



# 03 CONTEXT & SETTING

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RECLAIMING PUBLIC SPACE & PROMOTING INFORMAL ACTIVITY

NOORD STREET ACTIVITY SPINE

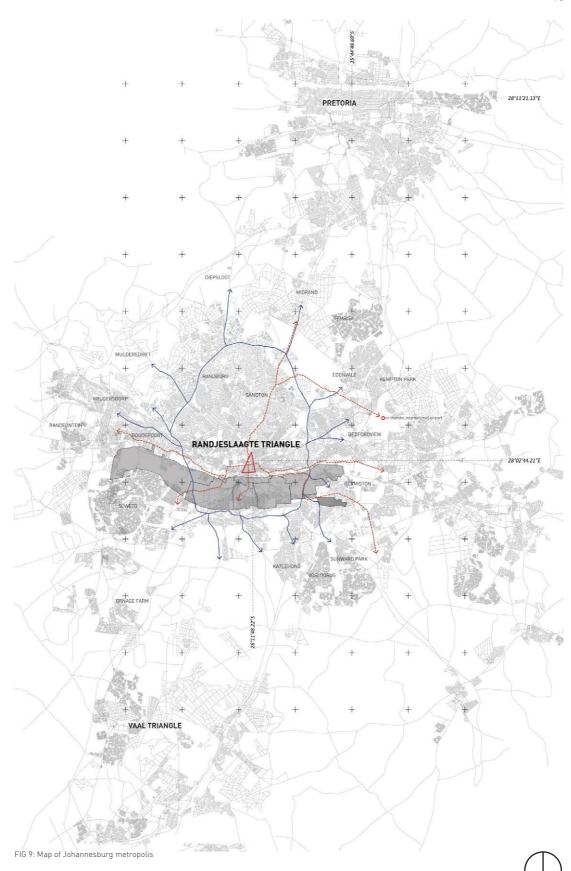


## 3 01 LOCALITY

The area under investigation is located on the fringes of the Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD) and Hillbrow. According to the 2001 South African Census (2001: 1), the Hillbrow—Joubert Park precinct is the most densely populated urban space in Africa. Johannesburg is renowned for its urban divisions, both planned and natural.

The Randjeslaagte Triangle that forms the main part of the city and the two major divisions, the Witwatersrand main gold reef and the sunken railway line, are indicated on the map. The railway line and ring road connect suburbs and townships around Johannesburg, indicating in some cases noticeable and strategic segregation.







The Randjeslaagte triangular land portion was the first part onto which the modern city grid was laid out. The urban fabric is made up of skyscrapers built at the height of Apartheid Nationalism, with Art Deco and historical neoclassical buildings interspersed throughout the city. This site is identified by the author as a place of arrival, historically synonymous with opportunity and adventure seekers. The site is perceived as a threshold, a type of portal to and from Africa, and where its fast-paced rhythm is generated from.



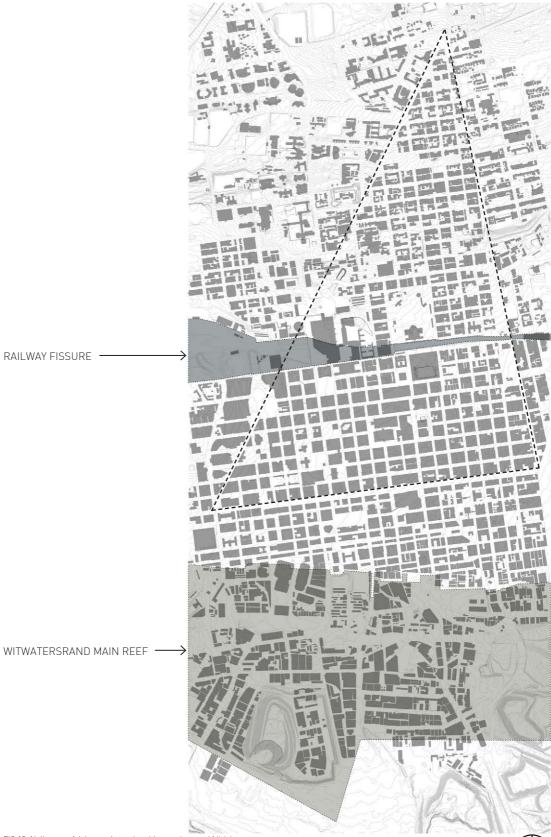


FIG 10: Nolly map of Johannesburg city with superimposed 'divisions.





Palimpsest map of Johannesburg composed of historical imagery from 1897 and recent aerial photographs. Indicated on this map is public open space provision, the sunken railway line, and the layout of the modern city grid between the natural rocky outcrops.







2013 aerial photograph of Johannesburg indicating densification and growth of built form. What can also be noted from the photograph is the systematic encroachment / intrusion into what was previously public open space, and the growth of motorized transport infrastructure (railway divisions and roadway bridges). The square grid results in minimal relief space and a confined, congested CBD with little room for pedestrian activity.

Open public spaces are precious and combine numerous different functions, ranging from recreation, social / spiritual gathering and venues for public expression. Density of population and proximity to transportation nodes (with thousands of daily commuters) caused the informal trade economy to develop rapidly and spill over into the streets, reclaiming and reinterpreting (previously) strictly controlled urban spaces.





