

“Just City-making” in Cape Town

Liberating Theological Education

Headley, Selena. D¹

Abstract

Aspirational terms such as world-class, resilient, climate-friendly and just City stand in contrast to adverse terms such as unequal, divided, colonial, violent, and segregated to describe the present and future state of the City of Cape Town. How do institutions offering tertiary qualifications in theology engage with the competing narratives of the City in the preparation of faith-based practitioners? This article aims to explore the current landscape of theological education offered in higher education institutions in Cape Town, in terms of an urban focus. The article will reflect on how curricula, pedagogies, and epistemologies engage the complexities of the urban context. The connection between theological education and ministry formation of faith-based practitioners will be explored in light of Cape Town’s urban futures.

Key words: Cape Town, justice, pedagogy, theological education, theological formation, urban futures

1. Introduction

The social landscape of the City of Cape Town presents a context of multiple existing and future challenges for theological education institutions. This article presents a starting point of inquiry into how faith-based practitioners are being prepared through theological education, and uncovers emerging themes to engage with urban issues in the future. Research methods utilising the pastoral cycle and action research were employed to identify pedagogical practices and ideas, while also exploring concepts that could be availed to prepare faith-based practitioners to engage urban challenges critically. Themes and scenarios will be explored to consider how theological education/formation can play a role in Cape Town’s development as a just City.

¹ “This article forms part of a special collection titled ‘Urban Africa 2050: imagining theological education/formation for flourishing African cities’. The collection captures the outcomes of a research project with the same title, hosted in the Centre for Faith and Community at the University of Pretoria. This research project was funded by the Nagel Institute for World Christianity, based at the Calvin University, Grand Rapids.” This article is also submitted as part of the requirements for a PhD in Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria, entitled: A praxis-based approach to liberating theological education: A Cape Town case study.

2. Cape Town’s urban challenges

2.1 Aspirations and adversities

Less than a ten-minute drive between a suburb and a township space on any given day can make my head spin and my heartache from the offence of blatant inequality. Cornerstone Institute (CI) was founded in 1970 on the Cape Flats by missionaries as a “non-racial” bible institute built on “a foundation of love and acceptance that recognised the equality of all humankind, made in the image of God” (Gustafson, 2018:13).² As a black female academic connected to the faculty at CI for more than ten years, I have wondered whether the roots of resistance still hold sway in a city that remains deeply divided and unequal. Has the theological education offered at CI and other institutions of higher learning been a liberating force in the City, or are we in a place of needing liberation? Is theological education in the City of Cape Town adequately preparing faith-based practitioners to play a role in urban challenges for just City-making?

Between 1996 and 2016, Cape Town’s population grew by 60%, from 2.5 million to 4.0 million (Turok & Scheba, 2018:10). The City of Cape Town has been working hard to establish a reputation internationally as a world-class city, striving to be a leading tourist, business, and conference destination on the continent. Yet, all inhabitants of the City do not experience the City in the same way. Cape Town maintains the highest income inequality in the province and perhaps even globally, with a Gini coefficient showing a rate increase from 0,604% in 2011 to 0,617% in 2017 (Western Cape Department of Human Settlements, 2019:23).

Locally, many who migrate to the City are absorbed into numerous informal settlements (Kesson, Morgan & Green, 2018:15). A collaborative interactive website—hosted by Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU), The Social Justice Coalition (SJC), International Budget Partnership (IBP) and OpenUp (2019)—provides current information about the approximately 146,000 households living in 437 informal settlements across Cape Town.³ The website specifies accurate information about demographics, density, sanitation, and the City’s “upgrade category” through maps documenting the widespread and growing challenges of informal settlement residents. The enumeration of these basic needs shows insignificant structural changes over decades in many informal settlements and inordinate delays on upgrading (Turok & Scheba, 2018:11). Although multiple barriers and appropriate interventions are clear, little development or change occurs in the identified settlements. As

² Cornerstone was founded in 1970 as Cape Evangelical Bible Institute (CEBI) as a multi-denominational, non-racial place of learning in the Cape Flats during the apartheid era.

³ The activist non-profit and law centre, Ndifuna Ukwazi (UN) helped to spawn the social movements the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) in 2008 and Reclaim the City (RTC) in 2016.

a result, many residents are excluded from the prosperity of the City as they experience the gritty reality of poverty and marginalisation.

2.2 The just City

Sitas and Smit (2016:64) credit Susan Fainstein with the most comprehensive exploration of the concept of “just cities” in her book, *The Just City* (2010). Fainstein (2014:12) states the intent of her book is to argue how the “values of equity, diversity, and democracy may be in conflict,” but when it comes to city planning, equity should be prioritised among the three. She identifies several policies which can be used to “benefit relatively disadvantaged social groups, as defined by income or marginality.” Although her research is drawn from a number of prosperous northern cities, she focuses on policies that put just City-making at the centre. Fainstein (2014:5) also acknowledges how spatial justice in developing countries comes with additional challenges, such as the interplay between vulnerable informal settlements and wealthy suburban enclaves, and even tourism development which often disadvantage low-income residents.

In promoting the idea of a “just City,” Fainstein (2014:12) is concerned with fostering equity for social groups suffering from marginality, revealed in poor housing, low-income household support, insecure living situations, exclusion from economic development initiatives, and inaccessible affordable intra-urban transportation. In addition, she promotes prioritising city policies that contribute to diversity, characterised by “ending discriminatory zoning,” freedom of movement between districts/municipalities, access to shared public spaces which benefit all, along with mixed land use. Finally, she insists on the inclusion and advocacy of representatives of disadvantaged social groups in decision-making since only then is there a possibility of fair representation of the interests of marginalised communities. Then participation can be more than nominal or perfunctory within city processes and structures (Fainstein, 2014:12).

With these concepts of a “just City” in mind, a brief examination of Cape Town governing plans and policies will reveal the disparity in meeting such aspirations. In Cape Town, one can source a wide range of annual reports, integrated development plans (IDPs), policy frameworks, and bylaws spelling out targets to foster and create a just City for all.⁴ The *City of Cape Town five-year Integrated Development Plan: July 2017 – June 2022* (2017) explicates strategic focus areas as “pillars” for an opportunity city, safe City, caring City, inclusive City, and well-run City. These pillars are meant to be the basis of all municipal plans, decisions, and development, linking city policy and implementation to provincial and national plans.

