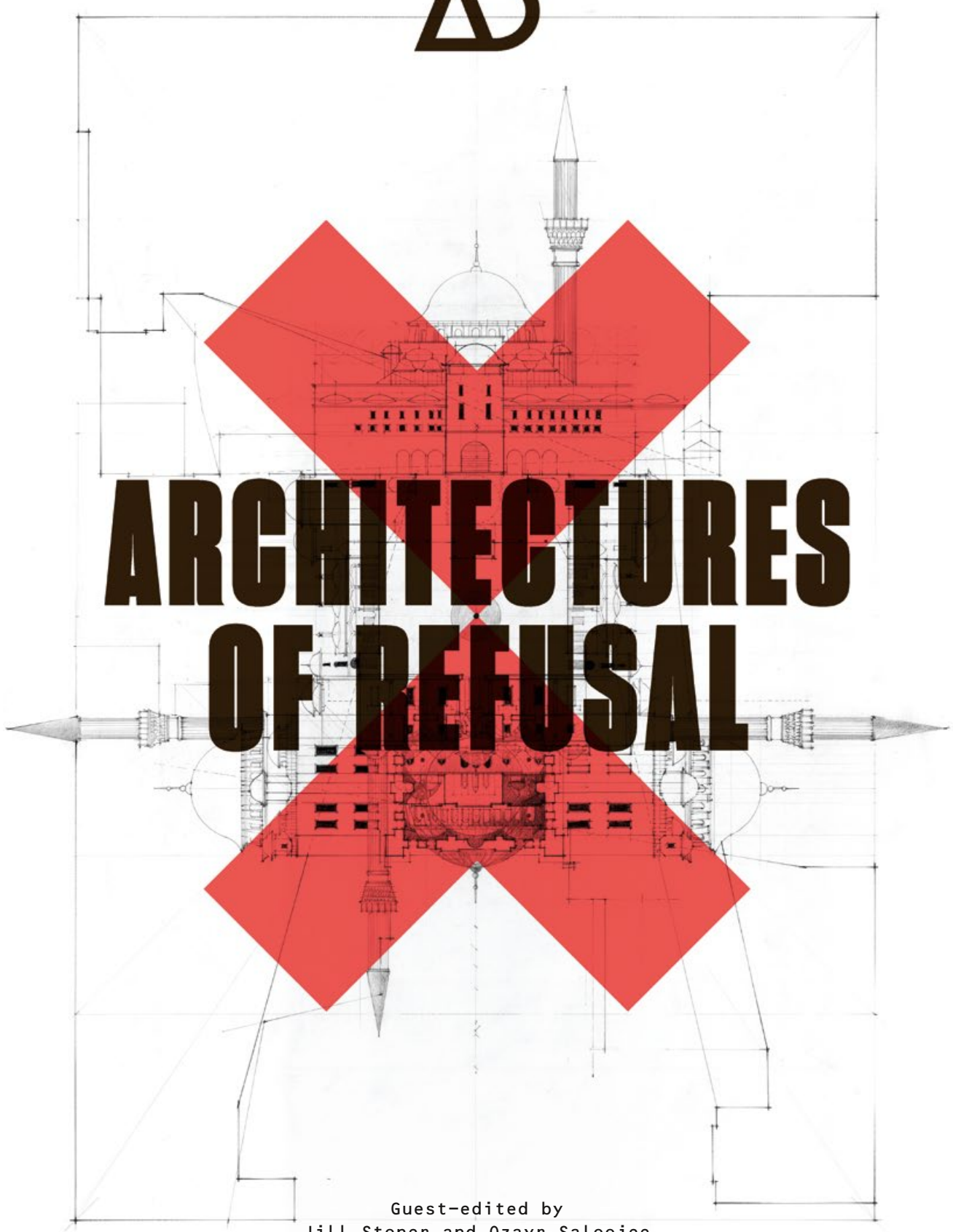


A detailed architectural drawing of a building, possibly a mosque or a large institutional building, with a central dome and minarets. The drawing is overlaid with a large, red 'X' shape, which is composed of two overlapping diamonds. The text 'ARCHITECTURES OF REFUSAL' is superimposed on the drawing.

