ARCHITECTURE'S TIGHTROPE

Investigating an Alternative Trajectory
for Critical Architecture: Critical
Spatial Practices and a Polycontextual
Engagement with an Urban Thick Edge
Condition

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RIGHT >
Figure i: Clifton Street Car Park,
NZTA engineers plan placed in
the context

While some consider the unfinished parts of the city as ugly or disturbing, others feel they make an area more interesting than the picture perfect urban fabric. The city's scars are stimuli for the mind. They raise questions, about memories and imaginations of a foregone past, and of potential futures. They visualize the passage of time and the inevitability of collapse. On a smaller level, they show traces of faded lives, moved communities and shrunken economies. The voids provide space for the observer to interpret them as he likes, to fill them with imaginations and meanings.

Mark Minkjan, "Failed Architecture"

Today's cities, however, look quite different from the cities of the future imagined by our predecessors a century ago. City dwellers are too often confined within monotonous grids, their connections to other people are severed, and they are condemned to an isolated existence. By now, those who migrated to the cities dreaming of a life of freedom and abundance have lost their spirited expressions and been reduced to a crowd of alienated individuals. Modernist architecture built a wall between itself and nature and relied on technology to create artificial environments with no connection to nature. It privileged function and efficiency, and cut itself off from the unique history and culture of its local settings. This kind of isolation from nature and rejection of the local community is to blame for the uniformity of today's cities and the people who live in them.

Toyo Ito, Pritzker Prize acceptance speech

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Figure ii: Photograph, the
Wellington Urban Motorway

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigation engages two contemporary interrelated problems – one theoretical and one practical – both of which are interrogated, interwoven and tested through a critical lens. The theoretical context framing the design-research reconsiders the vitality of ‘critical architecture’ in relation to contemporary discourse, in particular, the so-called ‘crisis of criticality’ and the implications of this ideological landscape within the built environment. Foregrounding a position to test this theoretical framing, the practical context of the design-research is distinctly urban – engaging one of the contemporary negative outcomes of rapid urbanisation.

The practical problem investigates the ‘thick edges’ (places of singular and/or impermeable identities) that manifest around and below new urban motorway infrastructural developments, a condition that creates barriers to cultural, social and spatial flows between communities in urban settings. This thesis argues that by engaging with the complex and multiple cultural conditions of urban sites, the rigidity and singular nature of these impermeable *thick edge* spaces can be opened to diverse flows relating to multiple contexts. Through processes of design intervention, the thesis proposes a ‘polycontextual’ approach to introduce flows of wider contextual dimensions within an urban site – promoting architectural solutions that blur, fray and punctuate *thick edges* by developing them as threshold conditions between adjacencies.

The theoretical problem analyses the limitations of both the autonomous and post-critical positions; this thesis argues that an alternative trajectory for a contemporary critical architecture has emerged, one that may be used as a theoretical framework for resolving urban *thick edge* conditions. Jane Rendell, Kim Dovey and Murray Fraser reveal

a trajectory to shift architectural practices towards positive and flexible modes of production whilst simultaneously opposing the insufficient positions of the post-critical. They posit that architecture remains an inherently cultural proposition – created through constructive ‘relays’ that can mediate between theory and design – elucidating strategies of resistance through an engagement with practices that are *both* critical *and* spatial. Jane Rendell further argues that strategies for such ‘critical spatial practices’ can be elucidated through an examination of processes that are: site-specific, socio-spatial, and temporal. Adopting these three categories as the theoretical framework of this thesis focuses the design-research, implicating *critical spatial practices* as a contemporary and alternative position for critical architectural production - providing a framework for positive and critical positions in current discourse.

In response to this two-fold investigation, the thesis tests a synthesis of *critical spatial practices* and a *polycontextual* approach through strategic design-research propositions. *Architecture's Tightrope* proposes a multifunctional events facility that permanently supports the New Zealand International Arts Festival, and the structuration of a dynamic, relational and non-deterministic public space. The primary aims of this thesis are: to test a contemporary critically engendered framework for architectural design-research that is both culturally and formally negotiated; and to investigate the potential for this framework to invert the negative conditions of urban *thick edges* through an engagement with multiple contexts.

Key words: *critical spatial practices*, *thick edge*, *polycontextual*.

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Figure iii: Photograph, Clifton Street Car Park

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PREFACE

Throughout my academic education the idea of the 'critical' within architecture has been a constant source of interest; particularly the emphasis that it places on demystifying, *resisting* and subverting dominant power structures, and how they impact our position - as potential architects - within the *context* of everyday life. This interest, fundamentally shaped by a selection of writings, teachers, and built projects, has had a significant impact on my ideological outlook not only as an architect but also as a person.

An opportunity to explore these interests was made explicitly clear the first time that I visited the Clifton Street Car Park. The site revealed itself as a series of dualisms and contradictions that are in desperate need of architectural investigation: beautiful yet overbearing; architecturally tectonic yet unresolved; urban and residential; frequently used yet completely forgotten. These dualisms emerged from many site visits, day and night, rain and shine - each visit presenting an even more fertile environment for *doing* critical practices. Thus, a problem emerged – how can architecture explore the complexities of the existing context and simultaneously reveal it to the wider public as a site of critical potency?

Fundamentally, this thesis is the result - an attempt to examine and critique the existing theoretical issues encompassed by the site into a rehabilitative design intervention. As the title suggests, the synthesis of these conceptual structures is a delicate balancing act - between idealism and realism - one which through the design-research of this thesis attempts to traverse the tightrope.

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Figure v: Photograph, colonnade of the Neues Museum, Berlin. Renovation by David Chipperfield Architects (2009). The museum has been rehabilitated from a decaying monument into a historically synthesised public space. Visiting this space in 2012 revealed the potency of an architecture that is context-specific, and a part of the city's critical history.

NEXT PAGE >

Figure vi: Looking south down the Wellington Urban Motorway. The Wellington town belt is to the right, and the back of The Terrace to the left.

CONTENTS

Abstract	7
Acknowledgments	9
Preface	11
Contents	14

1	Introduction: Architecture's Tightrope	21
	Introduction to the Context of Design-Research	22
	Problem Statement	25
	Design-Research Aims and Questions	25
	Scope of Design-Research	25
	Design-Research Approach	26

SECTION ONE: FRAMING

2	Averting the Crisis of Criticality: A (Discursive) Design Problem, Argument and Approach	33
	Introduction	34
	A Critical Premise: Mediating Between Formal and Cultural Production	36
	The 'Late Avant-Garde': Fathers of Critical Architecture's Death Drive.	37
	A (Conflated) Crisis? Unravelling the Post-Critical and its Oedipal Discontents	41
	Implications of a Post-Critical Ideology: The Technical Perspective and a Loss of Context	44
	Architecture's New Desire: Mediation through Critical Spatial Practices	48
	Conclusion	50
3	Negotiating the Thick Edge: A (Real) Design Problem and Approach	53
	Introduction	54
	A Sprawling Problem: Modernism's Leftovers	55
	Where Grids Get Cut: Tangible Implications at the Border	58
	A Localised Problem: Three Examples of a Negative Thick Edge	65
	A New Form of Flow: Opportunities for Contextual Positivity	67
	Conclusion	

4	A Potent(ially) Critical Site: Investigating a Polycontextual Approach to the Clifton Street Car Park	69
	Introduction	70
	An Urbanised Context	71
	A Historical Context	71
	A Political Context	76
	An Economic Context	78
	A Social Context	79
	A Physical Context	79
	A Visual Context	84
	Conclusions	103

SECTION TWO: MEDIATING

5	Expanding Place as Critical Practice: Elucidating Strategies for a Site-specific Practice	111
	Introduction	112
	Between 'Here' and 'There': Continuity and Discontinuity Through Site-specific Strategies	113
	Bernard Tschumi's Discontinuity: An Anti-contextual Approach	114
	Enric Miralles's Continuity: A Contextual Approach	119
	Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for Design	124
6	Social Space as Critical Practice: Elucidating Strategies for Socio-spatial Flows	131
	Introduction	132
	Between 'One' and 'Another': 'Loose' Space Through Socio-spatial Strategies	133
	The Palais de Tokyo: Social Space as Appropriated Space	139
	The Metropol Parasol: A Canopy for Multiple Publics	142
	The Rolex Learning Centre: Horizontality, Transparency and Porosity	145
	Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for Design	150
7	Dialectical Space as Critical Practice: Elucidating Strategies to Construct Temporal Images	153
	Introduction	154
	Between 'Now' and 'Then': Walter Benjamin's Dialectical Image	155
	Avoiding Spectacle: Framing Dialectics Through Visual Juxtaposition	157
	The Jewish Museum Berlin: Engaging Historical Context in the Dialectical Image	160
	Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for Design	166

8	A Potent(ially) Critical Programme	173
	Elucidating Programmatic Strategies for Clifton Street Car Park	
	Introduction	174
	An Economic Opportunity for Thick Edges: Cultural Nodes	175
	Event Spaces: Performing Arts Facilities	177
	Auditorium Typologies	179
	Three Local Examples	182
	An Exemplary Client: The NZIAF	192
	Conclusion: Programme Brief	192

SECTION THREE: TESTING

9	Design Case Study:	
	Architecture's Tightrope: a Multifunctional Performance Facility for the NZIAF	201
	Introduction: Design Descriptions	204
	Functions	213
	Adjacencies	218
	Circulations	220
	Critical Strategies	222
	Implementation of Strategies: Ground	239
	Implementation of Strategies: Middle	242
	Implementation of Strategies: Upper	245
10	Design-Research Reflections:	
	Conclusions and Implications	259
	Reflections on Design-Research	260
	Evaluations	266
	Discursive and Practical Implications	266
	Conclusion	266
	Bibliography	268
	Figures List	282

FRAMING

INTRODUCTION

Architecture's Tightrope

-
- Introduction to the Tightrope
 - Problem Statement
 - Design-Research Questions, Aims and Objectives
 - Scope of Design-Research
 - Design-Research Approach

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Figure 1.1: BIG Architects, Superkilen Urban Park, Copenhagen (2012). The park introduces a number of multi-cultural and recreational referents to an area of Copenhagen that is densely populated with immigrants - creating a flow of architecturally-framed contexts throughout the urban landscape

Introduction to the Tightrope

Walking a tightrope is a negotiation, a balancing act, a performance. It requires operating between various dimensions, left and right, up and down. Architectural design practices can be seen to follow a similar mediation of dualities, ‘balancing’: theory and practice, formal autonomy and cultural instrumentality, barriers and flows. Critical theory provides a useful framework in this regard, offering a multitude of approaches for operating between ‘two’ - ways of thinking in terms of ‘both/and’ rather than ‘either/or’.¹ These approaches are based upon a foundational desire to question and, when necessary, resist common understandings of cultural forces as static or objective, thus attempting to expose opportunities for positive change. However, unlike critical theory, architecture is not an inherently esoteric or theoretical exercise; it is axiomatically implicated in ‘real world’ concerns, the social, cultural and spatial conditions that shape its production.

Consequently, this thesis is driven by an intention to engage two contemporary interrelated problems – one theoretical and one practical – both of which are interrogated, interwoven and tested through a critical lens. The theoretical context framing the design-research reconsiders the vitality of ‘critical architecture’ in relation to contemporary discourse, in particular, the so-called ‘crisis of criticality’ and the implications of this ideological landscape within the built environment. Foregrounding a position to test this theoretical framing, the practical context of the design-research is distinctly urban – engaging one of the contemporary negative outcomes of rapid urbanisation. Specifically, the practical problem investigates the ‘*thick edges*’ that manifest around and below new urban motorway infrastructural developments, a condition that creates barriers to cultural, social and spatial flows between communities in urban settings. In response to this two-fold investigation, this thesis sets out to explore a specific critical method to mediate between theory and practice: developing critical theory strategies for problem solving, tested through design propositions that encourage alternative frameworks for traversing the tightrope.

Theoretical Context of Design-Research: Critical Spatial Practices

In “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form”, Michael Hays contends that architectural design differs from critical theory as it is necessarily spatial – mediating dialectically between formal and cultural production. At opposing ends of this dialectical spectrum, two dichotomous positions exist in a constant state of tension: architecture as a purely ‘autonomous’ formal product, a process of interrogation through the language of architecture itself and its theoretical interiority, and architecture as an ‘instrument’ of culture, where the architectural object perpetuates and projects the hegemonic values of a particular zeitgeist. The role of ‘critical’ architecture is to understand and analyse this condition. In so doing, it must ‘cut across’ architecture’s dialectical dichotomy by resisting the potentially negative implications of the dominant culture through the production of architectural form. This definition for critical architecture “cannot be reduced either to a conciliatory representation of external forces, or a dogmatic, reproducible formal system”.² Consequently, Hays’s primary proposition for critical architecture – as mediating between form and culture in a resistant manner – presents a reference point throughout this thesis as the fundamental proposition for critique through design-research.

Following the influence of several canonical figures of the ‘late avant-garde’ – Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman, Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk – critical architecture has become rigidly polarised and one-sided. Rather than mediating between form *and* culture, the influence of these figures shifted critical architectural practices towards a trajectory primarily invested in purely formal autonomy, dislocating the productive tension from Hays’s dialectic by removing its cultural capacity for critique. This autonomous position presents a disciplinarity that is exclusively focussed on architecture as a contextless and isolated practice – a rigorous investigation of its conceptual languages through form, structure, and technique.

1. Rendell, 2008, p. 9.
Rendell’s position in this regard is heavily indebted to the ‘deconstruction’ practices by authors such as Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes.

2. Hays, 1984.

In the wake of the late avant-garde's trajectory for a purely autonomous architecture, a new generation of architects opposing the limitations of this context has emerged – expressing a positive intention to re-engage architectural discourse in 'real world' concerns and pragmatic, flexible methods of production. A dominant proponent of this new vanguard is a faction provocatively termed the 'post-critical'. However, a discursive impasse created by the post-critical position has holistically conflated the proposition of critical architecture, limiting it to practices solely associated with autonomous disciplinarity. In doing so, post-critical architects such as Michael Speaks, Robert Somol, and Sarah Whiting have drawn the discipline into a supposed 'crisis of criticality' – claiming that it is now in fact beyond any necessity to embody a critical intention. This crisis has fostered an ideological climate of submission to the complexities of external forces, supplanting critical processes with a focus on design experimentations based on effects, innovation and technological advancements. Consequently, prominent architects such as Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid, who can be seen to align with post-critical intentions, legitimize architectural production methods that re-enforce complicity with forces of globalisation – producing iconic and decontextualized structures that avoid the importance of contextual engagement.

Analysing the limitations of both the autonomous and post-critical positions, this thesis argues that an alternative trajectory for a contemporary critical architecture has emerged. Investigating the theoretical contentions of Murray Fraser, Kim Dovey and Jane Rendell reveals a trajectory to shift architectural practices towards positive and flexible modes of production whilst simultaneously opposing the insufficient positions of the post-critical. Fraser, Dovey and Rendell posit an understanding that architecture remains an inherently cultural proposition – created through constructive 'relays' that can mediate between theory and design – elucidating strategies of resistance through an engagement with practices that are both critical and spatial. Heavily indebted to the 'spatial turn' in cultural studies, these *critical spatial practices* revitalise Hays's definition for critical architecture

through an examination of the earlier investigations of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Marc Augé. These figures of the spatial turn invest the creation of 'place' identity exclusively within the dimensions of social relations – contending that the 'identity of place' arises from conditions that are dynamic, performative and relational insofar as they are understood as a system of interactions between multiple contexts. Importantly, this adaptation of place 'opens' the architectural design process to critical responses relative to the cultural dimensions of a particular site.

Rendell argues that strategies for *critical spatial practices* can be elucidated through an examination of processes that are: site-specific, socio-spatial, and temporal. Adopting these three categories as the theoretical framework of this thesis focuses the design-research, implicating *critical spatial practices* as a contemporary and alternative framework for critical architectural production. *Critical spatial practices* suggest a new trajectory for critical architecture, averting the conflating influence of the late avant-garde and the subsequent post-critical impasse, and providing a framework for positive and critical positions in current discourse.

Practical Context of Design-Research: Urban Thick Edge Conditions

An investigation of patterns of urbanisation that have shaped the fabric of many Western cities including Wellington reveals one of the contemporary urban problems through which *critical spatial practices* can be tested. Throughout the latter twentieth century, urban infrastructure development processes (referred to as 'jump-cut' urbanisation when critiqued by Robert Ingersoll in the late nineteenth Century) have contributed to the production of spatial barriers, manifesting as 'negative' leftover urban spaces. These sites are tangible realisations of the concomitant effects of 'global' forces as they impact at a 'local' level.³ One specific example of this condition is the creation of what Iain Borden refers to as '*thick edges*' – contextually rigid (static and

3. A proposition explored by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson in *The Social Logic of Space*.

singular) sites, which have emerged around these newly inserted infrastructures. Considered by many as unworthy of architectural attention, *thick edges* in this context are often left as architectural voids or 'filled in' with singular-use programmes (in particular, car parks) that prevent social flow or engagement. Problematically, as urbanisation has proliferated so has the production of these *thick edges*, constructing contextually impermeable borders that sever land-use zones and dislocate previously contiguous social, spatial and cultural communities within urban landscapes. Such sites are singular (usually economic) in their motivations – neglecting relations between the surrounding *visual, physical, social, political, economic and historical* contexts that contribute to the cultural construction of place-identity.

In Wellington, the Clifton Street Car Park (132 The Terrace) vividly exemplifies the problem of the urban *thick edge* – a residual site that occupies a significant area both underneath and surrounding the Wellington Urban Motorway (1969-1984). This site forms an incision through the residential/commercial threshold between the city centre and its periphery, leaving behind a landscape of anti-social vehicular use that divides communities and prevents social flows. Through its sprawling horizontal concrete parking platforms (three 'datums' at different heights) and large supporting columns, the car park imposes a rigid order to the site – physically and visually separating the green belt to the west from the urban centre to the east. Alongside the isolating social, physical and visual effects of this *thick edge*, the construction of the car park and motorway has historically been the locus of significant cultural trauma: removing and relocating thousands of graves from the nearby Bolton Street Cemetery; burying the Kumototo Stream, considered an important landmark for native iwi; and destroying hundreds of state homes that were once part of the adjacent Thorndon suburb. The new motorway went ahead despite the cultural calamity that resulted from the destruction of these historic and social references. As a result, the Clifton Street Car Park remains rigidly detached and isolated from its wider contexts, committed to its performance as an economically driven function and a figure of ubiquitous urbanisation, while forming

an impenetrable barrier between The Terrace and Thorndon communities.

Many theorists such as Rem Koolhaas denounce these spaces as 'junk', imparting a narrative that suggests *thick edges* must be ignored and left to deteriorate – as is the case with the Clifton Street Car Park. Consequently, few architectural alternatives for *thick edges* have emerged. Aaron Betsky and Alexander d'Hooghe have argued for an approach that resists these commonly held assumptions, suggesting that *thick edges* can become, in fact, sites of theoretical and cultural potency. This thesis argues that by engaging with the complex and multiple cultural conditions of urban sites, the rigidity and singular nature of these impermeable spaces can be opened to diverse flows relating to multiple contexts. Through processes of design intervention, the thesis proposes a 'polycontextual' approach to introduce flows of wider contextual dimensions within an urban site – promoting architectural solutions that blur, fray and punctuate '*thick edges*' (places of singular and/or impermeable identities) by creating them as threshold conditions between adjacencies.

Engaging *critical spatial practices* in a polycontextual approach, this thesis challenges critical architecture to 'invert' the cultural and spatial rigidity of *thick edges*, presenting them as an urban 'threshold' that is in essence multiple, relational and positive, rather than singular, rigid and negative. In so doing, this thesis looks to create such a shared threshold space to embody the potential to enhance the social and cultural conditions of the adjacent urban environments as places of new, dynamic and positive outcomes.

As such, this thesis intends to test *thick edges* as an opportunity for *critical spatial practices* to provide alternative and resistant design possibilities, by engaging critical architectural design in a polycontextual process of inverting existing negative conditions. Consequently this thesis looks to establish a framework of imperatives for dealing with these contemporary urban conditions in the future, to "find civic values and beauty in situations that have been alienated from any trace of community".⁴

4. Ingersoll, 2006, p. 7.

Problem Statement:

The design-research of this thesis investigates two problems. Firstly, following the post-critical impasse, critical architecture has become maligned, thrusting the discipline into a 'crisis of criticality'. This crisis has fostered an ideological climate that is apathetic to the resistant possibilities and productive capacities of architecture as a critical mediation between formal and cultural production. Secondly, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the developments of jump-cut urbanisation connecting Wellington's centre to its periphery have resulted in the emergence of a number of *thick edges* – contextually singular and rigid areas that are barriers within the urban fabric, residual and disregarded. These sites, created by the incisions resultant from new urban motorway infrastructure, generate urban conditions that are impermeable to engagements with wider contextual dimensions of relational place identities. In Wellington, the construction of the Urban Motorway (1969-1984) has created several sites that stand as exacerbated embodiments of this condition. This thesis proposes that a critical engagement can negotiate and mediate a number of contextual approaches to resolve such sites – inverting the *thick edge* from one of negative rigidity to one of positive flows, while resurrecting critical architecture from its crisis of criticality.

Design-Research Questions, Aims and Objectives:

The primary aims of this thesis are: to test a contemporary critically engendered framework for architectural design-research that is both culturally and formally negotiated; and to investigate the potential for this framework to invert the negative conditions of urban *thick edges* through an engagement with multiple contexts. The primary objective is to propose a framework for urban development procedures to prioritise multiple contexts in the construction of place identities, re-establishing these *thick edges* as potent opportunities for critical architectural intervention.

As such, this thesis is framed by the following research questions:

What are the conditions of a 'critical' architecture and what processes have contributed to its currently maligned position and a discursive 'crisis of criticality'?

What are the problematic implications of the post-critical position, and how can *critical spatial practices* provide a contemporary, flexible and resistant alternative?

What are the negative conditions produced by the proliferation by urban *thick edges*, and how can architectural intervention provide positive alternatives and approaches to this contemporary problem?

How can *critical spatial practices* manifest in the built environment, in particular through strategies of architectural design? How can these strategies engage multiple contexts to introduce positive flows to the urban *thick edge*?

Can the implementation of architectural programmes that have beneficial polycontextual implications facilitate the production of *critical spatial practices* within the *thick edge*?

Through the testing of *critical spatial practices* as a design research framework, is it possible to produce positive solutions to the urban *thick edge* condition? Further, how does this framework challenge the position of critical architecture in the contemporary context?

Scope of Design-Research:

This thesis focuses specifically on how critical architecture might be implicated in resolving *thick edge* conditions caused by the incisions of urban motorway infrastructure development. By testing the role of architectural design in a localised context (Wellington's urban centre), this thesis tests the implications of applying a critical framework within a highly focused urban contextual problem occurring at a site-specific level.

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Figure 1.2: Diagram of the overall thesis structure divided into three sections: FRAMING, MEDIATING, and TESTING.

Positions on the critical capacities of architectural production are varied and vast, presenting a huge field of research and argument beyond the scope of a Master's thesis. To limit this field to a relevant scope, the following key authors have informed the core institutional voices that structure the thesis argument and design framework:

Section One

K. Michael Hays, Eliot Noyes Professor of Architectural Theory at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design

Murray Fraser, Professor of Architecture and Global Culture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London

Kim Dovey, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Melbourne

Jane Rendell, Professor of Architecture and Art, and Vice Dean of Research at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London

Section Two

Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991), was a French Marxist philosopher and sociologist, who studied at the University of Paris.

Michel de Certeau, (1925-1986) was a leading intellectual member of France's Freudian school, Michel de Certeau, and Professor of sociology at the department of ethnology at the University of Paris-VII

Marc Augé. is a French anthropologist, essayist and author.

Nick Kaye, Professor of Performance Studies, and Dean of the College of Humanities at the University of Exeter

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), was a German literary critic, philosopher, social critic, translator, and essayist associated with the Frankfurt School Institute of Social Research.

Gevork Hartoonian, Professor of Architecture

faculty of Architecture and Design, University of Canberra.

These authors can be seen to operate outside of the mainstream, opposing and resisting from the periphery. As a result they may possibly be considered less susceptible to the influence of architects that have shaped the impulses of the post-critical. Instead, all of these authors have their roots in critical social theory, particularly in the work of Walter Benjamin who provides a conscious and subconscious influence throughout their work as well as throughout the argument of this thesis.

Additionally, as design-research, the discursive mediations and arguments of this thesis are contextualised and implicated within the realities of contemporary design practices. Built environment precedents are considered and discussed with equal importance to text, drawing upon investigations and built-works that resonate between practices directly (and not-so-directly) related to architectural design (as well as landscape art, sculpture, urban design, etc.). Design is approached in the thesis as a critical, malleable, and multi-contextual process that is capable of embodying both intentions and solutions for architectural research.

Design-Research Approach

The design-research of this thesis is structured around three sections: **Section One** 'framing'; **Section Two** 'mediating'; and **Section Three** 'testing'.

Section One investigates a discursive position for the thesis argument and theoretical framework. It begins with **Chapter Two**, which conducts an investigation into the central proposition of critical architecture and the reasons for its currently marginalised position. Upon illuminating the context through which the post-critical impasse and subsequent critical crisis has emerged, the core ideological tenants behind the post-critical position are identified and critiqued. In doing so, **Chapter Two** introduces an alternative trajectory for critical architecture and a resistant position to the

post-critical project. Engaging three authors who are currently addressing this discursive problem, Murray Fraser, Kim Dovey, and Jane Rendell, *critical spatial practices* are identified as a contemporary framework through which the design-research can be tested.

Chapter Three focuses the inquiry on a 'real' problem for the design case study – discussing the conditions of late-twentieth century urbanisation that have shaped the production of negative urban spaces, such as *thick edges*. As a driver of urban sprawl, 'jump-cut' urbanisation is examined to explain the processes by which an urban centre is connected to its periphery through new infrastructure. The conditions of urban *thick edges* that result from such processes are identified and a positive, polycontextual, alternative approach is established. **Chapter Three** describes three *thick edge* exemplars embedded within the urban fabric of Wellington: the Westpac Stadium Car Park, the Ballantrae Car Park and the Clifton Street Car Park. As the most extreme and particularly problematic example of a *thick edge* condition, the Clifton Street Car Park is selected as the context for the design case study.

Chapter Four conducts a thorough contextual analysis of the site, the Clifton Street Car Park, critically examining the historical, economic, political, social, physical and visual contexts that have shaped its identity as a *thick edge*. Consequently, **Chapter Four** produces information that is developed through polycontextual design strategies applied in the design case study.

Section Two mediates between the theoretical framings and testing of the thesis research, implicating *critical spatial practices* in processes of architectural design by expanding upon Rendell's initial positions. Building upon the research conducted in **Section One**, the 'spatial turn' is discussed and a theory of place identity is outlined through Lefebvre, de Certeau and Augé. As a *thick edge*, the Clifton Street Car Park is identified as closer to an identity of 'non-place' – a positioning that informs the focus and expansion of Rendell's framework as it relates to a polycontextual approach. As such, the research framework based on Rendell's *critical spatial practices* is pursued through a three-fold process of critique that integrates the work

of three contemporary theorists: site-specific (Nick Kaye, **Chapter Five**), socio-spatial (Kim Dovey, **Chapter Six**), and temporal (Gevork Hartoonian, **Chapter Seven**) processes.

In **Chapter Five**, Rendell's position on site-specific processes as a form of *critical spatial practice* is developed in further detail through the work of Nick Kaye. Exploring an alternative to traditional notions of 'site', Kaye considers practices that engage the 'performative' possibilities of site-specific intervention. For Kaye, performative practices embody the possibility for architectural design to embed sites with contextual information, creating a dialogue between built form and the identity of a particular place. Analysing two case studies, the Parc de la Villette (1982-83) by Bernard Tschumi and the Igualada Cemetery by Enric Miralles (1994), strategies of *continuity/discontinuity* are elucidated.

Chapter Six expands the framework of *critical spatial practice* through socio-spatial processes, explored through the work of Kim Dovey. Taking a position on public space that resists deterministic appropriation, Dovey argues that architecture enables and/or constrains spatial practices through particular dimensions that can be classified within a spectrum of 'tight' and 'loose'. These dimensions empower architects to explore the possibilities of social flows through programme and form – creating dynamic spaces within which multiple publics can engage. Through three case studies – the Palais de Tokyo (2001) by Anne Lacaton and Philippe Vassal, the Metropol Parasol (2011) by Jürgen Mayer, and the Rolex Learning Centre (2010) by Ryue Nishizawa and Kazuyo Sejima – strategies of *addition, subtraction, horizontality* and *verticality* are investigated.

Chapter Seven investigates critical temporal processes in further detail through the work of Gevork Hartoonian. Re-visiting Walter Benjamin's theory of the dialectical image, Hartoonian presents a position that engages the contextual histories of particular places in the visual production of architectural form. The Jewish Museum Berlin (1999) by Daniel Libeskind is analysed as a relevant case study in this regard, demonstrating how strategies of *juxtaposition*

are capable of subverting and destabilising the physical and visual context of architectural intervention.

Chapter Eight proposes an architectural programme for the Clifton Street Car Park site relating to an exemplary client – the New Zealand International Arts Festival (NZIAF) – introducing ‘real world’ architectural components to be implicated in the design case study experiment.

In **Section Three** the thesis documents, discusses and reflects upon the design-research case study experiment, a multifunctional events facility and public park sited within the Clifton Street Car Park. **Chapter Nine** presents the design, investigating the intervention of an events facility that has been derived from a polycontextually framework of *critical spatial practices*. The design is analysed and presented in relation to the research problems and research questions framed in **Section One**, and the strategies implicated and demonstrated in **Section Two**.

Chapter Ten concludes the thesis by reflecting upon the design case study relative to the research aims and objectives. The design case study is not presented as a singular solution or outcome, but rather as a provocation and opportunity for further development and reflection. Based upon this understanding, the potential implications of the thesis are discussed as: a testing of *critical spatial practices* as a discursive framework, and an opportunity to engage urban *thick edges* as architectural opportunities that can make a positive contribution to the urban fabric. The proposed new Basin Reserve Flyover project is presented as yet another *thick edge* about to emerge in the urban fabric of Wellington, evidencing the urgency of addressing this contemporary problem, and reinforcing the relevance and vitality of this design-research thesis proposition in the contemporary context.

Section One: FRAMING

AVERTING THE CRISIS OF CRITICALITY:

A (Discursive) Design Problem,
Argument and Approach

Introduction

A Critical Premise: Mediating Between Formal
and Cultural Production

The 'Late Avant-Garde': Fathers of Critical
Architecture's Death Drive.

A (Conflated) Crisis? Unravelling the Post-
Critical and their Oedipal Discontents

Implications of a Post-Critical Ideology: The
Technical Perspective and a Loss of Context

Architecture's New Desire: Mediation through
Critical Spatial Practices

Conclusion

< OPPOSITE
Figure 2.1: Mies van der Rohe,
Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin
(1968). This building is
commonly cited as an example
of Mies's 'silent criticality'

*Resisting is the business of thought, and risking
critical thought in a time that takes comfort in not
thinking is a perilous enterprise fraught with danger.
It demands courage and conviction.¹*

Nadir Lahiji

*Professor of Theory of Architecture, Drexel
University, Philadelphia*

1. Lahiji, 2011, p. xiii

Introduction

This chapter examines the theoretical problem and framework for this thesis by discussing the ‘critical’ faculties of architectural production. In particular, through K. Michael Hays, **Chapter Two** isolates the tenants of a ‘critical architecture’, tracing its dominant ideological trajectory from the late avant-garde to its currently maligned position within a discourse that is considered by many to be ‘post-critical’. An alternative trajectory is argued for and illuminated – framing the first of the primary aims for design-research.

Following the influence of Critical Theory on the spatial disciplines (indebted to the works of cultural theorists from the ‘Frankfurt School’) the possibility that architecture is capable of bridging the gap between discursive criticism and built environment practice emerged as a prominent force in the 1970s.² This chapter considers the subsequent and essential definition for ‘critical architecture’, as *resistant* and oppositional, through the lens of architectural theorist K. Michael Hays. In so doing, the first question for the design-research of this thesis is engaged:

What are the conditions of a ‘critical’ architecture and what processes have contributed to its currently maligned position and a discursive ‘crisis of criticality’?

Building Hays’s proposition, the dominant trajectory for critical architecture since the 1970s is investigated. This follows the influence of a group of significant architectural theorists and practitioners

primarily operating within an experimental practice of ‘absolute autonomy’. These figures (Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, John Hejduk, and Aldo Rossi) titled the ‘late avant-garde’ by Hays, have contributed to a shift in focus for critical architecture – away from dialectical critique as a form of *resistance* – and towards design strategies invested in isolating architecture as an independent, formal exercise. This trajectory can be seen as producing a context throughout the 1990s that has initiated a discursive impasse since the turn of the twenty-first century – the intervention of the post-critical and the subsequent ‘crisis of criticality’. Progressing the argument, a second thesis question is addressed:

What are the problematic implications of the post-critical position, and how can *critical spatial practices* provide a contemporary, flexible and resistant alternative?

Isolating the central propositions of this impasse, **Chapter Two** argues that the limited responses of the post-critical – in particular the writings of Michael Speaks, Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting – conflate the definition of critical architecture to that of formal autonomy alone, disregarding the possibility for architecture to embody a socially or culturally inflected criticality. Importantly, the reflexivity of the post-critical position has contributed to a contemporary architectural landscape that is apathetic to the investigations of architecture’s autonomy as a formal proposition, as well as its implications as a culturally contextual

2. Rendell, 2007, p. 2.

discipline. Rather, this chapter argues that under the guise of positive progress through innovation alone, the post-critical facilitates design practices that are conciliatory to the forces of globalisation and its potentially negative consequences.

Acknowledging the necessity for architecture to move beyond its own formal autonomy, whilst also rejecting the ‘new disciplinarity’ imposed by the post-critical, this chapter argues that a new trajectory for critical architecture is vital. This alternative focus is built upon the proposition that, in light of the developments of the ‘spatial turn’ in cultural studies since the 1970s, critical architecture can re-engage

Hays’s original dialectic within the contemporary context. In so doing, architectural design can operate through a framework of critical strategies that can produce positive, flexible, solutions to the complex requirements of contemporary discourse. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of three authors who affirm this position: Murray Fraser, Kim Dovey and Jane Rendell - isolating *critical spatial practices* as the framework for this thesis that will be investigated.

BELOW
Figure 2.2: Diagram illustrating the argument structure of this chapter, constructing a framework for the design research

RIGHT >
Figure 2.3: Argument structure
for this section

A Critical Premise: Mediating Between Formal and Cultural Production

In his seminal essay “Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form” (1984), K. Michael Hays investigates the notion that architectural production can embody an intentional critical faculty. In so doing he develops a progressive method for defining a ‘critical’ architecture – a method that was perceived as a canonical definition for the generation that followed. According to Hays, the ‘critical’ in architecture is the means through which architectural production can perform a role that is *resistant* and oppositional to “the self-confirming, conciliatory operations of a dominant culture and yet irreducible to a purely formal structure disengaged from the contingencies of place and time”.³ The critical architect emerges as an ‘author’ of motivations that persistently resist prevailing ideologies, producing “knowledge both about culture and about architecture”.⁴ Of particular emphasis to this definition is the identification that critical architecture must operate *between* modes of formal and cultural production, within which it is in a state of constant *dialectic* negotiation.⁵ These two modes are identified as: ‘architecture as an instrument of culture’ and ‘architecture as autonomous form’.

The first of these modes, as an ‘instrument’ of culture, identifies architecture as a cultural product – a system that is capable of confirming and assuring the continuity of dominant and hegemonic value-systems. The so-called instrumental perspective calls for methodologies that “attempt to restore an

architectural object to its original meaning” through a study of “the base material of the historical world”.⁶ For Hays, the temporality of the instrumental perspective – as perceived at the time of his thesis – was proposed as a historically material construct. Thus the cultural mode of operation for critical architecture is problematically limited:

*It is supposed that the only alternative to the strict methodological recovery of the cultural situation at the time of the object’s origin is the denial of any historical objectivity and capitulation to the idea that all schemes of interpretation are hopelessly subjective.*⁷

As such, resistance to the ‘hopeless’ determinism of the instrumental position is presented as an engagement through the second mode: disciplinary ‘autonomy’ as a critical, formal, procedure. The autonomous position posits that any critique through architecture must be focussed on the systems that

The ‘critical’ in architecture is the means through which architectural production can perform a role that is *resistant* and *oppositional* to “the self-confirming, conciliatory operations of a dominant culture

produce it (be they structural, linguistic, formal etc.), creating a language of production that is exclusive to the discipline proper. In this regard, the function

3. Hays, 1984, p. 15. For Hays, culture is understood to be a duality between: “those theoretical and practical systems which authorize, promote, or constrain the production and use of ideas and objects which a society or a place differentiates itself and maintains its hegemony”; and, “the artefacts and environments which endure as resourceful physical precedents or exemplars of systems of production and become transmitters of culture”.

4. Hays, 1984, p. 27. This thesis agrees with this proposition, and argues for a resistance to particular processes of architectural production throughout Chapter 3.

5. For the purposes of this thesis ‘dialectic’ is used in the Hegelian sense: as the negotiation between two seemingly opposite, often contradictory, positions - engaged in a dialogue with the purpose of negotiating a synthesis.

6. Hays, 1984, p. 16

7. Ibid, p. 16

8. Martin L. , 2011, p. 181

of autonomy is to interrogate the conceptual space of architecture as a 'pure' discipline that can be understood without the complicity of subjectivity and/or external forces.⁸ According to Hays, this conceptual space is completely open to interpretation and can be endlessly read and misread at the exclusion of any cultural constraints:

*...this second position is characterized by the comparative absence of historical concerns in favour of attention to the autonomous architectural object and its formal operations – how its parts have been put together, how it is a wholly integrated and equilibrated system that can be understood without external references.*⁹

9. Hays, 1984, p. 16

As such, "absolute autonomy" admits to accede to the inefficacy of political and social implications, and by virtue of this admitted powerlessness, maintains a disciplinary purity - a form of critical practice that operates beyond the inevitably compromised influences of culture.

Exemplifying mediation between the autonomous and instrumental positions, Hays cites the 'silent criticality' of Mies van der Rohe, whose projects "abstain from any dialogue with the physical particularities of their contexts" creating architectures that exude a rigorous *apriori* formal logic (see Figures 2.1 and 2.4). For Hays, Mies's architecture propagates the promise that architectural form alone, through its own order of materials, surfaces and geometries, can *resist* the dominant order of societal values by actively occupying a culturally neutral space.¹⁰ In so doing, Mies's buildings are *resistant* to their cultural contexts by intentionally reflecting a formal and visual 'detachment'. Importantly, Hays's identification of the 'silence' of Mies's architecture towards the cultural conditions that produce it forecasts the impending unhinging of the formal/cultural dialectic, and a trajectory for critical architecture as *absolutely* autonomous – a proposition which continues to inform the dominant perspective for debates surrounding architecture's critical faculties today.¹¹

11. As recently as 2011, prominent architectural theorist Pier Vittorio Aureli has argued for the possibility of a critical architecture through a radical and absolute autonomy. Aureli, 2011.

Outlining this trajectory, this thesis argues for a contemporary re-visiting of Hays's central

proposition for a critical architecture, as *resistant* to processes that are conciliatory to hegemonic cultural value systems, or ideologies, and their negative outcomes. As a result, this thesis understands that critical architecture, operating in dialectical tension, is constantly reflexive – contingent on the 'zeitgeist', the particularities of the context(s) within which it is operating.¹² Understood in this manner, this thesis contends that 'criticality' occupies a crucial role within the discipline of architecture; regardless of the prevailing values of the discourse, architecture must maintain a constant state of incisive evaluation and re-evaluation in accordance to the situations that produce it at a particular *time*, in a particular *place*.

12. The contexts within which critical architecture is currently operating are examined and outlined in Chapter 3.

The 'Late Avant-Garde': Fathers of Critical Architecture's Death Drive.

Following Hays's initial identification of the two modes of operation for a critical practice (instrumentality and autonomy) several dominant voices within the architectural community have contributed to a discursive direction that has favoured a rigorous and 'absolute' autonomy, drawing the definition of critical architecture away from the original, dialectically mediated proposition of Hays.

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Figure 2.5: Mies van der Rohe, Friedrichstrasse Project, charcoal drawing (1922). For Hays, this project represents a 'radical departure' for Mies, physically and conceptually relating architecture to the city through volume and transparency.

13. It is important to note that, in the context of this thesis, the term 'father' is used as a placeholder for the Oedipal impulses of the next generation of architect's to resist.

Architecture's death drive, identified by Hays as encompassing a 'lack of a social need for architecture, architecture's total loss of the *real*' reached its polemic zenith in the 'post-human' investigations of Peter Eisenman.

14. Hays, 2010, p. 11

In his most recent work, *Architecture's Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde* (2010), Hays reflects on this trajectory and the drive towards absolute autonomy - citing the works of a group of experimental practitioners operating within the discourse since the 1970s - namely, Aldo Rossi, John Hejduk, Bernard Tschumi, and Peter Eisenman - since considered to be the highly influential 'fathers' of critical architecture.¹³ Hays identifies (with the benefits of hindsight), that this 'late' avant-garde represents the enactment (and, for now, exhaustion) of "architecture's desire"

to uncover architecture's interiority, its disciplinary boundaries, through "a reflection on the foundations and limits of architecture itself".¹⁴ This desire, has been misconstrued as 'critical', yet, Hays perceives it as grounded in a radical experimentation with architecture's singularity, rather than operating in critically inflected space between form and culture.

As such, the moniker for this particular group is prefixed with 'late', purposefully drawing association with Frederic Jameson's notion of the 'late modern', and implicating them with the post-war experimentations and extreme conceptualisations of avant-garde art practices:

15. (Ibid, pp. 11-12)

*Unlike the fully commercialized postmodernism, the late architectural avant-garde keeps its namesake's [Jameson] commitment to rigorous formal analysis... it self-consciously closes in on its own limits rather than opens outwards.*¹⁵

With their 'rigorous' formal autonomy, art practices of this post-war or 'late modern' movement pre-date (as is often the case) the architectural avant-garde in question, reaching a saturation point in the 1950s and 1960s through the minimal abstractions of artists such as Donald Judd, Carl Andre, Frank Stella

16. This process - the shift in art practices from late modern formal autonomy to a more

and Richard Serra (see Figure 2.5).¹⁶ Consigned to the inevitability of a similar fate - architecture's 'death drive' is inscribed axiomatically within the motivations of a pure autonomy, as its detachment from the dialectical tension between form and culture 'freezes' architectural discourse from contact with the real.¹⁷ This death drive forecasts the inevitability of the downfall of pure autonomy as a misconstrued version of critical architecture's primary focus:

*The architecture of the late avant-garde performs the impossibility of architecture's full realization; it stages an architectural project that for historical reasons must be undertaken but ultimately is bought to failure by a dynamic integral to the project itself. Such are the workings of architecture's desire.*¹⁸

Architecture's death drive, identified by Hays as encompassing a "lack of a social need for architecture, architecture's total loss of the *real*" reached its polemic zenith in the 'post-human' investigations of Peter Eisenman.¹⁹ Eisenman's critical project can be seen as systematically hijacking any mediation between form and culture in favour of a totalising disciplinary 'interiority'. His body of work is an "unremitting vector" of self-proclaimed interiority that probes into the manifold conditions of architecture as a formal procedure.²⁰ Leading to, and following, the identifications made in Hays's "Critical Architecture...", Eisenman's formal experiments directed architectural discourse towards consistently deeper modes of abstraction to the point where it can be perceived as "meaning-free, arbitrary, and timeless".²¹ In this sense, architecture becomes

culturally inflected practice - is explored in depth by Rosalind Krauss in (Krauss, 1985) and (Krauss, 1977)

17. This notion, that architecture's autonomy would lead to a continuous and self-reflexive feed-back loop, was forecast by Manfredo Tafuri in *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1985). Additionally, this thesis argues for a definition of 'real' space as socially produced, rather than abstract and absolute.

18. Hays, 2010, p. 2.

19. Ibid, p. 7.

20. Eisenman, 2004, p. xii.

21. Eisenman, 1986, p. 155.

< LEFT
Figure 2.5: Donald Judd, 'Minimal Myth' (1973). Amongst others, Judd's minimal sculptures can be seen as the distillation of pure formal autonomy in art practices - reducing the logic of sculpture to a core formal logic.

22. (Muzaffar, 2004, p. 70)

23. Eisenman, 2004.

'post-human' by removing itself from the "humanist nostalgia" of modernism's functionalism, rather, focussed on examining the conceptual language of architecture as a structure and technique.²² Thus architecture becomes concerned with "the thing itself", rather than its attachment to the limiting constraints of the human - the functional and the social.²³ Eisenman's post-human formal experiments are manifest in his 'House' series – a number of experimental procedures that attempt to engage the structural languages of the notion of 'house' as an architectural object (see Figure 2.6).

Located outside of Cornwall, Connecticut, 'House VI' (designed for Suzanne and Richard Frank between 1972 and 1975) stands as a physical record of Eisenman's formal *processes*, a collection of orthogonal architectural elements (walls, floors, columns, beams) arranged according to a logic that refines and resolves "relationships within the fractured grid" (see Figure 2.7).²⁴ In House VI, Eisenman removes the architectural process from its cultural, social and humanistic implications is clearly evident. Kristina Luce, Professor in Architectural History and Theory at the University of Michigan notes:

*In other words, Eisenman's goal was to make a kind of sliding puzzle out of House VI. He desired to induce the reanimation of his process of design in the visitor... by reactivating this process, Eisenman undermined the physical object that is House VI, placing it alongside all the other buildings that a visitor might imagine.*²⁵

25. Ibid, p. 132.

As a formal experiment, House VI represents a radical reinterpretation of what a 'house' is in relation to the arrangement and structure of architectural language that constitutes it. However, as an inhabited and thus essentially *social* object, Eisenman's design has several negative implications. The most prominent of these, are its functional eccentricities (see Figure 2.8) and structural failures. (The clients were required to rebuild it in 1987.)

Crucially, through the construction of House VI, the tenants of post-human autonomy transition across the threshold from *conceptual* practice into

the *reality* of architecture's functionalism, implicating the distinctly 'human' in the 'post-human'. This transition represents an important moment in Eisenman's investigations of architecture's interiority; a turning point towards the impending finality of pure autonomy that has since been outlined by Hays. As a result, this thesis contends that the autonomous trajectory, and the subsequent removal of the *social realities* of architectural practice from its role as a critical mediation, has led to the ideological foundations of the post-critical position, and what will now be discussed as architecture's 'critical crisis'.

< LEFT
Figure 2.6: Peter Eisenman
House III (1972)
Axonometric view.

RIGHT (TOP) >
Figure 2.7
Peter Eisenman
'House VI' (1972)
Cornwall Connecticut
Exterior Perspective showing
arrangement of architectural
'elements'.

RIGHT (BOTTOM) >
Figure 2.8
Peter Eisenman
'House VI' (1972)
Interior perspective showing
the glass 'slot' that divides the
master bedroom in two, forcing
the occupants to sleep in
separate beds.

A (Conflated) Crisis? Unravelling the Post-Critical and its Oedipal Discontents

*A crisis often seems to explode abruptly, without prior warning. Typically, the forces that feed the crisis intensify and strengthen in the periphery of vision, outside the centre, and their threat to the status quo is not adequately addressed until a later moment – until the crisis erupts.*²⁶

26.(Kaminer, 2011, p. 13).
Tahl Kaminer is Professor of Architecture and Landscape at the University of Edinburgh

Tahl Kaminer

*I remain suspicious of the glibness of formulations like the postcritical, which in the end are cynical inasmuch as they leave the dominant system unchallenged, if not strongly reinforced.*²⁷

27. Ockman, 2003, p. 78.
Joan Ockman is Professor of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania.

Joan Ockman

Many authors have noted that, since the onset of the 21st century, contemporary architectural discourse has found itself in a supposed 'crisis of criticality'.²⁸ As Kadimer identifies, the forces contributing to the perception of a 'crisis' appear abruptly at first, and then are revealed over time.²⁹ Thus, the intentions and influences that have 'fed' the post-critical movement can now be traced more clearly and implicated in the context of this thesis.

28. Doucet & Cupers, 2009.
Dorrian, 2005, p. 229. Stead, 2007

29. 'Crisis' is a time of "intense difficulty, a turning point which requires an important decision to occur". Simpson & Weiner, 1989

The first sign of the post-critical impasse has been traced back to a conference organised by ANY magazine in 1994, where the highly influential architect Rem Koolhaas was noted as suggesting that there is something "inherently un-critical" about architecture. Koolhaas's statement is symptomatic of a wider trend that was forming within architectural discourse in the mid-1990s as a generation of architects following the late avant-garde attempted to wriggle out from the shadows of autonomy's theoretical negativity. According to William S. Saunders, Editor of the Harvard Design magazine:

Fast-forward to the mid-1990s: many highly intelligent young architects and architectural intellectuals were getting fed up with this [critical autonomy's] detachment, theoretical abstraction, and helplessness... They wanted to be in the game.

