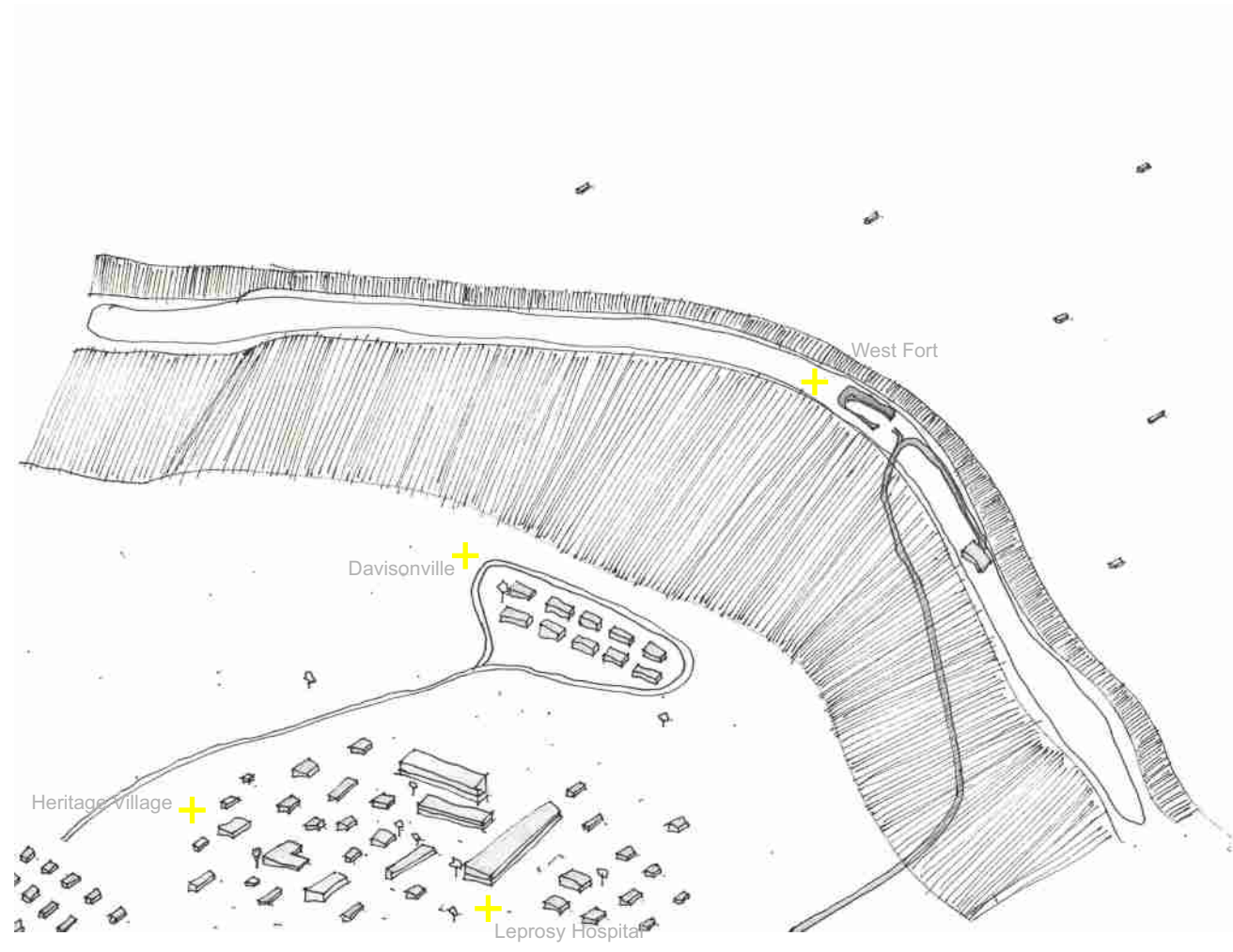


03

Site & Theoretical Approach



+ Site

CONTEXT

The site is situated to the West of Pretoria. The West Fort is located on the Waterberge, near Lotus Gardens and Danville. The area is very neglected and various RDP low-income housing surround the area. The site is approximately 400ha in extent. It is situated approximately 10km to the west of Church Square and to the north of the low income township Lotus Gardens. Access from the CBD of Tshwane is via the N4 Highway and Church Street (Holm Jordaan: 2008).

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS TOPOGRAPHY

The northern boundary of the site is formed by the Daspoortant also known as the Witwaterberg and forms part of the Magaliesberg. The site lies against the southern slopes of this ridge. The entire site therefore lies higher than existing developed areas and enjoys a view towards the southern parts of Tshwane. The upper slopes of the ridge does not allow for township development due to the steepness and also due to the presence of rocky outcrops.

MUNICIPAL WATER RESERVOIR

Slightly further east of the fort is a large municipal water reservoir at about 1521m, the highest point in the vicinity, just outside of the cadastral boundaries of the site.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

An archaeological site is situated near the western-most neck, near the top of the Daspoortant. It is believed that the homesteads belonged to Sotho-Tswana speaking people and that it dates back to the 16th century.

