

**Framing the field of affordances: space, place and social justice
in education in South Africa**

**Paper prepared for the international seminar on Space, Place and Social
Justice in Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, 13 July 2012**

**Pam Christie
School of Education
University of Cape Town
South Africa**

pam.christie@uct.ac.za

Framing the field of affordances: space, place and social justice in education in South Africa

This paper addresses the relationships between space, place and social justice to provide an analysis of education in South Africa. Two themes form the analytical framework of the paper. The first is the contradictory dynamic of global/local as it plays out in education policy and practice. On the one hand, globalisation is producing homogenising effects on the education policies of nation states, which are increasingly formulated in sight of each other and are increasingly alike. On the other hand there are inequalities of space and place within countries, such that experiences of education are very different depending partly on local conditions. This global/local tension takes a particularly sharp form in South Africa, where inequalities in education are pervasive, in spite of a constitution that enshrines formal equality and a policy regime that conforms to global trends. The tension between homogenising policies at global and state levels, and differentiation of policy enactment at local level, provides the first theme for the framework of this paper.

The second theme in the framework relates to the particular historical geographies of education in South Africa and their continuing effects in the present. Centuries of colonisation laid the groundwork for spatialised relations of power, which were extended and formalised by apartheid into a hybrid sovereignty that tied race to place in structurally unequal ways. These configurations of power and opportunity have proven hard to shift in post-apartheid education. Differentiated patterns of access, provision and performance fall along the lines of historical geography, albeit with blurring forms as race gives way to class in segments of the system. Understanding the continuation of these patterns with a view to shifting them is a major social justice issue for education policy.

The paper aims to develop an analytic framework based on the spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre to address the themes of global/local policy and historical geography in understanding persistent inequalities in South African education. The paper begins with an account of Lefebvre's (1991; 2004) work on the production of space and rhythmanalysis. Lefebvre's concept of social space opens consideration of the different spatial practices of schooling, the representations of schooling in policy and the everyday experiences of schools in different places. Building on this analysis of space, the paper then turns to the broad patterns of South African education and their spatial production. It concludes that a consideration of affordances, understood as the possibilities – material and imagined – that place offers for action may provide a useful point for working for social justice in education.

Fashioning space with Lefebvre

Nigel Thrift argues that the 'spatial turn', which has marked the social sciences and humanities over the past 20 years, may be understood as an aspect of a

broader theoretical move towards grappling with what he terms 'the unremitting materiality of the world where there are no pre-existing objects' (2006:139). The 'things' of the world are, he suggests, 'being continually recast by processes of circulation within and between particular spaces' (ibid). If space is understood as constituted through relationships of continuous and involuntary encounter, this necessarily invites an investigation of the materiality of thinking. For Thrift, this means that 'the whole business of praxis and poesis is wrapped up in the stubborn plainness of things' (2006: 140), and that the 'energy of the sense catching forms of things' requires serious consideration.

Materialist analysis is not new for theorists informed by frameworks such as Marxism and critical realism. Emphasising 'things' alone does not lead to an analysis that foregrounds space, as Thrift is certainly alert to. The spatial may be recruited into other frameworks as an add-on to society and time, without a major conceptual shift. Indeed, the fashionableness of the 'spatial turn' may turn out to mean little more than a new set of metaphors, a new play of language, mapped onto existing work in ways that add few new insights. For spatial theories to add significantly to existing analyses in education, it is necessary to go beyond metaphor to seek different analytical insights and different points for action.

Placing space at the centre of the analysis, this paper draws specifically on the work of Henri Lefebvre. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre's project is to establish a unitary theory that encompasses mental space, physical space and social space, and to explore the notion of social space aside from the abstractions of space that have come to predominate in social analysis. Lefebvre argues that particular notions of physical space ('nature') and mental space (formal abstractions of philosophy and mathematics) have enabled space to be conceived of as 'absolute' in the Euclidian notion, as an empty container to be filled, or as a 'form' to be imposed on physical materiality. These approaches mystify the social activities of space with abstractions that have little to do with the experiences of everyday life.

