Named after Nelson: Tracing the threads of graphic heritage in Gauteng, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Places named after prominent figures like Nelson Mandela symbolise their legacies and shared values, offering an opportunity to learn about their lives and impact on society. In this article, we explore the concept of "graphic heritage" – a term that extends beyond physical markers to include theoretical understandings that enhance our knowledge of and experience with these places. Employing a "constructionist" perspective, we view the meanings associated with these places as constructed through individual interpretations. Working alongside the Nelson Mandela Foundation, our research focuses on six locations named after Nelson Mandela in Gauteng, South Africa. These sites are part of the Nelson Mandela Foundation's mission to promote a just society by preserving Mandela's legacy and fostering dialogue on social issues. Using photographic documentation inspired by Zeisel's "Design by Inquiry" framework, we examine the dynamic interplay between graphic heritage, toponymy (the study of place names), and topophilia (the emotional bond between people and places). The narrative weaves through the historical contexts and temporal dimensions of these places, enriching our understanding of Mandela's extensive influence. It identifies thematic threads that link graphic heritage with place names and emotional connections to places, concluding

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that an in-depth study of graphic heritage illuminates what is present and absent, revealing the profound layers of storytelling in design.

Keywords: Nelson Mandela, Graphic Heritage, Toponymy, Topophilia, Photography, Gauteng.

Introduction

Many places bear the names of eminent people. They embody their legacies and symbolise shared values. Nelson Mandela, an iconic figure of the 20th century, alongside others such as Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, and Miriam Makeba, stands as a global symbol of equal opportunities. Such individuals become enduring symbols whose iconic status is continuously re-engineered and commercialised, as seen in the case of Mandela, whose image has been transformed into a powerful brand (Du Preez 2013). In the case of Mandela, the Nelson Mandela Foundation acts as gatekeeper, endorser, and facilitator of the living legacy of Nelson Mandela. Placemaking in his name needs to be formally requested, after which it is assessed against varying and differentiating criteria such as evidence of direct historical linkage, direct or indirect commercial intention, and geographical proximity in relation to other institutions or entities that already bear Mandela's name (Harland, Burger & McKenzie 2024).

The Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory Archive (2024) registers hundreds of locations worldwide, including streets, buildings, gardens, and bridges named in honour of Mandela. The process of place naming – and any material representations that then refer to people – not only offers the opportunity to learn about a person but also impacts one's experience and understanding of place. We refer to these representations as a form of "graphic heritage", a concept that extends beyond reading physical markers and includes theoretical underpinnings to enhance knowledge and understanding.

Through photo essays, in this article we explore the dynamic interplay between graphic heritage, toponymy (place naming), and topophilia (the emotional bond between people and place) to tell the story of six places in the Gauteng province of South Africa. We build on prior research on the impact of place naming by exploring the interrelation of toponymy and topophilia within the context of Mandela's legacy, utilising a transdisciplinary approach that spans design, photography, urban planning, archival practices, and heritage studies.

Collaborating with the Nelson Mandela Foundation (a non-profit organisation in South Africa responsible for protecting and preserving the memory of Mandela), the research corresponds with the Foundation's principle mission 'to contribute to the making of a just society by keeping Mandela's legacy alive, providing an integrated public information resource on his life and times, and by convening dialogue around critical social issues' (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2024). This mission is achieved through three impact pathways: (1) Dialogue and advocacy: convening dialogue on critical social issues; (2) Memory: providing public access to information on his life and times through the Archives of the Centre of Memory at the Foundation; and (3) Nelson Mandela International Day: mobilising the legacy of Nelson Mandela. The first two provide the impetus for pursuing an exploratory hypothesis towards depicting how graphic heritage can be a useful classifying construct for understanding Mandela's acknowledged and unacknowledged impact on placemaking.

In the first part of this article, we provide background to the research by clarifying the relevant terms used and background narratives of the six case studies explored, whereas in the latter part, we discuss the thematic threads of connections between graphic heritage, toponymy, and topophilia according to the research design of the research.

