

1b- The Legacy Effects of Colonial and Apartheid Imprints on Urban Greening in South Africa: Spaces, Species, and Suitability

Colonialism is a significant legacy across most aspects of urban form, the nature and distribution of public green spaces, and tree species composition in many cities of the Global South. However, the legacy effects of colonialism on urban green infrastructure and the uses thereof have only recently come under scrutiny. Here we collate information from South Africa on urban greening and interpret it through a colonial and apartheid legacy lens in relation to the distribution and types of urban nature found and their resonance with contemporary needs as an African country. The analysis indicates marked inequalities in public green space distribution and quality between neighborhoods designated for different race groups during the colonial and apartheid periods, which continues to be reproduced by the post-colonial (and post-apartheid) state.

Additionally, in the older, former colonial neighborhoods non-native tree species dominate in parks and streets, with most of the species having been introduced during the colonial period. Such colonial introductions have left a burdensome legacy of invasive species that costs billions of Rands annually to keep in check. Lastly, the forms of nature and activities provided in public urban green spaces remains reminiscent of the colonial norm, with little recognition of African worldviews, identity and needs. We conclude in emphasizing the necessity for urban authorities and planners to address these anachronistic legacies through adopting a more inclusive and co-design approach with respect to the extent, location and types of urban nature provided, as well as the types of cultural symbols and activities permitted and promoted.

Charlie M. Shackleton, N. Gwedla, Department of Environmental Science, Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa, <https://www.frontiersin.org/> Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution, **11 January 2021**