'Development Issues': Traveling Theories, Apartheid Criticism and the 'Social Turn' in Architectural Education

In the early 1980s, a group of professors in the Department of Architecture at the University of Cape Town (UCT) came together to design a new course for their students. What would eventually be called 'Development Issues' was an intervention in education, architecture and apartheid. It represented a concern for the current state of affairs in the Department, at the University, and in the nation.

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The course would come to be reflected upon by students and educators alike as a pivotal, formative moment in their careers. I am interested in this course, not as an end in itself but rather as a marker of the time and of a strand of pedagogy, knowledge circulation, and method of political action. It's significance lies with the cast of characters responsible for the course's development and the events – political, personal, and educational – that led to its inception. The significance of this small course, developed in one school of architecture at the farthest edge of Africa, and taught for only a few years is two-fold. First, it stands for the making of a citizen-architect: a concerned, informed architect ready to think and practice in (apartheid) South Africa. Second, it brings to light ways in which apartheid and interventions into an apartheid society were framed. These may be surprising from the perspective of early twenty-first century hindsight, but reflected the contemporary thinking about the possibility of an architecture of protest and critical apartheid analysis. Together, these strands of significance speak to the limits and possibilities of using architecture to participate in urgent and immediate political struggle, making social engagement an architectural act.

TURNING 'SOCIAL'

Prior to the 1970s, architectural education at the University of Cape Town followed in the model of the French École des Beaux Arts. Students were taught architectural principles through methodical reproduction of the established canon. The Architecture Department privileged far-flung connections to Europe over a situated engagement with its local context. The mid-1970s, however, witnessed what I am characterizing as a 'social turn' in the school. It in part reflected political events at the national level. On June 16, 1976, students in the black townships of Soweto, in Johannesburg, took to the streets to protest recent legislation requiring all tertiary education be conducted in Afrikaans - which was

most students' third language, at best. The state response was incredibly violent, resulting in the death of hundreds of students, and setting off waves of protests around the nation. The resulting carnage shocked many liberal-leaning whites out of their complicit stupor. Although only a few joined the banned African National Congress (ANC) or other radical organizations, many began to seek ways to express their opposition to apartheid and assist in bringing an end to the regime. As this paper will show, some of the most prominent members of the UCT's architecture department were amongst those seeking avenues of political resistance, and deployed their pedagogical platform as a venue from which to do so.

UCT's social turn, propelled forward by the consciousness spurred on by the Soweto Revolts, developed through the innovative, activist-oriented teaching of a few key figures. While not necessarily any more important than any of the other actors, a useful entry into this cast of characters is through Ivor Prinsloo. The Head of the UCT Architecture School from 1974 into the 1990s², Prinsloo embodies the energy, strategies and intellectual framework that would characterize the Architecture Department's social engagements from the 1970s into the 1990s.

Prinsloo was characterized by all who knew him as a force of nature³, whose personal story reflects how the development of a 'social turn' was a particular synergism of happenstance and inevitability. Prinsloo was appointed the Head of the Department of Architecture in 1974. His arrival from Los Angeles, where he was completing his Ph.D., was a choreographed spectacle. He drove away from the airport in an American-made convertible, that he had shipped to South Africa, to his new apartment that he had redesigned using the latest in American design innovations⁴. The beginning of his tenure at the School of Architecture was celebrated by a vibrant pamphlet/poster (Figure 1) that announced his pedagogical initiatives alongside school events and curated curricula vitae for himself and eminent historian Vincent Scully, who was to soon visit the School. Originally from the rural, Afrikaans speaking town Bethlehem, in the South African hinterland, Prinsloo was educated at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in the 1960s. This was a first step in a career that would expand his geographical horizons and worldview beyond that of an Afrikaans farm boy. He completed an extended internship with John and Allison Smithson, which brought him into intimate contact with icons of the European architectural avant-garde, from Le Corbusier to Team X. These influences would emerge in his professional career, as a designer and educator through engagements with social issues and critical departures from architectural traditions, from the Beaux Arts to South African iterations of modernism. One of the first instances in which this can be seen was in the first significant professional job he took after completing architecture school. Prinsloo went to work for the Rand Mine Corporation, leading a team that included architect Julian Cooke - who would also come to serve as a key figure in UCT's social turn - designing worker housing.