⁴ The city of Cape Town provides an open source portal where copious policy documents can be downloaded for free: <https://www.capetown.gov.za/Family%20and%20home/city-publications/Publications-and-reports>.

2.3 The gap between policy and implementation

In practice, the objectives, numerous projects, and programmes linked to equity and inclusion of low-income residents are hardly ever realised due to inadequate allocation of finances and lack of political will (Sitas & Smit, 2016:69). For example, to expedite housing delivery, the City of Cape Town (2016:118) has chosen an “incremental approach” with a focus on “informal settlements upgrade, integrated human settlements, and social and economic amenities.” According to Hendler and Fieuw (2018:100), implementation of informal settlement upgrades has tended to fall far short of the City’s stated plans, in recent years showing a disturbing trend of slowing down to a halt and killing the informal settlement upgrading programme and partnership with civil society organisations.

The unjust nature of Cape Town persists, where “the poor are marginalized spatially by being located on the fringes of cities, located far from work opportunities and the opportunities of the city” (Denoon-Stevens, 2016:19). The *Draft National Spatial Development Framework 2018 (NSDF)* (2018:19-23) is explicit that the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act 16 of 2013 (SPLUMA) was put in place to eradicate colonial and apartheid spatial planning.⁵ SPLUMA, along with the National Development Plan (NDP), provides policy directives based on five principles: spatial justice; spatial sustainability; spatial resilience; spatial efficiency; and good administration” (2018:53). The *Cape Town Municipal Spatial Development Framework (MSDF)* (2018:x) is said to be informed by SPLUMA, referring to the City’s compliance throughout the document.

Social movements have arisen in recent years, documenting numerous challenges associated with the lack of responsiveness of the City to low-income residents. SJC activists focus on holding the City to account for spatial injustice in informal settlements, for example, highlighting that “20.8% of all households in the city are informal but receive less than 2% of the spending for water and sanitation infrastructure” (Davis, 2015). NU and their offshoot Reclaim the City (RTC), advocate to stop the economic displacement of tenants from well-located areas in the City, while documenting the urgent need for affordable housing from underutilised government-owned land (Budlender, Sendin & Rossouw, 2019; De Beer, 2017:2). Turok and Scheba (2018:12) mention, according to the City’s *Built environment*

⁵ The National Spatial Development Framework Draft 2018 (2019:26) specifies the concern for justice that should govern all cities: “SPLUMA was introduced to ‘provide a framework for spatial planning and land use management’ in South Africa. As such, it not only seeks to attend to and rectify the fragmented, irrational, unfair and unequal apartheid planning system inherited from the Apartheid era, but also its consequences in space.” The Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act, Act 16 of 2013 (SPLUMA) can be viewed at, <https://www.gov.za/documents/spatial-planning-and-land-use-management-act>.

performance plan 2015/16, that “social housing constitutes only 3% of all housing committed or under construction.”

Throughout the plethora of official publications, such as those cited above like the *State of Cape Town Report 2016* and *Cape Town Municipal Spatial Development Framework (MSDF)*, it appears that the city governors and planners concede they should meet the needs of low-income residents. Although numerous by-annual “state of the city” reports and other vision and policy documents indicate intentions for a just City, informal settlement upgrades and the needs for affordable housing in well-located areas remain stagnant, telling a different story.

2.4 Looking towards Cape Town’s future

Cape Town is projected to grow to experience many of the challenges shared by other sub-Saharan African cities such as,

Slum proliferation, weak and inappropriate infrastructure, growing insecurity, marginal role of governments, weak capacities of municipal authorities, and environmental and climate change issues (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, Ncube, Shimeles & Yaméogo, 2014:156).

The cities’ projection of growth is that by the early 2030s, the population will reach 4.5 million (City of Cape Town & TDA Cape Town, 2018:27). According to the *Draft National Spatial Development Framework 2018* (2018:35), by 2050, Cape Town will be a mega-city region with over 6 million people, which may present new challenges as much of the urban population in South Africa’s city regions may be younger than 35 and include many poor households. The *Built Environment Performance Plan* (BEPP) anticipates that population growth will continue to be concentrated among people with low-income levels (Department of Spatial Planning and Urban Design, 2016:7).

The ongoing legacy of apartheid spatial planning and racial divisions contribute to persistent spatial injustice (Kesson, Morgan & Green, 2018:18). Spatial and social justice are inextricably linked with inequality, entrenched from the colonial and apartheid past of Cape Town (Sitas & Smit, 2016:68). Lack of adequate housing and services in some areas contributes to segregation and injustice, maintained through a “socio-spatial hierarchy” that limits people’s mobility and flow between areas of the City (De Beer, Smith & Manyaka, 2017:2). Webster (2019:165) proposes that without adding more households to the list of housing needs, “the current housing backlog will only be addressed by 2065” at the City’s current rate of development.

Furthermore, if the City fails to prioritise significant shocks and stresses, the impact of rapid urbanisation and globalisation could lead to a catastrophic future (Cape Town Resilience Strategy, 2019:6-7). The urgent risks, categorised as shocks

and stresses, are unpredictable and reoccurring with the potential to derail the City's economic fabric if left unconstrained. Identified through extensive consultation, the ten identified shocks are: civil unrest; cyber-attack; drought; gale-force winds; financial/economic crisis; fire; heatwave; infrastructure failure; power outage; and rainfall flooding. In addition, the ten identified stresses are: climate change; crime and violence; food insecurity; insecure municipal finances; informal settlements; lack of social cohesion; poverty and inequality; rapid urbanisation; substance abuse; traffic congestion; trauma; and unemployment. To mitigate the short and long-term effects of these shocks and stresses, widespread public participation is crucial. Barring more dramatic and intentional interventions, Cape Town will continue to suffer from the impact of ongoing structural inequality.

