

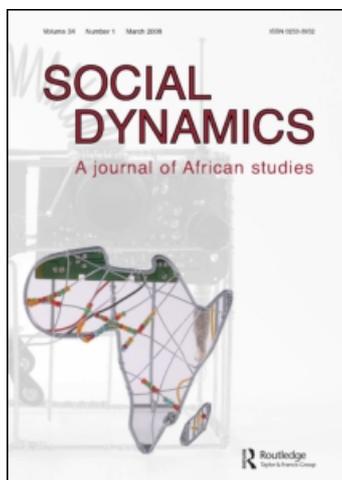
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Christa Kuljian^a

^a Centre for Sociological Research, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

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The Congress of the People and the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication: from public deliberation to bureaucratic imposition in Kliptown¹

Christa Kuljian*

Centre for Sociological Research, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

Kliptown was the site of the Congress of the People in June 1955 where the Freedom Charter was adopted – the culmination of two years of public deliberation. Fifty years later, in 2005, the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication, a memorial to the Freedom Charter, opened on the same site. The new Square and a set of related buildings were built by the Johannesburg Development Agency as part of the Kliptown Redevelopment Project. The article begins with a brief review of Kliptown's history, especially on the fringes of apartheid, and then explores the new Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication, which stands in stark contrast to its surroundings. The article continues with comment from local residents about the new Square. In an effort to understand what happened in Kliptown, it reviews the process by which the new Square design was chosen and the level of community involvement in the development of the Square. The section 'Memorialising Kliptown' briefly contrasts the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication with the District Six Museum and explores the concept of heritage as tourism. The article concludes ironically that in the era of democracy, in Kliptown – the home of the Freedom Charter – space for public deliberation has been severely curtailed.

Keywords: Kliptown; Freedom Charter; development; community participation; heritage; memorial

I first walked through Kliptown in 1985 with Uncle Bill, shopping for fruit and vegetables. A community activist and sports leader working with the United Democratic Front, he took me under his wing and taught me about South African history and politics. As we walked down Union Road, which is adjacent to Freedom Square, he motioned towards the Square and said: 'Kliptown is the home of the Freedom Charter. It was signed here in 1955 by the Congress of the People'. Before I could take a proper look, I had to veer around the flapping wings of live chickens for sale and negotiate the streams of people doing their shopping. Uncle Bill stopped to review the produce at a roadside trader. He made his choice and handed me a crate of tomatoes, then moved onto another topic. 'Mandela used to hide here in Kliptown when he was running from the police', he said. I wondered in which building. The butcher, the fabric shop and Jada's hardware store were all possibilities and permanent features on Union Road. Despite Eldorado Park on one side and Soweto on the other, Kliptown felt like a town, not a township.

Kliptown was never designed as a township. It was originally built on two farms on the Klip River. Klipriviersoog Estate was established in 1903 and the farming area

*Email: christak@alignafrica.com

became peri-urban as housing development continued through to the 1950s. The rights of Africans to own land in the area was confirmed in 1905 when Mr Tsewu bought land and sought a court order to pass the transfer. Successive generations of black intellectuals were drawn to Kliptown. The 1913 Land Act and the 1923 Urban Areas Act restricted black people from owning land and limited who could live in townships. But Kliptown was a freehold area like Sophiatown and Alexandra. It fell outside the boundaries of the Johannesburg Municipality until 1970. Current estimates are that Kliptown has a population of 8000 households totalling a population of 45,000, about 85% of which live in informal settlements.

As a result of its history and location, Kliptown attracted people of diverse backgrounds, including those of Indian, Chinese and European descent as well as those who were categorised as Coloured and African under apartheid. When the working committee for the Congress of the People was looking for a venue in 1955, it wasn't easy to find a location for a public, non-racial assembly. They chose Kliptown because of the large open space available, accessibility to a train station and the absence of municipal administration. As one local resident recalls: 'Kliptown gave refuge to a lot of criminals on the run, freedom fighters and homeless people, because Kliptown was not in the Jo'burg Municipality' (in Duiker 2001, p.17).

The new Square

In August 2006, 21 years after my first visit to Kliptown, I returned. In those 21 years, momentous changes had taken place. South Africa held its first democratic elections and Uncle Bill voted for the first time at age 60. I married Uncle Bill's son and had two children, and Uncle Bill died, far too young, in 1998.