*Their intellectual elders struck them as overly serious, overly self-important, overly righteous, and "pure".*³⁰

30. Saunders, 2007, pp. viii-ix

Under the seemingly insurmountable intellectual excursions of theoreticians such as Eisenman, many leading institutions of architecture attempted to explore a discourse that was disguised under the moniker of 'critical architecture' yet propagated a climate of pseudo-intellectual posturing.³¹ This environment was seen by many as contaminating architectural practice with investigations of "bad novels, bad sociology, bad psychology, bad philosophy, and bad movies".³² As a result, the motivations of the post-critical's 'new pragmatism' were openly reactionary, positioned against the dislocation of nearly all critical architectural theory from 'real-world' concerns. The intentions of this attitude towards architectural theory did not coherently materialise until 2002 with the publication of two pieces of writing, one from Professor of Architecture at the University of Kentucky, Michael Speaks; and the other from Director of the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois, Robert Somol, and Professor and Dean of the Rice School of Architecture, Sarah Whiting.³³

31. Interestingly, even Eisenman has accepted that his influence has been inappropriately adopted by many – instead finding safety in a withdrawal from an exclusively theoretical practice. Most recently his textual studies have moved away from an aggressively progressive position and have focussed on the analysis of historically important buildings, see Eisenman, Allen, & Lourie, Ten Canonical Buildings: 1950-2000, 2008.

32. Ibid, p. ix

33. Baird, 2004, p. 16. Martin R. , 2010, p. 348.

In his introduction to a series of interview-based articles titled 'Design Intelligence and the New Economy', Michael Speaks sketches the purposes of a distinctly anti-critical position. For Speaks, any discussions around a deeper, critical, meaning in architecture must be brushed aside in favour of a new theory based upon the 'chatter' and 'little truths' that are evident in a hyper-globalised, technology-driven society. His theory of 'Design Intelligence' calls for a professional architectural practice that explicitly denies the "dialectic negativity of Adorno-inspired critical architecture" in favour of *innovation* through adaptation.³⁴ His basis for this conviction is that we are now in a post-capitalist paradigm enabled by globalisation, and therefore must accept that the dominant economic structures are knowledge-based. In such a society, Speaks argues that:

Philosophical, political, and scientific truth have fragmented into proliferating swarms of

34. Speaks, 2006, p. 104.

RIGHT >
Figure 2.8: Argument structure
for this section

*“little” truth appearing and disappearing so fast that ascertaining whether they are really true is impractical if not altogether impossible. No longer dictated by ideas or ideologies nor dependent on whether something is really true, everything now depends on credible intelligence, on whether something might be true.*³⁵

35. (Ibid)

For Speaks, adherence to critical ideology is ‘impractical’, in light of which he suggests an alternative – architects should succumb to dominant market forces and embrace the *innovations* of technological tools such as 3D modelling, rapid prototyping, and generative mass production as means to produce pragmatic design solutions for their clients.³⁶

36. Ibid, p. 105

Almost immediately in the wake of “Design Intelligence and the New Economy”, two more American academics - Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting - composed an argument that explores a more philosophically nuanced direction for the post-critical project. In “Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism”, Somol and Whiting suggest a discursive alternative to the critical, one that is less embedded in the economic concerns of Speaks. Identifying that critical architecture’s internally autonomous position is stuck in a ‘negative’ self-reflexivity that relies on a constant opposition to reification, they propose a ‘projective’ architectural practice that is based upon performance and emergence:

While reification concerns itself with the negative reduction of qualitative experience to quantification,

*emergence promises that serial accumulation may itself result in the production of new qualities. As an alternative to the critical project – here linked to the indexical, the dialectical and hot representation – this text develops an alternative genealogy of the projective – linked to the diagrammatic, the atmospheric and cool performance.*³⁷

37. Somol & Whiting, 2002, p. 74

Accordingly, projective architecture claims autonomy through expertise and technique whilst simultaneously denying the possibility of interdisciplinarity.³⁸ Unlike Speaks, who wishes to disregard the vanguard movements of the late twentieth century altogether, Somol and Whiting instead seek to *redefine* architecture’s disciplinarity in terms of *design* and *effects*; projecting forward, rather than looking back or criticizing the status quo:

38. Ibid, p. 75.

*Rather than isolating a singular autonomy, the Doppler focuses upon the effects and exchanges of architecture’s inherent multiplicities: material, program, writing, atmosphere, form, technologies, economics, and so on. It is important to underscore that this multiplying of contingencies differs greatly from the more dilute notion of interdisciplinarity... A projective architecture does not make claim for expertise outside the field of architecture, nor does it limit its field of expertise to an absolute definition of architecture.*³⁹

39. Ibid, p. 76

Upon outlining a ‘looser’ definition of what architecture *can* do – a new approach to design that is multiple and, to some extent, theatrical – Somol

and Whiting briefly explore what it *should* do. Here they articulate a simplistic apathy towards the late avant-garde that has come to define the intentions of the post-critical:

*Critical architecture is hot in the sense that it is pre-occupied with separating itself from normative, background, or anonymous conditions of production, and with articulating difference... [Projective] architecture is cool, easy, and never looks like work...producing effect without high definition, providing room for manoeuvre and promoting complicity with subject(s).*⁴⁰

40. Ibid.

These closing statements are particularly noteworthy. By refusing to explicitly express *why* architecture should perform as a malleable, multifaceted practice (other than to divert around its previously rigid autonomy), “Notes Around the Doppler...” simply presents a series of architectural positions and directives (*design, innovation, pragmatism*). These reflective statements *do* however implicate an ideological openness, yet do *not* provide a supporting framework for design.

Contextualising the work of Speaks, Somol, and Whiting reveals that the motivations of the post-critical constitute less a ‘crisis’ and more a firm appeal for architecture to re-engage with pragmatic and ‘real’ disciplinary concerns. However, this thesis posits that in spite of valid (albeit intellectually reactionary) intentions, the post-critical has come to inform a misguided position on three interrelated fronts:

- Firstly, in attempting to deny its forbearers their intellectual potency, it (incorrectly) conflates the crucial, dialectical, definition of a critical architecture with that of pure autonomy.
- Secondly, its consistent request for architecture to replace critical design processes with processes based solely in “efficacy, innovation, and realism” simply constitutes a different kind of reflexive disciplinarity, one that problematically fetishizes the ‘newness’ of architecture.
- Thirdly, it attempts to throw critical architecture into a state of crisis, yet it does not

deliver a cohesive or resistant substitute, instead occupying a conciliatory position with regards to the hegemonic value systems of globalisation and flows of capital.

Affirming these contentions, Daniel Barber, notes that the fundamental definition of ‘critical architecture’ set forth, and rejected, by the post-critical is “reliant on a rigid conception of disciplinary autonomy”.⁴¹ For Barber, the post-critical position is not based upon a rejection of the ‘critical’ in architecture *per se*; rather, their attempt to surpass criticality is “based in an attempt to de-legitimise the concept of architectural autonomy that has, for the past thirty years, provided the possibility for the critical model”.⁴² Consequently, their position requires the assumption that critical architecture is defined solely by a conflation of the original formal/cultural tension set forth by Hays. A number of post-critical critics have noted that this conflation is motivated by a two-fold bias: a lack of (genuine) interest in *social* critique; and a drive to reject the influence of the aforementioned critical ‘father’ figures of Eisenman, Hejduk, et al.⁴³ According to Barber:

*Somol and Whiting’s claim for a new social engagement is on the terms of the potential for ‘qualities of sensibility’ to impact culture in new, non-oppositional ways... It is left unclear in the ‘Doppler Effect’ article why these qualities of sensibility are generative of the new, and why they have a positive social function [emphasis added].*⁴⁴

For Barber, the vagueness of the post-critical’s social intentions is a consequence of their agenda to place design and innovation as openly, and unashamedly, a priority for the discipline of architecture. As such, the positions elucidated by the Somol and Whiting clearly indicate a wish to construct a different kind of disciplinarity. In so doing they have avoided the more prescient opportunity, that of ‘destabilising the relationship’ between architecture and its external cultural contexts.⁴⁵

By conflating the terms of critical architecture put forth by Hays, the post-critical erect a theoretical ‘straw figure’, only to knock it down,

41. Barber, 2007, p. 246. Daniel Barber is Assistant Professor of Architectural History University of Pennsylvania.

42. Ibid, p. 246

43. This impulse has been described as ‘oedipal’ by critics such as Reinhold Martin, Mark Dorrian, and Jane Rendell. These authors identify that, given the educational proximity of the major post-critical authors to the avant-garde prior (Somol and Whiting were taught by Eisenman) the post-critical is comparable to the Freudian ‘Oedipus Complex’. This moniker also refers to the influence of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s 1972 treatise ‘Anti-Oedipus’.

44. Barber, 2007, p. 247

45. Ibid, p. 61

leaving an ideological vacuum in their wake. As such, efforts by prominent figures to positively express a position have failed to deliver a coherent, affirmative intellectual project.⁴⁶

In his essay 'Criticality and its Discontents', George Baird notes that Somol and Whiting attempt to provide easily-digested adjectives – such as “cool”, “easy”, and “relaxed” – for a new projective design direction, which are only effective insofar as they are an effort to anaesthetise terms associated with the critical.⁴⁷ This, in Baird's opinion, begs the question: by what standards, other than a pandering to existing societal, economic, and cultural norms, can the post-critical project, and subsequent crisis of criticality, be judged?⁴⁸ To present a practice that affirms performance and effect does not express a questioning of the limits within which they operate; neither does the post-critical argument elucidate a strategy to assess its concomitant effects.⁴⁹ Therefore, aside from an omission of the autonomy of Hays (through Eisenman), Somol and Whiting essentially present a resistance to resistance, in much the same way that Speaks's argument requests a submission to the forces of technology and globalisation. This engages the post-critical in a reflexive and essentially directionless position, one that can be manipulated to service the agendas of designers indifferent towards architecture's critical responsibilities.

Reinhold Martin, Professor of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, at Colombia University, further affirms these concerns. In his essay “Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realism” Martin highlights that the general characteristics of post-critical architectural practices as, “affect-driven, non-oppositional, nonresistant, nondissenting”, contribute to the transformation of architecture's potential cultural critical faculties into purely aesthetic, technical ones.⁵⁰ For Barber, Martin and Baird, this design-based pragmatism would be less concerning if it did not have wide-ranging implications within the built environment.⁵¹

Implications of a Post-Critical Ideology: The Technical Perspective and a Loss of Context

*This allegedly realistic attitude, sometimes characterised as the “post-critical”, has led many designers to relinquish political consciousness in order to fully embrace the conditions of their time. But can architecture live only in the present, oblivious of the past and indifferent to the promises of a different future?*⁵²

Antoine Picon

Whilst the post-critical may have done architecture a service by wresting it away from the theoretical posturing of the 1990s, the climate of consent and ‘perilous’ anti-intellectualism that has emerged *since* is genuinely problematic.

Representative of this shift, the works of highly prominent architects such as Rem Koolhaas, Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid have aligned with the ethically suspicious ideology set forth by Speaks, Somol and Whiting. Given his recent declaration that design processes should be rooted in ‘vigour and skill’, Rem Koolhaas has emerged as a positive role model in favour of the post-critical.⁵³ Rather than engage with local and geographic issues of context – factors which can complicate and confuse the design process – Koolhaas reinforces the oft-used post-critical analogy of the surfer who rides the ‘waves’ and ‘flows’ of globalized capital:

*A “new pragmatism”, in the face of the overwhelming complexity of undecidable outcomes, informs the choice of ride. The surfer, far from being overwhelmed by the inexorable force of events, instead is skilful enough to ride the wave, to use its massive energy and power to enable his or her own (spectacular) performance.*⁵⁴

Analogies such as this call into question a number of worrying connotations. For Graham Owen, the surfer/wave comparison suggests that the role of technology and globalisation is at once a ‘force of nature’ and simultaneously only able to be negotiated

46. Baird, 2004

47. Somol & Whiting, 2002, p. 76

48. Martin, 2010)

49. Dorrian, 2005, p. 232

50. Martin R. , 2010, p. 348

51. Jane Rendell also expresses these concerns, see Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between*, 2008, pp. 8-12)

52. Picon, 2010, p. 14. Antoine Picon is Professor of the History of Architecture and Technology at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

53. Owen, 2009, p. 1.

54. Ibid, pp. 5-6

RIGHT >
 Figure 2.9: Guggenheim
 Museum,
 Bilbao
 Frank Gehry (1997)
 Exterior perspective from
 harbour

through complicity – aestheticizing and legitimizing the ‘wave’ through the intuitive and genius-like work of the architect/surfer. In this context, the architect (or ‘Starchitect’) - producing innovative, sustainable or technically experimental icons – becomes a propagandist of ethically dubious situations that require social, political and critical responses.

Alongside Owen’s isolation of Koolhaas as a propagator of dangerous analogies, Kazys Varnellis sees the post-critical’s influence in the iconic constructions of Frank Gehry, who has arisen as a figurehead of architectural practice largely due to the influence of his design for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (see Figure 2.9).⁵⁵ Stretched out along the Nervión River, the Bilbao Guggenheim was created specifically to be an isolated landmark, a visual beacon in an industrial neighbourhood that was “long past its prime”.⁵⁶ Varnellis states:

*As the structure became one of the most popular museums in the world, the idea that simply adding a stunning building was enough to revive a dying city became identified as the “Bilbao Effect.” Whereas the Guggenheim Bilbao’s fractured shards would once have been read as a critique of utopian modernism and a commentary of the dying post-industrial city around it, Gehry would now describe it as an unfolding flower while other writers would draw attention to the way it seamlessly blended in with the city’s infrastructure.*⁵⁷

In light of the “Bilbao Effect” esteemed

Western architects have frequently engaged in the construction of ‘iconic’ structures - large buildings, complexes or even small cities for politically and geographically disparate clients (some of whom may widely be regarded as oppressive or undemocratic).⁵⁸ These impressive technical achievements – although truly novel – are often designed with a disregard to their specific cultural contexts and are therefore divorced from the social implications of their construction. This perspective reinforces the maxim that first and foremost the architect must “get the job” with the only responsibility being to produce buildings with ‘skill and rigour’.⁵⁹

Affirming Varnellis’s concerns, Antoine Picon contends that these contextually and critically

[I]nnovative technologies must be *critically* applied rather than blindly assimilated as a driving force for architectural production

indifferent designs that have emerged in the wake of the ‘Bilbao Effect’ can be seen as directly related to ideologies based in technology innovation. Although recent technological innovations have provided architects with a number of tools that positively advance the ways in which architects design and construct the built environment, these tools “should not however lead to the pitfall of narrow technological determinism” which is infrequently the only explanation “especially in architecture where so

58. Zimmerman, 2009, p. 1.
 Benedikt, 2009, p. 105. Owen,
 2009, p. 1.

59. Benedikt, 2009, p. 105.
 Owen, 2009, p. 1.

55. Kazys Varnellis is Director
 of the Network Architecture
 Lab at Colombia University.

56. Lamster & Stoller, 1999,
 p. 2.

57. Varnellis, 2009, p. 153.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP >

Figure 2.10: Galaxy SOHO,
Beijing
Zaha Hadid Architects (2012)
Interior perspective showing
the 'fluid' and nature-inspired
spaces created by the
architects

Figure 2.11: Galaxy SOHO,
Beijing
Zaha Hadid Architects
Exterior perspective from
adjacent 'hutongs'
(2012)

Figure 2.12: Galaxy SOHO,
Beijing
Zaha Hadid Architects
Exterior perspective from
adjacent 'hutongs'
(2012)

RIGHT >
Figure 2.13: Concluding argument structure showing shift towards a contemporary alternative

60. Picon, 2010, p. 9

much depends upon economic, social and cultural factors”.⁶⁰ Rather, innovative technologies must be *critically* applied rather than blindly assimilated as a driving force for architectural production. David Brain’s perspective is also useful, illuminating several problems that emerge from singularly technology-based perspectives:

*First, even the best technical knowledge can produce very well-supported decisions that add up to normatively disastrous outcomes. Second, in the context of planning and design, the technocratic approach narrows the debate in a way that causes many issues simply to disappear from consideration. Third, it undermines our capacity for a productive politics by displacing responsibility for political choice to infinitely contestable claims about the nature of things. Ultimately, the problem with the effort to use technocratic expertise to avoid the messiness of politics is that politics comes back to bite us—typically in its most uncivilized and ultimately undemocratic form.*⁶¹

61. (Brain, 2005, p. 233)
Professor of Sociology at the
University of California, Berkeley

An aversion to the ‘messiness of politics’ and issues of cultural context is evident in the Galaxy SOHO retail and entertainment complex in Beijing, a recently (2012) completed project by Zaha Hadid Architects (see Figure 2.10). The technically impressive 330,000m² commercial hub disregards contextual specificity or integration, and refuses to engage with its impact on the social and political history of the region. Instead, Hadid’s design intentions operate in a language of detached

post-critical jargon, claiming to create movement between spaces that are “inspired by nature”. Resulting from her design, the surrounding ancient passages and neighbourhoods or ‘hutongs’, have become marginalised, fractured and are subsequently in decline (see Figure 2.11 and 2.12). Whilst the decline of Beijing’s ‘hutongs’ is a complex issue that cannot be attributed to architectural intervention alone, the Galaxy SOHO facility is symptomatic of an ideology that positions itself outside of implications that are not internal to the new, pragmatic disciplinarity.

The current ideological climate, fostered by the misguided motivations of the post-critical, has had significant and detrimental effects on the production and design of the built environment. This climate, influenced by the *pragmatism* and *innovative* practices of influential architects, has disseminated a further disjunction between critical architecture’s imperative to mediate between cultural context(s) and formal autonomy. In light of this, a number of contemporary architectural scholars and practitioners have expressed a desire to re-engage critical architecture’s potential by suggesting an alternative intention, one that is engaged with multiple cultural contexts (polycontextual). In so doing, architectural processes can ‘open up’ spaces for design responses that are “critical, questioning and self-formative in character”.⁶²

62. (Taylor and Levine, 2011, p.187)

Architecture's New Desire: Mediation through Critical Spatial Practices

*The crucial thing, however, is to see these architectural and spatial issues in relation to their specific cultural context, operating simultaneously on global and local levels.*⁶³

63. Fraser, 2006, p. 320

Murray Fraser

While an agreement can be made on the need for architecture to move away from the restricting practices of absolute autonomy, the reactionary attempts of the post-critical to submit criticality to a 'crisis' has done nothing more than prove distracting. As a result, a number of architectural theorists, practitioners, educators have emerged – presenting alternative, critical, approaches to architectural design that are nonetheless built upon Hays's original dialectic. This thesis argues that three contemporary figures in particular – Murray Fraser, Kim Dovey, and Jane Rendell – have outlined a new trajectory for critical architectural practices. These figures express a compatible desire to productively and positively 'open' territory for engagement with the contextual complexities of architectural design, concluding the argument for a contemporary critical practice.⁶⁴

For a moment it is useful to briefly return to the conditions of Hays's proposition from "Critical Architecture...". Responding to Hay's conclusions, particularly with regards to the definition of instrumentality, Murray Fraser has noted that the situating of architecture's possible cultural engagement is heavily influenced by the positions of architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri.⁶⁵ Tafuri, whose historio-political critique of architecture reached prominence immediately prior to the time of Hays's assertions, expresses a position on history that is deeply subjective. Tafuri's critique informs Hays's proposition that the "deterministic instrumentality" of architecture's *cultural* dimension(s) is directly linked to the temporality of a materialist view of history.⁶⁶ For Fraser, Hay's adherence to this position conveniently negates architecture's critical engagement with culture in a *social* capacity. Instead Hays ties cultural-architectural production to

64. It is worth noting that these academics all operate outside of the 'dominant' institutions of architectural discourse, namely American Schools such as Harvard, Yale and the Cooper Union. As such, their position is innately alternative and removed of bias.

65. Fraser, 2006, p. 317

66. See: Tafuri, *Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology* (2000), 1969, and Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, 1976.

a pejorative position, rather than maintaining a contextual tension between form/culture.⁶⁷

67. Rice, 2007, p. 261.

Whilst Hays's disregard for architecture's cultural engagement can be traced to its death drive, Fraser identifies a second trajectory – a socially orientated criticality that is indebted to (predominantly) Continental cultural studies throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Broadly speaking, a socially inflected criticality builds upon the notion of mediation "between authoritarian power, or capitalist power, and some sort of humanistic aspiration".⁶⁸ Therefore architectural discourse requires a constant negotiation with cultural context, rather than positioning itself 'outside' of culture and critiquing from a detached position:

*... it [critical practice] is itself in fact entirely produced and subsumed into cultural practices. So this is why the study of differences between cultural contexts becomes the primary intellectual task... cultural identity offers the location of what might be considered as critical practice, not the other way around. Playing on these issues becomes the way forward in an age of increasing globalisation.*⁶⁹

68. Fraser, 2006, p. 318.

69. Ibid, p. 320.

Additionally, Fraser suggests that the fetishisation of design by the post-critical is another form of "intellectual isolationism" that favours avoidance of culturally engaged positions as concretely as pure autonomy has/does. It is the contradictions and differences that arise from a dialectical understanding of architecture with culture that can inform "different tactics in different situations, whether in terms of their *social, economic, or political* conditions" [emphasis added].⁷⁰

70. Ibid.

Expanding upon Fraser's positioning of critical architectural practice relative to cultural context, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Melbourne, Kim Dovey, suggests that a recovery of the formal/cultural dialectic is contingent upon the investigations conducted during the 'spatial turn' in cultural studies – specifically the work of urban theorist and sociologist Henri Lefebvre.⁷¹ According to Dovey:

71. The 'spatial turn' marks a crucial period of time – the

1970s – in the development of cultural studies, during which a multitude of scholars began to approach the notion of space from alternative, human-orientated, perspectives. For the implications of this moment, discussed in length, see Warf & Arias, 2009.

72. Dovey, 2006, p. 259.

*A critical architecture is an unsettling practice, and it may be unsettling for both the architect and the various communities of interest. A critical architecture will destabilise the field of architecture, its boundaries, identity formations and reproductive practices.*⁷²

Thus, like Hays, Dovey argues that a critical architectural practice is resistant, destabilising and subversive. However, the application of critical architecture can be re-directed, operating through an interdisciplinary perspective related to *formal representations* and *spatial practices*. These dimensions purposefully re-define Hays's dialectic through the fundamental redefinition of 'space' undertaken by Henri Lefebvre in his seminal work *The Production of Space*, "an architecture theory properly understood as

This position expresses a certain positivity, asking that "critical architecture must at least plant seeds of desire for a better future", thus contending that the desires of critical architecture must project forward.

73. Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, 2000, p. 175.

a mediation between architecture, broadly conceived, and social practice".⁷³

Importantly, the influence of the *The Production of Space* within architectural theory has only emerged recently. This is largely attributed to its delayed translation – not published in English until 1991 - providing some explanation as to why its primary thesis was not considered within the definition of critical architecture until *after* autonomy had hijacked its definition.⁷⁴ Lefebvre saw the normative approach to space as a simple reproduction of the dominant ideas of the dominant class, separating the mind from the inhabitation of public life, asserting that the 'science of space' creates modes of operation that must be critically attacked as forms of dominant value reproduction. Consequently, he argues for a unitary redefinition of space that is non-Cartesian, non-absolute, and therefore non-deterministic.

74. Gottdiener, 1997, p. 121. Hays, in spite of his adherence to architectural autonomy, recognises that Lefebvre's social critique "has not been fully developed in architecture theory". See: Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, 2000, p. 175.

This new proposition of space encompasses all forms of *social* experience as constituted *within* and *through* it.⁷⁵ As such, space is not only "part of the forces and means of production; it is also a product of these very same relations", a property that makes spatial design different from any other form of social production or commodity.⁷⁶ Lefebvre achieves his 'socio-spatial' redefinition by identifying three modes of production which, when placed in a state of negotiation, establish boundaries for investigation, also known as a 'practised-conceived-lived' triad of: 'representations of space', 'spatial practices' and 'spaces of representation'.⁷⁷ Accepting Lefebvre's hypothesis, the realities of architecture are implicated with the interactions of "everyday social life", achieving the flexibility and pragmatism requested of architectural theory by the post-critical, and denied by its rigid autonomy.⁷⁸

75. Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 9-10.

76. Gottdiener, 1997, p. 124.

77. This triad is used throughout the thesis as the basic proposition for a social critique of space, and thus the intervention of architecture within space.

78. Dovey, 2008, p. 52.

Transmitted through this triad, Dovey's first contribution to a culturally contextual critical practice, *formal representations*, combines Lefebvre's 'representations of space' and 'spaces of representation' into a singular term that concerns the ways in which "built form constructs social meaning as a form of discourse or text".⁷⁹ As such, critical architecture is *resistant* to submissive identity reproduction (through an examination of social, political, economic, and historic contexts) and accepts a responsibility for the production of identities *through* architecture.

79. Dovey, 2007, p. 253.

Dovey's second contribution, *spatial practices*, concerns architecture's "actions and events through its spatial programmes".⁸⁰ Spatial practices approach questions of identity and subjectivity through a focus on the actions of everyday life, and how these actions are shaped and translated through architecture. Significantly, Dovey identifies the necessity for an emphasis on spatial practices as a means to critically illuminate the structure of *social* space: the use of *borders*, *thresholds* and *boundaries* to control social interaction, and the impact of standardised spatial fields and building types on the individual.⁸¹

80. Ibid, p. 254.

81. (Hillier & Hanson, 1984)

By manipulating his intentions through the socio-spatial turn in cultural theory, particularly Lefebvre's triad, Dovey expresses the same project for architectural discourse as Fraser, to 'open' and 'unsettle'

its critical rigidity. This position expresses a certain positivity, demanding that “critical architecture must at least plant seeds of desire for a better future”, thus contending that the desires of critical architecture must project forward – not with the limited disciplinarity and pragmatism of the post-critical – but within the framing of everyday cultural life and context. For Dovey (and Fraser), critical architecture must embody a constantly reflective and projective *intention to resist*, allowing the *design* process to express a freedom that is nonetheless grounded in an understanding of the cultural contexts that organise it.

Aligning with Dovey, Jane Rendell has suggested an architectural framework that challenges architecture to re-engage its critical faculties in a *spatial, social* and *temporal* manner. Identifying contemporary critical theory as necessarily “fragmentary and partial”, requiring a self-reflexive and constant process of relay between practices that are both ‘critical’ and ‘spatial’ – namely *critical spatial practices*.⁸²

82. Rendell, 2008, p. 7.
As with Dovey, Rendell also recognises the importance of Lefebvre’s ‘spatial practices’ within her definition.

In Art and Architecture: A Place Between Rendell situates such practices within three interdisciplinary processes of practical application: ‘Between Here and There’ (site-specific), ‘Between One and Another’ (socio-spatial), and ‘Between Now and Then’ (temporal). Each section contributes towards a unitary process that aims to “negotiate the relationship that theory has to practice and vice versa”.⁸³ These three categories form the crux of the design-research approach of this thesis - building on Lefebvre through Fraser, Dovey and Rendell to create a contemporary position for critical architecture. In so doing, a structure is presented through which this thesis can examine themes and analyse spatial case studies for design-research.

83. Ibid.

Significantly, *critical spatial practices* does not present a specific method for architectural design. Rather, aligning with the motivations and research questions of this thesis, Rendell’s work offers a vital and practical framework to guide critical design investigations. This thesis contends that a re-reading of the critical *spatial, social* and *temporal*

‘themes’ from within Rendell’s framework presents an opportunity for the construction of a unique and critical design methodology relative to the parameters of a specific set of *contexts*. As these themes that form the foundation of Rendell’s work are expanded upon and explored in detail in Section 2, as a theoretical mediation to the development of the design-research.

Conclusion

In this chapter an outline for the theoretical argument and approach for design-research has been presented. The work of K. Michael Hays has proven pertinent in this regard - that in order for a work of architecture to embody a critical intention it must be respondent and resonant to formal *and* cultural concerns.

Arguing that under the dominance of absolute autonomy, **Chapter Two** has shown that critical architecture has followed a trajectory that has resulted in a discursive conflation – resulting in the cultural dimensions of critical practices becoming disregarded and marginalised by many. Additionally, in an attempt to avert the influence of the late avant-garde, the post-critical impasse has exacerbated this conflation by suggesting an opposition to the notion of critical architectural production. Problematically, the post-critical position has been shown to foster an ideological climate that is disengaged from architecture’s capacity to *resist* contexts of architectural intervention that foster socially, spatially and culturally negative outcomes.

Exposing the inadequacy of the post-critical position on several fronts, an alternative through Murray Fraser, Kim Dovey and Jane Rendell has been presented. These figures consider critical architectural design to require a particular flexibility – an intent to ‘open’ design processes to a critique and resistance of cultural forces, with the desire to provide positive spatial solutions. This approach considers critical architecture through a new trajectory, one that presents Hays’s dialectic through Henri Lefebvre’s reconfiguration of the notion of space – challenging architectural design to operate within a framework that is *both* critical *and* spatial.

Upon isolating this position, the details and propositions of a *critical spatial practice* is expanded upon in **Section Two** of this thesis. Rather than elaborating on this theoretical framework, this thesis acknowledges that one of the imperative conditions of a flexible critical architecture is to positively engage ‘real world’ concerns. As such, *critical spatial practices* are examined in further detail throughout **Chapter’s Five, Six and Seven** – explored as design-research through its application to a contemporary and practical problem. This problem is now to be examined in **Chapter Three**.

NEGOTIATING THE THICK EDGE:

A (Real) Design Problem and Approach

Introduction	
A Sprawling Problem: Modernism's Leftovers	
Where Grids Get Cut: Tangible Implications at the Border	
A Localised Problem: Three Examples of a Negative Thick edge	
A New Form of Flow: Opportunities for Contextual Positivity	
Conclusion: A Polycontextual Approach to the Clifton Street Car Park

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Figure 3.2: Aerial photograph of Los Angeles. The sprawling urban centre is connected to its periphery through expansive infrastructure.

Introduction

1. Ingersoll, 2006, p. 3

Almost without notice, urbanisation and 'sprawl' have pushed the fabric of the urban centre to its fringe.¹ The metropolis of the twentieth century has given way to the rapid contractions and expansions of sprawl at a dizzying pace, forcing cities to 'spill out' from their edges (see Figure 3.2). At these edges, sites of distinctly urban dimensions attempt to connect to their peripheries; a desire often fulfilled through the incisions of dense and overbearing highway infrastructures. Around and underneath these infrastructures, unwanted, undesirable, and under-utilised sites emerge as the spatial residues of modern urbanisations singular developmental drives.

A practical and contemporary problem is identified: distinctly negative in character, these sites are frequently 'thickened' by the implementation of pragmatic, singular-use programmes. Problematically, these *thick edges* divide and dislocate existing communities and cultural contexts - resulting in physically and figuratively rigid conditions that perform as barriers to social and spatial flows.

Pursuing the argument further by localising the problem, three sites operating as *thick edges* within Wellington are investigated: the Westpac Stadium Car Park; Ballantrae Car Park; and the Clifton Street Car Park. From this analysis, a number of re-occurring conditions are identified that contribute to the rigidity and problematic dimensions of *thick edge* sites.

This chapter argues that few architectural alternatives for *thick edges* have emerged beyond the superficial application of recreational landscaping and perfunctorily beautified infrastructures. Through Aaron Betsky and Alexander d'Hooghe, this chapter presents an approach that resists these commonly held assumptions, suggesting that *thick edges* can be transformed into places of theoretical and cultural potency. Challenging architectural intervention to engage the *thick edge* through multiple contexts, this chapter proposes that these rigid conditions can be positively inverted - producing flows between various communities, land-use zones and publics. In so doing, **Chapter Four** addresses the third research question of this thesis:

What are the negative outcomes attributed to the proliferation of urban *thick edges*, and how can architectural intervention provide positive alternatives and approaches to this contemporary problem?

A Sprawling Problem: Modernism's Negative Leftovers

Following the Second World War 'three glorious decades' of growth under the drives of globalised modernism, technological development, and economic prosperity, informed a period of unprecedented urban sprawl and urbanisation, of which our cities are *still* facing the effects.² In this period, the influences of progress-driven commercial development and the ease of individual transport created by increased automobile production, encouraged cities to sprawl outwards – to urbanise. Kenneth Frampton identifies that this phase of urbanisation in the developed world has radically transformed the fabric of metropolitan centres to such an extent that “with the exception of cities which were laid in place before the turn of the [20th] century, we are no longer able to maintain defined urban forms”.³

Influencing this shift, 'modern' planning emerged as dominant on a global scale – entailing methods for the design and expansion of cities concerned primarily with connecting the gridded order imposed on urban centres to their emerging suburbs through transport.⁴ Built upon promises that technology-based progress could improve the 'health and circulation' of urban environments, this influential urban 'solution' proliferated the “two symbiotic instruments of megalopolitan development – the freestanding high-rise and the serpentine freeway”.⁵ The genesis of this perspective can be seen in the early models put forth by architects such as LeCorbusier (see Figure 3.3) and Ludwig Hilberseimer (see Figure 3.4). These schemes, which clearly privilege the circulation of the automobile and the scale of the high-rise over human sensibilities, have fundamentally influenced the core logic of urban development ever since (see Figure 3.2).

Richard Ingersoll argues that the intentions of modernism's perspective towards urbanisation are comparable to the 'jump-cut' technique in cinema - a violently fragmented montage that rapidly connects two disparate images. Thus 'jump-cut' urbanism informs a process whereby new highway aggressively 'cuts' between seemingly incongruent land-use zones

2. Bauman, 2000, p. 16. Wellington is no exception; a growing city – the Wellington City Council predicts that in 2040 55,000 more people will be living in central Wellington, containing 68% of all Wellington jobs. See: Council, 2011, p. 9

3. Frampton, 1983, p. 21. Kenneth Frampton is Ware Professor of Architecture at Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation Colombia University.

4. Pope, 2011, p. 143.

5. Frampton, 1983, p. 16. Frampton also notes that this process of development creates a shift in power away from the social realm and towards the institutional confines of economic capital. See: Solomon, 2004, p. 23.

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Figure 3.3: 'Radiant City'
Urban masterplan for Paris
LeCorbusier (1930-35)
Model

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Figure 3.4: 'Grossstadt'
Urban masterplan for Berlin
Ludwig Hilberseimer (1927)
Charcoal on paper

(industrial, residential, commercial), allowing sprawl to occur at increasingly rapid rates.⁶ Throughout the 20th century, jump-cut urbanism was adopted with such rapacity that it informed the basic structure of what we now understand to be the current identity of the city. Resulting from this technique, urban development became primarily concerned with connecting the dense commercial *centres* of cities (the urban) to the sprawl of their ever-expanding *peripheries* (the regional, suburban), disregarding the conditions by which they would normally meet their *borders* (see Figure 3.5).⁷ These connections have been predicated on the rise and impacts of developments in infrastructure as rail and roading networks cut across, through and around such borders.⁸

In the *The Social Logic of Space*, spatial geographers Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson

6. Ingersoll, 2006, p. 91. Richard Ingersoll is Professor of Architecture and Urbanism at the Syracuse University of Florence.

7. Solomon, 2004, p. 22.

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Figure 3.5:
Author's diagram showing
generalised relationship
between an urban centre and
its periphery as it connects
through jump-cut urbanism.

8. Ibid. Jonathan Solomon is Associate Professor and Associate Dean at the Syracuse School of Architecture.

9. Hillier & Hanson, 1984. Bill Hillier is Professor of Architectural and Urban Morphology at The Bartlett, University College London; Julienne Hanson is Professor of House Form and Culture, and Director of Teaching at the Bartlett School of Graduate Studies, University College London. Conversely, a positive approach to urban space will engage local systems as they refer to the *social* relations within and around such a territory - between the *cultural* conditions and individuals as they perform within everyday life.

10. Crisman, 2013, p. 115

outline that this form of urbanisation represents a fundamental position based upon what constitutes positive and negative spatial relations. For Hillier and Hanson, architectural engagement with urban space relies on mediated relations between global and local forces and interests. In this relationship, the spaces of global systems (in this case jump-cut urbanism) are a projection of a unified ideology and authority across a specific territory (that of the automobile). Consequently, spaces that are predominantly global-to-local manifest as *singular* in motivation, detached from the cultural complexities of the *contexts* associated with local culture. (in a capitalist system these motivations are generally economic and/or political.) The more that a global spatial structure acts to realise its aims (becomes spatialised), the more the local system is dominated by a system of ideologically defined formal structures, and social spatial inequality ensues.⁹ Following this observation, when operating as one such system, the globalised forces of jump-cut urbanisation have contributed significantly to the rise of negative spaces within the local built environments of their implementation.

Where Grids Get Cut: Tangible Implications at the Border

*Peripheral or 'edge' areas of cities and other leftover urban spaces have traditionally been considered unworthy of design attention. Such places are usually ugly and out of the way; they are also places where urban and architectural scales collide and raw social and economic divisions are manifest.*¹⁰

Phoebe Crisman

In the context of jump-cut urbanisation, global-to-local systems of spatial negativity are particularly evident. In many cases they have manifested as the left-over spaces created by urbanisation – singularly motivated by the automobile – and used for purposes that are distinctly anti-social. These connecting spaces exist at the collision between structurally-defined land-use zones and are predominantly left disregarded, 'lost' or 'leftover' as the residues of capital interest. Crisman

has suggested that urbanisation's residual spaces are complex socio-spatial zones, informing globally ubiquitous conditions yet fundamentally unique local relations which have been perceived as 'unworthy' of architectural focus.¹¹ Professor Emeritus of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University, Roger Trancik, notes:

*Lost spaces are the surface parking lots that ring the urban core of almost all American cities and sever the connection between the commercial center and residential areas. They are the no-man's-lands along the edges of freeways that nobody cares about maintaining, much less using ... They are the residual areas between districts and loosely composed commercial strips that emerge without anyone realising it.*¹²

11. Crisman, 2013, p. 115.

12. Trancik, 2007, p. 64.

Peter Newman and Jeffrey Kenworthy agree, suggesting that these spaces are the outcomes of modernism's economic imperatives, produced when the processes of urbanisation are in 'full flight'.¹³ As such, these spaces are ill-defined, incoherent and make "no positive contribution to the surroundings or users", re-enforcing the conviction that they constitute an undesirable and unavoidable spatial 'negativity'.¹⁴

13. Newman & Kenworthy, 1999, p. 287.

Spaces that are predominantly global-to-local manifest as *singular* in motivation, detached from the cultural complexities of the *contexts* associated with local culture (in a capitalist system these motivations are generally economic and/or political)

Building upon this notion, Aaron Betsky identifies negative urban spaces as, "not pretty places or real places, only background noise that threaten to drown out the polite forms of a built polity" and arise from the inherent lack of control expressed by contemporary urban centres.¹⁵ For Betsky, cities are now developing fluidly creating a disjunction when architects, planners, and urbanists attempt to 'solve' these conditions by implanting a pre-designed order. These imposed ordering systems often take the form

14. Trancik, 2007, p. 64

15. Betsky, 1998, p. 465. Aaron Betsky is an architectural critic, curator, educator, lecturer, and director of the Cincinnati Art Museum

of modernist-driven grids and masterplans or the linearity of infrastructure (see Figure 3.6). Lost and left-over spaces arise not in definable, controllable, limits but as certain characteristics and conditions:

It [negative urban space] is profoundly modern in a simple, stylistic sense: it is planar and not volumetric; it is based on a divorce between its context, girded by machined materials, and the artificial space it opens up; and it is extensive in its tendencies. Its planarity is predominantly horizontal and gridded, and dissolves at the edges [emphasis added].¹⁶

16. Betsky, 1998, p. 465.

Crisman argues that such conditions have perpetuated throughout the urban fabric and can be regularly identified in their most potent form in sites adjacent to transportation infrastructure:

Even within these admittedly challenging conditions, however, one kind of edge stands out for the design problems it poses: the zones created by linear cuts incised through the morphological continuity of the contemporary city by rail lines and highways.¹⁷

17. Ibid p. 115.

These sites, prevalent throughout the contemporary city, are a prescient issue and must be investigated by architects if urbanisation is to impart positive social effects within the city.

Rem Koolhaas has suggested that these sites can be categorised as 'Junkspaces', the bi-products of a consumer-driven culture, the "body double of space, a territory of impaired vision, limited expectation, reduced earnestness".¹⁸ Aligning with the propositions of negative urban space put forth in this chapter, Koolhaas argues that junkspaces appear wherever capital interest is rampant, even suggesting "the entire highway system is junkspace".¹⁹ However, upon identifying the conditions of their production, responses to these conditions are frequently problematic. Koolhaas, a figure-head of the post-critical's desire to go with capital flows, is dismissive—arguing that as junk they must be treated thus, disregarded and left to decay. This narrative is distinctly post-critical; it identifies the driving

18. Koolhaas, 2002, p. 180.

19. Ibid, p. 181

< LEFT
Figure 3.6:
Aerial view of proposed master plan for Christchurch re-build following the earthquakes of 2011. The plan shows the continual desire of architects and urban planners to impose regular and structured order systems within the urban fabric.

force and locus of negative urbanisation and yet concedes defeat. Instead of *resisting* or *opposing*, this position perpetuates the problem, permitting capital appeasement and promoting the axiom that whatever does not work should be thrown away or cosmetically upgraded.²⁰ Koolhaas's attitude is contagious and continual, facilitating the misuse and degradation of such spaces, treating them as 'junk' and cosmetically filling them with anti-social programmes. Thus, instead of utilising negative spaces, exploiting them for public or social uses, they are often 'filled in' with economically pragmatic programmes, "we make them into parking lots or feeble patches of grass – no man's lands between the scale of the region and the locality".²¹

20. Ingersoll, 2006, p. 18.

21. Ibid, p. 78; Venturi, 2011 [1977], p. 80.

Resulting from these singularly-motivated approaches, a binary rigidity – a 'thickness' - is formed, manifest as impermeable conditions that 'cut' or separate two spatial conditions (see Figure 3.7). This point is put forth by Iain Borden, who contends that *thick edges* present spatial and formal barriers, limits "between *here* and *there* in and out", impeding the right of passage and therefore restricting positive social and spatial flows.²² Treated as undesirable

22. Borden, 2000, p. 222. Iain Borden is Professor of Architecture and Urban Culture at the Bartlett School of Architecture

RIGHT >
Figure 3.8:
Diagram showing wider local
context, Wellington

and impractical, and filled with functions that are indifferent to human use, the *thick edge* condition reproduces and reinforces the spatial negativity that constitutes it – in a vicious urban cycle.

A Localised Problem: Three Examples of a Negative Thick Edge

Based upon the understandings of jump-cut urbanism's consequential urban conditions, it is pertinent to examine how '*thick edges*' have come to emerge in a localised context – specifically, Wellington (see Figure 3.8). Analysing the city's urban centre reveals three relevant patterns: firstly, the urban (centre) is bisected by dense infrastructure – motorways and rail – that connects the outer-lying suburbs to the city (see figure 3.9); secondly, the CBD is additionally bounded, geographically, to the west by a dense greenbelt; and thirdly, examining the figures of the built fabric (see Figure 3.10) these infrastructural passages have carved out significant borders between the formal structures of the high-density CBD and the low-density inner-suburbs. Following the junkspace approach, many of the leftover sites within these borders have been renovated into car-parks, creating impermeable barriers – *thick edges*. Three sites in particular have been identified: the Westpac

Stadium Car Park, 83 Waterloo Quay; Ballantrae Car Park, 1 Ballantrae Place; and the Clifton Street Car Park, 132 The Terrace (see Figure 3.11).

The Westpac stadium Car Park is situated underneath an expansive, elevated public walkway that leads to the city's largest stadium to the north-east of the urban centre. The site is somewhat of a city gateway, positioned *between* the industrial waterfront/harbour zone and the Pipitea commercial precinct (See Figure 3.12). Additionally, the car park is wedged between the infrastructure of the Wellington rail system and the Waterloo Quay road system. As a result, the facility 'fills in' a residual strip of space, deemed necessary for parking. Given its proximity to the adjacent sports stadium the need for parking space is evident. However, this should not eliminate the possibility of further developing the *thick edge* to engage contexts outside of its economics. The occupied space underneath has been positioned in such a way that it creates a vehicle-orientated zone at ground level, and thus presents an almost entirely anti-social space that resists the interactions of a variety of publics (see Figures 3.13-3.15).

Moving to the western periphery of Wellington's urban centre, the Ballantrae Car Park is more inconspicuous. Positioned at the intersection of three roads: the urban motorway (above); Bowen Street (adjacent); and accessed via Ballantrae Place, the site's location at the northernmost point of the

Following the junkspace approach, many of the leftover sites within these borders have been renovated into car-parks, creating impermeable barriers – *thick edges*.

Bolton Street Cemetery informs its condition as a leftover space – created by the roading infrastructure's negotiation with the natural topography (see Figure 3.16). Consequently, the parking space is submerged, informing a physically slumped condition between the greenbelt to the west and the sporadic high-rise buildings to the east.

RIGHT >
Figure 3.9:

Map of central Wellington showing arterial infrastructure routes that connect the urban 'centre' to its northern 'peripheries', notably the Hutt City and the Western Suburbs.

Interestingly, attempts have been made to reduce the orthogonal nature of the infrastructure's architecture by chamfering the columns into visually varied geometries (see Figures 3.17-19). This is an attempt to engage the visual rigidity of the *thick edge*, however, there are no architectural references that engage the materials, typologies or histories of the surrounding fabric - displaying a resistance to the site's context within the local built environment.

South of Ballantrae Place and located at the western edge of Wellington's downtown financial core, the Clifton Street Car Park is a council-owned

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Figure 3.10:

Figure/ground map of central Wellington showing the increased density and structure of the centre. Residual empty spaces appear where the city grid meets the incision of infrastructure, creating distinct borders between the centre and its periphery.

pay-and-display parking facility at 132 The Terrace. Located directly below *and* adjacent to the southbound Wellington Urban Motorway, the car park consists of a 335m curvilinear north-south axis that simultaneously follows the topography of the 'Wellington Town Belt' to the west and the dense commercial fringe of the CBD ('The Wellington Terrace') to the east (See Figure 3.20). According to the Wellington City Council, the car park is officially at the periphery of the Wellington 'Central Area' and forms a zoning border with the Thorndon 'Inner Residential' sector. The site has been excavated within the foothills and dense vegetation of the

RIGHT >
Figure 3.11:
Locating three 'thick edges'
in Wellington

- KEY:
- 1. Westpac Stadium Car Park, 83 Waterloo Quay
 - 2. Ballantrae Car Park, 1 Ballantrae Place
 - 3. Clifton Street Car Park, 132 The Terrace

greenbelt, forming steep concrete terraces adjacent to a gently sloping and regular ground plane (see Figure 3.22). Within and behind the town belt lie the urban suburbs of Thorndon and Kelburn, containing many of Wellington's residential heritage properties. North of the site cuts through the historically significant Bolton Street Cemetery, as well as the houses of many of the city's earliest settlers. To the south the car park is diagonally dissected by the Wellington Cable Car, a prominent tourist attraction which connects the retail sector of Lambton Quay with the Wellington Botanical Gardens and nearby Victoria University Kelburn campus (see Figure 3.23). Additionally, of the three sites, the Clifton Street Car Park is the largest – encompassing a vast space underneath the Urban Motorway directly adjacent to the greenbelt. It is also the most complex, comprised of several horizontal datums that have been adopted for parking (see Figure 3.21). Resulting from the car park's size and position,

Congruent with the conditions of leftover border spaces elucidated in this chapter, these three sites display consistent attributes that inform a condition that is impermeable and resistant to various contexts. As such, a number of factors contribute to their condition as a *thick edge*. These include:

A lack of social activity: driven by the imperatives of vehicular use, the spaces are *singular* in their anti-social, economically driven function. As such they act as social barriers that are rigidly mono-programmatic and inclusive only of their wider context as it relates to infrastructure. They promote vehicular use over social flows, preventing engagement and interaction between multiple publics by physically dislocating and isolating adjacent communities and land-use zones.

Continuous, rigid materiality: each site portrays a visual and tactile 'hardness' due to the dominant techniques of construction for infrastructure. Concrete is the dominant material and has been used in various forms (poured in-situ, precast, shot-crete).

