



IDEAS FOR INTERPRETATION

CHAPTER 02

city as possibility
overload
interventions of meaning
element of surprise
adaptation
architecture of opportunity

IDEAS FOR INTERPRETATION

city as possibility

...is the optimism and outcomes associated with the city. Possibility provides experience and thus becomes a tangible element which informs the architecture and the individuals who encounter it.

People primarily move or commute to the city for the economic and social opportunities that it provides. This fluctuating populace creates the framework for the cosmopolitan nature of a city, yet it's at the point when the citizens take ownership of their city that the multiplicity of experience begins. Burgeoned by the commuters and the migrants, the city begins a narrative that allows for possibility to take place. The city is the global nucleus within the regional landscape that represents possibility and accordingly draws people into interaction, exposing us to new experiences in spontaneous and isolated scenarios. The connection of these individuals and their meetings within the network of global opportunity (Read, 2005: 10) joins the local, global and intermediate opportunities together. The city becomes a tangible element in the everyday experience.

The city in its economic context allows for possibility but hinders the expression of difference through its commodification (Swyngedouw, 2005: 131). The commodity places a market value on architecture, just as the expression of the economy through materials, information and exposure drives public expectations and tourism. The reality is stale possibility. However, possibility is discovered through experience on an intimate pedestrian scale and the legibility of architecture in a capitalist economy should be sensitive to what can be discovered by its citizens. The 'everyday' is what defines a city, however much the advertising appeal tries to polish the reality. Therefore the overlapping encounters, programmes and narratives define city life and that which represents it.

The possibility for a varied urban experience lies in the hidden assets of the city and each fresh urban experience can lead to the revealing of these hidden layers. The perception of the outsider for example, has significance in terms of a sense of belonging and the identification of which assets contribute to belonging and possibility. Pedestrian comfort, safety, orientation and the

