

**The Influences on the two Inner City Housing Projects of
the Bo Kaap and District Six in Cape Town that were built
between 1938 and 1944**

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DECLARATION

I declare that *The Influences on the two Inner City Housing Projects of the Bo Kaap and District Six in Cape Town that were built between 1938 and 1944* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by complete references

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Signed _____

ABSTRACT & KEY WORDS

In every field of industry, new problems have presented themselves and new tools have been created capable of resolving them. If this new fact be set against the past, then you have revolution...

Our minds have consciously or unconsciously apprehended these events and new needs have arisen, consciously or unconsciously. The machine of Society, profoundly out of gear, oscillates between an amelioration, of historical importance, and a catastrophe.

The primordial instinct of every human being is to assure himself of a shelter.

The various classes of workers in society today no longer have dwellings adapted to their needs...

It is a question of building which is at the root of the social unrest of today; architecture or revolution

(Le Corbusier, Towards a New Architecture)

This study examines the social, political, and architectural influences that shaped the two Cape Town inner city housing projects in the Bo Kaap and District Six that were built after the introduction of the Slums Act of 1934, between 1938 and 1944.

During this period there were changes in the hegemonic perceptions of the city. The eradication of slums served as a catalyst for spatial change and the dislocation of lived space as the city sought to re-create itself as a modern, rationally planned metropolis. The civic authorities and architects appeared to use the criteria of the modernist discourse as a mechanism to wield social control on marginalised members of society; creating mechanisms of removal, exclusion, surveillance and control based on ethnicity. This reflects the perceptions of the French philosopher, Foucault regarding power and control.

The conditions prevailing in Cape Town prior to the introduction of the Slums Act are examined, both from a historical as well as a civic and political perspective, and then attempts to evaluate the apparently modern architecture of the two inner city housing schemes against the planning and socio-political background of a city and an architecture in transition, with their inherent contradictions and contestations. Links are made to the contemporary global context of both housing and modernism. The aim has been to consider the schemes not purely as architecture, but to attempt a multi-layered reading that locates the schemes in a colonial framework that was trying to establish connections with a changing, modern world.

The literature review locates the projects in the theories of Foucault and the work of urban geographers such as Edward. W. Soja and James C. Scott. Research has attempted to 'read' the remaining built fabric of both schemes and both locate and evaluate it in the archival sources of the time as well as the contemporary architectural media; in order to determine whether it meets the criteria of modernism as defined by architectural historians.

KEYWORDS

Housing

Flat schemes

Modernism

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Glossary of Terms

Cape Town City Council

The form of local government, established in 1867, which remains relatively unchanged to the present day, is a mayoral system with councillors elected from the local citizenry.¹ It is generally called the *City Council* and as such will be referred to in the text as the *Cape Town City Council (CTCC)*

Flat Scheme

A group of self contained living units, arranged on multiple floors, each consisting of living rooms, bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom, and as distinct from a tenement block.

Inner City

This refers to the central area of Cape Town that lies within the Table Valley and forms the historical centre of the urban area.

Inner City Housing Projects

Two housing projects, undertaken in the Inner City in the 1930s, still remain. These are the Canterbury- Bloemhof Flats in District Six and the Schotsche Kloof Housing Estate in the Bo Kaap.

Modernisation

This is a term used to describe the process of social development, the main features of which are technological advances and industrialisation, urbanisation and population explosions, the rise of bureaucracy and increasingly powerful nation states, an enormous expansion of mass communication systems, democratisation, and an expanding capitalist world market.²

Modernity

Modernity, according to Heynen, is "the element that mediates between a process of socio-economic development and subjective responses to it in the form of modernist discourses and movements".³

Modernism

This refers to the progressive architectural movements of the 1910s and 1920s.⁴ Bozdogan relates it to the "use of reinforced concrete, steel, glass, the primacy of cubic forms, geometric shapes, and Cartesian grids, and above all the absence of decoration, stylistic motifs".⁵

¹ Alfred H. Honikman in *Cape Town: City of Good Hope*. (Cape Town: Howard B. Timmins, 1966), p69-78.

² Hilde Heynen. *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*. (Cambridge (Mass): MIT Press, 1999), p10.

³ Ibid, p 10

⁴ Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002

Modernistic

This was used to denote the use of elements from modern movement architecture as stylistic devices in combination with more traditional elements, particularly the plan form, to create an eclectic architecture.

Modern Movement

This is a term relating to the architecture that emerged in Germany and France in the Twenties which was derived from the artistic avant-garde and rejected the bourgeois culture of philistinism that used pretentious ornament and gave precedence to purity and authenticity with a clearly visible constructional logic.⁶

Panopticism

A description used by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his Book, '*Discipline Punish: The history of the Prison*', to describe methods of controlling a large number people by subjecting them to constant surveillance and observation. The term is derived from the prison design of the eighteenth century architect Jeremy Bentham who called his circular prison that allowed for central, unseen observation by a single observer, a Panopticon.

Public Housing

The term is usually used to denote the housing projects undertaken using public funding. In this proposal it refers specifically to the projects undertaken under the aegis of the Cape Town City Council.

Tenement block

A group of living units consisting of living rooms and bedrooms with cooking facilities, but sharing communal bathrooms, and as distinct from a flat scheme.

Abbreviations

AB&E The Architect Builder & Engineer (journal)

APO The African Political Organisation (Dr. Abdurahman president until 1940)

CTCC Cape Town City Council

NEUF Non-European United Front

⁵ Sibel Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building, Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, (Seattle & London, University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁶ Heynen, p 28.

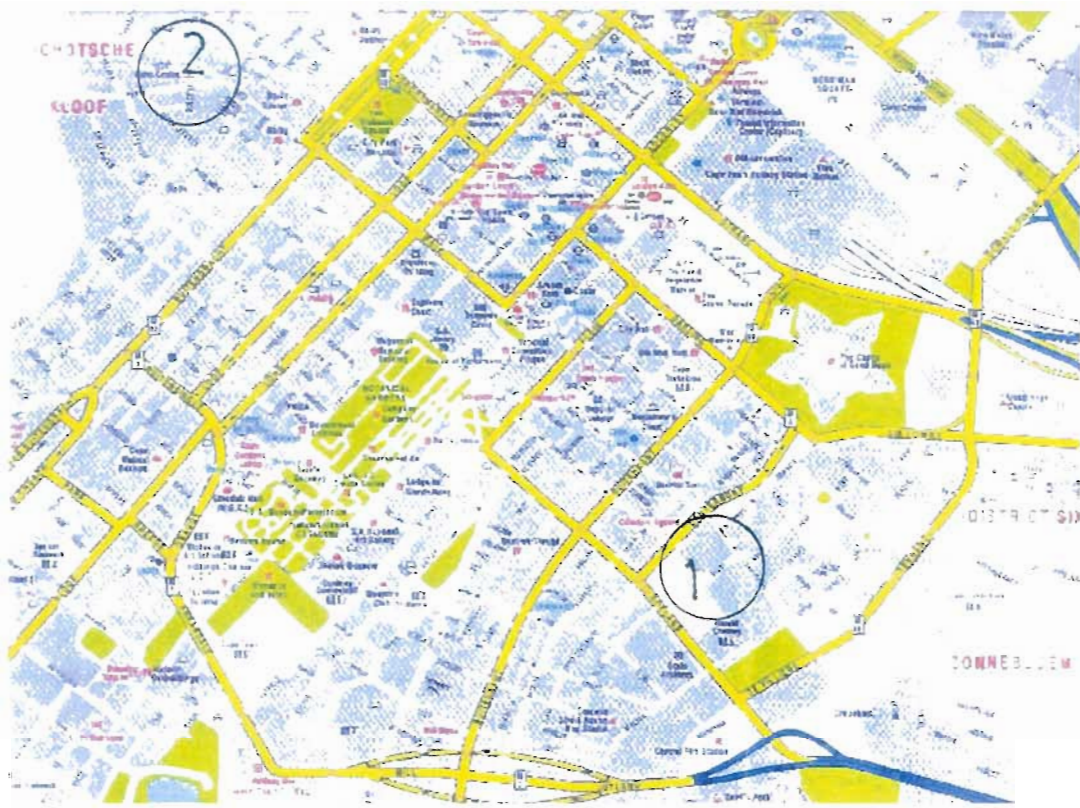


Figure 0.1

Map showing the location of the Canterbury-Bloemhof and Schotsche Kloof Flat schemes in relation to the centre of Cape Town

Key:

1. The Canterbury- Bloemhof Flats in District Six
2. The Schotsche Kloof Flats in the Bo Kaap

Chapter 1 Introduction

. A great epoch has begun.

There exists a new spirit.

Industry, overwhelming us like a flood which rolls on to its destined end, has furnished us with new tools adapted to this new epoch, animated by the new spirit.

Economic law unavoidably governs our acts and our thoughts.

'The problem of the house is a problem of the epoch. The equilibrium of society to day depends upon it. Architecture has for its first duty, in this period of renewal, that of bringing about a revision of values, a revision of the constituents of the house.'

Le Corbusier

The 1920s and 30s marked the beginning of a new epoch for Cape Town. It was the epoch when the city shook off the image of colonialism and began to recast itself as a modern city, culminating in the adoption of a new, modern planning layout for the centre of the city, focussed on the newly reclaimed foreshore, and sweeping away all traces of shabbiness and decay. A key catalyst to this change was the focus on slum clearance and the re-housing of the urban poor. There was a change in the way the colonial hegemony perceived itself in the aftermath of the First World War, and there emerged a new awareness of the city's image as the 'Mother City', and the 'Gateway to Africa'. The modern, rational approach that was taken to housing in the city at this time reflected aspects of the modern discourse that was taking place elsewhere in the world, along with the inevitable contestations that this presented. The problem of slums and overcrowded neighbourhoods had begun much earlier, but now was linked to ethnicity and morality.

Cape Town, the first colonial city established in South Africa, had, in 1806, become the capital of the British-controlled Cape Colony. In 1910, with the declaration of the Union of South Africa, it became the legislative capital, thus maintaining a degree of prominence. However, it did not have any mineral wealth in the vicinity, unlike Pretoria, the administrative capital, or Johannesburg that drew on the gold mining industry, and was still reliant on agricultural products for its commercial success. The diamond fields of Kimberley were too far away to materially benefit the city.

Cape Town faced a housing problem from the late nineteenth century with the increasing movement of people from the rural hinterland to the city, in search of better living conditions, as the farming sector was particularly vulnerable to climatic and economic crises. This was exacerbated by the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902,

¹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*. Translated from the 13th French edition with an introduction by Frederick Etchells. (London, John Rodker, 1931) p227

which brought a flood of people, fleeing the war-torn hinterland, to the city. In addition, Cape Town tended to be the main port of arrival of newcomers to South Africa.

There was, however, no major industry that developed rapidly in the twentieth century, despite an economic spurt during the Anglo-Boer War. Consequently, Cape Town's population growth was marked by an increase in the urban poor, with the resultant increase in inadequate housing and slums. This problem grew much worse after the First World War and was raised to crisis levels by the period of economic depression that occurred in South Africa in the 1930s, following on from the Wall Street collapse of 1929 in America. The poor were now drawn from all races.

The problems of overcrowding and poor housing were by no means unique to Cape Town and cities such as Johannesburg, Durban and Port Elizabeth also experienced similar problems. It appears that the problems were worse in Cape Town than elsewhere.² A number of measures were considered to deal with the problem, which was closely linked to racist politics, and these became more drastic over time. The main driving force was largely the State, which passed legislation aimed at controlling non-White population movement and patterns of urban settlement. These also became increasingly interventionist.

In 1927 Cape Town passed the first town planning ordinance and in 1929 attempted to deal more effectively with the housing and related slum problem by introducing sub-economic housing or 'letting schemes' as they were called, mainly built as 'tenement blocks', or, alternatively, as blocks of flats. But the programme was extremely slow, bogged down by bureaucracy, with very little tangible outcome. A tenement scheme was built in Constitution Street in District Six in 1929, and a proposal made for land in Klipfontein Road, Athlone.³ The national government, responding to the call of cities for greater powers to eliminate slums and free up land for the development of housing, introduced the Slums Act in 1934. This gave wide powers to the health authorities to proclaim slums and expropriate such properties if they were needed for housing. In the same year, the Cape Town City Council established a town-planning branch, attached to the City Engineer's department.⁴

² Housing & Estates Committee minutes of 21 November 1927 recording an interview with the Minister of the Interior, Dr. D.F. Malan, where the Mayor states that there is "no other Municipality in the Union where the shortage of housing is so acute as Cape Town."

³ Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 7 August 1929

⁴ V. Bickford-Smith, E. van Heyningen & N. Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century. An illustrated social history*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1999) p 145

The City Council responded to the need for housing the occupants of slum properties by starting a wide-scale housing programme in the City including both individual houses and 'flat' schemes from the late 1920s onwards. They initially considered, on an ad hoc basis, all parcels of land that were available in the inner city. The two housing projects under consideration here: the Canterbury- Bloemhof, and the Schotsche Kloof flat schemes were the sole inner-city outcomes of the post-Slums Act initiatives, the others failing to be realised as a result of economic or political factors. The Schotsche Kloof scheme was only partially completed. The scale and 'modern' architectural approach to the problem used in these schemes was unique in Cape Town at the time.

Bickford Smith et al recount the reaction of Sir William Holford, a South African-born British town planner, to the 'modern city' of Cape Town in 1956, when he addressed the local institute of architects. He criticised the monumentality of the city, which he described as "both the aesthetic and political product of twentieth century 'modernism.'"⁵ Bickford Smith et al contend that central and local governments all over the world were, at this time, using technological achievements and bureaucratic powers "to plan the lives of citizens more completely than ever before. Modernist town planning also fitted in well with segregationist thinking. Both were concerned with zoning, with placing people in appropriate space, moving them from inappropriate localities."⁶

This dissertation examines the conditions prevailing in Cape Town under which these two remaining inner city sub economic flat schemes in District Six and Schotsche Kloof were created, along with the emerging contradictions and complexities that characterised the shift in the architectural discourse and relates these to national and international trends. The structures of power and control are located in the writings of the South African historian, Shamil Jeppie, who wrote about the Bloemhof Flats, as well as philosophers such as Michel Foucault, and urban geographers such as Edward Soja and James C. Scott. The city is examined to contextualise the housing problem that emerged in the twentieth century. The city's legislative mechanisms and planning interventions are examined as part of a discourse of emerging modernism in order to frame the architecture of Cape Town at the time the housing schemes were built and to locate the built form within both national and international architectural responses to the debates of both housing and modernism.

⁵Ibid. p 144

⁶ Ibid. p 144



Figure 1.1
Cape Town

The study area is located in the inner city to the north of Table Mountain, but the areas of new residential development and removal lie to the on the Cape Flats.

Chapter 2

Developing a theoretical framework for evaluating the 'modern' housing projects of Cape Town

In developing a theoretical framework for examining the inner city housing projects of Cape Town that were built in the 1930s and 1940s, I found the historian Shamil Jeppie's assessment of the Canterbury and Bloemhof Flats in District Six to be a key critique.⁷ He considers a number of issues that relate to power and control, as he contrasts the lived experience of a former resident to the present-day reality. Attention is drawn to the way in which the destruction of the slums, which were the lived spaces of the communities, was fundamentally disabling and led to a loss of both identity and community.

The City's slum areas and potential living spaces were being identified, evaluated and planned in the 1930s in an entirely new and comprehensive way. A number of Council committees were established at this time to gather data, set planning and housing standards (including minimum dwelling sizes), consider costs and manage the projects. This was, Jeppie contends, a process "to render visible the spaces over which government was to be exercised."⁸ The motives for creating order and control were part of a social and political system of domination. The new planned housing projects would be easier to control than the chaos of the slums, as the Council controlled the entire process, and both owned and managed the projects. He also maintains that, since these were new buildings and new forms of accommodation, they could be used as laboratories for the promotion of a modern lifestyle. Thus, three key characteristics emerge from Jeppie's critique:

1. A comprehensive strategy for planning the city
2. The extension of social and political domination by spatial control of people.
3. The use of housing as a laboratory for the promotion of modernity

Power, control and planning

The assertions made by Jeppie relate to the relationship between systems of power and control and the people over whom the control is being exercised. The theories of the French philosopher Michel Foucault that address the links between power, control and the individual, are to be found in his writings and interviews and they provide a framework for analysing the reality of the housing projects undertaken in

⁷ Shamil Jeppie, *Modern Housing for the District: the Canterbury and Bloemhof flats*. In Ciraj Rassool and Sandra Prosalendis, *Recalling Community in Cape Town. Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*, (Cape Town, District Six Museum, 2001)

⁸ *Ibid.* p 117

the inner city by the Cape Town City Council. He describes the method used to control the plague at the end of the seventeenth century⁹ and compares the plague to a form of disorder that called for discipline and control. The threat is met with order and control over every aspect of the individual's life. Regulation penetrates every aspect of everyday life through the

...Mediation of the complete hierarchy that assured the capillary functioning of power... the assignment to each individual of his 'true' name, his 'true' place, his 'true' body, his 'true' disease...Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting memory of 'contagions', of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder.¹⁰

To Foucault's list one could add the contagion of poverty in colonial Cape Town, and the 'disorder' of miscegenation, of being 'Coloured'. Poverty, disease, crime and Coloured are inextricably linked in the view of the municipal authorities. These people need to be made visible, to be assigned their 'true' place in the city (or peripheralised where necessary). Indeed, the 'slum-ridden' city and the related perceived manifestations of disease and crime can be compared to Foucault's observation of the plague-stricken city. As the editor of the Architect Builder & Engineer pointed out

Slum Conditions also affect the health, well-being and moral development of the embryo citizen. The interest of children cannot be dissociated from those of adult slum dwellers, many of whom are classified as "social undesirables"¹¹

Foucault goes on to describe the way in which the plague gave rise to disciplinary projects. "Rather than the massive, binary division between one set of people and another, it called for multiple separations, individualizing distributions, an organisation in depth of surveillance and control, an intensification and a ramification of power."¹² In Cape Town this is reflected in the way people were separated ethnically at that time into multiple sub-divisions including 'Natives', Malays, Asiatics, Coloureds, poor Whites and Europeans.

Foucault describes those sick of the plague as "caught up in a meticulous tactical partitioning in which individual differentiations were the constricting effects of a power that multiplied, articulated and divided itself."¹³ He says that "The plague-stricken town, traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town

⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish; The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1977), New York, Vintage Books, 1995 edition. (Originally published as *Surveiller et Punir; Naissance de la Prison*, editions Galimard, Paris, 1975) p195

¹⁰ Ibid., p 198

¹¹ AB&E Dec 1935 p22

¹² Foucault, 1977, p 198

¹³ Ibid., p 198

immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies- this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city."¹⁴

Foucault goes on to link this notion of surveillance to modernism. He quotes the German philosopher, Nicolaus Julius, who contrasted feudal and modern society by the increased significance of surveillance to modern governmentality.

"The fundamental problem confronting modern architecture is...to arrange that the greatest possible number of persons is offered to a single individual for surveillance."¹⁵ Foucault describes the way in which modern society is controlled by both governmental and capitalist authorities, and the role of architecture in the process.

Lateral or marginal techniques were organised to ensure, in the industrial world, the functions- confining, segregating, and containing of the working class.... Measures were taken therefore- such as the creation of workers' housing estates... (as) a series of means for attaching the working population, the developing proletariat, to the very body of the production apparatus.¹⁶

He maintains that from the nineteenth century on, there developed "problems between the exercise of political power and the space of a territory, or the space of cities- that were completely new."¹⁷ He emphasises that "The reflections upon urbanism and on the design of workers' housing...are an area of reflection upon architecture."¹⁸

Soja¹⁹ describes the modernity that was taking place at this time as having a 'spatial fix.' He describes the way in which the spatial arrangement of life at all levels, both worldwide and local, was being changed to meet the needs of capitalism in crisis. Soja asserts that there was a need to find new ways to maintain social control. He goes on to point out that "many of the avant-garde movements...in architecture, and what then represented progressive urban and regional planning – perceptively sensed the instrumentality of space and the disciplining effects of the changing geography of capitalism."²⁰

¹⁴ Ibid., p 198

¹⁵ James D. Faubion Ed, *Michel Foucault, Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, London, Penguin, 2002. Truth & Juridical Form, p71-72

¹⁶ Ibid p76

¹⁷ Ibid Space, Power, Knowledge p353

¹⁸ Ibid p353

¹⁹ Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, (London, Verso, 1989)

²⁰ Ibid., p 34

This had a profound global impact on the way cities were planned and gave rise to a new approach to the design of cities that sought to remove the past rather than adding another layer to the complex historical layering of most cities and make the parts of the city clearly identifiable. As the urban planner Don Pinnock points out²¹, the Modernist architectural and planning concepts of the avant-garde Swiss-French architect and planner Le Corbusier were to become increasingly influential in Cape Town and he quotes Corbusier's observation that "To build on a clear site is to replace the 'accidental' layout of the ground, the only one that exists today, by a formal layout... If only captains of industry would examine these plans they would see the immense scope of these suggestions."²²

Housing and the Discourse of Modernism

Do the inner city housing projects reflect the discourse of modernity in any form, or are they merely the outcome of a process of control? Superficially they would not appear to reflect modernity, but it is necessary to examine what is meant by the term 'modernity'.

