



CHAPTER 3

SITE ANALYSIS

This chapter explores the site of the dissertation project. It investigates its physical fabric, as well as the sites relationship to its occupying user.

- 3.1 THE SITE NARRATIVE
- 3.2 THE SITE LOCATION
- 3.3 THE PROJECT SITE
- 3.4 THE SITE FABRIC
- 3.5 THE SITE MAPPING
- 3.6 THE PEOPLE OF THE PARK
- 3.7 THE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

3.1 THE SITE NARRATIVE

Uncomfortably located between two high energy public spaces, is a row of 1940s art-deco residential buildings (figure 3.1). With Joubert Park on its right, and the Noord Street taxi rank and Park Station on its left, these towers have begun to turn inwards, from the tyre screeches, loud music and taxi calls of the everyday commuter, creating islands of isolated residential masses. As you walk past the southern edge of the park, you see the silhouette of the roof-lines peeking out above the trees (figure 3.2). Back on street level however, the walk is an uncomfortable one. A vast empty space where the train tracks separate the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the Park from the street interface.

Walking through the Noord Street Market towards the bridge mall (figure 3.3), the location of the site, you have to move past the jokers, the hawkers, the running children, the fruit and veg ladies, the singers, and the suspicious loiterers, until you spill out all of sudden into this vast empty space (figure 3.4). A shop front with barely anything to sell, litter scattered across this vast pavement, and a few ladies carrying water to their homes that they share with two other people. However, if you look up, the most beautifully crafted art-deco façades facing onto King George Street (figure 3.5). Curved bricks and concrete slabs in between broken windows and boarded up balconies.

If you then slowly move your eyes to the left you are confronted by a sudden drop in scale and a very alien type of architecture. Red two-storey pointed roofs in contrast to the smooth curves and plastered façade of the high rise towers. A new addition that makes a louder statement of disconnect than a promise of a brighter future. As you then walk up King George towards Hillbrow on the narrow pavements against dead building edges and a row of taxis parked on the tree edge, you peer down the smaller side streets where private everyday interactions takes place. Minutes of repose between the chaos that is Joubert Park.

FIGURE 3.1 SITE MAP

A diagrammatic site map highlighting the row of residential buildings sitting between the park and Noord St taxi rank. Indicated on the map is the route of approach the narrative follows and the direction from which the pictures were taken.

FIGURE 3.2-5 SITE WALK THROUGH

The series of photographs highlight the site as you approach it that accompanies the route map.



①



FIG 3.2

②



FIG 3.3

③

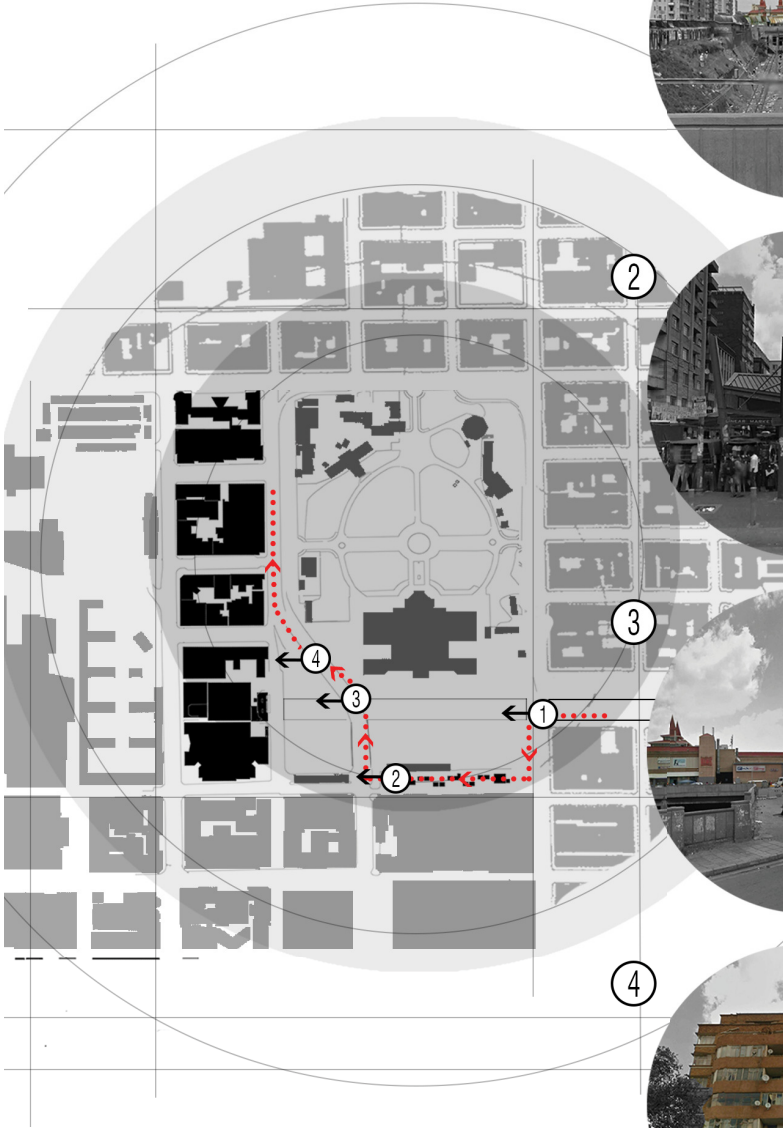


FIG 3.4

④



FIG 3.5



3.2 THE SITE LOCATION

The general precinct of Joubert Park is largely a residential area. However, this inner-city living area boasts additional urban infrastructure in and around its periphery. The public green space of the park and its accompanying cultural heritage sites, such as the gallery and the greenhouse, are intended to support the residential function of the larger urban space. Some functions having integrated better than others. To the left of the precinct is the Park Station transport hub. Due to its close location, the residential area is well connected to its surrounding city precincts.

It is a complex social and cultural environment that consists of an internal collection of micro-communities. These smaller communities create their own networks and systems where resources are shared and communal environments are created in smaller spaces within the built fabric. There is a trend among these communities to keep to themselves and take ownership of only that which directly belongs to them. Everything else that is considered public, the park, the streets, the in between spaces, are not looked after by any allocated group.

The study area focuses on an area where various urban conditions in the inner city merges. This specific site looks at an edge condition created between two very different urban spaces. The park is considered a recreational and cultural space that is mainly pedestrian orientated, and the Park Station precinct is a high energy amalgamation of pedestrian activity, vehicle activity, and the trade that grows between them. Situated between these two dynamic urban spaces is a static mass of residential towers.

