

chapter 2

a counter strategy

Overview

The counter strategy is ultimately concerned with challenging destructive spatial practices. It aims to do this by cultivating networks of opportunity that can engage with the complex dynamics of the contemporary city, intervene in its current mechanics and alter behaviour. These networks are spatial in nature and therefore fall within architecture's realm of influence (pages 34-36). They are focussed on the micro level, where they can act swiftly and efficiently (pages 36-38). Such networks have a number of strategic objectives to be addressed by the proposed interventions (pages 38-40). The individual interventions are guided by a spatial strategy (pages 42-46) concerned with creating footholds in the urban fabric.

In order to develop interventions that successfully follows such a strategy, it is necessary to rethink current urban practices (pages 48 - 52). This includes practices concerned with building, planning, managing and governing urban spaces as well as practices concerned with knowledge exchange and the role of tertiary institutions in urban development.

chapter 2

a counter strategy

part i

spatial networks of opportunity

1. Introduction

...it will be the staging of uncertainty; it will no longer be concerned with the arrangement of more or less permanent objects but with the irrigation of territories with potential; it will no longer aim for stable configurations but for the creation of enabling fields that accommodates processes that refuse to be crystallized into definitive form; it will no longer be about meticulous definition, the imposition of limits, but about expanding notions, denying boundaries, not about separating and identifying entities, but about discovering unnameable hybrids; it will no longer be obsessed with the city but with the manipulation of infrastructure for endless intensifications and diversifications, shortcuts and redistributions...

(Koolhaas & Mau, 1998:969)

Blau & Rupnik (2007:17) define a strategy as "a highly organized plan of action devised in response to conditions that are unstable or otherwise uncertain, which is both constrained and directed toward the achievement of specific objectives. Uncertainty is the fundamental condition of strategy, just as agility is its mode of operation".

The existing uncertain conditions in urban South Africa call for an insurgent spatial strategy that guides potential interventions. Such a spatial strategy is not merely concerned with individual acts of resistance. Instead it is concerned with creating a network of spatial interventions that support one another to

ATELIER D'ARCHITECTURE AUTOGÉRÉE STUDIO OF SELF-MANAGED ARCHITECTURE

**interdisciplinary/collaboration/generating
transformation/new architectural identity/
derelict spaces**

est. 2001_paris, france
<www.urbantactics.org>



This interdisciplinary studio consists of architects, artists, students, researchers, unemployed persons, activists and residents. They conduct research and have completed numerous projects concerning urban mutations and related emerging practices in contested territories of cities like Paris and Belfast (Northern Ireland). This studio is actively rethinking the role of architecture:

...an architecture [that] does not correspond to a liberal practice but asks for new forms of association and collaboration, based on exchange and reciprocity. Our architecture is simultaneously political and poetic as it aims above all to create relationships between worlds

(atelier d'architecture autogérée, 2004)

They have moved beyond the limits of the profession and are experimenting with new collaborations, methods of participation as well as ways in which architecture can manifest in previously disregarded urban spaces.



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achieve the larger objectives of the strategy. These interventions do not only exploit existing opportunities, but are generative; they create opportunities where none existed. The spatial strategy imagines, plans and rationally projects actions and their consequences onto existing conditions, thereby transforming those conditions into possibilities (Blau & Rupnic, 2007:17) and cultivating spatial networks of opportunity.

The spatial networks are ultimately aimed at countering the destructive spatial practices present in global and South African urban spaces.

2. Architecture as the agent of change

The influences of the spatial practices discussed up to this point are so vast that they appear to render architecture impotent. It seems as though the counter-strategy requires transformation in economic systems, political policies and social networks. If spatial interventions are to make an impact, the solution may lie within the realm of urban planning and design. The possible solutions seem far beyond the scope of architecture.⁸

Architecture's inability to make rapid, large-scale changes often frustrates architects and, particularly, students of architecture. This sense of powerlessness often results in a resigned retreat into the old dynamics where architecture serves the agents of power and control, instead of advocating change in the public realm (Findley, 2005:33). Crawford (1991:43) believes that architects tend to fall back on one of two equally unpromising polarities when faced with social-spatial issues: compromised practice or esoteric philosophies of inaction. The pivotal question then arises: what kind of socio-spatial change is actually within the grasp of architecture?

8. Architecture in this context refers to all disciplines involved in the field: i.e. interior architecture, architecture and landscape architecture.

David Harvey (2000:35) addresses this point:

Within the definition of architecture as the design and making of individual projects, there is the scale of real space and the heartbeat of lived time... This is a far smaller scale than the grand sweeping dynamics of power of nations. It is exactly at this small scale, that architecture can and does support change.