Heynen²³ begins her critique of architecture and modernism with a search for the meanings of the word and the concept of 'modernity'. She identifies it as "the element that mediates between a process of socio-economic development known as modernisation and subjective responses to it in the form of modernist discourses and movements."²⁴

Heynen goes on to distinguish between what she refers to as "programmatic modernism" and "transitory modernism"²⁵. Programmatic modernism is identified as being essentially a project of progress and freedom. She examines what this means to theorists such as Habermas and finds two components: an irreversible emergence of autonomy in the fields of science, art and morality; and the notion of a project which has the potential to rationally organise and improve daily life. This is contrasted with the concept of transitory modernism, which relates to the desire for innovation, of breaking with tradition; of creating an aesthetic of rupture. This second meaning is perhaps most closely linked to the avant-garde movement in architecture. Heynen

²¹ Don Pinnock, *Ideology and urban planning: Blueprints of a garrison town*, in Wilmot G. James & Mary Simons, Eds. *The Angry Divide. Social and economic history of the Western Cape*. (Cape Town, David Philip, 1989).

²² Ibid. p154

²³ Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: a Critique*, (Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T Press, 1999). Third Reprint, 2001

²⁴ Ibid., p 10

²⁵ Ibid., p11

sees the avant-garde as radicalising the basic principle of modernity- “all norms, forms and conventions have to be broken; everything that is stable must be rejected, every value negated.”²⁶ She uses this to contextualise the modern movement as an architectural avant-garde of the 1920s and 30s.

Sibel Bozdogan, the Turkish architectural historian,²⁷ also relates this to “the use of reinforced concrete, steel, and glass, the primacy of cubic forms, geometric shapes and Cartesian grids, and above all the absence of decoration.”²⁸ She asserts that this modernist aesthetic became a universally rational and valid doctrine that was applied worldwide, but that the discourse is interpreted differently in various parts of the world as it is internalised by different cultures. This difference is between the abstracted concept of modernism and the lived reality of its particular location.

For instance, in Turkey, she identifies a more conservative brand of modernism that prevailed there. Buildings there were constructed more traditionally with smaller openings and often with pitched roofs. Among the contradictions found there at the time is that an appreciation of its lived dimensions is often rejected in favour of the principles of “rationalism and functionalism”²⁹

Bozdogan draws attention to the hybridity and complexity of non-western societies, and argues that there are multiple and heterogeneous trajectories within the discourse of modernism. She goes on to say that: “looking at different experiences in different places and circumstances is the most effective way by which we can ensure that modern architecture, traditionally reified by its supporters and its opponents, becomes historically situated, contextualised, and, most importantly, politicised”³⁰.

She then explains why the categories of power and space are fore-grounded in studies in this field: asymmetries in cultural and architectural history are much clearer when viewed in these categories. Modernisation outside of Europe and North America was not a profound societal experience, but rather an official programme conceived and implemented by Western and colonial governments and the like who used architecture and urbanism as a form of visible politics. There is a shift “from architecture as an autonomous, self referential discipline to what we might call the

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p 27

²⁷ Sibel Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building. Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, (Seattle & London, University of Washington Press, 2001).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p4

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p7

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p9

politics of architecture.”³¹ The impetus for the development of modern architecture that Bozdogan identifies, is therefore a self-conscious process, and not driven by the deep philosophical concerns about the improvement of society's well being that Heynen describes in Weimar Germany.

James. C. Scott³², the American urban geographer, highlights a development of this that he refers to as “High Modernism.” He explains that it combines three elements: the administrative ordering or rational engineering of nature and society; the unrestrained use of power to achieve these designs; and thirdly, a weak or emasculated civil society that is unable to resist these plans. He says that “The ideology of the high modernism provides, as it were, the desire; the modern state provides the means of acting on that desire; and the incapacitated society provides the levelled terrain on which to build (dis)utopias.”³³

The writings of Manuel Castells identify the use of space as a manifestation of power relations that operate in a society. The slums represented states of anarchy and revolution: a threat to the mechanisms of control.

Space is not a ‘reflection of society’, it *is* society...Therefore, spatial forms, at least on our planet, will be produced as all objects are, by human action. They will express and perform the interests of the dominant class according to a given mode of production and to a specific mode of development. They will express and implement the power relationships of the state in a historically defined society....³⁴ ✓

As Henri Lefebvre, the French philosopher, points out, and Foucault and others repeat in different ways: spatial fragmentations as well as the converse- the appearance of spatial coherence and homogeneity are both social products and often an integral part of political power.

The key to the Lefebvorean assertion was his recognition of a profound evolutionary transformation linked to the survival of capitalism into the twentieth century...we are in a period where the urban problematic has become more politically decisive than questions of industrialisation and economic growth...The urban social movements that were receiving such contemporary attention were essentially rooted in the political response of those subordinated, peripheralised, and exploited by the particularities of this increasing global spatial planning process.³⁵

³¹ Ibid., p10

³² James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State. How Certain Schemes to improve the Human Condition have failed.* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998) p88

³³ Ibid., p89

³⁴ Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grass Roots* (1983,4), in Soja, 1989 p 71

³⁵ Soja, 1989 p96

Modernity and Dwelling

Heynen examines the dichotomies that exist between modernity and dwelling, linking the former to a condition of 'homelessness'. Modern housing removes the constraints of family and social bonds with its concomitant loss of identity and meaning. She cites Heidegger's assertion made in 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking' that "the real plight of dwelling does not lie merely in the lack of houses...The real plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell"³⁶

In her evaluation of *Das Neue Frankfurt* of the 1920s Heynen examines the housing achievements of the German city under the auspices of the architect Ernst May for whom 'modernity' meant the creation of a new unified metropolitan culture. This, she identifies as a programmatic concept of modernity. It took the view that progress was the result of rationality at every level of society. It addressed the housing needs of the poor and underprivileged as part of a general upliftment of society. This is contrary to modernism as a form of visible politics as described by Bozdogan in Turkey and Jeppie in Cape Town. May referred to a "struggle for a bold new design, for honesty in the use of materials, and for truth." This had to do with removing all excess and rejecting anything that was superfluous. He sought to find a "pure and sober architecture of the utmost simplicity."³⁷ Modernity was thus also being linked to issues of morality in architecture. But, as a result of the economic crisis that followed in Germany in 1929, public housing was mainly seen as an economic and financial problem, and rationality and functionality were tied to cost-efficiency.

May's planning was based on the concept of the *Trabantenstadt*, or satellite city, which consists of a core surrounded by a series of satellites (*trabanten*). It creates a system of spatial hierarchy and functional segregation that is based on the English planner Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model. These satellites appeared, as some critics suggested, floating in space to become what the Italian theorist Manfredo Tafuri, as cited by Heynen,³⁸ describes as "islands" in an "anti-urban utopia." These negative characteristics were to be part of the defining elements of the post-war segregated cities of South Africa, and identifiable in modern Cape Town.

³⁶ Heynen, 1999, p16

³⁷ Ibid p 35

³⁸ Ibid p52

In Frankfurt, there is a marked difference between the earlier *Siedlungen* or enclaves based on the Garden City model and the open row development of the later ones. The later projects had far simpler layouts and less variety of unit types. Their economy of layout would have seemed to appeal to planners world-wide searching for more economical solutions. Heynen goes on to assert that the architecture of Das Neue Frankfurt is not really radical in terms of its design, but relies on the way it handles the urban space, the way in which variety is combined with neutrality. This mechanism will be used to evaluate the layouts of Cape Town's inner city housing projects.

Summary

The housing projects of Cape Town can be evaluated both in terms of Heynen's 'programmatic modernity, and 'aesthetic' or avant-garde modernity. But intimately linked to programmatic modernism is the problem of power and control, which was exercised differently by world governments. There is a great contrast between the socialist approach of the Germans in places such as Frankfurt, and the more authoritarian use of rational order and planning in colonial countries such as South Africa. Although forms may be borrowed and aesthetic concepts shared, the forces driving the programmes were quite different.

The underlying conditions need to be examined in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the issues raised by Jeppie. The projects in District Six and the Bo Kaap need to be located within the comprehensive replanning strategy for Cape Town. They also need to be considered within the framework of social and political domination of the colonial hegemony of the 1930s, when the Foucaultian panoptic³⁹ vision of the city was being developed. And, finally, the planning proposals need to be examined to determine the extent to which the housing acted as laboratories for modern living.

³⁹ Foucault describes in his book *Discipline, Punish*, a system of surveillance and control, that makes a group of people constantly visible by a single person, that he calls panopticism. The term is based on an architectural proposal for a model prison that was made in the 18th century by Jeremy Bentham, who called his design a Panopticon.

Chapter 3

Research Framework

Research will focus on the following issues:

1. Power structures
 - National socio-political framework
 - Local government in Cape Town: ideological and organisational.
 - Identification of racial zoning in the city
 - Identification of relevant planning legislation.
2. Architectural Responses
 - International trends in housing and architectural theory at the time
 - Identification of significant architects who influenced local design, and their work.
 - Mapping of public housing projects of this period to locate the inner city projects.
 - Parallel historical developments, both nationally and internationally.

Chronological identification of significant events: social, political, and architectural.

The primary sources to be interrogated include

- The Cape Town City Council records in terms of committee minutes and reports to the various committees, drawings and plans, as well as the built housing schemes themselves.
- The records of the South African Heritage Resource Agency and the South African National Library.
- The physical fabric of the built schemes.

METHOD

Research will examine

- The ways in which cities generally use mechanisms of control. This will be done through the literature review to identify parallels between global practices and attempt to identify some of the underlying forces.
- The housing problem in Cape Town including slums and overcrowding through an examination of published sources; unpublished academic texts. and the minutes of City Council committees such as the Slum Clearance Special Committee and the Housing & Estates Committee, with the intention

to uncover the impact of ideological and organisational structures in the city on housing.

- The way in which the Cape Town City Council responded to the challenge presented by the slums, through the City Council minutes of the various committees that dealt with the problem to determine power structures and underlying socio-political implications.
- The effects of the 1934 Slums Act that gave greater powers to the authorities will be examined in both the published literature as well as the archival sources such as the City Council's Slum Clearance Special committee. This will attempt to determine the extent to which the Act possibly acted as a catalyst to social engineering.
- The extent to which segregation was used as a planning mechanism prior to the political changes of 1948 when the Nationalist party came into power, and legislated segregation. The minutes of the Housing & Estates Committee as well as the published literature will be used to investigate this aspect. The deliberations and implementation of policy will possibly highlight the segregationist trajectory from a much earlier period in the city's history.
- The same sources will be used to examine legislation and planning decisions that impacted on housing conditions in Cape Town.

The architecture of the inner city housing projects needs to be contextualised and located, taking the projects from the architectural intent, through an examination of the built form. This needs to be done in terms of the international trends as identified in published sources such as Hilde Heynen and Sibel Bozdogan, as well as establishing what links there might be to the Modern movement in South Africa. This will also be examined through contemporary published journals, as the media appears to have been a powerful tool for the dissemination of architectural ideas during the 1930s, and in turn leads to an interrogation of the actual physical fabric of the built projects. This will link the physical, material evidence to the theoretical framework identified in the literature review, as well as the legal conditions imposed by government, both local and national.

Chapter 4

Cities and Control

The mechanisms of control of the growth of cities worldwide are largely linked to issues of health. The housing problem in cities such as Cape Town, with its associated health problems and the attempts at their control and regulation, can be traced back to conditions experienced in nineteenth century Britain, where industrialisation had led to a drift of people to the cities. Tarn⁴⁰ asserts that the housing problem in Britain was essentially an urban problem, linked to the growth of the post-industrial working class city population and community response to the related social and health issues. He goes on to link notions of regulation and control to the outbreak of disease, and particularly, cholera, in 1832. He points out that housing and public health were inextricably connected in the nineteenth century. Overcrowding, that is, high-density living, was linked to contagion and disease.⁴¹

Dealing with the problems of overcrowding and disease was largely a reactive process at first, a case of 'too little too late'. But a series of parliamentary bills attempted to legislate against poor living conditions and the means to control it. These came to underlie the later building regulations that were carried over from Britain to its colonies. There was a very strongly perceived moral link in Britain between living conditions and poverty. Tarn quotes from *The Economist* newspaper of 1838:

In our condition suffering and evil are nature's admonitions; they cannot be got rid of; and the impatient attempts of benevolence to banish them from the world by legislation, before benevolence has learnt their object and their end, have always been productive of more evil than good.⁴²

This was equally applicable nearly a hundred years later in early twentieth century South Africa with its colonial racial concepts, especially when it concerned the mixture of 'non-Europeans' with 'Europeans', despite having been written in England in 1848. Thus one finds great concern being expressed in 1935 regarding "the distressing and alarming position created by the racial mixtures in our population."⁴³ Neither the State nor local authorities, it was contended "fully appreciate the dangers which may be apprehended when economic pressure compels people of European descent to live in close proximity to those of other races. The peril is by no means

⁴⁰ J.S. Tarn, *Working-class Housing in 19th-century Britain*. (London, Lund Humphries for the Architectural Association, 1971) p1.

⁴¹ Ibid. p2

⁴² Ibid. p3

⁴³ *Architect Builder & Engineer*, December 1935 p22- author unidentified

confined to the spread of disease and crime; it may threaten White civilisation in the continent of Africa."⁴⁴

The Housing Problem in Cape Town

Public housing schemes reinforced one dimension of the topography of segregation in the city. The political ideology of apartheid could be seen to be essentially a system of spatial exclusion, based on ethnicity and an ethnic hierarchy. What is surprising is the extent to which this system and the establishment of the segregationist topography was in place prior to the Second World War, and how closely it was linked to the provision of housing by the local authorities. In the aftermath of legislated discrimination, the complex socio-political and ideological framework is not overtly apparent, whilst the built fabric remains, sometimes partly de-contextualised, to be interrogated and analysed. ✓

A Brief History of Segregation in early Twentieth Century Cape Town

The first signs of segregation and ethnic removal emerged as the Anglo-Boer war dragged on into the new century. A new threat emerged in Cape Town at this time—one that had swept the rest of the world at the close of the nineteenth century—plague. There had been concern about the possibility of disease as Cape Town was a port city, and the war resulted in a greater level of activity in the port as goods and equipment for the war effort arrived. The Plague Officer at the time, Prof. W.J. Simpson, warned of the danger posed to Cape Town. The focus of his concern lay with the living conditions of the poorest sections of the city. "Living in the same insanitary areas, often living in the same houses, the different races and nationalities are inextricably mixed up, so that whatever disease affects the one is sure to affect the other", he warned. He thus linked race and culture, as much as poverty, to disease.⁴⁵ The plague broke out in 1901, brought into the city by forage for the army, imported from Argentina. ✓

The Challenge of the Slums: Spatial separation

The city responded to the threat by using the Public Health Act of 1897 to move Africans, identified by Professor Simpson as being 'unfit for urban life', from District Six to a camp set up by the colonial government at Uitvlugt forest station, forming the basis for the location of N'dabeni. This was established in terms of the Locations Act of 1901, which is significant in that it was the first act in South Africa to legislate for ✓

⁴⁴Ibid p22.

⁴⁵Bickford- Smith et al 1999,p19.

racially segregated 'townships'.⁴⁶ African people were moved out of the slums in District Six and a cleaning up operation was set into motion.

"No words can, however paint the indescribable filth in which many of the houses were found to be", reported Professor Simpson in a public lecture.⁴⁷ The cleaning of the slums stopped the plague, but in exchange, the African people were to pay with the loss of their freedom. Conditions at the camp were dauntingly dehumanising. There were five large corrugated iron huts, *each sleeping five hundred people*. In addition, there were about six hundred iron shacks, all located in an area that was subjected to flooding, wind and mud. Disease soon broke out,⁴⁸ but the township was to remain until after the outbreak of the Spanish influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 had taken its toll.

There had previously been calls for the removal of Africans from the dock area where they lived and worked -many living in barracks- and in scattered settlements throughout the city. They were accused of living in unsanitary conditions and of 'savagery'. The prime minister, W.P. Schreiner complained that 'uncleanly, half-civilised units' were being brought into intimate contact with 'the more cleanly and civilised portion of the community'⁴⁹

After the First World War, the South African economy improved and another wave of urbanisation began. This resulted in overcrowding in both District Six, often the first place of call of new arrivals, and ultimately, in areas such as N'dabeni. At a mass meeting in the township in 1918, the principle of urban segregation was rejected as well as the refusal to allow Africans to own land in urban areas. Selope Thema of the SANNC told General Smuts in Cape Town:

We have a share and a claim to this country. Not only is it the land of our ancestors, but we have contributed to the progress and advancement of this country. We have built this city.⁵⁰

By 1920, N'dabeni was filthy and derelict and described as "a place without a soul... a confession of the failure of civilisation".⁵¹ Most Africans had in fact abandoned the area and were living in District Six or else on the Cape Flats.

⁴⁶ Megan Anderson & Sean Field, *Langa Heritage Study*, Cape Town, Planning & Economic Development Directorate, City of Cape Town, 2003, p29.

⁴⁷ Bickford- Smith et al, 1999

⁴⁸ Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Mapping Cape Town: From Slavery to Apartheid*, in Sean Field, ed., *Lost Communities, Living Memories*, Cape Town, David Philip, 2001, p 18

⁴⁹ Bickford-Smith et al, P 20.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p90

⁵¹ Ibid, p 87

In 1919 the City Council was asked by the Union government to take control over the township, but they were unwilling to take this on with little prospect of financial assistance from the government. Instead, they proposed building a new township that would also allow the land at N'dabeni to be used to meet the increasing demand for industrial land. The government granted the council 400 morgen of land at Uitvlugt in 1922 for the establishment of the new location. A Native Townships Committee recommended that the location should include both barracks for male migrant workers and married quarters for town residents.⁵²

Despite opposition from the African residents, the Council went ahead with its plans and in 1927 opened Langa Township.

In 1927 Bishop Lavis, the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town wrote a series of articles in the Cape Times calling for housing reform, adding his voice to a general concern about the living conditions of the poor⁵³ who were condemned to live in squalor in a city that did not consider their lot to be an urgent priority. In September of the same year he also led a deputation from the Citizens' Housing League to meet with the Housing and Estates Committee of the Council to express their concern about the living conditions of the poor.

There is deep concern at the deplorable conditions prevailing in the city. Official reports issued by the Council during the last two years tell of 9000 people representing 2100 families living in 900 houses in the district under Signal Hill (The Bo Kaap), in many cases in houses unfit for human habitation. 78% of the population are living under conditions of overcrowding and no less than 2200 persons are living at the rate of four or more per room. There is a total shortage of 6200 houses and the erection of 900 annually would be required to meet the increase in the population estimated at 5000 per annum.⁵⁴

Comparing Cape Town with London, Bishop Lavis said that in 1921, 16.1% of the population of London were living under conditions of overcrowding, whereas in Cape Town, 78% of the Coloured people and 29.5% of the poor Europeans were living under such conditions. In London, with its millions, only 30 000 persons were living 4 or more to a room. In Cape Town, in the Coloured population of 92 000, no less than 22 000 persons were living four or more to a room.⁵⁵

⁵² Megan Anderson & Sean Field, *Langa Heritage Study*.

⁵³ Shamil Jeppie p120

⁵⁴ Housing & Estates Committee minutes 22Sept. 1927, Cape Archives.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

As Japha & Todeschini point out, media focus and attention in the 1930s was on the inner city working class areas of the Bo Kaap and District Six.⁵⁶ These areas were regarded as the worst slum areas of the city and the sites of planned 'improvement' of living conditions.

For the poorest sector of the city the only alternative to the overcrowded areas was to squat. The area known then as Windermere and Kensington was an open, sandy area of smallholdings that had been sold and rented to White, Asian, Coloured and African homeowners and squatters from the 1900's to the 1930's. The squatters were largely African or Coloured but there was a sprinkling of poor Whites. They were largely migrant workers and the census of 1923 claimed that there were 2000 people living in the area.⁵⁷ The numbers gradually grew despite the problems of flooding and impassable, muddy roads. Living conditions were appalling and residents made do with timber and corrugated iron shacks that were constantly threatened by fire.

There were no municipal services and only two water pipes for the entire area.

In 1933, the Johannesburg Council issued a booklet entitled "To Hell with Slums." In it the Mayor of Johannesburg called for an "attack (on) one of the greatest evils that beset our social system- the evil of slums."⁵⁸

The racial concern, the fear of 'contamination' by social contact, is expressed as:

European slum conditions exists in certain of the poorer class districts...where Europeans are congregated in rooms and buildings, as often as not, in juxtaposition to Coloured persons, Asiatics, and a certain number of natives not as yet removed..."⁵⁹

The Slums Act No. 53 of 1934

There was a constant complaint in the late 1920s and early 1930s about the inadequacy of existing legislation in dealing with the slum conditions in the cities of South Africa. The Minister for Health, in recognising the call of municipalities, promulgated the Slums Act No. 53 of 1934, which gave the Medical Officers of Health sweeping powers to expropriate property that they deemed to be a health risk.⁶⁰ Slum owners would be served notices to repair their property, reduce the number of residents or face having the occupants evacuated. The legislation set out

⁵⁶ Japha & Todeschini, Cultural Identity & Architectural Image in Bo-Kaap, Cape Town, UCT School of Architecture, Planning & Geomatics, undated.

⁵⁷ Sean Field, Windermere: Squatters, Slum yards and removals, 1920's to 1960's, in Sean Field, Lost Communities, Living Memories, p 30.

