

# 01

## CHAPTER

# INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

Urban wastelands today are often derelict and isolated, in a sense seen as barriers in an urban society. Modernist theories have been accompanied by concepts of alienation, isolation, and barriers in urban contexts (Amiri, 2016). A connection can be made that modernist theories and actions can be linked to urban wastelands today. Social diversity was often disregarded in modernist theories and interventions, with rigid and static architectural expressions often influenced by functionalism (Todes, et al., 2010), that ultimately contributed to disconnection and a lack of meaning to a site. This dissertation seeks to revert the works and architectural expressions left by modernist theories.

The aim is to investigate new functions and programs to regenerate and activate urban wastelands. In order to do this, it is very important to investigate the context that the wasteland finds itself in along with the immediate public found close to the chosen site. It is the context and the future users that will guide the design decision making process to identify new suitable functions and programs to allow the wasteland to be successfully integrated back into the urban fabric.



“Abandoned buildings and lots are a subcategory of the larger problem of physical disorder in a community”.  
-Jon M. Shane

## GLOBAL ISSUE

### *The negative effect of urban wastelands*



The creation of urban wastelands, unused spaces or abandoned interstitial spaces that is no longer suitable for the functions that they were designed for, finds itself in the unique position for change and the re-envisioning of what that space can be (Cherchi, 2015).

The re-envisioning of abandoned buildings that gradually turned into urban wastelands over time is needed as it can have a negative effect on cultural, social, economic, and architectural life within an urban environment. The lack of programs and functions for an abandoned site is what keeps it in a state of wasted space.

Urban wastelands that was inflicted by abandonment can affect the immediate public and environment in a negative way, generating a sense of deterioration of that area. A correlation has been made between the incidence of pollution activities due to abandoned buildings and wastelands, which can then lead to problems of health and the well-being of a neighborhood (Akindele, 2013). Abandonment can encourage concealment and unsafe spaces, ultimately creating a setting for unsafe and dangerous activity. These issues are all consequences that occurs due to the presence of abandonment, and underutilized wasted space within the urban fabric.

Figure 1.1: Global issue (Author 2020)

## URBAN ISSUE

### *Generate meaningful spaces*

It is often the lack in meaning of a space, that is a result of functionalist theories, that causes the decrease in attention and care that is needed for that space. Giving meaning to a space has the ability to attach new spatial behaviors, and emotional characteristic to that place (Hashemnezhad, et al., 2013). Which can in turn generate new attachments for the immediate public to make with that space.

To give meaning to a space that includes the immediate public can have the ability to inspire people to improve and take care of that space. It can be said that a place, or a site in the case of this dissertation, without any people is merely a geographical location, only when the existence of people are connected to a place it can generate greater meaning (Tuan, 1977). It is from this greater meaning, physical, and emotional attachment to a site that a connection between people and the urban environment they share will be ensured.



*“The responsibility of an architect is to create a sense of order, a sense of place, a sense of relationship”.*

*–Richard Meier*

Figure 1.2: Urban issue (Author 2020)

## ARCHITECTURAL ISSUE

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*Diversity of the built environment that correlates to the natural one*

“Nature and natural processes are the guiding principles or the main metaphors of the design approach”.  
-Frank Lloyd Wright

Coming to the realization of the consequences of uncontrollable city growth and irresponsible development, the need for sustainable development have become more and more evident (Haupt, 2014). Dr Howard Frumkin (2002) adds that the result of irresponsible development can lead to environmental damages, a negative impact on physical and mental health of the public along with a disruption in the community's well-being and land use. It can then be said that a complex negative relationship erupts between the built environment and natural environment.

It is thus important that the architectural issues of a design correlates to that of a green strategy. It is based in the principles of diversity as a means to generate resilience. Thus, seeking diversity within the built environment that correlates to that of the natural environment by incorporating sustainable design thinking.



Figure 1.3: Architectural (Author 2020)

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over time it is inevitable that buildings will eventually deteriorate, which can in extreme cases subsequently lead to the abandonment of the building and depreciation as time goes by (Akindele, 2013). The abandonment and deterioration of buildings are often related to bad management, political interference, or maintenance and upkeep of a building/site being absent. Current urban planning is struggling to deal with these abandoned site and wastelands in a constructive manner, leaving them useless and lifeless.

However, there are numerous ways and strategies that can be applied to deal with these buildings and sites to avoid years of abandoned wastelands. If urban planning and design development policies are focused on reusing and restoring these spaces to be relevant within the current environment and for the users, it could result in a more livable, healthier and

meaningful space within that community, which would then give the immediate public reason to fight against the building and site being abandoned once again.

The reason why it is important to resolve this issue of abandonment and urban wastelands is because abandoned buildings and wastelands are capable of introducing numerous problem that include environmental, social, economic and safety problems within that urban area (Akindele, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to identify how this abandoned site, can be stitched back into the urban fabric. Investigating a strategy of re-integration and giving meaning and importance back to this site.

## Research question

How can Kempton Park Hospital be stitched back into the urban fabric and the daily lives of the immediate public?

## Sub questions

Theory

How will the integration of urban wastelands affect the dynamic of the current urban conditions?

