Donaldson, Ronnie[1]

No Room for Modesty in Heritage Significance: The Case of Dennesig in Stellenbosch, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Significance and authenticity are two key concepts that run through the practice of urban heritage conservation. When combined, they form a powerful tool within a value-based system that ensures the preservation and continued use of historic places. Stellenbosch, being the second oldest town in South Africa, holds great importance as a historic town. However, several historic suburbs have experienced processes of redevelopment, studentification, and gentrification over the past decade, resulting in their deterioration. But what happens when the unique heritage character of a place is considered insignificant by developers, heritage practitioners, architects, and the local authority? This paper focuses on the Dennesig neighborhood in Stellenbosch, where the broader context of modest heritage significance has been neglected and erased from historical records due to poorly conceived planning, urban design, and mismanagement of heritage resources. The argument put forth in this paper is that in order to evaluate a specific case study site, one must consider the complexities of broader heritage and urban planning processes. This understanding is crucial to comprehend the factors that have shaped the current context and the eventual significance attributed to a particular place, setting, or townscape.

Keywords: authenticity, built heritage resources, modest heritage, heritage conservation areas, heritage significance

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[1] Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, Small Town Research Unit, Stellenbosch University, 82 Ryneveld street, Stellenbosch, 7600, South Africa. E-mail: rdonaldson@sun.ac.za. Tel: +27 21 808 2395, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6710-0220

INTRODUCTION

The field of heritage conservation in the built environment has witnessed substantial advancements since the drafting of the Charters of Athens in 1931 and the Charters of Venice in 1964. Today, there exists a widespread consensus regarding the definition of heritage as a social ensemble that encompasses various complex and interdependent manifestations, reflecting the culture of a human community (Luxen, 2004, para. 8). The focus of discourse has evolved from inquiries about "how to conserve" to inquiries about "why conserve" and "for whom to conserve." International conventions and charters have played a pivotal role in establishing a consistent understanding of built heritage, both on a global scale and within South Africa. An integral component of this framework is the concept of place identity, which refers to the unique and distinctive characteristics defining a specific location and the emotional, cultural, and psychological connections people forge with that place (Relph, 1976). Place identity exerts a significant influence on historical sites, shaping how individuals and communities interact with and assign value to these locations. Place identity assumes a critical role in the preservation and conservation of historical sites. Local communities and heritage organizations frequently champion the protection of these sites due to their cultural and historical significance. Consequently, preservation efforts are directed toward maintaining the authenticity and integrity of historical sites, ensuring the preservation of their place identity for future generations (Uzell, 1996).

Significance and authenticity are key considerations in heritage resource management. When combined, they form a powerful tool in a value-based system that ensures the preservation and continued use of historic places (Townsend, 2017). The Venice Charter emphasizes the importance of the geographic setting and recognizes the significance of contributions from all periods in shaping the character of a building or an area. Therefore, protecting the built environment heritage entails more than safeguarding individual houses, structures, and landscapes. As stated in the charter of the US/ICOMOS Committee on Historic Towns, significant features of a historic town include the historical development patterns that have emerged over time (Committee on Historic Towns, US/ICOMOS, 1992). Of particular relevance to this paper is the international recognition, particularly during the 1970s, of including modest historical dwellings and farmhouses in inventories of built heritage, preservation practices, and conservation efforts (Schädler-Saub, 2015). The focus has shifted from individual sites to a larger scale, encompassing the protection of groups of historical buildings and urban structures, known as historical sites. This shift has given rise to an expanded concept of built heritage that embraces modest historical buildings (Schädler-Saub, 2015). Modest heritage can encompass various aspects, such as buildings of modest scale, unlisted structures, buildings with a modest architectural character, and heritage buildings with low monetary value (often due to their location and lack of official listing). In the context of this paper, the term "modest architectural heritage" refers to buildings, structures, or sites that may not exhibit grand or elaborate designs but are esteemed for their historical, cultural, or social significance. These architectural works often represent the everyday built environment of a specific period or community and may be associated with ordinary people, vernacular traditions, or distinct local contexts. The importance of modest

architectural heritage lies in its ability to provide insights into past lifestyles and socioeconomic conditions.

The Burra Charter, which emphasizes the preservation of cultural and environmental value, reveals a gap in local conservation practices in relation to international standards. According to Hobson (2001), the issue lies in the interpretation of conservation and its value within the context of urban development, particularly with regards to the effectiveness and guiding principles of conservation planning by local planning authorities. While it is essential to incorporate cultural heritage into urban planning for the purpose of building sustainable cities (Larkham, 1988; Pendlebury, 2002, 2013; Sykes & Ludwig, 2015; Tait & While, 2009; Thomas, 2018; Hobson, 2001; Cheong & Fong, 2018), there are concerns regarding the definition and implementation of culture within global policies such as the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. These approaches may have unintended consequences when applied to African cities (Sitas, 2020). The rapid process of urbanization has resulted in the marginalization of urban heritage amidst the development agenda, overshadowing the value placed on it by previous generations (Erkan, 2018, p. 82). In a South African context, the study of Buchanan (2021) affirms this weakness. In many cases, urban heritage faces the risk of unnecessary losses when the survival of its individual components is dependent on their integration within the larger urban context. This is particularly evident when culturally significant historic cores of towns and cities become the focal point of significant changes or redevelopment pressures, without adequate proactive policies in place to address and counterbalance those pressures (Ripp & Rodwell, 2015).

