

# PART SIX

## SYNTHESIS – ISSUES TO ADDRESS

*“Walk down any street and quickly you will get a sense of what the issues are, of how all the aid and planning, and non-planning, appears on the ground; of what a development agenda might begin to look like.”<sup>100</sup>*

### HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS

It will be clear from the analysis that Marabastad does not house the tight knit community that it once did. Although the people occupying the streets today are there every day, they do not ‘belong’ to Marabastad and Marabastad does not belong to them. Over the years the area has changed its face from a residential community to a commercial district where people only pass through on their way to work and although there are some bars and restaurants most of Marabastad seems to shut down at night.

Realising that one can never bring back the community of the past it is believed that the area of Marabastad can once again become a place to ‘belong’ to, and that the people using this place can once again shape a strong and integrated community.

#### Design opportunities:

- Gathering spaces – public square / piazza / street café / restaurant
- Reasons for gathering – entertainment / eating / public meetings / lingering / shopping / religion
- Inspiring events of today – movies / soccer / music & jazz / religion

### FRAMEWORK SYNTHESIS

The framework analysis shows the existence of the historical core of Marabastad to the south of Mogul street. Many buildings along the street front are thus protected or zoned for restoration (Fig. 48). On the northern side of Mogul street the many open spaces (Fig. 49) seem scattered and excessive. The position of the proposed public space can be questioned as it seems small, isolated and removed from the central area of activity.

#### Design opportunities

- Linking of the open spaces to form an urban open space system
- Consolidating open spaces to shape a public space/system as the heart of Marabastad – *“every attempt [should be] made to connect new and existing plazas via pedestrian streets and access ways, so that the end result will be a pedestrian system rather than isolated oases.”<sup>101</sup>*
- Using public space to connect isolated objects such as the station and Asiatic bazaar

<sup>100</sup> Hamdi. *op.cit.* p. 4

<sup>101</sup> Marcus. *et al.* 1990. p. 15.

