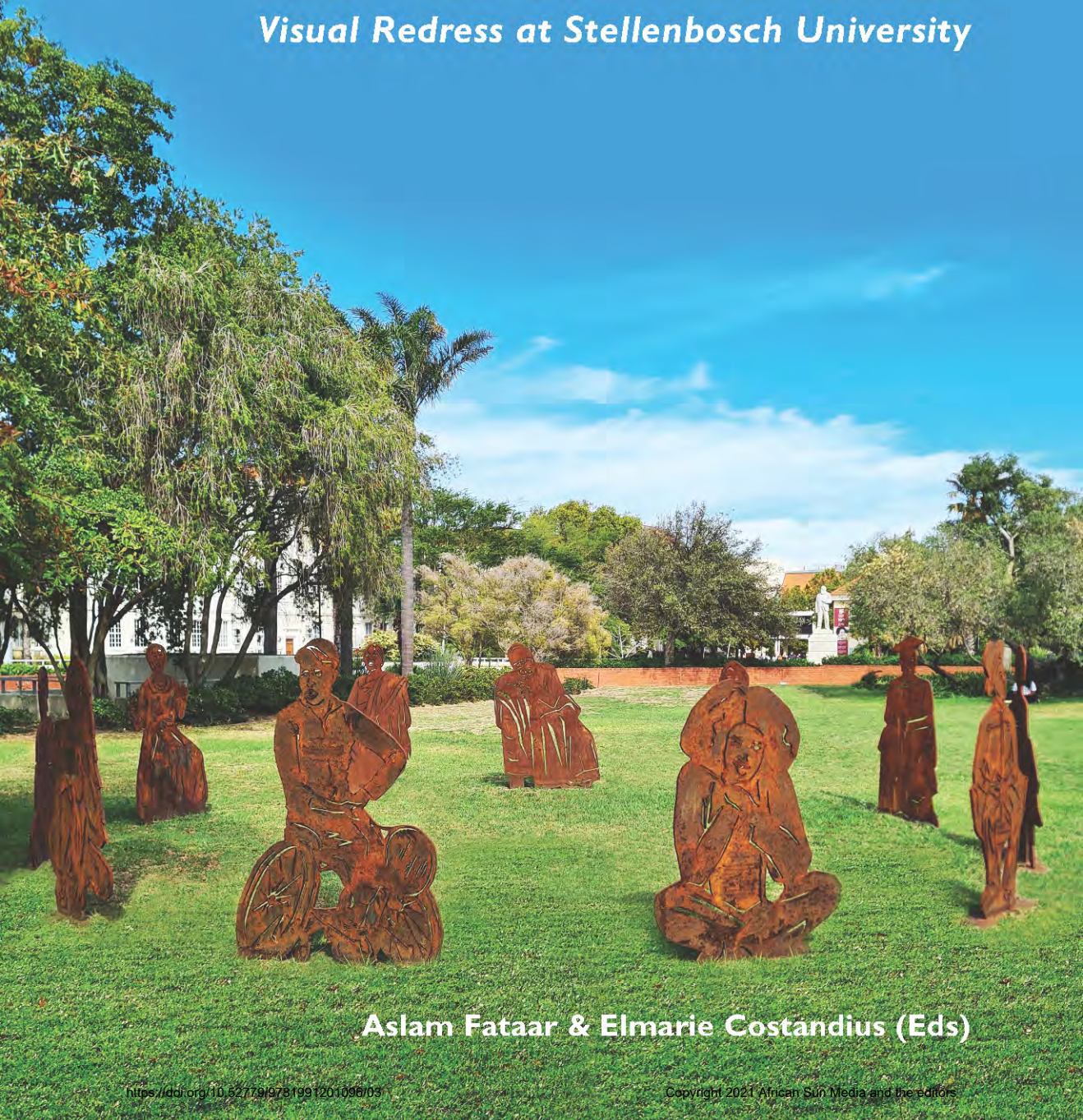


Evoking Transformation

Visual Redress at Stellenbosch University



Aslam Fataar & Elmarie Costandius (Eds)

Chapter 3

*Transforming the Stellenbosch University landscape(s):
The journey of visual redress at Stellenbosch University*

Leslie van Rooi



Introduction

The end of apartheid in South Africa also put an end to the segregated education system that unequally advanced the development of white South Africans over the development of other racial groups.¹ The Higher Education Act of 1997 ushered in a new phase in higher education. It integrated South African universities and advanced a new philosophy that focused on transformation and deliberately supported the reconciliation project prevalent, especially under the presidency of Nelson Mandela (DoE, 1997).