FIG 12 [Google Earth]: Aerial photograph of Johannesbur







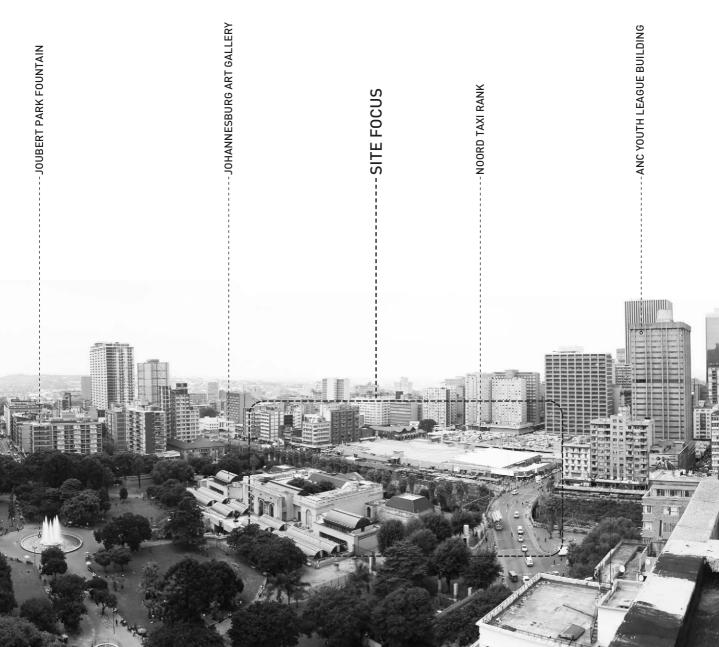


FIG 13: Panoramic overview of site



### 3 03 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

### **RANDJESLAAGTE**

Before the discovery of gold the site that Johannesburg now occupies was still open veld, without trees except thorn bush, in parts very rocky, and uninhabited except by wildlife such as lion, jackal and antelope which, though reduced in numbers, still roamed the plains. The discovery of gold in 1886 caused a vast influx of people from all over the world and brought prosperity to a pastoral people (City of Johannesburg [n.d.]). It became the new empire of the already powerful diamond magnates of Kimberley and brought high earnings and wealth to thousands of immigrants. Its romantic story thrilled millions. With the romanticism of Johannesburg came great sorrow as well (Leyds 1964: 1), caused by the systematic removal of Native people and the Anglo-Boer War which, with its political repercussions, still has an impact on the country almost a century later.

The Voortrekkers, emigrant Boers from the Cape, entered the Transvaal by crossing the Vaal River, over the drifts named by or after some of them such as Viljoen's Drift near Vereeniging, Lindeque's Drift, and De Kock's Drift (Leyds 1964: 1).

The Voortrekkers found much of the country uninhabited, although the great native chief Moselekatsi and his Matabele warriors had retreated beyond the Magaliesberg and, after their final defeat at the hands of the Voortrekkers, went beyond the Crocodile and Limpopo Rivers (Leyds 1964: 1).

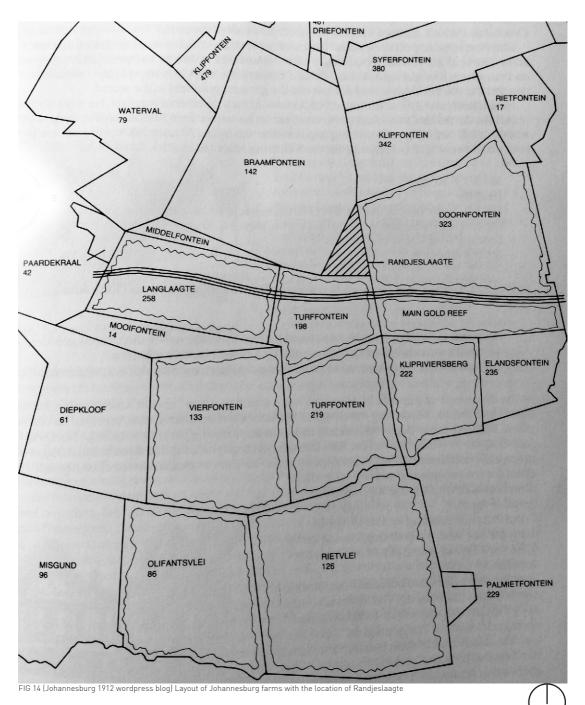
The established farms at the time of the discovery of the Rand's Goldfields were Doornfontein, Langlaagte, Turffontein, Braamfontein and Luipaardsvlei (Leyds 1964: 3). The original village of Johannesburg was laid out on the farm Randjeslaagte, which is now commonly known as uitvalgrond, the only patch of land where no gold was discovered in Johannesburg.

The farm Doornfontein extended from what is now End Street to Bedford View, and the original homestead stood at the eastern end of the farm (Leyds 1964: 3). The Witwatersrand got its name from the waterfalls which dropped down to the north from the ridge, which extended from Krugersdorp (now Mogale City) to approximately Bedford View, past Orange Grove (Leyds 1964: 4). The two main falls were called the Witpoortjie Falls (White Glen Falls). The pure white waters, so different from the muddy Vaal, could be seen and admired from the north, tumbling down in cascades, flowing into the Limpopo River (Leyds 1964: 4).

Langlaagte (which now includes Fordsburg, Mayfair, Industria and Sophiatown) was the farm where the payable auriferous conglomerate, the Main Reef, was first discovered (Leyds 1964: 5).

Deciding who Johannesburg was named after proves to be a matter of dispute among South African historians. Hedley Chivers and Bulpin are both of the opinion that no single individual gave his name to Johannesburg: "We are told that with so many people named Johannes in the Government and in the civil service, not to mention outsiders, it was an inclusive name, giving everyone a chance to claim share of the honour." However, the final conclusion of James and Ethel Gray, who devoted months of research to the matter, is that Johannesburg is named after the Veldkornet of the area, Johannes Petrus Meyer. Meyer was intimately associated with the area for many years before the Main Reef was discovered (Leyds 1964: 11).







# **3\_04 PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY**

15_01	Railway line between Johannesburg Art Gallery and Noord Taxi Rank
15_02	Park Station main arrivals and departures hall
15_03	Soccer game in the Drill Hall square
15_04	Old Ster City Cinema from the Drill Hall square (now market and spiritual gathering space)
15_05	Drill Hall community library and artist's residency (installation, digital, music art)
15_06	View of Drill Hall events space from Twist street
15_07-10	Drill Hall artist in residency with some of his work (garden and installation art)
15_11	Sunflower and view of old Ster City building
15_12-15	Windybrow Theatre, outdoor cinema screen and steel structures
15_16	Rustic steel screen in Twist Street
15_17	Taxis on their way to Noord Taxi Rank
15_18	Friends and informal goods traders Noord Street Market
15_19	Commuters and travellers walking from Noord Taxi Rank to Doornfontein Station
15_20	Hairdressers advertising along the Noord Street
15_21	Market on Noord Street
15_22	Life chickens for sale
15_23	Street tailor and clothing repair man
15_24	Mkomboti (African beer) brewers and traders
15_25	Fresh grapes for sale
15_26	Duster and Broom making near Noord Street Market
15_27	High pedestrian traffic in Noord Street near Park Station



