MKHONDA LODGE & EDUCATIONAL FARM
PIET RETIEF, MPUMALANGA

Creating a new vernacular

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the design of a lodge and all its components, which include accommodation, exhibition spaces, conference facilities, restaurants, public services, fishing dams and a certain amount of cottages. Regarding accommodation, the proposed lodge would be able to provide for large groups of people, but would still adhere to the more private needs of those individuals who prefer to travel alone.

Mkhonda Lodge and Educational farm is situated on farm Madola outside the town of Piet Retief, Mpumalanga. Piet Retief is integrated as part of a major tourist route that connects KwaZulu-Natal with Swaziland and the Kruger National Park. This means that a considerable amount of tourists inevitably pass through the town without adequate available accommodation or restaurants to satisfy their needs.

Sustainable building practices and appropriate technologies guide the design process in terms of the use of local materials and labour; construction techniques; and resource and waste management. Local labor plays an important role in an effort to educate the local community. All the buildings are predominantly constructed of straw bales which are used as infill between the timber pole post-and-beam root structures. Building elements are standardized to create a modular system which adds to the idea of keeping the design simple and easy to construct.

The design strives to create spatial balance and harmony for interior and exterior spaces, environmentally friendly yet functional infrastructure and materials, low maintenance, ergonomic solutions, and respect for our environment and resources. The ideal is that visitors are educated in an informal way through experiencing unconventional construction methods and design approaches.

In essence, this thesis continuously emphasizes respect for the site, its users through generally integrating a more holistic approach.
00 LIST OF FIGURES

01 INTRODUCTION
01.01 PROLOGUE
01.02 PROBLEM STATEMENT
01.02.1 Accommodation
01.02.2 Road Structure
01.03 THE SITE
01.04 CLIENT AND CLIENT REQUIREMENTS
01.05 OBJECTIVES
01.06 FEASIBILITY & PROJECT PHASING

02 DESIGN DISCOURSE
02.01 DESIGN PHILOSOPHY
02.02 DESIGN DIRECTIVES
02.02.1 Sustainable building practices and appropriate technologies
02.02.2 Straw bale construction
02.02.3 Culture significance of the courtyard
02.02.4 Mushroom cultivation
02.03 LAYOUT GENERATORS
02.03.1 Local building typologies
02.03.2 Significance of courtyard
02.03.3 The meaning of “Mkhonda”
02.04 DESIGN EXPLORATION
02.05 DESIGN

03 CONTEXT
03.01 TOURISM IN PIET RETIEF
03.01.1 Piet Retief as a tourist node
03.01.2 Farm Madola as a tourist attraction
03.02 HISTORICAL CONTEXT
03.03 SOCIAL CONTEXT
03.04 ECONOMIC CONTEXT
03.04.1 Economical and Social Implications of constructing a lodge
03.04.2 Economic sustainability of Mkhonda
03.05 PHYSICAL CONTEXT
03.05.1 Location
03.05.2 Site - Madola 154 H.T., Portion 5
03.05.3 Geology
03.05.4 Climate
03.05.5 Vegetation
03.05.6 Water resources
03.05.7 Existing buildings
03.05.8 Visual impact
03.06 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
03.06.1 Choosing an appropriate site
03.06.2 VISUAL ANALYSIS
03.06.2.1 SITE 1 – Main Development
03.06.2.2 SITE 2 – Private cottages in Kloof

04 PRECEDENT STUDIES
04.01 Sustainable design & appropriate building technologies
04.01.1 Blouberg Cultural Village
04.01.2 Kalahari Tent Camp, Northern Cape Crafrford & Crafford
04.01.3 North Island, Seychelles by Silvio Rech & Lesley Carstens
04.01.4 Singita Lebombo, Kruger Park
04.01.5 Walters Camp, Mavhuleni
04.02 CREATING A NEW VERNARICAL
04.02.1 Nomre House in Johannesburg by Silvio Rech & Lesley Carstens
04.02.2 “Glorious Mud”
04.02.3 “Nieuwe Sion Farmstead, Simondium, Western Cape”
04.03 STRAW BAILE AND COB CONSTRUCTION
04.03.1 Straw bale housing Blanco near
04.03.2 Inexpensive houses from straw bales
04.03.3 Straw House, Wales
04.03.4 Lodges

