Towards a critical and active citizenship in architectural education

Alex Noble

Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Corresponding author: alexnobl@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines how architectural technology education can actively promote social justice, critical engagement, and ethical practice beyond the discipline's technical focus. Situated within South Africa's socio-political-spatial context and the enduring legacies of colonialism and apartheid, it focuses on an Architectural Technology Extended Curriculum Programme at a University of Technology, using posthuman and decolonial frameworks from the author's PhD research. The paper further advances socially just architectural pedagogies by integrating Professor Elmarie Costandius' concepts of critical and active citizenship, emphasising the role of education in fostering engaged, socially aware practitioners. Through processual learning, event-based pedagogies, and walking excursions, the programme deepens students' understanding of Cape Town's urban layout and histories of spatial injustice. These methods aim to enhance students' critical thinking, encouraging them to become socially responsive practitioners who challenge spatial inequalities and advocate for inclusive design.

Keywords: Critical Citizenship, decoloniality, posthumanism, processual learning, social justice pedagogies, walking methodologies.

Introduction

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Professor Elmarie Costandius, whose visionary contributions to critical citizenry education, decolonial practices, and the advancement of active citizenship have influenced educational approaches—fostering meaningful connections between students, communities, and social justice initiatives.

Elmarie played a notable role in my PhD journey, by reviewing my thesis proposal and final submission, providing supportive feedback that gave me confidence to pursue my research with purpose. Although I could not discuss my completed thesis with her, my supervisors had recommended engaging with her work during my PhD. At the time, I focused on other frameworks and did not delve deeply into her ideas. Now, revisiting her work, I'm struck by how her analysis of critical citizenry education aligns with my efforts to familiarise students with the notion of critical citizenship.. Her insights have clarified and deepened my understanding of the

relationship between social justice, posthumanism, and decolonialism and how these theories inform my pedagogical practice. This paper draws directly from my PhD research, reimagined through Elmarie's influence.

In South Africa, higher education faces significant challenges due to the pervasive influence of neoliberal agendas and policies. These forces often obstruct genuine efforts towards decolonisation, redress, and social justice. Bozalek notes that 'higher education policy, practice, scholarship, research, and teaching have all been deeply affected by neoliberalism and corporatisation' (2021: 3) which prioritise efficiency, competitiveness, and quantity over quality, marginalising socially responsive and community-centred educational goals. This paper resists the neoliberalisation of higher education—where efficiency and quantifiable outcomes overshadow meaningful learning—and calls for pedagogies centred on inclusivity, critical engagement, and social justice.

Architectural education, in particular, must navigate these neoliberal pressures while addressing the deep-seated inequalities in spatial planning, land ownership, and urban development that stem from colonialism, apartheid, and even post-apartheid policies. By rethinking the built environment, architectural education can foster inclusivity and equality, raising awareness of local needs and equipping students with the skills and solutions necessary to tackle South Africa's socio-economic, environmental, and political challenges. The paper critically engages with the intersection of architectural education, social justice, and theoretical insights of posthumanism and decoloniality while drawing on Costandius' work on critical and active citizenship. Situated within the Architectural Technology Extended Curriculum Programme[1] at a University of Technology in South Africa, the paper expands on two examples of experiential learning encounters that attempt to address the country's socio-political landscape and the enduring legacies of colonialism and apartheid.

The paper advocates for pedagogical approaches that move beyond technical training to promote critical engagement, ethical practice, and social change. The theoretical framework draws on posthumanism, decoloniality, and critical and active citizenship education, emphasising relational, processual, and experiential learning. Methodologically, the research adopts a postqualitative approach, using processual learning, walking methodologies, and event-based pedagogies to engage students with Cape Town's spatial and historical complexities.

The paper examines two pedagogical events that employ these methodologies to highlight how architectural education can cultivate social justice by prompting students to critically engage with their environments and the socio-political forces shaping urban spaces.

---

[1] Extended curriculum programmes were first introduced in South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, They aimed to enhance university access for 'Black' students at historically 'White' institutions (Garraway & Bozalek, 2019). The architectural technology extended curriculum programme at a University of Technology in Cape Town, has been running since 2012. The programme prepares students for the diploma, qualifying them as candidate architectural technologists accredited by the South African Council for the Architectural Profession. Architectural technician professionals provide supervised services like design, documentation, and construction detailing in both formal and informal sectors.

The first event is *Exploring Urban Settlement, Displacement, and Social Justice*. and the second event is *Exploring Apartheid's Spatial Legacy in Cape Town*. Each will be discussed in turn. The paper concludes with a discussion bringing new insights and directions to further develop pedagogical practices in architectural education.

Theoretical Framework

This research integrates posthuman philosophy, decolonial theory, and critical citizenship to reimagine pedagogies in the Extended Curriculum Programme for Architectural Technology education. It builds on the theoretical insights by positioning these frameworks not as isolated concepts but as interwoven strategies for fostering socially just pedagogies. Posthumanism, as proposed by Braidotti (2013, 2019, 2021), critiques Eurocentric humanism by decentring the human and fostering a relational worldview that includes both human and more-than-human[2] entities. In the context of architectural education, this perspective challenges anthropocentric biases, advocating for an inclusive approach. Key principles are relationality, diversity, and resistance to universalism—aligning with social justice and recognising the interconnectedness of all life forms, in addition to addressing systemic inequities embedded in the built environment.

Barad's (2007) concept of *agential realism* further emphasises the importance of relationality, asserting that meaning emerges through interactions. Agential realism highlights the interconnectedness of all things, and the ethical responsibilities teachers have in shaping the future for humans, the more-than-human, and the material environment in knowledge production (Romano, 2022; Dolphijn & Van der Tuin, 2012). This perspective encourages architecture students to perceive social, spatial, and environmental relationships as fluid and dynamic, prompting educational processes that adapt to the interplay between natural and cultural contexts. This research explores how to be responsible and accountable in knowledge production, as these principles are central to agential realism (Juelskjær, et al., 2020).