Graphic heritage, toponymy, and topophilia

"Graphic heritage" is a relatively new concept that can be traced to the city's critical, creative, and poetic interpretations through a graphic design perspective (Harland 2024). Notwithstanding its broad appeal for a wide range of subject matter, for example, food packaging or sporting memorabilia, in the context of the built environment, it has been explored to stand for 'any object through which people experience and are informed about urban heritage in graphic form' (Harland & Xu 2021). Stressing the urban context, the "graphic" in graphic heritage is further substantiated by drawing from art, design, and architecture, following the concern of art historians for what has been referred to as the "graphic image", a classification that groups a sometimes related and other times random phenomena listed as architecture, designs, pictures, statues, diagrams, and graphs (Mitchell 1986:10–13). Graphic heritage is further shown to provide a bridging concept for the contested relationship between heritage interpretation, presentation, and representation (Harland et al. 2023). Based on these reference points that reflect the transition from an exploratory to classifying hypothesis, in front of the word heritage, there is an inflection on the ambiguous concept of "heritage" and what it describes

(Harrison 2013:14). For this discussion, we position the heritage in graphic heritage as 'a version of the past received through objects and display, representations and engagements, spectacular locations and events, memories and commemorations, and the preparation of places for cultural purpose and consumption' (Waterton & Watson 2015:1).

"Graphic heritage" is preferred to the more established notion of "visual heritage", which amalgamates ideas from a wider range of disciplinary perspectives. For example, cultural studies, tourism studies, cultural geography, art history, communication studies, archaeology, and anthropology are all invariably interested in visuality, imagery, visual culture, and representational practice in the context of heritage studies (Watson & Waterton 2010:1-2). This domain's provenance is visual culture and the prominence of the construction of meaning over objects. However, downplayed in visual heritage discourse informed by visual culture is the role of design, and specifically its sub-discipline of graphic design, the lens through which we are more versed.

Within what has been defined as design culture, Julier (2006:69) argues that visual culture is more concerned with the singularisation of the objects of analysis compared to design culture, which acknowledges multiplication through a range of media for meaning-making together with the considerable growth in design production and consumption during and since the latter decades of the twentieth century. Graphic design has been the most significant part of design practice since the mid-1980s (Julier 2014:27). In parallel, there has been the diversification and global spread of heritage during the same period (Harrison 2013:31).

Thus, "graphic heritage" is used here as an emerging concept that draws together interest in imagery, interpretation, visuality, and design, space, and place. Graphic elements inherent in the urban heritage experience provide a new understanding of select objects, places, and practices that connect with the past and are projected into the future to give a sense of history, identity, and belonging. We utilise graphic heritage in the materialisation of the notions of toponymy and topophilia.

In contrast, toponymy and topophilia are much less problematic in their definition. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2024) defines *toponymy* as 'the place-names of a country or district as a subject of study' and *topophilia* as 'love of, or emotional connection to, a particular place or physical environment.' In this article, we use a combination of the two to reinforce the means and the meanings associated with any place or physical environment connected to Nelson Mandela through his name. Since we focus on placemaking, the term toponymy was deemed more appropriate than onomastics.

Thus, such name designation impacts those who visit places named after Nelson Mandela regardless of the efficacy and reasoning behind the naming act. The purposeful act of place naming (effect) and the influence this may have (affect) bears a significant correlation between a particular place and the vision, mission, and core work of the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The interplay between graphic heritage, toponymy, and topophilia is evident in six case studies substantiating the project.

Narratives of the six locations named after Mandela in the Gauteng province

The research unfolds within the broad framework of graphic heritage, encompassing both theoretical and practical aspects of material representations to unravel the intricate tapestry of Mandela's presence interwoven in places. Despite the numerous locations named in his honour worldwide, we strategically document the diversity of representations and references to Mandela in select locations in the Gauteng region. Employing a "constructionist" perspective, we view the meaning associated with these places as constructed. The six selected places serve as individual case studies, each offering a unique lens to explore the interplay of graphic heritage, toponomy and topophilia. The six locations were chosen from the Archive at the Centre of Memory's (2024) list of tributes within the Gauteng region to represent diverse human geography types, including a bridge, park, square, village, theatre, and building.

The images in the photo essays shown below were taken by several people. They each look through the lens with different motivations, but all with a sense of design inquiry as framed in the methodology of this article. The final selection of images evolved from hundreds that were taken, analysed, and synthesised to work within a composite of photographs depicting a sense of character of the place. Sometimes, several visits were necessary as new narratives emerged.