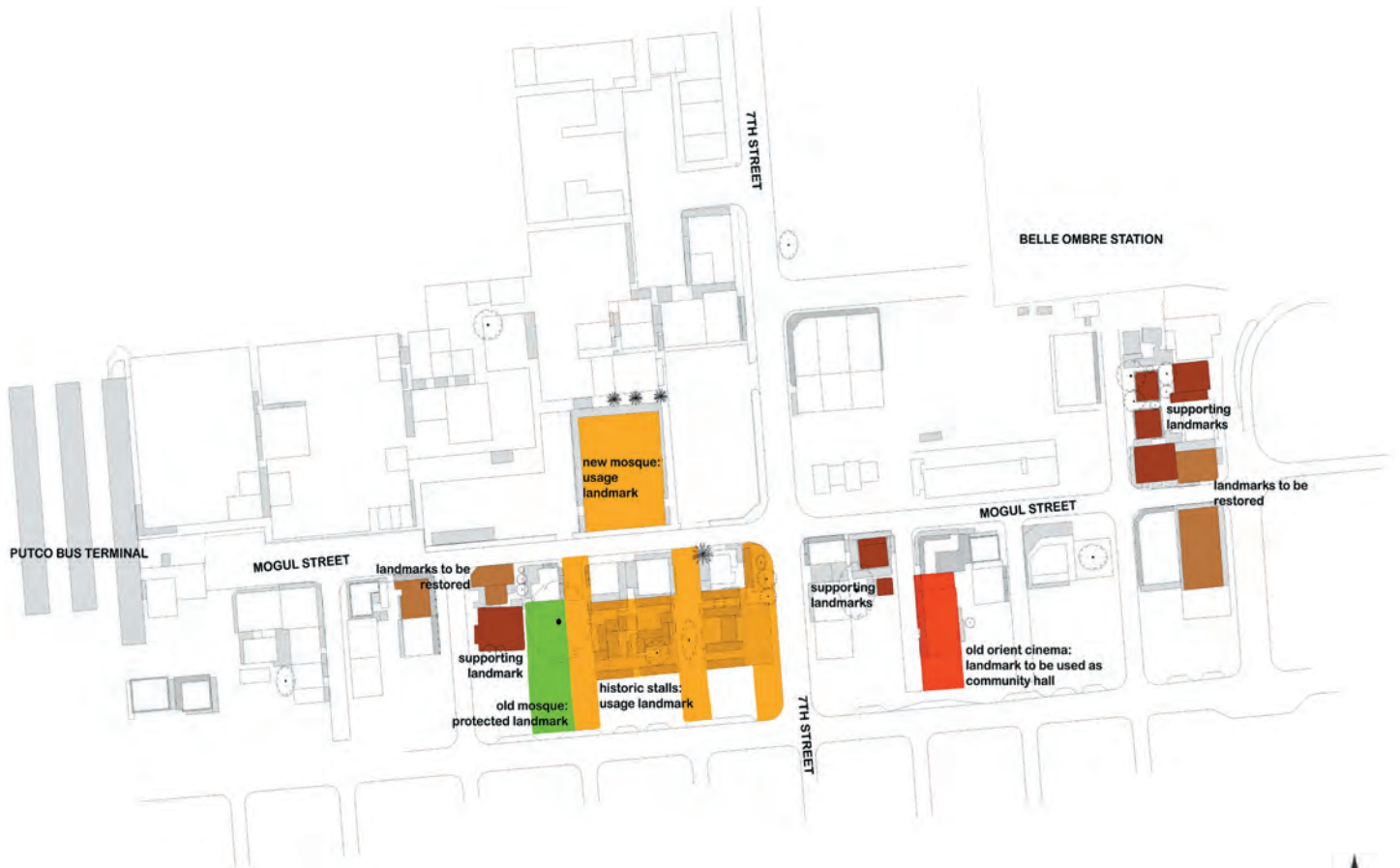


Fig. 48: Mogul street - framework proposed location of landmark buildings



Fig. 49: Mogul street - framework proposed usage of open space

## CONTEXTUAL SYNTHESIS

It is clear that Marabastad is very much in isolation and that it thus needs a better connection to the CBD – this issue is addressed in the framework by the proposal to return Boom street to a two-way feeder between D.F. Malan and the CBD. Furthermore it can be assumed that the proposed residential and mixed use areas to the south of Boom street will add a new dimension to the user group of Marabastad which today mainly consists of pedestrian commuters on their way to the shop, bus, train or taxi. This pedestrian activity is mainly along Mogul street – one block removed from the busy vehicular traffic in Boom street – and crosses over the empty open spaces left between the historical centre and more recent bulky and intrusive developments.

### Design opportunities

- Harvesting the pedestrian energy of Mogul street to shape active public spaces
- Slowing down movement through Marabastad to turn it from a commuter crossing into a place that enhances the networks and communal structures of the people that occupy the space
- Noticing the potential of the open space (on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Mogul street) that overlays most pedestrian routes of the area – this area seems more appropriate as public open space (Fig. 50)

## LOCAL SYNTHESIS

On a local level one can't help to notice the vibrancy and energy that flows through the site with the movement of pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Amidst all the hardships experienced by this poorer community, one gets a sense of ambition and endurance and although most people find themselves in Marabastad for the sole reason of making a living, there is still an underlying zest for life that breaks through the everyday activities of selling mielies and roasting peanuts.

