

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the sub-questions of the research is explored. This includes investigating the concept of identity in a community as well as the relationship between landscape and memory to strengthen community formation.

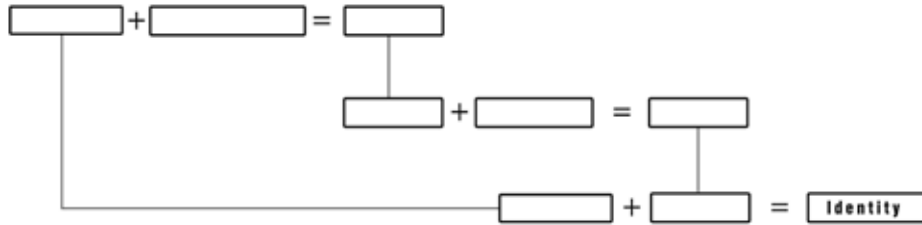


Figure 23. Design aim: community identity (Author, 2009)

### 3.1 Identity:

Identity is found within each individual but is collectively known as the term 'sense of community'. New urbanism is a social doctrine that believes that the built environment is able to create a 'sense of community' (Talen 1999:1362). Talen (1999:1369) argues that the term 'sense of community' is often misunderstood and it is therefore necessary to clarify from the beginning what is meant by it. Sense of community includes the notion of membership, need fulfilment, shared emotional connection and loyalty and is believed to be vital to human functioning (Talen 1999:1365-6).

While there is suitable evidence to suggest that the physical environment can encourage a sense of community, Talen (1999:1375) claims that it is rather the social elements in a space that contribute to this. These social elements include the people that use a space and the interactions of people within the space. Therefore, it is through resident interaction that emotional connections are created. This social network encourages place attachment and a sense of belonging, which in turn is linked to mental health (Talen 1999:1371).

For this reason a strong social network should be encouraged in Marabastad in order to encourage a sense of belonging.

### 3.2 Community:

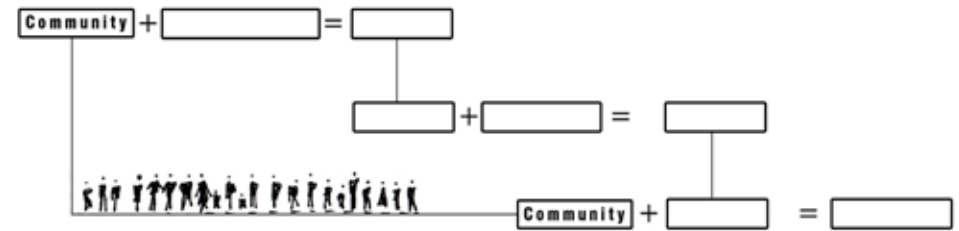


Figure 24. Community interactions (Author, 2009)

A community can be defined as a social group or population of people that inhabit a certain area that have a shared connection. The community of Marabastad currently consists of people who commute to the area to buy, sell or worship. Where once there was a thriving multi-racial, multi-religious community living together, one now finds a commercial district dominated by taxis and a community that is displaced across Pretoria and whose only attachment to Marabastad is that it is a place of income.

There are currently no residential areas in Marabastad and therefore the sense of community is robbed of social interactions between residents and the presence of children. The area lacks the permanence of people at all hours of the day and the passive surveillance that comes with it, elevating the problem of crime<sup>8</sup>. "The current community in Marabastad mind their own business, while in the old days everyone knew their neighbour" (Sooboo, interview).

However, in the proposed group framework for Marabastad (see chapter 4) housing is introduced in the vacant lots of land to the south of Bloed Street. This will foster a community of people who live, work and play in the area. In order for this new community to feel grounded in its new location it needs to grow an attachment to the area. This can be done through events that cause awareness of past meaning.

<sup>8</sup> In an interview with Shanu Sooboo, a businessman in Marabastad, he said that crime was a major problem in the area and that at night Marabastad was like a graveyard.

