2. THE BODY

Where it all began

The *body in space* is used as a theme in the following chapter. This is done to understand the effects of our disconnectedness with the world, and the alienation associated with the modern era. The analysis of the occupation of space at an existential level provides the premise for the study of the body in the South African context.

Fig. 14. A celebration of the everyday and the body in space.
Sketch of Raphael's The marriage of the virgin (1504).

OLD MAN

Where it all began

The first visit to Atteridgeville set the tone of this dissertation. First, what came as a surprise, was the overtly suburban nature of Atteridgeville. We all have preconceived ideas of what *should* be happening in townships, and how we should intervene as architects. My academic career has exposed me to new ways of thinking, but these often focus on socio-economic developments. There is a specific response to what townships need, and sometimes these interventions become white elephants, crippling communities rather than empowering them, and at times, a romanticised poverty aesthetic is adopted.

When visiting Ramohoebo Square, the chosen site for this investigation, we met four old men sitting beneath the canopy of the small shops on the northern edge of the vacant site. They spoke of what was: the SS Mendi memorial statue placed at the centre of the square with a rock garden, and before that, a traffic circle. A tinge of nostalgia filled the air as we spoke to the four men reminiscing of what once was, gazing into the distance, over the empty square.

This simple interaction with Atteridgeville residents made it clear to me that storytelling is a vital interaction between people, and it is being replaced by activities that prevent such honest interactions. Being able to share stories and emotions about a place or time that I could never have experienced is so valuable, and this creates relationships that "link people to people, people to places, people to stories, people to knowledge, and so forth."[1] This awareness reminded me that for this to occur, we need places to frame these experiences, encourage them, and presence us in the moment.

Having an understanding of place is crucial to developing an appropriate response. The investigation presented in this dissertation is built on this premise, along with the notion of challenging conventional approaches when working in townships in a democratic South Africa.
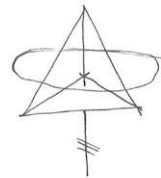
We long for a unified identity, and this exploration aims to find informants that could perhaps guide us in the right direction.

Fig. 15. Storytelling (top). Four old men.
Fig. 16. Stores on Ramohoebo Square (bottom).

1. Ouzman (2002) describing heritage.

WHAT?

"The absolute place"
Foucault (Jones 2006:229).

The philosophy of space has influenced architectural thinking through the ages. This dissertation grew from a fascination with the body in space and a recurring interest in the relevant texts, including but not limited to Heidegger, Foucault and Lefebvre. This chapter will explore themes of the body and dwelling, in an attempt to understand the relationship between the body and built form in the context of Atteridgeville.

The body is the point of departure - our perception of where and how the body occupies space provides an awareness of our place in the world and how this affects our roles in society. Michel Foucault (1986:24) considers the body to be an "involuntary prison" where we are held captive in our own bodies. It is the point from which all is experienced:

… as soon as my eyes are open, I can no longer escape I cannot move without it… I cannot leave it there where it is, so that I, myself, may go elsewhere… Where I am. It is here, irreparably: it is never elsewhere. My body, it's the opposite of a utopia: that which is never under different

skies. It is the absolute place, the little fragment of space where I am, literally, embodied. My body, pitiless place.
- Foucault (Jones 2006:229).

Our role in society is described by Aristotle (350BC) in *Nicomachean Ethics* as the *zoon politikon*: man, the social being that participates in society through his **connection to the city and the people**. Hannah Arendt (1958:7-10) emphasises the importance of this participation in *The Human Condition*. She explains that it gives the citizen validity. The *active citizen* has **his place in the world**. He can make his mark, and so the body has value in space.

Continuing this thought, it must be acknowledged that power, ownership and identity determine the occupation of space in our daily lives. This relationship is constantly changing as these determinants are questioned and reinterpreted. As individuals and a society, we are required to adapt to these developments - technological, social and political.

Fig. 17. **Moments of interface.** The coming together of things.

Fig. 18. **Mon Corps, Topie Impitoyable.** Drawing by André Masson for Georges Bataille's journal: Acéphale (1936-39).

The desire to be heard, and a desire to be part of community has always existed. However, the way in which this happens is changing.

WHERE?

"the little fragment of space where I am"
Foucault (cited in Jones 2006:229).

The rise of social media and online interaction has allowed our engagement with others to occur in virtual space - an abstract environment devoid of the physical body. What is real and what is not is no longer relevant; instead what is the most current, absurd or entertaining has more value - the spectacle. Alienation is the consequence. It is a distraction and escape from our increasingly mundane lives.

Two symptoms of this development is of interest: the illusion of the collective and a need for constant stimulation.

