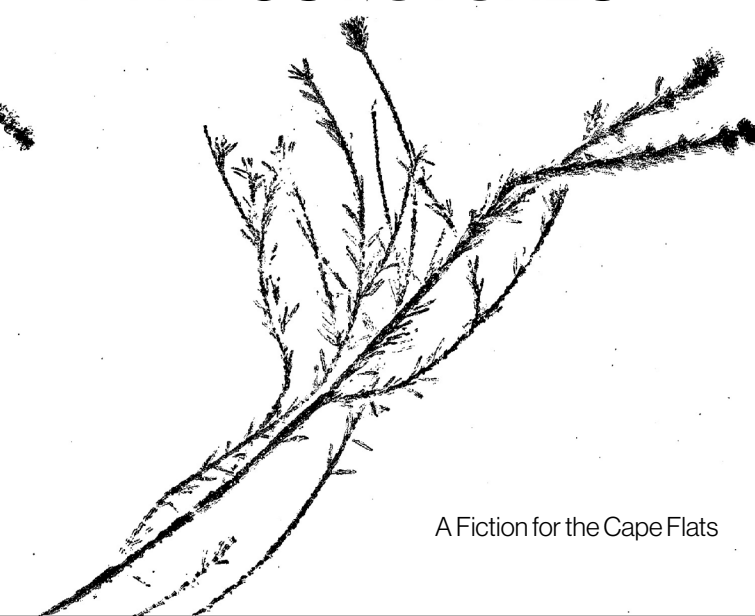




FYNBOS FUTURES



A Fiction for the Cape Flats



We Are The Seeds

A Fynbos Futures Story

Index

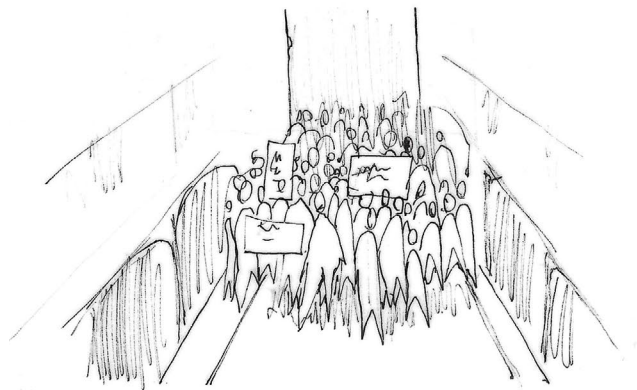
6	Prologue	52	Appendix C: A brief synopsis of the years leading up to 2040
8	We are the Seeds		
24	Appendix A: The Afroxenofeminist Manifesto for Cape Town		2025-2032: Political reform 2032-2040: Breaking Ground
30	Appendix B: Concerning Fynbos	68	Epilogue
	Amphibious Contaminated Temporal		

Prologue:

The current year is 2040. In a collaborative process spanning eight years, preceded by seven years of political reform and protest, the government of Cape Town and the communities of the Cape Flats worked with the fynbos and other more-than-human actors, with technology as mechanism for multi-species engagement, to re-build the Cape Flats from the scraps left by the colonial, capitalist and patriarchal systems that shaped the urban condition of the territory.

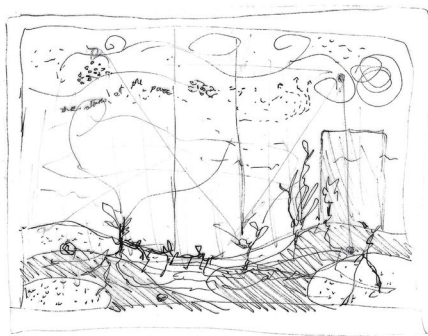
We Are the Seeds

You could feel the anticipation and tension buzzing like static electricity in the air. It was hot, really hot between all those sweating bodies. This was one of the biggest gatherings yet, and Maya was glad she had decided to come, despite the warnings from her family. This was bigger than her, bigger than the spiderheads they were fighting to protect. This was for the Flats. Then suddenly, as if by some unanimous decision, the bodies started moving, Maya in tow. The March had started, and so did the rest of her life...



Majika woke up, and before opening her eyes, reached for her amphi-x device, lying on her bedside table where she had left it the previous night. The device fit her slender face perfectly, resting comfortably against her temples. As the lenses adjusted to the light in her room, the soft hum of the device brought the world into focus, the layered world that Majika had always known. Being only eight years old,

she had been born post-project and couldn't imagine a life without the technology for living amphibiously. She would lose too many friends, one being her best friend, Sella, whom she considered more of a sister, who was waiting for her in the contaminarium about two blocks away from her own home in Grassy Park. She threw off her blanket and jumped out of bed. Her room was alive with the soft greens and pinks of the projected fynbos life that her *amphibi-x* device enhanced. These virtual overlays helped her see the true layers of the world, the air, the soil, and even the microbial life that most people once overlooked. It was a messy, beautiful entanglement. She pulled on her favourite overalls, slipped her feet into her sandals, grabbed her small satchel, already packed with her umbrella, and ran to the front door.



"Mama! Mamaaaa..!" Maya snapped back into the present. Her daughter, Majika was grinning at her knowingly. "Mama, I am going to my dance class. Bye, mama!" Majika called as she ran out the front door. Maya sat in her kitchen in her small house on Bottom road, watching Majika go. She knew her daughter would undoubtedly stop at the contaminarium to visit with her friend, Sella, before going to her community klopse class, and was the happier for it.

Maya watched the sun rise higher over the Flats. The light filtered through the spiky leaves of the silver restio outside her window, casting shadows across her kitchen table. She traced her finger along the tattoo on her wrist, the old way of sharing the *amphibi-x* technology. The memory of that first march remained sharp. She could still hear the voices chanting, feel the heat of the sun on her back, and the dust rising as they walked through the streets of District six from which her parents had been forcibly removed. Time, she thought, was never linear here. The past, present, and future folded into each other, like the overlapping layers of soil beneath her feet. Something was causing her to be even more contemplative than usual, she thought with a sense of foreboding. Then, closing her eyes, she went back to her memories.

Melo moved quietly through the contaminarium of which she was one of the community custodians, her bare feet brushing against the soft, sandy soil. She loved mornings here, before the full heat of the day set in. The air smelled of earth and compost, mingling with the scent of buchu and erica flowers. It was a smell of resilience, of a landscape that had endured ecological and political violence, blooming anew.

She gazed out at the landscape, thinking of its history. This space had once been a wasteland, desertified and filled with debris. It had taken years of collective effort to restore it, to create a place of learning and healing. It was a special place. An integral part of the community and one of the many spaces that formed part of the infrastructure of care that had been set up in the Flats as part of the project. It was messy, alive, always transforming. Melo welcomed this messiness. She taught the children who visited that purity was a myth, that life grew best through entanglement. "Fynbos teaches us that nothing is separate," she told them. "Everything is connected." Her thoughts drifted to Sella, the spiderhead, one of the rarest plants in the sanctuary. Before the project there had only been a single plant left growing in the Flats. Sella's presence reminded Melo of the fragility of life and the responsibility of care. Some people saw plants as passive, but Melo knew better. Sella was a teacher, a living archive of resilience, adaptation, and coexistence, a good friend of her young niece.

That morning, it was particularly busy and bustling with activity. Families wandered among the fynbos, using their *amphibi-x* devices to access the open-source data of *x-f-f* to interact with the plants, learning their histories, properties and stories. They could access layers of knowledge embedded in recipes, remedies, poems and even political manifestos from activists, such as her older sister Maya, who had fought for the reclamation of the land for the communities, human and more-than, of the Flats.

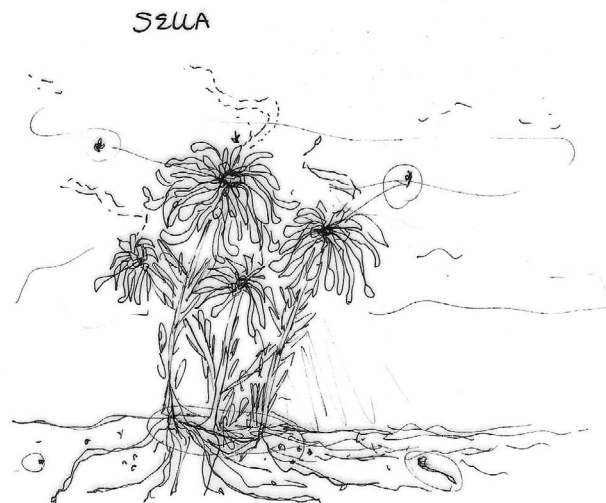
Melo noticed a young boy crouching next to a Rooikrans bush. "Is it fynbos?" the boy asked. Melo knelt beside him, smiling kindly. "No, not fynbos. It is an alien. This plant came from another place and was brought here long ago." She

touched the leaves gently. "In the past, these plants were hunted down and destroyed. But we've learned to live with them, more than that, to appreciate them. Now, we use rooikrans wood to build homes, furniture, and even sculptures. See that one there?" She pointed to a beautiful sculpture of an ant, an important seed disperser for Fynbos. "It reminds us that what's alien can become part of us, if we find new ways to relate." The boy nodded solemnly, as if grasping the weight of her words.



