TU Delft

Delft University of Technology

The Power and Powerlessness of Designing Low-Income Housing Architectures in South Africa

Methodologies

Wilcox, Afua

Publication date
2023

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Material Practices

Citation (APA)
Wilcox, A. (2023). The Power and Powerlessness of Designing Low-Income Housing Architectures in South Africa: Methodologies. In M. Schalk, K. Riesinger, E. Markus, & U. Leconte (Eds.), *Material Practices: Positionality, Methodology and Ethics* (pp. 14). Technische Universität München.

Important note
To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
Please check the document version above.

Copyright
Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download, forward or distribute the text or part of it, without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license such as Creative Commons.

Takedown policy
Please contact us and provide details if you believe this document breaches copyrights.
We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

This work is downloaded from Delft University of Technology.
For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to a maximum of 10.

MATERIAL PRACTICES: Positionality, Methodology and Ethics

Meike Schalk, Karin Reisinger, Elena Markus Kossovskaja, Uta Leconte

Practice-oriented research frequently starts from a 'material' and develops its theoretical concepts and frameworks along the way or as outcomes. Several architectural practices, often in collaboration with other disciplines, and in relation to various geographies, have already begun to radically reconceptualize knowledge production in sustainable processes from the perspective of the material.

Current discussions of materialisms have attempted to go beyond discursive processes, based on unveiling social and cultural constructions to reconsider the organization and compositions of materiality and their socio-ecological and political effects. Over the last two decades, matter, objects, 'things' and artifacts have received increasing scientific attention and become reconceptualized. These emerging theoretical and methodological directions criticize the imagination of the natural world and technical artifacts as mere resources for technical progress and economic growth.

The expansion of concepts of agency and self-organization to non-human entities, as well as the questioning of traditional notions of life and death has become critical (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2013; Haraway, 2016; Latour, 2021).[1] Karen Barad, in particular, has taught us that the relationship between ontology ('what is'), epistemology (how we know about it) and ethics has to be rethought[2] — which we understand, in this publication, as a task of creatively re-thinking processes of knowledge development in architectures based on recent shifts in the world.[3] This includes an awareness that specific material entanglements and embodied knowledges relate to various inequalities caused by racism, sexism and ableism (Truman, 2019; Yusoff, 2019).[4]

In this complex scope, thinking materialisms together with ethics has been crucial for many contributors in this publication. This collection is the culmination of a one-year long research education programme at Technical University of Munich's Department of Architecture and KTH School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm for the BauHow5 Alliance and the Swedish research school ResArc.[5] In regular gatherings starting with the international workshop for doctoral researchers, 'Approaching Research Practice in Architecture 2021' (ARPA), followed by five further modules, participants explored the matter of their research projects through open lectures by invited guests, literature seminars, workshops, peer reviews and writing sessions. The group included participants from fifteen different global universities who contributed their knowledge and experiences to the debates, all with an interest in developing their research practices in architecture.[6]

This research education programme intended to go beyond the predominant Eurocentric discourse in architectural research. We asked the following questions:

How do you work with your material and position yourself?

What are the sources of knowledge in architecture that you are aware of, what voices are included/excluded in a canon? How can we as architectural researchers contribute to a development of knowledge that results in more diverse canons? What are specific relations in your complex cartographies of knowledge?

1 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge/ Malden: Polity Press, 2013); Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC/ London: Duke University Press, 2016); Bruno Latour, *After Lockdown: A Metamorphosis* (London: Wiley, 2021).

2 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*; Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn (eds), *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012).

3 See Rosi Braidotti, 'What is Necessary is a Radical Transformation, Following the Bases of Feminism, Anti-racism and Anti-fascism', https://lab.cccb.org/en/rosi-braidotti-what-is-necessary-is-a-radical-transformation-following-the-bases-of-feminism-anti-racism-and-anti-fascism/, accessed: 5 May 2023.

4 Sarah E. Truman, 'Feminist New Materialisms', in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Research Methods*, eds P. A. Atkinson, S. Delamont, M. A. Hardy and M. Williams (London: SAGE, 2019); Kathryn Yusoff, *A Million Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

5 BauHow5 includes The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment of the University College London (UCL), Chalmers University of Technology, Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering (CUT), the Department of Architecture of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH), the Department of Architecture of the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and BK Bouwkunde of Delft University of Technology (DUT). The Swedish research school ResArc includes besides CUT also Lund Institute of Technology (LTH), and KTH School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH).

