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Radical Centres?
The Political Morphology of Monumentality in Warsaw and Johannesburg

Abstract
This text compares and contrasts two monumental architectural ensembles: Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication in Kliptown, Johannesburg, opened in 2005 by President Thabo Mbeki; and The Palace of Culture and Science, a Stalinist skyscraper 'gifted' to Warsaw by the Soviet Union in 1955.

This architectural juxtaposition serves as the point of departure for the text's two, interconnected key themes: an inquiry into the complex continuities and contradictions between the political and economic reconfigurations experienced by South Africa after 1994 and Poland after 1989; and an exploration into what the author defines as the 'political morphology' of monumental architecture.

The bulk of the text is concerned with a critical investigation into how scholars conceive of the relationship between the morphological (spatial, geometric and aesthetic) characteristics of built form, and their political or economic correlates. Must there be – as the scholarly consensus suggests – an intrinsic connection between democracy and architectural humility, and between authoritarianism and monumentality?

Introduction

Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication (WSSD) is a huge, public square at the heart of

Kliptown, Soweto. All vernacular-tinted soft brutalism, it looks an awful lot like

something Nehru's India or Kubitschek's Brazil might have built in the 1950s or early

1960s. But it was completed in 2005, opened by President Thabo Mbeki, on the site

where – fifty years previously, on the 26th June 1955 – 3,000 delegates and 7,000

spectators had gathered to adopt the ten postulates of the Freedom Charter, the

foundational manifesto of South Africa's anti-apartheid movement.

Less than a month following the signing of the Freedom Charter, on 22 July

1955, an opening ceremony took place in Warsaw for the Palace Culture and Science,

an enormous Stalinist skyscraper 'gifted' by the Soviet Union to Poland. Now,

Kliptown's Square (horizontal, modernist, concrete, restrained) and Warsaw's Palace (vertical, Stalinist, brick and stone, bombastic) have almost nothing to do with each other, it would seem **(Figures 1 and 2)**. One common feature of both, perhaps, is their anachronism – while WSSD's mid-century high modernism was out-of-time in 2005, the Palace's late-Stalinist grandiloquence was, conversely, something of an oddity in the mid-1950s, when most of the world – including much of the Eastern Bloc, and indeed of Warsaw[1] – was busily embracing high modernism. But there are a few other significant shared features too. Both are monumental architectural and planning ensembles, created more or less a decade following the beginning of a period of political reconfiguration: the introduction (or imposition) and consolidation of state socialism in Poland; and the collapse of apartheid and the construction of a new political order in South Africa.

I juxtapose these events and these buildings, to draw attention to some questions, which lie at the core of this article. If we are comparing – as the texts in this special issue aim to – the political-aesthetic parameters of the Eastern European and South African transitions, ought we really be focusing exclusively on Eastern Europe's 1989-1991 and South Africa's 1994? Furthermore, what are the shapes, scales, geometries and aesthetics attached to certain ways of organising and thinking about politics and economics? Do authoritarianism and democracy, communism and capitalism – and the passage from one to the other – come ready-made with their own, inherent, formal or morphological characteristics and trajectories? A comparison between Kliptown's WSSD and Warsaw's Palace does not answer any of these questions definitively. But it provides the ground for a few reflections, laid out in the paragraphs below, complicating some commonly-held ways in which scholars – of

politics, of architectural aesthetics, of urban planning – have tended to answer them so far.

