

Figure 5.1 Early Conceptual Sketch(Author 2015)

V

C O N C E P T A N D P R O G R A M

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explain the manner of thinking which resulted in an overarching architectural concept that will both inform and guide design decisions during the development of the architectural intervention.

5.2 Concept

The following chapter stems from the preceding investigation into how entropy as a philosophical aid might provide clues to the development and strengthening of a conceptual approach to guide the architectural intervention to be established within the urban marginalised space. The existing built form is perceived as information reservoirs (fig 5.1), where data became internalised and contributed to the formation of marginal space between its various built forms.

The concept proposes to activate an energy leakage in terms of programmatic information to be extracted, processed and redistributed into marginal space for public purposes, of which the spatial repercussions and requirements will be explored throughout the design development. This is closely tied to the theoretical approach, where it is implied that isolated systems, if to become natural systems, should be punctured to increase the entropy of its surrounding environments (fig 2 & 3).

As leaking information directly into a high-pressure environment could lead to an “overload” or unbalanced energy distribution, it seems theoretically appropriate to distribute extracted information into a low-pressure zone, being that of marginalised space, to balance the flow of information. The architectural form is henceforth guided by this concept of high- to low-pressure and will also manifest in the tectonic concept to follow.

The scheme intends for the building to latch onto the existing structure and to progressively diffuse into the public domain. The concept is thus four-dimensional in essence and consists of incision, extraction, processing and redistribution. This process developed as a direct response to the notion that introverted programs of buildings lower the entropy of their environments and aim at disrupting this urban status quo.

The hierarchy of public and private is positioned in relation to the natural vertical increase of the site. From where the incision is made into existing structure, it also represents a decrease in privacy of program – both in terms of access and external visibility, down to a low-pressure zone, representational of information dispersed into the public domain. In a sense the intervention is to represent a socially orientated temporary prosthesis, an intermediate that will allow the public user to programmatically interact with the existing and introverted built form.

