



Figure 2.1: (Author 2015)



U R B A N C O N T E X T

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with a brief investigation into the formation of Pretoria so as to establish the various ideas that formed the basis for its development, and to gain an overarching understanding of the context in which the intervention is to be located.

2.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

2.2.1 Introduction

“In the Postmodern ‘history like’ – be it in architecture, the visual arts, or literature – the ideological and the aesthetic are turning out to be inseparable... What postmodern theory and practice have taught is less that ‘truth’ is illusory than that it is institutional, for we always act and use language in the context of politico-discursive conditions (Eagleton 1986:168). Ideology both constructs and is constructed by the way in which we live our role in the social totality... In other words, all social practice (including art) exists by and in ideology.”

(Hutcheon, 1988:178).

A city model and the architecture which forms it represent ideology to be strived towards, and this, in turn, determines how users experience the city (Jordaan, 1989:26). According to the notion of the ideal city, as it evolved through the ages, it represents a static phenomenon, as opposed to the good city which consists of ecology in constant flux.

The traditional relationship between these two cities is that the fixed, or constant state, should accommodate that which is in continual flux whilst retaining its “permanent” structure (Jordaan, 1989:26).

To understand the relationship that exists between the user and the city, it is of importance to investigate the underlying ideology imbedded in a city’s formation over time. It is hypothesised in this dissertation that the residue of ideals, as it is made and manifested in built fabric, still influences Pretoria’s functioning as an urban environment through the permanence of structure (Fig 2.2). Furthermore, reference to specific architectural elements found in the city, which reflect this manifestation, will be analysed as a tool in the development of an overarching architectural concept. For the purposes of this study the investigation into Pretoria’s development will be structured into three segments:

2.2.2 Strengthening the idea

2.2.3 In the wake of an idea

2.2.4 The Birth of an Idea

2.2.2 The Birth of an Idea

Set into motion by the migration of white European settlers into the interior of the county during the Great Trek of the Voortrekkers, later known as Afrikaners, a cultural territory began to emerge in what was referred to as the Transvaal, which included the present location of Pretoria (Van der Klashorst, 2013:29). Around 1829 the site was occupied by Mzilikazi, a breakaway Zulu chief and founder of the Matabele nation. Between this period and 1854, Boers settled in the region now known as Irene, and in that same year Commandant-General Marthinus Wessels Pretorius, son of the hero of Blood River, Andries Pretorius, purchased the portion of land known as Kerkplaas (Church Farm) to serve the central Boer Republic, later known as the ZAR (Hopkins,2006:29).

Through the process of mapping the landscape, the city was formalised into measurable grids where agriculture and dwellings were established and managed (Van der Klashorst, 2013:30). As this process developed into a city, it gave birth to the beginnings of the Afrikaner's cultural and administrative capital.

The original street grid which determined Pretoria's urban framework, and still present today, was set out to conform to the requirements of ox wagon transportation of people and goods (Louw, 1959:28). Engelbrecht (1942) as cited by Van der Klashorst (2013) notes that, the centre of this grid, known as Church Square, facilitated the three-monthly per year sacrament of communion of the state church – the Dutch Reformed Church, where farmers and citizens would gather at its centre (Van der Klashorst, 2013:31). From early on this established Pretoria's core as fundamental to cultural and religious identity, specific to that associated with the Afrikaner. According to Jordaan (1986), the street grid system of Pretoria did not develop as a direct response to the town's geographical typology, but was borrowed from the Graaff-Reinet model (Fig 2.3). The application of this foreign system proved to be a more "successful and pure" application, compared to that of the Cape Province town model. The availability of water supplied by the Apies River allowed for irrigation ditches to be led into the town grid, effectively supplying plot and home (Jordaan, 1989:28).

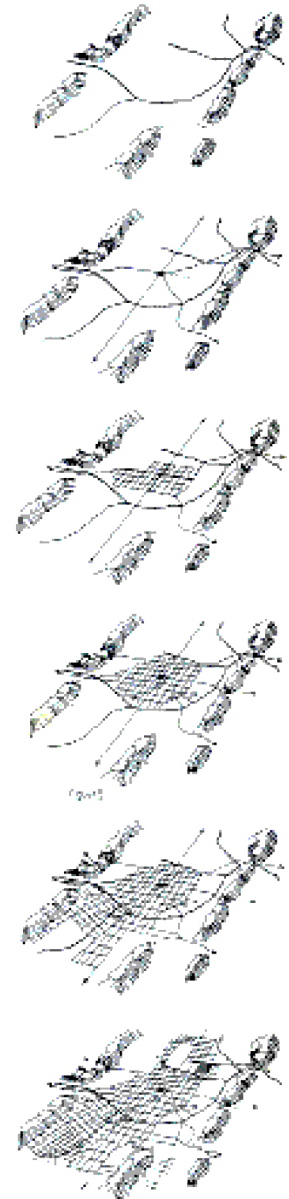


Figure 2.2: Pretoria Grid Development(Jordaan 1989 2015)



Figure 2.3: Graaff-Reinet - Urban Grid (Jordaan 1989)

This already indicates that the conception of Pretoria as a town, rather than a contextual consideration of environment, pivoted largely on the superimposition of classical, cultural and foreign principles carried with the settlers to be tested and perfected at its destination.

