05

melgisedek as a focus case study

[a]

SITE SELECTION

The five case studies were evaluated against ten selection criteria to select one case for further analysis as an example of the phenomenon of appropriation and where a design intervention will be proposed in response to specific requirements and aspects of the site. Some of the selection criteria were influenced by the case study observations, while others were deemed necessary in consideration of the dissertation intentions and scope.

It was deemed important to select a site that is currently occupied by a vulnerable community and where the nature of appropriation indicates potential to build on. Thus, the intention to develop a design proposal for a current and real-life occupation and heritage scenario drove the compilation of selection criteria.

After analysing the various sites, the Melgisedek complex in Prinshof was chosen as the most suitable site, as it met all ten criteria. The site is located within 5 km of the CBD. There are buildings of heritage significance, but they are not well known, providing the opportunity to reveal the hidden, latent potential of the heritage and informal appropriation. The site is also occupied by a vulnerable, yet relatively functional community – albeit with complex dynamics – which stimulates interesting and diverse manifestations of appropriation that support community life. The site presents developmental opportunities on a complex yet manageable scale. Lastly, with access to various stakeholders who are currently involved at the site, safe site access and obtaining relevant information would be easier than some of the other cases.
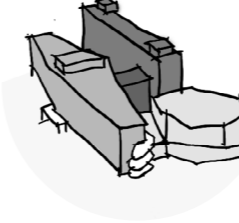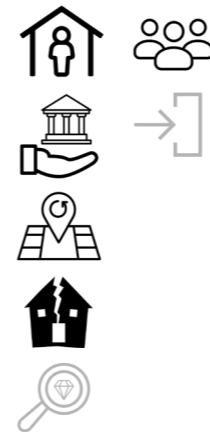
site selection criteria

OCCUPATION SCENARIO
currently informally occupied by a vulnerable community

LOCAL
located in City of Tshwane

URBAN PROXIMITY
located in C.o.T. Region 3 & within 5km of the CBD

SCALE
appropriate scale to be manageable and resolvable, but multi-layered & complex

HERITAGE VALUE
some historical & heritage significance, preferably architectural

DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL
open space, latent interstitial spaces, potential urban integration

NEGLECTED/DERELICT SITE
currently vacant / 'abandoned' / 'derelict' building(s)

HIDDEN POTENTIAL
not iconic/well-known for its heritage so as to reveal the latent hidden potential, with a focus on the informal appropriation

SIGNS OF COMMUNITY
the existence of some sort of community life among occupants (albeit complex in its dynamics)

ACCESSIBILITY
access to the site is safe and easy, information is obtainable, accessible

Fig. 5.1. Right, page 20: Site selection criteria, icons from nounproject.com (2018).
Fig. 5.2. Bottom right, page 21: Site location graphic (Author 2021).

LOCAL
All of the 5 case study sites are located in the City of Tshwane

WESTFORT VILLAGE
by Sytze Wierda, 1890s

JUSTICE COLLEGE
by Brian Sandrock, 1960

MELGISEDEK
by Gordon Leith 1927, Unknown 1960s & later
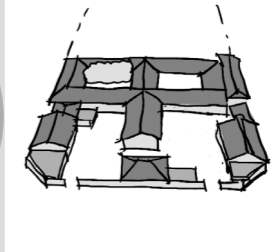
STRUBEN SHELTER
Unknown, 1950s/60s

SCHUBART PARK
Unknown, 1976

SITE LOCATION
Melgisedek (Mahala flats)

Steve Biko academic hospital

Univeristy of Pretoria medical campus

Soutpansberg rd.

Netcare Femina hospital

Union Buildings

Apies river

Steve Biko rd.

Walkerspruit

Johan Heyns dr. / Hamilton st.

5.1.   5.2.

