

## CHAPTER

# 04

*This Chapter aims to describe  
the characters of the narrative  
as methodology.*

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### UNSEEN OBSERVERS

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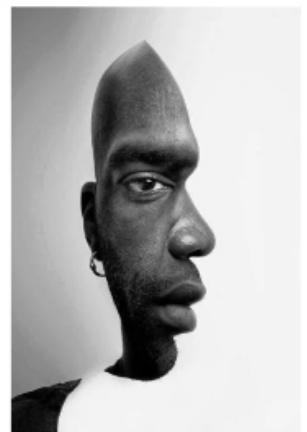
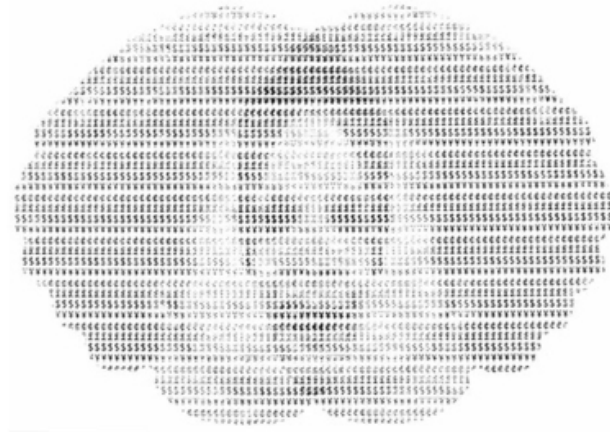


Figure 57: Marginal characters depicted as unseen observers. (2016)

#### 4.1. THE MAVERICKS

The characters derived from the marginalised groups are used as method to establish whether architecture can be understood through different personalities and their perceptions. The reason for choosing such specific personalities is based on the personal opinion of the author.

The author, as architecture student and activist for marginal people, plays a key role in the narrative of this investigation. Observing first hand what a marginal human being has to deal with in their lives of struggle against society's opinions, the author recognises that immense strength and integrity exists in the heart of such a character. Utmost respect is expressed for these marginalised people.

Past and current marginal conditions in Pretoria suggest outcomes for the making of architecture in this dissertation. The argument continues to relate back to identity of self, of a group, and of different groups together.

In isolation, each group functions in a very specific way but provides common ground for sympathy and general understanding towards each other. All functional responsibilities are assigned separately but the overall aim of the intervention is that a collective community is formed to become resilient and sustainable in future.

In a pre- and post-disaster environment where chaos is a dominating factor, it is not an assurance that activities will run smoothly and everyone will coincide. Instead, room is left for the potential of organic development.

The aim of this section of the dissertation is to indicate where the potential lies in the making of architecture. Later, as will be revealed in the design development, the narrative continues and reasons for design intentions become clear.

#### 4.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF SCENARIOS AS A DESIGN INFORMANT

Just like any human being, the survival of physical and emotional existence is of utmost importance. Value is inherently measured by the contribution of people against the world. A human being is criticized by so many external factors, that it is altered on a daily basis. Emotions such as happiness, sadness, depression, etc. implicate the survival of the human being.

The power of scenarios lies in the collective nature of this process of exploring uncertainty. By drawing on the ideas of a diverse group with different worldviews and specialties, it is possible to build a collective picture of what the forces driving change might be and their likely impact.

The result is a set of stories about the future. This provides a template with which to develop and test alternative ways to anticipate and adapt services and environments as responses to the risks that might arise.

Scenarios help people imagine and manage the future more effectively under conditions of human-related incidents, high uncertainty, potential disruptive political and social change, depleting resources and contested relationships between society and marginalised groups of people.

Anticipating and understanding risk within a specific context is critical for any community that wants to survive and thrive in a turbulent external environment. It requires a resilient organisational culture that can promote strategic thinking to anticipate and adapt to change.

Risk is the possibility that human actions or events lead to consequences that affect aspects of what people value (Scenarios architecture 2010). The rapid speed of change, the complex interactions between different developments taking place globally and the impact of modern channels of communication are all transforming the world, making many of the risks we face more complex and global in nature.

In the following section various scenarios are suggested which were informed by the conditions of the characters.



[ CHARACTER 1 ]

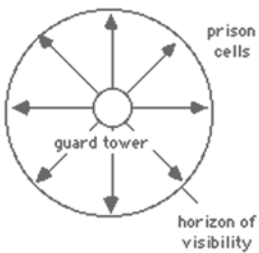
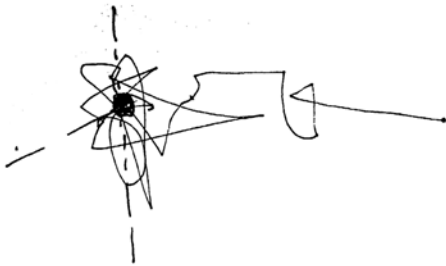
P R I S O N E R

EXISTING CONDITION:

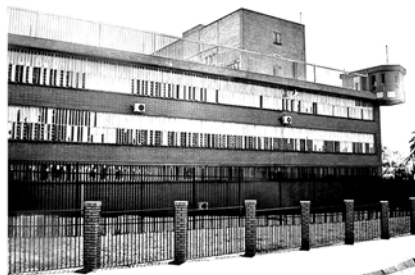
A person that experiences inner conflict of a dark nature will continue such thoughts in an environment of solitude and isolation. Their struggle is further enabled when an identity is given to them by society - 'a criminal', 'a low-life', 'a parasite'.

Their routine includes eating, sleeping and interacting with other prisoners that experience similar struggles. Their environment prohibits them from moving beyond a mindset of anger and struggle.

