

*"Men are so necessarily mad, that not to be mad
would amount to another form of madness."*

Pascal

B R I E F



Figure 2.1: Caroline by Gaconetti, Tape Gallery, London

1.1 Problem Statement

1.1.1 BACKGROUND

Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital is a training hospital, dealing mainly in psychiatry and is situated in the west of Pretoria. The hospital has roughly 1400 beds and a bed occupation of 95%. Approximately 5 000 patients are admitted annually, whilst the outpatient section handles approximately 5 200 patients per year. (<http://www.facultyoftraining.up.ac.za.html>)

When the idea of a mental asylum for Pretoria was first conceived in 1889 the causes and treatment of mental illness was still very underdeveloped. Although limited medication and treatment was available then, doctors already knew that the natural environment could have a positive impact on patients.

In order to create this hospital in a natural environment, Weskoppies was built in the old Botanical gardens of Pretoria. At the time, Weskoppies was heralded as 'a beautiful building very healthily situated, with large gardens and cultivated fields'.

Since then Weskoppies has been through turbulent times, including the Anglo Boer war.

Currently Weskoppies is known as the place where 'sick' people go and it is greatly stigmatized. A combination of factors has fostered a deep and enduring division between Weskoppies and the community. These include:

- **The isolation and exclusion of Weskoppies from the community:** The initial concept of an asylum meant that from the starting point a social barrier was created between Weskoppies and the outside world. This led to the social isolation and institutionalisation of the patients.
- **The developed form of the built environment:** When Weskoppies was first built, it was located in a natural environment within Pretoria West, which was then a thriving and wealthy neighbourhood. Since then an industrial belt has formed around the edge of the site and conditions in Pretoria West have deteriorated.
- **Emphasis on sickness:** As many hospitals tend to do, Weskoppies also put the emphasis on sickness. A healthcare system which is actually capable of keeping people healthy, in mind and body, must put its emphasis on health, not sickness. Because Weskoppies has failed to do this, it has become a place associated with sick people and has, therefore, no place in a healthy community.
- **Perceptions:** The relationship that exists between architecture and perceptions has had a negative effect on the built environment of the mentally ill. The disciplinary and professional boundaries of medicine have conditioned the

perception of what is possible within the design of mental healthcare facilities. Internationally these perceptions are being challenged as researchers discover the healing power of therapeutic environments and the positive effect it has on the patients. As Weskoppies has not endeavored to implement these new concepts, perceptions of institutionalisation are not challenged within the hospital structure.

The current conditions at Weskoppies are demoralizing to both the patient and the community. Instead of the public turning to a 'healing' environment, it avoids any contact for fear of stigmatization and institutionalization. This is damaging to

"If community forms the foundation of our sense of identity and well-being, then a healthy environment should include a community component."

society. Mental health is as important as physical health to the over-all well-being of individuals, societies and countries.

According to the WHO's World Health Report 2001, one in four people in the world will be affected by mental or neurological disorders at some point in their lives. This counts for both developed and developing countries. Around 450 million people currently suffer from such conditions, placing mental disorders among the leading causes of ill-health and disability world wide.

Gauteng is no exception. In this province 120 000 people suffer from severe mental illness. (Sunday Times, 2004:5) Primary mental healthcare facilities were implemented to serve these individuals in the community, but they have proven to be insufficient and many sufferers have landed up in state institutions. Many habitually relapse after being de-institutionalised due to a lack of support systems.

This becomes a concern to state institutions, as they are under grave pressure to release patients. State psychiatric hospitals have been forced to cut their chronic beds by roughly half the levels of 1997. (Sunday Times, 2004:5)

1.1.2 THE WAY FORWARD

A healing environment should be a community environment. Not only to serve the patient by establishing him in the community and thereby enforcing his sense of well-being, but also to empower the community through creating access to healing, therapeutic environments.

1.2 The Project

1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

A community treatment and wellness center is envisaged for Weskoppies. This facility will provide treatment to community members and patients, offering the latest in best practice for patient-focused quality care in healthcare design.

The center marks the transformation of Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital to a new model of community care, mixing outpatients services with private wellness services, in a radically different healthcare environment.

The vision of the project is to create a refreshing, healthful image for Weskoppies with an uplifting ambience within the existing campus.

1.2.2 THE AIM OF THE PROJECT

The aim of the project is, firstly, to create a community focused mental healthcare facility. Through this facility a help-line will be offered to members of the public who needs support, information and treatment in the area of mental health.