2.01 PEOPLE CREATE POSSIBILITY



2.02 OWNERSHIP OF THE CITY



2.03 NEGLECTED SPACES + EDGES

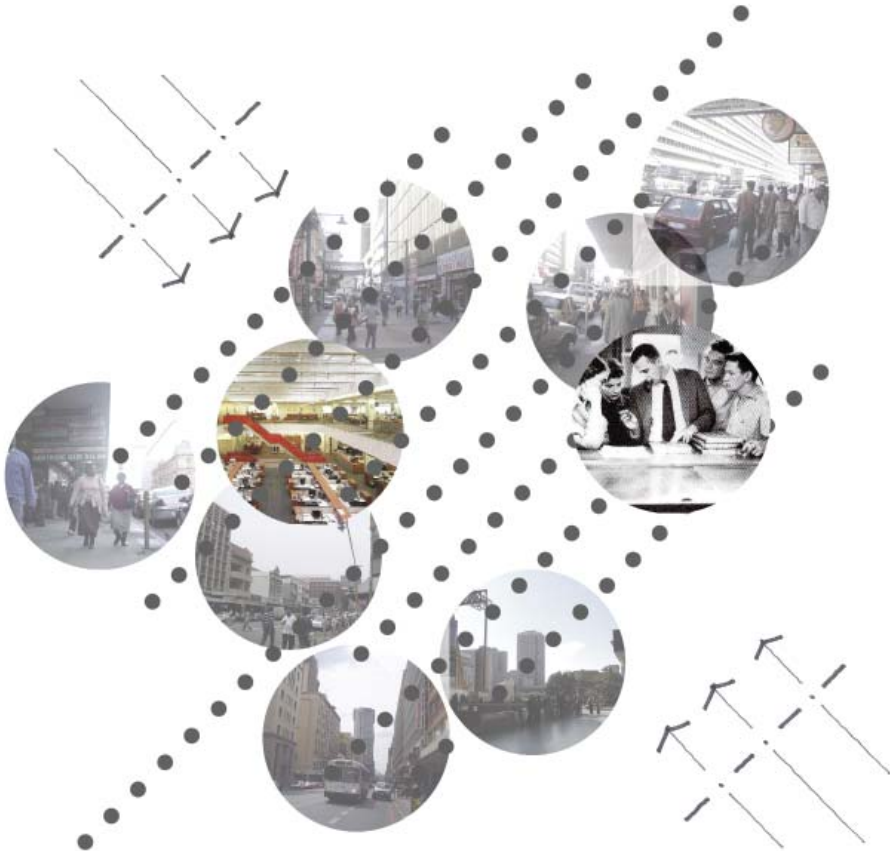


value of historical resources are immediate examples which allow for such possibility. Barthes suggests that illiteracy within the city is a positive experience (1970: 9). The quality of reality, the flâneur environment and impartiality are enhanced to form an attachment to the city, possibilities that should be explored. The uneasiness evoked by a city can be an asset for development within the bounds of possibility. Such sentiment places intermittent 'safe' points, which could act as catalysts for precinct development, strengthening people ownership of lost spaces.

It is exactly out of...the 'officialised' urban experience that the possibility for imagining and practicing a different form of urban experience resides (Swyngedouw, 2005: 133).

The context of this investigation within the 'city as possibility' explores what is hidden, where resistance and opportunity come forth and the possible development of understanding and in the 'everyday'. The depth of the city block and the legibility of the processes within this block remain enigmatic for the user. In Pretoria's arcade context the city block and its processes have the ability to expose themselves to the pedestrian, dissecting the layers of historical development to give meaning to close encounters with the unknown (Swyngedouw, 2005: 133). For the 'city as possibility' is a continuum for architecture. It allows for future expansion and focuses on the unexplored and availability that the city offers us on a daily basis.

2.04 THE CITY AS POSSIBILITY



overload

...is the obvious expression of commodity, information and globalisation which influences the 'everyday', the image and future of the city. Legibility is required to reverse this temporary experience.

The international street represents the optimism in society, adorned with mass imagery, constantly changing scenarios, tall buildings and crowds moving up and down the sidewalks on individual missions. This street evokes prosperity and has become a destination in itself, desirable for any country and in any context. It is here that the culmination of the country's work is on show, anything and everything is seemingly available. However this context exudes space of disorientation and defies a sense of belonging. Pretorius Street is one such 'international street' within Pretoria, and exists as a patchwork of activities (Swyngedouw, 2005: 125) that connects the capital with synonyms of global order. The economic character which is exuded is the overload that pedestrians and motorists face on a daily basis. Debord suggests that the imagery of the streetscape becomes the constant in the daily connections of the people using the street. (1994: 12) The overload is the verbal equivalent of social interaction that is removed as a result of the clear individualism of the street. The resistance to this overload is the architectural experiment, such that the opportunity is included without the existing pastiche.

The expression of the commodity is seen through the overload: of information and everyday exposure. Signage is an additional plane, overlaid upon the architecture and with its strong commercial messaging the context is reinvented but remains as a result, superficial. However, overload becomes a design informant to which the intervention must respond. Commodity has influenced architecture, such that trade is instilled in homogenised space and the variations become less publicly obvious and accessible. The internal shopping malls along Pretorius Street are such an example. As a result of the limited street exposure, pedestrians, motorists and 'the outsiders' knowledge of the malls is reduced. Sennett defines this as the elimination of complexity and 'alterity' about the city streets (2005: 121). Social and architectural transformation within this context therefore relies on changing public perception through the branding and new interventions in the streetscape. Yet overload is inevitable, cities are the strategic placement of regional commodities and accordingly public consumption will remain a permanent feature of society.

2.05 ARCADE MEETS SIDEWALK



2.06 SIGNAGE IN ALL DIRECTIONS



2.07 INFORMATION ON THE GO



The visual economy of modern capitalism has put up new barriers to the experience of complexity on the city's streets (Sennett, 2005: 121).