As per Turner (2018), the division between urban heritage and development must be addressed by implementing the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach which emphasizes the role of culture in facilitating sustainable development (UNESCO Culture Sector, 2018). Cultural landscapes are crucial in this regard (Pentz & Albert, 2023). Considering that heritage is now recognized as being shaped by and the responsibility of local communities, it is important to highlight the broader urban connections and associations outlined in the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the HUL. HUL emphasizes the importance of applying a landscape approach to incorporate cultural heritage policies and management considerations into broader objectives of sustainable urban development (Ginzarly, Houbart & Teller, 2019; Rey-Pérez & Pereira Roders, 2020; Bandarin, 2019). This goes beyond focusing solely on static, academically defined intrinsic values. Coupled with this, in order to foster a shared understanding of heritage and its related objectives, the participation of local communities is crucial. To maximize the potential benefits, it is essential to identify and involve all stakeholders in shaping the actions taken (Ripp & Rodwell, 2016).

Significance determines everything in heritage resource management. According to Townsend (2017) no planning or design work can be considered before an assessment of the cultural significance has been articulated and agreed on. As will be shown in the paper, the case study has however proven the contrary. Townsend further proposes that significance can only be established through research and consultation with many parties. In addition, the protective measures suggested must be proportionate to significance (the higher the significance the greater care, the lower the significance, heritage can be enhanced or sacrificed). Therefore, different types of significance demand different protective

measures (Townsend, 2017). Furthermore, Townsend (2017, p. 12) argues that "the significances of heritage are affected by questions regarding the authenticity of the relic, building, site, place, cultural landscape/townscape and/or environment in question." Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built, setting refers to the character of the place in which the property played its historical role (it is the physical environment of a historic property). It involves how, not just where, the property is situated (Alho et al., n.d.). The concept of authenticity was originally used in a museum context but has since then been used in broader contexts such as places, buildings, material culture, as well as experiences (Wood, 2020; Alberts & Hazen, 2010; Di Giovine, 2008). By combining heritage and authenticity it is important that heritage resources must be worthy of preservation since they have cultural and historical value (Harrison, 2020). It is about their "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" and it is about their "unique existence" (Di Giovine, 2008: 26).

In South Africa, there has been a scarcity of scholarship addressing the interconnected themes of heritage, urban conservation and planning (Donaldson, 2005). Existing studies tend to primarily focus on the link between urban tourism planning and heritage (Van der Merwe & Rogerson, 2018). The preservation of urban heritage in South Africa encounters significant challenges due to the dynamic nature of cities and the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid. Moreover, obstacles such as urban form, limited political will, implementation difficulties, and a challenging socio-economic context further impede urban heritage conservation in the country (Donaldson, 2001, 2005; Bakker, 2003; Donaldson & Williams, 2005; McLachlan, 2009; Townsend, 2017; Buchanan, 2021).

This paper explores the intricate relationship between development and conservation, using the Dennesig suburb in Stellenbosch as a significant case study of a historic town. The primary focus of the paper is to examine the "application" and "effectiveness" of heritage legislation while emphasizing the importance of often overlooked "modest" heritage resources in early twentieth-century suburban environments. The argument presented in the paper emphasizes that a comprehensive evaluation of a specific case study site necessitates an understanding of the broader heritage and planning processes that have influenced its context and ascribed significance to the place, setting, and townscape. Therefore, the paper aims to advocate for the consideration of the significance of modest heritage resources in heritage resource management and broader urban development practices, highlighting the missed opportunity in the case of Dennesig.

METHODS

This case study aims to document the destruction of a heritage suburb in Stellenbosch. The research heavily relies on archival materials to piece together the process that unfolded in the changing geography of the suburb since the 1980s. Three sets of data collection were conducted for this study.

Firstly, gathering information to accurately map the shifting boundaries of the designated official heritage conservation area(s) was essential. This involved understanding how and when these boundaries changed and assessing whether the proposed developments in Dennesig aligned with official

policies. Relevant documents were obtained from the archives of two community heritage watchdog organizations (Stellenbosch Interest and Stellenbosch Heritage Foundation), as well as from the town museum and municipality, to reconstruct and map the process of demarcating historical areas in Stellenbosch.

Secondly, mapping the spatio-temporal changes in the suburbs from 1980 onwards was crucial to illustrate the periods of land use transformation resulting from new student apartment developments. Cape Farm Mapper, an interactive source that maintains records of title deeds, was used to map the extent of these developments. This enabled the compilation and mapping of a timeline that encompassed all the changes over time.

Lastly, the paper focuses on the first major development that potentially initiated the transformation of the entire suburb, known as the Boschen Park development. Information regarding development applications, heritage assessments, and approved development plans was sourced from the developer, municipal officials, and a town planning firm. Permission was obtained from the Body Corporate of the complex to access the municipality's files related to the houses that were demolished for the Boschen Park development. Former residents were located through word of mouth, and interviews were conducted with representatives from the two heritage watchdog organizations, the Stellenbosch Municipality's urban planning department, and developers involved in Dennesig developments. Additionally, heritage reports submitted to the provincial heritage authority were sourced for further information.

