



Towards redress: The ‘not-yet’ future between harm and repair in Cape Town

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Arts education
South Africa
Testimony
Futures pedagogy
Reparations
Redress

ABSTRACT

ImaginingOtherwise was a participatory arts education initiative engaging peripheralised young people to explore how ‘race’ and space are reproduced in the specific context of the Cape Flats, Cape Town, which like all apartheid cities, was a result of violent dispossession by forced removals. There is a need to attend to local, specific accounts of young people and their capacity to resist the ravages of disposability. I bring together youth studies, futures studies and some insights from ImaginingOtherwise, considering processes of listening and participating in gathering, stories of ‘race’, space and dispossession and how these may lead towards imagining other outcomes. What does ‘imagining otherwise’ enable in the afterlives of injustice? Witnessing and truth-telling alone do not equate to reconciliation and we need something in between. I thus take up Olufémi Táíwò’s discussions of reparations (2021), developing a counter-position that attests to Saidiya Hartman’s concept of ‘redress’ (1997). Emphasising the centrality of redress as a worldmaking, future-oriented mode, I argue that in this local and contextually defined project, collective imagining became a ‘doing’ of just futures in the present, and as such, enabled a rehearsal of possible futures between harm and repair. A redressive orientation to futures is not a chronologically linear journey, but one that moves between temporalities. The article proposes that redress is a grounded and collaborative approach that unfolds outside of formal (legalistic, logistical, monetised or material) reparations. Redress is a worldmaking, future-oriented mode and we need creative and collaborative pedagogies to work through the need to break and ‘un-make’ towards a different future.

1. Contexts of redress in a South African arts education project

1.1. Introduction

Parkwood – the area I come from – is not good enough to come from, and I don’t want my children to experience [that], so I am working hard to come out of the area – gangsterism, teenage pregnancy and drugs. The gangsterism is important because I lose friends on a daily basis ... It shouldn’t be normal: we should fight against it. Art can be used in a way we might want to see the world... you can escape the world you live in. But I think why should it just be art, why can’t it be life as reality? (Interview, M, 18, Parkwood)

In this account of place, a young participant in ImaginingOtherwise reflects on his desire for a different set of possibilities for

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himself and his community. As he introduces Parkwood, his description positions this neighbourhood in the Cape Flats as unchangingly hostile, always already violent. In this article I will take up the need for ‘redress’ offering insights from *ImaginingOtherwise*, a youth-centred arts education project in Cape Town, South Africa.

I take up Black feminist Saidiya Hartman’s formulation of redress as the location of contestation for those who have been impacted by racial violence, trauma and dispossession (1997). Hartman describes how even from within oppressive present circumstances, burdened by the violence of the past, subjugated people imagine alternative futures. Redress invites resistance for those as yet unable to dismantle the hierarchies that inform racist social orders and how they play out as prejudice in everyday life, and as such is an important stage in reparative justice.

Hartman’s perspective sets up a complex relationship between past and future as she warns that the enormity of the ‘breach’ and the scale of what she calls ‘history that hurts’ (1997: 51) must be recognised even as we consolidate practices of activist organising towards the future. Within her argument, such futures are always already configured under racial capitalism. This leads to the central concern in the project that is discussed here, which is that we must resist the ideal of unfettered futures (Slaughter, 2020). This is central to Futures Studies perspectives on ‘open futures’ (Ho et al., 2015; Sools et al., 2022). How we make sense of ourselves is tempered by traces of histories, which must be considered within whatever is imagined in the future, without which we run the risk of forgetting, eliding or trivialising the impacts of state-legislated harms with claims of meritocracy and resilience that individualise ‘failure’. Redress requires that repair is grounded in context and not abstracted, and I go on to show that this is an important phase in reparative futures.

Hartman’s approach is to seek a recuperation of possibility out of the incommensurable pain, suffering and violence of trans-Atlantic slave trade by attending to what ‘imagining otherwise’ might enable in the afterlives of injustice (Sharpe, 2016). This capacity to resist in conditions of interminable dispossession while dreaming freedom (Kelley, 2002) is a fundamental tenet of Black feminism (Nyong’o, 2019; Olufemi, 2022; Omotoso, 2021). As performance studies scholar Catherine Cole puts forward, to contend with afterlives we must consider what came ‘before’ (2020). To bring such a project to the postcolonial, post-apartheid context of South Africa is to contend with history’s ‘distortions’ and ‘truncations’ (Cole, 2020: 5) in the form of loss, through practices of enslavement, colonial land grabs, indentured labour, legislated racism and forced removals alongside losing language which all enter the frame in South Africa’s Western Cape. This violent past necessitates ongoing reckoning with complex concerns of memorialisation (Coombes, 2003), the politics of testimony and trauma (Caruth, 1996; Cole, 2010; Felman & Laub, 2002), setting the ground for the role of creativity and activism (Coombes, 2003; Hutchinson, 2013; author, 2020) in post-apartheid imaginaries. The many approaches contributing to visions of liveable futures (Nyong’o, 2019) must exceed the limitations of discourses that neatly package past harms as ‘over’, and position the future of a fair democratic South Africa as predicated on forgiveness. That discourse was staged by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 1996–1998), renowned for ushering in what is discussed as a ‘peaceful transition’ to democracy after years of apartheid’s autocratic, racist, rule (Cohen, 2001; Cole, 2010, 2020; Hutchinson, 2013; Krog, 1999). It also relies on a particular conception of justice that equates witnessing and truth-telling with reconciliation, thereby emphasising performative processes as reparative. In such a teleological conception, repair is achieved or completed.