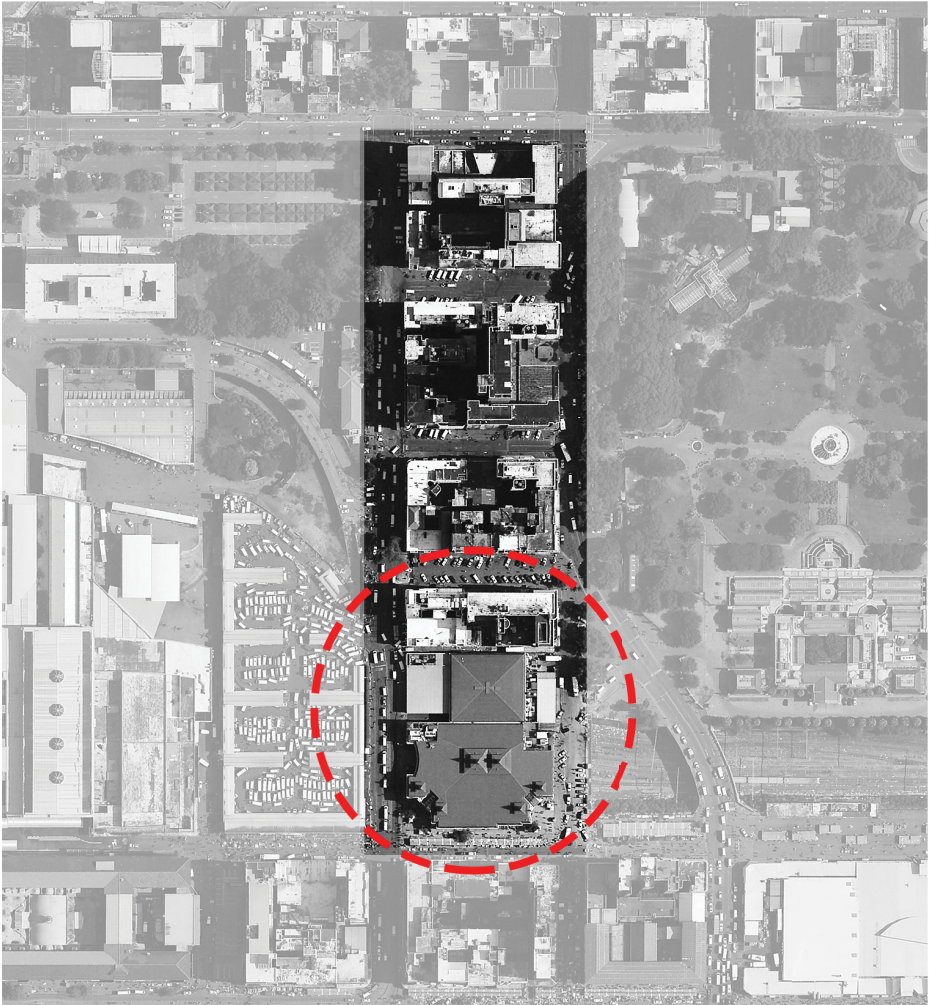


FIGURE 3.6 SITE LOCATION

The aerial map indicates the specific area considered in the study, with the red overlay indicating the exact location of the urban intervention

3.3 THE PROJECT SITE

The project site is located on the south-western edge of the park (figure 3.7). It consists of 3 primary masses, the first one being a 10 storey heritage residential tower, which is situated alongside the more recent addition of the Bridge Mall, and its accompanying storage facilities. The site was specifically chosen because of its ideal location in the identified study area.

Firstly, its position responds to the energy and movement on the site. A lot of this energy is concentrated on the southern edge of the park, moving east-west to and from park station. The site sits on the edge of this main movement route and looks to draw in that energy and disperse it northwards towards the opposite edges of the park.

Secondly the site sits on the direct line of access between the art gallery and the entrance to the Noord St taxi rank. This creates possibilities with regards to an intermediate threshold space that links these two important urban structures.

In this chapter we will investigate the context surrounding this area to understand how the intervention can integrate holistically into the larger fabric of Joubert Park.



FIGURE 3.7 THE SITE CONTEXT

Three-dimensional perspective locating the project site in its context, with JAG in the foreground and Park Station behind it.

3.4 THE SITE FABRIC

The site plan below(figure 3.8) indicates the built structures on site and their main points of approach. The residential building (figure 3.9) sits on the northern edge of the block, with the mall and its storage space situated south of it. When approaching the residential building with its accompanying retail edge you have to move across King George St, which is a high traffic route past the park, onto this vast pavement space. This paved area is often used as an informal parking space (figure 3.10) which limits visibility of the passing pedestrian to the edge of the building. When you then enter the residential building you move through a small undefined entrance into the southern “courtyard” space which contains the main circulation services. This space has no access to direct sunlight and is cut off by the storage space of the mall. This makes this area incredibly uncomfortable and quite unsafe.

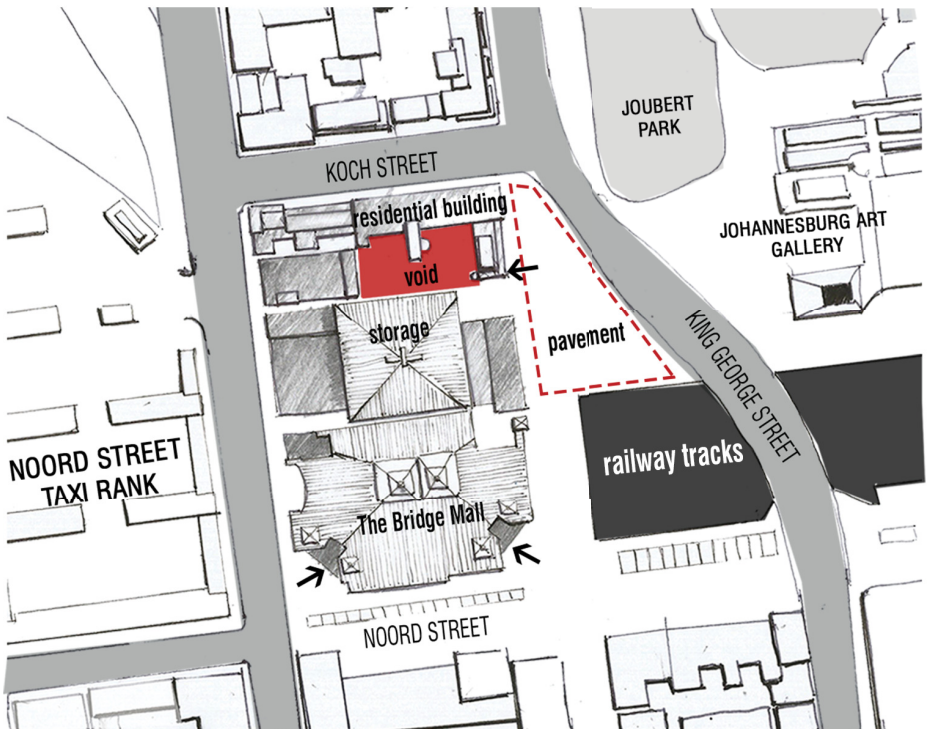


FIGURE 3.8 SITE PLAN

Site plan indicating the larger site in its context. The entrance points are indicated as well as irregular urban spaces around the structure.

On the southern edge of the block we find the two opposite entrances of The Bridge Mall. These cater to the pedestrian traffic moving east-west along Noord St. Many people by-pass the mall or use it as a secondary route to their destination when Noord St is congested. The remaining mall and storage structure acts as a barrier to the pedestrians moving through the site, coming from the park looking to go towards the taxi rank/station or vice versa. It is a large impermeable mass that is adding to the disconnect between the two urban areas. The sunken railway line that disconnects the mall from King George St further adds to the isolation of the structure.

