Introduction

Enquiries into the realities represented by the connections between people and the material world of the past and the present in Cape Town are of interest to those concerned with shared built heritage in Africa. I like to think that insights flowing from these enquiries may also illuminate speculations about a future reality of interactions in Cape environments, because my interest is as much directed at heritage as at necessary and appropriate development.

A useful metaphor for such enquiries is a palimpsest: a parchment used to record words and illuminated drawings; wholly or partly wiped-off and reused many times over. What are displayed at any moment on its surface are features which are sometimes difficult to attribute to particular people or times—necessarily configured with regard to some imprints of the past which have been joined and overlaid with marks from progressively later authors.

Whatever our respective disciplinary basis—archaeology, art, history, anthropology, architecture, environmental planning and design (or what have you)—we examine the surviving material of the past, inclusive of accounts of how environments were perceived and were lived in and what they meant to some of those who were present as actors in (or were observers of) the processes of their construction, adaptation, occupation and transformation at different times. We then place interpretations on this material, sometimes making connections to issues of our own time. Our interest is how people—often particular classes of people—adapted, adapt and may choose to adapt their environment to suit their purposes. This is whether the scale of their action relates to:

- relatively small objects and implements of daily life—such as pots and other “small things”;
- an intermediate scale of shaping and inhabiting shelter and/or dwelling—such as buildings; or;
- the larger settlement scales. These larger settings tend to be comprised of very many nested elements, some simply left as found in nature, others adapted to some degree.

In this process of adaptation and construction of a landscape in which to play out life in its many dimensions, it seems obvious that people have left and continue to leave marks which speak of their individual, class, or other collective identity—some of this residue is virtually indelible and impacts on the lives of subsequent generations, some remains for a time in the jumble that we inherit, much else is ephemeral. Historically and at present, it is also obvious that at polar extremes there are those who dominate and there are the dominated: in terms of the local history at the Cape there were the colonisers and the colonised; hopefully we are moving into a less rapacious period of social relations.

1. This paper is partly based on one I was invited to prepare for ICOMOS South Africa and presented in Cape Town on 5th July 2011.
As a number of scholars have remarked, settlements, towns and cities may be read and experienced contemporaneously as both heaven and hell, the particular reading depending on the experience and perspective of the reader. Settlements and towns are the theatre of life for many people: they are manifestations, amidst much else, of posturing, of power relations in society, of conflict (hidden or blatant), as also of concord.

Identity is a forceful term, overflowing with mutating meanings, only some of which are embodied in material things made and found. I shall say nothing about identity in the abstract, deferring to those amongst you who have a better grasp of the concept and of the necessary processes for unpicking it both historically and at present. What I intend to say about identity will be interwoven in the discussion of substance and method with which the paper is concerned, insofar as it relates to landscape modification at the larger scale at the Cape.

So, the aims of this presentation are simple: first, it is to sketch some work with which I have been or am currently engaged, and which connects to the theme of shared heritage, identity construction and development; second, to expose the conceptual and methodological underpinnings of the work to the degree that this appears necessary and may contribute to unfolding fruitful debates.

The current research relates to some completed papers and projects as well as to contemplated research concerned with conservation and development planning of particular urban and rural environments at the Cape. Thus, the considerations with which I am concerned here are both reflective and critical of work already done and are aimed at helping to shape a direction for future enquiry.

The subject matter colleagues and I have probed in some projects is the shaping of space and place by people at a variety of scales, and how this is partly an inheritance from nature and, partly and culturally, from other people. The disciplinary basis from whence I approach the subject matter may best be referred to collectively as environmental design; my professional interest and education having been in architecture, city planning and urban design—where the latter is understood to include core aspects of landscape design. My principal starting points, biases or assumptions (in other words, the particular perspective from which I tend to operationalise research) may be delineated as follows:

- human action, including the construction of identity, occurs in space at many scales, and the organisation of space is important to human purposes—it is not an extraneous variable. The morphology of settlement is not neutral to urban performance or to the construction and projection of identity of individuals, groups and classes in society;
- descriptively and analytically, landscape and urban forms may be defined in terms of their skeletal frameworks, which are comprised of elemental types, on the one hand, and of particular traditions or protocols whereby the spectrum of types are brought into some topological and spatial juxtaposition, on the other. In the design and planning disciplines this is known as typomorphology—the study of landscape or urban form derived from typical spaces and structuring elements. Typomorphology as an approach to the study of urban landscapes has a relatively well developed international literature spanning over half a century, having been founded in the 1940s, and having evolved over the decades into three identifiable main schools of thought—the Italian (or Muratorian), the English (or Conzean) and the French (otherwise known as the Versailles School). We will return to some of the features of these schools of thought towards the end of this paper, for it seems that several propositions they represent may well have implications for enquiry about shared built heritage at the Cape.