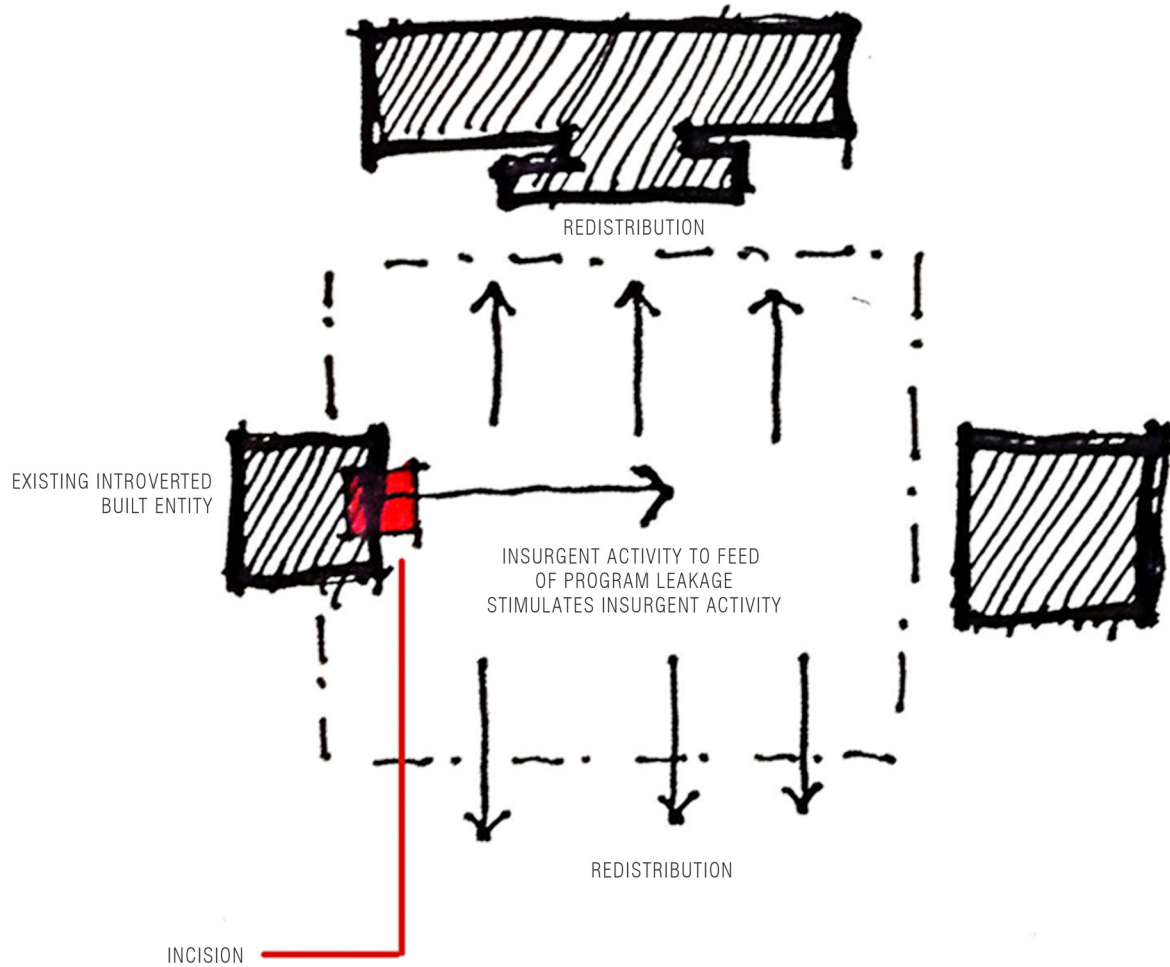
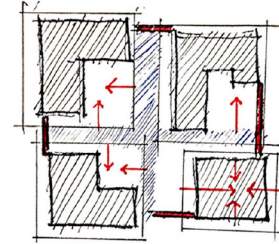
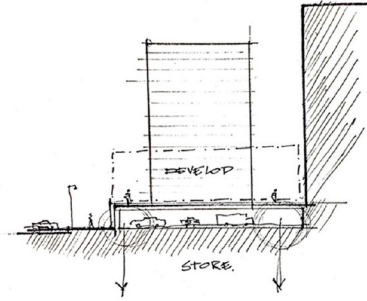
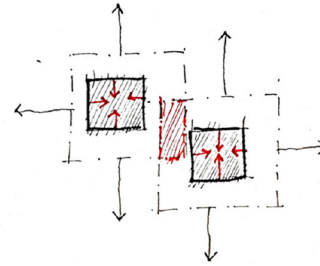
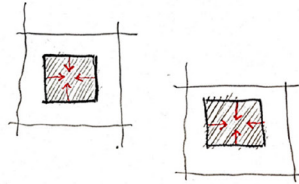


Figure 5.2 Early Conceptual Sketch of Intent(Author 2015)

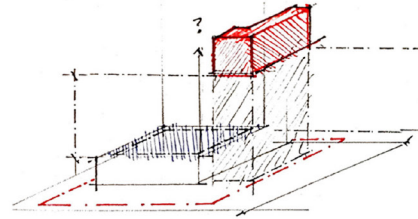
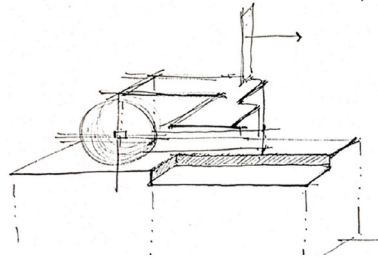
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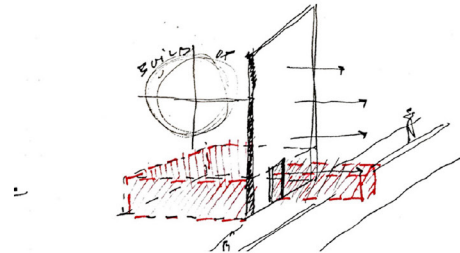
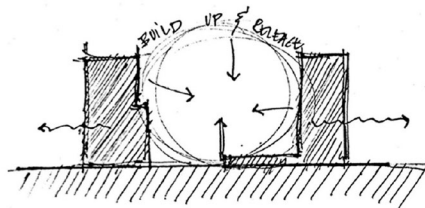