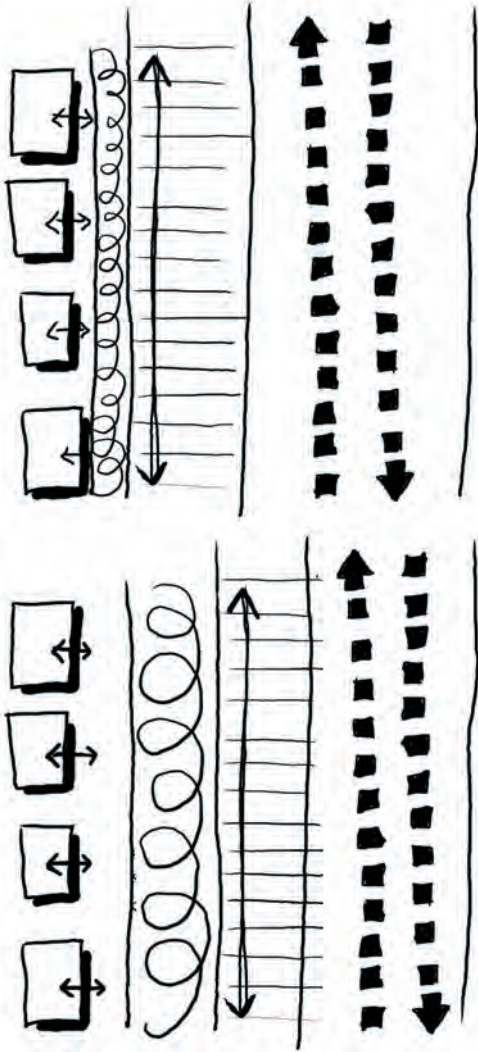
When investigating the movement through the site and immediate surrounding area, it can be found that although the informal structures and sales areas seem completely random at first, they follow the simple rules of location and proximity. Movement happens over the shortest distance possible and avoids obstructions while stalls are placed next to the main lines of movement. The investigation further highlighted certain principles of movement and space occupation within the public open spaces of Marabastad. These principles were used to formulate a series of guidelines (Fig. 51-55) that are specific to the area and will be used to inform the design process later on.

### Design opportunities

- Enhancing opportunities of network and connection by bringing together the many forms of activity within the existing public realm – pedestrian movement / informal sales / formal sales / entertainment / religion / lingering / eating / public wc
- Setting a support structure – spatial and social – for the economic initiatives (informal sales) of the occupiers of the area
- Bettering the quality and experience of the local environment from a visual, functional and micro-climatic perspective – responding to identified needs, problems and functions (Fig. 56).

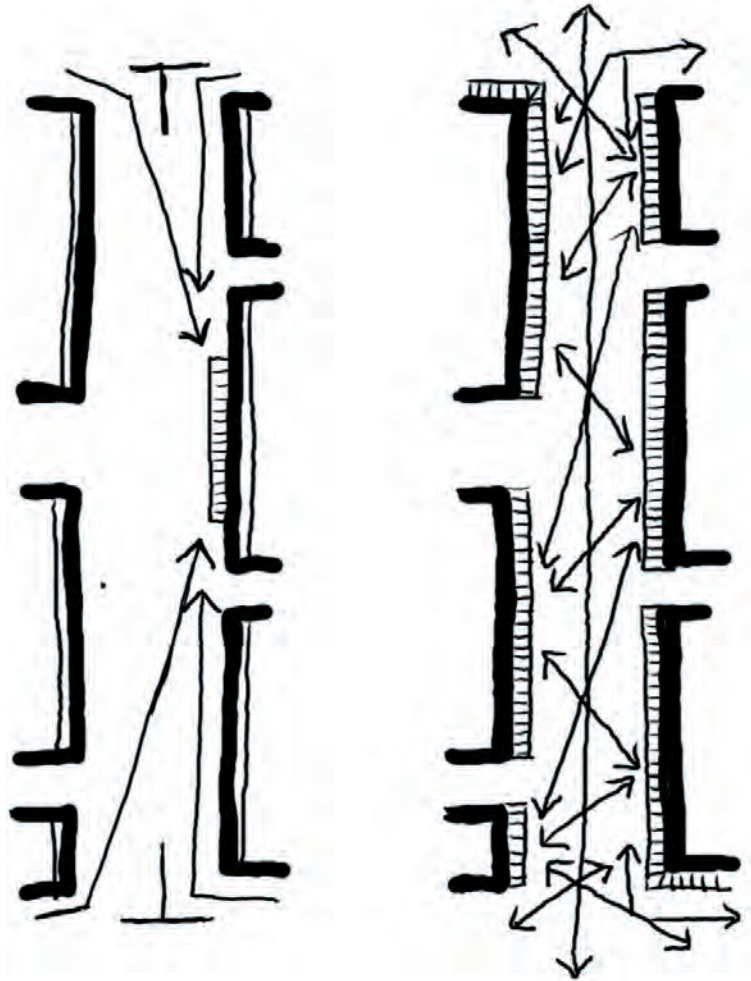






- allow space for trade
- assume turbulent movement in front of stalls
- appropriate space for passing pedestrian flow
- roads with appropriate width
- build up speeds - do not locate high & low speeds next to each other

