

# 08

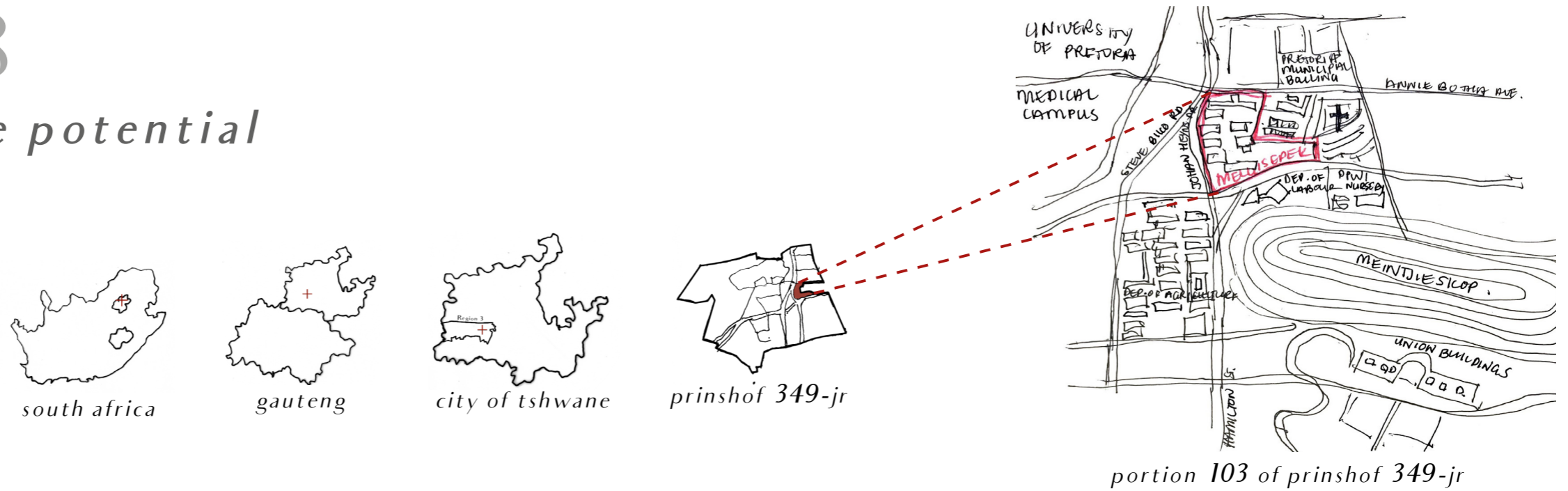
## mapping the potential

[a]

### SITE POSITION & MESO-CONTEXT

The site is located in the Prinshof 349-Jr farm adjacent to the predominantly residential Riviera suburb just north of Arcadia and the institutional uses of the medical-educational precinct directly west, which includes the Tshwane District Hospital, Steve Biko Hospital and the University of Pretoria Medical Campus. Under 2.5 km from the CBD, the site is in prime location considering the economic opportunities and general land value (Melgisedek Proposal 2019: 6). This would favour a development that serves a mix of users and interests, as opposed to a single, private function that might further isolate the site from its surroundings.

A brief study of the movement, activity and dead spaces of the immediate context adjacent to the site has revealed areas of suggested activation that could assist in the integration of the site and its inhabitants into its surroundings. The isolation of the site is exacerbated by the harsh boundaries of the surrounding sites, which in turn contribute to the “dead”, underused spaces. While the fast-moving vehicular traffic on the multi-lane roads, Steve Biko and Soutpansberg, also create a barrier between the site and its surroundings, the corners of the site at the intersections present the most potential for activation due to a higher presence of pedestrian activity in these areas. The intersection of Steve Biko Road and Annie Botha Avenue is of particular importance for a public interface and offers potential to integrate the site into its surroundings due to the pedestrian presence to and from the hospitals and medical campus, as well as slower vehicular movement on Annie Botha Avenue. Intervention on the corner of the underused sports fields across from the site would further activate the intersection and create a dialogue with the site, catalysing activity across Annie Botha and Steve Biko.



#### 📍 SITE LOCATION

- 📍 Church Square
- 1. Union Buildings
- 2. Steve Biko Academic Hospital
- 3. UP Medical Campus & Tshwane District Hospital
- 4. Laerskool Riviera
- 5. Riviera Fellowship Church
- 6. Department of Environmental Affairs
- 7. Department of Agriculture & Forestry
- 8. Netcare Femina
- 9. National Zoo
- 10. Old Pretoria Technical College (now Tshwane North TVET College)
- 11. Municipal Bowling club

8.2.

