

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as context of Fort Commeline. The conceptual and architectural problem is stated and contextualises the project's context, theoretical approach, research question and methodology.

*Figure 1.5
The ruins of Fort Commeline
(Author, 2018)*

1.1 Proposed Context

Hidden in the southern hills of Pretoria lies the remains of what used to be the one of the first fortifications introduced by the time of the Transvaal Rebellion in 1800 (Van Jaarsveldt, 1981: 45-57). Fort Commeline served an important role for Pretoria during the 1880 -1881 war between the 'Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek' and Britain. During this time the British strategies for the defence of Pretoria and the network of forts and laagers that were erected towards this end served as resistance against the Boer rebellion forces both from the west and south (Viljoen, 1905).

This fort has been disregarded for many years to the extent that the remnants of the trenches that previously served as the fort sector, would only be found when the fort is analysed and searched for by foot. These fortified remnants are often considered as deteriorating fragmentations residing as but a figment of narrated memory among the precinct and it is hereby argued that due to the progression of time, not only does this "fragmented" heritage weaken, but that it loses its character, which subsequently deteriorates the relationship of identity between man and architecture (Nesbitt, 1996).

Just before the outbreak of the First Boer War in 1880, this fort became the reluctant hope for the British. This small, rough stone fort was built on Magazine Hill, south of the military camp, in December 1880. Today there are only ruins on Magazine Hill. Since it was known that there was a fort in the Second Anglo Boer War, it is not possible to determine whether there still were remains of Fort Commeline. This was only determined by a comprehensive study (Meyer and Van Vollenhoven, 1993).

Due to the current condition of the fort's-built fabric, there is no doubt that these ruins are in desperate need of attention. Not only are these ruins considered as vulnerable matter to both vandalism and natural decay, but its existence is unknown and remains a hidden and forgotten narrative and as a result, detrimentally effects its heritage value and historical memory (Van Vollenhoven, 1992).

This study reflects on the present isolation and ruination and orientates itself as a sense of character and symbol this fort once stood for and perceived within our current continuum of memory and change as a result of time.

The rehabilitation of this forgotten ruin, however rather regarded as hidden ruin, serves as the foundation of the narratives and mysteries that had previously arose from Magazine Hill (Panagos, 2006: 1-7).

Being part of a greater network of the fortification attempts conducted between 1880-1902, Fort Commeline is considered as unique due to its heritage, state and location (Laband, 2014). This British military designed fortification perceived a different approach to the design compared to other fortifications. It also went through numerous phases of alterations during this time. This fort was smaller and more simplistic in its structure and material use and faced south to guard the entrance to Pretoria, also known as the 'Skietpoort'.

Limited investigations on this site, such as heritage and archaeological analysis has been executed and inaccurate documentation of the fort questions its existence (Panagos, 2006: 1-7). Van Vollenhoven states that the site is of exceptional cultural significance given its relationship with neighboring sites. It is therefore vital that the Magazine Hill precinct be considered and remembered as part of the fortification network and re-purposed accordingly (Van Vollenhoven, 1992).

To this day there has not been any attempt of restoration or remembrance of this fortification except for the archeologic study which Panagos has conducted in 1991. As a result, due to the precinct's unique history, narrative and mysteries, it is proposed that it should be preserved as a place of remembrance and narration.

Considered in this dissertation as the key driver of ruination and the process thereof, is perhaps the flow of nature due to the changing of time (Leach, 2002: 126-133). In order to rehabilitate the heritage fabric, it is decisive to determine the heritage worth. This evaluation therefore considers the collective heritage of Fort Commeline, but more importantly, the future value of this iconic heritage precinct, known as Magazine Hill.

