

Architectural dissertation by Tian Du Toit Oosthuizen

BEHIND THE CURTAINS

Breaking the fourth wall with a public interface into the [laboratory] of the performing arts.

An Cultural and Educational Back of House for South African State Theatre.
In an Indeterminate Introverted City Block in the CBD of Pretoria.

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Breaking the fourth wall with a public interface into the [laboratory] of the performing arts.

An Cultural and Educational back of House for South African State Theatre, establishing a typology of public space for everyday performances.

In an Indeterminate Introverted City Block in the CBD of Pretoria.

By Tian Oosthuizen

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Architecture (Professional) in the Department of Architecture, in the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, University of Pretoria

Course Coordinator: Dr. Arthur Barker

Study Leader: Neels Van Rooyen

Pretoria, South Africa
October 2015

| i Dedications

I would like to dedicate this to my loving wife Telanie, thank you for unconditionally loving and encouraging me throughout these years.

Furthermore to my Family, for your endless love, support and encouragement that you devoted to me through these years.

ii Acknowledgments |

I firstly would like to acknowledge my Heavenly Father, for Blessing me throughout my incredible life journey

I would like to thank Neels Van Rooyen and Arthur Barker for their guidance, support and encouragement throughout this year.

Thank you so much Telanie and Jean-David for assisting me through my final exam preparation.

Last, not least, Thank you Elize Venter for editing my book at short notice.

iii Preamble

Programme:

A 'Back of House' for The State Theatre, which is an Alternative Theatre, dramaturgy and production experience.

Site Description & Location:

The site is allocated along Helen Joseph (Church) street and Sisulu (Prinsloo) street in Pretoria. The site is located within city block forming an introverted space of indeterminacy, with left-over parts of yesterday's city. The State Theatre and Sammy Marks precinct on Sisulu Street is located on the western and north western side of the block as well as the Tshwane North College on the corner of Helen Joseph and Du Toit located on the North Eastern part of the block.

Addresses: GPS -25° 74' 63.55", +28° 19' 64.45"

1. Prinschurch Building Erf R2575/383
2. Karps Building 2/384 Church Street Erf 2731
3. The Sheds 386 Church Street Erf 3081
4. Karps: 373 Church Street Erf 2731/2
5. Mavarin: 361 Church Street Erf 384/1

Research Field: Heritage / HUE Housing and Urban Environments

Clients(s):

- Department of Arts and Culture (DAC).
- Development opportunities within the South African State Theatre (SAST), which could function within the existing development framework of the theatre forming the new back of house for the State Theatre.

Theoretical Premise: The Dissertation uses Body-space, event-drive space, African Space Theories. The projects approach is to use the ritual activities of the everyday on site and superimpose the newly created event-driven space as the theatre back of house programmes and stage within the existing fabric. By re-scripting the existing fabric, makes it relevant to a mixed cultural group of users through "rebuilding, incorporation, connecting and intensifying that what already exists", as suggested by Da Costa & Van Rensburg (2008b:48).

Architectural Approach: Creating Interfaces, which develops new connections to the public realm and establish public life on the introverted site.

iv Abstract |

Behind the Curtains is an exploration into the introverted and indeterminate space as a place of activity.

The dissertation investigates and compares the spectacle of the everyday and reality by means of a theatre stage and a semi-public courtyard / plaza, which is situated opposite the State Theatre in Pretoria's CBD. The theatre is focused on the awareness of reality through the spectacle of performance while the semi-public courtyard / plaza can "turn the artificiality of everyday situations into theoretical situations" and bring life to the streets (Brenner 1994:97). Everyday life is put on display.

The programme forms a new back of house for the State Theatre with the theatre stage, rehearsal studios and back of house programmes intertwined with the activities of the everyday.

The project explores whether it is appropriate to intervene and re-appropriate an introverted site, characterised by its indeterminate left over spaces, and whether the re-appropriation of indeterminate space could reactivate Pretoria's CBD.

The dissertation seeks to advocate an alternative approach to removing the existing, by investigating the possibility of working within the dynamics of an introverted and indeterminate left over space. The dissertation explores finding new possibilities and opportunities to transform the site into dynamic social spaces that maintains the uniqueness and quality of the spaces, without destroying the space's character and memory.

1. Brenner, Klaus theo. Stadttheater urban theatre: Manifesto for a style-free architecture (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1994), 97.

v Normative Position

Pretoria is filled with spaces of an indeterminate nature. These spaces are hidden and restricted from use and ultimately become the blind spots that puncture the environment we circulate. These unconsidered spaces are neglected due to the lack of civic pride and confusion of ownership. The spaces of indeterminacy provide an opportunity to reshape an urban centre and counteracting urban sprawl by attracting people back into the city centres (Trancik 1986:2). Urban land can be utilised more efficiently to create a more integrated and compact urban form re-utilising the spaces of indeterminacy (Trancik 1986:i).