Applying posthumanism, decoloniality, and critical citizenship to Cape Town's apartheid-shaped socio-spatial landscape encourages students to confront exclusionary legacies. Costandius, et al. define citizenship as 'a multidimensional concept... based on the acknowledgement of, and respect for, difference' and key to a socially just society (2015: 40). Essential elements include power dynamics, participating in civic initiatives, embracing social responsibility, and empowering students to challenge oppressive systems for a more just society.

These pedagogical interventions aim to inspire new ways to envision a built environment that embraces the diversity of lives, histories, experiences, and environments. The inquiry engages with Derrida (1994) concept of hauntology, later expanded upon by Barad (2010, 2017), which 'is about traces of the past that haunt the present and future' (Motala, 2018: 68), 'not just for what

---

[2] The more-than-human, a posthuman concept, highlights the shared agency of human and non-human entities—such as animals, plants, objects, and environmental forces—within complex systems. It challenges anthropocentric views, emphasising how urban spaces emerge from dynamic interactions between human activity and more-than-human elements like architecture, climate, and infrastructure. This relational perspective fosters awareness of these collaborations, promoting ethical coexistence and mutual impact.

comes to matter but what is constitutively excluded from mattering in order for particular materializations to occur' (Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012: 21). In this context, Barad's (2007, 2017, 2019) notion of the 'void' is crucial for understanding how colonial and apartheid legacies of erasures continue to influence the present. Barad expresses 'suspicion of the capitalist fascination with the new', emphasising that temporal indeterminacy is integral to our existences'; they point out that 'we're always already haunted by the past and the future—that neither the past nor the future is closed' (Juelskjær & Schwennesen, 2012: 13).

For Barad, the void is not merely an empty space; rather it is filled with traces of past exclusions as well as future potentialities. This notion is particularly useful when examining District Six in Cape Town—a site violently cleared during the colonial and apartheid eras. In this case, the void signifies both the trauma of erasure and the possibility of reconfiguration and reconnection. Linked to this is Derrida's (1994) concept of hauntology, which Barad (2010, 2017) builds on. Hauntology offers a lens for reimagining the persistent influence of colonial and apartheid histories within architectural spaces. Thinking with this concept is particularly effective when applied to discussions about District Six. Here, the absence of what once existed—displaced communities and erased histories—continues to haunt (Barad, 2010, 2017; Motala, 2018, 2019; Motala & Bozalek, 2022) the current landscape. Through the perspective of agential realism, these hauntings can inspire innovative visions for the built environment, which embrace the diverse tapestry of lived experiences, histories, and ecologies.

Barad (2007) introduces the notion of 're-turnings' to illustrate how histories and materialities are dynamic, continuously reconfiguring over time. For Barad, re-turning is not 'returning as in reflecting on or going back to a past that was, but re-turning as in turning it over and over again' (2014: 168) thereby fostering new innovations in spatial and temporal configurations. This concept is essential   for understanding that apartheid-era spatial injustices are not confined to the past; they re-turn in the present through urban design practices, public spaces, monuments, and the broader built environment, influencing contemporary spatial experiences.

These perspectives challenge the simplistic notion of 'filling the void'. Instead, they encourage the learning to engage with architectural practices that honour the histories of displacement. By doing so, students can imagine and work towards inclusive and reparative futures. Addressing these voids necessitates confronting the epistemological structures that enabled such erasures. In this context, thinking with decoloniality is crucial.

Decolonial theory, as articulated by Mignolo (2011), Tamale (2020), and others, in its critique of Western epistemological dominance in higher education, calls for the inclusion of African-centred knowledge systems and the amplification of historically marginalised voices. In architectural education, this implies resisting curricula that uncritically replicate Western ideals and practices; but rather for doing academia differently. For place-based, experiential learning that reflects local and Global South realities.

Cape Town's legacy of forced removals—exemplified by District Six—demonstrates the deeply political nature of the built environment. Engaging students in District Six narratives

exposes them to epistemic violence that underpins apartheid-era spatial planning and positions architectural education as a site for resistance and reparation. Students are encouraged to critically examine the socio-political dimensions of the built environment and engage with communities still navigating apartheid's spatial legacies.

Aligning with posthuman and decolonial approaches, the work of Costandius and Alexander (2018) on critical citizenship education provides a pedagogical model that is both relational and affective. Grounded in notions of 'knowing, acting, and being' as cited by Costandius and Alexander (2018: 1) from Barnett and Coate (2005), this framework enables students to reflect deeply on their positionality within the broader socio-political context. By encouraging such introspection, students are empowered to critically interrogate their emerging roles as professionals in the field of architecture.

Additionally, as advocated by Costandius, et al. (2015), critical citizenship underscores the necessity of actively engaging with social systems. When engaged in educational settings, active citizenship fosters a recognition among students of their agency to influence and shape societies that are more inclusive and just. For Costandius, et al. adopting 'critical citizenship for the social good' involves being 'inquiry-focused and knowledgeable … autonomous yet collaborative, and actively engaged in ethical, environmental, and social awareness' (2015: 49).

From a posthuman perspective, critical citizenship extends beyond human-centred narratives by acknowledging the entangled relationships between human and more-than-human actors—such as spaces, materials, and ecological systems—in shaping the built environment. The foregrounding of these entanglements encourages students and professionals to grasp that architecture is not an isolated, anthropocentric practice but one of distributed agency within socio-spatial networks through which social, material, and environmental forces are iteratively co-constituted.

