Chapter 1: Establishing the Platform

'WE CANNOT CLAIM THAT AS CURRENTLY FORMULATED, THE BULK OF ARCHITECTURE IS IN ANY WAY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE.

THE CHALLENGE IS TO DEVELOP NEW WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE PROFESSION,

NOT MERELY 'SOFT' KNOWLEDGE, NOT CLOSED, OBJECTIVE, ABSOLUTE AND OVER DETERMINED, BUT SUBJECTIVE, SITUATIONAL, OPEN AND CONDITIONED BY RECEPTION.

STANLEY MATHEWS
(Mathews;2007;67)

Illus: 3   **A new RDP scheme being handed over in Mamelodi, an example of the fluxual dynamics of South Africa's current Context** (Author, 2011)

1.0.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEVELOPMENTAL LANDSCAPE

Noleen Murray, in *Contemporary South African Architecture in a Landscape of Transition,* writes of the current South African paradigm where landscapes in the cities, townships, towns, farmlands and rural homeland spaces are merging, as South African society 'opens up' to globalizing forces. **(Deckler et al,2006;5)**

This condition of 'opening up' is fuelling the unprecedented rate of urbanization within the cultures, economic classes and race that are currently intermixing in ways not contextually experienced before.

The effects, both positive and negative, of this exodus are seen not only by the temporal mobile population deemed 'informal', but within all divisions of South African Society.

This postcolonial spatial layout of South Africa is considered in the same post modern condition as almost anywhere in the globalizing world where poverty and wealth are becoming increasingly polarized. **(Watson, 34; 2001)**

These emerging publics are competing with old for resources and access to urban facilities that are in Vanessa Watson's terms *"More divided than ever".* **Watson,33; 2001)**

The large gaps that exist between these economic classes contain risk factors that extend beyond social degradation and poor quality of environment, but threaten environmental and health sectors.

1.1 A NEW ROLE FOR THE SPATIAL DISCIPLINES

Thorsten Deckler argues that South African cities have become sites of debate for critical engagement of the re-configuring and remixing of identities - racial, gender, spatial and more. **(Deckler Et Al,2006;9)**

Within this debate Architectural interventions are expected to be more responsive, more responsible and consider more than ever their effects on future resources both tangible and intangible.

The debate shifts the focus away from built structures as iconic objects of architecture, to issues of structure supporting culture and identity within the social political context in which these structures are made and used.

According to Murray, there no longer appears to be space for the idealistic visionary projects that previously characterized the modernist approach to architecture. **(Murray et al, 2007;24)**

1.2 ENVIRONMENTS OF FLEXIBILITY AND FLUIDITY

Within a developing context, spatial professionals are now expected to design buildings in spaces that are by traditional definitions considered 'fluid' - as is the case of informal settlements, housing, or socially programmed houses through apartheid segregation and the like. **(Deckler et al,2006,8)**

In reference to these areas of fluxual development, Murray comments that it is impossible to ignore the ways in which architecture continues to give form to what Foucault calls the spaces of 'Heterotopia'.

These Heterotopic spaces are seen in the simultaneously mythic and real spaces that remain exclusionary, 'privileged' and spaces of that are under utilized - those of 'deviation'. **(Deckler et al,2006: 6)**

In order to engage with and understand these spaces of deviation and exclusion an approach that goes against 'business as usual' is required.

An alternative set of parameters that define a brief is needed to break this paradigm.

Illus: 4   **Mamelodi residents moving temporary home to make way for RDP** (Author, 2011)

1.3 A CRITICAL STANCE

In order to determine these parameters a critical and informed stance on the current social developmental issues is needed by spatial professionals.

Quilian Riano, the founder of DSGN AGNC (Design Agency), writes of his encounters inactivism in architecture. He notes the 'anxiety' around the notion, but explains how at its roots, this stance on design stems from modernism. (Riano, 2010)

He explains in his work how designers like Teddy Cruz, Marjetica Potrc, the late Sam Mockbee, Urban Think-Tank, and Elemental Do-Tank have learned the lessons from the earlier efforts and seem to be rethinking the meaning of activism.

Similar ideas in practice are seen locally in groups such 26'10 South Architects, Harbor & Associates, Asiye eTafuleni, ARC Architects (Cape Town) and FEDUP to name a few.

