



**Empowering Youth ‘Placeless-ness’ in Coloured Communities through Architecture:**

Towards an integrated cultural youth centre in Greenwood Park, Durban.

By

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A Dissertation Submitted in partial

fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Architecture

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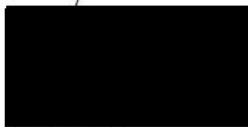
Durban, South Africa

2019 – 2021

## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture, in the Graduate Programme in Architecture, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

I, Carl Hartley, protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000054/2019, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master in Architecture in the faculty of Humanities, within the school of Built Environment & Development Studies, KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other university.



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Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who made the dissertational process achievable through their assistance, support and encouragement.

To my supervisor, Dr Silvia Bodei. I would wholeheartedly like to thank you for your patience and understanding along this challenging road. Your guidance has been invaluable. Without you, this would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank Dr Yashaen Luckan, for going beyond his duties as a lecturer and taking the time to offer helpful personal advice and assurance when I needed it the most.

To the UKZN Architectural Department and its many facets including the Barry Bierman Library staff, the architectural administration staff, the architectural management and the lecturing staff. Thank you for walking me along the journey of architecture. I have learnt so much over the years and have picked up so many mentors.

To the multiple architectural classes, I have been apart of over the years. Thank you for your support and care. The laughter and fun times will never be forgotten. You all have made the process so much easier.

To my family and friends, thank you for the constant support and understanding. I am who I am because of you and am eternally grateful.

Lastly, I would like to thank Jocelyn Ogle, for her unconditional love, understanding, patience, and for always managing to keep me motivated to be the best version of myself.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Genevieve Hartley. You have always been a rock in my life and have taught me invaluable lessons that I will always cherish. Your love for life and zest for adventure is enthralling to be around. I thank you for being the mother and person you are. I would not be who or where I am today without you. Your unconditional love and unwavering belief in me is something which I will treasure forever.

## ABSTRACT

“Placeless-ness” amongst youth is the wondering of youth in spaces often unclaimed or unoccupied. Its presence represents the existence of spatial inequality or exclusionary spatial characteristics in Coloured communities. A non-inclusive urban formation has pushed the youth to the periphery, often feeling unwelcome and lost in their homes and civic spaces. This exclusion has forced the youth to create self-determined spaces on the fringes of their community. As a result, the presence of placeless youth is often associated with a sense of social decay defined by the worst traits linked with the Coloured community, including drug and liquor abuse and gang-related behaviour.

The primary purpose of the research is to explore the ability of a building to reflect the concerns and aspirations of the youth while creating a constitutive link between placeless-ness, the youth and architecture. The idea is to create a built environment that can engage youth through the theories of culture and empowerment and the concepts of mentorship and co-production.

The research is approached from a qualitative perspective. All relevant literature is critically engaged to determine plausible solutions to youth placeless-ness. Precedents are reviewed in an attempt to find real-world solutions, their application and implementation, along with society’s response to an architectural intervention. The case study is of the site, an area with very little public documentation. Through the process of observations and interviews, an in-depth understanding of the Greenwood Park community was formulated.

The research attempts to demonstrate the lack of autonomy and space the youth are given within their community. The youth’s choice to find space on the street results from current city planning methods, which have created streets unfit for human consumption. Ironically, the street's unclaimed nature makes it the most democratic and equitable space available within the city. The street becomes a point of youth empowerment and reclamation. It possesses the opportunity for the creation of a healthy psychosocial space.

A call for a youth cultural centre within the Coloured community of Greenwood Park, which acts as an extension to the streets, is required. The centre will be a part of a broader satellite intervention that aims to be strategically placed throughout the community creating points of value for the youth at their point of reclamation; the streets.

# PART 1

## PART 1

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>DECLARATION</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>DEDICATION</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>ABSTRACT</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>TABLE OF CONTENTS</i>	<i>vi</i>

#### **CHAPTER 1 .....**

1.1 BACKGROUND RESEARCH ON ISSUES .....	1
1.1.1 Background.....	
1.1.2 Motivation of Study.....	
1.2 DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES .....	3
1.2.1 Definition of the Problem.....	
1.2.2 Aims.....	
1.2.3 Objectives .....	
1.3 DEFINING THE SCOPE .....	5
1.3.1 Delimitation of Research Problem .....	
1.3.2 Definition of Terms .....	
1.3.3 Stating the Assumptions .....	
1.3.4 Key Questions.....	
1.3.5 Hypothesis .....	
1.4 CONCEPTS AND THEORIES.....	9
1.5 RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIALS.....	13
1.5.1 Research Design & Methods .....	
1.5.2 Research Material .....	
1.6 CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION.....	16
1.7 SUMMARY .....	17

#### **CHAPTER 2 .....**

UNDERSTANDING THE YOUTH: CULTURE AND IDENTITY

2.1 Introduction ..... 19  
2.2 Youth Culture ..... 20  
2.3 Youth Identity ..... 23  
2.4 Coloured Culture and Identity ..... 27  
2.5 Coloured-ness in KwaZulu-Natal ..... 30  
2.6 Understanding Coloured Youth ..... 31  
2.7 Conclusion ..... 32

**CHAPTER 3** .....

CONCEPTUALISING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

3.1 Introduction ..... 34  
3.2 Youth Empowerment: An Effective Method to Alleviate Youth Placeless-ness ..... 35  
3.3 Mentorship as a Method of Empowerment ..... 37  
3.4 Understanding Co-production as a Youth Approach ..... 39  
3.5 Conclusion ..... 40

**CHAPTER 4** .....

ARCHITECTURE FOR THE YOUTH

4.1 Introduction ..... 41  
4.2 Place: The Status Quo ..... 42  
4.3 Designing for the Youth ..... 48  
4.4 Conclusion ..... 62

**CHAPTER 5** .....

PRECEDENT STUDIES .....

5.1 Introduction ..... 64

A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY SPACE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

5.2 Dongziguan Villagers' Activity Centre: ..... 65

AN EXTENSION OF YOUTH CREATED SPACE

5.3 Game Streetmekka ..... 78

AN RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF THE YOUTH

5.4 Outreach Foundation Community Centre ..... 88

5.5 Conclusion: .....	105
<b>CHAPTER 6 .....</b>	
YOUTH WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY: AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF GREENWOOD PARK	
6.1 Introduction: .....	106
6.2 The Positionality of the Researcher: Limitations .....	107
6.3 Greenwood Park in Context.....	108
6.4 Youth within Greenwood Park.....	121
6.5 A Successful Youth Intervention: Studio 849.....	133
6.6 Conclusion.....	137
<b>CHAPTER 7 .....</b>	
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	
7.1 Introduction: .....	139
7.2 Analysis of Research Findings: .....	141
<b>CHAPTER 8 .....</b>	
8.1 Recommendations: .....	150
8.2 Site Selection Guidelines: .....	153
8.3 Conclusion: .....	155
<i>LIST OF FIGURES</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>REFERENCES</i>	<i>xix</i>
<i>LIST OF APPENDICES</i>	<i>xxvii</i>



*“Most of us don’t know where we come from. So we take on whatever identity you give us. If I know where I come from, I know who I am. You can’t tell me who I am. I am not an alcoholic. I am not a no-good person. I am not a stabber. I am not that person, I am much more than that.”  
(Marvin Anonymous, 2020)*

*In interview with a member of the Coloured community of Greenwood Park.*

*2020*

*Figure 1: An artistic representation of a man from the Coloured youth community. The drawing shows how the youth own their culture proudly and refuse to conform (Author, 2020).*

# Chapter One

BACKGROUND RESEARCH ON THE ISSUE

## 1.1 BACKGROUND RESEARCH ON ISSUES

### 1.1.1 Background

Youth placeless-ness is a prevalent phenomenon found across the world. Edward Relph (2008) views the current state of placeless-ness as a consequence of the modernity of urban planning and architecture and its inability to consider space's humanistic formation. For this dissertation, youth placeless-ness will also be defined as the wondering/roaming of youth in spaces often unclaimed or unoccupied. This can occur in many forms depending on the place: including the aimless wandering of youth through suburban areas or the occupation of unoccupied derelict buildings (Cuervo and Miranda, 2019). In the case of Coloured communities in Durban, it is the occupation of dominant road convergences or cul-de-sacs, hence the colloquial name 'Corner Boys.'

Youth placeless-ness represents the existence of spatial inequality or exclusionary spatial characteristics in Coloured communities. A non-inclusive urban formation has pushed the youth to the periphery, often feeling unwelcome and lost in their homes and communal civic spaces (Anderson, 2009), thus forcing them to create self-determined spaces on the fringes of their community.

The phenomena of placeless-ness describe a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and intergenerational issue grappling with historical oppression, identity (or lack thereof), cultural vacuum or dissonance and a general dissonance between racial positioning and understanding in the new South Africa. As a result, the presence of placeless youth is often associated with a sense of social decay defined by the worst traits linked with the Coloured community, including drug and liquor abuse and gang-related behaviour (Pijoo and Coetzee, 2017).

'Corner boy' behaviour is often tied to and associated with 'Coloured behaviour.' This strong tie encourages the understanding of Coloured behaviour (Pijoo and Coetzee, 2017).

The research is undertaken in the South African Coloured community of Greenwood Park. The area is a northern suburb within the eThekweni Municipality and falls under the Durban North District. Greenwood Park has a strong tie to a colonial and apartheid past. Its history can be traced back to the 1890s and its connection to the sugar industry. It evolved into a white-only peri-urban settlement by the 1930s. Between the 1950s and 1960s, it was re-defined as a predominantly 'non-white labour reserve'. It quickly evolved into a middle-class community

on the back of being the only Coloured space with a right to land and privatised property ownership (Francis, 2001). Greenwood Park has an area of 1.07 km<sup>2</sup> with 3 323 community members and 1096 households (of which 1036 people are between the ages of 18 and 35 years old and classified as youth). 72.04% of the population use English as their first language. The area is still a majority Coloured community, with 62.80% of its residents being Coloured according to the most recent study, a 2011 census (Frith, 2011).

There is a need for an architectural intervention that could holistically facilitate the youth. This dissertation proposes a cultural centre that would connect the youth at the intervals of learn, work and play.

The cultural centre will be rooted in theories of culture, empowerment and concepts of mentorship and co-production, creating a non-static building capable of reaching out and connecting to the community to empower the youth.

### **1.1.2 Motivation of Study**

There is cultural decay evident in the youth of Coloured communities. This decay is defined by “hegemonic Coloured masculinity”(Anderson, 2009), accentuated in ‘corner boy’ culture. ‘Corner boys’ are synonymous in Durban’s Coloured culture, but there is a gap in research with no critical engagement on the phenomena.

The purpose of the research is to explore an architectural intervention focused on reflecting the youth's concerns and aspirations while creating a constitutive link between placelessness, youth, and architecture (Davids, 2007). It will attempt to create a design in which the youth feels comfortable occupying. Architecture can facilitate youth at diverse social entropy levels and different phases: learn, work, and play. The concept of placelessness as the presence of uniformity and the absence of adaptiveness (Relph, 2008) requires a non-static response designed to reach beyond the boundaries of a site, acting as a central connecting point in the daily lives of the youth. The idea is to create a built environment that can engage youth through theories of culture and empowerment and mentorship and co-production concepts.

## 1.2 DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.2.1 Definition of the Problem

Youth are the future of our communities. Youth culture, youth empowerment, mentorship and co-production are critical factors when influencing an individual (Hellison, 2009). Unfortunately, there is a disconnect experienced by Coloured youth through youth placelessness. This creates a space where youth are often detached from an essential web of support. The result is the accentuation of the worst traits associated with the Coloured community: violence, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, school dropouts and social entropy (Pijooos and Coetzee, 2017).

‘Corner boy’ culture has a long history within the Coloured community. Its longevity evident by the scars of youth who have grown up still stuck on society's fringes, often addicted to alcohol or drugs unable to make much of a contribution to society. The presence of corner boys represents spatial inequality or non-inclusive spatial characteristics (Anderson, 2009). Architecture can act as the bridge between the youth and their community. An architectural response may facilitate a space built by the youth and for the youth, a space capable of empowering the youth (Abeysekera, 2015). The dissertation aims to reconnect the youth to the fabric of society with theories of culture and empowerment and concepts of mentorship and co-production through a proposed cultural centre.

### 1.2.2 Aims

The research document aims to investigate the use of architecture to empower youth within the Coloured community. It will propose a cultural centre anchored on theories of culture and empowerment and concepts of mentorship and co-production. Doing this will give the youth the ability to claim the space they currently occupy (the street) and create a healthy psychosocial space.

### 1.2.3 Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

1. To recognise and understand placeless youth within the built and urban environment of Coloured communities.

2. To propose an architectural intervention capable of holistically responding to the phenomena of youth placeless-ness

The objectives can be achieved by using architectural intervention based on the theories used to understand youth culture. The dissertation will be research-driven to create a design capable of empowering the youth.

## 1.3 DEFINING THE SCOPE

### 1.3.1 Delimitation of Research Problem

Many issues have resulted in the placelessness of Coloured youth and their relationship/lack thereof, with architecture. Lack of identity/identity politics, social issues (Gender, racial and political), and the absence of support and guidance are all issues which call for individual research. The study, therefore, will require a set of focus limitations. The research will not address or engage social issues which do not impact the youth. The study will be limited to Durban Coloured communities focusing on Greenwood Park, and it will not attempt to force a cultural identity upon the Coloured youth but merely investigate youth Coloured culture and attempt to enhance and celebrate it. However, the research will focus on the relationship between Coloured youth, culture and architectural intervention; how they are connected, and their ability to empower the youth.

The research will also engage how culture and identity can be discovered through architecture. The study will attempt to interrogate how a well done co-produced architectural intervention may result in youth empowerment in the form of personal growth, skills development, community upliftment, job creation and the possibility of promoting tourism and economic stimulation.

### 1.3.2 Definition of Terms

#### *1. Youth*

According to the South Africa's National Youth Policy and its National Youth Commission Act and its Integrated Youth Development Strategy (draft 1, 2), youth is defined as 14 to 35 years of age. For this study youth between the ages of 18 and 30 will be the focus.

#### *2. Culture*

Culture can be seen as a society's way of life, its values and beliefs and how its people behave in accordance with these beliefs (Zenani and Mистри). Youth culture is often formed by two defining factors: the arts and the city's living environment (Riano-Alcala, 1991).

### *3. Placeless-ness*

Edward Relph (2008) defines placeless-ness as the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardised landscapes that result from insensitivity to the significance of place. This definition implies a disregard for the end-user, ultimately resulting in groups and individuals being left out of the fabric of society. Therefore, placeless-ness can be defined as a lack of consideration, which leads to an urban environment that excludes individuals and groups from feeling accommodated.

### *4. Identity*

Identity can be defined as a relationship between the individual and the world. It is seen as having three components: the ability to self-define, the ability to make claims about one's self-definition, and the proximity to the actions that allow one to make claims about oneself (Chrysochoou, 2003). Identity can, therefore, be defined as an individual's definition of self, either in isolation or in relation to the sameness that is shared with others.

### *5. Coloured*

Coloured as a collective noun for a race of people is an incredibly complex term with a problematic past. Coloured people, as famously defined by Marike De Klerk are the people that were left over after all other people were sorted out (Pijooos and Coetzee, 2017). This shows in retrospect that the title was created to form a new category of race for those who do not fit in (Francis, 2001). The lack of definition of the category 'Coloured' has resulted in a people being defined by their worst traits: poverty, violence and addiction, further strengthening the idea of a community being externally defined and lacking a definition of identity.

### *6. Empowerment*

It is a means for addressing the problems of vulnerable populations and mediating the role powerlessness plays in creating and perpetuating social problems (Gutierrez et al., 1995).

### **1.3.3 Stating the Assumptions**

As previously stated, the Coloured community was initially defined as anyone who did not fit any other race's description. However, the assumption is due to apartheid's creation of an isolated Coloured community; some cultural and behavioural similarities have been created; these can be seen both locally and nationally. These similarities are passed on from generation to generation. This has created a similar behavioural and cultural experience amongst Coloured people and by extension, the Coloured youth (Anderson, 2009).

The study is done in the frame of social normality; therefore, social issues such as gender and racial problems and other social ills would exist and affect the Coloured community. This is evident in the term 'corner boys,' an issue which is not isolated to males but is also dominated by males due to the cultural expectations of girls versus boys (Anderson, 2009).

The assumption is that youth left to their own devices (placeless-ness) have exacerbated community social issues. Architecture can be designed as a responsive force to help combat placeless-ness to help change the youth perception of self and society.

### **1.3.4 Key Questions**

*Primary Question:*

How can Coloured youth placeless-ness inform an architectural response?

*Secondary Questions:*

1. How does placeless-ness affect the way Coloured youth engage with and shape their environment?
3. How can Coloured youth placeless-ness guide and inform an architectural response?

### **1.3.5 Hypothesis**

The concept of empowerment can be used in architecture to create spaces capable of facilitating the youth. This can be achieved through architecture guided by theories around empowerment and culture and concepts of mentorship and co-production. The use of meaningful architecture can help empower the youth through various stages of self-actualisation, namely learn, work and play. A useful youth-orientated space would help intergrate placeless youth into the fabric of the community.

## 1.4 THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

Before engaging in the complexities of designing the built environment, an in-depth understanding of physical and social intricacies of the particular environment is required. Critical engagement with theories and concepts will help review prevalent arguments already present in the field, thereby creating a rich discourse of the topic at hand.

### 1.4.1 Theories

#### *Youth Empowerment*

Placeless youth should be considered a vulnerable group within the Coloured community (Goldstone, 2015). The youth's ability to utilise space and architecture as a vessel for self-actualisation is vital for their empowerment journey (Riano-Alcala, 1991). The process of placing power back in the hands of the disenfranchised consists of two dimensions: the personal skills to act autonomously and the environment to apply these skills (Úcar et al., 2016). The existing space which prevents people from self-determination is by definition disenfranchising. Therefore reclamation of an individual's existing environment is required. If done effectively, empowerment will ultimately result in social transformation (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2018). Empowerment is not something which can be given instead is something which needs to be taken (Fetterman and Wandersman, 2007). The empowerment of youth has to be a co-produced process with the youth, ultimately being in charge of the final intervention.

#### *Youth Culture*

Theory of culture can be seen as a society's way of life, values, and beliefs and how its people behave in accordance (Brake, 2013a). For this study it will be defined as shared symbolic regulators which guide the actions of a collective. It thus becomes an evolving system which is moulded by the collective and guides the individual (American Sociological Association et al., 1992). Culture is the collective projection of society; dependent on a shared view created through time. This shared understanding guides the individual through their daily lives; consciously or sub-consciously. Culture as a system forms logical consistency, creating an entity capable of guiding an individual to a point of ignorance (Abu-Lughod, 1996). Culture ultimately sets up a system of shared behaviour and collective logic within a community

defined by its actions, beliefs and notions. Culture is not absolute, but an individual who subscribes to a collective culture is guided and informed daily by this 'culture' (American Sociological Association et al., 1992).

Culture can be broken into subcultures; these are subsets of a collective culture which share a commonality with the overarching culture but are distinctive in the traditions, actions and customs (Brake, 2013b). The youth are considered a subculture. Coloured culture is considered a racial subculture, and like any other culture it is a collective buy-in and is informed and guided by a collective projection of society; Coloured youth culture within the Coloured community is a subculture. It buys into the general culture while also existing in the complexities of youth culture.

Coloured youth and their subsequent culture are neglected in the current status quo. This is made evident by spatial inequality present in the phenomena of placeless youth. A collective re-understanding of Coloured youth culture founded on mentorship and co-production, will help reconnect the youth to their community and surrounding areas. Hence a culture shift will result in a shift in the collective understanding. Youth cultural expression is also defined by the appropriation of public space (Riano-Alcala, 1991).

In the case of the topic at hand, the space appropriated by the youth is streets, road convergences and the cul-de-sac. This space has become intrinsically tied to the subculture of youth within the Coloured community. This space requires a subsequent architectural intervention guided by principles of empowerment and concepts of mentorship and co-production.

### *Youth Identity*

The definition of identity as the individual's expression of character and opinion reflected by one's belief and cultural heritage (Govender, 2014) shows the strong connection between self (identity) and collective (culture); the one cannot exist without the other.

## **1.4.2 Strategies for Youth Empowerment**

### *Mentorship*

The idea of mentorship is not a foreign concept to the Coloured community. There is and there continues to be multiple programmes which have effectively connected the youth to mentors; whether it be through the arts or sport. These present and past attempts hold references of profound differences made to individual lives through the aid of mentorship. Bronwynne Anderson (2009) who did a PHD study on Coloured male youth, from Wentworth, found that the addition of mentorship may have changed the lived experiences and life trajectory of many of her participants.

The broad definition of mentorship is ‘off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking’ (McKimm et al., 2003). Mentorship can come from a rehabilitated individual who can teach from life experience or come from an individual with a set of skills you desire. Mentorship begins with a communal understanding of the desired end goal and the connection between two individuals. Mentorships are not as rigid as traditional forms of learning spaces. The relaxed nature of mentorship and the close bond formed between an individual and their mentor is often cited as the reason for the system's effectiveness amongst the youth (McKimm et al., 2003). Mentorship is a perfect strategy for empowerment because it helps create a safe learning space from which a disenfranchised individual can reclaim their power.

### *Co-Production*

The National Co-production Critical Friends define co-production as ‘a relationship where professionals and citizens share the power to plan and deliver support together, recognising that both partners have vital contributions to make to improve quality of life for people and communities’ (National Co-Production Critical Friends, 2014). Co-production varies from participation. Participation is input from the public, which is digested by professionals and used accordingly, instead of co-production, which uses peoples' lived experiences in both the design and delivery phase (Co-Production Network, 2014).

Co-Production embodies a set of principles, namely: Equality, Diversity, Accessibility and Reciprocity.

South Africa's architectural past which is grounded in the experience of the maker (Davids, 2007: 5) demands an understanding of culture and its influence in creating a built environment which reflects and expresses a community.

A symbiotic relationship between the youth and architecture, if achieved, will be capable of facilitating the youth through any stage of actualisation. This relationship is vital to ensure the growth of a group of individuals who lack a place in the urban fabric. The architectural intervention will be required to facilitate the reclamation of space and re-imagination of the status quo.

## 1.5 RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIALS

This section is used to understand and outline the approach and methodology used to guide this research. It aims to outline the intended scope of the study and various techniques used to gather data.

### 1.5.1 Research Design & Methods

To proficiently engage with the issue, various forms of information were collected, examined and analysed. This informs an architectural intervention used to empower youth within the Coloured community. Various methods and techniques are used to conduct this research. The purpose of this section is to name these approaches. The research is conducted from a qualitative stance, and hence all data, both primary and secondary, is collected and interrogated accordingly.

### 1.5.2 Research Material

Empowering placeless youth in the Coloured community through architecture is the focus of this research. The research, therefore, emphasizes the influential factors that could impact an architectural intervention and architectural understanding.

#### *Primary Data*

Primary data consists of a case study, personal observations and both formal and informal interviews with critical personal.

#### Case studies

The Case Study is further engaged with as a separate heading which is found below.

#### Personal observations

Data collected throughout the process of dissertational research is filtered through the architectural lens and the lived experience of the researcher. This information was synthesised

through reflection and critical self-evaluation. The data influenced and contributed to the research.

## Interviews

The interview process was a continuous process throughout the research and design phases to help enhance and clarify specific issues generated and encountered by the research question. Interviews were conducted through a purposeful selective process based on the researcher's self-selection of individuals best suited to help guide and clarify specific issues. Interviewees were assessed beforehand to ensure only relevant and informed individuals were considered, thus ensuring reliable information was obtained.

Unexpected disruptions due to the COVID – 19 pandemic reduced the intended number of interviewees. Intended interviewees to include:

- Five Greenwood Park youth community members who used to or currently fall under the classification of youth placelessness.

The project's co-produced nature required an 'action research' approach to include the observer, user, and client working in equitable collaboration. This meant the youth were a part of the conceptualisation phase. This helped better understand the fringe group of individuals while also helping achieve a bottom-up approach to design (Swann, 2002).

Questions to interviewees respectively were focused on lived experiences around identity, culture and architectural influence/ lack thereof. Questions were semi-structured and open-ended to encourage the interviewee to contribute information deemed relevant to them.

## *Secondary Data*

Secondary data included the collection, examination and analysis of literature review and precedent studies. The information was checked for validity before critically engaged for the dissertation.

## Literature Review

The literature review's primary focus was on how architecture can empower the youth in Durban's Coloured communities. The primary question will be viewed through the lenses of various theories and concepts, including empowerment theory, cultural theory, identity theory and the concepts of mentorship and co-production.

It engaged with current information on the topic creating a deeper understanding of the issue to respond adequately. Sources included various published materials including journal articles, books, and websites.

### Precedent Studies

By selecting and evaluating numerous local and international sourced precedents, a comprehensive view can be formulated of how existing architecture utilises design principles, theoretical and conceptual framework in response to youth, cultural and identity formation, and empowerment. The focus was on community development and youth-orientated projects centred on culture and identity. Criteria included the ability to empower the afflicted and offer them a sense of autonomy. The precedents were engaged from three topical vantage points: a democratic community space and built environment, and an extension of youth-created spaces and a response to the youth's needs.

#### Topic 1 - A Democratic Community Space

- Dongziguan Villagers' Activity Center (Dongziguan Village, Fuyang District, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China, 2017) - gad · line+ studio

#### Topic 2 - An Extension of Youth Created Spaces

- Game Streetmekka (Esbjerg, Denmark, 2015) – EFFEKT Architects

#### Topic 3 - An Extension of Youth Created Spaces

- Outreach Foundation Community Centre (16 Kapteijn Str. Hillbrow 2038. Johannesburg) – Local Studio

Once collected and synthesised secondary data provided the basis for analysis through the case study and ultimately informed the development and design of an architectural intervention.

## 1.6 CASE STUDY DESCRIPTION

The case study underwent the physical analysis of the site of Greenwood Park. The case study was carried out by collecting data through a qualitative method. Data was collected through techniques such as photographs and first-hand observations. This data was filtered through qualitative analysis techniques and further enlightened the relationship between built form and its ability to empower Coloured youth.

Observation methods involved the evaluation and descriptions of space, its context and use.

Data will include:

- Movement tracking during different periods
- Methodological issues
- Field notes
- Photographs
- Visual and audible recordings

The information collected was broken into physical and environmental behaviour. This helped differentiate between the visceral experience and the physical experience. The physical, including a five-sense experience of the site and the visceral focusing of behaviour emotions and connections, experienced and observed on site. These observations helped characterise the spatial qualities of the said case study.

## 1.7 SUMMARY

	Objectives	Research Questions	Data Sources	Sample Size	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Method	Data Presentation Form and Style
1	To investigate the use of architecture as a method of empowering youth within the Coloured community	How can Coloured youth placelessness inform an architectural response?	Standard Relevant Sources include:  Published documents, Journals, Relevant websites, Newspaper articles, magazines and observations  Both formal and informal interviews.  Precedent Studies.  An in-depth analysis of the proposed site.	Adequate to address the research question.  5 x community member interviews  Multiple impromptu interviews  4 x precedent studies  1 x in-depth case study of the proposed site	Desktop study and document analysis  A semi-structured formal interview process  A continuous informal interview process  A continuous observational study.	Documentation analysis and content analysis	Text narrative, visual images, diagrams, diagrammatic maps
2	To recognise and understand placeless youth within the built and urban environment of Coloured communities.	How does placelessness affect the way Coloured youth engage with and shape their environment?	Both formal and informal interviews.  An in-depth analysis of the proposed site.	5 x community member interviews  Multiple impromptu interviews  1 x in-depth case study of the proposed site	A semi-structured formal interview process  A continuous informal interview process  A continuous observational study.	Documentation analysis and content analysis	Text narrative, visual images, diagrams, diagrammatic maps

4	To propose an architectural intervention capable of holistically responding to the phenomena of youth placelessness	How can Coloured youth placelessness guide and inform an architectural response?	Data sources are standardised and therefore will mirror part 1 above.	Sample Sizes are standardised and therefore will mirror part 1 above.	Data Collection Methods are standardised and therefore will mirror part 1 above.	Data Analysis Methods are standardised and therefore will mirror part 1 above.	Data presentation form and style are standardised and therefore will mirror part 1 above.
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# Chapter Two

UNDERSTANDING THE YOUTH: CULTURE AND  
IDENTITY

## **2.1 Introduction**

Placeless-ness has been defined as an issue that is affecting the youth. To understand the phenomena of youth placeless-ness, the youth need to be understood. This chapter will focus on understanding the youth and more specifically, Coloured youth. This will include three themes; culture, identity, and Coloured-ness. The first two themes of culture and identity will be interrogated on how they affect the youth in an urban setting. This will be achieved by understanding their formation, maintenance, and renewal. The third theme will be Coloured-ness and how this racial classification has contributed to the youth's culture and identity formation. By engaging with the above themes, a holistic image of the youth can be formed.

The ability to empower youth through architecture requires a holistic understanding of the youth. To do this effectively, a plethora of information will be revised. Chapter Two will focus on understanding the youth.

## 2.2 Youth Culture

Culture can be seen as an environment made by humans. It is a set of beliefs, systems and meanings that an individual and or collective come to adopt at a specific time and place. These systems help create a friendly environment, clarify and set boundaries and create space for growth (Markus et al., 1996). Despite the nature of cultures being quintessentially undefinable and continually evolving, they have been found to encompass concepts of identity, language and tradition (Kompridis, 2005: 318 - 319).

Culture can be explained in three different ways. Firstly as a shared group practice. The shared nature helps free up cognitive space, reduce conflict and stress for the individual while doing mundane tasks. An example would be public transport etiquette; the way taxis operate with a set of unofficial rules and practices (Morris et al., 2015). Secondly is a set of core themes adopted by the collective. These themes dictate the way people engage with and think about ambiguous situations such as conflict (Oyserman, 2011). Thirdly is by the relationship between the collective and the individual. The individual controls to what extent, at any given time and place, they buy into the culture. This allows an individual to divert from groupthink to an individualistic stance (Oyserman and Lee, 2008).

The second way to explain culture is further outlined by Daphna Oyserman (2011). He states that at an individual level, culture is defined by individualism and collectivism. Individualism is a person's definition of self, defined as one's ability to interpret ambiguous experiences as defining moments. Collectivism pertains to a perceived place within the collective. It is defined by the reputation and respect an individual holds amongst the collective. It is ultimately measured by an individual's self-perception, whether it be founded or unfounded (Mesoudi et al., 2016).

Culture is a tool that can be manipulated and altered to suit the individual's ability to make meaningful choices and lead a self-directed existence (Kymlicka, 1995).

Courtois (2008), however, argues against the above. He believes in peoples' need to subscribe to a specific culture. By defining culture as fluid, it assumes that individuals can manipulate their culture to best suit their needs. Culture can not be portrayed as something fluid, permeable and renegotiable as it contradicts its tangible nature (Kompridis, 2005). If culture simply flows with the times, what would create generational culture and ones yearning to buy into and identify with a specific culture?

Geoffrey Reaume believes that the cost of changing cultures is too high to be undertaken lightly, comparing it to choosing eternal poverty. It is not considered impossible but requires a delicate methodical approach. However, this is not encouraged unless there is a tangible benefit. The value of maintaining and keeping cultures alive is to offer the individual context and identity (Courtois, 2008).

The individualistic nature of culture is influenced and contributed to by the collective, but bought into by the individual. Cultures are continuously evolving as a consequence of change. A change to the status quo will result in a culture shift (Portes and Zhou, 1993). If a culture shift is not done carefully, it can result in a shift of cultural equilibrium. The outcome will often be cultural groups fiercely defending the state of their culture. (Mourey et al., 2015).

Culture is experienced as reality itself (Triandis, 2007). People generally believe that everyone sees the world through the same cultural filters (Oyserman, 2011). This naivety leads to animosity and ignorance between different cultural groups. This explains the tension between the youth and the community. This naivety also blinds the community from understanding the nuances of youth culture.

Youth culture is a subculture of society. Youth culture could also be considered what Bourdieu and Nice (1984), and Harvey and Reed (1996) refer to as a caste-like group. This is a subculture which is widely associated with stereotypes and fits into a specific social hierarchy. The common perception of this subculture is often associated with growth, learning, vulnerability and mistakes.

The two defining factors of youth cultural formation are the arts, specifically music, and the city's living environment. Music creates and forms a youth symbolism. This shared symbolism begins to form a common shared culture. Music creates cultural styles; these are commonly associated with: fashion, dance, art, expression and rebellion (Riano-Alcala, 1991). Music culture is quickly adopted and defines how youth connect with society, their community, space and the urban. Music becomes a point of reclamation, and a statement of definition; a cultural expropriation used to make a mark of who and what they are.

Youth cultural expression is also defined by the 'appropriation of public space and the interpretation of those spaces as 'expressive space' (Riano-Alcala, 1991). The youth defines the appropriated space; a cultural imprint takes place. The space takes on the youth's personality; influenced by music and other youth cultural influences (Riano-Alcala, 1991). In

the case of the topic at hand, the space appropriated by the youth is streets, road convergences and cul-de-sacs.

The youth are a caste-like group, a widely stereotyped subculture, but would fiercely protect their culture. This is a trait which speaks volumes to where they are in life; a place of growth, learning, vulnerability and mistakes. The youth have to navigate the space between their subculture and the collective culture. This is a feat they approach radically, imposing their collective attitude and culture onto whatever they touch; whether fashion, music or space.

