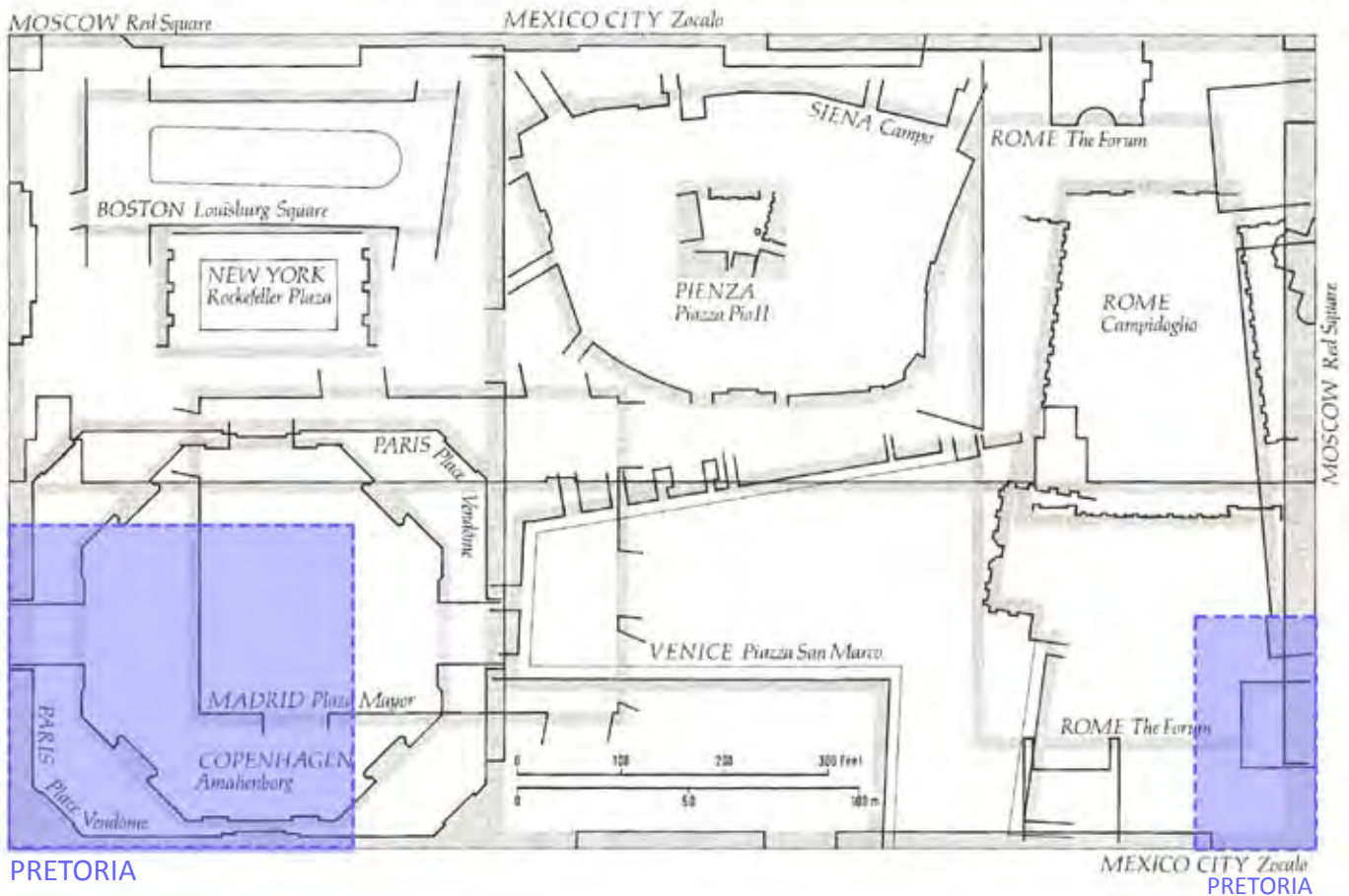


# 03\_CITY SQUARE



PRETORIA  
LILLIAN NGOYI SQUARE (CURRENT CONDITION)

MEXICO CITY Zocalo  
PRETORIA

Sammy Marks Square

*“Stand in a public space, walk about, sit at its edges. Does the space itself have a presence, a definition, a quality that adds significantly to the architecture and the features that it embraces? And if you decide that yes, it is a square, does it work well? Does it take your breath away as you enter, and lift your spirits as you stroll around? Is it a place in which you want to meet your friends and observe strangers? Is it the first choice for community celebrations? Does it offer a sense of place, a feeling of historical continuity, a vision of what urban life should be? Is it maintained with respect or vandalized; does it serve as an oasis or for parking? Ask another question: “if not, why not?”*

*Actors and décor have changed over the centuries, but the need for a stage has remained a constant.”*

(Webb, M. 1990: 11-12)

Fig. 3.1.

*"Oh, a day in the city square, there is no such pleasure in life!"* (Browning, R. in Webb, M. 1990, p. 12.)

This chapter will discuss the importance and the meaning of public space in different cultures and the influence of culture on the production/construction of public space. It will also look at historical and contemporary theories about public space, and characteristics of successful public spaces. An attempt will be made to apply these theories to Lillian Ngoyi Square, an underutilized public space in the centre of Pretoria, in order to obtain an appropriate design solution. The study reflects a view that public life in public spaces is beneficial to people and societies and; that a good balance between private and public life is necessary for a healthy lifestyle.

#### PUBLIC SPACE: MEANING AND CULTURE

Public places provide casual meetings and encounters in the course of daily life that can bring people together and give life meaning. Public life offers relief from the stresses of work and provides opportunity for relaxation and social interaction and entertainment (Carr et al. 1992, p. 45; Webb, M. 1990,p. 9; Low, S. 2000, p. 239). Low (2000:35), states that public squares and plazas represent the aesthetics of a city, and are metaphors of urban life.

There is great concern over the disappearance of public space worldwide, as many of these spaces are privatized, restricting free access to them. Low (2000:34) states that in America, civic spaces are no longer democratic spaces where all people are welcome. These spaces have become instead, centers of trade and consumption that are under strict



Fig. 3.2. Rhythms of daily life in Campo San Stefano, Venice.

surveillance by police or private security companies. Low (2000:246) argues that the understanding of the political nature and cultural meaning of public space leaves us with an obligation to preserve and protect them from pressures of privatization.

In South Africa, access to public spaces and facilities were restricted to certain racial groups in recent history. Public life is therefore especially important in South Africa as one of our democratic rights. Free access and use of these facilities by all people, should be celebrated by all South Africans.

Carr et al. (1992:3) state that there is a dynamic balance between public and private activities in all communal life. Within this balance, different cultures place different emphasis on public space. In the Latin cultures of Europe, wealth and civic and religious power is reflected in public space through palaces, churches and town halls that face the main streets and squares. In North African Muslim cultures, public space is limited to markets and shopping streets and rich design expression is given to mosques, homes and schools (Carr et al. 1992, p.3).

