3

CHAPTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

A THEORETICAL APPROACH

Figure 3.1 ~ Traditional versus modern city.psd

SCALED FOR HUMANS
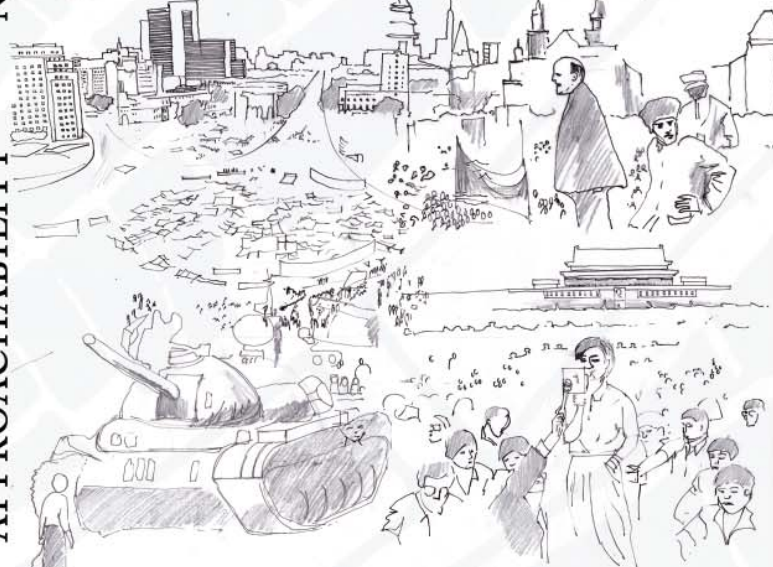
PEDESTRIAN HIERARCHY

LOCAL

FREEDOM

NETWORK

PARTICIPATION & APPROACHABILITY

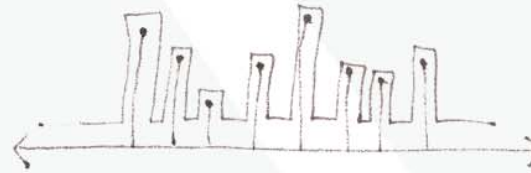SCALED FOR VEHICLES

VEHICULAR HIERARCHY

UNIVERSAL
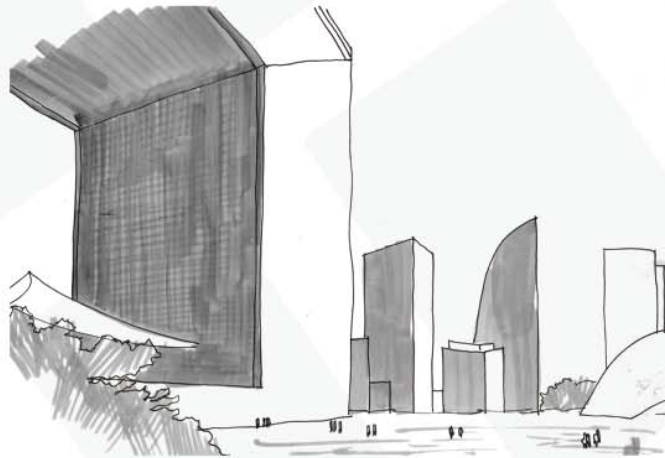
CONTROL

CUL DU SAC

ISOLATION & INTIMIDATION

Figure 3.2 ~ Le Corbusier's unbuilt "Plan Voisin" is an object, not a city.psd [Muller Bueno 2013]

Our modern cities in their pursuit of progress and control forgot their initial raison d'être: that cities are a human construct based on the slow evolution from the nomadic to the sedentary lifestyle. Instead we see cities sprouting up like mushrooms today, built from two dimensional plans, determined by planners and politicians.