15_28	Street barber in Noord Street Market
15_29	Chinese goods and clothing for sale in Noord Street Market
15_30	Johannesburg Art Gallery Palm trees visible from the market
15_31	Ladies shopping in Noord Street Market
15_32	Politically motivated gathering outside Noord Taxi Rank and the ANC Youth League Headquarters
15_33	Abandoned building in Twist Street, occupied by many homeless city dwellers
15_34	Johannesburg Art Gallery, Meier Pienaar Architects copper roof
15_35-38	Artworks including Gerrit Rietveld chair on display in the gallery
15_39	Water damage inside the Johannesburg Art Gallery
15_40-41	Steven Hobbs exhibition JAG SNAG, highlighting physical defects, abandonment and need for restoration to the Johannesburg Art Gallery
15_42	City doves in Joubert Park
15_43	Informal spiritual gathering in Joubert Park
15_44	Joubert Park chess club
15_45	Old Jewish Schul (synagogue) in Hillbrow
15_46	(Jackie Hulme 2013) Reinterpretation of the Schul with resonances from its past. A place for spiritual gathering. Now home to the Revelation Church of God (African-Christian Church)
15_47	Doorman and Pastor in training at the Revelation Church of God
15_48	Sunday service with the Church spilling out into the streets
15_49	Wolmarans Street Market
15_50	Entrance sculpture to local restaurant in Noord Street





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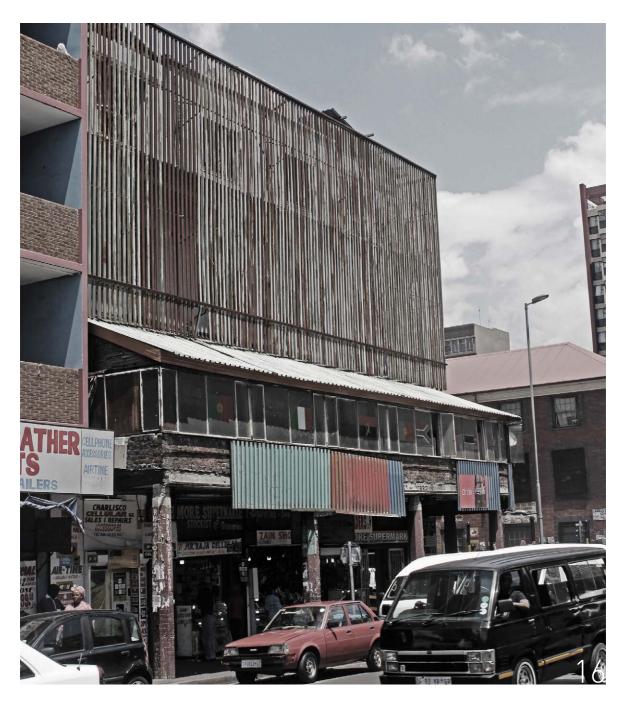












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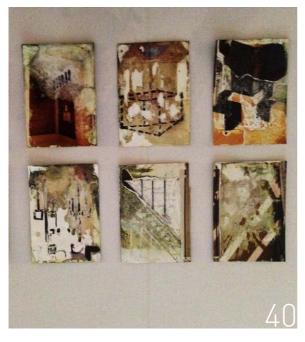




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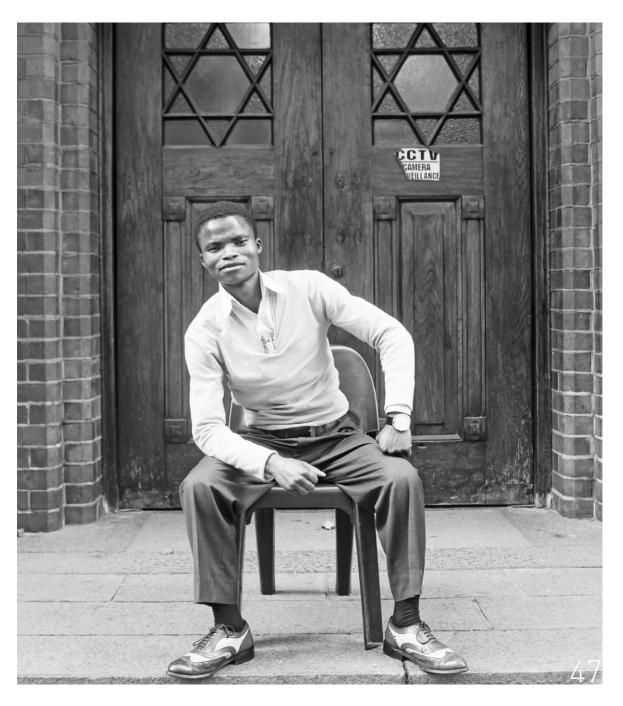