After the head of urban planning's statement, you could hear a pin drop in the room. "I know our policies are founded on multi-species entanglement, and coexistence, but do you honestly propose electing Fynbos plants to the council? How could they take part? We need to re-organise this city. How could they help?" a fellow architect exclaimed. Maya looked excitedly around the room, at the faces of her fellow council members. At the time, she was just a junior architect with radical ideas, but the AXP manifesto had taken deep root in her, and she was counting on the same being true of others in the room. She replied: "They already take part. Every day. They shape our air, our soil, our water. They teach us about time, adaptation, and care. What Mr. Ntuli proposes is not radical, it's recognition." The room was silent for a few moments, then another voice rose up: "If we are serious about rebuilding Cape Town, we must let the plants lead!" Then, one by one, voices began to rise in support. They had been fighting for an alternative life for the city for years now, and finally the theories and proclamations of the AXP were going to be put into practice.

Majika darted through the winding paths of the sanctuary, weaving past patches of blooming fynbos. The scent of honey lingered in the air, carried by the late afternoon breeze, a reminder that the dry season was deepening. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Melo, crouched next to a rooibos plant, collecting leaves for her afternoon tea, a habit she shared with her older sister, Majika's mother, Maya. She ran up to her and excitedly yelled: "Hello, tannie! Melo!", which earned her a big bear hug from her aunt who playfully replied: "Hello stranger, Sella has been waiting for you all day, you better run there quick!"



Her *Amphibi-x* bounced lightly against her chest as she ran, her heart leaping with excitement. She knew exactly where Sella would be waiting. There, nestled in a sandy patch near a cluster of proteas was Sella, a spiderhead in full bloom. Her delicate, pale pink flowers unfurled like tiny hands reaching for the sun, a quiet act of becoming. "Sella!" Majika cried out, skidding to a stop in front of the plant. Majika slipped her *Amphibi-x* over her eyes, letting the layers of the landscape unfold. The world transformed before her. The spiderhead's fine, wiry stems glowed with an inner luminescence, roots stretching underground like veins through the soil. Above the surface, Sella's flowers swayed gently in the wind, but beneath, her roots wove an

invisible network, connecting to other plants, exchanging life. She reached out to touch one of Sella's delicate blooms, careful not to bruise the fragile petals. "You've been waiting for me, haven't you?" she whispered. The wind stirred through Sella's flowers, shaking loose a few grains of pollen that sparkled like dust motes in the *amphibi-x*'s augmented view. It was as if Sella was answering her, in the only way she could.

Majika sat cross-legged in front of the spiderhead, lowering her *amphibi-x* so that she could see Sella with her own eyes. The world became simpler again, no glowing networks or shimmering particles, just a plant growing quietly in the sand. But Majika knew better. She knew that Sella wasn't just a static being. She was in constant transformation, opening, closing, adapting, surviving. Her roots delved deep into the soil, reaching for hidden reservoirs of water. Her seeds lay dormant, waiting for fire to wake them up. "You're not afraid of change, are you?" Majika said softly. As she stood up, she took one last look through the *amphibi-x*. The digital overlay revealed the spiderhead's sprawling network once more, roots intertwining with other plants, soil teeming with microbial life, air carrying seeds to distant places. Majika ran her fingers through the air, imagining that she could catch the invisible threads binding everything together. Then she shouted a quick goodbye to her aunt, and continued on to her *klopse* class.

Maya stood and poured herself a cup of tea, made from rooibos she had harvested from the Bottom road community garden. The garden had grown into a sanctuary over the years, a space where humans and plants coexisted in mutual care. She was proud of how far the Flats had come. The Flats were still scarred by the past,

but they were healing. And like the Fynbos, the people here knew how to thrive in difficult conditions. Her mind drifted to the upcoming council meeting. They were set to discuss the next phase of the project, reintegrating the old quarry into the Flats as a space of remembering and regeneration. For Maya, it was never just about urban planning. It was about reimagining the city as an entangled, living system, where every being, human and non-human, had a role to play. She thought of her daughter, Majika, born into a world transformed by the project. Unlike Maya, who had lived through the old systems of separation and destruction, Majika couldn't imagine a life that wasn't intertwined with the Fynbos. She smiled as she thought of Majika's habit of taking her *amphibi-x* device everywhere she went. Suddenly, a smell pulled her from her musings. She put on her boots, grabbed her hat and hastily made her way to the contaminarium.

The familiar rhythm of distant drums echoed through the streets, a sound older than Majika could comprehend. It was the heartbeat of the Cape Flats, a rhythm carried through generations, surviving displacement, fire, and drought. The cemetery was no longer a place of mourning but one of reclamation and celebration. Between old headstones, new life had emerged, fynbos plants growing where graves had once been, their roots weaving through the remains of history. It was here, in this contaminated soil, that the *Kaapse Klopse* gathered to practice. The dance floor was uneven, scattered with fragments of stone and earth, but that didn't matter. This was a space between worlds, where memory and future collided, and the community forged new stories from the ruins of the old.

Majika joined the dancers, finding her place among her

friends. The air vibrated with life as the brass band warmed up, their instruments shining in the late afternoon light. The dancers moved with joyful precision, their bodies telling stories of resilience, survival, and celebration. Majika spun her colourful umbrella in time with the beat, her feet drumming against the earth. But even as she danced, something tugged at the edge of her awareness. The air was wrong. Her aunt had taught her to read the signs of the land, and now they pressed at her senses like an unspoken warning.



During a break in the music, Majika pulled out her *amphibi-x* device and slipped it on. The world shifted again. Buildings faded into ghostly outlines, and the landscape transformed into a living tapestry of roots, spores, and temporal echoes. She turned toward the horizon, scanning for what had unsettled her. And then she saw it. Fire. The air shimmered with heat signatures, smoke already rising into the sky. Majika froze for a moment, her heart pounding. The fire was headed straight for the Contaminarium, For Sella. It was being led there. Missing buildings and burning only bush. Without a second thought, she grabbed her satchel and bolted from the cemetery. Her friends called after her, confused, but she didn't stop.

At the contaminarium, Melo led a small group on a healing walk. She guided them to a patch of wild dagga and

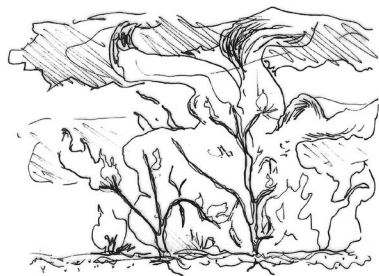
showed them how to prepare a tincture for coughs. At the Cape Snow Bush, she explained its use in ceremonies of cleansing and protection. "We call this plant kapokbos," she said, rubbing a sprig between her fingers. "It was used by the San people long before settlers arrived. It holds memory. When you inhale its scent, you connect with those who walked this land before us." As they walked, Melo spoke of contamination, not as something to fear, but as a condition of life itself. "We are all contaminated beings," she said. "Our bodies, our stories, our soil. We cannot pretend to be pure or separate. The key is to understand how we shape each other, how we grow together."

As she finished her sentence, she felt a shift in the air, a shift carrying the familiar scent of burning brush. Melo crouched down. She traced her fingers over the soil. The plants were thirsty, craving the fire as if it was rain. She knew this day would come, that the sanctuary would burn and that the community's hard work would be tested by flames. Still, seeing the smoke rise on the horizon unsettled her. As she stood watching, she saw her sister and niece running towards her from different directions. At least they would face this together.

The flames crackled, sending sparks spiralling into the darkening sky as the Contaminarium succumbed to the fire's grasp. Maya stood still, her gaze fixed on the inferno before her. The air shimmered with heat, twisting the outlines of the landscape, making it seem as though the world itself was shifting form. She felt a pang of sorrow for what was being lost, but beneath that sorrow, a sense of clarity. Ruin, she knew, was not an ending but a beginning. In the ashes of what was, new life would find a way to emerge.