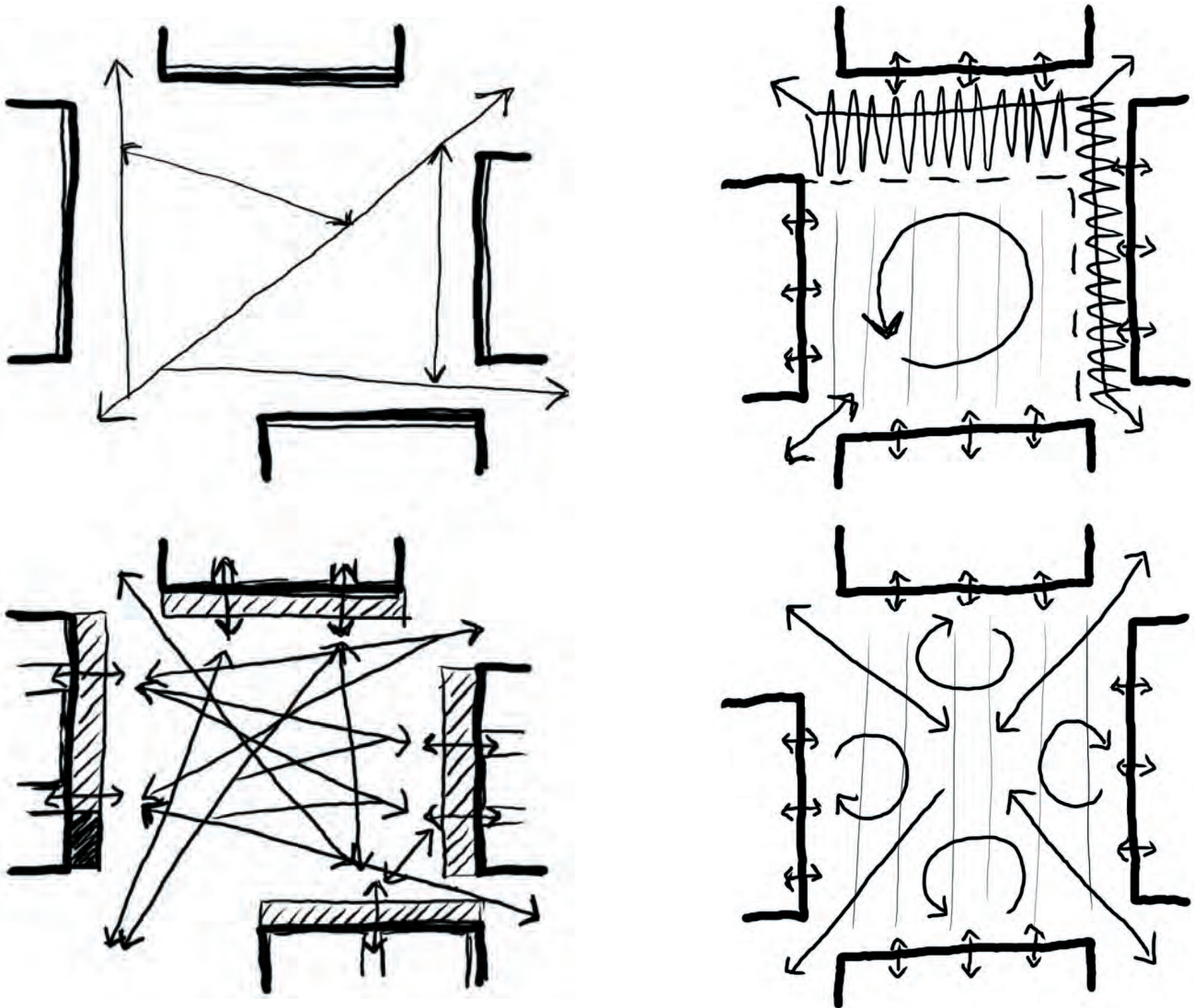
Fig. 51: Design guidelines - roadside, speed & space ratio



- create purpose of movement inside & outside street
- interactive facades increase movement patterns and interaction

