The spatial nexus of monuments, memorability and identity formation in Chatsworth and Durban Central, South Africa

Tariro Mukwidigwi[ID] **· Maheshvari Naidu ·
Subashini Govender · Garikai Membele**

Abstract The monumentalization of public space has received significant scholarly attention both globally and locally. In the South African context, this interest has been further heightened by the #Rhodes Must Fall campaign in 2015, which raised questions about the relevance of colonial statues in the post-transformation era. This campaign sparked extensive debates regarding monumentalization within the country's cultural landscape. Against this backdrop, the present empirical study aims to contribute to these discussions by examining the role of monuments, particularly their spatial characteristics, in shaping processes of memory and identity reconstruction within urban public spaces. The study employed cultural mapping techniques, including participatory GIS (PGIS) and semi-structured interviews, to generate data in the areas of Chatsworth and Durban Central. Additionally, the study draws upon Henri Lefebvre's (1974) conceptualizations of monuments and Proshansky's (1983) place-identity theory to explore the constitutive relationship between the spatiality of monuments and embodied memories in the production of spatial identities. The empirical findings of the study affirm monuments as sites for negotiating spatial identities, acknowledging the diversity and multiplicity of memories and identities that emerged. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of the spatial context of monuments, including dimensions such as aesthetic appeal, geographic prominence, positionality, and discernibility, in influencing the symbolic value of monuments in memory-making and identity formation processes. In conclusion, the paper emphasizes the importance of reconfiguring the spatial context of monuments to ensure their efficacy in processes of memorialization and identity reconstruction.

Keywords Monuments · Spatiality · Memory · Identity · Cultural mapping

T. Mukwidigwi (✉) · M. Naidu · S. Govender · G. Membele
University of KwaZulu-Natal - Howard College Campus, Durban, South Africa
e-mail: tarimoyana1@gmail.com

M. Naidu
e-mail: Naiduu@ukzn.ac.za

T. Mukwidigwi
School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu Natal, Durban, South Africa

Introduction

Monuments hold a significant place within societies, serving as physical embodiments of collective memory and cultural identity. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the exploration of these spatial markers has gained prominence as a means to comprehend the complexities of historical narratives, social dynamics, and the (re)formation of identities. This paper explores the impact of monument spatiality

on memory-making and identity formation processes within evolving urban socio-spatial configurations. Previous research has demonstrated that the spatial context of monuments significantly shapes the construction, interpretation, and debate of collective memories and identities (Antonova et al., 2017; Ye et al., 2011; Glover et al., 2016; Popkin, 2016). This is further supported by modern spatial theories influenced by the spatial turn, which underscore the interconnected relationship between spaces and human experiences. These theories acknowledge that individuals actively shape the places they inhabit, while those places, in turn, influence their self-perception (Bodenhamer et al, 2013; Hauge, 2007). Thus, the built environment assumes a crucial role in shaping both individual and collective memories and identities. Drawing on these perspectives, this study examines the dynamics of memorability and the reconstruction of identity within the spatial aspects of commemorative monuments in Chatsworth and Durban Central, South Africa. The paper argues that adopting a spatial perspective to evaluate the impact of monumental heritage in South African urban areas contributes to our understanding of how monument spatiality influences memory and identity.

Review of Literature

The connections between place, meaning, and identity hold significant importance within cultural and political geography. Scholars exploring these concepts have emphasized the close association between the identification and attribution of individuals, objects, and social practices with specific geographical locations (Agnew, 1986; Cresswell, 1992; Cresswell, 1992). Cultural and political geographers have utilized the notion of place-identity to elucidate the role of identity politics, demonstrating how people's self-perception and definition are influenced by their attachment to and interpretation of places. While some existing research has explored the dynamics of spatial interactions in the process of identity formation (see Taylor, 2009; Monnet, 2011; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015; Surchi & Nafa, 2021), limited attention has been given to the influence of the spatiality of monuments on memory and identity formation, particularly in the South African context. By examining monuments as physical structures with multiple histories and meanings, this

paper aims to situate studies on memory and identity within a broader framework. It emphasizes how the spatial characteristics of monuments have the potential to enhance understanding of the processes through which memories and identities are shaped or reshaped by intersecting with specific social, historical, and cultural changes in urban contexts.

Spatiality, within the context of geographical discourse, pertains to the arrangement and attributes of space, including the position, size, and shape of objects within it (Hornby, 2010). Halbwachs (1980) posited that the development and manifestation of collective memory rely on a spatial framework. His work illustrated how alterations in the physical manifestations of Roman commemorative practices, including artistic expressions and architectural structures, led to shifts in the ways in which remembering and self-definition took place (Popkin, 2016). Furthermore, Alderman and Dwyer (2009, 52) observe that monuments possess specific placement and relative location. Placement refers to the particular conditions of a monument's site, such as its accessibility, visibility, symbolic elements, and adjacency to other features in the landscape. Relative location, on the other hand, encompasses its broader positioning in relation to the surrounding city, including its connection to patterns of race, gender, class, and proximity to sites of power (ibid). By investigating the spatial characteristics of monuments and their influence on memory and identity formation, this study provides a valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding place and identity within urban environments.

A broader body of research has addressed the spatial aspects of monuments providing insights into how the physical characteristics, placement, and surrounding environment of monuments contribute to shaping individual and collective experiences, perceptions, and interactions within the urban landscapes (see Abu-Gazzeh, 1996; Kulisic and Tudman, 2009; Antonova et al., 2017; Ye et al., 2011; Glover et al., 2016), Abu-Ghazeeh (1996) found that the size and placement of signage, including monuments, impacted their ability to effectively communicate. He highlighted how appropriate sizing enhanced visibility and contributed to their efficacy as geographic markers. Ye et al. (2011) investigated the construction of freestanding gateway monuments and signage along roadways as effective means of conveying messages to motorists. Their study also examined the

safety of monument placement and concluded that they did not pose distractions to drivers. Glover et al. (2016) emphasized the significance of the physical environment surrounding monuments, as it influenced their appeal and the interpretation of the space. They argued that the setting in which a monument is situated is equally important to the monument itself. Similarly, Morgan (2010, p. 15) acknowledges that sculptures require a context that extends beyond their mere presence, necessitating spatial awareness or a spatial conceptual framework. The aforementioned literature underscores the importance of considering the spatial dimensions of monuments in urban landscapes, illustrating how spatiality plays a vital role in informing and shaping human experiences and processes.

Drawing on Mpofu and Tomaselli (1997), a monument can be defined as a deliberately preserved structure or image that represents or signifies a specific historical experience of great significance in the evolution of a people's identity. This definition is particularly relevant to the scope of the present study, as it expands the concept of monuments to encompass images in the form of murals that are associated with cultural and historical representations, resonating with both individual and collective identities. Despite the various definitions of monuments, a crucial characteristic they share is their role as significant sources of collective memory. Previous research and scholarly discussions also widely recognize the significance of monuments as repositories of individual and collective memory (Johnson, 2005; Gurler & Ozer, 2013; Antonova, 2017; Resane, 2018; Osadchaya et al., 2021). This commemorative and symbolic function of monuments can be traced back to medieval times when memory was intertwined with the visual landscape of that era. Johnson (2005;170) observes how monuments constituted a sacred geography where the Christian God was situated, remembered, and revered. Similarly, Resane (2018) highlights the use of religious monumentalization and the missiological role of monuments in contemporary religious practices. Furthermore, Osadchaya et al. (2021) allude to the political significance of monuments as embodiments that perpetuated the memory of national heroes from the Soviet period, fostering a sense of unity and integration in post-Soviet countries. Additionally, literature reveals how colonial powers extensively employed politically charged monuments to advance their political agendas and legitimize their power in colonial territories (Ball, 2018; Barnabas, 2016; Hightower and Hightower, 2022). This practice served as a form of indirect rule aimed at solidifying colonial ideologies and reinforcing colonialism. Consequently, monuments are demonstrated to be vessels of memory, representing and articulating historical, cultural, social, and political discourses.