Figure 1.6
Urban Relationship with Fort Commeline
(Author, 2018)

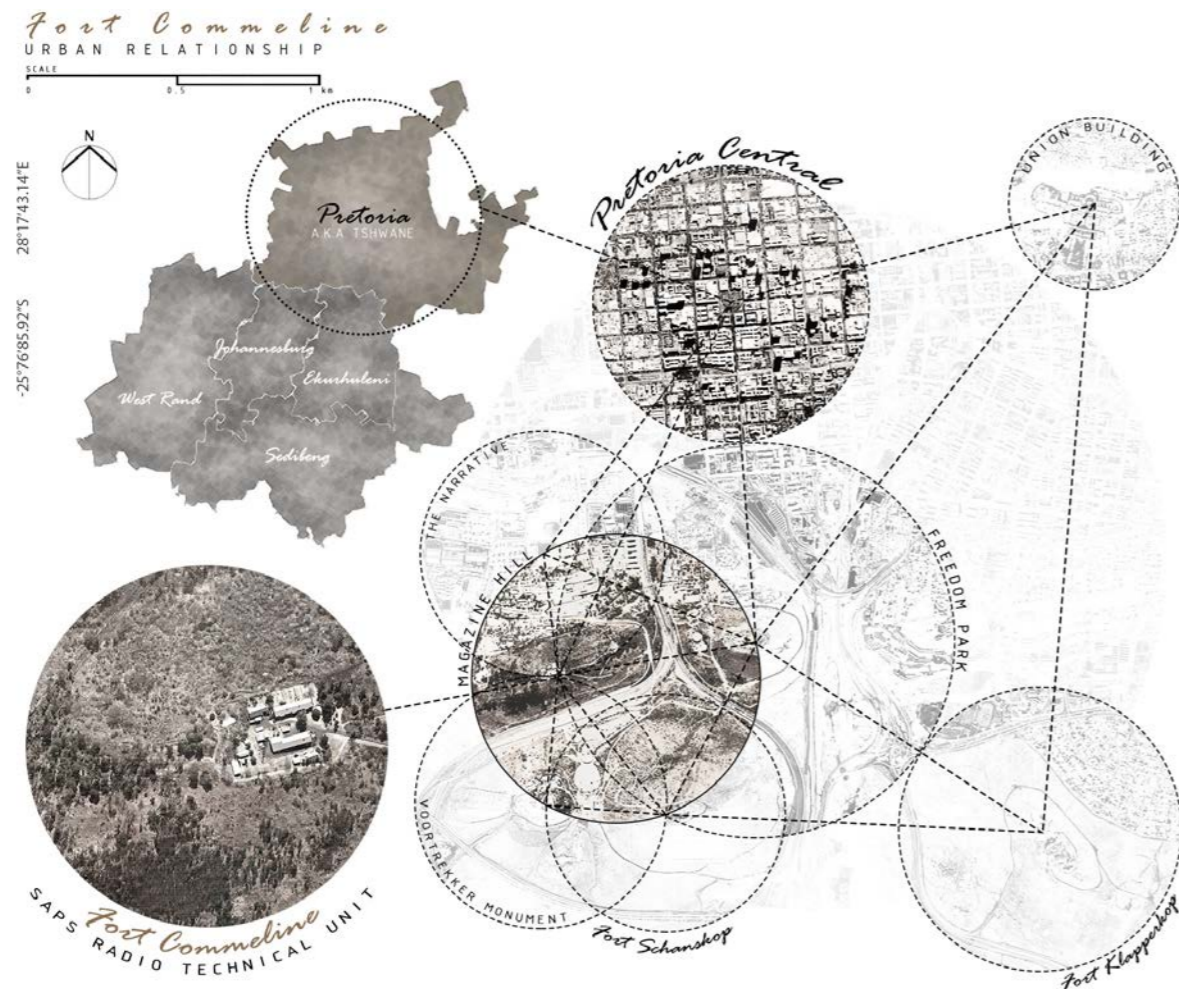


Figure 1.7
Visual analysis of the ruins of Fort Commeline
(Author, 2018)

1.2 The research problem

The perspective of historical landscapes such as the fortifications of Pretoria and its existence as heritage fragments has long been undefined. Where the narrative of memory is left in ruins, heritage and contextual worth remains questioned and its argument around vain and emaciated source of rehabilitation and narrated mystery, marks it as futile.