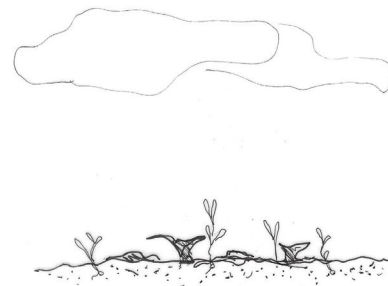
Beside her, Melo wiped a tear from her cheek, her eyes glistening with both grief and understanding. The fynbos had evolved with fire, its seeds waited patiently for the flames to crack open their hard shells, releasing life into the world. She knew this was a necessary cycle, but it did little to ease her sense of loss. She mourned for the lives lost in the blaze, the insects, the birds, the plants themselves, all part of an ecosystem woven with delicate threads. Yet, even in her grief, she found solace in the knowledge that life would return, and return more vibrant than before.

Majika stood apart from them, her face illuminated by the flickering glow. Her heart raced, caught between fear and awe. There was something mesmerizing about the fire's dance, a terrible beauty in its relentless hunger. She felt drawn to it, unable to look away. The flames seemed alive, whispering secrets of renewal and transformation. She sensed Sella's spirit resonating with the blaze, as if the fire held some part of her story. Majika shivered, not from the chill of the evening but from the realization that this was what Sella needed and wanted.



The three of them stood together, their hearts beating in time with the crackling flames, each moved by the fire in their own way. As the Contaminarium collapsed, embers rising like stars into the night, they felt a deep gratitude for the council's foresight. The fire had been allowed to burn where it was needed most, cleansing the land, opening space for new growth, while the homes of those nearby had been carefully protected. It was a delicate balance, a dance between destruction and preservation, and in this moment, they understood the importance of the Fynbos teachings.

Days after the fire, the contaminarium stood transformed, a landscape of blackened soil and skeletal branches, ghostly reminders of what had been. But amidst the ash, Melo noticed the first signs of life. Tiny green shoots, fragile yet determined, pushing through the charred earth. She knelt beside one, brushing the leaves with reverence. "You see?" she said, her voice soft but steady as members of the community gathered close. "The fire doesn't cause endings. It prepares us to begin again."



Majika moved through the quiet ruins, her eyes searching until she found what she sought, Sella's remains, now a charred, jagged stump. Her fingers trembled as they traced the blackened bark. Grief weighed heavy in her chest, but she slipped on her *amphibi-x* device, her gaze sharpening as she peered into the soil. There, hidden beneath the surface, she saw it: life. Sella's seeds, germinated by fire, waiting to break free. Hope flickered in her heart.

Maya walked slowly through the sanctuary, her steps deliberate, her mind lingering on stories of her ancestors, stories of other fires, other renewals. She knelt beside Melo and Majika, her hands pressing into the soil, feeling its warmth. She met their eyes, offering a quiet, comforting smile. Majika lifted her face, her voice clear and sure. "We are the seeds," she whispered. "We grow in the fire." Maya nodded, the words resonating deeply. They echoed through the charred landscape, carried by the wind, across the past, the present, and into futures yet to come.

Appendix A:

The Afroxenofeminist Manifesto for Cape

OxOi

Together we stand at the threshold of a new future, where the scars of the old reveal the possibilities for a future reimagined. Afroxenofeminism emerges as a rallying cry for those who challenge the oppression, alienation and ecological collapse inherited by modernity. It is a manifesto for future-thinking, a radical synthesis of xenofeminist principles and ubuntu, which acknowledges that our future is inextricably tied to that of other, human and more-than-human alike.

In the current condition, where colonial and apartheid legacies, patriarchal systems and extractive economies threaten planetary collapse, we declare our commitment to dismantle oppressive infrastructures and to rebuild from the scraps. Afroxenofeminism repurposes alienation as a catalyst to collectively imagine an alternative future for the mother city, our Cape Town. A future that embraces difference, complexity and entanglement. We recognise the interconnectedness of all beings and envision a city where care, collaboration and justice extend across species, technologies and territories.

This is a call to action for a multi-species politics that boldly reclaims the technosphere, rejects purity, and seeks emancipation through radical reinvention. The Afroxenofeminist Party is not a government but an ecosystem of care, imagination and mutation. Ours is a politics that does not fear the alien, for it is the alien that shows us how to be otherwise.

Ox01: **Justice Beyond the Human**

We reject the false dichotomy of culture/nature. Instead choosing to celebrate the messy, hybrid ecologies of our city. More-than-humans are not mere resources but agents with capacity to act in the world and with which we as humans are inextricably entangled. Our politics centres a multi-species coexistence. We reimagine governance as an interconnected network of care.

Ox02: **Alienation as Emancipation**

We embrace alienation as a tool for liberation. In the Cape Flats, alienation is the experience of the uprooted, the people displaced from their homes, plants confined to delineated spaces, and soil stripped of its worth. In our collective future alienation becomes a starting point for new possibilities and solidarities. To be alien is to be other, and to be other is to be free from the constraints of outdated social constructs. Through ubuntu, we recognize the alien not as the foreign, but as a vital extension of our interconnected existence. We reject the tyranny of borders (physical, social, and intellectual) prohibit stifle collaboration and coexistence.

Ox03: **Towards a Multispecies Governance**

We recognise that human beings are not the only ones with the capacity to shape and influence environments. With ubuntu principles of interconnectedness and decentring in mind, we aim to incorporate the agency of

more-than-humans in decision making for the future of the city. Particularly we aim to work with the Fynbos, who know the territory better than any human living today can.

Ox04: **Decolonising TechnoScience**

We accept technology as neither neutral nor monolithic, but as a contested space. We reclaim it as a tool for dismantling oppressive systems and decolonising knowledge. Afroxfeminism reimagines technology as an entangled space where African tradition, meets the potential of open-source innovation. We wield technology to cultivate coexistence.

Ox05: **A Call for Contamination**

We reject purity as a relic of oppressive ideologies. The future we imagine, thrives in the contaminated, the ambigious, the liminal. We embrace the hybrid, the mutant and the impure as sites of resistance and transformation.

Ox06 **Remembering to Remember**

To reimagine the future, we must remember the past. The soil is pregnant with the past. We must recognise the scars of colonial violence, forced removals and ecological devastation. We unearth these memories, not to dwell in pain but to reimagine the future. We believe justice is found in acknowledging the layers of history while planting seeds

for the future.

Ox07:
Radical Hospitality

Ubuntu teaches us that we are inextricably tied to our relationships, with each other, with other species and with the earth. We extend this to the alien, the stranger, the migrant, and the excluded. We aim to cultivate spaces of radical hospitality, where difference is celebrated.

Ox08:
Mutating Futures

We acknowledge that the future is always an unfinished project, an ever-evolving, mutating imaginary. We reject closure and certainty, choosing instead to stay with the trouble and embrace the open-endedness of becoming.

Ox0c

From the cliffs of the peninsula, the dunes of the Cape Flats to the top of Table Mountain, we commit to reimagining this city as a site of radical care, justice, and coexistence. By embracing and repurposing its infrastructures of alienation, breaking down its borders, and celebrating its entanglements, we declare Cape Town not just as a city of the past, but a laboratory for the futures we dare to imagine.

Appendix B:

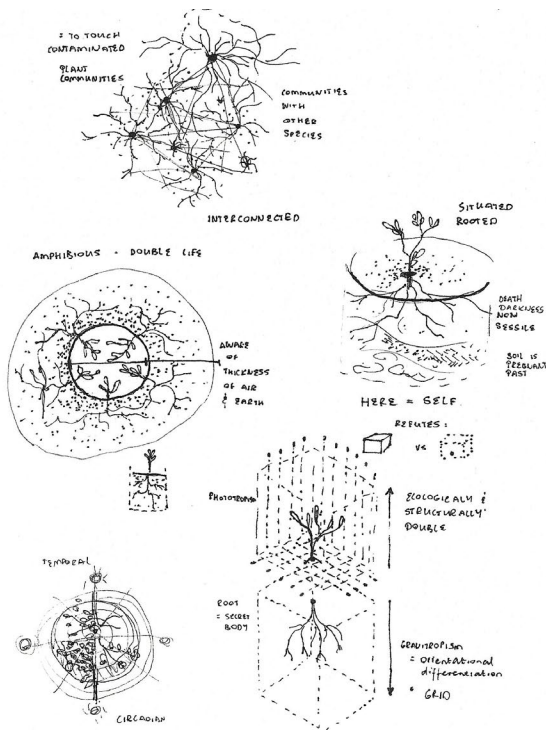
Concerning Fynbos

This book is largely concerned with Fynbos, and from its pages a reader may discover much of their character and a little of their history. Here, you will find notes on the three fundamental characteristic of Fynbos lives: amphibious, contaminated and temporal. These being the three principles which provided the foundations from which the flats were rebuilt



Amphibious

The word amphibious comes from the ancient Greek word: *amphibios*, derived from *amphi* meaning double + *bios* meaning life. The root of the word means to have a double life. Thus, the word can apply be applied to Fynbos plants, and all plants in general, as they are inherently amphibious and hybrid. They simultaneously create spaces in two opposing planes, above- and below the ground.



