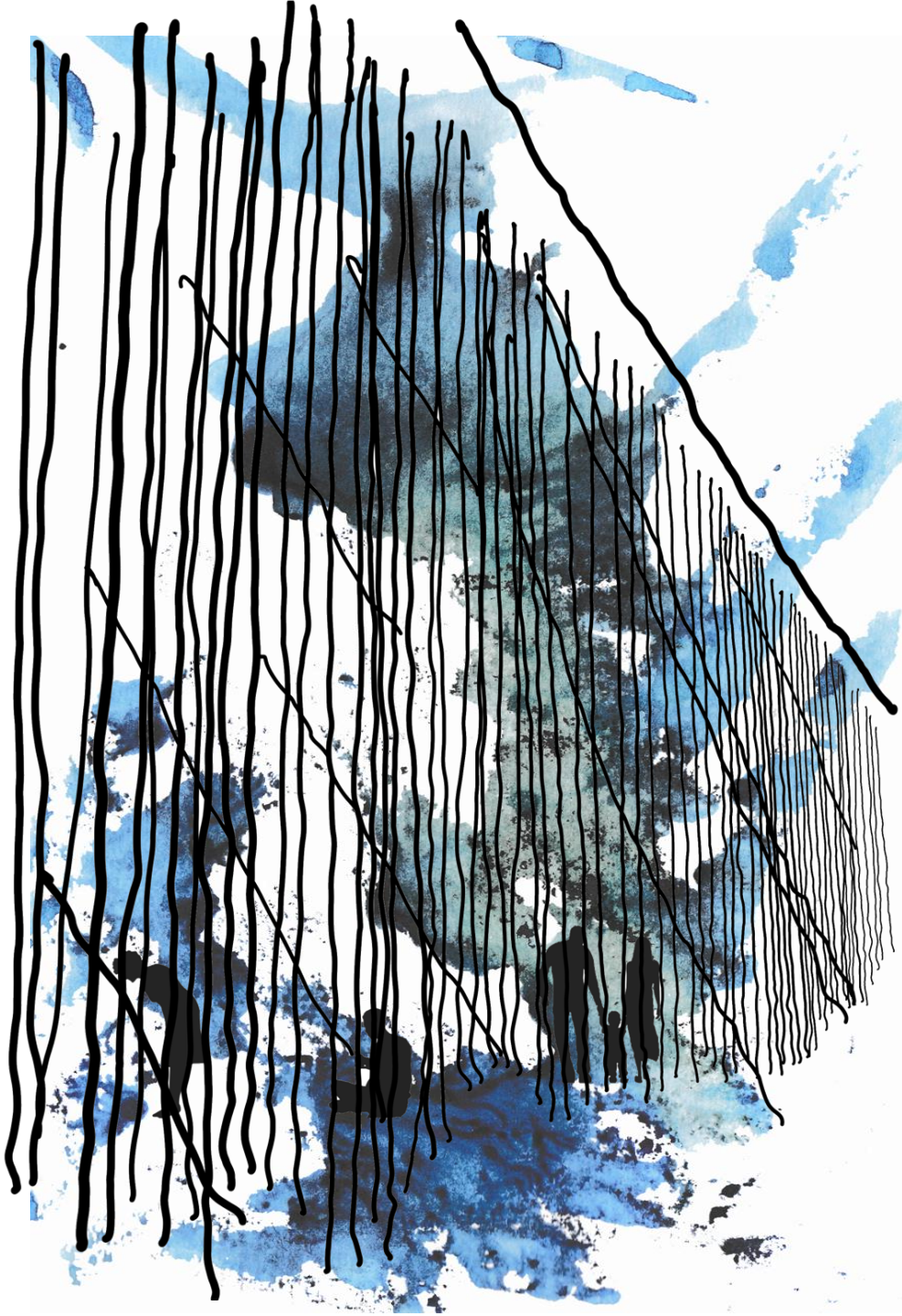


# The City, The Body and The Mind

Interwoven Symbiosis of Nature, People and Architecture



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## **Thesis Document**

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# Abstract



**Figure 01:** Man reaching to something - (Author, 2022, drawing)

“We are our choices.” This interpretation of the famous saying by the 20th-century existentialist and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre when he claimed that “existence precedes essence” (Sartre, 38) is one of the often discussed positions towards definition of being. This leads to an understanding that the impression of who we are is defined by the choices that we make daily; these conscious and subconscious choices have an impression on our personality, perceptions, lifestyle, and feelings, conceiving what we can transcend. Mostly our identity is perceived through how we look like and where we come from, commonly through the way we look and live.

Beyond having an impression on identity, architecture and buildings share a symbiotic relationship in form of providing shelter to the human body. This thesis explores enhancing social fabric through the exploration of the interwoven symbiotic tectonics of the community’s culture, their identity and architecture; guided by the understanding of emplaced embodied care.

The thesis is formulated as architectural investigations dedicated to exploring roles of architecture in nurturing, sheltering, and reflecting the identity of the communities. Thus, the approach is to challenge how buildings combine the community’s customs, traditions and needs with architectural work; leading to the argument that, such initiatives have the common purpose of encouraging the community to have an impact on their built environment and the society and ultimately enhancing social fabric.

Even though a synthesis of theory, context, brief and technology this dissertation will expand on the field of architecture through critical reinterpretation of the community’s culture and rituals to reimagine an appropriate platform that exhibit the concepts of constructed imagery, personal environment, and social communication in the form of a **Iziko Community Life Centre** dedicated for

Sustainable Building Technologies in disaster relief and emergency response in the disaster prone informal community of Imizamo Yethu, Cape Town

I am passionate about people, especially those in communities. I believe there is a need to attend to strong social needs with very practical and non-complex architectural solutions.

This thesis presents a platform where I will able to build on my interest in the continued debate on how to make urban environments more equitable and inclusive through the adaptation and reimagination of both public and private spaces. This also aligns with my further personal focus which involves exploring strategies to implementing realistic and progressive solutions to the challenges of environmental and social sustainability and building technologies.

I feel the need to practice in authentic, inclusive architecture to assist to upgrade and integrate existing communities while protecting and preserving their identities and culture. My focus is to navigate the complex structures set up in these communities with ultimately focusing in community architecture and the impact it has on the daily living of the general population of South Africa.

# Part 1: Grounding



**Figure 2:** Abstract Spatial flow (Author, 2022, drawing)

## Introduction

The disastrous effects of natural and man-made disasters have been well researched in relation to varying contexts and mitigating measures together with strategies developed towards managing the impact of these events. Much of the research and investigations in this regard in the developing world has been based on the formal communities which are well established. This however isolates the communities and context of the development of most South African communities which are characterised with informal structures and undefined infrastructure.

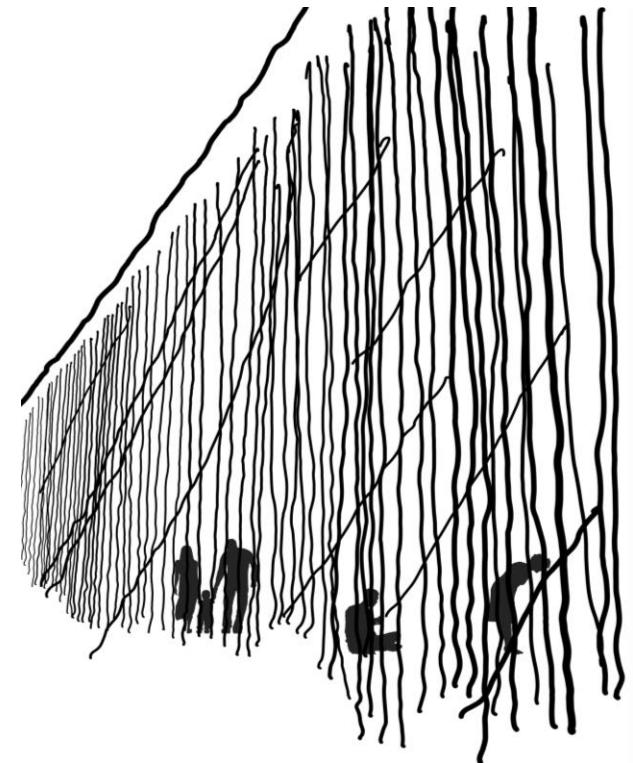
Disasters affect informal settlements differently, mostly leaving many residents without places to live in. Cape Town has recently experienced an increase in devastating fires which have been well publicised. These unfortunate events have exposed the lack of planning and preparedness for such disasters in informal structures of South Africa. Adequate planning that includes the participation of the communities has the ability to provide strategic solutions in reducing vulnerability of communities. This thesis is therefore focused on increasing the community's participation in the planning for disasters through investigating alternative robust building technologies which can be adopted by the community.

The spatial and socioeconomic effects of fires in Imizamo Yethu always leaves this community vulnerable to displacements and diminished means for livelihoods. Due to the uncontrolled, sprawling development patterns basic services such as lack provision of running water, sanitation and access for firefighting means has exposed this community to limited resilience to fire risks.

Even though a synthesis of theory, context, brief and technology this dissertation will expand on the field of architecture through critical reinterpretation of the community's culture and rituals to reimagine an appropriate platform that exhibit the concepts of constructed imagery, personal environment, and social communication the form of a **Iziko Community Life Centre** dedicated for Sustainable Building Technologies in disaster relief and emergency response

To achieve an architectural intervention that responds to the problems there is a need to understand the being and flesh in relation to spaces; to understand that space is the mediator of the human body and mental state. Qualities of physical space, our behaviour and mental tuning, are interrelated when designing physical spaces. (Pallasmaa, 2014, 10:54, video).

Understanding the Interwoven Symbiosis of Nature, People and Architecture is aimed at assisting in the translation of the imaginative-physical-cultural realm onto a poetic and appropriate physical reality that priorities the human body. By understanding the body, it is possible to conceive spaces that would not only resonate, but also house and shelter parts of the community's culture and identity.



**Figure 3:** Spatial settings that evoke embodied experiences (Author, 2022, drawing)

## 1.2. Theoretical Stance.

The theory stance is intended to express my enthusiasm for communities, culture and identity through understanding of how the human body engages with surroundings as guided by work of Merleau-Ponty. The theory aims to convey the flowery, and poetical philosophical writings and ideas of Merleau-Ponty's and Christian Norberg-Schulz's discourse to formulate a design tool and stance for a hypothetical response to be applied on the design.

## 1.3. Research Question.

With the symbiotic approach in mind, the intention is to, design a platform that would not only resonate, but also house and shelter the community's culture and identity.

The research question for the dissertation is: How can the exploration of the interwoven Symbiosis of Nature, People and Architecture enhance social identity in the community of Imizamo Yethu.

## 1.4. Site

The proposed project is situated in the Cape Town informal settlement of Imizamo Yethu, South Africa. The site is located in Hout Bay, along the slopes of . The cultural diversity is evident in the urban morphology on Imizamo Yethu through the appropriation of spaces and situations by the community and sometimes through political gestures. Understanding the dynamic of Imizamo Yethu provides a reference point for reimagination of spatial settings through the reinterpretation of the city's narratives and processes.

## 1.5. Brief

The proposed intervention is a 'Iziko' Community Life Centre for Sustainable Building Technologies supported and funded by Gift of the Givers Foundation who are at the forefront in the provision of disaster relief and emergency response to vulnerable communities throughout the world.

As part of Gift of the Givers Foundation's sustainable communities programme they have earmarked and prioritised Imizamo Yethu as a potential experiential ground for investigating progressive solutions towards educating communities in better building methodologies to avert effects of fire disasters.

Cities are a reflection of our interrelations and engagements with each other. The cultural diversity is evident in the urban morphology through the appropriation of spaces and situations by artists and designers and sometimes through political gestures. Understanding the dynamic of cities provides a reference point for reimagination of spatial settings through the reinterpretation of the city's narratives and processes.

This contextual analysis is aimed at assisting in the translation of the imaginative-physical-cultural realm onto a poetic and appropriate physical reality that prioritises the human body.

Contextual analysis is a critical part of the planning and design process. The proposed intervention will be influenced by the conditions of the site and will have an impact on its context.

This part forms a foundation for the understanding of the site, its uses and the community in guiding the design of a Iziko Community Life Centre dedicated for Sustainable Building Technologies in disaster relief and emergency response.



**Figure 4:** Proposed Site (S Perold, 2021, photo)



**Figure 5:** Proposed Site (Author, 2022, photo)

# Places in Imizamo Yethu



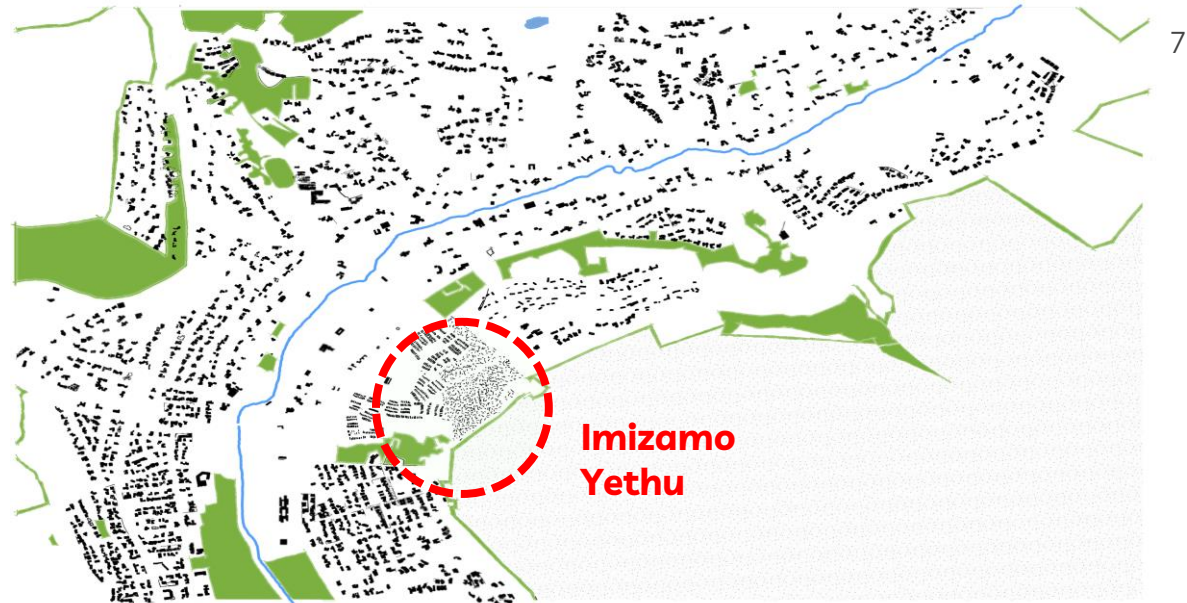
Figure 6-9: Site pictures of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, photo)

## Site Analysis

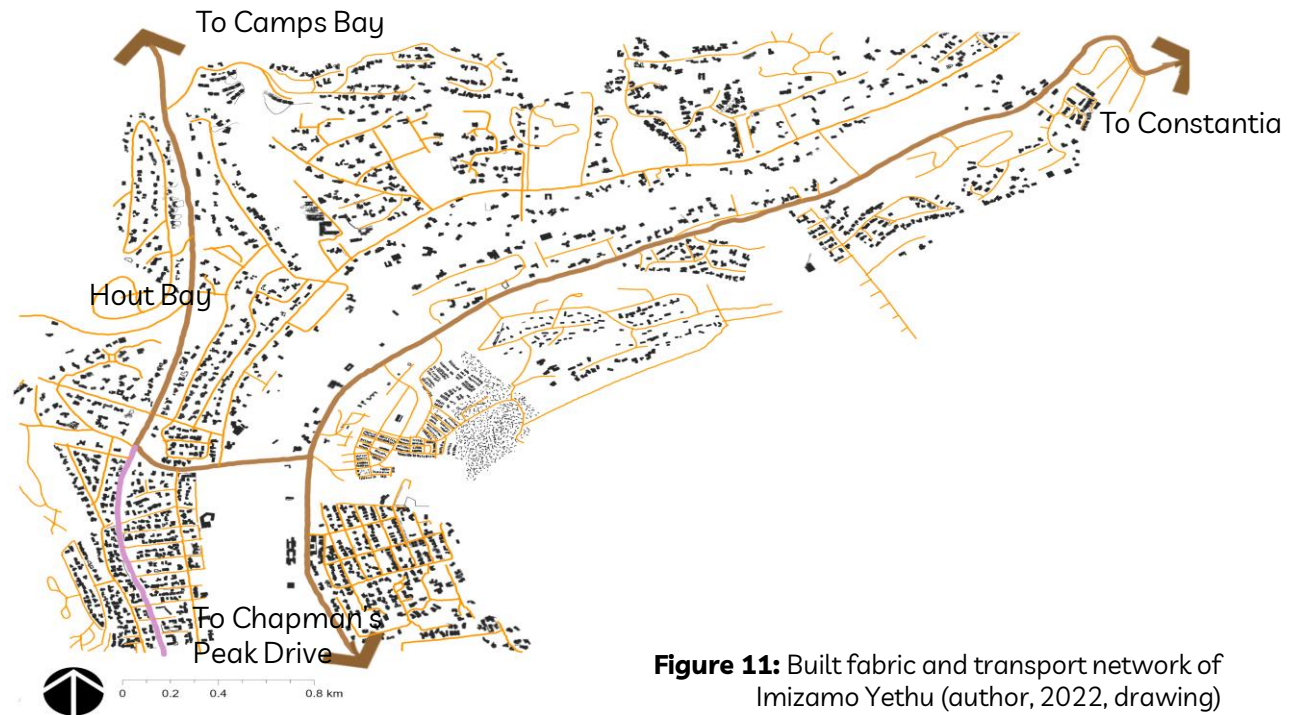
Imizamo Yethu was chosen following the determination of the programme and setting of design drivers. The main design drivers from the theory and technology studies have been extracted and included as tools to assist in guiding the design and choice of site.

Imizamo Yethu has the potential for creation of constructed imagery, personal environment, and social communication through the appropriate architectural response.

In pursuit of architecture that speaks to genius loci and human identity of a place, the small scale and properly defined spatial boundaries of Imizamo Yethu lends itself to be the ideal place for such investigations. Physical indicators related the ground or earth and perpetual indicators will be analysed.



**Figure 10:** Built fabric and green spaces of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, drawing)

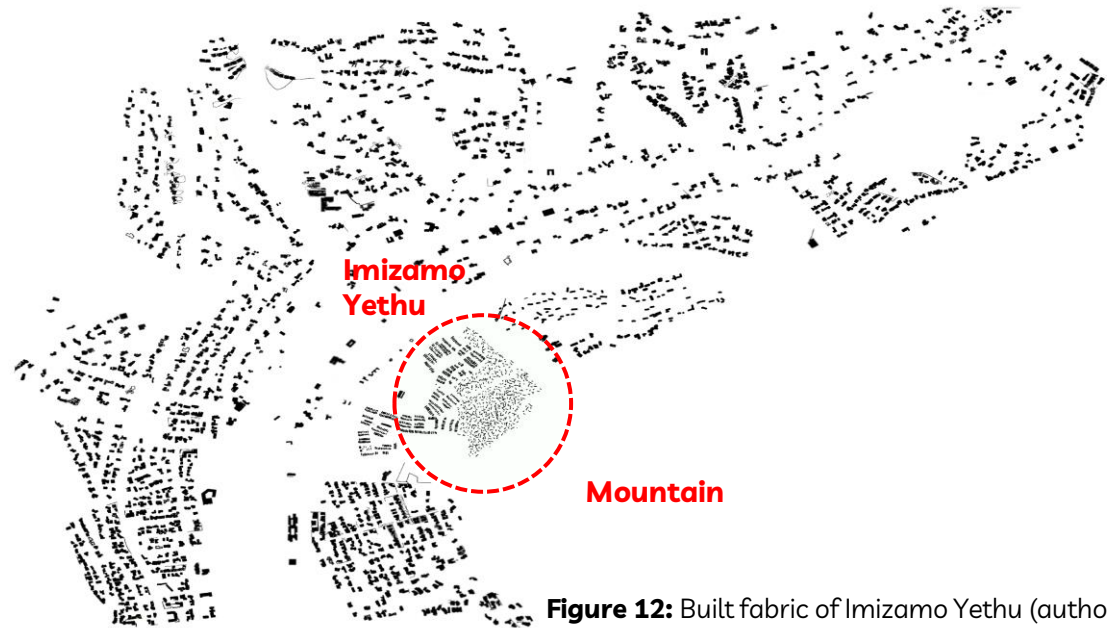


**Figure 11:** Built fabric and transport network of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, drawing)

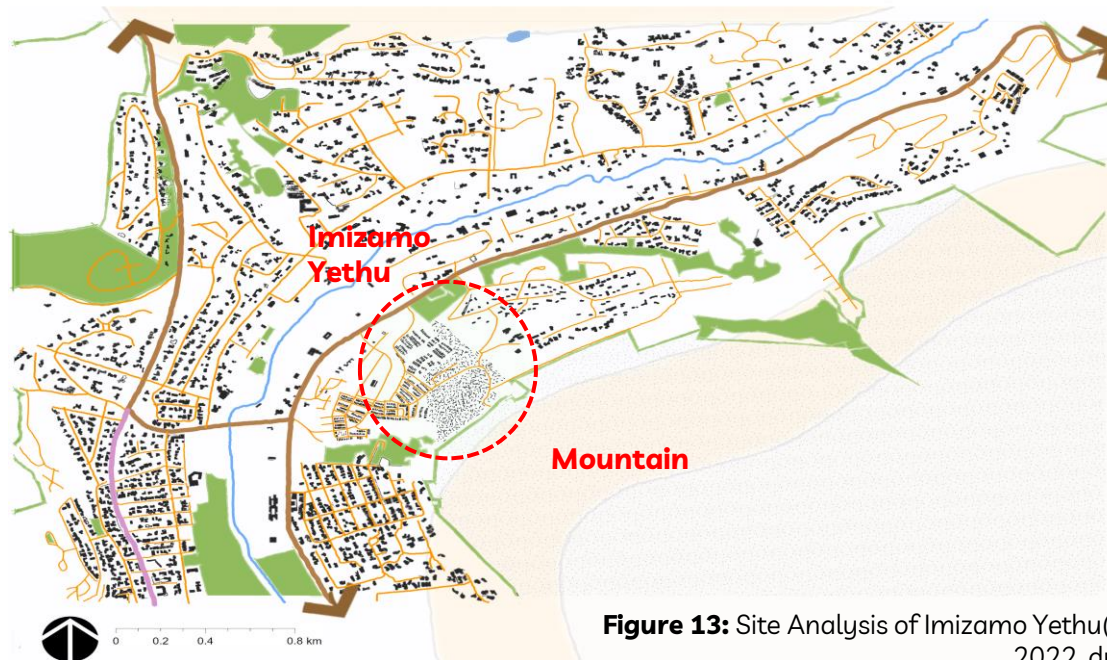
## Site Analysis

The following indicators have been applied in the context and choosing of site:

1. Better value: The value of the land may be increased by identifying its assets and possibilities.
2. Better environmental sustainability – Climate, orientation, and layout must all be considered early on in order to achieve environmental sustainability.
3. Better connectivity – Opportunities for well-planned routes, access to public transportation, and safe and pleasurable walking and cycling contribute to more sustainable communities.
4. Better accessibility – early decisions are made to ensure that the development is accessible to all
5. Better health and well- Decisions are made early on to guarantee that the development is accessible to everybody.
6. Better sense of place – making the most use of existing features to offer the development a distinct personality
7. Better cost effectiveness - Avoid abortive effort and the costs associated with adjusting to limits later in the process.
8. Better security - Responding to the context of the site will aid in the creation of a more secure development. (Welsh Government, 2016)



**Figure 12:** Built fabric of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, drawing)



**Figure 13:** Site Analysis of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, drawing)

## The problems of Fire

The residents of Imizamo Yethu, in Hout Bay, Cape Town, like most residents of informal settlements in South Africa live in abject poverty and unconducive environments leaving them vulnerable to environmental disasters, which include fire.

In addition to poverty, Imizamo Yethu is characterized by inadequate formal planning, shortage of basic services, housing and infrastructure often leaving desperate residents resorting to self-constructed shacks. The materials used in building these shacks is vulnerable to fire and the unregulated positioning of these structures promote easy spread of fires while hindering access to fire fighting.

*An informal settlement (IS) is a densely populated area of housing that has little to no legal status or regulation. The settlements arise as a result of housing needs for low-income residents or migrant workers. Typically, the homes are quickly assembled on any plot of available land, using materials that are donated or can be easily acquired. Globally, the number of people living in IS ranges from 200 million to 1 billion [Walls, et al., 2020] [United Nations, n.d.]. In South Africa, people in IS households comprise between 18% to 33% of the total population. Projections predict that up to 3 billion people will live in IS by 2030 [United Nations, n.d.].*



**Figure 14:** Drone view of homes bringing in Imizamo Yethu (Harrison, 2017, online)



**Figure 15:** Drone view of homes bringing in Imizamo Yethu (Harrison, 2017, online)

## The problems

Even though the purpose of this investigation is not to conduct exhaustive investigations into the effects of fire; it is mainly concerned with the architectural contribution towards fire disaster relief and emergency response. As such a Iziko Community Life Centre dedicated for Sustainable Building Technologies in disaster relief and emergency response is being proposed to address among others the problems identified in Imizamo Yethu noted below:

1. Lack of platforms for teaching the community about sustainable building methods related to fire.
2. Lack of dedicated facilities and services to be utilised in disaster relief and emergency response.
3. Minimal facilities available for use by the community for informal businesses. This is evident along Nelson Mandela street where informal markets do not have stalls or tables to display goods.
4. Lack of after school activities for school children with most children roaming the streets.
5. The existing community hall is depilated and in need of replacement.
6. Diminishing identity of Imizamo Yethu.



**Figure 16:** Forced evacuations in Imizamo Yethu (Harrison, 2017, online)(Author, 2022, drawing)



**Figure 17:** Forced evacuations in Imizamo Yethu (Harrison, 2017, online)(Author, 2022, drawing)

## Site Analysis

The chosen site for the proposed is Madiba Square. This site was previously super blocked by the City of Cape Town for housing development. In 2017 the site was affected by a large fire and is currently vacant and being utilised by taxis. The site is only accessed through Mandela Road. The site topography has a level difference of over eight metres however through the preparation of the site by the City of Cape Town, the site has been levelled. For the purposes of this thesis it is assumed that the site has been serviced with domestic water, stormwater, electricity and sewer connections available.

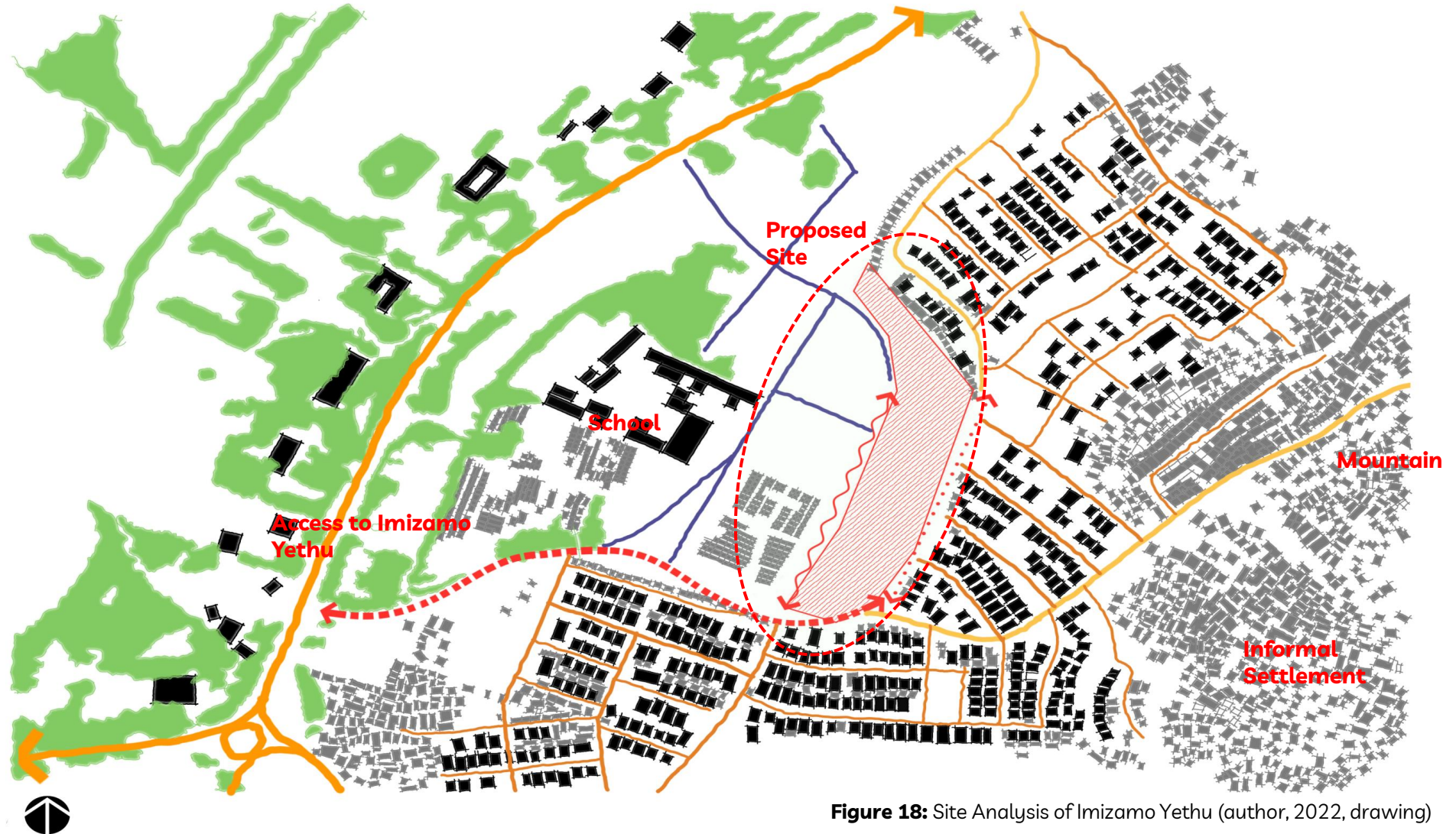


Figure 18: Site Analysis of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, drawing)



Figure 19-22: Site pictures of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, photo)

# Part 2: Investigations

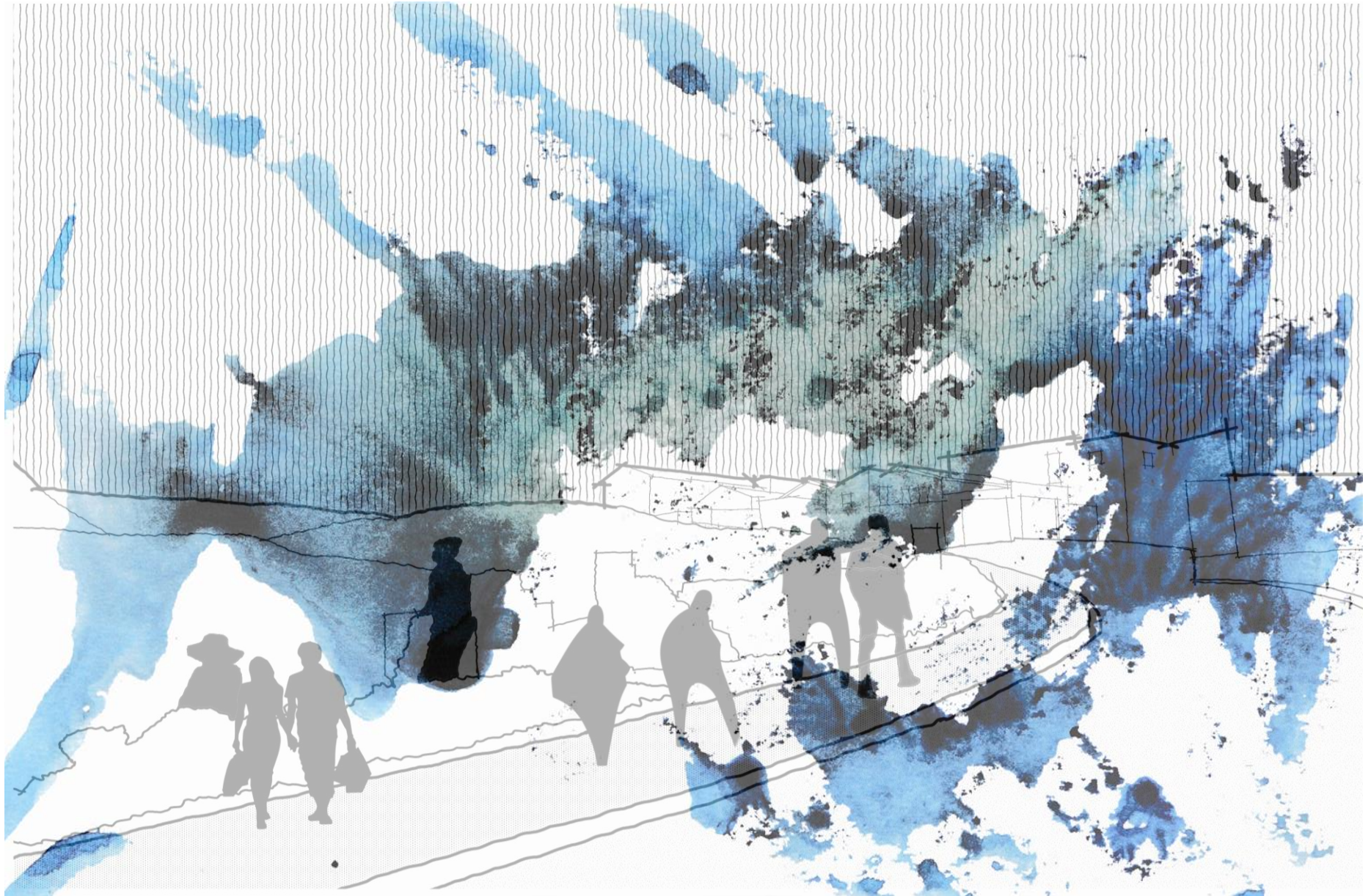


Figure 23 : Spatial settings in Imizamo Yethu (Author, 2022, drawing)

## Nature, People and Architecture

Identity, silhouette, image, community, design, model, materiality, construction, sculpture, tissue, model. These convergent descriptions and practices of community's culture, their identity and architecture provide knowledge into the interwoven landscape and images of the modern city.

Both practices are different in scale, with the attempt to preserve culture and identity intangible, delicate, and pliable while architectural design being rigid, slow, and permanent. However, both practices are predominantly rooted in the creation of spatial settings that highlight our conception of 'time, space, form, fit, interactivity, and mobility' (Crewe, 2009:2039.)