6 The programme was taught by Torsten Lange, Elena Markus, Andreas Putz at TUM, Meike Schalk at KTH and Anna Boyksen Fellow at TUM-Institute for Advanced Study, and Karin Reisinger, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, who engaged especially with the writing practices of architectural PhD education. ARPA 2021-2022 followed ARPA 2020-2021. See the publication of the first doctoral programme, Meike Schalk, Torsten Lange, Andreas Putz, Tijana Stevanović, Elena Markus (eds), 'Species of Theses and Other Pieces', *Dimensions. Journal of Architectural Knowledge*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 2022.

Technical University of Munich
Institute for Advanced Study
Lichtenbergstrasse 2 a
D-85748 Garching, Germany

Department of Architecture
Professorship of Urban Design
Designed by Alexander Schuh, Vienna
Proofreading by Lisa Coodrum, London
Printed in Austria by Gerin
Printed on Munken Lynx 80g

2023, Creative Commons,
CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
TUM School of Engineering and Design
Technical University of Munich
Arcisstr. 21, 80333 München
www.ed.tum.de
kommunikation@ed.tum.de

Material Practices:
Positionality, Methodology, Ethics
Edited by Meike Schalk, Karin Reisinger,
Elena Markus, Uta Leconte

ISBN 78-3-948278-41-0

Bios
—2

Some Words on Positionality
Karin Reisinger
—3/50

To Appreciate (Or Not) the Colonial Downtowns in Tunisia:
An Essay from Tunis, About Tunis
Khaoula Stiti
—4/49

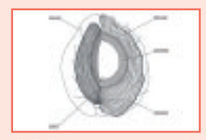
Cooperation in Architectural Conservation Challenges:
Hungarian Perspectives in Cold War International Exchanges
Helka Dzsacsovszki
—5/48

'Renewing' Green Materialism:
Louis Le Roy's countercultural positions of biodiversity in The Netherlands' Ecological Landscape
Michelle Mlati
—6/47

Collective Matters:
Self-organization As Nomadic Practice Of Making
Natalie Novik
—7/46

A Mother's Place
Maretha Dreyer
—8/45

Architecture and the Liminal Space
Deniz Köse
—9/44



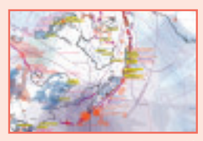
Of Coconuts and Clay
Asha Sumra
—10/43

Methodology and Methods:
An Annotated Bibliography
Meike Schalk, Uta Leconte
—11/42

Understanding the Unseen:
Caring About/For the Elderly Peasants and Migrant Workers in Desakota Landscapes in Rural China
Hongxia Pu
—12/41

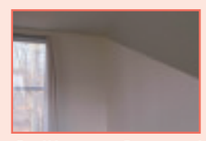
Performance-based Lighting in Educational Spaces
Stavroula Angelaki
—13/40

The Power and Powerlessness of Designing Low-Income Housing Architectures in South Africa
Afua Wilcox
—14/39



Emergency Architectures.
Approaching Methodologies for a Rapidly Changing Environment
Estefania Mompean Botias
—15/38

Imagining a Liveable Amsterdam
Soscha Monteiro de Jesus
—16/37



Ceiling as Space: Light, Colour, Corner at Ordrupgaard
Sonia Cohan
—17/36

Developing Spatial Patterned Products for Buildings
Sreeprada Gogulapati and **Neelakantan Keshavan**
—18/35

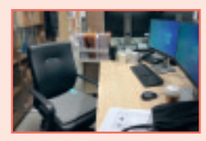
The Story Around a House
Anne Cross
—19/34

Participation as Agency Building:
Reflecting Practices of the Project Corso pro nás by Spolka Collective
Zuzana Tabačková
—20/33

Ethics: Doing With, Thinking With, Being Accountable
Torsten Lange
—21/32

Architectural Organs:
More than Human Memories
Sebastian Catz
—22/31

The Vitality of Sand: Microhistories of a Material's Impact and Witness in a 1970s Million-Program Playground
Chero Eliasssi
—23/30



