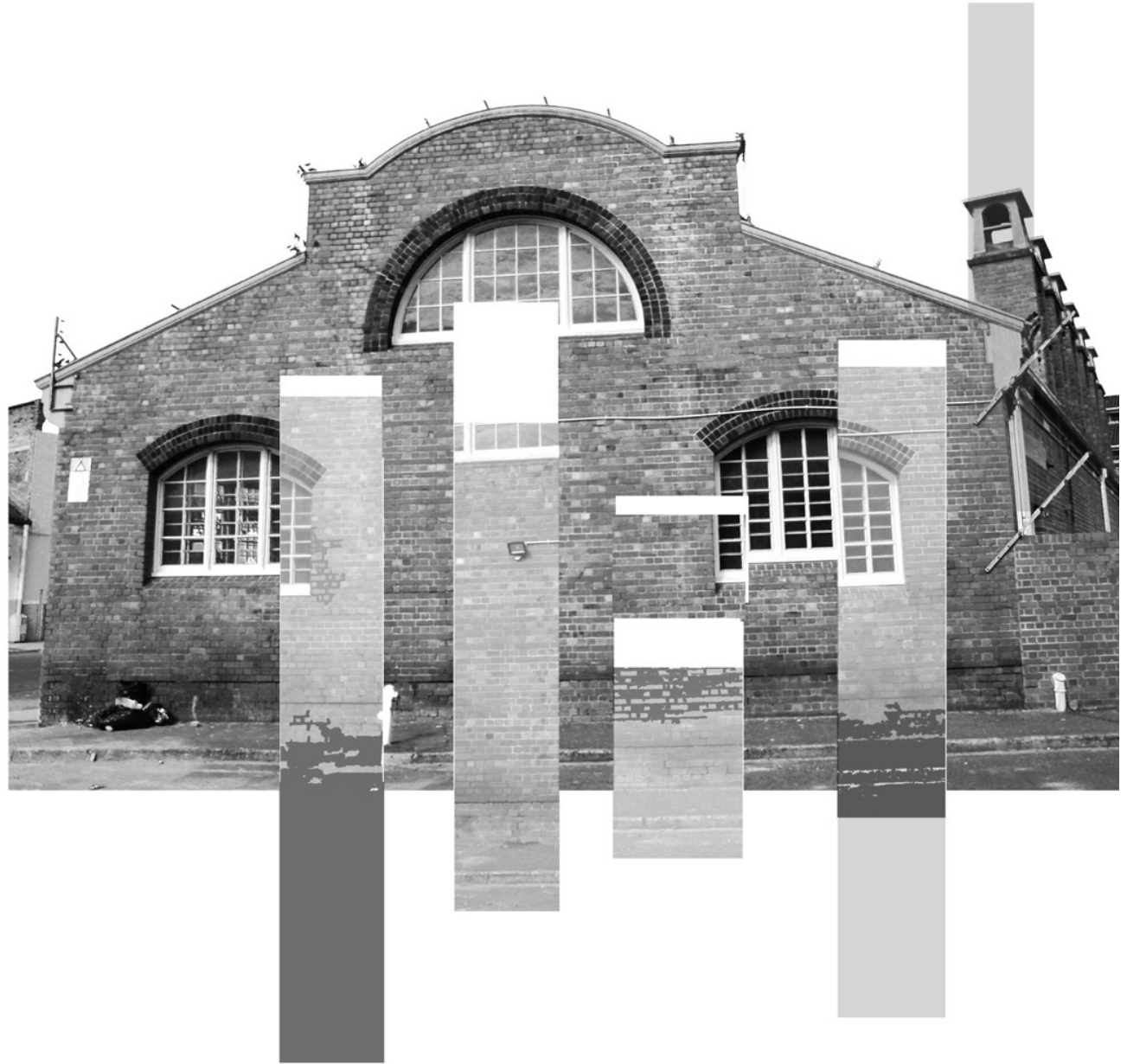


Rivertown Beerhall: *Surfacing the hidden*

Katie Strachan



DECLARATION

In accordance with Regulation 4(c) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses, I declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

I further state that no part of my dissertation has already been, or is currently being, submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

I further declare that this dissertation is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.