The adopted approach is, therefore, that of an academic-practitioner who wishes to have his teaching, research and practice informed by adequate theory, precedent and empirical evidence. As points of departure, the paper rests on two simple observations. The first is that most of the few existing living environments of Cape Town that tend to display enduring positive qualities of liveability are the product of colonial times—in contrast and in general, the products of more recent

2. For example, see: Mumford, L (1961) The City in History, Secker and Warburg, London.
times leave much to be desired, not just because many of them were constructed under the dominant ideology of apartheid, but due to a more universal paradigmatic shift that has characterized modern town planning, and largely continues to obtain in current times. The second observation flows from the first, and is that closer examination of some of the settlement practices exercised under colonialism and shared heritage at the Cape are of relevance to debates concerning the definition of some valid principles for the physical structuring of settlement in South Africa’s current time of reconstruction and development.

So much for the introduction of approach and points of departure. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section roughly sketches the spatial development of settlement in Greater Cape Town over time, via some map reconstructions prepared on the basis of archival material about 20 years ago, as well as some other selected material. The object here is not to present a thoroughly balanced, detailed and substantiated account. Rather, it is to delineate the main outlines of spatial occupation and the evolving morphology of settlement: to refer to the opening metaphor, the aim is to sketch the main features of the palimpsest. Then, some more local—yet relatively large-scale—environments of Greater Cape Town are sketched in similar manner. In conclusion I will turn to some issues of substance and method. There is little attempt to tie the many threads up neatly in a conclusive way: the work continues to be very much in progress.

A Sketch of the Development of Greater Cape Town

The natural landscape setting is remarkable because it is defined by a beautiful interplay of sea, hills, mountains, valleys and coastal plains. To the west is the distinctive Cape Peninsula, comprising a long coastline of many points and bays, rugged mountains reaching heights of 1000

---

4. Much of the substance of this and other sections of the paper is drawn from an unpublished manuscript entitled ‘The Development of the Design Structure Underpinning the Evolution of Cape Town’ resulting from research on the development of Cape Town prepared by the author sporadically since 1977 as a consequence of funding and assistance received from a variety of sources, inclusive of the City of Cape Town and the University of Cape Town, which are here acknowledged.
meters and a number of well-defined valleys. In the hinterland to the east are long mountain ranges and inland valleys, with a semi-desert interior beyond. Lying between the two major mountainous features is the extensive Cape Flats. The topographic variety of the setting is clothed by a relatively mild, Mediterranean climate and a floral kingdom rich in species diversity.

The settlement and cultural landscape of Greater Cape Town also display a considerable diversity of patterns which are the material products and the adaptations made to the broad site by many generations of local people in pre-colonial times as well as about eleven generations of colonial and post-colonial inhabitants drawn from a wide range of backgrounds. A few outline plans reflect the historical growth of Cape Town.
Research has suggested that three planning/design paradigms have featured in the historical development of Cape Town up to the present. 5 The first two—earlier colonial, operative until about the 1840s, and later colonial, spanning from approximately the 1840s to the 1920s-1930s—were the products of Dutch and English colonial occupations, respectively. They share some features but are also different in important respects. In combination, they shaped the form of Cape Town right up to the first decades of the 20th century. 6 The third paradigm is that of modern town planning. Most of the urban ‘footprint’ of Cape Town has been shaped by the last of these models, as interpreted by the repressive social-engineering ideology of apartheid. It is common cause that the overwhelmingly crude spatial separation between different parts and functions of Cape Town has resulted in an unjust, unsustainable, sprawling and fragmented contemporary city which ill serves the majority. 7 At present there is the need to reflect on past and present town-building, and there is the opportunity to define the outline of a necessary paradigm shift for the development of a Greater Cape Town into the 21st century. 8

Early Colonial Synthesis 1: Cape Town up to the Early 1800s

With men and women of European origin and indigenous people, numerous convicts and slaves from near and far engaged in the production of Cape material culture from the early years of colonisation. They were brought to the Cape as part of the Dutch East India Company’s mercantile monopoly and coercive labour policy. Despite the significant cultural diversity, European colonial practice for the founding of colonial outposts seems to have dominated. The layout of the first