The proposed site is in a prime location to form a gateway that could establish development towards the south eastern quadrant of Pretoria (as seen in Figure 1). The intervention can be a catalyst that sparks development and stitches the adjacent isolated spaces of indeterminacy together, to re-establish a network of arcades, with a cultural pedestrian route connecting

Sunnyside with the CBD. Currently, these neglected areas detract from the cultural experiences that Pretoria has to offer and become infertile environments for living. These introverted spaces are hidden and cannot interact with the surrounding public realm, resulting in negative, undefined spaces that become abandoned and degraded. Spaces of indeterminacy are not caused by poor city planning, but rather by left over parts of previous patterns of flow, of yesterday's city. These unique, unmanageable qualities of indeterminate spaces allow the city to adapt and self-organise to a more ecological rhythm and contribute to creative shifts in the urban individual's experience of their built environment (Jones 2006:[S.p.]). Reconnecting these blocks as a network of spaces will result in more vibrant mixed-use functions and activities that could function more interactively. An attractive environment could be established within these networks in which new economic, social and recreational activities could take place.

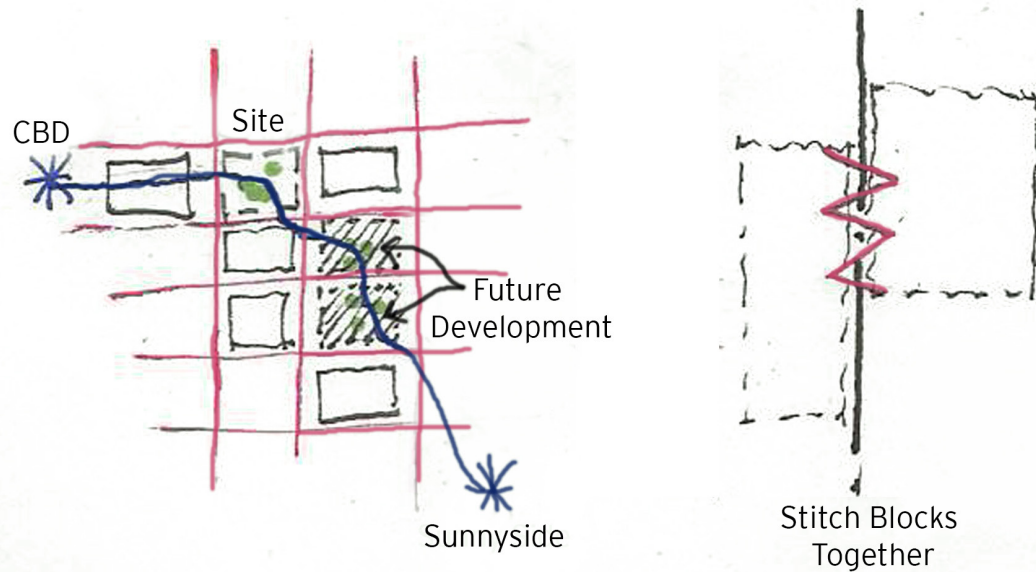


FIGURE 1 - PROPOSED FUTURE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT (AUTHOR 2015)

I. Biophilia:

The term means love of life or living systems. Coined by Erich Fromm to describe a psychological orientation of being attracted to all that is alive and vital (Fromm 1964:[S.p]).

II. Escapism:

“an activity or form of entertainment that allows people to forget about the real problems of life” (Merriam-Webster 2015:[S.p.]).

“habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine” (Hubpage 2015:[S.p.]).

III. Happening:

“an unconventional dramatic or artistically orchestrated performance, often a series of discontinuous events involving audience participation.”

“any event considered worthwhile, unusual, or interesting.”

IV. Heterogeneous Society:

“In general, a heterogeneous society is where there will be diversity of people in terms of race, culture, religions, languages, etc.”

“People following different religions and speak different languages, similar to society in the USA having English as a common language, is an example of a heterogeneous society” (Hubpage 2015:[S.p.]).

V. Indeterminacy Space:

“‘indeterminate’ spaces are spaces left out of ‘time and place’ with regard to their urban surroundings, mainly as a consequence of rampant deindustrialisation processes and the ‘shrinking’ city” (Groth & Corijn 2015:[S.p])

VI. The Fourth Wall:

“The thin line that exists between a story and reality. When a character in a story tells the reader in some way that they know that they are a character in a story, which is called ‘breaking the fourth wall’ (Hawke 2012:[S.p]).

“The fourth wall” is an expression stemming from the world of theatre. In most modern theatre design, a room will consist of three physical walls, as well as an imaginary fourth that serves to separate the world of the characters from that of the audience. (Merriam-Webster 2015:[S.p.]).

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction establishes a common ground, contextualising the project and defining the boundaries of the project.

Real world Problem

What Happened...

The increase in the city's density increases the demands for social and recreational opportunities, whilst open space within the urban environment is fast becoming a limited resource. Alternative means must be found to create these opportunities.

