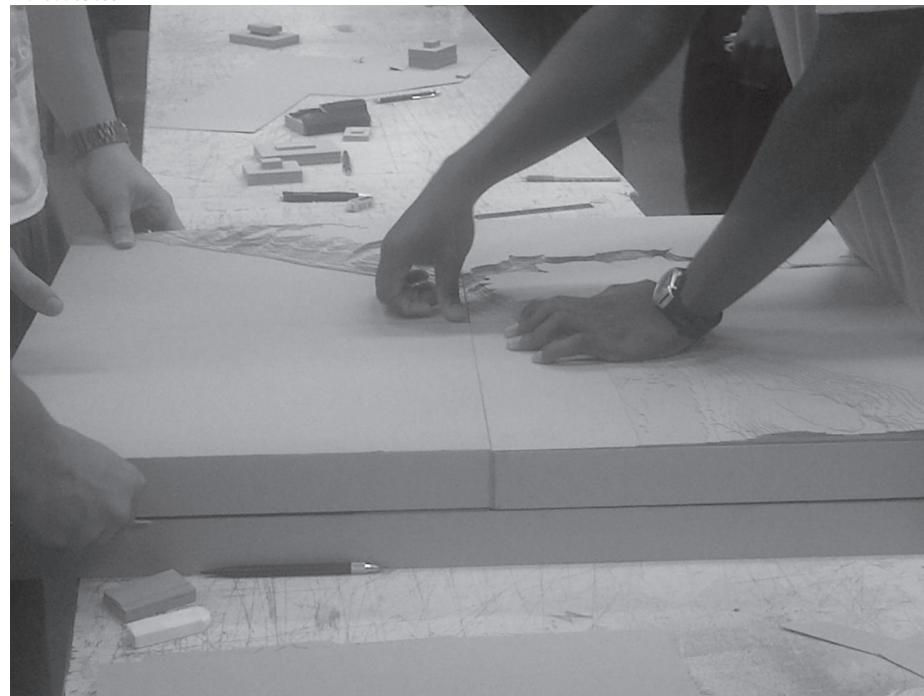
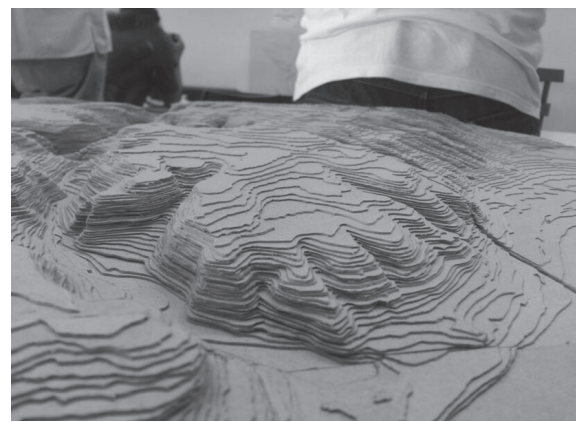


Baakens Valley Under Construction

Marc Jacobson



Workshop 2 further built onto another practical session on Monday 10th February in creating a 3D contour map model of a portion of the Nelson Mandela Bay coast and the Baakens Valley.



The project required acute precision and accuracy, as each contour layer had to be finely lacerated, measured and placed to form an overall detailed scope of the Bay landscape. With a vast degree of gradients and altitudes in the Baakens Valley region, a challenging task had been set for the students, as all specifics and values of Architectural principles needed to be adhered to.

“As we build the model as precise and carefully as we possibly can, small little problems begin creeping up, then we have to use our own intuition to smooth out the problems,” said Karel Prinsloo, a First Year Architectural student regarding the challenges of the project. “We can only be that accurate and conscious the whole time of what we’re doing, so there are small things that need fixing along the way,” added Karel.

One of the challenges were when the contour layers had overlapped the predeceasing layer and had required trimming and adjusting so that a clinical and precise replica can be made, the measurements, however, would not be exactly the same as the map.

The context models added a more realistic view plan of the landscape, in that a physical approach can be applied to the valley with regard to design and planning when constructing a certain structural project.

THE UNSPEAKABLE ARCHITECTURE

Sinesipho Mbandazayo

On Thursday, 6th February Associate Professor of Architectural Theory and Design, Professor Renato Rizzi, gold medallist for Italian Architecture and arguably one of the greatest contemporary architects of late spoke about the unspoken architecture of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University’s South Campus.