Lefebvre (1991:203) states that there is a relationship between each member of society and space, but also an identification of the individual versus the other - and so space becomes the intermediary where this interaction occurs. What is the consequence when this intermediary space becomes digital?

Although Lefebvre's text is pre digital-era, he offers valuable insight into the relationship between space and the body. The shift to the digital age has had a major impact on our bodies' relationship to space. Perhaps this concern may not appear as urgent in lower-income townships, since access to this realm is less prominent. However, a negative impact is still felt. Residents take part in an exodus, losing touch with their place of residence, but an aspiration to be part of the growing capitalist society which dwells in the digital realm will potentially sever the relationships which still exist.

The way in which we dwell in space is constantly changing, and so the way we make space should change. We have a responsibility to recognise the nuances of the human body, societies and cultures and return them to a realm where the body can reinstate itself as part of a physical community. Ouzman (2002:29) describes this as the "need to commune with something more that the one-dimensional everyday."

Despite South Africa's liberation as a democratic republic, contested spaces continue to be neglected. They form part of the valuable intermediary space of interaction, yet carry a stigma that is a difficult one to overcome. Should we recognise these spaces as independent, self-sustaining entities and facilitate this change, or should we remove them from our built fabric entirely to erase the memory of the past?

Fig. 19. The road out of Pheli. Tree-lined avenues.

WHY?

"There would be no space at all for me if I had no body"
Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945)

Being physically disconnected from the physical world is having an enormous impact on the way we socialise and the way we view our own bodies in space. Casey (1998:197) states that "once space is dissociated from the particular bodies that occupy it, it is bound to be emptied of the peculiarities and properties that these same bodies (beginning with their outer surfaces) lend to the places they inhabit – or that they take away from places by internalisation or reflection. The inward partitioning of space, it's incarceration in bodies-in-places, gives way to space as the 'infinite theatre of movement': an essentially empty theatre."

The body's physical presence is becoming less apparent in the everyday since it is possible for communities to exist in a digital realm, where members may never physically interact.

Foucault (1986:23-25) discusses the body as an essential factor necessary to analyse the description of space, as well as the need for the body to be present, occupying space to create these realms. We cannot remove the body and locate this as only a mental experience, or we lose our sense of engagement with the world, and those who form a part of it.
Our body is the point from which we engage with the world and those around us, but it is that which we use to orientate ourselves. It is what determines our cognisance of the world.

Taking these perspectives into account, it is of the author's opinion that a digital realm of engagement, a 'single-space', undermines the value of the body in space but also exaggerates our need to be heard. We are all equal players on an imaginary chess board and the freedom we have been afforded is perhaps a burden. Our ability to acknowledge our own existence and our own mortality has always translated into a need to assert ourselves within this existence; but the migration to this 'single space' is unprecedented and has an impact on how bodies occupy the physical realm, and the role of the architect.
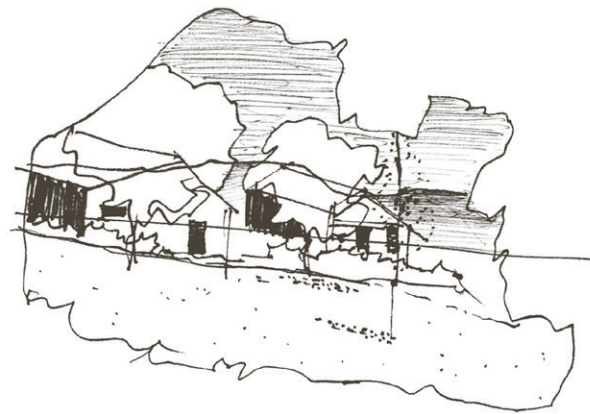
A body so conceived, as produced and as the production of space, is immediately subject to the determinants of that space ... the spatial body's material character derives from space, from the energy that is deployed and put to use there.
Lefebvre (1991:195).

HOW?

In virtue of idleness
A capacity for boredom

"A generation that cannot endure boredom will be a generation of little men, of men unduly divorced from the slow processes of nature, of men in whom every vital impulse slowly withers, as though they were cut flowers in a vase."

- Bertrand Russell (1930:65)

The physical world is slowly being pulled out from under our feet. Our quest for knowledge and our understanding of our immediate surroundings has been dulled to a mere acceptance of what we are given. Constant stimulation is allowing the wool to be pulled over our eyes as boredom and curiosity recedes.

Fig. 20. A place to be idle. Sketch during visit to an Atteridgeville school.

Fig. 21. Searching for place. Mapping the intangible on Ramohoebo square (March 2016).