The overload of information within the everyday has constituted an image for the city. Huysen describes the 'city as sign' (2005: 76) which packages the city into a single service. The internal resultant of this service becomes an urban architecture obsessed with communication and neglects quality of public space (Venturi, Scott-Brown & Izenour, 1977: 8) within the intervention's environment. Visuals become a 'skin architecture' in need of translating an understanding of process and provision for a meaningful everyday experience. Interactive facades and theories on transparency could be a solution to the overload within the 'international street'. Interactive facades allow for a varied readability and legibility for both pedestrians and users and consider the relationship of inside to outside and the converse. The pedestrian scaled, interactive and intimate experience allows for greater understanding as opposed to continuing the digital translations of extensive flashing imagery. Legibility amongst an overload scenario could be grasped through phenomenal transparency and as Kepes defines it, as the 'simultaneous perception of different spatial locations' (In Rowe & Slutzky, 1976: 161). The insertion of this layering breaks down the mundane and repetitive in addressing the overload, and present varied experiences.

New legibility and transparency consider the erosion of clarity. Barthes states that the wall of the city is 'destroyed beneath the inscription' (1970: 107) which supports the idea that the processes within the block remain hidden from the general public, and from this statement perhaps as a result of information overload. The role architecture plays is reduced due to the signage and remains as background to the everyday experience. The intervention of a skills training centre of the 'everyday' aims to rebut this scenario and integrate the intervention within the public forum, for the overload remains an experience, but only a temporary experience.

2.08 OVERLOAD



interventions of meaning

...identify and develop the narrative of the city, exposing the users to the historical resources and series of change.

Change is a fundamental state... (it makes) provision for the fact of history, for the unintended, for the contradictory, for the unknown (Read and Sennett, 2005: 2).

The associated meaning of a city undoubtedly develops from its history. It has the human quality of personality, such that for better or worse its history stays with it, to be celebrated and remembered. Accordingly when pedestrians walk along the city's streets they are exposed to its narrative. However, much of the narrative remains hidden, for as development continues the history is often not celebrated and remembered. Thus this intervention aims to expose the meaning and historical value of a building, forgotten as a landmark and swallowed by commercialism. With each new development that doesn't take cognisance of the previous conditions the narrative is 'subtly disrupted' (Swyngedouw, 2005: 130) and the meaning of Pretoria becomes less accessible. Time becomes a history in itself and what 'text' Pretoria presents itself as. In current terms, Pretoria is largely undiscovered, clinging to the term 'capital city' and content to be second best. Yet Pretoria is a city, beset with challenges and opportunities of its own and to confront the future means first to expose the past.

The meaning of the narrative continues in everyday terms with the interactions between people and between people and the buildings they inhabit. An attachment to place and adhered memory of an environment enables the city as much as the multitude of activities it fosters. The unlikely nature of city interactions about its 'ground floor' (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007: 6) develops meaning between the communities and creates an everyday nostalgia, the experience of which the thesis intervention aims to harness and to further establish previously unremembered meaning, expressed in vertical and horizontal reticulation.

Pretoria contains numerous under-emphasized historical resources which fade into the surrounds of the streetscape and underscore their own significance. The landmarks of a city are the bearing points but considerable meaning can be uncovered between the main visual 'moments' of the city. The recognition of historical resources contributes to the branding, visible