3. Research Method and Design

3.1 Methodological considerations to the theological landscape

Urban Africa 2050: Imagining Theological Education/Formation for Flourishing African Cities, was conceptualised to gain insight into how theological institutions across sub-Saharan Africa are preparing urban practitioners and how they might adapt curriculum, pedagogy, and epistemologies to meet the challenges of Africa's urban futures. In conjunction with my postgraduate study, *A Praxis-Based Approach to Theological Education: A Cape Town Case Study*, I participated as part of a transnational research team consisting of sixteen researchers/educators asking similar questions in fifteen cities and nine countries across the continent. Dr. Stephan De Beer convened the research project in 2018 in conjunction with the University of Pretoria utilising Holland and Henriot's (1983) praxis cycle as a framing research methodology.

In considering “the state of the city” where the governing structures of the City are struggling to provide safety, inclusion, opportunity, care or efficiency to the townships and informal settlements, or affordable housing for low-income residents, what role might theological education institutions play? As part of the higher education landscape, how are accredited theological faculties, bible colleges, and training institutes contributing to the vision for a just City? If the concept of a just City is valid, and the need to advocate for the economically marginalised and under-resourced pockets of the City remains, how are theological institutions in Cape Town addressing urban challenges?

Cape Town is host to several accredited public university faculties or departments of theology and private denominational/interdenominational bible colleges or institutions. Educators from six of the eight invited accredited sites of theological teaching and learning (Cape Town Baptist Seminary, Cape Town Biblical College, Cornerstone Institute, George Whitefield College, Helderberg College of Higher Education, and Stellenbosch University) took part in the initial focus group. It must

be acknowledged that churches and faith-based organisations across the city host unaccredited denominational and nondenominational bible schools, and short and long-term training ministry programmes of various kinds across the City. However, individuals from these programmes were excluded from providing the beginning picture of theological education/formation. This article is limited to focusing on the urban response of educators from accredited theological institutions and the subsequent analyses by a wider circle of faith-based practitioners for the future of theological education/formation (TE/F) in Cape Town.⁶

The praxis-based approach supports the voice and experience of participants, in this case providing space for participants to engage in contextual analysis, the categorising of content, and the expression of their hopes for TE/F, which might engage urban concerns (Headley, 2018). The research was undertaken aligned with Elaine Graham's (2013:151-152) understanding of the ways in which action research can be a vehicle for practical theologians to identify practical wisdom as a collaborative undertaking whilst offering value to participants. The pastoral cycle was used to foster dialogue among insiders who share an interest in human flourishing, theological reflection, and action for renewed practice in TE/F (Graham, 2013:153-154). A participatory and emancipatory approach was taken to involve participants in the production of knowledge and the analysis of content, signifying trust in participants' knowledge and lived experience as co-researchers (Swartz & Nyamnjoh, 2018:2). The research method included a feedback loop sharing the collated findings with all participants through reports along with invitations to participate in successive focus groups, building on the identified themes and outcomes of each event.

3.2 A participatory action research methodology

3.2.1 The focus group process

During three focus groups hosted between March and September 2019, participatory action-research and appreciative inquiry methods were used to gather and analyse the thoughts and reflections of a range of participants regarding theological education and formation in the urban context. The focus group discussions were framed through facilitated participatory activities, questions, and reflections on Cape Town's urban challenges.

3.2.2 Theological educators

The initial focus group served to gain a picture from theological academics/educators of the concepts, methods, practices, and courses or sections of the curriculum

⁶ Throughout this article theological education and formation are linked together in preparing and forming students for ministry, hereafter referred to as TE/F.

that are currently employed to connect students with urban realities. Participants from six accredited theological teaching and learning sites and two representatives from a faith-based organisation participated and assisted with the group facilitation (The Warehouse Trust).

Several introspective questions were posed, inviting participants to write and share responses about institutional identity, pedagogy, epistemology, and teaching practices. After identifying institutional distinctives, the lines were removed so that common threads shared across institutions could be identified. The amalgamation of the inputs under umbrella subjects ranged from theological/ecclesial traditions to pedagogical postures for deepened student and community engagement. All written statements describing practices and ideas were eventually clustered in at least one overarching category, creating a shared picture of how students were equipped for urban ministry.

Besides a focus on the moral and spiritual formation of leaders for the church, almost all the invited accredited institutions promulgate the value of equipping faith-based practitioners to serve and transform society, indicating concern for the welfare of the City. The differing vantage points of the theological educators revealed some shared concepts and approaches to engage the City. In comparison, the assessment of these interventions and the views of the future indicate the call for a dramatically different kind of theological education for faith-based practitioners. In light of rapid urbanisation, future projections connecting to the hardships of under-resourced communities necessitate extensive just City-making efforts in TE/F for urban Africa.

3.2.3 Faith-based practitioners

The second focus group involved fifteen faith-based practitioners and educators, alumni or beneficiaries of formal and/or informal theological education. More than half of this younger group comprised female participants, who were given an opportunity to analyse and build on the urban engagements identified by the first group of educators. The group re-examined, critiqued, and added fresh inputs to the picture of TE/F. They were subsequently led in an exercise to imagine and draw up scenarios of the kind of theological education which would meet the needs of African cities by 2050.

3.2.4 Faith-based community participation

Finally, all previous focus group participants were invited to participate in the final phase of the *Urban Africa 2050* research project, promoted as a colloquium open to all with an interest in TE/F in the City. This group included twenty-five faith-based practitioners connected to faith or community-based organisations, churches, or formal and informal theological training programmes. While the two prior focus

groups had been hosted at The Warehouse, the final event was hosted at a church in one of Cape Town's largest informal settlements, Khayelitsha.

The group of faith-based practitioners, pastors, and educators were invited to further analyse, supplement, and cluster the compiled inputs and themes that invigorated urban TE/E. The compiled focus group themes are represented in *Table 1: Focus Group Themes*. This final group of participants were also asked to examine and add to the future scenarios showcasing pedagogy, epistemology, and methodology to educate and form theological practitioners engaging complex urban challenges in Cape Town by 2050. *Table 2: 5 Scenarios and 18 Shared Characteristics for an Urban Future* represents an overview of the significant characteristics that emerged from the five imaginative scenarios created during the second focus group, with the addition of a scenario depicting Black Consciousness and economic representation during the third focus group.

