Changing the Visual Landscape
Reactions of Students and Staff to Visual Redress Projects at Stellenbosch University

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ABSTRACT
The national #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student protests of 2015–2016 at universities across South Africa foregrounded the need for the transformation, decolonisation, redress and Africanisation of the country's higher education institutions. One of the ways that Stellenbosch University (SU) has endeavoured to address transformation-related challenges linked to symbols and names is with the Visual Redress Project, whose aim is to change the visual landscape of the university's campuses. This paper explores the reactions of students and staff to initiatives carried out thus far by the Visual Redress project on SU's Stellenbosch campus. It attempts to contribute to the discourse around the transformation of higher education in South Africa through a look at how social cohesion and the sharing of stories and identities could be achieved on SU's campus through visual redress. It draws upon and expands on the existing research on visual redress conducted at the University (Fataar & Costandius, 2021; Costandius et al., 2020; Clarke & Costandius, 2019). The paper aims not only to provide insight into SU's transformation efforts but to also use these responses and reactions to potentially inform future transformation imperatives and redress initiatives in particular on this and other campuses locally and globally.

KEYWORDS
transformation; visual redress; decolonisation; production of space

Introduction

The higher education landscape in South Africa changed dramatically in the aftermath of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student protests of 2015–2016 (the #MustFall movements). Curricular change and demographical shifts are continuing as part of deep processes of change initiated through these protests.[1] One of the ways that Stellenbosch University (SU) has endeavoured to address these issues is with the Visual Redress Project, a continuing institutionally embedded initiative that aims to change the visual landscape of the university's campuses.[2] This forms part of a broader focus on transformation, guided by the institution's Transformation Plan, that engages with the institutional culture of SU, a historically white university (HWU), to bring about meaningful change. The overall intent of the ongoing project is to foster "an inclusive environment where people meet, talk, share ideas, and where identities and lifestyles are formed to enable diverse cultures to develop and flourish" (Stellenbosch University, n.d.).

This paper considers how changes to the visual landscape are perceived by those who regularly interact with the space through a look into the reactions of students and staff to a few initiatives undertaken by the Visual Redress project thus far—particularly the installation of several new artworks such as *The Circle* and welcome benches, as well as contextualisation boards and the renaming of buildings. The data were collected through two streams (35 in-person interviews and an online survey of 104 individuals) and interpreted as to their role in the production and decolonisation of space—specifically of SU's Stellenbosch campus. Visual Redress at SU should be seen as one aspect of a deliberate, institutional focus on transformation at this university. As such, the comments, outcomes and influence shared through the feedback should indeed be read in relation to a focus on transformation as it plays out on various levels.

Production and Decolonisation of Public Space

Henry Lefebvre's (1991) theory on the *Production of Space* investigates the way that space is conceived, perceived, and lived ("spatial triad"); it is about the physical and experiential aspects. Spaces both shape and are shaped by individuals because of the social and cultural meanings attributed to them. They can become spaces of inclusion and exclusion, able to privilege certain groups (social, cultural, racial, gender) over others. For Thomas Greider and Lorraine Garkovich (1994, p. 3), spaces are a "reflection of sociocultural symbols and meanings that define what it means to be a human being in a particular culture". Sometimes these symbols and meanings can be normalised into everyday life to an extent that people do not even recognise that they are there (Hall, 1973).

Public spaces—such as SU's campuses—are multimodal and multivocal. Multimodality encompasses the various modes of meaning making within a space: the visual, aural, oral, tangible and intangible symbols. A multimodal approach "emphasizes the social aspects of all communication, and pays special attention to the interplay between different modes of communication (i.e., speech, writing, images, gestures etc.)" (Insulander & Lindstrand, 2008, p. 85). Christopher Stroud and Dmitri Jegels (2014, p. 2) posit that to comprehend a space "an understanding of the situated social dynamics of multivocality in local spaces,

manifest in the contesting lives of multiple publics [is needed]". Multivocality comprises the many different voices and individuals—the multiple publics of students, lecturers, staff, local and international visitors, etc.—interacting with the same place (campus) to create layers of personal and communal meanings within that space.