Continuous, orthogonal typology: reductive orthogonal features are consistent throughout,

resultant from walkways and motorways creating horizontal canopy conditions that are supported in a regular verticality by the column systems. This has emerged from the minimal post-and-beam construction techniques used. Consequently, each site has had a consistent and regular order imposed upon it - carved out spaces to support the structures of motorways and other infrastructures.

Excavated ground planes: facilitating the desirability of flat ground planes for parking, supporting columns and motorway datums each site has constructed an artificial (asphalt) ground surface by excavating the existing site. This 'tabula rasa' technique requires the removal of significant volumes of earth as well as the excavation of existing natural and cultural contexts, leaving behind visually and physically ubiquitous landscapes.

Dislocated zoning adjacencies: as they relate to building densities, incisive infrastructure has informed conditions where each site is *between* various zoning attributes (industrial, residential, commercial), informing polarised adjacent contexts. This bi-product of infrastructural incision forms a barrier to surrounding communities, rigidly dislocating land-uses.

Disproportionate scales: driven by the requirements of infrastructure, the car parks are neither high-rise nor human in scale. Importantly, this has left significant volumes of space underneath and around the infrastructures - unused and available for architectural intervention.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT
>

Figure 3.12: Aerial photograph of Westpac Stadium Car Park, 83 Waterloo Quay

Figure 3.13: Photograph from elevated walkway above parking facility

Figures 3.14 & 3.15: Photographs of parking facility from underneath walkway

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT
>

Figure 3.16: Aerial photograph
of Ballantrae Place Car Park

Figure 3.17: Photograph
showing column detail
underneath Wellington Urban
Motorway

Figures 3.18 & 3.19:
Photograph of parking facility
from underneath Wellington
Urban Motorway

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
>

Figure 3.20: Aerial photograph of Clifton Street Car Park situated between The Terrace and Thorndon

Figure 3.21: Photograph from middle level of parking facility

Figure 3.22: Photograph of Wellington Cable Car at Southern end of site

Figure 3.23: Photograph of parking facility from underneath southbound motorway

A New Form of Flow: Opportunities for Contextual Positivity

23. Ingersoll, 2006, p. 122

Highway construction and renovation continues unchallenged, with few exceptions, as do new flyovers and parking structures.²³

Richard Ingersoll

I would argue that nothing can be accomplished urbanistically until these assumptions regarding the inherently negative qualities associated with contemporary urban space are challenged and overcome.²⁴

Albert Pope

24. Pope, 2011, p. 162.
Albert Pope is the Gus Sessions Wortham Professor of Architecture at the Rice University

25. See (Stoll, Lloyd, & Allen, 2010), (Solomon, 2004), and (Shannon & Smets, 2010)

In order to arrive at positive architectural solutions for urban *thick edge* conditions, it is necessary to challenge, alter and resist the current approaches used by governing bodies. Many architectural endeavours have attempted to treat existing infrastructures as an architectural object in an effort to mitigate their negative effects, with mixed results.²⁵ In such instances, architecture is ‘applied’ to these sites – polishing and beautifying their austerity as formal objects through creative interventions. This approach is evident in projects such as the ‘Alicante Tram Stop’ (2005-2006) by Subarquitectura Architects (see Figure 3.8), Jean Nouvel’s ‘Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes’ project in Barcelona (see Figure 3.9), and the ‘Louisville Waterfront Park’ (1999-2009) by Hargreaves Associates (see Figure 3.10). In all three instances architectural intervention is used as a means to adjust the existing conditions of the infrastructure – enhancing their attractiveness to the public.

As a result, the economic and development-orientated motivations of infrastructure are passively superimposed with a sceneographic context of ‘publicness’ created through recreational landscaping. Consequently, the motivations and rigidities of the spaces are only slightly adjusted, introducing new visual, physical and social contexts but overlooking the historical, political and economic potential of the site(s).

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Figure 3.24
Subarquitectura Architects
‘Alicante Tram Stop’
(2005-2006)

Figure 3.25
Hargreaves Associates
‘Louisville Waterfront Park’
(1999-2009)

Figure 3.26
Jean Nouvel
‘Plaça de les Glòries Catalanes’
(2005)

Importantly, Aaron Betsky identifies that an alternative ‘flow’ through leftover urban sites can be established, one which maneuvers around the positions of approaches that engage a limited range of contextual concerns. For Betsky, this form of flow is not aligned with the movements of capital,

globalisation and urbanisation – rather, it follows the organic and fluid growth of a city – a process which reveals negative spaces as they emerge over time. From this perspective, negative urban spaces are opportunities that allow architects to construct sites of critique and *resistance*.²⁶ According to Betsky:

*We do not need to build connective structure. Instead we need to weave our structures together by burrowing into them, destroying the false separations between inside and outside, reality and appearance, function and form, and between places by turning them into an amorphous web or landscape... To design this space means to direct the self-organising systems of the city and to wander through the real city, along its real spaces – the formless blobs of streets and parking lots.*²⁷

Aligning with Betsky's alternative view of negative urban spaces, Alexander D'Hooghe believes that sites of infrastructure embody opportunity to create moments of conflicting, contradictory, and radical critique. In "The Objectification of Infrastructure", D'Hooghe suggests that:

*Infrastructure, instead of being about one direction of movement becomes about the resolution of conflict between opposing flows and modes. Infrastructure, instead of being subservient to smooth flows, would instead take advantage of moments of friction and begin to articulate those into delineated public spaces... [A] critical design project will then consist of the creative appropriation of these codes, forms and the entire syntax of bureaucratic order, in order to re-invent and re-build them as authored systems with a human poetic element... Using the same technocratic elements that gave rise to the original form of the infrastructure system, but re-arranging them in a way that multiplies their functionalities and directions of potential use, will enable a consciousness of their existence as cultural objects.*²⁸

This thesis identifies Betsky and D'Hooghe's approach as implicating with a contemporary, flexible criticality - aligning with the framework of *critical spatial practices* presented in **Chapter Two**. Importantly, by engaging the rich possibilities,

the 'flows and modes' of multiple cultural *contexts*, architectural intervention can *invert* the negative conditions of the *thick edge* created by infrastructural incisions. Here, an 'inversion' of the *thick edge* becomes a two-fold gesture.

On the one hand, a polycontextual inversion of the *thick edge* refers to an alternative understanding of its condition at the border. Rather than a static and impermeable barrier, the border condition presents an in-between space of flow and possibility, fraying, and blurring. The *thick edge* by this definition is a space where identities collide, a potent space of questioning and undoing.²⁹ Linda Pollak notes that in such cases, *thick edges* are not impermeable barriers they are latent thresholds, fertile and complex borders of potential social engagement:

*Boundaries can function as thresholds as well as barriers, to support and enable difference in social space... Because boundaries are where things meet, they have potential, when approached and represented from different sides, to function as spaces of debate and ambiguity, where it is possible both to call identities into question and to reveal their independence, whether these are identities of subjects or spaces.*³⁰

On the other hand, inversion refers to the turning 'inside-out' of the standard intentions of *thick edges*. Thus they are redefined, not as a formal and spatial *negativity*, but, as a cultural *positivity*. Through polycontextual flows these sites can become rich spaces of complex *historical, economic, political, social, physical and visual* engagement and interaction. Rather than single-use junkspaces, embracing the flows of context presents a critical and vital flexibility - replacing the static and largely singular conditions of this urban problem. Thus the intervention of critical architectural production within *thick edges* emerges not as a physical barrier, but as socio-spatial event space – "not a division of things but a negotiation of flows".³¹

Approaching the *thick edge* from this dual inversion, allows architects to explore new and subversive architectural territory. Reconceptualising

26. Betsky, 1998, p. 466. This is an essentially Derridean proposition, the resistance of identifiable and objective conditions through traditionally binary conditions.

29. Elizabeth Grosz, Philosopher and Professor of the Women's Studies Program at Duke University, has talked about this notion – as it relates to architecture – in great length. See: Grosz, 2001, p. 92.

30. Pollak, 1999, p. 77. Linda Pollak is a Lecturer in Landscape Architecture at The University of Pennsylvania School of Design. She is also an architect, landscape architect, and partner at Marpillero Pollak Architects in New York City.

31. Borden, 2000, p. 240.

28. D'Hooghe, 2010, p. 82. Alexander D'Hooghe is Associate Professor of Architecture at the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

these sites provides a potent alternative to the default sprawling action of much contemporary development – an opportunity to intensify and engage the unseen contexts, and to “conceive of the public realm, urban structure and architectural typology as interconnected”.³²

32. Crisman, 2013, p. 125.

Conclusion: A Polycontextual Approach to the Clifton Street Car Park

Engaging the third research question of this thesis, *thick edges* – the condition that forms as a result of new highway infrastructure and expanding urbanisation – has been illuminated as a contemporary urban architectural problem, spatially and culturally separating communities, land-uses and publics.

This chapter has argued that these sites, although difficult and often unsightly, present architects with potent opportunities. Approached critically *thick edges* offer a chance to regenerate negative and anti-social spaces within the localised urban fabric, whilst simultaneously contesting and critiquing the global forces that produce them.³³

33. Dunham-Jones, 2011, p. 26.

Additionally, **Chapter Three** has argued that engaging with the complex and multiple cultural conditions of urban sites, the rigidity and singular nature of these impermeable spaces can be opened to often disregarded flows of context. These contexts may be *historical, economic, political, social, physical and visual*; contributing to the culturally engaged dimension of critical architectural production, and providing bases for the inverting of the impermeability of *thick edges*.

This thesis proposes that it is the task of the *critical spatial practices* to not only adopt these found sites as grounds for fertile re-engagement, but to expose the unique contextual information that is latent within each site proper. In so doing, architectural intervention can initiate positive cultural flows through contextually rigid sites, enabling new community interactions, experiences and spatial practices.

Of the three *thick edge* sites identified in this chapter, the Clifton Street Car Park presents the most extreme and exaggerated example of the *thick edge* condition – therefore posing the most challenges, and strongest opportunity, for the design-research to test this problem. This site in particular provides a number of fertile contexts, explored in **Chapter Four**, through which *critical spatial practices* can be tested and critical architectural processes can be engaged.

A POTENT(IALY) CRITICAL SITE

Investigating a Polycontextual
Approach to the Clifton Street Car
Park

- Introduction
- An Urbanised Context
- A Historical Context
- An Economic Context
- A Political Context
- A Social Context
- A Physical Context
- A Visual Context
- Conclusions

1. Alington, 1978, p. 159

There are so few places in this country where one can read history other than in books... There are even fewer places where one can read history on the spot in surroundings of such charm and grace, and what sacrilege it would be if it were all made so municipally trim as to take away its soul.¹

Olive Smuts-Kennedy

Introduction

In **Chapter Three**, it was established that within the contemporary built environment urban *thick edges*, a condition of new infrastructures imposed upon a pre-existing urban fabric of integrated communities, present opportunities for positive critical responses.

Through investigations of three sites, the Clifton Street Car Park has been isolated as the focus for design research in this thesis. Following the argument put forth in **Chapter Two** - that critical architectures will be *resistant* to submissive reproduction under global-to-local forces, mediating between formal and cultural production - this chapter considers the design opportunities presented by a polycontextual investigation of 'site' as encompassing *historical, economic, political, social, physical* and *visual* processes.

In so doing, this chapter investigates how these contexts are related to production and reproduction of the current identity of Clifton Street Car Park as a *thick edge*. A polycontextual framework is established for the testing of *critical spatial practices* within these conditions - illuminating knowledge with regards to contexts that have been historically disregarded, impaired or marginalised by the forces of jump-cut urbanisation.

An Urbanised Context

The Clifton Street Car Park figures as both a product of, and symbol for, the impacts of 20th century jump-cut urbanisation in Wellington. The histories of this urban complex - notably the impacts of automobile dependence and the rapid high-rise development of The Terrace - present a background for the production and representation of Clifton Street Car Park as a negative urban space. Additionally, these histories illuminate culturally relevant information that foregrounds the construction of critical responses and practices in the design case study.

The post-war period, 1950 onwards, exemplifies the desire for Wellington to engage with institutions of globalisation such as American planning techniques and economically-driven development (See Figures 4.2-4.12). The city, and consequently the Clifton Street Car Park, has been subject to two notable 'boom' periods - both occurring in the period between 1960 and 1990.

The first of these periods of rapid growth occurred with the introduction of significant infrastructure to accommodate both Wellington's growing population and the rise of the automobile. This resulted in the construction of the Wellington Urban Motorway - a network of roads connecting the urban centre to its peripheral suburbs. Predicting further growth, a two-phase car park development was put forth and initiated as an economically pragmatic solution to the leftover space from the motorway. The first phase, completed in 1970, initiated the construction of the Clifton Street Car Park as it exists today. The second phase of this development was abandoned as infrastructure requirements and population growth slowed, leaving the facility unfinished.²

The second boom period, instigated by the rise and affluence of the private sector throughout the 1980s, saw the construction of economically-motivated office towers along The Terrace. 'Facing' towards the harbour aspect, these office buildings further implicate the car park as a residual urban

space, and as a thickened edge - informing a polarised position between the densely urban terrace and the natural topography of the town belt. Both of these boom periods, driven by economic imperatives, have contributed to the site performing in a contextually reduced capacity, acting as an incisive barrier to the surrounding area(s).

A Historical Context

Further investigation reveals four additional historic contexts that contribute to the Clifton Street Car Park as embedded within a culturally complex area: the Bolton Street Cemetery; the Thorndon suburban area; the Kumototo Stream; and the Wellington Cable Car. Each of these contexts has been affected by the construction of the Urban Motorway and subsequently has become segregated or removed by the *thick edge* created by the car park.

Bolton Street Cemetery and the Clifton Street Car Park

The history of the Bolton Street Cemetery and its partial relocation through the construction of the Urban Motorway is considered to be one of Wellington's most culturally traumatic and controversial planning decisions. The cemetery is New Zealand's earliest formal burial site, accommodating graves from as early as 1849 (although it is suspected there are older graves as this is merely the date that the cemetery records began).³ Occupying a large geographic area north of the Clifton Street Car Park, the cemetery documents the earliest colonial and religious settlement of Wellington City as well as providing inner-city green space and a connection to the Town Belt (see Figure 4.13).

The Urban Motorway enters the city directly through the centre of the Bolton Street Cemetery, requiring the *excavation* of 14,973m² from the existing cemetery plot (see Figure 4.14).⁴ This controversial procedure of urbanisation caused much public backlash throughout the 1960's, culminating in the formation of the Bolton Street Cemetery Preservation Society in October 1964. Alongside broadcasts on radio and television, public resistance to the cemetery's desecration was conducted through photographs, letters, as well as newspaper articles and editorials.

3. Alington, 1978, p. 3.

4. Alington, 1978, p. 162. This is a conversion of 3.7 acres to metres-squared.

2. The population of Wellington increased by 400,000 between 1960 and 1970, this rate halved in the decade following. (New Zealand, 2013)

RIGHT >
Figure 4.2: Photograph of 'Shell House', 49-55 The Terrace, Wellington (1960)

1953: NEW ZEALAND JOINS THE UNITED KINGDOM TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT.

In so doing local councils were required to produce development master plans - a clear signal that the country wished to engage with the progressive drives of European modernism, and aim towards the ideals of post-war town planning.

1960: SHELL HOUSE (49-55 THE TERRACE) IS CONSTRUCTED.

Wellington's first high-rise building is constructed - a 14 storey glass and steel box designed by Stevenson and Turner architects, is seen as a point of departure (for The Terrace in particular) towards downtown Wellington establishing itself as a business centre.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.4: Photograph of the last run of the Wellington trams, Lambton Quay, Wellington (1964)

1964: WELLINGTON TRAMWAYS SHUT DOWN

An institution in the city, the removal of the tram system represented a social and economic shift towards a vehicle-based transport infrastructure and a chance to engage with the rest of the world through technological progression and construction.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.5: Photograph showing construction of the Urban Motorway off-ramp, connecting The Terrace to the new infrastructure. This would later form the site of the Clifton Street Car Park. The off-ramp required further excavation of Shell Gully to occur.

1969: FIRST STAGE OF THE DE LEUW CATHER TRANSPORTATION PLAN OPENED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE 'FOOTHILLS MOTORWAY'

The first development of the De Leuw Cather plan saw the construction of the Wellington Urban Motorway - connecting Lower Hutt City to TeAro and The Terrace. The motorway carved through the foothills of the Town Belt, contributing to "the changed face of The Terrace with its commuter-supported office buildings and huge car park facility".⁷

7. Kernohan, Wellington's Old Buildings, 1994, p. 19.

1950

1959: NATIONAL ROADS AMENDMENT BILL INITIATED

Allowing the government to construct networks of free-flowing highways into urban centres, networks that will "enable the free flow of traffic on routes considered essential for national development and defence".⁵ Immediately following a proposal is put forth for a Wellington Urban Motorway that could accommodate the 29,000 commuting vehicles travelling to the city centre every day from the Hutt City suburban periphery.⁶

5. Miller, 1969, p. 33.

6. Yska, 2006, pp. 182-183.

1960: CITY COUNCIL ENGAGES AMERICAN ENGINEERING firm De Leuw Cather and Company as master planning and infrastructure consultants.

August 1963: DE LEUW CATHER AND COMPANY RELEASE 'MASTER TRANSPORTATION PLAN'

Involving significant excavation and land acquisition as well as cutting through the centre of Bolton Street Cemetery and behind The Terrace through Shell Gully (one of the remaining few inner city green spaces).

RIGHT >
Figure 4.3: Photograph of the construction of the Wellington Urban Motorway following the De Leuw Cather infrastructure master plan. Entering from the north of the city, the motorway excavated a significant incision within the landscape (1969).

Throughout the 1960's THE DE LEUW CATHER PROPOSAL RECEIVED MUCH RESISTANCE from the public, much of which focussed on the negative visual and cultural outcomes of the motorway. Resisters felt that the motorway represented the direct importation of American planning ideals into a context that required more subtle and local solutions. Local publications were flooded with letters from concerned citizens as details emerged of the potential desecration of the existing cultural landscape, in particular the Bolton Street Cemetery.

*"... it is felt that 637 car spaces approximates the maximum that can be accommodated in the Shell Gully car park, having regard to the additional private parking development in the area."*⁸

A. D Martin, Deputy City Engineer

8. Martin, 1970, p. 5.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.6: Cartoon by Neville Lodge depicting public resistance to the Urban Motorway proposal.

< LEFT

Figure 4.7: Photograph, looking south, showing extensive excavation through Shell Gully. Terracing of the Townbelt is becoming evident (to the right) and the concrete platforms that will form the Clifton Street Car Park are under construction.

1970: CAR PARK PROPOSED IN SHELL GULLY

Following the perceived 'success' of the Urban Motorway by the City Council, schemes put forth by the Wellington City Corporation for the "investigation into the economic feasibility of incorporating a parking building into the elevated section of the motorways between Aurora and Everton Terraces", an area known as Shell Gully.⁹ This site was perceived as having high intrinsic value given its proximity to The Terrace.

9. Martin, 1970, p. 1.

1961-1981: RAPID EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERRACE

Upon the construction of the Urban Motorway – connecting the urban centre to its peripheries - 'spectacular' commercial growth along The Terrace ensued, to the extent that "in the first five years following the De Leuw Cather study, the actual expansion exceeded more than three times that allowed in the study over the 20 year period to 1981".¹⁰

10. Martin, 1970, p. 4-5.

11. Kernohan, Wellington's Old Buildings, 1989, p. 1.

*"On The Terrace a continuous growth of anonymous earthquake-proof structures has sprung up to serve this [development] need. Purely additive and cost-measured, with no elegance or style, they come alive symbolically in the halflights, with changing banks of lights forming fascinating kinetic patterns... Glimpsed through the jagged rampart, old Wellington waits to disappear, old bush, bare hills, small scale colonial buildings."*¹¹

1981-1991: SECOND PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT - PRIVATISATION

The Terrace irreversibly transforms into a private-sector commercial zone coinciding with an economic 'boom' period in the stock exchange. This exacerbated the economic mandates of urban development, resulting in the production of "anonymous, bland office buildings".¹²

12. Ibid

BELOW

Figure 4.12: Photograph, looking north, showing thick edge condition created by the Clifton Street Car Park - the back of The Terrace is to the right, the Townbelt is to the

1970: CAR PARK APPROVED

Wellington City Council approved a scheme for 660-670 16'x8' spaces beneath the motorway in Shell Gully, 'Scheme IIIA', with the addition of two parking 'platforms' and the potential for future extension. This scheme was a two-phase development costing an estimated \$1,075,000 and \$5,144,000 respectively (\$14,985,500 and \$71,707,360 in Q4 2012). Phase One entailed regrading and excavating the land to accommodate 475 parks underneath the southbound section of the Urban Motorway as well as The Terrace off-ramp. Phase Two allowed for further decks, parking platforms that would separate the site into several levels, to be constructed to support a further 803 spaces. Automobile and population expansion slowed, and Phase Two was cast aside, the extra parking deemed as unnecessary. As a result a number of footings remain in preparation for Phase Two.

1977: SECTION 301A OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT INITIATED

The 301A Act entitled developers, flourishing in the private market, to legally enforce the demolition of a number of heritage buildings that were deemed to be 'earthquake prone'. A significant proportion of these buildings occupied the desirable real estate of The Terrace and their removal prompted developers to erect 'earthquake safe', orthogonal, office towers.

^ ABOVE

Figure 4.9: Photograph of The Terrace c.1970.

< LEFT

Figure 4.8: Photograph of remaining footing from incomplete Phase Two of Clifton Street Car Park proposal.

1981 onwards: HIGH CITY/ LOW CITY

Facilitated by the infrastructural addition of the Wellington Urban Motorway, The Terrace has come to form a visual and economic backdrop for the city. Through dense commercial development, The Terrace has created a visual skyline for Wellington, informing the high city/low city structure put forth by the City Council.¹³

13. Council, 12. Central Area, 2012, p. 13.

^ ABOVE

Figure 4.10: Sketch of 'High-city/low-city' skyline created by The Terrace

RIGHT >

Figure 4.11: Diagram showing 'High-city/low-city' skyline created by The Terrace

2013: CLIFTON STREET CAR PARK

The high city/low city development imperative has informed a physical context where The Terrace faces towards the Harbour aspect, visually rejecting the Clifton site. This additionally implicates the definition of the site as situated between two land-use zones.

RIGHT >

Figure 4.13: diagram/map showing proximity of Bolton Street Cemetery to the north of the Clifton Street Car Park.

In spite of public upheaval in 1969 the Ministry of Works began the process of removing human remains from the cemetery that lay in the motorway's path. In 1965, an estimated 700 graves were to be affected; however, between 1968 and 1972 a number of unknown burials were revealed. By the motorway's completion, the disinterment of 3,693 buried corpses and some 900 memorials occurred, relocated in cardboard containers to nearby mass graves within the cemetery (at the 'early settler's lawn') or to the suburban Karori Cemetery (see Figures 4.15 & 4.16).

No other event better expresses incisive processes of jump-cut urbanisation than the Bolton Street Cemetery's bisection. Negatively impacting the cultural fabric of the city, the construction of the Urban Motorway (including the Clifton Street Car Park) expresses how global-to-local forces of urbanisation can act through contextually singular motivations (economic).

< LEFT

Figure 4.14: Photograph showing the partial excavation of Bolton Street Cemetery during the Urban Motorway construction (1969)

The history of the Bolton Street Cemetery associates the Clifton Street Car Park in the process of identity-destruction, shifting the emphasis of development towards the reification of inequality between global and local interests. A critical response in this thesis will engage in *mediation* between the intervention of architectural form within the negativity of the site and the multiple contexts of this identity destruction. As such, the desecration of Bolton Street Cemetery is an important cultural history for the production of critical design responses to the site, and the opportunity to invert the *thick edge* to the possibility of positive polycontextual flows.

RIGHT FROM TOP >
Figure 4.15: Photograph
 memorial plaque to the
 removed graves from Bolton
 Street Cemetery
 (1969)

Figure 4.16: Photograph/
 diagram highlighting the mass
 grave at the Early Settler's
 Lawn that contains a significant
 portion of the reinterred graves

The Thorndon Suburb

In terms of Victorian and Edwardian housing, Thorndon is one of New Zealand's most historically significant suburbs. As home to the country's first settlers in 1840, Thorndon was established as the location of many of the country's important historic events – many of which are associated with native iwi as Thorndon Flat was a 'favoured settlement for local Maori'.¹⁴ Architecturally, the suburb is characterised by the size and variety of its housing types (see **Figure 4.17**). Towards the end of the early settlement period, at the end of the 19th century, Thorndon had established two distinguishable housing areas – one of wealthy elites in the northern sector and the densely populated working class area to the south. There has been great effort since the 1960s to maintain Thorndon's heritage fabric and value:

It is a popular tourist destination, and has been the subject of numerous books, three heritage trails, on-line guides, drawings, paintings and photographs, illustrated talks and, in the case of the Thorndon Society, hundreds of newsletters. Few other historic suburbs in New Zealand have roused so much

*consistent community interest and support over such a long period.*¹⁵

At the time of the Urban Motorway proposal, areas of Thorndon outlined for demolition were considered to be in decline – accommodating mainly low-middle socio-economic families. As such, the potential demolition of housing stock within the area “would not be a great loss”.¹⁶ Although much of the public outcry revolved around the exhumation and relocation of Bolton Street Cemetery, the motorway construction “forced relocation of hundreds of people”. Between 1966 and 1971 as many as 400 dwellings were destroyed, causing the relocation of an estimated 1000 people (and directly affecting 2000).¹⁷

Following the destruction to large areas of the suburb during Urban Motorway construction, the Thorndon Trust was formed – initiating a renewed interest in heritage value and a resistance to the “formidable adversary of developers”.¹⁸ From 1973 onwards local volunteers and community bodies pressured the city council to regard Thorndon as a legally protected area. These actions resulted in the dislocation of the area from the nearby commercial expansion along The Terrace throughout the 1980s. As a result, the car park now exists as a typological vacuum – a border condition between two strongly identifiable land-use zones – the densely structured commercial fabric of The Terrace, and the low-density housing of Thorndon.

The Kumutoto Stream

Prior to 1840 the Clifton Street Car Park was bisected by the Kumutoto, a small stream feeding an outlet at Jervois Quay, which has since become covered “in asphalt and car parks” by the intervention of the Urban Motorway.¹⁹ Culturally significant, the stream once marked the location of early Maori settlement (the Kumutoto kainga, or ‘small village’). The original site of the kainga is now occupied by the Wellington Club (88 The Terrace). In memorial to the relocation of the kainga in 1877, a single Pohutakawa tree was planted, occupying a space adjacent to the club ever since. The Pohutakawa tree stands as a symbol of both the natural location and burial of the Kumutoto stream, as well as the local settlement and colonial

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid, p. 33.

17. Ibid, p.35.

18. Ibid.

14. Black, Kelly, & Cochran, 2008, p. 3.

19. IFLA50, 2013.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.17: Photograph of Thorndon residential suburb as it occupies the Town Belt

interaction of the Maori people in the area.

The Wellington Cable Car

Designed by James Fulton, and constructed in 1902 on behalf of the Kelburn and Karori Tramway Company Limited, the Wellington Cable Car provides a direct link between: Lambton Quay, The Terrace, the Clifton Street Car Park, the Botanical Gardens and Victoria University's Kelburn campus (see Figure 4.18). Purchased by the Wellington City Council in 1946, it remains as the only form of pre-automobile public transport in the city, remaining as a symbol of Wellington's transition from public to private infrastructure. In 1978 it was converted to a Swiss-designed hydraulic system, and has become advertised as primarily a tourist attraction.

In spite of its economically (tourism) driven context, the cable car currently facilitates a direct transport connection to the Clifton Street Car Park, stopping at the south-western end of the public path that runs Botanical Gardens and is used by a variety of peoples.²⁰ Transversely cutting through the site, it exposes users to a cross-sectional view of the border conditions created by the site. Whilst the infrastructure of the cable car has created a decisive 'cut', an end point, to the site – its scale is significantly less imposing than the motorway overhead, reducing the impact of the edge it creates. Additionally, due to its tourist-driven identity, the cable car engages multiple publics passing through the site, and thus presents a potent opportunity to introduce social activity and permeability to the car park.

20. Yska, 2006, p. 205

A Political Context²¹

The political purpose(s) of the Clifton Street Car Park correlates to its position within the Wellington City Council District Plan, which covers strategies and policies of "transport, urban design, heritage, parks and open spaces, and more, delineating future development in the city".²² Accordingly, the Central Area is based upon specific zoning allocations which reinforce an urban 'sense of place'.

The desire of the Wellington City Council to prioritise a high-city/low-city urban structure, a visual transition from The Terrace to the waterfront, has left the Clifton Street Car Park in a political 'no-man's land' (see Figure 4.19).²³ The Terrace forms the backdrop for the 'high-city', leading down to Lambton Quay and Lower Willis Street. It also presents the foothill border for the 'Inner Residential' suburb of Thorndon. In the case of the Clifton Street Car Park, the City Council Design Guides provide little clarity for design as the site is officially located in-between two land-use zones. Importantly, as the *thick edge* has no zoning itself, it becomes either a non-zone typology or needs to be embraced through

< LEFT
Figure 4.18: Wellington Cable Car map highlighting the location of the Clifton Street Car Park site as it relates to the cable car route.

21. For the purposes of scope, political context within this thesis is limited to provisional and planning restriction enforced by governing bodies such as the Wellington City Council.

22. Council, "1.3 The District Plan in Context", 2012

23. Council, "12. Central Area, 2012", p. 13.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.19: land-use zoning plan showing Clifton Street Car Park in a non-designated 'no-man's land', as well as the Kumototo Stream and the Wellington Cable Car

*of example, buildings typically define the edges of public space in the Central Area. This is in contrast to the rest of the city where buildings tend to be surrounded by open space.*²⁴

24. Council, "Central Area Urban Design Guide", 2012.

design as a new inter-zone typology. This informs an imperative for the polycontextual approach of this thesis.

Investigating the “Central Area Design Guide” presents the most likely political intention for the site as it isolates the prominence of the built environment in shaping public space in downtown Wellington:

Building design and appearance has a direct bearing on the visual quality of the public environment and distinctive nature of the Central Area. By way

The guide also provides a number of 'design' specifications that are orientated around context specificity; however, the suggested parameters and design considerations prioritise physical context (height, bulk, form, visual coherency). This approach, although relevant to the *visual* fabric of the city, is severely limited in scope – suggesting that public space is defined by buildings rather than the confluence of cultural interactions that occur between them.

The Design Guide is a broad document that is inherently limited on a site-by-site basis, especially with regards to Clifton Street Car Park. Posing a critique of this, the thesis proposes to engage *critical spatial practices* to test polycontextual approaches, proposing design processes that are relational and flexible. In so doing, this thesis can engage what Nadir Lahiji terms architecture's 'political unconscious',

proposing new solutions for the site through a resistance to the political forces that have defined it (or, in this case, left it ill-defined).²⁵

An Economic Context

Recent debate surrounding Wellington’s economic prosperity has sparked heated and polarising responses – notably the opinion of Prime Minister John Key that it is a ‘dying’ city due to the migration of traditional corporate business to Auckland.²⁶ Emerging from the vitriol, the need for alternative economic sources was identified as a means to revitalise Wellington’s economic frailty – in particular an acknowledgement that Wellington is a

“leading centre for creative industries” and therefore needs to expand upon its knowledge-based economic infrastructures.²⁷ Relating to this economic vision, the Clifton Street Car Park currently poses an inflexibility – a singular economic function that is service-based.

As one of three council-owned car parks in the Wellington city centre (alongside Civic Square and the Michael Fowler Centre car parks), the multi-level facility has both covered and uncovered parks with reserved parking prices ranging from \$225-300 per month.²⁸ There are 562 casual parks, 250 reserved parks and approximately 10 motorbike parks (822 total).²⁹ The park facilitates automobile requirements for offices in the surrounding area, predominantly

Rutherford, 2013; and Parliament, 2013.

27. Council, 2013

28. Council, “Council Owned Car Parks”, 2013.

29. Lawrence, 2013.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.20: Diagram illustrating the economic context of high commercial property value instigated by the privatisation of The Terrace.

KEY: 'Lot Number (legal description): Company/function; capital value; rates.'

- 1 164 (LOT 1 DP 349051 AU68): Montreaux Apartments; \$390,000-840,000; \$1,677.64-\$3,462.12
- 2 158 (LOT 2 DP 52623 - WEDDEL HOUSE): Engineers New Zealand House; \$7,200,000; \$100,812.97
- 3 154 (LOT 2 DP 309308): Atrium Tower Apartments; \$200,000-\$1,475,000; \$2,800.37-\$20,652.65
- 4 138 (LOT 1 DP 52252 - SUBJ TO ROW DP 63127): Domainz Ltd; \$15,000,000; \$59,613.60
- 5 132 (LOT 1 DP 52252 - SUBJ TO ROW DP 63127): Joan Stevens Hall; \$15,000,000; \$59,613.60
- 6 120 (LOT 1 DP 85832): Quest Serviced Apartments; \$235,000-\$280,000; \$1,063.00-\$3,920.50
- 7 114 (LOT 4 DP 10306): The Terrace Conference Centre \$10,500,000; \$147,018.92
- 8 108 (LOT 2 DP 23307): Taupo Central Apartments; \$9,700,000; \$135,817.46
- 9 104 (PART LOT 1 DP 7597 LOT 1 DP 23307 - SCIENZ HOUSE): The Terrace Eye Centre; \$4,800,000; \$67,208.63
- 10 96 (PT LOTS 1 2 DP 12193 - 20 M2 SUBSOIL BUILDING ON ROAD RESERVE): Transpower New Zealand; \$29,400,000; \$411,652.92
- 11 90 (LOT 1 DP 67607): The Terrace Lofts Apartments; \$570,000-\$1,125,000; \$7,981.03-\$15,752.03

A Social Context

Following the Lefebvrian proposition outlined in **Chapter Two**, that space is a socially produced construct, the Clifton Street Car Park presents a confluence of possible publics. The potential of the site as a social space is exemplified by the variety of individuals that exist around this *thick edge* – students, families, business people, homeless persons, tourists (see Figure 4.21). However, the social performance of these individuals is limited by its infill with a distinctly non-social programme – car parking.

Although technically a ‘public’ site, the car park is characteristic of what Dovey refers to as a private-public condition – it can be accessed by multiple publics, yet its interests are distinctly private. Through economic influence, the site performs a reduced social agency – the capacity for individuals to operate within multiple social contexts as a result of the rules and resources projected into a particular space.³³ Dovey, through Lefebvre, argues that architecture frames the social structures of everyday life and is therefore capable of ‘enabling’ or ‘containing’ the production of relations within space. Based upon this understanding, the social context of the Clifton Street Car Park is particularly constrained, relating directly to the conditions proposed by Hillier and Hanson – that in a system dominated by global-to-local structures (in this case the urban imperatives of infrastructure and private development) spatial relations are restricted in a negative faculty.

The existing social context of the Clifton Street Car Park poses an opportunity, not only for critical response(s), but for architectural intervention to enable socio-spatial positivity: to create flow between multiple segregated publics that are primarily ‘pushed out’ by the *thick edge*.

A Physical Context

The Clifton Street Car Park expresses a conflicted past of architectural intervention into the naturally occurring geography, namely the incision of infrastructure and developer-driven built

The Terrace. As such, the Clifton Street Car Park is a commercial asset to the city council, contributing to the \$7,699,000 that the Wellington City Council grossed from public parking July 31st to December 31st 2012. The total revenue from public parking for the 2012/2013 financial year is expected to be \$15,630,000.³⁰ However, according to reporter Katie Chapman, parking occupancy has fallen from 75% to 58% since 2010, the impact of which is visible, noting that “some inner-city car parks popular with commuters, such as the Clifton Terrace car park, were no longer full by 9am”.³¹

Additionally, the car park is positioned next to high-value commercial property that significantly contributes to the identity of The Terrace as Wellington’s financial core. Isolating buildings that are directly adjacent to the site (lot numbers 164-90), reveals capital values that range from \$4.8M to \$29.4M (excluding individual apartment values) (see Figure 4.20) Most of the adjacent buildings function within commercial usage; however, recently many have been converted into high-end apartment complexes as companies shift towards desirable waterfront locations. In stark contrast to this, the legally protected town belt (directly west of the car park) holds no specific commercial value and is considered to be of ‘priceless’ cultural value.

In line with this thesis, David Cunningham argues that the emblematic significance of architectural production as a critical investigation has its immediacy in the “seam it shares with the economic”.³² For Cunningham, through economic re-configurations of sites, architecture can “articulate the existing social tensions” of a particular context, in a subtle gesture, shifting the urban organisation of a site towards the immediacy of the social.³³ Thus, architectural intervention within the singular and infrastructure-based economic context of the Clifton Street Car Park Site must reconfigure the economic relations that currently exist – exposing and *resisting* them – whilst positing a positive ‘reconfiguration’ towards the social.

30. Chapman, 2013.

31. Chapman, 2013

33. Dovey, 2008, p. 19.

32. Cunningham D. , 2007, p. 36. David Cunningham is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Westminster, London.

33. Ibid.

< LEFT

Figure 4.21: range of social publics that have been witnessed engaging within the wider contexts of the Clifton Street Car Park. Clockwise from top left:

Businessman/women from The Terrace; student(s) short-cutting between the CBD and Kelburn; young families from Thorndon; a homeless man who sleeps under the motorway turn-off; and tourists catching the Cable Car

environments. As such, a unique physical landscape has formed, a collection of visual, tactile and structural languages that are in tension with each other.

Typologies and Materiality

Within the wider contexts of the car park, a number of conditions exist that contribute to the physical language of the site; these are:

Typologies and materials of landscape:

Soil/earth, Pohutakawa trees, Kumototo Stream/river, foothills topography, bark.

Typologies and Materials of infrastructure:

Shuttered and boxed concrete, shotcrete retaining walls, landscape re-grading and terracing, ramps,

parking spaces, excavation, brick follies and toilets, circular columns, strong horizontal platforms, concrete stairs.

Typologies and materials of commercial architecture:

Orthogonal moment-frame construction, steel, expansive glass/glazing, strong vertical forms.

Typologies and materials of residential architecture:

Painted timber, ornamental details, gable rooflines, timber-frame construction.

Alongside typology and materiality, the site exhibits clear and imposing *orthogonal order*, a strong visual and physical identity that has been created by the infrastructure.

The existing physical structure of the car park is a complex arrangement of five, vertically stacked, 0.5m thick *horizontal* concrete platforms (used as motorway or parking space) that are supported by a system of 1.50m deep two-way beams. There are sixty-nine 1.10m diameter *vertical* concrete columns that support the platforms and motorway, of varying height. Wedged behind The Terrace and running parallel to the Town Belt, these parking areas provide significant gravity-load bearing platforms for architectural intervention and insertion. Additionally, each datum poses a unique relationship to the surroundings, orientating the user to a multiplicity of perspectives.

Moving east to west across the site, Datum 0 is the entry ground plane that is accessed via Dalmuir and Shell Lanes. It has been re-graded into a gentle south-north slope that finishes in a cul-de-sac (see Figure 4.22). Datum 0 also contributes to the bounded identity of the site as a *thick edge* - it regraded the ground plane into a slightly sunken slope (see Figure 4.23).

Datum's 1 and 2 are stacked vertically on top of the ground plane at varying heights above Datum 0 (3.87m and 14.81m respectively), with almost half of Datum 1 sheltered above by the unfinished Datum 2. Datum 2 is a completely exposed parking platform, connected (although separated by a fence) to the southbound off-ramp which links to The Terrace (see Figure 4.24 & 4.25).

The second (raised) ground level, Datum 3, is 2.2-3.8m above Datum 0 (due to Datum 0's decline), and runs directly underneath the southbound Urban Motorway (Datum 4) which is 12.67m overhead. This volume creates a canopy effect – informing a gigantic interior space, and creating a visceral *verticality* and spatial identity above (see Figure 4.26).

Circulation

There are a number of points of arrival and/or departure that enable or restrict movement through the site. Notably, there are five pedestrian

thresholds that allow access to the site. These are:

Cable Car Stop: This 2-way stop is at the southern boundary of the site, connecting users (down) to Lambton Quay, or (up) to the Everton Terrace (second stop) and the Botanical Gardens (final stop). Everton Terrace is at the heart of the Thorndon inner residential zone. The Botanical Gardens, a popular tourist attraction, are within walking distance of Kelburn University.

Northern Stair: This pedestrian (not disabled) access stair is at the northern boundary of the site. Linking to the pedestrian path that follows the Thorndon section of the Town Belt, this stair leads directly to Bolton Street and the Bolton Street Cemetery.

Rosina Fell Lane: A pedestrian tunnel/underpass, this lane allows access from Lambton Quay via the pedestrian Woodward Street.

Shell Lane: The vehicular entrance to the car park, framed by two high-rise structures, it is a precarious pedestrian arrival/departure point. Visually, the entrance is bisected by the motorway off-ramp overhead.

Dalmuir Lane: The vehicular exit from the car park. This exit, similar to Shell Lane, is a vehicle-orientated threshold. It provides a narrow pedestrian corridor and single footpath.

Within the arrival/departure points of the car park, there are several vertical thresholds running longitudinally along the site. Upon entering from the east, the user moves underneath the Urban Motorway off-ramp and through three levels of parking (Datum 0, 1 and 2). Past this point, the site reveals a cavernous void that occupies another ground level (Datum 3) covered overhead by the southbound Urban Motorway (Datum 4). Between these two zones are several up/down ramps that 'tie' the threshold together. Passing through this threshold exposes the vast expanse of the site that runs parallel to The Terraces of the Greenbelt boundary. The volume between Datums 3 and 4 constitutes one of the largest covered spaces in the city; however, it is

RIGHT >

Figure 4.22: Isometric diagram highlighting: site ground level, Datum 0; access points to site for vehicles and pedestrians; and the remaining footings from the incomplete Phase Two development

RIGHT >

Figure 4.23: Exploded isometric diagram highlighting site as it relates to The Terrace and Town Belt. These two zones inform a visual, physical and zoning 'in-between' condition.

RIGHT FROM TOP >

Figure 4.24: Exploded isometric diagram highlighting site Datum 1, the partially covered main parking platform that spans the longitudinal length of the site.

Figure 4.25: Exploded isometric diagram highlighting site Datum 2, the exposed parking platform that is adjacent to the motorway off-ramp.

Figure 4.26: Exploded isometric diagram highlighting site Urban Motorway (southbound), Datum 4, that forms a canopy above the second ground plane, Datum 3.

not an 'indoor' space – there is no protection from the elements beyond shelter from precipitation. This volume presents one of the strongest physical opportunities for the site, capable of containing large outdoor events, public activity, and/or small buildings capable of supporting such activities. Additionally, this volume forms a strong overhead identity for the site, a large infrastructural canopy (see Figure 4.27).

Infrastructure

Throughout the Urban Motorway and Clifton Street Car Park construction process, intensive excavation and re-grading has flattened, sloped, and terraced the site into an artificial topography. The effects of this are particularly notable on Datums 0 and 3, where the user is in contact with the artificial ground surface. These processes have over-written the contextual histories of the landscape in a *tabula rasa* manoeuvre (the vegetation of Shelly Gully, Kumutoto Stream), informing a relationship between landscape and infrastructure that is dominated by the latter.

Visual Context

The visual context of the Clifton Street Car Park contributes to the typological identity of the site. Similar to the physical context, the visual constructs the 'image' of the site as an architectural place (explored in **Section Two**). For the purposes of this thesis, the visual context is considered as a montage – a series of images that are framed by the physical structure (typology and materiality).

When considering the visual context, it is relevant to analyse the Clifton Street Car Park from five montage-based perspectives based upon common circulations within and through the site:

The Entrance Alleys

The Underground Path

The Cable Car

The Northern Stair

Thorndon/Bolton Streets

< LEFT

Figure 4.27: Photograph looking south from underneath the spatial volume created between Datums 3 and 4 by the motorway above. The excavated terraces can be seen to the right. Datum 's 1 and 2 can be seen to the left.

Each perspective follows common circulation routes into, through, and out of the site. They show the various typologies, materials, scales and proportions of the existing context.

Additionally, visual analysis attempts to encapsulate social interaction as relating to the site. As such, the five perspectives provided in this chapter are based upon movements of various publics witnessed by the author engaging with the context(s) of the car park in its various dimensions. Within each visual montage, one particular image has been isolated by the author and emphasised. These images relate to the framed threshold points of arrival/departure, framing the visual transition of publics into the site. These perspectives are presented in figures 4.28-4.78.

Visual Perspective 1: The entrance alleys

Tuesday 22/05/2012, 1:37pm

RIGHT, FROM TOP >
Figure 4.28: Isometric diagram showing the path followed by visual perspective 1 - beginning in the PWC building, level 8, and finishing at a car park on Datum 1.

Figure 4.29: technical site plan showing the path (1-1') followed that explores visual perspective 1 in montage.

< LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT
Figure 4.30-4.33: Photographic
montage of visual perspective
1. The Clifton Street Car Park
(visible in the background
of 4.30) appears in flashes
from The Terrace. The strong
orthogonal verticality of the
high rise buildings imposes on
the figure, framing publics at
ground level.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.34: Photograph
of threshold arrival point.
The horizontal datums of
the car park are framed by
the adjacent verticality of
the high-rise buildings. The
visual combination of these
two structures is a strong
orthogonality and rigidity that is
larger than human scale.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT >
Figure 4.35-4.38: Photographic
montage of visual perspective
1 (continued). The orthogonal
rigity and artifical materiality is
continued upon entering the
car park

Visual Perspective 2: Underground path Sunday 4/10/2012, 3:51pm

RIGHT, FROM TOP >

Figure 4.39: isometric diagram showing the path followed by visual perspective 2 - beginning at the intersection of Lambton Quay and Woodward Street and finishing on the (empty) Datum 1.

Figure 4.40: technical site plan showing the path (2-2') followed that explores visual perspective 2 in montage.

< LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT

Figure 4.41-4.44: Photographic montage of visual perspective 2. The Clifton Street Car Park can be accessed via an underground path that connects to Woodward Street. The verticality of The Terrace is emphasised further in this perspective as circulation is residually positioned around the buildings.

RIGHT >

Figure 4.45: Photograph of threshold arrival point at the northern end of the site. The horizontal datums of the car park are framed by the adjacent verticality of the high-rise buildings. The visual combination of these two structures is a strong orthogonality with a visually empty space between them. The infrastructure has clearly ‘cut’ through the site.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT >

Figure 4.46-4.49: Photographic montage of visual perspective 2 (continued). The unusual elements of the site (leftover footings, the cable car) become apparent when the car park is empty.

Visual Perspective 3: Cable Car Sunday 03/12/2012, 1:45pm

RIGHT, FROM TOP >

Figure 4.50: Isometric diagram showing the path followed by visual perspective 3 - taking the Wellington Cable Car from its Lambton Quay ticket office to the Kelburn lookout.

Figure 4.51: Technical site plan showing the path (3-3') followed that explores visual context 3 in montage.

< LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT
Figure 4.52-4.55: Photographic
montage of visual perspective
3. The Clifton Street Car Park
can be accessed via the
Wellington Cable Car. This is
a popular tourist attraction,
particularly in the summer
months.

RIGHT >
Figure 4.56: Photograph taken
from cable car of threshold
arrival point at the southern
end of the site. The cable
car stops directly adjacent
to the large volume of space
between Datum 3 and Datum
4. This space presents a
strong opportunity to shelter
spatial practices and publics.
However, in the site's current
state as a 'thick edge' this
potentiality is not perceived
as a positive; rather it is
occupied by a singular car park
programme.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT >
Figure 4.57-4.60: Photographic
montage of visual perspective
3 (continued). The cable
car connects to the Kelburn
University campus as well as
the popular lookout point
which exhibits a panorama of
the cityscape.

Visual Perspective 4: Northern Stair

Thursday 03/04/2012, 8:45pm

RIGHT, FROM TOP >

Figure 4.61: Isometric diagram showing the path followed by visual perspective 4 - a view from the northern stair during the night

Figure 4.62: Technical site plan showing the path (4-4') followed that explores visual perspective 4 in montage

RIGHT >

Figure 4.63: Photograph taken from the northern stair in the evening. This threshold shows the relationship between the large, open but sheltered, volume underneath the motorway and the greenbelt (to the right). Additionally, the strong orthogonality of the site is re-iterated to the left, framed by The Terrace (vertically) and Datums 0, 1 and 2 (horizontally).

Visual Perspective 5: Thorndon/Bolton Street

Saturday 05/04/2012, 1:45pm

RIGHT, FROM TOP >

Figure 4.64: Isometric diagram showing the path followed by visual perspective 5 - the greenbelt path that follows parallel to the car park and connects the Thorndon suburb to the Bolton Street Cemetery.

Figure 4.65: technical site plan showing the path (5-5') followed that explores visual perspective 5 in montage.

