

ABSTRACT

Over 800 000 people access and commute through Johannesburg Inner City every single day. (JDA, 2009) Out of this, a certain group of people enter the city with every intention to find permanent residency and work within the city. They mostly come from afar, rural or semi-rural areas and often from neighbouring countries. Unfortunately, with the continuously changing urban environment, it can be an incredibly difficult process to adapt to alone. As such, this can be the best time and the worst time of their lives, filled with mixed emotions of excitement, disappointment, fear and anticipation. This is the time where one may manage to truly live life, or end up surviving it. The sudden change in lifestyle, security, social and economic conditions, entertainment and habitat can create situations where the very best will fail in their quest to improve their lives and fall into degenerate lives of crime and despair from which very few will emerge stronger.

As I see it, architecture is the science of building, in terms of not only visually inspiring structures but more importantly, structures that can improve the lives of people whilst preserving the environment and assisting in the building of a stronger economy and moral fibre. I believe that architecture is at the root of civilization itself.

However, due to a multitude of varying levels of control implemented into the urban realm of Johannesburg's Inner City, in order to ensure this change, it appears that parts of the physical environment are being distorted to accept a selected group of city inhabitants, leaving the marginalised group to fend for

themselves. In saying this, there thus appears to be a new form of segregation occurring within the city. As such, the social and physical environments are beginning to lose a certain key characteristic of what a city should be – spirit and integration between all of its parts.

This thesis therefore investigates a design that strives to create a bridge between Johannesburg's Inner City and the formal environments where new city-dwellers can find respite and are assisted to achieve their goals without succumbing to the pitfalls that would otherwise await them. The design will ensure that the transition between these new-comers' old and new lifestyles and surroundings is as painless as possible allowing them to reach their full potential quickly and hopefully removing the risk that they may become a burden to themselves and society.

This thesis will focus on the construct of a 21st century interpretation of Godin's familistère, not necessarily in its structural make up but rather in its funding, management and programmatic structure to fulfil its mission in a sustainable manner as well as the new idea of connecting these factors into the 'bigger picture'. (Benevolo, 1971) This thesis will address the fundamentals of target group, services provided, training, temporary living accommodation, optimal time of stay, work ethics, funding and most importantly, the spatial framework required for such integration to occur. The results of this thesis will culminate in a full-scale detailed design of such a construct and propose how it could be achieved spatially for the direct benefit of those individuals, as well as the indirect effect it could have on the physical make-up of Johannesburg's Inner City.