### 3.3 Public Space:

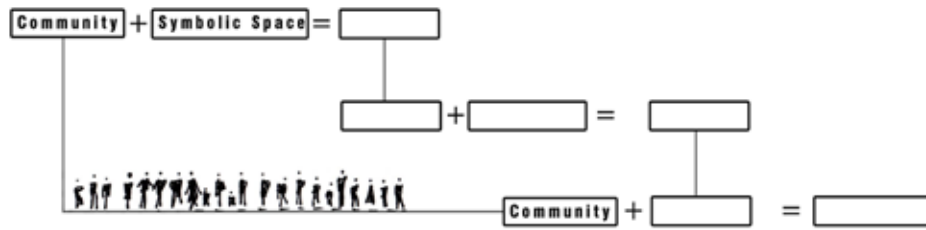


Figure 25. Public space required for the community (Author, 2009)

The public space of a city is vitally important. Its value lies not only in the physical and environmental benefit that it contributes to a city but also the psychological and emotional benefit to people's daily lives. It is in the public space of a city where interaction and community formation is possible.

Lefebvre (1991:11 see also Lehrer 1998:203-206; Pooley 2000:433) advocates that there are three types of public space: physical space, social space and mental space (also called symbolic space) (Figure 26). Physical public space is described as the physical built environment and evokes images of streets, plazas, picnic areas, beaches etc. In contrast to this, social public space is created through practices and is not limited to a physical environment. The symbolic public space is created by the collective memory of people and can consist of demonstrations or small performances. It is the intangible public space that exists in people's minds; where remembrance and imagination exist.

Lippard (1997:7) supports this view by ascertaining that place is not only temporal and spatial (physical), it is also personal and political (social). Furthermore, place is a location layered with human histories and memories; consisting of width as well as depth (symbolic). Additionally, Relph (1976:141) adds to this way of describing space, or more specifically *place*, when he states that places are directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world and consist of meanings (symbolic), with real objects (physical), and with ongoing activities (social). They are important settings of individual and communal identity to which people can have deep emotional connections and psychological bonds.

Lefebvre (1991:14) asks, "what term should be used to describe the division which keeps the various types of space away from each other, so that physical space, mental space and social space do not overlap?". He then concludes that the three fields are inter relational and dependent on one another when he states "...these kinds of space involves, underpins and presupposes the other."

Therefore, in order to generate change within a community all three components of public space are important. In order to infiltrate the collective memory of a community it is necessary to have appropriately designed physical space that supports the social interactions of the community. It is through the creation of this physical space that allows the formulation of events, interactions and practices to emerge which in turn rekindles memories of the past as well as creating new perceptions and new memories and references to the present.

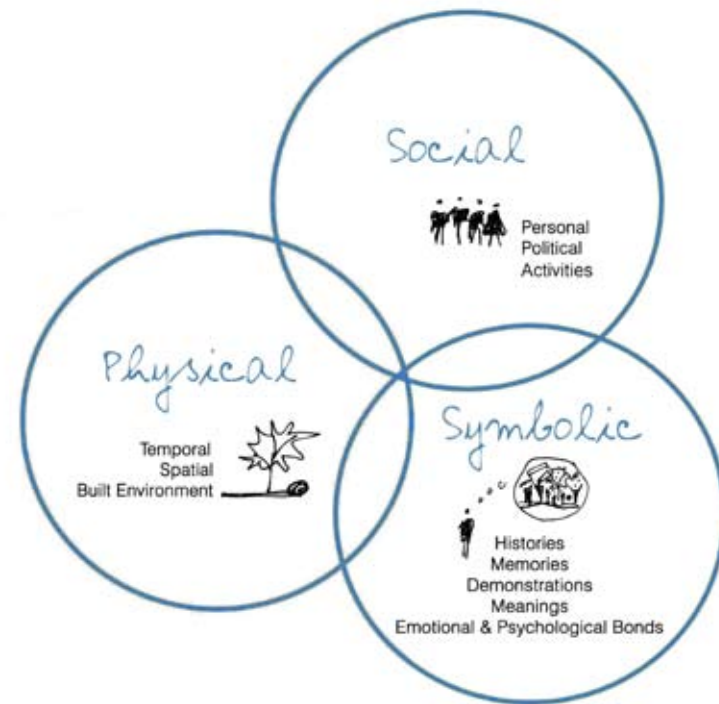


Figure 26. Public Space according to Lefebvre (Author, 2009)