Katie Strachan



ABSTRACT

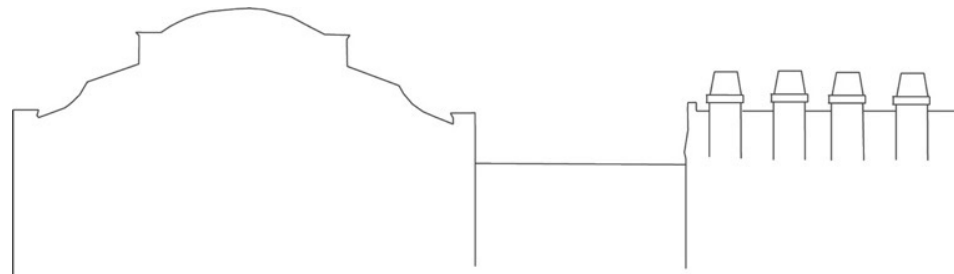
Heritage landscapes in South Africa inevitably embody multiple layers of power that have contributed to the place over time, owing to our exclusive, Apartheid history. The reuse and renewal of such sites, have often been undertaken with a focus on economic growth at the expense of social and spatial justice (Dirsuweit 2009: 78-82).

Consequently, this attitude towards the reuse of heritage sites has resulted in various spaces that further exacerbate the past power structures engrained in these places (Dirsuweit 2009: 86-89) (Winkler 2012:166).

If the reuse of heritage could act to restructure and heal our fractured landscapes, then power embedded in these sites would need to be actively dealt with instead of being further suppressed, ignored or intensified.

The Rivertown Beerhall in Durban presents itself as a heritage landscape that could be reused to either maintain past power structures and further contribute to the fracturing and segregation of Durban, or it could be reused to improve the social and spatial justice of the city.

The primary intention of this dissertation is therefore to explore alternative ways in which South African heritage landscapes can be read and analysed in order to spatially, functionally, architecturally and infrastructurally subvert such power relationships in space and promote inclusivity and social exchange for future users of these sites.



PROJECT SUMMARY

Rivertown Beerhall : Surfacing the Hidden

2021, Katie Strachan, u20590190

Programme:

Bakery, Grain Refillery, Seed Research Centre & Exhibition

Address:

102 Florence Nzama St, Durban, South Africa

GPS Co-ordinates:

29°51'08"S, 31°01'54"E

Research Field:

Memory, Legacy and Identity

Client:

eThekweni Municipality

Theoretical Premise:

Theories involving an ecological worldview, regenerative design, decalcomania, and thresholds and boundaries are used to form an argument that challenges power hierarchies in space and instead advocates for social exchange.

Key Words:

Power, heritage, social exchange, spatial justice

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01

setting the scene

“Heritage is, as much as anything, a political act and we need to ask serious questions about the power relations that ‘heritage’ has all too often been invoked to sustain.” (Association of Critical Heritage Studies 2012).

This dissertation is an exploration of these power relations within heritage landscapes, particularly through the site of the Rivertown Beerhall in Durban. Layers of power on this site extend beyond socio-political agendas in space to infrastructural and environmental (hydrological) acts imposed on the landscape.

Instead of heritage places sustaining and reproducing past engrained power structures through their current interpretation and management, this dissertation aims rather to contest these embedded power relations to produce an alternative inclusive and regenerative reality for future heritage sites.



Figure 1: Southern façade of Rivertown Beerhall (Author 2021)