Contrary to such a vision, material conditions in the 2020s lag far behind the rhetoric of fair futures imbricated in the narratives of post-apartheid transition. This retains a racially-differentiated dimension (Gilmore, 2002; Satgar, 2019). Despite the early promise of the discourse of a peaceful transition, and the persistence of narratives of fair reckoning that were staged in the TRC, South Africa’s youth continue to face devastating conditions of deprivation across all areas of their life (at school, home, and in relation to future work). The concern is that when young people are peripheralised and repeatedly defined as ‘disposable’ by virtue of state-sanctioned ‘forgetting’, that ‘the future’ becomes impossible to imagine, because the day to day challenges of survival, and the depressive mode of feeling left behind, can lead to complex social concerns, most perniciously, hopelessness. In that sense, there is an urgent need to attend to local, specific accounts of young people and their capacity to resist the ravages of disposability (Giroux, 2009a, 2009b, 2015), which Stan Cohen has also called ‘state denial’ (2001). This is materially relevant in terms of access to resources, quality pedagogies in formal education (Sriprakash, 2022). As I go on to show, there is redress in working class Black youth taking part in informal education that enhance the understanding of learning from producing future workers towards producing future human beings (who can enjoy hobbies, taking pleasure in developing skills and finding fulfilment in creative problem solving). This decouples the present day youth from the sole focus of producing future minimum waged workers that was a feature of apartheid’s engineer Hendrik Verwoerd’s ‘Bantu Education’ (cf. Visagie & Trantraal, 2022).

By setting up the contexts of the study as South African youth in crisis, I contextualise issues in theorising futures –in line with reparative futures approaches – as beyond linear, requiring engagement with repair. I explore youth studies in relation to futures studies, emphasising the need for the reparative redress of injustices that shape young people’s lives, including in education (Sriprakash, 2022: 2) and beyond. I go on to introduce the youth arts education project, *ImaginingOtherwise*, and then move towards building theory from praxis, outlining South Africa’s TRC and the limits of testimony. I then discuss some of the youth imaginaries that emerged in the project through arts workshops and reflections on oral histories. I put into conversation Olùfémí Táíwò’s discussions of reparations (2021), and Saidiya Hartman’s concept of ‘redress’ (1997). Emphasising the centrality of redress as a worldmaking, future-oriented mode, I argue that it is through active participation that redress is enacted in the present. Reparative futures are seen as ‘in rehearsal’ rather than simply hoping that someday repair will happen (Maynard & Simpson, 2022). In the project, collective imagining became a ‘doing’ of the just future in the present, and as such, enabled a rehearsal of possible futures. Redress forges the possibility of repair through present-day actions with a futures focus, reinforcing the centrality of the ‘not-yet’ to reparative pedagogies.

1.1.1. Context: youth in crisis

Writing of the North American context, educationalist Henry Giroux says that ‘[w]hile all youth are now suspect, poor minority

youth have become especially targeted by modes of social regulation, crime control, and disposability that have become the major prisms that now define many of the public institutions and spheres that govern their lives' (Giroux, 2009a: 78). He also characterises the relationship of present to the future by means of the various expectations of how young people are to participate in daily life: as consumers, learners, and future workers, showing that this must be understood within their socio-economic conditions.

'Too many youth within the degraded economic, political, and cultural geography occupy a "dead zone" in which the spectacle of commodification exists side by side with the imposing threat of massive debt, bankruptcy, the prison-industrial complex, and the elimination of basic civil liberties' (2009b: 11–12).

How youth are affected of course plays out differently in different contexts, but their capacity to endure 'dead end' socio-economic conditions in relation to schooling, social mobility, and the inevitability of punishment or surveillance is particular for youngsters in the Cape Flats. To that end, we need local and specific approaches for young people to consider how their futures can be recuperated.

Youth Studies can also position youth as a locus of trouble, with a tendency to rely on subcultures to explain their circumstance. As Cooper, Schwartz & Mahali explore, '[y]outh in the global South are often perceived in 'deficit' terms, associated with poverty, criminality and dependency, representations that lead to repressive policy decisions' (Cooper et al., 2019: 32). This goes alongside assumptions of a 'universal generalisability' about 'youth' (2019: 29). They put forward that '[i]n Southern contexts, moral panics frequently involve youth, obfuscating societal problems and unfairly pinpointing youth as the cause of social troubles' (2019: 33). Across Africa, youth bear the brunt of neoliberalism, and must contend with the 'frightening repercussions of contemporary global financial capitalism' (Ugor & Mawuko-Yevugah, 2015, 1). Citing data from 2020, under the African National Congress (ANC) government, South Africa's youth unemployment was estimated at over 64% (Macrotrends, 2022), signalling those under 24 who are available for, seeking work and who are unable to get jobs. Economists refer to any unemployment rate at over 20% as a 'crisis'. It is clear that deficit discourse and its correlative social problems encircle the young people, rather than springing from their innate characteristics. Cooper et al. explain that in South Africa, 'the 'crime problem', which is largely attributed to young Black men, functions to divert attention away from the lack of material and economic transformation in the post-apartheid period' (2019: 33). This goes alongside Giroux's criticism of the punitive and deficit approach to youth as leading to:

'the undoing of the social bond and importance of shared responsibilities, but also the endless reproduction of much-narrowed registers of character and individual self-reliance as a substitute for any analyses of the politics, ideologies, and mechanisms of power at work in the construction of socially created problems' (Giroux, 2009a: p 2).

This tendency, in public life but also in much sociological literature, plays out in the lack of context for youth and their constraints (leading to the disruption of their sense of the future). In short, youth are configured 'as an enemy to be contained and punished' (Giroux, 2009b: 11) without any recognition of how that constrains their futures. As a result, political education and activist pedagogies have recognised the significance of youth-centred initiatives that engage and encourage young people to rethink how they are to participate in civic life. These critical issues attest to the need for alternatives to a deficit model, and are animated by the sense of youth as potential agents as well as stewards of the future (Cruz et al., 2022; Ugor & Mawuko-Yevugah, 2015). How we 'use the future' is explored as 'futures literacy' which is as yet an emergent field (Miller, 2018: 2). It is an approach to learning about underlying assumptions that forge our 'anticipatory frameworks' for the yet to come (2018: 3), not only in terms of future employment, but across climate, lived environment and social life. As yet, however, FS has not always engaged with Youth Studies outside of curriculum and pedagogy (Dubovicki & Dilica, 2022; Sriprakash, 2022), as outlined by Ho et al. (2015).