Figure 5.3 Conceptual Application (Author 2015)

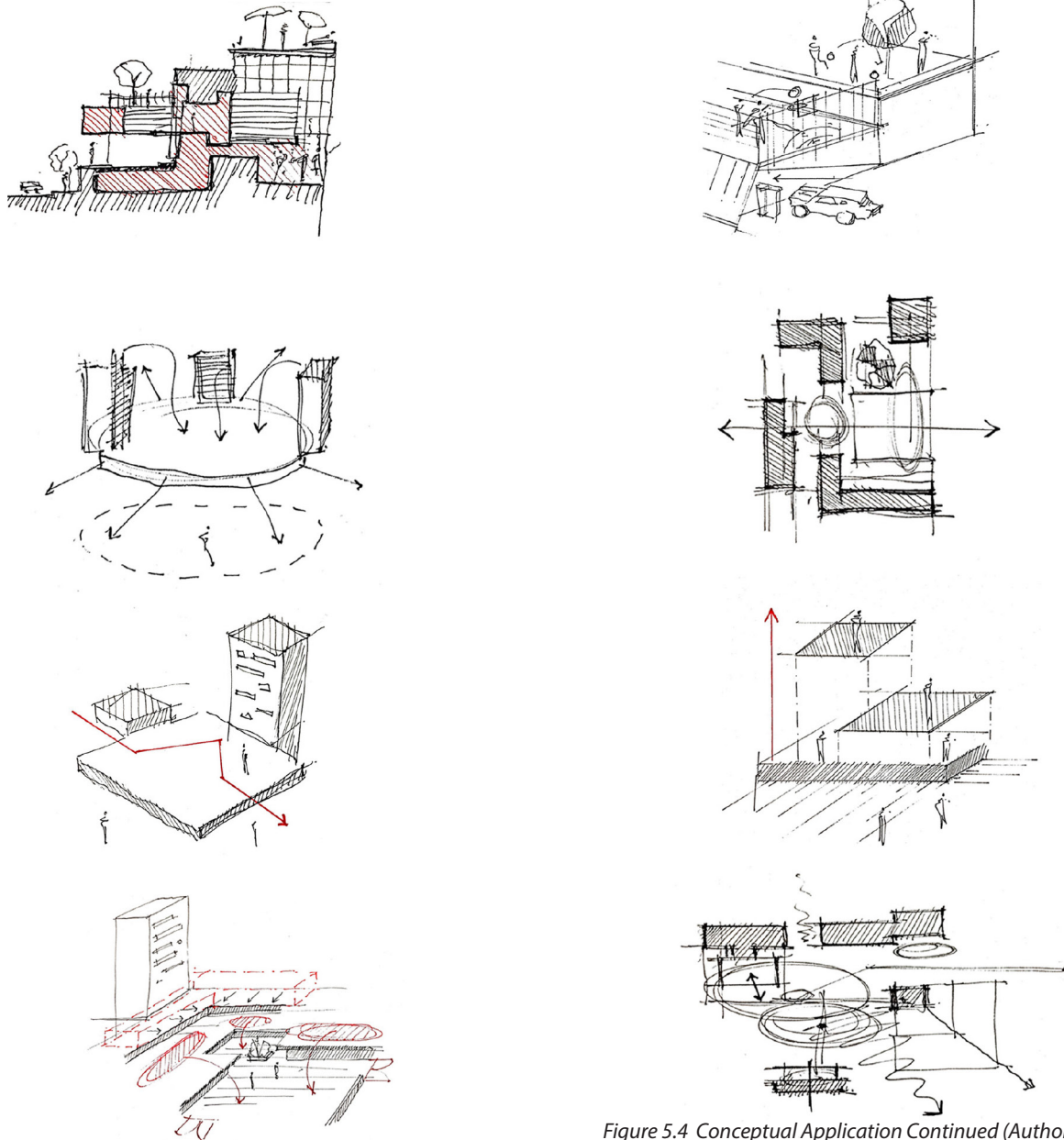


Figure 5.4 Conceptual Application Continued (Author 2015)

When the Advocates Association occupied the Old Mutual Centre building, concerns were voiced that the structural and spatial integrity of the building did not suit the various requirements for the storage of literature.