THE BETRAYAL
OF THE BODY

Interlude

*Because so much of ones identity is locational -
you are where you are - physical separation from
a place also serves to erodes one's identity.*
Ouzman (2002:29)

The intention is to derive a framework based on the occupation of the body and an interpretation thereof in the context of South Africa's townships, specifically Atteridgeville. First, the implications of the body during apartheid will be discussed. This is followed by an investigation of what made Atteridgeville unique during apartheid and presently.
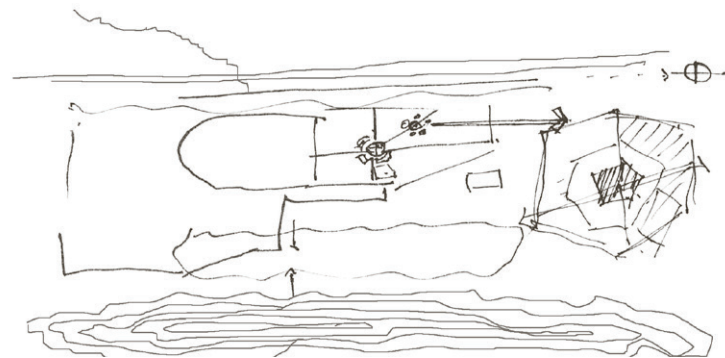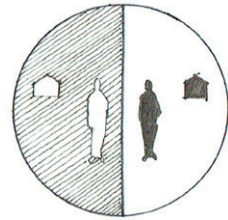

Fig. 22. Atteridgeville Layout. First impressions (Feb).

"The life-environment, the shell as supplied by the City Council had been Western and complements a pure Western living pattern." - Coertze (1969:139), unpublished thesis on Atteridgeville, cited by Stals (1998).

Fig. 23. The betrayal of the body.

STATES OF BEING

Betrayed body
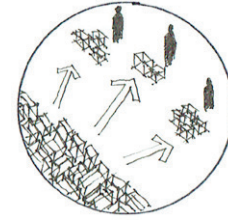
Branded body

Displaced body

Abandoned body

Rapid industrialisation accelerated the establishment of black townships for political and economic gain. Calderwood (1955:1) states that the development of these townships was seen as an important factor in creating a stable and efficient labour force. Black citizens were seen as an expendable commodity to maintain white supremacy and economic prosperity (Stals 1998:14).

The policies of the apartheid government did not make a break with the past. Lord Milner's reconstruction era attempted to create a united white government which was built on separatist intentions (Worsfold 1913). *The Natives Land Act (*Act No. 27 of 1913*)* marked the beginning of official territorial segregation. The National Party took this further upon taking power in 1948.

The Population Registration Act (Act No. 30 of 1950) provided a system for classifying people according to race. Interracial marriages and relationships were illegal, and families were broken apart if it was deemed that a parent and child were of a different race. This was further exaggerated by *The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act (*Act No. 49 of 1953*)* which determined the use of public facilities, transport and services. The body of the "non-European" was branded and stigmatised. The carrying of the pass book ensured that this discrimination was inscribed on the everyday lives of the non-white body.
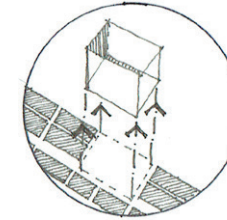
*The Group Areas Act (*Act No. 41 of 1950*)* was built on the *The Natives Land Act (*Act No. 27 of 1913*)*. These laws intended to separate races. The apartheid ideology led to a spatial transformation of South African cities, and the physical implementation of these laws led to the displacement of the *black body*.

The structuring of daily life changed, forcing inhabitants to adapt to a new, urban way of living. The legislation prevented black urbanisation and denied the black population the right to own property. This led to massive forced removals to remote rural areas organised according to race and ethnicity.

The location of the townships ensured large traveling distances to the CBD, completely disabling the township-dweller. All formal work and commercial opportunities were located far from residential areas. Basic amenities and recreational facilities were often discarded as part of the township planning (Stals 1998:16).

The permanence of black and 'non-European' urban dwellers was not recognised. Property could not be owned independently and the already minimal investment into townships in the form of housing, infrastructure, education and other essential services were cut back to reduce the attraction of cities to people from rural areas. The only large-scale investment came in the form of hostels for single black men. These facilities made no provision for supporting structures or recreational facilities - creating subhuman environments (Turok 1993:3).

Housing schemes were developed according to minimalist considerations for the 'native'. State funds expended by December 1953 indicated an average of 1276 pounds per unit for European housing and only 312 pounds per unit for 'native' housing. (Stals 1998:36). This is approximately R500 000 for European housing and R134 000 for 'native housing, in current monetary terms.

Fig. 24. Betrayed body (Nel & Sadiq 2016).
Fig. 25. Branded body (Nel & Sadiq 2016).

Fig. 26. Displaced body (Nel & Sadiq 2016).
Fig. 27. Abandoned body (Nel & Sadiq 2016).