Work/Space/Architecture: Burnout and the Story of a Workstation
Ekaterina Kochetkova
—24/29

Swedish Schoolyard Types Studied through the Lens of the History of Norms
Matilde Kautsky
—25/28

Redistribution as a Spatial Question: From the Valley Section to the Global Hinterland
Adrià Carbonell
—26/27

Postscript: Knowledge Cartographies
Karin Reisinger
—51

SPONSORED BY THE

Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst

IAS TUM Institute for Advanced Study Technische Universität München

FUNDED BY THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (BMBF) AND THE FREE STATE OF BAVARIA UNDER THE EXCELLENCE STRATEGY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE LÄNDER, AS WELL AS BY THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH— INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY.

BIOS

Stavroula Angelaki is a doctoral student at KTH, Royal Institute of Technology. Her research focuses on lighting design in educational spaces. She holds a bachelor's degree in interior architecture and design from the Technological Educational Institute of Athens and a master's degree in lighting design from Aalborg University in Copenhagen.

Estefania Mompean Botias is an architect and urban planner currently pursues her Ph.D. at ALICE laboratory at EPFL (2021-2025). Her research explores the Emergency conditions, the study of their ambivalences, examining the new connotations of regulation that the Emergency States are acquiring, and identifying how architecture and urban studies respond to these situations.

Adrià Carbonell is a Stockholm-based architect and urbanist. He is a lecturer in architecture and a PhD candidate in urban design at KTH Royal Institute of Technology. He is cofounder of the research collaborative Aside, where he writes on the interplay between architecture, territory, politics and the environment.

Helka Dzsacsovszki is an architectural historian from Hungary. She studied architectural history and conservation at the University of Edinburgh and is currently a doctoral candidate at the Technical University of Munich, where she is researching the developing theories on contemporary modern architecture in historic urban contexts during the Cold War from a Hungarian perspective.

Chero Eliassi is a doctoral student in theory and the history of architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology, KTH. Her work focuses on researching how the outdoor environments of the Swedish Million-Program neighbourhoods have—through a social, ecological and spatial perspective—been transformed and used after their construction.

Sonia Cohan is currently completing her PhD on representational imagery in architecture at the Royal Danish Academy in Copenhagen. She has a background in both architecture and photography, and holds a master of architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design and her bachelor of fine arts in photography from the University of Washington, Seattle.

Maretha Dreyer is an architect and lecturer at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (South Africa). She holds an MA in gender studies from University College Dublin (Ireland) and is currently a doctoral student at Hasselt University (Belgium). Her research focuses on the intersection of architecture, gender and mobility studies.

Sebastian Gatz is an architect, artist and trained car mechanic who works at the intersection of art, architecture and technology. He is currently undertaking a PhD in fine arts at Konstfack—University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm. His research combines ficto-critical and posthuman methods to explore human-nature-technology relationships. He has previously worked and taught at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts for the Centre for Information Technology and Architecture (CITA).

Sreeprada Gogulapati is a PhD candidate in the Department of Design at the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad, India. She is a Prime Minister Research Fellowship candidate. Her current research is concerned with practice-based design research. This research aims to explore the sculptural properties of Jaalis [perforated spatial screens that are common in vernacular architecture] in creating experiences.

Anne Gross is an architect and filmmaker from Berlin, based in Tokyo. She is co-founder of Studio GROSS, with projects published in Japanese and the international media, such as a video series for the CCA. Anne is also pursuing her PhD in systemic thought in the urban realm at the Tokyo Institute of Technology.

Matilde Kautsky is a Stockholm-based architect and PhD candidate in applied urban design at KTH Royal Institute of Technology, where she also teaches. She is especially interested in just cities, equal living conditions and social sustainability. Her research focuses on public spaces, like schoolyards and their architectural morphology, usage and how they are distributed in the city.

Neelakantan Keshavan is a faculty member of the Department of Design at the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad, India. He is keenly interested in design as the cultivation, preservation and proliferation of difference and heterogeneity. His research areas are visual and spatial culture, the agency of the architect, design as a discourse of visions and architecture as an active search for being at home.