Kliptown Oculus

Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication **(Figures 3-6)** receives its framing from two colonnaded concrete edifices. Sections of each house an eclectic assortment of functions: a lively market, featuring traders and food-sellers, dispensing everything from steak and pap to shoelaces and fresh vegetables; a four-star hotel, the Soweto Holiday Inn; an under-used retail wing; and a perpetually-empty 'multi-purpose hall'. Vast information tablets hammer home the complex geometrical symbolism, with which the square's architects, Johannesburg practice StudioMAS, saturated their competition-winning entry: jaunty off-Corbusian *pilotis* stand, we are told, for 'vitality'; abundant X-shapes – laid out as brick benches on the 'New Square' section of the site – signify 'equality, democracy and the freedom to vote'; the 'modular' form of the buildings refers to 'robustness', 'adaptability' and, again, 'equality'; recycled roof-sheeting and 'bricks from demolished buildings' (those demolished to make way for WSSD, perhaps?) evoke 'ecology' and 'Kliptown's rich cultural and historic legacy'. The symbolism conveyed by the paving on the 'Old Square', WSSD's most featureless, deserted, windswept and sun-drenched section, is particularly layered and multi-faceted, it turns out:

> The grid pattern on the paving of the square signifies the unyielding nature of the regime against which the struggle was waged. A footpath that once existed during the time when the meeting took place is commemorated by an irregular brick line that runs across the grid. This path breaks the rigid geometry of the paving and also symbolizes the collapse of the political order against which the struggle took place.

The visual pivot of WSSD is a vast, Great Zimbabwesque brick cone. Within stands a circular granite platform, sliced into sections laying out the Freedom Charter's ten postulates. The interior is dark and musty, but an awkward slither of light shines from a cross-shaped oculus (another ballot box reference, apparently) cut into the cone's ceiling. A few days before coming to Kliptown, I'd visited the Voortrekker Monument – a gargantuan, fascistic brick stump, looming high on a hilltop overlooking Tshwane (formerly Pretoria), and the Kliptown cone was very awkwardly reminiscent. The Voortrekker Monument was opened on 16 December 1949 – one year following the establishment of the apartheid regime – on the Day of the Vow, commemorating a bloody 1838 Afrikaner colonists' massacre of their Zulu adversaries. It had also been conceived to convey associations with Great Zimbabwe (that and the ruins of Egypt, the other great evokers of the 'vastness of Africa', see Coombes 2003: 38); and even featured its own cosmos-channelling dome slit, which, at noon on the Day of the Vow each year, shines a forty-metre ray of light onto the cenotaph in the building's vault. Architect Lindsay Bremner comments sardonically on the resemblance between the two monuments: 'on June 26 each year' – the anniversary of the Freedom Charter – 'observers would be able to watch the sun briefly light up [the Charter's] surface, before it receded once more into the shadows of history' (Bremner 2007: 342-343).

An old man, shabby and tired-looking, sombrely dressed in a ripped shirt and tie, rested on a bench by the wall, dusting down a recorder flute. He introduced himself as Tabang, and offered to tell us the story of the Freedom Charter. We shuffled around the slab, stopping for a moment to examine each slice **(Figure 7)**. Although the narrative was interrupted by dreadful fits of coughing, Tabang rolled out

the tale of the first two postulates – 'the People Shall Govern' and 'All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights' – in a fairly celebratory tone, 'These have been realized', he said. At number Three, however 'the People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth' our guide became scathing. 'This has not been realized. The whites and rich own the country, while the blacks go poor', he said. After this, what had started out seeming like a propaganda spectacle, turned into a twenty-minute circumambulatory critique, whose severity focused in particular on Postulates Number Four ('The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It'), Seven ('There Shall be Work and Security') and Nine ('There shall be Houses, Security and Comfort'). As we completed the tour, Tabang took out his recorder and played the first verse of the South African national anthem. The patriotism was as genuine, I think, as the bathos was pungent. Has he always lived in Kliptown, we asked? Did he remember the assembly at which the Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955? Yes, he said, he was born here, but not until a long time after. Tabang, hunchbacked and gravely ill, had the appearance of an old man, but he couldn't have been much over fifty. We asked him whether he liked the Square and the Monument, but he politely ignored the question. We paid our small fee, said our goodbyes, took a few more photographs and walked back out into the scorching March heat.