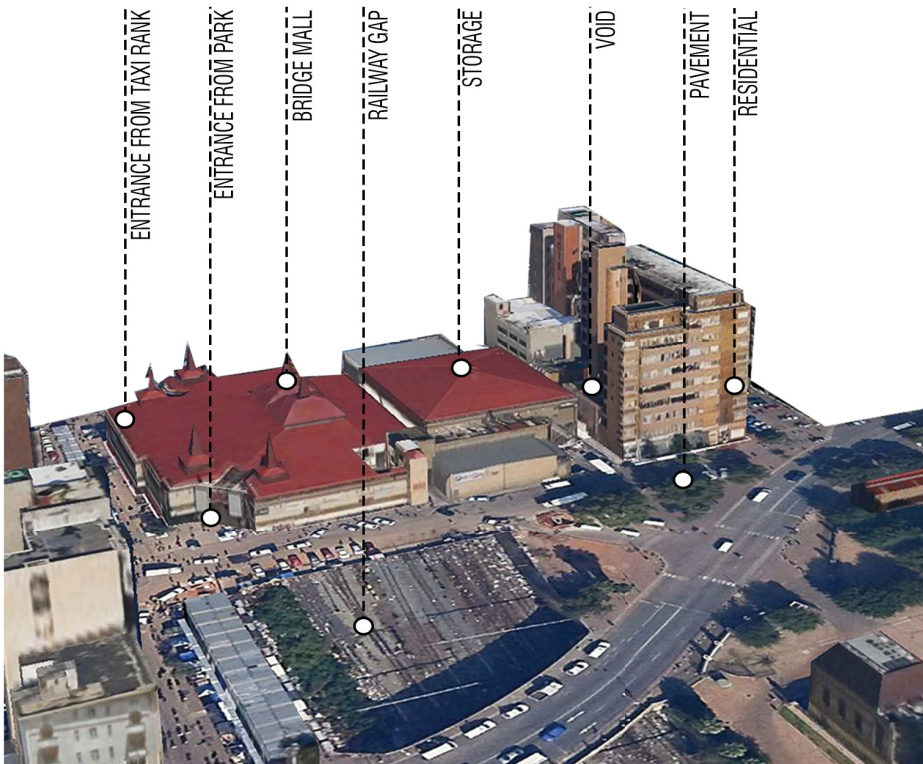


FIGURE 3.9 3D SITE

A three dimensional depiction of the site plan along side it (figure 7). Indicating the structures relationship to each other as well as the spaces in and around the site.

Figure 3.10 indicates the eastern facade of the 1940s residential tower located on the chosen dissertation site. The building is faced with problems of over-crowding, which has left the building in a state of slow decay.

The ground floor of the building has been allocated to retail (figure 3.10). These shops open up onto a wide pavement space that separates the building edge from the street edge. This informal parking pavement space acts as a barrier that isolates the residential building from the public realm.

The vehicle congestion combined with this vast pavement space has contributed to the building slowly turning its back towards its context. The heavy brickwork on the facade creates an additional layer that interrupts the relationship between the internal and external spaces.



FIGURE 3.10 CONSTANTIA RESIDENTIAL TOWER

Photograph of the Constantia residential tower taken from King George St of the eastern elevation.

The structure was originally constructed using a simple concrete column and slab system, with additional brick infill and cladding. These historic residential structures were built with an inherent characteristic of robustness and permanence. In an already dense environment where there is minimal space for new developments and interventions, the existing buildings on site provide the opportunity to develop within the existing fabric.

From the section in figure 3.11 we can see the static quality of the internal spaces and the monotonous repetition on each level, which contradicts the dynamic ever-changing communities that currently occupy these spaces. The new occupants struggle to adapt its enduring fabric in a manner that is efficient and low-cost. Intervention is needed in order to use the frame work of the building to create a flexible and adaptable living solution.

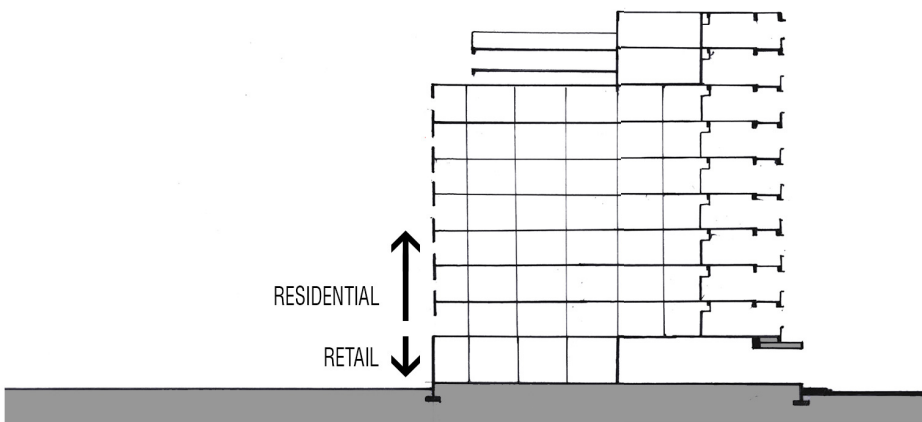


FIGURE 3.11 RESIDENTIAL SECTION

A section through the eastern facade of the residential tower indicating retail ground floor edge and the residential flats above it.

From figure 3.12 below we can see the vast difference in character between the relatively new structure of the bridge mall, and its historic context. The mall was completed in 1993, which makes a relatively new structure in its historic environment. The architecture is unresponsive in its sensitivity to site and the historic architectural language of the place. Surrounded by residential towers of 10 storeys and over, this new two-storey retail typology restricts its possibility to relate to and integrate with its surroundings.

The mall's external façades are unresponsive to its edges, creating unsuccessful dead spaces along the edges of the mall. Internally, the shops face onto an internal courtyard (figure 3.13) that holds its main circulation space. The mall is mainly used for its ATMs and formal clothing stores such as Jet, but is noticeably quieter than the street trade happening outside it.



FIGURE 3.12 THE BRIDGE MALL

Image of the bridge mall taken from the opposite side of the railway opening.

KOCH STREET

KING GEORGE STREET

WANDERERS STREET

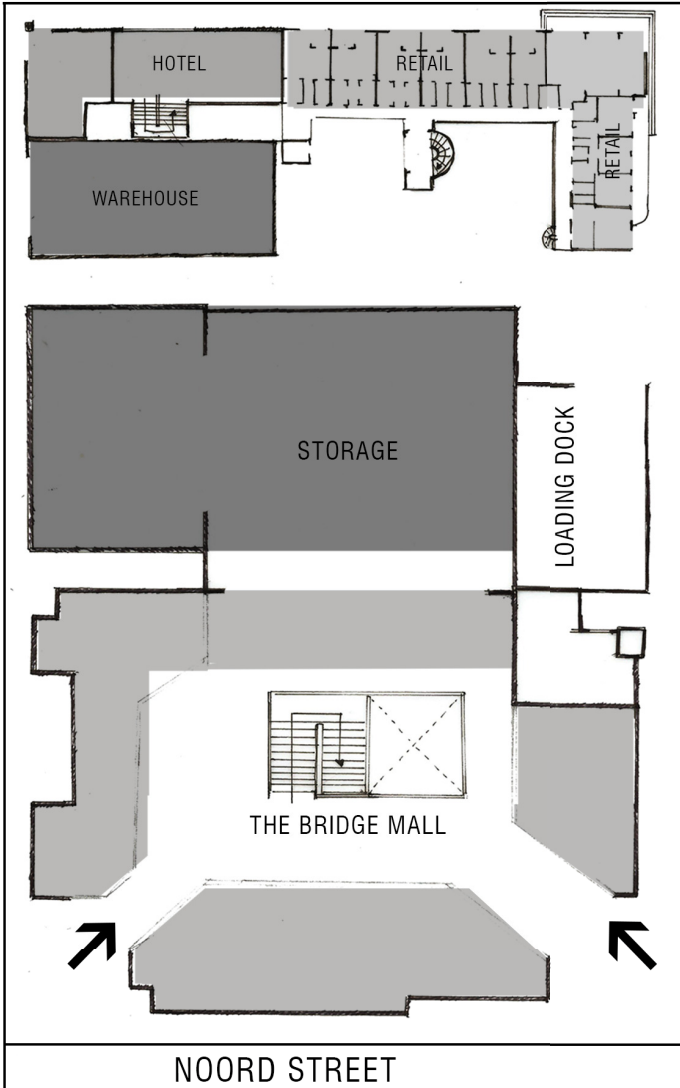


FIGURE 3.13 THE GROUND FLOOR LAYOUT

Plan of the existing layout on ground floor of the city block, indicating the programmes of the spaces.