points of interest, general land uses and relation to CBD

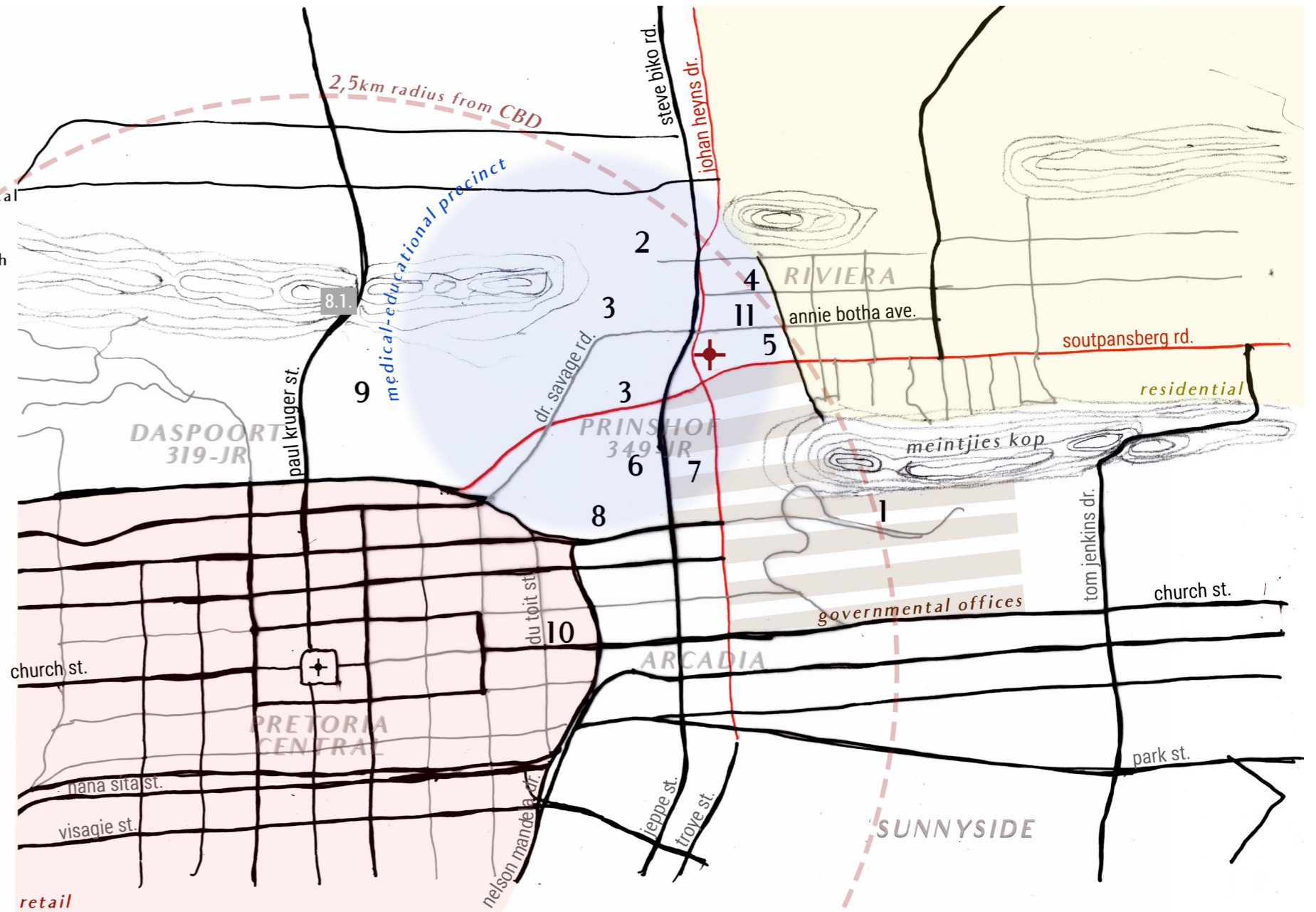
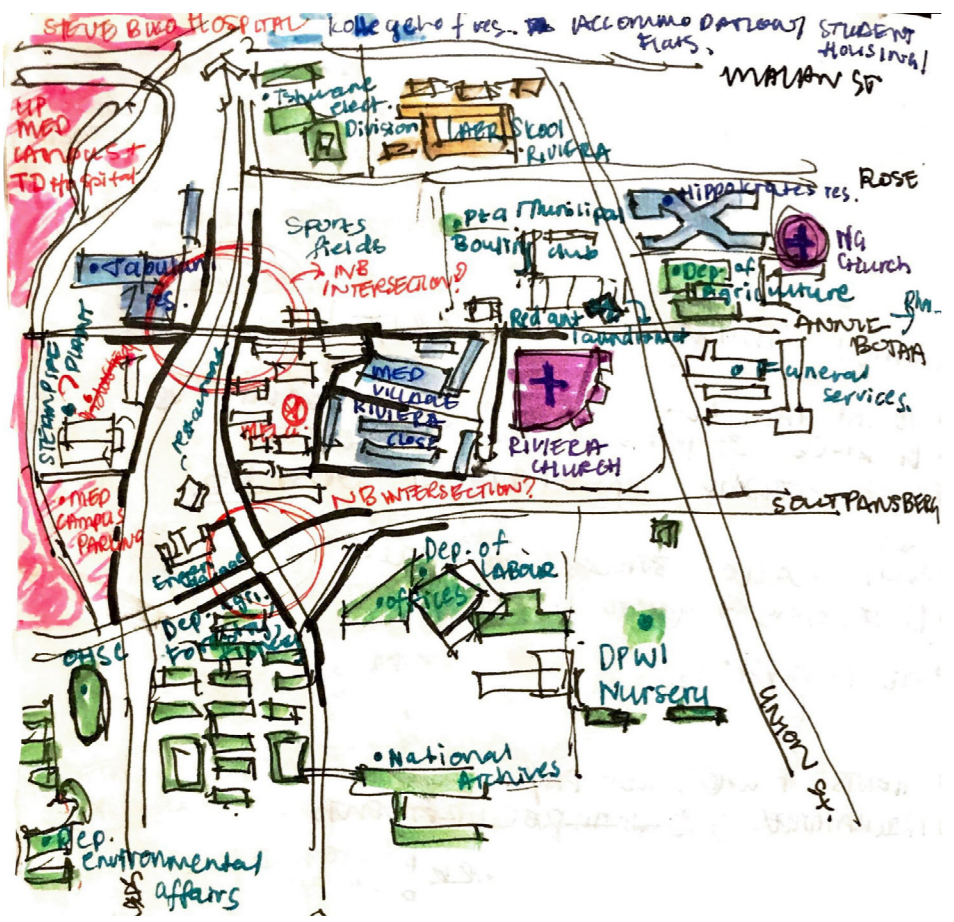


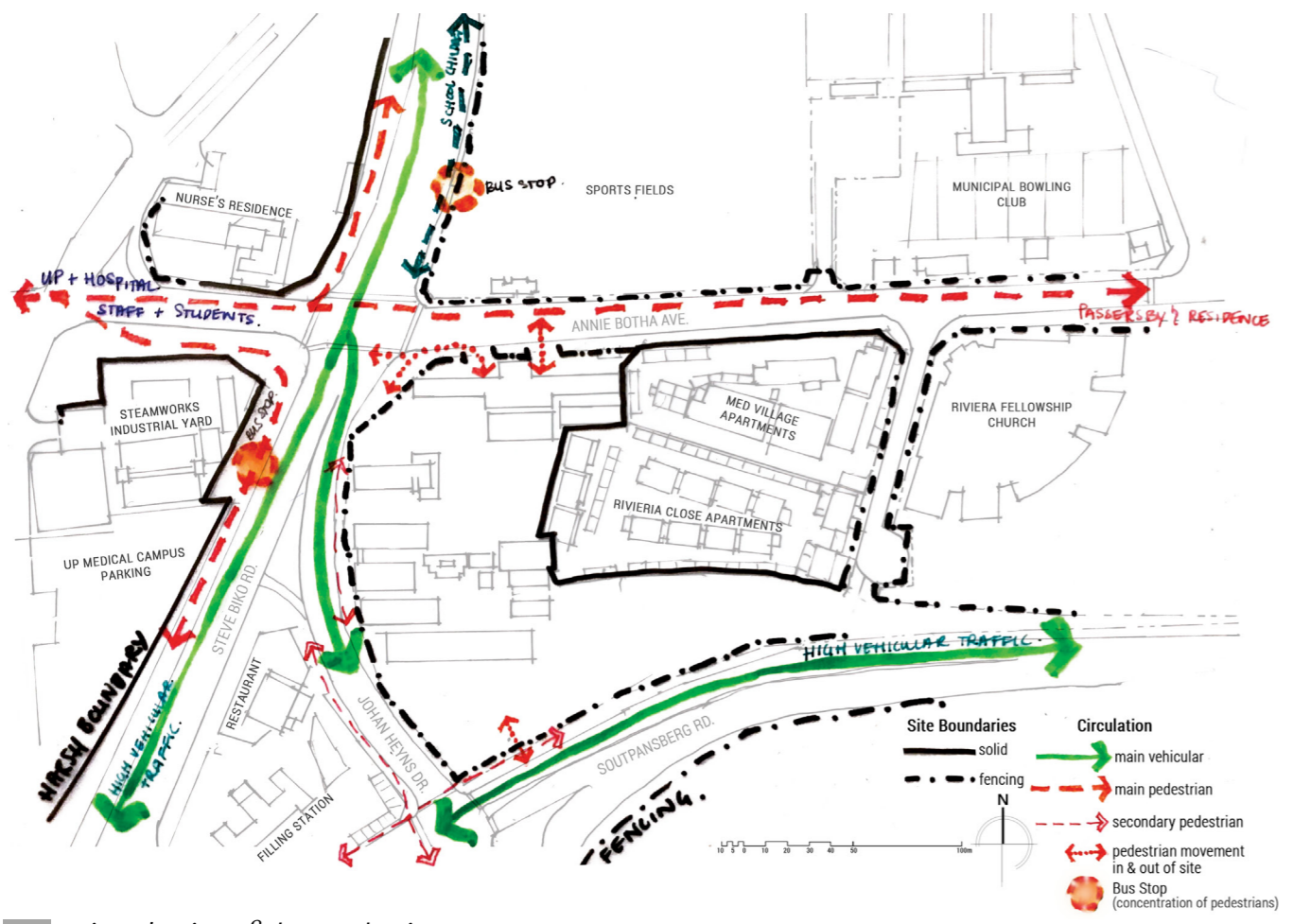
Fig. 8.1. Top right: Location of the site (Author 2021).  
Fig. 8.2. Bottom right: Map indicating the site in relation to points of interest and landmarks, general land uses and distance to the CBD (Author 2021).