STATES OF BEING

Condemned body

Faceless body

The segregation of residential areas according to race sometimes extended to ethnic groupings within the black community. The apartheid spatial planning took many aspects into account to ensure a clear-cut marginalisation of the black body. The ideal location for native housing meant one which did not interfere with white city boundaries. Areas were separated by buffer zones, often incorporating natural features such as rivers and mountain ranges, or man-made elements such as industrial belts (Stals 1998:14-16).

Another precautionary measure taken by the apartheid government in most townships, was placing military installations and airfields in close proximity to the townships to enforce a militant presence. Radial planning of many townships was for the sole purpose of facilitating military interventions, as well as creating few access point to seal off of a township during times of unrest (Stals 1998: 16).

This approach extended from an urban to domestic scale. The social infrastructure was minimal or non-existent as township citizens were recognised as essentially rural. Poorly built houses, lacking internal doors, ceilings and services of no more than 50m^2 on minute plots were rented to township inhabitants (Stals 1998:16).

Township planning did not readily take the personal needs or identity of individuals into account. R.M. Frean (1960:6) commented on the appearance of these endless expanses of houses:

> *...a vast, uniform carpet of tiny houses spread over the veld. The town has no form that one can grasp, no direction, just dreariness on all sides. The houses were so similar that one can only tell the house from the children.*

Deppe (1994:5) states 'the scheme had been a Eurocentric one with no attempt to interpret an African sense of place. Connel (1947 cited by Stals 1998:21) goes on to say:

> *I have been strongly impressed with one outstanding fact about Native housing, and that may be summed up as the extraordinary contrast between the charm and vitality of traditional architecture and the drabness and monotony that usually characterises the urban Native townships.*

According to Connell (1947 cited by Stals 1998:22), the use of the grid street pattern did not resemble the intimate scale that appears in the African village morphology. The new, vast town planning prevents any sense of community from being retained, making individuals feel insignificant.

Fig. 28. Mapping connections (opposite). movement and overlap on site.
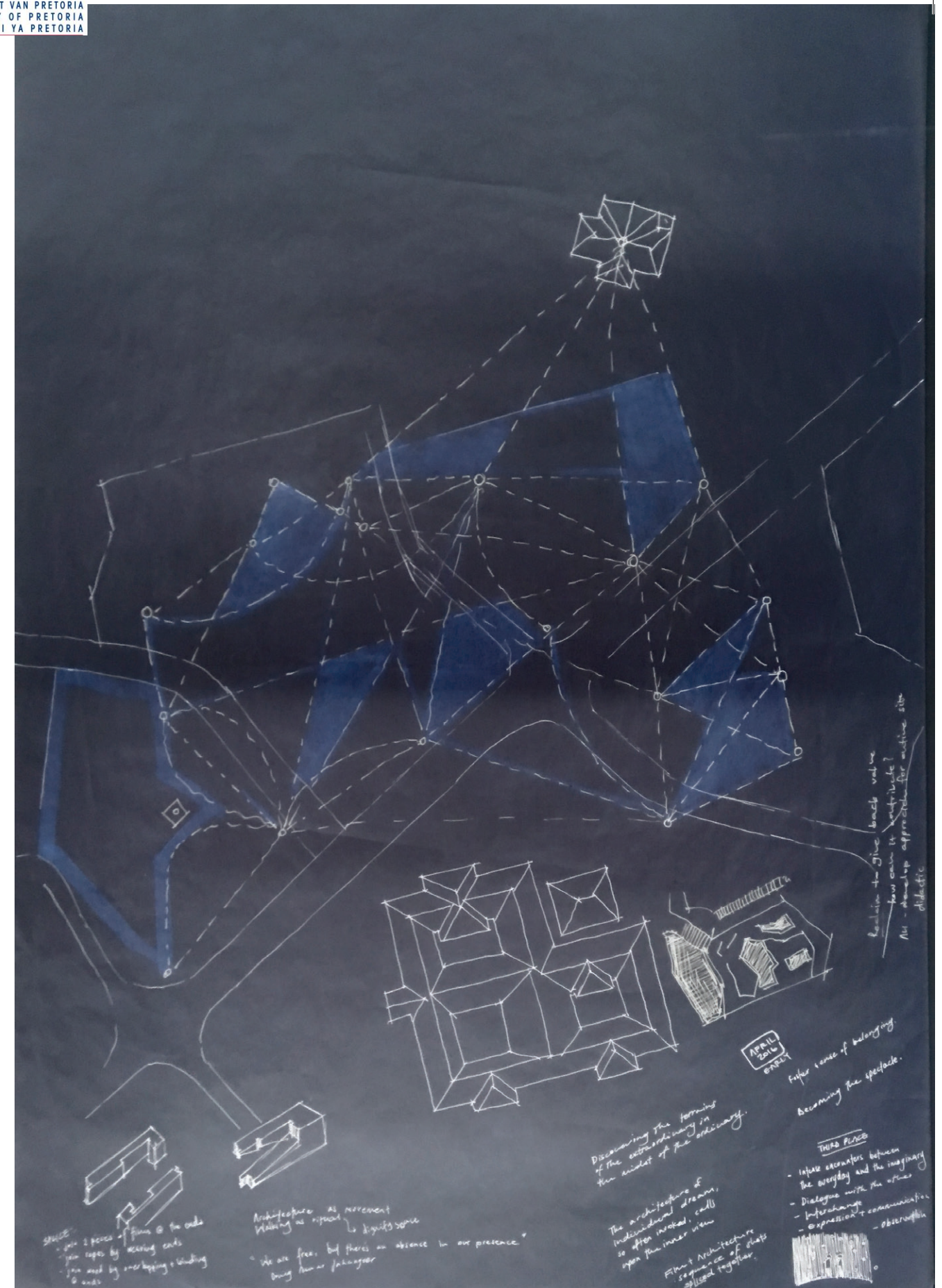
PHELI