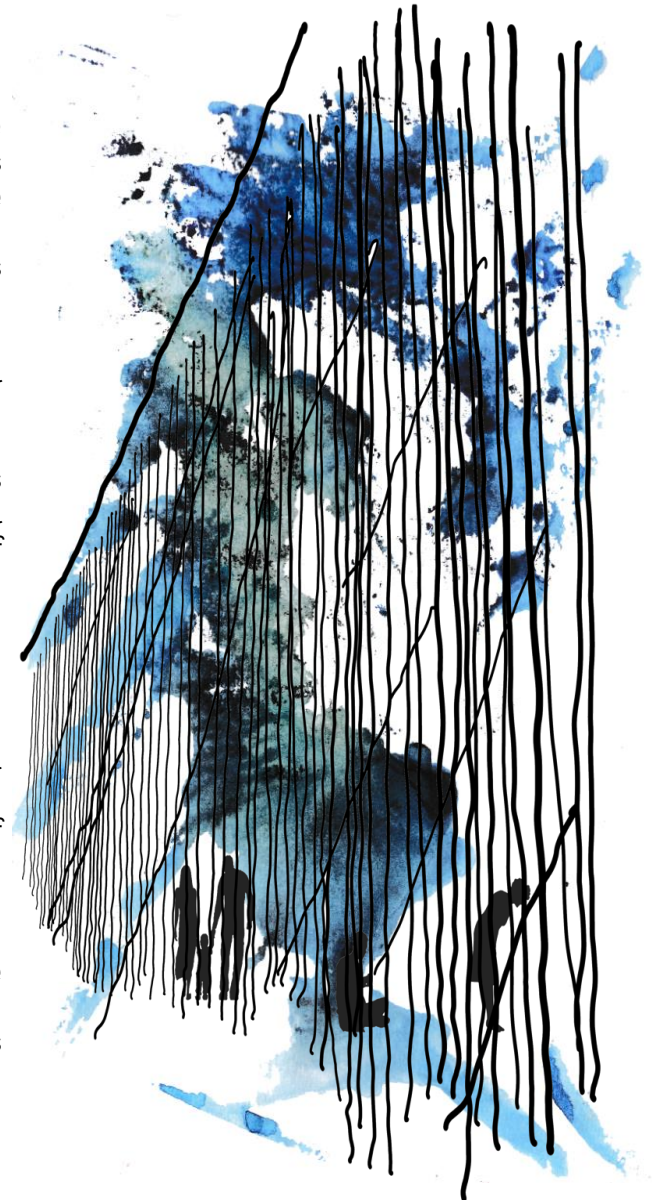
The convergent and interwoven parallels and origins of human existence and architecture are bound together by the need for shelter. Even though presented in different scales, they both demand sheltering the body for survival.

My intention in this thesis is to express my enthusiasm for communities, culture and identity through understanding of how the human body engages with surroundings as guided by work of Merleau-Ponty. The thesis aims to convey the flowery, and poetical philosophical writings and ideas of Merleau-Ponty's and Christian Norberg-Schulz's discourse to formulate a design tool and stance for a hypothetical response to be applied on the design.

The thesis will outline Merleau-Ponty's argument of phenomenological consideration of the experience of physical spaces by the human body. This understanding will be further augmented by the interpretation of the work of Juhani Pallasmaa.

The thesis also discusses technological strategies to implementing realistic and progressive solutions to the challenges of environmental and social sustainability and building technologies.

The study of Mapungubwe Heritage Site will be superimposed on theoretical and technological to support arguments contained in this thesis.



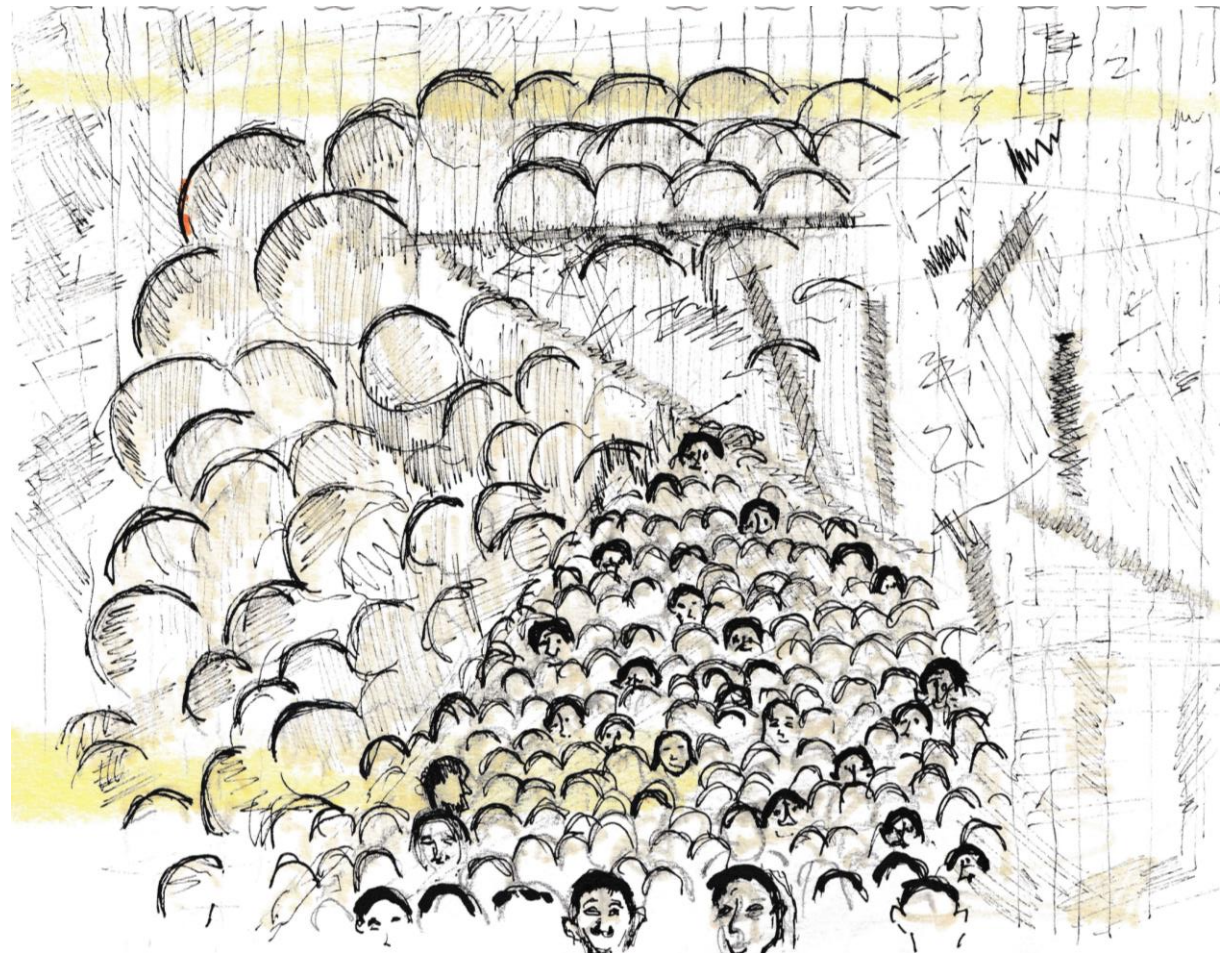
**Figure 24:** Bodily engagements (Author, 2022, drawing)

## 1.1 Interwoven Symbiosis of Nature, People and Architecture

The term 'symbiosis' is used to describe interrelations and dependency between different aspects of life. In positioning discussions contained herein the vocabulary associated with symbiosis refers to integration of nature, people, and architecture.

Combining architectural works with the customs, traditions and needs of communities has the capacity to be 'life-enhancing' (Montagu, 1986) thus enhancing social fabric. The conceivable spaces are aimed to stimulate interest, living, moods and actions and not be frames for activities which are devoid of life but that they guide and choreograph. (Pallasmaa, 2005).

Through the understanding and reinterpretation of the Interwoven Symbiosis of Nature, People and Architecture (connection between the community's culture, their identity, architecture and nature) this thesis will argue that we live, feel, inhabit, and embody buildings in our everyday life and that carefully curated buildings that incorporate gestures that resonate with the identity of communities can produce 'emotions, sensory experiences and feelings, and engender memories.' (Pallasmaa, 2005).



**Figure 25:** Collection of different identities (Author, 2022, drawing)

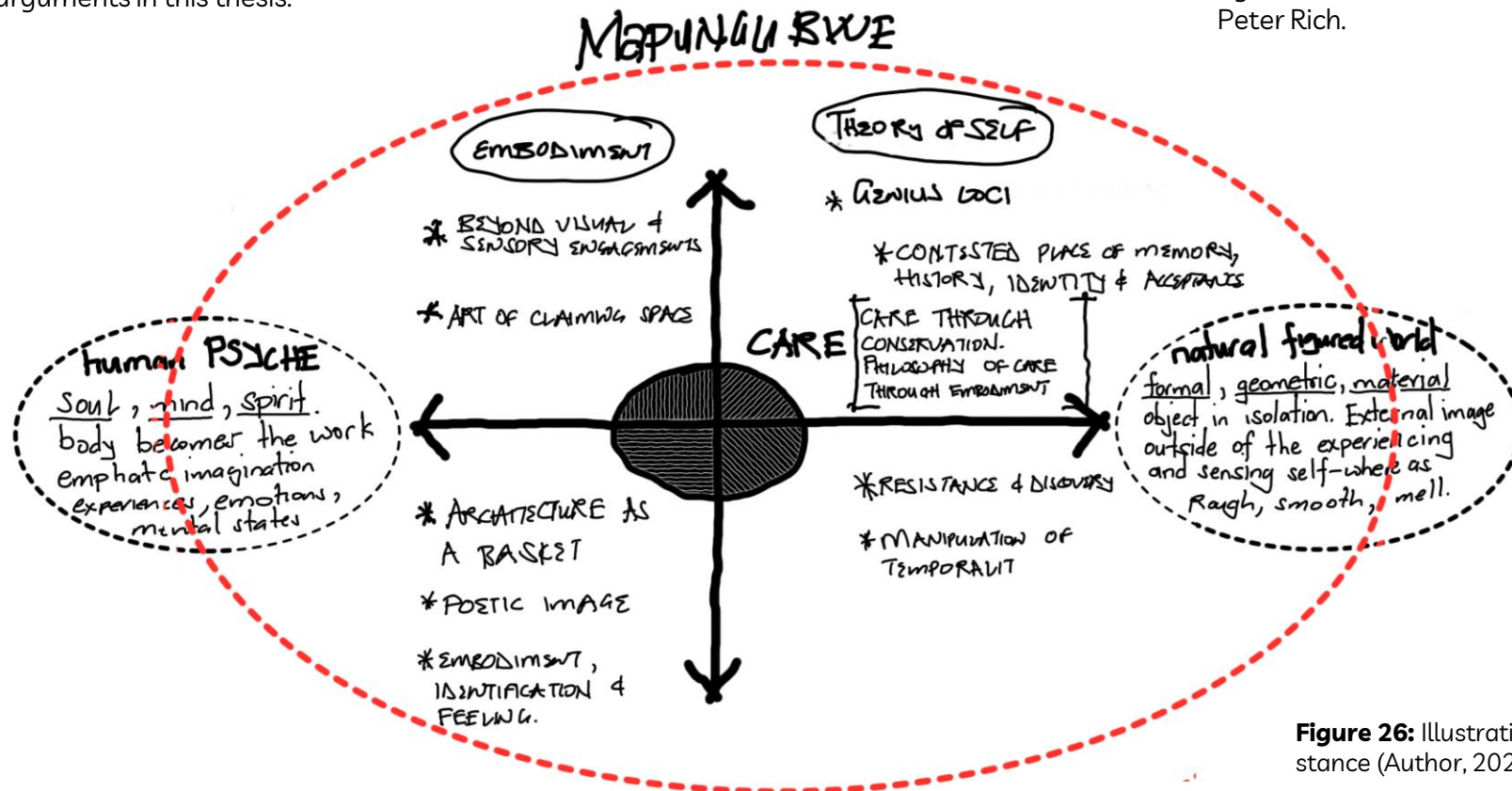
## 1.2. Significance of Mapungubwe Heritage Site.

The research is formulated through investigating how architectural configurations can listen and retell the flesh of the community, its dwellers and genius loci through the exploration of theory and technology. The Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre together with associated landscape in the Mapungubwe National Park, have been chosen as the appropriate configuration to support arguments in this thesis.

The Mapungubwe Historical and Cultural landscape is significant and important not only to South African and southern Africa, but also to the international community as recognised through its inscription in the World Heritage List by the World Heritage Committee in 2003 (Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre, 2022).

The Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre which is located in Limpopo, South Africa is situated in Mapungubwe National Park. This location is affectionately common for its confluence which separate three countries, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

The Interpretation Centre was designed by South African architect and educator Peter Rich.



**Figure 26:** Illustration of theoretical stance (Author, 2022, drawing)

## 2. Theory and Technology

### 2.1. Emplaced embodied care

The leading theme and focus on the understanding and reinterpretation of the Interwoven Symbiosis of Nature, People and Architecture is that of **emplaced embodied care**. This stance will be explored through the many discussions of the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the bodily experience of space in his opus, '*Phenomenology of Perception*'; together with philosophical writings of the Norwegian architect, Christian Norberg-Schulz.

The theory of emplaced embodied care is further examined and discussed through the explicit and theoretical work of the Finnish architect, Juhani Pallasmaa in his book, '*The embodied image: imagination and images in architecture*'.

#### 2.1.1 Definitions of Emplaced embodied care

The author's attempt to define 'emplaced embodied care' draws from the theoretical interrogation of distinct experiences, emotions, and mental states in relation to physical spaces.

In the context of this paper, emplaced embodied care can be defined as a conscious and deliberate process of embodiment, identification and feeling entities (spaces and fashion e.t.c) as imagined extension of self through embodied simulation (Pallasmaa, 2014, 17:28, video) to stimulate appropriate poiesis and develop discernment.

This theoretical and technology paper will argue that placing the unhindered thinking body (bodily experience/movement of the body) at the core of architecture is an ethical imperative that determines the place of man in the design of space and not just an aesthetic judgment (Lonescu, 2016: 7). This will be argued by critically noticing emplaced embodied care through the exploration and application of theory to existing architectural configurations at Mapungubwe to develop an appropriate architectural discernment to be applied to the design of the architectural proposal.



**Figure 27:** Varied bodily engagements  
(Author, 2022, drawing)

## 2.2. Genius loci and Human identity

As a point of entry, I would like to argue that architecture is a form of art that aims to narrate the identity of a place or environment. Norberg-Schulz argued that our human identity is linked to and determined by the place (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 22).

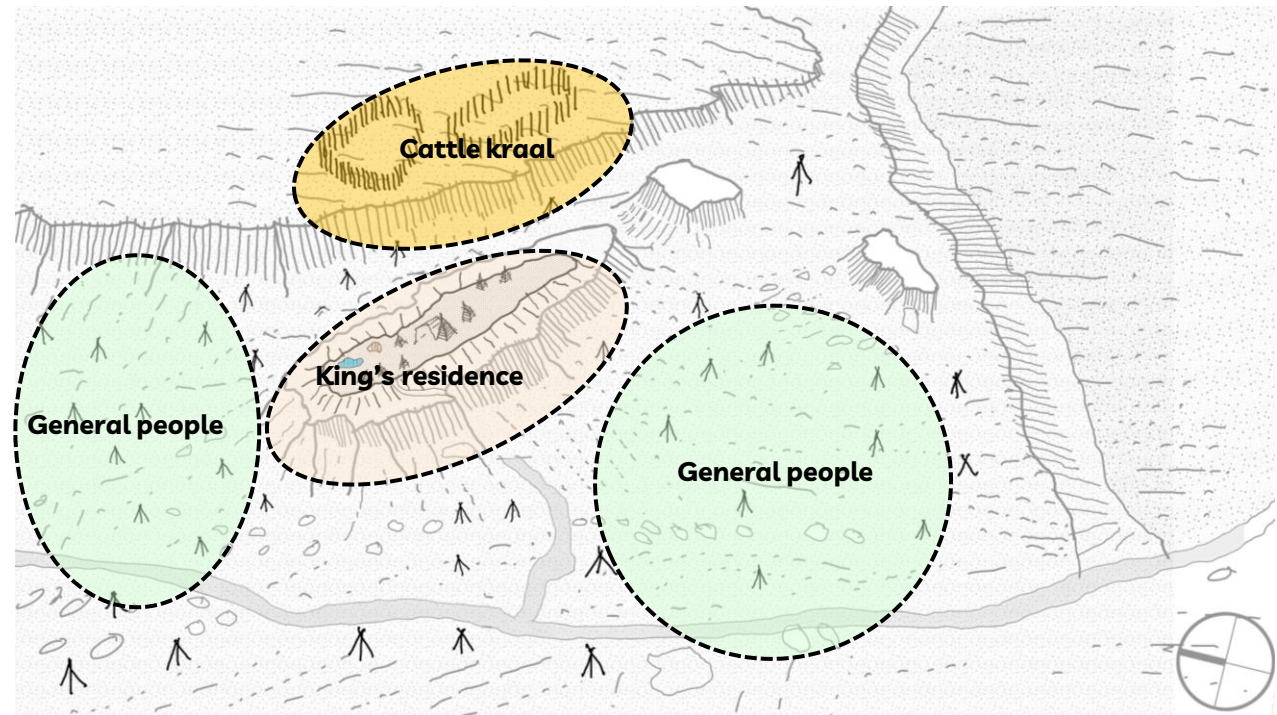
Thus, it is vital that architectural practice should reflect the essence of a place and add to its capacity to communicate as a source of 'continuity' in the environment (i.e. a *stabilitas loci*) (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 180). It is possible to protect the identity of the place, through respecting the *stabilitas loci*, in spite of the "historical forces" (economic, practical, cultural and social) negatively affecting living circumstances (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 180). The description assigned to this by Norberg-Schulz described prioritises, "the preservation of 'continuity' amid 'change' in the form of a 'living tradition' able to offer 'ever new' interpretations of the 'identity of the place'. By expressing 'change' in terms of a *stabilitas loci* progress becomes 'meaningful'" (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 182). To safeguard the *genius loci*, demands the ability of designers to "implement its essence in continually changing historical environments as the actualization of "what was already there as possibilities" (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 18).

The Mapungubwe Hill is of great significance to the *stabilitas loci* of this place. This is the area where artefacts were discovered in 1983. These discoveries indicated proof that the area was previously occupied including traces of civilisation associated with the Southern Africa cultures. The King is believed to have lived on top of Mapungubwe Hill while the rest of the community lived in the valley, which allowed for farming.

Also, of significant importance was The Nyende hill which was used by rain prayers.

The discoveries around the Mapungubwe kingdom indicated certain rituals which were associated with this place; these included burying the dead facing west.

These practices intended to contribute to the image of the place through simulating the embodied sensory, emotive, and mental encounter of the users.



**Figure 28:** Reimagination of Mapungubwe Kingdom (Author, 2022, drawing)

## 2.2.1 Imagining Mapungubwe

In discussing Mapungubwe, I would like to argue that its identity has a stronger influence on human behaviour than 'economic' or 'political' forces (1979: 78-111). Mapungubwe is still the same and also different. Despite its ever-changing nature, it still leaves room for orientation and identification that extends beyond the security or threat offered by immediate economic or political systems. People living in the new residential neighbourhoods around Mapungubwe turn to points of references such as Mapungubwe Hill to confirm their identity; this is understood in Norberg-Schulz's discussion of Prague (Norberg-Schulz, 1979:109).

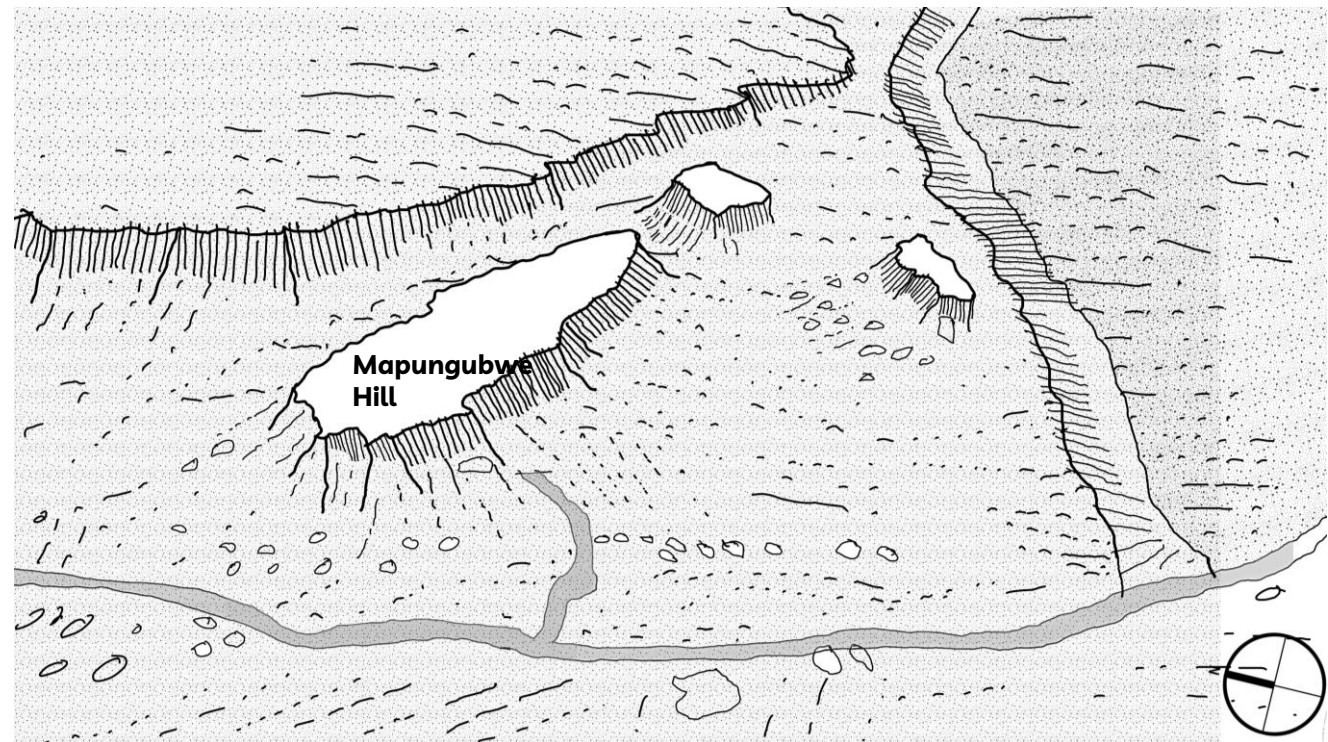
The living tradition of architecture brings together the contemporary and historical worlds by allowing people to relate to and orientate among the things of a 'living world' in a way that they are preserved and illuminated (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 6). As such, "respecting the genius loci" does not mean stagnating human development, but rather expressing afresh the "rooted" nature of existence within an appreciated and relevant history (Norberg-Schulz, 1980: 196). Hence, Norberg-Schulz suggested that architectural work should extend beyond just dignifying the past, but also grow from every day's lifestyle (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 194) for the world to continue to be

a world and human to continue to find identity.

Therefore, the "freedom" of contemporary times - when applied within a living tradition - will not degenerate into arbitrary play, but rather manifest itself in "creative participation" because it "services life" (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 182).

The strength in the current stage of narratives of Mapungubwe is that they encourage imagination beyond what is existing.

I am in support of Norberg-Schulz's confidence in that the implementation of the life-world in architecture needs to be envisioned as an act of "translation", rather than "discovery" (Norberg-Schulz, 2000:143).



**Figure 29:** Mapungubwe Kingdom  
(Author, 2022, drawing)

## 2.3. Architecture and the image of the City.

The Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre indicates how understanding the Genius Loci can be extracted and reimagined to not only inform but complement a contemporary architectural response.

Supported by Juhani Pallasmaa's thought in his book, *'The embodied image: imagination and images in architecture'*, I view the Interpretation Centre's principal duty being to 'tame' the world for human habitation and comprehension, but also to increase its sensuality and desirability (Pallasmaa, 2011: 119). It presents a form of architecture that seeks to humanise the world by providing it with a human measure and, as a result, a horizon of judgment and meaning through which it can be interpreted and analysed. Pallasmaa defines an architectural metaphor as a highly abstracted and condensed experiential entity that integrates the diversity of human experiences into a single lived picture (Pallasmaa, 2014, 40:29, video).

Pallasmaa distinguishes two qualitative levels of city images. The Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre is not projected from formally defined and rigid images but rather magnifies the simulation of the mental, sensory and emotive encounter with this projected reality. It is not a material objectified thing in isolation but a reality that exhibits lived and experienced realities of the world; extending itself as

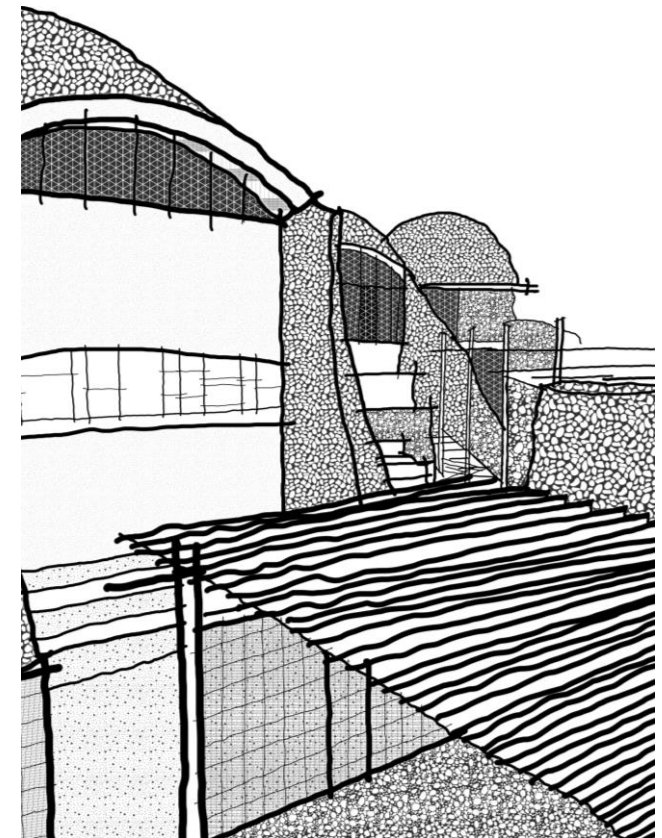
part of existential experience, as in the real encounter with the genius loci physical reality. Formally defined imagination primarily engages with topological and geometric configurations whereas the empathetic emotive imagination arouses embodied and intimate experiences, recollections, qualities, and moods (Pallasmaa, video).

However, the American urban theorist Kevin Lynch's theory emphasise the visual quality of the urban environment which relates to the physical elements of the environment together with the perceived image of the people (Lynch, 1960). Lynch's perspective is that each user perceives the city and architecture in a different way according to their knowledge, experience, and familiarity of the site. It is the visual qualities that navigate this process of the urban environment (Kader, 2012:9).

I found the design of Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre being intended to contribute to the image of the city through simulating the embodied sensory, emotive, and mental encounter of the users. This has been enhanced by targeting and emphasising the users feelings, recollections and association.

As an organic contested urban landscape, this highlights the dichotomy in the need to preserve the natural, organic setting and superimposing modern urban life,

focusing on issues such as urban movement, public safety and equitable access to convenient living which is vital to survival of modern cities. With this in mind, I endeavored on an exploration exercise to represent an abstract understanding of contestation of modern cities.



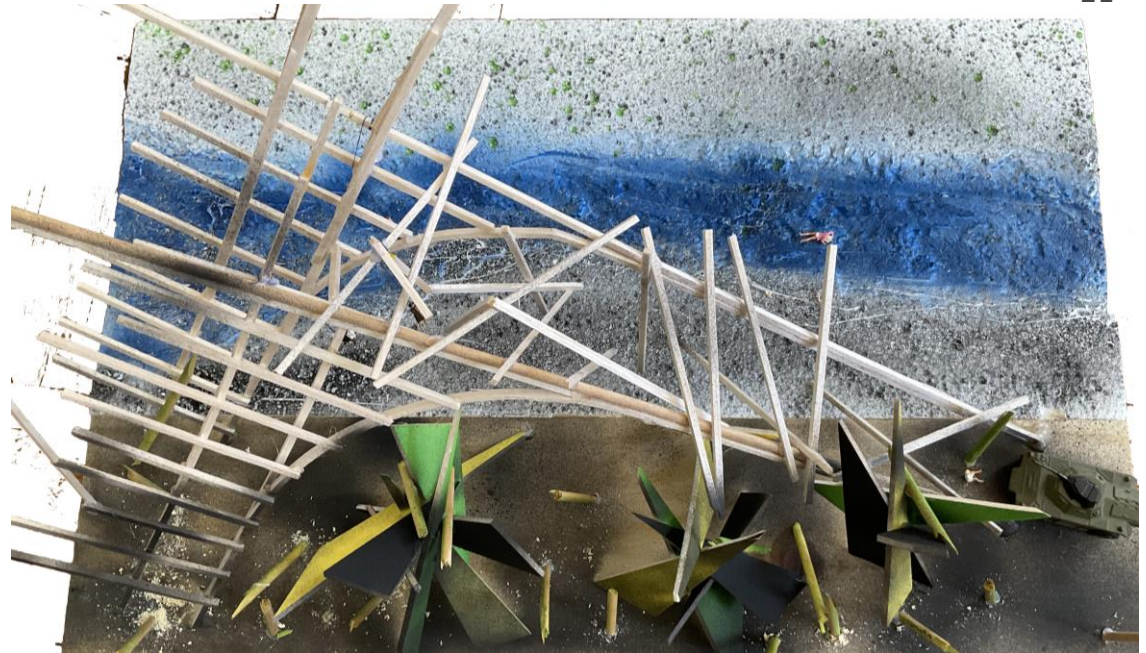
**Figure 30:** View of Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, drawing)

It is crucial to understand contestation of cities in the history and context of a place.

Though associated with negative effects such as diminishing identity of local people, sometimes the tension and patterns created by the contestation of cities make urban environments more equitable and inclusive through the adaptation and reimagination of both public and private spaces.

This concept attempts to explore the tensions and patterns in the city to encourage public engagement through the built fabric and urban density and diversity.

The Mapungubwe cultural narratives are woven from all these recollections, associations and threads. The identity of the place is contested and complicated and its history and culture is subject to interpretation (Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum, 2022)



**Figure 31:** Contested landscape(author, 2022)



**Figure 32:** Contested landscape(author, 2022)

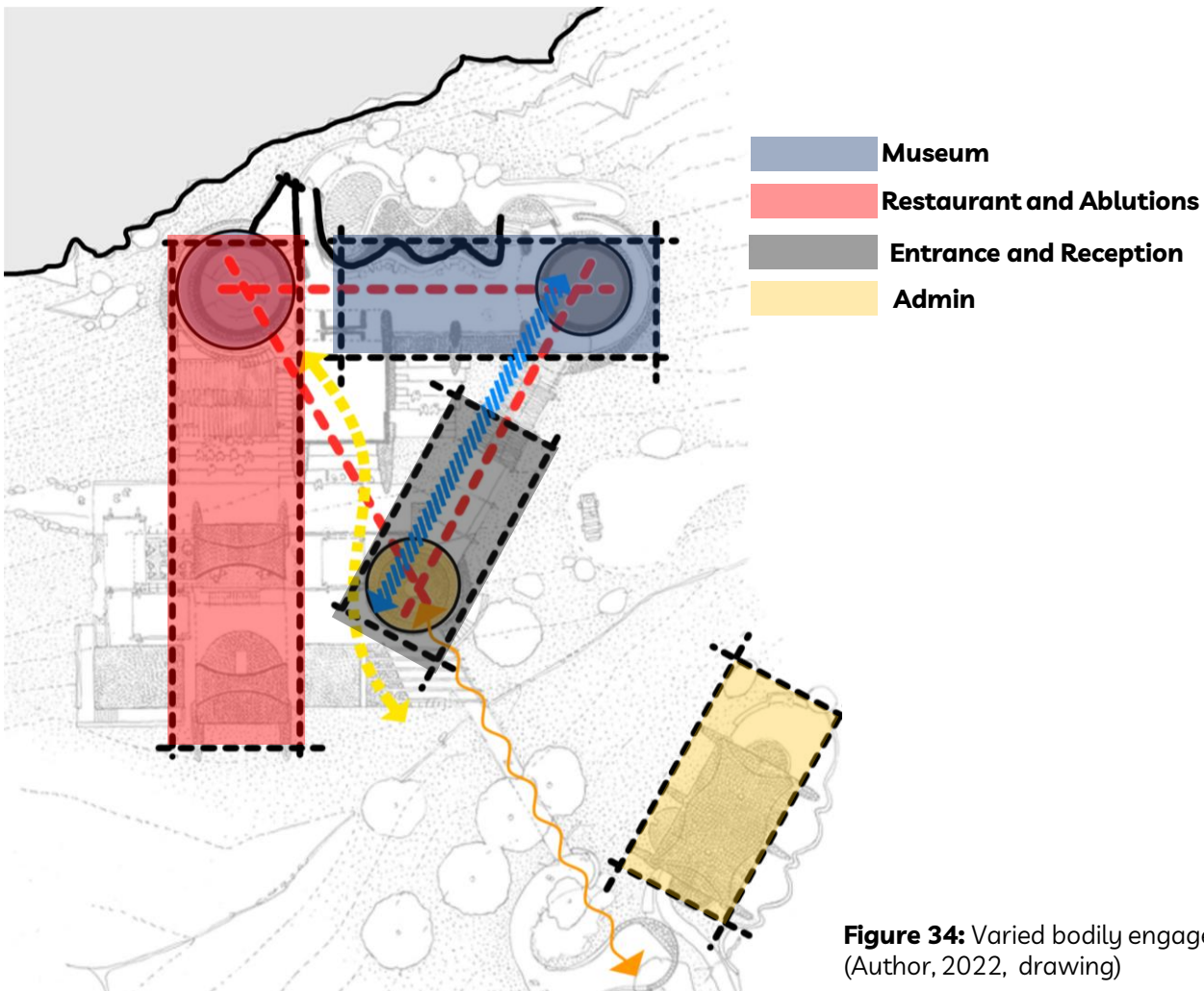


**Figure 33:** Contested landscape(author, 2022)

The Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre complex is anchored on the side of a mesa, seamlessly blending into the character of the existing landscape. The design exhibits stone cladded vault structures that balance on the slopped site set in the mopane woodlands.

This respectful manipulation of the site's resources ensured that the structures are rooted to their genius loci. This understanding of the site resulted in a composition of authentic structures that speak to the identity of the people of Mapungubwe.

Primarily, the structures are ordered around an equilateral triangle which runs along the site contours creating a geometry. This strong geometry was used to define and fix secondary elements with its significance being referenced by the triangular motifs anchored on stones and materials collated from Mapungubwe Hill.



**Figure 34:** Varied bodily engagements  
(Author, 2022, drawing)

The project prioritized drawing design inspiration from the genius loci of Mapungubwe; this was translated in the technology through predominantly using natural materials from site and the integration of unskilled local labor. This type of response in the context of the rural setting of Mapungubwe encourages incorporation of aspects of social design which is driven by society, for society and with society. This stance is even more crucial in the current economic situation and could be aimed as a response to the local economic difficulties for communities exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic in a technically driven global growth economy and its consequences for humans and the environment.

## 2.4. Feelings, recollection, and associations.

Architectural images evoke recollections feelings and associations; my arguments are guided by Pallasmaa through his belief that architectural images should not be 'formal fabrications or inventions' derived from and in support of our mental world and artistic experiences. Rather that we experience these images as an extension of our living ultimately assigning meanings to these architectural images. (Pallasmaa, 2014, 23:55, video). While referring to the artistic works as experience, the American philosopher John Dewey argued that artistic forms cannot be fabricated; that architectural qualities are constituted in experiencing the work.

'By common consent, the Parthenon is a great work of art. Yet it has aesthetic standing only as the work becomes an experience for a human being. Art is always the product in experience of an interaction of human beings with their environment.' (John Dewey, 1940, online).