8.3. adjacent uses



8.5. dead spaces & opportunities for activation



8.4. circulation & boundaries

Fig. 8.3. Below: Sketch of the site in relation to the uses in the adjacent context (Author 2021).  
Fig. 8.4. Top right: Pedestrian and vehicular circulation; and harsh boundaries (solid and fencing) around adjacent sites (Author 2021).  
Fig. 8.5. Bottom right: Dead and underused spaces, correlating with harsh boundaries and singular functions. Also shown are areas of opportunities for activation in order to counter the dead spaces and maximise on pedestrian activity (Author 2021).

(See Appendix 2 for enlarged maps.)

[b]

## IDENTIFYING EXISTING ARCHITECTURE

### general statement of significance: site overview

This section deals with an overview of the site's existing buildings and their significance to determine the sensitivity towards each in developing a programmatic and conceptual strategy for the site. The significance of the existing buildings on site (see Figure 8.6) is measured according to their heritage significance based on age (NHRA Act 25 of 1999: 58), current physical condition, craftsmanship and contribution to an architectural style or period (Orbasli 2008: 40). It could be argued that each of the buildings, regardless of their historic or architectural value, hold a certain amount of communal and social value due to the meaning that the inhabiting community may ascribe to them as their appropriated homes (Orbasli 2008: 45). This should be considered in the approach to programme, site strategy and the displacement of occupants if the less significant buildings are to be demolished and significant buildings adapted.

After a brief evaluation of each building and the qualitative mapping of special architectural moments on site (Figure 8.7.), it is concluded that the three buildings – the 1927 hostel, dining hall and the 1960s/70s hostel building – are of highest significance and should be retained and possibly adapted in the proposed site vision and design. The qualitative mapping (Figure 8.7.) also identifies interesting material and textural queues that could guide specific approaches to the heritage buildings and materiality of proposed additions.



#### 1960s/70s Building:

**Moderate-high significance**  
(Possibly a heritage building, exemplary of a functional regionalist style)

**Architect:** Unknown

**Date:** Unknown, assumed to be 1960s/70s (likely 60 years old or just below - possibly protected by NHRA (1999: 58) if older than 60).

**Original Use:** Hostel accommodation

**Condition:** Fair. Some surface damage and vandalism. In relatively good condition compared to other non-heritage buildings on site. Occupants have seemed to take ownership.

**Materiality:** Face brick, concrete frame structure and metal roof sheeting.

**Other:** Three storeys. Exemplary of a functional regionalist style as a variant of the Modern Movement, with evidence of climate considerations and material articulation.

**Proposed Action:** To be retained, adapted and treated with similar sensitivity as a heritage building.



#### Pre-fabricated asbestos structures:

**Lowest significance**

**Architect:** Unknown

**Date:** Unknown, probably added between 1986 and 2009 (under MCC shelter management).

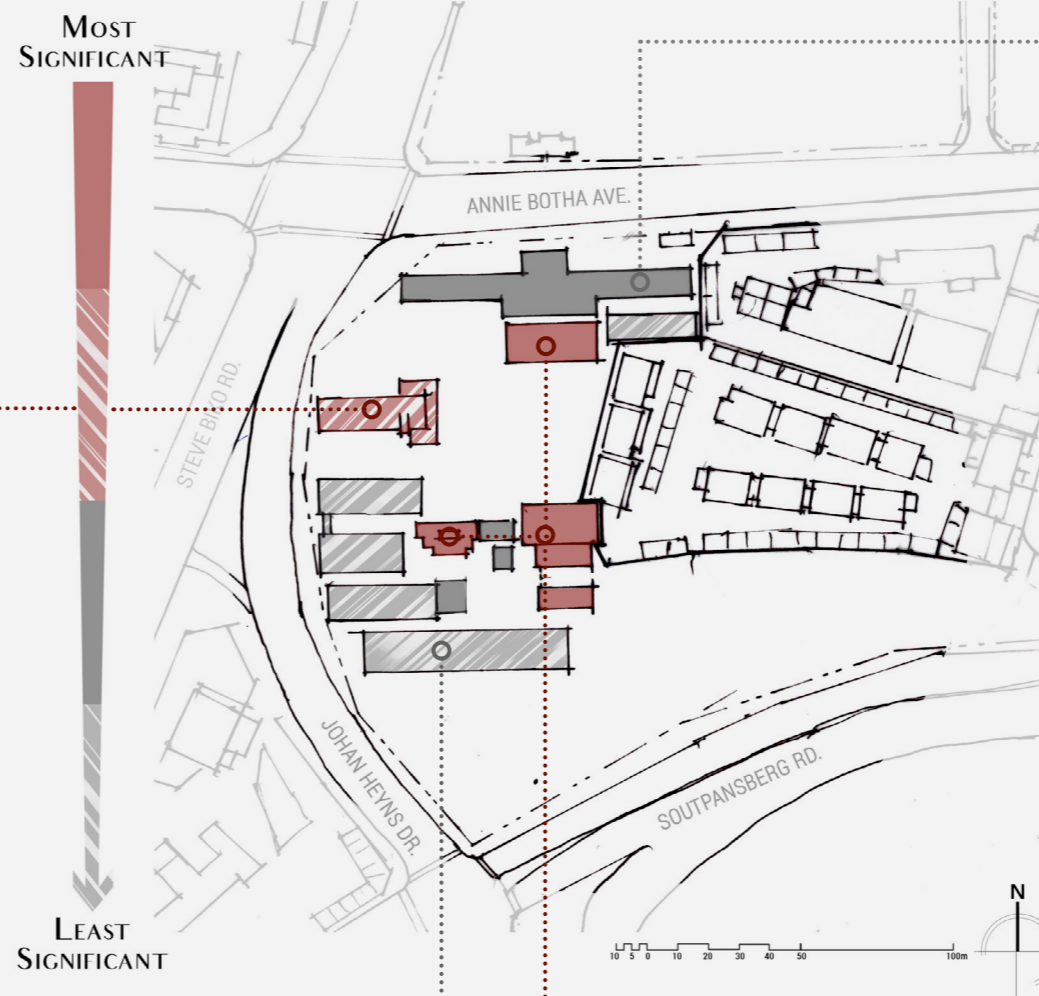
**Original Use:** Dormitories for shelter accommodation

**Condition:** Very poor. Damaged asbestos – hazardous and uninhabitable.

**Materiality:** Asbestos and steel structure and metal roof sheeting.

**Other:** One storey. These five structures are all placed on the site with little consideration of the overall site layout. Their elongated “dead” facades provide little to no interaction with the spaces adjacent, especially the narrow leftover spaces between the structures to the south, which are predominantly used as dumping sites. The asbestos presents health risks and the exteriors provide little thermal comfort to the narrow interiors.

**Proposed Action:** To be removed/demolished.



#### North Brick Building:

**Low significance**

**Architect:** Unknown.

**Date:** Unknown, probably after 1986 establishment of MCC shelter.

**Original Use:** Shelter reception and accommodation

**Condition:** Very poor. Severe structural and surface damage caused by neglect and fires. Sanitation equipment and piping removed. Parts of the building are used for housing by occupants.

**Materiality:** Face brick, suspended timber floors and metal roof sheeting

**Other:** Two storeys. Impermeable, elongated form cuts site off from surroundings. Minimal architectural contribution in terms of style, craftsmanship and architectural value. Positioned extremely close to 1927 Hostel, creating a narrow, dead passage between the two buildings.

