The Old Synagogue, being one of the oldest buildings in Pretoria (built before the Union Buildings), not only has architectural value, but, due to it being the only building in the city built in the late 19th century Byzantine Style, it also gives an indication of the large population of immigrant communities that settled in South Africa (related to the gold and diamond rush, people fleeing Europe after WW II and due to established trade routes). In addition, with its conversion to an Apartheid court, the building is representative of several cultures as well as different periods of South Africa’s history.

Today’s challenge lies in proposing an appropriate function for the dilapidated synagogue that will re-integrate the building into contemporary (and future) city life by allowing the citizens of Pretoria to embrace and value their history and heritage that is embodied in the building. This includes proposing meaningful spaces around the synagogue (and other heritage buildings in the area) that contribute to the existing context without weakening the inherent character of the place.

There is a sense of urgency in restoring the Old Synagogue as Vos points out in his assessment of the building: “If this gem of a building which is the only building of this magnitude in the Byzantine Style in Pretoria is not restored promptly, accumulating damage at the current tempo which is being maintained and accelerating, only the brick structure will remain within a relatively short period of time.” In addition, younger generations, removed from the history of the building, are increasingly unaware of its significance.

The "less is more" criterion is epitomised by the modern movement. It is this principle-driven period that, according to Brolin, caused societies to react with a "militant conservatism". In order to avoid this, he calls for the teaching of the craft of architecture rather than an ideology that brings with it the fear of stepping out of line.

While various design approaches exist on how to successfully relate new buildings to their existing context, addressing issues of building height, materials, massing etc., the author points out that meeting these criteria does not guarantee the success of the intervention. Rather, the ornament and visual texture of the building, regardless of the style, "often seems a surer way to build a sympathetic visual relationship between buildings". His appeal to architects and communities is to encourage buildings that are "sympathetically integrated with the old", even if it requires the addition of ornament to achieve a visually harmonious townscape (refer to figure 4.01). This directly contradicts the ideology of the modern movement summarised in the statement: "Ornament is a crime".

"If a design does not stand out from its neighbours, most believers in modern architecture seem to feel it has failed: it is neither original nor creative.” Brolin 1980:7

In this manner, the non-physical link between the architect, the end-user, the existing context and the community gains importance.

The discussion focuses on the evils of modernism and only in the book’s appendix does the author give the reader a better idea of how more visually harmonious environments can be achieved. First and foremost, the author recommends identifying whether or not anything in the surrounding context is worth honouring. This decision goes beyond the architectural quality of the building and includes cultural heritage, historical importance, aesthetic appeal and the degree of visual homogeneity present in the surroundings. The approach, therefore, should reinforce the character of the neighbourhood and regional approaches in order to strive towards achieving visual coherency.
Preservation in Europe and the charter of Venice

While nineteenth century architects criticised work of the Baroque period, the modern movement disregarded all historical styles in favour of their own approach. In both cases, the approach led to extensive destruction of the urban environment. For those adhering to the fundamental guidelines of the Modern Movement, which showed little interest in urban design and preservation, architecture is seen as an expression of art and, therefore, legitimises individual expression. Today, architectural criticism continues to be in favour of present day architecture.\footnote{17}

However, Denslagen\footnote{18} criticises this approach, arguing that historic architecture has the right to be protected from the “excessive creativity” that is rooted in modernism. In the course of the discussion, Denslagen points out that when designing in a historical context, designs need to respond to existing historical values. “New buildings have to take their place with fitting politeness in the old environment; they should not be obtrusive or subservient, but rather self-aware and well bred.”

Throughout history, preservation principles have been a product of their time and thus, need to adapt and change as new issues regarding preservation arise. Therefore, preservation “[…], cannot be contained in a single declaration of principles, because – like every codification – this needs to be constantly adapted to changing threats.” Denslagen\footnote{19} therefore, suggests steering away from a declaration of principles, as they are perceived to restrict creativity.