On that cold winter's day, I was driving friends on a tour of Soweto and we were on our way to Eldorado Park to visit my mother-in-law for lunch. I was curious to see the new monument that the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) had built at Freedom Square. I had read that the JDA was hoping to attract tourists to the area. As we drove by, Union Road looked cut in half. On one side, the shops remained, but on the other – where shops had bordered on the dusty open area of Freedom Square – there was a massive colonnaded building that ran the length of two long blocks. It overlooked a vast expanse of white concrete where Freedom Square used to be, with another imposing concrete building on the other side. At one end of the Square stood 10 enormous concrete columns, which I later learnt were meant to represent the 10 clauses of the Freedom Charter. Is this the new monument? We couldn't keep my mother-in-law's legendary chicken curry waiting, so there was no time to stop. But my curiosity was peeked. Thus began my journey to learn more about what happened to Kliptown.

What drew me back to Kliptown was not only its proximity to where my husband's family lives in Eldorado Park, nor those early visits, but also a desire to understand what happened to this historic site. As Uncle Bill told me, Kliptown is famous for having been the site of the Congress of the People on 25–26 June 1955 when the Freedom Charter was adopted, a document that has inspired much of the liberation movement in South Africa and provided input to South Africa's new Constitution. The preamble reads: 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white'.² In the mid-1980s, my sister-in-law made a needlepoint of the 10 clauses of the Charter in black, green and gold, the colours of the African National Congress. It still hangs in her house today.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication. Photo: StudioMAS Architects and Urban Designers.

In June 2002, the Gauteng provincial government renamed Freedom Square the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication. There was no public consultation about the name change. It seems the decision was made because Freedom Park was underway in Pretoria and government felt that it might be confusing for tourists. Ironically, Walter Sisulu was banned at the time of the drafting of the Freedom Charter and wasn't able to attend the Congress of the People. He watched the proceedings from the roof of Jada's hardware store on Union Road.

In October 2006, I went back to explore the Square. Union Road was overshadowed by the colonnaded building, which had the feel of a large industrial space. A forest of concrete columns, reminiscent of ancient Greece or Rome, grew amidst numerous small stalls, all empty, with a set of metal-panelled doors serving as a barrier between the Square and Union Road. On the Union Road side, the street was teeming with hawkers. Piles of dark green spinach lay on shelves of bricks. Mountains of carrots and cut pumpkin sat next to sacks of potatoes and onions. When I walked off Union Road and onto the Square, it was deserted. The vast concrete desert was checkered with short thorn trees planted next to brick platforms that, when viewed from above, looked like large Xs. I had read that the Xs were meant to commemorate voting and were an expression of liberation. Would anyone walking around the Square (not hovering above it in a helicopter) notice?

In the centre of the Square, there was a large conical structure resembling Great Zimbabwe (or, as someone later pointed out to me, a huge beehive). It was meant to house an eternal flame and panels with the text of the Freedom Charter, but the four metal doors on each side of the cone were padlocked so it was impossible to see inside.

While the building on one side of the Square housed the empty market stalls, the three-storey building on the other side of the Square housed a row of shops on the

