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CHAPTER 1_INTRODUCTION

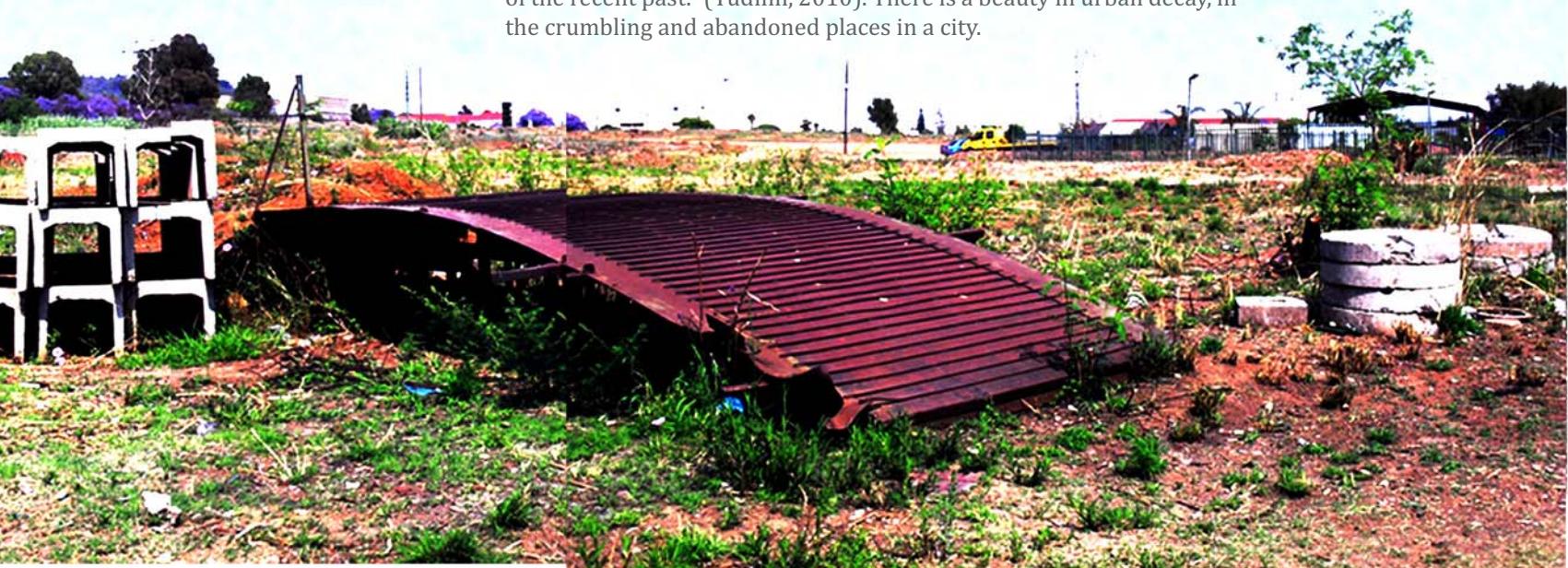


Illustration 1: Poetry of forgotten places, Salvokop



1.1 Preamble

"We humans are explorers by nature. The quest for discovery, both old and new, is part of what separates us from rest of the animal kingdom. Since the world we live in has been largely mapped and plotted, we urban adventurers turn our sights toward the relics of old and the ruins of the recent past." (Tudinh, 2010). There is a beauty in urban decay, in the crumbling and abandoned places in a city.





01 INTRODUCTION

"Cause on the surface the city lights shine
They're calling at me, come and find your kind
Sometimes I wonder if the World's so small
That we can never get away from the sprawl
Living in the sprawl
Dead shopping malls rise like mountains beyond mountains
And there's no end in sight
I need the darkness, someone please cut the lights"

(Arcade Fire, Sprawl II lyrics, 2010)

