Chapter 1

Introduction & Background

Brief & Aim

Client

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Immense challenges are faced by contemporary South African designers designing for the post Apartheid environment. South African cities are often characterised by patterns of fragmentation and extreme low density sprawl, Stals (1998: 4). Marcuse & van Kempen (2000:3) describe the layout in these cities as a

> ...pattern of separate clusters of residential spaces, creating protective citadels and enclaves on one side, and constraining ghettoes to the other in a hierarchical relationship to each other.

Stals (1998) continues to say that, because of the displacement of the poor to the urban edges due to the legacy of the apartheid system and because of the fact that the majority of new urban growth is happening amongst those who are most impoverished, increasing numbers of people are living on the urban edges.

In the average South African city one can almost always find two separate social structures existing side by side. The spaces associated with these social structures also remain detached into their own "envelopes and enclaves" (Murray 2006:6).

Alison Todes (2003:109) notes that the 'large dormitory townships', such as in Mamelodi, which lie on the urban edges of the South African cities and towns, enforce considerable costs in terms of transport and travel, which only serve to marginalise their inhabitants from urban opportunities. This is especially true of Mamelodi East, where the inhabitants experience a lack of basic services, community facilities and low standards of housing- the common typologies being informal 'zozo' and RDP houses.

Todes (2003:111) concludes that this separation has:

> ...resulted in sterile environments with poor services and facilities and has undermined small-scale economic activity.

The planning of the Apartheid City, in which the townships played a crucial role in asserting hierarchical dominance of the ruling class, was similar to that of the colonialists for which, AlSayyad points out that the planning and design of urban spaces clearly illustrates the intentions of the governing power:

> Analysis of the forms of dominance deployed in colonial cities may point the way to a better understanding of the power of architecture and urbanism in general. In particular we may see that, while politics necessarily plays a role in architectural and urban form through the choice of goals, styles and techniques, it is not the specifics but the implementation of such a program that is all important. And in all colonial cities that relationship between the dominator and the dominated are clear, as are the political agendas and motivations behind it. (1992:5)

In the field of architecture, public buildings have the ability to work both with the built fabric and the community as they are, communitcating what they have the potential to become.

> The architect is also an interpreter of values and aspirations in a culture, and because of the life span of the built environment, thereby contributes in a significant way to a society's present and future self-perception. (Holden 1995:14)

Architects have the ability to spark change and possibility, especially within communities that have been marginalised as a direct result of a legacy of social fragmentation.

> 'Architecture always reflects the society it serves', the ultimate question remains what kind of society, what kind of future South Africa do we want to create? (Marschall & Kearney 2000:182)

This thesis proposes to examine the catalytic ability of nodal public buildings that provide social services in order to promote healthy urban and social transformation through empowering the communities they serve.

It is intended that the proposed intervention houses many diverse social service oriented functions required in a specific locale, and that will facilitate community empowerment and the strengthening of existing communal bonds.

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The make-up of Tshwane should rather be understood within the context of a polycentric (multi-nodal) metropolitan region. (The City of Tshwane 2007: 10)

The site is located in an area in Mamelodi east, an area where social service provision is greatly lacking. The creation of a service based, catalytic nodal intervention seeks to facilitate the upliftment process within the community, as is programmed within the proposed Linear Nodal Development Framework. The study will present the diverse social service oriented functions that the proposed intervention must house, focused on both the spiritual and physical needs of a target community. This intervention must play a vital role in the growth of the people who use and contribute to its work, namely to facilitate community empowerment and strengthening of existing communal bonds. Additionally, the nature and role of a church as a place of facilitation and empowerment will also be explored.

It is important for designers to allow for supporting functions when designing religious buildings. Although historically churches were constantly open to the public to allow for those seeking spiritual guidance and contemplation to come and go freely, this function by itself is no longer sufficient to sustain such a diverse organisation. Churches are beginning to expand into secular functions in order to serve their communities and gain perceived usefulness.

Since today's religious buildings get used more than one day of the week, the architect is prompted to design his program with the day-to-day needs of the community in mind... an emphasis on secular and religious functions of the community ensures that the building will be used, that the neighbourhood is aware of its usefulness, and in a way, guarantees the longevity of the building itself... we know these buildings are serving their communities to the maximum capacity. (Thompson 1979: ix)

A multi-functional religious cum secular community empowerment centre would, by necessity, not have a single patron but would be a composite client that would work as a public-private partnership, comprising of government departmental bodies, the local municipality and Non- Governmental Organisations.

Some support and funding will be sourced from the World Bank, while the core funding will be sourced from the Victor Daitz foundation (a charitable foundation). The Tshwane Leadership Foundation, which works with both Churches and communities for urban transformation would facilitate and coordinate the energy behind the project. Additional funding and facilitation will come from relevant Governmental development initiatives.

The World Bank announced a plan to work more closely with Church groups in Africa to fight poverty and to *'break the conspiracy of silence on AIDS.'* The Bank hopes to channel development resources through Church programs and to include churches in consultations on economic and social policy issues.

(The World Bank, Accessed 05 May 2010)

Through a partnership with the Departments of Social Development, Trade and Industry and Health and Education, the local government is able to support the development and upliftment of the community through service provision, education, opportunities and access to resources.

- Department of Health: instrumental in facilitating the implementation of a satallite clinic.
- Department of Basic Education: instrumental in facilitating the day care centre.
- Department of Trade and Industry: instrumental in facilitating the building and trade training.

The intervention will be a multi-functional development where religious institutions and groupings, in this case various Christian Churches and movements representing the demographic make-up of the community in Mamelodi East, will be supported in responding to specific community needs.