For Edward Soja (2010, p. 28), spatial justice in public spaces is an "active negotiation of multiple publics, in search of productive ways to build solidarity across difference". How these multiple publics interact with the space and each other—how they use these different modes and voices to create meaning within the space—influences the (in)equality and (in)justice produced and maintained by the public space. He asserts that "[s]pace—like justice—is socially produced, experienced, and contested on constantly shifting social, political, economic, and geographical terrains, which means that justice must be engaged on spatial as well as social terms" (2010, p. 28).

Therefore, spatial justice works alongside social justice to try to effectively combat exclusion and injustice. Nancy Fraser (2007) suggests that social justice rests on the three themes of redistribution, recognition and representation. These themes are used to create "participatory parity" (Fraser, 2008, p. 278), which she explains as the ability for all users of a space to participate as equals so that no one is privileged above another. In the context of SU, this translates to the understanding that communities on and around campuses should be able to benefit from the campus spaces. As such these communities and individuals are entitled to access the campus spaces and to see themselves represented in these spaces.

This creation of "participatory parity" can be facilitated by decolonisation. For Achille Mbembe (2015, 2016), the decolonisation of the university involves (amongst many things) addressing the "economy of symbols" that have normalised racism and segregation, such as statues, artworks, names of buildings and spaces, and other remaining tokens of colonialism. Decolonisation "seeks to challenge the Eurocentric hegemony of power, being and knowledge" (Stellenbosch University, 2021, p. 7) through recentring and placing Africa at the core of knowledge production for and about Africa. This allows for everyone "the possibility to inhabit a space to the extent that one can say, 'This is my home. I am not foreigner. I belong here'. This is not hospitality. It is not charity" (Mbembe, 2016, p. 30).

For South African higher education institutions, the issues of production and decolonisation of space came to a fore in 2015 when a prominent statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the University of Cape Town (UCT) became tinder for the #RhodesMustFall movement that sparked other #MustFall movements around the country—and globe. As Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains, "In decolonial thought Rhodes is a symbol of genocide, enslavement, conquest, colonization, apartheid, material dispossession and author of inequalities haunting South Africa today" (2008, p. 222) and attacking the statue was emblematic of attacking colonialism. Susan Booysen (2016, p. 4) cites student activist Athabile Nonxuba in defining the movements as a call that "everything to do with oppression and conquest of black people by white power must fall and be destroyed". Carolyn Holmes and Melanie Loehwing provide two categories of commemoration for South African public memory: monologic and multiplicative. Monologic aims to "produce icons, or re-presentations of historical figures" particularly with the objective of promoting and legitimating whiteness (Holmes & Loehwing, 2016, p. 1211)—these encompass commemorative sites/statues/symbols created

during colonialism and apartheid (such as the Rhodes statue). Multiplicative, conversely, follows the post-apartheid policy of preserving colonial and apartheid monuments while adding new sites/statues/symbols to "pursue a polyvocal representation of various components of the national community" (Holmes & Loehwing, 2016, p. 1215)—to create spaces that provide a voice for the previously marginalised and promote an inclusive history. However, they argue that #RhodesMustFall movement demonstrated that the multiplicative commemoration does not always work, as UCT had installed many new monuments on campus prior to the protests. Therefore, the economy of symbols—of commemoration—must change and must be a collaborative effort.

Stellenbosch University and the Production and Decolonisation of Space

The history of SU, and the town that it is situated in, is historically closely tied to Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaans language and culture. The history of the university is further linked to that of the apartheid regime—a number of SU alumni played a central role in developing and implementing apartheid.[3] While SU has been making transformative changes on various levels since the late 1990s (van Rooi, 2021), issues regarding the legacy of apartheid in the space and institutional culture of the university, amongst others, came to a head during the 2015–16 #MustFall student protests.[4] These protests (and other subsequent protests) revealed that SU was viewed as exclusive and unwelcoming for some and called for the transformation, decolonisation and Africanisation of the university's space, curriculum and culture. One of the direct outcomes of this unrest was the development of a Transformation Plan (Stellenbosch University, 2017b), which guides several initiatives including the adoption of a new trilingual language policy (English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa).