Prinsloo and Cooke's employment in the mining sector speaks volumes about the role of mining-based capitalism in South Africa, and the possibilities for architectural expressions of social values in such a context. Mining has historically been one of the most exploitive sites of capital production and social relations in South Africa; it served as the industrial backbone of the migrant labor system, and arguably the apartheid system. Yet, as Julian Cooke stated, mining corporations were major landholders and large scale employers, who provided a rare opportunity to engage in design problems concerning ideal residential arrangements⁵. There are a two, intertwined points regarding the collusion of architects with mining corporations. The first is that the design of company towns,



Figure 1: Exuberant announcement of Ivor Prinsloo's arrival at UCT

Beyond the Fringe 'Development Issues' 162

which the mining camps can be thought of as, is an old tradition. In the US context, such towns date back to the latter half of the nineteenth century, and their designs were thoroughly imbued with a utopian vision.⁶ We can read the work done by Prinsloo's team as located - albeit potentially uncomfortably - within this tradition. The second point is that it is essential to understand how impossible - or at least difficult - it was under apartheid to separate out mining, and other forms of state and corporate institutions, from the production of space. Architects sought out any means they could to attempt to shape space in ways that they saw as socially responsible, even if that meant working for a client who was ethically suspect. Doing so meant architects needed to carefully negotiate the social and spatial components of their professional practices. For architects such as Prinsloo, there were two sets of values at stake: the first was the political, by which I am referring to the opposition to apartheid. The second set of values relate to architecture and the making of space. These values reflected criticism of modernist planning ideals, such as those propagated by CIAM. Modernism in South Africa was especially closely tied to apartheid and capitalism⁷, and by the 1960s had begun to come under critique. Architects sought new spatial configurations, which they believed to be more socially nurturing. The freedom that the Rand Mine Corporation granted to its team of architects to devise new schemes for housing workers gave them the opportunity to develop such configurations (Figure 2). Thus, the work that architects such as Prinsloo and Cooke undertook for the Rand Mine Corporation was the beginning of an assertion of an ideology about space, which perhaps did not resist capitalism or the politics of the apartheid system. It did however take on the modernist architectural expression of apartheid. For Prinsloo and Cooke at this moment in the late 1960s, utilizing one's architectural professional skills and endeavors for social good meant to work for 'traditional' clients - such as mining corporations - but to produce buildings and planning schemes that reflected 'progressive beliefs' about space. Such critiques of modernism would come to be a significant strand of anti-apartheid architectural practice in South Africa, in apartheid's later days and after.

A DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXT

Prinsloo's career took on new, international dimensions when he won a competition to design housing in Chile, under the young Allende government. He relocated to Chile to undertake the project, but the 1973 coup forced him to leave the country. Not yet ready to return to South Africa and eager to further his education, Prinsloo went to do a PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). There he studied planning, with luminary figures such as Edward Soja. At UCLA, Prinsloo began to undertake scholarship that connected the city with social issues. It was also at UCLA that Prinsloo developed the particular intellectual frameworks that would guide the making of the Development Studies course and UCT Architecture Department's particular – or peculiar - engagement with the anti-apartheid struggle.

I have undertaken ethnographic research in Cape Town, speaking to architects, academics, and state actors about the 'social turn'. In one interview, architect Lucien le Grange stated that the 'Development Issues' course was the result of realizing that "our context was a developmental context." At that moment, I was somewhat shocked to hear that statement. In my reading, South Africa in the early 1980s was an *apartheid* context. Once I got over my initial shock, I realized there were some very telling things coming together in le Grange's statement.

The first was an awareness of different analytical frameworks that could be

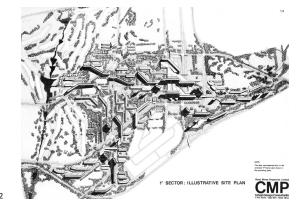


Figure 2: *Crown Mines Properties Site Plan*:
Rethinking the Mining Compound and Modernist Planning.

applied to South Africa. A 'developmental state' often refers to a "form of government involving direct, concerted, and sustained intervention in national economic development through industrial policies such as export-led growth and labour control."8 This view of a strong state resonates with South Africa at the time. However, if taking le Grange's statement in a broader sense, of relating to 'development studies', it also reveals transnational sympathies, alliances and borrowings. Beginning in the 1960s, scholars and practitioners from institutions such as the World Bank came to frame global-scale inequalities through the bifurcated lens of 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' countries. With a particular focus on cases in Latin America, the field of development studies emerged in the 1970s. Seminal works such as Brian Roberts' Cities of Peasants⁹ and Janice Perlman's The Myth of Marginality¹⁰ broke open – in very different ways – the field, providing methods and frameworks for looking at underdevelopment in a grounded manner. Architecture slotted into this field with work like John Turner's Housing by People¹¹, and Bernard Rudofsky's famous Museum of Modern Art exhibition and accompanying monograph Architecture without Architects¹². Development studies helped architects understand their context as one of polar extremes: of rapid urbanization, of great disparities between the urban and rural, accompanied by thematic binaries of the 'modern' versus 'traditional'.