In the case of Mapungubwe, the interpretation of the landscape (including spatial settings) has been defined by different groups and classes of people ranging from archaeologists, palaeontologists, travellers, historians and descendants of the place who have

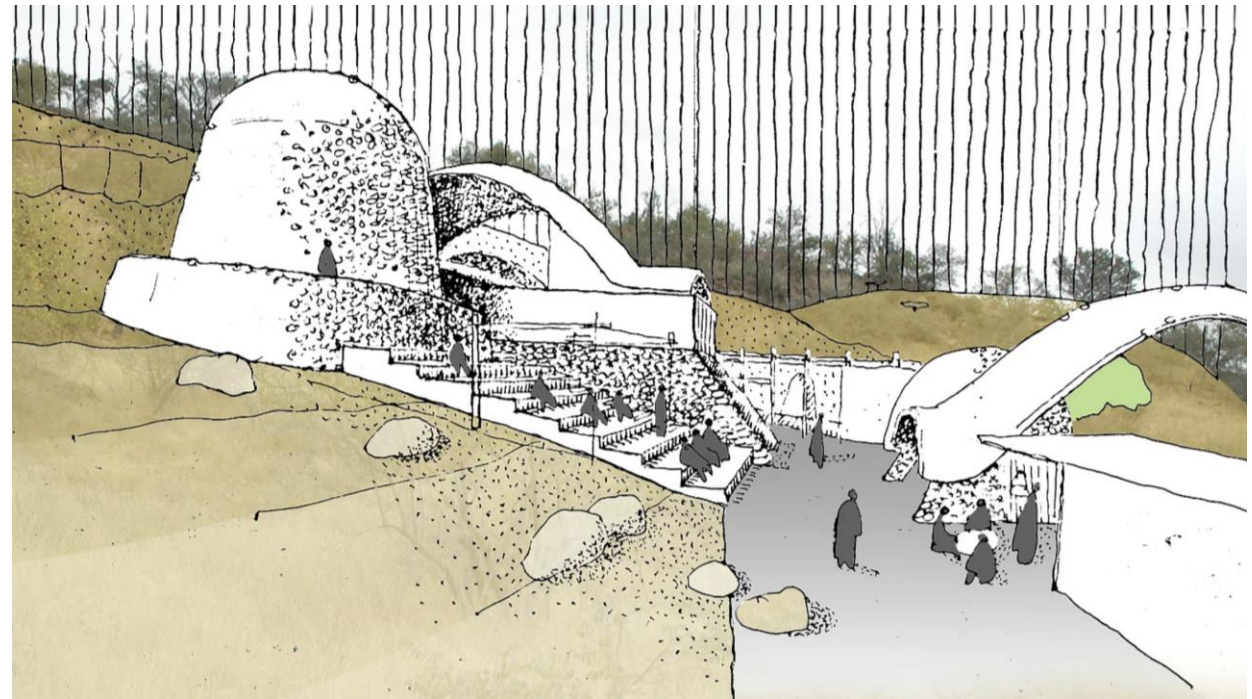
created and told varied projections and images of the place.

The Mapungubwe cultural narratives are woven from various recollections, associations and threads. The identity of the place is contested and complicated and its history and culture is subject to interpretation. (Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum, 2022)

Confronted with different ethnic groups

claiming ancestry ownership, Rich drew inspiration from the genius loci of Mapungubwe, turning the contestation tension into harmony that is emplaced on the place. I find this approach compelling and relevant, not only in the context of Mapungubwe but in the divided diverse nature of South African cities post apartheid era.

When at Mapungubwe the building speaks of everyone's identity; the identity that we are beings on mother earth.



**Figure 35:** View of spatial configurations at Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Peter Rich Architects, 2015, online)

## 2.5. Beyond Designing Geometry but experiences

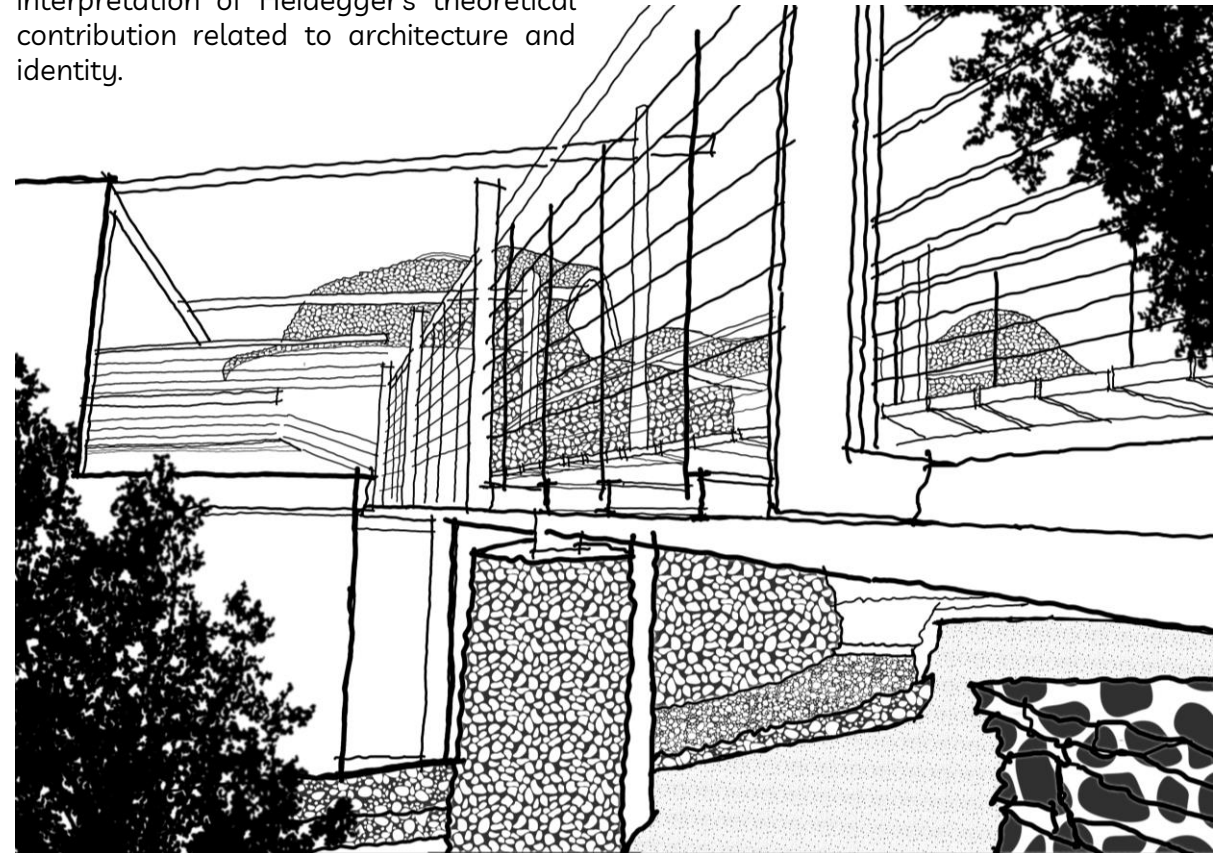
Real qualities of architecture are not defined or geometric, academic, or even aesthetic. They emanate from the ability to stimulate and sustain existential and poetic, embodied and emotive experiences which connect humankind with the deep history of dwelling. These true qualities arise from our emotive existential encounters with the world and not from the sense of vision. Architectural images as art are not formally defined configurations, they are artistic images that are rooted in the soul of human historicity, identity, and imagination. Poetic artistic images are always new and ancient at the same time. (Pallasmaa, video)

Even though not deeply dwelled into in this short theoretical section I find that Merleau-Ponty's account of phenomenological experience of space is somehow incompatible with Pallasmaa's. This is notable on the implications of their phenomenology positions on designed spaces. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy conceives spatial interventions that are genial to the natural of an intentional flesh experience with spatial settings, while Pallasmaa emphasises synthesis of the cognitive through evoking sensory experiences. I side with Merleau-Ponty's position and concur that the flesh and body are the medium for the world as they create spatial platforms for

engagement from a formless and non-dimensional manifold of possibilities (August, 2008: v).

Merleau-Ponty's and Pallasmaa's phenomenological prioritises human experience and bodily engagements with space. This position is intimate to spaces and is supported by Norberg-Schulz's interpretation of Heidegger's theoretical contribution related to architecture and identity.

Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum is predominately designed as a 'series of domes' with variations sizes, forms. The main structural system is that of light earth bricks and covered with sandstone. The building is designed to fit in and complement the landscape of the site (Guest, 2013).



**Figure 36:** View of Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, drawing)

## 2.6. Authentic Architectural Response

We give meaning to human presence through building and gather buildings in order to visualise and symbolise life as a whole; resulting in a sincere place to reside and call home (Norberg-Schulz, 1979:170).

Norberg-Schulz imagined creative engagement as Dasein's process to romantically reveal "the fundamental meaning" of existence, as it does under continually-evolving historical contexts (1979b: 185). Heidegger argued, in *Building Dwelling Thinking*, that poetry is revealed through a "double space-making" process (Heidegger, 1951: 156).

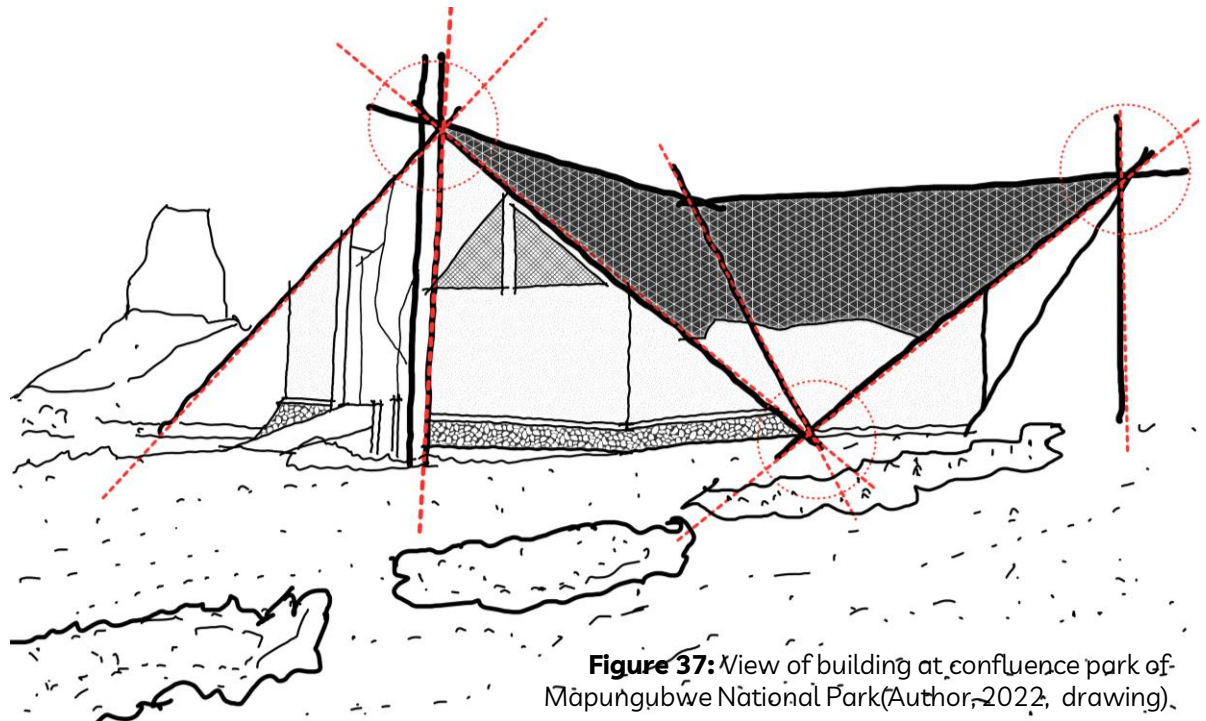
The first step in architecture is to be able to grant space to the fourfold. Heidegger named this process "Einräumen". The next step is to enclose or define the space through the use of an enclosure or boundary. Ultimately "expressing" the character of the place. Heidegger called this process "Einrichten". The place comes to life through the "provision of space" and "embodiment of character" (Norberg-Schulz, 1980: 194). Dasein sets the perception of the place (the general "theme"), through 'creative participation', into works that serve as an explanation (a dedicated "variation") towards defining the meaning of being 'present' (Norberg-Schulz, 1979: 184).

Interpreting Daesin's works provide worldly exposition of the environment. Between the world and skies, objects and living beings are intertwined.

My position here is that if architecture is reduced to merely 'objects', people become mere 'subjects' and that commodification of objects, makes mankind to simply become consumers; on the other hand, if objects are viewed as ingenious assembly of the prefigured world, then occupants dwell meaningfully as the translators of the fourfold.

As an interpreter the occupants 'sings a song of praise to existence' (Norberg-Schulz, 1979:185).

The buildings at the confluence park of the Mapungubwe National Park exhibit some sort of attempts towards formulating the appropriate response for the area. Unlike like Rich's Interpretation Centre I found these to be biased towards interpreting a certain culture, dismissing the contestation of this site. Figure 15 below indicates a drawing of one of the buildings.



**Figure 37:** View of building at confluence park of Mapungubwe National Park (Author, 2022, drawing).

Rich's design of the Interpretation Centre at Mapungubwe demonstrates a critical understanding of the external influences on both authenticity and its meaning for the preservation.

The poetic approach in the writings of Norberg-Schulz was intended to position and demonstrate arguments in support of the notion that "great architecture's origin is not an assemblage of 'signs' or 'archetypes,' rather it originates from revealing the space associated with the living world (Norberg-Schulz, 1980: 200).

Architecture is 'revelatory' and 'true' to 'life' and is considered authentic when it manifests the genius loci (Auret, 2015: 116). Architectural work at Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre facilitate identification through acknowledging that the spatial configuration of the existing genius loci provide a point of reference and orientation; this has been achieved through the manifestation of the 'character' of the existing space. Spaces that offer identification, recollection and orientation, enable people to dwell conceiving places we refer to as, architecture.

The language of architecture at Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre is made up of a Museum which consists of an introduction hall, different rooms and a sacred place dedicated to the remains found in the area.



**Figure 38:** View of Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, drawing)

### Site surroundings:

The Mopane trees found in the Mapungubwe landscape are a resemblance of a savannah environment, coupled with huge baobabs and thorn trees that form the vegetation intertwining with rock projections found throughout the site (Guest, 2013).

### Garden pick of materials.

Just like picking vegetations outside the kitchen, the most of the materials were obtained from the site allowing the use and integration of local communities into the construction process.

Building elements such as roof tiles which were produced locally by the community, presented a platform to empower and upskill the dwellers of Mapungubwe with priceless skills. Handling of imported materials such as steel ensured a transfer of much needed knowledge to the community.



**Figure 39:** View of transitions at Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, drawing)

## 2.7. Body's capacity to intentionally engage with its surroundings

What are the implications of Merleau-Ponty's position that, as fleshy creatures, we are part of the world and belong to it, for how we think about the built environment? Merleau-Ponty's perspective that architectural work emerges from the intertwining of human beings with their surroundings is echoed in the analysis by the 19th century art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (Irwin, 2019: 94).

Wölfflin argued that "physical forms possess a character only because we ourselves possess a body. If we were purely visual beings, we would always be denied an aesthetic judgment of the physical world. But as human beings with a body that teaches us the nature of gravity, contraction, strength, and so on, we gather the experience that enables us to identify with the conditions of other forms." (Wölfflin, 1994: 151). This suggestion by Wölfflin expresses that human beings are participant to the world and do not just stand idle with no contribution (Irwin, 2019: 94).

Wölfflin further writes, "we read our own image into all phenomena. We expect everything to possess what we know to be the conditions of our own well-being." (Wölfflin, 1994: 152). Pallasmaa echoes this thought by mentioning that 'we live in resonance with our world and

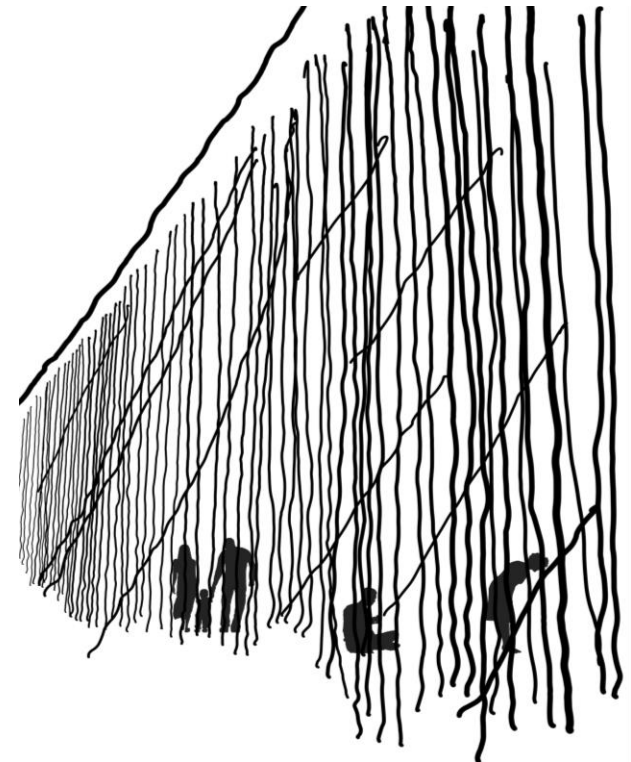
architecture mediates and maintains that very resonance. Buildings are products of imagination; every architectural structure has first existed as a mental image' (Pallasmaa, 2014, 12:55, video).

This non-reflective account of the body's capacity to intentionally engage with its surroundings (August, 2008: 54) by Merleau-Ponty is central in discernment towards the appropriate interventions in the design of Initiation Interpretation Centre. The spaces to be designed are to complement the human body where the body becomes (part of) the art and in concert the body is extended by the art work, giving imagination through our entire embodied experience (Pallasmaa, 2014, 17:28, video).

I believe that the Interpretation Centre at Mapungubwe engages with the body through the combination of forms, processes and metaphors into one design. Repetition and Rhythm further accentuate and define the design resulting in dynamic interfaces.

Ordering and prioritising of spaces is essential to follow through the building. Visual connection is also prioritised to create a tempting connection with the genius loci.

Movement, progression, inter-connectivity and relation between spaces is essential. Contrast, Juxtaposing, Re-imagining, Layering, Wrapping, Structuring all compliment the spaces. Continuity, Expression, Infinity, are all characteristics that have been incorporated. Understanding the Context, Human Scale and Interpretation of place conceived the careful selection of the appropriate forms and technology.



**Figure 40:** Spatial settings that evoke embodied experiences (Author, 2022, drawing)

The images below illustrate the selection of materials used at Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre which were predominantly sources on site



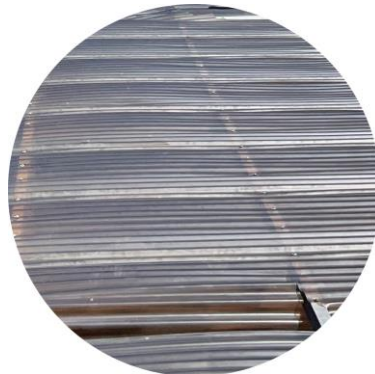
**Figure 41:** View of raised platform Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, drawing)



**Figure 42:** View of walkway Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, drawing)

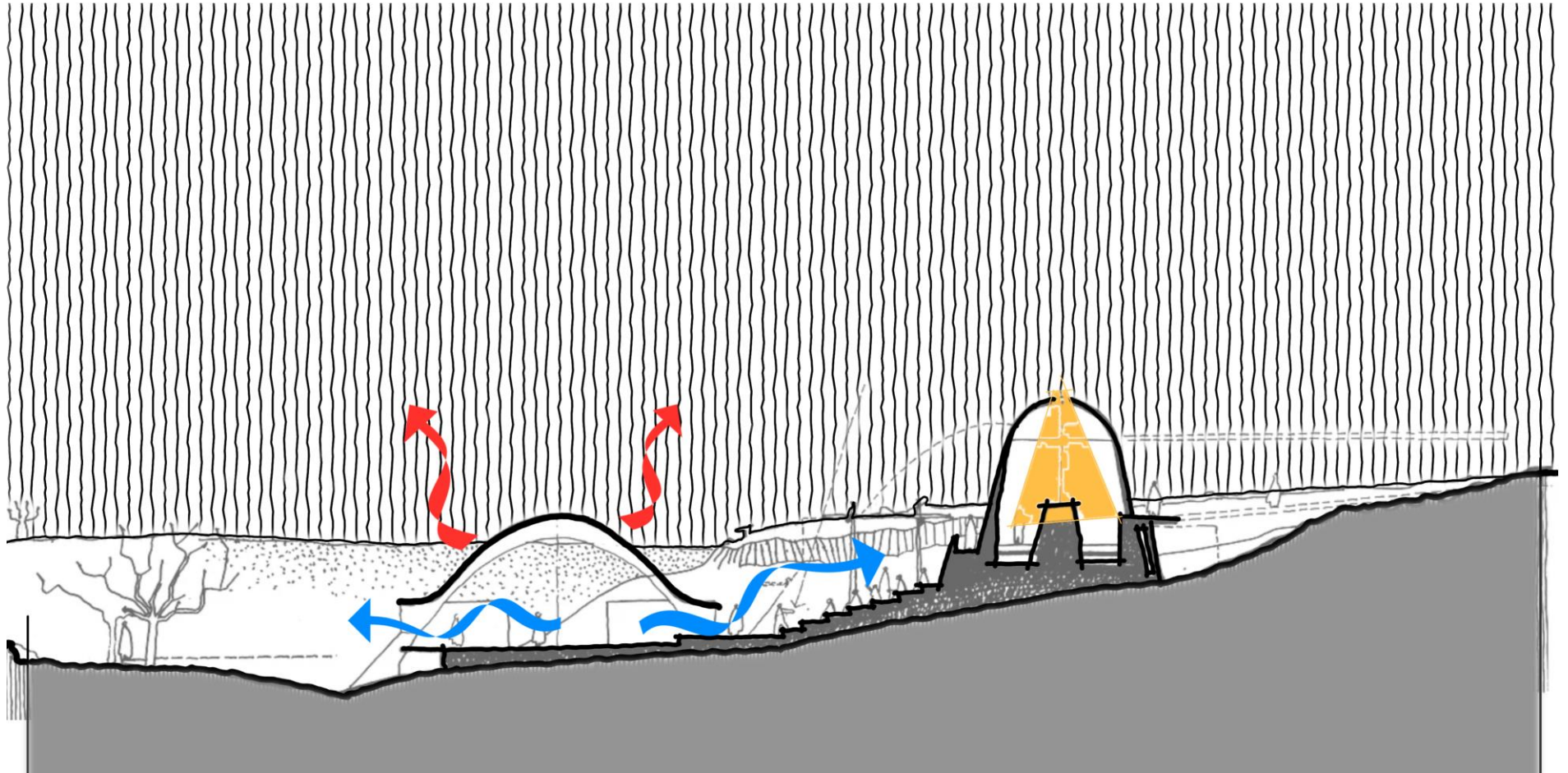


**Figure 43:** View of stairs at Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, drawing)



**Figure 44-48:** Materials at Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Museum (Author, 2022, photo)

The use of natural elements make provisions for lighting, climatic performance, heat control, acoustics and other systems.



**Figure 49:** Section of Mapungubwe Interpretation Centre Peter Rich Architects, 2015, online, modified by author)

## 2.2.2 Genius Loci of Imizamo Yethu

Cities are a reflection of our interrelations and engagements with each other. The cultural diversity is evident in the urban morphology through the appropriation of spaces and situations by artists and designers and sometimes through political gestures. Understanding the dynamic of cities provides a reference point for reimagination of spatial settings through the reinterpretation of the city's narratives and processes.

This contextual analysis is aimed at assisting in the translation of the imaginative-physical-cultural realm onto a poetic and appropriate physical reality that prioritises the human body.

Contextual analysis is a critical part of the planning and design process. The proposed intervention will be influenced by the conditions of the site and will have an impact on its context.

This chapter forms a foundation for the understanding of the site, its uses and the community in guiding the design of Ho'loha Sechaba Community Textile Design School

### Scale, local architecture, local material

The sequence of lively events along the only access into Imizamo Yethu narrates the youthful lifestyle of this area. Life is lived on the streets. Loud radio speakers, clothes hanging on fences, children playing on the streets, pavements being used as markets, car washes along the streets, taxis meandering along the streets and densely populated streets are some examples of the street life of this compact community.

There is a mix of conventional brick and mortar houses with shacks made from corrugated sheeting. Most houses are single storey and two stories being the highest.

Houses in Imizamo Yethu are predominantly made of self constructed shacks, made from locally sourced materials.

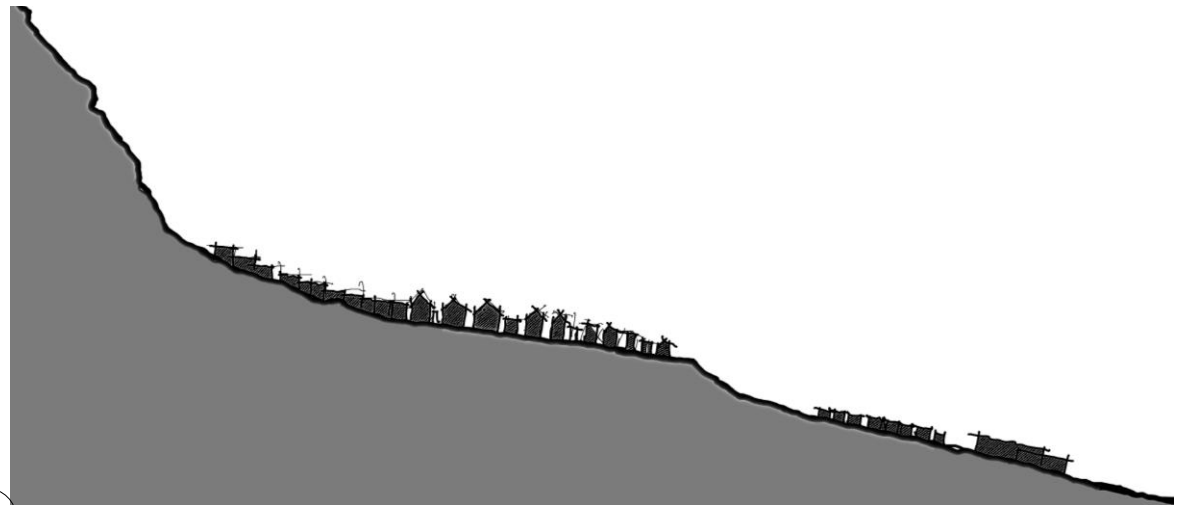
### Topography

The community of Imizamo Yethu is built on a steep slope. The steep slope has presented a huge challenge for expansion of this community together with adequate provision of services and infrastructure.



1

**Figure 50:** Social life in Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, drawing)



2

**Figure 51:** Topography of Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, drawing)

## Social and Cultural

Imizamo Yethu was formed in 1991 on a valley forest in the town of Hout Bay, in Cape Town. It was established as a settlement for black people, mostly employed in the finishing industry of Hout Bay and working as domestic workers.

(MacGregor et al., 2005).

Most formal employment does not exist in Imizamo Yethu. The local economy of Imizamo Yethu is driven by informal sector which includes street markets, preparation and sale of food, sale of building materials, mini bus taxis, car washes and alcohol outlets (shebeens).

The social life has been improvised to suit the constraints of this community. Residents have found ways to live and survive with no provision of basic services and employment. Their urge to survive is seen through their ability to rebuild as a community after disasters such as fires affect them.

*'the street is cramped with colourful tin shacks instead. Layers of rusted iron sheets nailed together to forge a home, the leaning structures both support and jostle each other to claim every square inch of the muddy spare ground. People mill about, some run to the bus stop outside...'* (reference)



3

**Figure 52:** Electricity connections on site (author, 2022, drawing)



4

**Figure 53-55:** Corridors and streets on site (author, 2022, drawing)

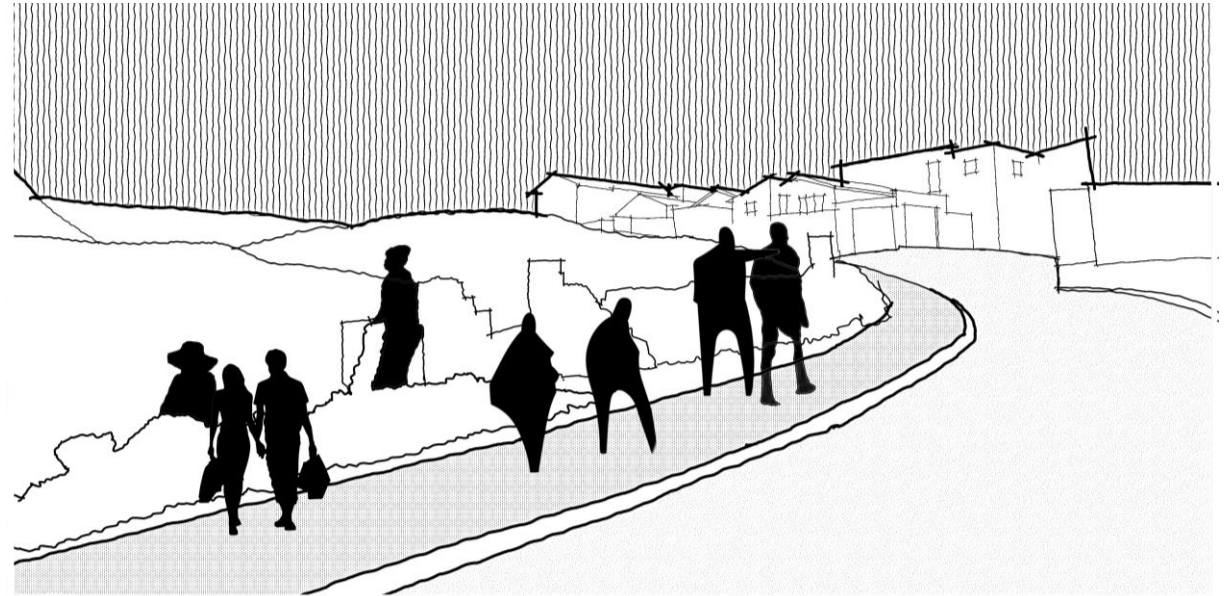
### Scale, local architecture, local material

The geographical location of Imizamo Yethu presents many challenges related to infrastructure development and provision of basic services.

The township is only accessed through two roads which are full of obstructions from the expansion of activities into the streets. Due to lack of land for expansions, most roads in Imizamo Yethu have been encroached by the residents who have their houses built into the streets.

Water is provided through a few sporadically located communal taps. There has been some attempts by various groups including the University of Cape Town to provide reliable, accessible and safe sources of water.

Electricity is mostly accessed through illegal overhead connections forming a skyline of spaghetti wires. This often present risks related to fire safety exacerbated by the use of paraffin, gas and wood as key sources of energy used for cooking and heating.



5

**Figure 56:** Market on pavements on site (author, 2022, drawing)



6

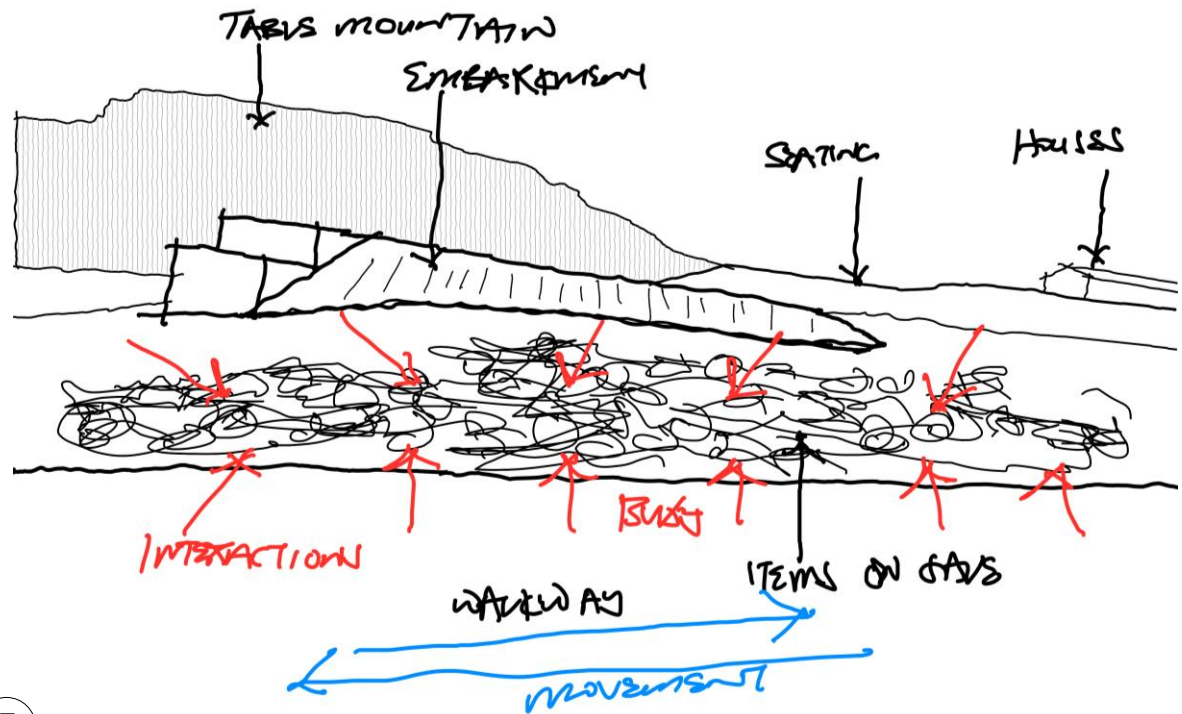
**Figure 57-59:** Informal businesses on site (author, 2022, drawing)

## Tradition and Socio-cultural

Most residents of Imizamo Yethu are Xhosa speaking people that have migrated from the Eastern Cape for employment opportunities. However, the community is made up of people from different ethnic groups. The tradition of this township is contested through these different groups.

Practices such as initiation and belief in the Xhosa god Qamata are still observed as a connection to the origins of the Xhosa culture. This continuation has protected the identity of the Xhosa traditions in the improvised landscape of Imizamo Yethu.

Interestingly, these various ethnic groups have found an effective way to co-exist, with the contestation in harmony. This is arguably achieved through the common need and argue to survive in this township.



7

**Figure 60:** Site sketch of activities (author, 2022, drawing)



8

**Figure 61-63:** Proposed Site (author, 2022, photo)

## Vegetation

Most of the vegetation in Imizamo Yethu has been destroyed through the clearing of land for informal houses. Trees have also been destroyed through disastrous fires and never replanted. However, the areas around Imizamo Yethu are leafy and provide clues to the type of trees and plants that once grew in this area.



9

**Figure 64:** Site edges (author, 2022, photo)

## Environmental Texture

The green texture in Imizamo Yethu has been lost mainly through fire disasters. The hard rocky surfaces have remained and make most of the texture.



10

**Figure 65-67:** Vegetation around Imizamo Yethu (author, 2022, photo)

Imizamo Yethu set on the slopes of a mountain and surrounded by affluent suburbs may resemble visual scenes and characteristics of a typical Cape Town township and yet it is experienced utterly different. Every resident of Imizamo Yethu has had varied, yet valid associations with this township and its identity is anchored in memories and meanings.

Despite a few remaining accessible streets, the distinctive wayfinding has diminished due to the sprawling locations of self constructed shacks. Rather this free-moving life is defined through organized and consistent use of sensory cues from existing environments.

The setting at Imizamo Yethu offers vibrant, dramatic scenes beyond the eye can see, and the ear can hear. The memories, recollections, feelings, diversity and contemporary life are experienced in harmony with each other and in relation to the surroundings.

The lifestyle of this improvised township is a genius loci waiting to be explored!



**Figure 68:** Graphic representation of Genius Loci of Imizamo Yethu  
(Author, 2022, photo)

## Genius Loci Specific to the Site

The site proposed for the building carries the same essence with the rest of Imizamo Yethu.

The site is accessed through Nelson Mandela Street which is the only street in and out of Imizamo Yethu. This link has resulted in informal business along the busy street. The population utilising Nelson Mandela Street is diverse primarily made of young people walking to close by

facilities and informal businesses that have claimed parts of the street.

Most businesses are informal small businesses which include food outlets, hairdressing, sewing studios, food and fruits markets and hardware shops.

The edges of site have been activated through informal activities. This site is part of the few remaining areas that have not

been occupied by the community. The community's reluctance for occupying the site is because of the hope that housing will be built by the City of Cape Town; a process that has taken longer than planned.

