**The social media ecology of spatial inequality in Cape Town: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram**

**Abstract**

While Cape Town is considered a ‘modern city’ by the international community, high levels of inequality still persist as a consequence of post-independence apartheid practices. The legacy of apartheid spatial polarisation has sparked ongoing debates about gentrification, infrastructural inequalities and affordable housing in mainstream media, with Cape Town at the centre of the contention. Cape Town based activists, organisations and campaigners for the desegregation of urban land (this paper identified Reclaim The City, Ndifuna Ukwazi and Future Cape Town as the key actors using social media to campaign for spatial equality in Cape Town), have opted to use social media platforms to advertise and coordinate protest action. As Juris (2012) has argued, social media has contributed to an emerging logic of aggregation involving the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds to come together in physical spaces. Social media platforms become a “temporary performative terrain,” a space for activists to make their struggles visible and to mobilise “crowds of individuals” through viral communication flows. (Juris, 2012, pg. 267). Over the past decade and a half, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have become an integral part of contemporary communicative practices providing personal, political, entertainment, sport, technological and scientific information to local communities often before convention media outlets like radio, television and print. “The quick rise of social media platforms in the first decade of this century was part of a more general networked culture where information and communication got increasingly defined by the affordances of web technologies” (Van Dijk & Poell, 2013: 5) By focusing on three of the most popular social networking sites in South Africa: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, this paper explores how social media has been used to foster awareness, share information and initiate discourse around spatial inequality in Cape Town. Using a combination of quantitative data scraping approaches and qualitative content analysis, this paper explored the central question: What are the prevailing narratives on social media around spatial inequality (including issues related to affordable housing) in Cape Town? The paper argues that the social media ecology of spatial inequality is complex and cosmopolitan due to the interconnectivity and global reach of social media platforms. In order to connect the local agenda to the immediate community and foster international awareness, activist, organisations and campaigners have choreographed their own cohesive narrative that they frequently promote in public social media spaces.

**Keywords**

Spatial inequality, social media, social movements, hashtags, activism, campaigns

**Introduction**

Cape Town, South Africa, is considered a Global City, with global cities defined as those that “have become key nodes for headquarter functions, financial services, information processing, and other activities that have been undertaken to announce their influence as world leaders” (Gibb, 2007). But as Lemanski (2007) argues, Global Cities also tend to have increased social and spatial polarisation, especially for developing world cities with limited resources and widespread poverty. “This is particularly the case in South Africa where apartheid legacies already provide a strong infrastructure of inequality” (Lemanski, 2007: 448). Social and spatial polarisation have persisted well beyond the end of apartheid, with levels of inequality amongst some of the highest in the world. The legacy of apartheid geography has meant that the African National Congress government has failed to realise their campaign promise of “housing for all”. Increasing urbanisation and levels of poverty have increased the demand for housing, despite the fact that the post-1994 housing policy sets out a variety of programmes and mechanisms to assist low-income households with access to secure tenure, services and starter housing (Landman and Napier, 2009).

A range of inner-city urban regeneration initiatives, most commonly seen in Cape Town and Johannesburg, have included gentrification, perhaps the most controversial, and defined as “a process by which working-class residential neighbourhoods were rehabilitated by middle-class homebuyers, landlords and professional developers” (Visser and Kotze, 2008). Gentrification usually implies that low-income residents are displaced by high-income residents, and has become a growing concern in the South African urban redevelopment discourse (Visser, 2002). These processes have been hotly contested in Cape Town, with a call for affordable housing in the inner city to accommodate people who work there, as these urban renewal processes push out the working-class black residents who live there, reminiscent of apartheid day race-based relocations. This has resulted in a wide range of gentrification debates, and issues related to class inclusion and exclusion, which have also played out in the media. While the topic has been widely covered by the media, local activists and organizations working toward affordable housing have also used social media to communicate and debate the issues. As Castells (2015) writes: “Historically, social movements have been dependent on the existence of specific communication mechanisms: rumors, sermons, pamphlets, and manifestos, spread from person to person, from the pulpit, from the press, or by whatever means of communication were available. In our time, multimodal, digital networks of horizontal communication are the fastest and most autonomous, interactive, reprogrammable and self-expanding means of communication in history” (pg.15).

