

Spatialities of Heritage Geographies in South Africa

Preface to the Thematic Issue of Modern Geográfia

Donaldson, Ronnie¹ – Tésits, Róbert²

The Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences at the University of Pécs, which serves as the foundation for our journal, maintains a longstanding partnership with Stellenbosch University, particularly with its team of dedicated geographers. This collaboration led to a visit from Professor Ronnie Donaldson, our guest editor for this issue, who joined us in May 2023 at our invitation. During his visit, in addition to delivering an insightful lecture on rural gentrification, the seeds of this special issue were sown, providing an exciting opportunity to showcase current research from the Small Town Research Unit of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Stellenbosch University, as well as other esteemed geography departments in South Africa, including Rhodes University, North-West University, and the University of Johannesburg.

Nestled in the heart of South Africa's diverse and culturally vibrant landscape, heritage holds profound significance. It serves as a testament to the enduring narratives, struggles, and triumphs that have shaped the nation and its heritage spaces. There has been a notable scarcity of geographical scholarly work addressing the interwoven themes of heritage, urban conservation and planning, as well as heritage tourism development in South Africa. Preserving urban heritage in this context poses substantial challenges, owing to the ever-evolving nature of cities and the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid. Obstacles such as urban layout, limited political will, implementation complexities, and a challenging socio-economic backdrop further hinder urban heritage conservation efforts in the country.

In this special edition, we present a collection of papers that offer fresh insights into the preservation, significance, and intricacies of heritage geographies in South Africa since the advent of democracy. This special edition comprises six papers, divided into two sections: one focusing on urban heritage practices (contributions by Buchanan, Donaldson, as well as Dlongolo, Irvine and Memela) and the

¹ Professor, Guest Editor, Department of Geography & Environmental Studies, Small Town Research Unit, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University, South Africa, ZA-7600 Stellenbosch, 82 Ryneveld Street, E-mail: rdonaldson@sun.ac.za, +27 21 808 2395, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6710-0220>

² Associate professor, Editor-in-Chief, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, University of Pécs, H-7624, Pécs, Ifjúság str. 6. E-mail: tesitsr@gamma.ttk.pte.hu, Tel: +36 20 336 7611 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9575-3309>

other featuring three papers on heritage tourism and planning (contributions by Rogerson, Drummond and van der Merwe).

The National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 was enacted to establish effective conservation principles in post-apartheid South Africa, and it forms the focal point of the first three papers. Buchanan's paper uncovers the challenges faced by the heritage authorities in the Western Cape province in managing the growing heritage resources in non-metropolitan municipalities, shedding light on the capabilities of local governments. The two subsequent papers delve into case studies of two small cities. In Donaldson's paper, the Dennesig neighborhood in Stellenbosch serves as a case study to explore how planning, urban design, and resource management can unintentionally erode the heritage character of a place, emphasizing the need for a broader perspective when assessing heritage significance, particularly for modest heritage structures. The next case study shifts its focus to Makhandla, examining the interplay between market forces and urban planning, and highlighting the looming threat to heritage conservation. This research unravels the challenges the city is facing, exposing how municipal dysfunction and urban management issues impact the preservation of its rich cultural heritage.

The spotlight then turns to aspects of heritage tourism in the three subsequent papers. Rogerson explores heritage tourism in Johannesburg, with a specific focus on Kliptown, a significant site in the anti-apartheid struggle. The study questions the promised developmental impacts of heritage tourism on local communities, shedding light on the complexities of heritage preservation and tourism development. Drummond's paper, in turn, underscores the importance of promoting colonial heritage to safeguard the country's diverse history and identity, offering insights into its role in local economic development. Lastly, in van der Merwe's paper, battlefield tourism, as a niche within cultural and heritage tourism, is explored through the lens of the contested Battle of Blood River, presented from both Afrikaner and AmaZulu perspectives. It advocates for a balanced approach to sustain and develop battlefield tourism in South Africa.

Each of these papers contributes to the ongoing dialogue surrounding heritage geographies in South Africa. Collectively, they illuminate the challenges, opportunities, and complexities inherent in preserving and comprehending the multifaceted heritage of South Africa.

*Ez a mű a Creative Commons Nevezd meg! – Ne add el! – Ne változtasd! 4.0 nemzetközi licen-
ce-feltételeinek megfelelően felhasználható. (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)*

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

*This open access article may be used under the international license terms of Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)*

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

