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Chapter 10:

PRODUCT

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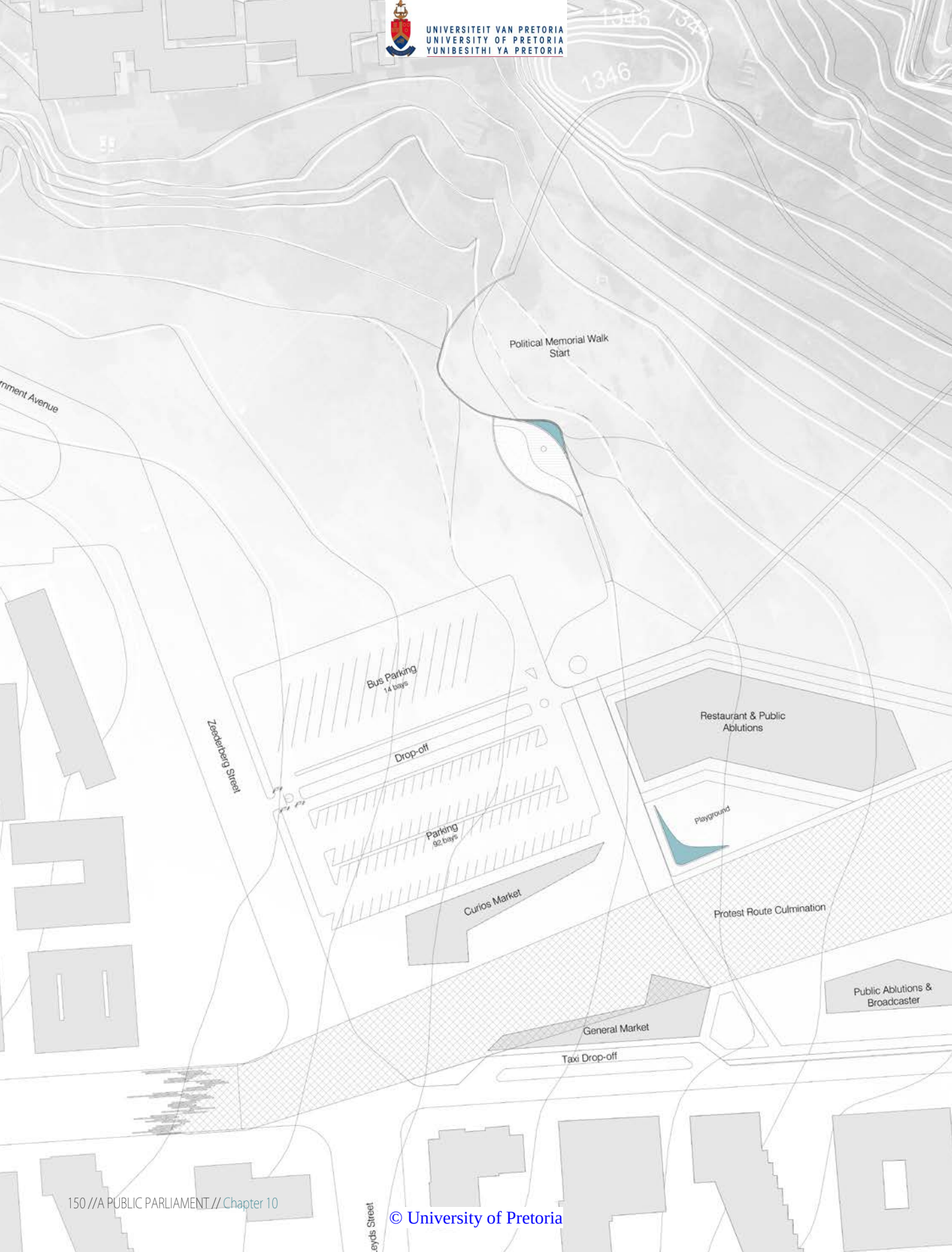

