

II. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to develop an approach to dealing with existing urban fabric of the Pretoria inner city in a way that would address large scale problems of decentralization, sprawl and placelessness and ultimately urban decay.

It argues that the unhealthy living environments in the city is one of the primary causes of these problems, and by using the landscape based approach found in landscape urbanism, one can create healthy urban environment that will address people's needs in a sustainable uplifting way.

Through the study of this theory in conjunction with precedents an approach was developed as to how fragmented and under utilised sites could be used to create a healthy, landscape orientated urban fabric. This approach investigated process as a means to first heal the sites over time, then reprogram them once the sites are healthy.

The investigation revealed that these process are not merely that of ecological rehabilitation but that there are various social and historical process that have shape the site over time, imbuing it with character and unique potentials.

Therefore the approach had to incorporate qualitative and quantitative aspects solving both functional requirements but also addressing character and experiential qualities of site.

It was found that landscape urbanism could not be used exclusively or in isolation from the design professions as it did not offer the necessary guidelines when it came to detail design, therefore additional theories had to be investigated to supplement it. It proved that the individual design profession of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design all

have their rightful place and individual strengths required to accurately address the richness of urban form required to engage with everyday life.

The urban environment has a direct impact on the quality of life of its residents. If they are happy, protected and supported by their environment, they will grow and flourish. If their environment is unhealthy they will stagnate or set off to find somewhere more promising.

The detail intervention therefore became a combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects merged with intuitive design and landscape architectural practice. It attempts to engage the existing qualities of the site through innovative responses to create contemporary everyday urban spaces. It used wasted and decayed sites to generate urban spaces that offer people what they need in terms of escape, relaxation, recreation and connection to their environment whilst solving functional requirements and ultimately addressing large scale urban problems in an attempt to regenerate urban form.

“No matter how ambitious or far reaching the above outlined practices (of Landscape Urbanism) may be, at the end of the day there will still be doors, windows, gardens, stream corridors, apples, and lattes. There is an inevitable intimacy with things that characterise a rich urban experience. The failure of earlier urban design and regionally scaled enterprises was the oversimplification, the reduction, of the phenomenal richness of physical life (Corner 2005: 32).”



Fig:247. Going west (Author 2010)

Epilogue

Having searched in vain for many years man was once again left disappointed; this time by the empty promises of suburbia. In discontent he spends all his time commuting back and forth to his Tuscan villa that looks uniquely identical to every other house in the complex. He arrives home exhausted, his children are fighting over the Nintendo, his wife is moaning that she never sees him and the frustrated dog is chewing his favourite shoes. He steps onto his crowded balcony overlooking the millions of cluster houses spread across the valley. He sighs, trying to fight the realisation that somehow there must be more to life.

Once again sets off in search new land but this time he does not need to look to far, unexpectedly he finds himself walking in the tree lined streets of Pretoria West, where to his amazement he finds himself immersed in a scene of vibrant activity. Couples hold hands whilst doing window shopping, children race to meet their friends at the park, a man walking his dog. Cyclist zoom by an old couple peacefully walk the endless trails that meander around lakes, through orchards and fields all within walking distance of their home.

The man walks past the station where passengers return from a day of work not weighed down by hours of commuting but with a novel under one arm and a bag of groceries they bought from the organic market on their way home. Neighbours make casual conversation as they bump into each other on the corner.

As he walks he is intrigued by the overgrown ruins of ancient industrial structures, he explores. Soon finds himself enveloped in a series of walled gardens, water steams drown out the vibrant city noise and the lush vegetation calms the senses. Filtered light dapples the undergrowth. He finds himself reflecting on his life, overwhelmed he sits down, a smile of content spreads across his face. He realises that finally, he has found what he was looking for.

12. References

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