



Adheema Davis

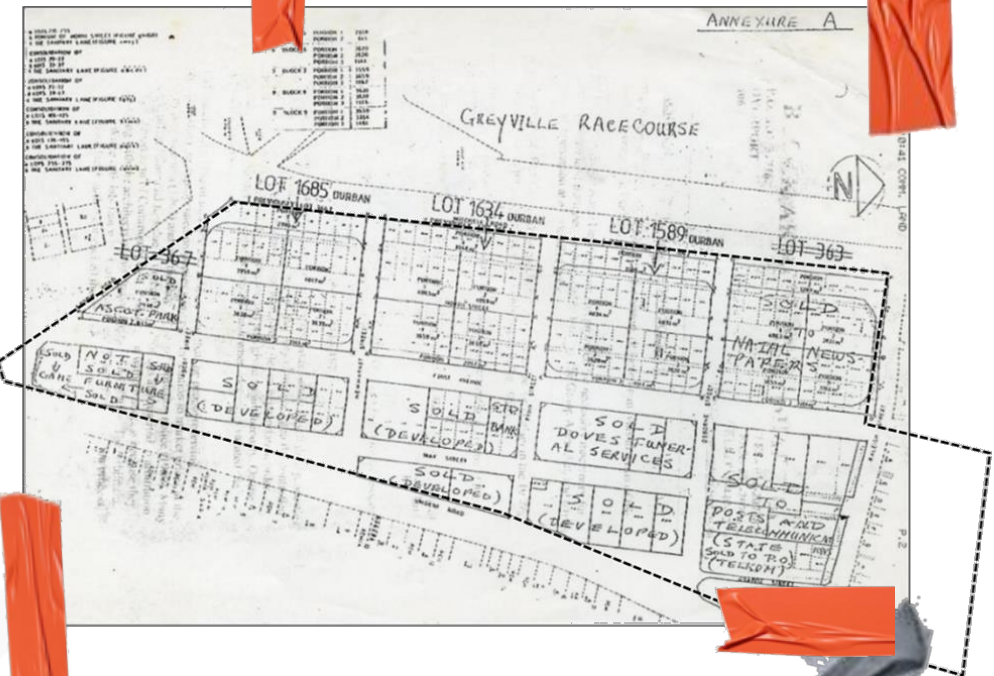
Lecturer at the Department of Architecture
Durban University of Technology

DUT ACADEMIC INDUCTION 2022 PROGRAMME.

At the end the participants were asked to prepare an 8 minute presentations in response to the question, 'How can I improve my practice?'
These are Adheema's slides.

Access Adheema Davis's living-poster from <https://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/adheema22.pdf>

re-membling heritage • redefining public culture • decolonising architectural education



decoloniality
radical pedagogy
reflexivity



design thinking
empathise • define • ideate • prototype • test

architecture
of repair.

adheema davis

lecturer at the department of architecture
durban university of technology

[email](#) • [linkedin](#) • [academia](#)

architect • academic • mandela washington fellow

pr.arch (sacap) • mia (saia) • b.a.s (ukzn) • m.arch (ukzn)

“justice, is what love looks like in public,
just like tenderness is what love feels like in
private.” dr. cornel west

عظمة

arabic: ain-dha'-meem

greatness, determination, firmness of purpose

collaboration • compassion • complexity





my mom

my dad



figure i: davis family portrait 1953, frank family portrait 1958, and the music of blackness

who i am and the journey in deconstructing the layers of my being gives me a perspective of redefining value for ourselves, and the spaces that realise ourselves. my family's history, like many others is one of apartheid-colonial trauma and forced removals, but it is also enriched by the making of home and community without discrimination. my parent's sacrificed to make a better life for us, and despite "politics being impolite" centred our home on love and truth...and playing music of dollar brand, the flames, stevie wonder, marvin gaye...

"you see, war is not the answer, for only love can conquer hate/ you know we've got to find a way to bring some lovin' here today/ picket lines and picket signs, don't punish me with brutality/ talk to me, so you can see, what's going on"

it's little wonder that their daughter became a radical!



black white

figures: the world turned upside down, a drawing of jacques derrida. image source: david levine in searle, 1983, and absence/presence. author, 2020.

exposure to deconstruction (jacques derrida - the black, algerian, jewish, french theorist and not just the frenchman) via doung anwar jahangeer and professor rozena maart in my studies grounded my thinking theoretically. understanding a layered construction of absence/presence and using language to describe specifically the makings of our spatial realities allows for a simultaneous redefining of value and imagining of what is possible. in my practice, encourage us to be open to exploring, to centre will (and whimsy), and to realise that sometimes we need to look at things in a different way in order to see the whole. we see what is there on the premise of what is not - how this has been used to construct spatial realities, and how an inversion can be used to reconstruct meaningful imaginaries.