RESULTS

Stellenbosch has been consistently identified as having the highest potential for growth in non-metropolitan Western Cape province in two consecutive studies (Donaldson, 2012). Over the past decade, the town has transitioned from being predominantly known as a university town to being recognized as one of the country's 21 secondary cities (Marais et al., 2016). Consequently, the local economy has shifted from its traditional agricultural and educational foundation to focus on specialized service sectors, including finance, business, tourism, and science and technology (Donaldson, 2020). Being a historically significant town in the country, Stellenbosch has faced development pressures resulting from changes in its geography, leading to severe impacts on its heritage-built environment. Concerns are growing regarding the loss of the town's historic sense of place, exemplified by the placeless approach of mass development, specifically in the form of student accommodation. The Stellenbosch Spatial Development Framework (SDF) consistently emphasizes the goal of preserving the architectural, historical, scenic, and cultural character of the settlements, structures, and areas (CNdV Africa, 2009). However, the concept of a sense of place has diminished in certain parts of Stellenbosch over the past decade, raising doubts about the preservation of authenticity and integrity in contemporary conservation practices. The Dennesig suburb serves as a prime example of this situation.

Dennesig, a modest historic suburb

Stellenbosch was established in 1679 by Governor Simon van der Stel in the Dutch Cape Colony, and it holds historical significance as the country's second colonial settlement (Donaldson, 2020). One of the notable historical features in the Dennesig suburb is the old Kromme Rivier farmstead, which was granted to Jan Jansz van Eeden in 1683. Among the houses, one still possesses the sole remaining pre-1790 Baroque-style central gable in Stellenbosch (Figure 1) (Fransen, 2004). These structures were recorded on General Plan A as the only buildings in the area when the suburb of Dennesig was surveyed in 1929 and declared as Kromme Rivier Township A and B in 1931 and 1932, respectively (Figures 2a, 2b) – the town's second suburb. This specific block, bounded by Hofman, Molteno, Paul Kruger, and Bird streets, was divided into seven plots.

Figure 1. Photo of Baroque gable

Photo: Author, 2023

Dennesig is widely acknowledged as a modest suburb, characterized by both the architectural style of its buildings and the relatively lower monetary value of its properties. In comparison to the first suburb of Stellenbosch (Mosterstdrift) and subsequent new developments during the mid-century, the houses in Dennesig were noticeably smaller. During the Segregation City era (1923–1950), cities in South Africa followed a specific pattern of development (Lemon, 2021). Dennesig was established adjacent to the mixed area of Die Vlakte, which served as Stellenbosch's version of District Six (a predominantly coloured residential area where residents were forcefully relocated from their houses to make way for white occupancy due to apartheid legislation). According to the Segregation City model, lower-income white housing was situated close to industrial sectors or major transportation routes such as railways and roads. Over time, Dennesig functioned as a buffer between the middle and high-income areas, the central business district, and the black township in the apartheid city. It was during this period that Dennesig was established as the town's first lower-middle income suburb exclusively for white residents. In subsequent years, the suburb attracted professionals, academics, and

individuals from the creative class as a preferred residential location. The properties had considerably lower value primarily due to their location, acting as a buffer between the black township and the rest of the town following the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950, which enforced racial segregation in residential areas. Unfortunately, the significance of such spatial formations in South African cities and their impact on our urban landscapes is often overlooked in heritage assessments.

Figure 2. Kromme Rivier Township A and B (later renamed Dennesig suburb)
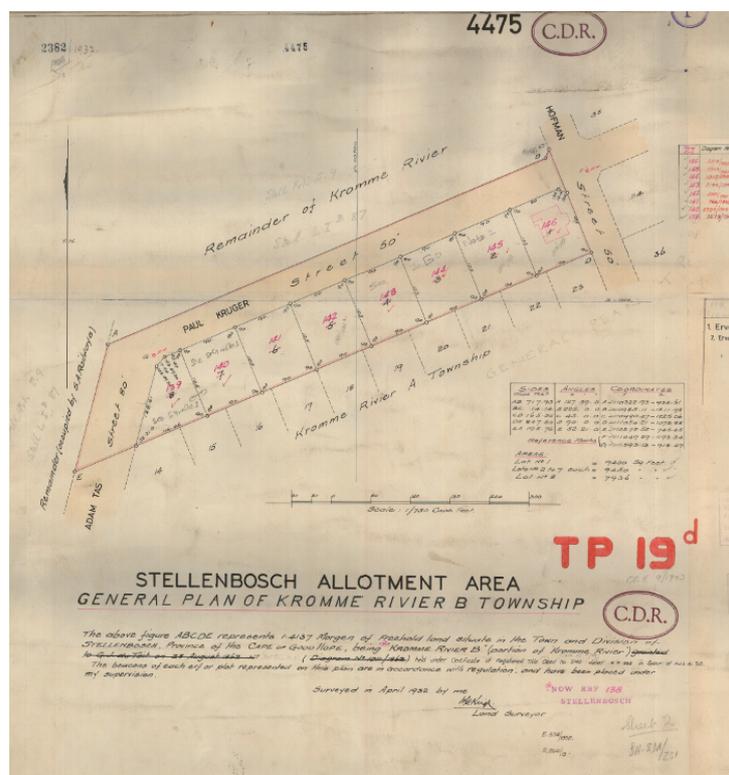
Source: Cape Farm Mapper, n.d.

Due to space limitations within this paper, a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the heritage resources in Dennesig cannot be provided. Therefore, the following is a concise overview of the heritage context and value of this suburb. A heritage audit conducted in 2017 revealed that 46% of

the properties in Dennesig were over 60 years old, meeting the classification of heritage resources according to the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) (Buchanan & Donaldson, 2020). Architecturally, Dennesig showcased modesty and presented a diverse range of styles prevalent between the two World Wars. These styles included Art Deco, Arts and Crafts, Victorian, and Cape Dutch Revival. Many houses in Dennesig were built in the Arts and Crafts style, characterized by hipped roofs with red tiles or gabled ends adorned with decorative elements. Additionally, during the 1960s, modest modernist-styled houses were introduced. Postlethwayt's assessment (2018) highlights that the houses in Dennesig were modest in their architectural design, utilizing simple brick and plaster materials. They were generally smaller in size and often featured an open relationship with the street. Figures 3–4 provide illustrative examples of this eclectic blend of architectural styles.