## 2.3 Youth Identity

Identity formation is considered the most essential part of youth development. Although not much is known about the process, it is considered dynamic. Philip Gleason (1983) believes that the term identity is not fully understood by society. The current use of the term is relatively new. There have, however, been numerous psychologists who have engaged with the term and attempted to understand it.

Psychologists differ from sociologists when they define the effect identity has on change and whether or not it will waver when threatened. The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud believed that identity was part of an individual's deep psychic structure and stays stagnant regardless of the threat. Sociologists, however, believe that identity is a social construct. It is something externally defined and externally maintained. Under this definition, identity evolves and changes depending on the social engagement and is held together by the thread of memory (Gleason, 1983).

The basis of identity formation is the question 'who am I?' A question once posed calls for a process of exploration and commitment. Exploration is defined by the process of experimentation, and commitment is defined by the process of making identity relevant choices and abiding by them (Topolewska-Siedzik and Ciecuch, 2018).

Different phases define the general understanding of the term identity. It starts as an infant taking on the accepted terms and definitions of self; for example, religious identity. Through adolescent years and into youth, the process of self-discovery and self-actualisation is undertaken; a period in which predefined connection with the world is questioned—resulting in an identity evolution. This is a continuous process which takes place right through an individual's life. Their decisions, associations, environment and time all contribute to what makes up their identity. Identity formation is thus an individual's social engagement with the world around them and their self-ascription within (Gleason, 1983).

The way we self-identify or are identified by others is heavily influenced by situation and context. Identity is often framed around variables like language, nationality, race, gender and religion (Brubaker, 2001).

Forming a clear and concise personal definition of identity is an important core developmental task. This clarity on who you are will help throughout life, especially during periods of turmoil

(Erikson, 1968). Youth go through a multitude of changes, including a social or cognitive process. These changes encourage critical thought on whom and what they wish to be.

A common theme that is agreed upon by authors is the environment required for youth identity to develop and thrive. That is a stable environment which allows for a healthy psychosocial functioning and well-being. This creates a space where they feel like they have a voice and level of control in their surroundings and their future (Crocetti, 2017).

Erikson (1968) believes that youth's primary developmental task is the conflict experienced between identity and identity confusion. They can choose to deal with this dilemma by resolving the conflict, or they can choose to exist in a state of identity confusion.

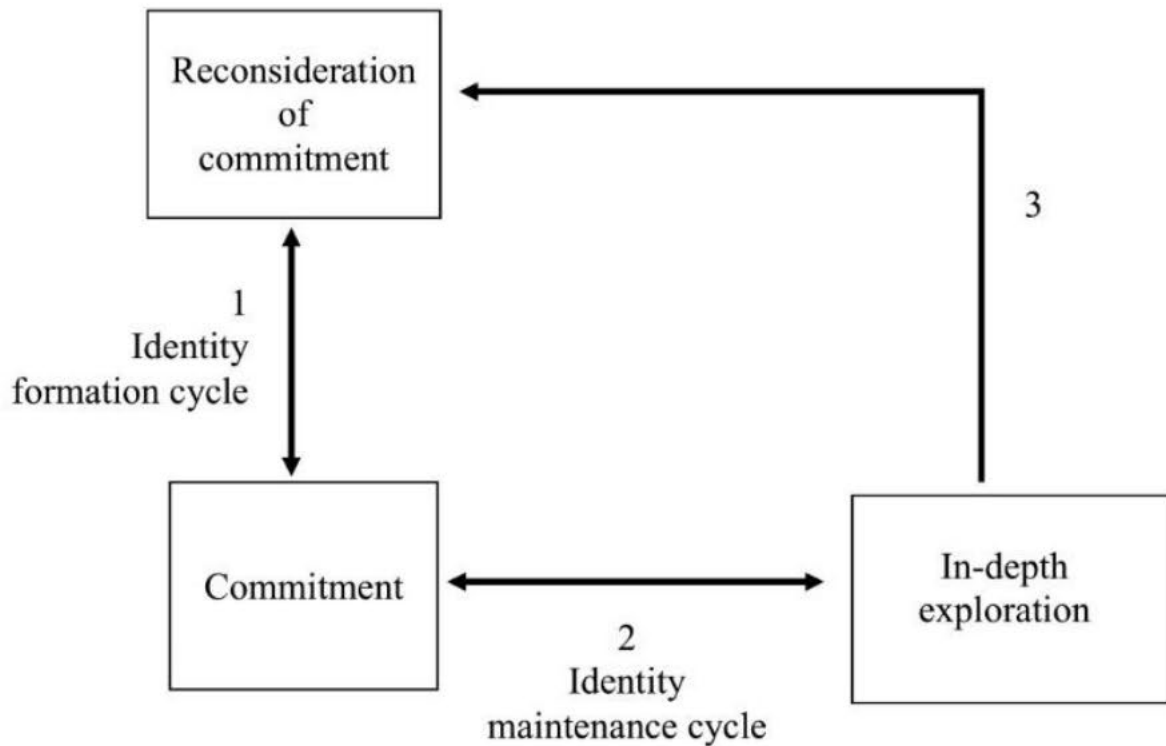
Marcia (1966) adds to Erikson's (1968) point by asserting that there are additional states of identity development. These states are known as Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm and are exploration and commitment - exploration being a state of discovery. Commitment being the process of settling on which identity you wish to self-define.

Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm is criticised for not fully understanding that identity is in a constant state of evolution (Côté and Levine, 1988). Identity cannot be viewed as a single task but is a continuous process that lasts a lifetime—an ever-changing status to combat identity confusion.

Researchers Bosma (1992) and Meeus (1996) realised in the 1980s the shortfalls found in Marcia's Identity Status Paradigm. They proposed an alternative model that would study the attendance and non-attendance of exploration and commitment and the intensity at varying points. The alternative they came up with was the Three-Factor Identity Model. Unlike Marcia's Identity Status Paradigms, the Three-Factor Identity Model understands the reiterative process of identity formation. It further broke commitment into commitment making and identifying with commitment (Bosma, 1992). It also broke exploration down into past exploration and present exploration. Past exploration could be viewed as the method to find current commitments and present exploration to confirm current commitment forms (Crocetti, 2017).

The Three-factor Identity Model consists of three processes by which to identify identity (Crocetti et al., 2008):

- *Commitment*: the various identification qualities that an individual has decided to self-define over an extended period. These identification qualities are where they draw confidence to make life decisions.
- *In-Depth Exploration*: the process of reflecting on the various decisions made based on identifying qualities that an individual has chosen to self-define. This process can be done through self-reflection, interrogating new information or communicating with those around you on their identification qualities.
- *Reconsideration of Commitment*: the process of considering alternative forms of commitment after realising that the current forms are no longer adequate.



*Figure 2: The Three Factor Model: showing the concept of a dual cycle; which includes identity formation and identity maintenance cycles (Crocetti, 2017).*

The Three Identity Process (**Fig. 2**) also introduces the concept of Dual Cycles. There are two dual cycles. The first is the Identity Formation Cycle. This is the process of the youth constantly evaluating their current state of commitment against alternatives in an attempt to find any redundancies. If any are found, the individual will begin to revise their previous commitments as they are no longer deemed satisfactory. The second cycle is the Identity Maintenance Cycle. This is the process of youth examining, evaluating and maintaining their current commitments.

When the Identity maintenance cycle results in uncertainty through the process of in-depth exploration, the individual may return to the identity formation cycle (Meeus, 1996).

There are strong links between identity processes and psychosocial functioning. Commitment and maintaining commitment is related to a positive environment for youth—an environment with good social ties and emotional stability (Hatano et al., 2016). In order for commitment to stay constant youth require a high level of confidence and esteem (Crocetti et al., 2008).

In-depth exploration is associated with both positive and negative experiences. The positive experience is the youth's ability to be in a positive space to critically engage with their current commitments (Hatano et al., 2016). The negative experience is the crisis to the system, which requires them to engage (Crocetti et al., 2008). Reconsideration of commitments is associated with negative experiences. It is the realisation that there is a problem that your current commitments are unable to help you through. This can result in stress and strain on the individual while they re-evaluate their identity in order to find a new commitment (Pop et al., 2016).

Identity formation is a constant process throughout life but is crucial during youth development. The ability to successfully achieve an effective identity is highly dependent on a conducive psychosocial environment. If the environment is not conducive to identity development, it can result in youth who are vulnerable to the crises of life. An attempt to create a conducive space for youth to be able to form their identity adequately is required within our communities.

## 2.4 Coloured Culture and Identity

Once a year, there is a stark reminder to most Coloured people that they have not fully grasped what their culture and identity is. This reminder comes on heritage day when Coloured people are asked to dress to express their cultural heritage. Most Coloured people are left scratching their heads or reaching for heritage which is a part of their White or Black history (Cupido, 2019).

In his article, Alan Cowell (1985) gave an apt definition of Colouredness, '*South Africa's 'Coloreds': a group torn between black and white worlds.*'

*To be "colored" is to be neither black nor white, more privileged than blacks but less privileged than whites, living a segregated life drawn from roots that deny segregation, labeled "colored" by the authorities, as if that denoted a homogeneous group, yet drawn from disparate roots. The label of "colored" is one of convenience, lumping together those who do not fit elsewhere in apartheid's great racial divisions (Cowell, 1985).*

Alan Cowell (1985) exposes apartheid's hypocrisy in the creation of the 'Coloured' racial group. The apartheid regime was based on the idea of separating definable groups. They believed by doing this, groups could nurture and grow through their traditions, culture and identity. However, the classification of Coloured was defined as anything other than White, Black, Indian and Asian. 'Coloured-ness' became multiple groups forced together including the Griquas, Cape Malays, Cape Coloureds and "other Coloureds." This directly contradicts the whole notion of apartheid favouring homogeneity.

Coloured culture is at times hard to define and sometimes undefinable. Marike de Klerk stated in 1983 that Coloured people were the people left after the nation was sorted out (Pijoo and Coetzee, 2017). A sentiment showing the complexities and undefined nature of today's Coloured community. This lack of definition has resulted in a community plagued with problems (Goldstone, 2015). A sense of uncertainty has created evident cracks in the social fabric of Colored communities. These cracks appear in the form of social ills such as substance abuse and violence.

Mohamed Adhikari (2009) believes Coloured identity could be viewed from two perspectives. The first perspective is a racialised identity forced onto a collective by 'whiteness' through the

regime of apartheid. The second perspective is the resilience of the Coloured collective to still subsequently develop a culture and identity amidst the abuse.

Although an individual can be forced into an identity grouping, the individual can never be defined by anyone other than the individual. The oppressive ruling group can simply label an identity but cannot define it. However, this does not negate the effect that such oppression ultimately does have on an individual's ability to form a healthy identity (Adhikari, 2009).

Coloured identity did exist to some extent before the state of apartheid. When white colonialists first landed on South African shores mixed-race children (Coloureds) were born. However, with the emergence of apartheid, it brought together multiple homogenous racial groupings under the bracket of 'Coloured'. It also isolated this diverse group. This forced segregation, which legally lasted for forty-one years and is still evident today, created a length of shared positionality, class and experiences which ultimately shaped a sense of sameness and identity (Adhikari, 2009).

Erikson's (1968) understanding of the phases of identity, as identity and identity confusion or crisis, allows us to view the initial formation of Coloured-ness as a significant identity crisis. If we consider the Three-Factor Model when Coloured-ness was imposed the collective would be forced into a process of self-evaluation followed by a reconsideration of identity commitment and ultimately a commitment to the new forced identity of Coloured-ness (*Fig. 2*). This could be viewed as a simplistic explanation of how Coloured identity went from being purely a forced identity into an identity maintained by the collective (Anderson, 2009).

Coloured identity in a post-apartheid South Africa has been a widely debated topic. There are three sides to this debate. The first side claims that the term 'Coloured' is a derogatory term which was forced onto the collective. This group calls for the term to be unpacked and understood. The second side believes what was defined as 'non-white' under the apartheid regime (Black, Indian, Coloured and Asian) should unite under the term Black as a new identity. Following ideologies such as black consciousness, this group believes in reclaiming power by taking it back. The final group believe that the racial designation of Coloured has become their identity. This group believe that as much as it should be interrogated and understood for its historical meaning, it has become a point of pride and identity (Adhikari, 2009).

Anderson (2009) also argues that Coloured culture cannot merely be viewed as a white imposition. Despite its origin, it has been developed and maintained by 'Coloureds.' However Coloured culture and identity cannot be viewed as the homogenous racial group apartheid intended it to be.

## **2.5 Coloured-ness in KwaZulu-Natal**

Whenever the topic of Coloured-ness arises in South Africa, there is the immediate jump to talking about Cape Coloureds and to a lesser extent Johannesburg Coloureds. Durban is seldom considered (Anderson, 2009).

The history of the Durban Coloured community is not as extensively researched. Coloureds have been present in Natal since 1824. They are mainly comprised of a mixture of Mauritians, St. Helenans and Euro-Africans. The Euro - Africans comprise a mixture of British men and Zulu women. Natal Coloureds have assimilated to a western style of life and predominantly speak English as a first language (Erasmus, 2001).

The apartheid regime introduced the Group Areas Act of 1950, which advocated for a separation of the races. This draconian law demanded that races live in separate areas; this resulted in the mass relocation of many people of colour. The most well-known Coloured example is the forced removals which took place in Cape Town's famous District 6 in 1966. However, Durban also experienced numerous instances of forced removals which affected the Coloured communities. As a consequence, Natal Coloureds have come to occupying five areas. These areas include Wentworth, Sydenham, Marianridge, Newlands East and Greenwood Park (Erasmus, 2001).

Wentworth, Marianridge and Newlands East were most affected by the apartheid imposed social ills. These ills were primarily attributed to a high rate of substance abuse, a high level of unemployment and an overcrowded urban environment which includes overcrowded flats. Sydenham and Greenwood Park experienced fewer social ills. This was due to their rights to property ownership and access to stable jobs with higher wages. This difference has created a lot of animosity and tension between the Coloured areas. The Coloureds from Sydenham and Greenwood Park tend to have a sense of elite social status over those from Wentworth, Marianridge and Newlands East (Erasmus, 2001).

Although these differences demonstrate a non-homogenous culture amongst Coloureds. There are overlapping similarities, but it would be naïve, considering the differences - even within the Durban Coloured communities - to assume that Coloured identity is constant (Anderson, 2009).

## **2.6 Understanding Coloured Youth**

Coloured youth are a sub-culture of Coloured culture. They too must engage with the issues that plague the Coloured community while still attempting to navigate through their unique issues.

The youth's toxic environment within Coloured communities is a result of a sense of inferiority, uncertainty and unworthiness. This has created a system plagued with social and economic shortcomings. The youth also exist in an environment with no support structure (Anderson, 2009).

The community of Durban saw a glimpse of this toxic culture in 2015, at the East coast radio Durban day, when a fight broke out between two Coloured males which ended in the death of a 20-year-old. In response, famous comedian Calvin Goldstone engaged with his personal experience with Coloured culture. Goldstone believes that a lack of identity aided by a flawed education system, low literacy levels, historically forced removals, relocations and congested living conditions exacerbated by drugs and poverty has created a sense of vulnerability. This insecurity has created a culture which views violence and respect as synonyms, a culture which has claimed countless lives and further alienated the community from society (Goldstone, 2015).

Anderson (2009) understands that the youth in Coloured communities cannot be identified as bad people, but only in an environment which is conducive to toxic behaviour. She believes that given the right environment, the youth are capable of thriving and breaking the status quo.

There is an apparent lack of social and physical public space created within the urban fabric of Coloured communities for the youth. This has forced the youth to exist on the fringes of society. The space which they have adopted and claimed is a non-inhabitable space which is unintended for human consumption; the streets. Hence the colloquial term 'Corner boys.'

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to engage with the complexities of youth culture and identity within the Coloured context. It sought to provide some insight into the youths' experience and the Coloured experience. A level of uncertainty remains within both topics, and as a result, they are a source of mass contestation. However, an attempt was made to engage with and understand both the Youth culture and the Coloured experience.

There is a strong tie between culture and identity. If an individual has the space and means to allow, their culture to thrive that space must be protected as it is the same space required to form an identity (Kymlicka, 2000). Courtois (2008) refers to how autonomy allows a choice in culture which influences the calibre of choices we make. Cultural choice, therefore, helps the youth navigate through time and space. Coloured culture was originally a form of oppression forced onto a group of people. However, the culture has now been transformed into a collective form of identity.

The nature of culture being a collective 'buy-in' is both useful and problematic. It is problematic if culture turns toxic as it becomes a collective toxic culture. It, however, can be a positive if used to help guide a community in a positive direction. Some of the youth in Coloured communities have latched onto the worst perceived traits of Coloured culture (Goldstone, 2015). Culture, therefore, should be re-evaluated for healthier and more sustainable models.

Youth culture can be shifted (Kymlicka, 2000). Attempting to understand the youth has shown two things. Firstly the youth are required to play a pivotal role within their change. There is a requirement on the side of the youth to respond positively and openly to the change that they seek to see, as this is not something that can be handed to them; the responsibility is both dual and reciprocal. Secondly, the quality of the surrounding environment is also vital for youth culture and identity development. This is more an external influence on youth culture. This second factor opens up the realisation that in order for there to be a significant cultural shift in a positive direction, there must be a response (internal) in the form of the youth's active participation and openness, and also a restructuring of the external environments in which these youth live.

The solution is, therefore, an environment designed by the youth, which will allow them the space to develop a healthy culture and identity as well as agreeability on their part. The urban environment will have to be revised to create a peaceful public space for the youth. Youth are

the future of a community; if adequate public space is offered, the youth will be allowed to flourish; in turn, the community will flourish. An attempt is required to create an optimum space that is good for the youth and if done well is capable of fostering a community to prosperity.

# Chapter Three

## CONCEPTUALISING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

### **3.1 Introduction**

Placeless-ness implies a state of disenfranchisement experienced by the youth. Empowerment has been hypothesised as an effective method to help combat the current state of disenfranchisement. Empowerment is embedded with principles of co-production and mentorship, both of which are well-established concepts capable of aiding in the process of self-emancipation and growth. Understanding empowerment is a vital step in understanding how architecture can be used as a tool to help aid in the self-emancipation of the current state of placeless youth found within Coloured communities. This chapter will, therefore, focus on understanding youth empowerment as a method of alleviating placeless-ness amongst youth within the Coloured community.

The ability to empower youth through architecture requires a holistic understanding of empowerment. To effectively do this, a plethora of information will be revised. The third chapter will focus on empowerment.

### **3.2 Youth Empowerment: An Effective Method to Alleviate Youth Placeless-ness**

Recent discussions around effective and holistic methods to combat persistent social ills have centred on the concept of empowerment. The definition of empowerment is, ‘a means for addressing the problems of powerless populations and for mediating the role powerlessness plays in creating and perpetuating social problems’ (Gutierrez et al., 1995: 534). The concept is based on the assumption that a member of a group with little social or political power will result in social and personal costs. The unequal access to resources will prevent youth, families and organisations in oppressed communities from obtaining the social elements they need. A broken system will result in individuals being susceptible to the adverse effects of oppressive systems. The empowerment concept proposes that this vicious cycle can be reversed through the redistribution of power (Gutierrez et al., 1995).

Empowerment theory explains how power can be generated from social interaction. Defining power as: ‘the ability to get what one needs; the ability to influence how others think, feel, act, or believe; and the ability to influence the distribution of resources in a social system such as a family, organisation, community, or society’ (Gutierrez et al., 1995: 535). This allows a group like the youth, through the process of disruption, the ability to drive social interaction, control power formation, regulate information and the distribution of resources. By doing this, the youth can create and reclaim power and in turn empower themselves.

Empowerment is the process of growth and confidence building. It is the beginning of reclaiming self-realisation and emancipation, which ultimately leads to social transformation (Bacqué and Biewener, 2013). Architecture as an agent of empowerment is the process of allowing as many opportunities for the youth to thrive and foster (Boluijt and Graaf, 2010). Architectural design, when done well, provides the common ground for empowerment to take place, whether actively (when the built form is used as an actual place for empowerment e.g training halls, sports grounds, community computer centres) or passively (when the youth become acquainted to their new surroundings as the standard norm, thereby uplifting their perspectives and general outlook on life).

The logical progression of empowerment would therefore be the individual's ability to develop personal skills ‘(knowledge, attitudes, aptitudes, abilities ... )’ (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2018: 2) and a conducive environment capable of facilitating the ability to exercise these skills (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2018).

Common factors which show positive signs for youth empowerment include the ability to control what activities they are involved in and the ability to create opportunities for themselves in safe environments (Jennings et al., 2006). The youth require the ability to create opportunities through occupational and training experiences to empower themselves (Spreitzer, 2007). Activities which contribute to youth empowerment include studies achieved, monthly income, skills available and studies or skills available to acquire (Pineda-Herrero et al., 2018).

The four models which are used to explain youth empowerment within communities include:

- Youth Empowerment Cycle (Chinman and Linney, 1998);
- Youth Development and Empowerment Program Model (Kim et al., 1998);
- The Transactional Partnering Model (Cargo et al., 2003); and
- The Empowerment Education Model (Freire and Ramos, 2014)

All four models share strong commonalities. These include a strong connection to the surrounding community; through methods of mentorship, a co-produced system versus a top-down approach; the youth have to be an integral part of their empowerment and the most important commonality is the need for a healthy environment which promotes positive connections with place and people.

### **3.3 Mentorship as a Method of Empowerment**

The presence of youth placelessness represents a disconnect between the youth and their prospective communities—a situation which results in the proliferation of social ills. Mentorship is a proven method of reconnecting Coloured youth to the community (Anderson, 2009).

Studies have engaged with the beneficial nature of mentoring relationships. Mentoring relationships require the community to be involved in youth development. These relationships promote positive growth and development (DuBois and Karcher, 2005, Keller and Pryce, 2010). The presence of a mentor also allows the youth to develop social skills; it teaches them how to engage with the other and fit into the community (Schwartz et al., 2013).

The primary role which mentors should fulfil is, ‘fostering, nurturing, and maintaining close, positive one-on-one relationships with their mentees’ (Lakind et al., 2015: 56). A mentor relationship should preferably be a long term relationship which covers all aspects of a mentee’s life, whether it be education, recreation or employment. A mentor should focus on goal-orientated growth, aiding and supporting the mentee along the way (Lakind et al., 2015). Simply put a mentor could be defined as a ‘wise and trusted teacher or counsellor (McLaughlin, 2010: 872).’

Mentorship is important to offer the youth a sense of autonomy from their parents; a developmental stage which all youth go through. The presence of mentorship will make an individual receptive to information despite the distance from their parents (Schwartz et al., 2013). Theory and research suggest that through mentorship, the youth can demonstrate adaptive outcomes (Schwartz et al., 2013: 143).

Mentor and mentee relationships are vital. A mentor that has a positive relationship with their mentee yields more positive results—the closer the bond, the stronger the influence (Spencer, 2007). A mentor’s ability to be useful is often determined by the ability to understand and empathise with the mentee’s reality. An individual cannot help someone they cannot understand. If a mentee is struggling with poverty, a mentor who comes from a wealthy background may not be able to aid in the development of that mentee (Herrera et al., 2013).

Mentor mentee relationships cannot work in isolation. For the best results, the mentee's immediate support system is required to be brought into the fold. The relationships should not overlap (Spencer et al., 2011).

Mentorship is something that has been used effectively amongst Coloured youth within Greenwood Park. The example of Art Centre Studio 849 run by the late architect Rodney Choromanski will be explored below.

### **3.4 Understanding Co-production as a Youth Approach**

Co-production is a joint effort undertaken by two parties who equally determine the outcome (Parks et al., 2005). It is an effective method to empower the youth. Co-production is a needs-based relationship, a need is required for a co-produced effort (Gornall, 2018).

Engaging with the youth is directly linked to their well-being and the development of both social and cultural growth. The intended outcomes of effective co-production systems include transformational learning, self-confidence, ability to engage effectively and self-esteem (Gornall, 2018). Similar to mentorship, there is a direct link between effective co-production and the quality of relationships within. In order for co-production to be successful, there has to be an expected level of trust, respect and autonomy between the youth and whomever they co-produce with (Gornall, 2018).

Co-production can be defined as the youth being an equal partner. It is a reciprocal and reiterative relationship between professionals and the end-user. It is based on the idea that people do not want to be passive agents within their communities but require an active role. When co-production is used, it results in far more effective outcomes (Hayes, 2017).

Co-Production values the collective production and formation of knowledge over a top-down approach. This method is commonly referred to as action research or participatory action research (Bell and Pahl, 2018).

There are two forms of co-production, namely, collaborative and collective (Humphreys, 2008). Collaborative co-production is the connection between the user and a professional. The youth could use this connection for education development, skills development or any other endeavour required to help their growth process. Collective co-production is the connection between users. This process would be the stimulus of youth passing on knowledge and skills. The collective co-production will be vital to help youth create autonomous capital giving them the space needed to change the status quo.

Participatory procedures are too often a box-ticking exercise using the youth as tokens in an attempt to appear to do what is required. This leads to failure and a farther disconnect between the fabric of society and those shaping it. This practice needs to stop and be replaced with an environment where the youth have a meaningful voice that is representative and reflective of their position within their communities (Hayes, 2017).

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Empowerment's rudimentary definition of autonomy implies a current state of disenfranchisement; reclamation is required to create a state of empowerment. In order for empowerment to be successful, it requires the youth to have a connection to the community, a voice in all relevant decisions and a healthy psychosocial environment.

Empowerment requires a connection to the community. This is vital to the youth's journey of growth and learning. It also ensures that the youth do not have to reinvent the wheel, but through a process of mentorship can be guided along a journey of cultural discovery.

The youth need to be involved in all relevant decisions. Through the process of co-production, the youth can gain a sense of value and a voice within the community. This creates autonomy, a valued state in the journey to self-empowerment.

Empowerment requires a healthy psychosocial environment which is capable of facilitating the youth to a state of self-actualisation. Beyond architecture's capability of facilitating multiple functions, it also can reflect (Ballantyne, 2013) and frame humanity. This ability will allow it to act as a vessel capable of facilitating a healthy psychosocial space for the youth. A space capable of fostering a state of empowerment.

A healthy psychosocial environment is defined by a sense of ownership, freedom to be themselves, the ability to voice their opinions, and try out new things. It is a space which allows autonomy while challenging youth to move beyond their comfort zones. This environment is co-created by the youth and others in the community. The youth have to maintain the role of primary actors within a youth empowerment place (Hilfinger Messias et al., 2005, Jennings et al., 2006).

If youth empowerment is successful, it could include the benefits of increased self-efficacy and self-awareness, positive identity development, positive social bonding, awareness of organisational operations and interpersonal relations and a sense of purpose (Jennings et al., 2006: 51).

# Chapter Four

ARCHITECTURE FOR THE YOUTH

## 4.1 Introduction

The literature, to this point, has attempted to interrogate, understand and define both Coloured Youth within the context of Greenwood Park and effective methods of eradicating the current state of placeless-ness (empowerment, mentorship & co-production). A firm grasp on both these topics is required before architecture can be explored as a tool required to help the youth self-emancipate from the current state of placeless-ness.

Chapters three and four, both unequivocally demonstrated how space and place are fundamental to the topic at hand. Both chapters shared common themes towards place/space, namely that:

- Place is intrinsic to our culture and identity; and
- Space is tied to empowerment.

Place is fundamental to understanding the dissertational question of, ‘how can Coloured youth placeless-ness inform an architectural response?’ Space, spatial planning, urban planning and architecture would therefore need to be interrogated. This will be done from two vantage points, namely: the status quo and an idealistic alternative. The two points feed off each other, and both need to be understood to understand youth in architecture, youth within the urban and youth in space/place.

The first point is the status quo of youth spatial understanding and formation, or lack thereof. The spatial formation is failing the youth. The sense of placeless-ness defined from the onset is something which is required to be understood. The first part of Chapter Four will therefore attempt to engage with and understand place and placeless-ness.

The second point is understanding what is required to evolve the current state of placeless-ness to an ideal youth inspired place. An attempt to understand youth requirements, needs and wants along with youth spatial formation and architectural interventions is required. The second part of Chapter four will attempt to understand pro-youth alternatives.

## **4.2 Place: The Status Quo**

Place is vital to the process of identity, and cultural formation as stated above the youth require a healthy psychosocial environment in order to thrive. The current state of place, however, is not conducive to youth development, growth and empowerment. It could be viewed as a state of placeless-ness. Place needs to be understood in order to understand placeless-ness. The first part of Chapter Four will focus on understanding place and placeless-ness.

Placeless-ness is the status quo of Coloured youth. An issue that has caused the youth to exist on the fringes of society, namely street corners and cul-de-sacs. Youth require autonomy over place for self-development to take place naturally. Place is therefore, vital for the process of empowering youth. A youth reclamation of place can result in a shift in youth culture and identity.

### **4.2.1 Place**

There is a standard agreement amongst authors who write on place: that place is being lost in today's society. This loss is defined as both a loss of place and a loss of meaning attached to place (Cox, 1965).

The concept of place has evolved, particularly in production and meaning. These areas have widely been affected by the advent of modernity and globalisation; a period characterised by the social dislocation of communally defined notions of place (Jameson, 2013, Lash and Lash, 1990). Globalisation has questioned the use of place and whether it is a necessity (Agnew, 1984) while modernity has commodified and devalued place (Sack et al., 1992). This line of thought has created a debate over whether place is essential to our modern way of life with authors such as Toffler (1984) questioning its purpose and use while authors such as Shuman (2013) advocate for its necessity.

Physical and social movement can be linked to modern forms of transport (public and personal) which allow individuals to explore the full extent of their cities. As a result, people tend to meet in communal social areas. These are forced spaces designed for capitalistic consumption and hence are defined as in-authentic, soulless meeting grounds. The subsequent consequence being that communities are left barren, used solely as places to sleep. The global phenomena of migration takes place both for job opportunities and as people move up the hierarchical

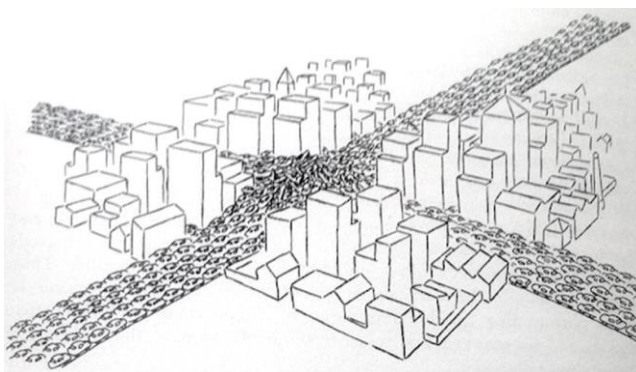
socioeconomic ladder; from a lower-class neighbourhood to an upper-class neighbourhood. Migration patterns create unsustainable communities incapable of maintaining cultural and heritage norms; as a result, communities become nothing more than commodities which people use to best suit their need for residency (Picard and Robinson, 2006).

There are three elements in which place can be reduced to, namely: a *sense of place*, *locale* and *location* (Agnew and Duncan, 2015). The *sense of place* examines how people are tied to and connected to their place (Agnew, 1987). *Locale* looks at the social relations that define place while *location* engages purely with the economics of place and how it shapes and affects its conception.

The destruction of place will be engaged from two vantage points—Non – place and placelessness.

#### 4.2.2 Non-place

The perception that life seems less authentic or has fewer real engagements is a common nostalgic observation that humanity has today (Cohen, 1988, MacCannell and Lippard, 1999). This feeling is our collective understanding that something is off with the place around us or lack thereof. Webber (1964) defined this non-place as a place which holds accessibility over propinquity. The new urban has become defined by the distance from propinquity, a world where proximity has encouraged and destroyed meaningful human connections. This has created spaces where roads, freeways, highways and all other forms of transportation infrastructure take precedent in planning while human propinquity is thrown into the realm of advanced telecommunications technology.



*Figure 3: Humorously demonstrates poor urban planning (Lindeke, 2017).*



*Figure 4: Birds eye view of a car first environment (Robinson, 2015).*

By prioritising accessibility, we simplify place to a location. This has numerous consequences, none more so than the quality of place. Place with well-designed roads has become the standard for prosperity and the definition of a well-defined place. This has created a world where accessibility holds more weight than the quality of connections (Arefi, 1999).



Figure 7: Poor urban planning creates a unfavourable space for the humans (Lindeke, 2017).

Figure 8: An architects vision of the ideal alternative (Attoe and Logan, 1992).



Figure 5: Artistic representation of the dangers of being a pedestrian in the city (Lindeke, 2017)



Figure 6: Pedestrians struggle to move through car first cities (Robinson, 2015).

The redefinition of place goes beyond being understood as merely a failure of planners and architects. It instead is a reflection of modern society and the way it defines and engages with place. We have created places that favour solidarity over the collective value (shared existences

and beliefs) (Augé and Howe, 1995). The introduction of cyberspace as an unprecedented alternative to propinquity has created places without communal ties and bonds that once where the definition of place defined communities (Arefi, 1999).

There is a call to learn from how we created place in the past i.e. to use a collectivist method of relying upon an agreed set of values and norms based on the community's needs. Modernity is critiqued as being sterile and unable to sustain the evolving needs of a community. Communities are now forced and pre-planned to best suit as many points of connection as possible. This system does not allow for a community to evolve. The current state needs to change. Propinquity cannot continue to be defined as less critical than connectivity (Arefi, 1999).

#### **4.2.3 Placeless-ness**

The antithetical relationship between place and placeless-ness dictates that understanding one will result in an understanding of the other. Place would, therefore, need to be understood to understand placeless-ness.