1.1.2. Theorising futures: the 'not-yet'

Futures or possibilities studies retains dominant approach that seeks potential markets or emerging economies (Miller, 2018), planning and forecasting (Bendor et al., 2021) or indeed the adoption of new technologies (Da Costa et al., 2008). Beyond the intention to plan, predict and enact wealth-building and acquisition, Futures Studies (FS) has developed across a range of contexts including in activist organising (Brown, 2017) and encouraged youth participation in policy-making (Da Costa et al., 2008; Cruz et al., 2022; Miller, 2018). In terms of its capaciousness across disciplinary approaches, FS has contributed towards methodological innovations in history (Bendor et al., 2021; Jackson et al., 2022), enhancing pedagogy (Dubovicki & Dilica, 2022); and has rehearsed just approaches to environmental collapse and climate crisis (Amsler, 2019).

In all of these realms, the emphasis in epistemological terms is not merely recounting nor analysing concrete phenomena, but in anticipating (Miller, 2018: 2), and enabling what is 'possible' to be articulated and explored without dogmatic adherence to the 'here and now'. It is crucial, as Youth Studies shows, for young people to be involved in collaborative efforts to address their futures. Cooper et al. say 'contexts where youth have had to adapt, hustle and survive in precarious conditions for an extended period of time [...] demonstrate something unique' (2019: 29), adding that this must occur through 'decentering' and 'democratising' the locus of attention towards majority world young people, taking into account their perspectives on 'multi-dimensional contextual constraints' (2019: 29). Critical Youth Studies' contribution to FS centres on material and potential repair for young people to pursue a just, generative sense of what is yet-to-come, not merely to enact futures predefined by older generations.

Futures and how they are told, or narrated have been seen as viable interventions into past injustices in oral history projects (Palmer, 2014). Anticipating the future by facing the past is considered of value, according to Bendor et al.: '[a]s whimsical as such narratives may seem, they can help challenge existing ways of thinking about historical contingency, foreground latent political undercurrents or amplify the voices of historically marginalized groups' (2021: 5). In many of these approaches, 'futures' are not temporally distant but collaborative rehearsals for change, for capacity-building and for generating the confidence to adapt, and as such hold a particular powerful pedagogic imperative (Sriprakash, 2022). While there is value in 'futures literacy' (Miller, 2018) that deepens resilience to crisis, for instance in the skills and attributes that enable considered decision-making in turning points in

economic crashes (Bussey, 2014), this article seeks to contribute to the reparative processes that aim to draw out learnings and implications from past injustices for a better awareness of what a ‘just future’ needs to be, especially for poor and working class communities.

The focus on the ‘not-yet’ is key, with capacity building for a just future as in progress, rather than a destination. In that sense, ‘redress’ is a practice, a stage prior to the societal-level of legislated reparations. To that end, I argue that we need an intentional, bottom-up pedagogy that positions young people from peripheralised communities in agential roles. Firstly, this generates creativity and confidence and secondly, stimulates imagined futures that are fair, just, anti-racist and animated by contextual needs (Bergin & Rupprecht, 2016). Secondly, this collective imagining becomes a ‘doing’ of the just future in the present, and as such, enables a rehearsal of possible futures (Maynard & Simpson, 2022). This idea of ‘rehearsal’ can be critiqued for being fleeting or utopian (Muñoz, 2009) but is also discussed as ‘gesture’ (Amsler, 2019) which minimises the distance between ‘here’ (the present) and ‘there’ (the future, and perhaps also, the past). As the article proceeds, it will become obvious that I am not deploying ‘resilience’, adaptability and change in the commonly understood framework of capitalist accumulation, but in an altogether more communal-minded approach to organising and resisting tendencies towards dispossession).

The choice of terms ‘here’ and ‘there’ suggests a need to guard against assumptions that they configure a simple, linear and mappable spatial-temporal relationship. By attending to place-time and the issues that unfold unpredictably, we can consider complex, contradictory efforts without finding the need to resolve them. That goes alongside declining to instrumentalise or predict that any future could be repaired in the wake of the enormity of loss (Sharpe, 2016). It requires recognition of ecological destruction rooted in colonialism (Amsler, 2019), and must address the traumas of postcolonial subjects within education (Sriprakash, 2022; Sriprakash, Rudolph et al., 2022).

Thus, any formulation of repair must account for the non-linear, complex relational issues that play out in everyday life, revealing harms well beyond simplistic monetary claims for recognition, requiring we address impacts of loss, trauma, stolen lands, lack of trust, and the continued material impacts of generational inequalities. I shall return to the form, which I am discussing as ‘redress’ throughout the article. It is within a political context of ‘disposable futures’ (Evans & Giroux, 2015) that the imperative of collaborative capacity-building in the present can contribute towards different ways of living, being together and imagining the future. This requires a process-based, collaborative and creative approach to generating ‘anticipation for the future’ (discussed in Miller, 2018), and beyond that, a sense of understanding, repetition (or literacy) related to that anticipation. But, it is not merely utopian imaginaries of impossible futures that are needed. As Miller points out ‘[p]eople’s fictions about the later-than-now and the frames they use to invent these imaginary futures are so important for everyday life, so ingrained and so often unremarked, that it is hard to gain the distance needed to observe and analyse what is going on’ (2018: 2). Yet, as the example *ImaginingOtherwise* puts forward, in contexts of extreme inequality and dispossession, in which the very concept of ‘future’ seems to have been stolen or rendered ‘disposable’ (Evans & Giroux, 2015), we must urgently find pedagogies and practices that enable young people to conceive of futures that are not simply more of the same: foreclosed by capitalist ‘success’. As explored in the next section, the article’s key empirical example attends to how young people deploy the potential of FS grounded in what is at stake: the ‘not-yet’ of a more equal, just world. By animating ‘otherwise’, we draw on symbolic power grounded in young people’s own anticipatory imaginaries, which Slaughter calls the critical turn in FS (2020: 10). The analysis below thus offers FS qualitative approaches beyond measuring intended progress narratives or growth futures set out by existing capitalist paradigms, and as such builds on the ethos of Black Feminism and abolition forged in ‘imaginative potential rather than by the constraints of predetermined or delegated outcomes’ (Sriprakash et al., 2020: 3).