The pedagogical approach raises awareness of the intricate interplay between human and more-than-human elements—such as land, infrastructure, and ecosystems—in shaping urban environments. It inspires students to cultivate inclusive and sustainable design practices that transcend human-centric perspectives, fostering a holistic understanding of urban spaces. From a decolonial perspective, critical citizenship challenges passive Eurocentric learning, promoting active engagement with social systems and the realities of marginalised communities. It encourages students to critically consider how colonial and apartheid-era spatial practices have influenced the built environment in Cape Town, raising awareness of power and inequity, and inspiring visions of more just, inclusive spaces.

My pedagogical practice is also informed by processual learning—understood as an ongoing, unfolding ontological process rather than a static transfer of knowledge. Manning describes it as 'a philosophy of movement and change … [and] an ontology of becoming' (2021: n.p.). This approach integrates theory and practice, encouraging students to critically engage with their social, historical, and spatial contexts and understand how these insights affect their becoming.

The interventions consist of *walking excursions* and *event-based pedagogies* as core methods. These activities are used to challenge colonial knowledge systems by immersing students in Cape Town's urban landscape, fostering direct encounters with spatial injustices. Rather than passive experiences, the excursions are designed to promote critical reflection and ethical responsibility and response-ability (Barad 2007, 2010; Haraway, 2016; Noble, 2024). Response-ability, refers to the capacity and willingness to engage responsively with others and to foster an environment where such responsiveness can flourish, drawing on the concepts developed by Barad (2007, 2010) and Haraway (2016).

Walking as a methodology

Walking, as a methodology, is both an ethical and political call to collective action, that offers experiential and embodied ways of learning (Springgay & Truman, 2018, 2019). Walking methodologies challenge Western-centric, human-centred pedagogies by promoting deep connections with place and advocating for socially and environmentally conscious, place-based education. More than just physical movement, walking is conceptualised a socially engaged act of exploration, attuned to marginalised historical narratives and spatial inequalities (Pink, 2015; Springgay & Truman, 2018, 2019).

Drawing on Lefebvre's (2004) rhythm analysis, Springgay and Truman (2019) highlight how walking allows students to perceive spaces as socially constructed and dynamic. This encourages an understanding of how social practices and inequalities shape spatial realities over time. The temporal lens fosters awareness of socio-cultural patterns within urban spaces, framing the built environment as a living, evolving entity. Walking, in this context, pushes students to view place relationally, acknowledging the interconnectedness of materials, histories, and social actors (Haraway, 2016).

As a decolonial critique, walking prompts students to confront colonial legacies within urban spaces, supporting a place-based learning approach that addresses historical injustices. In architectural education, it guides students through socially significant spaces, encouraging critical engagement with past, present, and future narratives. Walking-with posthumanism and decolonialism fosters awareness and action, empowering students to confront spatial injustices and integrate this critical understanding into their future design practices.

Event/s and eventing

This paper employs the concept of event/s or eventing as a mode of processual learning, rooted in process philosophy and the ontology of becoming (Barad, 2007). Eventing prioritises movement, change, and relationality in knowledge formation, moving away from static methods and embracing emergent learning environments where knowledge unfolds through direct engagement. These events create 'alter pedagogical environments' (Deleuze, 1992; Manning, 2016) that are dynamic, flexible, responsive learning spaces that encourage experimentation and collective inquiry. Data gathered from within these events and walking excursions are not static outcomes, but elements that can be revisited and reactivated in ways that inspire ongoing

reflection and learning. Through eventing, theory is embedded in practice by fostering iterative, experiential processes that engage students with real-world issues.

Walking, events, and critical learning

Walking methodologies and event-based pedagogies were used to engage students with Cape Town's socio-political and spatial complexities, integrating posthuman, decolonial, and critical citizenship perspectives. The goal of using such approaches was to raise awareness of historical and spatial injustices and cultivate socially responsible architectural learners.

The first event, a two-day workshop at the District Six Homecoming Centre, was intended to immerse students in the area's history of forced removals during apartheid, using participatory exercises and testimonies to highlight power dynamics and privilege in urban spaces. A tour of the District Six Museum enhances understanding of relational urban histories and strategies for spatial justice.

The second event, a two-day bus tour, visited relocation sites of former District Six residents, linking historical displacement to current urban challenges and emphasising the need for socially responsive architectural education. What follows is a detailed account of each of them.

Event 1: Exploring urban settlement, displacement, and social justice

Event 1 was hosted at the District Six Homecoming Centre in Cape Town, located on Buitenkant Street. Managed by the District Six Museum Foundation Board, the centre encompasses the museum and the Fugard Theatre[3]. Held over two days, the workshop included visits to the District Six Museum[4] and walks on the site with former District Six residents. Activities were designed in such a way that students could explore the relationship between spatial apartheid and injustice, by linking colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid urban planning with posthuman, decolonial, and critical citizenship perspectives in architectural education. Given that the university campus is located in District Six, this setting further intensified and resonated with students' learning and engagement with the area's layered history.

The District Six Spatial Apartheid and Spatial Justice programme (2021) provides the following historical context:

> District Six was declared for 'Whites only' on 11 February 1966, under the Group Areas Act of 1950. Over a period of twenty odd years between 1966 and the 1980s, the systematic demolition of homes, churches, schools, hotels and cinemas was enforced, displacing more than 66 000 people from their homes in the city to racialised ghettos all over the Cape

---

[3] The Fugard Theatre opened in February 2010 in District Six. It was officially closed in March 2021. In 2022 it reopened as part of the District Six Homecoming Centre.

[4] The District Six Museum is housed in what was once the vibrant inner-city residential area of District Six. It is located in a building that was originally built as a Methodist church. Established by the District Six Foundation in 1989, the museum opened its doors in 1994 to serve as a poignant memorial to the community's forced removals during apartheid.

Flats—a policy of urbanisation built on land dispossession that was applied throughout the country. Prior to this, the pass system and migrant labour worked in tandem to ensure an existence of servitude, imprisonment and inhumane living conditions for those classified as African that continues to generate violent conflicts in struggles for a decent life.