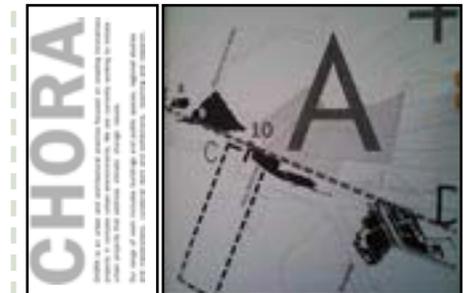
Architecture is a visible, high profile form of cultural practice that deals directly with space. It is the primary spatial way for people to represent themselves in the world. According to Bunschoten *et al* (2001:24) architecture "is a practice engaged in speculating within emergent urban configurations and orders. It recognises them, suggests mechanisms to make them instrumental, and gives them form. As physical objects, these structures are part of the existing world; as models, they describe emergent orders, possible realities". Architecture does not merely support, advocate or give spatial definition to urban transformation. As a vital spatial practice, architecture can generate transformation by opening spaces for new possibilities and future forms of social life (Harvey, 2000:200).

Iain Low (2002:36) believes that South African "architects must take a stand on the side of imagination and the possible... [they should] engage in the unknown; with the otherness that has ensured our divides for so long. It requires the exercise of a capacity for critical reflection that locates our imagination probably best between grassroots and the global". Architecture requires a new identity if it is to make a meaningful contribution to spatial transformation in South Africa (Low, 2002:36).

CHORA R. BUNSCHOTEN AND OTHERS

**interdisciplinary/context specific/public
activism&dialogue/temporary public
spaces**

est. 1994
<www.chora.org> (bunschoten *et al*, 2001)



CHORA is an urban and architectural research laboratory aimed at understanding, transforming and modelling the dynamic processes present in complex urban spaces. They describe themselves as an 'urban agency that combines practice with research'. This group is concerned with developing a new methodology for reading, understanding, mapping and intervening in contemporary cities. They are at the forefront of rethinking the role of architects in issues that traditionally fall outside the realm of the practice.

Their range of work speaks of the group's perpetual move towards redefining the role of the architect and includes buildings, public spaces, regional studies and masterplans, curatorial work and exhibitions as well as teaching and research. Their philosophy and approach to design is visible in the seminal publication *Urban Flotsam*.



This requires the development of new architectural methodologies that respond to current urban conditions. Amongst others, Chora is actively researching and practicing such new methodologies.

Architecture practiced as pure discipline cannot respond to new social dynamics (Hötzl, 2004). Instead, current conditions require a collaborative approach to architecture that engages not only professionals from different fields, but also community members, governmental institutions and potential investors. Collaborative architecture is by no means a new concept, but is more vital now than ever before. Platforma 9,81 (Zagreb, Croatia), Atelier d'architecture Autogérée (Paris, France) and sharpCity (Johannesburg, South Africa) are examples of architecturally based groups that are actively pursuing collaborative practices. These collaborations are blurring the lines between the different professions concerned with spatial change. These blindly accepted artificial divisions should be questioned and realigned in search of a new identity for architecture.

When investigating the work of some of the practices mentioned here it is clear that architecture can indeed effect socio-spatial change, as long as its methods and practices continue to evolve with the spaces and people it aims to transform. Harvey (2002, 35) believes that architecture encourages spatial change by "...doing what it does best: by enclosing a series of human uses adjusted to the particular conditions of a specific place."

With that in mind, the new dynamics of the South African city are viewed as a challenge, not as a fatal curse. A challenge that can lead to the proposal of a spatial strategy that deals specifically with the space-user-artifact interface.

3. The scale and nature of the spatial networks

Spatial networks of opportunity can, and should be employed over all scales of the built environment, from large scale urban networks with international ties, to ones that deal with only a handful of users and a few strategic institutions. Micro and macro networks, far from excluding or opposing each other, reciprocally question each other resulting in a richer design approach (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007b:2). This is

not only true for the networks, but also for the individual interventions that constitute them.

This study specifically investigates the potential of interventions that deal with the space-user-artifact interface. It aims to investigate the role of interventions that collapse the distinctions between private and public, inside and outside, use and function; interventions that consider threshold conditions, zones of transaction and unnoticed human desires. The role of interventions that are focused on the needs of the client, not the generic masses of modernism but rather specific groups and users whose needs are often overlooked by the architectural marketplace.