Place has been redefined at least three times: from the *unconscious* to the *conscious* and finally to the *manufactured consciously*. This is the by-product of society's devaluation and commodification of place.

While place is understood as being embedded in meaning and is rooted in belonging, placeless-ness can be viewed as a loss in meaning (Relph, 2008). This loss is not only an urban loss of place but also a shift in society's definition and engagement with space (Arefi, 1999).

People and place share a strong connection, being that one is defined by the other, and the one cannot exist without the other. Place is intrinsic to our identity. It therefore can be assumed that the meaning place holds is a reflection of the value and definition we place on it; thus, people instil meaning and identity into places (Relph, 2008).

The rootedness of place can be defined as the core of place to person connection. Tuan (1980) defines rootedness as an unreflectively secure, unselfconscious, and comfortable state of being in a locality. The term feeling at home is a result of this sense of being rooted in a place.

Placeless-ness would therefore lack any of these attributes or lack them in any form of authenticity.

In the modern landscape, place has become an inauthentic expression, a romanticised notion (*manufactured conscious*). This romantic view of place has been devalued to the point of a commodity (Agnew, 1984). An attempt is made to standardise, and mass produce this sense of place in modern society which in turn creates the ironic state of inauthenticity and placelessness we currently live in (Jacobs and Appleyard, 1987). Planners and architects believe this failure is the result of a shift from place, forming organically to the manufactured sense of place. However, this realisation has resulted in a futile scramble to self-correct and renew the urban by demolishing existing established places in an attempt to manufacture the other. These places are given coined terms such as renewal or revival of the urban landscape. However, it has further exacerbated the state of placeless-ness within modern cities by continuing the status quo of the mechanisation and commodification of place (Arefi, 1999).

Manufacturing a sense of place has created a society where traditions and customs have been globally created—resulting in sterile spaces designed to overload our senses. Amusement parks and shopping malls have thus been created as a rooted sense of place; an attempt to find a community (Banerjee and Baer, 2013).

Youth place formation holds all the above complexities. However, it is further exacerbated by the youth having been excluded from the creation and formation of place. A process which they are required to be a part of, if not they will go elsewhere to reclaim unintended space as their own (Matthews et al., 2000). This exclusion has resulted in a top-down approach; the assumption is made that they should be designed for. This creates a sense of disconnect between the fabric of communities and the needs of youth. This is a problem which results in the disenfranchisement of the youth; offering them no autonomy and power within their spaces (Thornham and Myers, 2012).

In the case of Coloured youth within Greenwood Park, they have been forced to occupy and adapt spaces which were not designed for human consumption. Spaces designed at the expense of human propinquity; such as streets and roads. Ironically the streets inability to be claimed or owned by any one sector of society created the only space the youth had the social capacity to lay claim to. Therefore in the current status quo, an attempt is needed to reclaim the spaces

which the youth have found a place. Despite the intended purpose, this space would have to be re-engaged to create a humanistic place for the youth to thrive.

### **4.3 Designing for the Youth**

Placeless-ness has resulted in the youth being pushed onto the periphery of society, finding place on its fringes, the streets. This is neither an uncontested relationship nor a static one. Instead, it is a relationship which sees the youth continually being pushed along and never being allowed to lay claim to any specific street corner or cul-de-sac, only finding space within the collectiveness of the streets. Ironically the streets which they have been pushed onto holds the capacity to be the most socially equitable space within the city. This is evident by citizens using the street as a neutral space to protest any form of injustices they face against governments or large corporate conglomerates.

The streets currently stand as a space not designed for human reclamation however they could be reformed and transformed into something which could not only serve to uplift the youth but also uplift the community at large.

The second part of chapter four will attempt to engage with the wants and need of youth inspired spatial planning and architecture, and the streets' ability to be a catalyst for change in youth culture and identity.

#### **4.3.1 Complexities of Architecture within Context**

Any conversation around South African architecture is a difficult one. This is a result of the tumultuous history alongside the rich diversities that the nation shares. As a consequence, there is a lack of national architectural identity. We have instead simply adhered to globalisation norms and created an architecture of sameness—one that shares its roots in a Western identity (Davids, 2007).

In order to understand the lack of national architectural identity, one simply has to look no further than the lack of general national identity. The sad reality is that architecture does not currently represent or mirror the needs of those it is intended for but instead is a representation of its creator. (Davids, 2007).

The legacy of apartheid and colonisation has created an urban, architectural and social foreign fabric in South Africa. Coloured communities are no different. Greenwood Park has a sense of cultural dissonance created by it initially being a white only designated area and since being

allocated for people classified as Coloured. The result is local infrastructure being by and large superior to other Coloured communities in Durban (Francis, 2001). This dissonance has created numerous problems, including cultural assimilation and a sense of superiority over other Coloured areas in Durban

Anthony King (2016) is interested in architecture in a post-colonial period. He takes an interest in the country's ability to re-understand global cultures; taking international technology and rooting it in local practices—a method which could be used to resist the ingress of world culture. Christopher Cripps (2004) counter argues that architecture can embed unconscious assumptions.

Architecture can utilise international technology but it needs to be rooted in local knowledge. If architecture is rooted in global culture and merely disguised by local derivatives, it will fail the community and further perpetuate a colonial disconnect. Through a process rooted in local knowledge, culture and identity and founded on the premise of co-production, international technology can be seamlessly incorporated into an indigenous architecture.



Fig. 11: View of Greenwood Park house in 1876.  
(K.P. McIntosh, 'Some Old Natal Families')

*Figure 9: A common colonialist house built within Greenwood Park when it was designated as a white's only area (Radford, 1998).*

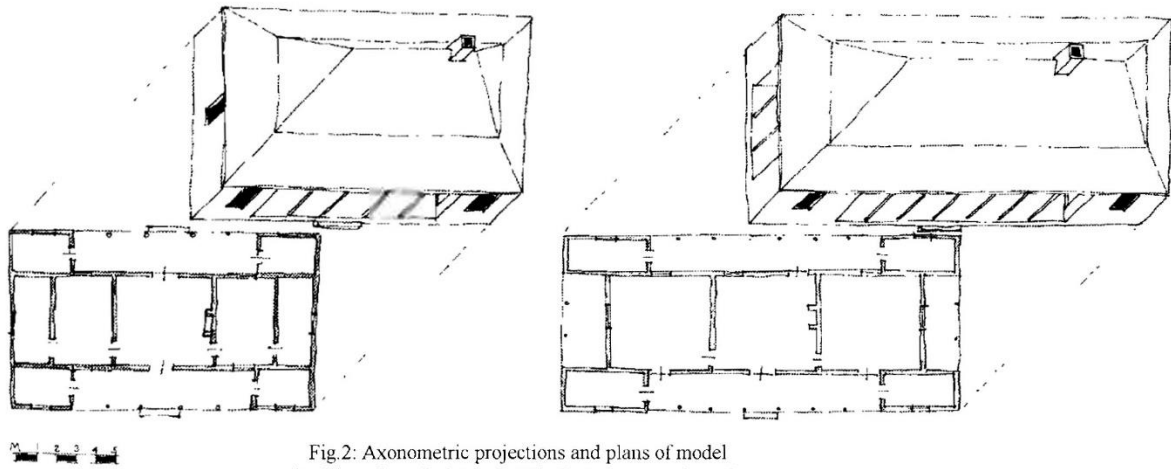


Fig.2: Axonometric projections and plans of model dwellings from Dr Mann's *The Emigrants guide to the Colony of Natal* (The author)

*Figure 10: Examples of floor layouts of colonial dwellings (Radford, 1998).*



*Figure 11: Demonstrates a global sameness shared in architecture (Agoba, 2020).*

*Figure 12: A facades disguised by token derivatives of 'local' architecture (Trower, 2010).*

### **4.3.2 The Thinking behind Designing for the Youth**

There is constant friction between the youth and community. This friction is as a result of a lack of understanding between cultures. The community at large do not appreciate the way the youth engage with space, perceiving it to be antisocial and infringing on their rights. However, the youth feel unjustly observed and unequally treated within public spaces. This often results in the youth acting out (White et al., 2002). Rob White (2002) suggests from experience that the best way to deal with the animosity experienced between communities and the youth is with a positive holistic approach where the youth are an integral part of the transformation.

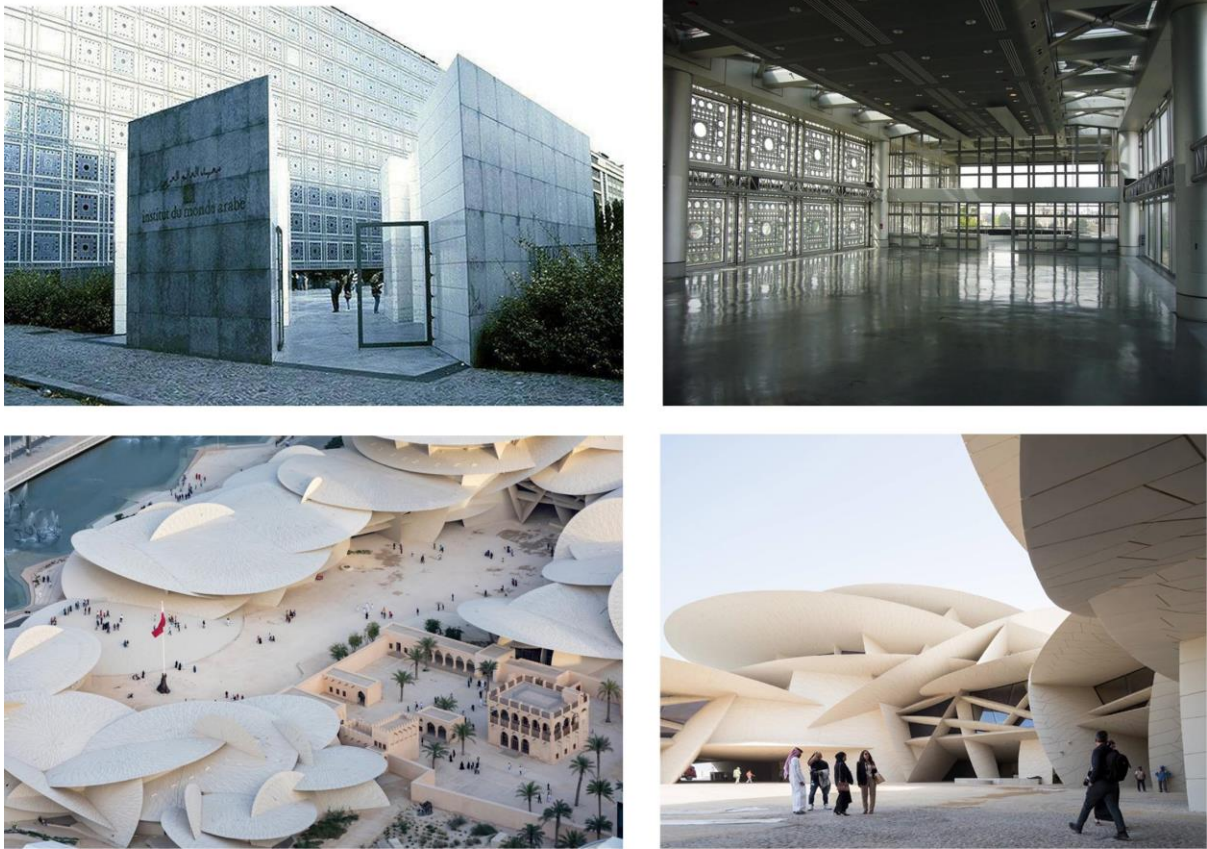
Architecture designed by youth cannot be seen as static or rigid but instead should be seen as ‘an ‘event’, as ‘mobile’ or as ‘process’ (Thornham and Myers, 2012: 784). Understanding youth architecture in this manner unveils that architecture essentially becomes a labyrinth of demonstrations and performances shaped by a range of factors including “place, space, mobility, agency, power and the visual, and are constantly rearticulated and reimagined”(Thornham and Myers, 2012: 784).

Although architecture can affect and influence communities, there is a need for inclusion and intent (Arefi, 1999). The standard method of youth spatial formation has failed. Although there has been a shift in design, the unhealthy power dynamics between the public and the youth have remained. The relationship perpetuates the status quo and fosters a top-down approach. Thus creating architecture which embodies traditional relationships and affects spatial organisation, how the youth learn and are taught and the autonomy they have over their own space and time (Thornham and Myers, 2012).

Youth-designed spaces currently are designed to contain, control and survey the youth (Thornham and Myers, 2012). The way spaces are designed reflect the way society views them, as non-involved entities that have to be looked after. It is a relationship that has resulted in the current state of youth placeless-ness.

Helen Thornham and Carrie Anne Myers (2012) believe that the alternative to this state of controlling architecture is to design and create spaces which place emphasis on visibility and openness built on concepts of innovation, transparency, accessibility, collaboration and engagement. The approach of illuminating the activity of the previously unseen, un-heard, un-involved and disenfranchised sector of society is viewed fundamentally as a method of empowerment. The use of these concepts will help create an environment where positive

activity can be continuously absorbed by the surrounding youth. By doing this, it can help encourage a shift in cultural perception and ultimately, cultural change.



*Figure 13: A collage of Jean Nouvel's work who is famous for using principles of connectivity, openness, accessibility, transparency, innovation and visibility. The two buildings on show from top to bottom are the Institut du Monde Arabe and The National Museum of Qatar (Michler, 2010, Bianchini, 2020).*

The start to rectifying youth placelessness would therefore be youth involvement. The youth need to be understood in order to adequately design architectural solutions for them (Gornall, 2018). Youth are required to be an integral part of the design process. Youth-inspired architecture should be a youth reality filtered through architectural expertise (White et al., 2002). Any architectural intervention is required to be highly adaptable in order to evolve with the community. A static, designed space will fail because there is no connection between place and people. Flexible spaces will allow an ever-evolving community more freedom and space to adapt. Therefore an architectural response has to be rooted in an understanding of flexibility and co-production from the point of conception. Implementing design drivers of innovation,

transparency and accessibility while focusing on youth, their lived experiences and their yearning for connection and autonomy (Gornall, 2018, Malone, 2002).

### **4.3.3 Youth Defined Architectural Themes**

A collective project which included discussions with 160 members of the youth across 15 projects found that the common themes of young people in an architectural intervention include (The Sorrell Foundation, 2010):

- Distinctive Architecture - the youth want architecture which is:
  - Different and unique to represent their state of the avant-garde.
  - Vibrant and capable of enhancing the mood. These spaces can be adorned with artistic expression from the community in the form of murals.
  - Capable of making them feel welcome and at home as well as safe and secure.
  - Sustainable. This is holistic sustainability which concerns both ecological and also internal systems. Youth want a place which could efficiently run without a large number of financial resources. A place that they can maintain without the need for constant aid.
- Location and visibility - the youth prefer a prominent location within the community. They feel a sense of value within the community by being placed in valued spaces.
- A Prominent Positive Role - The youth not only wish to hold a prominent role within the centre they also wish to:
  - Create a space capable of redefining their image within the greater community.
  - Redesign their identity into one of value. Youth hope to achieve this through strong and distinctive branding. This distinctive branding goes beyond just architecture but is a brand which can be pushed into everything, including signage, clothing and other creative outlets.
  - Create a space capable of fostering and creating opportunities for the youth.
- Space - appropriately designed spaces include:
  - Inclusive spaces capable of facilitating everyone.
  - Spaces which are easily accessible to the youth.
  - Flexible spaces which serve two purposes:

- Firstly which are capable of facilitating multiple functions, an example would be an indoor dance studio which might also serve as an indoor soccer court.
- Secondly is highly adaptive spaces capable of morphing to serve the ever-evolving needs of the youth.
- Spaces which are dedicated to specific tasks, this might include a computer area and an area to host meetings.
- Outdoor spaces which are not dominated by motor vehicles. The youth requested overflow spaces which could facilitate both the arts and sport. There is also a need for self-sufficient spaces such as garden patches.
- A space capable of bringing in an income which the youth can run. This space will serve to teach the youth about finances and running a business. It will also give them invaluable job experience and give them buying power which could be used for upkeep and further projects.



*Figure 14: Shows a project which was designed in collaboration with the youth. The building represents and demonstrates all the themes which the youth found valuable within architecture. Themes of a prominent presence, iconic design, and accessibility, in door outdoor spaces, connection to the street and the community, vibrant fun spaces and welcoming homely spaces (The Sorrell Foundation, 2010).*

The Sorrell project effectively demonstrates that the youths primary want is autonomy and a seat at the table. They yearn to be valuable members of society who are respected by their communities and have the autonomy to contribute and dictate their futures.

The youth are in a avant guard state and excited by the prospect of iconism. The youth take ownership of space through the arts. Unapologetically anointing the space in their likeness. These could all be defined as the youths universal needs and wants for architectural intervention.

The Sorrell Study however does not focus or attempt to understand the space the youth occupied before intervention. It could be viewed as one aspect the study falls short. Its inability to understand why the youth have been excluded from the built and social fabric of the city as well as what their reason and choice was for adopting and occupying the spaces they did while being excluded from the fabric of society. These are both vital questions to understand the topic.

The specificity of the placeless-ness of Coloured youth will also mean that there is nuanced differences in culture, history and urban set up. An example of this would be the urban setup difference. The Sorrell study takes place in areas that accommodate for civic space. This allows the youth the opportunity to adobt spaces intended for human consumption while the Coloured community of Greenwood Park has no civic spaces. This difference changes the way the youth engage with society and the fabric of their community.

Valuable universalities can be drawn from the Sorrell study however they have to be understood and filtered through the lens of context. This will allow for contextual response to the problem of youth placeless-ness.

#### **4.3.4 The Streets as a liberating force**

Groups who are displaced often reclaim spaces which are not intended for human consumption, such as the streets. The streets become an intrinsic part of daily life and an extension of the community. This is especially prevalent amongst those who are excluded from whatever urban fabric there is, an example would be the youth (Davids, 2007).

The youths relationship with the streets is a complex one; this is because people perceive the youth with little to no social status (Rogers and Rogers, 1992). People tend to view their presence and visibility on the streets as something quite uncomfortable and inappropriate. A perception which creates tension that further pushes the youth into the periphery of society. Communities often define the public realm as their domain and view youth within these spaces as a problem and an act of anarchy (Valentine, 1996). This can be seen as a youth act of defiance and a challenge to the hegemony of community ownership over public space (Matthews et al., 2000).

The street allows the youth to exist away from the prejudiced gaze of the community. The street is a space where the youth have a sense of autonomy to be themselves and a space where they can develop their culture and identity and feel like they belong. As much as these are undesired spaces for the community, they are still a contested space. If the youth are found gathered on the street, it is met with disdain, often resulting in them having to move off and find an alternative street corner or cul-de-sac. This transient relationship with the streets prevents the youth from laying claim to much more than the streets as a collective (Matthews et al., 2000).

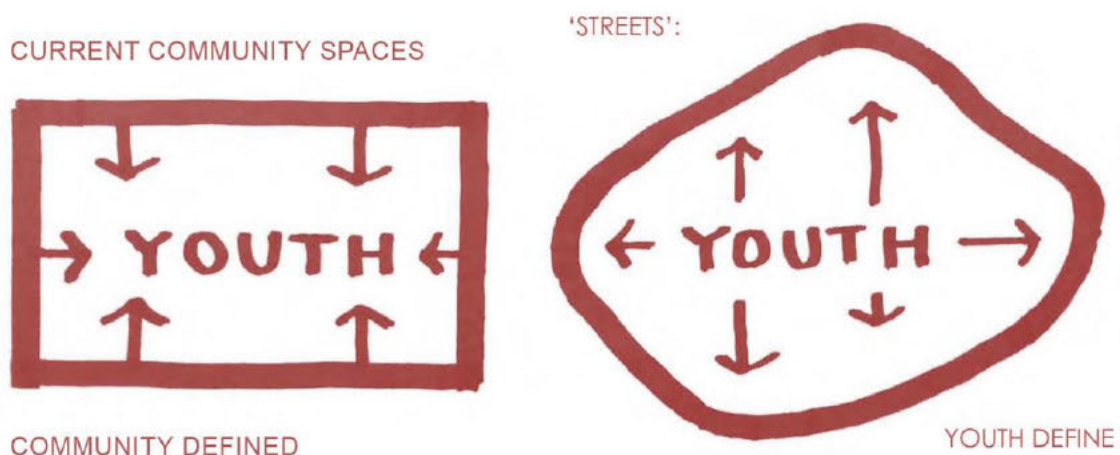
Bhabha (2004) defines this fight for a right to their community as hybridity. It is a state of survival where the youth attempt at all costs to create a sense of agency and identity. In this state, the youth are continually fighting for a right to their autonomy and independence. The streets have afforded the youth the only plausible space capable of facilitating this fight. The streets facilitate a state of contestation, where the youth can work through a transitional stage of identity and cultural formation. The streets can be defined as a rapidly evolving ever-changing space of tension and discontinuity (Matthews et al., 2000).

Foucault (1982) talks about how contested space can be oppressive and enabling. The state of spatial subjugation forces the choice of acceptance or retaliation. The act of retaliation poses the opportunity for community and self-emancipation or empowerment. Youth have a sense of resilience because they have no choice but to help themselves. The streets can be viewed as

both the acceptance of hegemonic dominance but also as a radical counterhegemonic act simultaneously. The youth have chosen to occupy a space on the fringe of society, but their imposition is counterintuitive of what is expected of them. This can be seen in their unapologetic use of the arts such as graffiti and loud music (Matthews et al., 2000, Valentine, 1996).

The streets have become lifeless entities that divide the urban and serve as a pipeline for cars. The streets could serve a higher purpose, as a point of connection between members of the community. These un-humane spaces could become pivotal points of humanity and add immense meaning to communities (Jacobs, 2016, Jacobs and Appleyard, 1987).

The youth have used the streets as an experimental space; a place where they can begin to define and engage with their identity away from forms of control such as their homes, educational systems and religious institutes. The street is a space where the youth have full autonomy; this control is a vital freedom required for the youth to develop their culture and identity.



*Figure 15: A edited image which demonstrates the relationship between the youth and the community versus the youth and the streets (Audibert, 2014).*

This autonomy does not come without its downfalls. The youth are going through a phase of trying to find out who and what they are. This state of self-discovery can manifest itself in a self-destructive nature, which could become embedded in a collective identity—commonly defined as ‘acting out’ (Audibert, 2014). This is seen as the case for Coloured youth in Durban.

The plausible solution would be to create a place designed for and by the youth, one which belongs to them and over which they have a real sense of autonomy that allows them to also be integrated into the fabric of the community in a meaningful way (Malone, 2002).

Ironically the very streets which the youth have occupied out of necessity could serve as the required liberating space the youth need. The street has an uncanny ability to influence both architecture but also the collective of a community. Streets can be viewed as the pulse of the community. The way they behave is often mirrored onto the way the community behaves. Streets hold value beyond thoroughfares; they hold the solution to thriving communities and are the solution to a cultural shift. The streets are therefore, the apparent place to initiate any form of cultural or collective change to a community. This change will gradually bleed from the streets through the community (Audibert, 2014, Malone, 2002).

#### **4.3.5 Designing Youth Friendly Streets**

Gary Toth and Herman Volk's (2008) opening line to their book 'A Citizen's Guide to Better Streets' states, 'if you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.' This quote touches on one of the fundamental issues which have resulted in the sense of placelessness experienced within the urban fabric of our cities: focus. Planners have been focusing on accessibility as the ultimate goal and as a result, have created barren spaces incapable of facilitating humanity. Our streets have become un-humane, unliveable, noisy and dangerous places. They should be spaces where we gather, socialise, bond, explore and discover. Our streets should be the heart and soul of our communities; instead, they are dominated by machinery which dissects and disconnect our communities. Streets should primarily be a pedestrian and community zone. The current state of streets being zones where pedestrians tiptoe around in fear of being mowed down by a speeding vehicle has to change (Appleyard, 1980, Francis, 1987).

Streets need to fulfil the needs and requirements of the user and have a positive effect on the community. Streets should not be noisy, polluted, vibration filled spaces. They should instead be places where people could read books, fall asleep and even study. The ultimate goal of a well-designed street is health, wellbeing and happiness. This can be achieved by monopolising on a community's assets, inspiration and potential. If done correctly, streets can fulfil the need for place that is lacking in so many communities. Currently, communities are forced to

congregate either in community halls, community fields or out of the area in restaurants and shopping malls. This is a massive disservice to community development. Communities should be formed in the community. The private should always belong to the individual, but the streets should be a space that belongs to the collective. The two should exist harmoniously side by side. Community streets could replace the soulless modern alternative of malls as places we gather to foster a sense of community (Toth and Volk, 2008, Appleyard, 1980).

Streets take up as much as a third of our communities but are harsh, unsafe, un-human spaces that cut our communities into disconnected un-traversable spaces. Streets were not always like this. There was a time where streets served as a meeting point for the community. Streets need to be viewed as a place or destination versus a channel or route. A democratic street should be one that is ecologically innate. It should be a space which holds and reflects the people, their history and their plight—echoing principles of social justice, economic health and ecological vitality—a place which facilitates everyone equally (Appleyard, 1980, Toth and Volk, 2008).

The sad reality of most modern-day pedestrianisation efforts is their capitalistic focus. The intent is to make money off foot movement versus trying to bring back the critical role streets should serve in communities. Liveable streets are what is required. The re-imagining of streets from their current state starts with our mental attitude towards transportation. Citizens and planners alike are required to re-evaluate their relationship with private transport. Cars only require streets for one purpose, and that is to drive on. People require streets to play, learn, grow, and gather to name a few. The concept of liveable streets goes beyond only slowing down traffic, through interventions such as speedbumps, but requires a shift in social understanding of the street. The city needs to promote proximity while actively softening streets. Communities need to be redesigned to allow members access to the majority of what they need within a short walk or cycle. This will remove traffic off the road. A reduction of stress will create safer roadways and allow for their repurposing into community space. Streets have to be viewed as complex animals which need a better design strategy than simple asphalt. It is the most democratic space within the community and therefore, should be the space where people can equitably meet regardless of social hierarchy. The focus of streets cannot be a purely capitalistic endeavour but have to be understood as a social effort (Appleyard, 1980, Toth and Volk, 2008, Francis, 1987).

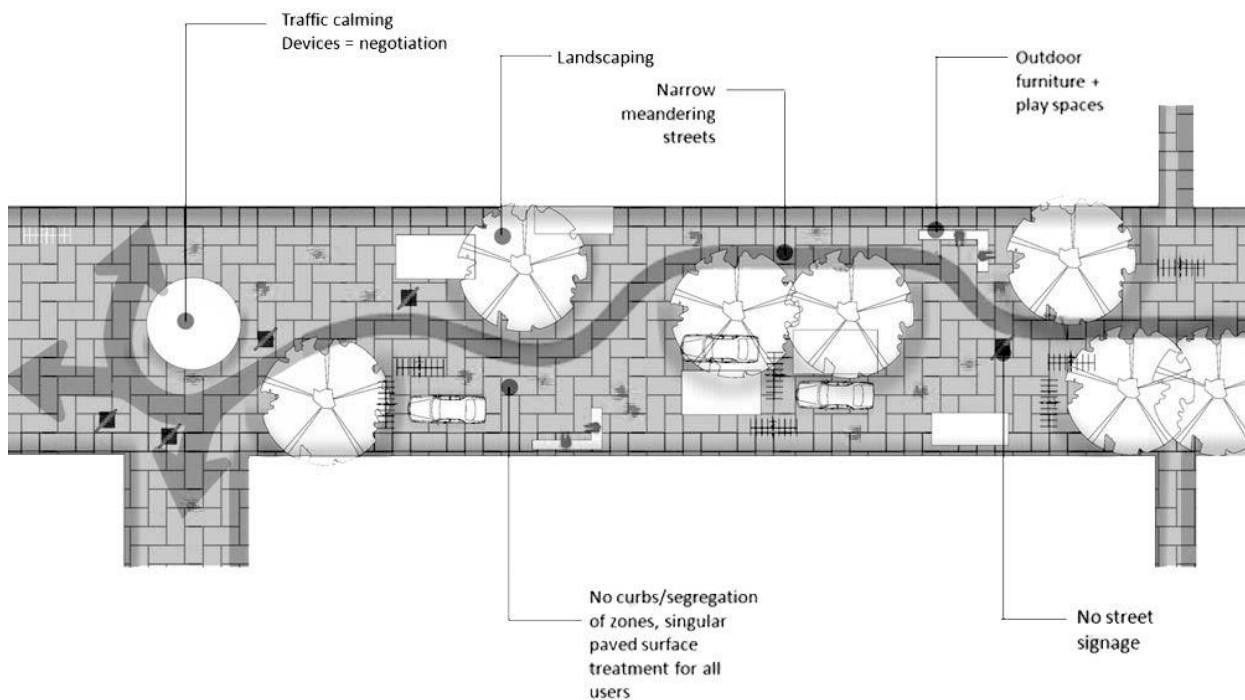
A liveable street does not wish to exclude the motorist or any other modes of transport but wishes to share the street equitably, emphasising the prioritisation of people. Good streets are not forcefully designed but are given the parameters to evolve effectively (Francis, 1987).

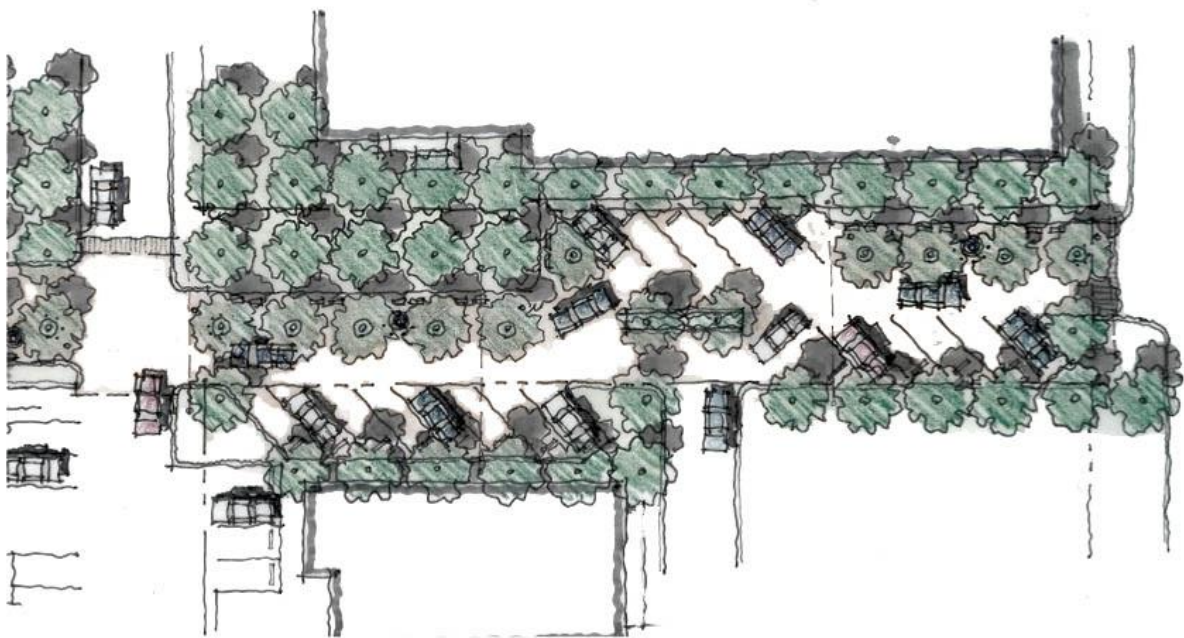
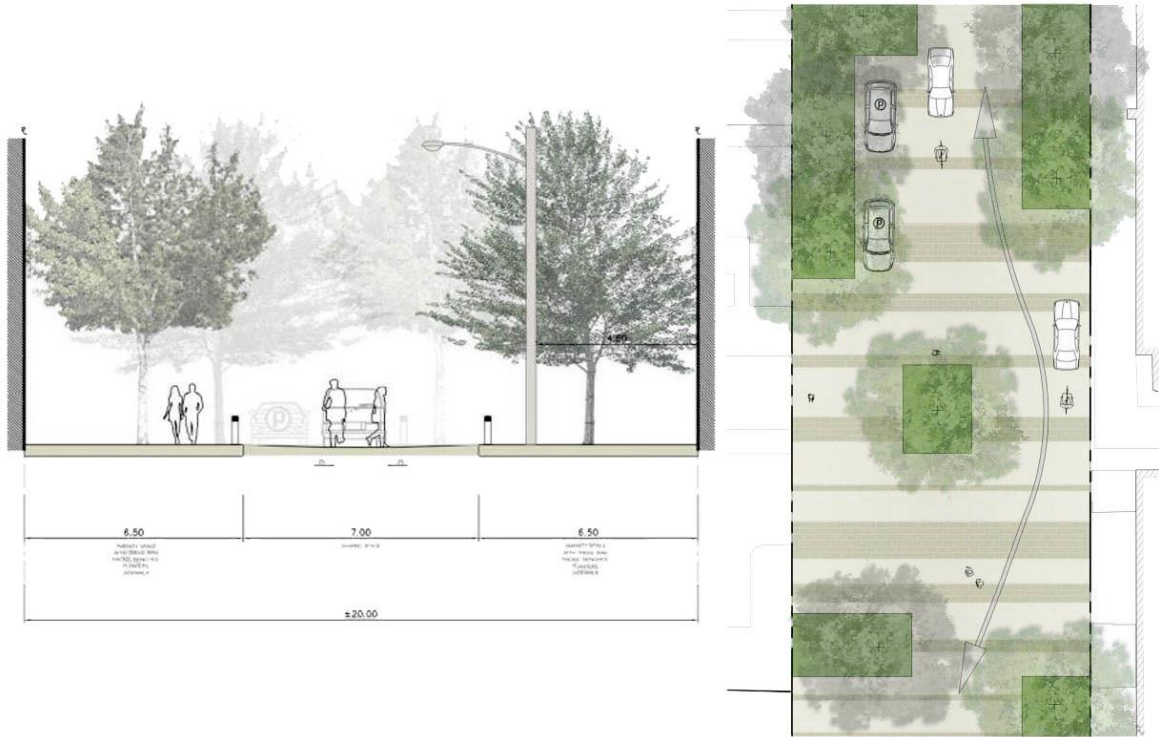
The Woonerf Street concept is a prominent precedent for liveable streets. Originating from the Netherlands, it is a beautiful example of functioning streets which fit the criteria for liveable streets. They have been adopted by many communities and add a lot of value (Collarte, 2012).