⁵⁸ AB&E December 1933 p39.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Jeppie, p118

the process with rights of appeal. In cases of overcrowding it was required that the occupiers had to agree amongst themselves who would move out and lodge a list of these occupiers with the Council. This generally happened to Coloured tenants, but seldom to Whites. In fact, the slumlords were very largely White. Jeppie gives examples of people who owned as many as 400 properties, with 20% of these falling into District Six.⁶¹ Large areas of District Six and the Bo Kaap were expropriated by the City Council in the years between 1935 and 1945. The City Council had used civic authority to demolish the overcrowded Well Square in District Six in 1932 after calls in the newspaper that "it is high time we awoke from our civic slumbers and got busy sweeping before our own doors with relentless brooms and at any cost"⁶²

The Development of a Legislative Framework

The Cape Town City Council used the Public Health Act of 1897 to move Africans from District Six to a colonial government camp at Uitvlugt forest station in 1901, which forming the basis for the location of N'dabeni. This was established in terms of

- The Locations Act of 1901, which is significant in that it was the first act in South Africa to legislate for racially segregated 'townships'.⁶³

Further legislation included:

- In 1913, the Natives' Land Act limited land ownership by Africans.
- In 1923, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act laid down that all Africans should be segregated in locations. Control on movement was also introduced and later became known as 'influx control'.

The act was based on the principle that Africans should remain temporary urban dwellers only. In 1922 the Stallard Commission had stated that

The Native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the White man's creation, when he is willing to enter and then minister to the needs of the White man, and should depart there from when he ceases so to minister⁶⁴

- The Slums Act No. 53 of 1934 called for the identification of slum buildings and areas; notification of owners to repair or demolish the identified properties, or face expropriation. Expropriation could take place on the

⁶¹ Ibid, p 118

⁶² Ibid, p 120

⁶³ Megan Anderson & Sean Field, *Langa Heritage Study*, Cape Town, Planning & Economic Development Directorate, City of Cape Town, 2003, p29.

⁶⁴ Anderson & Field, *Langa Heritage Study*, p 34

recommendation of the Slum Clearance Special committee if the slum land was considered 'necessary or useful...for satisfactory development...'65

- The Native Representation Act of 1936 removed Africans in the Cape from the common voters' roll.

The call for control of the Coloured section of the populace came in 1939 when the national government tried to introduce a 'Class Areas Bill' to enforce Coloured segregation. They failed, largely because of the level of protest from the National Liberation League and NEUF⁶⁶. But the pressure to segregate grew stronger and by 1945 the new housing that had been erected during the war years was entirely segregated.⁶⁷

Mapping Segregation prior to 1948

Before 1948, only the African population of the city was subjected to legally imposed controls and segregation, but segregationist elements were creeping into the treatment of Coloured people as well. The development of segregated residential areas in Cape Town is a trajectory that began with the creation of N'dabeni in 1901, and was an accepted planning condition by the 1930s.

As the City expanded in the nineteenth century, the wealthier White classes moved to southern areas such as Kenilworth, Claremont and Rondebosch, which imposed an economic segregation, as the properties were too expensive for the Coloured residents⁶⁷. Instead they lived in 'pockets' in these areas, providing domestic labour to the surrounding area. Examples would include Protea Village in Bishopscourt and Harfield Village in Lower Claremont. Even more significantly, in some White areas such as Milnerton, Oranjezicht, and parts of Camps Bay, title deed restrictions, introduced as early as 1900, excluded Coloureds and Africans from these areas.⁶⁸

From the 1930's housing in Langa was always in short supply. The emphasis on the provision of single quarters in the first phase had made the forced removal of residents from N'dabeni difficult, as there was nowhere to accommodate them and there were inadequate funds for new building. This was coupled with an official reluctance to allow the permanently settled African population to expand. Growth of the Coloured sections of the predominantly 'White' suburbs was similarly contained. This was partly as a result of the housing schemes, which were being built for the

⁶⁵ Slums Clearance Special Committee minutes: 8 Oct. 1934

⁶⁶ Vivian Bickford-Smith, Elizabeth van Heyningen & Nigel Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century* p148

⁶⁷ Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Mapping Cape Town: From Slavery to Apartheid* p21

⁶⁸ *Ibid* p21

poor of all races, and partly caused by the policy that all residents of an area could use local schools, a policy that was not favoured by the White residents. The way to overcome this 'problem' was to create new Coloured housing areas at a distance ✓ from the White suburbs. At this time, as Bickford-Smith points out, planners were concerned with "public health and the maintenance of social order-and residential segregation was usually seen as part of the solution"⁶⁹

Ethnicity, identity and housing

Thus the Council can be seen to be using segregation as a method of controlling the living spaces of those whom they wished to control; to remove them to places where they would be clearly visible. Foucault suggests that "all authorities exercising ✓ individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding...and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who is he; where must he be; how is he to be characterised; how is he to be recognised...)"⁷⁰The colonial discourse on racism focussed heavily on differentiated assignment particularly with regard to the 'superior' characteristics and 'responsibility' of Whites in relationship to other ethnic groups. This can be linked to the misinterpretation of the Nietzschean concept of the *Übermensch* ', as happened in Nazi Germany, by linking superiority with a particular ethnic group. The White Man's Burden', was the description used in 1927 to predicate a diatribe on other ethnic groups.

We find for instance that the native labour is unintelligent and unskilled, that the Coloured labour is only partly skilled, that the native labour though loyal is incompetent, and the Coloured worker, though partially competent, is untruthful and disloyal.

It is our duty and our privilege to render such service to the measure of our own capacity ourselves. That is the White man's burden.

It is the White man's burden to so minister to the weakness of subordinate races and so to utilise it even when to his own advantage, that no cruel injustices shall result.⁷¹

Jeppie identifies "a powerful racial element in the discourse on housing and urban renewal.... 'Slums' and 'Coloured' were almost interchangeable terms."⁷² Whiteing⁷³ describes the intermediate or residual position held in the Cape by Coloured people, whose position is 'assigned' on the basis of them being neither White nor African. He goes on to describe this identity as bearing negative and derogatory connotations.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p144

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish* p199

⁷¹ AB&E, June 1927 p2

⁷² Jeppie, p117

⁷³ Richard Whiteing, *The Emergence & development of a Distinct Coloured Identity*. Cape Town, Dept of Historical Studies, UCT, 2003, unpublished Seminar Paper: Topics in Modern Western Cape History

"At the core of these connotations was the idea that the Coloured people were the result of miscegenation and were racially impure."⁷⁴ This reiterates Foucault's description of the identification and exclusion of the leper⁷⁵.

The 'Coloured' category was further sub-divided in the prevailing colonial ethnic discourse. The 'Malay' section of the community was viewed quite differently to the 'Cape Coloured'. In the published assessment of the Schotsche Kloof housing design competition, they are described as: "As a race or caste or class or faith, call it what we may, ... noted as being intelligent, sober, law-abiding, cleanly, and in the vast majority of cases anything but unskilled."⁷⁶ The writer of the article goes on to complain:

Our Malay people don't want barracks! They want homes! As a folk, they are fond of the open and of as much joy and freedom as they can get out of life, just as we are; and *in their degree* (emphasis mine) they are as much entitled to it as we are.⁷⁷

Dr. D.F. Malan, later to become the prime minister of South Africa, had already in 1924, in an address to the Cape Malay Association, described the Malays as being "unlike Indians... true South Africans with 'a distinct status'."⁷⁸ This association had also been particularly susceptible to the 'invention' and promotion of their identity, by the Afrikaans writer, I.D. du Plessis in the 1930s, and this identification of a Malay tradition encouraged subsequent moves to preserve the Bo-Kaap as a 'Malay Quarter.'⁷⁹

The outcome of this differentiation and assignment of 'Otherness' to ethnic groups was used to map out the differing planning approaches that would be adopted by the City Council in the housing policies applied to different groups. In Langa, the Africans, removed as far as possible from family structures, were given mainly hostel accommodation. In District Six, modernism's 'clean knife' would be used to cut out the decay and to replace the existing living pattern with a 'modern' vision of urban housing, that laid open and visible the threatening alleys and spaces that potentially fomented revolution. The Canterbury-Bloemhof flat scheme in District Six was set in open spaces, clearly visible and controllable. In the Bo-Kaap, there was a reticence to adopt the same approach despite the declaration of slum areas and the palpable air of decay. Schemes that had been prepared for replacing the existing urban fabric

⁷⁴ Ibid. p5

⁷⁵ Foucault, p198

⁷⁶ AB&E April 1939 p2

⁷⁷ Ibid.p5

⁷⁸ Bickford- Smith et al, p83

⁷⁹ Bickford- Smith et al, p83

with a 'modern' alternative were shelved, and the Schotsche Kloof flats, the outcome of an architectural design competition, was prominently placed on a green field site above the historic area. Was this in response to the different attitude being shown to the Malay populace? Or as a result of the writer I.D. du Plessis' championing of their cause and his call for the preservation of the Bo Kaap? Official records are silent as to why this was done. But the link between the modern housing and mechanisms of control were clearly apparent. The spaces were 'rendered visible' as Shamil Jeppie contended.

Chapter 5

Planning the Modern Mother City

*From the huddle of hovels, from the depths of grimy lairs...there sometimes came the hot gust of rebellion; the plot would be hatched in the dark recesses of an accumulated chaos in which any kind of police activity was extremely difficult.... St. Paul of Tarsus was impossible to arrest while he was in the slums...
Le Corbusier-The Radiant City⁸⁰*

With these words Le Corbusier reflected the fear that existed among the middle classes of the threat of revolt that the slums offered. His idea to "clear the decks completely and replace the centre of Haussmann's city with one built with control and hierarchy in mind"⁸¹ was the universal Zeitgeist in the 1930s and one finds programmes being undertaken around the world to implement slum clearance and new housing programmes that were, if not in their initial proposals, more often than not, linked to the removal, segregation and control of the urban poor. Although social reform is the often cited reason, one wonders whether the aftermath of the world war and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia was not feared as a threat to established order and lead to new Foucaultian methods of social control and surveillance to avert any possible threat.

Facing the Housing challenge: Legislating against poverty

In Cape Town, the control over the housing of the poorer sections of the city came about gradually. At first ignored, or dealt with by removal as had happened with Africans to Langa in 1901, the question of housing for the urban poor recurred during the first four decades of the twentieth century. In addition to the legislation that controlled the location and movement of people, specific legislation was introduced at all levels of government to deal specifically with the issue of living conditions and housing. At first fairly low key, the legislation became stronger and more racially biased by the 1930s.

In 1919 the Provincial Council passed an Ordinance known as the Municipal (Provision of Homes) Ordinance No. 23 of 1919 as amended by Ordinance No. 5 of 1920, enabling the Cape Town City Council to advance loans for the erection of dwellings. Thus, even access to finance was legislated and ownership could be controlled as a consequence.

⁸⁰ Quoted by James C. Scott in *Seeing like a State*, p 116

⁸¹ James C Scott p116

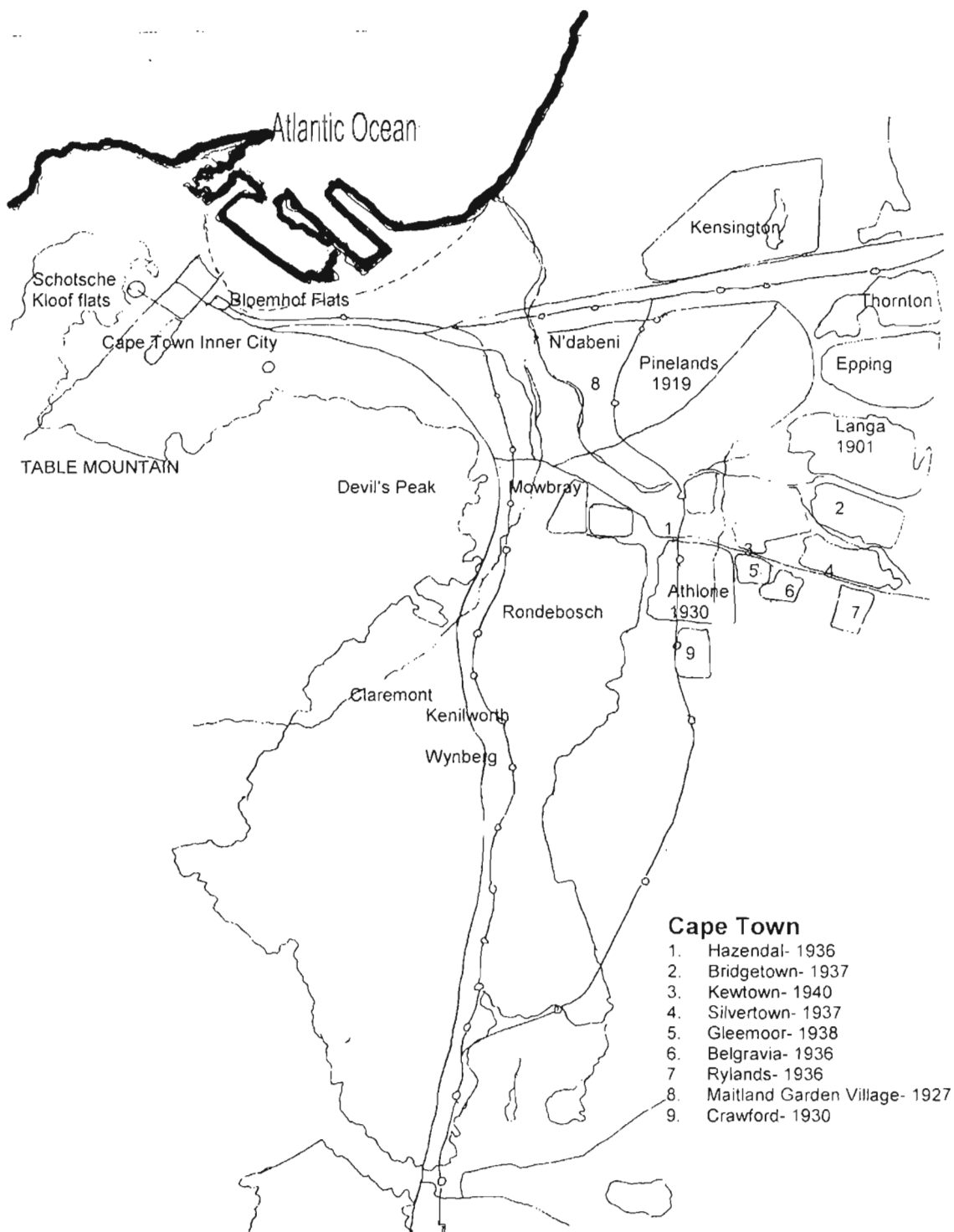


Figure 5.1
Cape Town

Map showing the location of the housing areas referred to in the text

Access to finance was further extended under the Housing Act No. 35 of 1920. Loans were made to White house buyers in Pinelands and for Coloured municipal employees in the City Council's own scheme- the Maitland Garden City, that was planned for 'non-Europeans'. But nothing was provided for the unemployed poor.

On the 30th May 1929 the Cape Town City Council adopted the principle of sub-economic housing by 30 votes to 3. In October 1928, Councillor Hetty Horwood had called for the erection of tenement buildings for letting to poorer people. She prepared a report for the Housing & Estates Committee and referred to housing schemes in Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham as well as London.⁸² On the 15th November 1928 she had tabled a motion to the Housing and Estates Committee that "This committee recognising that the present schemes do not and will not meet the needs of the City's poorest classes, asks the permission of Council to inaugurate a letting scheme on the lines of the Amsterdam or London County Council schemes."

The Slums Act No. 53 of 1934 was 'legislation of a new kind in South Africa, although it has been demanded for many years...The main object of the Act is to avoid the obstacles and delay caused by resort to the courts.'⁸³ On the 17th August 1934 the Slums Clearance Special Committee was constituted by the Cape Town City Council to implement the Slums Act No. 53 of 1934.

Housing as a method of controlling the marginalised

This array of housing legislation was used in Cape Town to implement the City Council's policy with regard to the identification, classification and rehousing of the city's poor. Scott and Soja both draw attention to the modernist programme of dealing with the poor of the world in a much more comprehensive way than had ever been undertaken before. Poverty, ethnic difference and slums represented a threat to a controlled colonial society. The legislation rendered visible the problems of the city's slum areas and, furthermore, created environments where the poor were either clearly visible, for example in the inner city schemes with their open spaces, easy access and hence controllable spaces; or removed to separate areas, isolated from the White populace and thus like Foucault's leper, identified and excluded. The first level of the process of control was the dehumanisation of the problem. Thus, in the

⁸² Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 20 September 1928

⁸³ AB&E November 1935 p19

late 1920s, there is a call for "comprehensive housing schemes for various Classes".⁸⁴ No mention was made of who was being classified.

The people who are possibly more concerned with the poor as people rather than merely statistics are groups such as the Citizens' Housing League. In 1927 a deputation from this group, lead by Bishop Lavis and including representatives of commerce such as E.R. Syfret, expressed their concern about the overcrowding in the city. Lavis referred to "the deliberate purpose, the concentration of public attention on the Community's direct responsibility towards the poorer classes, those persons whether non-European or European of the handyman and the unskilled labouring classes". He argued "the accepted axiom that the closest possible proximity of the workers' dwellings to the work centre must be secured at all costs" The League was strongly opposed to the erection of 'tenement buildings'. "The feeling is universal among the poor. Privacy, individuality and home feeling cannot be obtained except in a separate house." In greater Cape Town they pointed out "there is no argument by reason of scarcity of land, either for tenements or terraces", adding, "if a Scheme is set forth which will remedy present evils, responsible opinion here, as in England, would allow a reasonable sub-economic element in such a scheme."⁸⁵ This point of view recalls Heidegger's view of the dwelling as a utopian rural structure, inextricably linked to the concept of *heimat* or home. This was to be the thrust of the proposals considered for Cape Town, with the aforementioned Garden City model as the preferred housing mode for all sections of the inhabitants. There was at first no support for any other form of dwelling despite the recognition that this could not be achieved in the inner city areas. Even the idea of who the poor were seemed unclear. The Central Housing Board, the government body concerned with housing, when emphasizing that government funding was available for a large development scheme, explained that the Government had allocated the money for "the purpose of assisting the poorer classes, but as to what actually constitutes the poorer classes is more a matter for a local authority to determine."⁸⁶

Already in September 1927 calls were made for a decision to be taken regarding tenement dwellings. However, the Mayor did not favour the erection of tenements saying: "conditions in Cape Town cannot be compared with those overseas where

⁸⁴ Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 30¹ August 1927

⁸⁵ Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 22 September 1927

⁸⁶ Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 6 March 1928

there is not a mixed population to contend with.”⁸⁷ Once again modes of living were linked to ethnic prejudice with its assumed notions of morality and White superiority.

The sole female member of the Housing and Estates committee at the time, Councillor Horwood, seemed to be the main champion of the sub-economic housing of the Council, complaining that the Council only dealt with “selected people.” She went on to suggest that the Council build tenements and terraces of houses near the centre of the city, “say on the slopes of Signal Hill, or in the Rose and Chiappini Streets where people do not have to pay heavy railway fares in order to get to and from work.”⁸⁸

Reaction came from the mouthpiece of the local Institute of Architects, *The Architect Builder & Engineer* journal:

The Cape Town City Council has tackled the problem of providing housing accommodation for the people who live in the slum dwellings in and around the municipal area.

So far Cape Town has done nothing for the very poor people...In the slum areas the people unfortunately cannot afford to be housed in an economic housing scheme.

We hope however that some other method of solving the question of housing the very poor will be found without the introduction of tenement dwellings, which is to be deprecated as it gives rise to unsatisfactory social conditions⁸⁹.

But it seems that the City Council realised that there was no other way of dealing with the requirement for a higher density of development in the city. The council prepared plans for a no longer existing tenement scheme in District Six on a site bounded by Constitution, de Villiers, Sackville and St. Vincent Streets, referred to as the Constitution Street Workmen’s Flats. Much debate ensued at the Committee meeting of 18th September 1929. A councillor explained that the idea was “to build in blocks of eight flats and so form a quadrangle, which would provide playing ground for children or otherwise could be used for gardening purposes.”⁹⁰ It was suggested in Council committees, that: “The idea was to try to give these people the best conditions under which to live” questioning whether such was the case “by bringing them into town.” A councillor commented: “Slums should be outside the city”⁹¹ reflecting again Foucault’s writing on the control of the leper.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 13 May 1929

⁸⁹ Architect, Builder & Engineer, June 1929 p3

⁹⁰ Housing & Estates Committee Minutes: 18 Sept 1929

⁹¹ Ibid.

Dr. D.F. Malan referred to this scheme of "Workmen's Flats" in February 1930 as being "the first experiment of its kind in South Africa"⁹²

In determining tenancy of these flats it was recommended, "That there shall be no discrimination between Malays and Coloured tenants as far as the allocation of flats is concerned; further, that Asiatics or aboriginal natives shall not be precluded from submitting an application for the hiring of one of the flats. The maximum wage shall be £2.5.0 per week". The application form states in bold capitals that they are "FOR NON-EUROPEANS ONLY"⁹³ Jeppie notes the interview process that was to be an inherent part of Council practise.⁹⁴ Applicants were required to give details of their families and occupation as well as their race and all were subjected to interviews that were recorded and reported to the Housing & Estates Committee. Morality issues were always raised: applicants had to be married to their partner and those of sober habits were preferred. Once again the process of distinction, analysis and control recalls Foucault's concept of control as exercised during the plague. ✓

In 1929 it was suggested "the time has arrived for the Council to face the position and to say to itself that the best results can be obtained in tackling the overcrowding question by concentrating principally on workmen's flats in old Cape Town, and also in one or two places in the Suburban areas." In the ensuing debate there was strong opposition expressed to the erection of flats, saying that the Council was shirking its responsibility and "putting off the evils to a future date."⁹⁵ The flats erected twenty-five years earlier in the Docks area, were called a "hopeless failure." Further flats erected at that time were described as having become the biggest slums. Any form of densification of housing was linked to slums; such was the strength of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City model of urban planning. And the question of morality and poverty is constantly raised as Jeppie points out.