With its contentious conditions and questionable significance as cultural landscape, it is argued that Fort Commeline has ceased to exist. Its purpose to defend was no longer required and its intents no longer valued, giving the impression that it was intentionally abandoned and lost in ruination and isolation (Meyer and Van Vollenhoven, 1993).

It is hereby presented as a contextual revolution by the firm disruption of the existing heritage by crafting a rehabilitative vernacularity among its damaged and narrated envelope. In essence, it considers the process of creating a rehabilitative ecology set among the narrated heritage which is surrounded by an urban society.

The purpose however is to recognize this lost and forgotten site, defined by space, structure and architecture. Where it was previously designed and located with an interpretation of the former envisioned British empire and currently solitary exists amidst a sense of deconstructive thresholds deprived from its cultural value, isolating history from its spatial realm and regenerative potential (Grassi, Summer 1980: 26-27).

1.3 The research question

How can Fort Commeline and the narrative its ruins convey, be reformed in order to preserve its cultural heritage worth, guarantee its future worth, and introduce a rehabilitative progression of the time it is bound to, through utilising the narrated construct and defined heritage?



Figure 1.8
Fort Commeline (Author, 2018)



Figure 1.9
The Green Magazine (Gouws, 2011)



Figure 1.10
West Fort (Gouws, 2011)



Figure 1.11
Fort Wonderboomport (Gouws, 2011)

1.4 Research Intentions

In terms of the problem statement and research question, this dissertation is aimed at reflecting on the following theoretical properties considering and identifying an appropriate architectural response.

14.1 Historical perceptions

There is no question that Fort Commeline and the precinct it resides in, is in dire need of attention to preserve its questionable worth. Heritage worth and its existence is subject to the perception and interpretation of the heritage in question.

Being an acknowledged heritage site of South Africa with its vast cultural heritage, it might often be assumed that the heritage of the British and the South African Boer War of the 19th century is intentionally neglected and that it is the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality's responsibility for the loss and neglect concerning heritage artefacts and ruins such as these (Bruinette, 2017).

Currently the South African Society still tends to contest and segregate our heritage according to cultural origin and leads to the exclusion and disregard of most heritage identities (Clarke and Kuipers, 2015). However, it is rather believed that the factual delimitation originates from the difference in heritage perspectives.

14.2 The character of time and place

It is agreed in this dissertation that we live in a continuum, defined by space, matter and time. It is due to the progression of time, that heritage fabric transforms and would be deciphered as an ultimate change in its character (Ionescu, 2016: 2-7). It is with this result that whatever is considered to be bounded by time's worth would be questioned.

Change which is considered as subject to time, as well as cultural characteristics are highly persuasive in perceiving the identity of place. Leach argues that identification of progression of method should not be considered as a permanent state but should rather be considered as an active and shared progression of identity which should be informed by the need to belong.

It is therefore imperative to guarantee the sense of "belonging and continuity" within our diverse cultural context that has a detrimental effect of validity of place (Leach, 2002: 126-133).

14.3 Approach to Heritage

It is clear that the inherent worth of our heritage is pre-eminently determined by our society, and it is therefore essential to critically reflect on our diverse evaluation irrespective of the heritage criteria. The preservation and formulation thereof, as well as the valued-based conservation as worthy of interpretation as heritage fabric, is neglected (Lamprakos, 2014: 418-435).

Both Fort Commeline and the SAPS Radio Technical Unit are respected for their heritage and narration it has contributed to the Magazine Hill precinct. The contribution to the South African heritage is acknowledged, however the considered heritage worth fails to conform to the heritage legislation such as the 1999 National Heritage Resources Act, which serves to preserve and protect our cultural heritage (Act No. 25 of 1999) (Caincross, 2011: 204-213).

14.4 Experiential potential

Where it is aimed at being a rehabilitative and conservative interference, the main theory distinguishes the built environment as a physical implementation of rebuilding matter defined by its past, present and future progression and investigates the retrogression of rehabilitative space, as well as the sustainability of structure among space, matter among space and the being among matter.