Rizzi strongly believes that nothing should come easily and only through hard work and dedication did he get to where he is now. To aspiring architects he encourages that each and every one experiences a challenge in their work and aim to overcome that challenge.

Though he prides himself with perfection and accuracy he is also not blind to the fact that perfection does not exist without mistakes. “The key is learning from your mistakes”.

Adding to this trajectory, Professor Ernst Struwig from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University’s School of Architecture assisted insight throughout the workshop. He instilled the concept of building a strong foundation before anything else. Prof. Struwig added that, “[t]he role of an architect is that of being precise and doing things in order, knowing that the foundation is the most essential part of the model”.

The workshop aimed to empower aspiring architects to think, observe and not only listen but hear. The workshops are connected through the primary concept of ‘development’ and ‘rebuilding’. Thursday’s workshop focused on the development of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum. Prof. Rizzi stated that a museum should reflect the history and culture of a community and therefore form an integral part of that community. Architectural student, Ruan Den Drijver continued on this ideology, stating that, “I hope to achieve more knowledge of the Italian architectural methods and their theories” in relation to the aspirations of the intended project. First year architecture student, Rachel Leslie, professed that, “[i]t is a complete honour and privilege to be able to witness Prof. Rizzi’s work”

Each working group in this workshop constructed the same piece of land of the Baakens Valley in these contour contextual models, but what differed between them was the scale in which they dealt with. Each group builds the same landscape with different scales, which allows them to interpret the project from different perspectives at different views and variations.

The ultimate vision of Renato’s workshop is to construct an underground tunnel-way stretching from the art gallery in St. Georges Park to the edge of the Baakens Valley which would look over the wide spectrum of the valley.

“As we build the model as precise and carefully as we possibly can, small little problems begin creeping up...”



NMMU SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS 2014

Edition 2 | 14 February 2014

Mermaid’s Precinct Under Urban Renewal to Add New Life

Marc Jacobson

Workshop 1, guided by Arch. Raul Pantaleo, took full toll in their third project phase on Friday 7th February, on plans in which to revamp the block of Mermaid’s Precinct, situated in Central.

Mermaid’s Precinct, bordered by Donkin Street, Belmont Terrace, Russell Road and Chapel Street, has the credentials to become as industrious as it deserves for various reasons. Port Elizabeth had its beginnings and initial history on the coast in this Central area, and which gives the Bay its unique identity over any other city with our own unique heritage. Mermaid’s Precinct is situated directly across the road from the historical Donkin Reserve; therefore this vicinity remains vitally important for tourism and in the process, for urban conservation.

“The idea is to bring the life back again to the area through different activities which will promote the concept,” stated Arch. Raul Pantaleo with regard to the main goal of the project. “We are not just thinking about making a project for the Mermaid’s Precinct or Central alone, but focusing on a wider concept or audience range,” added Raul.

Mermaid’s Precinct is a perimeter of plots and sites that are very neglected and quiet regardless of its reputable surroundings in heritage, history and the central business district situated on Govan Mbeki.

This introduces the concept that urban conservation needs to be developed to link this block of plots to its dying potential.

The workshop was divided into groups to plot up ideas and to collaborate their planning into this urban renewal programme and one group in particular synthesised an approach whereby a lifestyle destination can be established in this perimeter.

“We have spoken to many nearby residents to find out what they want and not what we want. They said that they want more energy and life, more parking areas, more greening, revamping of old buildings and improving safety,” stated Arno Struwig, a Second Year NMMU Architecture student.

“We have decided to design a layout which would then add more life and energy through this block, linking it to Govan Mbeki, but at the same time leaving it quiet to surrounding residences- much like Stanley Street,” said Arno.

The group formulated an idea after observation of the houses that these predominant double-story residences can become small-scale wholesale suppliers (residence on top floor, workshop on bottom floor) to all the stores on Govan Mbeki road which ultimately encourages commercial/residential expansion. This was described as moving Govan Mbeki upwards and ties these residences to the rest of the community as the strategy seeps through Mermaid’s Precinct and will ultimately resuscitate the perimeter.