Mandela Village in Hammanskraal, Pretoria

Mandela Village in Hammanskraal, located about 40 kilometres from Pretoria, epitomises post-apartheid urban development since its establishment on the historic Leeuwkraal farm in 1990 (Hall, Napier & Hagg 1996). Governed under the AmaNdebele ba Lebelo through Chief Kekana's office, the village became part of

the Hammanskraal Local Area Committee in 1995, marking a significant move towards community inclusivity (Hall *et al*. 1996). The village has seen substantial infrastructural growth, featuring amenities like schools, community halls, sports facilities, and a craft market. A prominent life-sized statue of Nelson Mandela unveiled in 1999 (see Figure 1), stands as a beacon of hope and a symbol of Mandela's enduring influence in an attempt to promote tourism in the area (South African Tourism [sa]). Sculptor Phil Minaar created the statue, which is believed to be the first public statue of Mandela (Abreu 2013).



FIGURE Nº 1

Photo essay of Mandela Village in Hammanskraal, Pretoria, 2023. The significance of this photo essay is unpacked in the thematic threads of connections between graphic heritage, toponymy, and topophilia in this article. Photography credit: Alet Pretorius.

Despite facing challenges such as limited access to clean water, high youth unemployment, and ongoing crime, which reflect the complexities of urban development in transitional societies (Rafapa 2021), the village shows signs of vibrant community life. Issues like the 2023 cholera outbreak highlight public health challenges (Evans 2023). Nevertheless, the community thrives, with well-maintained public spaces, local sports achievements, and educational opportunities reflecting a strong communal spirit. The village's sports facilities have fostered local talent, leading to achievements like hosting the South African roller skating championship in 2022 (Moleya 2022) and the Hammanskraal Tennis Club receiving Gauteng woman in sports awards and the Rising Stars provincial finals (*Moretele Times* 2023). The village symbolises the evolution of post-apartheid urban development.

Nelson Mandela Bridge in Braamfontein, Johannesburg

The Nelson Mandela Bridge (see Figure 2), inaugurated in 2003 by Nelson Mandela himself, is a pivotal infrastructure in Johannesburg, linking Braamfontein and Newtown. This bridge not only serves as a critical thoroughfare but also symbolises Mandela's legacy of bridging socio-political divides, connecting historic and cultural districts, and signifying urban transformation within the city (Mfaniseni 2021; Road Traffic Technology [sa]; South African Tourism 2024;). Recognised as the largest cable-styled bridge in Southern Africa, it was designed to facilitate the flow of approximately 3 000 vehicles per hour, enhancing accessibility and safety across vital urban areas (Road Traffic Technology [sa]). Constructed with 4 000 cubic meters of concrete and 1 500 tons of steel, the bridge faced significant challenges, including spanning 42 railway lines without interrupting traffic. Its construction won an award for outstanding civil engineering from the South African Institute of Civil Engineers (City of Johannesburg 2011). Additionally, anticipating the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the bridge's lighting was upgraded to feature rainbow-coloured lights, symbolising South Africa's rainbow nation – a tribute to Mandela's enduring impact (South African History Online [sa]).