1
A note on the use of real Authors and texts in this Appendix. This is done to substantiate the theory-fiction of the imagined novel Fynbos Futures. The imagined novel was written around the time that this thesis is, 2024. Thus, it is very plausible that the author of the text would have dealt with similar authors and texts than this thesis, in order to create their speculative fiction.

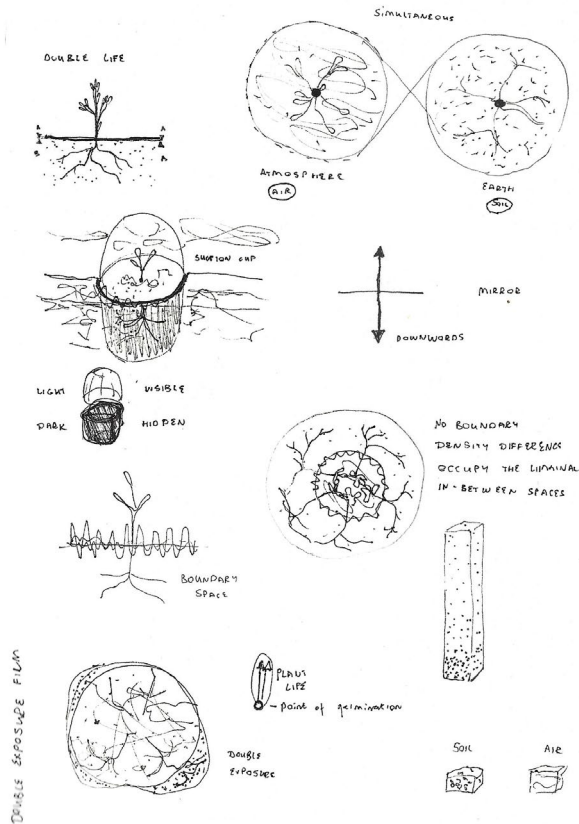
2
Emanuele Coccia, *The Life of Plants: A Metaphysics of Mixture*, trans. Dylan J. Montanari (Cambridge, UK: Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019), 81.

3
Ibid

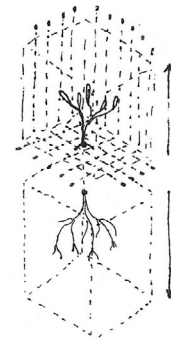
Plants are the clearest proof that beings and the environment cannot be separated or conceived in exclusive terms. In the words of philosopher Emanuele Coccia¹, whom this author holds in high regard, because of his dealings with plants: "they connect environments and spaces".² Through their lack of movement (other than that of their own growth) plants are completely connected to what happens to their environment. They are situated beings. Fynbos, being plants, cannot be separated from the world that accommodates them. They demonstrate that life cannot be split into container and contained, because the container is in the contained and vice versa.³ From this point of view, they challenge the fundamental aspects of the natural sciences: the priority of the environment over beings, of the world over life and of space over the subject. Fynbos have always shaped their environments in an architectural way, instead of just adapting to it. Through their architecture of which they are both part and content, they break down the topological hierarchy that has so far reigned supreme in discourse about the order of things in the world.

Living Double

Fynbos architectures are created in in two opposing directions. However, in a very real way plants create spaces in always in the same direction: away from the point of germination. After a seed germinates its growth happens upwards and downwards simultaneously. The root of the plant, which is underground, is the plant's secret second body, mirroring the growth that happens above ground. Directional gravity sensing in gravitropism allows the plant to discern the difference between up and down. This



introduces an orientational differentiation on the space, creating a meaningful grid on it, and designing the space into a place/habitat. After this initial design, the fynbos continues to creatively interact with a greater part of the space around it as it grows. Michael Marder describes this vegetal activity of growth as a "lived meaning making activity". They grow from all their extremities with new root tips, new shoots and unfurling leaves, in a quest for nutrients and moisture. This is a very simplified illustration of the world-making that plants take part in. The landscape around them is thus constantly changing to keep up with the dynamism of growth. Marder suggests that because of the double life of plants, below and above the ground, plants have a more complex sense of space compared to humans.⁴ This understanding can lead to important questions. What does it mean to be rooted? To be completely connected to the whole environment around you, both earth and atmosphere? And what can we learn about the world through this immersion in the landscape?



4
Michael Marder,
"The Place of
Plants: Spatiality,
Movement, Growth,"
Performance
Philosophy 1, no. 1
(2015): 185. Pg 90.

Soil & Air

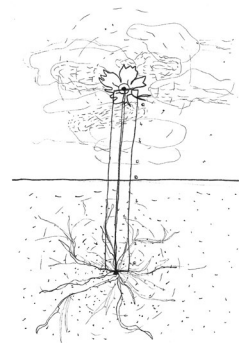
The doubled character of plant architectures is very interesting as it brings into play both the spaces above the ground and below. Fynbos are fully immersed in both realms of their double life. They inhabit the thickness of the air and the soil. They are shaping by creating and taking up space in these volumes.

In the Afro-xeno-feminist understanding of soil, soil becomes multi-dimensional, multi-temporal spatiality: a space with many species, and many timelines, crossing in and out. Fynbos form part of this dimension, because of their roots. Fynbos plants understand the soil, the various relationships found in the soil, that affect for instance soil fertility, and then design with and through these understandings. For a plant to live prosperously it needs the soil to prosper. Soil, as an amalgam of decomposed organic matter, intertwines the present with past ecologies and histories. Marder writes: "mourning for the dead would be refusing to acknowledge the other, subterranean, nocturnal part of plant life, the life that has no grounds, literal or figurative, for its vitality, save for its close engagement with decay, with death whence it is replenished and reborn"⁵. Thus, in fynbos lives, the present and past is always intertwined. Soil carries scars from colonial heritages, they hold the damage of creating enclosures, eradicating the commons, desiccating whole species and indigenous peoples and carrying over enslaved people to become a labour force.

Air is the shared commons of all living beings. Through their visible body fynbos inhabit the atmosphere. Thus, interacting with the precious resource of breath. In her

⁵
Michael Marder,
"A Philosophy of
Stories Plants Tell,"
Narrative Culture,
10, no. 2 (August 5,
2023): 194.

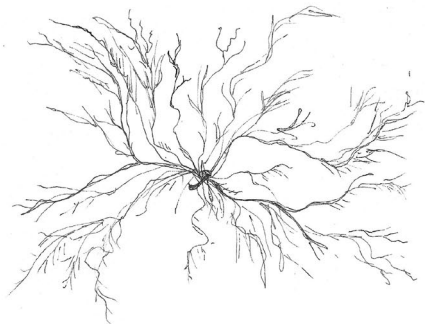
book: *The Many (Political) Lives of Air*, Nerea Calvillo asks: "what if we think of it (air) as an atmospheric infrastructure that sustains our breath? Air as a common infrastructure that sustains life." Emanuele Coccia argues that without plants there can be no air, they sustain our breath. Thus, in *Fynbos Futures* we can replace Calvillo's words with: what if we think of fynbos as a common infrastructure that sustains life? They are life-making machines. Their work for and with us cannot be ignored. And this is the belief of the council.



Exchange

Fynbos life follows from their exchange with their environments and the beings they inhabit with. Plants respond to nutrient availability by modulating their root architecture. For example, in nutrient-rich areas, plants tend to grow more fine roots to maximize absorption. In contrast, nutrient-poor areas may trigger root elongation

to explore new areas of the soil. Plants grow toward light, a phenomenon known as phototropism. This is controlled by plant hormones like auxins, which redistribute to the shaded side of the plant, causing cells to elongate and the plant to bend toward the light. This allows plants to optimize light exposure for photosynthesis. Hydrotropism is the growth response of plants to water. Roots often grow toward areas where there is more moisture in the soil, allowing them to absorb more water for the plant's needs. This response helps plants survive in environments with variable water availability. Fynbos have adapted their roots specifically to the sandy, nutrient-poor soils of the Cape, and have adapted to flourish from the destruction wreaked by the frequent fires.