The interventions follow a 'micrological' approach, as described by the political scientist and sociologist Nicolas-Le Strat (2007b.) Under such an approach, the difference between micro and macro (small and large, interior and urban, etc) is not one of size or scale. The difference between the two lies in the way they come into existence, the way in which they are formed: "micro and macro represent two possible modes in which one and the same reality can become constituted" (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007b:2). In other words, micro situations represent a glimpse, a snapshot of society.

Bunschoten *et al* (2001:377) refers to the situation of the 'Locker Girls' as one such 'snapshot'. The presence of the Locker Girls may seem an insignificant detail in the life of a big city, but Bunschoten *et al* (2001:378) believes that the girls have turned into an informal urban authority. Their daily ritual relates to changes of a global order: sexual morals, public health, mobility, information exchange and the like. They are, however not only influenced by these changes, but in fact affect the city's public spaces and urban systems themselves. They have become an authority at the station, and if recognised as such,

LOCKER GIRLS

a case study from the publication Urban Flotsam

urban authorities/micro situations/ micrological approach

kyoto, japan
(Bunschoten *et al*, 2001:376-378)



1. The Locker Girls are a group of school girls in Kyoto, Japan. Every morning they pass through the Kyoto train station, wearing their school uniforms.
2. At lunchtime and after school they change in front of the lockers, taking off their uniforms and putting on 'city' clothes before going into town together. This ritual makes it impossible for travellers to use the lockers.
3. With the help of a coin and a key the girls are transformed into young women that go into town where men can meet them for a meal or sex.
4. After their time out, they return to the lockers, change back into their school uniforms and take the train back to their suburban homes.

This scenario has links with the following global groups, activities and concepts:

1. schoolgirls, teachers, school authorities, uniforms.
2. travellers, station managers, transport authorities, locker maintenance people.
3. practice of prostitution, clients, pimps, health authorities, police.
4. general public, mass media, consumer pressures, parents, family, girls, friends.

↳ ...architecture practiced as pure discipline cannot respond to these new social dynamics... requires cooperation with existing institutions, developers, architects, investors, and the government.

Platforma 9,81 (Hötzl, 2004)



FELD 72 ARCHITECTURE

working across scales/micrologies/urban tactics/strategic approach to urbanism

est. 2002 (www.feld72.at)



feld72 is focussed on developing new strategies for dealing with current urban conditions. Their projects and research address everything from object related planning to urban investigations and interventions. They believe that these constitute one and the same reality and attempt to influence user behaviour through their designs. Their projects function on the micro level where they can have the optimum impact on users.

Horsebox
This stable moves beyond being only a functional item, and instead illustrates the possibility of using simple objects to encourage social diversity. The stable is deliberately designed to be used by horses, birds, bats and humans - a simple but effective example of their attempt to create objects that question existing relationships and encourage thought

Wokon
This design uses the bus stop and adjacent parking lot as a redefined public space that question social relationships as well as the use of purely functional urban infrastructure

File-Kit
This event played out on an urban scale and questioned user behaviour and social interaction in everyday situations like traffic



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they can be empowered and their potential as urban role players can be realised. Micro situations are indicators of macro conditions, and the micro level therefore also represents an ideal testing ground for interventions aimed at creating networks of opportunity.

According to Deleuze (2003:113-114) interventions focused on the micro level allow one to work more intensely with the issues at hand, without being slowed down by weighty and obvious institutional limits. "To choose the 'small' is also a strategy of harassing the real - a way of constantly interpellating⁹ it from all sorts of angles" (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007b:2). A micrological approach to design allows one to tackle situations from different points of view, on multiple occasions and from diverse perspectives.

4. Strategic objectives

These spatial networks of opportunity have the following strategic objectives:

4.1 Preserve and stimulate urban biodiversity

This can be achieved by concentrating urban activities and by increasing their complexity. Activities that can benefit one another are grouped together to optimise synergies. The choice of activity is based on existing local practices as well as potential new ones. Linkages are crafted between unlikely partners and organisations (Hamdi, 2004:69). These include linking different 'informal' economic practices to one another, as well as linking these practices to institutions like the University of Pretoria. There has to be a mutual benefit to all involved, be it academic, economic or even social. In the case of the study site, the basis for strategic

⁹ defined as the process of formal and in-depth questioning (Barnhart & Barnhart, 1988:1103)

partnerships is a re-imagined process of knowledge exchange. Reactivated economic networks have obvious benefits like an increase in employment opportunities, the empowerment of individuals and the potential for business and personal growth.

However they also have the added benefit of activating the social networks of the area. Borja (1998:8) believes that the "more functionally polyvalent a space is, the more it will contribute to citizenship, and the more it will favour social interchange". A valued, diverse and active urban space will thus encourage diverse social relations.