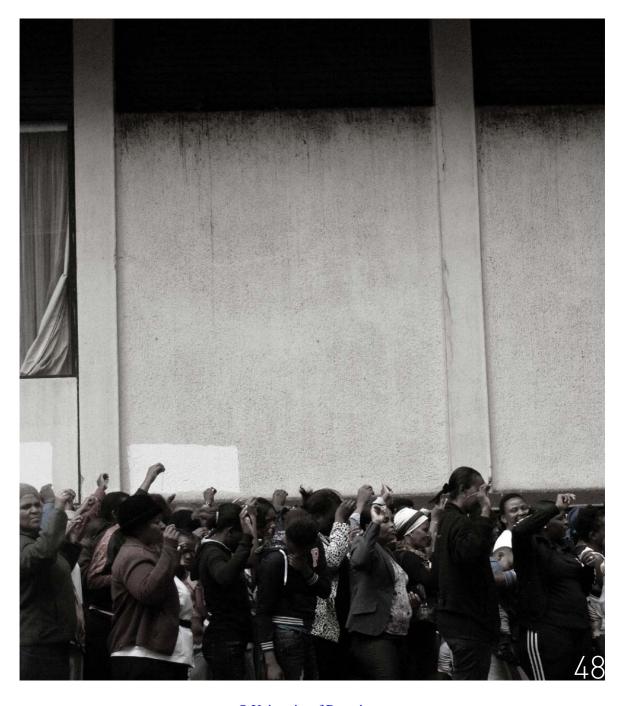
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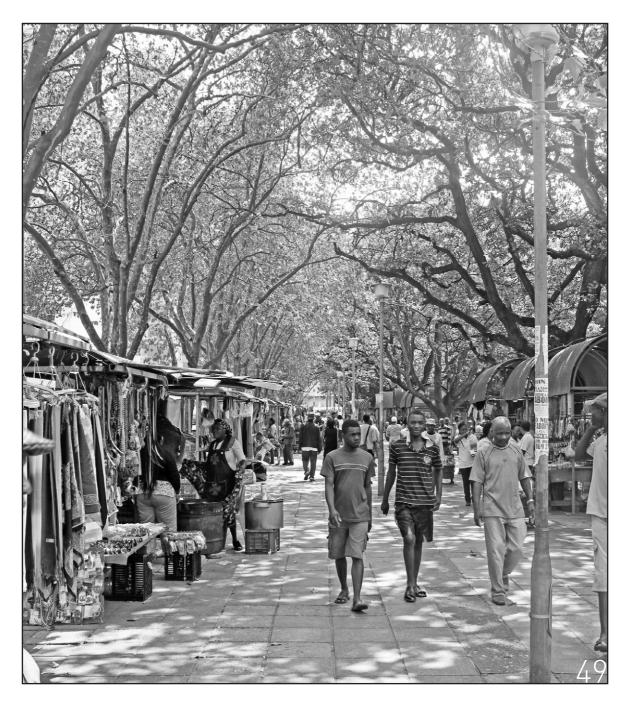
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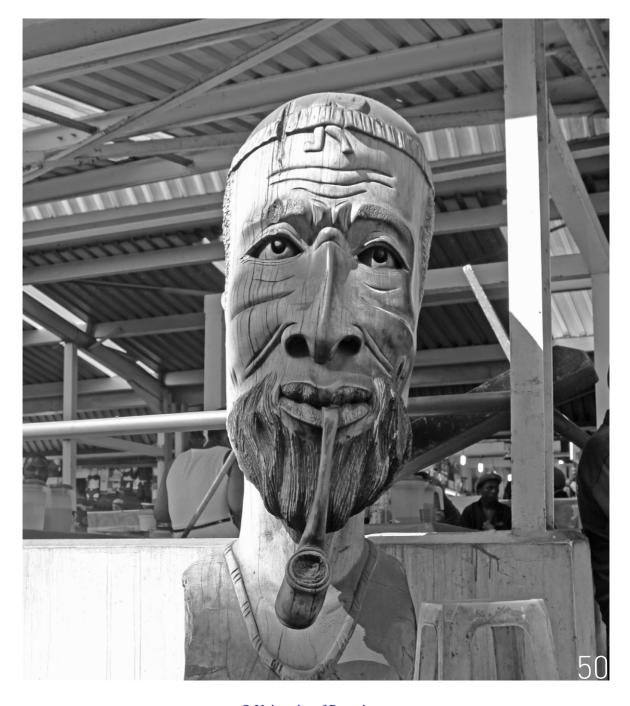
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### 3 05 GLOBALISATION AND THE THIRD WORLD METROPOLIS FILM SET

The unpredictable, ephemeral nature of the third-world metropolis is systematically gaining more popularity in contemporary western culture through literature and cinema. Perception is slowly shifting towards the third-world metropolis as a symbol of the 'new', while the glistening imitations of the perfectly planned, maximum efficiency first-world city that once symbolised the future is receiving less attention [Dasgupta 2006: 38].

In 2006, the film Tsotsi opened up the path for films set in a similar context and undeniably contributed to the construction of international satellite film studios in Cape Town. Many similar films set in urban environments of developing counties explore the fast-paced, often unstable and unpredictable nature of everyday life of these unfamiliar environments.

Films such as The Constant Gardener (Nairobi), City of God (Rio de Janeiro), Secuestro Express (Venezuela), Slumdog Millionaire (India), and Lord of War (Lebanon) were well received at film festivals and achieved international box-office success.

The first-world city that dominated the silver screen for the better part of the 20th century is now the stacked-up, sprawling city of the third world; its confidence and ambition have turned to anxiety and besiegement; its homogenising obsession has induced counter-fantasies of insubordination, excess and life forms of chaotic variety (Dasgupta 2006: 38).



FIG 16.1 Still image from the film District 9



If cinema is our collective subconscious desire or fantasy projected (Zizek 2006), the desire of the cinema-goer is found in the functioning and thrill of the fecund ecology of the third-world metropolis.

Once perceived as 'backward', the third world has turned into a dreamlike, uncanny promise (Dasgupta 2006: 39). South-African director Neill Blomcamp (District 9, Elysium, Chappie), whose work is characteristically inspired by the contrasts in and dualistic nature of Johannesburg, distorts the edges of what is accepted as the norm of existence in a globalising world. The script of District 9 was written for and shot in Johannesburg, whilst Elysium, set in Los Angeles and representing similar themes and aesthetics, is depicted as the future globalised metropolis in what was before known as the first world.

Slowly, aspects developing economies are systematically infiltrating the most intimate and secure western refuges — from a knowledge of where 'sweatshop' goods, 'Made in China' household items, counterfeit CD's and DVD's, software, fashion and cheap electronics come from: the third world insistently emerges and latches on to life in the west.

The improvisational ethos of these bricolage cities has been elevated to a global ambition; the unlikely potential of the third-world city was never unlikely at all (Dasgupta 2006: 39). Although the idea of the third-world metropolis as an image of the future might be unsettling, the concept of the third world became that of the ultra-modern: more capable and better equipped than the first-world city to sustain radical diversity, cope with growing population rates and other world problems the principles of globalisation.



FIG 16.2 Still image from the film District 9



### 3\_06 JOHANNESBURG AND HILLBROW

### DYNAMIC-HISTORIC SPATIAL PERSPECTIVE

Modern African cities are in a state of crisis, experiencing problems that include deteriorating living conditions, deepening inequality and polarization, widespread corruption, and high levels of crime. Yet they also function as engines of economic growth and show hope through low-income communities who, with a willingness to rise up against challenges of everyday life, mobilize successfully to improve difficult circumstances (Graafland 2012: 15).

