

Chapter

The primary objective of this dissertation is to build theoretical argument around architectural experience and place-making in the urban realm. How we experience architectural space in a society dominated by media, is to be questioned. The research topic, "architecture as urban stage", investigates the production of media within the space of the city. This methodology is divided into sub questions which are addressed on urban- and architectural levels.

On urban scale the discourse explores the notions of embedded media technologies in the built environment. A sense of arrival is celebrated at the historic eastern gateway into the heart of the inner city, cultural district and urban campus. In relation to this, the question is raised whether media can contribute towards a more vibrant, productive and meaningful urban space - compared to existing spaces in the city?

Can technology extend the reach of architecture, establishing a more flexible urban realm during; e.g. different times of day; adjusting to different activities and social events? How can public space in the city create a sense of awareness, social participation and consciousness towards the production of media? Will this generate a spirit of city and campus activities, enabling the individual to express his / her unique identity and presence in the city?

Architecture as urban stage explores the combination of architectural experience with the integration of urban campus into the urban fabric. This will ensure a diverse event of activity and socio-cultural expression within the space of the city: an urban classroom for all to share.

1

Glossary

Architecture

Urban

Stage

Exploration

Media

Multi-Sensory

Experience

Space

art, liberal, orchestrator, director,

classroom, environment, life, nature,

act, performance, event, concert,

investigates, process, look into,

communication, expression, educate,

body, being, dwell, feel, hear, see,

time, being, participation, awareness,

gateway, node, threshold, precinct,

facilitator, translator, communicator, informative

scenery, character, features, personality, quality, social, cultural

journey, show, routine, presentation, scene, animation, activity

inquiry, searching, questioning, inspect, consider, examine, explore, study

information, memory, news, radio, television, message, billboard, identity

smell, taste, spirit, vibrance, energy, ambience, emotion, memory

exist, living, culture, psychological, meaning, imagination, education,

place, square, room, opening, pause, interval, movement, area, zone

ABSTRACT

ACTOR

ACTION

REACTION

INTERACT

CONTACT

Introduction

urban classroom

Pretoria is the administrative capital of South Africa. It is home to the largest educational institutions, main research organizations, National Reserve Bank, seat of Government, and leading businesses in the country. Like most African cities, Pretoria functions on a formal- and informal level. In addition crime, neglect and social decay have caused eastward sprawl. The migration of residential and commercial activities left the city with an inefficient, congested infrastructure and fragmented economic activities.

Western thought might argue that the city has become sterile, mono-functional and unprofitable, but in African sense the city became an ambient, economic platform for events on sidewalks and public transport nodes. Currently Pretoria's socio-cultural spatial experiences are overshadowed by this informal sector, with an identity formed by temporal events.

The chosen study area is situated along the edge of the inner City of Pretoria which forms the historic eastern gateway into the heart of the city. This specific area falls under the Inner City Development and Regeneration Strategy, and the Nelson Mandela Corridor Framework of 2005.

The primary vision for Pretoria is to become the "leading international African capital city..." Pretoria is aimed to be the "Functional and Symbolic Heart of the Capital City of South Africa and Africa, and The Centre of Culture in Africa, where all aspects of being (South) African can be celebrated." (City of Tshwane 2005: 4) Overriding factors for the inner city are the lack of identity, vibrancy, excitement and energy. (City of Tshwane 2005: 4-9)

Despite this so-called lack of identity, Pretoria encompasses a dominant educational identity in South Africa. However, the city's educational institutions exist as fortified islands, completely shutting themselves off from the rest of the urban activities. This dissertation aims to encourage education as a means to contribute towards the regeneration of the inner city.



- Church Square and Judicial District, Historic origin of city
- Cultural district
- Proposes Journalism precinct and Historic Eastern Gateway
- Main carriageway into city
- Primary east-west connections

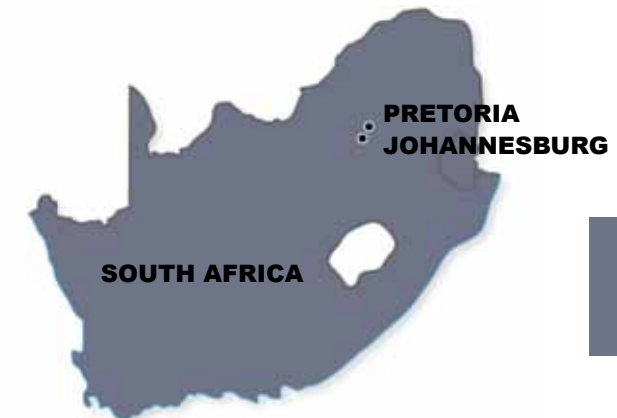


FIG 1.1_Pretoria Nolli Map

FIG 1.2_Pretoria Geographical Location Map



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The chosen research topic proposes an urban campus within the space of the city to become a place for valid South African socio-cultural urban expression, contributing towards the regeneration of the inner city.