ARCHITECTURES OF REFUSAL

Guest-edited by
Jill Stoner and Ozayr Saloojee

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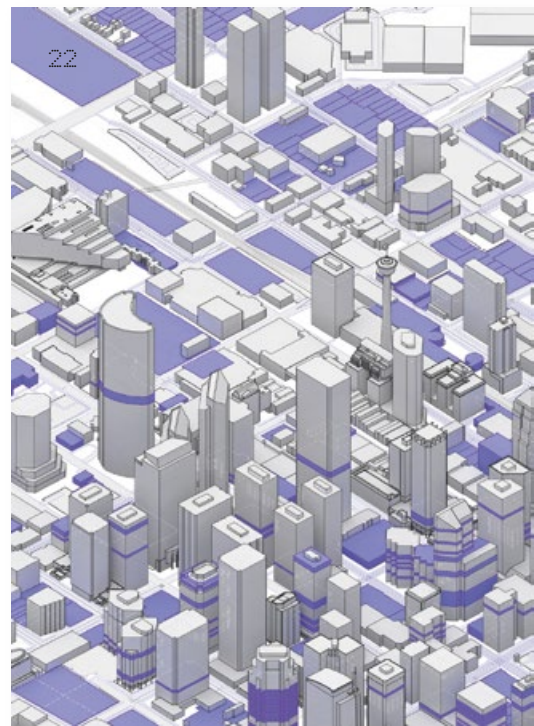
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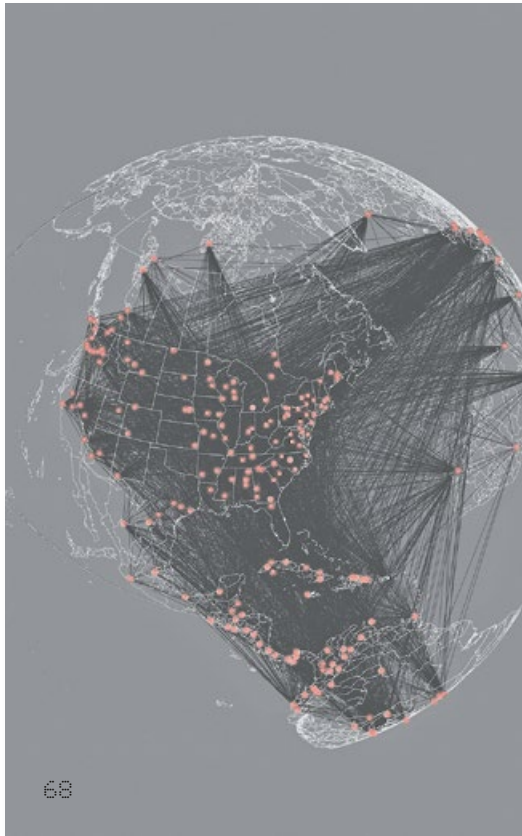
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Jill Stoner

‘For decades, architecture has refused to acknowledge its contributions to social and environmental injustices, instead blithely perpetuating exploitative practices in the name of high art. But now, alternative practices and theorists across the world are refusing to comply.’

—Jill Stoner and Ozayr Saloojee

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Design by Christian Küsters
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Inside front cover

Cathy Smith,
Meanwhile Bodies, 2022.
© Cathy Smith

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Ozayr Saloojee, *Sinan's Sokollu Mehmet Paşa, Istanbul (1568)*, 'Drawing an Argument for Refusal' series, 2022.
© Ozayr Saloojee

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Earth Ver

Resisting Globalisation on the Open Pitch



sus FIFA

Hannah le Roux,
Tent location
on a township
football field,
2022

The introduction of the 36-metre-long tents – shown here in crayon on an aerial photograph from a 2008 survey – creates a small-scale urban element in or along open fields, which could signal their capacity for more formal support structures.