In his book *Architectural Restoration in Western Europe: Controversy and continuity*, Denslagen traces the emergence of preservation principles and discusses various approaches with regard to several Western European examples. In post-World War II Europe, preservation\footnote{15} focused on physical preservation of individual buildings in response to the vast destruction of historical buildings during the war. With much preservation having been completed, according to Brolin,\footnote{16} the focus of preservation today has moved beyond architectural preservation, resulting in the principles of the Charter of Venice being outdated: “[…] monument conservation – which was traditionally mainly concerned with architecture of a high artistic quality – currently, has to be applied to the cultural-historical aspects of ordinary neighbourhoods, residential districts and rural areas”. 

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\footnotetext[15]{The Charter of Venice was drawn up in 1964 by the Second Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, which in 1965 formed the basis of the organisation, International Concil on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) under UNESCO (Denslagen 1994:236).}

\footnotetext[16]{Denslagen (1994: 237)}

\footnotetext[17]{Denslagen (1994: 246)}

\footnotetext[18]{Denslagen (1994: 254)}

\footnotetext[19]{Denslagen (1994: 263)}
Preserving Place

The Power of Place - Hayden

In her book *The Power of Place: Urban landscape as Public History*, Hayden addresses the issue of preservation that goes beyond the physical and architectural preservation of a place. She states: “[People invest places with social and cultural meaning, and urban landscape history can provide a framework for connecting those meanings into contemporary urban life].” Her argument arises due to the debate sparked in the New York Times in 1975 between architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable and the urban sociologist, Herbert J. Gans regarding the manner in which the preservation of cities is addressed. While the discussion focuses on American cities and American history, many of the issues raised have relevance in the current South African context.

Introduction to the debate
Physical preservation almost exclusively focuses on architectural monuments and neglects the social issues and the greater context of the urban environment. According to Hayden, these issues are intertwined and cannot be dealt with in isolation and are critical for the future of American (and other) cities. By neglecting to address the related nature of these afore-mentioned issues, only an aspect of history is covered, thereby limiting accessibility and the interest of the greater urban community. Social issues tend to focus on individual conflicting issues that arise out of differences of race, gender and class, rather than focusing on a “sense of common membership” that embraces diversity. The debate remains unresolved.

“The architecture, as a discipline, has not seriously considered social and political issues, while social history has developed without much consideration of space or design.” Hayden 1995:8

The role of Public Space in the urban environment
Hayden examines the role of public spaces in the urban environment and the importance of preserving urban history. Referring to public space and urban landscapes as “storehouses” for “social memories”, Hayden heightens the reader’s awareness of personal and collective memories associated with place. In addition, she points out that “identity is intimately tied to memory”, emphasising the fact that preservation needs

Introduction to the South African context
At this point in time in South Africa, the focus of preservation is on the history and heritage associated with the struggle for democracy, which, due to the racially-biased Apartheid Regime, was regarded as unnecessary and thus, completely neglected. This is evident in the recent appearance of numerous memorials and museums spanning the country that commemorate momentous events and figures that contributed to the anti-Apartheid struggle. The same is true for the United States of America, with increasing numbers of claims being made for public history and public culture as a result of centuries of neglected ethnic history.

While this process is completely justified and necessary, the danger lies in the neglect of the country’s pre-Apartheid history. As pointed out by the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, the “production of space” is inevitably a reflection of the economic and social situation of a culture at a specific point in time. By neglecting to recognise the physical and cultural manifestations of pre-Apartheid South Africa, one neglects to understand the past and how it contributed to the emergence of Apartheid. This contributes to perpetuating prejudices rather than embracing diversity as the past inevitably lives on in the present. The result is the erosion of the character of individual places, which comprises multiple memories, layers of meaning from various generations, aesthetic quality and the natural environment.

24. Such as the Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg; The Hector Pieterson Memorial, Soweto; and the District Six Museum, Cape Town
Proposals to preserving the power of place

Understanding the context
Hayden proposes, therefore, that the role of urban landscape history, integral to any renewal process, is to reclaim the identities of deteriorating neighbourhoods. As a result, a better understanding of the “complex forces that have led to present configurations” can form the basis for further decision-making. Hayden points out that inhabitants themselves must understand the reasons for the decay of their neighbourhood in order for a sense of responsibility to allow for positive change.

