URBAN EMBROIDERY

The Predicament Regarding
the Incoherence of
Wellington's Townscape

" 'Townscape' is the art of giving visual coherence and organisation to the jumble of buildings, streets and spaces that make up the urban environment."

(Cullen, 1961, back cover)

Figure 1. Tite page image -a design development drawing.

Urban Embroidery

The Predicament Regarding the Incoherence of Wellington's Townscape

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Abstract

Since Wellington's establishment as a British colonial town in 1839 its townscape has evolved rapidly - becoming aesthetically complex, multifaceted and increasingly incoherent. New Zealand cities have characteristically borrowed an array of architectural ideas from other countries and applied them with little consideration of local context. In Wellington, as elsewhere, the result has been a townscape that has no common aesthetic base to build from and no shared design language. Yet from this aesthetic confusion, some informal but strong local typologies have emerged.

In searching for an architectural solution to the problem of Wellington's aesthetically incoherent townscape, this thesis takes the stance that it is these unique local typologies that must be built upon. Attention to local context and an awareness of site specifics are of most importance in the development of a strong design language for the city.

The existing special qualities that give Wellington its personality must be carried through to develop a more coherent townscape. In this way local identity will eventually prevail and the aesthetics of the city will become something that speaks of clarity and truth.

For logistical purposes, one particular block in the Te Aro neighbourhood has been focused upon. This thesis advocates an intimate understanding of place and so the site specifics of this block are looked at closely. The philosophy and methodology could be applied to other neighbourhoods and cities, with designs developed in response to their particular local conditions.

Within the inner city there are many thresholds and blurred boundaries between what is private and public space. New Zealand cities are particularly interesting to study, because historically the inner city neighbourhoods have not been densely occupied for residential purposes. But this has been changing recently, and rapidly, in our larger cities. Te Aro is a good example of this trend.

The relationships between public and private spaces within the city, and the spaces between these realms, are what this thesis is particularly concerned with. By applying the discipline of landscape architecture to revive and make use of these small, neglected interstitial spaces, it is hoped that the overall visual coherence of the inner city will be improved and some strong local typologies enhanced.

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Figure 2. A glimpse into The Bristol kitchen at night. Photo taken from the back of the building.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Problem

Wellington's incoherent townscape

Wellington City is an amalgamation of mixed architectural ideas, most of these imported from overseas ideals. The result is a multi- faceted city that has absorbed different architectural styles since its beginning as a colonial village. It is a complex urban environment, and one that reflects the city's short but dynamic history. It is a city in conflict between contrasting architectural ideas, and between what has been applied to the city and what is appropriate given the local context.

Since 1939 and the first European settlement of Wellington, the city has undergone steady development and transformation of its townscape. The story of Wellington's development over the past 173 years has been one of jerks and pulses. At times there has been sudden development, and at other times sudden destruction. The result today is an incoherent and multifaceted townscape.

In present day Wellington this disjointed nature is more obvious than ever. This could be because we are now more aware as citizens of where we have come from and where we want to go with our city's identity. The inherited styles of past eras can now look ridiculous in the local context, which is now much better appreciated. The 21st century is a time for reflection, but also a time of refinement towards a truly local and unique identity for the city.

This thesis focuses on the issues of Wellington's townscape; however the problem of disjointed townscapes and confused aesthetic identity is not unique to Wellington City but shared by many other New Zealand cities and towns.

The introduction of international ideals and the destruction of established buildings

The introduction of international styles began with colonialism, and the Victorian architectural styles that were imported from England. This colonial architecture had to be adapted to fit the Wellington context. In many instances unexpected local conditions intervened, and imported ideas were more often than not only half pulled through. Local conditions in Wellington led to the personalisation of imported architectural ideas.

Other international trends and styles followed the Victorian colonial era. Modern and then Post-modern architecture made its mark on the Wellington townscape in the 1960s and 1970s. Post- modern architecture and its underlying principles encouraged embellishment and acceptance of differing styles. This further provoked the ethos that had been developing in Wellington architecture, where 'anything goes'.

Just as some of Wellington's old colonial buildings, and buildings from other eras, had been given time to find their place in the townscape, and weathered to be part of the local context, the 1980's brought a period of destruction. Council ordered many

of Wellington's most historic and interesting buildings to be pulled down, making way for many dull and poor quality buildings, based on the trend that had occurred twenty years earlier in the United States. This destruction affected the Lambton area and parts of Te Aro precinct. But many of the buildings in Cuba Street and some of the smaller streets backing away from Cuba Street, such as Leeds and Eva Streets, were spared. Developers perhaps saw less potential in these smaller streets, and they were a lot less affected.

In recent years, following this period of destruction, there has been a neglect of quality and care in building throughout the city, and particularly in Te Aro. This has further enhanced the feeling of incoherence. Poor quality in building is accepted more in a city where 'anything goes'. There is simply no coherent civic language to live up to, or to use as a reference point.

The informal identity that has been created

As Wellington has succumbed to this 'anything goes' attitude, this assorted way of designing and building has become accepted, even celebrated. Arguably this has led to a unique type of New Zealand townscape.

This eclectic style, which has come to typify Wellington, has its positives and negatives in terms of the city's aesthetic identity. In some ways it makes the townscape appear intricate, and in other ways unconsidered and confusing.

This incoherence in the townscape is largely reflective of Wellington's confused past identity. The last 173 years have largely been dedicated to finding the city's architectural feet.

This thesis explores the predicament of Wellington's incoherence as a townscape. It is a city full of juxtapositions, lost meanings, and half-finished ideas. This is on the one hand what gives Wellington its uniqueness and character, and speaks of its acceptance of difference. On the other hand it is what gives Wellington its confusion and lost sense of place. Wellington is a dichotomy between loss of identity in place, and found identity in its informal nature.

A gap in New Zealand theory

From research towards this thesis it has become evident that there is a lack of theory in New Zealand architecture, landscape architecture, and planning disciplines regarding the overall townscape of New Zealand cities. Although there has been a lot of discussion about vernacular architecture in New Zealand, and about the outcome for New Zealand landscapes, there has been much less discussion about the evolution of New Zealand cities, seen in their entirety.

In New Zealand the city is rarely considered in terms of its overall visual coherence. This may be due to the fact that aesthetics often take a back seat to function and program.

At times New Zealand cities have had little regard for history or the layers that go into building up a city, the layers that contribute to a rich and complete whole within the

overall city.

Contemporary Wellington - looking ahead

As Wellington begins its life as a 21st century city, surely it is time to start developing readability and some sense of a coherent language throughout this contemporary city.

Wellington is in need of some care, quality, readability, and the creation of a consistent language in its townscape. Yet this must be balanced with an appreciation of what is unique to Wellington, and the future of Wellington's townscape must build from what currently exists. We cannot ignore the past and all the influences and mistakes that have gone into making Wellington what it currently is.

The design dilemma Wellington faces

This tension between a need for coherence and the promotion of what makes Wellington unique is a design dilemma. The question is, how can we design for Wellington in order to give it some coherence and readability, while also respecting Wellington's existing individual identity?

1.2 Theoretical Bases

The idea of '*Townscape*'

The word '*townscape*' is referred to a lot throughout this thesis. It is a word used to describe the aesthetics of a whole city or town. It is a way to look at the city in its visual entirety.

In order to understand the best approach for bringing some design coherence to Wellington's townscape, this thesis aims first to understand what actually makes up a successful and coherent townscape.

The concept of townscape stems from a movement in mid-20th century Britain and is concerned primarily with the city from an artistic point of view. It cares for the visual perception and aesthetics of a city. It could be argued that is a rather one dimensional and static way of viewing the city.

Gordon Cullen was a key author writing about the idea of townscape: he emphasized the idea of visual coherence in post-war British towns. This was in part a reaction to modernism. Cullen wanted planners and architects to acknowledge the history of cities, and to incorporate this within the rebuilding of war-torn towns. To Cullen the idea of townscape was focused around drama, almost to the point where the city was seen as a stage set. Sequential and controlled views were a key aspect to his theory.

Other commentators on the concept of '*townscape*' include Camillo Sitte and Nikolaus Pevsner.

Camillo Sitte lived before Cullen and wrote about the classical European cities, idealising their overall aesthetics. He unfavourably compared the modern cities of America to these classical European cities. He was not offering solutions for the present, so much as recalling the lost planning ideals of the past.

Cullen's contemporary Nikolaus Pevsner wrote in Britain around the same time as Cullen. Both of them wrote for the Architectural Review magazine in post World War Two Britain. Pevsner was an historian, and, like Sitte, Pevsner was concerned with the design aspects and principles of historic cities. But Pevsner was primarily concerned with old British towns and cities. Pevsner wanted to bring attention to the impact that the idea of the picturesque had had on British planning. Unlike Sitte, Pevsner wanted to relate the history of cities to contemporary times, and to contemporary change. Pevsner was concerned with the dramatic surge of building of modern structures in British towns and wanted people to sensitively relate these to the existing historic townscape. Pevsner was interested in the art of interweaving different periods of architecture successfully through the townscape.

After analysing the underlying principles of these and other writers' ideas on townscape, this thesis attempts to describe what actually makes for a successful and coherent townscape; and in particular how can we begin to devise a way of designing a distinctive and coherent Wellington.

Wellington doesn't lend itself to a static picturesque townscape; instead other ways of devising a coherent townscape must be explored. Drama, however, is a recurring theme in townscape design, and seems especially relevant to Wellington.

The potential role landscape architecture has in solving this problem

This thesis explores the role that landscape architecture has in providing the city's mixed architectural styles with some coherence, with specific reference to leftover and overlooked spaces.

Landscape architecture and the utilisation and transformation of these types of spaces is a tool for imbuing Wellington with greater aesthetic coherence than it has at present.

Landscape architecture regularly works on a range of scales in the city. It also often works with the interstitial spaces of a city. There are further opportunities to use landscape architecture as a disciplinary tool, and to use a 'weaving' approach through the city, to deal with the problem of the chaotic aesthetics of the city centre.

This thesis is an urban project that considers a variety of scales within the city. It is focussed on smaller spaces and the detailed realm, while all the while relating the design of these smaller spaces back to the larger city scale.

The specifics of site

A particular block in Te Aro has been chosen for analysis and design. This block represents the mixed architectural styles of Wellington's past. It is an historic block that includes some of the oldest buildings in Wellington. It is also a block that has a variety of very dramatic and interesting spaces.

The specifics of the site are an important part of this thesis. High emphasis is placed on

North

1:5000

Figure 3. Context plan. The particular block chosen for analysis and design, in Te Aro, Wellington.

site analysis, and an intimate understanding of the site, at a range of scales. The haptic realm is emphasised as important.

Patterns and geometric forms

Geometries and patterns are tools used in developing a coherent design. This comes out of the site analysis and awareness of form and detail. Geometries from the site are borrowed in order to accentuate and create coherence, while relating to the existing site attributes.

Consideration of history, existing attributes, and local typologies

History and context is often given too little importance in design decisions in New Zealand cities.

This thesis emphasizes the importance of acknowledging history and context in order to design successful new interventions within the city.

It is the nature of cities to be built up in layers over time; it is these layers that give cities richness and complexity.

By building in relation to what has been before, a coherent yet evolutionary city can develop.

This thesis focuses on the importance of local context and an appreciation of culture,

topography, climate, and existing architecture: understanding that new ways of working and thinking, and revolutionary ideas in architecture, are important; but that these can be introduced while acknowledging the existing local context.

By focusing on these virtues this thesis hopes to work on creating a local kind of coherence for inner city Wellington.

One strong local typology that has emerged in Wellington is the development of rooftop apartments in the central city. Gordon Holden's article, '*Superiority Complex*', in Architecture NZ 2004, discusses this unique Wellington typology and this has been influential in the development of the design for this thesis.

By focusing on Wellington's virtues and local typologies this thesis aims to create a kind of local coherence for inner city Wellington.

Neighbourhood and community

In addition to studying the purely formal and spatial elements of a city, this thesis also looks at the ideas of neighbourhood and community. The individual characteristics of different neighbourhoods are important.

There needs to be a careful balance between designing with the intention of creating greater visual coherence, and supporting diversity and difference within the local community.

Private and public thresholds

While the specific ownership of buildings is not considered in this thesis, issues regarding privacy are. The public and private thresholds of the inner city are considered. As well, this thesis works with the idea that people need varying types of public spaces in the city - spaces that offer privacy, and spaces that are more communal.

The developed design caters to both public and private user groups. It offers a range of spaces offering different degrees of privacy.

1.3 Other Key Authors and Texts

Gerald Melling and '*The Mid-City Crisis and other Stories*'

Gerald Melling is a well-respected Wellington architect. He is also the owner of a building in the block that this thesis deals with. His building sits in the tight urban fabric of Egmont Street, the alleyway street that runs parallel to Leeds Street. His office is in this building, and at different times he has also lived in the building. Melling understands the site this thesis deals with very well.

The building that Melling owns is comprised of two parts: an existing historic building, and a contemporary extension that Melling has added on top of the existing building. The extension is called 'Skybox'. The extension is referred to as a case study in Gordon Holden's article '*Superiority Complex*'.

It has been stated that there is a gap in New Zealand theory about the critique of overall

aesthetics in New Zealand townscapes. Gerald Melling is one of the few authors who does write about this issue, in his 1989 book '*Mid-City Life Crisis and other Stories*'. In '*Mid-City Life Crisis*', Melling specifically discusses Wellington's failures as a townscape. The book criticizes both individual architecture in the city, and how it works together in a collective manner as a townscape. Melling is concerned with the processes of building, and how systems of public and private interests influence architectural outcomes in the inner city.

Gerald Melling was interviewed for this thesis; and asked what he thought of the current state of Wellington's townscape, and if he thought aesthetics had improved since 1989. He said that he did not think they had much. In the interview Melling gave some useful insights on what he thinks makes Te Aro unique; as well as providing some useful information on the recent history of the district.

Christopher Alexander and '*Pattern Language*'

'*Pattern Language*' (1977), by Christopher Alexander, is another rulebook for developing a design language, and can be applied to Wellington. The book offers 253 patterns in total, which can be used to develop this language. These patterns are formal, but most often in response to peoples' activities.

The phenomenologists and their emphasis on site attributes

'*Questions of Perception*' (1994), by Juhani Pallasmaa, Steven Holl, and Alberto Perez-Gomez, has been influential. According to the approach of this book, the phenomenology of a site is divided into fragments. These fragments are key criteria by which to judge the particular site's spatial qualities. This criterion is helpful in understanding the formal elements that go into making a space special. These formal elements are separate to historical and contextual elements, and are more about what actually makes a particular space attractive.

Jane Jacobs

Jane Jacobs is an author who offers a variation to others writing about the formal elements of townscape. Jane Jacobs is well known for her humanitarian approach to neighbourhoods, her observation of social systems, and her encouragement of building up already working systems and existing attributes.

'*Opening Spaces: Design as Landscape Architecture*'

'*Opening Spaces: Design as Landscape Architecture*' by Hans-Wolfgang Loidl and Stefan Bernard (2003) is a general guide to landscape architecture as design. It offers advice on 'creating spaces', 'fundamentals of good design', and advice on 'movement and access'. A chapter that is particularly relevant to this thesis is 'Repetition as a Tool'; in

which Loidl and Bernard discuss achieving a balance between variation and coherence (repetition, patterns, proportion, rhythm, and scale).

1.4 Research Intention

There are two main intentions of this research.

One is to devise a way to analyse the success of a townscape. This means understanding what the different authors regard as successful in a townscape; and then deciding what is actually the problem with Wellington's townscape and how it can be improved.

The second main intention for this research is to devise a way of designing for some coherence within Wellington City: to find a way to design that strikes the balance between respecting context and existing elements on the one hand, and on the other putting forward a strong enough design solution that can begin to create a coherent language in a particular part of the city.

 A subordinate design intention is to test the role of landscape architecture, specifically, in creating coherence in a visually cluttered New Zealand city.

1.5 Outline of Thesis

This thesis covers: a brief background to Wellington; a theoretical overview; a site analysis; a discussion of sub-topics that come under this overall topic; a discussion of case studies; and a discussion and evaluation of the design.

Chapter two is a broad overview of Wellington's history and background. Both the recent Maori history and early European settlement of Wellington is outlined, in order to understand Wellington's development. There is also a brief discussion about the recent physical landscape changes of Te Aro.

Chapter three sets out a theoretical base and methodology by which to work. This chapter acts like a literature review, considering some key authors and texts.

This includes a critical evaluation of the concept of townscape and the picturesque city. Out of this a theory around a townscape specific to Wellington is developed.

Chapter four is site analysis. This is the site analysis that came as research. following the development of a theoretical base. Included in this chapter is a range of different ways of analysing the site, and at a range of different scales. This chapter includes a description of the site and reasons for choosing the site. There is also a discussion on the validity and success of the various approaches to site analysis.

Chapter five includes a critique of Jan Gehl's 'City to Waterfront Study' for Wellington. In the more general sense this chapter discusses Jan Gehl's philosophy on urban quality and the strengths and weaknesses of his approach to urban analysis and design. A main part of this chapter is a discussion of Wellington and Copenhagen, as two different cities with opposite degrees of coherence.

Chapter six evaluates the existing typologies in Wellington. A discussion of what unique typologies exist in Wellington that we can build off - literally.

Chapter seven discusses the private and public relationships that people have within the context of an inner city situation, and with their city. This chapter evaluates the role that community and civic pride have in creating a coherent townscape. It also discusses the need for intimate and quieter spaces, as well as public and exposed places, within the inner city.

Chapter eight is the design chapter. Design development, final design, and design evaluation.

Chapter nine is the thesis conclusion.

Figure 4. One of the oldest brick buildings in Wellington. Its maintenance has been mostly neglected, but this has caused it to weather is some really interesting ways.

CHAPTER 2

Te Aro's Background

2. Te Aro's Background

A brief overview of Te Aro's background.

The purpose of this thesis is to create a design which will add to the coherence of Wellington's inner city townscape. For logistical purposes, I have chosen to concentrate on the inner city neighbourhood of Te Aro, while also relating the design to greater Wellington.

It is important to understand the influences that have shaped the Te Aro area, so that the design can be as sympathetic to the area as possible. This understanding of background is part of the methodology which has informed the final design.

The European history of Te Aro, which dates back to 1839 has been looked at, as well as the recent Maori history preceding it. One of the most influential times in the development of the contemporary Te Aro townscape was the period when Maori and European land ownership visions collided in the 1800's. This period of hasty development marked the beginning of a dizzying evolution in the townscape.

Information for this chapter is from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) register, and specifically the '*Te Aro Pa Report*'. This report is summed up on NZHPT's website, but a full copy is also available at NZHPT's national office in Wellington. The author of this specific report is E. Anderson. The registration number for Te Aro pa is 7771. Additional information is from the book '*Te Aro Pa - Its Significance*', by John Roberts (Roberts, 1989).

2.1 Te Aro Pa

Walking around Te Aro flat today most people would have little awareness that the land around Courtney Place was a thriving ecological swamp just 170 years ago. Nor would it be obvious that around the same time there was a prosperous Maori pa at what is now the bottom of Taranaki Street.

At the time of European colonisation in the 1840s Te Aro Pa was one of the largest in the Wellington area, along with Pipitea Pa (near present day Thorndon). In the early 1840s, when Europeans were first arriving, there were approximately 60-80 acres of cultivated land associated with the pa (NZHPT register). The site that this thesis deals with was part once part of this cultivated area.

This old Te Aro Pa is now buried beneath asphalt roads, inner-city high-rise buildings, residential dwellings and ground level commercial outlets. Apart from the remains of three ponga structures on display in a glass case, there is no evidence that vernacular Maori residential huts and other utilitarian structures once occupied this site.

2.2 A Past Te Aro Landscape

In less than 200 years there have been dramatic landscape changes in the Te Aro area.

The foreshore used to end at Wakefield Street. It now ends a quarter of a kilometre further out into the harbour, due to the 1855 earthquake and land reclamation in the late 1880s. Te Aro Pa used to sit directly on the old foreshore. If it were still to exist now, it would sit inland, in the middle of a strict city grid.

Besides the pa, the Te Aro foreshore was once comprised of a lowland swamp, fanning out from Waitangi stream, which used to be a useful food source for local Maori.

Te Aro flat had one other prominent stream, the Waimapihi Stream, but nothing remains of this stream today. The Waimapihi Stream began in the south-west hills beyond present day Brooklyn. It then flowed down Aro Valley, through the once waterlogged Te Aro flat, and had its outlet on the Te Aro foreshore, entering the harbour just to the west of the old pa. This stream is now diverted into a concrete underground storm water system at the top of Aro Valley, cutting short its journey to the Te Aro flat and foreshore.

Waimapihi Stream is known to have had strong connections with three iwi - Ngati Mutunga, Taranaki, Ngati Ruanui - the three iwi that at various times lived at Te Aro Pa.

The 1855 earthquake contributed significantly to the changing landscape of Te Aro. This magnitude 8.1 earthquake lifted the entire Wellington shoreline. The low-lying swamp land of Te Aro was raised up, causing it to drain. This resulted in the disappearance of an invaluable food source for the Maori living at Te Aro Pa. This food source associated with the swamp had also been a useful bargaining and trading resource for Maori with the recently arrived Europeans. After this loss they were more at risk of losing their occupation of this land.

As well, port development around the Te Aro foreshore, which was already taking place before the earthquake by the early Europeans, became a lot easier as a result of the raising of the foreshore. It made later land reclamation more possible too, which led to an escalation of Te Aro's development.

2.3 The Complex Land Rights of Te Aro

The beginning of the 19th century had been a dynamic period in Wellington's history, with complex patterns of land occupation and development.

In the first part of the 19th century, before Wellington's European colonisation, there were numerous battles between Maori iwi over land occupation rights.

For a long period the Wellington area had been occupied by the same iwi, who had lived in a reasonably peaceful state with one another. Then during the period from 1819 to 1836 Wellington (Te Whanganui a Tara) was invaded at least six times by iwi from north of Wellington. Following the Waiorua battle in 1824 a significant migration into the area by these northern iwi occurred. The migrating iwi were Ngati Mutunga, Ngati Tama, and Te Atiawa who were in turn '*fleeing Waikato vengeance in Taranaki*' (NZHPT register).

In January 2004 the Wellington Tenths Trust Cultural Impact Report, described the early settlement history of Wellington Harbour as '*...an extraordinarily complex situation where the term 'tangata whenua' needs to be couched in historical context.*'"(NZHPT) For a while the newly arrived iwi Ngati Mutunga, and the established iwi Ngati Ira lived in co-existence around the harbour. Then Ngati Mutunga attacked Ngati Ira in the 1820's, driving them out of the area.

It was Ngati Mutunga that established Te Aro Pa in 1824. However they didn't stay long, and in 1835 Ngati Mutunga left their Waitangi Stream land; leaving it in possession of Taranaki iwi, who had recently fled the Taranaki area.

After this re-possession, Te Aro Pa was actually split into two parts, and occupied by two different iwi - Ngati Ruanui iwi at the eastern end, and Ngati Haumia hapu from Taranaki iwi at the western end .

This connection with Taranaki iwi means Te Aro Pa has connections to some of the earliest stories associated with New Zealand. 'Te Aro' means the face or the front, in reference to the old pa facing Taranaki Maunga, where the inhabitants originated. This name further proves the association of Taranaki iwi with the pa.

Te Aro Pa and the land surrounding it, is also associated with some of the most prominent chiefs in recent Maori history; among them Ngatata-i-te-rangi, one of the chiefs who signed the Treaty of Waitangi in Wellington.

2.4 European Colonisation

Following this quick shake up in the occupation of Te Aro by Maori in the early 19th century, European colonisation followed almost immediately afterwards.

In the 1840's when the New Zealand Company were colonising Wellington, it became clear that Te Aro Pa was special to Maori and that Maori were determined to keep it. For Maori it was a thriving community, a valuable food source, and also a place of Wahi Tapu with sacred burial grounds.

However Europeans regarded it as highly valuable as well, because it provided a connection from the developing main street, Taranaki Street, to the port land that was being reclaimed on the waterfront. Te Aro Pa was considered to be in the way of a developing European townscape.

The New Zealand Company had divided up the land of Te Aro, and planned sections and a town before they had even arrived in Wellington. They had sold all of the sections to English settlers prior to their arrival.

In 1839 the New Zealand Company signed an agreement with some local Maori to ensure they could get colonisation underway. These signatures were described by the New Zealand Company as the signatures of the sole owners of Port Nicholson. This was untrue as there were many iwi occupying Port Nicholson at this time who had not signed. Specifically, there was no signature from a representative of Te Aro Pa.

Surveyors nevertheless began to mark out the land around the pa with pegs and lines. Maori quickly responded, pulling the surveyors' tools from the ground. Maori living at

the pa refused to give up their occupation of the pa, or any of the land surrounding it. Maori occupying other parts of the Wellington harbour also strongly denied that their land had been sold to build a European town.

With the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, in 1840 in Wellington, came an investigation of the New Zealand Company's dealings. English lawyer William Spain was involved in reviewing the company's dealings, and eventually ruled that Te Aro Pa and its associated cultivations be excluded from the company's ownership rights in Te Aro area. Spain tried to define what area constituted the pa.

The ruling by Spain, directing that Maori be allowed to keep their cultivations, led to a lot of subsequent tension between arriving settlers and Maori. At this time Maori had 639 acres under cultivation in the Te Aro flat, but 528 of these acres had already been sold to arriving European settlers by the New Zealand Company (NZHPT register).

Because of the land disputes that were occurring over these cultivated acres, in 1845 Lieutenant Colonel William Anson McCleverty stepped in. McCleverty directed some exchanges, favouring Europeans. Europeans were granted the cultivated land they had bought from the New Zealand Company, and in exchange Maori were gifted land elsewhere for growing their crops. This gifted land was most often a long walking distance from the pa, on the outskirts of Te Aro, and this made life hard for the Te Aro Pa Maori at this time.

Wesleyan missionaries travelling down from other parts of the North Island were also gifted some land on the pa by Maori. The Wesleyans built a chapel on the pa, and built up a following for their beliefs among local Maori. To this day there are

Wesleyan connections in the Te Aro area, with a prominent Wesleyan church situated on Taranaki Street. During the colonial period the Wesleyan missionaries were good mediators between Maori and European. Most often they were Maori, so understood the Maori culture and language, but they had also been taught English and been integrated into European culture and so were useful interpreters between the parties.

Colonisation was too great a force for local Maori to resist, and it took only two decades for Te Aro Pa to go from being a thriving pa, to being a remnant of a past civilisation. By 1861 there were only 9 inhabitants at Te Aro Pa. This rose again, but to only 59, by 1874. (NZHPT register)

In the 1860's Te Aro Pa was divided officially into 28 allotments, under the Native Lands Act 1865. The allotments were granted by the Crown to individuals and small groups.

Soon, what was left of Te Aro Pa, and the surrounding Te Aro flat, became a burden to the city. The pa's communal way of living was seen as unhygienic. In the late 1800s Te Aro Pa had become a slum and was strongly objected to by other residents of the city. Commissioner Heaphy was one of those who wanted the pa erased from the city.

Heaphy saw the pa as an exception to the usual rule that reserve land required for Maori should be preserved for Maori. He described Te Aro Pa as a '*nest of immorality*' (NZHPT register) and considered the pa insanitary. He thought that for both Maori and Pakeha it would be best if Maori left town, and that the pa should pass into pakeha hands. This is essentially what happened, with the building of a British town already underway.

In the 1880s reclamation added 9 hectares to the Te Aro foreshore, and dramatically changed the shape of the Wellington townscape

Eventually Wellington's imported European history unveiled itself, in varying stages, upon the land that was once the pa and the surrounding Te Aro flat. Now all evidence of Maori occupation of the area is gone, except for three punga logs housed in the ground floor of a new multi-storey building.

2.5 A Rapid Evolution

The 1880's saw a rapid development of the townscape, with little time for reflection or consideration. The change happened too fast for any vernacular townscape to be applied or developed. In just two decades Te Aro went from being a swampy flat, with a pa living effectively off the available natural resources, to a rapidly developing British town. There was no time for discussion about what would work best on the land. Nor was there any discussion about how a Maori way of living could be fused with a European way of living. There was a desperate fight for land, with roads, buildings, and other elements that make up a townscape, laid down as fast as possible in order to secure effective ownership of the land.

It is only recently that Wellington residents have begun to reflect upon what has contributed to the current townscape. A British town plan, colliding with an unexpected local context, resulted in a misguided city grid becoming established, setting the scene for a confused townscape. These shaky foundations have been built

upon over the past 170 years with imported styles from every international era being introduced to Wellington's townscape.

Over the years, some small scale and personal amendments have been made and some building has occurred that relates specifically to the local context. For the most part though, and with the larger scale buildings in the city, this confusion and lack of identity has only been amplified.

In colonial times this collision of ideas and context was typical of the establishment of cities throughout the country. However these inappropriate patterns of development seem to be even more evident in Wellington because of the city's dynamic and powerful natural setting. The weather and topography largely dictate how people live in Wellington.

The next three pages shows some of the earliest buildings constructed in the Leeds Street site. Some of these buildings were constructed in colonial times, and a few later, in the 20th century. All of these buildings remain today, although some of them have had alterations to make them suitable for contemporary living i.e, the Hannah's Warehouse building.

Hannah's Warehouse residential building

This building sits dominantly arching over Leeds Street. The main thoroughfare of Leeds Street runs through the cut out passageways of the building. The building used to be used as the Hannah's shoe factory, but is now a residential building. The building could be said to be the key piece in the composition of the block that it sits in.
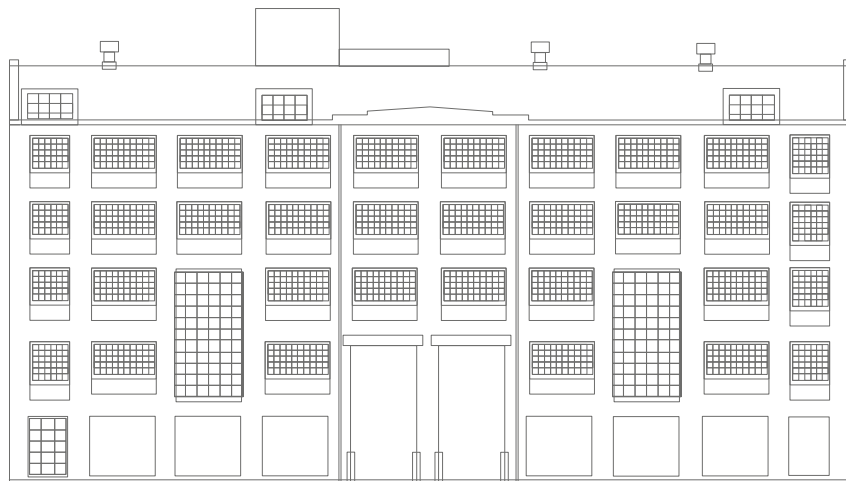
South elevation
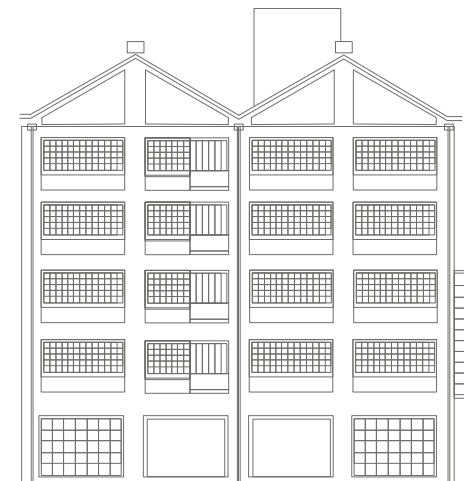
West elevation

Figure 5. Hannah's Warehouse residential building

These drawings are based on originals sourced from Wellington City Archives.

All drawings scaled at 1:400

'Jam' hairdressers building

This building was once used as the horse stables to the Bristol Hotel. The Bristol Hotel sits directly in front of this building, facing Cuba Street. The Bristol Hotel still exists today as a popular pub. This small building is today used as a hairdressing salon, and it helps to compose some interesting courtyard spaces.

"Barber & Co.' building and 'Nees' building

These buildings sit side by side on Leeds Street, and are used today as tradesmen workshops. One is a furniture making workshop.