Suburbia

Atteridgeville (Phelindaba, or Pheli) has many unique characteristics which has grown from the initial planning stages. Planned in 1934, long before the National Party took power, it is tainted by a separationist ideology, yet carries a very different story to so many townships littered across our landscape (Stals 1998: 7-10). A thorough investigation of this is covered in Volume I of this series but certain aspects will be highlighted in here.

Based on the aforementioned research, Atteridgeville's location clearly indicates its identity as a township for separate development. Located 14 kilometres from the CBD, its isolation is evident. Abutted by a police dog training unit as well as the old steel factory (ISCOR) the town planners' intentions are clear. There are however a few exceptions, which, may not have been intentional.

Designed as a model township, Atteridgeville received substantial social and economical amenities which was not a common feature in townships (Stals 1998:19). With regard to planning, Atteridgeville received far better treatment than other townships. This may have been because the harsh rules determining what 'natives' required, had not yet been established.

The government at the time seemed to be more optimistic as to what was economically viable in the development of these townships. Only after establishment did they realise this 'mistake' and the over-expenditure, which resulted in a more 'economical' approach to townships post-1954 (Stals 1998:17-21).

Our attitude towards areas such as Atteridgeville will have an impact on the future of our cities. It brings us back to the question raised previously: should we recognise these spaces as independent, self-sustaining entities and facilitate their success as such, or should we remove them from our built fabric entirely to erase the memory of the past?

Atteridgeville appears to be on a trajectory towards suburbia. The urban planning, monotony and mono-functionality ensure that townships suffer from the same urban conditions as suburbs. There is minimal consideration for recreation and commerce and these areas are not economically or socially sustainable. They function as domestic entities which depend on separate commercial, cultural or economic areas. This is apparent in the daily exodus which occurs in Atteridgeville. It is but a place to lay one's head.

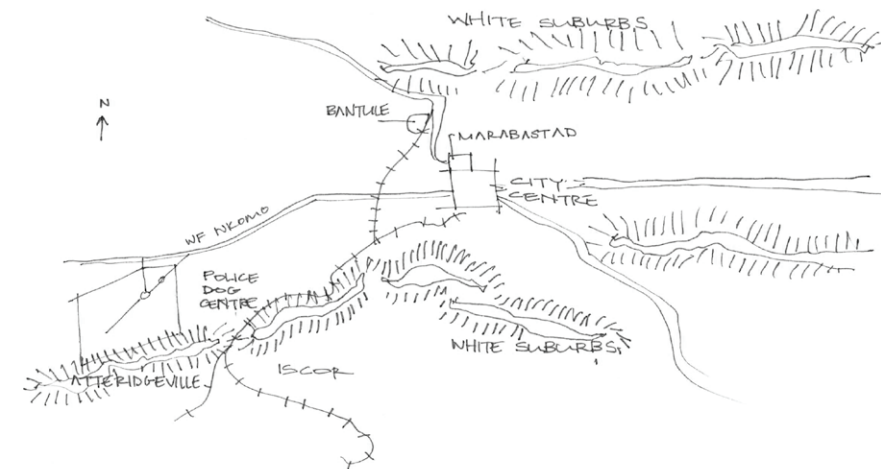**Fig. 29.** But a place to lay one's head. The road to Pheli.

Fig. 30. Apartheid city planning: discussed in preceding text (adapted from Dauskardt. 1989:111).

Nestled between a river and a ridge, the garden city plan laid across the undulating terrain. The sense of place due to the topographical features is unavoidable.