Lefebvre's project is to analyse space in terms of the social relations embedded in it, rather than the 'things' within it, or space emptied of things. Fragmentation of space into specialist studies (such as geography or architecture) leads to partial representations – 'shards of knowledge' – that may serve to turn attention from the social relations that produce space. Lefebvre views this as an ideological distortion, not unlike commodity fetishism, where 'products' are separated from their conditions of production. In his words:

Knowledge of space wavers between description and dissection. Things in space, or pieces of space, are described. Part-spaces are carved out for inspection from social space as a whole. Thus we are offered a geographical space, an ethnological space, a demographic space, a space peculiar to the information sciences, and so on *ad infinitum*. Elsewhere we hear of pictural, or musical or plastic spaces. ... The result is that all focus is lost as the emphasis shifts either to what exists in space (things considered on their own, in reference to themselves, their past or their names), or else to space emptied, and thus detached from what it

contains: either objects in space or space without objects, a neutral space. (1991: 91)

Instead of fragmented analyses and abstractions of space, Lefebvre posits his notion of space as socially produced, amenable to analysis in Marxist terms of productive forces and social relations. He identifies three realms of activities that make up social space: spatial practices (the perceived space of daily realities and routines), representations of practice (the conceptualized space of architects and planners), and representational practice (the experienced space of everyday life and its images). This triad of perceived-conceived-lived (the practical, the symbolic and the imaginary) is not an abstract model of space or an ideological mediation, but, in his terms, it is 'concrete' (1991: 40) requiring an understanding of space in relation to the practices that produce it.

The generic term 'social space', though apparently singular in form, in fact implies a multiplicity of social spaces and practices. Working against abstractions of space as empty or inert, Lefebvre posts space as an 'encounter, assembly, simultaneity... [of] everything that there is *in space*, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living beings, things, objects, works, signs and symbols.' (1991: 101) Lefebvre envisages a hypercomplexity of intertwined and overlapping practices, of networks superimposed on others, of movements, flows, rhythms, sequences that interrupt and interfere. Social space includes local places as well as multiple movements, 'embracing ... individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flows and waves – some interpenetrating, others in conflict and so on' (1991: 88). In this approach, the local never disappears into regional or national or global spaces, but continues to exist. There is no expectation of homology across scales; instead, spatial practices are polyrhythmic – each following its rhythm which may cut across, interrupt or be interrupted by another in a hypercomplexity which is not simply random.

In foregrounding space, Lefebvre does not underplay the significance of time. Instead, he views time, space and energy as constitutive of social formations. Space provides a synchronic order, time a diachronic order, and energy a 'reality' to social formations (1991: 13). In his triadic dialectic, Lefebvre seeks a theory to explain how societies generate their social space and time – their daily realities of spatial practice, their representations of space, and their experiences and images of everyday life. Lefebvre's unitary approach links an analysis of the forces and relations of production to space and time, to knowledge, and to meaning in the everyday.

Social space consists of webs of relationships that are continuously and actively produced and reproduced in time – relationships of daily routines, representations of these, and the experiences and expressions of them in everyday life. This is set out particularly clearly in *Rhythmanalysis*, where the interplay of linear and cyclical rhythms – polyrhythms, rhythms crossing and interpenetrating each other – produces activities that are simultaneously perceived, conceived and lived. Thus he links large-scale marxist analysis of mode of production with phenomenology, so that, as Schmid points out:

Central to Lefebvre's materialist theory are human beings in their corporeality and sensuousness, with their sensitivity and imagination, their thinking and their ideologies; human beings who enter into relationships with each other through their activity and practice (29).¹

For the purposes of this paper, a Lefebvrian framework offers a number of valuable pointers for analyzing space and education. First, spatial analysis provides an expanded approach to that of 'class-race-gender' in understanding schooling inequalities, which is particularly useful in postcolonial contexts. Secondly, the triad of perceived-conceived-lived space affords a means for exploring the complex of activities through which inequalities are established, endure and change. Thirdly, space-as-encounter provides a frame for exploring the simultaneity of global and local practices as scales that do not necessarily follow the same rhythms. Each of these three points will be explored further in the section that follows.