The information review, electronic research and archiving facilities were then relocated to the old Eureka factory building (fig 5.2), where it currently still occupies the space to suit the needs of the legal precinct. This building, protected by the Heritage Act of... was not originally intended to serve such a purpose, and therefore does not represent the ideal spatial qualities befitting a legal library.

It is henceforth proposed that this building could be exposed to public use according to strategies proposed by conservation through adaptive reuse, and to be incorporated into the public space, currently appropriated by a restaurant located within a street enclave - popular with legal and associated professionals employed in the precinct. The function of the building complies with the North Gauteng Advocates Association's requirement for a law library and research centre as a vessel to initiate the conceptual process of incision, extraction, processing and redistribution.



Figure 5.5 Eureka Factory Pretoria

As part of an abstraction of conventional building typology found within Pretoria's built context, the scheme proposes extroversion of program and spatial quality. To accomplish this, a conceptual principle of structure and skin is introduced, where structure resembles the skeleton of the building to contribute to the infrastructural integrity of the site. As the architecture will represent the opposite to convention of fixed and internalised built form, it is orientated towards a consumerist and adaptable solution. The skin controls the permeability of the architecture – exposing program and materiality into the city and simultaneously diffusing the city into the interior of the marginal space.

Playing on the contrast between the space being kept secret through the years and the scheme's intension of introducing it to the public, the skin acts as an invisible fence, providing a sense of security to the interior, whilst not separating it from the city. The structure component of the concept consists of the more permanent building elements that may be "left behind" to be subjected to future reinterpretation and readaptation. Also included into this donation of infrastructural flotsam are the services and various self-sustaining frameworks to be put into place that may be implemented for future developments as the city evolves and as the future development of the plinth will require. Service space and circulation of program will be guided by contrasting the conventional city approach where services are located to "back-of-house".

Services, as well as vertical and horizontal circulation, will be positioned towards the street, whilst serviced space will be located to the interior of the plinth. The logic behind this strategy intends to animate the street facade, setting it apart from its peers and providing an everyday sense of inclusivity for passersby. As the building represents the promotion of insurgent practices through the spatial conditions it will generate on the plinth, it will be reflected through the architectural form and response to site.

It is intended for services to tap into existing infrastructure so as to introduce a purpose to marginal service space, an incorporation of existing permanent form to enable the existence of a less permanent architecture. Internal building services are to be exposed, specific to space and program, as this forms part of the building's information circuit and links to the overarching conceptual approach. As an exposed transistor within an information circuit, the user will interact with extracted information and will be mirrored by the building interacting with its built context.

5.3 PROGRAM: A Conceptual Response

Programmatic development was centered on investigating the possible public interface that could be associated with the respective internalised program contained within the buildings on site. It was explored how these public-related spin-offs could be arranged to have synergy. Overlapping programs, identical in nature, were then grouped to establish the most appropriate program to be assigned to the intervention. This indicated towards a program grouping that could most effectively be associated with the North Gauteng Advocates Association.

New trends, such as the increased role of media to promote transparency and public interest into the legislative system in South Africa, deemed it fit to accelerate the introduction of the legally orientated program associated with the High Court Chambers into the public domain. This system attempts to establish a space where the public and educational institutions could be actively involved in the very process that impacts on their socio-economic well-being.

The program then intends to facilitate and amplify the user's constitutional right to critique his democratic and urban traditions.

The scheme therefore does not propose inserting a programmatic structure into the site, based on contextual consideration of the precinct alone, but intends to extend existing and established program, to the point where it could serve public needs and activity.

