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uMkhumbane Cultural Place

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Abstract: uMkhumbane Cultural Place, Durban, South Africa

Townships were developed as dormitory settlements, located furthest from the CBD to accommodate migrant African labour building and servicing the cities of privileged South African's.

Cato Manor of Durban is such a settlement, which holds national relevance and global significance, as one of the world's largest forced removals sites. Similar mass removals took place in Cape Town's District 6 (beginning 1968) and Johannesburg's Sophiatown (1955-1963). Community uprisings, riots, subjugation and eventual emancipation form a major part of the site's history. The heritage of the people who resisted oppression permeates through the present as a triumphal spirit of freedom.

This spirit is an inspiration for the development of the uMkhumbane Cultural Place, defining a significant sense of place which celebrates resilience of life, growth, and the transition of a community within the city of Durban. The uMkhumbane Cultural Place is the beginning of an urban strategy stretching across Cato Manor (Fig 2.). As part of a master plan, the Vertical Museum and Memorial draw on Zulu emblems in contemporary architectural expressions, creating powerful spaces that elevate culture.

The site as an urban device provides a convergence point for present-day Umkhumbane Culture and its commemorated history. Using principles of regeneration and contemporary technology, the node becomes a catalyst for the co-creation of this urban community.

Keywords: Regeneration, Urban, Memory, Innovation, Culture

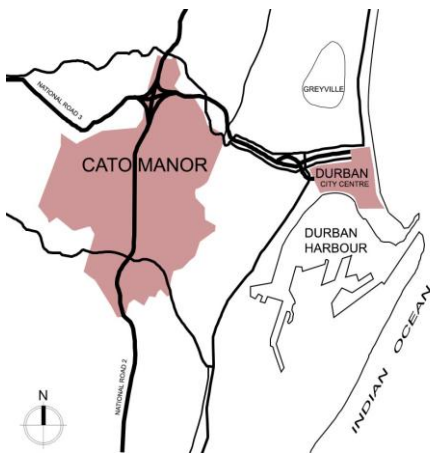


Fig. 1. Cato Manor locality plan



Fig. 2. Historically significant sites in Cato Manor

1. Introduction

The Cato Manor Township, approximately 7 kilometres from Durban's CBD (Fig. 1.), remains characterised by a high unemployment rate and social fragmentation. At the same time, residents are increasingly taking initiative in the development of the area and there is a high level of community organisation, citizen action and participation.

The city's Economic Development Unit together with Parks Recreation and Culture and the Cato Manor Development Association (CMDA) identified Cato Manor as an ideal location to develop the "uMkhumbane Cultural Place", and supporting infrastructure to preserve the areas rich cultural and political history and stimulate innovation and economic development.

Collaborative research was conducted on uMkhumbane to understand its history and current culture as one of the first sites of forced removals. The CMDA, eThekweni Municipality, the Local History Museum and various specialists together with the architects held workshops, conducted historical research and compiled documents on the narrative of uMkhumbane and existing cultural and historical nodes in the area (Fig. 2.). This collective undertaking helped form a holistic understanding of the context of the place, the history being commemorated and the existing culture and opportunities for activation in the cultural museum of living history.

Online research and onsite visits to various galleries across the globe was done to establish precedent of urban projects that actively transform the status quo of historically marginalized, under-serviced areas. This research provided insight to urban models which successfully embrace contemporary methods to address a degenerate urban environment.

2. Historical Narrative

uMkhumbane - Discovering Soul to our City

Cato Manor was one of the first communities in South Africa to experience forced removals as a result of apartheid legislature. Named after the Mayor of Durban, George Cato, it originally consisted of 5875 acres of land of which was integrated into the Borough of Durban in 1932 of which parcels of land became property to indentured Indian labourers after their five years of service

In the 1950s, post war industrialisation in Durban led to large-scale urbanisation, putting infrastructural pressure on the Apartheid city aspiring to suburbia. With places like Chesterville, Lamont Location and Baumanville already saturated with labourers of colour, Indian landowners started to rent out spaces to African people in Cato Manor. The rapid influx of residents and lack of infrastructure quickly made the uMkhumbane the most formative feature of the settlement, giving its name to the community.

uMkhumbane was one the most vibrant and diverse communities in Durban during a time characterised by separation. Various accounts of the community, including Ronnie Govender's *At the Edge and Other Short Stories*, oral history and publications of *The SB Bourquin Collection*, express its richness, pain and beauty. The networks, social hierarchies, local nicknames, Aspro shops, means of getting 'forbidden liquor' and other everyday realities tell powerful stories of the strength of people to momentarily live outside the confines of political machines and the abstract city created by apartheid.