There is a large population intermingled with Europeans for whom a slum area must be provided. Those who wish to live in the slums like animals will have to stay there for good.⁹⁶

⁹² Housing & Estates Committee minutes 18 Feb 1930

⁹³ Housing & Estates Committee minutes 3 Feb 1931

⁹⁴ Jeppie, p122

⁹⁵ Housing & Estates Committee minutes: 18 September 1930

⁹⁶ Ibid

But the incipient racism of the housing planning was already clear and in the same month Dr Adurahman, the APO councillor and one of the few non-White councillors, complained that each time a new housing scheme for non-Europeans is considered there are objections from nearby White residents, an example being the comment made regarding a proposal to build cottages above De Waal Drive that the "type of person who would reside in these cottages would be a menace to the community."⁹⁷ Dr. D.F. Malan continued to pressurize the City Council on the provision of housing. In November 1930 he was alarmed at the report in the Rand Daily Mail of 20th November that the Council would reduce capital expenditure, and he wrote to the Council hoping that the expenditure would not be halved as reported so that improving "the appalling conditions under which a number of the very poor class are living" would continue.⁹⁸

On the 30th October 1930 the Cape Town Citizens' Housing Utility Scheme at Crawford was approved. This provided housing for poor Coloured people from the city. it was noted that:

The Council shall, *pari passu* with the carrying out of the scheme, actively proceed with measures for the reduction and prevention of overcrowding; the repair or the closure and demolition of insanitary, dilapidated or unfit dwellings; and the improvement or removal of slum or unhealthy areas.

But the concept of sub-economic housing was still not widely accepted and in the May 1931 edition of the *Architect, Builder & Engineer* the editor said

We remain unconvinced regarding the necessity for any sub-economic housing schemes. The Union of South Africa cannot afford such schemes and does not need them...We do not need them, we do not want them, and we ought not to have them.⁹⁹

Not only was there concern about housing issues at professional level, but the voice of capitalism was also heard, as it perceived a threat to property investors in any form of subsidized housing. In May 1931 the Peninsula Property Owners' Association requested permission to inspect the Constitution Street flats as they wished to learn all about the flats "as it affected their members considerably both by way of the flats being a burden on the ratepayers and a competitor of housing ownership." Permission was refused.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Housing & Estates Committee minutes 25 Feb 1930

⁹⁸ Housing & Estates Committee minutes 28 November 1930

⁹⁹ Architect Builder & Engineer May 1931 p3

¹⁰⁰ Housing & Estates Committee minutes 1 May 1931

But despite mounting pressure in the media for action by the Council to eradicate slums ¹⁰¹ the Council was not able to meet the requirements for housing that was being demanded. In December 1932 the Central Housing Board expressed its concern with the slow pace of the Council's building programme. They referred to an amount of £4 367 that was requisitioned over a period of 7 months, representing an "insignificant" amount.

In his survey of the housing shortage in 1931-1932 the Medical Officer of Health estimated that some 8000 dwellings would be required to meet the housing shortage. The entire clearance of the slum areas in Cape Town and District Six would call for the demolition and replacement of over 2500 dwellings. He highlights the extent of the problem by comparing the need to house some 50 000 people to the 'European' population of Pretoria which is 69 000. It can thus be seen that, already at this stage, the destruction of both District Six and the Bo Kaap was being contemplated.

In October 1932 the *Architect Builder & Engineer* reported that the "City Council has now under consideration housing methods used in Germany."¹⁰² In view of the advanced housing developments in Weimar Germany at that time, this would seem an interesting development. It was, however, noted that the proceedings of the meetings were confidential, and there appears to be no record of the outcome.

In Johannesburg, after a council debate on 'the slum menace', a 1933 Council recommendation was made calling on Central Government for further legislation to enable the council to remove slum areas. The Council's attention was drawn to "the five and ten-year schemes for slum clearance in England."¹⁰³

The pressure was inevitably mounting for increased powers to deal with slums and the debate at the time on 'slum elimination'. In January 1934, a meeting was held between the Johannesburg and Cape Town City Councils to discuss draft slum elimination legislation proposed by Cape Town. It was noted that the Minister of Health had decided that it should be adopted countrywide.

But dealing with slum problems was not only an issue in South Africa but one that was receiving attention and had become the focus of countries worldwide, as the

¹⁰¹ In the *Cape Times* of 27th April 1932 an article entitled "The Slums must go" is published. In an article in "*Die Burger*" of 2nd July 1932, Dr. Malan, the Minister of Public Health is reported as issuing an ultimatum, but this is untrue. It is said that he would use his powers under the Housing Act to compel the council to eradicate the slums.

¹⁰² AB&E October 1932 p21

¹⁰³ Ibid. Oct 1933 p41

pattern of urban migration, coupled with declining rural and agrarian societies in the inter-war years, affected cities globally. Thus the type of comprehensive housing programme described by Heynen in Germany was also being implemented in many countries throughout the world at this time. The United States, for instance, began its public housing programme in 1933 in a limited way, with their Housing Act of 1937 marking the start of a more comprehensive public housing programme. The American historical archaeologist, Solari says that:

In the 1930s a war against slums swept the nation. Much of the housing stock was ageing and lacked modern amenities. Almost all houses built before 1900 were considered substandard...In 1931 President Hoover convened the 'President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership' to study America's housing problems. In the federal government's view, there was a close connection between housing and health, safety, morals, and family health and general welfare¹⁰⁴

Solari notes that the language used to describe slums was dramatic and fear inspiring: slums were equated with cancer or a contagious disease that could spread to surrounding areas if left to rot and fester. Slums were dangerous and threatened the destruction of entire urban communities. This phenomenon is also reflected in the media comments in Cape Town.



Figure 5.2 Peralta Villa Flats California

Peralta Villa Flats, West Oakland California, 1942. Illustration source: Elaine-Maryse Solari, *The making of an archaeological site and the unmaking of a community in West Oakland*

As an example Solari describes a housing project in California. In the late 1930s, West Oakland was chosen for two USHA housing projects, Peralta Villa and Campbell Village. This was a dense urban area, with an African American community who considered that they had been unfairly targeted for removal. Peralta Villa was

¹⁰⁴ Elaine-Maryse Solari, *The making of an archaeological site and the unmaking of a community in West Oakland*, California p26

completed in 1942 with thirty-five two storey residential buildings and one administration building in a stripped down International Style¹⁰⁵.

It is interesting, in examining South America, to find that in Argentina, the first public housing project in the western hemisphere was built in Buenos Aires in 1912.¹⁰⁶ This row house development was followed in 1932 by *colectiva* or apartment schemes. Their tenants were chosen by a *sorteo* or public drawing, which appears to have favoured middle class tenants. In Uruguay and Peru the housing programmes of the 1930s were for one and two-storey row houses.

In Chile, the *Caja de Habitación Popula*, was set up by law in 1936, with most of the projects being undertaken in Santiago. Some of these were of the apartment type, although the majority appear to be of the row-house type. Where apartment schemes were built, such as the *Poblacion Huemul* in Santiago, they were four storey high walk-ups. In 1943 new low-cost housing legislation came into force in Chile, which gave the authorities autonomous, sweeping powers to expropriate land and build housing.

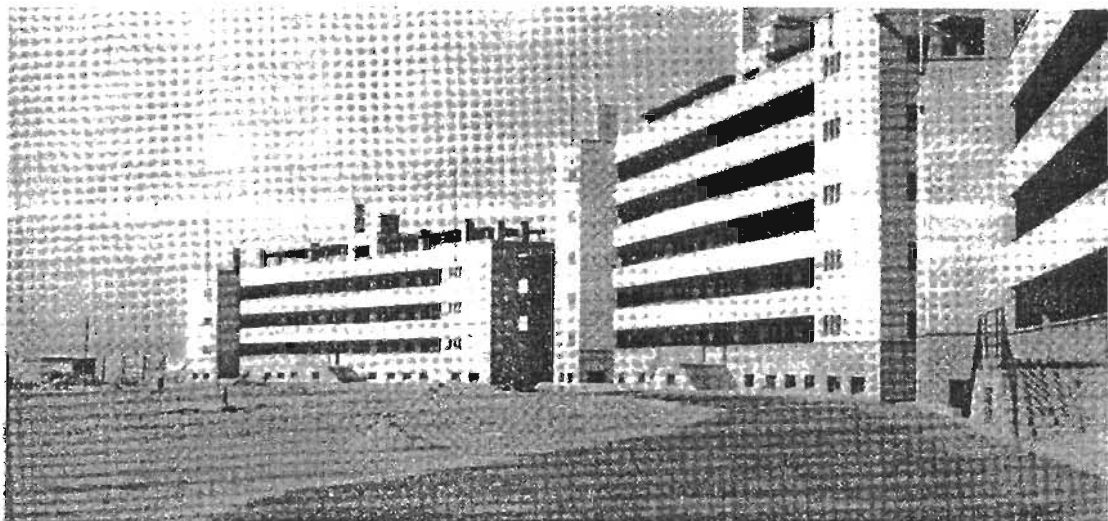


Figure 5.3 Chilean Flats

Chilean low-cost apartments: *Poblacion Huemul* in Santiago, 1942 Illustration: Francis Violich, *Cities of Latin America*

In South Africa, the legislation was used by the Council to summarily dismiss 'undesirables' who might contaminate others. Western cites the American urban planner Glazer on urban renewal:

¹⁰⁵ A term used by the historian Hitchcock to describe the modern architecture of the 1930s, as it was seen as the global architecture of the future.

¹⁰⁶ Francis Violich, *Cities of Latin America*, New York, Reinhold, 1944 p125

Experience so far shows that almost invariably the despair in areas slated for demolition is not channelled into meaningful political opposition, it is outweighed by the arguments for renewal presented by planners to the city fathers and the prejudice among middle-class citizens against allowing what they consider slums to remain standing near them."¹⁰⁷

. The mayor of Cape Town drew attention to the fact that

One of the most important questions of policy which the Slums Committee would be called upon to deal with would be the expropriation of property in relation to areas where the Council might intend to erect flats or tenements.¹⁰⁸

In his opinion it would be essential for the work of the Committee in this respect "to proceed on recognised lines with the zoning of areas, so that the work which is laid before the Committee might proceed in close co-operation with the activities of the Council and the activities of the Town Planning Committee."

This was the stage at which, as Jeppie points out, the Cape Town City Council set up a plethora of committees to deal with the control and development of the city. The control of the City's poor and the growth of the modern city were managed by amongst others: the Housing and Estates Committee, the Slum Clearance Special Committee and their successor in 1937, the Housing and Slum Clearance Committee, which operated until August 1940. Rather extraordinarily, there was no committee dealing with these matters from that point until January 1945, despite a continuing process of erection of housing during the war years. Other committees that influenced the form of the city included: the Special Committee re: Town Planning, the Health and Building Regulations Committee, and the Properties Special Committee

The major problem area for the Slum Clearance committee appears to have been Wells Square in District Six. The Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Shadrack Higgins, who had substantial powers in terms of the Slums Act, reported negatively on the King's Building in Wells Square: 8 lettings are by "natives only"; 6 by "natives and Coloureds"; 3 by "Coloured people only" and one by a "European." He went on to say, "the occupants are in the main of a low type; and there is a criminal element."¹⁰⁹ He reports on prostitution, illicit liquor selling and dagga smoking taking place.

¹⁰⁷ Western, *Outcast Cape Town*, 1986 p144.

¹⁰⁸ Slum Clearance Special Committee minutes 17 Aug 1934

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum by MOH to Slums Clearance Committee dated 29 June 1935

"Drunkenness is frequent and there have been a series of stabbing affrays."¹¹⁰ Reports such as these highlight the negative view that was being taken of the slum areas and poverty is very clearly linked to ethnicity. Although there is recognition of the poor living conditions in the Bo Kaap, and it is subject to expropriation from 1935, particularly in the Chiappini Street area, by contrast, no comments are recorded in the minutes on the character of the residents.

The media's response to the slum issue is highlighted in an article in the *Architect Builder & Engineer*, where they complain that some politicians were using the slums, as a "stick to beat their political enemies." They go on to state that "public opinion blamed drink, - spiced with immorality, - for the creation of slums: then it was felt that local authorities were to blame."¹¹¹

Western quotes the American writer Marris on the question of the assumed connection between visible physical dilapidation and supposed social dysfunction

Physical squalor is an affront to the order of society, which readily becomes associated with other signs of disorder in the public image. Crime, drunkenness, prostitution, feckless poverty, mental pathology do indeed cluster where housing is poorest- but not there only. Once this association has been taken for granted, any anomalous pattern of life embodied in shabby surroundings is easily assumed to be pathological, without much evidence. Bad housing thus becomes a symbol, of complex discordances in the structure of society and so be treated as if it were a cause of them.¹¹²

It was often perceived that the slum problem in South Africa differed from that in 'European countries'. The Vice Chairman of the Rehousing and Slum Elimination Association, F. Gebhardt, explained in 1936 that: "The psychological factors that tend to create slums...apart from extensive unemployment...and the meagre earnings of the lapsed masses...is the powerful attraction which 'White' civilisation exerts upon the more primitive races." He goes on to reiterate the White supremacy ideology as he points out that "While slums, therefore, constitute a problem of the poorest classes, irrespective of colour, it is incumbent on the White races to solve the problem."¹¹³ But there were contradictory views at the time as to whether the problems of slums were different in South Africa or whether the problem was universal. Rather oddly, in view of his later role in defining segregation based on

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ AB&E Dec 1935 p22

¹¹² John Western, *Outcast Cape Town*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, paperback ed. 1996 p144

¹¹³ F. Gebhardt in AB&E Jan 1936 p13

difference, Dr. D.F. Malan, the subsequent National Party leader and prime minister after 1948, said at a housing conference held in Cape Town in 1930 that “the crux of the problem in connection with housing is the provision of housing for the very poorest classes,” and what to do with the existing slums and the overcrowding that existed. In getting rid of slums, He referred to legislation in the United Kingdom that should be followed as he considered conditions in South Africa to be no different to those in the U.K.¹¹⁴

The Slums Act was supposedly used to expropriate property and the declaration of a property as a slum was described by a complainant as a “stigma” which drew “undesirable publicity”.¹¹⁵

Despite the Slums Committee meeting some sixty times a year, it was reported in July 1935 that “the Council has up to the present caused no substantial evacuation of slum premises...(nor)...the demolition of slum property in the slum areas which it has decided to expropriate”. Further concerns of ineptitude are raised in the *Architect Builder & Engineer* in December 1936, quoting the Mayor of Cape Town as saying: “not a brick has been laid for two years” The Mayor pointed out that five sites had been under consideration for development: Jerry Street, Chiappini Street, Schotsche Kloof, Bloemhof and Gabriel Street, Wynberg. He went on to indicate that although Jerry Street had been acquired, the City Engineer had objected to its development, ✓ as the land was too valuable. The Bloemhof site, he opined, “should be related to the town planning scheme now in process of preparation.” The Chiappini Street site was considered suitable for “Malay settlement and Scotsche (sic) Kloof for non-European. The City Engineer agreed that the Schotsche Kloof site and a portion of the Zonnebloem Estate might be developed but he thought that these would be too expensive. He pointed out that District Six needed 2500 houses and that between 10 000 and 12 000 people were living under slum conditions. They could not, he contended, be economically housed within the city and he advocated development outside the city.¹¹⁶ ✓

The evidence thus suggests that the Slums Act was not as effective a tool as the Council had imagined it to be in the elimination of overcrowding and slums and that there was now a perceived need to tackle a much more comprehensive planning

¹¹⁴ Housing & Estates Committee minutes 18 Feb 1930

¹¹⁵ Slum Clearance Special Committee minutes 25 February 1935, reporting on the complaint by the legal representative of a landlord regarding a slum declaration.

¹¹⁶ Cape Peninsula Notes, AB&E Dec 1936 p17

exercise that would create a modern city unencumbered with the problems of the past. These views, calling for a more comprehensive way of dealing with slums reiterates the views of Le Corbusier. Scott indicates the attitude of Corbusier who condemned the 'misery, confusion,' rot', 'decay', 'scum' and 'refuse' that he believed needed to be overcome. He regarded the slum inhabitants as "a dead weight on the city, an obstacle, a black clot of misery, of failure, of human garbage." He objected to the lack of discipline of these people, which he regarded as being against nature, which was all discipline. He was also concerned about the potential revolutionary threat posed by these people. Scott says that Corbusier understood, as Haussmann had, that crowded slums were and had always been an obstacle to efficient policing. He goes on to say, "Le Corbusier proposed to clear the decks completely and replace the centre of Haussmann's city¹¹⁷ with one built with control and hierarchy in mind."¹¹⁸ Foucault's description of panopticism is the underlying order of the modern city as proposed by the modernist vision of Le Corbusier.

Planning the Modern City

The first tentative steps in the planning of a modern industrial city in Cape Town came with the introduction of the Garden City town-planning model¹¹⁹. In England, Ebenezer Howard, as a reaction to the growth of an urban working class in the London inner city in the late nineteenth century, had first proposed this model. It was "essentially decentralist and strictly controlled in terms of size and layout."¹²⁰ The concept of the Garden City was first piloted in Cape Town in the design of Pinelands—an exclusively White residential development promoted under the aegis of the wealthy department store owner, Richard Stuttaford, following the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919. He had written to the acting Prime Minister, F.S. Malan, early in 1919, saying,

"For some time past, and particularly since the influenza epidemic, I have given a great deal of thought to the question of better housing accommodation for the people of our larger cities"¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Baron Haussmann was the nineteenth century planner who radically re-planned the centre of Paris adding broad boulevards.

¹¹⁸ James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State*, p116

¹¹⁹ A planning concept developed in England during the second half of the nineteenth century. Howard suggested that new towns be established with zones for living and working, all with adequate open space and controlled aesthetics.

¹²⁰ Don Pinnock, *Ideology and urban planning: Blueprints of a garrison town*, in Wilmot G. James & Mary Simons, Eds. *The Angry Divide. Social and economic history of the Western Cape*. (Cape Town, David Philip, 1989).

¹²¹ Fifty Years of Housing 1922-1972, *The Story of Garden Cities*, Cape Town . Garden Cities, 1972. p9

A competition was held for the design of Pinelands and this called, amongst other criteria, for entrants "to plan the northern area of land for housing the Non-European population".¹²² Needless to say, this was never implemented and Sir Raymond Unwin, the planner of the first Garden City in Britain, Letchworth, and the assessor of the competition, rejected the winning competition entry, calling for the appointment of the British planner, Albert Thompson, who also subsequently planned Langa Township. The scheme for Pinelands, as executed, was to receive critical acclaim as

It was the first genuine attempt at a town-planned area in South Africa and pointed the way towards the establishment of the first Cape Ordinance for the control of Townships.... It has proved that a properly planned area is easier to control, cheaper, more satisfactory and certainly more pleasant to live in than the erstwhile haphazard development".¹²³

The operative words were 'easier to control' and 'cheaper'. The thrust of new development was to be in a ring of segregated satellite suburbs on the Flats beyond the White southern suburbs that had grown along the main road to the south in the nineteenth century. Comparisons can be drawn to the German town planning principles used in Frankfurt, although Heynen draws a distinction between the open spaces as a series of parks, "rather than as a non-urban area situated between the nucleus of the city and the Trabanten."¹²⁴ Pinnock describes these open spaces in Cape Town as buffer strips that were not "the new playgrounds of the urban proletariat but the horizontal walls of a defensive city."¹²⁵

Once again, Foucault's description of the leper, subject to rituals of exclusion, draws comparison with the municipal reaction to the overcrowding in the inner city: the exclusion of sections of the community. It brings into play Foucault's image of the leper "caught up in a practice of rejection, of exile-enclosure."¹²⁶ In April 1925 the Housing and Estates Committee of the City Council had held a conference with the Central Housing Board to discuss the housing problem of the city. A township was proposed at Athlone for "Non-Europeans", with an approved loan from central government of £50 000. By 1927 146 wood & iron cottages and 115 concrete cottages had been built.¹²⁷ The same year the council considered a housing scheme at Crawford.

¹²² *Ibid.* p15.

¹²³ *Fifty Years of Housing 1922-1972, The Story of Garden Cities* 16.

¹²⁴ Heynen, p54

¹²⁵ Pinnock, p159

¹²⁶ Foucault p359

¹²⁷ *Housing & Estates Committee minutes*

In June 1930, the City Engineer, D.E. Lloyd-Davies reported on a proposed housing scheme for the "poorest classes" also at Athlone.