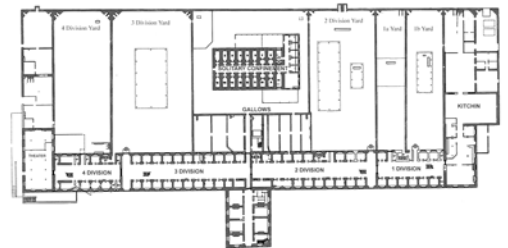
1



PANOPTICON LAYOUT



CORRECTIONAL SERVICES FACADE

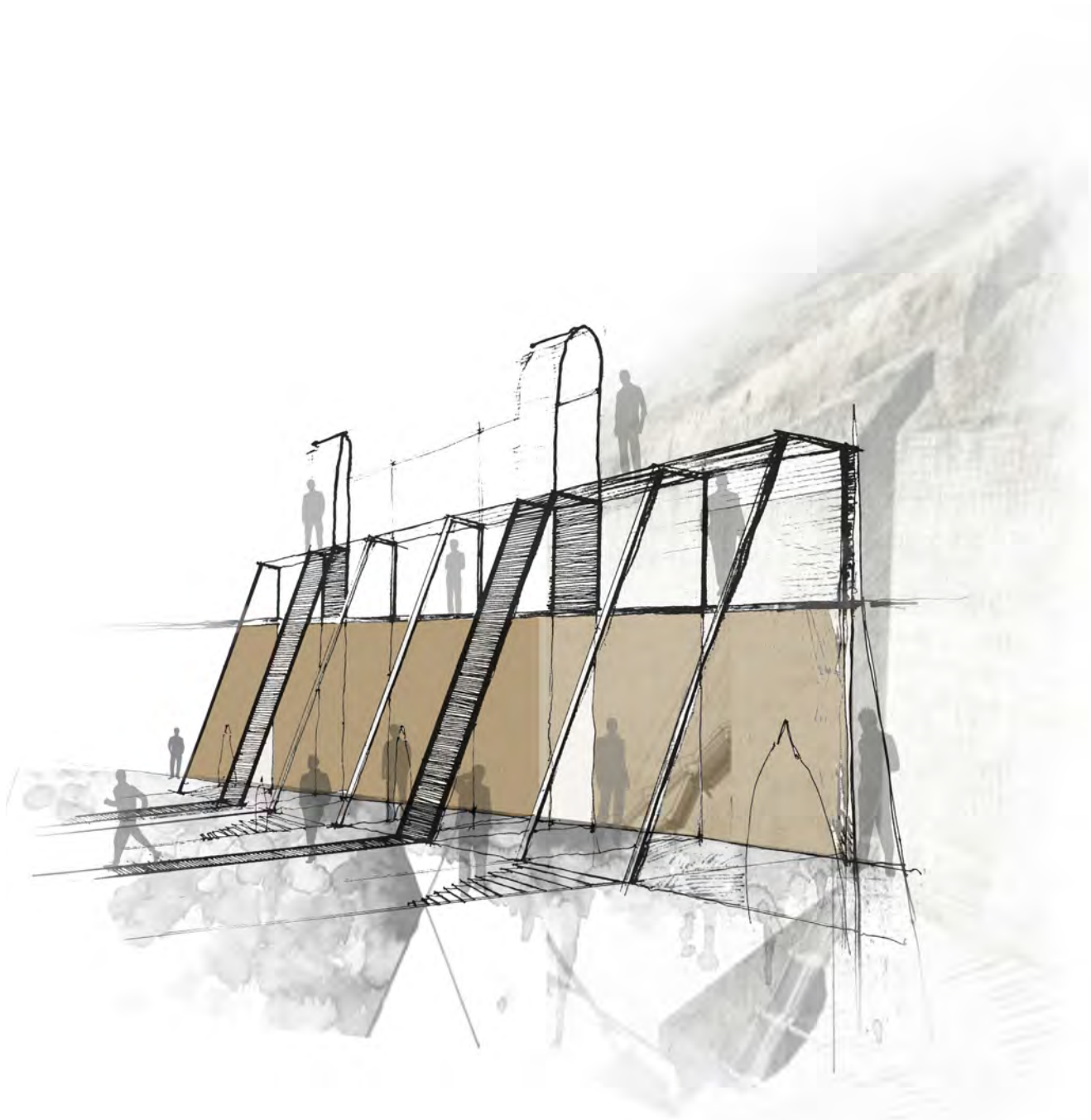


TYPICAL PLAN OF PRISON

Figure 58: Current marginal state of character 1. (2016)

## PROPOSED SCENARIO:

In the proposed intervention the intention of the spatial experience for the 'prisoner' is to create breathing space for free interaction with people experiencing struggles of a different nature. Although there is still an extent of confinement (purely for security reasons) these characters are now able to create objects like furniture, building components and prostheses from collected materials as part of a therapeutic activity. These spaces are called workshops.



*Figure 59: Proposed condition of character 1. (2016)*





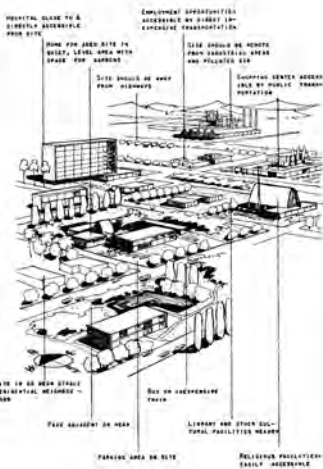
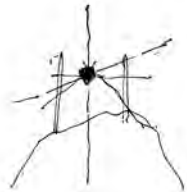
# [ CHARACTER 2 ]

E L D E R L Y

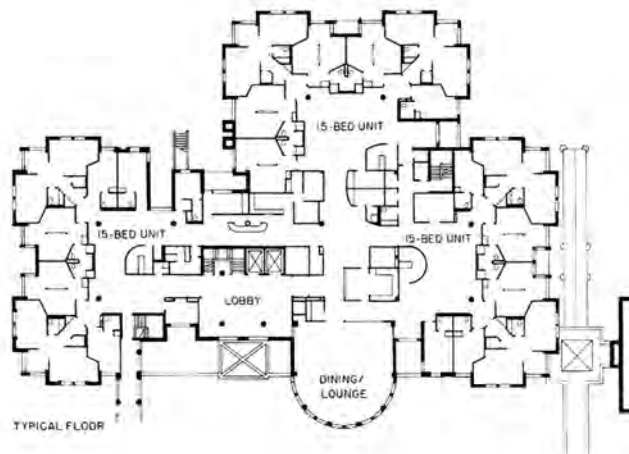


An elderly person is very conscious of time. Past time represents their memories and present time represents the collection and preservation of memories. Someone who possess knowledge of time has gained experience of dealing with people on various levels. An elderly person fosters relationships and has the ability to teach others based on their own experiences.

