

Urban Vision

Understanding Johannesburg: an Origin

Reading the city: the logic of fragments

The Uitvalgrond as fragment

Fantasy and fragment

Identified 'Uitvalgrond' sites

Nostalgia translated

Projects

PART I: Johannesburg Nostalgia - Urban Vision

An investigation undertaken as a group study. The collaboration between Elzanne Pieterse, Marzanne Roux, Erwin Struwig, Pieter Swart and Gillian van der Klashorst.

The urban investigation undertaken by the group started with a 'conversation' between us, the group, and the material that constitutes the city of Johannesburg in the absence of lived experience. The objective of this conversation was to engage and encounter the city as representation from a position of uncompromised and unblemished naivety. It is as much a personal account of the city as it is reading and research. This approach takes the built structure as the point from which to investigate how a city, and more specifically the city of Johannesburg, unconsciously projects and constructs its own image. It is in this unconditioned capacity from which the city is first understood as fragment.

Understanding Johannesburg: an Origin

Firstly, Johannesburg was investigated as 'fragment'. A condition of fragmentation permeates the city on all scales, the geomorphological, the cartographic, the political, typological and, perhaps most significantly, on the scale of individual fantasy.

A mapping exercise was undertaken in order to understand Johannesburg's conception and development and, more specifically, its geomorphology, cartographic development and political history – the city as a whole.

To understand the grain, one must understand the whole.

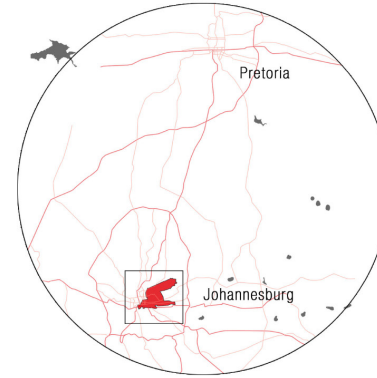
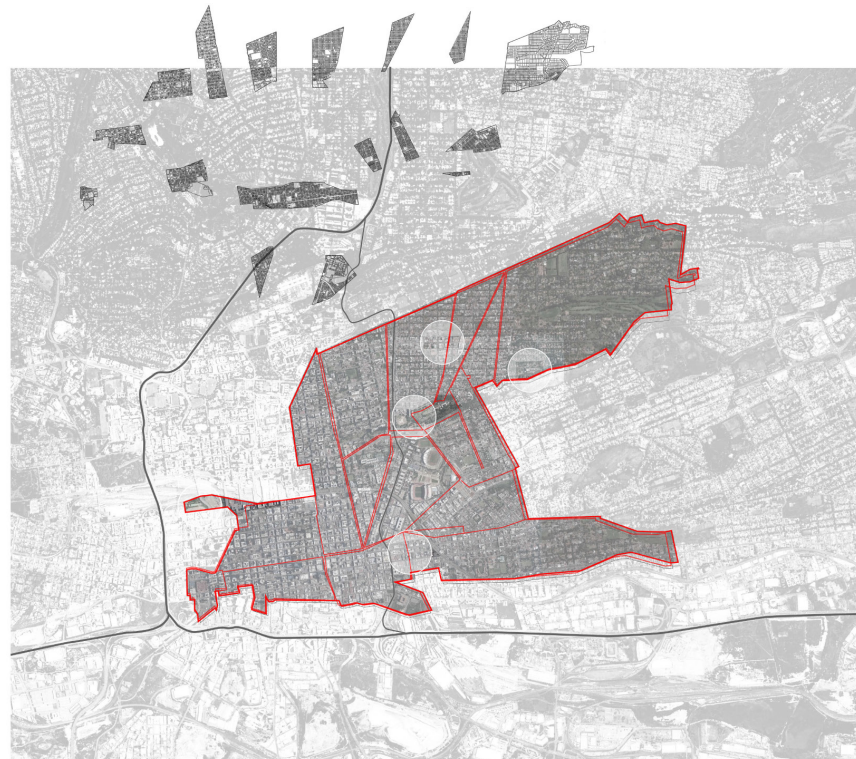


fig 3.1. Initial study undertaken and the illustration of fragmented Johannesburg'



JOHANNESBURG: 'ISLANDIFICATION'

The Origins of the City of Gold

3 Billion years ago the Witwatersrand basin was covered by an inland sea/lake. Heavy materials and minerals, such as gold, were deposited through streams into the bottom of the lake. Over time layers of sand and sediment accumulated, eventually buried by lava, creating sedimentary rock, wherein one finds the gold of Witwatersrand.

2 Billion years ago a meteorite, the size of table mountain, collided with the earth leaving a crater of 250km wide. The force caused 'Upliftment'- a geological phenomenon occurring in the centre of impact craters, wherein rock bounces back and forms a dome, here known as the vredefort dome. The tremendous force of the collision caused the rock and earth to liquidise, disrupting the earth's crust and tilting the 'bowl' of the Witwatersrand basi, burying the gold kilometers beneath the earths surface. Without this impact the gold on the surface would have washed away.

The Johannesburg main reef and southern reef is visible on the southern slopes of Witwatersrand, running east to west at a constant angle of 25-30 degrees. Johannesburg's mining industry began in 1886 with 0.16 % of the global industry to largest single source of gold supply in the world – over a ¼ by 1898.

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fig 3.2. 1964 Map of geological conditions

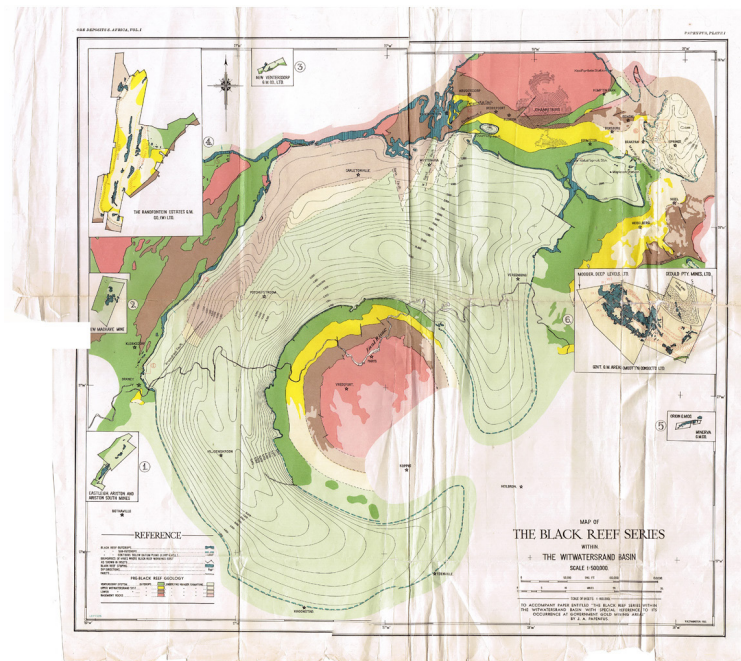
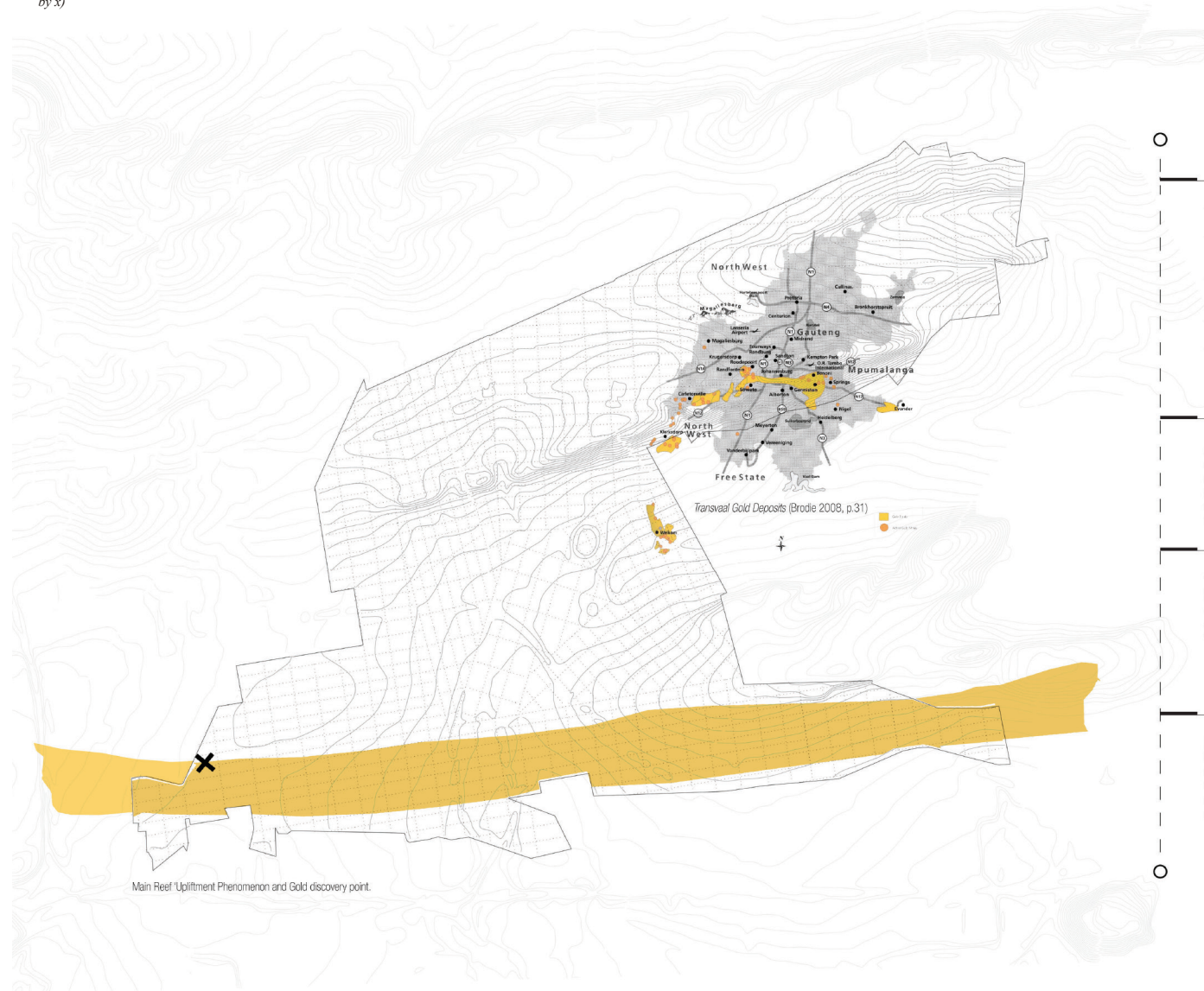