Social media platforms have, increasingly, over the past decade and a half, become part of everyday life. “The quick rise of social media platforms in the first decade of this century was part of a more general networked culture where information and communication got increasingly defined by the affordances of web technologies” (Van Dijk & Poell, 2013: 5). Van Dijk and Poell (2013) contrast social media and mass media and posit that each have separate logics, but stress that they are not autonomous of one another, noting that the factors leading to the Haren ‘Facebook Riots’[[1]](#footnote-1) emerged through an “intricate web of online and offline settings connected by a dynamic constellation of technological, economical, and socio-cultural settings” (p3).

Nonetheless they contend that there are four key social media logics which enable social media to penetrate everyday life more effectively than mass media is able to do. These are programmability, popularity, connectivity and datafication. Curiously, the authors give only an oblique reference to social movements, in their critique of the casual social media characterization of the social uprising in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011 such as the ‘Twitter Revolutions’ (p11). For Castells (2015), on the other hand, the impact of social media is inseparable from the social movements such as the ‘Revolution of Liberty and Dignity’ (Tunisia), ‘25th January Revolution’ and the ‘6th April Youth Movement’ (Egypt), ‘Indignadas’ (Spain), ‘Occupy Wall Street’ (which originated in the USA and spread across the Northern Hemisphere) (2012). While Castells does consider the importance of factors such as programmability and connectivity, he argues that these should be understood as factors of networking more generally and that social media is properly understood only in relation to social movements.

Using a combination of quantitative data scraping approaches and qualitative content analysis detailed further below, this paper explores the central question: What are the prevailing narratives on social media around spatial inequality (including issues related to affordable housing) in Cape Town? A further three sub-questions guided the research:

1. What types of interactions take place on the Facebook pages of the key campaign organisations, Reclaim the City, Ndifuna Ukwazi, and Future Cape Town? Can the discourses be understood as a dimension of social action? What are the key issues of spatial inequality that are addressed in these discourses?
2. How is Twitter used to organise discussions around spatial equality? How are hashtags used to guide these discussions?
3. How do the key campaigners for spatial equality in Cape Town use digital identifiers, specifically hashtags, locations and tags, to engage the social media audience on Instagram?

**Background and context**

A brief introdution to the three key organisations, which work actively in this area, follows below; followed by a brief discussion of each of the social networking sites considered for this research.

Ndifuna Ukwazi an activist organisation and law centre, and a non-profit organisation which includes the NPOs Equal Education (which campaigns on pre-tertiary education provision) and the Social Justice Coalition (based in Khayelitsha and campaigns on local social issues such safety, water, toilets). In 2015, NU opened its law centre, providing specialist legal services to individuals, social movements and community-based organisations struggling for access to land and housing. Reclaim the City has a campaign structure which focusses on housing inequality and is supported in this campaign by the organisations mentioned above. Both of these occupy a ‘hybrid of cyberspace and urban space’ a third space that Castells’ refers to as a “space of autonomy” (Castells 2012: 222). Future Cape Town is an organisation which focuses on the technical issues (transport, design etc.) of the provision of affordable housing. Although, it can be argued that is also occupies the ‘space of autonomy’, it does so to a much more limited degree that either of the other two, as the data below shows.

***Facebook:* South Africa’s biggest social network.**

Online social networking sites, Facebook in particular, are growing in popularity in South Africa, with With the increasing affordability of mobile handsets, users are able to access the mobile internet and connect via mobile social networking applications. Facebook boasts an audience of over 1.8 billion[[2]](#footnote-2) with 13 million[[3]](#footnote-3) users in South Africa, making it the biggest social network in South Africa, with almost double the amount of users of its nearest competitor Youtube[[4]](#footnote-4), which has 8 million users.