# 2



TYPICAL LAYOUT OF RETIREMENT VILLAGE

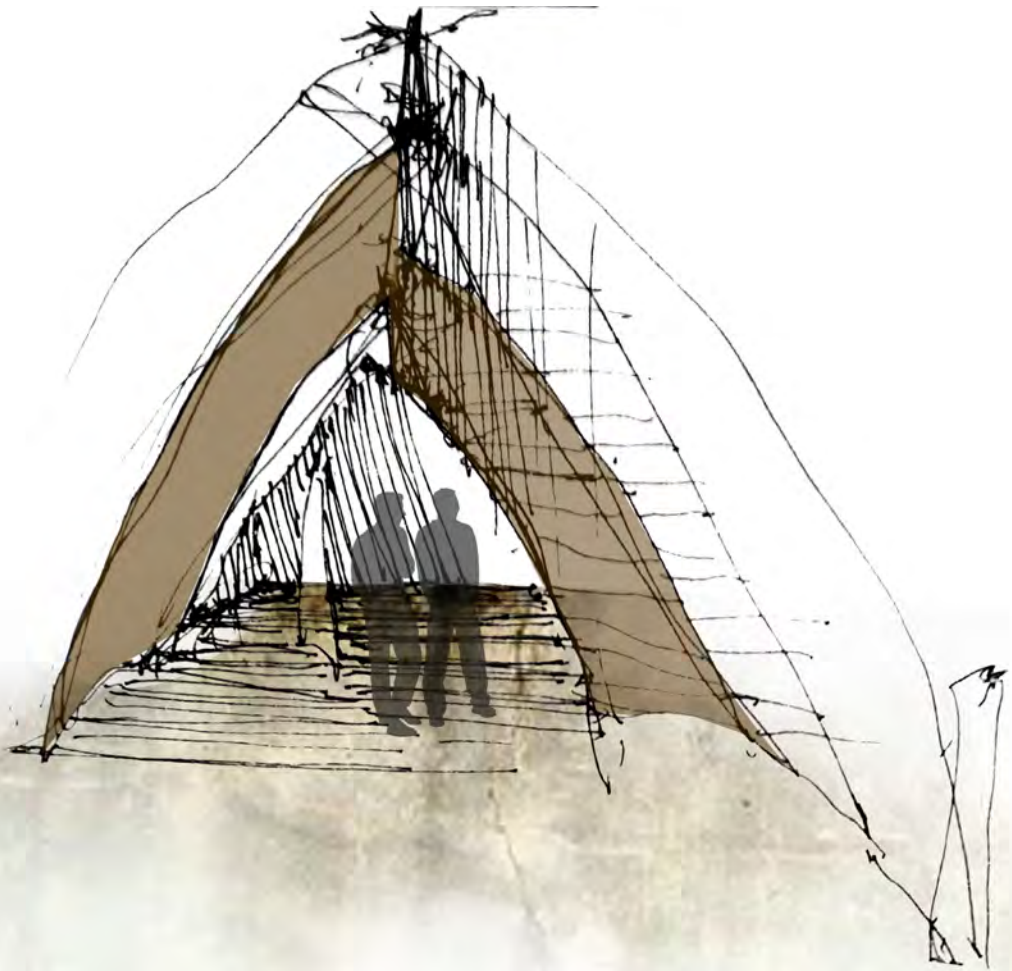


TYPICAL PLAN OF RETIREMENT VILLAGE

Figure 60: Current marginal state of character 2. (2016)

## PROPOSED SCENARIO:

In the proposed intervention the elderly represents a leadership figure who is able to take responsibility for the flow of activities. This character therefore makes diplomatic decisions at specific points in time about the interactions of people in different spaces and during activities. The elderly also takes responsibility for the archival materials collected that are to be preserved for future use.



*Figure 61: Proposed condition of character 2. (2016)*



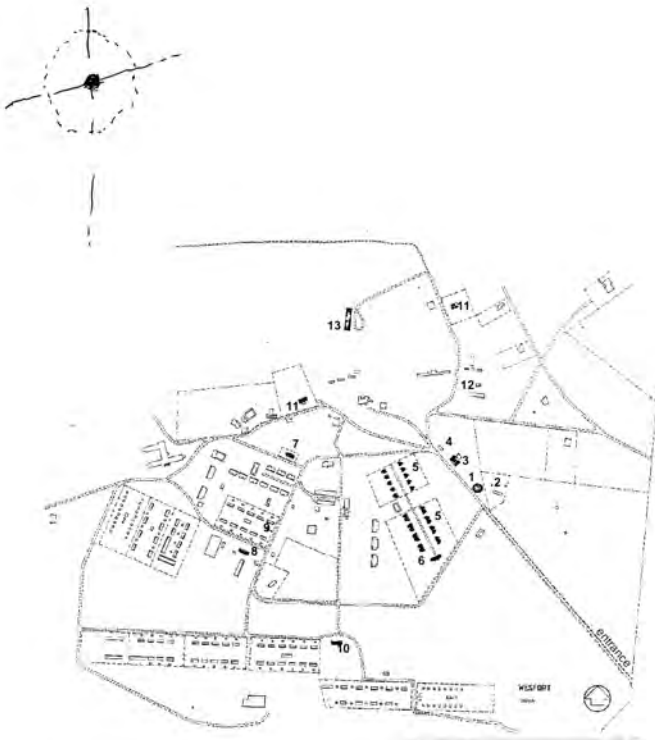
[ CHARACTER 3 ]