An investigation into the notion of space in indigenous South African cultures by Rod Lloyd (2003:105,107) suggests that European and African notions of space differ greatly. Lloyd (2003:107) states that in traditional African settlement, it is understood that all space is public, except when defined by ritual as private space. However, in European culture, all space is private, except for the specifically designated public areas. Although the private-public balance is unique in each culture, the balance will shift under the influence of cultural exchange, technology, changing political and economic systems and the culture of the time (Carr et al. 1992, p.3). In all cultures, public space is seen as a stage where communal life unfolds (Carr et al. 1992, p.3; Webb, M. 1990,p. 9; Low, S. 2000, p. 239). Public spaces such as streets, squares and parks are essential in our everyday lives as spaces for interaction with others, where we can learn and play. They are places of relaxation that offer freedom from the troubles of work. According to Michael Webb (1990:9), they are microcosms of urban life that offer excitement and repose, markets and public ceremonies. They are places to meet friends and watch the world go by.

One of the first forms of a “square” in Western culture was the ancient Greek Agora, described by Lewis Mumford as the “place of speech”. The Agora was seen as the religious, political, judicial, social, and commercial centre of the ancient city, and was usually located in the centre of the city or close to the harbor. The Agora was usually enclosed on two or three sides, surrounded by an arcade containing shops and public buildings, statues, altars and trees. According to Webb (1990:28), the Agora in many Greek cities was replaced by smaller squares scattered around the city around 3BC. In Rome, the forum was established as market, meeting place and a place of public gathering. Here, all the important public buildings, including the court, jail, bathhouse, places of entertainment and the temple were situated around the forum. During medieval times, squares were marketplaces. Carr et al. (1992:54) state that, in addition to market squares, a number of European cities contained squares or piazzas adjacent to their town halls. During the Renaissance, plazas were carefully planned based on a symmetrical design.

Public spaces remained the meeting ground for people until the twentieth century, when people started to move away from the city, to the suburbs where they have their own private outdoor space. The need and use of outdoor public space changed. With the invention of the automobile, street life diminished and shopping centres and commercial strips developed in suburbs, replacing the downtowns as settings for commercial life. This has led to a decline in public life, and a shift of balance in society from towns to the security of public life (Carr et al. 1992, p.4,5,60).



**Facing page:**

Fig. 3.3. Barcelona's Placa de la Palmera before and  
Fig. 3.4. after it was improved (Sculpture: Richard Serra).

Fig. 3.5. Placa de Navas, Barcelona.

Fig. 3.6. Public sculpture in Parc del Clot, Barcelona.



**This page:**

Fig. 3.7. Race of the Ceri in the Piazza della Signoria, Italy.

Fig. 3.8. Market in Campo del Fiori, Rome, Italy.

Fig. 3.9. Children playing in Campo Santa Maria Formosa,  
Venice, Italy.

Fig. 3.10. Spanish Steps and the Barcaccia fountain. Image  
taken from Via Condotti, Rome, Italy.

In 1979, the socialist mayor, Narcis Serra, initiated a project for new public spaces, and the restoration/redesign of old public spaces in Barcelona (See Fig. 3.3-3.6). The project's goal was to restore old- and create new districts, and to create a city of smaller spaces, each with its own identity, rather than a monotonous sprawl of housing and businesses (Webb, M. 1990, p.185). The renewal project did not create new theories of urban design, but rather a new approach. It showed a deep awareness of the reality of what the city has meant to our society, economy and culture, and what it offers as an important part of life (Mackay, D. 1996, p.38).

The project succeeded in significantly improving the quality of public spaces in Barcelona, drawing local people back to the city to use its public space, and improving the tourist value of the city. The projects were all very different, ranging from traditional European squares to contemporary squares filled with contemporary public art. Although many of these public spaces are not considered (by Projects for Public Spaces) to be successful spaces, they should be considered as valuable examples of urban renewal.

William White, mentor for the PPS (2009) argues that the success of public squares is not determined by shape size or design, but by access and choice of where to sit. People are the big attraction and they are drawn to, and try to be as close as possible to where the action is happening (PPS (2009); Gehl, 1987; Carr et al. 1992). Jan Gehl (1987:31) writes that human activity and people's presence are what draw people to public places. "People come where people are" (Gehl, J. 1987, p.25).

"..people and human activity are the greatest object of attention and interest. Even the modest form of contact of merely seeing and hearing or being near to others is apparently more rewarding and more in demand than the majority of other attractions offered in the public spaces of cities and residential areas. Life in buildings and between buildings seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves." Gehl(1987:31)

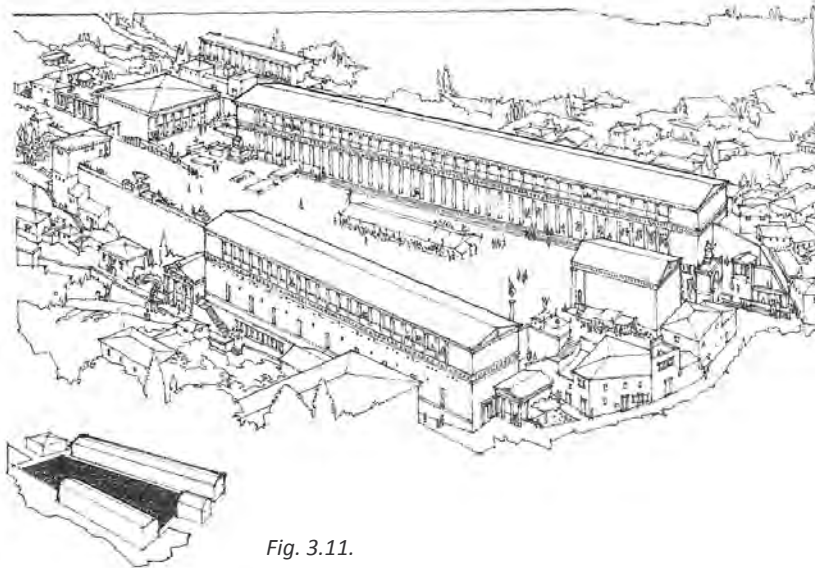


Fig. 3.11.

Gehl (1987:79) states that the measure of success of public spaces is not the number of people or events that can be observed in public spaces, but rather the amount of time (minutes) spent in these spaces, that is important. A high level of activity in a certain area can be stimulated by ensuring that more people use the public spaces and by encouraging longer individual stays (Gehl, J. 1987, p.97). The major issues in designing public spaces, is attracting people to these spaces, and providing a comfortable environment that will keep them there for the maximum period of time. Methods of addressing human needs through the design of public spaces will be discussed below.