< LEFT, PRECEDING THREE
PAGES, CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT ON EACH PAGE

Figure 4.66-4.77: photographic
montage of visual perspective
5. The Clifton Street Car Park is
historically and visually linked
to the Boloton Street Cemetery.
Additionally, the Urban
Motorway creates a distinct
visual and physical barrier
between the Thorndon Suburb
and The Terrace.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, a polycontextual analysis of the Clifton Street Car Park has revealed essential information that informs the strategies and critical framework for the design case study. Investigating the urban problem and specific site of research from this lens has opened the design process to the possibilities of a context-based criticality. In so doing, the resultant design case study will resist the notion that architectural practice should exist as purely pragmatic and innovation-based (the post-critical position), or dislocated from cultural concerns (the absolutely autonomous position).

Additionally, a thorough site analysis in the design process - including wider contextual implications for architectural design - reveals negative implications of, and opportunities for, the urban *thick edge* condition of the car park. Consequently, the specific conditions that have shaped the literal and figurative rigidity of the Clifton Street Car Park have been isolated

Information gathered from an analysis of the *urbanised, historical, economic, political, social, physical* and *visual* contexts of the site will perform as generators for design solutions through a test of *critical spatial practices*.

Following the argument, research, and opportunities outlined in **Chapter's Two, Three and Four, Section Two** mediates this information through the framework of *critical spatial practices* to elucidate strategies for how design can be used to resolve the contemporary research problem of the urban *thick edge* condition.

2

MEDIATING

For design, it [context] is a mode of conceptual operation, a process of knowledge formation. More than simply amassing and organizing facts, figures, and impressions of a given condition, the descriptions and analyses that designers produce actually generate the knowledge necessary to engage a given condition as a site. Site representation is not a matter of getting a reality right as much as a matter of constructing forms of knowledge that can cope with multiple realities.¹

Andrea Kahn

A different sense of place is being theorized, no longer passive, no longer fixed, no longer undialectical... but, still, in a very real sense about location and locatedness.²

Michael Keith and Steve Pile

1. Kahn, 2005, pp. 288-289.
Andrea Kahn is Professor of Urban Planning and Preservation, Colombia University.

2. Keith & Pile, 1993, p. 5.
Michael Keith is Professor of Media and Communication at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Boston College; and Steve Pile, Professor of Human Geography (Geography) in the Faculty of Social Sciences at The Open University

In **Section One** of this thesis, two problems (and therefore two opportunities) have been established: in relation to critical theory, architecture has been misled to a crisis of criticality, a crisis that can be averted through a flexible critical approach; and in relation to systems of twentieth century urbanisation, driven by singular motivations and new infrastructure that is not responsive to existing urban contextual conditions, have created conditions of spatial inequality and negativity – *thick edges* – that inhibit meaningful contextual flows through these sites that are necessary for urban social engagement. This section looks to address these conditions, as they exist at the Clifton Street Car Park, through Jane Rendell's framework of *critical spatial practices*.

Based on these understandings, **Section Two** focuses the thesis on elucidating specific strategies for architectural design - as the relate to *critical spatial practices* - strategies that open the design case study to processes that are *site-specific*, *socio-spatial* and *temporal* in their critique. Thus, Chapter's Five, Six and Seven in this section examine Rendell's framework in further detail, engaging the design process in specific theoretical and architectural applications of *critical spatial practices*. Consequently, this section mediates between the themes put forth by Rendell and the

potential for architectural intervention to engender the Clifton Street Car Park to operate as a critical 'place', with the directive of mediating between the discursive framing and the design test.

As is suggested by its phrasing, the proposition of 'space' is crucial to the framework of *critical spatial practices*. In light of this, it is of particular importance to introduce **Section Two** by briefly elaborating on its use since the spatial turn by Rendell - in particular how it has effected architectural notions of place and how this relates the identity of Clifton Street Car Park as a contextually impermeable *thick edge*.

Traditionally architectural space has been conceived as Cartesian, *absolute* and abstract, coinciding with its use in planning and architectural practices relative to the identity of a particular site. This notion of how space is conceived is thought to be the geographic 'reality' – real space within which phenomena such as people, objects, and positions, exist.³ As such, *absolute* space in architectural discourse follows three assumptions: space can be represented; space can be seen; and, concordantly, space can be designed.⁴ Under these prescriptions, the complexities of *site* and *context* are viewed as an abstract totality – distancing the architect from

3. Lefebvre, 1991, p. 361.

4. Lehtovuori, 2010, p. 20.

conditions that are external to the contingent (often cadastral) bounds of a project. Treatment of space as an abstract and absolute condition has stubbornly shaped the built environment of many Western centres, rendering focus on the boundaries and zoning of sites according to a limited range of attributes. Alternatively, Lefebvre's redefinition of space as a social construct - rather than simply as *absolute* and Cartesian - is crucial, and has subsequently initiated debates around the identity and politics of 'place'.⁵

5. Massey, 1993, p. 141.

'Place' as an architectural principle gained currency as a disciplinary topic between 1970 and 1990, and has primarily relied upon ontological definitions of dwelling. In such cases, the primary

Rather than treating place as an order or a specified and absolute structure, de Certeau suggests that it is an ordering *system* – where social and spatial practices operate as ordering activities that realise the various possibilities of a site.

motivations for defining a place are experiential – phenomenologically tied to our sensuous interactions with space – embodying experience as a connecting mechanism between the 'being' and the 'world'.⁶ These explorations have frequently been criticised for their nostalgic attachment to bygone concepts of 'community', related to romantic ideas such as the 'harmonious village' and the 'hut', notions that are considered redundant in the current urban landscape.⁷ However, this earlier conviction of place has forged the genesis of its use and has since been hijacked in popular architectural discourse, referring to a desire for certain characteristics to (often) identify whole regions:

Wellington's success as a city relates closely to its sense of place. Wellington has a dramatic setting, is compact, and has good public transport. It is at the centre of the nation and is the national capital. It will have distinctive and beautiful buildings connected by high-quality public spaces

*and recognise the legacy of the past through the protection and conservation of its natural and cultural heritage.*⁸

8. Council, "Profile of Wellington", 2013.

As the Wellington City Council identifies, place in this setting is tied intrinsically to the image of the city – its geography and cosmetic appeal. Lefebvre sees this appropriation of 'place' as removed from the lived practises of everyday life; devoid of social depth. In "Right to the City", he contends that politicised definitions of place are problematic as they implicate the right to appropriation, how place is defined holistically.⁹ This is evidenced in the lack of definition presented by the Wellington City Council for the Clifton Street Car Park. The *thick edge* displays characteristics that are antithetical to positive place-notations in this sense, and therefore defy definition in a superficial use of the term.

9. Lefebvre, 1996.

In light of Lefebvre's critique, anthropologist Michel de Certeau has argued for a definition of place that shifts focus away from simply visual character, and towards a definition that is essentially cultural, social and 'practised'. For de Certeau, identities of a particular 'place' are continually constructed and reconstructed through human actions in everyday life; they are *relational* insofar as they are understood *contextually*.¹⁰ For de Certeau, as traditional descriptions of place become increasingly defined through strategies of power and institutional forces, such as governance and commercial enterprise, possibilities and opportunities for *resistance* appear. In such situations, specific sites (such as *thick edges*) become exposed to 'tactics' of subversion and critical interventions.¹¹ Additionally, relational places, according to de Certeau, are inherently intertwined to the performance of various publics within them:

10. See: de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984.

11. Dovey, 2008, p. 52.

*Space is a practised place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e.: a place constituted by a system of signs...[I]n relation to place, space is like the word when it is spoken, that is when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization.*¹²

12. de Certeau, 1984, p. 117.

6. See: Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Bachelard, 1969 and Norberg-Schulz, 1980.

7. Dovey, 2008, p. 53.

Thus, rather than treating place as an order or a specified and absolute structure, de Certeau suggests that it is an ordering *system* – where social and spatial practices operate as activities that realise the various possibilities of a specific location. This definition of place is performative – requiring the actions of individuals to initiate it, epitomised in the activities of occupying the public environment (performing as publics). Even according to de Certeau’s proposition of place, the immediate context of the Clifton Street Car Park denies positive engagement. Crucially however, the surrounding contexts of the car park are fertile with social and cultural activity and history that is currently being isolate by the impermeability of the *thick edge*.

Extending upon this definition, anthropologist Marc Augé illustrates a counter-position: the concept of ‘non-places’. Augé’s thesis documents the fleeting and fragmented notion of place as it is transformed by an increasing velocity of modernisation noting that, “if a place can be defined as *relational, historical* and concerned with *identity*, then a space which cannot be identified as relational, historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place”[emphases added].¹³ In this environment non-places are realised by rapidly travelling *through* de Certeau’s places – experienced in a montage of sites and locations:

*Space, as frequentation of ‘places’ rather than a place, stems in effect from a double movement: the traveller’s movement, of course, but also a parallel movement of the landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of ‘snapshots’ piled hurriedly into his memory and, literally, recomposed in the account he gives of them.*¹⁴

Non-places are ungrounded, and de-contextualized. They represent the desires of modernity taken to the extreme – a form of ‘supermodernity’. Unlike de Certeau’s places, Augé’s non-places can be readily identified, formed by singular motivations – whether that be transport, leisure, transit etc., and are characterised (but not completely defined by) locations such as motorways, airports, shopping malls and other supermodern

homogenous spaces. Non-places attempt to form a global monopoly of place, one that threatens the uniqueness of context through spatial, social and formal homogenisation.

The polarising spectrum of place/non-place is tied directly to the tensions between globalised and local cultures. In the twenty-first century, local/global tensions have become embedded in all places – placing an end to the ‘closure’ of the nostalgic local place, yet ‘exposing’ it to the inauthentic notions of dwelling in an increasingly global commodity culture.¹⁵ Recognising this point, and based upon the identity politics of sociologist Anthony Giddens, this thesis posits that critical architectures must identify disparity in the dialectic between the *places* of everyday social activity and the *spaces* of global production, calling attention to, and *resisting* the myopia of decontextualized architectural practices.¹⁶

Place-making thus takes on a mediating framework, “a collagist character; a collision of practices and images rather than one narrative replacing another”.¹⁷ Such an approach gives the experience of a particular place “a phantasmagoric character wherein the global and local, the familiar and the strange become inextricably intertwined”.¹⁸ *Critical spatial practices* must therefore look to resist ‘politicised’ and appropriated place descriptions that require architects to gloss over spatial inequalities – such as the *thick edge* conditions of urban space.

Following the logic of de Certeau and Augé, the Clifton Street Car Park expresses a disjunction, a disparity, in the tensions between the global and the local – it is rigidly global in its context. Its identifiable characteristics are therefore closer to an Augéian non-place, *resisting* the performative character and contextually relational identity of a de Certeauian place

Importantly, for Rendell this adaptation of place opens certain contexts to critical responses in architectural practice; “it is the ongoing redefinitions of space and place in cultural geography that open up discussions of the differences between such terms as site and context”.¹⁹ By introducing perspectives

15. This point is put forth by sociologist and critical theorist, David Harvey. See: Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, 1996.

16. Dovey, 2008, p. 54.

17. Dovey, 2008, p. 53.

18. Giddens, 1991.

14. Ibid, p. 86.

13. Augé, 2008 [1995], p. 48.

from cultural disciplines, Rendell is opening the modes through which architecture can pose critical responses beyond its own autonomy – producing a certain discursive flexibility.

Additionally, for Rendell, critical practices positioned within the place/non-place spectrum initiate a set of mediating processes:

Here/there (site-specific)

One/another (socio-spatial)

Now/then (temporal)

These themes construct a notion of place as *both* social *and* locational; a practice of place-making that is capable of exposing, and embedding the multiplicity of dimensions in Clifton Street Car Park through

20. Ibid, p. 19. *critical spatial practices*.²⁰

Critical architectures resist ‘politicised’ and appropriated place descriptions that require architects to gloss over spatial inequalities – such as the *thick edge* conditions of urban space.

This thesis develops Rendell’s framework by exploring *critical spatial practices* through three key influences: Nick Kaye, Kim Dovey, and Gevork Hartoonian – providing critical positions for *site-specific*, *socio-spatial* and *temporal* architectural intervention that overlap, at times even contradict. Approaching design-research in this manner allows for a critical flexibility – a framework that will implicate the wider contexts of the Clifton Street Car Park in the design process, polycontextually opening the *thick edge*.

Elucidating strategies for design from Rendell’s framework, Kaye, Dovey and Hartoonian are translated through architectural case studies. Each case study focuses on different architectural strategies that critically engage a variety of contexts in the built environment. These strategies implicate *critical spatial practices* in the architectural design process. As such, they are not limited to sites of infrastructure, *thick*

edges or specific programmes; rather, they embody the manifestation of the theoretical foundations of this thesis, particularly how such strategies can inform critical design processes that respond to *thick edges* such as the Clifton Street Car Park.

Based upon these findings, **Section Two** concludes by investigating and establishing a critical programme for the site – that of a performing arts facility. An exemplary client, the New Zealand International Arts Festival, is established and analysed providing supplementary parameters for the design case study and concluding with a design-research brief. Combined with the strategies for design through *critical spatial practices*, this programme will contribute to the outcomes of the design research.

This section addresses the following research questions:

- How do *critical spatial practices* manifest in the built environment, in particular through strategies of architectural design? How can these strategies engage with a polycontextual approach to the urban *thick edge*?
- Can the implementation of architectural programme facilitate the development of critical design intervention within the *thick edge*?

EXPANDING SITE AS CRITICAL PRACTICE:

Elucidating Strategies for a Site-specific Practice

Introduction

Between 'Here' and 'There': Continuity and
Discontinuity Through Site-specific Strategies

Bernard Tschumi's Discontinuity: An Anti-
contextual Approach

Enric Miralles's Continuity: A Contextual
Approach

Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for
Design

On the one hand, all social (and indeed physical) phenomenal activities/relations have a spatial form and a relative spatial location: the relations that bind communities, whether they be 'local' societies or worldwide organizations... 'Space' is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global.'

Doreen Massey

1. Massey, 1993, pp. 155-156.
Doreen Massey is Emeritus Professor of Geography and Sociaology at the Open University

Introduction

As Massey notes above, the spatial turn has provoked a relational understanding of space (and its relationship to place) that is intrinsically linked to the contextual dimensions of location. In **Chapter Four** a polycontextual understanding of one such location, the Clifton Street Car Park, was established. Accordingly, for Rendell, the properties of a given site (such as the car park) are bound by a dual definition: a geographic location, (an un-zoned cadastral parcel of land at 132 The Terrace); and a place condition (a *thick edge* that is closer in identity to that of a non-place). Informing the framework of *critical spatial practices*, Rendell suggests that sites can be reconfigured according to this definition as both 'here' (a site, specific) and 'there' (a wider cultural location, or context(s)), allowing architectural intervention to construct a critical dialogue through its relationship to site as a geography (position), and its placement within its contextual relations (location).

Expanding further upon Rendell's framework, this chapter looks to engage these two dimensions of 'site' as a potentially critical construct - elucidating strategies for design through site-specific practices. Here, the work of Nick Kaye is of particular importance, examining the notion of site as a performative index - an idea that has been shaped by disciplines such as land art and geography. For Kaye performative strategies challenge traditional relationships between architecture and site that engage a location as cadastrally bounded and static. Performative interventions positively destabilize these rigid approaches to site by 'acting

out' contextual information, constructing a site-specific index of referents, traces and events. These indices adopt the form of dual metaphors, creating a dialogue of *continuity* or *discontinuity* between the architecture and its context - strategies that reveal information that may confirm or critique the identity of a particular place.

Two architectural interventions emerge as relevant case studies in the discussion of performative sites: the Parc de la Villette (1982-1983) by Bernard Tschumi; and the Igualada Cemetery by Enric Miralles (1994). Analysing how strategies of *continuity* and *discontinuity* are deployed through architectural design within these case studies reveals crucial translations of *critical spatial practices* within the built environment. As a result, this chapter posits that performative strategies reveal an opportunity for *critical spatial practices*: to explore an inversion of the Clifton Street Car Park *thick edge* condition by introducing wider contexts into the process of design intervention.

In so doing, this chapter adds to Rendell's framework and mediates between the theoretical framings of **Section One**, and the design case study in **Section Three**; engaging the fourth research question:

How can *critical spatial practices* manifest in the built environment, in particular through strategies of architectural design? How can these strategies engage multiple contexts to introduce positive flows to the urban *thick edge*?

Continuity and Discontinuity: Performative Sites

‘Site’: substantive. Local position. The place or position occupied by some specified thing. Frequently implying original or fixed position

‘Site’: 1. transitive. To locate, to place. 2. Intransitive. To be situated or placed.²

2. Kaye, 2000, p. 8. See also: Onions, 1973

In *Site Specific Art* Nick Kaye, Dean of the College of Humanities and Professor of Performance Studies at the University of Exeter, provides a key analysis of critical approaches to the notion of site-specificity. As Kaye identifies above, on the one hand a site is frequently defined relative to an understanding of position - a straightforward entity contained by boundaries that delimit it from the surroundings, implying a ‘fixed position’; and on the other hand, as an identity-based location - a place in which its meanings are defined. In many cases, urban planners and architects reduce the definition of site to the strict delineation of cadastral limits (its position) - reducing the notion of site to the first definition as a simple classification of metes and bounds.³

3. This is evident in the Wellington City Council’s designation of the Clifton Street Car Park ‘site’ as non-designated

Kaye proposes critical “strategies which work against assumptions and stabilities of site and location”, and which offer a context of practices that resist or expose the “underlying concept of site”.⁴ In this sense, site-specific practices will not only critically engage the particularities of a certain location, but, also the very notion of what a site *is* and can *do* (as it is portrayed within architectural discourse).⁵

4. Kaye, 2000, p. 9.

5. Interventions that question normative site definitions may be incongruent with the perception of a place by many – a fact exemplified by the controversy surrounding site-specific works such as Richard Serra’s ‘Tilted Arc’ (1981) and Maya Lin’s ‘Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial’ (1982). Both of these sculptures are considered highly site-specific, with Serra noting that ‘to move the work is to destroy the work’. After much public outcry regarding its visual relationship to its location, ‘Tilted Arc’ was removed from its site within a year of its erection. See: Senie, 2002.

This approach to site as a critical construct, emerged within architecture from the influence of wide-ranging examinations of site conducted by art practices throughout the 1970s, particularly in land art and sculpture. Works by Robert Smithson, Richard Serra, Mary Miss and Gordon Matta-Clark began to expand the definition of site in art practice as no longer confined to the gallery system (see Figure 5.2).⁶ These experiments were crucial to architectural discourse as they introduced an argument of site as dynamic, responsive, and a contextual presence within the work. Rosalyn Deutsche argues that these works explore the expression of spatial intervention through

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Figure 5.2: Photograph of Richard Serra’s ‘Tilted Arc’ (1981) before it was removed from its site, Foley Federal Plaza, New York City

6. (Prev.) For a further investigation of this impasse see Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field”, 1979.

the very processes by which they are themselves being deployed, and as a result:

*broadened the concept of site to embrace not only the aesthetic context of a work’s exhibition but the site’s symbolic, social and political meanings as well as the historical circumstances which artwork, spectator and place are situated.*⁷

7. (Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, 1996, p. 162)

Intended in this way, site-specific practices become essentially ‘performative’, inscribing (and inscribed with) layers of contextual knowledge within the place/non-place spectrum. Performative sites are built upon relations of *continuity* and *discontinuity* between intervention and site; they ‘act out’ the relations of their locations, their contexts, in a perpetual state of constructing a place/non-place. A performative site can act out this role in a state of exposure or resistance according to its position on the place/non-place spectrum – ‘troubling’ expectations as to what a site can and should be:

*It is in such contexts that site-specific art frequently works to trouble the oppositions between the site and the work. It is in this troubling of oppositions, too, that visual art and architecture’s approaches to site realise or may be read through the terms of performance.*⁸

8. Kaye, 2000, p. 13.

For Kaye, performative interventions ignite this critical opportunity by embedding a particular

9. Krauss, 1977

10. Berrizbeitia & Pollak, 1999. See also: Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America. Part 2", 1977, p. 59.

11. The concept that an architectural object as a sign is related to its reception as a signified (symbol) has been destabilised in the works of (amongst others) Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. See: Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976; and Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1972

RIGHT

Figure 5.3: Photographic montage of 'Cibachrome', Gordon Matta-Clark (1977).

In Matta-Clark's spatial practice, place-making is created through strategies of 'cutting' and 'tracing'. The architecture thus becomes an index that 'acts out' cuts and traces as a double-metaphor.

These works destabilise the architectural definition of specific locations (house, factory, wall, floor), critically engaging normative definitions of a site as fixed and static.

location with an index of place/non-place operations, a language that creates dialogue between the site and its context. An index in this sense refers to a "type of sign which arises as the physical manifestation of a cause, of which traces, imprints, and clues are examples".⁹ As an index, a performative site becomes 'unfixed', informing a relational specificity through a 'field' of architectural signs.¹⁰ As an index of wider contextual dimensions, the performative site is composed of a series of referents, records of events and traces that seek to undermine the idea that there is any one-to-one relationship between an architectural object and its symbolic meaning.¹¹ Rather, a performative site acts out by *doing*, by colliding the signifier of an architectural element with its function (see Figure 5.3). A performative index, Kaye argues, creates a 'place-event'. A place-event is a field of relations

where a "series of interlinked narrative and formal structures, 'architecture' and 'event' are invested one within the other" through strategies that aim to 'upset' the boundaries and conditions of a site.¹² Architecturally, two projects display critical strategies for performative sites in opposing ways – as an index of *discontinuity*, and of *continuity*.

Bernard Tschumi's Discontinuity: An Anti-contextual Approach

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Figure 5.4: Photograph of The 'City of Culture of Galicia', Eisenman Architect's (2013).

Even Peter Eisenman's most recent projects have displayed performative characteristics that are beyond the confines of pure autonomy. This is evident in the City of Culture where Eisenman has created a superimposed site 'collage' on the buildings surface. This collage contains archaeological referents - large traces of streets and alleys (historical context); and a superimposed grid, a Modernist logic.

An example of a performative approach to site, operating through strategies of *discontinuity*, is Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette (1982-83). An 'Urban Park for the twenty-first century' that occupies a large site within the 19th arrondissement on the northeast side of Paris, Parc de la Villette is an attempt to develop a critical relationship between architecture, its site and its use (see Figure 5.5).¹³ The site, consisting of pre-existing structures such as a Museum of Science and Industry, a City of Music, and a Grande Halle for exhibitions and concerts, already expressed a clearly localised environment of social activity and architectural identity with respect to its cultural context (see Figure 5.6). Thus, for Tschumi, a critical intervention required the implementation of architectural elements that perform a *discontinuity* between each site and its wider context:

Thus in rejecting the imposition of 'a masterly construction', a compliment to the pre-existing structures, or a deconstruction of previous architectural definitions of site, Tschumi sought to deploy an 'abstract mediation' between the site and the project's 'programme' or 'list of required utilities'.¹⁴

13. Ibid, p. 47.

14. Ibid, p. 49.

OPPOSITE>
Figure 5.5: Aerial map highlighting Parc de La Villette located in the 19th arrondissement of Paris.

KEY:

1. Museum of Science and Industry
2. La Géode
3. Canal Saint-Martin
4. Zenith de Paris
5. Grande Halle
6. Cité de la Musique

< OPPOSITE

Figure 5.6: Aerial map showing cultural context of the site; site boundary; and imposed grid of folies

RIGHT >

Figure 5.7: Exploded isometric of Tschumi's applied ordering system to the site - through surfaces, points and lines.

Tschumi's process begins with the application of an abstract system of points, lines, and surfaces that impose a strict order across the entire park. By applying a rigidly logical order, Tschumi is creating a language of *discontinuity* between the grid and the site "the park became architecture against itself: a disintegration for the addition of the systems' internal coherences is not coherent (see Figure 5.7). The excess of rationality is not rational".¹⁵

15. Tschumi, 1987, p. 8.

Tschumi's ordering system imposes the grid onto the park and creates its index of collisions - serving the purpose of exposing events and moments that emerge where this index and the site meet (see Figure 5.8). These collisions manifest architecturally as 'folies' - unconventionally imposing on the existing site wherever they are forced to meet - rather than embodying any form of specific contextual reference (see Figure 5.9). In the folies, Tschumi is playing on the dual definition of the word - in English as a 'house of spectacle', or entertainment value; and in French as a form of insanity or madness. Madness provides the performative metaphor for the index across the site, 'acting out' the title of the work (referring to the

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Figure 5.8: aerial photograph showing the imposed index across the site - the structures collide with the existing in an anti-contextual strategy

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Figure 5.9: photograph showing a point of collision between one of Tschumi's 'folies' and the park - the folie is coincidentally located in the Canal Saint-Martin

irrational rationality of the imposed grid) and as the 'irrationality' of the 'anti-contextual' imposition of the folies. Through this index, the folies are expressing the critical intentions of the architect - an approach to the overall site as an index of referents that are both *in* and *of* madness.

Consequently, the motivations of Tschumi's performativity informs his site-specificity - his aim (as one of the figureheads of Hays's late avant-garde) is to push architecture's disciplinarity to its borders - to explore the production of architecture dislocated from the influence of its cultural context. At the time of its construction this entailed a focus of 'deconstructing' the relation between architecture as a discipline unto itself, and architecture as deployed within the social events of space. By 'upsetting' or 'deconstructing' the perception of these relations, Tschumi's "site-specificity is intimately tied to notions of event"; he creates an anti-thesis to Kaye's place event, an index of anti-place events.¹⁶

The collision spaces of Tschumi's folies create a system of anti-context, of event and *discontinuity* (what Tschumi refers to as disjunction), through

16. Kaye, 2000, pp. 46-47.

operations of typology, materiality, composition/ order. They physically and visually contrast the soft landscape contexts of the park - starkly orthogonal, bright red and highly polished in their materiality and construction; arranged across the site in a purposefully unnatural and imposed fashion (see Figure 5.10) - the intention of which is to create a language, a physical and visual dialogue that subverts the existing identity of the site as a tourist-focused park, and to create a 'logic of materials' and forms that subvert expectations.¹⁷ For Tschumi the *grid* is a crucial operation in the construction of this dialogue as it presented the design process with a series of dynamic negotiations, dialectic oppositions:

17. Tschumi, 1994, p. 252.

RIGHT >
Figure 5.10: Photograph showing a point of collision between one of Tschumi's 'folies' and the park - the folie is visually, physically, and historically discontinuous with the existing context - it is anti-contextual.

*We had to design a park: the grid was anti-nature. We had to fulfil a number of functions: the grid was anti-functional. We had to be realists: the grid was abstract. We had to respect the local context: the grid was anti-contextual. We had to be sensitive to site boundaries: the grid was infinite.*¹⁸

18. Tschumi, 1987, p. 6.

Tschumi's work does not de-contextualise its site, it is *anti-contextual* – aiming to destabilise the proposition of site as a context, and to create 'mobility' between events that may or may not occur at the *folies* (see Figure 5.11). As a result, the Parc de la Villette projects a certain contextual negativity; it "aims at an architecture that means nothing" one that is "pure trace or play of language".¹⁹ For Tschumi, site-specificity at the Parc de la Villette is a *resistance* to the notion of context itself and thus opens itself to a "multiplicity of meanings" through location and place as sites of events.

19. Ibid, p. 8.

In relation to the Clifton Street Car Park Tschumi's design for Parc de la Villette is both useful and problematic. Identifying the site as a performative index, Tschumi engages architectural design strategies of *discontinuity* as they relate to order, composition, typology and materiality, offering the orthogonality of the grid as a "paradigmatic twentieth-century form".²⁰ These processes are referenced in the overlaid index of folies and in the composition of the folies themselves. Thus Tschumi's processes are crucial to the communication and formation of the design as an overall system (index) and for its individual parts. His *discontinuity* informs the locus of critique - his *resistance* to the context of the park as a cultural identity and place.

20. (Ibid)

< LEFT
Figure 5.11: Photograph showing a point of collision between one of Tschumi's 'folies' and the park - the folie creates anti-thesis to what Kaye refers to as a place-event.

In spite of its 'anti-contextual' approach, the Parc de la Villette is unavoidably implicating context. The construction methods of the folies are a reference to the rationality of Modernism, a notion also referred to through his use of the colour red (a reference to the Constructivist design movement). The folies are axiomatically grounded in precedent, and all of the cultural connotations that are associated with them. As a result, rather than producing a complete *anti-context*, the Parc de la Villette is providing a polarising *resistance*, a *discontinuity* that responds to the existing physical, visual and historic contexts of the site and its relationship to the architecture as a constructed intervention. Thus, Tschumi's anti-contextual approach is paradoxically polycontextual in its *discontinuity*.

Designing site-specifically, and critically, within the polycontextual landscape of the Clifton

Street Car Park, however, requires an opposing process to that of Tschumi. The physical context of the site already exhibits forms of 'irrational rationality' as the infrastructure has carved an ordering system of orthogonal horizontal and vertical elements throughout. Applying Tschumi's logic at Parc de la Villette to this site would only contribute to an exacerbation of the existing physical, visual and historic issues that have contributed to the negativity of the *thick edge*.

Therefore a critical design approach will be to adopt a strategy of site-specific *discontinuity*, following Tschumi, *with the elements of infrastructure* – with the orthogonal grids and rigid logics of their construction. It will *perform* this through materiality, composition, and typology, in an opposing trajectory to Tschumi – with the intention of engaging context(s) rather than destabilising them.

Enric Miralles's Continuity: A Contextual Approach

Offering alternative strategies (through *continuity*) to Tschumi for the design of a performative site is Enric Miralles's Igualada Cemetery (1994). Located in the outskirts of Barcelona, the Igualada Cemetery is an experimental approach to the relations between architecture and site through its historic al physical and visual identity (see Figure 5.12). The site, an abandoned quarry located within a rough and deeply eroded river valley, has no adjacent commercial or housing areas, isolating it from any adjacent urban context. As a result, the critical intention of Miralles is to engage the identity of the site as a naturally occurring landscape that has been traumatically altered through man-made processes.

Following Kaye, and aligning in contraposition with Tschumi, the cemetery presents an attempt to construct a language – or series of contextual dialogues – across the site. The design engages its contexts through a critical lens of *continuity*, one that, according to Anatxu Zabalbeascoa, "engages with the pre-existing history of the site by combining a variety of elements from the disciplines of landscape design, architecture, urban design, sculpture, and land

art". In so doing, Miralles's design approach *resists* the proposition that site is a fixed or stable spatial entity:²¹

21. Zabalbeascoa, 1996, p. 14.

*At the Igualada Cemetery, a space is provided that allows a multiplicity of ways of viewing and using the architecture... [T]he site becomes a place of interaction – architecture as living art to which the user can personally and physically relate.*²²

22. Ibid, p.24.

For Miralles, the intervention of architecture required a strategy of *continuity* with the site (as it existed at the time of the design) that performs as an index of 'grounding', through processes of embedding and excavation. This index follows a linear path, unlike Tschumi's grid, terraced at two different levels, and organised by several architectural gestures/coordinates (see Figure 5.13). The entrance to the

Following Kaye, and aligning in contraposition with Tschumi, the cemetery presents an attempt to construct a language– or series of contextual dialogues - across the site.

(main) lower terrace is marked with sculptural steel totems that signify an arrival/departure threshold (see Figure 5.14), followed by a series of vertically stacked *loculi*, or 'niches' - burial areas that guide the visitor through the cemetery and are embedded into The Terrace face (see Figure 5.15). The progression finishes with a cul-de-sac of mausoleums, retained by gabion walls (see Figure 5.15). This linear ordering system informs a 'social landscape' within which the design is located.²³ Consequently, for Miralles the circulation through the design adopts the spatial form of a street, a procession that emulates the 'path of life', in a spatial (as a physical path) and temporal (as a passage through the lives of the buried) metaphor.

23. Ibid, p. 14.

Engaging these notions, Miralles 'opens' the site to a polycontextual interpretation through an approach that is aligned with Kaye's performative position. It is within this action of 'opening' that an opportunity arises for architecture to be "an agent

ABOVE ^

Figure 5.13: Aerial map of the cemetery showing, in plan, the major gestures executed by Miralles

< OPPOSITE

Figure 5.12: Aerial map showing urban context of the site at the periphery of Igualada, Spain

KEY:

- 1. Cemetery entrance
- 2. Path 1 entrance, lower terrace
- 3. Mortuary
- 4. Chapel
- 5. Cul-de-sac of mausoleums
- 6. Naturally occurring terraces

RIGHT >

Figure 5.14: Photograph showing the cemetery entrance marked by steel referents. The linear path is sloped downwards in an action of

RIGHT >

Figure 5.15: Photograph showing cul-de-sac of mausoleums, framed by terraced gabion walls of reconstituted stone from the quarry site. Embedded into the ground are railway sleepers that contribute to the burial index that informs a continuity between site and design.

of the physical and conceptual reconstruction of the environment it has disrupted, and, in doing so, to establish a reciprocal relationship with it.”²⁴ According to Anita Berrizbeitia and Linda Pollak:

*[Miralles] has made visible and palpable the relationship between the site's past and present programs: that a quarry and a cemetery both involve cutting into the ground, although one is a place of removal from the earth in order to build elsewhere, while the other is a place of return to it.*²⁵

25. Ibid, p.71.

Berrizbeitia and Pollak identify that processes through which the Igualada Cemetery is ‘grounded’ creates an index of: the architecture and the physical and landscape; and the architecture and the site’s history – subverting historically modern assumptions that site is “merely the ground on which architecture rests”²⁶

One process which the site ‘acts out’ as a grounding index is the *excavation/terracing* of the existing site to conduct the intervention. This operation of grounding performs the “site’s history as a quarry and its new use as a cemetery”.²⁷ The most vivid instances of the excavation process occurs in the construction of the *niches*, where the entranceway, chapel, and procession carve into the hillside, pushing the earth to the sides, creating a valley that frames the occupant and activates the edges of The Terraces as burial positions.²⁸ This is recognised by Zabalbescoa as an exchange in the design process that creates a series of *continuous* and reciprocal dialogues between the past and the present (historical context), the site as a quarry *and* as a landscape:

*Much of Miralles’s work is concerned with excavating, shifting or marking in some way the sites on which the buildings are constructed. Although in theory this may seem to be an imposition on the land, in practice it enables the architecture to open up a dialogue with its environment, to work with it, even using what was ‘replaced’ by construction in the architecture itself.*²⁹

29. Ibid, p. 22.

Within the excavated landscape, Miralles adopts a second design process of grounding - *embedding/burial*. The embedding of the ‘cliff-like’ niches into The Terraces exaggerates the procession as it moves downwards towards the mausoleum, giving the occupant the impression of being ‘buried’ by the cemetery (see Figure 5.16). This process also occurs as occupants pass between The Terraces, experiencing the ground above – punctuated by cuts and holes that allow light to filter through (see Figure 5.17). Wooden railway sleepers set into the ground as figurative bodies also ‘act out’ as performative referents of *embedding/burial*. Scattered within the main procession through the site, between the niches, these wooden sleepers embrace the natural processes of deterioration that occur by embedding in the landscape, a secondary referent to *burial*.

The Igualada Cemetery informs a site-specific strategy of *continuity* primarily through operations of materiality and its aforementioned composition/placement. Materiality contributes to

26. Ibid, p.14.

27. Rendell, 2008, p. 37.

28. Zabalbescoa, 1996, p. 20.

RIGHT >

Figure 5.16: Photograph of the burial niches that are embedded into The Terraced top level. The entrance markers are in the background. The niches create a physical and visual continuity with the natural and man-made process of the site.

the visual identity of the cemetery within its specific context by generating a language that coordinates with its natural setting. To do so, the design incorporates stone (gabion walls), earth (terraces), and wood (sleepers, seats) to “refer to a process of material *continuity* between building and site”, constructing a strong language between the site’s history and the design (see **Figure 5.18**).³⁰ In particular, the use of gabion walls (composed of quarried stones collected from the landscape and bound in mesh) exposes a visual referent that “represents a kind of abstraction

30. Rendell, 2008, p. 37

RIGHT >

Figure 5.17: Photograph from underneath the top terrace. Occupants are ‘buried’ within the niches, accessing the mortuary and chapel from underground.

that is not formal, but instead operates through a displacement”.³¹ In this sense, the gabion walls are conciliatory with the architecture as it mediates between the natural and built – coding a site-specific practice. Additionally, these walls instruct a visual dialogue between the ground and The Terrace – exposing how “the building becomes a part of the surrounding landscape, and also represents that landscape”, implicating the topography of the site as the conceptual *and* physical content of the design.³²

31. (Berrizbeitia & Pollak, 1999, p. 48)

32. Ibid, pp. 14-15.

Miralles’s design strategies, as they relate to the architecture’s indices of grounding, are of particular use to the design testing of *critical spatial practices* at the Clifton Street Car Park. The Igualada Cemetery presents a critical examination of site as an index that is continuous with the landscape’s history (as a quarry) and naturally occurring setting – performing its contextual dimensions physically, visually and historically. The car park has undergone similar industrial insision – related to the imposition of infrastructure – that can be critiqued indexically by creating *continuity* with the prior landscape. Whilst

RIGHT >

Figure 5.18: Photograph from mausoleums, looking back towards the cemetery entrance. The site-specific index that has been created through Miralle's performative strategies accumulate at this point - the moments of burial /embedding and excavation/terracing are evident.

the trauma associated with the Igualada site is less divisive socially and historically than the *thick edge* condition of the Clifton Street Car Park, Miralles nonetheless explores potent and critical design processes that can be adapted within the design test of this thesis.

Conversely, the cemetery has limitations for the design case study. Primarily, due to its non-urban location, the Igualada Cemetery is concerned with its relationship to the landscape as a naturally occurring condition – its dialogue with the quarry, the materials of the site, and its programme as a burial site. It provides little information to inform critical strategies of resistance as they relate to highway infrastructure and the *thick edge* condition as a social, political and/or economic context.

Conclusion: Implications and strategies for design

Throughout **Chapter Five** it has been posited that, given its dimensions as a *thick edge* and embodiment of an identity closer to that of a non-place, the Clifton Street Car Park is an opportunity for a framework of *critical spatial practices* to explore critical, site-specific, practices.

Following the investigations of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and Marc Augé, Rendell's identification of a dual approach to site – as a geographic location *and* an unfixed place composed of a series of contextual relations – presents a critical position towards the politicised appropriation of site as a defined and 'zoned' region. This stance 'opens' the Clifton Street Car Park to its wider contexts of place, critiquing its current position as a non-defined entity between the central area and inner-residential zones. Implicated by this notion of site, the contentions of Nick Kaye are particularly important – introducing an argument for site-specific strategies that look to

create a performative index within the design process.

A performative approach will adopt the use of dual metaphors to 'act out' contextual information, constructing a contextual dialogue of *continuity/discontinuity* through ordering systems, materiality and typology as a critical *resistance* or exposure to/of the pre-existing condition(s) of a site as a position and a place. These critical practices express an opportunity for the design process to positively reconfigure the site and to create a place of polycontextual flows. The primary narrative of a site (in the case of this thesis, the *thick edge*) is thus replaced and subverted by multiple narratives, or as Dovey states, "a collision of practices and images rather than one narrative replacing another", enabling "focus on the relationships between elements rather than on the elements themselves".³³

In relation to the Clifton Street Car Park the performative suggests that the design experiment should concern itself with an inversion, or site-specific *discontinuity*, with the physical, visual and historical contexts that have informed its rigidity. This rigidity operates through:

A lack of social activity

Continuous infrastructural materiality

Continuous infrastructural typology/ordering system

Excavated ground planes

Zoning adjacencies (residential sites, commercial sites)

Disproportionate scales

Additionally, the design experiment will test how it can perform in site-specific *continuity* with the landscape as a site of physical, visual and historical trauma. These contexts have operated through:

The burying of the Kumototo

The removal of graves from Bolton Street Cemetery

The incision, terracing, and excavation of Shell Gully

The kainga Pohutakawa tree

The demolition of low socio-economic housing in Thorndon

Experiments testing how these strategies can be deployed, prior to additional information at this point, are shown in [Figure's 5.19-5.25](#).

In the anti-contextual *discontinuity* of Parc de la Villette, and the highly contextual *continuity* of Igulada Cemetery, Kaye's definition of site-specific practice is made evident. Thus a polycontextual approach to architectural design can inform a critical dialogue of *continuity* and/or *discontinuity*. Kaye argues this through an engagement with physical context (typological, material), visual context (compositional, order), and political context (the normative definition of 'site'). How these contexts are engaged through architectural design speaks to a critical intention to construct specific identities of place insofar as they are *continuous* (contextual) or *discontinuous* (anti-contextual).

All of these categories (investigated in **Chapter Four**), when encompassed by performative operations, 'open' the locational notions of site within an expanded field of relations. Through this lens, critical architectural design will respond to a multiplicity of influences that are connected in parts – rather than imposing a singular identity across the site. The design experiment for the Clifton Street Car Park will treat the site as a polycontextual field of relations, with the architecture as the index through which multiple contexts can flow. Whether the intervening architectures are *continuous* or *discontinuous* with the existing site will determine its critique with the aim of inverting the contextual rigidity of the current *thick edge* condition.

33. Dovey, 2008, p. 53; Berrizbeitia & Pollak, 1999, p. 11.

RIGHT >

Figure 5.19: The infrastructural system of the Clifton Street Car Park imposes a rigid physical logic of post-and-beam construction throughout. This diagram shows the regular vertical order created by the columns. The order is at its most 'rational' along Datum 3, axially following the greenbelt in a series of perpendicular couples.

RIGHT >

Figure 5.20: The regularity of the columns is even more strict longitudinally, informing an order of four rows of columns in the north-south direction.

RIGHT >

Figure 5.21: Accumulating the ordering system in plan shows the axial grid that is created across the site by the infrastructure. This grid performs the 'irrational rationality' seen in Tschumi's Parc de la Villette - providing the design case study with a clear language through which a critical resistance can occur.

RIGHT >

Figure 5.22: Inverting the grid reveals a number of volumes that the design can appropriate as space for intervention. Segregating the volume for design from the existing infrastructure allows a clear discontinuity to accumulate - the design is visually dislocated, 'inserted' into the context.

RIGHT >

Figure 5.23: Creating performative continuity with the design, the site exhibits a number of elements along the ground planes that are fertile for development: the buried Kumototo along Datum 3; the terracing of the topography of the greenbelt; and the isolated ground surface of Datum 0. The site's existing circulations penetrate these elements.

RIGHT >

Figure 5.24: Extending the existing terraces into the site constitutes an action of continuity - shaping a contour that follows the form of the Kumototo as well as 'acting out' the tabula rasa processes of the motorway incision.

RIGHT >
Figure 5.25: In plan, these site-specific processes contribute to the construction of a 'field' of various relations that both evoke context as well as function as architectural design elements. The design becomes embedded with contextual information and references, individually and inherently connected to the site as a place and position.

Expansion of the greenbelt topography into the site - the 'natural' is given precedence of the existing in a gesture of discontinuity.

An abstraction of fluidity - referencing the Kumototo Stream underneath.

Circulation permeability is maintained.

Historical embedding of the ground plane along Datum 0.

Positions of contextual referents, possibly trees or memorials, that create nodes within the rigid ordering system of the infrastructure.

SOCIAL SPACE AS CRITICAL PRACTICE:

Elucidating Strategies for Socio-
spatial Flows

Introduction

Between 'One' and 'Another': 'Loose' Space
Through Socio-spatial Strategies

The Palais de Tokyos: Social Space as
Appropriated Space

The Metropol Parasol: A Canopy for Multiple
Publics

The Rolex Learning Centre: Horizontality,
Transparency and Porosity

Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for
Design

< OPPOSITE
Figure 6.1: Appropriated space
in action! Photograph
of a skateboarder at the Palais
de Tokyo (2011)

1. Wellington City Council,
2011, p. 1.

*'Public Space': any space to which the public has generally unrestricted access becomes public – in effect even if not in law. For this reason, this appendix defines public space as all areas to which the public has access – including streets and accessways, pedestrian routes, squares and parks that are part of a private development [emphasis added]. Similarly, public car-parking buildings, elevated plazas, walkways, bridges and underpasses are classed as public spaces.'*¹

Wellington City Council

Introduction

In **Chapter Five** a performative understanding of the notion of site was explored and expanded upon through the contentions of Nick Kaye. In particular, the relationship between *critical spatial practices* and the creation of site-specific indices was investigated, elucidating strategies of *continuity* and/or *discontinuity* to construct a dialogue between architectural intervention and its relative contexts.

Operating within the dynamic and social place/non-place spectrum outlined within this section, this chapter explores and develops the second process of critical practice outlined by Rendell's framework. Arguing that *critical spatial practices* will approach assumptions of space between interests that are private ('one') and public ('another') from a resistant position of 'opening', a critical position will engage space as relational, as both public and private - rather than defined as either/or where one term is privileged over the other and becomes susceptible to processes of control and alienation.²

2. Rendell, 2008, p. 9.

Developing Rendell's framework further, **Chapter Six** implicates the work of Kim Dovey who posits that architecture 'frames' the practising of a de Certeauian place; it provides a system of structures through which space is activated and produced – engaging social and political contexts in combination with the physical, visual and historical flows created by site-specific practices. For Dovey, this 'structuration' empowers architecture and the built environment to provide the tangible spatial structures through which the performance of spatial practices by individuals

or 'publics' are enabled or constrained. Critically negotiating several dimensions of 'tight' and 'loose' spatial structuration, architecture can positively resist politically controlled and socially deterministic approaches to public sites. These processes contribute to the 'opening' of design processes to strategies that allow spaces to be appropriated by multiple publics through multiple contexts.

The importance of these processes in the development of *critical spatial practices* is revealed through three pertinent and contemporary architectural case studies that critically engage public space as structured by architecture: the Palais de Tokyo (2001) by Anne Lacaton and Philippe Vassal; the Metropol Parasol (2011) by Jürgen Mayer; and the Rolex Learning Centre (2010) by Ryue Nishizawa and Kazuyo Sejima.

Analysing how strategies of *addition*, *subtraction*, *horizontality* and *verticality* are deployed through architectural design within these case studies reveals crucial translations of *critical spatial practices* within the built environment. As a result, this chapter posits that strategies of tight and loose public space reveal opportunities for *critical spatial practices* – the potential to introduce flows of social and political context to the Clifton Street Car Park *thick edge* condition.

In so doing, this chapter adds to Rendell's framework and mediates between the theoretical framings of **Section One**, and the design case study

in **Section Three**; engaging the fourth research question:

How can *critical spatial practices* manifest in the built environment, in particular through strategies of architectural design? How can these strategies engage multiple contexts to introduce positive flows to the urban *thick edge*?

Between 'One' and 'Another': 'Loose' Space through Socio-spatial Strategies

The definition of public space presented above by the Wellington City Council expresses a widely-held desire to represent public space as topographical, an approach that is representative of traditional approaches to 'the public' as well as the concept of 'public space'. Topographical public space asserts that space itself is defined abstractly by borders, and therefore clearly demarcates access to particular urban contexts for 'the public' or 'the private' realms.³ In this situation, 'the public' is defined collectively as the entirety of citizens within the public sphere.

3. The notion of public space as defined by access and ownership is a view that has been influentially introduced to

Architecture must treat space as relational, as *both* public *and* private, rather than defined as either/or where one term is privileged over the other and becomes susceptible to processes of control and alienation.

architectural discourse through the 'new urbanism' movement. Such arguments are primarily built upon Hannah Arendt's idea of public space as it relates to the Greek Agora – a place of public gathering, instigating new urbanists to call for 'legible' public space, defined areas that can be recognised as exclusively 'public'. See: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1998 [1958].