The Facebook structure is designed primarily for use by individual ‘entities’, which could be people or organisations, which make use of Facebook by setting up personal accounts with avatars, with the proviso that these avatars are identifiable as really existing entities (there are certain provisions set by Facebook to attempt to limit the possible abuse of this requirement. Entities are enabled to connect to each other by means of ‘Friend’ and ‘Follower’ modes. The former is a bidirectional relationship whereas the latter a unidirectional relationship. An entity is able to ‘request’ that another be its Friend which may be denied. The number of Friends that the entity may have is limited to five thousand, whereas there is no limit on the number of Followers. Entities are also enabled to network within Groups. Groups have three levels of privacy: ‘open’, ‘closed’ and ‘secret’, enabling the administrator to limit the levels of interaction with the global FB community. A third mechanism for interaction is a Page. Pages are effective mechanisms for corporate entities to advertise their products, for public figures (politicians, film stars, musicians, media personalities etc.) to popularise themselves, or for CSOs, political parties, trade unions, ‘movements’ to engage with the global FB entities around themes or issues which are important to them. Pages do this through ‘recruiting’ followers (they do not have Friends) which allows them to have Followers without the need to respond on a one-one basis that is expected of ‘Friend’ships. The three organisations considered in this research: Reclaim the City, Ndifuna Ukwazi and Future Cape Town, are FB entities with Pages.

***Twitter:* South Africa’s social activist medium**

Despite having the slowest growth in South Africa; 7.4 million to 7.7 million users between 2015 and 2016, Twitter is increasing in popularity. According to the 2017 edition of the SA Social Media Landscape, by World Wide Worx and Ornico, “the role of social media in the public debate has moved from the periphery to the heart of activism,” as symbolised by some of the most high-profile campaigns of the years 2015 – 2017, namely, #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, #FillUpTheDome, #FillUpOrlandoStadium , #Zexit and #ZumaMustFall. These campaigns are partly defined by their use of specific Twitter hashtags, reflecting a kind of hashtag activism. However there are debates dismissing social media campaigns as “armchair activism or clicktivism” but one cannot neglect the awareness that Twitter hashtags generate in the public and private media spaces. Twitter hashtags enable “the general public to explore the situation more deeply and to approach it in a new way ... awareness alone does not achieve anything, but opening up a politicized space is a good start.” (Herman: 2014, 14 -15). Given the large quantity of tweets on the platform, the use of hashtags facilitate conversation around specific topics and allow for easier tracking of these online discussions. Yang et. al. (2012) argue that hashtags bring about convenience to users: apart from grouping together relevant topics and events, they also “serve as a symbol of community” by bringing like-minded people together. Twitter thus has the potential to allow marginalised voices to be heard by allowing users to make a public statement and hashtags allow the discourse to continue and equalize diverse voices by giving everyone the same limitations - celebrity, politician or individual.

***Instagram:* The fastest growing social media application on South Africa**

Instagram is a free image and video sharing smartphone application originally developed for the IOS (iPhone) operating system) in 2010. In 2012 it was acquired by Facebook in 2012[[5]](#footnote-5) and an Android version was launched along with a limited-features website; turning Instagram from a mobile application to a social networking site. The social networking application currently has 600 million[[6]](#footnote-6) users worldwide with 3.5 million[[7]](#footnote-7) account holders currently residing in South Africa. According to the Fin24 and Business Tech websites, Instagram is the fastest-growing social network in South Africa.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Instagram uses a 'follower' model, meaning all accounts are either public or private and any Instagram users can subscribe / follow to any users accounts. Users can create up to five accounts from one primary mobile number.[[9]](#footnote-9) All images are public by default, but users can choose to make their accounts private, making their images and videos visible only to their approved followers.[[10]](#footnote-10) However, if a private account holder shares the image / video by connecting to other social networks (such as Facebook or Twitter), the privacy settings for the shared network take precedence. This is because Instagram’s API (Application Program Interface/ rules/protocols/ routines) functions more like a bridging application linking Instagram user generated content with third party applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Swarm and FlIckr. This bridging function is not limited to third party, users can add hashtags[[11]](#footnote-11) to frame their interest/subject matter in the caption or comments of their posts, making the post visible on the corresponding hashtag page. The corresponding hashtag page is effectively a public forum[[12]](#footnote-12) displaying all images and videos users have shared with that accompanying hashtag / shared interest.

There is a vast range of opinion amongst scholars about the effectiveness and the role played by Twitter and Facebook in social activism. Even though Castells (2009, 2011, 2015) argues that the occupation of ‘public spaces’ is essential for all social movements, he prioritises the role of internet and social media; as for him it provides ‘free spaces’ which are the origin and backbone of any movement. He convincingly makes this point with regard to the use of Facebook in the Indignadas movement of Spain (2015, 119) and the Egyptian Revolution with “the most prominent initiative being the network created around the Facebook group We Are All Khaled Said “(2015, 55), a group set up by Wael Ghonim (2012).