Kliptown Scale

The try-hard democratic triumphalism of WSSD, in other words, lays bare with a brutal honesty the myriad contradictions, inadequacies and shortcomings of the post-apartheid South African political order. It's not very hard to find things to dislike about it, and the critics have not hesitated in doing so. Its barren, foreboding vastness is off-putting, they agree, and ignores all aspects of the local area's social life,

economic dynamics, aesthetic and scalar characteristics. In the words of Johannesburg-based architect Jonathan Noble (2008: 26),

> "The windswept terrain of the square, with its seemingly endless hard paved surface, devoid of places to sit or opportunity for shade from the harsh sun, is quite uninhabitable, and one struggles to imagine how this space might be used by the residents of Kliptown on a daily basis".

Architect Lindsay Bremner – herself a co-designer of another WSSD competition entry – casts the site as an anachronism, a 'nineteenth century beaux arts set piece', redolent not just of the Voortrekker Monument or Great Zimbabwe, but also of 'the colonnades of ancient Rome' and the 'light columns of Hitler's Nuremberg stadium' (2007: 342). The problem with StudioMAS' winning design, says Bremner is that it 'constructs a metanarrative for the space' (Ibid.: 341). Her own design, by contrast, rested on 'allowing the micronarratives of everyday life in Kliptown to carry on undisturbed. … Our approach to architecture was anthropological. We attempted to observe spatial practices from an ethnographic, not a panoptic point of view' (Ibid: 344).[2]

Echoing Bremner, anthropologists Lynn Meskell and Collete Scheermeyer (2008) dismiss WSSD as a 'set piece' of 'heritage pageantry', at once ineffectual and obfuscatory. 'Extravagantly memorialising the site of the Charter's endorsement has proven much easier than fulfilling the document's promises for the residents of Kliptown' (2008: 162). WSSD, and analogous sites of ideological spectacle in post-apartheid South Africa – like Johannesburg's Constitution Hill, Durban's Old Fort Museum or Tshwane's Freedom Park, which sits adjacent to the Voortrekker Monument – are compared unfavourably by the authors to 'small-scale heritage

initiatives by marginalised communities.' (Ibid.) Jonathan Noble, meanwhile, draws attention to the manner in which StudioMAS' design paid scant regard to the 'multicultural history and complex hybrid character of the area' and instead 'has sought to impose its own architectural geometry' (Noble 2008: 30). Noble bemoans the 'cathedral-like expanse of wasted space' and wonders 'why the informal traders could not have been accommodated in a more modest fashion' (Ibid.: 26). Johannesburg-based sociologist Christia Kuljian (2009), meanwhile, follows Noble's diagnosis of the undemocratic character of the site a 'grandiose', 'non-Kliptown', 'bureaucratic imposition', and cites Annie Coombes' (2003) highlighting of the associations between large public spaces and totalitarian regimes. All the authors above highlight a sad irony: WSSD was intended as a site for the memorialization and commemoration of a proud democratic heritage. But whatever 'good intentions' may have been behind the project, the bureaucrats and architects clubbed together to make sure they fell way short of their stated goal. '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' (2008: 463).

Political Morphology

I have no intention in this article to defend WSSD, and have no data at my disposal to counter the assertions of the authors cited above. I'd like to highlight, however, how their critiques resort to a quite consistent set of convictions about the relationship between spatial, geometric and aesthetic – one might say, morphological – features of built form, and their cultural, historical or political correlates. In the critics' presentation, the 'historic character' of pre-WSSD Kliptown in its authentic self is 'complex', 'hybrid', 'small-scale', 'modest', 'informal' and, by implication,

intrinsically democratic. Populated as it is by 'micronarratives of everyday life', Kliptown, Bremner suggests, is a proper terrain for 'ethnography', rather than for architecture in the traditional sense. WSSD, by contrast, is 'panoptic', 'extravagant', 'grandiose' and therefore bureaucratic, autocratic, totalitarian (Voortrekker, Hitler, ancient Rome).

