



artefacts of persistence

building community resilience and a sense of belonging through small-scale interventions



the project team



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**our role as architects is to be immersed in the context,
working with our particular skill-set within a network of
actors, both human and non-human,**



disclaimer

This is a project based in our personal experiences.
It has been shaped by our encounters with other
people and their stories.

Focusing on qualitative methods of mapping, rather
than quantitative, we believe that a more sensitive
and complex understanding emerges.

Keep this in mind as you read through this report.

The work that we are presenting is intended to be
used as a pre-study for further development. Together
with the attached appendices it can be the foundation
for continued engagement in the settlement that we
have worked with, either by the NGOs, university
students, or the community itself. We also believe
that the methods that we have used can be applied in
other situations and the report can therefore also be
used as a tool for engagement in other contexts.

key concepts

informality:

Not being in accord with prescribed regulations or forms. In human settlements it encompasses non formal processes regarding economic, social, legal, cultural and political fields, leading to precarious living conditions and to be perceived as illegal.

community:

A group of people containing a various number stakeholders, living in the same locality and sharing the same leadership under the influence of a complex web of power dynamics.

participation:

The involvement of people and organizations in making decisions and taking action. In this context participation has been interpreted in two broad ways. Firstly, as means to improve development activities (instrumental participation) and secondly, to ensure people's influencing of their own situation acts as empowerment (transformational participation).

safety / security:

The perception of being in no risk or danger, experiencing freedom of residing in an area without feeling vulnerable to be harmed, evicted or kept away from one's rights.

resilience:

The ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change; robustness against shocks. The capacity to respond to adversity and adapt to change, hopefully, creating stronger endurance by learning from past experiences, situations and mistakes.

sense of belonging:

the feeling of being part of something, to be affiliated to a place and/or be accepted and supported by members of a group. It is an intrinsic social need to be accepted, included and represented.

place identity:

Group of ideas about place and its local urban character. The term concerns the meaning and significance of places for their inhabitants and users, and how these meanings contribute to individuals' conceptualizations of self.

mobilization:

The act of organizing and assembling a group of people (usually a vulnerable community) to take action toward a specific goal by legal means, activism or social demands. It comprehends persistent acts of resistance to stand up against social injustice or to demand the fulfilment of basic human rights.

in situ upgrading:

The Upgrading Informal Settlement Program (UISP) focuses on the in situ upgrading as an approach that entails developing the existing informal settlement, by gradually extending to the residents, land tenure, infrastructure and, social services, such as water, sanitation and electricity without relocating the community.

qualitative mapping:

In this project, the qualitative mapping includes the capturing and documenting experiences, perceptions, conversations and impressions in a written and graphical way on a map or diagram to better understand and understand a complex context.

quantitative mapping:

As opposed to the qualitative mapping, the traditional quantitative mapping focuses on visualizing and localizing on a map, information that can be counted, categorized, measured and compared in numerical terms.

small scale interventions:

Use of low-cost spatial artefacts, temporary changes or very specific enhancements that could improve the settlement's conditions and sense of belonging through local knowledge and resources.

spatial artefacts:

The spatial artefacts are non-human actants that work in the intersection between the social and the physical space. They aim to create a stronger sense of belonging and place identity.

*the key concepts have been adapted and added to from the report *Korogocho Streetscapes - documenting the role and potentials of streets in citywide slum upgrading* (2012).

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introduction / background

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timeline

The timeline looks back at the historical events that has led up to the current state, outlines the scope of our work, and proposes what the future might look like.

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stakeholders

A look at the different people and organisations active in the context, outlining the most important ones for the project and how they interact.

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method

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process

Outlining the project through the objective, research questions, and purpose. Showing the ways that the previously presented methods were used during the field studies.

design

This section presents the design output of the project, a series of small-scale interventions that holds potential to catalyze change.

reflection

Summarizing our personal reflections and learning after having completed this report, along with questions to take further.

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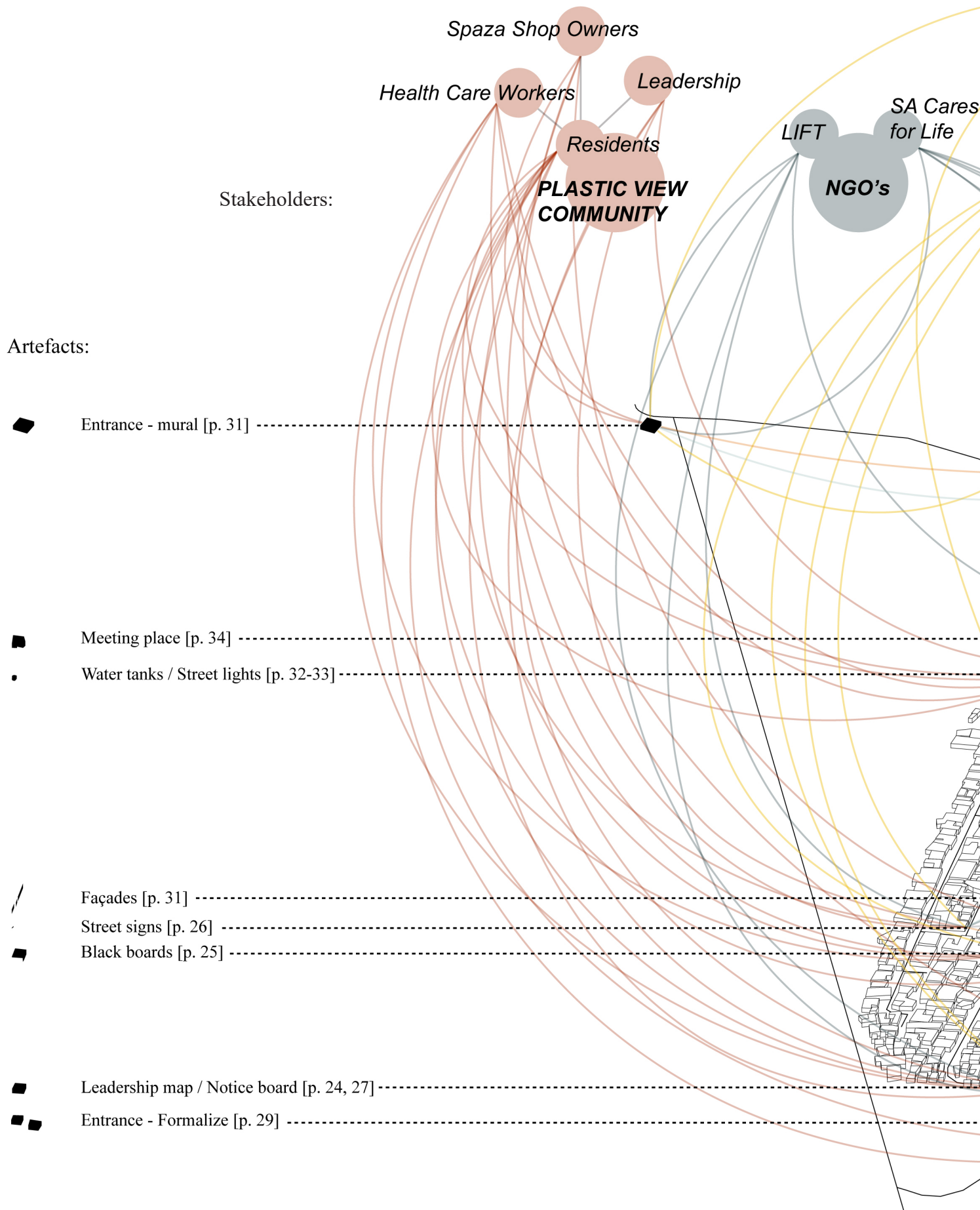
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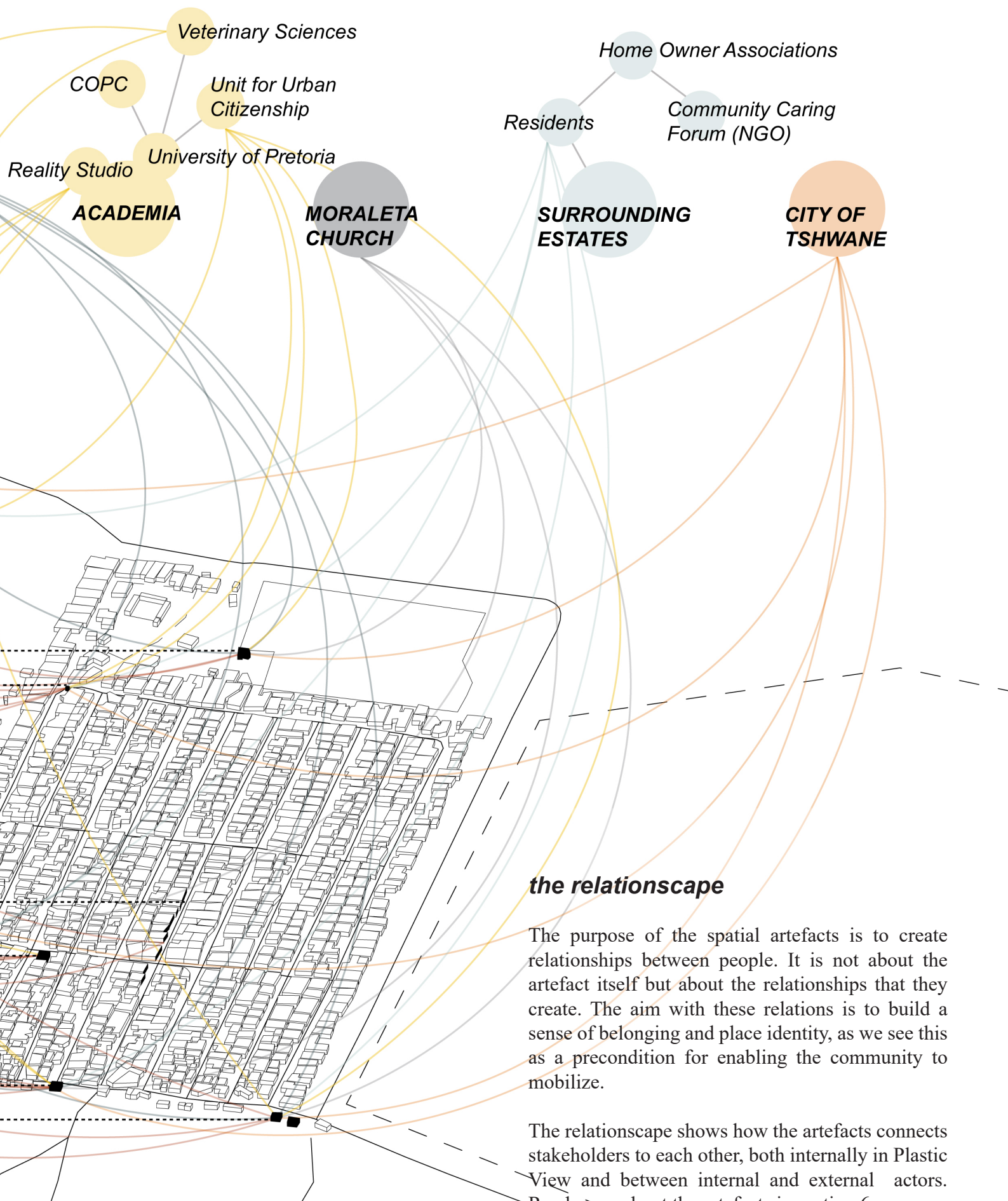


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HYPER-LOCAL



NON-LOCAL →



introduction to the report

This report will explore the role and potential of place identity and sense of belonging as an important factor in building a strong community.