---

6. The Dutch occupation of the Cape spanned from 1652 to 1806, interrupted only by a brief intervening first British occupation (1795-1803). Formally approved by the House of Orange in 1814, the second English colonial occupation endured until 1909, when South Africa received National independence. The periods during which the suggested paradigms appear to have been operative were somewhat longer than the respective colonial occupations. This is because entrenched practices of town-building tended to be continued for some time even under the changed authority.
settlement at the Cape conformed to contemporary European tradition for the founding of colonial outposts, which had their roots in the Bastidal and other new towns of the Western European Middle Ages. Although those settlements were established in Europe by Europeans, they were part of a process of mother country expansion not dissimilar to that of later trans-continental colonialism, of which developments at the Cape are an example. As utilised at the Cape and elsewhere, the type can more properly be referred to as that of a planted mercantile town. This colonial town planning practice was codified as part of the body of the Laws of the Indies (Leyes de Indias in Spanish) by King Phillip II of Spain in 1573 and was wholly or partly utilized in the practice of settlement formation by many colonizing powers besides the Spanish during the 16th-17th centuries and beyond.

---

9. See for example: Morris, A E J (1979), History of Urban Form before the Industrial Revolutions, George Godwin Limited, London, pp. 93-118. Numerous Bastides were established in England, Wales and France during the first half of the thirteenth century, as were Spanish Poblaciones and Zahringer towns in the vicinity of the Rhine. In the mid 1200s a number of other towns with some similar features were the result of colonisation programmes undertaken by the King of Bohemia. Terre Murate were founded by the Florentine Republic at strategic positions at the outer extremities of its dominions in the last decades of the 1300s. Bastides were also established in Holland during the 13th and 14th centuries: see Burke, G L (1956), The Making of Dutch Towns, Cleaver-Hume, London, pp. 53-63.

10. The older component of the Laws of the Indies dealing with matters other than town planning (such as relations with native inhabitants) had first appeared in 1512, proclaimed by King Ferdinand II of Aragon.
The main characteristics of the settlement at that time are noteworthy, as follows:

- the plan form was that of a grid of public routes defining private building lots and central public spaces, main axes in the grid relating to major features of the surrounding setting, such as Table Bay, as well as to some internal elements such as the Company Gardens;
- settlement was compact, the outer edges were clearly defined and communal grazing land was readily accessible;\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) Hence the names Buitenkant, Buitengracht, Buitensingle, etc.
main public elements—such as the Castle and the Grand Parade, the Company Gardens and public squares and buildings—were strategically located and they helped to organise the overall public spatial structure of the town. Public buildings were the pivotal and special, or foreground, buildings of the settlement;

- with few exceptions, the town ‘blocks’ were approximately square, and were occupied by the dwellings of the majority of the inhabitants, which constituted the ‘infill’. The dwellings were the ordinary, or background, buildings on the streets and squares which they spatially defined. They were generally modest in size. It is a fact that the 1680 fourth volume compilation of the Laws of the Indies specifically includes a rule that: “they [colonists] shall try as far as possible to have the buildings all of one type for the sake of the beauty of the town.”

The plan was a general framework for organising the position of, and the relationships between, the important public spaces and unique buildings in space. It suggested a generic pattern for ordinary buildings, as a consequence of the specific dimensions of the town blocks and of the way in which they could be subdivided into individual properties. Although there was seldom a detailed plan in existence before the initial occupation of the site—the actual settlement plan, therefore, evolved as needs arose—there was a diagrammatic plan in an a-priori sense: the essential configuration of settlement was present in the minds of the colonial leadership at the Cape.

Since the individual lots were initially also used for agricultural purposes, dwellings were generally built lengthways along the road frontage, one room deep, and they contained and defined the public space. As the need arose, additional rooms were built back onto the lot into an L or U plan. Tradition and pattern books from Europe provided a range of standard plans.

The limitations imposed by these traditions and pattern book plans worked in tandem with other material constraints: the particularities of the site, the local climate and the restricted range and quality of building materials available. Collectively, the clarity of the plan and the repetition of building forms provided coherent enabling constraints, which tended to result in a settlement which was formally understandable and ‘natural’, in the senses denoted by Alexander in the 1960s and by AlSayyad and Bourdier more recently.12

Because most people were poor and dwellings were small, many activities occurred out-of-doors in appropriately demarcated public spaces: the street and the square were shared outside ‘rooms’. Ordinary functions were carried out there, as were more occasional celebrations and other significant manifestations of collective life.

