

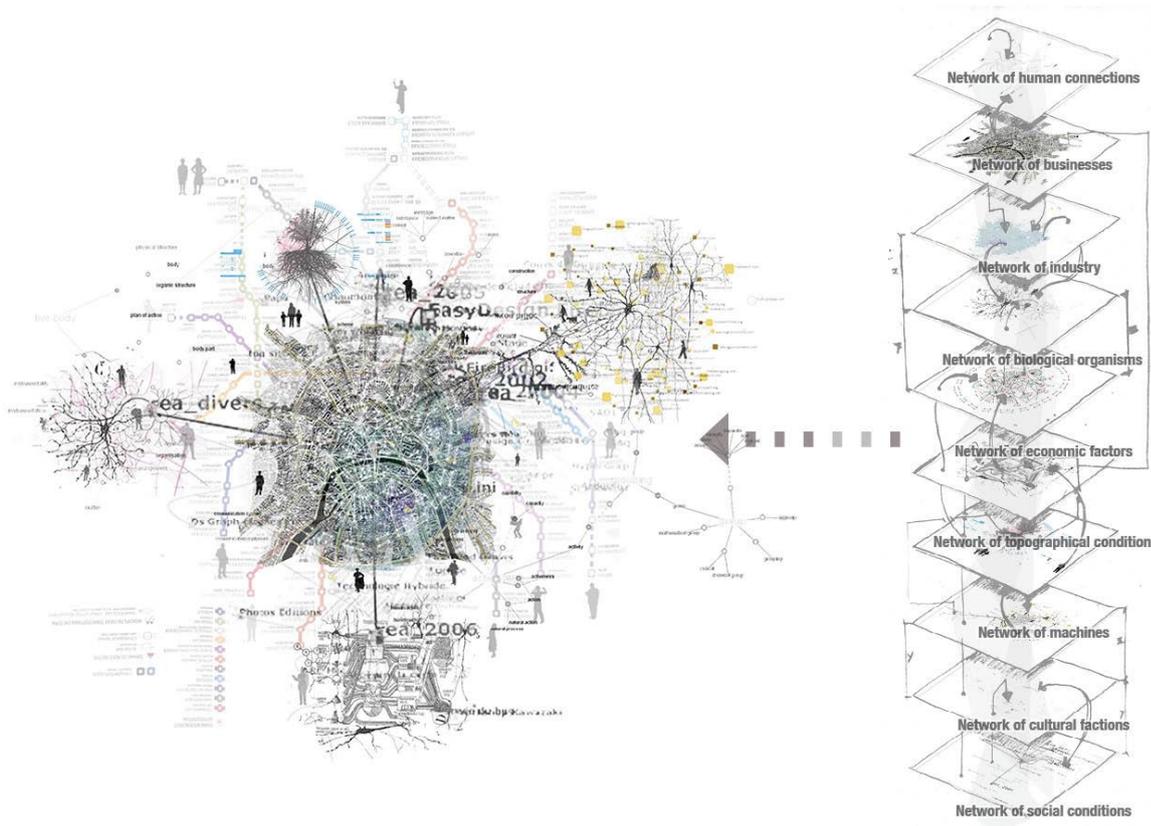
UNIT 2 – Quarter 1

NEIGHBOURHOOD IMMERSION

Unit Leaders: Amira Osman, Jhono Bennett & Tariq Toffa

Project Leader: Jhono Bennett

“Start where the system is. Have empathy with the system and the people in it, particularly as it will not like being ‘diagnosed’.” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005)



COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURHOOD NETWORK?

Our national development strategies & policies regularly make reference to community driven development, participatory practices and the inclusion of grass roots initiatives in governance actions – but these themes rarely manifest in the implementation of built environment projects.

A contributing factor to this non-alignment between the intentions embedded in policy and practice is the misunderstanding of ‘community’ – this term is often used to collectively describe groups of people who simply share space and nothing else.

“Architectural history traditionally deals with individual buildings. Yet beyond that, building has many times been about the creation of neighbourhoods, where the community is the basic “architectural” unit, the daily face-to-face social networks and patterns of interaction ultimately defining the settlement. Thus, many urban settings are perceived as a “collective” rather than an “individual” form of expression.” (Osman, 2014, archhdotcom blog).

