

# RE[CREATE]tion

Revealing the agency of recreational spaces in the township of Mamelodi East through architecture as a "dispositif" for the everyday

**Denambaye Martine Demba** 

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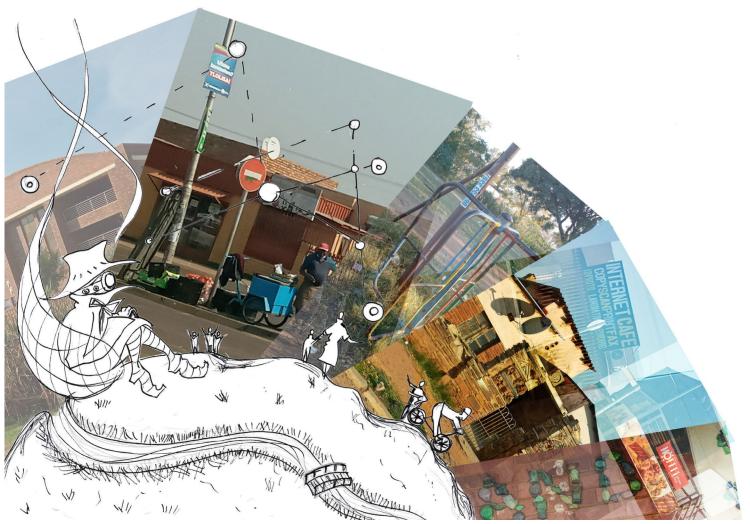






Figure a: Thandanani basketball court (Author 2021)



RE[CREATE]tion: revealing the agency of recreational spaces in the township of Mamelodi

East through architecture as a "dispositif" for the everyday

by

Denambaye Martine Demba

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Editor: Debby Dewes



#### **DECLARATION**

In accordance with Regulation 4(c) of the General Regulations (G.57) for dissertations and theses, I declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Master of Architecture (Professional) at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

I further state that no part of my dissertation has already been, or is currently being, submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification.

I further declare that this dissertation is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and fully acknowledged in the text and list of references.

15/11/2021



### **DEDICATION**

To God, my Lord and Saviour who never fails me and whose joy is my strength.

To my family whom I love dearly, thank you for the never-ending support, love, joyful moments, encouragement and understanding. You all never cease to amaze and inspire me.



#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

To my old and the new friends I made along the way, thank you for your overflowing cheerfulness, humour and positive attitudes. To the fellows in studio, these last days in there will really be missed but I wish you all the best for the years to come.

Thank you to my supervisor Paul Devenish for the support and patience, for sharing your knowledge and for challenging me to dig a little deeper.

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Finally, thank you to Thandanani Drop Inn Centre and SOS Children's Village for your generous hospitality, time and accommodation. You have truly inspired this dissertation.



#### **ABSTRACT**

In South African townships, the realities of the scarcity of public spaces or poorly maintained and derelict recreational sites, are a continuous phenomenon. Additionally, the scars left from the apartheid spatial planning resulted in a perpetuated fragmentation in the urban fabric engendering further issues of public facilities' accessibility. This research-led dissertation, aims to rethink the function of public spaces in townships by acknowledging their multi-layered facets and their transcendence beyond mere services. Through a mixed-method of enquiry and a pragmatic approach, the study takes on a contextual discovery of the narratives and networks emerging from the sites; linking to the importance of socio-cultural sustainability in design. The results are then used to generate a 'dispositif'-architecture as a set of architectural explorations, using the polyvalence of the notions of the in-between and twin-phenomena to articulate recreational spaces at different scales (urban to human) in a holistic manner. The scope of the research is to explore ways to reveal the agency of recreational spaces in townships and their contribution towards urban cohesion. The study turns towards the regeneration of neglected existing cultural and recreational sites to transform them into places with meaning for people rather than afterthoughts of development schemes, so that they not only fit within their context but also showcase the diversity and values of the community using them.

**Key words**: Mamelodi East, Township, Recreation, Public Space, Urban Cohesion, Socio-cultural Sustainability, "Dispositif", Mixed-method approach, Networks.



#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**PROGRAMME:** Outreach Precinct (hybrid recreational precinct)

SITE: Tsomo street, Mamelodi-YMCA and Rethabile Sports Grounds, Mamelodi East, Region

6, Pretoria, South Africa

**LATITUDE:** : 25,7095 S

**LONGITUDE:** 28,3716 E

RESEARCH FIELDS: Smart Cities and Neighbourhoods; Inhabitation of Place; Regenerative