Figure 3. a) Red-tiled, hipped roof, single-storey home in Dennesig,
b) Single-storey home with gable end in Dennesig

Photo: Author, 2020

Figure 4. a) 1930s perfectly intact house with stepped archways, rusticated columns, and stepped windows which are unique and original, b) Art deco inspired house
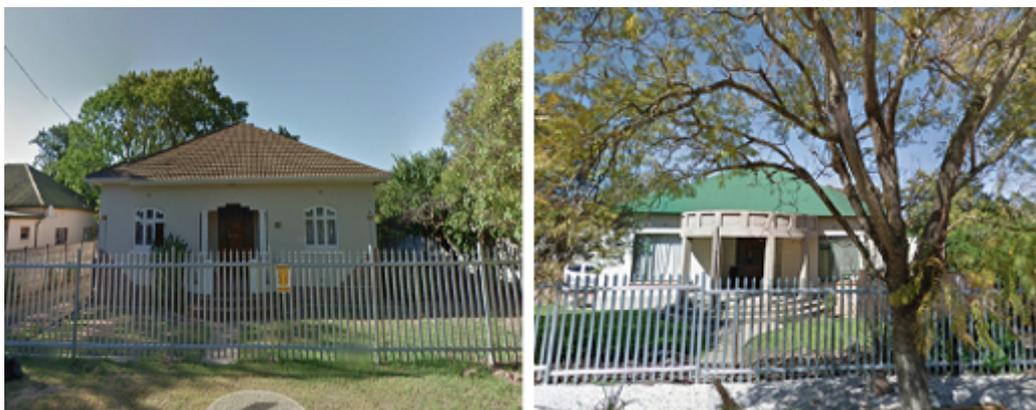
Source: a) Author, 2020; b) Google Earth Streetview
Note: One of only three properties listed in the municipal inventory, demolished in 2021

In many cases, modest suburbs and houses are often associated with speculative housing. However, it is important to note that while one heritage practitioner, Snelling (2008), claims that the historical houses in Dennesig were primarily speculative housing, Postlethwayt's (2018) investigation of

historical ownership records in the Deeds Office found little evidence of speculative development. The properties in Dennesig were primarily developed by their first owners and subsequently sold to individuals, usually in no more than two lots. These properties remained under relatively stable ownership, often for extended periods, likely serving as family homes passed down to family members or through deceased estates.

According to Section 3(3) of the NHRA, the significance of a place is determined by the value it contributes to the overall historical pattern. The establishment of Dennesig as one of the earliest suburbs in Stellenbosch holds great significance, not just from a historical standpoint but also within the socio-spatial-cultural context. In the following section, a concise examination of the delineation of heritage areas in Stellenbosch will shed light on the reasons behind the neglect of Dennesig as a valued heritage area. Despite the perfectly intact original layout and historic houses remaining unchanged since the construction of the first houses in the early 1930s, Dennesig has regrettably been overlooked in terms of its official designation as a heritage area under NHRA Section 31. As a consequence, starting from the 1990s, some properties in Dennesig began to undergo rezoning for high-density apartment developments, primarily catering to student housing. This shift in zoning and development purposes introduced a change in residential stability (Kruger & Donaldson, 2020; Buchanan & Donaldson, 2020). It is worth noting that these changes occurred for various reasons, prompting a departure from the previous pattern of stable ownership and traditional residential use, resulting in the demise of a heritage suburb.

Demarcating historical areas in Stellenbosch

Heritage conservation acts play a crucial role in governing the rights and responsibilities of the state, local government authorities, and owners of cultural resources (Tintěraa et al., 2018). Demarcating heritage conservation areas is a planning method used to safeguard cultural heritage by defining specific perimeters or zones where strategies are implemented to restore and protect historically significant buildings, sites, or designated areas (Steenkamp, 2021). These areas encompass both public and private properties and recognize the broader physical and historical context of importance and authenticity in which heritage resources are situated. Heritage conservation areas typically have additional rules and regulations governing construction and renovations, often requiring licensed specialists to develop plans and adhere to specific conditions (Graham et al., 2000). The specifics of these regulations vary from city to city (Pickard, 2002). The adoption of heritage conservation areas has connected proactive preservation with the spatial planning process (Dameria et al., 2018). The preservation of the historic environment has therefore been significantly influenced by the planning of contemporary cities (Pendlebury & Strange, 2011).

The practice of urban conservation in South Africa dates back to the 1970s. In 1979, Cape Town became the first authority to incorporate principles of conserving the built environment into their planning controls, although these principles were officially included in the zoning scheme only in 1990 (Kruger-Roos, 1997). Stellenbosch followed a similar trajectory, initially demarcating a historic core in the 1970s without legislative backing. To fully comprehend the decline of Dennesig as a histo-

rical suburb, it is necessary to explore the process of demarcating historical areas in Stellenbosch. The town's first "official" heritage area was the 1990 Structure Plan, which was developed in accordance with the Land Use Planning Ordinance (LUPO) of 1985, the prevailing legislation at the time. The historical development and layout of Stellenbosch leading up to 1990 are extensively documented in the initial volume of this Structure Plan. To manage development control, an Ethics Committee was established to provide guidance to the Council on matters related to the built environment. Regulations were proclaimed in the 1996 Town Planning Scheme, and the heritage area map from that year closely resembled the demarcation outlined in the 1990 Structure Plan. Figure 5 illustrates the evolving boundaries of the urban heritage core over time.

