



Segregated Spaces

1. Introduction

“*South Africa still a chronically racially divided country*”, finds survey.¹ This was a headline in the British *Guardian* newspaper back in 2012. In 2016, the same newspaper ran this headline: ‘*Divided cities: South Africa's apartheid legacy photographed by drone*.’² The story was about work by the photographer Johnny Miller who had

“.. used a drone to take aerial photographs of the gulf in living conditions for the poor and the wealthy in South Africa. ‘During apartheid, segregation of urban spaces was instituted as policy,’ he says. ‘Roads, rivers, buffer zones of empty land and other barriers were constructed to keep people separate. Twenty two years after the fall of apartheid many of these barriers, and the inequalities they have engendered, still exist. Often, communities of extreme wealth and privilege will exist just metres from shacks’ “.

The *Guardian* was not alone in highlighting the country's segregated geography. “*Race and space in Cape Town*”³ appeared in the *Independent Online* (IOL), while the *New York Times* announced, ‘*In a Divided City, Many Blacks See Echoes of White Superiority*.’⁴

In the midst of this persistent segregation, Cape Town was the most segregated of the country's cities going into the new South Africa. As the geographer Grant Saff notes,

*“prior to the implementation of the Group Areas Act (1950), Cape Town was the least segregated city in South Africa. The implementation of the Act was, however, most severe in Cape Town which had become by 1985 the most segregated major city in the country.”*⁵

However, Cape Town, though consistently in the top ten most segregated municipalities, has since been overtaken by Nelson Mandela Bay in 1996, and the Western Cape's Overstrand in 2011, as the most segregated municipalities⁶. This means segregation is not inevitable nor set in stone. It can be changed.

When it comes to an analysis of South Africa as a divided society, even opposition political parties agree⁷ with the assertion in the National Development Plan (NDP) that, “*South African society remains divided. Many schools, suburbs and places of worship are integrated, but many are not. South Africa remains one of the most unequal economies in the world.*”⁸

In 2015, Statistics SA produced a strategic plan, and in describing where South Africa is at present, it refers to a “fragmented statistical and geographic environment” where “apartheid left a disastrous spatial legacy.” It goes on to say that even “after 20 years of democracy, South Africa's towns and cities are still divided and inefficient, imposing high costs on households and the economy.”⁹

So, after nearly 23 years of democratic government, has nothing changed, and is the future bleak?

2. The Ideal

In 1994, at his inauguration as the first democratically elected President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela said:

“We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human

*dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world”.*¹⁰

The Constitution of the Republic, adopted in 1996, starts with a preamble which says that:

*We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise the injustices of our past;*

....

*Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, **united in our diversity.***

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to –

***Heal the divisions of the past and and
Build a united and democratic South
Africa ...***

[emphasis added]

Running through these narratives is the fundamental idea that the country comes from a divided past, and that therefore one of the most fundamental ideals is the healing of divisions and the promotion of unity; bringing people together, as Mandela said, to create a “nation at peace with itself”. Is South Africa moving any closer to these ideals?

3. The Persistence of Segregation

The 2015 SA Reconciliation Barometer Survey, conducted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), made some rather disappointing and depressing findings about the levels and nature of segregation in South Africa society. The survey notes that, though institutionalised racial discrimination has been done away with, “the apartheid geography of our cities and towns – as well as the distributional patterns of our economy – has largely remained in place to reinforce the template created by the architects of apartheid”. Even more concerning is that “legislation is no longer required to sustain apartheid,” since “it has evolved in ways that allow it to sustain itself up to the present day”.¹¹

Work done by Stats SA confirms that residential segregation is still a very strong feature of our society. Johannesburg is the most integrated city, but even it scores only 0.57 on the scale of 0 (complete integration) to 1 (complete segregation). Nelson Mandela Bay performs worst, at 0.7. Data from the 2011 census shows – perhaps unsurprisingly – that patterns of urban segregation persist. It is true that most of the

central business districts (CBDs) now have much larger African populations than under apartheid, but these are mostly in cheap and run-down areas in inner cities. For the rest, figures show that the suburbs surrounding the CBDs remain predominantly white, while ‘coloured’, Indian and African populations are still largely confined to high-density townships and residential developments further away from city centres, often ill-served by public transport links.

It appears that most of the racial mixing that does happen occurs in the previously white areas. In other words, there is a certain amount of ‘upward mobility’ reflecting the growing black middle-class, but little if any ‘downward mobility’ affecting whites. Their privileged position under apartheid, in residential terms, seems to have been very largely preserved.¹² Having said that, what is even more curious is that Stats SA found that the poor seem more integrated than the rich.