#### NEEDS

Carr et al. (1992:87) state that people use public space deliberately or by accident. People are attracted to spaces that are inviting and friendly. Needs in public spaces include comfort, relaxation and security. This involves providing for basic human needs: food, drink and shelter or a place to rest that provides shelter from the sun, wind and rain, while being visible for the feeling of security. A variety of seating and standing options should be created to give the users of the space a degree of choice and comfort (Gehl, J. 1987, p.156).

People also have a need for passive (Fig.3.12) and active (Fig.3.6-3.10) engagement (Carr et al. 1992, p.105-119). PPS (2009) describe this as the “Inner” Square and “Outer” Square: The edges of successful public spaces are used as viewing points where life on the square and the surrounding streets can be observed. Gehl (1987:32-34) argues that people-watching is one of the most important activities in public spaces. Gehl (1987:157) further states that people are more comfortable and safe when sitting/standing in an area where their backs are protected.

Active engagement involves meeting and socializing with people, walking along a promenade, or playing in the square’s water fountain. Carr et al. 1992:118 states that active engagement involves the more direct experience of the public space and the people in it. These are the activities that are watched by those on the edges of the squares. The “Inner Square” is the activity space where public performances are held and events occur. Active engagement can be achieved by providing sculptures/ playgrounds for children to play and engage with each other and the physical surroundings.

#### RIGHTS

Freedom of access to public spaces, and freedom of use of these spaces is important for all genders, cultures and racial groups. Throughout the world, and especially in recent South African history, use of certain public spaces has been denied to groups of people. This discrimination leads to negative connotation to a place. Such negative connotations are associated with Lillian Ngoyi Square. This study attempts to remove this stigma through a design that would be accessible to all. PPS (2009) state that Bryant Park in New York is heavily used and a very popular location, but has become increasingly privatized. The park is closed to the public for two weeks each year for a private “invitation-only” festival. They explain that although the park is very popular and frequently used, it is not regarded as a successful space because it shuts out the public for long periods of time.

The best public spaces are easily reachable and accessible by foot (PPS (2009); Alexander (2002)). Physical access is one of the most important aspects of public space. It determines the amount of people that use the space and the success of the space. In the case of Lillian Ngoyi Square in Pretoria, access to the site is restricted by a number of physical barriers and level differences. Unless the space is made more accessible to the public, the space will remain unused and empty. Many examples of hindered access to public space can be given in Pretoria.



Fig. 3.12. Old men sunbathing in Plaza de la Borda, Texaco, Mexico.



High volumes and speed of traffic further hinder access to public spaces. If traffic volume and speed around squares are too high, the space becomes unsafe for children. In Røros, Norway, some streets are closed during summer days to create walking streets. These streets are only used by cars and trucks in the evenings and in winter months. According to Carr et al. (1992:143), limiting vehicular access has enabled the street to retain its local character.

Public spaces should be well connected to their surroundings. The connection to surrounding neighborhood is important to draw people and activity to the space. Furthermore, squares should be designed to accommodate change. This change of character at different times of the day, month and year is not a new concept. Most European squares host festivals at certain times of year and use changes throughout the day and month. A flexible design provides opportunity for changes in needs and events. For example, a retractable stage and movable chairs could be provided for music performances. For other occasions, the square could be cleared for a tennis match. Umbrellas could be provided for events and functions (PPS (2009), Carr et al. 1992, p.169-180).

#### MEANING/IDENTITY

The most successful squares have a unique identity. Identity and overloaded meaning in public spaces can lead to negative connotations and alienation of large groups of people. Strijdom Square (now Lillian Ngoyi square) was designed to be a display of Afrikaner Nationalist identity (Hook, D. 2005). Hook (2005) explains that the design of space to be monumental and reflect the identity of a selected group of people, excluding others, may lead to violence and evoke feelings of hatred and unease.

Carr et al. (1992:237) state that attention to the needs and rights of the users of public space are means of making public spaces civil. Furthermore, public spaces develop mean-

ing when people are able to “form roots” in an area. Different meanings may be formed by different cultural groups as their view and use of public spaces may differ. Identity is enhanced through activities that involve entertainment or evoke national pride (e.g. processions). Good squares provide attractions and smaller “places” that attract different people, such as cafés, fountains, sculpture, bandstands and playgrounds that provide entertainment and draw people back to the space time and again.

#### MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

According to PPS (2009), the best places are ones that people return to time and again. The only way to achieve this is through a management plan that understands and promotes ways of keeping the square safe and lively. Management involves providing attractions, organizing events, regulating vehicular access to the space, catering for the needs of the user, and maintenance of the space itself.

Squares with good management plans typically change with the seasons, hosting events such as seasonal markets and festivals, displays of art and sculpture, etc. Carr et al. (1992:256) state that different activities are preferred by different people. A thoughtfully designed multiuse space allows for more possibilities and can cater for the needs and preferences of different users. This could involve zoning of activities in public spaces.

“The designer must not only think about how to support multiple uses of a space, but also how this time sharing will affect the use of adjacent spaces.”Carr et al. 1992, p.257.

*Fig. 3.13. Puppet Theatre in Gunajato's Jardin de la Union, Mexico.*



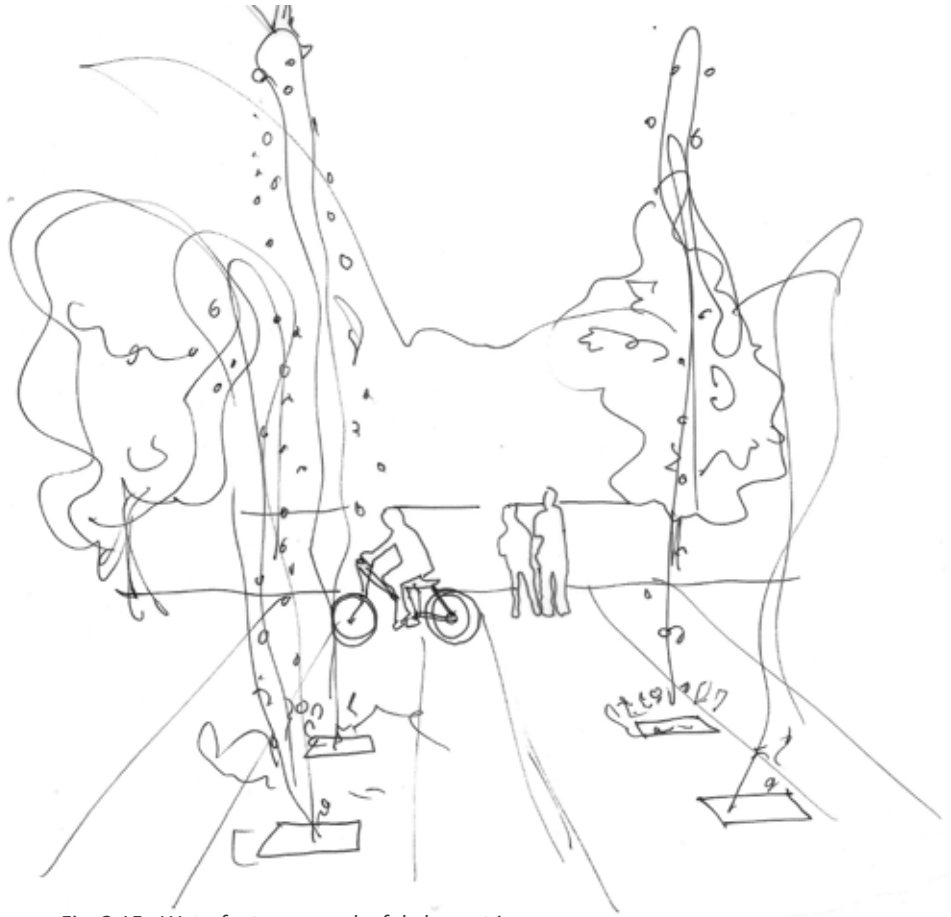
PPS (2009) state that some of the most successful squares in America, are managed by partnerships that seek to supplement what the city can provide, with funding from diverse sources. Funding can come from the rent of cafes, market space and other small commercial uses on site, as well as fundraisers, film shoots, and hosting festivals and events.