The term 'transformation' is commonly used when describing urbanism and social issues of the post-apartheid city, which is characterised by distinctive cultural, socio-political and economic circumstances. The way we address architecture and public space should be unique to the African urban context — a product of interrelations as constituted through interactions, the existence of multiplicity, and the coexistence of heterogeneity (Massey 2005: 9). The African model for urban space facilitates social exchange and its temporal conditions supersede the physical, homogeneous and static (Da Costa 2007: 10).

The dividing lines of the past are strongly drawn on the surface of Johannesburg's soil, the formal organized urban fabric made up of homogeneous spaces that signify separation and power. Robinson (1999: 165) refers to Lefebvre's 'abstract' space as 'representational' space. Representational space is thus built upon the dominance of the visual, of formal relations amongst objects organized on the basis of technical knowledge.

The spatiality of representational space draws on cultural and historical resources — where the possibility and memory of previous ways of living in other spaces are not dictated by a dominant order (Robinson 1999: 170).

Despite the fragmentation, alienation and dividing lines, the City in Transition now functions as a dynamic and connected organism, although what it inherited from its divided past is a sense of association with the urban environment, which is often still distorted, causing the city's identity to be characterized by its temporal qualities.

The inner city is not only connected to townships around Johannesburg and other cities, but the routes of many of its residents stretch the length of Africa (Robinson 1999: 170).

"Where do you stay?" is answered with a longing and connection to a hometown, whether in rural KwaZu-lu-Natal or Zimbabwe, rather than his/her new urban residence.

"Hillbrow is a place in perpetual transition. You move in because you have to, you move out as quickly as you can" (Dangor 1999: 359). The Johannesburg CBD and Hillbrow are often seen as places of economic opportunity or as last resorts for survival — places to use and battles to emancipate oneself from.

Norberg-Schulz (1980: 14) suggests that event alludes to time and that the character of place is an integral function of time. Hillbrow as transitional space is interesting because its nature is inherited; its history became part of it's genetic code.

It has always been a place of arrival, a place where migrants first set foot in the city. This likely happens because of its central location and close proximity to major transport nodes.



The changing and restless flows of people, of resources, of ideas, which constantly reshape or mobilize city spaces, can now be considered (Robinson 1999: 170). Nowadays the city is regularly described as 'in transition' or 'in a cycle of flux'. Understanding and constructing in moving space which is caused by a history of division should result in a new approach to urbanism.

The spatial conditions of the Noord taxi-rank opposite the Johannesburg Art Gallery is thus the most appropriate space to investigate as the dynamics of transience and history are most apparent between these two opposing forces.

"Social space contains potentialities of works and re-appropriation — existing to begin in the artistic sphere but responding above all to the demands of a body 'transported' outside itself in space, a body which by putting up resistance inaugurates the project of a different space (either the space of a counter-culture, or a counter-space in the sense of an initially utopian alternative to actually existing 'real' space" (Robinson 1999: 166).



### **CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

"Johannesburg represents the South African Paradox at its most acute, confronting us with radical contradictions, unhealed wounds, bitter-sweet memories, utopian visions, mine dumps, lush forest-gardens, strip malls, spazas, villas, shacks, walls, stoeps, BMWs and horse carts. Its hidden beauty lies in its dry expansive veld, golden, red and ochre earth, blackjacks, cosmos, veldt fires, urban forests, and electric storms" [Deckler 2012: 1].

South Africa's extremely complex, multi-layered and multicultural history asks for an understanding of its intimate nature and culture. Culture seen from a modern, Western perspective is defined as a system of traditions, beliefs and behaviours of a certain group of people or a society, which is manifested and preserved in the arts, architecture, language and other human intellectual achievements.

Western philosophy approaches culture as a tool, dynamic and provocative, through which contemporary society constantly validates, tests, re-evaluates and positions itself (Lokko 2012: 79). Culture from an African perspective is largely manifested in tradition which, by its very definition, cannot perform in the same way — it is almost always a process rather than a fixed, unchanging state of being, and part of its uniqueness is its ability to shape, shift and transform itself and the society producing it (Lokko 2012: 79).

African culture cannot only be preserved in the current, more static form of art galleries, museums and books: the traditions of dancing, storytelling and performance are precious commodities and need a place in the contemporary city in order to be a useful resource for the critical understanding of culture and the role it plays in a city that becomes ever more



FIG 17 Noord Street Taxi Rank



The city is made up of different layers of historical time, architectural strata, and residues from earlier times superimposed on one another (Jansen 2012: 130). Johannesburg must be understood through the layers of segregated and disconnected urban planning, a colonial/apartheid built heritage and its relation to apartheid history, as well as the potential of heritage as a reservoir of 'memory'. The reservoirs of memory form part of the subconscious of the city and influence its day to day functioning.

The 2000 Values and Heritage Conservation Report of the Getty Conservation Institute stipulates that artefacts are not static embodiments of culture but are, rather, a medium through which identity, power and society are produced and reproduced (Lagae after Avrami & Randall 2012: 90).

Cultural heritage plays a central role in the social construct and can be of great symbolic value in terms of reconciliation and building the collective identity of the major role players in a community.

The author argues that the reality of the post-apartheid city is that it exists of a historic residue, which the majority of people who currently live in the city do not identify with or have negative associations with. Without territorial identification of the inhabitants of a city with the city, it risks remaining transient, abused, and on a path of destruction.

The challenge is to find a mediating way in which culture and historic built form (tangible and intangible heritage) can be protected and preserved, whilst facilitating the transition of people from all backgrounds and ensuring that they identify with the city in order to restore pride and increase social cohesion.

