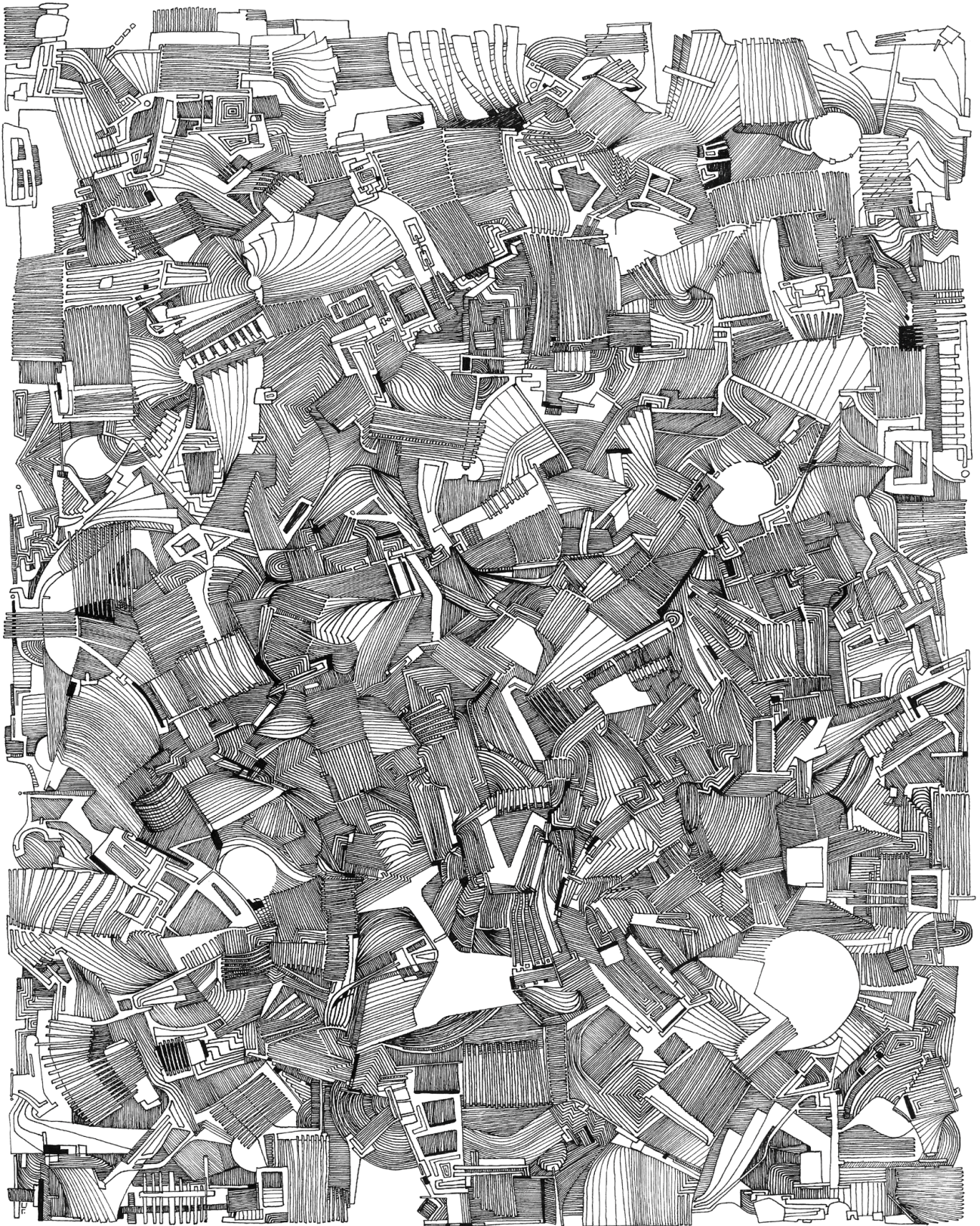# Chapter 4

Reflection and conclusion

19. Reviewing initial intention

The initial intention of the project was to secure the significance of an iron age ruin site and protect it from sand mining and suburban encroachment, as described in the research question:

How can the integration of iron age ruin landscapes with developing cityscapes be shaped in a way so as to encourage their sensitive occupation, programmatic longevity and communal value, in turn, extending the cultural significance of such sites into the future?