Hannah le Roux is an architect and architectural historian specialising in the modern architecture of Southern Africa. An Associate Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand, here she documents the importance of football to local communities and its binding effect in strengthening societal bonds and providing a sense of self-determination.

There are football pitches all over South Africa, a legacy of the game's role as a site of embodied resistance in black communities. One can find them scraped out in open spaces: where there is housing, there are spaces to play football. On these pitches, reference to the Modernist model of a football field is ephemeral: at most, ash lines on the ground, and sometimes simply four temporary markers as goals. Such open pitches give a datum for alteration that is both robust – defended through use – and fragile – physically open. Where football fields were laid out by the government, whether during apartheid or more recently, their space has a very different quality, by virtue of their surfaces – usually grass – their fenced boundaries and their mono-functional use.

World Cup Legacies

These social and spatial contrasts were heightened by events running up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, which promised to reduce these contrasts. But while South Africa's World Cup planning was presented in the 2003 Bid Book as a popular project and planned out as an event management exercise, the implementation largely benefited established construction companies.¹ The Bid Book's many images of children playing on dusty fields alongside informal settlements gave way to a representation of mega-projects and metrics. The official events took place without exception outside of townships – black residential areas. The 'legacy projects', funded with a fraction of the World Cup profits and planned as an ameliorative strategy for township football, were delayed and only a fifth of them were built.² In Alexandra, one of the densest townships near Johannesburg, a Football

for Hope Centre was promised as the site for the Street Football event that ran during the World Cup, but nothing had been constructed by June 2010 and the event was housed in temporary structures.

The township projects that were built were mostly standardised, 'top-down' and even destructive interventions. In the region of Ekurhuleni to the east of Johannesburg, 24 out of a promised 64 'Legacy Fields' were identified, irrigated, planted with grass, surrounded with concrete palisade fences and locked. Most of these fields, which were previously managed within communities for leisure leagues, were later vandalised. Moreover, the South African Football Association (SAFA) chose to certify games played on turf only, leaving many townships without a field that could provide entry into leagues. Instead, SAFA only monitored a few formal sites, some renovated with artificial turf, benefiting those industries while draining local talent.³

The World Cup's recognition of football as South Africa's most popular sport and the presence of public attention also spurred the growth of non-governmental organisations around the game. But black self-organisation around football really did not require the state's or FIFA's interventions. The creation and management of teams and leagues was already a widespread activity that had grown alongside black urbanisation from the early 20th century. It was a medium through which individuals gained political, social and material success denied to them in formal, white-controlled organisations.⁴ Access to grounds already happened through the borrowed use of pitches belonging to schools and colleges, mines, or through industry donations to the township administration boards.



Overgrown football field in KwaThema, South Africa, 2009

Open football fields allow overlapping uses. Their proximity to housing means residents often use them as shortcuts. In KwaThema, livestock graze on some fields. Their maintenance by the state is erratic.



Pipe goalposts at a football field in KwaThema, 2009

As a social commons, rather than a place owned by an institution, the open fields rely on available technologies like plumbing pipes for goals, ash for lines and salvaged shade cloth and timber for kiosks.

Playing on Earth

In South Africa's mining and industrial belt, the Witwatersrand, the growth of township football leagues from the 1950s onwards coincided with the development of modernist townships such as KwaThema, built on the 'Rand east of Johannesburg as a segregated dormitory area for black workers. Constructed to a low-density model influenced by post-Second World War neighbourhood planning, with layouts that echoed British New Towns and American suburban tracts, these townships separated rows of houses with buffer strips and skirted the low-lying areas between houses with broad belts of undeveloped space.⁵ The open spaces may have appeared as green parks in their planning representations but were underdeveloped during apartheid, and remained as open grassland or just earth. As a *terrain vague*, such township buffer zones had a risky status. While the space itself is a locale for pitches, their definition is lost in the extensiveness of open land and in the overlapping uses that lay claim to it. Football is just one of a series of temporal claims including cattle grazing, farming, car parks, informal housing and religious gatherings.