Extract from the 2021 District Six workshop program

The first day of the workshop saw students participating in a number of carefully designed activities. One of these was a 'race classification' exercise that outlined apartheid's discriminatory practices. Led by the facilitator, and the Head of Education at the District Six Museum Foundation, students were assigned apartheid-era racial categories and positioned in different spaces, as a reenactment of the exclusionary dynamics of the apartheid era. In this 'divide-and-rule' exercise, students are assigned apartheid racial statuses and positioned around the room accordingly. They received worksheets and cut-up pieces of photographs depicting the city and the Cape Flats, symbolising the race-based city planning and the 'dompas' Pass Law and passbooks system. The workshop facilitator guides the groups to symbolically reconstruct the segregated urban planning typically found in South Africa, while emphasising the fragmentation caused by apartheid policies (Noble, 2024: 137). She asked the students several questions: What do the images on the various worksheets represent? What are their stories? Additionally, how can they derive meaning from them? She probes the discussion further by asking what the mentality of the thinking at the time might have been, what the students thought happened in the photos provided, and who benefited and who did not? (Noble, 2024: 137).

Students were also introduced to former residents of District Six who shared their personal accounts and experiences of apartheid's enduring legacy. Collaborating with former District Six residents facilitated intergenerational dialogue on justice and resilience, encouraging students to consider the socio-political implications of apartheid in both past and present contexts. This approach fostered a 'thinking-doing' pedagogical encounter of collaborative and embodied learning (Manning & Massumi, 2014). Conceptualised as socio-material research-creation[5] in architectural education, this method emphasises relational and immersive learning, where students critically engage with historical injustices and envision their roles in driving social regeneration.

Later, students played the 'silent card game', designed to surface contemporary issues of community conflict and privilege. In this exercise, student groups represented a 'community' each with its own unique rules. One group had special freedoms, symbolising societal privilege. The process of enforced silence and frequent reshuffling highlighted the discomfort and

---

[5] Research-creation is a research methodology that integrates creative practice with scholarly inquiry. It aligns with post qualitative inquiry and has gained popularity among post-philosophy and feminist new materialist scholars, particularly in the humanities, social sciences, and arts (Manning, 2018; Springgay & Truman, 2018; Loveless, 2019). In South Africa, it has become increasingly prevalent. It shifts away from human-centred knowledge production, drawing on post-philosophical theory, and challenges overly formulaic and restrictive research methods (St. Pierre, 2019).

disorientation caused by arbitrary rules, echoing apartheid's impact on subjectivity and privilege in post-apartheid scenarios.

By combining historical context with interactive activities, this research-creation-based approach moves beyond traditional methodologies, using agential realism (Barad, 2007) to reveal insights emerging from human and more-than-human interactions. The District Six workshop illustrates the significance of relational, experiential learning in fostering a socially responsive architectural education as students addressed the distribution of power, privilege, and the institutions perpetuating these inequalities.

On the second day, we gathered at the District Six Homecoming Centre for a day of reflection, group discussions, group presentations, and guided tours of the museum and the District Six site. To begin students presented their group work findings from the exercises done on Day 1 on a large pinboard. They shared insights and discussed the connections between apartheid's history and the city's current social issues. The facilitator encouraged students to consider themes of democracy and social justice, by inviting them to reflect on how apartheid-era spatial injustices continue to affect city planning today and to speculatively imagine a more equitable Cape Town.

Students then participated in a guided tour of the District Six Museum with former residents. They engaged with the museum's exhibits which commemorate District Six, its former community, and life as a neighbourhood in the inner city of Cape Town, as well as the apartheid-enforced forced removals. The tour traced the paths of erased streets on a large neighbourhood map located on the floor of the museum, painstakingly recreated by those who once called it home, bearing witness to the enduring impact of this tragedy. Moving on from the museum, students were led on a walking tour through the former District Six site by a former resident who narrated the historical context of each area and highlighted scars in the landscape that reflect the destruction of the community.

The pedagogical intention was to broaden discussions to include South Africa's ongoing housing crisis and foster architectural learning through processual, hands-on approaches. For Noble and Gachago (2022), this form of engagement nurtures critical citizenship by establishing a deeper understanding of the dramatic influence of colonialism and apartheid on the city. It is a teaching framework that promotes fluidity and social cohesion. This approach provided students with direct engagement with the history and socio-political challenges of District Six. By exploring the legacies of apartheid and its spatial impact on contemporary Cape Town, students were able to deepen their understanding of social and spatial justice.

Such hands-on approaches not only broadened discussions on South Africa's housing crisis but also embodied the critical citizenship framework proposed by Noble and Gachago (2022). Through these processual, immersive experiences, students actively engaged with the built environment, challenging traditional narratives and fostering a commitment to social cohesion and justice in architectural education.

The apartheid authorities enforced the removal of residents from District Six and the destruction of their homes. This is marked as one of the most visible and enduring scars in South

Africa's history. The land was later used to build a technical university for 'White'[6] students in the 1970s and 1980s, amidst controversy over the demolition of 348 homes and the displacement of 354 families. Prior to this, a 'technical college campus for "coloured" students was established in 1920 … [on] Longmarket Street in Cape Town's' central business district (Noble, 2024: 119). This too was 'relocated to a site between Belhar and Bellville South on the Cape Flats on the outskirts of the city', reinforcing the apartheid regime's racial segregation policies. (Noble, 2024: 119).

This racial separation is mirrored in contemporary urban violences, such as gentrification, where lower-income residents are displaced by developers. Although the university, known now as the District Six campus, acknowledges its complex history, its location remains contentious because of its apartheid-era land acquisition.

The District Six event marks the beginning of the processual learning pedagogies, offering a distinct, immersive learning experience aimed at sensitising students to social and spatial injustices. By engaging with the story of District Six, the project foregrounds colonialism, apartheid, and post-apartheid legacies in Cape Town's urban landscape, emphasising their ongoing impact on access and ownership.