4. Iveson, 2007, p. 5. Kurt Iveson is Senior Lecturer in Urban Geography at University of Sydney.

Problematic outcomes of these attitudes arise when spatial intervention appears incongruent with the ideals of the democratic masses, when social activity within defined public space impedes upon the 'order' and 'quality' of 'good public space'. According to Kurt Iveson:

*Here, it is argued that exclusion from public spaces is the product of so-called 'anti-social' and criminal behaviour. Planners and law enforcement agencies charged with the responsibility of improving public space argue that the exclusion of a troublesome minority will make public space more accessible for the well-behaved majority.*⁴

Bruce Robbins argues that the common idea of the all-inclusive 'public sphere' is a phantom, a nostalgic view that is the catch-cry of those who wish to control access to topographically defined public spaces.⁵ For Robbins this (phantom) public space is generally based upon narratives that the urban landscape has previously been quantifiably 'more public', and therefore must be 'retrieved' as a place of dialogue, co-existence and access.⁶ However, in many instances this view instructs environments that are fertile places for tactics of control, security, and surveillance - negating the desires of certain citizens to privacy in the public realm - they produce environments which reduce the city to "a script that we must follow", a linear and deterministic view.⁷

Kim Dovey's contribution to *critical spatial practices* explores an alternative requirement for the production of public space to *resist* mechanisms of power and control through architecture's ability to "frame space both literally and discursively".⁸ Framed by architecture in particular ways, public space is capable of *resisting* tactics of social and political appropriation – it can display, explore, and produce socio-spatial *flows*. Dovey's approach to space, as contributed to by architectural form, is built upon the relationships between 'agency' and 'structure' investigated by cultural theorists such as Michel Foucault, Anthony Giddens, and Pierre

^ ABOVE

Figure 6.2: The BMW - Guggenheim LAB by Atelier Bow Wow, Berlin, 2012. The 'roaming' LAB travels to various city centres to present architecture to the public through various interactive modes (video, lecture, display, exhibition). Various architectural strategies inform a buildings that enable socio-spatial flow where the LAB is sited. Architecture is 'framing' 'loose' public space through spatial practices (programme) and structure (the architecture)

5. See Robbins, *The Phantom Public Sphere*, 1993. Bruce Robbins is Professor in the Humanities, Department of English & Comparative Literature at Columbia University.

6. Robbins, 1993, p. viii.

7. Betsky, 1998, p. 458. See also: Deutsche, "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy", 1992.

8. Dovey, Boyer, Fraser, & Morrow, 2013, p. 11.

9. See: Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, 1979; Bourdieu, 1990; Foucault, *On Power*, 2000 [1988].

Bourdieu.⁹ Through these figures, Dovey identifies that ‘agency’ expresses the capacity for a system (in this case multiple publics) to perform within the organised properties of a wider ‘structure’ (in this case the dimensions of public space). The relations between agency and structure are those of ‘enabling’ and ‘constraining’ – agency can either be *restricted* or allowed to *flow* according to the nature of its structure:

From this view architecture can be considered as a

*form of structure, and the social action it ‘frames’ as a form of agency. Architecture evokes and enables certain forms of life while constraining others with both walls and sanctions...this complex interaction of structure and agency is what Giddens calls ‘structuration’.*¹¹

11. Dovey, 2008, p. 19.

Applied architecturally, spatial practices and spatial structure contribute particular properties to the design of the built environment, properties that exist in constant mediation between the polarised

RIGHT >

Figure 6.3: Diagram showing the dimensions of tight/loose space as identified by Kim Dovey and applied to the Clifton Street Car Park. Many of these dimensions are discursive and/or structural – contributing to the overall ‘structuration’ of a design, its capacity to enable or constrain critical socio-spatial agency. The current condition(s) of the Clifton Street Car Park are positioned on these scales by a red circle.

Figure 6.4: Photograph of Wellington's Civic Square during a time of low activity. The site is bounded, static and constrained by the structures that surround it.

^ ABOVE dimensions of *tight* and *loose* space (see Figure 6.2).

12. Ibid

Here, *loose* space is “identified with movement and instability through which stable territories are erased and new identities and spatial practices become possible”; it represents a desire for an urban condition that *resists* certain dimensions of *socially* and *politically* defined *contexts*.¹² Socially, *loose* space posits that multiple publics are deployed as individuals, relationally interacting in the processes of spatial production. *Loose* space therefore *resists* the politically appropriated and deterministic definition that public space is singularly defined by ownership/access, in favour of architectural structures and programmes that facilitate possibilities for exchange. Additionally, *loose* spaces invest and embed *places* with social context, exposing possibility and opportunity for social activity where it may not already exist.¹³

13. Franck & Stevens, 2007, pp. 15-18.

14. Ibid, p. 22.

Conversely, *loose* space intentions are polarised by social and political *tight* spaces, “where identities and spatial practices have become stabilised in strictly bounded territories with choreographed spatial practices and socially controlled identities”.¹⁴

As such, a critical design approach will resist the “mindless reproduction of socio-spatial practices” by constructing “spatial flows” between literal and discursive dimensions of *tightness* and *looseness*

Figure 6.5: Photograph of Wellington's Civic Square during a time of public address and demonstration. The space is recognised by publics as one of civic power. In this sense it is capable of supporting a social 'looseness' as it becomes appropriated, social and practiced as 'outside'.

Tight spaces follow the same logic as the negative urban spaces highlighted previously in **Chapter's Three and Four**, as sites of global-to-local forces, singular use, and limited approaches to engagement with context(s).

Properties of *loose/tight* spaces contribute to the structure within which multiple publics can perform. Importantly the dimensions of *loose/tight* are in a state of constant mediation, and – much like the place/non-place spectrum put forth by de Certeau – are never fully realised as absolutes. Rather, for Dovey, the role of *critical spatial practices* is to acknowledge the dimensions that are at play in any given situation and to facilitate positive synthesis between existing and intervening architectures.

Exploring the means through which the *loose/tight* spectrum may be deployed architecturally, Dovey analyses critical architectural production as inherently informing “the structure of social space, the use of boundaries to mediate social encounter and standardised spatial fields and building types”.¹⁵ For Dovey, architectural form and structure negotiates between a variety of spatial dimensions along which the social and political instruments of power in places are played out.¹⁶ As such, a critical design approach will resist the “mindless reproduction of socio-spatial practices” by constructing “spatial flows” between literal and discursive dimensions of *tightness* and *looseness* (see Figure 6.3).¹⁷

15. Dovey, 2008, p. 254.

16. Dovey 2008, p. 18.

17. Dovey, 2007, p. 254.

^ ABOVE

Figure 6.6: Photograph of Wellington's Waitangi Park.

The public transparency and accessibility of the park allows for multiple publics to engage and for multiple spatial practices to occur. These include farmers markets, skateboarding, concerts, recreation etc.

Dovey's dimensions of *tight/loose* public space are readily found contributing to public spaces in Wellington. Civic Square – although overtly accessible to multiple publics – presents a public space which displays socio-spatial *tight* properties. The square is a fundamentally bounded territory, defined rigidly by the buildings and infrastructure that surround it, with little inside/outside, public/private permeability or *flow* (see Figures 6.4). Although Civic Square is internally 'open', it is constrained by its outside barriers – its facades. This informs a defined public space that is enclosed by its architecture. However, spatial *looseness* arises when the square is appropriated by publics for events and civic upheaval – acknowledging the square as a gathering place for protest and event (see Figure 6.5).¹⁸

18. Ibid, p. 254.

Another of Wellington's prominent 'public' spaces, Waitangi Park, displays properties that

RIGHT >

Figure 6.8: Photograph of a public space in Cordoba, Spain (2010). Designed by Paredes Pinos Architects the space has been framed by architecture to structure a completely loose and left-over site for multiple publics. The canopies provide covered space for various markets and public activities, mediating between tight and loose dimensions to construct a positive polycontextual intervention.

^ ABOVE

Figure 6.7: Photograph of Wellington's Waitangi Park.

During outdoor public events infrastructure is required and shelter remains scarce. The transparency, openness and literal outside nature of the park becomes problematic.

exaggerate socio-spatial *looseness*. As an urban park, the site is almost entirely unbounded and porous – it is outside - presenting a space of accessibility and transparency for multiple publics (see Figure 6.6). The site has been facilitated through circulation and public activity spaces, but offers little privacy. The park's *looseness* and openness positively facilitates engagement with multiple publics; however, it is architecturally unstructured and unsheltered, requiring significant infrastructure to support specific events, and lacks public/private diversity (see Figure 6.7).

Importantly for the design case study of this thesis, the Clifton Street Car Park displays properties that are closer to that of a *tight* space – a socially constrained and 'strict' site that is politically defined as public, yet performs in a limited capacity as a public space. Engaged for the singular purpose of car parking, the Clifton Street site is highly segregated, fixed, and socially restricting. Dovey's dimensions of *loose* space, although not deterministic, provide a series of properties for the discursive and architectural 'structuration' of this spatial condition. They impart a framework through which the *thick edge* can be politically (as a defined public space) and socially (as confluence of social actors) mediated, even inverted. This follows the aim of acknowledging the "messy and dynamic urban geographies of publicness", opening the site to its wider social context(s) (see Figure 6.8).¹⁹ Consequently, three contemporary projects are

19. Iveson, 2007, pp. 8-9.

RIGHT, OPPOSITE >
Figure 6.9: Aerial photograph of Paris highlighting the location of the Palais de Tokyo adjacent to the Seine river

< LEFT

Figure 6.10: Aerial map of the Palais de Tokyo showing, in plan, the significant spatial areas of the centre. The site is bounded by the Seine River and arterial roads that form its circumference. To create permeability, Lacaton and Vassal have stripped back the interior structure of the old building - introducing visual and social transparency between interior and exterior.

KEY:

- 1. Multiple overlapping gallery wings
- 2. Cafeteria, bookstore
- 3. Level One entrances
- 4. Colonnade
- 5. Public square
- 6. Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

< LEFT

Figure 6.11: Technical plan of the Palais de Tokyo, Level One. The main entrance level is open in plan with overlapping programmatic volumes of space that generate the potential social activity between multiple publics. These spaces 'bleed' into each other and overlap, reconfiguring the context of the site as socially and politically disregarded into one that is of public appropriation and activity

^ ABOVE
Figure 6.12: Photograph of an interior ‘volume’ of social space in the Palais de Tokyo’s level one. The original structure has been stripped back and walls removed to inform an environment of ‘spatial excess’. Concrete frames have been added where necessary for structural support, creating a visual and physical motif of intervention throughout. Overlapping areas between the gallery wings are activated through performances and alternative spatial practices such as piano and skateboarding. The space is appropriate by multiple publics to engage or disengage as they wish.

investigated in this chapter as exemplars of Dovey’s critical strategies for the social and political inversion of *thick edges* – exploring dimensions of *tight* and *loose* space through architectural design. These are: the Palais de Tokyo (2001); the Metropol Parasol (2011); and the Rolex Learning Centre (2010).

The Palais de Tokyo: Social Space as Appropriated Space

Whilst public space can be hijacked and its definition appropriated for political motivations, conversely it may be appropriated by architectural intervention for social means. One such example is the ‘Palais de Tokyo’ (2001) by Lacaton+Vassal Architects – an art gallery, performance and event space that has been inserted within a neo-classical museum on the north bank of the Seine in Paris (see **Figure 6.9**). The design intervention re-creates and re-imagines the original venue as a ‘place of contemporary creation’ which encourages a dialogue between the previous building (left in ruin) and the addition of the new structure as an appropriated, relational social space.²⁰

Originally built in 1937 to house art collections for the ‘Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques’, the Palais de Tokyo fell into disrepair following the relocation of its collections in 1976 to the Centre Pompidou.²¹ The structure remained abandoned until 1999 when the French Ministry of Culture decided to develop Anne Lacaton and Phillippe

Vassal’s proposal for a flexible, public, arts facility and museum. Following the instructions of contemporary curator, art critic and theorist, Nicolas Bourriaud, the Palais de Tokyo explores the notion of appropriation – opening a space that is widely perceived as negative and obsolete for the purposes of relational social interactions between multiple publics. For Bourriaud, this meant employing architectural design as a framing device, to mediate a place for “the realm of human interaction and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic place”; for the space to seek and establish inter-subjective encounters.²² To achieve this *looseness*, Lacaton and Vassal adopt strategies of *addition and subtraction* through: the *addition* of space as a socially produced, public proposition; and the *subtraction* of physical structure to create transparency, porosity, and blur the occupation of outside and inside.

Socially, Lacaton and Vassal acknowledged the abandoned building as privately defined, segregated, and owned – a predominantly *tight* space (by Dovey’s definition) which has become disengaged from the public sphere. Inverting this condition, the architect’s superimpose the *addition* of “loose spaces that are constantly in flux, redefined by their users with temporary, often virtual boundaries”.²³ The *addition* of space with this intention introduces ‘social volumes’ that overlap and can be accessed through multiple entrance points by multiple publics: “No need to look for an entrance – just walk in anywhere.

22. Bourriaud, 2002, p. 14

23. Ayers, 2012, p. 51.

BELOW
Figure 6.13: Photograph of the level one bookshop. designated spaces are necessarily partitioned (visually and physically) for security and circulation purposes. However, transparency and looseness remain paramount, the bookshop is constructed of mesh partitions and books are displayed openly, creating an environment closer to that of a market

20. Lacaton & Jean-Phillipe, 2010.

21. Ayers, 2012, p. 4.

^ ABOVE
 Figure 6.14: Photograph of an interior 'volume' of social space in the Palais de Tokyo's level one. The spatial flexibility created by Lacaton and Vassal's design strategies works harmoniously with the curation of Bourriaud. Exhibitions and performances 'spill out' into the circulation spaces and refuse to be submitted to defined locations - to be simply hung on the walls.

24. Lacaton & Jean-Philippe, 2010.

25. Rendell, 2008, p. 94.

No doors, foyers, queues or commissionaires: it's up to you how you use it" (see Figure 6.13).²⁴ To achieve this, the 'pomp' and weight of the old Palais has been stripped back, physically opening it to create additional space. Space in this sense is not treated as a *subtraction* of structure, rather, as an *addition* of possibility:

*Lacaton and Vassal define luxury not through the acquisition of expensive materials but through the creation of space; the ability to provide extra space in terms of floor area and volume can, through their architectural design approach, be achieved through the efficient use of materials.*²⁵

The *addition* of space creates transparency, visual and physical, between inside and outside. This is evident in the deployment of multiple programmes introduced through the architecture – igniting a variety of different spatial practices. On top of the exhibition spaces, the Palais consists of two cafes, a book shop, a skate ramp, and eight-metre high circulation volumes that can be used as sites for performance (see Figure 6.12). The circulation created by inserting programmes in this way is conditioned by Bourriaud's curation – he attempts to create 'events' rather than to merely "hang art on walls".²⁶ This has the effect of instigating a dynamic programmatic *flow* between each of the galleries, connecting them through people and art, and blurring the normally defined conditions through which the art and architecture is experienced (see Figure 6.14)

26. Bishop, 2004, p. 51.

^ ABOVE
 Figure 6.15: Photograph of the level one southern gallery. Much of the structure has been removed to create visual transparency between inside and outside, even in the gallery spaces. Art works are protected by sheer curtains that loosely separate the visual inside from outside.

The addition of social space correlates directly to the means through which the physical architecture and additional design mediates between *tight* and *loose* through processes of *subtraction*. The giant structure and land area occupied by the Palais presented the architects with the potential to introduce luminosity and openness, stripping back excess structure to flood the gallery spaces with natural light. Combined with the new programme and spatial intentions, this required the removal of much of the existing, introducing a new transparency and visual porosity to the appropriated building (see Figure 6.15). Moreover, Lacaton and Vassal's design 'inserts' new concrete structure to inform a material *discontinuity* between the stone and brickwork of the existing, creating a form that physically and visually contrasts the old. The renovation therefore forms a repetition, a motif throughout in dialogue with the inhabitants as the spatial addition is neither a process of conservation nor of economic development. This process informs an experience of the Palais de Tokyo that refuses to fetishize the original structure; rather, the architects expose it as an appropriated ruin that is constant mediation with a dynamic socially produced space.

These design strategies critically embrace the actions of various publics, rather than creating a tightly controlled space. In so doing, transparency, accessibility and porosity are paramount. Through such processes Lacaton, Vassal and Bourriaud

RIGHT, OPPOSITE >
 Figure 6.16: Aerial photograph of Seville highlighting the location of the Metropol Parasol within the Medieval square

RIGHT >

Figure 6.17: Aerial photograph of the Metropol Parasol by Jurgen Mayer Architects (2011). The design investigates strategies of horizontality and verticality through the canopy that connects six parasols (highlighted in red). The result is a design that frames socio-spatial activity for multiple publics, mediating between Dovey's dimensions of tight and loose in a polycontextual process.

introduce *looseness* as a socio-spatial imperative. Based upon these understandings, the Palais de Tokyo provides precedent for the design case study of this thesis to engage *addition* and/or *subtraction* and successfully create dimensions of *looseness*. A critical approach to space, and place, at the Clifton Street Car Park will look to introduce these dimensions spatially and physically by reconfiguring the existing structures and to frame practices enabling *flow*.

space, adding and subtracting space and structure to allow *flow* between multiple publics, the Metropol Parasol (2011) by Jürgen Mayer Architects investigates how architecture can frame space through strategies of *horizontality* and *verticality*. The Metropol Parasol presents an architectural intervention that covers and encloses a large public space in the centre of Seville, Spain – reconfiguring what existed as a car park – into a multi-level series of interweaving public spaces (see Figure 6.16).

The Metropol Parasol: A Canopy for Multiple Publics

Where the Palais de Tokyo has been designed through strategies of *appropriation* to create loose

The plaza site has a rich and long-standing history in Seville. Defined in the middle of the nineteenth century as a market hall within a medieval monastery, it was converted into a temporary barracks between 1973 until in 1982 it

RIGHT >

Figure 6.18: Aerial photograph of the Metropol Parasol site as it existed prior to the intervention of the Metropol Parasol. The site, a car park, clearly exhibits properties that constitute a residual or leftover urban space

< LEFT

Figure 6.19: Interior photograph showing the subterranean museum beneath the Metropol Parasol

KEY

Open space, covered

Covered space

Circulation permeability

RIGHT >

Figure 6.20: Diagrammatic plan showing the permeability and flows that are created by the Metropol Parasol's re-framing and inverting of the spatial conditions of the site.

was demolished and used as a car park (see Figure 6.18).²⁷ The current design response arose from the exposure of archaeological ruins during excavation for an underground extension of the car park facility. As with the Clifton Street Car Park and other *thick edges* highlighted in Wellington, the intended parking facility was an attempt by the Common Council of Seville to 'fill-in' the residual void in the urban fabric with a singular private-public programme. However, "digging was halted when mosaic floors and other remains of Roman villas were discovered at a depth of six metres", shifting the context(s) of the development from a negative leftover to a place of historical significance.²⁸

27. Mayer, 2012.

28. Webb, 2011.

In 2004, following the uncovering of the site's latent histories and its recognition by the people of Seville as worthy of conservation, Jürgen Mayer's proposal was presented and accepted as a design alternative. The project looks to engage the existing context(s) of the site to define a "unique relationship between the historical and the contemporary city".²⁹ For Mayer, the purpose of the insertion of public space in this context, facilitated by architecture, was twofold: firstly, to create a "bustling social centre"

29. Mayer, Metropol Parasol, 2013.

that draws in 'locals' to "stroll, sketch and skate", thus 'fleshing out' the publics through activity; secondly, the design must acknowledge and respect the physical landscape as a part of the fabric of the cultural history of Seville.³⁰

30. Webb, 2011

Mediating between these imperatives Mayer initiated the negotiation of a multitude of programmes - a farmers market, a civic plaza, a panoramic roof terrace, an archaeological museum, as well as several bars and restaurants that are underneath, adjacent to, or inside the design (Figure 6.19).³¹ The variety of

The *horizontality* of the canopy allows the design to reconfigure the openness of the site, introducing various points of access and permeability – shifting the boundary of the plaza inwards towards the programmes it frames.

these uses activates the space day and night, enabling multiple publics to access and appropriate the site at

31. Argyriades, 2011

^ ABOVE
 Figure 6.21: Photograph from the roof terrace of the canopy. Vertical elevators within the structural columns of the parasols reposition publics vertically upwards, engaging the wider visual context in discontinuity with the design.

their will. To achieve *flow* between such programmes, Mayer employs a canopy design that manipulates *horizontal* and *vertical* axes to engage architecture in the process of framing space structurally and socially (see Figure 6.17).

The foremost function of the canopy is to introduce practical infrastructure to the exposed and open dimensions of the space, connecting six *vertical* 'parasols' linked together by a fluid *horizontal* plane. These parasols, comprised of a complex timber lattice structure, support the canopy which shades

The design projects a positive resistance to its physical urban context, a critical flexibility that counteracts the negative anti-contextual *discontinuity* of Tschumi's Parc de la Villette.

occupants from the local weather conditions and manipulates the overhead porosity of the space to control exposure to sun and/or rain. Additionally, each supporting element contains a concrete lift shaft that leads to a rooftop restaurant and walkway, lifting publics above the ground to a view over the city (see Figure 6.21). In so doing, Mayer recognises the lack of shelter presented by sites such as Waitangi Park and the limitations of a purely outside space. Additionally the canopy presents a design device that envelops the

space to facilitate additional programmes, including those that may need to be conducted outside yet require the presence of flexible infrastructure (such as staged dance, cinema, and other performances).

Additionally, the canopy design transforms the dimensions of the bounded (yet completely open) left-over space into a public node – the Plaza de la Encarnacion. Much like Civic Square in Wellington the existing site presented Mayer with an open but segregated space, one which was disproportionately

^ ABOVE
 Figure 6.22: Diagram/image of the manipulated ground plane of the design. The lifted horizontality (dashed red arrows) creates a plinth effect that is framed by the Parasol, enveloping the museum below and inverting the boundaries of the site from the urban fabric towards the programmes facilitated by the intervention (solid red).

< LEFT
 Figure 6.23: Additionally, the verticality of the parasols, connected by the latticed canopy, allow a number of various activities to occur underneath (dotted red arrows).

loose in some dimensions (completely outside and unsheltered, openly accessible from all directions) whilst *tight* in others (rigid and bounded by the surrounding urban structure, singularly programmatic). The *horizontality* of the canopy allows the design to reconfigure the openness of the site, introducing various points of access and permeability – shifting the boundary of the square

inwards towards the programmes it frames. The effect is an inversion of the site's boundedness, informing a social permeability and *flow* (see Figure 6.20). This creates a "hive of activity – a social and cultural hub where both residents, visitors and tourists can gather under the architecturally motivating 'crown-like waffle'"³²

32. Argyriades, 2011.

Much like the Palais de Tokyo, Mayer embraces the complexity and importance of social space as a collision of multiple publics. Unlike the Palais however, the Metropol Parasol is positioned within a largely open and public site, requiring the addition of structure to mediate between public and private, *tight* and *loose*. The gesture of the canopy is crucial to the design in this regard. Its *verticality* shelters and frames the space at a scale that allows for various activities to occur underneath. Simultaneously, the canopy's *horizontality* informs a *looseness* at human scale for various programmes and spatial practices to *flow* between one and another.

Alongside the social and spatial reconfiguration of the site, Mayer engenders the design with historical context. The ground plane is embedded with its archaeology, shaping a subterranean museum beneath the canopy. In so doing, the architecture "maintains the existing street level for the market and creates a fresh plaza on its [the museum] roof beneath the canopy."³³ This gesture allows the design to structurally frame the historical context, providing an infrastructure for certain spatial practices, whilst also maintaining the site's open and porous dimensions, its *looseness* at the ground level (see Figure 6.22 and 6.23).

33. Webb, 2011.

Formally, the fluidity of the canopy, as well as its timber construction, creates a physical and visual *discontinuity* with the surrounding fabric, a "stark contrast to the geometry of the old town, in materiality and even mentality."³⁴ This can be observed from the roof terrace which engages the immediate visual context of the design with the wider built environment. The design develops upon strong intentions to introduce local referents, collaged together in a 'primordial soup' of forms such as trees, mushrooms, and references to the organic forms of

34. Mayer, 2012, p. 72.

architects such as Antonio Gaudi. These gestures can be seen to *resist* the rigid and repetitive urban fabric that surrounds the site, creating "sensuous forms that swell from each trunk, imbued with an inner energy that expresses the vitality of the city."³⁵ The design projects a positive *resistance* to its physical urban context, a critical flexibility that counteracts the negative anti-contextual *discontinuity* of Tschumi's Parc de la Villette. However, as a critical index, the design is less site-specific than the *continuity* of Miralles's Igualada cemetery. The canopy's lack of engagement with its surrounding structures, as well as its haphazard arrangement of formal referents, results in a design that is vague in its index and thus fails to 'act-out' its intentions beyond mainly aesthetic concerns.

35. Webb, 2011.

Using canopy design through *horizontal/vertical* manipulation strategies is pertinent to critical intervention within the Clifton Street Car Park. Positive aspects of canopy design – as a framing and sheltering device for spatial practices – implicates the volume between datums three and four as a potentially useful space for public/private functions. The intervention of a new canopy can facilitate the use of this space as a sheltered, outside, volume whilst introducing *looseness* to the adjacent levels. As such, the Metropol Parasol explicates strategies for the framing of space where dimensions of *looseness* are prevalent, introducing an infrastructure for spatial practices to eventuate. As a *thick edge*, these strategies will require adaptation if they are to be implemented in the design case study. Manipulating *vertical* and *horizontal* planes through site-specific processes has the potential to frame the site to new programmes and to invert its infrastructural rigidity in a gesture of *discontinuity*.

The Rolex Learning Centre: Horizontality, Transparency and Porosity

Horizontal and *vertical* volumes are manipulated as strategies for framing public space in the design of the Metropol Parasol. Alternatively, SANAA architects, Ryue Nishizawa and Kazuyo Sejima, use these strategies in the design of the

RIGHT >
 Figure 6.26: Aerial photograph
 of Lausanne, Switzerland,
 showing the location of the
 Rolex Learning Centre (2010)

Rolex Learning Centre (2010) to frame *loose*, private space. The primary aim of SANAA's project to date, although in this case existing within the 'walls' of a semi-private structure, is to explore the degree to which "architecture opens itself to the unplanned chaos of contemporary life" and "creates a maximum of social, cultural and political effects with a minimum number of elements".³⁶ In light of such statements, their intentions align clearly with the critical thesis of Dovey - to enable multiple socio-spatial flows through architectural structures.

Built on the University campus of the EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) in Lausanne, Switzerland, the Rolex Learning Centre

is a necessarily enclosed multifunctional building – a library, language centre, student workspace, career centre, EPFL precious book collection, publication office, cafeteria, restaurant, lobby, and presentation theatre – yet it is not entirely private, engaging multiple publics in multiple activities. Previously an empty greenfields site and (as with the Metropol Parasol) a parking lot, the learning centre is an additional social and educational node that is somewhat of an archipelago in its visual and physical context (see Figure 6.25 and 6.26). As a result, the design is an act of *re-framing*, internalising the centre within the borders of four walls. Within this re-framing, Nishizawa and Sejima implement strategies to structure spatial *flows* that mediate

36. Allen, 2010, pp. 65-67.

RIGHT >
 Figure 6.24: Aerial photograph
 of greenfields site at the EPFL,
 Lausanne, showing the location
 of the Rolex Learning Centre
 before its construction

< LEFT, OPPOSITE
 Figure 6.25: Aerial photograph
 of Lausanne, Switzerland,
 showing the location of the
 EPFL and Rolex Learning
 Centre (2010).

< LEFT, OPPOSITE
 Figure 6.27: Aerial photograph
 of the Rolex Learning Centre
 showing the rectangular plan
 as it is punctuated by voids of
 various sizes

RIGHT >

Figure 6.28: Diagrammatic plan of the Rolex Learning Centre showing the anchor voids and circulation flows that connect the buildings' various programmes

RIGHT, BOTTOM >

Figure 6.29: Digrammatic plan of the Rolex Learning Centre showing programmatic layout and volumes, structured by the 'inverted box'

KEY:

1. Pedestrian ground level walkway
2. Student study areas
3. Arts and Engineering collections
4. Science and Humanities collections
5. Precious book collection
6. Car park entrance
7. Restaurant
8. Administration
9. Cafeteria
10. Forum/lecture theatre

E. Entrances

ABOVE ^
Figure 6.30: Interior photograph of the studying areas of the Rolex Learning Centre. The undulating floor and fluid plane allows programmes and publics to flow between the anchor voids

between different aspects of Dovey's dimensions than the Palais de Tokyo and the Metropol Parasol.

Primarily, SANAA's design consists of several gestures that inform a spatial 'fluidity,' creating an interior urban landscape that frames "a place where activities are separate but naturally related to each other... in a single, coherent setting".³⁷ This responds to the notion that space continues seamlessly between locations, framed by architecture, and through what Nishizawa refers to as a '*horizontal infinity*'.³⁸

The result is a circulation and arrangement of spatial practices framed by the architecture that allows for non-linear, non-deterministic, *flows* between spaces and publics.

The Rolex Centre explores this notion; one of the primary gestures of the design is that it houses all of its programmes within a single storey of uniform height (3.50m). The occupants of the building thus move 'seamlessly' through the programmes within a spatial volume that is sandwiched between two undulating concrete planes. For Nishizawa and Sejima, this *horizontality* creates *flow* between publics, programmes, inside and outside, a "fluid dynamism of architecture...a fluid, organic dynamism".³⁹ The result

is an inverted box that looks to bring the exterior into the interior, to create a continuous spatial experience that merges the social context(s) within the defined space of the building. Additionally, SANAA visually connect the exterior site to the interior of the design by wrapping the inverted box in glazing, refusing to produce an exterior 'image' through the use of a traditional façade.

Analysing the building in plan reveals that the programmes are anchored to several voids or vertical porosities that puncture through the horizontal planes to create points of transparency throughout (see Figures 6.26-6.28). Circulation is equidistant to the various programmes, branching outwards from various entrances that are positioned at the buildings centre to "create smooth lines of flow".⁴⁰ The voids seem random at first; however their position is highly specific. The larger central voids act as circulation

BELOW
Figure 6.31: Exterior photograph of the ground plane beneath the Rolex Learning Centre. The undulating horizontal floor plane informs a landscape beneath the building, creating a fluid transition between exterior and interior

nodes creating thresholds between the exterior ground plane and the interior landscape. Such thresholds take the form of entrances, connecting publics to the interior environment via ramps and/or stairs. The voids 'push' the programmes outwards from the central circulation areas, towards the glazed skin of the structure. This gesture, although opposite in its outward direction, follows the same logic as the Palais de Tokyo and the Metropol Parasol, creating social permeability within the boundaries of the building/

40. Hasegawa, 2006, p. 25.

39. Nishizawa, 2013, p. 8.

Figure 6.32: diagram showing how horizontality and verticality are implemented in the design of the Rolex Learning Centre

site. The result is a circulation and arrangement of spatial practices framed by the architecture that allows for non-linear, non-deterministic, *flows* between spaces and publics (see Figure 6.30). Additionally, the voids and manipulated horizontal planes frame activity, *resisting* the exaggerated 'openness' of a park, square or leftover space.

Unlike the Metropol Parasol, the Learning Centre's *verticality* is almost entirely non-visual. *Verticality* emerges in the form of the anchoring voids and shallow undulations in the floor and ceiling planes. This uniformity reduces the building to human scale at all times and emphasises the moments where the vertical punctures occur. *Verticality* in this sense is a strategy to fluidly connect the occupants on the ground plane, outside, to those within the *horizontality* of the building, its inside (see Figure 6.31).

Design strategies used by Nishizawa and Sejima in the Rolex Learning Centre, notably the manipulation of the buildings *horizontality* (in circulation, layout, and structure), are relevant to critical intervention within the Clifton Street Car Park. The design explicates methods for placing and arranging a multiplicity of programmes to inform a social looseness within a bounded territory. This is particularly relevant to the creation of permeability through the car park's social *thick edge* condition. Additionally, Nishizawa and Sejima's approach explores how *looseness* can be created in conditions of confined and uniform *horizontal* planes – such as datum's 0-2 of the car park – anchored through *vertical* punctuations that create circulation points and link the above to the below, the inside to the

outside (see Figure 6.32). However, the design of the centre does not claim to be polycontextual or critical beyond its socio-spatial strategies. As previously stated, it creates an internal environment, and does not respond to site-specific particularities in that sense. Moreover, the detached physical, visual and historical conditions of the site reduce gestures of *continuity* (with the physical site) and *discontinuity* (through materials, typology) critically impotent as they do not engage in any form of specific *resistance*, limiting the gestures of fluidity and voiding to the performance of structuring the space in a formal and social sense.

Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for Design

Throughout this chapter the fourth research question has been engaged - expanding upon the parameters and directives of *critical spatial practices*. Following the imperatives for the structuration of tight/loose public space put forth by Dovey, strategies exhibited by the three case studies have been examined, exploring how critical socio-spatial strategies manifest through architectural design – elucidations that are particularly relevant to the experimentations of the design case study.

Analysing the Palais de Tokyo, the Metropol Parasol and the Rolex Learning Centre reveals strategic applications of *addition*, *subtraction*, *horizontality* and *verticality* to illustrate how architectural design can invert the social (and therefore spatial) *thick edge* condition of Clifton Street Car Park. Based upon these precedents, specific design manoeuvres will empower **Section Three**, the design testing, to introduce a flow of publics through the site – creating social permeability between the adjacent areas of Thorndon, Bolton Street, Kelburn, The Terrace, and Lambton Quay.

Specifically, following Lacaton and Vassal, strategies of *addition* and *subtraction* (to frame both spatial and structural relations) show how a negatively perceived site can introduce new conditions by reconfiguring – rather than

demolishing or conserving – the existing dimensions of a *tight* space. As it stands, the infrastructure that comprises much of the car park is already ‘stripped back’ to its engineering essentials. However, as a strategy of physical *subtraction*, the design will cut-into the imposition of non-essential structure where necessary. This strategy is particularly useful along Datum 1 where the concrete platform has created a dark and bounded spatial volume.

The strategic and critical *addition* of space is equally essential to the design. Negotiating a programme that is capable of instigating multiple uses to the currently singular condition of the car park, space can be appropriated in the form of social volumes. These volumes, following the Palais de Tokyo, can overlap and bleed into each other, introducing a flow between programmes. Appropriating the site as such is a critical gesture as it resists the deterministic intentions of its current use, informing a spatial *looseness*.

In a similar vein, the *horizontal* and *vertical* manipulation of structure and volumes created by the Metropal Parasol is relevant to the translation of Dovey’s critical position into design. In particular, the space underneath the Urban Motorway is logically implicated. The canopy created by the motorway provides a rare condition – sheltered outside space that can encompass a variety of spatial practices. A manipulated gesture in this regard, such as Mayer’s design, posits that an overhead sheltering device can envelop various activities whilst *simultaneously* engaging in the creation of an infrastructure underneath (a dimension lacking in the current *thick edge*). Introducing a manipulated canopy adjacent to the motorway can take advantage of the positive aspects of the existing conditions and the flexibility of a architectural structure to frame various socio-spatial practices. Moreover, a dynamic *vertical/horizontal* canopy is typologically *resistant* (visually, physically) to the orthogonality of the car park – a proposition explored further in **Chapter Seven**.

Adding to the strategies put forth by the Palais de Tokyo and the Metropal Parasol, the Rolex

Learning Centre exemplifies how undulating datum planes above and below, interspersed with public scale vertical openings can create circulations of socio-spatial and programmatic *flows*. Primarily a *horizontal* strategy, the fluidity created by Nishizawa and Sejima’s design shows how entrance thresholds and vertical voids can create programmatic anchors. Positioning similar anchor points within the site-specific index of the design case study can structure the social uses of a space yet allow them to bleed between each other. This approach is an inversion of the current *thick edge*, refusing to enforce a determined and controlled public/private condition. Following SANAA, this can inform a landscape of dynamic uses that critically mediates the necessary dimensions of *tight* and *loose*.

Moreover, the three examined case studies show how spaces between two horizontal planes (such as Datum’s 1 and 2 of the Clifton Street Car Park), or large open spaces (such as Datum’s 3 and 4) can produce multiple public/private conditions within one bounded site. A combination of these design strategies will determine how the design conducts a socio-spatial critique of the existing conditions, engaging various contexts to provide positive solutions to the *thick edge*.

DIALECTICAL SPACE AS CRITICAL PRACTICE:

Elucidating Strategies to Construct
Temporal Images

Introduction

Between 'Now' and 'Then': Walter Benjamin's
Dialectical Image

Avoiding Spectacle: Framing Dialectics
Through Visual Juxtaposition

The Jewish Museum Berlin: Engaging
Historical Context in the Dialectical Image

Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for
Design

< OPPOSITE

Figure 7.1: Juxtaposition
as dialectical image.
Michaelangelo Pistoletto's
'Venus in Rags' (1974). The
informally stacked clothing
destabilises the historical
resonance of the classical
Venus sculpture

It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not a progression but an image, suddenly emergent.¹

1. Benjamin & Tiedemann, 1999, p. 462.

Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project

Introduction

This chapter builds upon the site-specific and socio-spatial practices that have been investigated in **Chapter's Five and Six** - turning to a temporal understanding of historical and visual context as contributing to a polycontextual lens for *critical spatial practices*. For Rendell, the writings of Walter Benjamin contribute to the foundations of such a critique, shifting the research from wider site and socially inflected issues to “examine particular works as new interventions into existing contexts, highlighting the importance of the temporal”- in particular how historical and visual contexts can be interrupted or displaced to positively subvert and resist the identity of a particular place.²

2. Rendell, 2008, p. 2.

Walter Benjamin's work is relevant to such discussions as it dissects and deciphers the urban landscape of the expanding metropolis during the early twentieth century. As the burgeoning development of modern construction began to shape cities into contextually ubiquitous and ahistorical places (reaching its zenith as the Augé -ian non-place) Benjamin constructed a two-fold critique of the city: architecture as experienced in a distracted montage of images; and history as a dialectical negotiation between ‘then’ and the ‘now’. These two positions have been highly influential, instructing a means for architectural design to embed a place with a critical temporality – a visual engagement with the historical context(s) of a site. This thesis proposes that one solution to reducing the impermeability of a *thick edge* is to reawaken shared histories of adjacent communities to the Clifton Street Car Park, thereby

transforming this condition into a dynamic threshold rather than a static and separating barrier.

In particular Benjamin's examinations of the urban landscape have been positioned as pertinent within the contemporary context through the writing of Gevork Hartoonian.³ Hartoonian's practice focuses on a twenty-first century re-interpretation of the writings of Benjamin as it relates to the current state of digital image reproduction.

3. Gevork Hartoonian is Professor of Architecture at the University of Canberra.

This chapter contends that through Hartoonian, a distillation of Benjamin's ‘*dialectical images*’ presents that architectural design “inserted into a given context aims to critique the construction of the past in the present, drawing attention to repressed aspects of history”.⁴ In so doing, architecture positions historical events in relation to the current context in a way that is not static but that operates dialectically. Essentially, in the *dialectical image*, formal constructions can intentionally frame visual compositions that juxtapose the existing fabric with the insertion of the new, revealing a contextual critique.

4. Rendell, 2008, p. 121.

The Jewish Museum in Berlin is analysed as a case study that is of particular relevance to this discussion. Elucidating strategies of *juxtaposition* from Libeskind's design reveals a translation of the temporal into the visual through the *dialectical image*. This the case study implicates clear opportunities for the design of *Architecture's Tighrope* to engage with the visual and historical contexts of Clifton Street Car Park, contributing to a polycontextual flow and inversion of the *thick edge* condition.

This chapter adds to Rendell's framework and mediates between the theoretical framings of **Section One**, and the design case study in **Section Three**; engaging the fourth research question:

How can *critical spatial practices* manifest in the built environment, in particular through strategies of architectural design? How can these strategies engage multiple contexts to introduce positive flows to the urban *thick edge*?

Between 'Now' and 'Then': Walter Benjamin's Dialectical Image

In perhaps the most influential of his critiques of the built environment, Benjamin argues that the architecture of the city does not register with its occupant in a conscious or cognitive manner. Rather, the modern urban landscape produces primarily somatic effects, inducing shifts in how architecture is collectively experienced, a position advanced in his frequently cited essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".⁵ In this seminal work he posits that architecture is experienced through habitual performances of use (spatial practice) and perception (for Benjamin this is primarily a tactile experience), "the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction".⁶ Benjamin argues that as publics move between the largely repetitive typologies of buildings the modern city is viewed in a drawn-out

montage – a series of commodified images and visual moments. This process can be seen as directly linked to developments in visual technologies, a parallel evolution with devices of image reproduction, and cultural shifts driven by devices such as photography and film:

*If one considers the dangerous tension which technology and its consequences have emerged in the masses at large – tendencies which at critical stages take on a psychotic character – one also has to recognise that this same technologization has created the possibility of psychotic immunization against such mass psychosis.*⁷

According to Benjamin, the culture of technological image reproduction has distilled the reception of architecture into a readily absorbed image, an image which decontextualizes the experience of it to that of phantasmagoria - a superficial spectacle of the work as an imitable commodity (see Figure 7.2 and 7.3).⁸ Importantly, Benjamin's argument has been updated by many contemporary cultural critics – arguing that this condition has proliferated exponentially through the rise of digital technologies.⁹

Nadir Lahiji believes that through digital media the impact of technology on the decontextualization of the architectural image has become all but instantaneous.¹⁰ Thus, in the early twenty-first century, the images of the built environment have valorised far beyond what was

5. Elliott, 2011, p. 27.

6. Benjamin, 1968 [1936], p.

BELOW

Figures 7.2 (LEFT) and 7.3 (RIGHT): The Galaxy SOHO (2011) design (discussed in chapter two) by Zaha Hadid architects (bottom left) has been imitated by a Chinese developer (bottom right). Hadid's design has been superficially replicated based upon the original design concept images - it was unbuilt before the copy emerged. This is an example of 'designing for spectacle', where architecture is treated as a purely visual commodity

7. Benjamin, 1968 [1936], p. 118.

8. Hartoonian, 2012, p. 47.

9. See: Foster, *Design and Crime (and Other Diatribes)*, 2004, p. 11.

10. For Lahiji, The image of architecture is the external identity of the discipline; it's projection as a commodity into the spectacle of society.

11. According to Jameson the spectacle of late capitalism informed a situation where “depth is replaced by surface or multiple surfaces”, see: Jameson, 1991, p. 62; (Foster, “Image Building”, 2004.

12. Lahiji, 2011, pp. 212-213. See also: Lacan, 1997.

experienced by Benjamin or even the spectacle of late capitalism, compounding the production of superficial ‘image building’ in architecture.¹¹ The ‘dangerous tension’ identified by Benjamin between technology and culture has given way to what Lahiji refers to as a period of “mass technological psychosis”, where ‘reality’ and the ‘Real’ (in the Lacanian sense) are indistinguishably blurred by the virtuality of current digital technologies.¹²

The second dimension of Benjamin’s critique examines how the very notion of history is implicated by urban form. His foremost writing on the topic emerges in his essay “Theses on the Philosophy of History” where he describes a dialectical relationship between the ‘what-has-been’ and the ‘now’ through an interpretation of Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* (1920). Klee’s painting - an abstract figuration of an angel, wings spread, and head turned (see Figure 7.4)

RIGHT >

Figure 7.4: ‘Angelus Novus’ (1920) by Paul Klee. Copper etching plate, Intaglio printing with acidic watercolor on drypoint canvas

provides Benjamin with an apt metaphor for a critical understanding of notions associated with history. His analogy posits that a ‘storm from paradise’ (the drives of innovation and technology through notions of progress) is recklessly propelling society into the future. As the angel is blown forwards, back turned, he can only look into the past, at the wreckages of modernity.¹³

For Benjamin, this links the notion of history

as read backwards yet visually represented by the fabric of what persists in the present. His approach avoids the static reification of history, and asks architecture to consider the past as an ever-changing relational construct (between now and then), rather than as an objective event. Engaging contextual histories is therefore perceived as a mediated relationship - unable to be reproduced, yet capable of critically provoking the present - “a destructive and fundamentally redemptive enterprise” that constantly shifts and resonates.¹⁴ Regarding all moments in time as a constant negotiation between ‘catastrophic reality’ and ‘utopian possibility’ is what separates Benjamin’s reading of the city as a potentially critical exercise. This view *resists* submission to both historical reification and the post-critical encouragement of the inevitability of technological progression.¹⁵

14. Benjamin cited in Gilloch, 1996, p. 14.

15. Elliott, 2011, p. 73.

His approach avoids the static reification of history, and asks architecture to consider the past as an ever-changing relational construct (between now and then), rather than as an objective event.

Consequently, these two positions manifest in what Benjamin refers to as ‘the *dialectical image*’, where “the momentary recognition and illumination of past and present” appears in the built forms of architectural production.¹⁶ For Benjamin, the *dialectical image* was visually distilled in the decaying Parisian shopping arcades of the 1930s and 1940s. The arcades represented the ‘primal history’ of modernism - the phantasmagoria of mass distraction and commodity consumption (for Benjamin, the ‘now’) in distinct contrast with the historically rich fabric of Paris (the ‘then’). Building upon Benjamin’s position, the histories of the Clifton Street Car Park, in particular the *tabula rasa* incisions of the Urban Motorway and private development of The Terrace, can be seen as dialectical – as the desires of Wellington to positively follow the progressive economies of other western cities; and as a contextual *thick edge*, a site of historical trauma that is now in a state of historic, economic, political, social and visual negativity.

16. Benjamin cited in Gilloch, 1996, p. 13.

13. Benjamin, 1968 [1940], p. 249.

Avoiding Spectacle: Framing Dialectics Through Visual Strategies

In *Architecture and Spectacle: a Critique*, Gevork Hartoonian builds upon this positioning of Walter Benjamin in the current context, contending that the experience of a building as an image embodies the ‘spectacle’ of architecture in the digital age. This has created a historically singular situation where the production and reception of architecture is infiltrated and ‘shaped’ by technology to the point of ‘total commodification.’¹⁷ Thus, the image has come to pervade the design process, contributing to the aestheticisation of architecture as a spectacle that is apathetic to many of its other contextual dimensions.¹⁸ For Hartoonian, this emphasis on the visual projection of a building has dislocated the appearance and form of a work of architecture. As a result, the design process is manipulated and exaggerated in order to fulfil a condition of ‘superficial delight’ in the eye of the beholder. Such a focus represents an attempt to remove individuals from their increasingly distracted experience (a position originally put forth by Benjamin):¹⁹

*In the mainstream of contemporary consumer culture, no one feels at home without access to the cultural products distributed globally... [I]t is the excess, both visual and tactile, that orchestrates today's culture of spectacle for which we have no adequate words except to say, "It's cool!"*²⁰

The desire to design for visual spectacle has become evident in the production of much of contemporary architecture, where a focus on surface, facade and ornament is once again prevalent. One notable example is the recent construction of the new Supreme Court of New Zealand in Wellington (see Figure 7.5). Designed by Warren and Mahoney, and completed in 2010, the courthouse boasts an extensive (and expensive) façade of tessellating patterns that, according to the architects take the form of “a bronze screen with a design strongly influenced by the Maori idea of Pohutakawa and Rata trees symbolising both shelter and leadership”.²¹ Beyond the visual, the screen provides little architectural contribution to the function of the building, performing no tectonic integration, and little cultural value outside of abstract symbolic expression. The Supreme Court, alongside other recent buildings in Wellington²², expresses an intention to superficially juxtapose its visual surroundings by introducing a projected façade. Problematically, the courthouse does so uncritically – submitting the design of the building to the realms of spectacle.

However, in the forces of image production Hartoonian identifies an opportunity for positive critique – ‘a potential to resist’ - by subverting the spectacle from within:

Of all the art forms, movies we watch and buildings we visit, to mention two artworks with

21. Mahoney & Warren.

22. See also: the Cordon Bleu Cooking School (2010) by Archaus architects, lower Cuba Street, Wellington.

23. Hartoonian, 2012, p. 3.

17. Hartoonian, 2012, p. 251.

18. Hartoonian, 2012, p. 2.

19. Although attributed to a number of factors, Hartoonian sees this trend as the logical outcome of the spectacle of late capitalism, dividing mainstream architectural design into two categories: ‘theatricalization’ and ‘theatricality’. Theatricality follows the tradition of Gottfried Semper – a belief that architecture has a latent criticality and ability for cultural communication that lies within the expression of its deep tectonic structure. Conversely theatricalization - most obvious in the recent works of Frank Gehry and parametricism - is the condition of superficial embellishment.

20. Hartoonian, 2012, p. 3.

RIGHT >

Figure 7.5: The Supreme Courthouse of New Zealand (2010). Warren and Mahoney architects. The superficial tessalating facade plays upon the image of the design as it is projected into the urban fabric. However, the screen adds only symbolic visual resonance to the building, falling into spectacle

ABOVE ^
Figure 7.6: 'Meiso no Mori Municipal Funeral Hall' (2009) by Toyo Ito architects. This design reflects the use of contemporary techniques (fluid-form, parametric design) in a manner that resists spectacle. The design is drawn from the surrounding landscape in combination with the programmatic requirements - refusing to present a consistent facade and provide an overall image of the design

*close ties to capital and technique, architecture still remains the most controversial mainly because it has the potential to resist but also be plunged into the contemporary culture of spectacle.*²³

In the *dialectical image*, Hartoonian suggests that architectural discourse can productively overcome the limitations of the current culture by plying the past for material, saturating the image of a building

For Hartoonian the *dialectical image* ignites strategies of *juxtaposition*, as both a means to engage in the processes of spectacle creation, and crucially as the embodiment of a visually temporal relationship.

beyond the superficial. For Hartoonian, the challenge for *critical spatial practices* is "how to use digital techniques and yet resist the prevailing culture of the spectacle" (see **Figure 7.6**).²⁴ This implicates the urban visual context *as* history, not in a nostalgic fashion, but as a means to reveal critical knowledge of the past into the present, 'opening' the design project to positive outcomes:

If the Promethean and forward looking vision of progress is suspended momentarily, then the rubble

*of the history might disclose something different. This is not to lament for the return of the bygone past, but to problematize the now of the present, and rework utopias that had to be submitted to the ashes of history, if capitalism had to survive.*²⁴

For Hartoonian the *dialectical image* ignites strategies of *juxtaposition*, as both a means to engage in the processes of spectacle creation, and crucially as the embodiment of a visually temporal relationship. Here, *juxtaposition* operates through visual contrast, "to startle, to make manifest that which lies hidden and forgotten, to bring the repressed unconscious to consciousness".²⁵ These moments of contrast intend to create contradictory experiences – whether through seemingly inappropriate materials, forms or languages – as a means to interrupt or displace the dominant identities of a particular context.