However, despite embodying specific historical memories, monuments are not fixed in their meanings and interpretations. Lefebvre's (1974) demonstrates this ability of monuments to produce numerous interpretations by introducing the notion of the horizon of meaning, where a monumental work encompasses an ever-changing hierarchy of meanings that momentarily take precedence based on specific actions. As such, instead of perceiving them as fixed memorial landscapes frozen in time, they should be regarded as symbolic systems that are open-ended and capable of being shaped under specific conditions (Alderman and Dwyer 2009, 52). For instance, monuments have become a subject of contention in the social and political sphere, reflecting shifts in political and social ideologies. Consequently, instances of iconoclasm have emerged, characterized by the questioning, neglect, or removal of specific monuments believed to contradict the prevailing political or socio-cultural realities of given times. For example, Forest and Johnson (2004) found that political conflicts surrounding key Soviet-era monuments in Moscow played a symbolic role in shaping national identity transformations. This illustrates how monuments can become focal points of debate and negotiation in the process of redefining collective memory. Similarly, the study by Leib (2004) reveals how in Richmond and the Southern region, debates have arisen concerning public memory, the Civil War, power dynamics, and the significance of symbolic landscapes. The focal point of the dispute was the deliberation on whether the portrait of Robert E. Lee should persist on the floodwall, given its status as a revered symbol of the white South, or if its removal was warranted due to its connection to the Civil War and slavery, which had the potential to be perceived as offensive to African Americans. This case demonstrates how the presence or absence of a monument can have significant implications for different communities and their historical narratives.

In a later study, Forest and Johnson (2019) highlight debates surrounding the removal of United States Confederate monuments. They suggest that

the discussion on the fate of these monuments should be situated within a broader international context, exploring alternative options beyond simply removing or retaining them. Furthermore, Martinez (2022) reveals how the neglect of memorials can serve as an invitation to forget or remember poorly, emphasizing the importance of maintenance and care in preserving collective memory. This suggests that the dynamic nature of monuments requires ongoing attention and engagement to ensure their meaningful preservation. In the South African context growing scholarly and public debates around monuments were sparked by the #RhodesMustFall[1] campaign. This movement, which later spread to other universities and then to the entire country, largely centered on the removal of statues of colonial leaders from the campus landscape in order to decolonize the country's educational system (Marschall, 2019). The movement also resulted in spirited calls in public, political and scholarly discourse for a redress of the post-apartheid cultural landscape, which was dominated by statues and monuments that symbolized colonial and imperial hegemony (Barnabas, 2016; Benoit, 2018; Frank & Ristic, 2020; Marschall, 2019; Nettleton & Fubah, 2020). It also resulted in the targeting and destruction of monuments, which is theorized as a form of political iconoclasm. Targeting and destruction of monuments has been documented in other parts of the world, such as the erasure of the names and statues of preceding Egyptian Pharoahs by reigning Egyptian Pharoahs in order to ensure that history begins with them, the toppling of Napoleon's monuments, and the toppling of British Imperial statues after the United States' independence (Marschall et. al., 2019).

As stated earlier, the acts of iconoclasm resulting from the #RhodesMustFall movement can be seen as a form of political resistance against marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion. The protesters, who demanded the removal of colonial and apartheid-era statues and advocated for decolonization, were motivated by a desire to reclaim their heritage and challenge the presence of certain legacies that were incongruous with the post-apartheid era (Frank & Ristic, 2020). These protests and the evolving relationship with heritage represent power struggles that

demonstrate the politicization of public commemorations. Additionally, Mashau and Mongoedi (2015,1) note that the wave of dismantling statues linked to colonial history was a fight for identity and belonging, extending beyond the issue of public space. This underscores the importance of monuments as platforms for constructing, negotiating, and contesting identities. In this study, we also examine how monuments shape participants' sense of belonging and their place in society, contributing to the ongoing discourse on monuments in the South African context through a spatial perspective. Despite the existing body of research on monumentalization in South Africa (Barnabas, 2016; Marshal, 2019; Benoit, 2018; Frank & Ristic, 2020; Nettleton & Fubah, 2020), there is a need for further investigation into public perceptions and interpretations of historical monuments within urban public spaces (Swartz et al., 2020). Situated within the context of monument debates in South Africa, this article aims to provide empirical and comprehensive insights into the meanings embedded in monuments within specific public spaces. These narratives contribute to the collective and individual memories that form an essential cultural resource in urban areas.

Methodology

Given that monuments are part of the visual and physical representation of culture, this study utilized cultural mapping to capture and map the local knowledge, meanings, and memories associated with monuments which are part of the cultural landscape of urban settings. Cultural mapping, which involves the documentation of both tangible and intangible cultural assets, was chosen for this study to map monuments that embody historical memories across various sites in Durban Central and Chatsworth, Durban. The methodology was effective as it facilitated the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Moreover, its strength lay in empowering local communities to identify cultural resources, thus enabling a bottom-up approach to cartography. The quantitative aspect of the study involved the application of participatory GIS (PGIS) for data collection and analysis. PGIS combines geospatial information management tools and methods to represent people's spatial knowledge either virtually or physically (Corbett &

---

[1] This is a protest that ensued at the university of Capetown in South Africa, on the 09th of March 2015 when students appealed for the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes from the university campus.

Keller, 2005). During the mapping process, participants were instructed to identify and mark the monuments they were familiar with on a physical map. This exercise allowed the researcher to record the locations of the sites, and the coordinates were subsequently overlaid and analyzed using Google Maps and QGIS.

Additionally, the study employed photo documentation as a visual methodology to facilitate the visualization and interpretation of the spatial context of the monuments. Photo documentation, as defined by Rose (2022), involves the systematic capture of photos by the researcher for subsequent analysis. The advantage of using visual methodologies lies in their ability to capture and assess complexities that may not be adequately conveyed through text or oral language (Cleland & Macleod, 2021, 231). Existing images also serve as a convenient source of secondary data, providing information on inaccessible sites. The present study capitalized on these advantages to capture and analyze the spatial context of the monuments. Digital photographs were taken during fieldwork visits with the necessary permissions, while others were sourced online. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from the two research sites to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences, connections with the physical environment, and the nuanced processes of memory and identity formation. A total of 25 semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from these two sites. The cultural landscape mapping was also carried out with these 25 participants, 15 of whom were from Durban Central and 10 from Chatsworth. Among the 15 participants from Durban Central, 9 were women and 6 were men, while the Chatsworth group consisted of 6 women and 4 men. The participants were purposively selected by the researcher during field visits, and some were recruited through snowball sampling among the participants. It is important to acknowledge that the study's sample size, particularly in Chatsworth, was relatively small, which restricts the degree of generalizability of the findings. However, recognizing this limitation, the study sought to address it by striving to create a diverse sample that could capture a wide range of perspectives and enable an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences. Participants were drawn from varying age groups, ethnic and social backgrounds. Rigorous and thorough analysis of the data was also conducted to enhance the validity of the findings.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

This paper draws on Proshansky's et al. (1983) place-identity theory, Lefebvre's (1974) conceptualizations of monuments in urban settings, and spatial theory. Proshansky's place-identity theory is particularly relevant to this study as it highlights the influence of the physical environment on the formation of individual and collective self-perception and identity. Place identity, as defined by Proshansky's et al (1983: 155), encompasses the conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, and behavioral tendencies that individuals associate with specific environments. Therefore, place identity refers to the aspect of one's self-identity that is shaped by the physical and symbolic attributes of the places they inhabit. This theory provides insights into how monuments' spatiality and built environment influence the processes of memory and identity formation in public urban spaces. It underscores how monuments, as spatial structures, are socially and historically embedded with symbolic meanings that contribute to societal structure and inform individual and collective identities. Bodenhamer (2010: 14) highlights the embodiment of spaces as a distinctive characteristic that transforms abstract spaces into places, which are "organized worlds of meanings characterized by experience, memory, and emotion." Thus, identity is constructed through the interaction and reaction to places, resulting in spatialized identities.