M E N T A L L Y  
D I S A B L E D

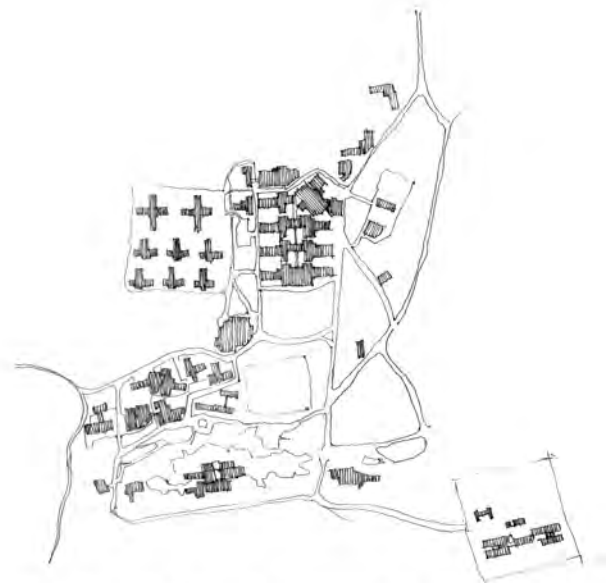
A mentally disabled person in an institution is controlled by rehabilitation practices. This includes medicine to control their psyche as well as isolated environments with little interaction with the outside world. Through these experiences of control they adopt the ability to observe everything around them.

# 3

M E N T A L L Y   D I S A B L E D  
 C U R R E N T   M A R G I N A L   S T A T E :  
 I N S T I T U T I O N  
 F R A M E   O F   R E F E R E N C E  
 C O M P L E T E   I S O L A T I O N  
 S O C I A L L Y   I N C A P A B L E  
 D E P E N D A N T   O N   M E D I C A L   A S S I S T A N C E  
 D E P R E S S I O N / P S Y C H O P A T H  
 P E R C E P T I O N   O F   R E A L I T Y   D I S T O R T E D  
 E M O T I O N A L   D E T A C H M E N T



1890 SITE PLAN OF WEST FORT HOSPITAL AND VILLAGE

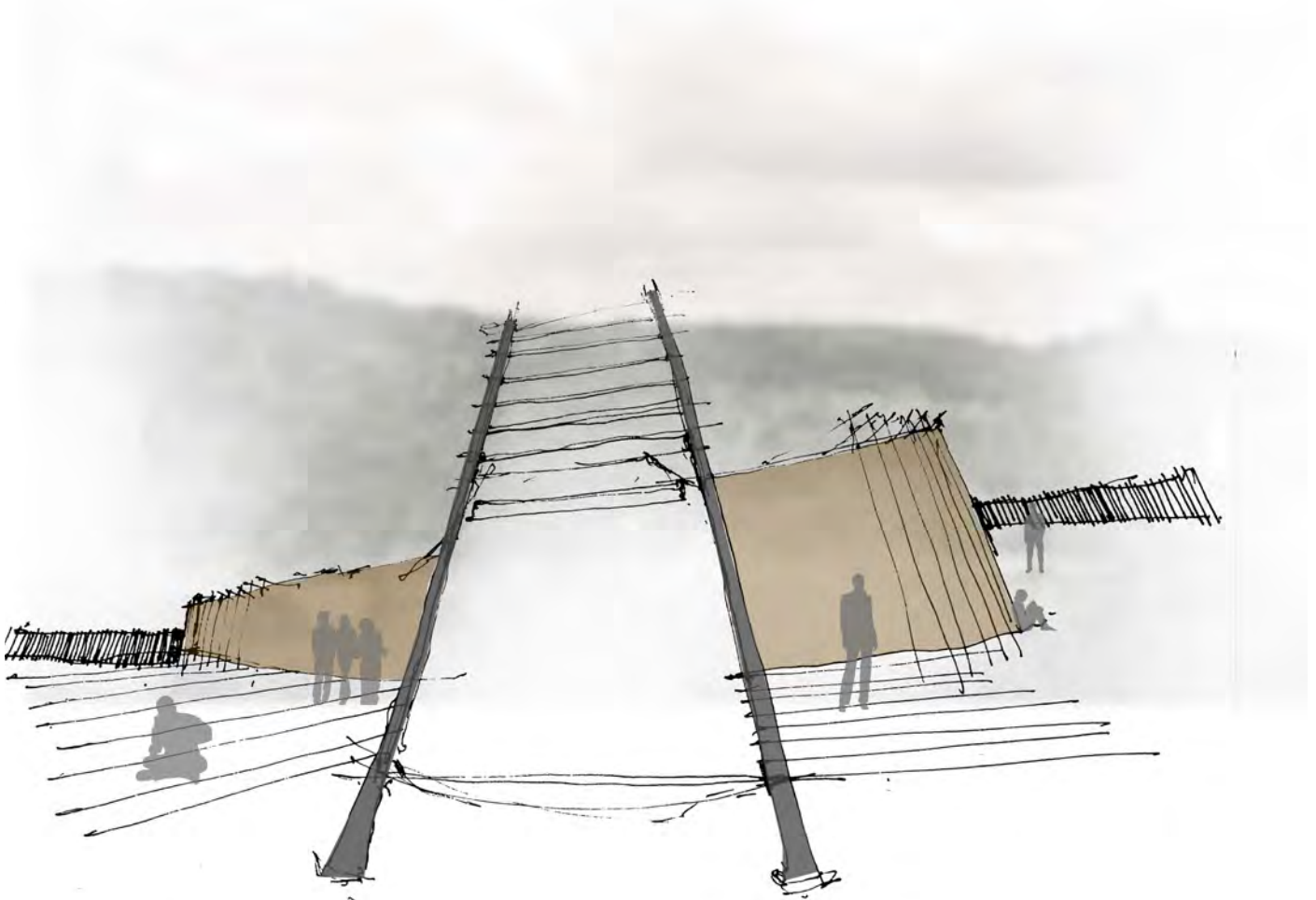


SITE PLAN OF WESKOPPIES PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Figure 62: Current marginal state of character 3. (2016)

PROPOSED SCENARIO:

In the proposed intervention the mentally disabled characters are tasked to observe the areas around the building without being seen from the exterior environment. Their responsibility is to alarm the rest of the characters if a threat is spotted in the surrounding area.



*Figure 63: Proposed condition of character 3. (2016)*



# [ CHARACTER 4 ]

P H Y S I C A L L Y  
D I S A B L E D

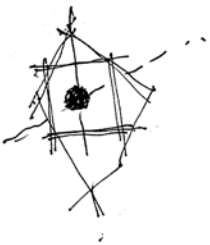


EXISTING CONDITION:

A physically disabled person is limited by movement. In many cases assistive devices are to be implemented in their daily activities to deal with this limitation.

