

CHAPTER 4



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PRECEDENTS

Four precedents will be discussed. First, the New York High Line Park was chosen for its ability to form a coherent whole, yet with a multiplicity of functions and open ended uses. The Metropol Parasol in Seville gives a clear understanding of what typology will be appropriate. The third precedent looks at the traditional ancient Roman Baths and how its rituals informs the progression of public to private even in today's contemporary society. And finally a quick look at traditional African public spaces and how a square in a cosmopolitan city can address different communities.

HIGH LINE PARK

Location: New York, USA
 Year of completion: 2009
 Architect / designer: James Corner Field Operations with Diller Scofidio + Renfro
 Client: City of New York
 Reference: Rosenfield, 2014

The High Line Park in New York was created on a disused part of an elevated rail line. It became a pedestrian route through a part of the city that was neglected and forgotten. By opening up this rail line and re-appropriating it as an inner city park, it opened up a part of the city to the dweller that was previously inaccessible and dangerous. It became a catalyst for many other projects of renewal in the vicinity. The High Line Park uses the existing city conditions and addresses them in a different and unique way. A gallery overlooking the "theatre" of traffic from an elevated position gives the pedestrian hierarchy over the vehicle. The wildflower and grassland garden memorialises an ecosystem that still thrives in the midst of the city's concrete jungle. The spectacle of everyday life is framed by each belvedere overlooking the city life. Green spaces, sun decks, event spaces and amphitheatres all give exiting opportunities for the dweller to experience the city from a different point of view.

The relevance of this precedent is in understanding how one element can become a catalyst for urban renewal and reinvigorating public life in the city. It is furthermore one concept, a bridge, that becomes a not only a park but a bridge between the city dweller and a part of its city that was previously neglected. The open ended programmes and spaces provide different types of activities and events. The High Line Park brings a character and identity to the sites that it connects by gathering the spaces around it into a coherent whole.