fig 3.3. A Study of Johannesburg's mining development, also illustrating the first area where gold was found (marked by x)



Johannesburg as Mining Camp

1886

ORIGIN OF JOHANNESBURG

- The first gold of the Main reef was discovered by George Harrison on the farm Langlaagte in 1886
- On 20 Sept 1886 President Paul Kruger opened the farm for public digging, this attracted vast amounts of Gold prospectors with dreams of fortune.
- The first mining camp named Ferreira's dorp - On the farm of Turfontein was the only camp with a water source, the Fordsburg dip.
- The second camp, Marshall's town was established not long after.
- The "uitvalgrond" - an open, barren, stony and unclaimed triangle of land, between the farms Braamfontein, Doornfontein, and Turfontein - known as Randjeslaagte, was settled in 1886 and was to become the city Johannesburg

1890

MINING INDUSTRY

Prospecting developed into deep level mining, with additional capital and machinery needed. This combined with the brief economic depression resulted in mining syndicates buying all mining holdings, permanently removing the prospects of fame and fortune of small-time prospectors, thus setting the stage for the industrial barons known as Randlords.

1890s

POLITICS OF GOLD

The Randlords had financial and political power and an important role in shaping the social and political history of Johannesburg. The viability of the financial and political future in Johannesburg, and resultant, South Africa was dependent on the abundant availability and low cost of labour.

Black Mineworkers: 1890 -99 : 14000 -100 000 workers
Chinese: 1910: 63659

1890s

LIQUID GOLD

Labourers, mostly men, lived in compounds and boarding houses. The rough lifestyles and lack of 'family' structure lead to a culture of drinking, gambling and prostitution - By 1890 Johannesburg was filled with approximately 40 'bars' - resulting in early descriptions of Johannesburg as a "weird mixture of civilisation and savage", with "a strange taint of gold lust."

Main Reef 'Upliftment Phenomenon and Gold discovery point.

“Uitvalgrond”

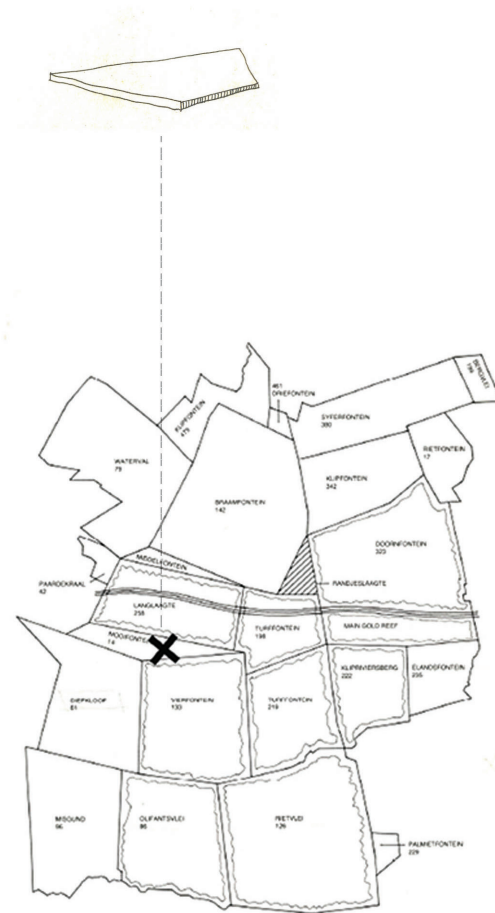
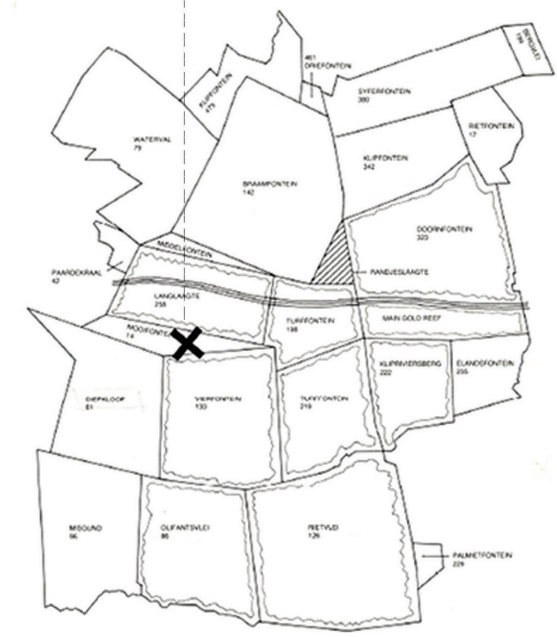
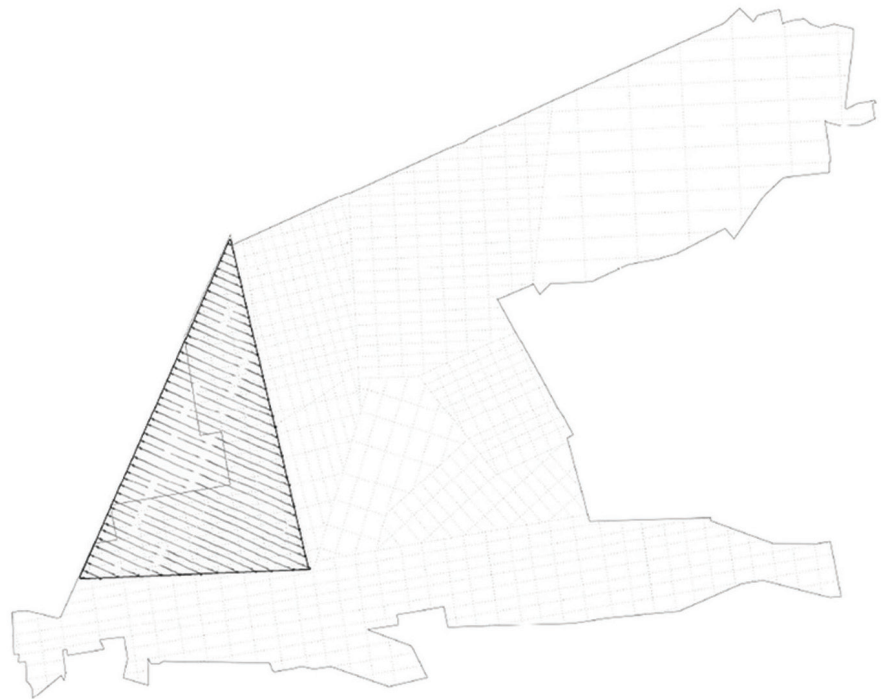
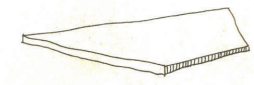