The layout of sites for private use, and the minimal building development control to which they were subject, allowed for building and re-building over time, in progressively more durable materials, as well as in forms that tended to accentuate urban space continuity and the definition of public and private domains. The plan had the capacity to give guidance in a dynamic and partial way over time, much as David Crane and Romaldo Giurgola have argued the architecture of the city should in our own time.13

When the pressure for growth beyond the limits of the then existing bounds of the town was experienced in the early 1800s, it is not surprising that the planned Newmarket extension, to the east of the Castle, was configured entirely in the terms of the established urban model. Many decades were to pass before the Newmarket town-extension was filled-out by development, by which time the previously well established settlement formation practices were being overtaken by a shift in the way private development began to be more influential in settlement morphology. Some aspects of this later colonial practice are indicated by two suburbs:


those of Green and Sea Point to the west and Salt River to the east of the original settlement in Table Valley.\(^\text{14}\)

However, before we briefly examine the outlines of this *later colonial* practice, it is useful to reflect upon the transformation and taming of parts of the rural setting, contemporaneously undertaken with the gradual construction of the Cape Hamlet (Die Kaapse Vlek) in Table Valley.

**Early Colonial Synthesis 2: Considerations of Farmsteads in their Larger Setting**

Some images will serve the purpose. They illustrate that homesteads in the countryside were based on the models developed in Table Valley, and *vice versa*.

***Illustrations highlighting farmsteads of the period at the Cape***

---

TITLE: 1970

LEGEND
- FOREST
- VINEYARDS AND ORCHARD
- SUB-DIVIDED LAND

CONSTANTIA/TOKAI VALLEY
GROWTH MANAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Fig. 1.3
When examined at the larger scale, by backing right off and viewing them through plans that represent phenomena at a regional setting, we observe these farmsteads as regularised, fixed and controlled environments distinct from the broader setting where nature predominated. The layout of farmsteads often replicated the checkerboard pattern characteristic of Cape Town. Carefully squared-off fields for cultivation and pasture mimicked the general plan of the town, and avenues on the axes of homesteads provided the base lines and focal points for humanised and tamed landscapes, in a setting where nature predominated. Indeed, it is obvious from a number of examples that these miniature ‘universes’ where so constructed in space as to cohere geometrically with (and perceptually make sense of and relate to) a larger order of natural landscape, which was thereby tamed through these contrivances. Some examples of this are: the Rustenburg alignment on Devil’s Peak, elaborated with Adam Tass’s Belvedere; Die Nuwe Landen; Groot Constantia and Tokai.
It seems to me that these practices mediated between at least two dictates. Firstly, the harnessing of contextual and geographic realities at a scale larger than the homestead, such as prevailing wind directions, piedmont slopes, physical eminences, alignments of streams and wagon routes—the latter often following older game and Khoi tracks. The result tended to be adapted and evolved geometries, more complex than that possible at the base of Table Valley—a focalised natural space—because most homesteads related to more linear and sinuous natural contexts and spaces, such as inland valleys. Secondly, these practices were doubtless aimed at the construction of identity, in terms of many possible dimensions and polarities: “tamed-untamed”, in the sense of differentiating domains of pristine nature and humanized landscape fragments; “superior-inferior”, in the sense of differentiating between classes of people; and so on. Indeed, in many senses these early colonial regional settlement modification practices prefigured Benton MacKaye’s twentieth century seminal ideas about the imperative of the maintenance of the triad of domains of wilderness, rural and urban in the context of metropolitan growth.¹⁵

Desired Future Character

Schematic Adjustment to 1991 Sketch Required
Later Colonial Synthesis 1: The Green and Sea Point Suburbs\textsuperscript{16}

Facing the Atlantic, Green and Sea Point developed into the first commuter suburbs from the 1850s, by which time the British colonial presence was entrenched.

Many factors contributed to the growth of Cape Town in the latter half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, when \textit{laissez-faire} in the settlement development process really became dominant. Amongst these were: the discovery of diamonds and gold in the interior; revolutionary change in transport technology; Victorian practices of suburban land subdivision; the availability of more industrialised building components; and the establishment of many new institutions—administrative, financial and civic.

In contrast to earlier developments, which were generated as a consequence of an \textit{a-priori} plan, at least in the diagrammatic sense (whether in Die Kaapse Vlek, farmsteads or the Newmarket), developments in the area we call Green and Sea Point occurred gradually from 1816, without any \textit{a-priori} diagramme or plan. The plan evolved as a product of a process of transformation of the site from \textit{veld}, through farmland, to commuter and recreational suburb during the 1800s, as a sequence of map figures showing the development of routes in the area illustrates.