I am interested in how these sorts of alignments – between ideas pertaining to morphology, and those pertaining to politics, economy (or culture, social organization, even the epistemological foundations on which academic disciplines rest) – are made. In other words, I would like to get to grips with the 'political morphology' which impacts on the way in which scholars – but also architects, planners, politicians and 'ordinary users' – use and experience built form. How can these political and morphological concepts be combined and correlated? What is the relationship between hierarchy and *verticality*, equality and *horizontality*? Between holism and *Euclidean space*, atomism and *non-linearity*? Between statism and *striation*, anarchy and *smoothness*? Between collectivism and *asceticism*, individualism and *luxury*? Between authoritarianism and *centrality*, democracy and *marginality*?[3]

Over the past hundred years, a great deal of scholarly energy has been expended on interrogating the permutations of the back-and-forth between centripetal and centrifugal forces, fusion and fission, concentration and dispersal – the 'ceaseless battle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere', as Michael Holquist (Bakhtin and Holquist 1982: xviii) puts it with reference to Mikhail Bahktin's philosophy of language. To name a few prominent, canon-forming instances, these have included explorations in the history of religion (Eliade 1987), social anthropology (Evans Pritchard 1940, Geertz

1984), macro-sociology (Shils 1975), political economy (Polanyi 1951, Wallerstein 1979, Wolf 1982, Ostrom 1972), archaeology (Rowlands, Larsen, Kristiansen 1987), art and architectural theory (Wolfflin 1950, Vidler 2001, Paperny 2002), continental philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, DeLanda 2006), urban economic geography (Krugman and Fujita 1999) and, of course, broadly-defined 'urban studies' (Burgess, Park, McKenzie and Wirth 1925, Harris and Ullman 1945, Jacobs 1961, Gottman 1980, Lefebvre 1991, 2003, 2014, Sassen 1991, Hall 1997, Soja 2005).

On an urban terrain, the odds in this 'ceaseless battle' have, it seems, been tilting decidedly more in favour of the centrifugal side. The 'monocentric' cities of old − whether theocratic-feudal ones dominated by soaring temples, or industrial-capitalist ones pivoted around downtown 'Central Business Districts' − are on the wane. The new urban age − say politicians, planners and scholars − will be one of polycenters margins and peripheries; of suburban special economic zones, grassroots innovation hubs and brownfield eco-cities. But do architectural goings-on in Warsaw and Johannesburg confirm the received idea − among scholars of municipal politics economy and planning, from Jane Jacobs to the Ostroms and Paul Krugman − which suggests that democracy must necessarily equate to urban polycentricity and architectural humility; and authoritarianism to monocentricity and monumentality? Do different ways or organising politics and economics, in other words, have inherent morphological corollaries (or morpho-logics)?[4]

Collective Centrality: The Morphology of Luxury
Kristin Ross' recent work on the Paris Commune has produced some richly suggestive, provocative avenues for rethinking deeply-rooted political morphological doxa − particularly with regard to the perceived interdependence between

egalitarianism and asceticism, or progressive politics and the renunciation of pleasure. In Ross' account, the actions and imaginations of the Communards were underlain by a vision of 'communal luxury' (the phrase is Eugene Poittier's), by a call to transform 'the aesthetics coordinates of the entire community', 'the demand that beauty flourish in spaces shared in common and not just in special privatized preserves' (2015: 58). Communal luxury, as Ross explains (via William Morris) entails the replacement of 'senseless luxury, which Morris knew cannot exist without slavery of some kind' with 'communal luxury, or equality in abundance' (2015: 63).

Ross is keen to emphasise that the morphology of her own account – and those of the Communards or Communard fellow-travellers she draws on, among them William Morris, Elise Reclus and Pyotr Kropotkin – is not afflicted by a 'fetishism of the small scale' (Ibid: 133). And, indeed, while it emphasises 'the centrifugal effects of the Paris Commune', this centrifugality of a distinctly 'macro' character – it sets out to rupture the 'cellular' regime of national space, its reach is global. Nevertheless, a positive valorisation of ascesis, a championing of the humble over the bombastic, and an active rejection of any centre-focused dynamic is evident throughout. Although the ideas and practices Ross discusses are founded on the very act of de-privatising beauty, in her account 'communal luxury works against the centralizing organisation of monumental space' (2015: 59). And the Commune itself, 'is perhaps best figured as having the qualities Reclus attributes in his book to the mountain stream. Its scale and geography are liveable, not sublime.' (2015: 8). In Ross' own summary, 'the supposition here is that a particular economic structure – common ownership – working with a particular political organization – a decentralized one – will foster a new level of fellowship, reciprocity and solidarity of interests among associates' (Ibid.: 127). But where does a decentralized organization end, and a