An example of good square management is the Rockefeller Plaza in New York that hosts a range of activities across all four seasons. For Webb (1990:174) the centre is proof that the square is still a valid concept, despite the changes and fragmentation of its traditional functions. He states that the Center is not art, but a living theatre of excellence that has not yet been matched.

Low (2000:35) discusses the differences in meaning and use of public space in Europe, Latin America and North America and finds that European and Latin American cultures view the city square as a symbol of Civic power and the cultural centre of the city. North American plazas, on the other hand, need commercial activity in order to be successful. The activation of public space through commercial activity could make the square less accessible to those who do not have the financial means to enjoy these activities. Financial/ social class exclusion of certain groups is a problem worldwide. An intervention in Lillian Ngoyi Square should therefore provide activities to attract a number of different groups of people.



*Fig. 3.14. Opportunity for resting and people watching*



*Fig. 3.15. Waterfeature as a playful element in a square*

## CONCLUSION

The future of public spaces internationally, is uncertain due to increasing privatization that leads to restricted access to public space and leaves many open spaces in the city unused. Free access to public space is a democratic right that must be maintained. Public space is an essential part of every city, where the dramas of everyday life of city users can unfold. Public squares are places of gathering and socializing that should be accessible to all. There is a need for a new approach to the design of public space that is culturally relevant and caters for the needs of the contemporary city dweller. In South Africa, the barriers of race and culture may be overcome through the design of new public spaces, and the regeneration of unused public space, to allow free access to all in a safe environment.



Fig. 3.16.

## ROCKEFELLAR PLAZA

Rockefeller Plaza is a sunken plaza in New York City, filled with tables and umbrellas in summer (Fig 3.16), and a popular ice rink in winter (Fig3.17). The plaza is said to be one of the most visited destinations in New York. According to Webb (1990:173), the square was intended to serve the opera house, but became a sunken plaza that focused attention of the RCA tower next to it. Originally, the square was lined with luxury shops on the lower level but few people visited these shops because there was too much to admire on ground level (Webb, M. 1990, p.174).



Fig. 3.17.

The shops were soon replaced by restaurants. An ice rink was tried out in the winter of 1936, and was a huge success (Fig3.17). The square has a year round program of events, from Easter fashion parades, concerts, floral displays, boxing matches, civic rallies and music performances.

*“The city makes the pent up energy of the Center and the city accessible and exhilarating. The avenues are bruising; here, except during the gridlock of Christmas, there is room to breathe and space to sit.”* Webb. 2009, p.147.



Fig. 3.18.



Fig. 3.19.

## BOSTON CITY PLAZA

City Hall Plaza is a large expanse of paving and steps (Fig.3.20.) that slopes down to the City Hall (Fig. 3.21), a large brutalist building. The plaza is one of Boston's least used public spaces (Carr et al. 1992, p.88; Webb. 1990, p.182). Webb (1990:182) states that the large stepped plaza bares a slight resemblance to the sloping surface of the Campo in Sienna, but the plaza is four times the size of the Campo. Unlike the great European Squares, Boston's City Hall Plaza is not surrounded by restaurants and street cafés bustling with activity, nor is it the location of any festivals, markets or public performances.

Fig. 3.20.

The shapeless plaza does not offer any activities such as shops or outdoor cafés that could draw people to the space. Buildings surrounding the plaza offer little protection against harsh cold winds. A fountain in the plaza was intended to draw crowds, but this did not offer enough activity to save the space, and the fountain no longer functions. The square offers no views to the city, or any trees to provide soft edges and shading.

According to PPS (2009), lack of activity in the square and surrounding streets add to the lack of access to the square. Furthermore, the layout of the square hinders movement on natural paths that people would take. The space is uncomfortable, unconnected and uninteresting.

Fig. 3.21.

Fig. 3.22.



# 04\_URBAN THEATRE

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This chapter will discuss the possibilities of reactivating Lillian Ngoyi Square as a place where the identity and rich cultural diversity of Pretoria can be expressed. Low (2000:50) proposes that urban public space reflects a cultural order through a complex culture making process. In this process, cultural images are produced, manipulated and understood by all users and parties involved in public space (designers, politicians, users and commentators) within changing historical, economic and sociopolitical contexts. Low (2000:249) states that public spaces hold cultural and political meanings symbolically encoded in their spatial relations and built environment. The designed landscape acts as an environmental device for communicating past and present meanings to daily users and urban residents.

The reactivation of Lillian Ngoyi square, a site filled with historical and political meaning, could invoke national pride amongst all users.

From the examination of contemporary theory regarding successful public spaces, it can be deduced that buildings and spaces in urban environments should be designed to facilitate human activity in order to be successful spaces. This is especially true around public open spaces such as squares and parks, where a lack of access, activity or comfort could be detrimental to the success of the space. Dewar & Uitenboogaardt (1991:84) state that public spaces rich in social spaces and activity, are regarded to be positive, irrespective of the aesthetic quality of the buildings surrounding the spaces. Buildings should not only define public spaces, but activate them through appropriate function (Tschumi, B. 2000, p.591). In this document, the term “*event*” refers to any form of interaction that receives an audience, or any communication or exchange between two or more people. This definition includes any form of meeting, performance (music, drama, dance, public speaking, etc.), display of art or media, markets or fairs etc. Public

Fig. 4.1.



squares are historically the venues for such events. According to the Oxford Dictionary, an event is: “...a thing that happens or takes place, especially one of importance”.

Tschumi (2000:12) states that architecture is both about space and about the events that take place in that space. The provision of functions that appeal to and attract local users, and management of the environment, will lead to spontaneous events occurring in public spaces.

