

02 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER



Fig. 17: Three spatial dimensions of the site overlaid (Author 2021)

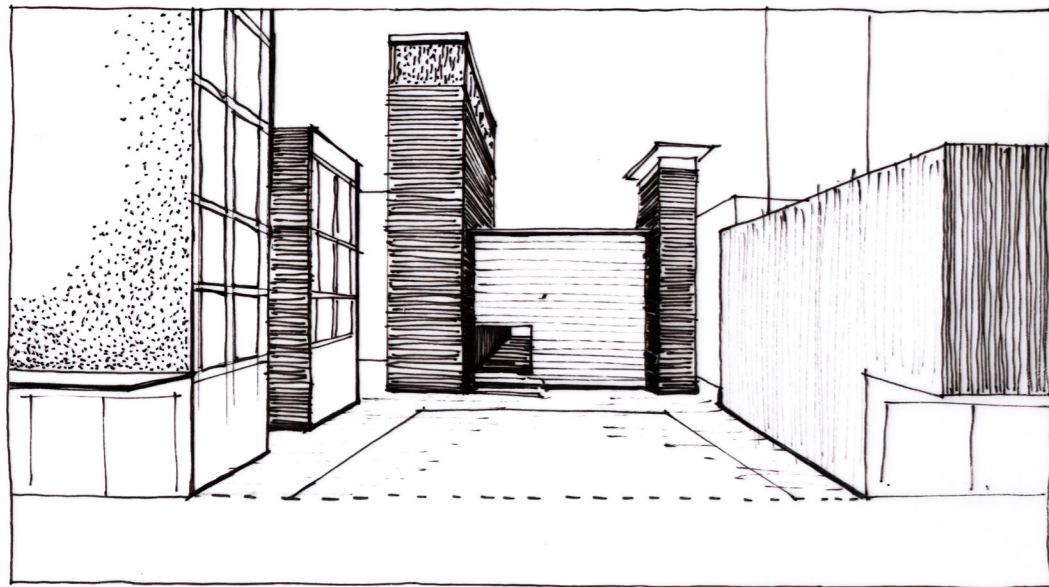


Fig. 18: A reading of the site as conceived space (Author 2021)

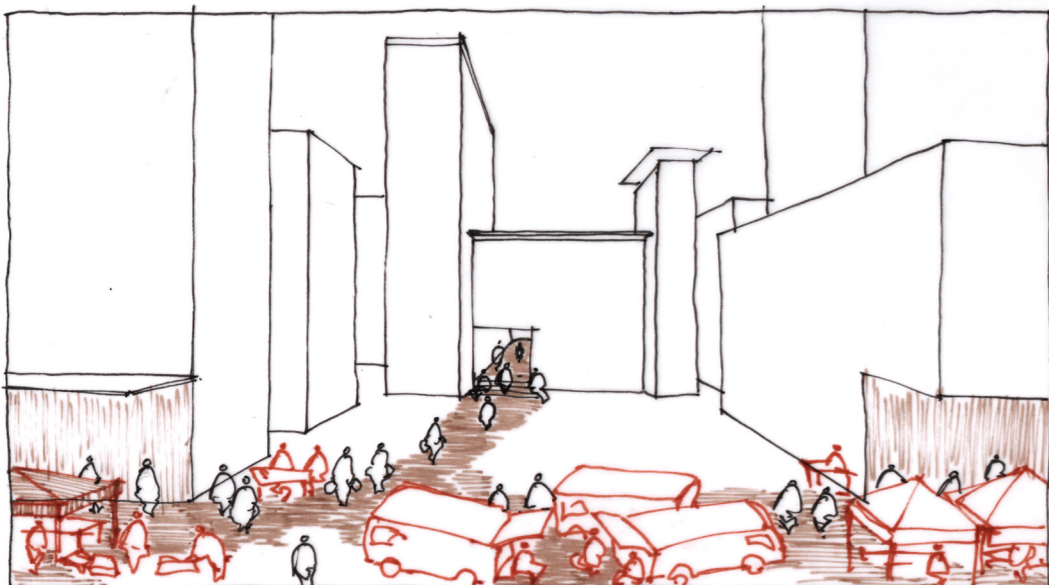


Fig. 19: A reading of the site as perceived space (Author 2021)



Fig. 20: A reading of the site as live space (Author 2021)

The larger intention of this dissertation is to re-conceptualize how urban space is conceived, with greater emphasis placed on the experience and socio- spatial behaviour of the mobile urban dweller. A series of themes have been extracted from the quotidian spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre (1991), which explores a possible mediation between architecture and social practice (Van Rensburg & Da Costa 2008b: 50).

2.1 SOCIAL SPACE

Soja (1985:90) argued that urban space ought to be considered as both the material realisation of social life and the medium through which social relations are generated. Lefebvre (1991: 68-90) argued that space should not be understood as an independent material product in itself, but rather as a series of three interrelated social processes (Schmid 2008: 27-28). Social space is *conceived* through abstract thought, *perceived* through the spatial practices of everyday life and *lived* as an experience through the body (Van Rensburg & Da Costa 2008a: 39). *Conceived space* is the process through which space is imagined, conceptualised, defined, ordered and represented (Schmid 2008: 35-52). *Perceived space* refers to spatial practices and how the activities of everyday life are structured by *conceived space* (Merrifield 1993:524). *Lived space* refers to the dynamic lived experiences of the body in space (Lefebvre 1991:93). Our attachment to place, our spatial behaviour and how space is conceived are interrelated processes.