My initial shock at the developmentalism declaration reflects my criticism of the strand of development studies that argues that there are paths of progress, which some nations – and peoples – are already on and others yet to enjoy. I find this bifurcated, historicist viewpoint reinforces colonial hierarchies and places certain groups outside the trajectory of history. However, the position articulated by le Grange rather reflected a way of thinking outwardly, connecting South Africa to other contexts. Developmentalism for the architects discussed here served as a lens that led to forms of political engagement more productive for them as architects than traditional forms of anti-apartheid protest.

A 'developmentalism' perspective indicated architects had shifted alliances and affinities, from European Beaux Arts to Latin American self-build programs. In one sense, the shift can be attributed to South Africa's increasing isolation under apartheid. No longer part of the British Commonwealth, the nation lost institutional and intellectual ties with Eurocentric and generally 'Westernized' movements further afield. However, this does not mean that architects were provincialized in their education and influences. Many of the University of Cape Town's most prominent academics received formal and informal training abroad, through expansive and diverse paths. As discussed above, Prinsloo worked for the Smithsons and Allende's Chilean government; these were two strands of practice, which engaged both the avant-garde and the everyday of nation building. There was a long lineage of South African architects going to the US to complete their postgraduate studies. Roelof Uytenbogaardt, arguably the most influential Cape Town architect of the latter twentieth century, began a tradition of studying at the University of Pennsylvania, where he received the tutelage of none other than Louis Khan. Lucien le Grange studied at Rice. Although Julian Cooke received all of his formal education in South Africa, he won numerous scholarships to conduct research across Europe. And the list goes on. These assorted practices brought together a host of influences. Prinsloo brought in a connection to Latin American, which included attention to self-build housing as well as more Marxist perspectives. Those that studied at Penn brought what Colin St. John Wilson calls the 'other tradition' of modern architecture¹⁵. Julian Cooke credits his travels in Venice, Italy, for his later urban design work, which

Beyond the Fringe 'Development Issues' 164

sought to produce a distinctively anti-modernist realm of activated outdoor-room like courtyards.

However, before continuing on to discuss how such influences played out in the Development Issues course, there is an important aspect of the 'developmental' perspective which needs discussion: race. Reading the 1980s South African context, by predominantly (although not exclusively) white architects, as developmental versus apartheid can suggest a silencing of the importance of race and racialized structures of inequality. This fits in with Marxist-based analyses of apartheid and apartheid cities in the 1970s and 1980s, which prioritized the category of capital was over race. In such analyses, race "relations are characterized as, for all practical purposes, class relations in the classical sense. The structuring of the South African labour force into black and white strata is therefore analyzed as similar to the 'fracturing' of the working class, which one finds in all capitalist social formations-with the single exception that, here, race is the mechanism by which this stratification of the class is accomplished."16 Although other interpretations that gave more voice to race existed, the Marxist base of the class-based approach was deeply influential. I believe that it was this Marxist perspective that held sway for the architects involved in the Development Issues course. They were not necessarily members of South Africa's Community Party, but found the class-based arguments – as so many South African members of the academy at the time - a compelling way of conceptualizing apartheid and potential strategies of resistance. A subtle but significant aspect of such strategies is how they addressed the conditions produced under such a racialized context, without directly attacking racism – or apartheid – itself.

ENDNOTES

- Claire Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship (London; Brooklyn: Verso, 2012).
- He was Head from 1974 to 1985. When the Department structure changed in 1985, and the Department Chair became a rotating 2-year long appointment, he was Chair from 1985 to 1987 and again from 1993 to 1995.
- Tragically, he died in a hiking accident in 2002, at the age of 67.
 See A2.8 'Ivor Prinsloo: A Celebration of his Life' in Ivor Prinsloo
 Papers (University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Papers, BC 1413).
- 4. From interview with Iain Low, by author, on February 23, 2012.
- 5. In interview with author, on June 29, 2012.
- Margaret Crawford, Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns (London: Verso, 1995).
- Derek Japha, "The Social Programme of the South African Modern Movement," in Blank: Architecture, Apartheid and after, ed. Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavic (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 1998), 422–37; Susan Parnell and Alan Mabin, "Rethinking Urban South Africa," Journal of Southern African Studies 21, no. 1 (1995): 39–61.
- 8. Noel Castree, Rob Kitchin, and Alisdair Rogers,
 "Developmental State," A Dictionary of Human Geography
 (Oxford University Press, 2013), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/
 acref-9780199599868-e-391?rskey=fXB5bS&result=2.
- Bryan R. Roberts, Cities of Peasants: The Political Economy of Urbanization in the Third World (London: Edward Arnold, 1978).
- Janice E Perlman, The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

