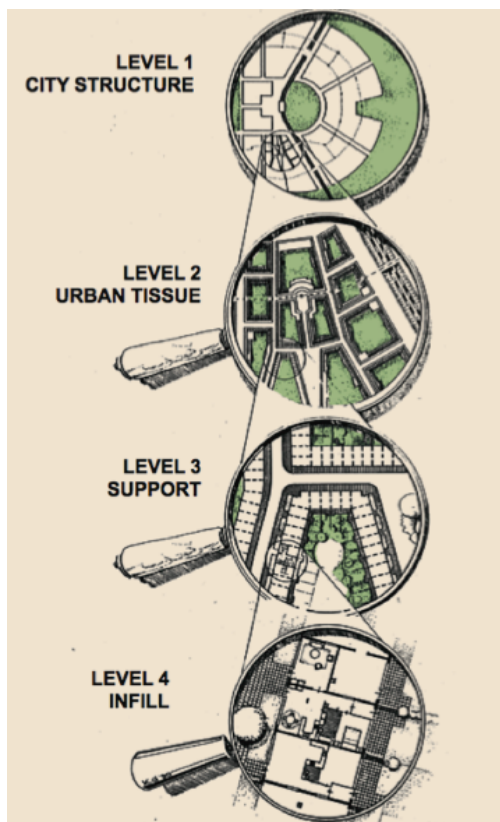


EXPLORATIONS IN URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE: MULTI-LAYERED, MIXED NEIGHBOURHOODS IN NEWTOWN, JOHANNESBURG

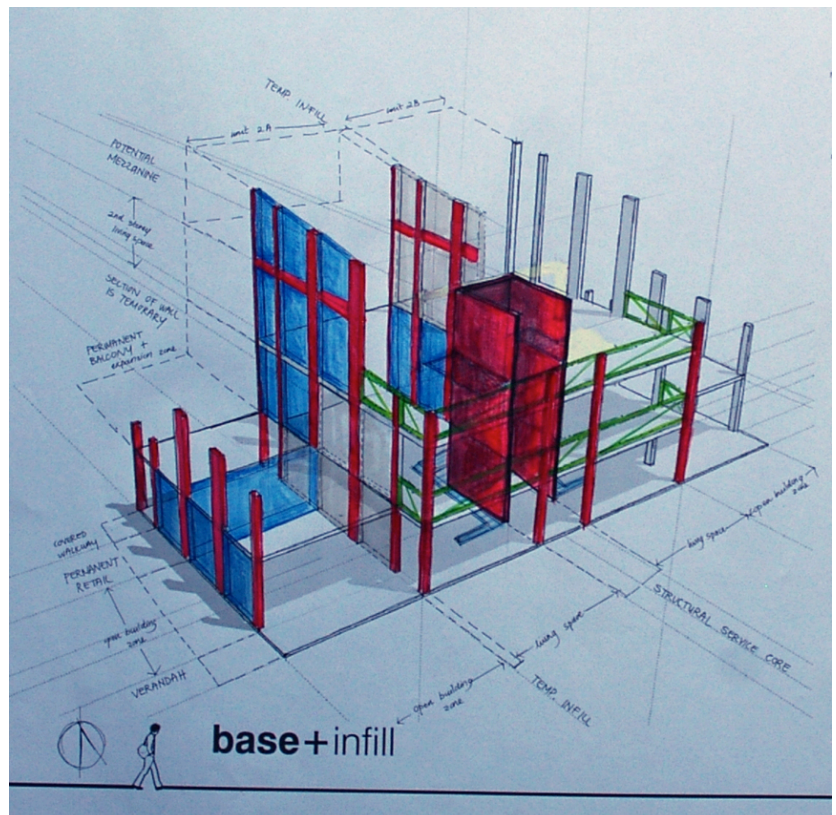
Unit Leaders: Amira Osman, Jhono Bennett & Tariq Toffa

Project Leaders: Amira Osman, Jhono Bennett & Tariq Toffa

“When is urban design architecture? When is architecture urban design?” Tariq Toffa



Frans Van Der Werf THE NETHERLANDS



Elana Van Der Walt HUE 2007 PRETORIA

NEWTOWN, JOHANNESBURG AND THE POTENTIAL FOR MIXED DEVELOPMENTS

Newtown is a potentially unique post-apartheid space. It is a site ideal for exploring a post-apartheid imagination of societal transformation. Put differently, it is a site ideally suited for mixed income, mixed-race, mixed program, & ultimately new ways of being & living in South Africa. This is because it is the only Johannesburg urban area located between South African Indian & immigrant South Asians (Fordsburg, Mayfair, Crosby, etc.) to its west, the largely white suburbs to its north, & the black & African immigrant inner city areas to its east. Moreover, the racial categories also parallel diverse linguistic & economic categories. Adrian Firth's maps of this from SA census data (<http://adrianfrith.com/>) demonstrate this diversity.

Secondly, added to this 'socio-economic infrastructure' of the post-apartheid imaginative kind, is the harder infrastructure, of railway lines to the north, highways cutting through and the mining belt to the south.

Thirdly, there are also the dramatic changes of fabric & programme in the area (residential, malls, industrial, cultural, public space, inner city fabric, etc).

So it's really a place of potentially incredible diversity, with many impacting factors – and thus plenty of scope for exploring the negotiations of different role players, interest groups & power structures.



THE ASSIGNMENT AND PROCESS

This assignment aims to achieve in depth understanding of the section of Johannesburg shown in the above map through a whole group exercise for the M Tech 1 students (Tuesday 24th – Wednesday 25th February). We will meet in Newtown on Wednesday afternoon (time and venue will be communicated). The group will report back to the unit coordinators and the defined area will be discussed and divided into smaller “segments”.