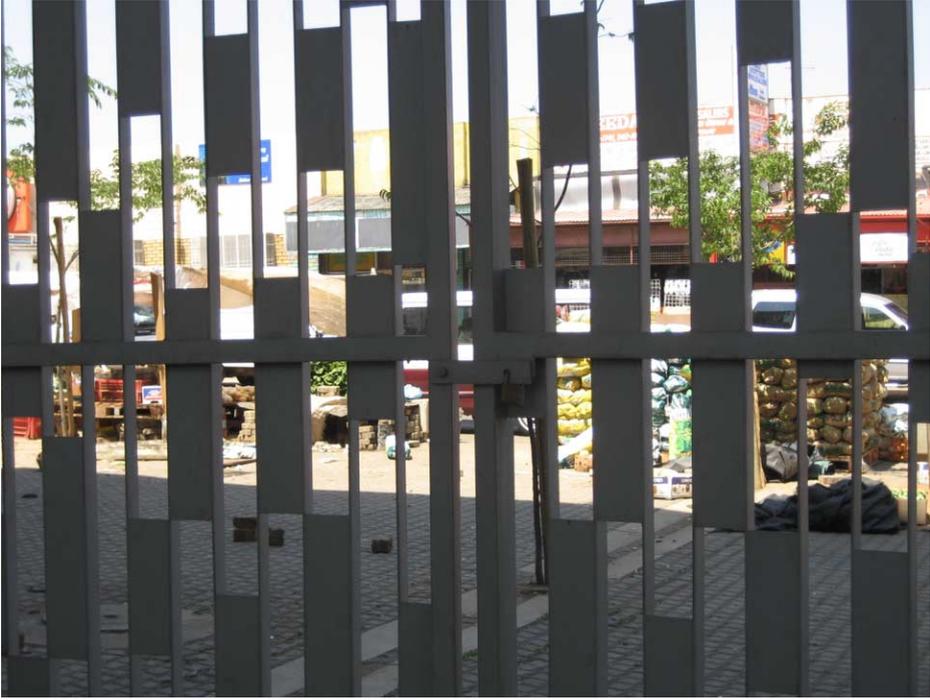


Figure 2. Looking through metal panels from the Square to Union Road. Photo: Christa Kuljian.



Figure 3. Freedom Charter Monument on the Square. Photo: Christa Kuljian.

ground floor and what appeared to be office space upstairs. Stairs led up to a grand door of an auditorium/multi-purpose hall, but there was no signboard and no activity. There were no shoppers browsing at JB Curio and Gift Shop or Penny's Home of Fashion.

Past the market stalls and the portion of the structure intended for a hotel, near the corner of Union Road and the railway line, there was a relatively small brick building. However, there were no windows and no way to see inside. There was no notice board or sign at the door. Wasn't this Jada's hardware store? That's where my brother-in-law bought supplies to build Grandma Anne's shower a few years ago. The JDA converted it into a museum. But something wasn't right. It was close to 18 months since President Thabo Mbeki opened the new Square at a launch with thousands of guests in June 2005, yet the museum was closed. The hotel wasn't complete. The market stalls were empty and the Square was deserted.

A security guard sat on a concrete bench reading *The Brethren* by John Grisham. Mandla, who lives in Hillbrow, had worked on the site for the past three years. 'Since they've finished construction', he said, 'I've had plenty of time to read'. The Square seemed another planet from the life that surrounded it. The sites, sounds and smells of Kliptown had been removed to make way for this massive, sanitised space. If the JDA's anticipated tourists ventured beyond the Square, they might see the remainder of Kliptown that exists at the periphery. But they would probably only see the Square. They would see non-Kliptown. I have worked on issues of development for many years, so when I looked at the Square, I was struck with certain questions. I pulled out

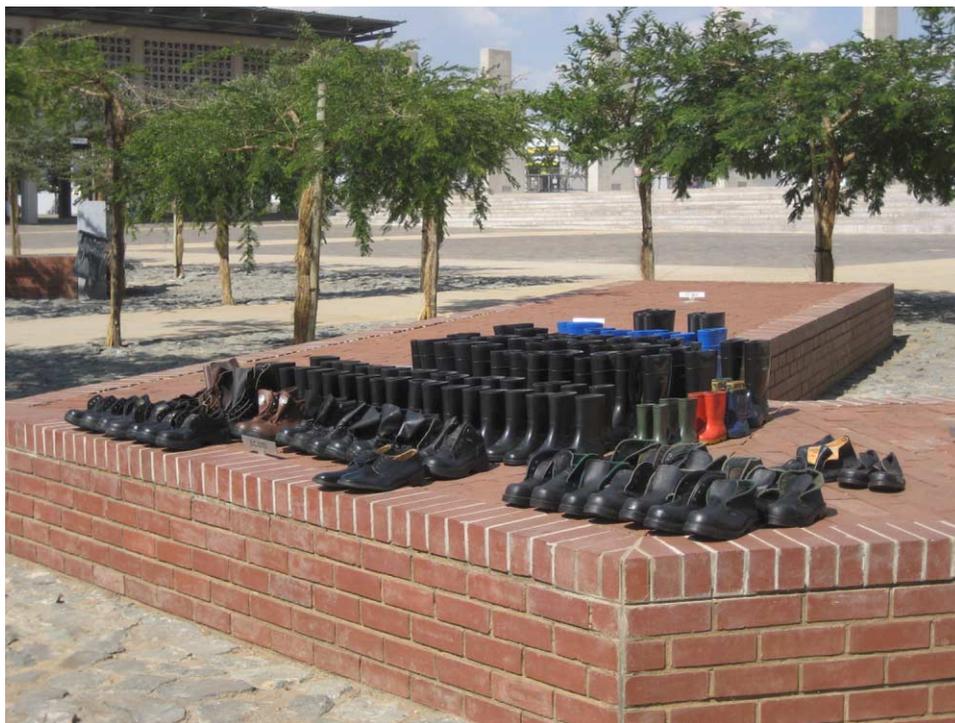


Figure 4. Selling boots on a brick platform in the shape of an X on the Square. Photo: Christa Kuljian.