Lefebvre's (1991) spatial framework is too vague if not applied to the specific realities of a site (Schmid 2008:41). In the inner city of Pretoria, *conceived space* is given priority over the existing spatial practices and lived dimension of space. This imbalance, has created a fractured relationship between how built form is produced, and how space is used and appropriated by users.

2.2 DIALECTIC THINKING

The spatial triad proposed by Lefebvre (1991:68-106) explored the dialectical relationships between the three dimensions of space (conceived, perceived and lived), which have previously been thought of as separate entities in Cartesian thought (Merrifield 1993: 517-518). A dialectic way of thinking implies that social reality can only be understood in relation to its own negation, its opposite and its inherent contradictions (Schmid 2008: 30-33). This is in opposition to analytic thinking, a process through which phenomena are broken into separate parts and logically ordered (Merrifield 1993: 518-520). The reductionist approach of analytic thinking is a manifestation of modern society's desire for clarity and certainty, and our inability to cope with complexity (Sennett 2018:11; Venturi 1966:16).

In the urban condition, space should be explored as relational and be capable of tolerating contradiction. Refuge can therefore not be designed without an understanding of exposure. In this study, a relational approach requires that the concepts of refuge and exposure not only be placed in contrast with one another, but exist within the same space simultaneously.

2.3 PLURAL PERCEPTIONS OF SPACE

The disjunction between the built environment and the mobile dweller's needs indicate a fractured relationship between the object and the subject. The object is prioritised and the subject is made universal and anonymous (de Certeau 1988: 93). Architects must acknowledge and embrace the contradictions between logic and perception, the differences between architectural intention and appropriation, and the unpredictability of a dynamic urban condition (Holl, Pallasmaa, Perez-Gomez 1994:5). Norberg-Schultz (in Nesbitt 1996:429) argued that the meaning of a place will differ, depending on the subject's interpretation, perception, experience and association with space.

Based on observations on site, four types of mobile urban dwellers were identified, each with different needs in terms of refuge and exposure. The theory of 'loose space' (Franck & Steven 2007: 9) will be explored in the design process to challenge the over-determining and prescriptive nature of conceived space. Urban space needs to be loose enough to accommodate different activities, spatial practices and spatial experiences, simultaneously and over time.

2.4 RITUALS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Sennett (1990) argued that the way in which we use and appropriate space is more representational of our identity and attachment to place than any visual or formal representation. The form and aesthetic-driven approach to space making in the city of Pretoria should be replaced with activity-driven solutions that celebrate the rituals of everyday life (Van Rensburg & Da Costa 2008a: 34). A process through which space can actively reproduce itself through event, experiences and everyday activities.

The shift in priority towards spatial practices rather than conceived space, require new methods of urban analysis to understand the existing socio-spatial relationships in the city (Van Rensburg & Da Costa 2008b: 52). The process of 'rhythmanalysis' (Lefebvre 1992) will be used as a method to investigate everyday urban life in terms of cyclical and linear rhythms (Meyer 2008:148).

2.5 CONSTRUCTING THE SITE

When the city is read as a whole, the complexity of the urban condition is overwhelming and illegible. Andrea Khan (1995:199-200) argues that the urban condition should not be analysed through a process where complexity is reduced and divided into separate layers, in an attempt to produce a clear, objective and coherent image of place. Conventional site analysis gives precedence to that which is visible, clearly defined and easily understood.

The site should be constructed rather than analysed (Kahn 1995:201). Constructing the site is a subjective process of extracting place-specific qualities on multiple scales and from multiple perspectives to construct a new version of the site (Kahn 1995:201).

The selected site was 'constructed' through the lens of the mobile urban dweller. Therefore, it is only one version of the site.

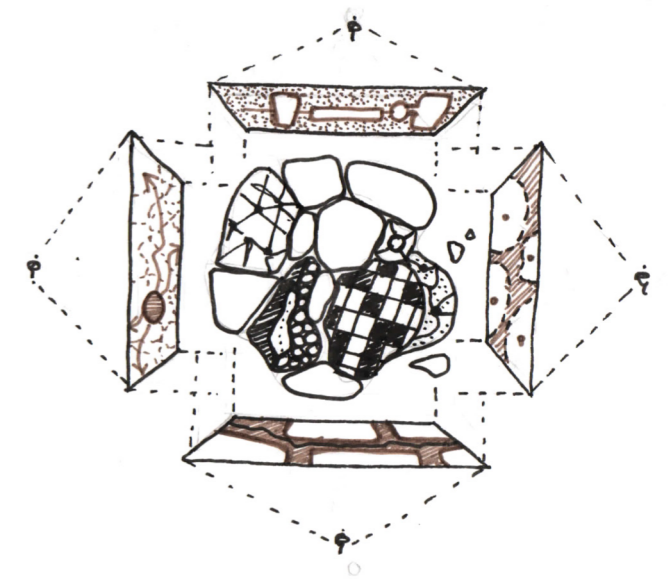


Fig. 21: Constructing the site from multiple perspectives (Author 2021)