With the grid positioning religion at the core of Pretoria's foundation, additional meaning was attached to the geographical typology of Pretoria, saturating its natural surroundings with cultural-specific ideology. The hills surrounding Pretoria, which provided the locations for the forts built to protect the town, were seen as being symbolic of the masculine soldier protecting the urban interior and positioned in stark contrast to the soft flow of the Apies River, which symbolised the emotional support of the Mother Feminine, to be protected by the guarding soldier against foreign threats (Jordaan, 1989:26).

This being a classical read of town planning, it could be easily understood why Afrikaner culture associated with this image when compared to the military Laager strategy, as implemented during their trek into the interior of South Africa (Fig 2.4 & 2.5).

By positioning their ox wagons in a defensive circular formation, women and children would be protected at its interior, whilst men defended the peripheries. Seen in its cultural context, Pretoria resembles a city reminiscent of the Jewish transition from Tabernacle to Solomon's Temple, a city deemed to represent an idea that would outlast generations. It is furthermore argued by Leach (1989) that this "laager mentality" had such a profound impact on Afrikaner culture that it permeated to the level of his household. It is therefore postulated that, if this idea could penetrate as far as family structure (Leach, 1989:42), it could easily be assumed that a city, its architecture and the spaces such architecture generated, would lean towards the same disposition.

The architecture in Pretoria was designed to convey a similar degree of symbolic importance, ranging from nineteenth century trends, British-influenced order, international modernism (as appropriated by Afrikaner Nationalism) and post-apartheid contemporary specimens (Van der Klashorst, 2013:42).

It has been argued that, compared to Johannesburg, not being located near a harbour or on mineral rich soil, which would have justified the establishment of Pretoria as an industrial city, it was secured by the Afrikaners as a city to function predominantly as a political and administrative entity (Van der Klashorst, 2013:43).

The Afrikaner culture and its leaders went to great lengths, despite imperial and internal conflict, to ensure the survival of both the city and its foundational principles (Vernon, 2007:148).

During the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, the influx of foreigners to the neighbouring city of Johannesburg was perceived as a socio-cultural threat to the ZAR government. In a response to cultural preservation of identity, the government ensured that the political seat of the country remained in Pretoria, with the added advantage of it already being mainly Afrikaans (Van der Klashorst, 2013: 32-33). Driven by the sudden economic thrust provided by the flourishing gold mining industry, the ZAR government under Paul Kruger engaged in state building projects that would reflect the young nation's ambitions and ideals (Holm 1998:64).

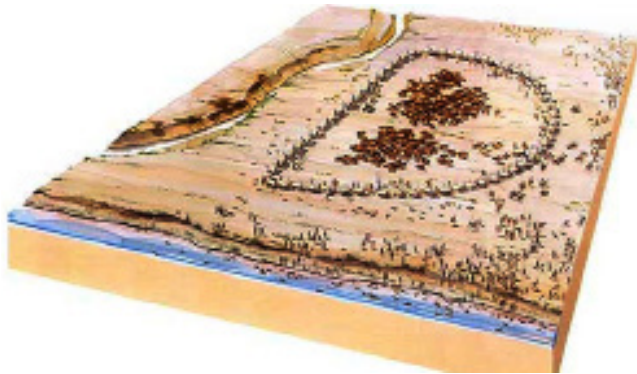


Figure 2.4: Battle of Blood River Laager Strategy Model



Figure 2.5: Voortrekker Laager

Focused mainly around Church Square (Fig 2.6), the majority of these new buildings were designed by the Dutch-born architect, Sytze Wierda (Van der Klashorst, 2013:42). According to Meiring (1952), as cited by Van der Klashorst (2013), Wierda, was familiar with the imperial architecture of Berlin and Paris and internalised Paul Kruger's visions of order and rule of law into his duties as Pretoria's chief civic architect (Van der Klashorst, 2013:43). A built environment thus emerged where the propagation of a young culture's ideals were being reinforced by a collaboration of principles borrowed from tried and tested imperial structures.

As Pretoria's built identity developed, it began to resemble a sharp contrast to the individualistic Victorian principles associated with commercial and industrial urban activity associated with South African cities of that era, such as Johannesburg (Fig 2.7). This sets apart and secures spaces such as Church Square as being rich in colonial-Afrikaner character and symbolism. An example of this vision materialising in architecture is visible in the design of the Palace of Justice (Fig 2.8), previously being the Parliament Building.

In contrast to typical Victorian buildings of its time, it reads as asymmetrical and less decorative in manner, with its single tower symbolic of phallogocentric power and masculinity (Van der Klashorst, 2013:32-44).

During the establishment of the South African Union in 1910, the Afrikaner leaders ensured that its power base should remain located in Pretoria ideals (Holm 1998:64), as this would ensure that South Africa's political nucleus would remain Afrikaans to a large extent. With buildings such as the Palace of Justice occupying its core, Pretoria began to symbolise a culture striving towards independence and cultural recognition.

Figure 2.6: Early Photo of Church Square with Church still present



2.2.3 Strengthening of an Idea

“Pretoria was chosen as the site for the [Voortrekker] monument, because it was here that the deeds of the Voortrekkers were given form.” (Hopkins, 2006:29). (Fig 2.9)

“I saw the outlines of their kappies silhouetted against the brilliant lights of Pretoria – the Voortrekker City.” T.C. Robertson (1983) as cited by Hopkins (Hopkins, 2006:27)

During the Great Trek’s centenary celebrations of 1938, an Afrikaner cultural revival swept the country (Fig 2.9 - 2.11). Leaders later to be associated with the National Party harnessed the patriotic symbolism of the Voortrekker as the national patriarch to shape a Nationalist cultural identity prior to the devastation of the Anglo Boer War of 1899 – 1902 (Hopkins, 2006:30). This vision of establishing an independent nation that will pride itself on its founding principles manifested politically a decade after the 100-year anniversary of the Great Trek, when the National Party assumed power in 1948. The Afrikaner’s drive towards independence and solidarity gave birth to and eventually accumulated in the legislative implementation of the apartheid ideology.