Ekaterina Kochetkova is a PhD candidate in the Department of Architecture at Seoul National University of Science and Technology. She graduated with honours from the Faculty of Design at Vladivostok State University and since 2015 has been exploring the intersection of urban life, culture and architecture from the perspective of a foreigner in Korea where she relocated under the Korean Government Scholarship Programme.

Deniz Köse studied architecture at TU Darmstadt and is now a PhD candidate at the Technical University of Munich. Her research in Urban Design focuses on the democratization of urban public space in human and non-human contexts. She also works as a freelancer with projects that involve games in the context of design and architecture.

Torsten Lange is Lecturer in Cultural and Architectural History at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland. His work focuses on questions of labour and production in architecture, gendered bodies and the spatialities of care from a queer perspective. He recently co-edited the special issue of gta papers, "CARE", with Gabrielle Schaad.

Uta Leconte is a researcher in architecture and cultural theory. Her work focuses on architecture as a cultural practice in the processes of globalization, transformation and instability since the 1970s, as well as on equity, diversity and inclusion in architectural pedagogy and practice.

Elena Markus Kossovskaja has been teaching architecture theory at the TUM Technical University of Munich since 2014. In her PhD entitled (Dirty) Realism. Analogue Architecture 1983-1987, she investigated the social and political significance of an alternative architecture production with regard to the dirty realism discourse in the art and architecture of the 1980s.

Michelle Mlati is an independent curator and PhD researcher in the project Green Participation; a joint initiative between the KULeuven and Chalmers University of Technology focusing upon the history and theory of inclusive ecological landscape design in the development of green infrastructure in the Low Countries (NL) and elsewhere from the 1960s to present-day ongoing projects at the nexus of climate, ecology, design and politics. She is also a 2023 ICI Curatorial Research Fellow under the Marian Goodman Gallery Initiative in honour of the late Okuwi Enwezor researching The Forest and Desert School emerging from Sudan in the 1960s.

Soscha Monteiro de Jesus is a PhD researcher at Delft University of Technology where she investigates histories of sustainability in urban design from the 1970s until the turn of the century. She is a Steering Group member of the Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA) and cofounder of a housing cooperative in Amsterdam.

Natalie Novik is a spatial practitioner, researcher and educator. Her interests include the notion of shared spaces and self-organization, especially in the field of cultural initiatives, commoning, collective care and low-impact ways of living. She holds a master's degree in architecture and urban planning from Chalmers, and she is currently enrolled in a doctoral artistic research programme at HDK-Valand Academy of Art and Design in Gothenburg.

Hongxia Pu is a PhD student researching the 'desakota urbanity in hilly regions in southwest China' at the University of Copenhagen. In 2019 she graduated in urbanism and strategic spatial planning from KU Leuven, Belgium. During her postgraduate studies she completed five international projects and her group works have been exhibited at the 2018 Venice Biennale and the 10th International Biennale of Landscape Architecture in Barcelona.

Karin Reisinger is an architect with a PhD in Visual Culture. She teaches writing seminars at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Institute for Education in the Arts where she also leads the Austrian Science Fund research projects 'Two Ore Mountains' and 'Stories of Post-extractive Feminist Futures'. Her research foregrounds feminist perspectives from within extractive areas.

Meike Schalk is Associate Professor in Urban Design and Urban Theory and Docent in Architecture at KTH School of Architecture. Her research combines critical inquiry into discourses of social justice and democracy, and collaboration in planning and design with practice-oriented research methods. She currently holds an Anna Boyksen fellowship at the Technical University of Munich-Institute of Advanced Study.

Khaoula Stiti is an architect and a PhD candidate at Université libre de Bruxelles in Belgium. She is also an active member of Edifices & Mémoires, a non-governmental organization dedicated to preserving endangered Tunisian heritage. Her research revolves around the convergence of participatory praxis, digital mediums, and heritage awareness. Specifically, her work focuses on the colonial heritage of downtown Tunis, which serves as an example of heritage that is both endangered and contested. In addition to her doctoral studies, Khaoula explores topics related to coloniality, migration, and autoethnography.

Asha Sumra is an Architectural Designer, PhD fellow at Aarhus School of Architecture, Denmark and Visiting Faculty at Bengal Institute, Bangladesh. After studying Architecture at the University of Cambridge, UK and the Catholic University of Valparaíso, Chile, she is currently investigating how ecologies of production, exchange and residue of materials impact building culture.