The slope of the ground is suitable for a good straightforward economical layout, and *it is not proposed to attempt to design an attractive picture* (emphasis mine) involving high development costs, which can only be appreciated from an aeroplane.¹²⁸

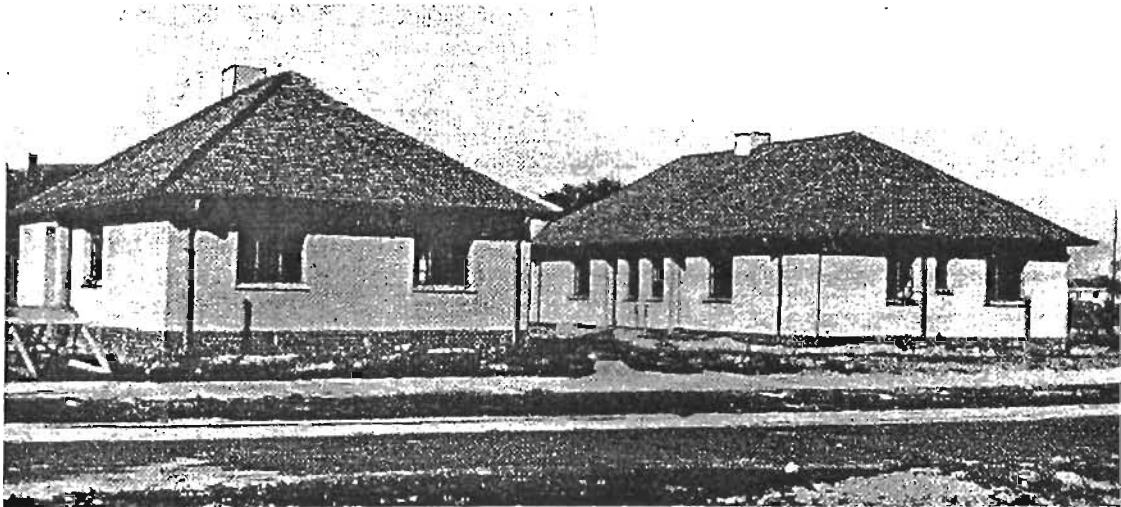


Figure 5.4

Cottages at Alicedale on the Cape Flats

It is clear that the agenda of the City was to overcome both overcrowding and racial mixing; characteristic of the inner suburbs, by establishing cheaply planned settlements on the Cape Flats, well away from White residents. The Provincial Administrator Fourie, in examining Cape Town's housing proposals for an area adjacent to Maitland Garden Suburb did not like

The scattering of non-Europeans from one end to the other of the city (which) was not in the best interests of Cape Town...The City should be completely zoned... so that certain sections should be set apart as European areas, others as Non-European areas and areas where noxious trades might be established."¹²⁹

This, *de facto*, creates the model of an ethnically segregated city that was to be reinforced in 1950 by the Group Areas Act. As part of the concept of ethnic segregation between sub-economic housing schemes and White housing, Bokmakirie, Bridgetown, Silvertown, Gleemoor, and Alicedale were laid out on the Cape Flats in the mid 1930s.¹³⁰ Rylands and Belgravia townships followed in 1936.¹³¹ These were all intended as segregated suburbs for Coloured residents, removed

¹²⁸ City Engineer's report 17 June 1930

¹²⁹ Housing & Estates Committee Minutes: 10 May 1928

¹³⁰ Bickford-Smith et al, p149

¹³¹ Housing & Estates Committee minutes 15 June 1936

from the slum areas of the city. They were primarily dormitory suburbs, consisting solely of 'cottages' at this time, although flats were built during the war years.



Figure 5.5

Layout of Alicedale Township

Already in 1932, proposals were being published for the comprehensive replanning of central Cape Town.¹³² There was a call for zoning regulations as the projected housing schemes led to an outcry from ratepayers. "These housing schemes are for the poorest inhabitants and in Cape Town the problem is complicated by the question of colour, so that it is only right that they should be most carefully located."¹³³

By 1940 City Engineer considered that the way of tackling the question of slum clearance and rehousing of people was inadequate. In his report of 22 February 1940¹³⁴, he pointed out that over a large area of Districts Six and Seven "slum conditions prevail by reason of congestion of building, small building sites, dilapidated structures, overcrowding, lack of open space and an extremely bad layout of the area." He contended that the only solution lay in less overcrowding by the reduction of the inner city population. He concludes that:

An examination of the district reveals that the only satisfactory method of creating any substantial improvement and to remove slum conditions is to carry out a replanning scheme on drastic lines and on such a scale as to

¹³² AB&E January 1932 p6

¹³³ AB&E November 1932 p27

¹³⁴ City Engineer's Report of 22 February 1940 to Housing & Slum Clearance Committee

practically wipe out the existing layout.... Decentralisation must take place as the area is overcrowded and the surplus population must be moved elsewhere if healthy conditions are to be achieved



Figure 5.6

Hanover Street in District 6 in the 1960s

As Pinnock points out, "urban planning cannot be separated from political and economic considerations.... Cape Town ...was to throw up some particularly brutal solutions."¹³⁵ He relates the replanning of Cape Town that culminated in the so-called Foreshore Scheme of 1947, proposed by the French architect, Beaudouin, and endorsed by Prof. Thornton-White (Head of the Architecture School at the University of Cape Town), to the modernist planning influence of Le Corbusier. This was first

¹³⁵ Pinnock p 150

shown in the scheme for Cape Town put forward at the town planning congress held in Johannesburg in 1938, where the architect and planner, Norman Hanson paid "tribute to the colossal achievements in creative thought of Le Corbusier."¹³⁶ Le Corbusier had stated that

In terms of town planning the flat may be considered as a cell. Cells, as a consequence of our social order, are subject to various forms of groupings, to co-optations or to antagonisms, which are an essential part of the urban phenomenon... It is possible by a logically conceived ordering of these cells to obtain freedom through order.¹³⁷

This authoritarian viewpoint can also be linked to Foucault's assessment of the Panopticon "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that ensures the automatic functioning of power."¹³⁸ The English architectural historian Colquhoun identifies an anti-liberal, anti-democratic attitude amongst the modern movement architects of Europe who were looking for a position that mediated between Marxism and capitalism, and who consequently adopt authoritarian design principles.¹³⁹

Scott goes on to point out that for Corbusier the doctrine of the 'Plan' was based on centralisation. "Functional segregation was joined to hierarchy His city was a 'monocephalic' city." ¹⁴⁰ He also shows that "Le Corbusier had no patience for the physical environment that centuries of urban living had created. He heaped scorn on the tangle, darkness and disorder, the crowded and pestilential conditions of Paris and other European cities..."¹⁴¹ His words are reflected in an article published in Cape Town in 1934 pointing out that

History has a habit of repeating itself not only in Johannesburg but in Cape Town too. We think that our difficulties (are) singular and exceptional. But they are the same sort of difficulties as those that beset every city with a past, which has suffered a haphazard growth.¹⁴²

The article goes on to ask

"Why...don't we build new Houses of Parliament, making them part of a coherent town-planning scheme for Cape Town?...Why don't we blow up the Pier?... Why don't we do all these necessary things (?)...The answer is plain. We have little or no civic pride. 'Where there is no vision the cities perish'"¹⁴³

¹³⁶ Ibid. p155

¹³⁷ Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning* (London, John Rodker, 1929) p 211

¹³⁸ Foucault, p361

¹³⁹ Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p183

¹⁴⁰ Scott. p111

¹⁴¹ Ibid p106

¹⁴² AB&E June 1934 p 6

¹⁴³ Ibid p7

Le Corbusier challenged existing conditions: "We must refuse even the slightest consideration to what is: to the mess we are in now.... There is no solution here..."¹⁴⁴

Scott in his description of 'Authoritarian High Modernism' observes that:

Colonial regimes, particularly late colonial regimes, have often been sites of extensive experiments in social engineering. An ideology of 'welfare colonialism' combined with the authoritarian power inherent in colonial rule have encouraged ambitious schemes to remake native societies¹⁴⁵

For Cape Town, the precedent set in England in terms of slum control legislation and the architectural responses it produced in terms of worker housing was to be the most influential. The major period of English housing innovation had occurred with the introduction of the Garden City planning principles of Howard, first used at Letchworth, which opened in 1903. Although possibly the least innovative architecturally after World War 1, it also adopted the modernist principles of rationality and order. Reference was made in Cape Town in 1929 to housing schemes in London, Birmingham and Manchester. The architectural language is essentially historicist at this time with pitched roofs and small-paned windows, and is still grounded in the Edwardian Free Style.

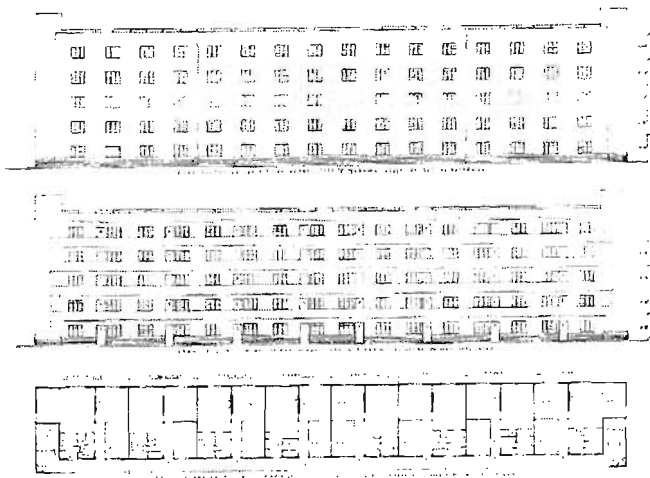


Figure 5.7 The model flat scheme proposed by the Slums Committee (UK) in 1934

But in publications on Slum Clearance in the 1930s, model-housing solutions shown are clearly influenced by notions of a-historicism¹⁴⁶. Designs have strong horizontal

¹⁴⁴ Scott, p116-117

¹⁴⁵ James C. Scott, p97

¹⁴⁶ A term used by the historian Colquhoun to describe a plain functional style of architecture that contains no historical references

emphasis; there is a lack of ornamentation; and the repetitive use of mass-produced building products such as the horizontal glazed steel windows are used as an ordering device for the facades. The roof is also flat.¹⁴⁷

Perhaps the most significant advances in social housing had been made in Weimar Germany between 1920 and 1933. Here as a result of factors such as the wartime migration to the cities, a lack of housing and foreign aid, the Social Democrats were able to put in place substantial housing programmes. What was extraordinary was the extent to which the avant-garde dominated the housing programmes as Colquhoun points out.¹⁴⁸ The housing programmes used the Garden City concept to create enclaves of new housing on the outskirts of cities. However, unlike the Garden Cities, these consisted mostly of blocks of flats of up to five storeys, laid out at right angles to the access streets to maximise light and air. They also incorporated public facilities such as laundries. They used traditional building methods except for the use of reinforced concrete for floors and roofs. Walls were generally plastered. The most extensive scheme of all was that of Frankfurt-am-Main under the direction of Ernst May. The avant-garde architects who adopted this method of design were part of the movement known as *Neue Sachlichkeit*, a notion of 'New Realism'. But it was not an entirely popular movement and there were also many architects in Germany at that time who promoted, by total contrast, the idea of a vernacular model for housing, known as the *Heimat* style, with pitched roofs and smaller windows. They polarized the debate between the two approaches and ultimately their ideas were carried forward by the National Socialists (Nazis) in opposition to the modernism favoured by the Social Democrats of the Weimar Republic.¹⁴⁹

Thus even in the birthplace of the modern movement, the appropriateness of this approach was being contested, and contradictions emerged. The programmatic modernism appears to have been more readily accepted than the transitory modernism of the avant-garde with its related aesthetic. The revolution in architecture of the 1920s and 30s was not as sweeping or as total as contemporary historians such as Siegfried Giedion implies in his book *Space, Time and Architecture*, or the slightly later writings of Nikolaus Pevsner in *Pioneers of Modern Design*

¹⁴⁷ The Council for research on housing construction, *Slum Clearance & Rehousing; The first report of the Council for research on housing construction*. London P.S. King & Sons, 1934. p94-95

¹⁴⁸ Colquhoun 2002., p165

¹⁴⁹ Ibid p168

Chapter 6

The Architecture of the inner city housing schemes of Cape Town

After all, the architect has no power over me...So the architect should be placed in another category- which is not to say that he is totally foreign to the organisation, the implementation, and all the techniques of power that are exercised in a society. I would say that one must take him- his mentality, his attitude- into account as well as his projects, in order to understand a certain number of the techniques of power that are invested in architecture...¹⁵⁰

Foucault's view outlines the elements that need to be uncovered in reaching an understanding of the housing projects of Cape Town. Heynen asserts that in Germany "The architects of the New Building were not only interested in the program of housing for the underprivileged classes for extrinsic, social reasons. They also saw it as an opportunity to realize an ascetic ideal- housing reduced to its essence, pure, minimal and authentic."¹⁵¹ She goes on to describe the modern movement architecture of Ernst May's *Das Neue Frankfurt* as "calm and not at all extreme. The contrast with tradition is striking but not totally pervasive. The rejection of all forms of ornament and the use of flat roofs and large balconies point to a deliberate tendency toward innovation..."¹⁵²

Bozdogan argues that in Turkey:

Nowhere is the ambiguity of modernism more evident than in the architecture of the house... On the one hand, it was a theme that symbolized the democratic potential of the New Architecture, whereby architects could claim service to "the people" rather than wealthy patrons, states, and institutions. On the other hand, the perception of the house as a means for reforming lifestyles epitomized the penetration of the state through experts, architects, and planners, to the traditional resistant domain of privacy, family life, and domestic order.¹⁵³

These contradictions together with the striving for a simplified aesthetic expression characterised the grappling with modernism in South Africa.

The Modern Movement in South Africa and the Architecture of Cape Town

Before the Second World War, the South African modern movement was essentially focussed in Johannesburg, led by architects such as Rex Martienssen, John Fassler, Bernard Cooke and Norman Hanson. The architectural historian Gilbert Herbert

¹⁵⁰ Foucault, *Space, Knowledge & Power*, p357 in James D. Faubion Ed, *Michel Foucault, Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, (London, Penguin, 2002).

¹⁵¹ Heynen, p48

¹⁵² Ibid, p64

¹⁵³ Bozdogan, p14

refers to the work of Roberts & Small, Max Policansky and Andrews & Niegemann in Cape Town as coming close to the ideals of the modern movement. He quotes Prof. Pryce Lewis, erstwhile head of the School of Architecture at the University of Cape Town, who suggested that the work of the 'Transvaal School' was influential in the Cape, perhaps more so than 'overseas philosophic movements', but there is little evidence of this until the post-war period. He conceded: "On the whole I think we looked at the Transvaal achievement with envy and with detachment as something rather remote and without possibility of realisation here."¹⁵⁴ Herbert notes that John Fassler wrote despairingly of the Cape Town architects: "It is obviously impossible to even venture any discussion on architectural topics which verge on the modern. What a crowd! The results are everywhere apparent"¹⁵⁵.

It must be remembered that the benchmark for modernism in South Africa that was being applied by architects such as Martienssen and Fassler was that of Le Corbusier who developed close links with the so-called 'Transvaal Group'. They took a narrow, radical view of modernism, uncompromising, with a rejection of any historical context. This was easier in Johannesburg; a relatively new city, which preferred not to look back to its mining-town roots, but rather forward to a brave new world.

Herbert claims that "Cape Town, the other principal centre of architectural journalism and architectural education was solidly conservative; and its path to modern architecture had few landmarks." His view exemplifies the differing attitudes taken to modernism in South Africa and is questionable since he uses the work of a small group of Transvaal architects as the basis for his comments.

There appeared to be much scepticism regarding the work of Le Corbusier that was being published, and the editorial of the *Architect Builder & Engineer*, the unofficial mouthpiece of Cape architects, in 1927 queried

If Beauty exists in spite of the slide rule and the machinations of the man behind it, then the provocative and cocksure French author is lost in the greatest darkness of error...He bid us admire a city of multi-storeyed houses which he has designed for our instruction but which cannot fail to provide the thoughtful with amusement merely. He needs Raymond Unwin to set him right here. It has been demonstrated beyond

¹⁵⁴ Herbert Gilbert Herbert, *Martienssen and the International Style; the modern movement in South African architecture*, (Cape Town, A.A. Balkema, 1975). p226

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid* p153

all cavil that the economic waste in storeyed building to the nth degree is astounding...¹⁵⁶

Herbert suggests that the Cape was encouraged by the work being done in Johannesburg, but that it was not related to the work of the modern movement architects of the Transvaal, nor was it regionally derived, but rather that it was drawn from overseas sources, and specifically: "the very diffident and derivative English architects, or the work of Dudok." There was, he concedes, some architectural merit in some of the work, "but it represented a dilution of intensity, when compared with the archetypal work in the Transvaal".¹⁵⁷ But, once again, it seems that the championing of a narrow view of modernism was being followed and that anyone outside of the mainstream modern movement was marginalised, including the Dutch architects such as Dudok.

But, if there appears to be a great deal of criticism of the work of Le Corbusier in Cape Town, it would be wrong to assume, as Herbert implies, that architectural design in Cape Town remained locked in a time warp. The rejection of the avant-garde modernism of the International Style was countered with an acceptance of a more mediated notion of what 'modernism' was. The South African architectural historian Chipkin describes the reaction by commercial architects in Johannesburg to the modern movement: "The commercial architects were able to take this in their stride...including the stylisms of the modern movement. This surrogate modernism was labelled at the time 'modernistic'".¹⁵⁸

Kurt Jonas, the Johannesburg-based architect and academic acerbically described 'modernistic' houses:

With senseless corner windows; with a flat roof, which is only applied as a modern feature without being utilised in any way to free the plan beneath; with glass-brick, bull's-eyes; meaningless curves, and still more meaningless corners; with horizontal glazing bars painted carmine; in short with a sprinkling of 'modern' features, which is as lavish as it is ridiculous.¹⁵⁹

The eclectic form that Jonas complained about, Chipkin describes as borrowing "Indiscriminately from the disciplines of the modern movement (but it) remained nevertheless tied by an unsevered umbilical cord to Edwardian and Beaux-Arts classicism." He goes on to note that: "It is surely ironic for a style so obsessed with

¹⁵⁶ AB&E March 1927 p3

¹⁵⁷ G. Herbert p226-227

¹⁵⁸ Clive Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style*, p89

¹⁵⁹ Kurt, Jonas, *Rand Architecture: the Modern Movement in Johannesburg*, Cape Times Annual 1938, p102.

innovation and newness that behind the surface stylisms stand the four-square axial symmetry, vestigial orders and heaviness of earth-bound Edwardian classicism.”¹⁶⁰

The 'transitory modernist' architecture that was prevalent in Cape Town in the 1930s largely reflects an 'English compromise' as suggested by Greenhaigh:

The key feature in English modern design was the space between form and content, a gap which first opened up at the end of the nineteenth century. It would be a mistake to attribute this simply to aesthetic failure on the part of the designers. Indeed, many of them showed great ingenuity in responding to the briefs they were faced with. Perhaps *structured compromise* is a more accurate way of describing their approach. This suggests that the bringing together of progressive form with regressive content was not a fault of incompetence but an inevitable expedient in an ideological climate which rendered any other approach to modernism economically, politically, and even socially unacceptable.¹⁶¹

The Cape Town architectural ethos of the 1930s largely followed this precept of compromise. Like English design of the time, there was incomprehension of the underlying principles of modernism. The modern movement was seen as a style to be assimilated into the architect's design vocabulary, much as the then still-prevalent Arts and Crafts approach of the Baker School¹⁶² appropriated Cape vernacular architecture to create a Cape Dutch style.

Practice in the city was dominated by the old, well-established architectural practices. In the absence of strong leadership from the university school of architecture, as was the case in Johannesburg, architects looked to their local journal for leadership. The north-south divide in South Africa ensured that the links between practice and media reflection on architecture would be parochial and insular.

The architectural media as mirror of praxis

In the Cape since 1917, a commercially owned journal, the *Architect Builder & Engineer*, had been produced monthly, edited in the mid-Thirties by the architect William Delbridge & Professor Snape from the School of Architecture at the University of Cape Town. Although it was referred to as the official organ of the Cape institute they did not have any financial or editorial control. When it was proposed (in

¹⁶⁰ Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style*, p94-95.

¹⁶¹ Paul Greenhaigh, *The English Compromise: Modern Design and National Consciousness 1870-1940* in Wendy Kaplan, Ed., *Designing Modernity. The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1995. p136

¹⁶² Named after the architect Herbert Baker who introduced this approach to South Africa when he practised here from 1892-1913. Many South African architects of the time were trained in his office

Johannesburg) that there should only be one official architectural journal in the Union, Snape feared that if the Cape would support an official national journal, his own province's paper would suffer, perhaps be eliminated. Delbridge reacted scornfully to the suggestion and "castigated the proposal as unrealistic and impractical. He was tremendously proud of the journal, which he and Snape edited and of which he was part owner ('We consider we have the largest subscription advertising medium in South Africa') and was appalled at 'the idea, therefore, that our journal should disappear'"¹⁶³.

The journal was the mouthpiece of Cape practice. It promoted uncritically the work of the old-established architects and warded off the modern movement agenda of the Johannesburg-based *South African Architectural Record* that was being edited under Professor Pearse by university academics such as Rex Martienssen.