4.2 Re-imagine public spaces, urban territories and responsibility
Sassen (2006:2) believes that spatial complexity can engage the 'temporary publics' that take shape in cities in particular spaces at specific times of the day. In other words, the activities of people can contribute to the creation of public spaces that are not controlled by practices of spatial governance. These spaces are invaluable as this is where social interaction takes place in its most natural form; where diversity can be expressed and where spontaneous activity can take place.

According to Bunschoten *et al* (2001:426) public space can be designed to not only provoke action, but also to invite specific ways of using the space, stimulating new types of collective behaviour. The recurrence of collective use and social interaction creates collective memory. Bunschoten *et al* (2001:86) believes that this memory is then encoded in the 'objects' of public space, rendering it a part of the formation of collective identity. This in turn fosters a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the created spaces. Such a public space is the 'property' of the democratic collective; a 'neutral' space that adds value to everyday life.

4.3 Design for emergence and re-appropriation
Emergence is a scientific term appropriated for architecture by Hamdi (2004:xvii) and others: "It refers to the ability of small, relatively simple and local elements to become organized and sophisticated; to move from one kind of order to another". In other words, emergence refers to the natural start and growth of [informal] systems in response to given conditions. According to Hamdi (2004:xviii) development needs a designed structure with rules and routines that provide continuity and stability and that offer a shared context of meaning and a shared sense of purpose and justice. However, too much structure can inhibit



FIGURE 34 An abstract representation of linkages that requires a mutual benefit for both parties involved

LANDSCAFTPARK DUISBURG NORD *LATZ AND PARTNERS*

**emergence/long-term phasing/
collaboration/autonomous/self-managed
spaces/ownership**

1989 - current_Germany
(Cumberlidge & Musgrave, 2007)



Latz and Partners envisaged this project as a 'slow-burn' design that could evolve over time. This not only applies to the natural processes of growth but also to the systems and activities introduced by the designers. Projects and processes were developed as funding became available eliminating large initial expenditure.

Instead of imposing an over-arching programmatic order to the site, they introduced a range of new activities to the site and allowed these to dictate the next phase of development. This approach allowed new functions to be 'discovered' and unsuccessful ones could be replaced.

The project incorporated many local groups in the development process and introduced employment schemes etc to the area. According to Cumberlidge & Musgrave (2007:54) this led to an increased sense of ownership, which in turn led to a self-sustaining process of management and natural evolution of function. By planning for a long time scale and encouraging the close collaboration of a wide range of local users, the designers ensured that the site remains valid and appropriate almost 10 years after its conception.



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personal freedom and get in the way of progress brought about by the natural process of emergence. In the turbulent environment of the contemporary city, it is essential to find the balance between the stability of design and the creativity of emergence.

This requires a balance between highly programmed spaces (and products) and those that suggest a variety of potential uses. Such spaces encourage spontaneous and often unexpected uses to emerge naturally. The aim is, in other words, to react to current conditions, whilst being strategic about the future. Such an approach allows networks to 'learn'; to respond creatively to unexpected new circumstances and to change and evolve with the ever morphing city (Capra in Hamdi, 2004:6).

erstices represent what is left of
istance in big cities—resistance
to normativity and regulation, to
homogenization and appropriation.
They embody, in a sense, what
is still “available” in the city. Their
provisional and uncertain status
allows for hint, a glimpse of other
ways of creating a city that is open
and collaborative, responsive and
cooperative.

There is no guarantee that an interstice
will remain open. The experimental and
insurgent process of creating footholds
in the city can very easily succumb to the
given order of development and lose its
creative nature. The only thing that can
protect a foothold is its constant movement
towards autonomy,¹⁰ its ingenuity and its
dynamic nature which allows it to adapt to
change (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007a:3).

3. Dynamism

Interventions must therefore be inherently
dynamic; they must encourage change and
re-appropriation. This asks for interventions
to be considered as an ‘open work’:

Umberto Eco describes the ‘open
work’ as a combination of openness
and coherence... The city as an
open work does not imply either
acceptance or celebration of the
chaotic or the ad hoc, but rather a
concept of the city as a project that
is dynamic and mutable- but that will
‘always be perceived as a work’.