Squares are often referred to as public theatres or theatres of life. They are places where one can watch the world go by, and drama in the community unfold. Theatres have also been used for performances. Anthropologist, Miles Richardson has done studies on different events and differences in social interaction between people in a market and public squares. Richardson (1982:85) writes that, while being engaged in participation and unaware of being in the presence of others in markets, people are conscious of being in the presence of others when they are in public squares. When in a public square, people act as if being “on stage”. When a market is held in a public square, the market and the exchange that occurs in it, is the event. On any other ordinary day in a public square, human activity becomes the event in the space. This thesis suggests investigating the possibilities of Lillian Ngoyi Square as an open-air theatre, not only of formal performances, but of the everyday activities and dramas that occur in the city centre.

According to Carlson (1989:14), theatre was an important part of urban life during the late middle ages and early Renaissance period in Europe. With no specific architectural element devoted to theatres, public performances were often held in public squares and market places. Carlson (1989:17, 19), states that the market square was a symbol of the stage where every ordinary citizen played his role. This was often a preferred site for public theatre as it was the source of the most activity in the city. This would also result in the involvement of every citizen in the event. Dramatic performances encouraged active participation by regularly erasing any possible barrier between performance and public space (Carlson. 1989, p.17).

Carlson (1989:129) suggests that the theatrical event that takes place in the community and, where it takes place, contributes, in all cultures to the processing of the event, and argues that it is not the separate spaces of actor and observer that make theatre, but rather, the simultaneous presence of both, and confrontation of actor against audience. This relationship characterizes theatre, even when it is not enclosed in a physical structure. This is also true of public space, which cannot be successful without opportunities for passive and active engagement. He writes: “*without a player’s space, however, there would be no theatre*”. Similarly, without activity and event, public space cannot be successful.

Contemporary theatre is no longer bound to any specific buildings. Directors have often explored the possibilities of non-traditional spaces, and performances have been held in streets, parks, factories, warehouses, and in public and private buildings and spaces. Often non-conventional spaces are preferred because they are less expensive to rent than traditional theatres, and allow more opportunity for stage design. Mackintosh (1993:86,121) advocates performance space that can be observed from all sides. He describes a “*courtyard theatre*” where galleries are introduced and performances can be viewed from many angles. Mackintosh (1993:121) argues that theatre space should be flexible, allowing for different configurations of layout for different types of performances.



*Fig. 4.2. Children playing on the Zocalo in front of the City Hall in Veracruz, Mexico.*

#### APPLICATION

The Urban design framework (see Appendix C), suggests the regeneration of the city of Pretoria through the strengthening of its identity as a South African city with historical value. Pretoria lacks a strong cultural centre that draws people to the CBD. There is an opportunity to develop the area around the State Theatre as a cultural district, giving all people access to the arts. Culture is a system of values and attitudes and institutions that influence individual and social behavior in all types of human experience. Arzeni (1996:66) claims that culture moulds the territory in which people live, and that urban culture differs greatly from rural culture in all countries. Culture, not politics, determines the success of society (Arzeni, S. 1996, p. 67).

Arzeni (1996:68) states that urban authorities can use culture as an innovative force in regeneration of cities, and in creating jobs for the future. However, this poses the challenge to balance different interests represented in the urban environment in order to benefit and involve inhabitants. This requires management and preservation of the local heritage.

Currently, the State Theatre does not draw enough daily users to regenerate life on the square. A relationship between actor and observer, or attraction and human activity, as well as access to the attraction must be established in order for the space to be successful. New functions that cater for the daily needs of the public using the space should be provided in order for Lillian Ngoyi Square to become a successful space.



Fig. 4.3. Schouwburg Plein at night

# SCHOUWBURG PLEIN

WEST8 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS | Rotterdam, NL

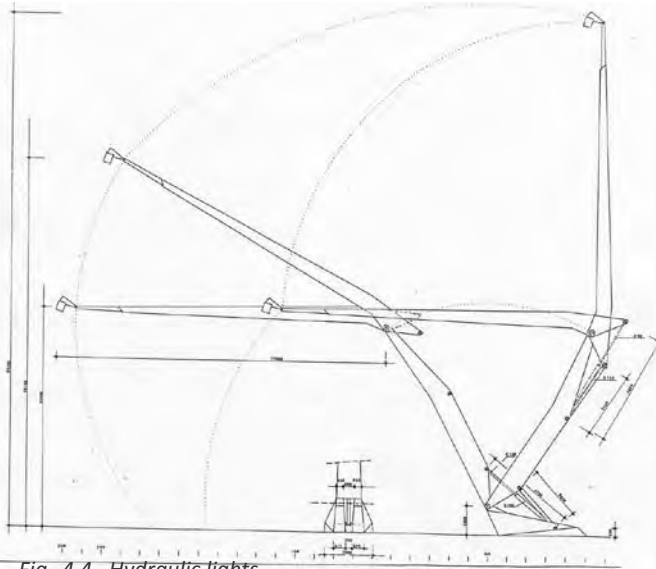


Fig. 4.4. Hydraulic lights



Fig. 4.5. Spotlight

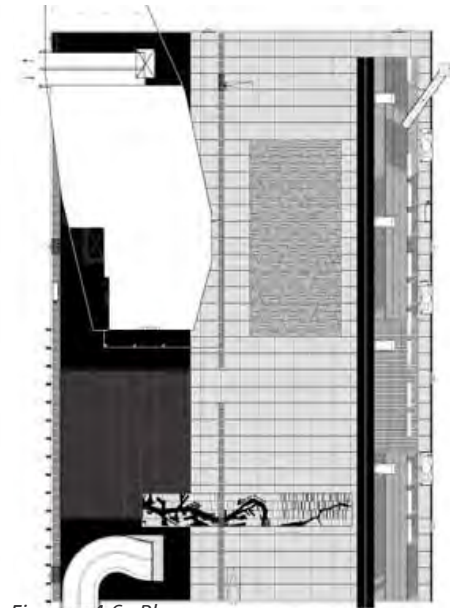


Fig. 4.6. Plan



Fig. 4.7. Waterfeature



Fig. 4.8. Event on the square

Schouwburg Plein is a public space in a prominent area in the centre of Rotterdam. It is surrounded by a municipal theatre, concert hall and station. The square was a dilapidated unused space in a prominent part of the city. The goal of the design project was to make the square more attractive. The brief required an attractive space that could host events.

The concept was to create a stage for the city that could be creatively filled by its users (Schneider, 2007). The square was to change its appearance and function depending on the time of day and season. The design of the square is based on expected use during the day, and the relationship with the sun. A timber bench that stretches over the entire length of the square is placed on the east side, which receives more sunlight. Ventilation towers from the parking basement below the square are clad with lightweight metal gauze, and act as armatures for advertisements and information displays. At night, these towers are lit from below.