By means of the Group Areas Act no. 69 of 1955, the ruling National Party was empowered to engineer the South African landscape so as to serve the purposes of racial and spatial segregation (Leach 1989:34), of which the consequences of such strategy would live on in the identity of spaces and places that will continue to impact the lives of users (Swilling, 1991: ix).

Pretoria was definitely not excluded from this process, as residents of Lady Selbourne were forcefully removed and relocated to townships located on the outskirts of the city (Van der Klashorst, 2013:32-39), almost permanently – by means of buffer zones – limiting access into the city’s core and shattering its fabric, which resulted in massive urban sprawl and a decentralised city infrastructure.

What especially distinguished Pretoria from its urban peers during this era was the fact that the bureaucratic mechanisms that kept the apartheid system in place, operated almost exclusively from Pretoria (Terreblanche, 2002:303). Afrikaner capitalism, which promoted and favoured Afrikaner trade and industry, led to most corporations and institutions associated with the National Party to live and work in Pretoria, resulting in its urban environment to facilitate and cater for this specific client (Van der Klashorst, 2013:40).

During the apartheid period from 1948 onwards, urban planning and architectural design implemented principles of international modernism as to make clear the modernity of the apartheid state (Murray and Sheperd, 2007:5). According to Dewar (2000), the ideology of modernism in the South African city, as imported from the UK, US and Europe, manifested as urban characteristics in the following:

A strong anti-urban and pro-suburban ethos placed strong emphasis on the free-standing building model surrounded by private space as the basic element of settlements. This single-free standing structure was deemed the apex of “good urban life” (Dewar, 2000:210)