(Blau & Rupnik, 2007:74-75)

Dynamic interventions stand in opposition
to the old paradigm of design thinking
which was primarily concerned with cause
and effect. This paradigm produced
projects that were short-term, predictable
and finite (Hamdi, 2004:13). Instead, the
urban environment should encourage
ongoing development and change. Such a
process needs to be stimulated and kept
appropriate through the use of dynamic

¹⁰ refers to independence (at the least a matter of
choice and freedom) from ‘the given order’ of urban
policy

INVISIBLE ZAGREB PLATFORMA 9,81

**foothold/autonomy/interdisciplinary/public
dialogue/temporary public spaces**

2003-2005_zagreb, croatia

<www.platforma981.hr>

(Cumberlidge & Musgrave, 2007:162-164)



This two year project was initiated by Platforma
9,81 to investigate and show-case the potential
of the city’s empty spaces for emergent forms
of social life.

The group investigated and mapped ‘voids’ in
the city’s proprietary and physical matrix, and
investigated the possibility of informal urban
and cultural strategies that could inhabit these
spaces. The temporary public activity in these
spaces served as a strategic delay before the
ultimate changes took place.

The project also provided an alternative
methodology for planning in Zagreb, a city
undergoing fast and profound change. It created
a simple strategy to influence the actual, real use
of urban space and buildings, address political
agendas and stimulate public engagement in
issues of city planning and management.

chapter 2 a counter strategy

part ii spatial strategy

1. Introduction

Potential interventions are guided by a spatial strategy
that works towards achieving the previously mentioned
objectives; a strategy that is always concerned with the
production, proliferation and implementation of a form
of knowledge specific to architecture (Blau & Rupnik,
2007:20). The strategy is however not concerned
with the creation of permanent objects in the city. It
acknowledges the constant flux of the city, and views
the process and product as equally important. It
accepts that even though the interventions may not
always (immediately) achieve the outcomes, the
process leads to the formation of invaluable interstices
in the urban fabric.

2. Creating footholds

Enabling interventions act as footholds in the urban
fabric, initial accomplishments that potentially widen
the scope of current activities and practices, and open
the way for further development. Such interventions
create the conditions for future changes in the city.
A strategy aimed at creating footholds has a double
thrust: it is a logic of intensification - giving momentum,
and a logic of opening - creating breakthroughs for
future change (Blau & Rupnik, 2007:19).

Nicolas-Le Strat (2007a:1) refers to footholds in the
urban fabric as temporary urban interstices:



interventions which are synonymous with the process of emergence. This 'allows' users and the spaces they engage with the freedom to evolve with the city.

This applies to both planning measures and actual designed products. Bunschoten *et al* (2001:234) believes that contemporary environments need dynamic planning measures: they must analyse, stimulate possible evolutions, suggest scenarios and indicate local catalysts and anchors for those scenarios. Architecture and other similar design professions must rethink the way that design is viewed in the contemporary city. It can no longer work in isolation, but must engage with urban planning issues, and attempt to find ways in which to engage the private and public sector in proposed interventions. In the words of Platforma 9,81: "...architects are called on to influence urban policy as advocates of the public domain" (Hötzl, 2004).

4. Autonomy

Interventions should therefore be autonomous. This implies that they exist as independent entities that question currently accepted patterns of urban ownership, planning and governance. This is necessary for a combination of reasons: because existing patterns and practices have become malignant, because they could work more effectively if they were to change, or because there is no sophistication where it is needed (Hamdi, 2005:xix).

Nicolas-Le Strat (2007b:2) states that 'footholds' function on a political level: they want to break away from the classical organization of the city. It is important to note that these interventions function both within and in opposition to the city and its urban planning processes. This quality differentiates it from urban rebellion, which derives its energy and reason for being from the negative relationship it has with institutional power. The movement towards autonomy disrupts the "flattering, aestheticised, efficient image the city has of itself" (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007b:4) by cunningly manipulating the city. It exploits the city's internal tensions and contradictions by embracing what the city neglects and dis-invests, from vacant lots to social diversity. In other words, it opposes current accepted practices by being inventive and creative.

↳ ...disrupts the flattering, aestheticised, efficient image the city has of itself.

Nicolas-Le Strat (2007b:4)



Autonomy also implies a degree of independence from fallible physical infrastructure, aiming to be self-sustainable where possible. Sustainable designs consider the future implications of material and infrastructure choices, not as part of the 'green' design trend but rather as a necessary quality of responsible design. Recent failures in the South African electricity grid illustrate the necessity of such physical autonomy.

5. Robustness

Another necessary characteristic for interventions is that of robustness, both physical and systemic hardness. Interventions should be able to withstand the unpredictability of the public realm, and strategies should be well-grounded in order to effect real change.