The context around the site is a reflection of the community's interrelations and engagements with each other and thus this cultural diversity need to be protected and sheltered in the proposed building.

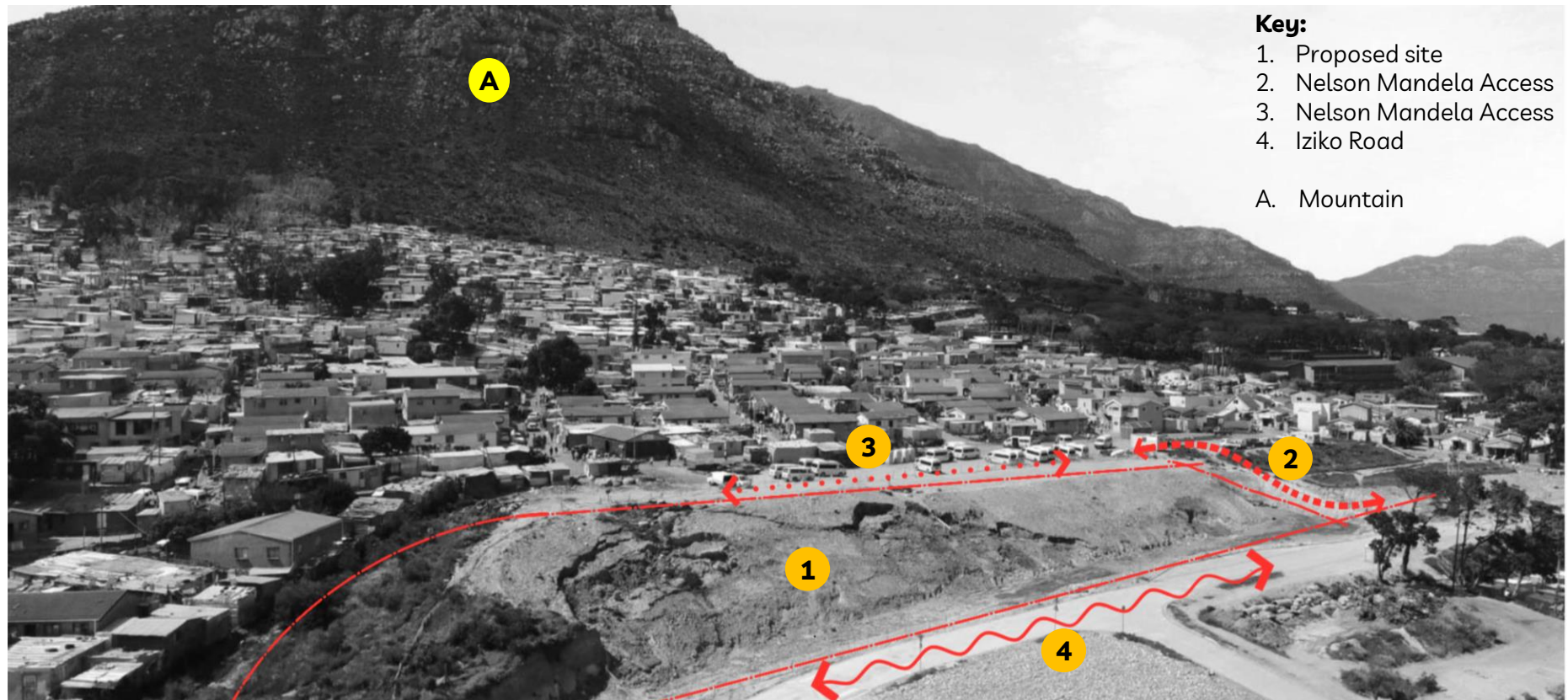


Figure 69: Proposed Site (S Perold, modified by author, 2022, photo)

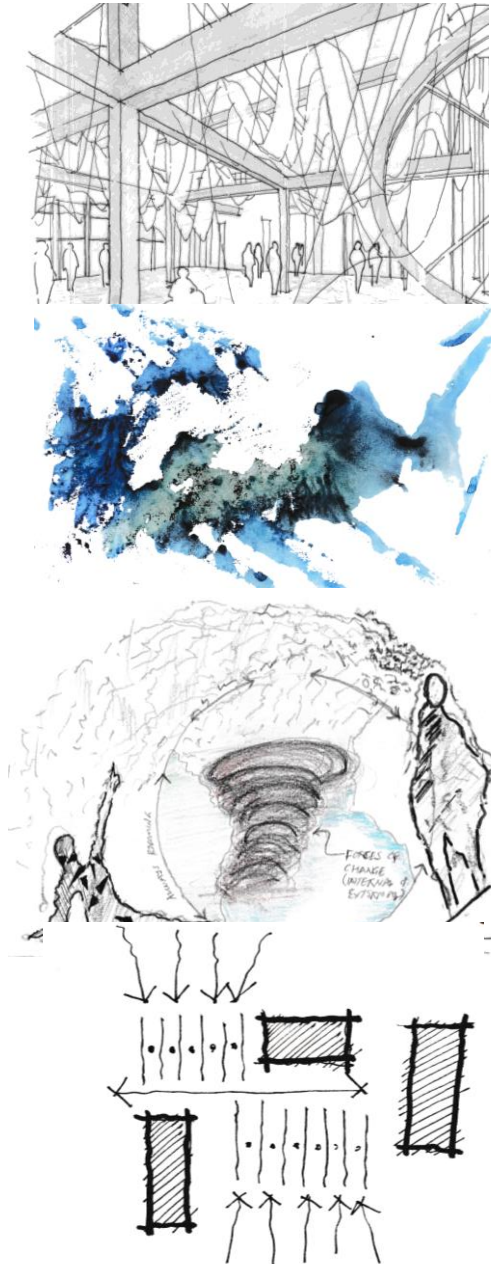
The activities of the site are captured in figure xx below



Figure 70: Site Pictures (Author, 2022)

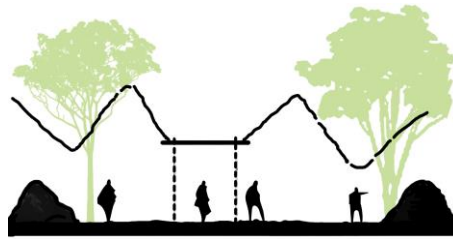
### 3.0. Towards the generation of architectural idea.

The main design drivers from the theory have been extracted and included as tools to assist in guiding the design. These drivers are extracted and supported by sketches I have done over the years in exploring my interest and passion of the relationship between people architecture.



- 1 Creation of constructed imagery, personal environment, and social communication
- 2 Non-reflective account of the body's capacity to intentionally engage with its surroundings (August, 2008: 54)
- 3 Assigning distinct experiences, emotions, and mental states in relation to physical spaces
- 4 Placing the unhindered thinking body (bodily experience/movement of the body) at the core of architecture is an ethical imperative that determines the place of man in the design of space and not just an aesthetic judgment
- 5 Intertwining of human beings with their surroundings

**Figure 71-74:** Thumbnail design sketches (Author, 2021-2022, drawing)



- 6 Combining architecture with the community's needs, customs and traditions and needs



- 7 Architecture is a mediator of our resonance with the world we live in

- 8 The spaces to be designed are to complement the human body where the body becomes (part of) the art and in concert the is extended by the art work, giving imagination through our entire embodied experience

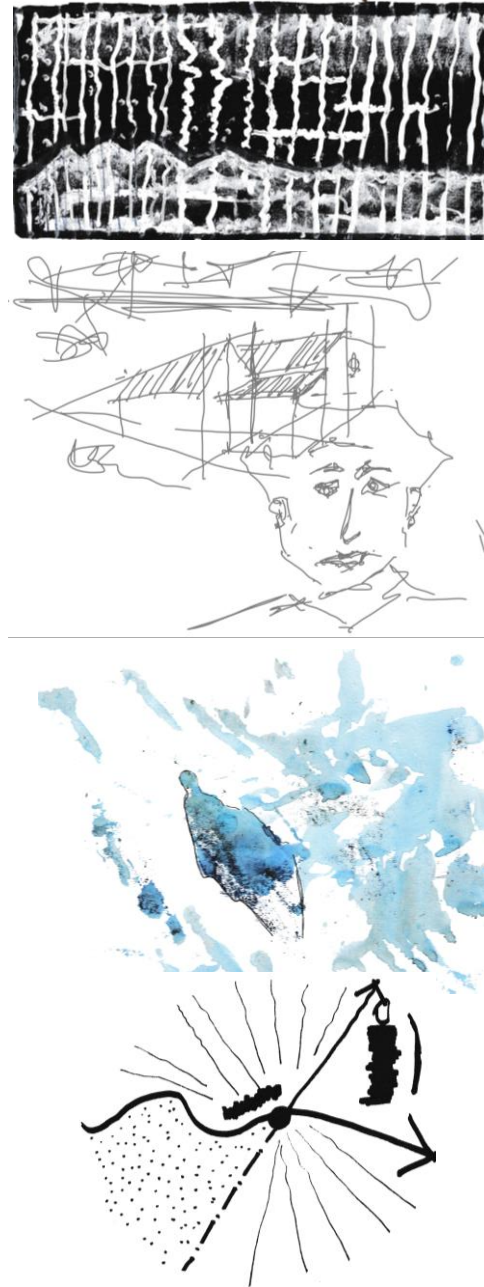


- 9 The human body's capacity for non-reflective, yet intentional, engagement with its surroundings



- 10 Human measure and, as a result, a horizon of judgment and meaning through which it can be interpreted and analysed. Pallasmaa defines an architectural metaphor as a highly abstracted and condensed experiential entity that integrates the diversity of human experiences into a single lived picture.

**Figure 75-78:** Thumbnail design sketches  
(Author, 2021-2022, drawing)



**Figure 79-82:** Thumbnail design sketches  
(Author, 2021-2022, drawing)

- 11 The conceivable spaces are aimed to stimulate interest, living, moods and actions and not be frames for activities which are devoid of life but that they guide and choreograph.
- 12 Contribute to the image of the city through simulating the embodied sensory, emotive, and mental encounter of the users. This will be enhanced by targeting and emphasising the users feelings, recollections and association
- 13 Architectural images evoke recollections feelings and associations. Architectural images should not be 'formal fabrications or inventions' derived from and in support of our mental world and artistic experiences.
- 14 Real qualities of architecture are not defined or geometric, academic, or even aesthetic. They emanate from the ability to stimulate and sustain existential and poetic, embodied and emotive experiences which connect humankind with the deep history of dwelling.

## Design precedents

This section is aimed at finding appropriate design tools through the application of research questions on Architectural configurations. The research is formulated through exploring how Architectural configurations can listen and retell the flesh of the city and its dwellers through the exploration of various precedent studies.

The research will mainly be guided by the exploration of theoretical concepts of Narrative theory, Embodiment and Assemblage theory. These theoretical stances will be explored through analysis of precedent studies and conceptual graphic studies. This will be followed by translation of these analysis, reasoning, interpretation, application, and evaluation of theory.

## Brick House, Wada, India



**Figure 83:** Entrance to brickhouse  
(Online, 2022, photo)

This project is located in the rural setting of Wada, near Mumbai, India. It is set in farmlands and hills (ArchDaily, 2019).

The architectural response is striking, drawing inspiration from nature and the surroundings (ArchDaily, 2019).

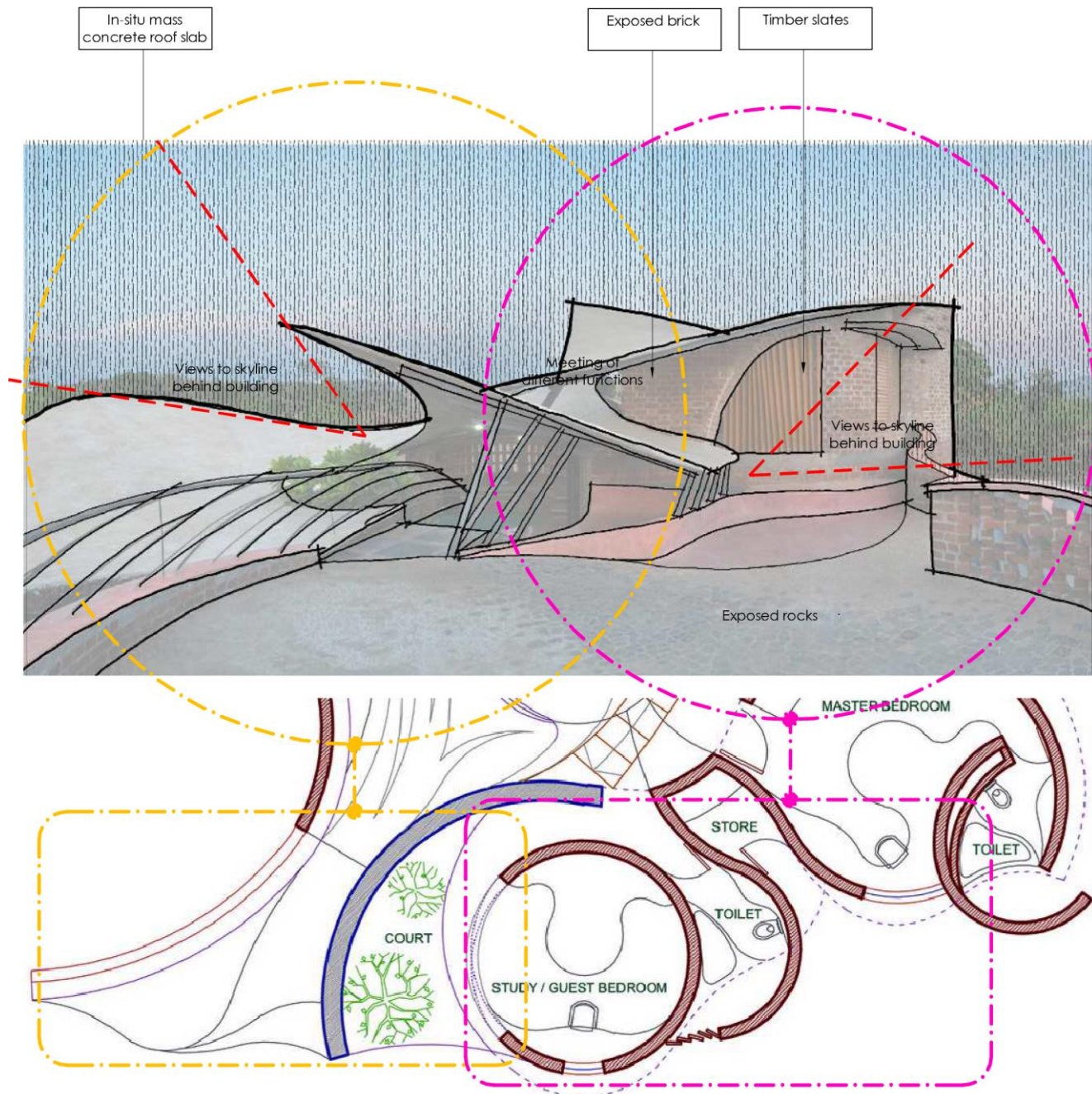
The morphology of the building emerges from the earth and resembles an organic element. The curvy mountains and landscape inspired the architectural response (ArchDaily, 2019).

## Brick House

The spaces are designed to interlink and flow seamlessly into each other with a shared central courtyard. The exterior brick wall intentionally draws the exterior into the interior. Light and shadows are articulated in varying compositions to accentuate the dichotomy between the two (ArchDaily, 2019).

Natural elements including water, natural materials and light are used to engage the body with architectural spatial elements (ArchDaily, 2019).

Architectural elements such as arches and stone and brick walls dominate the spaces giving the impression of cool spaces (ArchDaily, 2019).



**Figure 84:** Views and plan of brickhouse (Online, 2022, modified by author, photo)

## Brick House



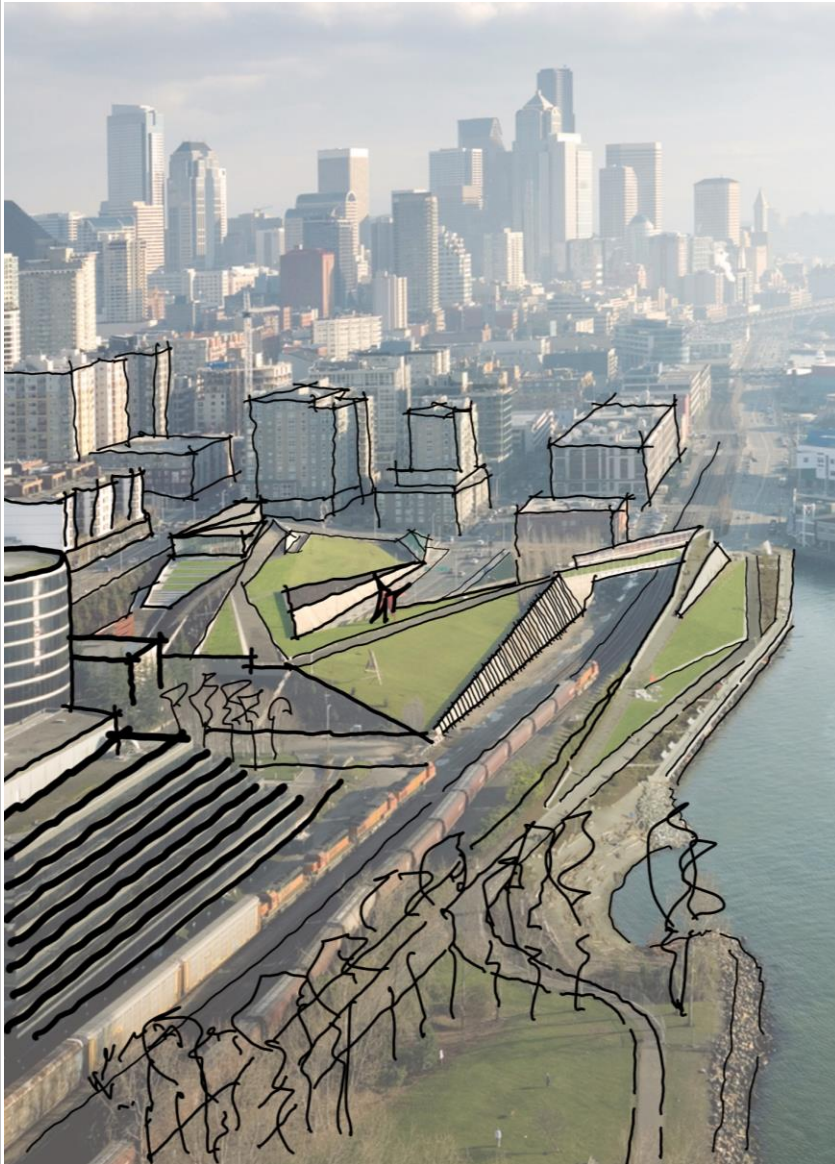
**Figure 85:** Internal Views of brickhouse  
(Online, 2022, modified by author, photo)

### Lessons from precedent

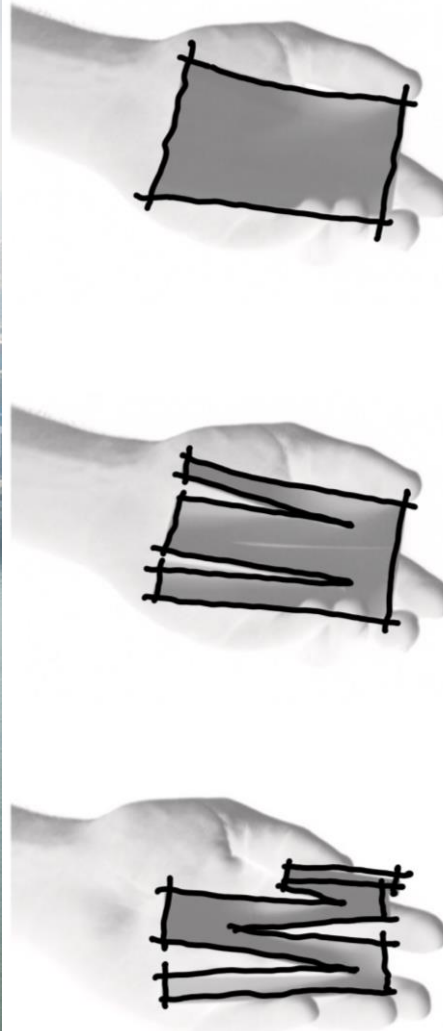
#### Material use

1. The use of materials from the context and surroundings.
2. Use of materials to create different textures.
3. Use of materials to guide the user into different spaces

## Olympic Sculpture Park



**Figure 87:** Axonometric View of Olympic Sculpture Park(Online, 2022. Modified by Author)



**Figure 88:** Illustration of design concept (Online, 2022. Modified by Author)

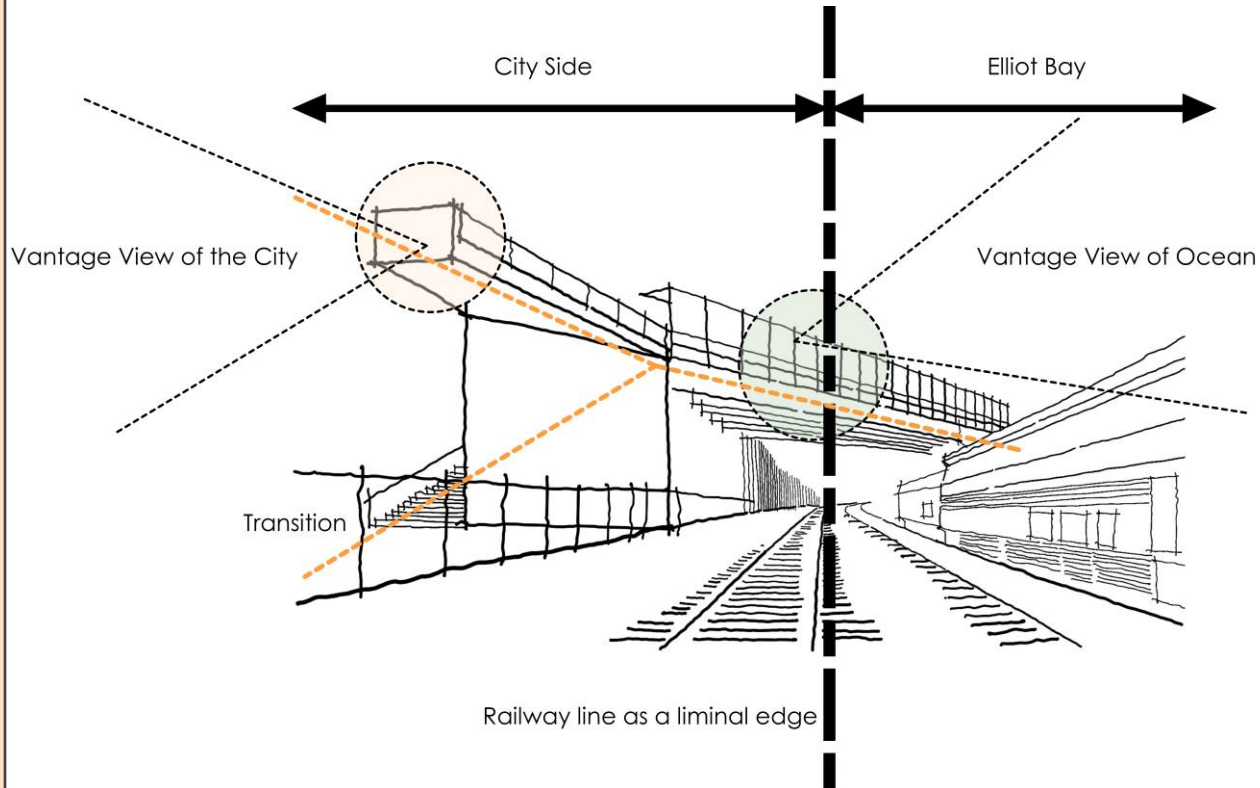
### Introduction

This project, which is envisioned as a new urban paradigm for sculpture parks, is situated on Seattle's remaining undeveloped waterfront land — an industrial brownfield split by train tracks and an arterial road. The concept unites three different sites with a continuous Z-shaped "green" platform that descends forty feet from the city to the sea, taking advantage of vistas of the cityscape and Elliott Bay, then rises above existing infrastructure to join the urban center to the regenerated waterfront. (Minner, 2011: Online).

Park creates a unique experience for modern and contemporary art outside of museum walls as a "landscape for art." The design, which is purposefully open-ended, encourages new interpretations of art and environmental interaction, reuniting the fragmented ties between art, landscape, and urban life. (Minner, 2011: Online).

Analysed in terms of Narrative:  
Conveying Memory through the Hollow Void - The design utilised a four-storey change from the built fabric to the water's edge. The landscape is planned as a continuous platform that wanders from the city to the shore. The change in

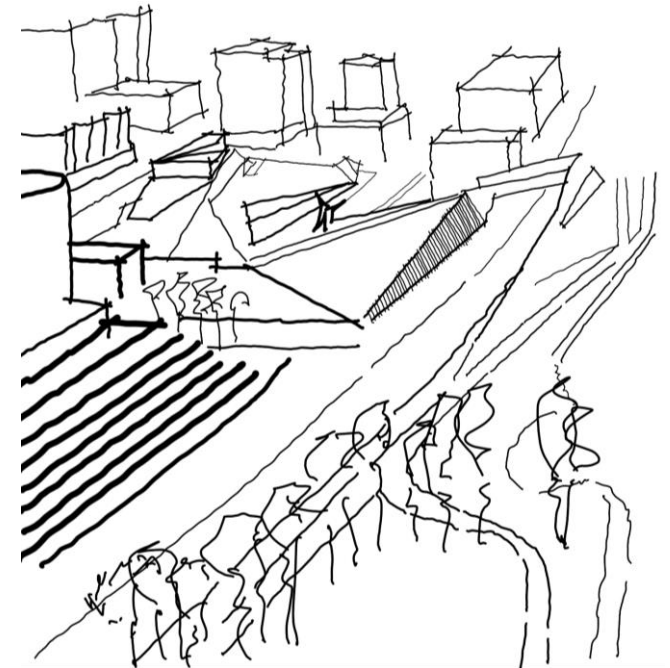
platforms conveys the void as a memory of the factory that once stood on the site. In preservation of the past and the hope of the future, this park is characterised by 'in-betweenness', translation of the past into the future and memory. The railway line that slices through the two fabrics is a memorialisation element of dilemma



**Figure 89:** Connections and views available at the park (Author, 2021, drawing)

which acts as a spatial edge. (Tseng, 2015: Online)

This museum is open to many interpretations and many routes through the abstract spaces and the voids which suggest poesis and multiple imaginations.



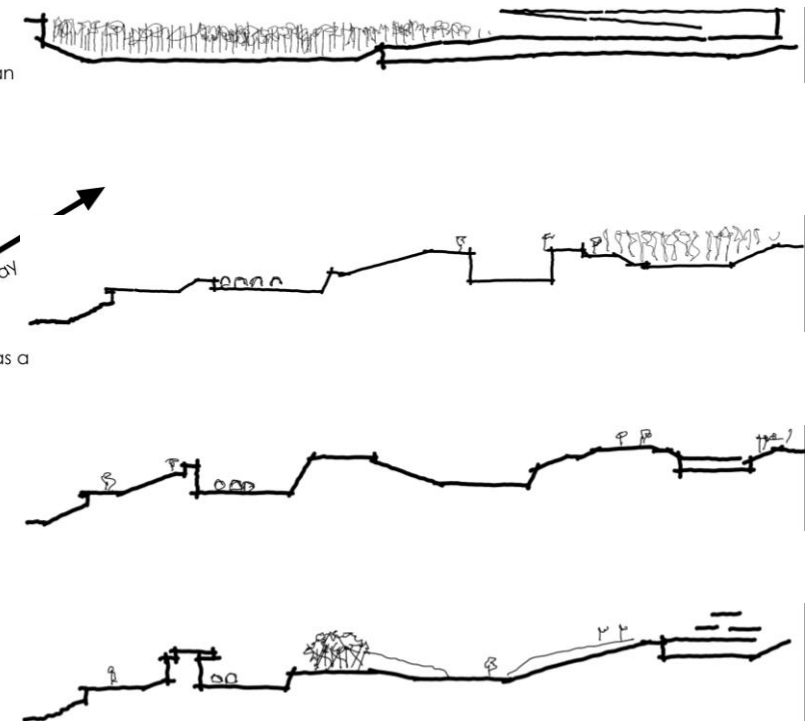
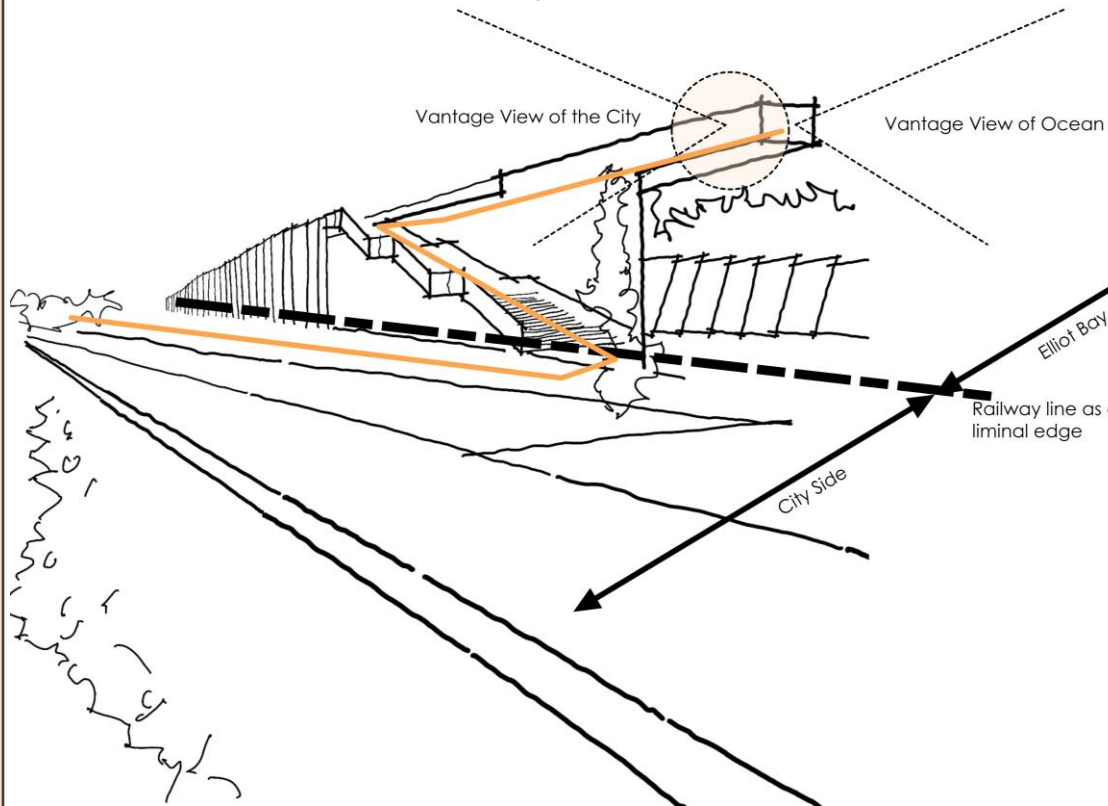
**Figure 90:** Axonometric View of Olympic Sculpture Park (Author, 2021, drawing)

Analysed in terms of:  
Embodiment:

The park is planned as a continuous landscape that wanders from the city to the shoreline (Minner, 2011: Online) giving the visitors interaction with various experiences embodied in the transition between these two bodies. The railway

line offers the rail passengers a different interaction by their virtue of being in motion. The flesh has experiences the park as a fast paced dynamic element for train passengers and as a slow wander element for pedestrians.

The Park defines a new way to exhibit artwork outside of walls and roof of museums. The topographical setting of sculpture of multiple scales invites new interpretations and engagements allowing for... reconnecting the fractured relationships of art, landscape, and urban life (Minner, 2011: Online).



**Figure 91:** Connections and views available at the park (Author, 2021, drawing)

**Figure 92:** Sectional exploration (Author, 2021, drawing)

## Ladeira da Barroquinha

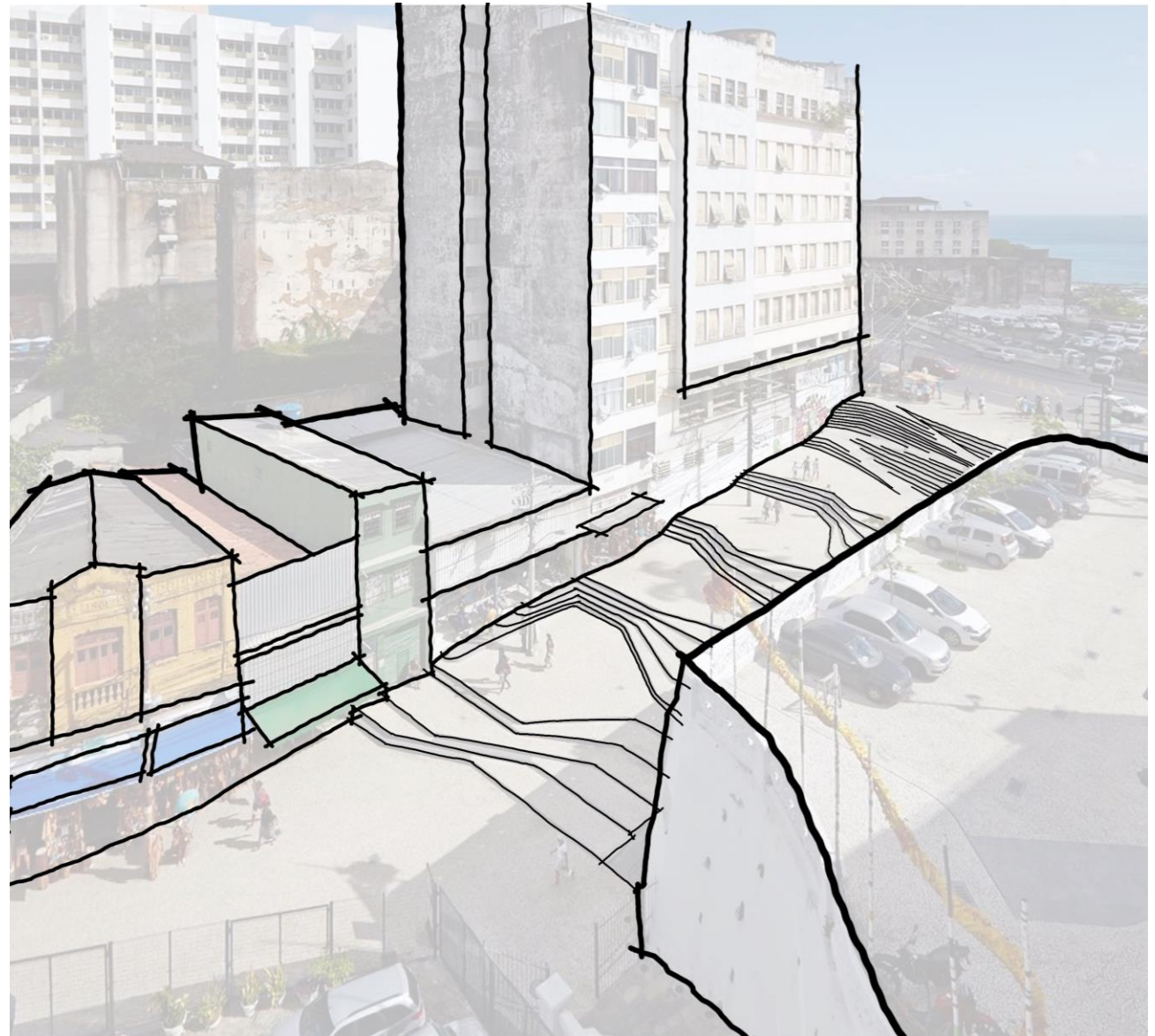
This public square is designed to interact and fit with the context. The new contemporary stairs and public space additions are juxtaposed with the existing historic buildings promoting reimagined ways to engage with existing spaces.