Figure 16: Community being formed on the street (Thistle, 2019).

Figure 17: Community being formed on the street (Streetfilms, 2019).





*Figure 18 (top): Flow diagram of Woonerf Street (Kerr, 2014).*

*Figure 19 (middle): Flow diagram and section of Woonerf Street (Lupsa, 2020).*

*Figure 20 (bottom): Architectural plan of Woonerf Street (Thomas, 2014).*

## 4.4 Conclusion

Edward Relph (2008) defines placelessness as the presence of uniformity and the absence of adaptiveness. The 'inauthentic attitude of placelessness' (Relph, 2008: 80) becomes incredibly nuanced within Coloured communities in South Africa. The Coloured community was defined by the other and created by forcefully placing people within. This lack of autonomy means that the sense of uniformity was forced onto the community, and the community was never designed to be adaptive and thrive. This has created a problematic status quo from the outset. The youth are a further silenced sub-group within this already largely silenced racial group as they are a group who have no autonomy or power over their place.

The youth require fixed predictable spaces with longevity which allow for slow continuous conception over time. Place cannot be porous beyond its borders of influence (Arefi, 1999). A globalised sameness cannot influence it. A well-nurtured place will offer a healthy relationship between psychosocial spaces capable of fostering youth empowerment.

A call for there to be a return to the value of propinquity over connectivity is required. Place has to be defined by the youths rooted connection to it. Place then should be allowed to organically evolve to serve the youth. Connectivity and propinquity do not need to be inherent enemies. Youth do require adequate accessibility for them to access opportunities. The problem does not solely lie in connectivity, but instead in the hierarchy, we have defined it in relation to propinquity. The status quo has resulted in a society dominated by un-human spaces forcing humans into a ruse of perceived connectivity and sense of place while promoting solidarity and placelessness (Arefi, 1999).

The youth need to be connected back to their community. It allows them to have a voice in making decisions and teaches vital skills including the ability to work on relevant projects, take leadership on challenging tasks and learn to demand a share of power and reciprocity within the community. This will empower youth with the agency for self-betterment and the betterment of their peers. All these factors result in a greater sense of belonging (a sort after attribute in a culture of placelessness) (Zeldin et al., 2016).

The placelessness of youth may become a catalyst for change. Youth are a subgroup of society and therefore have a unique culture. This is a culture that is currently treated with suspicion and unjustly subjugated. The youth have done a lot for South Africa (June 16, 1976, uprising and fees must fall being two examples of the role youth have played across two different

generations). This resilience comes from their sense of rebellion, a willingness to learn and a fearless positivist outlook on life. This optimistic culture should be one which is nurtured, not shunned. These attributes, aided by a fresh perspective, will allow the youth to critically engage with and question their culture, identity and place. The process of self-evaluation can become the shift in cultural and identity formation, creating a new paradigm. The streets are the perfect place for the youth to self-evaluate, occupy, develop and nurture their culture. The streets currently serve as a space of protest against domination (Fyfe, 2006). This fact is nowhere more prevalent than South Africa where citizenry won independence on the streets and continue to air grievances on the street through protest action. This speaks volumes to the neutral uncalmable nature of the street that the downtrodden can pick a fight with the powerful (Malone, 2002). The streets, therefore, hold the space required for the youth to claim autonomy and begin the process of empowerment.

The nature of youth placelessness dictates that the proposed cultural centre is required to connect to the community beyond the site boundaries. The project would not be feasible nor sensible if it attempted to do everything required to empower the youth; primarily since it is located within a space with existing facilities geared towards the youth (albeit mostly failing). It, therefore, will attempt to fill the gaps present while creating healthy relationships and connections with existing facilities. This will help reconnect the youth to the community and facilitate the youth in their current state of connection to the street. If appropriately facilitated through the proposed cultural centre, the trajectory of empowerment may ultimately result in fostering social transformation (Malone, 2002).

To understand the placelessness experienced in the specific context of Coloured youth within Greenwood Park, a comprehensive case study will be completed below under the Case Study Section.

# Chapter Five

## PRECEDENT STUDIES

## **5.1 Introduction**

The following chapter reviews critical precedents studies that engage with youth placelessness. The buildings which are reviewed not only engage specifically with youth designed spaces but also look at other vital aspects such as empowering spaces, spaces which connect with the street, community spaces, open and transparent spaces and cultural spaces. The precedent study will attempt to review sophisticated applications of vital concepts required to help empower placeless youth.

The precedents will be analysed through the lens of the various concepts and theories engaged in the previous chapters including theories of youth empowerment, identity and culture and concepts of mentorship and co-production. Through analysis, these concepts and theories can be interrogated in a real-world setting. The process of interrogation will uncover effective methods of implementation and useful information to aid in the process of designing the proposed cultural youth centre.

The analysis of the precedent studies is a crucial learning step which will help inform and guide the design process of the proposed cultural youth centre. In order to understand the complexities of the topic, the analysis will attempt to analyse three different precedents. Each of the precedents share a common thread but approach the topic from slightly different perspectives. The first precedent will attempt to engage with a democratic communal space built to unite the community, the second precedent will look at architectures ability to engage with the street and street culture and the last precedent will be a response to the needs of the youth.

## 5.2 Dongziguan Villagers' Activity Centre

### A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY SPACE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT



*Figure 21: Dongziguan centre in context (Angelopoulou, 2018).*

#### 5.2.1 Project Description

Architect: gad · line+ studio

Location: Dongziguan Village, Fuyang District, Hangzhou, China

Project Area: 686.6 square meters

Project Year: 2017

The building falls under the category of a cultural centre (archello, 2020a) and exists in Dongziguan the old capital of East China's Zhejiang Province, Fuyang District, Hangzhou (Zhejiang China, 2020). Described as a 'micro-small world under the big roof' (Angelopoulou, 2018), the project was aimed at creating 'vitality spaces' for community members. The building is situated between the new and old sections of the village. Its success is heavily linked to its rootedness in tradition, and open, diverse and transparent spaces and its ability to be owned by the community (ArchDaily, 2018).



*Figure 22: Commuter passing Dongziguan Villagers centre (ArchDaily, 2018).*



*Figure 23: An aerial view of Dongziguan city with the villagers activity centre (Angelopoulou, 2018).*

### **5.2.2 Justification of Precedent Study**

Dongziguan centre shares similarities with the coloured community of Greenwood Park. It is a small village within a broader urban space. It is an inhabited working-class community and also has underused dilapidated community halls, sporting facilities and other infrastructure which was never adopted by the community or utilised to its full potential. Both communities are tight-knit communities which value community spirit. The Dongziguan community hall attempts to bring together the old section of the village with the newly rejuvenated area. The new site has attracted a lot of new members to the community while the old neighbourhood is well established (Angelopoulou, 2018, archello, 2020a, ArchDaily, 2018, Zhejiang China, 2020). The building attempts to work through the animosity experienced in this transition. Its attempt to connect these two foreign entities could be viewed as a similar attempt the proposed cultural youth centre makes to connect the youth with the rest of the community.

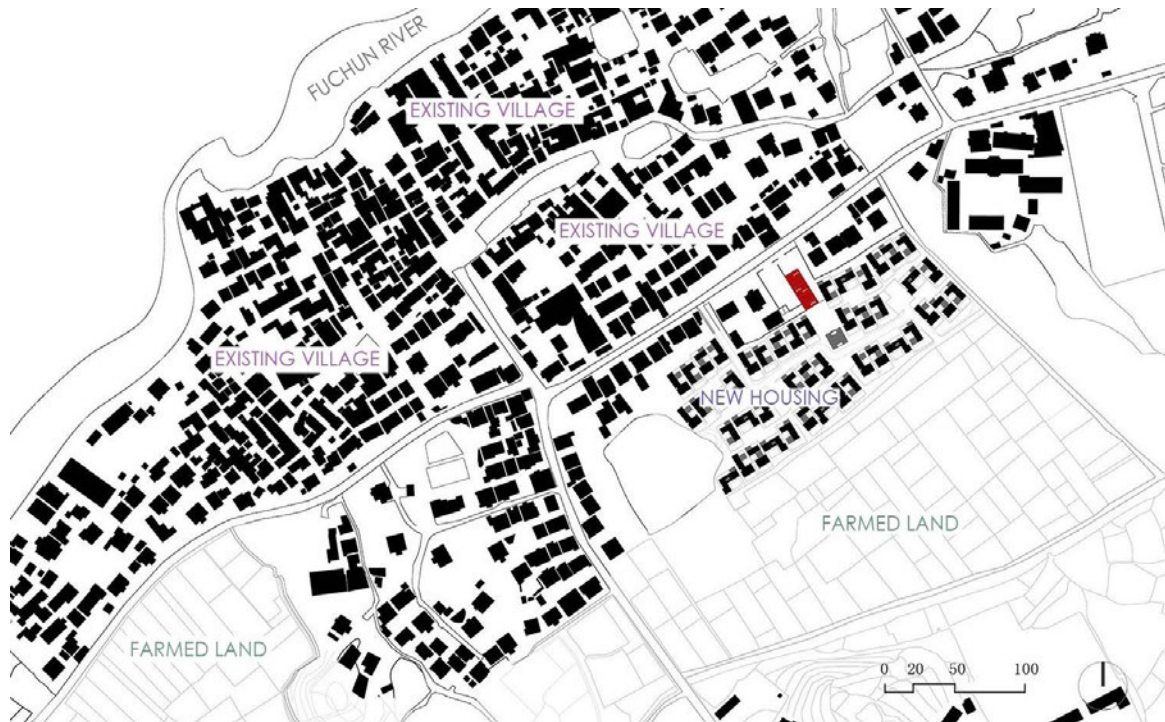
As a result of these reasons a plethora of lessons can be learnt from the Dongziguan centre, which will be useful in designing the proposed cultural youth centre, and therefore this precedent study is deemed valid.

### **5.2.3 Urban Context and Locality**

The village is over 1500 years old and falls along the Fuchun River. It once served as an essential commercial stop along the river between the Hangzhou and Anhui Province. The area is famous for its fish cuisine, outdoor spaces and connection to the water (Zhejiang China, 2020).

The area is known for its craftsmanship, and the community's ability to create and develop everything as a collective. The houses within the community have been built using local materials: which include both bricks and tiles made from a blueish-grey clay and the prominence of local timber. The locals also bag most walls in a clay slurry and paint it pure white. The use of local materials and the similarities in construction methods have created a common language, which is something that the village has become known for. The act of building is one of the ways the community unites and is a valuable method of passing down knowledge and skills. Dongziguan is a place that values the concept of working together and

also values their traditions and cultural practices, doing everything they can to ensure continuity.



*Figure 24: Urban figure ground of Dongziguan (archello, 2020a).*

The site is located at an intersection of old versus new (Angelopoulou, 2018). In an attempt to prevent urbanisation, the government has created a modernised village alternative in the hopes of promoting reverse migration (Zhejiang China, 2020). This new space hopes to appeal to those who have gotten used to city aesthetics but prefer the nostalgia of village life.

The new brings with it a person who is used to city culture. The old holds memory and traditions. Both are at times stubborn to change. This has created an awkward juxtaposition of the new versus old.



*Figure 25: The new section of Dongziguan village (Zhejiang China, 2020).*



*Figure 26: The old section of Dongziguan Village (Xinhua, 2018).*

**5.2.4 Project Objectives**



*Figure 27: The centre is integrated into daily life. Families and people across all ages pause in the space to catch up and touch base (ArchDaily, 2018).*

The project is aimed at both uniting the old and new sections of Dongziguan Village but also creating a ‘vitality space’ for members of the community. Up until this point, all other community centres have failed and resulted in underused dilapidated buildings. The existing infrastructure lacks any form of connection to the space or community (ArchDaily, 2018). The architects were given the task of creating a space which would be adopted by the villagers and become a useful social hub.

The project hopes to continue the vitality of the village through open and lively spaces. The architect explained their objectives as:

*“a flowing spatial system, localised material language, and spontaneous construction methods, the tangible space carrier and intangible place spirit are merged into the construction logic of the space itself, injecting new vitality into the village”* (archello, 2020a).

### **5.2.5 Programme and Planning and Design Rationale**

The space is intended to serve the village in its entirety. The design hopes to carry with it the diversity, richness and subtlety of life in smaller-scale units. The daily existence and interests of the community are subdivided into small independent scenes. This gives people the option to either stay in neutral in-between spaces, dictating what and how they use them or enter into scenes which mirror a valued community activity, for example, chess (archello, 2020a).

The in-between spaces are open and freely connected to the outside world, offering minimal obstruction to walk in off the street. The building has strategically been linked to the surrounding spaces creating two village squares. These squares can be used in conjunction with the building or in isolation. The building in this way creates socially valuable space through its relation to its surrounding. The building also has the ability, in the event of a larger public event, to be rearranged into a desirable layout (archello, 2020a).

The centre has two floors. The ground floor is open to the street, and the second floor is partially connected (archello, 2020a). The centre has the multi-functional ability of weddings, funerals and numerous other public gatherings (Angelopoulou, 2018) while also serving to house specifically themed activities such as card playing (archello, 2020a). The logic behind both formal activities coexisting with daily hobbies is an attempt to have passer-by’s freely enter but stay for extended periods in the hope of fostering a community (Angelopoulou, 2018).

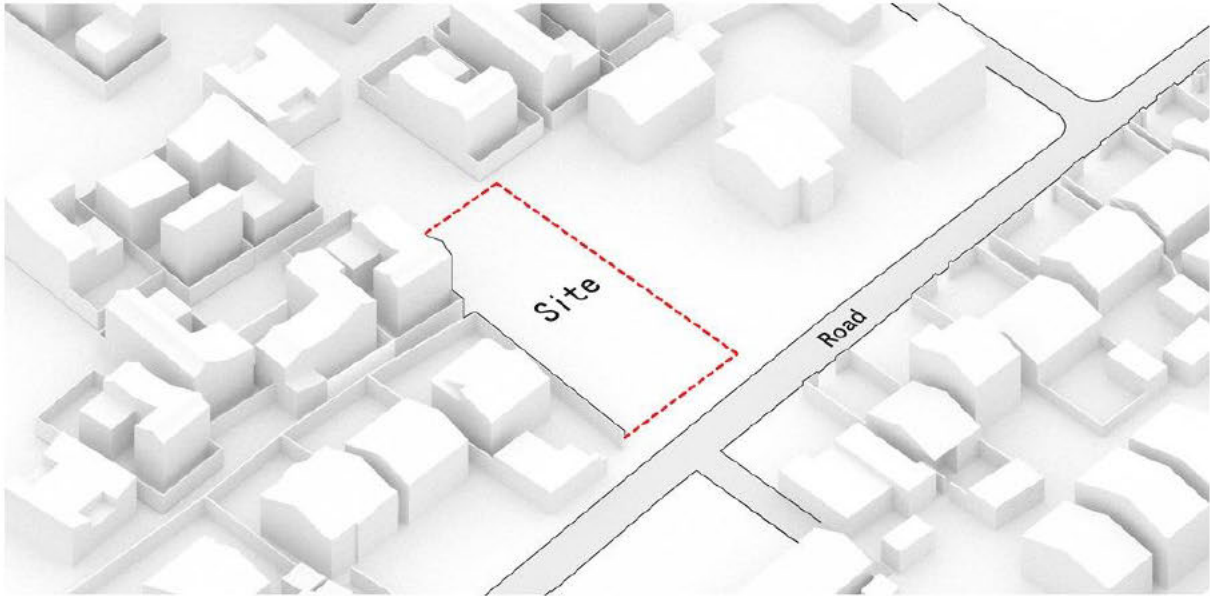


Figure 28: Diagram of the site in its surroundings (ArchDaily, 2018).

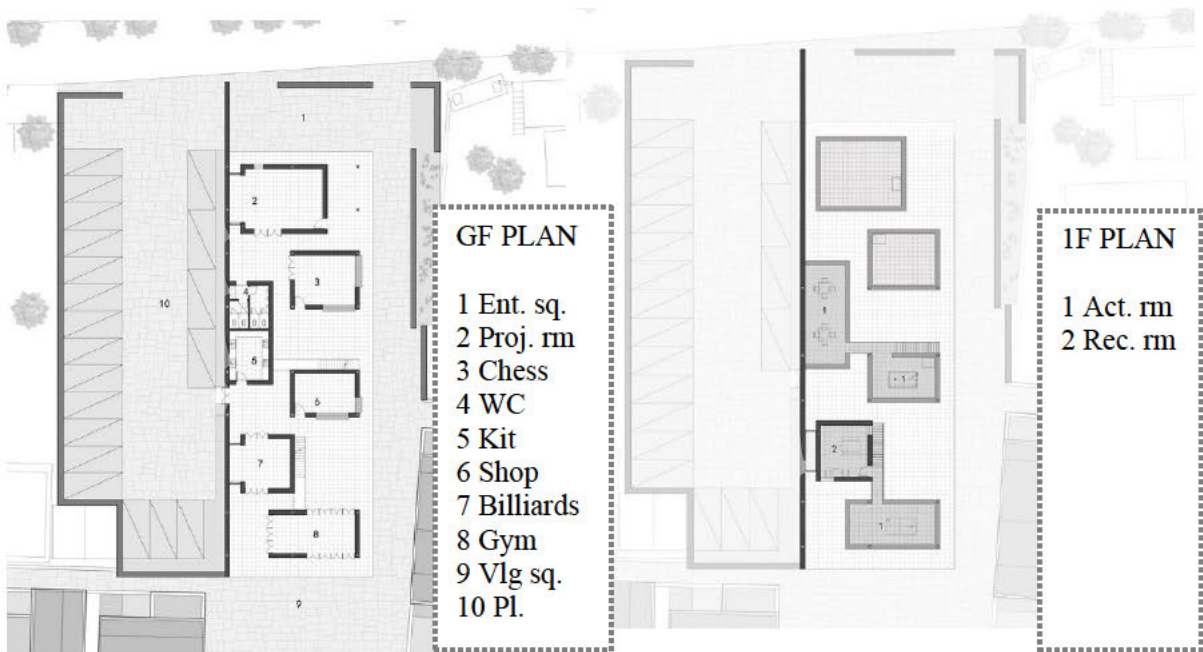
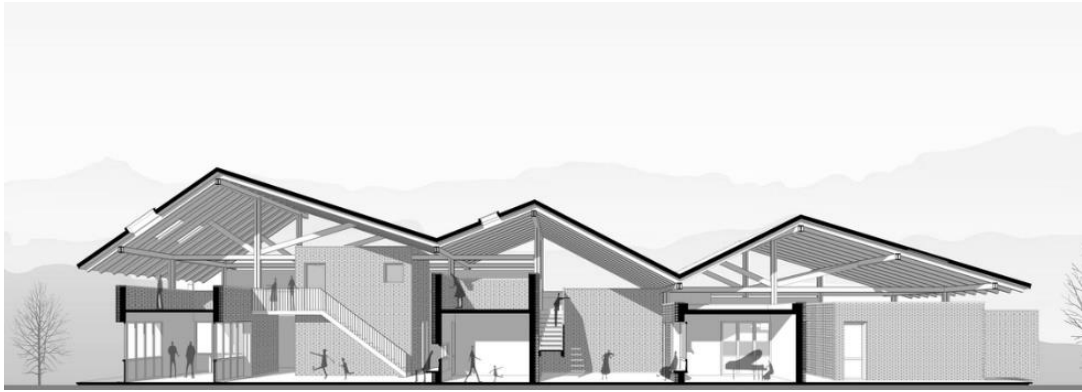


Figure 29: Ground floor plan and the first floor plan (ArchDaily, 2018).



*Figure 30: Section demonstrating how the single roof unifies the dynamic space (ArchDaily, 2018).*



*Figure 31: The roof offers value to both designated as well as in-between spaces. The open nature of the building is also captured (ArchDaily, 2018).*

The sense of value the space offers is reflected in the way the place was constructed. It utilised the traditional (to the Hangzhou area) materials of bluish-grey bricks and timber (Angelopoulou, 2018) and was built by the people and for the people. It specifically chose low maintenance and tough materials to help promote longevity and also allow for easy maintenance, which the community could easily undertake. These are systems which are familiar and technology which is familiar. By doing this, the building from inception can become a public activity, and the planning and construction can become a medium to connect the community to the building. It also acts as an activity that unites the community and a space where knowledge and skills can be passed down from older generations to the youth—thus creating continuity for culture and heritage (archello, 2020a).



*Figure 32: The community has the ability to adapt the building to suit their needs (ArchDaily, 2018).*

## **5.2.6 Observations/Lessons learnt**

### *Design Approach*

The building is founded from its inception on the concept of social cohesion. This shows in its purpose, design development and implementation.

The building took the approach of utilising knowledge and skills which are available to the community. By doing this, it immediately emphasised the value of the community and its members. This insured the building required input from the community to exist and generated interest and buy-in for its inception. The community had a sense of ownership before the first brick was laid; this is crucial. It means the community had an invested interest in the outcome and would help guide the project into what it needs to be. It also ensures that the final product will be something which the community wants.

## *Culture and Heritage*

The building starts the conversation of culture and heritage by acknowledging its most valuable asset as the community and its members. It creates a space for culture to exist and thrive. It achieves this through its construction methods and its spatial arrangement.

It uses the community's knowledge and skills in its construction methods. This helps create a building which fits into context, is familiar to the community and has an unintended consequence of having a low carbon footprint. The building is built from locally sourced materials using locally developed techniques. It, in essence, is made by the hands of the community. The building, however, does not merely keep the status quo but filters familiarity through the lenses of innovative smart design to create something unique and exciting. Being constructed by the hand of the community also allows for construction methods, skills, and knowledge to be passed down through the generations; keeping construction culture alive.

The spatial arrangement is designed in a way that maintains and develops culture. There are static and dynamic spaces. The static spaces hold activities which are unique and prized to the community. There is also dynamic, adaptable spaces which the community can adopt and morph into anything. These spaces can both maintain and develop culture and heritage.

The introduction of community squares in purposeful negative spaces around the building is an example of social architecture. The architects used the built form wisely to create spaces of value beyond their scope. This creates value for the community to host events, meetings and any other activities that require a large space. This is another example of architecture which is intended to encourage the maintenance and development of culture and heritage.

The building is also designed to encourage chance encounters for community members. It achieves this by creating pause points for commuters to take a second and rest with fellow community members, but also by creating spaces which encourage people to gather and socialise. The building is designed with an array of spaces, high, low, small and big, these spaces are intended to encourage a variety of people to find place and coexist. In this way, the building can serve as a communal microcosm of the village. A place where the community can meet and grow.

### *Empowerment & Co-production*

The building emphasises the importance of empowerment and co-production by valuing the input of people and by creating adaptable spaces which the community can change and morph into what they require.

The use of the community's knowledge and skills is uplifting in and of itself. It is a clear statement that their culture, heritage and who they are is good enough and valuable.

By involving the community with every developmental stage of the building, it offers the youth a multitude of learning experiences and skills development opportunities. This includes the design process and the construction process.

The simplicity of the design offers an easy alternative for the community to adopt in other spaces. This is useful in a community where all other communal spaces have failed and been abandoned. The design is a simple but strong statement of a collection of spaces under an overarching canopy. The canopy helps unite the spaces below but also creates a valuable third space of the street. It creates valuable space which the community can adopt and morph into whatever they need and want.

The design process of drawing the street into the building and allowing it to filter through helps create a democratic space. From the research above, it is clear that the street is the most democratic space in a community. It is a space which belongs to everyone equally. The act of bringing the street into the building helps create an architecture which belongs to the collective equally.

### *Mentorship*

Through the construction process, a bond was created between the youth and elders of the community. The elders were required to teach the youth localised building techniques. This was a skill which the youth gained, but simultaneously they gained mentors and formed intergenerational friendships.

The building also has a schedule which creates space for both the youth and elders to coexist. This puts both parties under one roof. It allows for chance encounters between the two

generations, and it also allows the elders to watch over the youth and guide them. The cohabitation of space will also allow traditions to be passed on from one generation to the next; keeping culture alive.

### *Lessons learnt from the shortcomings of the project*

The project blatantly ignores numerous social ills which could heavily affect the communities ability to adopt and connect with the building. These shortcomings could potentially lead to the architectures demise and stop the community taking ownership. These issues include socio-economic differences and new versus old neighbourhoods in the community.

There is layers of socio-economic issues that appear to be ignored. The building assumes that rich/poor, young/old, men/women all hold equal social and economic capacity and therefore could coexist equally in a building happily. It has totally disregarded the nature of socio-economic problems and the way it affects communities.

The project also doesn't engage with the worldly disconnect between the establish part of the town and the new part which is attracting people from the city. These two groups have vastly different outlooks on reality and life. There would understandably be animosity between the new and the old with the assumption that the old section of town would feel infringed by the new section. These issues aren't engaged.

Both of these issues could create problems down the line and prevent the building from being accepted by the community or fulfilling its intended purpose.



*Figure 33: The centre used for a community meeting. Creating empowering spaces which encourage co-production (ArchDaily, 2018).*

## 5.3 Game Streetmekka

### AN EXTENSION OF YOUTH CREATED SPACES



*Figure 34: A rendered birds eye view of Game Streetmekka (Stott, 2014).*

#### 5.3.1 Project Description

Architect: EFFEKT Architects

Location: Remisen, 6700 Esbjerg, Denmark

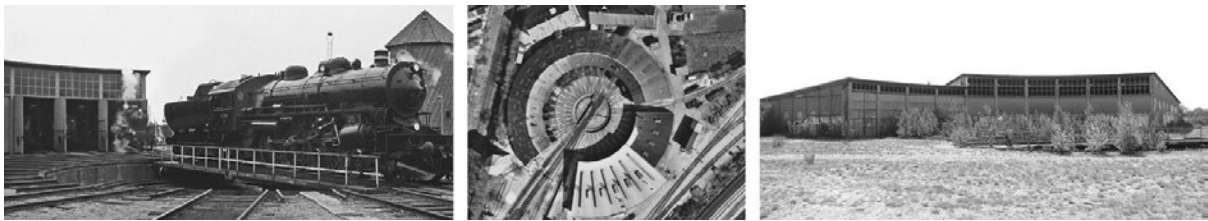
Project Area: 2800 sqm

Project Year: 2014

The project was decided through the process of competition and won by a Danish-based architecture studio, EFFEKT. Game Streetmekka is rooted from inception in the idea of innovation and creativity. The site being an old locomotive maintenance shed required an imaginative solution but also offered numerous opportunities in a building and site steeped in history. The brief was simple: convert a dilapidated locomotive maintenance shed into an innovative street sports and culture facility. EFFEKT stated that the site location suited the brief perfectly. They could not imagine anywhere more fitting to host street sporting activities

then that of an abandoned shed, a space which street sport was already familiar with and currently occupied across the city and world (archello, 2020b, Prahm, 2015).

The purpose of the project was to make street sport and culture acceptable to the masses and accessible throughout the year in cold Scandinavian climates. The construction process began in 2014 and opened to the public in 2016. In less than four months, the centre received more than 18 000 visitors and have exceeded the 2000 membership mark from a range of ages between four and sixty years old (archello, 2020b).



*Figure 35: The Locomotive shed in its original context (Stott, 2014).*



*Figure 36: Artistic perspective of a birds eye view of the layout of GAME Streetmekka (Stott, 2014).*

### **5.3.2 Justification of Precedent Study**

The project shares a few fundamentally similarities with the proposed youth cultural centre.

The primary similarity is its strong connection to the street. It attempts to bring ‘street culture’ onto the site and into the building. This creates a strong connection between the architecture and its relation to the streets. Additionally, the building also focuses on youth culture and its strong connection to street culture. The architecture used street culture as a method of expression and empowerment. In doing so, it formalised an activity which has been existing on the fringes of society. By connecting and reinventing both the street and the abandoned shed it gave power to previously frowned-upon youth activities such as skateboarding, graffiti and parkour.

Many parallels can be drawn between the two projects, and they attempt to give power to a socially unaccepted activity done by a frowned upon the group. For these reasons, the precedent is justified.



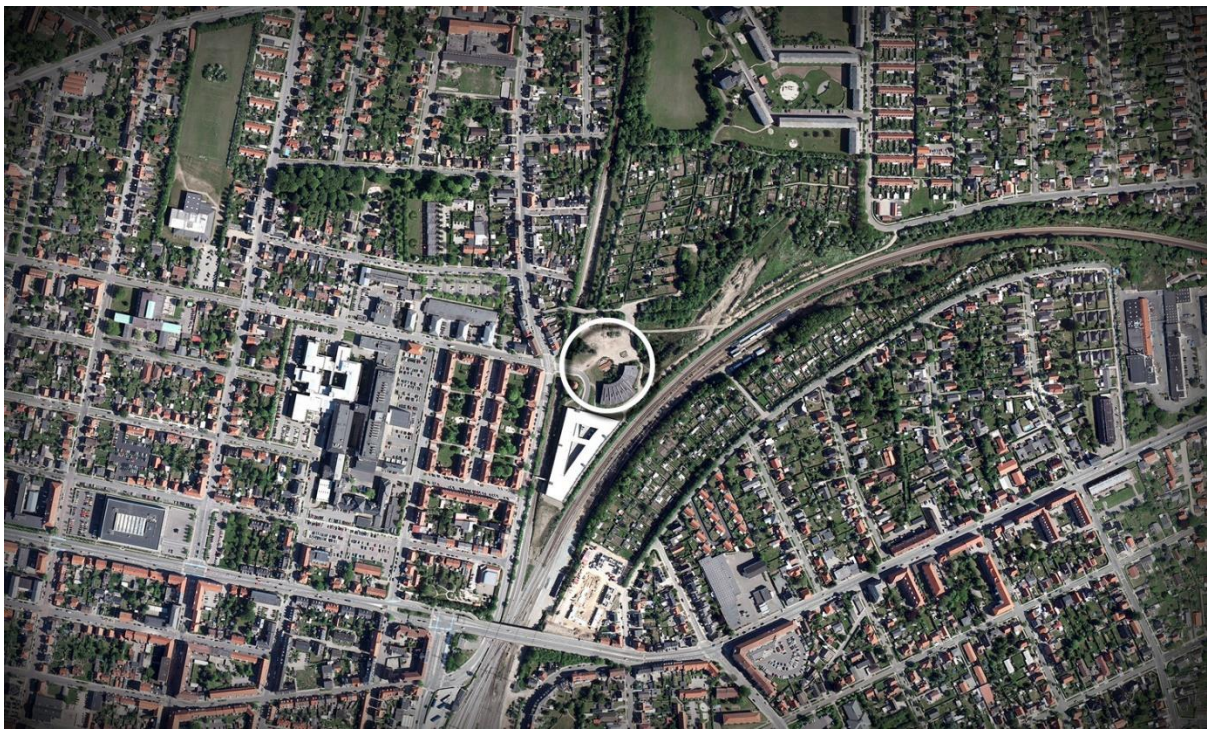
*Figure 37: Priority and value given to a previously shunned activity of skating (archello, 2020b).*

### **5.3.3 Urban Context and Locality**

The Game Streetmekka sits along an existing train line. It is close to numerous shopping opportunities, a hospital, schools, transportation hub and multiple residential areas. It is situated

in Esbjerg, Denmark, which is the fifth-largest city and the youngest big city within the country (archello, 2020b).

The project is funded by the philanthropic organisation Realdania. The partnership is an urban scale intervention in an attempt to offer skateboarding (the fastest growing sport in the area) and street culture a space to thrive. As a result, Realdania is building Streetmekka and two other projects designed to house street culture within the country of Denmark (archello, 2020b, Stott, 2014).



*Figure 38: The GAME Streetmekka in urban context (Stott, 2014).*

### **5.3.4 Project Objectives**

The projects main aim was to offer skateboarding a home along with other forms of street culture. It was also tasked to create a space where street culture could exist through the harsh winters found in Scandinavia.

There was a gap in the market as conventional sporting facilities were incapable of facilitating the unorganised character of the formerly underground sport of skating and other street culture activities (archello, 2020b, Frearson, 2014)

The project looked to repurpose an abandoned train shed in a symbolic effort to give order to the current space which skateboarding and street culture occupies. It simultaneously was an attempt to repurpose unused space within the city. This allowed the city to keep history alive by activating spaces instead of deleting them (archello, 2020b, Stott, 2014).

The centre is aimed at kids, teenagers and young adults who do not feel welcome or comfortable in mainstream sports culture. The ironic goal was to have them involved with street culture and street sport while keeping them off the 'streets' (archello, 2020b).