2.09 CENTRAL STR. REVEAL PROCESS



2.10 TRAM SHED. RE-USE

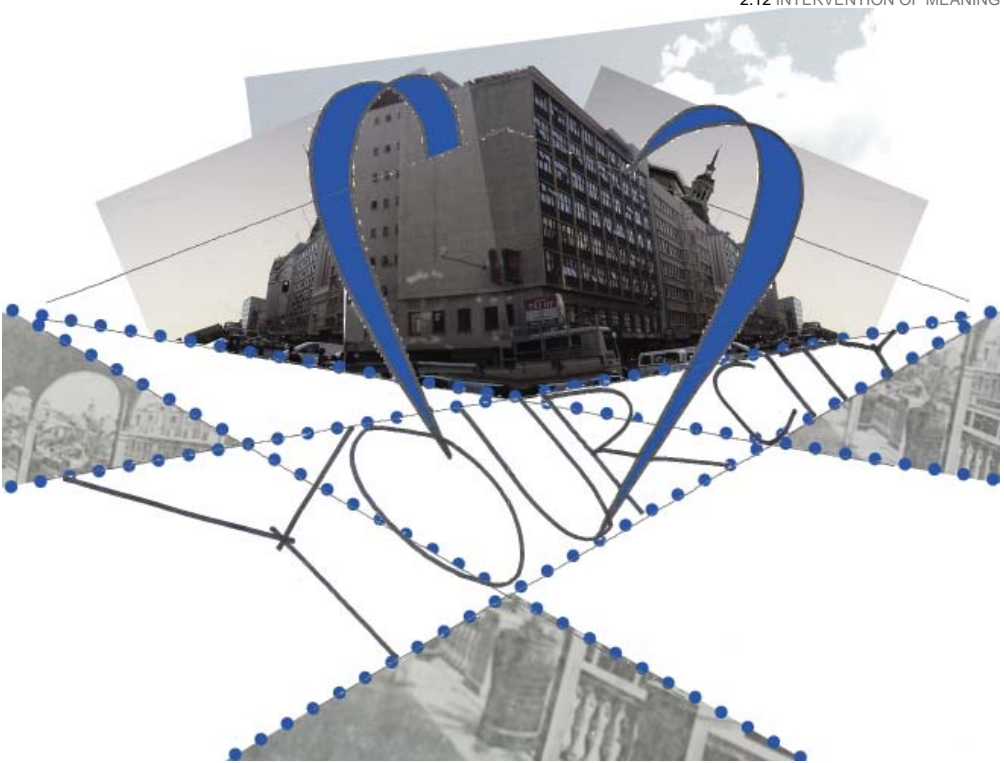


2.11 OPERA PLAZA. RESTORATION



re-use and reduces the 'echo' (Barthes, 1970: 76) of contemporary streets as meaningless duplications which promote individualism through function but not consistently through architecture. New interventions based about the under-emphasized resources will allow for greater understanding of the city narrative and strengthen the identity of streetscapes. The macro scale could be positively influenced as a result, creating routes to follow and an awareness of surroundings for both pedestrians and motorists at varying speeds. Historical resources ultimately derive a sense of ownership and pride within the city and the everyday experience is varied through phenomenological intervention.

2.12 INTERVENTION OF MEANING



Element of Surprise

...provides a connection in the legibility and experience of the city and its architecture. Revealing the pedestrian network through surprise, strengthen connection to place and the *derivé*.

The depth of city blocks and the 'perimeter wall' that to a large extent prevents permeation can allow people to discover part of the 'city as possibility'. Whether the arcades and pedestrian streets of Pretoria are used as shortcuts or as destinations in themselves the everyday experience is constantly manipulated by the volumes and qualities of these spaces. The element of surprise and interventions of meaning can be used in conjunction to develop the narrative of the city; such is the use of Burlington Arcade. In turn this narrative can be used to conceptualise and construct the future interventions within the larger network of movement that develops. The intimate pedestrian experience is enhanced and provided with self-orientation (Barthes, 1970: 36) through the element of surprise. The atrium in Koedoe Arcade is one such example of an interactive, orientating space that caters for the public forum as well as the office environment. The atrium is not readable from the street and the sudden change in volume, materiality and quality of space traces itself within the individual and allows the city to continue.

These spaces within the city blocks constitute non crowded unexpected public space. The individual's route asks whether the space is real or imagined. These spaces aren't lost spaces; they are frequently used and people return to them on the basis of memory, the sensory experience and the original element of surprise. Soja defines these spaces as 'thirdspace' and suggests that as a result of discovery, perception and a surprise order they remain important to the city's composition (In Swyngedouw, 2005: 144). Variation is derived that the spaces are both concealed and revealed as part of the daily path. Opera Plaza is an important 'everyday' example into the role that the element of surprise as well as adaptation plays in capturing the essence of urban interactions. The surprise in this regard is the interface between the historic building and courtyard beyond. The connection to the arcade system allows for the perception of release and safety, and the six storey ivy-covered facade of a neighbouring building is a contextual and characterising. Further success is that it connects to the street in unexpected frames that adds to the sidewalk experience.