Currently, higher education planning and policy processes distinguish between historically white institutions (HWIs) and historically black institutions (HBIs) (Van Rooi, 2018:225). This distinction helps us to consider the historical realities of our institutions and the current challenges created by our historical inequalities and perpetuated by our current systems. Most South African universities remain on a transformation journey. Although these journeys show similarities, they play out differently at the various institutions.² The distinction between HWIs and HBIs is important for this chapter because the journey of visual redress³ at a HWI such as Stellenbosch University (SU) and the accompanying shift in institutional cultures follow a trajectory that differs from those of HBIs.

SU's transformation journey is currently guided by its Transformation Plan, which focuses on the three pillars of programmes, people and places (SU, 2017a).⁴

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- 1 Due to its historical relevance, this chapter uses the racial categories used under apartheid, namely white, black, coloured and Indian. Unfortunately, these terms are still used in South Africa too often – also in an attempt to redress historical disadvantages.
 - 2 The public higher education sector in South Africa currently consists of 26 universities – 11 general academic universities (learning, teaching and research), 9 comprehensive universities and 6 universities of technology.
 - 3 As indicated in this chapter, this term is used in the context of practice and policy at Stellenbosch University. Other terms are used to describe redress processes at other universities.
 - 4 This plan comes with a set of indicators that includes that of visual redress on institutional and environment-specific levels. These indicators are used in the annual Transformation Report shared with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and with SU institutional structures.

Visual redress is part of the focus on places. However, it is not separate from the two other pillars. Indeed, any redress process should also find expression in teaching and learning as well as research (programmes), and it should enhance and renew the institutional culture (people) (SU, 2020b:2).

Some of the ways in which universities express changing campus cultures and contexts linked to transformation is through changing building and venue names as well as through removing and/or adding public symbols, including statues and art. At SU, this process is guided by the work of two institutional committees, namely (i) the Committee for the Naming of Buildings, Venues and Other Facilities/Premises⁵ and (ii) the Visual Redress Committee.⁶ Both of these committees report to the rectorate, and membership is shared to align and link the work of the committees deliberately.

SU (2020b:3) defines visual redress as follows:

... an attempt to right the wrongs of former and current powers by removing hurtful symbols (e.g. of apartheid), social injustice and misrecognition; and by remedying the harm that has been caused by these visual symbols that should have African centrality as an outcome and that should allow for the inclusion of a variety of expressions, stories, identities and histories.⁷

From 2017 to 2020, SU has changed various names, added a range of campus symbols and other visual objects and also contextualised building names and statues. Initiatives included the following:

- The commissioning of an art installation called *The Circle*⁸

5 This committee is guided by SU's policy for the Naming of Buildings, Venues, Facilities and Other Premises (SU, 2010). The principles of this policy have been integrated into the Visual Redress Policy (SU, 2020b), currently in draft format.

6 This committee is guided by the Visual Redress Policy (SU, 2020b).

7 This definition is part of the current draft Visual Redress Policy (SU, 2020b) and was developed by me and Prof. Elmarie Costandius, both members of the Visual Redress Committee.

8 Photos available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/transformation/visual-redress/initiatives/the-circle>.

- The installation of the SU 2018 Centenary Restitution Statement⁹ as a reminder of where we were and where we are heading
- Welcome messages in 15 languages,¹⁰ including braille, South African Sign Language and San, carved onto benches in public areas on the Rooiplein
- The installation of a map¹¹ of Die Vlakte at the entrance of the Arts and Social Sciences Building, a structure built on the grounds from where families were evicted under the Group Areas Act in the 1960s, linking with work already done in the Arts and Social Sciences Building as well as at the Old Lückhoff School in Banghoek Road.

At the time of writing this chapter, SU was in the middle of another name change process for the former RW Wilcocks Building, which was expected to be concluded by the end of 2020.¹² Various other projects will be rolled out in the coming year (2021) through the work of the Visual Redress Committee as well as various SU environments. These initiatives will be aligned with the SU Transformation Plan, the key performance indicators for transformation for each SU environment and the draft Visual Redress Policy.

