1 Introduction

The first chapter will introduce the reader to the site and the problem. It will cover the theoretical approach and how it will inform the design intervention on the chosen site. The topic of the dissertation is focused on the so called “Bilbao Effect”, how it regenerated the city of Bilbao, and whether it can be replicated by means of landscape architecture within an urban precinct known as Pretoria West.

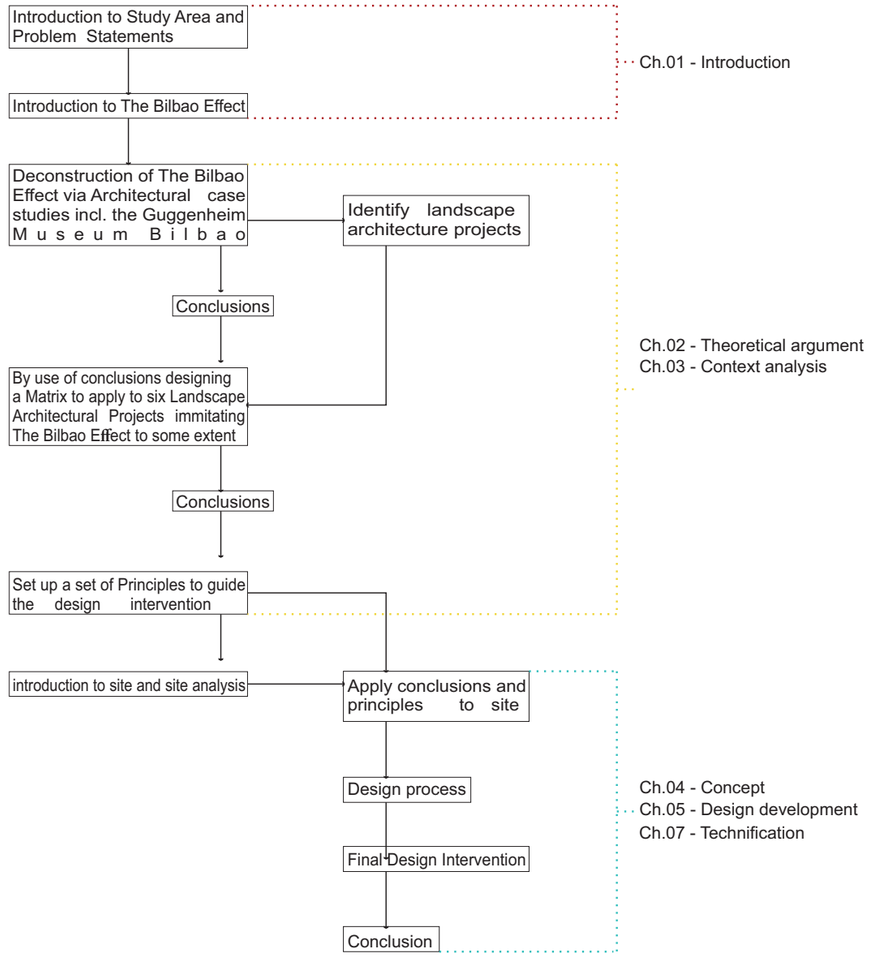

Figure 1.1: Flow diagram explaining the intentions of this dissertation

Pretoria West

The project site is in the heart of Pretoria West (Figure 1.2). Pretoria West is best known for its industrial zone and large show grounds that are still used today, albeit infrequently. Pretoria West has a unique character as it consists of industrial, commercial, and residential zoned areas separated by the large showgrounds (Figure 1.2). The showgrounds consist mainly of open areas used as parking for large events that are held in the six conference halls that form part of the showgrounds. The Pilditch Stadium also forms part of Pretoria West's defining elements, a very successful multi-use sporting facility which is currently the home ground of SuperSport United (2nd team) and Garankuwa United ("PSL" 2016).

It might seem as if Pretoria West is a functioning microcosm of a city, but it is deteriorating both physically and economically. Pretoria West has a rich and colourful history (Meiring 1980). In the 1980's this part of Pretoria was surveyed for Burgher-right plots (Meiring 1980). There was an agreement that the Voortrekkers would receive farms in the Transvaal, but many preferred large stands and they settled mostly in Pretoria West (Meiring 1980). After 1902, farmers flocked to the city from the country to the existing Goede Hoop residential area; a part of Pretoria West, which developed rapidly (Meiring 1980).

Urban regeneration

Since the earliest human settlement urban regeneration has been accompanying urban development, and was especially emphasized after World War Two (Li 2003). After several decade's experience and billions of dollars spent, decision makers realized the importance of the urban image including both the quality of life and the urban environment (Li 2003). Public squares were recognized as prerequisites and catalysts for economic development in cities (Li 2003). Many Western countries have proven that public squares within the urban fabric create a symbol for the city, as well as recreational space for the residents. The squares also greatly contribute to urban regeneration (Li 2003).