On the other end, Arno introduced the idea that many restaurants and much entertainment, much like in Stanley Street, can be erected along Donkin Street sidelining the perimeter. This will add the entertainment life to the area, whilst the inner houses add the residential and commercial life, ultimately linking itself to the tourism and working environment that surrounds it. Arch. Raul summed this small-scale work to be a good plan for a starting point as, ‘people move closer to where they work, which encourages commercial/residential expansion through the renewed suppliers and entertainment and is much linked to urban farming.’

The next step of the workshop is to merge the general layout that all the groups have collaborated with their different aspects of focus, in order to create a unified and substantial project for the area.

CLUB HOUSE OF THE FUTURE

Sinesipho Mbandazayo

Architecture lecturer Chris Allen compiled a slide-show of existing clubhouses. This was to inspire the students and equip them with new and practical ideas for their club house project.

The basic idea of the project is to build not just a lifesaving club but a club house that accommodates the interests of the general public. Though it should appeal to the public it will also have a high level of exclusivity to club members. This concept then gives birth to the idea of two access points; one for the public and the other for members.

Visibility is the most important part of the project as the structure needs to be one that can be seen from the beach and vise versa.

The aim is also to build a sustainable club in terms of the building material. Towards the end of the workshop, it became something of a brainstorming session where local architect Prof Ora Joubert voiced her opinions and engaged with suggestions from the students. Her last words of advice were that each student should always ask the question of “what does the building want to be?”

“The idea is to bring life back again to the area through different activities...”

Students Design Models To Depict Landscape

Architecture students have begun the first phase of a project which will see them build scale models of the planned renovations of the Western Road area as well as the additions to the NMM Art Museum in St Georges Park.

The first phase of the project, requires students to build a model of the landscape which surrounds the mentioned area. Landscaping is a very important step to any project as it gives the architect an idea of what type of elements would work best for the project. It also adds a feeling of ‘realness’ to the project.

These models will be built using cardboard with the aid of maps of the landscape. Drawings and templates of the model’s landscape will then be crafted.

Planning of the structure took place on Friday with the students once again being assisted by Professor Renato Rizzi. This is a very important step in the design process as preparation of all the necessary elements needs to be done before the next phase of the project can begin. This stage of the project is known as the planning stage because it illustrates how each element fits into the context of the project. Each group is working on an element for the project and once all the pieces have been completed, they can then be put together to create the final project.

The main materials in use for this part of the project are cardboard, cutting blades, maps of landscapes as well as cold glue. Cardboard is being used to create what it known as a nervous curve. A nervous curve, in architectural terms, refers to a piece of material which is used to create a landscape, i.e. mountain peaks or levels of the ground above sea level. Measurements for these parts have to be as accurate as possible because if they are not, it could jeopardize the entire project. Architects usually have to work within a certain time frame and very often there is no time to correct any mistakes as this would push the dates for other parts of the project back, which are often very costly.

According to Prof Rizzi, “In Architecture, we are a career field where many of our workers have to be very accurate”. Students are assigned to different obligations within their groups. One student will be asked to use maps of the desired landscape, in 2-D form, and trace the contour lines of the landscape onto a piece of cardboard. From there, the next student then uses a cutting blade to cut along the contour lines to create the nervous curve. Once all pieces have been cut, students then assist each other in getting them stuck to the base of their model to create a 3-D version of the landscape.

For this part of the project students have to work very quickly because once the glue has been added to the cardboard, its dimensions tend to change, so the effectiveness of its use could be compromised as the glue makes the cardboard fragile.

The cardboard clippings are numbered according to the figures given on the drawings of the landscape. Each contour line represents a measurement of the ground either above or below sea level. In the creation of a single model of landscaping, students could use in excess of 500 sheets of cardboard, which encourages them to waste as little as possible. The aim of this phase of the project is to look at the structure of the landscape. Analysis of drawings of previous landscapes are important for the architect to observe if any changes to the landscape has taken place over a certain period of time.

Contours need to be mapped out to their exact specifications in order to achieve the desired results. The process of mapping out the landscape is quite a lengthy one as these are only the first steps in a project with many different parts and elements to consider. Students will most likely be working over the weekend in order to finish this phase of production.



CROSS EXAMINATION

Bianca Wicks

Professor Read’s workshop group started their second week with a recap of what they did the previous week, as well as planning this week’s five day programme.

