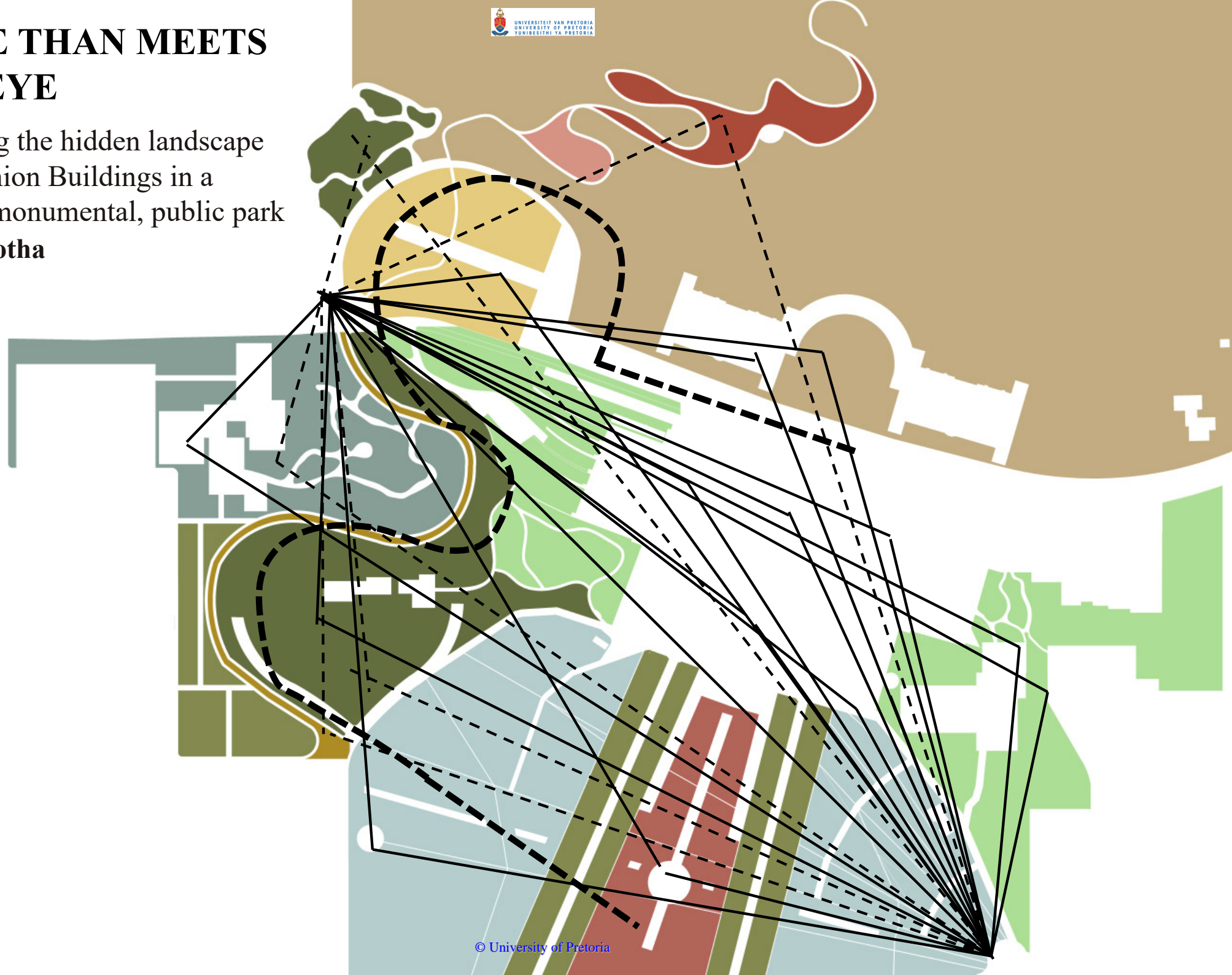


MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Unveiling the hidden landscape
of the Union Buildings in a
counter-monumental, public park
Jolene Botha



Project data

Figure 1. (Cover page) The Union Buildings memorylines and lost narratives (Author 2021)

Dissertation title:

More than meets the eye: Unveiling the hidden landscape of the Union Buildings in a counter-monumental, public park

Submitted by:

Jolene Botha

Submitted in fulfilment of part of the requirements for the degree Masters of Landscape Architecture (Professional) within the Department of Architecture, in the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology at the University of Pretoria
2021

Study leader: Johan N. Prinsloo

Studio master: Johan N. Prinsloo

Course co-ordinator: Professor Arthur Barker

Site Location: Erf 357-JR, Elandspoord, Arcadia, Pretoria (Gauteng, South Africa)

GPS coordinates: 25°44'24.72"S, 28°12'43.199"E

Site description: The heritage gardens of the Union Buildings

Client: The Department of Public Works and the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality

Users: The residents of Pretoria & Tshwane, The politicians that work on site, everyday visitors from the city and country, visiting tourists

Proposed landscape typology: Counter monumental public park

Research field: Heritage and Cultural landscapes & Environmental Potential (HCL & EP)

Theoretical premise: Developing a public programmed, landscape architectural intervention at the Union Buildings, using contemporary heritage approaches as a celebration of the cultural and natural heritage of the site and ridge

Jolene Botha: 15 November 2021

Student declaration

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology
Department of Architecture

In accordance with Regulation 4(e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses, I declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Landscape 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 other works of other, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.

I, Jolene Botha, student number 13040929, for the subject CPD 810 in the Department of Architecture at the University of Pretoria.

1. understand what plagiarism entails and I am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
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3. did not make use of another student's previous work and submitted it as my own.
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Fakulteit Ingenieurswese, Bou-omgewing en
Inligtingtegnologie / Lefapha la BoetSenere,
Tikologo ya Kago le Theknolotši ya Tshedimošo



Masters '21

Erkennung / Acknowledgements

Eerstens gaan my dank aan my ouers vir die liefde en opvoeding wat jare se opoffering, toewyding, bloed, sweet en tranes gekost het. Dankie vir die voorreg om te kon studeer en dankie vir al die bydrae, raad en ondersteuning wat soveel waarde by my verhandeling gevoeg het. Dankie aan my kleinsus, Lené vir al jou liefde en aanmoediging deur die jare. Verally aan my Ma, baie dankie dat Mamma my elke dag van my studies bygestaan, aangemoedig en ondersteun het.

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Laastens, baie dankie aan Ouma Joey, wat my altyd aangemoedig het om ons naam hoog te hou. Ek het vir die maan gemik en met die Here se genade en Mamma-hulle se liefde en ondersteuning, het ek tussen die sterre geland, ek hoop dit maak Ouma trots.

Abstract

Landscape Transformation

On the southern slope of Meintjieskop lies a Renaissance garden, a remnant of the past at the foot of what is described by SA History Online (2011) as a South African architectural masterpiece – the Union Buildings. These terraced gardens are arguably one of the most important designed heritage landscapes in South Africa. The site, designed by Sir Herbert Baker in collaboration with Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gordon Leith was constructed between 1910-1913, as a memorial to reconciliation, and a national icon of the custodianship of collective good governance (Bakker 2003). It was envisioned to be a grand, ordered and symmetrical landscape of formalistic terraced gardens. Between 1913-1919 during the construction of the gardens, Baker’s original vision was adapted in his absence and more than half of the site which was intended to be formal parterres ended up as a large unsustainable lawn that has been appropriated as an informal public park.



Figure 2. Drone photograph of Jacob Zuma’s inauguration at the Union Buildings in 2009 (The Presidency 2009)

Over the past 26 years of democracy, there have been numerous calls for change at the Union Buildings, ranging between options of preserving it to changing its name or the removal of the monuments and sculptures, even as far as proposals of building a completely new seat of government (Mabin 2019:20-23). For this reason, the Union Buildings is the ideal testing ground for the much-debated heritage transformation that is proposed by the South African government (Mthethwa 2015 & Dhlamini 2020).

The aim of the dissertation is to create a landscape design proposal for the Union Buildings site that re-imagines the site as a living democratic monument, whilst reintroducing the public to naturalistic environments by establishing natural plants and planting communities from the region as a means to create place identity unique to Meintjieskop and the Daspoortrand. A successful public park typology is established on the site, to allow for contemporary uses whilst representing a number of forgotten narratives integral to the site’s identity.



Figure 3. Photograph of the bad condition of the southern lawn of the Union Buildings (Richman 2016)

Landscape architecture is thus presented as a medium for heritage transformation through which the project will investigate the potential of landscape architecture to restore and conserve a heritage site as a living monument used every day by city dwellers & residents. Furthermore, the designer aims to create an inviting site that will respect the site’s history, whilst celebrating its regional environment and create an all inclusive public space that will prevent the call for further heritage transformation.