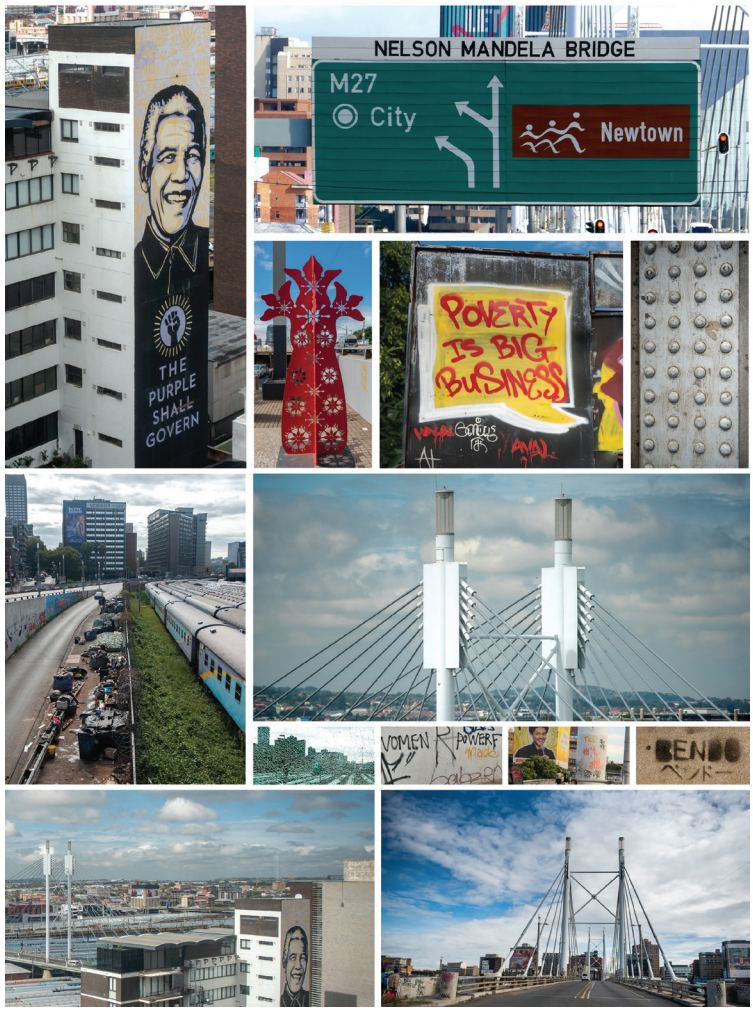

FIGURE **Nº 2**

Photo essay of Nelson Mandela Bridge in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2023. Photography credit: Robert Harland, Alet Pretorius, Matsediso Dichaba, Khaya Malinga and Tsepiso Mahooe.

Nelson Mandela Theatre in Braamfontein, Johannesburg

The Nelson Mandela Theatre (see Figure 3), situated atop Braamfontein Hill within the Johannesburg Civic Theatre complex, is a prominent cultural landmark. Initially built in 1962 and significantly renovated in 1987, the theatre re-opened in 1992 as a notable technical marvel in the theatrical world (Joburg Theatre 2020). Renamed in 2009 to honour Nelson Mandela, with Mandela himself endorsing this tribute (Joburg Media 2019), the theatre now features 1 069 seats. It hosts a variety of performances ranging from Broadway musicals to local productions, such as Janice

Honeyman's pantomimes (Sessel 2015). The theatre is a cultural beacon symbolising a commitment to artistic excellence and societal transformation. Known for its vibrant red seats, the Mandela Theatre is a hub of creative talent and a venue for significant events, including the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture. It reflects its role in fostering global peace and social justice discussions (The Archive at the Centre of Memory 2023). It also houses the Joburg Ballet, which trains aspiring South African ballet dancers, further contributing to its function as a centre for cultural education and enrichment. The theatre serves as a space for high-calibre performances and embodies Mandela's legacy of societal transformation through cultural engagement (Joburg 2023). Each production is crafted with high dedication, aiming to provide audiences with an enriching and immersive experience. This commitment reinforces the theatre's role in promoting creativity and cultural dialogue within Johannesburg, positioning it as a central figure in the city's arts and entertainment scene (Sabra & Burger 2023).



FIGURE **Nº 3**

Photo essay of Nelson Mandela Theatre in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2023. Photography credit: Alet Pretorius.

Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory in Houghton, Johannesburg

The Nelson Mandela Foundation, located in Houghton, Johannesburg, was established by Nelson Mandela in 1999 following his term as South Africa's first democratically elected president. Initially serving as Mandela's post-presidential office, the Foundation transitioned into a non-profit organisation dedicated to memory, dialogue, and legacy work, housing the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory (see Figure 4) (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2024). As a custodian of



FIGURE **Nº 4**

Photo essay of Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory in Houghton, Johannesburg, 2023. Photography credit: Robert Harland and Celeste McKenzie.

Mandela's vast archives, the Foundation manages an extensive collection that documents his life and work. It has taken significant steps to digitise and preserve these materials to international standards, ensuring accessibility through an online archive portal that includes a variety of digital resources, social media presence, and extensive databases (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2024).

The Foundation's mission is to foster a just society that values diversity and learns from history. It engages in dialogue and advocacy, supports archival research, and organises Mandela Day activities to promote community service. Through these efforts, the Foundation aims to act as a change agent, connecting with and impacting people in South Africa and globally (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2024): 'Like the expansive blue of the South African sky, the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory is synonymous with endless possibilities. It stands as a beacon of hope, its azure emblematic of the boundless opportunities available to all South Africans.'