fig 3.4. The boundaries of the historic farms, and the location of the 'Uitvalgrond' (Meiring et al., 1986:11)

"Uitvalgrond"



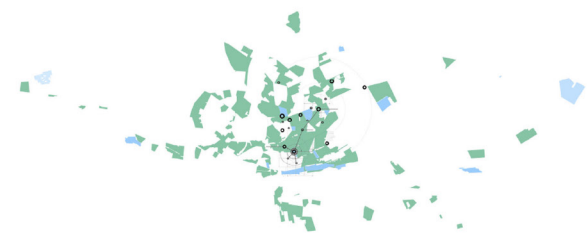
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fig 3.5. 'Uitvalgrond' - The Randjeslaagte Triangle within the present boundaries of the Johannesburg municipal area.

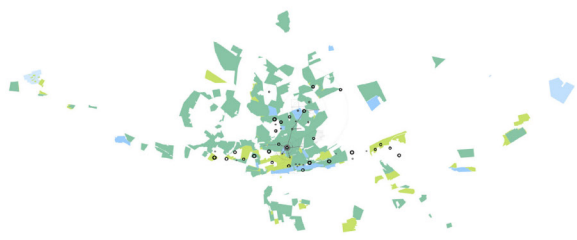
fig 3.6. The historic development of Randjeslaagte, Ferreiras Dorp, Marshalls Town and Jeppes-town what was to become the current Johannesburg CBD



Land development 0 - 1890 and 1890 - 1900



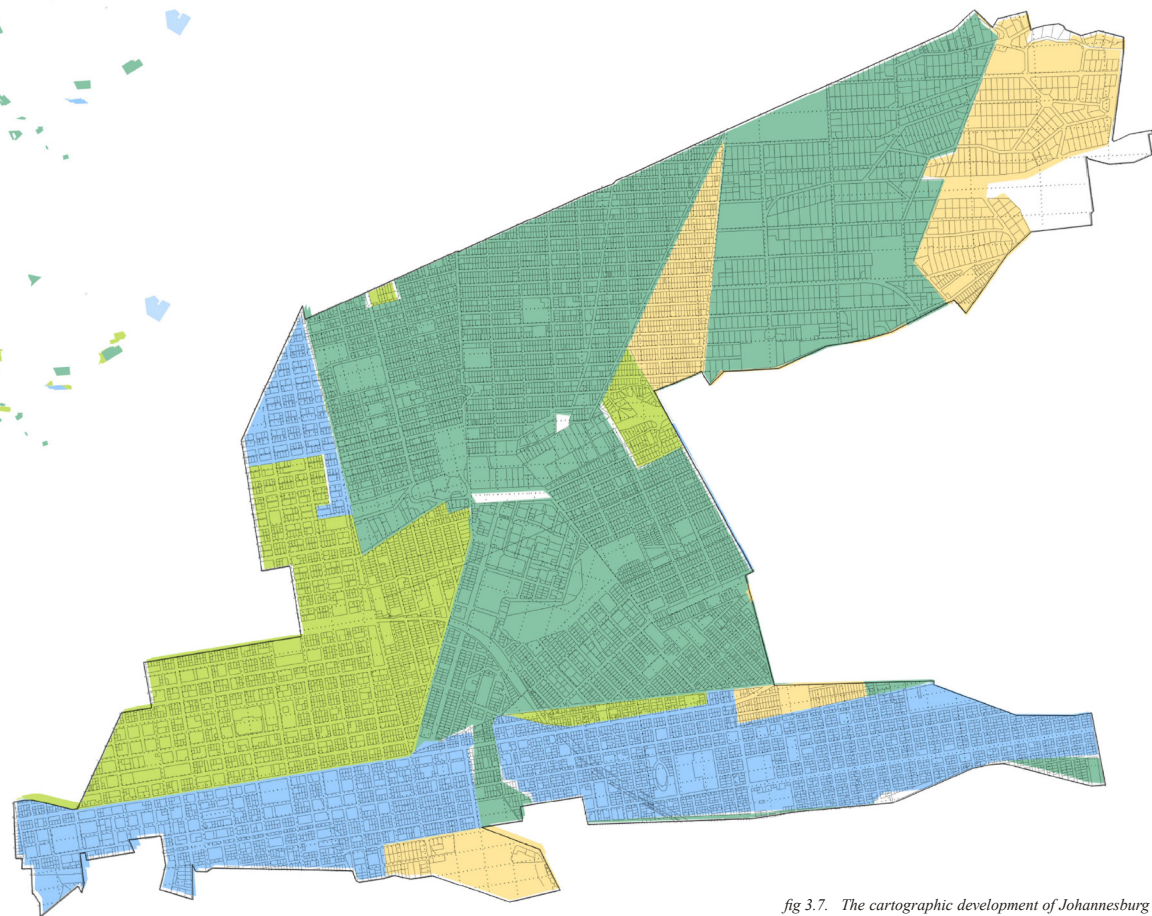
Land development 1900 - 1910



Land development 1910 - 1920

Exploded City

- 0 - 1890
- 1890 - 1900
- 1900 - 1910
- 1910 - 1920
- 1920 - 1930

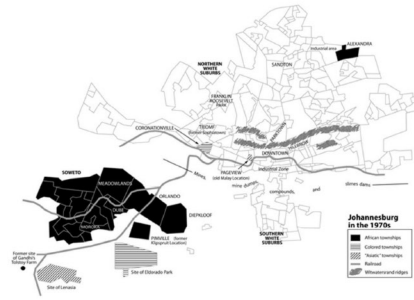


Land development 1920 - 1930

fig 3.7. The cartographic development of Johannesburg between 1890-1930 illustrates the rapid development of Johannesburg from a mining town to city.

