Urban Form, Sharing Practices and Resilience:
an actor-network analysis of the urban environment of the kgotla

By

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I **Buccah Goitseone SEBITLA** declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualification at any other academic institution.

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ABSTRACT

The urban form of the kgotla is a distinct kind of organisation of residences commonly found in rural and regional towns of Botswana. Major features include; clustering of residences in a semi-circular form of arrangement, common access, shared open space and the cattle kraal. The urban form evolved over many years to meet the needs of the communities for whom living was integral to sharing. In recent decades, regional areas began to be reshaped for participation in more global ways of life. Nonetheless, studies that focus on the potential contribution of the urban form and the resilience of the community, although remain an important and prominent feature of regional towns are little researched. Studies in this area largely focus upon human relations within the organisational form. In contrast, this study departs from the human orientated perspective as it explores the relationships between the spatial qualities of the urban form and sharing practices to understand how the interactions of diverse human-non-human actors contribute to community resilience. Specifically, the study serves to explore how traditional urban environment can support the resilience of the community by encouraging and strengthening multiple interactions in the way people are operating in sharing practices. The study is built on three part research questions; 1) Are sharing practices active? 2) In what ways does traditional urban fabric support these sharing practices? and 3) how can community resilience be an effect produced by the interactions in sharing practices? Three sharing practices explored in this study, namely; sharing decision-making, sharing experiences and sharing labour based on special activities, rather than everyday activities.

The study draws upon actor-network theory and those who have build upon it to give equal weight to both human and nonhuman participants in the urban environment.

The study applied actor-network orientated research methods in tracing the relationships. The methods used include; discourse analysis; photographic materials of sharing activities during fieldwork as well as from journal articles and the Internet; participant observation of naturally occurring activities; focus group discussion and in-depth interview with key participants in their residences. The methods used allowed me to explore many actors that may otherwise be forgotten or excluded during data collection. The actors were also traced in the analysis.

The study establishes that, firstly; sharing practices are active, an important kind of performance of the community and that each of the practice help build a sense of belonging within the community. Second, the urban form provides an environment within which all sharing practices flourish. The study contributes to the scholarly research community by showing that some of the spatial qualities of the urban form, which are traditionally considered to be important in cultural activities, could actually be omitted or replaced without impacting upon the significance of sharing. Lastly, the study establishes that resilience is important to the urban fabric of the kgotla in regional communities and identifies particular qualities of the community which gives an insight into what attributes of the community are important in cultivating and sustaining sharing practices in fostering resilient communities of the future.

GLOSSARY

B

Batswana : refers to the people of Botswana (singular – Motswana).

Bogadi/lobola : bride price; customarily, it comprises of cows and sometimes with a sheep. The number of cows varies from one community to another.

Botho : a shared value system which embraces spirit of community; respect; good behavior; belonging etc

G

Go-folosa : official registration of the marriage; the signing of certificate of marriage and exchange of rings.

Go-laya : to counsel; to guide or teach someone the rules concerning a particular practice or behavior.

K

Kgotla : community meetings place: physical environment characterized by a distinct arrangement of residences in semi-cycle or horseshoe (plural – *dikgotla*)

Kgosing : the kgotla of the chief; a place for tribal administration duties of the community: a ceremonial place for the entire town or village.

L

Loobo : shelter / kgotla shelter; customarily it is made of mud walls, timber posts and thatched grass; often times used for informal and formal meetings if it is public (in the kgotla) or as a cooking space if it is within the compound.

M

Malwapa : clustering of residences around the shared open place of the kgotla clearing (singular – *lelwapa*).

Mokoto : finely cooked meat (meat and salt only) customarily prepared during special occasions such as weddings etc; It is also a common practice that this meat is prepared in the cattle kraal.

P

Patlelo : semi-private open space of the kgotla clearing.

Patlo : a process of asking for the bride's hand in marriage.

S

Sego : handcrafted African calabash commonly used for serving Water.

Sego-sa-metsi : bride; receptacle of water; the 'one' who brings water.

Setswana : national language of Botswana; can also refer to the culture of Batswana in general.

T

Tswana : A group of Setho-Tswana speaking people of Southern Africa.