

# chapter 1



## Part 1: Setting the scene

Townships in South Africa are not unlike *ghettos*<sup>1</sup> found all over the world. They are also however, complex, vibrant places housing different people from different cultural backgrounds, different income groups, different language preferences, and different value and belief systems. They are places filled with challenges, opportunity, ingenuity and creative thought.

Although townships are multifaceted, dynamic places to live, bursting with culture and life, they are also unfortunately fraught with a myriad of problems. These include a lack of infrastructure, overcrowding, unemployment, HIV-Aids, poverty, urban sprawl, and a general lack of amenities, to name but a few.



Figure 2:  
Informal settlement across from the UP Campus (Author, 2008)  
Small shelters constructed from available materials



Figure 3:  
The informal edge of Hans Strydom Road (Author, 2008)  
Hot, dusty, eroded and strewn with litter



Figure 1:  
"With a dustbin bag, twigs and string..."  
(Adrian de Kock, 2008:7)  
Children take to the streets with their home-made kites in Tswelopele Ext. 8



Figure 4:  
There are numerous informal vendors in and around Mamelodi (Author, 2008)  
Such vendors sell anything from fruit, vegetables and sweets to low-cost phone calls and hair cuts

Mamelodi is a township situated on the eastern edge of the Tshwane district. It was created during the Apartheid era as a means of separating the African population from the rest of the city (le Roux, Louw & Nel, 1980:ii). Due to the precise placement of this township, buffered by the Magaliesberg mountain range in the north, it still remains partially segregated and on the outskirts of the city. This division from thriving commercial areas has resulted in the fact that people living there have to travel substantial distances in search of work, ensuring that they spend much time away from home; a situation which is both inconvenient and has contributed to many social issues.

### 1. Ghetto:

*A part of a city, especially a slum area, occupied by a minority group / a segregated group or area (Thompson, 1996:570).*



Figure 5:  
Diversity in Mamelodi (Author, 2008)  
Zozo panel construction, taxi-wash, residences - living & working in the same place

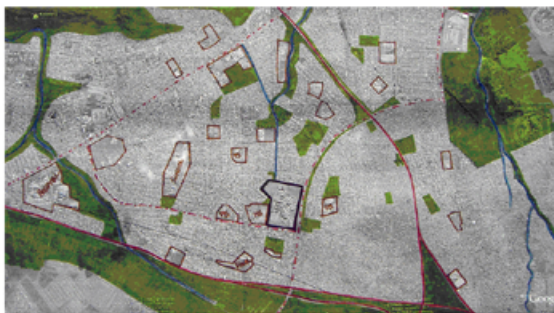


Figure 6:  
Green open spaces around the UP Mamelodi Campus  
(Google map manipulated by author, 2008)

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Mamelodi also has a severe shortage of d open space and the houses in this area al with extensive back gardens in which to play, relax and de-stress.

There are plenty of open spaces within the city fabric but these are simply leftover spaces which have become voids and do not contribute anything positive to the functioning of the township. Instead, they are desolate and neglected spaces with no elements of human scale, rendering them inhospitable; spaces that breed crime and are used as nothing more than dumping grounds. These areas contribute more to the problems of Mamelodi than to the solutions.



Figure 7:  
Vast, inhospitable, littered and neglected open spaces with no elements of human scale (Author, 2008)



Figure 8:  
Open spaces that contain no designed elements or creative thought are uncared for by community members (Author, 2008)

## Part 2: The real world problem

As shown in the above paragraphs, Mamelodi has a great many needs and shortcomings which have to be addressed, and the University of Pretoria Mamelodi campus, because of its prime location and inherent qualities, has the opportunity to make a real difference. The campus has the ability to significantly aid and empower the people of Mamelodi and to become a place of value, distinction and pride. At present, however, the campus is not being used optimally. It functions as an obstruction in the urban fabric; an insular element with insufficient students which has become almost meaningless to the people around it.