Segregated Johannesburg

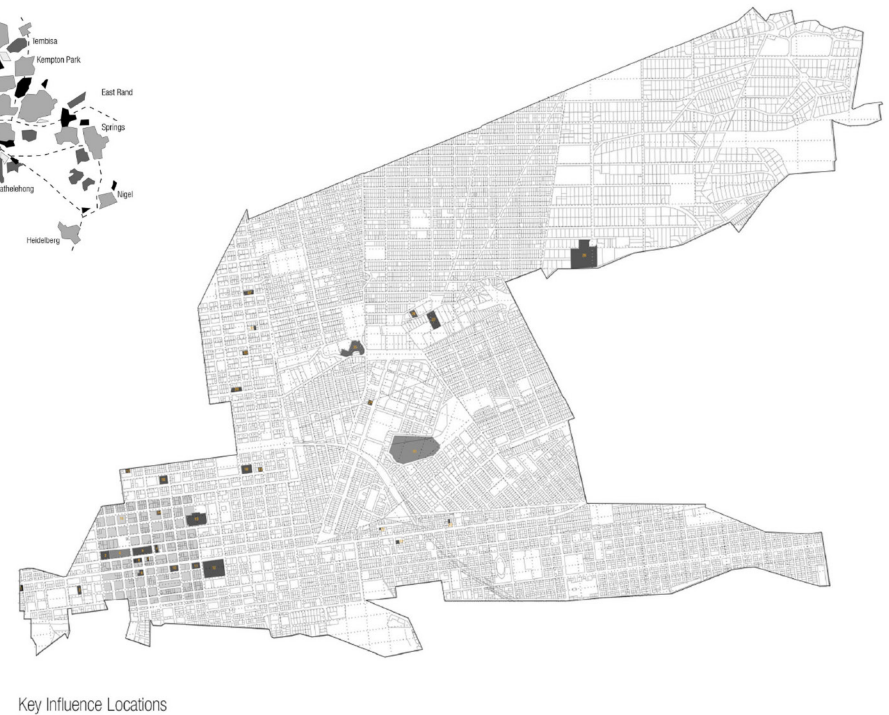
- 1911 - The Mines and Works Act: prevents Africans from obtaining jobs beyond the level of manual labourer.
- 1912 - ANC - African National Congress is formed
- 1913 - The Native Land Act (No: 27) is passed, forcing Non-whites to live in specific areas
- 1922 - The Stallard Commission is established owing to African labour protests in the Witwatersrand, permanent African migration into towns and the emergence of squatter settlements close to towns. The Commission encouraged racial segregation.
- 1934 - The Slum Clearance Act: Enabled municipalities to forcibly remove people who were settled in areas that were considered to be slums. (District 6)
- 1946 - The Asiatic Land Tenure & Indian Representation Act restricted Indian people from buying or occupying land outside certain exempted areas.
- 1948 - The National Party (NP): led by D.F. Malan in alliance with Nicolaas Christiaan Havenga's Afrikaner Party (AP) wins by a majority of five seats and 40% of the overall electoral vote.
- 1950 - The Group Areas Act: Gives the government power to create racially segregated areas where members of a specific racial group could live and work. The Act enables the authorities to forcibly remove people of a different racial group/s from an area that has been designated as being long to another racial group.
- 1955 - Sophiatown is declared a White area under the Group Areas Act, and over 60 000 people are forcibly removed from the area and a suburb named "Triomf" for whites is established in its place in
- 1957 - Lenasia: Indian people are forcibly removed from around Johannesburg and relocated to Lenasia
- 1960 - Sharpsville massacre
- 1964 - Rivonia trial: ANC members like Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment in Robben Island
- 1976 - Soweto uprisings
- 1985 - Height of state of emergency
- 1990 - Mandela is released
- 1994 - Democracy - First democratic elections



The rigid racial zoning of Johannesburg and Soweto after forced removals of the apartheid era (Nightingale 2012).



Racial segregation - Apartheid Planning Larger Impact



- KEY**
- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 - John Vorster building | 17 - Moth Building |
| 2 - The Empire | 18 - Dell Hall |
| 3 - JHB Public Library | 19 - Star City |
| 4 - Old Market square | 20 - Ellis park Stadium complex |
| 5 - City hall | 21 - Trophy Bar |
| 6 - Guild Hall Pub | 22 - Cosmopolitan Hotel |
| 7 - Old Arcade | 23 - Market street arcade |
| 8 - Post Office | 24 - Leonard Rajan Theatre |
| 9 - Rand Club | 25 - Pentec City tower |
| 10 - His Majesty's Theatre | 26 - Old water tower |
| 11 - Colosseum Movie Palace | 27 - Westminster Apartments |
| 12 - Carlton Centre | 28 - Observatory |
| 13 - High Court | 29 - Little Rose & Bazzmatzaz |
| 14 - Jantje's Art Disco building | 30 - Madisa Rogge club |
| 15 - French Fashion Quarter | 31 - The ambassador |
| 16 - Bantu men's Social Centre | 32 - Hillbrow tower |

fig 3.8. The city's political history and places where important political events occurred.

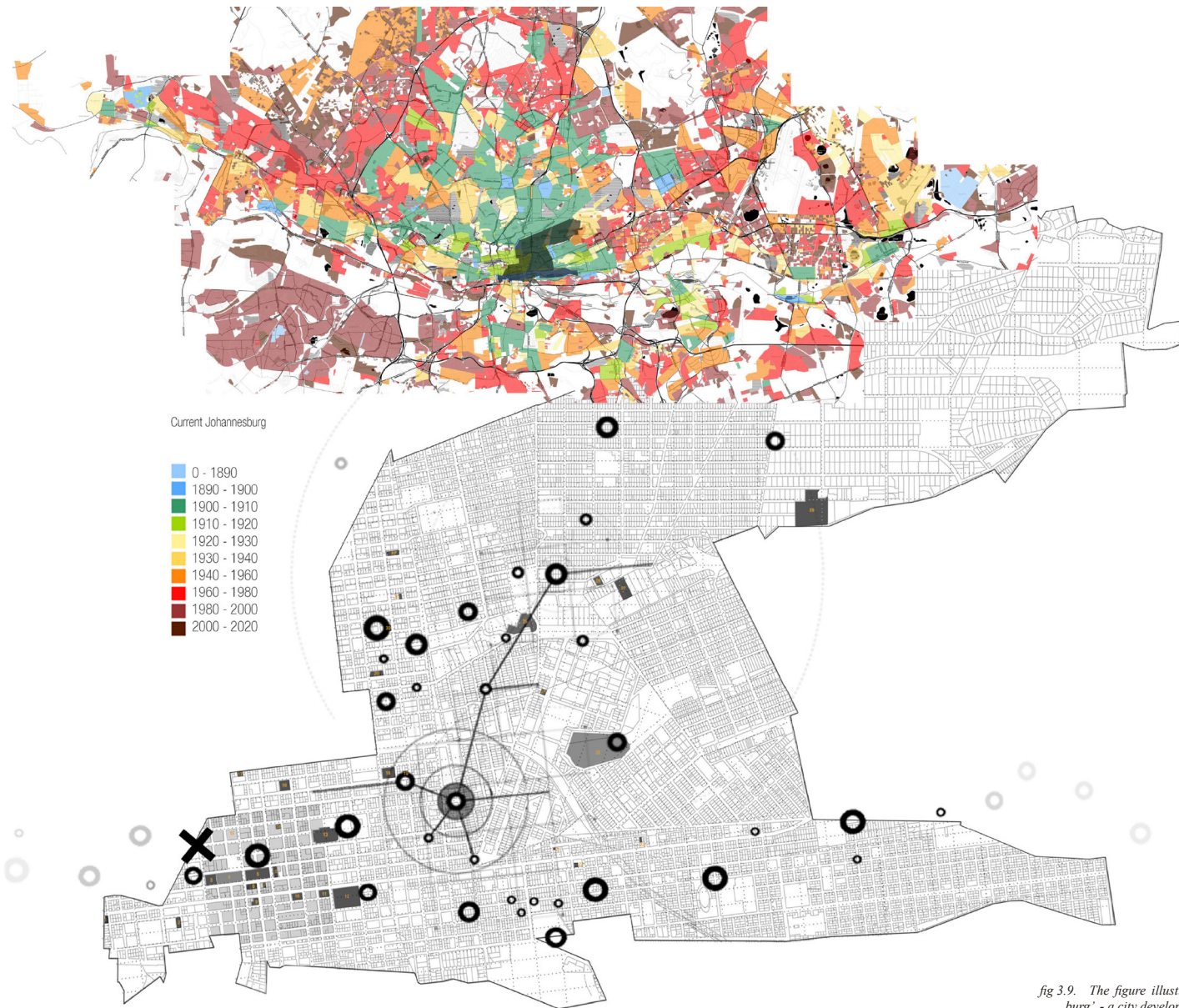


fig 3.9. The figure illustrates 'Resultant Johannesburg' - a city developed

Reading the city: The logic of fragments

Traditional historic studies of Johannesburg can be separated into three categories (Nuttall et al. 2008:12): the study of geographic poverty; the urban development of Johannesburg; and the spatial reconstruction of Johannesburg. The categorical study of the city results in specific problems when trying to 'read' the city.