# 4

P H Y S I C A L L Y   D I S A B L E D  
C U R R E N T   M A R G I N A L   S T A T E :  
I N S T I T U T I O N  
T O O L   D E P E N D A N T   ( P R O S T H E S I S ,  
W H E E L C H A I R ,   M E D I C A L )  
P H Y S I C A L   R E A L I T Y   D I S T O R T E D  
( W H E E L C H A I R   H E I G H T ,   B L I N D N E S S )  
S T R E E T S  
T O T A L   I S O L A T I O N   F R O M   S O C I E T Y  
L I M I T E D   E N V I R O N M E N T S   A N D  
I N T E R A C T I O N   ( S O C I A L )

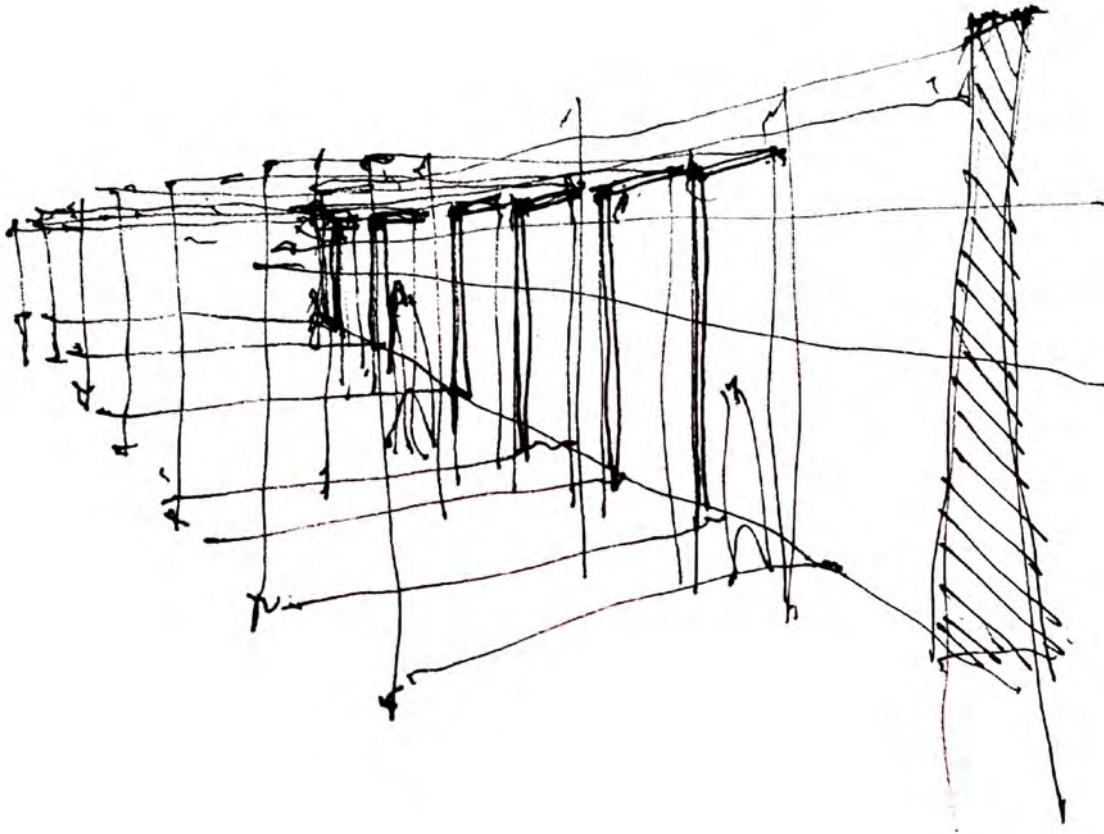


The Lebone II College in Phokeng, North West

Figure 64: Current marginal state of character 4. (2016)

### PROPOSED SCENARIO:

In the proposed intervention, movement is assisted through open flexible space that does not limit activities. Instead the characters' intellectual capabilities are put to use in the form of research and study. The development of innovation is essential in their activities - such as the study of plants for the use of food and medicine as well as new ways to create prosthetics for their own use. These spaces are named laboratories to provide a sense of resilience for the future.



*Figure 65: Proposed condition of character 4. (2016)*





[ CHARACTER 5 ]

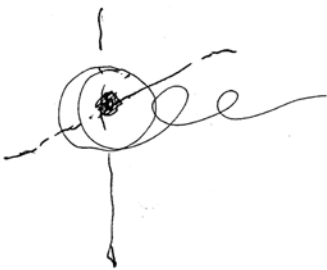
H O M E L E S S

EXISTING CONDITION:

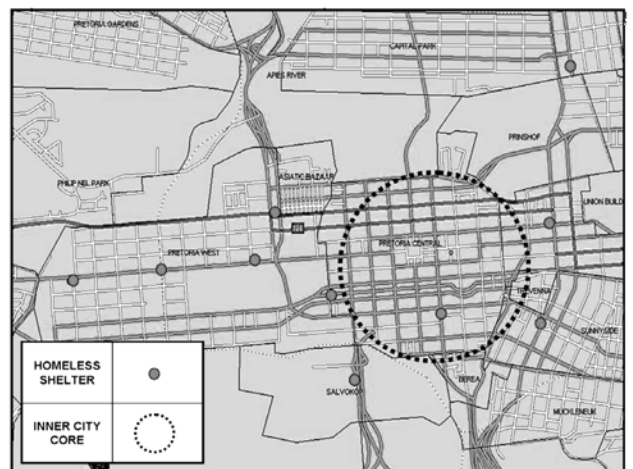
A homeless person's environment consists of streets or temporary homeless shelters. These characters are able to adapt to different environments very quickly in order to survive on a daily basis.

