



Nobody Knows

Nobody knows how old it is. No-one
knows who made it, no-one knows
what it is for. Hands like these? No-one
knows. Stories laughter, words? Nobody knows.
The silent stone is silent. It does not
speak. Though the stone is written, it is
a text we cannot read since it does not
propose anything other than what it is.
The stone does not negate anything, it does not
argue against anything- it is silent,
it does not speak or choose to be silent.
Nobody knows how silent this stone is,
or how old, who, where, why this stone is.

Michael Cope, Ghaap, Sonnets from the Northern Cape, 2005

1.1 Overview of the context

Location of site:

Latitude 25° 24' 30" S and

Longitude 28° 04' 59" E

Tswaing, the Place of Salt in Setswana, is a 1946 hectare conservation area located 40km northwest of Pretoria CBD.

The Tswaing Crater nature reserve is located in the peri-urban environment of Soshanguve, easily reached by the city-dweller. It is a meteor impact site of natural heritage importance and is currently described as a 'open museum' hosting hiking trails and an undeveloped visitors centre. The theoretical enquiry is concerned with the problems relating to disorientation of the individual within his biophysical and cultural urban environment. The problems are addressed in the proposed project that is programmed as a built intervention housing opportunities to experience oral literature, while making the user aware of the landscape. The project function will reside under the title of a 'museum' that is accessible to both a local and foreign visitor as a universally important site.

1.2 Research methodology

The research methodology involved in this document is directed towards the end goal of a product in built form and the experience thereof. Thus the emergent theory is not confined to the written word, but rather embodies the eventual, proposed product.

In order to formulate a design question and subsequent solution, the extent of the problem has to be investigated using a research methodology. An architectural project is set in an environment that must address both the concrete and abstract needs of the client. This poses a uniquely complex problem. This is further perpetuated by the ambiguity of the client who represents not only the user of the building, but also the developer and manager. Consequently, a research methodology would include a host of elements to ultimately ensure a sufficiently complex solution.

Considering the nature of the site, it is clear that scientific and psychological data should be investigated. Therefore, it is appropriate to adopt an approach that would involve both qualitative and quantitative data collection and interpretation. The combination of the two research methods enables one to understand the quantitative data in terms of their human context. (Trochim: 1999) Thus, while this document will take relevant quantitative data into account, this will be done within a predominantly qualitative framework.

As the product, in its capacity as a 'theoretical statement', is unknown at the outset of the project, it will evolve from the initial data collection and interpretation thereof. In light of this, the appropriate research methodology was deemed to be a simple qualitative- quantitative investigation during which relevant literature is reviewed and the experience of the site is recorded. These findings are then synthesized through logical argumentation and graphic analysis to justify the design as end- product.

The above process is applied to this project in the following manner. The biophysical and cultural setting of the building implies the use of architectural theory that is discussed, evaluated and built upon by related theory. Quantitative data includes the physical and numerically definable attributes of the site and environment investigated in a site analysis. The significance of the site and certain areas within the site will further direct the study in a qualitative manner that will suggest sensitivities and opportunities for development and programming. These will continually shape and feed the theoretical argument that will culminate in a relevant design solution.

Simply put, the approach is an attempt to discover a product, or theoretical statement in a generative manner, which is a solution that is responsive to the given situation. (Trochim: 1999)

1.3 Goal

The goal of the investigation is to identify the problem of disorientation of the individual within his environment and subsequently find a solution that will offer the individual the opportunity to reconnect to the environment. This should encompass not only the biophysical environment but also the cultural and historical within which each unique individual is located. The location begs a solution to this that is sensitive to the biophysical environment in term of the significant visual and ecological resources.

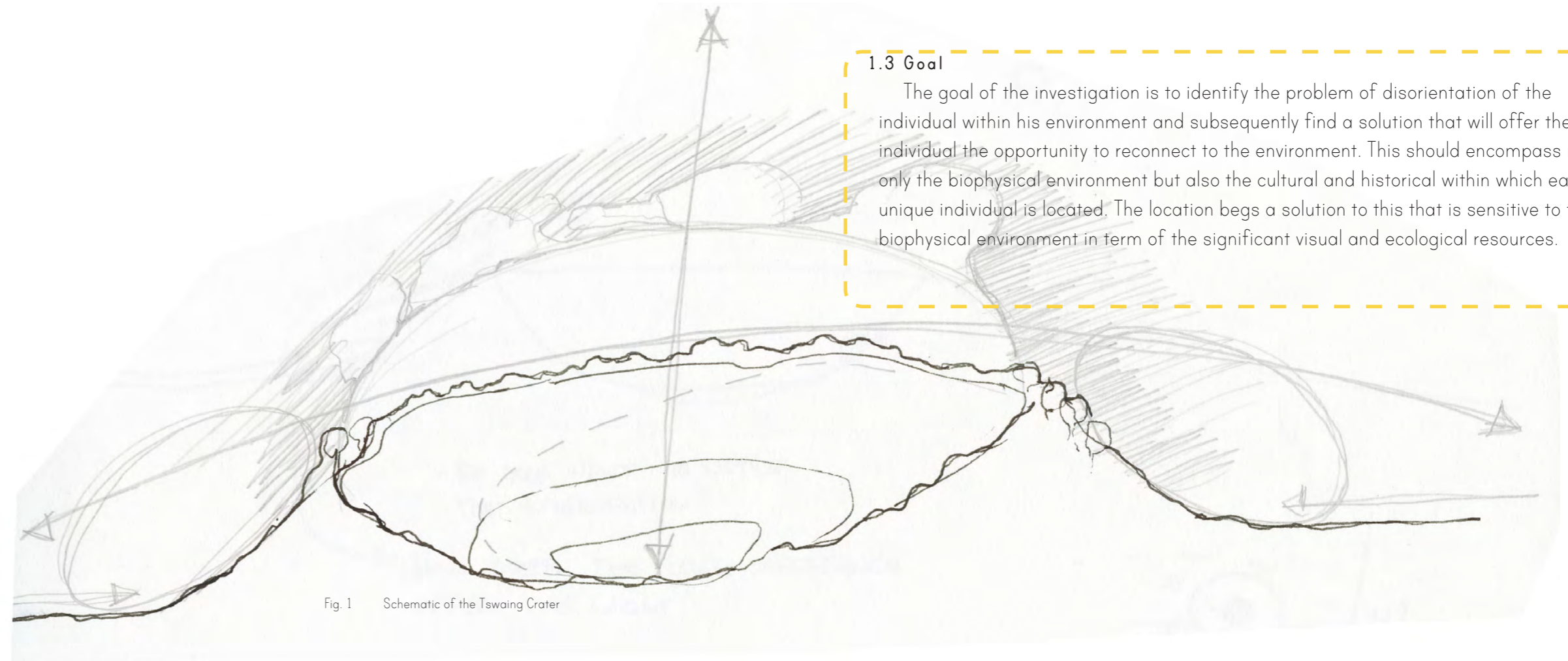


Fig. 1 Schematic of the Tswaing Crater