Juxtapositions disrupt the distracted montages of the urban fabric, constructing a dialogue in a similar manner to the strategy of *discontinuity*. However, unlike the design operations of *discontinuity*, which may occur as a wider anti-contextual gesture (as is the case with Parc de la Villette), *juxtaposition* requires a rich visual context to exist already. In this way, *juxtaposition* creates an intervention where an "insertion of objects, texts, images and voices into a context already thick with meanings has produced a complex scene". Reconfiguring the existing visual

ABOVE ^
Figure 7.7: 'Engel' (2002) by Tatzu Nishi. This architectonic sculpture is precariously positioned on the roof of the Cathedral of Basel, juxtaposing the two architectural typologies to destabilise the historical significance of the building

25. Gilloch, 1996, pp. 115-116.

26. Rendell, 2008, p. 104.

24. Hartoonian, 2010, p. 2.

ABOVE ^
Figure 7.8: ‘Discovering Columbus’ (2012) by Tatzu Nishi. In this instance Nishi surrounds a sculpture of Christopher Columbus in New York City - positioning it within a recreated domestic interior space. The effect is a formal juxtaposition that draws attention to the two latent ideologies of the moment and the domestic

context as an image of historical potency, resists the spectacle as a purely superficial device. Rather, it “invites the viewer to move through the work, drawing out hidden and differing meanings over time, rather than through the one-off shock effect”.²⁶

Importantly, without critical attention to the context, as related historically to the intentions of its production, *juxtaposition* befalls to mere spectacle. One such example of this complex negotiation is the effects of *juxtaposition* explored by artist/architect Tatzu Nishi. Nishi’s works attempt to question the languages and identities of particular contexts (predominantly monuments and public sculpture) through the intervention of architecture.²⁷ In *Engel* (2002) Nishi surrounds the weathervane atop a spire of the historic Cathedral of Basel with an inhabitable box (see **Figure 7.7**), *juxtaposing* the architecture of the gothic cathedral with languages of building sites (scaffolding, prefabricated components, plastic sheeting etc.). Similarly, in *Discovering Columbus* (2012), he constructs a ‘display’ room around a statue of Christopher Columbus in Manhattan, New York. Both rooms are reached via a precarious scaffolding stair, encapsulating the monument within a domestic interior space (see **Figure 7.8**). In such works Nishi inserts *juxtaposing* elements, interrupting sites of public history with scenes that are traditionally the forum of personal drama.

27. Bond, 2011.

Locally, Regan Gentry’s sculpture *Subject to Change* (2009) explores the strategy of *juxtaposition* through the insertion of architecture into a historically complex context. Gentry’s sculpture critically engages the history of the Wellington Urban Motorway by positioning a bright red structural skeleton of a ‘heritage-style building’ next to the motorway exit on Karo Drive (see **Figure 7.9**). The architectonic sculpture informs a contrast with the surrounding villas of Karo Drive – houses that were forcibly relocated by the New Zealand Transport Authority in 2006 to make way for a re-routing of the motorway off-ramp:

*The piece is a thoughtful reflection on the buildings that have been removed and those that have been retained. It will itself, we expect, become an embedded and popular part of the Te Aro streetscape.*²⁸

The sculpture is incomplete - a replica of two sections of an absent house, giving the impression that it is a “slice of building left behind by developers”.²⁹ Here, Gentry places a contrasting architectural form within the same context as the relocated and renovated villas, deriving its image from the architecture “in its immediate vicinity”.³⁰ In so doing the sculpture critically references the demolition of low-income property through forces of development, and typologically juxtaposes the forms of the nearby villas.

ABOVE ^
Figure 7.9: ‘Subject to Change’ (2009) by Regan Gentry. On the opposite side of Karo Drive a series of renovated and repositioned heritage villas have been placed. Gentry’s sculpture is sited at the original location of the villas that were removed by the motorway

28. Trust, 2009.

29. Gentry, 2009.

30. Ibid.

Additionally, by revealing only the skeleton of the villa's structure, Gentry is destabilising the superficial identity of the work – stripping back the facades of the villa – creating an inverted image, an anti-spectacle. Through this visual *juxtaposition* (colour, material, 'empty' space), the work is in dialogue with its context as both an anti-spectacle and as a historical referent – it is critically engaging the past in the present as a *dialectical image*.

The Jewish Museum Berlin: Engaging Historical Context in the Dialectical Image

The works of Gentry and Nishi are examples of small scale architectonic interventions adapting strategies of *juxtaposition* to create *dialectical images*. Applied holistically, and as a primary design strategy for a full-scale work of architecture, is Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin (1999). Libeskind's design uses a series of context-specific indices, 'lines', 'voids', 'traces', and 'axes' to generate design imperatives for a building that performs as an anti-spectacle. As such, the museum has been called "one of the important realized buildings of what can be called the indexical project in architecture".³¹ However, unlike the site-specificity of Kaye's approach, Libeskind uses his performative index to present a series of specific images – a critique of symbolic representations of

history through various subversive *juxtapositions*. In so doing, the design aligns with Benjamin's historical method as it denies the problematic assumption that historical context is a stable identity, treating the past and the present as dialectical rather than concrete.

Situated at the intersection of Markgrafstraße and Lindenstraße in the Friedrichstadt district of east Berlin, the Jewish Museum is directly adjacent to and on the property of the Prussian Collegienhaus (see Figure 7.12). Barely surviving the air raids that destroyed much of Berlin during World War II, the Collegienhaus was restored between 1963 and 1969 under the supervision of Günter Hönow. Originally erected as a Superior Court of Justice for the (then) Prussian state - the Collegienhaus now stands as a Baroque landmark and provides an entrance point to Libeskind's design. Importantly Friedrichstadt has become a locus point for the 'reconstruction' of Berlin since the 1980's, an annex identifiable through 'unrelated' structures of various eras and styles – an archipelago of heterogeneous architectural icons (see Figure 7.10 and 7.11).³² This has informed an environment that is rife with spectacle – impressive buildings that are spread out in an assortment of projected architectural images. Within this context the Jewish Museum Berlin was intended to stand out as "devoted above all to a representation of Jewish history as an integral part of the city's history".³³

OPPOSITE >
Figure 7.12: Map of the Jewish Museum Berlin (1999) within its urban context

31. Eisenman, Allen, & Lourie, 2008, p. 232.

BELOW, LEFT
Figure 7.10: 'Checkpoint Charlie' IBA Housing (1987) by Peter Eisenman, is one of the many impressive architectural icons in the Friedrichstadt District of Berlin.

32. See: Aureli, 2011.

33. Schneider & Libeskind, 1999, p. 19.

BELOW, RIGHT
Figure 7.11: The Jewish Museum Berlin sits on an isolated site - directly adjacent to the Collegienhaus. Many of the buildings in the Friedrichstadt district are visually and physically separated, forming a context of individual architectural images

34. Ibid

35. Smith, 2010, p.146.

Relative to this sensitive brief, the architecture of the Jewish Museum operates between, on the one hand, an 'uncompromising uniqueness' and on the other, a 'painstakingly' contextual approach with regards to the surrounding urban fabric and architectural histories.³⁴ These imperatives are yielded visually through indexical images that are experienced as one proceeds through and/or around the building. This is an attempt by the architect to refuse the construction of an icon or spectacle, instead, implicating an experience of 'open-ended ambiguity' that is "always on the verge of *becoming*".³⁵

Libeskind's proposal for the Museum is titled *Between the Lines*, thus informing the most visual of his spatio-historical indices. Straight lines, or axes, are used throughout the building – as uninterrupted or fragmentary markers – performing throughout the project as a double metaphor – a 'division' between the physical gesture and the segregation experienced by the Jewish population in Berlin.³⁶ At the core of this approach is a series of *juxtapositions*.

36. Libeskind & Binet, 1999, p. 23.

The primary *juxtaposition* strategy occurs through the building's radically new typological and material gestures that contradict the existing context,

RIGHT >

Figure 7.13: Axonometric diagram of the Jewish Museum Berlin and adjacent Collegienhaus highlighting the 'zigzag' extruded volumes of the museum in formal juxtaposition with its visual context

forming “a definitive contrast to the configuration and style of the old, yet at the same time [the museum] works as a lateral element that clearly defines the old building’s position in space”.³⁷ Facilitating this *juxtaposition* is the effect of the formal zigzag of the building (see Figure 7.13). Conceived in plan, the zigzag is generated “from imaginary lines on the city map which connect the site with the street addresses of great figures in Berlin Jewish cultural history – Heinrich von Kleist, Heinrich Heine, Mies van der Rohe, Rahel Varnhagen, Walter Benjamin, and Arnold Schönberg”.³⁸ Additionally, the zigzag is divided into 60 interior sections, referents to each of the “Stations of the Start” described by Benjamin in his notes about Berlin in the essay “One-Way Street”.³⁹ This theoretical gesture directs the occupant immediately towards the influence of the *dialectical image* throughout the project: regarding the history of Berlin’s oppressed Jewish population as ultimately recoverable in the ‘now’, experienced through architecture in a series of visual mechanisms, images, as occupants move through the new museum.⁴⁰

37. Schneider & Libeskind, 1999, p. 30.

38. Ibid, p. 36.

39. Smith, 2010, p. 145.

40. Ibid, p. 148.

RIGHT >
Figure 7.14: Exterior photograph of the museum in its urban context. The monolithic, zinc-clad exterior immediately contrasts the regular Baroque facade of the Collegienhaus.

The extruded volumes of the zigzag plan generates an experience of the exterior of the building that is immediately incongruous with its visual context. The visual composition created by Libeskind is striking in its contrast between the old (the ‘then’) and the new (the ‘now’). Analysed from its primary street elevation, the jagged masses and zinc-clad facades of the extension are immediately identifiable as ‘other’ to the baroque Collegienhaus, a visual disruption in the montage of the streetscape

< LEFT
Figure 7.15: Exterior photograph of the museum in its urban context. The zig-zag extruded volumes refuse to present the occupants with a clear external image of the building

that at first appears contradictory and intentionally iconic (see Figure 7.14). However, moving around the design, the initial spectacle of the contrast is unable to be fully grasped as the overall geometry of the building appears as a façade-less mass, rendering the totality of the zig-zag plan unintelligible through visual experience alone (see Figure 7.15 and 7.16). This is evidenced by the occupant’s inability to produce an overall exterior image or ‘gesamt’ of the building. According to Andrew Benjamin:

... [T]he contrast is unable to be fully grasped as the overall geometry of the building appears as a façade-less mass, rendering the totality of the zig-zag plan unintelligible through visual experience alone.

*The Museum’s external gesamt is deliberately broken and odd in outline, too well disguised by its cladding, and so bunker-like and tangential in its address to its neighbourhood that it resists every attempt to read it as iconic...[T]he design refuses to settle for spectacle.*⁴¹

41. Benjamin, 1997, pp. 115-116.

In so doing, the design forms a visual resistance to the wider heterogeneous context – subverting the visually detached and readily aestheticised buildings that are littered throughout Friedrichstadt. Much like the deconstruction of the villa typology by Gentry, this effect is largely due to the subversion of

RIGHT >

Figure 7.16: Exterior diagram/ photograph of the museum in its urban context. The 'bunker-like' exterior is anti-iconic, (in spite of its contrasting nature), critically engagin the visual context of the area. Additionally, the 'arbitrary' cuts and traces superimposed across the building's surface destabilise the regularity of the Collegienhaus's facade

the superficial aspects of the design – the façade. The shifting volumes and consistent zinc cladding create an anti-façade, *resisting* the temptation to 'plunge into the culture of spectacle'. Similarly, the *juxtaposition* created by the shifting masses of Libeskind's design infiltrate the background perspective, refusing to present a linear frontage. This contrast highlights the two-dimensional projection of the Collegienhaus's façade, placing the two structures in a visually contradictory dialogue, inviting the visitors of the

museum to question their relationship architecturally and historically.

Alongside the zigzag plan, an series of lines create an index that is visually superimposed across the distinctive zinc cladding of the exterior. The jagged volume of the building is wrapped with punctuations - lines of apertures that frame views from the inside, and destabilise the visual presentation of the exterior (see Figure 7.17). Additionally, these cuts contribute further to the visual *juxtaposition* of the two buildings occupying the site – creating a distinct contrast with the regular and symmetrical apertures of the Collegienhaus. As a critical design operation the lines have a simultaneous action – to resist the typical notion that a window should reveal the scale of the interior/exterior relationship, thus avoiding a stable image of the building's volume; and to shift the role of the window to that of an indexical marker. At first this index appears arbitrary, yet it is its arbitrariness that is in keeping with Libeskind's wider motivations, to express the seemingly 'meaningless' execution of Jews in Europe and their subsequent absence in Germany's past.

RIGHT >

Figure 7.17: Detail photograph of the exterior lines that punctuate the zinc facade. These 'traces' contribute to the design as an index and aperture

Physical exterior separation between the Collegienhaus and the Museum is crucial to the resonance of the overall *juxtaposition* of the two buildings. Initially it appears that Libeskind's design is dislocated from its adjacent contexts. However, this visual separation is inverted as visitors enter the extension, exposing the insertion of the entrance stairway of Libeskind's design within the foyer of the Collegienhaus (see Figure 7.18). In so doing, the new entrance announces a sharp division between the Museum's overall 'Germanness and Jewishness'. According to Terry Smith the effect of this *juxtaposition* is:

To vanquish the Museum of Berlin, leaving us to take the entire ensemble [dialectical image], Collegienhaus included, as, now, the Jewish Museum Berlin. This latter Museum certainly seems to be the experience of the visitor: the rococo structure functions as no more than an elaborated entrance.⁴²

42. Smith, 2010, p. 151.

As Smith identifies, upon overwhelming its exterior image the contrasting new museum infiltrates the fabric of the historical Collegienhaus. The purpose of this gesture is twofold: firstly, through its imposition within the interior of old, the new

museum adopts a dominant position in the hierarchy of the two *juxtaposed* buildings, contending that the new face of Berlin must be a projection of positivity and hope for European Jews as accessed through the past; secondly, the connection of the two buildings below the ground datum allows each structure to remain externally separate, subverting notions of *façadism*, and producing a singular object presence. Thus Libeskind constructs a *dialectical image* – synthesizing the structure of the past, literally and metaphorically, with the intrusion of the contrasting, new design. In so doing, the architecture 're-inserts' a series of *dialectical images* within a visual context of Berlin's Jewish past, present and future.

Conclusion: Implications and Strategies for Design

Following a re-reading of Walter Benjamin by Gevork Hartoonian, a position on the *dialectical image* has been argued. This critical, temporally-focused approach contributes to the framework of *critical spatial practices* by engaging visual and historical context(s) in the design process. Consequently, a temporal engagement will contribute to a polycontextual the 'opening' of *thick edge* conditions displayed by the Clifton Street Car Park.

Translating this critical practice into design research, the Jewish Museum Berlin displays how strategies related to *juxtaposition* can implicate the *dialectical image* in the design process. This is of particular relevance to the design case study, explicating how the current commercial and infrastructural visual context of the car park can be subverted. However, unlike the Friedrichstadt district, the Clifton Street Car Park is located in adjacent to a landscape (The Terrace) that is defined (in Benjaminian terms) by primarily modernist, developer-driven office buildings that construct a repetitive montage of glazed facades as one moves throughout the wider context.

In addition to the visual context of The Terrace, the rigidly orthogonal infrastructure of the

RIGHT >

Figure 7.18: Photograph of the museum entrance. Occupants enter the museum from within the Collegienhaus, revealing the dialogue that is informed by the exterior, that of hierarchical juxtaposition, as a critical one

Urban Motorway contributes to a visual identity that is distinctly 'modern'. These features are shown in [Figures 7.18-7.21](#).

Based upon these understandings, formal intervention within the thesis's experimental design site can be tested to contrast, contradict, and destabilise this visual orthogonality of the visual context. Following the strategies employed by Libeskind, this may involve the intervention of a 'radical' typology that contains an indices related to the contextual history of the site. In so doing, the design case study can frame a series of *dialectical images*, a series of spectacles that invert the homogeneity of the existing, yet explore dimensions beyond simply the contrast of spectacle.

Chapter Seven concludes the elucidation of strategies for Rendell's framework, and the fourth research question - demonstrating how *critical spatial practices* manifest in the built environment, in particular through strategies of architectural design. This thesis now looks to develop further information for the design case study by exploring the potential of architectural programme to engage a polycontextual approach to the *thick edge* condition.

RIGHT >

Figure 7.19: Photograph of the Shell Lane threshold. This moment is framed by the strong verticality of buildings either side, bisected by the motorway's horizontality. The natural irregularity of the greenbelt forms the backdrop. The lane is anti-pedestrian, forcing publics to access from the narrow footpaths either side

RIGHT >

Figure 7.20: Photograph of the underground pathway threshold. This moment is framed by the strong verticality of The Terrace to the left - the back of the high-city/low-city skyline.

Datum's 1 and 2 cut through the site in a planar horizontality, supported by the concrete columns

RIGHT >

Figure 7.21: Photograph of the Cable Car threshold. This reveals the vast volume underneath the Urban Motorway. A threshold within the site is also apparent - running between the columns that support Datum 4 in a longitudinal axis through the site.

Visually, the language of the infrastructure is dominant, however, the greenbelt overflows to the left

RIGHT >

Figure 7.22: Photograph of the northern stair threshold at night. The cavernous volume of space between Datum's 3 and 4 is desolate, empty, and unused.

The same language emerges as in figure 7.20, but is exaggerated when the car park is not actively used.

A POTENT(ially) CRITICAL PROGRAMME

Elucidating Programmatic Strategies
for Clifton Street Car Park

Introduction

An Economic Opportunity for Thick edges:
Cultural Nodes

Event Spaces: Performing Arts Facilities

Auditorium Typologies

Three Local Examples

An Exemplary Client: The NZIAF

Conclusion: Programme Brief

< OPPOSITE
Figure 8.1: Creating a cultural
node to open the thick edge.
Folly for a Flyover, Assembly
Architects (2011). The folly
is a temporary cinema that
occupies a space underneath
the overground train system in
Hackney, East London.

The most successful downtowns are populated by residents, workers, shoppers, diners, tourists and business visitors, who occupy buildings and enliven streets and public spaces during different days and hours. In the aggregate, the activities of these groups give the downtown area daytime and night-time vitality on work days, weekends, and holidays.¹

1. Kromer, 2010, p. 49.

John Kromer, Fixing Broken Cities.

Introduction

Based upon the definitions of, and design strategies for, *critical spatial practices* outlined so far in **Section Two**, this **Chapter Eight** now looks to positive strategies for the revitalisation of existing economic, political and social contexts of Clifton Street Car Park specifically through the implementation of architectural programme. As a means to contribute to the inversion of the *thick edge*, economic diversity and vitality is posited as a crucial component to architectural intervention – and the implementation of an arts-based ‘cultural node’ is presented.

The contributors to prosperous urban spaces identified above by Kromer (residential, business, retail, tourism) all currently exist within the various adjacent contexts of Clifton Street Car Park. However, the programmatic thickness of the site has constructed constrained conditions that refuse to take advantage of such factors, isolating social interactions and communities adjacent to the site. The intervention of a cultural node presents a response to these conditions that will allow for an economic and social inversion, creating a space of social permeability through the site.

Investigating this proposition further, Wellington’s cultural calendar reveals the need for additional venues to support its regular cultural events. An events facility for the New Zealand International Arts Festival as an exemplary client is proposed – a community that could occupy the new events facility design experiment, and for which the

core programme brief in the design case study will be structured. It is argued that the NZIAF (and Wellington events planning in general) requires three diverse scales of performance space. Consequently this chapter investigates performance spaces currently available in Wellington, analysed specifically through the CIRCA Theatre, the St James Theatre, and the Wellington Town Hall. This chapter concludes with the clarification of a programme brief, presenting the site as an opportunity for architectural design to introduce positive contextual flows, structuring a space that is *both* public *and* private.

In so doing, the thesis progresses the framework of *critical spatial practices*, presenting the Clifton Street Car Park as an opportunity for architectural design to introduce positive contextual flows to the *thick edge*, structuring a space that is both public and private. Mediating between the theoretical framings of **Section One**, and the design case study in **Section Three**; this chapter engages the fifth research question:

Can the implementation of architectural programmes that have beneficial polycontextual implications facilitate the production of *critical spatial practices* within the *thick edge*?

An Economic Opportunity for Thick Edges: Cultural Nodes

More so than other sectors, the cultural industries are seen to draw vital resources from city life and from city cultures. The city – and most often those with a compact metropolitan core – emerges as the effective horizon of place for the cultural industries. However complex it might be to theorise, cultural industries, in the main, ‘inhabit’ the city.²

Justin O'Connor

The heart of the cultural capital – The central city has many of New Zealand's foremost cultural institutions and events, from Te Papa and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra to the NZ International Arts Festival, the World of Wearable Art, and more. It is also home to many creative sector businesses. Wellington's creativity and heritage are reflected in its urban environment, for example through its growing range of public art. These central city features are the basis of Wellington's status as New Zealand's cultural capital.³

Wellington City Council

Wellington's cultural arts sector is a fundamental community in the city's identity, one which is 'reflected in the urban environment'. The production of this culture – as it is framed by architecture – is a "social phenomenon" that exhibits "intensely local characteristics"; characteristics which can be undermined by global-to-local structures of social exchange and commodification.⁴ This point is significantly reiterated by several critics, historians and urbanists who note that when cultural industry is driven by singularly motivated forces, "culture as a pattern of non-place globalized events and experiences", the repercussions are erosive to local cultures.⁵ Conversely, as highlighted above by Justin O'Connor, positive social production through cultural intervention is most successful when it is driven by distinctly local-to-global intentions and clustered within close proximity – sharing infrastructure and services.

Aligning with O'Connor's perspective, intervention within the Clifton Street Car Park through the culture industry can draw influence from 'within' the city – as a bi-product of intentions that are distinctly local. This approach draws economic and political strategy from influences that thrive upon the competitive advantage of "local, tacit know-how" which is "not accessible globally".⁶ A local-to-global approach does not deny the positive effects of global economy or policy; rather, it draws influence from a social directive that engages specific political and economic contexts as a means to "negotiate a new accommodation with the global market" in which the cultural industry of a particular city can engage with the global market whilst constructing a "distinctive and defensible local base".⁷ For O'Connor, cultural nodes are of particular economic and political efficiency when induced to create social flows at a specific location:

The intimate mapping of city and [cultural] node means that flow is not unidirectional; the culture industries work symbiotically with the city. Cultural production and consumption transform the landscape of the city... This 'revitalisation of the symbolic content' of cities draws in city governments, who link these transformations with 'ambitious public efforts of urban rehabilitation in the attempt to enhance local prestige, increase property values and attract new investments and jobs'.⁸

The cultural node concept, and revitalisation through cultural intervention, operates between arts and commerce. In so doing, cultural nodes present the potential to engage the existing *thick edge* economic and social contexts of the Clifton Street Car Park in an opportunity for productive enterprise.⁹ Locally, a positive synthesis between the arts and economics can be seen in the successes of WETA Workshop and the associated film industry of the region.¹⁰ However, in the case of WETA Workshop, there is little focus on the social production of space as an imperative – the industry itself is located outside of the urban centre and is both privately and economically driven. As an alternative approach, the centralisation of cultural and creative activity into a node concentrates 'multiple and diverse' publics into a new urban location.¹¹

2. O'Connor, 2004, p. 2. Justin O'Connor is Professor in the Creative Industries Faculty, University of Queensland, Australia

3. Council, "Central City Framework: Approach to Implementation", 2011, pp. 3-4.

4. Scott, 2000, pp. 3, 30-31

5. Scott, 2000, pp. 3-4. See also: Zukin, 1995

6. Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999, p. 14.

7. Ibid.

8. O'Connor, 2004, p. 3.

9. Roodhouse, 2010, p. 19.

10. Finlay, 2006, p. 37.

11. Ibid.

11. Sacco, 2010, pp. 40-41.

12. Council, "Profile of Wellington", 2013.

13. Forcast.id, 2013.

14. Cultural centralisation and

Given recent debates around Wellington's commercial future, this chapter proposes that a cultural node will address the *economic* context of the site based upon several existing contextual factors: The identification of Wellington as a "leading centre for creative industries"¹²; a projected population increase from 28,724 in central Wellington between 2013 and 2031, and necessary cultural vitality to support this growth¹³; the requirement for centralised cultural infrastructure, contributing to the knowledge-based sector of Wellington's economy, introducing economic diversity to the central city¹⁴; and the need for alternative economic infrastructure to revitalise Wellington's status as a "dying city", a process that has

The cultural node concept, and revitalisation through cultural intervention, operates between arts and commerce. In so doing it engages the existing *thick edge* economic and social contexts of the Clifton Street Car Park in an opportunity for productive enterprise.

diversity has been identified by the New Zealand Property Council as a potent economic revitalisation policy for Wellington, see: Council N. Z., 2013.

15. Recently New Zealand's Prime Minister, John Key, caused significant controversy with his statement that Wellington is "dying". See: Cowlishaw, Chapman, Hallahan, & Rutherford, 2013; Parliament, 2013.

16. Montgomery, 2003, p. 294. John Montgomery is an urban planner, Economist and Managing Director of Urban Cultures Ltd.

17. Ibid.

emerged from the migration of traditional corporate business (away from areas such as The Terrace) to Auckland.¹⁵

This raises a fundamental question, how can the polycontextual revitalisation of a *thick edge* contribute to resolving this problem? Building upon O'Connor's identification that an area of centralised and shared cultural production can instigate positive economic and social *flows* – John Montgomery highlights several strategies for their successful implementation.¹⁶ For Montgomery, the pitfall of cultural nodes is primarily the alienation of low socio-economic groups due to increased commercialisation and property value in surrounding areas. In the context of Clifton Street Car Park, this is less likely to be an issue as the site is surrounded by middle-to-high value residential, and high-value commercial zones.¹⁷ However, the adjacent suburbs have historically removed and repositioned the activity of low socio-economic groups - a factor that

can be critically approached through the design. An events facility has the ability to attract performances and groups that are known to have a high appeal across the social spectra. It is imperative to this thesis that the design case study engages these qualities as interpreted as political and/or socio-economic - qualities that not only create flows between the existing communities (Thorndon and The Terrace), but also introduce marginalised publics to the *thick edge*.

Upon drawing attention to this, Montgomery outlines several conditions that are necessary for the programmatic success of cultural nodes. These include¹⁸:

- ✦ Diversity of primary and secondary land uses
- ✦ Small, medium and large-scale cultural venues
- ✦ Presence of an evening economy, including café culture
- ✦ Strength of small-firm economy, including creative businesses
- ✦ Access to education providers
- ✦ Presence of festivals and events
- ✦ Availability of workspaces for artists and low-cost cultural producers
- ✦ Small-firm economic development
- ✦ Managed workspaces for office and studio users
- ✦ Location of arts development agencies and companies
- ✦ Arts and media training and education
- ✦ Complementary daytime and evening uses

18. Montgomery, 2003.

These points direct the implementation of architectural programme towards imperatives of private *and* public flexibility. Therefore, a cultural node at the Clifton Street Car Park must look to: facilitate multiple events *and* multiple publics; as well as an infrastructure that can support global *and* local groups at multiple times – day and night, throughout the year. Based upon these understandings, a successful node requires an examination of cultural events that occur locally and regularly. From the 2012 Wellington events calendar, these events include:

[Indoor Event]
[Indoor and/or Outdoor Event]

1. ASB Gardens Magic (summer outdoor cinema): 8-27 January
2. Positively Pasifika Festival: 19 January
3. Wellington Cup Carnival: 19-26 January
4. NZ Hertz Sevens Tournament: 1-2 February
5. NZ Fringe Festival: 15 February – 9 March
6. Paniyiri Greek Food Festival; 23 February
7. Chinese New Year Festival: 23-24 February
8. NZ International Arts Festival: 24 February – 18 March
9. Writers and Readers Week: 9-14 March
10. Capital E National Arts Festival: 11-23 March
11. Southeast Asian Night Market: 16 March
12. NZ Dragon Boat Festival: 16-17 March
13. Holi Festival of Colour: 17 March
14. Festa Italiana: 24 March
15. Wellington Fashion Week: 3-7 April
16. Battle of the Bands: 18 April – 15 June
17. Creative Fibre Festival: 25-28 April
18. NZ International Comedy Festival: 26 April -19 May
19. National Shakespeare Festival: 1 June
20. Wellington Jazz Festival: 6-8 June
21. The Performance Arcade: 8 June – 27 July
22. Wellington Lux Festival: 21-24 June
23. NZ International Film Festival: 27 July – 11 August
24. Beervana: 9-10 August
25. Wellington on a Plate Food Festival: 9-25 August
26. NZ Chocolate Festival: 6 – 8 September
27. Japan Festival of Wellington: 9 September
28. Mexican Food Festival: 12-19 September
29. NZ Improv Festival: 17-21 September
30. NZ World of Wearable Arts: 26-30 September
31. Blossom Festival: 29 September
32. Diwali Festival of Lights: 21 October
33. Wellington Folk Festival: 25-28 October
34. Blow Creative Arts Festival: 10-24 November

Many of these events have overlapping dates and venue requirements, informing a dynamic and ever-changing cultural ‘scene’ in Wellington (see Figure 8.3). Additionally, as Figure 8.3 reveals, larger and longer events are clustered around January, February and March (summer) due to Wellington’s temperamental weather conditions and lack of large,

covered, outdoor spaces.

Although some of these festivals have designated venues, many are disparately located and would benefit from a centralised, flexible location. Of those identified, the New Zealand International Arts Festival is the only event/festival which requires permanent office space – other events are organised independently or through governing bodies such as Creative NZ.¹⁹ Based upon these understandings, a critical design intervention can test an opportunity for programme to enable a positive inversion to a *thick edge* condition. Moreover, by providing a facility that is capable of accommodating a number of these events, critical architecture looks to initiate positive economic, social and political solutions – engaging multiple publics in the production of a polycontextual space.

19. CreativeNZ.

Event Spaces: Performing Arts Facilities

Of the events identified, many require only portable infrastructure (food markets, etc.), and can be readily superimposed within the Clifton Street Car Park site. Events that require significant infrastructure are primarily performing arts and cinema based. As such, the event spaces will be designed around

DRAMA

ENTERTAINMENT

DANCE

CONCERT

< LEFT
Figure 8.2: Diagrammatic key of four categories of performance

RIGHT >
Figure 8.3: Diagram showing annual cultural events in Wellington central. Events are clustered summer and winter - requiring open-air or indoor venues

the larger programmatic requirements of a flexible performing arts facility. This requires an analysis of specific requirements for performing arts venues of varying scales.

The performing arts can be generally divided into four distinct categories: *drama*, *entertainment*, *dance*, and *concert* (see Figure 8.2).²⁰ As performance types vary significantly (from dance, music, opera and theatre, to spoken word, cinema, musical theatre, and circus arts) different events requiring specific spatial and format requirements that may fluctuate in relation to the event/venue size. Venues that encompass these activities can be divided into: 'receiving' facilities, presenting touring shows and require rapid change-over between events; 'producing' facilities, encompassing original productions; and those that do both. To provide maximum opportunity for a variety of publics to engage with the design, the programme brief will provide a series of facilities that are flexible to both produce and/or receive.

Performance venues are designed around three programmatic adjacencies: *front-of-house*; *auditorium* (staging and seating); and *back-of-house* (see Figure 8.4). Traditionally the relationship between each of these components is linear, informing a straightforward separation between performer and spectator (see Figure 8.5). Each of these components has a variety of sub-components which facilitate the various standard functions of the venue (see Figure 8.6). However, the complicated existing physical context of Clifton Street Car Park, and the design intention to construct a variety of spatial practices and social flows, requires a negotiation of these

adjacencies – informing how they are dispersed within the context of the site.

Auditorium Typologies

Regardless of the facility's intentions, the format of the auditorium - the space that encapsulates the relationship between the spectator and the performer - is crucial to the flexibility and experience of any performance. This relationship frames the interaction of spectator and performer, prompting the arrangement of specific front-of-house, staging, and back-of-house functions. Auditoria design follows six formats that are capable of encompassing most performance events (see Figure 8.7). Positioning a performing arts facility within the space of Clifton Street Car Park requires a brief examination of these existing venue typologies:

Proscenium/end-stage: The proscenium stage or 'end-stage' is the most common form of auditoria, prevalent since its emergence as an operatic venue in the seventeenth century. This model is based upon a performance/spectator division by the 'proscenium arch' or 'fourth wall', a threshold between the auditorium and stage that frames and reveals the event.²¹ The audience is positioned end-on with the auditorium to maximise viewing, however, this forms a limiting and passive 2-way relationship between audience and performer(s). The stage is raised, often with an orchestral pit between stage and audience. Performers enter from back-of-house to stage in a linear format.

21. Theatre Projects, 2013.

Thrust Stage: taking cues from the early

RIGHT >
Figure 8.4: Diagram showing normative adjacencies in section (LEFT) and plan (RIGHT) for performance venues: back-of-house (BOH); front-of-house (FOH); and auditorium. Traditionally these relationships are linear.

ABOVE ^
Figure 8.5: Isometric diagram showing normative adjacencies in proportionate volume for a linear performance venue. BOH activities are often 'stacked', introducing a vertical adjacency.

outdoor Greek amphitheatres, 'thrust' stage venues expand upon the proscenium format, extending the down-stage stage outwards, thus positioning the audience around three sides of the performance. The thrust stage may be backed by an open or closed proscenium arch. Performers enter from the rear of the stage or through the body of the audience. The extended stage invokes a high degree of intimacy between stage and audience, allowing 270° visual aspect for the performers.

Thru-scenium: thru-scenium staging is a hybrid-format event auditorium. Thru-scenium stages extend down-stage, as well as stage-left and stage-right, into the audience, usually in the form of an arc. Thru-scenium arrangements allow greater performance flexibility to accommodate multiple performance types in one venue.

Traverse/Promenade: this format places the audience adjacent to the stage, informing a linear and parallel performance/spectator relationship. Usually rectilinear, the stage is a 'stretched' thrust, allowing for visibility around three sides of the performance. The audience perceives other spectators as the backdrop, eliminating the need for a traditional end-on

1. Function room(s)	9. Stage
2. Catering, bar/kitchens	10. Administration
3. Foyer/lobby	11. Production offices
4. FOH offices and storage	12. BOH dressing rooms, toilets
5. Toilets	13. Wardrobe(s)
6. Control room	14. Scene dock/staging
7. Auditorium	15. Rehearsal room/studio

proscenium. Performers enter from the rear of the stage, often directly from the back-of-house.

Arena: also referred to as 'in-the-round', arena staging places the performance in the centre of the auditorium space. This constructs an essentially free-form event space as stage direction and proscenium are made redundant. Performers are required to enter through the audience. The intimacy of the relationship between performer and spectator is entirely dependent on the scale of the auditorium.

Black Box: also known as 'flat-floor' or adaptable spaces, black box stages are a variation of the arena format - capable of accommodating a wide variety of *indoor* small-scale performance types and configurations. They are usually without architectural embellishment and often accompany larger venues as rehearsal spaces. The spectator/performance configuration varies according to the production.

The design case study will look to provide a facility capable of producing/receiving productions that may require any of these typologies. Elucidating the specific requirements for each requires an examination of Wellington's current venues.

ABOVE ^
Figure 8.6: Plan diagram showing normative adjacencies in proportionate volume for a linear performance venue.

BELOW
Figure 8.7: Diagram showing
 six common auditorium layouts

PROSCENIUM/END-STAGE

Scale: Any, 50+ seating,

Format: Permanent Stage, 1 option, indoor or outdoor

Staging: Raised stage, usually permanent.
 Down-stage, up-stage, stage left/right

Use: *most performance types, theatre, opera, small-scale concert, etc.*

THRUST STAGE

Scale: Any, 50+ seating,

Format: Permanent Stage, 2 options, indoor or outdoor

Staging: Raised stage, usually permanent.
 Down-stage (extended), up-stage (possibly closed), stage left/right

Use: *most performance types, theatre, opera, small-scale concert, etc.*

THRU-SCENIUM

Scale: Any, 50+ seating,

Format: Permanent Stage, 1 option, indoor or outdoor

Staging: Raised stage, usually permanent.
 Down-stage, up-stage, stage left/right

Use: *most performance types, theatre, opera, small-scale concert, etc.*

TRAVERSE/PROMENADE

Scale: Any, 50+ seating,

Format: Permanent or temporary Stage, adjacent seating, indoor or outdoor

Staging: centre stage, usually permanent.
 Only down-stage, up-stage

Use: *Runway performance types - concert, fashion, gymnasium, circus, bespoke etc.*

ARENA/‘IN-THE-ROUND’

Scale: Any, 50+ seating,

Format: Permanent or temporary Stage, multiple seating options, indoor or outdoor

Staging: No discernible stage
 blocking/directions

Use: *Flexible performance types - concert, free-form theatre, bespoke etc.*

FLAT FLOOR/BLACK BOX

Scale: 50-500 seating

Format: Flexible, indoor

Staging: Flat. No discernible stage
 blocking/directions

Use: *free-form theatre, fringe theatre, open-form*

Three Local Examples

According to the Wellington City Council and the Venue Web Trust, there are 25 spaces in central Wellington that regularly host the performing arts.²² These include (see Figure 8.8):

1. The Botanical Gardens Sound Shell
2. Memorial Theatre
3. Clifton Street Car Park (proposed)
4. Lighthouse Cinema Wigan Street
5. The National Library Theatre
6. City Art Gallery Projection Room
7. Civic Square
8. Wellington Town Hall
9. Michael Fowler Centre
10. Plaza Ballroom
11. Wellington Opera House
12. Gryphon Theatre Ghuznee Street
13. TSB Arena
14. Shed 6
15. Frank Kitts Park
16. Designated Wellington Waterfront Area
17. St James Theatre
18. Reading Cinema (Courtenay Place)
19. CIRCA Theatre
20. Soundings Theatre (Te Papa)
21. Paramount Cinema
22. Hannah's Playhouse
23. The Embassy Theatre
24. BATS Theatre Company
25. Waitangi Park
26. Cuba Street

Mapping the locations of these venues shows that performing arts facilities, much like the events they accommodate, are generally decentralised (see Figure 8.8). Most of these venues can be grouped according to four positional patterns: the Civic Square node; the Cambridge/Kent Terrace node; the Courtenay Place passage; and a curvilinear axis that follows the Waterfront. This also identifies that there is a significant lack of performance facilities within close geographic proximity to the Clifton Street Car Park – the site exists within a vacuum of performance-based cultural activity.

Of Wellington's 25 main existing performance spaces, scale, seating, flexibility and shelter vary significantly. Figure 8.9 demonstrates that these spaces range in seating size from small

(0-500) to medium (500-1500) to large (1500+). Of these 25 spaces: three venues are limited to cinema projection only (Embassy, Readings, and Lighthouse); two venues have been marked as earthquake prone (Paramount Cinema, Wellington Town Hall); and there is currently a total lack of open-air, outdoor performance spaces that are sheltered.

A number of existing venues are small-scale, capable of seating up to 350 persons in a flat-floor, black-box format. However, *none* of these seat more than 322 people, requiring events with capacity seating allowances of 350-500 people to occupy a medium-sized venue – primarily the St James Theatre, or a partitioned section of the TSB Arena.

Examining the medium-sized venues shows a *problematic shortage* of 500-2000 seat facilities. Events with seating capacities in this range are restricted to the St James Theatre which is a heritage end-on theatre with limited staging formats. In addition to the St James, these events may occupy: a partitioned section of the TSB Arena; the lower levels of the Michael Fowler Centre (Concert Hall); or the earthquake prone Wellington Town Hall.

Within the large existing venues, there is a sufficient range of auditoria typologies and seating flexibility. Events with seating capacities in this category are generally distributed according to performance type: concerts accommodated by the Michael Fowler Centre; opera and dance accommodated by the Opera House; and entertainment and recreation events accommodated by the TSB Arena. Although the TSB Arena is considered to be a 'flexible' venue with multiple size/seating arrangements, it is widely acknowledged that it is an acoustically inappropriate venue for small to medium capacities. Alongside Central Wellington's large auditoria, there are several uncovered outdoor performance venues. Events which are specifically designed for open-air performance (large ceiling height, flexible open space) are required to provide temporary canopy/tenting shelter as all of Central Wellington's large outdoor performance spaces are un-sheltered. Additionally, most of these venues do not provide permanent seating of any kind.

RIGHT, OPPOSITE >
Figure 8.8: Map of Wellington showing the location of the 25 central city performance spaces

OVERLEAF >
Figure 8.9: Diagram of 25 performance venues/spaces in central Wellington. These venues vary in size, infrastructure and shelter. This diagram evidences that there is a shortage of 500-2000 seat venues

SMALL VENUES: 0-500 Capacity

MEDIUM VENUES: 500-1500 Capacity

PERFORMANCE VENUES: Local Context

- Performing Arts Venues
- Cinema ONLY Venues
- Earthquake-Prone Venues
- Outdoor (Greenspace)
- Outdoor (Paved)
- ⊘ Shortage

LARGE VENUES: 1500-2000 Capacity

WELLINGTON TOWN HALL
(Seats 2,000, Main Auditorium)

LARGE VENUES (INDOOR): 2000+ Capacity

2,000-2,500

WELLINGTON CONVENTION CENTRE
/MICHAEL FOWLER CENTRE
(Seats 2,209)

OPERA HOUSE
(Seats 1381 + 849 in Stalls; Total 2,230)

2,500+

SHED 6
(3,000-5,000 All Standing)

TSB ARENA/EVENTS CENTRE
(Seats 4,430; 5,655, Standing;
Total 10,085)

LARGE VENUES (OUTDOOR): 2000+ Capacity

DESIGNATED WATERFRONT AREA (Outdoor)
(0-3,000 All Standing)

FRANK-KITT'S PARK (Outdoor)
(0-3,000 Amphitheatre seating)

CUBA STREET (Semi sheltered, outdoor)
(0-3,000+ All Standing)

BOTANICAL GARDENS SOUNDSHELL (outdoor)
(0-3,000+ All Standing)

CIVIC SQUARE (Outdoor)
(0-3,000+ All Standing)

WAITANGI PARK (Outdoor)
(0-3,000+ All Standing)

This thesis proposes that there is a clear opportunity in Central Wellington for a multiple-typology and scale performance facility at the Clifton Street Car Park to provide:

Small, indoor, flexible black-box theatre space, capable of hosting events with capacity seating of 350-500 persons;

Medium, indoor, venue space with flexible front-on staging formats, capable of hosting events with capacity seating of 500-1500 persons;

Medium, indoor, venue space with flexible side-on (traverse) staging formats, capable of hosting events with capacity seating of 500-1500 persons;

Large, open-air, *sheltered* outdoor venue space capable of hosting events with capacity *standing/seating* of 1500-2000 persons.

Multiple 'event' spaces, overflow areas where publics can perform or spectate.

A flexible range of staging/auditorium typologies to accommodate multiple typologies.

These spaces will be arranged in such a way that several of their adjacencies can be shared, recognising the benefits of implementing an architectural infrastructure for multiple venues in one location. As such, three of the local venues highlighted in this chapter can be analysed as examples that elucidate specific programmatic outlines to partially fulfil these design requirements: the CIRCA theatre; the St James Theatre; and the Wellington Town Hall (see Figure 8.10). Elements will be taken from each of these examples, combined with standard theatre typological requirements, to inform a design that is appropriate to the needs of the Wellington cultural environment.

The CIRCA Theatre

Located at 1 Taranaki Street, the CIRCA Theatre is one of Wellington's premiere small-scale theatres. Constructed in 1994, the theatre was a reaction to the lack of flexible black box venues in the city. The venue encompasses two stages: a

main auditorium, designed to seat approximately 250 people, taking the form of a 'kite' shape; and a secondary studio theatre, that is capable of seating 100 people in a variety of formats and provides rehearsal space.

Custom seating in both theatres allows for flexible arrangements according to the requirements of the performance. Lighting is connected to a movable steel grid that surrounds the stages. Analysing the theatre in plan reveals that the programmatic adjacencies are slightly irregular to the normative linear format as BOH activity is split and circulation is not linear (see Figure 8.11). Important requirements elucidated from this example include:

BOH: dressing room space for 5-10 performers; separate parking/loading bay; significant staging area(s); a workshop; storage and a kitchen to facilitate both performers and publics. FOH: significant gathering/overflow space in the entrance foyer; 6 separate toilet cubicles (3 male, 3 female); a bar.

AUDITORIUM: 49m² stage (identical for both); pipe grids over stages to accommodate lighting; flexible seating layouts; limited entrance points.

From this exemplar it is clear that a 350-500 seat black box theatre incorporated into the design case study will require larger floor areas for all three adjacencies, maintaining similar area proportions.

The St James Theatre

The St James Theatre, built in 1912, is recognised as one of Wellington's most valued heritage buildings. Located at 77-87 Courtenay Place, the venue is a traditional proscenium theatre, with linear programme adjacencies. Of the medium-sized venues in Wellington it is the most flexible, seating up to 1552 people and hosting events from all four performance categories.

Given the time of its design, the St James is limited in its production flexibility – providing no permanent lighting, rigging, or sound equipment. The spectator/performer relationship is front-on, divided

BELOW
Figure 8.10: Diagram
showing location and exterior
visual context of three local
performance venues

LOCAL EXEMPLAR 1: Wellington Town Hall

LOCAL EXEMPLAR 2: Circa Theatre

LOCAL EXEMPLAR 3: St James Theatre

LOCAL EXEMPLAR 1: THE CIRCA THEATRE
Ground Floor Layout Plan (NTS)

- 1 Entrance from street
- 2 Reception
- 3 Foyer and bar for both theatres
- 4 Toilet block

FRONT-OF-HOUSE

- C Circulation

- 6 Main theatre 250 SEATS
- 7 Main theatre stage (49m²)
- 8 Studio theatre 100 SEATS
- 9 Studio theatre stage (flat floor)

AUDITORIA

- 10 Control rooms
- 11 Back stage (both theatres)
- 12 Parking/loading bay
- 13 Workshop/main stage entrance
- 14 Storage
- 15 Kitchen

BACK-OF-HOUSE

Front-of-house activities occupy approx. 30% of programmatic volume

Auditoria activities occupy approx. 40% of programmatic volume

Back-of-house activities occupy approx. 30% of programmatic volume

LEFT
Figure 8.11: Spatial analysis of the CIRCA Theatre

RIGHT, OPPOSITE
Figure 8.12: Spatial analysis of the St James Theatre

LOCAL EXEMPLAR 2: THE St JAMES THEATRE
Ground Floor Layout Plan (NTS)

- 1 Entrance from street
- 2 Foyer
- 3 Bar
- 4 West Court

- C Circulation

- 6 Auditorium 1552 SEATS
- 7 Orchestral pits (60m² ea.)
- 8 Proscenium curtain
- 9 Main proscenium stage (250m²)
- 10 Removable stage left/right
- 11 Control room

- 12 Parking/loading bay
- 13 Backstage/dressing rooms
- 14 Transformer room
- 15 Staging area
- 16 Storage (under stage)

FRONT-OF-HOUSE

Front-of-house activities occupy approx. 20% of programmatic volume

AUDITORIUM

Auditoria activities occupy approx. 40% of programmatic volume

BACK-OF-HOUSE

Back-of-house activities occupy approx. 40% of programmatic volume

LOCAL EXEMPLAR 3: Wellington Town Hall

190

Ground Floor Layout Plan (NTS)

First Floor Layout Plan (NTS)

- 1 Entrance from street
- 2 Foyer for both theatres
- 3 Bar
- 4 West Court

- C Circulation

- 6 Main auditorium 2,000 SEATS
- 7 Main stage, thru-scium, (120m²)
- 8 Iliot theatre 264 SEATS
- 9 Iliot theatre stage (flat floor)
- 10 Stage Lift
- 11 Control Rooms

- 12 Parking/loading bay (underground)
- 13 Backstage/dressing rooms
- 14 Green Room
- 15 Staging area
- 16 Council Chamber/storage

FRONT-OF-HOUSE

AUDITORIUM

BACK-OF-HOUSE

Ground Floor

First Floor

Front-of-house activities occupy approx. 30% of programmatic volume

Auditoria activities occupy approx. 40% of programmatic volume

Back-of-house activities occupy approx. 30% of programmatic volume

< LEFT, OPPOSITE
Figure 8.13: Spatial analysis of
the Wellington Town Hall

by an orchestra pit (see Figure 8.12). Additionally, there is limited space for FOH activity, only encompassing 20% of the overall theatre's floor area. Many of the FOH components are displaced by the theatre's location – Courtenay Place contains a variety of bars, restaurants and public gathering areas. Important requirements elucidated from this example include:

BOH: dressing room space for up to 50 performers; separate parking/loading bay; significant dressing area(s); storage underneath the stage

FOH: off-street gathering/overflow space in the entrance foyer; 15 separate toilet cubicles (5 male, 10 female), 5 male urinals; a bar/cafe

AUDITORIUM: 250m² stage with adjacent staging wings; above/below backstage-staging area adjacency (circulation via a stair); linear staging/stage adjacency; permanent seating arrangements (tiered)

From this exemplar several important programmatic factors arise. The medium-sized theatres in the design case study will look to improve on the St James Theatre by providing: a flexible, front-on or side-on staging layout; sufficient FOH gathering spaces; and flexible spectator seating arrangements. Additionally, based upon the St James precedent, the medium sized event spaces can incorporate above/below adjacencies between the staging and backstage areas.