The power of temporary pitches to maintain spatial agency is clear to the KwaThema grassroots football coach and former Orlando Pirates star goalkeeper, Innocent Mayoyo. Countering ideas of creating World Cup 'Legacy Fields' which invariably led to enclosure, resurfacing, external management and exclusion of some of the current teams, Mayoyo's vision is to promote the game played directly on appropriated earth surfaces. What he calls 'open fields' spring up alongside new social housing developments when new communities instruct the drivers of road graders to clear a field in exchange for a small donation. The open pitches are largely earth, with posts constructed from plumbing pipes or timber. Their access for weekend matches is organised within the community according to consensus between teams, and during the week they are used for practice by boys. The pitches are integrated into their surroundings by virtue of their use as shortcuts through the area, and are protected against invasion for housing.

Mayoyo's understanding of the ephemeral networks of leagues that take place in the township of KwaThema suggests a counter-practice for the support of football that uses only the most direct moves. The leagues and their spaces are a temporal and self-constructed layer of township urbanism that can be seen as a counter-project to the sport's recent commodification and institutional control. The pitches and the players on them are not absolutely separated out from the SAFA network, but nor are they under its control. Some will pass from community to SAFA control and then back to local municipality management, coinciding with their physical transformation through construction and subsequent neglect. Their shifting status is complicated by the interrelationship between the physicality of spaces and their social meaning. If the hallmark of an institutionally owned field is its fencing, then that of a community-owned one is

its openness through the lack of fencing. At the same time, the absence of any markers may lead to the loss of recognition of a pitch and its social amenity. Marking pitches more permanently, without enclosing them, might maintain local claims to them.

White Lines

Design interventions in KwaThema's football spaces can amplify a common formal gesture: the placing of a white line on the earth as a way of designating the pitch. The delicacy and deliberateness of this gesture is striking in aerial images where ash lines sometimes stand out. Moreover, the overlay of white pigment onto earth is a very stark and universal medium of representation, with a fundamental materiality capable of eluding any formal tradition of design. Whiteness is associated with Modernist open space, and becomes a neutral tone for the project, open to later signification. But whitening is also associated with African initiation rituals that cover faces with kaolin or flour to render them anonymous.

The first concept for intervention was the establishment of the whitelineunit. The unit would be a small group equipped with the skills and materials to establish a field anywhere, in the most minimal manner, using white paint onto earth and four goal markers. The unit also had the basics for field-side meetings, in the form of a shade structure and a gas *braai* (barbecue). It was run from 2010 by a group of volunteers, the Imvelo Youth Development Brigade, who helped to locate and organise clean-ups of potential fields in KwaThema township. This group formed after a 2007 design-build studio, the KwaThema Project,⁶ and extended their park maintenance into line painting and tent construction. In this strategy, their actions of clearing reclaimed the ambivalence of the open spaces and allow for a collective imagination of their redeployment as community space. Clearing was overwhelmingly effective in its impact.

Further volunteers joined them for a collaborative game organised by the Equality Forum, an LGBT group who came together to commemorate Eudy Simelane, the captain of the South African women's football team who was murdered in a hate crime in KwaThema's Riverside Park. The process revealed a number of overlapping agendas for the open space, one of the first township green spaces, dating back to 1951: its claiming for the Eudy match; use as a potential community garden; remaining a relaxation space established by an artist who had saved trees from being cleared and built a circle of seating; giving grazing land for hostel dwellers' cattle and goats; use for worship circles of religious groups; being fenced as a playground; and serving as a dumping ground for uncollected rubbish. The game also reactivated the concrete slabs of two demolished schools on the site, showing them to be an asset with the potential to support new activities there. One of the local businesses that erect tents for ceremonies put one up for the event, showing how quickly the platform could be transformed for football spectating.