centralizing one begin? Does the one always have to be the opposite of the other? And is it not possible to produce a political morphological framework, which elides the significance of neither periphery nor centre?

No City Without a Centre: Re-Centring the Collective

In terms which overlap strikingly with those of Ross, architectural historian Łukasz Stanek emphasises how French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre's interest in 'collective luxury' (2011: 170-179) was connected to a reaction against the perceived fragmentation of the modernist city. As Stanek's analysis suggests, Lefebvre was given over to the task of overcoming the tendency of thinkers who interested him – whether Debord or Fourier – to focus on one pole rather than both of the central-peripheral divide. Instead, Lefebvre's concept of 'dialectical centrality' – a concept, which has been markedly (perhaps purposefully?) neglected by scholars before Stanek – aimed to account for the 'complementary processes of exclusion, repulsion and dispersion… the simultaneity of these contradictory movements' (2011: 179).

As Stanek emphasises (2011: 179-191), Lefebvre's historical study of the Paris Commune (as well as his participatory account of May 1968 and its 'explosion' on the peripherally-located Parisian campus of Nanterre University) analysed both events as dialectical encounters of 'necessity and chance, determination and contingency, the anticipated and the unpredicted' (Lefebvre 1965: 11); events, during which, in Lefebvre's words (1969: 117-118):

> People who had come from the outlying areas into which they had been driven and where they had found nothing but a social void assembled and proceeded together toward the reconquest of the urban centres.

Thinking through his project of 'unitary architecture' Lefebvre sought inspiration in Charles Fourier's attempt to 'overcome the separations produced by modern capitalist society' (2011: 170) – separations such as those that Ross' Communard protagonists sought to overcome in their thought and work: between intellectual, aesthetic and manual work; between fine and decorative arts; between nature and culture; between city and country; between centre and periphery (cf. Ross 2015: 41-65). Indeed, in Lefebvre's account, centripetality constitutes a necessary condition, without which no sort of urbanism is possible. In his own words (2003: 79),

> There can be no city or urban reality without a centre … there can be no sites for leisure, festivals, knowledge, oral or scriptural transmission, invention or creation without centrality.

These words by the French Marxist philosopher mirror quite uncannily a pronouncement made by Edmund Goldzamt, a leading architectural ideologue in Warsaw during the Stalinist 1950s (1956: 11):

> There can be no such thing as a city without a centre. The very idea of the city incorporates within itself the fact of the existence of the primary catalyst of the urban organism: the central ensemble or arrangement.

Goldzamt's thoughts were formulated with explicit reference to the Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw's then-brand-new Stalinist skyscraper. Now, the Palace of Culture was consciously intended to endow Warsaw with an entirely new political morphology, focused on itself – and the surrounding, 25 hectare Parade Square – as pivot and *dominanta*. The morpho-logic of the gift – as verbalized by the Stalinist architectural ideologues of the day – was to function as the 'vital and territorial centre

of gravity' (Goldzamt 1956: 22) of Warsaw, the new 'urban epicentre,' to which the remainder of Warsaw would be 'harmoniously subordinated' (Sigalin 1986c: 10).