This event serves as both a pedagogical tool and a research experiment in eventing, aligning with decolonial and posthuman calls for social justice. It challenges the neoliberal framework of Higher Education by centring knowledge production within the South African context, disrupting dominant Western epistemologies, and exposing the absence of historical and socio-political critique within the architectural technology extended curriculum programme.

By positioning District Six as both a site of memory and resistance, the project reorients the pedagogy toward histories beyond Whiteness and Western frameworks. It expands students' and lecturers' understanding of Cape Town's spatial grid and its colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid planning through the lens of future architectural responsibility. This engagement not only cultivates critical consciousness but also challenges students to rethink their role in shaping inclusive, socially just urban environments.

Ultimately, the District Six event is more than a historical reflection—it is a call to action. Students are not passive recipients of history but active participants in a living narrative. The project compels them to interrogate their own positionality, consider how their design practices might perpetuate or disrupt entrenched systems of exclusion, and envision a 'justice-to-come' (Derrida, 1994; Barad, 2007, 2010, 2019). By critically engaging with District Six, students gain the tools to imagine and contribute to a more equitable built environment, one that acknowledges the past while actively working toward a just future.

In thinking with Barad's (2007) agential realism, the District Six event was not just a learning exercise but an emergent phenomenon—what Barad (2007) would describe as an entanglement of material, social, and historical forces. Drawing from posthuman and decolonial perspectives, the project challenges dominant Eurocentric knowledge production, disrupting the Western architectural canon that often excludes African spatial practices. Instead, it foregrounds relational

---

[6] This paper places the racial categories imposed by the apartheid government in inverted commas to reflect their historical usage and to remind readers of the context of that era.

learning, where knowledge is co-constructed through engagement with the District Six Homecoming Centre, former residents, and students.

Massumi (2015) and Bozalek and Taylor (2021) describe events as dynamic, relational, and continuously unfolding—producing knowledge not as fixed but as emergent through interaction. This workshop, therefore, functions as an experiment in knowledge-making, reorienting architectural education toward a South African spatial paradigm that acknowledges past injustices while imagining more just futures. By engaging with District Six as a living history, the project allowed students to critically examine how colonialism and apartheid persist in Cape Town's built environment and to explore alternative ways of thinking about design for equity and social justice.

The immersive activities described above made it possible for students to engage directly with the history and socio-political challenges of District Six, and foster a deeper understanding of the legacies of apartheid and its spatial effects on present-day Cape Town. This experience set the scene for the next event, a two-day bus tour of those neighbourhoods where former District Six residents had been forcibly relocated to.

Event 2: Exploring apartheid's spatial legacy in Cape Town

Following South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994, there were high hopes for economic and social reform. However, entrenched inequalities and the legacy of apartheid-era urban planning continue to shape the spatial layout of Cape Town today. The goal of this event was to immerse students in historically segregated neighbourhoods, encouraging them to critically examine apartheid and colonial systemic segregation and its ongoing impact on urban landscapes and daily life.

The shift from the District Six workshops to spatial apartheid tours exemplified Haraway's idea of 'staying with the trouble' (2016: 19-20), compelling students to engage with the realities of these environments through their materiality. The bus tours provided a critical examination of Cape Town's historically segregated neighbourhoods, revealing the enduring effects of colonial-apartheid-era spatial planning.

Event 2 consisted of two full-day bus tours held over consecutive weeks, as shown in Figure 1. On the first day, students visited key sites, including Ndabeni, Langa, Pinelands, and the Cape Flats[7]—areas shaped by apartheid-era racial segregation and forced removals, including the relocation of District Six residents. Through direct engagement with these spaces, students critically examined the enduring socio-spatial inequalities embedded in the urban landscapes they visited. The tour deepened students' awareness of historical displacement, segregation

---

[7] The Cape Flats, located to the southeast of Cape Town's central business district, is a vast, flat, and low-lying region in Cape Town. Before the 1950s, it remained largely unoccupied. Under the apartheid government, the Cape Flats became a site for forcibly relocating people of colour from the city's central urban areas into informal settlements often referred to as 'townships' or 'locations' which are terms that came about during the apartheid era and are still used today.

policies, and the material conditions of these neighbourhoods through comparative analysis, exposing critical issues in the built environment. At the same time, it challenged them to reconsider their role as future architectural practitioners in addressing contemporary spatial injustices.

The first stop was Ndabeni, established in the early 1900s after a bubonic plague outbreak, during which 'Black' Africans were scapegoated for the disease and forcibly removed from areas like District Six (Motala, 2019). Ndabeni became Cape Town's first race-determined location for displaced people of colour.

Figure 1: Exploring apartheid spatial legacy bus tour routes for Days 1 and 2.
Image: Google Maps with overlays of bus routes. Map overlays by Alex Noble

In stark contrast, the nearby suburb of Pinelands was developed exclusively for 'White' residents, inspired by British town planner Sir Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model. This concept, which gained popularity in England at the time, aimed to harmoniously blend rural and urban elements, shaping Pinelands as a neighbourhood that provided affordable housing for the 'White' middle class.

Langa, Cape Town's oldest 'Black' township, founded in 1927, further exemplified how urban planning was used to enforce racial segregation. Athlone and Gatesville, designated for 'Coloured' and Indian residents under the Group Areas Act, evolved into cultural hubs despite ongoing structural inequalities.

On the second day, the bus tour took students through Hout Bay, with a focus on Imizamo Yethu and Hangberg—two communities shaped by apartheid-era and post-apartheid era spatial divisions. The journey began with a scenic drive from the city, passing significant landmarks such as Kirstenbosch Gardens, before arriving in Hout Bay. The activity explored neighbourhoods that were segregated under apartheid laws, alongside an informal settlement established in the mid-1990s in the post-apartheid era.