Schooling and the production of space

Turning to the first of the above points, the persistent inequalities and injustices of schooling experiences and outcomes have troubled sociologists of education for decades. Basil Bernstein's conclusion that 'schools cannot compensate for society' has proven to be an accurate aphorism. Whether through the lens of structuralism or poststructuralism, reproduction/resistance or power/knowledge, there is no shortage of studies illustrating the enduring patterns of inequalities along the lines of social class, race, gender and other forms of social disparity. An analysis based on spatial practices is unlikely, of itself, to achieve different overall conclusions, but it may well enable different strategies for action. This is a cautionary point rather than a cynical one, since the work of achieving social justice in education continues to be ethically pressing. Rather, it is to recognize with Foucault (1989/1996: 443) that there is no completed state of 'liberation' from inequalities. Instead, the task is to strive continuously to achieve 'acceptable forms of existence' and 'practices of freedom' – strategies for action. Social relations of power are inevitable, but their forms are not, and the task is to work for conditions under which 'games of power' are played 'with as little domination as possible' (2000: 298). This requires continually striving to understand the construction of inequalities, possible moments of fracture and possible pressure points for change. Using Lefebvre's terminology, it is to discern the ways in which rhythms of practice may be interrupted and counter or alternative rhythms established.

In terms of the second of the above points, holding the notion of space as central to the production of social formations provides particularly valuable insights into the ways in which inequalities are produced, endure and may be contested. The notion of space as actively produced within social relations of production – or social relations of production actively produced within spatial relations – adds a richness of theorization as well as potential trajectory for counter-action. This analytic approach is particularly useful in postcolonial contexts like South Africa,

¹ See also Lefebvre (2004) particularly at pages 67 and 81.

where colonial conquest produced very specific and place-related forms of domination and exploitation, in schooling as well as other social practices. The appropriation of land by violent conquest, the subjugation of populations and their incorporation into colonial and neo-colonial political economies has been the topic of much theoretical work, and will not be discussed more fully here. Understanding these processes in terms of spatial production brings different insights into the enduring nature of inequalities beyond liberation – patterns of inequality that are all too evident in South African schooling. This is not to collapse all analysis into an abstract notion of space – the very step Lefebvre abjures – but rather to suggest an agenda for empirical investigation of the range of activities that Lefebvre’s triad of spatial practices addresses. It is to this second point that the paper now turns.

In elaborating on the different forms of social space, a Lefebvrian analysis enables more detailed understanding of what space entails. His triad of perceived-conceived-lived provides enables a more fine-grained analysis of the different activities of spatial production. The historical production of spatial inequalities, their mapping onto representations of space, and the everyday experiences of spatial inequalities brings a theoretical coherence across geography, political economy, society and culture in understanding the historical production of enduring social patterns of inequality. So, for example, there are the spatial practices of schooling, including: the daily journey from home to school (and the accessibility of particular schools to particular communities of students and teachers); the specific routines of practice within schools as demarcated places; the materiality of schools as products of historical social relations; the flow of resources; and so on. There are the representations of schooling: the recognizable architecture of schools and its colonial variants; the images of students and teachers and schools represented in policy documents; the planning of schools to fit their purposes and their environments; the differential attention given to centres and margins. Then there are the lived experiences of schools: the texture of everyday life for students, teachers, parents; experiences of influence or lack of influence over the activities and outcomes of schooling; images of ‘school days’ in the memories of those who have attended them; aspirations of schooling as the ‘key to the future’ for young people; and so on. Lefebvre’s triadic approach enables an analysis of the different practices, conceptions and experiences of schooling for different individuals as well as the social structures through which inequalities are expressed.

Thirdly, the notion of space as activity, as encounter, as intertwined and overlapping practices, as simultaneously local places and global flows enables a unitary (but not unified) understanding of the different scales of spatial production. As spatial practices, the activities of schooling are enacted and experienced at the local level in the specific site of each school; they are simultaneously produced in the activities and representations of national policies, which themselves are part of global flows of ideas and images – a global imaginary of education policy, of comparative equivalence as judged by performance on international tests. Each site of practice does not supersede or eliminate the other; sites coexist and collide in complex interplays of encounter. These interplays are amenable to analysis in terms of the particular activities,

representations and experiences that make up the production of space. Through foregrounding the relationships of production, these interplays are visible as spatial practices, representations of space and everyday experiences of space (perceived-conceived-lived space) simultaneously and differently produced at different scales. They may be researched through a rhythmanalysis of everyday life in local places, and, as Castells does, through an analysis of turbulent flows of globalization.

Having sketched a theoretical framework for schooling based on Lefebvre's work, the paper now sets out briefly the application of this approach to schooling in South Africa.