Secondly, the project will aim at bringing society members together to support and affirm each other. It is hoped that, through this project, people will understand each other and become tolerant. This implies freedom for the sufferer and power to the society.

1.2.3 WHY A COMMUNITY TREATMENT AND WELLNESS CENTER FOR THE MENTALLY ILL?

A new generation of healthcare facilities is emerging that are very different from the familiar institutional models. Based on patient-centered care and of healing the whole person, these health centers are spiritual sanctuaries with gardens, fountains, natural light, art and music. Researchers are learning how emotions are linked to disease and that healing is promoted by surroundings that reduce stress and engage the senses in therapeutic ways.

The community will benefit through:

- **Prevention**

Mental disorders represent not only an immense psychological, social and economic burden to society, but also increase the risk of physical illnesses. Given the current limitations in effectiveness of treatment modalities for decreasing disability due to mental and behavioural disorders, the only sustainable method for reducing the burden caused by these disorders is prevention. (Prevention of Mental Disorders, 2004:18)

- **Promoting mental health**

- Mental health is essential for the well-being and functioning of individuals.
- Good mental health is an important resource for individuals, families, communities, and nations.
- Mental health, as an indivisible part of general health, contributes to the functions of society, and has an effect on overall productivity.
- Mental health concerns everyone as it is generated in our everyday lives in homes, schools, workplaces, and in leisure activities.
- Positive mental health contributes to the social, human, and economic capital of every society.
- Spirituality can make a significant contribution to mental health promotion and mental health influences spiritual life.

- **Maintaining health**

In some communities, time-honoured practices and ways of life maintain mental health even though mental health may not be identified as the outcome, or identified by name. In other communities, people need to be convinced that making an effort to improve mental health is realistic and worthwhile. (Promoting Mental Health, 2004:23)

Christopher Alexander writes, in *A Pattern Language*, that: "Health Centers should adopt the philosophy of maintaining health. The emphasis should fall away from treatment of illness and lean towards the maintenance of health.



Figure 2.2: City : Pretoria



Figure 2.3: Campus : Weskoppies



Figure 2.4: Site

Weskoppies will benefit through:

- A community link project for Weskoppies would mean greater openness, influence and scrutiny from the public, which could have a positive effect on Weskoppies. Through the community project Weskoppies should actively seek the input of the public and should use this open system to inform and educate the public about the facilities functioning.
- The extension of the hospitals outpatient division through the introduction of the community center will accommodate the expected influx of noninstitutionalized patients.

"A community facility created to inform, support and treat public suffering from mental illness or the effects thereof."

1.2.4 METHODOLOGY

- **City-wide context:** Ways of including Weskoppies as a site into the city context will be investigated through an analysis of the city context.
- **Campus context:** A campus framework will be designed through analysis of the campus context in order to improve the functioning of Weskoppies as a campus and indicate a suitable location for a community treatment and wellness center.
- **Site context:** The site will be selected according to the campus framework and analysed in order to produce an appropriate architectural intervention in the creation of an inclusive built environment that will function as a community link project and an extension to the hospital.

1.2.5 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to create a social upliftment platform within the context of a therapeutic environment that focuses on the inclusive nature of an environment bringing different people together.

1.2.6 THE CLIENT: THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

In the 1990's South Africa was one of the few countries in the world where wholesale transformation of the health system started with a clear political commitment to restructure the health system according to a 'district health system' (DHS) and deliver health care according to the principles of the primary health care (PHC) approach.

The PHC approach is described in the Declaration of Alma Ata which was adopted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1978. The essential aspects of this Declaration are:

- an emphasis on preventative health measures rather than on curative measures;
- the importance of participation of individuals and groups in the planning and implantation of health care;
- an emphasis on maternal and child health care;
- the importance of education on health problems;
- giving high priority to the provision of health care to the vulnerable and high risk groups, such as women, children and underprivileged elements of society; and
- equal access of individuals and families to health care at a cost the community can afford.

The constitutions' recognition of the right of access to health care services marked an initial victory for millions of South Africans. As has been noted, the White Paper on Health seeks to make health services accessible, affordable and equitable with particular attention being accorded to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. It further seeks to educate the public on issues of health, to foster community participation in the provision of health services, as well as to facilitate the monitoring of health services.