North courtyard elevation

Courtyard facade - west facing   Roof plan

Leeds Street facade - facing east

Figure 6. 'Jam' hairdressing building

Figure 7. 'Barber & Co.' and 'Nees' buildings.

Whitcoulls building on Cuba Street

This building, fronting onto Cuba Street, today houses a 'Whitcoulls' stationary store, but also a 'Hannah's' shoe shop, retaining some of the Hannah's family legacy that has always been a part of the history of the site. This building has a grand facade. It also has an interesting roof, resembling the topography of a valley.

Main Cuba Street facade - west facing
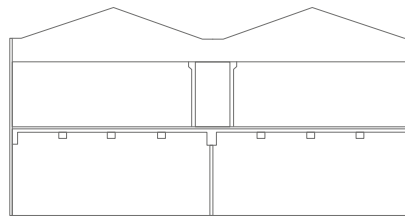
Section through the middle of the building

Cuba Street
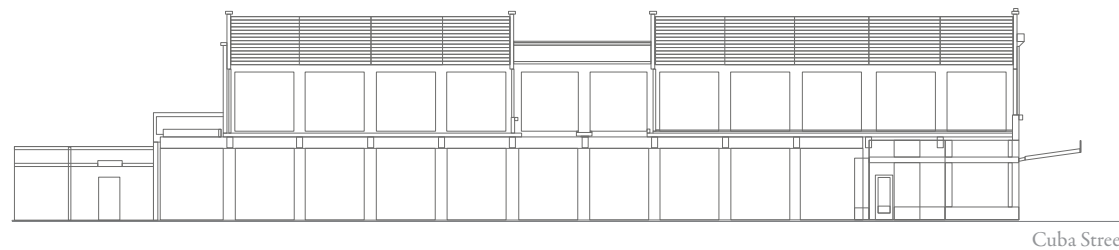
Longitudinal elevation

Figure 8. Whitcoulls building

2.6 The Destruction of Wellington

Just as Wellington had accumulated an eclectic but comfortable mix of historic colonial buildings and other buildings inspired from past international eras, the city underwent a period of quite drastic destruction during the 1980s.

Gerald Melling, in his interview, said that the Te Aro precinct stayed a bit more intact than the Lambton Quay area during this time. Cuba Street and some of the surrounding small streets kept most of their integrity, but a lot of the built fabric that made up the wider community of Te Aro, was destroyed.

In his 1989 book, '*Mid-City Crisis and other Stories*', Melling compared the destruction of central Wellington to performing open heart surgery with a '*Kango hammer*'. "*The feverish uncoordinated fingers of the city's many self appointed quacks have ripped out flesh and transplanted organs with almost total disregard for the patient's ability to survive in recognisable form.*" Melling is referring to the Wellington City Council's unbelievable disregard for existing history, when they allowed some of the city's most identifiable and fondly regarded buildings to be pulled down. Melling wrote that the city is now 'bleeding', and in '*post-operative shock*'. (Melling, 1989. p. 80)

Melling argued that change should never be carried out so drastically because it ruins the intricate systems and complexities of the city. This seems to be the story of Wellington's history, however, and has contributed to the confused townscape the city has inherited (see figure 9).

Figure 9. View of Wellington townscape, from Whitcoulls building rooftop.

In '*Mid-City Crisis*' Melling stated that a lot of Wellington's civic buildings are inert and dull - that within them there are no mysteries to unravel, no dark secrets to be found or discoveries to be made (page 8). The streets that surround these dull buildings in central Wellington could be said to be equally lacking in mystery. This is because interesting buildings give the spaces surrounding them interest as well, through their intrusions, extrusions, and details.

When I interviewed Melling recently however, he was thankful that although many of the historic buildings along one side of his street, Egmont Street, had been pulled down, at least the proportions and external spaces of the street had remained largely intact. He thought that many of the replacement buildings were boring, but at least they had kept their proportions within the same original street structure, so that the alleyway still had the same dimensions and some of the same feeling.

2.7 The Wrong Fit

Wellington has missed a huge opportunity to develop an intensely dramatic townscape, one that responds to the local conditions. Instead Wellington has had a generic European grid imposed upon it, despite this being clearly a wrong fit given the topography and climate.

Gerald Melling is one of the few commentators in New Zealand to discuss New Zealand's incoherent townscapes. In '*Mid-City Crisis*' Melling refers to specific examples of architecture in the city and the apparent lack of quality and civic pride

in the building of Wellington City. Since Melling wrote '*Mid-City Crisis*' in 1989, certain areas and buildings have changed, but the criticism remains valid. Even some of the most recent buildings in Wellington have been designed with little relation to their surroundings.

Currently in Wellington the existing townscape is so confusing that any intervention or new building has no starting point or reference for design. Any style can be imposed upon the city and the building won't be criticized as being out of place (see figure 10 and 11).

2.8 The Te Aro and Cuba Street Precinct

Te Aro and the Cuba Street precinct of Wellington is a neighbourhood that has been grappling with creating a local identity for itself. The area speaks of individuality, and acceptance of difference. It is a culture that has been rising above its confusing surroundings and trying to create a strong sense of community.

The area does have a strong community centred on Cuba Street. There are many individual shops and businesses, a vibrant street life down Cuba Street, and an increasing number of inner city residents.

Yet, if this neighbourhood is to continue to thrive, this ethos has to encompass the whole area. A network has to be created that expands beyond Cuba Street. It has to spread into the side streets where many residents live and where there is the possibility of creating some more private and personal spaces.

Figure 10. Civic Square - a good example of the confusion and incoherence present in Wellington City. The square demonstrates some of Wellington's lost meanings and half finished ideas, with many broken axial routes. Yet, there are still quirky and interesting aspects to Civic Square, which illustrate Wellington's individual identity. Civic Square proves the predicament in developing a design language through Wellington.

2.9 The Current Mindset

Currently Wellington is in a reflective but also development mindset where it wants to see the city transform into a thriving 21st century city, but one with a local identity.

There has been an increasing shift to living in the inner city. As a result, the importance of inner city public spaces and parks has been recognised. However, these spaces are still being developed predominantly along the waterfront, and less so in the denser inner city areas.

International trends are still looked at closely by Wellington's planners, and it is important to keep up with the rest of the world and connect Wellington to a wider global context; but the city's past should be an important consideration in designing for the future.

Figure 11. Civic Square panorama

Figure 12. A back view from the Whitcoulls building rooftop.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Base & Methodology

— literature review

3. Key Ideas and Methodology - literature review

An outline of the range of authors and texts considered.

There is a range of views offered on site, city, and general design. A few of the texts are written as rulebooks to design. A selection of the opinions and theories offered became very useful for both site analysis and design. Some of these texts form part of the methodology of this thesis.

3.1 The Phenomenologists and their Specificity to Site

Site according to the phenomenologists

'*Questions of Perception*', by Alberto Perez-Gomez, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Steven Holl, looks at site as it is categorised into phenomenological fragments. A site is broken down into fragments, all of which contribute to how we experience it.

These fragments are intuitive feelings about a space and the qualities which people experience and think sub-consciously about all the time. This book is helpful in identifying some of the attributes which make a space experiential and for highlighting these often intuitive feelings. It sets out a guideline by which to sensitively analyse a space.

The fragments are:

- *Enmeshed experience: The merging of object and field*

- *Perspectival Space: Incomplete perception*

- *Colour*

- *Light and Shadow*

- *Spatiality of Night*

- *Time, Duration, and Perception*

- *Water (natural processes)*

- *Sound*

- *Detail: The Haptic Realm*

- *Proportion, Scale, and Perception*

- *Site, Circumstance, and Idea*

Juhani Pallasmaa also has a chapter in this book that states that we experience architecture and spaces with all of our seven senses:

- *Visual*

- *Acoustic – including silence, time, and solitude*

- *Scent*

- *Touch*

- *Muscle*

- *Bone*

- *Taste*

'*Questions of Perception*' has proved to be a useful guidebook with which to analyse a space according to its sensual qualities.

3.2 Gordon Cullen's *'Townscape'*

Gordon Cullen's book '*The Concise Townscape*' although 50 years old now, is still a refreshing look at urban design. It is a book that focuses on the spatial relationship between people and their surrounding townscape.

Like the phenomenologists, Cullen understands the delicate way in which the body experiences space. He shows this understanding in his evocative perspective drawings of the city. Cullen is particularly well known for his sequential drawings of spaces (see figure 13). He is concerned with the realities of a body being immersed in particular spaces.

Cullen believes that scientific methods can only get us so far in understanding the city. Diagrams and statistics cannot evoke drama within an urban setting, and therefore planning with these tools alone cannot give us the human sensibility we require in a city. Cullen does a good job of capturing experiential qualities in his perspective drawings.

"*In a world of black and white the roads are for movement and the buildings for social and business purposes*" (Cullen, 1961, p. 21). Cullen understands place as being something beyond pure urban organisation.

Cullen does not divide spatial experience into fragments like the phenomenologists. He is concerned mostly with optics; in this he differs to Pallasmaa, who actively tries to involve the other senses and warns against the dominance of vision.

Cullen is however very specific with optics, and sorts them into three categories;

- *Motion*

- *Position*

- *Content*

These three ways of understanding vision contribute to understanding of how our environment produces an emotional reaction within us.
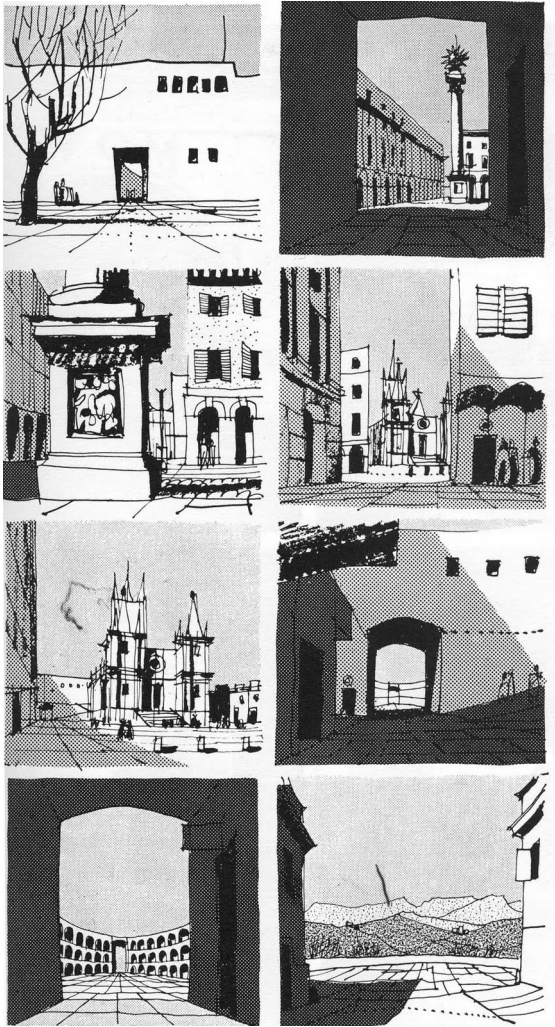
Figure 13. Gordon Cullen's illustration of serial vision and sequential views, taken from *'The Concise Townscape'*.

Cullen describes '*motion*' as serial vision. Although a pedestrian may walk through a town at a uniform speed, the scenery of a town is often revealed in a series of jerks and revelations. This is what he calls serial vision, where the town is revealed to us in a sequence. The surroundings we experience are always going to disrupt our even movement.

This description of serial vision differs from the phenomenologists' who view the city as an enmeshed experience. They see the city as having multiple horizon lines and vanishing points, rather than serial experiences. What the phenomenologists and Cullen have in common, however, is that they both perceive the city in terms of how the body perceives it: in detail, and as a haptic and spatial experience.

Cullen expands upon his theory of serial vision, and explains that we split our sequential experience into two elements: the existing view, and the emerging view; which becomes here and there. You cannot have one without the other. Through understanding of our optical movement he says that we can begin to manipulate the sequence of views we experience. Through careful and sensitive design he claims that we can design a sequential space full of juxtapositions, drama, surprise, and contrast. Alternatively, through neglect or lack of care, we can also design spaces that are featureless, inert, and dull.

According to Cullen, this basic understanding of motion and optics is how we can begin to understand if a townscape is interesting or not. Drama is the key attribute Cullen uses to determine whether or not a space is interesting.

Secondly, Cullen discusses '*position*' - the position of our body in its environment.
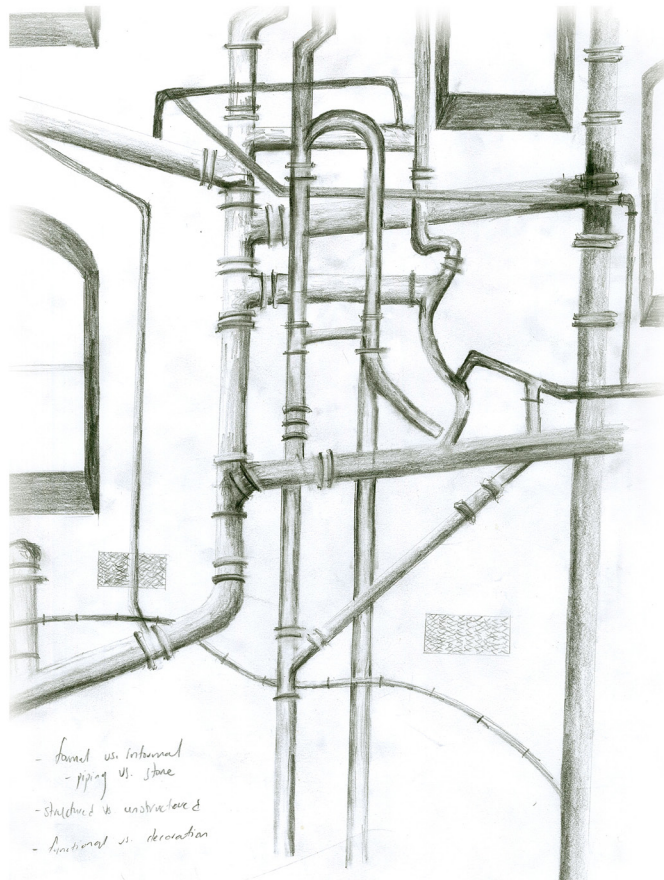
Figure 14. Drainpipes present on a wall in the site. This is an example of interesting '*content*' that makes up the urban setting.

Cullen thinks that sense of body position in design should be highly considered, if not exploited. Position can be manipulated through layering spatial experiences, contrasting one situation with another. With the creation of these emotive situations, drama can be induced, and the relationship between city and person enhanced.

Finally, '*content*' is what the urban environment is composed of. Cullen believes that there is too much insensitivity in urban design and not enough concern for content. Content includes details, texture, materials, and form (see figure 14).

Cullen stresses the importance of breaking away from conformity of content within the urban realm. He states that the best way to do this is through integration of local context. An understanding of local conditions provides difference in design. Diversity is important in giving content its interest. According to Cullen, an integration of local conditions in design can also provide coherence.

Cullen uses the metaphor of a party and the interaction of people. At the beginning of a party people generally conform more to social norms. But, as the party progresses, people break away from rigid conversation and the party becomes more interesting. The conversation between people is more fluid and more at ease. The same could be said with the townscape and the interplay between buildings. It is a conversation between buildings, and one that can be a multitude of things - interesting, relaxed, fluid, boring, or conflicting. The design of the townscape determines this conversation. Time also plays a crucial role in the outcome of the conversation. A townscape unravels itself over generations, much like the unravelling of a party over the course of an evening. Over many years it is hoped that a fluid conversation can be created between buildings.
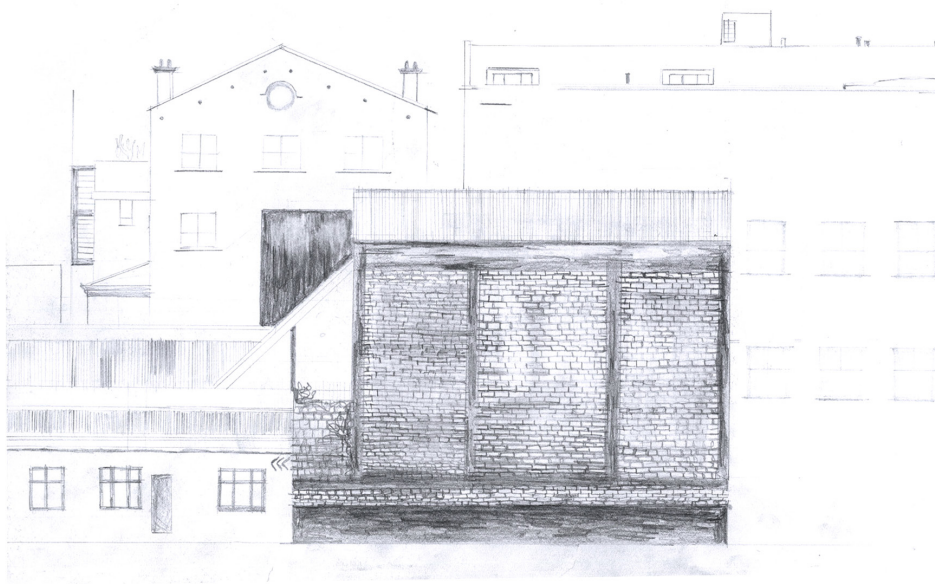
Designing townscape is the art of making variation work together, towards a cohesive whole. A collection of differing styles and building techniques, from different eras, can still be accumulated to make an interesting and satisfying composition (see figure 15).

'*The Concise Townscape*' discusses the art of creating relationships between various urban elements, "*buildings, trees, nature, water, traffic, and advertisements weave together to enhance motion, position, and place.*" (Cullen, 1961, p. 8)

Cullen continues by saying drama is the ultimate goal to this interweaving: "*to take all the elements that go to create the environment...and weave them together in such a way that drama is released.*" (Cullen, 1961, p. 8). Cullen looks at the city as a stage-set for life. He considers how the design of it can best support unfolding stories.

Cullen compares building a city to building a home. We must use our human imagination and warmth in order to create this home. If we do not use our warmth as humans to design, then we end up with unconsidered townscapes, where everything is incoherent, and spaces become dull and uninteresting. This is what has begun to happen in parts of Wellington where big box developments rule, with their lack of quality or detail. But Wellington also has some very homely neighbourhoods, where human warmth is very present. Te Aro is a neighbourhood that exhibits both the former and the latter.

Cullen believes in not having complete control over the townscape, but rather manipulating small aspects of it; "a*s will be seen, the aim is not to dictate the shape of the town or environment, but is a modest one: simply to manipulate within the tolerances.*" (Cullen, 1961, p. 8)

3.3 The Picturesque and the Relationship to Cullen

Two other authors on the topic of townscape, Nikolaus Pevsner and Camillo Sitte, provide comparison to Cullen.

Camillo Sitte lived from 1843 to 1903 in Vienna, Austria. He was an architect and city-planning theorist. He studied the ancient cities of Europe in order to understand what made them work on a human scale. He idealized the old European cities, and was very critical of the new American cities. In 1945 Sitte published '*The Art of Building Cities: City building according to its artistic principles*' (Sitte, 1945) extolling the old cities and criticising modern planning principles.

Nikolaus Pevsner was Cullen's contemporary. He lived from 1902 to 1983 in Britain. He was on the editorial board for the *Architectural Review* from 1946 to 1971, and contributed many articles on the topic of townscape during this time. In 2010 '*Visual Planning and the Picturesque*' was published. It is a book compiling these journal articles published in the *Architectural Review* in the mid-century, the time of the British townscape movement.

Pevsner also studied historic city planning examples, but in contrast to Sitte, who idealised historical cities in a nostalgic and reminiscent manner, Pevsner applied his understanding of history to enhance contemporary planning.

Many of Pevsner's articles published in the *Architectural Review* came about because of the post-war discussions about reconstruction that were occurring. It was a time for change in Britain and the townscape movement was prevalent in architectural discussions.

Foremost, Pevsner was a British historian, and he wanted the book '*Visual Planning and the Picturesque*' to bring attention to Britain's contribution to planning history. He also wanted to bring to light the role that the picturesque concept had had in British history and culture, and how this had led to the townscape movement. He wanted to discuss the common threads that the picturesque had with the modern planning concepts of his time.

In many ways Pevsner could see the big picture and the links between history and what was happening with modernism in Britain in the mid-century. '*Visual Planning and the Picturesque*' is useful for its historical overview of architecture and town planning in Britain and wider Europe.

Cullen's book '*The Concise Townscape*' is similar to Pevsner's book in that it is also a collection of articles published from the 1940's onwards in *Architectural Review* magazine in Britain. Both Cullen and Pevsner were writing influentially about British townscape during the post-war period, when modernism was dominant.

Pevsner's views are particularly relevant to the New Zealand experience.

Pevsner was able to break down the meaning of 'picturesque' and discuss what its key principles actually were. The picturesque is now seen as a cultural phenomenon from Britain, but before that it was a set of principles relating to site. The principles were similar to the phenomenologists' fragments. Like the original theory of 'picturesque', the phenomenologists' identify qualities that make certain sites special and sensual.

The phenomenologists' emphasize individual site circumstances.

By the time of the colonial settlement of New Zealand, the meaning of '*picturesque*' had evolved. 'Picturesque' came to mean one ideal - an ideal to be encouraged, copied and reapplied to different sites. The application of this ideal was essentially what influenced the founding of Wellington's townscape.

Pevsner was also able to see the importance of combining generations of architecture in a coherent townscape, in order to create an identity for a city. He understood that cities hold many stories and past ways of living, and he knew that successful cities must weave these stories together in a coherent fashion. Like Jane Jacobs, his criticism of modern architecture in the mid-20th century was its lack of recognition for the existing fabric of the city, and the consequent destruction of it to make way for this modern architecture.

"Modern architecture is let down by its planning consequences in an excessive and exclusive idealism that provides no way for modern and historic buildings to live together. What is required is a new picture in which, despite their ideological and technical incompatibility, modern, historic, and vernacular buildings can be visually composed together. Both the resources and the authority for this lie in the picturesque and its national character." (Pevsner, 2010, p. 17)

One of the key principles in the developing idea of townscape was the idea of historic preservation amongst modernism, the unity of various architectural eras. The picturesque was the tool with which to create this unity -the picturesque being a set of principles with which to grasp and organise the best of a given environment. The picturesque, under Pevsner's theory, was a way to design in a very site-specific way, responding to the special conditions available; and to make the most from them in a coherent design.

3.4 Gerald Melling and '*Mid-City Crisis and other Stories*'

Gerald Melling's book '*Mid-City Crisis and other Stories*' is a critical but very entertaining collection of writings that were originally written for Melling's column in the *National Business Review.*

In '*Mid-City Crisis*' Melling criticises Wellington architecture, as well as some buildings in other parts of the country. Melling discusses both individual buildings and whole neighbourhoods. He is reacting to the destruction that took place in Wellington and elsewhere in New Zealand in the 1980's and the redevelopment period that followed. The book uses a medical analogy, with the city being compared to a body with organs, and with the architects, city planners and developers cast as surgeons - some precise and thoughtful, and some clumsy. It is an engaging analogy.

Melling's book and its criticism of Wellington's townscape is summed up in the opening page of the first chapter, where he states, *"In short, the redevelopment of Wellington (Auckland too) lacks any theoretical base for its buildings, either collectively or individually."* Melling references Aldo Rossi, who stated that places must be stronger than people, *"the fixed scene stronger than transitory succession of events".* Melling is

making the point that Wellington does not have a strong and coherent townscape within which life can play out. This is similar to Cullen's views about townscape, as a dramatic and well-designed stage set.

Melling states that if there is a strong city-design-scape then it makes positive demands on building quality in the city. Society respects the existing design language of the city and as a result quality standards will be higher.

3.5 Christopher Alexander and *'Pattern Language'*

Christopher Alexander's book '*A Pattern Language*', published in 1977, is volume two - the second part of a single work. This volume two discusses formal and social patterns within the city. The book is a rulebook for a building and planning language, within the city, but at other scales too. The book uses patterns to construct this overall language; patterns for towns, neighbourhoods, houses, gardens and rooms. There are 253 patterns in total.

'*A Pattern Language*' discusses the need for the many people in a society with varying vocations, to work together in order to create a coherent language in the built environment. The book is clearly an aim by Christopher Alexander to reach out to the many people in society with different skills. Alexander believes that towns and cities cannot become alive unless they share a common pattern language, and unless they are made by all the people in society.

'*A Pattern Language*' is written for people with a range of projects at different scales.

Projects could include a house for a family or oneself, a neighbourhood project, a public design, or even a project on the scale of a whole town. The book is written to be practical, encouraging, and realistic. The book is even intended to be used as a guide in the construction process.

The book looks at general problems in the urban environment, and then offers solutions to these problems. These solutions could be applied to many different sites. In this way the book is very good at picking up common problems in the urban environment, but does not refer to site specifics. The reader should be aware that local conditions must also be considered.

This echoes Cullen's views on dealing with conformity. In '*The Concise Townscape*', Cullen states that conformity in design is a good starting point, but interesting design must break away from conformity by adapting to local conditions.

An important aspect of '*A Pattern Language*' is that all the patterns are related to one another. Every time a new pattern is introduced it is related back to the others. This emphasises the importance of weaving the patterns together to create a coherent design language. The patterns are described as components that can be adjusted in an infinite number of ways in order to suit different conditions. It is evident that there is an understanding of relationships between different scaled patterns. *"In short no pattern is an isolated entity. Each pattern can exist in the world, only to the extent that is supported by other patterns..."* (A Pattern Language, page xiii).

Alexander states, *"This is a fundamental view of the world. When you build a thing you cannot merely build that thing in isolation, but must also repair the world around it,*

and within it, so that the larger world at that one place becomes more coherent, and more whole; and the thing which you make takes its place in the web of nature, as you make it."(A pattern language, page xiii).

3.6 Jane Jacobs and her Observation of Neighbourhoods

In 1961 Jane Jacobs published '*The Life and Death of Great American Cities*'. In this book she discusses New York City, and in particular the social aspects of the city in relation to formal aspects. She discusses the fate of New York City as a consequence of the trend towards modernism in the mid-20th century, writing about similar issues and at a similar time to the British townscape theorists, Cullen and Pevsner.

Jacobs is concerned with the realities of cities, as opposed to top-down planning. She was not an architect or a planner, and her most powerful research tool was observation. She wrote about neighbourhoods she knew intimately. Her book is most usefully read as a way of understanding an alternative approach to site analysis. She advocates observation as a tool for site analysis, and ultimately design. Jacobs believed that planners were too hasty and too eager to demolish neighbourhoods and to replace them with what they thought were better design solutions. Jacobs believed that even the most deprived neighbourhoods had their entrenched social systems, and that the physical destruction of these neighbourhoods destroyed these systems.

Jane Jacobs took a humanitarian approach to neighbourhood planning that was

different to the townscape theorists, who took a formal and aesthetic approach. It is worth considering both of these approaches. The results of Jacob's observations are also relevant to the New Zealand experience.

At the time Gerald Melling's book '*Mid-City Crisis*' was published in 1989, it seems that New Zealand had learnt little from the United States' planning and architecture failures. New Zealand often trails a few steps behind the United States and Europe in terms of cultural trends, and has had the advantage of observing successes and failures overseas. However, by the late 1980's it would seem the lessons had not been taken on board.

In '*Mid-City Crisis*', Melling refers to '*The Life and Death of Great American Cities*', stating that he thinks Wellington failed to learn from Jane Jacobs' warnings. *"As ever New Zealand has failed to learn from the mistakes of Europe and the United States"* (Melling, 1989., p. 82). ...... *"It is 20 years since Jane Jacob's 'The Life and Death of American Cities (1967) warned ominously of the dangers of development without public participation."* (Melling, 1989., p. 80)

Melling reiterates the point that the whole of a society must participate in the development of a city.

Melling is also of the view that city planners must have an understanding of history in order to design in a forward thinking way. *"... it is now 10 years since the city of Wellington, with an almost mystical lack of interest in history, embarked upon a redevelopment programme of such determined self-destruction as to make the aforementioned literary eminences wonder why they ever bothered to pick up a pen",* he wrote referring to Jane

Jacobs. (Melling, 1989., p. 80)

When Gerald Melling was interviewed for this thesis he was of the view that we should listen to the advice of overseas theorists, but we should also question what they are saying in regard to our local context.

3.7 Pulling these Ideas Together

Because issues regarding the city are so complex it was necessary to look at a broad range of authors initially, and then narrow this down to a select few to work by.

This thesis has taken something from each of the authors mentioned above, and formed an amalgamated methodology. Both site analysis and design were carried out according to this methodology.

Many of these authors share common thoughts about aspects relating to site. For example both Gordon Cullen and the phenomenologists believe that the city should be an exciting and stimulating place to be. Both of these authors advocate a sensory experience in the urban realm. Cullen writes about the predominance of vision. The phenomenologists write about the importance of all the senses. In fact, even if unstated, it is clear that Cullen thinks about more than just the visual as well - he often refers to the body's position, and the other senses in relation to this.

Christopher Alexander provides another way of developing a design language in the city; and Jane Jacobs has a humanitarian approach and provides insightful ways to

approach site analysis.

Gerald Melling relates much of the work of these overseas theorists to the local context, writing about Wellington specifically.

Figure 16. An uncared for alleyway in the site , with apartment dwellings jutting out into it

CHAPTER 4

Site Analysis and Site Understanding

4. Site Analysis and Site Understanding

This chapter outlines a description of the particular site chosen for design. It outlines why this site was chosen, and why it is important and interesting. This chapter will also outline the methods of site analysis employed.

Site analysis was an important aspect to this thesis; as it was essential that the site was understood really well, in order to design sensitively for it.

4.1 Description of Site and Reason for Choosing Site

The site chosen for design is a part of a central Te Aro block. The block sits directly off Cuba Mall, a central and busy pedestrian street in the middle of the Cuba precinct (see figure 17). Other main streets surrounding this block are; Dixon Street (see figure 18), Ghuznee Street (see figure 19), and Taranaki Street (there are some irrelevant buildings between the buildings dealt with directly in this thesis, and Taranaki Street, however.)

This site includes a variety of the mixed architectural styles present in Wellington. Many of the buildings in the site are very interesting architectural pieces and are

representative of different eras of Wellington's history. The block is an excellent example of built layering in the city, illustrating different stories that have occurred in the past.

Yet the layers have not developed to correspond to each other in any way. This is typical of Wellington, with each layer of building evolving independently one to another, with no cohesive language being developed. It becomes a cycle where it gets harder and harder for each new layer to fit into the townscape because the city identity gets more and more confusing. This small inner city block is an example of a wider problem in the city.

Despite the confusing design language, this Te Aro block site has some excellent spaces: spaces that Gordon Cullen would describe as being important for a city - sequential spaces, enclosed spaces, and revealing spaces. They are spaces that are not often present in New Zealand cities. Yet, amongst the public there is an innate feeling that these spaces are special. The proof is in the many pedestrians that choose to walk through the site, as well as in the residents that have adapted these spaces to their own uses and made them their home. There are people that linger in the spaces, using them for breaks from their work in the surrounding buildings.

This Te Aro block has an unusually dense ground layout that is different to most blocks in New Zealand and people seem to recognise and respond to this.

As well as the block being dense, it also has a feeling of being vertical. Many of the spaces are narrow, with tall buildings surrounding them. The Hannah's building is one such example. Access ways such as spiralling external stairwells accentuate this vertical

Figure 17. Cuba Mall with all its bussyness and social activity.

Figure 18. Dixon Sreet and Manners Street are wide car-dominated streets.

Figure 19. Ghuznee Street is also a busy street, with its pulses of car and pedestrian activity. The intersection shown in this photo is one of the busiest intersections in Te Aro.

nature. Even though this block holds a lot of interest, the Leeds Street area is still underutilised. The spaces hold so much potential yet something is lacking. It feels like residents and workers are trying to grasp onto this site and revive it, but it needs a helping hand to make it accessible.

The relationship between the buildings and the outdoor spaces are what makes this site attractive. The buildings themselves are full of interesting details, weathered materials, extrusions and intrusions, and interesting access ways. The composition and density of the buildings together, creates the interesting spaces around them. A dramatic sequence of spaces is carried right the way through the block.

The site has a gritty urban aspect that enhances it, yet the neglect also prohibits it from being used to its full potential. Access ways are often cut short, prohibiting people from rising from the depths of the site to the rooftops. The site feels frustrating, as though people want to access certain areas but cannot.