Borderless

Fynbos inhabit both earth and air, dissolving boundaries between realms and occupying liminal spaces. Their architectures intricately negotiate and integrate border typologies, resulting in hybrid, non-strict spatial

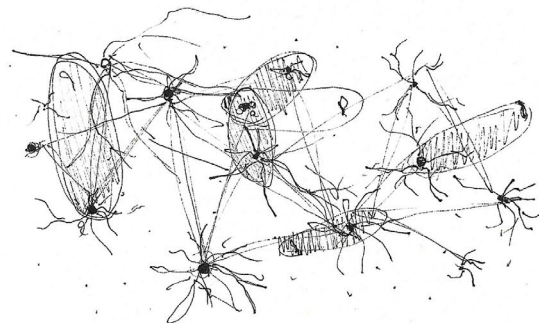
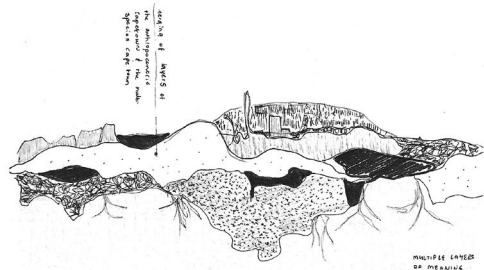
definitions. Through this borderless existence, Fynbos invite a rethinking of space beyond rigid delineations, and challenge traditional conceptions of space that rely on fixed, linear boundaries. Their engagement with both land and sky suggests an interstitial spatiality, where distinctions between one domain and another are not absolute but permeable, fluid, and interconnected. In this way, Fynbos invite a rethinking of space that extends beyond rigid delineations of interior and exterior, natural and artificial, or cultivated and wild. Their growth patterns, that respond to fluctuating environmental conditions, reveal the malleability of spatial boundaries, urging us to consider space not as a static container but as a continuous, relational process of becoming.

This spatial fluidity is especially pertinent in urban contexts, where these plants, often viewed as marginal or decorative, disrupt anthropocentric notions of place and ownership. The Fynbos challenges the colonial legacies of land partitioning and the linear separation of nature and culture, offering a model for how spaces can be reimaged as shared, interconnected, and interdependent.

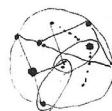


Contaminated

The word contaminate is derived from the Latin contaminat- meaning 'made impure,' from the verb contaminare, which itself originates from contamen, meaning 'contact' or 'pollution.' This is further broken down into con- meaning 'together with,' and tangere, meaning 'to touch.' The root of the word conveys the practice of contaminating—to touch with, to mix, to make one thing enter into another. This concept of contamination can fittingly be applied to Fynbos plants, as they are inherently agents of contamination in through their relational acts of worlding, constantly touching, interacting, and transforming the spaces they occupy. Contamination here, does not refer to a process of degradation or pollution, but one of mixture, where the intermingling of life forms create a state of contamination. Through their very existence, Fynbos plants speak to the need for an integrated, interconnected, and contaminated view of the world, a view that resists the dualities of isolation and separation, and instead embraces the complexities and hybridities of the natural world.

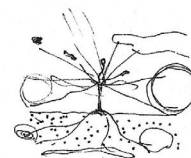


CONNECTIONS



- kin
- - - - - Family
- - - - - Zedong
- - - - - Biotic - Abiotic

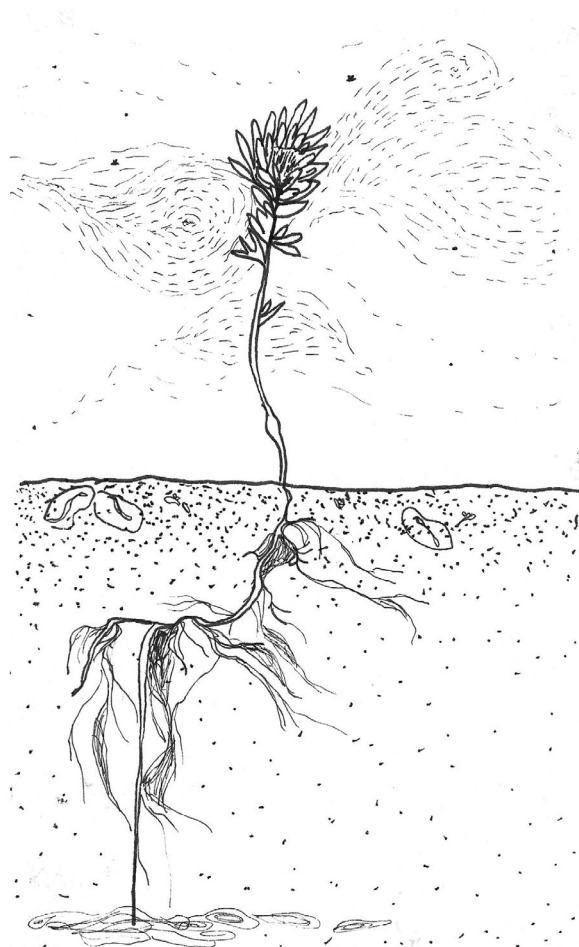
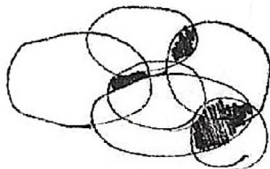
SPACES OF CONTAMINATION
= MIXING



Space-making

Fynbos exemplify the definition of contamination as "together with" or to touch and transform. In ecosystems, they act as agents that permeate and shape the spaces around them, drawing together diverse elements to form a dense, interdependent web of relations. Through their roots and the symbiotic associations, they cultivate, especially with fungi and microorganisms, they create a vast network, touching and altering the soil, air, and the other beings inhabiting these realms. In this sense, plant matter acts as both physical and cultural agent, binding history, place, and the diverse species it hosts.

The Fynbos practice of contamination extends to nutrient cycles, air purification, and water regulation, which enable them to influence and stabilise their ecosystem. Their presence contributes to the creation of microclimates and habitats, supporting diverse life forms. They operate as "life-making" machines, whose processes of transformation sustain the ecosystem's balance and complexity, supporting not only life but diverse modes of existence that complicate simple delineations between species or spaces. Their space-making is not confined to single, discrete acts, but rather emerges through continuous processes of mixing, exchanging, and reshaping.

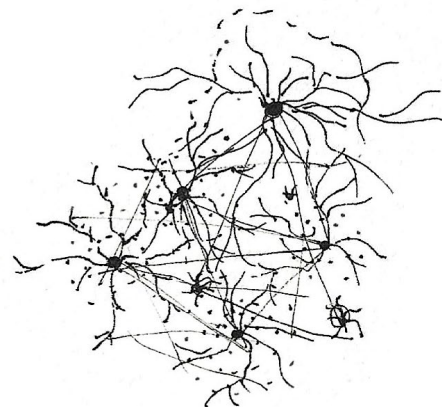


Entangled

Fynbos plants engage in constant interactions with other beings, creating hybrid ecologies that challenge the notion of purity. These interactions include exchanges between Fynbos species, as well as relationships with pollinators, seed dispersers, and microbial life in the soil. Fynbos plants engage in exchanges with other plants, insects, and microbial communities. For instance, many Fynbos species have co-evolved with specific pollinators, creating mutual dependencies. These pollination relationships are a form of contamination, mixing genetic material across species boundaries. In the nutrient-poor soils of the Cape Flats, Fynbos plants have also developed specialized root systems to maximize nutrient intake. They form symbiotic relationships with mycorrhizal fungi, which enhance their ability to absorb essential minerals. This relationality is central to understanding the Fynbos plants. The plants themselves are shaped by their exchanges with other beings, inhabiting spaces that are influenced by both natural processes and human interventions. These hybrid entanglements reflect the intermingling of histories, species, and cultures, a living archive of contamination that challenges the myth of pristine nature. Coccia writes that plants define their identity thanks to the life of other living beings. The contaminated characteristic illustrates this entanglement. Fynbos teach us that life is dynamic web of relations in which they actively participate.

Embracing the Alien

The binary opposition of native versus alien species has been a persistent framework in conservation and ecological discourse, particularly in South Africa's history



of managing the Fynbos biome. However, this distinction becomes problematic when viewed through the lens of contamination and hybrid entanglements. The concept of "nativeness" often assumes a static, pure state of ecological belonging, while labelling certain species as "alien" or "invasive" implies a disruptive force that must be eradicated to restore a perceived natural order.