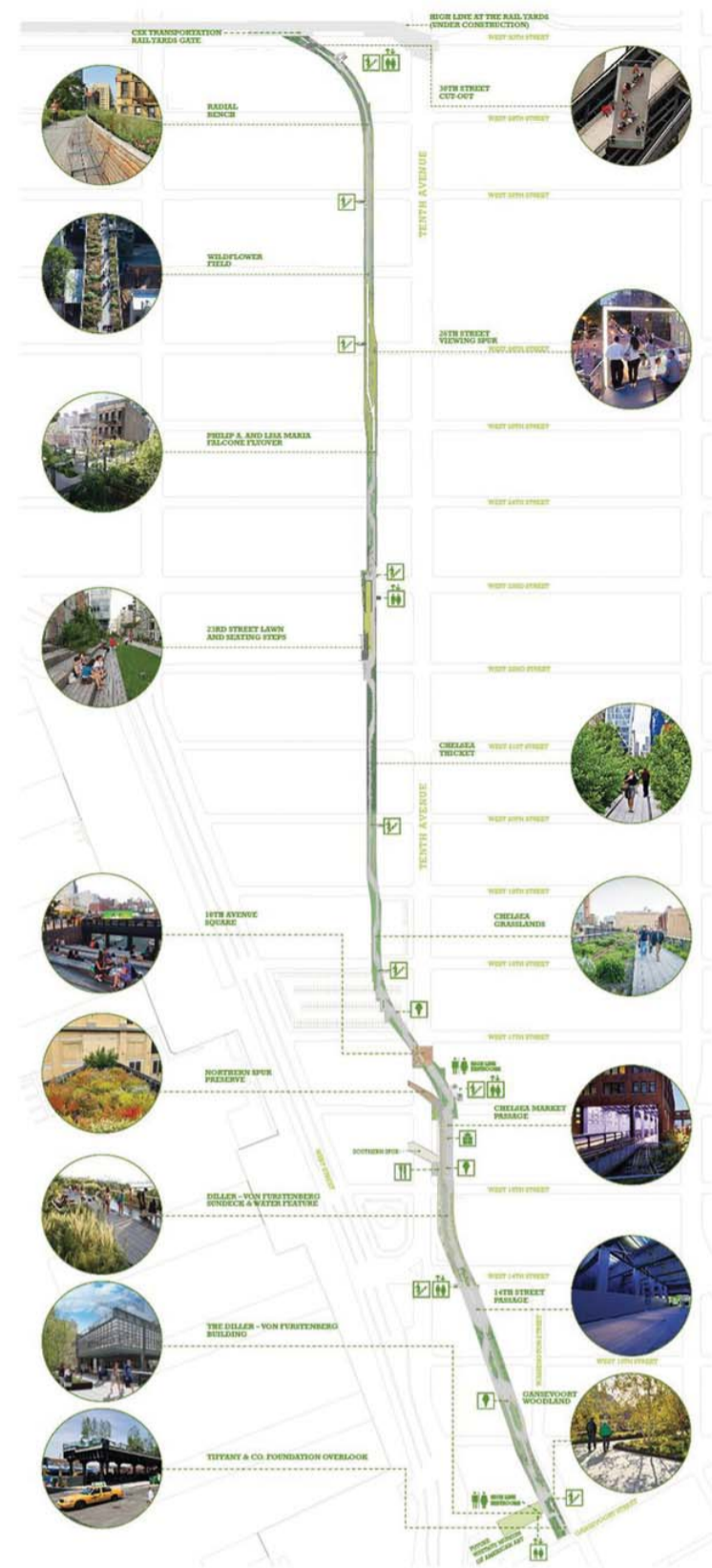
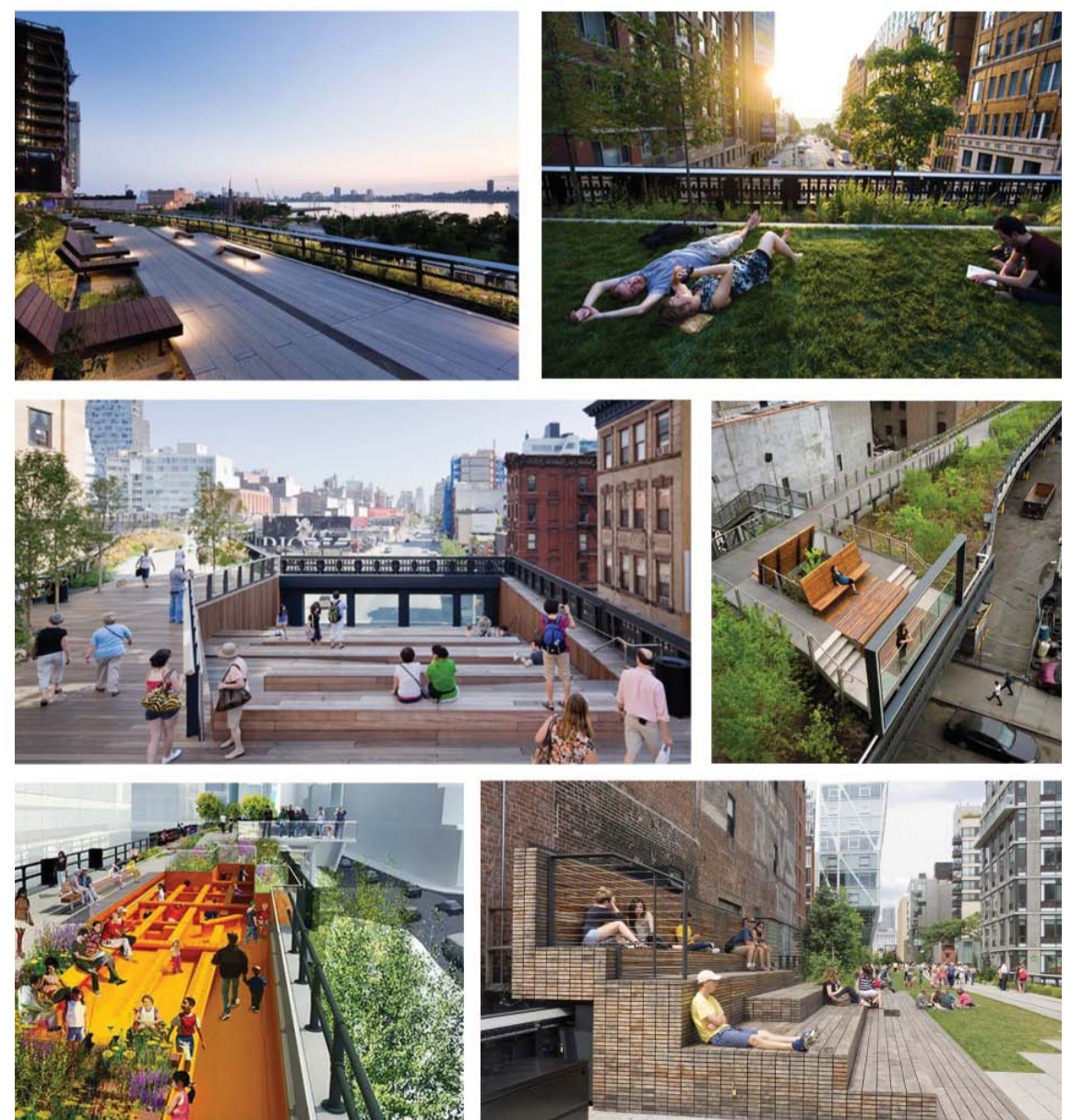


Figure 4.1 - High Line Park.psd ("High Line", n.d.)