3.4 Events:

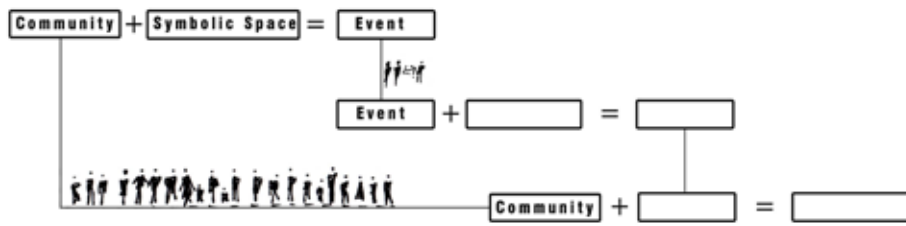


Figure 27. Social interaction through events (Author, 2009)

The sharing of events fosters an emotional connection which leads to the creation of a spiritual bond between people (Talen 1999:1370; Chang & Huang 2005:268). Open spaces play a role in enhancing the sense of community since they are where these events and interactions occur. According to Burgess (1988:471) public open spaces have the potential to enhance urban life through offering a variety of opportunities and physical settings as well as providing a platform for social interaction and cultural diversity. It is these spaces that provide opportunity for gathering, sharing information and connection and they need to be positive and well-defined in order to foster a community spirit.

The events can occur at varying degrees of intensity and on different scales (Figure 28). In order to strengthen relationships within a community events at all three levels are required. The event, *per se*, can be a large scale community festival or a small scale event such as a greeting in the street. These small scale events take place during daily life and includes interactions between people. The proposed design intervention will target this level of activity and provide the stage for daily connections to occur between the people of the Marabastad community.

On the 23rd of October 1998 the Marabastad Mardi Gras was held to celebrate the visit of the provincial MEC and the opening of the new Marabastad Development Forum (MDF) offices. The day's events included a variety of cultural events: a Hindu dance, jazz music and local singers (Maraba Indaba 1999:8). Unfortunately this event was not held again and according to our interview with Laura Lourens from the CTMM the MDF is no longer in operation after adjustments within the council. The proposed design hopes to create the opportunity for the reinstatement of events such as the one described above.