\*\*\*\*\*Map sequence showing development of Green Point and Sea Point\*\*\*\*

\textsuperscript{16} Much of the research material on which this section of the paper is based is derived from: Todeschini and Japha (1989), “Green and Sea Point Conservation Study”, illustrated 2 vol. Report to the Cape Town City Council.
The settlement morphology evolved as a result of the subdivision of estates in relation to the strong local topography, inclusive of distinctive places, and to the major movement routes along which tram transport services were developed. In contrast to the standard traditional block configuration of the old town and the Newmarket, here a great variety of suburban block-sizes materialised, as a
consequence of a context-specific series of mutually reinforcing actions and reactions by different parties. The depth and length of the blocks were organised on the basis of a range of possible building lots, which related to choices from an array of building types developed during the period: detached villas or manor houses, row and terraced houses, and special and hybrid buildings.

Later Colonial Synthesis 2: The Suburb of Salt River

Salt River, to the south-east of Table Bay and opposite Green Point (relative to the Table Valley amphitheatre), was developed rapidly, commencing in 1893. The area had not been urbanised previously because land to the west and south had been more suited to development until then. Map evidence, research and field work indicate the virtually complete and fine-grained development of the suburb by 1915. Because of its connective position between the Peninsula and the African hinterland across the Salt River, developments at Salt River were functionally very mixed and catered more to the working class than did those in Green and Sea Point.

Emergence of the suburb

Salt River thrived under transport boom conditions, especially during the South African War (1899-1902). Investment in the construction of rental housing was undertaken by numerous individuals in the vicinity of the railway workshops and of fledgling industries. Many churches, a well patronised market, retail outlets and other developments complemented the relatively dense housing fabric.

Although the development pace was rapid, no one planning or development agency directed the process. Rather, many actors were involved in, and benefited from, developments: evidence suggests that the largest single housing development ‘bite’ in the area at the time was a run of about 16 dwellings.

The heavily travelled routes, in combination with the position of railway stations and the alignment of tram services, furnished the spatial logic to the compact urban layout. The location of various land uses and the associated land values were fundamentally informed by the different levels of accessibility which the structure of major and minor routes facilitated at different points. The practice was to subdivide the land between major routes by a grid of roads, the depth and length of resulting urban blocks being organised on the basis of a range of possible building lots. Here the blocks tended to be more regular and smaller than was the case in Green and Sea Point. Housing types ranged, but row-house types—both single and double storey—predominated because they resulted in the highest dwelling densities and, therefore, afforded higher rental returns to absentee landlords.

17. Much of the research material on which this section of the paper is based is derived from: Todeschini and Japha (1986), “Salt River Conservation Studies”, illustrated 3 vol. report to the Cape Town City Council.
A Later Colonial Synthesis 3: The Groote Schuur Estates

An account of some features of the development of the significant Groote Schuur estates on prominent slopes of the Table Mountain chain is here included because it both leavens and particularises aspects of later colonial landscape transformation and construction at the Cape.

***Illustrations reflecting the development of the Groote Schuur Estates***

The personal property of Cecil John Rhodes for less than a dozen years, some four hundred and twenty hectares of land and improvements on the easterly-facing slopes of Devil’s Peak and Table Mountain were left by him to the people of Southern Africa on his death in 1902. Now a part of the Cape Town suburbs of Rondebosch and Mowbray, the visually prominent Estates are a component of the South African national heritage, and they are visited and enjoyed by many thousands of people annually. They incorporate domains of wilderness, park land, and urban fabric, and they include historic places, monuments and institutions of note. They embody the products of ecological and other historical processes. The Estates encompass as much a designed as a natural landscape: an overall contrived cultural landscape which may be interpreted to comprise ‘layers’ of values and ideals held by those people who engaged in the land’s adaptation and transformation.

Of significance to Khoi pasturalists for many centuries prior to colonialism, the easterly facing voorberg (piedmont slopes) of the Liesbeeck valley has a long history of settlement. Early colonial drawings of the area confirm the then absence of any dense forest cover and show the presence of fynbos or rhenosterbos type vegetation, other than in the kloofs where some forest scrub is likely to have survived colonial depredations.19 Later illustrations show progressive planting of various kinds in the area, both in relation to specific homesteads and in regard to the lower reaches of the mountain slopes generally.20 These representations confirm the earlier evidence of relatively dense vegetation in the valley bottom, as well as the presence of carefully aligned avenues, chiefly related to farmlands. They also show then more recent afforestation of the lower mountain slopes by a variety of tree species represented in different hues. Striking, in addition, are the splendid shimmering expanses of Silver Trees depicted on the south-easterly mid-slopes of Devil’s Peak.