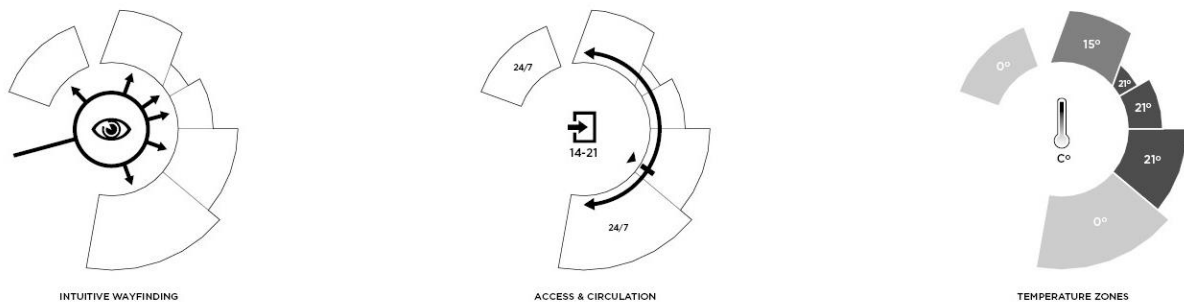


*Figure 39: The informality of skating being formalised in a space it has always occupied (Stott, 2014).*

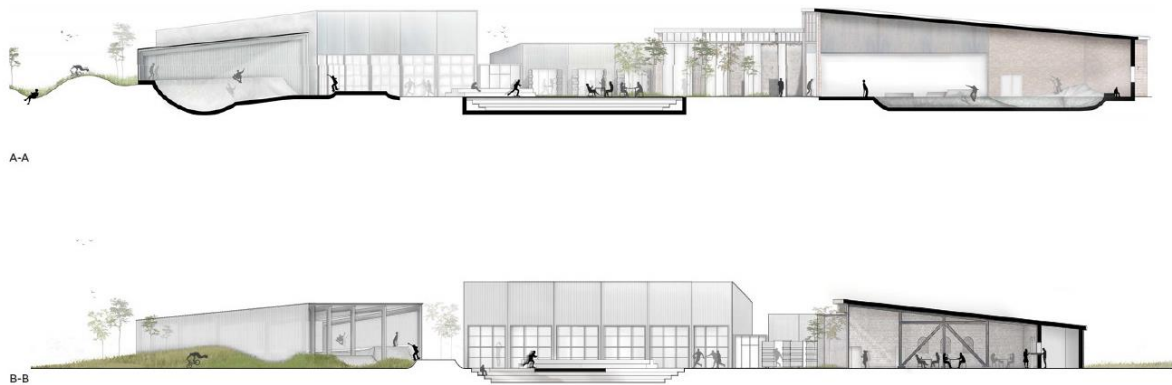
### **5.3.5 Programme and Planning and Design Rationale**

The brief for the project was open-ended. It asked for a framework for an unorganised sport that thrives in spontaneous participation and fluctuating schedules. The only stipulation was not to compromise the cultural heritage of the existing industrial scene (Prahm, 2015). The hearth of the building is organised around the central pit which initially was the train turntable. The central space is also the first point of contact into the building. This allows visitors the opportunity to get an overview of all activities and their location, in relation, quickly. The central space is surrounded by five buildings which mirror the formation and style of the existing typical roundhouse locomotive shed. These five buildings open up into the central space creating a strong inside/outside connection. The five Mekka's include concrete, asphalt, brick, lounge and dance. The halls are individually distinctive but share a connection to the central space through the wall to ceiling openings. Each activity comes together to create a

coherent multi-functional street culture compound (archello, 2020b, Architecture & Design, 2014).



*Figure 40: Design drivers for Streetmekka (Stott, 2014).*



*Figure 41: Section through the building demonstrates the connection to the central 'street' and the use of levels to achieve interesting street scenery (Stott, 2014).*

The facilities programmes are to include, ‘a covered area for transition and bowl skate, interior and exterior street basket courts, a street dance area, an indoor street skate arena, workshop areas for DJ-schools and street art, meeting rooms, administration offices, a cafe, kitchen, changing rooms and a large social area and reception’ (archello, 2020b).

EFFEKT believed that the three most essential elements for a functional street sports and culture facility would be room to meet and make friends easily, accessible facilities for both beginners and experts, and a lot of asphalt and concrete (Prahm, 2015). The space became a juxtaposition between indoor and outdoor space, large openings and large spaces next to small niche spaces; all of these spaces are adorned in concrete or asphalt in the hope of both promoting street culture and sport but also encouraging informal hangout spots and meeting points (archello, 2020b).

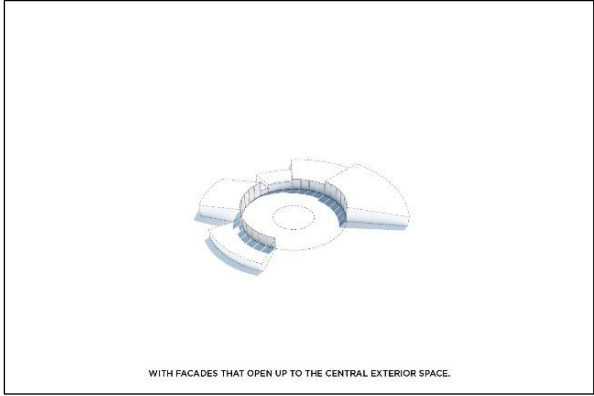
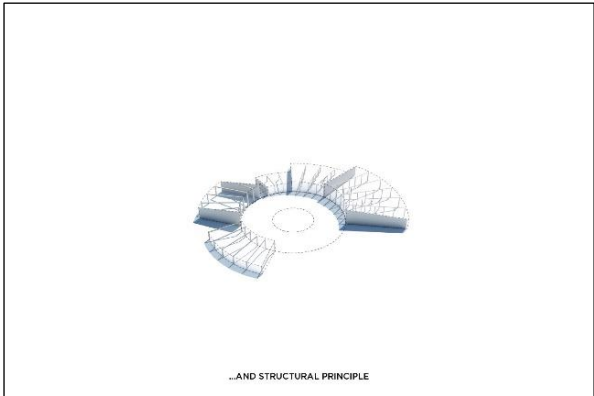
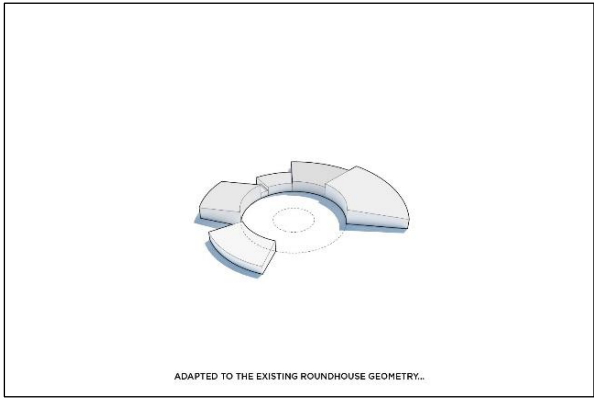
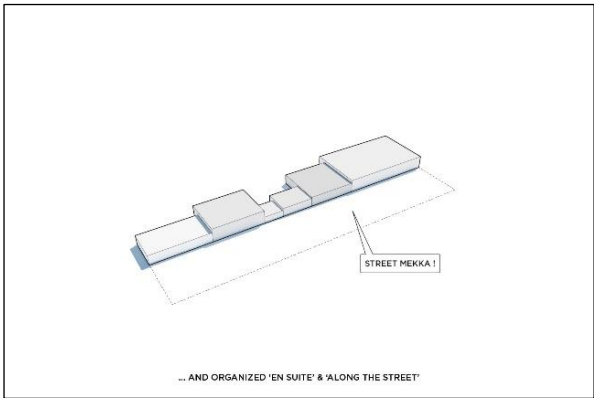
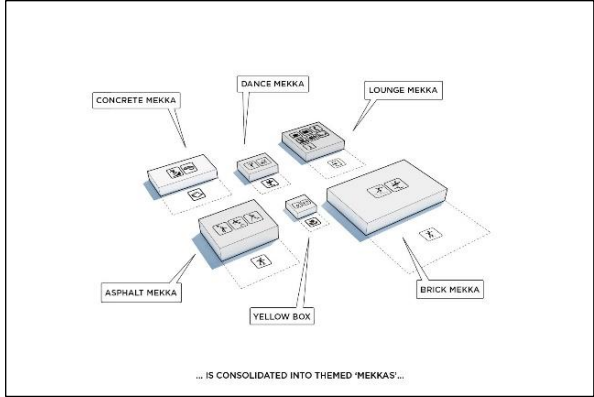
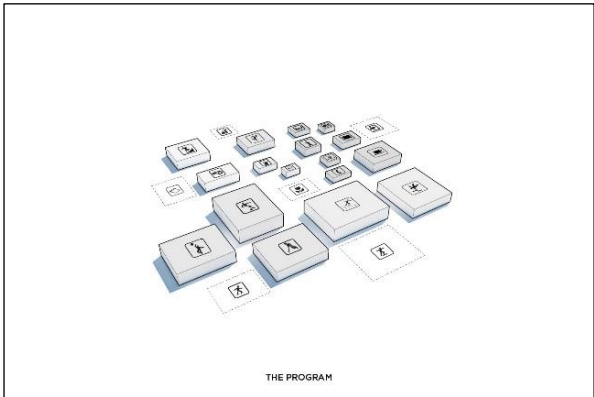
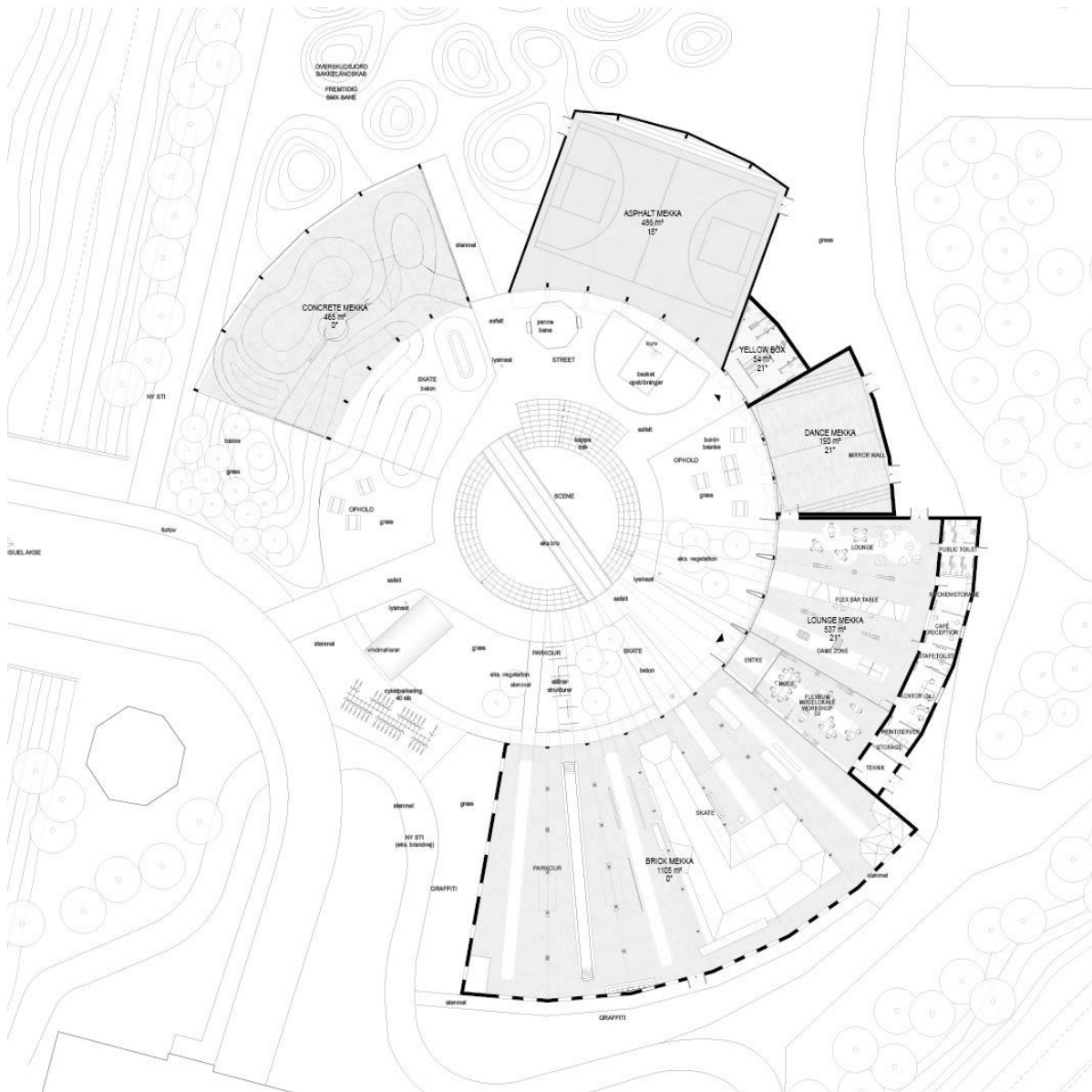


Figure 42: Schematic conceptual development (Stott, 2014).



*Figure 43: A plan of GAME Streetmekka (Stott, 2014).*

### 5.3.6 Observations/Lessons learnt

#### *Design Approach*

The brief was to give voice and space to a previously shunned and disregarded culture. The project made a powerful statement of choosing a space the culture had already adopted. This prevents a culture from being disrupted and acknowledges the connection and reason the space was used. Street culture was forced to adopt an undervalued space because it is not accepted by society. The space has become valuable to the culture, and a simple relocation would be problematic; akin to the forced relocation of a home.

The designers from the onset realised the strong connection between street culture and the street. They knew that the building would have to be an extension of the street. – a space which allowed users to use the streets throughout the year regardless of weather conditions. They also created a microcosm of the city’s elaborate and dynamic street system by creating an array of separate spaces with different scenography and different activities to match that of spaces found throughout the city. The design approach allowed the space to serve an assortment of users from different walks of life, who have different interests and who feel comfortable in different spaces. It allowed a variety of users who shared the identity of street culture to occupy one space, while also encouraging chance encounters between different people and different spaces. This is vital for cultural development and cultural growth.

The building is an extension of the street. The designers have made an active choice to use a central street space as a unifying element. It serves as a communal space and promotes chance encounters. It also serves as a gradual transitional space from which people can decide where they feel comfortable and to what extent they feel comfortable from the vantage of the democratic nature of the street. In this way, this central space plays a pivotal role in the success of the building.

### *Culture and Heritage*

The project adopts the space that the culture currently occupies. In doing so, it acknowledges the culture. The city has given the culture a right to their space and has created a sense of social value. It also gives the culture a voice and a sense of autonomy.

The project further acknowledges the heritage of the space in which it has been adopted. The train locomotive shed becomes a design driver and a connection to the city and its past while simultaneously celebrating its possibilities as an alternative.

The centre acknowledges the connection street culture has to the street. It understands that the abandoned shed is currently used as an extension of the street. It, therefore, designs from this perspective and creates an inclusive extension to the street. This space has such a strong connection to the street it becomes indistinguishable to recognising where the street ends, and the building begins.

The centre understands that the interconnected nature of street culture to the street also dictates a specific palate of materiality. This includes hard surfaces set up industrially. This holistic

attempt to organise the street into a user-friendly space creates an easily adoptable environment. This can be seen by the way users engage with the space going as far as ‘tagging’ surfaces with spray paint, a familiar street activity.

### *Empowerment*

The community is empowered by the city’s acknowledgement of their existence. This acknowledgement is further strengthened by the city’s allocation of valuable historic space. By doing this, the city has created a strong sense of social value for those who identify with street culture.

The centre aims at creating a variety of spaces to cater for the broad spectrum, which is street culture. This allows people from all walks of life to find a place within the centre. The centre is also designed to help unite the community through its design. It achieves this by creating a strong connection to the street.

The architects created highly flexible spaces which could be morphed into the needs of the community. This is vital for the empowerment of a community. It allows the space to meet their demands and gives them the ability to dictate its purpose directly.

### *Lessons learnt from the shortcomings of the building*

The project falls short in its inability to keep the focus on the placeless youth which it was intended for. The project intended to recognise, offer value and space to a forgotten sector of society and that was skating and street culture. It however then adopts the space which this sector of society used, improves it and opens it to the general public as a civic space for families and all ages.

This isn’t done through a transitional program intended to reintegrate fringe members of society back into their communities but is done in what appears to be a business model of bringing in more revenue.

This unfortunately may result in the intended user being further isolated as their space of reclusiveness and autonomy has now been taken away and transformed into a community civic space.

## 5.4 Outreach Foundation Community Centre

### A RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF THE YOUTH



*Figure 44: Outreach Foundation in Context (Local Studio, 2020b).*

#### 5.4.1 Project Description and Justification

Architect: A combination of Local Studio and Outreach Foundation NGO

Location: 16 Kapteijn Str. Hillbrow 2038. Johannesburg

Project Area: - Creative Centre: 300m<sup>2</sup>

- Skills Development Centre: N/A

- Counselling Centre: 100m<sup>2</sup>

Project Year: - Creative Centre: 2014 - 2015

- Skills Development: N/A

- Counselling Centre: 2016 – 2017

The Lutheran Church/Friedenskirche Precinct is a site which was given to the Lutheran Church by Paul Kruger in the early 1900s. The complex is home to an active Lutheran Church and the Outreach Foundation. The Foundation is a local established NGO which takes pride in being a social solution from the community and for the community. The Foundation has been actively working alongside the community to help combat social ills since 1998. Aided by German Government funding, in the 2010s it requested the assistance of architects Local Studio to develop a creative space. Local Studio was subsequently recommissioned to create a counselling space (Local Studio, 2020b, Local Studio, 2020a).

The Outreach Foundation has now become a complex of buildings built on The Lutheran Church's land. This complex of buildings attempts to meet the collective vision of 'inspiring and advocating creative and empowering journeys' (Outreach Foundation, 2019). The buildings include a creative space, a skills development space and a counselling space.

The purpose of the Outreach Foundation was to face Hillbrow's modern-day social issues head-on. These include a high HIV/Aids infection rate, women and children abuse, refugee influx, urbanisation and degradation of the urban environment, drug dealing, prostitution and crime. It intended to offer an alternative to the status quo of social rot and degradation (Outreach Foundation, 2019).

The project seemed justified because it met the desired criteria. The context may vary, but the ethos of empowerment being at the core of everything is the same. Outreach Foundation attempts to achieve this state of upliftment through:

- Cultural expression and discovery.
- Revealing an alternative to the community's status quo
- connecting the youth to the community in a healthy equitable state (mentorship and co-production).
- Following fundamental empowerment strategies of creating a healthy psychosocial space; this is both through architectural design but also human intervention such as counselling.

- Creating spaces where the youth feel comfortable to be themselves, express themselves and discover themselves and giving the youth a voice and autonomy.

By giving the youth a sense of autonomy, it allows them to dictate what skills and knowledge they wish to gain in order to better themselves. These are the practices which the dissertational process has unveiled as being the best tools used to answer the primary question of, how can Coloured youth placeless-ness inform an architectural response?

#### 5.4.2 Urban Context and Location

The building is located within the Hillbrow district of Johannesburg. Hillbrow has become infamous for violence, drugs and migration issues. It was initially designed to be the health district for Johannesburg. By the 1960s the area had been transformed, due to rapid urban sprawl and the introduction of high rise buildings, into low-cost housing for students and migrants. In the 1980s, Hillbrow chose to ignore the apartheid separation act and become known as a liberated zone of tolerance. By the 1990s Hillbrow began its descent due to inner-city decay. The suburb became known for crime, sex work and ungovernability. This state of social decay is the state it remains in up until today (Stadler and Dugmore, 2017).



*Figure 45: Satellite Image of the Outreach Foundation in context (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

### 5.4.3 Objectives, Programme and Planning



*Figure 46: The three different spaces present on site. 1. creative centre, 2. skills development space and 3. counselling space (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

The Outreach Foundation has a strong ethos of growth, empowerment and development. An ethos which is present in their goals, mission and vision.

This straightforward ethos is what grounds the centre in everything they do, including their approach to architectural endeavours; holding onto strong principles of safety and connection: safety to protect the user from the harsh world of Hillbrow and connection to allow the community to see and engage with a possible alternative. The architects achieve safety through principles of solid and void, in and out. Creating buildings as buffers from the outside and hollowing out internal courtyards for safe spaces of expression and growth.

The Foundation has a strong program which aims at offering children, youth and adults the opportunity to engage with the arts, culture and heritage while simultaneously facilitating communication, participation and community building. The Foundation also holds an inter-cultural disciplinary programme which aims at connecting the youth to the community and offering alternative extramural activities. The Outreach Foundation believes that through team building, building self-worth, and identity exploration, the centre will help achieve a holistic change in the individual and community.

The Foundation consists of three individual buildings, each of whom serves its purpose. These buildings will thus be viewed individually to understand their purpose better.

## *1. Creative Outlet (Play): The Outreach Foundation Centre*



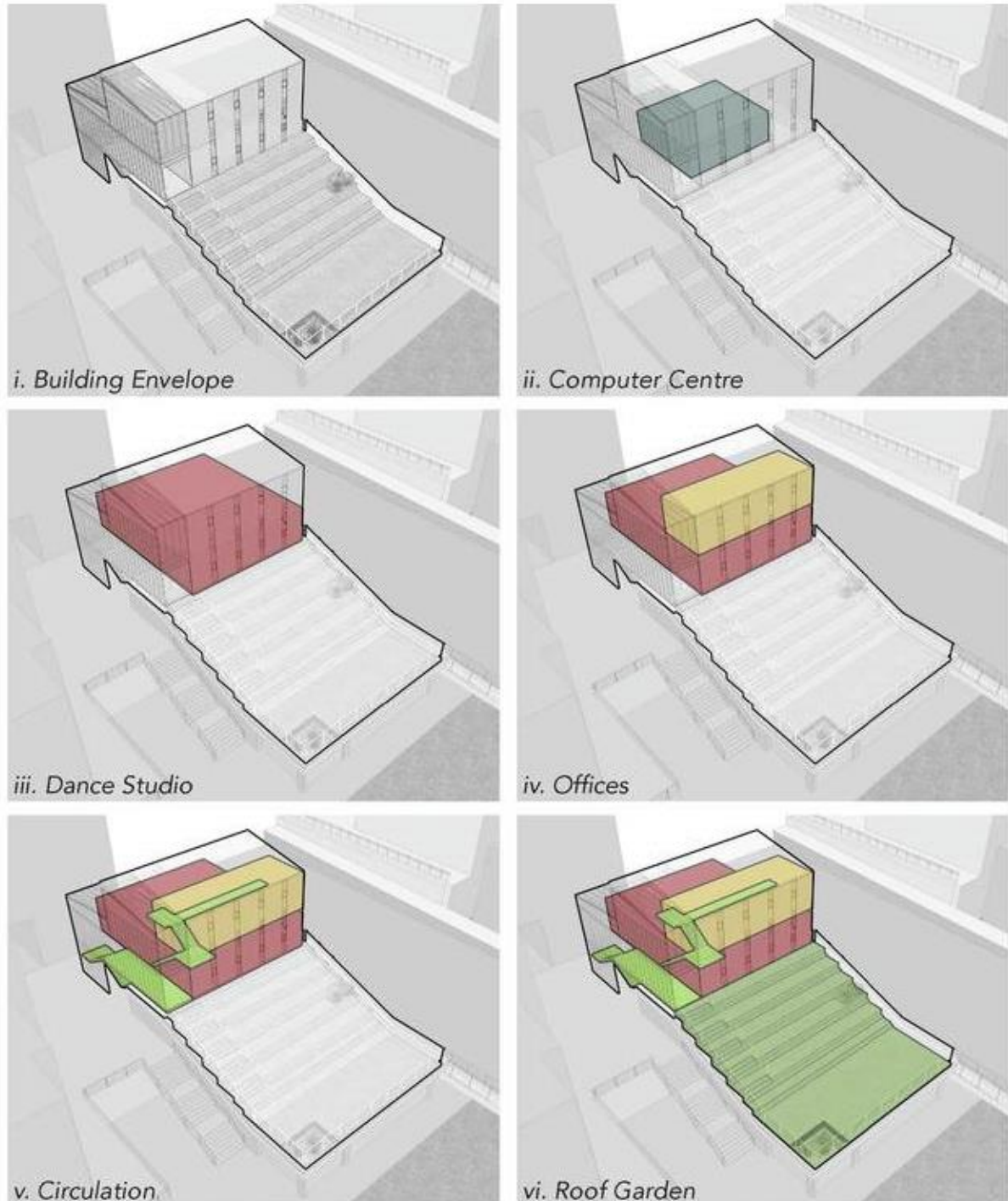
*Figure 47: Children dancing in the dance studio. It also demonstrates the interconnected nature of the building both to the upper floor, through the double volume, as well as to the community through the 12m long strip window (Local Studio, 2020b).*

The building is created with three primary functions, namely: a computer centre, a dance studio and office and meeting areas.

The building is a simple artistic take on the traditional gable form house. The form is constructed from white corrugated steel and wrapped in a translucent corrugated polycarbonate cladding. It was designed to distinguish it as a new addition to the surrounding area but also to stick to the concept of transparency and connection (Local Studio, 2020b).

The Ground floor of the building is the computer room, the first floor is the dance studio and the second floor is office and meeting room space. The dance studio is the primary space and is connected to the second floor via a double volume. The dance studio also opens up onto the adjacent street via a large window to allow commuters a glimpse of an alternative. A satellite

intervention of a bench was placed across the street to allow commuters the opportunity to pause and watch the dancers perform (Local Studio, 2020b).



*Figure 48: Schematic development of the centre (Southwood, 2015).*

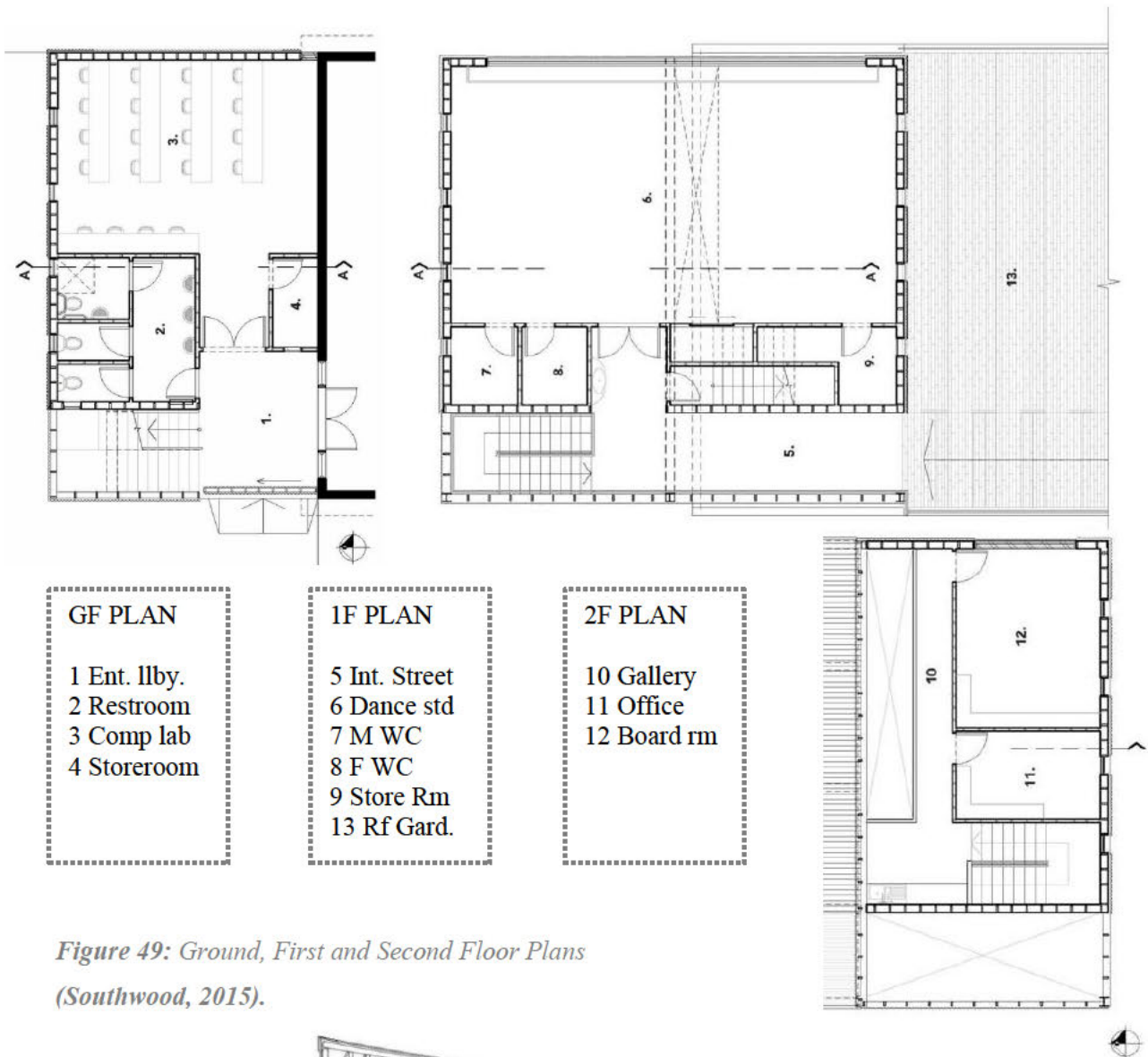


Figure 49: Ground, First and Second Floor Plans (Southwood, 2015).

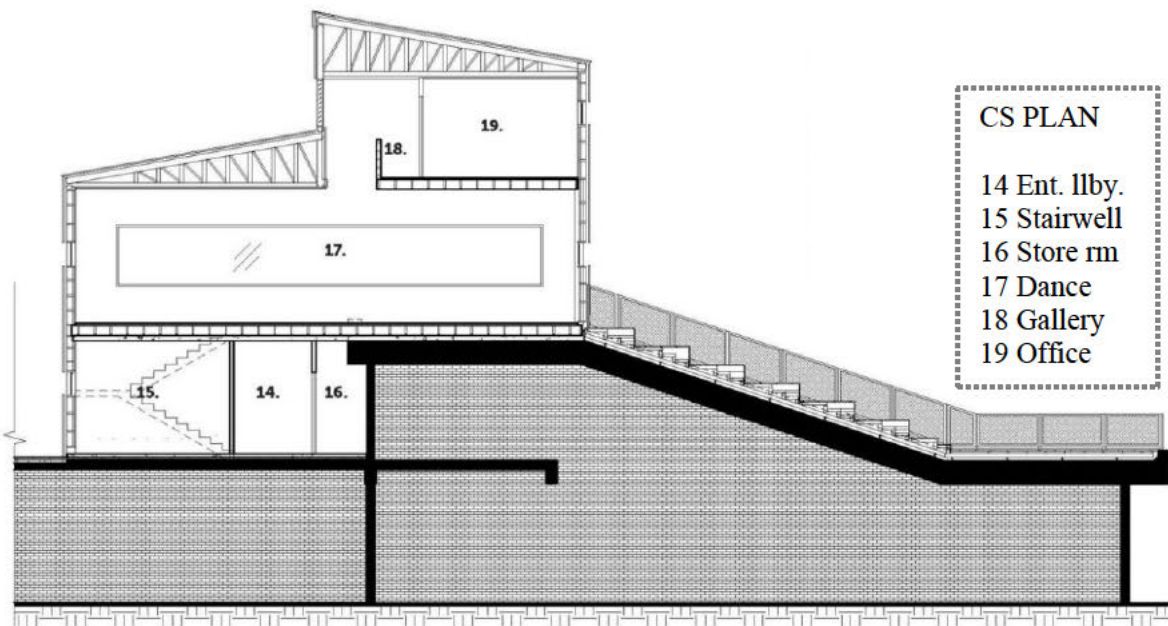


Figure 50: A section through the centre (Southwood, 2015).



*Figure 51: A internal street (Local Studio, 2020b).*

The building is in itself a micro-urban entity. While the dance studio may be the primary space, the circulation is the hearth of the building. It houses a vertical street which runs from the ground floor up a volume stairway and into a passage which accesses the roof courtyard. The roof then acts as a multi-functional space: a relaxing space, an amphitheatre and space for the youth to have a strong connection to the surrounding suburb. This passage line allows for ascent between levels while also offering a democratic space within itself; a journey (Local Studio, 2020b).