However the race riots of 1949 and the *Revolt of the Queens* in 1959 revealed how unjust dynamics affected the people living there, resulting in resistance, violence and protest (Fig. 3.). The 1949 riots, sparked by a fight between a young black boy and an Indian trader, grew rapidly and violently revealing the grievances of black community members with Indian business people and landlords and reflecting the large scale effects of Apartheid on resource scarce communities of colour. In 1959, local Shebeen Queens' marched to and damaged the Cato Manor Beer hall in response to the apartheid government banning local beer and monopolising this market to fund the Native Affairs Department. This powerful show of resistance by women spread to other Beerhalls in the city, addressing issues of economic oppression, family decay, patriarchy, and citizenship rights.

Cato Manor's recent history as part of the interim government's Reconstruction and Development Programme, current challenges and expression of informality in South Africa today reveal the



contemporary significance of Cato Manor as opportunity for pioneering apartheid redress. While its social and political importance in the past could be measured by the effort the apartheid government took to destroy it, perhaps its current challenges and our inability to engage with its history are a reflection of our own socio-political time.

The selected site falls within a neglected conservation area of the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS) along the historical uMkhumbane River which has degenerated due to dumping of construction waste along its banks and pollution of the water due to informal settlements. The neighbouring University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) owned the land which was donated to the development under the auspices of the Department of Education. It is ideally positioned at the confluence of two major arterial roads, while in close proximity to previously segregated residential and business areas through apartheid planning. The placement of a celebrated Cultural Centre and memorial for Queen Thomozile in this space provides an important opportunity to facilitate other cultural and heritage sites, museums, playgrounds, libraries, art centers and other methods of entering living memory in Cato Manor which could resonate through surrounding neighbourhoods, into the city and beyond.

The nature of the history being commemorated demands a more sensitive approach than the familiar interventions that led to commodification, curated histories, and gentrification at the expense of the existing communities and networks. Cato Manor's present communities tell their own stories- many of which are a continuation of the injustices entrenched in its past. This opportunity to co-create a culture and heritage infrastructure calls for a collaborative approach.



Fig. 3. Left: Queen Thomozile; Right: Protests in Cato Manor in 1949 and 1959



Fig. 4. Current informal cultural nodes in Cato Manor

3. Historical Timeline

1650	Earliest known history: settled by Nqondo Clan
1730	Land occupied by Ntuli Clan
1843	Land ownership given to George Cato the mayor of Durban
1908	Native Beer Act passed
1914	Subdivided plots of land to Indian market gardeners developed along the uMkhumbane River as a source of irrigation.
1932	Cato Manor was integrated into the Borough of Durban (Fig. 6.)
1939	Influx of African inhabitants created a vibrant hybrid culture
1945	First tensions between the 50 000 mixed race inhabitants, fostered by apartheid rule
1948	Beginning of Apartheid Rule in SA
1949	African-Indian Riots
1950	Group Areas Act passed
	Riot against pass laws led by women of Cato Manor
1959	Beer hall riots against beer making laws and forced removals
1962-64	uMkhumbane bulldozed to the ground approximately 150 000 people forced to relocate
1980s	People return to the area (Home to 93 000 people)
	Further destruction of public institutions in the area due to political unrest throughout the country
1990	Early 1990s, mass invasion back into the area