[b]

OVERVIEW OF THE SCENARIO

For a background understanding of the selected site and its occupation scenario, information was gathered from various sources, including engagements with stakeholders (De Beer 2021, Bac 2020, Bac 2021, Schmidt 2021), analysis of news articles and other available literature about the site.
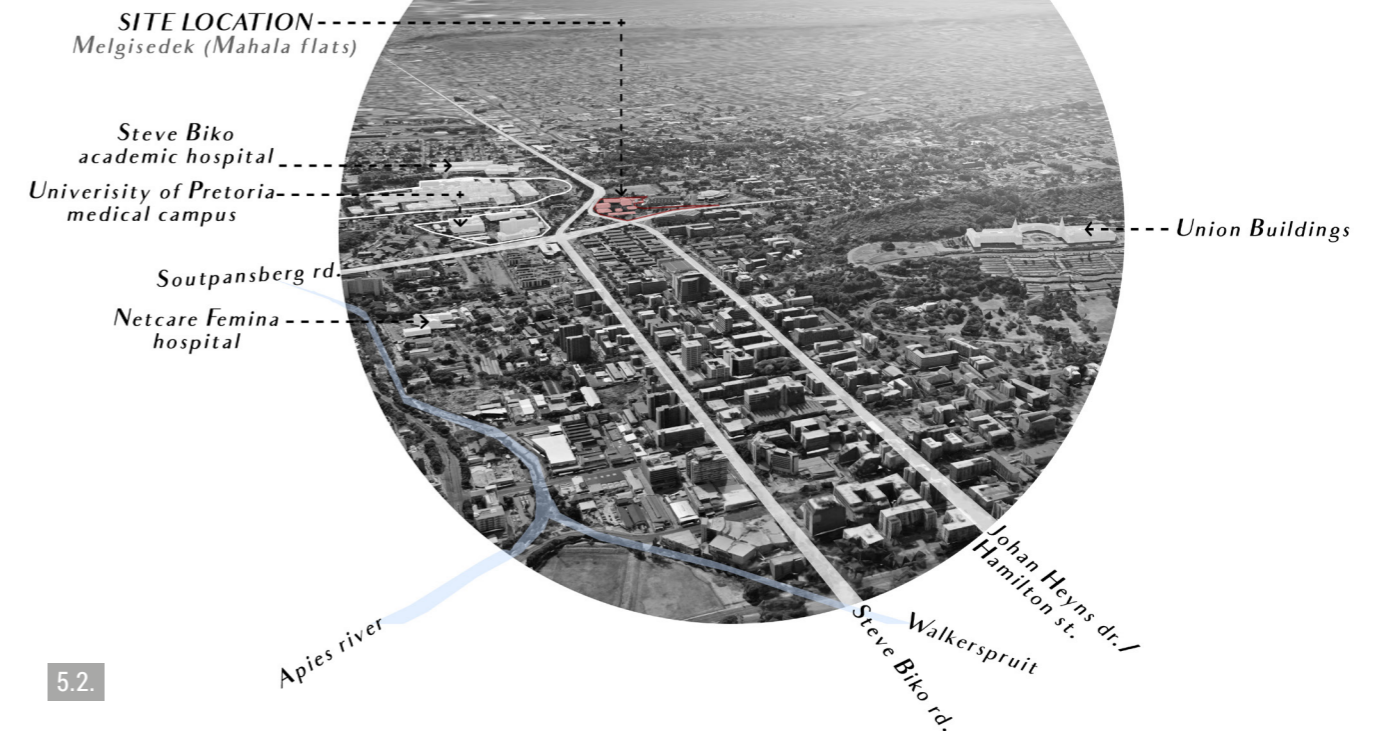
The site was originally used as Pretoria Technical College hostels until 1986 (Moore 2007: 46). Thereafter, it was run by an unsuccessful NGO, Melgisedek Christian Centre, as a homeless shelter, giving the site its current name (Bac 2020). After some time, the place and its residents were left in serious debt around 2009 (City of Tshwane 2010), after which Melgisedek became gradually and increasingly informally occupied by vulnerable people. Although currently owned by the City of Tshwane's Group Property (De Beer 2021), since 2009, there has been no formal management, resulting in a current lack of water, sanitation and electrical services.

Currently, approximately 400 vulnerable people occupy the site and its buildings illegally, including families and individuals seeking income in the city (Bac 2020). Moreover, there are numerous inhabitants, including many immigrants, people without identification documents and people with abuse problems who have been ostracised by their family and are unable to find work (Bac 2020). In response to their precarious situations, the inhabitants have appropriated the spaces and have taken ownership of their environment.

Among the existing buildings on site, there are several heritage buildings, with the oldest ones designed by Gordon E. Leith and built in 1927 in a typical Baker-school classicist or "traditional" style (artefacts.co.za n.d. (2).). Additionally, there is one building estimated to be built in the 1960s – presumably in a functional regionalist style – which is likely also a heritage building based on its estimated age (NHRA 1999: 58). In addition, there are multiple prefabricated asbestos hostels that were added later. All the buildings are in various states of decay, with some more damaged than others due to lack of maintenance and fires from cooking or heating during the informal occupation.