However, in contrast to Castells, Fuchs (2012) minimizes the role of social media (2012) and dismisses Castells and others for promoting “techno-euphoria”, instead alligning himself with Morozov (2011) who disparages the role of social media as nothing but “a ‘self-indulgent medium that promotes slaktivism”. This has led to a “slaktivism/activism divide” (Marichal, 2013, 2) amongst scholars which Marichal says not a helpful polarisation and while not fully agreeing with Castells suggests a proposal based on some of Castells’ insights. However, Marichal does point out that this slaktivism/activism debate is an age old sociological problem[[13]](#footnote-13): the human agency vs structure debate. Into this debate Margaret Archer (1995) introduced what she calls a ‘morphonogenetic approach’[[14]](#footnote-14), which if Fuchs, Morozov and Gladwell had taken cognisance of, would have presented a more sophisticated critique of Castells.

Much of the literature on Instagram explores how it reflects city dynamics and urban social behavior. Hochman and Schwartz (2012) used cultural analytics visualization techniques for the study of approximately 550,000 images taken by Instagram users. By analyzing images from New York City and Tokyo, they offer a comparative visualization research that indicates differences in local color usage, cultural production rate, and varied hue’s intensities— all form a unique, local, ‘visual rhythm’: a framework for the analysis of location-based visual information flows. Hochman and Manovitch (2013) analyzed the affordances provided by Instagram and the ways it structures users’ understanding and use of the medium, comparing the visual signatures of 13 different global cities using 2.3 million Instagram photos from these cities. They aimed to show how the images offer social, cultural and political insights about people’s activities in particular locations and time periods. Others, for example Salomon (2013), have explored Instagram as a potential tool to engage with university students for the purposes of teaching and learning; while Weilenmann et al (2013) explored Instagram’s use in communicating heritage, history and a museum experience. McNely (2012) argued that Instagram and the resultant social software genre ecologies help organizations actively shape image-power, an organization's self-conscious, self-reflective management of public perception and the concomitant shaping of patron identities.

**Methodology**

The key tools used to collect the data were open source tools Netvizz, Twitonomy and Mecodify. With regard to Instagram, this study initially collected quantitative data focused on identifying the hashtags used by the three social actors the paper identified. Once the hashtags were retrieved, their impact in the larger discourse (corresponding hashtag page) was measured, taking into account the social engagement (likes and comments) of the post. Lastly this study gauged how effectively these key actors contextualised their post by using supporting metadata such as tags (did they tag other activists) and locations (did they geographically locate their image in Cape Town).

The media ecology approach takes into account that users often use multiple social networking sites simultaneously, therefore we considered social media use from a more holistic perspective to acknowledge its complexity. We selected three platforms whose API's allow them to interact with each other and are commonly used in conjunction with one another as our primary data collection source; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram – their users constitute 25%[[15]](#footnote-15) of South Africa's total population. Using a sample of three key actors who have led the social media campaigns on spatial inequality in Cape Town; namely Reclaim The City, Ndifuna Ukwazi and Future Capetown, this study used a mixed method approach (both qualitative and quantitative) to conduct a cumulative analysis of these (3) actors’ activities and content in relation to the public discourse on Cape Town spatial inequalities on social media. These methods are outlined in greater detail below.

*Facebook data collection and methods*

We analysed the Facebook pages of three key organisations working locally in Cape Town to campaign for the issues of affordable housing: Reclaim the City, Ndifuna Ukwazi and Future Cape Town. Data was extracted from the organisations’ official Facebook pages using the open source application Netvizz. Netvizz is a data collection and extraction application that facilitates data crawling across Facebook pages, to avoid manual collecting or custom programming (Rieder, 2013). It was developed by Bernhard Rieder in 2009 to study social networking sites and developed into a data extractor that provides outputs for different sections of Facebook in various formats (Rieder, 2013). Netvizz is a Facebook application that runs on a server provided by the Digital Methods Initiative and can be downloaded by typing the name into Facebook’s search box. The application runs from within Facebook and uses the Facebook API to mine the contents of posts and comments on official pages, including information on the posts and comments, such as the post author (page/user), time of publication, post format (photo, video, status, etc.), and all engagement measures (number of Likes, Comments, Shares, and Comment-likes the post received). The results are in tab-separated format and can be uploaded to Excel and to SPSS, or software packages such as Gephi, for statistical analysis. The Netvizz application was used to mine all the messages posted on the Facebook pages by the page itself as well as by followers, together with the engagement measures for each post.