Figure 5. Shifting boundaries of the heritage core
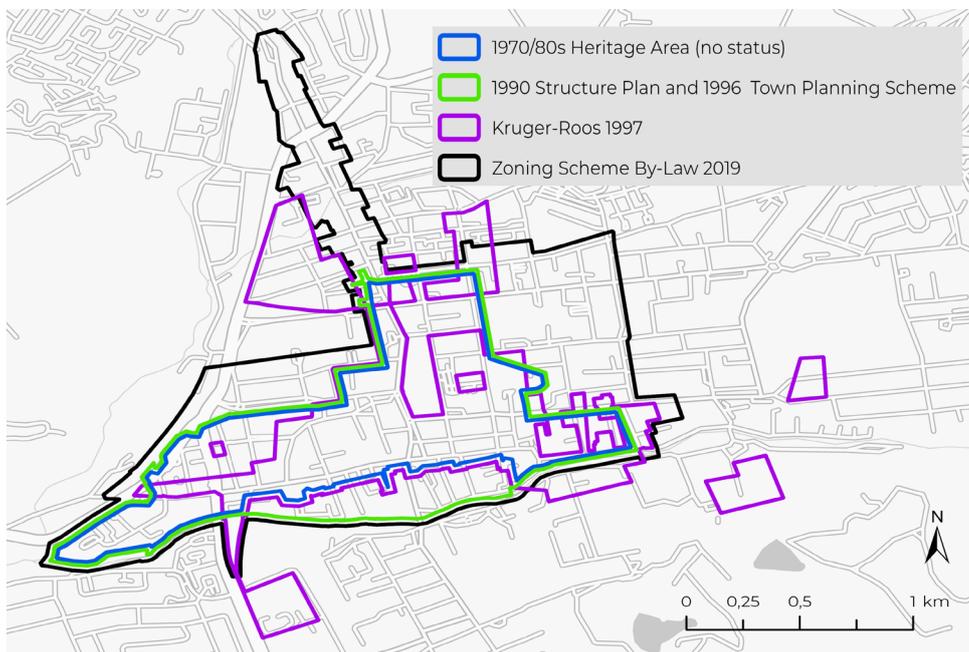
Source: Author

However, due to the lack of clear heritage conservation guidelines, the Stellenbosch Municipality sought the assistance of consultants Kruger-Roos in 1997 (coincidentally during the drafting of the NHRA) to prepare a document called *Conservation Strategy Development Guidelines* (Kruger-Roos, 1997) specifically for the historical core. This report highlighted the Council must collaborate with the National Monuments Council to present a proposal for the demarcation of a conservation area in central Stellenbosch and the implementation of protective by-laws for the area. The proposed conservation area comprised three sections, with the historical core encompassing the largest number of significant structures, buildings, and landscapes. According to the report, the conservation of these elements was deemed non-negotiable. In October 1997, the municipal council officially adopted the guidelines. For the first time, the inclusion of the Dennesig suburb in the historic core was based on a comprehensive conservation plan and well-researched information, acknowledging its heritage significance structures (Figure 5).

Local government in South Africa has the legal authority to contribute to the protection of cultural heritage resources through various means, including by-laws, planning instruments, and local policies (Donaldson, 2005; Steenkamp, 2021). The Constitution, together with the NHRA and environmental legislation like the National Environmental Management Act, indicate that local government has a definite role in safeguarding and managing heritage resources (Steenkamp, 2021, p. 3). The demarcation of heritage areas is accounted for in section 31 of the NHRA. It is the responsibility of all municipalities to compile and submit an inventory of heritage resources within their jurisdiction when developing or revising their planning, zoning schemes, or spatial development frameworks (SDFs). Section 34 of the NHRA protects all structures older than 60 years and any demolition or alterations need a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority. After the enactment of the NHRA, Boden (2001, p. 10) raised the following questions "What specific types of conservation do [South African] local planners aim to promote? Should the focus be on preserving individual buildings or safeguarding the remaining intact historic urban areas?" He then claimed that in relatively secluded settlements where capitalist development poses minimal or no threat, the emphasis will be on the broader historic urban areas. Unfortunately, that was not the sole approach adopted by the Stellenbosch Municipality. The NHRA presented an opportune moment for the municipality to declare the Kruger-Roos heritage conservation area. However, due to tumultuous circumstances in the early 2000s, the town had to wait until the late 2010s for this to come to fruition.

During the early 2000s, Stellenbosch's local government underwent significant changes. According to Seethal (2005), the Democratic Alliance (DA), which held political power in Stellenbosch, pursued material success for the middle class, co-opted senior municipal officials, and maintained exclusive enclaves that perpetuated uneven development and socio-spatial differentiation, effectively marginalizing the African National Congress (ANC), nationally, the ruling party since 1994. In October 2002, after the political floor crossing, the ANC-New National Party (NNP) alliance gained a political majority in the Stellenbosch Municipality, displacing the DA. Consequently, the municipality transitioned from a mayor-councillor system to an executive mayor-committee system. As Seethal argues (2005), this change marked a new trajectory for local politics in Stellenbosch, with implications for place-making. In contrast, the ANC sought alliances in opposition to the dominant single vision of the city. It mobilized around social and welfare issues and economic justice, challenging the power of the municipal elite with support from provincial and national leadership (Seethal, 2005). The restructuring of the executive mayoral committee resulted in key divisions being reorganized, effectively cutting off communication between opposition councillors and municipal department heads. This restructuring created uncertainty among senior officials, many of whom held contract appointments, as their contracts could be compromised if they did not align with the dictates of the ANC-NNP alliance (Seethal, 2015, p. 147). Consequently, a planning and policy vacuum emerged, impacting heritage management and planning as well. As a result of these political and administrative changes, the proclamation of the heritage conservation area and other related initiatives faced delays, leading to a period of uncertainty and stagnation in heritage management and planning in Stellenbosch (Donaldson & Morkel, 2012).