Fig. 52: Design guidelines - pedestrian movement in streets / alleys



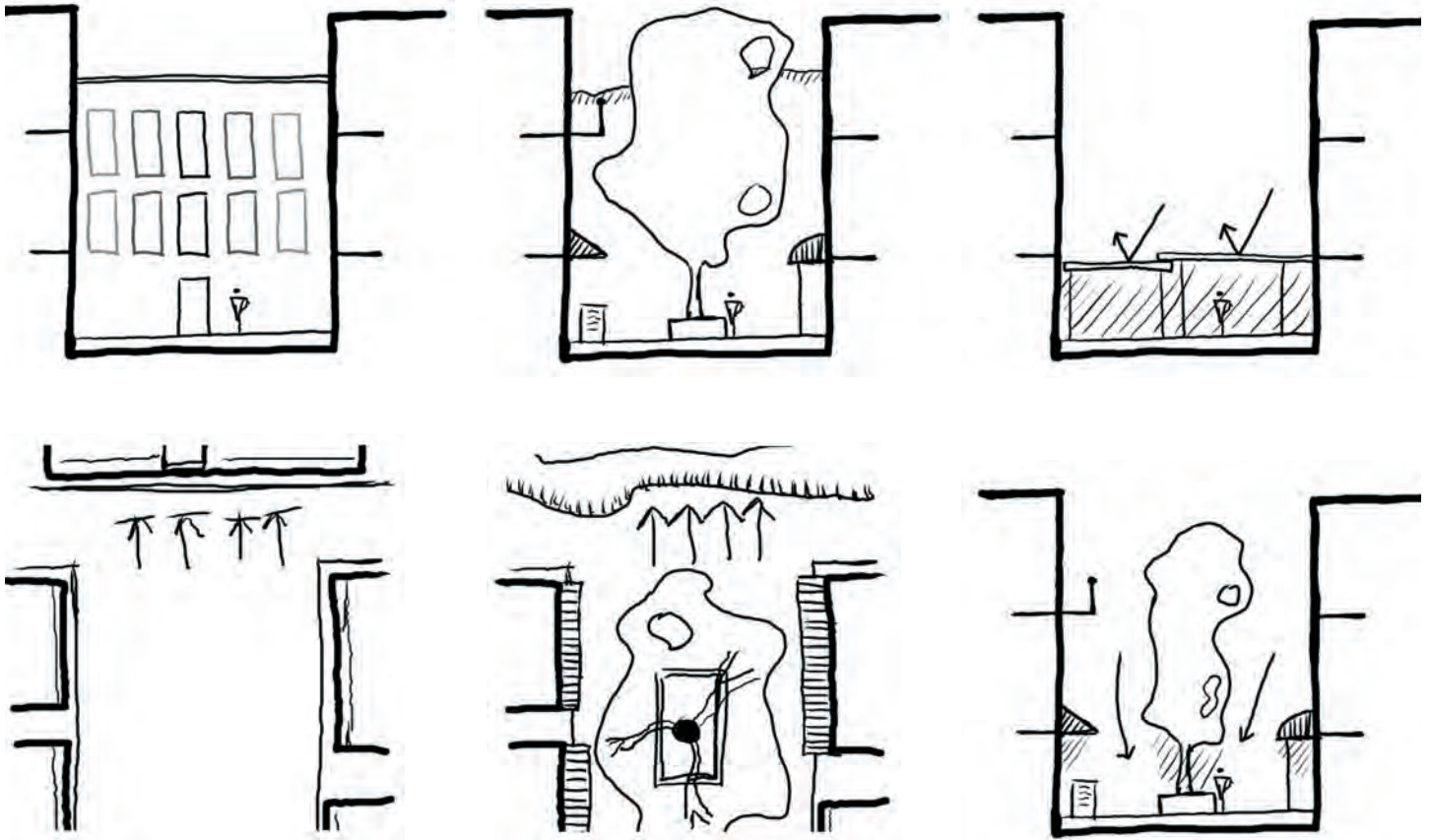


- blank facades encourage fast movement through a space
- interactive facades draw energy and increase activity and interaction in a space

- barriers create protected spaces but may leave awkward open space on the other side
- barriers constrict movement and limit interaction

Fig. 53: Design guidelines - pedestrian movement through enclosed urban space





- ensure elements of human scale in streets and open spaces: seating, tree canopies, balconies, overhangs and interactive facades
- diversify elements within spaces
- provide framed views out of enclosed spaces