05 BASELINE CRITERIA
05.01 SUSTAINABILITY
05.02 NATURAL SUNLIGHT
05.02.1 Ponds to reflect light
05.03 ENERGY EFFICIENCY
05.03.1 Designing with the sun
05.03.1.1 Sunshine duration
05.03.2 Embodied energy
05.03.3 Solar panels (water heating)
05.03.4 Heating swimming pools
05.03.5 Passive design and Thermal regulations
05.03.5.1 Natural ventilation
05.03.5.2 Sun angles
05.03.5.3 Thermal Mass (solar walls, heat absorbing materials)
05.03.5.4 Western facades (orientation and size)
05.03.5.5 Insulation of building structures
05.03.5.6 Building form & orientation
05.03.5.7 Sizing and location of windows
05.03.5.8 Roof overhang
05.03.5.9 Active systems
05.04 OCCUPANT COMFORT
05.04.1 Foot comfort
05.05 WASTE MANAGEMENT
05.05.1 Grey water recycling
05.05.2 Storm water management
05.05.3 Rain Water Collection
05.05.4 Septic tanks/ sanitary drainage system
05.05.5 Organic waste
05.05.6 Water provision on site
05.06 ACCESSIBILITY AND CIRCULATION
05.06.1 Legibility
05.06.2 Persons with disabilities
05.06.3 Accessibility between different buildings
05.07 EDUCATION, HEALTH AND SAFETY
05.08 FLEXIBILITY
CONTENTS

05.09 LOCAL LABOUR AND PARTICIPATION
05.10 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
05.11 LOCAL PRODUCTION OF FOOD
05.12 BUILDING MATERIALS AND COMPONENTS
  05.12.1 Locality of materials
  05.12.2 Renewable materials
  05.12.3 Straw bales
  05.12.4 Wood
  05.12.5 Cord wood
  05.12.6 Stone and pebbles
  05.12.7 Earthen Plaster & floors
  05.12.8 Sand & Gravel
  05.12.9 Corrugated iron roofs
  05.12.10 Glass
  05.13 AESTHETICS
    05.13.1 Architectural character
    05.13.2 Resembling local culture
  05.14 LANDSCAPING & VEGETATION
  05.15 NATIONAL BUILDING REGULATIONS
  05.16 RATIONAL FIRE DESIGN
  05.17 ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS
  05.18 PARKING REQUIREMENTS
  05.19 ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

06 TECHNICAL INVESTIGATION
  06.01 BUILDING STRUCTURE
    06.01.1 Structural Timber Frames (Timber Roof Structure)
    06.01.2 Foundations
  06.02 SEWAGE SYSTEMS (septic tanks)
  06.03 BUILDING MATERIALS
    06.03.1 Straw Bales
    06.03.1.1 Straw Bale Dimensions
    06.03.1.2 Construction
    06.03.1.3 Height & width limits
    06.03.1.4 Strengthened straw bale walls
    06.03.1.5 Protection against moisture
    06.03.1.6 Joining straw bales with other materials
    06.03.2 Stone
    06.03.3 Wood
    06.03.4 Cordwood walls
    06.03.5 Earthen plasters and floors
    06.03.5.1 Plasters
    06.03.5.2 Floors
  06.04 TECHNICAL EXPLORATION OF PROPOSED BUILDINGS
    06.04.1 Cottages (Units C, D And E)
    06.04.2 Conference Facility
    06.04.3 Meeting Room
    06.04.4 Composting Area
    06.04.5 Offices and Reception
    06.04.6 Restaurant and Kitchen
    06.04.7 Lounge
    06.04.8 Staff Quarters & Laundry
  06.04.9 Timber Decking
  06.04.10 Courtyard and Landscaping
  06.04.11 Basic design of mushroom cultivation area
  06.04.12 Hiking Trails
  06.04.12.1 Mushroom trials
  06.04.12.2 Indigenous trials
  06.04.12.3 Educational excursions