Another way that SU is attempting to address a facet of these issues is through the Visual Redress Policy. In September 2021, SU formally adopted this policy, the first of its kind in the SA Higher Education space.[5] It brings together visual redress and naming/renaming processes at SU and is embedded within the Transformation Plan (Stellenbosch University, 2017b), which prioritises three pillars: places, programmes and people. This plan situates Visual Redress under the first pillar of "places":

> 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, welcoming 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. (Stellenbosch University, 2017b, pp. 6–7)

This pillar also emphasises the university's commitment to "[r]enew the public semiotics, i.e., the public meaning and symbolism of the physical infrastructure of SU (buildings, signage, statues, pictures etc.) in a resolute, intentional, coordinated way" (Stellenbosch University, 2017b, p. 7).

The Visual Redress Policy allows for the Visual Redress Project, which is focused on the removal or contextualisation of sensitive artwork or symbols, the introduction of new visual symbols with African centrality as an outcome, updating campus signage, the naming and renaming of buildings or other spaces, and other such initiatives. The aim of the project is to create a more inclusive, comfortable and welcoming environment for students, staff and members of various publics both within and outside of the university. Notably, the Visual Redress Project has installed new artworks—for instance, 30 benches inscribed with welcoming messages in South Africa's different languages and dialects and *The Circle* sculpture of eleven women leaders of historical, current and future relevance. Contextualisation boards have been erected all over campus to provide insight about the history of various buildings and the meaning behind artworks and space names.

SU has seen several name changes names for buildings, venues and other spaces since the early 1990s, but the principles of the Visual Redress Policy now steers these changes.[6] These changes are executed both institutionally and from individual environments, which allows for an impact on the teaching and learning environment. As such, the deep consultation and eventual name change and contextualisation of the Adam Small Theatre complex has had an influence on the music and drama genre celebrated in the theatre. And it is intended that the Krotoa name change will have a similar impact on the disciplines of History, Psychology and others housed in the building. In this regard the SU Visual Redress Policy (Stellenbosch University, 2021, p. 2) states:

> The policy provides impetus for disciplinary and interdisciplinary conversations about visual redress activities on campus as regards the University's curricular and 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, this being envisaged as a continuous process.

This indicates that visual redress is not only interested in physically transforming the space, but to also facilitate critical dialogue and awareness about the project and the issues that it is addressing. Creating a more welcoming atmosphere for all—where everyone experiences a sense of belonging—along with providing a safe space to discuss issues together have the potential to assist in providing a more fulfilling and productive space for teaching and learning. This is, of course, an active continual process that must be stimulated and evaluated and that can indeed have relevant and impactful research as well.

Additionally, it is impossible for visual redress to perform efficiently and effectively without deep and meaningful stakeholder and direct community input. Given the nature of SU, which is a town university without gates and borders (here referring particularly to the Stellenbosch campus), it is imperative that research and teaching and learning occurs in partnership with those on and around campus. SU thus acts as a knowledge partner and community engagement (or Social Impact[7] in the context of SU) is defined as a knowledge exchange between university and community. Therefore, "community" in this sense can mean both the "university community" and the "town community". The Visual Redress policy (Stellenbosch University, 2021, p. 3) states:

> An important aspect of visual redress activity is inclusive dialogue and consensus-generating processes at the various sites on campus. These processes emphasise the deliberative participation and collegiality necessary for ensuring that visual redress contributes to a cohesive and inclusive campus culture.

This type of work requires deliberate community engagement in an attempt to redress the injustices of the past between the university and its publics. As such, visual redress cannot take place without deep and meaningful community engagement. Without it, it is impossible to discern the needs of the community and as such a knowledge exchange cannot take place. Visual redress is only impactful in its outcome of redress and transformation if it enjoys the support, involvement and approval of the broader university community and its publics.