**Fig. 54: Design guidelines - providing the human element**

- it is necessary to let daylight into an urban open space
- divided pieces of shelter that leave areas of light function better than one solid roof
- although not waterproof, trees provide filtered light and a sense of protection

**Fig. 55: Design guidelines - amount of enclosure**

# NEEDS

## BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

floor covering / surface  
shelter  
shade  
safety  
protection from elements

## LIFESTYLE NEEDS

connection (pedestrian & taxi)  
storage  
position / location  
parking

## EMOTIONAL NEEDS

community  
belonging  
personal space  
visual & other sensory stimulation  
acknowledgement

## DESIGN NEEDS

robustness  
multi-functionality  
multi-use  
timelessness  
personal demarcation  
flexibility

# PROBLEMS

waste dumping  
storage of commercial goods  
crime  
taxi & private car parking  
disruptive fencing  
maintenance of public facilities  
vehicular & pedestrian interface  
surface finishing  
commercial pavement space

## mielie cookery (seasonal)

taxi rank

informal sales:

everyday groceries

clothing and shoes

music

eats: peanuts/worms/fruit/sweets

restaurants

formal sales

workshops

pharmacies / herbalists

groceries

fabrics

electronics

funeral services

restaurants

parking

pedestrian link

religious gathering

Fig. 56: Identified needs, problems & functions

## PHYSICAL SYNTHESIS

Topographically, the chosen site is ideal for the making of an all accessible public space. The gentle slope without any major level changes facilitates easy movement through the site and ensures a visual connection with the destination at all times. This not only motivates the passer-by to enter the area, but also helps to orientate the user within the space – *“Behavioral studies of Manhattan plazas indicate that as long as the plaza is flush with the sidewalk, 30 to 60 percent of the pedestrians entering the block will walk through it and avail themselves of the space.”*<sup>102</sup>

The gentle slope from south to north ensures good stormwater drainage. However, because of the size of the site and intensity of the thunderstorms, sheet run-off may accumulate into streams and deeper areas of water. This will not only inhibit the pedestrian use of the space but will also be a threat to informal traders without proper shelter for their goods. Furthermore it should be noted that in a place where lack of maintenance is one of the biggest problems, by example of the Steenhoven spruit, the introduction of water features should be carefully considered as it may only have a dilapidating effect on the appearance of the area.

As the temperatures are mostly pleasant (except for the cold evenings in mid-winter) and rain mostly occurs as shorter thunderstorms during the summer months, the site lends itself extremely well to intensive outdoor use. It should however be kept in mind that the exposed site can become unpleasantly hot during summer afternoons when there is no cloud cover or areas of shelter.

Because the site is currently asphalted from corner to corner with no vegetation and situated in a dense urban fabric of two to three storey buildings, wind gusts can be quite severe and turbulent as a result of funnelling and obstruction. This, together with the relatively little shaded areas and constant taxi traffic that produce masses of noise and air pollution, contributes to an unpleasant and exposed feeling when one crosses the site from one side to the other.

### Design opportunities

- Catering for both passers-through as well as lingering people who will spend some time on the site
- Introducing restaurants and street café's that spill out into the public area
- Introducing trees as wind breakers, shade providers, pollution controllers and space makers
- Developing a drainage system that regulates the stormwater run-off – catches it and uses it for irrigation purposes
- Providing shelter or storing spaces for informal traders
- Designing a low maintenance public space that can not easily be polluted or harmed by the elements
- Bettering the interface between vehicular traffic and pedestrian circulation

<sup>102</sup> Pushkarev. & Zupan. 1975. p.162.