Lastly, private and public entities – including various NGOs, non-profit companies (NPCs) and the University of Pretoria – have submitted proposals for the site's redevelopment into social or student housing, or both, following a public invitation from the City of Tshwane in 2018 (Van Petegem 2019).

Fig. 5.3. Right: Overview of the current site scenario: site photographs by Author (2021), photograph bottom left from a PTA News article (Van Petegem 2019) and an aerial photo (City of Tshwane 2018 (2)) edited by Author (2021).

1927 Heritage buildings (older than 60 years)

5.3.

[c]

The Story

historical timeline

The research regarding the history of the site has been distilled into key events to populate a timeline that gives an overview of the various institutional, architectural, social and political layers that make up the complex narrative of Melgisedek. The two themes of architectural and historical heritage and social, occupation-related issues are clearly distinguishable on the two halves of the timeline. Up until 2009, the significant events encompass institutional and architectural history, while everything after 2009 has been dominated by the social and political circumstances surrounding the occupation of the site and homelessness in Tshwane. The events of the timeline's second half are organised according to the following themes that impact the social context: electrical services, site conditions, negative interventions/events, positive interventions/events and policy-related events.

1909 1918 **1926 1927** **1928** 1937 1939 1945 **1947** 1979 **1986** 1988 1990

Fig. 5.4. Right: Graphic illustrating the heritage buildings and social condition of the site (Author 2021).
Fig. 5.5. Next two pages: Historical timeline of significant institutional, architectural, social and political events at Melgsidek, compiled by Author (2021).

5.4.

establishment of
PRETORIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE
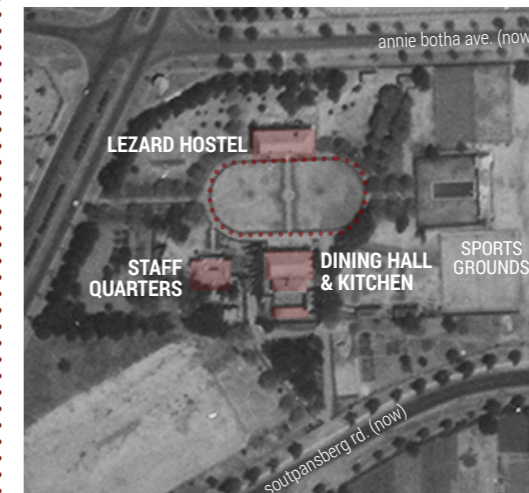main building to be built where boys hostel was at the time (Moore 2007: 46, SAB 1927: 47-49).

PRETORIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE
COMPETITIVE DESIGN
SCALE 10 FEET TO ONE INCH

FRONT ELEVATION

Winning competition design by Gordon Leith (Furner 1926: 95) with sketched facade (Author 2021).

establishment of
PRETORIA TRADES SCHOOL & POLYTECHNIC

PRETORIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE
main building is built on corner of Church st. & Du Toit st., designed in classical Herbert Baker style by Gordon Leith & young Norman Eaton. (Moore 2007: 46, Pearse & Howie 1946: 282)
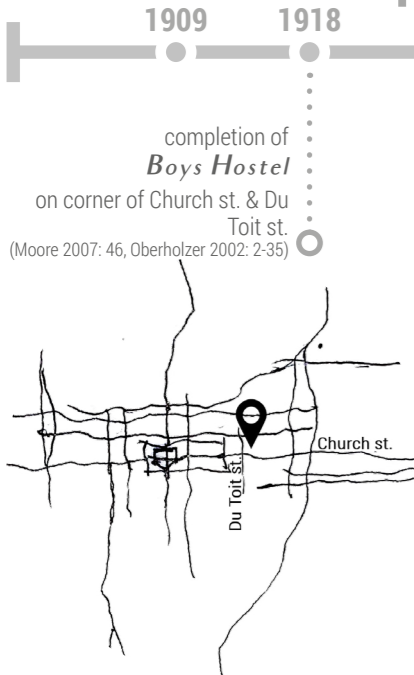

Photograph of PTA Technical College main building on c/o Church and Du Toit st. after it was built (Pearse & Howie 1946: 282).