Figure 5. Market stalls on the Square. Photo: Christa Kuljian.

a notebook and wrote: *What was the process to choose the monument design? How were Kliptown residents involved? Who is responsible for current management of the Square?*

What did local residents have to say?

While I didn't like the new Square and felt that it was grandiose, perhaps other people were happy with it. I'd have to find out more from the JDA about the process, but first I wanted to talk to someone who lived in Kliptown.

Eva Mokoka moved to Kliptown in 1954 as a young nurse and midwife. She remembers leaving work early so that she could attend the Congress of the People. From her house on Station Road, you can look across the railway line to the Square. Station Road, which runs perpendicular to Union Road, is still unpaved. There is no water-borne sewage in the area, so the dirt road has gullies of water running along each side. Two dumpsters on the street burst with bags of rubbish. Numerous bright blue and green portable toilets line the road, but Aunt Eva says that most people don't use them. 'When they thought they were improving things, they made it worse', says Aunt Eva. 'When we only had the bucket system, they used to clear the buckets on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Now, with the Easy-Loos, with those 44-gallon drums, they only drain them fortnightly. By the time they come and drain them, they have such big worms – maggots. I decided I'm keeping my bucket'.³

Aunt Eva isn't impressed with the new Square. The new name – the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication – hasn't caught on. 'That Sisulu business, it's not ours', says Aunt Eva. 'They built that white elephant on the road so that tourists can step on and off the bus without seeing Kliptown', says her son Bob Nameng, 'but we've still got our dignity and our pride'.⁴ 'Those JDA people made so many promises that didn't materialise', says Aunt Eva, who now uses a wheelchair. 'They asked me to be part of their forum. I said I would, but I told them I don't have transport. "Transport is no problem," they said. "We'll come and pick you up." They didn't do it even once'.

Not long after meeting Aunt Eva, in mid-November 2006, I took another walk to Union Road. It looked empty. The hawkers on the side of the street along the Square were gone. Two or three traders had moved into the Square's under-cover market space, but it was still largely empty. 'Where is everyone'? I asked. 'Metro Police took our stock', said Marta, who lived on Station Road and had been selling on Union Road for years. Metro Police told everyone that they couldn't sell on the street anymore and that they had to register to move inside, or leave the area. 'I'm suffering. Now I have to pay R120 per month for two stalls', she said as she pointed to the bananas, tomatoes and potatoes spilling over the small, metal, grey cupboards.

The queue to register at the Metropolitan Trading Company (a subcontractor to the JDA) was long and ran alongside the wall of the new Kliptown taxi rank. A guard led people, one by one, inside the office. Everyone in the queue was wearing sturdy, flat shoes but several women working for Metro Trading walked in and out in high heels. Francina Mazibuko, who lives in Meadowlands and has been selling clothes in



Figure 6. Station Road, where Eva Makoka lives, across the railway line from the Square. Photo taken 1 December 2006 after fundraising walk. Photo Credit: Christa Kuljian.

Kliptown for years, was waiting in the queue. ‘This place is going to sink’, she said. ‘Those people who built the monument, they told us we could choose the design for the area for traders. But then they told us the woman who said that left. Then they told us the contractors built it wrong. There’s no covering. How can you stay in the sun?’ Another man in the queue turned to Mazibuko and said: ‘Kliptown used to be known for shopping, but they’ve killed it’. ‘Where are we going to put our stock in storage?’ asked Mazibuko. ‘If you put potatoes in one of those stalls, they’ll mould because they cook in there’.⁵

Another local resident, Gene Duiker, is the Director of the Kliptown Our Town Trust. He is also unhappy with the new Square. ‘Experts were brought in from outside’, he said. ‘We are sitting with a monstrosity over there. This was supposed to be for the benefit of Kliptown people but I can’t see how we are benefiting’.⁶

What was the process?

I wanted to understand more about how this transformation of Kliptown had happened. How had the new Square developed in a way that seemed to discount many of the needs of the local community?