Due to the lack of open space, new developments began taking place on the fringes of Pretoria; this also included the businesses previously located in the CBD. This urban sprawl is also responsible for the current lack of growth and 'energy' within Pretoria's CBD. As a result, vacant city buildings and city blocks have become lost spaces to the city's inhabitants, becoming a major contributing factor to the increase in criminal activities and the city's decay. The CBD's lack of dynamic public spaces is primarily because of social exclusion, which is, among other problems, the cause of empty spaces, which in turn increases opportunities for criminal activi-

ties in such spaces.

Recent local advocacy efforts were made to attempt to reinstate and rejuvenate Pretoria's public spaces in the urban center. The City of Tshwane developed and presented the Tshwane 2055 Urban Vision for the urban upgrade of certain areas in Pretoria, the CBD being one of the main focus areas. To establish this urban vision, parts of the indeterminate old city fabric needed to be removed.

The dissertation focus area is drawn towards non-place or indeterminate spaces within the city fabric which could be re-established to answer for the city's demand to expand. Pretoria is filled with spaces of an indeterminate nature, hidden and restricted; these spaces form the blind spots that puncture the environment we circulate. These unconsidered spaces are neglected due to the lack of civic pride and confusion of ownership. These spaces of indeterminacy are not caused by poor city planning, but rather because they are left over parts of previous patterns of flow, of yesterday's city. (Figure 2 shows a diagram of city space developing as blocks of indeterminate space). These unique, unmanageable qualities of indeterminate space allow the city to adapt and self-organise to a more ecological rhythm and contribute to creative shifts in the urban individual's experience of their built environment (Jones 2006:[S.p]).

1.1 Real World Problems: Indeterminate spaces

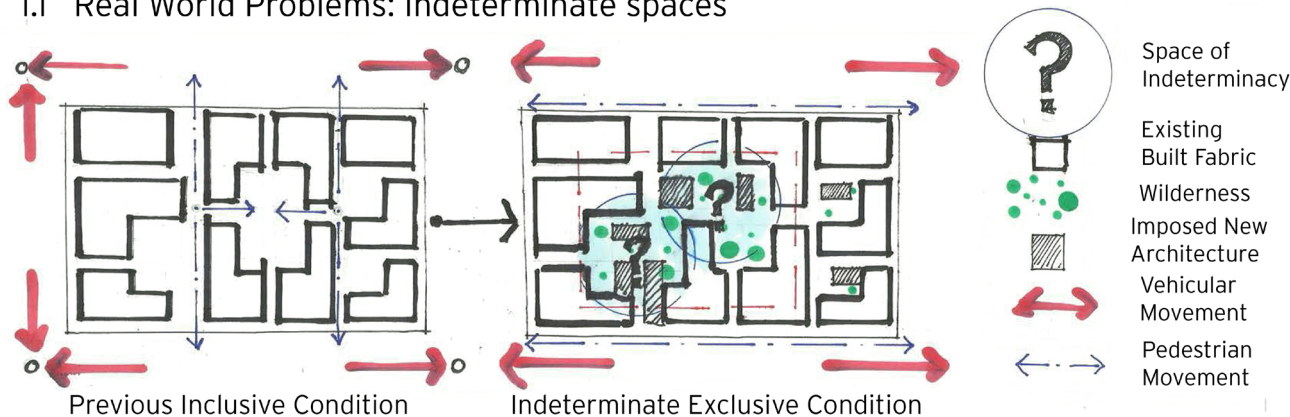


FIGURE 2 - CITY BLOCK AS INCLUSIVE OR INDETERMINATE EXCLUSIVE (AUTHOR 2015)

“The appropriate intervention in a space of indeterminacy that can be compared to grains of sand in an oyster that cause irritation (current condition), leading to the growth of ‘pearls’ (urban renewal of urban life)” (Lefebvre and Roode c1996).

Investigating a solution...
 In light of the vision for 2055 and the methods used for urban regeneration...
 The dissertation seeks to advocate an alternative approach to removing the existing, by investigating the possibility of working within the dynamics of an introverted, indeterminate left over space. Finding new possibilities and opportunities to transform the site into a dynamic social space that maintains the uniqueness and quality of the space, without destroying the space’s character and memory.
 It was these challenges and urban context analysis that attracted the attention of this study towards the site located within the CBD opposite Sisulu (Prinsloo) Street on the eastern edge of the South African State Theatre.

The Architectural intervention of this dissertation will be explored and developed through new interventions that can connect the surrounding buildings in the block as well as re-appropriating the surrounding buildings to form a relation with the previously introverted courtyard spaces. The site will have access points that are opened for the public to be able to explore the previously hidden “other” spaces of the city.