The study of human socio-cultural phenomena is generally referred to as “humanities” which introduce journalism and public relations.

- Journalism is the art of investigating and presenting authentic information regarding people, concerns, styles and events.
- Public relations is the communicative art and science of administrating and sustaining a positive image between organizations and their key public interests. (Events management, business communication)

The introduction of the disciplines of journalism and public relations in the faculty of humanities in the inner city hosts several opportunities for the faculty. The urban campus is situated amongst the most vibrant socio-cultural, political and economic energies in the city.

The role of journalism in shaping a developing country holds the key to deliverables within its context. In this way the city can become a classroom for the students which:

- Investigates human experiences and social interaction, a social art by means of communication.

- gives identity, meaning and status in the community, builds community spirit in developing nations.
- triggers human psychology or “wow” factor of emotion, intellect and amusement.
- sets agenda for community aspirations, needs and education.
- makes full use of media technology to deliver news, stories, events etc.
- human studies is realized by absorbing the self-generating life, energy, vibrancy, ambience, knowledge of the human and city.

By means of developing the current, fragmented and fortified campus block into the urban fabric as an urban classroom, will have the power to become:

- Be able to continuously adapt towards a growing contemporary urban culture..
- By means of technology this classroom will be able to absorb all the cultural, political and social energies of the city.
- Will express all these energies through media technologies to become a live experience not only in the city, but on global scale.

The synergy between humanities and theoretical argument to follow is that it's not merely a social art but also a study of the human's “being-in the world” by means of his experiential factors. This close resemblance between the two ideologies: urban stage and classroom, ensures an environment which sees itself not merely by what it is, but by the significance of what it does.