07 TECHNICAL DRAWINGS

08 APPENDICES
  08.01 CONTEXT
    08.01.1 History Of Piet Retief
    08.01.2 The Influence Of Apartheid on residential areas of Piet Retief
    08.01.3 The History Of Boxer Pipe Tobacco
    08.01.4 Flora
    08.01.5 Fauna
    08.01.6 Tourism
    08.01.6.1 The importance of tourism
    08.01.6.2 What is tourism and eco tourism?
    08.01.6.3 Government’s involvement in tourism
    08.01.6.4 Tourism as a source of income
    08.01.6.5 Accommodation possibilities in the town of Piet Retief
    08.01.6.6 The tourism cycle
    08.01.6.7 The benefits of tourism
    08.01.7 Proposed New Roads
    08.01.8 Annual farm activities
    08.01.9 Placing of cottages in Kloof: building footprints and impact on the environment

  08.02 BASELINE
    08.02.1 Sun Angles
    08.02.2 Benefits of economic advantages of straw bale construction
    08.02.3 Short List Of Requirements For Structural And Non-Structural Straw Bale Construction
    08.02.4 New Mexico guidelines for Residential non-load bearing bale construction
    08.02.4.1 Section 1: General
    08.02.4.2 Section 2: Straw bale construction standards
    08.02.4.3 Definitions
    06.01.1.1.1 Specifications
    06.01.1.1.2 Wall construction
    06.01.1.1.3 Vapour barriers
    06.01.1.1.4 Reinforcing
    06.01.1.1.5 Anchors
    06.01.1.1.6 Openings
    06.01.1.1.7 Stucco/ plaster
    06.01.1.1.8 Parapets
    06.01.1.1.9 Electrical
    08.02.5 Specific design criteria for Mushroom Cultivation Area
    08.02.5.1 Spawn laboratory
    08.02.5.2 Growing / Cultivating rooms
    08.02.5.3 Solar dryer

09 REFERENCES

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA, A. KRYNAUW 2004
01 INTRODUCTION
01.01 Map of South Africa, Brochure: Kwazulu-Natal Tourist Map.
01.02 Church street ca 1925, BRITS, J.P. 1983 p.28.
01.03 Church street ca 1983, BRITS, J.P. 1983 p.142.
01.04 Church street ca 2004 Photo by author, 2004.
01.05 View onto Kloof. Photo by author, 2004.
01.06 View onto private Kloof area. Photo by author, 2004.
01.07 View onto main development area. Photo by author, 2004.
01.08 View onto farm Madola. Photo by author, 2004.
01.09 Main street of Piet Retief (Church street) Photo by author, 2004.
01.10a Map indicating distances to various destinations from farm Madola. Map drawn by author, 2004.
01.10b Mahamba Road. Photo by author, 2004.
01.10c Left turn-off from Mahamba Road to farm Madola. Photo by author, 2004.
01.10d Photo embracing main view. Photo by author, 2004.
01.11 Lowest part of main development area. Photo by David Krynauw, 2004.