It focuses on the experiences and perceptions of the residents in Plastic View regarding their interactions within the settlement, but especially to external stakeholders. In informal contexts, like the one we have worked in this semester, our basic understanding is that the state of impermanence and uncertainty creates a negative cycle where lack of hope in the future leads to lack of action towards changing that future.

We asked ourselves how we, as architecture students, can initiate a higher level of participation amongst the residents of Plastic View. How can the feeling of hopelessness turn into hope in an environment, where many residents are not given the right to make their voices heard and are not taken proper care of by the South African government?

The attachment of the residents to their community highly affects the resident's motivation to participate in uplifting the neighbourhood. This is why we think it is important to connect the stakeholders within the Plastic View community and shift the power dynamics when external stakeholders like the NGOs or the municipality get involved.

Throughout the six weeks we spend in Pretoria, we have changed our approach several times; moving our focus from communication in general to information flows to power dynamics and how to shift balance by creating a stronger sense of community.

Despite the many potential directions this project could take, in this report we want to focus on the following question:

How can the collective making and design of spatial artefacts act as a catalyzt for change?



*Border between Plastic View and the church ground
drone footage by the Unit for Urban Citizenship, UP*



*From field studies in Plastic View, Pretoria, SA
photo taken by the project team*

connection to UN SDGs



The project addresses Goals 5 (specifically target 5.5) through the engagement with the community leadership, which to a large extent consist of women. During the COVID-19 pandemic women have played a critical role in the response, as health care workers and care givers (United Nations 2021). This is true in Plastic View, and by working with women in leadership positions the project aims to advance their role and voice.



The project addresses Goal 10 (specifically target 10.2) through the engagement with the community leadership and the work to map the organizational structure of Plastic View, with the aim to visualize and represent it so that it can be understood and appreciated by external bodies. The inequalities adversely affecting the inhabitants of Plastic View has been more present than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected vulnerable people and communities hardest (United Nations 2021).



The project addresses Goal 16 (specifically target 16.3, 16.7, and 16.10) through its long-term objective to enable community mobilization, and through the focus on participation as a design principle. As stated above the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed existing inequalities, with increasing violence against vulnerable groups, such as women and children (United Nations 2021).

the child perspective

Play is a way to leave a mark and to take up space, and in Plastic View this happens everywhere, all the time.

Connecting specifically to article 8, 12, 13, and 31 in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the project touches on what it means to have dedicated spaces for play and what the role of making and self-expression has when it comes to creating a sense of belonging and place identity. The aim is to reflect on what it means to be a child growing up in an informal settlement.

As a way of visualizing this, we have made a film, that explores, what the state of impermanence creates in terms of lack of stability, security, and ownership. Recognizing children as a specifically vulnerable group, but also as a group that hold potential to change the future of Plastic View, we consider how allowed to express thoughts and ideas through art, culture and play can play a role in children's sense of entitlement and ability to act. What does it mean to leave a mark?



Link to the film: <https://youtu.be/HiQXSa7O91M>

*From field studies in Plastic View, Pretoria, SA
photos taken by the project team*

the context

introduction to South Africa

South Africa praises itself as one of the most diverse countries, famously called the “Rainbow Nation” by Nelson Mandela. It is home to around 57 million people (South African Government 2022), with approx. 68% of South Africans living in urban areas (VACorps 2022). This number is constantly growing as people migrate from rural areas and adjacent countries to the cities in search of opportunities.

South Africa has the second largest economy in Africa (Nigeria has the largest), and the 41st largest in the world, but the money is distributed unfairly (NaijaQuest 2022). In addition, South Africa is the most unequal country (Scott 2019). Wealth is very much defined by racial groups, with White and Indian South Africans experiencing the highest levels of income, and Coloured and Black South Africans bearing the brunt of unemployment and poverty. This is the outcome of centuries of racial discrimination and segregation of the Apartheid-era government.

The 1913 and 1936 Apartheid Land Acts confined all non-white South Africans to 13% of the country’s surface area (South African History Online 2019). Only for work and with a permit were non-whites allowed to enter the “white areas”. After the end of apartheid in May 1994 black and coloured South Africans were free to move (South African Government 2022). With increased freedom, city expansion and inner-city decentralisation, many non-white South African residents chose to relocate to areas closer to job opportunities, but the segregation is still visible, due to different socio-economical possibilities.

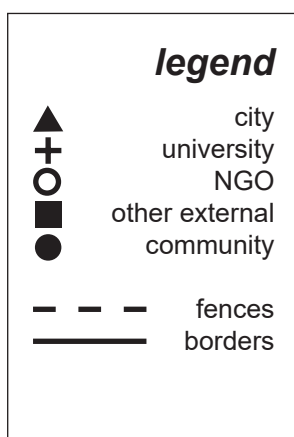
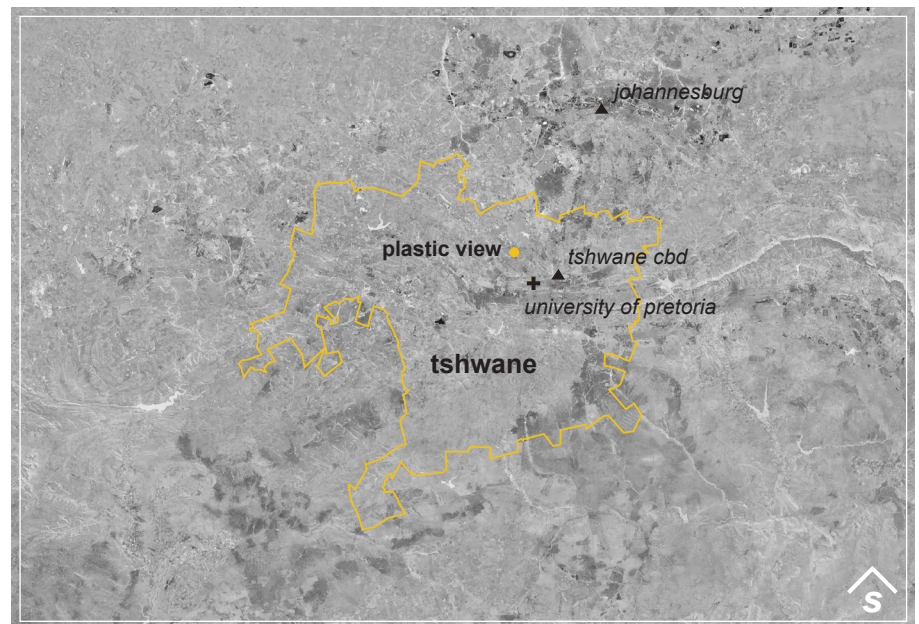
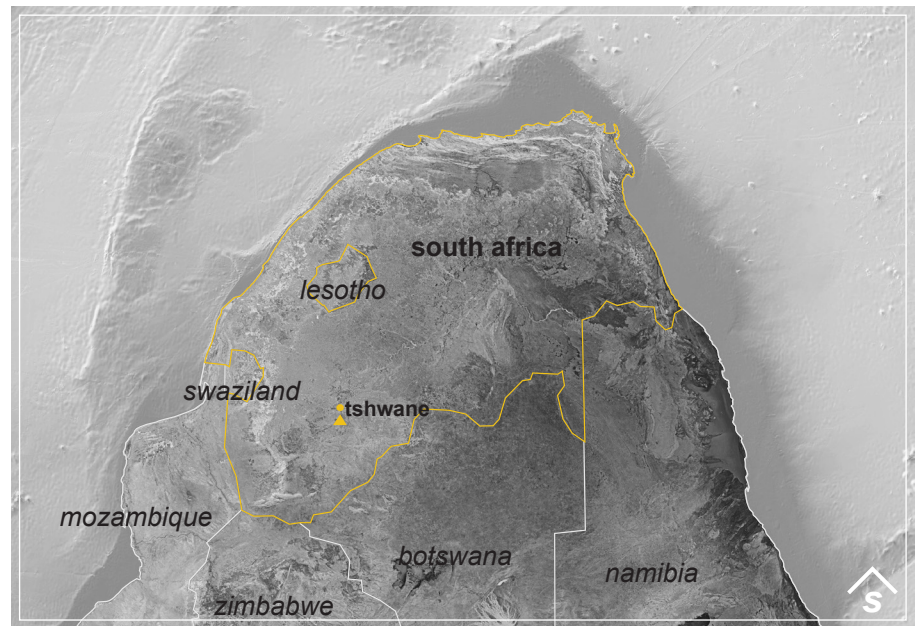
introduction to Plastic View

Plastic View is an informal settlement in Moreleta Park, Pretoria. It is home to an estimated 9000 people, majority (80%) of whom are economic and political refugees from Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Mozambique, and other adjacent countries. The lack of documentation and its consequences have an intrusive presence in daily life (UP Hons 2021).

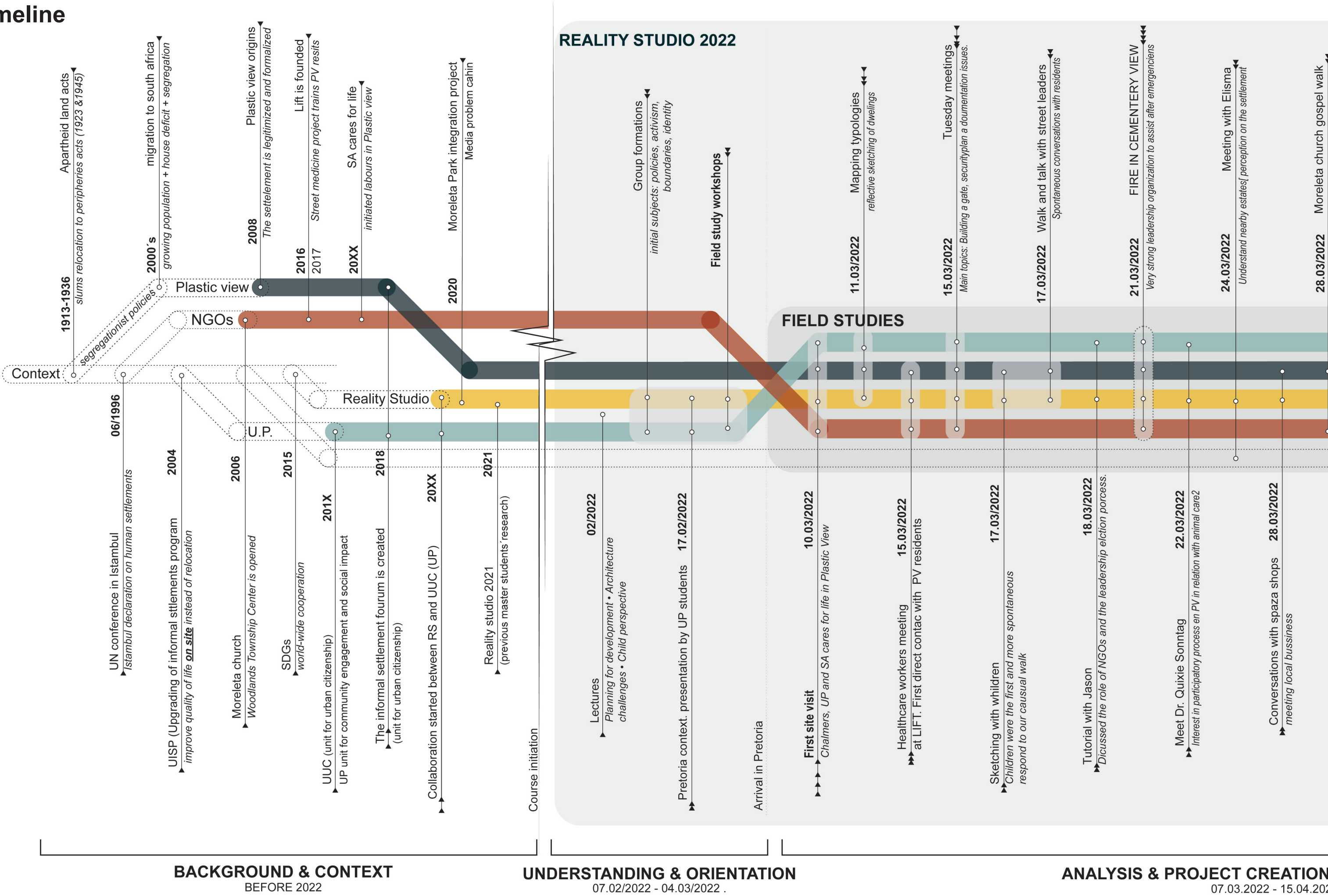
As a relatively new form of urban development in South Africa, Plastic View like many other new urban settlements, appeared spontaneously on an open land fragment in between luxury estates and public amenities. Spread across a piece of land that lie immediately adjacent to the Moreleta Church, Plastic View has established its location on the map after being partly recognized in 2008. The scattered dwellings in between the high-income neighbourhoods were consolidated and fenced off, in an attempt to bring control and uniformity to the settlement. Expansion is restricted, which explains why the footprint of the settlement has remained stable, while it has densified considerably to accommodate the increasing population. Despite a number of these residents showing interest in the opportunity to further their skills, talents, and craftsmanship, they find themselves stagnating in a situation with little to no opportunity for personal development (UP Hons 2021). This is especially relevant in the aftermath of the COVID 19 pandemic.