**Proposed Action:** To be demolished.

#### “Lezard” Hostel, Dining Hall & Staff Quarters:

**Highest significance**  
(Heritage buildings by a significant architect)

**Architect:** Gordon E. Leith

**Date:** 1927 (94 years old – older than 60 years therefore protected by NHRA No. 25 section 34(1) (1999: 58)).

**Original Use:** Student hostel, dining hall and staff quarters for Pretoria Technical College

**Condition:** Fair. Some surface damage and graffiti. In relatively good condition. Occupants have seemed to take ownership of the buildings by cleaning and appropriating them for housing.

**Materiality:** Red (presumably Kirkness) face brick in English bond with sandstone accents and rustication; parquet and vinyl floor finishes; pressed steel and asbestos ceilings; and clay roof tiles.

**Other:** Hostel – two storeys; dining hall and staff quarters – one storey. Exemplary of Gordon E. Leith's

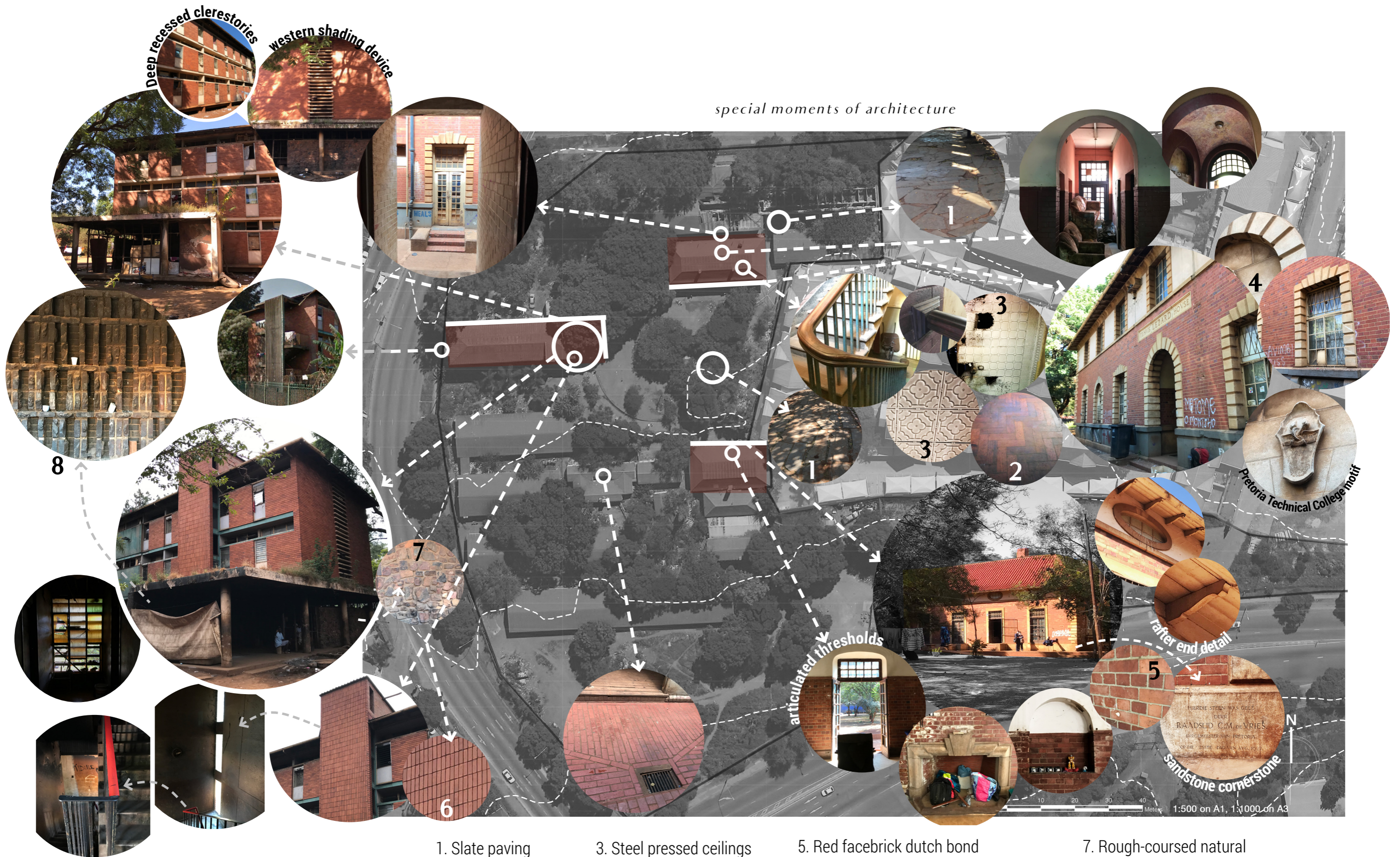


classicalist “traditional style” (Artefacts.co.za n.d. (2)) with its symmetry, vaulted foyer and arched openings. Showcases an important architectural contribution and craftsmanship attributed to Gordon Leith's works.

**Proposed Action:** To be retained and adapted with sensitivity (specifically the hostel and dining hall).

Fig. 8.6.: General statement of significance – site plan indicating significance of existing buildings (Author 2021), brief descriptions of each building and proposed action, photographs of buildings by Author (2021).

8.6.



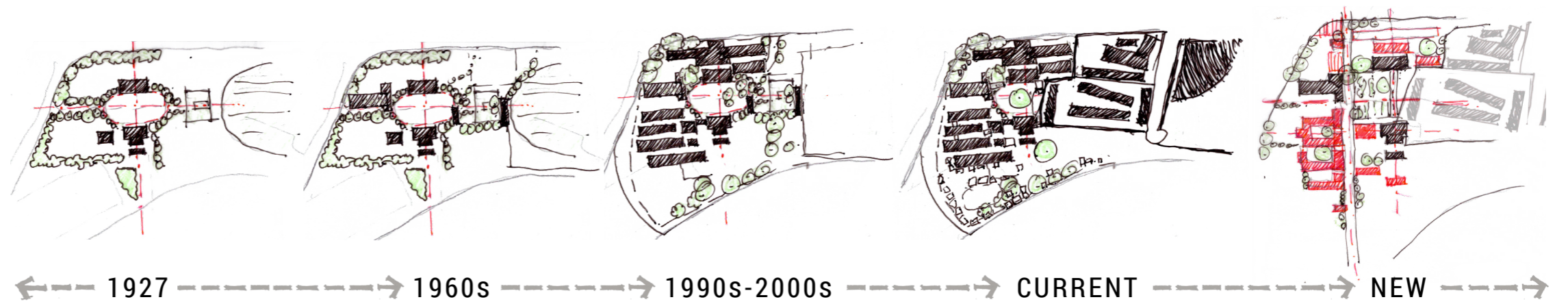
- 1. Slate paving
- 2. Parquet flooring
- 3. Steel pressed ceilings
- 4. Sandstone details
- 5. Red facebrick dutch bond
- 6. Red facebrick vertical stack-bond feature wall
- 7. Rough-coursed natural stone wall
- 8. Rough-textured brick wall

Collage of photographs taken on site of special moments of architecture to capture the material and textural qualities of existing buildings and spaces. The three most significant buildings are highlighted (Author 2021). 8.7.

