

https://dspace.org/

Exchange : a mixed metals market for 21st century mining

Du Plessis, Jacques

2014-04-03
http://hdl.handle.net10539/14473

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

URBAN PLACES AND ELECTRONIC SPACES

The Spatial Tensions between Globalising and Developing Worlds

Jacques du Plessis 06 – Dec - 2012 REV 14

ABSTRACT

Society is moving through the *Information Age*[1], a period summarised by advancing information technologies, a world economy, and a global culture, where an ephemeral network has expanded to stir and captivate our everyday lives. While the seemingly unimaginable nature and spatial qualities associated with this digital age continue to captivate our imaginations, one cannot ignore that electronic space has grounding in physical place; a consequence that sees minerals, energy, technology, and people coming together in real spaces to construct the backbone upon which today's global information networks are built.

In this instantaneous era, where spatial tensions are characteristic of widespread change, one need not stretch one's imagination to see that people and cities are increasingly pushed to find new ways to retain their grasp on and compete within the circuits of globalising space. The shifting nature of urban geographies everywhere materialise not only from the capacity of networks to disperse but also integrate increasingly complex components of productivity throughout specific regions of the world, while hollowing out spaces of marginality in others. Those cities located within developing contexts, which live so precariously along a cusp, become frontiers for unimagined resourcefulness and experimentation, where people as infrastructure assemble with remarkable reach and efficiency to oscillate between the universal and particular (Simone, 1998:173-187). These trajectories shift our perception from city to borderland, where the *urban imaginary* converges on themes of exclusion and incorporation, marginality and experimentation. Our incessant lifestyles and fixations with technology, consumption, and obsolesce have reproduced volatile circumstances, where mountains of discarded electronic waste are dumped near marginal communities. These wastelands are far removed from the promises once held by this machinery – instead offering opportunities only to those willing to salvage precious metals in smouldering pits. By providing an interface that operates to alleviate the collision between these phenomena; the *Open Public Trade Forum*, a hybrid market place where a liberalised trade in metal weaves in and out between actual and virtual space, informal and formal activities, local and global networks, could be the first to explore the intersection between these traditionally exclusive sectors. Through rethinking existing economic activities and socio-spatial environments the market is to become a lithe public realm – an arena for altering perceptions – where established notions of trade fuse with progressive concepts of exchange and production in an exploration of

[1] *Information Age:* is a period characterised by widespread electronic access to information through the use of computer technology (Encarta English Dictionary).

programmatic relations and typological inventions. This is a dynamic space to be used as much for commerce and industry as social collectives, where a myriad of citizens are brought together under the auspices of exchange: to trade in mixed metals, to visualise, debate, and shift their dreams of urban futures, to experience chance encounters and excite unique social interactions. And in so doing distinguish a new public architecture – a pioneering metal market embedded between Johannesburg's informal, informational and industrial landscapes.