This site reflects a growing trend in Wellington's inner city area, with a number of apartment dwellings.

4.2 The Site as a Key Thoroughfare

Leeds Street is a well-used thoroughfare in Te Aro. The street is an alternative to the busy pedestrian and car-dominated streets that surround this particular block. When people use this street they can enjoy a short walk away from the busyness of the central city.

4.3 The Forgotten Buildings

Leeds Street and Eva Street are back-block streets. This means that there are very few front facades opening onto these streets, only the backs of the buildings (see figure 20). There are also many smaller buildings present on these streets. Many of these smaller buildings have survived purely because of their location in the back streets. They have been left unrecognised and undervalued, surviving developer's opportunistic eyes. Because these buildings have been left alone they have also weathered and decayed interestingly.

4.4 The Design Challenge for this Site

This site presents an interesting design challenge. The site is full of interesting qualities and potential, it just needs a sensitive design intervention to make the site accessible and breathe some life back into it.

Figure 20. 'Higgilty-piggilty' composition. The site is a complex tapestry of spaces and materials. There are also many connection-ways in the site that lead to nowhere or are frustratingly cut short, from panoramic views.

Figure 21. A dominant external staircase. This staircase connects a buildings balcony with a lower platform, and it also by-passes the rooftop of the Whitcoulls building.

4.5 The Connection-ways in the Site

The site is full of external stairs and connection-ways. Some of these stairs are now obsolete (see figure 22), but they're still there, as if longing to lift people out of the depths of the alleyways and up to the rooftops. Even the stairs that are still used jut out of the buildings in a rather alarming way (see figure 21). They're scary and off-putting to climb.

If the existing stairways are to be improved, it would be best to have them nestling into and following the man made contours of the buildings. This would make them more enticing to use. But even as they are, the current stairways add a dynamic element to the site.

4.6 Methods of Site Analysis

Mappings

To begin with, some simple mappings were undertaken in plan, in order to highlight the most obvious aspects of the site.

These plan mappings were useful for grasping an understanding of broad social systems and spatial relationships present in the site. But it was soon clear that less conventional types of site analysis were needed, because this thesis from the outset has aimed to work with the detailed and haptic realm of the city.

Mappings only offered a planar and two-dimensional understanding of the site, and became limiting in could be understood through them.

A closer understanding of the site was needed.

Site Model

A 1:200 scale site model of this Te Aro block was constructed, in order to gain this closer understanding of the site. The act of making this site model required an intensive analysis of detail and close concentration on the composition of the site.

Photography

Photography was used as a quick way to record aspects of the site. It was useful in capturing fast sequential views, and also social aspects of the site.

It proved to be helpful in documenting the site at different times and in documenting how people use the spaces throughout the day.

However, photography was not a very memorable way of analysing the site. It was useful in combination with other methods of site analysis. Photography was a way of looking rather than analysing.

Drawing

A variety of drawings were carried out, in an effort to understand the site better.

Some technical drawings of buildings within the site were undertaken. Perspective sequential drawings were also tried, in accord with Cullen's method.

Some details on buildings were also drawn.

Video

A video was made to show how a person could interact with the site. Movement through the site is an important idea in this thesis. The video presents how a person's body can move through the site, and interact with all the forms in the site.

The subject in the video demonstrates how frustrating the site can be, trying to get on top of buildings and up access ways, while being prevented from doing so.

To view this video, go to: **http://vimeo.com/32022110**

The video was made in collaboration with George Grieve.

4.7 A thorough Understanding of Site

Mappings

Exterior ground level space within the block

These mappings are of the chosen block within Te Aro- the site that is to be worked with for the rest of this thesis. These mappings identify some basic physical, built, and social characteristics of the site. These mappings concentrate mostly on the ground level of the site.

All mappings at 1:2000

North

Cuba Street

Dixon Street

Egmont Street

Ghuznee Street

Residential buildings

■ Buildings that are solely residential

■ Buildings that are mixed purpose but include residential

Historic buildings

■ Historic buildings that have main street facades

■ Historic buildings that are back buildings

Cafes that exist on ground level

Ground level exterior space that offers privacy

Earthquake prone buildings

The site as it was discovered through colour
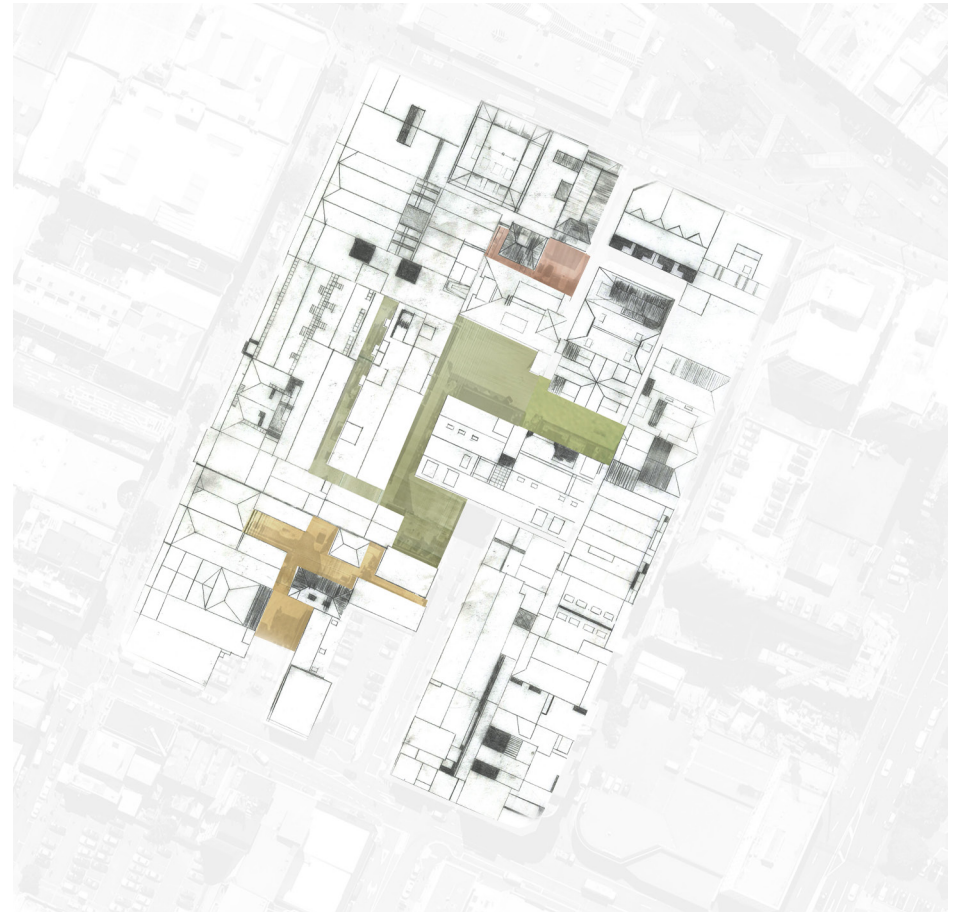
Site Model

This model was a built at 1:200
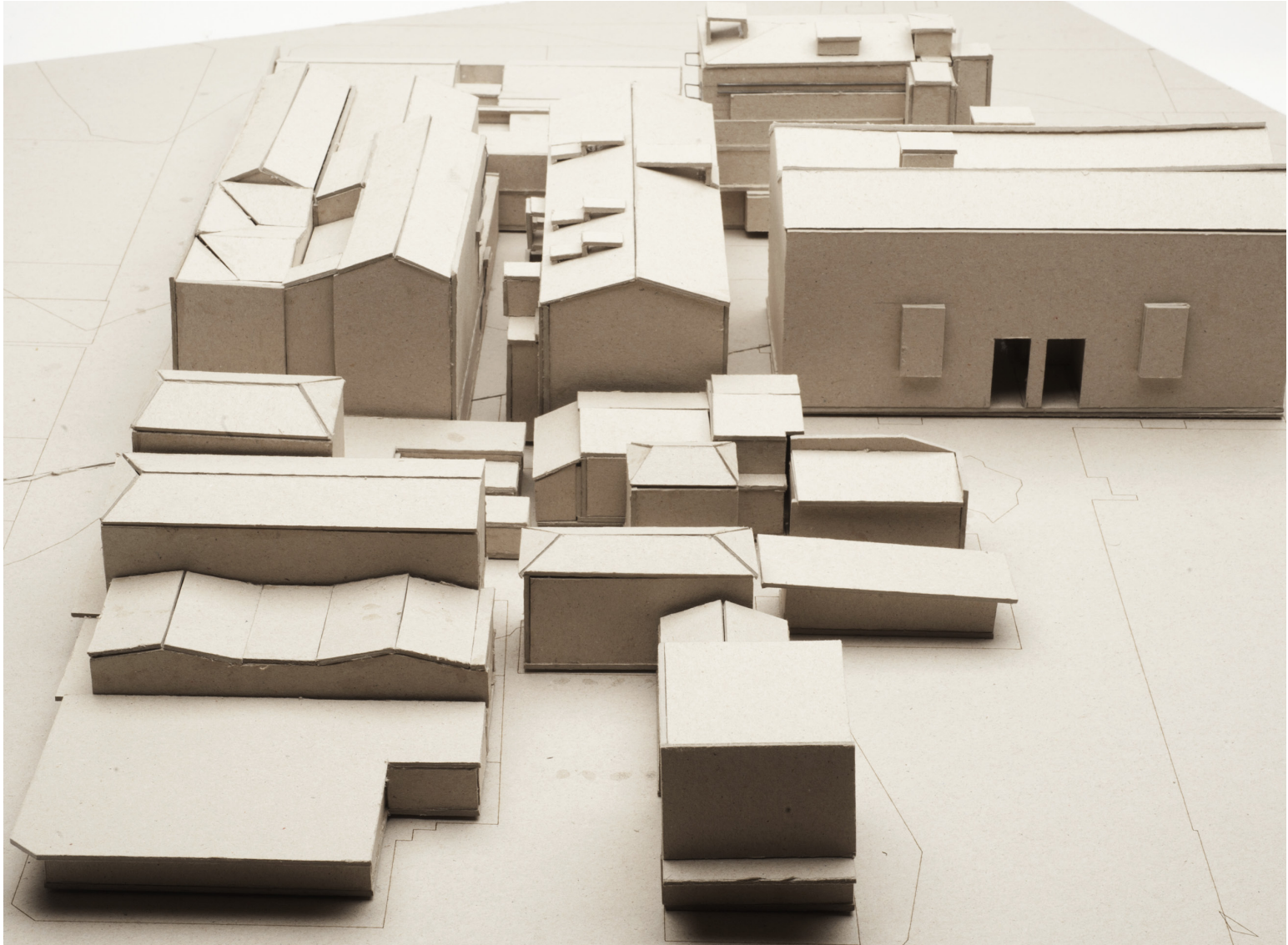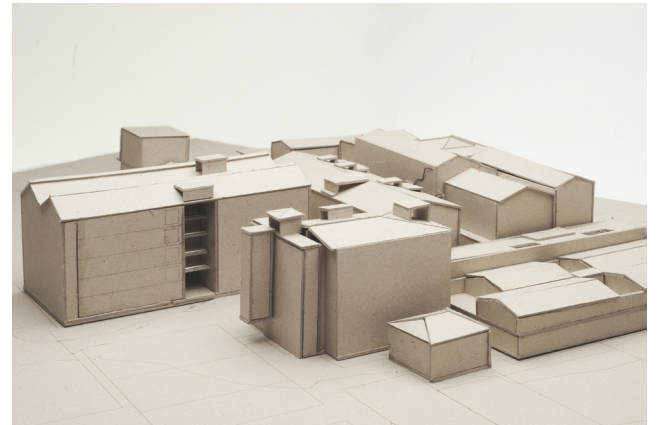
Figure 30. Photographs of site model

Photography

This next set of images uses the phenomenological fragments to look at the site as it was identified through; colour, texture, details, form, weathering, light and shadow, perspective, and proportion (amongst other fragments). Gordon Cullen's ideas on optics were also kept in mind when photographing the site.
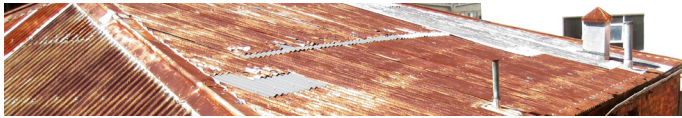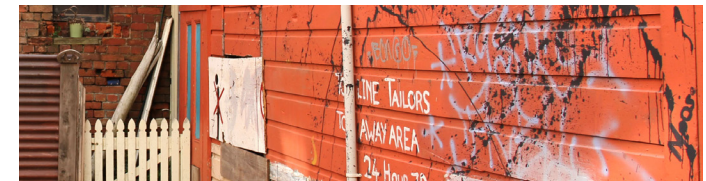
Figure 31. Site photographs - in response to the site theories of the phenomenologist's, and Gordon Cullen.

Photography Continued

Spatiality of night

This series of photos explores the spatiality of night.

The night allows the site to transform into something that is mysterious and allusive, triggering the imagination.

As well as the spatial composition of the site changing at night, so does the social systems that occur.
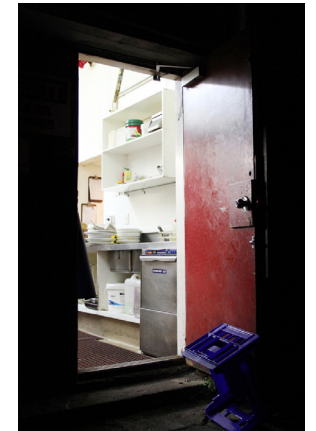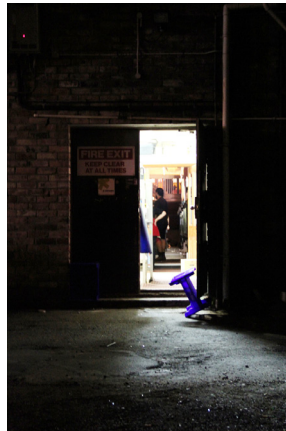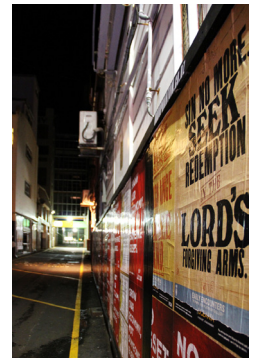
Figure 32. Night photographs of the site.

Drawing
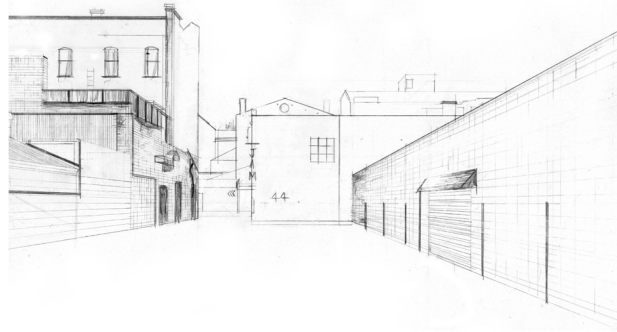
Figure 33. Sequential drawings - leading the eye into a courtyard of the site. These drawings were intended to be in the style of Gordon Cullen, in order to understand the sequence of spaces present in the site.
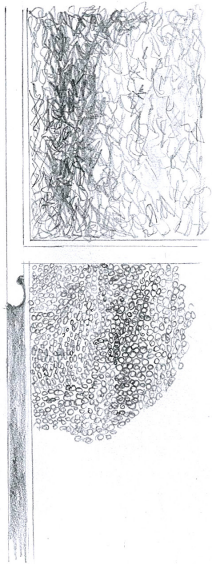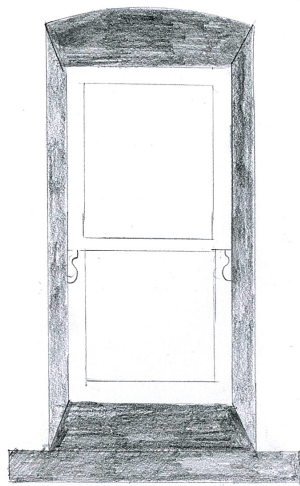
Figure 34. Drawings of windows, of a building in the site. These drawings are a good
example of noticing some of the content present in the site.

It was crucial to employ a range of methods for site analysis as it meant there was more chance of developing a holistic understanding of the site. Because this thesis puts such an emphasis on local conditions and site specificity, an in-depth understanding of the site was needed, from the larger context down to the detail level.

Mappings, for example provided an understanding of the larger context, while photography provided an insight into how people used the site, and the building of a physical model allowed a thorough analysis of the form of the block.

Figure 35. View from a Hannah's Warehouse residential apartment, looking into another building.

Figure 36. Photo of a typical central Copenhagen street.

CHAPTER 5

Gehl & his Copenhagen

5. Gehl and his Copenhagen

This chapter is comprised of two parts. One part is a critique of Jan Gehl's '*City to Waterfront Study- Public Spaces and Public Life Study*' Wellington report (2004). The second part compares Gehl's home city, Copenhagen, with Wellington because in Gehl's report he refers to many urban design examples from Copenhagen.

5.1 Critique of Jan Gehl's Proposal for Wellington

In 2004 Jan Gehl visited Wellington and gave his suggestions for improvements to Wellington City in his report '*City to Waterfront Study- Public Spaces and Public Life Study*'.

While this thesis acknowledges that some of Gehl's suggestions are useful and insightful, it also takes the view that Gehl missed many of the subtleties and intricacies that make Wellington unique.

This chapter sets out an argument that later chapters build upon, and this argument helps explain the resulting design.

This '*City to Waterfront Study- Public Spaces and Public Life Study*' is a broad overview of problems present in Wellington, and offers broad suggestions for improvement. The report focuses mainly on pedestrian connections and activities in and around the city. Both connections and activities are looked at only at street level.

Jan Gehl is a well-known Danish urban designer, and his firm Gehl Architects (www.gehlarchitects.com), is based in Copenhagen. The firm have been employed to undertake a number of international public life surveys, regularly referring to their home city as a basis for comparison with other urban townscapes, including Wellington.

Gehl is primarily concerned with social and functional aspects of the city. Most of his analysis of Wellington is undertaken at a large scale and in diagrammatic form. Infrastructural systems and transport planning is of particular interest to Gehl. Gehl is able to analyse certain patterns effectively on this large scale, but there is a lot that he overlooks within the '*content*' of the city. In Gehl's study for Wellington, and in many of his reports for other cities, he gives no justice to the haptic realm of the city.

From research around Wellington's background and its existing problems of incoherence in the townscape, this thesis is of the view that solutions to these problems lie in the small scale. Character is in the small scale and it is local character that Wellington should be building up. Gehl's mappings and analysis of Wellington show nothing of the character or detail that is present in the city.

What Gehl fails to pick up on in his study of Wellington is the character of individual precincts. In his report he highlights main connection ways in the central city, such as the Golden Mile, but doesn't go into any detail about the neighbourhoods of the

Figure 37. A small and informal alleyway in Christania, Copenhagen. This type of space is an anomaly in Copenhagen.

central city. There are many fascinating streets and spaces that lie within the central city beyond the main arterial routes. The chosen site for this thesis holds many such examples.

Jan Gehl's firm, Gehl Architects, hold a set of principles and methods that speaks very much of 21st century urban design. They emphasize effective, programmatic function and the social dynamics of the city. According to Gehl Architects' website their vision is to create '*Healthy & Prosperous, Accessible & Inviting, Safe & Secure, Lively & Diverse, Attractive & Competitive*' cities. This vision is admirable and Copenhagen is indeed a city that is very close to achieving all of these qualities. Yet within this vision there is no mention of the content or aesthetic quality of the city.

But while it is admirable how Gehl Architects strive to achieve high social ideals in the city, it is arguable whether cities should be designed with this amount of public intent. Some of the best cities in the world are characterised by grittiness and imperfection, yet they still thrive socially - Barcelona would be one example. Urban life in these cities can speak of hardship and failure, but also diversity of experience. Despite their imperfections these cities are energetic and intoxicating places to be. In Copenhagen one of the parts of the city that is actually most interesting is Christiania (see figure 37). Christiania is a free state within the city and is a refreshing contrast to the rest of Copenhagen precisely because it does not subscribe to the conformity of aesthetics and social function that the rest of the city does. A city of course needs rules and structure, but it is refreshing and necessary to have varying degrees of it, within the same city.

Figure 38. Leeds Street- one of the intrinsic alleyways that makes up central Wellington.

Gehl's suggestions for Wellington seem overwhelmingly large and controlling. They also seem somewhat vague and unspecific. His statements highlight problems that most people in Wellington already know exist, and the solutions he suggests tend to be rather unspecific.

Because this thesis has the view that problem-solving in Wellington must work from the small scale up, the residents and people immersed in the city must be enabled to initiate this problem solving. Informal but insightful and well-understood solutions should be encouraged in Wellington.

Some of Gehl's suggestions for Wellington seem very unrealistic, or at least unsupported. Some of the solutions he offers he takes directly from Copenhagen, but offers no support as to how or why they would work in Wellington. A cycling network is one such example. (Jan Gehl, 2004, p. 48). In the report Gehl acknowledges that Wellington has a hilly terrain, and offers some solutions of uphill infrastructure for bicycles. But there is no sustenance written as to why the culture of Wellington would adapt to cycling so well.

In many instances Gehl fails to look into the intricacies of the city, the layers beyond the most obvious. Gehl recommends that some main streets and connection ways should be improved, such as the Golden Mile, but he only acknowledges these existing main streets and thoroughfares in Wellington. His study never mentions improvements of alleyways or well-used thoroughfares that are more discrete but still intrinsic to the city see figure 38). It is these streets that offer the most potential for street life: yet in Gehl's study report there is no interest in them.

The Te Aro precinct is overlooked in Gehl's study, with the focus being on the Lambton precinct, the Golden Mile, and the waterfront. The only mention Te Aro gets in the whole study is in the section titled '*Pedestrian Network*' where Cuba Street is acknowledged as being a main pedestrian route. Proof of Gehl's focus on the waterfront and Lambton area is when he writes, "*The connections to the waterfront are equally poor and thus the city is "one-sided" offering an interesting walk along the Golden Mile but not much more than that.*" (Jan Gehl, 2004, p. 16). Gehl only sees interest in the waterfront and its peripheral area. He does not see all that Cuba Street and the Te Aro precinct offers the city as well. Te Aro is the spirit of Wellington, where the townscape becomes densely urban and is gritty, but is also full of life and diversity. In Gehl's study, there is a whole chapter dedicated to the Golden Mile, its potential, and the recommended upgrade of this route. There is also a whole chapter dedicated to Lambton Quay, and one about the waterfront. In contrast there is no chapter dedicated to the possibilities of Te Aro. It seems strange that Te Aro, a key and vibrant district of central Wellington, would not have an extended chapter about it included in the study. The introduction to the study sets out the study area, and includes Te Aro; yet the study never elaborates upon this area, clearly overlooking its potential and possibilities.

In Gehl's Wellington report there is continued discussion of movement, and there is a chapter entitled '*Jaywalking in Wellington*'. Within this chapter Gehl is saying that movement around the city should be straightforward, easy and uncompromising. "*For the comfort of pedestrians and the vitality and functional quality of the city, it is important that people can cross the streets frequently and in an uncomplicated manner.*"

(Jan Gehl, 2004, p. 19). This chapter confirms Gehl's approach to movement around cities, his favoring of even and easy ground level movement. It is a practical approach to have, but it also risks the development of city streets being boring and predictable. It is a different approach to that of Cullen and the phenomenologists, who encourage the development of complex city settings, settings that unveil themselves with drama. Wellington in its natural setting is logically aligned to having a complicated city street layout anyway. Copenhagen on the other hand, Gehl's home city, with its flat topography, naturally lends itself to a straight and particular city street layout. Gehl's philosophy towards urban design is a product of his cultural context. This comes across in his other writing, such as in the book '*Life Between Buildings*', when he writes, "*Like detours, differences in level represent a very real problem for pedestrians. All large movements upward or downward require more effort, additional muscular activity, and an interruption in the walking rhythm.*" (Gehl, 1996 p. 144). What he understands as working for his own city, Copenhagen, may be completely wrong in Wellington.

Wellington's best pedestrian networks are a matrix of different sized streets, with a variety of inclines. The best streets are not necessarily the most direct ones, nor the easiest to cross. Jay-walking can in fact add interest to a street, as well as make people's routes shorter. People jaywalk because they feel a street is safe enough and leisurely enough to do so, and it is an instinctive thing to do. You cannot control people's every movement and direction in a city. Wellington is made up of spaces and connection-ways on a variety of levels. Life in the city does not just occur in a straight linear mode. People inhibit spaces that are underground, on top of buildings, and behind buildings.

Jan Gehl's '*City to Waterfront Study- Public Spaces and Public Life Study*' of Wellington,

is too simplistic. The study offers too many broad sweeping gestures, but without any convincing analysis to support these. The study fails to pick up on the interesting detail that makes Wellington the city that it is. It does not properly identify the city's problems, and so is not in a position to offer solutions.

It is the detail that gives the city life, and proof that it is well lived in. Gehl's report concentrates too hard on the functional aspects of the city, but pays insufficient attention to the content and character of the city. But without this content and character what is a city? Gordon Cullen sums this up when he writes, *"And yet... if at the end of it all the city appears dull, uninteresting and soulless, then it is not fulfilling itself. It has failed. The fire has been laid but nobody has put a match to it."* (Cullen, 1961, p. 8). A great city balances thoughtful planning with an allowance for living: Gehl's report manages only to incorporate the rigid planning aspect.

Figure 39. A formal sequence of spaces in Copenhagen. The new opera house is aligned with both the royal palace, and the marble church, in perfect symmetry, reflecting the city's strong pride for its monarchy.

5.2 Comparison of Wellington and Copenhagen

This section of the chapter compares Copenhagen and Wellington, two cities that are opposites in terms of coherence in their townscapes. It also looks at how local context and history have played their part in shaping the public life and spaces of each city.

In 2010 I was fortunate enough to spend six months studying architecture on a student exchange in Copenhagen. This experience contributes to research for this chapter, with a personal understanding of the city.

Copenhagen and Wellington are both the capital cities of small democratic and developed countries, although the population of Copenhagen is much larger than Wellington's, with 1.4 million more residents. Both countries also have a monarchy as head of state, although they are regarded with a different level of affection in each country. Denmark is very patriotic and proud of its monarch, whereas New Zealand's lingering attachment to the British monarchy is controversial and sometimes divisive.

Copenhagen and Wellington have evolved very differently and as a result have very different cultures, ways of living and aesthetic values. But there are some similarities between the two cities as well.

Copenhagen and Wellington are both the capital cities of small democratic and developed countries, although the population of Copenhagen is much larger than Wellington's with 1.4 million more residents. Both countries also have a monarchy as head of state, although they are regarded with a different level of affection in each country. Denmark is very patriotic and proud of its monarch, whereas New Zealand's

Figure 40. Contrast of seasons. The public spaces of Copenhagen are reflective of the drammatic contrast of seasons.

lingering attachment to the British monarchy is controversial and sometimes divisive.

These types of social and political differences contribute to what makes the townscape of each capital city unique. The cities' individual histories are apparent in the evolution of each city's townscape.

Wellington is a city that has evolved out of an English colonial settlement in the space of only 170 years. It is a city that is still finding its identity amongst the mixed architectural styles borrowed from overseas. Copenhagen dates from the 11th century, and so has had lots of time to evolve a very refined townscape that speaks of its national identity and local context (see figure 41). Anything contemporary that is built in Copenhagen is closely regulated and must fit into the existing and ancient townscape (see figure 39). In contrast, Wellington has evolved rapidly and with little thought or consideration of the local context. A contemporary building in Wellington has no set townscape that it must consider.

The way each country is governed has something to do with the outcome of the townscape. Denmark is very much a socialist country, and Copenhagen reflects this. From the city's infrastructure to its aesthetics, it speaks of fairness, equality, and functional sophistication. This socialist functioning of the city is admirable in that there is much less poverty and hardship than in many comparable cities. But there is also much less diversity; less diversity of race, culture, and ways of living. The city can at times become very repetitive. Everything is designed correctly, in theory, and is a living example of what Gehl Architects describe as a 'successful city'. Yet at times Copenhagen feels as if it is missing the messy diversity that a city needs in order to

give it its spark.

Wellington has this messy diversity. There is acceptance of difference in Wellington, especially in the Te Aro precinct and this helps to give the city its edge. Because Wellington is far from perfect in its coherence as a townscape, it is as if there is less holding back with experimentation and creativity, which is one of the positives of Wellington city.

The two cities' very different topographical and climatic conditions also contribute to differences in both private and public spaces.

The long Danish winter dictates that people are confined to the indoors for a good portion of the year. A lot of socialising during these winter months takes place in the privacy of people's own homes, and the city appears to shut down during the deepest part of winter. As soon as summer arrives, however, the public spaces transform dramatically and are heavily used. There are stark contrasts between the seasons and the use of public spaces reflects this (see figure 40). The people of Copenhagen have adapted their lifestyles and their city to suit their local context.

Although Wellington, like Copenhagen, has an at times oppressive climate, it is different; and Wellington has a very different topography. The people of Wellington are getting closer to working out what type of building and living works best in their city.

The people of Wellington have adopted a hardy way of living in response to the local conditions. There are many houses in Wellington that date back to colonial days,

Figure 41. The Copenhagen townscape - steeped in history and composed of majestic spires. The city's historic fabric sets the scene for any contemporary interventions.

Figure 42. A typical flat square and pedestrian space in Copenhagen.

Figure 43. A glimpse into the formally arranged cafe scene in Sankt Hans Torv, Copenhagen

made of timber, and generally uninsulated. The majority of the time it is windy in Wellington, with the dramatic topography and the streets channelling these winds. These conditions do not seem to affect how the people of Wellington enjoy their city. In contrast to the residents of Copenhagen - who tend to live quite internally during the winter months, huddling in retreat from the weather - even in winter the people of Wellington eat, drink, and socialise a lot in the central city, with a resulting vibrant inner city centre. It is much more affordable than in Copenhagen, and the winters, although cold, are still tolerable.

One of the main differences between Wellington and Copenhagen is in the evolution of the public spaces. With Copenhagen's entrenched history and its loyalties to its monarchy, the public spaces of the city are highly designed and in many cases very formal (see figure 39). Wellington on the other hand has very few formally designed public spaces, and most of the ones that do exist are centred around the waterfront. Most of the old public spaces that were set aside in colonial times have been disregarded, with axial routes and public squares carelessly disrupted and overrun. Within Wellington there are many half finished civic ideas, ideas that are not quite pulled through properly. The evolution of a messy townscape in Wellington has meant that there has been an informal network of public spaces crop up all over the city. Public spaces in Wellington have adapted in order to fit around the untidy townscape. People need inner city public spaces whether they are planned or not, and in the case of Wellington they have not been planned so have popped up in this relaxed manner. This network of informal public spaces has essentially become a local typology for the city, something that makes Wellington unique.

In Jan Gehl's report, '*City to Waterfront Study- Public Spaces and Public Life Study*', he suggests a lot of open spaces for Wellington, giving examples of how it is done in Copenhagen. One particular example he refers to is Sankt Hans Torv, in Copenhagen (see figure 43). This is an open and exposed square with wide streets circulating around two sides. The restaurants and cafes fronting onto this square have laid out their furniture in clusters, in a particular and arranged manner. Besides this furniture, however, there is little seating. This type of square is very typical of Copenhagen and it suits the way of life and the topography of the city well. Copenhagen has very flat terrain, and so flat squares are an obvious choice (see figure 42).

This type of square however would seem very inappropriate in Wellington. Wellington has a very dramatic natural setting, with an accumulation of striking hills, a salient sky, and tumultuous harbour. An open flat square does not suit the setting well. Because of the dramatic, blustery climate and challenging topography (see figure 45), in Wellington people like to gather in small pockets, hide from the wind, and feel protected from the elements. The informal spaces of Wellington work well - nestling into abandoned sites around buildings, or tucked into small alleyways (see figure 44).

If public spaces are to be designed in Wellington they need to cater to this need for shelter and comfort.