The object city, as a construct of modernist thinking will be discussed first, after which probable solutions will be studied. Of the theories to counter the object city we will first discuss Richard Sennett's Open City and its relevance to the site in question. Secondly, a South African perspective from Roelof Uytenbogaardt and David Dewar will be discussed and possibilities of incorporation identified. Thirdly, Jan Gehl's success in making cities prioritise humans instead of vehicles or buildings led me to look at some of his guidelines. Finally, we look to Edward Relph and Lineu Castello for an explanation of what place is, what gives place identity and how this can benefit the process of proposing a new intervention on the site in question.

Sennett's Open City, Uytenbogaardt's city in context, Jan Gehl's guideline to good public space and Relph and Castello understanding of place will form the filter through which the site and its conditions will be analysed.

The chapter concludes with a look at how buildings with heritage value will be addressed.

Freezing the city in time makes it vulnerable to neglect and abandon. A city frozen in time is not resilient to change.

THE OBJECT CITY

The modernisation of our cities, whether it is George-Eugéne Haussmann's redesign of Paris in the 1860s or Oscar Niemeyer's deterministic plan of Brazilia one hundred years later, left, in its pursuit of progress, a wake of brutal cities devoid of human scaled spaces and liveable places. Several events in history point to the turn from the traditional to the modern city. Finnish architect and urbanist, Panu Lehtovuori stated,

> *"For the classical understanding, a city's physical structure was contingent: a city was conceived of as a political and ethical unit. In contradiction, the modern city was a physical object and a technical project (of ordering and sanitising)"[Lehtovuori 2010:114].*

Efficiency and universality was therefore the credo of the major building projects ever since the Second World War. The vehicle killed the street and pedestrians were pushed to what little bit of street remained, the side walk. Zoning severed people from the inner city and created the exponential growth of the suburb, hence the need for roads to accommodate high traffic volumes. Richard Sennett explains,

> *"The proliferation of zoning regulations in the twentieth century is unprecedented in the history of urban design, and this proliferation of rules and bureaucratic regulations has disabled local innovation and growth, frozen the city in time"(Sennett 2006).*

Freezing the city in time makes it vulnerable to neglect and abandon. A city frozen in time is not resilient to change. Richard Sennett (2006) referred to it as an "over-determination" with which our cities are created. A city planned as "a physical object and a technical project" (Lehtovuori 2010:114). Sennett (2006) calls such an "over-determined" city a "brittle city" because of its lack of resilience.

> *"Modern urban environments decay much more quickly that urban fabric inherited from the past. As uses change, buildings are now destroyed rather that adapted… the over-specification of form and function makes the modern urban environment peculiarly susceptible to decay" (Sennett 2006)*

The fast growing sprawl outwards from the city centre created what Marc Auge called "the proliferation of non-place the a-historic and identityless realm of highways, airports and malls" (Lehtovuori 2010:1). The vibrant inner city life, where generations of traders and families have given identity and security to the city, was destroyed when suburban development realised for the middle classes. The distinctive high streets closed down and became abandoned when franchised mono-functional shopping malls started to sprout up (Lehtovuori 2010:1). Edward Relph, in the same vein, spoke of a "placelessness" it created,

> *"the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardised landscapes that results from an insensitivityty to the significance of place" (Relph 1976)*

In Pretoria, parts of the historic "high street", Church Street, was demolished to make way for less functions and more buildings that fitted the worldwide standard for being modern. Decision made in the 1960s in Pretoria attests to the eras' insensitivity towards the significance of place.

THE "OPEN CITY"

Richard Sennett theorised that "Open Cities" are the answer if we want our cities to be resilient (Sennett 2006). He advocated three elements that a city required to be an "Open City". The first element is the passage territories or the city wall – this is where unregulated development happens, where innovation and informality reigns (Sennett 2006). The wall is both resistant and porous forming a permeable edge. The second element is incomplete form (Sennett 2006). He explained,

> "When we design a street, for instance, so that buildings are set back from a street wall, the space left open in front is not truly public space; instead the building has been withdrawn from the street. We know the practical consequences; people walking on a street tend to avoid these recessed spaces. Its better planning if the building is brought forward, into the context of other building" (Sennett 2006).