Space and schooling in South Africa

Apartheid is rightly notorious for its racialization of all aspects of the South African social formation.² In terms of the production of space, this may be understood as a racialised political economy of space, and/or the political economy of racialised space. Introduced in 1948 by the Afrikaner Nationalist government, apartheid was in fact the apogee of centuries of violent conquest and segregation from 1652 onwards. It may be understood as a particular moment in the spatial activities of colonialism. South Africa was colonized by Dutch interests and then by the British government, with waves of other European settlers (French, German, Scottish) adding to the 'white' population over decades, and imported Malayan slaves, Indian sugar plantation workers and Chinese indentured mine workers adding to the 'black' population. In the early phase of encounter, Indigenous KhoiSan people were largely decimated and displaced into desert parts of the country, where they remain to this day. White settlers fought a series of bitter frontier wars and other battles with different African tribes who occupied the interior of the country, herding cattle, planting grain and smelting iron. Over time, different settlement patterns were established by war and accommodation between white groups and African tribes who had historical patterns of land occupation. Africans were successively dispossessed of their land and proletarianised, becoming laborers on farms and mines, and later in nascent manufacturing. The last of the wars of conquest was fought in 1905, by which time the British had taken on and defeated the Boers in the South African War (1899-1901), thereby securing their ownership of the country's rich mineral resources.

The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 represented British victory over Boers, but it also represented the formalization of racial and spatial inequalities in the next phase of colonialism. The limited land and franchise rights of Africans were removed, and the 1913 Land Act confirmed the division of land achieved by settler conquest over African inhabitants, enshrining white ownership of 80% of the land. In response to this, the African National Congress was formed in 1912, sending a delegation to negotiate – unsuccessfully – with the King of England. In the ensuing period, segregation was entrenched in the social production of space. 'Job reservation' legislation of the 1920s secured

² This section draws on an extensive literature on South African history; for a summary, see Christie (1991), and in education, the edited collection by Kallaway (1984).

employment for whites at the expense of people of other races, and the ownership of productive forces was securely in the hands of colonisers. Thus, by the time the Afrikaner nationalist party came to power in 1948 with its ideology of apartheid, the groundwork for spatialised relations of power and production was in place, with space already linked to race, and access to opportunities already linked to race and place.

Apartheid legislation extended and reinforced divisions race, firming the link between race and space. Legislation allocated African people to Bantustans (euphemistically referred to as 'homelands') based on and diversifying the allocations of land of the 1913 Land Act, and drastically curtailed black access to land. Movement of black people to urban areas was restricted, and a plethora of legislation controlled the differential entitlements and restrictions of 'population registration groups'. Over the years, the ideology of 'separate but equal' was formalized into a hybrid citizenship, where Africans were classified according to tribal groups and afforded limited rights in designated 'homelands'. In several of these, puppet quasi-'independent' governments were established, laying the foundations for power relations whose legacy of under-provision, inadequacy and corruption remains beyond their formal dismantling. Bantustans were splintered so that powerful resources – land and minerals – were secured in white hands, and the provision of infrastructure mapped patterns of occupation. Networks of transport and communication largely bypassed Bantustans, which, as rural areas, were too over-populated to sustain agriculture. The production of rural marginalization was both meticulously planned and neglectfully enabled by apartheid.

[FIGURE 1 (MAP) ABOUT HERE]

In education, an uneven racial and spatial spread of schools developed, with limited schooling for Africans largely provided by missionaries. Again, apartheid legislation entrenched and extended existing racial and ethnic segregation. Schooling was brought under government control, and mission schools were closed – except for Catholic schools, which did not acquiesce to government demands. At the time of political transition in 1994, there were nineteen different racially-based education departments dispensing an unequal system justified by an ideology of cultural and ethnic difference. There were ten departments for the the 'homelands' and one for Africans in white areas; four provincial departments for white education; separate departments for people classified as 'Indian' and 'Coloured', and a national department that set overall norms and standards. The physical provision of schooling as well as per capita finance for students were racially differentiated, with clear priority given to whites. In the heyday of apartheid, twelve times more was spent on the education of a white child than a black child; this had reduced to four times at apartheid's end in the early 1990s. Spatial and historical patterns of provision – with the poorest provision being for Africans in rural areas on farms or in Bantustans – laid the basis for deep contours of inequality in education that have proven almost impossible to shift in the post-apartheid period.