Additionally, the theory poses to interfere with the nature of the conventional and rather inconsiderate architecture of man and proposes an unhindered stimulus to the general conservative habits in the regeneration of new organic ideals for heritage fabric and reintegration strategies (Wright et al., 1960).

It is proposed in this dissertation that conservational developments, whether it be focused on the existing or contemporary architectural fabric, becomes a static reflection on the old and should therefore resonate the comprehensive purpose of conserving and generating for the collective and continuous heritage.

Hereby also reflecting on previous fortification and heritage conservation studies executed on behalf students from the University of Pretoria (Gouws, 2012) (Van Wyk, 2012) (Bruinette, 2017). This project therefore serves as a critique on heritage conservation, irrespective of the conditions of the heritage fabric.

The need for celebrating the pragmatic characteristics of space which would significantly encourage and secure its future value of heritage sites. Ideally, the architectural intercession should permit an inclusive and engaging experience that compliments and respects the heritage value but would also encourage change.

14.5 Narration of heritage

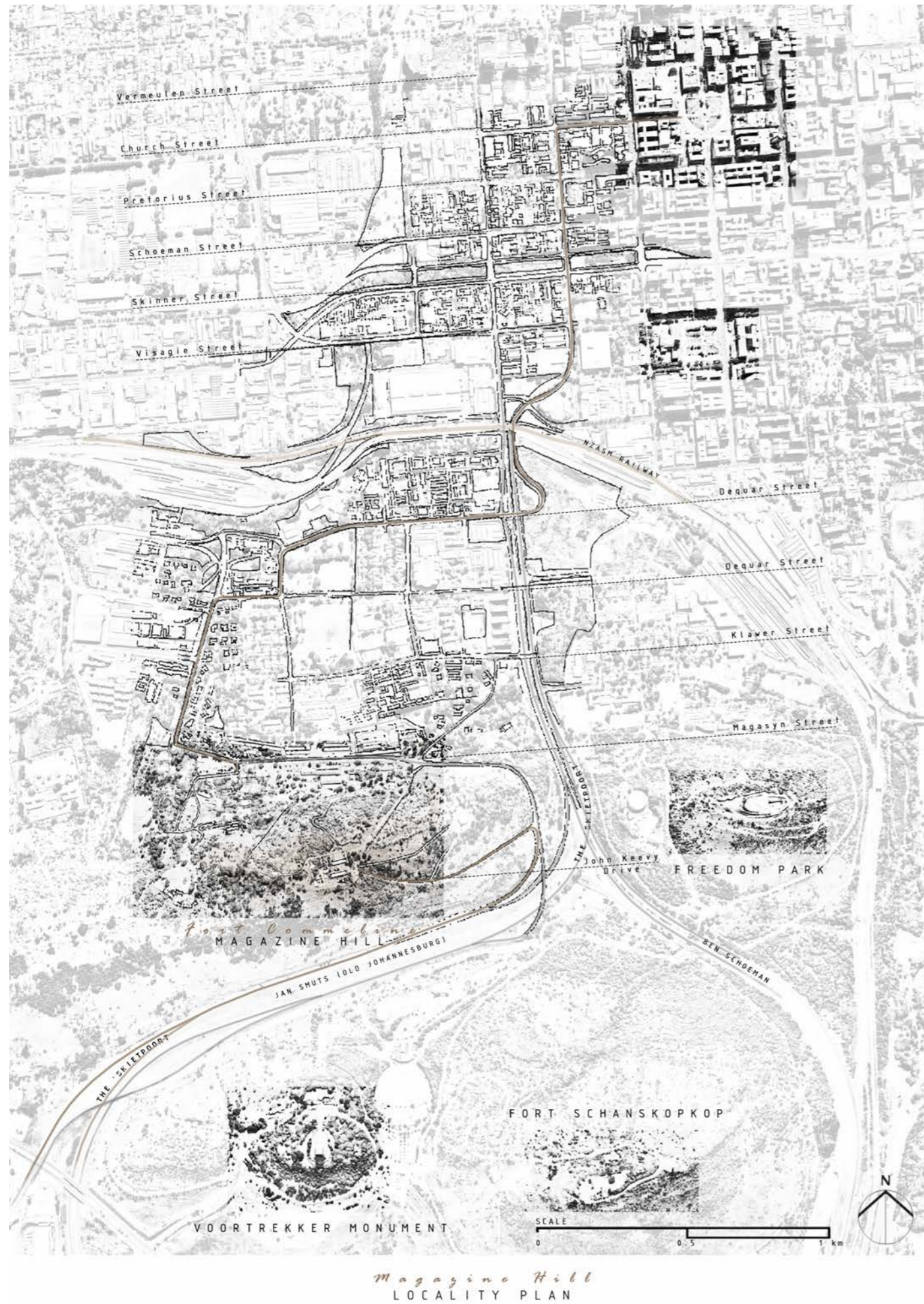
The current history of Magazine Hill and the precinct surrounding it, is rather considered as abundant value to the South African heritage and forms part of the transformation and progression of our heritage and conservative nation (Gouws, 2012).