1.2. *ImaginingOtherwise*: youth arts education in Cape Town

ImaginingOtherwise was initiated with Cape Town partners Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education, Bottomup School Development (a small non-profit organisation) and researchers from the University of Leeds in Performance Studies and Human Geography, funded by development money disseminated by the UK’s Arts & Humanities Research Council Global Challenges Research Fund (AHRC/ GCRF). Under the auspices of the large network ‘Changing the Story’, teams engaged youth and civil society organisations in post-conflict contexts, many of the projects focused on arts based methods to engage in heritage, memorialisation and articulation of futures. The aim of *ImaginingOtherwise* was to explore youth activism against racialized and spatial injustice as it plays out in South Africa’s paradoxical city of Cape Town, through arts education. Paradoxical, because it is both renowned for its beauty and spectacles of wealth and retains scars from colonial violence and apartheid-era enforced poverty which remain distinctly characterised by racialized dispossession. Running from March 2020, the project sought initially to engage in arts education activities to a) explore the youth’s own consideration of their daily lives, experiences and hopes, and b) to imagine alternative futures, deepening the skills-base for articulation and manifestation of futures that do not entrench oppression and dispossession but require creative collaboration. These ‘future orientations’ were considered to be critical by the lead partner Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education, whose approach to pedagogies demands a focus on alternative futures, hopeful affects and the need for popular political education to bring activists to a position of planning, forecasting and manifesting other worlds. In our collaborative project, we focused specifically on young people 16 – 25 based in the Cape Flats to deploy the arts education methodologies as an approach towards generating the futures literacy that Miller (2018) identifies as crucial.

The intended arts activist pedagogy was curtailed by COVID conditions, but we nonetheless managed to host over 30 arts workshops, two residential camps, with young people producing two public events to share artworks, performances and reflections on their experiences (discussed in Walsh & Sutherland, 2021; Walsh et al, 2020). We later received additional support to follow up with oral history interviews within the young people’s communities (‘Power of Word’ (POW) with a focus on the politics of language in 2022). This was enabled by training in oral histories, having identified themes and issues from their own work, and generating a set of

interests they wanted to know more about from elders in the community. They were interested in asking about forced removals, inequalities in schooling, expectations and the imagined futures of the elders under apartheid conditions.

In terms of socio-economic constraint, the communities we worked in are burdened by ‘unpayable debt’ (Chakravartty & Ferreira da Silva, 2012), which refers to their ongoing subjection to precarity as postcolonial subjects on stolen lands, whose ancestors were enslaved. The paradox of past and present demand new approaches to addressing how young people can hold and make sense of the temporalities of injustice while conceiving of activist potential of arts-based approaches to support futures. The skills and epistemologies of the humanities are needed for a politics that acknowledges ‘temporal and spatial difference’ (Chakravartty & Ferreira da Silva, 2012: 282). To this end, we need methodologies that are about activating young people’s participation through arts pedagogies. This encouraged us to consider how arts based activist education might make an intervention in the area of the Cape Flats.² In all, 35 young people took part between 2020 and 2022, out of whom 18 conducted 40 oral history interviews (in any language) with various people in their communities. Participants were a heterogeneous group based in the Cape Flats, including speakers of Afrikaans, Xhosa, Portuguese, French, Shona and English.³ The project team also conducted regular interviews with the young people about their learning from sustained arts education and how they made sense of the oral histories. This was a means of learning about the past through valuing and attending to how people narrate their own experiences in various forms beyond language. The young people were able to reflect on continuities and differences in daily struggle, as well as learn from the process of listening and participating in gathering, stories of ‘race’, space and dispossession and how these may lead towards imagining other futures.

At this point I should like to point to a methodological decision in this article which is that I have structured it as a meta-reflection on the process and modalities of the project for several reasons. Firstly, as the sole white South African English speaking team member based in the UK, I was exemplary of the metropolitan, elite, distant scholar, unable (due to travel restrictions) to join the participants in person, although I facilitated many of the online workshops. Secondly, during the project, the young people were the interviewees and were able to conduct the research phase and interpretive phase, though were not resourced to conduct a co-authorship process, which has been the model for other project outcomes. I intend not to reinscribe the power dynamics that inevitably structure funded projects, though the implications of resource-scarcity and inevitable time-boundedness of funding limits what is possible to achieve on that score. My choice then is to theorise from the project methods, analysing participants’ reflexive materials with thinking on testimony, trauma and narrative with Táfwò’s (2021) and Hartman’s (1997) philosophy.

I therefore centre on the values that structured the project itself, which is that stories are containers for making sense of histories, experiences, and impacts may include trauma and subjectivity alongside the ‘official’ national reckoning manifest by the state’s process of Truth and Reconciliation. Indeed, as Cole (2010) outlines, the direct presence and hearing of stories is what brings difficult pasts ‘closer’ to witnesses. But it is not a simple matter of listening to, or witnessing painful pasts, as Felman & Laub contend (1992), but the need to learn alongside the power of ‘living voice’ (1992: xix), which can take on more symbolic significance through the arts. As such, what I should like to foreground in this article is the particular richness of arts education and oral histories as methods that expose and produce accounts of the future by way of listening to community members reflect on ‘race’, space and dispossession. I attempt to do so through a theorisation of the processes, themes and observations of the young people’s learning, rather than emphasising the testimony of the elders who were interviewed. I am reflecting futures literacy and the value of interpretive strategies from testimonies that are crucial to the transitional-justice paradigm, discussed further in part 2, which are foundational to any reparative notion that we may ‘change the story’.