*“An analysis of the correlation between the segregation index and the multiple poverty index for all municipalities showed that there is generally a strong negative correlation between segregation and multiple deprivation. i.e. The more deprived a municipality is, the less likely it is to be segregated.”*¹³

4. Where To From Here?

In an attempt to grapple with this question, the CPLO held two roundtable discussions, one in Cape Town and another in Johannesburg, to try to elicit some thoughts and opinions on this controversial matter. What was clear was that perception of segregation was even more notable than the factual reality. There was general consensus that something needed to be done but, interestingly, many people were unaware of the work already being done in many places to change the reality.

Speaking at one of the roundtables, Professor Owen Crankshaw from the University of Cape Town pointed to the efforts that have been made to understand the nature of spatial development and the segregation/integration of urban spaces. Focusing on Gauteng and the very interesting changes that have taken place there, he pointed out that the common perception that South Africa had not changed was not uniformly true. In Gauteng there had been much more spatial integration, especially in residential areas. He

ascribed this to the huge increase in the number of black professionals in Gauteng (almost twice the number of white professionals); their upward social mobility has resulted in movement especially into previously white areas of Gauteng. However, he did point out that residential integration happened more in places where there was rental accommodation, and less so where housing needed to be bought.

Speaking at the same meeting, Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Andries Nel, presented work done on the *Government's Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF)* which was developed to "manage the scale and growth of South African cities and towns". The Framework is quite a detailed policy on how to develop more integrated spaces, especially in cities and towns. This framework involves not just spatial integration, but questions of inclusion and access, inclusive economic growth, and enhanced governance capacity for cooperation to achieve the desired levels of "spatial and social integration".¹⁴

Thus good analysis and good policies are there to deal with the problem. But again, why are they not being realised, and are they sufficient?

5. Conclusion

Arguing that South Africa is not a segregated country is both dangerous and wrong. Firstly, it creates a temptation to ignore the seriousness of the fragmentation that feeds the racial and class tensions that manifest themselves in the insults,

slurs, threats, and violence that are a daily occurrence in our country. But secondly, and even worse, it feeds the denialism about the magnitude of the crime that apartheid was and the viciousness with which it fragmented South Africa, at great cost to the majority.

However, arguing that nothing has changed is also wrong, because it feeds the narrative of conflict that seeks to ignore the great achievements made in the post-apartheid era, and to pretend that the country should still be in a pre-1994 mind-set of war and struggle. What is also clear from all the analysis is that integration does not happen by itself but requires active engagement; and that it is also very easy to perpetuate segregated spaces directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously.

Finally, South Africa does have solutions to the challenges of overcoming segregation. These are available in the form of policies, constitutional principles, enlightened legislation, and a range of social insights. But sadly, like in so many other areas, there seems to be a chronic failure to implement and realise all these policies and ideals. Until radical implementation of good policies takes place, conflict is inevitable. Certainly, South Africa has come a long way in dealing with many of the issues of segregation in and of its living spaces, but it is also quite clear that the country still has a very long way to go.

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- ¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/06/south-africa-racially-divided-survey>
- ² <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2016/jun/23/south-africa-divided-cities-apartheid-photographed-drone>
- ³ <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/race-and-space-in-cape-town-1576493>
- ⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/world/africa/in-cape-town-many-black-south-africans-feel-unwelcome.html>
- ⁵ http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/amcdouga/Hist446_2013/Readings/squatters%20marconi%20beam.pdf
- ⁶ <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-18-06/Report-03-18-062014.pdf>
- ⁷ <https://www.da.org.za/archive/the-national-development-plan-an-emerging-progressive-consensus/>
- ⁸ <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/NAP-Draft-2015-12-14.pdf>
- ⁹ http://www.statssa.gov.za/strategy_plan/strategy_plan_2015.pdf
- ¹⁰ <http://mg.co.za/article/2015-12-09-five-sa-myths-debunked-by-the-2015-reconciliation-barometer>
- ¹¹ <http://www.dac.gov.za/sites/default/files/reconciliation-barometer.pdf>
- ¹² For more on these figures, and for maps showing the levels of integration in cities, see <http://www.htxt.co.za/2016/05/23/map-monday-johannesburg-is-the-most-racially-integrated-city-in-sa/>
- ¹³ Page 32 of <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-03-18-06/Report-03-18-062014.pdf>
- ¹⁴ For more information on the framework, see <http://www.cogta.gov.za/?programmes=the-integrated-urban-development-framework-iudf>

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