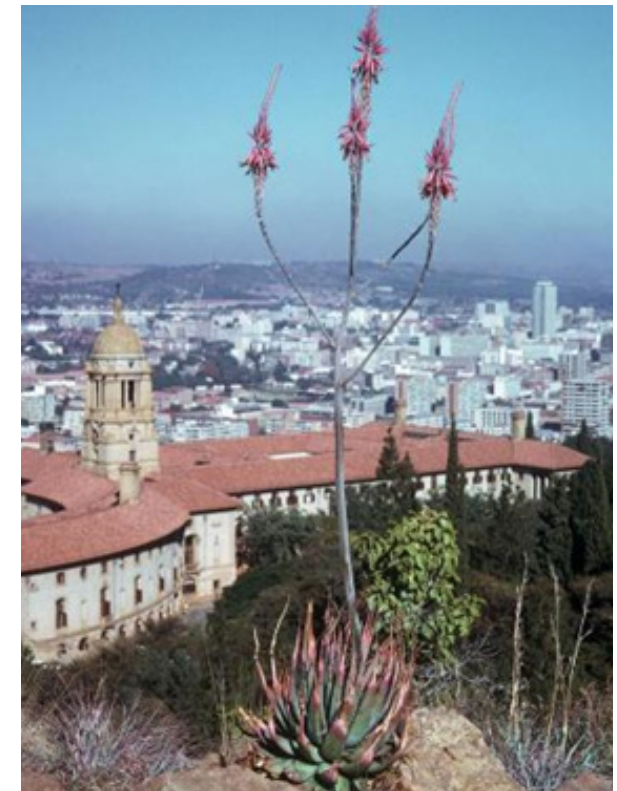


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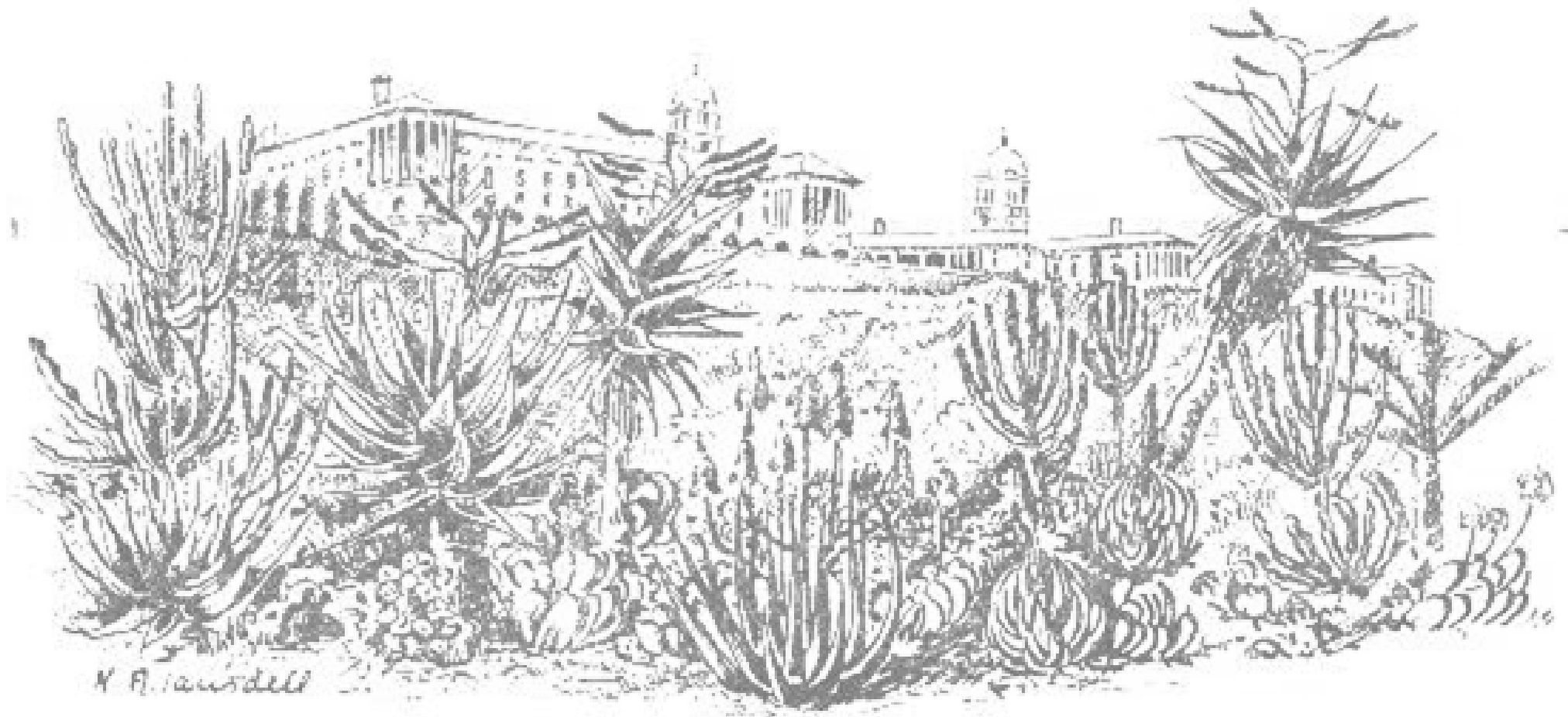


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Definition of terms

Terminology applicable to this project appropriated from the SAHRA (n.d.) conservation principles document are:

ADAPTATION: to modify a place for a compatible use. Adaptation is appropriate where the original use cannot be maintained, and where the adaptation does not substantially remove from its cultural significance (SAHRA n.d.).

COMPATIBLE USE: to use a place other than that for which it was designed for, to allow for the least intervention in the fabric (SAHRA n.d.).

CONSERVATION: all the processes included to look after a place to retain its cultural significance (SAHRA n.d.).

CONTESTED: When something is argued over or questioned.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE: is a site's aesthetic, historical, scientific, and social contribution to past, present, and future generations (SAHRA n.d.).

HERITAGE: Our inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture.

DPW - The Department of Public Works

HISTORICAL: to belong to the past (SAHRA n.d.).

PRESERVATION: the protection and maintenance of the fabric of a space in its existing state and the prevention or slow in deterioration or change, may also include to stabilise structures. Preservation is appropriate where the existing state of the fabric itself constitutes evidence of specific cultural significance (SAHRA n.d.).

RECYCLING: to modify or adapt a place to suit a use other than that for which it was designed (SAHRA n.d.).

REHABILITATION: to return a place to a state of utility through repair or alteration while preserving those features of the place which are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values (SAHRA n.d.).

ICCOMOS - The International Council on Monuments and Sites

ICCROM -The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

RESTORATION: to return the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by re-assembling existing components. It is based on respect for all the physical, documentary, and other evidence and stops at the point where conjecture begins. Restoration is limited to the completion of a depleted entity and should not constitute the major part of the fabric. Restoration is appropriate only if there is sufficient evidence of an earlier state of the fabric and if returning the fabric to that state recovers the cultural significance of the place. Restoration is appropriate where it recovers the cultural significance of the place (SAHRA n.d.).

REUSE: to use a building or place for a use other than that for which it was designed (SAHRA n.d.).

STAGNANT: Showing no, dull or slow activity.

SAHO - South African Heritage Organization

SAHRA - South African Heritage Resource Agency

NHA - National Heritage Act

“The glory of the garden lies in more than meets the eye...” Rudyard Kipling (1911)



Figure 6. Union Buildings artworks
and photographs layered
(Sources varies)

Prologue

Our Union Buildings is a garden that is full of stately views,
Of borders, beds and shrubberies and lawns and avenues,
With statues on the terraces and peacocks strutting by;
But the Glory of the Garden lies in more than meets the eye.

For where umbrella pine trees grow, along the rocky ridge,
You'll find the remnants, rocks, and shards of kraals and "voetpadjies",
the grasses and redoubts, and memories of tented camps,
and countless protest marches that took place along these lamps.

And there you'll see the culture, the places, children, women,
forgotten and neglected, few remember them;
For, our history is told with monuments of politics and men,
but the true Glory of this Garden lies not with them.

And here I am a simple gardener, who hopes to remind thee,
that the glory of this garden lies in more than meets the eye.
So when my work is finished, I hope to wash my hands and pray
For the Glory of this Garden that it may not pass away!
And the Glory of the Garden it will never pass away!



Figure 7. Watercolour of a grotto in the gardens of the Union Buildings (1928), by Sydney Carter (Heritage portal 2021)

Poem adapted for the site and dissertation
(Author 2021)
Original poem by Rudyard Kipling
The Glory of the Garden (1911)

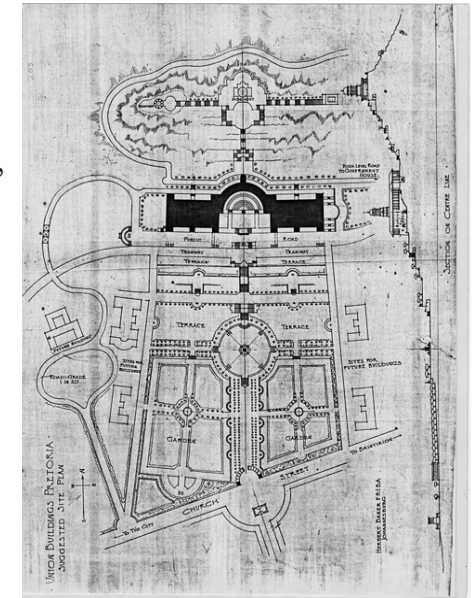


Figure 8. Plan showing the original design for the site of the Union Buildings (1909), by Herbert Baker. (Manchesterhive 2017)

Introduction -Change is inevitable

Sir Herbert Baker, the architect of the Union Buildings, intended for the terraced gardens, to be a grand display and act as a threshold to the natural landscape of Meintjieskop. The aim was to juxtapose the stability and autonomy of the Union Buildings against the wild preserved ridge that rose behind it and the unimproved, yet to be tamed nature of the veld that lay below it (Foster 2008:160). Besides wishing to preserve the ridge in its natural state, and allow access to it, he further intended for the rich dark coloured masonry walls of the terraces to act as a background in contrast with the bright orange, yellow and scarlet flowers of ‘African, sun-loving plants’ and aloes that would thrive on the hot terraces (Baker 1927:67) and this beautiful display was intended to add to the beauty and influence of the building.

However, as a developing country, South Africa has been subject to multiple changes over the past century on the urban, political and environmental fronts - as one of the capital cities of South Africa, Tshwane has been in the limelight of these changes. Similarly, landscape architecture and designed public spaces change over time. The site has adapted quite successfully over the years to new functions and to allow continued public displays of protest, but the original splendour of the gardens and intentions of its designer, as displayed in paintings by Pierneef and other artists have somewhat been lost. It can be argued that some of these intentions strongly contrasts the opinion of Foster (2008) and many other that the Union Buildings and its gardens are a crude import of “colonial nationalism” or by Kruger (1999:1) as a ‘monument to the British Empire’.



Figure 9. Union Buildings under construction 1913 by Eric Meyer (1876-1960) (Heritage portal & Arca-

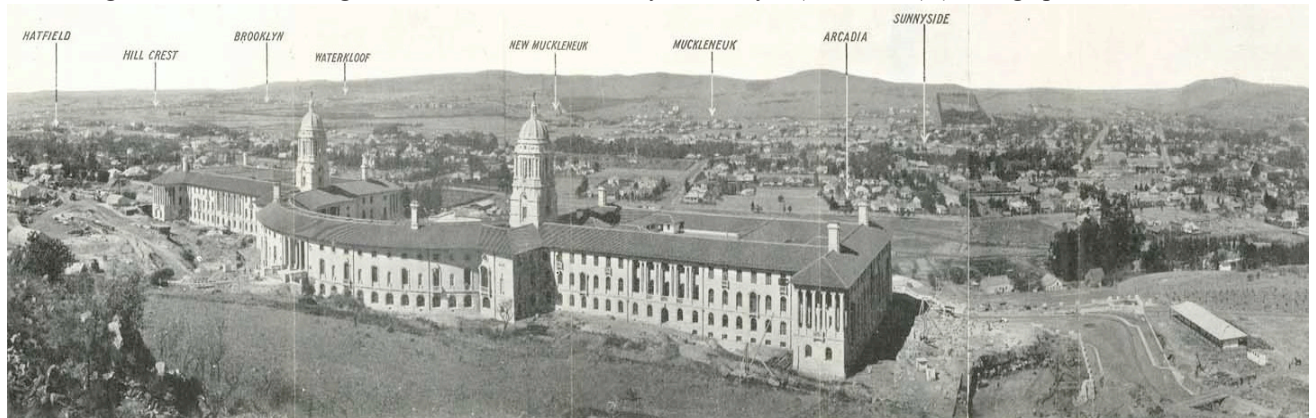


Figure 10. Panorama of Pretoria William Martinson (The City of Pretoria and Districts 1913)

Background - Debated heritage transformation: contested iconography

Debated heritage transformation: contested iconography

Almost thirty years into democracy, there is still a palpable need for change, a cry for decolonisation which not only manifests in the renaming of heritage structures and sites but also in their destruction and removal. Heritage sites often focus on specific events, individuals, and cultural groups and for this reason, the sites become underutilised as they only interest those who wish to participate in the commemorative function of the site. The cultural exclusiveness of such sites often draws negative attention and leads to contestation: multiple heritage sites and monuments have been destroyed, vandalised or desecrated, worldwide over the past decade (Segobye 2015). Locally, the Rhodes Must Fall protests of 2015 at the University of Cape Town, which also included acts of defacing colonial heritage monuments, relit the nationwide debate of heritage transformation. During these debates, the EFF political party strongly advocated for the removal of all Apartheid and colonial heritage. However, Buthelezi (2020), former leader of the IFP, advocated against the destruction of statues, stating: “if we must have a record of our saints, I think we must have a record of our villains as well”, paraphrasing Santayana (1905), who wrote, “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. The South African Government promotes a transformative national agenda but accepts that history can and should not be destroyed or removed, and that transformation needs to be guided by heritage law (Mthethwa 2015; Dhlamini 2020).