Four red hydraulic lights define the eastern boundary of the square. These lights are crane like and can adjust their spotlight at random. Connection points for water, electricity and tent-tie downs are built into the square's floor surface. A water feature built into the square's surface can be activated when needed, and turned off when not. This cools the square and its users during summer, and is a great attraction for children.

Schouwburg Plein holds many similarities to Lillian Ngoyi Square, and offers an example of the successful redesign of an unused existing public space. Both squares are situated on top of pre-existing parking basements, in the case of Schouwburg Plein, this basement is used as a light source for the square at night. Schouwburg Plein offers an example of the uses that an open space next to cultural facilities could offer, by using the square for cultural events. Both squares are situated in pedestrian areas, with a much used vehicular route on one side. Strong vertical elements and a line of trees on the road side of Schouwburg Plein create a defined edge to the square from where activities and events can be viewed. The surface of the square is raised a few centimeters above the surface of the road, to enforce the concept of the square as a stage.

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) argues that the square only attracts users when activities are explicitly organized, and that it does not provoke uses that are unprogrammed. Schneider (2007) argues that the square should be seen in its current and historical context and states that the space provides a vibrant, playful, and flexible outdoor venue for the city. He praises the designers for challenging the idea of what an urban park/square should look like, and their innovative use of materials and technologies.





Fig. 4.10. Birds eyeview of square from Pompidou Roof

Fig. 4.11. Place Beaubourg sloping towards entrance of Pompidou

# PLACE BEAUBOURG

RICHARD ROGERS + RENZO PIANO | Paris, France

The Pompidou Centre in Paris was a collaborative design project between Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano which was completed in 1977. The project is an example of how a building can bring life to a rundown area of a city.

The plaza was designed to be a grand entrance to the Centre, and an arena for public events (Carr et al. 1992, p.111; Webb, M. 1990, p.201). The Centre is situated in a pedestrian area, surrounded by a network of small shops catering for the local people. The building houses a collection of multi-media contemporary art, and is the site for conferences and performances, a library, a current affairs room, two restaurants and a terrace overlooking Paris and the plaza below. According to Carr et al. (1992:111) and Webb (1990:201), the plaza attracts an extraordinary amount of street performers, and is used as an amphitheatre where people can watch both the activities on the plaza and the activities of the streets surrounding the plaza.

PPS (2009) state that the Centre's (and plaza's) success can be attributed to its array of activities- attracting not only tourists, but Parisians and locals to its complex. The plaza itself is a large paved surface that offers no seating, yet crowds gather to watch performers and to meet friends. According to PPS (2009), the lack of seating is made up by a number of street cafés surrounding the Centre, where visitors can relax and view the action in the plaza and the surrounding square. "To its credit, the plaza succeeds where other such open expanses in dense urban settings have failed." (PPS 2009).

The Pompidou Centre and its plaza were designed to accommodate public viewing of films, providing a gentle slope for viewers to sit and watch. For most of the day, there is a choice of shaded and sunny spots to gather on the plaza, and areas that are more protected from the wind, adding to the comfort level on the plaza. The project is a celebration of arts and culture. According to Rogers, Stirk Harbour and Partners (2007), the public domain is extended from the square up to the façade with a great diagonal escalator that crosses the façade, and allows visitors to view the events on the public space from within the building.



Fig. 4.12.

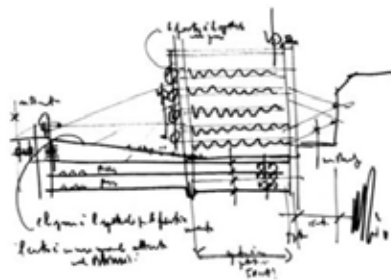


Fig. 4.15. Concept sketch of building and square

- 3 Location plan: a Atelier Brancusi
- b Pompidou Centre c Place Beaubourg
- d Place Stravinsky e rue Renard
- f rue Rambuteau

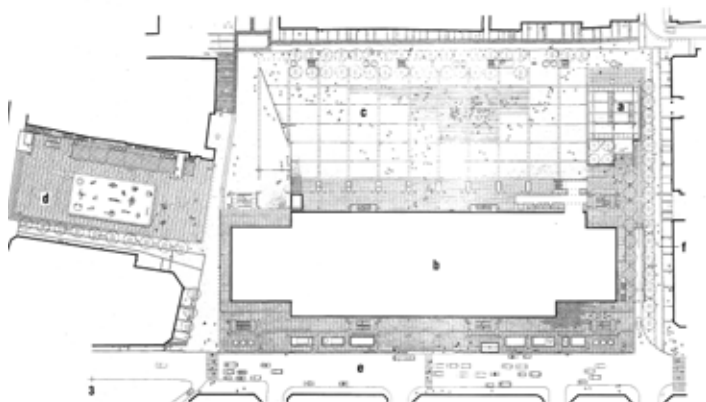


Fig. 4.14. Site plan



Fig. 4.13. Airconditioning vent



Fig. 4.16. Screen on outer window of Photography gallery is used as a screen



Fig. 4.17. Screen in rolled up position

# TEMPLE BAR REDEVELOPMENT

GROUP 91 + VARIOUS ARCHITECTS | Dublin, Ireland

The Temple Bar district is rich in historical, architectural and archeological heritage and is considered the natural Cultural Quarter in Dublin. The project involves the regeneration of an entire historical district in Dublin, which includes additions to existing fabric, renovation of existing fabric, as well as the total demolition and redesign of certain areas. Temple Bar is a new arts and culture district in Dublin.

Although this large and ambitious project has received much criticism, it is considered to be very successful as it has succeeded in raising local interest and international tourist interest in the city of Dublin. The project, although not the first or the biggest culture-led urban renewal project in the Euro-American environment, is the first model in Ireland which has contributed to city living and its values (McGonagle, D. 1996, p. 51.).

Phase 1 of the scheme was implemented between 1991 and 1996 and includes new cultural buildings (a film centre, a photographic archive, a multimedia centre, a music centre, an applied arts centre and a children's centre), commercial activities and small street-front shops, apartments and a number of public squares. The Temple Bar development proudly hosts a year round programme of public events such as food markets, book markets and public screenings of films, performances and children's theatre, an annual five day Irish music, a culture festival called the "Temple Bar TradFest", and another called "Dublin City Soul Festival". It also hosts a chocolate festival, a circus festival and culture nights.

The regeneration of Temple Bar is funded and driven by the state, rather than the private sector, and encourages giving ordinary working class people access to the arts. O Brian (1996:58), states that many people involved in the arts are skeptical and nervous about the role of the State in the arts. But from studies into cultural infrastructure in Europe, North and South America, it is clear that the arts can only function in a market context if the state does not take an initiating role.

"Temple Bar is not just innovative urbanism or property development, economic regeneration or



Fig. 4.18. Openable Theatre



Fig. 4.19. Movable seating



Fig. 4.20. Outdoor movie theatre

a series of cultural initiatives. It is both a reflection of and a contribution to contemporary Irish society, and ultimately has to be tested as such.” McGonagle, D. 1996, p.51.