- 1991 Apartheid Legislation abolished
- 1993 (CMDA) Cato Manor Development Association formed to facilitate urban and regional planning and improve social services and economic opportunities in the community (Fig. 5.)
- 1994 Elections creates democratic SA (Nelson Mandela becomes first black president in SA)
(RDP) Reconstruction and Development Programme -*South African socio-economic policy framework implemented by the African National Congress (ANC)*
- 1995 Cato Manor becomes presidential lead project
- 1997 (EU) European Union funding to work alongside CMDA
- 2001 (ABM) Area Based Management of eThekweni Municipality creates catalyst between community and new infrastructure, facilitating cohesion, community planning and participation; economic and skills development. (Fig. 5.)
Feasibility for Heritage Centre complete
Selection of Site approved by community and donated by the UKZN (Fig. 7.)
- 2003 Selection of an Architect through a National Architectural Design Competition
- 2012 Construction of phase 1 - Site preparation, Reinternment of a Zulu Queen who becomes the muse to the project
- 2014-17 Construction and inauguration of the uMkhumbane museum



Fig. 5. Cultural node by Cato Manor Development Association, managed by Area Based Management

Fig. 6. Historical Photo of Cato Manor

Fig. 7. Site for Heritage Center

4. Case Study: Medellin City - Colombia



Fig. 8. Cultural Library Parks

Medellin had been effected by crime, drug trafficking and domestic war in the last 20 years of the past century. In 2012 it achieved status as the world's most innovative city. Its regeneration illustrates the concept of cities as a solution, and not as a problem, to the global challenges we face.

Medellin is considered a success only because all the stakeholders, grouped around the public, private and citizen sectors, understood the value of defending its existence. The transformation proved that cities are merely victims to the lack of innovative, creative thinking by the individuals and institutions responsible for



their transformation. It has become a beacon for what the developing world has to say about innovation and has been successful as a testing ground for new social approaches to urbanization.

Below are some of the new methods of urbanization drawn from in the uMkhumbane Cultural Place

1. **Cities do not make poor people.** Cities attract poor and vulnerable individuals looking for a better future. Therefore, they must be accepted and integrated into the city's dynamics in order to foster their individual and collective potential. There was 8.9% reduction in poverty between 2008 and 2013,
2. **Architecture must never be a barrier to human interaction.** The best way to reduce inequality is to promote connections and face-to-face engagement between individuals, without regards to their socioeconomic conditions.
3. **Public and accessible urban services reduce inequality.** Allowing individuals across the board to enjoy a city, its surroundings and services are the best ways to make them active citizens
4. **Education drives change.**
Placing libraries and other cultural assets alongside public transport systems played a central role in selling the new brand the city wanted to create for itself, placing it squarely in the collective mindset.
5. **Using technology as a means and not as the end itself.** Medellin understood that whatever technological upgrades were needed, its success would rest with the function it fulfills and not in the scientific advancement it represents
6. **Placing culture high on the list of priorities helps to unleash a citizen's potential.** Culture plays a major role in a city's transformation due to its ability to bringing people together, to move forward from traditional socioeconomic paradigms, and to share a vision and common values
As a millennial from the emerging world, the story of Medellin is the story of what the world will see this century, which is only just beginning.

5. uMkhumbane Cultural Place

The first project reports responding to the cultural development were compiled in 2003 which laid the foundation for the appointment of the architect. A master plan was created by Choromanski Architects, which incorporated the vision of the “uMkhumbane Cultural Place” complimenting the Cultural Renaissance Programme of the eThekweni Municipality.

The Cultural Place includes the uMkhumbane Museum as the first city commissioned museum in Durban in approximately 100 years, in order to preserve the area’s rich cultural and political history and stimulate innovation. It provides the opportunity for contemporary culture and powerful heritage to converge at a node, serving as a tool for social and ecological regeneration. As part of a broader urban strategy, the site seeks to activate and network various cultural nodes within the community of Cato Manor through community involvement, local artists and leaders.