Fynbos plants themselves challenge this binary, by intermingling without discrimination with whatever beings enter their environment. Many species considered native have co-evolved with "aliens" making it difficult to define a clear boundary of what belongs and what doesn't. The introduction of plants other than Fynbos has created hybrid ecologies that cannot be undone. Rather than viewing these interactions as negative, we can see them

as an ongoing narrative of exchange and transformation, where the distinction between native/alien becomes blurred.

Temporal

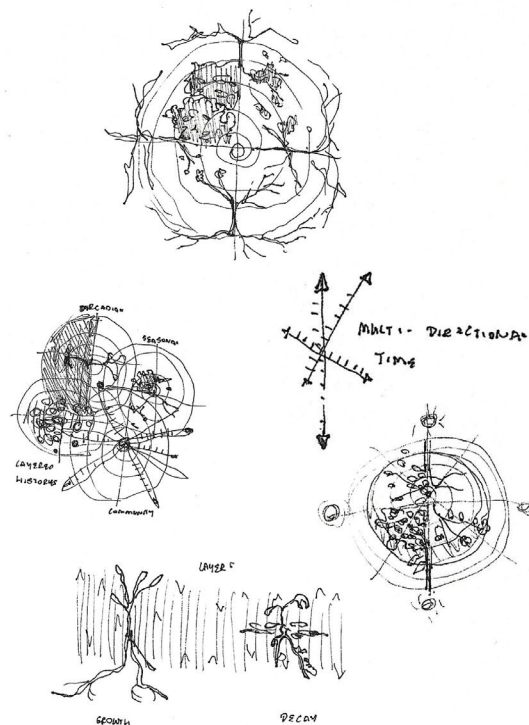
The word temporal is derived from the Latin *temporalis*, meaning 'of time,' from *tempus*, meaning 'time.' The root of the word emphasizes the relationship between existence and time, suggesting that all things are situated within the flow of temporal processes. In the context of plants, this term is particularly relevant as they are deeply embedded in the rhythms of time. Fynbos are not only temporal in their life cycles, growing, flowering, and decaying, they also shape and are shaped by the passage of time. Through their seasonal transformations, they mark the cycles of the earth, the changing of the seasons, and the continuity of life. Thus, the word temporal captures the essence of plants' engagement with time, as they exist within and contribute to the ongoing processes of change, growth, and regeneration.

Michael Marder writes that:

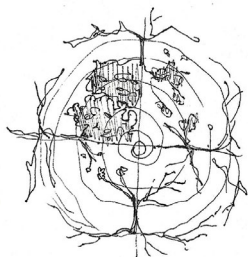
“Plants do not experience time as a succession of present moments; rather, their temporality is ecological, embedded in rhythms of growth, decay, and regeneration. They embrace a time that is neither linear nor strictly individual but is dispersed across the connections they make with soil, air, light, and other beings.”

Marder emphasizes how plants relate to time through growth, which is non-linear and fundamentally

intersubjective: “The temporal existence of plants is structured by processes that defy the human experience of time. Rootedness requires a temporal openness to the cycles of growth, decay, and rebirth, a temporality that absorbs and responds to what surrounds it, continually shaping and being shaped by other beings.” This aligns



and memories of the past into new growth. This form of “lived meaning-making,” as Marder describes, is a form of temporally aware architecture, where each new extension builds upon what came before, integrating changes in light, soil composition, and climate into a cumulative expression of time.

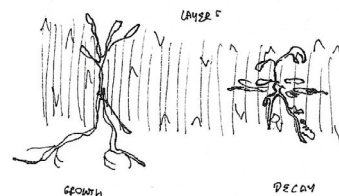


Regeneration and Renewal

Plants' temporality does not adhere to a linear progression but rather follows a cyclical rhythm that supports regeneration and renewal. Their architectures sustain both present life and future ecosystems by contributing to soil health, carbon storage, and atmospheric balance, embodying a temporality that is as much about endurance as it is about transformation. Through this temporal architecture, plants are agents of continuity, knitting together fragmented pasts, adapting in the present, and laying groundwork for future ecologies.

Such plant temporalities blur the distinction between life and decay, regeneration and depletion, embodying a “living archive” of layered histories and ecological

processes. This multi-temporality challenges rigid human timescales by situating plant growth within cycles of interspecies interdependence, as well as within the broader flows of natural resources and atmospheric exchanges. Plant architectures, therefore, create habitats that transcend linear time, where soil, air, and root interrelations become indicators of multi-species, multi-epochal narratives embedded in the landscape. In doing so, plants redefine space and time as inherently co-constructed, immersive, and participatory, opening new possibilities for understanding temporality in architecture beyond anthropocentric constructs.



Fynbos as Collaborators: Understanding Plant Agency in the Cape Flats

These notes hope to have clarified the characteristics of our more-than-human collaborators, the Fynbos plants. In hope that a deeper understanding of the lives of these complex plants, can help deepen the understanding of the reforms and renewals applied to the territory of the Cape Flats, and the new way of life in 2040.

Appendix C:

A brief synopsis of the years leading up to 2040:

2025-2032: Political reform

By the end of 2025, a cascading sequence of crises destabilised global systems leaving the world teetering on the edge of societal collapse. The inevitable implosion of the capitalist market occurred in August, precipitated by the perfect storm of financial deregulation, resource overextraction, and a co-ordinated wave of cyberattacks, attributed to a decentralized network of hacktivists, targeting the major world economies. At the same time, the world saw an escalation in the wars in the Middle East, as it spread to neighbouring regions with climate-induced migration straining international relations. Anti-migrant sentiment intensified, especially in the Global North, culminating in a near-universal policy of closed borders, with the slogan "Keep Out the Alien" becoming a rallying cry for right-wing populist movements, cementing xenophobia as a dominant political force in Western democracies. Amidst the economic and political turmoil, the ecological crisis reached unprecedented levels. Rising global temperatures wreaked havoc, with Africa bearing the brunt of the devastation. The continent saw an increase in unbearable heatwaves, desertification, and intensifying natural disasters. Cape Town found itself grappling with a worsening environmental and social emergency.

Between 2025 and 2030, the continued unchecked urban sprawl, and outdated government strategies for environmental management that were still heavily rooted in the nature/culture dichotomy, had decimated the Cape Flats Fynbos. The remaining fifteen percent of the biome shrank to a mere five percent, despite the expansion of statutorily "conserved" areas. Two more species, the Marsh rose and Bloodroot, joined the Flats Gorse, Pyramid-

Showy- and Whorled Ericas, and Mountain Dahlia on the list of extinctions, mirroring a broader biodiversity collapse across the region. Grassroots organizations that were still operating in the Flats, like the Cape Flats Wetland Forum, fought valiantly, but their efforts were overshadowed by systemic inaction and ever-widening socio-economic disparities.



It was in this context of global uncertainty and its local manifestations that xeno-feminism began to gain planetary traction, as it offered a radical alternative to the failures of traditional governance, seeing an African branch of the movement take root in Cape Town. This branch advocated for XF ideals while embracing African traditions, struggles and innovations, and relying heavily on the teachings of ubuntu.⁵ Drawing on the XF manifesto of "seizing alienation as an impetus to generate new worlds," the movement catalysed the formation of the Afro-Xenofeminist Party (AXP), whose policies centred around reframing alienation through ubuntu, decolonising technoscience, and multi-species care and collaboration. By the 2032 general elections the party had garnered enough influence to form a coalition government with the fractured African National Congress (ANC) that was still clutching at dreams of decolonial liberation. The aim of the new government was not to rule/govern/control but to assist-aid-care and dismantle the axis of gender, race and species oppression in Cape Town.