The art of narration and mystery is valued for its ability to enable and encourage memory and promotes equal participation as transformative progression (Wieder, 2004: 23-28).

It is vital to include the narration of all South Africans that would serve as the involved progression of narration, it is therefore considered as a critical way of thinking to consider our diverse methods of narration due to our vast cultures to guarantee the continuity, and potentially defend our endangered future heritage values of our vast heritage worth.



Figure 1.12
Visual analysis of the SAPS radio technical unit, east of Fort Commeline (Author, 2018)



Magazine Hill
LOCALITY PLAN

1.5 Research methodology

The proposed research intentions are discussed, as well as the architectural approach that will be utilized to develop an appropriate architectural response to the architectural problem.

Having a comprehensive understanding of the existing narrative as well as the memories that it embeds, rehabilitative strategies are not just necessary, but an essential self-inflicted natural rehabilitative approach.

1.5.1 Heritage reflection

This analysis considers the fragmented heritage of both the fort and the SAPS Radio Technical Unit (Paschke, 2018). It is therefore critical to study the original purpose as well as design to perceive the significance of heritage (Aylward, 2010).

The theory therefore concerns the existing typology and the sustainability of heritage and architecture, not only in terms of resource use, but in terms of the life cycle of architecture. Consequently, the architectural matter of an acquisitive architecture and its revival is narrated and identified within the architectural built fabric.

1.5.2 Site interpretation

Previous archeologic studies conducted by Panagos (Panagos, 2006: 1-7) and Anton an Vollenhoven (Van Vollenhoven, 1992) is considered to be the only accurate documentation of the site. Present studies conducted by the author would therefore allow for a visual and contextual understanding of the historical context of the ruins and the development over time, serving as the bridge between heritage and context as a result of reflection. Journal publications, articles as well as novels and tails, will enlighten on the concerns of heritage worth and responses to ruination of the Magazine Hill precinct.

In support of the theoretical exploration, the following hypothetical premises concerning the collective heritage will be focused on: historical perceptions, the character of time and place, character of space, approach to heritage, the experiential potential of heritage projects, and narration of heritage.

1.5.4 Precedents

The selection of precedent studies and case studies will be presented and discussed. This will ultimately support both the theoretical and physical perception of the requirements focused upon, in the design process.

It is hereby referred to these sources as valuable and meticulous research and insights on the Magazine Hill Precinct. A series of site visits to the Fort as well as the Military division, more commonly known as the South African Military Defect Centre, will encourage the illustrated future condition of the Magazine Hill precinct and its contribution to our collective heritage (Gouws, 2012).

1.5.5 Design methodology

The thesis positions itself within a relationship between the life cycle of architecture, the memory of built fabric and the narrative bound by the landscape. It considers the existing state of built fabric as a relationship between man and natural landscapes. Understanding the life cycle of architecture categorised by a cycle of heritage, design, craftsmanship, utilisation and in the end change its architectural characteristics and purpose.

1.5.3 Theoretical exploration

The hypothesis considers the heritage fabric as meditative and adaptive architype that serves as the basis to craft the narrative from the architecture, currently separated by its time. Recognizing the architectural life cycle of structure and its theoretical understanding through the normative.

