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EDITORIAL: (DE)-COLONIALITY, AUTONOMY, IDENTITY, AND SPATIAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

Two decades into the current millennium, there are still questions about the status and situatedness of Africa in the global community. One central question about Africa is the historical footprint and arrangements of the colonial occupiers. From this standpoint, additional questions center on the lived experiences of Africans, especially in terms of the colonial impact on settlement arrangements and planning models. Several policy initiatives aim to empower and improve the African condition from the global to the continental levels. From the global context, the United Nations-inspired Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000 to 2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015 to 2030) are instructive. While the former goals focused on the Global South, which included the African subregion, the latter set of goals focused on both the Global North and Global South (Hanson, Puplampu and Shaw, 2018). The SDGs, especially SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), and SDG (partnership for the goals) are essential in addressing the nexus of the environment, human settlements, and global partnership. At the continental level is the African Union Agenda 2063 and its inspiring undertones of creating an Africa that Africans want based on sustainability (Africa Union et al., 2016). The important point is that both the global and continental policy initiatives have significant implications for any discussions on coloniality, autonomy, identity, and spatial justice, the issues at the heart of this special issue of the *Journal of Inclusive Cities and Built Environment*. It is thus an opportune time through this special issue to unpack how well contemporary policy and research on the continent have come to grips with the interplay between (de)coloniality, autonomy, identity, and spatial justice. The special issue aims to contribute in durable ways to the possibilities of reimagining space and place in the built environment from a decolonial lens. The reflections in this issue arise from engagement with questions of spatial difference, autonomy, identity, and change in Africa, aspects of which have become more apparent through the current debates on decolonization. These experiences form the basis of reflection stimulated in this issue to reflect on what confronts and motivates *built environment knowledge holders* in deepening the critique of past colonial injustices. The question of what the built environment (i.e., planning, urban planning, architecture, housing, social geography, and spatial planning) can do to contribute to the decolonial debate. Colonialism connotes a power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, often expressed in a superior-inferior binary in state-to-state relations (Young, 2018; Whyte, 2018; Hechter, 2020). The legacies of colonialism are visible in a post-colonial society (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Bonilla, 2020; Enns and Bersaglio, 2020, Patrick et al., 2022) and the pattern of power relations in such society (Ricaurte, 2019). While many may trace Africa's colonial realities back to the conquest and subjugation of Africa in the slave trade era (Wabah and N-ue, 2020; Masaka, 2021), one can argue invariably that the official colonialization of Africa was formalized in the Berlin conference of 1884/85, chaired by Otto van Bismark (Idejiora-Kalu, 2019; Babatunde, 2020). The implications of this event for any conceptualization of African identity in the historical contemporary contexts cannot be overemphasized. Identity, it needs to be stressed, is about a sense of self and how others recognize and response to that sense of self. Indeed, is there an African identity currently in an era of neoliberal globalization?

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The 1950s marked the onset and waves pan-African nationalistic movements and ultimately political independence in Africa (Falola and Essien, 2014; Schramm, 2016). While these waves of political independence have been a yearly celebration in practically all African independent states, the elusiveness of decoloniality in Africa cannot be over-emphasized. The continuous subtle influence of the West and other emerging global powers in post-colonial African affairs is an everyday reality. This is evident in many decolonizing discourses in contemporary times. Colonizing research (Smith, 2019), education and knowledge (Fataar, 2018; Andrews, Khalema, & Assie-Lumumba, 2015; and Absolon, 2019), and curriculum (Knight, 2018; Settler, 2019), among others are part of the daily reality in African societies. It is generally known that political independence is meaningless unless it is linked directly to broader and significant changes in the human development potential of the society. Thus, the critical question is the extent of human development of African countries since the heydays of political independence in the 1950s to the 1990s in the case of South Africa. Put differently, it is important to sketch, even in general terms, the state of Africa in a decolonized framework.