3.5 THE SITE MAPPING

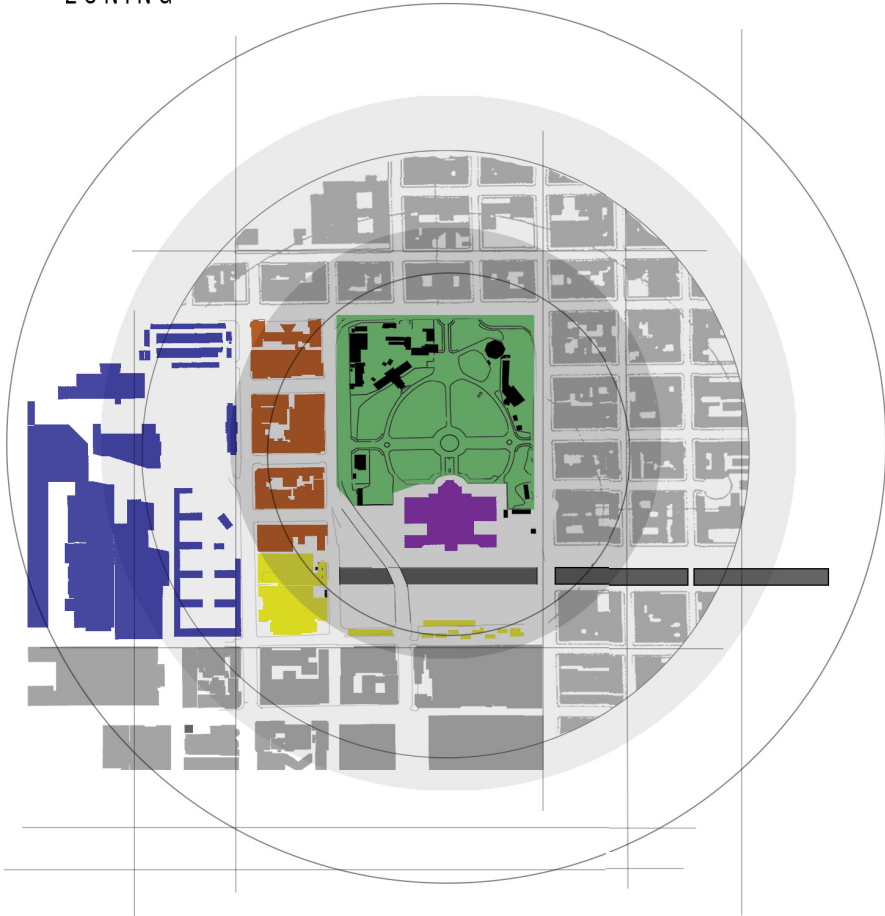
Having being introduced to the location of the project site and the existing structures on the site; we will now investigate its position within its physical environment as well as its relationship and role in the social relationships of the precinct.

We will begin by investigating the site's relationship with its surrounding structures, by determining the value of its function and typology in its context (figure 3.14-15) and its contribution to supporting the community living in the area. A more in depth study is undertaken with regards to the trade on the site (figure 3.16), in order to understand what makes it successful and where its pitfalls lay. The role of the trade on the site is an important aspect of my investigation which is concerned with the economic empowerment and upward mobility of the community.

An edge study (figure 3.17-21) is then conducted to understand the relationship between building and street edge, and to determine what factors are adding to the disconnect between the various functionalities and the public realm.

Lastly we look at the social aspects of the site (figure 3.22-25) in order to have a basic understanding of who the users of the space are and the challenges they face. Mapping the social networks and hierarchies of the area in order to understand the immediate and long term needs of this community that could enable their growth and development.

ZONING








-  TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE
-  CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE
-  RESIDENTIAL
-  RETAIL
-  RECREATIONAL SPACE

FIGURE 3.14 NODAL ZONING
This map illustrates the various functionalities found in the study area and the relationship between them.

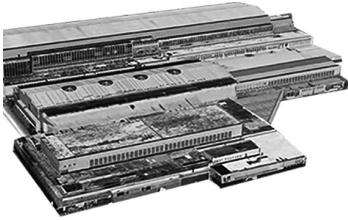


TYOLOGICAL STUDY



FIGURE 3.15 TYPOLOGIES

This map locates the various typologies investigated for the purposes of the study



1 TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Large mass in landscape

Unresponsive edges

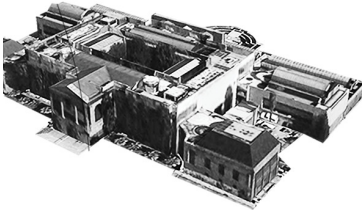
Better human scale

OPPORTUNITIES:

Integrate into urban fabric

Create pedestrian friendly edges

Connect to the park



2 CULTURAL INSTITUTION

Disconnected from surroundings

Elitist structure

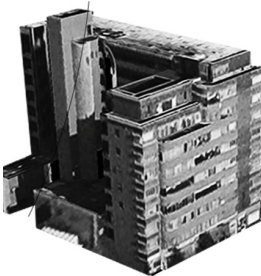
Closed off mass

OPPORTUNITIES:

Open up to the public

Redefine entrance to be more inclusive

Integrate into park



3 HERITAGE RESIDENTIAL

Introverted

Unsuccessful trade

Dangerous voids between structures

No relationship to street

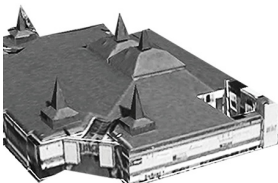
OPPORTUNITIES:

Integrate street edge with public realm

Differentiate between trade and res

Open up closed facade

Open up void



4 LARGE RETAIL

Barrier in urban fabric

Not responsive in context

Unresponsive to architectural language of the place

OPPORTUNITIES:

Open up facade to allow movement through

Reconsider retail typology in the city

Integrate retail into residential fabric

TRADE TYPOLOGICAL STUDY

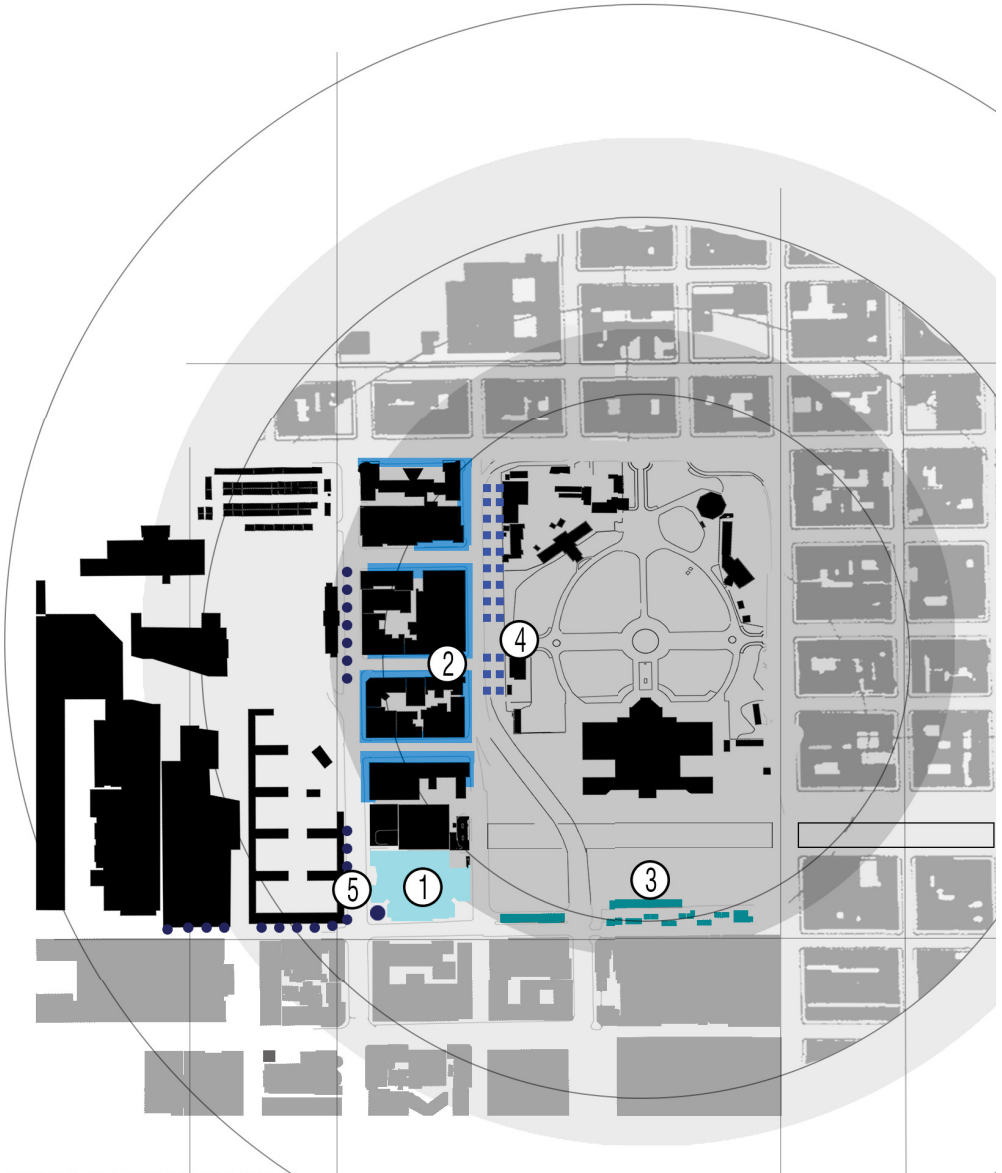
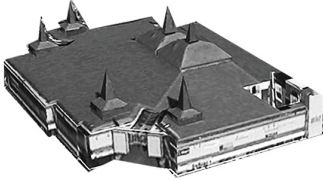


FIGURE 3.16 TRADE TYPOLOGIES

This map indicates the various types of trade in the study area and investigates the various typologies of trade and where they are located



1 LARGE RETAIL

Barrier in urban fabric
Not responsive in context
Unresponsive to architectural language of the place

OPPORTUNITIES:

Open up facade to allow movement through
Reconsider retail typology in the city
Integrate retail into residential fabric



2 SHOP FRONT RETAIL

Unsuccessful trade
No threshold/ layers of approach
Cut off by physical barriers in landscape

OPPORTUNITIES:

Define facade and trade
Remove surrounding barriers



3 FORMAL MARKET

Successful and responsive edge to public realms
Human scale
Industrial language used for retail typology

OPPORTUNITIES:

Use as precedent for retail in the city
Create various iterations across the city
Break up linearity to slow down movement



4 INFORMAL TRADE

5 Various typologies based on permanence.
A table/sheet, make-shift stall, and gazebo structure,
sit on a scale of temporary to permanent

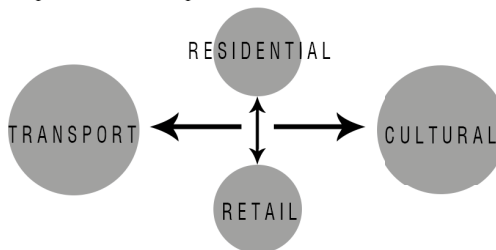
OPPORTUNITIES:

Integrate formal services based on
various levels of permanence that
could encourage growth from
the one to the other.

ZONING AND TYPOLOGY

Figure 3.14 looks at the zoning on site, giving an overview of the various types of structures surrounding the site of the project. The aim of this mapping exercise was to identify the various functionalities of the buildings surrounding the area of intervention. The study brings to light that even though Joubert Park can be considered a residential area, there are other supportive infrastructures in place to help support its residential function. However, functions such as the transport networks are more successful than others functions, such as trade and cultural sectors. This is why it becomes necessary to understand these existing typologies and determine possible opportunities with regards to both the existing infrastructures and possible additional supportive infrastructures, to nurture the growth of the precinct into a holistic system.

The project site consists of a residential and retail functions, with the cultural heritage site of JAG to the east and the transport infrastructures of the taxi rank and Park Station to the west. In my project I consider each of these functionalities and look at how to strengthen their value in context and additionally, how to mediate and integrate the existing functions on site.



The retail typologies (figure 3.16) vary from very formal structures, such as the mall, to very informal structures along the street edges. However in this area most of the trade, which consists of various layers of ever-changing networks, struggle to exist within the boundaries of the older more static structures on site. This then limits the growth of the trade in the area to survivalist trade, without many opportunities for the upward mobility of small businesses in the area.

Having these typologies already in the environment can create many opportunities of growth and integration. However, it also allows us to see what typologies are missing from the fabric, such as educational institutions and more formal economic structures like offices, companies, and banks.

STREET CULTURE AND BUILDING EDGES

The relationship between building and street is an important one in the context of a pedestrian orientated precinct such as Joubert Park. However, over time the buildings in this precinct have turned inwards and faced their backs to the public realm. The art-deco high-rises from the 1940s, which saturate the skyline of this precinct, were not historically designed to be responsive to the public edge. These were upper class private buildings that were known for their exclusivity and status.

There is a variation in the way the building meets the street along the row of residential buildings on the project site. The buildings directly west of the park have incredibly narrow pavement spaces, which are made to feel even smaller with the rows of taxis parked against it (figure 3.17). Figure 3.18 illustrates the relationship between building edge and street edge on the project site. The vast pavement space forms a significant void between the two spaces that adds to the disconnect between public and private space. Threshold, hierarchy and layers of approach should be considered in this new urban context before alterations to these important heritage structures are undertaken.

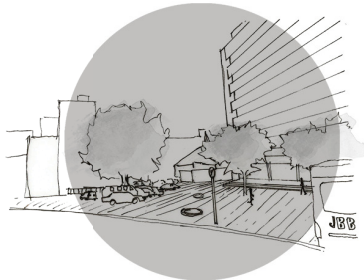
FIGURE 3.17 STREET EDGE

This image illustrates the confined space of the walk-ways along the residential blocks. High volumes of traffic further add to the isolation of these edges.