LOCALITY

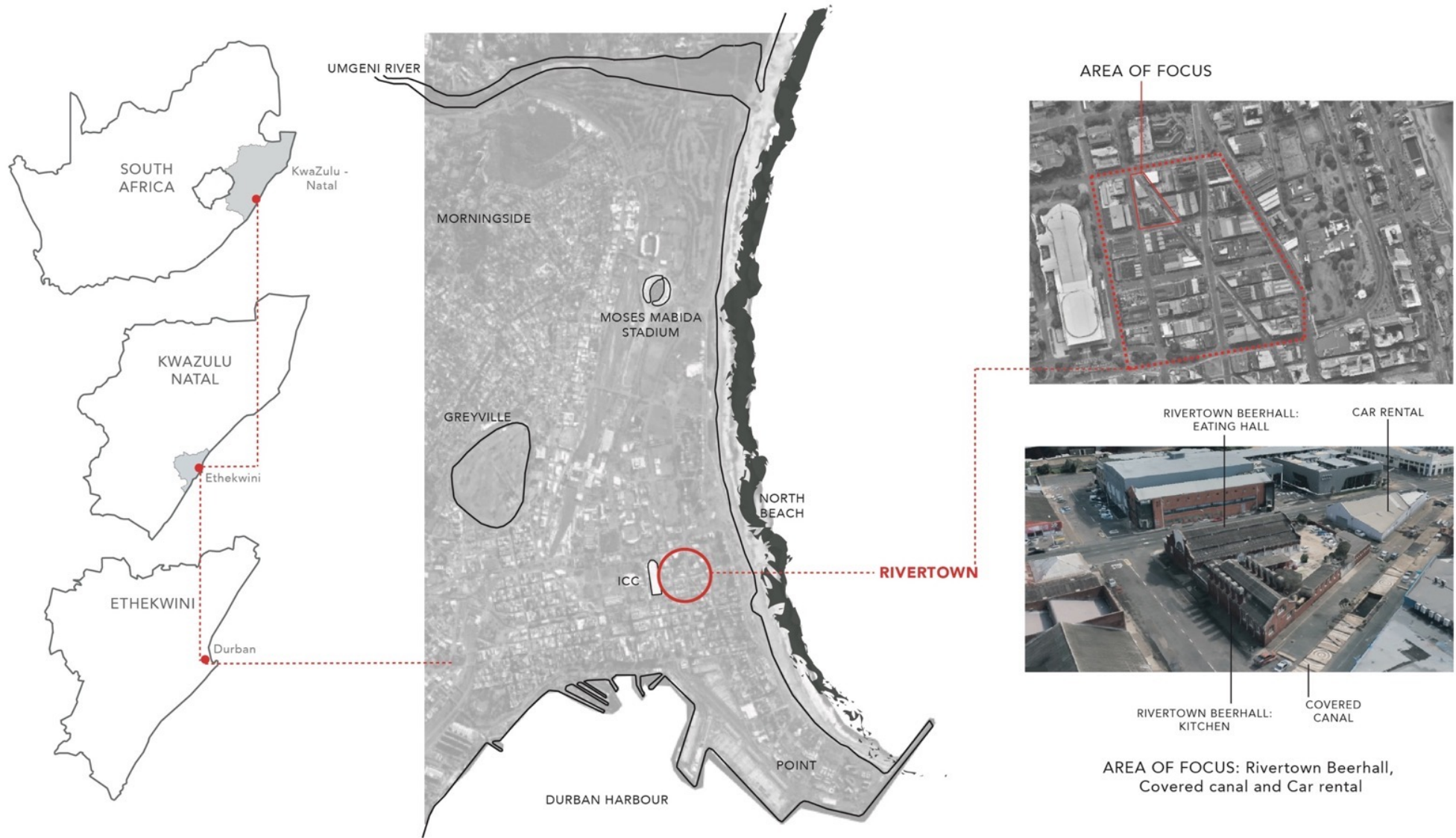


Figure 2: Locality & Areas of Focus (Author 2021 & Google Earth 2021)

SETTING THE SCENE

Foucault (1986:24) distinguishes between two types of spaces represented in our society: Utopias and Heterotopias. Utopias describe spaces that are fixed on perfection or ideals of a certain aesthetic or singular cultural group, resulting in spaces that are not appropriate in their reflection of society and therefore lack a sense of place (Foucault 1986:24) (figure 3). In contrast, Heterotopias depict spaces that reflect and are built upon real diverse cultures of society, resulting in places instead of spaces (Foucault 1986:24) (figure 4).

Utopias have emerged as products of urban regeneration practices that have shaped our South African inner cities. Urban Regeneration is a historical and current global reaction to the major urban issue of declining cities (Beall, Crankshaw, & Parnell 2002:110). It is defined as “the attempt to reverse that decline by both improving the physical structure, and, more importantly and elusively, the economy of those areas” (Weaver 2001). Gentrification is often the unintended consequence of regeneration practices whereby “the economic, social and physical changes to an area result in class transformation and displacement for those living and operating businesses there” (South African Cities Network [SACN] 2016:8).