national map

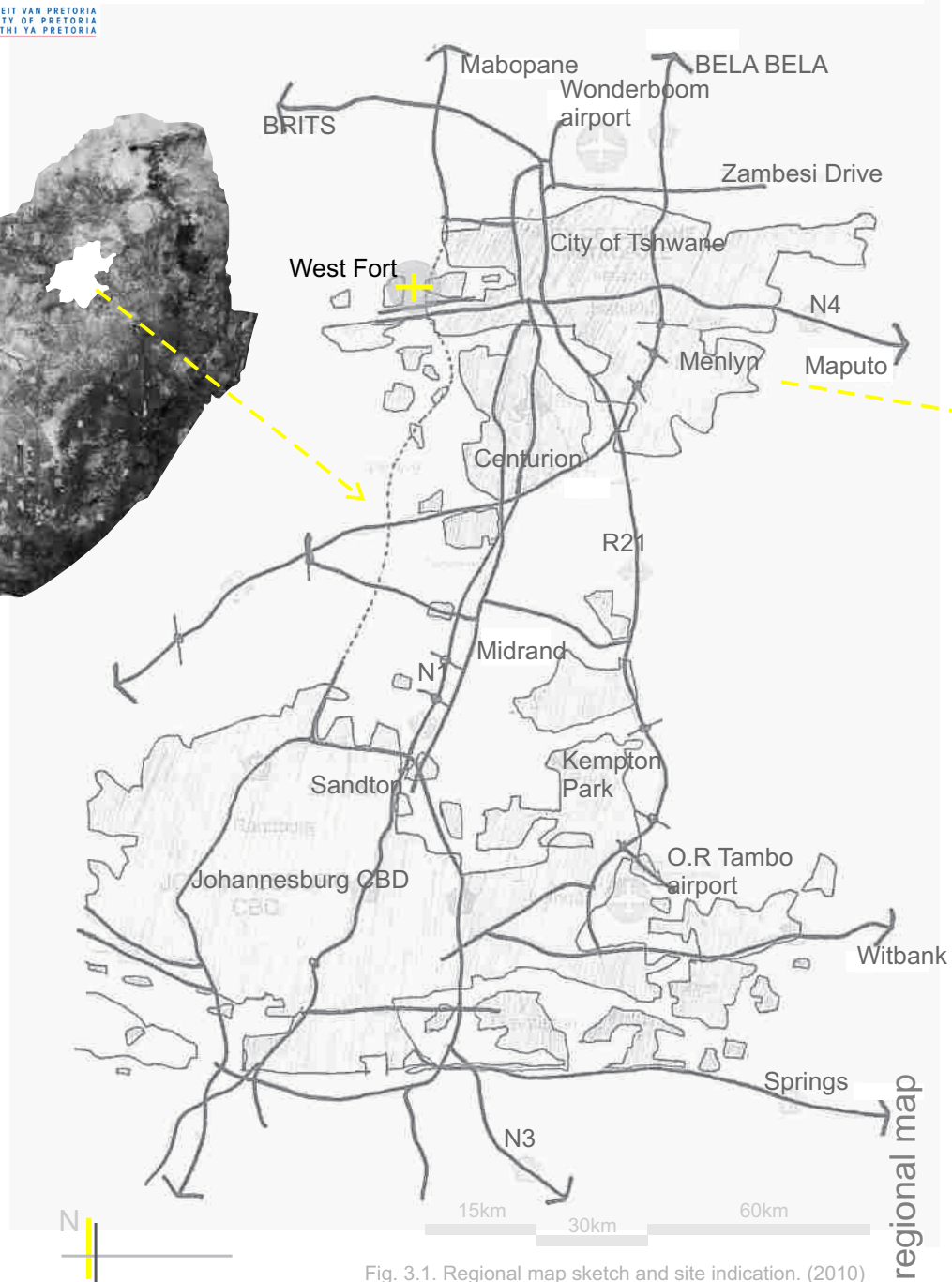
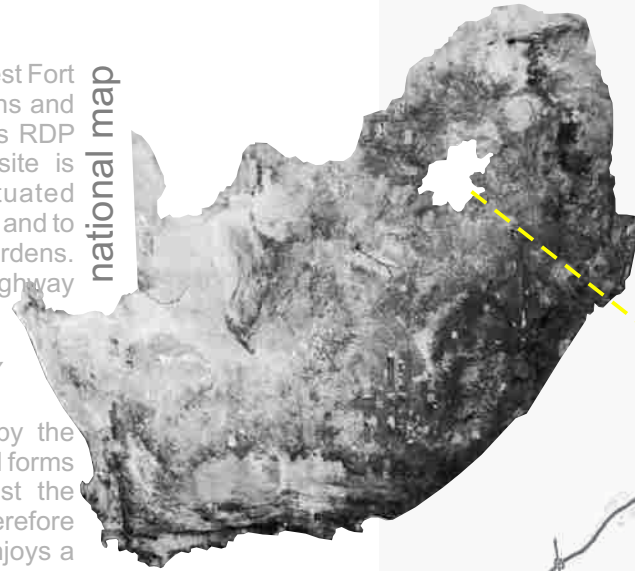


Fig. 3.1. Regional map sketch and site indication. (2010)

DAVISONVILLE

A small residential complex consisting of two rows of single dwellings on the upper reaches of the slopes of the Daspoortant in the north-central part is situated just south of the Westfort. There are a total of 14 houses in this small isolated cluster. The structures have historical value and must be protected.

ACCESS

This western part of Tshwane is regionally accessible via the N4 and Church Street running east west to the south of Lotus Gardens. There are two off-ramps from the N4 giving access to the townships south of the site and it is therefore regionally well served by access routes.

Access to the site is proposed from three points:

- One from the south-east: Van den Berg Street Extension, which is an existing major collector road in Elandsport. Presently it is the access to the Fort West Urban Village.
- One from the south: Citron Drive, which is the western of two existing access roads for the residential township of Lotus Gardens and has been constructed as a major collector road right up to the south-central boundary of the site.
- One leading from the eastern Access off the N4: Acridian Drive.

According to architectural theorist, Sandy Isenstadt, context is one of the concentric rings of circumstance comprising our understanding of site: from lot to plot, from neighborhood to region, from locality to landscape to climate. It implies the whole set of conditions from which an architect will construct an idea of site suitable to a specific scheme, and will include the technologies used to shape the site, such as infrastructure and earth-moving machinery, as well as technologies of seeing that mediate any conception of what is unique and local at a site with images from other places (2005: 157).