In the decades following the second British occupation, many of the previous Company lands were sold to private individuals, including De Groote Schuur and Rustenburg. With the emancipation of slaves in 1834, tracts of land belonging to insolvent owners came onto the market and were sometimes subdivided and sold in parallel with Crown lands.

Cape Town was becoming more anonymously part of the British Empire and essentially regional characteristics of the built-form began to give way to the more ‘universal’ Imperial mass product uniformity of other industrialising colonial settlements. By the late 1840s horse-drawn omnibuses were in operation on the old Main Road, providing fairly regular services between the small but growing settlements located along it, such as Rondebosch and Mowbray, and the two ‘poles’ of Cape Town and Simonstown at either end. Pressures for the gradual sub urbanisation of some of these properties was mounting.21

Land development companies, often the very tram and railway companies which made such developments possible, engaged in meeting the demand for genteel villas in the suburbs. Realising the imminent suitability of this mode of transport for the southern Peninsula’s relatively isolated chain of settlements, strung out between Cape Town and Simonstown, a railway company completed a line parallel to the old Main Road as far as Wynberg by 1864. It reached all the way to

---

19. See for example: Hamilton, Lady Sophia, (1799), “Devils Peak and Table Mountain”, Fehr Collection A5634, Cape Archives.
21. This figure was prepared by Todeschini and Japha, Architects and Planners, and appears in the report prepared for the Cape Town City Council in 1990, “Rondebosch and Mowbray Conservation Study”.

Simonstown by 1890. Even before this, the subdivision of large estates adjacent to the Main Road leading to town had become the practice.22

Properties to the mountain side of the Main Road had superior natural attractions, were more valued, and a number of large estates were considered prime candidates for sub-division into suburban lots. One such property was the Groote Schuur Estate, subdivided in 1878 and sold into lots on the instructions of the owner, a Mr de Smidt.

Enter Rhodes. By 1881 he had amassed a considerable fortune and was a rising member of the Cape Parliament to boot.23

No doubt it was while attending Parliament that he gradually fell under the spell of the Cape Peninsula, and the more verdant attractions of the Liesbeeck River Valley, where he leased The Grange, which was the remaining homestead core of the original Groote Schuur estate.24 The rail and tram connections between Rondebosch and Cape Town facilitated the convenient conduct of business and politics, and of residential retreat.

During the period 1891 to 1899 and starting with Welgelegen, Rhodes proceeded to purchase numerous properties in the vicinity: his estates eventually extended from Welgelegen in the north, southwards to Kirstenbosch and present day Cecilia Forest, to Bel Ombre and parts of Wittebomen in Constantia.25 These are shown on a beautifully rendered map prepared by Bisset, a government surveyor.26 Rhodes was keen to prevent the encroachment of suburban development up these mountain slopes and to secure the land as a general asset for the future.

As soon as he had acquired Groote Schuur, he set about having it restored and remodelled by the hand of Herbert Baker, his architect, whom he had met in Cape Town. He had Baker restore the old Belvedere on the Rustenburg estate, and the homestead of Welgelegen. He also had Baker erect the Woolsack when he bought Zorgvliet, with the instructions that “it was to be a cottage in the woods”.27 In the words of the architect Kendall, a protégé and co-worker with Baker on many projects for Rhodes:

“It must be remembered that Sir Herbert was Rhodes’ adviser, mentor, and general source of inspiration in matters of art, and most especially, of course, in anything connected with architecture. ... He sent Baker to Italy, Greece and Egypt so that he might absorb the spirit of some of the classic buildings which he himself particularly admired, and the minds of the two men became closely allied in the scheming of architectural projects.”28

In order to unify his estates into a series of experiences, and so as to make them more accessible to the public, Rhodes had a carriage drive constructed linking the westernmost extremity of present day Rhodes Avenue (in Mowbray) to Newlands Avenue, a little to the south-west of Groote Schuur, roughly along the alignment of what we know as De Waal Drive and Princess Anne Avenue.29 He later extended this drive northwards so as to connect it to the Main Road to Cape Town in Mowbray and Observatory, approximately opposite the then intersection of the Main Road with Station Road.30 He also extended the main drive through his Estates north-westwards, in an arc, into the northern reaches of his stone pine and meadow land park-like landscape.