Urban regeneration, also known as urban renewal, urban renaissance, and urban revitalization, is the field of public policy that addresses urban issues such as environmental decay, economic decline, community dereliction, growing unemployment, and social issues caused by these urban issues (Merriam-Webster 2003). In biological terms, regeneration means the regrowth of lost or injured tissue, or the restoration of a system to its initial state (Merriam-Webster 2003). These factors are also prevalent in urban areas. According to Couch et al. (2003:2)

> *"Regeneration is concerned with the regrowth of economic activity where it has been lost; the restoration of social functions where there has been dysfunction, or social inclusion where there has been exclusion; and the restoration of environmental quality or ecological balance where it has been lost".*

Urban regeneration is thus not the creation of a completely new urban area, but is instead the management and planning of existing urban tissue and environments (Couch et al 2003). An integrated vision is required to lead and resolve urban issues within environments that have been subject to change (Roberts 2000). When urban regeneration is mentioned it is mostly referred to as the regeneration of the city centre and its immediate surroundings as they are usually more densely populated and possess greater historic significance (Plaza et al 2015). A model of a city successfully regenerating its economy, infrastructure, and cultural activity through a single urban acupuncture is known as the "Bilbao Effect" (Plaza et al 2015).

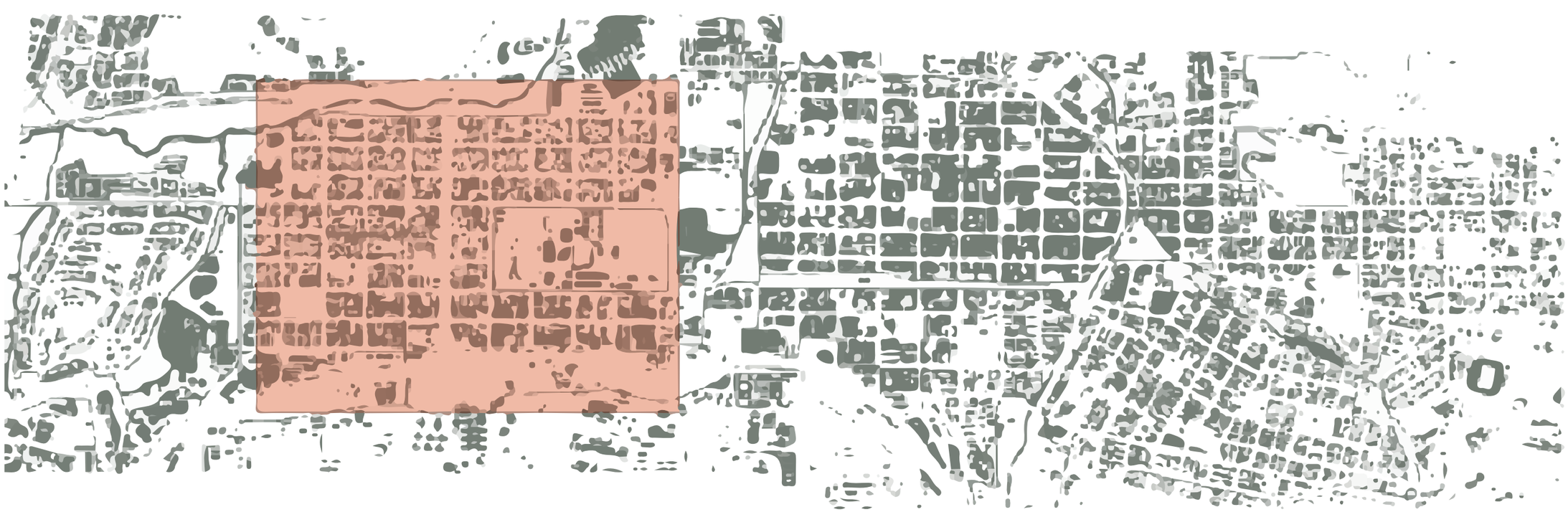

Figure 1.2: Diagram highlighting the chosen study area for the dissertation, Pretoria West

Figure 1.3: Map of Spain illustrating the catalytic impact one building can have on the entire city and country

The Bilbao Effect

The 'Bilbao Effect' is a success story of urban regeneration named after the seemingly miraculous and unprecedented success of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (GMB) (Plaza et al 2013). The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, built on a site previously encompassing Bilbao's failed shipbuilding industry, was intended as a flagship for the city's regeneration plan.