Figure 2.7: Artist Impression - Victorian Johannesburg

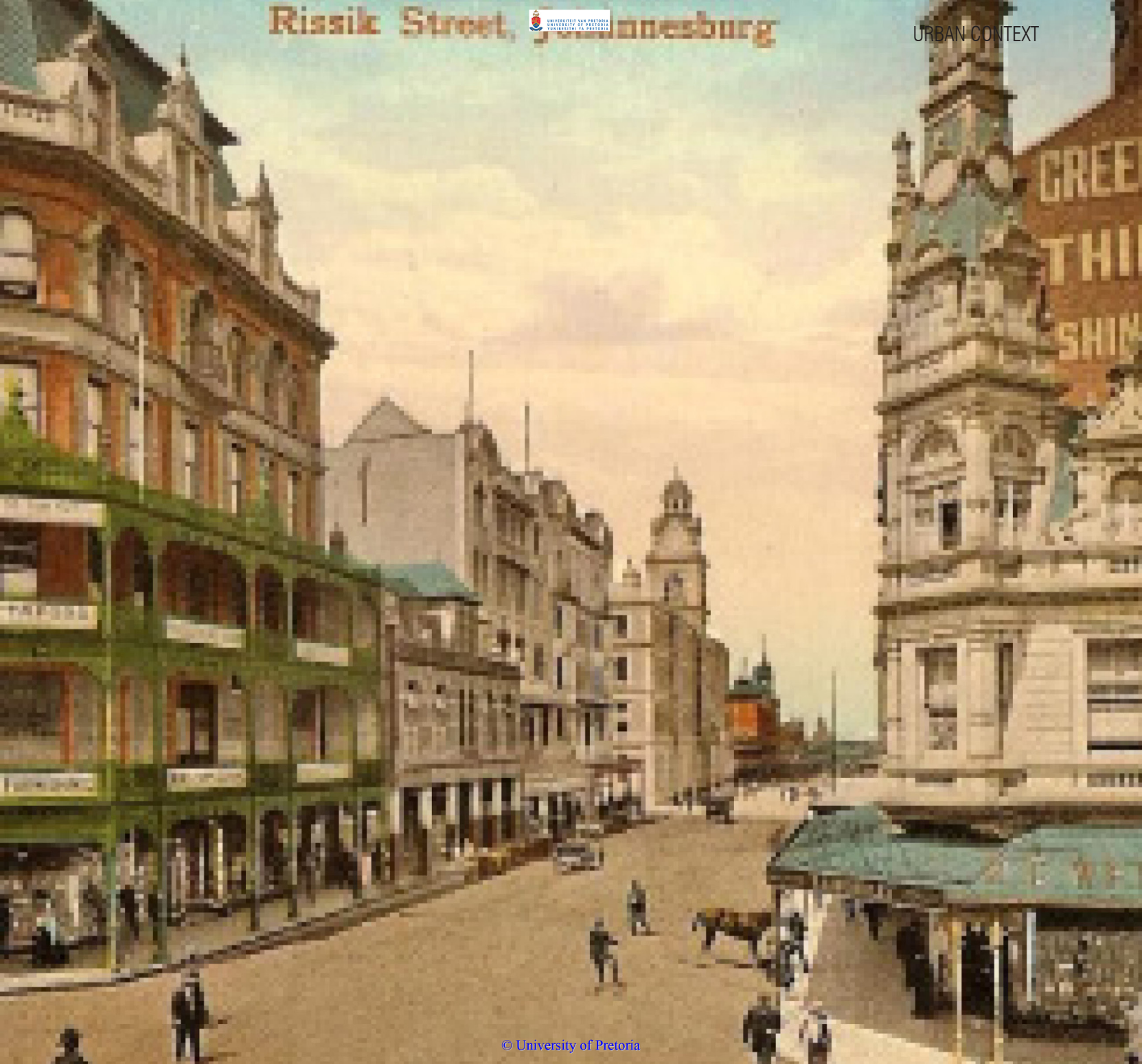




Figure 2.8: A Young Palace of Justice 1901. Church Square (University of Pretoria)
© University of Pretoria

A strong separation between everyday activities such as living, working, playing and movement was a means to avoid “conflict” (Dewar, 2000:210). Buildings were largely quantitatively and programmatically determined. Here capacities and thresholds were organised so as to establish a catalogue of sorts to allow for an efficient assembly of parts, rather than a contextual appreciation for the framework it would operate in (Fig 2.13). Decisions about the elements of structures were viewed as being discipline-specific and orientated in virtual isolation from one another (Dewar, 2000:210).

The concept of the neighbourhood unit – residential cells that are clustered into distinct cells – focused inwards onto centrally-positioned community facilities (Fig 2.12). These distinct cells, not being integrated, but merely connected via movement infrastructure, failed to realise the conceptual aim of generating a sense of community (Dewar, 2000:210).

The private vehicle was seen as the primary method of transportation and buildings were scaled and positioned in relation to the motor car (Dewar, 2000:210), and reinforced the isolation of the neighbourhood cell. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge that two ideologies shaped the structure of Pretoria – being modernism and apartheid – as well as to view these two ideologies, not as separate from one another, but rather as compatible doctrines within the city’s historical context.



Figure 2.9: Voortrekker Monument 16 December 1949 (Slideshare)



Figure 2.10. Voortrekker Centenary 1938 (Wikipedia)



Figure 2.11: Laying of the Cornertone Voortrekker Monument 1938 (Boeseken et al, 1953)



Figure 2.12: Pretoria's Isolated Infrastructure Network (Jordaan 1989)

Here the modernist concept was embraced due to the emphasis the apartheid ideology placed on separateness, whilst distorting the architectural movement's approach to scale and ideas of community (Fig 2.14). The cellular form and limited points of access held obvious interest in how these could be manipulated in order to gain control over possible social unrest in urban environments (Dewar, 2000:210). It is furthermore postulated that these systems were not put in place to suit temporary requirements, but rather to ensure the prolonged isolation of the city model, as well as the success and efficiency of the apartheid system decades in advance, which therefore still echoes through the adopted built form in cities such as Pretoria.

The interwoven relationship between segregation legislation and town planning in South Africa during the period of architectural modernity renders the modern movement and apartheid ideology inter-dependent in South Africa during this period. Implementing international models of town planning aimed at segregation on racial principle, Pretoria, as stronghold of Afrikaner nationalism, would have had to

Figure 2.13: Built Environment Segregation Structure

represent this ideology strongly. International models of modern design principles were incorporated to further the cause, with the main aim on establishing urban environments that would not allow for black and white social synergy (Maylam 1995:24).

The exception was black urban labour, as it was required by the ruling minority (Lemon 1991:4). In addition to the above, international modernism was a method in establishing Afrikaner Nationalism as a modern entity. This relationship between movement and ideology would have had specific implications with regards to public space in Pretoria at that time, and would have been predominantly designed for and used by whites only. The same principle would have impacted urban elements such as street, architecture, signs and public art in order to serve white urban needs. Although this implies that Pretoria's fabric is saturated in Afrikaner ideology, Fisher (1998) suggests that, under Afrikaner rule, a region-specific vernacular, or architectural regionalism, developed and supported the growth of the built environment, characterised by a rich diversity of local materials and a drive towards achieving a distinctive cultural language in architectural design (Fisher, 1998:124-6).

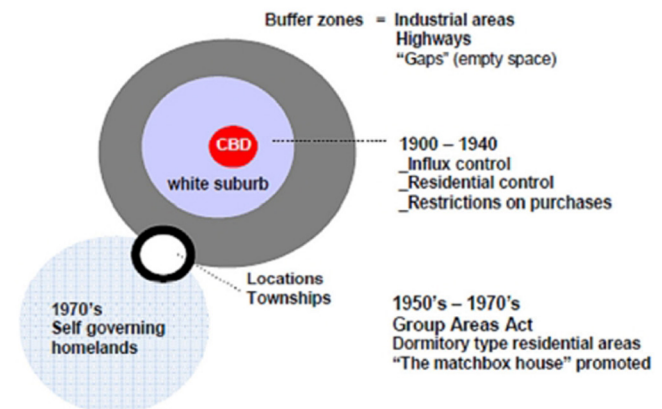




Figure 2.14: Le Corbusier Plan Voisin for Paris (Pezi.com)



This regionalism not only provided Pretoria with a rich and unique architectural identity, but also generated the drive behind its infra-structural and architectural development, and raises the question of how this identity should be integrated in today’s urban climate, whilst not undermining the importance of the city’s role in facilitating social diversity.