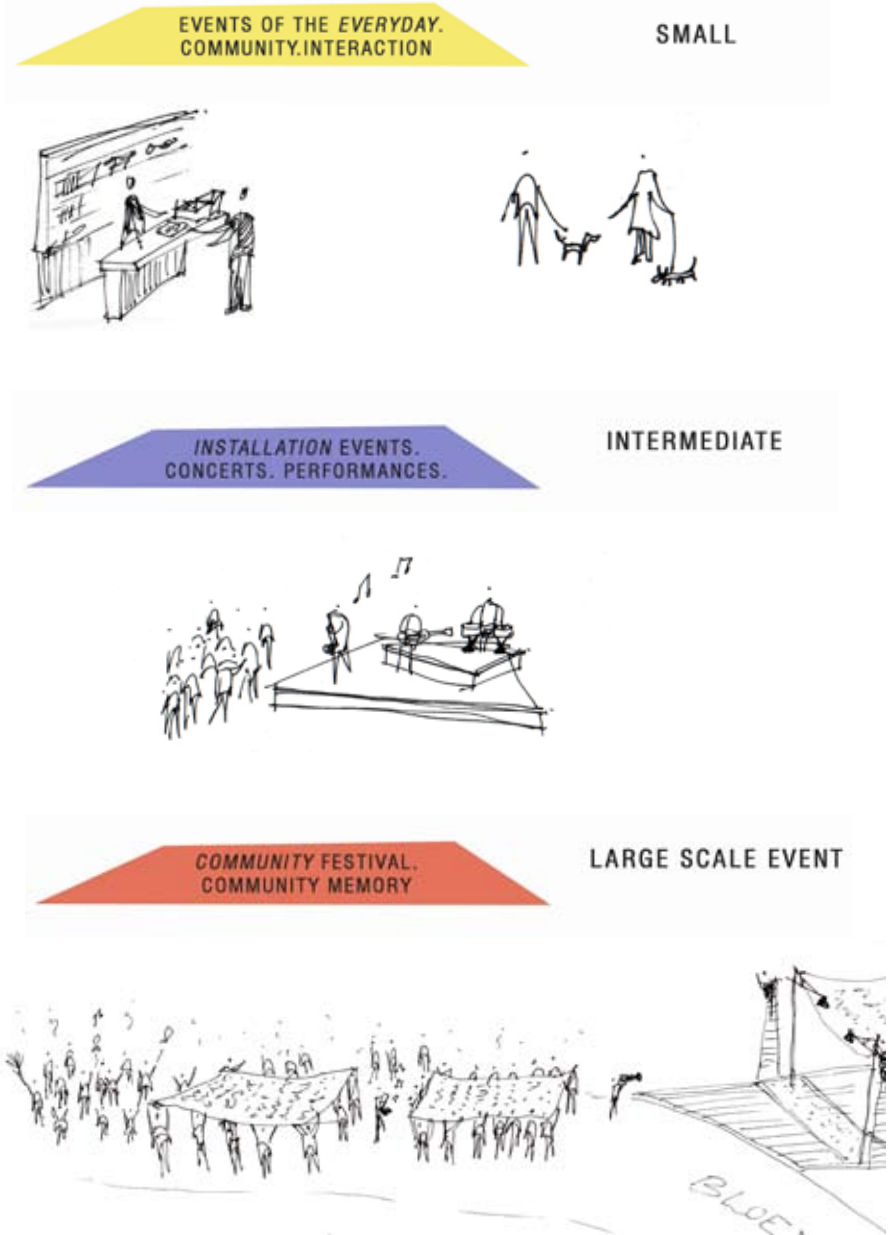


Figure 28. Varying size and scale of events (Author, 2009)

### 3.5 Landscape:



Figure 29. Landscape as the location for events to take place (Author, 2009)

The landscape of Marabastad is predominantly an urban setting characterised by the streets that transverse it. Owing to the history of the area the landscape is a palimpsest of layers of meaning and significance. The landscape is a resource that can either be utilised to enhance the sense of place of Marabastad or the danger exists that it could be lost through development. Therefore, as Corner (1999) advocates, landscapes should be 'recovered' and the retrieval of memory should be part of the method of instilling the cultural enrichment of a place. This involves not merely restoring, but reinterpreting, remaking and reinvigorating landscapes in order for it to find renewed place and value in the future.

Research undertaken by Shamsuddin & Ujang (2008:399), in traditional shopping streets of Malaysia, establishes that streets act as a place of functional and emotional significance and are important in influencing the identity and economic vitality of a city. The streets in Malaysia, as in Marabastad, are strongly characterised by the informal activities along the street with walkways that act as transition space between the street and the building (Shamsuddin & Ujang 2008:401).

The objects within a space (physical) and the activities taking place there (social) influence the users' perception of places. The functional, emotional and the meanings evoked (symbolic) by these elements cause a place to be loved and felt to be significant (Shamsuddin & Ujang 2008:405). Edensor (1998:205) expresses that streets are spaces for transactions of news and gossip, for entertainment as well as ultimately becoming temporary stages. Similarly, public space fulfils these roles. It is this social interaction and the personal experiences of people in spaces that give landscape its meaning.