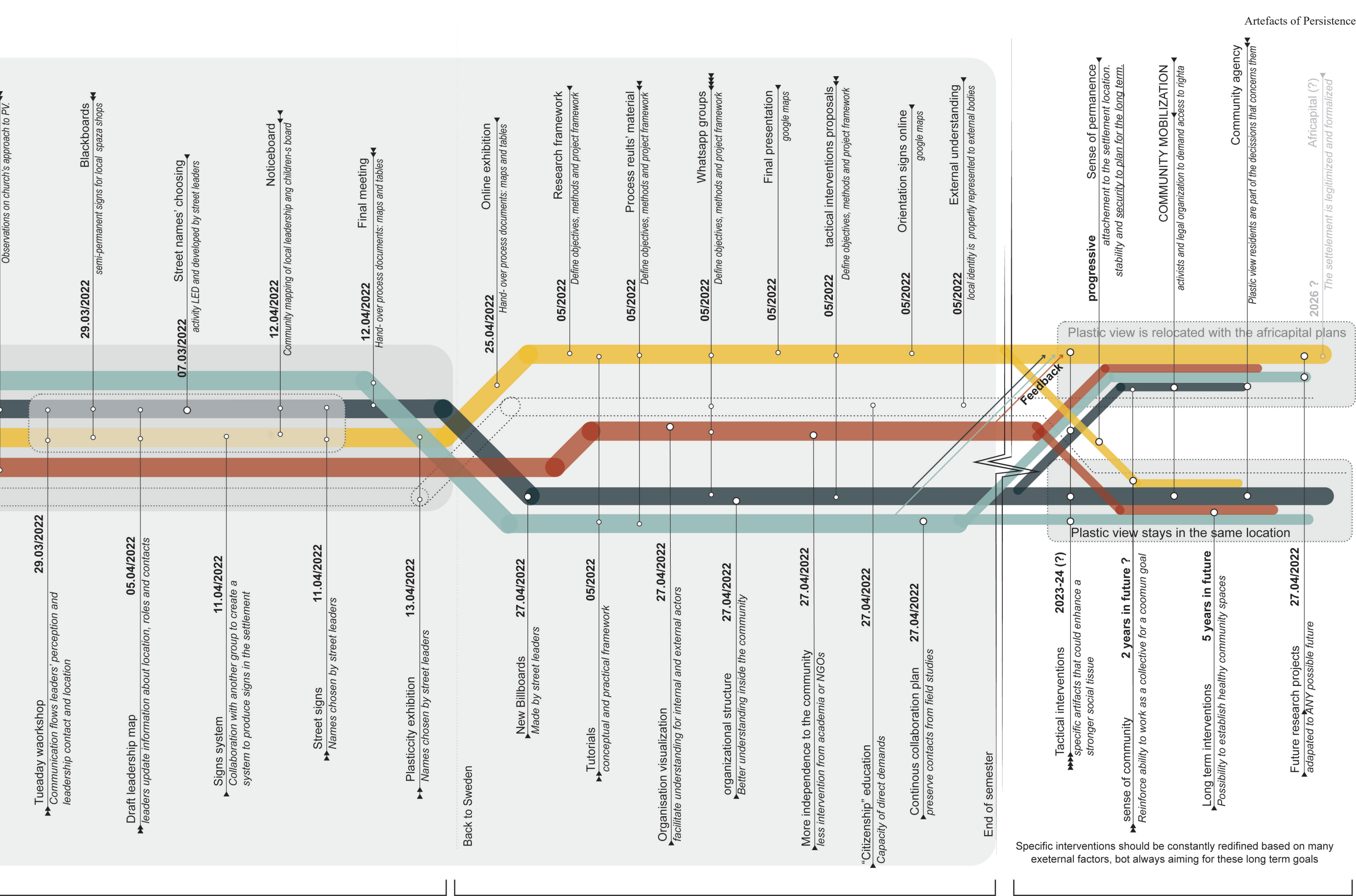
Today Plastic View consists of 11 blocks. High densities in the fabric characterise the settlement. High unemployment, lack of water and sanitation remains the most urgent problems, in addition to inadequate or absent infrastructure, education, electricity and community space for people.

The inaction and negligence towards upgrading the settlement is based on two basic assumptions: the dwellers have illegal status in South Africa, and the city of Tshwane is bankrupt and poorly financially equipped to take action. Though recognised as a violation of human rights, the overhanging threat of demolition of the area and dismissal of the foreign (majority) dwellers, and relocation of the South African citizens, will persist for the nearby future.



timeline

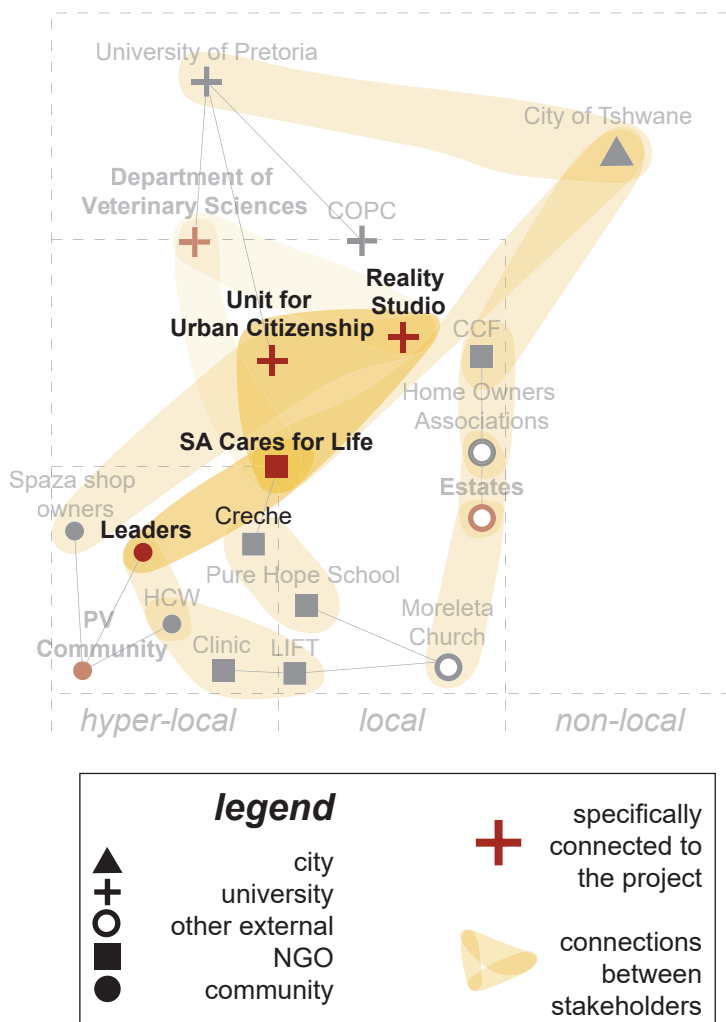




stakeholders

stakeholders

The project focuses on three groups of stakeholders: the Plastic View community (particularly its leadership), the NGO SA Cares for Life, and academia (through Reality Studio and UUC). Currently, the NGOs act as mediators between the community and external bodies, and were important for the initial contact that we had with Plastic View. This dynamic has been identified as a problem, the NGOs tend to speak for the community, leading to dependency and an inability for the community to voice their own concerns. To read a more detailed analysis of each stakeholder identified in the project read the appendix *Stakeholder Analysis Matrix*.

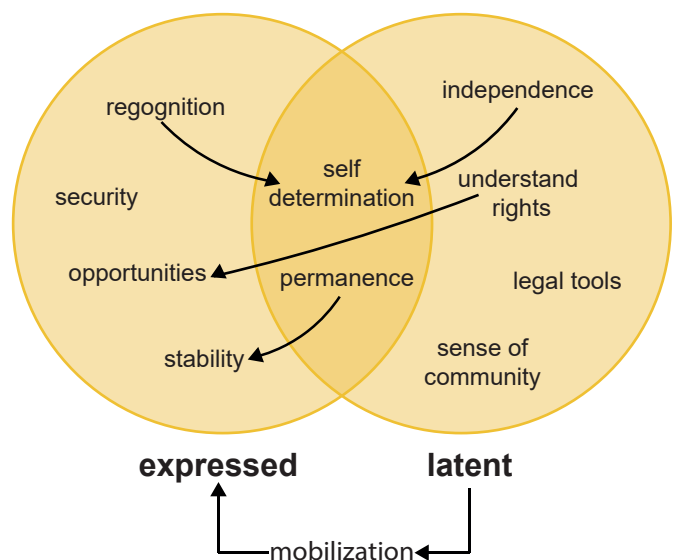


The diagram illustrates the stakeholders that we have identified and highlights the ones that we have been in direct contact with. It also attempts to show how the links between different groups work, where they might overlap, and where new connections needs to be made.

