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# Idea bank: Watt street,Wynberg, Johannesburg

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# BETWEEN WATT STREET AND WALL STREET:

## IDEA BANK FOR NEW FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL TRANSACTIONS: IN WYNBRG: JOHANNESBURG

# ABSTRACT

What if you could spend an idea to earn money?

Detected through an anthropological lens, rather than a strictly economical one; the context of this thesis inherits a feverishly fluctuating South African economy. It is pitted against often contradictory and interchanging consciousness of opportunity in the so-called formalised and informalised markets; and within the flaring gap that exists between the two. This gap finds spatiality in South African post-Apartheid cities, in which physical buffers to dense marginalised communities remain visible; as in the particular case of Johannesburg.

Investigations into the spatial orders of postmodern 'money institutions' (including the bank, shopping mall and casino) show that the urban phenomena of emergent 'money borders' also echoes itself in its architecture. Through historical analysis, the capitalist construct displays itself increasingly as a closed protected entity. Underneath the exquisitely woven Persian rug of privatised space, trapdoors to dubious and illicit spots often exist, In this space, it is all smoke and mirrors. The rules can be broken for the desires of those inside, and keep out the supposed risks of those who are not. Its detachedness is reconstructed through the theoretical perspectives of Michel Foucault and Georg Simmel; this examination providing grasp for spatial tools which, if altered, could recalibrate the way in which privatised spaces open and close themselves to the public.

How can a reassembly of spatial and psychological thresholds in financial institutions assist in making capital more accessible to the idea-bearer? The results of this research propose reworked syntax of physical legibilities which make entry, participation and exit in financial systems understandable and therefore more possible. An idea trading floor (idea bank) is designated as the principal programme; where the possibility of intersection of capital, presented by an investor meeting an innovator with an idea is available, in a stripped down form. Beginning with the shell of the capitalist epitome 'free market' stock trading floor, a new re-mastered hybrid is born. Usually fascinatingly chaotic, these spaces are viscerally experiential but also remain inaccessible to many parts of society. What if we could sell stocks for entrepreneurial ideas, in a physical, space-folded, compact trading floor, partly quotidian like that of a supermarket, and partly fantastical and alluring?

Fertile ground for such a transaction point is identified at an intersection in Wynberg, Johannesburg; which currently lies suspended along a highly-trafficked pedestrian movement route between Alexandra and Sandton, and is earmarked for a future transport interchange. Space-folding techniques underline the conceptual arrangement of the architecture; with the superimposition of idea bank with micro-factories and gathering spaces. These programmes are vertically punctured by a circulation vein to the proposed bus terminal below the site, revealing the processes of seed capital generation for a passing commuter or visitor: In addition, through spatially centralising the idea; creativity and the possibility for change; rather than money as an end in itself; this thesis speculates cause-led spatial practice rather than a profit-led one.

Ultimately, if capital has a wall around it (literally and figuratively), perhaps architecture could put a door in it; in doing so making cognizant the presence of the wall; and therefore the possibly to transverse through it.