The “World Class African City” (City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality 2017:13) vision which drove urban regeneration in the inner city of Johannesburg, epitomises a city’s desire for a utopian state that is not grounded on real society but rather on an idealized image. There is a danger in working on the premise that an inner city is broken and needs to depict or return to an ideal or former glory, which in South Africa’s case, was the best example of exclusion (SACN 2016:10). Such practices and visions of economic competitiveness should be balanced with issues of social and spatial justice (Winkler 2012:166).

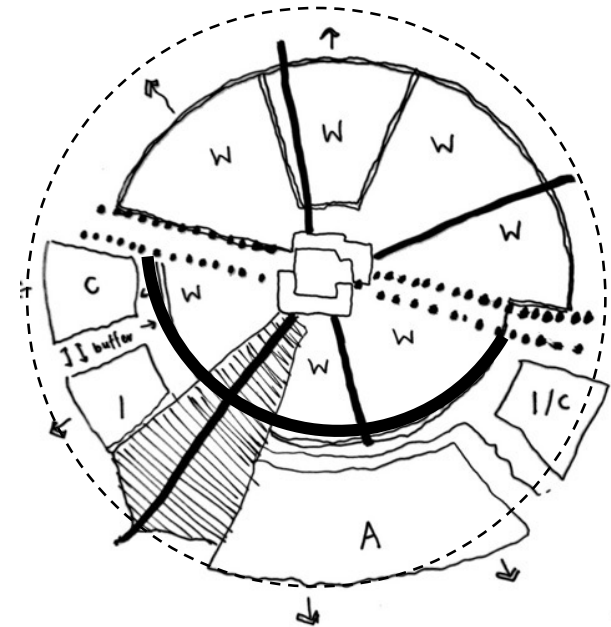


Figure 3: Apartheid City Planning as exclusive 'Utopia' (Author 2021, Adapted from: Du Plessis, Irurah & Scholes 2010 : 244)

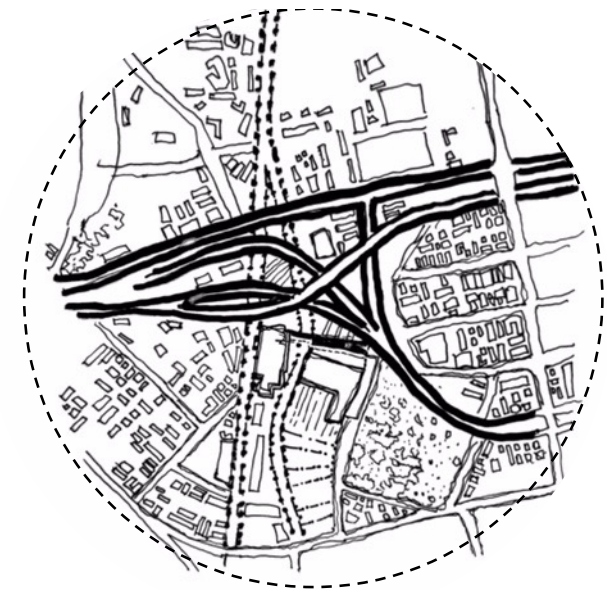


Figure 4: Warwick Junction as "Heterotopia" (Author 2021)

THE GENERAL ISSUE

The general issue arises when urban regeneration practices cause heritage fabric to be managed, interpreted, and conserved in such a way to produce exclusive 'utopian' (Foucault 1986:24) spaces. This is demonstrated in projects such as 44 Stanley and Arts on Main (figures 5 & 6).

These projects have been criticised for portraying a sense of stability and affluence which lies in stark contrast to the existing social realities of inner-city Johannesburg (Bahmann & Frenkel 2012:14; Dirsuweit 2009: 77-90). Striving for such ideals results in an exclusion of anything 'other' and therefore, creates a homogenous environment (Bahmann & Frenkel 2012:20) that is representative of the romanticised and unrealistic spaces of Foucault's (1986: 24) Utopias. In contrast, true public space encourages encounters with the 'other' in such a manner as to recognize, acknowledge and mediate the social, cultural, and economic diversity that underpins a city (Bahmann & Frenkel 2012:20).