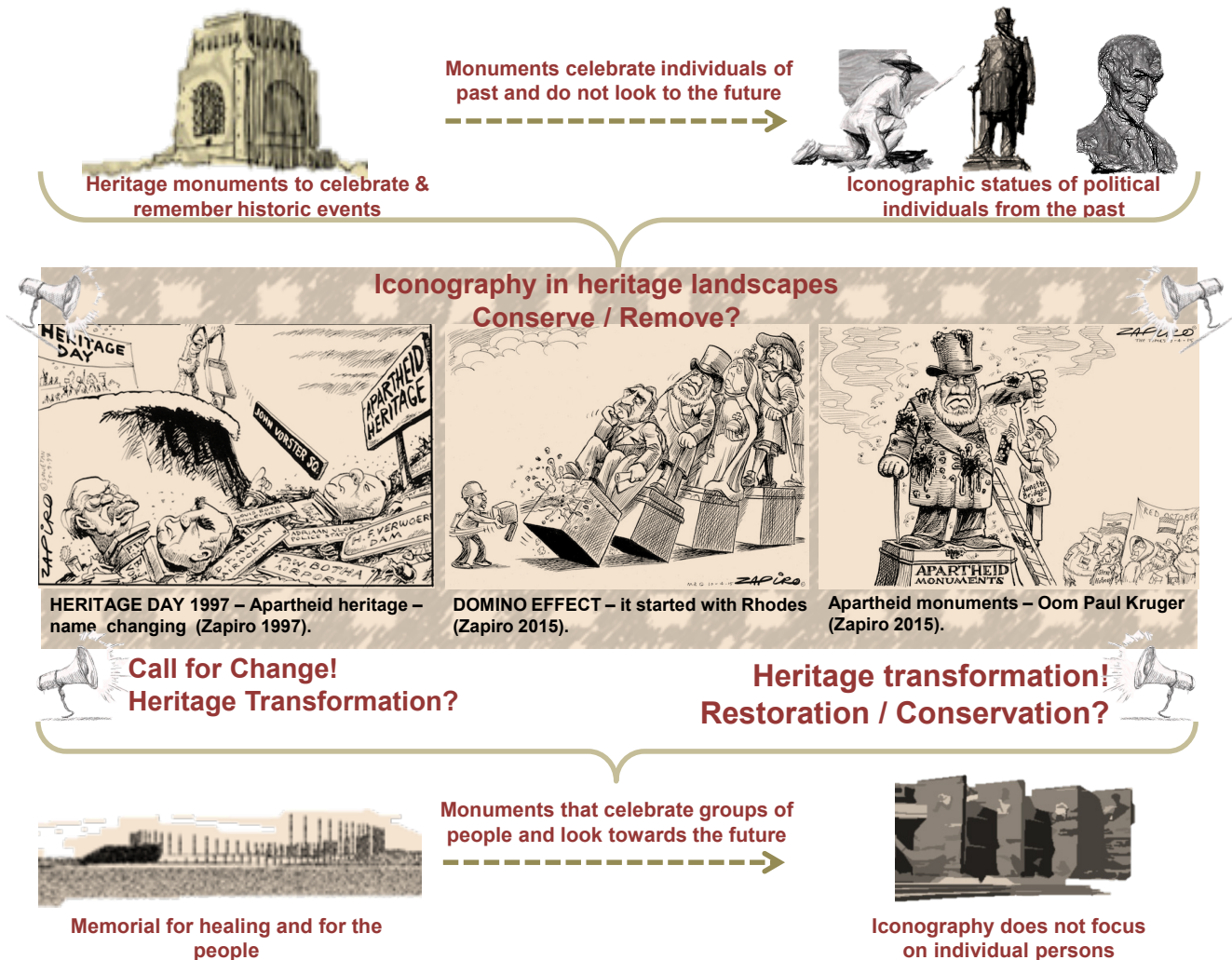


Figure 11. Contested heritage defined (Author 2021)

Statement of significance

On the southern slope of Meintjieskop lies such a heritage landscape, a neo-Renaissance garden, with an Arts and Crafts approach to materiality and planting. These terraced gardens, layered with remnants of the past lie at the foot of the Union Buildings, described by SAHO (2011) as a South African architectural masterpiece. The building and gardens were designed during the last year of the colonial period in South Africa (1909), and construction started on 1 November 1910 following the union of the four colonies on 31 May 1910. It is arguably one of the most important heritage landscapes in South Africa. However, the attempt to preserve the architecture, the spontaneous

adaptation of the site, the neglect of the gardens and increasing security protocols, have allowed the connection to its natural landscape and some valuable aspects of the site's history to be lost over time. It represents memorable periods in the history of South Africa and Pretoria, but the focus is on specific events and individuals associated with politics and war - frozen plaques and statues. Over the past 26 years during the process of transformation, there have been numerous calls for change at the Union Building (Mabin 2019:21). These range from preserving the site as a national treasure, to debating name changes, such as the 2010 renaming of the amphitheatre to the Nelson

Mandela Amphitheatre. There are also the more extreme EFF proposals to destroy and remove all pre-democracy heritage and monuments (ANA 2015) and has even escalated all the way up to proposing the construction of a completely new seat of government (Mabin 2019:20-21). Thus, the Union Buildings is the ideal testing ground to explore the role of landscape architecture in the much-debated proposal for the transformation of heritage sites in South Africa.

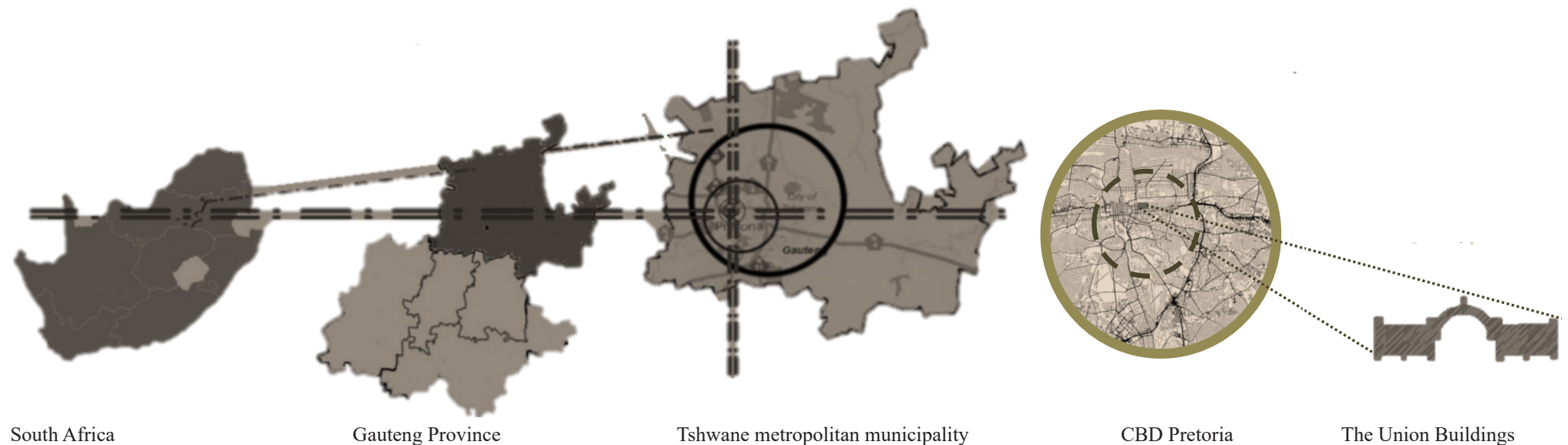


Figure 12. Site location (Author 2021)

Defining the first heritage issue and its research question

Binary solutions to heritage transformation.

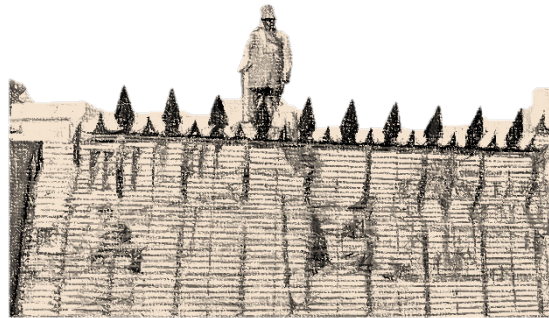
Heritage sites and urban historical contexts are often perceived as static resources that do not adapt to, or allow for contemporary use, furthermore due to isolated representation, their heritage, value, and use are contested and threatened with protests and destruction. Contemporary design solutions for such stagnant and contested heritage sites are mostly binary responses (Barker 2020) and often these heritage responses and their political debates only consider the two polar opposites of preservation or destruction. As important as it is to remember and protect our past, the Union Buildings

and South Africa at large consist of multiple rich, complex layers of heritage and narratives that were interwoven over time. It lacks a more inclusive representation of the rich heritage that makes up its historic fabric which might have been addressed with less binary heritage approaches.

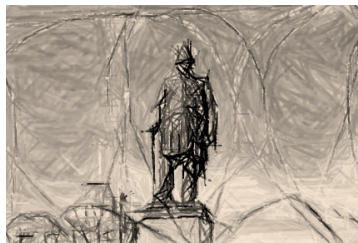
Local examples of heritage celebration in Pretoria and South Africa, very often focus on monolithic, ideological monuments that celebrate singular narratives and lack the inclusive celebration of the multitude of different narratives, individuals, cultures, and historic events that do not fall under political ideologies and those who were lost in

the pursuit of war and political ideals. Some of these sites of historic and cultural importance are the Voortrekker Monument, the Afrikaanse Taal monument, and the larger site of the Union Buildings.

1. What theoretical approach in landscape design can be applied in the Union Buildings gardens to oppose the future application of the existing binary heritage approaches and to prevent the realisation of the politically debated extremes of pure preservation or destruction?

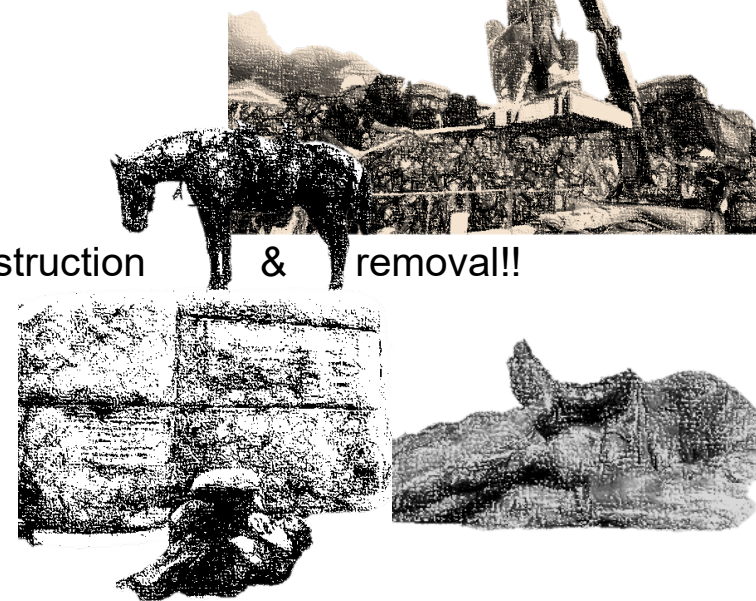


Either Conservation & Preservation



Binary Heritage solutions

Or Destruction



& removal!!

Figure 13. Binary heritage approaches (Author 2021)

Defining the second heritage issue

Lost and forgotten narratives and heritage layers

Although the gardens were originally meant to be enjoyed during lunchtime by the original 1500 governmental employees of the Union Buildings (Rencken 1989:38) it is also used by the general public and tourists. The Union Buildings is arguably one of the most important heritage sites in Pretoria, and the site analysis and historic documents indicate a much richer heritage than what ‘meets the eye’.

The investigations and analyses of the site and its history have uncovered the meaning of the tangible monuments, buildings, and gardens of the site, but also indicated that Meintjieskop has a very rich history that pre-dates the construction of the Union Buildings in 1910 and the founding of Pretoria in 1855.

Paintings and written sources (Swanepoel 2006a,b & Crane 1877) revealed that one of Mzilikazi’s military kraals was situated on Meintjieskop between 1823 and 1835 and possibly the same structures were later used for herding. The site was also used for recreation before the construction of the Union Buildings: a few examples include the 1887 Anglican community sports on

the site after thanksgiving celebrations, the 1889 picnic for 450 schoolchildren on the site, and the Pretoria citizens who reportedly often swam in the natural pool at the foot of the site, dubbed as the Meintjies swimming pool or Meintjies’ hole (Swanepoel 2006a). The ridge was also fortified with a blockhouse and redoubt during the Anglo Boer war and there was also a 1902 Anglo-Boer war concentration camp that is believed to have been on the same ridge less than 1.5 km west of where the Union Buildings stand today, in the location of the presentday Bryntirion estate and presidential residence Mahlamba Ndlopfu (Hattingh 1967; Swanepoel 2006a,c). Archeological excavations and investigations were done in this area in 2007 after a midden was found, believed to have been related to the use of the koppie for a blockhouse and redoubt during the Anglo-Boer War (Van Vollenhoven & Pelsers 2007, Otto 2005 & Van Vollenhoven 1992).