needs finding

expressed needs

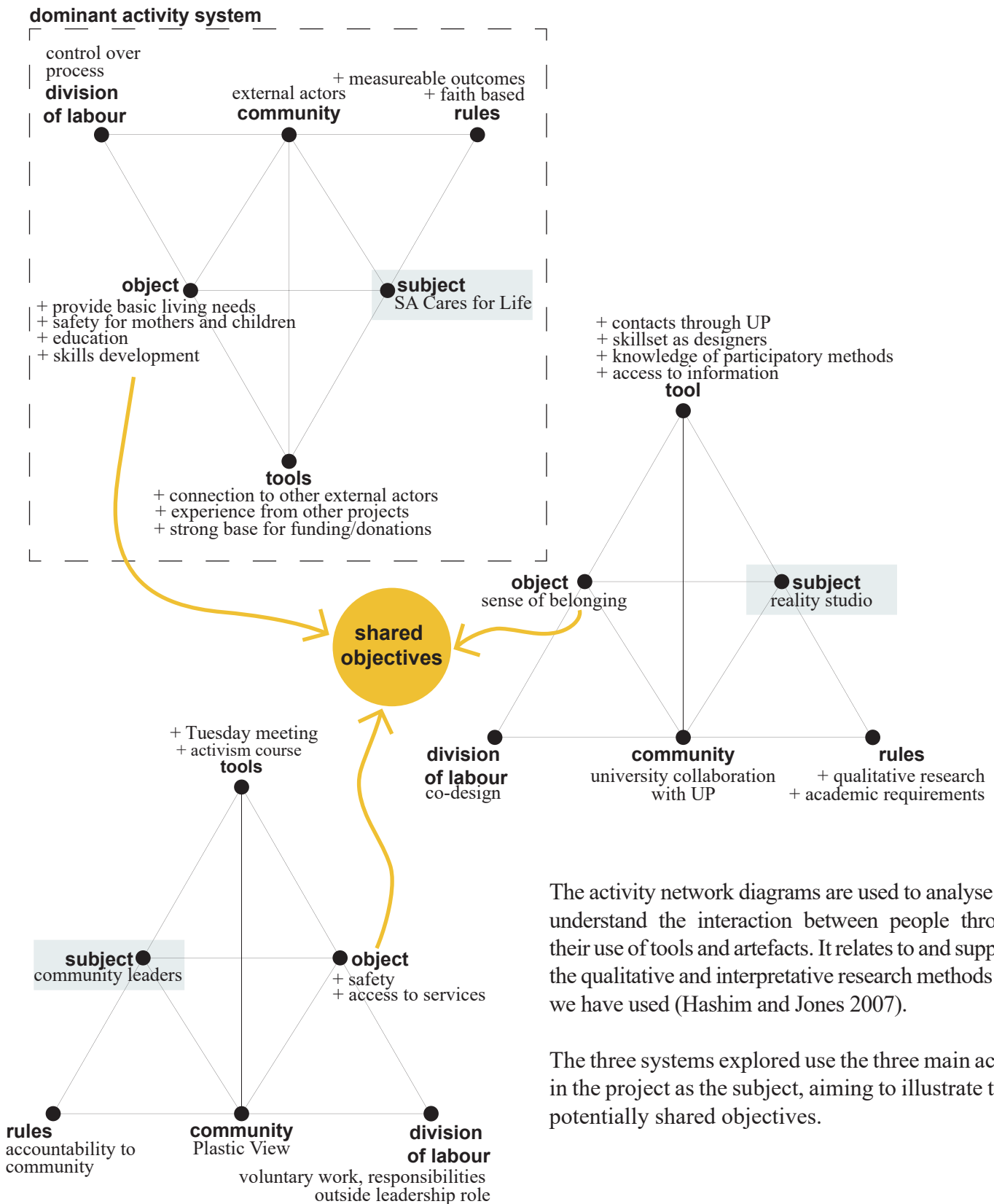
High unemployment, lack of water and sanitation, and the precarious living conditions, remain the most urgent problems, in addition to inadequate or absent infrastructure, education, electricity and community space for people. The opportunities for work, as well as for legal occupation in South Africa, is restricted due to the lack of legal documentation.



latent needs

Beyond the expressed needs of the community, the pre-study also shows a lack of place identity, and sense of belonging for the dwellers, and it is assumed that the lack of documentation is the determining factor for the condition. Further, access to information and understanding of rights within the community remains a critical point, as many communication processes with governing bodies happen through a third party, generally the NGOs that are active in the community. Residents do not have a direct way to voice their concerns. Our perception is that the multiplicity of problems reinforces each other in a negative circle, and the project explores intervention points (leverage points), to interrupt the negative pattern.

activity systems diagram



The activity network diagrams are used to analyse and understand the interaction between people through their use of tools and artefacts. It relates to and supports the qualitative and interpretative research methods that we have used (Hashim and Jones 2007).

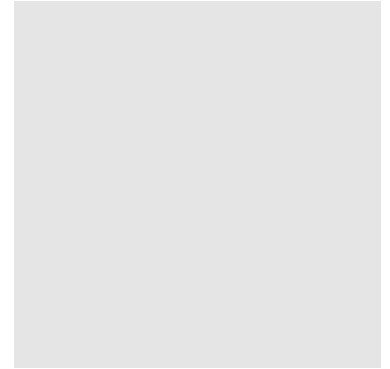
The three systems explored use the three main actors in the project as the subject, aiming to illustrate their potentially shared objectives.

methods / design criteria



+ *tactical urbanism*

The project uses tactical urbanism as an approach for catalyzing a change in the community. The small-scale interventions are set to be either; Short-term (low cost and quick in their becoming, with potential to catalyze long-term change); Intermediate (quick to prototype, scalable with potential to develop over time); Long-term (more permanent interventions that require the involvement of many stakeholder groups). Together they create an overlapping strategy for the community.



+ *intersection between social / physical*

Sense of community and place identity is built by human and non-human components; one of the criteria for design and location is that the artefacts connect the social and physical space. Focus lies in the daily lives of the residents.



+ *participation*

The foundation for the project/understanding of context, was made together with the main stakeholders, particularly street leaders of Plastic View, critically examining their positions in the community. The tangible result of the project work as a tool to continue to build understanding.

+ *qualitative and ethnographic methods*

We emphasize the importance of extensive fieldwork, qualitative mapping, and personal connections as the foundation of the work, ensuring the connection of the design to the specific context.



ways of engaging



walk and talk

An approach to interviewing that is more informal and personal. It also connects the conversation to place as it engages with the surroundings.



street sketching

Sketching used as a tool both to analyse the built environment and to be able to stay for longer periods of time in a place. The sketch can also become the object to have a conversation around with people passing by.



blackboards

Making black boards together with the community aims to connect and have conversations. Together with spaza shop owners the idea of the black boards was brought up, as an easy way to share small messages or advertise products for sale. In the same way as the sketches in the street sketching approach, the boards become objects to have conversations around.



community meetings

Attending community meetings is both a way to tap into already ongoing discussions, and a way to observe dynamics between different stakeholder groups (in this case between the community leaders, community health care workers, SA Cares for Life, and the University of Pretoria.)

*Field studies activities
photos taken by the project team*

delimitation

overall objective

The overall objective is to enable mobilization of the residents of Plastic View, recognizing that the inability of the community to organize and speak for themselves is one of the main obstacles for creating more permanence. Building on the belief that place has a transformative capacity to create and sustain change (Hamdi 2011, 138) the objective is to investigate the connection between place identity and the process of development in an informal context.

project purpose

The scope of the project involves the shaping of a sense of belonging in the community, which is seen as a necessary first step in the process of mobilization, a process of which residents will eventually take ownership. The strategy is, in co-operation with the residents and leadership, to make tactical, small-scale interventions in the environment, provoking an awareness of the surroundings and the community's own capability of intervening. The interventions concern topics of wayfinding, the organization of the leadership, street identity, expression and creativity. They provide an opportunity for residents to do things themselves that they usually ask external bodies to do for them, as well as allowing skills of the residents to come into use for the good of the community.

guiding questions

- + How does the place identity of informal urbanism impact the politics of upgrading and eviction/demolition?***
- + How can making the organizational structure visible/readable (through the use of small-scale interventions) to the community as well as to external bodies counteract the implications of the state of impermanence?***
- + How can the collective making and design of spatial artefacts act as a catalyst for change?***

overall objective

project purpose

The actor-network (Latour 1990) diagram (next page) works as a tool to define the practical outputs (goals) of the project through analysing the actors, artefacts, and encounters that was carried out during the pre-study. It identifies community mobilization as a consequence of stronger place identity and sense of belonging, and breaks it down into potential small-scale interventions.

actor - network diagram

problem
setting

The **state of informality** and temporality is limiting the community in Plastic View to, in a and long term way, on equal terms, engage with external bodies (such as the surrounding estates, the NGOs, and the City of Tshwane). They are therefore **not able to have a voice in the decisions taken about their future**.

Additionally, the transient state of informal settlements produces feelings of uncertainty, lack of hope, and affects the ability to have a vision of one's future in that place. (lack of identity)

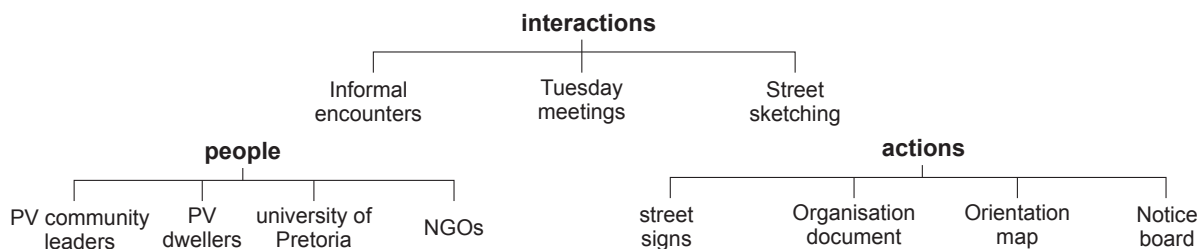
Dilemma: The impermanent state creates a negative cycle in which the incapability of hope towards the future leads to incapability of action to change it.

problem owners: plastic view residents

question

Through making the organisational structure visible/readable in the community and to external bodies, **can we counteract the implications of temporality?**

actants



actants'
aim

identity-creation +
ability to define their
needs and to
demand resources

creating content
that's useful to them,
that proposes an
improved way of
working

rethinking
their role

ability to continue to
"publish" formal
announcements and
information / organization
/ orientation elements

more inclusive
organization,
awareness and
interest from the
community

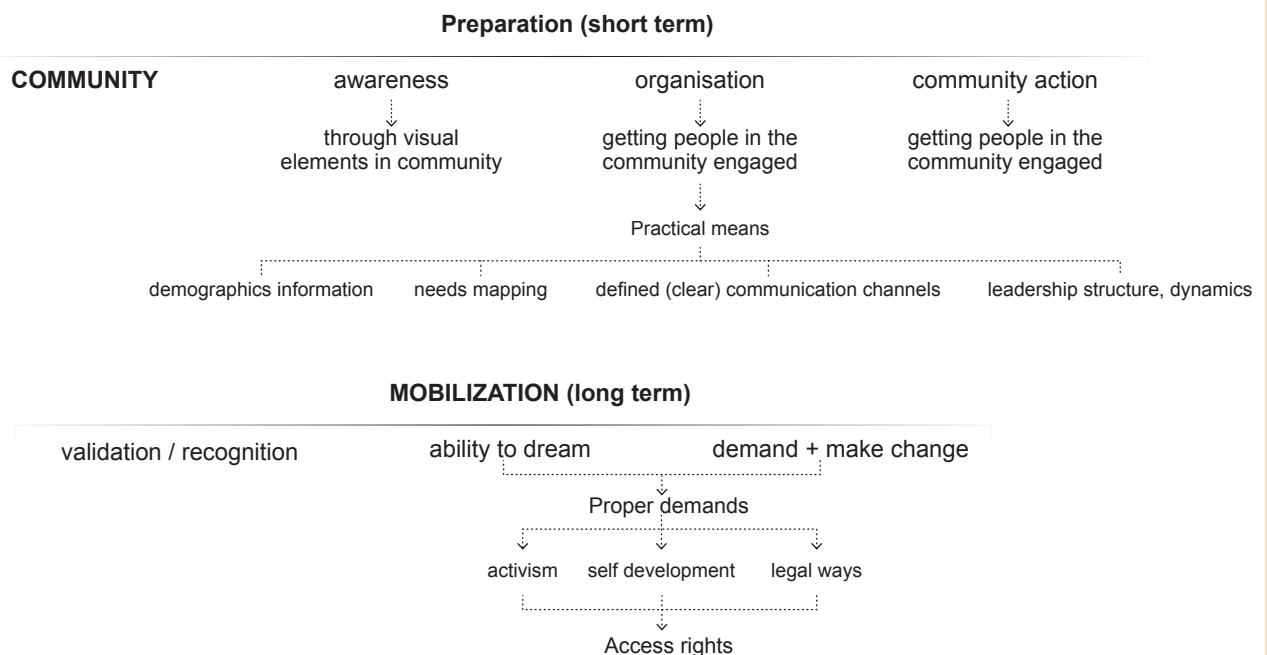
way finding
(internally +
externally), sense
of belonging within
community.