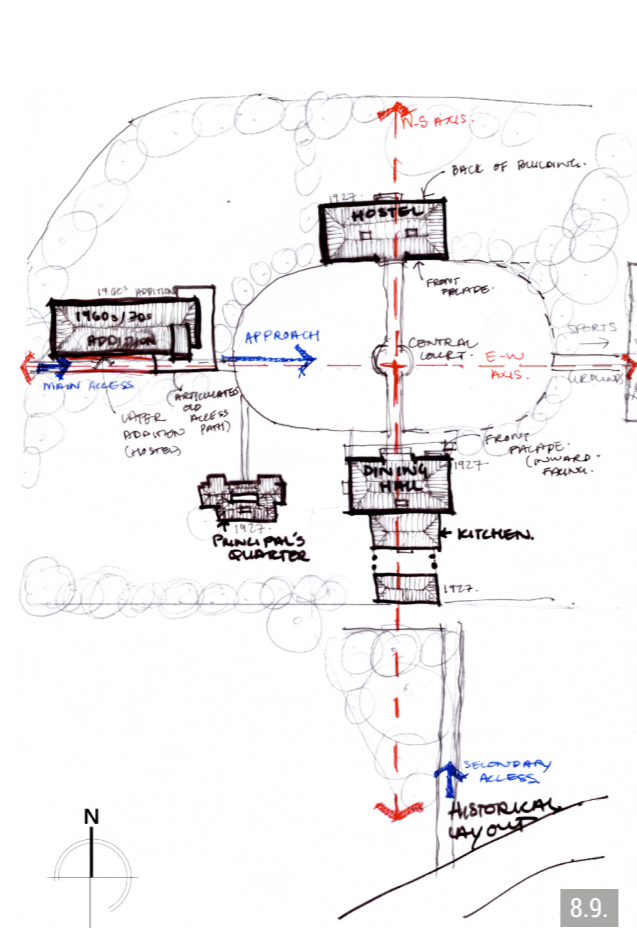
heritage approach

The site displays a palimpsest of uses and architectural styles that have been added over time. They are “layered in time and living” (Fisher 2014: 360), representing the past but contributing to the present. Drawing from the theoretical framework that recognises these traces as layers expressing human experience over time, the proposed heritage approach is based on the intention to continue this palimpsest of the site. Fisher (2014: 360) supports projects that respect heritage, but add a new “narrative which embodies something of our own time”. The proposed approach thus considers the site as a whole: a continuously evolving palimpsest of architectural and historical layers. Therefore the new additions should be a continuation of this palimpsest, where significant existing buildings anchor new programmes that are appropriate for the current social and urban context. The new should act as a sinew between the old – respecting and acknowledging its architectural heritage – while adding a new layer that reinterprets underlying spatial principles and materiality of the old, suggests new principles, ideas and materials and is guided by the current social context as an important driver. The functions and programmes of the existing should be re-interpreted and contested where necessary, to contribute meaningfully to the evolved social context and future of the site.

As opposed to a stylistic and aesthetic approach, emphasis of historical axes, the prevailing central courtyard, proportions and geometry of the existing both honours the old and binds it together with the new, so that new additions are considered as an integral part of the site’s composition without dominating the existing heritage.

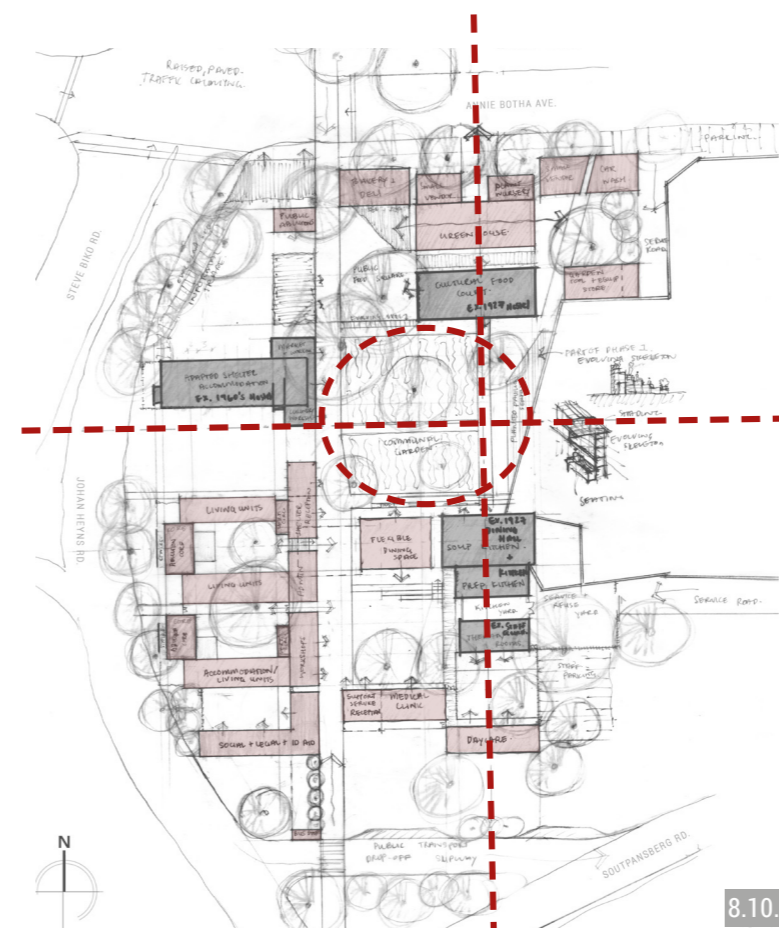


8.8



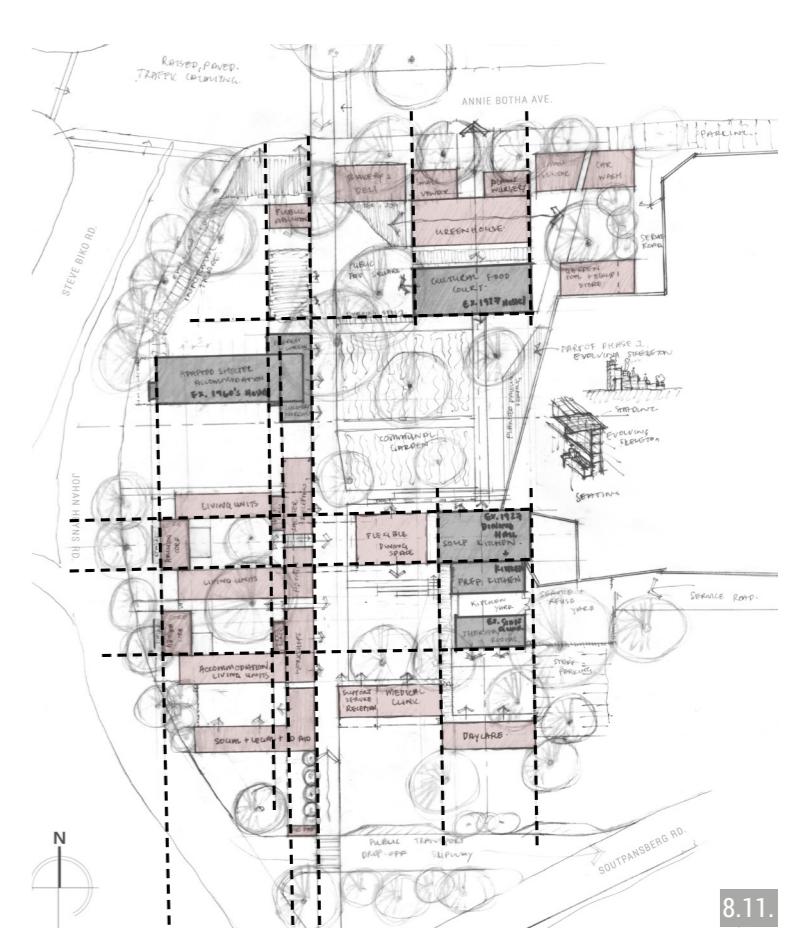
8.9

historical layout (ca. 1965)



8.10

historical axes, and courtyard



8.11

existing geometry, proportions and grid

Fig. 8.8. Top: Morphology of the site and approach of continued palimpsest (Author 2021).

Fig. 8.9. Bottom left: Sketch of the assumed site layout around 1965 (Author 2021).