Design

What design strategies can ignite meaning and purpose to an abandoned site?

Technical

How can architectural interventions shape positive behavioral characteristics to improve the quality of a space?

## General questions

How does urban wastelands affect the quality of environmental and human well-being?

How can the built environment respond to environmental and human health?

What impact can the meaning of a place have in a society?

Why should the re-use of abandoned spaces be considered?

Why is it important for the built environment to accommodate human well-being?

How will shared spaces impact the value of the urban environment?

Figure 1.4: Research questions diagram (Author 2020)

## INTRODUCTION TO SITE

The site that I have chosen for this dissertation sits within Kempton Park, Gauteng, but more specifically in one of the suburban areas of Kempton Park, namely Van Riebeeck Park where I have chosen the Kempton Park hospital site for my dissertation. The Kempton Park Hospital is an existing building that closed in December 1996 and have been an abandoned building and site ever since. The structure of the building remains intact, still facilitating all the medical equipment, patient rooms, and staff accommodations. The building was designed on strong modernistic principles, giving it characteristics of an isolated building, standing alone on a large site, overwhelmingly large stereotomic architecture, with little regard to the human scale and the natural environment around the building. Over time the site has become a large urban wasteland in Van Riebeeck Park, creating an unpleasant and deserted space in the urban space. The site sits within a high-density residential area, surrounded by schools and small commercial businesses that can all benefit from this site as the urban community once did. This is also the reason why I have chosen this site, because of the potential it holds to have a meaningful role once again in the daily lives of the direct public.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

### *Geriatric medical center*

The Kempton Park hospital once played a vital part in the immediate neighborhood. Since its closing, it resulted in a missing link of public interaction within the life of Van Riebeeck park. The site once accommodated an entire range of public needs and well-being with a wide spectrum of users depending on the activities and functions on this site. With the re-activation of the site it can once again have great meaning within its context.

The program of the entire site will be developed to accommodate a holistic design, emphasizing the importance of the site as a whole and integrating it with the current urban environment. For the exiting building I am proposing that it will be a medical center in memory of the previous program, but more specifically a geriatric center.

Only by combining health care with other uses a cluster of functions interlinked can create a resilient node that can affirm itself in this particular urban context. New programs would be dependent on the geriatric medical center to try and create an interface between the medical facility and the rest of the environment.

My dissertation will focus between the edge of the exiting building and the urban environment and how to create that transition through a concept of shared spaces.



## AIMS

- a. Revert the works and architectural expressions left by modernist theories.
- b. Introduce an immersive vision of public life into suburban areas through embracing the site as a whole and bringing it back into the urban fabric.
- c. Reclaim fragmented wastelands into urban society by introducing appropriate programs and activities that can reconnect and re-establish the importance of this site into the urban society.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this dissertation are to identify strategies to deal with abandoned and lost wastelands within the urban fabric. It is to re-think the meaning of that space and create a more integrated and relevant public network for the current public life. The overall design intention is based on the activation of derelict spaces and creating diversity as a means of generating resilience to ensure that this site will not find itself, abandoned once again.

### *General objectives*

- a. The activation of large-scale wastelands, as it can often lead to unsafe and lifeless spaces within the public area.
- b. Encourage social interactions and public liveliness, for it is a reflection of the site's well-being and safety.
- c. Ensure a more sustainable footprint by incorporating sustainable service systems, introducing an overall green strategy to the architectural intentions.

### *Architectural objectives*

- a. With the program focusing on a specific user group the architectural objective is to create a space that would improve the daily life and well-being of the user.
- b. Creating interior spaces that incorporates methods of easy wayfinding and legibility.
- c. Promoting comfort, and a safe environment of interior and exterior spaces through semi-closed courtyards and appropriate choice in materials.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The broader paradigm of this research is based on a critical realist nature, which means this research deals with the nature of causation and the implicit or explicit ontologies we can find ourselves in. Du Toit (2015) describes this critical realist paradigm as research that would ultimately lead to a positive change.

A qualitative research approach was chosen because it focuses on experiences, more specifically on subjective experiences, within a social context (Merriam, 2009). This research aims to understand what people think and feel within the context and circumstances which they find themselves confronted with (Thorne, 2000). Qualitative research highlights the importance of uncovering knowledge and understanding these experiences.

For the collection data a means of triangulation will be used. This implies using more than one method of data collection within the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1970).

### *Method one: Data collection*

The first stage of research is through document collection and analysis. According to Glenn Bowen (2009), this is a systematic process to evaluate and review literature found in articles and book. This method was chosen because it allows for the development of empirical knowledge on the subject through the examination and interpretation of data that will elicit a thorough understanding on the subject (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Literature used includes Journal articles, books, and peer reviewed articles with the subject focused on the effect of urban wastelands, well-being in architecture and the role of shared spaces.

### *Method two: Context analysis*

An investigation into the conditions around the site and on the site was conducted. The analysis is split into two categories. First a contextual analysis is done, investigating the broader context that the site sits in. The second analysis was done focusing on the chosen site, investigating current conditions, and establishing what can be useful for design decisions.