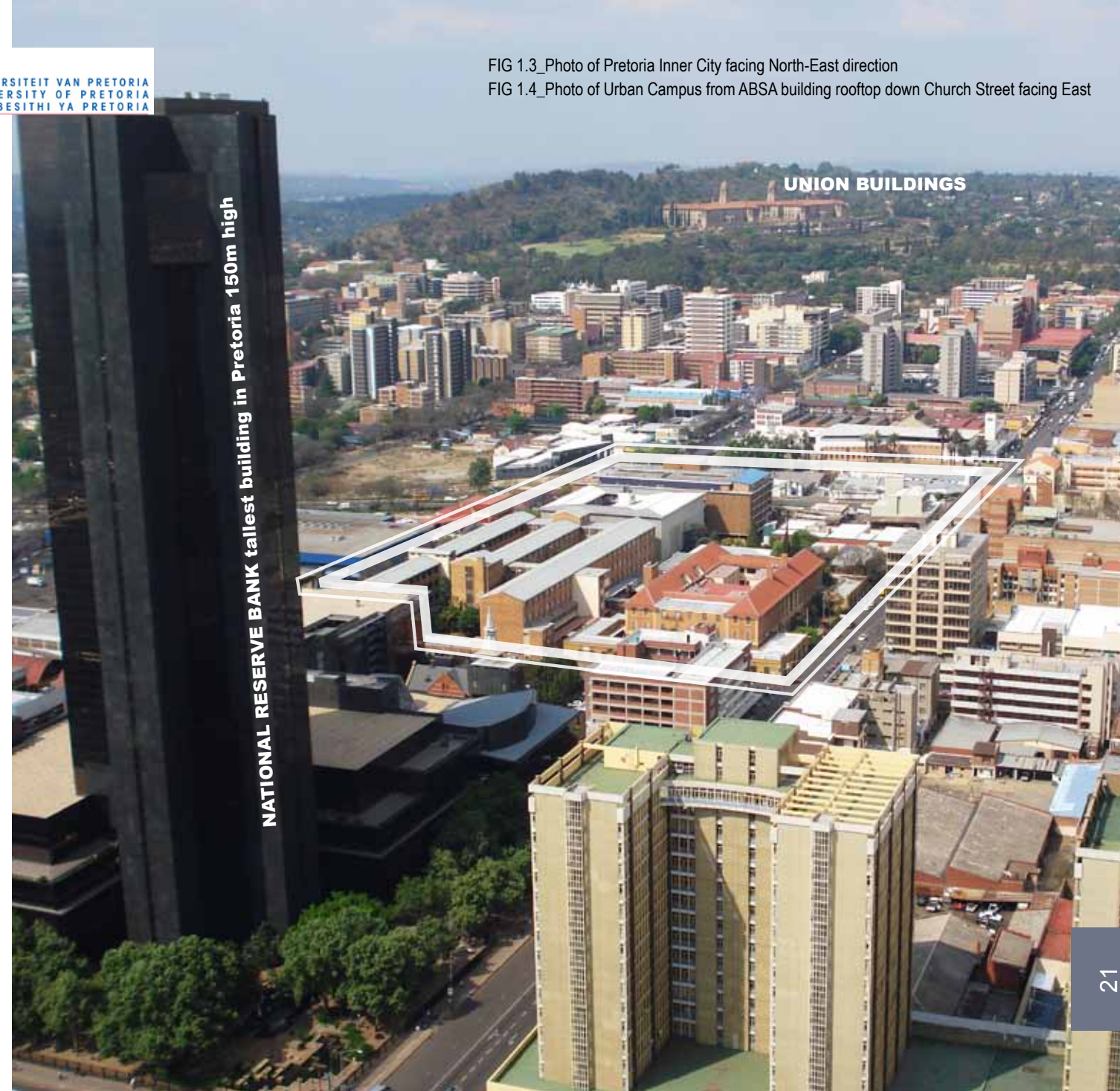


FIG 1.3_Photo of Pretoria Inner City facing North-East direction

FIG 1.4_Photo of Urban Campus from ABSA building rooftop down Church Street facing East

Site and urban approach

Client

The discourse investigates the development of the Tshwane University of Technology's (TUT) Science Campus with the Human Sciences (Humanities). The TUT inner-city campus is situated amongst the most vibrant socio-cultural energies in Pretoria. On metropolitan scale the integration of city block into urban fabric will be investigated and analyzed. Currently the city block is divided into two halves: consisting of the Tshwane North College towards the west, and one of three satellite campuses of TUT to the east.

The chosen architectural program proposes the integration of the campus within public realms to ensure a variety of uses through a longer daily period, to address current needs in the city, and become a people's place. This site has to encourage interaction between students, the public, professionals and variety of users. The equivalents between the existing activity and new proposed intervention have been explored to ensure the longevity of the project in the urban fabric.

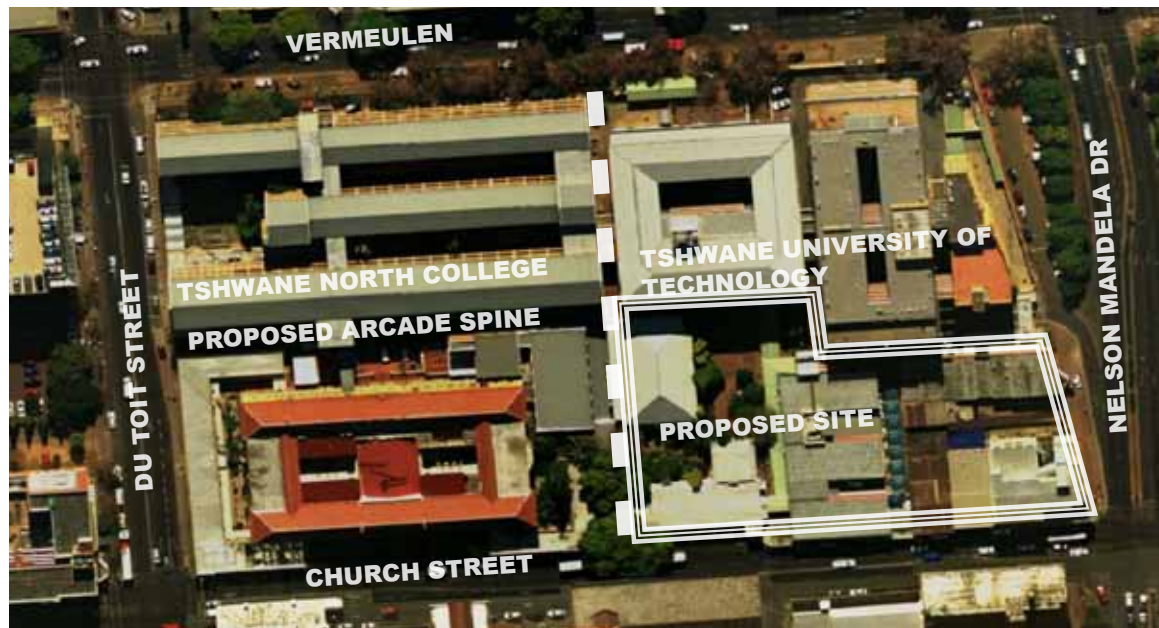


FIG 1.5_Aerial Photo of Campus Block

TUT has three campuses located in and around Pretoria. The inner city campus, formally known as Arcadia Campus, is found to be the most optimal area for human studies whereas the other two TUT campuses, main campus north-west of the city and Shoshanguve in a township 50km towards the north, contributes limited resources. The location of the science campus will be able to foster maximum socio-cultural exchange for the students and consequently become their classroom of study.