Over the subsequent two decades after the adoption of the Kruger-Roos guidelines, the municipality took a fragmented approach to housing developments within the heritage core, particularly those related to student accommodation (Donaldson et al., 2014). In 2012, the Stellenbosch Municipality made updates to the zoning scheme overlay, stipulating that the zoning scheme would permit development within the heritage area overlay zone, now referred to as the urban heritage conservation area (UHCA) of Stellenbosch, on the condition that it respected and preserved the physical aspects of the heritage area (Figure 6). The UHCA provides protection through a special zoning scheme, which requires any modifications or alterations to the built environment to undergo thorough examination by a special committee and obtain approval from the Council. The updated zoning scheme defined heritage conservation as allowing development that harmonized with and made the best use of the aesthetic of the historical built environment (Nicks, 2013). Regrettably, Dennesig has been excluded from the UHCA, despite the fact that the municipality still refers to and applies the Kruger-Roos report as a definitive guideline for heritage practice.

In 2015, the Stellenbosch Municipal Land Use Planning by-law came into effect, replacing the previous Land Use Planning Ordinance (LUPO). This by-law incorporated certain requirements of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) and the Western Cape Land Use Planning Act (LUPA), both of which took effect on 1 December 2015. With the passing of the zoning scheme by-law in 2019, it became evident that Dennesig, despite its historical significance, would be transformed into a suburb primarily dedicated to student accommodation (Buchanan & Donaldson, 2020). By that time, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for 2017–2022 had prioritized redefining the suburb as a densification zone, proposing the construction of six-story apartment blocks for residential living (Stellenbosch Municipality, 2017), which marked the death knell for the historic suburb, signalling its irreversible change.

Figure 6. Heritage conservation area according to the updated zoning scheme 2012
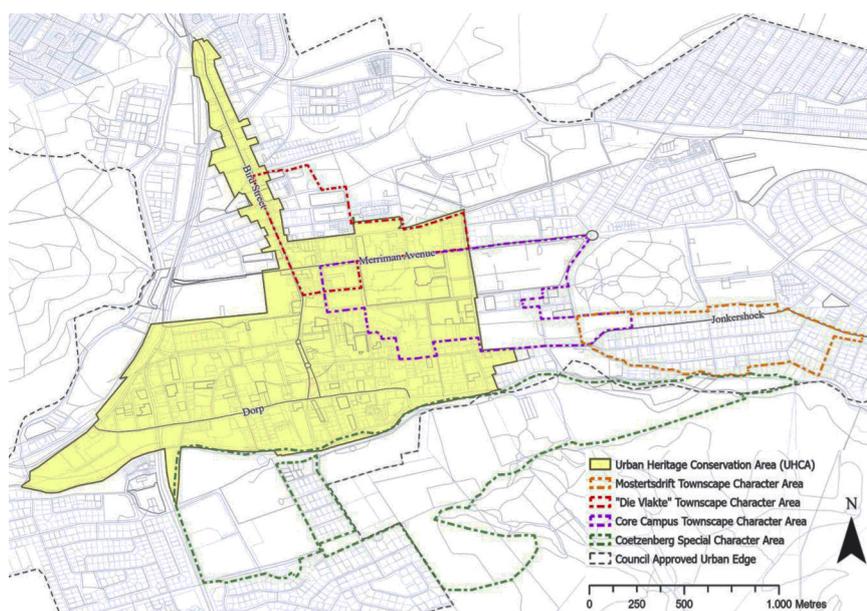
Source: compiled from various sources

The development that triggered the demise of Dennesig?

The preservation of historic townscapes faces a major threat largely attributed to the insensitive planning approvals of alterations within townscapes (Galway & Mceldowney, 2006), resulting in the gradual erosion of the local character, encompassing both physical and functional changes (Barrett, 2023). Baker's (2003) study focused on the issue of local planning authorities and most developers that are not sensitised to and who cannot practically deal with the concept and the realities of preserving intangible heritage in urban contexts. The Dennesig suburb serves as a prime illustration of this insensitive planning approach from a heritage perspective.

Since the 1980s, as the town began to expand, many of the residential properties (called *erven* in South Africa) along the outer boundary of Dennesig, particularly along the main arterial routes, underwent land use changes. These changes involved transforming single residential properties into general residential areas, including the construction of apartment complexes and mixed-use developments. This was achieved through consolidation and subdivision of some of the erven, as indicated by the red area in Figure 9. Unfortunately, due to the absence of heritage area protection (in contrast to the recommendations put forth by Kruger-Roos), Dennesig has experienced a significant surge in applications under NHRA Sections 34 and 38 since the mid-2000s. These applications sought consolidation, rezoning, and demolition of structures older than 60 years to make room for apartment blocks designed to accommodate students (green areas in Figure 7).