Te Aro especially is made up of a network of complex spaces within the block layout of the area. This provides many opportunities for these informal spaces to occur, and many cafes in Te Aro have begun to take advantage of this, nestling in sheltered corners. Many cafes back into small courtyards or occupy the sides of pavements in

Figure 44. Informal inhabitation - 'Jam' hairdressers have inserted this informal seating arrangement next to their building, for the purpose of work breaks. This small courtyard catches the sun well, and offers protection from the wind.
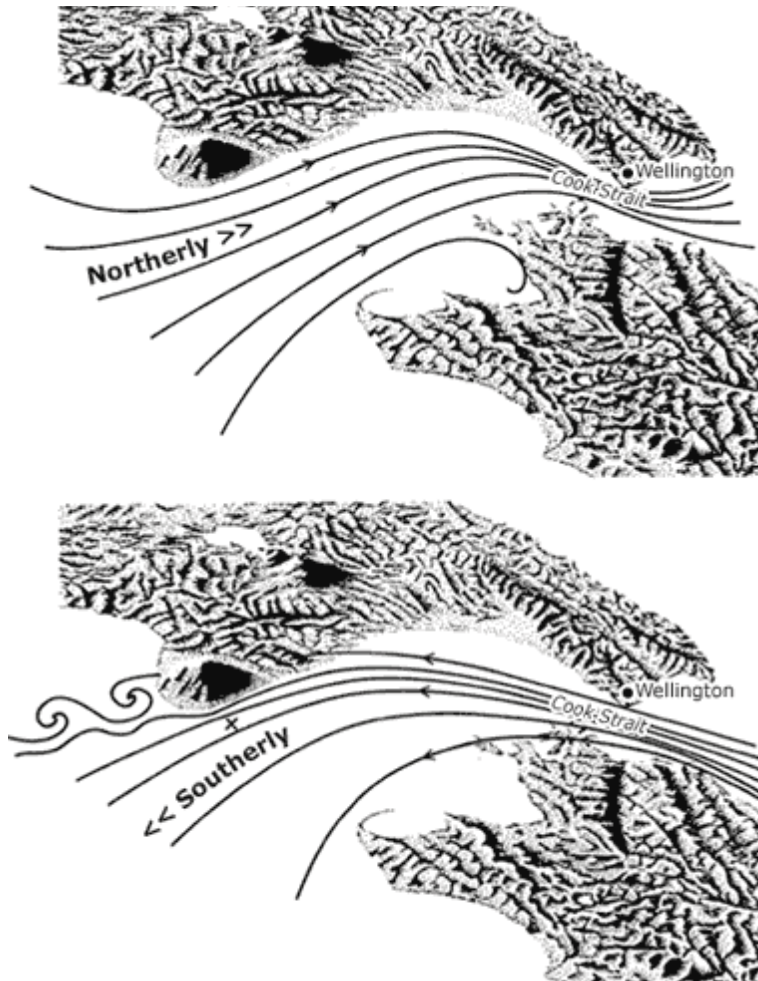
Figure 45. Wellington's wind. The design of public spaces within Wellington should be sensitive to local conditions, such as the prevailing winds that characterise Wellington. Image taken from www.teara.govt.nz

any way they can.

There is still, however, a lack of spaces in the area that are purely public, and not attached to cafes or commercial outlets. Currently Glover Park, Cobblestone Park, and Te Aro Park, are the only parks in the area. So there is a lot of potential for these smaller public spaces to be introduced into Te Aro. Te Aro would not suit the introduction of larger parks or squares, which would not be compatible with the built fabric. The waterfront and other less built parts of Wellington are better suited to larger open spaces, but Te Aro suits a more complex matrix of insular spaces.

So instead of continuing to copy examples of built design from overseas, such as from Copenhagen, Wellington needs to develop its own spaces which are suited to its own local conditions. Wellington planners can admire and learn from overseas examples but should understand that these cities built conditions have been developed for their local context. Wellington has a completely different type of local context and the design of the city must acknowledge and respond to that.

You could compare this to designing clothes. One dress style may fit one body shape and personality perfectly; but on another body shape and person it may be completely wrong. The same can be said for the design of a city in relation to its culture, context, and history.

Figure 46. A ground floor apartment in the Hannah's Warehouse building. There is a lot of ormentation and decoration surrounding this apartment, with some of it spilling into the public space of Leeds Street.

CHAPTER 6

Existing Typologies in Wellington

6. Existing Typologies in Wellington

Out of Wellington's incoherent townscape, there has been a multitude of local typologies develop. Most of these typologies have developed informally and without a great deal of consideration. Four of the most obvious typologies present in Wellington include:

6.1 Wellington's Emerging Rooftop Typology

For most of Wellington's history the central area has been mainly used for industrial, commercial and retail purposes only. People lived in the suburbs and travelled into the city centre for work and shopping. But in the last 15-20 years there has been a clear change, with more and more people moving into the central city to live.

This trend towards more people living in the central city is clearly evident in the latest, 2006, census. In the 1996 census the '*Usually Resident Population Count*' for the Te Aro area was 1,452; by 2001 it was 2,994; and in 2006 it was 4,518 (Statistics New Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The resident population more than trebled in the central Te Aro area over ten years and has certainly increased significantly again in the last five years.

This unprecedented demand for inner city accommodation wasn't anticipated. Initially there were few services available for residents, and there was a shortage of available land on which to build new residential buildings. Most of the land in the area was already occupied by industrial, commercial and retail buildings.

In response, many buildings that were obsolete for industrial and commercial purposes were converted into residential buildings or had residential apartments added to them. More recently in Wellington there has been the development of some stand-alone and purpose-built apartment buildings, but this trend of adaptive re-use and add-on residential living is still prevalent in the inner city.

One particular response to the lack of available building space has been that additions that started to crop up on top of existing buildings. This sudden need for central city housing was the beginning of a development in Wellington's roof-top typology.

'*Superiority Complex*'

Gordon Holden's article '*Superiority Complex*', published in Architecture New Zealand in March 2004, talks specifically about this unique Wellington typology.

At the time it was published the article estimated that "*nearly half of the central city's approx. 8,000 residents are accommodated in converted or expanded offices and warehouse buildings.*" (Holden, 2004, p. 54) A lot of the buildings that were converted were

Figure 47. Cuba Street from the Whitcoulls building rooftop. This view offers a refreshing perspective on a well-known landmark.

redundant or abandoned. According to this article the council district plan played an important part in enabling these buildings to be reused as residential living. The district plan had ensured that many of them were earthquake-strengthened to give them the possibility of being turned into apartment dwellings. The plan also made possible the use of air space on top of buildings. Gerald Melling's '*Skybox*', on top of an historic building in Egmont Street (see figure 48), is a good example of an extension that made use of air space.

Holden's article makes the point that despite the large number of apartments constructed on top of older buildings, there aren't many that are amazing to look at in terms of design, but collectively they are something that is impressive and speaks of a design language in Wellington. This comment reiterates the point that while the architecture is often dull and collectively incoherent, out of this the city has grown some unique bottom-up typologies and some interesting layers.

Gordon Holden points out that this unique rooftop typology is helping to give Wellington a civic identity. It is something that responds to Wellington's past, highlighting how the city once functioned, while also providing for a new way of living in the inner city.

Gordon Holden uses the term *'residential palimpsest',* meaning building that takes place on top of existing buildings and existing infrastructure, rather than constructing new buildings from scratch. This *'residential palimpsest'* demonstrates a sustainable way of building in the city, while also retaining parts of the city's existing identity and

built form. It allows the city to be built up, literally, in gradual layers and allows the city to tell stories over time.

From this Wellington rooftop typology there has been a development of both private and public facilities in the city supporting the new residents, *"thereby reinforcing the centre's performance as a truly multi-functional urban area."* (Holden, 2004, p. 55)

However, the problem of incoherence in Wellington's townscape is not solved with the introduction of this rooftop typology. Holden states that aesthetic compatibility between apartments around the city is low. This incompatibility is likely to have something to do with the construction materials and techniques used. Holden's article categorizes the '*residential palimpsest*' buildings into light mass (44% of examples studied) and high mass (56% of example studied) construction. These two different types of construction mean two different base types of materials used, which ultimately leads to different styles.

Building off this categorization, Holden sorts the studied apartments into two different design styles. Of the buildings studied he says that 44% are of a contemporary or modern look, contrasting with the base building. The other 56% are of a style that attempts to fit in with the base building. All but one of the additional apartments are built on top of high mass base buildings, with 60% of these buildings being pre-1940's.

Many of the base buildings are heritage listed, and their additions have been influenced by the City Council's design guides.

Holden is of the view that the most successful additions are the ones that speak of their time, when there is no confusion between what is new and what is old, and the contrast is clear.

Ask the public though, and it gets a bit more complicated.

In researching his article, Holden surveyed the public, asking how pleasing they found the additions, and how compatible they found them with the original structure.

Overall the public considered the majority of additions to be reasonably aesthetically pleasing. However the majority also thought that there was low compatibility between the host building and its addition. Compatibility and aesthetic success seemed to correlate. The three additions that were thought to have the most compatibility were also thought to be the most successful aesthetically. Equally the three examples that were thought to have the least compatibility were thought to be the least pleasing aesthetically.

According to the public surveyed, what enabled good compatibility between host building and additional building were similar rhythms; continuity of style; and similar character.

Conversely reasons cited for failure came down to a disregard for existing character; inconsistency in style; and poor quality of materials and details.

But overriding the different styles it seemed to come down to the individual designer's ability. It did not matter as much whether or not the addition was of a contemporary style, or mimicking the older style, as long as it was carried out well and compatibility and attention to detail were considered.
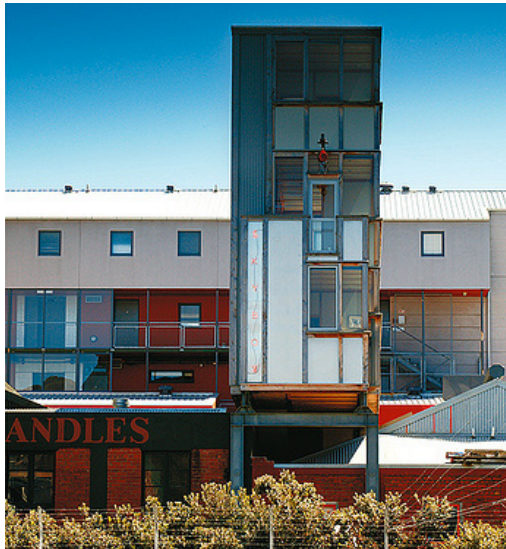
Figure 48. Melling Morse 'Skybox'. Image taken from www.mellingmorse.co.nz
Figure 49. Architecture Workshops Wakefield Street apartments. Image taken from www..archwksp.co.nz

Evidently compatibility is different to coherence. There were three examples that were considered by the public to be not very 'compatible' with their host buildings, but were nonetheless considered to be successfully 'coherent'.

The first example is the apartments on top of the old World Trade Centre, on the corner on Victoria Streets and Ghuznee street, designed by Perry Architects. The second is Gerald Melling's 'Skybox', on Egmont Street (see figure 48) - a multi-level apartment box that sits on a converted warehouse. And the last example is the Wakefield Street apartments by Architecture Workshop (see figure 49).

In all of these examples the additional apartments are clearly different to their host buildings, with different materials and styles used. Yet something that remains constant between host building and extension is the obvious care for retaining proportions. There is also an obvious care for quality and good design. This sense of retained proportions gave the combination of host building and its addition a good sense of '*coherence*', even if they are not strictly '*compatible*' in the narrow sense.

"*From this it may be concluded that the public recognise that better quality architecture can make for an overall aesthetically successful development, even if the new apartments are not visually compatible with their host building.*" (Holden, 2004, p. 57) He concludes that each case should be assessed on its individual design merits, and on the coherence rather than the compatibility, of the additional building with the host building.

"*These findings give the message to those controlling heritage assessment design policy and procedures that a blunt 'compatibility' approach is not universally appropriate.*" (Holden, 2004, p. 57)

Holden's article goes onto say that there have been some recurring functional problems with these rooftop apartments. Specific problems include; difficulty in access to the apartments, excessive noise, and negative impact on nearby public space. The rooftop building trend has been limiting sun exposure to ground level public spaces, as well as affecting wind levels.

The nearby public space issue is one of the most interesting problems that has surfaced out of this rooftop typology. It is interesting because it affects both the residents and the public and begs for a solution where both parties can benefit.

After discussing the functional negatives that have arisen out of this roof top typology, the article discusses some of the things that make the rooftop extensions functionally stronger. Transitional spaces were one of the things considered to make the roof-top extensions work best socially, and therefore functionally. Transitional spaces could be spaces such as balconies, and other semi-public zones, so that it is recognised that these additions are clearly a part of the townscape, and that they have a degree of civic life to them. Of course this needs to be balanced with people's need for privacy.

Holden's article concludes by saying that this typology, if refined and done well, can contribute significantly to the public life and revitalisation of central Wellington. Future public spaces in central Wellington should be developed alongside and in collaboration with this Wellington rooftop typology. If this collaboration can occur then both residents and the public will benefit. *"There appears to be a growing appreciation of the potential for this apartment type to establish a distinctive and memorable new urban layer in the city."* (Holden, 2004, p. 12)

In summary, there are two points from Holden's article that are of special interest to this thesis.

The first is that compatibility can be different to coherence. The public survey showed that the host building and the additional building can be incompatible, but still be perceived as coherent together. This may come down to the individual designer's talent. Coherence may be achieved through similar use of proportions or dimensions, or through design detail. For example, the Wakefield Street apartments designed by Architecture Workshop, although of an entirely different style to the host building, achieve their coherence with the host building through use of the same dividing proportions. The host building is divided into six vertical sections, and the additional apartments fit cleverly within these six sections.

The second point from Holden's article that is of relevance to this thesis is that enhanced public life can result from these roof-top extensions. There is an opportunity for spaces of varying degrees of public and private exposure to come out of these roof-top developments.

Holden's article breaks down the success of this emerging Wellington rooftop typology, into two categories; success in terms of aesthetics, and success in terms of social function.

It is a strong typology in Wellington and hopefully it can be refined to be both aesthetically and functionally successful in the future.

6.2 Movement Through the City

The success of a city's public spaces has much to do with transitional zones. How and where people move around and through the city has a lot to do with how and where they gather in the city.

If people are moving around and passing through the city only on ground level, then they are only seeing one dimension of the city. In Jan Gehl's report for Wellington *'City to Waterfront Study- Public Spaces and Public Life Study'*, he discusses strengthening the main pedestrian network in Wellington, but he suggests doing this only on the ground level, and predominantly around the main pedestrian streets and waterfront. Obviously there are many more complex routes around Wellington, and the pedestrian network could uncover so much more of what is interesting in Wellington.

As discussed, Wellington has a unique rooftop typology emerging. If this typology is to be strengthened, then new types of public spaces must acknowledge this. Strengthening connection ways so that they encompass this rooftop typology is vital. There is an opportunity for an innovative way of movement through Wellington City to be developed – a mode of movement that is unique to Wellington and illustrates a special Wellington design language.

With so many people living among the rooftops, different types of spaces are beginning to occur informally anyway - for example, balconies and essential connection ways. But a designer's helping hand can engage the community within these spaces and encourage them to be used more effectively. Different types of public spaces can start be developed, improving the sense of community among apartment dwellers.

Te Aro's youthful and able demographic

Te Aro is comprised of a youthful and mostly able-bodied demographic. According to the 2006 census, 18- 24 year-olds make up 41.4% of the total Te Aro population. 25-34 year-olds, comprise a further 26.7%. Together 68.1% of the total population of Te Aro are between 18-34 years - the physical prime of their lives. (Wellington City Council, 2006),

Many of the people living in the precinct are university students, or young professionals. This demographic have a natural need to feel fit and healthy, and to balance stationary deskwork with physical exercise. Central Wellington is not known for being a place of recreation and sport. However, the people of Wellington are already used to walking around their city, so there is potential here to make their pedestrian network more exciting and enjoyable. More interesting movement through the city would also help to engage people better with their city and help them to feel a better connection to it.

In Jan Gehl's report and suggestions for Wellington he encourages better ease of access around the city, access that is straightforward and uncomplicated. And certainly it is necessary to have a network of walkways around the city providing direct access between destinations. But this will not necessarily be the most interesting network. People should have a choice of routes around the city, with some being less direct but providing a higher level of interest.

The waterfront and routes along main arterial roads are among the more direct access ways through Wellington, but passageways through the denser parts of the inner city can be more intimate, revealing and offer a more dramatic experience, in Gordon

Cullen's terms.

Connection to one's environment

Through using a variety of muscles to navigate through the city a pedestrian will develop a more intimate and visceral connection with their physical environment. The more complex an environment is, and the more attention and effort that is required, the more a person will be aware of their physical surroundings.

This is how the activity Parkour works.

Parkour is an activity, first developed in France, where one must move through the urban environment at speed and with great efficiency of movement. Parkour practitioners have to navigate objects and buildings on their journey through the city. But in Parkour, practitioners (known as traceurs) also use these obstacles as devices for moving; for bouncing off, climbing on, and running around. Traceurs become very spatially aware, and must pay attention to form and detail.

The Parkour philosophy can be extended to all pedestrians. If people are required to navigate the city environment in a way that is more complicated than simply moving in a straight line and on a single level, they will become attuned to their immediate surroundings. With this attention one is more likely to form a stronger connection to the city or environment and from this connection, one is more likely to care for it, appreciate it, and want to change it for the better.

New Zealand's mountaineering culture

Physical and sporting achievements have long been celebrated and encouraged in New Zealand, including mountaineering. There is a hardy determination amongst New Zealanders that defines this nation. Surely the cities of this nation should be reflective of this lifestyle and culture?

Tourists visiting New Zealand come for the landscape and adventure outside of the cities – with the cities have much less appeal to overseas visitors. Surely there is an opportunity here to design New Zealand cities so that they are more aligned with New Zealand's foundations and sporting culture.

To have more exciting routes around the city is one way that recreation and adventure within the city could be encouraged, but still with an urban 'edge' to it. The routes would still celebrate the urban realm, passing through all the grittiness and density that makes the city what it is. Ease of movement around the city does not celebrate the urban context for what it is. Direct access, on a mono-level, while necessary, is generally uninspiring and doesn't make the most of Wellington's natural and built features.

"The instinct to climb up to some high place, from which you can look down and survey your world, seems to be a fundamental human instinct." (Alexander, 1977, p. 316). Alexander understands that people have a basic need to have an overview of their environment and situation. In a townscape, rooftops offer so much potential for this. People need refreshing overviews of their complex of the urban environment. This correlates again with Gordon Cullen's views about *'here and there'.* That we are
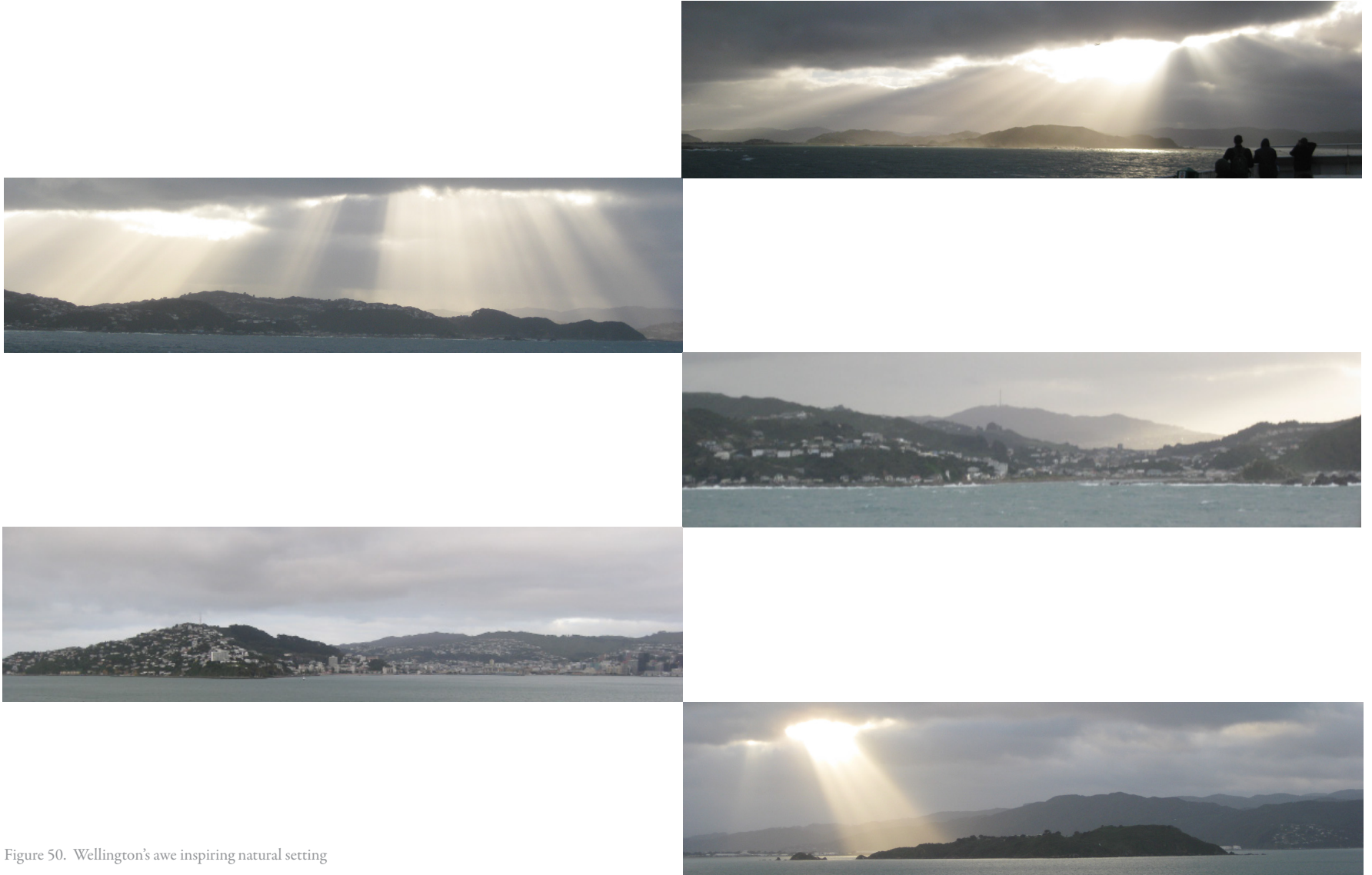
Figure 50. Wellington's awe inspiring natural setting

immersed in *'here'* and what the environment is at the moment, but we need to know where *'there'* is. Having a high view allows us to look at *'here and there'* as a whole and to put all the pieces together. This is just as important as being immersed in the *'here'*.

Alexander also advocates the use of roofs in *'A Pattern Language',* in the chapter *'Roof gardens', "A vast part of the earth's surface, in a town, consists of roofs. Couple this with the fact that the total area of a town which can be exposed to the sun is finite, and you will realise that it is natural, and indeed essential, to make roofs which take advantage of the sun and air."* (Alexander, 1977, p. 576) This is relevant to the rooftop typology that is emerging in Wellington. In Gordon Holden's article *'Superiority Complex'* it is mentioned that the public spaces around the additional rooftop developments were being compromised because of their effect in blocking sunlight from reaching public spaces below. To remedy this, a cue could be taken from *'Pattern Language'* and public spaces created on top of the built fabric in the city.

The young people of Wellington need physical challenges as much as youth living in rural New Zealand. Wellington has an opportunity to embrace the active culture that New Zealand prides itself upon by capitalising on the unique rooftop typology which has developed, and by creating new movement corridors through, up and over the inner city.

Wellington's stunning natural terrain

Wellington is blessed with a stunning natural setting (see figure 50). Jan Gehl acknowledges this in his report, writing, *"Wellington enjoys an excellent natural landscape formed by the hills and harbour."* (Jan Gehl, 2004, p. 5)

Yet Wellington's townscape does little to take advantage of its natural setting. There is so much opportunity to capitalise upon the drama of Wellington's natural setting within its designed townscape.

Both Gordon Cullen and the phenomenologists promote a sensory experience of the city, one that is full of drama, sequences, variation, and surprise. With Wellington's natural setting it shouldn't be hard to achieve this kind of drama and excitement. The townscape just needs to respond to the natural setting in a sensitive way, in order to unleash these inherited qualities. Movement through the city should be highly considered; how can drama be released with people moving through spaces? Where can view shafts be created? How can people move and with what muscles? If people are forced to move with a variety of muscles then they will be made more aware of their surroundings, what they are engaging with and how. Details, materials, and textures will come more into their immediate awareness. Through this awareness, people may begin to contemplate their city, to notice it, and care about the aesthetics of it.

Figure 51. Weathering and grittiness in the site
Figure 52. A roof in the site that has been weathered to be rich in texture and colour.

6.3 Weathering and Materials

Although Wellington has only had a short European history, it has many interesting buildings: buildings that have weathered in interesting ways.

Often it is weathering that has brought some coherence to varying buildings in Wellington's townscape. The weathering in many cases has softened contrasting materials and textures, bringing conflicting buildings onto a more even level aesthetically.

The site that has been chosen for this thesis, Leeds Street and the surrounding block, is full of interesting and weathered buildings (see figures 51 and 52). Some of these buildings have been neglected, giving them the opportunity to decay and melt somewhat into softer forms and textures. Often these particular buildings have just been left alone because they are the back parts to a block, and developers and city officials have concentrated on development of the blocks' more public facades.

David Leatherbarrow and Mohsen Mostafavi's book, *'On Weathering: the Life of Buildings in Time'* (1997) discusses the issue of maintenance and decay of buildings. The book points out that buildings can be highly designed and constructed but there is another layer of weathering that supercedes the design stage, the 4th dimension of time. Time, weathering, and decay can dramatically alter the function and aesthetics of the building.

In the case of the Leeds Street block, many buildings have begun their lives heavily contrasting with their neighbours, but with time have softened and weathered to

Figure 53. The resident of this little brick house has allowed weathering and personification to occur. He has actually encouraged weathering, through decoration with organic materials.

become more at one with each other.

Weathering helps one to consider the layers and parts involved in a building. Often the exterior of a building has weathered heavily but the interior has remained intact. Roofs are another interesting part of the building that can endure a lot of weathering separately to the rest of the building.

It is not just the natural elements that weather a building. In the case of Leeds Street, it is the people of the city that have that have given the street its character. The block has a lived in feeling, it tells stories, and has the touch of human warmth, and human care applied to it (see figure 53).

Thinking about a design intervention into a building, it can be most interesting to consider the building in terms of its parts and layers, and how these parts weather differently to other parts.

Intentional weathering is another aspect to consider within a design intervention. By using different materials, parts of the design can be manipulated to change and take on different characteristics as they age.

Weathering can highlight certain details and make them appear more interesting. Weathering and decay makes the haptic realm of the city come to life. It reminds us of the lives that have been lived there, of the city's many stories, and how a space has been used or not used.

Decay and weathering helps us to consider longevity and quality in the built environment. It also helps us to consider history, connection to place, and the multi-

Figure 54. Memphis Belle Cafe on Dixon Street. This cafe is a perfect example of people taking over messy side walks, and sitting in between obscure buildings, in an effort to enjoy their city. Many Wellington people have come to love the messy vitality that this kind of space offers.

layered city. It helps us to realise what has been and gone before us, and what we want as the city's current identity. Weathering and decay has the power to evoke all these thoughts and help us to contemplate the sentiment of the city.

'On Weathering: the Life of Buildings in Time' describes how weathering and decay can be used as a tool, a tool which can provide a subtle layer of coherence to a multi-faceted townscape. In the most interesting neighbourhoods of Wellington, such as in Te Aro, there are already many layers of weathering and decay present in the townscape. This weathering, with the process of time and generations, has added a sense of personalisation to many of the imported architectural styles.

Weathering and decay is a typology that could be further developed in Wellington's townscape, in a controlled and interesting way.

6.4 Informal and Smaller Public Spaces

As discussed in previous chapters, Wellington has developed a network of informal public spaces. This comes out of the lack of formally designed parks and other public spaces, and the increasing number of people living in the central city. People in the inner city need these public spaces for social interaction and play, and if they aren't designed and made available then people will create them for themselves (see figure 56). This is what has occurred in Te Aro.

Cafes in Te Aro have been the leaders in this trend of creating liveable spaces from the off-cuts available in the inner city (see figure 54). There are many examples of cafes

Figure 55. A deep alleyway in the site. This space is photographed in its complete raw state, but it illustrates how the site is full of spaces that could make great courtyard spaces. This space is semi-enclosed, but still offers visual loopholes and glimpses into the distance.

creating functional courtyards at the back of their businesses. Olive Cafe on Cuba Street is one such example. Here they have taken a small gritty space out the back of their cafe and turned it into a functional and lively courtyard. They have achieved this by adding seating, planting, and small-scale ornamentation and decoration. The space has been personalised and feels like it has had the 'warmth of human intervention' applied to it, something that Gordon Cullen emphasizes as important.

Christopher Alexander also states the importance of the warmth of human intervention in small-scale settings. Pattern 115 in Alexanders book *'A Pattern Language'* is titled *'Courtyards Which Live'*. He discusses what makes some courtyards extremely successful and others not. Alexander is of the view that courtyards in modern buildings are often dead and underused. *"The courtyards built in modern buildings are very often dead. They are intended to be private open spaces for people to use- but they end up unused, full of gravel and abstract sculptures."* (Pattern Language. Page 562).

Alexander goes on to say why he thinks these smaller spaces fail, and how he thinks they could succeed. He lists three ways for making a small space work. The first is through interstitial zones between inside and outside. Creating an interstitial space that is a part of someone's ordinary everyday life, so that they have to use it all the time. The main designed space can flow out from here but users are drawn into it from having to use the interstitial space out of necessity.

The second way to make a space succeed, according to Alexander, is through design of multiple openings into the space. With many doors or openings entering the space people tend to use it as a thoroughfare between activities (see figure 55). The space

becomes a meeting point between activities and other places.

Alexander's third way to make a courtyard succeed is through having loopholes. This means spaces that allow a person to see glimpses into the distance, into places further beyond their immediate surroundings. This is similar to what Gordon Cullen describes when he refers to sequential spaces in *'The Concise Townscape.'*

So, summarising Alexander and Cullen, a courtyard works best if it offers partial enclosure but is also related to a wider sequence and offers wider views and visual links.

Alexander also discusses the varying degrees of privacy available in a courtyard. In a courtyard a person may feel they are in a private space but can still feel a degree of human interaction, e.g. they can still hear other people talking in nearby spaces or get an occasional glimpse of other people.

Alexander states that a successful courtyard will allow a person to take up a variety of positions, depending on mood and climate. There may be corners that feel safe and insulated, more open areas that provide a revealing view, or a sunny place where a person can lie. Texture, materials and ornamentation are what help to make a courtyard feel inhabited and gives it a warm, human touch.

Figure 56. Man taking a break in the site. Because there is a lack of formally designed spaces in Te Aro, people have adapted other spaces for themselves, such as this man.

6.5 Typologies Conclusion

Wellington, and particularly Te Aro, is full of spaces that have this human warmth. Most of these places have evolved informally, with residents initiating their creation. It seems that people have a natural ability to create these spaces, when left to do so. Sometimes it is when spaces are overly designed, or left with no room for personalisation, that spaces feel sterile and uninhibited.

This is not to underestimate the importance of a designer's role; a designer can be very important in transforming a space. But it is the people who use it and make it their own after this initial intervention. This is especially so if it is the residents who are occupying the space and it is a part of their daily lives. Then the residents have a special vested interest in the space and they want to see it thrive. The designer may kick-start the process by creating a good foundation, but the users must follow it through.

This is the method of design that seems most appropriate for Te Aro. The informal space typology that has become a part of Wellington should not be lost, but it can be guided and improved upon by designers. There can be a collaboration between designers and the public: the designer providing purpose and direction, while still allowing local personality to come through. Out of this method of design, and by employing local typologies, a local type of coherence can begin to be developed within Wellington's townscape.

In Te Aro, the local people have tried to rekindle the spark of human warmth, the spark that has been nearly smothered by the thoughtless destruction of the 1980's and subsequent big box developments devoid of detail and interest. In many cases the spark looks set to reignite, but designers can help to fan the flame, and bring back the warmth into specific neighbourhoods.

Reiterating Cullens quote; *And yet... if at the end of it all the city appears dull, uninteresting and soulless, then it is not fulfilling itself. It has failed. The fire has been laid but nobody has put a match to it."* (Cullen, 1961, p. 8).