It should be noted that, while this paper is specifically about SU, it is not the only higher education institution grappling with its visual landscape. Universities across the country are making concerted efforts to transform their campuses, curriculum and culture. They are also all participating in the removal of statues, addition of new artwork, renaming of buildings and spaces, the revision of symbols and other such activities that foster inclusivity and transformation.

Reactions to the Visual Redress Project

This section presents a selection of the responses collected through two data streams: in-person interviews with 35 participants in early 2022 and an anonymous online survey of 104 participants in mid-2021. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm. This approach, which is used by qualitative researchers to explore how people create and perceive their reality, calls for an analysis of the social construction of data and the recognition that there is a multitude of ways that the realities/narratives produced can be understood, (mis)interpreted or biased (Klein & Meyers, 1999). To this end, and to combat Whiteness (Dyer, 1997; Green et al., 2007; Snyman, 2008), data were collected from participants who represent South Africa's multiple cultural and racial backgrounds (black, coloured, Indian, white). The codes referencing the in-person interviewees are shown in Figure 1.

We note that the table is coded to reference the racial backgrounds of the respondents. We have done so because of the complexity of race in South Africa due to our long history with colonialism and apartheid—and therefore racism, oppression and exclusion for white privilege. In racially coding the data there is the potential to see the influence of colonialism and whiteness within responses. Intriguingly, responses did not fall along racial lines but, rather, opinions were mixed.

BM: black female	CF: coloured female	IF: Indian female	WF: white female
BM: black male	CM: coloured male	IM: Indian male	WM: white male

Figure 1 Table explaining the coding for in-person interviewees.

In-person interview reactions

During the in-person interviews, respondents were asked to provide their reactions on (1) the Visual Redress Project, (2) the changing of building and space names and (3) whether statues and monuments should stay or be removed. A selection of their responses on each question follows along with researcher comments.

Reactions regarding visual redress

As will be noted below, reactions and comments vary, with some showing deep engagement with the project whilst others show a lack of awareness. It is also clear that visual redress at SU cannot be read and interpreted outside of the broader programme and experience of transformation, including the lived experiences of staff and students alike. Some of the comments include:

> I don't even think [it is] necessary because it makes zero sense to actually depict something but not implement it. Because if you want to promote a society where there is inclusion, then you should implement it in practice rather than just posting it out there. Cause you're not doing anything about it but just showing us that "we're trying to be inclusive" but not really in practice. (BF5)

> I am aware of these projects and think it's good, although the university could do more on campus. There are a lot of things that haven't been addressed—the injustices of the past and present. (CF6)

The first response in this section by BF5 (and mentioned by CF6 as well) references an interesting phenomenon of visual redress in that, while visual transformation is occurring on campus, institutional transformation is being implemented at a much slower pace and people are struggling to feel it; resulting in the perception that transformation is being shown but not practised. The Visual Redress Project is symbolic; it is about the redressing of spaces towards inclusivity by recognising that spaces are not neutral and can be perceived as exclusive (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 2010). The response highlights that the visual transformation of SU should be more integrated with other decolonisation processes happening on campus because, if it continues to outpace institutional transformation, visual redress risks becoming a merely symbolic gesture.

> I think it serves a purpose, it's showing that change is happening, and people are being acknowledged and that we are trying to become more connected as a people. I think it's also making students more comfortable, especially people of colour. (CF4)

> I think it's really cool to have sculptures on campus, especially [The Circle]. [It] does make you aware that the university is making an active effort to change the institutional associations. I definitely think the visual redress project is somewhat successful. (WF7)

Conversely, as the two responses above demonstrate, some people indicated that seeing Visual Redress initiatives does reflect that change is happening, people are feeling acknowledged and more comfortable (CF4) and that SU is actively working on transformation (WF7).