The conscious destruction of nature by the "being" in essence is bound up with the way the character of the "being" is formulated, and it is possible only within such a formulation that architectural resilience may perhaps be achieved. The framework of this thesis, which aims at addressing this theory that in principle, we can carry out the destruction (a theory of crafting the new) only with regard to phases of history which are in principle decisive. (Heidegger, 1996: 41-267)

It utilises the existing heritage fabric to craft from, to rebuild a resilient relationship between the architectural man and the architectural nature and considers the historical normative and existing heritage as basis for contextual theory and architecture. While ruined built fabric does not always serve as definite heritage fabric, it remains as narrated built fabric that is considered to craft from.

Figure 1.13

Left opposite: Locality plan of Magazine hill in relation to popular sites (Author, 2011)



Figure 1.14
The Military Defect Exhibition and Museum west of the Flame-tracer Building and former Red Magazine (Author, 2018)



MAIN NODES

- 1 | Building no. 1 B-shelter:
Cordite magazine
- 2 | Building no. 2 B-shelter:
Declifying bomb shelter
- 3 | Building no. 3 B-shelter:
Bullet filling
- 4 | Building no. 4 B-shelter:
Cordite magazine
- 5 | Building no. 5 B-shelter:
Declifying bomb shelter
- 6 | Building no. 6 B-shelter:
Incendiary ordnance repository (IOR)
shot filling room
- 7 | Existing main entrance
- 8 | Main cloak room
- 9 | Office PG
- 10 | Boiler room
- 11 | .303 Ammunition capping and
vanishing
- 12 | .303 Ammunition Mint loading bays
- 13 | .303 Ammunition assembly plant
- 14 | .303 Ammunition loading fields:
weighing, ganging and packaging
- 15 | Garage workshop
- 16 | No 1 Main guard room:
Magasyn road (closed)
- 17 | Enclosed Grand magazine laboratory
- 18 | .303 Ammunition soldering room
- 19 | Electricians and carpenters workshop
- 20 | Former Magazine Laboratory
- 21 | Grand Magazine/Red Magazine/
Sentraalmagasyn (1984-1945)
- 22 | Gunpowder Magazine
- 23 | Sub Station
- 24 | .303 Bullet filling shop
- 25 | Sub station/Mens latrines
- 26 | MRG3 Kitchen block
- 27 | Building no. 7 B-shelter:
Primary cartridge assembly
- 28 | Flame Tracer/Assembly building
- 29 | G3 Armory assembly/Defect center
- 30 | Green Magazine/Groenmagasyn:
Second Primary magazine
- 31 | Canteen/Offices
- 32 | Latrines
- 33 | Old box store
- 34 | New box store
- 35 | Guard house administration
- 36 | Restrooms for work force
- 37 | Storage yard
- 38 | Open Shed for industrial works:
Restortions
- 39 | Fort trench walls/acces to fort from
magazines
- 40 | Old Fort Camp
- 41 | Fort Commeline/Magazine Redoubt
- 42 | South African Police Service (saps)
Radio Technical Unit

Figure 1.15
Magazine Hill in relation to popular sites
(Author, 2018)



1.6 Delimitations & Assumptions

It is imperative to state that Magazine Hill will be considered as holistic precinct and acknowledged as character of space, matter and time. The design emphasis will be conducted on Fort Commeline as well as the SAPS Radio Technical Unit, which will illustrate the poetic and rehabilitative response to the research focus.

It is hereby assumed that these two separate nodes stated above serve as the current inhabitants of Magazine Hill, as there are residential units for the staff of the Radio Technical Unit. It is also important to state that the fort has not been declared as national heritage monument and has been disregarded since and prior to 1965 when the SAPS Radio Technical unit was erected.

The fort currently remains under the protection of the SA Army, with restricted access to the general public. It is however unclear whether it has considerable value under the Heritage Act (see chapter on Fort Commeline).

It is hereby argued that any proposal or incentive intervention is considered as essential architecture for the purpose of congenital regeneration and motivated accordingly.