While earlier perspectives on place identity theory primarily emphasized individual dimensions, later work on the theory recognizes places as significant and contested arenas for collective existence and belonging (Hauge, 2007). This refinement is particularly relevant to this study, as it investigates not only personal identities but also the (re)emergence of collective identities stemming from the interplay between people and monuments. Proshansky et al. (1983: 28) argue that physical settings, regardless of their simplicity or complexity, elicit multifaceted human responses such as feelings, attitudes, values, expectations, and desires. Thus, to comprehend the relationship between physical settings and human experience and behavior, one must consider both their known physical properties and their impact on human responses. Building on this premise, the current study employs the concept of place attachment to examine how the physical attributes of monuments and
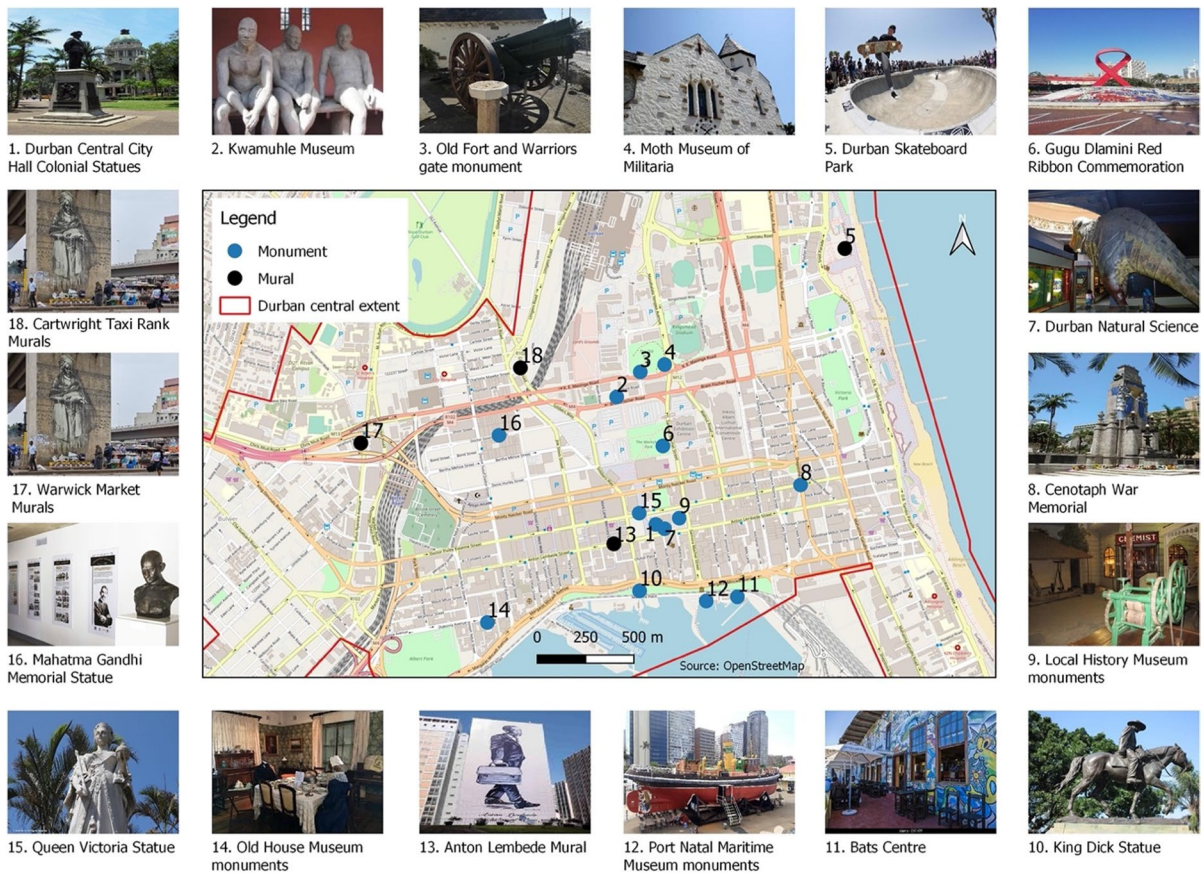
Fig. 1 Spatial distribution of monuments in Durban Central

the associated symbolic meanings foster emotional connections between participants and their physical environment. Furthermore, the study incorporates Henri Lefebvre's ideas on space and monuments to analyze and understand the politics and the role of monumentalization in urban settings. Lefebvre argues that space is socially constructed and emphasizes the political dimension of space. He contends that space is inherently political and highlights its use by dominant groups to uphold social relations. This understanding is instrumental in analyzing how the spatial aspects of monuments, including their symbolism and positioning, are politically motivated. Additionally, Lefebvre's conceptualization of monuments as possessing an infinite horizon of meanings informs the analysis of the diverse interpretations that participants ascribe to monuments across the two study sites.

Findings

Spatiality and dynamics of memorability

The cultural mapping process generated spatial awareness and knowledge of monuments by having participants identify locations with monuments they were familiar with. The maps below (Figs. 1, 2) visually depict the spatial distribution of the identified monuments accompanied by a representative image from each of the location. The monuments, as illustrated in both maps, were embedded with various commemorations that were either colonial, religious, social, or cultural, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of monuments in urban environments. Furthermore, the PGIS mapping revealed the presence of both new and old monuments within the two study locations. The inclusion of new and old monuments particularly those associated with colonial and apartheid eras reflect
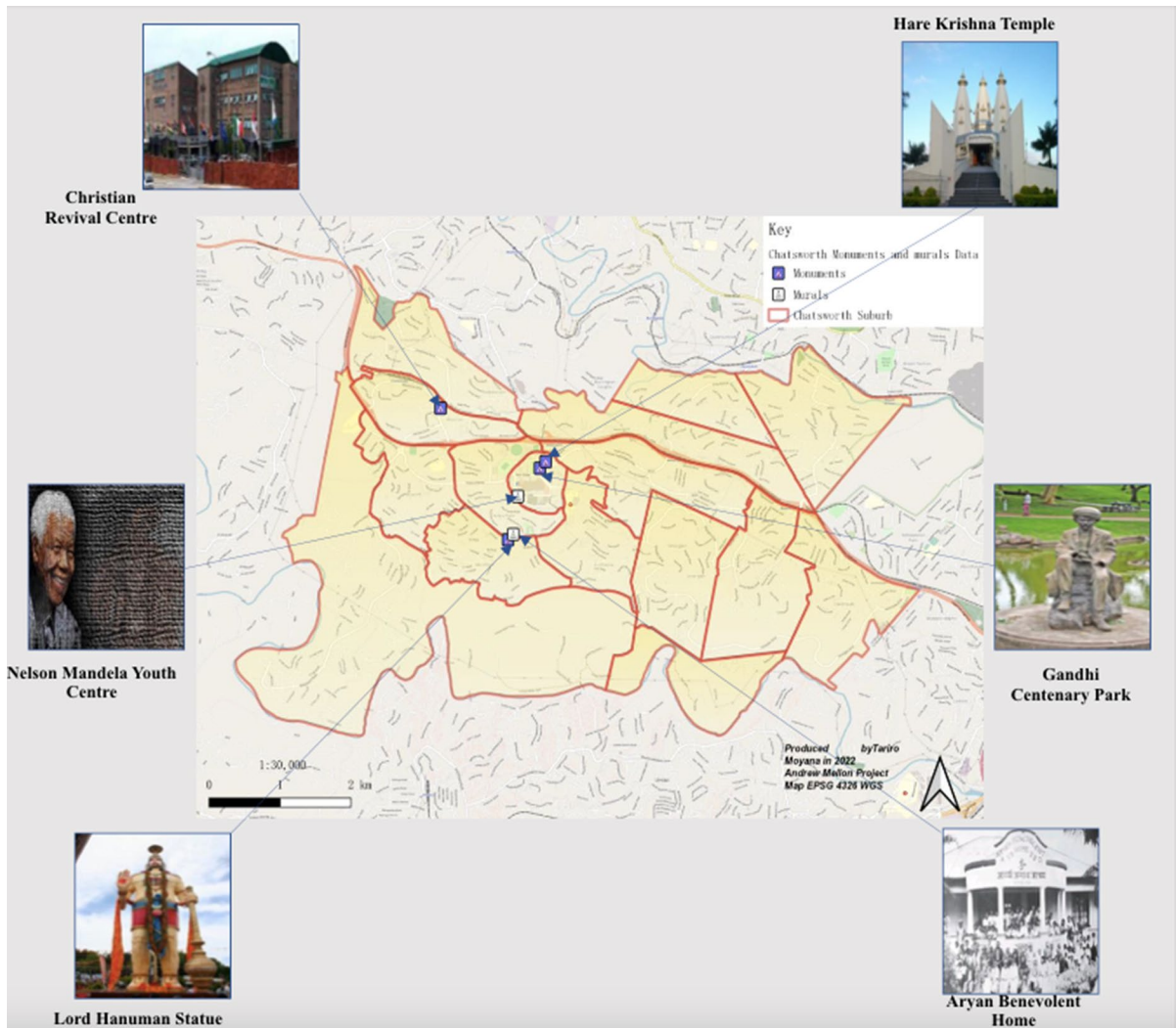
Fig. 2 Spatial distribution of monuments in Chatsworth