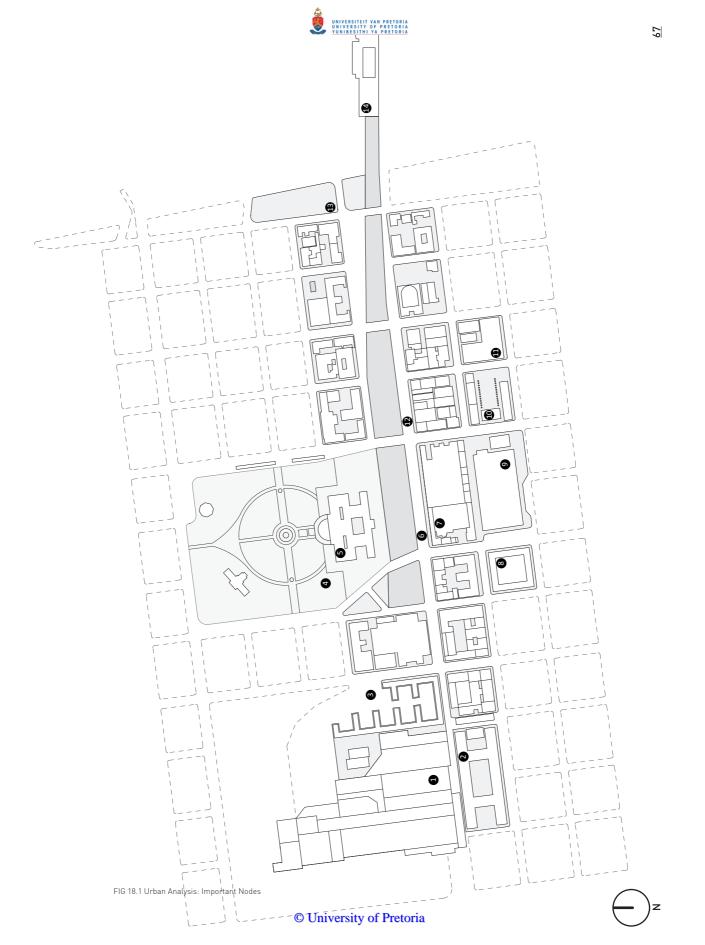




### 3\_07 URBAN ANALYSIS

### **IMPORTANT NODES**

- 1 PARK STATION
- OLD PARK STATION BUILDING
- 3 WANDERERS TAXI RANK
- 4 JOUBERT PARK
- **5** JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY
- 6 NOORD STREET INFORMAL MARKET
- PARK CENTRAL SHOPPING COMPLEX
- **8** ANC YOUTH LEAGUE BUILDING
- 9 NOORD STREET TAXI RANK
- DRILL HALL
- **11** OLD STER CINEMA COMPLEX
- SATELLITE POLICE STATION
- NUGGET PARK
- **10** DOORNFONTEIN STATION





### **GREEN SPACE**

① OLD TELEPHONE PLANE

CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

CHESS

PARK

② KRUGER PARK

OLD WANDERERS STADIUM FOOTBALL CLUB

3 JOUBERT PARK

RECREATIONAL SPACE

CHESS CLUB

PHOTOGRAPHY

CRÈCHE

CLINIC

HERITAGE (VICTORIAN GREENHOUSE)

URBAN FARMING

4 UNION GROUNDS / MARKET SQUARE

PROTEST AND PUBLIC VOICE

RECREATION

MARKET

S NUGGET PARK

RECREATIONAL SPACE

TRADE

LINK TO CHURCHES DISTRICT

NG-CHURCH

ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE

OLD SYNAGOGUE (REVELATION CHURCH OF CHRIST)



