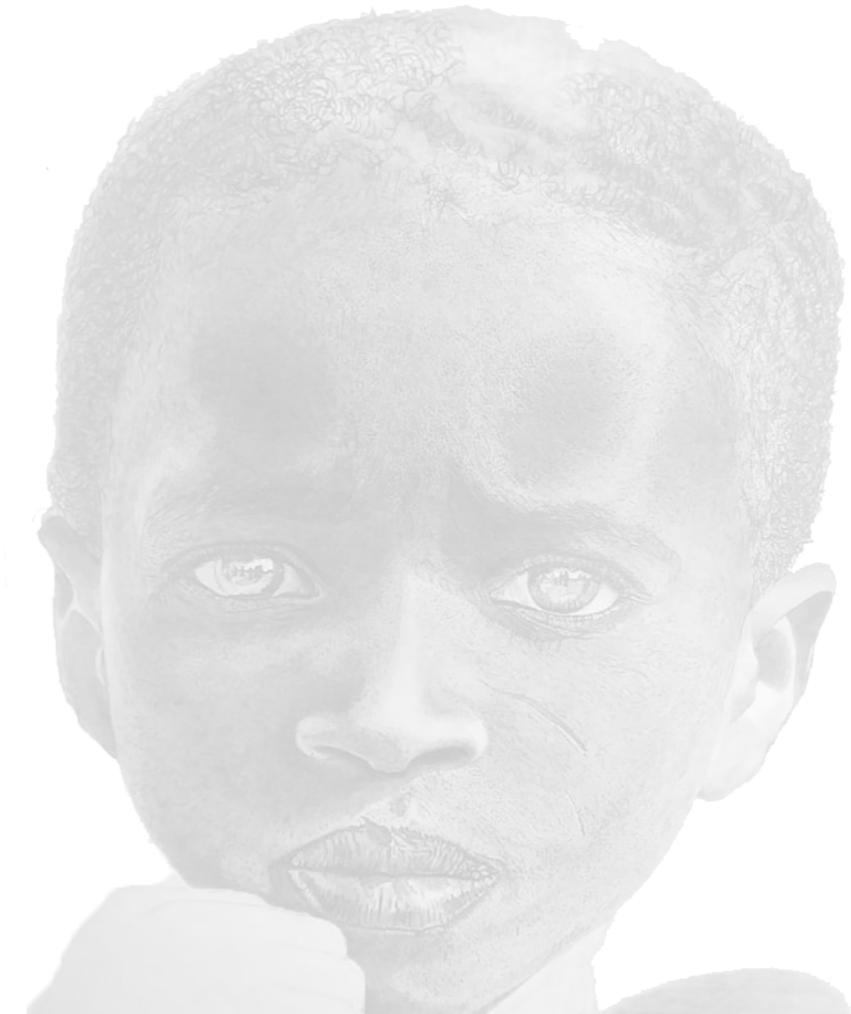


## *Essay 4: Critical Reflection*

*The following sections is about a critical conclusion of the design outcomes, that provide a coherent reflection on the dissertation process while postulating a way forward for the career.*



*Critical thinking (Author, 2021)*

### *4.1.1 Original Normative Position*

As noted previously, this project has been set out to create a sustainable development infrastructure that minimises the use of imported materials and promotes the use of locally available materials. Reflecting on this design approach, the project has demonstrated a possible symbiotic relationship between local vernacular and modern materials. In addition, the exercise of skills-sharing between contractors and locals promoted by this design initiative could demonstrate a more sustainable method in modern construction. While the notion of interfacing permanent and temporary building materials may seem to create the need for reoccurring maintenance in the future, since the local community is directly involved in taking authorship of their hard-earned infrastructure, it is predicted that the responsibility to maintain and preserve said infrastructure will be of priority to them. The 'triple bottom line' demonstrated by Douglas Farr and discussed earlier, therefore, proves to be a more sustainable social, economic, environmental means of creating better livelihoods.

### *4.1.2 Dissertation Foundations*

This dissertation was based on the theoretical premise that agrarian urbanism recognises, promotes, and preserves individualism. The study, thus, attempted to argue for a more focussed developmental approach in a rural setting in order to demonstrate sustainable and individualistic improvement of the area, rather than further promote reliance on centralised governments. With the increase in job insecurities and the persistent lockdown threats posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, many are beginning to weigh the benefits of investing more in pastoral areas versus staying in cities (Free-ar et al., 2021, p. 1). This presented project has, therefore, focussed on a rural development framework in an attempt to create a more resilient socio-economic approach.

### *4.1.3 Research Explorations*

Several research explorations were conducted using a mixed-methods approach. Therefore, the results presented in this study demonstrate scientific assurance that the manifestation of this project could better create economically viable environments for the Mpaka community.

### *4.1.4 Design Iterations and Conclusions*

The development framework approach adopted in this study presents a significant opportunity to demonstrate, functionally, the urban transect. However, the challenge faced throughout the iteration process relates to how best to contextualise the design. To ad-

dress this issue, and in order to avoid creating a project that has elements of universalism, which takes away the relevance and sense of identity for the community in question, an iteration process of using modern tectonic and stereotomic vernacular systems has been implemented. In addition, the community itself has been included and, thus, forms an integral part of the project's process to produce a more locally relevant project.

### *4.1.5 Technology Iterations and Conclusions*

Indigenous technical skill in working with vernacular materials appears to be slowly disappearing (Alrashed, Asif, & Burek, 2017, p. 19). This presented project has, therefore, attempted to revive these skills and materials. It should be noted that while many technological challenges occur when attempting to integrate modern materials and indigenous building systems, the presented aspects reveal a worthwhile exercise in finding new ways of preserving local vernacular by integrating them with contemporary architecture.

### *4.1.6 Extension: What this Dissertation Could Mean for a Career in Architecture*

This study attempted to challenge the perception that vernacular architecture is unsustainable (i.e., that it includes many temporal aspects) while modern architecture appears to be more sustainable through its provision of more permanent architectural solutions. Specifically, this notion has been challenged by embracing both vernacular and modern aspects in a bid to create a longer-lasting solution than either approach could demonstrate alone.

Attempts at densifying urban centres in order to create resilient cities tends to be met with various gentrification-related challenges. Since 70% of the population of Eswatini lives in rural areas, a focussed development framework in a pastoral setting that uses agrarian urbanism demonstrates a more sensible solution.

### *4.2 Outcome: Reflections on the Dissertation and Architectural Process*

The initial project inception was based on the idea that the presented project holds the potential to manifest in real life. As a result, this approach brought about a constructive challenge in assuring that the design development process was conducted in a realistic and sensitive manner. This presented project also demonstrates how academic principles can be applied in real-life situations. Overall, it is possible to confirm that this exercise provides a significant extension into future architectural endeavours and sets up the necessary skills for such a career.