The first stop, Imizamo Yethu, highlighted the challenges of informal settlements. While a planned guided walk was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances, students and staff observed and discussed the area's mix of formal and informal housing, its history, and ongoing land struggles. Next, the group visited Hangberg, a historically 'Coloured' fishing community overlooking the harbour. Here, students engaged in a measuring and documenting exercise, examining government-built housing from the early to mid-20th century and interacting with local residents.

Hout Bay serves as a microcosm of South Africa's socio-economic disparities, with Hangberg—historically home to 'Coloured' fishing workers—and Imizamo Yethu, a post-apartheid informal settlement, highlighting persistent spatial injustices. Through these site visits, students engaged with the layered histories of forced removals and exclusion, fostering a deeper understanding of the social, economic, and political forces that continue to shape Cape Town's urban landscape.

The day concluded with a reflective lunch stop along Chapman's Peak Drive, offering a moment to consider the persistent socio-spatial inequalities in Cape Town's built environment.

Within the different neighbourhoods, students worked in groups to analyse three adjacent houses from each focus area. Back in the studio, they created strip elevations in pencil and ink, capturing the scale, proportions, textures, and materiality of different residential houses into ink-lined elevation drawings. This practice aligned with Manning and Massumi's (2014) concept of 'thinking-doing,' emphasising embodied learning through movement and observation.

By comparing different housing types, public spaces, and street thresholds, students gain insights into how apartheid's spatial barriers continue to influence Cape Town's urban layout. The fieldwork encourages critical engagement with architecture's role in either perpetuating or dismantling these inequalities.

This event provides an experiential learning framework that integrates history, architecture, and social justice. By situating housing within both an educational and societal context, it fosters a decolonial perspective that challenges traditional architectural pedagogy. The curriculum aimed to cultivate ethically aware professionals equipped to engage with South Africa's housing crisis and broader urban inequalities, positioning architecture as a tool for spatial justice and inclusive city-making.

Discussion

As an exploration in processual learning and social justice pedagogies, the interventions described above were designed to enhance students' awareness of social, economic,

environmental, and political issues. Retrospectively and in thinking with Costandius' work, the projects were designed to enable critical thinking and a sense of critical citizenship by prompting students to question power dynamics, reflect on their (future) roles within the built environment, and engage meaningfully with issues of social justice.

Event 1 exposed students to District Six and the impact of the apartheid laws inflicted on the area's inhabitants and people of colour all around the country. In so doing, it showed how the past continues to shape the present for the city and its inhabitants. It emphasised that the built environment is inherently political and that addressing historical injustices requires an ethical and responsible approach to practice. Through engaging with the histories of land dispossession, relocation and inequality, the District Six workshop events and the walking excursions from the bus tours plant seeds of ethical awareness. They highlight that socially just practices must be rooted in an understanding of the past and its ongoing impacts.

Exposing students to the historical injustices of District Six, aligns with Costandius, et al.'s (2015) emphasis on pedagogical practice that promoted critical thinking—as a core component of critical citizenship. This event encouraged students to critically examine the societal structures that upheld apartheid, deepening their understanding of how these legacies persist in shaping the built environment today.

Event 2 further highlighted how apartheid's spatial legacy remains deeply embedded in Cape Town's urban landscape, illustrating that the city's spatial divides are not simply remnants of apartheid but part of a broader, systemic design problem. These entangled issues extend beyond human-centred concerns, aligning with Barad's (2007) call for accountability—not only to the victims of colonial and apartheid violence but also to those who have passed and those yet to come. This perspective challenges students to critically reflect on their roles as future architectural practitioners and recognise the interconnectedness of history, space, and justice. In this context, the concept of response-ability (Barad 2007, 2010; Haraway, 2016; Noble, 2024) becomes particularly relevant; where response-ability refers to the ability and capability to be responsive and to allow responsiveness in others (Noble, 2024: 20). By embracing response-ability, students are prompted to consider how their future professional work can facilitate healing and justice, acknowledging their ethical obligation to both the past and future inhabitants of these spaces.

Event 2's focus encourages students to actively engage with these issues, mirroring Costandius, et al.'s (2015) notion of active engagement. By participating in walking excursions and bus tours, students were not just passive observers but active participants in understanding systemic urban, spatial design problems that persist, thereby embodying the critical citizenship call to contribute to societal change.

The two events highlighted the importance of examining the political and historical dimensions of the built environment in Cape Town and South Africa, emphasising how colonialism, apartheid, and systemic violence continue to shape these landscapes. In the students' curriculum, these engagements offered a speculative starting point for social justice pedagogy—

prompting students to critically reflect on their roles as future architectural practitioners and the ways they might become agents of social and spatial change.

By integrating posthuman and decolonial pedagogies alongside critical and active citizenship, the research urged students to move beyond individualistic understandings of justice. It fostered an awareness of the interconnected socio-political and environmental dynamics shaping Cape Town's built environment, highlighting how historical injustices—such as land dispossession and apartheid-era spatial planning—continue to structure urban spaces and the lives of those who live and use such spaces. The curriculum's emphasis on understanding historical injustices and their ongoing impacts resonates with Costandius, et al.'s (2015) concept of social responsibility. Moreover, by fostering a commitment to ethical conduct and the well-being of the broader community, students are encouraged to consider how their future work in architecture can enhance social justice and community well-being, aligning with the broader aims of critical citizenship.

Decolonial theory disrupted Western epistemological dominance in the curriculum by creating space for Global South knowledge systems and emphasising the enduring impact of colonial and apartheid violence. The integration of posthumanism further expanded this approach by challenging human-centered narratives, encouraging students to see the built environment as shaped by entangled human and more-than-human relations. Grounded in Barad's (2019) concepts of colonial hospitality and hauntology, the research invited students to confront the voids left by historical erasures—not as empty spaces, but as sites charged with the potential for re-membering, accountability, and imagining inclusive futures. This approach, combined with notions of critical and active citizenship, urged students to move beyond passive recognition of injustice, instead fostering an engaged, relational understanding of their roles as future architectural practitioners within the complex socio-political and environmental realities of Cape Town.