The M Tech 1 students will be split into smaller groups who will then embark on a more detailed analysis of an assigned section of the overall area (Thursday 26th – Friday 27th February). The student groups will have one week to develop an urban design framework during the period Monday 2nd March – Thursday 5th March. These frameworks are to be presented as part of your overall outputs for the cross-unit reviews on Friday the 6th February.

Each student is then tasked to identify an intervention within the group framework to tackle at an architectural level. This may be a gap in the city fabric or within the existing fabric and infrastructures of the study area. This intervention will be a mixed-use development and the individual students must conceptualise the programme to respond to both the contextual conditions as well as the urban design framework of the student team aiming to achieve a mix of incomes, functions and lifestyles.

This is an excellent exercise in Open Building thinking where the students are asked to think of the various levels of decision making in the urban context and to respect the higher level decision conditions when making decisions at a lower level.

All students are asked to read Habraken’s “The Structure of the Ordinary” which will be discussed in the studio and you must have completed the book by the end of the assignment.

THE URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS & FRAMEWORK

Each group of students is asked to design an urban design framework in response to the four sites (A, B, C, D) assigned as a segment of the overall defined area of study. Urban design deals with the grouping of buildings, spaces and people towards the achievement of functioning, beautiful, sustainable, accessible and human(e) places.

In your group projects you must consider the following:

- You are required to undergo an in-depth study of the site, mapping and documenting the various factors that make the urban environment (movement, activity, energy, nodes, edges, street sections, height analysis, shadow analysis e.t.c). This may be supported by various subjective observations & findings (video, social media, poetry e.t.c). You are asked to pay particular attention to levels of the built environment as well as to detect the methods of negotiation that happen in the area – as well as how that negotiation is facilitated (or

maybe in some places, hindered) by the spatial and structural qualities of the area. Also note the lower levels of the environment which are under the direct control of groups or individuals. In addition to the other qualities of the site/s, you will be asked to comment on this particular aspect with a view to better understanding the concepts of levels and agency.

- As a group, you are to achieve a mix of activities in the selected section of the site, further enhancing or adding to the existing uses captured in the mapping exercise. This mix also implies that your sites will cater for a large proportion of residential options addressing the diverse needs of different income groups, lifestyles, family structures and cultural differences.
- As far as the time will allow, the groups are asked to study current residential densities and coverage – aiming to achieve high densities and a wide range of residential opportunities in the frameworks. Check resources dealing with urban renewal in Johannesburg and densities.
- Consider the edge conditions, connectors, nodes, massing and spatial qualities in the development of the framework. Negotiate with the other groups in this process.
- The scale of your urban design will be 1:500 – at this scale you should be able to consider outdoor spaces and street condition and characteristics, courtyards, parks, building zones, squares, social/cultural amenities, educational and health amenities.
- The frameworks should set guidelines for the group in terms of densities, heights, massing to enable the students to work within these parameters for their individual architectural design interventions.

Once the urban frameworks are completed, they will be presented as preliminary submissions on the 6th March 2015 as part of the cross-unit exhibition and reviews. The frameworks are to be presented on the same size paper across groups A, B, C, D (this is to be negotiated among yourselves and with the lecturers) – the submissions will be 4 sheets (one per group) and as a model (one per group), which you will present next to each other and as a complete set so the development of the overall study area is considered together.

The drawing and model specifications will be negotiated between the groups so there is an exact “fit” once they are presented together.

The frameworks will also be presented in 3D computer models showcasing the spatial and massing characteristics of the design. The final frameworks will be submitted as part of your complete projects at the end of the quarter.

THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTIONS AT ARCHITECTURAL LEVEL

From these urban design frameworks, each student is asked to consider a site of intervention responding to the analysis of the previous exercise and within the parameters defined by the group frameworks. Your intervention will cater for diverse needs (including special access needs), a variety of tenure options as well as affordability levels, general access considerations (vehicles and pedestrian) and residential types. Your intervention will also focus on building, landscape, interior depending on what it is and the needs of the context into which it is inserted. The students will therefore be asked to explain the rationale behind decisions related to programming – however, remember that an intervention based on Open Building principles would not be strictly tied down to function!

Please broaden your interpretation of Open Building – Open Thinking, Open Design, Open City? Permanent/Temporary, Long Life/Short Life, Higher Level/Lower Level, Shared/Individual, Entangled/Disentangled, Interconnected/Independent, Control/Chance, Planned/Unplanned? Again, this relates strongly to facilitating increased agency in the built environment. This concept will be discussed further in the studio.

Each student will tackle the project at an architectural scale of 1:100. At this scale, the projects will show spatial and formal design elements and will reflect an understanding of supports versus infill, vertical and horizontal spatial elements as well as an understanding for service systems, vertical and horizontal circulation systems. These individual projects will be presented on A1 sheets. A model will also be presented by the groups (A, B, C, D) showing where the intervention is inserted and its relationship to the other interventions.

THE PROJECT REVIEWS, SUBMISSIONS AND FINAL ASSESSMENTS

As mentioned previously, the group urban design frameworks will be exhibited at the cross-unit reviews as part of your overall portfolio of work so far. The groups will also be required to present the work to Architect/Urban Designer Marianne de Klerk who will do a thorough review of the urban design frameworks on Monday the 9th March 2015. At this second review you will be asked to identify your site selection for the individual projects for discussion. The date for the complete project presentation, with its various components, for assessment will be communicated at a later date, and in negotiation with the students.