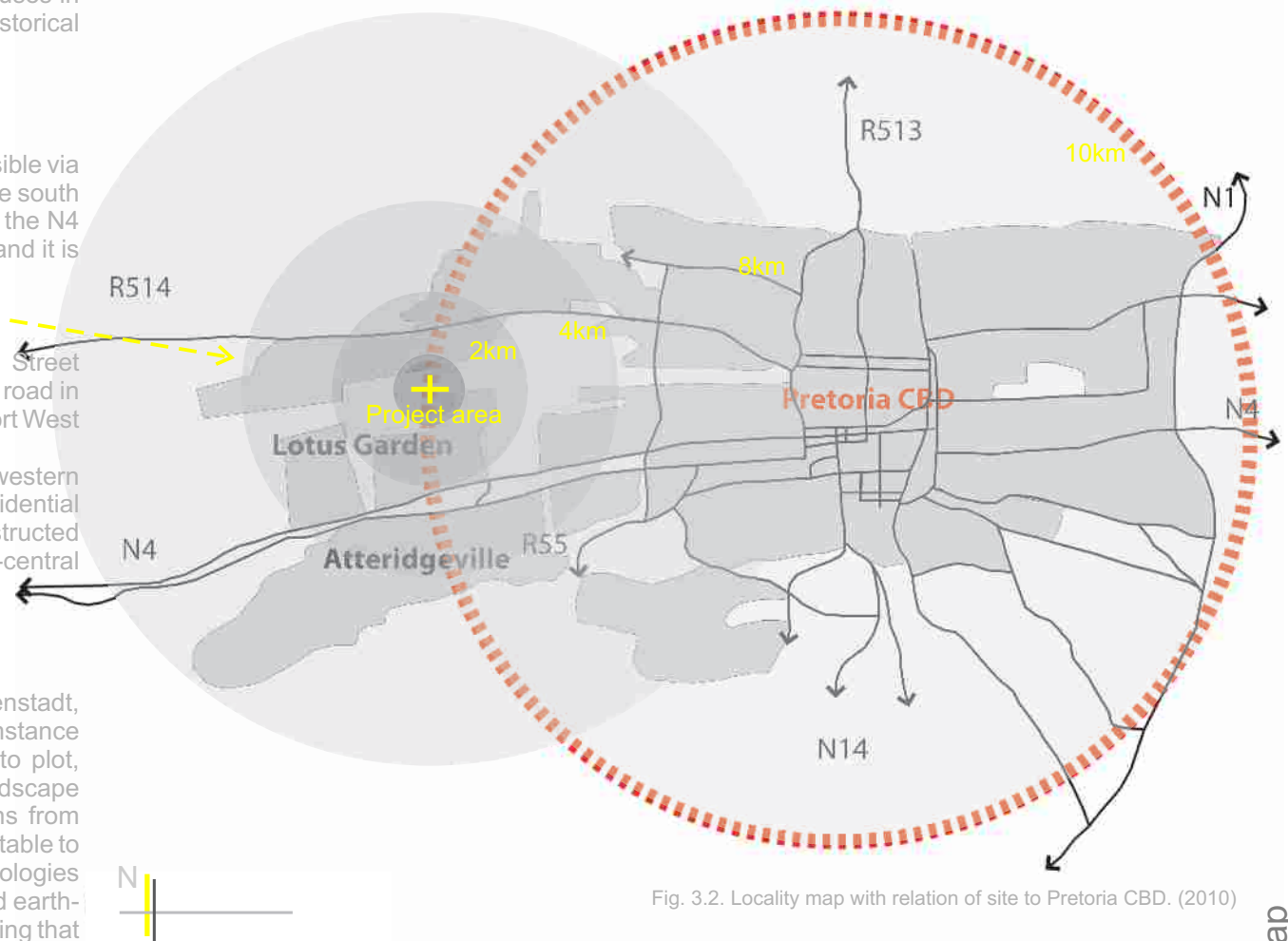


Fig. 3.2. Locality map with relation of site to Pretoria CBD. (2010)

Although clearly subject to various interpretations, context is a crucial concept for architecture. Despite its amorphousness, it must be addressed as part of the very fabric of architecture (*ibid*).

In this sense, the question of context is kin to that of style, which loomed large in the nineteenth century as a result of published accounts of archaeological discoveries and the cult of ruins (2005: 177).

According to Prof. Robert Beauregard, all sites exist first as places. Before places become objects of urban planning and design, they exist in personal experience, hearsay, and collective memories. Standing between planners and designers and the sites on which they hope to act are socially embedded narratives. And, while these place narratives can be ignored, they cannot be wholly erased. **Places are never empty** (2005: 38).

These images, in turn, prepare the way for other narrative constructions. When settlers establish wilderness outposts, for example, they enter into narratives of discovery, conquest, and the beneficence of civilization. These stories are possible only because the place has been first understood as alienated and empty, that is, because it existed in a prior narrative.

Antithetic to places unknown are places saturated with meaning. Densely imagined through overlapping histories and intersecting current events, they resist being turned into “cleared” sites.

Throughout all of this, the default position remains a site story, a narrative of professional interpretations and interventions. This is the dominant narrative of planning and design. Like all stories about place, it “weaves the tissue of habitats, educates the gaze, and informs the landscape.” It is the discourse of choice, meaningful within and resonant outside the design professions (2005: 55).



Fig. 3.8. Image capturing the tranquility of the landscape. (2010)



Fig. 3.4. Greenbelts through Pretoria, defining its natural defense ability.(2010)



+ The West Fort is a place of high cultural significance that should be conserved sustainably, effectively and efficiently in order to retain this significance and at the same time provide for appropriate uses. The spirit of the place will be experienced through the tangible and intangible qualities of the site and its cultural richness.

"Only a good for nothing is not interested in his past."
Sigmund Freud



Fig. 3.5. Panoramic view of the communal space inside West Fort. (2010)

+ Archaeological sites

The following mapping illustrates archaeological sites that are relevant to the author's study, to understand the proximity of these sites in relation to West Fort site. The influence and relation these sites have to the Archaeological Centre:

CRADLE OF HUMANKIND

Through the use of biochemical evidence they have argued that the split of the human lineage (Hominidae) from that of the African apes took place around 5-6 million years ago. The study of hominid fossils from sites in Africa thus enables scientists to understand how these hominids have changed and diversified since then (archaeology.about.com: 2010).

LYDENBURG (South Africa)

Early Iron Age site (5th century AD) in the Transvaal region of South Africa.

MAKAPANSGAT

Makapansgat is a series of very ancient archaeological sites in the Makapansgat valley of South Africa, with evidence for Australopithecus.

MAPUNSUBWE

Stone age and Iron Age occupations in the valley of the Limpopo River.

PHALABORWA

The archaeological complex of Phalaborwa consists of a series of iron and copper mining sites dated the early parts of the second millennium AD.

STERKFRONTEIN

The ancient early man site of Sterkfontein is a cave in a dolomite hill of the Blaauwbank River Valley, about 10 kilometers northwest of Krugersdorp, South Africa.

SWARTKRANS

Swartkrans is a Lower Paleolithic cave site in South Africa, discovered in 1948 by Robert Broom and excavated by C.K. Brain in the 1960s.