The building on its own will be incompletely revealed, but it becomes part of the greater urban context so that the buildings become so dependent on their relationships to other that they cannot stand on their own at all.

> "The buildings acquire their specifically urban value by their relationship to each other; they become in time incomplete forms if considered alone, by themselves"(Sennett 2006).

In summary, we can define an open system as one in which growth admits tension and discord. This is also what Sennett intended with his third element: narratives in development (Sennett 2006). Like any good story the end cannot be known in the beginning. The story has to unfold.

> "Rather than a lock–step march towards achieving a single end, we look at the different and conflicting possibilities which each stage of the design process should open up; keeping these possibilities intact, leaving conflict elements in play, opens up the design system" (Sennett 2006).

Sennett postulates that if these three elements are in place the city can become a democratic place, not in the legal sense of the word, but as a physical experience (Sennett 2006). This is the kind of city aimed for in this dissertation. Sennett's elements becomes drivers for the urban response of the design.

Passage territories
Incomplete form
Narratives in development

Figure 3.3 ~ Closed versus open city.psd

PERMEABLE
CITY WALL

UNREGULATED
ACTIVITIES

THE CLOSED CITY   THE OPEN CITY

A CITY IN CONTEXT

A lot has been said about the "catastrophic" consequences of the urban visions of the 1920s. (Hall 2002:219). One of these remedial visions was attempted by Roelof Uytenbogaardt and David Dewar's manifesto for South African cities. In it they postulated that an urban plan needs firstly to be rooted in a human centred understanding of the city and secondly it must value conservation (Dewar & Uytenbogaardt 1991:13). They explained the central ideas behind conservation as firstly the understanding of the city as a system in "dynamic balance": man's "activities" as based on certain available "resources" and that the "activities" and "resources" must be in balance. Secondly, conservation points to "regionalism" – this recognises "the inextricable interdependence between the characteristics of a place; (its) peoples; (its) activities in that place and (its) emergence of cultural expressions and forms" (Dewar & Uytenbogaardt 1991:13). Thirdly, conservation implies "resource sensitivity: a recognition of the importance of all resources and the need to utilise these wisely" (Dewar & Uytenbogaardt 1991:13).

Uytenbogaardt and Dewar's first principal: dynamic balance and the understanding of the activities/resources ratio are interpreted in this dissertation through an understanding of historic and current activities; as what the latent potential of the site is in terms of its programming. A thorough analysis will reveal this potential. Concerning the second principle: conservation; (which refers to regionalism) a very detailed understanding of the site and the conditions that make it unique and root it to this place will inform the design in essence. The final principal: resource sensitivity and man's consequential accountability to use resources sustainably is another important driving force. In this proposed intervention specific attention will be given to the harvesting of rainwater, the use of passive ventilation systems for the cooling of spaces and the even distribution of natural light.

CITIES FOR PEOPLE

Jan Gehl's success in Copenhagen and Melbourne and active ongoing projects a many other cities led me to his theories and guideline on urban planning and design. Working in the inner city of Pretoria with its already tall skyline and large modernist structures makes Leon Krier's argument for village scale interventions obsolete. The question is how to create human scaled architecture when the urban condition is already far beyond any human scale. Jan Gehl stated that the effort should go into the ground floor edge design of buildings.

> *"The challenge is how to incorporate large buildings in cities where people have the same small stature and slow pace that they had hundreds of years ago. There is now a considerable confusion in the gap between large and small scales and between 'quick' and 'slow' architecture. Ground floor façades provide an important link between these scales and between buildings and people. For public space and buildings to be treated as a whole, the ground floor façades must have a special and welcoming design. This good, close encounter architecture is vital for good cities "*
> *(Gehl 2013:29).*

Inactive edge conditions are one of the surest ways to destroy public life in a city. In the proposed design the treatment of edges becomes an important strategy to reinvigorate public life. Various grades of permeability are being explored in the design.