Zuzana Tabačková is a founding member of the interdisciplinary collective Spolka which is active in the field of urban design in Central and Eastern Europe. Since 2017, she has also been working as a research associate in the Department for Urban Design and Development at the Institute of Urban and Regional Planning at the TU Berlin. Her work combines spatial practice, research and education.

Afua Wilcox is a professional architect and PhD researcher at TU Delft. She has extensive experience in the research and practical design implementation of affordable housing and informal settlement upgraded projects in South Africa. She has also administered a number of housing-related courses at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. Afua is currently pursuing her PhD in the faculty of architecture and the built environment, with her subject matter based on informal settlement upgrades in South Africa.

Postscript

The ARPA course included continuous writing sessions on the topics of intersectionality, thick descriptions, situated knowledges and positionality.[1] For a writing session in April, we invited the participants to temporarily escape the linear structures of text and engage in mapping the various sources and materials that each of us worked with. What are the references or sources of information for the knowledge production in process? Which people, writings, materials and concepts are important (and often neglected in a thesis)? Thus, during the course that provided the context for writing the contributions to this textbook, we took some time to reflect upon our learning processes and to reconsider from which human and more-than-human sources we have gathered knowledge, and to illustrate those sources. Our chosen format was a map that contained text, images, connective lines and arrows. The mappings that were produced contained an impressive variety of elements: texts; concepts; visualizations of people and further lively creatures, as well as materials; fields; architectures; sites; spaces and places; tools and building elements; videos; annual figures; sound recordings; people; photography; written stories and experiences. Related carefully, the maps showed interdependencies and complexities whilst they transgressed disciplinary attempts at categorization.

As much of this course was inspired, and deeply influenced by, feminist critiques of knowledge production, we need to express our gratitude to Rosi Braidotti for her constant reminders about the importance of critical cartographies that connect peripheries and centres, create awareness of old and new 'Masters' Narratives' and look at the 'micro-geographies of power relations' that rely on local and global connections.[2] When we discussed the produced micro-geographies, specific ways of addressing intersectionalities emerged during the reflections about the sources of our knowledge. Mapping, and thus not taking connections between locations and concepts, materialities and architectures for granted, turned out to be productive. It helped to overcome, or at least generate awareness of, the duality of sites and architectures to be studied on the one hand, and the places where knowledge and power relations are discussed and reproduced on the other (in academia for example).[3] Uniting the skills of architectural illustration with the feminist tool of drawing cartographies based on situating, locating and connecting interdependencies, the method of mapping knowledge production, which is always in a state of flux, was a further step to access a series of questions.

How does the material show diversity and interaction (connections, relations)?
Which complexities could be observed and how is material/architecture a part of these complexities?
How is the personal experience related to further sources? Are there contradictions?
Who are the experts anyway?
Which questions remain open? Is this openness (or silence) productive or indebted to exclusionary knowledge traditions?

When mapping feminist new materialisms, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin used cartographies to move from classificatory and linear engagements to cartographical engagements with the ability to overcome various binary oppositions. In conversation with Braidotti, Dolphijn and Van der Tuin return to the importance of not only drawing cartographies but also traversing them.[4] Using her 'feminist-materialist check-list', Sarah E. Truman suggests some starting points for qualitative research to outline a feminist contribution to materialist approaches. Truman demands that a couple of points be included; a wariness of exclusion, the inclusion of situated knowledges and intersectional concerns and the deconstruc-tion of assumptions, as well as a responsibility towards newly created networks and genealogies. Returning once more to her list, it became more obvious who and what is affirmed but also excluded by the use of specific sources being cited and collaborations chosen. It also showed the connection between situating knowledges and intersectional concerns 'being recognized alongside of a *turn to matter* and *decentering of Humanism*,'[5] concerns that were broadly shared by the participants in the course.

'Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world.'
– Karen Barad, 2007[6]

As the architectural researchers and practitioners who came together for this course, we are deeply enmeshed in the daily material practices of building and researching. We are very well equipped with spatial understanding and are able to draw or otherwise visualize connections that we have analyzed in specific places and spaces, and therefore, taking on the materialist implications and mapping them according to the inclusionary tactics of intersectional feminisims. As such, many of the texts in this contribution can be understood as generous but always situated and embodied knowledge cartographies of certain fields, architectures or problems. Giving the last word of this postscript to the cartographies of knowledge means foregrounding the challenging but productive complexity of relations and dependencies during the process of writing an architectural PhD thesis.

1 Some of the writing exercises and methodologies were inspired by Nina Lykke (ed.), *Writing Academic Texts Differently: Intersectional Feminist Methodologies and the Playful Art of Writing* (London: Routledge, 2016). For details on the course, see the "EDITORIAL" in this issue.
2 Rosi Braidotti, 'A Critical Cartography of Feminist Post-postmodernism', *Australian Feminist Studies 20*, no. 47 (July 2005): 169–108, especially page 176.
3 See also M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Cartographies of Knowledge and Power: Transnational Feminism as Radical Praxis' in *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*, eds Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 23–45.
4 Rosi Braidotti, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, 'Interview with Rosi Braidotti' in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, eds Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 19–37, here 14. See also Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
5 Truman, Sarah E., 'Feminist New Materialisms' in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Research Methods*, eds P.A. Atkinson et al. (London: SAGE, 2019), 10.
6 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2007).

Know-ledge Carto-graphies

Karin Reisinger

The Power and Powerlessness of Designing Low-Income Housing Architectures in South Africa

Afua Wilcox

METHODOLOGIES

Spatial planning in South Africa has historically been used as a tool to either connect or divide the population. The new democratic South Africa brought the promise of fully-subsidized housing for low-income households.[1] The right to adequate housing was highly charged because of the country's political history and complexity. This excerpt is a contribution towards the perspective of an architect when they are faced with the complexities of designing for mass low-income housing. It reveals the privilege, tensions and considerations in the author's personal experience and her experience with these issues through visual explorations.

Excerpt

My name is Afua Wilcox and I am a middle-income architect of colour who designs state-funded housing for low-income groups in South Africa. I do not consult my client, my client has no name, no face, I am merely given a sheet of numbers from a faceless marketing company and I am meant to create a masterpiece, hundreds of homes for hundreds of families I do not know. I am disconnected. I am told that knowing my developer and their systems is all I need to know, that it is not important to know the residents who will live in these houses. I am told that allocation processes are tricky and that I should just focus my energies on designing these houses. And my site? There are no people here, but I am told that one day, people who need houses will live here. I believe the work I do is important because I have the opportunity to help people in low-income households, build a new narrative for a new South Africa and for people from disadvantaged backgrounds who bore the brunt of the apartheid system, people who would otherwise live in inadequate housing. I believe my work has meaning; there is good design here, good design principles. I try my best but I will never know how my work is actually received by my client. I will never know how to improve my work, to create better houses for people who need them because I will never meet the people staying in these developments or see how they have interacted with the space and whether the spaces are successful or not.

South Africa has a turbulent history of discrimination and inequality.[2] South African cities were built to segregate people by race and class, and to this day they still perpetuate this format.[3] State-funded fully-subsidized housing issuing from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing built from 1994 was aimed at trying to close this gap by giving previously disadvantaged residents physical assets that were aimed at elevating their socio-economic experience.[4] It has been claimed that these policies have improved the lives of many South Africans, but fully-subsidized housing is difficult to scale and there is a severe backlog of houses while many South Africans still live in informal settlements with inadequate services and housing.

South Africa has a complicated history with many things, and housing is one of them. During the apartheid era, housing was used as a tool for segregation but in a new democratic era, it also became a symbol of hope and of a life that people began to envision for themselves with the promise of a new democratic South Africa which never lived up to its potential. This dream was bigger than just a house, a house meant security (financial and physical), it meant safety, it meant dignity and it meant a better life for future generations.[5] Housing in South Africa is fully-subsidized for people in the lowest income bracket,[6] a gift that many countries in Africa could only dream of, but many people are still waiting for this dream. Expectations were created that could not be met and some people are still waiting for land they were promised, for a house they were promised or for the promise of a better life that they deserved because of what previously disadvantaged groups had to endure. Since the introduction of the democratic government, the promise of housing, whether or not it has been realized has been used by politicians to encourage votes from low-income households.[7]

After some residents are finally given the opportunity to live the long-awaited dream, literally being upgraded from slum conditions to a brand new home made of brick, is this dream realized? Does the physical manifestation of a formally built home mean that they are satisfied, and what is it that makes them satisfied? Does the design of their home satisfy them and can the architect actually influence these aspects of satisfaction? Or is it the intangibility of the promise of a better life that leaves residents with unfulfilled expectations?