Issues at four scales brought to the fore questions about the meaning and relevance of iron age ruin in South Africa. How can these perceptions of significance be used to supplement a cohesive South African cultural identity (South African department of arts and culture, 2009) through their integration into suburban and urban built fabric? The concept of a living heritage framework within which a heritage conservation project in Africa (Baillie, 2020) could be generated was proposed. This paradigm set the stage for the creation of a heritage project with longevity and cultural agency. More traditional heritage programmes such as the museum, interpretation centre and the archaic cultural village, were critiqued and used to inspire and inform a new programme for the site. The resultant programmes addressed ideas of heritage production, in a context where heritage extraction is the go-to process. Ruins were given the role of tectonic landscapes (Hartoonian, 2012) with connections to the past and inspirers of the future ((Coppolino, n.d.) & (Jordaan & Raman, 2014)) shaped the programmatic and architectural intention of this heritage scheme. This project attempts to counteract previous mindsets established by international heritage boards, in favour of exploring African possibilities for heritage conservation. Strict preservation seems to be an outdated approach and more value can be generated if heritage resources are imbedded into ongoing contemporary practices.

20. Measuring the product against the intention

On a technical scale, the question of interface was raised. This project focused on creating a haptic experience with the landscape and the intangible effects of culture upon it. After an investigation into both the intangible contexts of broader heritage paradigms and cultures associated with the site, initial concept programmes were given form. Concept found footing in the acclimatisation of the plan concepts to suit the physical conditions of the site. The resultant buildings aim to facilitate various heritage production programmes around and within the ruin landscape as a means of framing the heritage fabric and giving it a chance for continued significance.

As stated in the opening introduction to this project, the author's normative stance relies on an autonomous conception of architecture that is projected onto site and adapted to find a sense of situationism. A risk in this approach is the reliance on projectivity to assume certain consequences of programme and architecture. The programmes selected for the heritage framework at the site were done so from a critical perspective, yet there may be the potential for alternative programmes that could either replace or supplement the proposed set. Another possibility that might be to the detriment of this project when considering the reality of practice is financial incentive. This project exists in the theoretical realm (as is the nature of a scheme intended for academic purposes) and while it tries to rely on concrete information and rational design to argue for its success, it is an ambitious scheme. A reduction in scale and complexity might be necessary were such a project practically suggested. Reality and academia should reliably work hand-in-hand (Plowright, 2009) but compromise is the only way to overcome financial and political confrontations. Such a scale reduction could be considered in conjunction with alternate sites for such a scheme. Further research and exploration could look into translating this project framework to urban block-type sites, or possibly city-wide sites that stretch to multiple blocks. Other research that could be pursued after this project includes deeper investigation into the processes of material cultivation and production and their associated programmes.

21. Considering what this project means for the author's future

Part of this reflective section is a consideration of the author's future. I believe that this project, founded on my own interest in heritage as an informant to architecture as well as a connected part of it, has yielded a better understanding of the required sensitivity heritage projects require. It is my hope that once I enter practice, I will be able to use the understanding context to help me root architectural concepts in their situation- both physically and culturally. I stand strong in the idea that heritage can drive innovation even while it is protected from decay. Further affirmed by this project as well is my belief that change does not automatically imply loss or destruction, but continuation. A memorial that is taken down, repositioned or altered does not imply a loss of history or a destruction of memory, it implies that the perception of it has shifted to match what is contemporarily relevant (Young, 1994). Just so, the future will yield alternatives that may contradict any contemporary paradigm. Rather than resist, a process of critical collaboration seems pertinent. I believe this applies to any piece of the built environment. If a critical approach to heritage integration can be conceptualised and (crucially) combined with a respect for context and consequence then a conservation scheme that is continuously reflective and pertinent can be installed.