2. Part 2

2.1. South Africa’s truth and reconciliation and the limits of testimony

South Africa’s TRC process became a structure for nation-building around a conception of transformative justice: through staging panels with those accused of apartheid atrocities, perpetrators could win amnesty for their crimes if they told the truth. In doing so, the rhetoric goes, the hearings would engender witnessing of testimonies from survivors and victims, and the country’s ‘histories that hurt’ would be laid to rest. Although that process, under leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, coincided with the transition to democracy following the country’s first democratic elections in 1994, the claims of ‘telling’ and ‘witnessing’ had to hold an enormous burden that centuries of racialised violence would be contained, and the mechanisms of apartheid would be dismantled.

It is precisely the ambiguity of the performative TRC hearings as the locus of transitional justice that bears consideration beyond its symbolic power. It has been criticised for attempting to contain the loss and anguish of victims of apartheid atrocities. The limits of testimony are powerfully explored by journalist Antjie Krog who covered the hearings (1999). Scholars subsequently have pointed to the importance of representations and the symbolic order for ‘working through’ traumas in visual cultures and memorialisation (Coombes, 2003); and performance (Cole, 2010; Hutchison, 2013). Racism persists (Satgar, 2019), disparity of access and the

² The Cape Flats is a relatively contained region, designated for ethnically diverse non-Black people of colour during apartheid (Adhikari, 2013). I do not replicate the persistence of racial categorisation here as it is testament to the complex persistence of spatial and economic arrangements of Apartheid, noting, however that ‘race’ and racialisation are hyper-visible across all spheres of life in South Africa. Project partners’ ethos draws on Black Consciousness, and the political usage of the term ‘Black’.

³ The interviews that are cited are in English because these were whole group sessions and participants were communicating across language differences. Though they may have made the choice to be understood, it is worth noting that the dominance of English nonetheless exerts power dynamics, affecting how people participate.

implications for outcomes remains (Seekings, 2014), and those outside of the ruling class have lost faith that relative peace of the transition to democracy correlates with a fair future. We thus need, as Priyamvada Gopal argues, ‘a more demanding relationship to history’ (2016: 25). Taking the TRC as context, and its significance as a modality for listening and witnessing as a starting point, while not being content to assume that it completes the job of reparative justice, leads to my central consideration that we need iterative, repeated opportunities to redress past injustices and their legacies. Yet as Cole suggests, there is no ‘post’ in the post-apartheid era as ‘unresolved pasts tend to return’ (2020: 1). This suggests the need to hold both past and future in the frame.

2.2. Mapping just futures: youth imaginaries

So, on my map I spoke about the Zimbabwe and the border where I came from and I pinpoint things in Cape Town. I don’t really know Cape Town that much but from what I see, I feel like there is still division between Gugulethu and the Cape Flats. I still feel like apartheid is still happening here. I also talk about the world, war, planet change, global warming and how politicians use the community to gain money but never give back. I spoke about my street, where I live in Ottery. How I walk from home to school but sometimes it is not safe, because I have to walk through the flats. I spoke about Zimbabwe about how it had huge impact on our lives; the things that happened and how it all affected us to find ourselves in this place. (Interview, F, 19, Ottery)

In early workshops, young people worked with Dr Alexandra Sutherland and colleagues from Tshisimani to explore what a just future neighbourhood would need to include. Young people worked on creative mapping activities, one of which included figuring the sites and affordances of the places they felt need to be available. Some of the mapping was literal, representing easy access to safe schooling, fresh fruit and vegetables available to the community, and arts spaces as well as parks for children and young people (see [Image 1](#)). Others imagined sufficient homes available to community members in need – a form of social housing that is not currently accessible in urban areas, despite the promise of Reconstruction and Development (RDP) homes by the ANC government in 1994 (see [Image 2](#)). What was common to many of the maps was the possibility afforded by local access to neighbourhood amenities: schools and childcare close by, workplaces that are local rather than miles away, and a sense of local activities that would keep young people occupied (sports, arts and leisure) – an alternative to the current open spaces and lack of opportunities that drives peers to drugs and crime (Chetty, 2015). Artist facilitator Maggie Fernando interpreted some of the comments she had heard from the participants: “Being a young person is extremely challenging in the Cape flats [...] There’s a shortage of recreational facilities, and this can mean that young people feel there are no safe spaces for learning and creativity”. She explains “the Cape Flats has a high rate of unemployment, and there is overcrowding due to the cost of living” (Interview, F, 28, Parkwood). Maggie mentions that “many of the young people come from a strict home background with a social context that includes teen pregnancy, school drop outs, alcohol abuse and peer pressure that always bring about inner conflict”. She says this results in “looking for a sense of belonging” (Interview, F, 28, Parkwood).

Other imaginaries allowed for the speculative and utopian potential of personal safety to be figured in a non-carceral alternative to policing. One of the maps included a dragon guarding the site. The dragon would protect civilians from the present-day harms of drug dealers and concomitant criminal activity (see [Image 3](#)).

Issues they raised relate to basic infrastructure for safe schooling, and beyond that to how they become conscientised to their differential access to dignity at school by comparison to well-resourced schools in formerly white areas. Despite no longer legislated as ‘separate development’, there is still a marked differential access to resources according to areas designated for the minority white population under apartheid. Presently, the state electricity provider ESKOM uses load shedding (switching off access to the power grid) to try and cope with the inadequate infrastructure because ‘separate development’ in logistical terms means only formerly white areas were calculated for energy, roads, and access to services. The participants posed a number of questions as they discussed each other’s maps, with observations about the state failure to service its poor and working class, going on to ask, ‘what might it be like to avoid open fields, and not having to navigate drug dealers and known gang areas?’ ‘What might learning be like without armed security at the gate?’; ‘What if we did not have to struggle to find place to study as we share rooms and have to look after siblings?’.