44 Stanley is criticised, for portraying an 'aesthetic' that a very small portion of the population can afford to engage with or exist in (Dirsuweit 2009: 86-87) because it caters exclusively for paying customers (Bahmann & Frenkel 2012: 4). It is important to note here that displacement as a characteristic of gentrification can be direct or indirect (SACN 2016:14). In the case of 44 Stanley and Arts on Main, indirect displacement occurs because low-income communities are excluded from the space through the notion of consumerism. In this way, gentrification of an area, characterized by varying forms of displacement, is subtle and nuanced. This subtlety of displacement is perpetuated by the "fortified enclave" (Bahmann & Frenkel 2012:14) nature of 44 Stanley and Arts on Main, owing to certain codes of exclusion such as high walls, lack of permeability and considerable security presence.



Figure 5: 44 Stanley (Robie Davie Photography 2017)



Figure 6: Arts On Main (Daffonchio Architects 2009)

THE URBAN ISSUE

This “fortified enclave” nature (Bahmann & Frenkel 2012:14) and resultant codes of exclusion depicted in projects like 44 Stanley and Arts on Main highlight the potential urban issue of the Rivertown Beerhall. Rivertown has been earmarked for urban regeneration practices similarly to the inner city of Johannesburg (Gulston 2015), which causes any heritage fabric within this area to be susceptible in potentially being transformed to exclusive utopias as demonstrated in the Johannesburg examples.

The site is currently occupied by the Durban Art Gallery (DAG) technical staff for the preservation of its artworks. The main urban issue of the site results from this private, inward-looking function and the preservation strategies employed in this building, which have caused it to be underutilized, inaccessible and isolated in its context (figures 7, 8 & 9).



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

THE URBAN CONDITION & COMMUNITY

The community of Rivertown consists of small business owners and entrepreneurs, factory workers and tourists from surrounding places. The urban condition consists of a mono-functional environment comprising mainly of automotive industries, with hard-edged boundaries and little natural capital.

The mapping of land uses indicates a lack of activities surrounding food as well as no central public space or meeting area for these various users (figure 10).



Figure 10: Land uses within 400m radius/ 5min walk around site (Author 2021)

TOURIST LANDMARKS



Figure 11: Tourist Landmarks (Author 2021)

URBAN ISSUE & INTENTION

This urban issue is exacerbated on a precinct scale where Rivertown as the connection between two heavily dominated tourist places of the Durban promenade and the International Conference Centre (ICC), is seldomly traversed by tourists owing to its lack of urban integration and public spaces (figure 11 & 12). Consequently, the value of this heritage has been lost to both the local community and visiting tourists.

Approaches towards a number heritage sites in Durban have prioritised the tourist over the local community resulting in a lack of ownership of these heritage sites by the host community (Marschall 2013:32). As in the case of Johannesburg, this has the potential to lead to gentrification of the precinct. "Cultural Involution" (Franklin & Crang 2001:9-10) is a more balanced approach to heritage in a tourist context: "Whereby the presence of tourism results in local peoples heightened awareness and greater knowledge about their own locality, its history, geography, natural resources and cultural attractions" (Marschall 2013:35).

Therefore, the urban intention is for this heritage building to be reused in such a way to attract and welcome the tourist whilst simultaneously being more integrated in its local context. This should initiate a greater ownership of the site by the host community, and act as an inclusive catalyst for further regeneration in Rivertown (figure 13).

Issues of ownership between tourists and host communities can directly influence whether heritage landscapes sustain past engrained power structures or act to resist them. In resisting the reproduction of power relationships, as is the aim for this dissertation, it is first vital to understand and reveal layers of power that exist on site.