Show
leadership,
opportunity
to leave a
mark

aim

**sense of community, ability to define their own problems (collectively) +
ability to produce solutions to problems.**

practical
outputs



activities - structure

As the method that we have followed deals with and focuses on people; works with participatory processes, in both formal and informal manners; the way that the project developed was non-linear.

In the initial phase of working, we were looking more generally at communication, but through interactions and encounters the project was narrowed down to focus specifically on place identity and sense of belonging in connection to the implications of informality.

We have framed this process in three different categories, where the encounters are divided into 0D, 2D, and 3D.



0D

The 0D includes mapping flows of information, translating the seemingly chaotic structure of organisation within the community and making it comprehensible from an outside perspective. In this process the formation of personal connections between us and stakeholders, as well as in between stakeholders, is highlighted as the most important outcome.

2D

As the status of Plastic View is currently informal, a part of our strategy is to counteract the temporality of this condition. This part focuses on interventions in 2D. The direct outcomes are the interventions themselves as well as to engage people in the topic of communication and the importance of having access to information.

3D

What makes a place feel permanent? And, what needs to be in place to transform the informal status? 3D focuses on co-design, prototyping and co-producing, spatial interventions that is challenging the temporal and informal state.

activities - field study interactions



*Laura with Sithulile outside her shack
photo taken by the project team*

walk and talk with Sithulile

0D

aim

Sithulile was one of the first leaders we got to know and therefore, we were interested in learning from her about the settlement. The aim with the conversation with her was to get to know her better, and since it took place early on during the field work it was also a way to get more familiar with Plastic View.

Moving around creates a more relaxed atmosphere, making it easier to keep the conversation going without having prepared questions. It can reveal unexpected places and information.

outcome

During the conversation we did not only learn more about her story and life in Plastic View, but also some of the issues that the residents have.

We talked with Sithulile about how the Spaza shops work, where they get the products from and what happens around them. She told us where the residents find job opportunities and about the problem of not having papers. She also explained how the residents inform each other about the police raids that happen regularly.



*Jessica with Andrew at his spaza shop
photo taken by the project team*

black boards with Andrew

2D

aim

The black board activity came out of a previous encounter that we had with Andrew, a spaza shop owner in Plastic View with a big interest in drawing and painting. We brought materials for making simple blackboards and made them together with him.

The aim of the activity was to create objects that we could have conversations around, enabling us to introduce our topics of concerns, such as access to information and orientation, into the conversation.

outcome

Even though it was still a bit difficult to bring the conversation to more intangible topics, the act of making was a way to connect. It also engaged people passing by, sparking curiosity.

What we brought with us from this activity was these connections, and also the idea of the importance of objects, or artefacts, and the actions connected to creating them, in bringing people together. Elaborating on this idea eventually led to the proposed system of artefacts that you can read about in the *Design* section (p. 17-34).

activities - field study interactions



*Sketching in Plastic View
photo taken by the project team*

street sketching

2D

aim

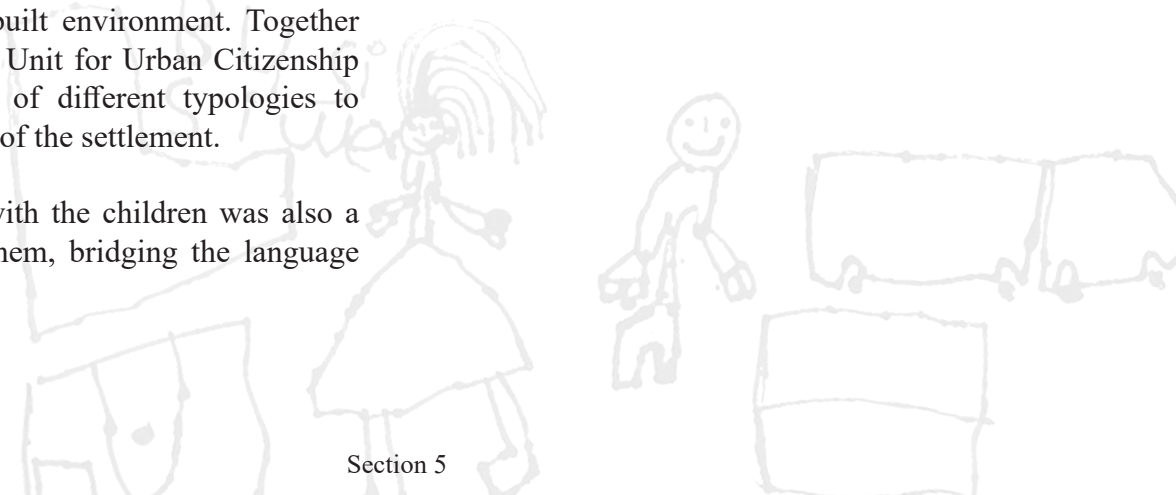
We used street sketching several times during the field studies. During one of the first days that we spent on site it was used with the intention to be able to move through the settlement slowly, looking in detail at the build environment.

On another occasion we had, in addition to the interactions with people we had an impromptu sketching session with children in the street. Even though it was unplanned it connects to the overall aim of the activity, to create objects that can spark interest.

outcome

The outcome of the interactions was several interesting conversations, and a more detailed understanding of the built environment. Together with students from the Unit for Urban Citizenship we collected sketches of different typologies to create a spatial lexicon of the settlement.

The drawing session with the children was also a way to interact with them, bridging the language gap by using art.



activities - field study interactions

tuesday meetings - setting

2D

aim

During our field studies we attended several Tuesday meetings, where the community leaders meet with representatives from the NGO SA Cares for Life. At the second meetings that we attended we were by chance the first ones to arrive. The meetings space was set up like a classroom, with all chairs turned to the “stage”. Having the experience that this spatial configuration enhanced the dynamics between the groups, giving power to the speaker and hindering discussions, we decided to set the room up differently, rearranging the chairs in a circle.

outcome

There was some surprise among the meeting participants about the new arrangement of the furniture. Altering the space and trying to remove the feeling of being directed towards a “stage” did not change the fact that the meeting was conducted by the representative from SA Cares for Life, but what it did do was clearly highlighting it.

A successful aspect of the action was that it made discussions felt more natural, the small change of not having to turn around when addressing someone or when being addressed had a strong impact on the dynamics. We felt that the division of speaking time felt more equal during this meeting in comparison to the first one that we attended.

tuesday meetings - interaction

3D

aim

The aim with being at the Tuesday meetings was to get a chance to meet the leaders all at once and be able to have constructive conversations about their perceptions of the needs of the community. At the meetings we also took the chance to have some activities with the community leaders, that focused on mapping the leadership structure. The conversations led to the development and implementation of the street signs (see p.23).

outcome

The practical output of the participation in the Tuesday meetings was the interventions that we made during our last weeks of field studies. But more importantly it led to stronger relationships between us and the community leaders, and a platform where we could present, discuss, and anchor our ideas.

Reflecting on this engagement we noticed that the power dynamics were not equal, the meeting agenda was always set by SA Cares, and their representative would conduct the meeting.