and Resilient cities

**CLIENT:** City of Tshwane (Department of Sports and Recreation)

THEORETICAL PREMISE: Networks, the "dispositif" and the twin-phenomena

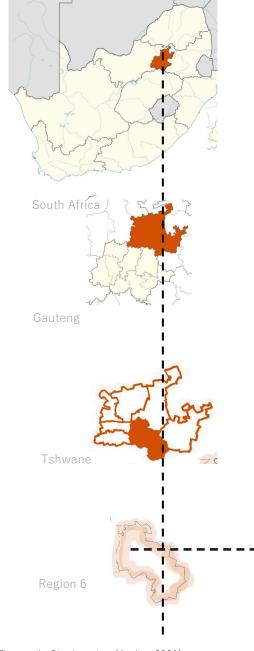
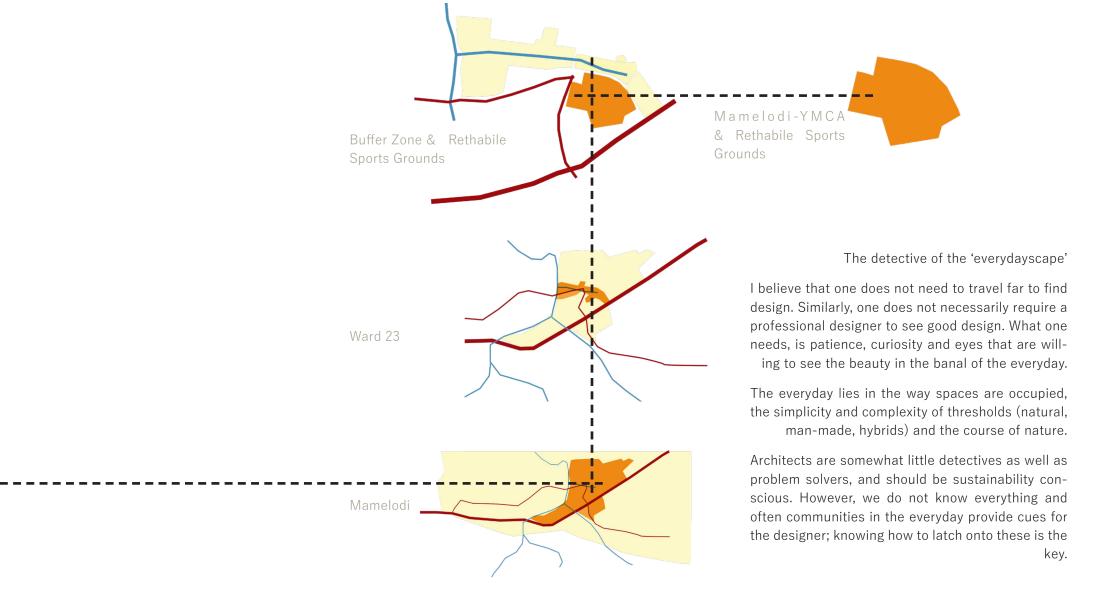


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#### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Activity and land use:** the way activities are laid out and exercised through space. This may include the aspect of appropriation and the modification of land use.

**Agency:** actions, behaviours or interventions by people or things producing particular effects.

**Affordance:** capacity or characteristics of an object or element that indicate its use to a user.

**Anchorage:** spaces "enhanced through their location and the connection they establish". This is an important notion for the dissertation's investigation as it also presents the idea of networks in a tangible manner; the relationships with contexts and other interventions and how to "anchor" networks in space to create places.

Continuity, mobility, accessibility and connectivity: set of principals addressing the ease of access to an intervention, accessibility to resources or services, the links the intervention establishes with the greater landscape and circulation (meandering, exploration).

**Comfort, safety and security:** distinct terms but also closely knit; they mainly involve the feeling of reassurance and protection within spaces.

**Dispositif**: a device capable of facilitating an action or a process and connecting elements.

**Diversity:** coexistence at different levels. A variety of elements coexisting in a space: from demographics to

processes (ecological processes such as flora, fauna or water), human interactions, biophilia or the articulation of space to "afford" people to interpret their environment and get a sense of belonging.

**Epistemic diversity**: the notion of acknowledging the value of various sources of knowledge beyond "traditional academic" knowledge.

**Flâneur:** a city dweller who experiences and interprets the everyday while walking, lingering and appropriating the urban environment.

**Floodplain:** mostly flat terrain in close proximity of a water course.

**Identity:** "Representation of space linked to the relation between users or users and the space".

**In-between:** notion encompassing thresholds and the language emerging at the meeting point of two spaces

**Informal settlements:** sporadic and unplanned settlements often created on the peripheries or in-between spaces of the city, usually unauthorized housing.

**Infrastructure:** the basic physical and systemic services and structures important for a living environment (roads, waste or water management etc).

**Leisure:** using free time for one's enjoyment.

Multifunctionality: multiplicity of functions within a

space; one can think of it as mixed use.

**NPO:** Non-Profit Organisation

**Park:** open public space, often a green landscape intended for social and recreational purposes.

**Place-making/placemaking:** the multi-layered process of creating a good environment for people to enjoy in their daily lives.

**Play:** activity engaged in for enjoyment and recreation, can also be relevant to work

**Public spaces:** areas accessible to the public including streets, recreational facilities and open spaces (in this dissertation the term may be used interchangeably with recreational spaces).

**Open public spaces:** spaces with ecological and socio-economic functions, predominantly free of built forms and encompassing parks, streets, plazas and squares.

**Recreation:** a voluntary act, encompassing but not limited to leisure and play, usually executed during one's free time. Its Latin roots: "to refresh" or to "restore" (McLean & Hurd 2015: 40).

**RDP Housing:** Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing scheme.

**Social dynamics:** the way interventions foster networking through providing platforms or occasions for people to gather or collaborate.



**Spatial Agency:** a design position challenging space production, knowledge and skill hierarchy by advocating bottom-up approaches and the collaboration between "experts" and other people.

**Sustainability:** the systemic and equitable management of resources (ecological, economic and socio-cultural) to avoid their complete depletion in the future.

**Townships:** Segregated suburbs created during apartheid, formerly for black occupation.

**Twin-Phenomena:** concept delving into the idea that opposite elements can mutually exist in the same space or form part of the same structure while forming a symbiotic relationship. Often linked to the notion of relativity.

**Urban cohesion:** urban identity and the physical form of the city along its planning processes, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors as it aims to challenge existing inequalities (Pinto & Remesar 2012)

**Urban sprawl:** the rapid, uncontrolled growth and spread of built elements (often housing) over large areas with no urban planning strategy.



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