It promotes a new layout that links users to the city center and local market while taking the area's historical significance into account (Ness, 2020: online).

The geography of the site permits a distinctive design, with a range of levels and altitudes connecting to diverse functions encircling the primary pedestrian route (Bessler, 2016: online).

By including the new materiality, the slope is lessened.(Bessler, 2016: online).

Metro architects created a huge staircase-walkway hybrid that meets the needs of local travellers arriving by bus and 'Casual' users were recognized.



**Figure 93:** Axonometric View of Olympic Sculpture Park (Online, 2022. Modified by Author)

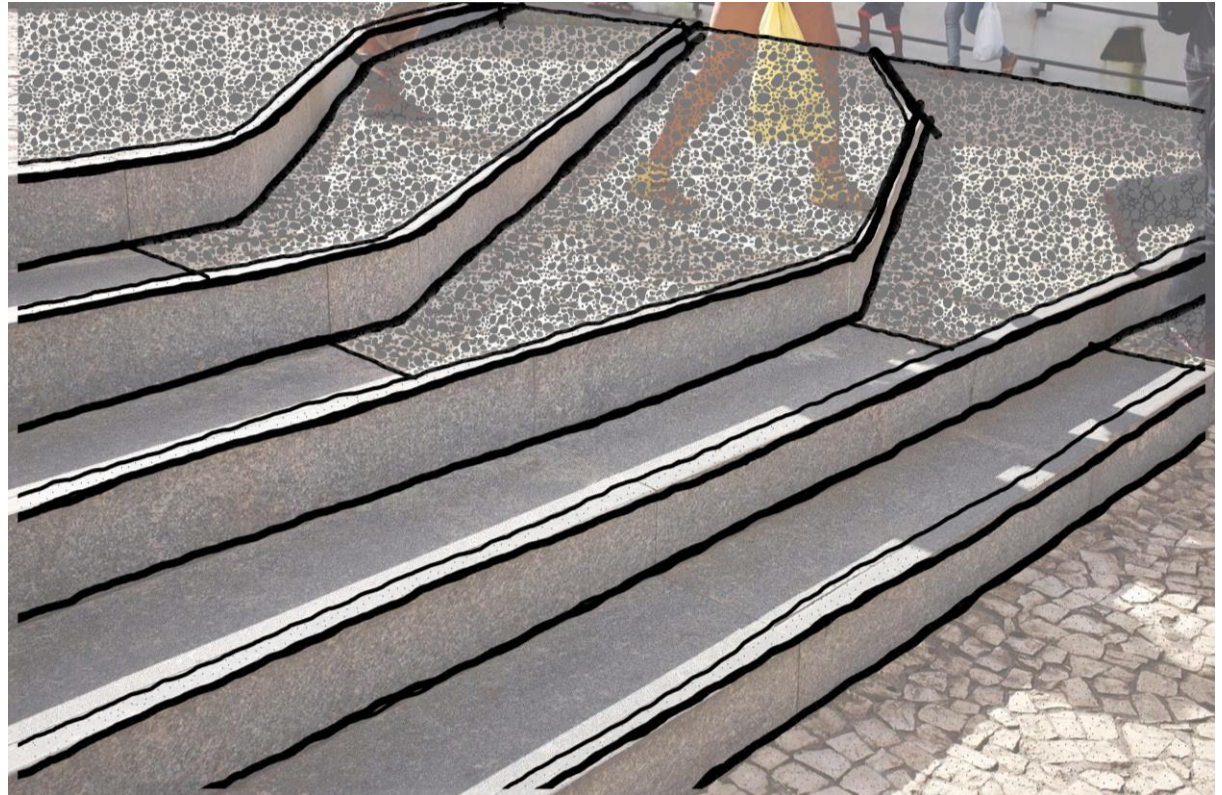
Ladeira da Barroquinha  
Salvador, Brazil  
Metro Arquitetos Associados, 2013

This precedent incorporates historical narrative into the surrounding buildings and historic landmarks, among other tales, into the urban fabric.

A narrative that adheres to the urban fabric's character.

The Precedent offers an experience centered on the movement and rhythm of travelers and pedestrians. Possibility for pedestrians who only wish to cross the site on a link road, pedestrians who prefer a slower pace, with seats and rest points.

Pedestrians have a wide range of experiences. The changing movement on the ground considers the human body in relation to the environment.



**Figure 94:** View of steps (Author, 2022, drawing)

**Bishan Cultural and Art Center**



**Figure 95:** View of Bishan Cultural and Art Center (Online, 2022. Author)

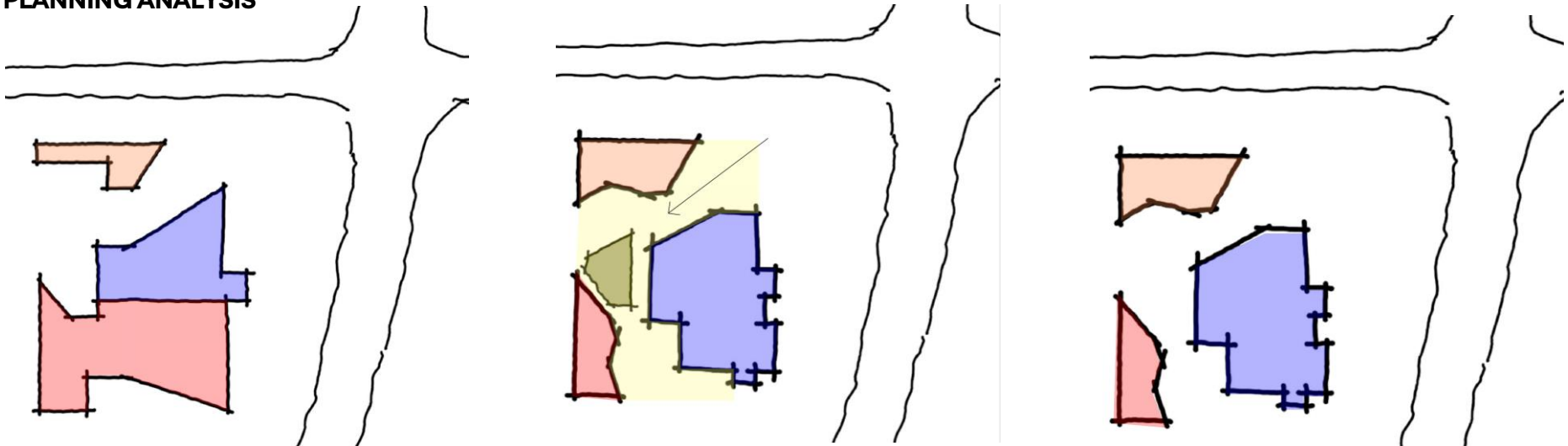
Client	Chongqing Ludao New District Management Committee
Architect	Tanghua Architect & Associates
Location	Bishan, Chongqing, China
Year	Completed 2016

This study is of a building that will assist in formulating a design response related to the construction and structural design to the proposed building. The study consists of high level analysis of the precedent building and preliminary speculation on how this study could influence the design of the proposed inner city building.

Bishan Cultural and Art Center is situated in the north of Central Park Lake, Bishan, Chongqing, China. It forms part of the most important components to the public service complex as it is one of the earliest project in this area. According to the County Annals of Bishan, In the past, people used to take the mountains as jade as these mountains were said to yield jade-like stones. Bishan was the name that they called these mountains. (Archdaily, 2019. Online)

The proposed building at the Bloemfontein inner-city is Community Textile Design School. The initial design intent is to preserve the existing building and add on top of the existing fabric to match the height of existing buildings.

**PLANNING ANALYSIS**

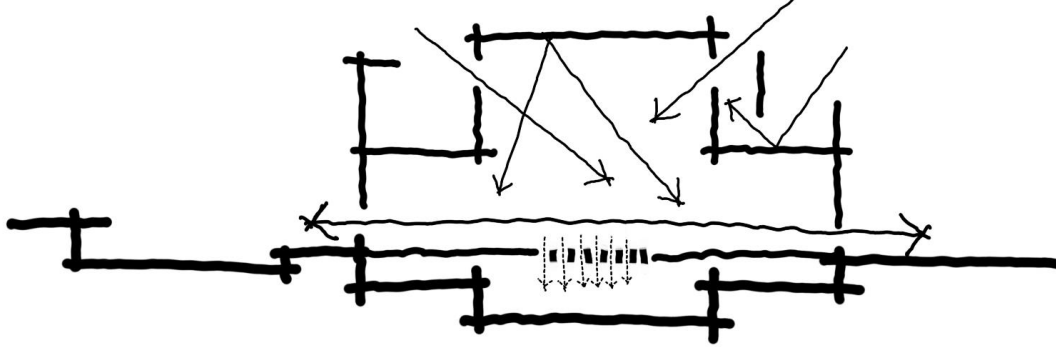


**Figure 96, 97 & 98:** Illustration of the three masses (Author, 2021, drawing)

### Precedent Analysis

Light is filtered into spaces through glazed light punctures on the roof together on the facades.

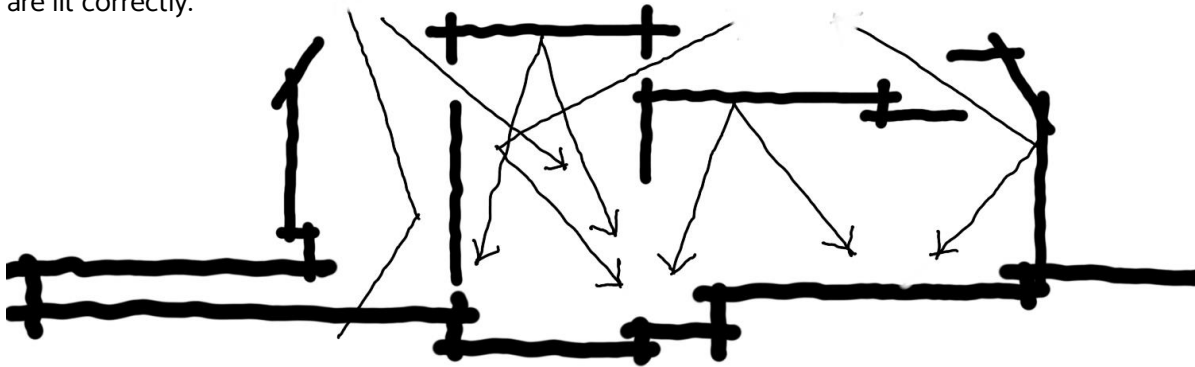
This light filters into the spaces below allowing for natural light to be utilised



**Figure 99:** Illustration of light filtering into spaces (Author, 2022, drawing)

The huge atrium spaces are also lit from natural light. The different levels on drawing light into spaces creates zones that are lit with different intensities of light.

The light is filtered through an external skin that provides some shading to ensure that the spaces are lit correctly.



**Figure 100:** Illustration of light filtering into spaces (Author, 2022, drawing)

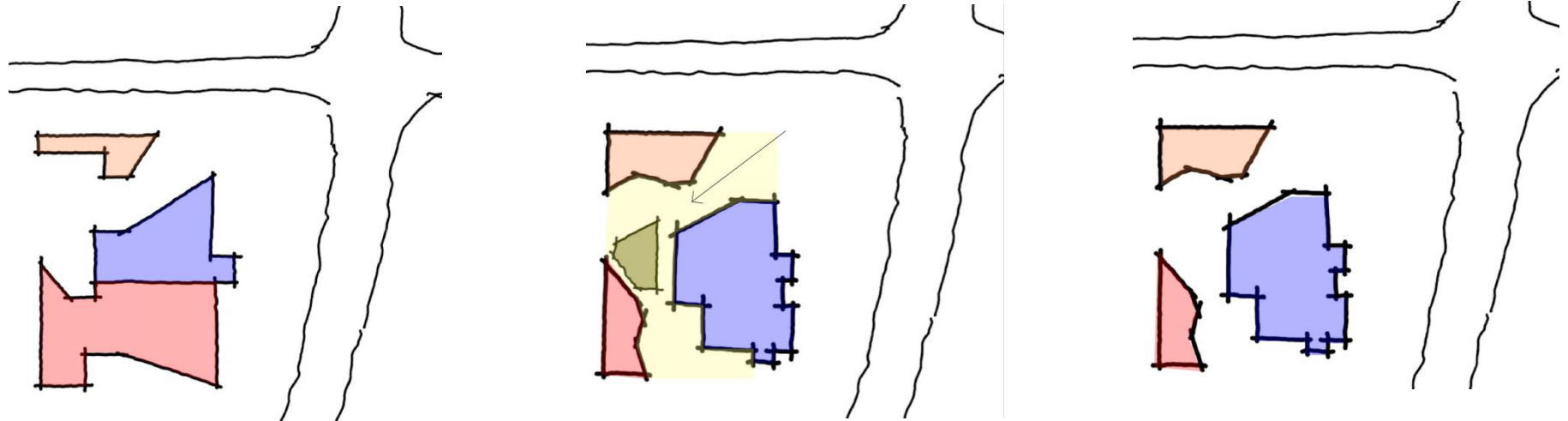
## Planning analysis

### Precedent Analysis

Bishan Cultural and Art Center is situated in the north of Central Park Lake, Bishan, Chongqing, China.

It forms part of the most important components to the public service complex as it is one of the earliest project in this area. According to the County Annals of Bishan, In the past, people used to take the mountains as jade as these mountains were said to yield jade-like stones. Bishan was the name that they called these mountains.

The building consists of 3 massifs stand opposite to each other, and the valley between them extends nearby. Such natural relationship inspire us. To us, it would be the best response to the nature ,the city and the culture. The mass is cut according to the tendency of the valley. And this helps to connect several public spaces. The landscape in the western part of the site will flow into the building through the platform on the 2nd floor. This platform connects 3 masses and plays the role as City Parlor. (Tanghua Architect & Associates, 2019. Online)



**Figure 101, 102 & 103:** Illustration of the three masses (Author, 2022, drawing)

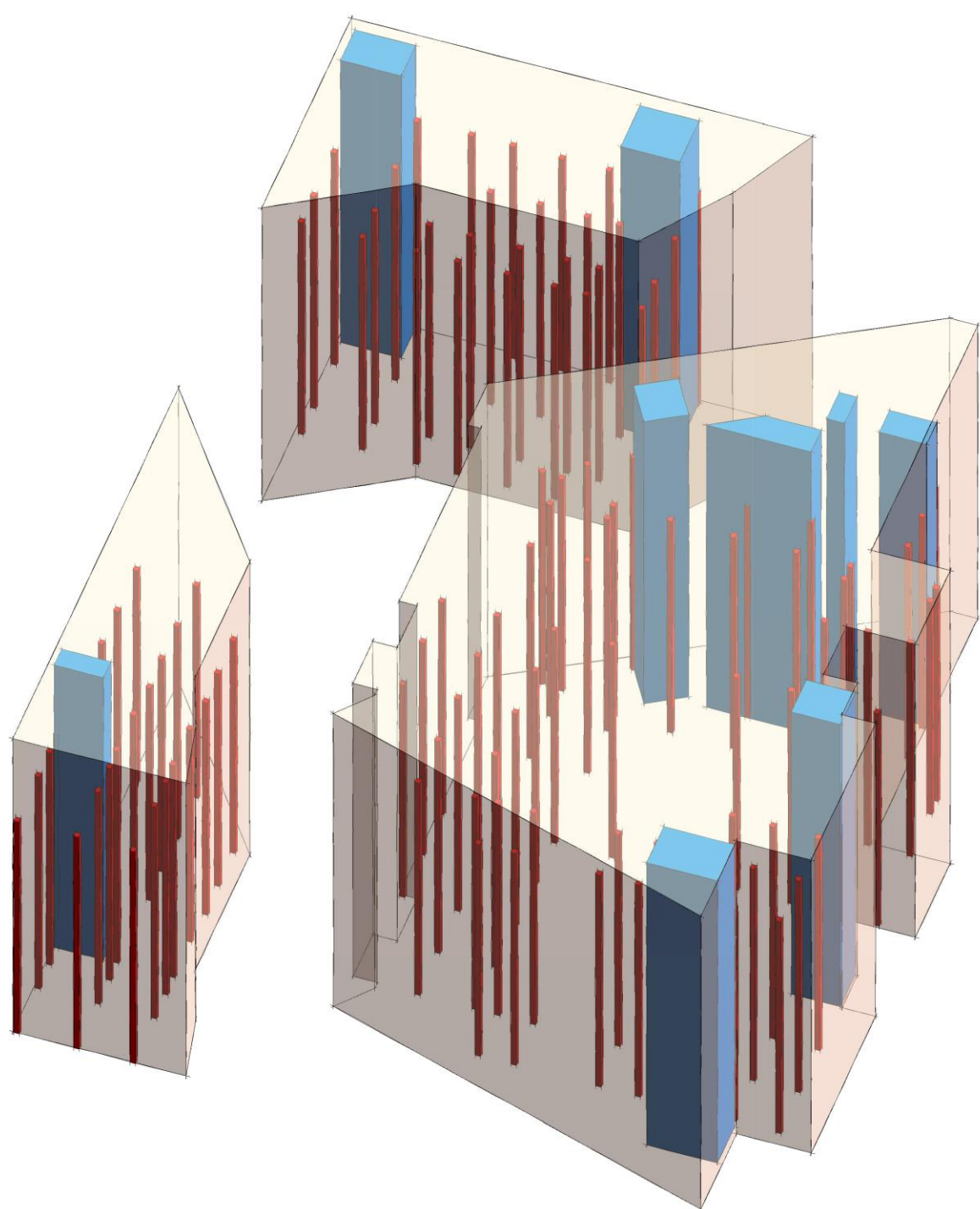
## Structural & circulation analysis

### Precedent Analysis

The building consists of various circulation zones (indicated in blue in figure 08). The vertical circulation zones predominantly consist of fire escape stairs together with lifts. This grouping of these functions makes the coordination and function of the building much better.

The building structure is made of columns that carry the structure (indicated in red in figure 08). The column structure is on a grid and the secondary walls are aligned with columns.

The use of various sizes of columns, probably with transfer beams, has resulted in the creation of large uninterrupted spaces.



**Figure 104:** Illustration of Columns and Circulation (Author, 2022, drawing)

## Specialised discipline analysis

### Precedent Analysis

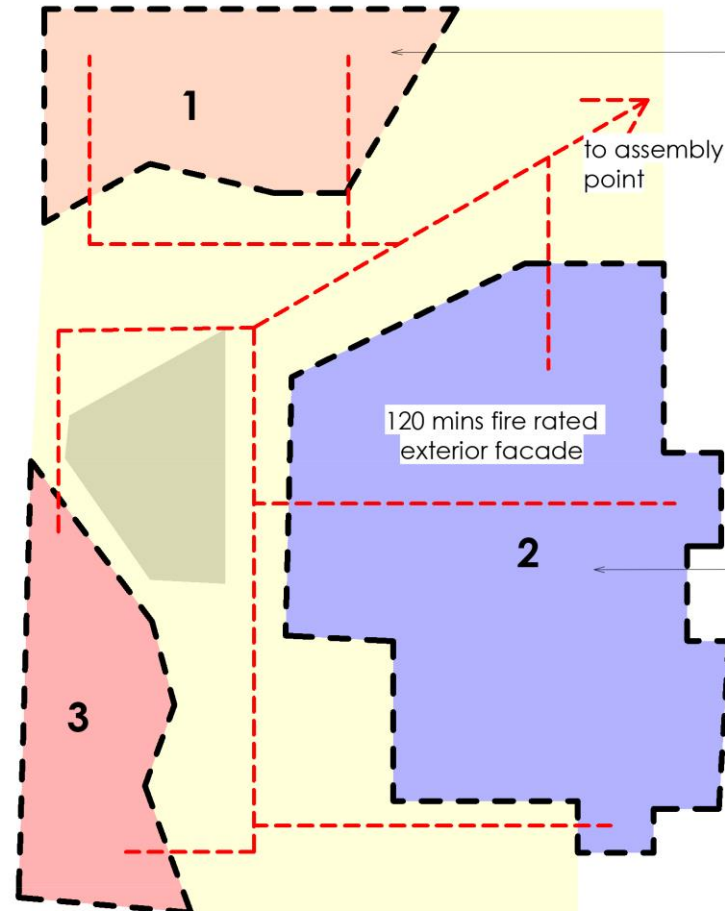
Fire Compliance Interpretation  
(SA Context)

The separation of buildings to three components allows for a simpler approach to the fire complex.

In the context of South Africa the three components of the building will need to be allocated an occupancy classification as per NBR.

The shared exterior spaces will be use the fire requirements of the occupancy with the most stringent requirements.

Due to the lack of some deemed to satisfy requirements such as universal access and sprinklers I would argue that a rational design would have been applicable in the context of South Africa.



#### Building 1&3 Fire compliance

1. 120 mins fire rated exterior facade
2. Escape Stairs & or Fireman's lift
3. FHR/Extenguishers
4. 60min seperation between occupancies and storage
5. Escape signage

#### Building 2 Fire compliance

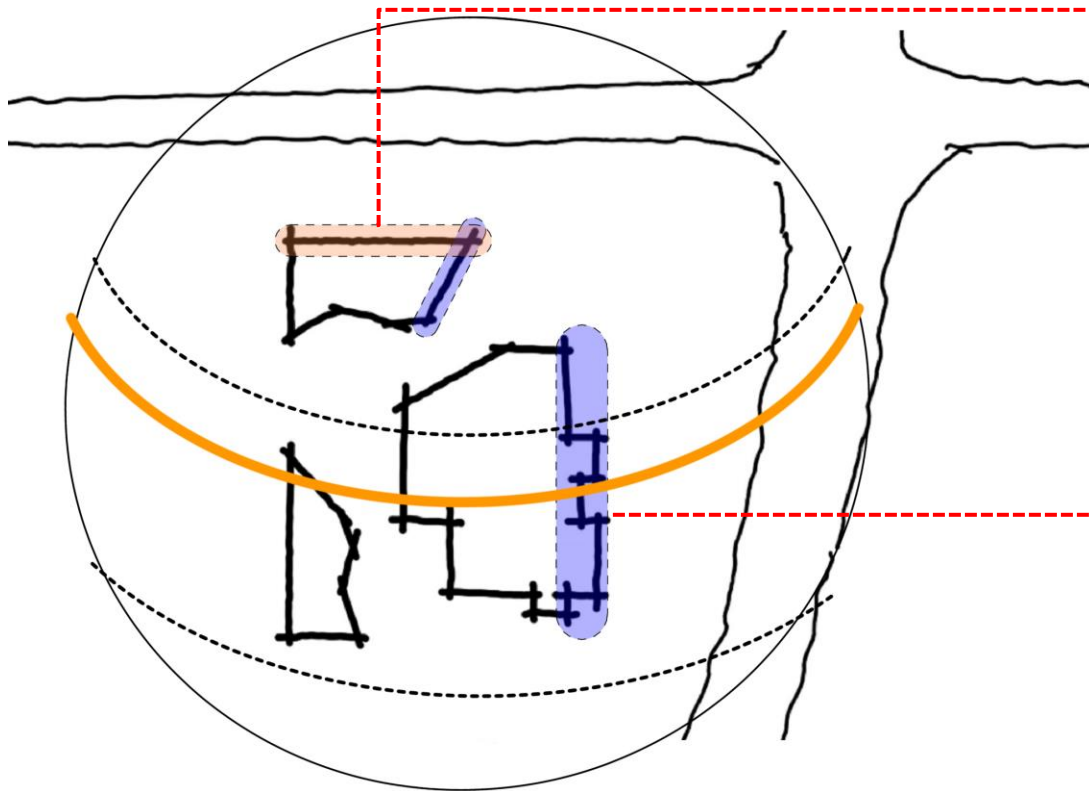
1. 120 mins fire rated exterior facade
2. Escape Stairs & or Fireman's lift
3. FHR/Extenguishers
4. 60min seperation between occupancies and storage
5. Escape signage
6. **Sprinklers**
7. **Smoke Divisions**

**Figure 105:** Illustration of Fire compliance (Author, 2022, drawing)

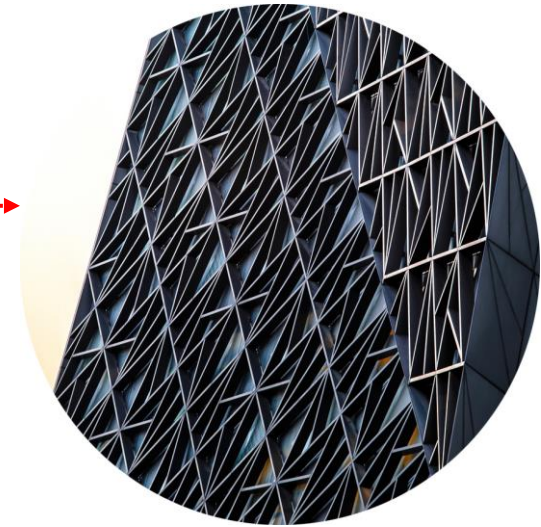
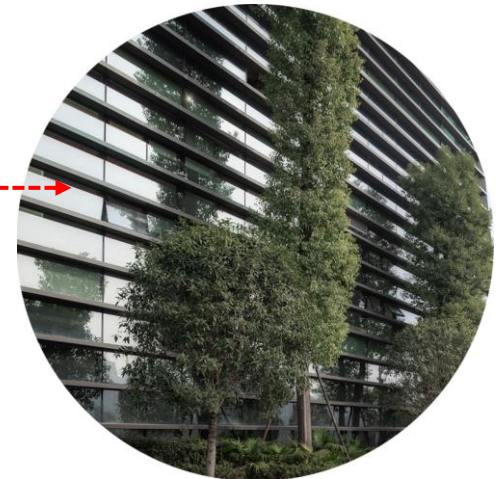
## Climatic response

### Precedent Analysis

Even though in the hemisphere the use of different types of shading is evident in the building. Horizontal shading devices are used on the northern side of the building while vertical devices are on the eastern side.



**Figure 106:** Illustration of sun path  
(Author, 2022, drawing)



**Figure 107 & 108:** Illustration of shading devices applied in the building (Author, 2022, drawing)

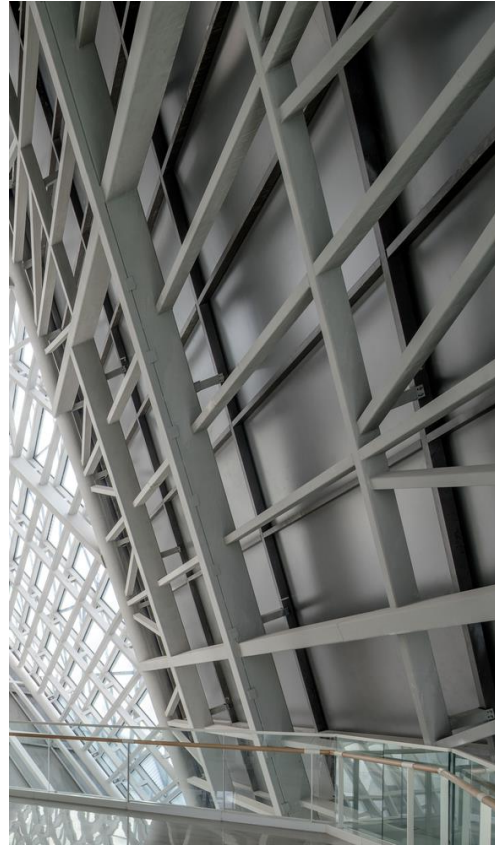
## Detail interpretations

### Precedent Analysis

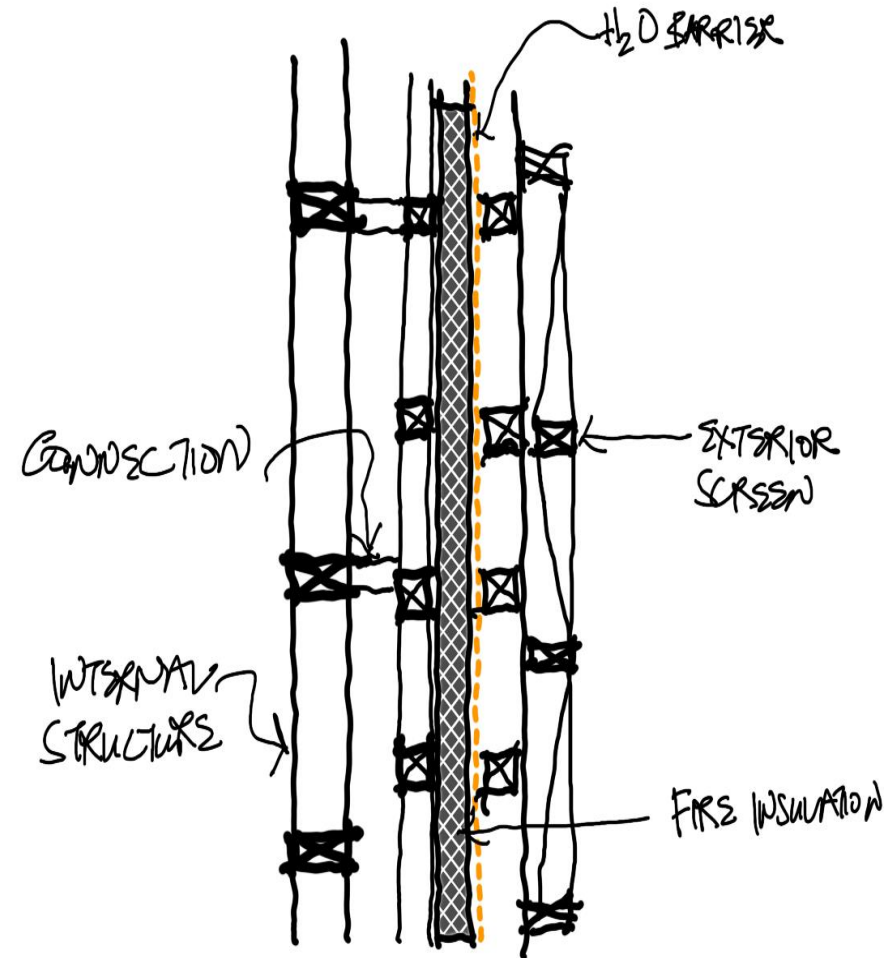
The general detailing of the precedent building has been well thought and constructed.

The use of various skins are evident. The façade structure is made of steel which is located internally forming a feature. The façade build-up is attached to this structure. The separation of the structures allows for the structural components to be designed to span large volumes.

This will be applied in the proposed building. I am interested in the freedom provided by these type of responses to façade resolution



**Figure 109:** Details of façade, internally (Archdailt, 2019, online)



**Figure 110:** Interpretation of detail (Author, 2022, drawing)

## Environmental Considerations

The proposed will have the north and west facades predominantly exposed to the weather.

### Treatment of North Façade

The north façade has huge glazing panels which allow for morning sun which is needed during the early hours of the morning especially in winter. Adjustable horizontal shading devices are installed to allow for control in summer seasons

### Treatment of West Façade

The west façade has narrow vertical glazing panels with the façade predominately made of brickwork. The west late afternoon/evening sun is the worst in terms of glare and adjustable vertical shading devices are installed to allow for control of the glare.