As a private estate this area is inaccessible to the public and since the camp did not exist very long and had no church or churchyard to bury the dead, there is no monument or memorial to honour the victims of the camp (Swanepoel 2006).

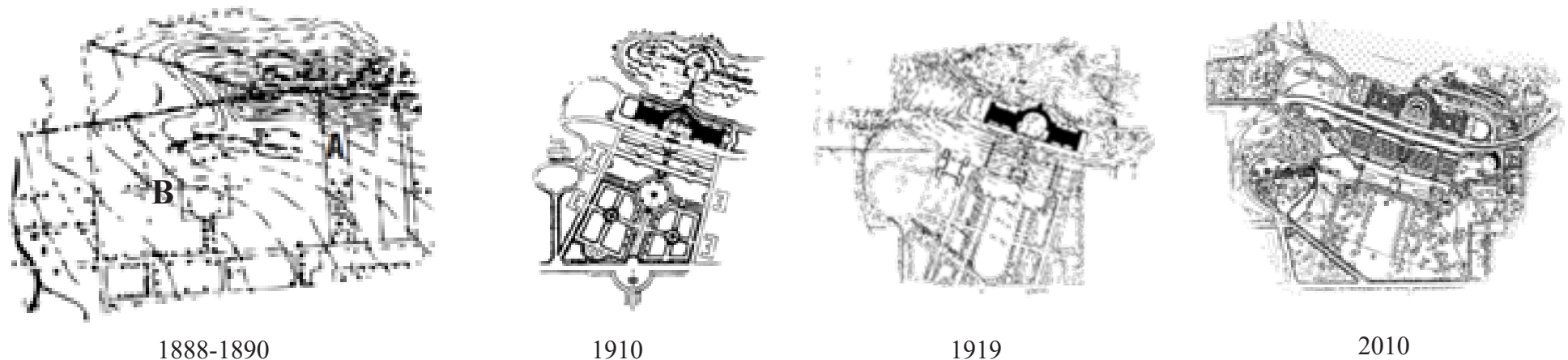


Figure 14-17. Site development (Varies)

Lost and forgotten narratives and heritage layers

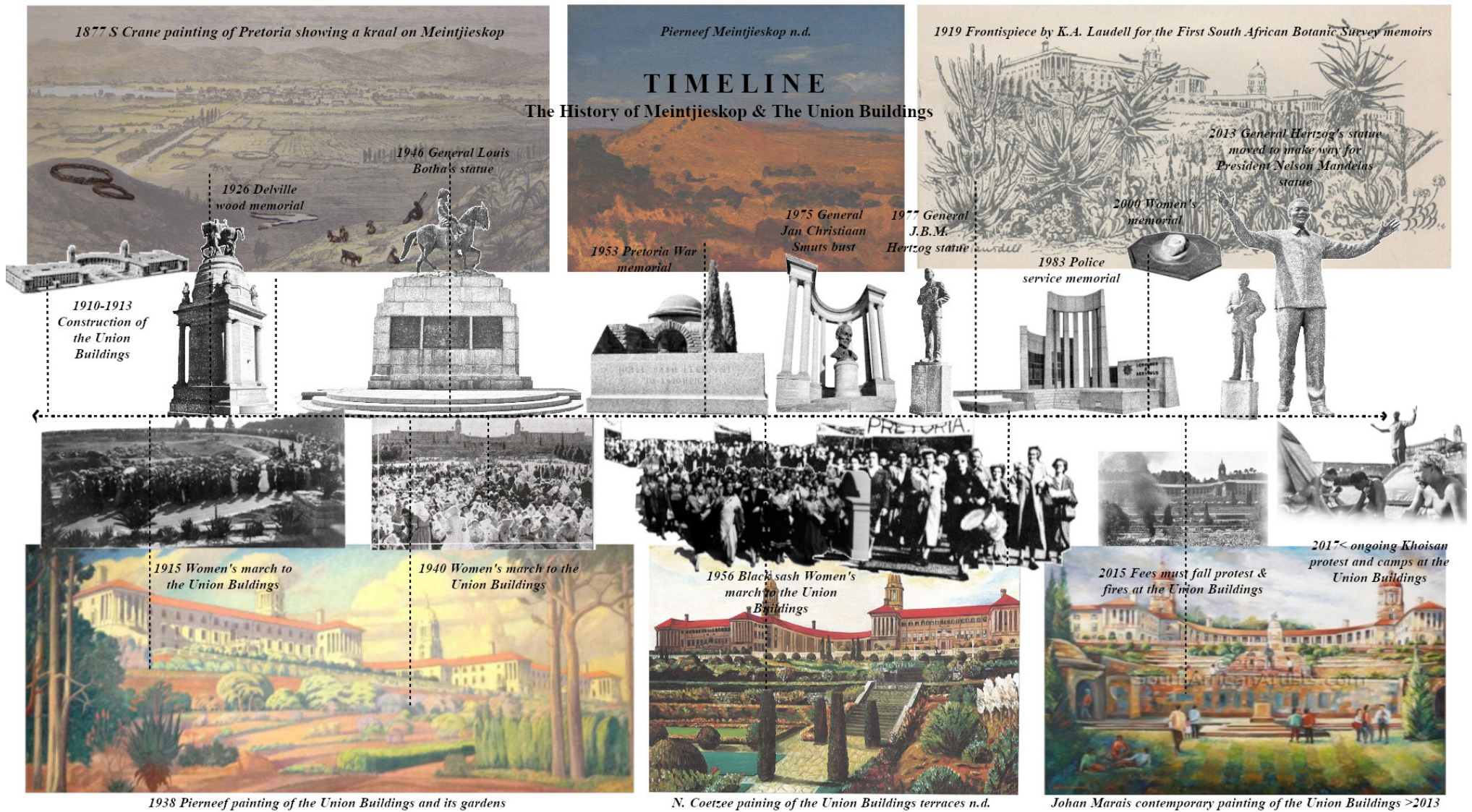


Figure 18. Site timeline Monuments and art (Author 2021)

Defining the second research question

Furthermore, there is also little to no trace of the different ceremonies and protests that took place over the last 111 years at the Union Buildings.

Historically the site always acted as a protest ground, with the first protests to the Union Buildings taking place in 1915, very soon after its construction, followed by protests in 1940 and the famous 1956, Black Sash, Women’s March, all three of these being women’s protests (Spies 1971), however, the site is not necessarily robust enough for these protests and has led to makeshift solutions to the threats posed by more volatile protests such as protest fences and access prohibited to the top terrace, amphitheatre and koppie.

Many of these layers of heritage and the narratives of these groups and places have been lost and forgotten over time.

2. How can a landscape intervention be applied as a medium for heritage transformation to oppose the current limited iconographic programming of the Union Buildings gardens, and allow the site to act as an all-inclusive park that reflects the broader society and democratic spirit of South Africa?

Figure 20. Union Buildings (1938) by J.H. Pierneef (1886-1957). Commissioned by the City Council of Pretoria for the Union Castle ship “Pretoria Castle” (Duffey 2010)



Figure 19. Union Buildings photograph (Alan Yates 1908)



Defining the third heritage issue and its research question

Natural heritage vs cultural heritage
Herbert Baker originally intended for Meintjieskop to be accessible, but today the site offers little connection to its natural heritage and environment and originally wished to showcase African sun-loving plants on the terraces. However, the Renaissance styled gardens with principles borrowed from the Arts and Craft movement, was designed for visual appeal and passive recreation and eventually turned into manicured, clipped gardens with a number of invasive exotic

species being protected for their heritage status. Artists such as Lausdell, Carter, Mayer, Pierneef and Goosen (See figure 5, 7, 9 20, 22) tried to capture the original essence of the site and gardens but over time some of the original beauty and intentions were lost. Despite the high number of visitors drawn to the terrace gardens each year, they are seldom aware of the rich botanical heritage of the site, the old botanical garden, old herbarium, Flanagan arboretum and natural koppie, which are mostly neglected, inaccessible to the public and

hidden away. As a possible result of the public's ignorance of these aspects and their importance and need for protection, they can be lost forever. In August of 2016, it was reported that the beautiful 1920's glass and iron greenhouses, that once stood in the herbarium portion of the site and was believed to have been imported from Scotland, was demolished to make way for parking (Arcadian 2016).



3. How can a contemporary landscape intervention revitalise Baker's original intentions for the site and realise his wishes to represent South Africa, its character and plants within this formal landscape.

Figure 22. Pretoria: Union Buildings Arthur English 1978 (Artefacts Dorothy Adendorff)



Figure 24. Union Buildings garden photograph scan (Marie Bester 2021)



Figure 21. Reported photograph of one of the Union Buildings' greenhouses (Arcadian 2016)



Figure 23. Union Buildings Pretoria oil painting 1945 by W. Goosen

Thesis statement

In response to the research questions, using the information and design strategies available, the following solutions and approaches to the design were developed.

1. What theoretical approach in landscape design can be applied in the Union Buildings gardens to oppose the future application of the existing binary heritage approaches and to prevent the realisation of the politically debated extremes of pure preservation or destruction?

In order to prevent the destruction of heritage structures and to counteract pure preservation and restoration, a more inclusive heritage representation is considered. However, a post-modern, pluralistic approach is taken that will mean more than one heritage approach being taken in different areas on site. It will result in both the retention of the existing layers where they are deemed important to the site's narrative, but in addition, also to add new layers that are deemed important to articulate on site. This will mean, representing and celebrating the lost and forgotten narratives and layers of the site's heritage. The intervention thus acts as a living monument that keeps both an eye on the past and becomes a design of the present.

2. How can a landscape intervention oppose the limited iconographic programming of the Union Buildings gardens, and allow the site to act as an all-inclusive park that reflects the broader society and democratic spirit of South Africa?

Not only will a more inclusive representation on site, oppose the existing heritage representation on site but the design will further counteract the current monolithic, monumental approach with a counter-monumental approach to the design.

3. How can a contemporary landscape intervention revitalise Baker's original intentions for the site and realise his wishes to represent South Africa, its character and plants within this formal landscape.

Lastly, the post-modern pluralistic approach to design is applied to the natural heritage of the site, by re-establishing the link between the natural koppie and designed landscape. A non-binary approach is maintained with regards to planting design, which might remedy the indigenous vs exotic planting debates and somewhat restore the original intentions of the garden. A middle ground is proposed between manicured and "wild" landscapes.