The types of projects and methods employed by these groups, locally and internationally, have begun to reveal what Riano is terming, 'an emerging movement of *Critical Activists'.* (Riano, 2010)

The most important attribute that can be found among these groups is the desire to architecturalize these conditions with active designs that rely on genuine inhabitant participation.
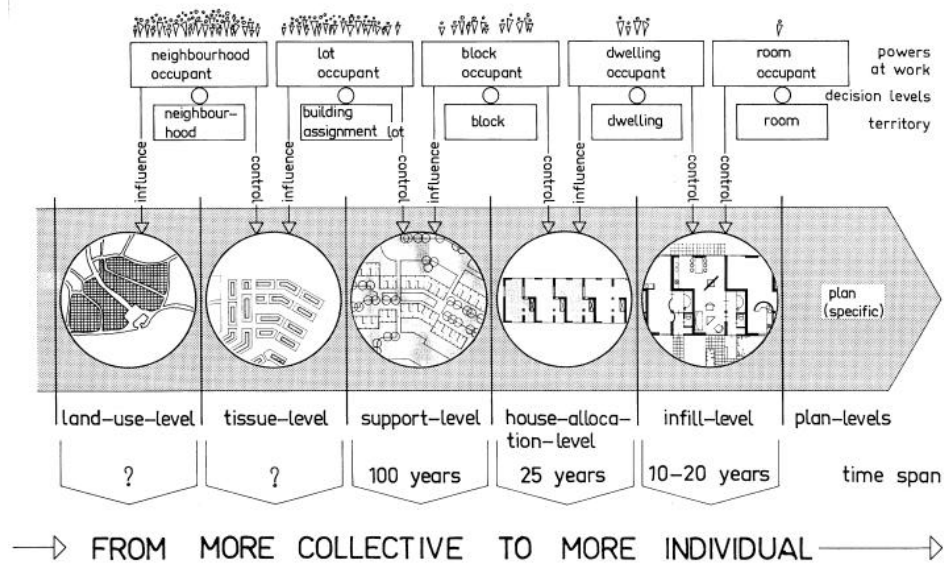
1.4 SUPPORT AND INFILL

What can be noted from the architecturalized products of these spatial professionals was an undercurrent concept in their work, classifiable under the contemporary design term of 'support and infill' architecture and planning.

This term, stemming from John Habraken's 1972 publication of *Supports: An Alternative to Housing in London,* outlines a strong conceptual notion embracing participatory and systematic processes of design and construction that is currently one of the more appropriate techniques with regard to critical engagement with developing contexts. *(see Illus: 6)*

Illus: 5   **The author involved in a process of critical engagement in Slovo Park** (Author, 2010)

Illus: 6 **Frame and infill hierarchies as described by Habraken** (Habraken, 2011:http://www.habraken.com/html/downloads/type_as_a_social_agreement.pdf)

Ignorance is liberating
Start where you can: never say can't
Imagine first: reason later
Be reflective: waste time
Embrace serendipity: get muddled
Play games, serious games
Challenge consensus
Look for multipliers
Work backwards: move forwards
Feel good

Illus: 7 **Poem of participation ethos by Nabeel Hamdi** (Hamdi, 2010)

1.5 CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT AS A STARTING POINT

Noleen Murray states that within this debate the scope of spatial professionals has extended beyond traditional tools of the spatial disciplines and now includes addressing the subjectively described 'messy' field of engagement by professionals in the spatial disciplines. **(Murray et al,2007;23)**

Within the current unprecedented growth rate in the peri-urban areas, spatial strategies that embrace participative and critical design will have to adapt to the increasing rural movement to metropolitan areas.

Through this critical engagement professionals can begin to address the aforementioned issues from the grass roots levels and tap into one of developmental process's more difficult to harness, but more powerful, resources described by Nabeel Hamdi as *Social Capital.* *(see Illus: 7)*

1.6 POTENTIAL IN SOCIAL CAPITAL

The resource of social capital is possibly one of the most under-utilized assets in the South African development context, displayed in the collective energy that can be seen in the rapid growth of South Africa's planned and unplanned settlements.

The problems faced nationally today will only be solved with the energy of the human collective represented by individuals on-site.

1.7 POINT OF DEPARTURE

This dissertation aims to engage with the inherent social capital that exists within the cohesive networks in the developing context of Mamelodi, Gauteng.

Through a process of engagement, a review of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities will lay the foundation towards designing an intervention that will seek to exist in balance with its contextual network.

The aim being that an Architectural Intervention can be designed to not only engage with such a network, but through a symbiotic relationship enhance both the building and its host network.

1.8 DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 1 - The dissertation process begins as an investigation into what defines the term 'community' in the developmental context of South Africa.

CHAPTER 2 - The concept of participation in design/research is explored and a process of participation is defined.

CHAPTER 3 - The participatory research is illustrated, followed by a set of key findings in terms of network strengths, weakness and opportunities. This process also revealed the core themes of the context, to be used for the intervention.

A niche intervention is then defined.

CHAPTER 4 - An overview of 3 precedent studies followed by a summarized look at the history of 'frame and infill' buildings.

CHAPTER 5 - A thorough analysis of the context, its future plans and the dissertation framework, in which the end design is situated.

CHAPTER 6 - The on-site research, analysis and conceptual exploration is combined to determine the nature of the intervention and how it should function in its context.

A unit of growth is designed.

CHAPTER 7 - The unit of growth is then tested against the findings from the previous chapters and hypothetically 'grown' on-site. A focussed look at the architectural manifestation of the unit with the initial host user is then explored further.

CHAPTER 8 - The technical resolution of the unit and the architectural manifestation of its growth is further explained and quantified.

