

Urban Agriculture - A Community Development Project

by Jacques Orton

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Study Leader: Dr Amira Osman

Introduction



“By the year 2025, 83 percent of the expected global population will be living in developing countries....Agriculture has to meet this challenge....Major adjustments are needed in agriculture, environmental and macro-economic policy, at both national and international levels, in developed as well as developing countries, to create conditions for sustainable agriculture and rural development.” Agenda 21 (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992)

Because food is being transported further than ever before, local crop varieties are being replaced by a few commercial types popular with supermarkets. This phenomenon of growing 'food miles' is far from sustainable and more and more poor parts of the city are becoming retail deserts. Air pollution, noise and road congestion is the by-product of this phenomenon. (Viljoen 2005:22)

There is no reason why fresh, local and seasonal food could not be promoted in the same way as the limited number of international foods that is available throughout the year. Urban agriculture will not supply all the food needs and some imported staple and special foods will still have to be imported from elsewhere, but to consume more food where it has grown will establish a sustainable and healthy balance between production and consumption. This is not only effective and practical but it will also be self-beneficial in reducing the embodied energy in contemporary food production. By reducing the energy requirements of goods and processes it will shrink the divide between those with access to abundant energy supplies and those who do not. (Viljoen 2005:29)



Urban agriculture in Africa is mainly a subsistence activity. Ordinary residents use urban space for food production under harsh economic conditions. This raises issues of legitimacy, land access, tenure and planning. There is a need to understand the concept of urban and peri-urban agriculture in Africa. Innovative policy intervention is needed to benefit local communities and the poor in terms of food security, nutrition and job-creation. Urban agriculture in Africa does not have an urban ecology and design focus like Europe. Continuous attention must be paid to the training and research that is needed to support and lead interventions for sustainable urban development. (Viljoen 2005:198)

This dissertation attempts to provide a platform where the local residents can be educated, empowered and given the opportunity to earn an income. This platform develops the community from the bottom up and could be implemented in townships across the country. The program takes form as an urban agricultural centre. The centre is located near Eerste Fabrieke Station in Mamelodi and is used as generator for other business, commercial and recreational activities. The urban agricultural centre also serves as a connection between Nellmapius and Mamelodi.

***If your vision is for a year,
plant wheat.***

***If your vision is for ten years,
plant trees.***

***If your vision is for a lifetime,
plant people.***

Old Chinese proverb

List of figures



Context

- 001 South African map with provinces obtained from www.samaps.co.za
- 002 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of Mamelodi obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department
- 003 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of site obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department
- 004 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of study area obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department
- 005 Figure ground of the fabric of the study area by author
- 006 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of study area obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department
- 007 Photos taken by author
- 008 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of site obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department
- 009 Heritage photos taken by author
- 010 Proposed urban framework of study area
- 011 Section through site by author
- 012 Section through site by author
- 013 Section through site by author
- 014 Section through site by author
- 015 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of study area obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department
- 016 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of study area obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department
- 017 HOLM, D. 1996. Manual for energy conscious design. Department minerals and energy: Directorate energy for development. Pretoria.
- 018 HOLM, D. 1996. Manual for energy conscious design. Department minerals and energy: Directorate energy for development. Pretoria.
- 019 Photo collage by author
- 020 Proposed urban framework of study area
- 021 Photo collage by author
- 022 Graphically manipulated aerial photo of study area obtained from the University of Pretoria; Geography Department

The Problem

- 001 Photo taken by author
- 002 Photo collage by author
- 003 Panoramic photo by author

Precedent studies

- 001 TILMAN, H. 1997. Integration or Fragmentation: The Housing Generator Competition. NAI Publishers: Rotterdam.
- Cooke, J. 2009. Greenshops Financial Services Centre. Journal of South African Institute of Architects, January /February 2009, p.22.
- 002 GERNEKE, G. 2006. Red Location Museum of Struggle. Architecture South Africa, May / June 2006:18-23.
- 003 COOKE, J. 2009. Greenshops Financial Services Centre. Journal of South African Institute of Architects, January /February 2009, p.22.
- 004 SOUTH AFRICA. Development Action Group. 2003. Housing Report; The Masisizane Woman's Co-operative. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- 005 UNKNOWN. 2003. Nelson Mandela Pavilions. Leading Architecture, January / February 2003:46-47.
- 006 JOUBERT, O. 2009. 10 Years+100 Buildings; Architecture in a Democratic South Africa. Cape Town: Bell Roberts Publishing.

Theory

- 001 VILJOEN, A. 2005:241. Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes. Oxford: Elsevier.
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- 005 RORKE, D. 2009. So much land, so little progress. Lowvelder, April 10, 2009:8.

Table of contents

	Page
Introduction	i
List of figures	ii
1. Context	
1.1 Project location	13
1.2 Project overview	15
1.3 Analysing the site	
1.3.1 Macro scale	16
1.3.2 Meso scale	17
• Barriers within the study area	17
• Historical background of Mamelodi/Nellmapius	18
• Heritage of study area	20
• Proposed urban framework: Mamelodi/Nellmapius	21
• Infrastructural analysis	24
• Social and economical analysis	25
• Bio-physical analysis	26
1.3.3 Micro scale	
• Site activities	27
• Urban agricultural analysis	28
2. The Problem	
2.1 Stating the problem	32
2.2 Sub-problems	32
2.3 Hypothesis	35
2.4 Delimitations	36
2.5 Assumptions	36
2.6 Client profile	37
3. Precedent Studies	
3.1 Spatial precedents	
• Housing and the Productive Landscape	50
• The Red Location Museum of Struggle	51
3.2 Precedents of process	
• Greenshops Financial Services Centre	52
• Masisizane Woman's Co-operative	53
3.3 Technical precedents	
• Nelson Mandela Pavilions	54
• House Sue	55
4. Theory	57
5. Concept development	63
6. Design clarification	
6.1 About the centre	76
6.2 Access and onsite parking	80
6.3 Main entrance and reception area	81
6.4 Agricultural training facility	82
6.5 Office and administration area	83
6.6 Cleaning and packaging area	84
6.7 Cold rooms	85
6.8 Loading dock and platform	86
6.9 Market	87
6.10 Informal trading area	88
6.11 Courtyard	88
6.12 Ablution facilities	89
6.13 Agricultural outbuildings	89
6.14 Security	89
6.15 Applied alternative energy	90
6.16 Selected construction material	93
7. Contract documentation	95
8. Conclusion & List of sources	