ongoing processes of redressing the colonial legacy in contemporary heritage sites, as the continued existence of colonial and apartheid monuments has been widely regarded as problematic and anomalous in the post-apartheid era in South Africa (see Schutte, 2015; Frank & Ristic, 2020; Nettleton & Fubah, 2020). This finding supports the paper's argument that the symbolic value and significance of monuments evolves over time due to changing social and political contexts, leading to the replacement of older monuments with newer ones.

Furthermore, the study examined how the spatial characteristics of monuments, including their physical design, placement, and relationships within the urban landscape, influenced memory and identity.

The findings of the study indicated that the geographical location of a monument played a significant role in facilitating its recognition and familiarity among participants. Monuments situated in open spaces within the town, such as parks, frequently used transportation routes, bus ranks, and the central business district (CBD), were more easily identifiable to participants. These monuments were described as more visible, readily accessible, and consequently more memorable. Some participants expressed that;

> The monument in the park opposite to the Workshop Mall of the HIV and AIDS activist who was killed for disclosing her HIV positive
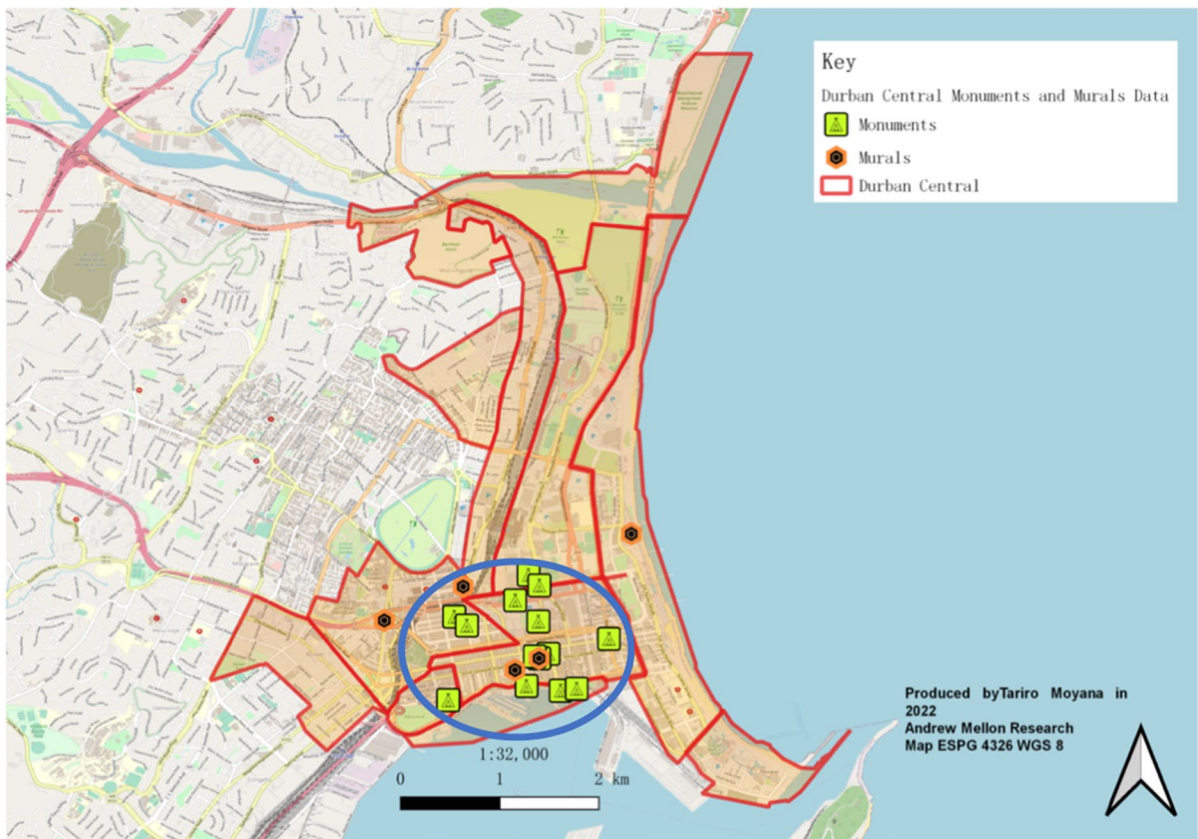
Fig. 3 Spatial concentration of monuments in Durban Central

status (Gugu Dlamini) is in a central location in town where most people come and meet, making it more visible to most people…For example if you put the monument in Umlanga (an affluent suburb), not so many people will afford to go there- in-depth interviewee, Durban central.
The Mahatma Gandhi statue in Gandhi Park is in the center of Chatsworth, making it easy for passersby to see and remember Gandhi. It is also close to the Chatsworth Centre, a remarkably busy mall in the area- in-depth interviewee, Chatsworth.

The narratives suggest that a monument's spatiality, particularly their central location, played a role in facilitating how easily people could recognize and remember it. This was further supported by the PGIS mapping process, as shown in Figs. 3 and 4 below, where participants identified monuments situated in central locations in both Chatsworth and Durban Central. The increased recognition and accessibility of monuments in central locations

