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The new public: a campus of exchange at Park Station

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Abstract:

Whose public?

This thesis, entitled 'The New Public', aims to investigate the role of public space and civic architecture in the information age. Specifically, examining the role of design in facilitating multiple different forms of public life as well as challenging the current approaches to pedestrian movement within the city.

The design approach was to create a campus containing a new public space and a hybrid civic building which together allow for spaces that facilitate new forms of public engagement. The aim of this campus is to create public spaces which host many different forms of public life and allow for mixing and exchange.

The thesis is grounded in the context of 21st century Johannesburg, a city which brands itself a 'world-class African city' and whose vision is to be a city that provides real quality of life for all its citizens.

However, while the current spatial policies strive to build a collective and shared vision for the future of Johannesburg, the city still plagued by a past based on segregation and inequality.

What this has left us with is a bifurcated public environment. A spatial condition further impaired by the currently strongly dived public and quasi-public transport systems.

I have therfore chosen to site my project in a space within the city which encompasses these issues: The Park Station precinct, Johannesburg.

The research component of this thesis aims to unpack the factors which have led to a change in the culture of use of the public realm both globally and locally. I also investigate how Johannesburg's past and current planning strategies created spaces that contain a 'legacy of separation'. Lastly the research extends to the relationship between public transport and public space and the effect of transit oriented design (TOD) approaches on public life.