FIGURE 3.18 PAVEMENT

This perspective illustrates the vast pavement separating the residential building and the street edge. We see how it is primarily being used for parking





STREET CULTURE AND BUILDING EDGES

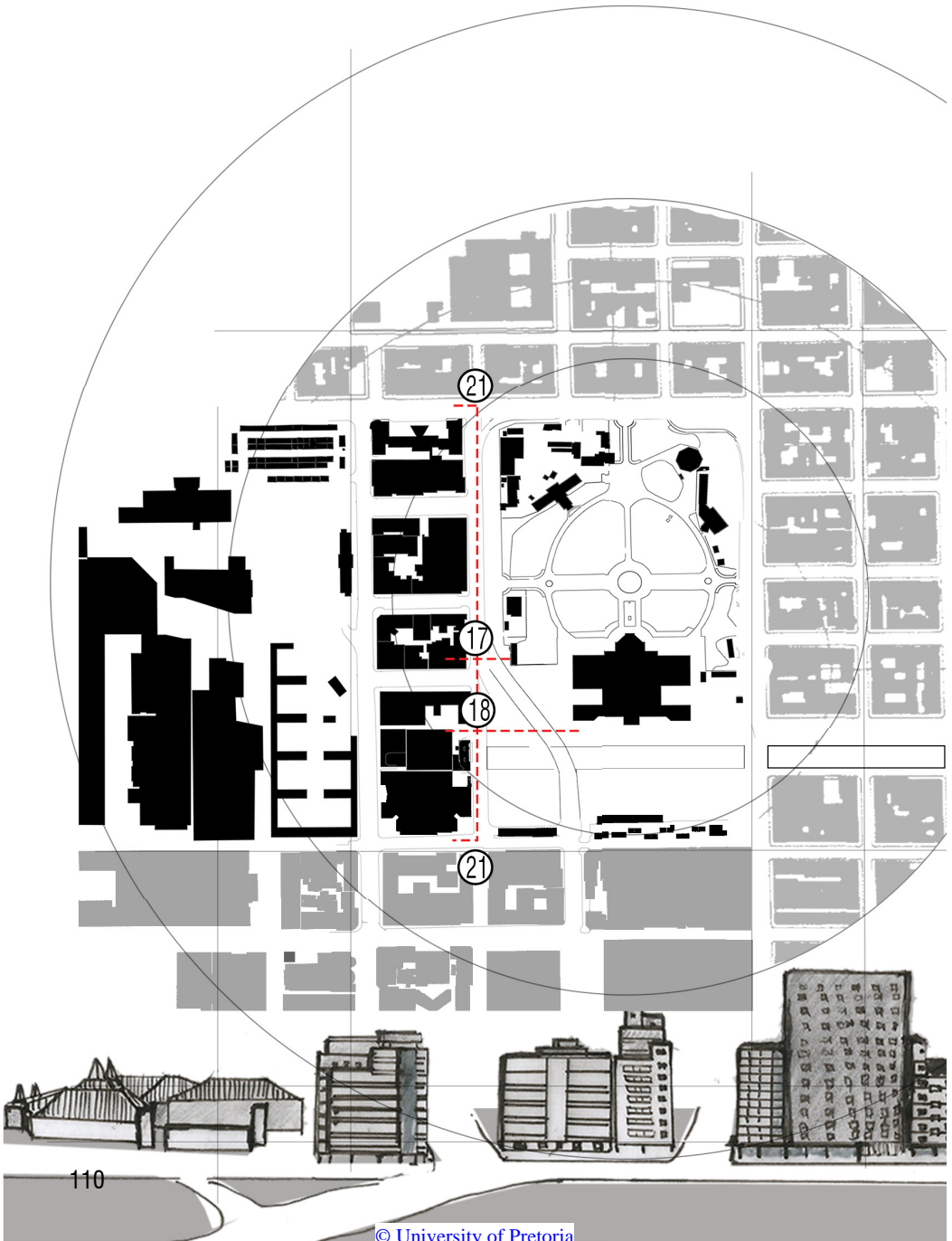


Figure 3.19 and 3.20 illustrate the levels of separation between the residential/retail structures on the site and the park. The wide pavement and railway void (figure 3.20) act as significant barriers in the landscape between the mall and the entrance to JAG. In figure 3.19 we see how the congested traffic and variance in pavement sizes on either side of the road show an uneven hierarchy between the park and the residences. The park with its wide pavement and rows of informal stalls are given more importance than the residential towers and their retail edges, which are given very little breathing space.

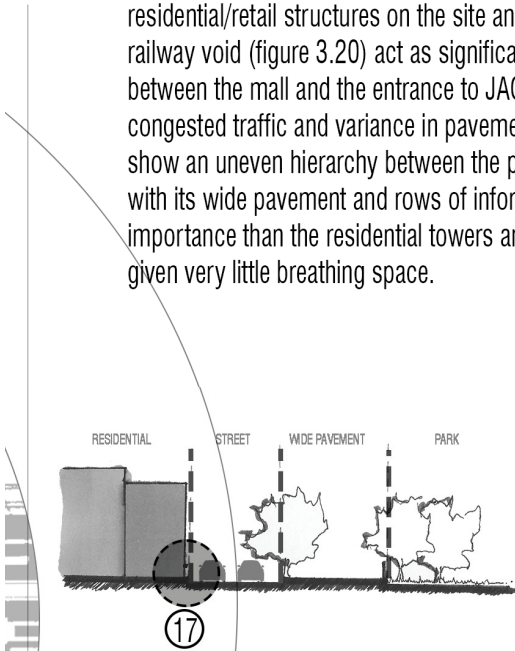


FIGURE 3.19 DISCONNECT

A section through a residential building with no threshold to street edge, and its relationship with the street and the park. A clear disconnect between the two elements is seen.

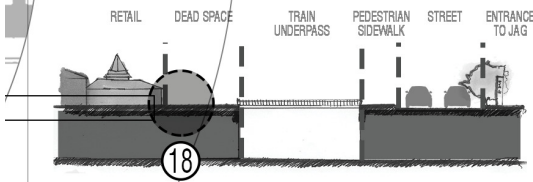


FIGURE 3.20 URBAN SCAR

A section through the bridge mall that cuts through the railway line and the entrance of JAG. This indicates the disconnect between the built fabric and the public realm

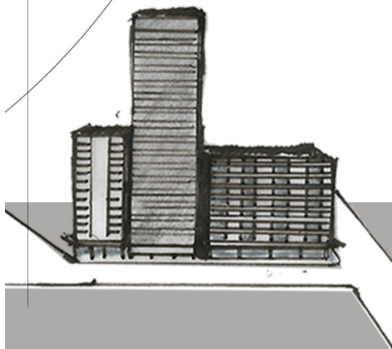


FIGURE 3.21 ELEVATION

An elevation of the residential towers of King George St showing the densities and heights, but also indicating the disconnect between the new structure of the mall and the older art-deco buildings

3.6 THE PEOPLE OF THE PARK

Joubert Park is a melting pot of people from places all over Africa, with their own cultures, traditions, languages and dreams. They are the retired war veteran playing chess in the park, or the Gogo selling sweets on the sidewalk. They are the children playing on the swings in the park waiting for their parents to return after a long day of work in the CBD, and the taxi drivers who wake up before sunrise to start preparations for their day.

However, they are also the street kids caught up in illegal networks with no way out, and the prostitute who needs to be able to support her family back home (Kihato 2013). This is the blessing and tragedy of the park. Where the people you know can either be your support system or your means of failure. These are the people who start to make up the character and energy of the park, it is through their day to day rituals that the park continues.

Through an analysis of anthropological readings by Kihato(2013) and Marais (2013), it was found that many of the dwellers of the Joubert Park precinct have found themselves stuck in a state of liminality. The city was supposed to be a stepping stone to a better life. They came to Johannesburg with the intention of finding safety and refuge, as well as better economic opportunities and upward mobility. Once they arrived, however, they had fallen into the constant struggle of day-to-day survival. They long for their homelands and dream of bringing them honour and respect, but due to victimization, pride, fear and poverty they find themselves stuck in this threshold. At some point they become comfortable with living in this in-between state and give up hope of their prior dreams and goals (Kihato 2013:14).