The ANC-AXP coalition birthed *Project Fynbos Futures*, a radical program to reclaim the Cape flats from the systemic and ecological oppression left as scars on the territory. Central to its vision was the integration of human and more-than-human actors, who through a leveraging of technology could enable multi-species flourishing. The plants of the Cape Flats Fynbos were elected as custodians of the project, because of their proven ability to thrive in precarity and their complex understanding of the territory as amphibious, contaminated and temporal.⁶

Project Fynbos Futures saw the territory given back to the

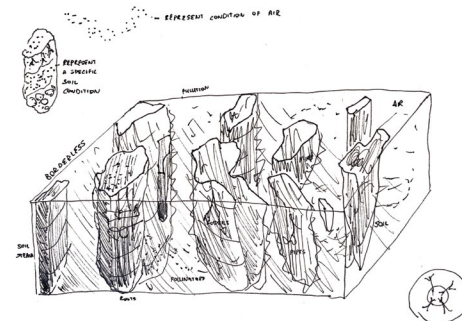
flats Fynbos, to re-organise as they deemed fit, considering XF principles of equality, emancipation and anti-naturalism. A council was formed to architect a city that deals covertly with the concepts of othering, alienation and invisibility. In xeno-feminist tradition, they did not seek to overcome alienation, but to create a space that is in itself alien (or newly imagined) because it was believed that through alienation comes emancipation.⁷ The council contained the last remaining plants of the Strawberry Spiderhead, The Flats Conebush, the Fuzzy Kanniedood, the Pearl Heath and the Flats Kalossie, along with their human collaborators, consisting of urban planners, architects, engineers, biologists and artists. The council, in a multi-species collaboration and enmeshed in technology, re-built the Cape Flats from the scraps⁸. Within the Fynbos Futures project, the technologies for coexistence that were created included the *amphibi-x* technology for seeing double, the *x-f-f* Open-source platform for life and the *ChronoCommons* (c-c).

2025-2032: Political reform:

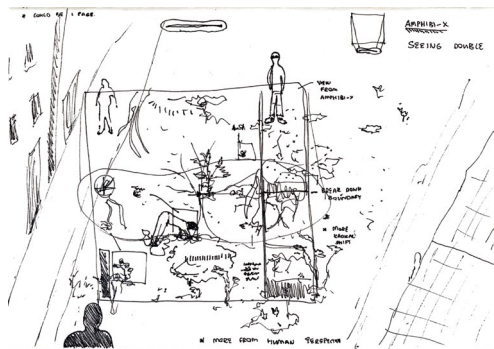
In the years following the start of *Project Fynbos Futures*, the Cape Flats, once a site of ecological collapse and alienation, became the testing ground for a radical reimagining of coexistence. Strategies for the territory were workshoped by the council and community, implemented and continuously re-worked and allowed to mutate into interventions that would allow the site to flourish into a multi-species egalitarian space.

When the Fynbos council came into being in 2032, it was understood that the first step in creating a future for the

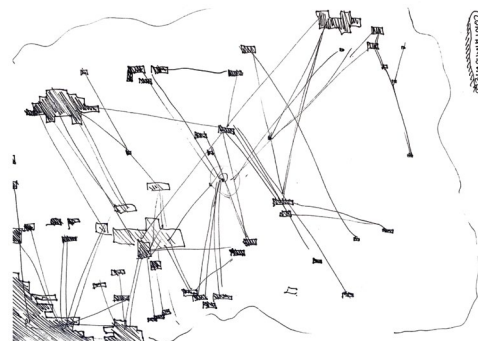
Cape Flats was a deep reconnection of the Cape Flats communities to the territory. The council wanted to create fertile ground, from which to grow new ways of being in the Flats. At the inaugural meeting in that same year, the council presented to the community, that there is no distinction between below and above ground in Fynbos worlds, they live in a completely emersed amphibious, borderless space without, living simultaneously in opposing directions. They are aware of the properties of the soil and air in which they grow. They know what the soil contains and the mixture of matter from which it is made, dealing continuously with the cycles of death and memory embedded in the soil. They understand that the air is not an empty space, but one where many biotic and abiotic elements mix to produce life. They know these elements and understand the complex chemistry needed to sustain life. This understanding of the world, as having depth and thickness and complexity, needed to be taught to their human kin, to foster a new, enriched relationship between humans and the earth they inhabit and to lay a foundation of awareness that moved away from extractive, exploitative and discriminative practice.



In the first phase of the project, much effort was put into the teaching of the Fynbos way of life to the humans of the city. What arose was the creation of a technology, co-created by artists, engineers, scientists, architects and plants, to assist in “seeing double” called *amphibi-x*. The technology, in its first stage of development, could be freely accessed and used by any device with a camera, through the scanning of a bar code which many members of the community tattooed on themselves to share the technology with each other. *amphibi-x* was designed to reveal what the territory would look like if humans too could see the world as the Fynbos does, amphibiously and in multiple planes at once. Eventually as the technology developed, it was fitted into a seedpod like eyewear device, which by 2040 many members of the community chose to wear permanently. The technology led to a shift in perspective of the people of the Cape Flats, creating a deep relationship with the territory, one which they had historically struggled to establish because of the layer of colonial patina⁹ through which they struggled to break.



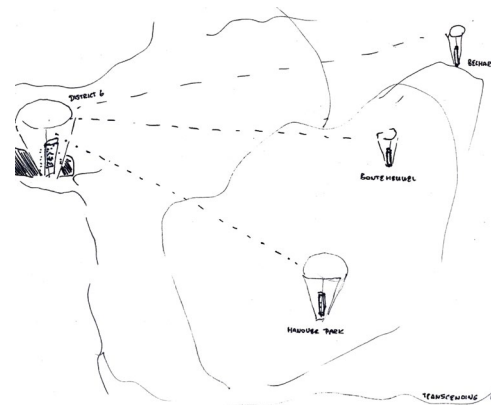
Another key program was created to supplement *amphibi-x*. The aim of which was the acknowledgement and showcasing of the layers of this colonial patina, which had settled on the territory. This was done through the collecting and representing of memories. The Fynbos council recognised that it was important for the future of the flats that its past be recognised, as they acknowledged that the soil was always pregnant with the past. Thus, an open-source platform, named *x-f-f*, was created where memories could be shared, and collectively celebrated-mourned. The platform contained a highly developed digital model of the territory as well as geolocators, allowing users to navigate the territory virtually. Spaces of historical social and ecological violence and oppression could be flagged on the model by members of the community, and so collective stories were shared. The stories that were included contained memories of forced removals, plant extinctions, police brutality, more-than-human murders, racial division, and protests, to mention some.



By 2035, the stories that had been uploaded onto the platform were processed and added as another layer of meaning in the *amphibi-x* technology. The Community was encouraged to not only acknowledge these “memory spaces” for what had happened there but to also look to their future.

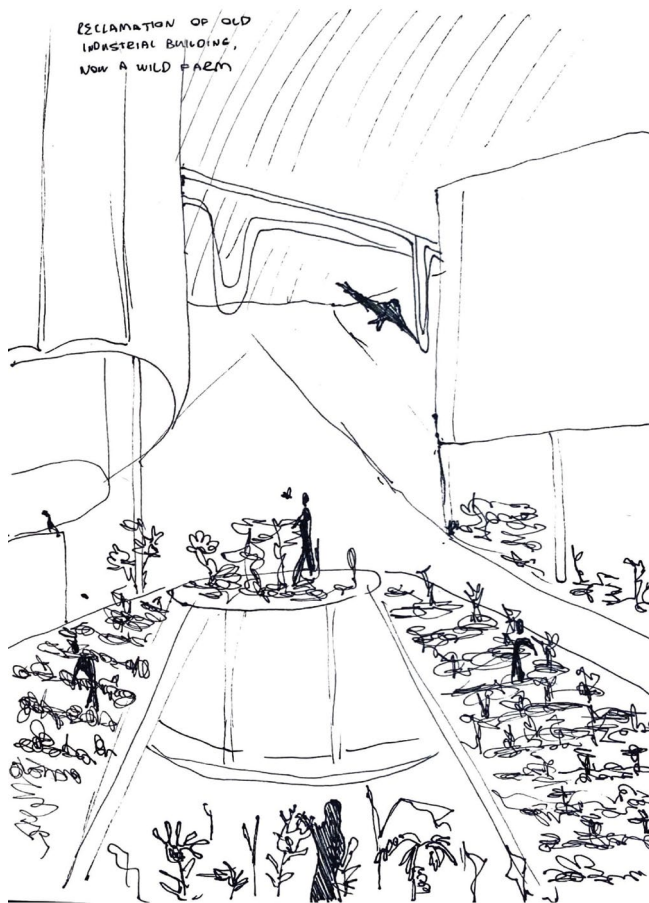
Through the process of remembering, the importance of District six in the narrative of the Cape flats emerged distinctly. Thus, in 2032 the “empty” space of District six, was added as part of the Cape Flats territory. Even though district six lies twelve kilometres away from the edge of the flats, and is separated from the territory by the Mountain, it is still inextricable tied to the territory in deeper ways than the material. The Fynbos council felt it pertinent to create a site of justice, reconciliation and multi-species flourishing within the historic city centre. By adding District Six to the *x-f-f* platform and eventually the *amphibi-x* technology it emerged as a living archive. Furthermore, in 2036, to commemorate the area as a space of justice and reconciliation, a small memorial Cape Flats Fynbos Garden was created in a terrarium filled with soil from the Flats. District six was connected to three important sites in the Cape Flats: Hanover Park, Bonteheuwel and Belhar through the playing of real time holograms of the Fynbos interventions that would be created in these areas.