The University has predominantly been funded by government organizations. By means of incorporating a private enterprise into the scheme hosts a diverse spectrum of opportunities to become a world class educational intervention. Smart business or ideal partnerships (consortium) promote and coordinate a sustainable initiative. This is directed towards the scenario where university and professional media companies can pool in on their resources, together with community participation. In addition, the "future of journalism" is to deliver successful print and digital media in a more diverse variety of form consisting of: newspapers, magazines, telecommunication, mobile messages, advertising, television and radio broadcasting.

Pretoria News is the city's only daily and online newspaper, owned by Independent Newspapers Inc. The presence of the SABC and Naspers (Beeld and the weekly Record) concludes this media identity in Pretoria. Operations in Johannesburg and Cape Town by the South African Media giant, Naspers have overshadowed further development in Pretoria. The integration of Naspers with the proposed faculty of humanities hold key opportunities for them. Naspers will benefit from the proposal being a future investment whilst also ensuring a prosperous breeding ground for future professionals in South Africa.

D

esign intent



T

heoretical abstract

The primary objective for the intervention is to create an urban classroom which extends itself beyond the walls of the campus block. In order to succeed as a vibrant, interactive destination place. Additionally it will provide a much needed gateway towards the heart of the inner city and cultural district of Pretoria, whilst also celebrating the richness of the city. The architectural program encourages awareness, interaction and participation in order to succeed as a 24 hour information precinct in the city; facilitating a dialogue between the relevant campuses, high pedestrian energies and key public spaces in the nearby urban fabric. Technology is to be applied as informative tool, such as digital communications.

The urban stage set for cultural media production will become an ever-changing urban even in constant dialogue with the surrounding metropolis. The user will be made aware of various activities in the city, events, news, and collectively experience the liveliness of the cultural city as a whole. The proposed stage of events between journalism, public relations, users, urban and architecture; will become the classroom where student, scholar, tourist, citizen, by-passer and professional can share his unique identity; to be part of the everyday life of the city: “ a place where I can come to, where I am proud of my people and my being in the city; for now, I am part of this city and its culture.”

The ocular bias of our current society manifests itself in urban spaces of visual seduction turning architecture into a visual journey and a digital art form of flattened images. Socio-cultural and multi-sensory spatial experiences have since been overshadowed by globalization, often resulting in detachment and alienation of the body in its environment. How does architecture set the stage for our lived experience of the city? How does an architectural technology guide and inform the user by means of various activities and spatial experiences? Can proposed stage create a creative environment which stimulates a full sensory experience, allowing for individuals to participate, express and share their unique cultural identity? Will this stage become the platform for an urban classroom which celebrates the city's cultural liveliness?

The success of the classroom is dependent upon its sustainability as an ever-changing cultural event within the space of the city, being accessible, experienced, and shared by all.



Analogy



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As I stroll down my daily path of life, towards my place of refuge, I am confronted with images of people and cars in constant flux. Despite these roaring noises and images of the city, I hear quiet whispers from brothers emerging from a near distance. Voices which call upon the city; "hurry we're waiting." What is this, what does it want from me? The sudden beat of tribal drums, starts echoing its rhythms into the vast cityscape, with shards of light rushing through...

I start engaging towards the light; grabbed by its rhythmic poetry beating through me, I can see people emerging from the sidewalk, with busses and taxis waiting upon them. What is this spirit lurking around the corner? What does it want? As I turn towards: there's a sudden vibrancy which rases through me, as stroked by thunder, it raises me up to a sudden state of celebration, it grabs me; welcomes me in a warm, open embrace. How can this be that a previously enclosed place; now being an enriched ambience of unexpected experience within the city? What do I, myself bring to this place? Is it my presence, sense of being or just by accident or chance?

Throughout this ever-changing atmosphere; I see people from all over Africa gathering around images and sounds of far away distances and long forgotten memories. I feel intrigued by the building, catching glimpses of people laughing, enjoying food and drinks, shadows of people working, engaging and unconsciously participating in the event. What is this inside?

Wandering through its spaces, no longer feeling like a mere spectator, I become one with the building's dialogue, part of my city; it starts sharing its values and secrets with me, its calmness touches my soul, and heart beating within me. I start walking on this rhythmic melody in my head, the echoing voices of the building. I'm starting to breathe the air of my culture. I start to recognize faces of people I've seen before, grasping upon voices I hear every day, I feel their presence; why are they here, what brings them to this place? Their participation makes me feel like being at home, in my living room, in my car...my being in the city...

As I move on, I come to a sudden halt, turning around to reflect back upon this unique experience I have participated in. I suddenly remember who I am, where I come from. This place inspired me, brought my being in the city to me, made me proud of myself and my people, a place like home, a place I will return to; for I am truly a citizen of this city...



the production begins...

FIG 1.6_Photo of Author