*Notice board and map outside community office
photo taken by the project team*

design interventions - a system of artefacts

legend

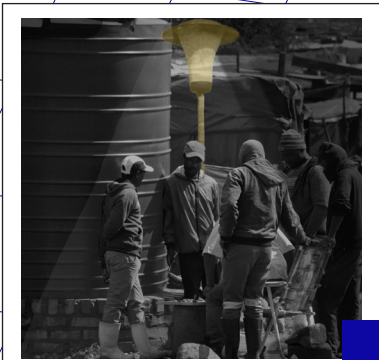
fences

roads

locations for interventions are marked in blue

completed

proposed



street lights
visibility and safety



mural
a space for conversation



street signs
place identity / wayfinding



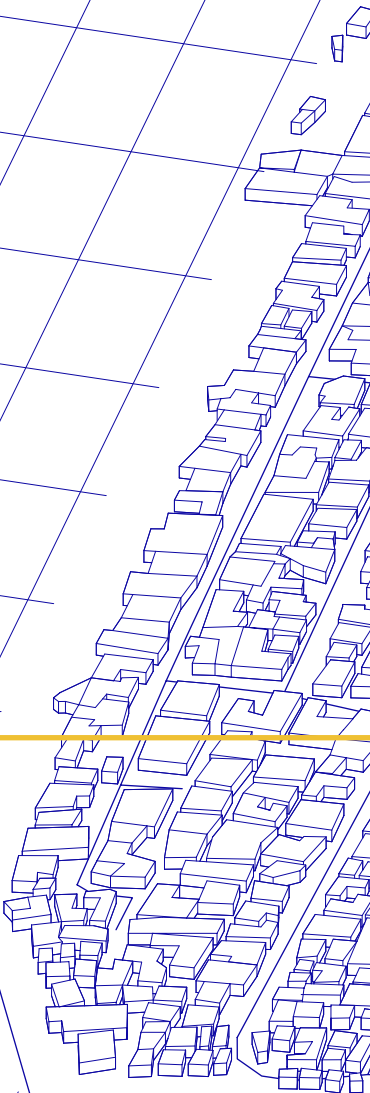
black boards
objects of connection

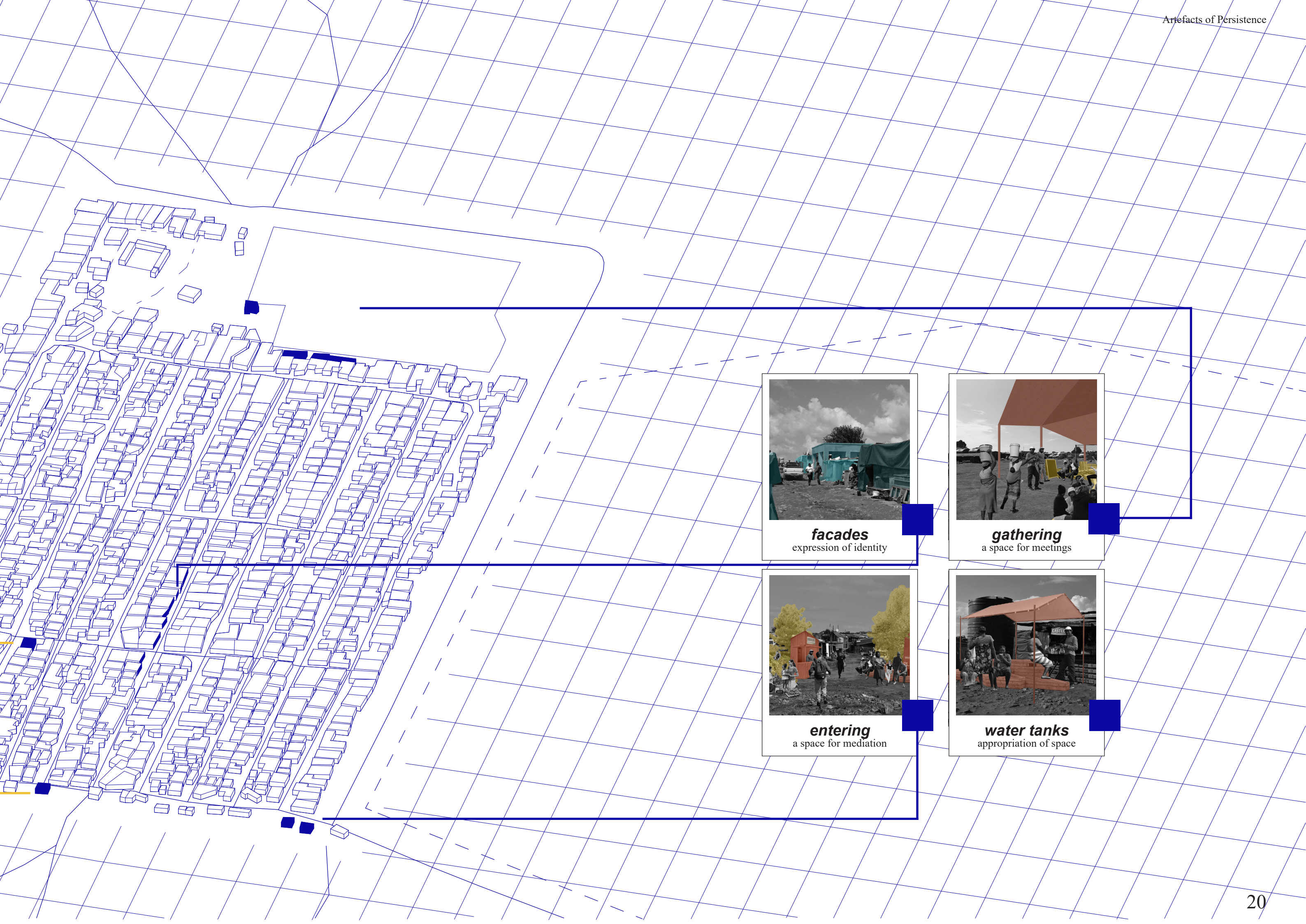


community map
visualising leadership structure



notice board
sharing information





facades
expression of identity



gathering
a space for meetings



entering
a space for mediation

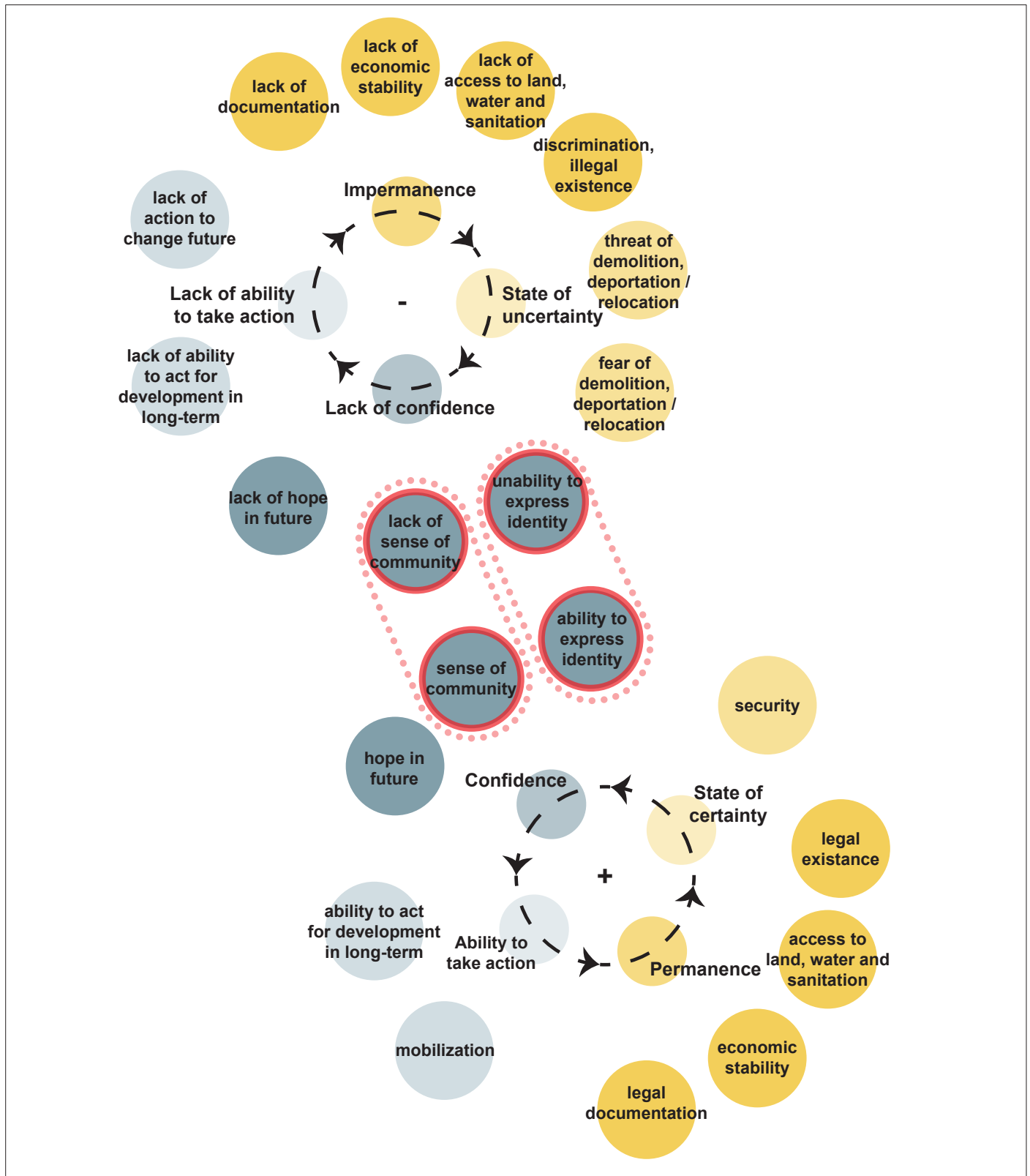


water tanks
appropriation of space

points of intervention

Our perception is that the multiplicity of problems that Plastic View faces reinforces each other in a negative circle, and the project explores intervention points (leverage points), to interrupt the negative pattern.

The diagram below shows leverage points that can become points of intervention. The project aims to investigate what roll small-scale interventions can have in changing the current negative cycle and the long-term development of the informal settlement Plastic View.



a system of artefacts

This section presents the different designs that we are proposing. Some have been implemented in Plastic View together with the community, and some are ideas that can be taken further in the future. The proposed artefacts are to be seen as concepts and inspirations that require further development by the community.

the setting

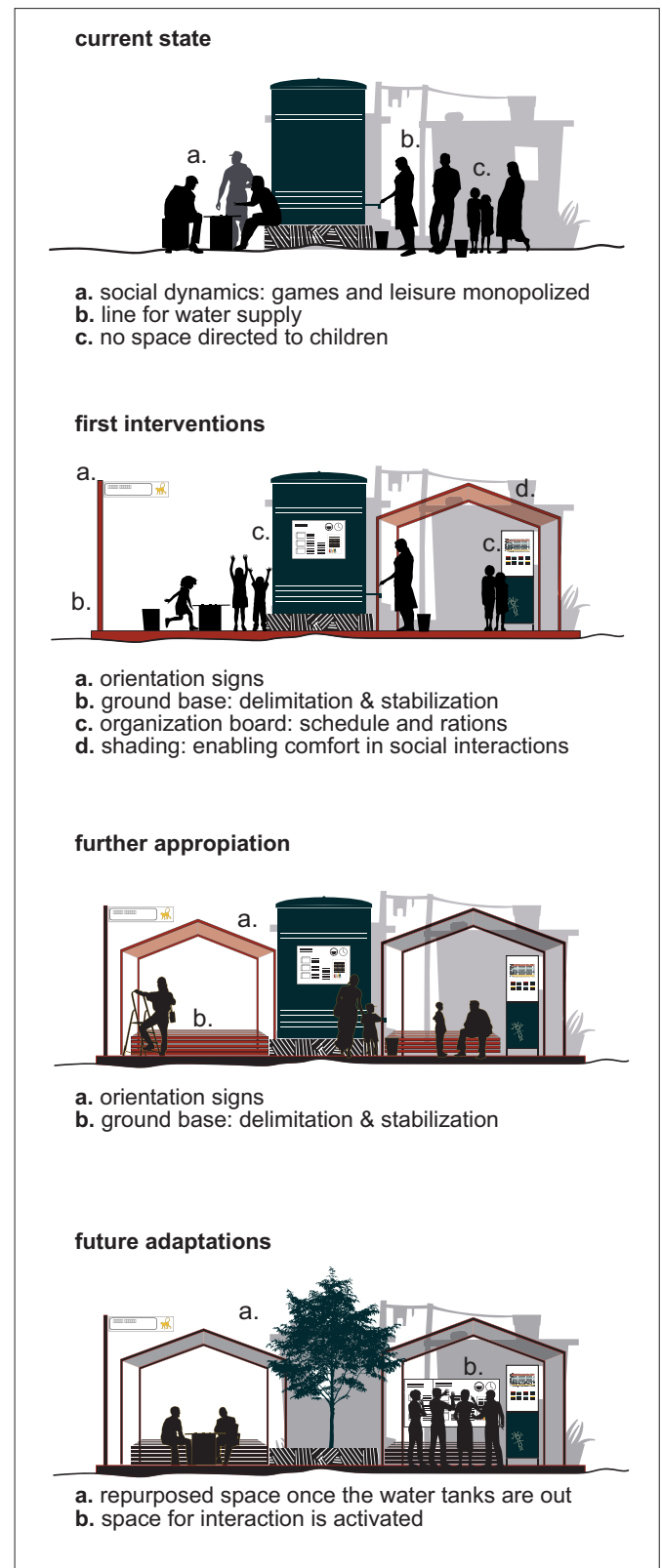
These interventions are based on a possible future where the settlement can stay where it is currently located due to city of Tshwane's incapability to execute the plans for AFRICAPITAL development (City of Tshwane 2021).

We are proposing interventions that addresses the state of limbo that Plastic View finds itself in, a state somewhere between permanence and impermanence.

the strategy

The tangible result of the project is a set of spatial artefacts, which are part of a long-term plan for upgrading the settlement and building a sense of belonging and identity.

The diagram to the right illustrates how an intervention can build over time, reaching big objectives through small actions.



legends

the design criteria

As previously mentioned (p. 11) the criteria for our work and the design proposals are the following:

- + **tactical urbanism**
- + **intersection of the social / physical**
- + **participation**
- + **qualitative and ethnographic methods**

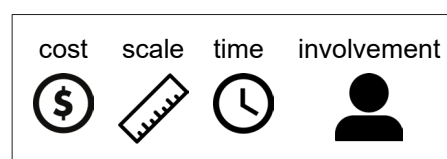
design requirements

The intention with the interventions is that their scale will make them feasible to carry out. Indicated in connection to the interventions are an estimation on the level of cost, scale, time, and involvement that they might require. These estimations should not be seen as more than initial thoughts since the proposals have not yet been developed in depth.

performance indicators

The success of the artefacts can be measured through their scalability and connection to other artefacts. Another factor that is important to look at is the way that they are appropriated and adapted further by the intended user, the community of Plastic View.

