1. project description

1.1 BACKGROUND TO STUDY

Marabastad was established in 1888 as a government-controlled 'location', named after Chief Maraba, a translator for the landdrost of Pretoria. As a place providing accommodation for Africans, Coloureds and Indians, it developed into a community rich in cultural diversity (Friedman, 1990:25-37). After the introduction of the Group Areas Act in 1950 (Joyce, 1989:248), the different racial groups resident in Marabastad were forced to move to respectively allocated locations around Pretoria. Marabastad, on the threshold of Pretoria's city centre, developed into a thoroughfare for commuters who now had to travel from outlying areas to their places of work in the city.

Today, Marabastad is a poor community consisting mainly of commuters, hawkers selling to the commuters, wholesalers selling to the hawkers and other bargain shops. The study is an attempt to facilitate the needs of the part of the community viewed as most exposed to the environment (physically, socially and politically), namely the hawkers. The site chosen for intervention is relatively small, for the reason that success in a context such as Marabastad, is more likely at a small scale than at a larger scale. The design could serve as a pilot project, which if successful, could be a trail-blazer for similar projects and subsequently, through many small projects, a whole area could be rejuvenated. By addressing the needs of the hawkers through the intervention, the potential exists for the other groups in the Marabastad community to also benefit.

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Fig.1.4 Commuters waiting for bus at 2: 45 a.m. (Badsha, 1989)

Fig.1.5 Black locations in relation to Pretoria (author, 2006)

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The choice of Marabastad as study area was made following an interview with Mr M. Erasmus at Munitoria. Currently, five particular areas in Pretoria are being considered for redevelopment in the Tshwane Inner City Development and Regeneration Strategy (2005). Moreover, Marabastad, as first Black location in the Pretoria area (Friedman, 1994:18), plays an important role in portraying the history of Pretoria. Due to its positioning in the city and its unique culture it poses tourism potential from which the users of Marabastad and greater Pretoria can benefit.

Locations were viewed as temporary lodging during the Apartheid era and this resulted in inadequate provision of basic services in the area. This lead to neglect of the overall environment – Marabastad is a good example of such neglect (Friedman, 1994:109). In our country's recent democratic history, many attempts are being made to repair the damage inflicted on the cities' environment by Apartheid's urban policies. One such example is the Thokoza Dam, Moroka Park project in Soweto. The park is part of a linked system of open spaces in Soweto that form part of the Mofolo-Moroka Open Space Development Framework (March 2000) prepared by Newtown Landscape Architects. The development of the open spaces serves to conserve the ecological value of the spaces as well as allowing community use of the parks. In close collaboration with the surrounding community, a wasted open area was transformed into a useful community park (Darroll, 2002:186,187). The attempts of improving areas affected by the Apartheid policies are often addressed by urban development frameworks. Development frameworks consist of proposals for large scale interventions and long term visions of what places might become. Examples of aspects addressed by the current development framework for Marabastad (Integrated Urban Design Framework for Marabastad, 2002) include proposals for land considered for restitution, restructuring the layout of sites, the reintegration of Marabastad into the rest of the inner city of Pretoria and function rezoning in and around the area of Marabastad – these examples clearly delineate the scale of development planned for the area. Evidently, the scale of these aspects makes for long term planning and intervention (roughly 10 to 20 years). It is thus the temporal and spatial scale of development frameworks and their implications that are under consideration.

As a result of the long term view of development frameworks, the matter at hand is overlooked and focus on the present needs of poor communities is often lost. The tendency to generalise the conditions and needs of poor communities leads to inappropriate development. Furthermore, the broad scale view of development frameworks also tends to ignore the local culture inherent in communities ('culture' implying the social and spatial patterns of communities) – also leading to inappropriate development that is to the detriment, rather than the upliftment of communities. In these generalisations, poor communities are characterised as disorganised and unplanned, while in reality there is a tremendous amount of social & spatial organisation in such communities, which a person from the outside would have difficulty noticing, let alone understand (Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1989:40). The importance of this structure in the community is underestimated by government actions, in the case of evictions, as stated by Hardoy et al (1989:23,38), but also in the execution of frameworks in poor communities. The network of family, friends and contacts that co-community members establish is an extremely important support system (i.e. finding jobs, financial support) which the implementation of a development framework might completely shatter without proper involvement of the community. Both the present conditions and local culture of a community considered for development need to be fully comprehended. The success of such a project lies in comprehensive communication and coordination between the developers and the community role players.

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Fig.1.6 Thokosa Dam Moroka
Park Precinct in Soweto - an
example of township upgrad-
ing (Darroll, 2002).