TEACHING - AND PRACTICING - 'DEVELOPMENTALISM'

One of the first ways in which this socially engaged cohort took on apartheid was through teaching as outreach. Prior to the development of the Development Issues course, professors such as John Moyle began to structure the design studios they taught around the design of community buildings for those most disadvantaged by apartheid. Architectural students would be asked to produce designs for projects developed in association with local leaders in Cape Town's townships. Such spaces would include crèches or community centres; they were interventions that sought to counteract the affects of 'disempowerment' in townships¹⁷ (Figure 3). It proved difficult to structure an extended engagement between the university and township residents, particular because of the differing temporal rhythms of each. Yet, these studios they marked an initial foray into expanding architectural education beyond the classroom, concretely and conceptually. Considering that architecture students, particularly at that time in the 1970s came almost exclusively from privileged, white backgrounds, few would have previously directly experienced township life. Their encounters with disadvantaged, predominantly black South Africans would have been limited to the domestic servants working in their homes. And in light of the school's previous adherence to a Beaux Arts education system, designing in the real world, for programs that reflected limited budgets and harsh conditions, was a radical departure in architectural education.

Through Prinsloo, outreach would take even more geographically expansive dimensions in 1978, when he entered the UCT School of Architecture into collaboration with the Lerotholi Polytechnic in Maseru, Lesotho. Prinsloo enlisted John Moyle to assist Lerotholi in establishing a program for technical training, and offered a pathway for graduates of the program to come to UCT for further

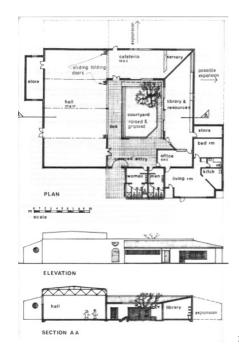
education. The collaboration was part of a like-minded body of 'development-oriented' projects undertaken by Prinsloo and colleagues. These engagements perhaps most closely reflect the 'developmentalist' ideas circulated from Latin America. Prinsloo sought out projects in "developing areas", not as a revenue stream, but in reflection of his ideals:

Ivor Prinsloo believes that the world in which we live is in the throes of one of those historically important sets of events when significant social changes occur as a result of the changes in our basic value structures. He thinks that this is most manifest in the Third World and that in this last quarter of the twentieth century Africa and in particular Africa South occupy geographical and political centrepoints. The guidance system which produces the physical environment is the concern of the architect and in this he may be a useful 'change-agent'. ¹⁸

Lesotho provided a terrain for South African architects to engage, to perform the methods of citizenship that they would have preferred to undertake within South Africa's borders, but were prohibited by apartheid politics. Lesotho was the 'developing' Other to Cape Town's – and especially UCT – developed self. By invoking the Other/Self binary I do not mean to suggest that architects such as Prinsloo were performing a form of colonialism. Rather, Lesotho stood in for the local - enabling architects to enact the ways they idealized contributing to their prejudicial context.

Which brings me to the UCT Development Issues course. While the collaborations with Lerotholi Polytechnic and local "community projects" expressed architects' sense of citizenship, the Developments Issue course was a direct intervention into the education of (predominantly privileged) architects. As both a pedagogical and political tool, it was substantively radical. The course was premised upon the belief, reflected in the collaborations discussed above, that architectural practice in South Africa needed to deepen its ties with its local context. The development of the course reflected the realization that for architects to do so, they must be exposed to the world around them and the possibility of their engagement with it. The content of the course, 'hammered out' over many weekends by le Grange, Moyle and Derek Japha, with Prinsloo's encouragement¹⁹, was intended to inform students about the contemporary South African context, to help them understand the world in which they lived – and were about to practice.