When reading the city of Johannesburg only as 'geographies of poverty', the developed city that is envisioned is not an aesthetic project, but a developed project of special division. The post-apartheid 'urban development' readings of the city do not take into account the multiple aspects of city life and city form, resulting in a prescriptive reading of the city. Finally, the reading of Johannesburg's 'spatial reconstruction', the study of urban sprawl and resultant polycentric character of Johannesburg, is a reading of what Nuttall et al. (2008:13) term as "fantasy urbanism" and odd lifestyles. These categories of study favours a reading of the city as an urban theatre of capitalist accumulation and exploitation, a total reading which, according to Nuttall et al. (2008:12), is undeveloped in terms of comparative focus points.

The mapping exercise that was undertaken similarly categorized the development of Johannesburg, and was not successful as a total exploration of the whole – as it was found that Johannesburg as a city is not simply a string of categories that can be studied; the city is comprised of actual bodies, images, forms, footprints and memories (Nuttall et al. 2008:12).

In the book *Not No Place: Johannesburg, Fragments of Spaces and Times*, Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013:.....) combine the written history of the city and its build environment with that which is less certain, less defined: the invisible and visible seams and ridges that hold the city together. The book was undertaken as a project resulting from the authors' own subjective relationship to the city, as formed over time. This project begins with a conversation between the individuals and the material that constitutes the city, in the absence of lived experience, as encounter and as representation. It is as much a personal account of the city as it is reading and research (Malcomess & Kreutzfeldt 2013:.....).

Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013:.....) state that Walter Benjamin used the 'arcade', an architectural typology of passage, to illustrate a city that is a world in miniature. This typology, as defined by Benjamin, is the 'wish image' of an emerging subjectivity, and the approach defines the built structure as the point from which to comment on how a city unconsciously projects and constructs its own image.

There is no exact equivalent for Benjamin's arcade typology in Johannesburg, but rather multiple complexities of 'place', which Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013:.....) describe as instances which produce their own vocabulary – not a single image, but many fragmented images projected by the city spaces of Johannesburg. These various fragmentary images of Johannesburg and the intrigue surrounding their nature was the starting point for the reading of Johannesburg Nostalgia – an urban investigation.

‘Uitvalgrond’ as fragment

The city develops by re-articulation, layering and reuse of fragments; in short, by reconstruction. The act of reconstruction does not necessarily imply that earlier states are neglected, but rather that some characters are written over and over again with fixated nostalgia. For example, the story of Johannesburg always begins with the discovery of gold. As this narrative still dominates, each new beginning point of the narrative re-situates the point from where it last began. For this exploration the concept of uitvalgrond was used as starting point.

Malcomess and Kreutzfeldt (2013:....) argue that the notion which best describes the reading of Johannesburg is that of uitvalgrond. The Afrikaans word “uitvalgrond” can roughly be translated into English as ‘surplus ground’; it is a fragmented state. “Uitvalgrond” as a term is used to describe the original triangle-shaped area between the historic farms of Braamfontein and Doornfontein, on which the town of Johannesburg was built.

In uitvalgrond there resides uncertainty, a concept resulting perhaps from its beginning – a beginning which is defined by speculation, randomness and self-promotion. It is the uitvalgrond that defines the characters and the fabric which constitute the city, serving as the territory of informal traders, trash collectors, the city’s indigent and homeless, or as a pathway between industry and a settlement.

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The concept of uitvalgrond, the surplus, proliferates in present Johannesburg; it now defines the zones between the visible and intangible, the stranded moments of the history of the built city. The negotiation of these complexities allows the possibility of the actual materialisation of place within the ambiguities of the present city form – it allows the possibility of place as fiction, as both impossibility and always deferred potential. Uitvalgrond appears to be unoccupied but is not necessarily unused. It is the ‘no place’ that proliferates the future nostalgia of the city. It is this nostalgic non-place, the ‘Modern Uitvalgrond’, fragmented across the city, that drew us to certain sites which recurred unexpectedly throughout our exploration and mapping of the city.

The aim was now to record the characters of these sites, how they have shifted and changed, as they are central to the city’s spatial relations and the understanding of the whole, and this provided the group with a method through which to explore Johannesburg as ‘fragments’ and ‘fantasies’. The ‘fragments’ and ‘fantasies’ present in Johannesburg have always been central to the city’s spatial relations. It becomes evident how the concept of ‘fantasy’ has in a peculiar way shaped the city into fragments, affirmed by Johannesburg being built on the resource of gold and the promise of prosperity that it offered the pilgrims who flocked there in a frenzy, rather than being built with the assurance of providence through natural resources – water, sustenance and defence. This promise, this desire, this fantasy has shaped the physical fabric of the city. It becomes a fantasy which was never realised, but one which is always underlying, an almost nostalgic feeling for a future that is never to be reached.

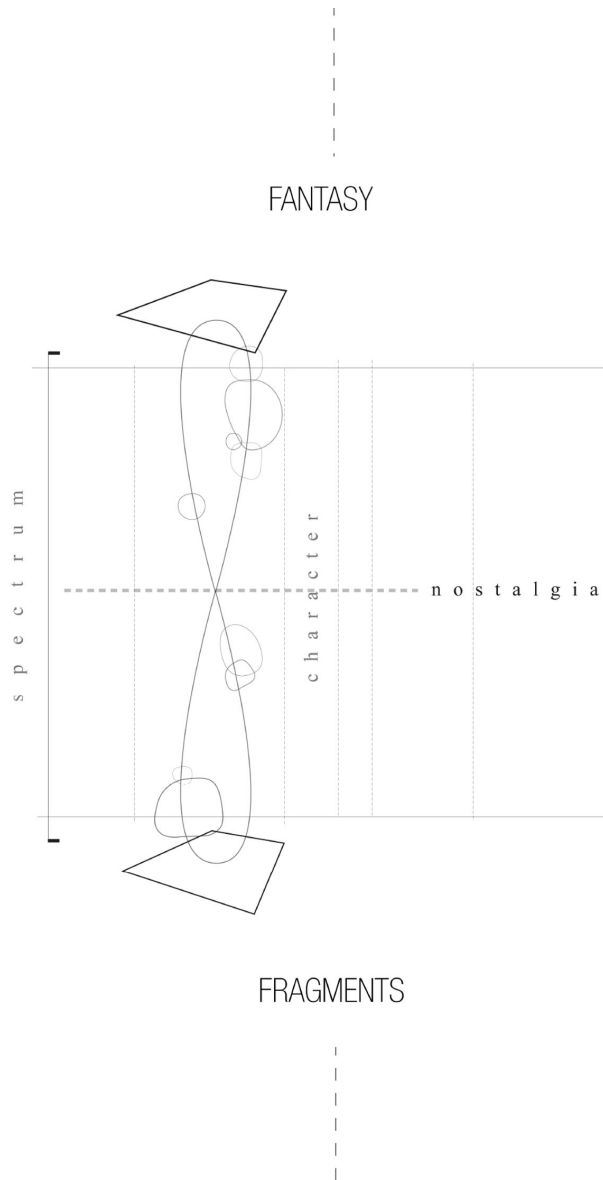


fig 3.10. Fantasy and fragment - A conceptual diagram

It is this town that was laid bare and exposed in states of unadulterated fantasy that ensured the vulnerability of the present city fabric, and assured the production of fragments in a way already predicting the proliferation of fantasy. It is a condition ingrained in the character of Johannesburg, ensuring that the same characters are to be written over and over again with a fixated nostalgia.

Fantasy and Fragment

The differentiation of uitvalgrond as fragments within the city – islands with a concentrated function – may lead to the understanding of the mapped city as a coherent whole. By connecting these fragments and creating an archipelago of fragments, the exploration addresses the potential of architecture to create urban pockets of meaning and significance. The identified “uitvalgrond characters” are prototypes of the city within the city. The analysis and exploration of these characters do not show the city of Johannesburg in a state of crisis requiring correction, but rather identifies these characters, and various others that are not addressed, as inherent conditions of a projective model for the city itself.