2.2.4 In the Wake of an Idea

South Africa’s transition into freedom, as it developed during the era of the late 1980s and early 1990s, provided unprecedented access into Pretoria by black South Africans and civic servants associated with a new democratic government. This introduced a new perception of space as to how it could be lived through the lives of new South Africans, although it had little effect on the heritage of Pretoria’s structural space that has been left unchanged.

“That General Hertzog should choose the language [Afrikaans] as the starting point of his struggle for Afrikaans survival was the logical development of his belief that language was much more than a means of expression.....It was a vehicle of a people’s distinctive culture [ideals] and separateness.”

(Hopkins, 2006:31).

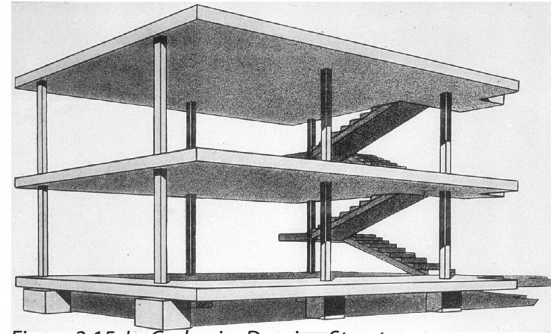


Figure 2.15: Le Corbusier Dom-ino Structure



Figure 2.16: Le Corbusier Plan Villa Savoye

Figure 2.17: Architectural Modernist Principles

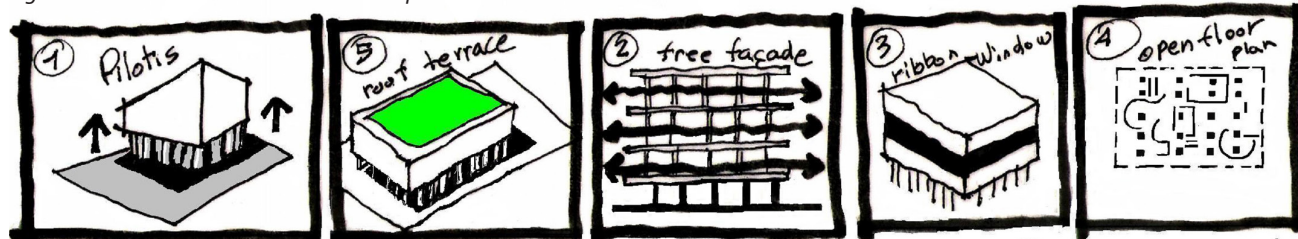




Figure 2.18: Transvaal Provincial Administrative Building 1955-1963

Church Square, the historical centre of Pretoria, still showcases a typical example of sculpture employed to emphasise the ideology within public space. Statues representational of the colonial masculine – placed strategically in relation to buildings of political importance and in line with the city grid – charge space ideologically, rather than defining it as a place for enjoyment and social interaction (Van der Klashorst, 2013:49).

This unavoidable fact, according to Labuschagne (2006), as cited by Van der Klashorst (2013), that the values and history symbolised within its space, will remain worlds apart from current and future urban generations, and will continue to cast its shadow over their leisure time (Van der Klashorst, 2013:51-52).

The very fact that the statue of Paul Kruger was not originally to be kept in Church Square, but rather relocated numerous times to retain its political-ideological significance (Labuschagne, 2011:143), reveals something regarding the priority of structured Afrikaner-dominated urban design (Fig 2.20).

Church Square as public space remains contested today and absorbs significant amounts of economical and socio-political expression, although not physically altered by such activity.

It is within this space that current sentiments and how the city responds towards Pretoria's ideological heritage may be best observed (Fig 2.19). A future proposal for the development of Pretoria, such as the Tshwane 2055 vision, does not deviate from keeping up with the city's image as an administrative and political heavyweight.

The proposal mainly addresses issues of strengthening the existing government route and Ceremonial Boulevard, whilst connecting and ensuring access to this experience through upgrading the public transport infrastructure. This strategy ironically still builds on the modernist urban model, where accessibility to movement is seen as a move towards establishing a sense of community within the neighbourhood unit.

This irony is accentuated of how government institutions indicate a migration towards the northern and southern edges of the city, leaving the historical core vacant and open for re-interpretation and private development (figures 2.21 - 2.22). These conditions provide opportunity for intervention, as good public space in the city remains few and far between, with the majority of urban programs still geared towards a mono-functional and public exclusive nature.

Despite government departments' various visions towards a public inclusive climate, the buildings that they occupy still resemble the modernist principles of monumental, private and separate structures and therefore do not reflect any revised government ethos. High crime rates, combined with the city resembling a working environment during the day and being left vacant at night, materialise in the physical decay of built fabric and propagate the need for strict security measures being implemented to fence in private and government property.