5

H O M E L E S S  
C U R R E N T M A R G I N A L S T A T E :  
A D A P T A B L E E N V I R O N M E N T  
U N P R E D I C T A B L E C I R C U M S T A N C E S  
S C A R E E X P O S U R E T O P U B L I C  
R E S O U R C E S  
H E A L T H H A Z A R D



STREET CONDITIONS

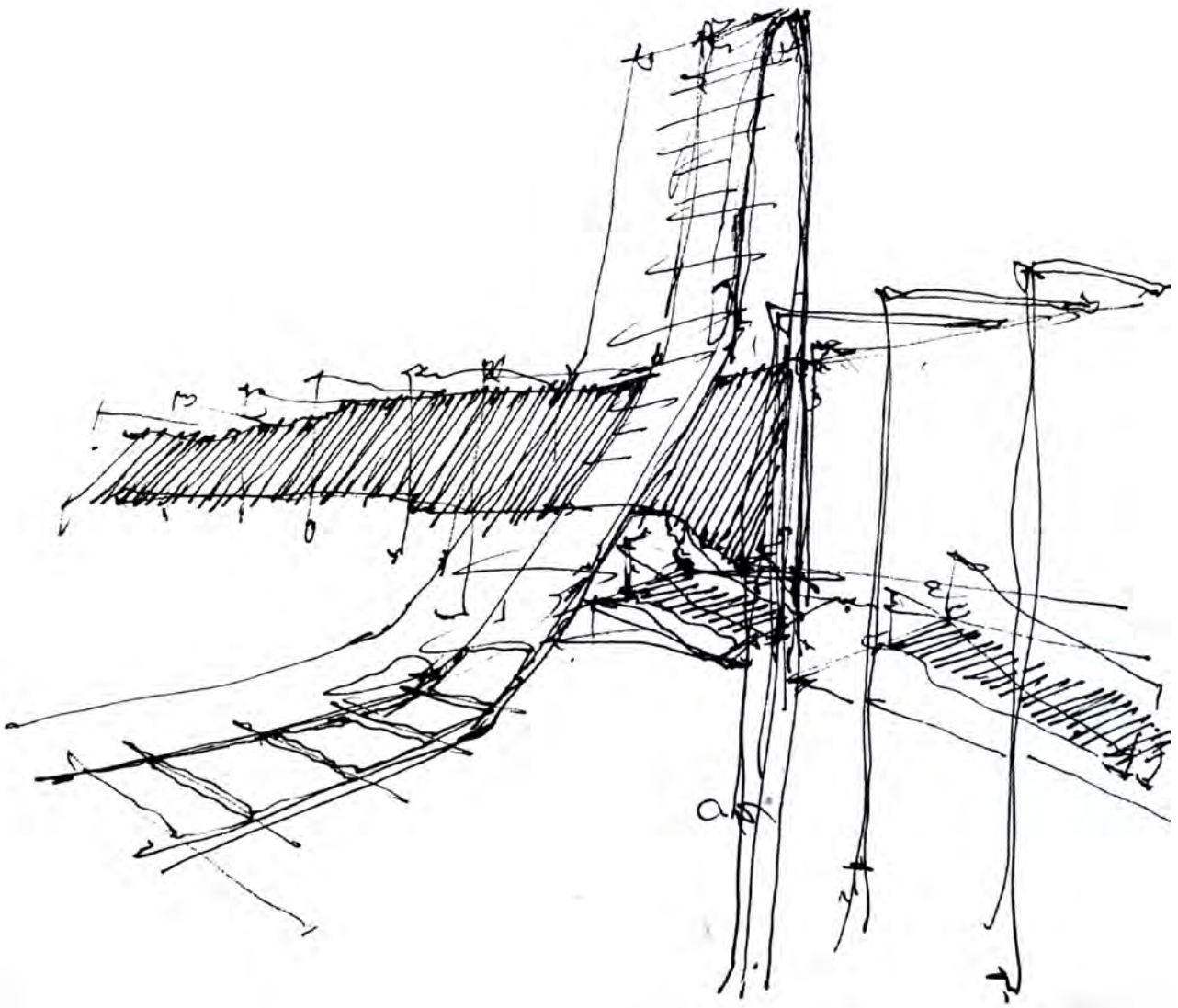


HOMELESS SHELTER LOCATIONS IN PRETORIA

Figure 66: Current marginal state of character 5. (2016)

## PROPOSED SCENARIO:

In the proposed intervention the initial function of the structure is to protect the inhabitants from disaster. This strategy is already put in place by the design of the building. As time progresses, the homeless characters are tasked to disassemble certain parts of the structure and replace these with 'lighter' structural components. The characters also have the responsibility to use food sources for cooking to provide for all the inhabitants.



*Figure 67: Proposed condition of character 5. (2016)*

## 4.3. THEORETICAL DISCOURSE

### 4.3.1. SPACE, POWER AND EXCLUSION

This section aims to follow the argument of the scenarios presented.

It has already been established in earlier sections of the book that marginalised people are excluded from 'mainstream society'. "In general, our understanding of the processes of exclusion is grounded in time and history" (Kitchin 1998:343). Spaces are currently organised to keep marginal people 'in their place' and 'written' to convey to these people that they are 'out of place'.

Kitchin (1998) argues that psychoanalytic and social constructivist theories are key in understanding why marginal people are oppressed in society. As a basic human condition people tend to categorise subjects and objects as either good or bad. The relationship between the self and the social world creates a contested boundary that is defined and formed to protect the self on the one hand and define the self on the other hand. Such a boundary is shaped through spatial experiences and acquired cultural representations. "The construction of 'Other' is a deep seated method of self-protection leading to the grouping of like-minded individuals" (Kitchin 1998:344). In the argument for different marginalised groups to co-exist in the proposed intervention, the concept of self-protection becomes a collective notion of the 'Other'.

Space can be understood as a constituent of social relations which is ambiguous, dynamic and contested in nature. Based on this definition of space, it is suggested that socially produced space excludes marginal people in two ways: firstly spaces are currently organised to keep marginal people 'in their place'; secondly spaces are social texts that convey to the marginal people that they are 'out of place' (Kitchin 1998:345).

In *Justice and Politics of Difference* (Young 1990), it is suggested that the classification of oppression is used to illustrate power relations and exclusion processes related to marginal people. It is through this view that marginal people are rendered powerless. This power relationship between the marginal and the 'dominant power of society' only exists by way of political means (arguing for a political disaster).