The performance of the artefacts could be measured through observations, but in the same way that the initial phase of the project focused on interactions, the evaluation should happen mainly through conversations.



legends



yellow pages = implemented



orientation

Improving orientation connects both to new residents moving in to Plastic View, as well as to external that needs to understand the place.



identity

Identity in connection to place is about how people connect to and perceive the settlement. Place identity is seen as a precondition for community mobilization.



connection

Connecting different people within the settlement to each other, as well as to building better relationships with external bodies aims to build more resilience through better access to information and understanding of rights.



security

A need expressed by the community in Plastic View is improved security. Contrary to the surrounding estates they have no way of controlling who moves in and out of the settlement.



information

Early on in the project we saw that the access to information was poor, leading to misunderstandings and frustrations between stakeholder groups. Not having full awareness of their rights and how to claim them is in addition a hinder for creating more stability for the residents.



blue pages = proposed ideas



ownership

An important aspects of all interventions is that the process of making them (collectively) allows the community to feel ownership.



meeting point

Currently community mobilisation is limited by the lack of spaces to meet inside the settlement. Creating more defined meeting points could also be a way for the internal and the external communities to meet on equal terms.



movement

The ability of the community to mobilise to access their rights and collectively build more stability is the main aim or the project.



welcoming

Recognising that the unfamiliarity hinders understanding between the internal and the external communities, creating a more welcoming environment aims to improve those relationships and allow for new meetings and connections.

leadership map

impact



orientation



identity



connection

cost



time



scale



involvement



The reason for creating the orientation started when the student groups struggled to contact the people that they wanted to work with.

Working mainly with the community leaders in Plastic View we mapped where the leaders lived and put this information on a map to make it easier to reach them.

By sharing the map with the rest of the community the aim was also to make it easier for them to know who they can turn to when they have problems / concerns. The map also includes the new street names, colour coded, so that they are more easily connectible with the street signs that have the same colours.

Future Development

Include more information:

location of...

- Spaza Shops
- Toilets and
- Water tanks
- Leisure places

Put up in more places:

- All entrances
- LIFT Clinic
- Crèche
- Soccer Field
- Small maps with more sensitive information for peoples homes

Could be improved:

- Clear connection to the map
- Public notice board added at every street corner
- Smaller version of the map for each resident/family

impact

information



connection

cost



time



scale



involvement



The aim with the blackboard workshop was to produce and leave behind something in the community. The blackboards connect specifically to the spaza shop owners, since they have a need for advertising what they have for sale, but could be spread to other parts of the community. Making the boards together with the shop owners was a way to get to know them and learn about

their business. We also had the intention of expanding the conversation to try and understand how the people we interacted with connected communication to their more expressed needs.

The black boards are a fun way to spread information, to use it for creative purposes and they are very practical due to the re-usability.

Future Development**Create a network:**

- Have more black boards spread around the settlement for either personal advertisement or public announcements

Make them permanent:

- Fix them outside of the house permanently, ensuring visibility
- By inspiring each other for different kind of uses, they can become a stronger tool in spreading information.

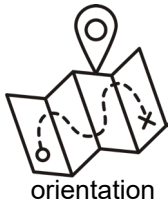
Could be improved:

- Spaza Shops could sell chalk and sponges for the boards
- Design to fix the boards, so that they do not disappear

street signs

2D

impact



cost



time



scale



involvement



The idea of street signs arose after having joined the street leader's meeting and discussions about creating a map and its content. While trying to collect the information on the map, it became clear that it is difficult to quickly describe a location within the settlement. In addition to the obvious

improving wayfinding in Plastic View, we hope that the street names strengthen the feeling of identity and belonging to the community / the individual streets. A more long-term goal is also to spark empowerment through showing signs of permanence.

Future Development

Formalize

- Add to Open Street Map / Google Maps
- See if it can be accepted by municipality

Finish Street Signs:

- One street sign at every corner
- Name the remaining streets

Could be improved:

- Process of making the street signs
- Material sourcing / affordability

impact

information



connection



orientation

cost**time****scale****involvement**

The way information flows currently is random and unclear. Because of its informality much information gets lost on its way, which creates difficulty for NGOs, but also for the active residents in organising meetings. Residents often don't know about the leadership. Without this knowledge it is hard for the community to organise themselves and make the leadership

structures more accessible to other residents. The notice board is a tool to make information visible. It is useful to contact the people in charge and to announce important information, workshops or events, regardless of the organiser being internal or external. The map on the notice board is part of the information that is visible permanently and therefore help with orientating in the settlement.

Future Development**Create a network:**

- Have more notice boards spread around the settlement for maps and announcements

Expand the space

- Develop the space around the boards, creating places for meeting / leisure

Could be improved:

- More noticeable (colours, more visible location etc.)
- Scale up the size
- Cover from rain

reflection on completed activities

on wayfinding and identity creation

The completed artefacts touch topics of participation, understanding and creation of connections, wayfinding and street identity. We have seen the benefit that the work of recognizing and representing the community organisation has had in giving a sense of pride, through making it visible it is given value.

Our goal with the work in the field was that the actions would be immediately useful for the community, which is why we focused on the things that they expressed a clear need for (leadership map, street signs, notice board). As the completion of these artefacts took place during the last days in the field, we have not been able to evaluate them fully, but the initial reactions both from the residents and community leaders directly involved in the process and the people passing shows already showed how small interventions can be a way to start a conversation and to create awareness about place identity.

From literature studies and reference project we also connect this to findings in other contexts, and the discussion of the need for place identity in general, and in informal contexts in particular.

“...a community feeling that contains confidence makes people want to stay in the neighbourhood and improve it. Hence a sense of belonging is strongly connected to the appropriation of public space, attachment to and identification with the streets.”
(Höök, Jonsson, Skottke, Thelandersson 2012, p. 99)



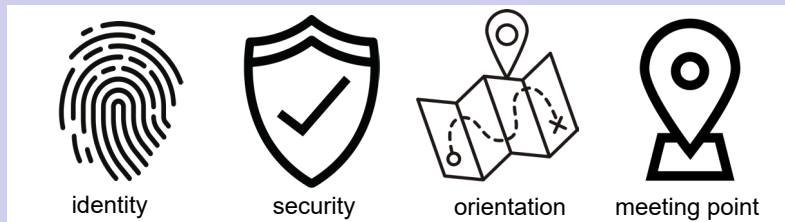
*Making and mounting street signs in Plastic View
photos taken by the project team*



entrance - formalize

3D

impact



cost



time



scale



involvement



Currently, the entrance to Plastic View is not very welcoming. Both internal and external stakeholders have stated that the area is unsafe, and many outsiders (for example members of the church) would not feel comfortable to come close to the entrance because of fear of unsafety and the unknown.

Adding a guard house could be a way create a defined space of entry where a contact person could help them find their way. It would give control to the community in Plastic View over who comes in when. Within the settlement there has also been the concern about criminals coming in. The guard at the entrance could have an overview over who is entering or leaving the settlement.

In addition, the trash that is dumped around the settlement creates an inhospitable environment. By moving the trash to a more hidden space and implementing gardening next to the entrance, the representation of Plastic View would be improved. At the moment it is seen as dirty and disorganised. Through formalizing the entrance, making organisational structures visible to everyone who is living and working in the settlement and showing the skills off the residents (e.g. gardening and crafting) self confidence and respect from the outside would be raised. Through the different interventions the entrance has the potential to become a space that mediates between the internal and external communities.

entrance - mural

3D

impact



cost



time



scale



involvement



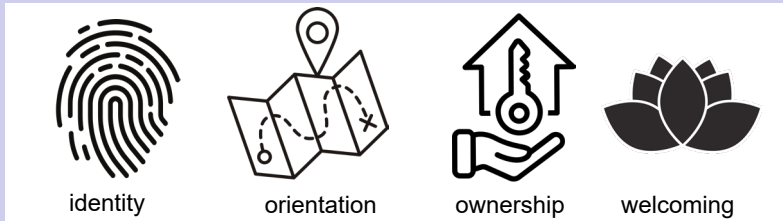
The mural can be a project that is done together with the Plastic View and the Meadow Glen community (on one of the surrounding estates). Both parties have several interests in common that they do not communicate about and therefore no cooperation exists to tackle those issues. A common fun project could bring both parties together and change the criticized entrance space into something more pleasant.

In the conversations that we have had, frustrations regarding the entrance surfaced, but it also became clear that both the internal and the external community expressed similar issues. What

differed was the way of dealing with the problems. The residents of the Meadow Glen Estate are part of conversations with the municipality while the residents of Plastic View are not invited to these conversations.

The painting of the mural would have three goals:

1. Formalising the entrance and clearly state a person of contact from Plastic View.
2. Bringing the two communities together and improving their relationship with each other.
3. Make the entrance (and therefore the community of Plastic View) more approachable.

impact

cost



time



scale



involvement



Our surrounding influence how we feel and behave. Understandably many residents have their priorities on other things than the colour of their facades, still you can see that many people do put effort into creating beautiful living environments with whatever resources they have.

In strengthening the sense of belonging, and place identity, art and colour play an important role. There has been many projects in marginalized areas in the global south and north that work with the impacts of having colourful surroundings and improving safety issues by creating friendly and inviting spaces.

Giving the blocks street names was a first step in creating a street identity. All the streets have a colour that is visible on the signs and the map at the community office. Our idea would be to bring that to the next level and paint the houses in every street with their street colour (leaving room for individual preferences). This would not only help reinforce the street identity, but also with orientation in the neighbourhood.

The settlement would turn into a less hostile environment. We hope that it would result in the residents being more proud of their neighbourhood and externals to be more interested in Plastic View and the people.

water tanks

3D

impact



meeting point



connection

cost



time



scale



involvement



As previously stated, Plastic View does not have a lot of meeting spaces. When residents meet, they gather in front of someone's house or at the water tanks and bring improvised seating and tables. Staying at a place for longer, always feels like invading someone's property and personal space.

By having shaded meeting spaces that are open to everyone, people would have a clear spot to meet and hang out. Life happens outside on the streets, as houses are small and dark, but there are no designated public spaces.

When appropriating the area around the water tanks it is important that there is still enough space to actually use the taps without people blocking the way, as well as creating a friendly environment.

Usually there is a spaza shop close to the crossroads and therefore water tanks, which is already a busy spot. To make this a safe space, it should be avoided that homogeneous groups meet there and claim it as their own. Especially in the evenings and weekend there is a high risk of having groups of men taking over the space and making it uninviting to other groups.

street lights

3D

impact



security



orientation



welcoming

cost



time



scale



involvement



street light next to
watertanks, toilets
and street corners

To make people feel safe, streetlights are essential. Plastic View, like many other informal settlements has a high-mast light. While it may seem that high-mast lights are better than nothing, they are problematic in dense informal settlements because they provide uneven light, casting shadows in narrow passageways and only lighten up the open spaces. The dark spaces between the houses makes it difficult to access basic services like water and toilets during the night.

Since the life mostly happens outside, the social life becomes restricted after dark due to by safety issues. By adding light in the in-between spaces

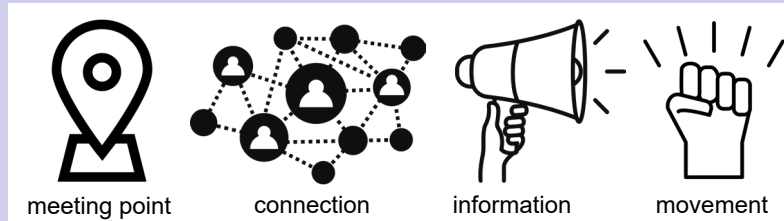
and important areas, the day can be prolonged to the after-work hours, which is the important time, when it comes to organizing the community and meeting with each other.