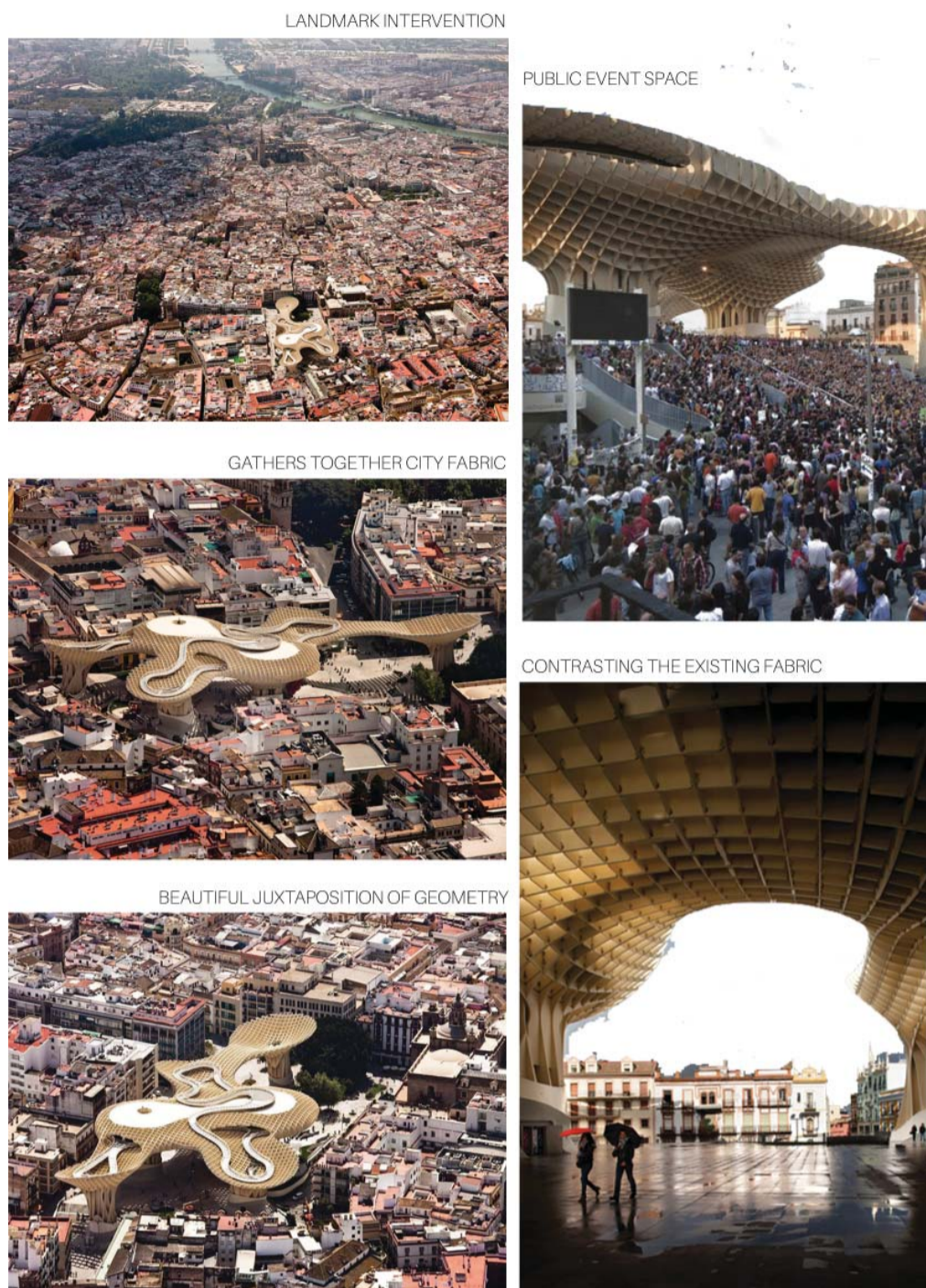


Figure 4.2 - Metropol Parasol photos.psd (Zimmer 2011)

METROPOL PARASOL

Location: Seville, Spain
 Year of completion: 2011
 Architect / designer: J. Mayer H. Architects
 Client: City of Seville
 Reference: Jordana, 2011

The Metropol Parasol in Seville, Spain is a large undulating timber structure that seems to grow from the old town square like six enormous mushrooms. The old city's building edges give a very strong geometry to the square. The edge contains the square in a rectangle. This made it possible to insert a bold and conflicting intervention that contrasts the existing form and fabric. The square was already defined as a space and could therefore accommodate an "interior" intervention. In this regard it cannot be compared to the site on the corner of Sisulu (Prinsloo) Street and Helen Joseph (Church) Street. The site in Pretoria is an uncontained leftover space with no sense of boundary or control. Creating that edge will be one of the first objectives to get control over that space.

The Metropol Parasol keeps the ground level open in order not to disturb the existing movement patterns and networks. It is also important to keep the views open for a sense of direction and legibility. The "walls" of the square remains the existing building edges. It is only the roof and the floor that changes. Above ground the Parasol becomes a rooftop walkway with a restaurant and ablutions. Underground it exposes the layers of history of the city by means of exposing the archaeological findings of the old city ruins. This treatment of a public space by acknowledging its character and exposing its hidden appeal is very relevant to the site in question in Pretoria. The site of intervention has many hidden narratives that are currently not exposed. Moreover, the site is ideal for a structure that will define it as a contained space.