# PART SEVEN





Fig. 57: Marabastad - bridge over Steenhoven spruit





**Fig. 58: Marabastad - banks of Steenhoven spruit**



## CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

From the above investigation, it is clear that the people of Marabastad have a history of problematic interaction and difficult reaction to their surroundings – this includes the political environment, economical situation, cultural differences and physical surroundings. From a political perspective there have always been issues of recognition and acceptance between the authorities and the members of the community. Economically the inhabitants of Marabastad have never had an easy life and many are still struggling to make a living every day. Although, culturally, in old Marabastad, the Black, Indian and Coloured communities were very well integrated, the differences between the cultural groups occupying the area today are obvious. It seems that each cultural community has a different place and function within the larger community and although there is a peaceful relationship between the individuals from the different communities, there seems to be very little positive interaction except over the retail counter. Concerning the physical environment, the many years of decay and neglect have rendered Marabastad visually unpleasing, hygienically unsafe and physically broken-down. *“Currently buildings and infrastructure are badly neglected, and lack of municipal management and control has given rise to severe social problems...”*<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, walking through Marabastad, one experiences a vibrancy and energy that is unique only to this part of the city. Somewhere between the fast moving taxi traffic along Boom street and the busy pedestrian bridge to Belle Ombre station, a different Marabastad shows itself (Fig. 59) – a Marabastad that rises above its environment with a spirit of endurance and a zest for life. *“It is here in this complicated and organic swamp of the everyday, with its adaptive and largely self-organizing systems of people and collectives who think locally and act locally, where the intelligence of cities lies, where small have long been difficult and even ugly, and where less is rarely perceived as more by those who have least.”*<sup>104</sup>

It is this unique quality of Marabastad that this study will aim to bring out and use to the benefit of the individuals as well as community of the area – it is about creating platforms of opportunity within the existing networks and linking people and activities in order to shape an interactive community that will not only build itself up, but stand as example of what life in the marginalised urban areas of South Africa can grow to be. The study will aim to impact through three different levels of action (Fig. 60):

- the first being the bettering of basic conditions and facilities of the local environment;
- the second aiming to create links between people and ideas using and enhancing the existing networks of the area;
- and the third, moving to socially activate public space within Marabastad by way of introducing new activities and harvesting existing activities in order to build networks and improve interaction between individuals and collectives.

<sup>103</sup> Malan. *op.cit.* p. 9.

<sup>104</sup> Hamdi. *op.cit.* p. 17.