> I just personally feel like the finances it takes to sort of redress … it could have gone to more things that were beneficial for students. (BM1)

This response by BM1 reveals the perception that the finances allocated for visual redress could be better spent on students. The counter here is twofold: (1) that the money spent on visual redress *is* for students as it is intended to foster social inclusion and promote a positive impact on teaching and learning and (2) that money has been allocated for student bursaries (the Die Vlakte Bursary was created in 2015 as directly asked for by students).[8]

> It doesn't affect things that happen in class or [my residence]. So, no. (BM4)

> I felt like maybe it's a good initiative if it's coming from the idea of trying to include everyone who is part of the environment. I think it's a good initiative because it makes everyone feel welcome. (BM7)

> I think [visual redress is] good because we always sit by these [benches] with the braille, and I feel like it brings more of an awareness that we are living in a very like multicultural, you know, like world and country. Especially [The Circle], we're always on the grass by [it] and then we read all of them, like, all the women and what they have accomplished and it's really interesting to know about these women and be made aware of it. (CF3)

> I think they are very important. I think there is this very limited idea of the impact of apartheid and focusing on categorizing culture, whereas culture is present in our diversity—we're a diverse country. It's very evident on its impact. I like that it's incorporated in the art sense—that it's visual, you can look at it, you can interact with it. You can value it in that sense. (WF9)

> I think it is good. I mean, I am not particularly affected by it too much, but I think it's like kinda like, even for me it's like a subliminal thing … it does help make it feel more inclusive. I think it's pretty valuable. (WM2)

> I think it makes our campus a little bit more interesting to be in. (IM1)

> I think it contributes to the beauty of the place … I see it this way, if the environment is good then you are automatically in a better mood but if the environment is dirty and if it's not being taken care of … for me my environment must be nice, otherwise it affects me—my mind set. So, it is nice that there are things like this. (WM1)

While some respondents, like BM4, indicated indifference or lack of awareness to visual redress, many respondents do feel some sort of benefit—particularly regarding social inclusion (BM7; CF3; WF9; WM2) and the impact on one's surroundings (IM1; WM1).

Reactions regarding building and space name changes

Similar to some of the comments in the section above, students and staff have differing opinions on names changes and, in particular, how these ongoing changes affect (or do not affect) transformation on the level of lived experiences. As such the responses range between extremes.

> To be honest, I feel it's a bit too late. I've been here for four years now … but I'm glad people are looking into it. Personally, I feel it doesn't affect me cause it's been like that for years but as they say change is needed. In general, I just feel, you can change the name, but the place will still be Stellenbosch. The way the people are here. (CM2)

CM2's response seems indicative of someone who has lost hope that any real transformation will happen. He believes nothing will change with the renaming as the place and people are fixed. This stems from the fact that he feels it is too late; that change should have happened much sooner, but that whiteness is prevailing (Green et al., 2007).

> It means nothing to me, it's just a building … I would understand if they changed the name because it had negative associations … otherwise the names of buildings really mean nothing to me. (BF1)

> I don't even find the purpose of changing the names cause we don't even know, some people don't even know who is Krotoa or what is Krotoa. (BF5)

> The changes of the buildings, I don't agree with that. A lot of my friends because they want like radical change, you know the old apartheid system, but I personally feel it's a part of our country's history, the building's name, a part of the university's history and I think it shouldn't be changed. (CF5)

> I would say no, I don't actually like it. I'm a bit more traditional. That building got that name for a reason in the past … but obviously there are changes of transformation and all of these things and maybe it is offensive for other people. (WM1)

BF1 and BF5 felt unaffected by the changes because neither the old nor new names had any connotations to them. Perhaps this "economy of symbols" (Mbembe, 2016) has become normalised and they now feel immune to them. Both CF5 and WM1 did not agree with the name changes because of tradition and history. Although WM1 did accept that perhaps the name changes were because the old names were offensive (BF1 also conceded this).

> A lot of the buildings and stuff, like I know with the Wilcocks, like the person was part of apartheid and stuff, I think it's a good way to let things like that move out and you get people [in] that have made a positive contribution in society. So, definitely it's a good idea. (CM1)

> I definitely think there is always room for transformation … and something that we can do is changing the names. (WF1)

> With time everything changes … so, I feel to move forward, it's good that names change. The history will always be there. (WF3)

> I think it is necessary because obviously the university is moving forward, students are moving forward, like we are growing and maybe stuff that happened in the past and changes need to happen to move us forward. (WF4)

> It matters if the intent is right … cause we belong here and I think by changing those names you're kinda opening the windows of conversations for talks as well as making people feel included as well. (BM3)

Ultimately, the reactions to building and space name changes here are mostly positive (CM1; WF1; WF3; WF4), with BM3 recognising that these changes were intended to foster belonging, inclusivity and discussions.