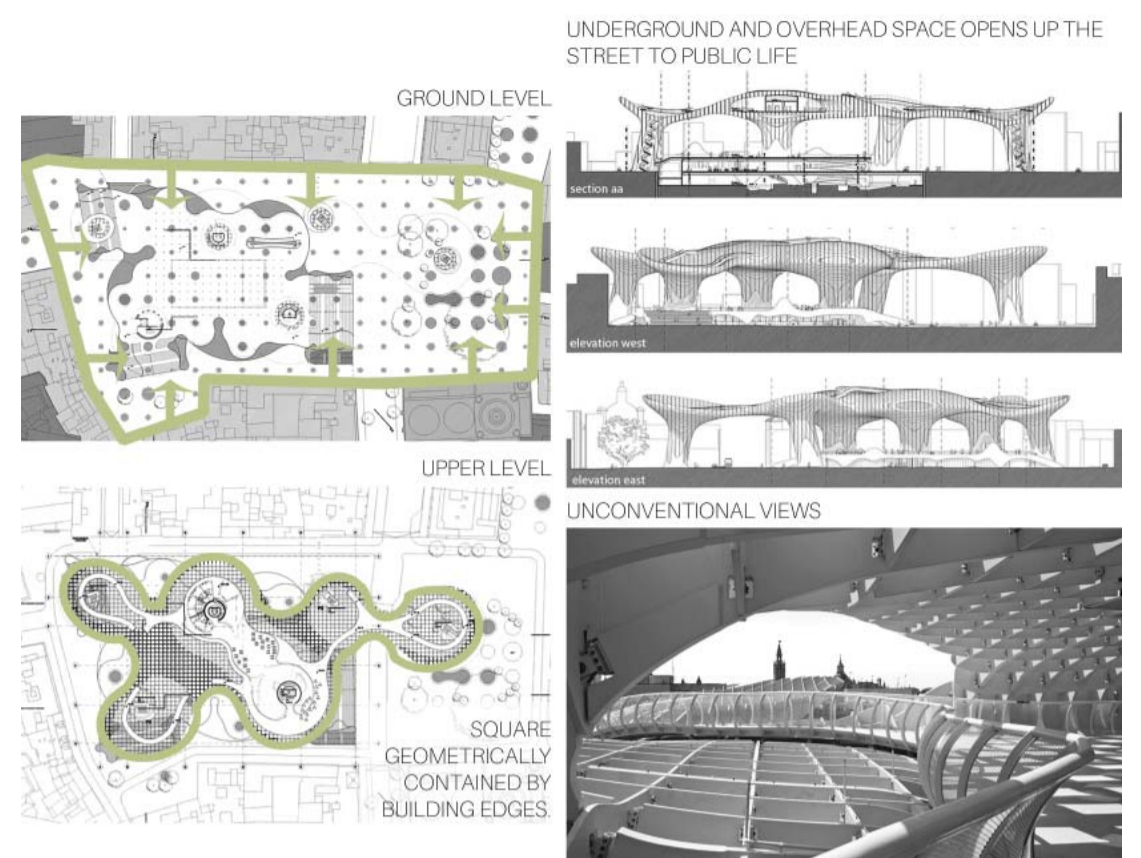


Figure 4.3 - Metropol Parasol site analysis.psd (Zimmer 2011)