The lived experience of Africans is in many ways is one of a lack of freedom and development. Several studies on topical issues like governance, citizenship, innovation demonstrate the mixed nature of post-colonial development landscape (Ocheni and Nwankwo 2012; Khalema, *et al.*, 2013; Sesay 2014; Kanakulya 2015; Patrick *et al.* 2022; Arthur *et al.*, 2020). In the case of Southern Africa, the apartheid inequality, particularly in South Africa, is inescapable in the livelihood struggles of indigenous residents of human development (Popoola *et al.*, 2021). In Western Africa, the post-colonial legacy of spatial inequality and power dynamics underpin the shock of freedom (Archibong, 2018). At the same time, Northern and Eastern Africa continue to grapple with sustainability of governance due to the emergence of new dimensions of coloniality- oligarchy and monarchy (Monjib, 2011). The broader question is if Africa is free, especially considering the persistent forces at play in the spatial, cultural, and social life of Africans in terms of peace, justice, and human development. We maintain therefore that contemporary inattentiveness to the interplay between coloniality, autonomy, identity, and spatial justice is linked to the relative absence of critical debates on the impact of colonial and neoliberal approaches within the built environment. Despite the undisputed recognition, in an era designated as post-colonial, that the founding act of colonialism was and is the appropriation of space, the yoke between colonialism and spatiality has remained largely unexplored within the built environment. In this context, a critical examination of the ways in which the academic debates based in the global south contribute are based on problematic global north colonial impositions. Decolonising the discourse, we posit, does not only entail a critical problematization of the global north narratives about space and place, but also requires reimagination of space and place rooted in African-centered imaginations within the built environment. This special issue, against the backdrop of coloniality and post-coloniality, assesses the extent to which Africa can claim true spatial emancipation (if viable). Our specific insights arise from the abovementioned call to decolonize and Africanise knowledge and our previous works on the role of power in knowledge production, which have brought us to a point of critically interrogating if decolonising the built environment is truly possible. The aim at discussing how coloniality plays out in the lived experiences of Africa is therefore central in the issue. The authors interrogate coloniality and decoloniality by bringing different traditions and perspectives from the humanities and social sciences to bear on spatial justice within the built environment. The result is a critical and an interdisciplinary gaze and insights on how coloniality is expressed, embodied, and resisted within contemporary built environment in Africa.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

The first paper by Olaniyan on thinking and narrating to the 'de (coloniality)' of Africa was along the continued footprint of colonial planning standards in African built environment. The paper interrogates the sustainability, applicability, and the 'effect' of such standards in Africa, focusing on the residual influence of colonial planning ordinances in Nigeria. The paper reveals the fault lines of inequality and the imbalances that are deeply ingrained in major cities in Nigeria, hence the manifestation of isolated rich and poor neighborhoods within the same municipal boundary. While this configuration is typical in different realms, the paper argues that the Nigerian example reflects colonial planning ordinances which abrogated different standards for European and Native areas. This analysis is consistent with studies such as Ekeh's (1975) discourse on colonialism and the two publics, Mamdani's (2007) discourse on political violence and state formation, Popoola *et al.* (2020; 2022) on the applicability of 'Europeanised' planning standard in rural Nigeria, and Patrick *et al.* (2022) discourse on coloniality on citizenship discourse.

Olaniyan's study corroborates the impact of colonial planning ordinances in Nigeria, and this discriminatory approach created divided cities with distinct European and Native areas. The paper also argued on the disparity between law and social realities based on colonial and foreign ideas. The unrealistic importation of laws without essential considerations of Nigeria's local, cultural, and ethnic peculiarities inadvertently renders these laws ineffective, irrespective of how artfully crafted or holistic they may have been conceived. Put differently; these planning practices fly in the face of African spatial and cultural identity formations and peculiarities. The paper advocates for a strategic trajectory towards inclusivity by reviewing extinct physical planning and land use laws to address the various constructs of spatial inequalities inherent in Nigerian cityscapes. The existing lines of segregation and spatial inequalities can be bridged by adopting mixed-density development strategies and a departure from the exclusionary zoning ideals currently practiced in urban areas in Nigeria.

