

https://dspace.org/

Urban continuum: a third typology in Fordsburg

Toffah, Tahira

2009-09-16T08:22:28Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/7270

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

urban continuum: a third typology in fordsburg

tahira toffah

I, Tahira Natasha Toffah (0707067K), am a student registered for the course Master of Architecture [Professional] in the year 2008.
I hereby declare the following:

I am aware that plagiarism [the use of someone else's work without permission and/or without acknowledging the original sources] is wrong. I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have stated explicitly otherwise. I have followed the required conventions in referencing thoughts, ideas, and visual materials of others. For this purpose, I have referred to the Graduate School of Engineering and the Built Environment style guide.

I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my in my own work.

_____ _____

Tahira Toffah Date

This document is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree:
Bachelor of Architecture or Master of Architecture [Professional]
at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, in the year 2008.

All photographs and diagrams, where not credited, are by author

Thank you

Allah for finding me.
Tariq for showing me the way.
Sam - most importantly for all the moral support and for being the best sister I could ask for.
Whitney - you are wise beyond your years.
Rich - the best handyman around.
Tom and Marco for the memories and studio six days.
My family for all your love and support.
Sadiq, Eugene and Zubair - for not hesitating and for your enthusiasm.
All the staff at Wits for your knowledge and time.
MRA staff for taking the time to assist me.
To all those I have interviewed, photographed and documented.



ABSTRACT

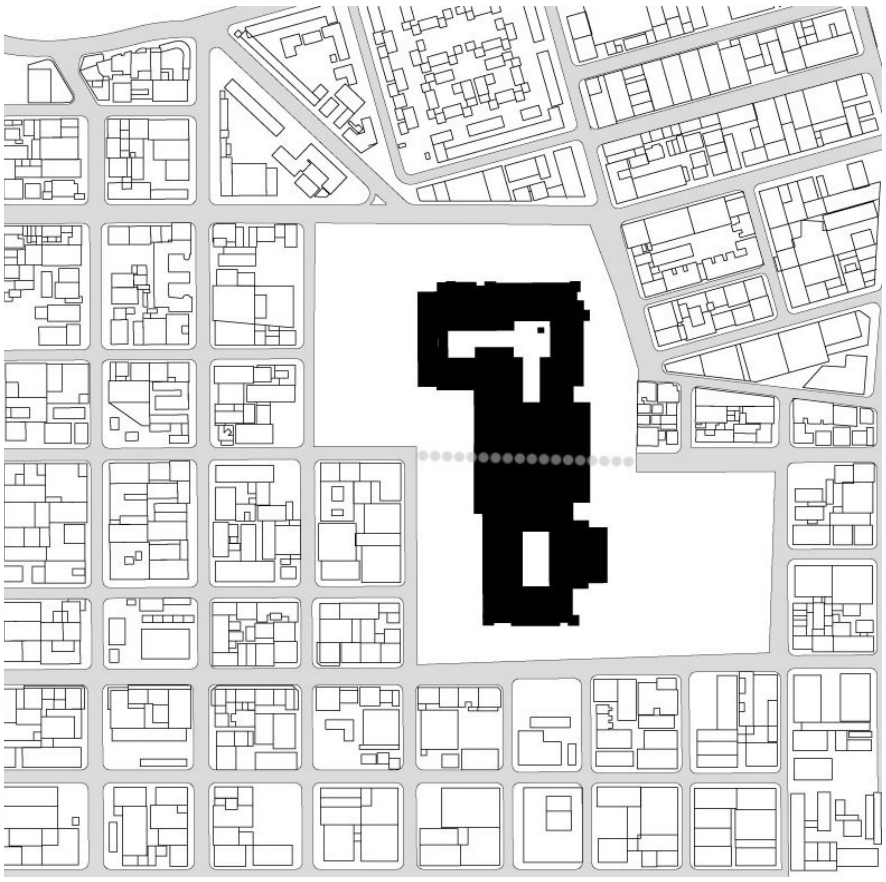
The premise of this thesis is the investigation of an urban landscape fractured by successive political, economic, and developmental concerns. It is an exploration of the intricate urban, architectural and cultural fabric of Fordsburg, revealing binary polarities ingrained in both landscape and mindscape. Discernable within these fractures are two distinct urban typologies: the layered urban fabric of Fordsburg; and the Oriental Plaza Shopping Centre (The Plaza), characterised by its uniformity & its discontinuity with the former.

As an urban environment Fordsburg lacks collective public space beyond those of purely commercial or religious purposes. However, the Plaza has become one the public places of Fordsburg and a place where people from all over Johannesburg have an opportunity to interact in the inner city beyond physical social boundaries. Despite the opportunities presented by the Plaza in this regard it is not a traditional public institution. It is privately owned and consumer based, with exchange as the predominant mode of interaction. Thus the Plaza has outgrown its initial conception as a political tool built to satisfy the needs of a middle class white consumer market and is now open to new possibilities.

The thesis proposal is an urban scale intervention that aims to reconcile the built form and spatial structures of the Oriental Plaza from the politicised forces of its initial conception with the forces that define its current position in an era of democracy. Thus Orient destination of the few becomes a city threshold for the many. Once a key made to fit the landscape and mindscape of one period in time it has become a keyhole to unlock new and imaginative possibilities in another.

Despite the apparent vastly different physicalities of the two typologies – Fordsburg as a historically intricate urban environment and the physical form of The Plaza – they share many similarities as well. This investigation seeks to learn from both typologies, the differences and the similarities, in order find an appropriate third typology to mediate between the typology of the mall and that of an urban environment. This is critical in the immediate context of Fordsburg and relevant to the future landscape of South African cities today.





Continuum - anything that goes through a gradual transition from one condition, to a different condition, without any abrupt changes or discontinuities.

(Oxford dictionary)








CONTENTS

01 **INTRODUCTION** 01

1.1 Issue
1.2 Site
1.3 Thesis Structure

02 **FORDSBURG : HISTORY** 10

2.1 Memory
2.2 City of Gold
2.3 People, Place and Politics: Rooting and Uprooting
2.4 The Oriental Plaza: White Elephant/Asian Citadel

03 **FORDSBURG: IDENTITY** 20

3.1 Cultural Idenitity
3.2 Hybrid Urbanism
3.3 Learning from Chinatowns
3.4 Commercialization of Public Space

04 **THE MALL** 30

4.1 The arrival of Malls in Johannesburg
4.2 Killarney Mall
4.3 The Rosebank Shopping Precinct
4.4 Willowbridge
4.5 Meydan Square

05 **IS THE PLAZA REALLY A MALL?** 46

5.1 From collective to public, from Jozi to Africa
5.2 Mall Definition
5.3 Origins
5.4 Feasability as determinant of typology
5.5 Democratic ownership
5.6 Unrealized mall configuration
5.7 Reantal and returns
5.8 Tenant mix
5.9 Regulated trading activities
5.10 Parking
5.11 Plaza now

06 **SITE ANALYSIS** 66

07 **PRECEDENT STUDIES** 74

URBAN PRECEDENT STUDIES

7.1 Isfahan
7.2 Free berlin University

ARCHITECTURAL PRECEDENT STUDIES

7.3 The Ark building
7.4 The Caixa forum
7.5 Rehabilitation of Santa Caterina Market

08 **URBAN DESIGN** 88

8.1 Issues
8.2 Programme
8.3 Concepts
8.4 Urban Design Principles

09 **ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN** 124

9.1 Concept
9.2 Programme
9.3 Design

10 **REFERENCES** 148