4. Analysing the urban focus in theological institutions in Cape Town

4.1 Reflections and themes formulated by theological educators

4.1.1 Pull factors

The focus group with educators generated an enormous amount of verbal and written reflections, which were amalgamated to gain a glimpse of how urban issues are being addressed across the theological institutions. Most of the theological educators represented institutions which could be said to have a core focus on what has been described as a "classical theological curriculum," which includes Old and New Testament studies, Biblical languages, Christian history, ethics, systematic theology or dogmatics, and practical theology, with missiology added at evangelical institutions (De Gruchy, 2010:43).

Reviewing the main themes that emerged from the data, it was apparent that pull and push factors are at play in curriculum development at several theological institutions across the City. The educators acknowledged the internal pull factors to maintain institutional pedagogical and epistemological traditions, which had been part of the history and foundational principles of their various theological institutions. Naidoo (2017:532) argues that theological institutions hold religious commitments and values, which "form institutional cultures that are more intense" than the majority of other higher education institutions. For example, institutional traditions, denominational perspectives, and organisational mission/values featured strongly in determining curriculum at the various theological institutions. Participants' contributions demonstrated a pull to retain many classical theological ideas, including various doctrinal ideas, which often emulated historically Western approaches to theology and the reformation of society.

<p>Theological Educators Focus Group 1 Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical basis for Theology (Bible-centred) • Church and Societal History • Church Focus (ecclesiology) • Community-Based Issues (advocacy and activism) • Community Engagement/Service Learning/Practical Training (using ministry skills in the community) • Contextual Theologies (informed by sites of struggle) • Denominational Emphases (doctrinal preferences shaping beliefs and curriculum) • Formative Activities (shaping believers) • Interdisciplinary (working across disciplines) • Institutional Traditions (organisational ethos) • Self-reflexivity as Lecturer (declaring positionality/being human and vulnerable as the teacher) • Student-Centred Education/Training • Urban Issues (engaging geography/location of learning)
<p>Faith-based Practitioners Focus Group 2 Additional Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decolonising Theology • Gap in Institutional Sharing (between academic institutions and community) • Power (understanding/analysing/disrupting)
<p>Faith-based Community Participation Focus Group 3 (Colloquium) Additional Theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Psychology of Poverty

Table 1: Focus Group Themes

4.1.2 Push factors

Should classical theology remain as directives, or could it serve in the shift of theological education towards the pressing concerns of the context? Mugambi (2013:117) indicated that educational curricula, including theological education, has “been overloaded with cultural values from Europe and North America at the expense of the African cultural and religious heritage.” Most educators acknowledged several external push factors, driven in part by a diversified student population towards engagement with contemporary issues and struggles of under-resourced communities. Since the “students have changed from who they used to be,” institutions were forced to reflect critically on what is being offered. Participants’ responses revealed that societal challenges are pushing educators towards dealing with urban challenges that were not dealt with through many classical approaches to theological study.

5 future scenarios and 18 shared characteristics	Scenario 1: Head, heart and hands (Focus Group 2)	Scenario 2: Church and theological education in the round (Focus Group 2)	Scenario 3: United through love, respect and dialogue (Focus Group 2)	Scenario 4: Organic circles of life (Focus Group 2)	Scenario 5: Black Consciousness and economic representation (Focus Group 3)
Action/practice-oriented	X	X	X	X	X
Co-learning with communities for new knowledge production		X	X	X	X
Contextual and local theologies	X	X	X	X	X
Creation care		X	X	X	
Decolonial/de-centring Western theology	X	X		X	X
Economic transformation		X	X	X	X
Ecumenical	X			X	
Embodied theology/ circles of learning	X	X	X	X	
Ethics of sharing and caring		X	X	X	X
Inclusive/centring sites of struggle	X	X	X	X	X
Interdisciplinary/de-compartmentalisation	X	X	X	X	X
Just and inclusive land, and infrastructure use	X	X	X	X	X
Holistic, integrated theology for all of life		X		X	X
Prioritising African language and culture	X	X	X	X	X
Psycho-social interventions	X	X	X	X	X
Re-imagined church structures and community	X	X	X		X
Social reordering for the common good	X	X	X	X	X
Spatial disruption and innovation	X	X	X	X	X

Table 2: Five Scenarios and 18 Shared Characteristics for an Urban Future
(Summary from Focus Groups 2 and 3)

Traditional sources of knowledge that dominate the theological landscape are insufficient to confront the geographic and social complexities of the City of Cape Town. The dissonance between theological education and contextual realities can lead to ministerial training, which is “inadequate for the delivery of relevant contextual service to the congregations in both rural and urban areas in Africa” (Mugambi, 2013:118). Fluctuating between the contrast of economically-resourced and economically-depressed areas, geographic location played a role in unsettling the faith experience of students and requiring deeper engagement with the context on the part of educators. Encountering the context, particularly the lived experiences of students and community members, seemed to influence how theological institutions injected curriculum and content confronting urban challenges.

For several participants, an urban emphasis was reflected in focusing across disciplines to uncover the multicultural and diverse understandings required for ministry in the City. Amanze (2013:232) outlines several pitfalls in Southern African theological education, which require improvement, identifying “the need to focus on *Mission Dei*, ecumenicity, interdisciplinarity, hands-on-learning experience, outcomes based curricula, contextuality, and gender sensitive curricula.” Several institutions included practical, community service, or service-learning components, which required students to spend time in communities or work with churches off campus. These exposures and students’ lived experiences led to dealing with the effects of crime and threats to students’ security, trauma, and questions of “why God allows evil to prevail” in the classroom. Issues born from the complex social and economic challenges of under-resourced communities surfaced in the reflections from the group of educators. Naidoo (2013:9) proposes that to transform communities into “worthy habitable spaces,” curriculum will have to take “deliberate and conscious account of the socio-economic, cultural, political and spiritual contexts of the majority.” Thus, the inclusion and integration of other disciplines in TE/F has become paramount.