Herbert goes on to explain that

This state of dynamic tension between the Cape and the hinterland, in the case of the architectural journal, paralleled that which existed in education. The rivalry, which existed, stemmed from hostilities on both sides, traditional in nature. Neither side was guiltless, when it came to putting provincial partisanship before the broader issue of national unity. But the upshot of these separatist tendencies was to isolate the Cape from the mainstream of development, and to consolidate the Transvaal in its dominant position, as the centre of influence, and the focus of initiative in the architectural world.¹⁶⁴

The Cape architectural journal launched an attack on Le Corbusier and the modern movement from the start. Was this a reaction to the support that he received in the Transvaal or merely the reactionary gesture of an older generation of architects who neither understood the new architecture nor accepted its marginalizing of their work? The invective against 'the fountainhead of the International Style' is reflected in an Architect Builder & Engineer editorial in 1928 in a review of Le Corbusier's book, *'Towards a new Architecture'*

To one prominent critic, and to many who have not attained to prominence, the houses which Corbusier has erected in actuality or in dreamland are but 'filing cabinets for families', lacking all grace, spirituality, emotion, beauty- call it what you will- call it Art and have done with it. To another class of readers the book speaks of Truth, naked and unashamed, of a dropping of shams and the adoption of a new outlook on the life and practice of design.

To us the determination of Corbusier's place as a vaunted leader and director of thought in regard to modern design is easy- he isn't one!¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ G. Herbert, p16

¹⁶⁴ Ibid p179

¹⁶⁵ AB&E Oct 1928 p1

The theme of the 'filing cabinet' with regard to Corbusier's work is often repeated in this magazine. His work appears to be singled out with little reference to other contemporary European architects. By 1930 the editor considers that "Architects have long since abandoned pretentious ornament and the public neither needs nor wants house machines, office machines and the other affectations of the ultra modern architect-iconoclasts."¹⁶⁶

The Cape Town architect, Richard Day, whose own work appears to be largely derived from Stripped Classicism, commented in the journal:

Everything that is good architecturally must accelerate the modern tendencies in the human make-up...even their mode of living. The aesthetic desire of today is simplicity, honesty and a clear indication of purpose.

The term "Modernism" as applied to the arts is probably one of the most criticised today...cold cubist architecture. The term is based purely on the thought; needs and ideals of the day and the artistic efforts that come nearest to expressing these can be considered modern. New forms are not justified except by necessity and, of course, it would be just as wrong to adhere to any outworn historic style, as it would be to introduce an unnecessary detail out of sympathy with the spirit of the moment... We must evolve a new mould in which to house our new constructional forms and cease draping our buildings with modernised precedent.¹⁶⁷

But it would be wrong to assume that the Transvaal architects were unanimous in their support of Le Corbusier, and indeed, the modern movement. In a critique of the new RIBA building competition in London, won by the architect Grey Wornum, the Johannesburg architect K.F. Gardiner complained in the South African Architectural Record:

Shall we eternally cringe to Corbusier, misinterpret Mendelsohn, borrow from Bruno Taut, frantically follow Frank Lloyd Wright, dance to Dudok and oscillate to Ostberg?

Architecture cannot be permanently be debased by Corbusier. Do we really wish to become mechanised automatons existing in living 'machines'? Do we consequently intend to obliterate without a qualm all that has gone before?¹⁶⁸

But, naturally, supporters of Le Corbusier, such as Rex Martienssen, rebutted the criticisms saying: "A class of English architects (notorious for their half-understanding of, and outdated attitude to architectural problems) once took up Corbusierism as a

¹⁶⁶ AB&E June 1930 p5

¹⁶⁷ AB&E October 1930 p6

¹⁶⁸ SAAR July 1932 p181

rather exotic architectural coating and used this to colour an occasional 'modernistic design'"¹⁶⁹

However this did not deter the editors of the *Architect Builder & Engineer*, and in a comment on the Russian experiences of the Cape Town architect Henk Niegemann, who criticised the poor construction of Le Corbusier's building in Moscow, they say:

The illustration given does not specially interest us because it was something that happened to a design by Corbusier in particular. With some, his is a name to conjure with, that of a superman, the high priest of functionalism, the creator of sphere harmonies, while to others he may be but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal¹⁷⁰.

The architecture that the journal supported was a much more conservative form, largely the output of the more senior members of the profession whom the journal undoubtedly regarded as superior.



Figure 6.1 Avalon Flats in Sea Point by Roberts and Small- 1935 as illustrated in AB&E

They also opposed the training of architects at a university, favouring the apprenticeship form instead. In these attitudes they reflect the attitude prevalent in Cape Town in the 1930s. The journal supported, for example, the 'modern' architecture shown in Roberts & Small's two blocks of flats in Sea Point; Dorchester and Avalon Flats built in 1935 that were very tentative experiments with Modernist forms, both with symmetrical plans, rounded balconies, White walls, and horizontally glazed windows, the latter, it may be noted, is the first South African modern building to be published in the conservative pages of the *Architect, Builder and Engineer*, and is called "this block of flats, which is treated on modern lines..."¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ SAAR July 1934, p 4

¹⁷⁰ AB&E Jan 1939, p1

¹⁷¹ AB&E, Nov 1936, p 11

The Cape-based journal is unquestionably a clear reflection of architectural practice in the province (Port Elizabeth is also extensively covered). Its illustrated work draws almost exclusively on the built or proposed work of Cape architects with few international examples. It might be questioned whether the *South African Architectural Record* was indeed a reflection of the prevailing *Zeitgeist* in Johannesburg with its divergent architectural approaches, or rather a 'propaganda' mouthpiece for the modern movement. The magazine illustrates the work of a limited number of architects at this time and most illustrated work is unquestionably modern movement derived. Its role could be more clearly seen as a promoter of 'good' progressive design produced by the reflective practitioner rather than reflecting architectural praxis.

The Housing projects of Cape Town City Council

Locating Housing in the City

But the most significant implementation of a modern architectural approach was in the field of housing, in Cape Town as in Europe, and, interestingly enough, on a much broader scale as housing was not the focus of the Transvaal Group of architects whose interest in houses remained with the elite of their cities.

From the late 1920s on, the City Council had started to look at potential sub-economic housing sites both in the City and on the Cape Flats. A number of inner city sites were proposed, but they were, in the main, small parcels of land and not adequate for the large scale housing projects that the Central Housing Board wanted. Of the three slum areas that both Council and media attention had been focussed on, namely, District Six, Jerry Street area, and the Bo Kaap, only the two inner city housing schemes that are the focus of this study, were carried out in the 1930s. They were the Bloemhof Flats adjacent to Canterbury Square, and the Schotsche Kloof Flats. The Jerry Street land was considered by the City Engineer to be too expensive. No other schemes were carried in the inner city. A proposal for a competition on a site above Lion Street was, after detailed discussion with the Institute of Architects and the appointment of assessors, abandoned.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes: 15 February 1934

Beyond the Pale: Housing in Greater Cape Town

Kalk Bay Housing

At the time the Schotsche Kloof Scheme was being proposed, consideration was also being given to the 'slum' area of Kalk Bay, which was inhabited by fisherman. Initial proposals to move them to near Retreat were strongly resisted.



Figure 6.2 Kalk Bay Flats

In March 1937 a Flat scheme was approved for them at Kalk Bay, with two storey buildings providing 48 units.¹⁷³

The architecture was much more conservative than the Schotsche Kloof or Bloemhof proposals. The blocks have pitched roofs and vertical windows with a more traditional, conservative character, quite unlike the 'modernism' of the inner city schemes. But it must be remembered that, despite the focus on the work of modern movement architects in Weimar Germany, there were many architects even there, who believed that domestic architecture should follow vernacular models with pitched roofs and small windows as had been suggested by Muthesius. This so-called *Heimat* style gained support from the National Socialists and the extreme right as the modernists were marginalized and discredited in Hitler's Germany¹⁷⁴. Even in Sweden, the new architecture of the late 30s and early 40s, although closely associated with social reform, mediated between modern and tradition to create social housing projects that were also typified by pitched roofs and small windows.¹⁷⁵. This is indicative of the contradictions that existed in architecture at the time.

¹⁷³ Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes: 30 October 1937; 6 Dec 1937; 7 March 1938; 6 March 1939; 2 Feb 1940

¹⁷⁴ A. Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p168

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p195-6.

Kewtown Flats



Figure 6.3 Kewtown

number out on tender. The layout ominously reflected Le Corbusier's planning layout as interpreted for central Cape Town in 1938, separated, not by parks, but by acres of concrete and tarmac.

On the Cape Flats, the Kewtown (Initially Q-Town) flats were being built with the first block ready for occupation in 1941. It had been suggested at the time that this would become "a town the size of Bloemfontein."... City Planners believed that all that was actually needed was actually putting together a few blocks of low-cost flats."¹⁷⁶ By 1944, Kewtown had 224 flats with double that

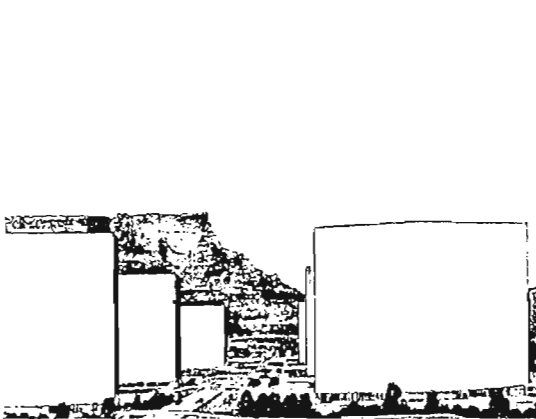


Figure 6.4 The 1938 Modernist Proposal for Cape Town is reflected in the Kewtown flats of 1944 (Photo 2004)

The selection of the architects for the Inner City schemes

The architects of the two schemes under consideration were appointed in quite different ways. The Canterbury Bloemhof architects were appointed almost by default, whilst the architects of the Schotsche Kloof Scheme won an architectural competition for that project. Architectural competitions were used in South Africa for the design of public buildings that were considered to be very important. This was the first housing scheme for which this approach was adopted- an indication, possibly, of the importance attached to the high visibility of the scheme in the city.

¹⁷⁶ Jeppie, p123

The City Engineer generally preferred to have the architectural work done 'in house', despite the fact that there appeared to be no Chief Architect at this time, since reference is made to the 'Chief Architectural Assistant' in Council minutes. When instructions were given to proceed with the design of the Bloemhof Flats, the City Engineer explained that he did not have the capacity and that an external architectural practice should be appointed. The decision as to who these should be was left up to the councillors. Nepotism seems to have been at play here as three names were put forward; Martin Adams-whose father was a councillor and sat on the committee, Simon Chapman, and Ian MacGillivray.

No reasons are minuted as to why these three architects should be considered, although all three were well-established architects in Cape Town. Chapman did a great deal of work in the 1930s¹⁷⁷, largely commercial but including flats in Kenilworth¹⁷⁸ and in Mowbray.¹⁷⁹ His commercial buildings were Art Deco in character, symmetrical, and ornamented. MacGillivray had been in practice with William Grant. (MacGillivray & Grant) They were responsible for, among others: the Long Street Baths in 1904-8; the Salesian Institute in Green Point in 1910 and the Alhambra Theatre in 1912.¹⁸⁰ MacGillivray was thus a much older architect who had worked in Edwardian Freestyle. Martin Adams designed a number of houses as well as the Stakesby Lewis Hostel in District Six and the Board of Aid Nursery and Hostel on the corner of Constitution and Canterbury streets, that is, on the lower corner of the Canterbury Bloemhof Flat scheme.¹⁸¹ He was ill when the decision finally was taken by the Council on the appointment of the architects for the Bloemhof Flats and Chapman and MacGillivray were appointed by the City Engineer as architects-in-association.

¹⁷⁷ SAHRA database of architects practising in the W. Cape, SAHRA

¹⁷⁸ AB&E Feb 1938

¹⁷⁹ Ibid Feb 1939

¹⁸⁰ SAHRA database of architects practising in the W. Cape, SAHRA

¹⁸¹ AB&E November 1938



Figure 6.5 Board of Aid Nursery and Hostel by Martin Adams, cr. Canterbury & Constitution Sts.

The City Engineer presented the departmental proposals for the Schotsche Kloof Scheme to the Housing & Slum Clearance Committee in October 1937.¹⁸² Once again the problem of lack of architectural staff was raised and as a result the City appointed a 'Chief Architect (Housing)'. He was the Edinburgh-trained architect P.J. McManus, who came to the City from the Durban Municipality. It is interesting to note that the Johannesburg modern movement architect, Douglass (sic) Cowin, had also applied for the position.¹⁸³

It was decided that in view of the prominence of the Schotsche Kloof site that it should be the subject of a competition. The practice of John Perry & Lightfoot won the competition and was appointed by June 1939; although the City Engineer and some councillors still considered that the City Engineer's department should undertake the project instead of the winner.

¹⁸² Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes 1 November 1937

¹⁸³ Ibid 6 June 1938

Architectural character of the Inner City projects



Figure 6.6 The Bloemhof Flats (The enclosure and plastering of the balconies is a recent change)

In both the Bloemhof and the Schotsche Kloof schemes the blocks are placed with regard to the orientation, contours and seek to avoid formalist layouts. They were designed to include community spaces and facilities. In both, the architectural character was regarded at the time as being 'modern'. The buildings use standard steel horizontal glazed windows and both schemes have facades that are strongly horizontal in expression, with plastered walls and both use their balconies and entrances as contrasts, a device found in a number of European prototypes. In both schemes the balconies are horizontal elements. Both also use the entrance staircase tower as a contrast to the horizontality of the blocks with a vertical expression. But there is essentially no ornamentation on the buildings, although ribs that would now be considered 'Art Deco' in character mark the entrances. The schemes were considered to be 'purely functional' in appearance, budgetary constraints leading largely to the more functional appearance.



Figure 6.7 The Schotsche Kloof Flats

In her evaluation of the Frankfurt scheme for Westenhausen, Heynen notes the “systematic seriality punctuated but the variety in the character of the open spaces creates a neutrality and homogeneity...”¹⁸⁴ This draws comparison to the two schemes in Cape Town although the Schotsche Kloof scheme does have pitched roofs.

The architecture of the *Neue Frankfurt*, Heynen asserts, “lacks a number of salient features that are fundamental to the work of other avant-garde architects. Flexibility, mobility and dynamism, for instance- essential elements in Giedion’s concept of modern architecture- do not predominate there.”¹⁸⁵ Since there was not any intention to destroy the old but rather to create juxtaposition between old and new, nor is there any radicalisation of modernity, but rather a desire to build as much as possible within the shortest time, Heynen identifies this as a characteristic of programmatic modernism. Once again, this juxtaposition between old and new could be used to describe the architecture of both schemes in Cape Town.

Bozdogan describes the Turkish architects who tried to dissociate modern architecture from cubic forms. The architect Abidin Mortas wrote in 1936 that “modern architecture does not mean horizontal windows, flat surfaces and wide terraces. It is the most logical and aesthetically sophisticated solution to modern psychological and sociological needs” She goes on to say that “he suggested that modern architecture was formally indeterminate, acquiring shape only in the specific

¹⁸⁴ Heynen, p61

¹⁸⁵ Ibid p64

circumstances at hand, thereby effectively negating the stylistic uniformity claimed by a more doctrinaire and canonic modern movement.”¹⁸⁶



Figure 6.8 Turkish Housing Project for Ankara

Canterbury-Bloemhof Flats

Background: The transition of Wells Square from ‘slumdom’ to modern housing scheme



Figure 6.9 Canterbury Bloemhof Flats

In considering the first of the schemes to be designed and built, the Canterbury-Bloemhof Flats, it is necessary to begin by examining the background to the site, which had gained notoriety as Wells Square.

¹⁸⁶ Bozdogan p 238

Wells Square was regarded as the epitome of the squalor of the District Six slums. Jeppie points out "Public housing and sanitation were invariably related in the rhetoric of the urban reformers."¹⁸⁷

The Square was often quoted in connection with poor housing conditions in Cape Town.

Impenetrable to outsiders, 'The whole of Wells Square can be likened unto a fort, having a number of narrow inlets, which lend themselves to barricading.'...Neighbours also feared it...In 1916 a petition from 250 citizens complained of brothels and other unmentionable activities in the area¹⁸⁸

Already in 1927 the Medical Officer of Health issued notices to vacate premises in the Square.¹⁸⁹ Further demolition notices are issued in March¹⁹⁰ and June 1928¹⁹¹ and In November 1930 it was reported that the City Council had been acquiring land in Wells Square area with the view to reduce the crowded conditions prevailing there. In August 1931 King's Building, a notorious slum building in Wells Square, District Six, was offered to the Council for £6 500, but refused. The "old associations connected with the building would prevent respectable people from residing there." Nevertheless, demolition notices were issued in October on a number of properties in Wells Square, many of which were unoccupied at the time.¹⁹²

In November 1931, in an apparent *volte face*, the Citizen Housing League passed a resolution "that in view of the number of cottages condemned and demolished without replacement, and the inadequate housing accommodation for non-Europeans within the City proper, the Citizens' Housing League urges the City Council to consider the erection of a number of flats similar to the one built in de Villiers Street."¹⁹³

They went on to ask "What are Council's intention with regard to Well's Square?" as it is the general feeling of the League that Flats should be on it similar to the Constitution Street flats with a number of open spaces in the centre. The Mayor felt that the solution to the housing problem lay in the erection of further flats in the vicinity of Well's Square.¹⁹⁴ But after inspection of the area on the 7th December 1931 it was felt that it would be inadvisable to erect flats in the Square while the King's

¹⁸⁷ Jeppie p119

¹⁸⁸ Bickford-Smith et al, p147

¹⁸⁹ Housing & estates Committee minutes 21 November 1927

¹⁹⁰ Ibid 15 March 1928

¹⁹¹ Ibid 21 June 1928

¹⁹² Ibid. 20 Aug 1931

¹⁹³ Housing & Slum clearance Committee minutes 9 November 1931

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 9 November 1931

Building was in existence. This was only finally acquired after the Slums Act came into operation.

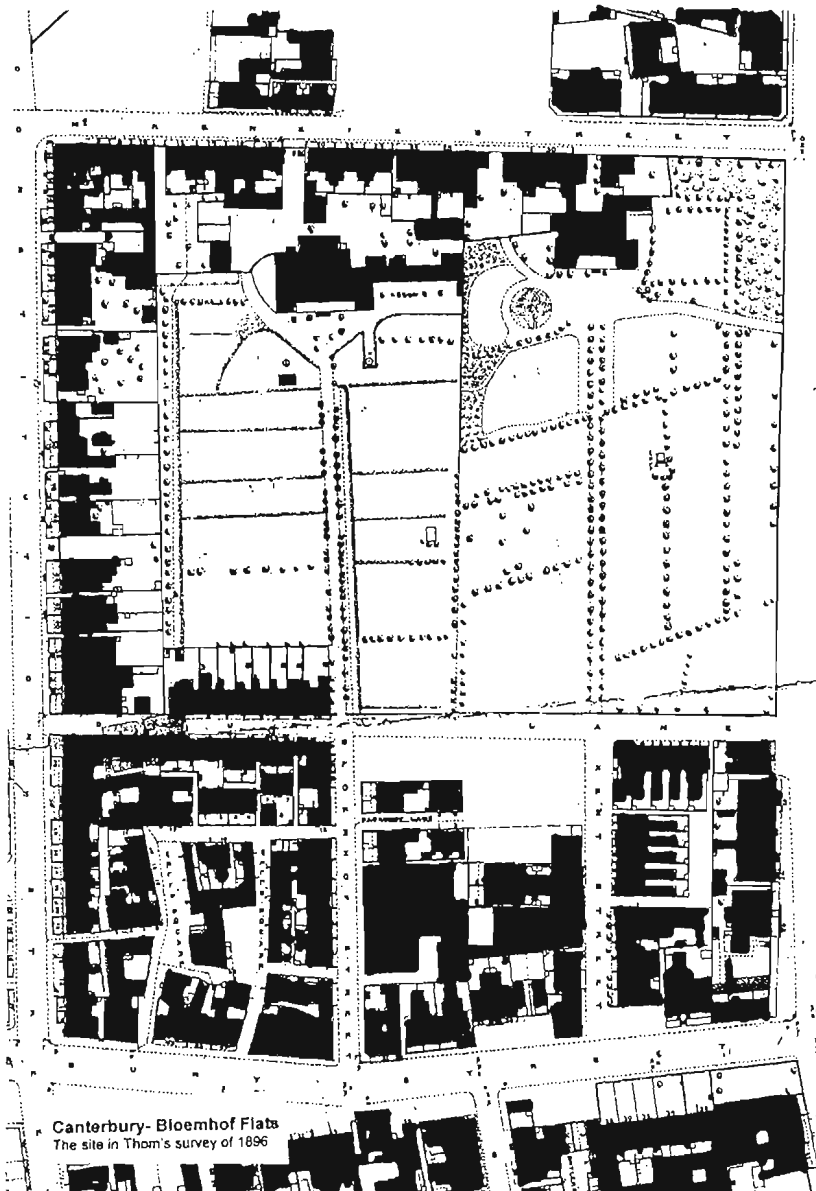


Figure 6.10 Wells Square and the Bloemhof site in Thom's Survey of Cape Town 1896

In 1932 approval was given to erect flats on part of Wells' Square although some of the land was only actually acquired two years later under the Slums act of 1934. The portion, which was acquired earlier, was used for the first blocks designed by the City Engineer's Department in 1932.