A part of the project that has particular value to this thesis is Meeting House Square and the buildings surrounding it. The square is bounded by a Film centre, The Ark (a children’s centre), a photographic archive and a gallery of photography. In essence, the square is an outdoor room which is used as an open-air performance space, celebrating all forms of contemporary culture, including music and theatre performances, performed in the Ark that opens its stage to the square, and film screenings, projected from the Photographic Archive building onto the Gallery of Photography (Quinn, P. 1996. P.103).

Lighting on the square has been designed to complement the brief: stage lighting is mounted at a high level on the perimeter and a circle of up-lighters is set in the centre of the square. Trees and specially designed furniture have also been installed as part of the development (Quinn, P. 1996. P.103). All buildings in the project allows for easy adjustment of spaces to accommodate different uses. This is done by providing stage lighting on facades and roofs and providing adjustable doors and screens that allow manipulation of space.

This project has shown the importance of creating compact cities and neighborhoods to ensure usage of facilities and functions provided. Furthermore, the project is an example of the successful execution of an urban renewal project with a focus on cultural functions and shows positive reciprocity between urban buildings.



# 05\_ CONCEPT + BRIEF

## CLIENT PROFILE:

According to Technical Director of the State Theatre, Mr. Gert Viljoen, the theatre receives little funding from the Government. The theatre no longer produces its own performances, but rents out its wood workshop and theatres to production and advertisement companies. Additional income is gathered from the renting of props and wardrobes. Props and venues are available for rent for private functions and events to productions. Additional office space in the administration tower is rented to private companies.

The theatre is seen by the general public as a closed building which is inaccessible to the man on the street.

There is a need to educate the public about the State Theatre and performing arts in order to ensure the future of the Theatre. This project is an investment by the State Theatre into its future. The project will be funded by independent patrons of the arts, as well as government funding

Client: South African State Theatre

Sponsor: Department of Arts and Culture and private sponsors.

## USER PROFILE:

Three types of users can be identified in the city:

### 1. Regular users

These are people that use the city on a daily basis. They come to the city to work in offices, shops or other facilities in the city, or come to school/college in the city centre. The project aims to provide activities primarily for these users.

The regular user will need places to socialize and relax during their lunch break and after work, including shops, restaurants/street cafés, fast-food stalls, shaded seating and viewing spots should be provided for relaxation and casual socializing during lunch hour.

### 2. Unfamiliar users

These are people that live in the larger Tshwane area, that do not use the city for reasons of security and comfort (or the lack thereof), as well as the distance they have to travel to use the city. The project aims to provide facilities that draw these users

to the city such as restaurants and entertainment facilities. Carr et al. (1992:111) ascribes the success of the Pompidou centre in Paris and its plaza, to small shops and boutiques in the streets surrounding the centre. These cater to the people in the vicinity who spill out onto the public space. The plaza provides further opportunity to eat, talk, sleep, read and rest, and view public performance on the plaza. The plaza becomes a spill-out space which provides a memorable experience to new users, and attracts people from all over the city.

Patrons of the State Theatre might enjoy coming to the city to enjoy dinner before or after visiting the theatre. They may need to be informed about the production which they are coming to see, as well as other events, concerts and productions that are and will be running in the State Theatre.

An entrance should be provided from the basement parking to the public square, from where these users might enter the theatre, or enjoy strolling along a promenade while enjoying a snack before entering the theatre. Alexander et al. (1977:180-182) states that shops, amusement and other services should be provided in order for users to have a choice of where to go, and how long to linger in a public place. This is especially applicable for night-life in a city. Alexander et al. (1977:182) states that the arrangement of shops, entertainment and other services together forms centers of night life. Safe, well lit and lively places draw night time activity. These activities grouped together could form small squares, with good lighting, and places for people to gather and socialize.

A new intervention should improve comfort and the sense of security in the city, in order for unfamiliar users to return to the city more regularly.

### 3. Periodic users:

These are temporary users such as tourists or patrons of the State Theatre that come to the city for a specific reason, and stay for a minimum period of time. Their perception of the city is formulated through their visual experience. The identity of the city and a display of urban culture are important to ensure a return of these users. They may need places that provide information about the city, curio/souvenirs shops and places to gather and eat or be entertained. A new facility should provide a unique experience that provides a positive memory of the city.

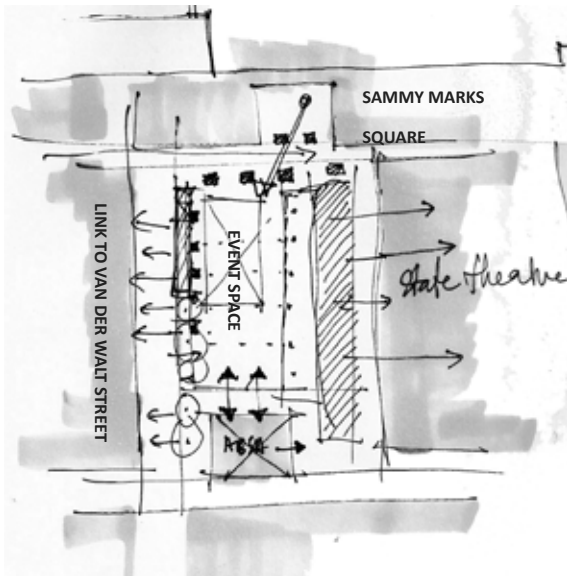


Fig.5.1.

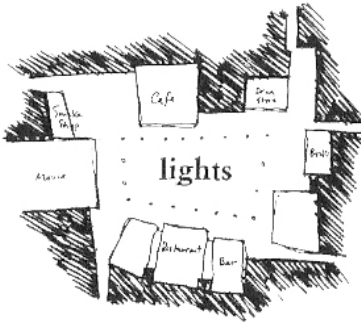


Fig.5.2. Alexander et al. (1977)'s proposal for the organisation of night activities around public space.



## BRIEF

The intervention should act as a filter building between the State Theatre and the surrounding space, and provide functions that could serve the State Theatre patrons, as well as regular users of the city. These functions should serve to liven both during the day and at night. The redesign of the square should accommodate viewing and performance space. The square becomes a performance space/outdoor theatre, and is renamed Performance square.

The Absa building is reorganized to re-open the original shopping centre on ground and basement floors. The ground floor is opened toward the square with restaurants and street cafés that spill out onto the square.

The extension to the State Theatre will house a permanent exhibition of the wardrobe and stage decorations including props and back cloths of productions of the theatre, as well as a temporary exhibition space for current and upcoming attractions.

The extension will accommodate an educational wing on the theatre that serves to educate the public about the performing arts and services offered by the State Theatre. This will include exhibition spaces, dance/drama studios, and social spaces such as restaurants, cafes and rentable function rooms that could draw the public to have a closer look at the Theatre and what it has to offer.