The historical record clearly suggests that the Groote Schuur Estates, inclusive of significant older and newer building complexes (and other elements such as graveyards) put in the care of Herbert Baker, were developed by Cecil Rhodes into a park-land ensemble. This was at a

---

22. A good example of this was Great Westerford (an extension of the original grant of Westervoort made in 1706), which was subdivided into 83 lots in 1850.
23. He was elected MP for Barkly West in 1880, and took his seat in the Assembly in 1881.
24. Note that it had been named The Grange by a prior owner and that Rhodes renamed it De Groote Schuur, in deference to its DEIC origin and history.
25. Initially, many of the properties were bought on Rhodes’ behalf by others, on his instructions. The name of the forest plantation derives from Rhodes’ first name.
26. The original, in need of some restoration, currently hangs in the Billiard Room of Groote Schuur.
27. It became Ruyard Kipling’s residence at The Cape.
28. Kendall letter to the Cape Times (10 September, 1928), Manuscripts and Archives, UCT.
29. The alignment of Rhodes Avenue leading up to De Meule, next to Welgelegen, was clearly shown by Thibault in 1812-13.
30. This road connection of Rhodes’ was rather tortuous, given the boundaries of the Estates in the vicinity of the Victorian cemeteries in Mowbray. Note that Station Road was then the boundary between the municipalities of Mowbray and Observatory and that it led down to Observatory Station.
time when the Park Building Movement was at the height of its popularity in Europe and North America. It was common practice then for philanthropists and city administrators to undertake major public works in their own and the community interest. Doubtless Rhodes was influenced by this movement. Perhaps he also wanted to ingratiate himself with Cape Dutch society and cast himself as a ‘landed Baron’ in the broader Cape colonial society and to make some Imperial statement—of these speculations I know little, though they may be entirely plausible.

What seems to me to be incontestable is that the landscape planting and clearing on the Estates accentuated the natural ridge lines and folds on the slopes, particularly in the northern part of the Estates, where the glades and dales between the ridge lines had previously been farmed, and where older tree plantations had already tended to have the desired effect. 31

Disagreements about the future of the Groote Schuur Estates in our own time are legion: many relate to the indigenous versus exotic vegetation debate.

Developments in the Eerste River Valley: Part of the Cape Winelands Cultural Landscape 32

This is the subject of a current and on-going project funded by an NGO concerned that neither the heritage nor the local municipal authorities are adequately coping with the proper management of the Cape Winelands. 33 The work on this strategic project appears to illuminate issues and methods relative to the identification of the complex and multi-layered heritage resources that constitute a cultural landscape as well as to the development tendencies and threats thereto, throwing into sharp relief the ‘contested terrain’ that lies between conservation and development planning.

***Map sequence showing developments in the Eerste River Valley***

31. This is suggested in some of Webb Smith’s watercolours of the 1820s and 1830s.
33. The author was approached a few years ago by the ‘Stellenbosch Interest Group’ to help them in their aim of seeking some appropriate way forward in the conservation of the Cape Winelands. The proposal tabled—that it would be strategic to systematically identify heritage resources in the Eerste River Valley and assess the current threats thereto—was adopted. The project is accordingly being led by the author, with the assistance of Ms Claire Abrahamse, in consultation with the Stellenbosch Municipality and Heritage Western Cape.
The Eerste River Valley

1938
1938
1959
Because this valley merges with the Cape Flats to the west (where the significant majority of the population of Cape Town live—in the order of 2 million), the Helderberg basin to the east (where the town of Somerset West is situated and is expanding laterally), and the historic town of Stellenbosch to the north-east, the Eerste River valley has been experiencing significant pressures for change, particularly over the past few decades and at the current time. Research in this valley points to the need for the clarification and entrenchment of the ‘wilderness-rural’ edge, called the ‘urban edge’ in statutory provisions, so as to give clear signals as to where urban (or suburban) development is entirely unsuitable, as well as to where such development could be located.

Towards a Conclusion and Some Issues of Method

I suggest that it is salutary to reflect on a few themes inherent in landscape modification at the larger scale as part of our shared heritage, operative at the Cape before the 1920s, as well as some pertinent to more contemporary times.

First, I have here highlighted the theme that liveable and reasonably well-performing living environments evolved and matured around a primary informing skeletal framework of public space and institutions: a topology comprised of the collective spatial realm and of public buildings. The thematic corollary was that the actions of many people were channelled to provide the urban ‘infill’—the ordinary buildings—as part of a ‘natural’ process. The public obligation in terms of this theme was the provision of the physical pre-conditions for a myriad private actions: scarce public resources were invested on elements that people could not provide for themselves.

The second theme was that though potentially beneficial, infrastructural services (the ‘plumbing’ of settlements) were not the form-givers in our colonial shared heritage: in the Louis Kahn, architectural design strategy sense, services featured in a servant relationship to the master role of the spatial and institutional framework.