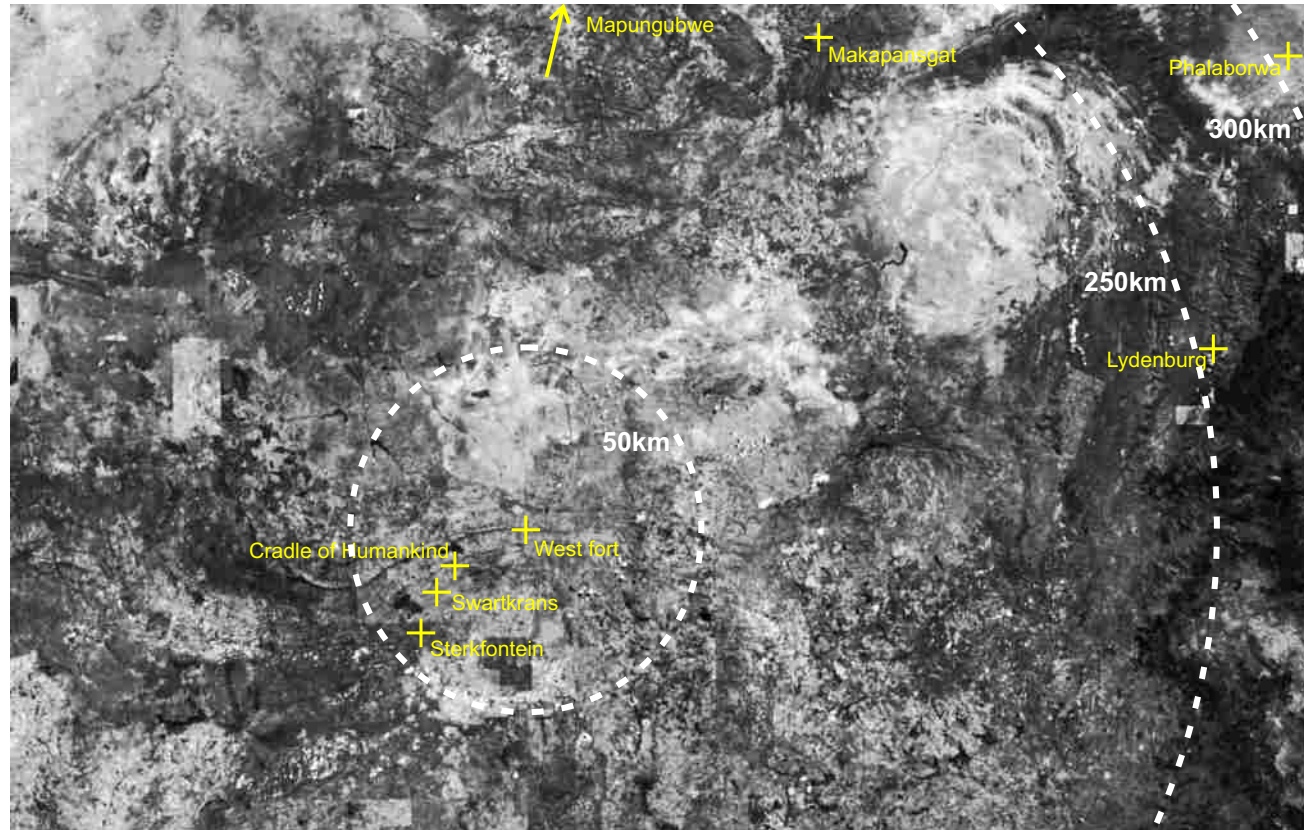


Fig. 3.6. Mapping of archaeological site in proximity to West fort. (2010)



Fig. 3.7. Sterkfontein caves. (archaeology.about.com: 2010)

+ Landscape

The following is a brief introduction into the various trees and shrubs that are found in the tranquil landscape in and around West Fort.

The Sickie pod, (*Dichrostachys glomerata*), is a sub-dominant tree. This tree looks a lot like an *Acacia*, but differs from the thorn trees, wherein that its thorns contain mainly shortened branches (1996:100).

Other common trees include the *Rhus lancea* and the *Rhus amerina*. The *Rhus lancea* is the well known “karee tree” which is widespread over the Gauteng area and is very common in Pretoria. It has long thin leaves, while the *Rhus amerina*, the “mountain tree”, which has small thin leaves.

The *Pavetta assimilis* is found a lot in the area and at the foot of the Witwaterberg. This type carries white flowers and later small purple berries.

The *Erythrina lysistemon* is a big tree from about 8 metres with black peels and red seeds, from which the Basoeto makes necklaces.

At the foot of the Witwaterberg another type is common, the *Vangueria infausta* and the *Clerodendron glabrum*, with its small, strong branches. Its got thick white flowers and the Zoeloes uses an extract of the roots as healing aid against snake bites.

The *Burkea africana* is very common higher up the mountain. It is a smaller tree, with a wide top and very dense leaves. According to Galpin, this is the wood used by the Voortrekker’s to build their wagons.

On top of the ridge is the *Rhus magalismontana*, n little bush of about 350mm high and is very common on Gauteng’s ridges and mountains, together with this specie, we find the *Brachylaena rotundata*, which is also part of the sunflower family. It is also very common in Gauteng.



Fig. 3.8. *Burkea africana*. (webegreencil.com: 2010)



Fig. 3.9. *Erythrina lysistemon*. (ibid)