## *2. Skills Development (Learn): The Skills Development Centre*



*Figure 52: A central learning courtyard surrounded by classrooms as well as the roof greenhouse (Author, 2020).*



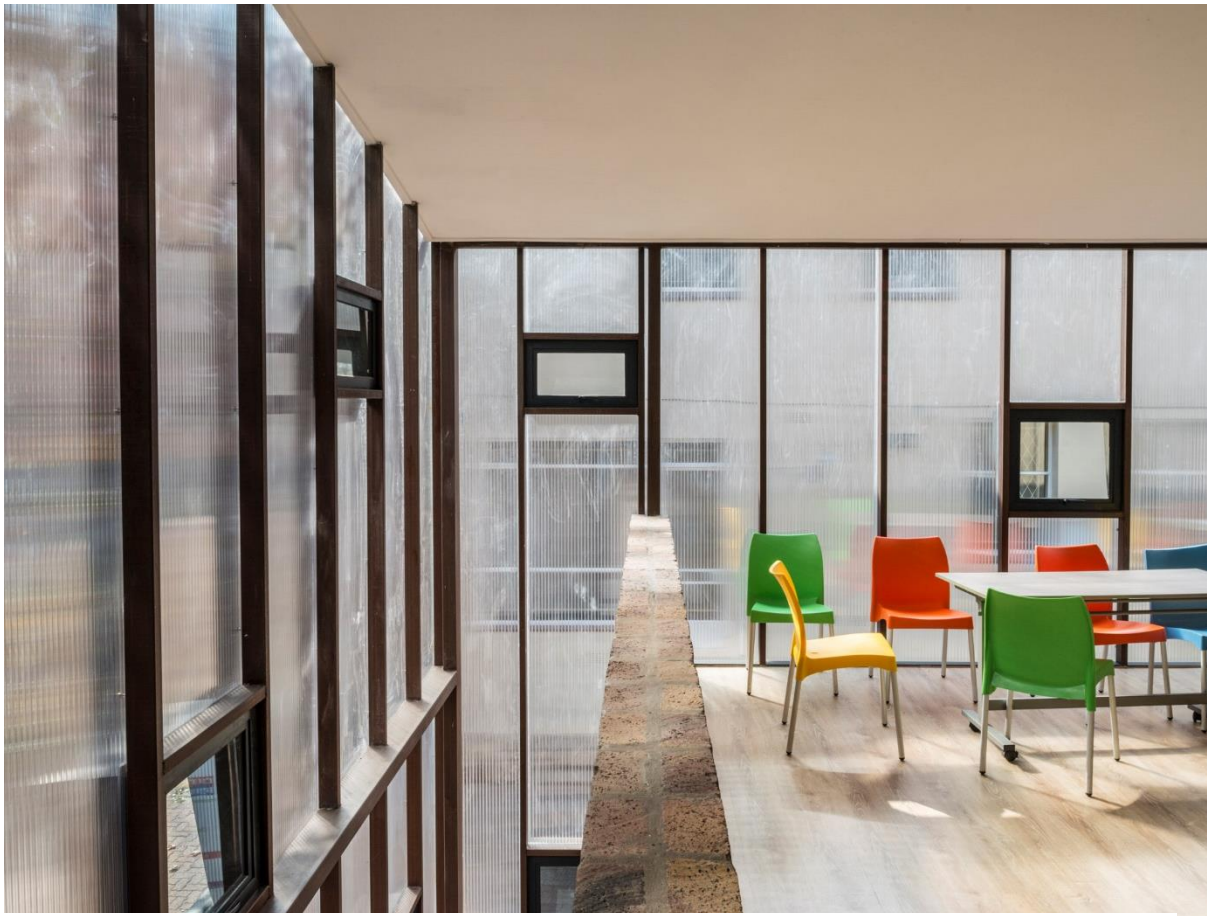
*Figure 53: Skills development in the form of a bricklaying workshop (Outreach Foundation, 2019).*

The skills development centre is wrapped around a central courtyard. This courtyard is used as the primary skills learning space in which construction classes and other classes take place. There is a passage which surrounds the courtyard, off which branch multiple open planned, flexible classrooms. The classrooms are designed to teach anything from plumbing to sewing. The roof of the centre is also used as a green garden site. This green garden has two purposes. Firstly it is used to produce food for feeding schemes, and secondly, it is used as a class in urban agriculture. This space has not been designed by an architect but organically developed over time by the organisation.



*Figure 54: A standard adaptable classroom under renovation (Author, 2020).*

### *3. A Space of Healing (Grow): The Counselling Centre*

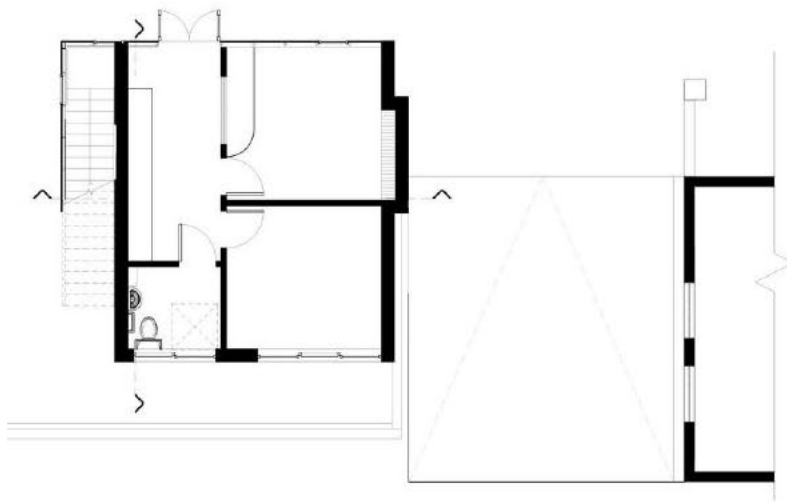


*Figure 55: Demonstrates the translucent nature of the counselling centre. It mirrors a cocoon (Local Studio, 2020a).*

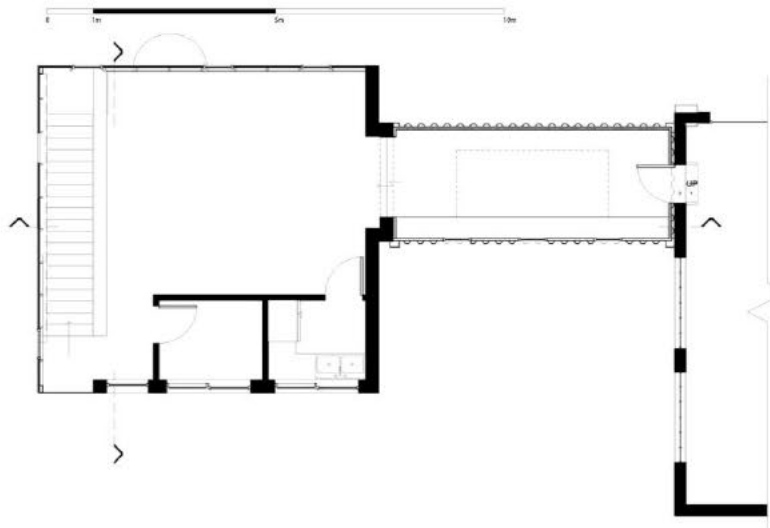
The Outreach Foundation has run counselling services since its inception. The counselling was intended to aid migrants, those affected by gender-based violence and people subject to crime. The Foundation ran counselling out of any available room. They soon realised that this practice was preventing truly vulnerable people from approaching the institute to ask for help. This conundrum encouraged them to build a space dedicated to counselling—an accessible space which could be placed in a private section of the property. Local Studio was recommissioned to design the Counselling Centre.

They wished to keep similar principles of transparency, haven, light-weight additive architecture. They quickly ran into the issue of privacy with a transparent building. The idea of sitting in a glass box for a traumatised individual might be enough to chase them away. They thus morphed the original building technique to create the concept of a cocoon: a space that wraps around the vulnerable and comforts them. The light, airy nature of the building also

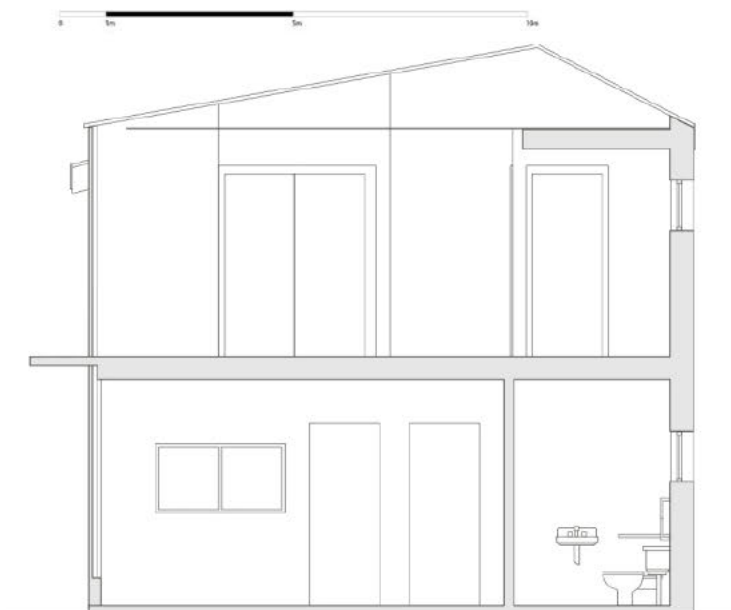
prevents users from feeling caged up. The perfect environment for counselling was created (Local Studio, 2020a).



*Figure 56: Ground floor plan (Local Studio, 2020a).*



*Figure 57: First floor plan (Local Studio, 2020a).*



*Figure 58: Section through the healing centre (Local Studio, 2020a)*



*Figure 59: The buildings wraps around a solid brick base, mimicking a cocoon (Local Studio, 2020a).*

### **6.3.4 Observations/ Lessons Learnt**

#### *Design Drivers*

The Outreach Foundation was formed off the design drivers of empowerment theory, cultural theory and the concept of mentorship and co-production. These are fundamental principles for youth development. The precedent study, therefore, has invaluable lessons on the implementation of these principles.

The architects had to be cognitive of their environment when implementing these design drivers. They intended to create spaces which had a strong connection to the community founded on concepts of transparency and connection. The community, however, had numerous issues which it faced. These included:

- Safety issues?
- A spectrum of clients from children, youth, elders, vulnerable and non-vulnerable people; and
- A variety of tasks to fulfil on one site which includes: a creative space, an educational space and a healing space.

Each of these issues posed a unique threat which the organisation found innovative solutions.

Safety becomes a primary issue. The organisation realised that the space could never be conducive to their mission of growth if the user did not feel safe. The design decision to make the connection with the community a visual one and not a physical one was made. The organisation achieved this by placing the built form strategically on the periphery of the site. This then creates a hollowed-out central space which became a safe space for the community to thrive.

The organisation decided to create multiple individual buildings. By doing this, they were able to create space for the assortment of users they intended to attract. The use of individual buildings also allowed the centre to make bold statements and create quiet havens simultaneously. The approach of creating multiple buildings also facilitates a third space; the street. It creates a dynamic in-between space which the user can mould and morph to suit their needs. The independent clusters are strategically placed to best suit the intended user. The healing space is in a private corner of the site while the creative space is celebrated in a central location which has a strong visual connection beyond the boundaries of the site.

The satellite intervention of a bench, although small, shows a want, willingness and awareness that the Foundation has to reach beyond the boundaries of the site. This simple act makes a clear statement to the community that they are wanted and needed for significant change.

### *Empowerment*

The Foundation has empowerment at its core, even stating it in their vision. It aims to achieve empowerment by offering:

- Support
- Inspiration and an alternative
- Skills and knowledge development
- A creative outlet.

The Foundation realised how powerful creative energy is for cultural and identity formation. It, therefore, attempted to create as many chance points for the youth to express themselves.

Architecturally the Foundation aspires to empowerment through bold imposition. It insists that the surrounding suburb views it as a logical alternative. This bold stance is seen by the way it unapologetically adorns itself over a busy community street, even going so far as to insist on commuters using a bench solely designed to frame the dance studio and rooftop garden; demanding that the surrounding area pause and look.

Alternatively, the centre looks to empower those who are too fragile to make as bold a statement as the dance studio does. It, therefore, creates a private space with cocoon-like architecture to facilitate such people to the point of healing.

The Foundation is designed in a way which is cognitive of the dangers it exists in. It, at times, boldly displays itself, but it does so visually and never physically. The design tool of using solid built form to protect the void within allows people at different levels of social confidence the ability to find space. The act of offering an individual who is in survival mode safety is empowering in and of itself. The Foundation offers numerous community members the simple solitude of safety. By doing so, it offers them the space required to heal and grow.

### *Culture and Heritage*

The Foundation starts this conversation, not by cliché notions or fickle forms of tokenism but instead creates a place which feels like an honest representation of not only South Africa but also of Hillbrow. A large percentage of the workforce is from the area. They know the area and know the problems that people face in the area. This representation from the onset creates a positive cultural and heritage stance. The building then moves forward to create favourable transitional spaces and adaptable spaces which allow users the freedom to express and discover their culture and heritage.

The centre is in a diverse part of the city. This poses the challenge of creating a space which is capable of connecting with everyone. The centre does this by creating an architectural language based on principles of transparency and connectivity and not derived from cultural principles. The architecture, therefore, behaves as a vessel for expression that is capable of housing cultural exploration. By making this design choice, it allows the community to use the space and building as a metaphoric blackboard. A clean slate which they can give meaning.

As much as the centre is apart of a religious institute, religious culture is not something which dominates the site. Cultural ambiguity is a sought after trait in such a diverse neighbourhood,

and therefore, the church not imposing itself on the site creates an environment which is welcoming to a broader section of society.

### *Co-production & Mentorship*

The Foundation believes in the strength of unity and pushes to facilitate it in a healthy, equitable manner. It facilitates a relationship between the youth and the community to promote the continuity of heritage and culture. The Foundation also values a healthy home and creates revenues for the youth to amend issues which might be affecting their home life.

The Foundation realises the value of the youth. They realise that working on youth directly affects the future of the area. The youth are an excellent catalyst for the community at large. Drawing the interest of the youth often has the unintended consequences of attracting the community. The youth become the point of interest for the community.

The Foundation understood that the state of Hillbrow could not continue. It knew that only through working with the community can there be a change. This symbiotic relationship has created many opportunities for the community over the years. The connection has only been strengthened by the trust the community has in the Organisation. The centre continues to be useful because it understands how valuable this relationship is and continues to work hard to maintain it.

### *Lessons learnt from the projects shortcomings*

The project does an excellent job at connecting with its surrounds and involving the surrounding community in its efforts of empowerment. It also creates flexible spaces capable of facilitating the communities needs.

It however falls short in its inability to engage with its own position and history. The fact that it is a religious institution immediately prevents it from being able to connect to the surrounding community equitably. The baggage of religion affiliation aided by foreign donors with a purposed mandate prevents the space from fully being able to facilitate everyone, being approachable to everyone and being able to deal with all the societal problems in a neutral manner.

These are problems which may affect the built environment from fulfilling its mandate.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The chapter aimed at analysing precedents through principles developed in the literature. The precedent selection consisted of three different studies which focused on specific aspects required to make a functional youth-orientated space.

The Dongziguan Villagers' Activity Centre focused on community development. It looked at a community which was made up of two incompatible sectors and actively attempted to unite them in a democratic space—the precedents connected to the surrounding communities by respecting traditions and culture while still pushing the avant-garde envelope. The overarching canopy helped tie together multiple functions under one space; it also gave purpose and place to the in-between adaptable space.

Game Streetmekka played with the critical relationship between the youth and the street. It attempted to offer valuable space to an unaccepted culture; in doing so, it offered the culture social value. It attempted to formalise an informal activity. It started this process by valuing the current space the activity has adopted. The project creates lines of memory by rejuvenating a historic space to host the activity it already was hosting illegally. The space is democratic and thus allows youth from all walks of life the space to self actualise.

The Outreach Foundation attempts to fight back against the social ills plaguing a community. It does this by creating a close bond with the community and co-producing what the community requires. The space is divided into three sections, namely create, learn, heal. The creative space makes a bold statement allowing the youth to express themselves unapologetically, while the learn space is adaptive to allow the members of the community the freedom to acquire skills and knowledge they deem necessary. The healing space is private, offering the vulnerable a space. The centre aims to create a safe space for a diverse community.

All three precedents exist in different contexts and tackle the issue from a slightly different vantage point. This variety is invaluable in formulating a design process. It offers a wide range of plausible solutions to the dissertational question.

Architectural solutions are required to be bound to place. Therefore the focus area of Greenwood Park needs to be explored in greater detail. The following chapter will look at Greenwood Park as a case study.

# Chapter Six

CASE STUDY: YOUTH WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY

An in-depth study of Greenwood Park

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at understanding the context of the study. It will attempt to do so through a thorough analysis of Greenwood Park and its immediate surroundings. The research is aimed at understanding how youth placelessness can inform an architectural response. Therefore, the research will give an overview of Greenwood Park but focus specifically on the youth, their lived reality, and the space they occupy.

Through preliminary research, the theories of culture, identity, and empowerment alongside co-production and mentorship concepts were discovered to be the most suitable design drivers. These drivers aim to create a holistic place for the youth within Greenwood Park to help curb youth placelessness.

The previous chapter looked at examples of architecture which have successfully dealt with similar issues surrounding the dissertational question of youth placelessness. It was an invaluable exercise of understanding real-world solutions and their applications. However, there is a dire need to engage with and understand the context of Greenwood Park, specifically. There is very little written on the area, and therefore extensive on-site research is required to understand the site. It is crucial to understand Greenwood Park as it is the nuanced, dynamic nature of the community aided by its culture that has resulted in the social issue of youth placelessness.

The chapter will also engage a successful youth architectural intervention within Greenwood Parks past. The precedent both demonstrates the possibility for success in youth-orientated spaces and the necessity for a youth-orientated architectural intervention. The intervention was successful because of its ability to connect the youth to a creative space they could claim as their own. This allowed them to find place and then begin the journey of self-actualisation within their community; a process which directly benefited both the youth and the community.

## **6.2 The Positionality of the Researcher: Limitations**

The research is undertaken in the community of Greenwood Park with a focus on the youth.

The primary limitation is the researcher's connection to the area. Being born and raised in Greenwood Park, along with being a member of the focus group poses some problems. These include personal opinions, preconceived ideas, proximity to the issue and the way the community reacted to a familiar face. Observing the community was also a challenge as it was not done through fresh eyes. All these spaces held memory and are layered beyond face value. The proximity and connectivity to the community were further complicated by the upbringing, schooling, and privileges held by the researcher. All of these issues created a constant internal dialogue of trying to find the happy ground of acknowledging the connection, using it, without pushing an agenda. It would be naive to think that this does not influence or skew the information collected in the first person. Instead of shying away from this reality the researcher attempted to embrace the concept of self within the dissertation.

Secondary limitations are centred on members of the Coloured youth not wanting to be engaged or photographed. They often reacted with hostility at the site of being approached. There was a constant need to be respectful of the streets which the youth protected fiercely as an unobserved, free space. An additional issue was the youths unwillingness to engage. It was not easy to get youth to agree to be interviewed. This process was either met with aggression or with a polite decline without much reason as to why. COVID-19 further hindered the interview process. The disease impacted on the time frame and how human interaction could take place.

The case study required constant feet on the ground. This included multiple walks across the two and a half kilometre area to observe behaviour and map activities. The youth are a difficult group to observe and photograph primarily because they do not wish to be pried upon when gathering on the street aided by their behaviour of occupying spaces late at night.

Despite all of these challenges the experience has resulted in invaluable lessons learnt, knowledge gained, and connections formed which will be vital in the design process of creating a cultural youth centre which responds to the issue of youth placelessness in Greenwood Park.

### **6.3 Greenwood Park in Context**

Greenwood Park has a fascinating architectural and spatial history. As a result of starting as a white-only area, it is a community which does not have the same oppressive design principles which plague other areas of Colour in South Africa. Its infrastructure is designed haphazardly as a result of being formed under Victorian control. It still possesses superior infrastructure which includes primary schools, high schools, a public pool and a library (Francis, 2001).

The area of Greenwood Park was also originally the only Coloured area where Coloured individuals had a right to land and housing. Housing shaped the social experience of Greenwood Park. It influenced the resident's views on politics and the way they engaged with their environment. Government's use of housing as a method to subtly define a citizen's sense of self-worth and actualisation was pivotal in Greenwood Park residents' cultural formation. A cultural formation which influenced their perceived positionality in relation to other Coloured communities, giving them a sense of privilege and power. This has also shaped the way the community formed.

In contrast, other Coloured communities are designed around flats or semi-detached housing. These forms of urban formation are synonymous with social ills (Francis, 2001). Greenwood Park is an area that initially only had one block of flats (Earl Anynomous, 2020); the rest of the community consists of single standing houses.

### 6.3.1 Location and Accessibility



*Figure 60: Locality map of Durban in South Africa (Author, 2020).*

*Figure 61: Locality map of Greenwood Park in Durban (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

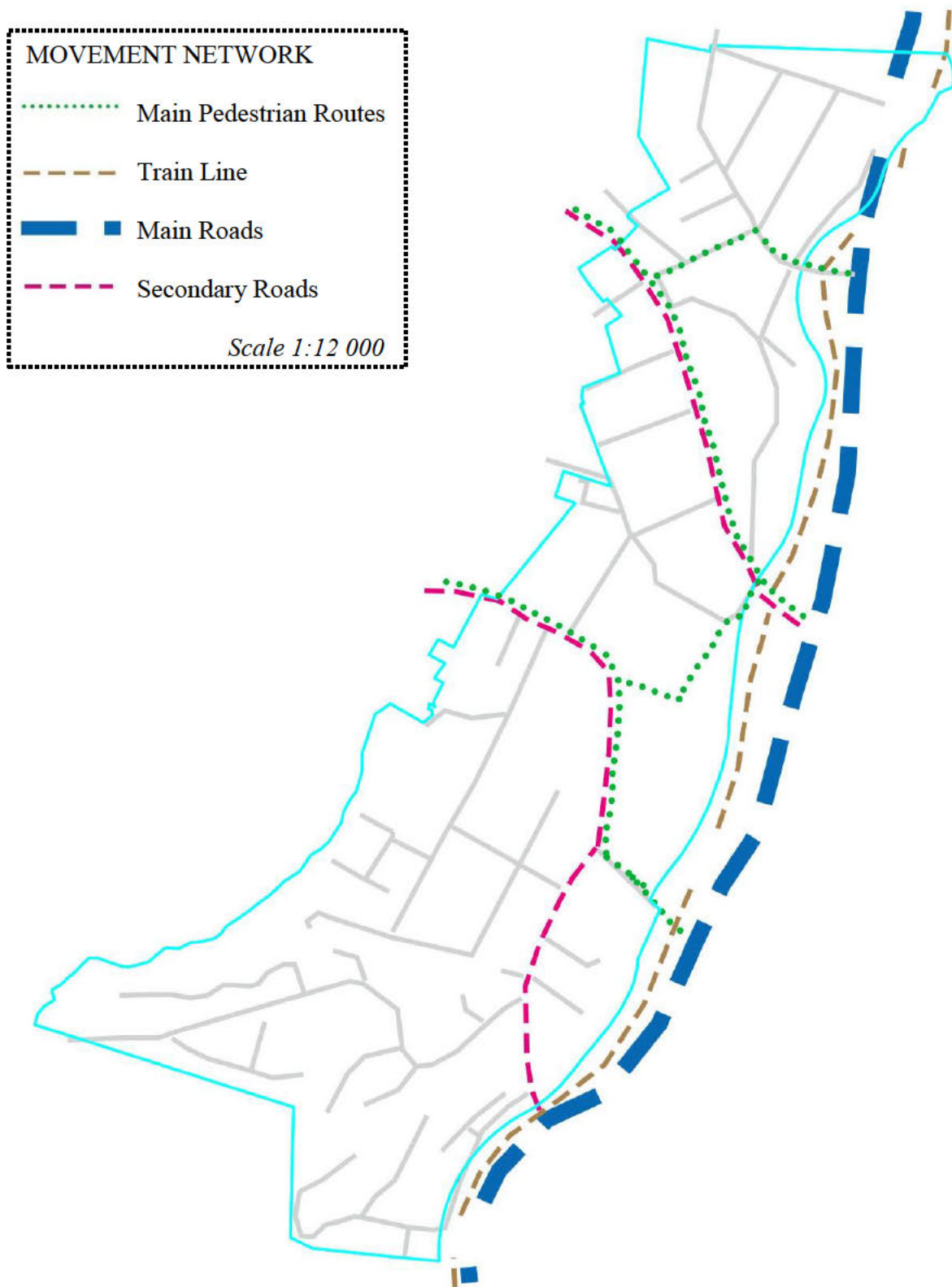


*Figure 62: Road networks around site (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

Greenwood Park is an area that roughly covers 1.07 square km. The community borders are a main road (Chris Hani Road) to the East, the original Indian communities of Avoca and Kenville to the West and North, and the industrial area of Briardene to the South. The community lies west of the previously white area of Durban North. Durban North acts as a buffer between Greenwood Park and the ocean, with the community sitting approximately 2.5 km away.

Greenwood Park is close to two national roads, the N2 and the M4, and multiple Regional Roads, which include R102 and the M45. Residential zones dominate Greenwood Park and surrounding areas. All surrounding industrial zones are usually found adjacent to major transport roads. The area is also within 10km of both the city centre and the robust economic Umhlanga business district.

A large percentage of the Greenwood Park workforce work in the fabrication industry, which includes boilermakers, welders and QC inspectors, these jobs are often found in the south basin of Durban. The accessibility of the community is a precious commodity.



*Figure 63: Diagram shows all primary pedestrian, vehicular and train routes in Greenwood Park (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*



*Figure 64: Diagram shows the zoning surrounding Greenwood Park (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

### **6.3.2 Understanding the Urban Context of Greenwood Park**

The South African model of urban formation within suburbs places a lot of emphasis on the private and very little on public. This collective thinking is translated into the way our suburbs have been developed. The residential urban are spaces of isolation and solitude from the collective. This has created barren suburbs; islands of activity that are separated from each other with no connection. The sole existence of any remanence of public space is the odd under-maintained public park, which ends up becoming hot spots for crime and drug abuse. People choose to drive out of their suburbs to manufactured spaces to fulfil their yearning for community; spaces such as shopping malls or restaurants. The result is a lack of community in most suburban areas. Suburbs become soulless spaces consisting of individual families who want nothing more than to be left alone.

Greenwood Park, as an area of Colour, does not suffer from this to the same extent as other areas. For now, Greenwood Park still has a sense of community and a definite spirit of unity and togetherness. It, however, does feel like a culture which is not being passed onto the younger generations. This has caused high wall culture to start encroaching on the community. Greenwood Park is, however, plagued with a lack of urban space. Very little planning has gone into spaces for the collective. Instead, there is simply the odd swing in a vacant plot of land as the sole solution to communal spaces.

#### *State of Housing*

Greenwood Park joined Natal after 1910. Before which it fell into the Victorian County. Its separation from Natal resulted in the area being subdivided haphazardly. Homes were also not built to the same structural standards as areas like Sydenham and Wentworth. What could be viewed as a downside ironically became an economic boom in Greenwood Park. The haphazardous subdivision created large, spacious plots of land. The land allowed residents to develop spacious and tastefully modern homes. However, the primary reason for this economic boom was Greenwood Parks sole right to property ownership. A privilege no other Coloured community shared.

Greenwood Parks built environment is an architectural summation which is made up of a combination of colonial architecture, an evolution of colonial architecture, a built environment of convenience and an evolution of additions. The traditional form of architecture was wood and iron houses and iron roofs with brick walls. The former was generally a wealthier and more

spacious, grandeur statement of development. The later was associated with indentured labour and government-aided homes for management in the development of the train lines. Properties have since evolved. Some properties show varying states of wood and iron houses; maintaining the wood and iron roof but filling the sides in with bricks or blocks. Other properties are homes of evolution—an amalgamation of minor iterations resulting in a building which has grown over time. There is also a fair amount of architectural dilapidation.



*Figure 65: Wooden iron houses within Greenwood Park (Author, 2020)*



*Figure 66: Wooden iron houses which have morphed and evolved over the years (Author, 2020)*



*Figure 67: Typical street edge found in Greenwood Park (Author, 2020)*

Greenwood Park has always been a place with supply and demand issues. This demand for property has created two trends. The one is property owners subdividing their land to either

create space for the following generations to build a home or to rent out space for extra income. The development of properties has created overly developed plots of land. The second (recent) trend is the anomaly of developers buying properties, destroying everything on-site and then developing varying forms of flats, duplexes and single standing units. Development within the area has become quite a lucrative endeavour but has also begun to change the landscape of Greenwood Park.

### *Landscape and Housing*

The landscape of Greenwood Park is generally undulating with steep points and flat plateaus. The landscape contributed to the original haphazard subdivision of properties. Properties were often placed on the plateaus, and the yard made to encompass the surrounding undulating land that was complicated and expensive to construct. The consequence of this is a developed area with low population density. Houses are often offset from the street surrounded by trees with little connection to the street edge.



*Figure 68: Landscape of Greenwood Park (Maxar Technologies, 2020).*

### *Pro et contra of the current urban formation*

Pros:

- A high property value
- A home with space to grow and expand
- A community that does not suffer from overcrowding and the social ills that accompany overcrowding
- A very green, open space which feels light and airy

- The youth, currently benefit from the protected nature of the streets which stop the public gaze.

Cons:

- A community with a lot of dead and underused space
- A community where sparsity separates members from easily maintaining and keeping a sense of community spirit
- The community-run into urban planning issues as a result of poor planning, these include poor physical structures, a failing elaborate drainage system to deal with the haphazardous design over an undulating landscape and a higher need for costly engineering structures such as retaining walls.

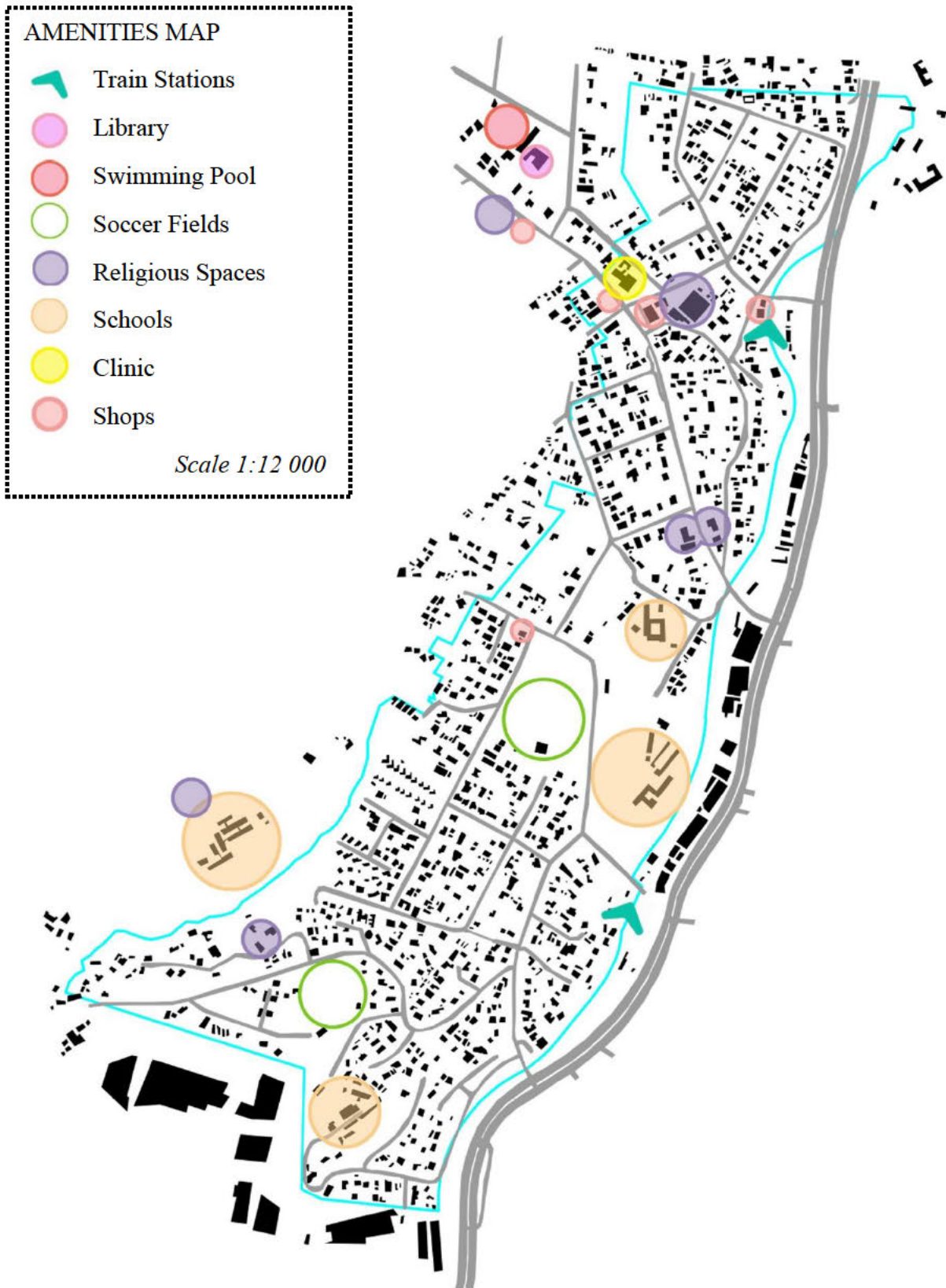
The landscape of Greenwood Park aided by disinterested planners resulted in the sparsely developed area which Greenwood Park is today. Due to the sparsity Greenwood Park has become associated with being a green area with lots of open spaces and a community connected to nature, a trait no other Coloured area in Durban shares. A desirable trait for a community to possess. The community, however, is also plagued with drainage issues, including erosion and runoff problems. This causes the majority of the damage to the infrastructure of the community.

#### *Amenities*

Being a residential area greenwood park does not have any amenities beyond small shops, schools, religious institutes, a library, a clinic and a swimming pool (**fig. 70**). Greenwood Park has a small tourism industry which only consists of a couple of bed and breakfast accommodations. Majority of the amenities within the community are designed in the common apartheid style of brutalism. The buildings tend to all be built out of brick with asbestos Victorian profiled roof sheets. They have small apertures and defensive entryways which often require passing through multiple strategic, designed gateways.