According to Franklin (2016), the intention was to move the city away from its rusting heavy industries and machine-age modernism and to restructure it around new service industries, emerging technologies, design, culture, and aesthetics. The GMB opened in 1997 and hoped against hope to attract 400,000 art tourists a year (Franklin 2016). This would have enabled the developers to pay back the total investment in a short timeframe and deliver valuable income to the city and the Basque Country economy (Areso 2007). In fact, they attracted a million visitors in their first year and have maintained that level ever since. As a result the cost of building the museum ($100m) was repaid in five years (and the overall investment in ten years). The GMB became a major contributor of GDP to the city, adding $33.5m per year to Basque public funds from 2006 (Areso et al 2013).

Significantly, the GMB also boosted global connectivity by placing this second-tier city on the global map of specialised international art-related tourism circuits (Plaza et al 2015), prompting further investment strategies around the world that linked art museums, art tourism, and urban regeneration (Franklin 2016).

Although Basque Country remains substantially industrial (22% of GDP), the Bilbao Effect became the holy grail for de-industrialized cities seeking reinvention (Financial Times 2012). Its potent mix of structural change and economic development, urban regeneration with a cultural twist, signature architecture for urban brand renewal, and local–global partnerships in museum development, inspired a huge growth in centerpiece museum projects in the 1990's and 2000's— but few were as successful as Bilbao (Plaza et al 2013).

> *"Even a Frank Gehry museum commissioned by a wealthy private collector was no guarantee that a new museum would work. Described in 2004 as 'EMPty', visitor numbers almost halved in the first three years of Experience Music Project (EMP) in Seattle, another shiny titanium museum built for Microsoft founder and billionaire Paul Allen. In the same period, it cut its workforce from 500 to 200."* (Franklin 2016:80)

Opening in 2000, pundits said it would consolidate Seattle's regeneration through the 1990's; however, it didn't.

Figure 1.4: The GMB

Figure 1.5: The GMB

Figure 1.6: The GMB

1.2 Problem statement

Pretoria West is a historic remnant, reminiscent of an industrial past. Although industries take up most of the urban form, there are precious open spaces that are underutilized, which can transform Pretoria West in to a more healthy and sustainable urban environment.

1.3 Hypothesis

The Bilbao Effect is a successful, sustainable approach to the regeneration of a post-industrial precinct. Landscape architecture will regenerate Pretoria West successfully with an intervention similar to the architectural approach of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (within its context). A few questions that will guide the study are:

1. What defines the Bilbao Effect?

2. Is the Bilbao Effect a good means of Urban Regeneration?

3. Can the Bilbao Effect be translated into landscape architecture?

4. Can the Bilbao Effect be applied within a South African context, and particularly, when applied to a derelict urban site in Pretoria West?

1.4 Research question

How can a post-industrial precinct benefit from a landscape architectural intervention with an approach guided by the so-called “Bilbao Effect”?

1.5 Delimitations

Very little research has been done on landscape architecture and the Bilbao Effect. The purpose of the study is to identify design principles that will guide the author through to the technicalities of the design.

Numerous authors have conducted case studies about the projects that will be discussed. Their research and opinions are considered when the author makes an unbiased analysis of the project.