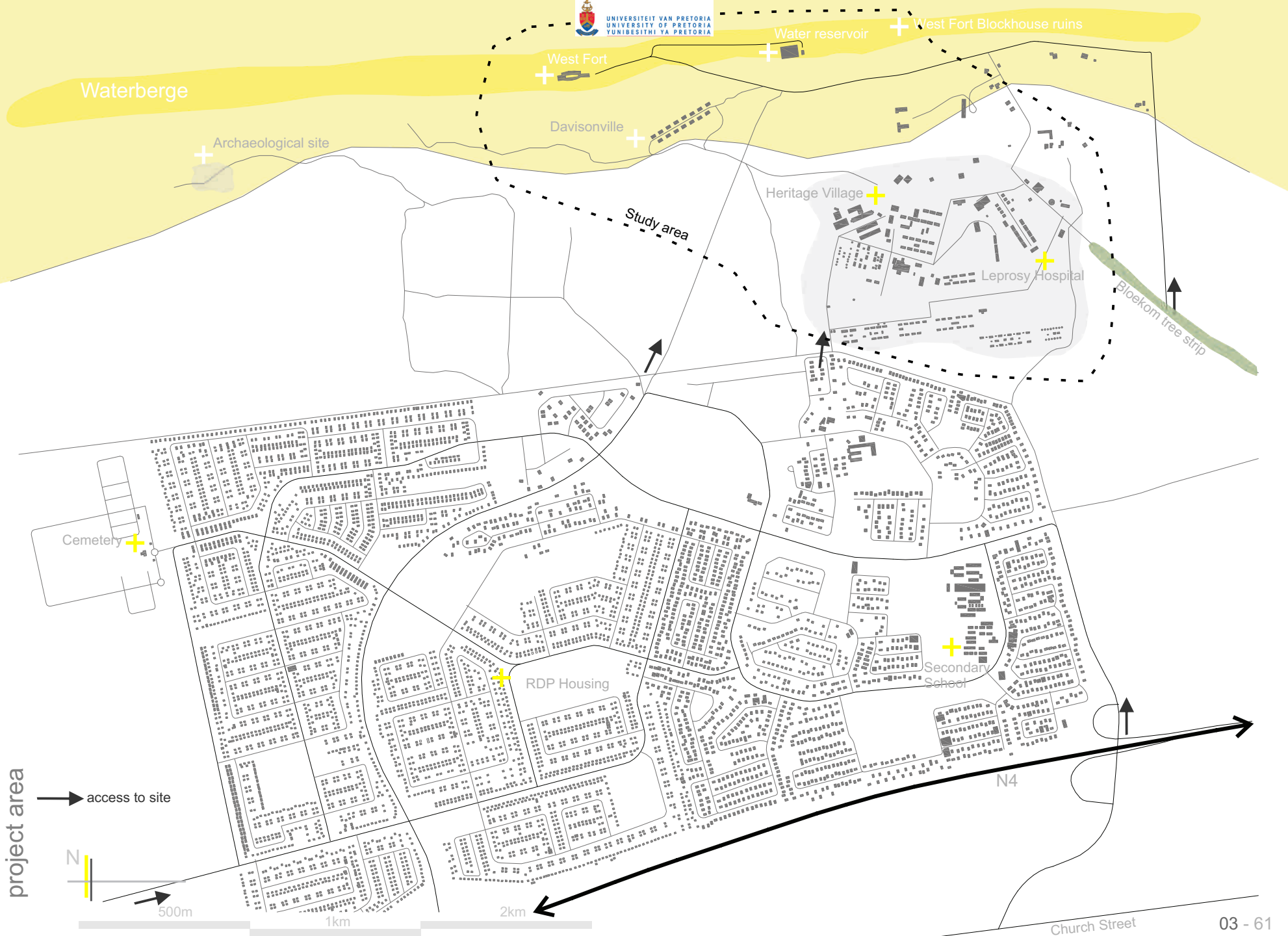


Fig. 3.10. *Rhus magalismontana*. (ibid)



Fig. 3.11. *Clerodendron glabrum*. (ibid)