As is the case at other universities, SU is continuously learning and adjusting its processes accordingly. An important lesson learned is that visual redress processes should foster an inclusive environment where people meet, talk and share ideas, and where identities and lifestyles are shared to enable people from diverse cultural backgrounds to co-create new ideas and perspectives. Public engagement and heritage-related processes, as well as the concepts addressed, ask for long and deep consultation. As the Stellenbosch campus of SU is an open campus, we are also continuously reminded that conversations should not only occur within the various campus communities, but also include stakeholders in the broader town. This principle is true for visual redress and naming/renaming processes.

9 Photos available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/transformation/visual-redress/initiatives/a-centenary-message>.

10 Photos available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/transformation/visual-redress/initiatives/the-benches>.

11 Photos available at <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/transformation/visual-redress/initiatives/die-vlakte-map>.

12 For the rationale and process behind the renaming of the RW Wilcocks Building, see SU (2020a).

Over the years, SU has learned that the naming/renaming processes and those of visual redress are interlinked, as expressed in the draft Visual Redress Policy (SU, 2020b:2). The policy combines visual redress and naming processes in one document, albeit with two implementation structures, as explained above.

Movements such as Open Stellenbosch, #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, as well as their outcomes, had a direct impact on the formalisation of SU's visual redress processes. Susan Booysen (2016:2–3) states the following about these movements:

The students themselves used the term 'movement' in relation to their multi-campus, cross-province and international action under the banner #FeesMustFall – and several derivatives of Fallism over time, including #RhodesMustFall in early 2015, #RhodesSoWhite, #OpenStellenbosch, #TransformWits, #KingGeorgeMustFall, #TheStatueMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #NationalShutdown, #FeesWillFall, #ANCMustFall, #FeesHaveFallen and #PatriarchyMustFall. The ideologies of feminists, the intersectionality of continued social injustice, black-African consciousness and identity, and dismissal of liberalism and neoliberalism were the core of the combination of more immediate targets for non-negotiables in the mix of targets for Fallism.

This chapter focuses on and shares SU's visual redress journey. Even though visual redress processes have been underway at SU, the chapter argues that the #RhodesMustFall movement acted as a catalyst that led to a clear, deliberate shift that guided the University to better formulate what it understands visual redress to be. It discusses the link between transformation and visual redress at SU and shares the motivation and key drivers behind visual redress at SU. Remarks are made about ongoing processes, and lessons learned are highlighted. The concluding remarks point to the way forward.

SU at the turn of the century and beyond¹³

Since the advent of democracy, SU's ongoing journey of transformation has resulted in several changes that relate to policies, demographics and structures. These changes have primarily been driven by key strategic documents, including the following:

- SU's strategic framework for the turn of the century and beyond¹⁴ (SU, 2000)
- The SU Task Team on a Welcoming Culture at Stellenbosch University (SU, 2013b)
- The current SU placement policy (SU, 2013a)
- The current SU Language Policy (SU, 2016)
- The current SU Admissions Policy (SU, 2017a)
- The current SU Transformation Plan (SU, 2017b).

Because SU was an institution that actively participated in creating and celebrating apartheid ideology and Afrikaner nationalism, it is not surprising that the institution, like other historically Afrikaans universities, celebrated these ideologies in and through its symbols, statues and building names. As Albert Grundlingh (2020:23) points out, it left its mark on the visual culture of the institution.

The documents and policies mentioned above, as well as their strategic foci, point to a clear shift away from an institution steeped in apartheid ideology and Afrikaner nationalism. However, policies must be linked to practices, and SU had to continue to break free from the shackles of its apartheid past. This point was highlighted by the Open Stellenbosch movement during the #FeesMustFall protests. Because of the slow pace of transformation, SU management had to appear before the parliamentary portfolio committee for Higher Education and Training in 2015 and 2017.¹⁵

13 For a brief historical overview of SU, see SU (2018).

14 This document was finalised and approved in 2000 when Prof. Andreas van Wyk was the rector of SU. It can be argued that the document influenced the strategies of the two rectors to follow, namely Prof. Chris Brink and Prof. Russel Botman (Botha, 2007; Grundlingh, Landman & Koopman, 2017).