02 DESIGN DISCOURSE
02.01a Local Zulu village – Main view. Photo by author, 2004
02.01b Local Zulu village – Main view. Photo by author, 2004
02.01c Local Zulu village – Main view. Photo by author, 2004
02.02 Local Zulu village. Photo by author, 2004
02.03 Local Zulu village. Photo by author, 2004
02.04 Traditional Zulu construction techniques. Photo by author, 2004
02.05 Traditional Zulu construction techniques. Photo by author, 2004
02.06 Traditional Zulu construction techniques. Photo by author, 2004
02.07 Traditional Zulu construction techniques. Photo by author, 2004
02.08 Traditional Zulu construction techniques. Photo by author, 2004
02.09 Local farmstead and saw mill. Photo by author, 2004
02.10 Local Zulu village – Main view. Photo by author, 2004
02.11 Local Zulu village – Main view. Photo by author, 2004
02.12 Local Zulu village – Main view. Photo by author, 2004
02.13 – 17 Analyzing Zulu villages. Sketches by author, 2004
02.18a,b Significance of courtyards. Sketch by author, 2004
02.19 - 21 Contour model of farm Madola. By author, 2004
02.22 Circle / Courtyard as layout generator. Sketch by author, 2004
02.23 Initial concept sketch of experience within cottage. Sketch by author, 2004
02.24 Initial concept sketch of cottage plan. Sketch by author, 2004
02.25 Initial concept sketch of cottage elevation. Sketch by author, 2004
02.26 Initial concept sketch of locally produced elements within each cottage. Sketch by author, 2004
02.27 Exploration of sloping site - Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
02.28 Exploration of sloping site - Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
02.29 Arranging functions around central courtyard. Sketch by author, 2004
02.30 Concept sketch of proposed architectural character & aesthetic quality of the design. Sketch by author, 2004
02.31 Initial proposed layout of Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
02.32 Stone walls proposed as landscaping elements to improve overall legibility within the landscape. Sketch by author, 2004
02.33 Developing the layout of the Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
02.34 Investigation of joining two sleeping units. Sketch by author, 2004
02.35 Incorporating solar panels into the design. Sketch by author, 2004
02.36 Concept sketches of Lounge & Bar to emphasize the most important view. Sketch by author, 2004
02.37 Lounge & Bar opening up towards the view. Sketch by author, 2004
02.38 Lounge & Bar overlooking vegetable gardens. Sketch by author, 2004
02.39 Initial sketch of outdoor deck area overlooking the landscape. Sketch by author, 2004
02.40 Finalizing the entrance into the Conference Facility. Sketch by author, 2004
02.41 Concept sketch of formal courtyard layout. Sketch by author, 2004
02.42 Sketch indicating the influence of circular lines on cottage’s layout. Sketch by author, 2004
02.43 Developed cottage plan. Sketch by author, 2004
02.44 Investigating the possibility of an outside shower. Sketch by author, 2004
02.45 Influence of natural ventilation patterns to displace warm air through clerestory windows. Sketch by author, 2004
02.46 Concept design of an exposed straw bale wall. Sketch by author, 2004
02.47 Designing cordwood space dividers within the various cottages. Sketch by author, 2004
02.48 Advantages & disadvantages of placing timber roof structure in- and outside straw bale walls. Sketch by author, 2004
02.49 Exploring natural sunlight penetration into larger buildings. Sketch by author, 2004
02.50 Designing roof overhangs for optimal interior temperatures. Sketch by author, 2004
02.51 Concept sketch of central courtyard as focus point in Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
02.52 Concept sketch of exposed composting area. Sketch by author, 2004
02.53 Detail investigation of the Lounge’s layout and finishes used. Sketch by author, 2004
02.54 Finalizing the plan of the Meeting room. Sketch by author, 2004
02.55 – 02.63 Model of earliest design. Photo’s by author, 2004