This does not imply that designed spaces and objects should be constructed to last for all eternity. It also does not eliminate the use of highly technological systems and materials in the public realm. However, it does require careful planning to assure that the chosen products, materials and infrastructure are suitable for the context. Robustness implies well-grounded choices that view aspects of crime, vandalism and lack of management not as obstacles, but rather as possibilities for inventive ways of applying 'old' knowledge.

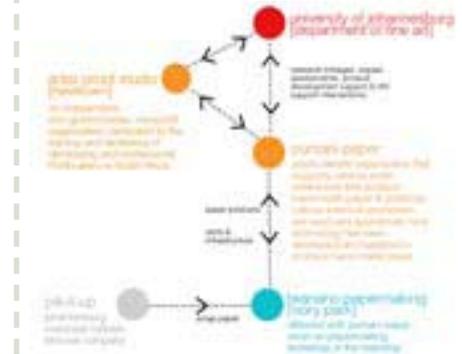
This also goes for the systems and strategic partnerships involved in networks of opportunity. Actors¹¹ and agents¹² must be chosen carefully; decisions should not be based merely on monetary influence and contributions, but should include other often unaddressed

11 Defined as local 'experts' or people directly involved in activities (Bunschoten *et al*, 2001:86)
12 Defined as outside 'experts', in other words, people that are not necessarily directly involved in the action (Bunschoten *et al*, 2001:86)

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH ARTIST PROOF STUDIO, PHUMANI PAPER, U.J.

robust network/autonomous/profit sharing/actors & agents/diverse partnerships

est. 2003(?)_ekhuruleni, south africa
<www.phumani.org.za> <www.uj.ac.za>



The partnership illustrated above consists of a number of stable agents including the University of Johannesburg. Both Phumani Paper and Artist Proof Studio have shown their commitment to effecting change in South Africa over the past years and are valuable contributors to this partnership. All members of this partnership benefit equally from the collaboration.

The local actor illustrated here is Twanano Papermaking, an affiliate of Phumani Paper. They have proved their worth as a sustainable self-managed initiative since 2001 and have outlive many other similar initiatives implemented under the EcoCity umbrella in Ivory Park.

contributions such as knowledge exchange. Partnerships should comprise a diverse range of role players committed to inflicting change in the city.

6. Accessibility

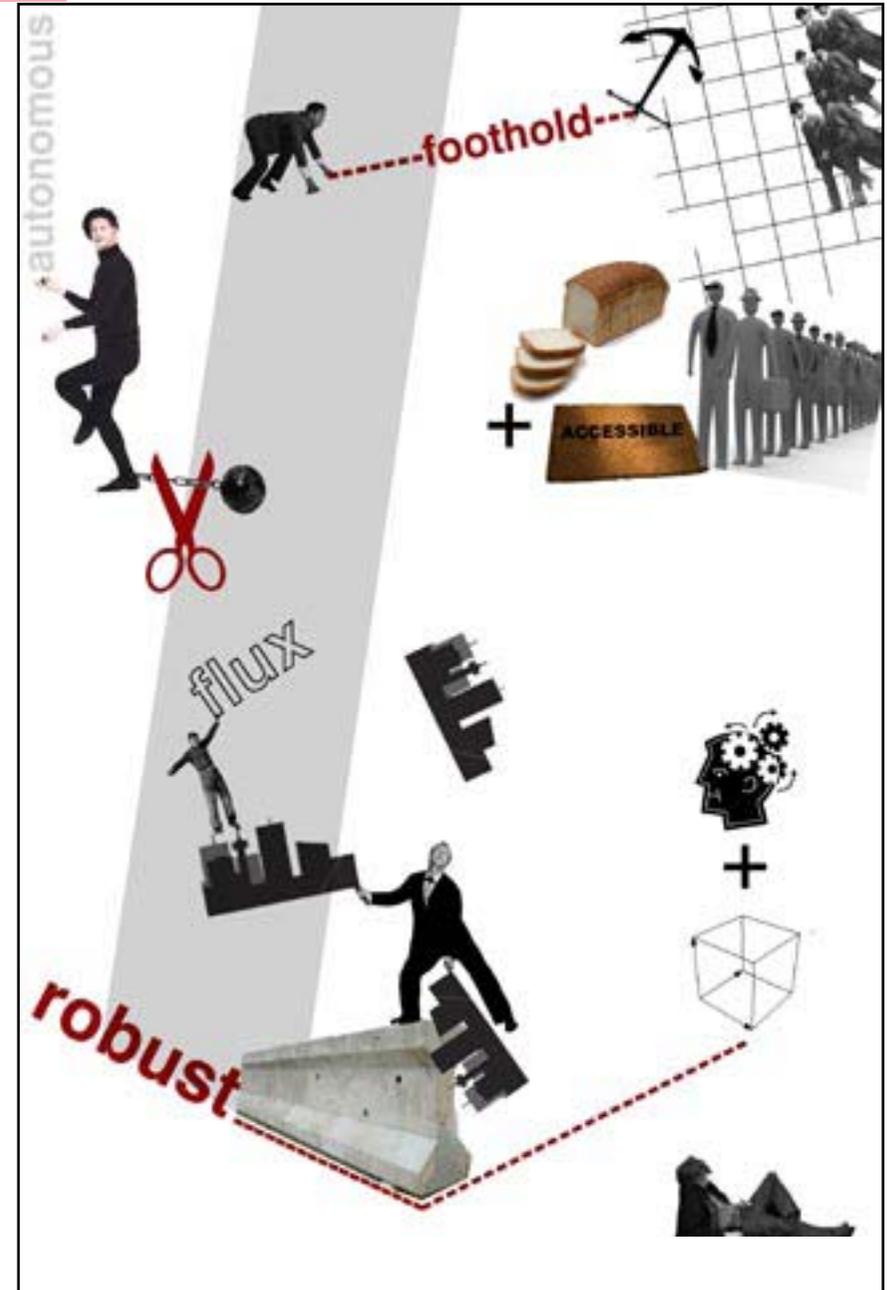
Interventions should also be accessible, in other words, perceived as both convenient and comprehensible. Spatial interventions that form part of this strategy should be viewed as a necessary part of the urban environment. The aim is to create objects and spaces that provide necessary amenities, resources and places for interaction. The need and value of these 'places' should once more become visible and available to all potential users.