15 For an overview of the meeting as well as the full presentation from SU, see SU (2017c).

Perhaps the most painful outcry from some members of Open Stellenbosch came through the *Luister*¹⁶ video. Through this video, students from SU and the Elsenburg Agricultural College shared painful allegations of racism as experienced by them on the two campuses as well as in the town of Stellenbosch. The video led to a national conversation on the topics shared in the video and initiated internal and external processes to review the SU institutional culture. It was perhaps the strongest catalyst for what transpired at the meeting between SU and the portfolio committee in 2015. SU's institutional response to the video focused on an assurance that transformation was being prioritised and that the University sympathised with the pain of black students in particular (SU, 2015).

Visual redress became a focused part of transformation following the #FeesMustFall protests. It includes the ongoing process of changing the names of buildings and venues, removing contentious and hurtful symbols and adding new symbols. Although the term 'visual redress' has only been used in a formalised manner since 2016, SU has been undertaking processes that align with the current interpretation of the term since at least the late 1990s. Some of the most notable name changes on campus in the 1990s and thereafter are the HF Verwoerd Building (name changed in 1992), the BJ Vorster Building (2002) and the DF Malan Building (2005)¹⁷ (Cloete, 2018). Busts and other memorial symbols that depicted some of the prime ministers of the apartheid era, most of whom were also chancellors of SU,¹⁸ were also removed.

Despite these developments, the University continued to receive criticism for its apparent slow pace of change and for its apparent non- or semi-participatory processes of visual redress that did not represent deep-rooted institutional change. An important criticism was the view that SU's visual redress processes did not allow for intensive participation of the campus community and the communities around the institution.

16 'Luister' is an Afrikaans word that means 'listen'. For the full video, see Contraband Cape Town (2015).

17 This building is in Merriman Avenue and is currently known as the Mike de Vries Building. It should not be confused with the former DF Malan Centre renamed as the Coetzburg Centre in 2014.

18 For a list of the chancellors, rectors and vice-chancellors between 1918 and 2018, see the SU Transformation Plan (SU, 2017b).

The removal of the Verwoerd plaque

The impact of the #RhodesMustFall, the Open Stellenbosch and the national #FeesMustFall movements led to a more focused and deliberative process of visual redress at SU. This process started with the removal of the Verwoerd plaque¹⁹ on 27 May 2015. Although visual redress at SU did not start at this time, the removal of this plaque in the former HF Verwoerd Building led to a formalised focus on visual redress at the University.

The HF Verwoerd Building was officially renamed the Accounting and Statistics Building in 1992 (Cloete, 2018:45). However, the plaque commemorating the opening and naming of the building in honour of HF Verwoerd was left in the corner of the building close to the main entrance. In 2015, attention was called to this plaque with calls from the Open Stellenbosch movement to have it removed for SU to break free from its apartheid past through accelerating transformation.

The removal of the plaque formed part of an official SU ceremony where, among others, Verwoerd's grandson, Wilhelm Verwoerd, delivered a speech indicating that he hoped that the removal of the plaque would convey a sense of healing (News24, 2015). During the event, members of the Open Stellenbosch movement protested in silence by waving placards of the old South African flag covered with an x. The plaque was replaced by a portrait of the national flag of the Republic of South Africa.

19 For a brief overview of the life and work of HF Verwoerd, see South African History Online (2019).



*Figure 3.1: The Verwoerd plaque in the Accounting and Statistics Building days before its removal
(photo by the author)*



Figure 3.2: Members of Open Stellenbosch protesting during the official ceremony that marked the removal of the Verwoerd plaque in 2015; in the front row is Dr Wilhelm Verwoerd, grandson of the late HF Verwoerd, and Prof. Wim de Villiers, rector of SU (photo supplied by SU)



*Figure 3.3: The national flag covers the area where the Verwoerd plaque once was
(photos by Masa Kekana/EWN)*

From my perspective, the call for the removal of the Verwoerd plaque as well as its subsequent removal was a turning point for visual redress at SU. Not only did it compel SU management to understand that visual redress should be deliberate and formalised, but it also underscored that visual redress processes should incorporate direct student input and engagement. This event²⁰ had a strong impact on my own thinking about visual redress, informed my perspectives and guided me in my current role as an institutional leader of transformation and visual redress at the University.

Jansen (2020:135) reminds us that reason should guide decision-making discourse and processes at universities and that a good crisis should not be wasted. This is exactly what the removal of the Verwoerd plaque allowed at SU. An event that started with anger and high emotion offered the University an opportunity to reflect on its processes. Embedded in the ambit of the #FeesMustFall protests, it guided the University in formalising a platform for processes of visual redress that would enable the deliberate and ongoing change of the visual landscape on and around its campuses.