Another form of power relationships is through the use of ideology. The norms of society are promoted over and above the values of 'others' which are seen as deviant. Marginal people are seen as 'unworthy' in the greater scheme of society. The investigation recognises the hegemony of power (in the context of Pretoria) and aims to deconstruct the landscapes of power and exclusion.

The intervention idealistically aims to resist these ideas and norms by creating a protected and resilient environment for the marginal. Therefore each scenario proposes a valued position for each character.

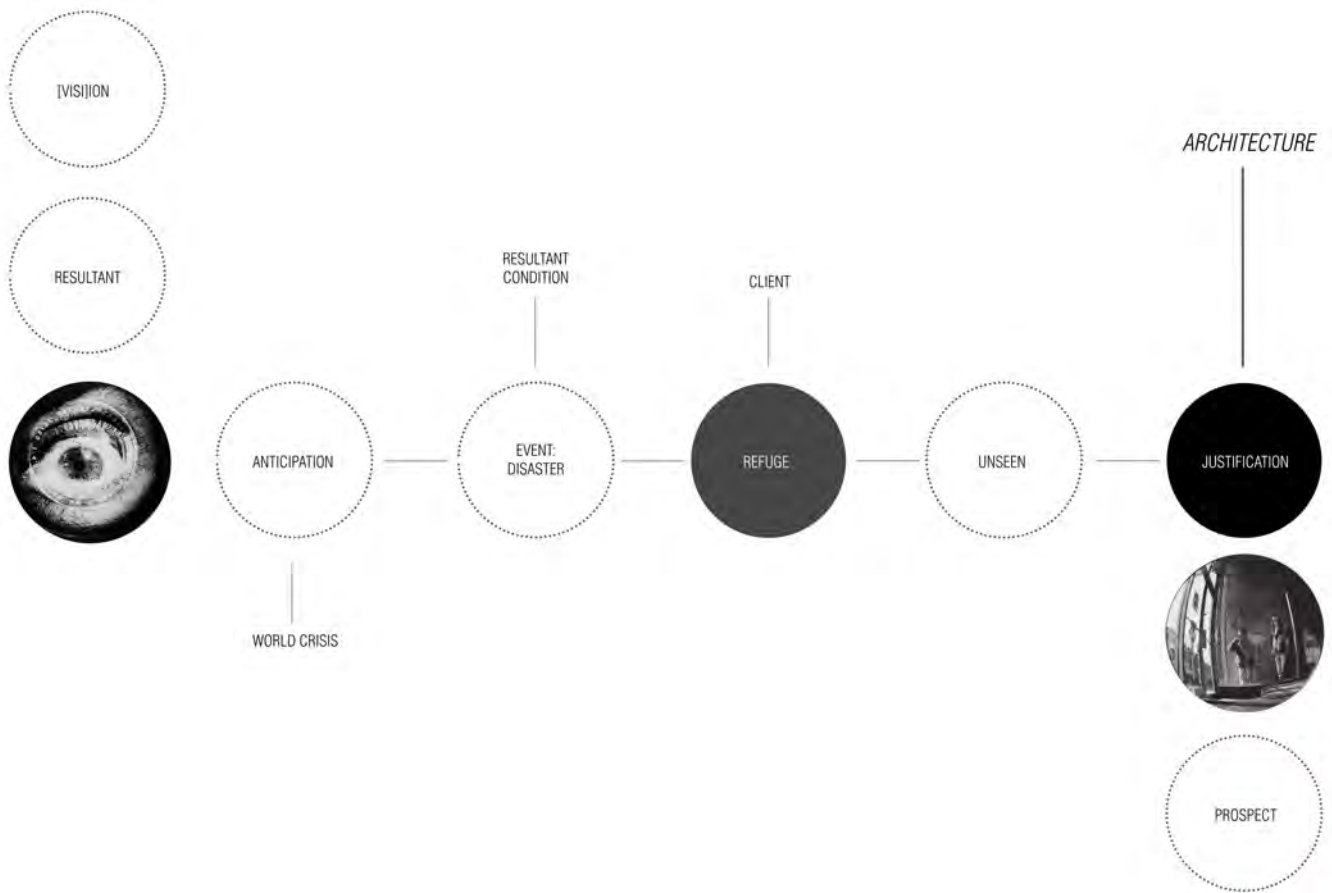


Figure 68: Illustration of the evolution of perception from the vision through to the justification and belief of perception based on the theoretical discourse. (2016)



#### 4.3.2. THE CONCEPT OF SPECULATIVE SPACE

For the purpose of this study we can assume that space is not absolute. It is a representation of experiences.

Liam Young is a speculative architect who in his own words, “operates in the spaces between design, fiction and futures” (Young 2015). His exploration includes future implications of emerging urban developments, by investigating unreal and forgotten landscapes. It is Young's view that speculative architecture and the role of humans in relation to nature is what drives the conceptual ideas of storytelling through fictional environments.

In the past the shaping of cities were majorly driven by the development of infrastructure, public spaces and buildings to establish an ‘economically stable’ urban environment. With emerging technologies as shifting agents cities are starting to develop beyond the physical spectrum. In Young's opinion the use of speculative scenarios is merely an attempt to “stay relevant in the context of a city that is always changing” (Young 2015:2).

We as human beings are no longer just an existence of our physical selves but rather identified by our social media footprints. Young states that the creation of future speculative projects is a way of coping with uncertainty. The future as a speculative project is slowly starting to make more sense than merely dealing with what architecture should look like in current aesthetic tendencies.

What is argued in this theoretical framework by Young is that an attempt should be made to “tell stories and exaggerate the present so that certain forces, tendencies or cultural idiosyncrasies become more legible, apparent and visible. The role of the future project is to critically engage with the present in a meaningful way and put in place scaffolds for the future we want” (Young 2015:9).

In light of Liam Young's speculative approach to the creation of meaningful spaces, Bernard Rudofsky in *Architecture Without Architects* (1988) aims to recognise and acknowledge ideas of participatory and humanistic spaces. Rudofsky's term of ‘non-pedigreed architecture’ is grounded in the idea that community and heritage can promote and motivate human-centred change to create a sense of place through the physical and psychological (Di Cintio [sa]).