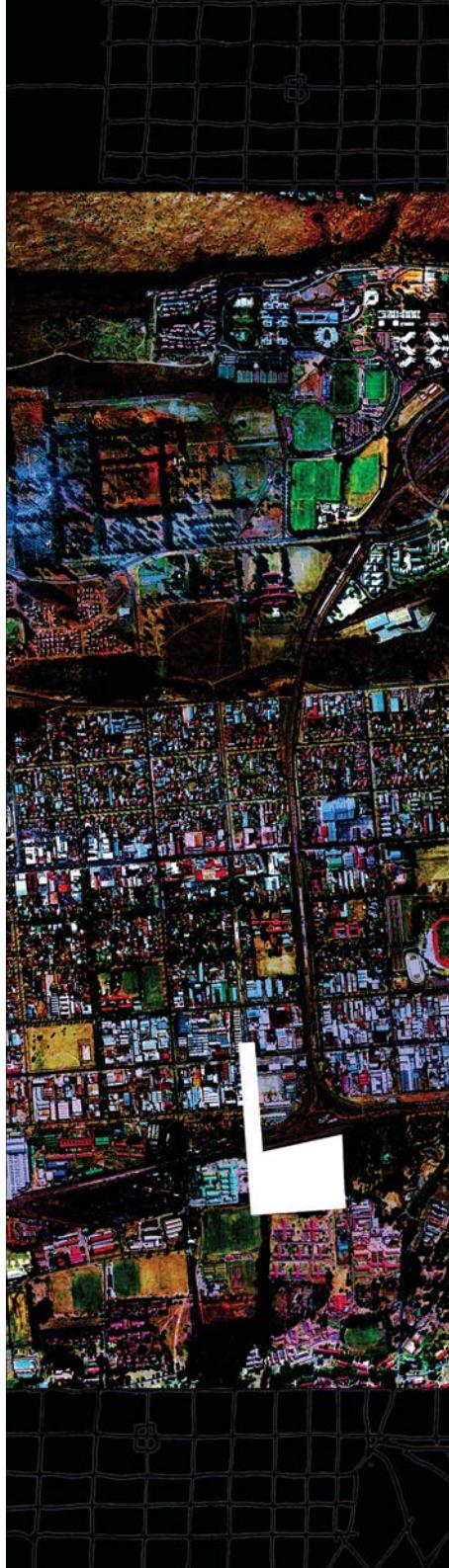


Illustration 2: Urban sprawl and wastelands



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‘A world where
and die in hosp

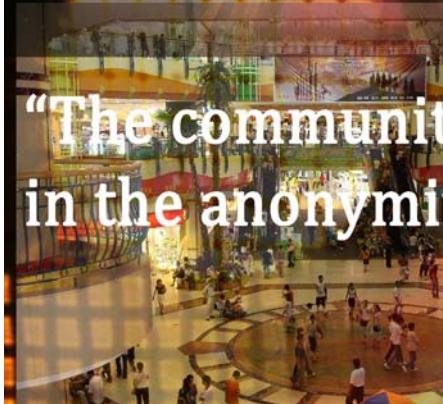


Illustration 3: Non-place.

“...people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitue of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce...”



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BILL MURRAY SCARLETT JOHANSSON

“The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of ‘places of memory’, and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position. A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions (hotel chains and squats, holiday clubs and refugee camps, shantytowns threatened with demolition or doomed to festering longevity); where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing; where the habitue of supermarkets, slot machines and credit cards communicates wordlessly, through gestures, with an abstract, unmediated commerce...”

Marc Augé, 1995

“...city of human destinies is experienced in the city of non-place, and in solitude”.