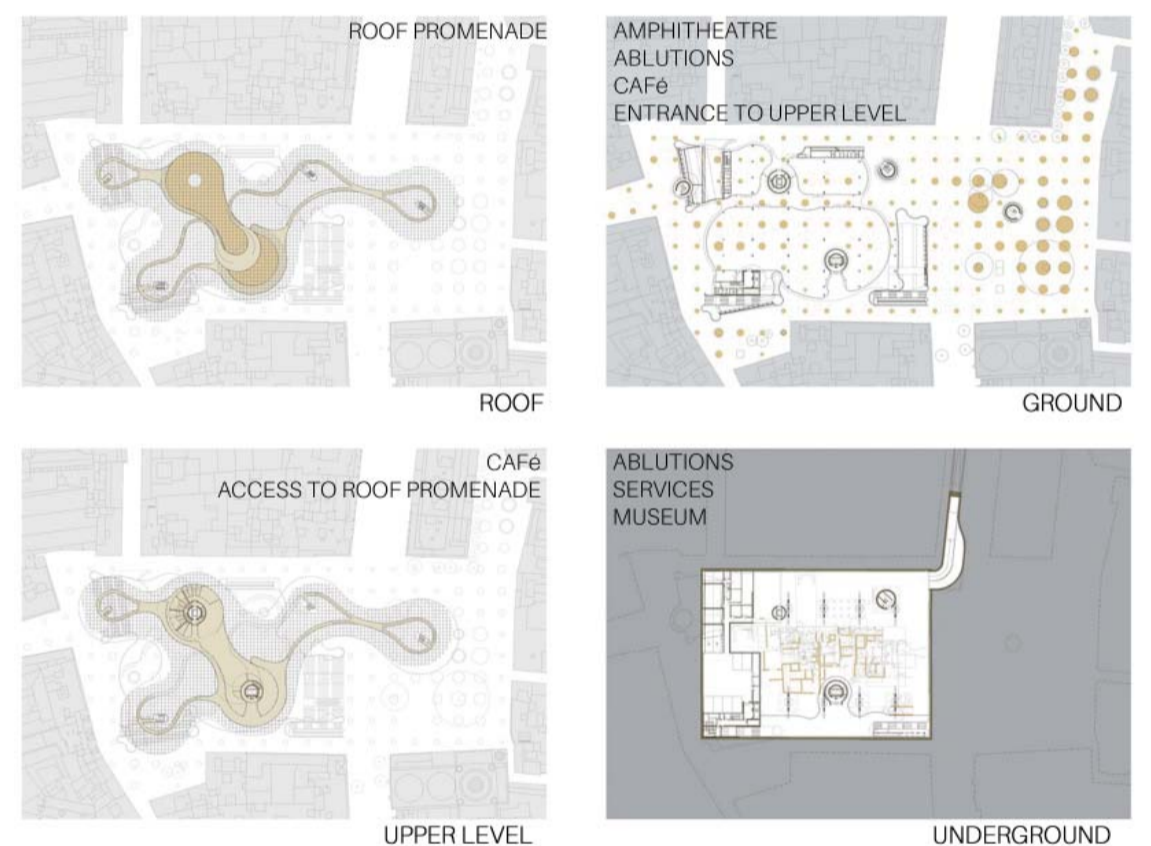


Figure 4.4 - Metropol Parasol floor plans.psd (Zimmer 2011)

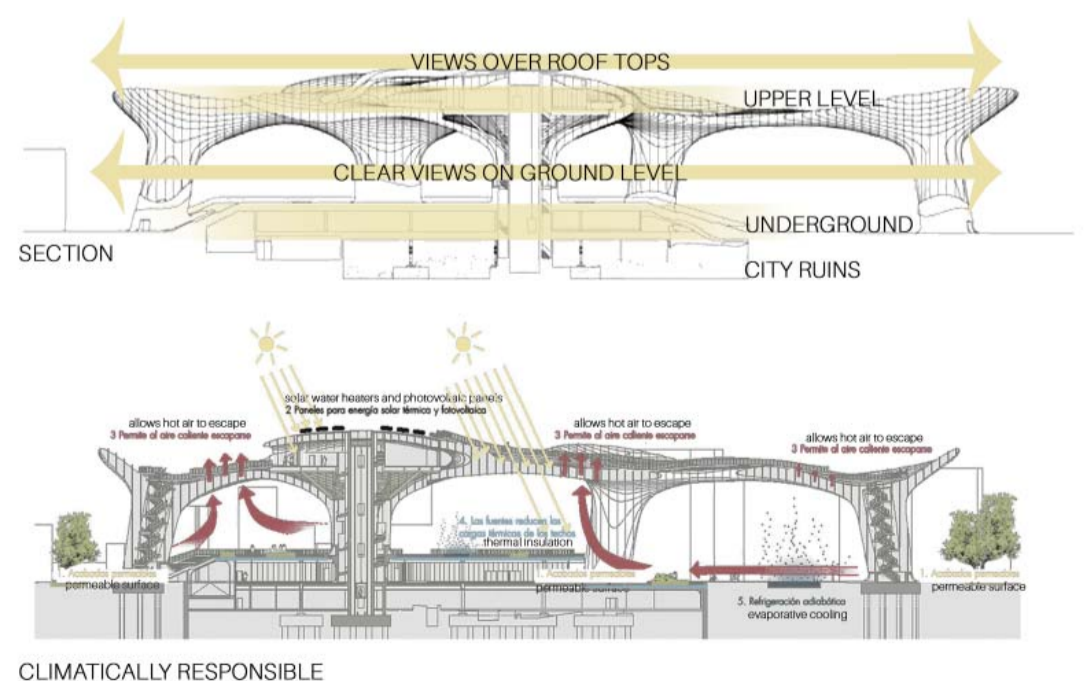


Figure 4.5 - Metropol Parasol sections.psd (Zimmer 2011)