While Olaniyan (2022) provided a theoretical and policy evaluation of the planning standard and ordinance in Nigeria, Jimoh and Olagunju's paper, "Resident's Compliance with Colonial Planning Regulations," provides a place-based expression and applicability of the planning standard in a city area of Nigeria. Their interest was to look at the level of compliance and awareness across some selected peri-urban spaces of Oyo State, Nigeria. The paper finds a high level of non-compliance due to physical development negligence among developers, which has contributed to the emergence and development of slums in peri-urban areas. Managing the effect of developmental non-compliance requires effective local planning that is embedded in the immediate local environment and societal values.

Land, as the physical resource that drives spatial configuration and divide, occupies a central place in any analysis of spatial justice. Muringa and Zvaita explore government land resettlement approaches in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Using a systematic document review triangulated with interviews, the paper assesses current land resettlement approaches with the colonial resettlement approaches. The paper traced the colonial historicity of land settlement and resettlement in Zimbabwe and argued that the colonial regime's policies led to the racial and spatial division of land. The paper underlines the inequality of this distribution as it favored the white European minorities against the Black African majority. The post-colonial Government of Zimbabwe was confronted with this spatial problem and set out to develop resettlement policy programs to decolonize the system. However, the reform policies on land resettlement gradually shifted, based on the politics of development, giving rise to, as Fanon (1963) argued, the hijacking of the decolonization process and a more repressive than the system it intends to overthrow. This postulation implies the loss of state legitimacy as citizens continue to live in poverty.

To the authors, the land resettlement approaches and the use of laws by the government and elites in post-colonial Zimbabwe bear great semblances with those during the colonial period, which was based on elite patronage. They further argued that the status quo represents a betrayal of the idea of land reform. However, decolonization and transparency in implementing land reform policies can attract national support as opposed to resistance from the bottom or local communities.

Tecle-Misghina's paper examines the inclusive expression of *genius loci* in the urban evolution of Asmara, Eritrea. In this piece, using a decolonial conceptual framework, the author looks at the development of Asmara during the era of modernist urban planning and Italian colonial influence bearing in mind the synergies between tangible and intangible attributes of place, planning, history, and impact of various administrations. The evolution of Asmara had been influenced by dynamic and complex interactions, which formed layers of memory in place over time, that defined its *genius loci*. The place of colonial interactions in this configuration is significant. The paper maps the evolution of Asmara's urban form through settlement and planning and observes that strategic positions of Italian occupation define the city's planned spatial and infrastructural development. The paper further shows how the contemporary infrastructure of Asmara and its built form within the historic perimeter could be traced to a succession of city plans developed mainly during the colonial era. The paper affirms that the role of history cannot be downplayed in the discourse of inclusive cities and spatial justice. This is because the spatial transformation of post-colonial cities would require careful consideration of all newly built forms and refurbishments to express critical dialogues, inclusive of diversity, through critical counter-positions to the colonial forms.

Discussing the dilemma of satellite cities in post-colonial Morocco, Isikkaya and Yaakoubi analyze the implications of post-colonial imperialism on spatial planning using Tamesna, a town in Morocco. In looking at the reterritorialization policies of neocolonialists in Morocco, the paper contextualizes the discourse on satellite cities within the developing world paradigm. The underlying assumption is that colonialization has led to the growth in urban population, leading to the need for satellite cities. Colonial affiliations have influenced the solution proffered to solve the spatial issues in Morocco. The paper argues that the development of the Tamesna satellite town provides a contemporary example of the disconnection between contemporary African realities and the policy drive/action of government influenced by colonial traditions and contemporary western ideas. The authors call for a bottom-up approach in terms of inclusivity in the design and implementation of governmental policies.