Wellington Convention Centre/Town Hall

Constructed in 1901 the Wellington Town Hall is a Category One Historical Places Trust Heritage Building. Recently, the Town Hall has been determined unsafe in light of the new earthquake code; from 31/08/2012, the estimated re-strengthening cost was \$30 million (\$10 million more than expected).²³ The Town Hall is the only example of a performance venue in Wellington that exhibits programme adjacencies and sizes for a specific venue capacity of 1500-2000 seats.

Unlike the St James Theatre, the Town Hall exhibits a variety of design elements that make it

a flexible space for events. Similar to the CIRCA theatre, the Town Hall has two stages (see Figure 8.13). The main stage is primarily front-on in format; however, the ground floor has no permanent seating and is therefore capable of hosting thru-scenium or traverse performances. Depending on layout, the main stage has a capacity of 2000 seats. The secondary stage (the Iliot Theatre) seats a capacity of 264 and is a rigidly front-on proscenium format. Programmatic adjacencies are distributed almost evenly (unlike the St James), as FOH and BOH volumes are shared between the two theatres. Important requirements elucidated from this example include:

BOH (distributed over two floors): dressing rooms; toilets, staging area are dressing room space for up to 70 performers; separate underground parking/loading bay; significant dressing area(s); storage underneath the stage.

FOH: multiple entrances to the main auditorium; large foyer/gathering/overflow space at the entrance; 20 separate toilet cubicles (4 male, 16 female), 10 male urinals; a bar.

AUDITORIUM: 120m² main stage with adjacent staging wings; multiple above/below/adjacent backstage-staging areas (circulation via a stairs); linear staging/stage adjacency; permanent (first floor, Iliot theatre) and flexible seating arrangements (ground floor).

BELOW
Figure 8.14: Exterior
photograph of 'Anvil House',
142 Wakefield Street, the
current location of the NZIAF
which has been listed as
earthquake prone

23. Schouten, 2012.

The Wellington Town Hall is a relevant example for the design case study as it implements facilities for two theatres with flexible staging and seating arrangements. Of particular importance are its shared FOH and BOH facilities, distributed in a non-linear format throughout the building. However, circulation limitations arise as the building structure is rigid and bounded, preventing publics from flowing between performance spaces with ease.

An Exemplary Client: The NZIAF

The New Zealand International Arts Festival (NZIAF) is a bi-annual series of cultural events that run from the 24th of February until the 18th of March, showcasing the works of international and local artists in 'outdoor spaces' and 'indoor stages' across Wellington. The 2012 festival was attended by 275,000 people, 30% of which were tourists, making it one of the city's marquee public events.²⁴

24. Williams, 2013.

Although the festival occurs once every two years for a four-week period, its size and scope require permanent administration staff and offices, located at Level 2, Anvil House, 142 Wakefield Street, Te Aro (see Figure 8.14). Permanent festival staffs (approximately 30-50 persons) occupy one floor of this building year-round. Based upon these figures, the NZIAF permanent staffs require 800-1000m² of office space. Additionally, Section 124 of The Building Act 2004 and the Wellington City Council 'List of Earthquake Prone Buildings' (released on 03/05/2013), posits that Anvil House has been marked as unsafe for occupation without strengthening.

Analysing the 2010 event programme reveals that *nine* venues are currently designated to host the NZIAF programme. The festival contains an itinerary that consists of various forms of performance and arts-based events (see Figure 8.15).

The flexibility of its programme, combined with the need for a new location for its private branch renders the NZIAF an exemplary client for the design case study, introducing a permanent physical, social, and economic infrastructure which can also support

a variety of Wellington's other cultural events.

Conclusion: Programme Brief

As **Chapter Six** acknowledges, architectural programme is fundamental to the construction of positive socio-spatial design strategies. Building upon this argument, **Chapter Eight** has focused on how programme may contribute practical dimensions to an inversion of the rigid economic and social contexts of the Clifton Street Car Park *thick edge* condition. Whilst it is recognised that economic rigidity may manifest in various forms, the purpose of this chapter has been specifically to find a positive critical solution to the car park's current limited singular use.

Highlighting the need for cultural and economic diversity in Wellington's downtown, the 'cultural node' concept is proposed – taking advantage of Wellington's self-proclaimed identity as New Zealand's 'cultural capital'. Multiple events in Wellington's cultural calendar have been identified, drawing forth the conclusion that there is not only a lack of cultural activity within close proximity to the car park, but also, that many of the aforementioned events are currently lacking sufficient facilities to support them. *Resisting* the normative approach of constructing new event spaces, this thesis proposes that the Clifton Street Car Park is an ideal opportunity to introduce economic vitality to the area and to structure the flexible requirements of an events facility.

Upon elucidating the typological requirements and programmatic adjacencies of standard performance venues, a severe shortage of flexible, 500-1500 capacity venues exists in Wellington. Further analysing the programmatic requirements of such a facility, three local examples of various scale are discussed in detail. Additionally, the requirement for permanent occupation of the site, introducing public/private looseness, resulted in the selection of the New Zealand International Arts Festival as an exemplary client. This client allows the programme to contribute a permanent infrastructure and architectural design within the site – initiating year-round social activity, and engaging

socio-spatial flows through the car park. Additionally, the programme contributes to a potential political redefinition of the site as a public and private space that is neither ‘inner residential’ nor confined to the ‘central area’ commerce.

This design process and analysis informs the core parameters for an events facility to successfully fulfil a local problem. Alongside the design strategies investigated in chapters five, six, and seven, this chapter posits a method for inverting the *thick edge* as a site of negativity, treating the car park as an opportunity for positive local development. Upon concluding this chapter, a programmatic brief is presented.

Programmatic Footprint(s):

Office (private)

800m² permanent office space

400m² flexible office space – able to be rented out as office space or artist studios during Arts Festival off-season

5-10 toilets (non-public)

50 m² communal space

Auditoria (public)

Six performance areas: three formal, three informal.

Formal:

Thrust/proscenium/thru-scenium theatre

Seating: 1000-1500

Traverse/arena theatre

Seating: 1000-1500

Black Box/in-the-round theatre

Seating: 350-500

Informal:

Open-air, covered, flat-floor performance space

Seating: 750-1500

Open-air, covered, sound-shell/cinema space

Seating: 750-1500

Open-air, covered, ad-hoc performance/
event spaces

Seating: flexible, up to 100

Front-of-House (public)

Separate circulation/overflow/gathering spaces for all of the main performance areas

Seating and recreation spaces

Art display areas

Advertising spaces

Café/Bar

Public Bookstore

Reception/coat check/ticket office

Toilets: male 10-15; female 10-15; 2 paraplegic; parent room (s)

Back-of-House (private)

A recital/rehearsal space, able to be hired out to the public

Dressing rooms (5-10m²) for up to 100 performers

Toilets 5-10

Storage 100-200m²

Workshop 100-250m²

Loading/delivery bay

Plant room

Circulation routes for performers and BOH staff

Back stage(s)

Staging area(s) for main theatres

Programmatic adjacencies

Within reason, theatres may share BOH facilities such as staging/back stage areas.

Loading areas and storage facilities must accommodate delivery equipment as well as circulation routes that allow for movement between theatres.

NEXT PAGE
Figure 8.15: Flow chart of the 2010 New Zealand International Arts Festival. A significant proportion of the events are hosted by 1500-2000 seat venues

3

TESTING

The more complex and the more public a project is, the more problematic it is for the architect to be critical. Public projects by definition aim to express shared cultural values, and these can become dysfunctional – even meaningless – because a critical approach may be openly misconstrued...superficially, critical architecture looks like normal architecture: you have to examine its production to discover where the critical position lies.'

1. Wigglesworth, 2007.

Sarah Wigglesworth

Subtraction

Verticality

Horizontality

Juxtaposition

So far in this thesis, **Section One** investigated a discursive problem, an urban problem, and a site for design-research. Building upon **Section One**, **Section Two** developed the framework put forth in **Chapter Two**, further examining opportunities for critical architecture to engage specific cultural and contextual attributes of the Clifton Street Car Park, as an exemplar of an urban *thick edge* condition.. These contexts include: *historical, economic, political, social, physical* and *visual*.

Additionally in **Section Two**, through a specific analysis of three key authors - Nick Kaye, Kim Dovey and Gevork Hartoonian - and an investigation into related contemporary architectural case studies, the design-research revealed a number of strategies for *critical spatial practices* as they relate to *Architecture's Tighrope*. These strategies focus Rendell's framework further, translating the theoretical and discursive research questions into design approaches for the problem of urban *thick edges* as an urban social, spatial and cultural barrier condition.

The primary focus of these critical approaches is to invert the *thick edge*, and to elucidate strategies that can facilitate a polycontextual *flow* through the site. Upon identifying and analysing these contexts for the design case study, *Architecture's Tighrope*, is yielded through engagement with formal strategies of:

Continuity

Discontinuity

Addition

The strategies listed aim to engender the design with dual intentions - to resist and critique the forces which have contributed to the formation of the *thick edge* condition; and to investigate / test contemporary applications of *critical spatial practices*. In doing so, *critical spatial practices* attempt to dialectically *mediate* between cultural place-production and formal imperatives, revitalising the original proposition of K. Michael Hays for a critical architecture.

Concluding **Section Two**, a programmatic imperative for the design has been established – a multi-functional performance facility that accommodates the bi-annual New Zealand International Arts festival, as well as a wide range of other festival activities and public park functions. The broader aims of this programme are: to facilitate a wide range of temporary events that occur throughout Wellington's cultural calendar; to generate a cultural node that economically and politically reconfigures the site into a positive public/private space; and to enhance social permeability through the *thick edge*. These programmatic priorities add to the structure and constraints of the design case study, introducing requirements for six performance spaces with flexible seating and staging arrangements:

[Formal Staging]

Thru-scenium

Traverse

Black Box

[Informal Staging]

Open-air cinema/projection space

Flat-floor

Ad-hoc

In addition to the performance areas the facility will accommodate various public and private functions, attempting to create a non-deterministic, relational *loose* space for multiple publics that can operate throughout the day and evenings.

Section Three looks to further engage critical architectural design to test these parameters, developing a hypothetical proposal for the intervention of various architectures, spaces and programmes sited within the Clifton Street Car Park. The production and outcome(s) of this process are situated in **Chapter Nine** which discusses and presents the overall design case study in relation to pertinent programmatic, contextual, and strategic issues.

Following the presentation of the case study, *Architecture's Tightrope* critiques strengths and weaknesses that emerged as consequences of the design process. **Chapter Ten** concludes **Section Three** and the thesis, reflecting upon the implications of the design-research according to the discursive and urban issues. As Sarah Wigglesworth notes above, the intentions and outcomes of critical practice are frequently misinterpreted. **Section Three** attempts to create transparency between the aims of *critical spatial practices* and the outcomes as they manifest in this architectural design thesis.

This section addresses the following research questions:

Through the testing of *critical spatial practices* as a design research framework, is it possible to produce positive solutions to the urban *thick edge* condition? Further, how does this framework

challenge the position of critical architecture in the contemporary context?

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DESIGN CASE STUDY:

Architecture's Tightrope: A
Multifunctional Performance Facility
for the NZIAF and Multiple Publics

Introduction: Design Descriptions

Programmatic Structuration

Functions

Adjacencies

Circulations

Critical Strategies and Indices

Implementation of Strategies: Ground

Implementation of Strategies: Middle

Implementation of Strategies: Upper

< OPPOSITE
Figure 9.1: Last look before
the intervention; photograph of
Clifton Street Car Park looking
north

NEXT PAGE >
Figure 9.2: Rendered plan of
the upper level(s) of the design
(NTS). Longitudinally the
design can be roughly divided
into three parts: fine grain;
canopy; and medium grain.

Datum 2 is visible beneath the
grid on the bottom right of the
image.

1. Rendell, 2008, p. 161.

In architecture, to position a building as a 'methodology', rather than as the end result of the method or process that makes the building, is a radical proposition.¹

Introduction: Design Descriptions

Upper Levels / Level Two

Analysing the intervention in plan, as it is exposed to the wider urban context, reveals three distinct longitudinal sectors (sector 1, 2 and 3) that negotiate with the existing structures (infrastructure, residential, commercial)(see Figure 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4). Formally, the structures inserted in these three sectors are typologically identifiable as: existing rectilinear/orthogonal; adjusted rectilinear; curvilinear/fluid; residential; and naturally occurring (see Figure 9.3).

The southernmost section, comprised of three small new architectural interventions contained within a timber grid (See Figures 9.6, 9.9 and 9.20), is pedestrian scale – the elements of the design closest to human scale. The rectangular grid isolates this section of the design both visually and physically - providing an overhead structure that frames the open-air public activity space. Depending on the user access point(s) this can either perform as a beginning or an ending to the experience of the facility.

Moving further north towards the site's central section, the framing transition into, but are nonetheless segregated from, the canopy. From above, the canopy takes the form of a fluid mass, tucked underneath the motorway to the west and bleeding out towards The Terrace and over the motorway off-ramp to the east. The continuity of the form is punctured four times (moving from south to north): a depressed funnel that forms a light well to the ground level; a large aperture that exposes a pohutukawa tree; and two vertically extruded cylindrical light wells

< LEFT
Figure 9.3: Diagrammatic KEY of the formal typologies used throughout the design case study.

TOP ROW (from left to right) existing structures/typologies: commercial, natural, infrastructure, residential.

BOTTOM ROW (from left to right) intervention typologies: rectilinear/orthogonal; augmented rectilinear; curvilinear/fluid; residential; and natural (implemented).

that extend upwards. Beyond the last punctuation at the northern end, the canopy is 'torn away' and disappears beneath the motorway.

From this point another grid emerges, a white-painted steel frame that is axially rotated to run parallel to the motorway above, aligning with the greenbelt. Unlike the timber loggia, this steel grid (See Figures 9.6 and 9.23-9.25) is square in formation and connects directly to the canopy – suggesting a structural purpose. Moreover, the steel grid is bounded within a curvilinear frame that continues the lines of the canopy's central mass, swelling over the motorway off-ramp and finishing suspended above the top car park datum.

At the northernmost section of the design, there are three separate buildings that are isolated from each other *and* the steel canopy grid (See Figures 9.6 and 9.24-9.25). The first is a chamfered square in plan, echoing the angular tear of the canopy. This intervention encloses an elevated glazed lookout area that provides a 360° aspect of the site

RIGHT >

Figure 9.4: Rendered plan of the upper level(s) highlighting the three primary sectors of the design

and its visual context. To the right of this is the second intervention of this section of the design, an augmented rectangular plan that is seven storeys in height. These two elements appear as if they were one building, split in plan by a diagonal void that reflects the axis into the site created by Shell Lane. The final design intervention in this sequence, beyond another punctuation revealing a pohutukawa tree (through Datum 2), is a narrower rectangular form with a gabled roof. This volume is significantly lower in height than the previous two, reducing its scale to a similar height to the buildings in the southern section.

Middle, 'Public', Level / Level One

Continuing in plan, and sectioning vertically downwards through the design, reveals that the canopy and motorway both provide outdoor cover to a variety of spaces - public, private, private-public, and performance (see Figures 9.5, 9.6 and 9.7). The structures appear 'loosely' positioned along the site; this approach establishes a variety of scales of public space(s) positioned according to functions, adjacencies and circulations. This strategically provides adequate breakout lobby space for performances with very

large audiences, while simultaneously providing smaller scale breakout areas for smaller audiences. This assortment of integrated covered outdoor public spaces not only mitigate the scale transition between The Terrace and Thorndon, but they also serve as public 'park' gathering spaces when performances are not in session throughout the day. As the new intervention is primarily a performance facility, much of the added built structure is orientated around the locations of the theatre spaces and the relationship between performer and spectator. The middle level contains two formal theatres – thru-sceneium and traverse (see Figures 9.49 and 9.50) – held within the existing open volume underneath the Urban Motorway; and informal ad-hoc performance areas surrounded by public seating (see Figure 9.6).

Analysing Figure 9.7 from left to right (south to north), the design is anchored around a series of public/private/private-public and performance/spectator relationships. As such, this level uncovers the human scale of the design, and presents *Architecture's Tightrope* as a primarily socially-orientated facility. Punctuations in the canopy above reveal an alignment with spaces at this level – open areas which are readily accessible to the public – and move along the datum as it swells outwards to accommodate the new intervention. Moreover, the formal languages developed at the urban level above find repetition in this central section – a combination of rectilinear, augmented rectilinear, and curvilinear forms are scattered across the car park's middle

RIGHT >

Figure 9.5: Diagrammatic KEY of additional spatial typologies

From left to right: private; private-public; public; performance

NEXT PAGE >

Figure 9.7: Rendered plan of the middle level of the design (NTS). At this level the design is orientated around structuring fluid relationships between spectators, publics and/or performers

Datum 3 is the ground level at the top of the image, with Datum 1 below it

datum – becoming ‘more curvilinear/fluid’ within the middle section of the design (encompassed by the canopy). The southernmost and northernmost ends of the site continue the rectilinear plans of the buildings above, creating orthogonal endings and ‘tighter’ spaces that are restrained by the two sets of grids (see Figure 9.7).

Bottom, ‘Service’ Level / Ground

Sectioning to the ground, the design introduces a level that is both performance and service based (see Figure 9.9). Beneath the public level, the operations of the facility occur. In addition to the service requirements of the facility, the black box theatre is contained at ground level (See Figure 9.49). This theatre repeats the formal language of the two theatres at higher levels, curvilinear in form and penetrated above by the canopy well to introduce natural light and continue the dialogue between canopy and performance.

The two ground levels (Datum 0 and Datum 3) also reveal site-specific, performative architectures.

An excavated section of gravel and soil greets publics as the enter the site along Datum 3, from the Cable Car, leaving behind four pads of concrete which are able to display public sculptures and works of art. This excavated space runs parallel to the grid structure that supports Datum 1, left unchanged to reveal how the containing grid directly above was drawn out.

Continuing along Datum 3, a number of public seating terraces (topped by timber decking) extend outwards from both the greenbelt and the threshold with Datum 1 (See Figures 9.48-9.50). The Terraces also run perpendicular to stage orientations of the thru-scenium and traverse theatres, creating a spectator/performance seating relationship that permanently occupies the design (see Figure 9.8).

The three levels highlighted and described so far in this section (upper/level two, middle/level one, ground) vertically structure the design, and will be used throughout the remainder of this chapter to analyse the strategies and outcomes of the design case study.

RIGHT >
Figure 9.6: Rendered plan of the middle level highlighting the performance spaces along this datum

RIGHT >
Figure 9.8: Rendered plan of the ground level highlighting the three theatre spaces along this datum as the relate to the seating terraces

NEXT PAGE >

Figure 9.9: Rendered plan of the ground level of the design (NTS). At this level the design is orientated around structuring fluid relationships between spectators, publics and/or performers.

Datum 3 is the ground level at the top of the image, with Datum 1 below it.

Programmatic Structuration: Functions, Adjacencies and Circulations

As outlined in **Chapter Six**, for Kim Dovey 'structuration' refers to the potency of architectural form in framing the relationship between spatial structure and social practices. Socio-spatial practices are either enabled or constrained according to the intervention of architectural design, informing social and political contexts that exist as a negotiation between *tight* and *loose*. The driving intention of this design is to introduce multiple programmes and activities to the site, introducing socio-spatial *flows*, and *looseness*. This intention is based upon the current *thick edge* condition as one of constraint – a *tight* space. However, a tension is necessarily maintained, and in *Architecture's Tightrope*, the *tight/loose* dialectic operates programmatically, configured according to the functions, adjacencies and circulations of particular spaces.

Functions

The design functions are generated according to the programme brief outlined in **Chapter Eight**. The position and size of these functions are presented in **Figures 9.10 and 9.11**.

2. For this thesis contextually 'normative' spatial practices are those which are related to the previous condition of vehicle-orientated programmes.

Building upon the brief, functions of the design (as a cultural node) are multiple and varied, inviting the surrounding publics to perform contextually non-normative spatial practices.² Unlike the site's previous condition as a car park, publics are now encouraged to engage in activities such as: *spectating* art, cinema, performance, and other publics; *walking* along multiple circulation routes and paths; *sitting* on the sheltered and unsheltered public seating scattered throughout; *playing* in a reconfigured social site, one of 'openness'; *eating* at the café, bar; *shopping* at the bookshop; *working* in the office building for the NZIAF, artist studios, and a workshop; *producing* and *performing* on stages for ad-hoc public busking, announcements and appropriation as well as a rehearsal space that can be hired by the public.

3. This approach is based upon the Lefebvrian understanding that space produces and is produced by, social actions.

Introducing these spatial practices contributes to a non-deterministic structuration insofar as the design is only attempting to 'open' relations across the site, rather than control the actions that take place within it.³ These design functions contribute significantly to shift the *thick edge* condition towards a de Certeauian notion of 'place', an ordering system which is socially and spatially 'practised', realising a larger range of possibilities for the location.⁴

4. de Certeau, 1984, p. 117.

NEXT TWO PAGES >

Figure 9.10: Technical plan of the Ground Levels showing design functions and sizes

Figure 9.11: Technical plan of the Middle Level showing design functions and sizes

Figure 9.10

GROUND LEVEL PLAN

KEY

1. Cable Car stop / southern entrance
2. Gravel 'river' / sculpture park
3. Black box permanent covered indoor seating
4. Black box performance volume / flexible seating area
5. Black box performer BOH
6. Black Box coat check / reception
7. Spectator volume for thru-scenium theatre / covered open-air seating
8. Main performer BOH storage space (100m²)
9. Main performer BOH backstage volume (450m²)
10. Main performer BOH dressing/changing rooms (350m²)
- 11i. Thru-scenium terraced seating, permanent, 400-600 capacity
- 11ii. Thru-scenium terraced seating, permanent, 600-800 capacity
- 11iii. Thru-scenium temporary seating area, flexible, 100-200 capacity
12. Workshop storage (100m²)
13. Workshop (250m²)
14. Circulation tower, stairwell and elevator
15. Plant room (200m²)
16. Loading bay
17. Delivery entrance and turn-around area
18. Open function space

C: Pedestrian circulation

E: Elevator

P: Partitioning curtains

S: Performance stage

T: Toilets (public)

V: Vehicle access

A - A': Traverse section 1 (See Figure 9.48)

B - B': Traverse section 2 (See Figure 9.49)

C - C': Traverse section 3 (See Figure 9.50)

D - D': Longitudinal section (See Figure 9.19)

SCALE:

Figure 9.11
MIDDLE LEVEL PLAN

KEY

- 18. Bookshop (75m²)
- 19. Cafe / Bar (75m²)
- 20. Cafe outdoor seating / loggia
- 21. Ticket office / information / coat-check (75m²)
- 22. Ad-hoc performance and busking stages / overflow / gathering space
- 23. Staging area for thru-scenium (350m²)
- 24. Ad-hoc performance / overflow / public gathering space
- 25. Public toilet block (includes x2 parents' rooms)
- 26. Service / workshop elevator, paraplegic toilets
- 27. Circulation tower Middle Level
- 28. Artists' studios / hire space / temporary offices (200m²)
- 29. Ad-hoc performance / overflow / public gathering space
- 30. Storage (200m²) (Recital / rehearsal space above)

- C: Pedestrian circulation
- E: Elevator
- G: Gathering / overflow areas
- P: Partitioning curtains
- S: Performance stage
- T: Toilets (public)

- A - A': Traverse section 1 (See Figure 9.48)
- B - B': Traverse section 2 (See Figure 9.49)
- C - C': Traverse section 3 (See Figure 9.50)
- D - D': Longitudinal section (See Figure 9.19)

SCALE:

Adjacencies

Where the implementation of various spatial practices presents an opportunity to introduce a reconfiguration of place from singular (non-place) to multiple (relational), the tangible adjacencies of these programmes are more pragmatic. The cohesive functioning of a multi-stage events facility requires specific connections between *back-of-house* (BOH), *front-of-house* (FOH) and *auditoria* (performance) spaces. In addition to these adjacencies, *Architecture's Tighrope* has been designed to facilitate the NZIAF staffs, temporary offices for administrators of other festival events, and various spaces for hire (artist's studios, rehearsal spaces), introducing a *commercial* element to the design (see Figure 9.13).

Following the relationship(s) between the performance adjacencies outlined previously (Chapter Eight), a large majority of BOH functions have been implemented at ground level, creating a level divided into 'service' and 'performance' BOH spaces (see Figure 9.12). This decision, based upon progressive design-research experiments, was in response to several site-specific and programmatic parameters:

- The functions of BOH spaces require less natural light and are therefore suited to the volume between Datum 0 and 1.

- Privacy from publics is necessary for certain areas of BOH facilities; positioning these spaces at ground level allows for easy public/private segregation.
- Service BOH activities require vehicular access for staffs and deliveries (including, drop-off, loading and turning space), and therefore need to be as close as possible to the main vehicular entry points of the site, Dalmuir and Shell Lanes (see Figures 9.24 and 9.25);
- As performance BOH facilities may need be shared, they should be placed in close proximity to each other for ease of access.
- To minimise vertical adjacencies between all BOH spaces, informing a cohesive line of

^ ABOVE
Figure 9.13: Diagram showing the various programmatic adjacencies within the design case study. These are divided into four categories: front-of-house (FOH); back-of-house (BOH); performance; and commercial.

RIGHT >
Figure 9.12: Diagram showing the back-of-house facilities divided into 'performance' (red) and 'service' (grey).

ABOVE ^
Figure 9.14: Diagram showing the various forms of shelter created by vertical arrangements

access;

- Adjacencies between BOH and auditoria spaces can be vertical, as is the case with the Wellington Town Hall and St James Theatre, allowing performance BOH to exist within a lower volume.

Additionally, positioning BOH facilities within the Datum 0/1 volume allows the large open-air volume under the motorway to remain unstructured – creating a spectator threshold that aligns axially with the performance BOH.

Consequently, many of the FOH activities are positioned along Datum 1 (some between Datum 1 and 2, others contained by the canopy or open-air). At this level, flow between publics is pivotal, informing an alternating relationship of adjacencies between performance and gathering spaces (see Diagram 9.16). Keeping the FOH structures to a minimal floor area, and positioning them axially along Datum 1, allows the design to achieve several imperatives:

- To maintain a linear performance/spectator relationship between the motorway volume and the BOH/FOH design interventions;
- To produce a variety of spaces – open-air sheltered, indoor, outdoor (see Figure 9.14);
- To encourage pedestrian access from the cable car, northern stair, and underground path
- To allow adjacencies to be shared vertically between BOH and FOH (see Figure 9.15), in particular storage, plumbing, electricity etc.;

^ ABOVE
Figure 9.15: Diagram showing how the BOH, FOH and private adjacencies allow for shared services

- To allow FOH facilities such as public toilets, retail and hospitality to be shared between publics attending performance and those who are not.

Interwoven within, and also informing these FOH/BOH adjacencies, is the auditoria positioning. The four large performance spaces (black box, thru-scenium, traverse, and open-air/flat-floor) anchor the infrastructure on a curved line – creating the performance/spectator threshold axis. The black box theatre requires the least amount of seating as well as an intimate interior space, and has therefore been positioned separately, underneath Datum 1 towards the southern end of the site (see Figures 9.21 and 9.48). As the thru-scenium and traverse theatres are the largest in capacity and infrastructure, they have been positioned adjacent to one another (see Figures 9.49 and 9.50); this allows the design a certain economy as the theatres can share BOH facilities and overflow space. Additionally, placing the two largest auditoria in the centre of the site limits congestion as publics can flow from the north or south entrances, filtering through the various gathering points.

The flexible, open-air, flat-floor performance space (see Figures 9.10 and 9.52) has been designated to the northernmost section of the spectator volume. This space can be used for a variety of low-infrastructure events such as: cinema, congregation, protest, concerts, markets, outdoor rehearsals and festivals, etc. For this reason, the design of this performance space does not impose an infrastructure beyond that of shelter and seating.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.16: Diagram showing the various programmatic adjacencies positioned along Datum 1 - particularly the relationship between performance (red) and gathering space (grey).

Circulations

Given the complex proposition of negotiating multiple, independent yet connected, spaces within one design, circulation is positioned as a crucial operation to achieve cohesiveness and *flow*. Beyond the practical requirements of access, circulation contributes to an overall language for the design, an effect, performing as a mediation between inside and outside, framing and dissolving and reframing public and private, performance and spectator.

The requirements and subsequent design of the facility's programmatic adjacencies have conditioned much of the pedestrian and non-pedestrian (vehicular) circulation throughout. These circulations operate both *horizontally* (paths, ramps and roads) and *vertically* (stairs, ramps, elevators, and light wells).

Horizontally, one of the major experiments and strategies of the design is to shift, and define, the emphasis of the urban function of the site from vehicular to pedestrian - conditioning a space that promotes social permeability over the existing

rigidity of the car park. The design uses a simple but important gesture to initiate this change – positioning four bollards at the entrance of Dalmuir Lane, transforming it into a pedestrian-only access way. In so doing, the facility requires service vehicle access to enter and exit down Shell Lane only, with a turnaround area adjacent to the loading bay (see Figure 9.17). This turnaround space has been enlarged to allow for large trucks to now enter the site. Complementing this line of vehicular access, Shell Lane has been extended through the site, enabling vehicles to drive equipment directly to the back of the traverse theatre and plant room if required to do so.

From a pedestrian perspective, a number of horizontal access points already exist within the site (see Chapter Four). One purpose of the design is to attract more pedestrians to the site by removing its vehicular functions. In so doing, it is expected that the Cable Car will perform a more intensive and diverse role as a transportation device – facilitating more than simply tourist movements. This is also a symbolic gesture – reducing the emphasis of

automobiles to engage the site as pedestrian friendly.. Moreover, given the day/night activity of the facility, the greenbelt path and northern stair (currently unfrequented at night) will be activated on a more frequent basis.

Within the facility, and between adjacencies, access is promoted through several up/down ramps. As these ramps have the original purpose of directing cars between parking datums, they are wide enough to allow for paraplegic access if necessary. The up/down ramps are positioned central to the public gathering spaces (and either side of the large auditoria), limiting congestion by directing publics into overflow areas.

Vertically, there are a number of means to transition between ground/middle/upper levels. Central to the design is the six storeys high circulation tower – encompassing an elevator and two fire stairs. This tower provides vertical access to all levels, and also transports publics to the viewing deck (See Figure 9.24) - a space which punctures through the canopy grid and overlooks the entire site. In addition to the circulation tower and up/down ramps, two large service elevators (one in the workshop and one in the loading bay) connect service BOH to the middle and upper levels. A standard passenger elevator also connects floors within the office building.

Although the large public ramps have been promoted over stairs and elevators, a large service stairwell connects the thru-scenium/traverse backstage to the staging area above.

Another crucial consideration for the design is the separation of performance areas within the spectator volume. As can be seen in Figures 9.10 and 9.11, floor-to-ceiling partitioning curtains (label 'P') reach between the existing structural columns either side of the large performance spaces (see Figures 9.48-9.50). These can be either tied back or closed to allow or restrict access according to the activities of the facility at any point in time. Dividing curtains, rather than walls, allow for a flexible and easy transition from public space to private-public spectatorship.

< LEFT
Figure 9.17: Diagram showing vehicular (solid line) and pedestrian (dashed line) entry into the site via The Terrace

Critical Strategies and Indices

So far the description and structuration of *Architecture's Tighrope* has examined how the programme – and its associated spatial practices – has been articulated within the design process. Through this process, the appropriation of the existing space has been discussed, displaying an intention to create an overall structure of socio-spatial *looseness* for multiple publics.

This chapter now turns to specific examination of how this has been achieved formally, showing how design strategies for *critical spatial practices*, elucidated in **Section Two**, have been implemented in physical structures. To do so, the design is explored in two and three-dimensions, through a series of isometric, section, sectional perspective, and diagrammatic images. These images continue the logic of discussion used so far, referencing the design in relation to its ground, middle, and upper levels. The critical formal strategies implemented throughout the design (*addition, subtraction, continuity, discontinuity, horizontality, verticality and juxtaposition*) are to be examined through each of the major buildings and discussed according to their formal typologies, spatial dimensions, functions and materiality (see [Figure 9.18](#)).⁵

5. Each of the structures has been designed relative to the operations that were deemed necessary to embed the design with critical potency, and therefore will display different strategies from each other. Additionally, each building is numbered according to their position in [Figures 9.11 and 9.12](#).

Following the performative understanding of architectural forms argued for in **Chapters Five and Seven**, the design strategies operate according to four site-specific indices that are embedded in many of the design gestures: *fluidity/flow, orthogonality/rigidity, excavation and terracing*. Here, *fluidity* and *orthogonality* are considered as formal and metaphorical opposites. *Fluidity* is a dual metaphor – it visually symbolises the latent curvilinear forms of the site's natural state – as a river bed for the Kumototo Stream and the undulating contours of the adjacent Thorndon green belt. Also, *fluidity* frames the production of dynamic spatial *flows*, informing *looseness* using similar spatial approaches to the Rolex Learning Centre or Metropol Parasol.

Conversely, *orthogonality* is symbolically related to the physical and visual context of the repetitive and homogenous geometries of the

infrastructure and the commercial development of The Terrace. *Orthogonality* presents space as a rigid and tightly structured condition, a series of regular structures that constrain and restrict. As Bernard Tschumi imposes the grid as a formal logic within the design of Parc de la Villette, in *Architecture's Tighrope* the *orthogonal* represents an imposed global force and ubiquitous formalism – the imposition of the rectilinear masses of economically driven urbanisation. How these two indices manifest (in *continuity, discontinuity* or *juxtaposition*) depends upon their position and relationship to the other elements in the design. The adjacent Thorndon hillside is defined by contours that are fluid, while the adjacent site of The Terrace is orthogonal. This *thick edge* site, which lies between, is both. The car park / motorway is orthogonal in some areas, but also bends and banks (inclines) in some areas. The design case study acknowledges this and has incorporated the undulating canopy to accentuate this dual condition, drawing visitor focus and attention to the complex 'blurred' condition. This assists the design intervention in establishing a new, inverted *thick edge* that performs as a threshold between conditions, thus encouraging flow from one to the other.

Evolving the precedent set by the Igualada cemetery, *terracing* and *excavation* are indices that are tied to processes of *tabula rasa* construction/destruction. In *Architecture's Tighrope*, *excavation* performs as an index of exposure and removal, correlating to the processes that were undertaken in the construction of the Urban Motorway and the subsequent repositioning of graves at the Bolton Street Cemetery. As with 'burial' in Miralles's design, *excavation* implies an action of removal whereby it moves physical material and also represents removal of earth, trees and graves historically - community memories. *Excavation* is a device of exposure, drawing out the history of the site that has been covered with concrete and jump cut urbanism.

Excavation works in tandem with the index of *terracing*, informing a *continuity* with the natural landscape. Terracing repositions the material that

has been removed through processes of *excavation* and applies them in a functional way (seating, stages etc.) in the design case study. The dual reference of the action of terracing also relates to the site’s historical trauma, the terracing of the greenbelt and The Terrace adjacent. The intervention of terracing reinforces boundary blurring along the perimeter of the *thick edge* condition. Applied in multiple ways, these indices:

- Contribute to the construction of a consistent overall ‘language of boundary mediation’ throughout the design – an ordering system that allows the individual elements of the intervention to be understood holistically as a critical narrative;
- Expand the notion of ‘site’ beyond that of a static and materially bounded entity, introducing flows of contexts beyond the limitations of a cadastrally ‘fixed position’;
- Inscribe the process with site-specific information (visual, historical, physical), layering the design with local referents that contribute to its identity as a contextually relational entity – reconfiguring the site towards notions of place (and away from its current condition as closer to that of non-place);
- Undermine the idea of a one-to-one relationship between architectural object and its symbolic meaning as each index ‘acts out’ its adjective signifier by performing functional operations. In so doing, each index refuses to submit to the superficiality of formal language as image, attempting to resist the culture of spectacle;
- Produce and are being produced by the architecture in a dialectical process – mediating between the architectural form and its multiple contexts, and cultural place identity (engaging Hays).

The deployment of these indices becomes apparent as the design is experienced at human scale. Breaking

down the existing large-scale homogeneous space into smaller-scale spatial flow elements and paths provides this human scale to the site. This is evidenced in the longitudinal section, D - D’ (see Figure 9.19).

< LEFT
Figure 9.18:
Design dimensions pertinent to the discussion of strategies.

FORMAL TYPOLOGY: Rectilinear, augmented rectilinear, curvilinear,
IMPLEMENTED natural, residential

SPATIAL TYPOLOGY: Private, private-public, public

PROGRAMME TYPOLOGY: Performance, BOH, FOH, Commercial

MATERIALS PALETTE

Brick, channel glass, earth/gravel
Plywood, ship-lap timber cladding, rough-sawn timber decking
Shuttered concrete, pour in-situ concrete

D-D' ZONE ONE

Figure 9.20: Southernmost section of the site. This image shows in detail the materiality and elevation form of the primary public FOH facilities. To the left is the site entrance via the Wellington Cable Car

D-D' ZONE TWO

Figure 9.21: Moving north, this image shows a continuation of the FOH facilities as well as sectioning through the black box theatre. The canopy's downward depression is also visible, flooding the theatre with natural light.

D-D' ZONE THREE

Figure 9.22: The first vertical punctuation through the canopy becomes apparent, revealing the pohutukawa tree below. The Thru-scenium theatre presents a strong, blank, volume which has flows of publics interacting around it.

D-D' ZONE FOUR

Figure 9.23: The canopy lifts above Datum 2, framing the traverse theatre under the motorway. Two light wells or 'chimneys' penetrate upwards to allow natural light to enter the service BOH level. The gathering space supports public seating, adjacent to the toilet block.

D-D' ZONE FIVE

Figure 9.24: The canopy dissolves into a steel grid framing structure, punctuated vertically by the circulation tower and NZIAF office block.

D-D' SECTION SIX

Figure 9.25: This section image shows the 'end' of the design at the northern site boundary. The vehicular access (foreground) and northern stair are visible (background)

Implementation of Strategies: Ground

Analysing the ground levels, Datum 0 and Datum 3, in isometric view (Figure 9.26) reveals how the critical indices have yielded a performative infrastructure. Arriving at the site from the cable car (1) presents a full view of the timber terraces (7) and (11i) and gravel/soil pit (2) that run along Datum 3 and the western boundary of the site. These elements create a material and formal *continuity/discontinuity* with the existing landscape and infrastructure. The timber starkly contrasts the shot-crete terraces of the western hill-edge of the site in a material *discontinuity*, positioning them as a distinctly inserted element. However, the form of these terraces – drawn from the topographical contours of the greenbelt – suggests *continuity* with the natural landscape, an extension of the existing geography. Thus the typology and materiality of The Terraces work to *resist* the *tabula rasa* techniques that have conditioned the *thick edge*. Shifting east towards The Terrace the language of The Terraces changes in materiality, introducing in-situ poured concrete – a gesture that signals a shift as one transitions through the design. The edge becomes less ‘natural’, more designed, as ‘softer’ timbers, soils, and gravel along the western site edgeway to the ‘hardness’ of concrete toward the eastern site edge. As The Terraces are also used for spectator seating, performances, and other public spatial practices they contribute to the *addition* of social space within the site.

The gravel pit (2) creates *continuity* with the natural landscape by ‘exposing’ the earth beneath. This method of grounding considers Datum 3 as a historically embedded layer, a local reference point. The pit is curvilinear in form, referencing (without replicating) the Kumototo Stream that has been buried beneath the car park. The gravel and earth that are exposed in this ‘river’ initiate a questioning of how the ground has been previously treated – covered in concrete and left to the devices of infrastructure. The reconstitution of the material is a gesture that draws from the theoretical experiments of land art practices, re-locating the site as a historically latent medium. Unlike processes of excavation which shaped the site, here the *subtracted* earth is reconstituted to create The Terraces as *continuous* with the landscape. Additionally, excess soil is placed in bags and piled up against the bases of columns, creating a dialogue

between the columns as elements imposed into the site and the removal of soil as intrinsically linked to them (see Figures 9.23-9.25 and Figures 9.49-9.50). Within the gravel pit four concrete pads are left behind, as performance stages and sculpture sites. Placing public art upon these pads destabilises the identity of the concrete ground plane as one of parking and reconfigures it as a space for the *addition* of public art; identity is further destabilised by ‘curating’ art upon an unexpected contextual field. Much like Lacaton and Vassal, space for performance, continually changing public art, and public interaction is treated as paramount, and the singular programme of the site is shifted towards dynamic relations.

Three Pohutakawa trees are planted at specific points to introduce natural elements to the ground plane and to reference the historic kainga settlement. These trees inform punctuations through all of the datums above – to allow natural light and to emphasise the importance of natural and historical elements within the design (See Figure 9.22).

Exploding the buildings positioned along Datum 0 (Figure 9.27) demonstrates the density of BOH performance and service facilities at this level. Each of these structures contributes further to the strategic design of the facility. The language of each building as it relates to the overall system of indices is presented in Figures 9.28-9.32. design (see Figure 9.22). Generally speaking, commercial buildings have been designed as rectilinear (orthogonal index) and from concrete. These two operations create *continuity* with the existing infrastructure, contributing to the language that *orthogonality* is intrinsically related to the site’s rigid commercially driven history. Conversely, performance buildings are designed as curvilinear (fluid index), a formal typology that is *discontinuous* with notions of rigidity (orthogonal index). The use of concrete in this manner may appear as a gesture of *continuity*; however, the radical forms of the performance spaces (further expressed by the undulating canopy) are intended to subvert its use as a rigid material, creating a new context from the dominant language of the existing context. Negotiating both of these languages, service buildings are constructed from brick – a traditionally industrial material – visually separating them from the concrete commercial/performance dialogues (see Figures 9.28 and 9.30).

Pohutukawa Tree

< LEFT, OPPOSITE
Figure 9.26: Isometric image
of the two ground levels
landscapes, Datum 3 and
Datum 0.

< LEFT, OPPOSITE
Figure 9.27: Exploded isometric image of the two ground levels with structures positioned along Datum 0.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.28: Isometric image of the loading bay. This is a privately accessed space.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.29: Isometric image of the plant room and circulation tower (ground level only).

The plant room is private access, the circulation is accessible to all publics.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.30: Isometric image of the workshop including storage (underneath terraces) and separate toilet. This is a privately accessed space.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.31: Isometric image of the major (shared) performance BOH facilities. This includes backstage, storage, dressing rooms, storage and private circulation. This is a privately accessed space.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.32: Isometric image of the black box performance space. This is relatively self-contained and has been insulated to prevent sound bleed. Separate BOH and FOH are included in the design. This is a public-private space as access is limited to those attending the performances.

[FOR KEYS, REFER TO FIGURE 9.18]

(17) Delivery entrance and turn-around area

(16) Loading bay

Brick, rectilinear, BOH, private

(15) Plant room (200m²)

(14) Circulation tower, stairwell and elevator

In-situ concrete, augmented rectilinear (tower) and rectilinear (plant room), BOH, private and public

(13) Workshop (250m²), timber work benches

(12) Workshop storage (100m²), includes toilet

Brick, augmented rectilinear, private

(10) Main performer BOH dressing/changing rooms (350m²)

(9) Main performer BOH backstage volume (450m²)

(8) Main performer BOH storage space (100m²)

In-situ concrete, curvilinear, BOH (performance and service), private

(6) Black Box coat check / reception

(5) Black box performer BOH

(4) Black box performance volume / flexible seating area

(3) Black box permanent covered indoor seating

In-situ concrete, timber plywood lining, curvilinear, Performance (auxiliary BOH and FOH), private-public (paid entry for publics)

Implementation of Strategies: Middle

Moving upwards, the volume of space between Datum 1 and Datum 2 performs as the core section of public activity and gathering. Exploding the buildings in isometric view reveals that there is significantly more space framed for publics on this level (see Figure 9.34). The four overflow areas introduce a socio-spatial looseness to the structuration of the space, reinforced by permanent public seating, signage, and busking/performance 'pads' (see Figure 9.35). The seating areas are varied in shelter: (29) and (24) are sheltered between Datum 1 and 2; (22) and (20) are open with minimal protection from the canopy and loggia. Handrails border the datum and the punctuations through it.

The strategy of *horizontal*ity is crucial to the conditioning of looseness at this level as the designs are individually separated in plan between Datum's 1 and 2, allowing social *flows* between all of the spaces. Some of the spaces are necessarily private and closed off (such as the thru-scenium theatre); however, transparency and porosity is still important. The *addition* of further *horizontal* space was required to allow for this, which can be seen in the 'swelling' of the datum around the theatres, (22) and (23). The extension of the datum is marked with the traces of concrete formwork throughout, in a similar gesture to the use of concrete in the Palais de Tokyo. Physical *subtraction* is also revealed along the datum – the punctuations are experienced at human scale with the *vertical* penetration of Pohutakawa trees occurring regularly where there is gathering space. The holes act as anchor points, as with the Rolex Learning Centre,

that focuses the public spaces around the re-insertion of natural elements.

A new formal and material language is also created with the introduction of FOH facilities that are designed for all publics (see Figures 9.36-9.40). These structures: the toilet block (25) and (26); ticket office (21); café/bar (20); and bookstore (19) introduce the use of timber and glass. All of these buildings are clad with a 100x25 ship-lap system, and are walled with large sliding glazed doors. This use of glazing allows maximum porosity and transparency between inside and outside of the public level (weather permitting).

The ship-lap cladding acts to create visual *continuity* throughout the designs at a human scale – identifying them as publicly accessible buildings. The ship-lap is also a reference to the timber construction methods of the traditional villa, bringing into the design a visual language from the Thorndon suburb. This 'residential' typology is repeated in the asymmetrical gable roof lines of the ticket office, café, and bookstore (see Figures 9.11 and 9.20). The gables have been designed so that in elevation they visually continue the undulations of the canopy (see Figure 9.33). These gestures implicate the site's historical context, considering the re-insertion of villa typologies as referents to their politically charged destruction during the motorway incision.

RIGHT, OPPOSITE >
Figure 9.34: Exploded isometric image of the middle level and structures positioned along Datum 1

BELOW
Figure 9.33: Diagram showing the continuity between the elevation of the canopy and the rooflines of the FOH design

BELOW
Figure 9.35: Exploded assembly isometric image of the signage positioned around the site. Signage reconfigures the visual environment - projecting programme.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.36: Isometric image of the storage /BOH overflow space. Storage is crucial to the function of the facility. Additionally, in times of peak staff (during the Arts Festival) this space can be used as office/overflow. This is a private space as access is limited to those working for the facility/ NZIAF.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.37: Isometric image of the studios/hire space and circulation tower (middle level only).

The hire spaces are public-private as access is limited to publics who wish to rent them; the circulation is accessible to all publics.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.38: Isometric image of the thru-scenium staging area. This includes lighting/sound rig trusses above and a proscenium curtain that separates stage from staging.

This is a private space as access is limited to performers and service staff.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.39: Isometric image of the toilet block. The service elevator provides easy vertical access to/from the workshop, making delivery to the major theatres cohesive. The toilet area is located between the theatres so that the facilities can be shared. The toilets are accessible to all publics.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.40: Isometric image of the primary FOH facilities at the southern end of Datum 1. These are accessible to all publics.

