

CHAPTER 3 : THEORETICAL PREMISE

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This chapter explores the sub questions that are derived from the hypothesis of the research. It communicates how memory could be used as a design tool when designing architecture in a post liberating context like Marabastad.

3.1 SPIRIT OF PLACE

Norberg Schulz's theory of the '**genius loci**' or '**spirit of place**' leads this theoretical investigation. Schulz (1986) argues that everyday life consists of tangible and intangible phenomena. The tangible being rocks, flowers, sky, earth etc. (anything you can see or touch) and the intangible (cannot see or touch) are experiences like emotions and memory. Memory is an intangible phenomenon that can evoke specific "feelings" or vice versa. "... *remembering is the fleeting correspondence through which a present sensation evokes an earlier, lost experience*"(Mcole, 1997). Schulz (1986) further states that "*when man dwells, he is simultaneously located in space and exposed to a certain environmental character*". He describes two functions that are involved, namely identification and orientation. Schulz argues that a person needs to orientate him/herself to know where he/she is in a place but also needs to identify with his/her environment. Memory in Marabastad becomes significant through the meaning it provides. For a person to **orientate** him/herself in Marabastad he/she needs to understand the meaning it contains. Therefore orientation can be interpreted as meaning in the context of Marabastad. Identity in this context through memory can act as a familiarity to identify with. To create tangible phenomena, in this case architecture, the intangible memories could be used to inform the identity and meaning which according to Schulz are needed to grasp the "spirit of place".

3.2 MEMORY

Memory is something that we all possess. It is our sub-conscious reminding us that we have lived. "*All memory is unavoidably both borne out of individual subjective experience and shaped by collective consciousness and shared social processes so that any understanding of the*

representation of remembrance and of the past more generally must necessarily take into account both contexts"(Combes.2003:7). As mentioned in the historical background (Chapter 2), Marabastad has a dire memory of political oppression which includes racial separation, forced relocation and destruction of personal property and integrity. These factors ultimately created the conditions in which Marabastad finds itself today.

"The strategic – political ultimately moral historical question is how to move towards understanding without forgetting, but to remember without constantly rekindling the divisive passion of the past. Such an approach is the only one which would allow us to look down into darkness of the atrocities of the past and to speculate on their causes at the same time as we haul up the waters of hope for a future of dignity and equality." (Alexander,2002 : 72)

Memory is a reference to the past in a place which has an oppressed history. It reminds us of our past, and the mistakes of our forefathers. Without a reference to the past we cannot move forward to create a future that will avoid the same hardships. It is thus of importance to have architecture in a previously oppressed context that has reference and is represented as a reaction to that past. "*Architecture becomes intelligible through reference*" (Wolff, 2009 : 175)

If memory is a reference, it could manifest itself as a "*resemblance to an existing or previously existing reality*" (Wolff, 2009 : 175). This resemblance in an architectural intervention opens the possibility for its dwellers to identify with it and find meaning in its spaces. "*With no connection to the familiar world, architecture runs the risk of being inaccessible, elitist and sitting uncomfortably with the people who use it*" (Wolff, 2007 : 66)

3.3 IDENTITY

Norberg - Schulz argues that two functions are needed to create a sense of place, identity being the first. "...*he [she] also has to*

identify himself with the environment, that is, he has to know how he is in a certain place" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980 : 423). Butina, Watson & Bentley (2007) define place-identity as meanings related with any particular cultural landscape which any certain person or group of people draws on in the making of their own personal or collective identities. These definitions demonstrate that people are the vital informants when dealing with identity and place making. There is a mutual relationship between people and the places they inhabit. McDowell(1997) states that people produce places and then derive identities from them: *"people are constituted through place"* (McDowell, 1997). Identity of place becomes important when creating spaces in order for people not to feel alienated. A present identity informed by memory creates a reference or familiarity that contributes to a non-elitist environment.

"One way in which identity is connected to a particular place is by feeling that you belong in that place. It's a place in which you feel comfortable because part of how you define yourself is symbolised by certain qualities of that place" (Rose, 1995 : 87). It is evident from above mentioned arguments that identity becomes an important part of how people experience a place. The question arises how this identity could inspire the architectural intervention. Adam (2009) claims that symbolism of place is a technique to give new architecture an identity that relates to its memory and context. Adam goes on to explain conceptualist Jurgen Mayer's approach to symbolism which is taking local materials that they could reinterpret as something new. Mayer's approach is to relate their architecture to its context but not have it looking like buildings from the past. Identity includes people into the architectural equation. It assists in the "spirit of place" and creates spaces that people can dwell and feel at home in.