Apart from the importance of the edge conditions, Jan Gehl's analysis of the types of users and the types of activities is a guideline that can inform and strengthen public space design decisions.

Figure 3.4 ~ Grading of edge conditions.psd
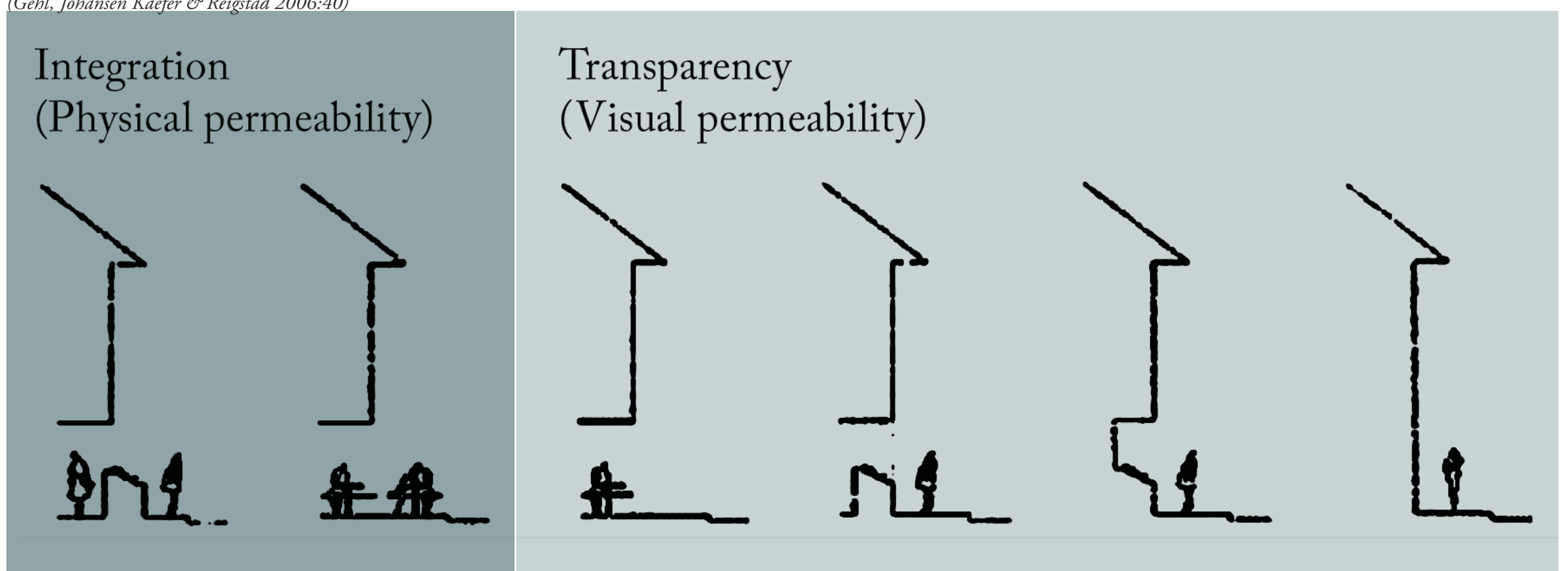*(Gehl, Johansen Kaefer & Reigstad 2006:40)*

Integration
(Physical permeability)

Transparency
(Visual permeability)

Figure 3.5 ~ Public space user group types.psd
("Public Spaces and Public Life" 2002:10)

Which types of user groups can be expected to use the public spaces?