Figure 57. The Hannahs Warehouse apartment building at night time.

CHAPTER 7

Public & Private Relationships with the City

7. Public and Private Relationships with the City

As individuals in a society we are in constant fluctuation between being a part of this society, and being our own person. Different people require different degrees of privacy and public exposure, depending on the individual. *"Some people want to live where the action is. Others want more isolation. This corresponds to a basic human personality dimension."* (Alexander, 1977, p. 193)

The inner city should offer varying spaces for varying types of personalities.

7.1 The Variety of People who Engage with the Site

The site chosen for this thesis, Leeds Street and its surrounding block, is used by a diverse community.

People that use the site include residents, workers, passers-by and visitors. The workers that use the site have a variety of occupations; among them tradesmen, office workers, and café workers.

Most of the people using the site during the day use it for coffee or smoking breaks, finding the odd sunny spot to relax (see figures 56 and 59). People often clamber up an

access way or a fire escape onto a platform in order to reach the sun and to climb out of the inner city depths.

Office workers may use the site in order to take a break from the hectic rush that is Cuba Street and some of the other main thoroughfares. It seems that people like having the choice to flit between being a part of the activity in the city, and being able to disappear when they wish to.

7.2 The Role of Civic Pride and Community Care in the City

There are many different people involved in the creation and evolution of a city, many different trades, expertise and opinions. What makes a successful and coherent city is when all members involved in creating a townscape can work together.

'The Culture of Buildings' (2006) by Howard Davis looks into the overall systems and processes of construction and building. It analyses how society and culture can heavily influence a particular building. Davis asserts that a building is not purely a product of client and architect. A building responds to its context and society. The responsive nature of the building industry is both a good and bad thing, depending on the society. Some countries have very well established building cultures, where issues have been worked through and the culture and working systems are respected by society and the people who use the buildings. Denmark is a country like this, where the vernacular style of the country is thoroughly sorted out. Copenhagen is a product

Figure 58. Furniture maker inside his workshop - inside the historic 'Barber & Co.' building, on Leeds Street.

of this refined building culture. Denmark has established what building techniques are best suited, both functionally and aesthetically, to the local context. In many cases traditional techniques have been evolving and progressing into the contemporary building culture.

'The Culture of Building', analyses some countries where a traditional building culture is not so strong; countries where the building culture is in a state of flux. In these countries the architect has little opportunity to influence change towards a better building.

'The Culture of Building' also discusses the loss of the building and craftsmanship trades. Once the architect was also a carpenter and had a lot of control and understanding during the building process. In contrast, current project management results in a disconnection between design and construction.

'The Culture of Building' discusses the many aspects of professional practice involved in contemporary architecture; money flow, agreements and contracts, collaboration of knowledge, specific skilled professions, modern craftsmanship, and how these aspects all contribute to the outcome of a single building. Davis discusses how the collective opinions and thoughts of society can affect building practise, *"...at any time, in any particular place, the building culture can be described as a specific configuration of knowledge, institutions, rules, and built results. A brief description of these various building cultures, with their similarities and differences, will begin to define both the nature of building cultures themselves and the way our present building cultures result from a long historical evolution."* (Davis, 2006 p. 25). This supports the stance this

thesis takes that Wellington has an incoherent and multi-faceted townscape, due to its short but turbulent past.

Gerald Melling states in *'Mid-City Crisis'* that architecture needs to engage everyone in the building process. *"It needs to be received. It needs goodwill."* (Melling, p. 41). Like Davis, Melling is saying that good design goes beyond the vision of the architect. Good design needs to be embraced by the community and by all the various people and occupations involved in the building process

If a society is to change its perception of its townscape, then it will be through slow change. A city is a collection of ideas and thoughts from a collective group of people. If Wellington is to improve the degree of coherence in its townscape and devise a strong and local aesthetic identity for itself, then it will be through a collective process. A city must think and work together to make change in a townscape. Designers and architects, however, should take the lead while being responsive to the local context and culture.

7.3 The Need for Intimate and Quieter Spaces in the City

A lot of contemporary theory regarding the urban realm advocates programmatic design. It encourages the constant design of activity; *'streets for people', 'active edges'* and *'opportunities for social engagement'*. It is true that the best cities in the world are full of street life and activities. But the best cities in the world also offer places of retreat,

Figure 59. Boy on steps. This boy may be a resident in the site, or a passer-by, but he enjoys a moment to relax in the sun, on one of the many elevated stairwells present in the site.

Figure 60. The peace and stillness of an interior apartment in the Hannah's Warehouse building. This image illustrates the intimacy and protection an interior space can provide from the outside world. Sometimes people just need spaces like this amongst the busyness of the inner city, especially if their whole lives are wrapped up in this inner city.

places for solitude, places for intimacy, and places for reflection within the city. Great cities in the world offer a balance of spaces, designed to provide for various social situations.

When people live and work so centrally in the city, their entire lives are wrapped up in this specific place. This is why people need a variety of public spaces.

When Melling was interviewed he said he thought that large open spaces in the city, such as Civic Square in Wellington, are a bit weird. He thinks that no one wants to be that publically exposed, and people prefer smaller spaces where they can find a niche for themselves and feel comfortable.

A courtyard or other small space works best if it offers partial enclosure but is also related to a wider sequence of spaces, and offers a visual links to these spaces. In this way people feel as if they have privacy but still feel as if they are a part of a community. It seems that small spaces that are semi-public work best. Spaces that cater to whoever is "in the know" i.e. the local community. Small spaces should be interesting enough that people can choose where they put themselves within them. The design should aim to stimulate all the senses, as the phenomenologists advocate.

Having spaces within the city that are quieter and more intimate, gives people the chance to be reflective and to develop a deeper connection with their city on a more sensory level.

7.4 The Hannah's Warehouse Building

The Hannah's Warehouse building (see figure 57) dominates Leeds Street, and is the building that houses the most residents within the site. When I interviewed Gerald Melling, he told me that he had once proposed a cafe below ground level of this building. The café was planned to have a glass roof so that people on street level could look down into it. He said he had thought that residents would really take to the idea of having a local café at the bottom of their building. However, he was surprised to find that actually the body corporate did not want the café at all. They thought it would bring too much noise and disruption to their apartments.

This proves the usefulness of having interstitial zones of public/private space around residential buildings. People like having activity, but don't necessarily want to have a functioning café close to their dwellings, with the attendant risk of noise and activity at unsocial hours. They like to know that they have control over what type of space they are in – they like to be able to choose when they are in a space with a lot of other people and when they are not.

One good thing that came out of the redevelopment of the Hannah's building was the inclusion of a pedestrian thoroughfare through the building (see figure 38). When Melling was interviewed he said that it was very good of the developer of the Hannah's building to allow the ground level of the building to be 'free space' allowing public pedestrian movement through to Leeds Street. Melling acknowledged it was rare for a developer to allow this kind of space to be essentially given as a gift to the public.

Melling said that is was hard to find the right balance between getting it right for the residents and getting it right for the public in this type of inner city living situation. Melling who has himself lived in the inner city, and in this particular block, thinks that people should accept blurred boundaries of public exposure and privacy if they are going to live here. This includes dealing with noise and other strong sensory experiences that come with living in the city.

It seems that some of the most effective spaces for roof-top apartment living are spaces that are semi-private: spaces that are open to the public but not overly advertised. Sometimes the best spaces in a city are ones that only the locals know about. This way there is a feeling of belonging when one discovers it and spends time there, as if they have earned their right to be there. Knowing about the space is proof of their investment in the city.

7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many types of personalities in this world and a successful city caters to this diversity. Great cities have a variety of spaces that cater to different people in their community and their moods. However, even though a city may have a variety of spaces catering to people and their circumstances, there should still be an overarching sense of design and coherence.
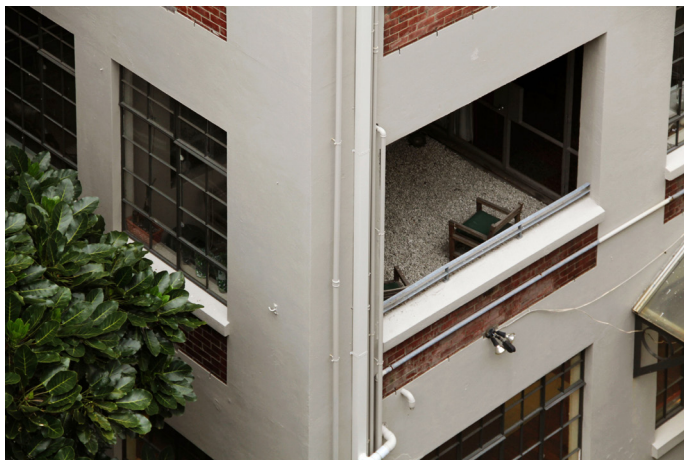
Figure 61. Residential intrusions and extrusions amongst the Hannah's Warehouse apartment building. These basic spatial arragements represent the basic human need to both retreat from the city, and to push ones self out futher into it. The top photo also shows how close some resdients balcony's come into contact with the rooftops.
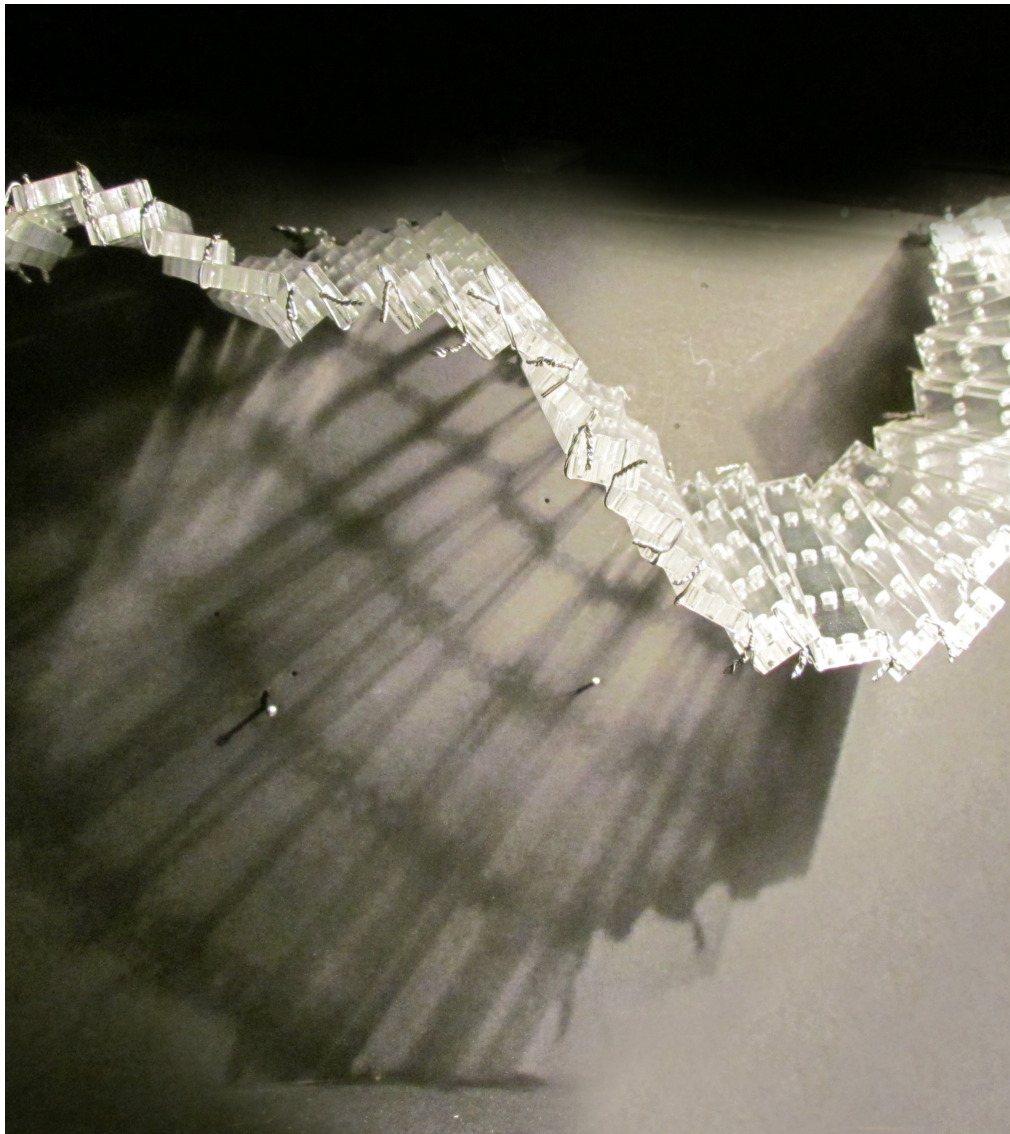
CHAPTER 8

Design

8. Design

The final design is for a walkway that weaves its way through the inner city block that was chosen for site analysis. The walkway is comprised of repeated modules (see figure 63)- modules that become stairs, platforms, bridges, structures, and small pocket parks. The walkway starts at one end of the block, on ground level, then continues to weave through buildings, around buildings, over the rooftops, down existing stairwells, and along walls. It eventually comes out at the other end of the block at ground level again. (see figure 76).

The walkway can be entered and exited from both ends, and both ends come out at a busy streets, Ghuznee Street and Dixon Street.

Just as the right piece of jewellery can bring a mismatched outfit of clothing together, it is hoped that this design intervention can bring a mismatched amalgamation of buildings together. Devising coherence in Wellington's townscape is the key aim of this thesis and design, but doing so with appreciation and consideration for existing qualities and systems.

The design aims to revitalise the site, and bring to light the best qualities and details of the site. It aims to help the site shine, for what it is.

Site Axis
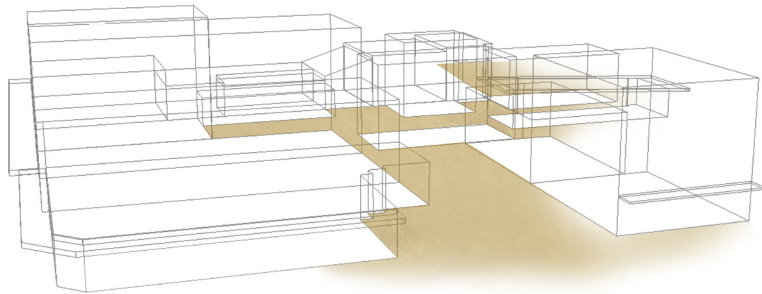
Ground level of the site
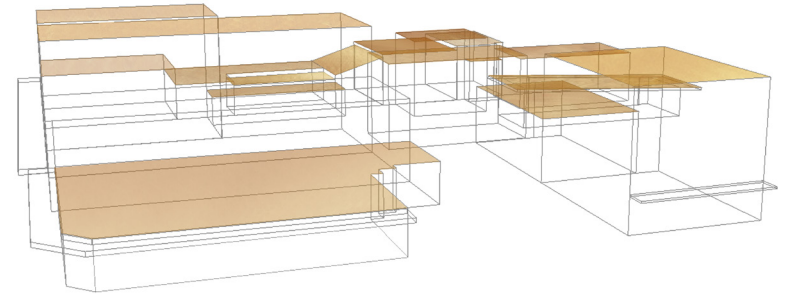
Rooftop space in the site

Figure 62. Site axis diagrams. These diagrams identify the different axis or levels that the design aims to work with in the site.

8.1 Module

The essence of this design is the module (see figure 63).

The design is one that is fractured, one that moves and twists, responding to the site. The module is the key device that allows it to be flexible and responsive. The design is one of geometries and visual patterns.

The module is a rectangle, and was devised following thorough site analysis. During detailed site analysis it was noticed that there was a reoccurring rectangle present in many of the forms and details upon the site. With so much diversity within the site, the rectangle was then taken as the leading form to bring coherence to the site.

Hans Loidl and Stefan Bernard in their book *'Opening Spaces'* (2003) discuss what is meant by good design. A reoccurring point they make is that good design is the balance between having enough diversity and enough repetition. Obviously the Leeds Street site has a lot of diversity, and so the search became about what is repeated in the site and what could be a cohering design element. The repeated rectangular shape became the cohering element.

The book *'Opening Spaces'* became very useful in helping to devise patterns, rhythm, proportions, scale and transformations. The book states in the opening of a chapter, *'Repetition as a tool',* that *"Design is coherence."* (Loidl & Bernard, p. 172)

There were some other rhythms and patterns already existing on the site, for example repetition in the sequence and size of spaces. The existing spaces have nicely coherent proportions.

After the rectangle was developed into a module, it was then experimented with to see what kinds of varying configurations could come out of this module. A lot of interesting patterns and geometries began to emerge out of this simple module, depending on how they were repeated, arranged, and overlapped (see figures 65 to 68).

The module began its development at its smallest size of 400 mm by 100 mm. This module then begun to be multiplied again and again, so that it existed at a variety of sizes, to be used in a variety of spaces. The design is one of fractals, so that it is the same module being repeated, multiplied and divided again. The larger modules retain the same proportion of 4:1 as the smaller modules.

The module that ended up being used throughout the final design was 1600 mm by 400 mm, with a depth of 50 mm. Sometimes the module was doubled in length to be 3200 mm by 400 mm. This means that within the final design, the widest part of the path was no more than 3200, and the narrowest part of the part, never less than 1600 mm. The path, in parts, became a variety of other widths, within this verified width bracket. Every few steps the modules were merged together to form a platform, with a width of more than a metre, for the purpose of resting.

This nature of the design is illustrated in the initial physical models. The flexibility between modules allows for the design to easily fold in on itself, and in and around the site with ease. The design takes a very rectilinear module and repeats it, until the overall design is no longer rectilinear in its form but organic and curving.

Initially it was thought that the design would be tectonic, and that it could be changed and altered by users, depending on their specific needs and requirements at the time. If

this were to be the nature of the design the connections between modules would have to be flexible and adjustable.

The final design however, moved away from being tectonic and adjustable, due to practical and safety reasons. The design is set in high places and it would be impractical to have something so unpredictable at rooftop level. The final design is fixed in place but the use of a module means that it is easy to replace components if something fails.

Although the design did not keep its original characteristics of being mobile and tectonic, it is still organic and twisting in its appearance. The components have been manipulated to fit the site, including obscure spaces and corners.

Because the design is modular it means that it can be changed or updated if a building in the site changes. For example some buildings in the site have been identified as being earthquake prone, and may be demolished in the near future. In this case the design could be broken down in this particular part, and rebuilt in another particular part. The design is reliant upon the existing buildings, but buildings are not permanent, and it is important to have a design that is resilient to change.

The Module
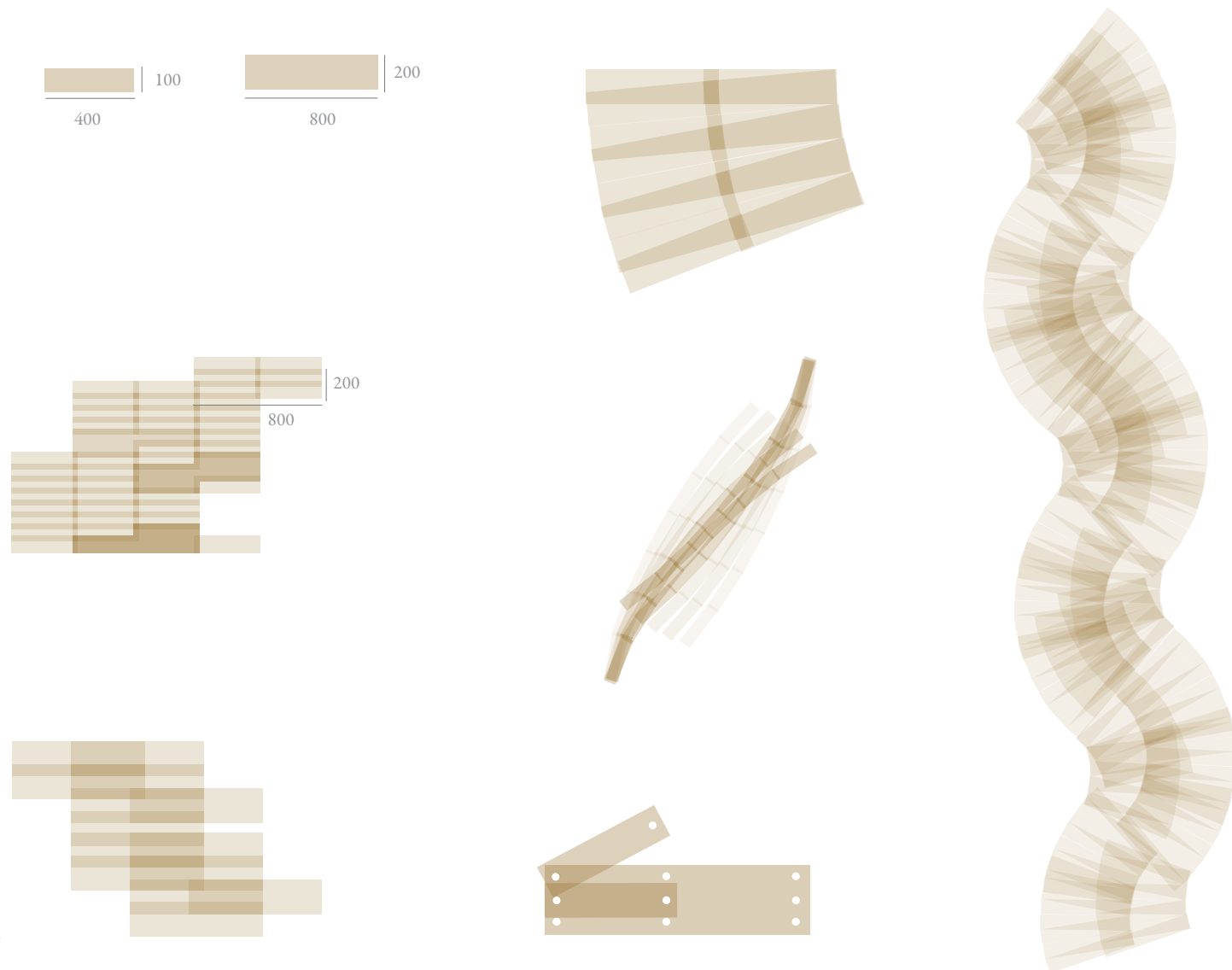
Figure 63. The module in all its varying arrangements. Note that scale has been lost in this diagram.

8.2 Phasing of the Design

It is intended that the design would be built in stages.

It would more feasible to build the design in stages. Also it is wise to learn from Gerald Melling's story about how the body corporate of the Hannah's Warehouse residential building rejected his proposal for a cafe in the subterranean level of the building. With Melling's proposal it seemed that residents understandably did not want to commit to a public amenity so close to their apartment dwellings. It is imagined that the residents would be equally reluctant to approve a design that comes so close to the vicinity of their private apartments, even though it is predicted that the design would not attract too many visitors at any one time.

The design has also been laid out so that it does not obstruct any resident's views, and does not pass too close to any resident's apartment openings. This is for privacy and security reasons.

Initially, the design is intended to be used primarily by the residents, with the public as secondary users, and the public taking to it more gradually than the residents. So taking Melling's story as a warning, it would seem wise to implement the design in stages. Residents may be accepting of a small part of the design initially, and then, if this works, a secondary part can be introduced, and then a third part, and so on.

8.3 Use of Materiality

Materiality has always been an important part of this thesis, both in the analysis of the existing materiality on the site, and in the use of the introduced materiality within the design.

Materials used in the design change as the design weaves its way through the site. The design changes in its use of materiality, according to the building it interacts with at any one time. There are some main materials that are used throughout the design to give it coherence. These main materials are timber and concrete aggregate. The design changes between using timber and concrete as the main materials, depending on the host building's construction and what it is capable of supporting.

Supporting these two main materials, timber and concrete, are other materials that are used when needed to highlight an interesting existing detail or form. For example sometimes polycarbonate is used to achieve a transparent effect.

A modular approach is useful for this changing materiality, as the materials can be sewn in with one another as the design changes and meanders through the site. Handrails in the design would be constructed from steel.

The particular materials used also depend on their function within the design. Throughout the block the design changes from paving, to stairs, to structural elements, to bridges and so on, and accordingly the type of materials need to change as well.

The layer of embellishment, that would come from residents decorating the site, is considered another layer of materiality - just as weathering and decay is described as

part of the design process, a continuation of the built design.

At one point in the design process, the design seemed to overwhelm the site and started to overtake the qualities of the site. When this happened the design had to be pulled back and refined to fit in and around the site. It had to be remembered that the site and its qualities took precedence over the design intervention. The design intervention is just there to give the site a boost, and to trigger coherence.

8.4 Useful Inner City Spaces

The most important aim of this thesis and design is to develop the beginning of a coherent design language in Wellington, by using a particular block as a starting point.

But it is also important that the design has a use and creates nice places for people to be in. After all, what is the point of having a coherent city if the spaces within in aren't useable?

Currently there are not enough inner city parks in Te Aro for the locals to use. Te Aro needs a better network of pocket parks. 'Pocket parks' generally mean parks that are occupying small spaces around the city. This type of park suits Te Aro very well because the neighbourhood is comprised of a tight composition of buildings with interesting spaces in between. Pocket parks do not have to be on ground level though, and this thesis challenges that assumption with the incorporation of 'pocket parks' in a multitude of dimensions and spaces around the city. This thesis set out to challenge where and how pocket parks could fit into the density of the central city, and be

integrated with the buildings.

Most of the 'pocket parks' designed for this thesis have been planned to be intimate small-scale spaces (see figure 93)ww. In accordance with Gordon Cullen and the phenomenologists theories, the design has aimed to balance having closed and insular spaces, and spaces that reveal views and a wider context. The site already offers both types of spaces, so the design has just been built off the site, to make the spaces more accessible, and more useable.

Following the phenomenologist's theory on fragments, and Pallasmaa's theory of the seven senses, the design aims to provide the user with a rich sensory experience. The haptic and detailed realm of the site is brought out with the design intervention, as people are forced to get close to the textures and details of the buildings, as they pass through the block. The site is full of interesting smells, some nice, some not, due to it being located in the middle of the city and being surrounded by food outlets operating from the buildings. The design passes around the source of these smells, letting the users encounter them. This reminds the user that they are in a dense urban block, and all these social operating systems are occurring around them.

The design through this block is set out and planned, but this should be seen as just a starting point. Building upon this base the design allows for personification and embellishment from users of the design. Wellington is well known for its handmade crafty decoration and personification of public spaces. Site analysis concluded that there is already a lot of residential decoration within the site, such as pot plants and wall murals. These signs of settlement would be encouraged as another layer adding to

the formal design.

The design also aims to make use of some of the access-ways that have been identified around the site. In some cases the steps are built off an existing stair-well, completing a connection-way onto a roof top or platform.

The site in its present state is already so interesting, that it does not need much to accentuate it; just improved access-ways and a sensitive design intervention. The aim of the design is to provide greater coherence, not to make the site more confusing. When Gerald Melling was interviewed for this thesis he used a phrase that summed up the implementation of a sensitive design. Melling said, *'the broad sweep sweeps the character away',* (2011) meaning that in an inner city situation a small and delicate intervention can be better than a large sweeping one.

8.5 Users of the Design - Privacy Thresholds

The design was developed for the existing community currently using the site, including residents, workers, passers-through, and visitors.

Within this thesis issues around the ownership of buildings have not been addressed. But the people using the buildings on a daily level must be considered. There are privacy issues to weigh up. The design has been placed considerately so it does not by pass the windows and openings of many apartments, ensuring that it does not overly intrude on resident's right to privacy.

It is intended that different user groups would use the design at different times during the day.

Residents and workers are expected to use the site in different ways and at different hours. Residents would tend to use the site in the early mornings or evenings, sharing a morning coffee or an evening meal in the sun available on the rooftops. They would have a higher level of privacy in the spaces at these times. People working in the area could climb up to the rooftops during lunch breaks, or after work, and passersby would use the design as an access way during busier times of the day.

The design is intended to cater to people 'in the know'. For the residents sake it would be best if the design never became overly populated, and was kept to a local user base. There would be no strict rules about who could use the design or when, but it would be hoped that natural patterns of use would occur during the day and evening.

8.6 Movement and Change of Module

In previous chapters, a new typology of movement has been discussed for Wellington. This design could offer an alternative type of movement through the city. If the design were to be extended, over time, it could begin to function as a complete infrastructure throughout the city. The new infrastructure would take people around the city's built topography.

Each neighbourhood that the infrastructure passes through would have a different module, so that the design would respond to the unique make-up of each

neighbourhood. The mode of movement would be the coherent element throughout the citywide design, with each neighbourhood taking on its own modular structure and therefore own characteristics.

The design treats the urban fabric like topography, meandering its way through this man made landscape.

8.7 The Design in Relation to Cullen

Gordon Cullen's *'The Concise Townscape'* was the main text that was referred to throughout the development of this design. The design tried to incorporate Cullen's three categories of vision; Motion, Position, and Content.

Motion refers to an understanding of *'existing view'* and *'emerging view',* or *'here'* and *'there'.* The design incorporates the idea of revealing sequences, which was possible because it is also a means of movement through the block.

By Position, Cullen believed that the body should be engaged by its surroundings. This could be achieved through a contrast of situations and spaces through the design, layering spatial experiences and manipulating sequences of views.

With regard to Content, Cullen believed that there was too much insensitivity in the design of the urban environment. Cullen wanted to see more attention to details, texture, materials and form. This design aims to enhance awareness of the interesting elements which already exist within the site. Cullen believed that incorporation of

local context was the best way to break away from conformity and to achieve a rich standard of content.

Cullen states that the art of townscape is being able to weave together all the elements that go into making a townscape, all the utilitarian structures and necessities, and release drama and excitement. Releasing this drama is the ultimate aim of this design, along with adding to a sense of cohesion within the site. If this is achieved then the relationship between person and city can be enhanced and the warmth of human imagination will be felt.