Housing policy in South Africa seldom considers the perspective of those on low-incomes, including those of informal settlement residents.[8] Not enough pre-design consultation or post-occupancy evaluation is used in order to understand the user experience of state- funded housing in the country. This is not only an issue for the future development of state-funded housing, but it also exposes the lack of participation by low-income residents in housing decisions. This issue therefore transcends the physical built environment and moves into a more political realm as researchers and practitioners of the built environment ask: are residents satisfied with their informal settlement upgraded housing? What processes are put in place to ensure that built form and socio-economic opportunities are being created to the residents' satisfaction?

The following illustrations explore, through collaging imagery related to housing in South Africa the architect's disconnection from the residents she was designing for as well as designers' lack of knowledge about, and understanding of, mass-housing projects. They are also a commentary on the 'matchbox house' which was originally built in the apartheid era with the house types NE51/6 or 51/9 (NE was short for Non-European).[9] A similar mass housing typology has been repeated in a number of fully-subsidized mass housing in South Africa for low-income residents.[10] It explores the powerlessness and power of an architectural designer during these projects through a cathartic visual exploration of projects that Afua has engaged with as an architect or researcher.

The projects included in the exploration are the Westgate RDP development in Princess Plots, the Devland social housing development in Soweto (she had worked as part of the Michael Hart Architects team that designed these units) and the K206 RDP housing project where she researched the relationship between original typologies and the resultant K206 housing; the site she is currently researching for her PhD dissertation through post-occupancy spatial mappings and interviews.

1 PoRSA, 'Reconstruction and Development Programme Policy Framework White Paper' (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 1994), accessed 8 July 2022. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/governmentgazetteid16085.pdf.

2 R. J. Davies, 'The Spatial Formation of the South African City,' *GeoJournal* 2, no. S2 (1981), 59–72, accessed 8 July 2022. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00196325.

3 Dewar, David. "URBAN SETTLEMENTS: CASE STUDIES IN SOUTH AFRICA." *International Journal for Housing Science and Its Applications* 32.3 (2008).