Figure 7. Land use change in Dennesig before and after Boschen Park development (in blue)


Source: compiled by Author, data obtained from Cape Farm Mapper

However, it was the application for the consolidation of four erven (around 2005/2006) to develop the Boschen Park complex (consisting of 124 sectional title residential units) that marked the beginning of the downfall of the suburb (Figure 8). Figure 9 presents a contrasting collage of the front elevations of the historic building plans (obtained from the municipality's building plan division) for these four *erven*. Among these plans, three of the houses were deemed worthy of conservation because the Act

protected them due to the 60-year clause. At the time of their demolition, all three structures were largely intact, with only minor layering made over the years.

Figure 8. The Boschen Park development
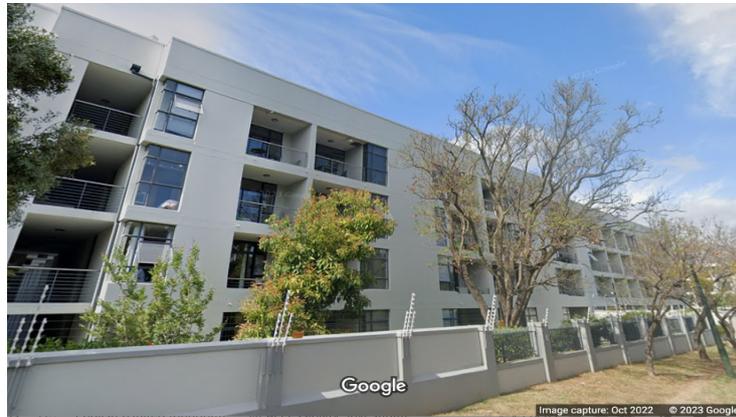
Source: Google Streetview, 2022

Figure 9. Streetscape of demolished houses

Erf 190 (1930) Erf 4290 (1927) Erf 4289 (1967) Erf 192 (1931)

Source: Building plans obtained from Stellenbosch Municipality's building department

The information presented here was gathered by contacting various stakeholders, including former residents, developers, and municipal officials. The developer, who was declared insolvent in 2009, acquired the properties by 2005 and subsequently applied for rezoning, consolidation, and departures in accordance with municipal planning bylaws and the zoning scheme. It is presumed that they also applied to the official provincial heritage authority, Heritage Western Cape (HWC), for a section 34 and 38 application to demolish the three historic houses on erven 4290, 190, and 192. However, no evidence of this application could be found at the municipality or HWC. From a legal, planning, and heritage approval standpoint, the overlapping effects of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act (NBR and BS Act), the Municipal Planning By-Laws/Zoning Schemes, and the National Heritage Resources Act (specifically sections 34 and 38) were relevant. When Sections 34 and 38 are triggered, no work or demolition is permitted until a permit is issued by HWC. When Section 38 is triggered, building plans cannot be approved until Section 38 compliance has been confirmed by HWC, regardless of whether the local authority approved the building work under the NBR and BS Act (Section 4).

Upon receiving the notification of intent to develop (NID), HWC had 14 days, as per section 38(2), to determine whether the applicant needed to submit an impact assessment report, which typically involves consulting with interested and affected parties (I&APs). In good heritage practice, a developer

would submit a heritage statement, prepared by a practicing heritage specialist, along with the NID. In the absence of documentation from HWC and the municipality, it can be assumed that the applicant (the developer) informed HWC of the NID and provided details about the location, nature, and extent of the proposed development, as required by subsection 1. If this was not done (i.e., a permit was not obtained), then the houses were illegally demolished. Generally, it is the applicant's responsibility to describe the heritage significance (or lack thereof), and it is the heritage authority's responsibility to consider significance. HWC had to inform the developer if they believed that heritage resources would be affected by the development. If the heritage authority determined that a heritage resource would be affected by a development listed in Section 38(1), a heritage assessment would likely be required, either as a standalone Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) or as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with a heritage specialist component. However, Boschen Park did not undergo any further HIA or involve heritage practitioners according to available guidelines.

The above scenario highlights a significant weakness in legislation and practice, particularly during the time of this case study when Heritage Officer Meetings (HOMS) conducted by HWC were not accessible online to conservation body watchdogs, and the agendas and minutes were not publicly available. In the past, conservation bodies would only learn about HOMS decisions years later when the developer's Land Use Planning Ordinance application was submitted. This is how many developments were approved without the knowledge of conservation bodies. In this case study, it is assumed that HWC officials determined that there would be no impact on heritage, allowing the developer to proceed without input from any specialist committee or heritage body. If, however, HWC had decided otherwise, the case study would have required consultation with I&APs in accordance with section 38(3)(c).

There are two officially community-registered HWC conservation bodies: the Stellenbosch Interest Group (SIG) and the Stellenbosch Heritage Foundation (as per Section 25 of the NHRA). As no documentation of their involvement could be found from them, it can be assumed that these conservation bodies either did not receive the application, did not comment, or did not object. It should be noted that communication channels between HWC and these two bodies were not as efficient in the mid-2000s as they are today. The municipality did not object either. According to the NHRA, conservation bodies have 30 days to make representations. Since they are voluntary bodies with members reviewing applications outside of regular working hours, meeting deadlines is not always feasible. According to a long-standing member of the SIG, they did object to a subsequent application for an apartment complex development in 2006 (Erven 5957 & 185) and commented: "The apartments on the southern side of Dennesig Street known as Boschenpark were recently approved by the Director of Economic and Facilitation Services with delegated powers. This was a mistake. If the Stellenbosch Interest Group had applied its mind to the application, it would most certainly have opposed the Boschenpark development. This development should therefore in no way be considered to set a precedent" (Stellenbosch Interest Group, 2006 – letter of communication to the municipal manager, 24.11.2006, regarding application for rezoning and consolidation: Erven 5957 & 185, Dennesig Street, Stellenbosch). However, considering the absence of objections, it can be assumed that HWC issued a permit for the demolition of all four houses, but HWC could not provide evidence thereof upon

request. In the worst-case scenario, the developer bypassed the HWC route and obtained permission solely from the municipality, which, although possible, would be an illegal practice.