Equality Forum volunteers
clearing Riverside Park,
KwaThema,
2011

right: As an open space between residential
areas, Riverside Park often accumulates
household rubbish when the council fails to
collect it. By taking on the clean-up by hand,
the volunteers, including Msholozzi and Portia,
precipitated its collection by the council.

Sfiso Tent Hire marquee
construction at Riverside Park,
KwaThema,
2011

below: Township households use tents for social
events like weddings and funerals. They are
supported by a vital economy of affordable and
efficient home-based businesses renting marquees,
chairs, portable toilets and sound equipment.





'Berry 10' shirt drawn on slab of demolished school building, Riverside Park, KwaThema, 2011

above: Two former schools in Riverside Park were condemned due to groundwater, and their brickwork salvaged. Children still play on the slabs.

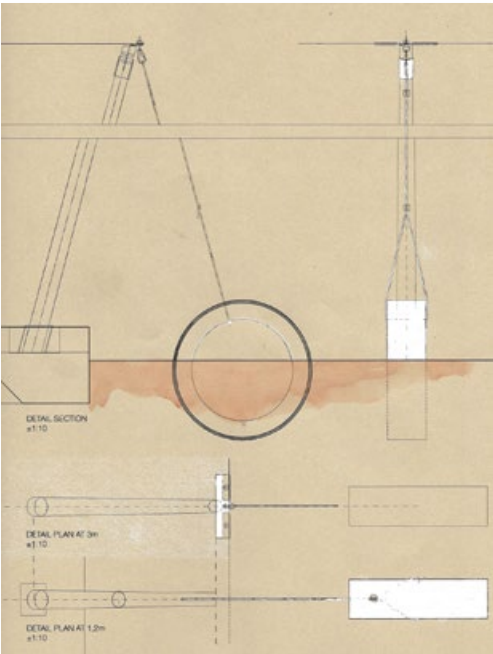


This event was a first iteration of a generic urban project. In it, football fields would be supported by the design and construction of a thickened edge to the fields, in the form of a strip of support for a mobile shade structure. The materials for the design came from township vocabularies. Specifically, shade cloth and plastic sheeting, including discarded billboards from the FIFA World Cup could be used to create screens, shading and signage. Shade cloth structures typically stand in the zone of ambivalence along the field's street or path edge, sometimes empty, and then filling during a match with spectators, players in waiting, officials and passers-by. They are positioned in between the game and the community at large. Reinforcing them with minimal supports would thicken this zone. Tent anchors made from whitewashed tyres would remain after the match, allowing for the installation of the tent infrastructure for league events, and used for dribbling practices in between. This infrastructure could support three leagues – school, keep-fit and affiliated ones – with the shade structures rotating between them.