Like many development programmes, this one began with some good intentions. In 1996, the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council developed a Greater Kliptown Development Framework. In the same year, a plan to build a shopping centre on the site was squelched. However, it took another five years – until 2001 and the establishment of the JDA – before the political will, institutional capacity and funding came together to revisit Kliptown and initiate another plan. The JDA was established as an agency of the City of Johannesburg to ‘stimulate area-based economic development initiatives’. It coordinates and manages capital investments and other programmes involving both the public and private sectors, predominantly in inner-city Johannesburg. According to its website, in addition to Kliptown, the JDA has managed projects in Newtown, Braamfontein, Faraday and Constitution Hill. Its operations are mainly funded by the City, but also by Blue IQ, a company established by the Gauteng Provincial Government, and by development management fees.

In 2000, the provincial government decided to include the development of Kliptown on its list of high-priority projects. The area was chosen largely as a result of provincial and city officials promoting the notion that tourism could significantly boost economic development in Gauteng and that Kliptown would attract tourists. The idea of an architectural competition was put forward and architects were asked to conceive of a redesigned space that would address a range of community needs such as housing, retail space, meeting rooms and a taxi rank, as well as attract international tourists who might be interested in the ideals of the Freedom Charter and its role in promoting freedom and democracy. As the design was chosen and implemented, attention to the preferences and practices of local residents declined and the emphasis on attracting tourists increased. Concerns about this emphasis echo from Kliptown traders, who lost their trading space, and from residents such as Aunt Eva Mokoka, who would prefer refurbished housing, electricity and water-borne sewerage.

In addition to tourism, the idea of a middle-class suburban space informed the vision for the new Square, which had no relation whatsoever to the existing community in Kliptown. As Graeme Reid, former CEO of the JDA, explains: ‘We have to hold on to the vision that people’s economic condition is going to improve quite

substantially. The Square will be one of the premier nodes of Soweto. It has the potential to be sort of like a Rosebank [an affluent part of Johannesburg with open-air cafes and shops].⁷ As the judges for the architectural commission reported: 'The project was chosen for its bold scale and also for its exemplary potential to change Soweto into a city' (2002). My view is that tourists and people from outside Kliptown may benefit from this approach (although even that is not certain), but that people from Kliptown will not.

The development process was predominantly top-down and imposed on the community. Thirty-five architectural designs were submitted to the JDA for review. In 2002, eight judges, none of whom were from Kliptown, chose the submission from StudioMAS Architects and Urban Designers as the winning design. In 'Reframing township space: The Kliptown Project', Bremner (2004, p. 526) describes several of the submissions to the architectural competition for Freedom Square. She applauds entries that did not win because they allowed 'the micronarratives of everyday life in Kliptown to carry on undisturbed. The events of the Congress of the People were minimally re-enacted ...; space was thus suspended between past and present'. In contrast, for StudioMAS, the winning architects, 'the commemoration of a founding myth of the new democracy, the Freedom Charter, enabled the investment of resources in monumental urban spaces as a stage for celebration and spectacle. Dramatic and exaggerated forms created the image of a possible new city, a new morphology for urban life' (Bremner 2004, p. 528).

The JDA did make efforts to include community members through the establishment of a Kliptown Development Forum, but only after the design was chosen and the new name for the Square was announced. Unfortunately, the Forum's existence was driven by the JDA project, not because of any pre-existing set of ongoing local issues. A project-based community forum may serve development planners, but it is not ideal for serving the needs of a community and often becomes a point of information sharing rather than decision making. Another factor that affected the process was that the JDA was under significant political pressure to complete the project in time for the June 2005, 50th anniversary of the signing of the Freedom Charter. Construction began in June 2003, so the entire project had to be completed in less than two years.

If the process had been different and residents from Kliptown had been more involved, it still is possible that the JDA would have ended up with a poor design choice and unhappy community members. Community involvement does not guarantee a quality outcome. However, without community involvement in the process, any development programme will suffer.

Kliptown remains invisible

In addition to the limited space allowed for public input to the memorial, there were other ways in which Kliptown retained its status as no-man's-land (despite being Everyman's land) after the 1994 democratic elections in the post-apartheid era. Its geographic location on the boundary of Soweto and Eldorado Park and on both sides of the railway line resulted in it being divided into several wards, rather than being unified with one ward councillor. Kliptown was also divided between Region 6 and Region 10 under the Johannesburg Municipality. Gene Duiker says that the area south of Union Road may become part of Region 11.⁸ Efforts at community advocacy in the first decade after apartheid were splintered and uncoordinated. Perhaps if the entire area were in one ward and one region, it would be possible for community members

to advocate more effectively and for the municipality to be held more accountable for the provision of services in the area.

Kliptown has remained invisible in another way as well. Under K in the *Gauteng Street Atlas* (2006), there is a listing for Klipfontein, Kliprivier, Klipspruit and Klipspruit West. There is no Kliptown. This map book was not produced in 1903 or 1955. It was published 12 years after South Africa's first democratic election, after the JDA spent close to half a billion rand in the area. When you turn to page 176, it shows a space between Pimville, Soweto and Eldorado Park and the intersection between Union and Boundary roads where the Kliptown Post Office stands. Oddly absent, however, is any mention of Kliptown. Every street of Pimville – Mzokolo, Kwena and Morekuru – is carefully recorded. Each road of Eldorado Park – Beril, Silika and Jaspies – is set out in detail. But there is no reference to Kliptown. Where is the Kliptown police station? The Kliptown Magistrate's Court? It is as if all the people, the houses and the history have vapourised.

I called GeoGraphic Maps CC, the 12-year-old company which publishes the book, and Director Jody Morrison was very receptive to my call. When I pointed out to him that there is a significant area that his map had missed, he welcomed the correction. He said they get their information from the Johannesburg City Council. 'But some of these areas have never been updated', he said. Even though Kliptown has been part of the Johannesburg Municipality since 1970, it seems that the Council has never fully embraced it. 'I'll send my researcher there to take a look', said Morrison. 'We did have a guy who drove Soweto, but he must have missed it. Safety-wise, how is that area?' he asked.⁹

What is development?

When looking at the recent efforts of the JDA to 'develop' Kliptown, it is important to review the meaning of the word. The concept of development has gained credence since the end of World War II, and often includes references to health, education, food and nutrition, income and poverty, and the environment. Yet different meanings of the word are greatly contested. Development is often presented as modernisation and economic growth and associated with capitalism. Other approaches focus more on people than growth. Some argue that the concept is obsolete and that development agencies are destructive. Even using a simple definition of development such as 'good change' is tenuous. As Thomas (2000, p. 24) contests:

What some see as a general improvement may have losers as well as winners and if social change is all-encompassing and continuous then the implication is that previous ways of life may be swept away, with the loss of positive as well as negative features.

This issue is relevant to Kliptown. While some may argue that the place has been 'cleaned up', many Kliptown residents say that they have no sense of connection to the new Square.

What went wrong?

Development programmes that are informed by the needs of local residents and local cultural practices have a much better chance of encouraging human development. The corollary is that a development project, such as the JDA's in Kliptown, that is

designed externally and controlled by external consultants, without much attention to local needs and patterns, has a much reduced chance of success and sustainability.

The major portion of the JDA's Kliptown Development Project focused on construction – the buildings on the Square, the taxi rank, roadworks and new warehouses for the businesses relocated away from Union Road. Relatively little attention was given to how the new facilities on the Square would be used, who would manage them and whether the local community would embrace them. As Ndebele (2006) reminds us in his series of essays *Rediscovery of the ordinary* (originally published in 1991):

If we define success, for example, according to the standards and formulations of the oppressor, if we build buildings like him, if we plan our cities like him ... then we have, in a very fundamental manner, become the oppressor ... In our attempts to call for freedom, we may, at the same time, be unconsciously prescribing our own containment.

In post-apartheid South Africa, many questions exist about the best way to promote development in terms of the role of the state, the private sector and civil society. Development literature explores issues of governance, economic growth and capacity building. Given this approach, many development agencies and individuals within them focus so strongly on the set of objectives and indicators towards success, that they forget the human complexities involved. Often the concept of development delivery trumps the need for human connection.

Memorialising Kliptown

Just as development practitioners need to be aware of the impact of their actions, so do those promoting memorials to South Africa's heritage. In many cases in South Africa, heritage and memorials have become synonymous with promoting tourism, with an emphasis on bringing in money for a province or a city. In 'Census, map, museum', Anderson (1991) argues that as Southeast Asia was colonised in the nineteenth century, monuments were 'increasingly linked to tourism'. He writes:

Reconstructed monuments often had smartly laid-out lawns around them, and always explanatory tablets ... they were kept empty of people, except for perambulatory tourists ... museumised this way, they were repositioned as regalia for a secular colonial state.