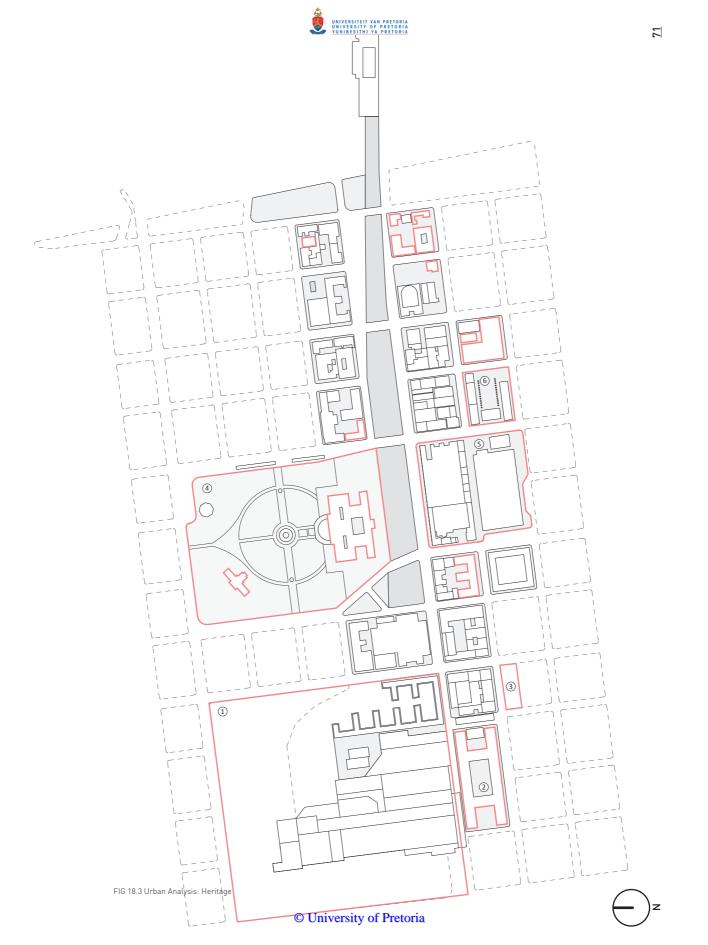


### **HERITAGE**

- ① KRUGER PARK

  OLD WANDERERS STADION

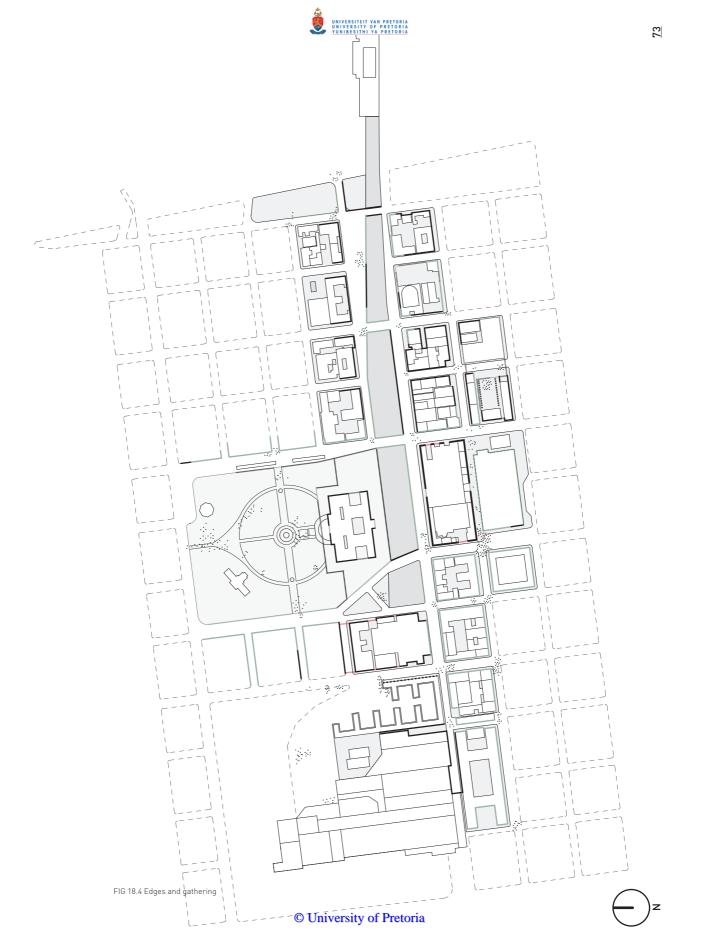
  FOOTBALL CLUB
- ② PARK STATION (GERARD MOERDIJK)
- ③ ST MARY'S ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL
- 4 JOUBERT PARK JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY (SIR ENDWIN LUTYENS) VICTORIAN GREENHOUSE
- ⑤ UNION GROUNDS / MARKET SQUARE PROTEST AND PUBLIC VOICE RECREATION MARKET
- 6 DRILL HALL





### **EDGES & GATHERING**

- ACTIVE, SOLID
- ---- ACTIVE POROUS
- ACTIVE, FENCED
- --- PASSIVE, SOLID
- ---- PASSIVE, POROUS
- RESTRICTED, ACCESS CONTROL





### ECONOMIC / TRADE

— SHOPFRONTS ON GROUND FLOOR

GENERAL ELECTRONICS
CELLPHONE REPAIR AND PRODUCTS
MATERIAL PRODUCTS AND CLOTHING
BEDS AND BEDDING
TRADITIONAL MEDICINE
RESTAURANTS
BARS / SHEBEENS
MEAT, VEGETABLES
VARIOUS CHINESE CONSUMER GOODS

INFORMAL TRADE ACTIVITY CLOTHING AND SHOES HAIR STALLS ARICAN FAST FOOD VEGETABLES GAMBLING

FORMAL TRADE

BRAND CLOTING AND SHOES COMMERCIAL FAST FOOD TELECOMMUNICATION / CELLPHONES





### **TRANSPORT & CONGESTION**

- HIGH CONGESTION
- TRAIN STATION
- B METRO BUS STOP
- BRT BUS STOP
- TAXI RANK
- ts TAXI STOP
- PARKING





### 3\_08 FRAMEWORK PRECEDENT

### THE INNER CITY CONNECTIVITY FRAMEWORK BY ALBONICO SACK METACITY ARCHITECTS

Realising the importance of the inner city's connectivity with the surrounding townships and the current problem of motorized transport congestion, Albonico Sack Metacity Architects and Urban Designers focus on the strategic development of future transport facilities and public spaces. By maximising public transport efficiency, a more walkable city, where the safety and delight of being a pedestrian in vibrant market-orientated streets and open civic spaces,

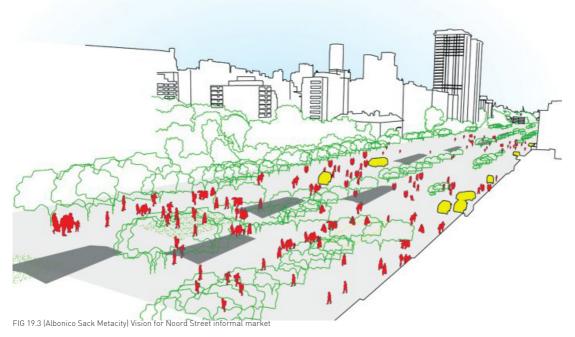
becomes the backbone of the scheme. The focus area addresses the site chosen for this architectural dissertation and the author, agreeing with the urban vision, proposes a permanent informal trade and pedestrian zone along the railway fissure Furthermore, an interesting aspect of the urban scheme is the bridging and zoning of spaces across the railway line which open up and create potential for new civic spaces.



