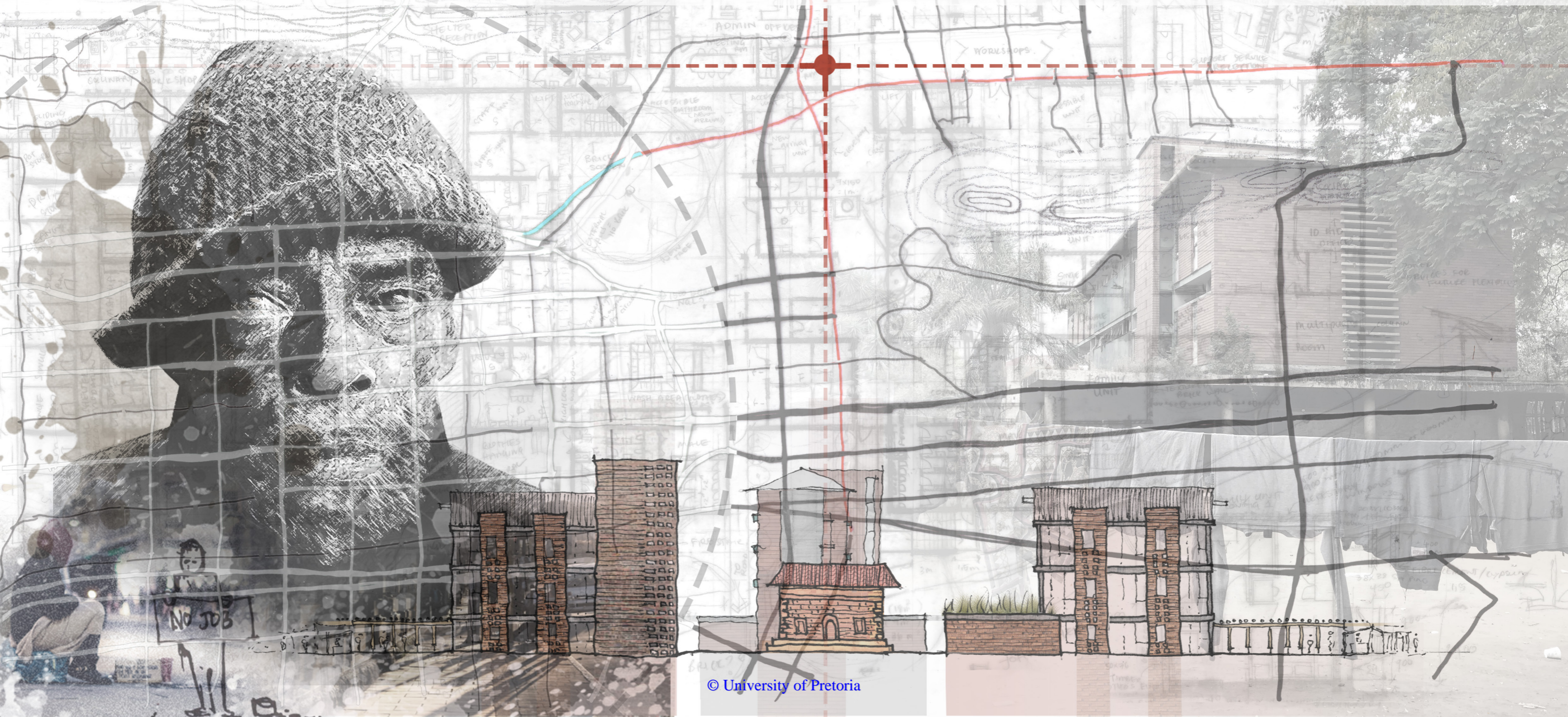


UNCOVERING THE **LATENT POTENTIAL** OF (RE)APPROPRIATED NEGLECTED SPACES:

The transformation of Melgisedek towards addressing
issues of homelessness and heritage

Heike Karberg
2021



00

preface

DECLARATION

In accordance with Regulation 4(e) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses, I declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other institution.

I further state that no part of my dissertation has already been, or is currently being, submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

I further declare that this dissertation is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which the work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.

Heike Karberg
2021

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Architecture (Professional), Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology.

University of Pretoria, 2021.

| Research Field |
Inhabitation of Place

| Course Coordinator |
Prof. Arthur Barker

| Study Leader |
Johan Swart

| Editor |
Athena Lysandrou



PROJECT SUMMARY

Uncovering the latent potential of (re)appropriated neglected spaces:

the transformation of Melgisedek towards addressing issues of homelessness and heritage.

Keywords:

homelessness, neglected buildings, appropriation, incrementality, palimpsest, heritage, adaptability

Research Field:

Inhabitation of Place / Heritage and cultural landscapes

Project Location:

25°44'2.41"S 28°12'17.04"E

Cnr. Annie Botha ave. & Johan Heyns dr., Prinshof 349-JR / Riviera, Pretoria

Site Programme:

Social Welfare programme: Transitional housing & support services, soup kitchen, medical Clinic, daycare.

Public Interface programme: Cultural food court, greenhouse nursery, bakery, small retail & vendors, informal trade.

Anchoring Link Programme: Communal food garden, culinary workshops & farmers markets.

Project Focus:

Social Welfare programme: Transitional housing & support services.

Client:

Tshwane Leadership Foundation partnered with:
City of Tshwane Department of Social Development
University of Pretoria Health Sciences Faculty, Family Medicine Department
Melgisedek Community Outreach

Main question:

How does the informal appropriation by occupants of the Melgisedek site affect the identity of place, and how can this guide the (re)activation, (re)integration and response to the site and its heritage buildings?