Design Development
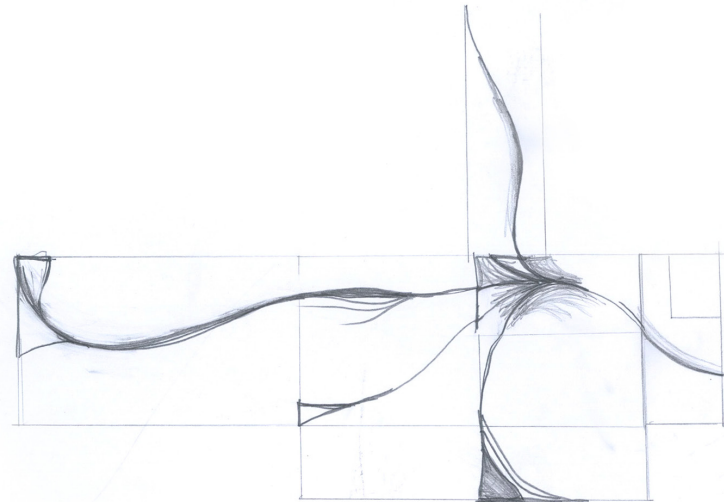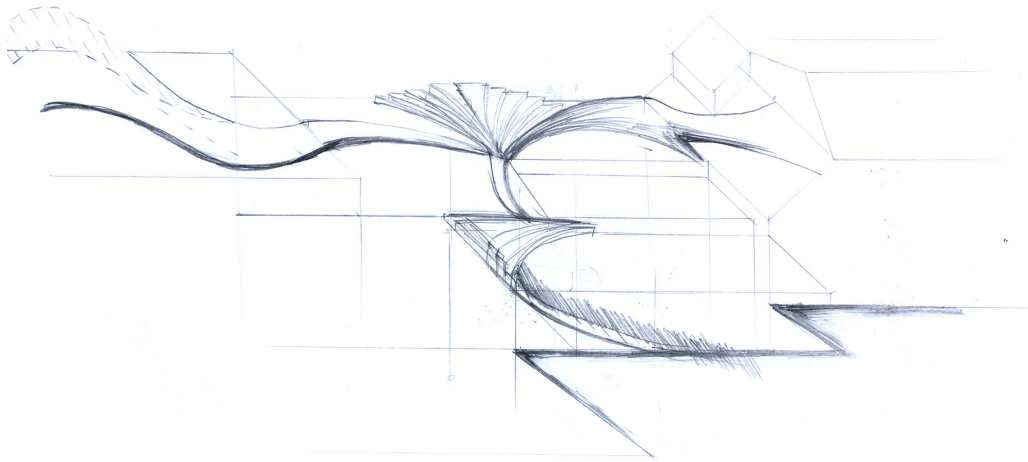
Figure 64. Initial sketches of how the design is intended to flow through the site.
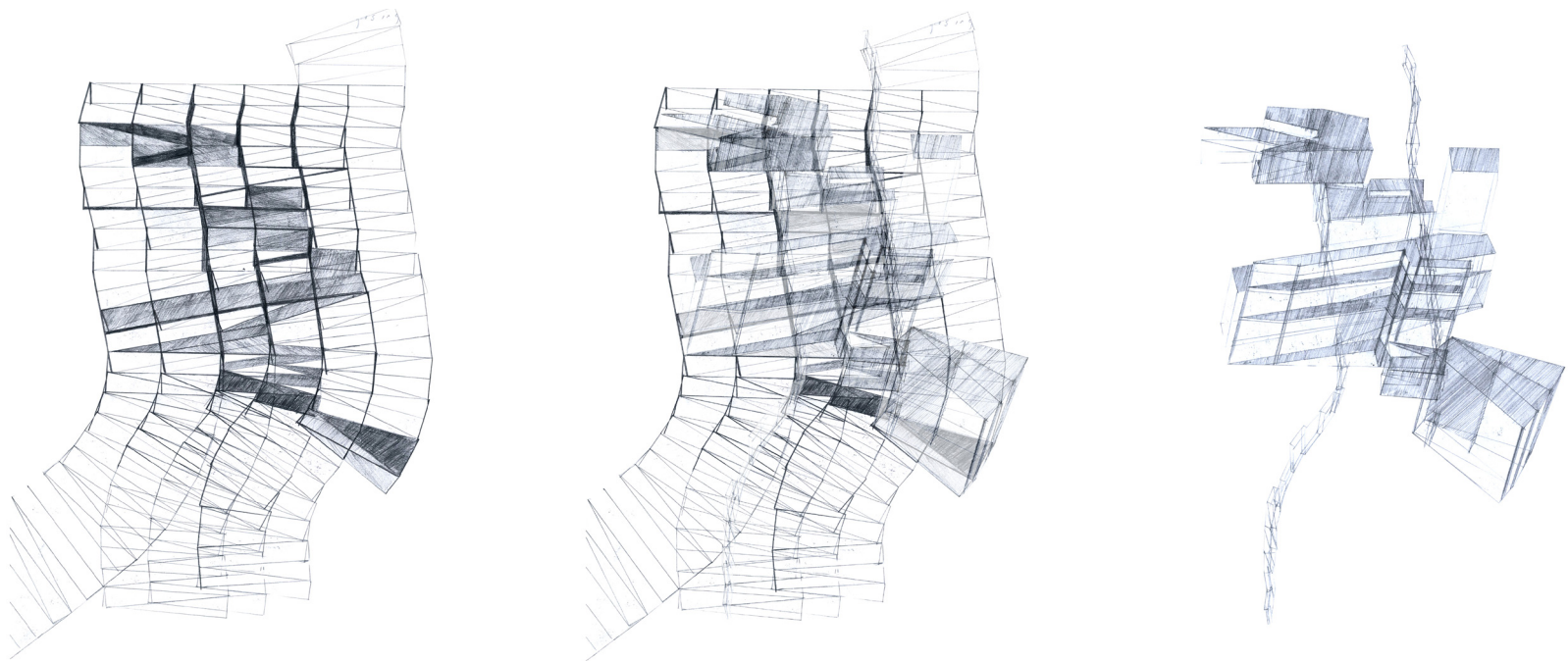
Figure 65. Modular grid. These drawings develop the idea of the module becoming a grid, and structure growing out of this grid.
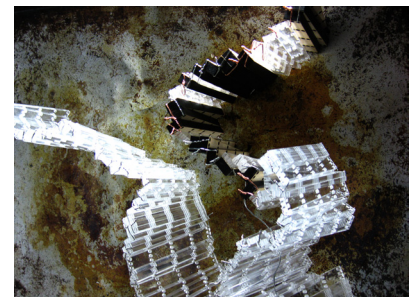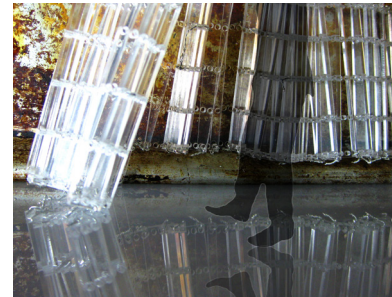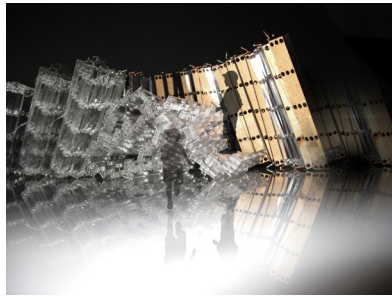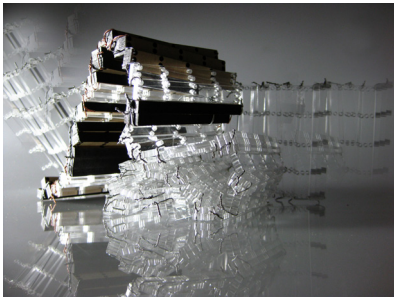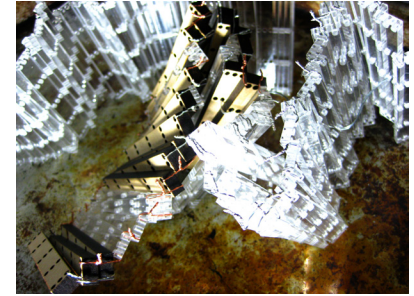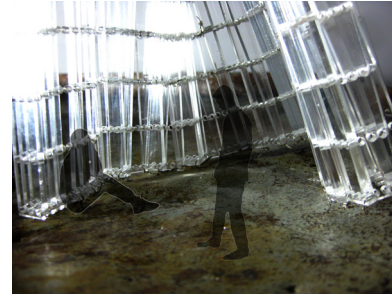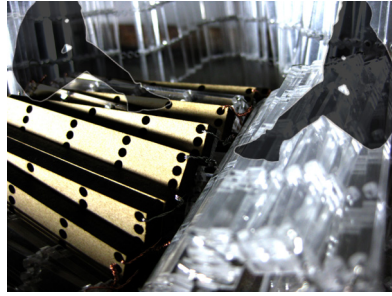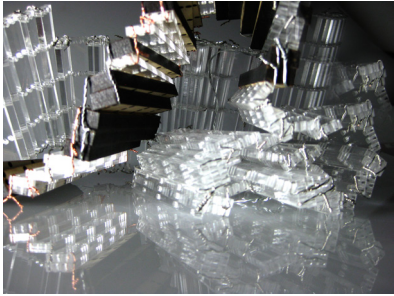
Figure 66. First physical concept model. This model was made from modules strung together, in order to test how as a collection they could begin to take on three-dimensional form and spatial qualities.

Figure 67. Opposite page- the same physical model. Here the model is combined with the drawn grid. These photographs/drawings are testing how the module could become actually useful, becoming structure/paving/ steps etc.
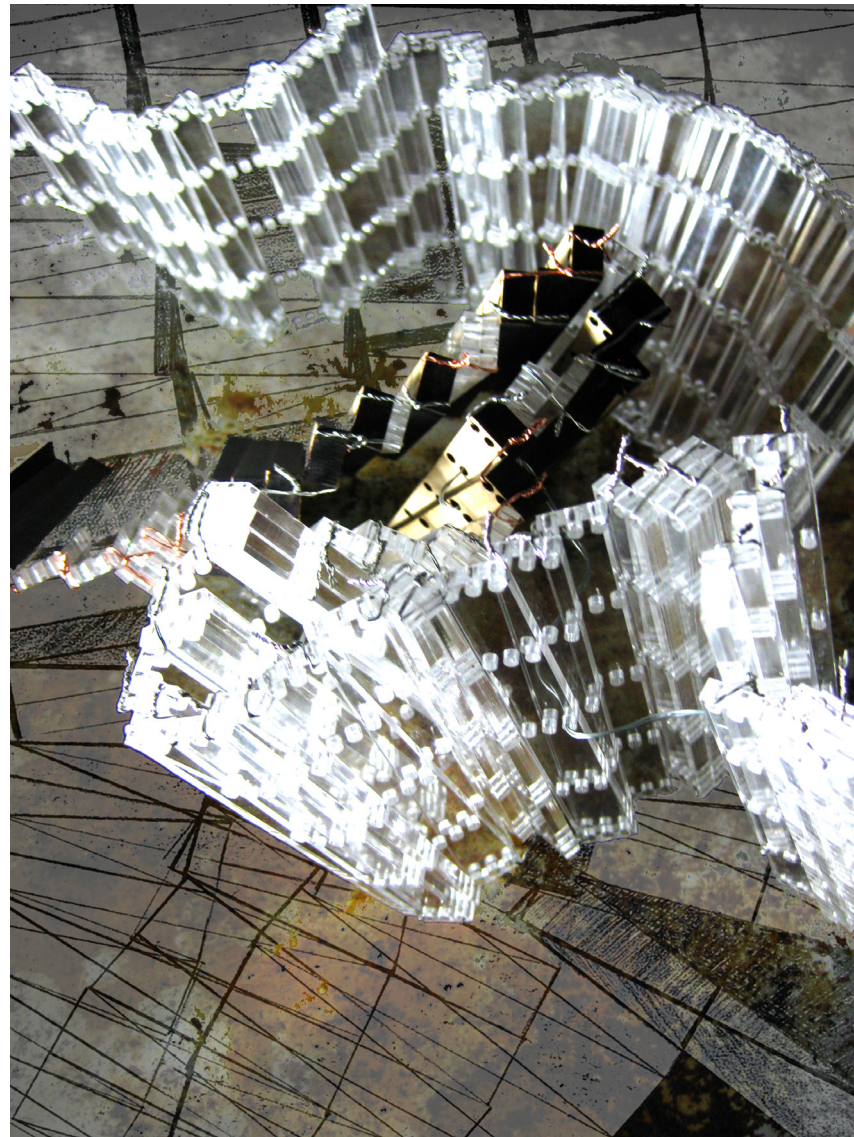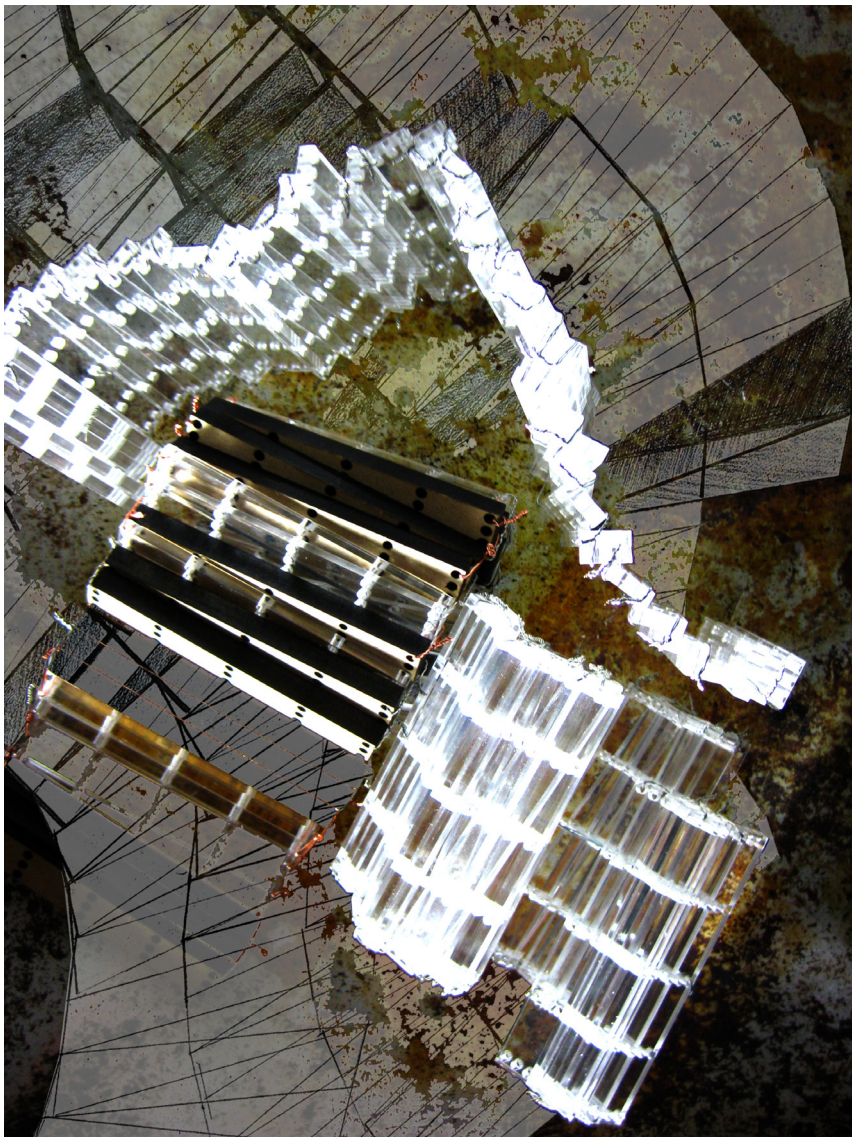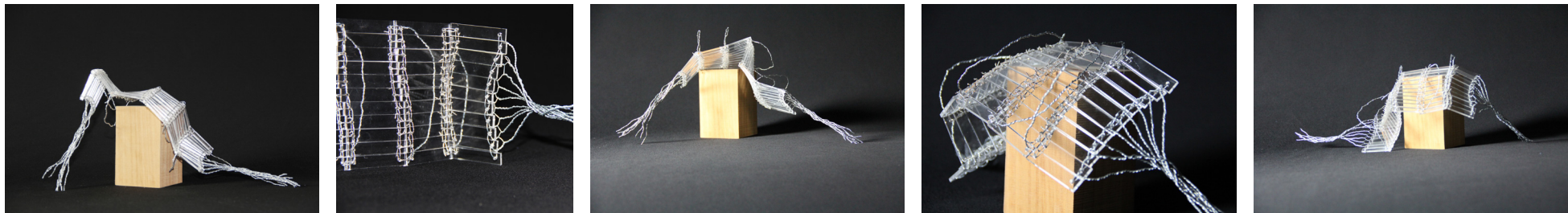
Figure 68. Second physical concept model. This model is a three dimensional-representation of the modular grid. This was constructed to test how the individual modules could be connected, as well to test how the grid could flex and move. The first physical model could only twist in one direction, whereas this model was a development from that, with it being able to twist in multiple directions. This advanced twisting is because of the way that the modules were connected and strung together within this second model.
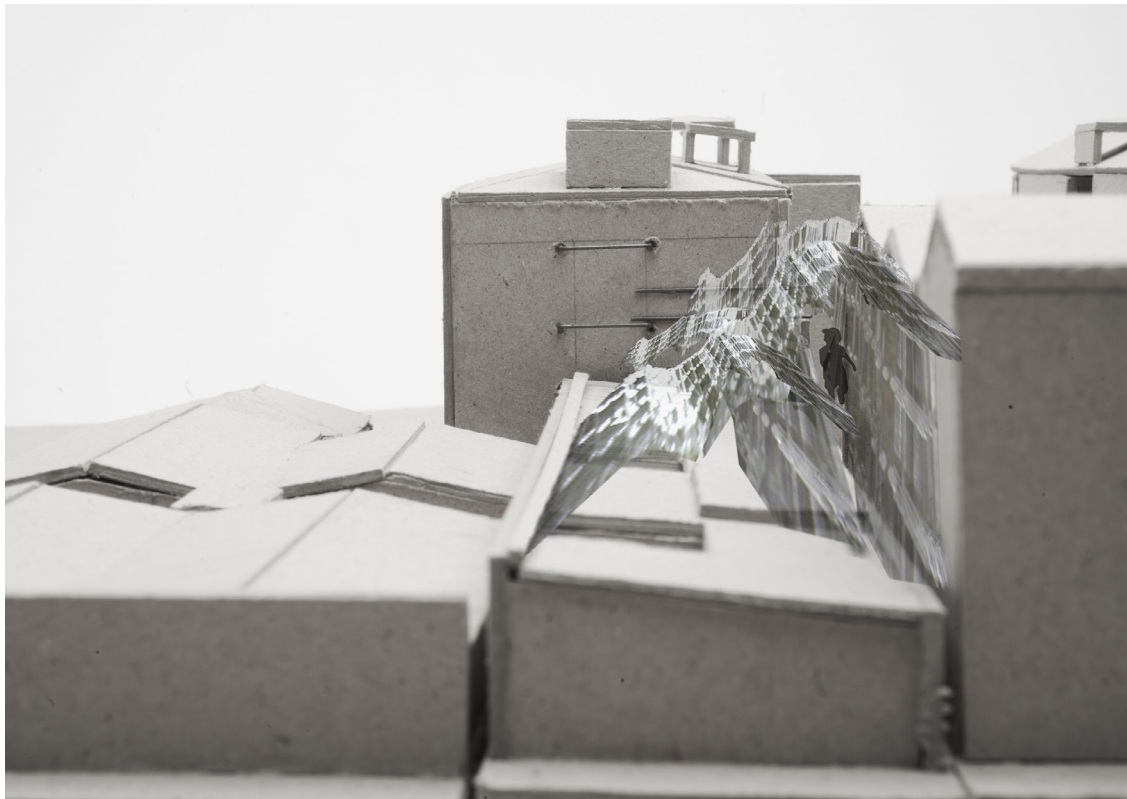
Figure 69. First exploration of a shelter structure within the site model.
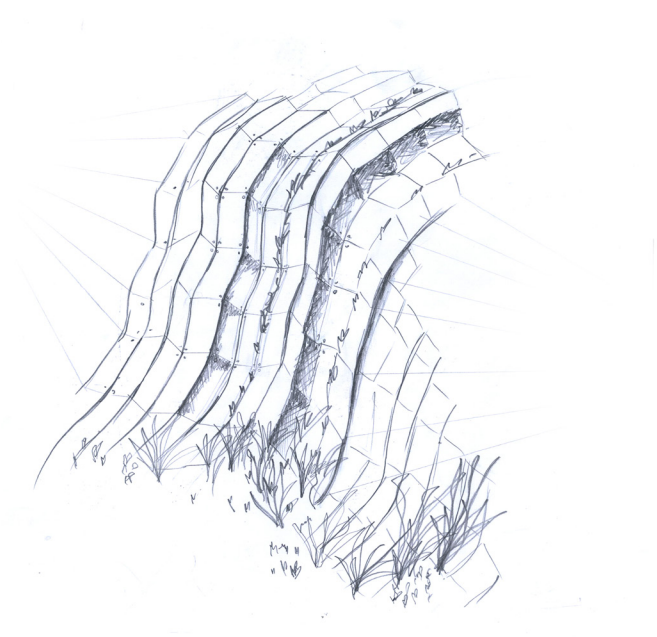
Figure 70. Sketch of first shelter structure.
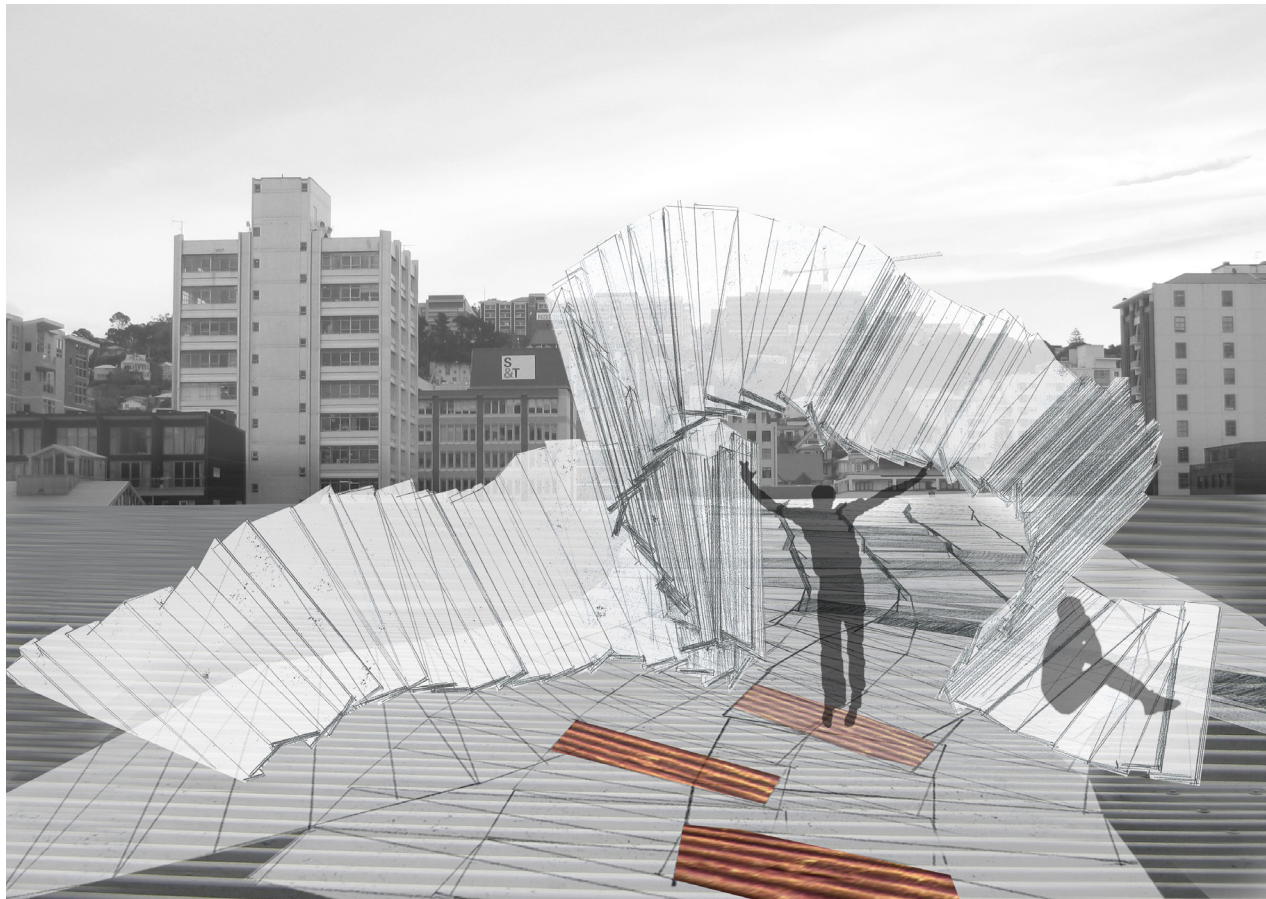
Figure 71. Second exploration of a shelter structure.
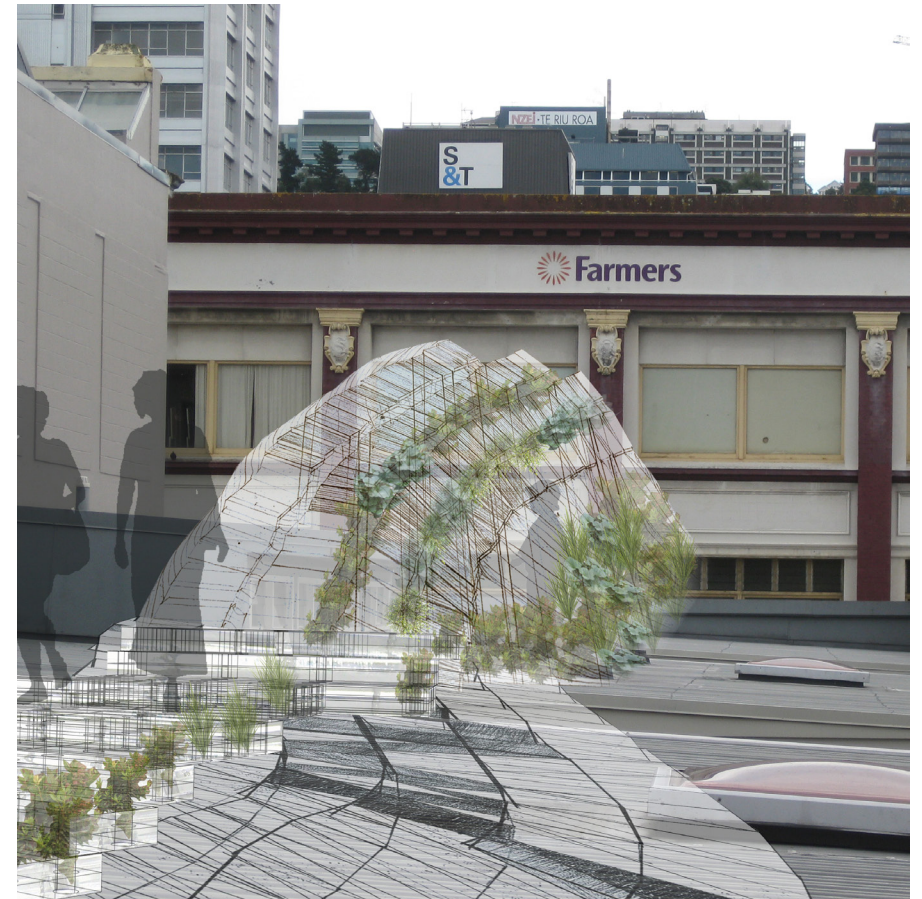
Figure 72. Third exploration of a shelter structure.
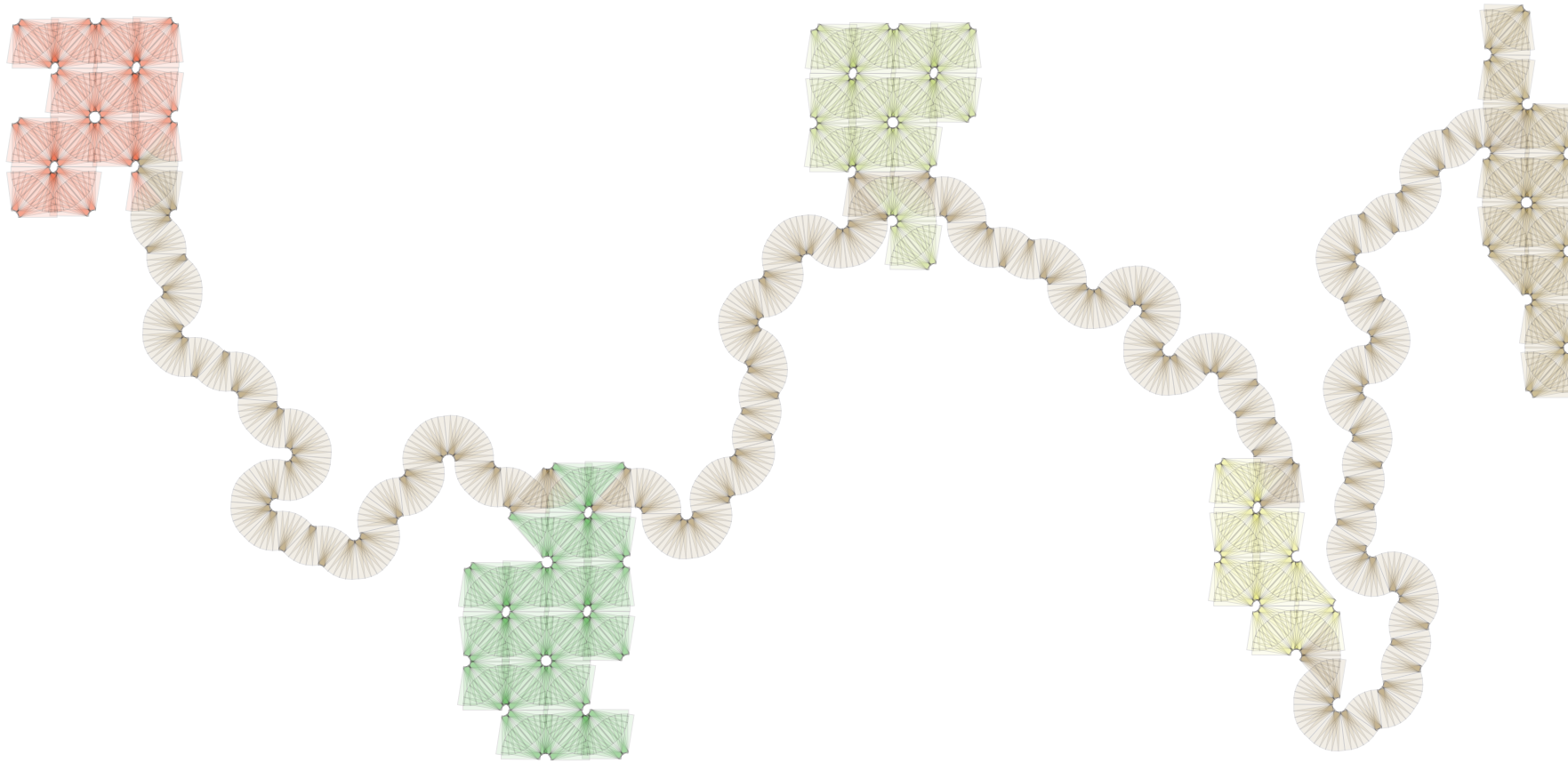
Figure 73. Modules linked. This is an initial diagram exploring how the modules could begin to be linked through the site.
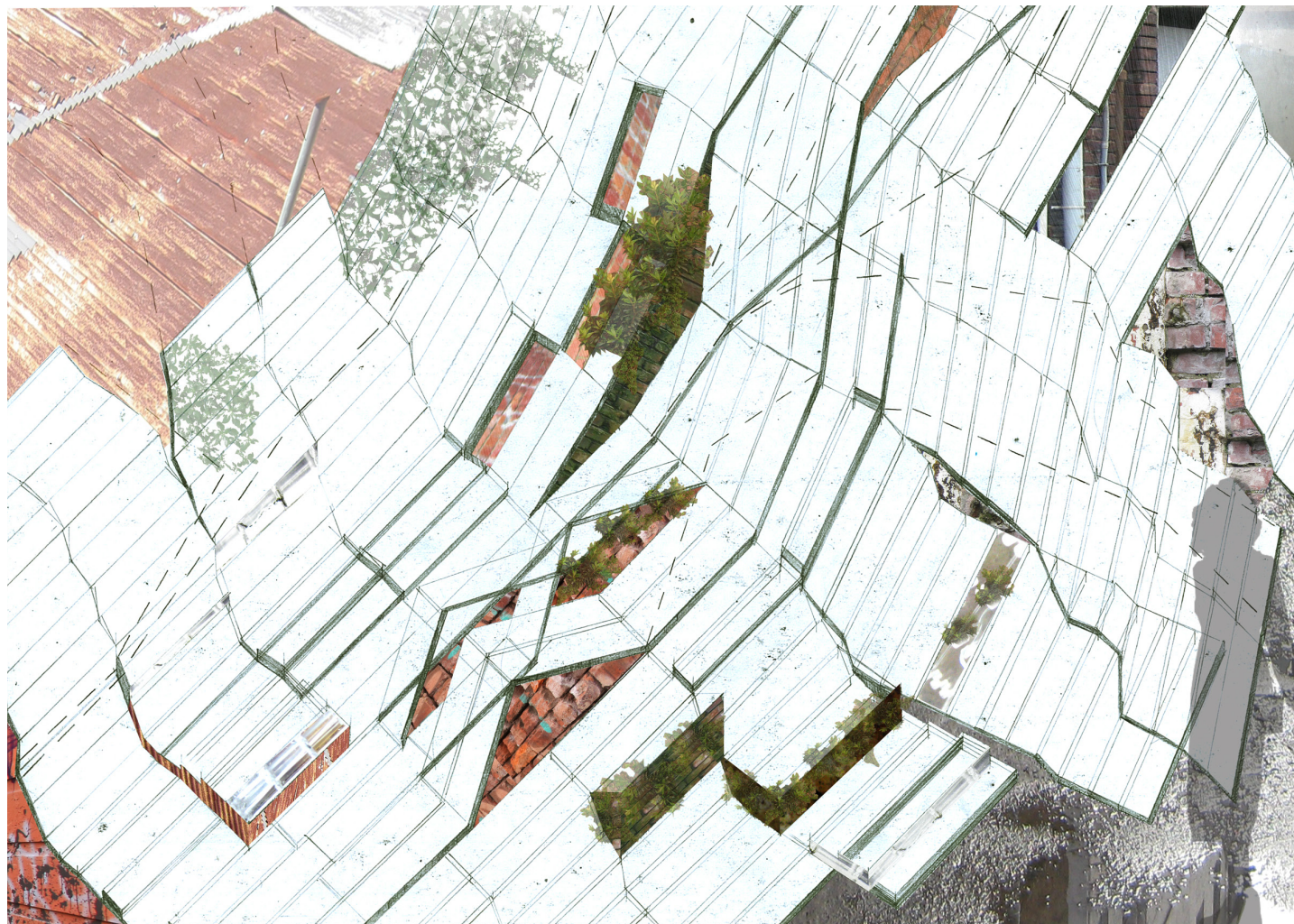
Figure 74. Folding modules drawing. This drawing was an exploration of how the modules could link together to become a sheet through the site, absorbing different aspects of the site, such as; materials, surfaces, and textures. This drawing explored how the sheet could break out in parts, revealing the apsects of the site it had absorbed.
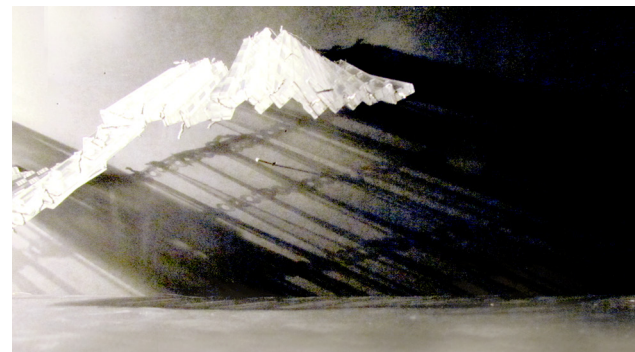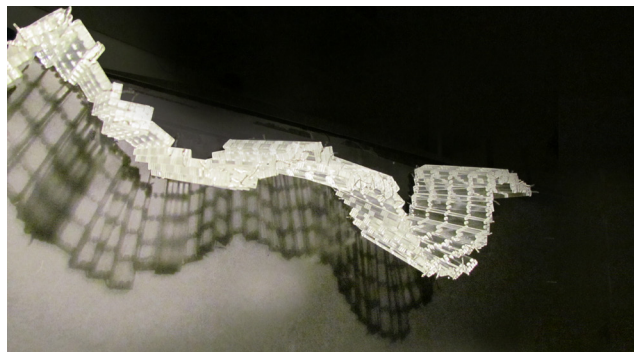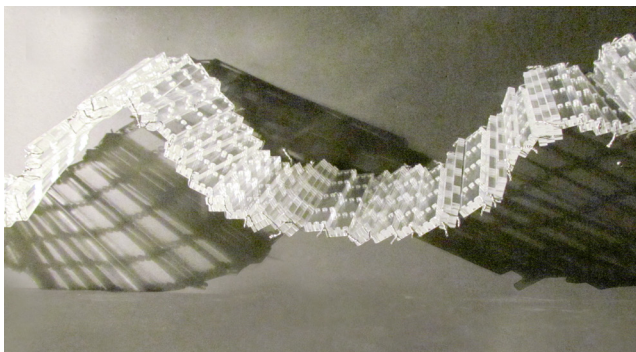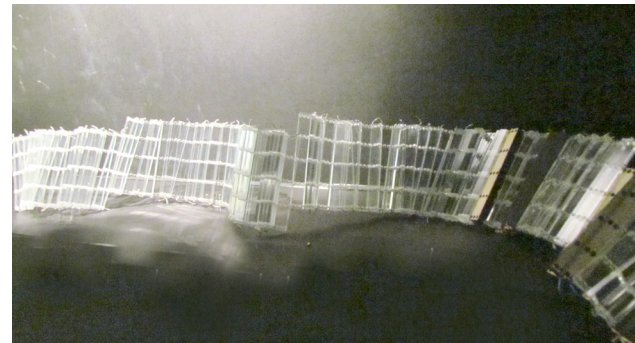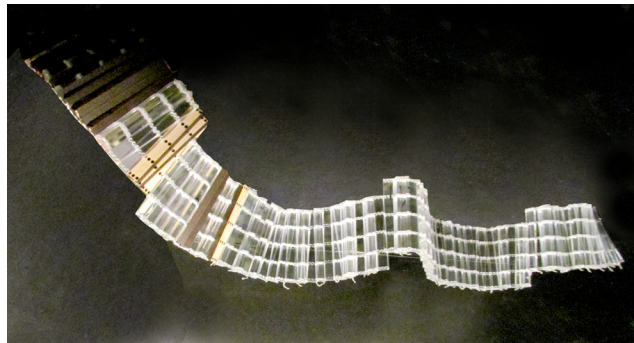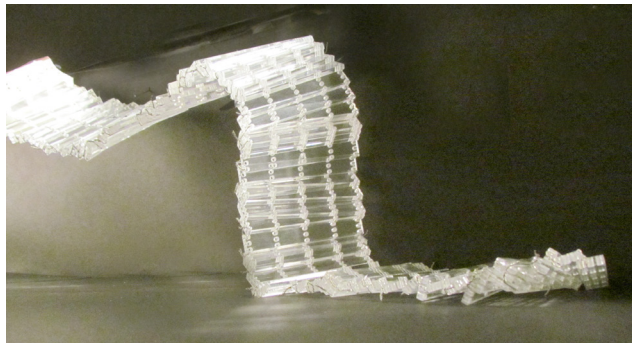
Figure 75. Light and shadow photographic studies, of first physical concept model.
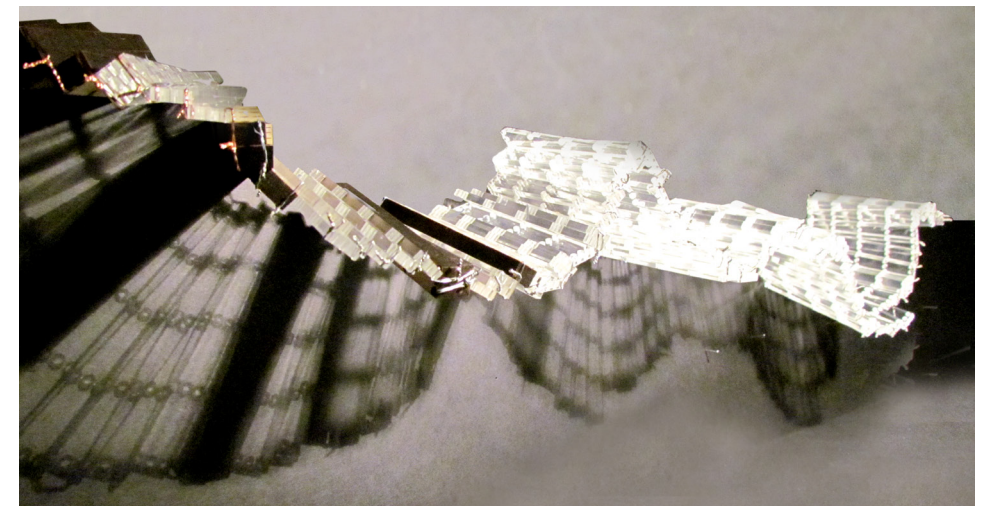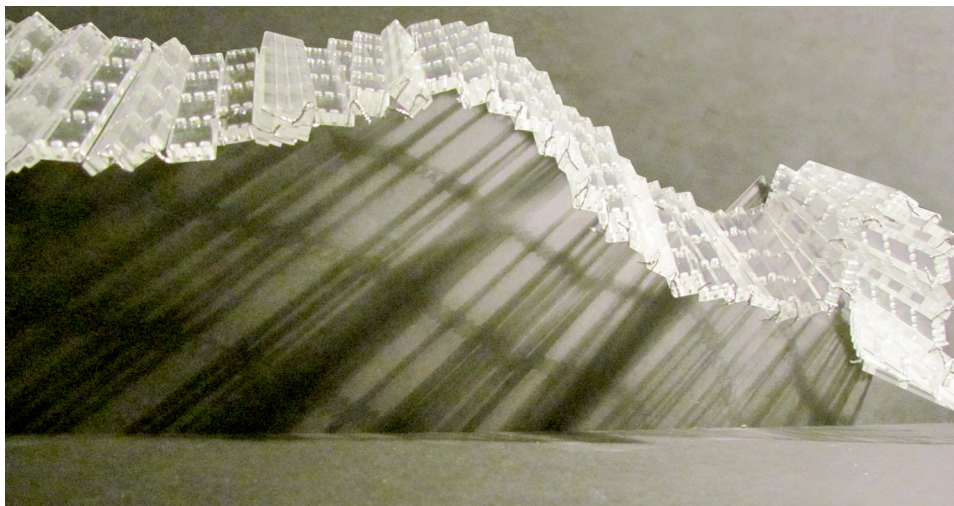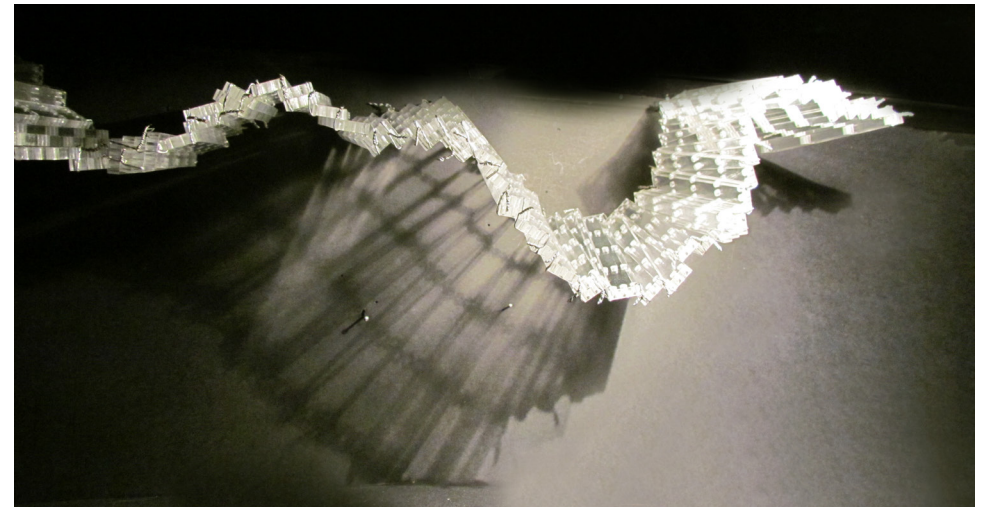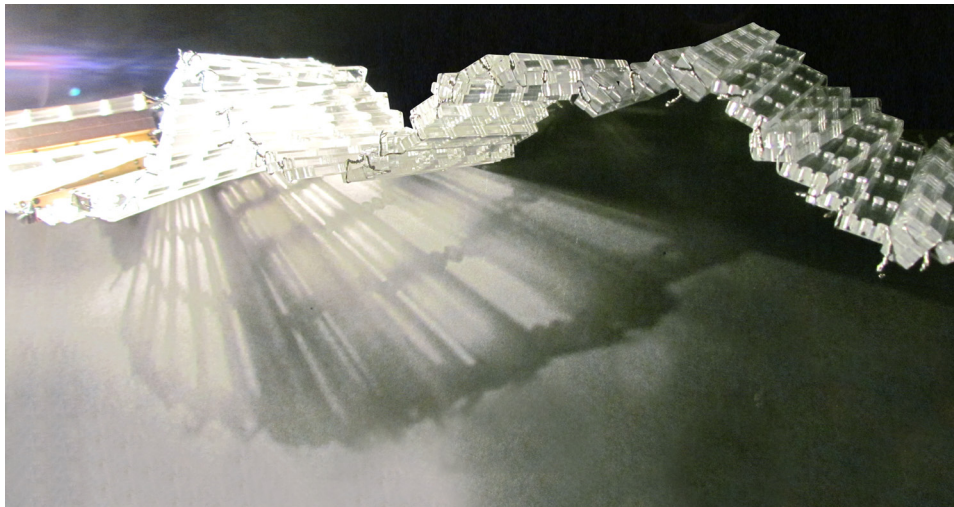
Final Design