such as Chatsworth center (a mall) and Durban central business district (CBD) can also be attributed to the locations' high levels of economic activity and population densities, which are typical of these urban spatial configurations. Drawing on place- identity theory, assimilation of embodied memories was made possible by participants ongoing interactions with the monuments and their subsequent remembrance of the historical figures that were commemorated. For instance, the commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi in the Mahatma Gandhi Park adjacent to Chatsworth center that is alluded to in the above excerpt exemplifies how the central location of a monument enhances familiarity and allows participants to connect with their historical heritage, contributing to their understanding of themselves as Indians. The findings also reveal the processes through which a sense of place and collective identity emerged from participants' interactions with Mahatma Gandhi's monument, aligning with the principles of place-identity theory.
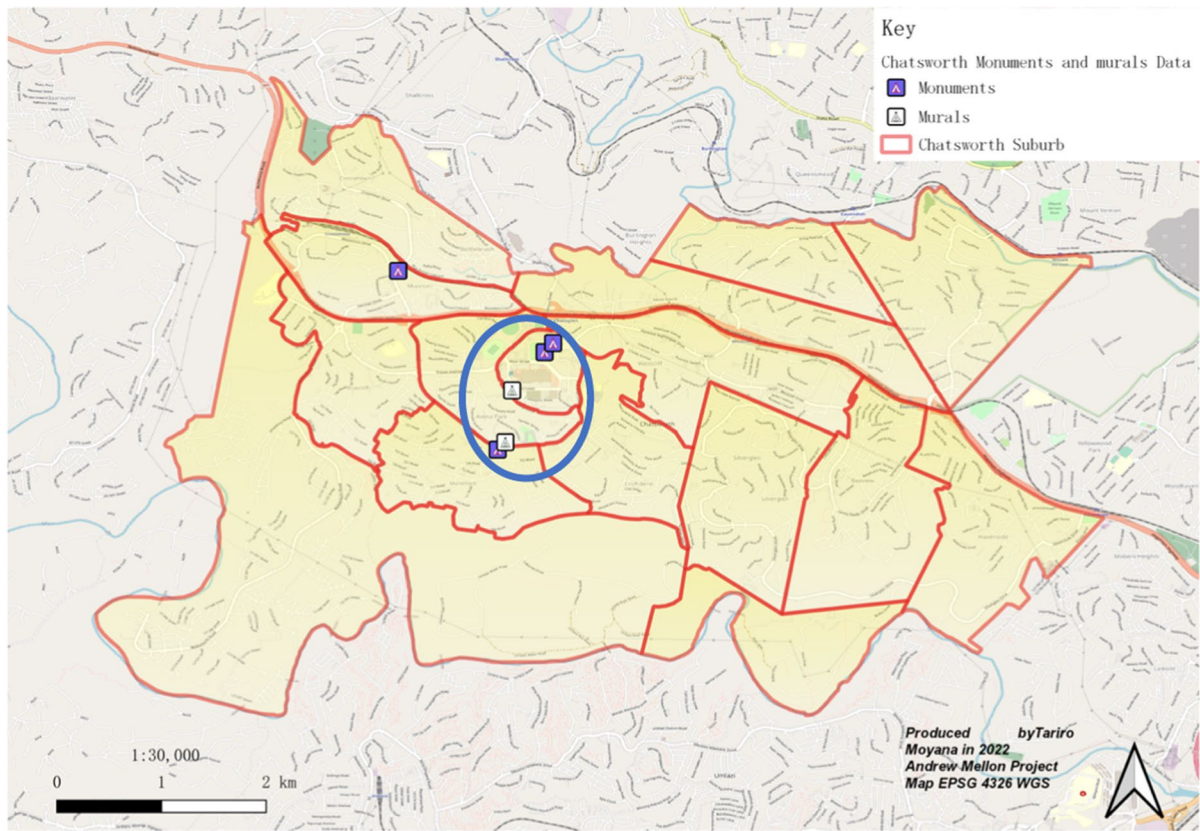
Fig. 4 Spatial concentration of monuments in Chatsworth

Furthermore, participants also revealed their familiarity with monuments that were located near common roads in town and in close proximity to taxi ranks. Participants reported encountering these monuments on a daily basis as they commuted to work or town using transportation routes nearby. These findings were further substantiated the PGIS mapping process which illustrated the adjacency of identified monuments to roads in geographic landscape. The narratives derived from the in-depth interviews provided insights into the significant impact of a monument's placement along primary routes, enhancing its visibility and increasing participants' familiarity with it. Thus, the results of this study affirm the influence of a monument's spatial context, specifically its position within the urban spatial landscape, on its visibility and users' knowledge of it.

Additionally, the results of this study indicated that the size of the monuments played a significant role in the ease with which people could identify them within the two sites. The scale of the monuments and their prominent placement within open spaces contributed to increased visibility and facilitated easier recognition by participants. Participants revealed that the sheer size of some monuments allowed them to be seen from a considerable distance. Below are pictures of some of the monuments identified by participants in the survey mapping process. As shown by photograph (a) below the monument commemorating Gugu Dlamini which was identified by participants is in the form of a 'giant' red ribbon, symbolizing HIV And AIDS awareness, is erected on top of a huge mosaic mold. Similarly, the monument for Lord Hanuman in Chatsworth, represented in photo (b) estimated to be 13 m high, is considered the 'tallest' in Africa. Furthermore, participants commented on the enormity of the monuments opposite the City Hall in Durban Central, represented in photo (c), noting how their size made them 'unavoidable'. Therefore, the significant size of the monuments influenced their easy recognition by participants thereby solidifying their role as cultural and a political landmarks in urban contexts.
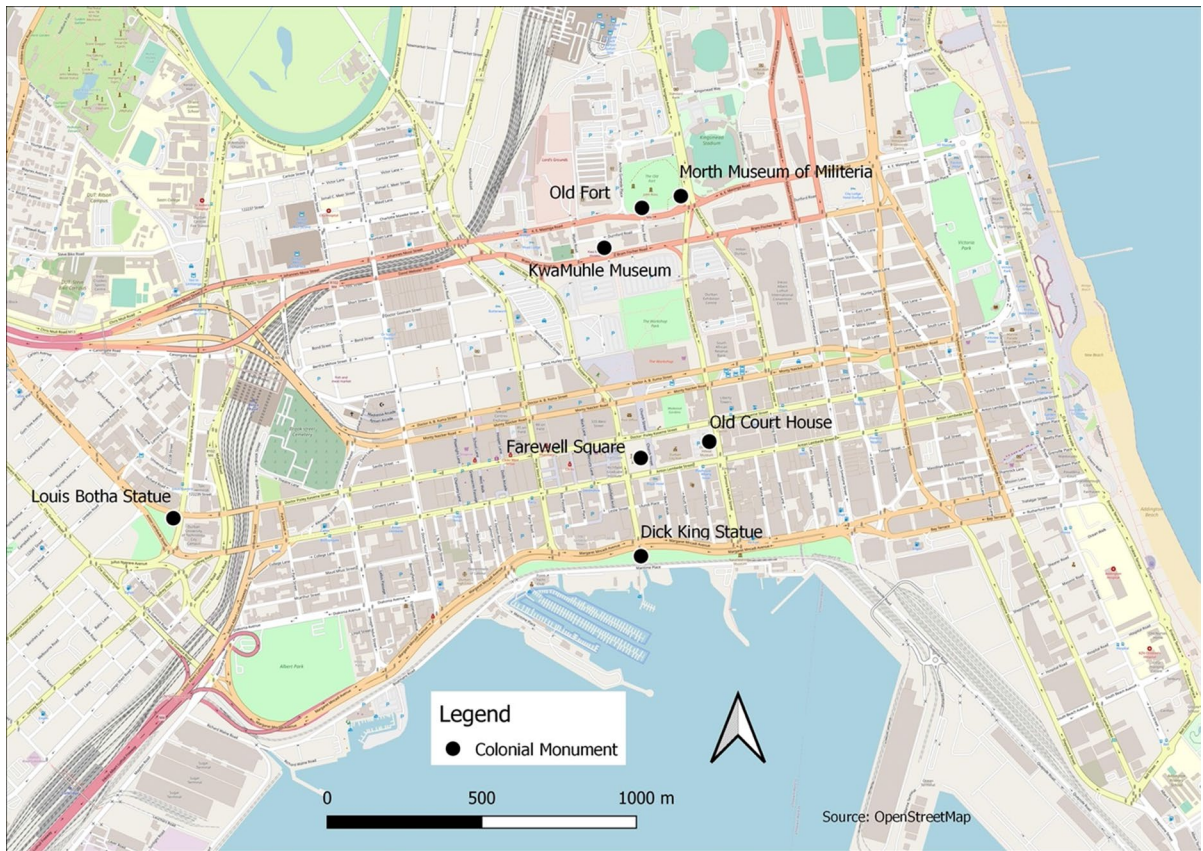
(a)