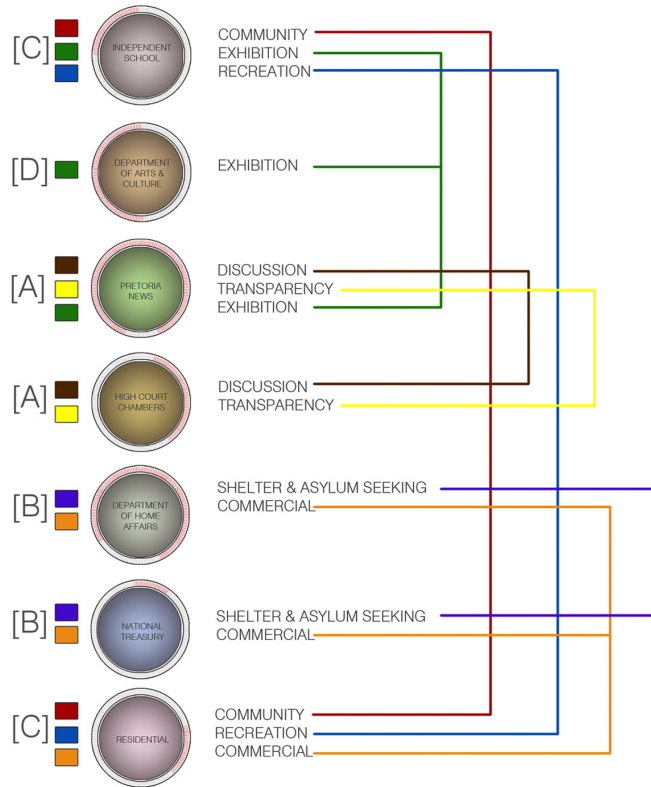


Figure 5.6 Programmatic Structuring (Author 2015)