Waterberge

West Fort

Davisonville

Heritage Village

Leprosy Hospital

RDP Housing

Secondary School

Cemetery

Water reservoir

West Fort Blockhouse ruins

Study area

Bloekom tree strip

N4

Church Street

project area

N

500m

1km

2km

access to site

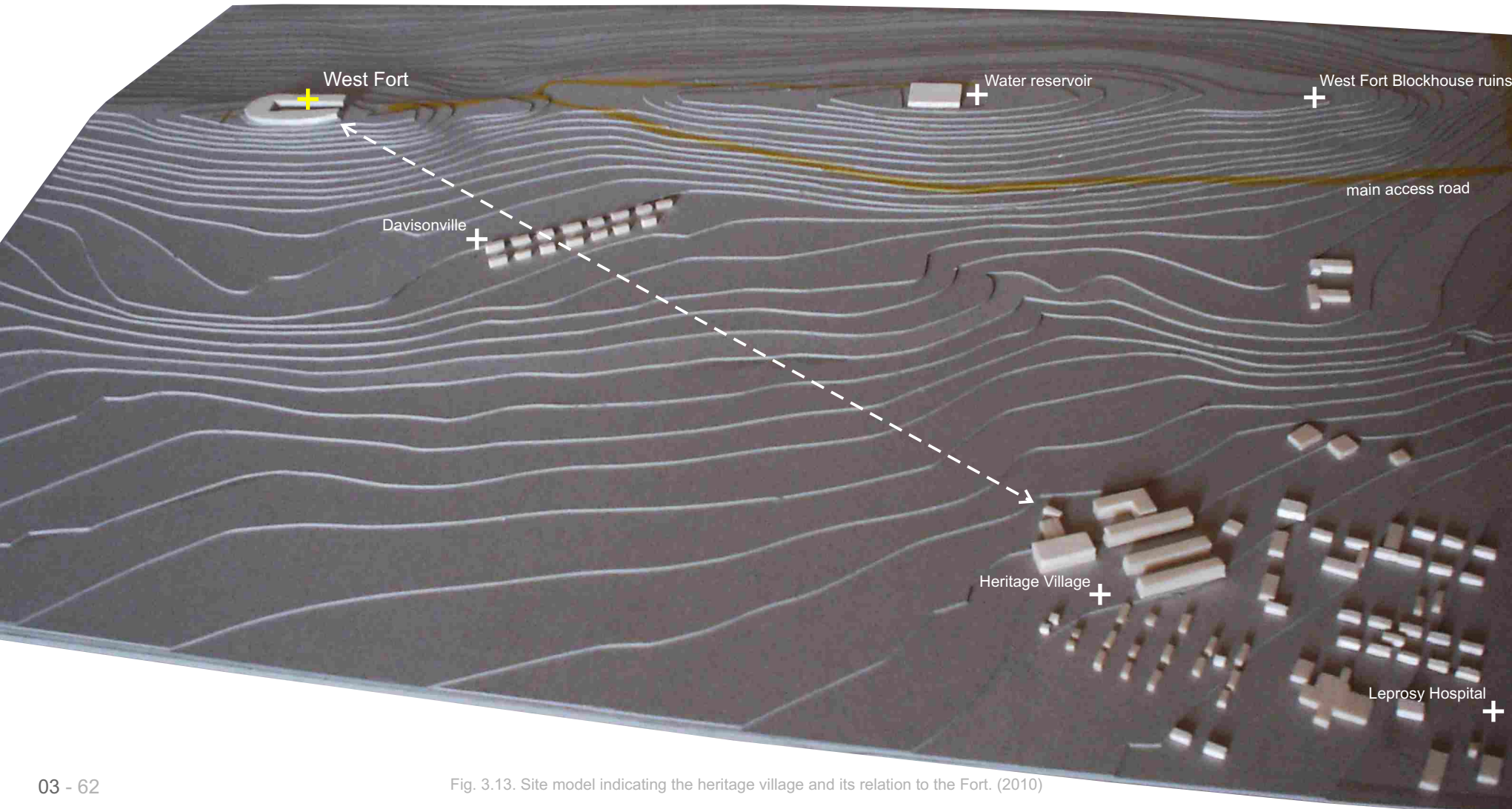
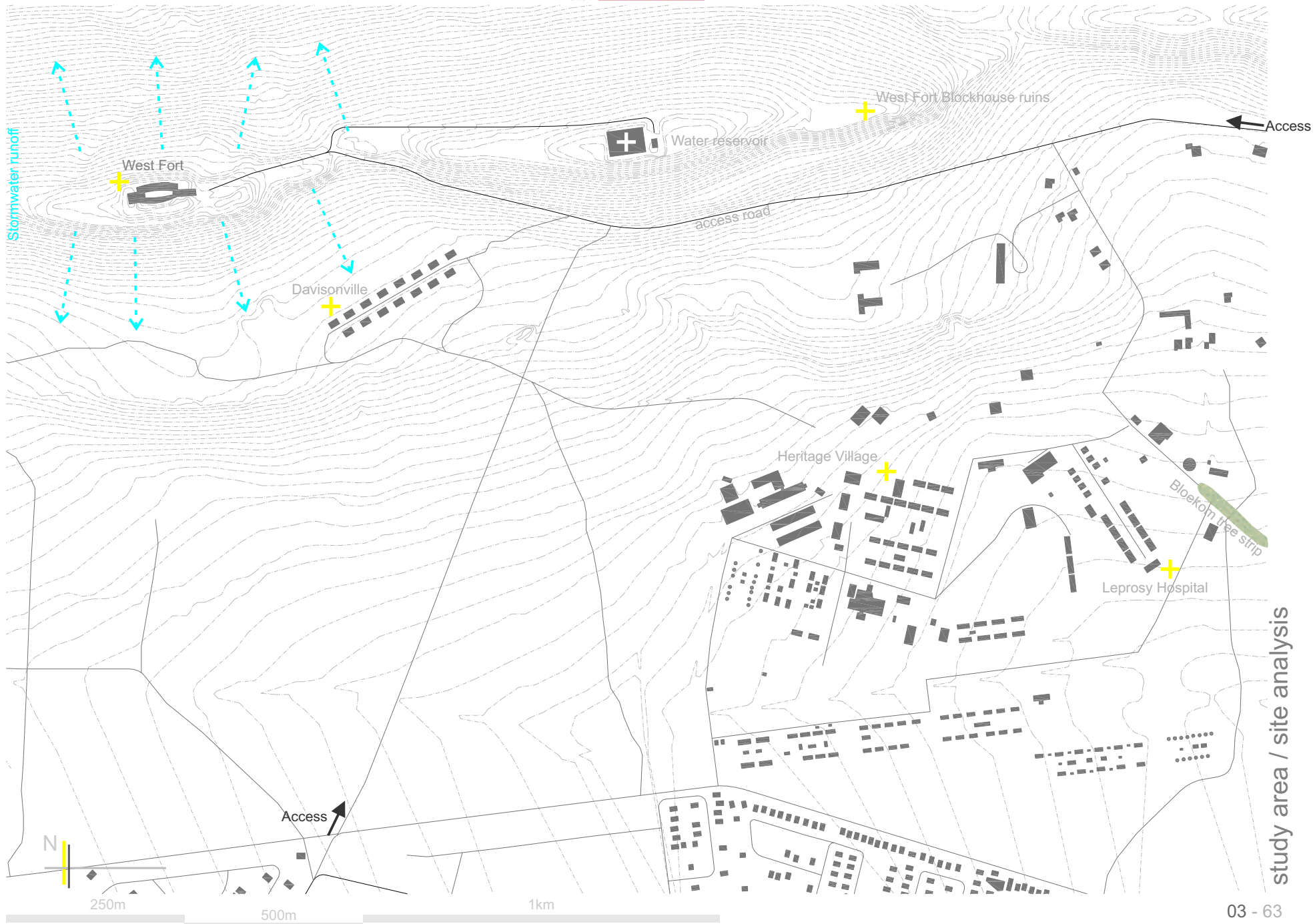
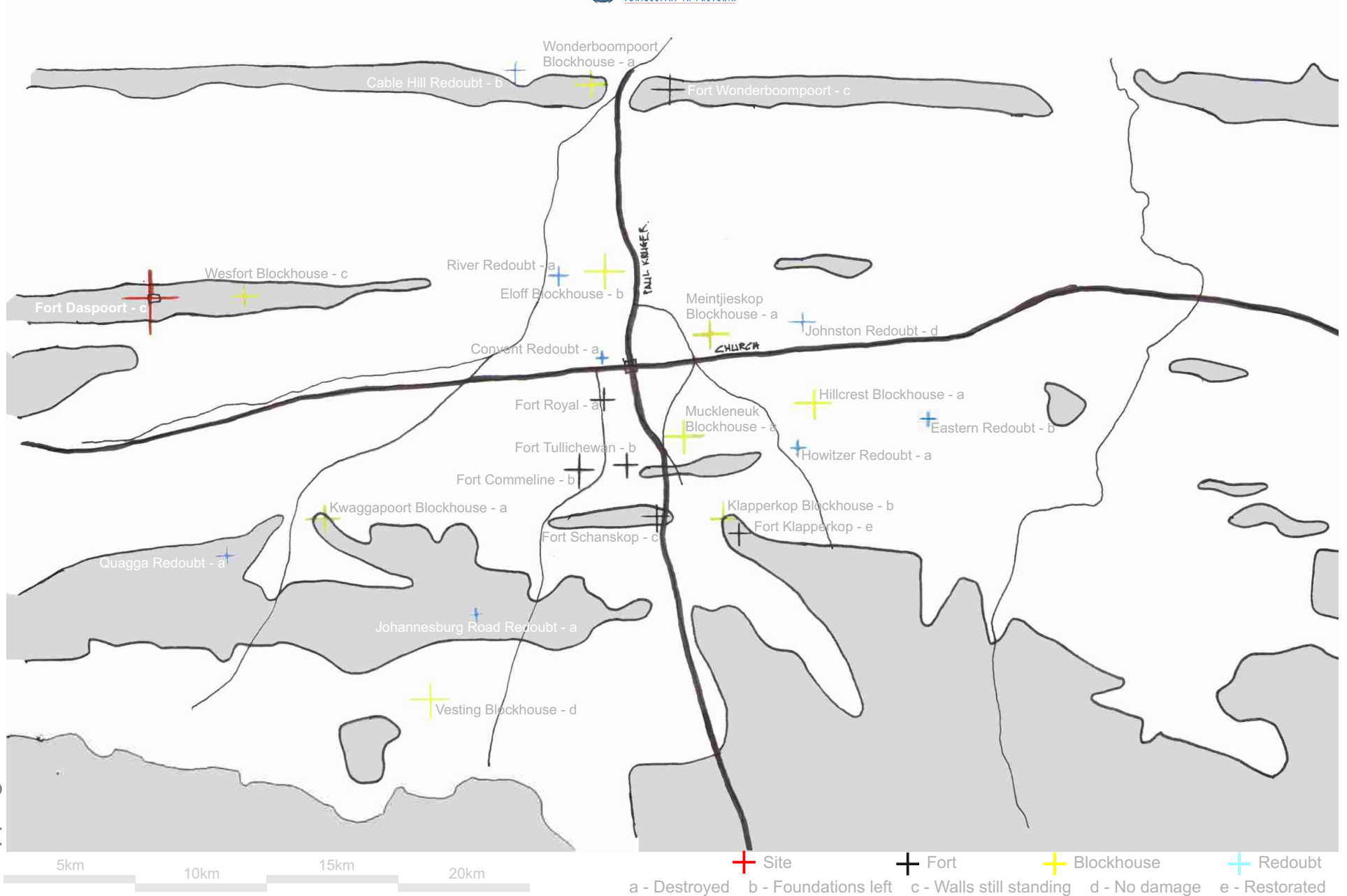