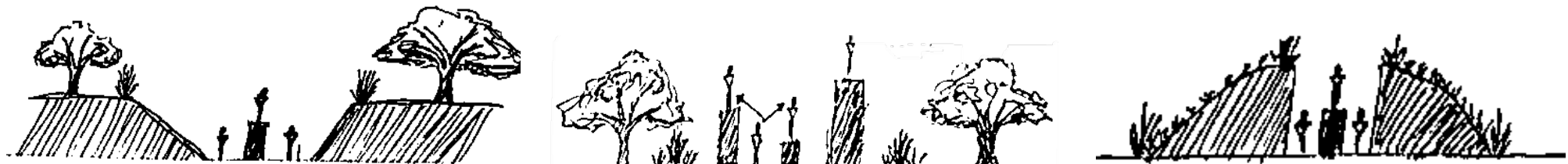
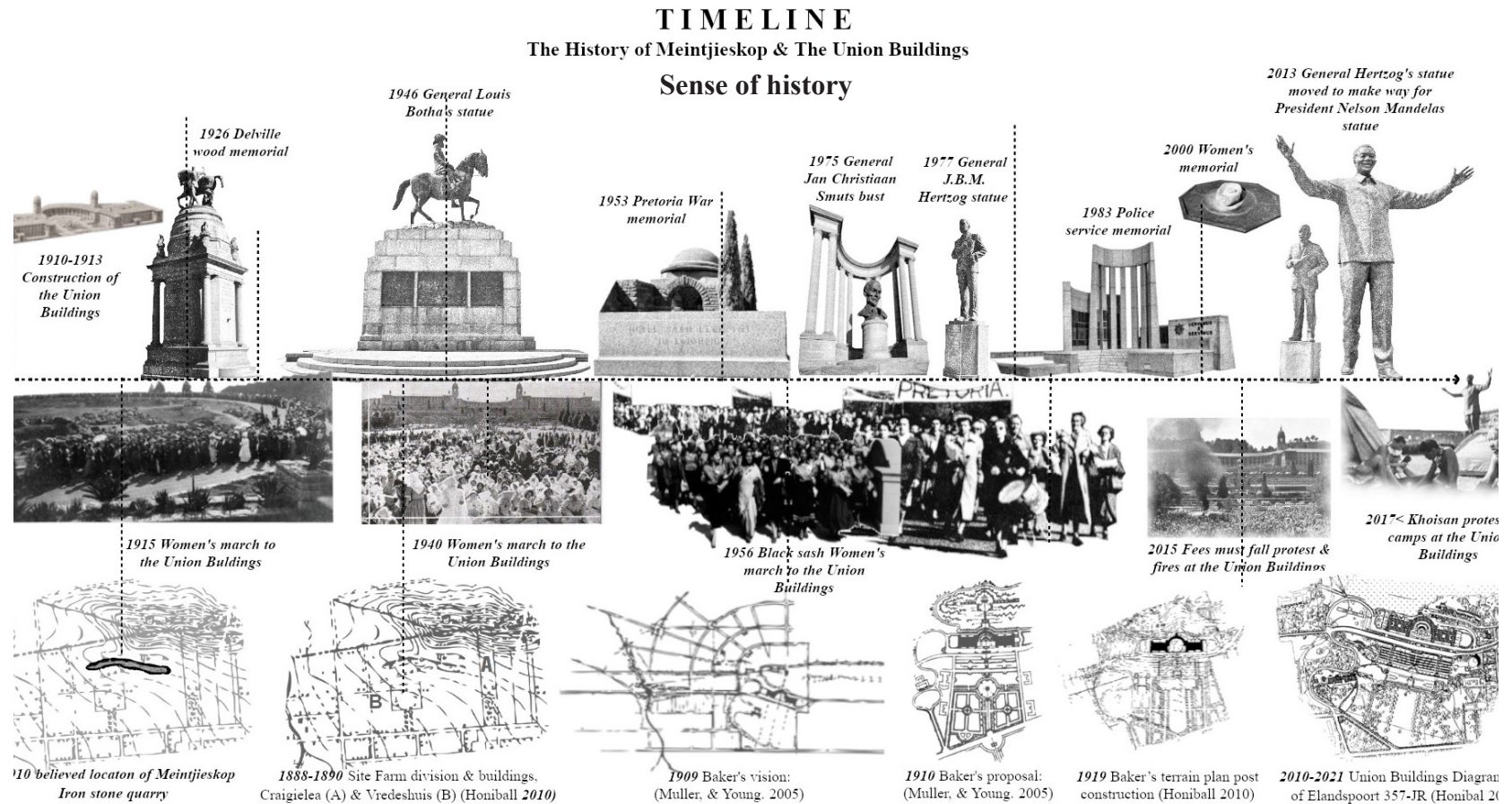


Figure 25-27. Dealing with existing Monuments
(Author 2021)

Theoretical framework

Critical regionalism

As the project has a very place-based approach in terms of understanding the site, its history, and narratives, critical regionalism was identified as the primary theory for the research and analysis phase of the project. Kelbaugh (2012) identified five characteristics of critical regionalism as a means to study a site and create architecture, specific to the spirit of a place, his work was based on the critical regionalism theories of Frampton (1981). The five characteristics that will be used to study this project is summarised on the following pages:



Display of architectural magnificence, grandeur splendour and political power through sculptures, but there is a lack of representation of the intangible heritage and a number of lost narratives on the site.

Figure 28. Site development, events and monuments timeline (Author 2021)

Spontaneous public park, active recreation, passive recreation, protest & celebration, ceremony.

Sense of place



Figure 29-36. Site activities (Varies)

Transition and change from a wilderness (natural koppie) to formal gardens as a threshold to the city and cultivated landscape.

Sense of nature



Figure 37-44. Change in nature (Varies)

Arts and Craft styles gardens with a Renaissance layout with terraces, niches, sculptures, water features, formal gardens and stone craftsmanship.

Sense of craft



Figure 45-48. Masonry (Author 2021)

Heritage legislation protecting architecture & monuments & the power play between private political space and public space.

Sense of limitations



Figure 49-52. Protected structures (Author 2021)

The following three problems were used to determine an appropriate approach to the design.

First the need to represent the rich layers of the forgotten history of the site, that is not adequately being represented (or not at all),

Secondly, to deal with the contested heritage of the existing monuments,

lastly, to avoid the current binary approaches to only protect or destroy the heritage.

Counter-monumentalism was identified as the best theory to guide the design as it denies the presence of an imposing, authoritative social force in public places (Stevens, Franck & Fazakerley 2012:952). It typically opposes monumentalism whereby, usually, the government or politicians establish monuments in public spaces to symbolise themselves or their ideology to influence the historical narrative of the place (Stevens et al.2012:961), similar to the current conditions at the Union Buildings. Principles taken from this theory is:

1 To contrast the existing monuments - such as the contested statues of generals Botha, Hertzog and Smuts.

2 To address the forgotten and painful history - such as the kraal, concentration camp, and protests.

3 To focus on multiple narratives, cultures, periods, and people, not only specific isolated ones and to not idolise them.

4 These narratives are often represented in unexpected ways, such as through art along a route that blends with its environment.

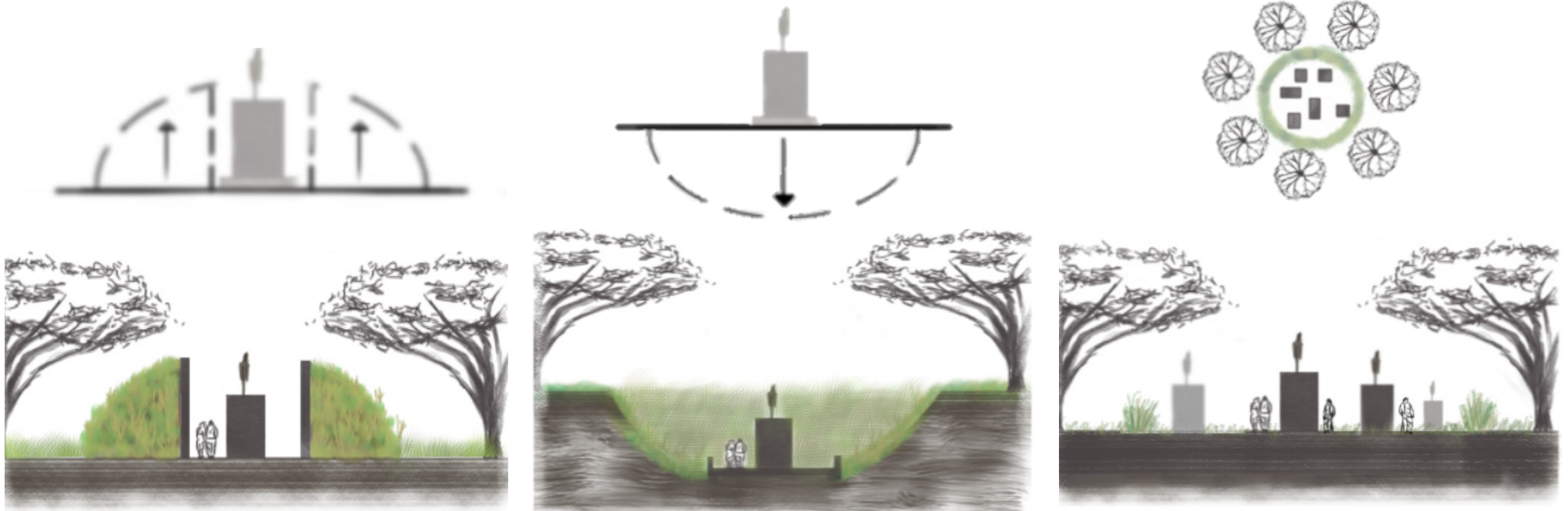
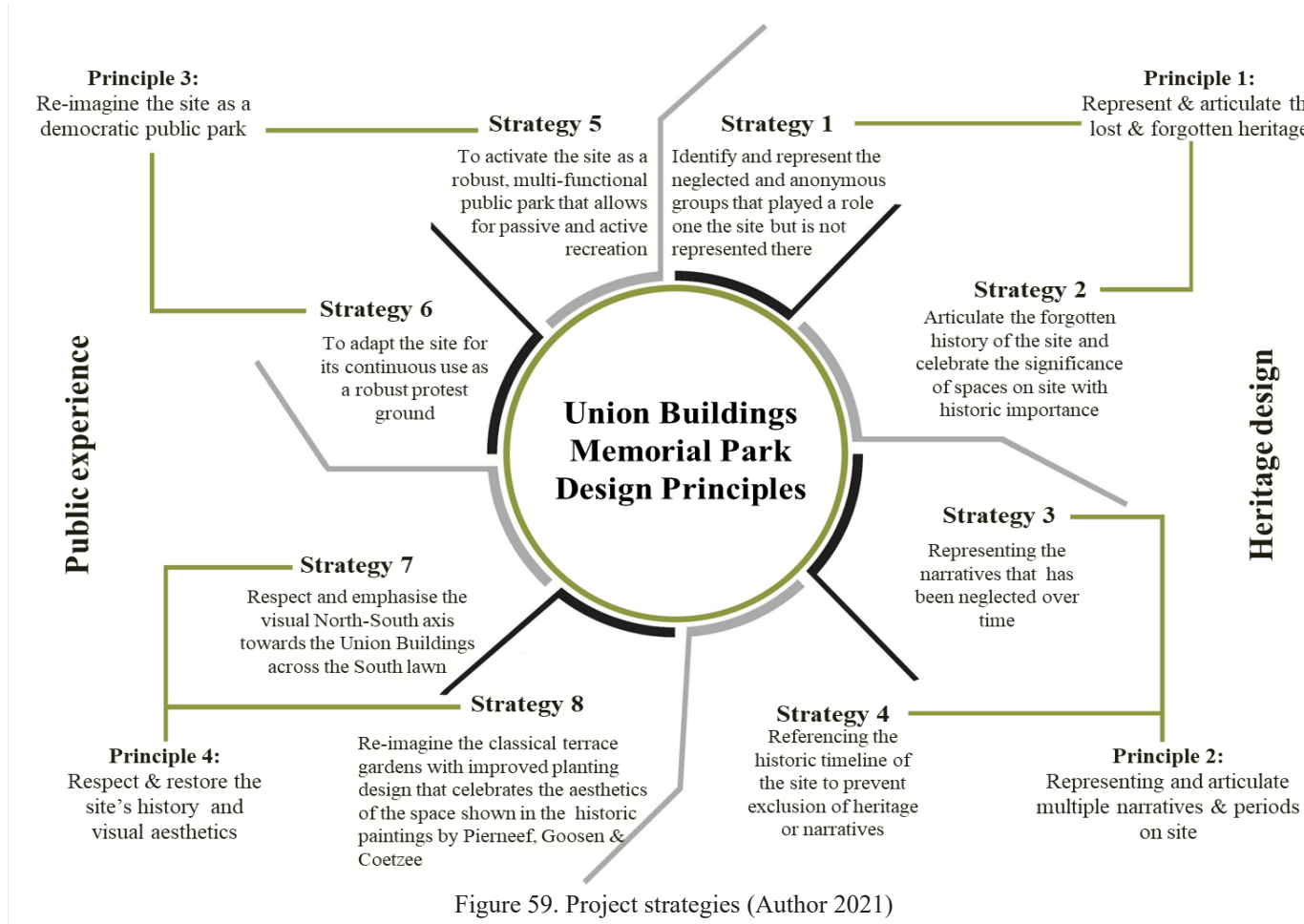


Figure 53-58. Counter monument (Author 2021)

Project intention

Project intention

- The aim of this dissertation is to generate a renewed landscape design proposal for the Union Buildings gardens that ensures continued use and celebrates the uncovered layers of heritage.
- The ideal is to find a balance between the past, present, and future use of the site, to remedy the inappropriate use of designed spaces and to restore the neglected historic areas and prevents future loss of heritage fabric.
- The project aims to counteract the isolated representation of specific past events and political individuals. And also aims to identify and represent the series of historic events that took place over time and their associated narratives of the neglected and anonymous groups that were once part of the site.