Thirdly, there was the theme that the spatial order was so configured as to generate functional patterns that allowed large and small, formal and informal enterprises to exist in proximity to each other and to where people lived; thereby promoting convenience, the generation of livelihoods and the development of skills within society.

The fourth theme was that small-scale supplementary agriculture was an urban as well as an easily accessible peri-urban use.

Fifthly, there was the theme that, because many people were poor and obviously their dwellings had to be affordable, self-build housing was often incremental in terms of two possible dimensions: it was initially very small and was then expanded in stages; it was constructed in progressively more permanent materials over time, as resources allowed. Moreover, as an alternative, various forms of rental housing were available, as a function of market forces.

The sixth theme was that large sites could be so significantly modified that they may be termed designed cultural landscapes in contrast to so-called natural landscapes. Perhaps the romanticism of the later Victorian era was particularly evident in the work of Rhodes and Baker, yet they and Empire have gone and aspects of the landscape they constructed still find favour amongst many town dwellers and users of those landscapes.

The seventh theme, particularly here reflected in recent developments in the Eerste River Valley case cited, was and is that suburban developments are out of control and swamping the countryside, that the wilderness-rural and rural-urban edges are being severely eroded and, consequently, much of our very significant Cape Winelands landscape is being destroyed.

It is noteworthy that these themes have strong connections to city-building ideas advanced decades ago by a number of scholars: those of the triad of wilderness-rural-urban domains advanced in the 1920’s by Benton Mac Kaye; those of the Dynamic City and of the Partial Vision, proposed by David Crane and Romaldo Giurgola respectively in the 1960’s; and observations about the ‘semi-lattice’ and open morphology of Natural cities, as opposed to the ‘tree-like’ and closed structure of Artificial ones, by Christopher Alexander, also in the 1960’s.

34. The total population of metropolitan Cape Town at present is somewhat over 3.7 million.
35. Conceptually, the ‘urban edge’ is a misnomer, since it should be the ‘wilderness-rural’ edge, defined from the urban-outside in, rather than from the urban-out.
It is also notable that, each in its own way, the three schools of typomorphology alluded to in the introduction to this paper have grappled with such notions. The Muratorian school reflected that the contemporary city and so-called modern design procedures had turned their backs on the strong relation between the town and the individual building which had existed before. It argued, and through Canniggia still argues, that both didactically and in terms of settlement practice this has powerfully negative implications. The Conzean school, has developed procedures of analysis designed to uncover the morphogenesis—the self referential rules of growth and development in an urban system: I have utilized such procedures in unpicking the structure and form of earlier and later colonial settlement-making practice—our shared built heritage here at the Cape. And, the Versailles school, by far the more multi-disciplinary in its composition, tends to outline a new discipline that embodies the study of the built landscape and its production with critical design theory. All three schools “claim that the built landscape must be understood in terms of three fundamental dimensions: time, form and scales”. Methodologically, the implication is that since these dimensions characterise the subject, a number of disciplines should co-ordinate their efforts at advancing their understanding. In particular, it has become obvious that heritage practitioners should work far more closely with development planners and assist in defining a far more positive and credible settlement planning paradigm than is currently operative. The modernist paradigm is still operative, whilst we need a post-modern one.

It seems to me that current disciplinary boundaries constitute impediments to the kinds of research required: co-operation and joint work is essential.

There are cogent reasons why these themes and ideas are of relevance not only to consideration of our shared heritage but also to future town-building practice in Cape Town:

- they are predicated on a vital rather than on a reductionist and mechanistic conception of landscape and urban order;
- they indicate an overall approach which tends to focus on the most important elements of the morphology of settlement (in other words, the concern with morphology and process is selective and strategic rather than all-encompassing);
- in a context of scarcity, they require an interdependent conceptualisation of the underpinnings to public leading actions and degrees of freedom available to private responses, mindful of the potentially complex processes involved in the dynamic formation and sporadic rebuilding of settlements by many actors. In this approach the emphasis is placed on minimal urban structural actions rather than on total design and the urban order they suggest is one always in a state of becoming—it is never ‘end-state’.

The essence of the argument is that an overall framework should be promoted which seeks to protect and enable supportive and valued relationships between elements of the immediate landscape setting and city structure, on the one hand, and between these and the broader rural and wilderness setting, on the other, aimed at the interest of the common good. A permissive context for the possible definition of many identities will be facilitated in this way.

It also seems to me that through contrasting the properties of the respective typomorphologies operative in the earlier and later colonial periods at the Cape we may highlight some other important questions of method linking heritage resources management and development planning. In other words, ways of seamlessly linking the heritage we inherit with heritage we should be making and promoting for future generations!

---