When setting up the lights it is necessary to work together with the community to find out where the lights are most needed and which system to use. Some residents should be educated in how to put up and fix the lights themselves to secure the maintenance. The program could start with a few lights and then overtime the community could add lights in spots that have next priority.

meeting space

3D

impact



cost



scale



time



involvement



Plastic View has a lack of meeting spaces, which makes it difficult for the street leaders or other groups to meet up together. Usually workshops, event or meetings take place in the church or on the pre-school ground, which makes the community, but also external stakeholders dependent on the church or NGOs. To improve the internal structures and to help the community organize themselves, a meeting place is crucial. It gives them the possibility to organize meetings, workshops, and events themselves and invite visitors or stakeholders on their own terms. The space could also be requested by external stakeholders through a contact person appointed by the community.

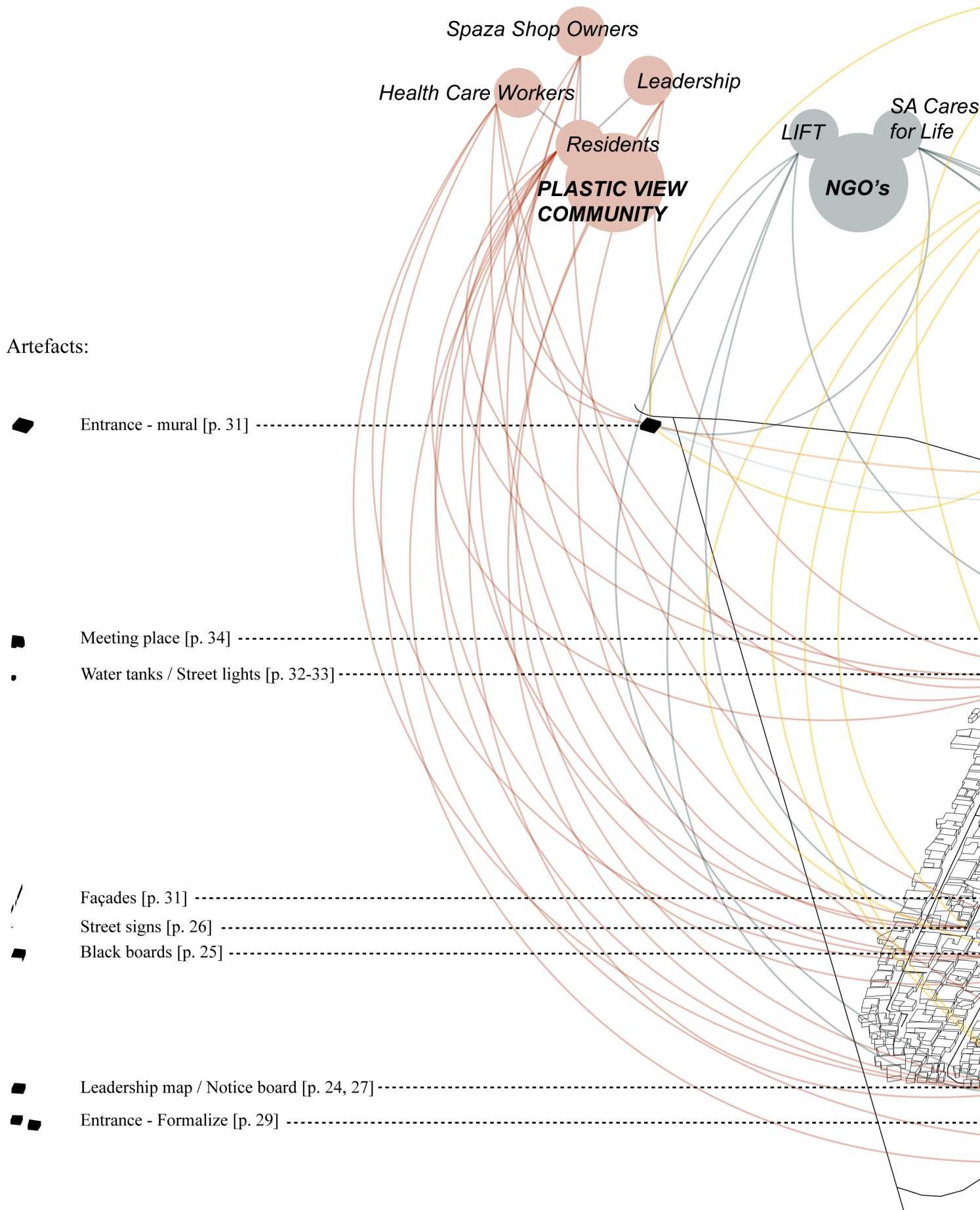
The current state is that despite the soccer field

there is no public space in the settlement. It is hard to meet up inside the small shack or on the streets with so many people passing, walking, and working. Having a meeting space that is protected from the weather and offers comfortable seating, would make it possible to meet for productive discussions and action planning, but also for informal encounters between people that would not stop on the streets to talk to each other.

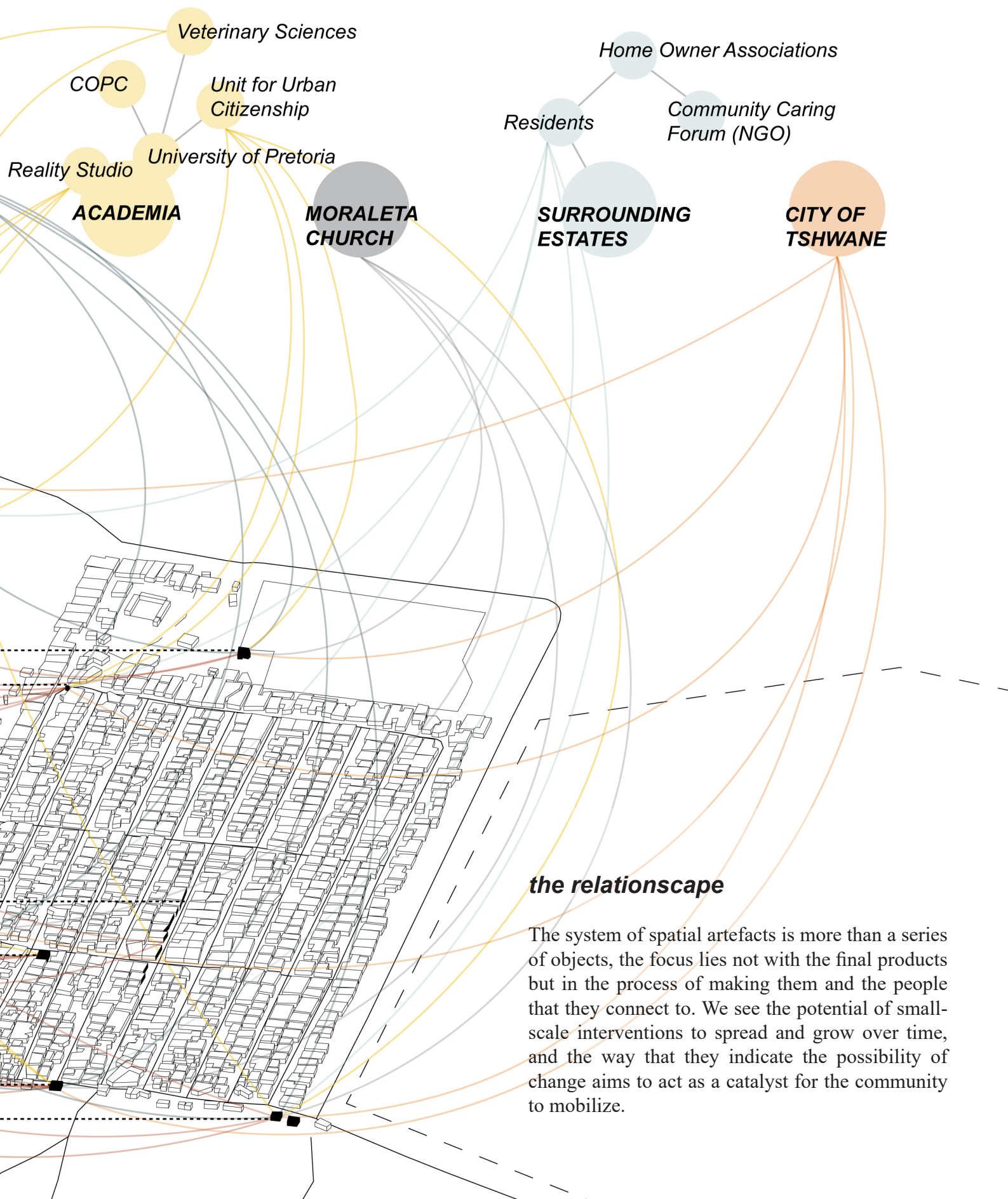
To announce events, there would be a notification board that can be used to inform the community. The kind of events could vary from leaders meeting, political activism, childcare, crafting or health classes or celebrations.

HYPER-LOCAL

Artefacts:



NON-LOCAL →



final reflections

Reflecting on the result of the work, as well as the process that led us to it, an aspect that seems key to highlight is the relationality. It is encapsulated in the system of artefacts that we are proposing, where the emphasis lie not on the object itself but on the processes, social actions and interactions that is connected to its becoming.

Relationality is also a part of the way we have worked as a studio, where all the project teams and the projects that has been a part of Reality Studio 2022 grow off and into each other. Working in a relatively small community and with stakeholders that to a large extent overlap, it has been crucial to share the work and consider the effort that we have put in as collective achievement. Without the collaboration between groups, it would for example not have been possible for us to make the artefacts that we completed during the field studies. And as the obstacles and leverage points in Plastic View are tightly interconnected, it also seems fitting that the way we approached the involvement in the context as a studio has worked in the same way, addressing different topics, but in a way that recognizes connections and overlaps.

Connected to our collective work as a studio is the question of how to map and understand a settlement that is constantly changing, and how to transfer the knowledge, stories, and connections that we have created together with the people that we have interacted with during our time in the field. Perhaps an impossible question to answer but based on the experience of working with this project we have seen the potential and power of interactions and actions. Re-thinking our skill-sets as designers to represent soft-values, emotions, and other intangible facts that we have focused on in this process has been both a challenge and learning experience. And if the connections that we have made can live on through these representations then that can pose a potential way to continue understanding the transience of Plastic View.


Returning to where this report started, with our role as architects, we have seen the need for immersion, for us as students/architects to be a part of the systems of actors. And what we hope to achieve with the system of spatial artefacts that we are proposing is to, at critical points, enhance connections, build resilience and mobilisation through stronger place identity and sense of belonging.



*Collaboration between project groups, making street signs
photos taken by the project team*

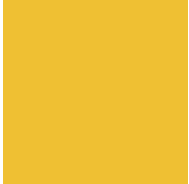

further questions

As we see this project report as the foundation for further engagement, and since we have many questions that are still unanswered we would like to end this report with a few of them, that could be potential departure points for taking these ideas further:



How can immeasurable qualities be valued in the process of (informal) urban development?

How can the outcomes / methods / learnings from this project be applied to other contexts and communities?

What is the bridge between small-scale interventions and reaching permanence? ~~(What is mobilization?)~~

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“Streets serve as democratic, open public space and as platforms for economic and social development.

They play a fundamental role for the public life in cities, by representing meaning, identity and orientation in a city.

Streets should be looked upon not only as the physical entity for mobility but also as the public realm that articulates and promotes social, cultural and economic activities.”

(Hope Raisers Initiative 2022)