*Twitter data collection and methods*

Data from Twitter was gathered using Twitonomy (<http://www.twitonomy.com>) which is a commercial service that calls on Twitter’s API to return a range of information from selected Twitter accounts or hashtags and also displays some data graphically. The search allowed retrieval of original posts in addition to metadata such as links to the post, the platform from which it was posted, the type of post, and retweet and favourite counts. Unlike NetVizz, Twitonomy does not show the content of replies made by other users to posts. Twitonomy also provides information indicating which users were most replied to, mentioned and re-tweeted by each of the user accounts we studied, indicating the levels of public engagement. A major limitation of Twitonomy is that it only retrieves posts from the previous 10 days. We created a dataset using Twitonomy to search for tweets using the following hashtags: #reclaimthecity, #occupyitall and #Tafelberg.

We analysed 5 -10 key hashtags that were frequently used around spatial inequality in Cape Town using the Twitter search as well as Twitonomy. Twitonomy is an analytics tool which provides various features that allow users to manage, monitor and track other Twitter user’s activities on the platform. It also has the ability to pull a set of tweets pertaining to a hashtag – however this is limited to a specific time frame. Key hashtags that were analysed include: #ReclaimtheCity, #OccupyitAll, #OccupyWoodStockHospital, #OccupyHelenBowden, #Tafelberg270, #StoptheSale, #Tafelberg, #BromwellStreet/#Bromwell. Tweets were coded using the following codes: Activism speech, Hate speech, Call to action, Live updates, News articles/media publications, Combo (specify). We also categorised tweets into the following categories:

Text, Photographs, Videos, Internet Link/URL, Combo (specify)

 From these tweets, posts from ordinary citizens and professional journalists at the same event were analysed for content and differences.

*Instagram data collection and methods*

Instagram is a visual social media application but one of the major challenges faced in this study was how to conduct researched based predominantly on the visual context. This challenge was attributed to two dominant characteristics of the Instagram application. Firstly, accessibility of the images - Instagram users own their user generated content and you cannot use the API to crawl or store users' media without their express consent.[[16]](#footnote-16) Secondly, searching for a specific 'kind' of image using keywords is not an option; the Instagram’s API provides a search hook dedicated solely to tags[[17]](#footnote-17) (user, location or hashtags). However, searching for an image using tags in Instagram reveals other useful metadata, specifically user accounts names, captions, dates, location, tags, reactions (likes) and comments, that can be utilized for a mixed methods analysis. Highfield and Leaver (2015) support this approach stating, “such data allows for quantitative and qualitative analyses, whether counting the amount of content over time, users, or tags, mapping media based on location data, or looking at the content of the media and their captions, for example.”

This study initially collected quantitative data focused on identifying the hashtags used by the (3) social actors to frame the housing inequality narrative on social media. Once the hashtags were identified the performance in the larger discourse (corresponding hashtag page) was measured, taking into account the social engagement (likes and comments) of the post. Lastly this study gauged how effectively these key actors contextualised their post by using supporting metadata such as tags (did they tag other activists) and locations (did they place an image in Cape Town).

Instagram gives users only two option, you can either have a private or a public account, all images posted in a private account are private, all images posted in public account are public. Public account holders highly identifiable information is easily revealed in the study, therefore we opted to focus the study specifically on public institutions rather than individuals.

**Results**

*Facebook findings*

Of the three organisations, Reclaim the City (ReclaimCT), Ndifuna Ukwazi and Future Cape Town the responses to the posts of the first two far exceed the responses to the posts of Future Cape Town; the maximum per day of for ReclaimCT is five thousand and for Ndifuna Ukwazi it is five hundred whereas for Future Cape Town it is less than 100.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **NU** | **RtC** |
| **Total Likes** | **Total Followers** | **Total Likes** | **Total Followers** |
| 6986 | 6943 | 8633 | 8520 |

Chatterjee (2004) makes a useful distinction between 'civil society' and 'political society' in postcolonial countries. The former, she argues, are organisations of the elite in these countries – they have the resources and education to hold ‘town hall’ meetings, conduct court interventions, and draw up expert submissions to government entities. In other words, they have access to government decision making processes. Those who constitute ‘political society’ are members of the subaltern classes (Gramsci) who don’t have the resources and education of the elite. Consequently, their tactics characteristically involve physical occupation of significant geographical venues, protest marches, blockading streets and often, destruction of (private and government) property. These tactics are found in the social movements that Castells describes and analyses in ‘Networks of Outrage and Hope’ (2015) i.e. movements that occupy what he calls the ‘autonomous space’ or ‘third space’ – an intersection of cyberspace and physical space.