Accessibility also refers to the extent to which interventions can be used by a range of users. This includes users classified as 'disabled', but also extends to include a much larger section of the population that is rendered disabled by badly designed physical spaces. Interventions should therefore accommodate users of different age, race and gender in an attempt at stimulating diverse social relations.

Accessibility is not limited to physical access, but also includes access to management and ownership structures and bodies. The decision making process must be transparent, democratic and open to change and input from the involved actors and agents. In other words, the 'decision makers' should not be removed from the participants.

7. Conclusion

These qualities constitute a spatial strategy which guides the creation of interventions that form part of a spatial network of opportunity. It then follows that the theoretical approach should be 'tested' on the site as described previously. This entails the design of a network of opportunities that responds to local conditions, follows the spatial strategy and aims to achieve its objectives.



part iii

rethinking current urban practices

1. Introduction

It is necessary to rethink some of the practices in development and design that often go unchallenged.

2. Participation (development and governance)

If one had to simplify the term 'architectural participation' it can be defined as the involvement of the user at some stage of the design process (Blundell Jones, Petrescu & Till, 2005: xiii). However, too often this involvement is 'token', bringing a degree of social consciousness to the profession without really transforming it. Blundell Jones *et al* (2005:xiii) believes that participation has become an organized (and potentially manipulated) part of design projects, where users are meant to be given a voice, but that the process often stifles the sound coming out. The term 'participation' is often accepted uncritically, an undefined term applied to too many projects but practiced in too few.

The process of architectural production is traditionally removed from the general public due to its need for clients with capital and power, and also in part due to Modernist views of architecture (Blundell Jones *et al*, 2005). This has led to a gap between the world as built, and the world as needed and desired. Participation essentially tries to address this gap by involving users in the early stages of the design process, aiming to give rise to environments that not only has an increased sense of ownership but are also more responsive to change. Participation is not just a catalyst for transformation of the role, and lives, of users, but for the transformation of architectural

practice. It aims to make the architectural profession more relevant to, and more engaged with, the everyday world.

The spatial strategy supported here follows an approach to participation similar to that of the *Atelier d'Architecture Autogeree* / Studio of Self-managed Architecture (aaa, 2004). They believe that architects and users should cooperatively develop 'tools' that empower and return spatial agency to the users themselves (aaa, 2004). This can be achieved through the creation of self-managed spaces that are supported by diverse networks of people and institutions. Power is distributed amongst role-players and users are encouraged to play an active role in decision making processes. This approach has parallels in the anarcho-syndicalism movement (Rocker, 1989).

Oversimplified, syndicalism refers to an ideology of egalitarian, pre-managed economic and labour structures (Rocker, 1989). Noam Chomsky, a major proponent of the movement believes that syndacalism offers possibilities for self-management over a broad scale (Jay, 1976). Self management not only encourages workers to be the masters of their own affairs, but also offers them the position to make major, substantive decisions concerning the structure of the economy, social institutions, urban planning and the like (Jay, 1976). In other words, self management returns power to the user / worker.