(b)

(c)

Fig. 5 Spatial distribution of colonial monuments in Durban Central

The study also found that the positioning of monuments in relation to ethnic and racial neighborhood structures contributed to their effectiveness in conveying social memory to specific groups of people. During the in-depth interviews, participants from Chatsworth noted that the strategic placement of monuments within the area was influenced by its demographic composition which was dominated by individuals of Indian descent. This also (re) produced a sense of place attachment among the Indian participants, who emphasized the notion that Chatsworth was primarily an Indian community. The findings also align with the concept of territorial identity (re) construction as posited by the place-identity theory. These findings highlight the role of monuments in reinforcing collective identity and fostering a sense of belonging among participants, particularly within the Indian community. Particularly, the Mahatma Gandhi and the Hanuman statues were mentioned by participants as they are imbued with Indian religious and ethnic symbolism. One of the respondents specifically stated that;

> I believe the Mahatma Gandhi statue is in Chatsworth because the community is primarily Indian. We Indians relate to him more because he was also Indian and did a lot for us Indians; he is more of an idol for us - in-depth interviewee, Chatsworth.

Similarly, participants from Durban Central also noted the prevalence of monuments commemorating colonial and apartheid figures in numerous public spaces in the area. While participants noted the emerging co-existence of both old and new monuments, they observed the continued overrepresentation of colonial and apartheid monuments in Durban Central. Figure 5 below shows the colonial/ apartheid monuments in Durban Central, highlighting the enduring apartheid legacy on the cultural landscape of contemporary public spaces. According to Lefebvre's

(1974), monuments are strategically erected to legitimate the present politics of groups associated with that space. Drawing on this assertion, the strategic placement of Mahatma Gandhi in Chatsworth which was predominantly Indian resulting from the Apartheid Group Areas Act and colonial monuments in Durban Central can show how these monuments were employed as tools to institutionalize racial divisions and reinforce white supremacy as espoused by Lefebvre. Particular ethnohistories were and are still combined with particular ethnogeographies. The placement of the Gandhi statue in Chatsworth emphasizes the 'Indianness' of the site, but it also adds to racializing the place as exclusively belonging to 'Indians'. Despite the discontinuation of the apartheid system, the presence of the Mahatma Gandhi's statue can signify a perpetuation of the area's designation as an 'Indian' township. Arguably, the existence and legacy of monuments which (re)construct ethnocentric histories and inform 'territorial' identities can be problematic given the contemporary urban landscape which is characterized by a diverse population of different racial and ethnic backgrounds residing and utilizing these places. As such, the study findings reinforce calls for the transformation of the cultural landscape which still mirrors colonial legacies and biases into one that promotes social cohesion through the use of monuments that accommodate diverse social groups.

As previously stated, spatiality within the context of this paper included the physical environment surrounding monuments. The findings of this study indicate that the physical surroundings in which certain monuments were situated within the two study sites had an impact on recognition and memory processes. It was observed that the dilapidated and unkempt conditions of some monuments' surroundings in the two sites rendered them "invisible," thereby devaluing the significance of the commemoration represented. Participants noted that the unclean and poorly maintained state of parks surrounding monuments had resulted in their neglect, with the appeal and historical significance obscured by overgrown vegetation and sometimes refuse. Photograph d) shows the dilapidated and unkempt state of one of Chatsworth's parks featuring a historical monument. Some participants from the in-depth interviews remarked that;

> People who are using the park now have no regard for Gandhi and have no idea why he is

there. I pass through there every day on my way home, and people do all kinds of things there, such as drink alcohol and do drugs, and there is so much litter everywhere, which is not right- In-depth Interviewee, Chatsworth.

I haven't been to the Gandhi Park for a long time as it has grown so dangerous, that is why people do not go there anymore. We used to go there when I was young and we would conduct parties as different Indian families and friends but the place is not the same anymore, its neglected. The pond is neglected, it is green (chuckle) In-depth Interviewee, Chatsworth.

The Old Fort and the park surrounding the historical monuments are neglected, and most of the important historical structures are covered in grass. It is actually not very safe due to the presence of street kids and vagrants; you should exercise extreme caution when visiting there alone. – in-depth interviewee, Durban Central

Similar findings were found in the study by Glover et al. (2016) which found that the aesthetic appeal of monuments can be affected by the inappropriate and unkempt surroundings. Consequently, certain monuments struggle to garner attention due to being overshadowed by spaces that are constructed and inhabited by human activities. Therefore, the study confirms that a monument's relative location and surroundings have the potential to can erode and even silence the intended meanings of the memorial's creators. (Alderman and Dwyer, 2009). This, however, has negative implications for memory-making and identity formation processes as people are denied the opportunity to trace their historical heritage and embodied memories, both of which are important for identity formation. Thus, the study emphasizes the necessity for continual maintenance and landscape revitalization of monuments to enhance their communicative efficacy.

Spatial knowledge and perceptions of monuments.

One of the primary aims of this study was to understand participants' spatial knowledge of the identified monuments and their perceptions of these monuments. While participants were able to identify monuments within the two study sites, the majority were oblivious of what was represented by the

Photograph d) showing an unkempt state of one of the parks featuring a historical monument identified by a participant (source: online).

monuments, or the narratives embodied by the commemorations. This is reflected in the following narratives, which are illustrative of these findings:

> I do not know who they are (referring to the figures being commemorated) but I just know where the monuments are. I really do not take time to know who the people are - in-depth interviewee , Durban Central
> I do not pay much attention to monuments. I just know that they are there in specific places in town - in-depth interviewee, Durban Central
> I think elderly people are the ones who can really help you on issues to do with monuments. I do not think us the younger generation really have knowledge on monuments, or even consider them (said with light chuckle)- in-depth interviewee, Chatsworth

The first narrative alludes to the general lack of knowledge among participants regarding the representations embodied in the monuments they identified. Identification of the monuments did not translate to knowledge about the history embodied by the monuments. Additionally, the participants' statements, such as "I really do not take time to know who the people are," "I do not really pay much attention to monuments, but I know there are several of them in a number of places in town," and "I don't think us the younger generation really have knowledge on monuments, or even consider them," demonstrate a sense of disregard and ignorance toward the monuments. These findings corroborate Gurler and Ozer's (2013) view that monuments can lose their social value

transforming into 'mere' objects of a public space. Despite the fact that these monuments are located in the actual city spaces, in the minds of the participants they are just arbitrary locations on a city map (Antonora et al. 2017). Furthermore, given that knowledge of a place and its history is thought to strengthen place attachment as espoused by the place-identity theory, knowledge of a place's history has an effect on collective memory processes and potential avenues for identity formation. These observations can reveal how participants' ignorance of the embodied histories of some of the monuments may have an impact on their understanding and recollection of particular histories that may be important for their self-knowledge and collective identity. Their sense of belonging is also adversely affected by this dislocation, which weakens their sense of connection to these places (placemaking) and the broader community.

Additionally, the findings of this study are consistent with Lefebvre's assertions regarding the evolving meanings associated with monuments as a result of spatial social and cultural constructs. The last narrative is illustrative of the idea that often younger generations do not pay much attention to monuments, particularly the colonial ones which they perceive are no longer relevant to them. Arguably, the participant's chuckle suggests a degree of trivialization of the issues under discussion, the participant also appeared reluctant to actively engage in the discussion. Additionally, other participants expressed apathy and resentment toward colonial statues, while others advocated for their removal from public spaces. They argued that these monuments embody a history that

evokes painful and unpleasant memories of struggle and subjugation endured by previous generations.