Fig. 3.13. Site model indicating the heritage village and its relation to the Fort. (2010)





+ Theoretical Approach

The theoretical approach of phenomenology in architecture and the spirit of the place will be focused on and interpreted to support design decisions made by the author. The approach towards memory and ruins will also be discussed, as the Fort is the ruin and how its memory is perceived and exhibited.

Genius loci is a Roman concept. According to the ancient Roman belief every “independent” being has its *genius*, its guardian spirit. It suffices to point out that ancient man experienced his environment as consisting of definite characters. In particular he recognized that it is of great existential importance to come to terms with the *genius loci* if the locality where his life takes place (1996: 422).

According to architectural theorist, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926 - 2000), the concrete things which constitute our given world are interrelated in complex and perhaps contradictory ways. Some of the phenomena may for instance consist of others. The forest consists of trees, and the town is made up of houses. “Landscape” is an “environment” to others. A concrete term for environment is *place*. Place is evidently an integral part of existence. A place is therefore a qualitative, “total” phenomenon, which we cannot reduce to any of its properties, such as spatial relationships, without losing its concrete nature out of sight (1996:414).

In the past, survival depended on a good relationship to the place in a physical as well as a psychic sense. In ancient Egypt, for instance, the country was not only cultivated in accordance with the Nile floods, but the very structure of the landscape served as a model for the layout of the public buildings which should give a man a sense of security by symbolizing an eternal environmental order.

Modern tourism proves that the experience of different places is a major human interest, although also this value today tends to get lost. In fact modern man for a long time believed that science and technology had freed him from a direct dependence on places. This belief has proved an illusion, pollution and environmental chaos have suddenly appeared as a frightening nemesis, and as a result the problem of place has regained its true importance.



Fig. 3.14. Entrance of West Fort looking back towards the city. (2010)

The problem of orientation has been given a considerable attention in recent theoretical literature on planning and architecture. Within the spectrum of *genius loci*, we may refer to the work of Kevin Lynch, whose concepts of “node,” “path” and “district” denote the basic spatial structures which are the object of man’s orientation. The perceived interrelationship of these elements constitute an “environmental image”, and Lynch asserts: “A good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security. Accordingly all cultures have developed “systems of orientation,” that is, spatial structures which facilitate the development of a good environmental image (*ibid*).

According to architectural theorist, Norman Crowe, who took a closer look at ancient Greek civilization, which shows a resonance in language as well as in custom and artifacts. The Greeks open and exploratory approach to thought and nature, for instance, it is reflected in their word *theoria*. It meant “to experience a place as a whole through feeling, imagination and memory, together with intellect and the senses”. It was a concept that “implied a complex but organic mode of active observation, a perceptual system that included asking questions, listening to stories and local myths, and feeling as well as hearing and seeing. It encouraged an open reception to every kind of emotional, cognitive, symbolic, imaginative and sensory experience (1995: 74). This relates to the author’s approach to the Fort as artefact and the experience by the visitor of the artefact and memory thereof. The artefact experienced through visual and physical exploration, captured by the visitor and “recorded”.

Finnish architect, Juhani Pallasmaa (1936), states that the phenomenology of architecture is “looking at” architecture from within the consciousness of experiencing it, through architectural feeling in contrast to analysis of the physical proportions and properties of the building or a stylistic frame of reference. The phenomenology of architecture seeks the inner language of feeling. The inner architecture of the mind emerging out of feelings and memory images is built on different principles from the architecture developed out of professional approaches. Architectural effect is based on a number of what we could call primary feelings. These feelings form the genuine “basic vocabulary” of architecture and it is by working through them that a work becomes architecture or not. Architecture is a direct expression of existence, of human presence in the world (1996: 450).

An impressive architectural experience sensitizes our whole physical and mental receptivity. It is difficult to grasp the structure of feeling because of its vastness and diversity. In experience we find a combination of the biological and the culturally derived, the collective and the individual, the conscious and the unconscious, the analytical and the emotional, the mental and the physical (*ibid*).



Fig. 3.15. View over the tranquil landscape. (2010)

To conclude, the spirit of place is a caption of the theoretical stance of the author, to emphasize the importance of the tranquillity of the site and the context. By incorporating feeling and emotion and evidently the physical into the buildings experience by the visitor, would capture the concept and theory and portray it in the form of a structure. A structure denoted to the user of the building, whom in my approach, is the essence of the success of the building.

