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The re-use of the UP Mamelodi campus and the stitching together of landscapes as a vehicle for empowerment
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The re-use of the UP Mamelodi campus and the stitching together of landscapes as a vehicle for empowerment

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Mamelodi is a multi-cultural township located 20kms east of the Tshwane city centre. It is a vibrant and complex place, alive with opportunity, diversity, talent and creativity. It is also however, afflicted by many problems, especially those of a social and economic nature, like unemployment, poverty, poor living conditions, and so on. Mamelodi therefore, is a place where the implementation of appropriate design could make a real difference in the lives of its inhabitants.

The University of Pretoria Mamelodi campus, due to its prime location and inherent qualities, has the opportunity to contribute significantly to the upliftment and transformation of the people around it, and to become a place of value and pride. It is however, missing this opportunity for a number of reasons: the isolation and segregation of the campus, its anonymity and lack of local identity, as well as the inaccessibility of the campus to local residents. One possible solution would be the full integration of the campus into the surrounding community, thereby enabling the empowerment of people on both a physical and psychological level.

Both of these types of empowerment can be achieved through modifications to the University boundaries and the reworking of the open buffer zone into an area of common ground – a transition zone where the University and the community can come together and be of value to one another. There are two levels of value – quantitative, which can be achieved through the implementation of a cultivated landscape, and qualitative, which is made possible through the creation of a maieutic landscape.

In order to achieve a continuous, integrated urban fabric, this study primarily investigates the creation of a large-scale framework design that considers the site in its entirety. The organising element in this regard was the existing storm water system which was also regarded as a missed opportunity. The study then progresses to a more detailed level in an area which was deemed to possess challenging and diverse options.

The space chosen is located at the entrance to the UP Mamelodi campus library, in the transition zone between University and community, where it functions as a public square. Both the principles of integration and maieusis were applied here in a bid to create an empowering landscape that is immersed in its context, that is accessible, and that is therefore used and appreciated by many.
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