These findings also provide empirical substantiation for earlier studies which reveal political iconoclasm of surrounding colonial monuments in South Africa (see Barnabas, 2016; Marshall 2019, Benoit, 2018; Frank & Ristic, 2020; Nettleton & Fubah, 2020). Arguably, the findings of the current study present subtle and covert forms of political iconoclasm manifesting in the form of neglect and invalidating, compared to other violent acts of deforming resented monuments documented in literature. These acts of neglect can be perceived as a manifestation of political discontent. Again, these findings also support scholarly and public calls for a transformation of heritage aimed at establishing a post-apartheid narrative that aligns with the current social and political dispensation.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that there were conflicting views on the symbolic importance and relevance of colonial monuments, with some participants citing the importance of monuments with colonial representations for historical knowledge for future generations. Several participants provided an illustrative example, noting the importance of colonial monuments to the country's history. These findings are in line with Swartz's et al. (2020) who found polarized views surrounding colonial monuments. In their study some participant advocated for the removal of colonial and apartheid masters while others proposed combining both the colonial and those honouring the heroes of the struggle. Similarly, the present study revealed conflicting perceptions towards colonial monuments. Thus, these findings substantiate Lefebvre's (1974) assertion that monuments have an infinite range of meanings, as evidenced by diverse perspectives and interpretations expressed by participants.

The findings of this study also indicated the extent to which some monuments were imbued with a sense of sanctity due to their perceived significance. For instance, the reverence accorded to Mahatma Gandhi by participants of Indian origin, who regarded him as a revered figure akin to a "god" due to his heroic contributions to Indian liberation. Reference can also be made to a participant from Chatsworth who noted that people in the Chatsworth community no longer revere the statue of Mahatma Gandhi or accord him the respect that is due. The participant decried the illegal use of drugs and alcohol, as well as the littering and unkempt state of the park where the statue was located. He considered these acts of disrespect for the statue which he apparently considered a deity. These findings validate ideas advanced by the place identity theory that symbolic meanings attached to physical features of a place create some bonds with the specific place. Furthermore, the beheading of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in the same park during the study's fieldwork confirms forms of iconoclasm, corroborating the participants' earlier stated assertions. It is however difficult to discern whether these were acts of political iconoclasm or some form of acquisitive vandalism as Mahatma Gandhi was a liberation struggle whom most of the Indian participants had high regard.

'Spatialized' Identities

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence to validate the role of monuments in shaping identities in urban public settings. Participants conveyed a profound sense of self and connectedness when engaging with the monumental representations and the narratives enshrined within them. This affirmation highlights the spatialized nature of identity (re)formation, as it stems from participants' spatial interactions with the monuments. Several participants explicitly expressed their perspectives, as exemplified by the following statements;

> I relate to Gandhi because he was Indian, and I am Indian too. He was an Indian lawyer, and it is a motivation for me as well to do the remarkable things he did for the Indians. in- depth interviewee - in-depth interviewee, Chatsworth Most of the exhibitions here show experiences of Zulu people during the apartheid period and these stories help me understand my history as I am Zulu. These three men here who are showing what African men went through to get a dorm pass to look for employment and the struggle they experienced while they waited to be given the dorm pass- in-depth interviewee, Durban.

The narratives above are indicative of the participants sense of belonging to their specific ethnic backgrounds, that is, the Indian and Zulu ethnicities. Photograph e) shows a monumental

Photograph e) shows a monumental representation of the waiting process of gaining a dorm- pass for employment during the apartheid period (photo taken by researcher: Kwa-Muhle Museum Durban).

representation of three African men to whom the participant referred and narrated to have a colonial history to which he, as a Zulu and African working man, relates. The monument depicts the racialization and marginalization of African identities during apartheid. During the apartheid era, the Pass system imposed restrictions on non-white individuals, necessitating the possession of a pass document that granted them limited mobility and access exclusively to designated white areas, particularly for employment purposes. As part of the pass application process, individuals were subjected to a degrading procedure of physical vetting, wherein they were compelled to undress and wait in queues in a state of nudity until their turn for processing. It can be argued that waiting for long hours while naked was degrading of African man who served as patriarchal heads in African customary structures. The phrases I am Zulu, I am Indian alluded to by the participants represent their identification and connectedness as members of their respective ethnic groups. The participants' identities are intricately shaped by their associations with monuments and the resulting attachment they feel towards these places, demonstrating the spatial embeddedness as posited by the place- identity theory.

Furthermore, several participants from Chatsworth identified religious monuments within their community.

that played a significant role in shaping their religious and ethnic identities. These findings were illustrated by a participant who noted that;

> Monuments at the Hare Krishna Temple represent my religion as I am Hindu. They are not only significant to me because I am Hindu, but they help me understand more of who I am as an individual and my culture as well- in-depth interviewee, Chatsworth.

The narratives demonstrated the intertwining of religious symbolism with their sense of religious identity and connections with their ethic and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, some monuments' aesthetic appeal was shown to increase recognition and possibly remembrance and familiarity with them. This was exemplified by participants who were captivated by the splendour of the religious monuments at the Hare Krishna temple, several of which were adorned with a golden finish. This implies that the visual qualities of these monuments can deepen personal attachments and facilitate a more profound exploration of one's religious and cultural identity.

Furthermore, the findings of the study revealed the role of monuments in shaping historical memories, which were crucial in their development of national identity. Participants of Indian and African origin expressed a shared sense of liberation from colonial and apartheid subjugation, which informed and shaped their national identities. This was demonstrated by their idolization of the monuments and characters of both Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela who are both revered liberation struggle heroes. Some of the participants noted that:

> And also, at the Nelson Mandela Chatsworth youth center, you could see quite by accident I'm wearing the T-shirt of the youth center because we honor Madiba (meaning Nelson Mandela) as the founder of that center. It is also a hub of community activism and social welfare work….- In-depth interviewee, Chatsworth.

The preceding narrative describes how participants commemorated liberation heroes like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi through their interaction with monuments, which served as important tools in shaping this historical memory. The participant's response highlights the sentiment of "honouring" these figures, reflecting a profound respect for their historical contributions. Drawing from the fact that the participant was Indian, it is plausible to not that these nationalistic sentiments transcended ethnic affination. Monuments are shown to play a pivotal role in the formation of national identities and can serve as a platform for uniting people around a shared experience of liberation struggles. Furthermore, another participant referenced the monumental representation of the "big five" in the Durban Natural Science Museum, noting how its historical significance informs many aspects of her identity including cultural, national and African dimensions. She explained how the monuments represented her ancestral history and cultural heritage, stating how these animals symbolized the formidable creatures her ancestors encountered during hunting. Additionally, she alluded to their national significance, as they appear on the back of South African bank notes. Thus, the findings of this study substantiate the notion that historical memories embedded in monuments contribute to the formation of identities on multiple levels, encompassing cultural, national, and personal dimensions.

Summary and Conclusion

This study examined the influence of monuments and their spatial characteristics on the processes of memorability and identity (re)construction in urban public spaces. It revealed that monuments play a critical role in shaping historical memories as shown by participants' narration of memories embedded in specific monuments across the study sites. This validated their discursive and commemorative function in urban settings. Furthermore, monuments that embody historical memories were found to elicit a sense of personal and collective belonging, contributing to the affirmation of national, cultural, religious, and ethnic identities. This underscores the interconnectedness between historical memory and the formation of spatial identities. However, these processes are contingent upon the impact of monuments on participants' perceptions and interpretations of space. Furthermore, the results indicated that the role of monuments as sites of memory and identity formation is influenced by their spatial contexts. The geographical location of monuments and its subsequent effects on their visibility and accessibility influence the extent to which they can be identified or remembered. This observation was supported by the easier identification and mapping of monuments located in central areas of both study sites. The study also highlights that the physical structure of monuments affects their visibility and the way they are remembered and memorialized. Notably, larger monuments are often considered more prominent and difficult to overlook.