SUBURBIA

Where to from here?

As part of the larger investigation, it is assumed that there is an aspirational trend which will affect many townships through their life cycle. The asymptomatic movement towards suburbia is especially evident, as discussed in Volume I. Atteridgeville carries a strong identity and sense of the collective which is apparent in the pride and care residents take in their own property.

In a capitalist society, the aspiration of owning private property does not yield. This is treated as a symptom in a developing nation. Suburbia is not ideal. It limits inhabitants' choices and access to a diversity of activities. If we acknowledge this trend, we may be able to reroute the development towards a more sustainable model where individuals may thrive socially and economically.

There is a generic response to the treatment of townships, from a political standpoint as well as a professional and academic one. The exploration of low-income, displaced townships has not been researched thoroughly. South American case studies display a more sensitive, well considered approach to these environments, for example the work of Elemental's Alejandro Aravena.

Although there has been a change of regime, it is noticeable that our new democratic government continue to implement apartheid spatial strategies

under a different name. Massive housing schemes crop up all over our country, and yet continue to disenfranchise those who are intended to be uplifted.

Low-cost housing developments continue to be removed from all opportunities found in the inner city. Cheap land, far removed from work and recreational opportunity, is developed into vast, monotonous low-cost housing estates. The research and study of Atteridgeville reveals that theses schemes often do more harm than good. The majority of the township resident's income is spent on transport and a disservice is being done to the majority of South Africa's citizens.

When there is investment into these areas, it is often ill-considered and unsympathetic to the conditions the inhabitants are faced with. Multi-purpose halls and transport interchanges seem to be the 'go-to' solution. They indicate a false sense of progress and do not consider the everyday, as they are predominantly market-driven. For example, the white elephant of a taxi-rank in Saulsville is unused and does not serve the community.

The intention of this dissertation series is to contest this notion. The schemes our government implement are similar to those utilised by the apartheid government. Those in need are further disadvantaged.
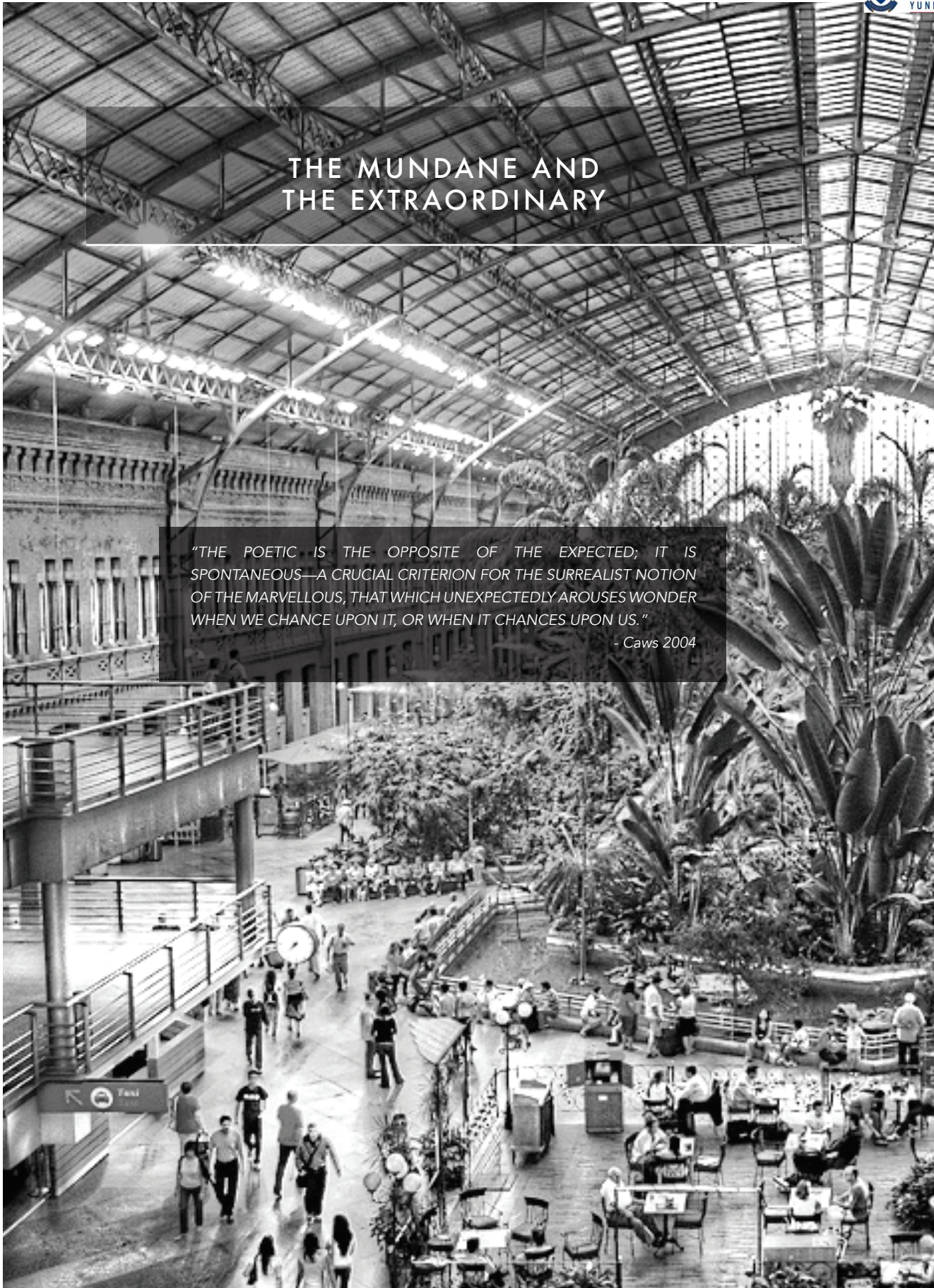