2.13 FNB COURTYARD. INNER BLOCK



2.14 BURLINGTON ARCADE. DISPLAY



2.15 OPERA PLAZA. CONNECTION

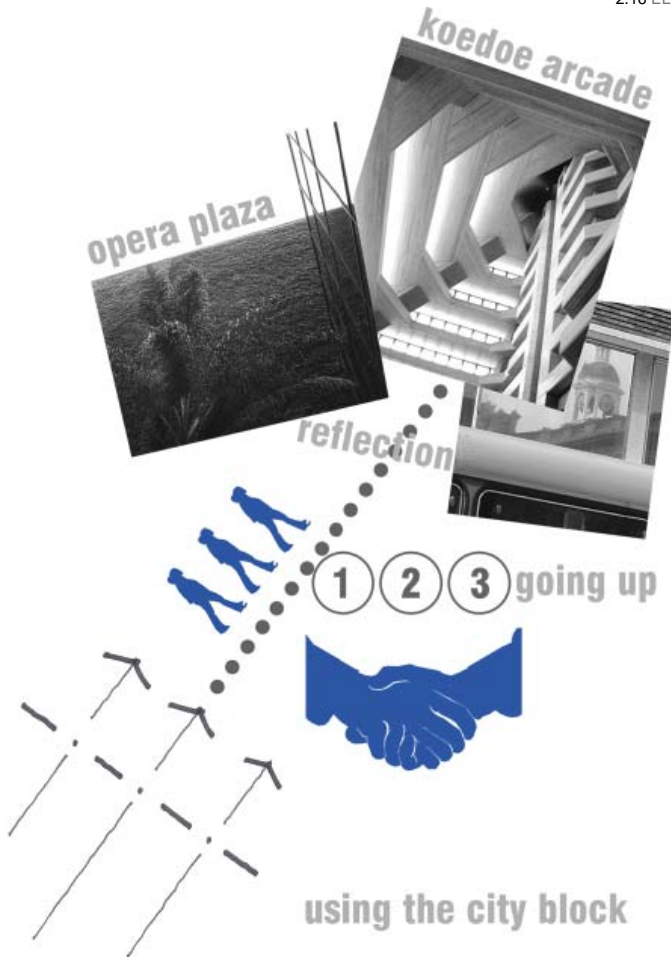


The possibility for the element of surprise using the existing fabric of Pretoria lies in their existing movement patterns and open/closed relationships. The connection to the network of arcades develops a layer of meaning that could be combined with the Situationist's strategy of the *derivé*. The urban wanderings (Mathews, 2006: 41) form a temporary connection to place that instils a memory whilst communicating the aimlessness of the now. The space evoking the element of surprise doesn't require constant attention; instead it becomes sub-servient to the city and the temporality of everyday experience.

By virtue of freely chosen variations in the rules of the game, the independence of places will be rediscovered without any new exclusive tie to the soil, and thus too the authentic *journey* will be restored to us (Debord, 1994: 126).

Open spaces within the city block are servants to the buildings around them: whether the spaces currently act as lightwells, ducts, courtyards or arcades, each of them has the ability to inform and create a sense of place regardless of scale. The element of surprise within each of them shows the viewpoints of daily life from a safe perspective and translates the key emotions of the city. The network of use is the very nature of the city; spaces within the block should communicate this use.

2.16 ELEMENT OF SURPRISE



adaptation

...and its inevitability calls for considered design which traces the history and reveals the associated meanings of the old through distinctive new work.

An architecture of the 'everyday' may take on collective and symbolic meaning but it is not necessarily monumental (Berke, 1997: 224).

Adaptation must be a carefully considered medium of intervention. Either it responds to an element which is lacking and a programme which needs significant re-interpretation or adaptation aims to reintroduce lost significance. The process can add a layer to the narrative of the city, giving future possibilities out of the past or through insensitive adaptation layers of meaning can be lost. The Burra Charter requires that adaptation minimise the impact on the cultural significance of the building and that it shouldn't change the significant fabric beyond regard (Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999: 7). These requirements are understandable yet when the significance has long disappeared due to poor adaptation on numerous scales; restoration becomes necessary to retrieve lost significance.