• The everyday users: People that live and work in the area or walk through the area.
• The visitors/customers: People that visit the functions in the area.
• The recreational visitors: People that visit the area because the public space is delightful or use the public space in relation to recreation, pleasure, exercise, play etc.
• The visitors to events: People that visit the public space because of special events.
(Excerpt from Public Spaces and Public Life 2002:10)

With this in mind the following list will guide decisions about the functions necessary for the public space.
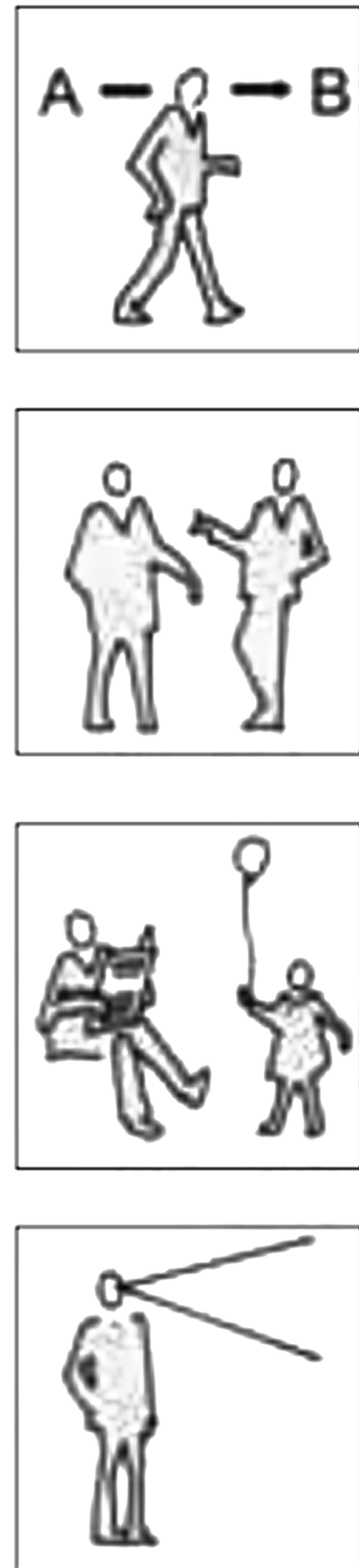

Figure 3.6 ~ Public space activity types.psd
("Public Spaces and Public Life" 2002:10)

What kind of activities can be expected in the public spaces?

• Daily necessary activity: to walk to, from or through.
• Daily recreational activity: breaks and pauses.
• Recreational activity: recreation and play.
• Planned activity: to be a spectator or participant at an event.
(Excerpt from Public Spaces and Public Life 2002:10)

Gehl's very practical guidelines have been tested and succeeded in many cities already. I will therefore continually test the design according to these guidelines.

In broader terms, the new intervention aims at the following characteristics.

Characteristics of a good city:

A good city for social and cultural exchanges
- space for cultural activities and communication
- space for street theatre, clowns, jesters, music, etc.
- small scale commercial activities
- democratic public spaces for all

A good city for talking, watching and experiencing
- low level of noise and few disturbances
- intimate public spaces
- fine views and good details
- interesting façades, windows displays and exhibits

A lively, diverse and safe city to move around in
- a wide variety of uses both day and night
- residences to ensure a 24 hour city
- educational institutions to ensure life and vitality
- open in the evenings with lit windows displays
- safe places and streets both day and night

(Excerpt from Public Spaces and Public Life 2002:8)

Three types of pedestrian activities:

Gehl distinguishes between three types of pedestrian activities that is required for good public spaces. Once again these guidelines will be used to test the design of the public spaces.

Necessary activities

In the short term, these types of activities occur regardless of the quality of the physical environment because people are compelled to carry them out. A good city provides good conditions for the many necessary activities and will retain and strengthen these activities over time.

Optional activities (urban recreation)

A good city is characterised by a multitude of optional activities. People come to town, find the places attractive and stay for a long time. A great, attractive city can always be recognised by the fact that many people choose to spend time in its public spaces.

Social activities

A good city offers a wide range of attractive social activities, and because so many people are present in the city, there are many people to experience, watch and speak to. The city becomes a lively and wonderful city. A people city.