In May 1932 the *Architect Builder & Engineer* reported that the "reduction and prevention of overcrowding requires the closure of insanitary, dilapidated or unfit dwellings and the improvement or removal of slums". Cape Town has "already fulfilled this condition in the area known as Wells Square which has been greatly

improved. (However it) needs greater powers of expropriation like the Housing Act No.14 of 1925 of the United Kingdom."¹⁹⁵

On the 15th December 1932 the Chief Architectural Assistant, Mr Angelini, informed the Committee that the Council has passed a proposal for the erection of three blocks of flats at Well's Square. The City Engineer then submitted plans showing the same number of flats but in two blocks in order to comply with Building regulations. This two-block scheme was then approved. These blocks, with their hipped corrugated iron roofs and external staircases are in contrast to the simplified architecture of the later blocks and highlight the difference between a more orthodox approach to housing and the modernism of the Chapman & MacGillivray design.



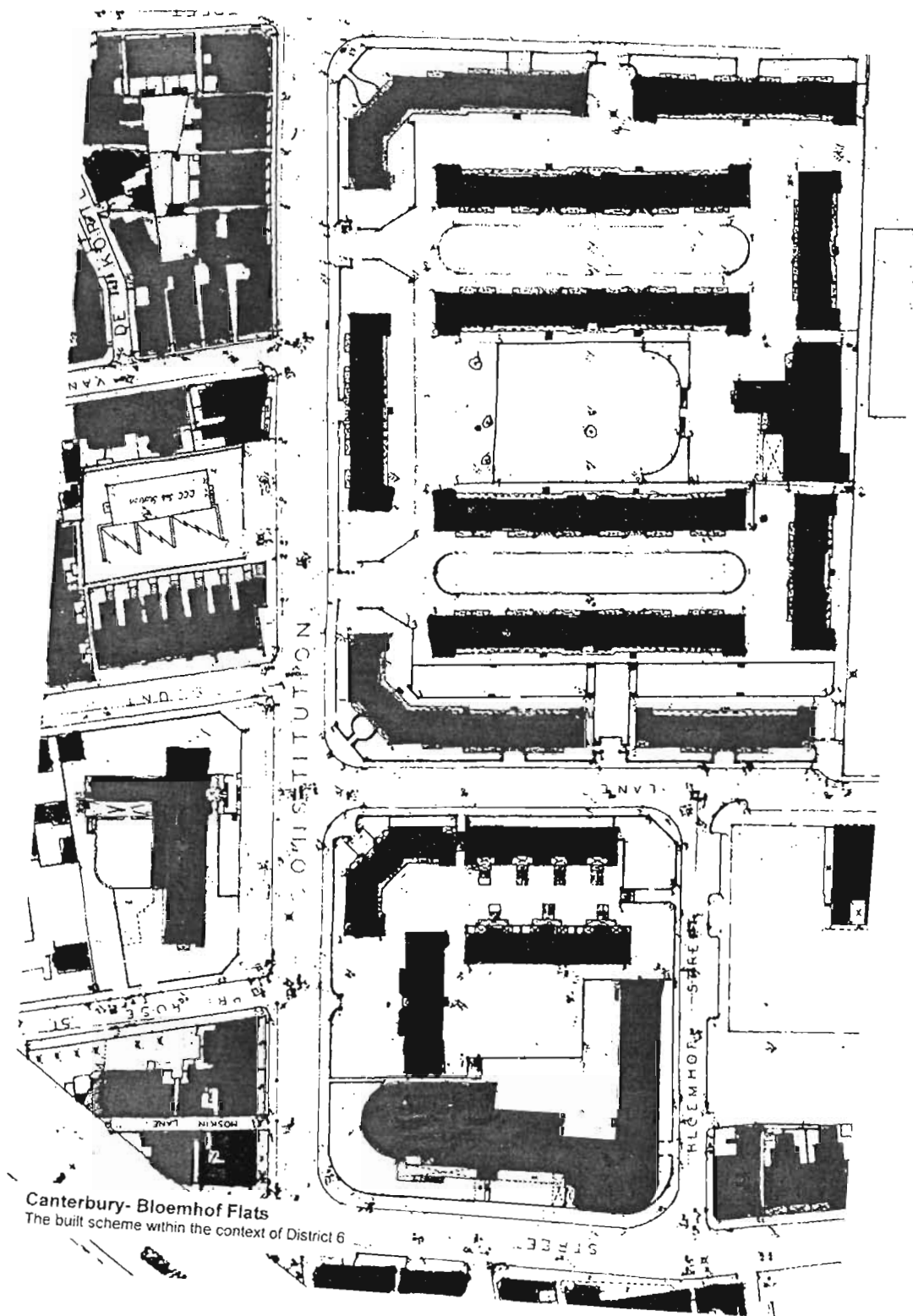
Figure 6.11 The first two blocks that were built on Canterbury Square in 1932 are very different in character and style to the later blocks. Coetzer describes the layout as being "like three cottages stacked on top of each other."¹⁹⁶

On the 18 October 1934, the mayor changed the name from Wells Square to Canterbury Square. As Jeppie notes: "It was not enough to raze the buildings to the ground and then rebuild new houses: the space had to be renamed and recast in a new language. Memory would be its only location."¹⁹⁷ The next major change to the site would come after the implementation of the Slums Act of 1934 and after the vision of a planned and controlled city had been postulated.

¹⁹⁵ A B&E May 1932

¹⁹⁶ Nicholas Robert Coetzer, *The Production of the City as a White Space. Representing and Restructuring Identity and Architecture*, Cape Town, 1892-1935 (University College London, PhD thesis, 2003)

¹⁹⁷ Jeppie, p 120



Canterbury- Bloemhof Flats

The built scheme within the context of District 6

Figure 6.12 Canterbury-Bloemhof Flats layout in 1945 (CTCC)

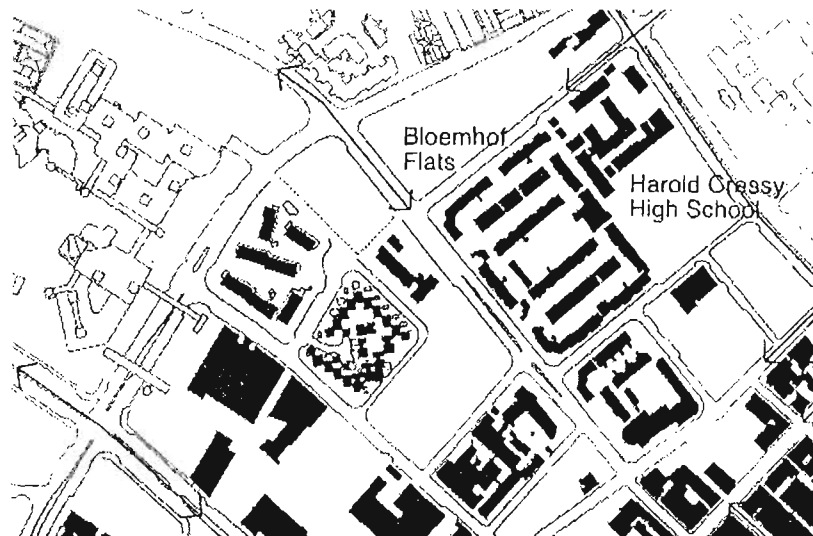


Figure 6.13 Locality Plan of the Canterbury-Bloemhof Flats as in 2003, with the former context of District Six largely destroyed.

In June 1935 the City Engineer reported that although he had been instructed to prepare designs for the now re-named Canterbury Square he did not have the necessary staff and a decision was made to appoint an architect. The council appointed the architects Ian MacGillivray and Simon Chapman for the project.



Figure 6.14 Bloemhof Flats in 1938 at the opening of the flats

The architects in association submitted a design and a report dated 10th October 1935 that sets out their reasoning for the layout and the appearance of the buildings.

We concluded that as many as possible of the Tenement Blocks standing back from the street frontages should run parallel with the contours of the land... as opposed to that of a more formal layout. The Blocks with frontages

for the scheme was debated on the 4th February 1938, more than twenty years after the calls for the demolition of the slums on the site. It read:

This tablet has been erected by the City Council of Cape Town and was unveiled by his worship the Mayor, Councillor Wm. C. Brinton on the ___ day of ___ 1938 to commemorate an important step in the City's slum clearance campaign and as witness of the City's determination to proceed steadfastly and relentlessly with the great task of the complete rehousing of the poorer sections of its citizens.²⁰⁰

A last line was to read: "Upon this site stood for many years the notorious Wells Square, one of Cape Town's worst slums." But this was removed after objections had been received from the Citizen's Housing League, who felt that this would perpetuate the memory of a place they considered best forgotten.

Schotsche Kloof

The land for the housing scheme on the steeply sloping side of Signal Hill above the Bo Kaap had been bought in 1935 as part of the slum clearance land acquisition above Chiappini Street. Although the land had never been built on, it abutted the slum clearance area.

The first proposal for the site was prepared by the City Engineer's department and presented to the Housing and Slum Clearance Committee in October 1937. The City Engineer referred to the site as "one of the most prominent in Cape Town, being visible from every angle." he suggested that the layout of the housing "should be of such a character and present such a perspective as to add to the amenities of the city."²⁰¹ Referring to the layout of the units he spoke of the "need to present a perspective in keeping with the amenities of the site. Any attempt at symmetry of design would be entirely out of place." The blocks were to be staggered along the contours to avoid 'monotony'. The architectural character was proposed "to give an effect of repose to the whole estate...(and to give) a sense of horizontality in the elevations of the building." This 'modern concept relates to an article in the AB&E noting:

Now mark the reaction in the new horizontal architecture. It makes no pact or compromises with traditional forms. They are ignored. Boxlike square projections boldly cantilever out, minus columns or ornamental brackets. There is a greater reliance on masses and bulk, a keen regard for sunlight and hygiene, a close check on the cost of upkeep and contempt of trivial detail.²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes 4 February 1938

²⁰¹ Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes 15 October 1937

²⁰² AB&E January 1938 p7

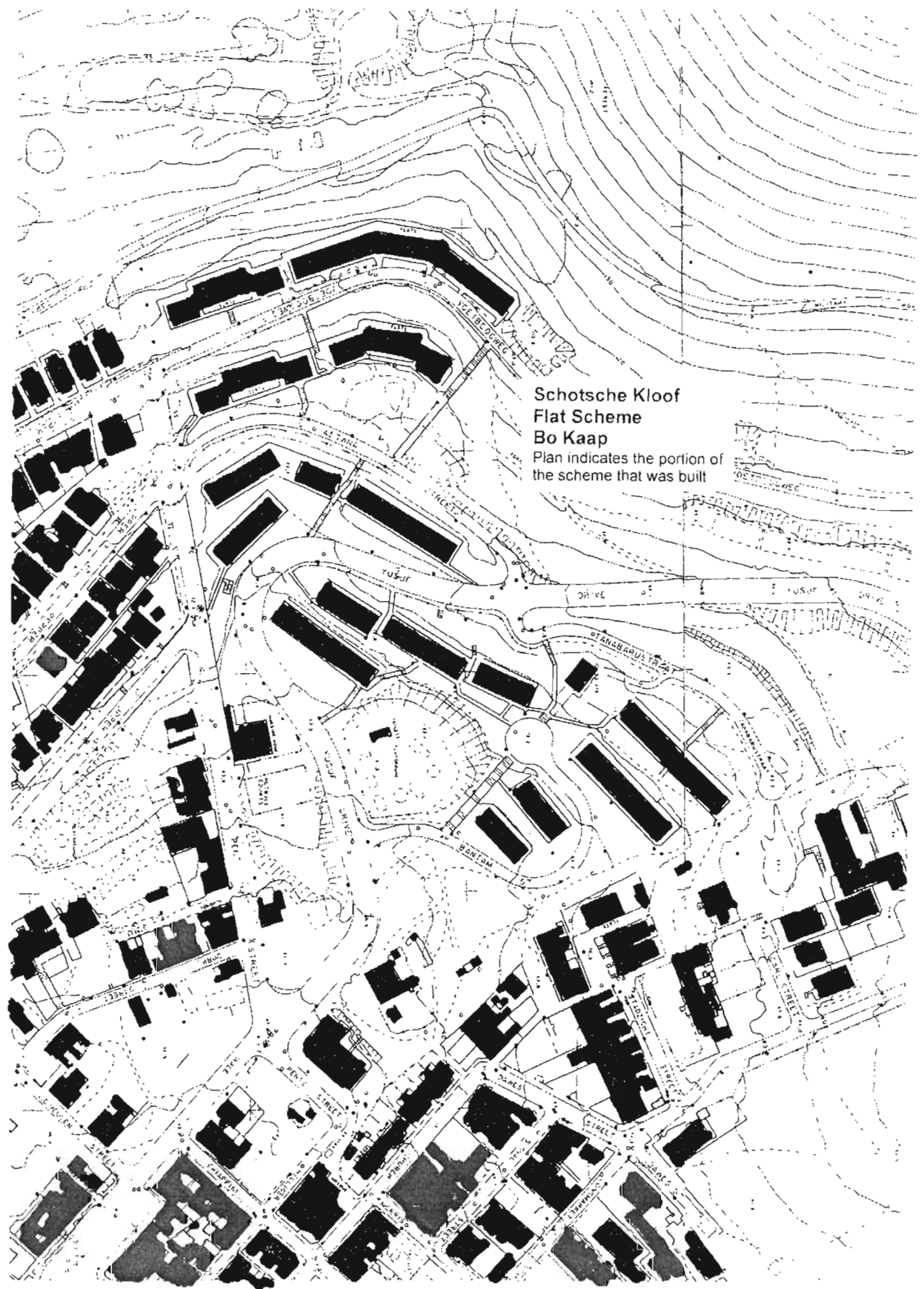


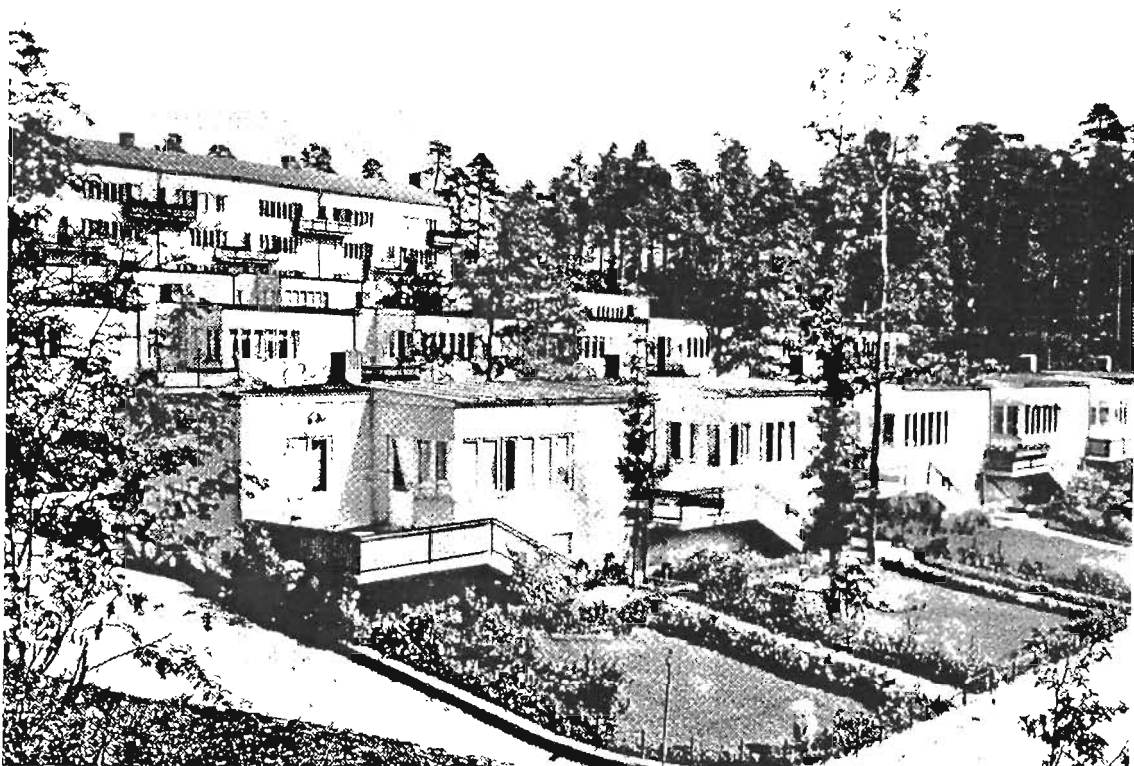
Figure 6.16 Schotsche Kloof Flat Scheme layout, showing the extent of the scheme as built

Consideration was given to the vista up Wale Street where a 'public building or school' was proposed as a focal point. The committee, with some dissenting members, felt that in view of the prominence of the site, the design should be decided by an open competition. A competition brief was drawn up and a panel of assessors drawn up in conjunction with the institute of architects. The assessors are the prominent architects Fred Glennie and John Parker with the City Council representative.



Figure 6.17 Above: Looking up to the Schotsche Kloof Flat Scheme 1938-1942

Figure 6.18 Below: Hastholmen Flats, Sweden 1932 by Olof Thunström which handles massing and layout similarly



The competition noted that the scheme was intended for the Malay community and it was suggested, "This might be reflected in the general design as contrasted with a purely modern treatment." The Architect Builder & Engineer reported that the designs submitted were, under the circumstances, disappointing.²⁰³ Of the three-premiated entries the winning entry is by the Cape Town practice of Perry & Lightfoot. A well established practice in the city, they had also won a number of other competitions including the Johannesburg public Library (1932—5) and the Magistrate's Court also Johannesburg (1934-8). Both buildings are traditional classical buildings that were strictly in the Beaux Arts tradition.²⁰⁴



Figure 6.19 Schotse Kloof- Perry & Lightfoot's competition entry

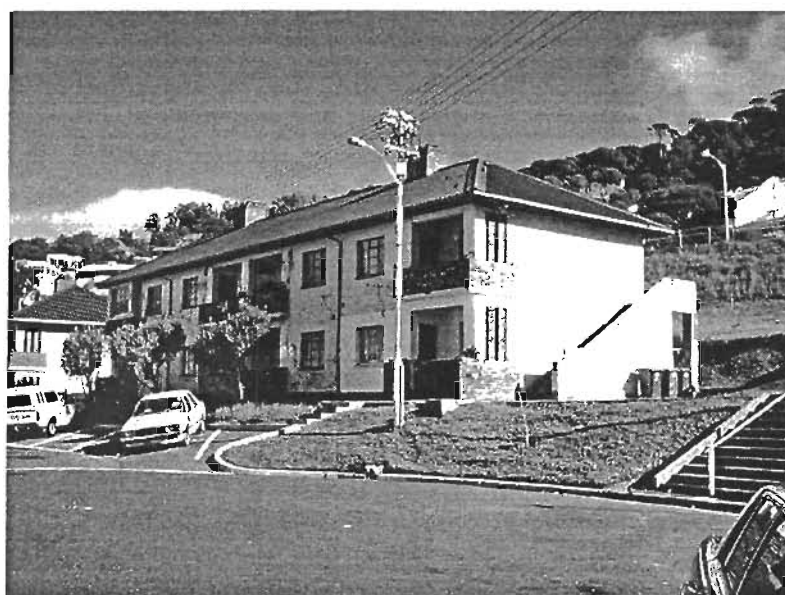
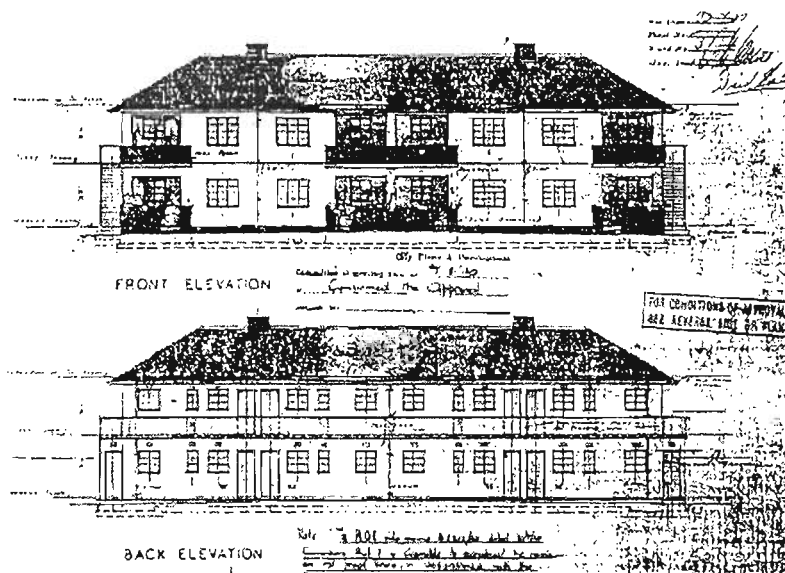
The competition layout by Perry & LightfootThe suggestion that the design should reflect a Malay character was ignored in favour of a "purely functional" treatment. However a mosque was proposed for the focal building.²⁰⁵ The AB&E believed that the scheme could have benefited by the use of flat roofs, as "The Malays being of the

²⁰³ AB&E April 1939 p5

²⁰⁴ Gerhard-Mark van der Waal, From Mining Camp to Metropolis, Johannesburg, Chris van Rensburg, 1987 p181-

²⁰⁵ AB&E April 1939 p5

Moslem faith, would welcome fine flat-roof expanses properly treated as suitable for their evening devotions." Another scheme is alluded to, number 22, as an 'also ran', despite being a good design, as it lacks 'local knowledge.' They go on to denounce the chosen site as 'entirely unsuitable', suggesting that it is 'hopeless' as a site for sub-economic flats. The scheme is condemned as being 'ridiculous in the extreme.' Le Corbusier is alluded to as the article comments "Flats have become filing cabinets for families. Who wants to file them or enfilade them?" The suggestion is made that, following the European example, "it is cheaper and better to keep your works and workers outside the city gates." ²⁰⁶



Figures 6.20 & 6.21 Architect's drawing and the built reality-1942

The design of the first blocks has a hipped roof, and projecting face brick balconies, reflecting the architectural treatment of the Bloemhof Flats. There is a similarity to the

²⁰⁶ Ibid p9

units designed in Fordsburg, Johannesburg by Douglass Cowin in 1935 who also used a pitched roof. That Housing Scheme was proposed by the Slum Clearance Association and was to consist of several blocks of flats, each block of 15 three room flats to cost approx. 6000 pounds. The blocks were three storey walk-ups, with boxed-in eaves, banded windows, white wall surfaces, and a strongly contrasting vertical stair tower.²⁰⁷

In the design of the Schotsche Kloof Flats, the architects proposed a smaller living unit, "a simplified flat" where the sleeping spaces were divided by a screen wall rather than a full height division. This was the cause of considerable controversy. It found favour with the Council on economic grounds, but some councillors objected on the grounds that it was unsuitable for "Malays (who) on the whole earned considerably more than the average Coloured person." It was suggested that the "Architect had put forward a design which was in vogue for superior Europeans."²⁰⁸ This proposal is closely linked to the *Existenzminimum* that was the subject of CIAM (Congres Internationale des Architecture moderne) 2 congress held in Frankfurt in 1929²⁰⁹.