1947 Aerial photograph of the site with the buildings by Gordon Leith (University of Pretoria 1947)

annie botha ave. (now)
LEZARD HOSTEL
STAFF QUARTERS
DINING HALL & KITCHEN
SPORTS GROUNDS
soutpansberg rd (now)

TSHWANE NORTH TVET COLLEGE
Technical and Vocational Education and Training College

City Council sounds old Technikon main building to Technikon Pretoria. The Technical Highschool then becomes **TSHWANE NORTH TVET COLLEGE** Which is currently still on the site, c/o Helen Joseph st. & Du Toit st. (Moore 2007: 52)

1909   **1918**   **1926**   **1927**   **1928**   **1937** **1939**   **1945**   **1947**   **1979**   **1986** **1988** **1990**   **2004**

completion of
Boys Hostel
on corner of Church st. & Du Toit st.
(Moore 2007: 46, Oberholzer 2002: 2-35)

Church st.
Du Toit st.

JUNE: Gordon Leith's competition design for
PRETORIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE: HOSTELS
(Williamson 1927: 8).

PRETORIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE HOSTEL

FIRST PREMIATED DESIGN   Gordon Leith.
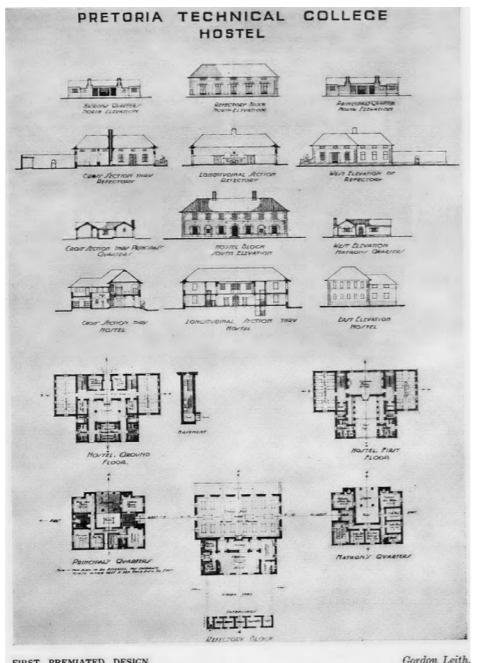
George Esselmont Gordon Leith
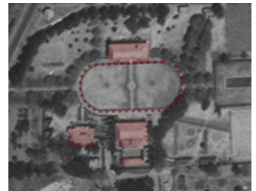
Top: portrait of Gordon Leith (artefacts n.d. (2).)
Above: 1947 Aerial photo (University of Pretoria 1947) with 1927 hostel, dining hall & staff buildings by Gordon Leith in red,
Left: Gordon Leith's competition entry for the Pretoria Technical College Hostel (Williamson 1927: 8).

the Technical Day School becomes a
Technical Highschool
(now Tshwane North TVET College at the Church/Helen Joseph st. site) (Moore 2007: 47).

WORLD WAR II

PTA Technical college changes name to
PRETORIA TECHNIKON
(Moore 2007: 51).

TECHNIKON PRETORIA DEPRARTMENTS & HOSTEL
move to new campus in Pretoria West (Moore 2007: 53, Schmidt 2021).

TUT PTA WEST CAMPUS
HOSTELS (MELGISEDEK)
SOUTPANSBERG
CHURCH CH ST.
OLD TECHNIKON SITE
CHURCH SQUARE
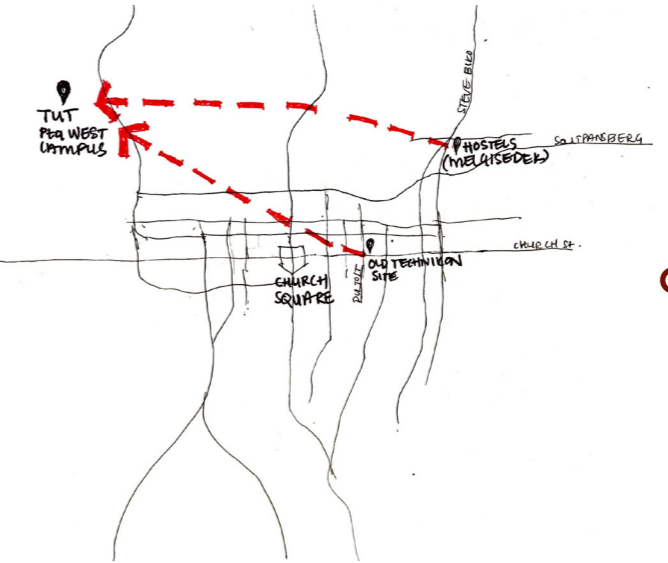
PTA Technikon changes name to
TECHNIKON PRETORIA
(Moore 2007: 51).