Practical experiences, often incorporated in theological training, provided opportunities for intentional solidarity in response to human pain, requiring contextually-rooted theological reflection. The nature of practical training and community engagement modules has helped push the introduction of a broader range of social sciences to address varied issues being faced in communities. Participants identified curriculum pertaining to family, multiculturalism, psychology, and money matters, to name a few, to help students deal with trauma emerging from community engagement experiences. Some participants noted how incorporating topics associated with sociology, history, and even postcolonial studies fostered engagements with challenges connected with urbanisation. Intercultural skills and cultivating multicultural sensitivity were also emphasised to help students interact

with diverse communities, which required knowledge and understanding beyond classical biblical and theological studies. To read and engage the urban context well, De Beer (2012:261) asserts that theological education must become both intra- and interdisciplinary, allowing students to interact with insights from a variety of disciplines such as: “development studies, urban planning, social work, psychology, geography, sociology, political sciences, land economics, graphic arts, health sciences, and others.”

4.2 Reflections and themes formulated by faith-based practitioners and alumni

Although much of what was presented by the educators was validated, the analysis and imagination of the subsequent focus group and colloquium participants revealed more radical and innovative interventions for TE/F to prepare urban faith-based practitioners. Beyond analysing and supplementing existing themes, the social analysis exercise, led the group to prioritise issues of power, coloniality, and ecumenism to connect deeply to practical urban realities. They proposed the importance of ongoing dialogues centring on the continuous changes in society, ethical communication, resistance to global uniformity in theological formation, and demonetisation of theological education as ways to break “the hegemony of professional theologians.” Chitando (2010:203-205) proposes that steps should be taken to intentionally move curriculum from a focus on abstract issues towards practical immersion, contemporary issues, and locally-based research. Pointedly, Chitando (2010:203) contends that African Theology and religious studies remain underrated in academia and society due to lack of “constructive engagement with the most pressing issues of our time,” highlighting the lack of constructive contributions to issues such as poverty, gender inequality, HIV/Aids, and Africa’s leadership vacuum.

4.2.1 Power dynamics

The theme of power at theological institutions in relation to race, gender, and knowledge production was highlighted by participants. They described the way “the absence of discussions around power” hinder understanding or engagement with furtive issues of race. Also, participants identified how patriarchal tendencies are tolerated and accepted in theological learning spaces. They shared experiences of how disapproval was repeatedly expressed towards female students by males throughout their TE/F experience. In addition, a “silencing of the voices” connected to local knowledge systems, creating a form of “Epistemicide.” A systemic silencing of indigenous voices remains unchallenged in the experience of participants. De Gruchy (2010:49) proposes that theological education “should be a moment of liberation for the student.”

Theological education is (or should be) a time when teachers and students problematise the power relationships that exist between those who know and those who do not know, and find dialogical ways of learning and growing together (De Gruchy, 2010:49).

The participants recommended that students be affirmed in recognising the validity of learning from communities and their lived experiences.

For the participants, this fresh approach would be exemplified by the inclusion of feminist, womanist, and African women’s theology, as well as the exploration of the place of local memory and history in South Africa. The contested role of African women in theology may be reflective of securing only one female theologian to participate in the first focus group of educators. Although women represent the majority in most churches and faith-based community efforts, they are poorly represented in academic roles in theological education. In part, the appearance of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (COCWT) in 1989 led to further informed scholarly articulation of theology highlighting the oppression, subjugation, and suppression of women in Africa (Akper & Koopman, 2005:16). Recognising the need for theological educators to be circumspect about the structures and practices dictating pedagogy in theological institutions, the focus group participants advocated for change.

4.2.2 Decolonisation

The call for the decolonisation of theological education was stressed, also echoed during the third focus group. De Gruchy (2010:48-49) speaks of the imperative of theological education to deconstruct the “colonial missionary legacy.” The participants suggested that the process of decolonisation should take place in conversation with the global and historical church. Underscoring the significance of grassroots theology below, a participant suggested that classical and contextual theologies are often pitted unnecessarily against each other. To challenge the prominent legacy of western white male theologians in theology, it was recommended that there should be more room to explore marginalised theologies, reclaiming African spirituality and theologies. Hadebe (2017:4) calls for decolonisation and laments the commodification of theological education which from its inception has maintained the epistemic exclusion of “African Indigenous knowledge, gender and lived experiences of Africans.”

Oguok and Smith (2018) propose the importance of rooting theological education outside traditional academic spaces to be grounded in the reality of informal settlements where many city dwellers live in African cities. Several participants suggested more dialogue and exchange between African spirituality and Christian theology, as-

signing greater attention to the use of African languages in the study of theology. The universities of South Africa were overtaken with student protests in 2015-2016, where university students emphasised the necessity to decolonise higher education (Headley & Kobe, 2017:6-7). Noting the significance of these protests, De Beer and van Niekerk (2017:216-217) suggest students were articulating a vision to dismantle colonial constructs, reclaiming tertiary education as a common good, providing space for contested voices, and placing “African voices and perspectives at the core of the educational endeavour.” These sentiments reflected the content of the focus group inputs.

4.2.3 Gap in institutional sharing

“The absence of sharing across theological institutions,” decrying how theological institutions were not collaborating enough to influence each other was underscored. Participants proposed that more frequent exchanges between institutions might help fill the gap between urban engagement and theological education in Cape Town. They identified the lack of reflective learning between academics, the community, and ecclesial leaders, throughout continental and global cities. In addition, a significant disconnect between the church, NGOs, activists, and community organisers contributed to a lack of collaborative knowledge creation for deeper urban engagement.

4.3 Colloquium reflections on “the city as conversation partner”

The deliberate choice to situate the final focus group in the form of a one-day colloquium hosted in the township of Khayelitsha was an attempt to root the discussion in city spaces which are often neglected in educational reflection and discourse. Colloquium participants were invited to add to the social analysis of theological education, learning, and formation by reflecting on their experience and considering how the City or community members had become conversation/learning partners.

4.3.1 Immersion experiences

Colloquium participants were invited to recall and reflect on how students were invited to engage in city/community challenges. Participants’ feedback indicated they were given opportunities to serve the communities, sometimes characterised by doing things “to the people and not with the people.” Participants suggested common attempts to lead and guide students into closer proximity with people in the community. For participants, a common focus of these immersions experiences was to form relational connections with people.