Fig. 8.10 & 8.11. Bottom middle and bottom right: Iteration 5 site plan defining historical axes, courtyards and relating to existing proportions and geometry (Author 2021).

Of the three most significant buildings identified previously, there are seemingly two distinct manifestations of recognisable architectural styles/periods. The 1927 Leith buildings represent the Baker-school classicist "traditional style" (Artefacts.co.za n.d. (2)) – with its formal axes, order, symmetry and discipline, stylistic treatment of the facade, direct relationship to adjacent open gathering spaces and formalised landscapes – while the 1960s hostel building represents a later interpretation of the international style and Pretoria regionalist style (Fisher 1998: 123-125) – with its grid structure, expression of structure and function in form and elevation, climatic control through western shading devices and northern overhangs, and local natural stone, face brick and corrugated iron roof sheeting. Both these styles have their own spatial and design principles that in some ways contrast each other. This provides a unique opportunity to respond to the existing in a way that combines, reinterprets and juxtaposes certain principles from each manifestation (see Figure 8.12.).

In order to respect and celebrate the existing heritage buildings as their own unique layers, the new interventions must be sensitive to the existing; not overpowering or enveloping it, but complementing it. Throughout the gradual development of the site, the various heritage buildings would be repaired, restored and sensitively adapted, involving minor alterations, additions and retrofitting of existing spaces to suit the new proposed programmes. The new must be clearly distinguishable from the old, yet still relate to it, creating a balance that unifies the past, present and future layers.

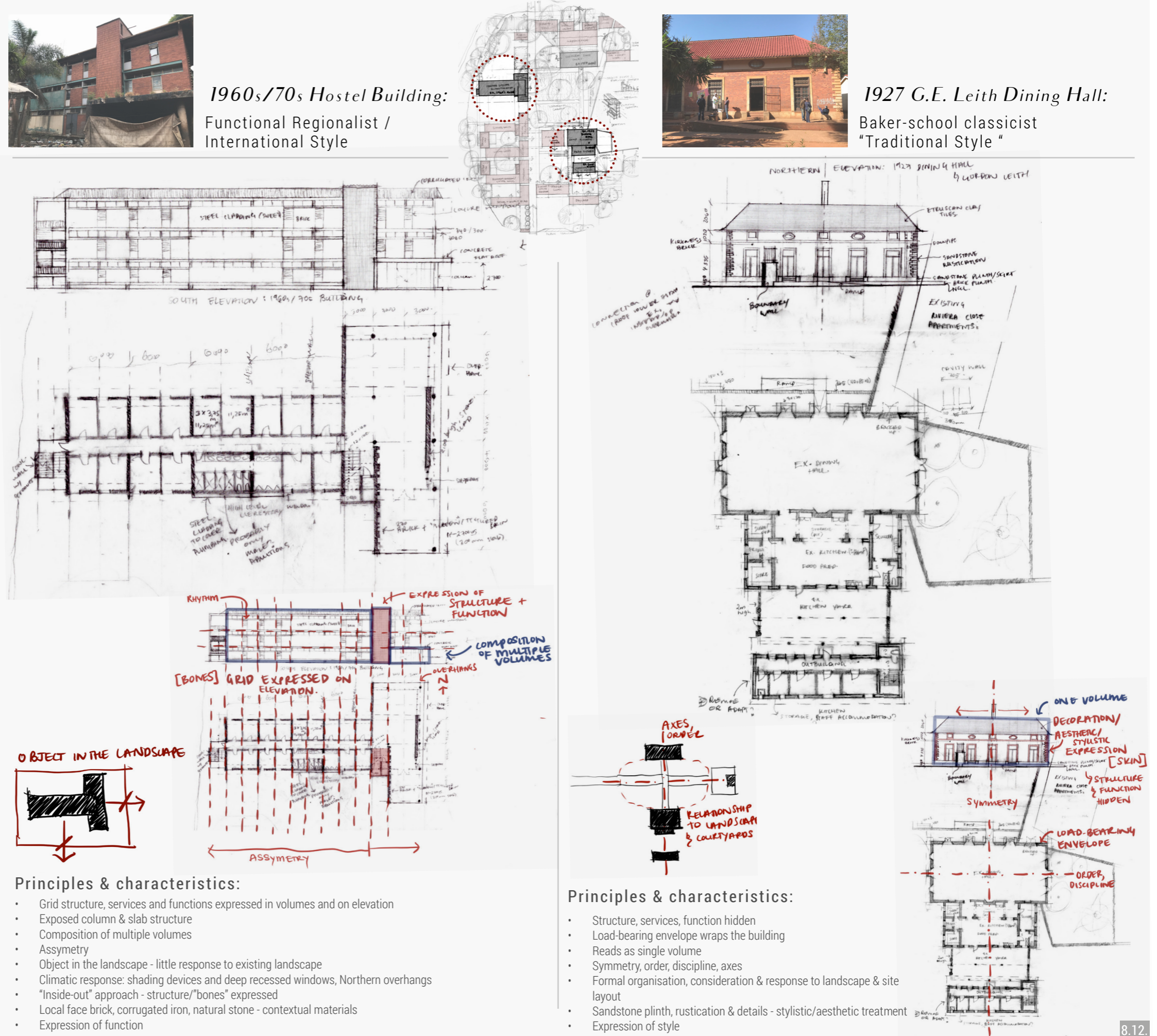


Fig. 8.12. Comparison between the existing 1960s Hostel building and the 1927 Gordon Leith Dining Hall, and their styles, principles and characteristics. Photographs and sketches by Author (2021). Plan and elevation drawings drawn from interpretation of aerial and site photos by Author (1927).

See Appendix 3 for enlarged sketch plans from Figure 8.12.

[c]