The Palace was suffused with transformatory social, political and economic intent; on both vertical and horizontal planes it rode roughshod over (what survived of) Warsaw's pre-existing urban structure and aesthetic. The radical multiplicity of functions encompassed by the building – three major theatres, three cinemas, a vast 'Palace of Youth' complete with resplendent marbled swimming pool, a 3,000 seat Congress Hall, municipal offices, two museums, numerous libraries, research and educational institutions, among much else – *condensed*[5] enormous quantities of people within its walls and environs, inculcating Varsovians with a profuse concentration of socialist culture. The Palace was to serve, in the words of Warsaw architect Szymon Syrkus (a lifelong communist, but a leading International Style modernist until the onset of the Stalinist period in 1949), an 'immovable guiding star on our journey to transform old Warsaw, princely Warsaw, royal, magnates', burghers', capitalist Warsaw into socialist Warsaw' (Sigalin 1986b: 460).

Stalinist architectural thinking, therefore, saw no unresolvable contradiction between revolutionary social content, and morphological centripetality or monumentality. Echoing German expressionist architect and theorist Bruno Taut's influential notion of the *Stadtkröne* (1919), Goldzamt writes that the 'particular destiny and ideological role' of the central ensemble 'determine the deployment in its construction of only the most monumental types of public construction and architectural form, *which crown the aesthetic unity of the city*' (Ibid., emphasis added). Further, adds Goldzamt, 'the dominating role of the central ensemble is the effect of the concentration therein of *architectural power*' (Ibid.: 21).

But how does Goldzamt square the egalitarian imperative behind socialist urbanism with the Stalinist elevation of the all-dominant centre? He distinguishes between the levelling effect of socialist town planning and the distribution of wealth and access to dignified living conditions on the one hand and, on the other, the *architectural* differentiation between centre and periphery, which the realization of an egalitarian urban environment necessarily entails (Ibid.: 18):

> Socialist urbanism eradicates class differences within the city, creating across all districts identical conditions for living, in terms of dwelling, work, communal services and aesthetic experiences … But the eradication of the social contradiction between the city centre and the suburbs does not entail the elimination of all differences in architectural solutions, nor does it entail the eradication of central ensembles, with their particular form and spatial role. To the contrary, the democratism of socialist societies … necessitates the enormous significance of the centres of socialist cities.

The Radical Centre, or Democratic Centralism

In Goldzamt's account – quite jarring, I think, to the parameters of today's democratic-peripheralist political morphology – the distinction between socialist and capitalist centrality lies precisely in the fact that, on all accounts, the former exceeds the latter: in scale, in intensity, and in agentic capacity. In contrast to capitalist urban cores, which are merely 'material carriers of the dominant worldview' (Ibid.: 16), socialist centres function as 'actual tools of ideological impact'. 'What is more', Goldzamt continues:

> … their prominence in the life of socialist cities must become incomparably higher than that of the ceremonial or financial-commercial centres of feudal and capitalist cities. The foundation of the strengthening of the role of the centre in

the practice of Soviet, Polish and other Peoples' Democracies is the *transformation of the infrastructure of social ties carried out by central ensembles* (emphasis added).

The centre of the urban organism, when possessed of the right characteristics, is able to and should become a powerful agent in the transformation of society, simultaneously actualizing and illustrating the 'coming unity of interests in socialist society, the unity of the interests and ideals of the entire population of the socialist city' (Ibid.: 20). The socialist centre is thus never at loggerheads with the remainder of the city.

Like Goldzamt, Lefebvre also emphasises that there is more than just one kind of centrality, and that the nature of centrality's social functioning depends on more than merely its shape, size and appearance. Having declared that 'there no be no city or urban reality without a centre', Lefebvre makes an important clarification (2003: 79):

'But as long as certain relationships of production and ownership remain unchanged, centrality will be subjected to those who use these relationships and benefit from them'

The question of the urban, then, is not one of periphery versus centre. The victory of a more collective, more egalitarian, more just or otherwise better urbanism does not depend on the vanquishing of the middle by the margins. It is, instead, a question of good and bad centralities: those owned by and open to the collective, or those held and guarded by the few; and those whose design – its aesthetic, scalar and morphological characteristics – are founded on *planned* use value, or those determined by *calculated* exchange value.