2.2.5 Conclusions

It is possible to deduce that the combined ideology of modernism, as imbedded in the culture generated by Afrikaner Nationalism, played a crucial role in establishing the city as an administrative capital. It is therefore postulated that this collaboration permeated most aspects of the built, spatial and programmatic structures of Pretoria from as early as the implementation of the original grid system. It is concluded that, as long as this model of control and exclusivity adheres to the principle that a fixed system should remain intact, while deflecting the impact of fluctuating urban endeavours, the ability of Pretoria to record, process and transmit information will continue to be distorted, resulting in a static and unresponsive urban environment. This renders an image of Pretoria as a city struggling with its socio-cultural heritage in the face of facilitating increased levels of urbanisation, whilst retaining its importance of a geo-political platform. Da Costa and van Rensburg (2008) clarify this by mentioning the difficulty in defining the urban nature of the African city due to its close connection to the Western and colonial ideal of what a city should entail (Da Costa and van Rensburg, 2008:31). Where modern principles were manipulated to display authority, oppression and control – as typical trademarks of the apartheid city – it represents what Koolhaas (2000), as explained by Da Costa and van Rensburg (2008), defined as the “generic city” (Da Costa and van Rensburg, 2008:31-32). A less intangible factor, coupled to the specific character of Pretoria, is the bureaucratic and administrative programmatic identity coupled to the city.



Figure 2.19: Political Protests at Church Square





Buildings representing these institutions tend to be authoritative and exclusive in the way they function and contribute to urban living. Here it needs to be stated that these buildings are not to be labelled as “evil” or sinister in the sense that they inflict continual tyranny upon the urban dweller, but rather implies that the residue of the urban and social organisation that these structures left in their wake had specific programmatic agenda and that the reality of this urban heritage should be incorporated without compromising livelihood and everyday life. It is proposed that architecture should play a vital role in this urban version of a “truth and reconciliation commission”.

It is argued that, as long as the city builds on this identity and does not negotiate methods in challenging and incorporating its image into something truthful, it will largely keep the user alienated from his context. It is further postulated that, with growing environmental and economic concerns, existing structure should be reorientated to serve an urban purpose that could be associated with current social needs and trends, with architectural intervention acting as the catalyst to this reaction. The fact that most of Pretoria’s built infrastructure has been left unaltered since the dawn of a new South Africa is testimony to the effect of monumental architectural design.

It indicates that the incomplete architectural narratives and assemblages, as mentioned in the first chapter, could likely be a direct result of urban space not being allowed to synthesise with the contemporary zeitgeist of urban life and its various activities (Fig 2.23). It is therefore deduced from the latter investigation that ideology imbedded in fixed or definite urban fabric prevents the user from critiquing urban traditions, or at least obstructs the ease at which this process might occur, which results in a city model to migrate away from a responsive typology and towards a disproportional structure

(Fig 2.24).

This is supported by Forty's notion (1995), that architecture no longer represents the sole determining factor within a city, and can only carry the diverse and complex ecology of human endeavour to a certain extent (Forty as Cited by Da Costa and van Rensburg., 2008:47). It is therefore not the duty of architecture to generate ideals or values to be imposed onto city life, but in contrast should allow the diversity of life in the city to take on its own various forms. This issue will be dealt with by incorporating relevant theory to be discussed in the following chapter so as to construct an overarching concept to aid in the architectural investigation.

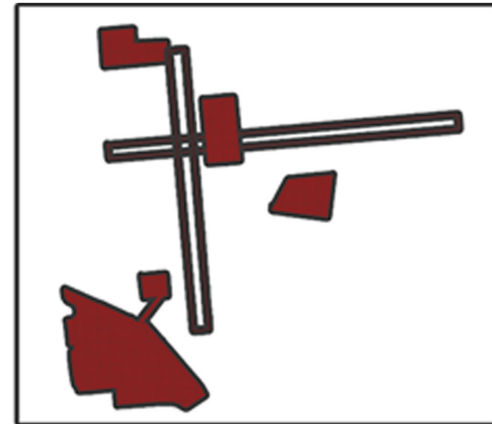
"... ideology comes to mean 'the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in' (Eagleton, 1983:14)."

(Hutcheon, 1988:178)

As the philosophy of Habermas suggests (Fig 2.25), democracy requires critique of its own traditions as a vital component for healthy society (Atkinson, 2011: 306-307). It is proposed that cities require the same critique not only from a planning and design perspective, but also via input from the everyday user. If architecture could form part of a vessel to motivate such critique, what new direction could projects orientate themselves within urban structures? What is proposed is not that such a paradigm should be introduced into the city, but that where it is currently taking shape, it should be amplified to the extent that it will be able to enforce its diverse influence upon future development considerations.



GOVERNMENT MIGRATION



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT



SCALE DENSITY

Figure 2.21: Government Migration and future development (Author 2015)



Figure 2.22: Government Migration and future development (Author 2015)