By the time of liberation in 1994, white children were given more years of schooling in a compulsory system, had well resourced schools, were taught by

better qualified teachers in smaller classes, and had lower failure and repetition rates. In contrast, schooling was not compulsory for black students; schools were inadequate in number and poorly provisioned; many teachers were under- or unqualified; retention rates through the system were low and failure rates were high. In 1996, the first mapping exercise for schooling as a single system showed that 24% of schools had no water within walking distance, 13% had no toilet facilities at all, 69% had no learning materials and 83% had no library facilities. The greatest deprivation was in rural schools; for example in the Northern Province, 49% of schools had no water within walking distance, 79% had no toilets, 95% had no library facilities and 41% needed serious repairs (see Motala, 1996). It is this historical geography of schooling that has proven so difficult to shift in the postcolonial period.

Democratic governments since 1994 have developed a framework of policies to redress historical inequalities and establish a rights-based system education of equal quality for all (see Christie, 2008).³ In doing so, it drew on global exemplars in education and other spheres of governance to fashion a raft of new policies. The Constitution of 1996 enshrines the right to education among other rights, outlaws discrimination, and recognizes eleven official languages. One of the first steps in education policy was to dismantle the racially-based departments and replace them with departments based on new provincial boundaries. Norms and standards for school governance and funding, negotiated conditions for the employment of teachers, and an outcomes-based curriculum were among the changes introduced. Over the decades, provision of schooling has expanded, enrolments have increased to internationally respectable levels, and teacher qualifications have improved overall. Yet changes to administrative structures and practices have had to engage with historical patterns of spatial production and these have shown a stubborn resistance to change. Patterns of performance on tests continue to mirror former apartheid departments, and thus, race, place and rurality. An urban black middle class has gained access to historically white schools, so that race has given way to class privilege for this segment of the population. Even in these schools, however, racial patterns linger, and overall, patterns of performance remain racially skewed. In short, the spatial practices of schooling in their materiality persist for the majority of the population.

A Lefebvrian analysis draws attention to the different forms of production of these spatial practices. For example, in terms of everyday life, the fact that the majority of black students attend historically black schools in the townships and rural areas where they live means that many of their spatial activities have not changed with the change of government. Their marginalization in the production of space has not changed, either in their everyday lives or in their access to government and resources. The government has developed the practice of representing information in terms of provinces, and this masks deeper patterns in the production of spatial inequalities. In education, it masks not only the influence of rurality on provision and achievement, but also the

³ There is an extensive literature on education in post-apartheid South Africa. For summaries, see Chisholm, 2004; *Emerging Voices*, Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Fleisch, 2008; Frempong, Reddy & Kanjee, 2011; Gilmour & Soudien, 2009; Roberts, 2005; Soudien, 2007; van der Berg, 2005, 2007.

influence of historical bureaucracies and lines of power, most specifically in terms of presence or absence of former homeland departments. And it is these patterns in the production of space, I suggest, that form the basis for the experiences of everyday life in schools in different places, and the inequalities that continue.

On the level of governance, a good example of this is the former Cape Province, now divided into the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape and the Northern Cape under the post-apartheid configuration. Education provision and patterns of performance are presented as if produced by the current provincial configuration, with the Western Cape achieving the best results in the country and the Eastern Cape the worst. What is masked in this presentation is that the Western Cape is a small and largely urban province, with a large proportion of former white schools and a small proportion of township and farm schools, many of these former 'Coloured'. It is these conditions that produce the good results that provincial governments claim credit for. In contrast, the Eastern Cape is largely rural and agricultural with important but limited industrial activity. Its Education Department has a different apartheid legacy, with most of its schools from the two former 'independent homelands' of Transkei and Ciskei, and segments of schools from the former white Cape Education department and the former Department of Education and Training (responsible for Africans in 'white areas'). This legacy has had disastrous effects on governance more generally, as well as on schooling. Administratively, the Eastern Cape has collapsed, unable to function across its former divides and deliver services to the population. In contrast again, the Northern Cape is sparsely populated and includes the small numbers of indigenous KhoiSan, who live largely in conditions of poverty. Its Education Department includes a mix of schools from the former white Cape Department, the former homeland of Bophuthatswana and schools formerly classified Coloured and African in townships and on farms. The administration is stable, and the provision of schooling and test scores is better than the Eastern Cape but less good than the Western Cape.