Several of the participants spoke about issues of racial segregation and the recognition that this affects their sense of what is possible:



Image 1. Tauriq’s map.



Image 2. Edina and Talent's Social Housing (Pics: Tshisimani).



Image 3. Imaan's dragon guarding the neighbourhood (Pic: Tshisimani).

We spoke about our country and our city because it is interconnected. I am proud to call Cape Town mine but it cannot be because I do not completely know it, but if I try to get to know it or understand it. It feels like everything is against me. So, there are certain things that limit me for example where I live, I wouldn't be able to come to this place [a wealthy beachfront suburb] to say or do something (Interview, F, 18, Parkwood).

Others reflected explicitly on political participation and their disillusionment about representative democracy when poor and marginalised communities continue to face extractivism of racial capitalism.

The reason why Africa is in the state that it is, is because of leaders that aren't for their country and they benefit for themselves. Leaders are worried about how they will sleep tonight and the benefits they can access from whatever the country has. People in Africa are in poverty and that's the reality. People think Africa is a [poor] country, there are lots of memes and jokes about Africa, don't have education and don't have all the things we should have; and yet we provide many of our things to the rest of the world (Interview, M, 21, Mitchell's Plain).

The hopelessness was not consistent, however, with some of the participants activated towards a different future, with one stating 'I want to be a person that drives change and speaks out against injustices across Africa' (Tshisimani, 2021). The ImaginingOtherwise arts activist experience encouraged considerations of how individuals could contribute to change in the future.

2.3. 'Not-yet': youth arts-based approaches & oral histories findings

In the interviews, community members' memories of past atrocities, including forced removals were counterbalanced by descriptions of their tight knit communities, and how families forged social safety nets. In a pedagogic mode, several of the interviewees aimed to remind the young interviewers of the power and resistance of young people in the past. Some of the examples they used signalled the virtue of young people generating opportunities outside of formal structures, such as self-organised sports, activist organising and youth movements that resisted asymmetrical access to resources.

Some of the complexities noted by the participants were the sense that people feel stuck in a present characterised by insecurity (precarity and lack of safety). In some of the interviews, that resulted in complex (misplaced) nostalgia for what was narrated as a certitude of apartheid times, for instance in claims about 'the youth' having lost respect for law and order (a perennial cementing of

'youth' as a locus of trouble, as discussed by Giroux, 2000, 2009a, 2009b, 2015). Hartman describes this as a 'paternalistic' relationship (1997: 52) that naturalizes the power dynamics between 'master' and 'slave'. Several elders commented on a perceived lack of corruption prior to 1994, even though people were subjugated under the law, which at the highest levels legislated differential status and rendered some less human than others. In the comparative distance of some decades, these conceptualisations are narrated as ever more violent and distressing in the present, with a sense that whatever was unjust and unfair in the past is at least recognisable and explicable as racist. By contrast, the lack of 'progress' or recognition in the present is unthinkable, wounding, and entrenches a politics of disposability. In the interviews with elders, there was some reflection that racial injustice persists and is enacted in structural invisibility, particularly in the peripheralised communities of the Cape Flats. They reflect that economic injustice in the present is characterised by precarious and exploitative work conditions, high unemployment and lack of job opportunities.

There is a strong sense that in some of these interviewees' imaginaries, a fair future has a strangely mirrored relationship with past socio-cultural norms while neglecting the implications of political marginalisation that necessitated stronger social ties. Many advocated for a return to faith as a disciplinary system and patriarchal structures of access to work and capital to provide for one's family. In several of the interviews, the 'not-yet' futures remain entrenched in racial capitalism, exposing a complexity that is worth recognising. Social mobility, notions of straightforward success in school and capacity to resist the difficulties faced in the present continue to bear the traces of romanticised, idealised norms which nonetheless uphold hegemonic social stratification – for instance, there was little critique of exploitative and unfair labour conditions, merely concern at little access to work. This normative logic attaches to neoliberalism's character of individualism, somehow resisting the recognition that wider systemic issues are what continue to enable political leaders to forget – and to make disposable – certain areas and groups of people. The relevance of the 'not-yet' as a locus for imagining alternative futures is what is significant here, as it becomes a space for negotiating contested worldviews.

Such persistence of the past, or what Cole calls 'the afterlives of injustice' (2020) is why we need creative and collaborative pedagogies to work through the need to break and 'unmake' towards a different future (Omotoso, 2021). That said, by undertaking the processes of listening to learn about South Africa's past via testimony the young people could consider how themes relate to their own experiences of life, and hopes for the future.

In many of the reflections, listening to people of different generations with different worldviews and languages engendered a sense of solidarity. The arts in particular generated capacity to move between memory and futures, allowing for the possible and the 'not-yet' to be explored. This is a generative means of 'practice of asking ongoing and difficult questions with the past: cultivating spaces to remember, create, explore and discuss injustices' (Sriprakash et al., 2020:3), with a view towards 'otherwise'. That is, not dwelling in the complex affects of painful pasts and what can seem to be the hopelessness of the present. The arts thus become a means of forging hope as a practice of what Táíwò calls 'worldmaking' (2021: 20). But as one of the young people posed, 'why should it just be art, why can't it be life as reality?' (Interview, M, 18, Parkwood). This signals that we might use arts processes in order not to remain in the space of merely telling, nor of witnessing, but to consider redress as a present-day, conscious wrestling with the paradoxes of past harms precisely to produce something other.