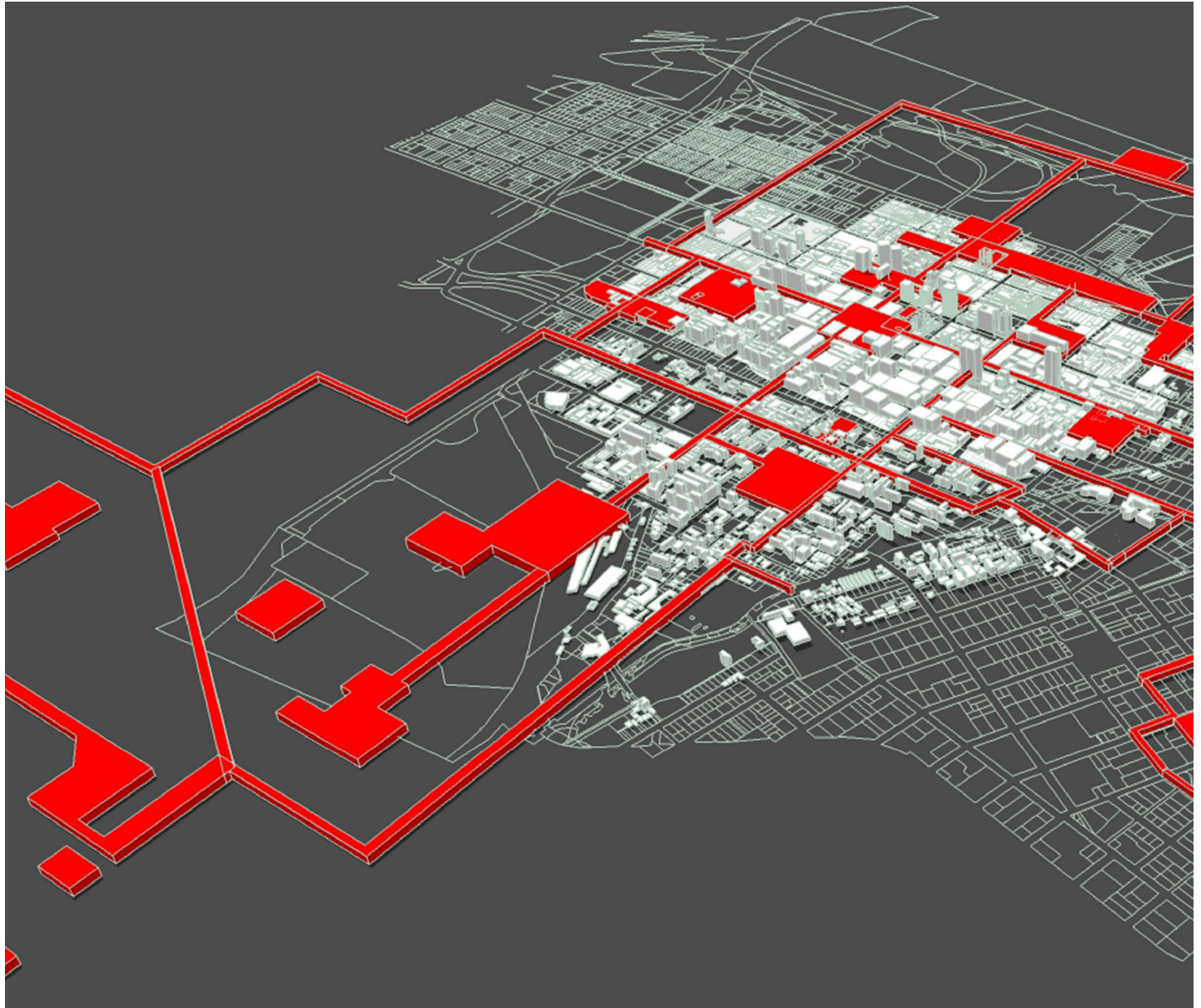
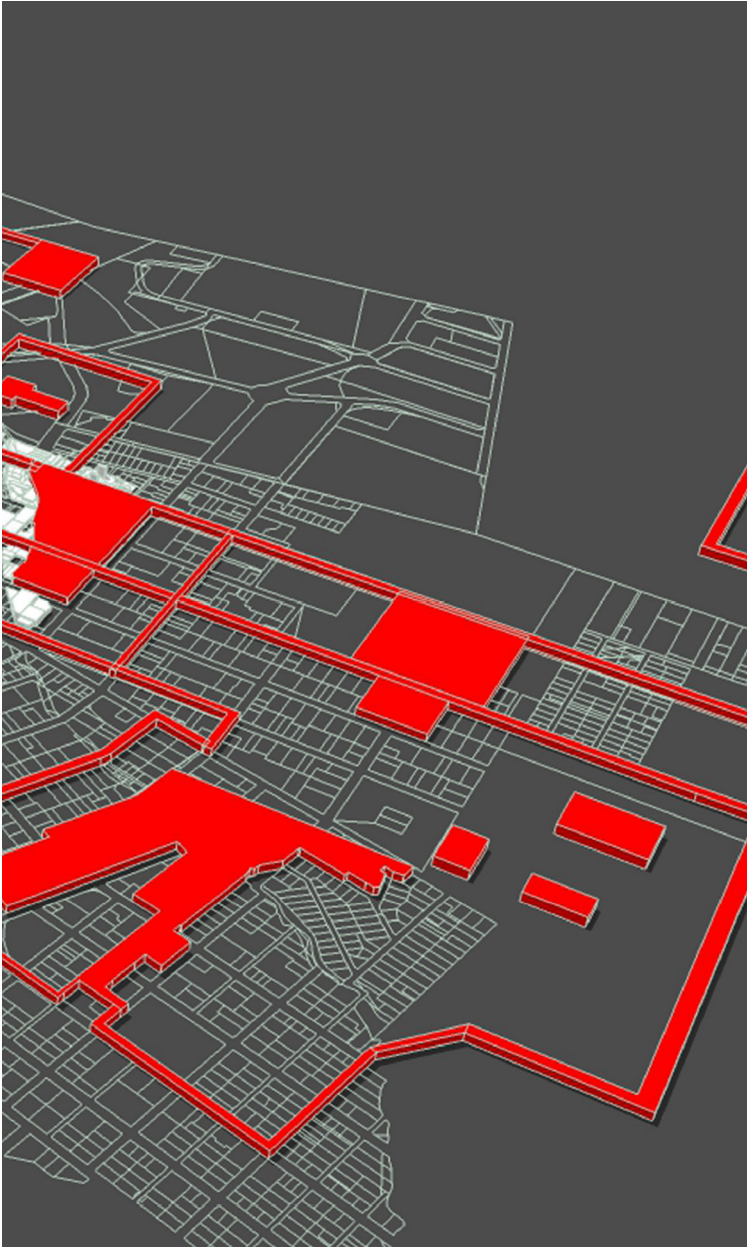