INTERPRETING EXISTING ACTIVITIES & APPROPRIATION



1 Gathering, Linging & lounging  
GATHER, LINGER



2 Communal washing  
WASH



3 Food gardens  
GROW



4 Tuck shops & informal trade  
SELL



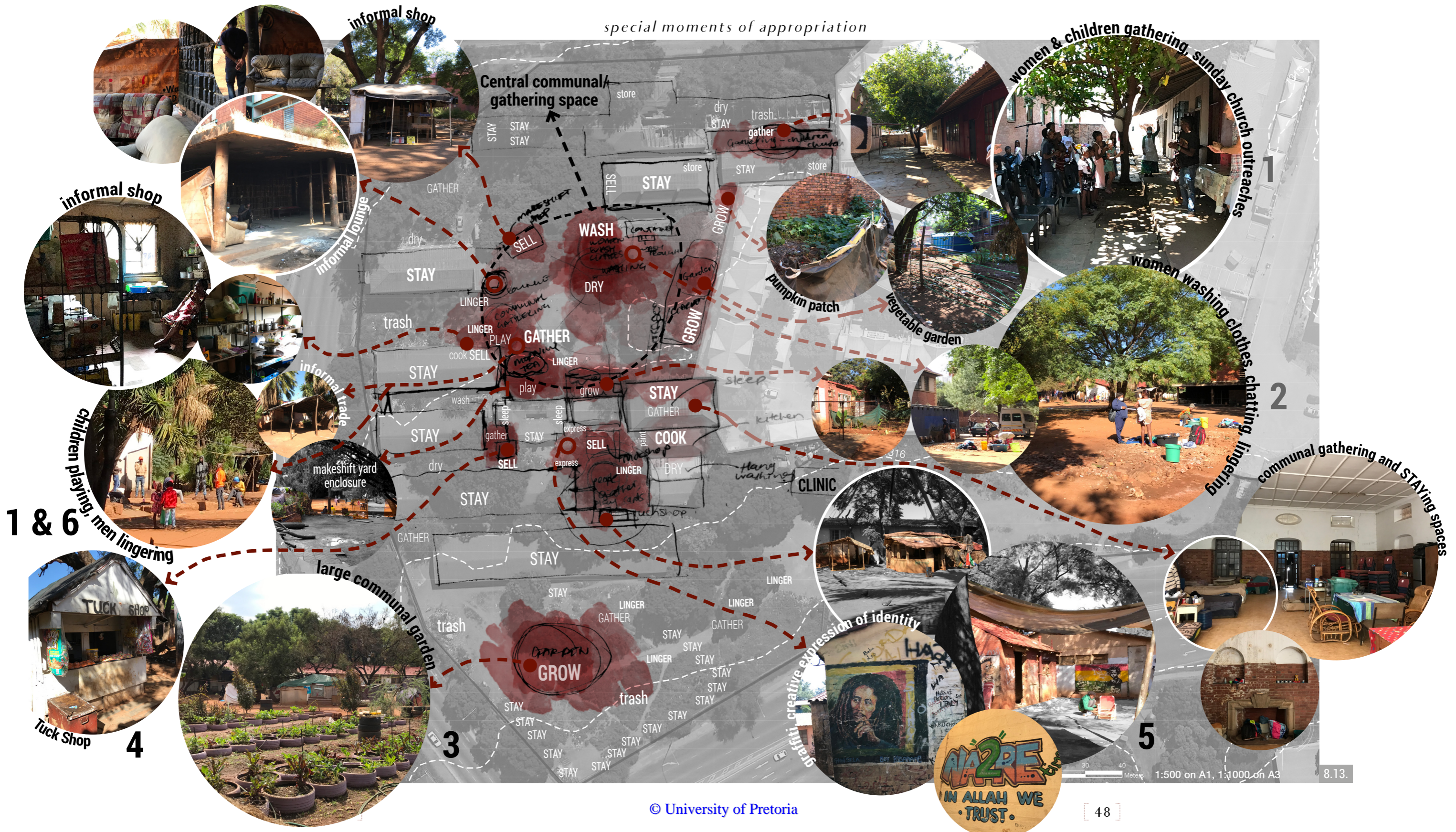
5 Creative expression  
EXPRESS



6 Children playing  
PLAY



7 Sleeping & living spaces  
STAY



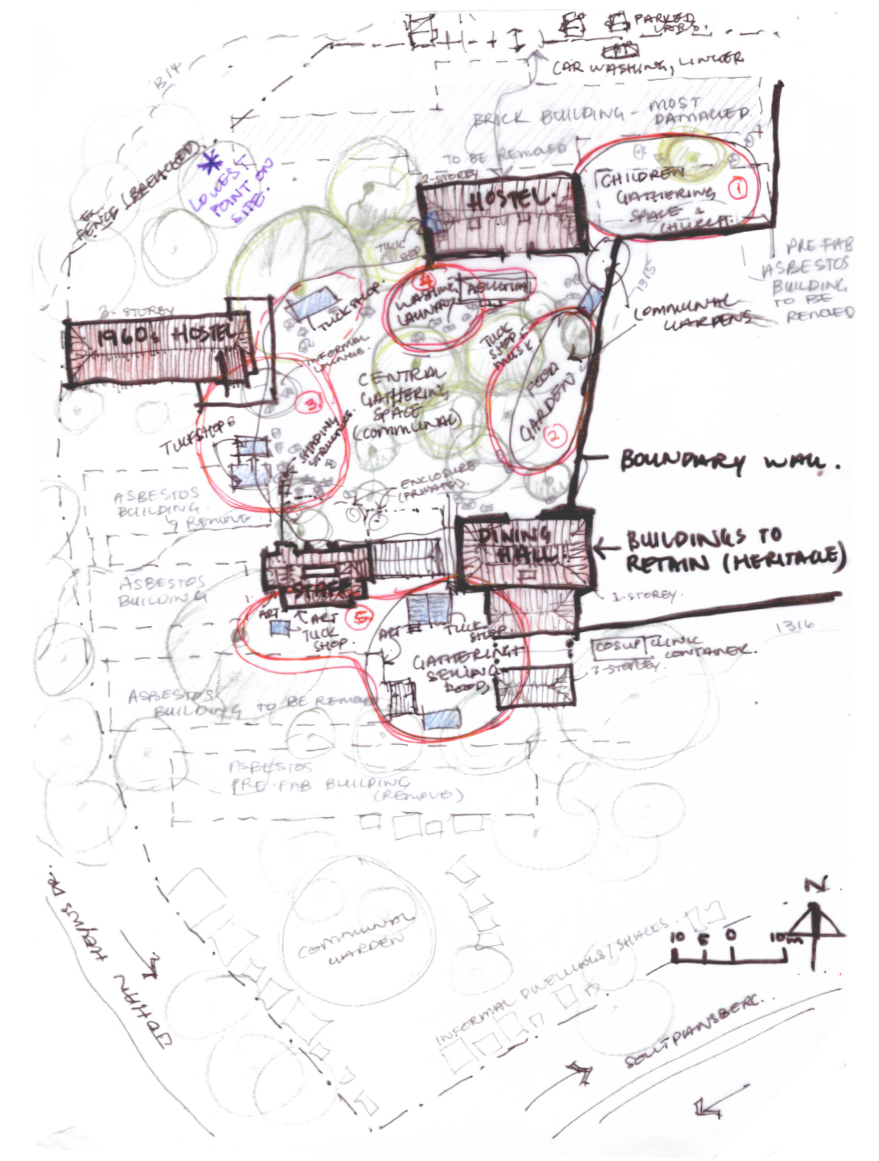
While the existing architecture and its materiality represent a permanence and mostly stereotomic presence of the past, the spontaneous, ongoing informality of the appropriation in and around the existing structures represents a more tectonic transience made up of a collage of found objects and materials. The activities that have emerged over time in the communities' processes of taking ownership of their circumstances and the site provide the potential to be built on and drawn from programmatically and spatially. The qualitative mapping exercise not only revealed a distinct and vibrant sense of place, but also uncovered recurring activities and forms of appropriation. As mentioned previously, many of the identified existing activities emerge out of the inhabitants' resilience and response to basic and communal needs. Through the photographic and mapping exercise on site, various quotidian activities have been identified and mapped.

The existing buildings on site are mostly used for accommodation as a somewhat private place to sleep, stay, cook and in some cases conduct unlawful activities, such as drug dealing and prostitution (Interviewee A 2021, MCO 2021). However, most of the activities in the interstitial and open spaces are expressions of daily communal life, such as women gathering to wash clothes; children playing; people (mostly men) lingering and gathering around music or food; people selling food at makeshift "tuckshops" or from rooms with windows; and people tending to vegetable gardens.