[FOR KEYS, REFER TO FIGURE 9.18]

(30) Storage (200m²) (Recital / rehearsal space above)
Brick, rectilinear, BOH, private

(28) Artists' studios / hire space / temporary offices (200m²)
(27) Circulation tower, stairwell and elevator
In-situ concrete, augmented rectilinear (tower) and rectilinear (hire spaces), BOH, public-private and public

(23) Staging area for thru-scenium (350m²)
In-situ concrete, curvilinear, performance, private

(26) Service / workshop elevator, paraplegic toilets (x2)
(25) Public toilet block (9 male, 9 female, 2 parents' rooms)
Ship lap timber cladding, augmented rectilinear, FOH, public

(21) Ticket office / information / coat-check (75m²)
(20) Cafe outdoor seating / loggia
(19) Cafe / Bar (75m²)
(18) Bookshop (75m²)
Ship lap timber cladding, residential, FOH, public

Implementation of Strategies: Upper

As the beginning of this chapter touched upon, the upper levels of the design inform much of the urban physical and visual identity of *Architecture's Tightrope*. Strategies of *horizontality*, *verticality* and *juxtaposition* have been deployed within the design process to yield, test, and confirm these identities (see Figure 9.42).

Positioned above Datum 2, the NZIAF offices and circulation tower are the strongest *vertical* gesture of the intervention (see Figures 9.24 and 9.46). These two buildings are designed to create a visual logic that is in subversive *continuity* with The Terrace. The regular rectangular fenestrations are positioned symmetrically across the buildings' facades, facades which 'swell' outwards in plan from east to west. This shift from rigidly orthogonal to curvilinear gives the impression that the buildings visually 'soften' moving towards the motorway; simultaneously the interventions mediate between the motorway (as it bends to follow the curvilinear contours of Thorndon) and The Terrace (which aligns with the orthogonal urban grid). Moreover, this slight adjustment in the formal orthogonality of the buildings reveals deep timber casements that chamfer back into the interior – exposing depth of structure (see Figure 9.45). Thus from the outside the NZIAF offices attempt to suggest a subtle resistance to the rigid logic of the surrounding context. These gestures are further exaggerated in the design of the circulation tower which dissolves into an entirely curvilinear chamfer.

The gable roof and timber cladding of the recital room adds to the visual language created by the FOH buildings. However, given its functional requirement for privacy, the glazing that wraps around the space is constructed from industrial channel glass (see Figure 9.43). This opaque glazing system allows the space to 'glow' when in use, suggesting activity to the outside by projecting dynamic silhouettes and movement (See Figure 9.25).

All three of these buildings vertically 'puncture' through the canopy grid – and are purposefully segregated from its curvilinear language.

They continue, in one way or another, the material and typological languages established in the levels below. Conversely, viewed from the outside, they hint at the indices that are explored throughout.

The most immediately contrasting design element of *Architecture's Tightrope* is the canopy. The fluid-form concrete and steel structure interrogates several strategies as well as performing multiple pragmatic functions. Its design emerged from the index of *fluidity* – visually curvilinear and simultaneously framing the socio-spatial *flows* below. The canopy is derived from a flat horizontal datum (a replica of Datum 1) with a grid imposed upon it. Starting from a grid allowed the canopy to be manipulated at multiple points, *horizontally* and *vertically*, and to instruct the new elements using the language of the infrastructure. Its *vertical* axes are extrusions or depressions based upon the positioning of the performance areas, creating variable undulations across the datum (see Figure 9.41) that continually transform spatial scale to reflect high public performance spaces merging seamlessly with lower private gathering spaces. The *verticality* of the canopy has a similar framing effect as the Metropool Parasol, providing shelter and structure to the open aspects of the site and framing the performance areas which have specific volume requirements.

Horizontally the canopy spreads beyond the widths of Datum's 1 and 2, sliding underneath the Urban Motorway to provide sound panels for the thru-scenium and traverse theatres. In so doing the canopy is framing social and performance spaces, expanding the existing cover of the site and opening it to flows of *additional* spatial practices. This is particularly evident sectioning across the site, explored in traverse sectional images A-A', B-B', and C-C' (see Figures 9.48-9.50). These perspective sections show how the canopy avoids symbolic arbitrariness through its performative *fluidity* - framing the theatre spaces and programmatic functions.

Visually and physically, the addition of another concrete datum purposefully places the canopy in a *juxtaposed* dialogue with the motorway

and parking platforms, presenting an enhanced fluidity that reinforces the *thick edge* space as a transitional environment (threshold) between the orthogonality of The Terrace and the fluidity of the Thorndon hillside. The inserted design is a locally radical new typology, a contemporary form that has emerged through the innovations of parametric design developments – it drastically contrasts the existing fabric and demands the attention of inhabitants from the urban surroundings. However, it is not an iconic construction, nor does it submit to spectacle. Following the precedent of Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum Berlin, from human scale the canopy element cannot be grasped in an overall image. As such, it refuses to project a static identity or stable symbolic reproduction. The decision to critically avoid 'iconic' symbolism - combined with the programmatic opportunity to engage covered but open public spaces - also led to the experimental approach of designing a large urban intervention without a 'façade' to mark

its 'identity'. This is also facilitated by the positioning of the site, as the intervention can only be captured visually in a series of threshold moments as one enters the facility (examined in **Chapter Seven**).

In these moments the canopy constructs a *dialectical image* through *juxtaposition*, deploying the language of the car park against itself. The existing orthogonal context(s) of the site are re-inserted through a manipulated architectural form, constructing a series of temporal images experienced throughout the design. These moments – *juxtaposed images* – draw attention to the contrast created by *Architecture's Tighrope*, and the strategies it has performed to implicate context (as 'then') in the present (as 'now'). These moments are explored by re-visiting the four threshold perspectives (see **Figures 9.51-9.58**).

RIGHT >

Figure 9.41: Exploded isometric diagram showing the points of verticality that have informed the canopy undulations

RIGHT, OPPOSITE >

Figure 9.42: Exploded isometric image of the upper levels (Datum 2 and canopy) and structures

FROM TOP LEFT >
Figure 9.43: Assembly isometric diagram of the channel glass system that wraps around the recital room.

Figure 9.44: Isometric diagram of the recital/rehearsal space. During busy periods this space may be used as overflow office space or exclusively for NZIAF rehearsal. This is a public-private space as access is limited to those who have hired its use.

(31) Recital / rehearsal room (200m²)

In-situ concrete, augmented rectilinear (tower) and rectilinear (hire spaces), BOH, public-private and public

FROM LEFT >
Figure 9.45: Assembly isometric diagram window casement system that regularly penetrates the office building facade.

Figure 9.46: Isometric diagram of the NZIAF office spaces. Each floor has a kitchenette and two unisex toilets. They are connected via an elevator.

(32) NZIAF permanent offices, total 600m² (three storeys @ 200m²)

(33) Circulation tower lookout terrace

The lookout area is enclosed by glazed walls and supported by a steel post-and-beam truss grid.

In-situ concrete, augmented rectilinear (tower) and rectilinear (offices), BOH, private and public

THIS PAGE
Figure 9.48: Traverse sectional
perspective A-A' (looking north)
showing the framing of the
black box theatre through the
performative fluidity of the
canopy

THIS PAGE
Figure 9.49: Traverse sectional perspective B - B' (looking north) showing the framing of the thru-scenium theatre through the performative fluidity of the canopy. The canopy 'dissolves' into sound panels that are hung from the underside of the motorway.

THIS PAGE
Figure 9.50: Traverse sectional perspective C - C' (looking south) showing the framing of the traverse theatre through the performative fluidity of the canopy. The canopy undulates underneath the Urban Motorway, creating an overhead rigging structure and sound barrier for the theatre.

RIGHT >

Figure 9.51: Interior/exterior perspective. Revisiting the Cable Car threshold. The design intervention has reconfigured the image of the site from this moment, exposing a number of new contexts in an image that dialectically negotiates between the existing and the intervening elements.

RIGHT >
Figure 9.52: Interior/exterior perspective at night. Revisiting the northern stair threshold. The flat-floor space has been adapted for public cinema and other such events. The motorway overhead and greenbelt to the right shelters publics from the elements. The programme is inducing flows of spatial practices as a permeable cultural node.

DESIGN-RESEARCH
REFLECTIONS:

Evaluations and Implications

- Reflections on Design-research
- Evaluations: Inverting the Thick Edge
- Conclusion

< LEFT, OPPOSITE
Figure 10.1: Photograph of the
spatial volume between Datum
3 and Datum 4

A critical architecture is an unsettling practice, and it may be unsettling for both the architect and the various communities of interest. A critical architecture will destabilise the field of architecture, its boundaries, identity formations and reproductive practices.¹

1. Dovey, 2008, p. 259.

Kim Dovey

Reflections on Design-Research

The central aims of this design investigation was to test the potential of *critical spatial practices*, a framework for critical architectural design that is both culturally and formally engendered; and the possibility for such a framework to invert the negative conditions of urban *thick edges* through an engagement with multiple contexts. These design aims have been pursued in response to two contemporary problems – one theoretical (discursive) and another practical (urban). Concluding the design-research of this thesis, **Chapter 10** reflects upon the processes engaged to interrogate the research aims, and the implications for theory, practice and further research relative to the thesis objective. Reflections on the thesis are structured according to the research questions put forth in **Chapter One**, followed by an evaluation of the design according to the thesis objective - to propose a framework for urban development procedures that prioritises multiple contexts in the construction of place identities, re-establishing these *thick edges* as potent opportunities for critical architectural intervention.

[What are the conditions of a 'critical' architecture and what processes have contributed to its currently maligned position and a discursive 'crisis of criticality'?:]

Discursively, an argument for a contemporary criticality has been established - emphasising the impacts of a post-critical position and thus the compounding importance and vitality of a focus for critical architectural design that re-engages Hays's

dialectic mediation between formal and cultural production.

[What are the problematic implications of the post-critical position, and how can *critical spatial practices* provide a contemporary, flexible and resistant alternative?:]

Throughout **Chapter Two**, the 'crisis' of criticality and instigating post-critical impasse has been contextualised, critiqued and deemed ineffective on a number of counts. *Critical spatial practices* was posited as a flexible, positive and culturally engendered framework for architectural design – an alternative to both the autonomous and post-critical positions. Consequently, practices that are site-specific, socio-spatial and temporal, have been identified as a means for providing design processes with a framework for engagement with 'real' world concerns, as well as engendering architectural interventions with a critical positioning.

[What are the negative outcomes attributed to the proliferation of urban *thick edges*, and how can architectural intervention provide positive alternatives and approaches to this contemporary problem?:]

Investigating *critical spatial practices* through a practical problem, the demand for new solutions to the conditions of urban *thick edges* has been identified. *Thick edges* were shown to manifest as a bi-product of 'jump-cut' urbanisation processes, created by the incisions of infrastructures such as the Wellington Urban Motorway. Contextually singular and rigid,

these *thick edges* divide communities - dislocating previously congruent social groups and producing culturally disengaged sites. The tangible implications of this urban problem were investigated in **Chapter's Three and Four**, isolating the Clifton Street Car Park as an extreme *thick edge* condition that has emerged through development and urbanisation that prioritises vehicular concerns over visual, physical, social, political, economic and historical contexts. Consequently, a critical and polycontextual imperative was established as a means to challenge the current conditions and approaches look to superficially condition or disregard the *thick edge* as fertile spaces for architectural intervention.

[How can *critical spatial practices* manifest in the built environment, in particular through strategies of architectural design? How can these strategies engage multiple contexts to introduce positive flows to the urban *thick edge*?]

Responding simultaneously to these two problems, **Section Two** of this thesis has examined the potential for *critical spatial practices* to engage multiple contexts as a directive for urban development and architectural intervention. Explored through Nick Kaye, Kim Dovey, Gevork Hartoonian and Walter Benjamin, a framework for design was constructed upon critiques that are site-specific, socio-spatial and temporal. Analysing pertinent case studies, strategies of *continuity, discontinuity, addition, subtraction, verticality, horizontality* and *juxtaposition* have been found to manifest within the built environment in a critical capacity. Operating within the limitations of this design-research thesis, the investigation of these critiques and strategies has been limited to one author. Expanding the scope of the research would allow a more detailed investigation of these principles and their relationship to architectural practices.

[Can the implementation of architectural programmes that have beneficial polycontextual implications facilitate the production of *critical spatial practices* within the *thick edge*?]

In addition to these strategies, architectural programme as a means to revitalise urban space has been investigated as a potentially critical design gesture

– facilitating the structuration of space and spatial practices for multiple publics. The revitalisation of the Clifton Street Car Park into an arts and performance base cultural node has been shown to facilitate the intervention of critical architectures by engaging the social, political and economic contexts of the existing *thick edge* condition. Framing the strategies elucidated in **Chapter's Five, Six and Seven, Chapter Eight** identified architectural programme as a crucial component to the reconfiguration of space (physically and socially) through architectural intervention

Evaluations: Inverting the Thick Edge

Embodying a critical intention, and testing Rendell's framework for *critical spatial practices*, *Architecture's Tightrope* inverts an urban *thick edge* condition by implicating a number of wider contextual concerns within the design to facilitate flow through the Clifton Street Car Park. The result is a design that is both contextually coherent and contradictory, both social and formal, both public and private. The identity of car park has been completely shifted, inverting the *thick edge* condition into one of permeability and polycontextual flows.

Architecture's Tightrope inscribes the Clifton Street Car Park with architectural insertions and interventions that are site-specific, socio-spatial and temporal: critically engaging the urban problem of *thick edges* from a *historical, economic, political, social, physical and visual* positioning. As the design is engendered with this critical positioning, it can now be evaluated according to its engagement and reconfiguration of these contexts.

Social

As highlighted in **Chapter Six**, the means by which architectural design frames and produces spatial practices through its programme is crucial to the creation of positive public sites. Sites of spatial looseness *resist* definition, they deny appropriation, and they enable multiple publics to perform spatial practices in a variety of ways. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to test whether the case study would in fact perform as a node for multiplicities of spatial

2.Dovey, 2008, p. 22

^ ABOVE
Figure 10.2: Longitudinal
section of the design case
study

practice. Nonetheless, evolving the precedent of existing buildings such as the Rolex Learning Centre and the Metropol Parasol, the design cohesively provides permanent and temporary infrastructure for the framing of a number of different events in Wellington’s cultural calendar. Aligning with the critical position of Kim Dovey, it has privileged an open, transparent, and porous public space that can be accessed and/or appropriated to inform a structuration of “movements and instability through which stable territories are erased and new identities and spatial practices become possible”.⁵

The placement and configuration of the programme in the design test has holistically implicated the strategies of *addition/subtraction* and *horizontality/verticality*. Much like the Palais de Tokyo, these strategies have been employed spatially – where space is considered a luxury unto itself – and inserted into an existing negative condition to invert its social rigidity. Therefore, the design can be seen as the *addition* of several social spaces, and the *subtraction* of the vehicle-orientated car park space, critically inverting the social context of the site by facilitating social *flow*.

In so doing, the design has created a landscape of public, private, and public-private spaces,

drawing into the site publics who have previously been constrained from its use. Additionally, through much of the design (in particular the middle level) publics not only have unrestricted access, but are also encouraged to perform in a *loose*, non-determined fashion. Currently there is no outdoor gathering space near the ‘upper city’ except for Midland Park (which provides no cover in the event of rain). *Architecture’s Tightrope* encourages continual daytime and nighttime outdoor activities as varied as skateboarding or busking (22, 24, 29), drinking coffee (19, 20), reading quietly (22, 24, 29), watching a outdoor performance, or simply commuting through the site (see Figure 9.11).

The social intention and execution of design is ‘critical’ insofar as it radically reconfigures the existing condition of the car park – *resisting* the *thick edge* by turning it inside-out – enabling a *flow* of various different activities to permeate the site. Beyond the programme of the facility, the design has shifted the car park towards the conditions and effects of a semi-unstructured and open space (such as Waitangi Park), whilst still recognising the potency of architectural intervention as a formal device to insert infrastructure and place identity. In different contextual conditions the design framework would have shifted the outcomes completely – perhaps

introducing publics to different activities with different emphases relating to those contexts, or even a higher degree of ‘openness’.

Political

The political critique within the design has been a positive one, introducing an identity to a site that currently exists in a state of negativity. As identified in **Chapter Four**, the site exists between governmentally prescribed land-uses, a zoning tightrope that must straddle both commercial and residential definitions. This condition is not unique – it exists as the political situation of many sites redefined by new infrastructure in central Wellington. *Architecture’s Tightrope* subverts this political non-definition by saturating the site with contextual identities, creating a relational space that ‘draws in’ the commercial, residential, and historical identities of the surrounding area.

The design instigates a strong, unique, and public identity to the site. *Resisting* the superficial notion of place put forth by the Wellington City Council, the design creates a place that is relational and socially produced. Playing upon the notion that Wellington is New Zealand’s ‘cultural capital’, the design structures a cultural node within an

Augé-ian non-place, appropriating the *thick edge* for positive political use. Thus one political outcome of *Architecture’s Tightrope* is to offer a specific, opportunistic, solution to these residual sites - presenting the council with an alternative proposition to the standard car park infill approach.

The political appropriation and re-definition of the site through architectural design is yielded from the specific conditions of this test. However - and particularly in that the design case study approach is polycontextual - in a different location outcomes would shift according to site and surrounding contexts. For instance, if *critical spatial practices* was instructing a design for a residential site, the design may look to question the political definitions of ‘house’, ‘home’ or domesticity in a locational and cultural context. If this design experiment were carried further, the important next step would be to conceive design solutions to sites within varied contextual conditions. By comparing the results, a set of common guidelines would emerge. Alternatively, emphasising a political critique through architectural design may look to resist common identities associated with the programme, questioning further what is entailed in the notion of ‘cultural events’ or ‘performance’.

Economic

The economic performance of the design is beyond the scope of this thesis, although the design approach specifically introduces capital ventures into the site to increase its economic value to the city. Nonetheless, the design-research has evidenced that cultural nodes introduce economic diversity and flexibility to a site that is singular in its production of income. The intervention of an events facility set within an array of outdoor public gathering spaces reconfigures the use of the site – primarily placing value in the social outcomes of architectural design rather than as a commodity. Positioning the social context above the economic in the polycontextual hierarchy of the design is a criticism of forces and imperatives that have shaped the Clifton Street Car Park as a *thick edge*. Additionally, the design resists the conciliatory practices that are purported by the post-critical, asking architecture to shift its focus towards multiple contexts, rather than ‘going with the flows’ of twenty-first century market forces.

This thesis does not discuss or investigate the financial cost or feasibility of constructing such a facility, as this is beyond the scope of the investigation. Given further design-research, it would be possible to explore alternative construction methods, materials, and design scales to test and enhance economic feasibility. This may involve re-visiting the critical gestures of some contexts (physical, visual). An example of this may be to use an ETFE membrane for the canopy to create a tent-like structure, reducing the construction and material cost. Another critical tactic may have been to redistribute the NZIAF offices within the buildings of The Terrace, spreading the identity of the intervention further into the city. However, as a *design*-thesis, these considerations were secondary to the investigation and exaggeration of strategies that test the potency of form, typology, and materiality in an un-constricted fashion.

Physical, Visual and Historical

The physical and visual dimensions of the design can be seen as both its strongest and weakest attribute(s). Deriving the formal outcomes of the case study from *purely* contextual and critical positions has created an intervention that is both radical (for

Wellington) and contemporary – contrasting the existing fabric from within itself. Engaging the formal, material and typological languages of the wider context has instructed an outcome that embodies strategies to critique the existing infrastructural and commercial contexts, as well as projecting a new, positive, architectural identity. These strategies collage the design with specific referents, a system of moments that ‘act out’ the formal and cultural *resistance*. As a result, the design has created *flows* of visual and physical engagement from multiple aspects and scales (urban, human, and vehicular).

Informed by an understanding of representation put forth by the key authors of this design-research investigation, a physical and visual language was tested that engages architecture as a discipline that is relational and subjectively interpreted by the individuals experiencing it. They are the authors of their own visual experiences of the urban environment. As such, the design is composed of elements that are in one sense narrative, yet never determined; the buildings can be either interpreted or ‘misinterpreted’ according to the occupant. The performative indices of the design are crucial in this regard, allowing the ‘image’ of the design to be axiomatically and consistently associated with its functioning as an events facility and public park. As a design framework, treating architecture as a physical and visual index allows a critical flexibility as the various indices will change with every site – elucidating different strategies and therefore different design outcomes.

The indices used throughout the design also implicate the contextual histories associated with this car park site. Following the position of Walter Benjamin, the historical context *is* the physical and visual context; the what-has-been and the now are dialectically linked. In *Architecture’s Tightrope* the indices of *terraces*, *excavations*, *fluidity* and *orthogonality*, resonate between history of the site and its positive, projective use. The design projects forward from an engagement with the past, rather than statically memorialising it or submitting itself to the spectacle of the present.

^ ABOVE
Figure 10.3: An architectural rendering of the proposal for the Basin Reserve Flyover project.

However, drawing the design almost entirely from its surroundings has limiting implications as well. Designing in material *continuity* (and formal *discontinuity*) with the infrastructure datums has had an austere effect on the design - due in no small part to the fact that all of the existing visible 'architecture' was built as highway infrastructure. Further design experimentation may look to articulate a critical language that is less reliant on 'hard' materials such as concrete, timber and brick and could introduce new materials that juxtapose the context in materiality as well as form. In particular, the materiality of the curvilinear elements could be investigated as performing the fluid index in a clearer manner. Additionally, further design testing could explore a manipulation of the infrastructure as it exists - deconstructing the orthogonality of the datums and columns to visually and physically 'open' the site even further.

Leaving the infrastructure intact and exposed, although theoretically pertinent, placed a number of restrictions on the design outcome. The ordering system of the car park has had the effect of 'inserting' the design within it; as such the performance spaces are not as articulated as they may have been on a blank site. The scale of the site has also produced challenges for the design; the size of the car park, 350m in length, has situated the thesis within a scale that is distinctly urban yet investigating

problems as they occur at human scale. Consequently, the resolution and articulation of the multi-building design is less detailed than would be expected from a smaller scale site and programme. Further design research would rigorously investigate and further develop the detailing and junction relationships between the performance spaces and the car park, as well as look to the critical potential of the construction process.

^ ABOVE
Figure 10.4: An adjusted image of the proposal for the Basin Reserve Flyover project. The image has been digitally reconfigured by a member of the public, suggesting the impending negative social outcomes of the design.

Conclusion

The persistence of the two-fold design-research conducted by this thesis - a polycontextual engagement with the urban condition of *thick edges* that are created by new infrastructures; and *critical spatial practices* as a positive and flexible design framework - brings forth the importance of a critical approach to design intervention. The vitality of architectural strategies to resist, provoke and question dominant forces and popular modes of thinking; challenges architects to engage the discipline as both a formal and a culturally pertinent proposition. Importantly, the application of this approach is not limited to this thesis, it is self-perpetuating – the outcomes of this design-research are now reflexively open to critique themselves, allowing new approaches to emerge from it – evidencing its discursive flexibility.

In light of these understandings, following further research, the framework of *critical spatial practices* could be pursued further through additional case studies, or an investigation of alternative modes of critique beyond the site-specific, socio-spatial and temporal. Additionally, applied within a different context, *critical spatial practices* would yield different results – looking to wider contextual dimensions that provide opportunities to expose information that has been previously suppressed or marginalised.

The compounding importance of such a flexible, critical position is evidenced by the current solutions (or lack thereof) to existing *thick edges* - 'junkspaces' that have generally been disregarded, filled in by singular anti-social programmes, or unimaginatively and cosmetically revitalised according to a contextually limited framework. This thesis demonstrates that unsightly and undesirable infrastructures can not only be explored for public, social or cultural benefits, but that they may also stand as structures of critique – where their ideological forces of production are subverted and destabilised by architectural intervention. In the case of the *Architecture's Tightrope*, this critique has emerged as an opposition to the privatised forces of development that have shaped the fabric of Wellington's City centre, in particular through infrastructure and

high-rise commercial buildings. Resisting this notion, the design intervention has appropriated the space for public and social concerns – a position that evidences the necessity for cultural engagement.

Current approaches to new infrastructure and urbanisation will continue to produce potentially problematic outcomes and the proliferation *thick edges*, evidenced by the new proposal for the Basin Reserve Flyover (see Figures 10.3 and 10.4). In contemporary society these developments are acknowledged to have negative and anti-social implications, yet design interventions continue to be limited to a narrow range of outcomes – a problem that will not be addressed as long as architectural ideology is apathetic towards contextual engagement, restricted to an internal disciplinarity, or entirely submissive to flows of capital.

RIGHT >
Figure 10.5: Architecture's
Tightrope, longitudinal section.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. i	Clifton Street Car Park, NZTA engineers plan placed in context. (Author's own image, 2013)	Fig. 2.11	Hadid, Zaha. <u>Galaxy SOHO</u> , Beijing (2012). 10 March 2013, <www.dezeen.com>
Fig. ii	Wellington Urban Motorway, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)	Fig. 2.12	Hadid, Zaha. <u>Galaxy SOHO</u> , Beijing (2012). 10 March 2013, <www.dezeen.com>
Fig. iii	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)	Fig. 2.13	Diagram of argument structure. (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. iv	The Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)		
Fig. v	The Neues Museum, Berlin. (Photograph courtesy of Tessa Ayling-Guhl. 17 Feb. 2013)	Chapter Three	
Fig. vi	The Wellington Urban Motorway, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)	Fig. 3.1	Wellington Urban Motorway, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)
Chapter One		Fig. 3.2	Allison, Noah. <u>Los Angeles Freeways</u> , Los Angeles (2012). 15 Oct. 2012 <www.goodfoodpreservation.com>
Fig. 1.1	Arch2o.com 2012-2013. <u>Superkilen Urban Park, Copenhagen</u> . <http://www.arch2o.com >	Fig. 3.3	Le Corbusier. <u>Model of Plan Vosin</u> , Paris (1930). 15 Oct. 2012 <www.meganrolph.wordpress.com>
Fig. 1.2	Diagram of overall thesis structure. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 3.4	Hilberseimer, Ludwig. <u>Grossstadt Project</u> , Berlin (1927). 1 Sept. 2012 <www.artic.edu>
Chapter Two		Fig. 3.5	Diagram of jump-cut urbanisation. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 2.1	Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin. (Photograph courtesy of Tessa Ayling-Guhl. 17 Feb. 2013)	Fig. 3.6	City Council, Christchurch. <u>Central Christchurch Master Plan</u> , Christchurch (2011). 1 Feb. 2013 <www.stuff.co.nz>
Fig. 2.2	Diagram of argument structure. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 3.7	Diagram of thick edge condition. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 2.3	Diagram of argument structure. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 3.8	Subarquitectura Architects. <u>Alicante Tram Stop</u> , Alicante (2008). 19 March 2013 <www.archdaily.com>
Fig. 2.4	van der Rohe, Mies. <u>Friedrichstrasse Project</u> (1922). (Reproduced from: Hays, Critical Architecture, 1984)	Fig. 3.9	Hargreaves Associates. <u>Louisville Waterfront Park</u> , Louisville (1992). 19 March 2013 <www.pruned.blogspot.com>
Fig. 2.5	Judd, Donald. <u>Minimal Myth</u> , (1973). 16 Feb. 2013, <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com >	Fig. 3.10	Nouvel, John. <u>Placa De Les Glories</u> , Barcelona (2005). 19 March 2013 <www.arcspace.com>
Fig. 2.6	Eisenman, Peter. <u>House III</u> , (1972). 16 April 2012, (Reproduced from: <u>Eisenman Inside Out: Selected Writings 1963-1988</u> . By Peter Eisenman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004)	Fig. 3.11	Diagram of wider local context, Wellington. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 2.7	Eisenman, Peter. <u>House VI</u> , Boston (1972). 18 April 2013, <www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 3.12	Diagram/map of central Wellington's infrastructure. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 2.8	Eisenman, Peter. <u>House VI</u> , Boston (1972). 18 April 2013, <www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 3.13	Figure/ground diagram/map of central Wellington. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 2.8	Diagram of argument structure. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 3.14	Diagram/map locating three thick edges in Wellington. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 2.9	Gehry, Frank O. <u>Guggenheim Musuem</u> , Bilbao (1997). 10 March 2013, <www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 3.15	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Westpac Stadium Car Park</u> . Wellington (2013). 23 March 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>
Fig. 2.10	Hadid, Zaha. <u>Galaxy SOHO</u> , Beijing (2012). 10 March 2013, <www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 3.16	Westpac Stadium Car Park, Wellington. (Photograph courtesy of Daniel K. Brown. 20 June 2013)
		Fig. 3.17	Westpac Stadium Car Park, Wellington. (Photo-

	graph courtesy of Daniel K. Brown. 20 June 2013)		PAColl-9150-24. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. < http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23249606 >
Fig. 3.18	Westpac Stadium Car Park, Wellington. (Photograph courtesy of Daniel K. Brown. 20 June 2013)	Fig. 4.8	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 3.19	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Ballantrae Car Park</u> . Wellington (2013). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >	Fig. 4.9	<u>The Terrace, Wellington</u> . Winder, Duncan, 1919-1970 :Architectural photographs. Ref: DW-2805-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. < http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22833036 >
Fig. 3.20	Ballantrae Car Park, Wellington. (Photograph courtesy of Daniel K. Brown. 20 June 2013)	Fig. 4.10	City Council, Wellington. <u>High City Low City</u> . 12 Feb. 2012. < http://www.mfe.govt.nz >
Fig. 3.21	Ballantrae Car Park, Wellington. (Photograph courtesy of Daniel K. Brown. 20 June 2013)	Fig. 4.11	Diagram of The Terrace showing high city/low city structure. (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 3.22	Ballantrae Car Park, Wellington. (Photograph courtesy of Daniel K. Brown. 20 June 2013)	Fig. 4.12	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 3.23	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)	Fig. 4.13	Bing Maps. Map of Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington (2013). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >
Fig. 3.24	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)	Fig. 4.14	<u>View of motorway under construction from Bolton Street Cemetery</u> , Wellington. Further negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP/1976/2436/28-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. < http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23008277 >
Fig. 3.25	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)		
Fig. 3.26	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)		
Chapter Four			
Fig. 4.1	Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.15	Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.2	<u>Photograph of Shell House</u> , The Terrace, Wellington. Fearnley, Charles James, 1915-1988 :Photographs of New Zealand buildings. Ref: 1/4-075735-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. < http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23191046 >	Fig. 4.16	Bolton Street Cemetery, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.3	<u>Wellington Urban Motorway under construction at Shell Gully</u> . Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002) :Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: PAColl-9150-24. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. < http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23249606 >	Fig. 4.17	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.4	<u>Lambton Quay, Wellington, looking south from railway tram terminus</u> . Smith, Alan :Collection of negatives of buses and trams, 1963 to 1970. Ref: 35mm-02059-21-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. < http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23011875 >	Fig. 4.18	Sign showing map of Wellington Cable Car, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.5	<u>Wellington motorway under construction at Shell Gully</u> . Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 1/4-020395-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. < http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23250383 >	Fig. 4.19	City Council, Wellington. <u>Land-use Zoning for Central Area</u> . (Reconfigured by author) 12 Feb. 2012. < http://www.mfe.govt.nz >
Fig. 4.6	Lodge, Neville. <u>Motorway Protest</u> (1965). 20 March 2013. < http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/cartoon/25751/motorway-protest >	Fig. 4.19	City Council, Wellington. <u>Land-use Zoning for Central Area</u> . (Reconfigured by author) 12 Feb. 2012. < http://www.mfe.govt.nz >
Fig. 4.7	<u>Wellington Urban Motorway under construction at Shell Gully</u> . Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002) :Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref:	Fig. 4.20	Diagram of property values adjacent to The Terrace. (Author's own image, 2012)
		Fig. 4.20	Diagram of property values adjacent to The Terrace. (Author's own image, 2012)
		Fig. 4.21	Diagram of social publics witnessed at site. (Author's own image, 2013)
		Fig. 4.22	Isometric diagram of site ground levels. (Author's own image, 2013)
		Fig. 4.23	Isometric diagram of site adjacent zones. (Author's own image, 2013)
		Fig. 4.24	Isometric diagram of site Datum 1. (Author's own image, 2013)
		Fig. 4.25	Isometric diagram of site Datum 2. (Author's own image, 2013)

Fig. 4.26	Isometric diagram of site Datum 4. (Author's own image, 2013)	Fig. 4.51	Plan diagram of site visual context 3. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 4.27	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.52	Lambton Quay, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.28	Isometric diagram of site visual context 1. (Author's own image, 2013)	Fig. 4.53	Cable Car Lane, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.29	Plan diagram of site visual context 1. (Author's own image, 2013)	Fig. 4.54	Wellington Cable Car, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.30	Photograph of Marsh Ltd. offices, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.55	Wellington Cable Car, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.31	Photograph of Marsh Ltd. lobby, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.56	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.32	Photograph of The Terrace, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.57	Wellington Cable Car, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.33	Photograph of The Terrace, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.58	Botanical Gardens lookout. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.34	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.59	Botanical Gardens lookout, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.35	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.60	Botanical Gardens lookout, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.36	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.61	Isometric diagram of site visual context 4. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 4.37	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.62	Plan diagram of site visual context 4. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 4.38	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.63	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.39	Isometric diagram of site visual context 2. (Author's own image, 2013)	Fig. 4.64	Isometric diagram of site visual context 5. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 4.40	Plan diagram of site visual context 2. (Author's own image, 2013)	Fig. 4.65	Plan diagram of site visual context 5. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 4.41	Lambton Quay, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.66	Thorndon suburb. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.42	Woodward Street, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.67	Greenbelt path (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.43	Woodward Street, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.68	Greenbelt path. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.44	Woodward Street, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.69	Greenbelt path. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.45	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.70	Greenbelt path. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.46	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.71	Northern Stair entrance to Clifton Street Car Park. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.47	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.72	Greenbelt path. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.48	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.73	Wellington Urban Motorway. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.49	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 4.74	Bolton Street Cemetery. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 4.50	Isometric diagram of site visual context 3. (Author's own image, 2013)	Fig. 4.75	Bolton Street Cemetery. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)

Fig. 4.76	Bolton Street Cemetery. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)		
Fig. 4.77	Bolton Street Cemetery. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 5.18	Berrizbeitia, Anita. <u>Igualada Cemetery</u> , Igualada, (1994). <u>Inside Outside: Between Architecture and Landscape</u> . Berrizbeitia, Anita; Pollak Linda. Gloucester, Mass: Rockport, 2003. Print.
Chapter Five		Fig. 5.19	Isometric diagram of ordering system. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 5.1	Smithson, Robert. <u>Asphalt Rundown</u> , 1969, Rome. <u>History of Our World</u> . 2 Feb 2010, < http://historyofourworld.wordpress.com/2010/10/18/robert-smithson/ >	Fig. 5.20	Isometric diagram of ordering system. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 5.2	Serra, Richard. <u>Tilted Arc</u> , 1981, New York City. Reproduced from <u>Contemporary Art Daily</u> . 2 Feb 2010, < http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com >	Fig. 5.21	Plan diagram of ordering system. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 5.3	Matta-Clark, Gordon. <u>Cibachrome</u> , 1975, Paris. <u>History of Our World</u> . 2 Feb 2010, < http://historyofourworld.wordpress.com/2010/10/18/robert-smithson/ >	Fig. 5.22	Plan diagram of ordering system. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 5.4	Eisenman, Peter. <u>City of Culture of Galicia</u> , Galicia, (2013). 18 April 2013, < www.archdaily.com >	Fig. 5.23	Isometric diagram of terracing. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 5.5	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Paris</u> , Paris (2013). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >	Fig. 5.24	Isometric diagram of terracing. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 5.6	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Parc de la Villette</u> , Paris (2013). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >	Fig. 5.25	Plan diagram of design ordering system. (Author's own image, 2013)
Fig. 5.7	Penarroyo, Cyprus. <u>Exploded isometric of Parc de la Villette</u> (1982-1983). 22 Sept 2012 < www.archdaily.com >	Chapter 6	
Fig. 5.8	Penarroyo, Cyprus. <u>Exploded isometric of Parc de la Villette</u> (2013). 22 Sept 2012 < www.archdaily.com >	Fig. 6.1	Winstanley, Tim. <u>Palais de Tokyo</u> , Paris, (2011). 2 April 2013 < www.archdaily.com >
Fig. 5.9	Penarroyo, Cyprus. <u>Parc de la Villette</u> , Paris, (1982-1983). 22 Sept 2012 < www.archdaily.com >	Fig. 6.2	Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. <u>BMW Guggenheim LAB</u> , Berlin, (2012). 5 April 2013 < www.bmwguggenheimlab.org >
Fig. 5.10	Penarroyo, Cyprus. <u>Parc de la Villette</u> , Paris, (1982-1983). 22 Sept 2012 < www.archdaily.com >	Fig. 6.3	Diagram of tight/loose space dimensions. (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 5.11	Penarroyo, Cyprus. <u>Parc de la Villette</u> , Paris, (1982-1983). 22 Sept 2012 < www.archdaily.com >	Fig. 6.4	Civic Square, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 5.12	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Igualada</u> , Igualada (1982-1983). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >	Fig. 6.5	Russell, Anne. <u>Civic Square during protest</u> . Wellington (2013). < www.fightback.org.nz >
Fig. 5.13	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Igualada Cemetery</u> , Igualada (2013). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >	Fig. 6.6	Capper, Phillip. <u>Waitangi Park, Wellington</u> (2007). < www.flickr.com >
Fig. 5.14	Kroll, Andrew. <u>Igualada Cemetery</u> , Igualada, (1994). 2 April 2013 < www.archdaily.com >	Fig. 6.7	Capper, Phillip. <u>Waitangi Park, Wellington</u> (2007). < www.flickr.com >
Fig. 5.15	Kroll, Andrew. <u>Igualada Cemetery</u> , Igualada, (1994). 2 April 2013 < www.archdaily.com >	Fig. 6.8	Paredes Pino Architects. <u>CAAC</u> , Cordoba (2010). 28 March 2013 < http://www.archdaily.com >
Fig. 5.16	Berrizbeitia, Anita. <u>Igualada Cemetery</u> , Igualada, (1994). <u>Inside Outside: Between Architecture and Landscape</u> . Berrizbeitia, Anita; Pollak Linda. Gloucester, Mass: Rockport, 2003. Print.	Fig. 6.9	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Paris</u> , Paris (1982-1983). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >
Fig. 5.17	Berrizbeitia, Anita. <u>Igualada Cemetery</u> , Igualada, (1994). <u>Inside Outside: Between Architecture and Landscape</u> . Berrizbeitia, Anita; Pollak Linda.	Fig. 6.10	Bing Maps. <u>Aerial photograph of Palais de Tokyo</u> , Paris (1982-1983). 23 March 2013 < nz.bing.com/maps >
		Fig. 6.11	Technical plan of Palais de Tokyo (Authors own image, 2012)
		Fig. 6.12	Winstanley, Tim. <u>Palais de Tokyo</u> , Paris, (2011). 2 April 2013 < www.archdaily.com >
		Fig. 6.13	Winstanley, Tim. <u>Palais de Tokyo</u> , Paris, (2011). 2 April 2013 < www.archdaily.com >

Fig. 6.14	Winstanley, Tim. <u>Palais de Tokyo</u> , Paris, (2011). 2 April 2013 <www.archdaily.com>		
Fig. 6.15	Winstanley, Tim. <u>Palais de Tokyo</u> , Paris, (2011). 2 April 2013 <www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 7.4	Klee, Paul. <u>Angelus Novus</u> (1920). 8 June 2012. Reproduced from <http://www. http://plundered-art.blogspot.com >
Fig. 6.16	Bing Maps. <u>Metropol Parasol, Seville</u> (2013). 2 May 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>	Fig. 7.5	Supreme Courthouse of New Zealand, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 6.17	Alda, Fernando. <u>Metropol Parasol, Seville</u> , (2011). 2 April 2013 < http://www.yatzer.com>	Fig. 7.6	Ito, Toyo. <u>Meiso no Mori Municipal Funeral Hall</u> , Gifu (2009). 5 July 2012. Reproduced from <http://www. http://www.dezeen.com>
Fig. 6.18	Unknown photographer. <u>Car Park, Seville</u> , (1960). Reproduced from: Mayer, Jurgen H. 'Metropol Parasol, Seville'. <u>Architectural Design</u> , Sept/Oct 2012, ed. Alexander Eisenschmidt	Fig. 7.7	Nishi, Tatzu. <u>Engel</u> , Basel(2002). Reproduced from <u>Contemporary Art Daily</u> . 2 July 2010, <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com>
Fig. 6.19	Alda, Fernando. <u>Metropol Parasol, Seville</u> , (2011). 2 April 2013 < http://www.yatzer.com>	Fig. 7.8	Nishi, Tatzu. <u>Discovering Columbus</u> , New York (2012). Reproduced from <u>Contemporary Art Daily</u> . 2 July 2010, <http://www.contemporaryart-daily.com>
Fig. 6.20	Technical plan of Metropol Parasol (Authors own image, 2012)	Fig. 7.9	Gentry, Regan. <u>Subject to Change</u> (2002). Reproduced from <u>Contemporary Art Daily</u> . 2 July 2010, <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com>
Fig. 6.21	Alda, Fernando. <u>Metropol Parasol, Seville</u> , (2011). 2 April 2013 < http://www.yatzer.com>	Fig. 7.10	Eisenman, Peter. <u>Checkpoint Charlie Housing for the IBA</u> , Berlin (1987). Reproduced from <u>MIMOA</u> . 2 July 2010, <http://www. http://www.mimoa.eu>
Fig. 6.22	Alda, Fernando. <u>Metropol Parasol, Seville</u> , (2011). 2 April 2013 < http://www.yatzer.com>	Fig. 7.11	Libeskind, Daniel. <u>The Jewish Museum Berlin</u> , Berlin (1999). 21 Jan 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>
Fig. 6.23	Diagram of Metropol Parasol's strategies (Authors own image, 2012)	Fig. 7.12	Libeskind, Daniel. <u>The Jewish Museum Berlin</u> , Berlin (1999). 21 Jan 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>
Fig. 6.24	Bing Maps. <u>Site of EPFL, Lausanne</u> (2013). 2 May 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>	Fig. 7.12	Libeskind, Daniel. <u>The Jewish Museum Berlin</u> , Berlin (1999). 21 Jan 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>
Fig. 6.25	Bing Maps. <u>Site of EPFL, Lausanne</u> (2013). 2 May 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>	Fig. 7.13	Axonometric diagram of Jewish Museum Berlin (Authors own image, 2012)
Fig. 6.26	Basulto, David. <u>Rolex Learning Center/SANAA</u> , Lausanne, (2010). 21 May 2013 < http://www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 7.14	Jewish Museum, Berlin. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 6.27	Bing Maps. <u>Site of EPFL, Lausanne</u> (2013). 2 May 2013 <nz.bing.com/maps>	Fig. 7.15	Jewish Museum, Berlin. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 6.28	Diagram plan of Rolex Learning Center's strategies (Authors own image, 2012)	Fig. 7.16	Diagram/photograph of the Jewish Museum, Berlin. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 6.29	Diagram plan of Rolex Learning Center's strategies (Authors own image, 2012)	Fig. 7.17	Diagram/photograph of the Jewish Museum, Berlin. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 6.30	Basulto, David. <u>Rolex Learning Center/SANAA</u> , Lausanne, (2010). 21 May 2013 < http://www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 7.18	Libeskind, Daniel. <u>Jewish Museum Berlin</u> , Berlin (1999). 10 March 2013, <www.archdaily.com>
Fig. 6.31	Basulto, David. <u>Rolex Learning Center/SANAA</u> , Lausanne, (2010). 21 May 2013 < http://www.archdaily.com>	Fig. 7.19	Diagram/photograph of the Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 6.32	Diagram plan of Rolex Learning Center's strategies (Authors own image, 2012)	Fig. 7.20	Diagram/photograph of the Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Chapter Seven		Fig. 7.21	Diagram/photograph of the Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)
Fig. 7.1	Pistoletto, Michelangelo. <u>Venus in Rags</u> (1974). 2 May 2012 <http://www.contempraryartdaily.com>	Fig. 7.22	Diagram/photograph of the Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author,
Fig. 7.2	Hadid, Zaha. <u>Galaxy SOHO</u> , Beijing (2012). 10 March 2013, <www.archdaily.com>		
Fig. 7.3	Image reproduced from: Fairs, Marcus. <u>Zaha Had-</u>		

	2013)		own image, 2012)
Chapter Eight		Fig. 9.8	Key for rendered plan of design ground levels (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.1	Assembly Architect's. <i>Folly for a Flyover</i> , London (2011). Reproduced from <i>Dezeen</i> , 2 July 2010, < http://www.dezeen.com >	Fig. 9.9	Rendered plan of design ground levels (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.2	Diagram of performance types. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.10	Technical plan of design ground levels (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.3	Diagram of annual events in Wellington. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.11	Technical plan of design middle levels (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.4	Diagram of performance adjacencies. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.12	Diagram of back-of-house adjacencies (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.5	Diagram of performance adjacencies. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.13	Diagram of performance, front-of-house and back-of-house adjacencies (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.6	Diagram of performance adjacencies. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.14	Diagram of various shelter adjacencies (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.7	Diagram of staging typologies. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.15	Diagram of various shared services adjacencies (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.8	Map of performance venues in Wellington. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.16	Diagram of Datum 1 programme adjacencies (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.9	Chart of performance venue sizes in Wellington. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.17	Diagram of design vehicular and pedestrian access (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.10	Location of performance case studies. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.18	Diagrammatic key of design typologies – formal, spatial, programmatic and material (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.11	Spatial analysis of Circa Theatre, Wellington. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.19	Rendered key of section D-D' with (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.12	Spatial analysis of St James Theatre, Wellington. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.20	Rendered section D-D', part two (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.13	Spatial analysis of Wellington Town Hall, Wellington. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.21	Rendered section D-D', part three (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.14	Photograph of the Anvil House, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 9.22	Rendered section D-D', part three (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 8.15	Flow chart of New Zealand International Arts Festival 2010 programme, Wellington. (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.23	Rendered section D-D', part four (Author's own image, 2012)
Chapter Nine		Fig. 9.24	Rendered section D-D', part five (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.1	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2013)	Fig. 9.25	Rendered section D-D', part six (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.2	Rendered plan of design upper levels (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.26	Isometric image of ground levels (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.3	Diagrammatic key of existing and intervening formal typologies (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.27	Exploded isometric image of ground level buildings (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.4	Key for rendered plan of design upper levels (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.28	Isometric image of loading bay (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.5	Diagrammatic key of intervening spatial typologies (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.29	Isometric image of plant room (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.6	Key for rendered plan of design middle level (Author's own image, 2012)	Fig. 9.30	Isometric image of workshop (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.7	Rendered plan of design middle level (Author's	Fig. 9.31	Isometric image of performance back-of-house facilities (Author's own image, 2012)

Fig. 9.32	Isometric image of black box theatre (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.33	Diagram section of canopy continuity (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.34	Exploded isometric image of middle level and buildings (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.35	Exploded assembly isometric image of signage detail (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.36	Isometric image of storage (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.37	Isometric image of studio/hire spaces (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.38	Isometric image of thru-scenium theatre (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.39	Isometric image of public toilet facilities (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.40	Isometric image of front-of-house facilities (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.41	Exploded isometric image of canopy derived from major programmatic points (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.41	Exploded isometric image of upper levels and buildings (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.42	Exploded isometric image of upper levels and buildings (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.43	Exploded assembly isometric image of channel glass detail (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.44	Exploded isometric image of recital space (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.45	Exploded assembly isometric image of window casement detail (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.46	Exploded assembly isometric image of NZIAF office spaces (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.47	Isometric image of canopy and adjacent grids (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.48	Sectional perspective image A-A' of black box theatre (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.49	Sectional perspective image B-B' of thru-scenium theatre (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.50	Sectional perspective image C-C' of traverse theatre (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.51	Perspective image cable car threshold (Author's own image, 2012)
Fig. 9.52	Perspective image northern stairwell threshold (Author's own image, 2012)
Chapter 10	
Fig. 10.1	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)

Fig. 10.2	Clifton Street Car Park, Wellington. (Personal photograph by author, 2012)
Fig. 10.3	New Zealand Transport Authority. <u>Basin Reserve Flyover</u> , Wellington, (2013). 21 May 2013 < http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/basin-bridge/index.html >
Fig. 10.4	Brunton, Simon. New Zealand Transport Authority. <u>Basin Reserve Flyover</u> , Wellington, (2013). 22 May 2013 < http://wellington.scoop.co.nz/?p=50715 >
Fig. 10.5	Rendered section D-D', (Author's own image, 2012)

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