an extract from my own teaching: a reminder that as humans, as south africans, as architects, we have a responsibility to reckon with our past, in order to serve the future in the now. ons pola hier sithandwa'sam (we're staying here my loves) - meadowlands by strike vilakazi, 1956. so, we speak directly to these truths so that we can confront them in the face of power. our lecture space is a constructive space where we may have to face our own conditioning in order to unlearn towards justice - discomfort is sometimes a part of that process, the openness of our dialogue is intended to heal, and not disrespect.



figure i: an anti-racist spiral of architectural education, wai architecture think tank, 2020.

in my published article as a response to “how will the pandemic change architectural education?” in 2020: what if architectural education reflected stories across the socio-spatial spectrum of our south africa, revising our history in present time, learning equally from learners and educators of the protected, erased, and forgotten heritage of all our people - celebrating and expressing the wonder of our differences through architecture in form and thought? the spiral positions a constant reflexivity in thought and practice.

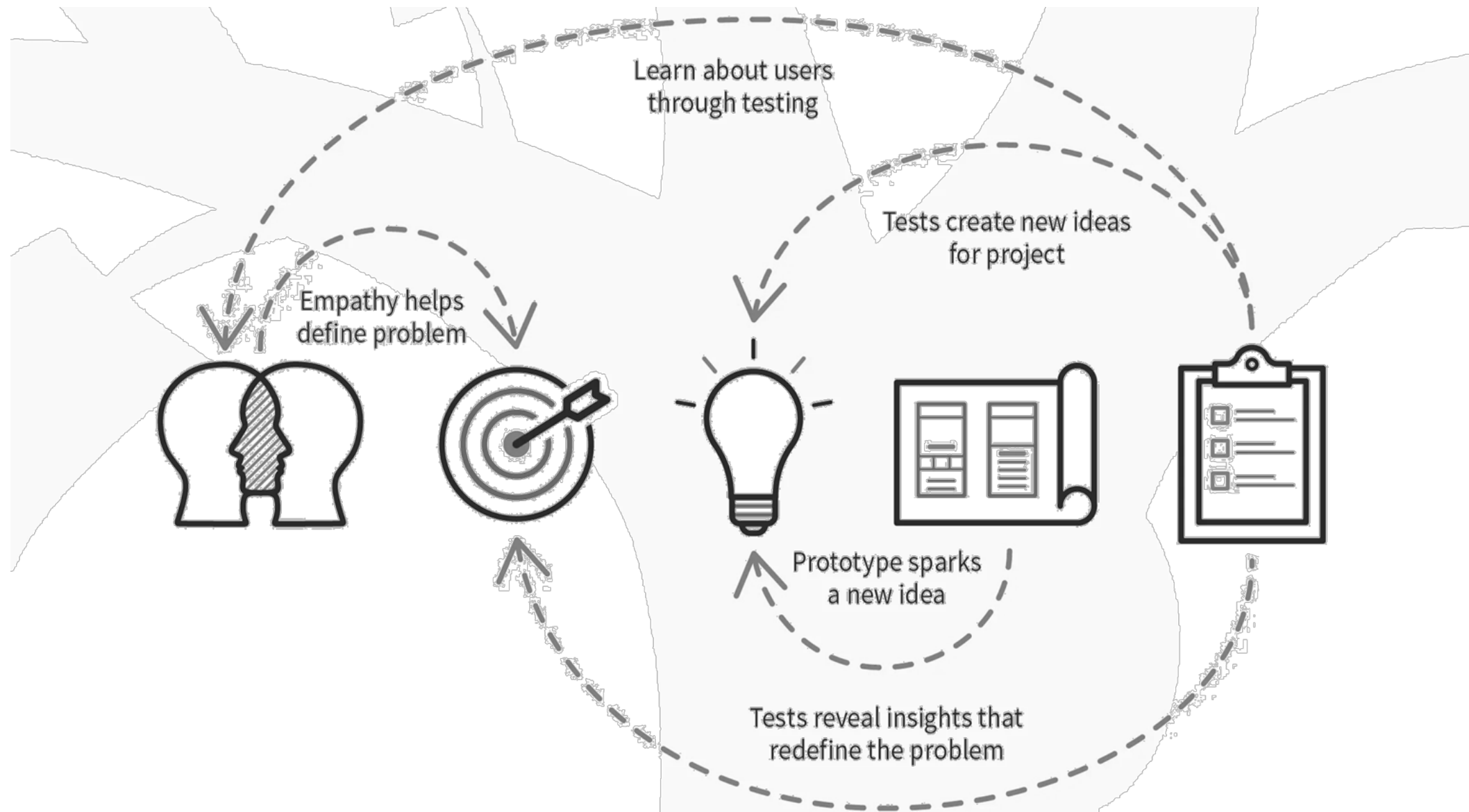


figure: design thinking, interaction design foundation, 2002.