More than a quarter century has passed since the collapse of Poland's state socialist regime in 1989, and yet the Palace of Culture continues to work much as Goldzamt and the other planners and ideologues of Stalinist urbanism intended it to. The vast majority of Warsaw's residents – 80% according to a large-scale survey I carried out in Warsaw[6] – consider it (and the surrounding Parade Square) to constitute Warsaw's singular central or core site (*centrum*); none of the plans for filling the space around it with a triumphant coteries of money-making skyscrapers have been carried out; and contrary to initial assessments that its shape, form and symmetry are 'anathema to democracy' (Murawski 2015), the Palace – Warsaw's most conspicuously totalitarian edifice – in fact functions as one of the city's prime sites of municipal democracy: the city council chamber meets here; and in 2000, a large clock tower was added to the building's spire, with the intention – according to then-Mayor Paweł Piskorski – of 'townhalling' the Palace and providing Varsovians with a 'place to come together, integrate urban society, under a huge clock tower' (Murawski 2015).

Nevertheless, it is essential to emphasise that Warsaw's post-socialist Palace is far from being some sort of amenable, humble lackey of the new political-economic order. The Palace remains a uniquely effective piece of *communist* architecture, spatial planning and social engineering. It is a building which functions as well as it does in post-socialist Warsaw, because the land on which it stands was expropriated from its pre-war owners, and has not yet been 'returned' to property speculators. It is a building, which, so far, resists the 'wild capitalist' chaos – of property restitution, 20-storey billboards, inner-centre poverty and rampant gentrification – which surround it. This situation may not last for long, however. Parade Square, and much of the rest of Warsaw, is slowly being chopped up and parcelled out to the descendants

of pre-war owners, or, more likely, to rapacious property developers, who have spent most of the last twenty years buying up land claims, more often than not for absurdly low ('non-market') prices. The Palace, then, will only distribute its seditious 'architectural power' over the city, for as long as it and its surroundings remain publicly-owned and managed.

Conclusion: A Palace for Kliptown

As Lungisile Ntsebeza (2007) points out, the global conditions of possibility for the post-apartheid order to take form according to anything other than capitalist lines collapsed together with the Soviet Union in 1991. The characteristics and consequences of one transformation – from Eurasian state socialism to neoliberal capitalism – in other words, foreclosed those of another – from apartheid capitalism to neoliberal capitalism, or from constitutional to merely economic apartheid. So, although at least on paper, Kliptown's WSSD is also publicly-built, owned and managed, it would be difficult to expect the parameters of its design to have had anything to do with the 'revolutionary transformation' of a capitalist urban organism into a socialist one.

WSSD's critiques account extensively for the manner in which the project was driven by the desire to boost investment and visitor numbers, to 'upgrade [Soweto's] existing business nodes' and 'create business opportunities' (JDA 2005[7]). In critic Jonathan Noble's words, the layout and programme of WSSD was determined, in fact, by 'the investment logic of a conventional shopping mall' (2009: 27). Furthermore, while the square's brief did initially incorporate training spaces, sports facilities, a police station and a community advice centre, all were removed from the final design, 'which is dominated, almost exclusively, by rentable space' and from

which – in absolute contrast to the Palace – 'social functions have been excluded' (Ibid.: 27). In the illustrative description of Graeme Reid, CEO of the Johannesburg Development Authority – the public body responsible for managing the Greater Kliptown Regeneration Project – the last remaining hope for WSSD is that it will act as a sort of catalyst for gentrification of Kliptown: 'The square … has the potential to be sort of like a Rosebank [an affluent part of Johannesburg with open-air cafes and shops]' (cited in Kuljian 2008: 458). With this projected future in mind, it goes without saying that its construction was preceded by the mass evictions of traders and others, who had occupied the same site for many decades – in some cases, for the entirety of the apartheid era.