Current urban practices and ideologies further perpetuate these fragments, as they are often ignorant of nostalgic and fantastical co-productions of space and place; therefore the need arises to devise a model for extracting information from the city that is sensitised to the concept of ‘Modern Uitvalgrond’ as both fragment and fantasy, as both the material and immaterial substance that pervades and produces the city.

To illustrate and ground the conceptual investigation of ‘fantasy’ and ‘fragments’, a dynamic diagram was devised and applied to specific places and spaces in Johannesburg. These spaces, all different forms of uitvalgrond, are defined in this study as sites with specific characteristics. For the purpose of this study specific sites within selected focus areas were identified, although many forms of uitvalgrond exist within Johannesburg. These sites were identified and chosen as they strongly demonstrate the manifestation of the notion of uitvalgrond in the realms of fragment and fantasy both.

The diagram serves as instrument to gauge the nostalgic nature of the identified uitvalgrond sites and their respective characteristics. The produced collages are based on their polarisation towards either fragment or fantasy, thereby determining a certain resilience inherent in the conditions where a symmetry exists between these poles.

In the context of Johannesburg, resilience is interpreted as the ability to absorb fantasy as a fragment, rather than as immunity to the material trauma which the conditions endure. It is the ability to absorb fantasy which makes certain conditions and certain characters more resilient than others, and it is these characters, understood as the personality of a specific fragment, which demonstrate how nostalgia is physically manifested in the fabric of the city – how the material and immaterial memories contained in the city allow the unconscious projection and construction of the city.

Collages were constructed in order to extract information from the identified uitvalgrond sites. The produced collages were determined using various scaled layers – literature, dialogue, narratives, and now, lived experience. This method was used for its ability to enable an archaeological density of a non-linear narrative through the juxtaposition of fragmented images deriving from irreconcilable origins. This method has, however, been sensitised to this investigation of ‘Modern Uitvalgrond’ as fragment and fantasy.