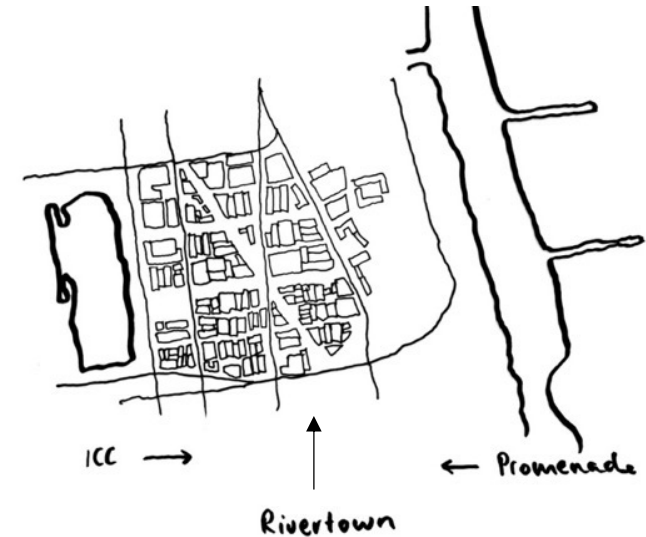


Figure 12: Rivertown, urban issue (Author 2021)



Figure 13: Rivertown, urban intention (Author 2021)

LAYERS OF POWER UNCOVERED IN HERITAGE

The first layer of power demonstrated on site is the canalization of the Eastern Vlei because of increased urban development (eThekweni 2016:26-29). As a result, the site has lost its relationship to natural water bodies (figure 14).

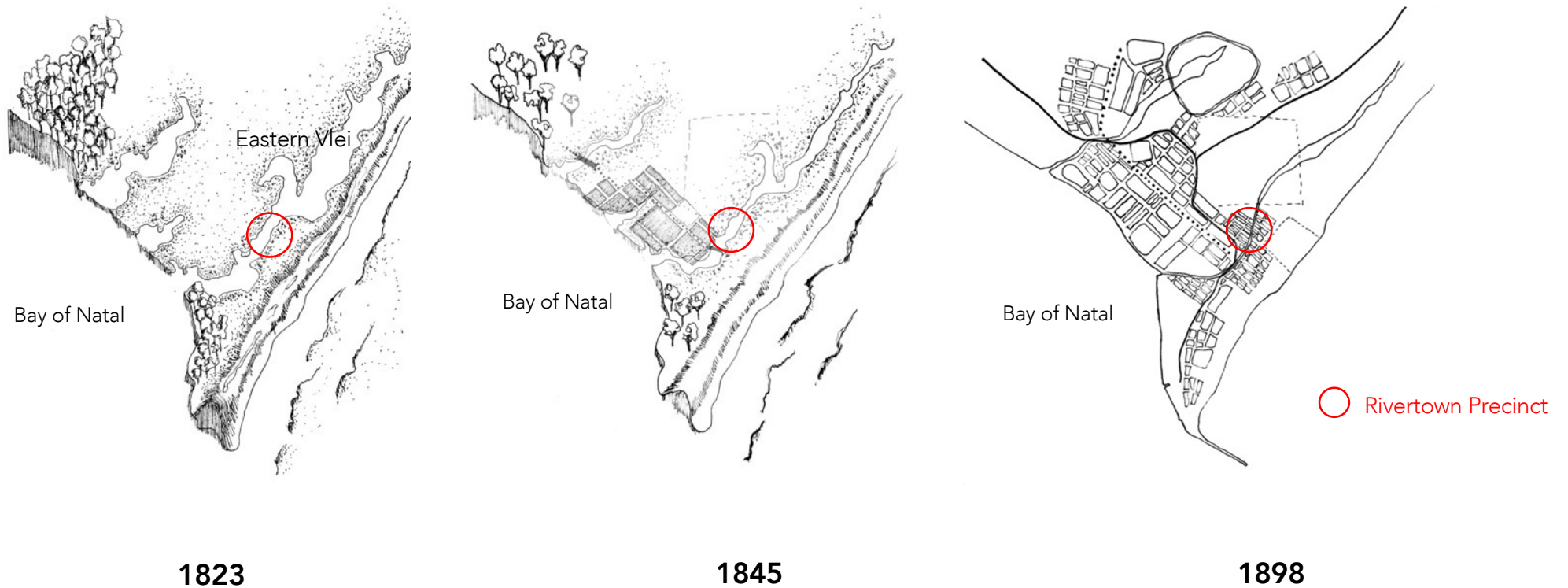


Figure 14: Loss of relationship to natural water bodies, Rivertown (Author 2021 adapted from: eThekweni Municipality 2016 : 26-29)