In the next section we will look at specific case studies of people living in the area of Joubert Park in order to have a better understanding of their daily circumstances through uncovering their spatial narrative. Through this exercise we can determine what social injustices the people of the park face, and how we can intervene from a spatial point of view to create a more just environment.

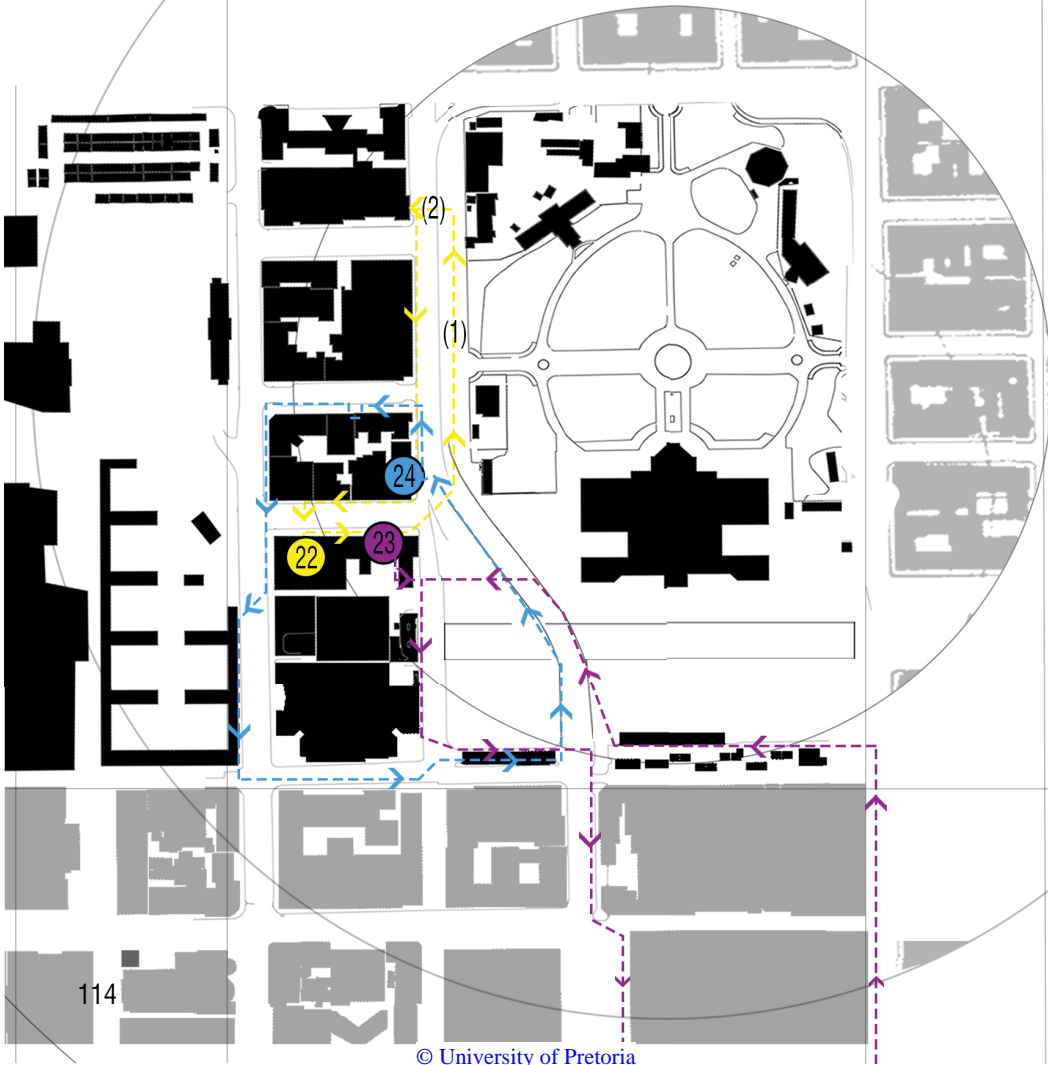


FIGURE 3.21 INHABITANTS
A collage illustrating the various user groups of the area



DAILY RITUALS

We will be following the narratives of three different individuals living in the study area. Their stories have been generalised based on the anthropological writings of Kihato (2013) and Marais (2013). The Al-Jazeera documentary entitled *Hillbrow: Between Heaven and Hell* (Bestall 2012) was also used as a precedent to understand the daily routine of the individuals living around the park. The diagram below indicates the location of each of the case studies and maps their daily route through the precinct. The routes illustrated below work in conjunction with the case study cartoons that follow.





22 FIGURE 3.22 MRS GOLDMAN

Case study 1 investigates the daily routine of an elderly white woman who moved to the park in the early 1950s. This looks at how the “old” community of the park has had to adapt to the changing social and cultural environment of the precinct and the relationships that have formed between the old and new.



23 FIGURE 3.23 OUS MIMMIE

Case study 2 follows the journey of a single mother who is a foreign migrant in the area. We look at her everyday rituals and document the struggles she has to face on a daily basis in order to protect herself and her child in this volatile living environment.



24 FIGURE 3.24 BRA JOE

Case study 3 follows the story of a young man who has left his country in order to find better opportunities in Joubert Park. We look at the relationships he has developed, and the hardship holding him back from reaching his potential in the big city.

CASE STUDY 1

Mrs Goldman

MRS. GOLDMAN

CASE STUDY 1



MRS GOLDMAN IS ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING WHITE CITIZENS OF THE PARK. WITH NO FAMILY, AND NO OLD FRIENDS LEFT IN HILLBROW, SHE ONLY HAS HER PET DOG AS A COMPANION



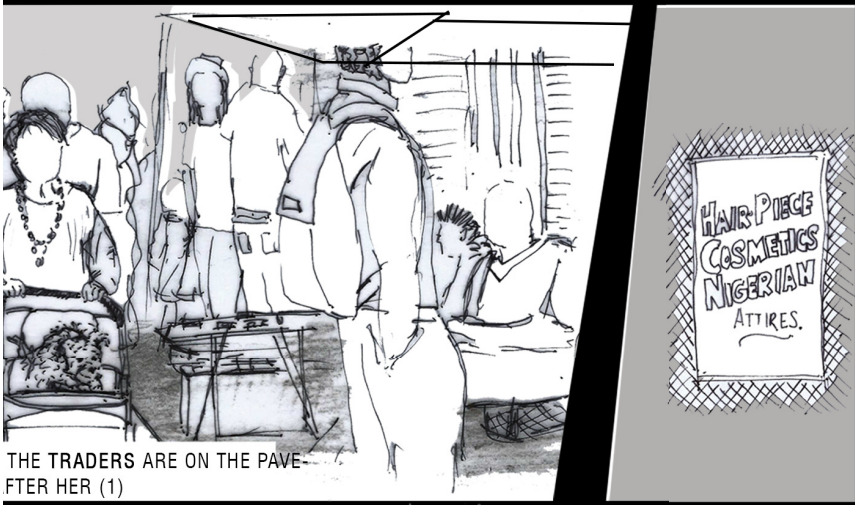
SHE IS GLAD I
MENT. THEY LI



"BUSI KNOWS HOW TO DO MY HAIR JUST THE WAY I LIKE IT" (2)