*Figure 69: Contour lines of Greenwood Park (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*



*Figure 70: Amenities found within Greenwood Park (Author, 2020).*

### **6.3.3 A day in the life of Greenwood Park**

Greenwood Park is a tightly knit and friendly community. The streets are often quiet, but there is always someone not too far away. People regularly can be found either working on their garden/ house or sitting on their veranda. There is a strong culture of greeting, which often turns into short conversations. People are willing to help wherever they can and take pride in themselves and their community.

The community can transform from silent to bustling in the blink of an eye. Activities generally centre on Havelock Grounds. The community comes together for sports, religion, fundraising or community efforts such as clean-ups. When the community gathers, it turns into a social event. Community members are always ready to gather, eat together and catch up.

During the week the area is generally quiet with the small shops getting the odd individual coming in to buy bread and milk. However, on the weekend, these pause points become places where people meet. There is generally always a crowd outside, and it is common knowledge to go to the shop to meet friends. Older generations attend to their houses and yards on the weekend. It is not a rare sight to see commuters stopped outside a house engaged in extended conversations with the properties residents. The scene is of a resident having paused they weekly chores carrying the odd tool while in lively conversation.

A person stopping outside a house is not only reserved for pedestrians but is often common practice for motor vehicles. Cars park on the street outside a house and enter conversations with homeowners, at times leaving their car music playing, creating a familiar ambience. The streets are occupied by a range of community members – children, youth and adults. Children ride bikes and play games while the youth tend to sit around, listen to music and talk. Adults generally use the streets less frequently but at times do follow youth traditions of sitting and listening to music from their cars.

The streets are the starting point for youth gatherings. Most Saturday gatherings take place in stages, starting at around midday. The youth meet on the street or at the local shop to socialise. By late afternoon they will often disperse to head home and get ready for the evening. Everyone once cleaned and dressed, will subsequently meet back on the street. This then becomes an intricately complex social movement that happens seamlessly. The youth transverse through their area, collecting and leaving individuals as they go and stopping at multiple points along the way. As the evening goes on the introduction of alcohol and in some circles, drugs, start

being recreationally used. The youth at any point may decide to either leave the area and head off to one of the numerous party scenes in Durban or stay in the area occupying the streets as their primary weekend social point. The financial situation of the group quite often dictates this choice.

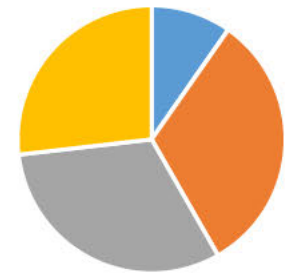
At the start of the day, the youth tend to occupy the streets in an open and public way, but the later it gets, and alcohol and drugs start being consumed they tend to reclude into more private sectors of the street. This is a tradition which a lot of Coloured youth go through on Friday and Saturday. Most tend to slow down on Sunday in preparation for work on Monday. On a Sunday the youth generally stay within the community and stick to one social point on the street.

## 6.4 Youth within Greenwood Park

The South African National Youth Policy and The National Youth Commission Act and its integrated Youth Development Strategy (The Presidents Office, 1996) define youth as 14 to 35 years of age. From observations, the highest quantity of youth in Greenwood Park appear to occupy the streets for extended periods after high school until their late-twenties (18 – 29). Youth between 18 – 29 years old would, therefore, be considered a focal group.

The Demographic Breakdown of the youth in Greenwood Park is:

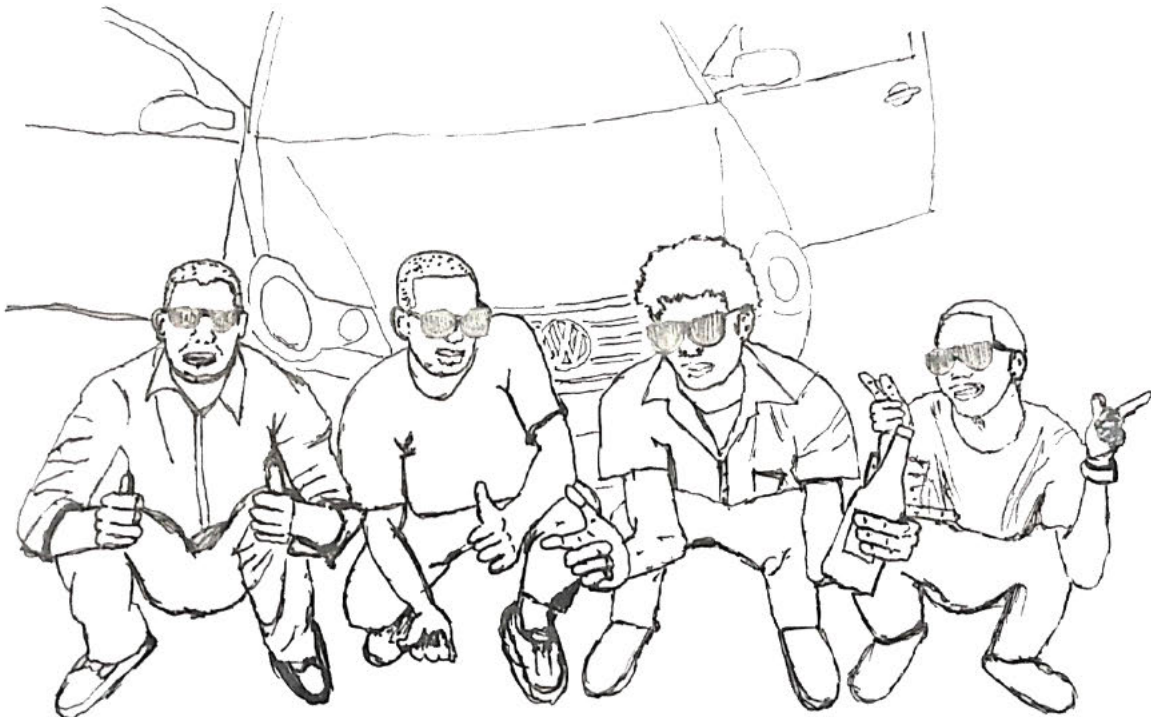
- 18 – 19 = 100 people (3.03% of the total population)
- 20 – 24 = 332 people (9.99% of the total population)
- 25 – 29 = 326 people (9.81% of the total population)
- 30 – 34 = 278 people (8.37% of the total population)



■ 18-19 ■ 20-24 ■ 25-29 ■ 30-34

Total number of youth = 1036 people

### 6.4.1 Placeless Youth



*Figure 71: An artistic sketch showing a group of Coloured Youth posing for a photo while occupying a cul-de-sac. The image perfectly captures Coloured youth bravado culture (Author, 2020).*

They are colloquially referred to as ‘corner boys’. Placeless youth culture within coloured communities can be found somewhere on the spectrum in Coloured culture and Youth culture.

There is a common sentiment that Coloured Culture and Coloured Youth Culture is hard to explain, even by those who identify as such. However, there is a common agreement that there is something different, unique and tangible. Coloured youth culture can present itself in a spectrum often holding onto commonalities but displaying itself in varying forms. Commonalities may include:

- A bravado culture; a need to be seen and heard and perceived with social value. A bravado culture is often achieved by wearing certain clothes, driving certain cars, listening to certain music; a general ethos of loud and proud
- A strong tie to Coloured culture which includes Coloured slang, Coloured dress code, Coloured mannerisms and typical Coloured idiosyncrasies.



*Figure 72: An iconic image of a corner boy perched on his haunches (Author, 2020).*



*Figure 73: A gathering of corner boys on a typical Saturday around Midday (Author, 2020)*

#### 6.4.2 A study of the Street: Corners and Cul-de-Sac's that placeless youth occupy

The youth occupy the streets at various points throughout the community of Greenwood Park. As stated above the youth have a complicated relationship with the street. A transient relationship based on convenience means that the youth can be found at any time, at any point on the street. There, however, are a few points which the youth frequent. These may be points from the past or the present. There is value in studying these points in the hope of finding patterns and commonalities between the Coloured placeless youth of Greenwood Park and the street. The analysis engages with youth points geographically from North to South. A total of 9 corner points were studied.

- PLACELESS YOUTH POINTS**
- Point 1:** Corner of Clyde Road & Hedley Road
  - Point 2:** Parking lot at Firwood Road pool
  - Point 3:** Corner of Ardrossan Road & Ben Nevis Road
  - Point 4:** Corner of Effingham Road & Tweed Road
  - Point 5:** Sky Lane dead-end
  - Point 6 & 7:** Corner of Park Station Road & Havelock Road
  - Point 8:** Cheron Road cul-de-sac
  - Point 9:** Bawden Place cul-de-sac

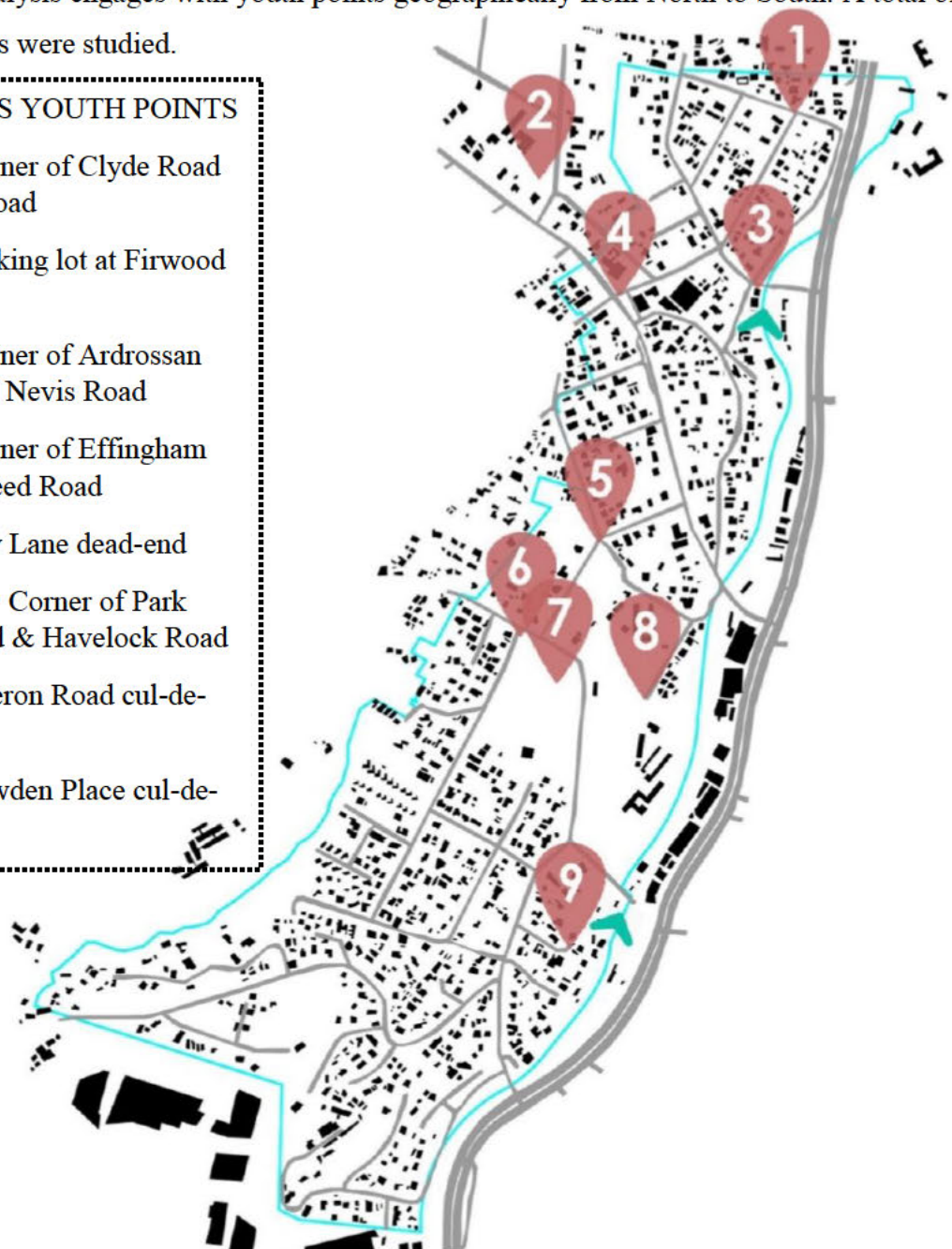


Figure 74: Placeless youth points throughout the area of Greenwood Park (Author, 2020).

**Point 1:** Corner of Clyde Road and Hedley Road

*Location:* The corner of Clyde and Hedley Road

*Context:* Residential houses surround the point. All of which are actively occupied.

*Connection:* The point is located on the inside of the corner. It exists on the verge. This is one of the smaller points in the area and is known for its connection to local youth who live within proximity. The youth who used to occupy this space have currently outgrown it. The spot was known for being meticulously maintained and one of the examples where the youth have taken total control over the street.

*Time:* The point currently is not occupied by youth



*Figure 75: Plan of Clyde Road (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

*Figure 76: View of Clyde Road (Author, 2020).*

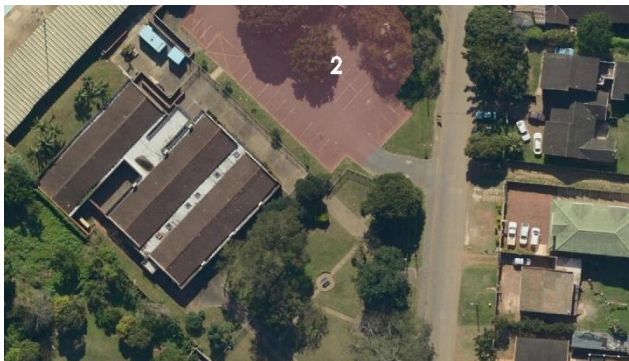
**Point 2:** Parking lot at Firwood Road pool

*Location:* Located in the parking lot of Firwood Road pool and library

*Context:* This point is bordered to the North-West by Firwood Road Pool and South-West by the Firwood Road Library. The East is bordered by roads across which lies an active residential community. The well-established trees which surround the parking lot have blocked off most direct lines of sight. This allows the point to hold a sense of solitude from the prying gaze.

*Connection:* The point is known to hold an assortment of youth. Generally, it is a hot spot for people with cars. The point has even been known to host impromptu spinning sessions (South African car sport). The spinning sessions are usually tied to Coloured youth bravado and are a statement made to claim social status. When occupying the space, the youth often drink alcohol and depending on the circle recreationally using drugs.

*Time:* Generally, this point is occupied over the weekend; however, most times, there could be the odd random vehicle parked off enjoying the space.



*Figure 77: Plan of Firwood Road parking lot (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

*Figure 78: View of Firwood Road parking lot (Author, 2020).*

**Point 3:** Corner of Ardrossan Road and Ben Nevis Road

*Location:* Infront of a local community store, 4-star supermarket, on Ardrossan Road

*Context:* The store is situated at one of the entrances into Greenwood Park. It is within proximity to Chris Hani Road and one of the two train stations that border Greenwood Park. It is bordered to the East by a train line and to the West by a church.

*Connection:* The community store is an old store and has existed in Greenwood Park for generations. This is one of the intergenerational points. There are stories that the previous generation will tell about sitting at this point, and parents will mention their attempts to try and keep their children away. The point is relatively isolated from direct lines of sight and has a sense of solitude for the youth.

*Time:* This point is not too frequently occupied. It is a point that has a busier past and generally has been forgotten about amongst the youth of today. However, there is the occasional gathering during the week.



*Figure 79: Plan of Ardrossan Road (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

*Figure 80: View of Ardrossan Road (Author, 2020).*

**Point 4:** Corner of Effingham Road and Tweed Road

*Location:* Located at one of the well-known shops in Greenwood Park - Top of The Rock shopping complex.

*Context:* This point is along the primary road - Effingham Road, which is one of the main roads running through Greenwood Park. The point is bordered to the West by Effingham Road beyond which is an active residential area, to the North is Tweed road beyond which is a Clinic. Top of the Rock building complex borders the rest of the space.

*Connection:* This point has a strong connection to the main road. It was known for people parking off in their cars and socialising. Since Top of the Rocks renovation, it is no more used by the youth as a social street point. It has become an economic hub which gets busy between 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm—attracting the after-work traffic, stopping for necessities on the way home.

*Time:* No longer in constant use.



*Figure 81:* Plan of Top of the Rock shopping complex (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).

*Figure 82:* View of Top of the Rock shopping complex (Author, 2020).

**Point 5:** Sky Lane dead-end

*Location:* Located at the top of Sky Lane

*Context:* This point is situated at the end of a very tight lane. The lane used to be a thoroughfare but has since been closed off. It is a point which has an active residential area around it and a primary school (Greenwood Park Primary School) to the South of it.

*Connection:* The main attraction to this point is the concrete bollards used to shut off Sky lane. The bollards act as a seating point; seating opportunities is something which often attracts youth. It is also a point which has very few direct lines of sight beyond cars driving on the adjacent roads. This is a point that tends to be used by younger youth, and they frequently use it to recreationally use Lean (Codeine cough syrup) mixed with soda.

*Time:* The point is occupied during the day by younger youth sitting and talking. In the early parts of the evening is when the youth use it to abuse lean.



*Figure 83: Plan of Sky Lane (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

*Figure 84: View of Sky Lane (Author, 2020).*

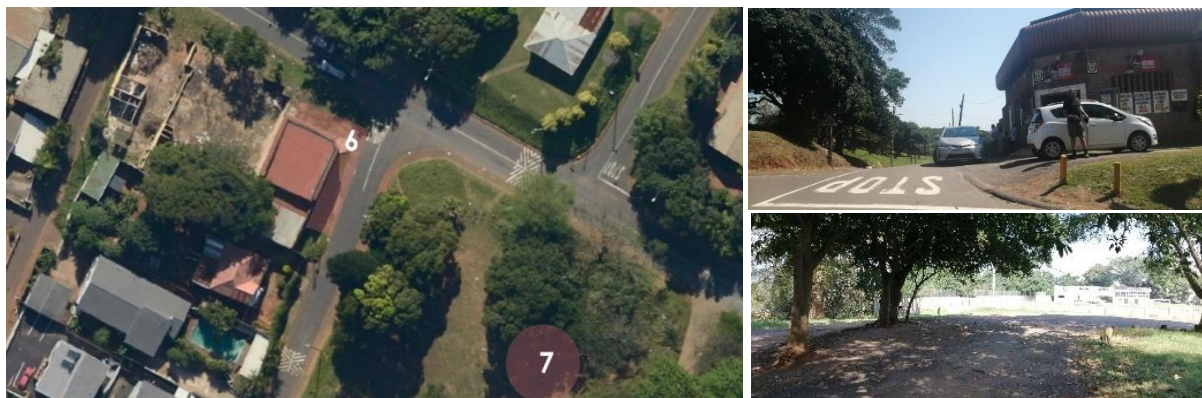
**Point 6 & 7: Corner of Park Station Road and Havelock Road**

*Location:* Point 6 is located by a well-known central Greenwood Park store, the Greenwood Park Convenience Store. Point 7 is located in the overflow space of Havelock Grounds.

*Context:* Point 6 is located along Park Station Road, one of the primary roads through the area. An active Community surrounds it. It is situated in what is considered the centre of Greenwood Park by many residents. It is also adjacent to the Havelock Grounds; a well-known central gathering point for the community. Point 7 is also located along Park Station Road and attached to Havelock Grounds

*Connection:* Points 6 has a strong connection to one of the main stores in the community. It is also currently the most active youth point in Greenwood Park. The youth occupy this point day and night, during the week and on the weekend. There is a high probability of seeing someone sitting here when passing. This point also holds memory, an intergeneration youth point. It is a point that the youth use both to park their cars and sit to socialise. Point 7 is connected to Havelock Grounds. It is a point in which the youth often sit and socialise while watching soccer games. The point is raised above the surrounding area and therefore has few direct lines of sight. This allows the youth to drink and use drugs without being watched. It also has vehicular access and attracts cars.

*Time:* Point 6 is generally occupied in the afternoon into the early evening during the week and from midday onwards on the weekend. Point 7 is frequently occupied by local youth. It generally will only be occupied by cars on the weekend. During the week it is generally occupied after midday until early evening. On the weekend it is occupied from around midday



*Figure 85: Plan of Havelock Convenience Store & Havelock Grounds (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

*Figure 86 & 87: View of Havelock Convenience Store & Havelock Grounds (Author, 2020)*

**Point 8:** Cheron Road cul-de-sac

*Location:* Located at the end of Cheron Road. This point is situated in a cul-de-sac.

*Context:* An inactive tennis court surrounds the cul-de-sac. There is a primary school (Greenwood Park Primary School) to the North West and active residential houses to the North East. The cul-de-sac is also connected to an official pedestrian lane known locally as Deadman's lane. It earned this name through the high crime rate often encountered by commuters who use this path to and from home.

*Connection:* Over the past five years this point has become a lot less active. Before every Friday and Saturday night, the point used to hold street parties which attracted, at times four to five cars and upwards of 50 youth members. Now days there generally tends to be no more than two cars and a maximum of 5 – 10 people. The point is known for hosting social events into the early hours of the morning.

The cul-de-sac is known for people bringing camp chairs, gazebos and braai stand. It is a point that the youth unapologetically laid claim to occupy. It is a point that holds much memory for street culture.

*Time:* Deadman's lane tend to be used in the early evening during the week until around 10 pm while the cul-de-sac can get the odd vehicle during the week. The activities during the week are reserved with low music levels and the youth staying in their vehicles.

Over the weekends the activities get a lot more ruckuses. Loud music from cars, cars often spinning, loud drunken conversations and at time fights break out. The times on weekends tend to be from about 8 pm onwards.



*Figure 88: Plan of Cheron Road (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

*Figure 89: View of Cheron Road (Author, 2020)*

**Point 9:** Bawden Place cul-de-sac

*Location:* Located in a cul-de-sac at the end of Bawden Place.

*Context:* This point is situated in the middle of an active residential community. It is a tight-knit community with everyone situated around the cul-de-sac knowing each other. All the houses around the cul-de-sac are below road level. This allows the cul-de-sac to have no direct lines of sight, offering it a sense of privacy.

*Connection:* This is a youth point that has always been owned by youth members who live in the adjacent houses. However, youth from the surrounding areas would come and join the local youth. It is a protected space which outsiders cannot use without being confronted and questioned as to their purpose for being there. The cyclical nature of communities means that the youth who once occupied this space have grown up and had young children. Therefore this space is not currently occupied. The point is an intergenerational space and has gone through this before. When the current children grow up, there is a chance that they will reactive this point.

*Time:* Currently not in use.



*Figure 90: Plan of Bawden Place (eThekweni Municipality, 2020).*

*Figure 91: View of Bawden Place (Author, 2020).*

### 6.4.3 Observations

Through the analysis of corner boy points, a connection between the youth and streets can be found. A thread of common themes include:

- Proximity. The youth usually occupy places close to their homes which offer them a sense of privacy
- Convenience. The youth find places which can offer impromptu seating options, shading on a hot day or close proximity to get a quick snack or drink (shops). Convenience is high up on the list that dictates the youth's choice in spaces to claim.
- Privacy. The youth value the streets as a space to escape the prying eyes of the community. The spaces they choose to occupy are secluded and obscured from any direct line of sight from surrounding homes.
- Car friendly spaces. The youth gravitate towards space that can facilitate their cars. Their cars play many roles. They play music, act as a vessel to carry everything, including drinks and offer the youth a sense of social status amongst their peers. For these reasons, quite a few places are capable of facilitating a car.

The points act as a system of connection between the individual, collective and the community. The streets hold the potential to become a catalyst for youth cultural rejuvenation and combat youth placelessness. These points, therefore, become points of reclamation. Architecture needs to intervene beyond a static site and connect with the youth at these points of convergence. The interventions can act as a point of convenience for the youth to connect to a collective; they can also act as positive reinforcement and a reminder about the alternative to the status quo. The problem requires an attempt to create an urban scale solution to the urban scale problem of youth placelessness.

## 6.5 A Successful Youth Intervention: Studio 849



*Figure 92: Shows Studio 849 in its prime (Moodley, 2017).*

Studio 849 is an example of a successful youth intervention within the community of Greenwood Park. The project was promoted and designed by Rodney Choromanski and Leonie Hall. The space was formed off the concept of mentorship. It offered the youth a space to claim and express themselves. The space became a place in which the local youth considered a home away from home. It kept the youth out of trouble and served as a meeting point for the youth. The space simultaneously educated the youth and offered them a space to express themselves and develop their culture and identity. The studio was a success and demonstrated the need for a youth-orientated space within Greenwood Park.

Designed as a Presbyterian Church, Studio 849 started as a religious building and not a youth centre. The iconic iron and wood building affectionately referred to as the ‘tin temple’ was subsequently built. The church was completed and consecrated in 1906. As the first Presbyterian Church in Durban North, it was built to cater to the rapid urban sprawl in Durban.

Since its inception, the building has been used as a church, warehouse, carpenters workshop, a Swiss stone masons shop and a community arts centre (Moodley, 2017).

In 1995 artist Leonie Hall and local architect Rodney Choromanski restored the dilapidated building and created a art centre called Studio 849. Due to the period in South Africa's history and the buildings attempt to use expression and the arts as a form of empowerment and liberation, the project garnered much publicity. The centre operated for two and a half years and touched more than one thousand youth members of all ages and cultures from the local and surrounding communities. Its heritage value, locality, aesthetic all made it the perfect precedent for how a building can become embedded in the fabric of a community and serve to enrich the community (Moodley, 2017).

### 6.5.1 What Studio 849 Achieved

The project came into existence just after the end of apartheid. Studio 849 attempted to celebrate this newfound freedom from an oppressive regime by using the arts as an empowering and liberating tool. It achieved this through the reclamation of a building which had only served white bodies up until that point and turned it into a space which served everyone equally. It used its position within the buffer zone as a mediating space. Attempting to bring everyone together to express cultural diversity through the arts. Its position in the wake of the new democracy helped join it to ventures such as the BAT Centre in its ability and vision to bridge gaps and celebrate cultural diversity (Moodley, 2017). The studio aimed to be an expressive space; allowing its members the freedom and autonomy to express their cultural diversity. It also attempted to empower the youth and community at large through skills and knowledge development in the arts, holding workshops for the unemployed and for people who wished to pick up a hobby.



*Figure 93: Collage showing the classes held at the Studio (Author, 2020)*

Rodney Choromanski spoke about meeting adults years later who were youth members of Studio 849. They would frequently mention how much the studio helped them gain confidence and created a space which they could express themselves; a space which they valued. The same adult's shared the sentiment of a need for a similar space for children today.

### **6.5.2 Architecture for the Community**

Studio 849 for two and a half years demonstrated the need for the youth to have an expressive place to lay claim. It effectively achieved its intended purpose of bringing the youth together to gain autonomy and empower themselves. The youth laid claim to the space so efficiently they began having a positive impact on the community at large.



*Figure 94: Effingham bridge painting. One of the community uplifting projects Studio 849 did in their two and a half years which is still visible up until today (Author, 2020).*

The project managed to see a need for the youth to claim an expressive space as a means of empowerment. It chose to reinvent a once oppressive space into an equitable space capable of serving everyone equally. The reimagined space, aided by a strong relationship between the youth and their mentors, began to reinvent the youth culture and identity within the

community. As a result, the community accepted the studio and the youth that brandished their connection to it proudly. The centre became an integral part of the community and an integral part of youth culture and identity development and maintenance.

If by nothing else the centre's success could be measured by the share volume of over one thousand students which passed through its doors in the short space of two and a half years. The youth require space—a gap which has not been filled adequately.

The project was never properly documented or studied and therefore very little information exists. However through engagement with Rodney Choromanski and two former youth members from the centre it appears to have had a profound effect on the youth and their ability to find a place where they belong in their community.

Due to lack of records the project cannot be examined in its entirety but has left enough examples of positives through time to know that the fundamentals which drove the project are capable of creating positive change for the youth within the Coloured community of Greenwood Park.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The case study done within Greenwood Park helps form a foundation into understanding the nuances of the community and the problems that the youth face. This information is vital for the design process. In order for an architectural intervention which is responsive, an in-depth understanding of the context and target market is required. This study attempted to the best of its abilities to achieve this.

Greenwood Park, as a community, lacks any overtly definable identity, whether it is architectural or cultural. This cultural conundrum is a shared sentiment between community members. There is, however, an equally shared sentiment that something uniquely tangible is present; a commonness and comfort found in familiarity amongst the people of Greenwood Park.

The community lacks any form of coherent urban planning. This is evident from the haphazardly way that homes were subdivided. The urban formation has potential in its green and open constitution, however, little importance is placed on communal spaces. This has left the community with nothing but private yards and public roads. The community has very few other options outside of the street to occupy. This is a common problem found across areas of Colour in South Africa and directly contributes to the streets becoming an extension to the community. The street needs to be redesigned and reimagined to give the space it is required to facilitate the role which is currently being forced onto it.

From observations, the youth occupy streets, street corners and cul-de-sacs throughout the area. The study simply pointed out spaces which hold memory or are commonly used. The youth, however, tend to favour pause points within proximity to their houses, out of direct lines of sight and situated close to impromptu seating opportunities.

An additional intriguing observation is that the youth would be attracted to the few youth-orientated spaces within the community, however, would stop just outside and find solace in the parking lot or adjacent space: a weird relation of acknowledging the space as a gathering point but not feeling welcome to exist in it. The democratic streetscape, therefore, becomes the point of convergence.

The proposed centre is therefore something which is needed now more than ever in Greenwood Park. It needs to engage with the complexities of the current state of the youth. The design

needs to go beyond the site. The centre is required to be cognitive of the vast spectrum of youth it is intended to engage and offer them what they require for self-empowerment.

The analysis of Greenwood Park and Coloured youth will be developed further in Chapter 7: analysis and recommendations.

# Chapter Seven

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter will synthesise the information gathered through the process of interviews and informal conversation undertaken in Greenwood Park. Primary data was gathered through observations and conversations. The interviews were both formal and informal. Formal interviews were conducted through a purposeful selection process. Finding formal interviews was a challenging process as the youth found no necessity to participate and did not trust the process. Informal interviews were conducted when the need arose—based on the willingness of the community member and the researcher's discretion. Interviews were invaluable because the research took place in a community with very little prior research. The history and present of the community can be found in the voices of its members. Due to the lack of research, interviews created insight into a lot of unforeseen and unthought-of information. Information which is crucial in the development of design drivers as it will ensure an architectural intervention that is cognitive of its surroundings and understands its context.

The interviews and research have been geared towards and aimed at answering the question of:

### **How can Coloured youth placeless-ness inform an architectural response?**

It was revealed through the process of critical enquiry that the street could act as an equitable space to liberate and empower the placeless-ness which the youth currently face. The democratic nature of the streets can be re-imagined to create a healthy psychosocial space which is premised on theories of empowerment and culture and concepts of co-production and mentorship. This space is required to offer the youth a place of social prominence within the community, a metaphoric seat at the table. By offering a space of social value, it will help the youth feel valued within their community.

Youth are resilient in their yearning for autonomy; they fearlessly brandish their culture within spaces regardless of the reception. This is evident in their ability to claim space unapologetically, even un-human spaces like the streets. Once claimed they imprint themselves onto space, playing loud music, 'tagging' walls, talking loudly in slang and generally displaying acts of counterhegemonic behaviour. This fearless resilience is something which should be celebrated instead of shunned. It is a confidence that holds the potential to reinvent the current state of youth placeless-ness and the associated social ills. The youth require a healthy space to engage with the formation, maintenance and renewal of their collective culture.

Humans and space share a symbiotic relationship. It then can be assumed predictable that the current place the youth occupy would result in a collective plagued with social ills.

There is a need to adopt and reinvent the streets which the youth currently occupy. This reinvention is required to be designed, built, maintained and owned by the youth. By offering a healthy space the youth can begin the journey of discovery and formation of an individual and collective culture—a process which will end in empowerment.

## **7.2 Analysis of Research Findings**

This section will analyse the most significant responses found in the formal interview process. The community was interviewed because the research process discovered the need for a bottom-up approach. The interviews were undertaken with the main focus of drawing relevant information from the interviewee. The interviews were open-ended, and the interviewees were informed beforehand that the sole purpose of the questions were to guide the interview. If they wished to speak off-topic, it was encouraged because these tangents lead to unforeseen knowledge. The interview sample size was five members of the community. This was a smaller size than initially intended but was reduced as a result of the unforeseen circumstances of COVID – 19. The number of five seemed inconsequential initially but turned out to be quite a burdensome task to locate five viable and willing candidates to be interviewed.

The sample was found amongst Coloured youth members who currently associated with placeless-ness, have a firm grasp on placeless-ness or existed in the past under the definition of placeless youth. The youngest interviewee was 20, and the oldest was 45. This range allowed for a better understanding of the evolution of ‘corner boy’ behaviour and uncovered interesting characteristics about where the culture has come from and where it is going.

The interviews were intended to be around half an hour long. The shortest interview was 22 minutes long and the longest was 45 minutes long. The topics covered were an array of questions looking into both the social and architectural experience of Coloured youth. A copy of the interview schedule can be found attached (*Appendix C*).

All interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of the interviewee. This was to prevent any distraction away from the interview process by having to document the conversation in other methods. All recordings were then transcribed at a later date.

This information is a synthesis of the information offered by the five interviewees, all of whom have not been mentioned to protect their anonymity.

### **Defining Coloured Culture**

Through the body of research, it is revealed that Coloured culture is hard to define. This is as a result of it being an apartheid construct which threw together an assortment of different

collectives under one umbrella term. The first aspect of the interview was, therefore, to understand whether the interviewees identify as Coloured and how they would define this culture.