From the data, it may be concluded that NU is, in Chatterjee’s classification, a civil society organisation, whereas RtC has the traits of being a social movement in ‘political society’ even though the difference between the size of the respective communities is only approx. 25%.

**Twitter findings**

The key organisations in the Twittersphere, tweeting on issues of spatial inequality in Cape Town are ReclaimCT (Reclaim the City) and Ndifuna Ukwazi; and these two key actors are also most often retweeted by other users. See table 1 below.

Table 1



**Analysis of the tweets/hashtags**

The graph below shows the most commonly used hashtags.



At least 12 hashtags surrounding spatial inequality struggles in Cape Town are frequently used on Twitter. The narratives that emerge from these choreographed timelines tend to draw voices from key players such as Reclaim the City, Ndifuna Ukwazi, Equal Education and various supporters/activists, journalists, civilians and news publications. These narratives range from texts to photographs and videos or a combination of them which touch on live updates on occupation events around Cape Town (i.e. Woodstock Hospital and Helen Bowden), calls to action, activism speech, opinion pieces, lists of demands etc. The narratives often intermingle with each other, mixing voices of citizens, activists, politicians, journalists covering the events and media publications which push out links to published articles.

The tags here are listed due to their frequency of use and does not include other lesser used tags. Two key hashtags on Twitter are: #OccupyItAll and #ReclaimtheCity.#OccupyItAll structures Tweets from the Reclaim the City campaign, the NGO Ndifuna Ukwazi, supporters and activists. While #ReclaimtheCity seems to garner more posts of news articles, live updates/analysis from media publications and journalists in addition to updates and opinions from the campaign, supporters and citizens.

There are at least 10 other hashtags that were frequently used including #OccupyWoodstockHospital, #OccupyHelenBowden, #Tafelberg270, #StoptheSale and #StandwithBromwell. #OccupyWoodstockHospital has lesser Tweets than #OccupyHelenBowden and both see posts of text, photographs, article links and videos from journalists, supporters and activists, news publications, NGOs and the Reclaim the City campaign. #Tafelberg270 reveals various Tweets particularly surrounding the Reclaim the City rally in Seapoint for affordable housing in Tafelberg. Apart from Tweets from the event itself, there were posts of supporters in Reclaim the City shirts, calls to action, links to articles, updates of meetings and discussions as they progress from supporters, campaigns alike.

Area tags such as #Tafelberg, #BromwellStreet/ #Bromwell, #Blikkiesdorp and #Wolwerivier seemed to generate many Tweets on spatial inequality as “general” as the tags may be, but these areas have also become significant “symbols” in the fight against gentrification and for affordable housing.



As Juris (2012) has argued, social media have contributed to an emerging logic of aggregation involving the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds to come together in physical spaces. Twitter in this instance became a “temporary performative terrain” as a space for activists to make their struggles visible and to mobilise “crowds of individuals” through viral communication flows (Juris, 2012, pg. 267).

**Instagram findings:**

Future Cape Town have the most followers, 4,700+ and tag other users in 45% of their posts compared to Reclaim the City which has 140+ followers and tag other users 25% of the time. Ndifuna Ukwazi is the least active of the key actors and have 20+ followers, yet they have not posted any content on their official page, however they are posting content through @mandz\_shandu’s personal account, the co-director of Ndifuna Ukwazi. Future Cape Town was the most active key actor, posting 300% more images related to spatial inequality in Cape town in a 30 days period than Reclaim the City posted in 365 days - Ndifuna Ukwazi had no posts. However, in the time reviewed, all 20 images posted by Reclaim the City were related to spatial inequality, compared to Future Cape Town’s 30%, researchers reviewed 64 images on Future Cape Town’s page before to reach the 20 images related to spatial inequality in Cape Town target.