In order to understand the complexity of people in space, we as spatial design practitioners, need to engage more critically with this term and employ interdisciplinary thinking to encourage a better understanding of those we serve through our professional skills as people first, then as practitioners.

THE PROCESS

Your objective is to challenge the notion of 'community' and develop your own understanding of this term employing tools and methodologies to engage, capture and represent the complex network of relationships to people and space that make up a neighbourhood of Jeppestown; using Bjala Square as your epicentre.

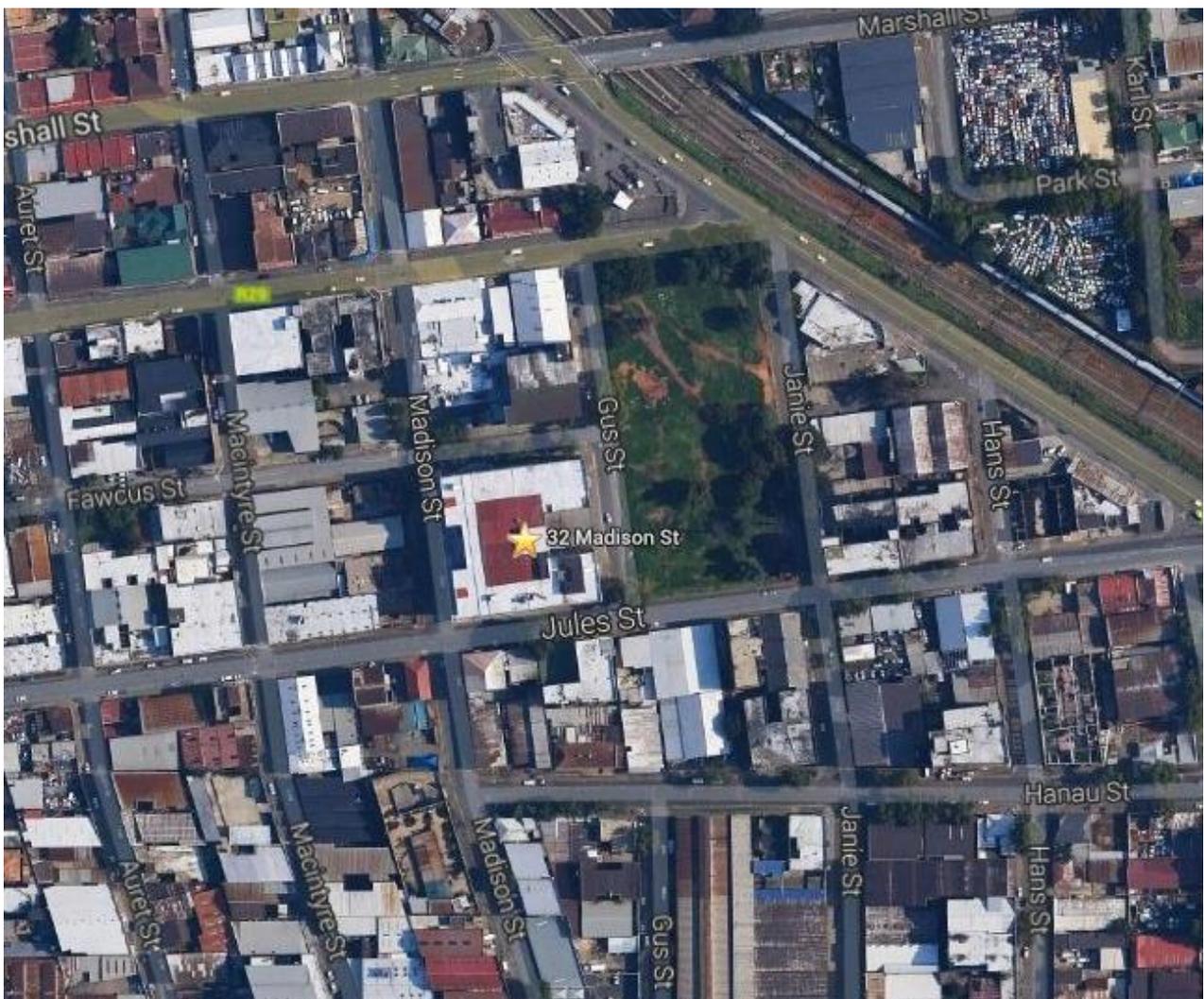
To explore the nature of what "community" may mean, you will spend a week working in a small scale neighbourhood in Johannesburg's inner city. Here you will be guided to employ several tools and methodologies to observe, map and document the people, spaces, networks, systems that characterise this complex neighbourhood ecosystem.