Fig. 31. Suburbia. Typical suburban setting in Atteridgeville.

THE MUNDANE AND
THE EXTRAORDINARY

"THE POETIC IS THE OPPOSITE OF THE EXPECTED; IT IS SPONTANEOUS—A CRUCIAL CRITERION FOR THE SURREALIST NOTION OF THE MARVELLOUS, THAT WHICH UNEXPECTEDLY AROUSES WONDER WHEN WE CHANCE UPON IT, OR WHEN IT CHANCES UPON US."

- Caws 2004

The Madrid Atocha Station (rebuilt in 1982 by Alberto de Palachio Elissagne after being destroyed by a fire) is an example of how public spaces, however mundane the activity associated with them may be, were celebrated. The working class were liberated from their everyday activities. This quality is unfortunately lacking in the majority of public spaces worldwide, especially since the shopping mall has replaced many such public spaces.

Fig. 32. Atocha Station, Madrid, Spain (Carlos Alberto Mejia Peralta 2007).
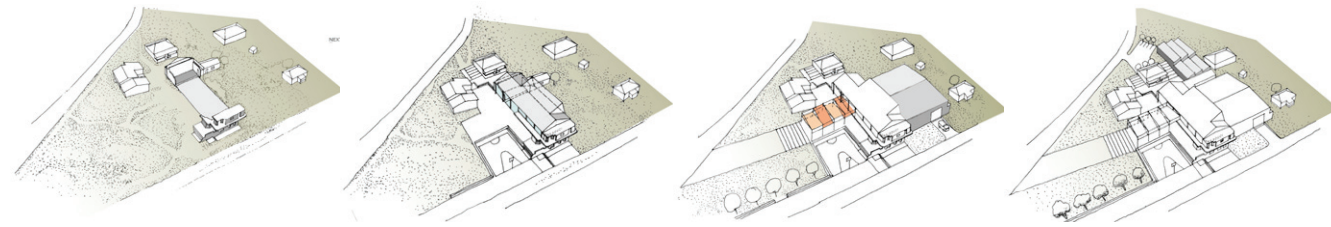
Fig. 34. Phased development. Lindsay Bremner Architects, 26'10 South Architects (Deckler 2009:53).

Fig. 35. Open air cinema screening, Vorster L. (n.d.)

LINDSAY BREMNER ARCHITECTS
26'10 SOUTH ARCHITECTS, 2002-2009
THE SANS SOUCI
KLIPTOWN, SOWETO, SOUTH AFRICA

Sans Souci, previously a dance hall and stable converted into a community cinema in 1948, fell into disrepair in the early 1990s and then burned down in 1995. Sans Souci (translates to "without a care") was one of the few cinemas available to black people during the apartheid era. Interviews conducted by the architects revealed that Sans Souci held immense value in the memory of the community. Residents shared that the rebuilding of the facility would "bring increased opportunities for employment, education, recreation and entertainment." The architects responded by developing a scheme for a community-based heritage project. (Deckler, *et al* 2006:51-3).

The architects propose that film screenings, production, dance and film festivals, and dance training will allow visitors and residents to participate in uncovering the history of Kliptown and the original Sans Souci, as the incremental scheme is constructed. The goal is to give cinema a new meaning through event and intervention. (Deckler, *et al* 2006:53).

PRECEDENT | PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Fig. 33. Sunset Dance
Graupner, A. 2006

Fig. 36. Site Development. Lindsay Bremner Architects, 26'10 South Architects.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Unfortunately this project remains unbuilt, but the lessons to be learnt are valuable. The focus on public space in conjunction with a cultural programme gives the project a richness inherent to the context. Responding to the needs of the community, the architects developed a sensitive proposal, taking the sentiment of the future users of the space into consideration, the result being deeply tied to the cultural and social informants on site.