03 CONTEXT
03.01 Rainbow route brochure - Mpumalanga Explorer Map, A guide to the province 2003
03.02 Map of Piet Retief, Brochure, Assegaaig ‘Experience’, printed by MASPRINT, Piet Retief.
03.03 Aerial Photograph, relationship between Piet Retief and Madola
03.04 Sawmill on Madola. Photo by D. Krynauw, 2001
03.05 Sawmill on Madola. Photo by D. Krynauw, 2001
03.06 Vegetable gardens on Madola, 2004. Photo by author, 2004
03.07 Contour Map of Madola. Piet Retief Municipality, 2001
03.08 Subdivision of Madola, 154 H.T - Portion S. Sketch by author, 2004
03.09 Layout of farm Madola. Sketch by author, 2004
03.10 Contour model of Madola. Done by author, 2004
03.11 Contour model of Madola. Done by author, 2004
03.12 Darm in Kloof area. Photo by D. Krynauw, 2000
03.13 Darm 2 near to main dirt road. Photo by author, 2004
03.14 Photo of farm Madola, indicating two areas. Photo of Mkhowenda Lodge. Photo by author, 2004
03.15 Plan of farm Madola, indicating two sites. Diagrams by author, 2004
03.16 Site main development area. Photo by author, 2004
03.17 View overlooking main development area. Photo by D. Krynauw, 2004
03.18 Proposed Farm Factory site. Photo by author, 2004
03.19a Sunset on Madola, Photo by author, 2004
03.19b View overlooking main development area. Photo by author, 2004
03.19c Most important view. Photo by author, 2004
03.20 Existing farm roads, Photo by author, 2004
03.21 View of site and existing structures. Diagram by author, 2004
03.22 Section through the site. Sketch by author, 2004
03.23a Private cottage section of Mkhowenda Lodge. Diagram by author, 2004
03.23b Slope of natural ground level. Diagram by author, 2004
03.24 Flat-crowned cottage area. Photo by author, 2004
03.25 Transition from tar to dirt road as one enters the site. Diagram by author, 2004
03.26 Entrance to the private section of the Lodge. Diagram by author, 2004
03.27 View lines. Sketch by author, 2004
03.28a Slope of natural ground level away from the main dirt road. Diagram by author, 2004

LIST OF FIGURES
University of Pretoria etc. Krynauw, A (2005)
LIST OF FIGURES

03.28b Section through main development. Sketch by author, 2004
03.29 Structures visible from the main dirt road. Sketch by author, 2004
03.30c Section through Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
03.30b Development is placed behind wattle tree forest. Sketch by author, 2004
03.30c Views from Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
03.30d Views from Main development area. Sketch by author, 2004
03.31 Wattle forest to serve as parking area. Photo by author, 2004
03.32 View of Mikhonda Lodge from the main road. Diagram by author, 2004
03.33 Positions from where Mikhonda Lodge is visible. Diagram by author 2004
03.34 The Kloof. Diagram by author, 2004
03.35 Positions of units. Diagram by author, 2004
03.36 The Flat-crown tree. Diagram by author, 2004
03.37 Division between private and public areas on farm Madola. Sketch by author, 2004

04 PRECEDENT STUDIES

04.01a - d Blouberg Cultural Village. Blouberg Cultural Village. 2004 p.96-97
04.02a,b Kalahari Tent Camp: CRAFFORD, N. 2003 p.88-89
04.02a - d North Island, Seychelles. DU PREEZ, K. 2004 p.148-159
04.05 House in Johannesburg. VAN DYK, M. 2004 p.96-105
04.06a – f “Glorious Mud”. CREMER, A. 1999 p.44-50
04.07a – c “Nieuwe Sion Farmstead. Nieuwe Sion Farmstead, Simondium. 2004 p.130-131
04.08a – c Straw Bale housing. CREMER, A. 1999 p.44-50
04.09 Inexpensive houses from straw bales. Landbouweekblad 1995 p.46-47
04.10a,b Straw House. GLAKIN, M. 1997 p.38-39
04.14a – c Mateya Safari Lodge, within Madikwe Game Reserve. Brochure by Mateya Safari Lodge, 2004

05 BASELINE CRITERIA

FIGURES:

05.01 Winter and summer sun angles, Lecture notes, 2002
05.02 Angles for fixing of solar panels, sketch by author, 2004
05.03 Combined solar and electrical geysers, Lecture notes, 2002
05.04 Natural ventilation parameters, EVANS, M. 1980 p.128
05.05 Buildings structure design for moderate to cool climatic conditions, Lecture notes, 2002
05.06 Clerestory windows, Lecture notes, 2002
05.07 - 05.14 Local farm products. Photos by author, 2004
05.15 Cordwood wall, KENNEDY, J.F., SMITH, M.G., WANEK, C. 2002 p.143
TABLES:

05.01 Sunshine duration for Piet Retief. SCHULZE, B.R. 1986 p.50
05.02 Parking requirements. Table by author, 2004
05.03 Accommodation schedule. Table by author, 2004

06 TECHNICAL INVESTIGATION

06.01 Modular building structure – Type 1. Illustration by author, 2004
06.02 Modular building structure – Type 2. Illustration by author, 2004
06.03 Construction of stone foundations.
06.04 Diagram of sewage system. Illustration by author, 2004
06.05 & 06.06 Post and beam construction, Helene van der Merwe’s cob and straw bale workshop at the Waldorf School, Irene. Photo by author, 2004
06.07 Traditional roof construction at local Zulu villages. Photo by author, 2004
06.08 Different unit types. WANEK, D.H. 2004
06.09 Various sun angles into western half of family unit type E. Sketch by author, 2004
06.10a Initial design of cottage. Sketch by author, 2004
06.10b,c,d Final design of cottage. Sketches by author, 2004
06.10e Final model indicating overall layout & placement of cottages. Model by author, 2004
06.11a – c Initial design of Conference facility. Sketches by author, 2004
06.12a,c,d Initial design of reflective ponds & suspended ceilings. Sketch by author, 2004
06.12b,c Initial design of reflective ponds & suspended ceilings. Sketches by author, 2004
06.13 Heat displacement through clerestory windows. Sketch by author, 2004
06.14a,b Initial design of Meeting room. Sketches by author, 2004
06.15a,b Initial design of wall at composting area. Sketches by author, 2004
06.16 Initial design of Reception & offices. Sketch by author, 2004
06.17a,b Initial design of balustrade in restaurant. Sketches by author, 2004
06.18 Final design of restaurant. Sketch by author, 2004
06.19a,b Initial design of roof structure in Lounge. Sketches by author, 2004
06.20 Concept design of balustrade within Lounge. Sketch by author, 2004
06.21a – d Concept design of fire place in Lounge. Sketches by author, 2004
06.22 Final design of Lounge. Sketch by author, 2004
06.23a,b Initial design of water feature at central courtyard. Sketches by author, 2004
06.24a,b Initial design of gabion structures. Sketches by author, 2004
06.25 Final design of Staff Quarters. Sketch by author, 2004
06.26a Final design of Lounge. Public toilets, Service area & Conference facility. Sketch by author, 2004
06.26b Final model of main development area. Model by author, 2004
06.27 Concept design of cavity wall at Mushroom cultivation rooms. Sketch by author, 2004
06.28 Indigenous hiking trail. Sketch by author, 2004

08 APPENDICES

FIGURES:

08.01 Boxer Pipe Tobacco, www.swedishmatch.com
08.02 Headquarters of the Piet Retief Co-operative Tobacco Planters Association, Piet Retief: 75 jaar van vooruitgang. 1959 p.10
08.03 Yellow wood tree with damaged bark. Photo was taken in the region of Piet Retief by D.H. Krynauw, 1998
08.04 Tourist activities in PR vicinity. Brochure: Assegaaal Experience, Piet Retief: MASPRINT
08.07 Proposed new detour road. Map by author, 2004

TABLES:

08.01 Indigenous trees. Table drawn by D.H. Krynauw, 2003
08.01b Exotic trees. Table drawn by author, 2004
08.02a Reptiles. Table drawn by author and D.H. Krynauw, 2004
08.02b Mammals. Table drawn by author and D.H. Krynauw, 2004
08.02c Birds species recorded on Madola. Table drawn by A. Hols & D.H. Krynauw, 2000
08.03 Accommodation possibilities in the Piet Retief region. Table by author, 2004
08.04 Annual farm activities. Table by author, 2004
08.05a – f Sun angles for Piet Retief region. Tables by author, 2004
08.06a,b,c,d Financial feasibility study. By author, 2004