The significance of a place however is seldom readily apparent; accordingly informed interpretation (Burra Charter, 1999: 8) should be used to develop appropriate responses to the context. The scales of adaptation vary greatly and their impact on the significance of place differs consequently. Retail and shop-front adaptation, which is prevalent along Pretorius Street, is one of the smallest scales of adaptation and because the envelope is seldom manipulated the significance is rarely damaged. The general economic nature and programme can however be used to enhance the significance and attachment to place. Adaptation within the office environment is also common place as the needs of companies' change. The significance and narrative of the building can be manipulated in this case in terms of the user's exposure to the architecture and their use of space. Management has an important role to play in shaping part of the city's environment. If there is a lack of understanding of history and a sense of place then the adaptation may discontinue the city narrative. Facade and structural adaptation as well as demolition have more impact on the accessibility of the significance of the building as it is a large scale intervention. In this scenario the history becomes paramount as to the legibility and intentions of the change.

2.17 ABSA BUILDING. RENOVATION



2.18 PRESIDENT TOWER. FACADE



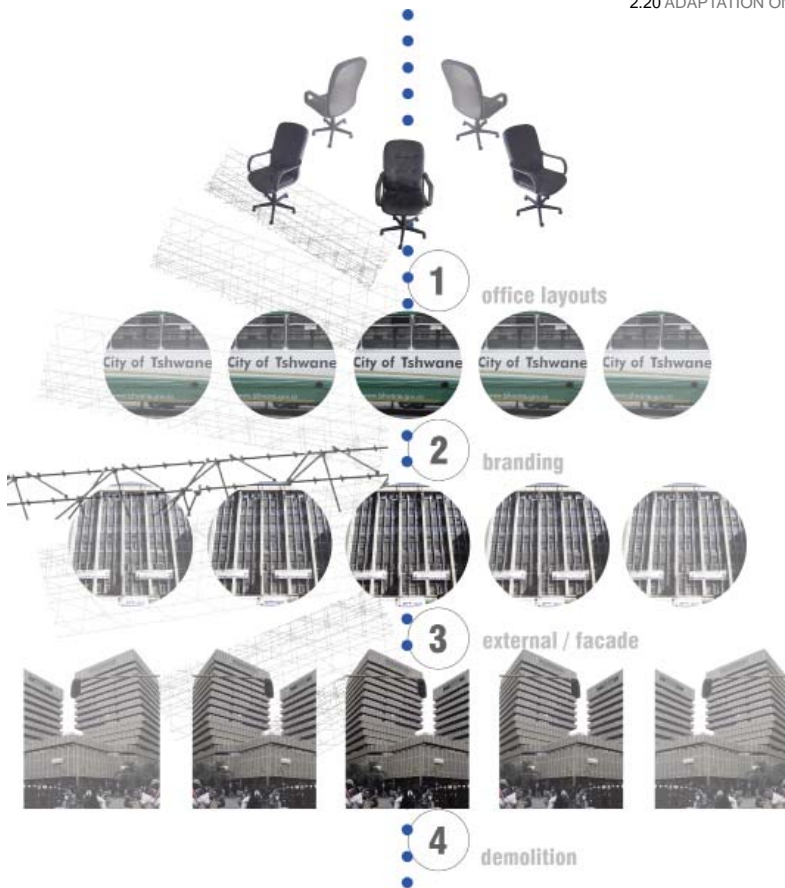
2.19 WACHTHUIS. BLAND NARRATIVE



The inevitability of adaptation exposes the conflict in appropriate design. A clear understanding of meaning is required to be considered in conjunction with the physical requirements of contemporary society. The temporary nature of society is defined by the capitalist market (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer, 2009: 178), the laissez-faire environment which is shaped by use-value and opposing social forces. The city requirements change constantly and the architecture adapts and reinvents itself under the pressure of time; arguably pursued in the cause of making cities better places to live and work in. Adaptation too reinvents itself. Sennett points out that cities now aim to overlay various functions (2005: 124) within the same space to maximise use and to encourage collectivism in an increasingly isolated world.