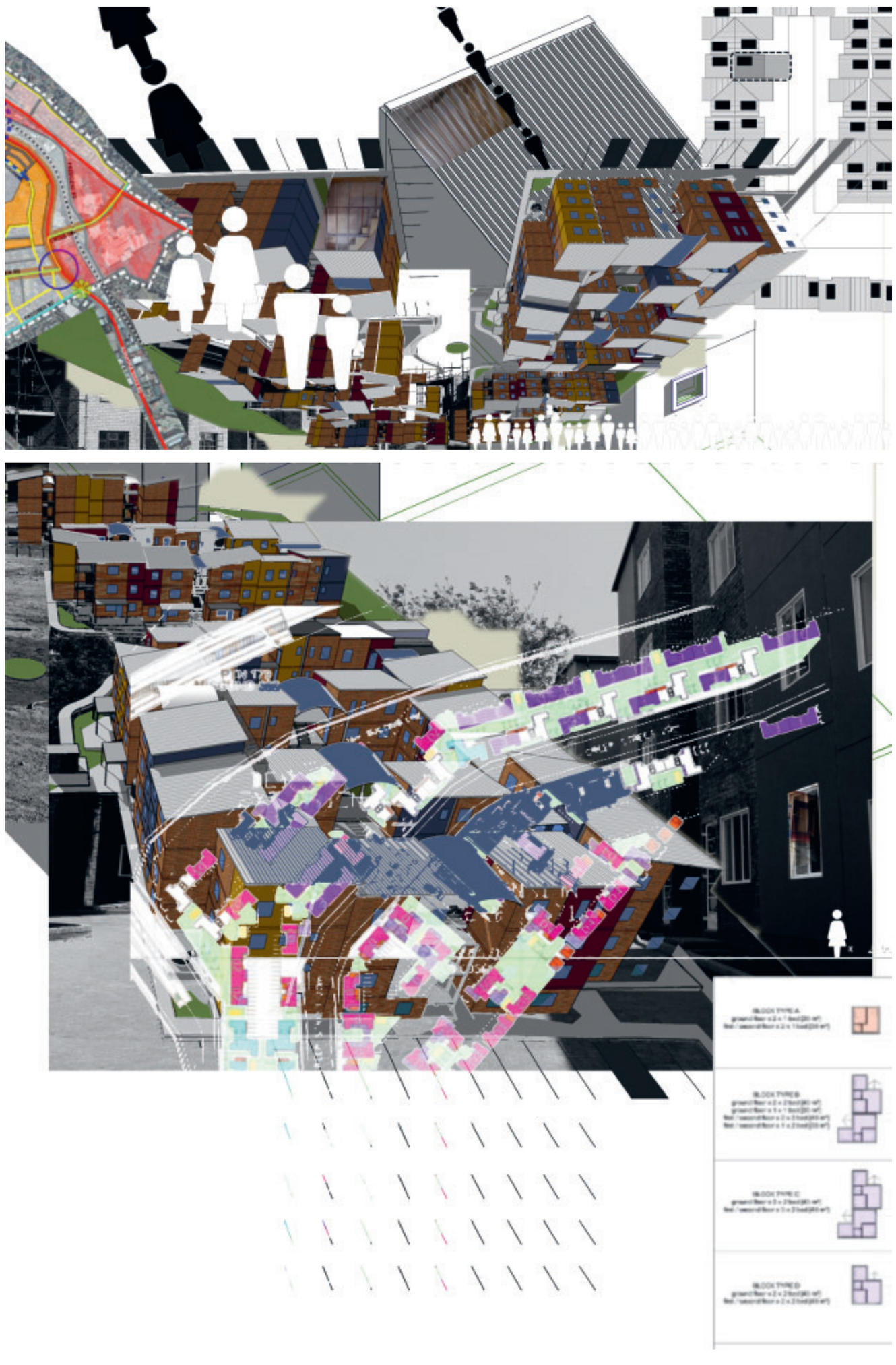
4 Tatenda Manomano, Pius Tangwe Tanga and Perpetua Tanyi, 'Housing Problems and Programs in South Africa: A Literature Review,' *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology* 7, no. 2 (April 2016): 111–17, accessed 8 July 2022. https://doi.org/10.1080/09766634.2016.11885707.

5 Department of Human Settlements (DoHS), ed., '"Breaking New Ground": A Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Integrated Sustainable Human Settlements (Department of Human Settlements)' (2004), accessed 8 July 2022. http://www.dhs.gov.za/sites/default/files/documents/26082014_BNG2004.pdf.

6 DoHS.

7 P. Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, *Alexandra: A History*. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2008); Philip Harrison, Adrian Masson and Luke Sinwell, 'Johannesburg after Apartheid,' in *Changing Space, Changing City: Johannesburg after Apartheid,* eds Philip Harrison, Graeme Gotz, Alison Todes and Chris Wray (Johannesburg : Wits University Press, 2014), 342–69.

8 Christopher Amoah, Kahilu Kajimo-Shakantu and Tanya van Schalkwyk, 'Meeting the Expectations of the Social Housing Recipients in South Africa: A Myth or Reality?,' *International Journal of Building Pathology and Adaptation* 39, no. 2 (2020): 218–34, accessed 8 July 2022. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBPA-07-2019-0062; Raeesa Moolla, Nico Kotze and Liz Block, 'Housing Satisfaction and Quality of Life in RDP Houses in Braamfischerville, Soweto: A South African Case Study,' *Urbani Izziv* 22, no. 01 (2011): 138–43, accessed 8 July 2022. https://doi.org/10.5379/urbani-izziv-en-2011-22-01-005.

9 Jason Hickel, 'Engineering the Township Home: Domestic Transformations and Urban Revolutionary Consciousness,' in *The Politics of Home in KwaZulu-Natal*, eds Jason Hickel and Meghan Healy-Clancy (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014).

10 Moolla, Kotze and Block, 'Housing Satisfaction and Quality of Life in RDP Houses in Braamfischerville, Soweto.'