2.4. Youth are simultaneously fetishized and blamed

There is a prevalence of elders naming the youth as 'the future'. The future is not just theirs, but the unfulfilled futures of their parents/ guardians and generations before. While it is common for young people to carry a particularly pressurised role as the ushers of a different future, in the South African case, that neglects how economic precarity and disposability politics operate. This narrative also coexists with meritocracy, which is entrenched in schools despite the lack of opportunities for poor and working class young people to access quality schooling, as explored in project comix produced by Visagie and Trantraal (2022). As a result, young people are also labelled and blamed if they do not 'succeed' within a very narrow margin of success predicated on standardised testing. This is all predicated on pernicious individualism, specifically relating to future employability (which identifies potential but dulls the realities of racial capitalism). In many of the conversations, social mobility equates to leaving the area rather than any conception that futures could be different in the 'ghettoised' neighbourhoods of the Cape Flats (Seekings, 2014). These narratives play out against warnings about 'bad' behaviour and cultures of surveillance, with many of the young people aiming for alternative legacies, or anticipating a 'different future' for their children (interview, M, 18, Parkwood). I take this to be a comment that clearly signals that the futures-thinking is a means of opening up critical awareness of pasts and presents. In the South African case, that often requires reflecting on conceptions of safety and justice.

2.5. Conflating safety and justice

Within their context of everyday violence, young people and their interviewees find themselves searching for a mode of justice that can make sense of, or imagine an end to, daily stress and a seemingly inevitable threat of bodily harms. I note interviewees struggling to re-calibrate conceptions of justice from state legislated racial discrimination to present-day dissatisfaction and the dismay at social depravity and criminal activity that renders the Cape Flats dangerous. While searching for ways to articulate futures free of such violence, there is a conflation of safety with justice. There seems to be difficulty conceiving of alternatives to punishment under the shadow of crime even though securitised surveillance curtails young people. We know that carceral logics produce an enclosed future in the form of a school dropout to prison pipeline (Chetty, 2015).

We can see an imagined alternative to that in Imaan's dragon (figure 3) – a metaphorical guard that would look over the community but that does not carry the historical freight of police surveillance. Nonetheless, because violence and policing are so much a part of the past and present in this area, imagining futures free from criminal punishment was not so evident. 'Freedom', when imagined in the

context of everyday violence is not readily imagined as abolitionist with no more police or prisons, though it is a place/ time with less crime and no personal risk or danger. In this sense, we can see the futures thinking is not yet unbounded by the logics of criminal punishment that replicate racist, colonialist tendencies. The dragon is still policing access, surveilling who belongs and who must be protected. Yet there is some gesture towards community-based freedoms configured as the desire for activities, green spaces, and access to recreational activities which should be available to young people to enable them to play, collaborate and enjoy time outside (see Tauriq's map [Image 1](#)).

2.5.1. Identities: gender, sexuality, language, faith & class

The project highlighted the need for young people to unlearn stigmatised identities and language politics that still conflate 'race' and class positions, as well as schooling that continues to produce unequal outcomes for working class young people ([Visagie & Trantraal, 2022](#)). Many of the artistic works created as well as interviews showed that we need stories that resist fixed or pre-determined outcomes, including gendered assumptions about work, family and earning. We noted that narratives of financial security were often conflated with gang activity and teen pregnancy as seeming to be a way 'out' of economic uncertainties. In that sense, futures are not necessarily imagined as outside of structures that already have a strong hold in the South African social order such as strict gender norms, child-rearing, and the correlation between one's own value and one's willingness to reproduce the status quo (through work, marriage, having children and maintaining faith-based practices).

The Flats retains a heterogeneous set of faiths which are to be negotiated and understood alongside other identity positions. This is not always simple and there is often a disciplinary modelling of the various faith positions as sanctioning a narrow set of behaviours and outcomes, such as heterosexual marriage and children as a given. There is an 'ambiguous accommodation' of faith and also of political discourses ([Bangstad & Fataar, 2010](#)). This was to be seen alongside comments about the complexity of political representation, whereby assumptions of 'democracy' in terms of which racial groups are represented in local and national government are, in the present, expressed as disappointment when political change does not equate to promises of freedom. Underscoring all of this is the persistence of how specific classed (and racialised) identities are conflated with unequal material access, and how participants narrate and make sense of their lived experience.

3. For reparative justice, we also need redress

Ta-Nehisi Coates' (2014) long form article on reparations in *The Atlantic* re-established the urgency of policies and practices that would firstly recognise the ongoing material deprivation of Black Americans and secondly, reconsider the supposedly legal racialised dispossession of communities whose access to safe housing, quality education and economic stability continues to be mapped and correlated with criminalisation. His article opened debates about the role of looking backwards to unjust pasts as unhelpful. Since then, awareness of reparative efforts has intended to, as Olùfẹ́mi Táíwò puts it, set about reconsidering 'the relationship between justice's past and future' in what he calls a third way of 'the constructive view of reparations' (2021, 4). He defines this as 'a worldmaking project. This involves thinking about justice and injustice in distributive terms: that is, as a matter of who gets what' (2021, 20). This process of revisiting past injustices with a moral ledger, balanced by present-day monetary payments may, he says, 'go some distance

Table 1
Restorative approach, Redress and Reparations.