Normative position

My normative stance echoes that of the South African architect, Professor Derek Japha (1986), who argued, that all heritage projects can not be based on a single aesthetic approach. He stated that there is no single correct answer to these projects, or for that matter a simple solution that can be applied to all heritage projects. He believed that both a traditional, vernacular solution and a very aesthetic, contemporary solution can be acceptable, as long as every decision during the designer's approach was underpinned by respect for the site's heritage significance.

Based on the study and work done to date, the normative stance is taken, that the solution to the heritage transformation issues of the Union Buildings, should not be simplified and reduced to the typical binary heritage approaches of pure preservation or restoration. According to Barker (2020), heritage projects and sites should not purely be conceived as static resources, and these projects should ensure processes that allow for critical architectural solutions and avoid your typical binary responses. It is therefore my stance that a site as complex as the Union Buildings can't be expected to have one sole solution to solve every single heritage-related issue that occurs. A single binary approach applied to all the different aspects of the site is set up to fail from the start. Complex sites such as these require a post-modernist approach of pluralities that embraces multiple uses and contexts on a site whilst accommodating diverse layers of viewpoints and histories. Each layer is dealt with individually to celebrate its identity and its part played in the formation of the site, but also to express these layers to become evident to unaware visitors.

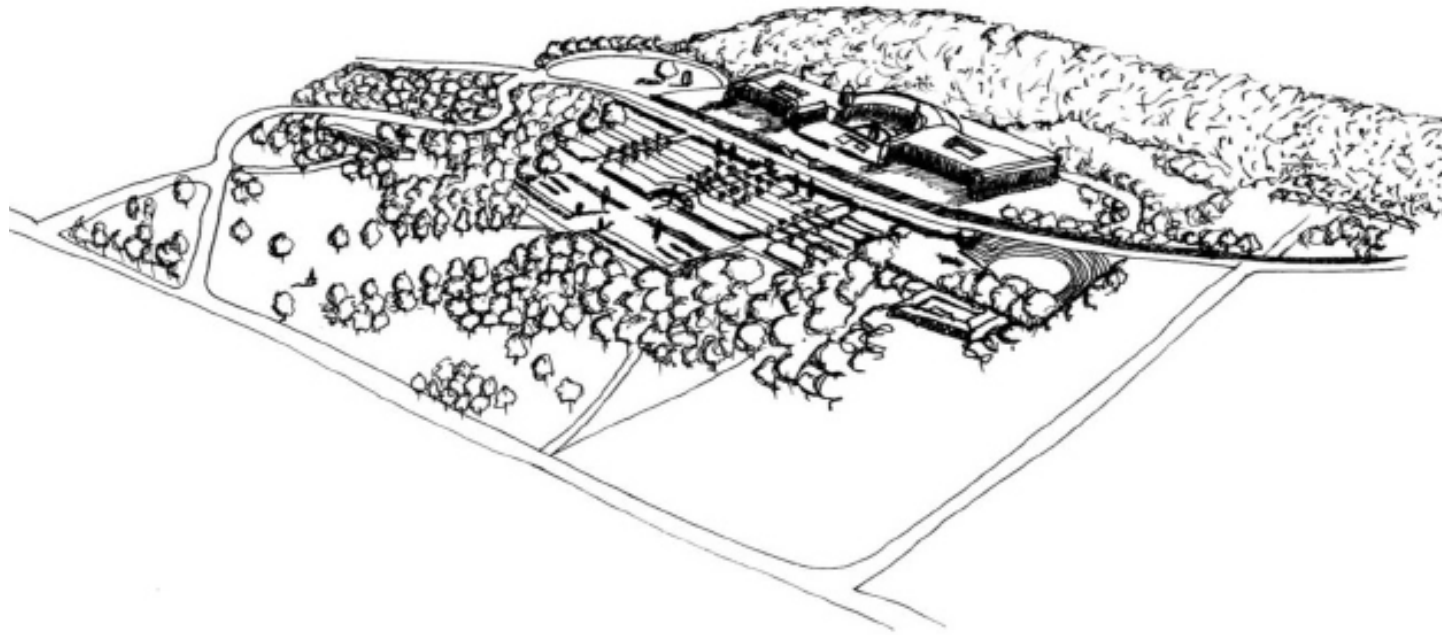


Figure 60. Site axonometric (Author 2021)

Proposed program

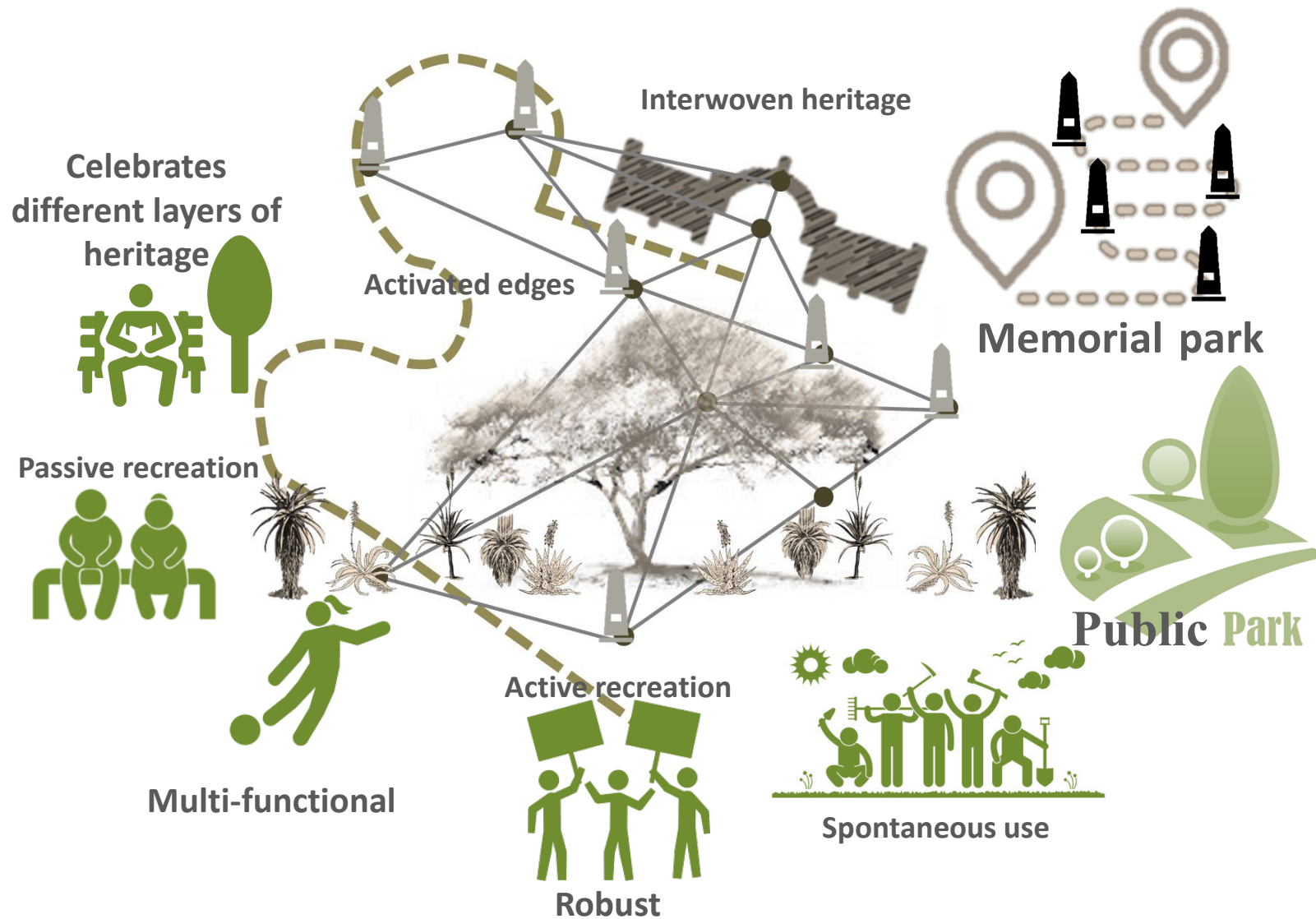


Figure 61. Programs (Author 2021)

Research methodology

Based on the research questions that deal with finding a contemporary pluralistic approach to heritage transformation, the design methodology will entail studying the site and generating its design from two perspectives: first, and most importantly, as a heritage site and secondly as a public park that offers passive and active recreation.

Pre-design research phase: Mapping the tangible and intangible

Existing historic maps, published research and aerial photographs will be used to identify areas and elements of heritage importance and then to map the tangible aspects of the site to create an Autocad base map, as there is not one that I was able to obtain from any of my sources.

A study of the site based on Heritage Impact Assessment principles will have to be done with regards to the location and condition of the tangible heritage of the site and to categorise them according to heritage legislation.

A limited literature review will be used to study the history of the Union Buildings, to identify and map the intangible heritage and possible lost or forgotten narratives that the users are unaware of. A timeline will be made of the site's history and its existing heritage iconography.

For this, the chosen methodology is based on the deductive paradigm which will focus on a limited literature review and an analysis of existing heritage approaches and critical regionalism and counter monumentalism theories. This study will focus on how principles of critical regionalism can best be applied to study the site and during the design process to create a design that is suitable in its regional context and on how counter-monumentality principles can best be applied to create a living monument. The information gathered from the study will be used to determine the design criteria, concept, and design language or principles most suitable for a contemporary design creating a living monument on the site.

Existing maps published information and research will be used to study the different structures and areas of cultural and natural importance on the site and to determine their age and heritage significance and to use these with two scales proposed by Barker (2020:129) to value the significance and age of the areas on a heritage site in order to determine the appropriate approach and attitude to take with regards to transforming these areas and whether it requires restoration, conservation, rehabilitation or can be adapted for other uses.

For the research-by-design phase - I identified a number of different important steps and strategies.

First, to understand the legal parameters of the design project as a heritage site.

Second, to study counter monumentalism theory and how it can be applied to the project.

Followed by a number of design strategies or experiments relating to the existing site, to inform the contemporary design. These design strategies include:

1. Programming the site
2. Finding a new geometry
3. Unveiling the unseen nature
4. How to represent forgotten narratives

Lastly, during the technical development phase, the planting of the site will be studied along with Baker's original intentions, and how a contemporary planting design can be approached in a non-binary way that may include natural landscape and manicured gardens as well as the combination of indigenous and exotic species to maximise the existing visual effect of the gardens.