According to Keast (1967:13), “an important criterion for evaluating campus plans would be to ask whether the campus encourages the maximum number of impromptu encounters with other students, with other faculty members, with visitors, with works of art, with books and with activities of which one is not usually a regular part“. A lack of ‘encounters’ at the UP Mamelodi Campus can be attributed to two main factors:

### 2.1) The isolation of the campus

The campus is completely cut off from its surrounding landscape by a double security fence as well as a large buffer zone of open land which runs all the way around the campus heart. This separateness enforces the idea that the university is an elitist institution for use only by a privileged few. It is an insular island which serves as both a physical and metaphysical division between different economic classes.





Figure 9:  
Open, anonymous buffer zone surrounding the University  
(Mr SID aerial photo, digitally manipulated by author, 2008)

The campus has inverted itself in a typical laager formation, turning its back on the surrounding community and shutting them out, resulting in the fact that the University has become insignificant to the people. This is evidenced by the dumping ground which has been established just outside the double fence enclosing the University; a prime example of the outcomes of the institution's physical separation from its immediate surroundings (see Figure 11).

Gerrit Jordaan (2008), urban planner for the University of Pretoria is quoted as saying, "A city around a University and a University within a city are two completely different things". Integrating the University into it's surrounding community will increase the potential for people to benefit not only from the services provided, but also from a day to day interaction with the facilities on offer.

## 2.2) The anonymity of the campus

The campus suffers from a complete lack of local identity. It says nothing about its context, about the people that use it or about its history. It could be this placelessness and lack of character which contribute to the shortage of students. There is no pull factor – why go to the Mamelodi campus when you can use main campus, with all its events, artworks, facilities and cultural activities, for the same amount of money?



Figure 10:  
View from inside the University of the boundary fence  
across the buffer zone (Author, 2008)



Figure 11:  
Dumping ground right outside the University's  
secondary gate (Author, 2008)



Figure 12:  
The campus with its lack of character and local identity (Author, 2008)



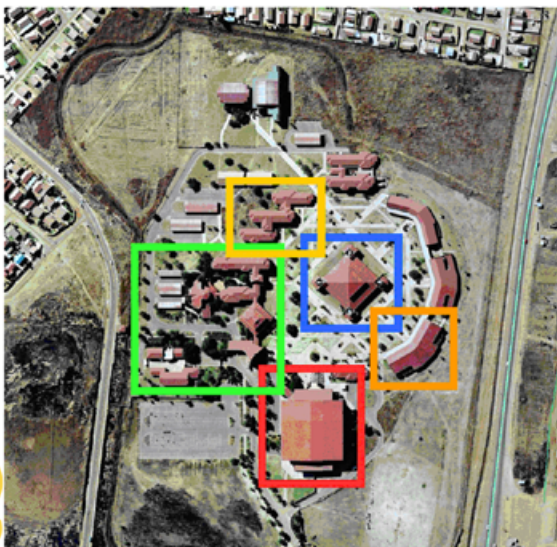


Figure 13:  
General layout of the UP Mamelodi campus (Google map digitally manipulated by author, 2008)



Figure 14:  
General layout of the University of Johannesburg Vista campus (Google map digitally manipulated by author, 2008)  
The similarities in both building form and layout of the UP and UJ Vista campuses are blatantly obvious.

Another factor which contributes to this is the physical campus layout. The UP Mamelodi campus was previously a Vista University campus, and was incorporated into the University of Pretoria on the 2 January 2004, as per the national government's restructuring of higher education program (University of Pretoria, 2008). The treatment of the previous Vista University Campus's nationwide is a prime example of the de-contextualised design process decried by Oktay (2002: 266), who says that the use of universal design standards denies a place its sense of identity and genius loci. Relph (in Walmsley & Lewis, 1984:161) agrees with Oktay and states that uniform planning is destroying localism and creating homogenous landscapes. "Planners are creating a placeless geography and fostering a sense of placelessness [where] man has no sense of awareness of the deep and symbolic significance of places and no appreciation of the role of places in his own identity". The university can therefore be accused of not contributing to either the identity or the wellbeing of the people who need it most.