f a n t a s y

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c h a r a c t e r



n o s t a l g i a

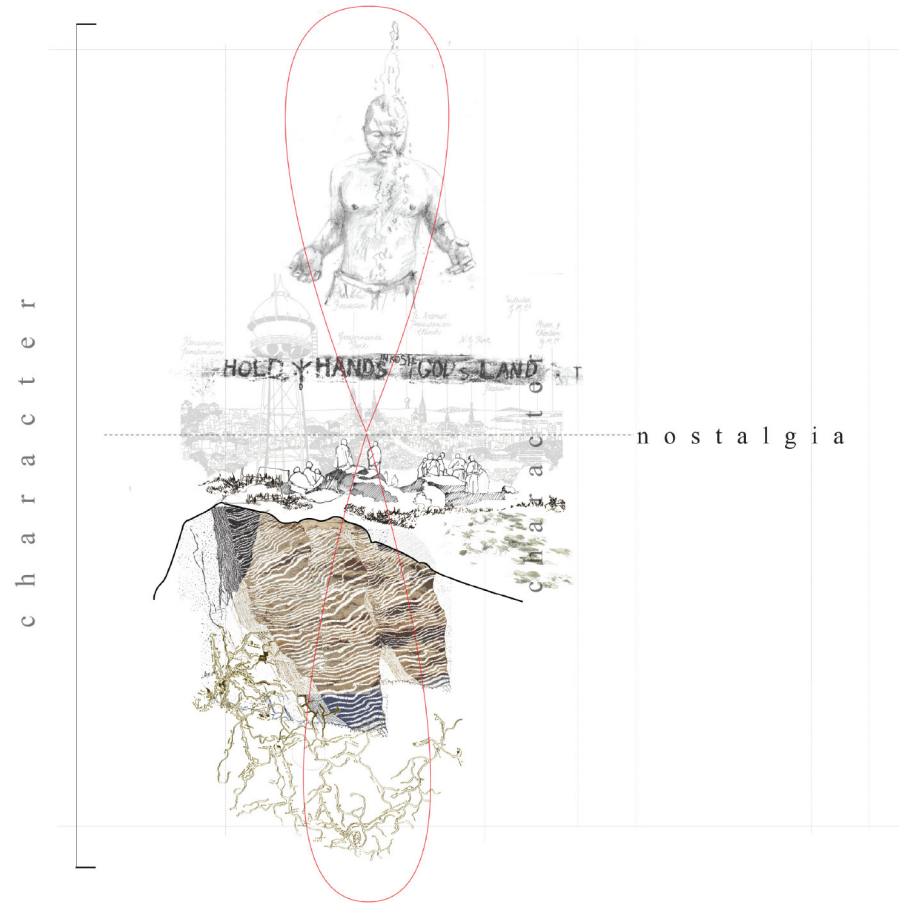
Ponte City

f r a g m e n t

PONTE CITY

fig 3.11. Fantasy and fragments character: Ponte City

f a n t a s y



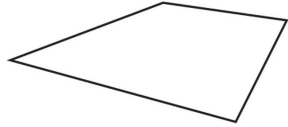
Highlands North

f r a g m e n t

YEOVILLE KOPPIE

fig 3.12. Fantasy and fragments character: Highlands North

f a n t a s y



n o s t a l g i a

Observatory ridge

f r a g m e n t

fig 3.13. Fantasy and fragments character: Observatory Ridge

Observatory

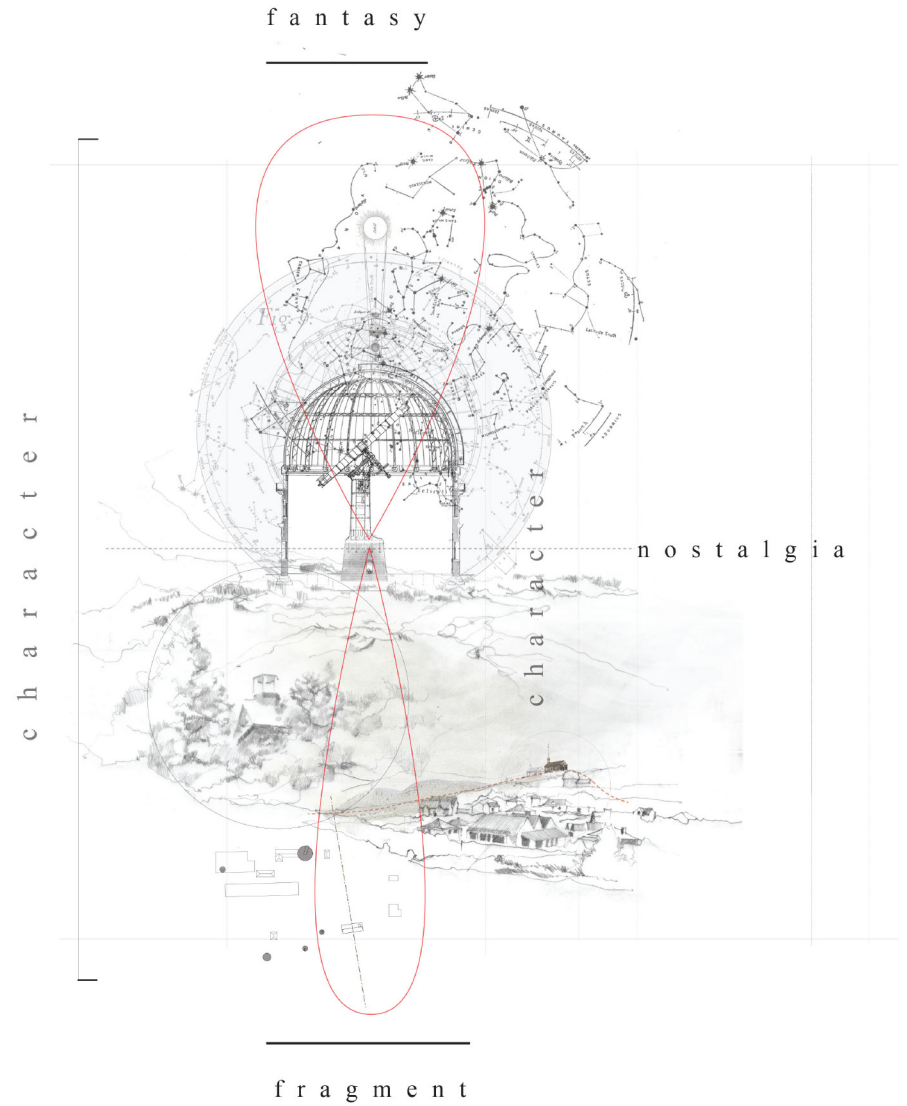
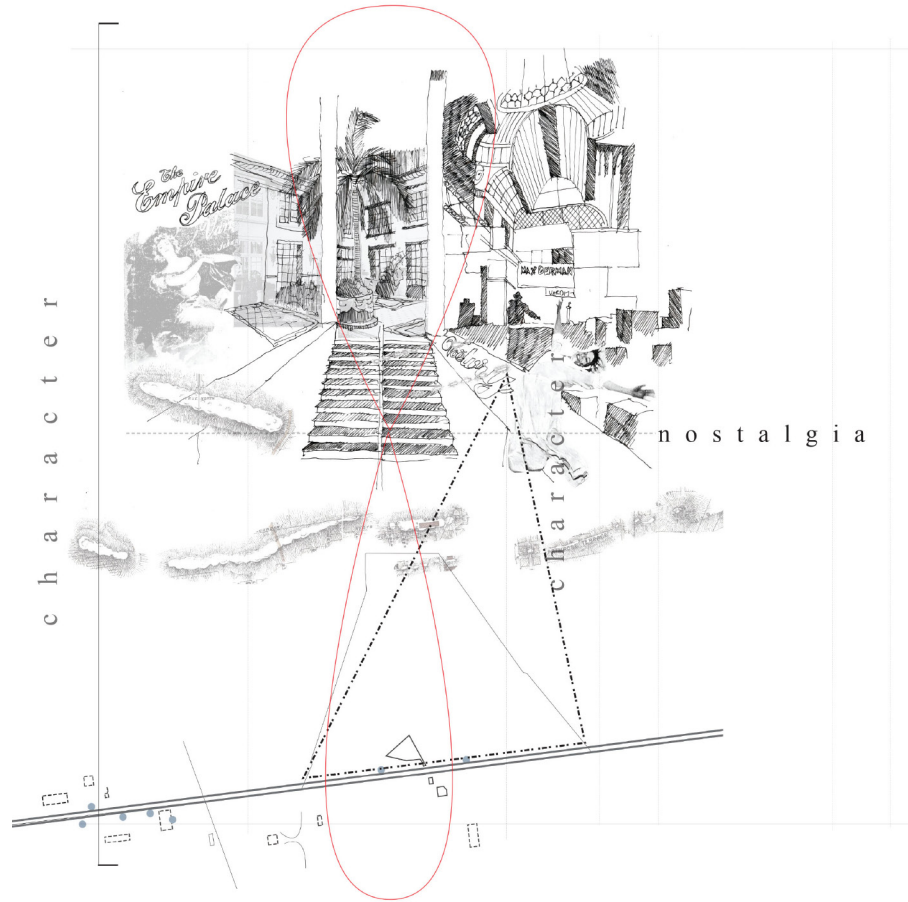


fig 3.14. *Fantasy and fragments character: Observatory*

OBSERVATORY

f a n t a s y



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n o s t a l g i a

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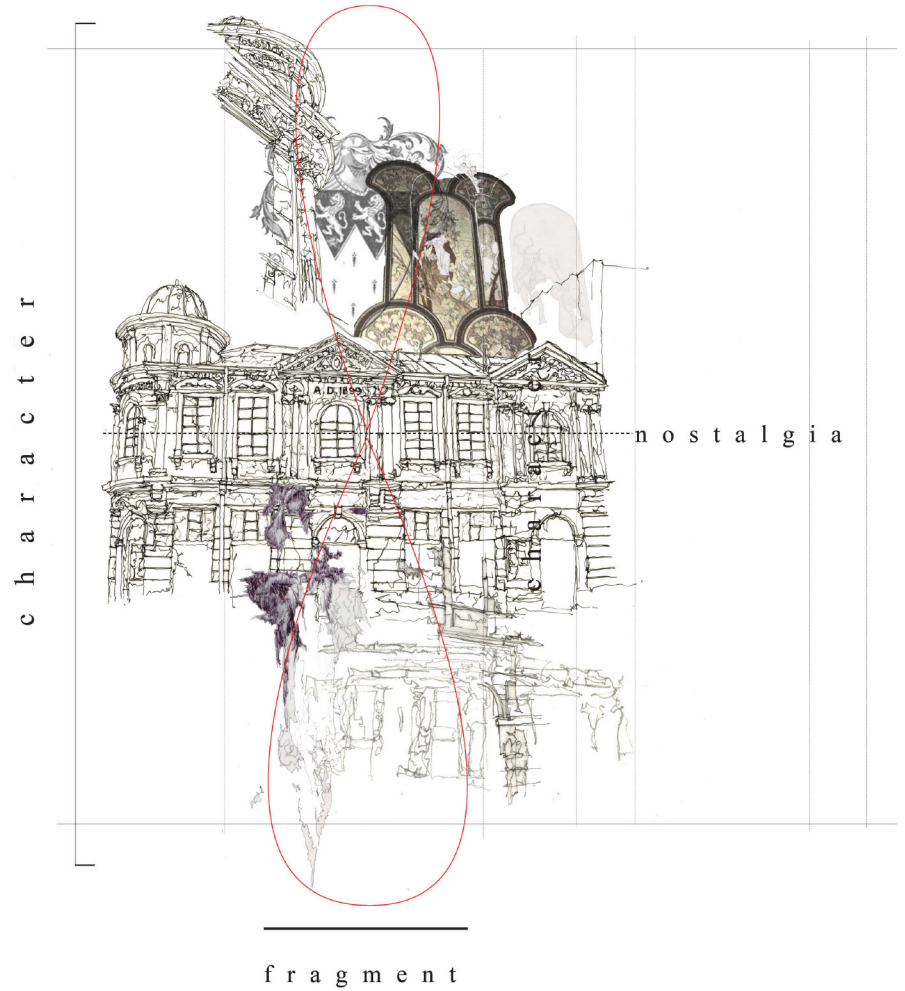
f r a g m e n t

THE GREAT WHITE WAY

The Great White Way

fig 3.15. *Fantasy and fragments character: The Great white way*

f a n t a s y



Cosmopolitan Hotel

fig 3.16. Fantasy and fragments character: Cosmopolitan Hotel

THE COSMOPOLITAN HOTEL

Nostalgia Translated

After the uitvalgrond sites and their resilient characters were identified, and further research, site visits, interpretations and the making of the collages and diagrams were done, each individual group member was assigned to a specific uitvalgrond site and character. The intention of this, the investigation and conceptual framework, is to guide the individuals' projects in the understanding and interpretation of character of place, so as to make appropriate programmatic and architectural decisions that encompass not only material but also the immaterial elements and projections of each site and character.

With the probing investigation into the layers of fragments and fantasies of the character of each site, the proposed architectural interventions can be understood as the strategic re-interpretation of the continued state of the respective sites and their identified characteristics. The intention of this urban vision is to guide decision making through a coherent understanding of the spatial context as well as how the urban fabric could respond to the different architectural interventions. This notion reveals new possibilities for interacting with the city, recognizing the intricate networks and elusiveness of the City of Gold.