The dissertation will address these challenges from both physical and social perspectives. The aim will be to create an environment that allows a “heterogeneous society” to express itself, with social and collective spaces that can accommodate the unplanned and spontaneous. This will create potential at the interface between different cultural groups. Arcades will be introduced to allow public movement through the block, with markets that can draw the public into the site. The idea is that the previ-

1.1 Real World Problems: Indeterminate spaces

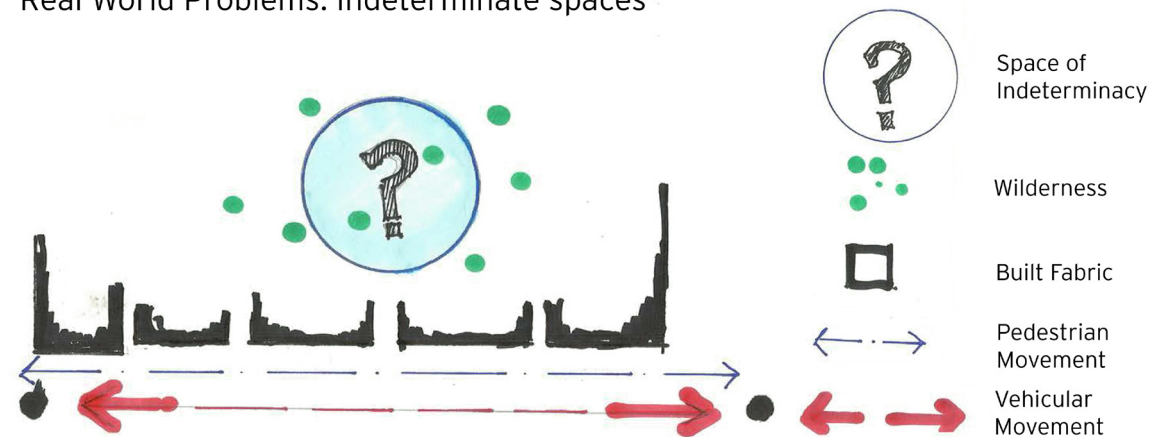


FIGURE 3 - INDETERMINATE SPACE (AUTHOR 2015)

ously lost, introverted site can be transformed into a space with extraordinary vibrancy from contemporary intellectual, artistic, cultural and sociological discourses, contributing to the urban renewal of the block's urban life as well as the larger city context.



To fully understand indeterminate or lost space, one needs to define it.

Trancik defines these fragmented spaces as follows (1986:3):

- Left over areas - abandoned areas or unstructured landscape, away from public realm like pedestrian movement and activity that represents the life of all cities.
- Surfaces that break up and border the urban core, lopping connections between the CBD and residential areas. Forming no-man's land along edges of urban rivers, freeways, the unused or unmaintained spaces.
- Districts that are loosely composed between residential and commercial areas.
- Spaces that take away from the cities well-being, like urban parks in a derelict state or old industrialised space.

- Spaces that require redesign - that don't contribute or provide a positive effect to surrounding users.

Trancik contends the importance of identifying lost space, but the principle causes must also be understood (1986:4):

- Society's dependency on vehicles, taking hierarchy over pedestrians.
- The modern movement's architectural attitude towards open space.
- Urban renewal zoning and land use policies that divide cities.
- A confused status of ownership over public urban environments and who takes responsibility.
- Abandoned industrial, transport or military sites within the inner city.

Trancik's definitions provided an understanding of the root causes and how to identify indeterminate spaces. The dissertation also uses suggestions made by Groth in his paper, Reclaiming Urbanity: Indeterminate Spaces, where he states: "the unclear and undetermined status of these 'no-man's-lands' may allow for emergence of a non-planned, spontaneous 'urbanity'. These interventions may be artistic experimentation or a deliberately open transformation of public space allowing for equal access and equal representation of a high degree of social and cultural inclusion" (Groth & Corijn 2015:[S.p.]). (Figure 6, shows a diagram of what an inclusive city condition could look like).