20 During this period, the author served as the head of the Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development at SU.

#RhodesMustFall

The symbolic removal of the Verwoerd plaque took place on 27 May 2015, just more than a month after the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was removed from the university campus of the University of Cape Town on 9 April 2015.

The #RhodesMustFall movement and later the national #FeesMustFall movement in 2015 and 2016 were catalysts for formalising visual redress at SU. Protests, engagements and conversations linked to the work of Open Stellenbosch during the #FeesMustFall period focused on debates on language (the prominence of Afrikaans at SU), identity, institutional culture and statues and other public symbols on the SU campuses – important markers and influences of institutional culture in the context of a university.

During this period in 2015, students with the support of, among others, Elmarie Costandius, a professor in Visual Arts at SU, started to propose new statues and symbols as well as engagement with some of the most prominent statues and symbols on campus (see Schmahmann, 2020:148–150). These suggestions were later some of the first visual redress initiatives of the first phase of the visual redress project.

As is the case with statues at other universities, in particular HWIs, the Jannie Marais statue on the central Rooiplein of the Stellenbosch campus of SU came under increasing scrutiny. During the height of the #FeesMustFall period in 2015, student groups on various occasions showed discontent towards the statue, including by starting fires around the pedestal of the statue. In return, students from Afriforum Youth attempted to wash the pedestal as a way of signalling their support for the preservation of this statue. On a particular day, as Afriforum students were cleaning the pedestal, other students, including representatives from Open Stellenbosch, threw clay and sand on the pedestal to show their dismay. A tense stand-off arose that luckily did not turn into a serious incident.

The Jannie Marais statue remains contested, and the tension around the statue has to be continuously managed, as is the case with other statues on the SU campuses. Three other prominent statues on the Stellenbosch campus that have also been contextualised as part of the ongoing visual redress process are those of

Danie Craven (in front of the Marais House, Coetzenburg), Johannes du Plessis (the so-called Pink Piet statue) and John Murray (the first professor of the Theological School at SU), the latter two both in front of the Faculty of Theology in Dorp Street.



Figure 3.4: The author with various students, colleagues and workers next to the Jannie Marais statue during a tense stand-off between AfriForum Youth supporters and supporters of the Open Stellenbosch movement (photo owner – Leslie van Rooi)

SU understands the process of visual redress as a continuous and ongoing process without an end date. As indicated in the draft Visual Redress Policy (SU, 2020b:5–6), the process will also continue to be proactively managed, whether through engaging with internal and external stakeholders on visual changes or through prompt visual redress processes, when necessary.

The establishment of a task team for visual redress at SU

When I started in my current role as senior director for Social Impact and Transformation at SU²¹ in 2018, one of my first responsibilities was to join a University task team meant to oversee visual redress. The task team was chaired by Prof. Nico Koopman, Vice-Rector: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel. The task team had the mandate to:

- structurally formalise visual redress through the development of an institutional policy to govern visual redress at the University, and
- guide visual redress processes at SU by, among other things, advising the rectorate on visual redress matters and implementing processes in collaboration with other internal SU environments and stakeholders, e.g. faculties, professional and administrative support services (PASS), the Students' Representative Council, etc.

It was soon realised that the process of visual redress could not be managed on an ad hoc basis through a temporary task team. It needed to be overseen by a full-time committee whose functioning would incorporate the tasks intended for the original task team. Therefore, the Visual Redress Committee was established to oversee the implementation of visual redress at the University.

The committee currently consists of ex officio members from the SU transformation portfolio and various senior managers from faculties and PASS environments. Via its membership, it links directly with Facilities Management as well as the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division. These two SU environments are central for consultation about and implementation of visual redress initiatives across the University. The committee meets at least four times per year and reports to the rectorate.

A 'sister committee' of the visual redress committee is the SU Committee for the Naming of Buildings, Venues and Other Facilities/Premises. This committee is responsible for reactively receiving and processing requests for the naming

21 One of my responsibilities in this position is to lead the visual redress portfolio.

and renaming of buildings, a process guided by SU's policy for the Naming of Buildings, Venues, Facilities and Other Premises (SU, 2010), which was accepted and implemented in 2010. The two committees deliberately have shared members to align their functions and processes. The functions of the two committees will be guided by the draft Visual Redress Policy (SU, 2020b:2–3) as soon as it is approved to facilitate even greater cohesion between these two related and important transformation activities.