WATER BODIES - Disrupting the present to give access to the depth of absorbed fantasies

Marzanne Roux

Address: Corner of Rocky and Cavendish Streets, Yeoville, Johannesburg

Function: Public Swimming Pool

Research Field: Heritage and Cultural Landscapes

Character description: Rocky Street

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In Yeoville the reconstruction and unconscious projection of the city fabric finds expression in fragments that have significantly been able to absorb multiple fantasies, from the puritanical intentions that accompanied its initial built pastiche as a sanctuary for the rich, to a grey area powerfully connected to political activism and ideological resistance, and its current demographic shift to become the Pan-African society it hosts today.



fig 3.17. Water Bodies - Character

URBAN OBSERVATORY - Re-introducing Observation and Measurement to Johannesburg

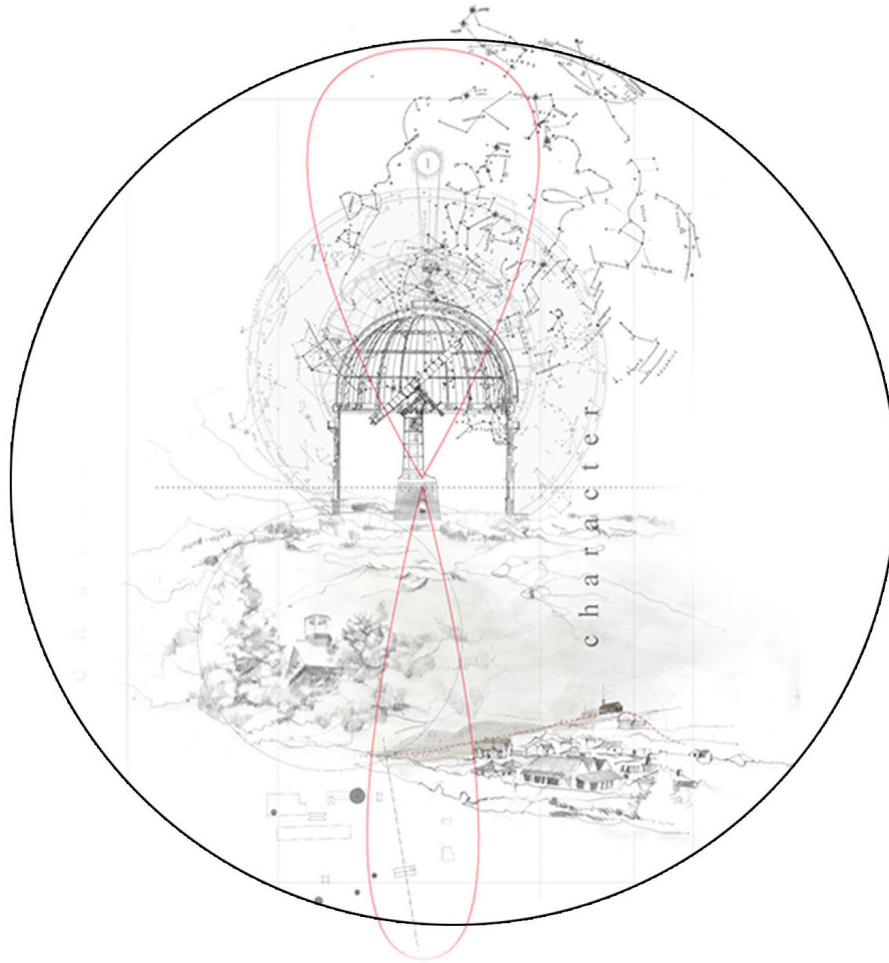


fig 3.18. Urban Observatory - Character

Gillian van der Klashorst

Address: 18 a Gill Street, Observatory, Johannesburg

Function: Urban Research and Innovation Centre

Research Field: Heritage and Cultural Landscapes

Character description: The Observatory

The Johannesburg Observatory occupies the highest point of the Witwatersrand as a landmark representing the nostalgia for the exploration of the night sky. The typology of the Observatory creates a fragmented space, composed to accommodate a specific function. The condition of isolation creates a focus to study the sky, amplifying the stimulation of contemplation, discovery and fantasy. This nostalgic striving to understand that which is beyond or unknown is the main driver for the resilience of the character of the Observatory.

DEATH OF THE CEMETARY - Burial ground as Park / Park as Burial Ground

Erwin Struwig

Address: Highlands Ridge

Function: Crematorium and Mortuary Bathhouse

Research Field: Heritage and Cultural Landscapes

Character description: Highlands North

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Perched on the ridge of the Witwatersrand, the site is a piece of leftover land, perhaps too steep to build on, fenced off, and claimed by those who have no place of their own. A strong sense of isolation is felt on the closed-off site; the overgrown vegetation makes one nostalgic for pure wild nature. The elevated plateau of the area is used by church and spiritual leaders along with their praying and singing congregants. These people have difficult lives, they cannot afford a church building, and thus this space becomes an isolated platform of hope and safety. For these people, the views over the city and Hillbrow, as well as the notorious Ponte tower, conjure up memories or perhaps hopes for a better future. The nature of the site allows for contemplation, isolation and spirituality to be experienced through its nostalgic roots



fig 3.19. Death of Cemetery - Character

RE(PRESENT)ATION - 'Site Unscene': The city as written text manifested by author

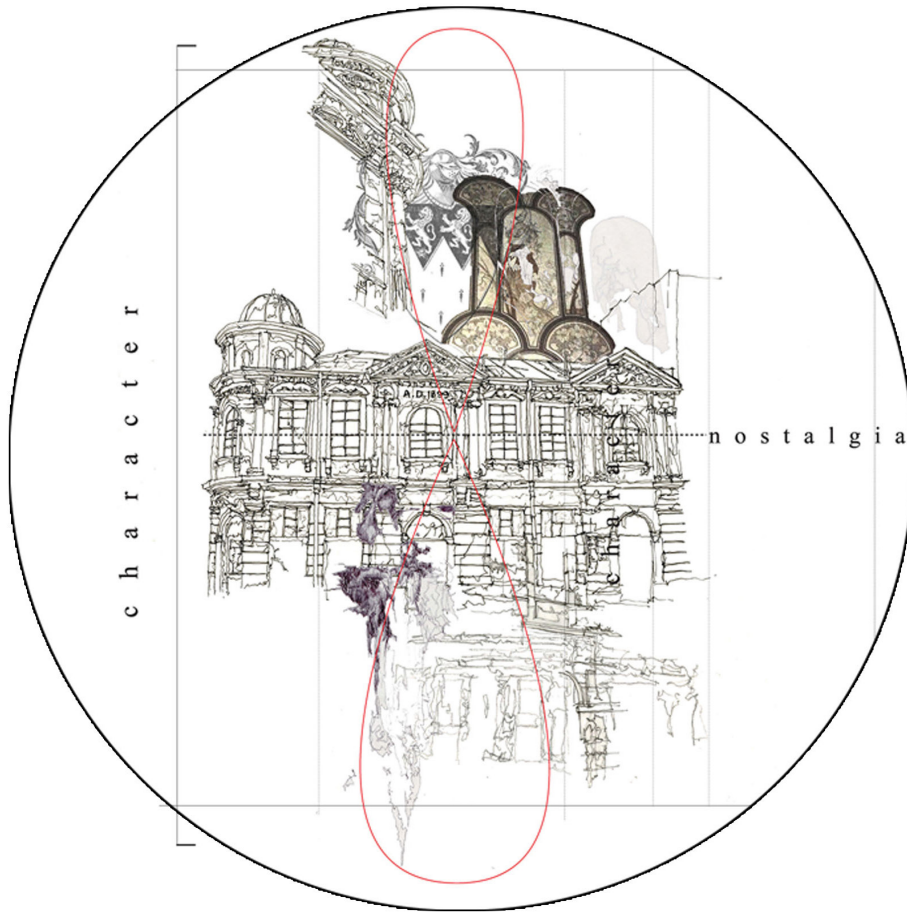


fig 3.20. Re(presentation) - Character

Elzanne Pieterse

Address: The Cosmopolitan Hotel, Albrecht Street, Johannesburg

Function: Boutique Hotel, Reading Room and
Readers' Institute

Research Field: Heritage and Cultural Landscapes

Character description: The Cosmopolitan

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Originally built in a Victorian architectural style during the Edwardian era, the building advocates the nostalgia for 'home' in Europe, attempting to reconstruct the familiarity of that home in Johannesburg. The building was a symbol of wealth and opulence, rendered as a fantasy of extravagance under the boisterous living conditions of an early mining town. Currently the abandoned building stands out as a strange fragment, with its decay over time heightening the fragmented condition of the derelict hotel even more.