Figure 2.23: Proposed future Development for Pretoria (Author 2015)



This does not imply the demolition of existing fabric, but rather a more sustainable solution of challenging the old ideas coupled to it through new intervention - thus harnessing the existing infrastructure of urban environments and empowering them to work towards the cause of urban renewal, as required by the everyday user. Individual architectural interventions become the catalytic reactions to put this movement into motion. The architecture becomes the vessel that enables the public to interact with the existing and the inherent static nature of the urban environment. It is seen as necessary to introduce a new architectural approach in dealing with the existing context of Pretoria in contextually sensitive and considered ways, so as to aid the user in communicating that which is currently not being made audible regarding the urban environment. This resembles a subversive approach to urban architectural interventions where emphasis is placed on what would have been conventionally viewed as being antagonistic elements in the city.

It has been suggested that, to explore the “urban unknown” constitutes a political act, through the process of enabling urban dwellers with new resources for mapping the city (Pile, 2000:265), empowering the everyday user to have an impact on what his space represents and is to become. Rather than amplifying certain urban conditions, this scheme occupies itself with the process of amplifying indigenous urban strategies, as implemented by the everyday user. This approach removes to some extent, the objective bias that a designer might superimpose onto the urban fabric, from the equation.

This is achieved by establishing a “subversive” alliance between marginal urban space and insurgent activity already found within the city. It will be argued that insurgent activity already proved itself a worthy combatant to the internalisation of a city program and fabric, which aided in the formation of marginalised urban space (Pile, 2000:265).

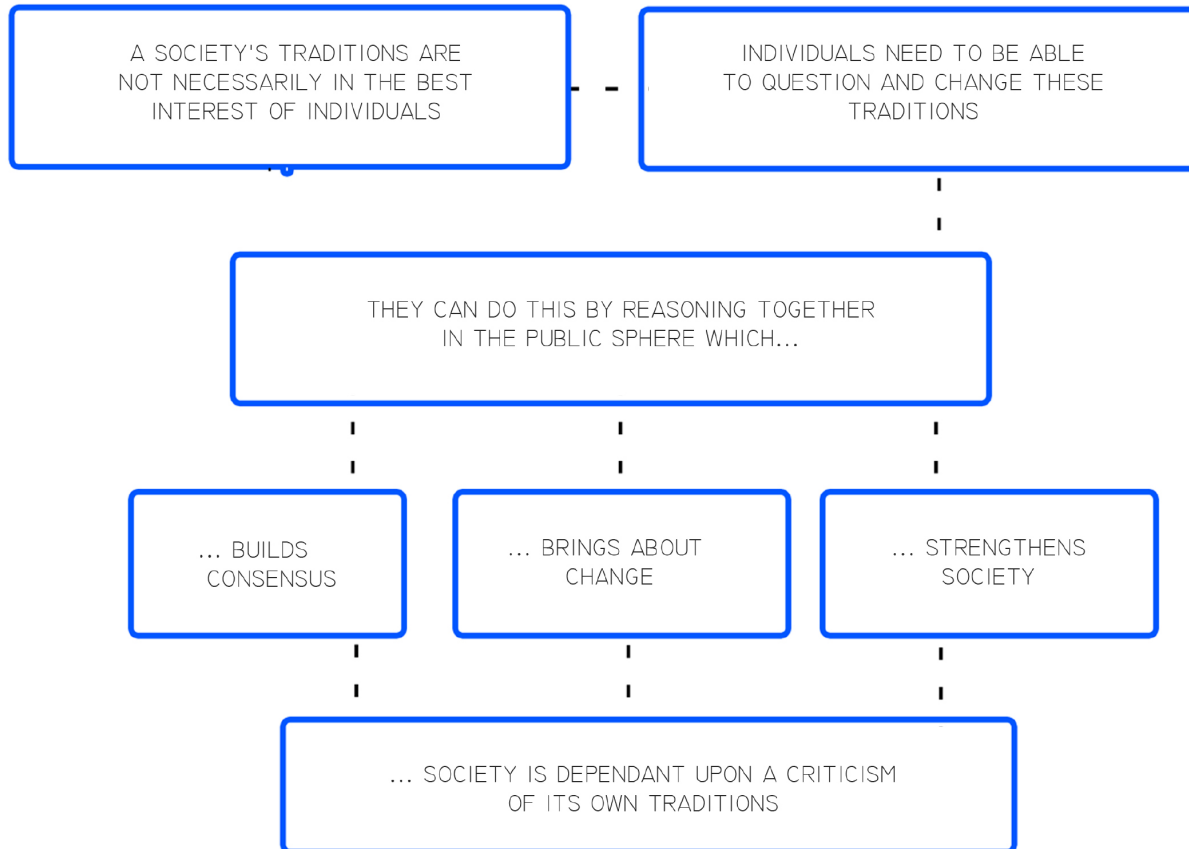


Figure 2.24: Philosophy of Jürgen Habermas (Author 2015 after Atkinson, 2011)