#### 4.3.3. THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE – LEFEBVRE

According to Lefebvre (1991:27) space is a social product which constitutes spatial devices such as transparency and opacity.

The aspect of transparency in space gives design a responsibility for mediation between mental activity and social activity. In this case design in any form enables a sense of transcendence into an imaginary world. Transparency in design therefore moves away from the mechanistic and materialistic which argues for a phenomenological approach in architecture.

It can be argued here that mental space is an image of physical space and vice versa. Patricios (1973:311) in his attempt to argue for a new approach to spaces describes these images as being a result of “sensations manipulated primarily by factors such as personality and culture of the perceiver and modified by expectation, attention, motivation and emotion” (Patricios 1973:312).

The argument resides in the idea that physical space is constructed and given meaning to through perception and the psychology of the mind. In this investigation, although the concepts are broad and intangible, an attempt is made through the scenarios of the characters. How different personalities are depicted in the proposed scenarios give meaning to spaces by way of the use of materials and movement through space.

Lefebvre (1991:33) suggests three different ways of creating meaningful space.

Firstly SPATIAL PRACTICE acknowledges the production and movement in the formation of different spaces which ensures a sense of continuity.

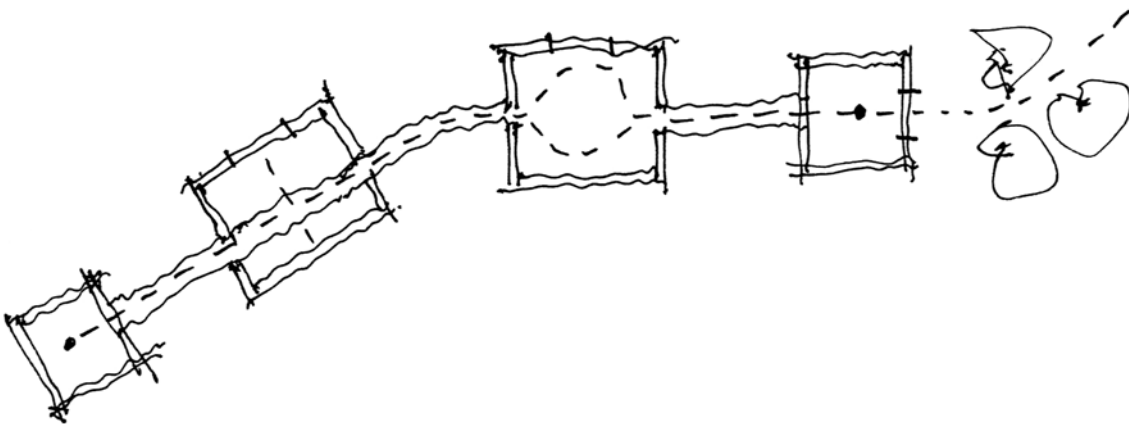


Figure 69: A drawing that represents spatial practice. (2016)

Secondly REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE are embedded in the relationships of people and activities within a space. Herein lies the symbols that make certain spaces unique and implies a link to the personalities of the people that inhabit a specific space.



Figure 70: A drawing of representations of space. (2016)

Thirdly REPRESENTATIONAL SPACE is what constitutes emotions expressed in specific spaces. These experiences can take place individually or in a collaborative scenario.



solitude



engagement  
conversation.



freedom.

Figure 71: A drawing of representational space. (2016)

#### 4.3.4. POWER

Power-knowledge as coined by Michel Foucault (Seisun 2004:1) refers to social norms and power structures created and facilitated by the built environment. The effects that it has on architecture is relevant in the case of the marginalisation of space and people. Hierarchy exists in all aspects of life. In architecture, unfortunately, the hierarchy of power through the authorship of a design enforces power relations between those who make decisions and the rest who have to adhere to them.

In his theoretical framework of space, power and knowledge, Foucault (2004:1) is concerned with how power structures are manifested in the modern and contemporary context. He suggests further that surveillance is the main driving force within these power relations between people which has a direct effect on the planning and spatial formation in architectural design.

In the context of this investigation, authorship of the design is translated to the identities of the marginalised characters. In doing this the controlling and ordering of spaces are left to the scenarios that are proposed for each character and how every scenario can relate to the others.

Space and power is therefore representational which refers to the production of space on different levels as mentioned in the ideas of Lefebvre (1991). The role of the individualisation of every character is manifested in the way that space symbolises each identity. "This perspective negates the role of the designer as it focuses on the main forces that shape design of the environment as those governed by the power-knowledge relations" (Seisun 2004:1).

#### 4.3.5. A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH AS CONCLUSION

In light of the theoretical approach to space, how we conceive justification of our beliefs is evident in the construction of environments. Any external source, whether verbal or physical, is seen as an addition to our empirical knowledge. Without external knowledge, growth and process cannot take place.

Representation of space is the acknowledgement of beliefs through the alteration of space. Altering an environment presents symbols of a psychological state. An example could be that of an elderly woman in an old-age home. Adding memorabilia of the woman's children and grandchildren, alleviates the effect of loss of time spent with her family. By altering the environment, the perceptual belief of being far away from loved ones is limited.

In the case of a mentally disabled patient, reality is only justified through the means represented by external sources. Being given medicine in an institution on a daily basis strengthens the psychological illusion of physical improvement.

The idea of creating representations of space in order to manage emotions exists within many environments. By altering elements of space moments of emotions are created which draws people closer to reality. Thus it can be said that reality exists in the psychology of perceptions. This justifies the notion of perception and how it is constructed through environments. Space therefore exists in the creation of reality through different devices (architectural or materialistic).

In the context of this dissertation, spatial perception is a dominant factor in the representation of an environment inhabited by a marginal person. This not only allows for a conceptual approach to place-making, it also provides opportunity to explore different devices to create specific qualities of space in an environment of refuge. Refuge in itself could only mean safety and hidden isolation, but the intentions require further exploration to represent symbols rather than simply adhering to spatial requirements of different functions.