Interdisciplinary work
Success is determined by interdisciplinary work. The collective input of public history, architectural preservation, environmental protection, public art and the relevant community establishes the context of social memory and contributes to a greater understanding of the range of the issues at hand. While this approach requires a less controlled process and includes less predictable participants (which inevitably leads to conflict at some stage), it forges a relationship between history and the people it is representing.

The benefits of greater participation
“Social relationships are intertwined with spatial perception”. By involving more people in the process of preserving urban history and social memory, social diversity is given recognition, resulting in a heightened sense of place. Therefore, community-based public history empowers communities to define their collective past. In this way, the process of preserving urban landscape history is meaningful for the relevant communities. According to Hayden, this collective identity comprised of social history and architectural preservation not only contributes to the potential economic development of the city, but also helps communities to face difficulties due to an awareness of past accomplishments.

Processes that weaken the “power of place”

Architectural Preservation
Hayden defines the “power of place” as: “the power of ordinary landscapes to nurture citizens’ public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory”. In most instances, architectural preservation is the adaptive reuse of a building, which tends to further restrict public access. While preserving community-based public history is often considered not worthy of municipal spending, architectural preservation tends to be more costly. Expensive restorative works freeze buildings in time leaving them “lifeless”.

Urban Renewal
Hayden points out a further factor that negatively impacts on the urban environment is the process of urban renewal. This process is limited to the physical and environmental regeneration of an area, often resulting in the neglect of the intangible that is integral to capturing the power of place. The result is a decrease in understanding of cities, their history and culture, and the inherent sense of place.

New buildings
Although the focus of Hayden’s discussion is on the preservation of architecture, the same is true for the erection of new buildings that may totally ignore or destroy the sense of place inherent in a space. This is often the result of a lack of understanding of the cultural and social dynamics of an area.
According to Roberts the principles of urban regeneration are based on a thorough analysis and understanding of the context. This forms the basis for an integrated strategy that relies on the initial analysis of an area. A sustainable regeneration approach simultaneously addresses the physical fabric, social structures, economic base and environmental condition of an area. As urban areas are “complex and dynamic systems”, the processes require the maximum possible flexibility and participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process in addition to the understanding that parts of the process will inevitably progress at different rates.

The issue of Policy development

Roberts specifically addresses the issue of policy-making as urban regeneration is often hindered by the inability of regulations and policies to adapt to a particular situation. Roberts does not go into detail as to how policies need to adapt, but he briefly discusses the main areas in which policy development is important:

• Future development of regeneration strategy
• Economic and financial issues
• Physical and environmental regeneration
• Social and community issues
• Policy and practice

It is evident that the process of urban regeneration is deeply rooted in societies’ structure and must closely reflect “the opportunities and challenges which are presented by urban degeneration in a particular place at a specific moment in time”.

A regenerative approach

Thus, the objective of this dissertation is to firstly, change the perception of the site “even if it’s only for 30 seconds”. Secondly, the intervention is required to go beyond a mere physical change of the site. Inserting an architectural icon into the environment or restoring the synagogue would only superficially address the issue of regeneration in the area. As Roberts points out, changing the physical appearance of the site is only part of the process. Industrial restructuring (in order to maximise returns), working within the constraints of available land and existing buildings while accommodating the social composition of urban areas is vitally important to ensure a mutually supportive environment.

Finally, while this dissertation aims to support and motivate the proposed building on the site, it is hoped that it may encourage decision-makers to take an integrated regeneration approach when developing a strategy for the area.
“Comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change.” Roberts 2005: 17

Precedents

The following local examples address an issues that has been identified in previously discussed literature. Each precedent is relevant in its approach to a specific scenario.
Participation

The District Six Museum - Cape Town

One local example of a successful participative project is the District Six Museum, located in the Cape Town CBD. The objective of the District Six Foundation,\(^{43}\) formed in 1989, is to keep alive the memories of District Six and the people affected by forced removals under the Apartheid Regime. Only in 1994, after an extensive period of “memory work”,\(^{44}\) was the museum launched. Situated in an old church on Buitenkant Street,\(^{45}\) the museum continues to act as a centre allowing “former residents of District Six and others to recover, explore and critically engage with the memories and understandings of their District Six and Apartheid pasts”. In addition, the museum forms the foundation for current plans for the reconstruction and design of District Six.