*Hashtags used on Instagram*

Hashtags are used to audiovisual content public and searchable on Instagram. The hashtags used by Future Cape Town are used to create a conversation or a story around spatial inequality in Cape Town. The hashtags most commonly associated with a specific key actor are rarely used by the key housing inequality social actors.

Future Cape Town used (79) hashtags in (20) images, therefore they averaged (4) hashtags per image. Reclaim The City used a total of (16) hashtags in 20 images, averaging of slightly under (1) hashtag per post. The most popular hashtag used by Future Cape Town is #capetown and Reclaim the Cityused #reclaimthecity most often. The following (8) hashtags have been used by both actors at some stage during their social media campaigns, #art, #southafrica, #capetown, #cities, #housing, #reclaimthecity, #ndifunaukwazi and #reclaimct. Future Cape Town rarely used the hashtag which is which is closely related to their brand in their post - #futurecapetown, opting to employ it in 10% of posts that were reviewed. Reclaim The City used the #reclaimthecity hashtag in 60% of their posts and it was actively engaged with and average of (6) interaction per post. When Future Cape Town used the #futurecapetown they accumulated an average of (46) interactions per post. Reclaim the City typically used (1) hashtags per post which were non-descriptive and general, for example, #housing, #cities and #art, whereas Future Cape Town used (4) hashtags per posts that were a combination of general, descriptive and specific statement-like hashtags; for example, #bridge, #innovation, #publicspace and #forwardtothefuture.

*Locations or geo-tags*

Future Cape Town used geo-tags to locate themselves within the Cape Town municipality in 45% of their posts, Reclaim the City used geo-tags in 25% of the posts reviewed. Future Cape Town predominately located themselves either in the city centre or township areas. Reclaim the City positioned themselves in either near or inside tertiary institutions, specifically on the University of Cape Town’s campuses.

*Image content descriptions*

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*Captions*

RTC uses more ‘personal’ and opinionated language in their captions using words like double standards, join us, and campaign compared to RTC’s more diplomatic tone, opting to use terms such as spatial inequality, active citizenship, and report.

*Social media engagement*

FCT has the highest social media engagement, their highest rated post related to spatial inequality in Cape Town was engaged with (77) times compared to RTC’s (20). However, taking into account that we cannot determine whether all of these actors’ reactions and comments came from their existing followers, we can determine each actor’s audience reception based on their current audience; RTC’’s most engaged post would have catered to 14% of their current audience compared to FCT 2%. Nonetheless, neither actors posts fostered a significant amount of comments on the post, the average interaction with the posts was reactional (likes) and the threaded conversations were limited to information.

Use “main” hashtags more consistently to organise conversations and make these conversations public. Effectively using four/ five hashtags per post that best frame the narrative that they seek to foster and garners a larger crowd. Mainstream media also often picks up on frequently used hashtags and in turn, the hashtag is further exposed to other audiences. Capitalize on hashtags already associated with the organisation #ndifunaukwazi, #reclaimthecity and #futurecapetown. Twitter is the best space to utilize hashtags to make a statement.

Audiovisual

Social media is an audiovisual experience. Create more exclusive, artistic content that will attract new audiences and diminish the reliance on mainstream media. Posts that contain audiovisual information should be effectively archived using digital identifiers such as hashtags, geotags and

captions.

These identifiers make the content easier to locate. Instagram is the best application to create a digital archive and one can post directly from Instagram to the other two platforms.

Engagement

There seems to be no comments, feedback or discussion, garnered from these post, other than reactions. The conversation is not going beyond show and tell.

Facebook fosters group activity and therefore should be used to engage and develop offline community engagement and active participation in campaigns, meeting and events. These posts should contain more audiovisual content, unique posters and links to more information. Facebook should also be used to tell individual stories about members of their offline community (followers). They should also tag users and followers to encourage a personal connection to their causes, especially those who frequently comment.

The posts are not personal, reflect no personality and do not connect with their audience.

Posts using the same hashtags used by other non - organisation (individual users) generate more social interactions and engagement

The descriptions on the posts are not personalised and are generally informative. Information alone does not encourage discourse - this is a closed conversation

Most of the key actors are not effectively using geo- tags or locations to place the issue within the Cape town geological space.