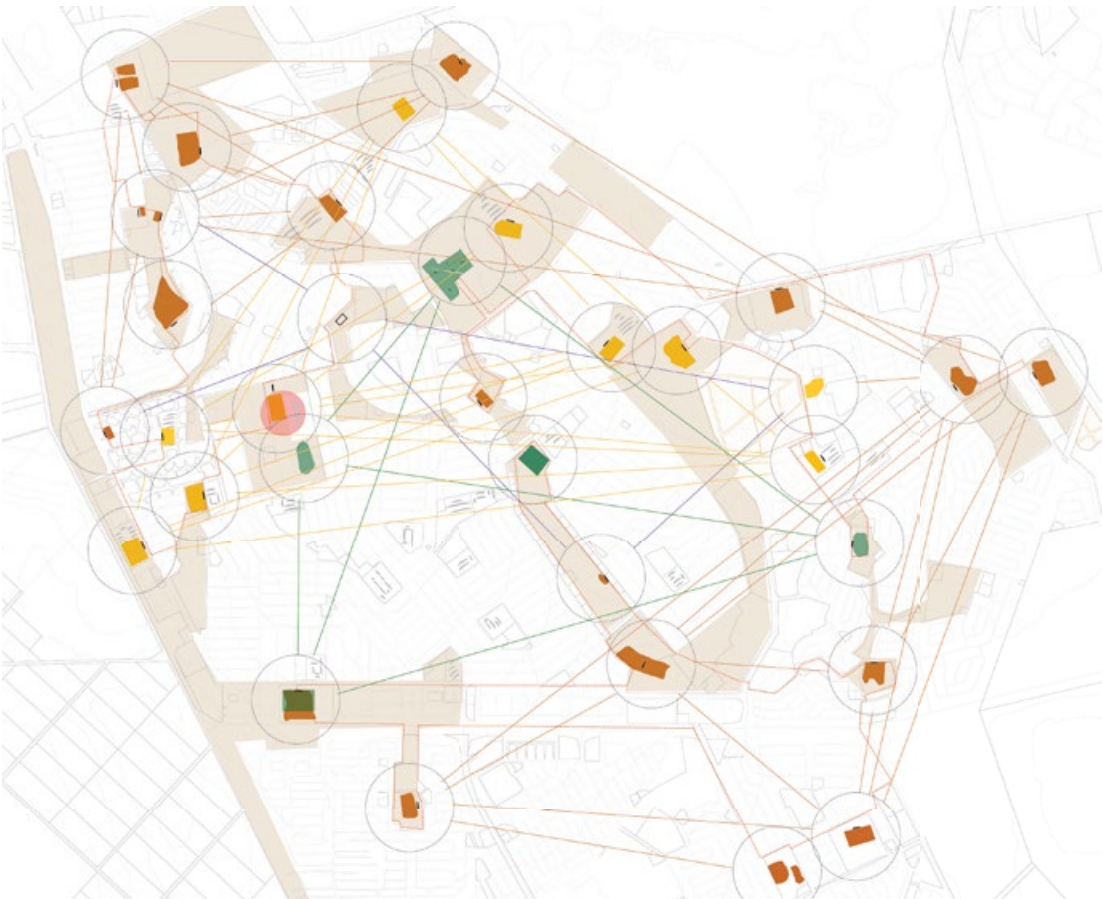
Imvelo Youth Development Brigade and Christof van Wyk fixing shadecloth clips for an open pitch tent prototype, 2012

The Imvelo Youth Development Brigade volunteered to put up prototype tents for football. The tents were designed to reuse banners from World Cup advertising.



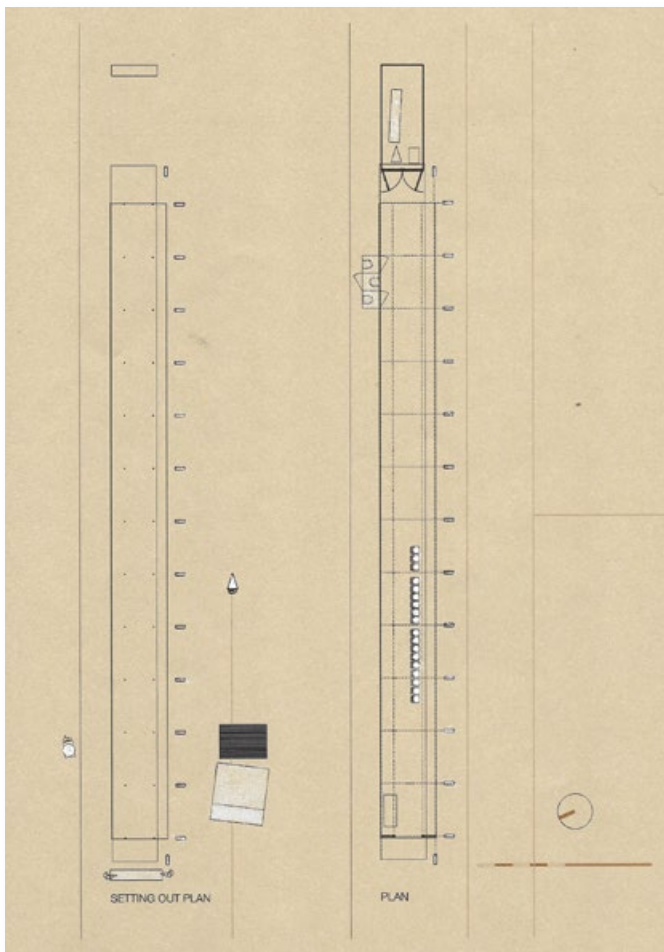
Hannah le Roux, Sectional drawing through an open pitch tent, 2012