The Museum

The central attraction of the District Six Museum is a large hand-drawn map of District Six. The map documents comments, names and memories of former residents. Employees at the museum are former residents of District Six, and they bring part of the place’s history to life by sharing personal experiences with the museum’s visitors. This approach to preserving urban landscape history\(^{46}\) is not only socially inclusive, but becomes the basis for public history, urban preservation and the redevelopment of the area, which Hayden\(^ {47}\) sees as being important for determining the success of the process. Furthermore, unlike many museums that capture only a glimpse in time and history, the museum continues to document visitor’s reactions through the incorporation of these into the growing exhibition. In this way, the museum becomes meaningful not only for those that were directly affected by the destruction of District Six, but also for future generations and those removed from the events at the time.

The challenge of conserving the memories of District Six

By means of a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) has been put in place to conserve what remains of District Six. The CMP\(^ {48}\) successfully recognised that “individuals and communities are shaped by places as well their relationships and interaction within the spaces, and with each other”. While the difficulty continues to lie in the conservation of the intangible due to the destruction of the entire area, the museum successfully portrays the past by means of a

Historical background to District Six

District Six was declared a “white Group Area” on 11 February 1966, resulting in the relocation of 60 000 people to the Cape Flats over the following 15 years. By 1984, the destruction of the once vibrant neighbourhood was complete, with only the churches and mosques remaining. Today, these community facilities, that continued to operate as an act of defiance during the Apartheid years, form the focal points of public space and activity for the envisaged redevelopment of the area.\(^ {49}\)

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43. The District Six Foundation 13-07-2007: http://www.districtsix.co.za/frames.htm
44. Le Grange (2007:59)
45. Buitenkant Street lies parallel to Long Street
46. refer to p38
47. Hayden (1995:12)
49. Le Grange (2007:59)
continually growing backward-looking present. The memory of the place “has been conserved in the minds and actions of the former community that inhabited it”. Memory work therefore began with a series of public art interventions on the site, aimed at bringing to the fore memories and associations, in order to conserve and document the intangible. In this way, the physical and the intangible were kept on a par, contributing to a successful preservation of the spirit of the place.

50. Le Grange (2007:59)
Today, public art is more resonant for individuals. The art critic and author of Mixed Blessings, Lucy Lippard describes contemporary public art as:

“Public art is accessible art of any kind that cares about/challenges/involves and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment; the other stuff is still private art, no matter how big or exposed or intrusive or hyped it may be”.

Hayden (1995:68)

As with other preservation approaches, “no public art can succeed in enhancing the social meaning of place without a solid base of historical research and community support”.

The Trinity Session

The Trinity Session is a contemporary art production team that operates from The Gallery Premises at the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg. Directors, Steven Hobbs and Marcus Neustaatier are interested in different aspects of contemporary public art. While Neustaatier’s niche is electronic art, Hobbs’ focus is on the urban environment and the engaging role art plays in the urban environment. He supports Hayden’s argument with his approach to urban regeneration by introducing public art and by working in conjunction with a variety of consultants, professionals and communities. “It requires the analysis, investigation and activation of a team of people to be truly successful”.

“Eaton listed the features which should be incorporated into the fabric of the city centre, ‘not as extravagances, but as necessitates’: trees, ‘with which shops and electrical communications would have to learn to live in submission, and not as masters’; off-pavement bays containing gardens, fountains and works of art; pedestrian arcades and malls away from the noise and fumes of the traffic; and an art gallery ‘in itself a work of art of the highest order’, a theatre and a concert hall, situated in open park-like settings.” (Harrop Allin 1975:53)
The Trinity Session has been extensively involved with the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) in establishing the cultural circle in Johannesburg, as well as in the commissioning of public art for the city of Johannesburg. The most recent piece of public art is a large 4m high concrete Eland located at the gateway entrance into Braamfontein. According to the artist, Clive van den Berg, the work "prompts reflection on our relationship to the past, and to the interconnectedness of environmental, cultural and spiritual destinies. […] what I am concerned with here is the geography of memory and spirit".