## BUILDING ACCOMMODATION

- Restaurants
- Information point
- Permanent Gallery for the State Theatre
- Temporary exhibition space
- Indoor Performance areas
- Gift shop
- New entrance to Rendezvous theatre
- Link to Absa basement
- Stage/performance space for pop concerts
- Rentable shops
- Cinema Nouveau theatres
- Street café's

Other:

Seating opportunities and Green space

Exhibition/installation space

Space for viewing public performance

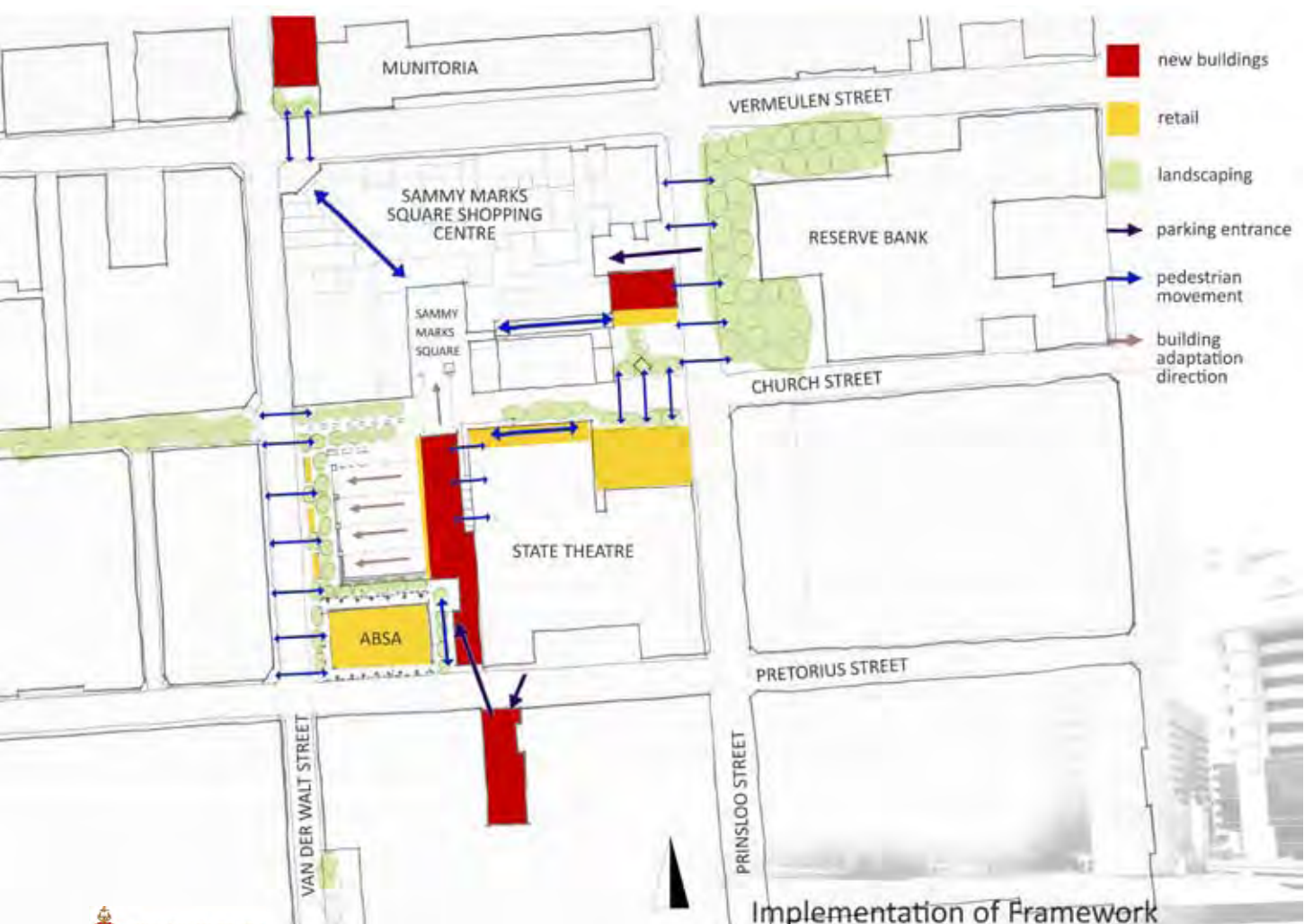
Public square must be able to transform into a public outdoor theatre of film, art and performances (music, drama and dance)

Fig.5.3. Giant Puppets exhibited in Church Street during August 2009 as part of an advertizing campaign for the 2010 Soccer World Cup. The prosed gallery and exhibition space is intended to house such exhibitions. The contents of the gallery would be displayed in full view of the public square, in order to draw curious visitors to the gallery, restaurant and thereby educating them about the State Theatre.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

# Performance Square

Fig.5.4.



Implementation of Framework

An Urban Development Framework was established for the larger area around the public square previously known as Lillian Ngoyi Square. Henceforth the square will be referred to as Performance Square.

The vision for the square is an outdoor theatre or event space. The Square is activated by the insertion of a new “filter” building between the State Theatre and the Square. This building will incorporate commercial and entertainment functions and will have a symbiotic relationship with the State Theatre and the Absa office tower.

The framework intends to create a new cultural identity for the city of Pretoria. The project aims to significantly improve the image of the inner city, by creating an attraction and facilities that could draw more users to the city, and by improving the quality of outdoor spaces in the Theatre district. This thesis will focus on the design of the “filter” building between the square and the State Theatre, as well as the urban design of Performance Square.



Fig.5.6. View from c/o Church and Prinsloo streets

1. South entrance to parking basement moved to a new entrance on Pretorius Street.
2. Basement parking linked to Sammy Marks Square parking.
3. East entrance to parking basement moved to Sammy Marks Square entrance.
4. Activity created through a “filter” building linking the square to the State Theatre (building offers commercial activity and restaurants as well as other cultural activities)
5. Ground and basement floors of Absa building opened to public (shops, cinema, banking mall, etc.) Ground floor opened toward the street to increase activity.
6. Absa tower becomes a viewing tower open to public use.
7. New roof gardens on the State Theatre used as terrace and viewing space open to public.
8. Square becomes a performance space with seating and viewing opportunity on edges. (Square will be used for public performances, film shoots and night time/seasonal open-air movie theatre)
9. Sidewalk broadened and lined with trees, shaded seating and street cafes
10. Van der Walt street becomes more pedestrian friendly
11. Buildings and building elements are adaptable to use
12. Linkage between square 1 and 2 through the insertion of new buildings that offer commercial activity, and the relocation of basement parking entrance to Sammy Marks Square basement entrance.
13. Linkage between square 3, 4 and 5 through restaurant and adjustable structure.
14. Linkage between square 6 and open space through the formalising of public space and new building next to Munitoria.

Fig.5.5. View from Van der Walt Street