Discussing the ideas around reimagining cities for the future, Jali explores the correlation between decoloniality, inclusivity and autonomy in relation to the future of cities in Africa. The paper highlights the discourse on decoloniality and sketches out an African perspective on reimagining future cities. Drawing on the discourse of sustainability in relation to smart cities and the discourse on the autonomous role in defining the future of African cities, it provides the impetus for a shift in thinking and practice to African-centred discourse in addressing sustainability in line with spatial justice. The paper provides an argument on the impact of disruptive technologies, the impact of spatial planning on an individual's socioeconomic status, and the significance of social justice and inclusivity in spatial planning. The paper stresses the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to unpacking the strategies around disrupting hegemonic powers which continue to interrupt African stability and growth.

One of such multi-disciplinary approach to promoting the African identity is the role of learning, teaching, and practice. Such an approach is imperative in the face of the continuous call for the decolonization of the African curriculum and changes in practice. Luckan decolonial thinking and practice towards the spatial transformation of the South African Built Environment from the perspective of higher education. The paper builds on and extends the implications of colonial systems presented by both Teclé-Misghina and Jali on spatial inclusivity in the Global South. Specifically, Luckan's paper reviews prevalent pedagogy, curricula, and practice modes to identify possibilities for inclusive approaches toward transformative spatial thinking and practice within the South African space. The paper also provides insights into the seemingly impossible effort by post-colonial societies to break away from the systematic hold of colonialism, specifically spatial thinking and practice based on colonial processes, methods, assumptions of reality and modes of knowledge production and transfer the implication of this continuous reliance places the African system at a disadvantage leading to marginalization and disconnection between knowledge and realities in African societies. The paper argued that the epistemological problem of disconnection between the knowledge society from the socioeconomic and cultural contexts could be traced to the system's reliance on centralized colonial western ideas. This led to a disconnect between knowledge centers and societal realities in Africa. The core of this decolonial proposition is founded on deliberate investment in forming a critical learning community rooted in a nuanced place.

Ogunsanya's paper on "Rethinking the architectural literacy of higher education institutions" also provides an excellent discourse on the colonial impact on higher education in Africa. Focusing on colonial architecture and its influences on the built environment, the article explores the chronological history of university architecture through different campus buildings. Using the example of the Howard campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, the author provides insights into the various transformations in the built environment of the university campus from its colonial inception to its evolving decolonized state through the campus buildings. A practice that captures and speaks to the making of a new 'sub-African' (and, of course, de-colonized) identity within an educational institution. The paper investigates the synergies that can be found between the progressive decolonization of the university's historical ideologies and the architectural style, form, and layout of its buildings. The paper argues that architecture could be viewed as a 'text,' a form of language that can be comprehended and interpreted through various architectural styles, elements, forms, and layouts.

CONCLUSION

All the contributions in this special volume buttress the implications of colonial history in post-colonial societies. The pervasive spatial injustice of continuing conditions in the post-colonies suggests that the basic spatial injustice that lies at its core has not been superseded. The papers in this special issue, in some way, reveal not only the prevailing challenges of transforming the colonial discourse that decenters spatial justice at the core but also how the convergence of the promising literature on spatial justice and post-colonialism impacts upon one another. Summarily, it is not an exaggeration that the legacies of colonialism have, in no small measure, helped shape the post-colonial African society politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Therefore, the implication of these discourses for spatial equality and spatial justice is worth areas of scholarly inquiry. We sincerely hope readers and scholars will find the interventions in the volume timely and worthy. We want to thank all the authors who have contributed to this volume, specifically their willingness and enthusiasm to share their research and thoughts. We also want to thank the anonymous reviewers for their time and willingness to share ideas. A special issue of any journal should acknowledge the generosity of the journal's current editors. We appreciate the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Inclusive Cities and Built Environment*, Professor Hangwelani Hope Magidimisha-Chipungu and the Managing Editor, Professor Lovemore Chipungu, and their support staff who helped in great measure for this special volume to become a reality.

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