Technikon Pretoria, Technikon Northern Gauteng, Technikon North West merge into **TSHWANE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (TUT)** (TUT 2018)

Tshwane University of Technology
We empower people

AUGUST: 'New' hostels built in Riviera (on selected site) before Pretoria Technical College main building was built (SAB 1927: 47-49).

Photograph of cornerstone of old Dining Hall at Melgisedek site (Author 2021).

1927

MELGISEDEK CHRISTIAN CENTRE (MCC)
NGO for the poor, established at old Technikon Hostel site. The site is also subdivided (Schmidt 2021).

2009
poor management, debt, fraud, delapidation

PORTION 103 OF FARM PRINSHOF 349-JR

ELECTRICAL SERVICES

City Council discontinues Electricity
(City of Tshwane 2010)

Prepaid electricity meters installed, Electricity partially re-instated
(Abreu 2013)

MAY: Electricty cut off again
(Abreu 2013)

SITE CONDITIONS

"The circumstances are bad, posing serious health, social and welfare risks. The place is not managed and there is no control. It is a freefor-all without any social programmes.

Photo and excerpt from PTA News article by Hlahla (2010)

JULY: Gas heater/cooker causes fire *Burns down section of building* (Abreu 2013).

(Google Earth 2015)

Melgisedek declared UNINHABITABLE. Residents to be relocated (± 600 occupants), creche & informal traders shut down (Mudzuli 2014).

"It's completely uninhabitable," he said.

Excerpt from Mudzuli (2014)

APRIL

Cops raid notorious city complex in bid to rid it of crime

Tshwane Metro cops raid Melgisedek to "fight crime" (Van Petegem 2014)

NOVEMBER: building catches fire again (Mahlangu 2016).

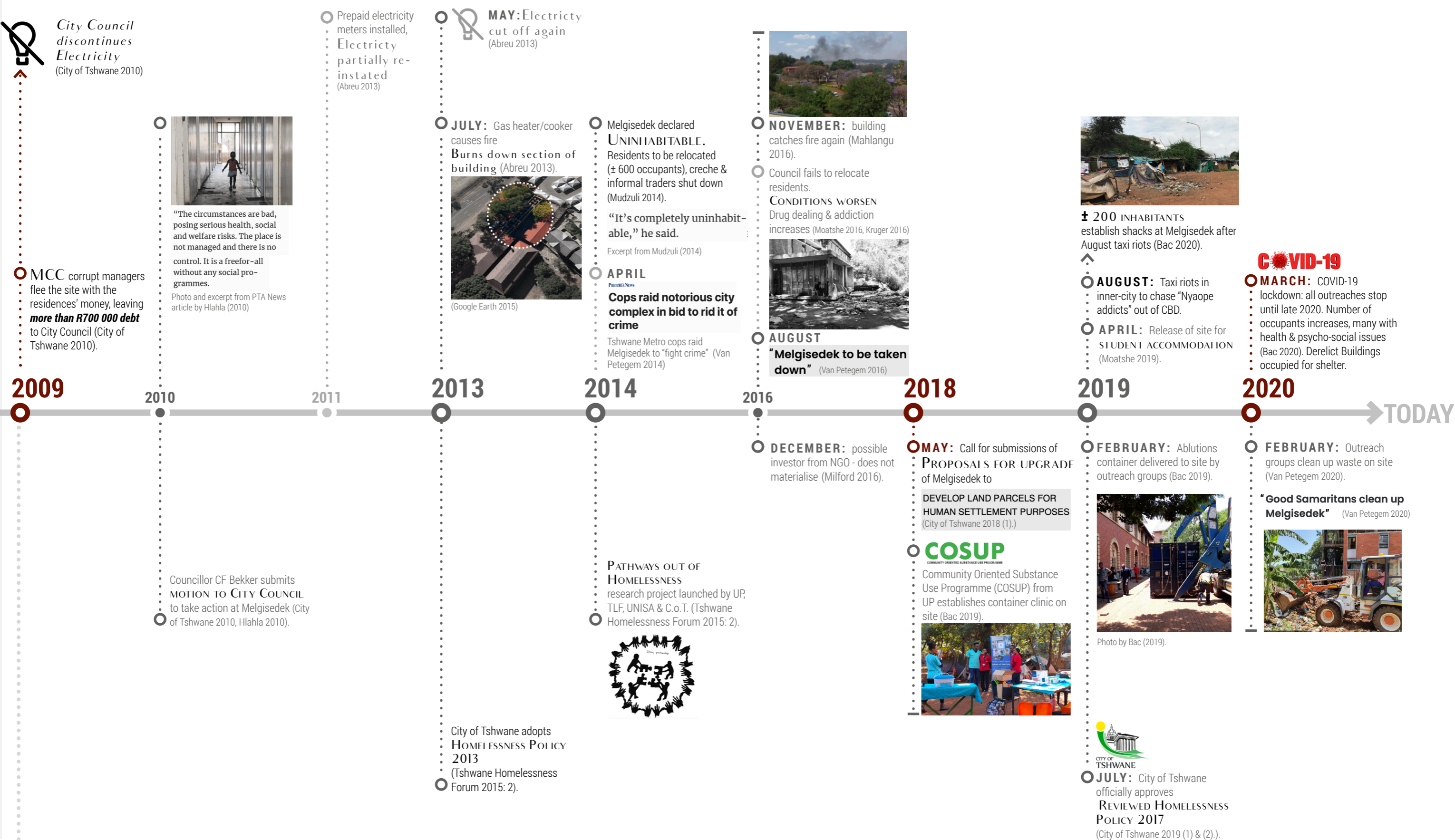Council fails to relocate residents. CONDITIONS WORSEN Drug dealing & addiction increases (Moatshe 2016, Kruger 2016)