Towards a visual redress policy for SU

At the time of finalising this chapter, SU's draft Visual Redress Policy was undergoing final approval processes via the various SU committees and statutory bodies, as required by the approval process of policies at SU. It had already undergone a full round of consultation with, among others, all faculty committees, the SU Institutional Forum and the SU Council. The consultation process also included a full public participation process that lasted 30 days, during which numerous proposals were received. Through this consultation process, the policy wants to signal a deliberate and deep engagement with various internal and external stakeholders.

The draft policy acknowledges its embeddedness in SU's Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework (SU, 2019) as well as the catalytic effect of #FeesMustFall on the eventual formalisation of processes and a policy for visual redress at SU (SU, 2020b:1–2). It calls for active and deliberate integration of visual redress processes with the core functions of SU.

The vision of the Visual Redress Policy and the implementation of the various projects resulting from it are intended to inform teaching and learning at SU. The policy provides impetus for disciplinary and interdisciplinary conversations about visual redress activities on campus concerning the University's curricular as well as its co-curricular offerings. Dialogue in teaching and learning environments about the policy and its implementation is meant to elicit critical awareness about visual redress projects being undertaken on campus and it is foreseen that this will be a continuous process. The Visual Redress Policy is also intended to stimulate research

possibilities and outputs at SU in collaboration with other universities, both local and global.

The Visual Redress Policy links directly with the SU Transformation Plan, specifically the plan's description of 'place' (SU, 2017b:6). Linked to the SU Transformation Plan is the ongoing process of developing key result areas for transformation at SU, including visual redress. As such, the plan will find impetus in the broader, ongoing transformation processes at SU to further stimulate visual redress.

The process of finalising the policy has allowed SU to think about and engage academically with the underlying scholarly aspects that inform visual redress and naming/renaming processes. In this regard, the policy followed an approach to visual redress that is informed by discourse that promotes deep-rooted change. Jansen (2020) warns that the lack of discourse might have a negative impact on social cohesion in the sense that redress processes might lead to nothing but displacement. As Jansen (2020:136) states: "It would become clearer during the course of debates on Afrikaner statues that what was demanded by many black protesters was displacement – the erasure of one set of nationalist symbols (white) and its replacement by another (black)."

The principles of the policy provide an understanding of visual redress at SU in the context of a philosophy that allows for engagement, enrichment, social cohesion and a sense of belonging (SU, 2020b:5–6). Through its policy process, SU reminded itself about the foundations from which it executes visual redress. It affirmed that visual redress processes must consider the complex interaction and impact of local, national and international imperatives. Given the nature of universities and the fact that they consciously strive to make a positive impact on society, universities cannot but engage with societal role players linked to changes about their symbols, statues, building names, etc. This engagement must allow for deep reflection and enhance conversations about the mentioned matters in society at large. These conversations should also have a direct impact on ongoing engagements and decisions on campuses.

Transformation on our University campuses must also allow for engagement with and a direct impact on society at large. Just as the #RhodesMustFall movement had an impact on South African society at large, our redress processes should also show a commitment towards engaging in questions of social cohesion in our communities.²² As the Transformation Plan (SU, 2017b:5–6) puts it:

The theme of “place” refers to social inclusion and changes in both the physical spaces and the foundational institutional culture that facilitate a sense of belonging among students and staff. The theme includes visual redress, welcome culture interventions, and the design and organisation of spaces that enable access to students and staff living with a range of disabilities. The focus on “place” also includes the way in which the visual identity and celebrations of SU are expressed as an institution rooted in Africa.

Given the nature and the positioning of the SU campuses, e.g. the Stellenbosch campus within the town of Stellenbosch, this university cannot but engage with communities in and around its campuses. The impact of SU’s policies and processes, including that of visual redress, is not limited to its campuses. Through its policies and processes, SU should attempt to make a positive impact on society by promoting social cohesion.

Visual redress and higher education in South Africa

Although it has a particular expression at SU, the visual redress journey at this university is not unique. The University of the Free State followed a similar journey, not only in terms of how processes played out, but also in the involvement and role of the media, alumni and other parties in these campus processes (Jansen, 2020:127–128).