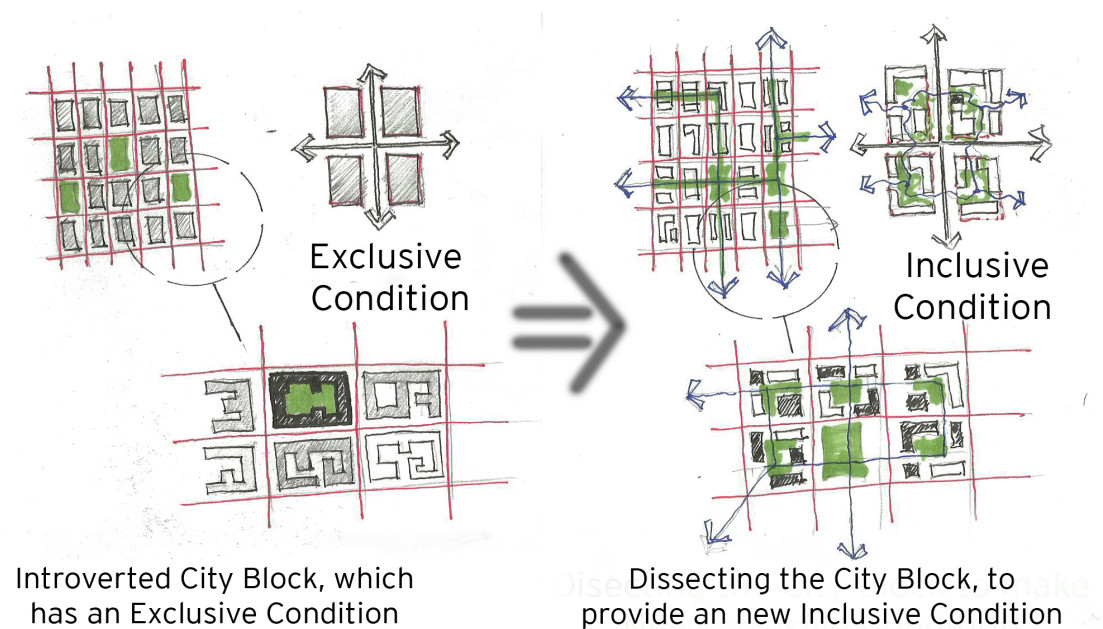


FIGURE 4 - EXCLUSIVE & INCLUSIVE CITY BLOCK CONDITIONS (AUTHOR 2015)

1.2 Site, Client & Proposed Programme

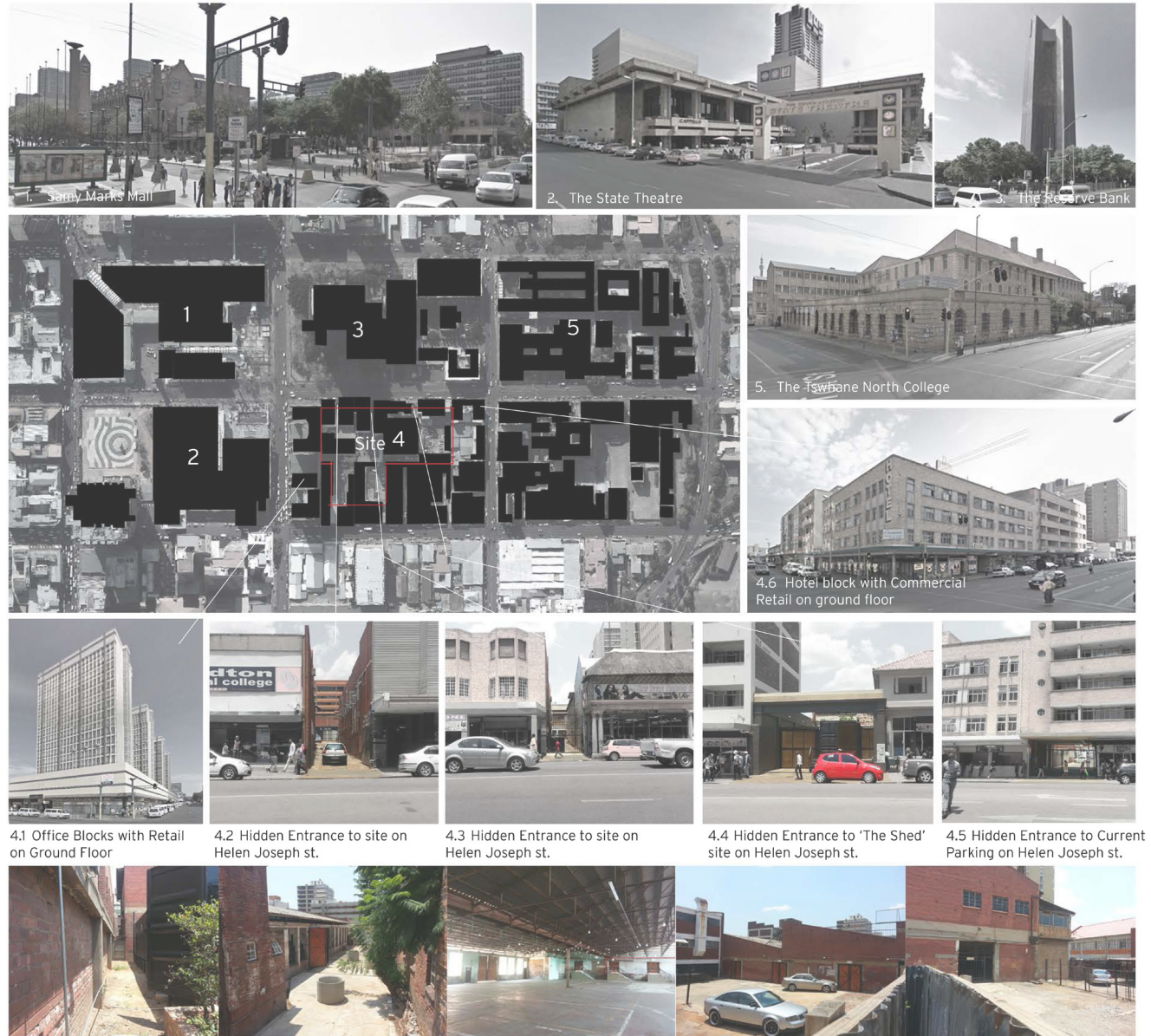
GPS [-25° 74' 63.55", +28° 19' 64.45"]
 Longitude & Latitude

