

CHOREOGRAPHING FOR THE NOMAD

a dance typology for the transient spaces of taxi ranks

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Figure 1

Location:

Erf 75, c/o Boom Street and Dr Savage Road, Pretoria CBD,
Pretoria, Gauteng
25°73'92.25S, 28°19'43.96E

Function:

Taxi Junction, Traders' Market & Transitional Haven

Client:

Tshwane City Council and the SA Taxi Association, operating in partnership with PEN (Participate, Empower, Navigate) (NPO), Sediba Medical Clinic, the University of Pretoria, Unisa and the Tshwane University of Technology

Research Field:
Inhabitation of Place

Year Co-ordinator:
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Study Leader:
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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.

Chanél R. du Toit



SIGNATURE

15 November 2021
DATE

ABSTRACT

Transient spaces, understood as in-between spaces, are often characterised as ‘placeless’ by virtue of not being destinations, and as such meaning is negated by both everyday users as well as designers.

This dissertation addresses the prevalence of taxi ranks as transient spaces within the South African context, in marginalised regions, whether in the city or urban peripheries, that are still bereaved of the necessary infrastructure, resources and architectural permanence, because of segregated and unjust spatial planning legacies of the past. An investigation is made into the understanding of these systemic issues that South Africa is still facing today, the spatial structure of this country, that led to the growth and sporadic development of the ubiquitous minibus taxi industry, that has now become an iconic part of the South African urban landscape. The Boom Street taxi rank is one such case where the trope of ‘placeless’ transient spaces is manifested in urban form. It is argued that taxi-rank facilities in conjunction with contextually appropriate architecture, can be used

as a catalyst to not only improve the quality of life for industry stakeholders, but also create a “people’s place” for the community members in the greater surrounding Boom Street area.

Narrative is used as a communication tool to explore the empathetic nuances of the Boom Street site, from which the multi-programmatic function of a Transitional Haven, that comprises a medical clinic, counselling centre and transitional supportive housing units, as well as the enhancement of the current taxi rank infrastructure and inclusion of an informal vendor marketplace, was extrapolated. This programmatic recommendation holds the potential of establishing a sense of place in a setting that is characterised by ‘placelessness’.

To mitigate the underlying misconception that denies the significance of this transient node, an analogy is drawn between the choreographing of dances and the construction of building form, in that this encapsulates both the permanence of form, yet the dynamic quality associated

with human movement, and as such could provide pace, orientation and identity, elements that are necessary in instilling a sense of place within its users.

The architecture explores the use of hard-wearing, low maintenance materials and a modest construction typology, that provides a sense of permanence and a human-scale quality to the intervention, and subsequently the site, with the aim of creating an inclusive and human-centred building.

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PREFACE

“There is a myth, sometimes widespread, that a person need only do inner work... that a man is entirely responsible for his own problems; and that to cure himself, he need only change himself... The fact is, a person is so formed by his surroundings, that his state of harmony depends entirely on his harmony with his surroundings.”

- *Christopher Alexander*

PROJECT PLACEMENT

The majority of South African citizens live their lives within conditions of informality, as a direct result of the divisive spatial legacies of scarcity that South Africa's years of colonialism and apartheid have embedded across the country that worked towards articulating, exacerbating and reinforcing distinct socially constructed categories of race and class (Tomer 2014:19). These patterns of segregated spatial organisation led to the growth of the private minibus taxi industry, catering to the demands of the large class of poor commuters, having to travel long distances from the peripheries of South Africa's major cities, stepping into a role that the government of the time held little concern for. These minibus taxi trips, usually depart from and arrive on a dark, undeveloped, unmaintained, dusty veld, surrounded by a conglomeration of other vehicles and persons, serving a purely pragmatic purpose, with little to no regard for the industry stakeholders (Deckler, Graupner & Rasmuss 2006:71, 73).