FIG 19.1 (Albonico Sack Metacity) Urban framework proposal plan



FIG 19.2 (Albonico Sack Metacity) Intensifying the core by bridging the gap





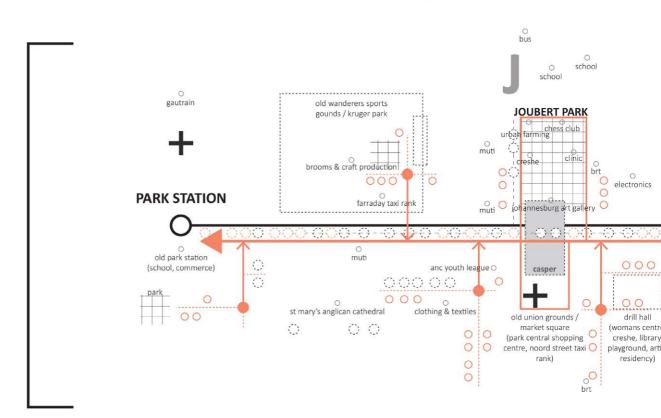


### 3\_09 URBAN VISION

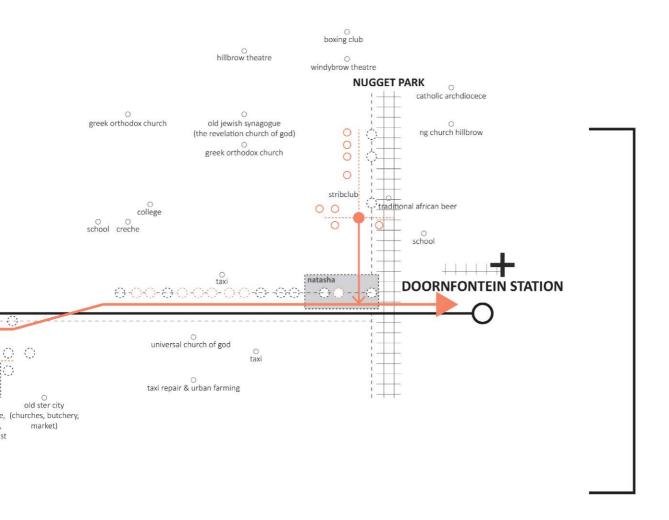
### NOORD STREET ACTIVITY SPINE: RECLAIMING PUBLIC SPACE AND PROMOTING THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Open soft spaces such as parks are scarce and extensively utilized in a number of different ways. The author identified the need for more open public space, especially around major transport nodes. The transition from arrival space to city fabric is marked by an inherently claustrophobic and anxious character, which could be counteracted by spaces of temporary relief. Furthermore, the area suffers from urban decay, congestion, and a lack of investment. To attract reinvestment, the site should be promoted and revived as the artistic and cultural hub of Johannesburg. Existing public infrastructure, civic centres and police stations should be upgraded and new facilities provided.

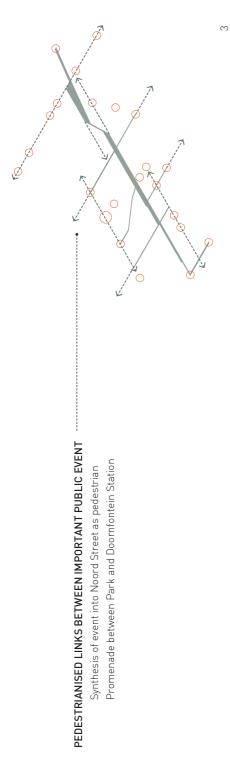
The urban intention is to build on the already active and successful Noord Street informal market by creating a pedestrianized activity spine which would better define the link between the Park and Doornfontein stations. The urban framework will allow for better movement between (and participation in) various cultural events, address the current need for public open space, stimulate the informal economy, and optimize public transport networks. Existing and new cultural, civic and infrastructural nodes will be integrated and linked to the main activity spine.











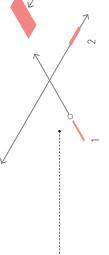


- 1. Old Telephone Plane park
  - 2. Joubert Park
- 3. Nugget Park

NEW PUBLIC SPACE AT PROMINENT TRANSPORTATION NODES -----

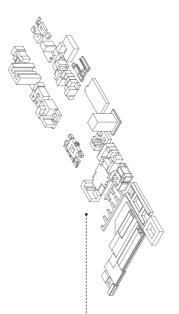
2. Noord Street taxi rank 3. Doornfontein Station

1. Park Station



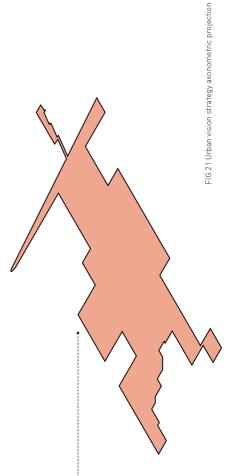
# REMOVAL OF URBAN OBSTRUCTIONS ......

- 1. Under utilized administration building at Park Station as new entrance to Noord Street pedestrian promenade.
  - 2. One storey fast food stand in King George Street
- 3. One storey Park Central shopping centre constructed on Union Grounds



## EXISTING BUILT FABRIC ......

- 1. Buildings along the Noord Street railway fissure,
- 2. Ground floor trade / production
- 3. Civic / public infrastructure and social housing



# URBAN VISION AREA (NORTH STREET TRADE PROMENADE)

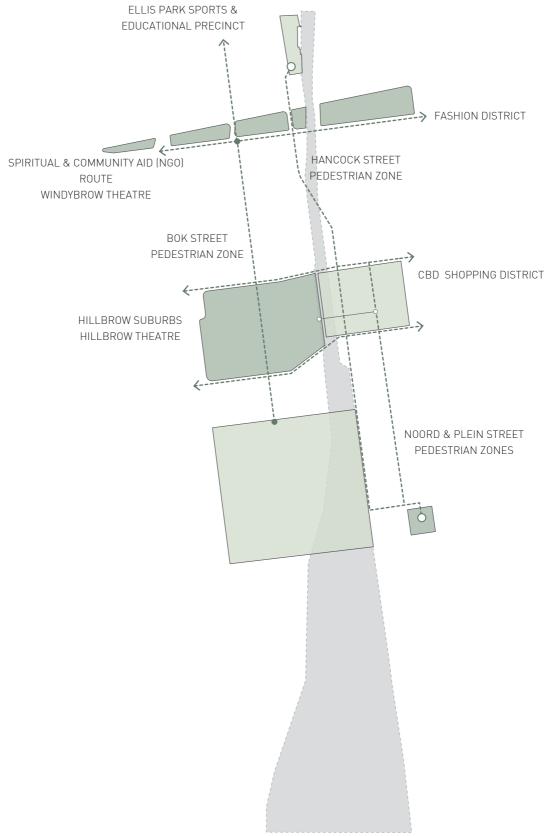
Area includes the greater Joubert Park precinct, linking the Doornfontein educational precinct with Hillbrow and

Braamfontein



## PEDESTRIAN STRATEGY: LINKING NEW AND EXISTING PUBLIC SPACE, RECLAIMING PUBLIC TERRITORY







### TRANSPORT STRATEGY: IMPROVING FLOW WITH AN OPTIMIZED PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

- BRT BUS ROUTES
- METRO BUS ROUTES
- TAXI ROUTE
- TRAIN CONNECTIONS (METRO & GAUTRAIN)
  - REMOVE URBAN OBSTRUCTIONS
- EXISTING PUBLIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE NODES