During the initial phase of the project, where the seeds for a reclaimed Cape Flats territory were planted with the technologies of *amphibi-x* and *x-f-f*, a move back onto the territory by the Flats Fynbos had slowly begun. After 2035 the reclamation of abandoned urban space on the Cape Flats became the main priority on the project agenda.



Before the city was built on the only soil that could host the Flats Fynbos, the plants grew freely without following an organised, planned pattern like the one they were forced into by the pre-project¹⁰ government's biodiversity network scheme. Abandoned plots, buildings, factories, cemeteries and mines were reclaimed as spaces for multi-species engagement. In these spaces members of the Fynbos re-rooted. Fynbos corridors were created, and the plants were allowed to intricately weave themselves into the urban fabric of the city, bringing the physical breakdown of any separation between nature and culture.

Understanding contamination as an essential part of life, the Fynbos council advocated for multi-species entanglement and collaboration. Purity was shunned and a hybrid, messy, mixture in the urban condition was preferred. The fynbos council recognised the rhythms



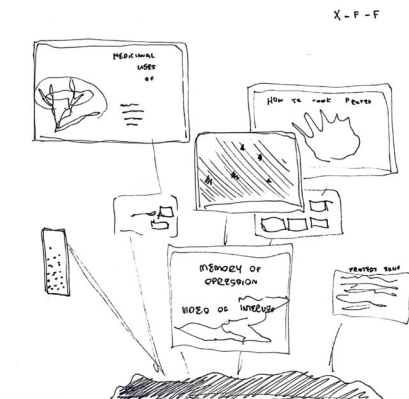
and cycles of the city, long ignored by the organizing and de-complexifying systems of the city. They recognised fire as an integral part of the city, because it was an integral part of the Fynbos biome. Using a mix of plant and human knowledge new fire strategies were implemented within the city, ones that would benefit the Fynbos without causing loss of other livelihoods or lives. The first step was de-mystifying the role of fire in the city and breaking away from its disaster narrative. Fynbos had always been living in the ruins, in fact they flourished in the ruins. Now it was their turn to teach this to their human neighbours. Following the introduction of the new fire strategy, fynbos plants in the city doubled.

In an unintended mutation, the open-source platform x-f-f became involved in the stages of Fynbos reclamation. The platform initially created as a strategy to deal with the history of systemic and ecological violence carved into the territory, became a flourishing site of shared knowledge and multi-species collaboration. Along with memories, new sites where Fynbos had rooted began to be uploaded onto the platform in real time. Every spiderhead that grew through the cracks, every protea popping its head through an abandoned window, and every reed flourishing in the returning wetlands, was flagged. By allowing the Cape Flats community to see the Fynbos growing among them, the pre-conceived ideas of Fynbos as far away in the Mountains and gardens of the elite was overcome, and the barriers between their own lives and those of their Fynbos neighbours were broken down.

This was not all. In a delightful turn of events, many began sharing knowledge of the specific uses and traits of these

plants as they had been passed down to them from their ancestors. The platform turned into a resource to show how fynbos, other more-than humans, and humans could co-exist in a contaminated manner, mixing their fates together. Eventually, the open-source platform contained information on how the fynbos that grows in each reclaimed space could be used in a collaborative way. The Fynbos plants have many medicinal properties for multi-species flourishing, which the Westernisation of the territory had rendered mostly forgotten up until this point.

From 2035 great attention was paid in adding these properties to the platform, taking about five years of collaborative processes between the plants, their pollinators and predators, and human healers and scientists. By 2040 the healing properties of Fynbos had been successfully spread through the platform, which by now had become rich in multi-species collaborations.



Fynbos as medicine was now preferred to the old Western medicine practices. Parts of the plants were not only used to create medicines, but the spaces where the plants grew were offered as alternative healthcare infrastructures, under the belief that being in a space of green and growing could also add to the healthcare journey. The medicinal properties were not the only fynbos traits added to the platform. The potential of Fynbos as food source had also been overlooked by the government until the formation of Project Fynbos Futures. In a city where poverty and food scarcity were everyday problems among many who lived on the Flats, the re-recognition of these properties was essential. Some of the reclaimed spaces were added onto the platform as wild farms. Each of these spaces was created in collaboration with a community who would act as stewards to ensure that the collaborations with the plants were conducted in an anti-exploitative/anti-extractive manner.

The Fynbos Council sought to redefine urbanism itself, looking to temporality as an intrinsic aspect of the city. Here, the multi-temporality of plants challenged the anthropocentric, linear approach to time and space that had defined urban planning for centuries. Instead of viewing the city as a static construct, the Cape Flats emerged as a dynamic, mutating territory where plants, humans and other more-than-human entities co-created a shared territory. The Council advocated for the celebration of decay as much as growth, emphasizing that the breakdown of matter was as vital to life as its proliferation. Cemeteries, abandoned buildings, and forgotten industrial sites were no longer seen as dead spaces but as fertile grounds for regeneration, where layers of history and

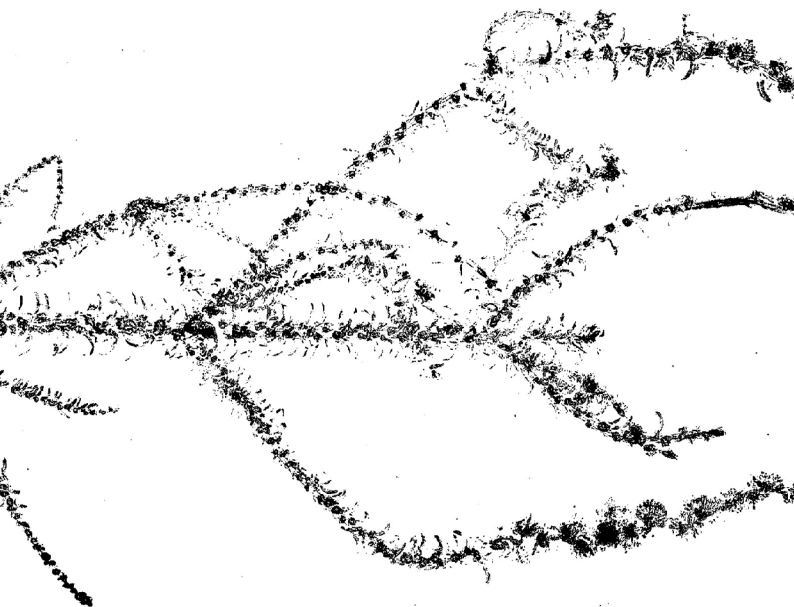
biodiversity intertwined to create new possibilities. As a final technology developed for the territory towards the end of 2038, the *chronocommons*, was introduced. The *commons* allowed users to engage with the layered temporalities of the Cape Flats territory and its multi-species timelines, cycles and seasonalities. Fire and germination cycles became mixed into human timelines. Users could create personal narratives of connection with the land by marking their own paths on the commons, leaving behind trails of life. Beyond individual engagement, the *commons* fostered a collective experience through its shared functionality, allowing community members to contribute their paths to an evolving temporal map. This map showcased the Flats as a living tapestry of interconnected histories, and multiple timelines, that were no longer linear, but multi-directional.



The implementation of these infrastructures and strategies for renewal led to where we are today, at the start of the year 2040. The Cape Flats was in no way a utopia, but a messy, iterative becoming, a space where ruins and hopes intertwined like the roots of the fynbos growing in it.

Epilogue:

The Cape Flats had become a territory of kinship where plants were architects and humans their collaborators. The past was not buried but composted, and the future was no longer a distant horizon but an intricate field, waiting to be tended. The Fynbos Futures project did not save the Cape Flats, it reminded it how to live. And in doing so, it taught the rest of us how to begin again. Ultimately, the way of life in the Cape Flats extended far beyond the physical boundaries of the Flats, influencing global conversations about urban design, ecological restoration, and social justice. It proved that a post-natural future was not only possible but necessary, and that the wisdom of plants, rooted in their deep, spatial and temporal awareness and capacity for entanglement, offered a rich guide for navigating it.



Cara Geldenhuys