Reactions regarding monuments and statues

Perhaps the most emotive responses during and after the mentioned #MustFall protests are those linked to monuments and statues on campuses and in public spaces. This remains the case in the aftermath and in relation to SU's ongoing journey of transformation and is clearly reflected in the reactions as shared below:

> If they don't affect any one in any way, I think they can stay there. Like they don't have a bearing on anyone … you just walk around … and it has no effect on you as a person. (BF5)

> I don't really get why they should move. It's just a statue. It means nothing. (CF6)

> I think they [should stay] they add to the aesthetic of Stellenbosch, which I like— like the old buildings and things. I mean, if they had to change the look that would have an impact on me. (BF2)

Of those who did feel they should stay, two (BF5 and CF6) indicated they were unaffected by their presence. This, again (like for BF1 and BF5 in the section above), could be because a hurtful "economy of symbols" (Mbembe, 2016) has become naturalised for them (Hall, 1973). BF2 also did not want statues to be removed; however, this was because she felt that removal would affect the look and feel of campus and that would then impact her. It should be noted that the "aesthetic of Stellenbosch" is very much colonial, with plenty of Cape Dutch architecture from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

> I think it has to be removed. It's unnecessary, because it's attached to apartheid in some sort of way. A lot of people on our campus, some people I know, don't like these things because it reminds them of certain things. Personally, I don't have experience of that, but I have sympathy for those people cause they get very, emotional, upset, and hurt by the fact that they have to walk past … I mean if it's there, it's there, but if they take it down, it's not going to bother me. (CF5)

CF5 had conflicting thoughts. On one hand she acknowledged that some people were emotional about problematic statues, and they should, therefore, be removed. On the other hand, she personally did not feel bothered by their presence—or potential absence.

> I don't really feel it's my place to decide cause I'm not from Stellenbosch and I'm white and wasn't affected by these historical injustices in the way that people of colour were, so I feel like I don't have the experience to make decisions about these things … I do feel like there is a place for some busts … but others, it's good that they've gone, there is no place for them anymore in a place of learning, no thank you. (WF7)

This initial response is consistent with whiteness (Green et al., 2007), where it is difficult for white people to confront the complexities and pervasiveness of whiteness within culture

because of colonialism (Snyman, 2008; Dyer, 1997). However, the respondent does recognise that some representations are problematic and should be removed.

> I think it's a case-by-case basis because if someone was a good person, their statue should stay there. And, again, with our country's history, there's a very large chance that a statue of an old white man is not a nice person. (WF8)

> I don't think that they necessarily need to be removed unless there is an actual legitimate reason … these people [who are memorialised in sculptures] … took part in a discriminating act and [people now] feel offended that they are there. But I feel like it's still in Stellenbosch … It still gives this genuine idea of where it started. I don't think Stellenbosch, visually has to modernize too much cause there is enough places like that in the world. (IM1)

> I don't know the history of Mr Jan Marais[9] but … I feel like I can assume with the history of South Africa [that] just leaving it there is not really addressing stuff in my opinion. (BM1)

The first two comments above indicate the belief that each statue's merit should be considered individually. WF8 and BM1 recognise that a historic statue of a white man is more than likely problematic on some level. IM1 and BM1's responses also allude to the potential for intervention with sites/statues/symbols and speaks to Holmes and Loehwing's (2016) idea of monologic and multiplicative commemoration. Leaving a complex monologic statue in place (IM1) provides history to a space as it "gives this genuine idea of where it started" but, as BM1 points out, leaving the statue there without contextualising it does not address the issues inherent in the space. Specifically regarding the Jan Marais statue, over the years students have done projects interacting with the statue and a formal contextualisation is in discussion. Yet, attesting to the sensitive and complicated nature of the statue, this process started four years ago and there has not been a consensus. However, other works have been installed in proximity to this statue (such as *The Circle*, welcome benches and other artworks) to provide a multiplicative commemorative space.