For the purpose of representation and presentation, four of the most interesting parts of the pathway design are focused in on. Each part is represented with a plan, sectional elevation, and persepctive view. The 'swing pod' that was developed is also looked at in more detail.

Figure 76. Complete sectional elevation of design and site buildings together. At 1:300

'Part One'

'Part Two'

Ghuznee Street

One main entry/exit point to the pathway.
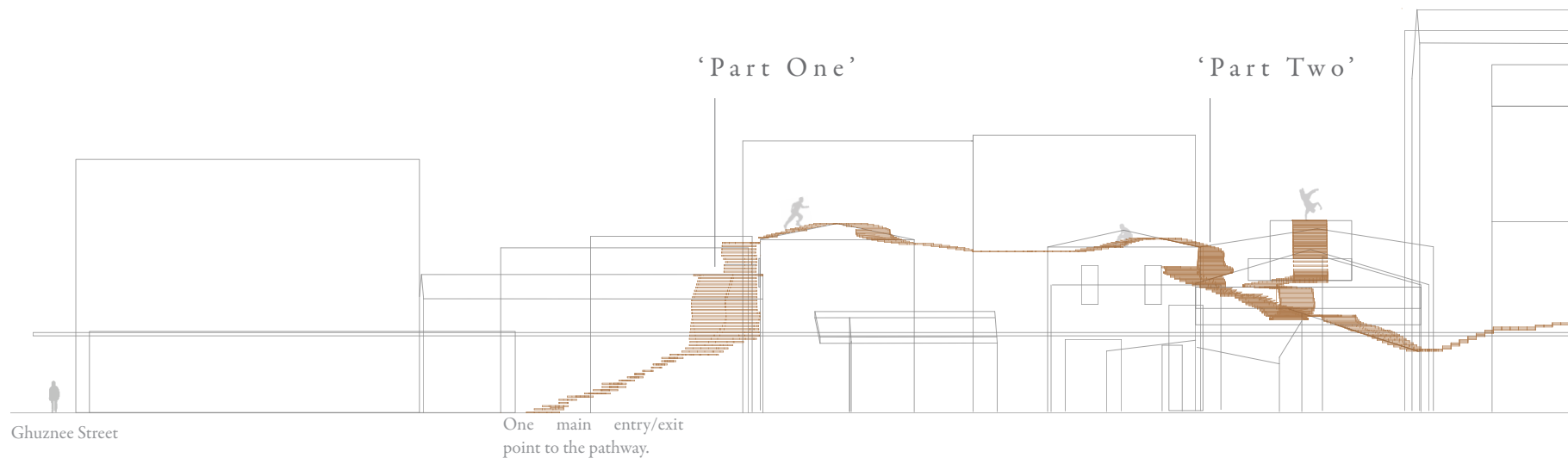
This part of the pathway design, runs through a deep man-made valley of buildings.

'Part Three'   'Part Four'

Other main entry/exit   Dixon Street
point to the pathway.

North

Dixon Street

Cuba Street

Eva Street

Hannah's Warehouse Building

Leeds Street
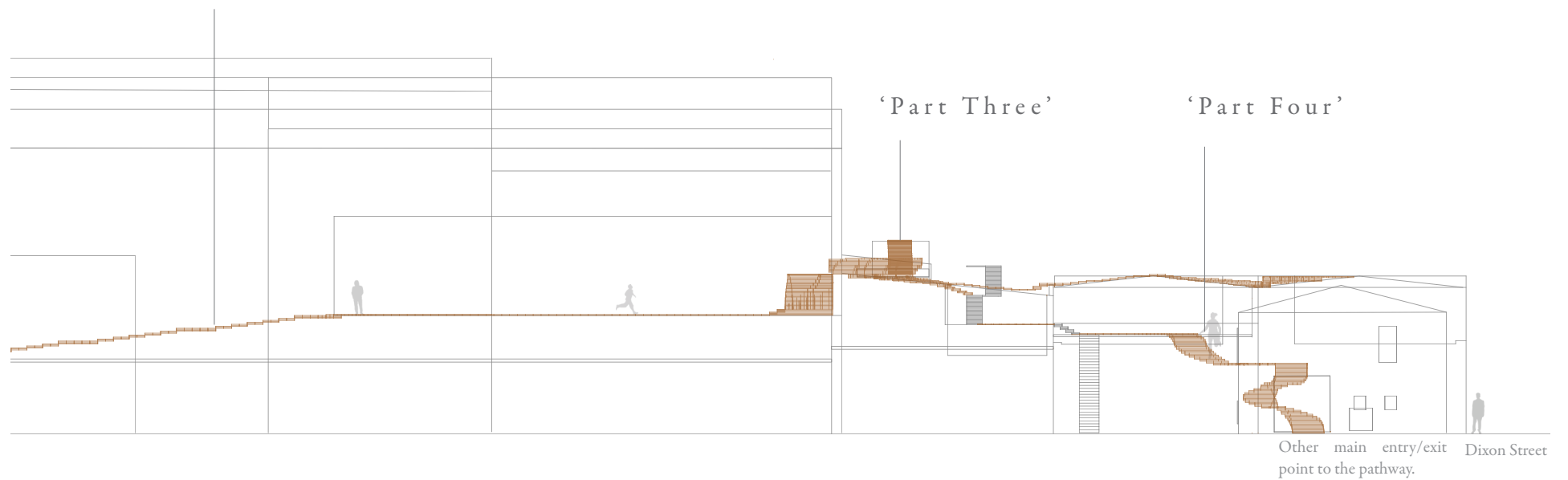
Ghuznee Street

Figure 77. This page - plan of design and site, with surrounding context. At 1:1000

Figure 78. Opposite page - simplified plan of design and buildings. At 1:500

North

Eva Street

Leeds Street

Dixon Street

Ghuznee Street
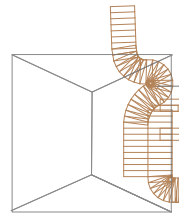
'Part Four'
One main entry/exit
point to the pathway.
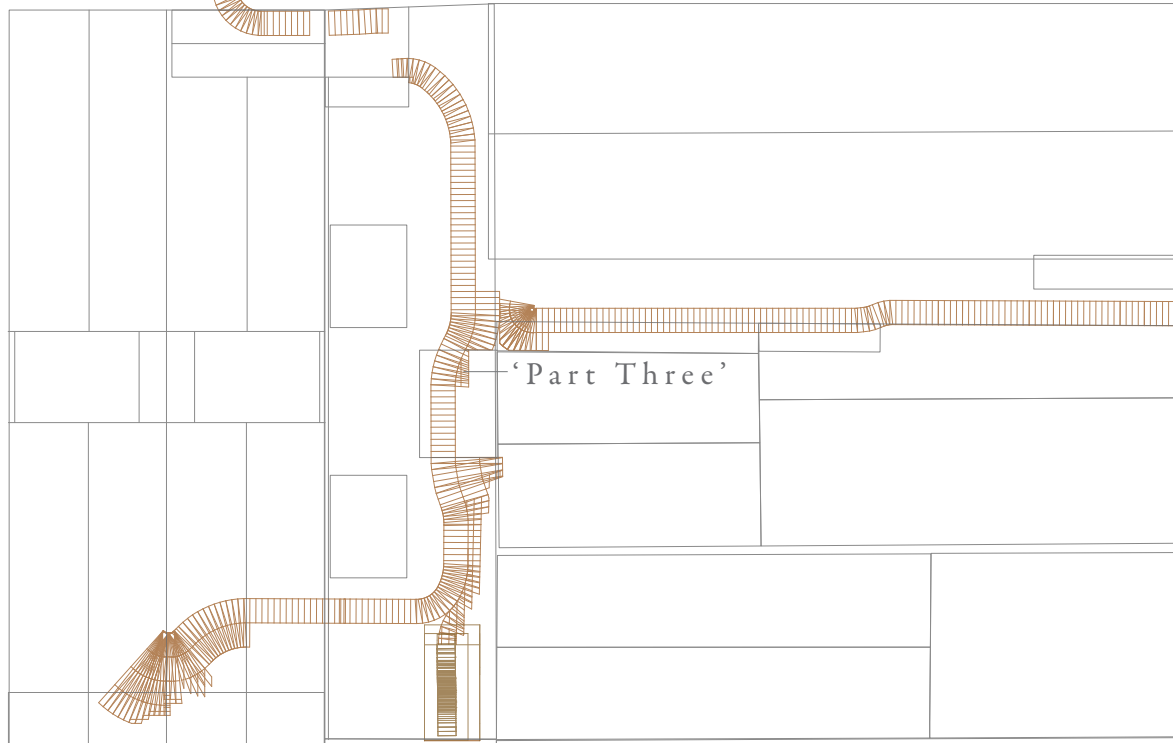
'Part Two'

'Part One'
Other main entry/exit
point to the pathway.

Platform

'Part Three'

Steps

Swing pod

Cuba Street

North

'Part One' of the design

'Part One', is one of two main entarnces to the design. It begins/ends just off Ghuznee Street, where there is an empty car park space. This is where the 'Jam' hairdressing building is.

This part of the design is constructed quite lightly, out of timber, and with spacing between each step, because in this part the host building is an old and un-reinforced historic stone building.

Figure 79. 'Part One' plan. At 1: 100

N.B. Within these part plans, the darker strokes represent individual steps, while the shaded yellow areas represent platforms (or at least areas that are relatively flat, with only one or two steps.)

Building window

Building door

Where the step merges with the roof

Step direction,with arrow head pointing downward

Steel handrail pole

Steel handrail

Timber step

Platform

Structure support

1600

400
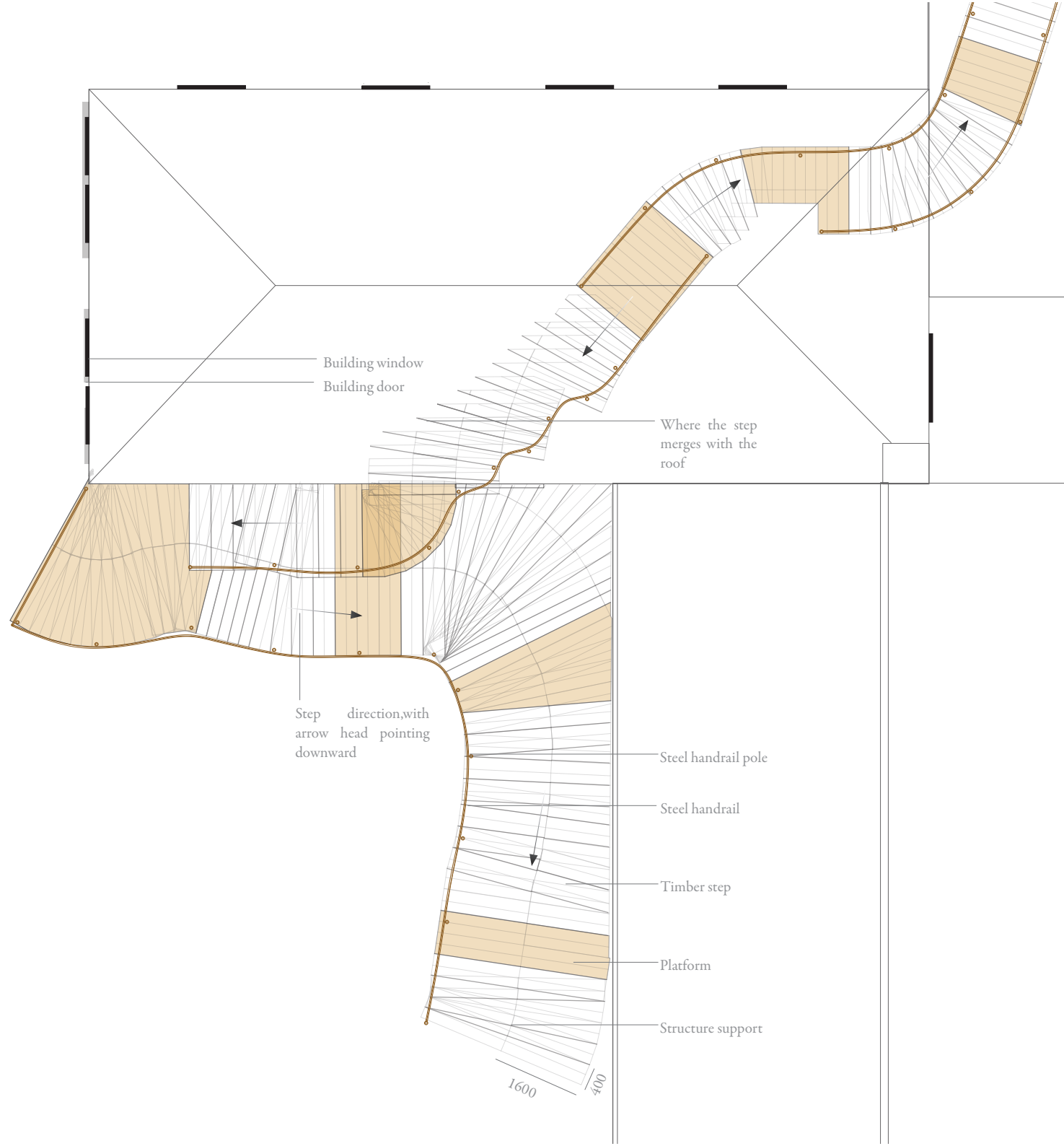
Figure 80. This page - 'Part One' sectional elevation. At 1: 100
Figure 81. Next page- 'Part One' perspective view

Platform

Where the step inter-locks the roof

Building window

Timber step

Steel handrail pole

Steel handrail

50

44
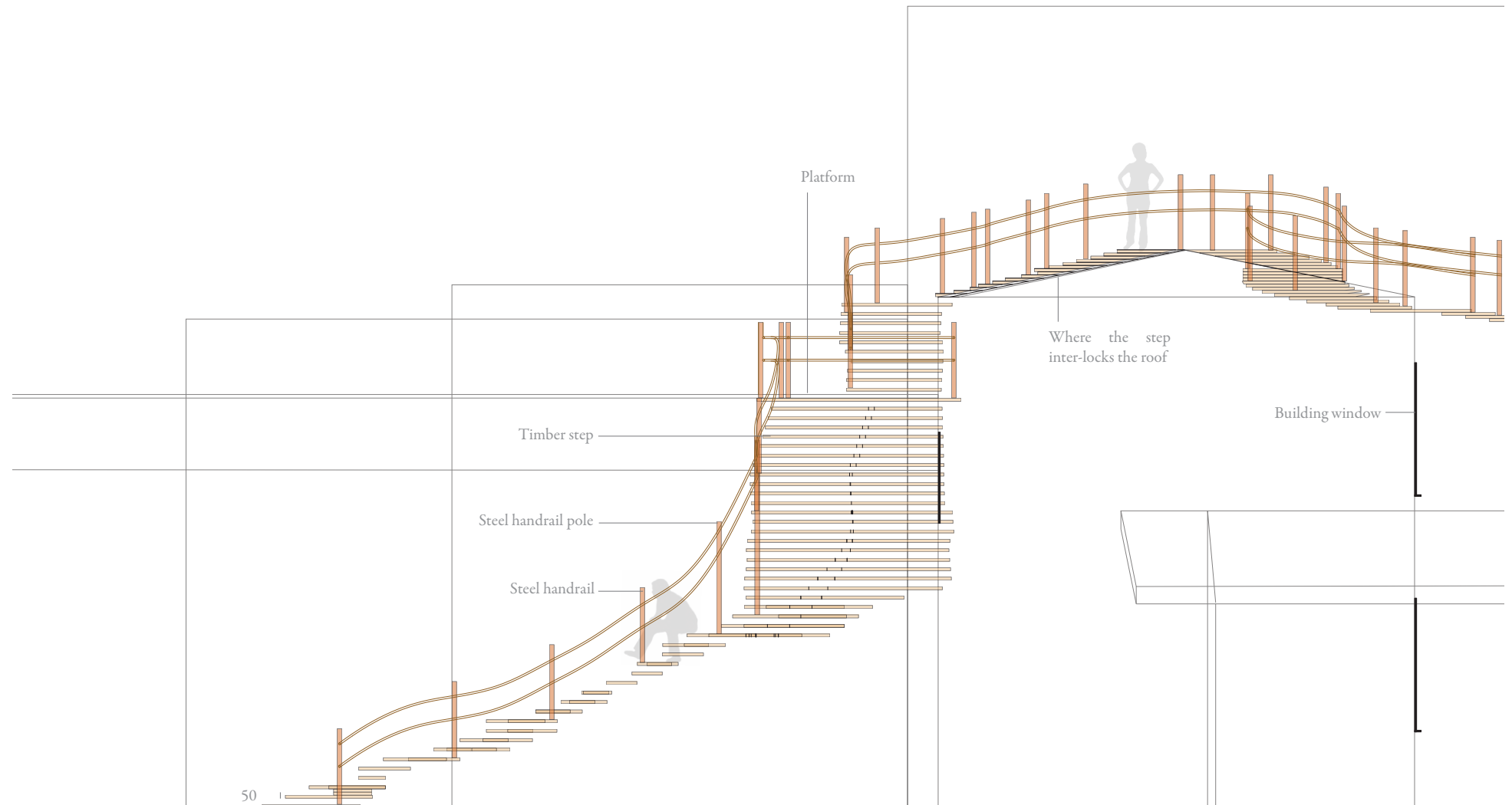
Figure 82. Aspects of the site that 'Part One' of the design deals with.

North

'Part Two' of the design

'Part Two' of the design undulates its way over several different rooftops. The walkway's steps wedge themselves into the rooftops and the corners of buildings.

Figure 83. 'Part Two' plan. At 1: 100

Figure 84. This page - 'Part Two' sectional elevation. This section is good for showing the complexity of buildings that 'Part Two' of the design passes through. At 1:100

Figure 85. Next page- 'Part Two' persepctive view
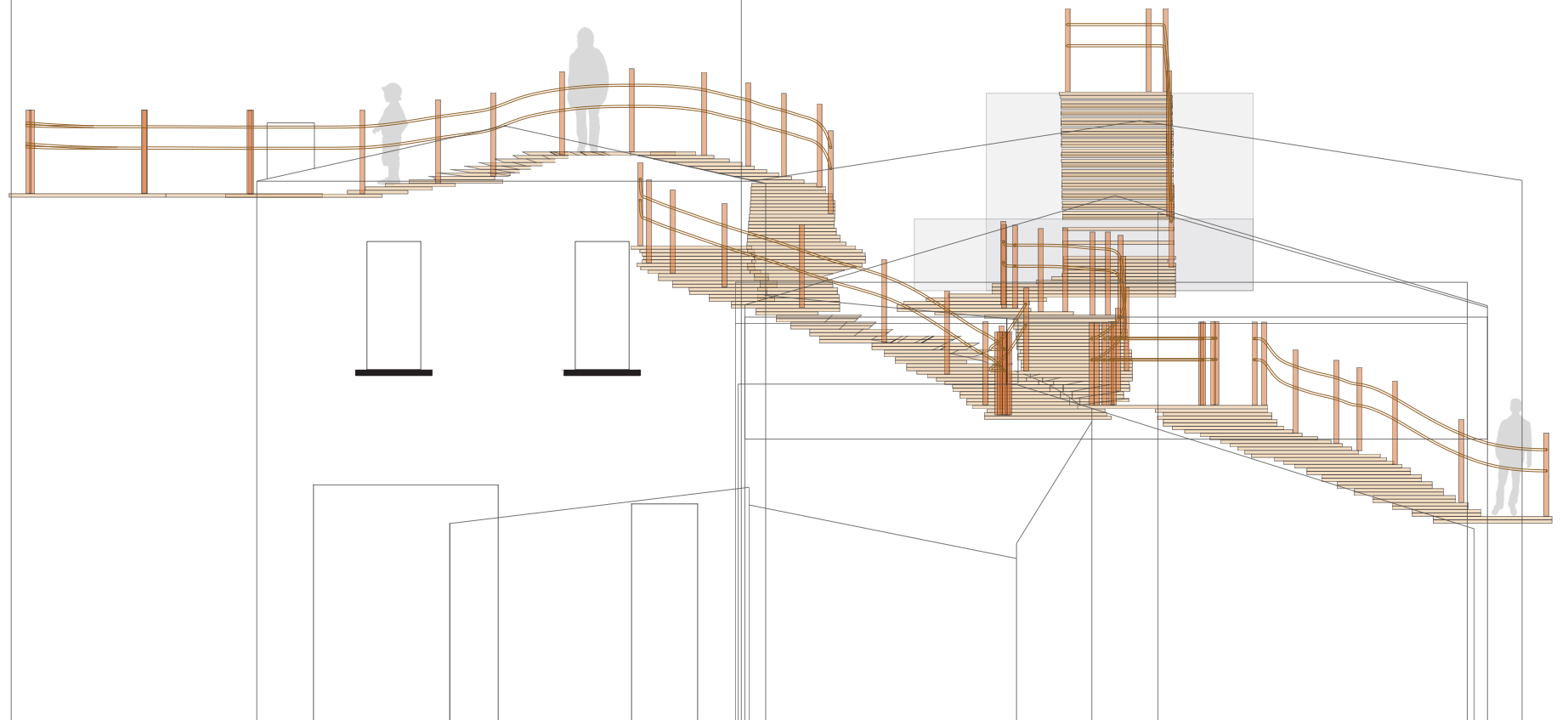
Figure 86. Aspects of the site that 'Part Two' of the design deals with. Note that buildings in the panorama photograph have been distorted.