Summary of Site Analysis - Programs

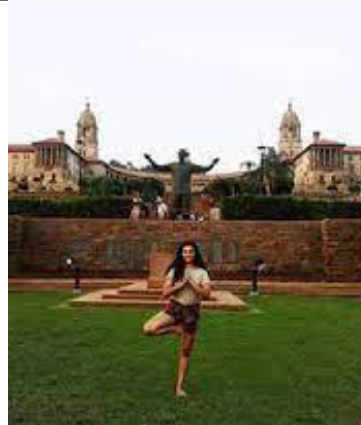
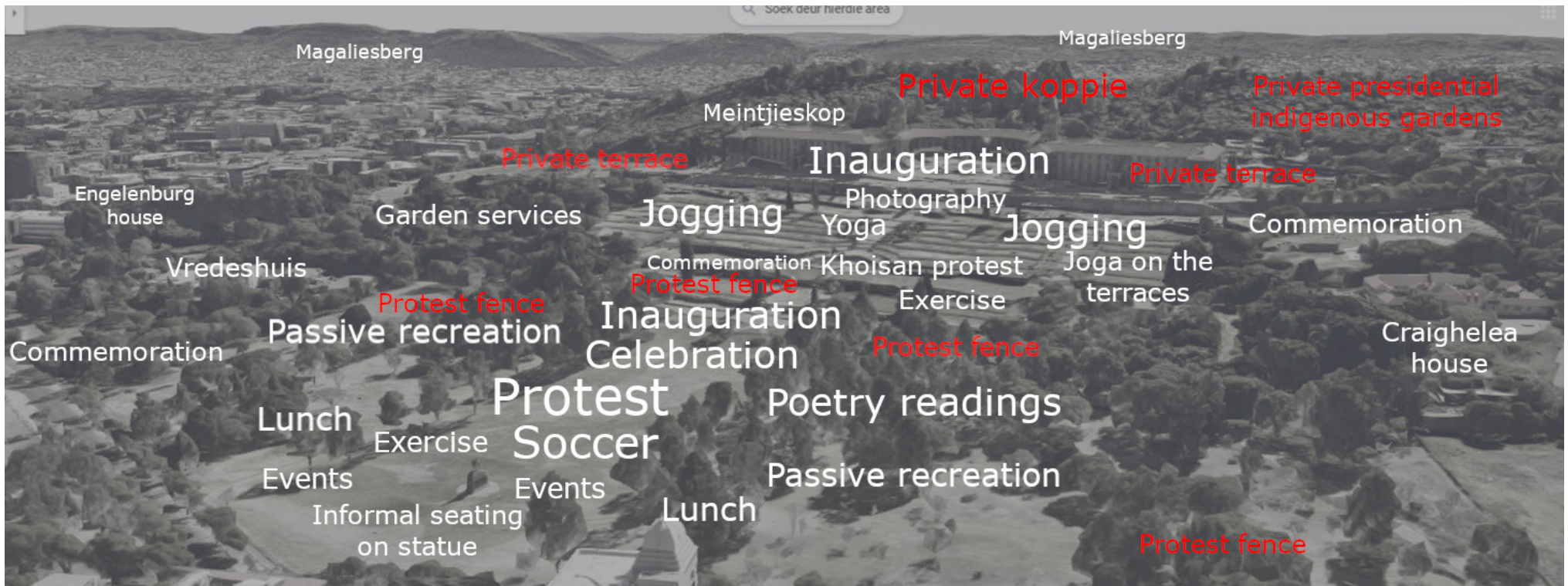


Figure 62-71. Site activities (Various)

Summary of site analysis

The original mapping looked at the region and ridges of Pretoria and the role that they played in the development of Pretoria, first for the fortification of the city during the Anglo-Boer War, then for the construction of monumental visual icons such as the Voortrekker Monument and the Union Buildings and lastly as environmental reserves and recreational escapes. However, I concluded that the heritage of these sites are often contested and that the natural environments are not easily accessible to the citizens of this area as they are surrounded by highways and charge a pricy entrance fee, and furthermore are private in the case of large portions of the Magaliesberg and also Meintjieskop. This created an opportunity to allow access to the natural environment of Meintjieskop as was intended by Sir Herbert Baker and also to deal with the contested heritage problem at the UB.

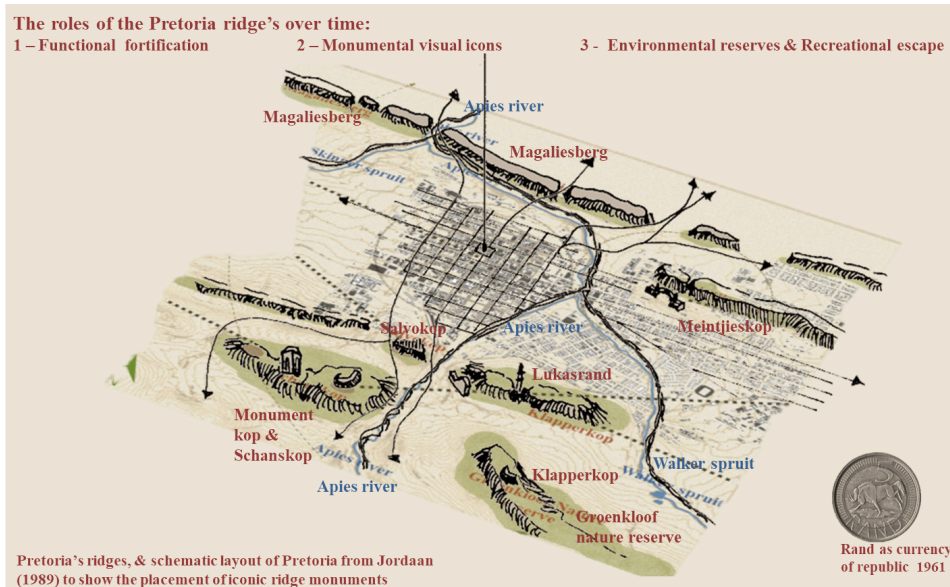


Figure 72-73. Pretoria's ridges and monuments (Author 2021)

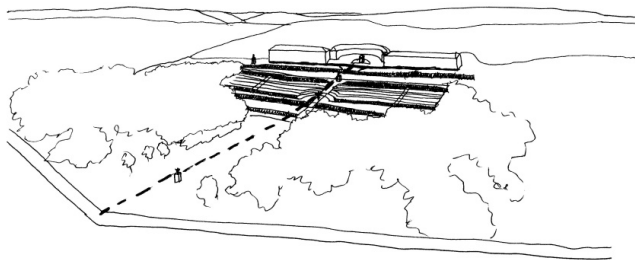


Figure 74. Union Buildings' context (Author 2021)

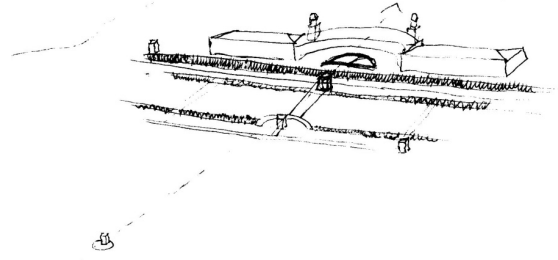


Figure 75
 Union Buildings' axis & orientation (Author 2021)

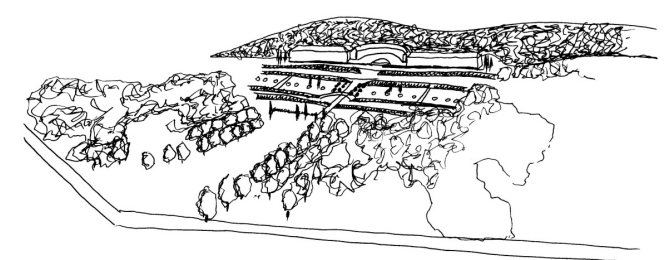


Figure 76. Union Buildings' surrounding environment (Author 2021)

The heritage mapping concluded that in accordance with SAHRA legislation, the monuments and sculptures are protected as part of the national heritage site, all structures, trees, and architecture older than 60 years are protected and that sculptures can only be moved with permission from SAHRA after a long application process and only in extreme cases. Thus, the design had to be approached in a way that would not change the structures, statues, and many of the trees on the site but also that would not change the visual quality of the site.

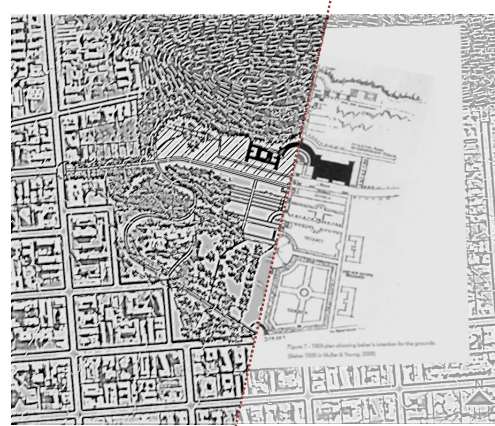


Figure 77. Existing plan vs Baker's design Intention (Author 2021)

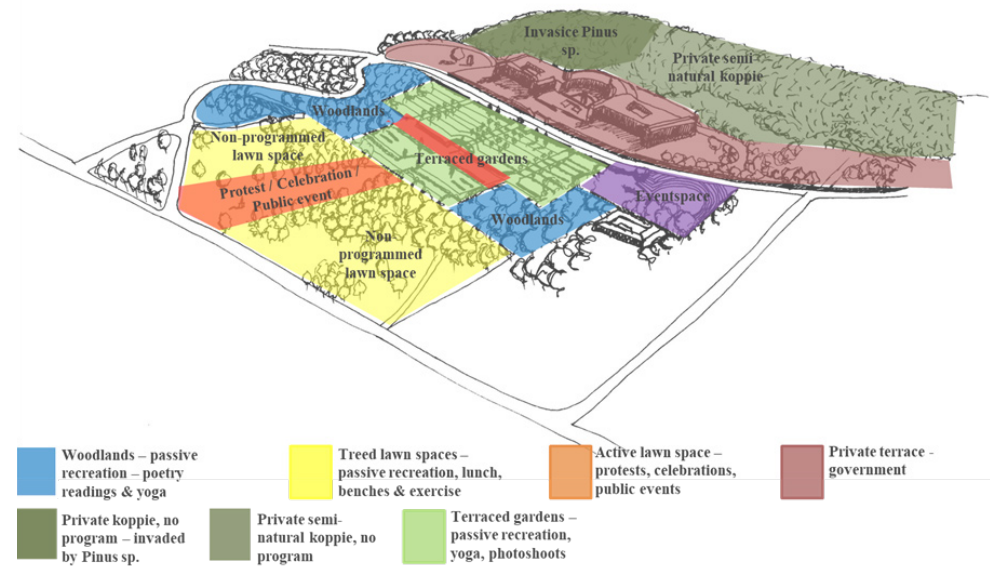
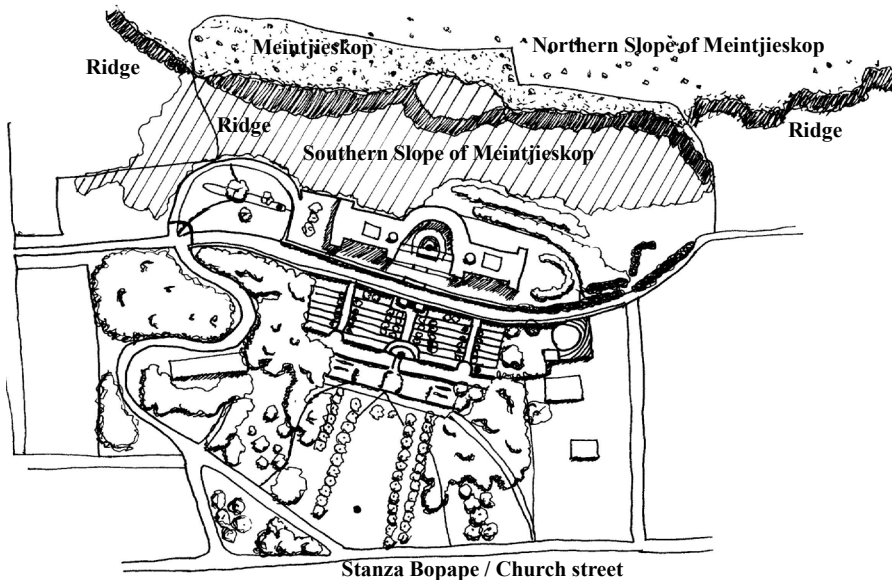


Figure 78-79. Site analysis - Union Buildings site conditions(Author 2021)



Figure 80. Site and surrounding region's heritage connections (Author 2021)