Anonymous online survey responses

For this online survey, participants were asked to respond on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to a number of questions regarding their reactions to specific Visual Redress initiatives on campus. At the end, and for the interest of this paper, the survey asked respondents whether they felt that these initiatives have contributed to the teaching and learning environment. This question elicited a 4 or 5 from 42.3% of participants, with 27% providing a neutral response (a score of 3). When asked whether the Visual Redress Project is contributing to creating a more welcoming environment for all, 71.2% of respondents chose 4 or 5 (12.5% chose 3). Further, 65.4% indicated a 4 or 5 when asked to score their overall feelings about the initiatives carried out by Visual Redress Project (23% scored a 3).

Further Discussion

Illustrating the multimodality and multivocality of public space (Insulander & Lindstrand, 2008; Stroud & Jegels, 2014), the interview and survey responses reveal that there is a wide variety of opinions on the topics presented. While there are positive, neutral and negative responses, they are mostly encouragingly. In-person interview reactions to the question regarding the Visual Redress Project show that participants do generally find that the initiatives are positively impacting campus. Comments such as "I am aware of these projects and think it's good" (CF6), "I think they are very important" (WF7), and "it serves a purpose" (CF4) indicate that there is benefit derived from the project. This is bolstered by the online survey data, where respondents reacted positively when asked how they feel about the Visual Redress Project overall and whether they feel it is helping to create a welcoming campus environment.

Providing a welcoming environment is one way to enable social inclusion. As laid out in the Transformation Plan, social inclusion relates to the transformation of "both physical spaces and foundational institutional culture that facilitate a sense of belonging among students and staff" (Stellenbosch University, 2017b, p. 6). With the Visual Redress Project, the university is trying to facilitate the production of a democratised space that prioritises social and spatial justice. It is interested in renewing its economy of symbols (Mbembe 2015, 2016) with African centrality as an outcome. This will allow for public spaces to practise redistribution, recognition and representation (Fraser, 2007). This is redistribution of the feeling of belonging, recognition of past exclusionary practices towards inclusive practices and equal representation in the visual landscape—through new artworks, name changes and contextualisation. The following responses highlight some participants' encouraging feelings around social inclusion and the Visual Redress Project:

> I think it's a good initiative because it makes everyone feel welcome. (BM7)
>
> I think it's also making students more comfortable, especially people of colour. (CF4)
>
> … we belong here and I think by changing those names you're kinda opening the windows of conversations for talks as well as making people feel included as well. (BM3)

These responses reflect Mbembe's (2016) call for spaces to be hospitable to all—for everyone to feel that they are not in some strange and unfriendly place but, rather, at home.

The Visual Redress Policy (Stellenbosch University, 2021, p. 2) directly states: "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 themes of social inclusion and teaching and learning are linked. Social inclusion impacts teaching and learning because, if you are not constantly struggling to fit in and feel comfortable in a space, you can instead focus on teaching and learning. The idea is that a safe space allows you to be better teacher/lecturer and learner/student; 42.3% of participants in the online survey showed

confidence in the ability of visual redress to beneficially impact their teaching and learning environment. Responses such as the following from the in-person interviews also demonstrate this:

> I think it contributes to the beauty of the place … I see it this way, if the environment is good then you are automatically in a better mood but if the environment is dirty and if it's not being taken care of … for me my environment must be nice, otherwise it affects me—my mind set. So, it is nice that there are things like this. (WM1)

> … I think it's like kinda like, even for me it's like a subliminal thing … it does help make it feel more inclusive. I think it's pretty valuable. (WM2)

These comments reflect the "subliminal" ability for space to influence one's feelings and mood. The material space (the statues, name changes, etc.) can affect the experiential space (how people feel about the statues, name changes, etc.). This, then, can affect how a person feels about the university as a whole and, in turn, about how they define themselves and their place in the university (Lefebvre, 1991).