4.3.2 Connecting with lived realities

Participants were asked to evaluate how students connected with the lived realities of people in communities. Reflections indicated how despite prevailing intentions

to build relationships, community engagement efforts were falling short. Several participants expressed how community members felt disengaged from these volunteer efforts. Participants suggested that community engagement experiences could be transformed deeper through “intentional leadership” to “conscientization of the student in advance.” Participants insisted students required assistance to meaningfully connect with the local residents’ social, economic, culture, and religious positions. Without appropriate preparation, students could enter communities to render services without connecting to the people, leaving community members with the sense that they were just there “to come, do their activity, and go.”

4.3.3 What would they say about us?

Participants were asked to imagine what community members might say about the students involved in theological education and their efforts at community engagement. Candid replies revealed responses such as, “they failed us,” “suspicion about our agenda,” “you are only concerned with church/spiritual things,” and “our pain is used as case studies.” Others saw “cross-cultural friendship initiated” and noted that storytelling of individuals and communities helped to “draw lines to current challenges.” The participants’ responses denoted shared concerns that equality and the unconditional love of God were needed to break down walls and build genuine relationships during community engagement.

4.3.4 The psychology of poverty

Participants elaborated and amplified the themes from previous focus groups, adding, *The Psychology of Poverty* as an essential subject for theological learning and formation in connection to urban ministry. The inequality and inadequacy of education in townships add another dimension of complexity for students affected by pervasive poverty. Questions arising from “the prosperity gospel” vs. accepting “poverty as the will of God,” and the lack of choice of social mobility were presented as primary for those from marginalised backgrounds who engage in theological learning. Again, participants highlighted the disconnection between theology and “school, church, NGOs, and activist organisers” as a problem in the ways theological education is conducted in under-resourced communities. Bowers Du Toit’s (2016) examination of poverty in connection to ‘powerlessness and power’ and ‘Theology and Development praxis’ is instructive in providing a background to some of the historical and contemporary nuances at work in South African society.

5. Five scenarios of a new life for a radical future

The picture of TE/F came to life when focus groups two and three, attended by a wider base of faith-based practitioners, were invited to explore and imagine the

kind of theological methods, structures, and institutions that would deepen engagement with the growth challenges of the City by 2050. What kind of TE/F would substantially contribute to a city flourishing for all residents? Small group work yielded rich descriptions of innovative theological teaching and learning. The exercises to imagine a “preferred future” uncovered strong indications of a transformed TE/F enterprise entwined with socio-spatial justice and inclusion in a transformed Cape Town (see Table 2).

The four invented scenarios created during the second focus group were sharpened and enhanced, while an additional critical future scenario surfaced from the township context at the colloquium. The detailed scenarios, presented in pictures, words and phrases, reflected a dynamic imagination about the future of TE/F. The scenarios portrayed significant shifts in social-economic and spatial patterns in the City, as though theological institutions had been part of revolutionary changes in Cape Town. Table 2 represents a summary of shared elements amongst the unique and diverse futuristic portraits of TE/F in 2050. This table is headlined by short titles summarising the essence of each imaginative scenario, while the eighteen elements represent shared characteristics of the future of TE/F. Each scenario of theological education emulated these embodied practices, which formed an integral part of the transformed visions of the City of Cape Town.

6. Future implications for theological education/formation

The work of re-imagining TE/F by 2050 revealed new contours grounded in transformed contexts, locations, mediums of instructions, and outcomes. These imaginative, innovative scenarios point towards practices embedded in the life and welfare of the City aligned with just City-making. These efforts were not peripheral but were seen as essential to theological education and the formation of urban practitioners.

The scenarios exhibited an abiding concern to include individuals and communities at the margins of the City. The new configurations of TE/F incorporated the City’s social, political, economic, spatial, and educational challenges. From newly formed configurations and learning communities, an emphasis on fostering equity through innovative spatial transformations emerged. While urban engagement described by theological educators at times remained superficial, tied to the boundaries of classical theology, the new imaginings of a diverse group of faith-based practitioners represented multifaceted persistent encounters with urban challenges.

Shared characteristics among the future scenarios represented embedded pedagogy, containing striking elements for a just City as reflected in Table 2.

- Spatial disruptions and innovations are characterised by the conversion and transformation of theological and ecclesial properties oriented towards the community’s needs.

- Contextual and local theologies embodying just land use and connection to under-resourced parts of the City.
- Drawing on African language, culture, spirituality, and sites of struggle to facilitate radical inclusion, diversity, and social innovation towards holistic, integrated theology for the whole of life and care of creation.
- Education and formation are action-oriented in unity with a variety of faith and religious expressions, creating a healthy, vital ecosystem of theological teaching and learning sites in a variety of city spaces.
- Ethics and values oriented towards sharing and caring in spaces of co-learning and knowledge production grounded in the City, facilitating hubs of opportunity for conflict resolution, healing of collective woundedness, economic opportunity, and harmonious relations to contribute to just social reordering.
- The use of theological institutions and church spaces to benefit the community.
- Emphasis on local theologies creating spaces for co-learning to change the shape of the education process and methods and the way of interaction with city life deeply embedded and embodying social, economic, spatial, and cultural transformation.

Such features place marginalised communities at the centre, aligning theological education institutions with the impetus to echo the aspirational terms addressing the necessity for opportunity, safety, care, inclusivity and efficiency, outlined in the *City of Cape Town five-year Integrated Development Plan: July 2017 – June 2022*. All scenarios represent a cry to improve theological institutions in tandem with the institutions of society to contribute to a flourishing City of Cape Town by 2050.

7. Provocations for just City-making

Are these future scenarios simply wild imaginings of faith-based practitioners and ministry leaders, or do they hold the promise of theological education/formation rooted in the struggles and life of the City? Bearing in mind the current and future multiplicity of changes in Cape Town, there is undoubtedly a place for greater civic participation of the theological institutions in how theological education and learning are framed. This can happen more intentionally by preparing community- and faith-based urban practitioners through curriculum and pedagogy, responding creatively and vigorously to deep urban fractures. TE/F which is authentically rooted in urban realities must embrace perspectives and knowledge from the vantage point of the oppressed and marginalised.

Could theological education put weight behind tipping the balance in the way problems and policies are framed and enacted towards transforming the condition of the disadvantaged in the City of Cape Town?

The hope underlying the discussion of the just City is that it can change the rhetoric around urban policy from a single-minded focus on competitiveness to a discourse about justice (Fainstein, 2014:14).