Most images associated with housing inequality do not show the physical spaces.

There are no unique visual campaigned generated by the Reclaim The City, Ndifuna Ukwazi as compared to Future Cape Town, which posts images with a similar content and style.

One image every three months is not an effective strategy, a picture is worth a thousand words in this image driven society.

The more popular (widely used?) the hashtags the more reactions a post acquires.

The images posted to not provide a counter or more expansive narrative on the housing issue.

The images did not give useful information or appropriately contextualize the issue

**Conclusion**

In order for social media to be a useful tool for activism, the key actors need to personally engage their audience. Unlike journalists, they can be ‘emotional’ and take a position on the housing issue --- the key factors required to connect with the social media audience. In order to use social media effectively for activism, the various platforms must be used to foster awareness on human rights issues, as trying to conduct traditional activist engagement online will not work.

The social media accounts could instead focus on garnering support and fostering awareness asnd create their own campaign that maintain the issue in the public interest. Once the story leaves traditional news outlets most people forget about it, whereas social media posts could more effectively be reminding Cape Town residents of the key issues more frequently.

Because these social media account belong to organisations (not individuals) they should reflect their constant activity. Most of them rarely post and rarely post links to their own daily weekly, monthly activities ---- social media is about real time timelines.

 social media platforms should function as basin of knowledge and information on useful information and pin articles, written by them or others on their sites.

In a contradictory society, characterised by class conflict and other conflicts between dominant and dominated groups, social media platforms are likely to have a contradictory character: they do not necessarily and automatically support/amplify or dampen/limit rebellions, but rather pose contradictory potentials that stand in contradictions with influences by the state, ideology and capitalism (Fuchs, 2012).

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<http://www.worldwideworx.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Social-Media-2017-Executive-Summary.pdf> Accessed on the 23rd of April, 2017.

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1. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/netherlands/9559868/Facebook-party-leads-to-riots-in-Dutch-town.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As of the fourth quarter of 2016, Facebook had 1.86 billion monthly active users. In the third quarter of 2012, the number of active Facebook users had surpassed 1 billion. See:<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/> & <http://www.fin24.com/Tech/News/twitter-enables-longer-tweets-amid-sluggish-growth-20160920> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 13 million South Africans now on Facebook, with 10-million, or 77 per cent, using it on mobile devices. Smartphones are used by 7,9-million South Africans to access Facebook See: <http://www.worldwideworx.com/socialsa2016/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Video sharing platform YouTube increased its user base marginally more, with a 15 per cent rise from 7,2-million to 8,28-million users. See: <http://www.worldwideworx.com/socialsa2016/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. S**ee** <https://www.instagram.com/about/legal/privacy/>  [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/>  [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See:<http://www.fin24.com/Tech/Multimedia/infographic-sa-social-media-by-the-numbers-20160920-2> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Arthur Goldstuck (managing director of World Wide Worx), told Fin24 that Instagram was the fastest growing social network in SA for the second year running. See: [http://www.fin24.com/Tech /News/instagram-snapchat-are-sas-new-social-media-hotshots-20160920](http://www.fin24.com/Tech/News/instagram-snapchat-are-sas-new-social-media-hotshots-20160920) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See: <https://help.instagram.com/1094643983940381/?helpref=hc_fnav> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See: <https://help.instagram.com/1682672155283228> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. You can use up to 30 tags on a post. If you include more than 30 tags on a single photo/video, your comment won't post. See :[https://help.instagram.com/35146062161109](https://help.instagram.com/351460621611097) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. When people with private profiles tag posts, they won't appear publicly on hashtag pages. See:<https://help.instagram.com/351460621611097>  [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Its origin is in in Marx’s well known theory that all superstructural phenomena, especially the cultural sphere, is determined by the substructure of the economic mode of production [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Archer’s theory is based on Roy Bhaskar’s philosophy of critical/social realism (Bhaskar 1978, 1979, 1986, 1989, 1991, 1993). The theories of both have been updated (Archer, 2012) (Bhaskar, 2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. South Africa has an estimated population of 55,348,352, at least 14 million users are on social media users. See: <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-africa-population/> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See:<https://www.instagram.com/developer/> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See:<http://www.firstmonday.dk/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/5563/4195#p5> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)