Now that the semester has officially started, Fourth Year students also joined the workshop. Read reminded the original group that they are the authors of the project.

He also said that he merely provides supervision and that although they were not part of the project from the beginning, the older students can still

be helpful by providing guidance to the undergraduate students

Read then explained what the project was about. He said that he has the idea that all cities are different and local ideas matter. The aim of the project is to talk to real people living in the various neighbourhoods, collect data and then apply professional practice to these findings.

Read reminded the students that it is also alright quite normal to be confused during the research process. “If we’re not confused, there’s no point in doing research,” he said.

So far, nine groups of students have collected data at different neighbourhoods around town and have created nine neighbourhood profiles. This week, they will consider each of these neighbourhoods’ relationship with the rest of the city. To achieve this, Read suggested that the students split into three cross groups.

“If we’re not confused, there’s no point in doing research.”



First Year Architecture student Joey Jacobsz (right) look on as Third Year Architecture student Scott Lenton (left) draws up a storyboard for the short film their group will present at the exhibition next week

MOBILITY WORKSHOP WITH PROF STEPHEN READ

Thembakazi Mbobela

The second week of the NMMU School of Architecture’s international workshop saw students working in groups and developing ideas about buildings in Port Elizabeth.

Prof Stephen Read, from the Delft University of Technology in Amsterdam, held an interesting lecture on “Rural Urban Regions” during the second week of the NMMU School of Architecture’s international workshop.

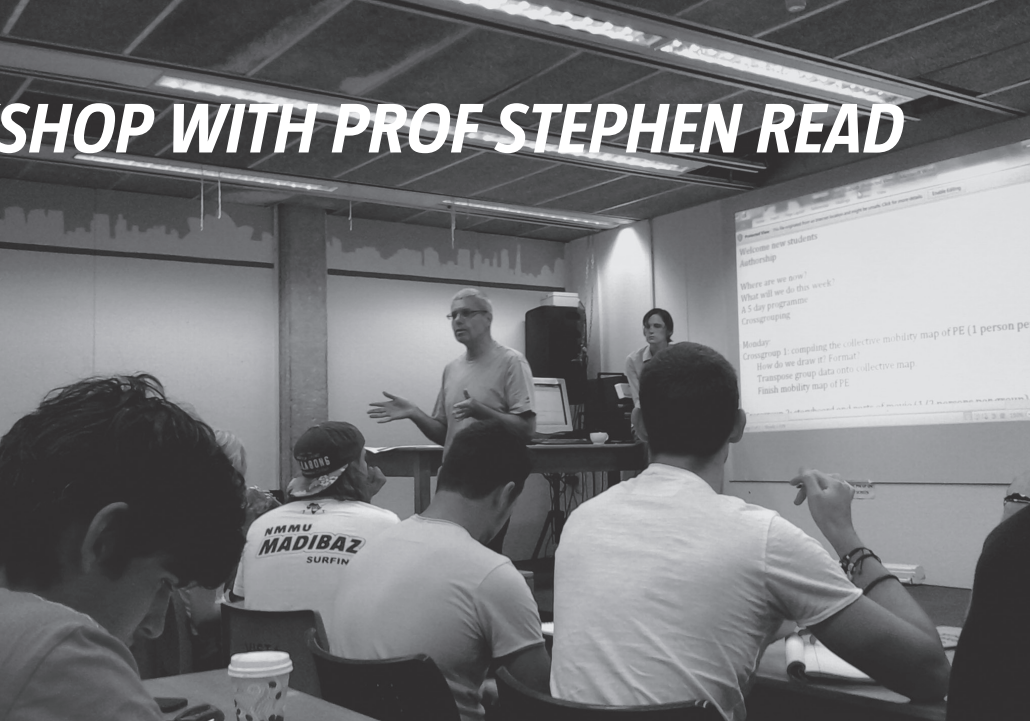
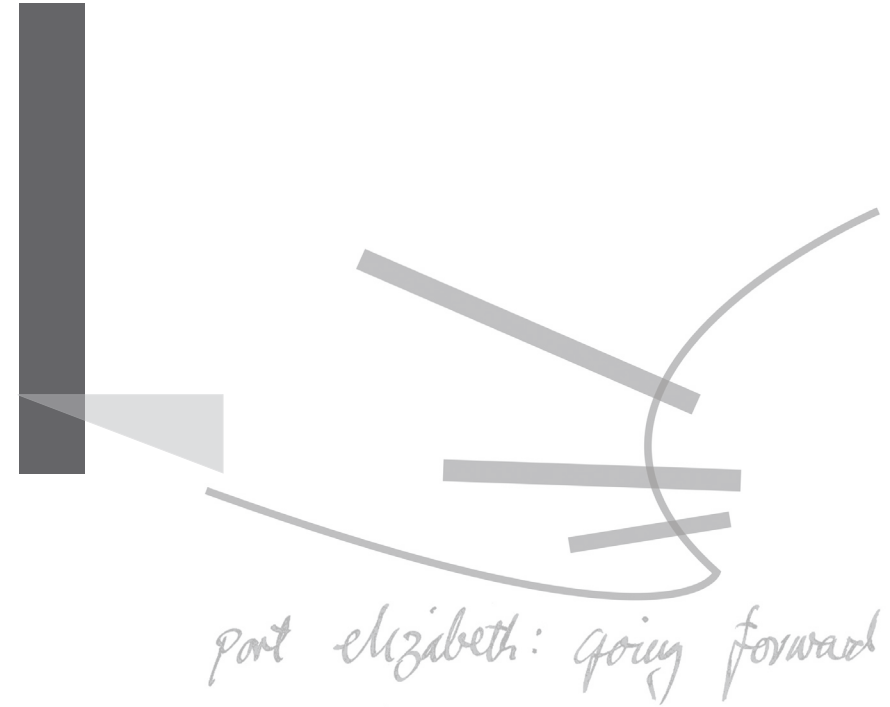
The lecture centred on the idea of how the presence of urban societies and cities allowed for time and space to exist. He spoke about the important role of technology in developing societies from the 14th century until the present day.