 Most frameworks' *"literature…about…development… is characterized by a considerable optimism that governments could create the conditions for 'take-off' and then self-sustaining economic growth so resources should be concentrated on removing key bottlenecks. The rapidly growing illegal settlements were often regarded as a transitory phenomenon which would soon disappear as the economy developed"* (Hardoy et al, 1989:42-44). The importance of development frameworks for the structured development of cities cannot be underestimated and their vital role in the successful functioning of cities is recognised. But since the spatial scale of development frameworks are from a 'city wide' scale, to the 'local environment' through to the 'intermediate' scale (the scale prior to 'site specific') (Senior & Wood, 1987:35) their vision for the future does not appear to be adequate to address the pressing needs that Marabastad is experiencing at present. The immediate needs of Marabastad include the provision of jobs, better living, working and environmental conditions as well as safety, which could be met by short term projects. All of these needs are also addressed in development frameworks, but on a larger scale which implies implementation in the long term. In the short term, however, the possibility does exist for simple, self-help projects on an individual scale – such as providing temporary jobs and improving working conditions. *"Big projects have little or no appeal for them* [the squatter citizens]. *The city they live and work in is unrelated to the city that the mayors and technocrats want to build. The neighbourhoods of the poor form a city of pragmatists."* (Hardoy et al, 1989:17).
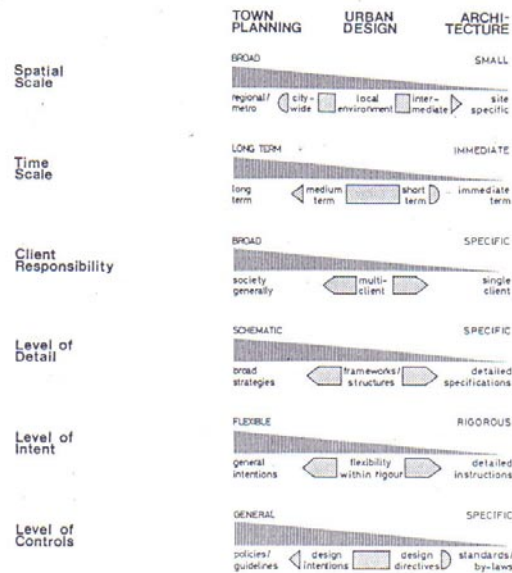
As is stated above, the value and necessity of development frameworks are not discarded – but an interim phase of development is proposed – a phase that has the possibility of operation and use before the ultimate implementation of large scale frameworks – that would enable the immediate needs of the users of Marabastad to be met. It is this need for quicker delivery in poor communities that this project/thesis attempts to address.

1.2 CLIENT

The client for this community based project is the NGO, Pretoria Community Ministries, which has an office situated in the Asiatic Bazaar, Mogul Street, Marabastad.

Fig.1.7 Comparison of different aspects of town planning, urban design and architecture respectively (Senior & Wood, 1987)

1.3 DESIGN PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Senior and Wood (1987:34), in the context of South African cities, a gap was identified between what town planners and architects considered the design spectrum their discipline needed to cover. Their finding was that due to the 'blinkered' work description of each discipline, the public environment was neglected. Urban design as a discipline was a response to this gap. Although a new profession is not suggested, a gap on the temporal, spatial and detail scale is however identified in designing for poor, marginalised communities (such as Marabastad). The gap exists between the current community conditions and the lapse of time until the eventual implementation of development frameworks in the community. Additionally, a gap exists at the spatial and detail scales of development frameworks, since the individual in his/her unique position is largely ignored.

People in marginalised communities such as Marabastad, exhibit specific needs – urgent to the extremely poor – that need immediate addressing.   It is this gap in the design continuum that this study would like to address: alleviating basic needs in the short term. The ultimate design objective is the generation of projects that can be implemented in the very immediate future – short-term, interim, hands-on, self-help, participatory, adjustable, small-scale interventions – from which the community members can optimally and rapidly benefit.

Although the whole of Marabastad is in need of upgrading, there are a number of areas that are comparably worse off than others.   This includes areas where spaces are not ideally suited for their function, areas that pose specific dangers to the people and that display the greatest want concerning the needs of the people in Marabastad – but they also hold significant potential for improving the overall impression of Marabastad when development in the longer term starts taking place.

The aim of the project is thus to find ways of *improving* the conditions of the people using Marabastad in the short term by means of small-scale planning and design that is problem driven (lack of infrastructure, services, shelter, storage, etc.) as opposed to extensive programming and long term *solutions* (Goethert & Hamdi, 1988:26).

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1.3.1 SUB-PROBLEMS

1. Sub-problem 1
What are the specific, immediate physical needs of the people in Marabastad, as a poor
and marginalised community, which are identified through observation in Marabastad and
through research on similar communities?

2. Sub-problem 2
Which 'problem areas' in Marabastad can be used as sites and what are their respectively
identified problems?

3. Sub-problem 3
What type of design project would optimally meet the immediate needs of the community,
while simultaneously ensuring a sense of ownership to the project and provide opportunity
for further spontaneous development?

1.3.2 ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions are accepted for the study:

a) In the case where a site falls in or on the boundary of a heritage site, it will not nullify
the design intervention, but rather enhance it due to the tourism and cultural regeneration
potential a site might have by hosting a historical landmark.
b) Land claims or property rights on the sites to be developed will, for the time being, not
limit what the development on the specific sites might be.
c) Due to the relatively short timeframe in which to gain insight into the very diverse needs
of the community of Marabastad, a number of assumptions concerning their needs had to be
made.

1.3.3 DELIMITATIONS

My study will include:

- only the three specific problem areas discussed in the study, albeit that other similarly
deficient sites exist in Marabastad.

My study will exclude:

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- discussing the whole spectrum of social needs in Marabastad in detail. Mere mention
of them will be made since more detailed discussions can be found in other sources (i.e.
the Integrated Urban Development Framework for Marabastad, proposed by Aziz Tayob
Architects Inc.). Thus, the word 'need'/'needs' will generally signify physical needs, while
otherwise, when referring to social needs, it would be spelt out as such.