The tents for open fields rely on existing technologies such as used tyres as anchors, gum pole supports, agricultural netting as shading and pipe connections.



Hannah le Roux, KwaThema football fields and proposed open pitch league connections, 2013

Pitches are used by different leagues on different days. On tournament days, tents can be put up to shade spectators and additional mobile technologies.



Hannah Le Roux,
Plans of open pitch tent set-up and between games,
2012

When pitches are not in use, the tyre anchors remain in place along the edge of the field for dribbling drills.

When it comes to football, an architecture of refusal can face in two directions: confronting elites who unethically benefited from its globalised upscaling, and supporting communities

Once raised, the edge element could in turn be used by other actors. Additional objects – food stalls, signage, branding and VIP enclosures – could be suspended or housed within its frame, coming both from within and outside of the local township economy. The shade structure and field, and their capacity to change in status between use and emptiness, would become the mediating filters between scales and networks around football and non-football use.

Architecture Against Corruption

The ephemeral nature of open fields makes their impact on football's affective value hard to measure. But their existence, just like that of futsal sites in Brazil and street games around the world, is fundamental to keeping the global game vital. Their presence as a common and uncommodified part of the game challenges the elite circle that manages football on a global scale to be accountable to its followers. In 2015, FIFA was shaken up by the exposure of corruption amongst officials. Its president resigned and now faces fraud charges. Investigations were launched into bribery related to World Cup merchandise royalties, broadcast rights and hosting rights, including a payment of \$10 million to Jack Warner, a FIFA vice-president whose vote was significant in awarding South Africa the 2010 hosting bid. It was a fraction of the estimated \$3 billion that was spent by the country on hosting infrastructures, including stadiums that now stand empty. The tent project for KwaThema's open fields was put together on a budget of \$5,000, one six-hundred-thousandth of the cost of hard infrastructures. These figures suggest that, when it comes to football, an architecture of refusal can face in two directions: confronting elites who unethically benefited from its globalised upscaling, and supporting communities who shape activities and spaces in an ongoing game.⁷ ▢

Notes

1. South Africa 2010 Bid Company, 'Africa's Stage: South Africa 2010 Bid Book', South Africa 2010 Bid Company (Johannesburg), 2003.
2. Scarlett Cornelissen, 'More Than a Sporting Chance? Appraising the Sport for Development Legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup', *Third World Quarterly*, 32 (3), 2011, pp 503–29.
3. Author's interview with Ekurhuleni Executive Council member, 2011.
4. Peter C Alegi, *Laduma!: Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press (Scottsville), 2004.
5. Hannah le Roux, 'Designing KwaThema: Cultural Inscriptions in the Model Township', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 45 (2), 2019, pp 1–29.
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7. This text is an edited excerpt from the author's unpublished PhD thesis 'Lived Modernisms: When Architecture Transforms', KU Leuven, 2014. The author's research in KwaThema receives support from the National Research Foundation of South Africa.

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