You will receive support from the unit leaders and given several resources to employ, but there is an underlying intention to develop new, unique tools for spatial research and representation that can be employed in later projects and different sites and contexts.

THE TASK

The findings of this investigation will be presented in a manner that communicates effectively and clearly to the immediate stakeholders (neighbourhood residents, retail agents & governance structures). This will be done on the Final Day of the exercise (Friday the 13th of February)

More creative and contemporary forms of representation beyond 2D graphics are encouraged such as film, poetry, performance, digital media (apps), installation, sculpture etc.



OUTCOMES

As a student of Architecture, or Architect, in South Africa you make up less than 0.05% of this country's population. This sits in contrast to the large proportion of stakeholders within the built environment, to which you will be expected to engage with during your career. The majority people you will work with and for will not have had a high school education and overwhelmingly larger percentage that will have no tertiary education, let alone a design background. As a result, the tools, language and graphic communication skills you will develop need to speak to a much wider audience than your fellow designers.

This exercise aims to expose you to contexts that you may not be familiar with. You are asked to interpret, represent, and then assimilate an understanding of an unfamiliar context. During this task we will begin to expose you to co-develop tools, methodologies and processes that will guide you in this unit, and hopefully beyond to assist in effective design decision-making, in order to ultimately generate more contextually-driven and appropriate design strategies for future projects.

We are here to expand these tools to reach a larger context. The development of these skills extends beyond social projects and has deep roots in the core of Architecture as a mediatory and critical profession in South Africa. The development of these observation and documentation techniques needs to be well-refined and will assist you greatly in later assignments of UNIT2 2015. Each assignment of UNIT2 links with later assignments and the intention is to build a solid portfolio of work by the end of the year.

SCHEDULE

- DAY 1 – Landing & Observation
- DAY 2 – Question Development + Investigation & Gathering
- DAY 3 – Investigation & Gathering Continued
- DAY 4 – Representation Development
- DAY 5 – Representation & Presentation

RESOURCES

- Not No Place** - Bettina Malcomess & Dorethea Kreutzfeldt
- Desire Lines** - Noeleen Murray et al
- Spatial Agency** - Schneider, Till, et al
- Counter Currents** - Edgar Pieterse et al
- Design for the Real World** - Victor Papanek
- A Place Maker's Guide** - Nabeel Hamdi
- Small Change** - Hamdi
- Writing the City into Being** - Lindsey Bremmer
- Ivan Valdisavic** - Exploded View/Portrait with Keys
- Learning from Cairo: global perspective, future vision** – Stryker, Nagati, Mostafa
- Learning from Nairobi: mobility** – Heidkamp, Stihl, Hossfeld, Mapunga

<http://www.sociotechnicalspatialdesign.wordpress.com/>

[http:// www.ideo.com](http://www.ideo.com)

<http://www.designkit.org/>

<http://fixperts.org/>

<http://www.spatialagency.net>

<http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/resources/useful-downloads/WallChart.pdf>

<http://dsgnagnc.com>

<http://www.gcro.ac.za/>

<http://1to1.org.za/links/>

<http://uj-unit2.co.za/>

<http://torredavid.com/>

<http://aet.org.za/>

<http://www.labprofab.com/en>

“...how seven different stories of a bus stop, two pickle jars, a barber shop, a fish run, a delivery fleet, a sharing waterpipe and a recycling waste center intertwine and evolve into wider schemes that sustainably scale-up and transform the city.” – Nabeel Hamdi; Small Change