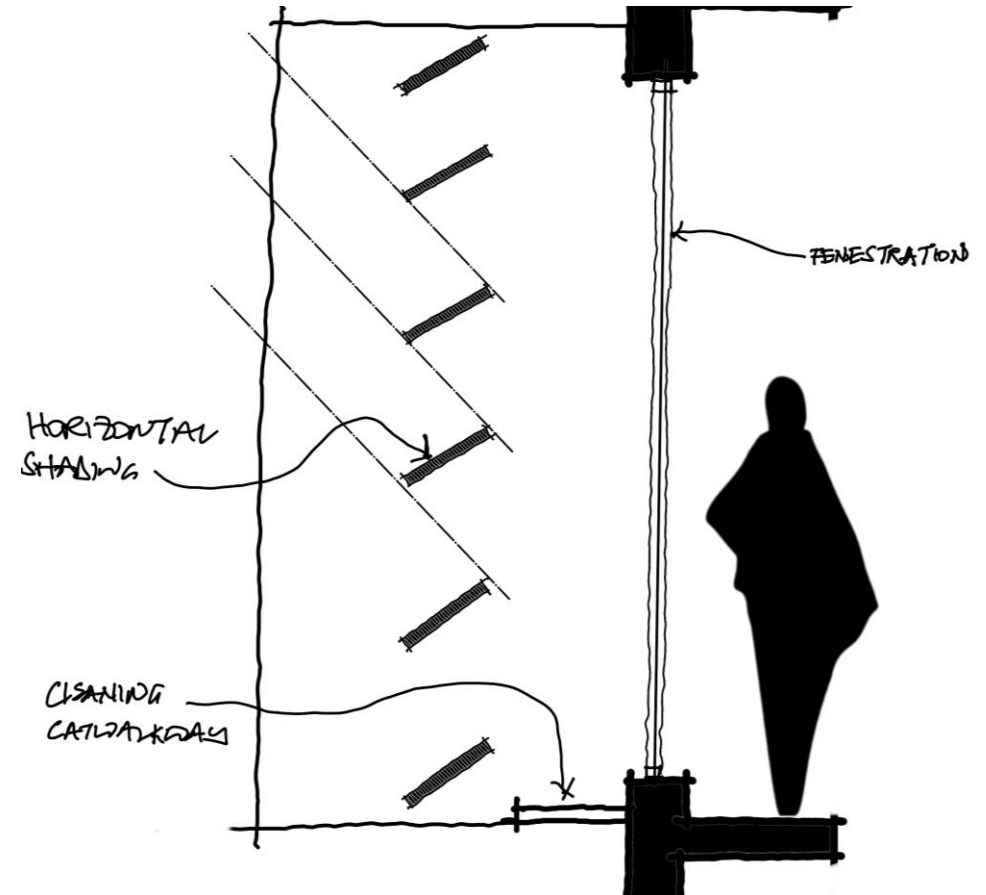
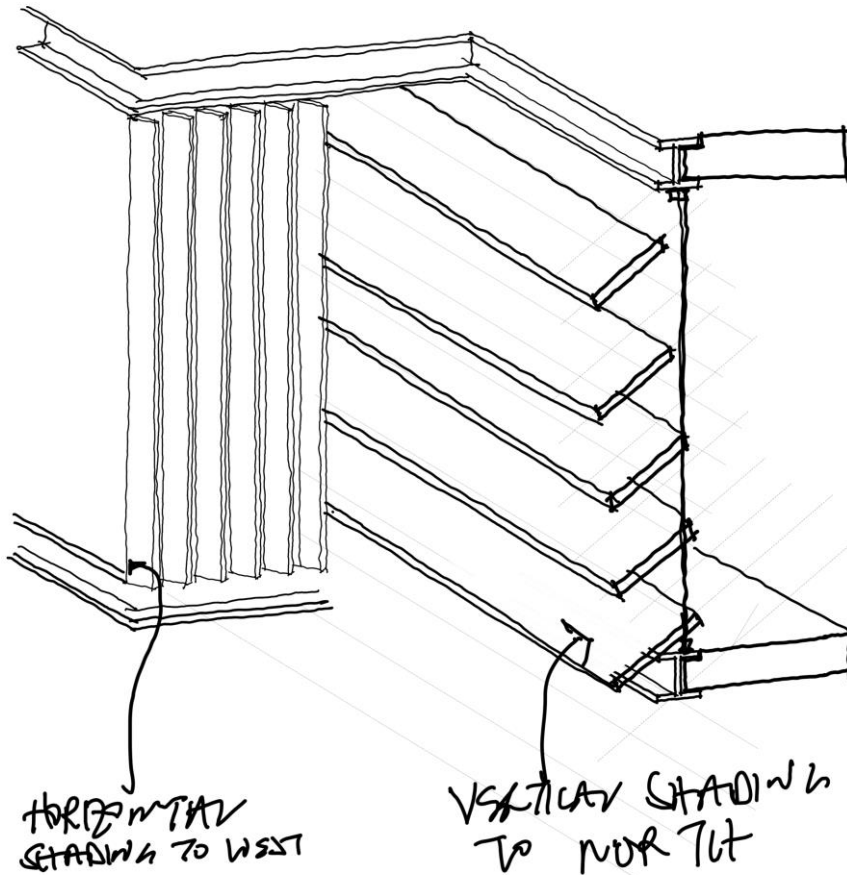


Figure 111-112: Proposed solar shading (Author, 2022, drawing)

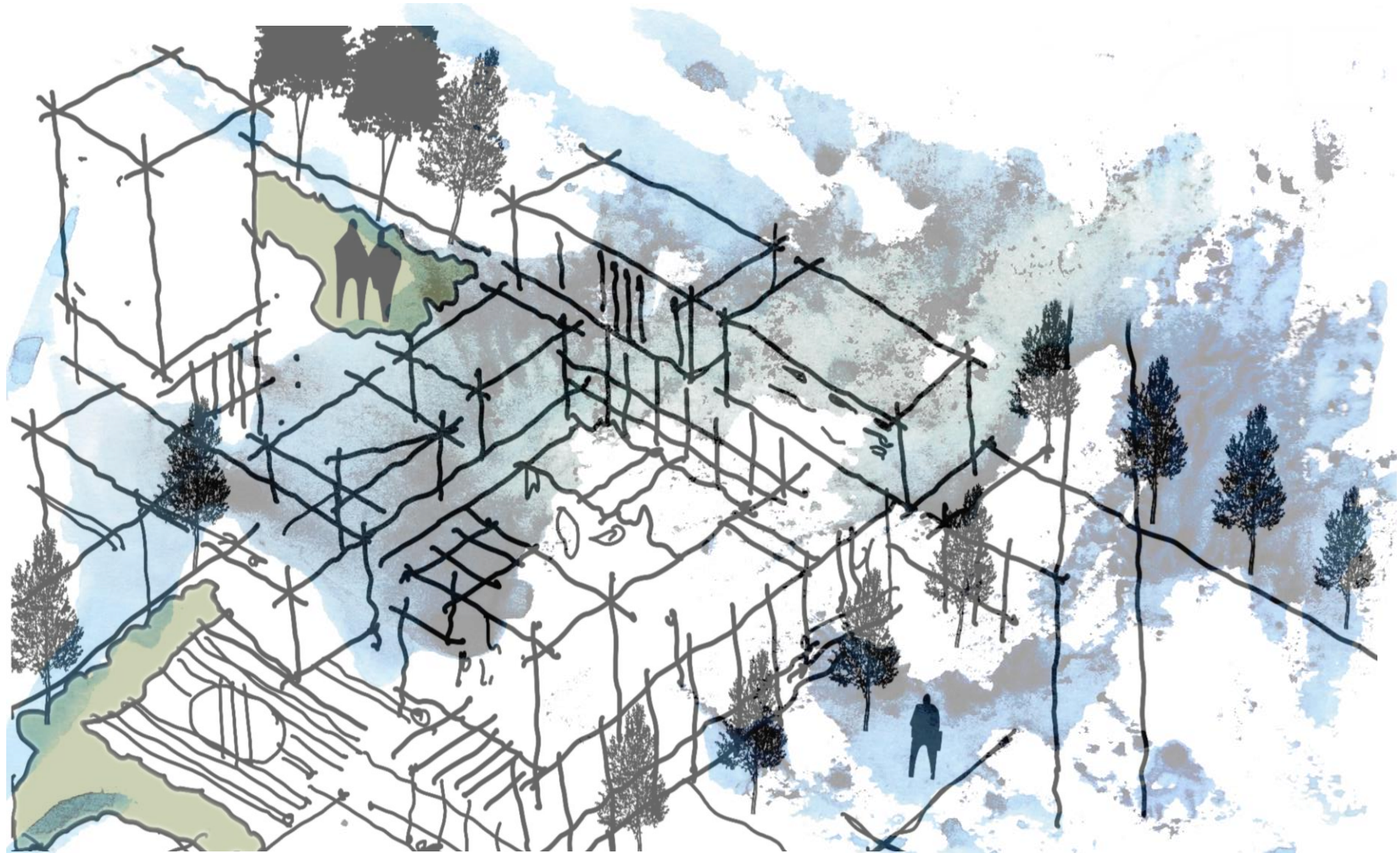
## Lessons from Precedent Studies

The precedent studies have provided lessons on the choice of materials in relation to the context. Of particular importance was the need to acknowledge the context in the choice of materials.

Furthermore consideration for different climatic responses to different building orientation was highlighted.

Structural systems and specialised services need to be defined to suit the design intent.

# Part 3: Application



**Figure 113:** Spatial settings that evoke embodied experiences (Author, 2022, drawing)

## Choice and details of programme

The research related to theory, technology, contextual exploration and case studied has assisted to determine the appropriate programme. These studies have indicated that the building need to be an image of the community, it needs to be the product both of immediate sensation and of the memory of past experience, intended to guide discernment through interpretation of the community's identity.

This section of the thesis will be guided by the analysis of the context in terms of topology, morphology and typology to detail the proposed programme.

The proposed building will be of public and community typology. The proposed intervention is a 'Iziko' Community Life Centre for Sustainable Building Technologies. The building will be used by the community in housing their daily community activities and in educational programmes related to fire.

This programme has been chosen due to the lack of community buildings in the area for use by the community. The preceding investigations also indicated the need to provide a platform for programmes related to fire disaster and built technology.

Possible challenge with community buildings relate to maintenance and upkeep. The building will need to resemble the identity of the community for the community to relate to and protect the building. Functions in the building will need to provide for income generation for maintenance purposes.

The form giving elements of the building will be guided by the context; of particular significance are the surrounding mountains.

Space sizes  
 Reception / Information Centre (60m<sup>2</sup> including ablutions)  
 Visitor's centre (30m<sup>2</sup>)  
 Administration offices (60m<sup>2</sup>)  
 Building technology studio spaces (30m<sup>2</sup>)  
 Stalls (100m<sup>2</sup>)  
 Dry & Cold storage (60m<sup>2</sup>)  
 Administration and empowerment offices (60m<sup>2</sup>)  
 Braai meat market, Cultural market and interchange (200m<sup>2</sup> along pathway)

## Concept

The concept of SPINE - Just like the rhythm of a Heart beat, the concept explores intricate aspects of design

Exploring how forms, processes and metaphors inform the design.

Repetition & Rhythm further accentuates and defines the design

Like a heart beat, the concept attempts to reach all aspects of the design; Resulting in dynamic interfaces.

Ordering & prioritising spaces is essential to follow the concept of heart beat.

Visual connection is prioritised to create a tempting connection with the eye.

Movement, progression, inter-connectivity & relation between spaces is essential.

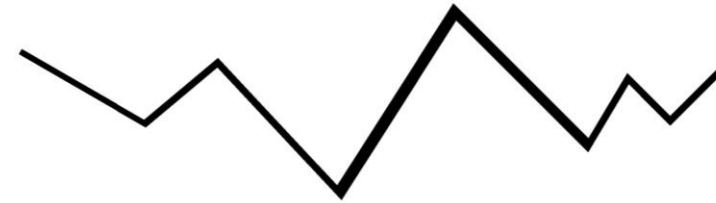
Contrast, Juxtaposing, Re-imagining, Layering, Wrapping, Structuring all compliment the concept of Heart Beat

Continuity, Expression, Infinity, are all characteristics of the Concept of Heart Beat.

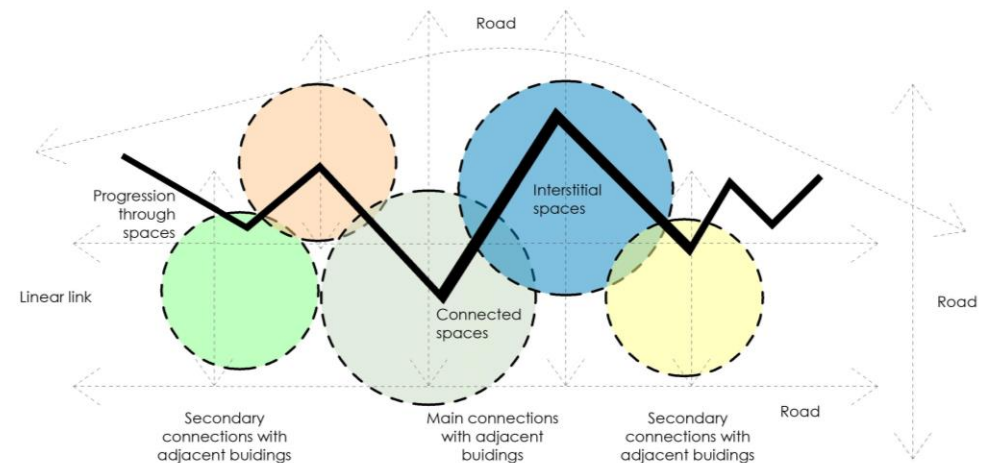
Understanding the Context, Human Scale and Interpretation of the concept by carefully choosing the appropriate form and technology is important.

Uniformity, Wrapping are defining aspects of the design are to be expressed

### Spine as an ordering element



### Spatial Hierarchy & Connections



### Defining Elements



**Figure 114:** Cconcept diagram (Author, 2022, drawing)

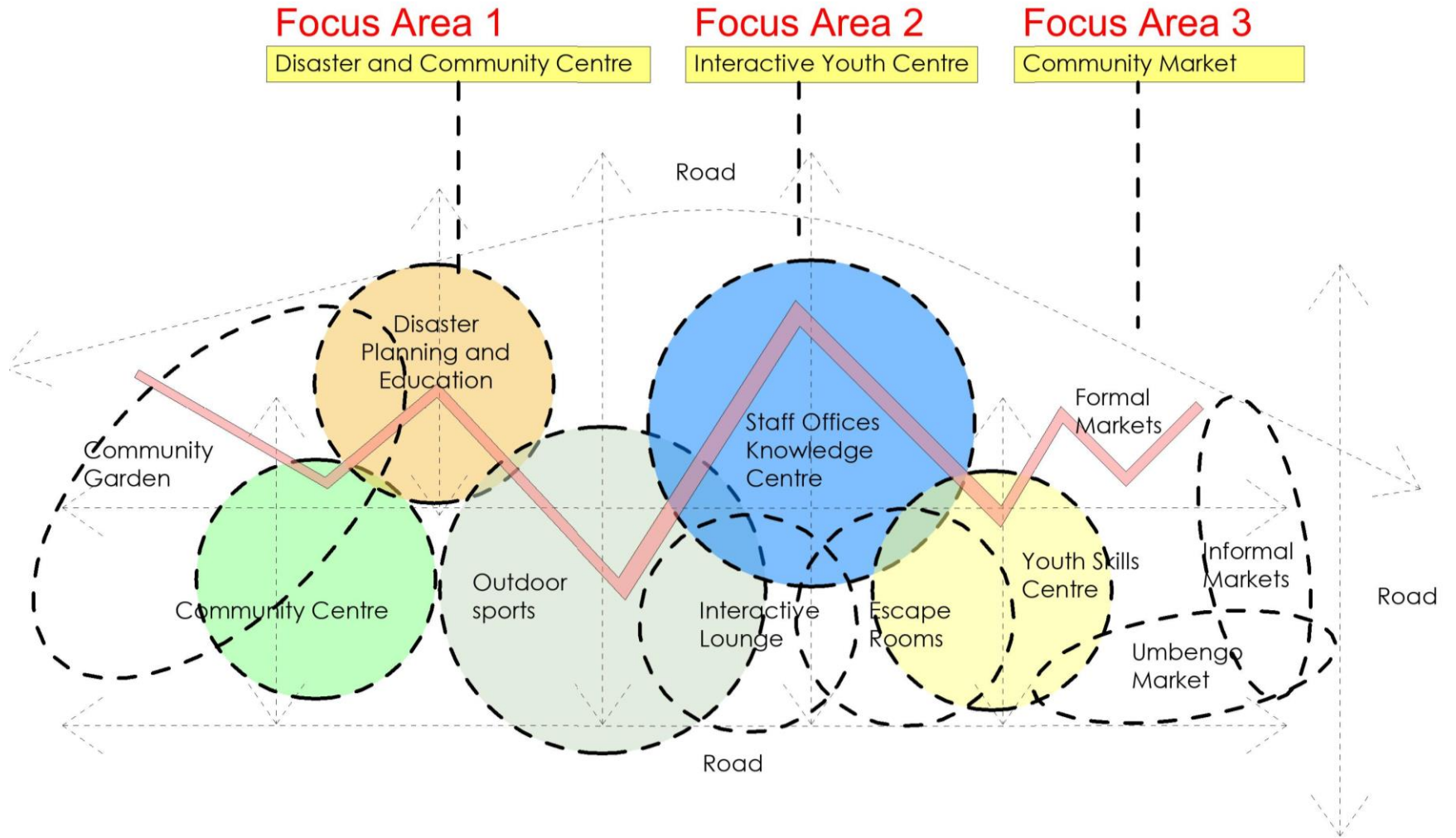


Figure 115: Proposed Organogram (Author, 2022, drawing)

## Concept 1: Harmony

### FRAGMENTATION

Continuity,  
Expression,  
Infinity,  
Uniformity,  
Wrapping

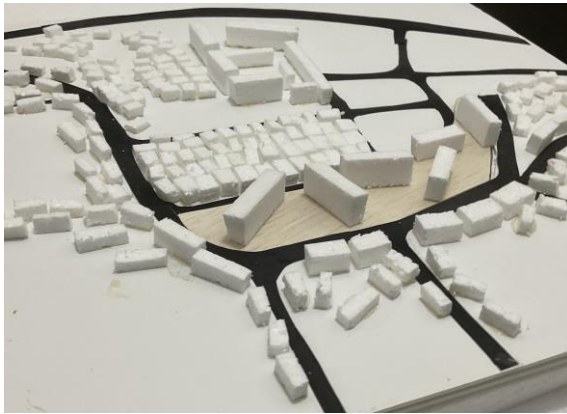


Figure 116: Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

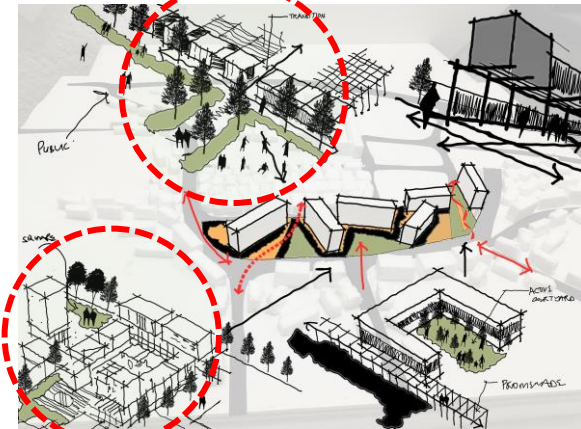


Figure 117: Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

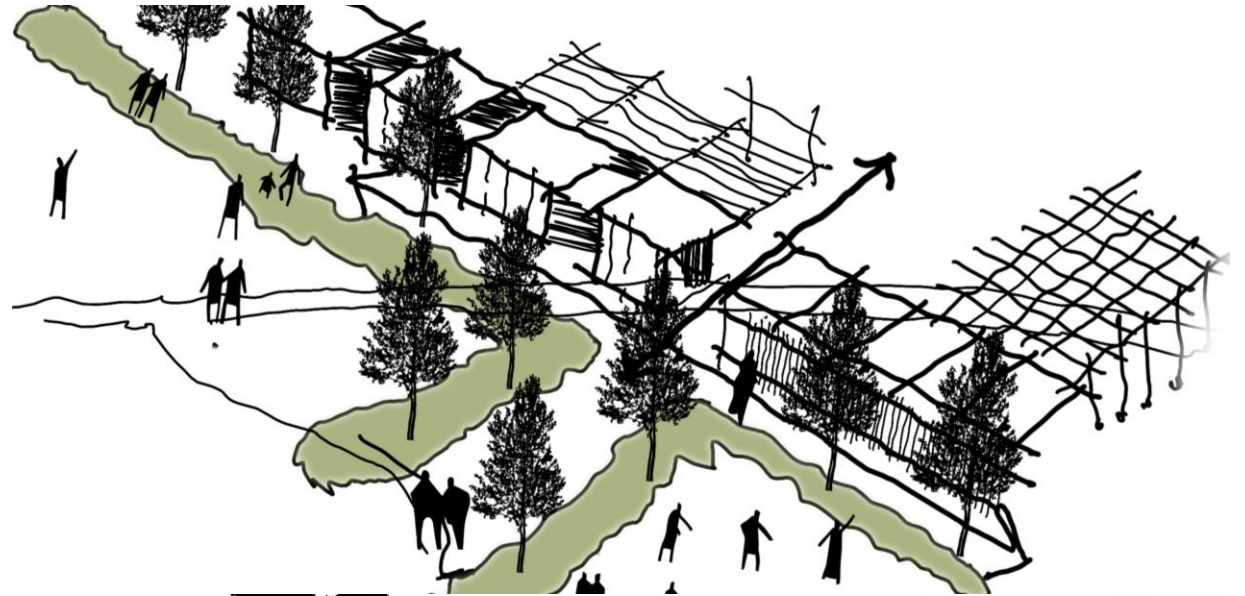


Figure 118: Drawing (Author, 2022, model)

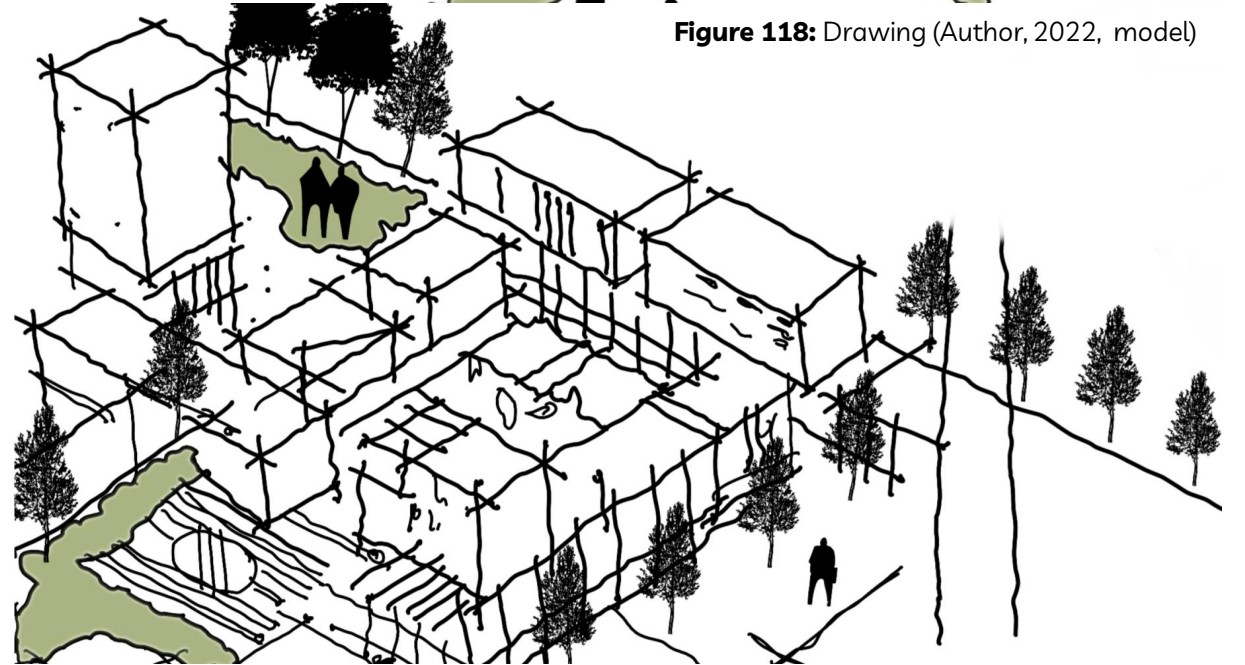
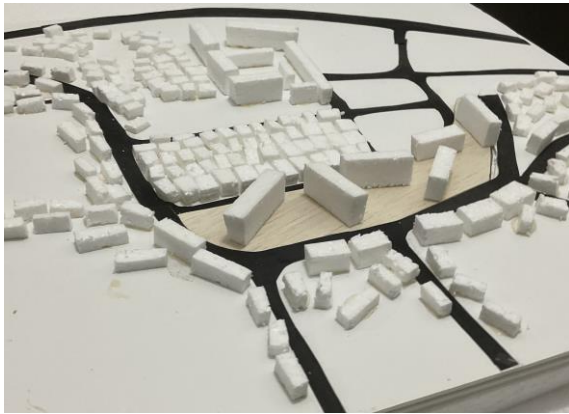


Figure 119: Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

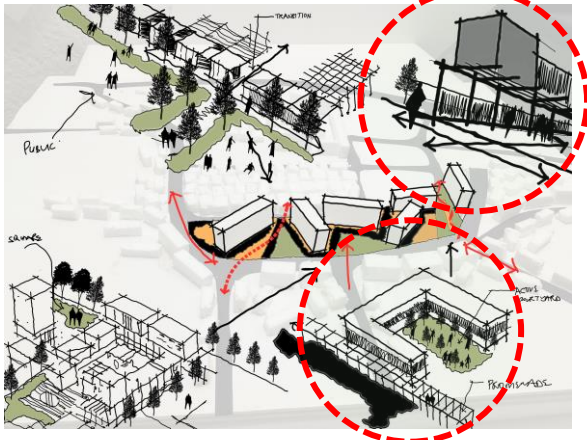
## Concept 1: Harmony

### FRAGMENTATION

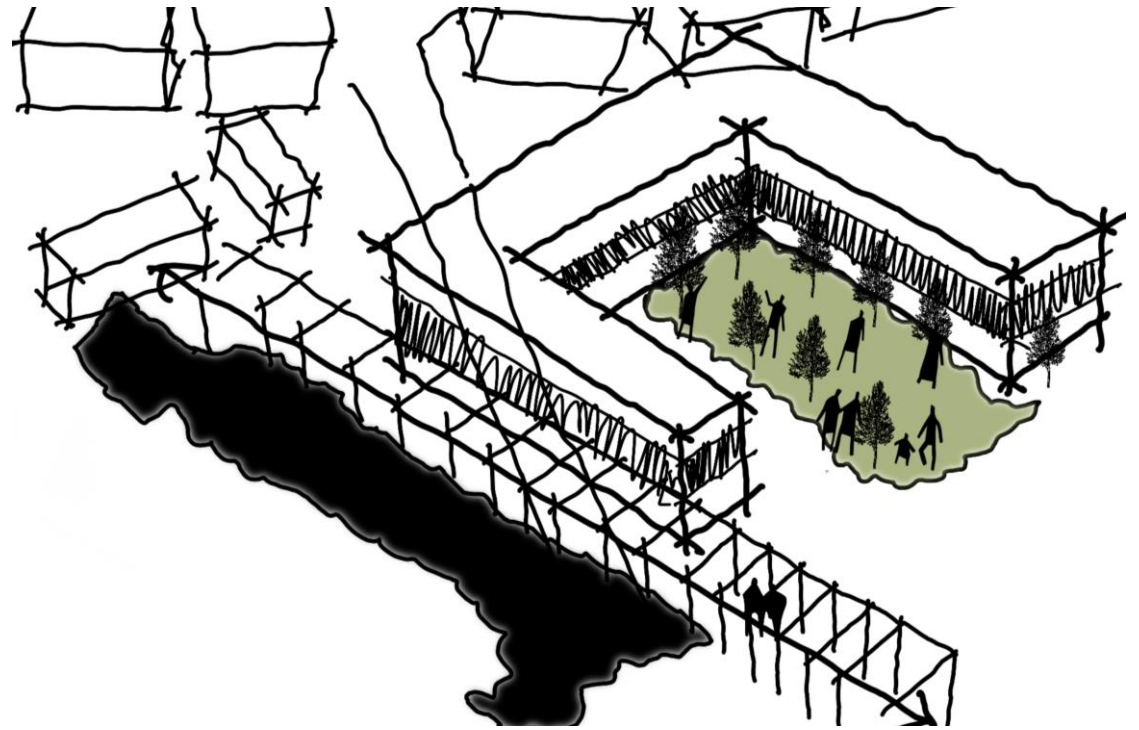
Continuity,  
Expression,  
Infinity,  
Uniformity,  
Wrapping



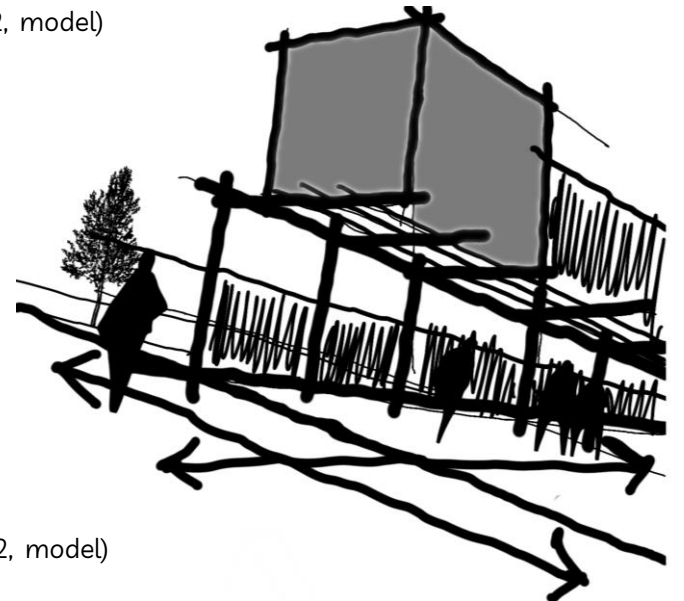
**Figure 110:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 111:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 112:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 113:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

## Concept 2: Intersection

CONNECTING SURROUNDINGS TO THE BUILDING

This concepts explores connections between the street and the building.

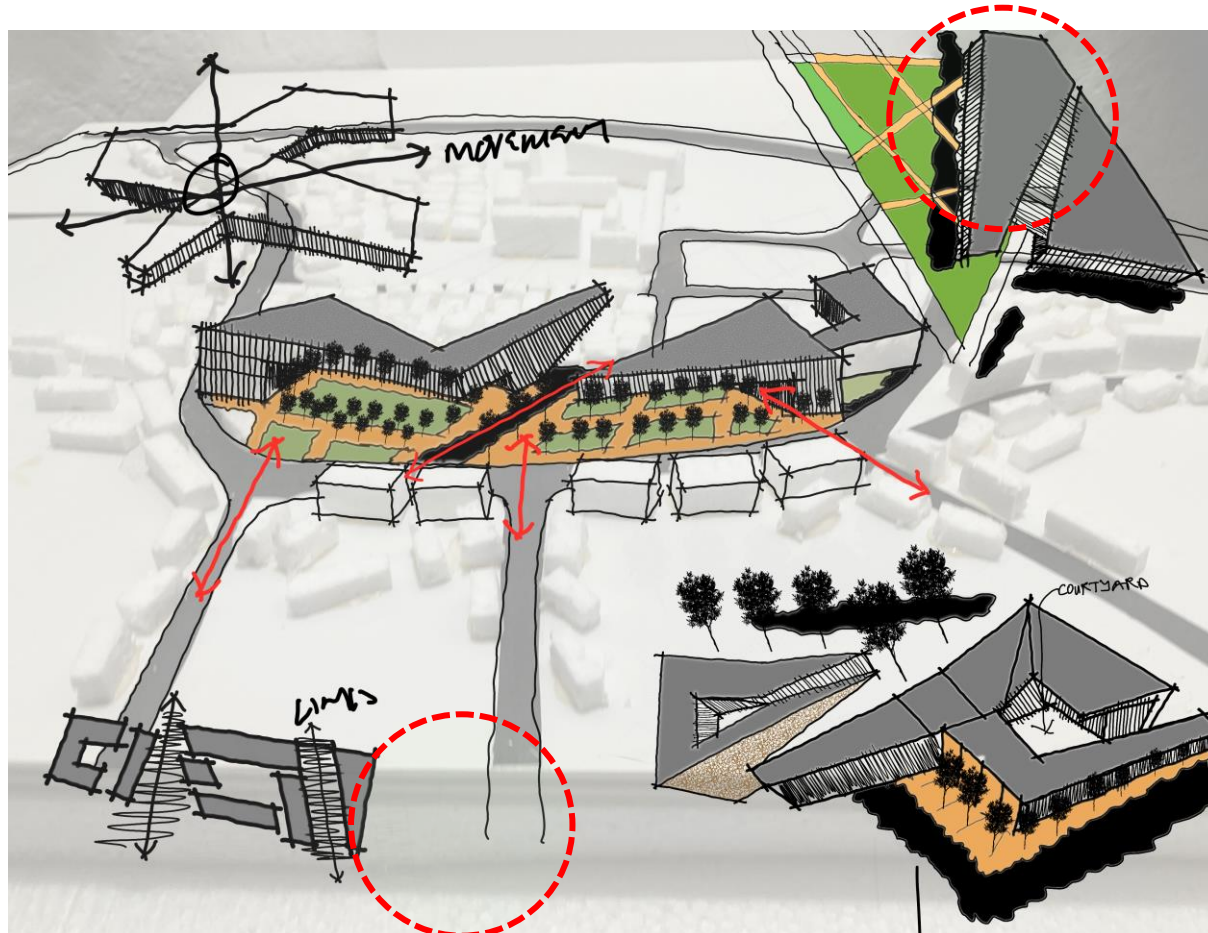


Figure 114: Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



Figure 115: Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

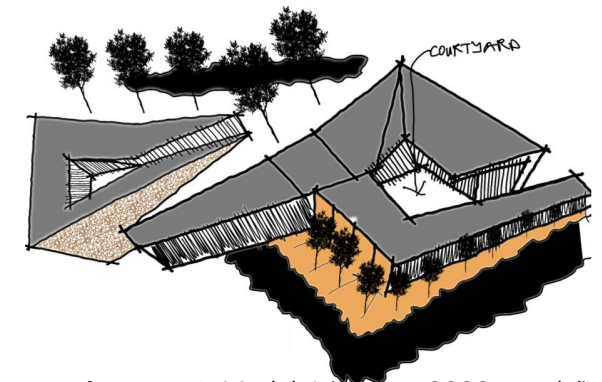


Figure 116: Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

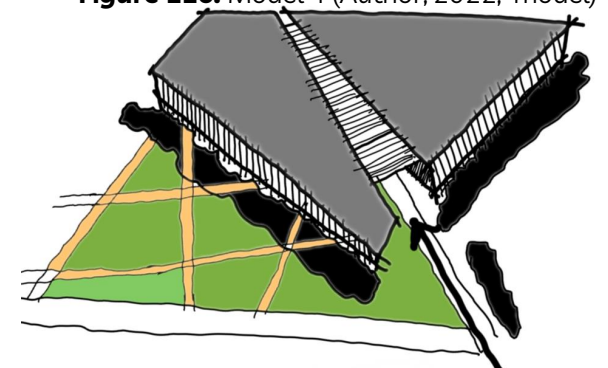


Figure 117: Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

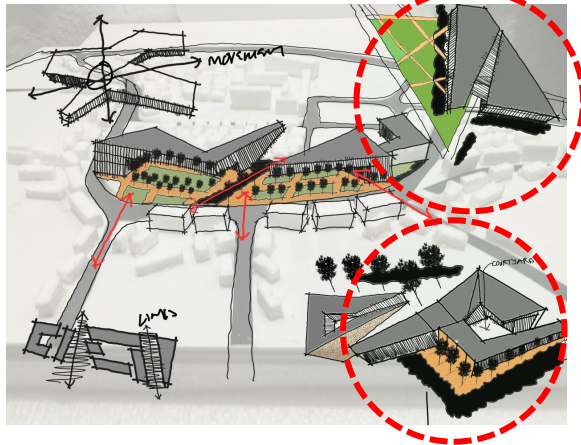
## Concept 2: Intersection

CONNECTING SURROUNDINGS TO THE BUILDING

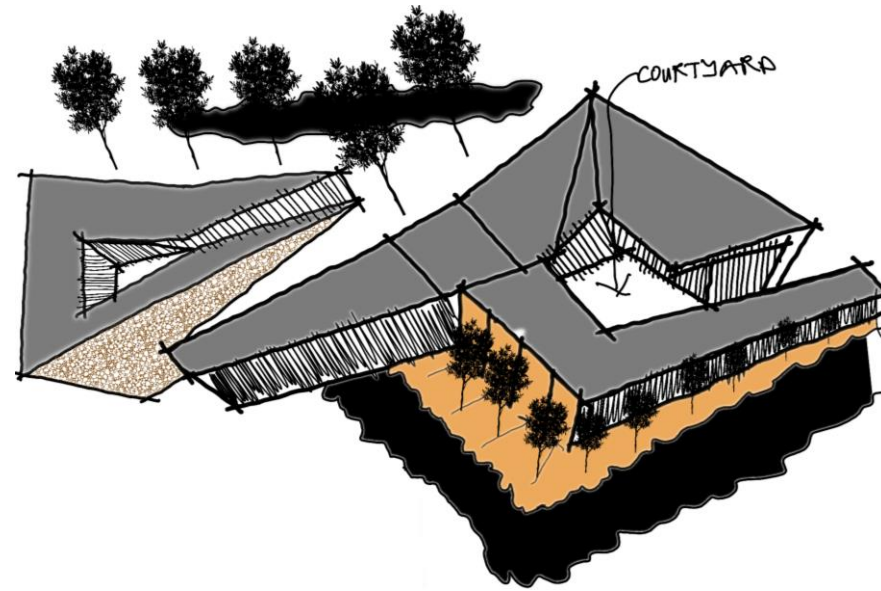
Ordering  
Visual connection  
Movement  
Progression,  
Inter-connectivity



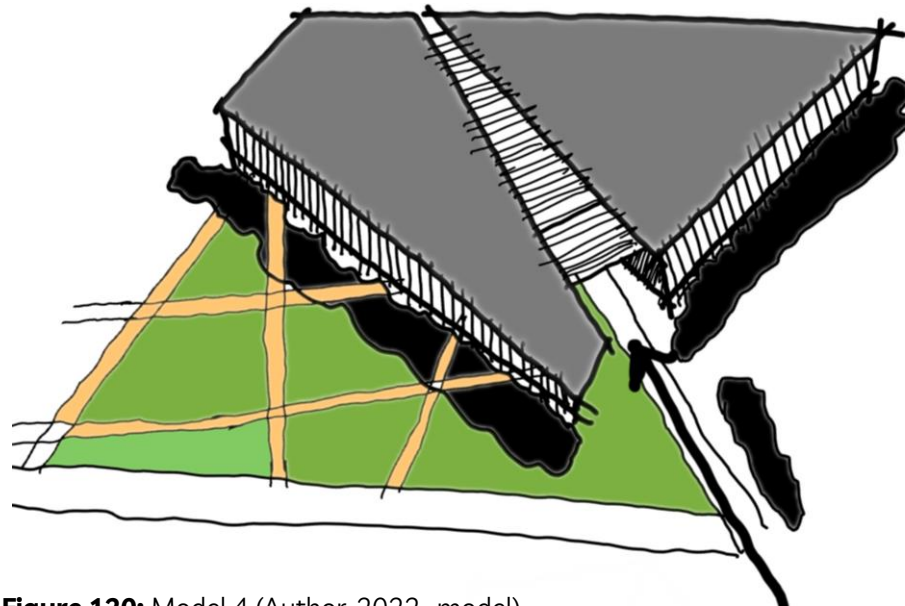
**Figure 118:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 119:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 119:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 120:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