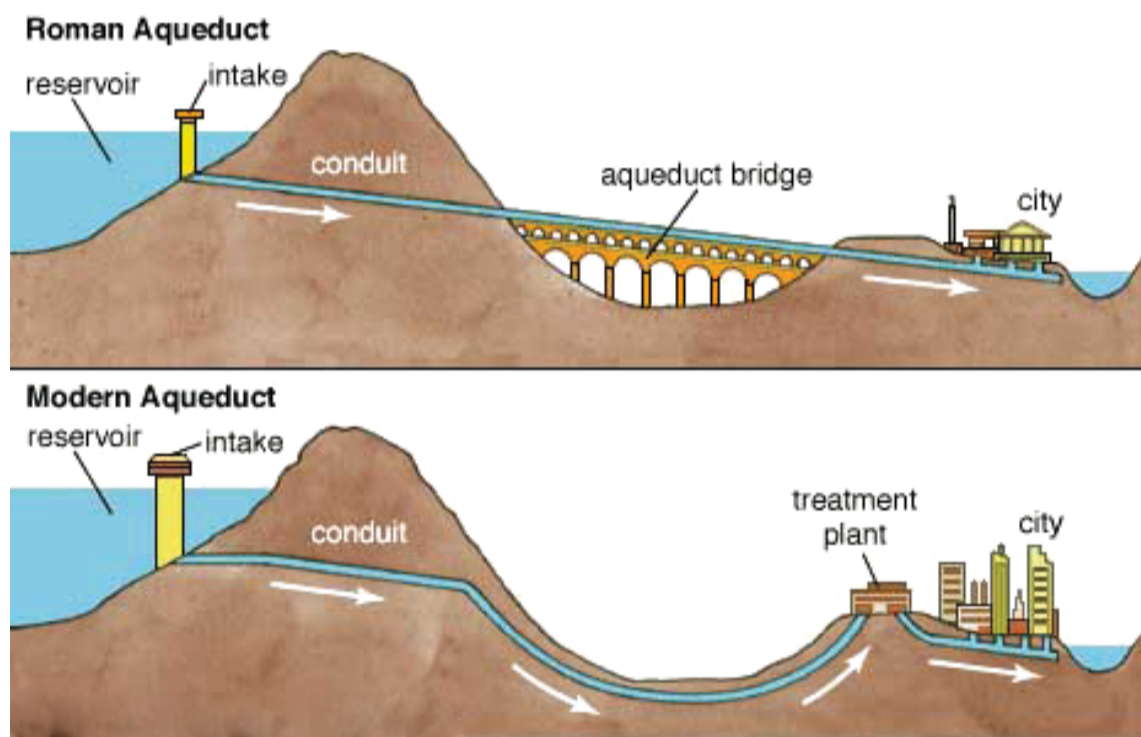


Figure 4.6 - Roman aqueduct versus modern aqueduct.psd (Ancient Roman Aqueducts n.d.)

TRADITIONAL ROMAN AQUEDUCT

The word aqueduct is derived from the Latin words aqua, meaning “water” and duct, meaning “to lead” (“Ancient Roman Aqueducts” n.d.). It is therefore a conduit that carries water from the point of source to the point of need. In modern engineering the term aqueduct is used to describe any system or structure with the purpose of carrying water, be it pipes, channels, ditches, gullies or canals.

The structure and function of the ancient aqueducts were studied as a precedent for two reasons. First, programmatically the proposed design becomes a conduit for water. It carries water from the municipal supply to the user. It carries rainwater from the roofs to storage and filtration systems. Moreover, metaphysically, it carries the memory of the water furrows – Pretoria’s own aqueducts. Secondly, structurally aqueducts are tall stone structures that became landmarks in old Roman empires. They elevate water, both physically, to transport it, but also metaphysically by articulating its course and exposing the structure that carries the water. In the proposed design the structure also physically become the conduit between the public and water. Furthermore the pipes that carry the water to and from the ablutions will be exposed where it runs in the steel structure. The steel structure becomes the conduit for the water just like the ancient stone aqueducts become the conduit for water.

TRADITIONAL ROMAN BATHS

The traditional Roman bath house is synonymous with the study of civilised urban public life. It was the ancient space of meeting, exchanging gossip, settling business deals and debating the political situation of the day (Cannon 2015). It can therefore also be seen as a space where you not only became naked in a literal sense, but where you also exposed yourself figuratively, by sharing your ideas, thoughts and narratives.

Pretoria is a cosmopolitan city of many cultures. Roman baths, even though the programme is not indigenous, supplies strong evidence of how public to semi-private gateways were treated and how men and woman reserved their privacy in their ablutions.

The relevance of studying the Roman bath house for this project is firstly because of its public nature. The intention of the project is to create a public space that links the existing programmes to each other, but also, on its own, augments the existing programmes. Public ablutions are crucial in the CBD of Pretoria. Considering the fact that many people travel far on foot and on

congested transport, a facility that offers the service of public showers and toilets will benefit them. Furthermore, the influence of the clinic and the importance of hygiene in preventing contagious diseases might strengthen the significance of public ablutions.

