CITIES IN A CHANGING WORLD:

QUESTIONS OF CULTURE, CLIMATE AND DESIGN

• Paper / Proposal Title:
  South African cities redesigned: The production of space to achieve environmental and mental well-being

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• Abstract (300 words):
  There is a connection between mental health decline and environmental degradation; parallels may be drawn between the two when considering concepts of scarcity and abundance. A scarcity mentality may generate a drive to consume and degrade. Likewise, an abundance mentality may generate a drive to grow and heal.

  The culture of consumerism is environmentally degrading. It is speculated that this drive to consume is driven by a decline in mental health. It could then be argued that reverting to a more environmentally-friendly culture and meaningful [spatial] experiences, as opposed to material consumption, may be a way to elevate mental health. To achieve this shift in behaviour and practice, the concept of a “healthy city” may be explored through the lens of the spatial design disciplines.
Fanon defined mental illness as a real experience, influenced by both society and culture, and by the stubborn contradictions of colonial and post-colonial societies; mental illness relates to the relationship between the individual and social structure. He also believed that the body plays a pivotal role in the expression and structuring of the mind. The impact of the environment or context may thus be used to understand mental health conditions and psychology.

wa Thiong’o presented co-operation and language as being intrinsically linked and “community” being based on co-operation in production. In this paper, the authors discuss how architectural interventions could be conceptualised in such a way so as to help achieve a mental shift from scarcity to abundance by considering a healthy relationship between people and the production of space.

South African cities are sites of physical and psychological trauma. The wounds caused by colonialism and Apartheid manifest in spatial patterns and are contained in peoples’ psyches. The paper is premised on the idea that healing may be achieved through spatial configurations. A theoretical premise is thus presented.

**Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

**Francine van Tonder** is a South African qualified architect, lecturer, specification writer, startup owner, and Level 1 CrossFit coach. She holds a Master in Architecture from the Tshwane University of Technology and a Master in Business Leadership from the University of South Africa. She is currently reading towards a Doctor of Architecture at the Tshwane University of Technology. She is a Sessional Lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand and a Part Time Lecturer at Tshwane University of Technology. Furthermore, she provides the service of specification writer to many architectural organisations in Gauteng, South Africa.

**Amira Osman** is a Sudanese/South African Professor of Architecture at the Tshwane University of Technology and SARChI: DST/NRF/SACN Research Chair in Spatial Transformation (Positive Change in the Built Environment). Amira believes that the architectural profession has a critical role to play in the achievement of buildings, neighbourhoods and cities that are more equitable, beautiful and functional, creating environments that are livable and lovable and offering people a better chance at improving their lives and livelihoods; this has been the driving force behind Amira’s work and she has spent most of her career advocating for these principles. Amira obtained a PhD in Architecture (University of Pretoria, 2004), she was a convener for the World Congress on Housing (2005), the Sustainable Human(e) Settlements: the urban challenge (2012), the 9th International Conference on Appropriate Technology (9th ICAT)(2020) and she served as UIA 2014 Durban General Reporter and Head of the Scientific Committee
for the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA). She is a joint coordinator for the international CIB W104 Open Building Implementation network. Amira has extensive experience curating international events, coordinating complex programmes, exhibitions, conceptualising content and managing diverse teams.