Returning to issues of scale (local, national and global) a Lefebvrian analysis enables different rhythms in the production of space to be analysed without being conflated into a single logic. For example, it is evident that local conditions of schooling follow different rhythms both across and within the different provincial configurations, urban and rural areas, suburban and farm schools. Bureaucracies at provincial and national levels produce different rhythms of practice that are clearly divergent and not 'harmonised'. Global rhythms play out at national and local levels in different ways. The umbrella national policies adopted by the post-apartheid government are colloquially referred to as 'Rolls Royce' policies, borrowed and adapted as they are from global templates. These policies have best suited the conditions in former white schools, while serving the majority of the population very poorly. In international tests such as TIMSS and PIRLS, South Africa has ranked very low, if not at the bottom, and has consequently decided to withdraw to focus on internal improvements (see Kanjee, 2007; Simkins & Paterson, 2005; Smith, 2011). In Annual National Assessments introduced in 2011, the great majority of students perform below grade level in literacy/language and numeracy/mathematics at Grades 3 and 6, with the mode in each case being less than 20% (Department of Basic Education,

2011). South Africa continues to benchmark itself and be measured by global organisations such as UNESCO and the World Bank, conforming as required to the reporting regimes of these and other organisations such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. These practices provide a global rhythm to the production of space in South African education.

At the level of local places, everyday life presents polyrhythms of differentiated responses to the changes introduced after apartheid. Privileged segments of the population – urban middle classes, now racially desegregated – produce privileged schooling spaces that are quite different to the spaces of the majority of students in schools in townships and rural areas. Whereas for some students, schooling provides an almost automatic route to higher education, for others, it offers an almost automatic route to marginalisation. If everyday life in schools is experienced in such vastly different conditions, with predictably unequal outcomes, the question arises: how do different schools and students perceive or imagine the possibilities for shaping their future lives with regard to schooling? Does this interface offer possibilities for intervention in working for greater social justice? It is to this that the concluding section of the paper now turns.

Perceived possibilities for action through education

In understanding how the production of space opens different possibilities for differently positioned students and their schools, a useful starting point is provided by Gibson's concept of affordances.

Writing in the context of social psychology, and specifically on visual perception, Gibson proposed a mutuality of relationship between animals (including humans) and their environments. He wrote:

The '*affordances*' of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill. The verb to *afford* is found in the dictionary, the noun *affordance* is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the environment and the animal. (1979: 127)

The concept of affordances has generated a series of debates in psychology which have little to do with the purposes of this paper. For this reason, while acknowledging the etiology of the concept, the paper refers, instead of '*affordances*', to the '*possibilities for action*', perceived or imagined, that schooling offers students in different places, and/or that students find in schooling. Lefebvre's unitary notion of space mitigates against imagination as simply abstraction, but rather enables the activities of imagination to be grounded in the material production of space, the production of knowledge, and the production of meaning (see Schmid, 2008: 41).

When places are as specific and different as the examples of the three Cape Provinces illustrate, it is clear that schooling does not offer all students the same possibilities for action; nor are students equally placed to perceive or even imagine what possibilities schooling may offer. South African education policies

stress the rights of students and recognize the 'diversity' of contexts and the need for redress, but these are largely abstract policies with very little traction at school and classroom levels. There are a small number of excellent classroom studies, but, with the notable exceptions (such as Jacklin, 2004; Dixon, 2011; and Fataar, 2007), these do not address the production of spatial inequalities.

This paper suggests that the local sites of schools and classrooms need to be considered in relation to the possibilities for action that they afford young people – what they perceive and imagine these possibilities to be. Addressing inequalities at the level of everyday life and the production of possibilities for action through schooling provides one means – among others – for working for more socially just outcomes in local places. The distribution of real and imagined possibilities becomes a nodal point for the sorts of strategies for action against injustices mentioned earlier in this paper.⁴ Investigating these strategies in their specific forms would require research on the everyday production of space in different local sites, where the inevitabilities of inequality need to be reimagined and counter-acted. The power of a Lefebvrian rhythm analysis is that it would enable a study of multiple logics and different scales – unitary but not unified – in framing the field of affordances, understood as the possibilities for action, real and imagined, that schooling offers students in different places.

