

Every city experience is defined by the connective qualities of individual places within the city, however these human bodily experiences can potentially be disjointed if the individual places within the city are far from each other. Zimbabwe's Bulawayo train station has become a lost place, a phrase associated with abandoned and under-used urban spaces, mainly because of their lack of connectivity to the city (Trancik (1986). As part of the government's plan to improve Bulawayo's public transport system, commuter rail transport is being introduced and expanded for public convenience. Creating a new transport hub at the train station is not enough to make sure that people will use rail transport as a form of public transport because the site's location is outside the city. Though the place cannot be relocated nearer to the city, this thesis explores the ways in which this lost place can be reconnected to the city and transformed into a revitalised and vibrant transport hub for commuters from within and outside Bulawayo.

One of the main aspects of 'finding' lost places involves using urban commuter rituals to rejuvenate the train station. These rituals will be used to activate the internal and external spaces of the train station as a method of connecting the site to the city. Since movement is a vital entity of places of transit, restoring all commuter, private and public vehicular links from the city to the station will become another method of re-connection to be explored. Reconnecting existing comatose transit systems rejuvenates and improves the efficiency of the urban life, however, more people in Zimbabwe are not using mass transport modes because of lack of security and their inaccessibility to the city centre. Public transport nodes are eroding fast and people are resorting to hitchhiking on a daily basis. This quality of life is taking over the city whilst abandoning other existing public transport systems. New routes of circulation are going to be established as a result of the new train station. Areas of commercial and social activity will occur bringing on the need for the area around the train station to be rezoned so as to accommodate the expected development. The station's new programme will help realise the potential of places of transit as social centres that people can go to and not as temporal nodes of transit that people merely go through. The building's new programme will allow spaces to create a new sense of place shaped by the users and their ritualistic activities. Whether they are formal or informal, these activities mark the new identity of the city's commuter experience and at the same time act as a gateway to the many opportunities that lie in the city.