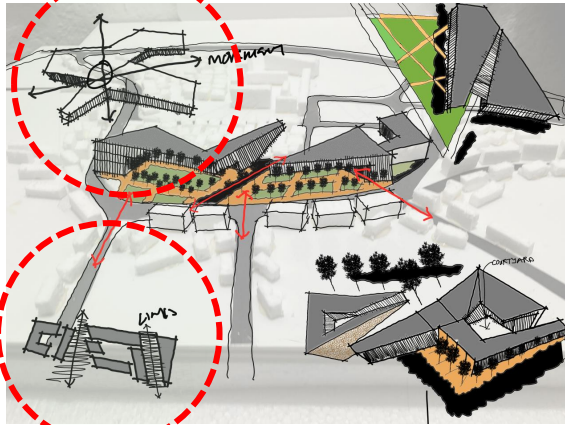
## Concept 2: Intersection

CONNECTING SURROUNDINGS TO THE BUILDING

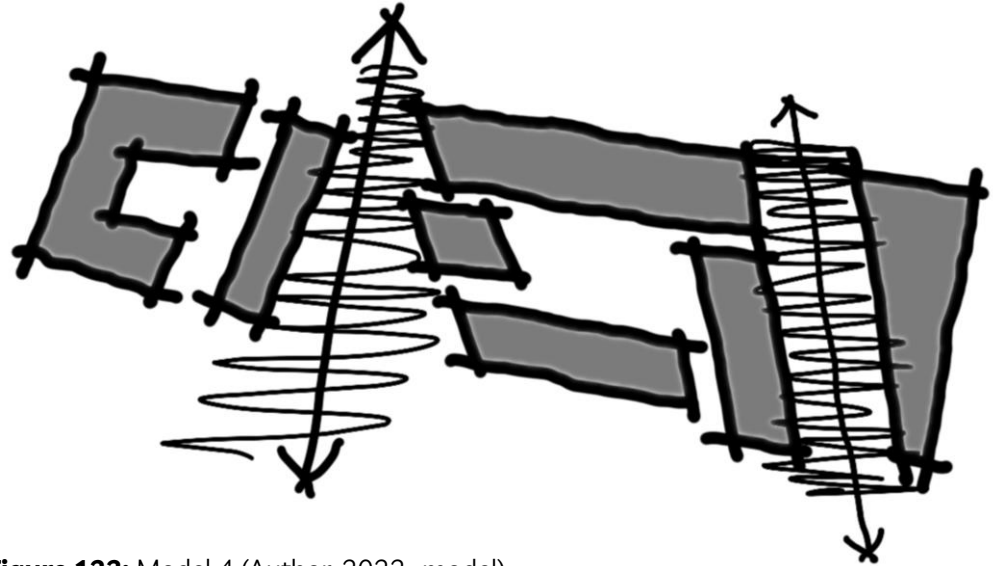
Ordering  
Visual connection  
Movement  
Progression,  
Inter-connectivity



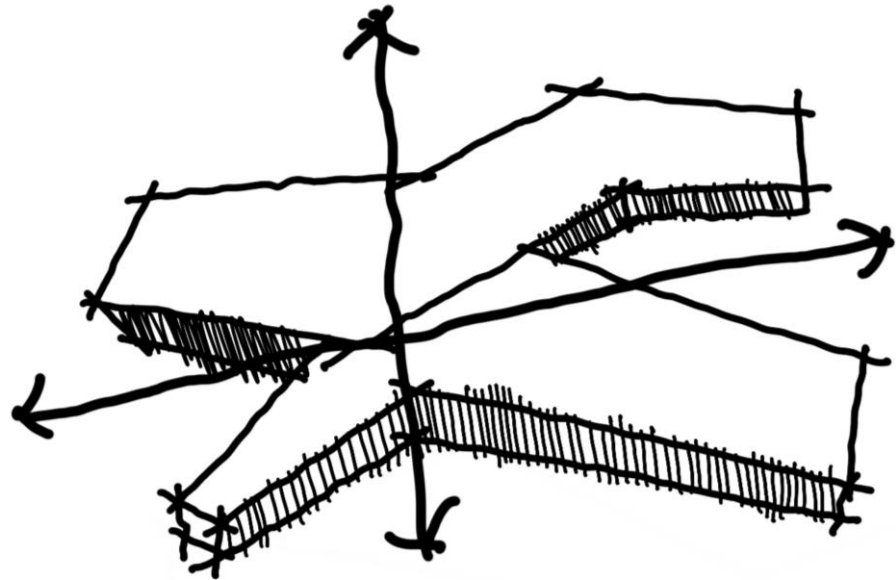
**Figure 121:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 122:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)



**Figure 123:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

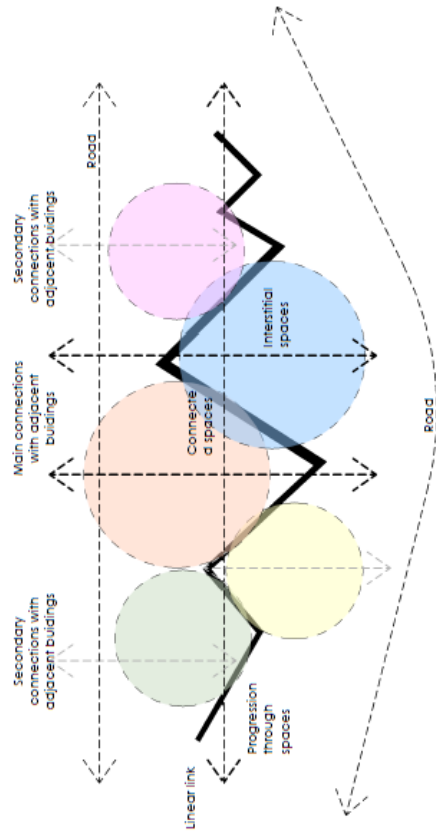


**Figure 124:** Model 4 (Author, 2022, model)

## Concept 3: The Spine

### RHYTHM OF THE CITY

Forms,  
Processes,  
Metaphors  
Repetition,  
Rhythm



**Figure 125:** Model 2 (Author, 2022, model)

## Concept 4: Line of flight

INVITING THE EXTERNAL INSIDE

Contrast,  
Juxtaposing,  
Re-imagining,  
Layering,  
Wrapping,  
Structuring



**Figure 126:** Model 3 (Author, 2022, model)

### Existing site constraints

The site has been raised and retained with gabion embankment creating a level platform. The use of locally available stones and rocks in the retaining wall is seen as an attempt towards appreciating the genius loci of Imizamo Yethu as described in the preceding topics. The stone reflects the natural environment in which this place is located.

The use of embankment, being the most obvious and predictable solution in dealing with stormwater ignores the potential of manipulating the slope in creating more spatial opportunities.

### Proposed manipulation of the slope

The proposed design response is to utilise the level difference of the site which present an opportunity for a basement.

The basement on northern side of the site will be used as stormwater treatment plants, with the recycled water being utilised for fire fighting and irrigation purposes. The water from the water treatment plants will be routed to dedicated fire fighting fire hydrants throughout Imizamo Yethu. The basement adjacent will a transport interchange for public transport.

While the basement towards the middle of the site will be used as workshops and fire response offices.

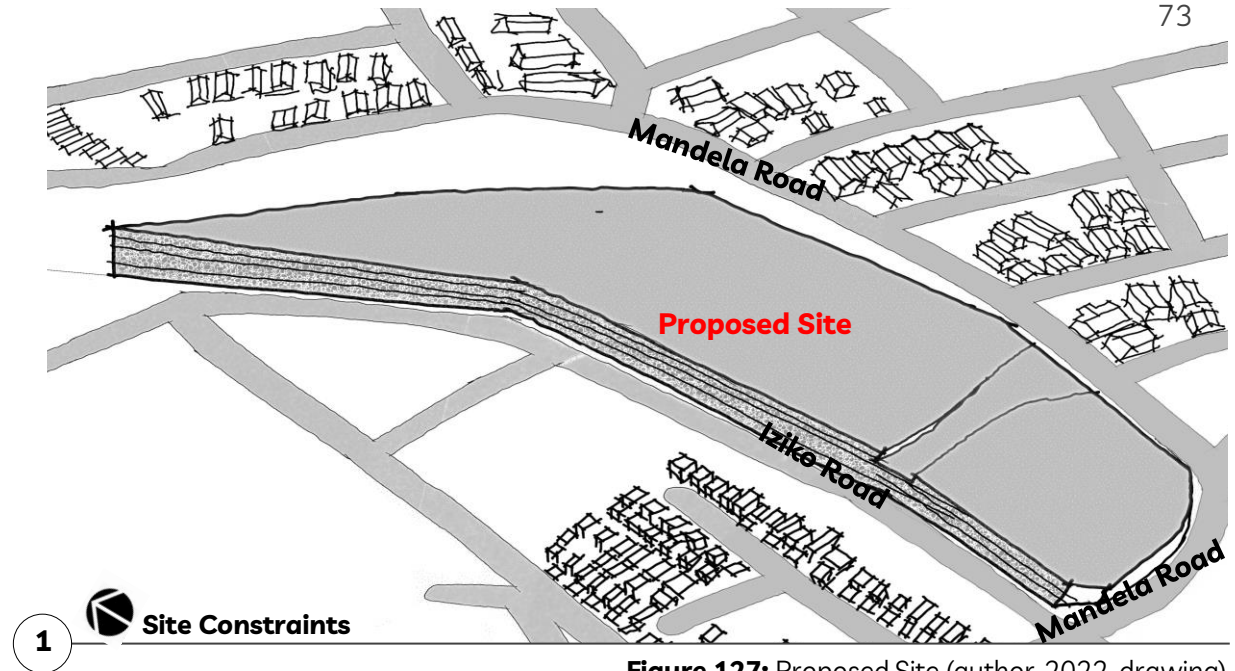


Figure 127: Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

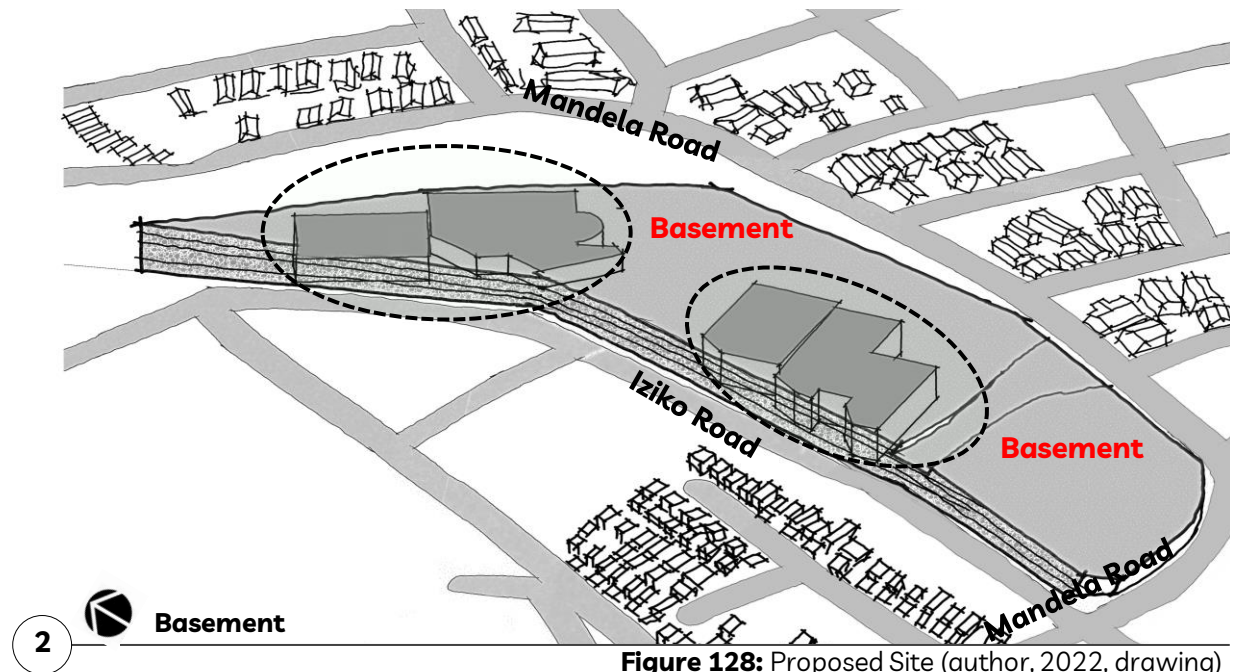
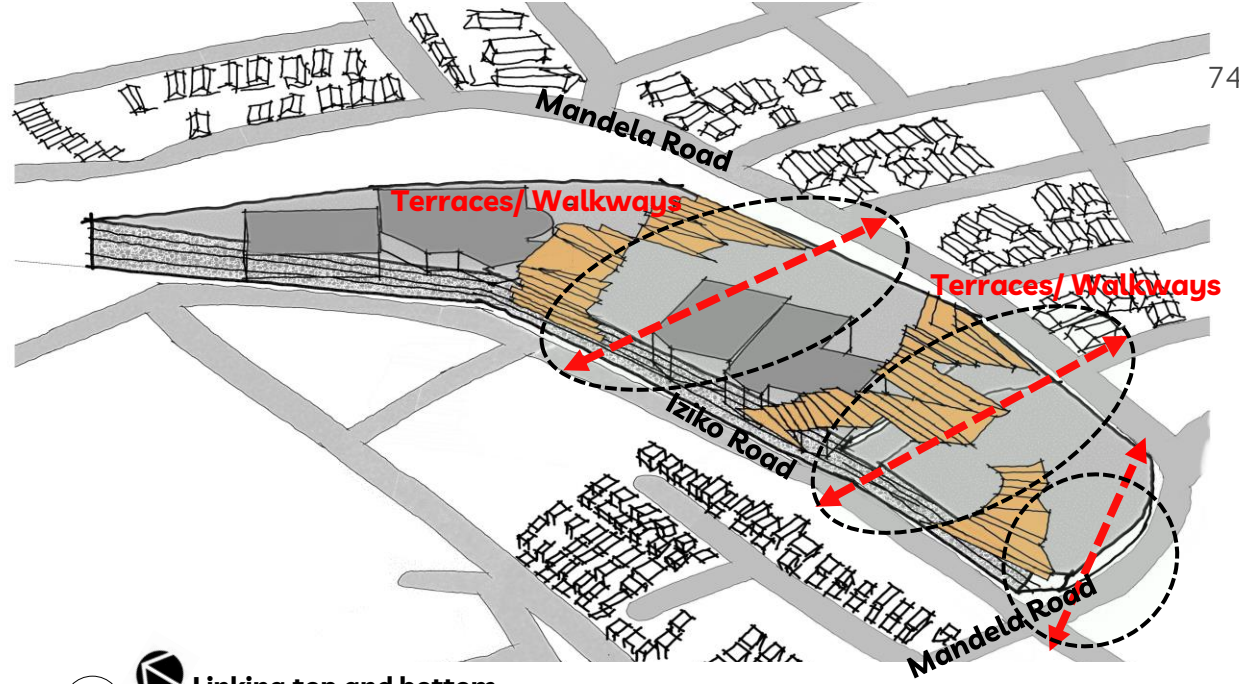


Figure 128: Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

**Connecting/linking**

The remaining spaces between the proposed basements are used to link the different levels. These links are envisioned to activate the edges of the buildings around them.

The activities along the streets of Imizamo Yethu will be moved to along these new walkways. The walkways will allow not only trading but can be utilised as park, proving seating and leisure amenities to the community.

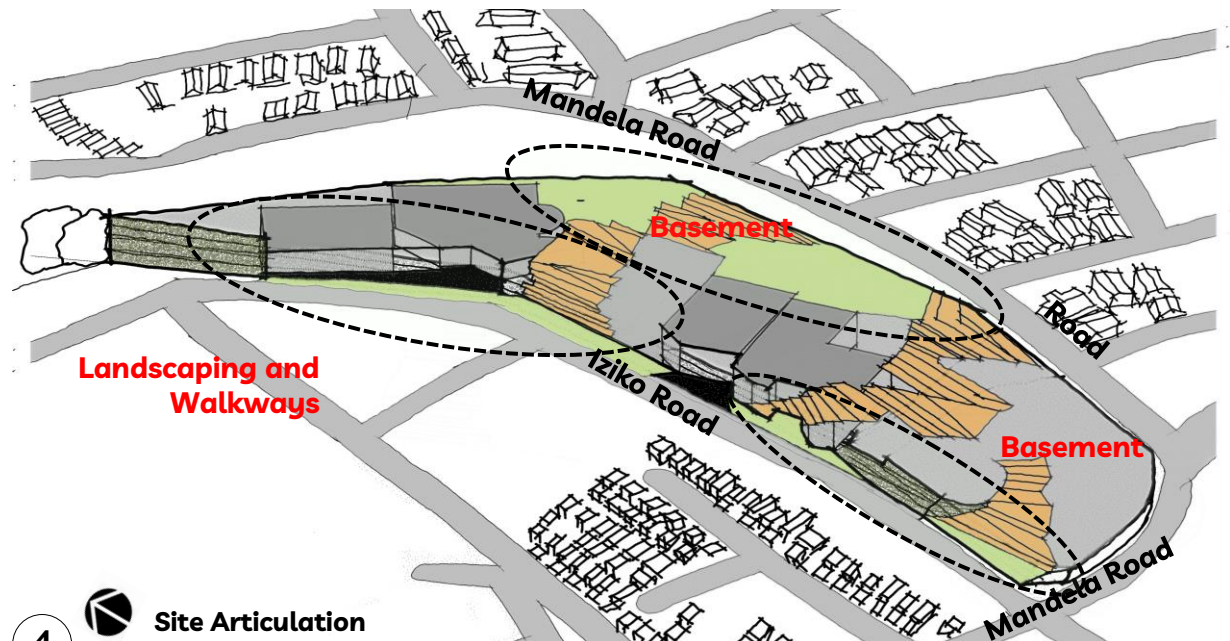


3  **Linking top and bottom**

**Figure 129:** Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

**Site Articulation**

The existing edges of the embankment are harsh and rigid. These edges will be articulated to allow for soft edges and surfaces. This highlights the natural, organic modern urban life of Imizamo Yethu, focusing on issues such as urban movement, public safety and equitable access to public spaces. The attempt here is to explore the tensions and patterns in the Imizamo Yethu to encourage public engagement through the built fabric and urban density and diversity.



4  **Site Articulation**

**Figure 130:** Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

## Creating Interstitial spaces

The element connecting the three components described in the preceding paragraphs is a strong form that resembles a spine. The concept of SPINE - Just like the rhythm of a Heartbeat; explores intricate aspects of the design by exploring how forms, processes and metaphors inform the design. Repetition & Rhythm further accentuates and defines the design, resulting in dynamic interfaces. Ordering & prioritising spaces is essential to follow the concept of heartbeat. Visual connection is prioritised to create a tempting connection with the eye. Movement, progression, inter-connectivity & relation between spaces is essential. Contrast, Juxtaposing, Re-imagining, Layering,

Wrapping, Structuring all compliment the concept of Heartbeat. Continuity, Expression, Infinity, are all characteristics of the Concept of Heartbeat. Understanding the Context, Human Scale, and Interpretation of the concept by carefully choosing the appropriate form and technology is important. Uniformity and Wrapping as defining aspects of the design are to be expressed.

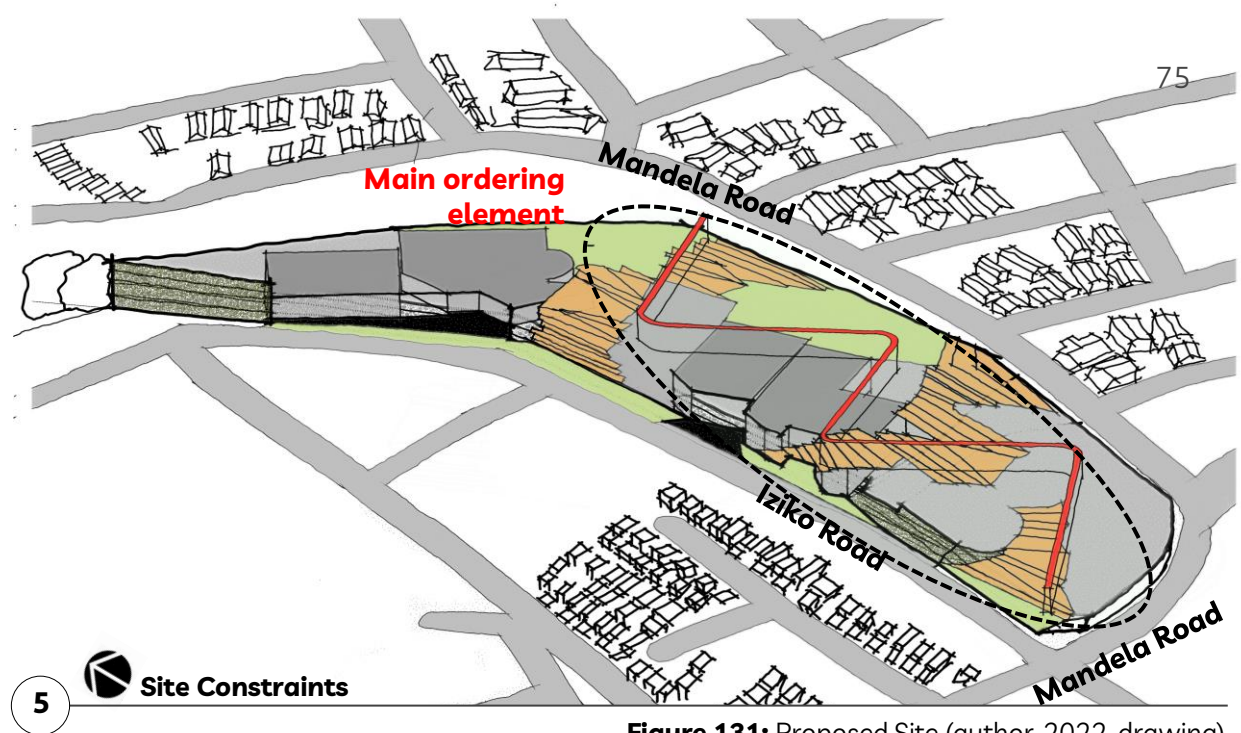


Figure 131: Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

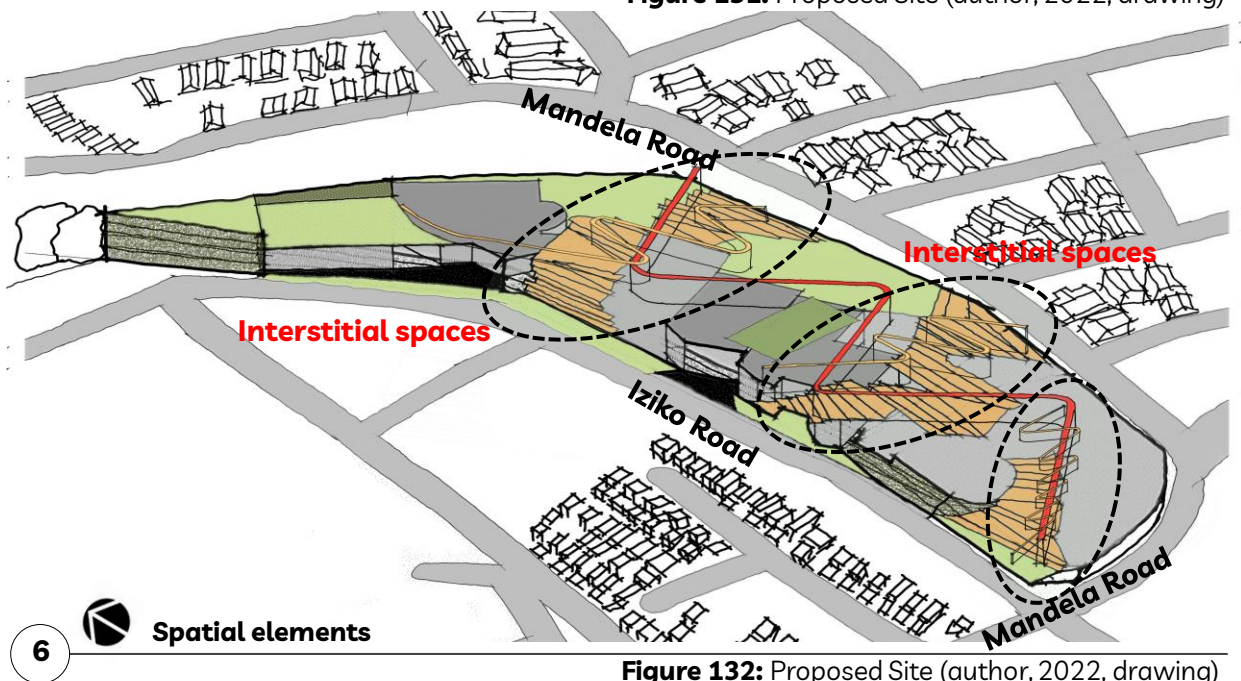


Figure 132: Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

**Social interaction**

Through the design of a transport interchange and by connecting Iziko Iziko Community Life Centre with its surrounding, it is hoped that social interaction will be enhanced. Arguably the community centre will be the biggest catalyst for social interaction through the diverse functions provided.

**Movement/Walkability pattern**

It is important to consider how people will walk through the site, therefore the designed patterns promote the organic use of walkways which will be activated through market activities; creating a break in the linear movements.

**Liveability**

The interstitial spaces created by the shape of the spine present an opportunity for private spaces that provide comfortable liveability. Spaces for seating and resting creating public realm that encourages people to walk through the market walkways.

Social Diversity, Integration & Sustainability are the main drivers for creating an accessible and inviting community centre.

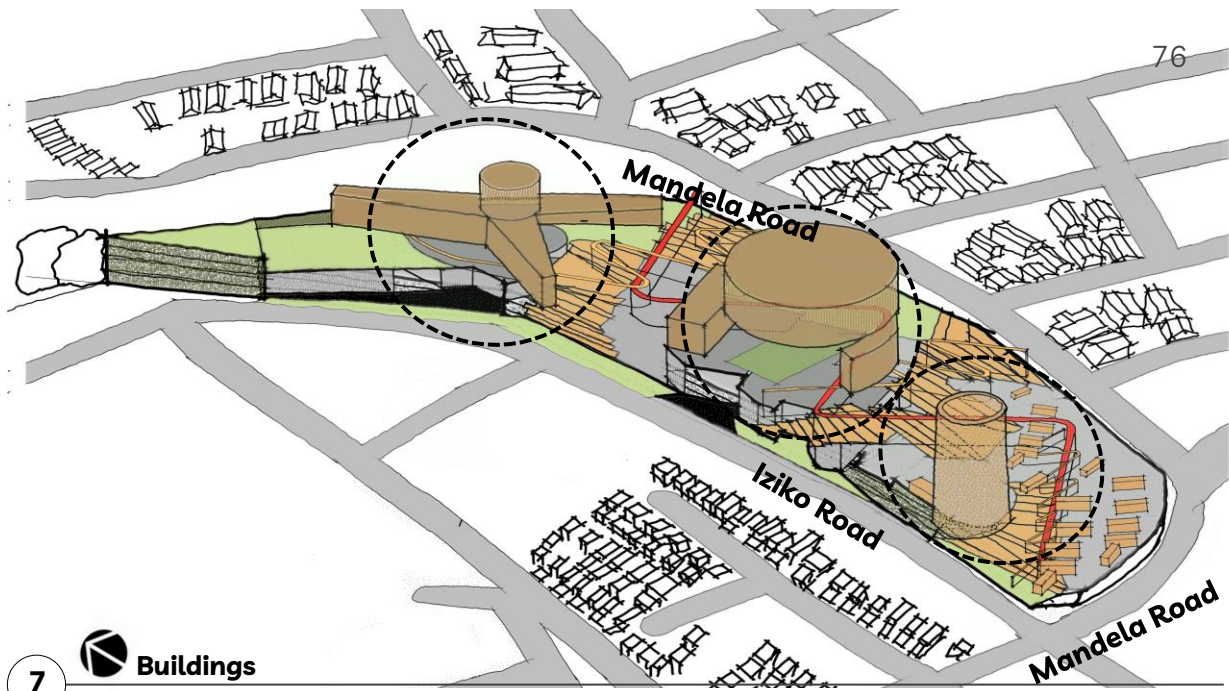


Figure 133: Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

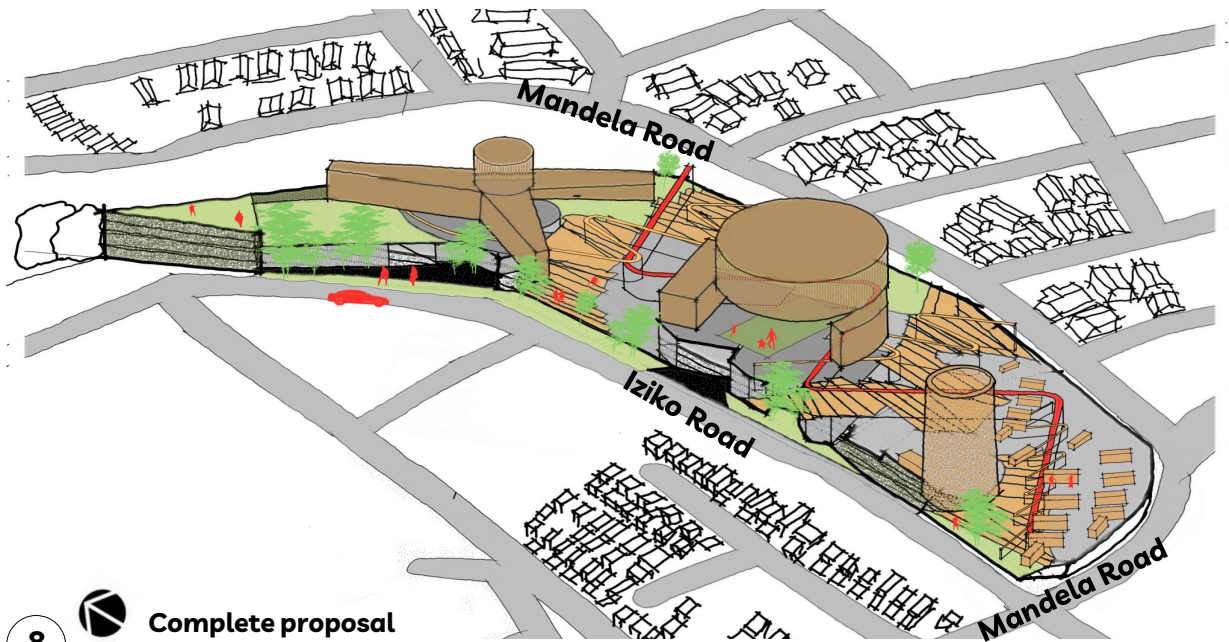
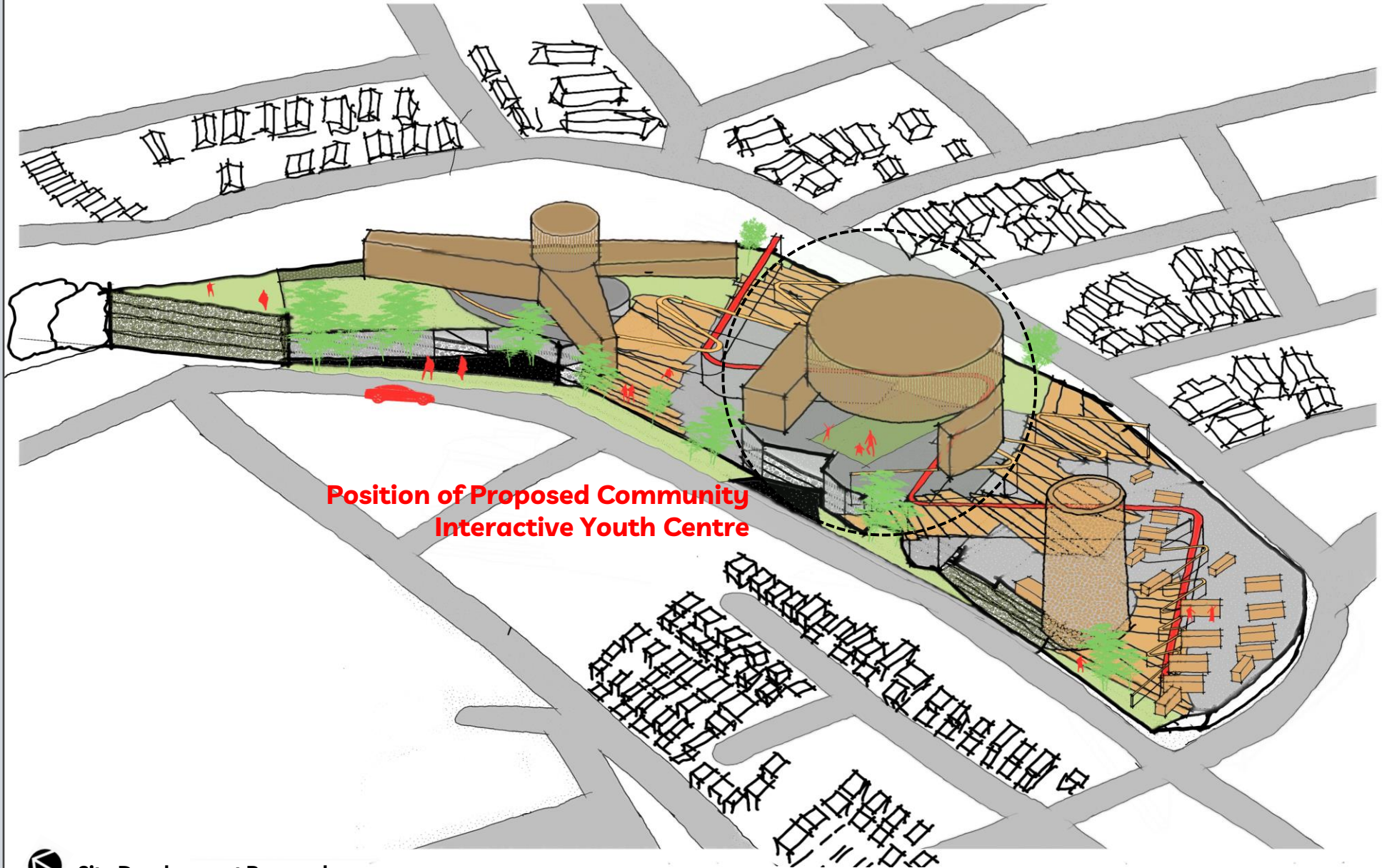


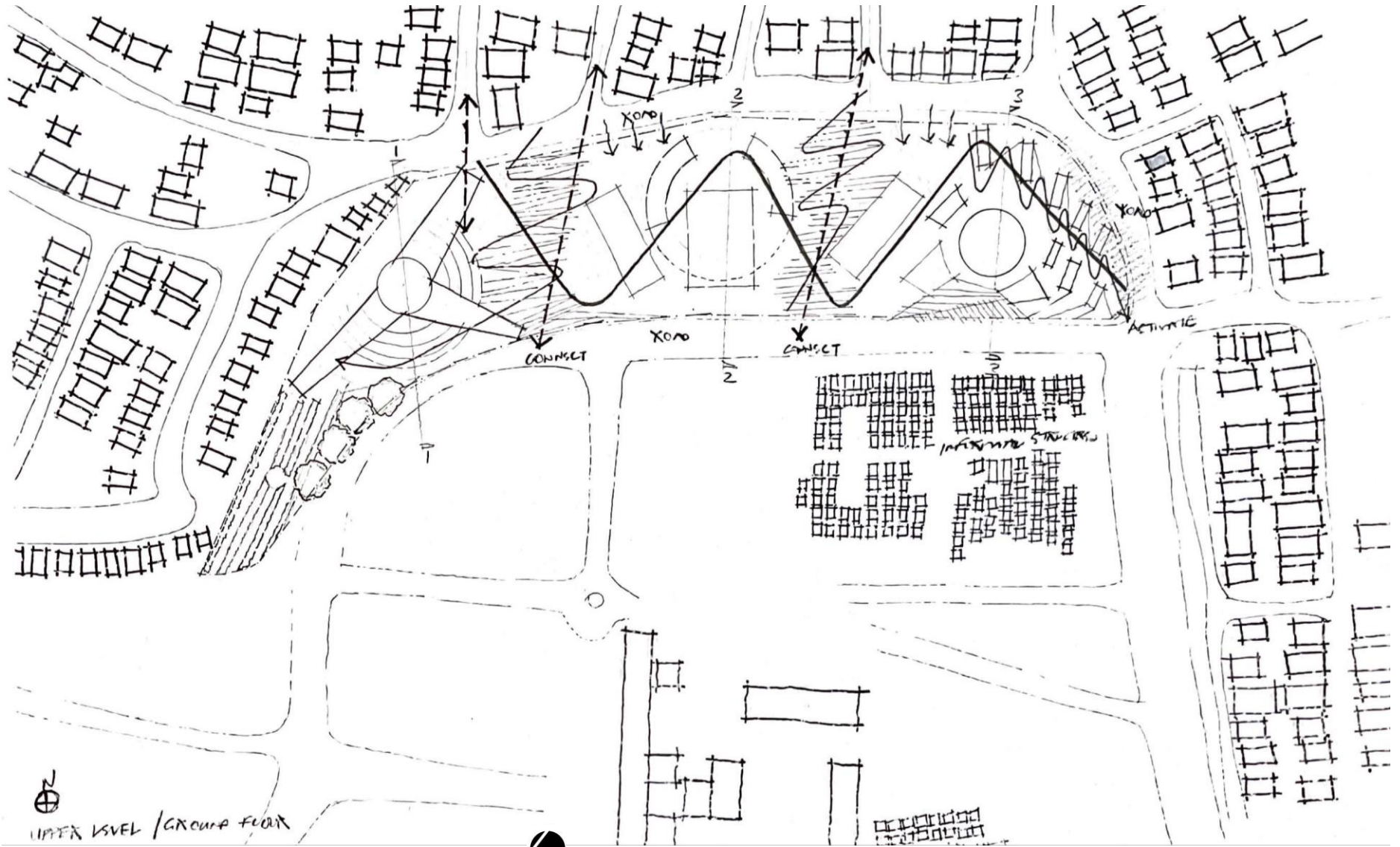
Figure 134: Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)



**Position of Proposed Community  
Interactive Youth Centre**

# Proposed Site Response

This proposed plan layout interrogates the overall development of the site as described in the preceding section.