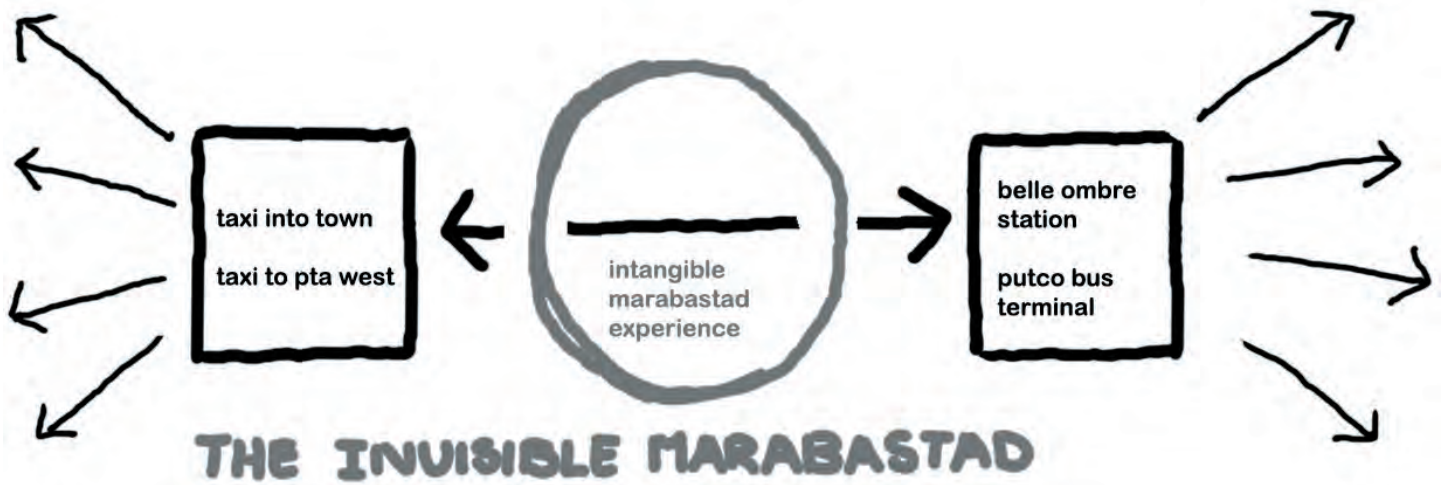


Fig. 59: The invisible Marabastad



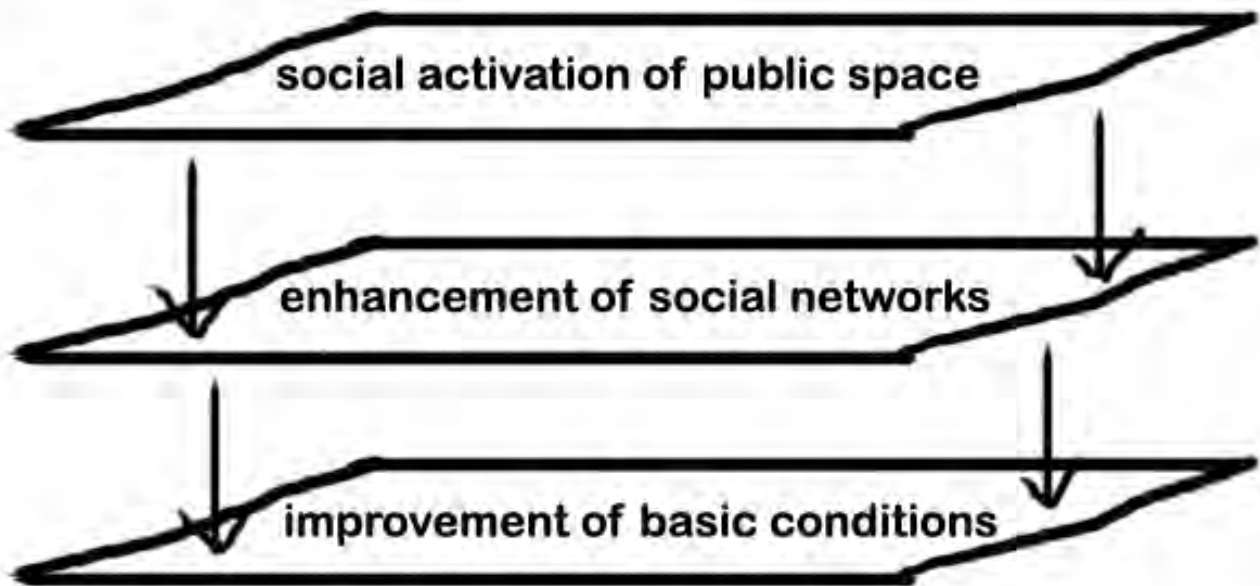


Fig. 60: Levels of design intervention

## Design ideas

Remembering Marabastad's past of music and parade, as well as noticing the way in which music shapes a large part of everyday life of the area (taxi's attracting customers with music, girls selling cassettes with speakers blaring out the merchandise and the mosque announcing its presence 12 o'clock every Friday), it would be of great advantage to the local character and spirit to introduce a series of jazz bars and restaurants as places of gathering. These places will also serve the apparent need for fast and affordable providers of meals and snacks as take-away shops and informal restaurants are scattered all along the streets of Marabastad.

In addition, the past culture of cinema and music combined with the amount of local people interested in the game of soccer, inspires the installation of an outdoor open theatre or electronic screen that can serve the purpose of entertainment through the screening of latest films and sports games. It can further be utilised for addressing large numbers of people at once or even to host exterior religious gatherings.

A multi-purpose outdoor stage will, in conjunction with the surrounding jazz bars and street café's, provide the opportunity for local artists and performers to show off their talents at will. In conjunction with the outdoor screen, the stage can also be used for organised performances and/or public speaking.

The chosen space will be designed as public square and will house the intended new activities as well as accommodate and enhance what is currently taking place within the space. It will be *"a place for trading and networking ... a waiting place – somewhere you know you've arrived. A place for wasting time and for spontaneous events or chance encounters or encounters by choice where public and private life are mostly indistinguishable. It should be a place where the old can sit and dream and pass on their wisdom and tell stories and gossip. Somewhere not intimidating for women and children, where people feel safe in the company of others because the surroundings are familiar, because you don't get lost, because help is always at hand and because you feel a sense of belonging"*<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> Hamdi. *op.cit.* p. 58.