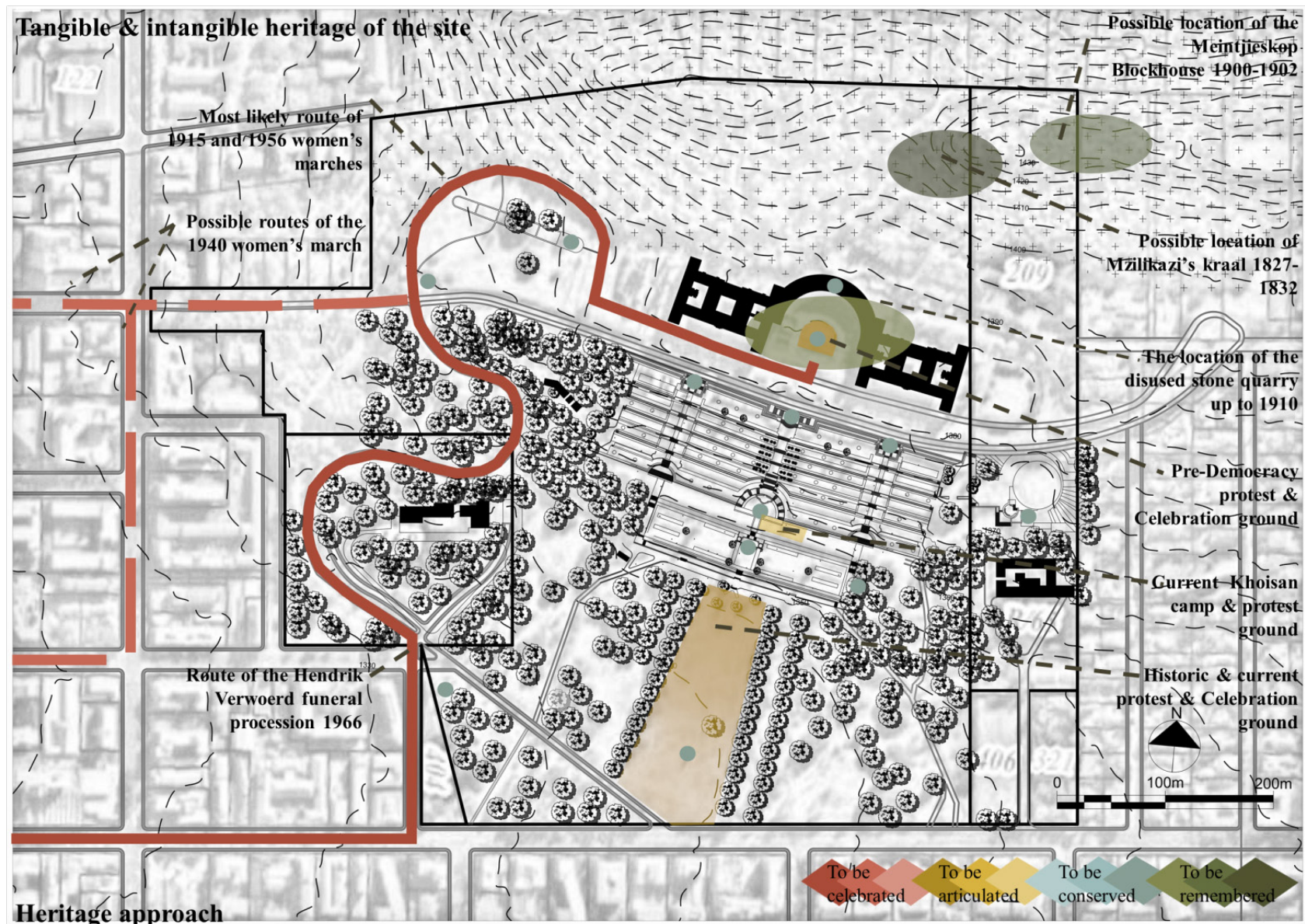


Figure 81. Heritage routes and structures with possible approaches to their continued existence (Author 2021)

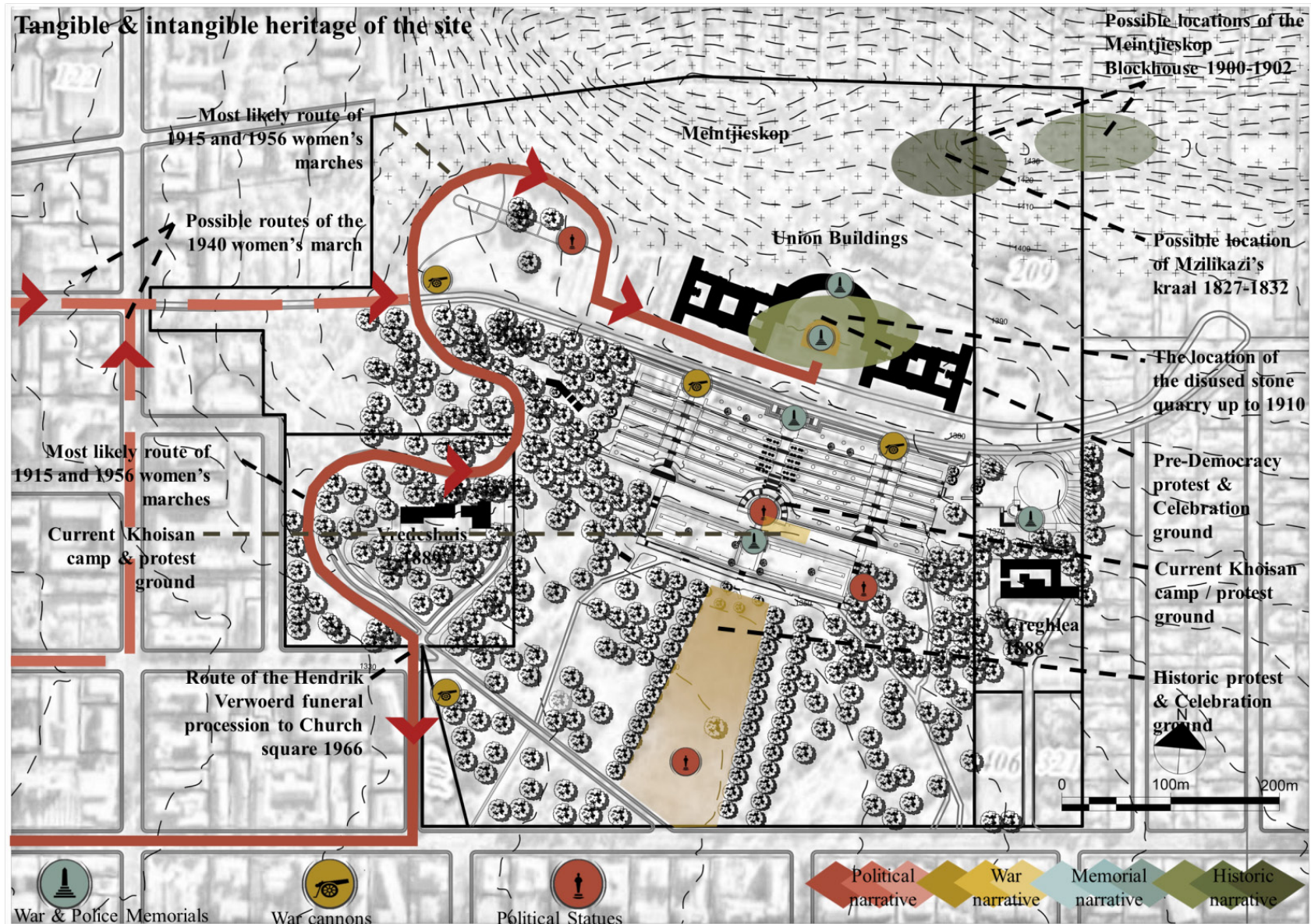


Figure 82. Identifying tangible and intangible heritage (Author 2021)

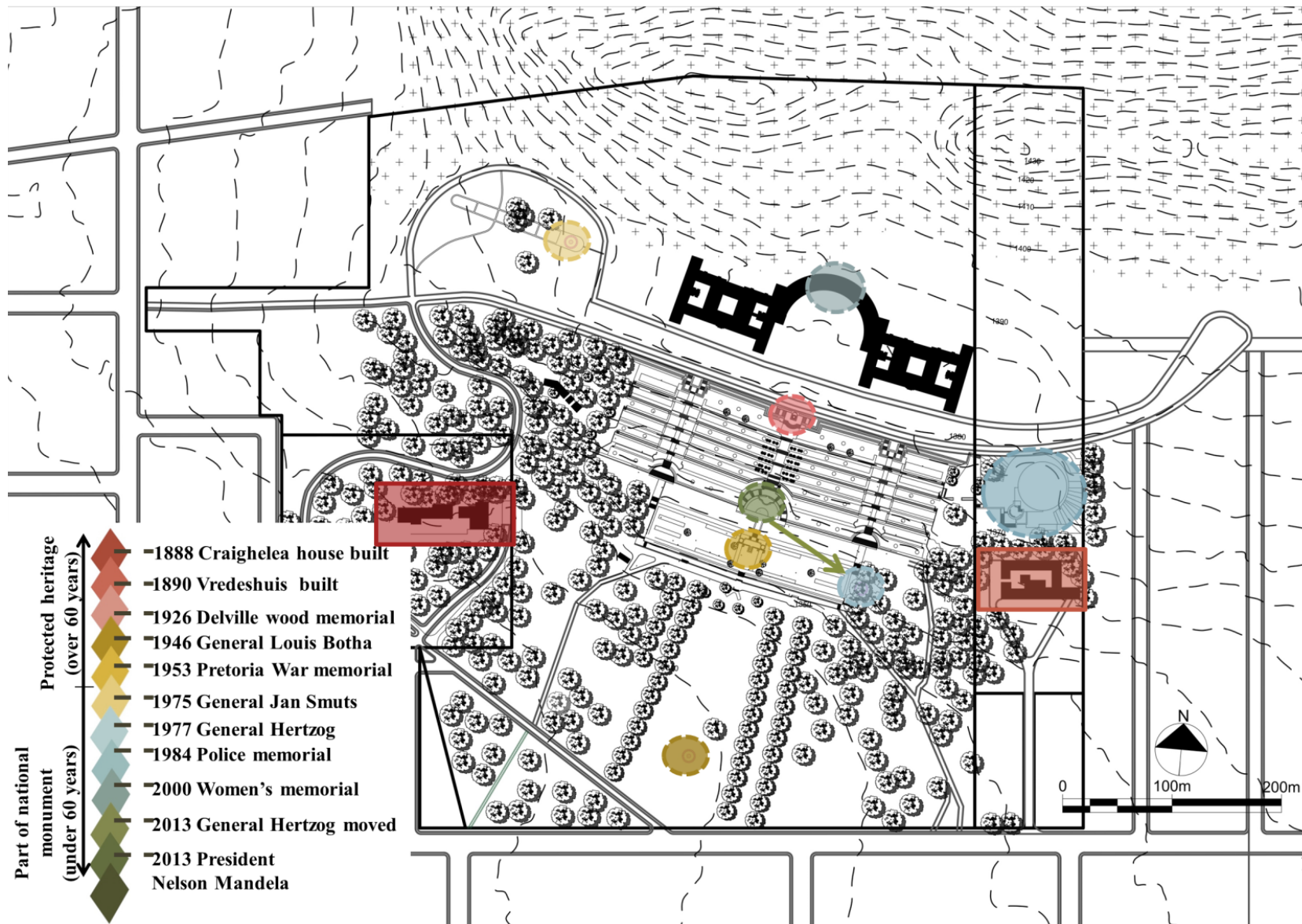


Figure 83. Tangible heritage timeline (Author 2021)

Conclusion

The initial approach to the project was place-specific and was primarily focused on gaining knowledge and an understanding of the Union Buildings' history, narratives, and on-site situation. This revealed the rich multi-layered history and narratives of the site. The binary approaches of preservation or destruction of specific contested heritage sites and structures were identified as prejudiced responses, that chose to focus on specific narratives and exclude others. It was concluded that the continued sole preservation and representation of specific narratives on-site, as well as the pure restoration of it would lead to further contestation, just like the destruction of the existing heritage would.

By identifying areas with forgotten narratives, a new approach to the site became evident. The landscape will be re-programmed to accommodate these narratives and then the design is used to connect these portions of the site along a single line of movement. The design thus becomes a palimpsestic journey, leading the visitors to multiple areas with different heritage values and narratives (previously unknown to the visitors). The pluralistic approach to the design reveals these areas of forgotten and neglected narratives but also aims to retain, complement and activate the existing heritage rather than to move, destroy or replace it.



Figure 84. A new approach envisioned (Author 2021)