This passage sounds like the Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication. Neat and clean and empty of people, the Square is regalia to celebrate South Africa's liberation history, but it is not embraced and used by local people. The renewed interest in the Square was not as a result of the needs of Kliptown, but as a result of the uncritically held belief on the part of provincial and metropolitan government that tourism could drive economic development. It was economics that drove the design for the Square with an emphasis on wanting to integrate Soweto into the broader economy of the province of Gauteng. Journalist Xolela Mangcu addressed this economic-driven approach to heritage in the *Sunday Independent* on 28 May 2000. He asked: '[If] our cultural institutions are nothing more than saleable products for the consumption of international cultural elites, who shall provide us with the self-understandings, symbols and meanings that are the basis of modern nationhood'?

Mangcu's remark points to the fact that the Square is not only an important development project with local implications, it is also a public space dedicated to the

memory of a significant national, political event. Presumably, the new Square, just as other public memorials, was intended to commemorate the past and contribute to a sense of South Africa's identity and nationhood. Other examples of public memorials in the post-apartheid period include the Apartheid Museum, Robben Island Museum, the Hector Pieterse Memorial Museum in Soweto and Constitution Hill. All of these monuments attempt to bring meaning to South Africa's history, especially of the liberation struggle and the formation of the 'new' South Africa. It is unfortunate that, during the process of designing the new Square, there was not more extensive linkage with a broader, national discussion of public history, heritage and memory in South Africa. What did the Freedom Charter mean to South Africa and how should it be memorialised in the form of a public space? Annie Coombes, in her analysis of public memorials in South Africa, states that 'all memory is unavoidably both borne out of individual subjective experience and shaped by collective consciousness and shared social process' (2003, p. 8) so that any commemoration of memory and the past must take both factors into account.

Coombes (2003, p. 22) also writes that works of such a scale as the Square in Kiptown are often associated with totalitarian regimes. She argues that 'the more monumental the scale of a public sculpture, the more likely it is to be ignored or forgotten over time' (Coombes 2003, p. 12). Such sites, she states, can be reinvigorated or reanimated. However, in the case of Kiptown, the scale of the new Square has not been well received. Whether it is reinvigorated in the future will depend on the actions of future generations.

The District Six Museum in Cape Town holds some particularly interesting parallels with the Kiptown experience. First, the definition of 'community' is relevant. In many post-apartheid projects, such as the Apartheid Museum, Constitution Hill and the Robben Island Museum, 'community' is defined as national. In the case of District Six and Kiptown's Freedom Square, there is a strong sense of 'community' that is local. In both cases, there are national and international ramifications of the events that took place at each site (forced removals and the destruction of a community in District Six and the drafting of the Freedom Charter in Kiptown), but the local community was important in memorialising both sites. In the case of the District Six Museum, there has been a major effort to record the voices, experiences and stories of individuals who lived there. This approach was similar to a community-driven project of the Kiptown Our Town Trust. The Trust developed and opened an exhibit of photographs and artefacts in 2002 that celebrated Kiptown's political and social history. Sadly, these were not used in the development of the official museum on the Square that opened in June 2007, another example of how the opportunity for public input was forgone.

Covering the entire floor of the main room of the District Six Museum is a laminated map of the community, complete with street signs. The map memorialises a place that the apartheid government attempted to erase from local memory. In contrast to District Six, Kiptown continues to exist as a community of families, houses, shebeens, churches and shops. Ironically, it is not the apartheid government, but the post-apartheid memorial, that erases Kiptown's past from memory. The new Square does not bring the existing site and its people to the centre, but rather keeps them at the periphery.

While Kiptown's history and heritage is rich, the winning design by StudioMAS saw Kiptown as impoverished and devoid of many aspects of a 'developed' urban space. Pierre Swanepoel, a principal architect at StudioMAS, confirms this approach.

When asked if he thought the scale of the Square was inappropriate for the surroundings, he replied by showing contrasting photographs of Johannesburg as a mining camp in 1896 and an urban metropolis in 1996. 'Look at how much Johannesburg changed in a hundred years', says Swanepoel. 'As that part of town grows, the Square will fit in easily in fifty or sixty years'.¹⁰ In my view, Swanepoel's scenario will force all the current residents out of Kliptown to make way for a new, gentrified economic node.