AUGUST

"Melgisedek to be taken down" (Van Petegem 2016)

± 200 INHABITANTS establish shacks at Melgisedek after August taxi riots (Bac 2020).

NEGATIVE INTERVENTIONS / EVENTS

MCC corrupt managers flee the site with the residences' money, leaving *more than R700 000 debt* to City Council (City of Tshwane 2010).

AUGUST: Taxi riots in inner-city to chase "Nyaope addicts" out of CBD.

APRIL: Release of site for STUDENT ACCOMMODATION (Moatshe 2019).

COVID-19

MARCH: COVID-19 lockdown: all outreaches stop until late 2020. Number of occupants increases, many with health & psycho-social issues (Bac 2020). Derelict Buildings occupied for shelter.

2009 **2010** **2011** **2013** **2014** **2016** **2018** **2019** **2020** ➤**TODAY**

DECEMBER: possible investor from NGO - does not materialise (Milford 2016).

MAY: Call for submissions of PROPOSALS FOR UPGRADE of Melgisedek to

DEVELOP LAND PARCELS FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENT PURPOSES (City of Tshwane 2018 (1).)

COSUP
COMMUNITY ORIENTED SUBSTANCE USE PROGRAMME

Community Oriented Substance Use Programme (COSUP) from UP establishes container clinic on site (Bac 2019).

FEBRUARY: Ablutions container delivered to site by outreach groups (Bac 2019).

Photo by Bac (2019).

FEBRUARY: Outreach groups clean up waste on site (Van Petegem 2020).

"Good Samaritans clean up Melgisedek" (Van Petegem 2020)

POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS / EVENTS

Councillor CF Bekker submits MOTION TO CITY COUNCIL to take action at Melgisedek (City of Tshwane 2010, Hlahla 2010).

PATHWAYS OUT OF HOMELESSNESS research project launched by UP, TLF, UNISA & C.o.T. (Tshwane Homelessness Forum 2015: 2).

POLICY

City of Tshwane adopts HOMELESSNESS POLICY 2013 (Tshwane Homelessness Forum 2015: 2).

CITY OF TSHWANE

JULY: City of Tshwane officially approves REVIEWED HOMELESSNESS POLICY 2017 (City of Tshwane 2019 (1) & (2).).

continuous illegal occupation & appropriation

"Although we are needy people, we believe we still have to live in dignity," said the residents.
Excerpt from Hlahla (2012)

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA