



01

Introduction

1.1 Real World Problem

The indeterminacy of space is a phenomenon that is synonymous with the city and human civilization. Not only is it represented in the fabric of built space, but it also illustrates a wider psychological phenomenon: that of the fragmentary nature of human thought and knowledge (Foucault, 1969:15). This fragmented condition of reality gives rise to gaps in the fabric of space that are difficult to understand: “These are spaces that do not fit into a category, that cannot be given a fixed name, use or user,” says architect Emma Williams (Transient Space: Habitat of the Outcast, n.d.).

For architects, the prevalence of indeterminate space in cities should be seen as an opportunity for reawakening the way in which they view urban space. As evidence of the flaws in our modern architectural practice, they offer us a basis on which to question conventions and to “generate new practices, new ecological habitats, new sub-cultures and new economies,” (Williams, n.d.). The detailing of these outcast spaces becomes imperative for their reincorporation into the fabric of urban space.



Fig. 1-1 Indeterminate space adjacent to project site (317 Pretorius Street).

1.2 Site, Client & Programme

1.2.1 Site

Within the Sammy Marks precinct, which is characterised by intense commercial activity existing inside a network of retail arcades, commercial block plazas and pedestrian routes, an opportunity to reconnect an indeterminate site with this network of spaces was identified. The site is currently appropriated as a parking space for urban users, and makes little contribution to local city life. The problematic relationship between the site and its context initiated an investigation of the surrounding structures, in order to discover potential opportunities for further intervention.

1.2.2 Client

An investigation of the State Theatre, which falls under the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), revealed the opportunity to develop a public model of theatre in the project site that could function within the theatre's existing developmental framework.

1.2.3 Programme

This new challenge sparked an investigation into forms of theatre that could be applied to the local context, with its prevalent informal qualities and public forms of activity. Forum Theatre was found to be appropriate as it deals directly with citizens by inviting them to engage with actors in interactive story-telling plays, thereby providing a platform for social engagement. In terms of design, Forum Theatre informed a process of exploration into how a new theatre could adopt public elements designed to enhance public engagement: the ability of public users to witness and feel connected to the theatrical events. The final designed space took shape as a central open-air forum for staging public theatre events: a central acting arena surrounded on all sides by overhead viewing galleries, and circulation spaces that ensure the public are kept as close to the locus of activity as possible.

In order to ensure the long-term feasibility of the theatre and provide for regular programming of the new theatre venue, the design will incorporate a second educational component in the form of an apprentice – mentor residency programme. This component responds to an identified need to develop training infrastructure for new theatre professionals in the region (State Theatre, n.d.). The new training programme will be able to utilise the theatre forum as a laboratory for experimenting with new ideas and generating new practices.

The development of the above programmes will be likely to involve a bipartite relationship between the DAC and the Department of Public Works, the latter being the owner of the theatre complex. Sourcing of grants from local and foreign institutions will be necessary for the funding of future development. It is reasonable to assume that the City of Tshwane will show an interest in the project because of its potential for job creation and the engagement of unemployed youths.

The project approaches the problem of dealing with the site's inherent indeterminacy through the installation of these programmes. At an enlarged scale, the newly activated site can constitute a necessary addition to the current collection of public spaces, and provide a stage for public events, both theatrical and non-theatrical.

1.3 Hypothesis

Being isolated from its surrounding context, the project site currently exists in a state of indeterminacy. The redevelopment of the site as a cultural space with theatre at its core will enable it to host meaningful interactions. A careful investigation of the site and context for opportunities can generate a clearer formulation of the nature of this redevelopment, delivering a building that speaks to its context. The ultimate aim is the re-incorporation of the site into its context.

1.4 Sub-Problems

The aim of this investigation is to test the appropriateness of the design against the hypothetical statement in 1.4 above. Some underlying sub-problems that will need to be answered, might include the following:

- What is the nature of spatial indeterminacy in the site and immediate context, and how does it relate to cultural space?
- How does the State Theatre contribute to spatial indeterminacy in its immediate context? How does it contribute to cultural activation?
- How can architectural programming provide the necessary framework for encouraging cultural events and practices on the project site, reconnecting it to its context?