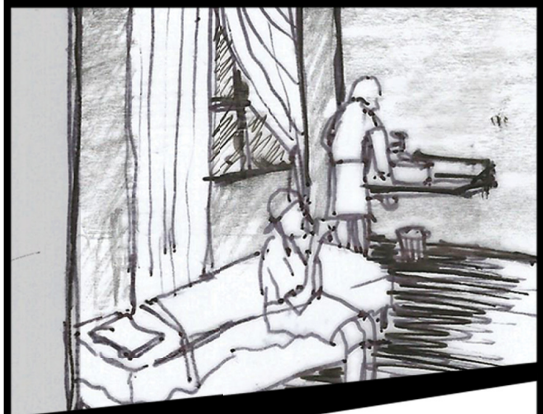
"WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE OUT IT TAKES ME 2 H



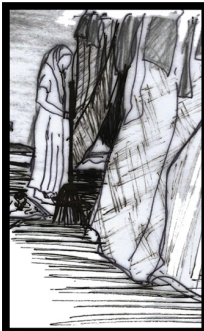
CASE STUDY 2

Ous Mimmie

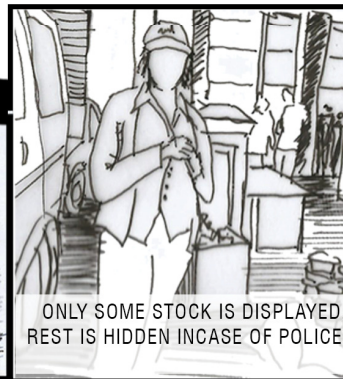
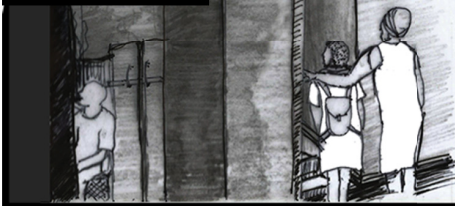
OUS MIMMIE CASE STUDY 2



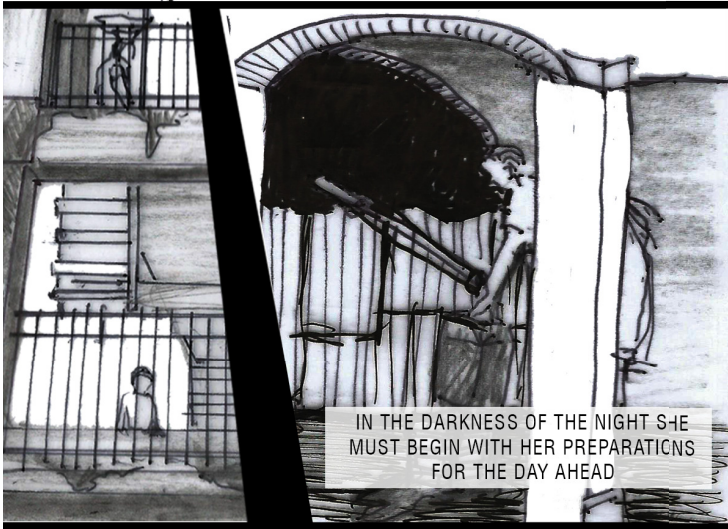
SHE IS A MOTHER.
A DAUGHTER. A DREAMER.
AN ENTREPRENEUR. A PROVIDER.
A PILLAR OF STRENGTH.



MIMMIE SWEEPS HER ROOM, ACCOMPANIES
HER DAUGHTER PAST THE RISKY AREAS
IN THE BUILDING AS SHE HEADS TO
SCHOOL, AND THEN HEADS
TO WORK



ONLY SOME STOCK IS DISPLAYED
REST IS HIDDEN IN CASE OF POLICE

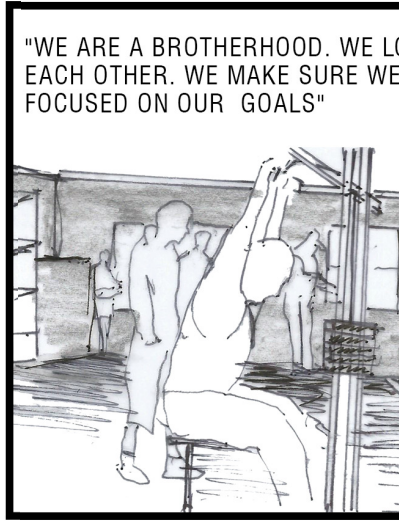
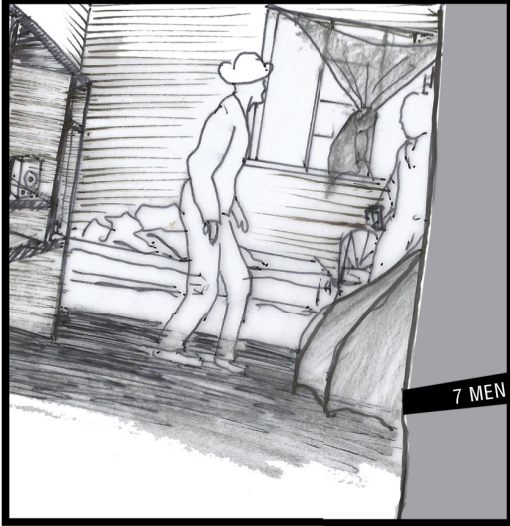


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CASE STUDY 3

Bra Joe

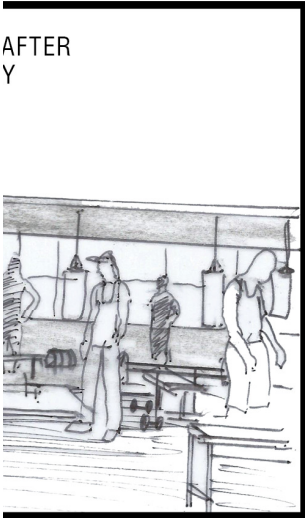
BRA JOE CASE STUDY 3





BEDROOM




CHOSEN BY
D COME TO
I OF BETTER
TIES



3.7 THE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

FIGURE 3.25 SOCIAL NETWORKS

This diagram looks at the various relationships formed in the case studies and the dynamics between them

-  SOCIAL NETWORKS OF CASE STUDY 1
-  SOCIAL NETWORKS OF CASE STUDY 2
-  SOCIAL NETWORKS OF CASE STUDY 3



The narratives of the three case studies show various similarities and differences. In the first case study we see how Mrs Goldman had to form relationships with street traders and vendors in the area (figure 3.25) in order to safely walk through the area as an “outsider” (Bestall 2012). She provided them with her loyalty and they provide her with the safety and services she needs. However in her residential building she is alone with her dog, and due to her old age her home slow falls into decay.

In the case of Ous Mimmie we find that she finds her support with the other ladies who own informal stalls in her trade area (figure 3.25). They have formed a support network that looks to help new foreign migrant women in the area with a means of supporting themselves and their families (Kihato 2013:16). However back in her building she is isolated and alone with her daughter, and it is within this space that she faces many of her daily challenges.

In the case study of Bra Joe we find that the relationships he has developed are crucial to his survival in the city. Men who have come here with the same goals as him, have come together to form micro-communities (figure 3.25) that help new comers with their integration into the park precinct. They form communal living environments where expenses are shared, and they have created their own trade networks where the goods they sell are bought together in bulk and distributed in various form of trade across the city (Kihato 2013:42).

The social relationships formed at this point are crucial, but are currently limited. Your nationality (figure 3.25) determines the social hierarchy that you belong to (Kihato 2013:13). There is an opportunity here to strengthen these relationships by providing them the platforms necessary for their growth and development, which could then lead to the integration of social networks into a more holistic social system.

In the next chapter we explore the social fabric of the project site further, looking at an in-depth analysis of the spatial implications of these social hierarchies.