The bathhouse was analysed in terms of its vicinity in the city. It plan it is clear that it is tucked in behind public commercial street lined shops. Yet it has multiple entrances leading deep into the centre of the urban square. The long threshold already indicates you are entering a less public space. Inside, the space opens up to form a public atrium where initial meeting, greeting and acclimatising takes place. From the main atrium the men and women will divert - if they do not have separate outdoor entrances. For both sexes a portico will lead from the atrium to the dressing rooms, from where passages will lead to the different baths. Traditionally they will first enter the cold bath after which they will move across to the warm room (for acclimatising) to the hot baths. The hot baths are then followed by the wet and dry steam rooms. This understanding will help guide the design of public ablutions in the inner city.

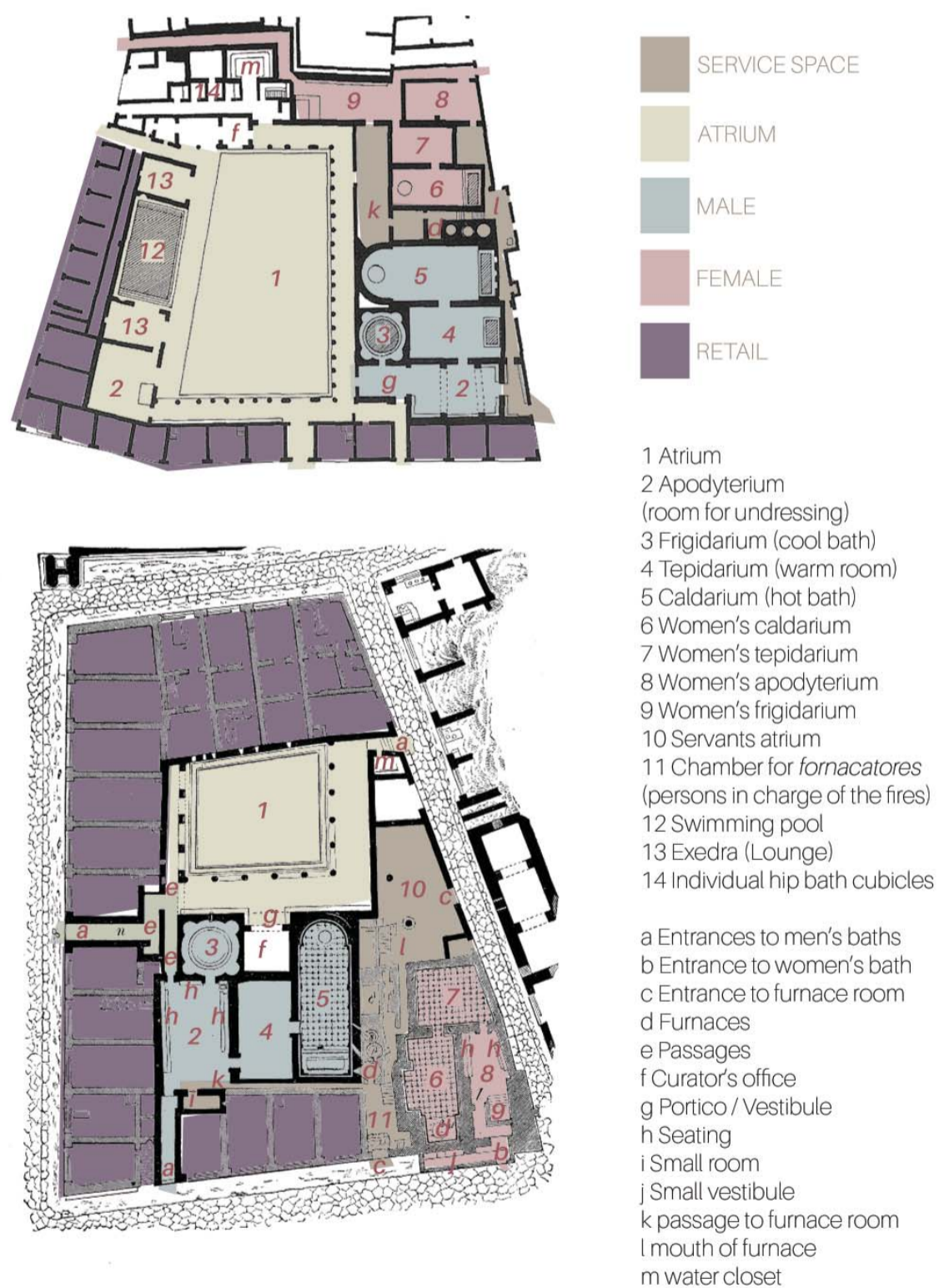


Figure 4.7 - Traditional Roman bath house.psd (Cannon 2015)

