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Influx: finding a taxi architecture in between Tembisa and the inner city of Johannesburg

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Abstract

This report problematizes the “single story” of the minibus taxi industry as a criminal, violent lawless phenomenon, which is an undeniable layer, but the label is missing a dimension. (Adichie, 2009). Another way to view this industry is, as that physical entity that offers freedom from the map or the latitude to navigate the landscape.

Moving and inhabiting is a tool to transform and add a layer of operation on the post-apartheid landscape. It is a tool that negotiates access to resources. The action of taxi’s through and in Johannesburg occurs in tandem with informal trading and around these spaces, recyclers are prevalent. These agents’ act of claiming their place in the city by occupying pavements, roads, and vacant sites, can be seen a play in the city’s power, architecture, and space dynamics but, are also survivalists’ strategies. Transport hubs and taxi rank nodes in the cityscape can become a point of enquiry about sustainability: economic, social and through design, ecological.

This report is a study of what the temporality of the phenomenological paradigms of belonging can be in defining and designing contemporary and future African dense cities.

It is an experiment to be conducted as an iterative design of the spatial node along a journey and route, a micro part of a complex macro network.

This investigation is about understanding the social and economic systems enacted on the frameworks and infrastructure of the city; how they comply, resist and rewrite colonial and post-colonial geographies as well as the narratives.

It seeks to map out and invert through architecture, how the different actors in these networks that are positioned at the intersection that is a taxi rank, make space. In this instance, the one occurring at Esangweni in Tembisa and the one occurring at the eastern edge of the inner-city operated by the Johannesburg Tembisa Taxi Association (JTTA).



Fig.6_ Map of Johannesburg showing municipal boundaries. The map is a recreation by the author (2019), source (City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality,2019a)