Architecture as a form of public art
Architecture is a form of art that embodies functional and spatial qualities. Located in the public realm, architecture can potentially function as a form of public art. In the same way as public art is used to change the perception of a place as a means to urban regeneration, architecture can potentially achieve the same – and more.

57. The Eland was erected on the eve of 18 August 2007
The first Cascoland Event in South Africa

The first Cascoland event, New Crossroads\(^\text{60}\) took place in 2006 in Cape Town in the form of a mobile village with the focus of transforming a public space into an “accessible and liveable one”. The approach remained DIY, and engaged and inspired local residents. The result was “an explosion of public cultural life and a reported reduction in crime, visitors of all kinds walking through a community otherwise usually isolated”.

“Cascoland is a research and art project that involves international artists, architects, designers, performers and communities. Cascoland initiates projects in public space to create an awareness of urban issues in a positive manner to mobilise local residents, artists and initiatives to participate in this process. Public space is temporarily activated by interventions, the construction of architectural objects, research into the use of public space and audience performances.”

Cascoland\(^\text{59}\) was initiated at the 2004 Oerolfestival on the island of Terschelling in the Netherlands. Together, five artists researching ‘Do it yourself’ (DIY) architecture erected a village that kept developing during the course of the festival through audience participation. Through interaction with a South African theatre maker, the plan emerged to bring Cascoland to South Africa.

In March 2007, the second Cascoland event took place at the Drill Hall in Johannesburg, located on the corner of Plein and Twist streets. The diverse team worked hand-in-hand with local caterers, performers, labourers and artists to make the event possible. The objective\(^\text{61}\) of the event was to allow public art to act as a tool for activating and developing public space. “As important as producing a physical work of art is, the creation of awareness and inciting a change in perception of public space with the audience”.

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Activities at the event
Activities included the construction of street furniture and swings made out of old tyres, the erection of a temporary scaffolding tower that announced the day’s activities and hosted music events, a sketch-a-thon, the provision of tented accommodation on the roof of Drill Hall, and performances that forced taxis to take note of pedestrians, amongst many other activities. All events and activities that took place at the event were intended to challenge the public’s perception of the site and the mundane routines that dominate people’s lives.

Urban Renewal is not enough
In spite of having recently been through an urban renewal process, Drill Hall remained a ‘un-activated’ public space. The event, therefore, not only brought people that would not usually be in that part of the city into the space, but also allowed the local residents to participate and to use this public space. Both adults and children were catered for at the event, and street furniture and swings made during the festival remain on the site for use by the public.

Success of Cascoland 2007
At this stage, it is not possible to determine the success of the event, but it can be assumed that the lasting nature of the intervention at least changed the people that attended the event’s perception of the public space. Events such as this point out the importance activating a space and critically engaging the public.

The Sans Souci - Kiptown

The Sans Souci, located in Kliptown is today a ruin after it burned down in 1995. During the Apartheid years it was active being one of the few places where black people could gather for movies, performances and low-key political gatherings. Today Lindsay Bremner and 26° 10 South Architects are in the process of redeveloping it as a community-based heritage project.63

The long term vision64 for the Sans Souci is a vibrant centre while the reconstruction process is incremental. The process begins with a series of events rather than a building. By hosting movie evenings and other dance performances in conjunction with the Gauteng Film Department, the community are encouraged to attend and support the initiative. Over time, the cinema is rebuilt, firmly capturing the memory of the place and establishing it for future use.

The adopted process allows the project to establish itself in the community over an extended period of time, ensuring its use once the project has been completed. Activity on site takes preference over the physical form - emphasising the importance of the community.

64. Deckler et al (2006:53)