



Figure 7: The brain (Brodel 2014)

# 7

## REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING

The site is explored in terms of its potential as a *memory box* of Johannesburg. This will inform the site vision.

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*“Remembering is not only a mental event; it is also an act of embodiment and projection. Memories are not only hidden in the secret electrochemical processes of the brain; they are also stored in our skeletons, muscles and skin.” – Treib 2005 : 27*

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## 7.1. THEMATIC PROPOSAL

Exploration of Joubert Park in terms of the theoretical premise (chapter 4)

# J.P. AS MEMORY BOX

According to McLeod (2013), the process of remembering follows a number of stages. These can be divided into the following:

- the encoding of information – translating perception into something that can be understood, contextualised and recognised. This is usually visual, acoustic or semantic. For long-term memory however, semantic and visual means of encoding is usually prevalent while acoustic means is normally associated with short term memory (Mc Leod, 2013).
- The following stage could be referred to as the storing of the perceived information. This usually concerns where or how the memory is stored, the capacity of information that can be stored and the duration that it is kept (ibid.).
- and finally retrieving or accessing the information (ibid.). Long term memory is retrieved through association (ibid.), recognising an aspect of an entire thought and thereby recalling the linked information that may not be tangibly stored.

Forgetting, however, occurs when one of these processes is not completed accurately thereby leaving room for the dissipation of information, making the act of remembering more difficult, if not impossible (McDermott & Roediger III, 2016) .

Marc Treib (2009: XIV) writes about the built environment being a form of a memory bank. Therefore, in order to understand Joubert Park as a potential memory box for Johannesburg, the following understanding regarding the phases of memory was adapted, using aspects of the site to represent each stage

**creation** of memory;

**capturing** of memory;

**storing** of memory;

and the **recollection** of memory.

## 7.2. MEMORY IN THE EVERYDAY

### Phases of memory

**The creation of memory** through events or sensory experiences occurs because it is perceived or noticed as uncommon in its context. Examples would be an unexpected art installation in the city, the smell of an Indian restaurant while exploring, a sudden burst of music playing in the streets. These phenomena cause a spark in interest and a resultant inherent desire to remember the extraordinary.

In archiving that which we remember, we sub-consciously choose those events, people, places and experiences according to the weight we assign to it with regards to its significance. If the role of the park is considered as a platform where memories are created then there should be spaces that allow for special interactions between people and between people and art; events and new experiences to take place; and for spontaneous changes and adaptations to the regular functioning of the park to occur.

An example of an experience that sparks interest due to its unexpected and extraordinary nature is an awareness campaign that took place in the Vatican City with a project called “Fiat Lux: Illuminating our Common Home”. The façade of St Peter’s Basilica, a well-known architectural icon, which is understood in its static and seemingly permanent state it is usually found in, was lit up with images of animals and underwater scenes to raise awareness about climate change and the effects it has on the world. The powerful images and the fact that they were displayed on a historic structure in this manner created the foundations for a memorable experience.



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**Figure 7.1:** St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican being lit up with images of endangered animals as part of the exhibition titled “Fiat Lux: Illuminating our Common Home” (Stefano Relandini 2015)

Opposite page:

**Figure 7.2:** Capturing.

# CREATION

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*“These physical remnants function as souvenirs, precious artefacts of where we have been, providing us with material proof that we were there: This is us...then” – Anwandter, 2006*

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## CAPTURING

### **The capturing or encoding of memories**

is the physical interpretation of capturing a moment in history (McDermott & Roediger III 2016). This could take the form of anything that can be interpreted and contextualised by a user or viewer, such as audio recordings, video, written text, poetry, photographs, sculptures, paintings and physical fragments of historical objects, to list a few.

Imagery such as photography offers us tangible proof of a past moment of a particular reality (Anwandter 2006: 6). This proof is the physical manifestation where past and present converge resulting in something that acts as a reminder of not only that which can be seen in the image, but that which we associate with at that moment in time (Anwandter 2006: 6). Images also offer the illusion that the moment can be possessed by the keeper of the image and/or the person who chose to capture the image (Anwandter 2006: 6). In this way it could be said that a photograph of a group of people, or of a recognisable place or object (such as a notable building in a neighbourhood) could induce a sense of collective ownership.

The photographers of Joubert Park, being an institution in their own right and thereby being representational of the nature and identity of Joubert Park, offer a means of potentially capturing a collective memory in the park. They are, due to their on-going presence, seen as part of the park and its everyday functioning and are therefore the masters of capturing moments in the park. This project will utilise this existing skill found on the site in order to develop a programme that will offer an upgrade to these existing stakeholders.

**The storing of memory** takes place in archives, libraries, museums, churches and theatres. These could all be considered as forms of cultural archives (Peterson 2002:33). The accessible storage of material in the hopes that someone will one day retrieve and interpret it is essential to avoid forgetting (McDermott & Roediger III, 2016). JAG is in this case an archive of snippets of our local and international culture.

