



Fig 1.1 Existing ruins of the old Era Brick Factory (Author, 2018)

CHAPTER

01

introduction

01.1 BACKGROUND

The remnants of our past have shaped South African cities for decades, The two most relevant to this dissertation are **post-industrial sites** (the majority for the extraction of natural resources) and the **spatial legacy of Apartheid**.

With regard to the proposed site, the above mentioned have created barriers and borders between the communities in and around Eersterust. This dissertation argues that it creates environments where stigmas or preconceived notions are formed - notions that are very hard to change.

Eersterust is still segregated by race, as a result of the Apartheid spatial planning policies. The specific setting on which this dissertation focuses on, is the site of the old **Era brick factory and quarry**, abandoned since the end of 2013. Being a post-industrial site, separated from and bordering on residential suburbs, it has contributed to an unhealthy site condition; fostering stigmas associated with degrading buildings and spaces as a consequence of the lack of use and ownership.

This then begs the question, how do we approach the development of sites like this? Upon a recent visit to Maputo, Mozambique I found that several of the old colonial buildings still stand, having survived the war, changing regimes and

other impacts. As such, the powers that be are striving for a new identity within the context they have inherited.

The old fort, *Fortaleza se Maputo*, for example, is now a war and military museum, housing all the old and controversial statues of the colonial period to the revolution and the civil war. They acknowledge their history rather than wiping it away. This can be an informant on how to address and interpret controversial heritage sites.

01.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Throughout this dissertation it is argued that architecture can be a tool to combat stigmas or preconceptions; and specifically, that the Eersterust post-industrial heritage site has the potential to be re-used and reincorporated into its context so as to once again be significant and relevant.

The downfall of the site's previous function was its reliance on a non-renewable resource that has been depleted. Thus, this dissertation attempts to find an alternative programme to reinvigorate the site and beneficially contribute to the communities bordering the site while maintaining and respecting the site's heritage value.

01.3 THE ISSUES

01.3.1 GENERAL ISSUE

Once a stigma is attached to an entity, it can be very hard to change. The Era brick factory, and even the suburb of Eersterust, is affected by stigmas and misconceptions. The lack of activity on the site (after the factory closed), pollution from the previous and current owners, and the underutilisation of the stadium resulted in a general perception of risk, and hostility.

In the greater Pretoria area, preserved examples of the city's industrial heritage are few and far between. This site however, presents itself as an opportunity for change from a derelict scar in the landscape to something that can contribute to the community and at the same time enjoy more than merely functional meaning .

01.3.2 URBAN ISSUE

At an urban scale, the site forms a barrier between two suburbs, *Eersterust* and *Jan Niemand Park*. This separation is reinforced by the natural barriers of the two rivers, *Moretele* and *Rietspruit*, flowing on either side of the site, with the mountain to the north and the man-made barriers of *Stormvoël Road* and industrial areas such as *Silvertondale*, strengthening the barrier.

01.3.3 ARCHITECTURAL ISSUE

How can architecture be a tool to reinvigorate a derelict site that has heritage value, while strengthening an existing stadium that is underutilised?

The real challenge this dissertation attempts to address is to create an architectural response that gives the site new meaning and purpose that will give back to the community.



Fig 1.2 Existing ruins of the old Era Brick Factory (Author, 2018)



Fig 1.3 Existing ruins of the old Era Brick Factory (Author, 2018)



Fig 1.4 Existing ruins of the old Era Brick Factory (Author, 2018)

01.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions arose:

- How can architecture change preconceptions of space and place?
- How can architecture break the boundaries of Apartheid spatial planning?
- What are the significance of stigmas and what relation do they have to architecture?
- What are the most prevalent stigmas that the site is subject to?

01.5 INTENTIONS

This dissertation intended to use the post-industrial site - *the old Era brick factory and quarry in Eersterust*, as the proposed site, but which has negative preconceptions and stigmas associated with it.

In the South African context, and, as mentioned, particularly in the context of Pretoria, there are not many examples of post-industrial sites being rehabilitated or reused effectively, especially sites of historic or heritage value.

This study attempts to find practical solutions to transforming these stigmas, with a specific focus on rehabilitating existing environmental degradation, preserving heritage and mediating between segregated communities.

This dissertation uses architectural and other supporting theories as design informants, while the main driver for design is a synthesis of site and context specific opportunities. Various programmes and the existing fabric acted as catalysts for design.

01.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve an appropriate architectural response and design approach to the problems previously stated, the following methods were be used:

Understanding the Context - Content Analysis & Historical Studies

- This was done by piecing together the site's history and development - using mapping, by reading existing publications and through historic photos.
- Establishing the current condition of the site - this was achieved through sketches and photographs.
- Identifying existing stigmas associated with the site and other relevant post-industrial sites - done in order to establish the site's tangible and intangible qualities.

Investigating Possibilities

- An investigation was undertaken at an urban level concerning available possibilities utilising a SWOT analysis (*strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats*).

Critical Theoretical Exploration

- Theories were investigated in relation to the alleviation of stigmas associated with place.
- Theories related to heritage, and specifically, industrial heritage and cultural landscapes: the heritage value of the site, heritage conservation and adaptive reuse were examined.
- Lastly, theories related to environment potential i.e., resilience and regenerative design were explored.

Precedent/Case Studies

- After an appropriate programmatic response was established, an analysis of a number of existing buildings was undertaken and these are discussed to substantiate and refine the proposed architecture. Precedents include, but are not limited to a contextual, technological, formal and functional examples.

Site Scale + Delimitations

- Although the entire old Era brick factory and quarry site were analysed, the dissertation focused just on the south-eastern portion of the site adjacent to the existing football stadium.
- A proposed programme and broad urban layout of the site is indicated, but not designed in detail in this dissertation.
- An understanding of the local community was gained through observation and secondary sources rather than direct interviews, due to constraints imposed by ethical clearance procedures.