Figure 15 & 16:  
Landmark buildings on both the Port Elizabeth NMMU Vista campus and the UP Mamelodi campus are identical (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. [www.nmmu.co.za](http://www.nmmu.co.za), [S.a.]) (Author, 2008)

"A deep human need exists for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and allow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. If, on the other hand, we choose to respond to that need and transcend placelessness, then the potential exists for the development of an environment in which places are for man, reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience" (Relph, 1976:147).

In other words, the University can thrive when it is used, loved and 'owned' by the people living there, and this can happen when the campus gains an identity that the people can relate to and feel comfortable in. Friedberg (1970:151) hits the nail on the head when he says that pride and identification cannot be built with second-hand materials. If anything, a deteriorated community with deteriorated morale needs a facility that is better than elsewhere; something that is unique; a place of distinction.

### 2.3) The inaccessibility of the campus

This brings us to the third major problem on the UP Mamelodi Campus: the fact that a university as we currently know it is a closed, prescriptive and elitist institution. It is therefore inaccessible and meaningless to many of the surrounding residents as they are unable to attend University, whether it is for financial reasons, insufficient educational qualifications, or simply a lack of information. In the 43rd pattern: University as a Marketplace, Alexander, Ishikawa & Silverstein (1977:232) condemn “concentrated, cloistered universities with closed admission policies and rigid procedures which dictate who may teach a course”, as these kill any opportunities for learning. Rather universities should become marketplaces which are open and public and woven throughout the city, allowing any and all with the will to learn, this opportunity.

The campus as it stands is the incorrect institution for its context, and the University has, to an extent, realized this. It is in the process of implementing community service and outreach programs (University of Pretoria, 2008) which will contribute to the solution, but will not completely solve the problem and create a continuous urban fabric. These Community Engagement policies are however definitely a step in the right direction and provide something upon which to build a fully engaged community facility that will benefit the people as a whole, create opportunities and improve lives.

## Part 3: Research goal and problem statement

### Research goal:

The creation of a landscape that empowers people, both physically and psychologically, that adds meaning and value, and that fosters a sense of community. A landscape that challenges accepted methods of education, and attempts to integrate life and learning. An innovative landscape that is grounded in its context and speaks of the identity of its people.

### Problem statement:

The current layout and design of the UP Mamelodi campus does not reflect its physical and social context, thereby limiting its interaction with and understanding of the needs of the people living and working around it.



Figure 17:  
An example of community engagement already in practice at the UP Mamelodi campus (Author, 2008)

Figure 18:  
Community engagement ensures that the students benefit from the practical experience, while at the same time providing the community with free legal advice (Author, 2008)





## Part 4: Sub-problems / research questions

### How can the landscape be used as a means of education?

Education = knowledge. What is knowledge, and how does one accumulate it?

Can the landscape become a 'teacher'?

How can a landscape challenge current ideas and contribute to the rectification thereof?

### How can one create a landscape that empowers people?

What is the meaning of empowerment?

How can the landscape become a tool for the empowerment of people?

Are there different types of empowerment?

### How can a landscape foster community spirit and a sense of unity?

What is a 'community'?

How does a landscape contribute to the building of a community?

Can the landscape be used as a means of encouraging community participation?

### How can identity in the landscape be achieved?

What is 'identity' and what does it mean to different people?

How does the identity of place relate to or influence the identity of an individual person?

What is the relationship between identity and place-making?

## Part 5: Hypothesis

A landscape has the ability to empower people both physically and psychologically. This can be achieved through context specific design that responds to the social, economic and political needs of the area and its people.

## Part 6: Assumptions and delimiters

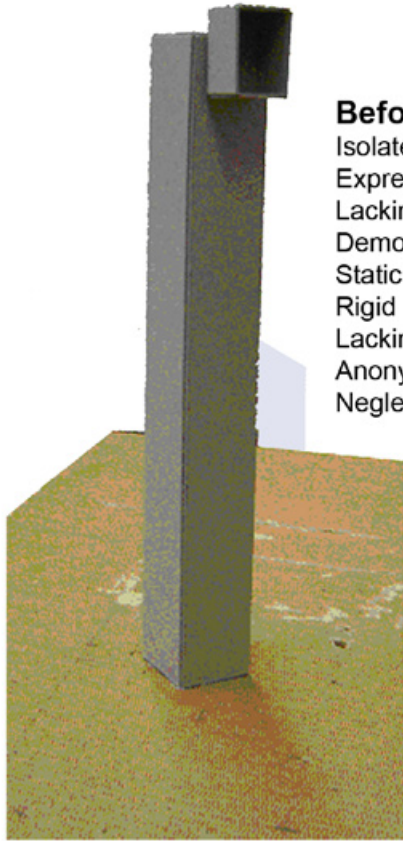
### Assumptions:

The author assumes that the future plans of the University of Pretoria regarding community engagement will go ahead as planned (as per the UP website). NGO's will move onto the campus and it will function as a practical training ground for students. Furthermore, the author assumes that the University is willing to contribute to the upgrade and rejuvenation of the UP Mamelodi Campus in any way possible. The author also assumes that the proposed building line specifications and zoning of areas on and around the campus will be approved by council.

### Delimitations:

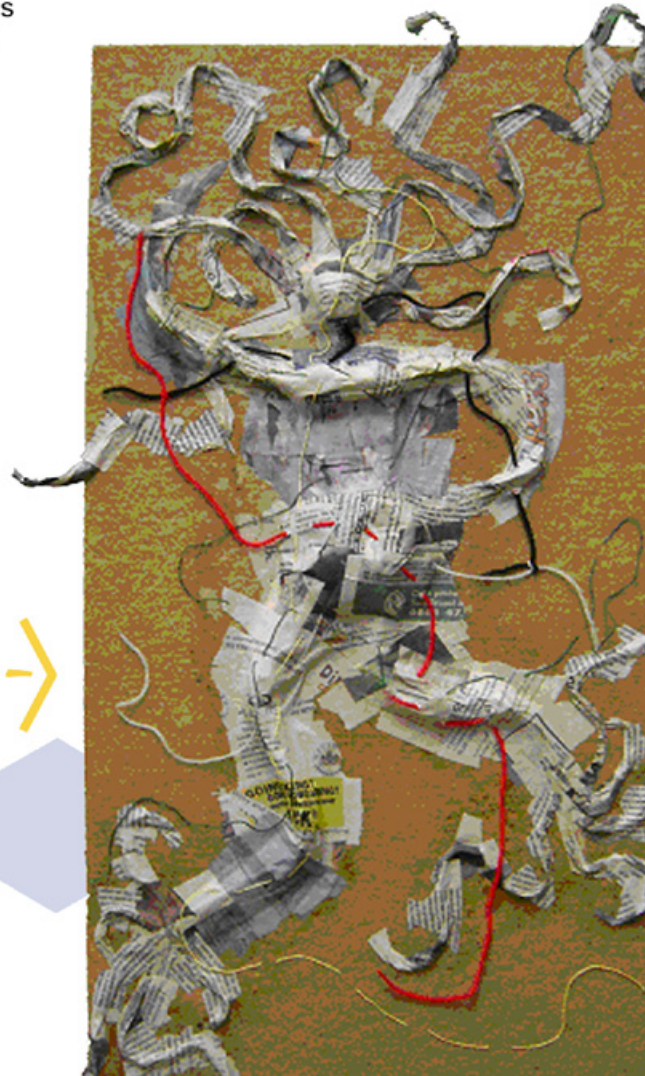
The author is basing all decisions on the current physical, social and economic context of Mamelodi. The Tshwane IDP will be incorporated, as far as possible, and the design will try to predict future expansion, but it primarily attempts to solve problems existing in the area in 2008.

The author will be focusing primarily on the identity of place as opposed to the identity of individuals, but will discuss the effect of place identity on one's individual identity.



**Before intervention:**

Isolated  
Expressionless  
Lacking identity  
Demoralised  
Static and sterile  
Rigid  
Lacking life  
Anonymous  
Neglected



**After intervention:**

Ephemeral and alive  
Flowing outwards  
Full of expression  
Integrated into; connected with...  
Complex and colourful  
Fertile with ideas  
Brimming with creativity  
Possessing an identity  
A metaphor for life