Ultimately, this intervention shows how reimagining extended curriculum architectural education through posthuman, decolonial, critical citizenship lenses might cultivate a deeper awareness of social justice issues. It was designed to encourage architectural technology students to critically position themselves within complex socio-political landscapes, recognising how historical injustices shape the present. By fostering a sense of active responsibility, the intention was to prepare students to design not only for the present but with a consciousness of the past and a commitment to creating more just, inclusive, and sustainable futures. Costandius, et al. (2015) view citizenship as a multifaceted concept that fundamentally relies on recognising and valuing diversity, which is essential for fostering a socially just society. This multidimensional understanding of citizenship is reflected in the new social justice curriculum, which encourages students to engage deeply with their environment, recognise historical injustices, and envision inclusive futures. By fostering critical citizenship, the curriculum is laying the groundwork for students to evolve into socially aware architectural technologists who will design not only for the present but also actively contribute to creating a more just and sustainable future.

This intervention highlights how rethinking extended curriculum architectural education through posthuman, decolonial, and critical citizenship lenses has the potential to foster a deeper awareness of social justice issues. Thinking with Barad provided a critical lens for examining Cape Town's built environment, addressing historical injustices, and imagining more inclusive futures. This approach revealed the entanglement of colonial and apartheid legacies, systemic violence, and power structures that continue to shape urban spaces.

The new curriculum offered students opportunities to critically engage with the political and historical dimensions of the built environment. By acknowledging these histories, the curriculum embraces radical hospitality (Barad, 2007, 2010, 2019)—recognising that architects, architectural technologists, and educators have a responsibility to contribute to a more equitable built environment, by acknowledging past injustices and envisioning just futures. The processual learning pedagogies in the extended curriculum programme drew on posthuman relational ontologies, encouraging students to consider the interconnectedness of human and more-than-human entities. This included recognising the entangled relationships between land, communities, and architectural practices. Students were prompted to reflect on how historical and present-day spatial injustices—such as land dispossession and apartheid-era planning—affect Cape Town's built environment and marginalised communities.

Through site visits, walking excursions, and spatial apartheid bus tours, students directly engaged with real-world architectural issues in historically significant areas such as District Six, the Cape Flats, Hout Bay, Hangberg, and Imizamo Yethu. These experiences expanded their understanding of Cape Town and of how socio-political, economic, and environmental challenges persist in these spaces today.

The integration of posthuman and decolonial perspectives not only cultivated empathy and critical thinking but also invited students to experiment with innovative approaches to social justice in architectural education. By centring relationality, responsiveness, and indeterminacy, the processual learning pedagogies encouraged students to consider the broader implications of their future work as architectural practitioners—highlighting the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental factors within architectural practice.

Ultimately, this intervention highlights the importance of preparing students to become socially aware architectural technologists—individuals who one day will design and work with an acute awareness of the past, a critical understanding of the present, and a steadfast commitment to more just, inclusive, and sustainable futures.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how architectural technology extended curriculum education might be designed to actively promote social justice, critical engagement, and ethical practice in pedagogy—moving beyond the discipline's technical focus. Grounded in South Africa's socio-political-spatial context and the enduring legacies of colonialism and apartheid, it emphasises the need for pedagogical strategies that confront systemic injustices. The pedagogical intervention was designed by drawing on posthuman and decolonial frameworks—integral to

the author's PhD research—and subsequently integrating Costandius' concepts of critical and active citizenship to advance socially just educational practices.

By incorporating Barad's (2007) concept of agential realism, the event projects fostered a relational understanding of the built environment, one that emphasises the inter- connectedness of human and more-than-human entities. Posthumanism's critique of Eurocentric humanism and its advocacy for a relational worldview encouraged students to challenge anthropocentric biases in architectural practice. This perspective was instrumental in fostering a critical approach to thinking about the practice of architecture, one that recognises the agency of all life forms and the material environment, aligning with social justice principles and addressing systemic inequities embedded in the built environment.

The decolonial imperative to address historical injustices played an important role in shaping the curriculum. By confronting epistemological structures that enabled colonial and apartheid-era erasures, the curriculum integrated African and locally centred knowledge systems and amplified historically marginalised voices. This was accomplished through innovative events like District Six workshops, museum visits, walks in and around District Six with former residents, and spatial apartheid bus tours. These activities had students engaging critically with Cape Town's complex socio-political and spatial realities, past and present. The processual learning activities— event-based pedagogies, and walking excursions—fostered relational and interconnected understandings of the built environment, which prompted students to consider it as both a site of oppression and possibility.

This pedagogical approach encourages students to do a different type of learning, it does not uncritically replicate Western ideals and practices. Rather, it promotes place-based, experiential learning in local and Global South realities. Engaging with the narratives of District Six and other historically significant areas exposed students to the epistemic violence that underpins apartheid-era spatial planning, positioning architectural education as a site for resistance and reparation. Students got to grapple with critical issues such as land dispossession, spatial inequality, and housing disparities through the lens of District Six, and the experiences of former District Six residents. Working closely with the former residents, these cross generational relations encouraged a sense of empathy, and of professional accountability, and a commitment to tackling systemic inequities among students. This approach resonates with Costandius, et al.'s (2018) call for critical and active citizenship and their relevance to architectural curricula, by encouraging students to see themselves not just as future technologists but as socially responsive practitioners, equipped to challenge spatial injustices and promote inclusive design in practice.