Many Kliptown residents aren't waiting to see what develops later this century. In July 2007, residents clashed with police during two days of protests about the lack of service delivery in the area. Despite the JDA's hope for increased tourism, the new Square has not resulted in a major increase in the flow of tourists to the area. In June 2007, the Kliptown Museum opened in the old Jada's hardware store, but it remains quiet. In October 2007, Soweto's first Holiday Inn opened on the Square and again there was a community protest. The Square remains empty, except for special corporate or government occasions. One American visitor to the Square commented: 'I won't take tourists there. What are they going to see but a huge field of concrete'?

As it turns out, Uncle Bill and Walter Sisulu are buried next to each other in Croesus Cemetery between Bosmont and Industria in Johannesburg. Bill was buried there in 1998. After Walter Sisulu's death in 2003, the Sisulu family chose the grave site next to Bill. Both men broke the old apartheid Group Areas Act and were laid to rest in the Chinese section.

Conclusion

Many agencies in South Africa, including the JDA, will continue to work on development programmes throughout the country. In those that are locally based, and those that commemorate national public history, they would do well to learn from the Kliptown experience and explore ways to encourage greater community input and deliberation.

In Rusty Bernstein's *Memory against forgetting* (1999), he writes that the process that led to the drafting of the Freedom Charter was a major departure in political style for the Congress Alliance that planned the Congress of the People. Historically, they had been accustomed to developing campaigns and asking for popular support. 'Now, for the first time, they [Congress members] were being asked to get the ordinary people themselves to state *their own* demands and to take *their own* initiative to realise them' (Bernstein 1999). The approach was no longer telling people 'this is what you should stand for', but instead asking them what they want. This approach required political activists to 'listen to and learn from the people' (Bernstein 1999). As Bernstein acknowledges, in today's development jargon, the effort was to 'empower people' (1999). To be fair, the final draft of the Freedom Charter was drawn up by individual activists – Bernstein included – not by 'the people'. Any community process has its challenges and problems. The process of compiling the Freedom Charter is no exception and has likely been idealised over time. However, the process that informed the final drafting did start by gathering input from people across the country.

Ironically, 50 years later, in the effort to commemorate the Freedom Charter, local people were sidelined. The provincial government, the City of Johannesburg and the JDA did not begin by listening and learning. They did not begin by gathering input from across the community. The Kliptown Redevelopment Project and the new

Square would have benefited had the JDA put some of the available resources towards a process that asked the people of Kliptown: ‘What kind of development would you like to see in your community’?, ‘What does the Freedom Charter mean to you’?, ‘What are your ideas on how best to create a memorial to the Congress of the People’?. Instead, they called for an architectural competition and then shared a series of ready-made development plans with the community. Unfortunately, in the era of democracy, in Kliptown – the home of the Freedom Charter – public deliberation was not allowed to flourish; rather, it was severely curtailed.

Notes

1. The research for this article was done as part of the author’s Masters in Writing at the University of the Witwatersrand. Another article, inspired by the same research, was published in the *Digest of South African Architecture* in 2008.
2. See Congress of the People (1955) for the full text of the Freedom Charter.
3. Interview with Eva Makoka in Kliptown, Johannesburg, 8 November 2006 and 17 November 2006. Please note that all those interviewed for this research gave permission to be quoted.
4. Interview with Bob Nameng in Kliptown, Johannesburg, 17 November 2006.
5. Interview with Francina Mazibuko in Kliptown, Johannesburg, 15 November 2006.
6. Interview with Gene Duiker in Kliptown, Johannesburg, 2 November 2006.
7. Interview with Graeme Reid in Parkwood, Johannesburg, 4 December 2006.
8. Interview with Gene Duiker, Kliptown, Johannesburg, 2 November 2006.
9. Telephonic interview with Jody Morrison, Johannesburg, December 2006.
10. Interview with Pierre Swanepoel in Forest Town, Johannesburg, 6 March 2007.

Notes on contributor

Christa Kuljian is a writing fellow at the Centre for Sociological Research at the University of Johannesburg, where she is working on a book about civil society in South Africa. She also works as a development consultant and freelance writer. Christa was the director of the CS Mott Foundation’s South African office from 1992 to 2003, working to strengthen civil society and citizen participation. In an effort to start writing about development instead of funding it, she completed a Masters’ degree in Writing at the University of Witwatersrand in 2007. Her writing has appeared in numerous publications and varies from development documentary to literary appreciation. Christa was an undergraduate at Harvard (1984) and completed her Masters’ in Public Affairs at Princeton (1989).

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