Indeed, it is landscape that provides this means of connection and is itself a facilitator for the initiating and strengthening of relationships. The landscape of Marabastad provides the opportunity for expressing these layers of meaning through urban transformation. Landscape can affect the meaning that one attaches to a place and in this way the attachment that one feels to a specific place. If this attachment is shared among a group of people a feeling of community coherence is possible.

### 3.6 Memory:



Figure 30. Memory through the participation of events (Author, 2009)

Memory affects attachment to a specific place. It can transform space into a place of significance and a place of storytelling. It provides clues to cultural history and prompts recollections that can preserve important historic events and enrich the space with meaning (Wasserman 1998:42,43).

As mentioned before, the landscape is a palimpsest of memories that have accrued over time (Corner 1999:5). These memories are formed through events or experiences and are specific to a certain location. Memory gives the landscape its complex layering of meaning and association that is unique to each individual. The uniqueness of a site is expressed through these layers and it is therefore paramount that these layers do not get lost through inconsiderate development. However, the character of a place is not necessarily native or unchanging, but it is always subject to evolution through the daily life and interactions of humans. Therefore, the meaning that a landscape holds must be expressed so that it remains an important reference to the past but at the same time allows for adaptability by the current users so that new layers of meaning can be added.

According to Chang and Huang (2005:269), it is not only possible for landscapes to resurrect the past, but also for them to aid in the process of destructive creativity. This destruction can be understood as selectively removing the old and 'forgetting to remember' by replacing it with new memories. With new activities new social memories can be created. Marabastad holds memories that are both depressing and inspiring. The forced evictions meant that people were uprooted from their homes and from the community to which they were connected. Paradoxically, many of the people spoken to recall the area with fond nostalgia and describe

favourable experiences<sup>9</sup>.



Figure 31. Ways in which history can be commemorated (Author, 2009)

Marabastad is an historic precinct of the city of Pretoria and is in danger of losing its character through development. It is currently in a state of neglect and decay and important, historic buildings are in danger of being lost. In order to prevent the loss of the memories that many people hold of this area it is necessary for a design intervention that strengthens the character and meaning of Marabastad. Change and regeneration are certainly necessary in the area, however, it needs to be done in such a manner that the layers of meaning and memory embedded in the landscape are respected and acknowledged.

<sup>9</sup> In an interview Hassen Mohideen he fondly recalled Marabastad as an area where people watched films, held festivals and knew their neighbour.

### 3.7 Conclusion:



Figure 32. Theoretical Argument in entirety (Author, 2009)

The aim of the theoretical argument is the strengthening of community identity. It is stated that this identity can be enhanced through the symbolic space of public space and therefore also through the memory and meaning a landscape contains.

However, public space consists of a tripartite relationship of symbolic, physical and social space and all three of these components should support one another. Physical space is required to sustain both social and symbolic space. The physical space in turn allows for new memories and perceptions to be created and these can be strengthened through the activities comprising the social space. Symbolic space has the opportunity to inspire the form of the physical space and it is this very statement that is argued for this landscape intervention.

Once the physical space of a landscape design is established there is a likelihood for events to occur. These events provide the opportunity for community interaction and can encourage the formation of relationships and social practices within a community. The interaction initiated through events is of varying scale and intensity, however the more a community interacts the stronger the relationships and bonds between the individuals will be. Furthermore, events also contribute to the generation of memories associated with the landscape and encourage a sense of attachment to place.

Therefore to invigorate community identity a landscape design intervention should be the platform for spontaneous interaction, which can lead to the conception of relationships within a community. This landscape intervention should look to the memory and meaning a landscape holds

to generate physical form and therefore provide the opportunity for events and interaction. These events comprise the practices and interactions of community members and encourage the formation of relationships within the community. Community members are able to identify with a place and its associated people once the physical, social and symbolic space support one another.

The physical environment should be designed to strengthen social cohesion and symbolic connotation within a community. This dissertation aims to encourage the strengthening of community identity through enabling connections with the memory and meaning held within the landscape of Marabastad in the physical design of public open space.