Nelson Mandela Park in Mamelodi, Pretoria

Mamelodi, established in 1945 on Vlakfontein farm north of Pretoria, transitioned from a temporary labour camp to a vibrant township named after the Tswana phrase for 'mother of melodies' in 1950, reflecting its evolution into a permanent home for post-World War II workers (van der Waal 2000). Currently, it stands as a dynamic township rich in history and cultural diversity, illustrating the contrasts of urban South Africa with its mix of expansive malls and simple street-side businesses (Embassy Direct 2016). The township's predominantly low-quality housing highlights the socio-economic challenges and disparities in access to essential services. Mamelodi hosts various institutions focused on education and health alongside recreational spaces like Nelson Mandela Park (see Figure 5). This park, created as part of the Greening of Mamelodi initiative, provides a community space opposite the Mamelodi Regional Hospital, offering tree-lined areas and playgrounds that facilitate community engagement (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2024; Walter Sisulu Environmental Centre [sa]). Opened in 1996 by Nelson Mandela, the park was intended as a symbol of community renewal and beautification, embodying Mandela's vision for spaces that foster joy and learning despite showing signs of wear over time.



FIGURE **Nº 5**

Photo essay of Nelson Mandela Park in Mamelodi, Pretoria, 2021. Photography credit: Fidel Thabang Mosupye.

Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton, Johannesburg

Sandton, a suburb with a rich history tracing back to its origins as a home to the San, a hunter-gatherer society, has evolved significantly from its early days as a farming district in 1906 to become Africa's richest square mile (Sandton Chronicle 2022; Stoughton 2021). The suburb, formed by merging Sandown and Bryanston, underwent rapid urbanisation and became part of Johannesburg in the 1960s (Sandton Chronicle 2022). It is a major financial, business, tourism, and retail hub, attracting wealthy South Africans and international visitors. In 2004, Sandton Square

was renamed Nelson Mandela Square (see Figure 6) as part of the celebrations marking the tenth anniversary of South Africa's democracy, reflecting a significant change in the recognition and commemoration of historical figures (Gerber 2015).

Situated in Sandton's Central Business District, Nelson Mandela Square is co-owned by Liberty Group Limited and Liberty Two Degrees and offers a blend of local heritage and international allure (Nelson Mandela Square 2022). It features a variety of high-end retail options and dining experiences, serving as a central component of the Nelson Mandela Square shopping centre adjacent to Sandton City, a landmark shopping destination known for housing over 372 top global retail brands (Nelson Mandela Square 2024). Directly across from this bustling commercial zone is the Sandton Convention Centre, a premier venue for major events in South Africa, underscoring Sandton's status as a critical node in Johannesburg's economic and cultural landscape. The square symbolises the country's progress post-apartheid.



FIGURE Nº 6

Photo essay of Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton, Johannesburg, 2022-2023. Photography credit: Robert Harland, Yolandi Burger and Everardt Burger.

Design by inquiry: A methodological approach

In the way it is interpreted here, graphic heritage is used as much as a critical perspective as a practical tool. This approach encourages the question of how graphic images in the context of design for heritage functions as heritage interpretation, presentation, and representation (Figure 7). Design inquiry is central to this approach and provides the methodological framework for graphic heritage.

Design for Heritage

Graphic Heritage		
Heritage Interpretation	***Heritage Presentation***	***Heritage Representation***
What constitutes heritage?	Why it is heritage?	How it affects people through the reproduction of meaning?
(Designation)	(Explanation)	(Impact)

FIGURE **Nº 7**

Graphic heritage as a system of representation spanning heritage interpretation, presentation, and representation (Harland & Xu 2021).