CHAPTER 9 - A conclusion is drawn and reflected upon. This chapter contains the background to further research, analysis and project possibilities.

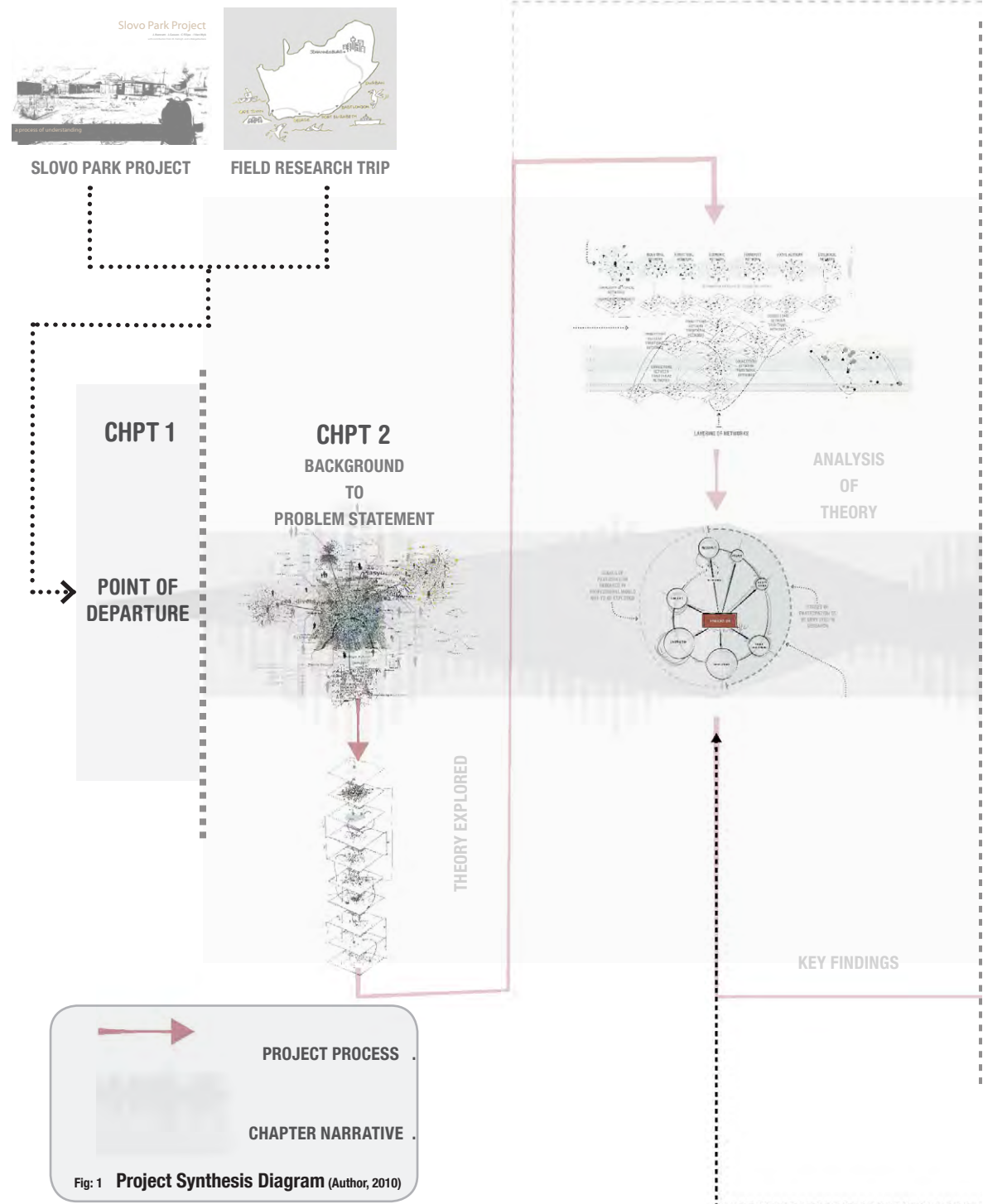SLOVO PARK PROJECT   FIELD RESEARCH TRIP

CHPT 1

CHPT 2
BACKGROUND
TO
PROBLEM STATEMENT

POINT OF DEPARTURE

ANALYSIS OF THEORY

THEORY EXPLORED

KEY FINDINGS

PROJECT PROCESS

CHAPTER NARRATIVE

Fig: 1   **Project Synthesis Diagram** (Author, 2010)

KEY FINDINGS

INTERVENTION APPROACH DEFINED

CONCEPT OF ENGAGEMENT

ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS OF FORM

FORM BECOMES PLACE

CHPT 3

INTERVENTION DEFINED

CHPT 6
FORM IDENTIFIED

CHPT 7
FORM DEFINED

CHPT 8

CHPT 9

TECHNICAL RESOLUTION OF FORM

SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS OF FORM

CHPT 4

SITE AND PRECEDENT ANALYSIS

CHPT 5

FORM BECOMES BUILDING

1