In conclusion, this paper has explored the theme of space, place and social justice in the context of South Africa. Its task has been to set out a theoretical terrain, using spatial analysis, for further research into the nature of persistent inequalities and how they may be shifted. The approach sketched here enables flows, rhythms and sequences of activities to be explored at global, national and local scales, with a view to understanding the production of educational inequalities and working against them towards greater social justice.

⁴ In considering the significance of perceived or imagined possibilities for action, a number of scholars provide excellent grounding for further exploration of how human beings collectively engage with their futures. These include Mills's (1959) *Sociological Imagination*, Cornelius Castoriadis' (1987) *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, and Arjun Appadurai's (1996) *Modernity at Large*. Appadurai's evocative notion of the 'capacity to aspire' links the imagination to culture in a way that resonates with the approach developed in this paper:

...[it] is in culture that ideas of the future, as much as those about the past, are embedded and nurtured. Thus, in strengthening the capacity to aspire, conceived as a cultural capacity, especially among the poor, the future-oriented logic of development could find a natural ally, and the poor could find the resources required to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty.

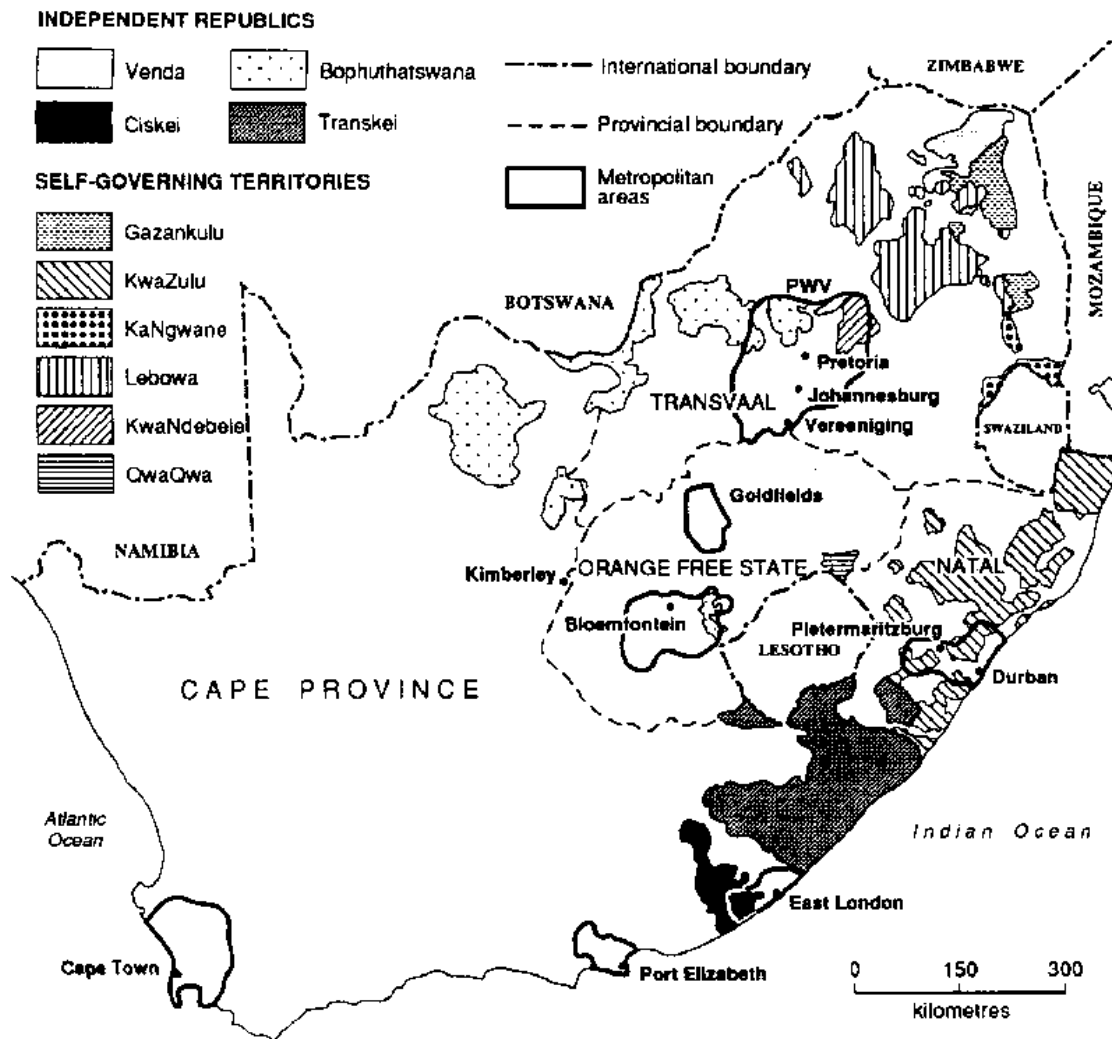


Figure 1: South Africa's Bantustans

<http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/listmaps.php> [accessed 8 June 2012]