(Excerpt from Public Spaces and Public Life 2002:9)

These practical guidelines will be used as a measure for the physical design of the public space.

Location
Natural and cultural
Network of circulation
Localisation of larger context

WHAT CONSTITUTES "PLACE"?

The final theoretical filter through which the site will be analysed is the idea of place and the identity of place. Edward Relph analysed Lukermann's (1964) concept of place as first having a location. It is specific to a unique "site and situation" (Relph 1976). It therefore has "spatial extension" meaning you can be inside or outside it (Relph 1976). Place furthermore has a unique combination of both natural and cultural features (Relph 1976). It also consists of a unique network of circulation that contains an interrelated "system of spatial interactions and transfers" (Relph 1976). The fourth characteristic of Place is that of localisation (Relph 1976): The place is part of a larger area and even though it is a complete place in its own right is carries in it the DNA of the larger context. Furthermore, it is always "emerging and becoming" and therefore becomes historical (Relph 1976).

Lineu Castello (Castello 2010) explained place as a "qualified space … that comes to be perceived by the population through the motivation of human experiences based on the apprehension of environmental stimuli." The stimuli include:
- Narrative
- Reputation
- Natural assets
- Association with historic buildings (like the Gundelfinger building or the State Theatre)
- Associations with political actions (like the Women's March or the killings of Barend Strydom)
- Associations with local tradition
- Building with emotive connotations
- The construction of fantasy / illusion / image associated with a place
- The availability of sensory enjoyment and comfort
- The availability of goods, services or technological facilities (like libraries, clinics, shops, restaurants and Wi-Fi spots)

(Summary from Castello 2010:4)

Relph and Castello's theory of place will guide in the design process to strengthen the site's identity by strengthening the elements that makes in a "place".

HERITAGE APPROACH

The Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach looks at the wider context when it comes to heritage. It does not stop at the site's boundary. It considers the city as a network of layers with cultural and natural values. It extends beyond what the historic component or the historic collective is. It considers the broadest urban context and how it is geographically seated.

> *"This wider context includes the site's topography* (e.g. located on a natural water reservoir between two mountain ranges), *geomorphology and natural features; its built environment* (e.g. Dutch heritage and the Kirkness brick; Japanese metabolism) *both historic and contemporary; its infrastructure above and below ground* (e.g. the water furrows)*; its open spaces and gardens; its land use patterns and spatial organization; its visual relationships (*e.g. straight visual axis of Helen Joseph / Church Street)*; and all other elements of the urban structure. It also includes social and cultural practices and values, economic processes* (e.g. use of street edges where buildings are pushed back)*, and the intangible dimensions of heritage as related to diversity and identity"*(e.g. the Women's March, the Indian Bazaar and the Barend Strydom killings) *[Bandarin & van Oers 2014:200].*

The HUL is therefore "a mind-set, an understanding of the city, or parts of the city, as an outcome of natural, cultural and socio-economic processes that construct it spatially, temporally, and experientially." (Bandarin & van Oers, 2014:p198).

> *The HUL "is as much about buildings and spaces, as about rituals and values that people bring into the city. This concept encompasses layers of symbolic significance, intangible heritage, perception of values, and interconnections between the composite elements of the historic urban landscape, as well as local knowledge including building practices and management of natural resources. Its usefulness resides in the notion that it incorporates a capacity for change." (Bandarin & van Oers 2014:198)*

To be able to make responsible decisions regarding the heritage of the site means that the site must be understood in every aspect of its history, its values, its built heritage, its symbolic meaning in the city and more. Following this approach requires a very deep analysis of the site.

"A mind-set, an understanding of the city, or parts of the city, as an outcome of natural, cultural and socio-economic processes that construct it spatially, temporally, and experientially"

(Bandarin & van Oers 2014:198).

"*By* *three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.*" ~ *Confucius*

"*Wisdom is learning what to overlook.*" ~ *William James*