It is important to note that self management and participation in governance should be integrated with the activities of the users. Self management does not necessarily require full-time involvement, but is a part-time job which should be rotated through the community (Jay, 1976).

Participation is thus not only a practice to be applied to the process of architectural development, but also to the ongoing processes of management and governance. Such a revised view of participation affects both places and people, hoping to transform mere users into interventionist users; urban authorities that no longer accept second class spaces but questions and demands supportive networks and cities.

3. Urban curators

The term participation implies a collaboration of a number of mutually dependant partners. This suggests the introduction of a regulatory body that can mediate between these various partners to ensure optimum collaboration and results.

Boxes need labels.
New phenomena
need caretakers.

chora manifesto (bunschoten *et al*, 2001)

...the architect
should accept
losing control.
Rather than being
the master, the
architect should
understand himself
as one of the
participants.

doina petrescu

RURAL STUDIO



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knowledge exchange/role of educational institutions/public_design partnership

2003-2005_zagreb, croatia
(cumberlidge&musgrave, 2007:129)



The Rural Studio shows that an educational institution can be an effective agent for change in deprived rural (as well as urban) areas.

Rural Studio's initiatives not only benefit the local community but also the students, who become better trained and more employable designers. As opposed to traditional forms of educational outreach – classes for the community, research studies on the community, or the use of real places as sites for hypothetical conjecture - the Rural Studio carries out action research that results in 'real' change.

The approach and realised projects of Rural Studio both validates the educational process and enables the community to benefit from a more sustainable partnership than short-term funded programmes or voluntary work.

Rural Studio proves that academia can engage in processes of knowledge exchange and hands-on research to realise radical change.

Bunschoten et al (2001:231) defines such a body as an urban curator. The urban curator is a caretaker and a connector of people, things, desires, stories and opportunities; someone who 'scans and lays out a new field by making new readings of things, which he or she identifies and contextualises' (Shalk in Petrescu, 2005:57).

It is important to note that the urban curator is not necessarily a single person, but in most cases consist of a group of people and/or institutions with varying backgrounds and connections to the project. In the case of Recover, this role is played by collaborations consisting of members from the private sector, the local community and the University of Pretoria. Urban curators should be established to oversee the entire project with smaller curatory groups for each of the individual interventions. Potential members are identified for each intervention in Chapter 3.

The University of Pretoria can play a major role as urban curator on this specific site. However, this is not the only role it can play. This leads to an investigation on the specific role of the university in urban development processes.

4. Rethinking the role of the University in the city

The first and most obvious role of the university in the city is in processes of knowledge exchange. The interventions that comprise Recover are all concerned with exchanging knowledge on a neutral base.

According to Russo, van den Berg & Lavanga (2007:199) academic training - a powerful generator of knowledge - cannot be demarcated from the social and environmental context in which it takes place. The context will determine the extent to which knowledge produced within the institutions' boundaries filters and sediments in local socio-economic processes. This filtering down of knowledge can give cities

a competitive advantage if it is managed in the best interests of the local community. This means, among other things, establishing strong and synergetic links between the host community and the landscape generated by higher education, consisting of the extensive physical fabric of the university as well as the people who populate it - students, researchers, and the teaching staff.

Russo *et al* (2007:200) believes that universities potentially have the role as 'networkers'. They can activate a local buzz around development initiatives and can pipeline global content into local structures and processes. Recover hopes to engage the University of Pretoria in exactly this manner, by establishing action groups from the UP to act as urban curators. This involvement will not only benefit the activities and users involved, but also the University and the city as a whole. By involving not only the institution but also the students, their field of knowledge is greatly expanded. Hotel Neustadt, initiated in Germany between 2002 and 2003, created an environment where young people could explore ideas of relevance to them, a place where they could test, lead and carry out their own projects (Cumberlidge & Musgrave, 2007:92). This project not only benefitted the students involved, but the city as a whole. The next generation of users of the specific area responded in a similar manner as the students had and engaged in entrepreneurial activities and events that directly contributed to the regeneration of the area. Recover hopes to initiate programmes that will encourage students to interact with grassroots knowledge, everyday practitioners and experimental activities that reach beyond the boundaries of their classrooms and laboratories.

Rural studio illustrates the benefits of such an integration between tertiary institutions and the local community. Universities are often viewed as 'ivory towers of knowledge' that are isolated from their context. By engaging in interventions like that of Recover, this perception can be addressed in a hands on manner.