Warsaw's Palace of Culture was erected by a regime expropriating land from the rich for what it perceived to be the collective good. Today, however, it stands within a political-economic context, where the transformation towards democracy goes hand-in-hand with the restitution – or, as they say in Polish *reprywatyzacja*, or re-privatisation – of land and property, a triumphant reassertion of an urban morphology founded on wealth stratification. WSSD, meanwhile, was built on land expropriated from the poor, by a system, which has been very happy for the lion's share of land – whether urban or rural – and all other kinds of property, wealth and resources to remain in the hands of the rich. The Kliptown square and its monument, in other words, belong within a context, where the transition towards 'democracy' limits itself to the political and symbolic realms. It is a bathetic aesthetic-morphological symptom of post-apartheid South Africa's political and economic logic – not a Goldzamtian 'actual tool of ideological impact', but a mere 'material carrier of the dominant worldview'. Walter Sisulu Square of Dedication expresses with great eloquence the contradictions of a regime, whose much cherished and celebrated

constitution fails to enshrine any of the Freedom Charter's economic postulates – each of which, as Tabang points out, 'have not been realised' – but instead ensures protection for the plunderous property arrangements left over from the colonial and apartheid eras (Nstebeza 2007, Walker 2007).

In the critics' eyes, the problem with WSSD is that 'the excessive scale of the superstructure stands in marked contrast to the needy social life of surrounding Kliptown' (Noble 2008: 29). The 'needs' of Kliptown are indeed unfulfilled, and the Square serves well as a venue for articulating this lack of fulfilment. Indeed, as Kuljian, Meskell and Scheermeyer recognise, since its opening in 2005, WSSD and its environs have played host to regular protests and rallies – including major disturbances in 2007 and 2013 – coordinated by activist groups, such as the Kliptown Concerned Residents, the Anti-Privatisation Forum and now Julius Malema's Economic Freedom Fighters.

But, while the square's monumentality and enormity make it into an excellent venue for expressions of political dissent, do they – in themselves – bear responsibility for Kliptown's ills? And on what basis does one make the claim that the social life of Kliptown – or of anywhere else – belongs to a small rather than a large scalar order? Accepting the obvious flaws and inadequacies of the WSSD project in its actualized form, in other words, precisely why ought a public space adequate to Kliptown be modest, micro, small-scale, informal? Could Kliptown, if the political-economic conditions of possibility were in place, not accommodate its own forms of monumentality, grandeur, bombast and centrality – its Palace of Culture and Science?

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[1] See Murawski (2012) for more on the 1950s re-assertion of modernism in Warsaw, and its appropriation as a post-socialist ideology of 'cosmopolitan patriotism'.

[2] This corresponds with Clifford Geertz's observation (which he attributes to Alfred Kroeber) concerning anthropology's longstanding 'centrifugal impulse' (1984: 285).

[3] Particularly interesting from the point of view of these reflections is Elżbieta Matynia's reflections on the performative aspect of Polish and South African transitions to democracy, which in Poland took place at a round table; and in South Africa at

[4] David Graeber and David Wengrow (2015) point to archaeological and anthropological evidence – the 'puzzling phenomenon of "rich" hunter-gatherer burials'; monumental architecture apparently raised during the 'pre-pottery Neolithic'; and, most notably, Marcel Mauss' and Henri Beuchat's pioneering work on the 'double morphology' of hunter-gathering eskimo populations, whose social organisation varied from summer to winter – to show that the relationships between politics, economy and social morphology are not necessarily fixed as solidly as scholarly consensuses assume them to be. Our earliest ancestors, Graeber and Wengrow suggest, were just as aware as us that 'no social order is immutable'.

[5] See Murawski (2013, 2015) for an analysis of the Palace as a Stalinist realisation of the Soviet constructivist notion that architecture ought to function as a 'social condenser'.

[6] In October 2010, I carried out an online-based questionnaire, composed of 70 questions about the Palace's relationship with Warsaw. Bias was controlled for to some extent by collecting demographic data for respondents, but the survey did not aspire to representativeness. See Murawski (2013) for an in-depth discussion.

[7] http://www.jda.org.za/index.php/milestones/kliptown, accessed 29 June, 2015.