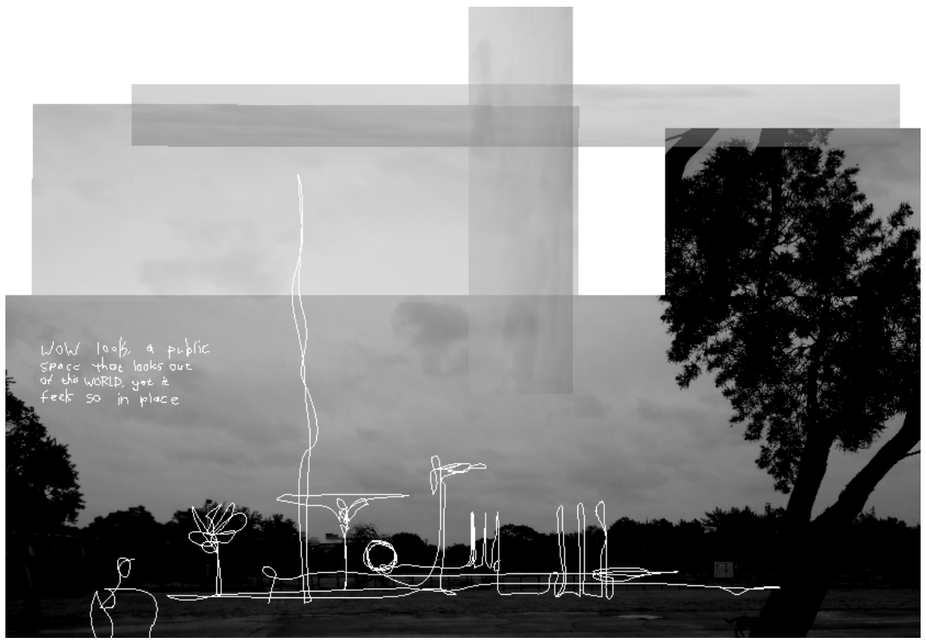

Figure 1.7: The GMB
Figure 1.8: (right) An image of the site in Pretoria West

Figure 1.9: Arial photograph of a large part of the showgrounds in Pretoria West

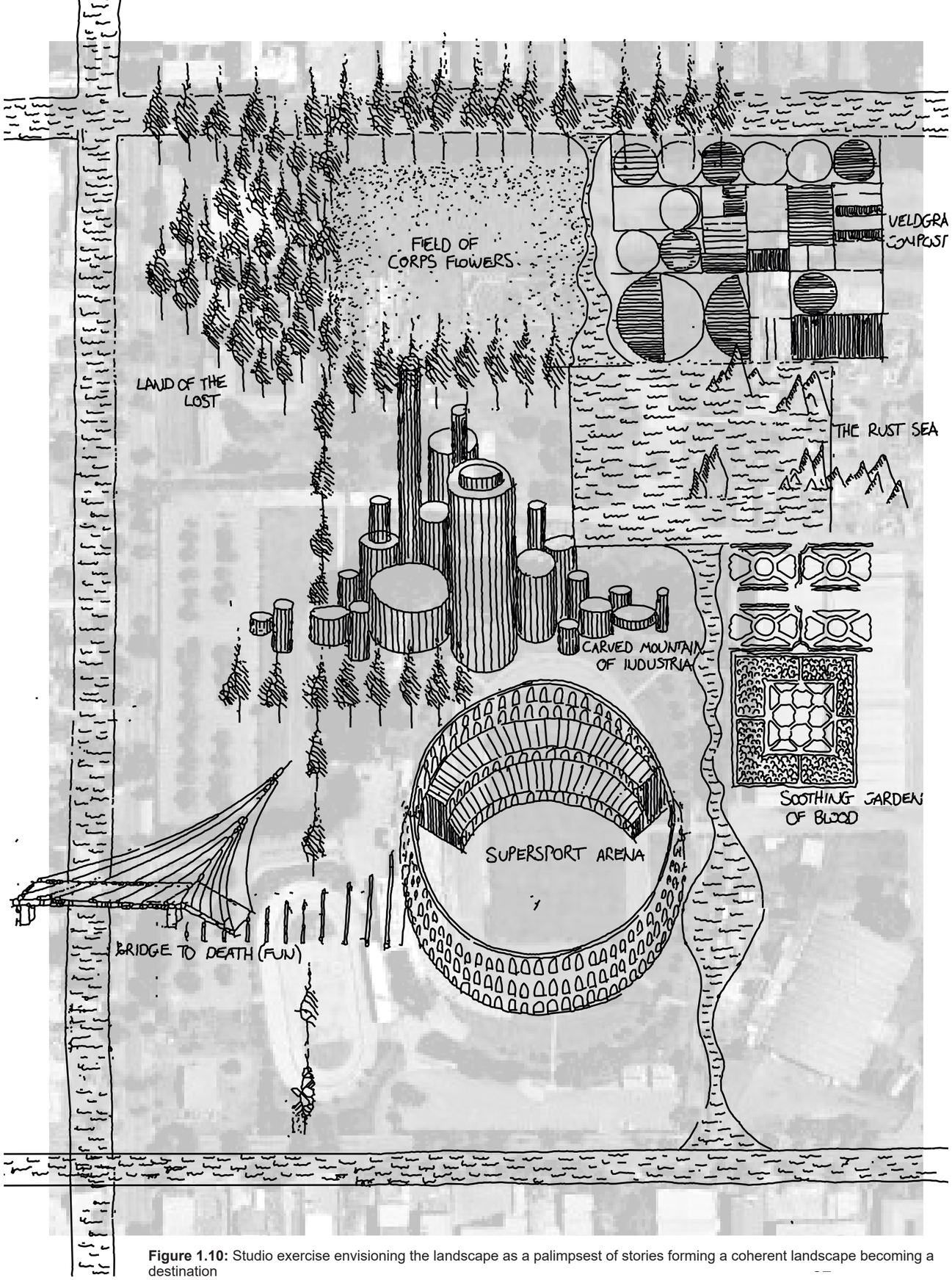

Figure 1.10: Studio exercise envisioning the landscape as a palimpsest of stories forming a coherent landscape becoming a destination