my 2018 mandela washington fellowship experience exposed me to design thinking, a methodology that i was trained in, and now actively engage in my studio space.

design-thinking, in a nutshell, encourages a non-linear and iterative process that can help us systematically extract, teach, learn and apply human-centered techniques to solve problems in a creative and innovative way - in our designs, in our businesses, in our countries, in our lives (not just the architecture studio). it is a process used by changemakers the world over. a process in which you seek to understand your users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions which you can prototype and test. the overall goal is to identify alternative strategies and solutions that are not instantly apparent with your initial level of understanding.

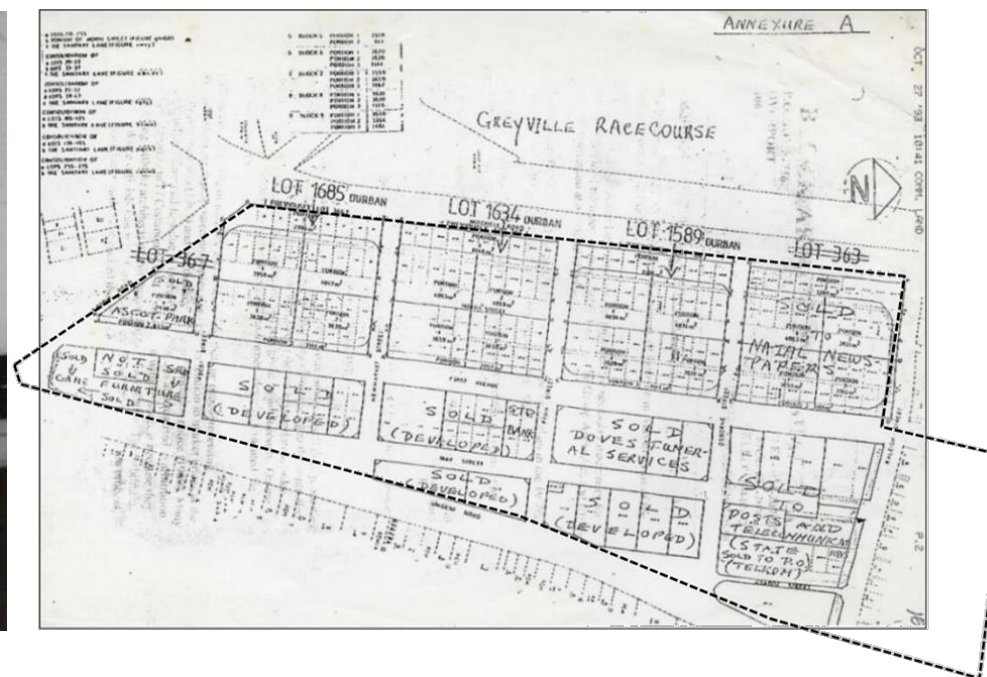


figure: precinct exploration for semester one 2023 – greyville. a history of forced removals, a present of urbicide, and a future of equitable justice?

how this, as well as my learning from the generous sharing of our cohort during induction this year, has influenced my practice? the structuring of my practice has been bolstered by induction, especially as a young academic, this past year has shown me that there is qualitative value in this process and not to treat it as a tickbox activities.

project-based learning is almost synonymous with the studio environment, scaling projects that are grounded in familiar places that host spectres of complexity and can afford deeper empathizing of the city for students. as i lecture at an exit-level, i am fortunate to be able to incrementally build on learned skills from foundational years, allowing students to see that life, at large, is an endless journey of learning.

“seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”

allowing my passions, values, and truth-seeking in my research to enrich my teaching, evident where gaps in student knowledge have been identified, and amplifying the learning outcomes by engaging my modules (design, and history and theory of architecture) to support an integrated knowledge base that encourages critical thinking and compassion at the centre. the goal through this is to plant a seed to create the understanding and desire to embrace, demand, and effect change within future architectural practitioners.