### *Method three: Precedent studies*

Precedent studies was done with the intention to contribute to design decision making. The precedents were investigated with the objective to critically analyze the role that architecture can have on the direct environment and the users along with establishing guidelines derived from the precedents that can then be used in my design.

## THEORETICAL APPROACH

This dissertation investigated three architectural theories to develop guidelines and inform programmatic and technological decision making. All three theories have the overarching intention of finding solutions for integrating urban wastelands into current urbanity.

### *Well-being through architecture*

The concept of well-being has many underlying definitions in design. For this dissertation well-being will be associated with the quality of life that users find themselves experiencing. Theoretical premises will establish how the built environment can shape and impact the user's well-being.

### *Places of meaning*

Understanding concepts like places of meaning, a sense of place and place attachment can be a fundamental asset to shaping a design. Only by understanding the important relationship between people and place can a new design be successful.

### *Holistic impression on design*

A holistic approach to design is related to the minimization of segregated spaces. By introducing design theories of flexible and multivalent architectural spaces. Creating different layers of spaces in function and/or programs. A theoretical premise that establishes the encouragement of less isolated spaces to alternative holistic spaces.

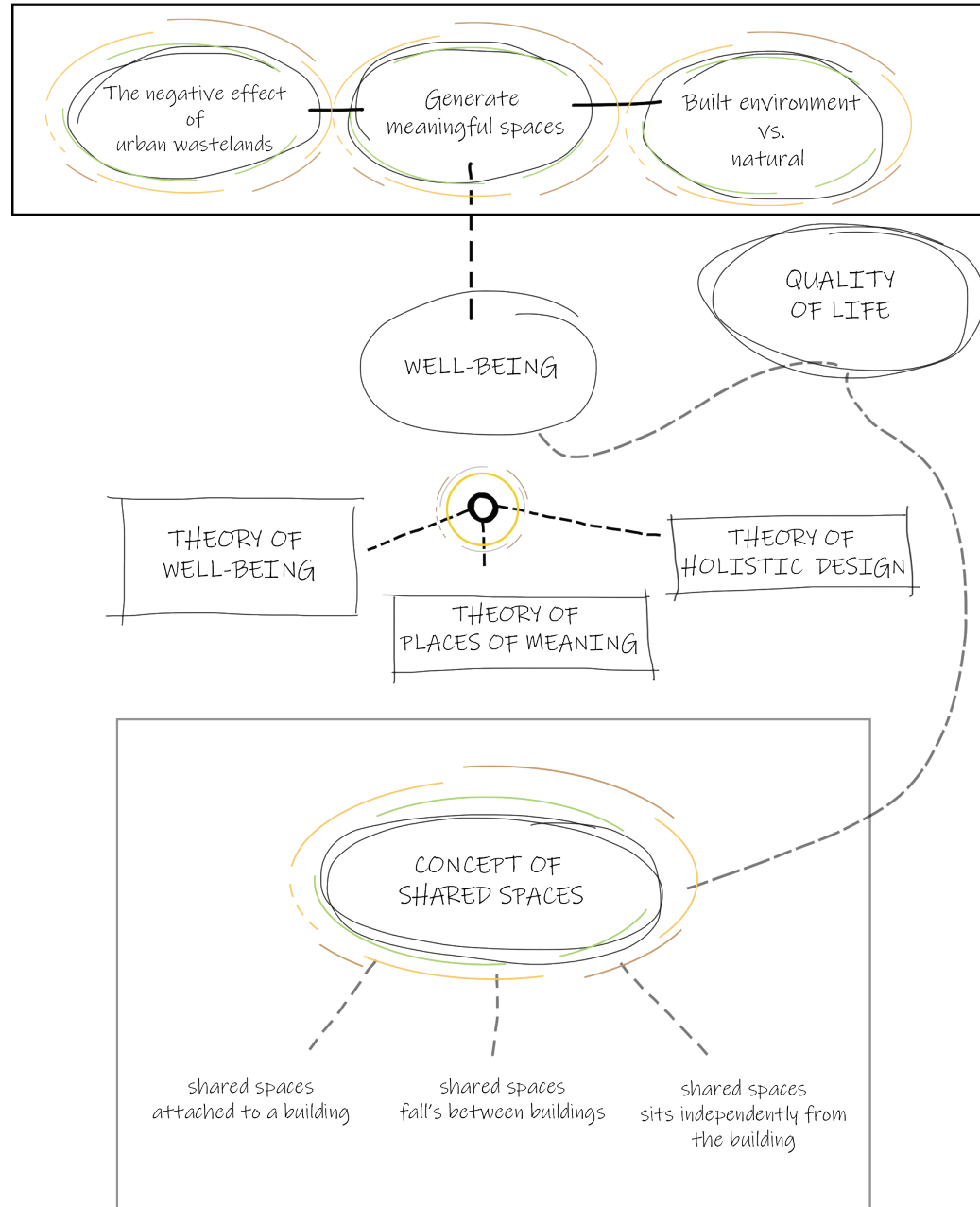


Figure 1.5: Theoretical approach diagram (Author 2020)