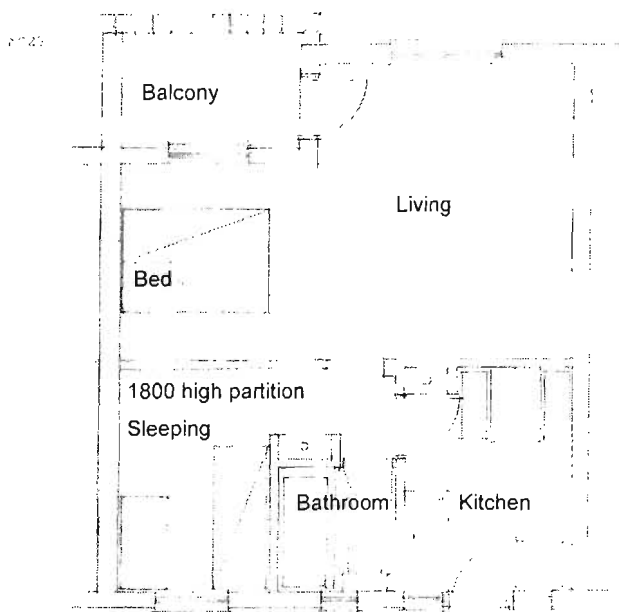


Figure 6.22 Unit designed for Schotsche Kloof as a single living unit.

The design of an acceptable minimum sized unit was central to the modern movement architects. The Perry & Lightfoot proposal does not match up to the much more considered proposals of architects such as Ernst May in Frankfurt, but it was

²⁰⁷ Herbert, *Martienssen & the Modern Movement in SA* p12

²⁰⁸ Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes 11 October 1939

²⁰⁹ Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism 1928-1960* (Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press 2000).

considered to be an experiment in ways of living, and certainly bears out Jeppie's contention that the housing was an experiment by the authorities. Among the vociferous opponents to the proposed flat was the Citizens' Housing League

The League could not possibly support the Council in connection with the one room type of flat at Schotsche Kloof. It considered that providing living accommodation for people in flats was only the second best method. It appreciated that flats had to be erected owing to the cost of the land, but this was not a desirable method of housing people with children.²¹⁰

Despite the opposition a percentage of these flats were included and they became a type of unit that was to be used on later schemes on the Cape Flats.

Modern or Modernistic?

The architecture of the two inner city projects mediates between the programmatic requirements and site. Possibly, the economic constraints of the projects led to a 'purer' form of modernism being applied than is the case with the other work of the two architectural practices.

Both schemes were clearly part of a comprehensive strategy for planning the city, thus proving the first of Jeppie's assertions to be correct. The strategies for the implementation of the housing schemes were extensions of social and political domination by spatial control of people by the city. Whether the architects were consciously part of the process or merely the instruments is hard to say from the available evidence. They appear to be applying norms that had been used in more egalitarian societies, but as Bozdogan points out, architectural form does not necessarily reflect only one political ideology. That the forms and layouts adopted make access, visibility and observation easier is apparent. Was this intentional or inherent in the design decisions taken? They seem to reflect a *Zeitgeist* that placed society above the individual, and the State above society. Individual identity is subservient to the needs of the authorities.

The last of Jeppie's assertions, namely, the use of housing as a laboratory for the promotion of modernity certainly occurred in the Schotsche Kloof flats with the introduction of new unit types that had not been used previously. Thus it would appear that both schemes corroborate the critique made by Jeppie. They strongly reflect the mediated modernism espoused by Bozdogan rather than the avant-garde modern movement ideals of Le Corbusier or the German architects.

²¹⁰ Housing & Slum Clearance Committee minutes 12 February 1940.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The new buildings were founded on the destruction of already occupied spaces-lived space- in which generations of ordinary people had made into the only homes they knew, where they had their own private and family sphere. Though living conditions were undoubtedly hard and grim, they had some tangible control over the immediate household environments. The destruction of their lived space was certainly a fundamental and disabling change in the experience of men, women and children who left it for new locations. At one level, the new Council flats were 'imposed' on the landscape; they were intrusions with extrinsic origins. At another level, they were valuable additions providing essential shelter.²¹¹

The assertion made by Shamil Jeppie that the new housing of Cape Town, following the introduction of the Slums Act, was a means of controlling people, notably, on ethnic grounds appears to be largely correct. Jeppie's recognition of the inherent contradictions in slum clearance and housing was undoubtedly an accurate reflection on both the Canterbury-Bloemhof Flats, and the Schotsche Kloof scheme. The contradictions that emerge in the debate appear to reflect not only local issues, but to highlight contradictions that emerged in the development of modernism. The debate over the transitory modernism of the avant-garde modern movement would seem to identify an underlying contestation that is not always reflected in accounts of the period. The contestation that existed between the modern movement and the *Heimat* style in Germany was also paralleled by the contestation and contradictions between modernism and conservative movements such as Art Deco in Cape Town; as well as a local *Heimat* style that emerged here from earlier Arts and Crafts building forms.

Contradictions can also be found within the politico-architectural debate of the time, both in Europe as well as South Africa. The links between modern movement and Socialism in Germany, and the linking of *Heimat*-style to National Socialism or Nazism, are reflected by the use in colonial countries, such as South Africa, of modernism- particularly programmatic modernism, as a tool of the State to express political power and control, and these reflect the inherent contradictions and complexities that emerge in a study of the influences on housing projects in Cape Town in the 1930s.

The colonial discourse of racism was not an invention of the Nationalist government that took control in 1948, but a trajectory that gathered greater momentum as the twentieth century progressed with the impact of forced removals already clearly planned and accepted by 1945. A piecemeal method of dealing with poverty and slum elimination, that began in the 1920s, was a decade later already being

²¹¹ Jeppie, p118

transformed into a piece of social engineering on a massive scale that would only culminate many decades later in the forced removal of most of the Coloured inhabitants of the inner city, with the exception of the Bo Kaap.

The City Council was the driving force behind the changes brought to both District Six and the Bo Kaap by the new housing schemes of the late 1930s, schemes on a scale that had never been done before in the city. It is clear that the architects were the instruments of the change but not the controllers of the process. Foucault was adamant in his view that architects could not bring about changes in society of their own volition. People could accept or reject their buildings. The power of the state, albeit at local level, would be the ultimate determinant of spatial hierarchy in the city.

The planning and the architecture of the both the Bloemhof and the Schotsche Kloof Flat schemes were undoubtedly conceived on 'modern' lines. But, is equally clear, one cannot simply apply the principles of avant-garde modernism to the built fabric in order to determine whether or not they represented 'modernity'. Heynen's distinction between programmatic and transitory modernism is particularly useful in this regard. It seems that the principle of 'programmatic modernism' was accepted in Cape Town before the arrival of 'transitory modernism'. Architects in the city were debating the concept of modernism and what it meant, as much as the architects quoted by Bozdogan were in Turkey. Modernism is a contested terrain, and by examining the professional media at that time, it appears that there is a 'mediated modernism' that appears in Cape Town, and doubtlessly elsewhere. Architects accepted the broad programmatic issues first. The layouts of both schemes broadly follow the tenets of modern planning as applied in Europe and avoided the mechanistic layouts proposed by contemporary British authorities. They responded well to terrain, despite clearly contrasting with the existing urban fabric. But this was also very much in keeping with the principles of modernism. Clear parallels can be drawn to the housing layout and forms that were identified by both Heynen and Colquhoun. Thereafter, the forms of avant-garde modernism were read as a 'style' and applied to the built form. They are broken down into elements and combined with more traditional forms and compositions to create a compromised modernism. In both schemes that have been considered, it appears that the stringent programmatic economic considerations led to a greater simplicity of forms and a stripping of ornamentation than was being applied to commercial buildings in Cape Town.

The study of the influences on the building of the inner city housing projects of the late 1930s raises questions about the complex and contradictory elements that drove the developments at the time. The schemes cannot be understood in purely architectural terms, or in pure socio-political terms, but it seems that there are complex inter-relationships that combined to generate the schemes. The issues of power, control and ethnicity need to be further explored to establish whether the power relations and contestations that appear in this study are reflected in other parts of the Cape Town's urban fabric. There is also a need to consider the impact of political modernism on the housing issue.

Forces of planning, control and the agenda of modernism with their inherent contradictions and contestations combined to create the inner city schemes. They were the forerunners of housing proposals that were to spread across the Cape Flats. In the later projects the sense of space and identity that these initial schemes had were lost to mechanistic layouts and minimal architectural treatment that stripped both the housing and ultimately, the occupants of their identity. Faceless, they became the stage for the violence of gang warfare and the brutalisation of the human spirit, places without hope. From these early experiments with modernism were spawned the monsters of the post-war Group Areas-regulated spaces of Cape Town.

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APPENDIX 1

Cape Town City Council planned housing schemes: 1920-1948

Date	Area where housing is proposed	Population Group	Number of units	Unit type
1920	Maitland Garden Village	Coloured	108	Cottages
1925	Athlone	Coloured	261	146 wood & iron cottages 115 concrete cottages
By 1927	Maitland Garden Village	Coloured	30	Cottages
1927	Jutland & Clovelly St, District 6	Coloured	45	Cottages
By 1927	Claremont	Coloured	36	Cottages
Ditto	Cape Flats	Coloured	87	Wood & iron cottages (loans provided)
Ditto	Cape Town	White	321	Brick cottages (loans provided)
1927	Abattoir site at Maitland	Coloured		Site rejected
1927	'Behind Kenilworth racecourse'	White & Coloured		Did not go ahead after objections by Civic association
1927	Oude Molen, Maitland	Coloured	500	Not completed
1927	Devil's Peak	White	350	Not completed
1928	Koeberg Road	White	500	Built by the Citizens Housing League Utility Company
1928	Schotsche Kloof	Coloured	105	Tenements. Never built
1929	Constitution, de Villiers, Sackville & Vincent Street block	Coloured	60	Tenement block. The first of its kind in South Africa. Largely demolished.
1929	Klipfontein Road, Athlone	Coloured	500	Workmen's flats. Never built
1929	Tamboerskloof	Coloured	504	Never built
1929	Mowbray	Coloured & white	492	Proposal for houses & flats. Never built.
1930	Athlone	Coloured	492	Cottages. Partly built.
1930	Crawford	Coloured	26	Houses built by the Citizens Housing League Utility Company
1930	Bokmakirie	Coloured	120	Cottages
1931	Sterling St. District Six	Coloured	54	Tenements. Demolished.
1932	Wells Square	Coloured	46	Flats. Part of the Canterbury-Bloemhof Scheme
1932	Rochester Estate, Salt River	Coloured & white	128	Tenements. Never built.
1933	'Above Lion St.'	Coloured	228	Competition proposed. Scheme abandoned.
1934	Bloemhof Estate & Canterbury Square	Coloured	369	Flats
1936	Jerry St	Coloured		Flats. Scheme abandoned as the CE deems land too expensive for housing.
1936	Wale, Chiappini & Rose Sts.	'Malay'	50 flats per acre	Never built
1936	Rylands & Belgravia Estates	Coloured		Houses
1936	Alicedale Estate	Coloured		Houses
1936	Hazendal Estate	Coloured		Houses
1936	Brooklyn	White		Houses
1937	Schotsche Kloof	'Malay'	582	Flats. Subject of a competition. Only partially completed.
1937	Bridgetown & Silvertown	Coloured		Houses
1938	Gleemoor	Coloured		Houses
1938	Epping Garden Village	White		houses
1939	Kalk Bay	Coloured	48	Flats. Built for fishermen.
1940	Q-Town (later Kewtown)	Coloured	152	92 Flats & 60 semi-detached cottages
1946	Hout Bay	Coloured		Semi-detached cottages for fishermen
1946	Minerton & Plumstead	White		Flats & cottages
1948	Facreton	Coloured		Houses

**APPENDIX 2
SCHOTSCHE KLOOF HOUSING COMPETITION
BRIEF: 1939**

EXTRACT (As published in Architect, Builder & Engineer: April 1939. Vol. XXII, No 8)

Clause 26

- Competitors are asked to bear in mind that the scheme is a sub-economic one and the planning should be as straightforward and economical as possible. The buildings must be constructed of fire-resisting materials and great care should be exercised to ensure economy of upkeep. The construction should, as far as possible, be vermin-proof, with particular reference to bugs.
- The buildings are intended to be occupied largely by the Malay section of the community, and the promoters suggest that this might be reflected in the general design as contrasted with the purely modern treatment.
- It must be clearly understood that the competition is in respect of flats only.
- The estate is to be wholly residential and will provide for approximately 500 flats, in addition to the site reserved for crèche, public hall and estate office, the plans for which do not form part of this competition.
- The position and levels of the roads shown on the plan of the site are fixed. The layout of the buildings and open spaces is at the discretion of the competitors, who are recommended to study carefully their relation to the main approach to the city.
- The planning, design, shape, and size of the blocks will not be restricted in any way, save that the maximum number of storeys is limited to four. It is recommended that at least 60 per cent of the blocks should be four storeys in height. Good light, ventilation, easy and direct access are essential.
- The attention of the competitors is directed to the desirability of achieving an interesting, simple and direct architectural composition with standardised planning. The blocks shall be spaced at least 1½ times their height apart. Staircases to the upper floors shall be safe and well lighted, designed as a means of access and for use as an emergency exit. It is suggested that not more than four flats per floor should be reached from each staircase.
- The walls of all passages and staircases should be lined to a height of five feet with a good quality facebrick or similar impervious material.

Clause 28 provides *inter alia* that

"no room... shall be occupied by a greater number of persons than will allow 400 cubic feet of free air space...for each person aged ten years or more and 200 cubic feet of free air space...for each person less than ten years of age.

The following are the percentages of accommodation to be provided:-

2-ROOMED FLATS (i.e. living room and bedroom No.1, with kitchen bath-room, etc.) for parents and one child under ten years- 5 per cent.

3-ROOMED FLATS (i.e. living room and bedrooms Nos.1, &2, with kitchen bath-room, etc.) for parents and two children over the age of ten years- 65 per cent.

4-ROOMED FLATS (i.e. living room and bedrooms Nos.1, 2 &3, with kitchen bath-room, etc.) for parents and four children over the age of ten years- 20 per cent

4-ROOMED FLATS (i.e. living room and bedrooms Nos.1, 2 &3, with kitchen bath-room, etc.) for parents and five or more children over the age of ten years- 10 per cent

The minimum sizes of rooms in all types of flats in feet super:

Flats to take parents and 5 or more children

Living-room	140
Bedroom No. 1	120
Bedroom No. 2	100
Bedroom No. 3	100
	120 (for 4-roomed flats to take parents & 4 children)
	120 (for 4 roomed flats to parents and 5 or more children)
Kitchen	80 (for 4 roomed flats to parents and 5 or more children)

The above minimum sizes are only a guide and it must be borne in mind that the living room and kitchen must be sufficiently large to provide for the needs of the family.

In most households meals are partaken of in the kitchen. Sufficient space must be provided to enable the whole household to partake of their meals in relative comfort.

A private balcony accessible from the living room to be provided. This balcony will have to serve as a clothes drying space, if other accommodation for such purpose is not provided. The kitchen to have standard equipment with a sink of the built-in type placed under a window.

A small, well-ventilated food cupboard against an exterior wall is essential. Means for the disposal of house refuse by chute or otherwise should be indicated.

Each flat to have a bathroom with 5-foot bath and pedestal w.c. of the standard types and the provision of facilities for holding a loose basin to enable the bath-room to be used as a laundry during washing days would be an advantage.

Power plugs for electricity are to be provided in living room and kitchen.

A brick flue carried through to the roof is to be provided for the ventilation of the kitchen.

The provision of a pram store and bicycle store, either adjoining or as part of each block, should be included in the design.

**BRIEF REPORT AND ESTIMATE OF COSTS
PROPOSED TENEMENT SCHEMES
BLOEMHOF ESTATE & CANTERBURY SQUARE
CITY OF CAPE TOWN**

We the associated architects in the above schemes have pleasure in submitting a Brief report and Estimate of costs, together with the preliminary sketches.

SITE LAYOUT

After careful consideration and deliberation we concluded that as many as possible of the Tenement Blocks standing back from the street frontages should run parallel with the contours of the land, thus keeping the cost of construction of foundations down to its absolute minimum and at the same time effecting an increase in the number of Flats as opposed to that of a more formal layout. The Blocks with frontages not set back from Streets are laid out with the desire to obtain a more formal approach and appearance in conjunction with the scheme as a whole. The general layout, in connection with this arrangement, would more adequately overcome the question of breaking up the direct force of the prevailing wind.

ACCOMMODATION

The scheme comprises two-, three-, and four-roomed units. The two-roomed units consist of Living Room, Bedroom, Kitchen and Bathroom; the three-roomed units of Living Room, two bedrooms, kitchen and Bathroom and the four-roomed units of Living Room, three Bedrooms, Kitchen and Bathroom. In planning the individual units, regard has been given as far as possible to the suggestions made by Miss Hurst, so that we have provided for small kitchens (with built-in larders), cupboards and Entrance passageways, no Bedroom less than 110sq. feet in area (sufficient to accommodate two beds), and a private Balcony to every unit; the inside Staircases have access gangways to each floor and in no instance do these serve more than six flats.

The number of flats developed in the entire Scheme is as follows:

	2	3	4
Bloemhof	63	129	84
Canterbury Square	<u>21</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>21</u>
	84	180	105

Mention must be made at this stage that the inclusion of inside staircases and also bedrooms large enough for two persons has reduced the possible number of flats obtained in this scheme as compared with the blocks of Flats already in existence in Canterbury Square.

DESIGN

The elevational treatment of Tenement Blocks has been kept simple and economical with its interest featured in the Balconies and concentrated around the Entrances and Stairways. Attention is also drawn to the fact that the main point of interest surrounding the Staircases is that they are carried up in order to give access to the Flat Roof.

CONSTRUCTION

We recommend the use of 5" Reinforced Concrete encased in ¼" Masonite. This is more vermin-proof and less liable to incidental damage. This type of construction, so far as we are aware, has not yet been attempted in this country and, in view of this fact, we have sought more detailed information, as to the current method of actual Construction from Experts overseas.

COST

In brick and mortar:

2-Roomed	£310
3-Roomed	£386
4-Roomed	£445

In Reinforced concrete

2-Roomed	£370
3-Roomed	£450
4-Roomed	£520

Signed Ian. D. MacGillivray
Simon Chapman

REPORT FROM ACTING CITY ENGINEER 9.10.1935

SITES

While it is desirable that maximum benefit should be obtained from the ground available, it is important that the buildings should not be crowded together, thus sacrificing light and air space. Authorities overseas appear to be hardening in their opinion that the number of Flats per acre should be somewhere in the neighbourhood of between 25 and 35.

In a country of sunlight such as ours there appears to be no reason why we should keep down to this figure. The Associated Architects in the preliminary layout provide 58 flats per acre on the Bloemhof Estate and 78 on Canterbury Square. This latter figure is however including the flats already constructed.

PLANNING OF FLATS

The planning of the flats is convenient but the provision of the light wells between each flat near the kitchen is expensive and can hardly be justified.

The balconies on the extreme wings of the flats lack privacy and are too far removed from the living room to enable supervision to be exercised, particularly when there are young children. It is also noted that Blocks & & 10 face due south and consequently will be in receipt of very little sunlight.

CONSTRUCTION

The suggested alternative construction in reinforced concrete with outside walls of 5" thickness is a method I am unable to recommend. Apart from it being (according to the Architects) more expensive, so far as I am aware, this method of construction has not been attempted in this country and it would be unwise to embark on this method of construction without previously having thoroughly tested it out.

The Council has not been fortunate in the flat concrete roof of several of its buildings and I am of the opinion that a pitch roof will give better service and less trouble. The total cost of 369 flats is £142 245.