1.2.1 Site

The site under investigation is located along Helen Joseph (Church) Street and Sisulu (Prinsloo) Street in Pretoria. Helen Joseph Street is one of the most active pedestrian corridors due to its pedestrianised street running east - west through the heart of Pretoria at Church Square. This pedestrianised portion also links up with various networks of arcades and ends at the State Theatre and Sammy Marks Precinct. The site is located within the civic, cultural and economic heart of the city, which runs between government, economic and private ownership. The site under investigation is located within an introverted space of indeterminacy, with left over parts of yesterday's city. Small commercial shops, colleges, student housing and offices are located on the peripheries of the site forming introverted courtyard spaces isolated from the public realm (seen in figure 6). The site has the potential to reconnect the indeterminate space with a network of existing commercial and cultural activities in the region. The State Theatre and Sammy Marks precinct on Sisulu Street is located on the western side of the block as well as the Tshwane North College on the corner of Helen Joseph and Du Toit streets located on the north eastern part of the block. The "awkward" relationship between the site and its context started an investigation of the surrounding structures in order to discover potential opportunities for further exploration within the spaces of indeterminacy.



FIGURE 5 - Locality Context (Author 2015)



Site and the Surrounding Context:

FIGURE 6 - SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT (AUTHOR 2015)

1.2.2 Client

- The Department of Arts and Culture (DAC).
- Development opportunities within the South African State Theatre (SAST), which could function within the existing development framework of the theatre forming the new back of house for the State Theatre.
- Momentum Independence Programme (MIP).
- Capital Collective - Pretoria
- The Tshwane North College - Arts and Design Department.
- Small Colleges renting existing building within the City Block.



arts & culture

Department:
Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

FIGURE 7 - DEPARTMENT: ARTS AND CULTURE



FIGURE 8 - THE SOUTH AFRICAN STATE THEATRE



FIGURE 9 - TSHWANE NORTH COLLEGE

A Drama is:

“a state, situation, or series of events involving an interesting or intense
conflict of forces”
“an exciting, emotional, or unexpected series of events or sets of
circumstances”

...reality is a force

...the spectacle is a force

A drama is a state, situation, or series of events involving an interesting or
intense conflict of reality and the spectacle (Adelson 2012:[S.p.]).

1.2.3 Proposed Programme

The Program forms a “Back of House” for The State Theatre, which is an Alternative Theatre, dramaturgy and production experience for the millennial generation. The back of house theatre is an investigation into developing spaces that represent a critical form of theatre, which can offer respite for the people living in Pretoria; encouraging the expressive generation to live and work within Pretoria’s CBD and contribute to a new cultural / educational precinct, providing a platform to engage and express themselves within a wider palette of theatre production. The Alternative Theatre provides respite from the businessman’s theatre, sought after by the “tourists”, merely entertaining the masses who visit from outside the CBD and do not contribute to the city’s resonance. The precinct breaks the fourth wall by blurring the lines between the spectacle and reality through theatre and everyday activities. These activities are intertwined with the theatre production processes taking place, allowing more insight into the back of house activities of the theatre.

The project compares spectacle and reality through theatre and everyday public activities inside the city block. The theatre is focused on the awareness of reality through the spectacle of performance, while the public courtyard can “turn the artificiality of everyday situations into a theatrical situation and bring ‘life to the streets’” (Adelson 2012:[S.p]). Everyday life is put on display.

1.3 Hypothesis |

The site is separated from its surrounding context where it currently exists in a state of indeterminacy. The redevelopment of the site as a cultural/educational space with performance arts at its heart will enable it to host meaningful interactions. A rigorous investigation of the site and context will lead to the identification of opportunities that can generate a clearer formulation of the nature of this redevelopment, delivering an intervention that communicates with its context. Better quality of life must be a precondition; attention must be devoted to intermediate spaces, the spaces of slow motion, of reflection, of dreaming, of storytelling.

1.4 Research Question

The research questions that arise from the background theory and chosen context of this dissertation are listed as follows:

1.4.1 General questions

- Can the appropriation of indeterminate space in Pretoria begin to reinvigorate the CBD?
- How can an indeterminate space be rejuvenated whilst embracing its undefined qualities?
- How can an active awareness of the unconsidered spaces in between buildings help to envision and dynamically map a more contextual, sustainable, creative and engaging design of the public realm?

1.4.2 Specific questions

- How can architectural programming provide the necessary framework for encouraging cultural events and practices on the site, reconnecting it to its context?
- How can theatre back of house programmes be designed for public viewing?
- How can the programme of the back of house be integrated with the existing programmes of the surrounding context?

1.5 Research Methodology

To gather in information, a mixed method has been used; both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research were combined to collect, synthesize, and create architectural solutions.

1. Quantitative Research methodology

- Data collection - this involves the collection, analysis and further research of relevant statistics, factual documents, statutory requirements and existing frameworks for area being researched.
- Context analysis - Consists of time spent at / near the site analysing the existing state of the site; observing natural occurrences and conditions on site; people's behavior in the area, and observing existing scenarios. This is recorded through photographing, drawing and documenting the events or physical features first hand.
- Programme - this involves the research into what type of features are necessary in order to provide for the brief and programme of the building.