1.5 Methodology

The study relies on a grounded approach to generate its theoretical framework. The theory attempts to offer clarification on the condition of spatial indeterminacy and specifically, how it relates to culture in the CBD of Pretoria. The observation of poor utilisation of cultural and public spaces in the project context generated the cultural focus of the project.

1.5.1 Site Analysis

Site analysis provided a framework for an appropriate response, generating a general image of the area to serve as a reference framework. This included making photographic documentation of contextual spaces, sketching ideas for possible interventions and consulting local archive resources for context-specific information.



Fig. 1-2 The site currently functions as a parking lot that services the surrounding buildings. The administrative building is visible ahead with a part of the gap to be developed for the project. (Photograph by Author)

1.5.2 Urban Mapping

Mapping of the project context was conducted to generate graphical data, and provided a qualitative means of exploring latent spatial and material qualities of the project area. These were later used to develop a unique architectural identity.

A second mapping exercise loosely based on Deleuze and Gaudtari's "rhizome" concept (Deleuze & Gaudtari, n.d.), provided insight into the complexity of spatial analysis and design. The "rhizome" serves to demonstrate the impracticability of trying to identify specific causal factors behind spatial formations, i.e. sites. Rather, the "rhizome" exposes the complex, heterogeneous nature of spaces, the causes of which have no clear beginning or end. Indeterminate spaces, in particular, are difficult to define. As gaps or spaces falling in between individually imposing structures and programmes, the transitions from one to the next are difficult to identify. Architecturally speaking, this complexity of space and its contradictory nature means that there can be no perfect solution to indeterminacy. Architects can only make proposals regarding what they believe needs to be done.

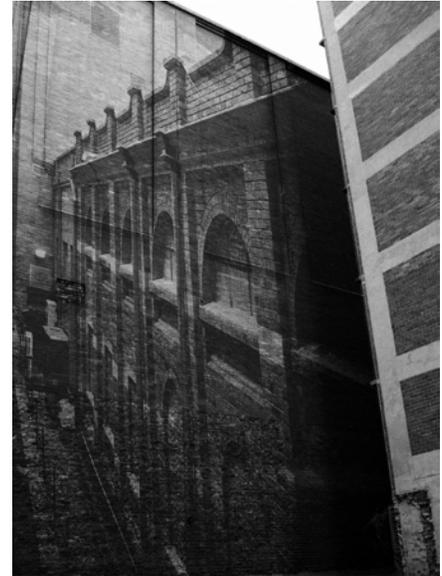


Fig. 1-4 (Above-Left) Mapping the invisible on the visible: The Tramshed trusses onto The Tramshed parkade wall. (Photograph by author).



Fig. 1-3 (Top) Mapping the invisible on the visible: The Tramshed historical facade onto The Tramshed parkade wall. (Photograph by author)

Fig. 1-5 (Above-right) Mapping the invisible on the visible: The Momentum atrium space beyond onto the front wall of the same building.

1.5.3 Archive Documents

Old city maps and codes were consulted to reveal changes made to the fabric of the central business district (CBD) during the course of Pretoria's development, were studied in particular.

1.5.4 Precedent Studies

Projects that offer relevant guidance for the design of the proposed theatre have been considered. These have been separated into their relevant chapters. Each precedent relates to a particular aspect of the design (structural, theoretical, programmatic, etc.) and contributes to the normative approach to the design.



Fig. 1-6 Swings installed into an indeterminate facade at the Cascoland Public Arts Festival in 2007 (Photograph courtesy of Jan Koerbes).



Fig. 1-7 Lina Bo Bardi's Teatro Officina was the site of many forum-based and applied theatre events. (Photo by Anne Graupner).

1.6 Delimitations

The study evaluates existing strategies and proposals by the DAC and third parties aimed at the future development of the Sammy Marks precinct.

The study focuses primarily on discovering evidence of spatial indeterminacy in the project context and how this relates back to the State Theatre and the project site. The observations and concerns will be listed and used to generate a unique set of programming guidelines for the design intervention.

The installation of a public model of theatre into the chosen site forms this study's approach to dealing with the site's indeterminate nature. It should also be noted that this project offers a site specific solution to the problem of spatial indeterminacy. Each site is unique in its make-up, which necessitates a fresh approach to dealing with its innate complexities.