NON-PLACE



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01 INTRODUCTION

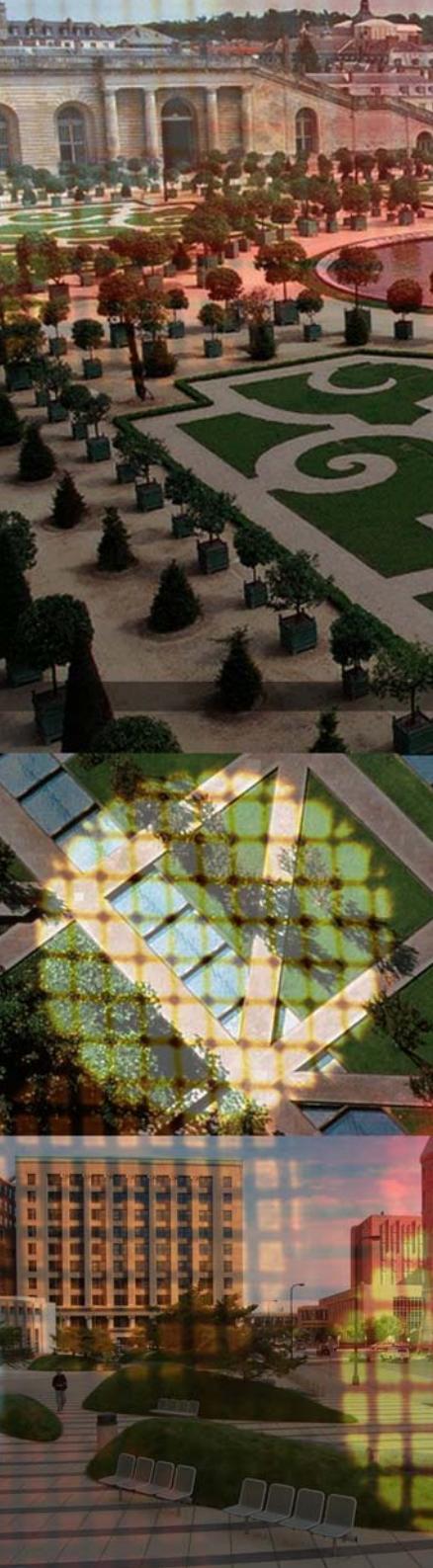


Illustration 4: Non-site



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NON-SITE?



01 INTRODUCTION

1.2 Background and context

Many cities are suffering from large-scale urban decay due to factors such as low density, decentralisation and urban sprawl. These factors lead to unsustainable wasteful cities, which are punctured with spaces that are left abandoned, delapidated, contaminated and wasted. People move away from the city centres, far from the supposedly crime ridden unnatural areas, in search of nature in the suburbs. Unknowingly, they continue to destroy the rare spots of nature that still exist. In addition, life is currently played out and experienced in the predictable non-places of a city. Tired, overworked people spend their lives in shopping malls, airports and on highways. In this monotonous life, humans desire uncontrolled and unpredictable places of adventure and exploration which are characteristics that can be found in enigmatic landscapes such as wastelands.

1.3 Problem statement

The real world problem:

People move to the suburbs in search of nature. As they move they destroy nature and contribute to the decay of urban form and fabric. Due to urban sprawl and other factors, cities are punctured with wastelands that lie abandoned, neglected and forgotten.

The theoretical problem:

Once identified for redevelopment or reuse the wastelands and their intriguing enigmatic character and richness are ignored and erased. The sterilisation and gentrification of these wastelands result in 'non-place'.

1.4 Hypothesis

The first hypothesis states that, on a planning level, wastelands can become the healing tissue that a city needs to reverse urban decay of form and fabric. These wastelands can be used to introduce nature in the city and encourage densification.

The second hypothesis states that, on a spatial and experiential level, wastelands have the potential to become enigmatic landscapes in reaction to the 'non-place' of modernity.

1.5 Aims and objectives

- To find informed methods and processes on a planning and spatial level that allow wastelands to add value to the city without losing its poetic character.
- To find methods to transform abandoned wastelands into ecologically healthy systems within a city.
- To invite citizens into these mysterious zones in order to experience, rather than repress the enigmatic quality of wastelands.
- To create an awareness of the 'other' enigmatic landscape opposite to the pedigree and controlled landscapes that currently exist.

1.6 Research questions

1. Is there a need for designed enigmatic landscapes in a city, as opposed to 'non-place'?
2. Can wastelands be transformed without losing their poetic character and if so what design methods and processes can be implemented to enhance the character of the site?
3. Can wastelands be developed into landscape space that will instigate urban densification?

1.7 Assumptions and delimitations

- Where required, concepts and guidelines for building footprints, heights and programmes will be provided because the focus of this study is landscape architecture.
- The study of wastelands in Pretoria has been restricted to the centre of Pretoria and Pretoria West for this dissertation.
- The 'Proposed Salvokop Framework' (see chapter 4) will be the assumed framework which will be followed for this dissertation.

1.8 Research and design methodology

A combination of a qualitative and quantitative approach will be used. Data will be researched by means of the descriptive survey method and the historical method.

- The Descriptive Survey Method includes taking photographs on the selected site and observing the area under



investigation.

- The Historical Method will include accumulating data in the form of past photographs and past aerial photographs, providing a timeline of the history of the site.
- A different design methodology to the standard and conventional linear approach will be proposed. This methodology focusses foremost on spatial and experiential levels. The process is almost accidental and organic, it grows naturally from one aspect to the other. The proposed design methodology for this dissertation can be seen in detail on page 36.