Interviewees shared the sentiment that Coloured culture is hard to define if not undefinable. Although through the interviews, the interviewees showed great pride in their racial and cultural definition.

Though hard to define common themes, which interviewees associated with Colouredness include:

- Coloured people are made up of a diverse group who share commonalities but are also very different and unique in their own right. This diversity and the proximity to diversity has resulted in a collective that is very adaptable and can fit into any space, place or group.
- Coloured people are an easy-going relaxed group of people who are very friendly and helpful.
- Coloureds eat similar food. Coloured food is a mixture of Black, Indian and white food.
- Coloured people share a common sense of fashion and dress sense. This is something they take pride in. It is a dress code often associated with name brands and is distinguishable in its own right.
- Coloured people share a love for music. A lot of Coloured people are also very gifted musicians, and it is something which is said to be in their blood.
- Coloured people are very gifted artisans. All of the interviewees take pride in this. Stating that Coloured hands played a large part in the construction of Durban. Coloured people up until today are still very active in the artisan trade, and it is commonly assumed to be the default field to go into as a Coloured male.
- Coloured people share a common language. Developing and maintaining a distinctive dialect of slang which is shared across Coloured communities, but nuanced in each area.
- Coloured people have a deep love for sport, mostly football. Most Coloured people either play at league level or know someone who does. They are also very passionate about the Premier League and Champions League.
- Coloured people share a very close bond with their families and friends. They enjoy spending time with the people close to them.

- Coloured people are generally very religious individuals. The race shares two religions which are Christianity and Islam.
- Coloured people are very expressive and creative individuals.

Although Coloured culture is hard to define, there is a shared sentiment that it is tangible—a culture which Coloureds feel comfort and a sense of familiarity within.

Personal Observations:

*Architecture can reflect this uncertainty and create a space which gives Coloured creativity room to explore. In this way, architecture can act as a catalyst for cultural discovery and growth.*

### **Spaces within the Community**

The interviewees find space within the community at shops, street corners, cul-de-sacs and the local grounds. When asked about why they felt comfortable in these spaces instead of more conventional spaces such as their homes or local libraries, the interviewees took time to process the question.

Personal observation:

*It is obviously not something which had ever been questioned. This shows beyond personal reasons; there is an overarching street culture which exists. The youth exist on the street because that is what the youth before them did. Through interrogation, you will find that it is because they felt free to express themselves and felt a sense of autonomy and a sense of community. It, however, does not appear that these were the initial reasons; instead, they become apart of the reason the youth continued to occupy the street.*

The interviewees place value on sport and exercise being ‘good clean fun,’ because of this there is a strong connection to the local field. The field is tied to fitness and football. Coloured youth are football fanatics and at any chance will agree to a game. It is a past time that brings great joy to the collective. Activities are centred on the local grounds. The youth gather before, after and between games, and hang around the space.

The interviewees also express their choice of spaces as a consequence of there being a lack of alternatives. There is no alternative other than football, the grounds or the street. It, therefore, became a space which they gathered to meet their friends, flirt and go on dates. It was considered a space of leisure and as such, associated with activities tied to leisure which included alcohol and drug consumption.

The only other space the interviewees spoke fondly of was the local pool. This, however, was a space where they felt supervised. The local pool, unfortunately, is currently closed for maintenance. It has been closed for over two years.

The interviewees spoke fondly of activities available outside of football from the past. These activities included galas at the local swimming pool and karate lessons at the local library. The youth enjoyed the entertainment of spectatorship if not participating. Sport united the community because there was always someone to vouch for whether it is a family member or a friend.

The interviewees speak fondly of street space within the community. They feel like that is where they belong in their community. It is space which is tied to friends and memories and a space which they feel a sense of power and autonomy. They viciously protect the streets at times resorting to violence to prevent outside elements from entering. This is a practice which has been associated with safety, which is ironic since bad culture already existed.

Personal Observation:

*The streets are unfortunately also tied to some of the social ills that placeless youth have become known for.*

### **Threats facing Coloured Youth**

The primary threat to youth is alcohol and drug abuse. Placeless youth was not a designed system, but a default system created because of home life, parents being too busy to actively partake in their children's lives and varying other circumstances. The youth, therefore occupied the street, often bordering neglect. The consequence of this is the natural process of youth experimentation, which can turn into experimentation with alcohol and drugs. It is a problem that creates many dependency issues within the community, along with most of the youth

spending their twenties being relatively unproductive beyond substance abuse. The act of drug abuse cannot be solely blamed on unsupervised youth; there is also a multitude of other factors including anxiety, uncertainty and anger towards the Coloured lived experience. These emotions are often drowned out by substance abuse.

The second threat which came up through the interview process is the damage the stereotypical Coloured male does to the space and autonomy the average Coloured male has. Anything other than the typical Coloured male - who can be toxic, quick to violence, unwelcoming at times - is shunned and considered un-Coloured. This has created a system where Coloured youth are forced to adapt to fit an unhealthy mould - afraid to be individuals in their own right. As a result, the spectrum of personalities, hobbies, skills and talents are being thwarted for a toxic cultural expression. This form of Colouredness is assumed to be the only form of Colouredness. It puts a lot of Coloured individuals in a difficult position to either adopt these cultural characteristics or to disassociate or strip themselves of what is defined as Coloured—a terrible position to be in.

### **Stigma the ‘Corner Boy’ Culture Holds**

From the observational process, an additional dimension to the community and their relation to the youth revealed itself. The youth occupy the streets out of necessity, not design. They were left to their own devices because their parents were either working or busy. Their homes were often spaces which they were not allowed to occupy; this was either a consequence of parents never being around, parents not wanting to clean up after their children, home spaces being too tight to facilitate youth or the possibility of a youths ‘daemon’ existing within their home. As a result, the youth were forced to adopt the streets as a learning and social space.

The consequences of this was the youth left to their own devices. This created a space where the youth experimented with drugs and alcohol – often resulting in dependency and abuse. The ‘corner boy’ has become synonymous with bad behaviour.

This common perception has created a parent who refuses for their children to use or occupy the streets. It has now created a community of youth who are locked away behind closed doors.

## Personal Observation:

*The youth nowadays occupying the streets are those from troubled homes, which very often are abusing drugs, or the older generation of youth who are on their way out of this timeless Coloured tradition.*

*The counter-culture intended to protect the youth against the ills of 'corner boy culture' has unfortunately created a disconnected community—a barren community which lacks a lot of the ethos and warmth experienced in yesteryear. The dead nature of the street has also left room for outside factors to come in, creating an increase in crime and other social ills. The community has become known as a crime hot spot. This has pushed members of the community further behind locked doors by fear.*

*Coloured communities have been created with a strong connection to the other. This connection was formed from young by the youth playing together on the street. They grew up with the lessons and values of know thy neighbour and value thy community. This ethos is what makes Coloured communities distinct. It unfortunately is slowly being eroded by the community's fear of the ills of 'corners boys' and the social ills of crime. Yes, there were problems which arose from the youth being left to their own devices, and it was not an ideal situation, but the upside was the formation of a strong united community. The solution needs to incorporate the benefits of connecting the youth to the community but in controlled, safe spaces which prevents the toxic culture from festering.*

*There is a need to help the youth who currently occupy the streets and who are plagued with social ills such as drug abuse, violent culture and stereotypical Coloured youth bravado but simultaneously there is also a need to reconnect the youth who have been locked behind closed doors to the community and each other.*

## **What could the Community do to help the Youth?**

The community could offer support, leadership and guidance. The community could step in whenever they see that there is a spike in drug abuse. Sit the youth down and talk to them about what is going on that is pushing them to abuse drugs. The community could act as a blanket that comes around the troubled youth and seek to help them find solutions to the issues they

are experiencing. This is a practice which is lacking. The community seem to complain and denigrate those who are drug users but never step in to offer aid.

Another issue is that a lot of the youth abused drugs because they were idle. If not a good football player, there was nothing to do. The youth felt that even if they were offered support and help to curb the drug abuse, what alternative could the community offer? There was no viable alternative other than football.

The community could also help expose the youth to more than they are currently. Help them understand what job prospects are available and explore what is beyond the boundary of Greenwood Park. This will encourage a worldly view and a level of growth.

The youth talk fondly of the few events other than football. Even within football, they would like more activities around the sport. The youth yearn for more events and exposure to outside teams and communities through sport.

The youth often speak fondly of mentorship. Most instances, it is connected to a football coach or a church leader. This shows the receptiveness the youth have towards mentorship.

### **The benefits of the youth having a voice in the community**

The youth could have changed the landscape of the community if they had a voice. They could have brought attention to the lack of opportunities and activities, to the lack of space offered, to the drug abuse, and they could have voiced their pain of feeling neglected and give voices to so many other nuanced issues the community could not see or were uninterested in seeing. By giving the youth a platform, issues could have been tackled from inception instead of being left to become the large intergenerational problems which plague youth culture.

### **The ideal space: Youth Inspired**

The local soccer club building a pub is an example of youth-orientated development, within Greenwood Park, making no attempt at changing the youth's current reality.

The youth shared a common theme of wanting an enclosed space attached to a sporting facility. They also spoke of the possibilities of creating amenities which are lacking in the community. This includes a space for sport, a meeting space, a creative space, a mentorship space and a guidance space.

- A space for sport included indoor sport (soccer, cricket and other forms of indoor sport) a gym (fitness was a common theme). Sport is important to Coloured youth. A lot of the youth see sport and fitness as synonymous with good clean fun. Any architectural intervention would therefore have to facilitate sporting activities which the youth want and be within proximity to local sporting establishments.
- A meeting space could include an enclosed coffee shop with pool tables and consoles for people to gather and relax in. The youth want a conducive space to relax which could encourage conversations that they do not feel the street in its current form is capable of facilitating.
- A creative space to include music facilities and performance areas for the arts. Coloured youth culture is tied to self-expression through the arts and music. An architectural intervention would need to house spaces which encourage creativity as a means for discovery.
- A mentorship and guidance space could have lines of connection to leadership in the community. These lines could help guide youth into career options and through whatever trials and tribulations they may face. These mentorship roles can be connections to sport, creative outlets, entrepreneurial advice or healing spaces. The process of connecting the youth to mentors will prevent the youth from having to reinvent the wheel.

The youth currently occupy spaces out of necessity, spaces which are stifling in nature, but there is a craving for something else.

The youth wish to have a safe space which allows them to meet like-minded people, a creative space where they can express themselves, a space which offers them events and activities to keep them occupied and a space which is strongly connected to the community.

Personal Observations:

*A reality which requires them to occupy the streets out of necessity. This is as a consequence of a poorly designed urban fabric which does not consider the human and places little to no value on public space. The result is barren communities which are incapable of facilitating anyone outside of the private home—a system which is actively destroying community life.*

*Coloured youth were placed into this system, in a state which some would describe as neglected: their parents were always too busy to occupy their time. This created an intergenerational system of the youth, leaving their homes to find a community and companionship. Due to a lack of public space, they were forced to use the street. This unsupervised, harsh space offered little stimulation and was not conducive to the development of a healthy culture. The symbiotic relationship humans share with space explains the toxic culture that we see today amongst youth who occupy un-human spaces like the streets.*

*The toxic relationship with space has had the unintended consequence of creating a generation of youth who are locked behind closed doors to protect them from the culture experienced on the street, further exacerbating the barren, isolated nature of communities.*

*Whether it be the corner boy or the youth locked behind a door, both sides are in spaces which are not capable of facilitating their ability to explore and commit to a healthy culture and identity and both parties have no autonomy or choice in what kind of space they wish to occupy. The obvious question would then be what the ideal space the youth would want to occupy?*

*A change in space would create the opportunity for a cultural change. A cultural change could result in a progressive association with Coloured youth culture. The status quo of sitting by the shop is heavily tied to the toxic stereotypical Coloured male culture and leaves no room for anything else to exist. This prevents any progress within the current spaces. A shift is, therefore required.*

Invaluable information was obtained through the interview process. Greenwood Park is an under-researched area; this dictates that information be gathered from the community itself. The collective voice of the community holds its history. Through interviews, this information can be revealed, and invaluable lessons which will fundamentally contribute to the design process were discovered.

# Chapter Eight

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## 8.1 Recommendations

The following are practical recommendations based on the body of research undertaken in this dissertation. These recommendations will inform the design of the proposed *integrated cultural youth centre in Greenwood Park, Durban*.

The primary and secondary research aimed to analyse all aspects of youth culture and identity, Coloured culture and identity, the process of youth empowerment which includes the concepts of mentorship and co-production, the understanding of youth placelessness and the understanding of youth architecture. This was necessary to understand the problem at hand and give insight into plausible architectural solutions. Through this body of research, key ideas can be extrapolated, which could help guide the design process. These fundamental ideas and recommendations are often responses to issues which have resulted in youth placelessness.

The key ideas and recommendations include:

- The youth are currently in a space where they are not respected and have no real sense of autonomy. A space should be created, which offers them a real sense of authentic power.
- The youth lack opportunity. A space is required, which allows the youth to dictate and create their own opportunities. This includes educational opportunities, recreational opportunities, occupational opportunities and financial opportunities.
- A youth-orientated space needs to be placed in a socially valuable space within the community. This, from the onset, offers the youth a sense of value and a voice within the community.
- The youth currently hold no social power and therefore are dictated to. This is a situation which is currently failing the youth. The youth require a place which allows them to make their own decisions. This includes the creation and formation of their own space.
- Authentic co-production is vital to the youth's ability to empower themselves.
- The streets which the youth occupy are unfit and not designed for human consumption. As a result, they have perpetuated the formation and maintenance of toxic youth culture. There is a need for a healthy psychosocial space which is capable of facilitating cultural and identity development.

- The street is currently the most equitable and democratic space within the city and is the key to the empowerment of the youth. The streets need to be reinvented to create youth-friendly spaces and a healthy environment.
- There is a lot of tension between the youth and the community. The community is currently in a position of power and offers the youth little to no space. If a state of equity can be created the youth and community can begin to learn about each other and grow together. The youth require a strong connection to the community on their journey to self-empowerment.
- The youth are currently thwarted within their community. Spaces are currently designed to control the youth into conformity. They are not offered any space to behave the way they wish or express themselves. There is a need to create a space which acts as an outlet and offers the youth the freedom to express themselves. The freedom to self-actualisation is fundamental in the development and maintenance of culture and identity. This is vital in the empowerment of the youth.
- In order for architecture to act as a vessel for change and growth, it is required to be flexible. There is a need to create a flexible space capable of facilitating the youth in any state of being. Flexibility helps create a connection between place and person.
- Coloured culture is hard to define. However, the collective agrees that there is something tangible. A space is required, which can facilitate this uncertainty and act as a vessel to guide the process of discovery.
- Architecture as an agent of empowerment is the process of creating as many points of opportunity for the potential growth of the youth.
- A youth safe environment includes a sense of ownership, freedom to be themselves, voice their opinions and try out new things.
- Youth architecture is required to place a lot of emphasis on visibility and openness
- Youth require a strong connection to the surrounding community (Mentorship). Further isolation exacerbates the issue.
- The youth require a space which is capable of generating an income. Buying power will garner social power and allow them to make autonomous decisions as a collective.
- Youth occupying the streets throughout the area dictates that an architectural intervention cannot exist solely on a particular site. There is a need for a satellite intervention that connects to the point at which the youth occupy the street. These micro-interventions will help connect the youth to the cultural youth centre.

- The proposed cultural centre is required to be capable of facilitating a broad spectrum of Coloured youth. Everyone should feel welcome and be able to find a space where they can link with like-minded people. The space, however, should be strategically designed to encourage chance encounters between different sectors in a safe, equitable manner. This will encourage a sense of collective and community.
- The focus of the architectural intervention is the youth; however, the space is required to be cognitive of the community which exists around it. The space has to offer some value to the community as a whole in order to prevent further tension and conflict.
- Youth spaces should include the design drivers of innovation, transparency, accessibility, collaboration and engagement.
- The youth require an alternative over the transient relationship they currently share with the streets. They require fixed, predictable space with longevity and a capacity for slow continuous conception over time.
- The centre needs to be built from local skills and knowledge. The building should be moulded from the hands of the community. This creates a connection between the youth and community and a sense of ownership which is invaluable.
- Static and dynamic spaces should be used to house prized activities as well as flexible spaces.
- The building is capable of using negative space strategically to create valuable extensions to the street.
- The building should be a low maintenance and affordable space for the youth to adopt and make their own.
- There is an urgent need for public space within the community. This will both benefit the youth and community as a whole. Public space will offer the youth space to be connected back into the fabric of the community.

## 8.2 Site Selection Guidelines

The site selection is one of the most important decisions in the design process. It is the start of the design process and dictates all parameters moving forward. Architecture has to be critical; therefore, the choice of site directly affects the outcome of design. The site selection must be informed and guided by the body of research; it cannot simply be a process which is undertaken haphazardously. The site is required to be in a space which directly connects to and is related to the issue at hand, youth placelessness. These are some of the informed guidelines which helped in the process of site selection:

- The site is required to be in a central location. The community of Greenwood Park is a reasonably small area roughly measuring 2.5 km in length and 0.6 km in width. This opens the opportunity for a centrally placed architectural intervention to be able to serve the community as a whole.
- The site needs to be placed on socially valued land. This is vital in the process of giving the youth a voice. The youth can not be tucked away in a corner; they need to be placed in a prominent central location
- The proposed cultural centre needs to be connected to the street which the youth currently occupy. It has the opportunity to re-imagine this democratic space.
- The youth need to be placed in a space which has the capability of reconnecting them back to the community. This implies some connection to a space where the community congregate.
- The site needs to be a healthy psychosocial space or capable of being converted into a healthy psychosocial space. Safety is, therefore, paramount. The site should be safe for the youth.
- The site should be accessible. It should be near public transport options and positioned in a way that is easy to access off the street.
- The site has to be capable of generating income.
- The architectural intervention to combat youth placelessness requires satellite interventions. The site, therefore, is required to be placed in a position where it can easily connect to these interventions
- Coloured youth place a lot of emphasis on fitness and sport, the site should be within proximity of a local field.

- The site should be well orientated, in a peaceful location, with lovely views and capable of creating a welcoming environment for the youth.

The site needs to respond to the needs of the community. It needs to be a space where the youth feel welcome. The site also needs to be positioned in a way which allows it to become a part of the youths' everyday life—integrating it into the broader community.

### 8.3 Conclusion

The dissertation set out to explore and understand youth placelessness experienced in the Coloured community of Greenwood Park. Through the process of exploration, the document interrogated issues around the youth, Colouredness, placelessness and ideas and examples around architectural interventions. The process was undertaken in the attempt to answer the question of *how can Coloured youth placelessness inform an architectural response?*

The research responded by providing a design proposal for an integrated cultural youth centre. This architectural intervention will provide a platform for the youth to empower themselves. Through empowerment, the youth can reach a state of self-actualisation. The centre should connect to the youth at different phases, namely work, learn and play. It will create supportive spaces to allow the youth to heal and grow while also offering holistic mentorship programmes. The project cannot be isolated to the site. The nature of 'corner boy' culture existing on the streets requires an intervention at the point which the youth occupy the street. Therefore, satellite interventions will be designed as a way to connect with the youth. The centre will be firmly based on the principle of built by the people and for the people. The youth will lead the process of creating a space capable of reimaging the status quo of placeless youth

The research demonstrates the importance of empowerment as a solution to combat the social ill of youth placelessness. It engaged with theories of culture and identity and concepts of co-production and mentorship. These theories and concepts were predicated on the overarching driving force of empowerment. It becomes a symbiotic system where one cannot exist without the other. Mentorship and co-production in a disenfranchised system turn into control and consultation. Culture in a state of survival tends to be toxic. Empowerment is required to give the youth the autonomy and power required to self-actualise.

Place is intrinsic to our culture and identity because it holds history and heritage and is strongly tied to our cultural/identity formation and maintenance. Place also ties us to the other and our surrounding community. If place formation is done well communities will thrive. The interconnected nature of place to our being could explain how the youth existing on the fringe of society (in unwanted and un-human spaces) could contribute to their current state of a toxic culture. If we define place and place defines us the streets in its current format is incapable of fostering any sense of autonomy or sense of belonging and value. Our social status is also defined by our perceived social hierarchy/value, and therefore, considering their current space,

the youth cannot view themselves to hold much value or power within the community. The logical consequence would then be a group of individuals who feel undervalued and unwanted within their community.

Space is tied to empowerment. It is made evident by the lack of autonomy and power the youth hold in their state of placeless-ness. Authentic power over space is required to act autonomously. The ability to have autonomy over oneself is required to develop and maintain a healthy culture/identity or to mend and reinvent an unhealthy or broken culture/identity. Youth are required to hold power in anything if it is to have any form of meaningful effect. Empowerment requires a healthy psychosocial environment which is capable of facilitating the youth to a state of self-actualisation.

The streets as a place were not a choice; they were the result of bad urban planning. The streets are a survival space which placeless youth currently find space within their communities. It however does not have to be this way. The streets ironically are the most democratic space within the city. They are critical to the empowerment of the youth. Architecture is required to articulate street space, transforming and incorporating it into public space.

The street has an uncanny ability to influence both architectures but also the collective of a community. Streets can be viewed as the pulse of the community. The way they behave is often mirrored by the way the community behaves. Streets hold value beyond thoroughfares; they hold the solution to thriving communities and are the source to a cultural shift. The streets are, therefore, the apparent place to initiate any form of cultural change to a community. This change will gradually bleed from the streets through the community

Precedent studies were subsequently selected to gain insight into world solutions and design drivers which architects have used in an attempt to combat the social ills associated with the problem of youth placeless-ness. Through the process of analysing precedents, an understanding of the real-world implications to proposed solutions can be better analysed. This is invaluable to the process of designing a proposed architectural intervention.

An in-depth case study of the community of Greenwood Park alongside interviews which were conducted on Coloured community members was undertaken. The process of interviews was vital in understanding the context of the issue. It is an issue that plagues a community and culture which is woefully under-researched. It is, therefore, through interviews that the researcher only started to get a comprehensive understanding of the issue within context.

Data was collected, analysed and discussed. This process resulted in several recommendations which are aimed at combating youth placelessness. The research points toward the need for a cultural youth centre which is co-produced by the youth, and can offer the youth a healthy psychosocial space which is equitably connected to the community. The space would be connected to the streets and is capable of facilitating the growth and maintenance of youth culture and identity.

A space of value would be created through the design of an integrated public space woven into the fabric of the street and community. Public space is something which is overlooked in South Africa. As a result, caste-like groups like the youth are forced to occupy inhumane spaces, such as the streets. The reclamation of the street and the creation of public space will be the breaking of a barrier required to foster a healthier youth and community as a whole. This is fundamental in the process of combating youth placelessness an issue which is currently affecting the Coloured youth of Greenwood Park.

# List of Figures

**Figure 1:** An artistic impression of a male from the Coloured youth community. The drawing shows how the youth own their culture proudly and refuse to conform.

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 2:** The Three-Factor Model: showing the concept of a dual cycle; which includes identity formation and identity maintenance cycles.

(Source: (Crocetti, 2017))

**Figure 3:** Humorously demonstrates poor urban planning

(Source: (Lindeke, 2017))

**Figure 4:** Birds eye view of a car first environment

(Source: (Robinson, 2015))

**Figure 5:** Artistic representation of the dangers of being a pedestrian in the city.

(Source: (Lindeke, 2017))

**Figure 6:** Pedestrians struggle to move through car first cities.

(Source: (Robinson, 2015))

**Figure 7:** Poor urban planning creates a unfavourable space for the humans.

(Source: (Lindeke, 2017))

**Figure 8:** An architect's vision of the ideal alternative.

(Source: (Attoe and Logan, 1992))

**Figure 9:** A common colonialist house built within Greenwood Park when it was designated as a white's only area.

(Source: (Radford, 1998))

**Figure 10:** Examples of floor layouts of colonial dwellings

(Source: (Radford, 1998))

**Figure 11:** Demonstrates, a global sameness shared in architecture.

(Source: (Agoba, 2020))

**Figure 12:** A facade disguised by token derivatives of ‘local’ architecture

(Source: (Trower, 2010))

**Figure 12:** A collage of Jean Nouvel’s work which is famous for using principles of connectivity, openness, accessibility, transparency, innovation and visibility.

(Source: (Michler, 2010, Bianchini, 2020))

**Figure 14:** Three different projects which were designed in collaboration with the youth. These buildings represent and demonstrate all the themes which the youth found valuable within architecture. Themes of a prominent presence, iconic design, and accessibility, in door outdoor spaces, connection to the street and the community, vibrant fun spaces and welcoming homely spaces.

(Source: (The Sorrell Foundation, 2010))

**Figure 15:** An edited image which demonstrates the relationship between the youth and the community versus the youth and the streets.

(Source: (Audibert, 2014))

**Figure 16:** Community being formed on the street.

(Source: (Thistle, 2019))

**Figure 17:** Community being formed on the street.

(Source: (Streetfilms, 2019))

**Figure 18:** Flow diagram of Woonerf street.

(Source: (Kerr, 2014))

**Figure 19:** Flow diagram and section of Woonerf street.

(Source: (Lupsa, 2020))

**Figure 20:** Architectural plan of Woonerf street.

(Source: (Thomas, 2014))

**Figure 21:** Dongzigian centre in context.

(Source: (Angelopoulou, 2018))

**Figure 22:** Commuter passing Dongziguan Villagers centre.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 23:** An aerial view of Dongziguan city with the villagers activity centre.

(Source: (Angelopoulou, 2018))

**Figure 24:** Urban figure ground of Dongziguan.

(Source: (archello, 2020a))

**Figure 25:** The new section of Dongziguan village.

(Source: (Zhejiang China, 2020))

**Figure 26:** The old section of Dongziguan Village.

(Source: (Xinhua, 2018))

**Figure 27:** The centre is integrated into daily life. Families and people across all ages pause in the space to catch up and touch base.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 28:** Diagram of the site in its surroundings.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 29:** Ground floor plan and the first floor plan.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 30:** Section demonstrating how the single roof unifies the dynamic space.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 31:** The roof offers value to both designated as well as in-between spaces. The open nature of the building is also captured.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 32:** The community has the ability to adapt the building to suit their needs.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 33:** The centre used for a community meeting. Creating empowering spaces which encourage co-production.

(Source: (ArchDaily, 2018))

**Figure 34:** A rendered image shows a birds-eye view of Game Streetmekka.

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 35:** The Locomotive shed in its original context.

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 36:** Artistic perspective of a bird's eye view of the layout of GAME Streetmekka

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 37:** Priority and value given to a previously shunned activity of skating.

(Source: (archello, 2020b))

**Figure 38:** The GAME Streetmekka in urban context.

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 39:** The informality of skating being formalised in a space it has always occupied.

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 40:** Diagram shows design drivers for Streetmekka

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 41:** Section through the building demonstrates the connection to the central 'street' and the use of levels to achieve interesting street scenery.

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 42:** Schematic conceptual development.

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 43:** A plan of GAME Streetmekka

(Source: (Stott, 2014))

**Figure 44:** Outreach Foundation in Context

(Source: (Local Studio, 2020b))

**Figure 45:** Satellite Image of the Outreach Foundation in Context

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 46:** The three different spaces present on site. 1. creative centre, 2. skills development space and 3. counselling space

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 47:** Children dancing in the dance studio. It also demonstrates the interconnected nature of the building both to the upper floor, through the double volume, as well as the community through the 12m long strip window.

(Source: (Local Studio, 2020b))

**Figure 48:** Schematic development of the centre

(Source: (Southwood, 2015))

**Figure 49:** Ground, First and Second Floor Plans.

(Source: (Southwood, 2015))

**Figure 50:** A section through the centre

(Source: (Southwood, 2015))

**Figure 51:** A internal street

(Source: (Southwood, 2015))

**Figure 52:** A central learning courtyard surrounded by classrooms as well as the roof greenhouse

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 53:** Skills development in the form of a bricklaying workshop

(Source: (Outreach Foundation, 2019))

**Figure 54:** A standard adaptable classroom under renovation

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 55:** Demonstrates the translucent nature of the counselling centre. It mirrors a cocoon

(Source: (Local Studio, 2020a))

**Figure 56:** Ground floor plan

(Source: (Local Studio, 2020a))

**Figure 57:** First floor plan

(Source: (Local Studio, 2020a))

**Figure 58:** Section through the healing centre

(Source: (Local Studio, 2020a))

**Figure 59:** The buildings wraps around a solid brick base, mimicking a cocoon

(Source: (Local Studio, 2020a))

**Figure 60:** Locality map of Durban in South Africa

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 61:** Locality map of Greenwood Park in Durban

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 62:** Road networks around site

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 63:** Diagram shows all primary pedestrian, vehicular and train routes in Greenwood Park

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 64:** Diagram shows the zoning surrounding Greenwood Park

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 65:** Wooden iron houses within Greenwood Park

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 66:** Wooden iron houses which have morphed and evolved over the years

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 67:** Typical street edge found in Greenwood Park

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 68:** Landscape of Greenwood Park

(Source: (Maxar Technologies, 2020))

**Figure 69:** Figure shows the contour lines of Greenwood Park

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 70:** Amenities found within Greenwood Park

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 71:** A artistic sketch showing a group of Coloured Youth posing for a photo while occupying a cul-de-sac. The image perfectly captures Coloured youth bravado culture

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 72:** A iconic image of a corner boy perched on his haunches

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 73:** A gathering of corner boys on a typical Saturday around Midday

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 74:** Placeless youth points throughout the area of Greenwood Park

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 75:** Plan of Clyde Road

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 76:** View of Clyde Road

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 77:** Plan of Firwood Road parking lot

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 78:** View of Firwood Road parking lot

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 79:** Plan of Ardrossan Road

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 80:** View of Ardrossan Road

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 81:** Plan of Top of the Rock shopping complex

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 82:** View of Top of the Rock shopping complex

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 83:** Plan of Sky Lane

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 84:** View of Sky Lane

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 85:** Plan of Havelock Convenience Store & Havelock Grounds

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 86:** View of Havelock Convenience Store

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 87:** View of Havelock Grounds

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 88:** Plan of Cheron Road

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 89:** View of Cheron Road

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 90:** Plan of Bawden Place

(Source: (eThekweni Municipality, 2020))

**Figure 91:** View of Bawden Place

(Source: (Author, 2020))

**Figure 92:** Shows Studio 849 in its prime

(Source: (Moodley, 2017))

**Figure 93:** Collage showing the classes held at the Studio

(Source: (Moodley, 2017))

**Figure 94:** Effingham bridge painting. One of the community uplifting projects Studio 849 did in their two and a half years which is still visible up until today

(Source: (Author, 2020))

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# Appendix

## Appendix A:

### Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

To whom it may concern

My name is Carl Hartley from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Architecture department. I am currently doing my Masters in Architecture and the projects falls under the requirements for the course. The dissertation is under the supervision of Dr Silvia Bodei.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research into youth placelessness which exists in coloured communities, focus being on Greenwood Park. The aim and purpose of this research is to look at how identity and culture can be used as a driver to empower the youth and inform architecture. The study is expected to communicate with the youth, individuals whom engage with the youth such as religious leaders and sports coaches and architectural professionals. Your involvement will involve an interview which will engage with the topic to help create a deeper understanding. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be a single interview which should take no longer than 30 minutes to 2 hours. The study will not involve any anticipated risks. The study will provide no direct benefits to participants. The study will hopefully start a conversation about the state and role of the youth in coloured communities and about coloured culture and identity in general.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC/00000054/2019).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at Carl Hartley: Cell: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]

or

the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION  
Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building Private Bag X 54001 Durban

4000 KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation is completely voluntary. You can choose to decline to answer any of the interview questions, including after you have answered the question if you wish the information to be discarded. You may also choose to end the interview at any time and remove yourself from the study without any consequences.

Any information you provide will be completely confidential. Your name will not appear or be used in any written report or in this dissertation. With your consent the data for this project will be stored for three years in my supervisors locked office at Howard collage in a locked cabinet. Your information will be cleared of all ties to you including your name before it is stored for the three year period. Only my supervisor may have access to this information.

## Appendix B:

### CONSENT:

I .....

have been informed about the study entitled: Culture and Identity formation as an architectural design driver; an attempt to empower placeless youth in coloured communities by Carl Hartley.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any consequences.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at:

██████████

████████████████████

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview YES / NO

Have a hand written record of the interview YES / NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant                      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness                      Date

(Where applicable)

## Appendix C

### Interview Schedule:

#### Current or previous placeless youth:

1. Would you like to give a short description of yourself; Age, interest's hobbies etc?
2. Do you identify as coloured, why?
3. What does it mean to you to be coloured and how do you explain your culture, why?
4. Where do you spend most of your time, why?
5. Where do you feel most comfortable in your community, why?
6. Where do you feel most uncomfortable in your community, why?
7. What and where do you have fond memories growing up in the community, why?
8. Do you feel like you have a place/belong in this community?
9. What would you like to see in your community, why?
10. What do you think is lacking in your community, why?
11. What would you like to change in the community, why?
12. Do you feel like the community could help you more?
13. Do you feel like you have power within this community? Why?
14. Where do you feel like you have power in this community?
15. What could change for you to feel like you have more of a say/ power within the community?
16. What would be your dream space to go to and be with friends or alone?
17. What would you like to happen within this space?
18. Where would you want this space?
19. How would you describe Greenwood Park?
20. What makes Greenwood Park different from other communities?
21. What do Coloured people and coloured youth have that is unique to offer to the world