



recover

An investigation into a possible counter strategy that challenges destructive spatial practices in contested urban territories by cultivating networks of opportunity (applied in a South African urban context).

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prologue

Contemporary urban spaces consist of an ever shifting mix of dynamic conditions and continuous instabilities, which invariably have spatial implications. These conditions often give rise to contested urban territories. The city is in need of a redefined approach to space, in need of recovery.

Recover is an agent for dynamic spatial change. It redefines, reorganises and capitalises on existing conditions, and encourages integration between these conditions and the spatial change and activities it proposes. Recover generates the connectivity between these that is needed for a truly dynamic environment that belongs to all, yet is used differently by everyone. It links users, activities and their resultant spaces to create new forms of urban life.

Recover questions the accepted models of planning, ownership, governance and participation that no longer respond to the dynamics and complexities of current cities and their users. It accepts these models, but attempts to subvert them by proposing dynamic interventions that deploy in the margins.

Recover is concerned with spatial reactions at all scales of the built environment. The approach views spatial reactions in the city, in its buildings and in its interiors as symptoms of the same 'disease'. It views the macro and the micro as two possible modes in which one and the same reality can become constituted: This is true for both the reactions and the 'solutions'. Recover's insurgent approach calls for interventions that are focused on the micro level. Here they can act swiftly, not weighed down by institutional limits or the need for large capital outlays. The design is approached from the inside out, starting from the user and his/her needs. This then gives rise to the necessary spatial qualities, the required artifacts and finally the organisation thereof.

Recover is simple; a diagram of what could come; a seemingly idealistic vision of urban change, but perhaps a desperately needed vision. Recover as a generative diagram acts as an organisational structure that facilitates urban complexity and that generates dynamic user behaviour. It recovers spaces of life...



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overview

The study is an investigation into the destructive spatial practices associated with the current urban condition. It questions accepted methods and practices in both a global and South African context (**chapter 1**). It proposes a counter strategy that challenges these practices (**chapter 2**); a counter strategy that ultimately cultivates dynamic networks of opportunity. The study looks at precedents, referred to in sidebars throughout the text, as examples of the possible, the successful and in some cases even the disastrous.

Then follows Recover, the potential counter strategy. Recover investigates, explores and predicts possible scenarios for a specific location: Festival Street in Hatfield, Pretoria, South Africa (**chapter 3**). Proposed interventions range from spaces for food cultivation to ones concerned with rendering the 'arts' as part of the public realm. The aim is to create neutral spaces where knowledge exchange can take place.

Possibilities for the site are explored through a series of models that investigate the relationship between required spatial qualities, user movements or interaction and finally architectural form. The spaces are thus conceived from the inside out. Possible actors and agents are identified and the triadic relationship between private sector, local community and higher education is investigated.

Recover is then evaluated on a level deeper than that of the 'conceptual'. A technical investigation is conducted for one of the interventions: Expose (**chapter 4**). Expose illustrates that the vision can become real.