Promising collaborations, such as the multidisciplinary think-tank hosted by the African Centre for Cities in 2017 and 2018, hold potential for the kind of creativity needed to alter Cape Town's futures. *The Integration Syndicate: Shifting Cape Town's socio-spatial debate* (Pieterse, Green, Knemeyer, Pulker & Viviers, 2019) documents how a group of public officials, academics, activists, and property developers met on ten occasions to wrestle with socio-spatial challenges, advancing five "provocations" to fundamentally improve the quality of life for all the City's inhabitants. Theological institutions were notably absent from this project. Yet, this type of configuration indicates a good deal of space for theological institutions to contribute to just City-making in Cape Town's future.

The research for *Urban Africa 2050* reveals the significant place of the context of the community/city in the education/formation process arising from the many inputs provided by the participants. There was a shared sense that students benefited from opportunities to learn and be shaped by real-life issues in the community in connection with theological reflection. There is little doubt that experiential ways of knowing through engagement with inhabitants in the City often opened up new spaces for theological reflection and learning through diverse knowledge sources. The increase in the number of students from under-resourced areas calls for re-thinking theological education, which has primarily been geared towards developing leaders for suburban churches. To unleash socio-spiritual African resources, the TE/F, which engages the context of the City, is essential for Cape Town's urban future.

Intra-/inter-disciplinarity provides an essential pathway for theological institutions to prepare students with a broader lens to encounter complex problems during service-learning or practical training in distressed communities throughout the City.

We insist on scholarship – teaching, research and engagement in and with communities – that embraces processes where researchers from different disciplines and people who are in the actual situation put their heads together to search for meaningful solutions to concrete problems with which people in the particular situation are struggling (De Beer & van Niekerk, 2017:238).

Several participants in each of the focus groups documented how tapping into other academic disciplines aided in connecting theological studies to urban realities. The

nature of practical training and community engagement modules requires introducing a more comprehensive range of social sciences to address various issues being faced in communities. The value of local knowledge(s) found in communities can help students grasp urban challenges as they integrate theological knowledge with their theological training and practice.

We owe it to the contexts in which we are called to do life-giving theology. Even more, we need to allow these contexts to shape our theological questions and emphases, but we also need to consider how we can do better theology in these contexts, in collaboration with local communities and silenced voices. It is in inviting such voices to disrupt our theological constructs and in dealing creatively with them that life-giving transformations can start to occur (De Beer & van Niekerk, 2017:217).

Perhaps it is time, as de Beer (2017:5) suggests, for places of TE/F and churches “to be disrupted, liberated and transformed by the voices of the poor and those occupying the underside of the city.” This kind of transformation of theological curricula could contribute to “the freedom and well-being of societies” when there is more room for “rigorous and critical engagement,” similar and diverse voices, various religious traditions and expressions, and “hosting contested voices,” imbedded in teaching and learning” (De Beer & van Niekerk, 2017:216). If theological training institutions identify deeply with the challenges of the City and the populations most in need of solidarity and advocacy, they may be part of healing the fractures of a divided city of Cape Town currently and into the future.

8. Conclusion

This article provided an overview of Cape Town’s current and future challenges as a backdrop for theological education, which can meet urban challenges. Current and possible future conceptions of theological education were explored through the reflections of theological educators and faith-based practitioners during three focus group events held over six months in 2019. The identified socially engaging themes could play a role in how theological institutions participate more actively and critically in the development of Cape Town as a just City through the preparation of well-rounded urban practitioners. Nel (2014) advocates for a change of mindset, which includes postcolonial Southern African ecclesiologies for the family of African Reformed churches, yet his challenge could equally be applied to theological institutions.

The challenge is indeed not simplistically about how ministers can be better marketers – but whether these churches are able to understand, interpret and learn from the seemingly different ways in which these younger (mobile) generations re-imagine faith, church and witness (Nel, 2014:270).

The second and third focus group events were attended by some of this younger generation who listened, shared, and generated the kind of insights to re-imagine the witness of faith practitioners and church, which Nel (2014:270) highlights. Further, synergistic spaces created for intergenerational dialogue in contexts like Khayelitsha may animate the future of theological education and formation towards the vision of a just City.

References

- Akper, G.I. & Koopman, N.N. 2005. Where do we go from here? A review of the role and status of the “past” theological tradition in contemporary African theological scholarship. *Dutch Reformed Theological Journal = Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif*, 46(1 & 2), 7-21.
- Amanze, J. 2013. Theological education in Southern Africa. In D. Werner & I.A. Phiri (eds.). *Regnum studies in global Christianity*. Oxford: Regnum Books International *Handbook of theological education in Africa*, 223-233.
- Bowers Du Toit, N. 2016. The elephant in the room: The need to re-discover the intersection between poverty, powerlessness and power in ‘Theology and Development’ praxis. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 72(4).
- Budlender, N., Sendin, J. & Rossouw, J. 2019. *City leases: Cape Town’s failure to redistribute land*. Cape Town: Ndifuna Ukwazi.
- Chitando, E. 2010. Equipped and ready to serve? Transforming theology and religious studies in Africa. *Missionalia*, 38(2), 197-210.
- City of Cape Town. 2016. *State of Cape Town Report 2016*. Cape Town: City of Cape Town. Retrieved from: <http://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20research%20reports%20and%20review/16429%20COCT%20State%20of%20Cape%20Town%20Report%202016%20FINAL.pdf> (Accessed 8 March 2019).
- City of Cape Town. 2017. *City of Cape Town five-year integrated development plan 2017 – 2022*. Cape Town: City of Cape Town. Retrieved from: <http://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20strategies%2C%20plans%20and%20frameworks/IDP%202017-2022.pdf> (Accessed 7 March 2020).
- City of Cape Town. 2019. *Cape Town resilience strategy*. Cape Town: City of Cape Town. Retrieved from: http://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20strategies,%20plans%20and%20frameworks/Resilience_Strategy.pdf (Accessed 30 September 2019).
- City of Cape Town & TDA Cape Town. 2018. *Municipal spatial development framework*. Cape Town: City of Cape Town. Retrieved from: http://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20strategies,%20plans%20and%20frameworks/Cape%20Town%20Metropolitan%20Spatial%20Development%20Framework_2019-20.pdf (Accessed 30 September 2019).
- Davis, R. 2015. Cape Town vs civil society: How much is enough spending on water and toilets? *Daily Maverick* (Cape Town). 20 May. Retrieved from: <https://www.dailymaverick>.