My interaction with colleagues at other institutions gave me the sense that other HWIs experienced similar journeys. Deliberate conversation with one another as well as with HBIs must be encouraged to share lessons and experiences and to

²² For an overview of the impact of the #RhodesMustFall movement on statue-linked discourses in South Africa at large as well as the neglect of specifically post-apartheid statues and symbols in South Africa, see Nettleton and Fubah (2020).

engage on the topic. Considering the public role and social impact of universities, these conversations should also not be limited to the higher education environment. University communities should be encouraged to actively participate in national debates on public statues and symbols.

Universities do not only have to grapple with the nuances of art and visual identities on our campuses from the past. They also have to navigate the complexities of identity in terms of new and additional art that forms the backbone of current, sometimes harsh and silencing, conversations on and around campuses. As Schmahmann (2013:12) states:

In addition to shaping concerns with images of the past, the question of transformation underpins increased sensitivity towards instances in which new art, acquired, produced by or shown at universities, may violate the dignity and standing of one or other group. It seems, in fact, that in the post-apartheid period, South African universities have developed a heightened awareness of the visual domain.

Universities will almost certainly continuously be confronted with, on the one hand, the need and, in some instances, the pressure to change campus cultures and identities, and, on the other hand, the complexity and non-neutrality of art, symbols, signs and names prevalent on our campuses. Given the lack of clear guidance and guidelines from the DHET, universities will most likely have to navigate this space through practice, experience, learning, unlearning and continuous engagement among themselves and with the broader South African society.

One of the lessons we can learn from the current Black Lives Matter²³ debates is that struggles linked to identity often flow over to the existence and non-existence of identity markers that include the look and feel of public spaces, museums and campuses. It should therefore be no surprise that, during the height of this movement in 2020, symbols and statues honouring slave traders were defaced and toppled in several countries. As such, the South African debate should also be read and interpreted as fully part of ongoing international debates and processes (Van Rooi, 2020).

23 For an overview of the link between the Black Lives Matter movement and statues, see Grovier (2020).

Closing remarks

Although off to a relatively slow start, the visual redress project at SU is well on its way to impact the visual identity, institutional culture and cultural landscape of this university. Over the next few years, the project will, among others, link with the rebranding processes at SU and will enhance the principles and outcomes of SU's Transformation Plan and its institutional and environmental key result areas. It is foreseen that visual redress at SU will not only take on an institutional character, but will also increasingly be driven by departments, faculties, PASS environments and the student body.

Universities are not islands removed from the various contexts around them. The visual landscape of universities will be influenced by national identity as well as historic and heritage-linked discussions. Conversely, it will also influence debates, policies and practices linked to our nation's cultural heritage.

Debates at our universities can, however, not be carbon copies of those in wider society. It should reflect the critical and contingent nature of spaces where diversity is celebrated and should be influenced by the relevant academic, historical and identity nuances. Debates should engage with the complexity, multi-faceted nature of histories. Schmahmann (2013:16) states in this regard:

Discussion about institutional culture and its prejudices can be very helpful in considering how the visual realm may be affected by and bound up with, for example, imperialist early histories as well as how visual culture might reinforce and perpetuate inequalities of race, gender or class. But while recognising how imagery and objects may be informed by and related to prejudicial practices and histories, it seems important that art and imagery inherited from earlier eras not be interpreted *only* as the unfortunate and embarrassing outcome of unhealthy alliances and allegiances in the past. Images are almost invariably more complicated than such readings suggest.

Given South Africa's continued struggle with its past and current realities, and specifically how it plays out in the context of statues, names and symbols in our towns, cities and public spaces, universities should fervently participate in these critical debates and discussions. This participation should facilitate deep reflection

that allows for an understanding of history, our various outlooks and identities as well as the social compact enshrined in and through the South African Constitution. Should this not be the case, we run the risk of chipping away at some of South Africa's hard-earned democratic gains and freedoms.

As Jansen (2020:137) notes:

It might well be that the indiscriminate assault on the visual imagery of universities in 2015–2016 contributed to changing campus cultures in ways that are likely to be intolerant and anti-educational in relation to engaging difficult subjects. In that sense, far more fell than Cecil John Rhodes alone.

To prevent this from being the case, universities must continuously reflect on and engage with the nature, motivations and underlying rationales for their visual redress processes and outcomes. This is best done within a framework that allows universities to play a meaningful part in enhancing social cohesion in South Africa.

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