Renowned architect Tadao Ando (1941) states that the presence of architecture regardless of its self-contained character inevitably creates a new landscape. This implies the necessity of discovering the architecture which the site itself is seeking. Ando composes the architecture by seeking an essential logic inherent in a place. The architectural pursuit implies a responsibility to find and draw out a site's formal characteristics, along with its cultural traditions, climate, and environmental features, the city structure that forms its backdrop, and the living patterns and age-old customs that people will carry into the future. Without sentimentality, Ando aspires to transform place through architecture to the level of the abstract and universal. Only in this way can architecture repudiate the realm of industrial technology to become "grand art" in its truest sense (1996:461).

Peter Eisenman (1932) states that in his proposal for rhetorical figures, architecture is no longer seen as merely aesthetic or functional elements, but rather as an other grammatical counter, proposing an alternate reading of the idea of site and object. In this sense, a rhetorical figure will be seen to be inherently contextual in that the site is treated as a deeply scored palimpsest. But traditional contextualism is representational and analytic, treating place as a physical presence known as a culturally determined idea containing powerful symbolic and evocative meanings. The analogic or rhetorical, rather than analytic, character of this process dislocates site implications from their culturally predetermined meanings by superimposing two old contents to create a new content. In the resulting rhetorically, as opposed to aesthetically, structurally, or historically determined figuration, there is the revelation in the site of a repressed text. This text suggests that there are other meanings which are site specific by virtue of their pre-existence, however latent, within the context (1996: 179).



Fig. 3.16. View towards the courtyard, the Fort in ruins. (2010)

Why do we need the past? What do we want it for? What burdens and risks does regard for it entail? The consequences of our heritage are more momentous than those revealed in nostalgic dreams and time-travel fiction, for they concern real rather than make-believe worlds, yet the ensuing dilemmas have much in common. The legion of benefits the past provides clearly transcends nostalgia. “The most Polite part of Mankind”, wrote Vanbrugh almost three centuries ago, agree “in the value they have ever set upon the Remains of distant times. “Today a large proportion of mankind share that view. A taste so widespread may be a necessity.

Some need the tangible feel of native soil; mere traces of the past suffice to keep others in touch with their own development. The endurance even of unseen relics can sustain identity. “Many symbolic and historic locations in a city are rarely visited by its inhabitants”, writes Lynch, but the survival of these unvisited, hearsay settings conveys a sense of security and continuity (*ibid*). Therefore the concept which denotes the fort of being exclusive, by now becoming inclusive by the interaction and participation of the public and users.

Historian, David Lowenthal describes awareness of history likewise enhances communal and national identity, legitimating a people in their own eyes. “A collectivity has its roots in the past”, in the French philosopher, Simone Weil’s (1909 - 1943) phrase. “We possess no other life, no other living sap, than the treasures stored up from the past and digested, assimilated, and created afresh by us. Groups lacking a sense of their own past are like individuals who know nothing about their parents”. Parallels between personal and national identity, a powerful stimulus to early nineteenth century European nationalism, culminated a century later in Max Dvorak’s association of cherished family icons and heirlooms with the need to preserve national historic monuments (1985: 44).

Late nineteenth century taste gauged artifacts and landscapes by the “pictorial” criteria embodied in ruins. Time and weather made old trees and buildings picturesquely rough, while “moss, lichen, and other encrustations” added tonal richness. Decay yields valuable information about the past, which states evidently that architectural ruins, portrays a “story” of the past and the richness in memory it poses for the visitor and informs the visitor thereof.



Fig. 3.17. Photo of the Fort in its current condition - memory portrayed through the ruins. (2010)

The attractions of decay are seldom solely aesthetic. Indeed, it was the sad, sinister, or violated look of ruins that appealed to Romantics. Dismay as well as delight at the look of age give rise to manifold reflections. “No one of the least sentiment or imagination can look upon an old or ruined edifice without feeling sublime emotions”, declared a late eighteenth century essayist; “a thousand ideas crowd upon his mind, and fill him with awful astonishment (*ibid*).” We have heard the aesthetic overtones of these sublime emotions.

The thousand ideas decaying and moribund artifacts elicit once bore on every realm of life. The veneer of age on paintings and *objects d’art* symbolized long-standing social continuities; the ruinous decay of sombre mansions embodied some dreadful hidden crime; the crumbling stones of ancient ruins conveyed a haunting sense of temporal remoteness (1985: 173).

Retrospective wonder was a common Renaissance response and admiration not for existing remains but for the greatness of the original structures they recalled. In England monastic ruins ‘sett the thoughts a-worke to make out their magnificence, as they were when in perfection.’ Contrast of present decay with former grandeur inspired poets and painters well into the nineteenth century.

Demands for intelligibility often justify altering ruins; the picturesque but shapeless Roman sites, medieval castles, and monastic ruins in British state care have been made more comprehensible by lowering ground surfaces, heightening walls, revealing buried details. Subsequent additions that confuse the scene are removed. The surrounding sward, cropped with military tidiness, enhances the bleak, austere, and majestic mood the public has come to expect from ruins. It’s worth erring towards order and control, notes a heritage-guide reviewer, “to offer something to people who are not specialists in medieval history.” (1985: 273).



Fig. 3.18. The grandeur of ruins: Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Capriccio with Belisarius* - 1730. (1985: 154)



Fig. 3.19. The grandeur of ruins: John Constable, *Stonehenge* - 1835. (1985: 154)

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The statement of cultural significance is written to inform the reader about the value and significance of the Fort as a monument. This also states the author's position on heritage and conservation regarding the West Fort. While West Fort was never officially named as a National Monument, it is of great cultural significance.

With reference to the Australian Burra Charter, the meaning of "cultural significance" is a concept which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations (1999:12).

The Fort should be conserved and not restored. The author feels that the value and significant cultural information it has to the visitor, be kept as is. The Fort should therefore be studied by archaeologists, but the remaining Fortifications in the city should be conserved and restored, depending on their physical status and the archaeologists suggestions.

The Burra Charter states in its guidelines to conservation with regard to physical intervention, to identify the likely impact of any intervention on the cultural significance. Therefore, the author intends to design any intervention with respect to the Fort as a monument of significance. The intervention will not compete with the Fort and its significant value.

The typology of the Fort and the aesthetical value will be conserved and not restored in any way. the author will design any building, so that it does not compete with the significance of the Fort.



Fig. 3.20. Photo of the majestic landscape. (2010)



Fig. 3.21. Photo of the form, which portrays the title - *Architecture in Ruins*. (2010)