Seeking out portrayals of Nelson Mandela in places named after him is aligned with John Zeisel's (2006) work on *Observing Physical Traces* concerning systematic approaches to looking at physical surroundings. Zeisel's methodology allows for the development of concepts, the formulation of hypotheses, and empirical testing. The case studies featured in this article follow this approach towards establishing an explanatory hypothesis framed within the domain of graphic heritage. To grasp this potential, it is important also to acknowledge what constitutes the "graphic" in graphic heritage. Significant in this pursuit is an understanding of what has been referred to as the "graphic image" as it has been used to reflect the concerns of art historians. Graphic image in this regard is a catch-all term for an assortment of 'pictures, statues, architectural imagery, and designs that may incorporate abstract, non-representational paintings, ornamental or structural designs, diagrams, and graphs' (Mitchell 1986:10–13). Utilising this concept with places named after Nelson Mandela allows for exploring the heritage orientation of graphic images in the selected six locations in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

Thematic threads of connections between graphic heritage, toponymy, and topophilia

> Like the person it was named after, the Nelson Mandela Bridge has become the iconic symbol of the "new Johannesburg" – an inclusive city, a melting pot of cultures and traditions, a vibrant meeting place for all the peoples of Africa. As we drape this bridge, we reaffirm Madiba as the architect of our transformation, the symbol of reconciliation and nation-building (Masondo 2010).

The analysis of the various places explored highlights the interplay between graphic heritage, toponymy, and topophilia and how meaning is reproduced. A comparative study of these places reveals similarities and differences in how the three are manifested. Graphic heritage anchors communities in their shared history and values, fostering a sense of place and belonging. However, the degree of maintenance, investment, and public engagement with graphic heritage varies, resulting in different levels of community attachment to these spaces, which can be explored through the dimensions of location and context, symbolism and representation, functionality and community engagement, and maintenance and preservation, as can be deduced by the visual appearance of place. For example, the defacing of signs in Mamelodi compared to the pristine nature of those in Sandton relates to these issues.

Location and context

The selected places span a range of urban environments (see Figure 8), from bustling city centres (such as Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton [F], Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory in Houghton [D], the Nelson Mandela Theatre [C] and the Nelson Mandela Bridge in Braamfontein [B]) to quieter residential townships (such as Nelson Mandela Park in Mamelodi [E] and Mandela Village in Hammanskraal [A]). This diversity reflects the region's and country's varied socio-economic landscapes and historical contexts. The geographical context influences the significance and function of graphic heritage within each place.

Detailed location maps serve as a vital foundational element in illustrating the geographical context of each place documented (places are documented with "A" on the respective maps in Figure 9). These maps are designed to do more than pinpoint locations: they reveal the land usage patterns and highlight nearby amenities, including significant and lesser-known access routes, pedestrian pathways, bodies

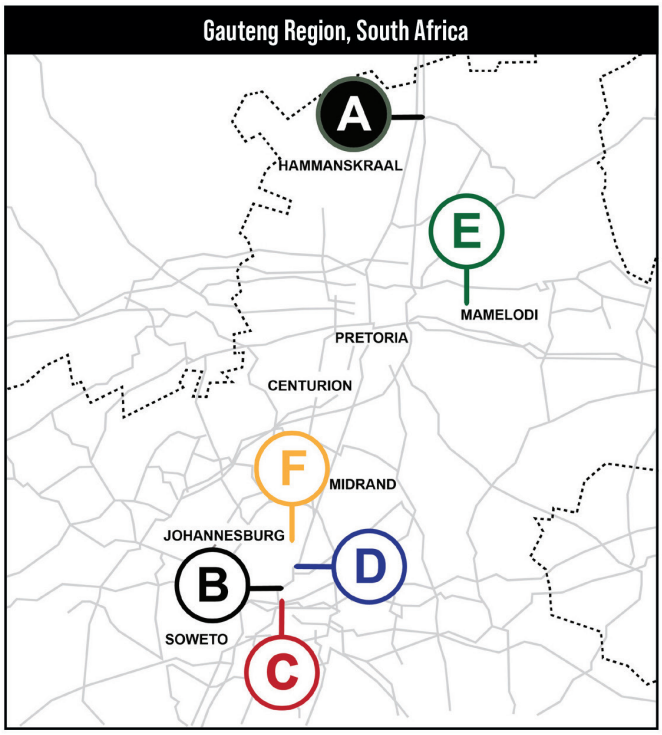

FIGURE **Nº 8**

Location map showing the location and context of the six places in the Gauteng province. Design credit: Yolandi Burger.

of water, and railway lines. This cartographic detailing is essential in visually understanding the place's role and significance within the community. It offers insight into how these places function and how the infrastructure supports the daily lives of those who use them. Through these maps, we aim to paint a comprehensive picture of the sites named after Nelson Mandela, ensuring that their stories and contributions to the community's fabric are celebrated and understood.