References

- Appadurai, A. (1996) *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Appadurai, A. (2004) The capacity to aspire: culture and the terms of recognition. In V. Rao & M. Walton (eds.) *Culture and Public Action*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bernstein, B. (1971) Education cannot compensate for society. In B. R. Cosin, I. R. Dale, G. M. Esland and D. F. Swift (The School and Society Course Team, The Open University) (Eds.), *School and Society: A sociological Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Castoriadis, C. (1987) *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Chisholm, L. (ed) (2004) *Changing class: Education and social change in post-apartheid South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press; London: Zed Press.
- Christie, P. (1991) *The Right to Learn: the struggle for education in South Africa*. Johannesburg: SACHED/Ravan Press.
- Christie, P. (2008) *Opening the doors of learning: Changing schools in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Heinemann.
- Department of Basic Education (2011) *Report on the Annual National Assessments of 2011*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.
- Dixon, K. (2011) *Literacy, power, and the schooled body : learning in time and space*. New York: Routledge 2011
- Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities (2005) Researched for the Nelson Mandela Foundation by the HSRC and EPC. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Fataar, A. (2007) Educational renovation in a South African 'township on the move': a social-spatial analysis. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27: 599-612.
- Fiske, E. B. and Ladd, H. F. (2004) *Elusive Equity: Education Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute; Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Fleisch, B. (2008) *Primary Education in Crisis: Why South African School Children Underachieve in Reading and Mathematics*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Frempong, G., Reddy, V. & Kanjee, A. (2011) Exploring equity and quality education in South Africa using multilevel models. *Compare*, 41(6): 819-835.
- Gibson, J. J. (1979) *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. New Jersey, USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gilmour, D. and Soudien, C. (2009). Learning and equitable access in the Western Cape, South Africa. *Comparative Education*, 45 (2): 281-295.
- Jacklin, H. (2004) *Repetition and difference: A rhythm analysis of pedagogic practice*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Kallaway, P. (1984) *Apartheid and education : the education of black South Africans*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Kanje, A. (2007) Improving learner achievement in schools: Applications of national assessments in South Africa. In S. Buhlungu, J. Daniel, R. Southall and J. Lutchman (eds), *State of the Nation: South Africa 2007*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*. Trans. D. Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, H. (2004) *Rhythmanalysis: space, time and everyday life*. Trans. S. Elden & G. Moore. London: Continuum.
- Mills C.W. (1959) *Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, B. (2005) 'Empty stomachs, empty pockets': poverty and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. In J. Daniel, R. Southall and J. Lutchman (eds) *State of the Nation: South Africa, 2004-05*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

- Schmid, C. (2008) Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space: towards a three-dimensional dialectic. In K. Goonewardena, S. Kipfer, R. Milgram, & C. Schmid (eds) *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*. New York: Routledge. P 29
- Simkins, C. with Paterson, A. (2005) *Learner Performance in South Africa: Social and Economic Determinants of Success in Language and Mathematics*. Pretoria: HSRC Press.
- Smith, M. C. (2011) Which in- and out-of-school factors explain variations in learning across different socio-economic groups? Findings from South Africa. *Comparative Education*, 47(1): 79-102.
- Soudien, C. (2007) The 'A' factor: Coming to terms with the question of legacy in South African education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27 (2): 182-193.
- Thrift, N. (2006) Space. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23(2-3):139-155.
- Van der Berg, S. (2005) How effective are poor schools? Poverty and educational outcomes in South Africa. Paper submitted to the Southern African Consortium for Measuring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) Conference, Paris, September.
- Van der Berg, S. (2007) Apartheid's enduring legacy: Inequalities in education. Revised version of a paper delivered to the Oxford University/University of Stellenbosch conference on The South African Economic Policy under Democracy: A 10-year review, 27-28 October 2005.