5  Site Constraints

Figure 136: Proposed Site (author, 2022, drawing)

# Proposed Site Response

This proposed plan layout interrogates the overall development of the site as described in the preceding section.

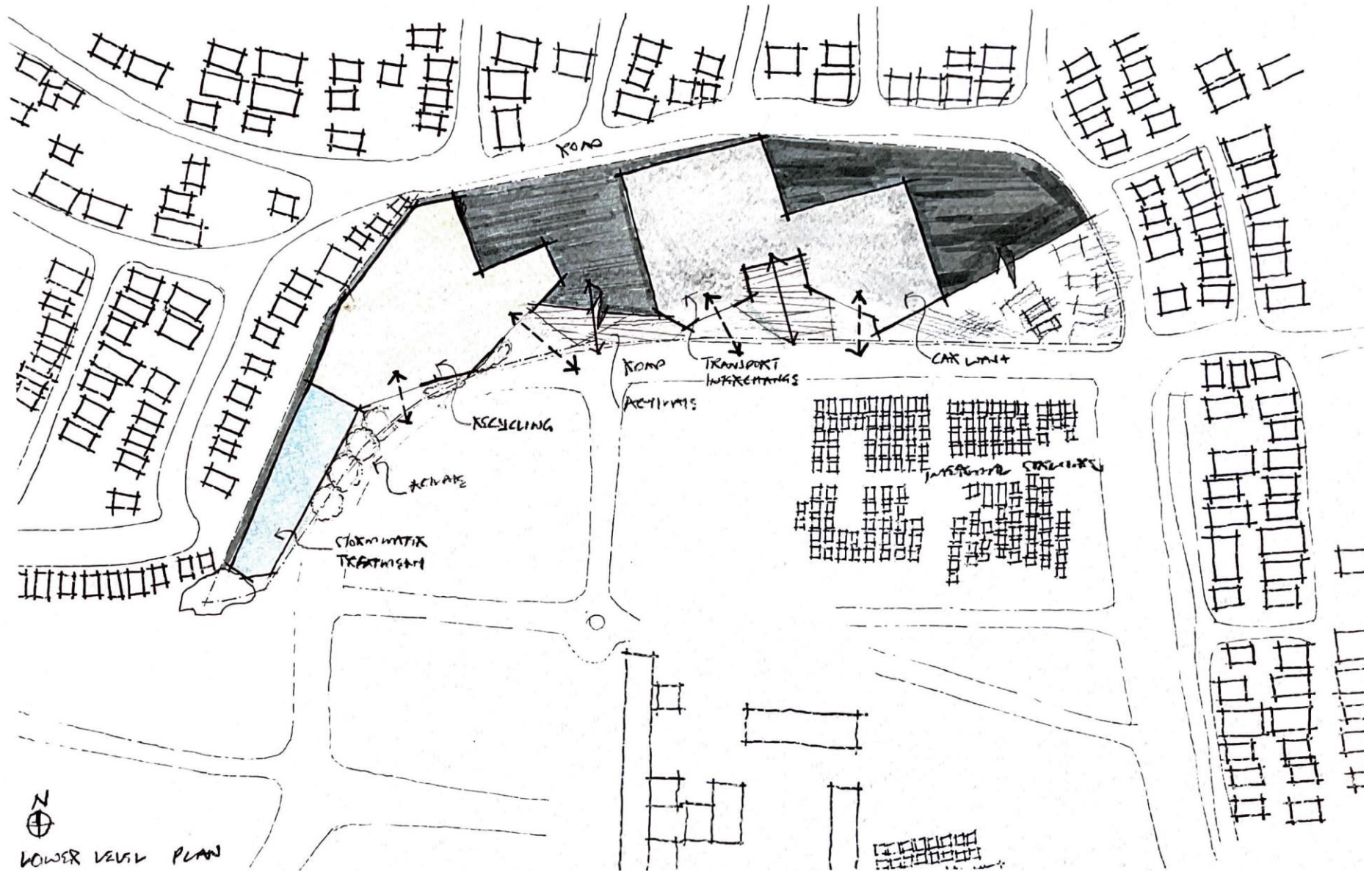


Figure 137: Proposed Concept (author, 2022, drawing)

# Proposed Site Response

This proposed plan layout interrogates the overall development of the site as described in the preceding section.

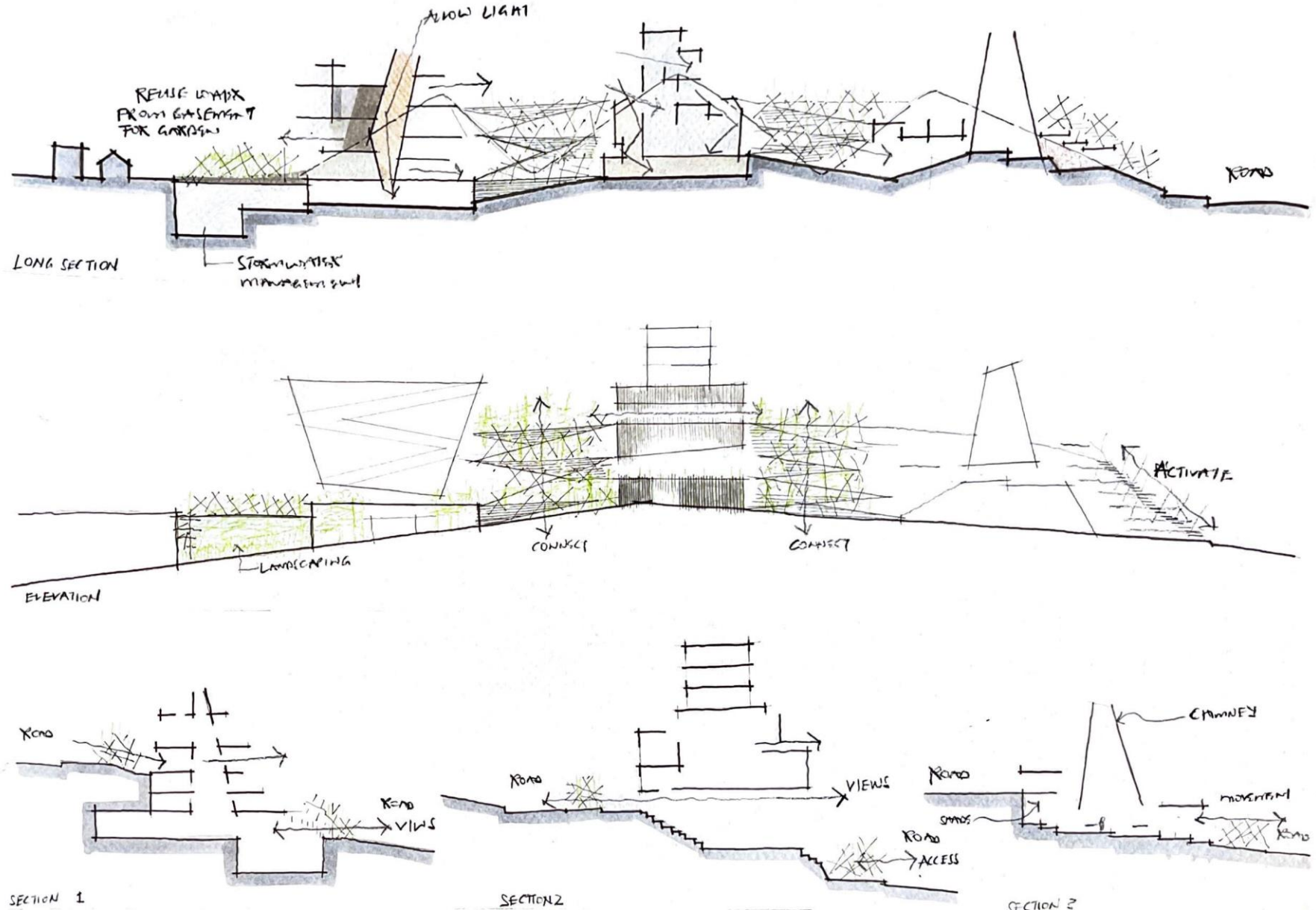
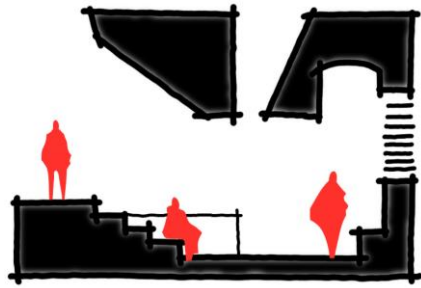


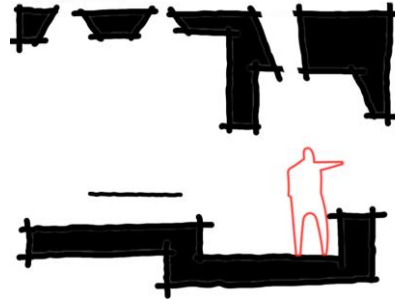
Figure 138: Proposed Concept (author, 2022, drawing)

## Density, Scale and Form

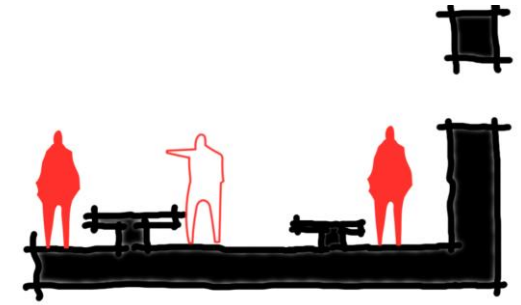
The proposed sections below are an exploration of possible spatial responses.



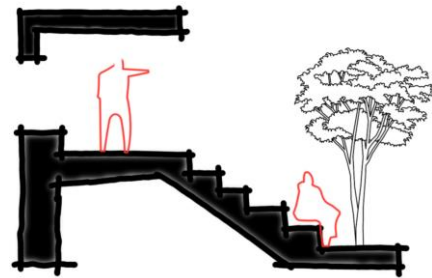
**Controlled Views**



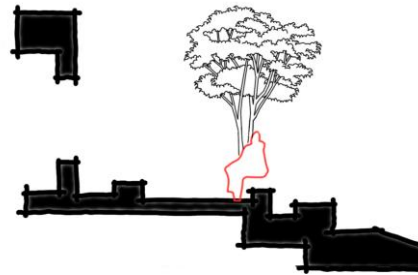
**Open window views**



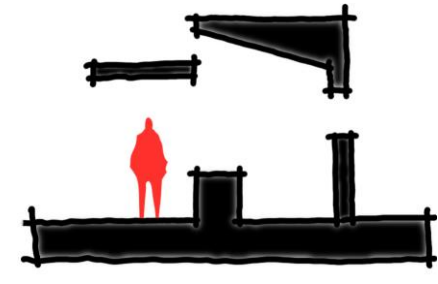
**Market Spaces**



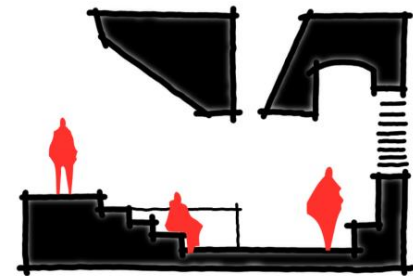
**Raised Views**



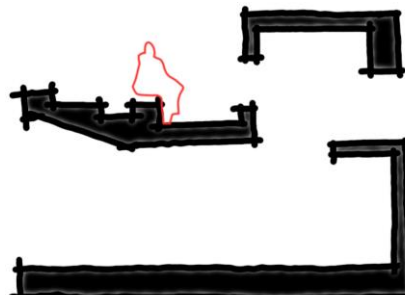
**Public Seating**



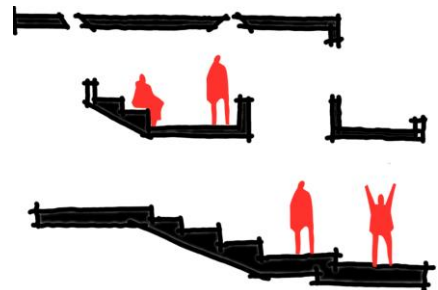
**Extended Threshold Views**



**Controlled Views**

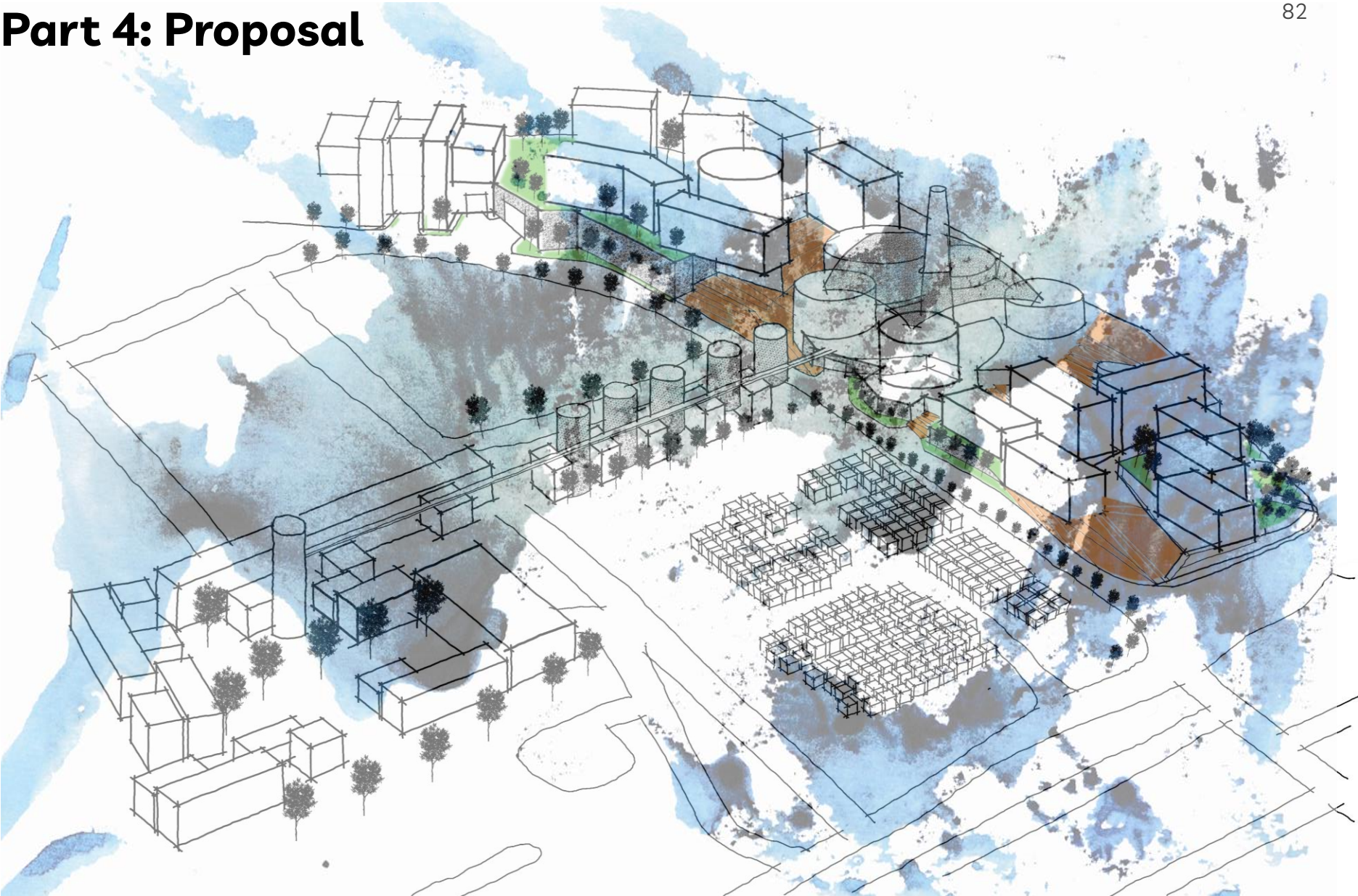


**Split floors**



**Floor within a floor**

**Figure 139-147:** Proposed spatial sections (Author, 2022, drawing)

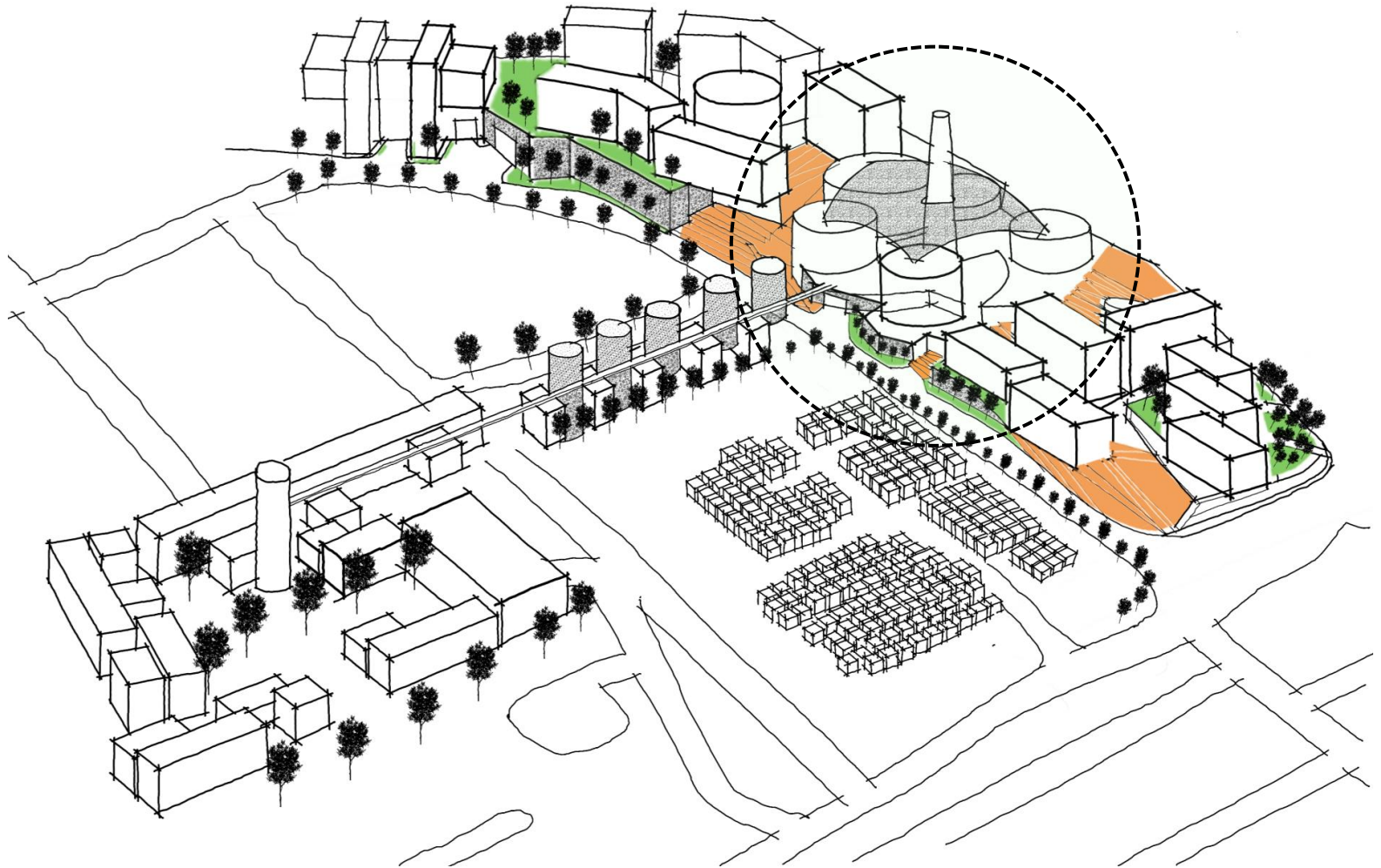


**Figure 148:** Spatial settings that evoke embodied experiences (Author, 2022, drawing)

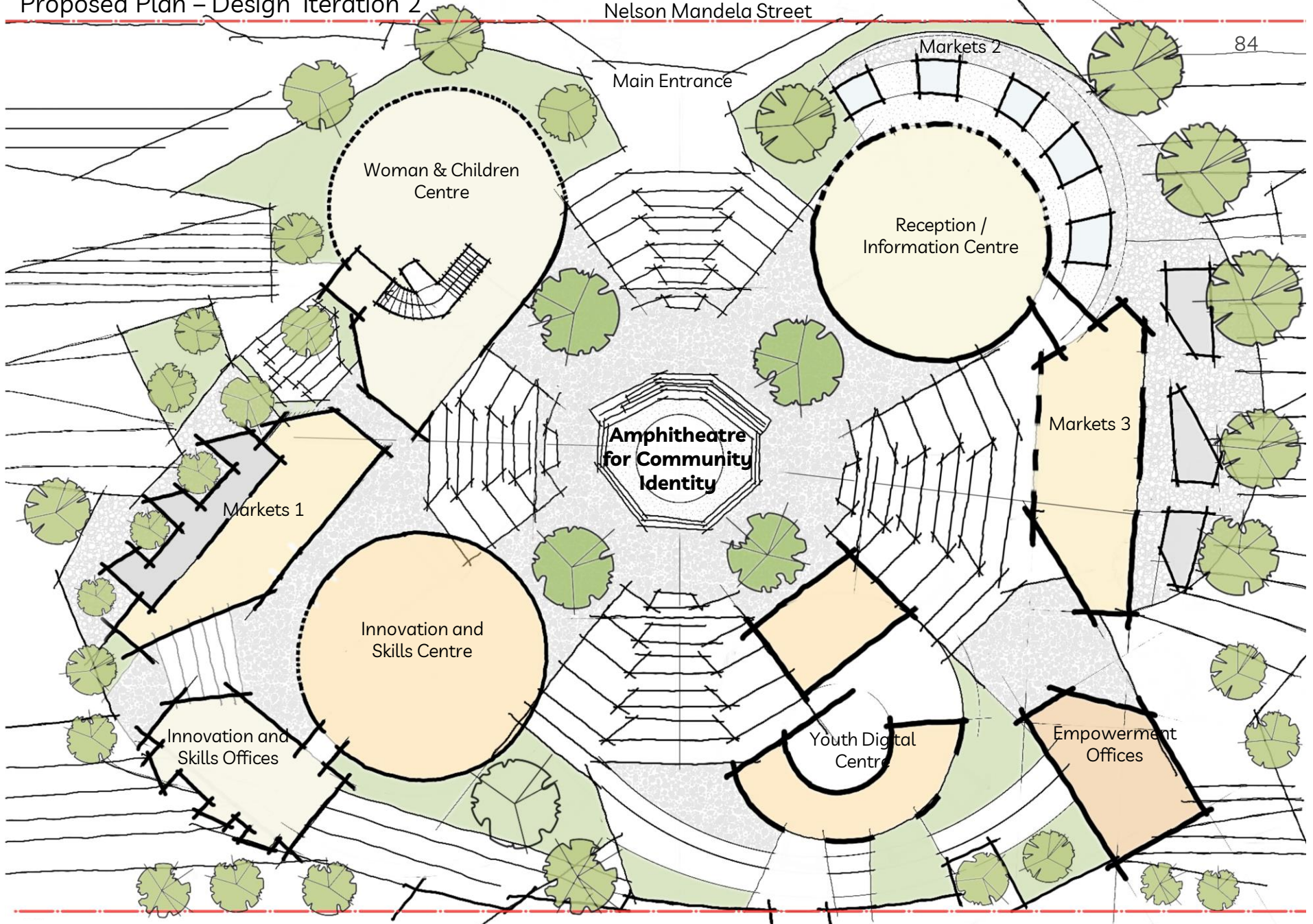
## Proposed Design Response

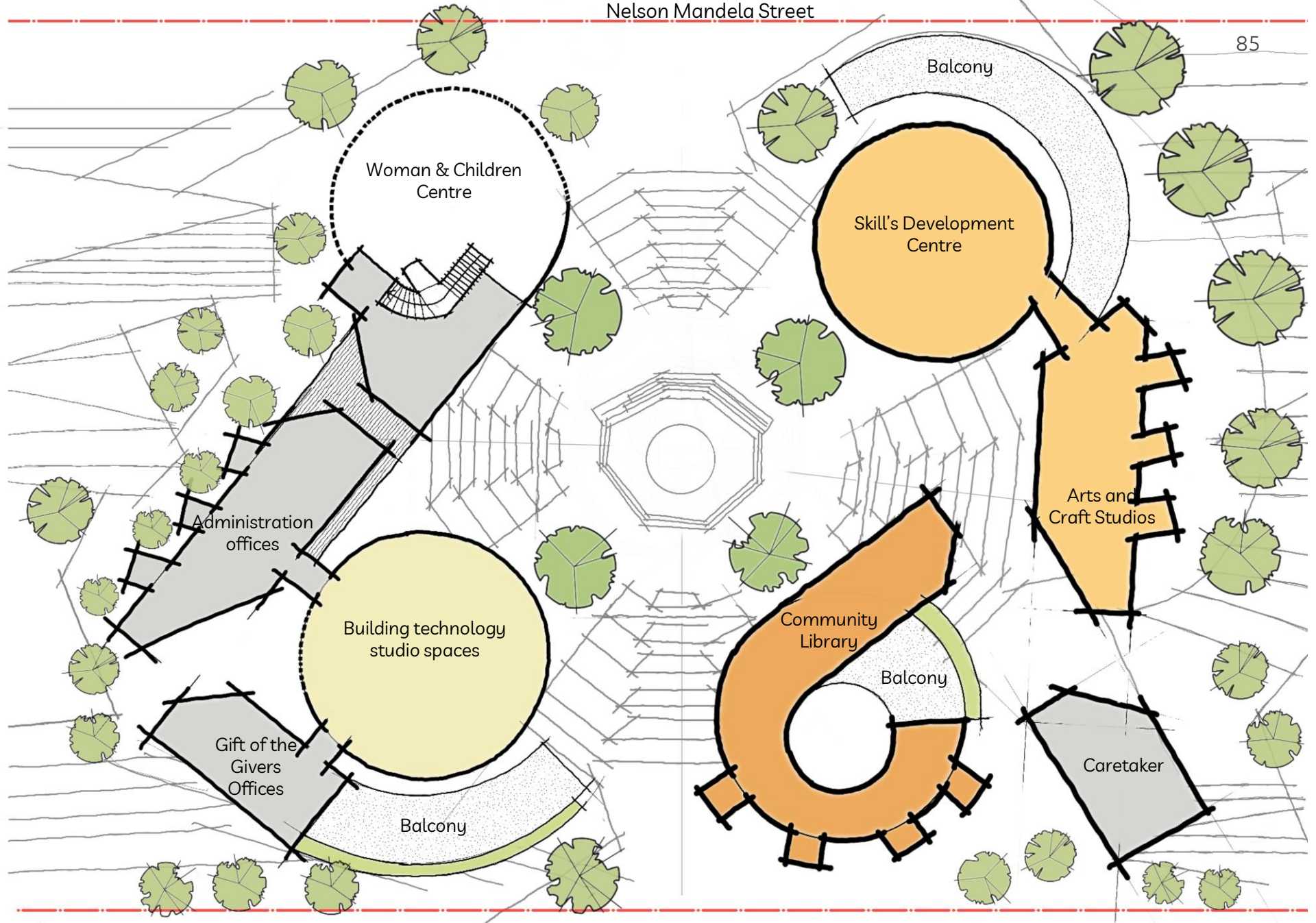
The proposed design response focuses on the central part of the site.

The planning on the site focusses on the use of central courtyard to order spaces.



**Figure 149:** Proposed Concept (author, 2022, drawing)





# Conclusion

The dissertation thesis document has been formulated as a design synthesis guided by context, brief, theory and construction. The analysis and study of these four key drivers has supported and justified the proposal of a Iziko Community Life Centre dedicated for Sustainable Building Technologies in disaster relief and emergency response as the appropriate architectural intervention in the informal settlement of Imizamo Yethu.

My intention in this thesis was to express my enthusiasm for communities, culture and identity through understanding of how the human body engages with surroundings as guided by work of Merleau-Ponty. The thesis aims to convey the flowery, and poetical philosophical writings and ideas of Merleau-Ponty's and Christian Norberg-Schulz's discourse to formulate a design tool and stance for a hypothetical response to be applied on the design.

The thesis outlined Merleau-Ponty's argument of phenomenological consideration of the experience of physical spaces by the human body. In summary the stance of embodiment outlines the body's readiness to respond to spatial situations and architectural elements through perceived bodily embodiment elements raising the need for the body to be understood and considered in design of spaces.

Merleau-Ponty's architectural focus is on the limitless possibilities and opportunities in synthesising the body into spatial configurations. I have argued engaging with spatial situations is not only about the capability of absorbing material surfaces through our senses and then relaying these images to the cognitive rather than the body intentionally independently responds and engages 'cognitive' ways that are somehow divorced with the mind.

The work of Merleau-Ponty illustrates the power of the body in engaging with spaces. On the same frequency Norberg-Schulz links the concept of emplaced embodied care to place revealing compelling arguments. (Auret 2015 116)

The architectural configurations discussed in this thesis supported by the poetic ideas of Merleau-Ponty's and Norberg-Schulz's discourse have demonstrated and illustrated the need for deep appreciation of place when designing works of architecture.

Throughout these discussions my attempt has been to highlight the importance of the understanding and reinterpretation of the Interwoven Symbiosis of Nature, People and Architecture (connection between the community's culture, their

identity, architecture, and nature). Firmly arguing that we live, feel, inhabit, and embody buildings in our everyday life and that carefully curated buildings that incorporate gestures that resonate with the identity of communities can produce 'emotions, sensory experiences, and feelings, and engender memories.' (Pallasmaa, 2005.)

Rich's work in Mapungubwe show how architectural work can be sympathetic to the place and individual's bodily flow. This is also echoed by Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that architects need to design architectural spaces and elements that are sympathetic to people's identities, culture and genius loci.

Through the understanding of this theoretical stance of emplaced embodied care I believe that it is fundamental to incorporate non-reflective aspects of human engagement and movement into spaces.

This thesis has been formulated as a design synthesis to guide the choice of site, context, brief and design response.

To further stimulate emotions, memories and images three concepts guided by the discussions and arguments in this thesis were developed as part of the inquiry stated above. The design informants and

drivers extracted and developed from this thesis will be tested through rigorous design options during the design phase of the course

Analysis of the context to understand the genius loci of Imizamo Yethu followed in the process. Understanding the dynamic settings of cities provided a reference point for reimagination of spatial settings through the reinterpretation of the community's narratives and processes.

This contextual analysis was aimed at assisting in the translation of the imaginative-physical-cultural realm onto a poetic and appropriate physical reality that prioritises the human body.

Contextual analysis was a critical part of the planning and design process. The proposed intervention was influenced by the conditions of the site.

The context part formed a foundation for the understanding of the site, its uses and the community in guiding the design of Iziko Community Life Centre.

Precedents studies were also used at finding appropriate design tools through the application of research questions on Architectural configurations. The research was formulated through exploring how Architectural configurations can listen and

retell the flesh of the community and its dwellers through the exploration of various precedent studies.

A brief was drawn and developed to further augment the above. The brief mainly looked at the possible requirements from a client perspective such as funding and program.

The research question attracts attention to the spatial bodily engagements in creating fleshly familiarity in engagements amongst the community to encourage social engagements.

The project addressed the two main issues that were identified; the lack of platforms for communities to enhance their education in building sustainable homes and the diminishing identity of the community.

A Community Life Centre dedicated for Sustainable Building Technologies in disaster relief and emergency response is the appropriate platform in equipping the community and enhancing social fabric as means of providing shelter are of great importance to the identity and origins of the community; and the dignified translation of the reinterpretation of these cultural references will conceive an interactive community.

The design research attracts attention and dialogue to the interpretation of spatial bodily engagements and their genius loci in creating fleshly familiarity in architectural configurations amongst the community to encourage social engagements.

As a clear image of the community and context this striking architectural landscape is the skeleton in nurturing harmonious relationships among different groups in the community and their surroundings.

With the symbiotic approach in mind, the intention was to, **design a platform that would not only resonate, but also house and shelter the community's culture and identity.**

# Reflection

I am passionate about people, especially those in communities. This passion inspires an honest, driven and energetic approach to designs that brings the human element to the spaces and buildings that I work on. I believe there is a need to attend to strong social needs with very practical and non-complex architectural solutions.

This project presented a platform where I was able to build on my interest in the continued debate on how to make urban environments more equitable and inclusive through the adaptation and refinement of both public and privately-owned spaces. This also aligned with my further personal focus which involves exploring strategies to implementing realistic and progressive solutions to the challenges of environmental and social sustainability and building technologies. I have great interest around issues of housing, informal settlements upgrading, public infrastructure provision, public engagement and urban density and diversity.

I feel the need to practice in inclusive architecture to assist upgrade and integrate existing low-income communities. My focus is to navigate the complex structures set up in these communities with ultimately focusing in community architecture and the impact it has on the daily living of the general population of South Africa.

I found the project to be interesting and challenging at the same time.

I enjoyed the design process followed. It really unlocked a lot of possibilities and relevant arguments.

The main lesson for me was being able to use theory to support the design. I really came to enjoy the theoretical lens more than I thought I would.

Also being able to synthesis construction, theory, brief and context into a single design was a major payoff of the project.

**The end.**

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