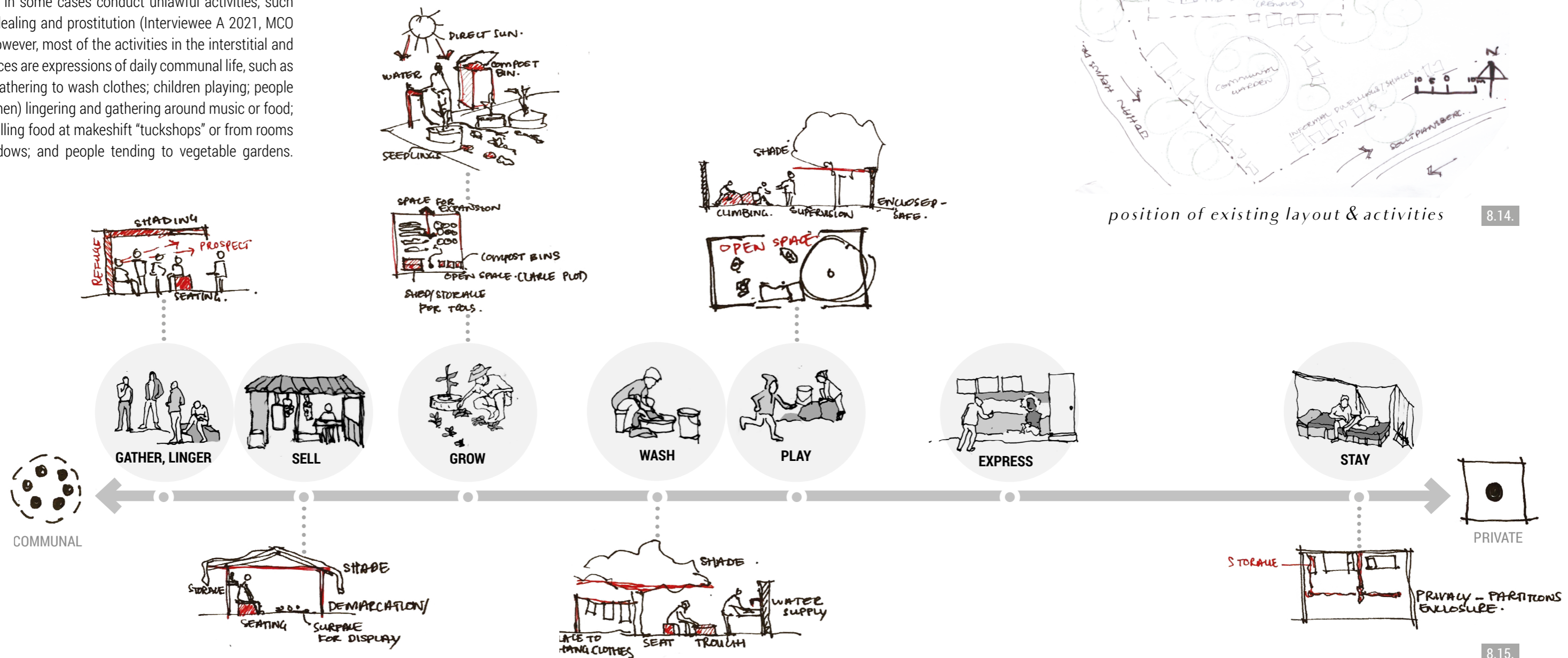
Fig. 8.13. Previous page: Collage of photographs taken on site of special moments of appropriation to capture the sense of place and existing activities (Author 2021).

Fig. 8.14. Right: Site sketch indicating significant buildings and the main activities of appropriation surrounding them (Author 2021).

Fig. 8.15. Below: Identified activities are unpacked briefly in terms of their spatial, physical and functional requirements. Most of the activities happening between buildings and in the outdoor spaces are communal in nature (Author 2021).



position of existing layout & activities 8.14.



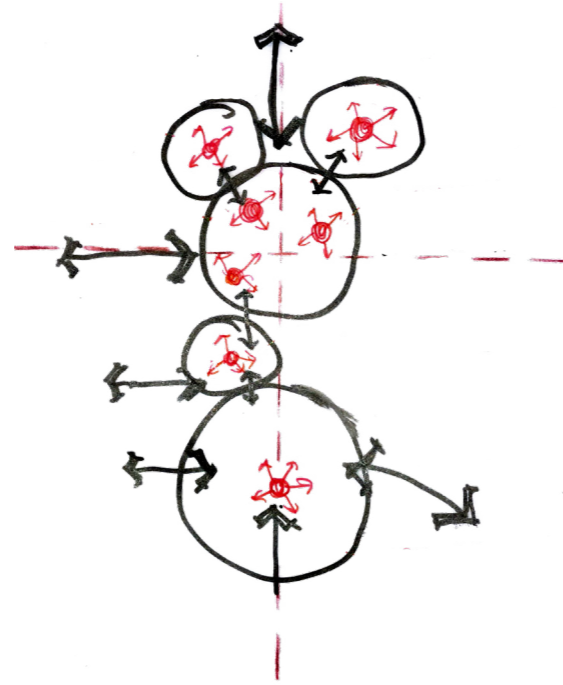
8.15.



[d]

## RESULTANT DESIGN & PROGRAMMATIC INFORMANTS

The identified activities are viewed as anchor points and programmatic catalysts in the development of interlinking event-driven spaces for the programme and intervention strategy to follow (see Figure 8.16.). The evolving, transient nature and the tectonic, adaptable materiality of the “makeshift” structures, room partitions and enclosures that inhabitants have added over time inform an incremental, flexible and adaptable approach to programme, design and even materiality that accommodates, acknowledges and celebrates this ongoing process of appropriation (see Figures 8.17.–8.20.). The existing appropriation and activities also indicate the “bare minimum” or essence of what is required practically and spatially for certain quotidian rituals (see Figure 8.15.). This flexibility and transience should, however, also be balanced by aspects of permanence that anchor the programme and materiality and reference the presence of past layers. Thus, the conceptual approach should negotiate between the existing tensions on site between old and new; informal and formal; social and heritage issues; solid and void; communal and private space; permanence and transience (see Figure 8.21.).



*programmatic informant*

8.16.



8.17.



8.18.



8.19.

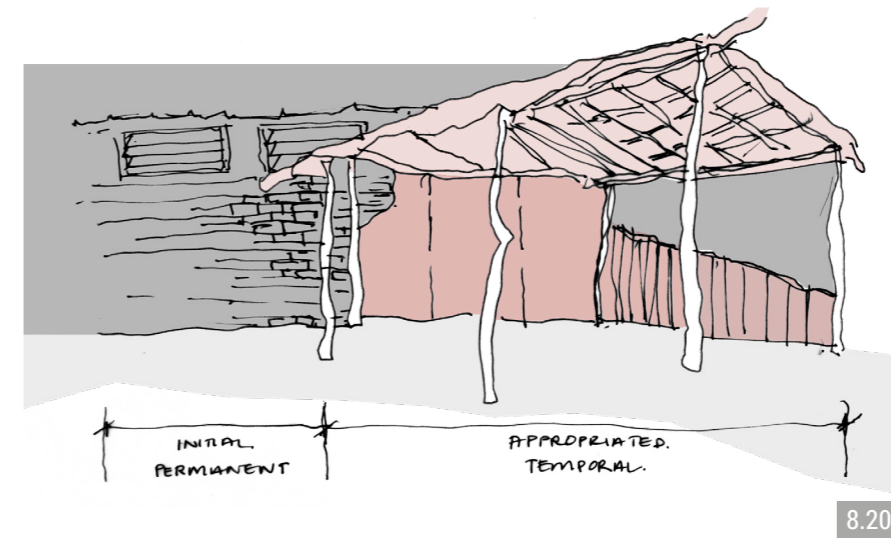


Fig. 8.16. Far left: Conceptual diagram indicating existing activities seen as anchor points and catalysts for interlinking event-driven spaces (Author 2021).

Fig. 8.17.–8.19. Bottom left: Photographs of structures and materials of appropriation on site, revealing the temporal and collaged materiality of the additions.

Fig. 8.20. Directly left: Sketch showing the permanent initial condition and the temporality and transience of the additions by inhabitants.



FORMAL



HERITAGE



SOLID



PERMANENT



COMMUNAL



TANGIBLE



FIXED



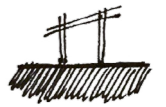
INFORMAL



SOCIAL



VOID



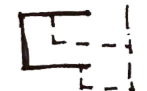
TEMPORAL



PRIVATE



INTANGIBLE



FLEXIBLE

8.21. Existing tensions observed during site and scenario engagement (Author 2021). Representation of similar themes influenced by Cochrane (2018).