In conclusion, integrating critical citizenship alongside posthuman and decolonial perspectives into architectural technology education is an important step towards cultivating civic responsibility and awareness of the profession's broader social and political implications. By engaging students in immersive experiences that confront historical and ongoing spatial injustices, this pedagogical approach might be able to equip future architectural practitioners with some of the critical and ethical tools to think about space and place in a broader historical context. In turn, this would work towards a process of informing design for more equitable,

inclusive, and sustainable built environments, positioning students as active participants in societal reparation.

Author biography

Alex Noble (PhD) is a Lecturer at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, specialising in undergraduate architectural and interior design education. She integrates art-based, social justice pedagogies, posthumanism, and decoloniality into her teaching practice, using research-creation to challenge conventional learning paradigms and promote socially just architectural curricula. ⓘD

References

Barad, K. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Barad, K. 2010. Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: Dis/continuities, spacetime enfoldings, and justice-to-come. *Derrida Today*, 3: 240-268.

Barad, K. 2014. Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart. *Parallax*, 20(3): 168-187.

Barad, K., 2017. Troubling time/s and ecologies of nothingness: Re-turning, re-membering, and facing the incalculable. *New Formations*, 92(92): 56-86.

Barad, K., 2019. After the end of the world: Entangled nuclear colonialisms, matters of force, and the material force of justice. *Theory & Event*, 22(3): 524-550.

Barnett, R. & Coate, K., 2005. *Engaging the Curriculum in Higher Education*. New York, NY: Open University Press.

Braidotti, R. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Braidotti, R. 2019. *Posthuman Knowledge* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Braidotti, R. 2021. *Posthuman Feminism.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bozalek, V., 2021. Slow scholarship: Propositions for the extended curriculum programme. *Education as Change*, 25: 1-21.

Bozalek, V. & Taylor, C., 2021. Event. In Murris, K. (Ed.) *A Glossary for Doing Postqualitative, New Materialist and Critical Posthumanist Research Across Disciplines*. London: Routledge, 66-67.

Costandius, E., Rosochacki, S. & le Roux, A. 2014. Critical citizenship education and community interaction: A reflection on practice. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 33(1): 116-129.

Costandius, E. & Alexander, N. 2018. Exploring barriers and strategies for critical citizenship education: A reflection on practice. In Costandius, E. & Botes, H. (Eds.). *Educating Citizen Designers in South Africa*, Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 1-22.

Costandius, E., Nell, I., Alexander, N., McKay, M., Blackie, M., Malgas, R. & Setati, E. 2018. #FeesMustFall and decolonising the curriculum: Stellenbosch University students' and lecturers' reactions. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(2): 65-85.

Deleuze, G. 1992. Postscript on the societies of control. (1990). *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, 139-142.

Derrida, J. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work Morning and the New International*, trans. P. Kamuf. London: Routledge.

Garraway, J. & Bozalek, V. 2019. Theoretical frameworks and the extended curriculum programme. *Alternation*, 26(2): 8–35.

Juelskjær, M., Plauborg, H. & Adrian, S.W. 2020. *Dialogues on Agential Realism: Engaging in Worldings through Research Practice*. London: Routledge.

Haraway, D.J., 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Juelskjær, M. & Schwennesen, N. 2012. Intra-active entanglements: An interview with Karen Barad. *Kvinder, Koen og Forskning*, 21(1-2): 10-23.

Lefebvre, H., 2004. *Rhythm Analysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Loveless, N. 2019. *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A manifesto for research-creation*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Manning, E. 2016. *The Minor Gesture*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Manning, E.. 2021. Post philosophies and the doing of inquiry Session 6: Erin Manning, With Bozalek, V., Kuby, C., Manning, E., & Price, E. *YouTube*, 23 January. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZHKK8hBLcU (Accessed: 21/01/2021).

Manning, E. & Massumi, B. 2014. Relational soup–Philosophy, art, and activism. Brian Massumi and Erin Manning. *YouTube*. TEDx Talk at Cal Arts. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2yHtYdl4bE (Accessed: 15/01/2021).

Massumi, B. 2015. *Politics of Affect*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Mbembe, A., 2015. Decolonizing Knowledge and the Question of the Archive [Lecture.] Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research.

Mignolo, W. 2011. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Motala, S., 2018. Critical posthumanism in geomatics education: A storytelling intervention. Unpublished PhD diss., University of the Western Cape.

Motala, S. 2019. District Six and CPUT: A carto-story. *YouTube*, 7 January. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEzydbcVWV4&feature=youtu.be (Accessed: 21/01/2021).

Motala, S. & Bozalek, V. 2022. Haunted walks of District Six: Propositions for counter-surveying. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 28(2): 244-256.

Noble, A.C., 2024. (Re)configuring socially just pedagogies with posthumanism and decoloniality: Experimenting with processual learning in the Architectural Technology extended curriculum programme in the Western Cape, South Africa. Unpublished PhD diss., University of the Western Cape.

Noble, A. & Gachago, D. 2022. Developing critical digital literacies through digital storytelling: Student attempts at re-telling the District six Story. *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning*, 14(3): 1-19.

Pink, S., 2015. *Doing Sensory Ethnography.* London, UK: Sage.

Romano, N. 2022. Reconfiguring a history of art and design curriculum in a South African university of technology: Becoming-with critical arts-based pedagogical encounters. Unpublished PhD diss., Utrecht University.

Springgay, S. & Truman, S.E. 2018. *Walking Methodologies in a More-Than-Human World: WalkingLab*. London: Routledge.

Springgay, S. & Truman, S.E., 2019. Walking in/as publics: Editors' introduction. *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, Nov: 2-12.

St. Pierre, E.A. 2019. Post qualitative inquiry, the refusal of method, and the risk of the new. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 27(1): 3-9.

Tamale, S. 2021. Decolonization and Afro-feminism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 39(4): 644-657.

Van der Tuin, I. & Dolphijn, R. 2012. *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. London: Open Humanities Press.