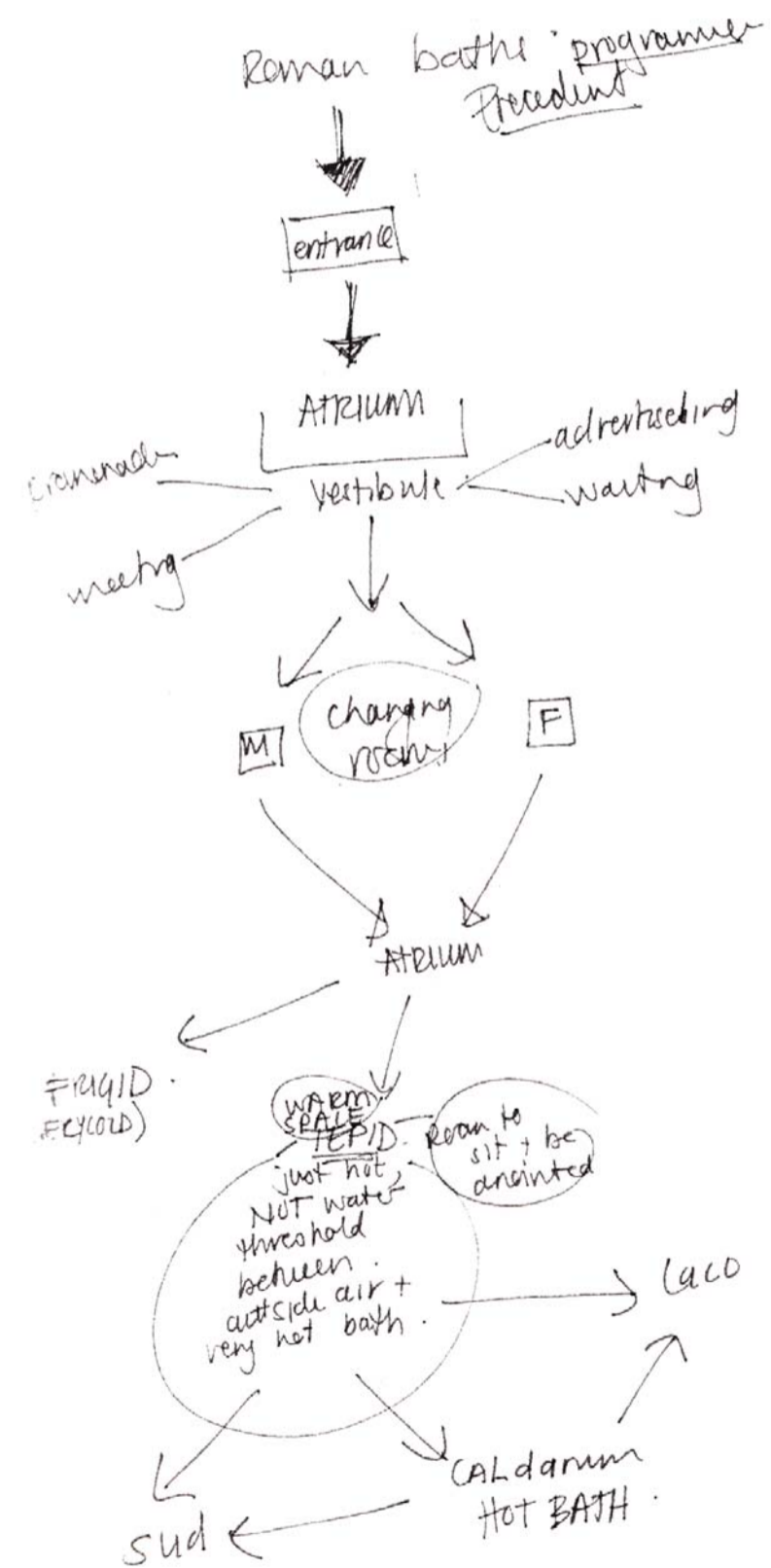


Figure 4.8 - Programmatic diagram of Roman bath house.psd



Figure 4.9 - Public space under the tree.psd

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN PUBLIC SPACE

In the traditional African village the public space is simply a central open piece of land, usually under a large tree that gives shade. Over time mats, benches and chairs will find a permanent place under the tree. And that is where the community will start to gather when they want to discuss, celebrate, debate and gossip. As Francis Kéré explained, “normally, in the village, public space is an open space. People gather under a large tree and talk” (Picchi 2010).

The public space in an African village has a different sense of ownership than the public space in a cosmopolitan city. The public space under a tree is really the property of that community and is limited to that specific culture. In the CBD of Pretoria with limited residential developments, the public space belongs to anyone who occupies the space any time of the day, week or year. The community will consist of commuters who walk the same way from the transport terminal to the city. It will consist of people working in the surrounding buildings, students studying in the nearby colleges, or visitors to the functions surrounding the site. It must therefore be the “open space under the tree” for a number of different communities, providing opportunities for meeting, gathering and socialising.



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“So much of design is context”. ~ Steve Madden

“Always design a thing by considering it in its next larger context – a chair in a room, a room in a house, a house in an environment, an environment in a city plan.” ~ Eliel & Eero Saarinen