'Swing pod'

Private courtyard inserted into building

Step direction (with arrow head pointing down)

Extrusion attached to building

The intersection of level change

North
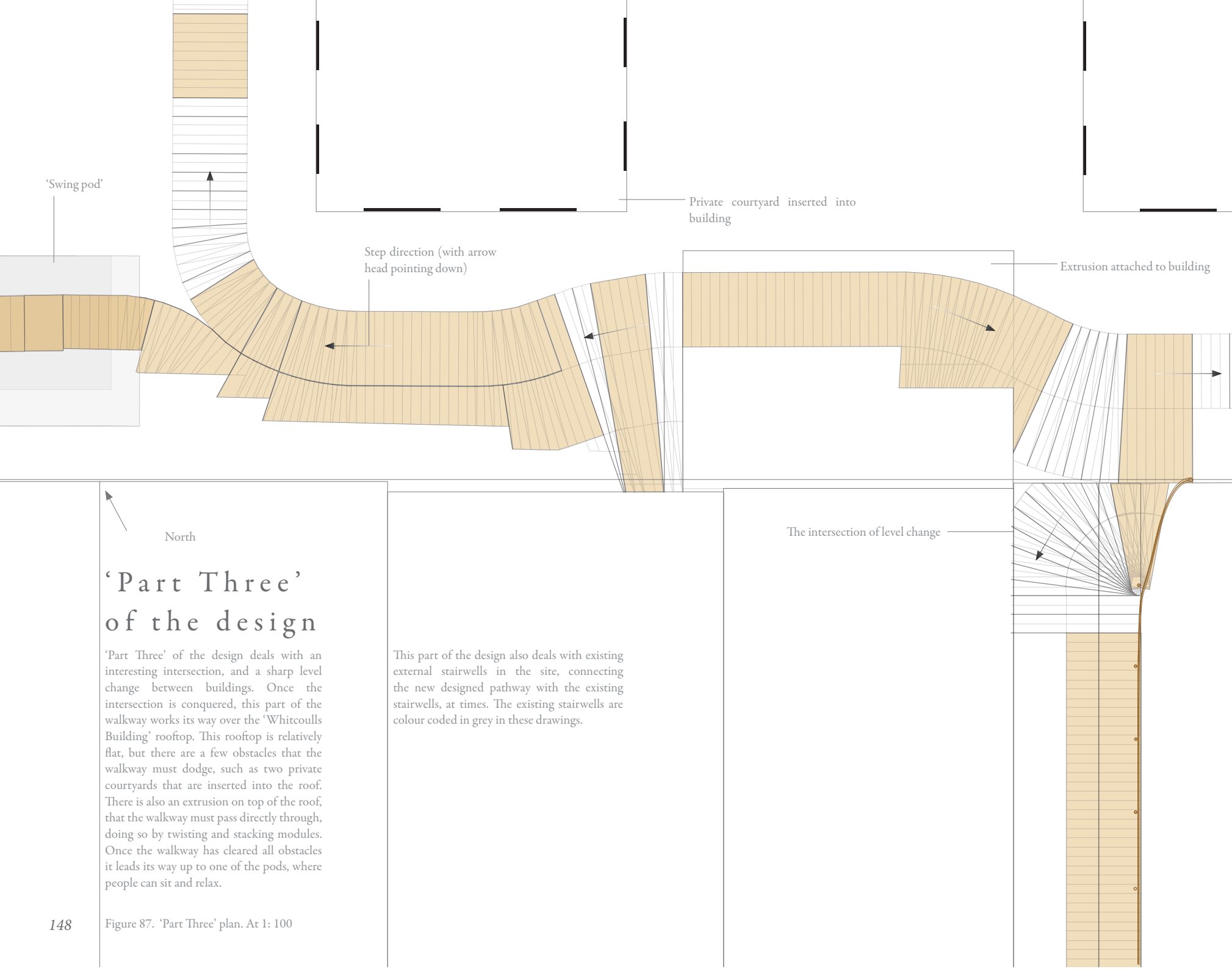
'Part Three' of the design

'Part Three' of the design deals with an interesting intersection, and a sharp level change between buildings. Once the intersection is conquered, this part of the walkway works its way over the 'Whitcoulls Building' rooftop. This rooftop is relatively flat, but there are a few obstacles that the walkway must dodge, such as two private courtyards that are inserted into the roof. There is also an extrusion on top of the roof, that the walkway must pass directly through, doing so by twisting and stacking modules. Once the walkway has cleared all obstacles it leads its way up to one of the pods, where people can sit and relax.

This part of the design also deals with existing external stairwells in the site, connecting the new designed pathway with the existing stairwells, at times. The existing stairwells are colour coded in grey in these drawings.

Figure 87. 'Part Three' plan. At 1: 100

'Swing pod'

Existing external stairwell

Figure 88. This page - 'Part Three' elevational section. This sectional elevation shows how in parts of the walkway the designed steps are integrated with existing external stairwells. This section also shows how the modules respond to a rather large level change between buildings. At 1: 100

Figure 89. Next page- 'Part Three' perspective view

Figure 90. Aspects of the site that 'Part Three' of the design deals with.

North

'Part Four' of the design

Figure 91. 'Part Four' plan.
At 1: 100

The existing residents dwelling would remain on this side.

Existing external stairwell

A main entrance/ exit to the pathway

The public intervention would exist on this side.

Concrete aggregate step

Pivot point in the spiralling staircase

Windows and doors that are taken out so that the intervention can flow through the remaining voids.

Existing external stairwell

Part Four of the design is unique because it is where the walkway passes through a small building. The building is a small, square, brick house, and has lovely even proportions. Currently there is an artist living in the building, and he has decorated the dilapidated house in some very creative ways. The intervention into this house needs to cause as little disruption as possible.

For the purpose of this thesis, the pathway cuts through one side of the house, and leaves the other side alone, so that the current resident can stay in a part of his house. The side that incorporates the new pathway will become open to the public and the host building is treated more like a shell. The existing windows are removed so that there are just holes where the pathway enters and exits the building.

There is currently an existing stairwell that the resident in the house uses to access his dwelling. The existing stairwell will remain, and it will overlap with the new pathway stairs. In this way the existing structure and systems can co-exist with the new intervention.

Figure 92. This page- 'Part Four' elevational section. At 1:100. This part of the design is one of the main entry/exit points to the walkway. It is also one of the most curving, steepest and complex parts of the design. It is the only part of the design that actually goes through a building, and for this reason it is one of the most interesting spaces throughout the whole walkway. This part of the walkway is self-supported and does not rely on the old brick building for any construction purposes. Instead, the pathway is supported by inserted pillars, and the steps are made from concrete aggregate. The brick building and concrete steps compliment each other nicely as materials.

Figure 93. Next page- 'Part Four' in persepctive view. For the sake of the image the front external wall has been removed, in order to show what the space inside would be like. But really just the existing windows and door would be removed, with the design unraveling itself through these voids. The white dotted lines show where the door would be, and also where the existing external stairwell would remain. The resident of this house would still live in one side and would enter his dwelling through this remaining stairwell, while the public would use the new walkway intervention.

Existing external stairwell

Concrete aggregate step

Supporting pillars

Voids, from which the design flows in and out from
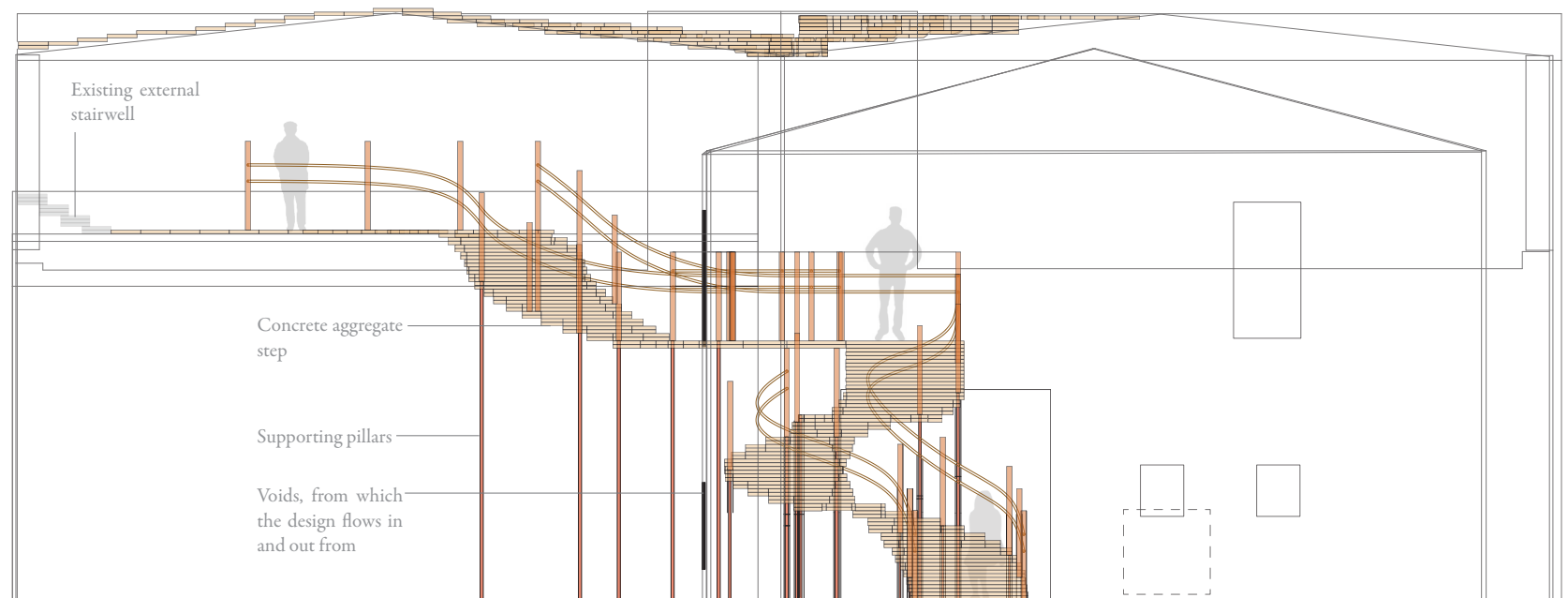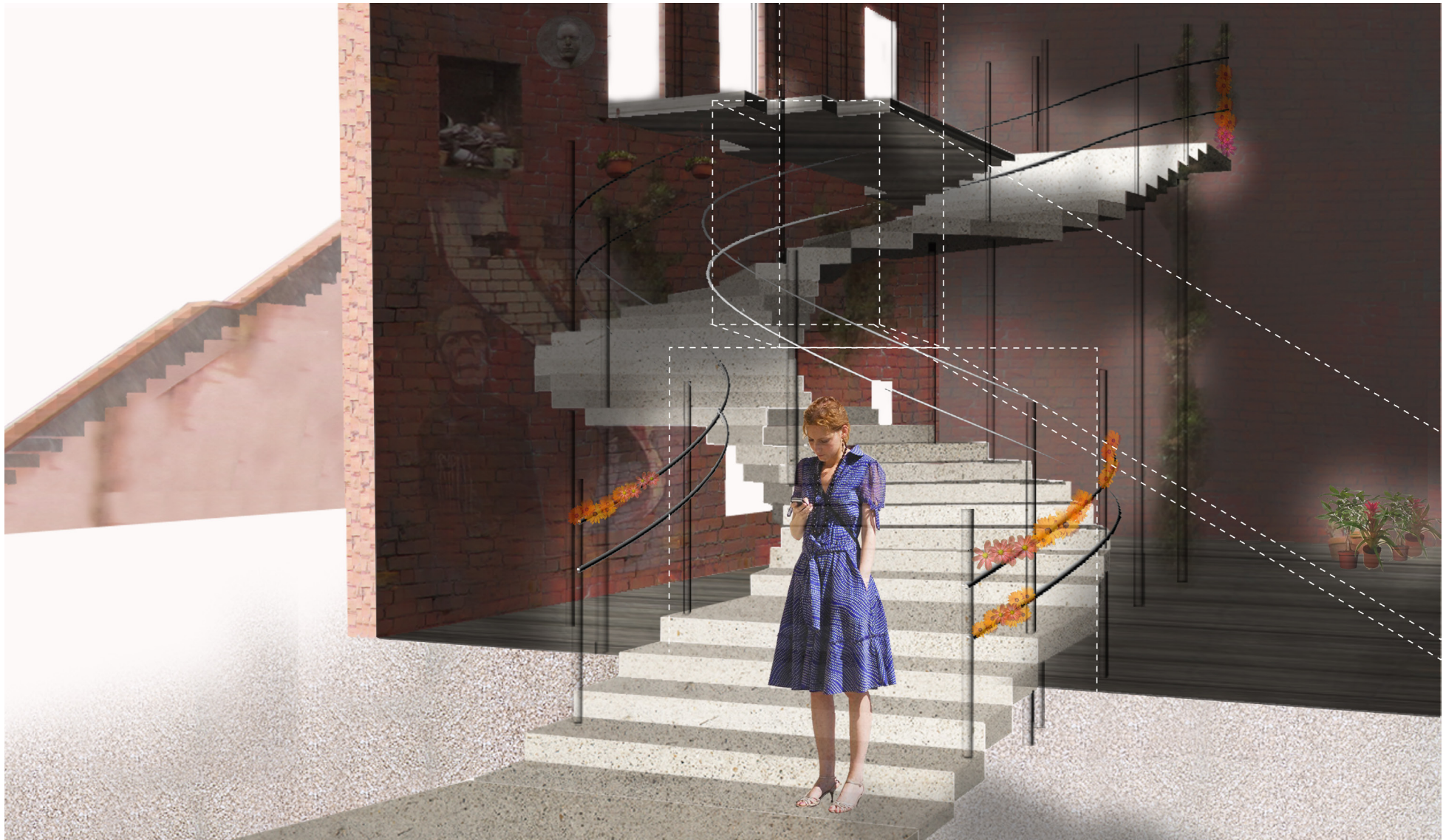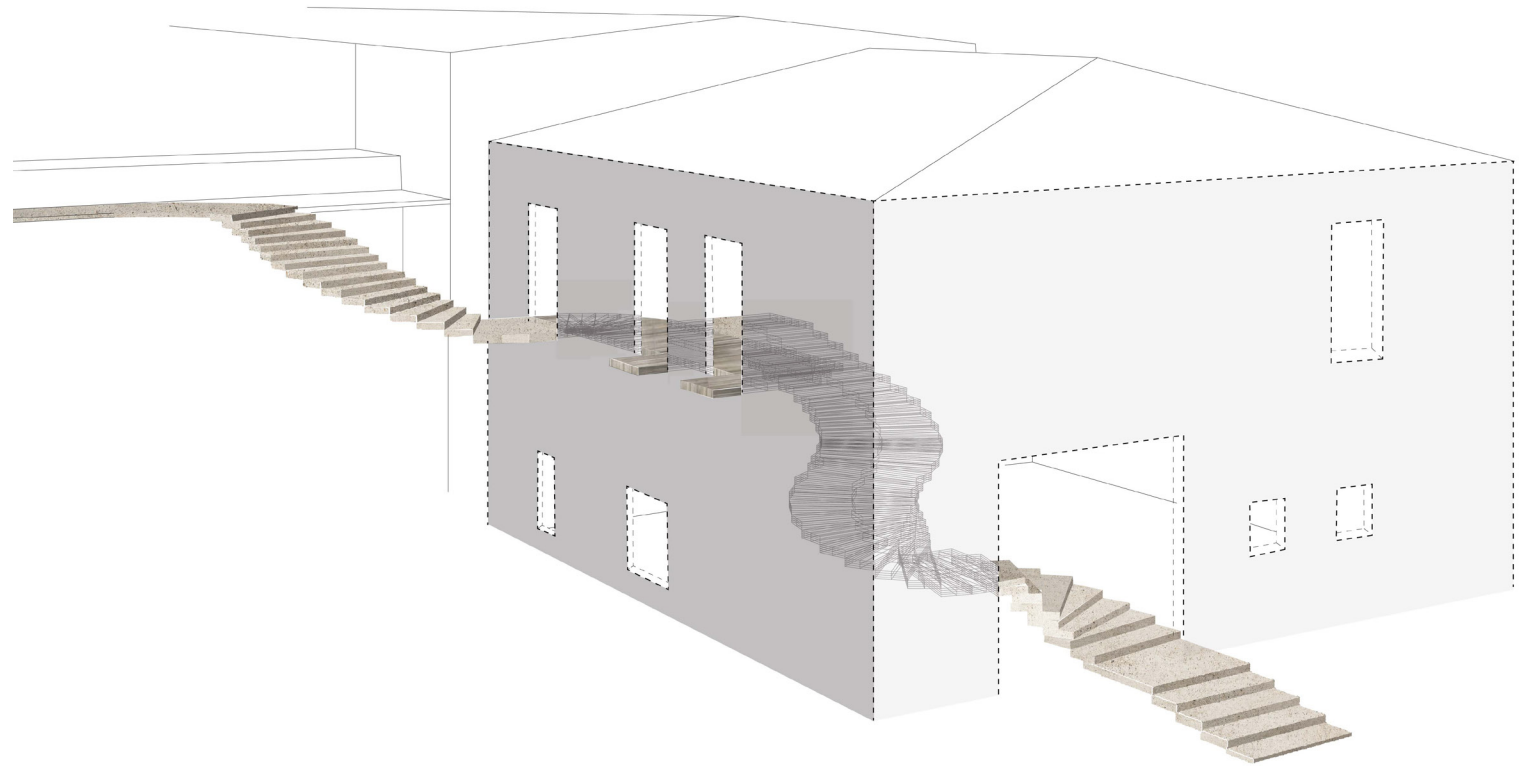
Figure 94. Diagram of the walkway interevntion through the brick house

Figure 95. Aspects of the site that 'Part Four' of the design deals with.

Design of 'Swing pod', on rooftop

There are two different swing pods throughout the whole design. They both overlook Cuba Street, and they were both placed to sit on relatively flat rooftops. The pods are destinations within the design, somewhere to break, sit, or play. They can provide reflective moments for people, as people are able to overlook their city and contemplate. They are pods that allow for solitude, or intimacy, in the view that the city should allow for public spaces like this, as well as spaces that are intensely busy and public.

Figure 96. Swing design by Didier Faustino. Image taken from www.mesarchitecture.org. This image really portrays a feeling of being free in the city, of rising out of the depths and density of the sometimes suffocating city. It is great if cities can offer spaces like this one in the image, for permanent city dwellers to be able to occasionally break free. This image became the inspiration for the design of a rooftop 'swing pod'. The 'swing pod' is incorporated into the overall design of the pathway.
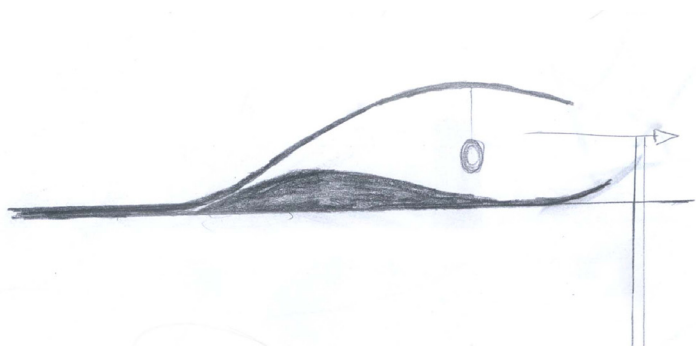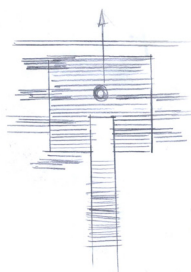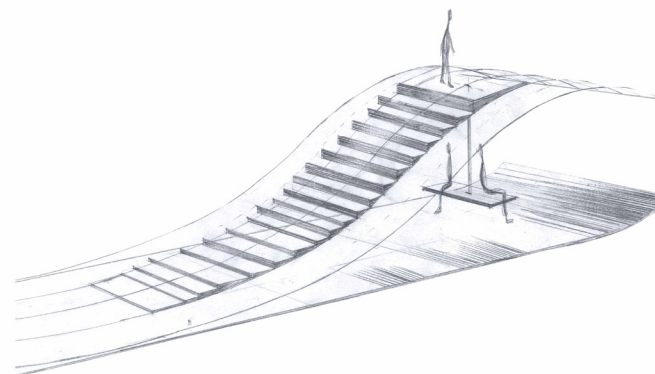
Section   Plan   Perspective

Figure 97. Initial sketches of the 'swing pod'. The initial concept was that the pod could be like an oyster shell, opening up partially to reveal its pearl. The pod offers framed views of the city, through this partial opening. The pod is supposed to be protective and insular, from the exposed Wellington conditions that one would probably encounter on a rooftop.
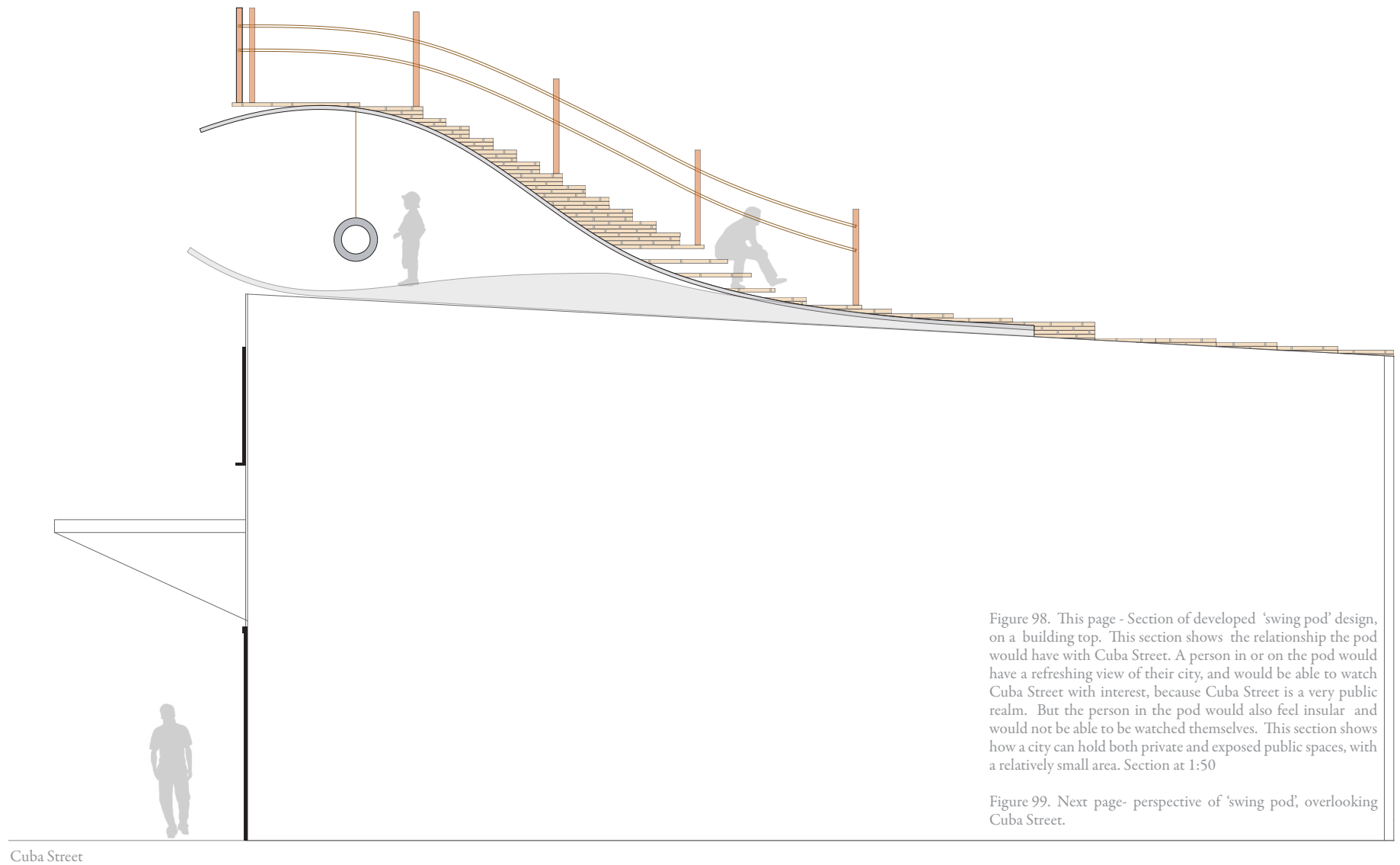
Figure 98. This page - Section of developed 'swing pod' design, on a building top. This section shows the relationship the pod would have with Cuba Street. A person in or on the pod would have a refreshing view of their city, and would be able to watch Cuba Street with interest, because Cuba Street is a very public realm. But the person in the pod would also feel insular and would not be able to be watched themselves. This section shows how a city can hold both private and exposed public spaces, with a relatively small area. Section at 1:50

Figure 99. Next page- perspective of 'swing pod', overlooking Cuba Street.

Cuba Street

8.8 Design Conclusion

This design was implemented with the intention to be a support system to an inherently interesting inner city site.

The over-arching aim of the design was to develop a sense of coherence for an interesting but complicated site. It should be remembered that this site is just one part of a larger city that is very complex. The aim of the design was to develop the beginnings of a local design language within Wellington, starting in one small block, and building off the existing characteristics of the existing townscape. There is much in Wellington that speaks of a local culture, but there is also an overriding incoherence and lack of built quality present in the city.

The design was primarily planned for the residents, workers, and other every-day users of the site. As well as implementing coherence the design needed to cater to the everyday needs of these local people living and working in the site.

During the development of this design, the small-scale in relation to the large-scale was considered constantly. The module and materials palette were used as tools used in the development of the design on the small scale, but this was always related back to how the design was contributing to Wellington on the large scale, how it could contribute to mitigating Wellington's incoherent townscape (see figure 100).

Figure 100. Neighbourhood diagram. This diagram demonstrates, how if this rooftop movement concept were to develop throughout the whole city, then it would have to do so through each neighbourhood developing a point of difference. This is because, even though the ultimate aim for Wellington would be a coherent townscape, each neighbourhood has unique characteristics that define it, and these characteristics should not be lost. The concept of a modular built movement infrastructure could be the same through the city, but the individual module could change. The module responds to the type of building and detail in each neighbourhood. Wellington map is at 1:20, 000

Figure 101. Mephis Belle Cafe on Dixon Street.

CHAPTER 9

Thesis Conclusion

9. Thesis Conclusion

Wellington's history is short in comparison to other international cities, but it has been tumultuous. The city's creators have been determined to borrow as many ideas as possible from international cities. The result has been a very confusing and multifaceted townscape. It is a city that has been grappling to find a local identity for itself, and the aesthetics of the townscape reflect this.

Meanwhile, alongside this struggle for a local identity, Wellington's inner city population has been steadily increasing.

This trend towards inner-city living has forced central Wellington to respond in some particular ways. Out of the confusion that is Wellington City's townscape, there has been the development of some strong local typologies. Most of these typologies have been of an informal 'bottom-up' nature. While these typologies provide a hint of an emerging local identity, they still do not yet provide a solution to the problem of incoherence in the townscape.

The current state of aesthetics in the overall appearance of New Zealand townscapes is something that isn't discussed enough in New Zealand history and theory. This may have something to do with the fact that programmatic function of cities has become so important, and issues concerning their aesthetics have taken a back seat.

But as Wellington grapples with its identity as a 21st century city, it is appropriate that the overall aesthetics of the city are studied more critically. As research into this thesis has discovered, there are a whole lot of other issues that stem from the problem of an incoherent townscape. The aesthetics and identity of the city should be developed in conjunction with the programmatic planning of the city.

The primary aims of this thesis were to explore what actually constitutes a successful townscape; to understand both what is special and what isn't working in Wellington's townscape; and ultimately, to explore how Wellington's townscape can best be developed into one that is more coherent.

A subordinate aim was to test the role that landscape architecture as a discipline could bring to creating coherence in visually cluttered New Zealand city.

Critiquing Jan Gehl's *'City to Waterfront Study- Public Spaces and Public Life Study'* for Wellington City, was helpful in pointing out Wellington's intrinsic and unique qualities, many of which eluded Gehl and his team. The shortcomings of Gehl's report highlights the importance of a thorough and detailed site analysis. The comparison of Wellington and Copenhagen brought focus to the question about what actually constitutes a successful townscape in an aesthetic and practical sense. The comparison was helpful in deciding what Wellington lacked, but more importantly what was special to Wellington.

Gordon Cullen, Christopher Alexander and the phenomenologists were the main authors referred to throughout the development of the design. Cullen offered a refreshing take on urban design, where aesthetics were at the forefront, something that

has been lost in 21st century planning.

Gerald Melling was valuable because he has written specifically about Te Aro from the perspective of both architect and resident. Likewise Gordon Holden's journal article 'Superiority Complex' was useful for its discussion of Wellington's emerging roof top typology. This typology became a key to the development of the design.

Te Aro as a neighbourhood was chosen as a site to work with because it encompasses a lot of the local typologies evolving in Wellington. The particular block that was chosen was selected because of its interesting composition of buildings and spaces, as well as its evocative sensory qualities.

The design challenge became about delicately striking the balance between putting forward a strong enough intervention that would promote coherence and local identity, while being sensitive to the existing qualities of the site.

A repeated module and three-dimensional geometric patterns became the main method used in developing coherence. The intricate geometries worked well in being able to flex around the site. This led to the development of a symbiotic relationship between the design and the site.

The design solution for this block should be related to the wider context of the entire central city. Over time it is intended that the design concept would be adopted in other parts of Wellington, so that the new infrastructure would offer an exciting alternative means of movement throughout the city.

A similar approach could also be taken in other New Zealand cities. The key elements in the development of a design are a thorough analysis of site and local conditions, and the development of a design language building upon local typologies that are working well.

Currently in Wellington it has been the larger and more open spaces, often centred on the waterfront, that have had priority for development. This thesis identified that Te Aro was in need of a different kind of network of spaces, a network of intimate 'pocket' sized spaces, to serve the local community. Landscape architecture proved to be a useful discipline for building up this kind of network, for it often works with the interstitial spaces of a city. Landscape architecture can be used to transform some of the most obscure and under-utilised spaces, in the tightest corners of the inner city, to make them useful to the community.

In conclusion, out of Wellington's confused townscape have come some interesting local initiatives. Because there is little to be precious about, the Wellington people have developed some truly local typologies, mostly of an informal nature, and some very creative spaces. It is these typologies and special site attributes that must be built upon in order to develop a coherent design language for Wellington's townscape.

There is already proof that Wellington is a well loved city by its people, in the eclectic and colloquial developments that can be found everywhere in the inner city and the energy that has been put into reviving it as a place to live. It is intended that the design will have the effect of further enhancing residents' appreciation of the unique and special character of their place and that this will in turn lead to a more coherent but still vibrant townscape.

Figure 102. Photo of the Hannah's Warehouse courtyard thoroughfare. Cafe Lala sits in the ground floor of the building, and the photo is taken from the first residential floor of the building.

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Figure list

All photographs shown are authors own, unless otherwise stated.