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ROTTEN POTATOES
Redefining Perceptions and Integrating the Police Station in City and Suburban

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ABSTRACT

Living in a country plagued by high crime rates and negative perceptions of the South African Police Service, South Africans are relying more and more on devices such as siege architecture and fortification to attain a sense of safety and security. However, these fortified enclaves do not just provide people with a sense of safety, they also serve as manifestations of Apartheid memory: intensifying segregation and 'othering', discouraging the growth of community and working against the development of healthy and inspiring civic spaces. At the same time, society's obsession with police criminality, intensified by the influence of the media, has made policing one of the most contentious topics in post-Apartheid South Africa. Consequently, the relationship between the police – the state's strong-arm of power – and the people is fragile, tense, and unpredictable, symptomatic of the palpable divide that separates the state and the people, a divide which is reinforced by a lack of spatial justice and a relic architecture which neither the state nor the people can identify with. As a tangible tool of cultural expression and a discourse of time and place, architecture embodies a nation's shared history, its present, and its future aspirations. Architecture is also fundamental to the cause of change, serving as a catalyst and an interface through which the divide between the state and its people may be reconciled. However, the police station as an institutional building – a social incubator – remains apathetic to the 'everyday'. This archetype demands a drastic rethinking of both *parti* and contextual setting. Such a reform could potentially transform the police station into an integral, effective, and active facilitator of relationships and make possible the goal of 'community policing'.