Memories are stored as fragments that aid in triggering the memory in its entirety. According to Lebeus Woods (2012), if we were to remember memories fully we would become saturated and would at a point stop being able to collect more memories. With fragments of a memory we can however fill in the rest of the pieces when they are sparked to recall the memory (Woods 2012). It is for these reasons that discrepancies in our memories exist. By filling in the missing links we often allow our current selves or external factors influence how we perceive the memory.

Similarly, archives store fragmented histories due to time and space constraints. The information that is stored is selected in a specific manner so that the visitor will be able to assume the rest through the information provided, which is the limiting reality of curating archives.



Figure 7.3: Dedicated storage area for paintings. (Katoen Natie N.d.)

## STORING



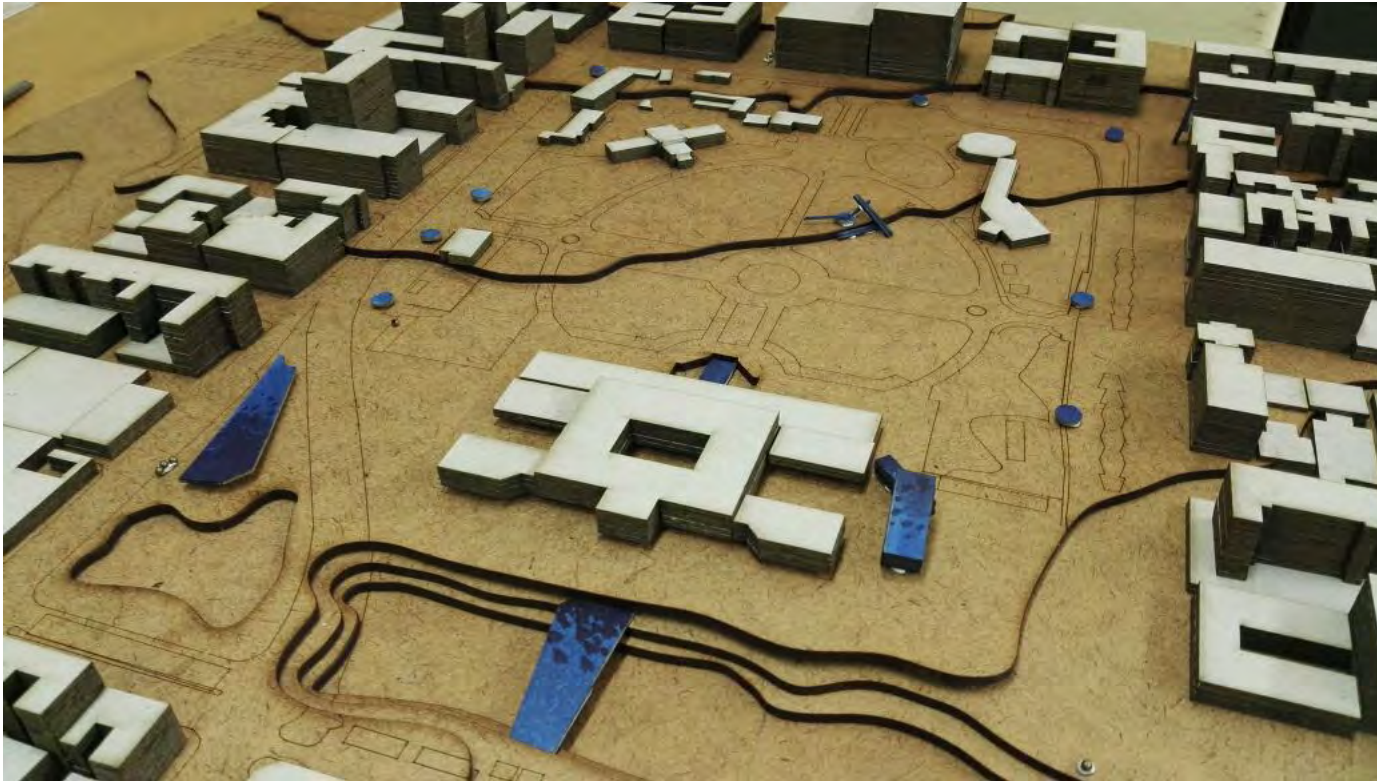
Figure 7.4: Memory (Safi 2015)

# RECOLLECTION

**Recollection** takes place through exhibition or display. In this instance, the recalling of memory is not aimed at the individual, but rather at the collective in Johannesburg and South Africa.

According to Huyssen (2003), remembering is fundamental in developing a strong understanding of life. It allows us to come to terms with the past and in doing so is essential to creating a collective understanding and encouraging forgiveness. By using art as a tool for recollection, collective understanding and acceptance may develop.





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Figure 7.6: Conceptual model of points of potential intervention.

Opposite page:

Figure 7.5: Diagram of potential points of memory phases in Joubert Park. (Adapted from original by Bennet 2013)

### 7.3. EXISTING MEMORY NODES IN JOUBERT PARK

As found and suggested by author.



#### Creating memory

- interactions in the park, ie at the playground, with the chess players; on the main pedestrian route

#### Capturing memory

- photographers

#### Storing memory

- photographers & JAG's archive

#### Recollecting the memory

- exhibitions in JAG