According to Prof. Read, different urban societies suffered because of economic and political tensions that could often lead to chaos, which meant that if societies lived in such chaos, they would not be aware of time and space. Therefore, in order to regulate such chaos, societies tended to regulate time and space.

Riveted by the lecture, first year student, Zani Sizani exclaimed “I think that these workshops are a great way to introduce first year students to architecture and people from around the world to Port Elizabeth. I also quite like a quote of Prof Read’s “Tiime and space is the amalgamation of technology and space.”

Third year student, Zintle Mkonwana, said one of the things she has enjoyed the most so far, were the site visits around PE communities and interacting with professional architects. “It makes me want to be in the working world and to create beautiful buildings of my own”, added Mkonwana.

“in order to regulate chaos, societies tended to regulate time and space”



Professor Stephen Read explains the aims of the project to his students. Photo: Bianca Wicks

Where are we?

Sinethemba Madolo

Workshop 3 was divided into 9 groups, each given a suburb and each tasked with finding out the transportation system, how it works and who uses it. The idea is to engage with the people and get information from the sources.

After gathering all the information, they need to make a documentary about their suburbs and everything they’ve found out about the mobility of that particular neighbourhood.

“What you have to do with the documentary is to represent your suburb, maybe by showing something iconic about that place; showcase the different people and their lives,” Professor Read said. Prof Read went on to say their point needs to be made from the get go.

Professor Read then introduced Francois Du Plessis, a film lecturer at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), to give a brief teaching of how film works and how to use a camera.

Mr. Du Plessis stressed five things that are of utter importance to filming: “exposure, white balance, audio, composition and focus; that five that will make your video brilliant”.

He went to explain how each function works and how to set it. “If one of these functions are off then your video won’t turn out as good as it should,” Du Plessis then explained the “don’ts” of filming: “do not pan or zoom; the human eye does not work that way and you will be straining the viewer’s sight”.

“We are well aware that we cannot be too ambitious about the outcome of the projects, however we are looking for an interesting product,” said Prof Read. He said that he is not sure as to what he really wants but he is looking to show the mobility system of P.E and how it tends to promote segregation of class, race, colour and culture. At the same time, he wants to propose a strategy where the municipality can create a better transport system for P.E.



Prof Stephen Read introduces Mr Francois Du Plessis. Du Plessis - who is a lecturer from NMMU’s department of Journalism, Media & Philosophy - taught the students some basic skills in video production. Prof Read’s workshop will present a short film on transport in various neighbourhoods in Port Elizabeth at the exhibition next week.

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