2. Qualitative Research methodology

- Normative position - involves the creation of a "norm" that will be focused on throughout the study (see iv. Normative Position).
- Architectural theories - includes theories relating to the indeterminate space, Event Driven Space, Body Space, and African Space Theory. These theories will establish principles and guidelines that have the potential for archi-

tectural interpretation.

- Precedent studies - includes case studies are used as conductive material that informs the research.

During the course of the study, attention has been given to site, context, history and memory to ensure that the program is applicable to its context and environment on both a physical and metaphysical level.

1.6 Assumptions & Delimitations |

Due to time constraints, the focus of the study and the programme of a “back of house” for Pretoria’s State Theatre are either assumed or delimited:

It will be assumed that the city block (GPS coordinates [-25° 74’ 63.55”, +28° 19’ 64.45”] longitude & latitude, on the corner of Helen Joseph and Prinsloo streets, in Pretoria’s CBD, will be rezoned to allow for cultural/educational use of the site.

- It is assumed that the State Theatre and Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) are the main client for this project.

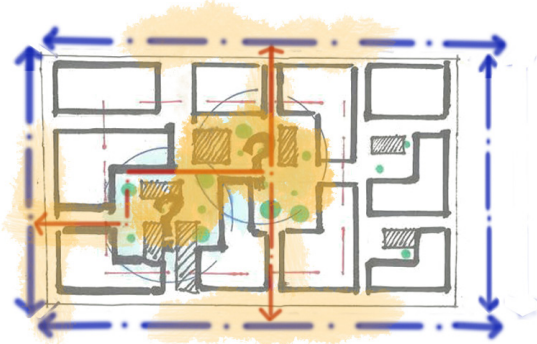
- The study will focus on the design of a back of house programme for the State Theatre, which will cater for the dramaturgy, workshops for stage and costume design, rehearsal studios and performance theatre space on the block opposite the State Theatre.

- The study will refrain from considering all the existing programmes situated in the city block; however, it will focus on relocating and organising some of these existing programmes to fit within the larger scheme of a back of house for the State Theatre. The intervention will both adaptively reuse existing buildings and construct new interventions within the block.

1.7 Problems Statement

1.7.1 General Issue

How can the re-appropriation of an indeterminate city block help rejuvenate Pretoria's CBD?

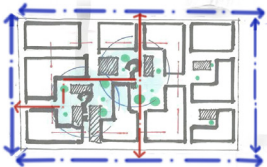


How can the re-appropriation of an indeterminate city block help rejuvenate Pretoria's CBD?

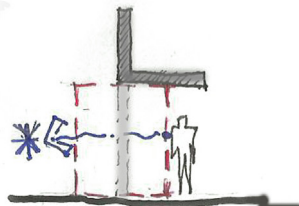
FIGURE 10 GENERAL ISSUE (AUTHOR 2015)

1.7.2 Urban Issue

How can the indeterminate space draw public life into an introverted exclusive condition?



Developing Exclusive condition into Inclusive condition?

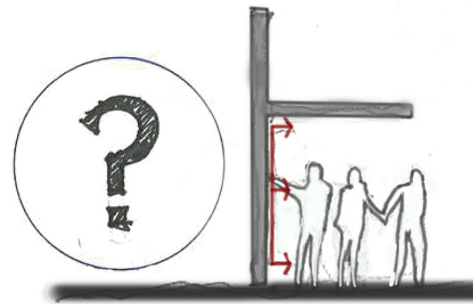


How to draw public life into Indeterminate Space?

FIGURE 11 - URBAN ISSUE (AUTHOR 2015)

1.7.3 Architectural Issue

The architectural problem addresses the spatial experience of an industrial context on site and how the theatrical program and processes is expressed as place-making mechanisms so that the industrial spaces may become spaces for people as well as for theatre production. The architectural intervention focuses on the design of architecture that reconnects the user with the building, and ultimately the body with the introverted spaces.



Architectural Issue

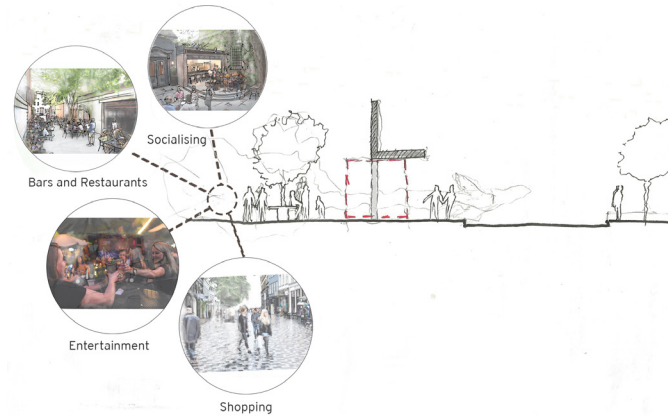
The Body being separated from space

FIGURE 12 - ARCHITECTURAL ISSUE (AUTHOR 2015)

1.7 Design Intent

1.10 General Intent

Placemaking through Event Driven Space and Everyday rituals.