The approval and subsequent development of Boschen Park paved the way for similar developments to follow (as depicted in Figure 7). In December 2015, the Stellenbosch Municipal Land Use Planning By-Law came into effect, replacing LUPO. By the time the Zoning-Scheme By-Law was enacted in 2019, the fate of Dennesig had already been sealed, aligning with Bandarin's (2011) belief that historic areas not included in a heritage/conservation zone or area are prone to extinction. In fact, the historic houses in Dennesig were considered modest, with only three properties being listed as worthy of conservation in the municipality's 2019 heritage register (one of which, a Grade IIIC property, has since been demolished) – contrary to the inventory of Buchanan and Donaldson (2020).

After facing criticism from the Stellenbosch Ratepayers Association and the Stellenbosch Interest Group (SIG) regarding the haphazard manner in which Dennesig has been developed since the mid-2010s, the municipality implemented a halt on all new developments until the finalization of the Dennesig Neighbourhood Development Guidelines in 2019 (Dennesig Neighbourhood Development Guidelines, 2019). However, this action came too late, and the lesson learned here is that areas not included in a heritage zone or area are susceptible to complete erosion, eventually leading to a state of "placelessness" (after Galway & Mceldowney, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

The paper has highlighted the significance of expanding the understanding of values associated with urban heritage within the heritage urban context and stresses the need to establish strong connections with interdisciplinary fields such as heritage management, geography, and urban planning in this regard.

While provincial and municipal heritage policies acknowledge the involvement of the public through the two approved heritage watchdog community organizations, the participation of other community members is largely overlooked. The reliance on an advertisement in a local newspaper poses a significant risk of missed opportunities for input. It is easy for such advertisements to go unnoticed, resulting in the loss of valuable opportunities for community engagement. An improved form of participation is thus needed for Stellenbosch.

What is clear from the case study is that the current legislation at the national and provincial levels, with some exceptions, fails to adequately promote the integration of heritage management into broader urban management and planning processes. In fact, Steenkamp (2021) asserts that the destruction of cultural heritage resources often goes unpunished, with legal proceedings being rare and successful outcomes even rarer. These arguments emphasize the need for a higher level of integration, particularly at the local level. The study has shown that even with regulations and the classification of areas regarding heritage policy, such regulations can either be ignored or are difficult to enforce which can easily lead to the disappearance of entire neighbourhoods in a short space of time. Ripp and Rodwell (2016, p. 107) succinctly summarize such a condition: "Whereas certain cities possess a

heritage value that has a higher grade of importance in the eyes of heritage professionals, all historic cities – as established multi-generational inhabited places – have a broad set of values in the eyes of their citizens; this range of values is not currently integrated into urban planning policy and practice, to the result that neither urban heritage nor urban planning are in a position to realise their potential in the face of twenty-first century global agendas." Political turmoil in local government coupled with a lack of policy on student housing in Stellenbosch directly contributed to the earmarking of Dennesig as a site for developers to create a studentified space.

M. Atwell's (personal communication, August 5, 2021) assertion that "research-based heritage assessment is one of the most overlooked aspects of heritage management [and that there is a] concerning tendency to evaluate heritage solely based on visual and architectural assessments" applies to the case of Dennesig. Relying solely on subjective judgments about the architectural merits of replacements is insufficient to justify the demolition of legally protected buildings. When it comes to replacing buildings with modest heritage value with a massive structure like Boschen Park, which is claimed to have greater functional and economic value, it inevitably leads to a division between supporters and opponents. This notion of "heritage dissonance" argues that all heritage belongs to someone and, therefore, cannot logically belong to someone else. Unfortunately, in the case of the modest suburb of Dennesig, there was no strong neighborhood association (similar to the documented struggles of a modest historical suburb surviving – Donaldson, 2001; Donaldson & Williams, 2005) to advocate for its protection. This is one of the underlying reasons for its demise.

The municipality and the developer of Boschen Park, along with other developments in the area, justified their actions by claiming a net enhancement (densification – Kruger & Donaldson, 2020) and catering to the needs of a growing student population (Donaldson et al., 2014) through studentification. On the other hand, the paper argues for the absolute harm caused to the heritage values of Dennesig. Both parties are making value-based judgments but assigning different weights to particular values. Unfortunately, when such "positions are maintained, the choice ultimately becomes a political one, or it is left for decision at a public inquiry" (English Heritage, 2015, p. 62). The neoliberal approach to urban development adopted by the Stellenbosch Municipality has effectively sounded the death knell for Dennesig, as they deemed the expansion of student accommodation more important than preserving modest heritage in the area.

Preserving and appreciating modest architectural heritage is important for maintaining a diverse and comprehensive understanding of architectural history. It ensures that not only grand landmarks but also ordinary buildings and structures are recognized and protected as part of our collective heritage. By safeguarding and celebrating modest architectural heritage, communities can maintain a connection to their past, foster a sense of local pride, and promote a more inclusive narrative of architectural history. Unfortunately, this approach was not implemented for Dennesig.

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