For urban planners and civil engineers, the use of these detailed location maps is invaluable since it provides a comprehensive understanding of geographical contexts, land use patterns, existing infrastructure, and community needs. It aids planners and designers in making informed decisions on infrastructure development, future land use zoning, and enhancing urban spaces and places. Specifically, in the context of locations named after Nelson Mandela, these maps underscore the cultural and historical significance of these places with the hope that future urban development respects, integrates and enhances the heritage of South Africa.



FIGURE **Nº 9**

Place-specific location maps showing the detailed location and context of the six places in Gauteng province. Design credit: Yolandi Burger.

Symbolism and representation

Graphic heritage in the form of statues, signage, and architectural design serves as visual representations of Nelson Mandela's legacy across all case studies. However, the symbolism attached to these representations varies depending on the space and its historical significance.

For example, the life-sized statue of Nelson Mandela in Mandela Village serves as a visual anchor and symbol of hope for the community. The statue not only represents Mandela's enduring legacy but also embodies the residents' deep connection to their village and its history. Mandela's influence is vividly immortalised in the village's southern end, where visual tributes cluster. A pivotal roundabout adorned with a statue of Mandela marks the entrance to various facilities named in his honour, including Mandela Hall, the Mandela Sportsground, and the Mandela Cricket Oval. These memorials are not only a homage to his enduring legacy but are strategically situated near the N1 highway and the Dinokeng Game Reserve,

serving as beacons that draw visitors and promote tourism, as seen in the location map. Despite facing challenges such as inadequate access to clean water and persistent crime, some residents express a strong sense of pride and belonging in their community, such as the local medicine woman who has a portrait of Nelson Mandela in her home (see Functionality and community engagement section below), reflecting the topophilia nurtured by the graphic heritage of Mandela Village.

The Nelson Mandela Bridge in Braamfontein serves as both a functional infrastructure and a symbolic structure representing Mandela's legacy of bridging divides. The bridge's architectural design and rainbow-coloured lighting pay homage to Mandela's role in South Africa's journey toward democracy and unity. However, the photographic documentation reveals a disconnect between the bridge's historical significance and current vandalised condition, highlighting the importance of maintaining and revitalising graphic heritage to preserve the emotional connection and topophilia associated with such landmarks.

In Nelson Mandela Park (Mamelodi) and Nelson Mandela Square (Sandton), graphic heritage plays a crucial role in shaping the identity and functionality of public and pseudo-public places. While Nelson Mandela Park serves as a space for the community, its minimal designation to honour Mandela through only two municipality signboards and not further graphic heritage elements underscores the need for greater visibility of graphic heritage to preserve the park's significance beyond its current use. In contrast, Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton embodies a fusion of local heritage and international flair, with its statues, inscriptions, and interactive elements (such as soundboxes and QR codes) celebrating Mandela's legacy while offering visitors a glamorous shopping and dining experience.

The Nelson Mandela Theatre at the Joburg Theatre and the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory further exemplify the intersection of graphic heritage and topophilia in public and pseudo-public places. Visitors are welcomed to the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory by a smaller replica of the Mandela statue from Sandton, set against the distinctive design of Mandela's fingerprint on the glass facade. Inside, a rich tapestry of Mandela's graphical representations unfolds, affirming the Foundation's role as an educational beacon and an agent for societal change. These places honour Mandela's legacy through their names and serve as spaces where communities can engage with and celebrate their shared heritage.

The theatrical performances, educational programmes, and archival resources offered by these institutions contribute to the cultivation of topophilia by fostering a sense of belonging and cultural pride among visitors and residents alike. Figure

10 shows a collage of the current *Named after Nelson* exhibition that shows symbolism and representation of this research project in action with a tangible result that addresses the first two impact pathways of the Nelson Mandela Centre for Memory's mission statement. The exhibition also encourages the public to share their stories about places named after Mandela via a social media campaign to enrich the archive.



FIGURE **Nº 10**

Named after Nelson exhibition, which is on display at the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory in Houghton, South Africa, from April to September 2024. Photography credit: Yolandi Burger.