LAYERS OF POWER UNCOVERED IN HERITAGE

The second layer of power imposed on this landscape results from the 1908 Native Beer Act that forbid the home-brewing of sorghum beer by Zulu women (Seid 2014). The act forced women to sell and brew beer in municipal beerhalls to raise revenue for the city authority (Seid 2014). This is a direct suppression of traditional cultural practices by women.



Figure 15: Beer Hall activity, (AMAFA Report 2015 : 7)

The third layer of power on site arises from the building typology of municipal beerhalls as products of the Native 1908 Beer Act figures 15-17). The spaces of the beerhall were gendered according to function (Whelan 2015:79) (figure 18). The colonnade depicts the public interface with the eating house behind occupied by men. A back door entrance to the eating house leads into the link area which connects to the kitchen where beer was brewed by women (Whelan 2015:79). Behind the kitchen lies a covered water canal that traverses the streets.



Figure 16: Beer Hall seating hall, (AMAFA Report 2015: 7)



Figure 17: Beer Hall street facade, (AMAFA Report 2015: 7)

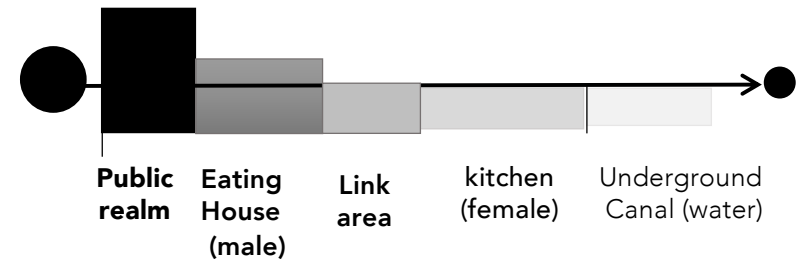
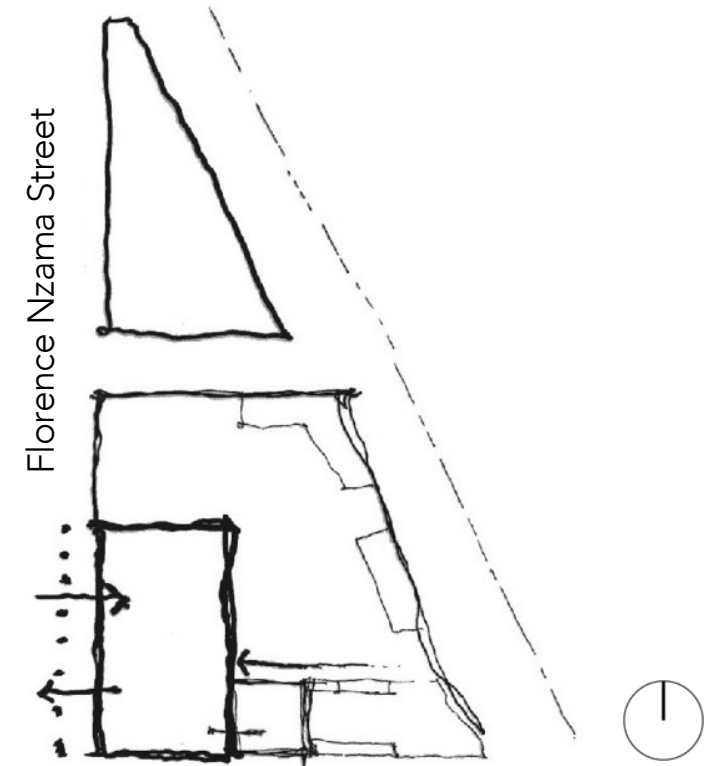


Figure 18: Gendered spaces: Rivertown Beerhall (Author 2021)

ARCHITECTURAL ISSUE & INTENTION

The entrenched notions of hierarchy, dominance, and power on site frame the following architectural issues and Intentions:

The main architectural issue is how to spatially and formally subvert tangible and intangible power relationships perpetuated by layers that make up the place? (figure 19)

The main architectural intention is to regenerate the site through the subversion and redistribution of power by revealing, re-signifying and reusing the site's most subservient spaces (figure 20).