The proposal ensures the emphasis lies on public space such that the contribution does not rely solely on the proposed programmes, but becomes part of the urban fabric. Sans Souci reveals the value of cultural and recreational facilities in developing townships.
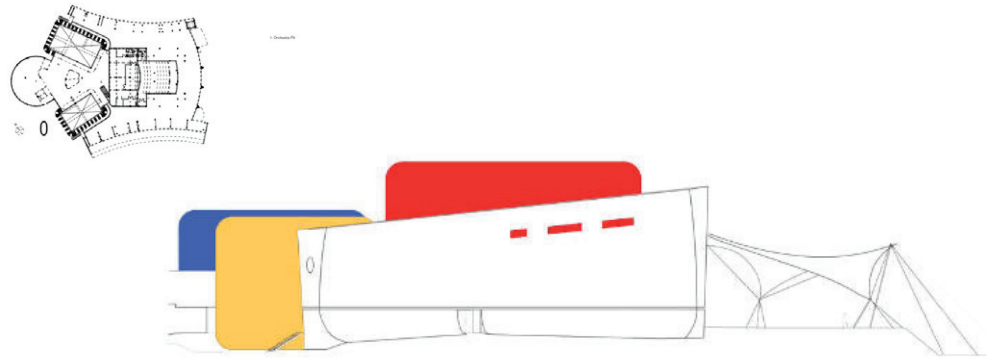
Fig. 37. Soweto theatre plan. Afritects.
Fig. 38. Soweto theatre elevation. Afritects.

AFRITECTS, 2012
SOWETO THEATRE
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

Afritect (2012) discusses the contrast between traditional theatres and those in the apartheid-oppressed Soweto. Traditionally, theatres are sealed boxes, which exclude the outside world, while in Soweto, theatre often took the form of a nomadic performance, as there were no dedicated venues- "any 'box' would have to do." This did however develop into an atmosphere lending itself to relaxation and accessibility. A need had been identified in Soweto - a formal theatre to serve the community, and provide opportunities to aspiring performers. The response could however not be generic, as it needed to respect the existing performance culture in Soweto and truly be of place. The intention was to contest the traditional theatre typology - "**monolithic, impenetrable, secretive-mass".**

The brief called for three separate performance spaces, seating 430, 180 and 90 patrons. The design highlights each of these spaces, allowing their internal workings to be identifiable from the exterior as "highly visible beacons in the landscape, enticing the audience in." The layout of the theatre took the highly serviced nature of theatres into account by separating the elements into wing walls flanking the black box, containing the services spaces (ablutions, storerooms, kitchens, etc.). This allows for street-like foyer spaces meandering around the performance spaces.

The three theatres share backstage facilities, as well as a foyer, which functions as a public space to be utilised as an additional performance space, gathering space and pause area. This foyer is covered by a tensile structure. The eastern and western façades are said to be defined by **"curving fortress walls", complimented by their "distinctive, top-heavy profile."**

*Summarised from information provided by Afritect (2012) on Archdaily, 16.06.2012.

PRECEDENT | CONTEXT

LEGEND:
1. Jabulani Mall;
2. Soweto Theatre;
3. Bheki Mlangeni Hospital;
4. Jabulani Technical School;
5. Inhlazane Train Station.
- - - - - Bolani Road
--------- Railway line

Fig. 42. Sharpeville and Jabulani, Soweto (adapted from Google Maps 2016).

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Fig. 39. Internal view of theatre
Fig. 40. Soweto theatre at sunset
Fig. 41. The peculiar forms of the theatre.

The architects at Afritect describe clearly that the intention was to contest traditional theatre, and respect the context and community. Unfortunately, the architecture manifests as a garish representation of this sentiment. A touch of 'romanticised poverty' (discussed in previous chapter) is eminent. There is merit in the use of colour but unfortunately this peculiar-shaped object-in-space appears to be more insensitive to the context. The curved form does not prevent this structure from having an inaccessible, monolithic feel and a definite point of entry cannot be distinguished. The architects themselves (Afritect 2012) describe the wings as "curving fortress walls" which is highly inappropriate. The internal spaces are reminiscent of public bathrooms.

The architecture does not seem to give back to the community. It is located beyond the large Jabulani Mall, separate from the residential area. The large site does not contribute to the daily lives of the residents, but instead it's monofuntionality results in the site being rather desolate. These aspects are valuable when considering public facilities. They should be tied into the built fabric so that their contribution is larger than the performance hosted, and finally they should be of place, and respectful to their place in the landscape without being patronising.