Fig. 9. uMkhumbane Place: Master Plan

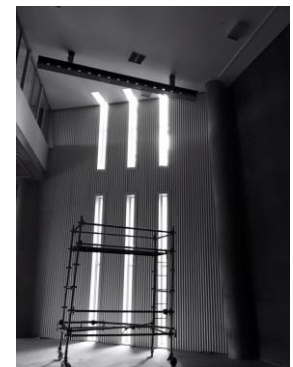
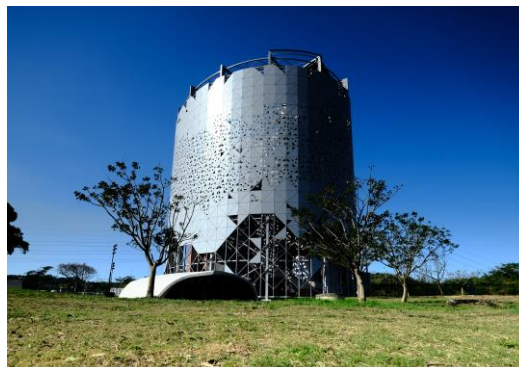


Fig. 10. And Fig. 11. Photographs of uMkhumbane Museum

uMkhumbane Cultural Place uses the idea of communal space to connect diverse people through open access to public services, by decentralizing cultural nodes. The master plan includes:

- a cultural park and public square,
- galleries for permanent collection on forced removals, focusing on the struggle by women and children and temporary collections,
- dedicated space for community exhibitions,
- gathering areas for oral, performance, installation exhibits,
- social gathering areas for functions, eg. book launches, festivals (film, writers, poetry, dance, music)
- concession areas including traders market stalls,
- theatre as multipurpose space,
- children’s innovative facilities,
- linking of the development to tour routes through the community and surroundings areas, thereby extending the innovative entrepreneur spirit from the “uMkhumbane Heritage Site ” through Cato Manor and Surroundings

The broader urban strategy aims to use technology and public space innovatively to access, network and enhance the culture, serving as a tool for community members to leverage in the co-creation of today’s uMkhumbane Culture. The stories of uMkhumbane in the 1940s were example of diversity and community during apartheid, Cato Manor today could provide much needed stories of regeneration and redress in South African in 2017.

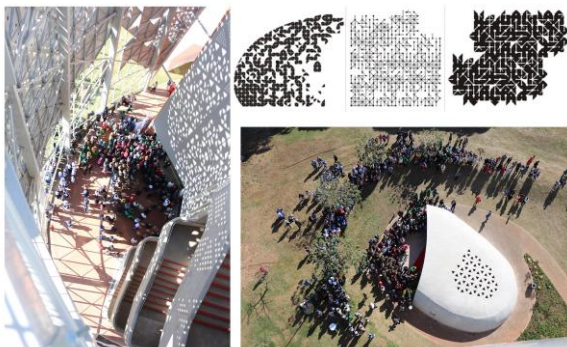


Fig. 12. Atrium (left) and Queen Thomo memorial (right) showing architectural expressions of Zulu emblems, expressing contemporary African identity



Fig. 13. Townscape quality of uMkhumbane Place

7 Conclusion

As a catalyst in its environment, uMkhumbane Place provides infrastructure to enable the health of the surrounding community and environment and the social capacity to co-create regenerative and enabling systems. On a broader scale, the project is an aggressive socio-economic development, using culture to create a new African Identity and brand in line with Durban’s 2040 vision to be Africa’s leading, most vibrant, livable, walkable city centre.

As in Medellin, our city attracts poor and vulnerable individuals looking for a better future. Therefore, the city should be prepared to support and develop their individual and collective potential. Collaboration amongst Durban’s wealth of diversely skilled citizens and innovation could enable collective management systems that address the challenges of our urban living. uMkhumbane Cultural Place serves to activate a network of vibrant cultural, commercial and historical nodes in Cato Manor, re-affirming a community with rich historical, cultural and social assets to offer.



A Place that was once termed a dark edge of chaos to the CBD, will now resonate adding significant soul to the palimpsest city of Durban (Fig. 14.).

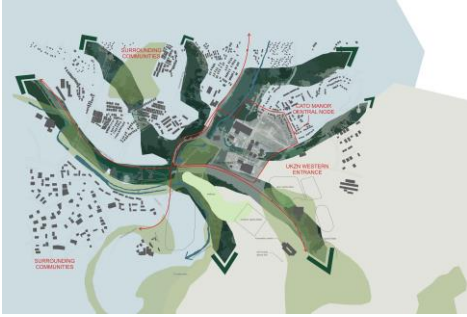


Fig.14. Site as organic catalyst: “Culture is shared, learned, symbolic, transmitted, cross-generationally adaptive and integrated” –John H Bodley

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