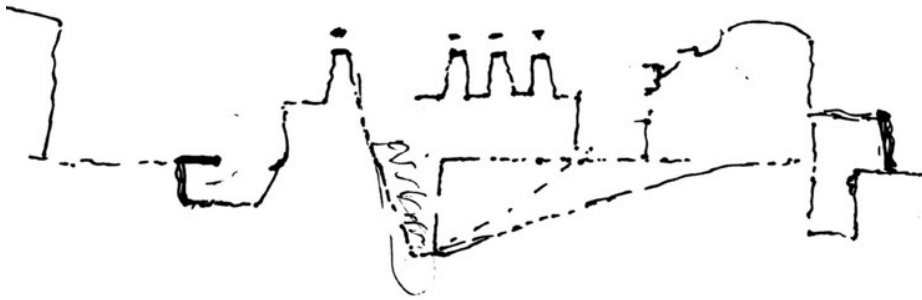


Figure 19: Subverting hierarchy: Rivertown Beerhall (Author 2021)

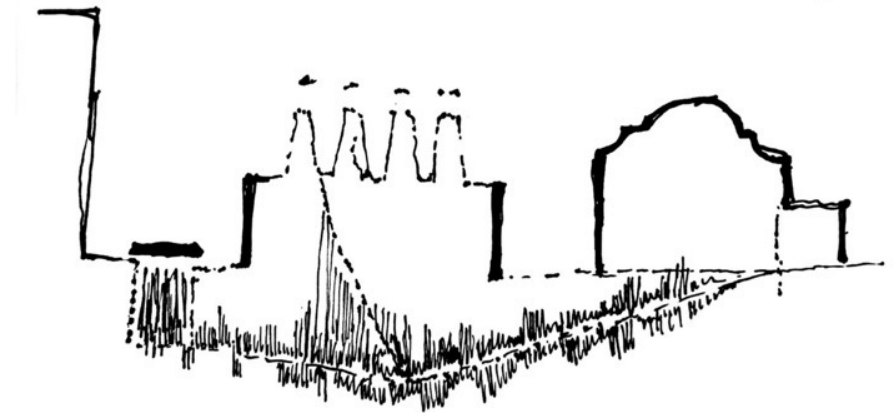


Figure 20: Regenerating the site through subservient spaces (Author 2021)

RESEARCH QUESTION & METHODOLOGY

Research question

The main research question is how can the reuse of heritage landscapes act to subvert past power structures instead of sustaining them?

Secondly, how can this subversion of past power relationships within heritage landscapes be used to inclusively accommodate the changing current and future needs of the city?

Paradigm

The Critical Paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017: 35) is selected for this research as it relates to power relationships and aims to emancipate subjects and sites from these oppressive structures to achieve social and environmental change.

Data Collection

Data collection includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods consist of an analysis of secondary data involving past heritage reports of the site, a literature review of heritage legislation to arrive at an appropriate approach and attitude towards this heritage as well as an interrogation of various spatial development frameworks of the precinct.

In addition, a Heritage Impact Assessment is conducted by the author to assess the value of the site and its buildings. Furthermore, a theoretical framework and literature review of architectural theories is developed to validate approaches towards the site. Qualitative methods include primary data collected through two interviews, site visits, analyses, mapping and photographs. In addition, various precedents are interrogated to inform spatial, formal, environmental and technical approaches towards the site and its heritage.

Ethics

The ethics protocols of this research are relatively simple in that the informants selected for interviews are not classified as vulnerable people and therefore only an Interview Consent Form is needed. One interviewee is a DAG staff member currently working on site and the other is a UKZN lecturer who is knowledgeable about Rivertown and the Rivertown Beerhall (see Appendix A for interviews).

The axiology of the Critical Paradigm is one that respects cultural norms (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017: 35). This means that the way interviews are conducted and the manner in which value judgements are made on site are rooted in this approach.