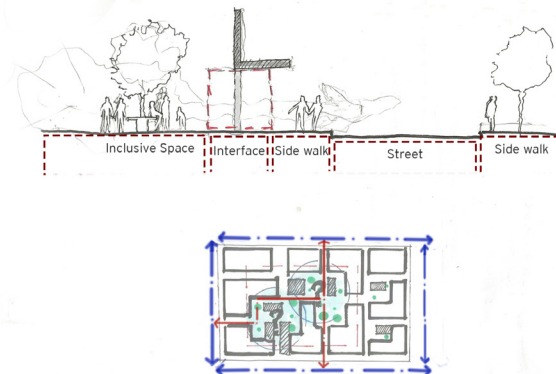


General Intent: Placemaking Through Event Driven Space and Everyday Rituals

FIGURE 13 - GENERAL INTENT (AUTHOR 2015)

1.11 Contextual Intent

"Behind the Curtains" - Re-establishing the public realm into the space of indeterminacy and developing it as an inclusive condition.

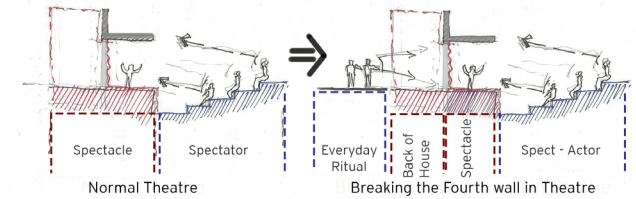


Contextual Intent: 'Behind the Curtains' - Re-establishing the public realm into the space of indeterminacy and developing it as an inclusive condition.

FIGURE 14 - CONTEXTUAL INTENT - BEHIND THE CURTAINS (AUTHOR 2015)

1.12 Programmatic Intent

"Breaking the fourth wall" - providing public life with a visual and physical connection into the back of house programmes.

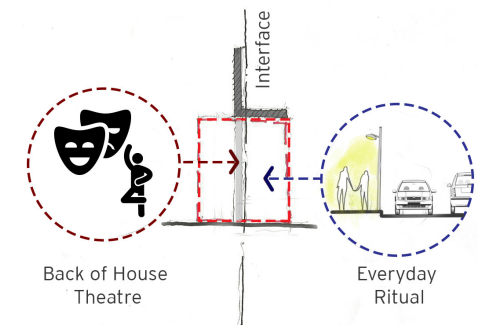


Programmatic Intent: 'Breaking the fourth wall' - providing public life with a visual and physical connection into the back of house programmes.

FIGURE 15 - PROGRAMMATIC INTENT - BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL (AUTHOR 2015)

1.13 Architectural Intent

Creating Interfaces, which develop new connections to the public realm and establish public life on the introverted site.

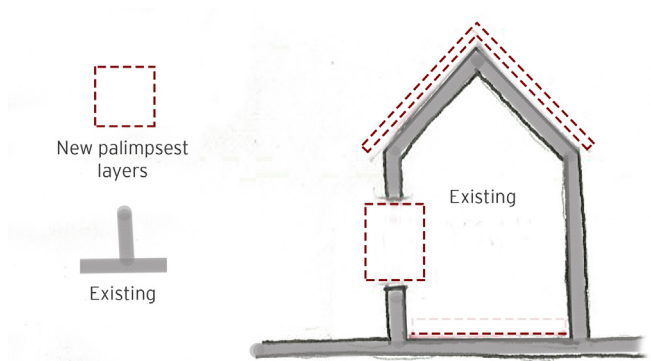


Interfaces: Creating Interfaces, which develop new connections to the public realm and establish public life on the introverted site.

FIGURE 16 - ARCHITECTURAL INTENT - INTERFACES (AUTHOR 2015)

1.14 Heritage Intent

Forming palimpsest layers over the existing.



Heritage Intent: Forming palimpsest layers over the existing.

FIGURE 17 - HERITAGE INTENT (AUTHOR 2015)

1.6 Objectives |

The objective of this dissertation is for people to recognize the potential of indeterminate space and how it can not only benefit our way of living, but to also contribute to the resilience of Pretoria's CBD which can lead towards a more regenerative future.

The growing and expanding of city development leaves no more space for public and green spaces, this new proposal establish a hybrid typology on the proposed site creating spaces that allows for heterogenous society in an inclusive environment. The proposal will make use of on-site resources in such a way that gives back more than what is taken out.

The main objective of the dissertation is to explore different ways of dealing with interfaces between public and private and providing new life to the forgotten site, by introducing public life in a previously introverted indeterminate site.

1.7 Synopsis

This chapter explores the dynamic social realm created by indeterminate spatial conditions. It unpacks both the issues and opportunities for design in such an environment.