Harnessing the space that the city neglects and conceals becomes important in highlighting the possibilities available and in the improvement of the 'everyday' experience. The exposure of the 'interstice' (Nicolas-Le Strat, 2007: 4) to question adaptation and accessibility of the derived can provide greater reasoning and uncover meaning such that the city develops without neglecting the narrative. Foremost in its cognisance, adaptation should understand what came before and what the possibilities are for the future, regardless of the building typology or programme which requires adaptation.

2.20 ADAPTION ON FOUR LEVELS



architecture of opportunity

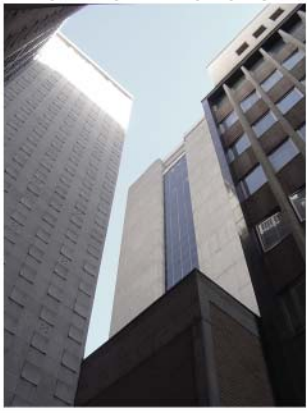
...is non-prescriptive and responds to the context by resisting isolation and harnessing the provisions of narrative. Variation, legibility and 'stop and stare' can create opportunity out of the mundane.

Within the existing context of the overload and the 'city as possibility' the mundane and meaningless are prevalent. The aim is therefore to transcribe an architecture of opportunity over the defined built fabric. The external expression of this considers the relationships between the city as a physical entity as well as an emotional entity. Opportunity is contextualised by the economic environment but suggests legibility from a departure point of architectural literacy and functional opportunity.

An architecture of opportunity is non-prescriptive and embraces the 'everyday' as opposed to the iconic. For the opportunity is derived as a result of extending a clear understanding to the outsider, such that a legibility develops. The pedestrian should be able to understand the expression readily and the influence of using the spaces created should enhance the 'everyday' experience. If the architecture and the opportunity are concealed, the person on the street becomes illiterate. Accordingly the manipulation of the city's voice and the tangibility of its narrative can be used to empower people. By rejecting the status quo of the environment an architecture of opportunity can find relevance in the 'everyday' and as a result of acknowledging what has come before.

The city is not a static entity and an architecture of opportunity responds to this characteristic. The systems in which people exist and operate (Sassen, 2005: 148) inform the spatial dimensions which contribute to presence and provisions that can be created. Recognising the speed of the 'everyday' and providing variations of space, in terms of both physical and emotional, is important in establishing the building presence and its opportunity. The presence however is not solely visual as an architecture of opportunity inspires the quality of stop and stare. The users who interact with the building are promoted in the hierarchy of experience. Thus the opportunity is found in the routes as well as in entrepreneurial programmes; from visual inside to outside variation, as an individual moving through or moving past the building, the architecture subtly imbues a requirement of memory, while refusing to demand attention (Berke, 1997: 223)

2.21 SKY + LIGHTWELL OPPORTUNITY



2.22 UNDERSTAND PROCESS



2.23 POLLEY'S ARCADE. REJUVENATE



An architecture of the everyday may be generic and anonymous (Berke, 1997: 222).

A possible anonymity of the architecture however demands a quality of experience, connections and acceptance of change. As much as an architecture of opportunity is about 'its moment' and dealing with contemporary society and issues, the intervention should be chiefly contextual. The subtle difference that becomes evident remains in its resistance to isolation and the sub-servient nature of all interactions. The architecture is a reaction to the existing conditions and a formal response to shaping the quotidian situation, which is consistently shaped by the activity between fluctuating forms (Kepes in Read and Slutzky, 1976: 160). Between the varying shapes and scales of the everyday in the networks of opportunity which allow for the activation of an architecture of opportunity. Questioning its role in the future and its relevance the 'multiplicity of fragmentary becomings' (Nicholas-Le Strat, 2007: 4) activates the opportunity. The significance of an architecture of opportunity is in the combination of provision and connections with the narrative of the city and the contextual 'everyday'.

2.24 ARCHITECTURE OF OPPORTUNITY