Functionality and community engagement

This aspect differs across the places explored, influencing how graphic heritage contributes to topophilia. Cultural institutions like the Nelson Mandela Theatre and Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory are hubs for artistic expression, education, and historical preservation, fostering a deep sense of cultural pride and belonging among visitors. Urban landmarks like Nelson Mandela Square attract diverse audiences and serve as platforms to communicate national unity and post-apartheid progress to the world. However, commercialising these spaces may dilute the historical significance of graphic heritage, leading to debates about authenticity and cultural commodification. Public places like Nelson Mandela Park and Mandela Village function as recreational areas and community gathering spaces, providing opportunities for social interaction and cultural exchange.

Residents in Mamelodi and Hammanskraal express a strong sense of pride and belonging, reflecting the community's deep connection to the graphic heritage associated with Nelson Mandela. For example, the testimony of a local medicine woman from Hammanskraal (see Figure 1). She expressed how Mandela's legacy was instrumental in the community's ability to secure their land from the government, emphasising, 'If it weren't for Mandela and his reputation, we wouldn't have a place to stay. Because of Mandela, we fought for this location and secured formal permission from the government, all through his name' (Anonymous 2023). However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and socio-economic disparities underscore the complexities of urban development and identity formation in transitional societies.

Maintenance and preservation

This aspect of graphic heritage is crucial in sustaining topophilia and cultural memory. Cultural places like the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory prioritise preserving and digitising archival materials to ensure accessibility and historical accuracy, as stated in their vision and mission (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2024). However, challenges such as funding constraints and technological obsolescence highlight the ongoing need for sustainable preservation strategies. Public spaces like Nelson Mandela Park need help with maintenance and safety, affecting the overall user experience and diminishing the symbolic value of graphic heritage. Efforts to revitalise these spaces through community engagement and collaborative initiatives are essential for preserving their significance for future generations.

Conclusion

A critical approach to graphic heritage unveils a nuanced understanding of both presence and absence within the socio-cultural fabric of South Africa. Through the lens of graphic heritage, this article reports on exploring the legacy of Nelson Mandela and its manifestation in various forms across urban and township landscapes. However, it is essential to recognise that the significance of graphic heritage extends beyond its tangible representations to encompass the narratives, memories, and aspirations embedded within these symbols. Graphic heritage is a potent tool for commemorating historical events, celebrating cultural identities, and fostering collective memory. Yet, it also reveals the gaps and challenges in preserving and promoting cultural heritage in contemporary society. The absence or neglect of

graphic heritage highlights systemic issues such as underinvestment, marginalisation, and the erasure of marginalised narratives within the national discourse.

A holistic approach to graphic heritage is crucial when considering Nelson Mandela's presence and absence through commemorating human geography in South Africa and the world (see the hundreds of streets, buildings, gardens, bridges and more listed on the Archive of the Centre of Memory 2024). This means preserving symbols and amplifying marginalised voices, reclaiming neglected spaces, and fostering inclusive narratives reflecting South Africa's cultural diversity. Future research should prioritise community engagement, sustainable development, and social justice in graphic heritage studies and practices. Collaboration among heritage experts, urban planners, policymakers, and communities is critical to advancing graphic heritage preservation and promotion and using graphic heritage as a tool for social change to create more resilient, equitable, and culturally rich communities in South Africa and beyond.

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We thank our wonderful network of photographers who documented the places featured in this article (read more of the unique lenses of the photographers in Harland, Burger & McKenzie 2024:17). We also sincerely thank the residents of Mandela Village, particularly Elizabeth and David for their hospitality, as well as Dumizulu for his invaluable assistance as our interpreter. Special thanks to The Playground for access to capture the Nelson Mandela Bridge, the Joburg Theatre staff, and Nelson Mandela Square's marketing department for their cooperation. Lastly, we appreciate the Nelson Mandela Foundation's ongoing partnership and consent to feature the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory in this article.

Declaration

This article is an academic extension of the *Named after Nelson* exhibition, displayed at the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory in Houghton, South Africa, from April to September 2024. It incorporates and paraphrases content from the exhibition's catalogue to enrich the discussion and analysis presented herein. All referenced or adapted materials have been duly acknowledged to maintain academic integrity.

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