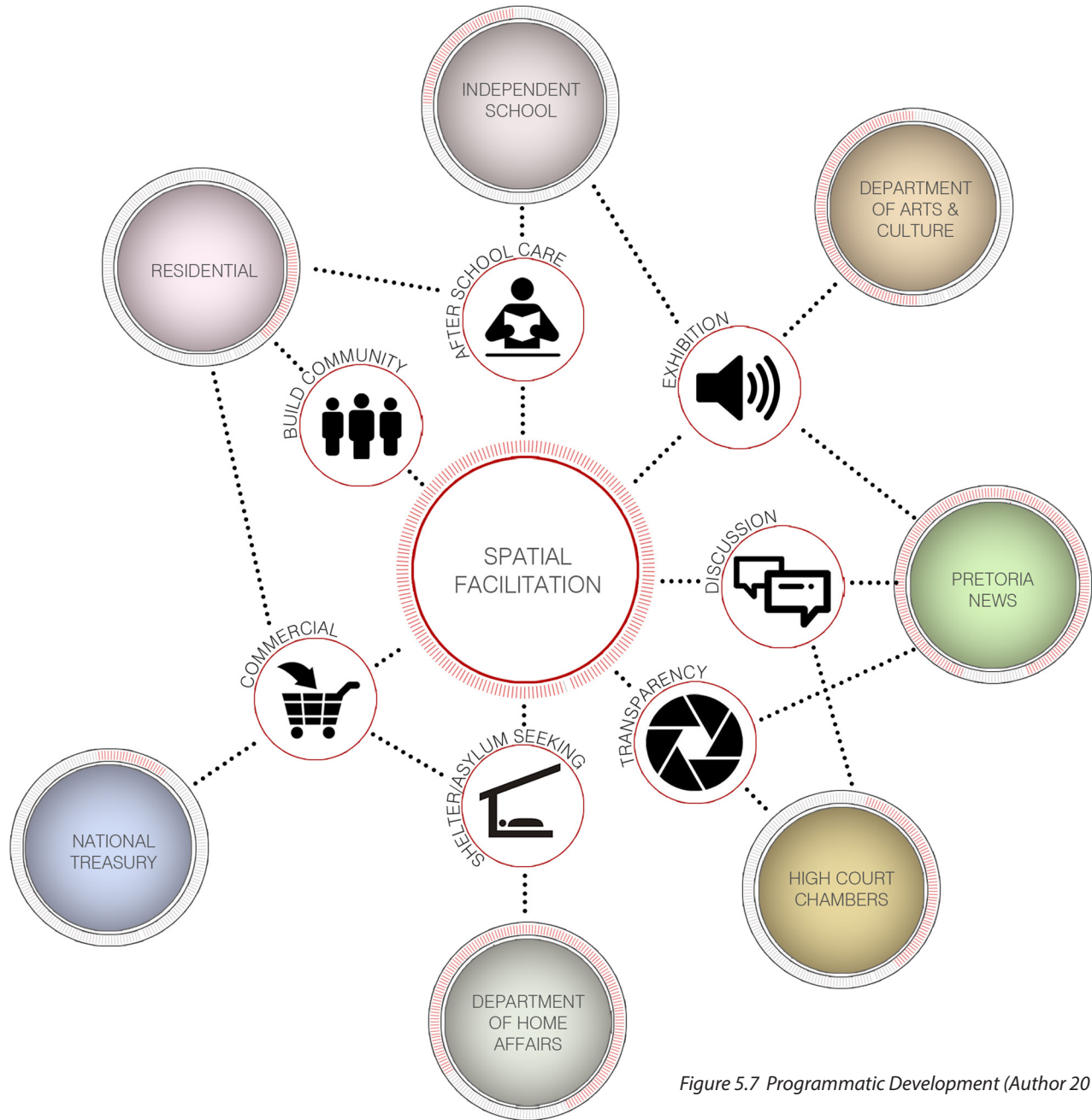


Figure 5.7 Programmatic Development (Author 2015)

5.3.1 Extension of Existing Program

The program structure will be ordered into four tiers as a response to the concept of incision, extraction, processing and redistribution. The programmatic response also intends to reflect the project's intention to symbolically redistribute static form into the public realm in the processed form of manageable social currency to be played out on the plinth itself. The four program tiers are:

Private – Specific to the requirements of the North Gauteng Advocates Association, this tier aims at facilitating increased productivity of the legal mechanism by providing various research and client needs.

Semi-private – Explores the overlapping of program requirements specific to the legal profession and that of parties, currently excluded from legal practice that may benefit from exposure, such as law students, staff of the National Treasury and employees housed in the Department of Home Affairs' head office.

Semi-public – Facilitates civic service by providing everyday user needs through intersecting the first two tiers. This function will be provided by occupying the plinth and generating new spatial conditions to provide these services.

Pedestrian-public – Establishes the purpose and the sum of all tiers as a civic service. This will be accomplished by manipulating the architecture as required by the private, semi – private and semi-public tiers, to provide good public space as an alternative everyday urban experience.

5.3.1.1 Private

As a vessel and foothold for further development, the intervention is to provide a legal library for the purposes of the North Gauteng Advocates Association. The library will provide suitable structure and space for the storage and reference of information – electronic and conventional – currently housed in the Eureka factory, which is deemed unsuitable for these purposes. Linked directly to the Bar, this will increase the efficiency in terms of information access and control. As arbitration or third-party out-of-court settlement occurs in Diaspora from the city's legal core, a facility for both legal representation and client is to be provided for such purposes, with access from the Advocate's building.

Additional office space is to be provided to be occupied by a broader spectrum associated with the legal profession to facilitate increased cross-pollination.

5.3.1.2 Semi -private

Towards an ever-inclusive approach, the building will also facilitate ongoing education of both legal staff and students of the profession. By expanding the electronic database, also located within the Eureka Factory building, the facility will provide a more accessible and manageable research environment to serve legal staff, students and interested public users. This will be addressed by providing semi-public access to the library facility, a lecture auditorium and opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience in their particular field of study by observing arbitration processes.