	Restorative approach (adjective)	Redress (verb)	Reparations (noun)
Conceptions of justice:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Truth and Reconciliation model of testimony as acknowledging harms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redress is what Táíwò describes as beyond 'relationship repair' (reconciliatory approach) (2021, 124), towards 'worldmaking' (constructive approach) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on 'harm-repair': 'restitution or retribution' of material conditions (Táíwò, 2021, 124)
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-violence/ peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulation of loss (Hartman, 1997, 73), narratives (Hartman cited in Siemsen, 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compensation
Relations of power:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restorative of social bonds by virtue of witnessing the 'truth' of the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redress as discursive, belonging to activist pedagogy (cf. Stuelke, 2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reparations require linear apologies which benefit the powers-that-be (Gopal, 2016)
Requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process and consequence of dialogue is assumed to be peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redress allows for refusal, resistance and continued grief or anger Creative, anticipatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks to identify mechanical/ logistical/ monetary 'equivalence' (Táíwò, 2021)
Affects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orientated towards apology & acknowledgement of harm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redress as founded on 'desire' (cf. Hartman, 1997, 73) a rehearsal/ a negotiation across languages, difference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reparations alone is a project of 'recuperating resistance' (Gopal, 2016)
Representational strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plays out in witnessing, emphasising 'victims' and 'perpetrators' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on inter-community/ interpersonal testimony (less focus on the harm-doer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could reinforce the inequalities in the relationship between harm-doer and harmed
Narrative modes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telling: Process-based, not time bound, not iterative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts processes: In-process, recognises that imagining, and rehearsing the future is never complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cathartic, aims for a resolution
Temporality of reparative futures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the past in terms of forgiveness and a sense of restoring order that used to be there. Teleological 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacted in the present but with futures-focus Critical address of the past Open-ended, 'not-yet' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present, focus on repairing past harms for future equilibrium Can be completed/ achieved

towards remedying' systemic exclusion from public life (2021, 2). Beyond that, he goes on to show, there's also important material and symbolic redress (political representation as well as countering symbolic injustices like monuments to racism), whereby what is sought is not only monetary reparations but the repair of dignity in the afterlives of injustices including enslavement and dispossession wrought by continual unequal access and material disparities.

Taking Táíwò's 'third way' to be moving beyond the critiques of reparations as linear, or concrete, and allowing for a more complex, and ongoing, enactment of political will towards justice, I introduce [Table 1](#) as a means of delineating some of the differences I perceive between the object of reparations (redistributive justice) and the project of redress, which I depict as an ongoing action, a verb. This distinction is, as I have explored above (in [Section 2](#)), imperative in the context of South Africa, where apartheid's legislated 'separate development' still plays out in everyday life as 'organised forgetting' ([Giroux, 2015](#)) or state denial ([Cohen, 2001](#)).

This table sets out some of the differences to be teased apart in approaches to reparative futures, while not suggesting a hierarchy nor a sense of linearity. Rather, as put forward by Táíwò, the politics of reparations are multifarious. By considering three strands of reparative efforts, what emerges is the need for the specificities of conceptions of justice alongside the particular representational strategies. In particular, considered in relation to *ImaginingOtherwise*, young people need informal generative spaces that enable them to, through arts pedagogies, begin to contend with issues of injustice. Such spaces, and the commitment to modes of processual anticipation of the future, are necessary for the reckoning and interpretive praxis that Táíwò calls 'worldmaking' (2021: 124). Additionally, we must recognise the significance and political urgency in the formal civic sphere for concrete redistributive reparations (such as land back, compensation, and the recalibration of political representation). Yet in the ambiguity of the present, to 'redress' is to emphasise the need to generate desire, hope, and resistance against the hopelessness accorded to disposability on the level of everyday life. What is particular about redress in terms of temporality is that it is situated in the not-yet which negotiates a future by contending with the past. This opportunity to reflect on and imagine is a particularly creative modality and I propose, critical for the reparative turn.

4. Towards conclusions: worldmaking as 'memory acts in service of redress' ([Hartman, 1997](#), 73)

This account of *ImaginingOtherwise* has been grounded in 'remembering that the feel-good fix that the reparative offers hasn't yet freed, and in fact cannot free, everyone from state and racial capitalist violence' ([Stuelke, 2021](#): 30). Therefore, the future-orientation of working towards freedom requires recognition and struggle for modes of repair that actively redress the harms of the past by means of recognising and moving to undo the legacy injustices left in their wake. Redress thus allows for the articulation of desires for a different future, and demands awareness that reparative efforts must not seek cathartic resolutions but must be in process.

I should like to return to Táíwò's articulation of reparative futures as a 'worldmaking project' (2021: 20), and with the emphasis of redress as a grounded and collaborative approach that unfolds outside of formal (legalistic, logistical, monetised or material) reparations, such worldmaking is a means of rehearsing possible futures. In *ImaginingOtherwise*, young people used arts processes and oral histories as modalities of 'thinking about justice and injustice in distributive terms: that is, as a matter of who gets what' ([Táíwò, 2021](#), 20). The reflexive interviews with *ImaginingOtherwise* participants show that it is not possible to leap straight to the reparative potential of witnessing through testimony and to thereby find concrete resolution. This might be particularly true for young people, who experience the impacts and legacies of past injustice in the present, but who themselves were not 'there'. That means there is a more complex and emergent process ([brown, 2017](#)) at play towards reparative futures: redress. It allows for the still grieving of immeasurable loss even while it playfully and creatively positions futures that are more fair – in which 'freedom dreams' ([Kelley, 2002](#)) are not out of reach, but advanced in the articulations of futures in both words and symbols. What is important here is that a redressive orientation to futures is not a chronologically linear journey, but one that moves between temporalities via creative arts pedagogies, and thus contributes to reparative futures. The youth-led interpretive praxis of 'not-yet' futures in *ImaginingOtherwise* is one such site of redress.

Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council AHRC/GCRF grant number AH/R005354/1 Changing the Story: Building inclusive civil societies with, and for, young people in post-conflict countries.

Declaration of Competing Interest

There is no declaration of interest to be made, either financial or personal to be made in relation to the research.

Acknowledgements

ImaginingOtherwise collaborators: Dr Alexandra Sutherland, Ashley Visagie, Helene Rousseau and Prof Paul Routledge as well as Dr Scott Burnett (Power of Word) and colleagues at Tshisimani. Thanks to Maggie Fernando for interviewing young people and transcribing, and to all *ImaginingOtherwise* participants whose engaged curiosity across two years has been inspiring. Note, where reproducing artworks I am using participants' real names, in accordance with agreements to attribute their artistic work. Where I am citing interviews with participants, they are anonymised. The project has ethical approval ref FAHC 19-037 from University of Leeds Arts, Humanities and Cultures Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

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