ABSTRACT

The intentions of this dissertation are to investigate the phenomenon of neglected buildings and urban spaces occupied and appropriated by the homeless, and to explore the spatial and design potential that this appropriation provides in the transformation and (re)activation of one such site – Melgisedek, Pretoria. The informal appropriation of neglected buildings is often viewed as causing a loss to heritage and identity (Doron 2000, Grunewald and Breed 2013). However, it is argued that this appropriation adds to the palimpsest of evolving identity and heritage embedded in these sites, which could guide the reimagining of these places as socially inclusive spaces (Dreifuss-Serrano 2020: 597, Shaw and Hudson 2009: 9).

Throughout the dissertation, the author explores two themes: the social condition of homelessness and informal appropriation (the primary focus) and the historical condition of the architectural heritage of the site (the secondary focus). The project attempts to overlap these often disconnected themes in an effort to honour and address both. The proposed intervention of transitional housing within a broader conceptual framework aims to uncover the site's latent potential by navigating the tensions between the social and the historical, permanence and temporality, existing and new, formal and informal, by building on existing activities of appropriation to create new layers of architecture while honouring the existing heritage.

The research on homelessness, case studies of occupied neglected buildings and the analysis of the site, its inhabitants and history guide the development of a multi-layered, incremental site vision with a three-stranded programme. This includes the social welfare programme, the public interface programme and the anchoring link of a communal garden, aimed at incorporating and reinterpreting existing activities of appropriation and addressing the needs of the homeless to reintegrate them into society. The heritage buildings are viewed as permanent anchors and the new additions as a sinew between them, both used to continue the evolving palimpsest of architectural styles and uses on site. A transitional housing development forms the focus for design development, which interweaves permanence, transience, adaptability and flexibility, while reinterpreting the spatial principles of the existing heritage architecture.

Finally, the project is intended to serve as a prototypical exploration of how current complex social issues may be approached in tandem with a respect for existing heritage on other similar sites in South Africa. It also suggests a possible architectural approach to addressing the issue of homelessness, appropriation and [occupied] neglected spaces, which are closely intertwined.

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Fig. 0.2. left: Photograph of furniture belonging to the informal occupants of the old 1927 hostel at Melgisedek, Pretoria (Author 2021).

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To my love, my rock and my number one person, Tom. Thank you for all your love, support and encouragement. For cooking many dinners, staying up late with me on many nights and telling me I'll be okay when the lack of sleep and stress got to me.

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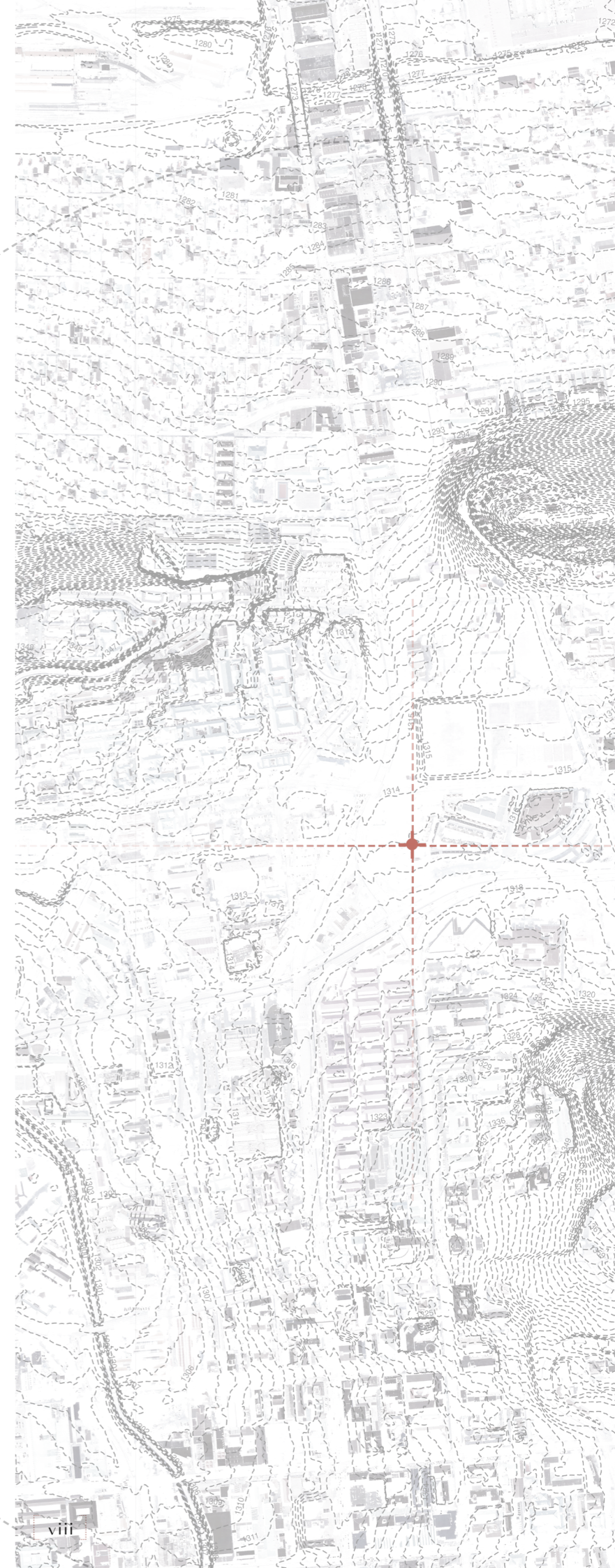


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