- co.za/article/2015-05-20-cape-town-vs-civil-society-how-much-is-enough-spending-on-water-and-toilets/ (Accessed 18 April 2020).
- De Beer, S. 2012. Urban South Africa: An opportunity for liberating theological education. *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Missiology*, 40(3), 251-277.
- De Beer, S.F. 2017. Urban social movements in South Africa today: It's meaning for theological education and the church. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 73(3), 11.
- De Beer, S.F. & van Niekerk, A.S. 2017. Transforming curricula into the next century: Doing theology collaboratively with local communities. *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 38(4), 213. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i4.1683>
- De Beer, S.F., Smith, R.D. & Manyaka, J. 2017. Trans-disciplinary research on religious formations in urban Africa: Towards liberative methodological approaches. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 73(3), 8.
- De Gruchy, S. 2010. Theological education and missional practice: A vital dialogue. In D. Werner, D. Esterline, N. Kang, & J. Raja (eds.). Oxford: Regnum Books International *Handbook of theological education in world Christianity: theological perspectives--regional surveys--ecumenical trends*, 42–50.
- Denoon-Stevens, S.P. 2016. Developing an appropriate land use methodology to promote spatially just, formal retail areas in developing countries: The case of the City of Cape Town, South Africa. *Land Use Policy*, 54, 18-28.
- Department of Rural Development and Land Reform & Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. 2018. *Draft national spatial development framework 2018*. Republic of South Africa. Retrieved from: <http://eolstoragewe.blob.core.windows.net/wm-698609-cmsimages/DraftNSDF15June2018compressed.pdf> (Accessed 7 March 2019).
- Department of Spatial Planning and Urban Design. 2016. *Discussion document: towards guidelines for the planning, design and implementation of human settlements projects in Cape Town*. Cape Town: City of Cape Town. Retrieved from: <http://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/Procedures,%20Guidelines%20and%20regulations/160428%20Discussion%20document%20LR.pdf> (Accessed 22 November 2018).
- Fainstein, S.S. 2014. The just City. *International Journal of Urban Sciences*, 18(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12265934.2013.834643>
- Graham, E. 2013. Is practical theology a form of ‘action research’? *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 17(1), 148-178.
- Gustafson, M. 2018. *A journey of hope through change*. Cape Town: Cornerstone Institute.
- Hadebe, N.M. 2017. Commodification, decolonisation and theological education in Africa: Renewed challenges for African theologians. *HTS Theological Studies*. 73(3), 1-10.
- Headley, S.D. 2018. A praxis-based approach to theological training in Cape Town. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 74(3), 7.
- Headley, S. & Kobe. 2017. Christian activism and the fallists: What about reconciliation? *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 73(3).
- Hendler, Y. & Fieuw, W. 2018. *Exploring partnerships with local government: A people's led approach to informal settlement upgrading*. Cape Town: Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC). Retrieved from: <https://www.sasdialliance.org.za/wp->

- content/uploads/2018/11/Upgrading_Publication_CORC_2018_SML.pdf (Accessed 4 October 2019).
- Holland, J. & Henriot, P. 1983. *Social analysis: Linking faith and justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Kayizzi-Mugerwa S., Ncube, M., Shimeles, A., & Yaméogo, N.D. 2014. The way forward. In S. Kayizzi-Mugerwa, A. Shimeles & N.D. Yaméogo, (eds.). Routledge African Studies no. 16. New York, NY: Routledge. *Urbanization and socio-economic development in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*, 156-178.
- Kesson, C., Morgan, G. & Green, C. 2018. *Resilient Cape Town: Preliminary resilience assessment*. Resilience Department in the Directorate of Corporate Services, Cape Town: City of Cape Town. Retrieved from: <https://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/City%20research%20reports%20and%20review/CCT%20PreliminaryResilienceAssessment.pdf> (Accessed 23 November 2018).
- Mugambi, J.N.K. 2013. The future of theological education in Africa and the challenges It faces. In D. Werner & I.A. Phiri (eds.). *Handbook of theological education in Africa*. Regnum studies in global Christianity. Oxford: Regnum.
- Nel, R.W. 2014. "It is better to build a bridge..." Using the praxis cycle of Holland and Henriot in discerning an African Reformed missional ecclesiology. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif*, 55(1-2).
- Naidoo, M. 2013. Persistent issues impacting on the training of ministers in the South African context. *Scriptura*. 112(1), 1-16.
- Naidoo, M. 2017. Challenging the status quo of an institutional culture in theological training. *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, 3(2), 493-546. Retrieved from: <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/stj/v3n2/26.pdf> (Accessed 18 May 2018).
- Oguok, S.O. & Smith, C. 2018. The informal God: Outside schools of theology. In S. De Beer (ed.). *Just faith: Glocal responses to planetary urbanisation*, 225-252.
- Pieterse, E., Green, P., Knemeyer, B., Pulker, A. & Viviers, A. 2019. *The integration syndicate: Shifting Cape Town's socio-spatial debate*. Cape Town: African Centre for Cities.
- Sitas, R. & Smit, W. 2016. Reframing sustainability: Realising just cities. In H. Palmer & H. Walasek (eds.). Gothenburg: Mistra Urban Futures *Co-production in action: Towards realising just cities*, 62-73.
- Swartz, S. & Nyamnjoh, A. 2018. Research as freedom: Using a continuum of interactive, participatory and emancipatory methods for addressing youth marginality. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 74(3), 11.
- Turok, I. & Scheba, A. 2018. 'Right to the city' and the new urban agenda: Learning from the right to housing. *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 26, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2018.1499549>
- Webster, A. 2019. Can schools save South Africa's cities? In E. Pieterse, P., Green, B., Knemeyer, A., Pulker & Viviers, A. (eds.). In *The integration syndicate: Shifting Cape Town's socio-spatial debate*. Cape Town: African Centre for Cities, 164-167.