While many respondents to the interviews feel that the Visual Redress Project is impactful and necessary, there were also those who did not believe in the project and its intended impact. This should be understood in relation to sense making around the pace of transformation at SU and a continuing question regarding the nature and intention of transformation at SU. What is also interesting about the data is the divide among respondents regarding name changes and removal of statues. These negative or impartial responses should not be overlooked. There are those who feel that money spent on this project could be better used elsewhere:

> I just personally feel like the finances it takes to sort of redress […] it could have gone to more things that were beneficial for students. (BM1)

Others feel that the initiatives have no bearing on their environment or their emotional wellbeing:

> It doesn't affect things that happen in class or [my residence]. So, no. (BM4)

> It means nothing to me, it's just a building … names of buildings really mean nothing to me. (BF1)

> I don't even find the purpose of changing the names, cause we don't even know, some people don't even know who is Krotoa or what is Krotoa. (BF5)

> I don't really get why they should move. It's just a statue. It means nothing. (CF6)

It is interesting to note that these negative or impartial responses all come from people of colour. These comments could be a result of sustained experiences of inequality and exclusion felt by some in public spaces due to Whiteness (Green et al., 2007). These feelings have the potential to be mitigated through the continued investment of the university towards transformation through visual redress and in finding "productive ways to build solidarity across difference" (Soja, 2010, p. 28).

Conclusion

SU's Transformation Plan explains that it views transformation as systemic. It suggests that transformation of the university is intrinsically linked to transformation through the university and that "all dimensions of university life contribute to the transformation of society" (Stellenbosch University, 2017b, p. 5). This is demonstrated by the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall student protests of 2015–16 informing change in SU culture, and a change in SU culture informing institutional change—i.e., the Visual Redress Project and Policy were direct result of student-led proposals.

Public spaces are not neutral. They are the creation of the multivocality of the multiple publics that interact with them, and of the multimodal ways that these multiple publics use to understand the space—and themselves in relation to the space. SU's Visual Redress Project aims to assist in this evolving understanding of space by endeavouring to provide a decolonised space, where social and spatial justice can be achieved. However, "[t]he making of place is a fraught practice involving the investment of social and affective capital of individuals tied to, identifying themselves with, or moving through a particular locale" (Stroud & Jegels, 2014, p. 2).

As individuals change, the meaning of space also changes, and, therefore, there must be a constant and deliberate renewal of symbols and other visual materials within the university sphere aligned with the principles of the SU Visual Redress Policy (2021). The data provided within this paper demonstrate that this grappling with the understanding of space is necessary and beneficial; that a decolonised space where everyone is equal can help to foster a socially inclusive teaching and learning space. Visual redress is an important facet in this struggle towards transformation.

NOTES

1. See in this regard the recommendations of the 2017 SU Task Team on decolonisation (SU, 2017a).
2. SU has five campuses: Stellenbosch, Tygerberg, Bellville, Saldanha and Worcester. Their names are derived from the area in which they sit.
3. Some of the most notable alumni linked to the nationalist, apartheid government include Hendrik Verwoerd, D. F. Malan and John Vorster. For an overview of the history of SU see http://www0.sun.ac.za/100/en/timeline/1859/
4. The #MustFall student protests took place at universities throughout South Africa. For an overview of the impact of these protests see Booysen, 2016.
5. This policy was circulated in a draft format from 2017 and underwent various stages of public consultation.
6. For a brief introduction on name changes at SU see Van Rooi, 2021. See also Grundlingh et al., 2018, for an overview of the story of SU buildings.
7. For an overview of Social Impact at SU see the SU Social Impact Strategic Plan: https://www.sun.ac.za/si/en-za/Documents/SocialImpactStrategicPlan2017-2022_25Nov.pdf and the Social Impact Knowledge Platform: www.sun.ac.za/si
8. For more information about the Die Vlakte Bursary see: https://www.matiemedia.org/stellenbosch-university-gives-back-descendants-die-vlakte/

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