Furthermore, the study revealed the significant influence of the surrounding environment on the visibility, accessibility and perception of monuments. Monuments situated in unkempt and dilapidated environments were commonly considered as less visible and inaccessible thereby diminishing their memorability. Emerging findings of this study revealed the extent to which these monuments and the spaces surrounding them are becoming 'muted' and to some extent 'irrelevant' spaces which no longer hold the same commemorative value that was once sacralised. Polarized attitudes toward monuments were also demonstrated to be the consequence of a

spatial context of monuments that is still dominated by a colonial and apartheid legacy which is not well aligned with the current social and political dispensation. Furthermore, it can be argued that the younger participants' apparent lack of interest in monuments reflects their inadequacy in fulfilling the cultural heritage needs of contemporary society. Their disregard and disdain towards some monuments, notably those associated with colonialism and apartheid, indicates some form of political discontent regarding the cultural landscape within the post- apartheid era. This highlights the necessity for new historical representations that resonate younger generations and the post-colonial and post- apartheid realities. Thus, the study affirms the imperative to (re)configure the spatiality of monuments and embodied narratives to ensure their inclusivity and effectiveness as instruments of historical commemoration, capable of constructing a post-apartheid narrative that aligns with the contemporary socio-spatial and political context.

Declarations

Ethical approval The research was conducted with careful consideration of ethical guidelines in research. This sub-study is part of a larger study with research protocol number (HSS-REC/00001708/2020) that was issued by the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN) research office.

References

Abu-Ghazzeh, T. M. (1996). Movement and wayfinding in the King Saud University built environment: A look at freshman orientation and environmental information. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 16*(4), 303–318.

Alderman, D. H., & Dwyer, O. J. (2009). Memorials and monuments. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, 7*(1), 51–58.

Antonova, N., Grunt, E., & Merenkov, A.,(2017). Monuments in the structure of an urban environment: The source of social memory and the marker of the urban space. In: IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, IOP Publishing. 245(6): 062029

Ball, J. (2018). Staging of memory: Monuments, commemoration, and the demarcation of Portuguese space in Colonial Angola. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 44*(1), 77–96.

Barnabas, S. (2016). Engagement with colonial and apartheid narratives in contemporary South Africa: A monumental debate. *Journal of Literary Studies, 32*(3), 109–128.

Benoit, P., 2018. A monumental question: A comparison between the United States' and South Africa's Monument Debates.

Bodenhamer, D. J., Corrigan, J., & Harris, T. M. (Eds.). (2010). The spatial humanities: GIS and the future of humanities scholarship. Indiana University Press.

Bodenhamer, D. J., Harris, T. M., & Corrigan, J. (2013). Deep mapping and the spatial humanities. *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing, 7*(1–2), 170–175.

Cleland, J., & MacLeod, A. (2021). The visual vernacular: Embracing photographs in research. *Perspectives on Medical Education, 10*(4), 230–237.

Corbett JM, Keller CP, (2005). An analytical framework to examine empowerment associated with participatory geographic information systems (PGIS), Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization, *40*(4): 91–102.

Cresswell, T. J. (1992). *In place/out of place: Geography, ideology and transgression*. The University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Forest, B., & Johnson, J. (2004). Unraveling the threads of history: Soviet-Era monuments and Post-Soviet national identity in Moscow. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 92*(3), 524–547.

Forest, B., & Johnson, J. (2019). Confederate monuments and the problem of forgetting. *Cultural Geographies, 26*(1), 127–131.

Frank, S., & Ristic, M. (2020). Urban fallism: Monuments, iconoclasm and activism. *City, 24*(3–4), 552–564.

Reuben K.A. Glover, C. S. K. S. A. S., 2016 "Spatiality of Public Monuments In Public Spaces"., International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Invention, 3(10). Available at: https://valleyinternational.net/index.php/theijsshi/article/view/578

Gurler, E. E., & Ozer, B. (2013). The effects of public memorials on social memory and urban identity. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 82*, 858–863.

Hauge, Å. L. (2007). Identity and place: A critical comparison of three identity theories. *Architectural Science Review, 50*(1), 44–51.

Hornby, A. S. (2010). *Oxford advanced students dictionary*. Oxford University Press.

Johnson, N. (2005). Locating memory: Tracing the trajectories of remembrance. *Historical Geography, 33*, 165–179.

Kulišić, M., & Tuđman, M. (2009). Monument as a form of collective memory and public knowledge.

Lefebvre, H. (1974). The Production of Space. Blackwell Publishing, USA

Leib, J. I. (2004). Robert E Lee, Race, representation and redevelopment along richmond. *Virgnia's Canal Walk. Southeastern Geographer, 44*(2), 236–262.

Marschall, S. (2019). The long shadow of apartheid: A critical assessment of heritage transformation in South Africa 25 years on. *International Journal of Heritage Studies, 25*(10), 1088–1102.

Martínez, F. (2022). Memory, don't speak! Monumental neglect and memorial sacrifice in contemporary Estonia. *Cultural Geographies, 29*(1), 63–81.

Mashau, T. D., & Mangoedi, L. (2015). Faith communities, social exclusion, homelessness and disability: Transforming the margins in the City of Tshwane. *HTS Theological Studies, 71*(3), 01–09. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.3088

Monnet, J. (2011). The symbolism of place: A geography of relationships between space, power and identity. *Cybergeo: European journal of geography*.

Morgan, D. (2010). Soldier statues and empty pedestals: Public memory in the wake of the confederacy. *Material Religion, 14*(1), 153–157.

Mpofu, A., & Tomaselli, K. G. (1997). The rearticulation of meaning of national monuments: Beyond apartheid. *Culture and Policy, 8*(3), 57–76.

Nettleton, A., & Fubah, M. A. (Eds.). (2020). Exchanging symbols: monuments and memorials in post-apartheid South Africa. African Sun Media.

Osadchaya, G. I., Kireev, E. Y., Vartanova, M. L., Seleznev, I. A., & Chernikova, A. A. (2021). Memorial heritage and social memory of youth of Eurasian integration countries. *Propósitos y Representaciones, 9*(SPE1), 1389.

Popkin, M. L. (2016). *The Architecture of the roman triumph: Monuments, memory, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Proshansky, H. M., Fabian, A. K., & Kaminoff, R. (1983). Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self.

Journal of Environmental Psychology, 3, 57–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(83)80021-

Resane, K.T., 2018. Statues, symbols and signages: Monuments towards socio-political divisions, dominance and patriotism?. HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies.

Rose, G. (2022). Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials. *Visual methodologies*, 1–100.

Schutte, G. (2015). *Statues are disrespectful to many. Sunday Tribune*. https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/sunday-tribune south-africa/20150426

Surchi, Z., & Nafa, H. (2021). Appraisal of place identity through tangible elements of cultural features in Erbil City. *Civ. Eng. Archit, 9*(7), 2528–2541.

Swartz, S., Roberts, B., Gordon, S. & Struwig, J. (2020) Statues of liberty?: attitudes towards apartheid and colonial statues in South Africa. In: Nettleton, A. & Fubah, M.A. (eds). Exchanging symbols: monuments and memorials in post-apartheid South Africa. Stellenbosch: AFRICAN SUN MeDIA. 1–29http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/15203

Taylor, S. (2009). *Narratives of identity and place*. Routledge.

Ujang, N., & Zakariya, K. (2015). The notion of place, place meaning and identity in urban regeneration. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 170*, 709–717.

Weaver-Hightower, R., & Weaver-Hightower, M. B. (2022). South Africa's Voortrekker monument and 1820 settlers national monument: Monuments to cultural violence. *Journal of Genocide Research, 24*(4), 549–567.

Ye, Z., Veneziano, D., & Lord, D. (2011). Safety impact of gateway monuments. *Accident Analysis & Prevention, 43*(1), 290–300.