The substance of Development Issues was an immersion in contemporary issues outside of architecture. In order to appreciate the significance of this, it is necessarily to quickly sketch out the structure of South African architectural education. In the US we are most familiar with a system built around the design studio, supplemented by courses in history, theory, and building sciences²⁰. At the undergraduate level, architectural courses are to varying degrees, depending on the school, supplemented by some general education course requirements. The South African architectural education system, following the British RIBA system, instead focuses the required courses solely within the architecture department; a South African architecture student is likely to never take a class outside of the Architecture Department. The Development Issues course broke this hermetic seal, opening up the department's pedagogy to an array of outside voices and perspectives. It consisted of a series of workshops, with invited lecturers from across the university, speaking on subjects that included anthropology, economics, sociology and African studies. Its structure was as a parallel program, running within the department, alongside traditional courses. The intent of the



- 11. John F. C Turner, Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).
- Bernard Rudofsky, Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture (Albuquerque: UNM Press, 1964).
- 13. Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006)..
- 13. Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006)..
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference, Princeton Studies in Culture/ power/history (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- Colin St. John Wilson, The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture: The Uncompleted Project (London: Academy, 1995).
- Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," in Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism, ed. Unesco (Paris: Unesco, 1980), 309.

Figure 3. Teaching Community Design: *Proposed Resource and Cultural Centre for the Teachers Improvement and Research Association*, Gugulethu, Cape Town. Courtesy of John Moyle.

Beyond the Fringe 'Development Issues' 166

- 17. From interview with John Moyle, by author, on 1 December, 2011.
- 18. Ivor Prinsloo Papers.
- From interview with Julian Cooke, by author, on 25 November, 2011.
- Joan Ockman and Rebecca Williamson, eds., Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America (Cambridge, Mass.: Washington, D.C: MIT Press; Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2012).
- Student feedback was published in the themed 'Class of '84' issue of Architecture SA, May/June 2010.
- Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu, "Toward Postcolonial Openings: Rereading Sir Banister Fletcher's 'History of Architecture,'" Assemblage April, no. 35 (1998): 6–17.

program was to expose architecture students to the world 'outside': outside the walls of the architecture building, outside the university, outside their own worlds of privilege. For participants in the course, Development Issues radicalized their education. Some of the students that passed through UCT during the tenure of Development Issues became active 'architectural agents of change', taking on projects that reimagined cities as spaces of democracy. Even those that established more normative practices, working on commercial projects and spaces for the elite, reminisce that Development Issues was a pivotal moment in their educations, which informed their practice as South African architects, no matter the type of projects they typically engage.²¹

AFTERWORD

After a few years, the Development Issues curriculum drifted into the domain of the African Studies Department. Today, no similar course is taught to UCT architecture students, although a critical reflection on the local context is woven into the history/theory and design studio curriculum. For example, in recent years it has become cemented into the curriculum that Second Year design students will design and construct a public space in one of the city's many informal settlements. The ideas and ideals reflected in Development Issues find new form today, reflecting in part the shift from apartheid to democracy. Today the Architecture School is concerned with how to recruit, support and retain black students. Student projects often seek out innovative ways to make the city more inclusive, to eventually erase away its history of separations and inequalities. Through practices such as this, the project of crafting a citizenship-based architecture lives on.

CONCLUSION

The Development Issues course was clearly a brief moment in the history of teaching architecture at the University of Cape Town. Yet, it was a significant one, for the lasting effects felt from the course itself, as well as what it stood for. Its significance outside of the South Africa context is two-fold, relating to methodology and content. As the development of the course demonstrated, architects felt that to ground their discipline in its social context meant to go outside of architecture. The content of the Development Issues course was a statement about the limits of architecture – as a pedagogical subject – and the need to engage its exterior²². The course intentionally disturbed the boundaries of architecture as established by the academy. This was a two-fold provocation: first, to the architectural discipline, to reconsider the content of the practice of architecture, and therefore in architectural pedagogy. Second, the course sought to disturb the very boundaries that structured the university system, and by affiliation, top-down governing systems such as apartheid itself.

The second principle that emerges from this examination of UCT's Development Issues course was the belief in educating architects who were not merely proficient in architecture's technical and aesthetic aspects, but also critically aware of the social component of their work. The 'social turn' experienced at UCT finds resonance with similar movements internationally. It was built through transnational circulations of architects and architectural thought, borrowing from the Latin American experience with 'developmentalism' and associated Marxist schools of thought. While the efficacy of architecture as a form of political protest is up for debate and discussion, for Cape Town architects of a progressive persuasion, during the nation's darkest days of apartheid, architecture was 'social' and needed to be taught as such.



CODED ENVIRONMENTS-EXPANDING THE AGENCY OF BIG DATA