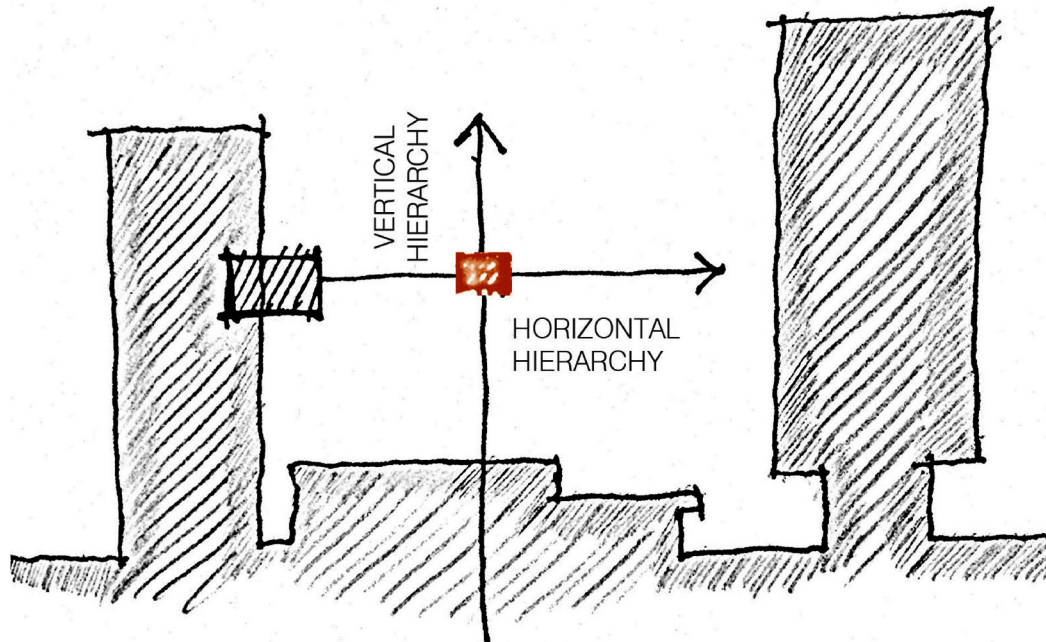


Figure 5.8 Public-Private Hierarchy (Author 2015)

Access to law archives and case studies will also be made available and will be positioned in the building as to be put on display, accessible to visitors and associated parties. Further cross-pollination of program is accomplished by establishing a relationship between legislative consultation and the functions of National Treasury and the Department of Home Affairs. This will be accomplished by providing mediating space for discussion, facilitating mutual research interests, light recreation and involving public users that may benefit from such an integration of program. The minimum size of the new legal library will be determined by the double storey, Eureka Factory building, of which all of its 600 square metres are currently fulfilling this purpose. The new library to be provided will then have to accommodate this minimum requirement, as well as allowing for the comfortable storage and future expansion and an integration of research space with the storage of books.

5.3.1.3 Semi - public

Reinforcing the relationship between established legal staff and students provides for legal aid or pro-bono services. Students and attorneys are to be involved in the process of catering for the general public's legal education and needs. This tier also addresses the functions housed within the National Treasury and Home Affairs Department. Collectively dealing in matters concerning national and international trade negotiations, citizenship, foreign asylum-seeking and refugee status, the possibility of these institutions benefiting from an inclusive legal mechanism is to be explored spatially in the public domain.

The existing program located to the western interior of the plinth site, consist of a day-care centre, residential flats, a mosque and an independent school facilitating the education of both primary- and high school students. Proposals for the interior of the plinth will therefore cater for these various existing programs. An after-school centre is to be provided for students of the existing Independent Barea Park School. This centre is to facilitate supervised care, whilst providing a place where learners could study, eat and play.

Guided by the proposed synthesis between the respective programs of the Pretoria News building, High Court Chambers, Department of Home Affairs and the National Treasury Department, the plinth space is to facilitate public opinion, in terms of discussion, exhibition and performance, to establish the plinth as an integrated and democratic environment.

5.3.1.4 Pedestrian - public

In stark contrast to the conventional issue of public interface having to deal with spatial conditions super-imposed onto it, the plinth will be re-appropriated through the thoughtful consideration of how the new spatial conditions, as an architectural by-product of the programmatic extension, might serve everyday public needs and the furthering of insurgent urban practice. Harnessing the natural condition of the site, in terms of vistas, height transition, enclosure and robustness, the plinth condition is to provide programmable space that will promote activity based on interaction between everyday users. This vision of a democratic urban space will be achieved through ensuring space that may be occupied by informal markets, food stalls, ablution facilities and green space, where the public could retreat from the narrow sidewalk vehicle-occupied exterior. As the scheme intends to utilise existing infrastructure, it also aims at strengthening existing businesses on site. Rather than providing the public space with restaurant facilities, it will incorporate the existing eatery located within the courtyard on street level to expand its already established business to serve the civic plinth.