3.4 MEANING

The second function that defines 'spirit of place' is orientation. Norberg-Schulz explains that a person needs to be able to orientate himself, or know where he is in his/her environment. Kevin Lynch (1960) identifies spatial structures or 'systems of orientation'. He further states that these elements that make these structures are "concrete things" with "meaning". In Marabastad, that has been stripped of most of its spatial structures,

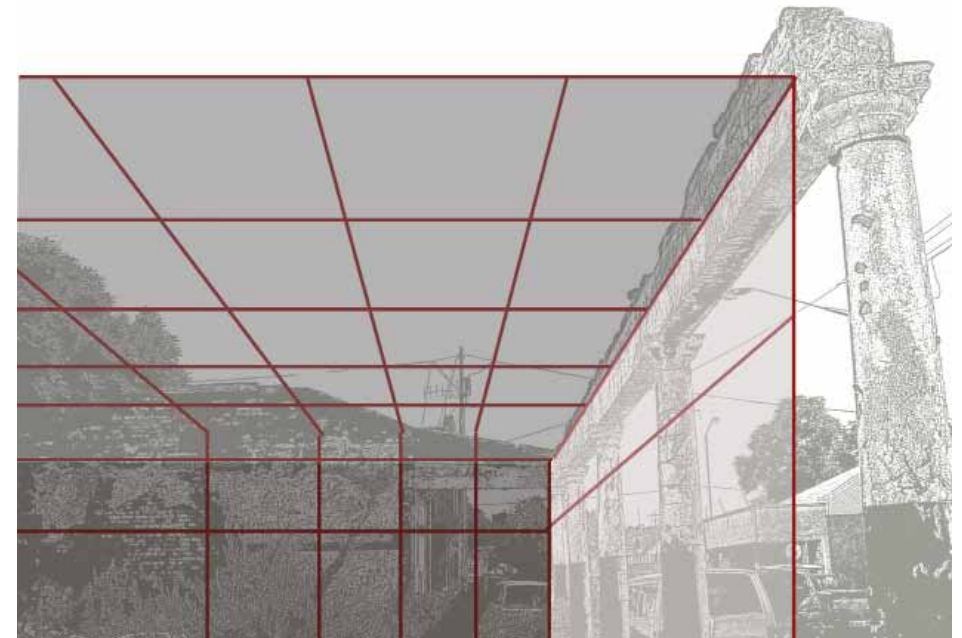


Figure 3.1
Using old to create new. Memory of the old gives meaning and something to identify with. Photograph manipulated by Author (2010).



Figure 3.2
Using local materials or familiar symbols to create identity. Photograph manipulated by Author (2010).

meaning can become an architectural or spatial informant. If a place has meaning to a dweller, he will be able to orientate him/herself. *"Monuments, streets, neighbourhoods, buildings, churches and parks are all material things, but they also evoke specific kinds of meanings and serve as spatial coordinates of identity"* (Lynch, 1972). Architecture in Marabastad should contain specific meanings that could create spaces of orientation. In Marabastad, there is meaning in the memories it holds and when applied to architecture it can create spaces of orientation.

3.6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW

"The sociopolitical realities of the post-liberating context demand both renewal to move forward and a connection to the past in order to engage with repressed history and identity" (Wolff, 2009 : 178).

Memory in Marabastad is the 'old' in Marabastad and is the reference that could give a new architectural intervention familiarity which users could relate to. With these memories of old, the new should evolve and create spaces that glimpse at the past but don't hold on to it so that the future cannot be embraced. Wolff (2009) states that there should be caution not to relive and recall the past in such a way that it 'collapses into conservatism' but it should inform the faith in the future. The memory (old) and the programme of the architectural intervention's requirements (new) create a tension that could inform the design decisions. These tensions need not be resolved by the language of representation which is informed by these dialectics, communal and judgements that *"constitute the engagement with the dialectic"* (Wolff, 2009 : 178). Through the identification of these tensions and relationships between the old and new patterns could emerge that could start to give form to an architecture.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Memory is the driving force to create architecture in a post-liberating context. Memory that informs identity and meaning could invigorate the 'spirit of place'. This could be achieved by using familiar symbolism like local

materials or keeping Marabastad's spatial integrity. The new program and memories create tensions that when attempting to resolve could inspire design decisions.

Marabastad has undergone much political oppression in the past and these memories could represent its history but also invigorate a faith in the future that reacts to these memories through place-identity and meaning.