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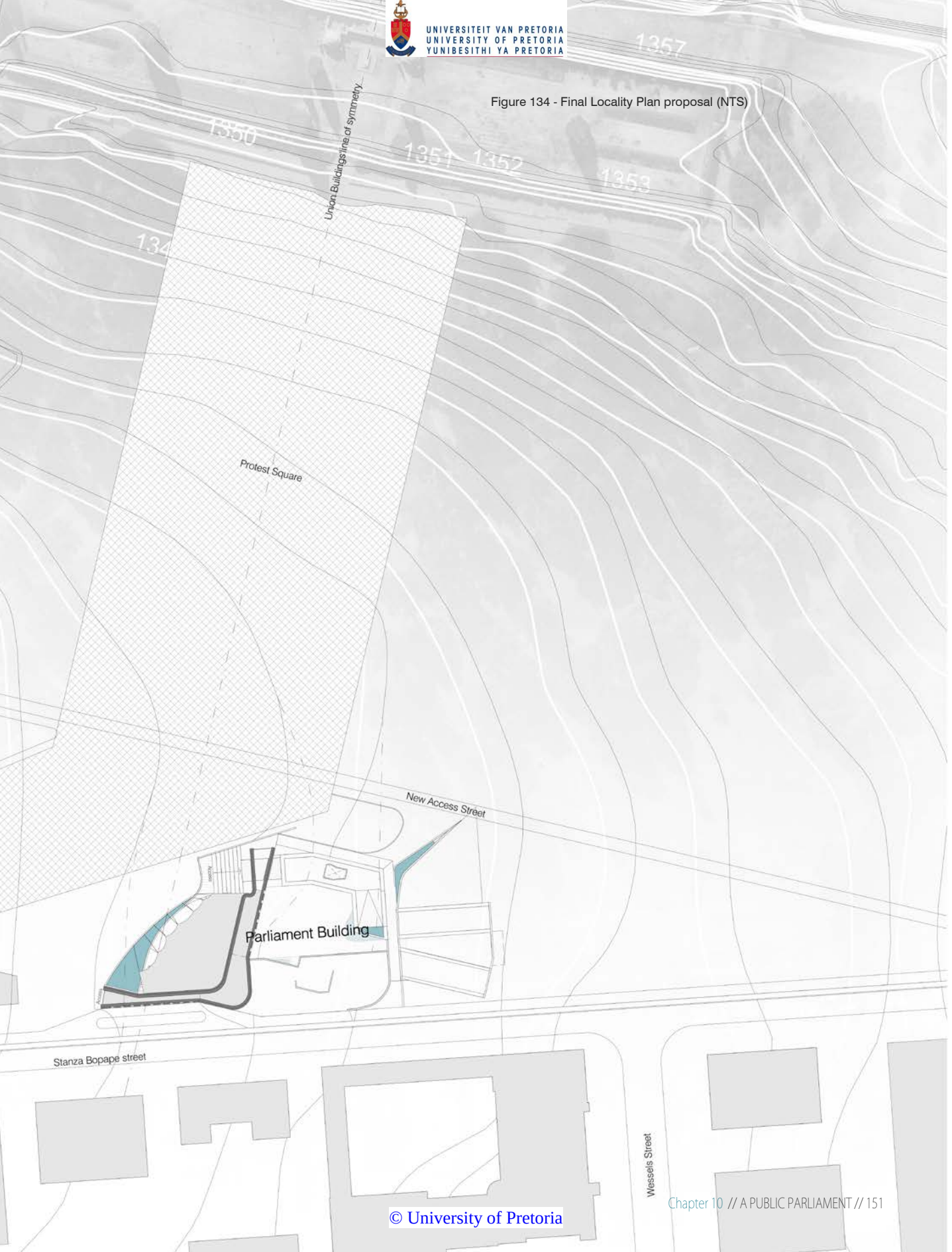
Figure 134 - Final Locality Plan proposal (NTS)



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10.1. Political Interpretation Memorial

The political memorial proposal illustrates the proposed sense of space required for contemplative spaces, the spaces can be for internal reflection or group discussion. The statues and their accompanying translations become triggers for dialogue and introspection into our roles in the political continuum of South Africa. The public nature and concealed observation from above enforces the necessity of this introspection because of the accountability it implies.

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Figure 135 - Section of the Political interpretation memorial path.

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10.2. Building

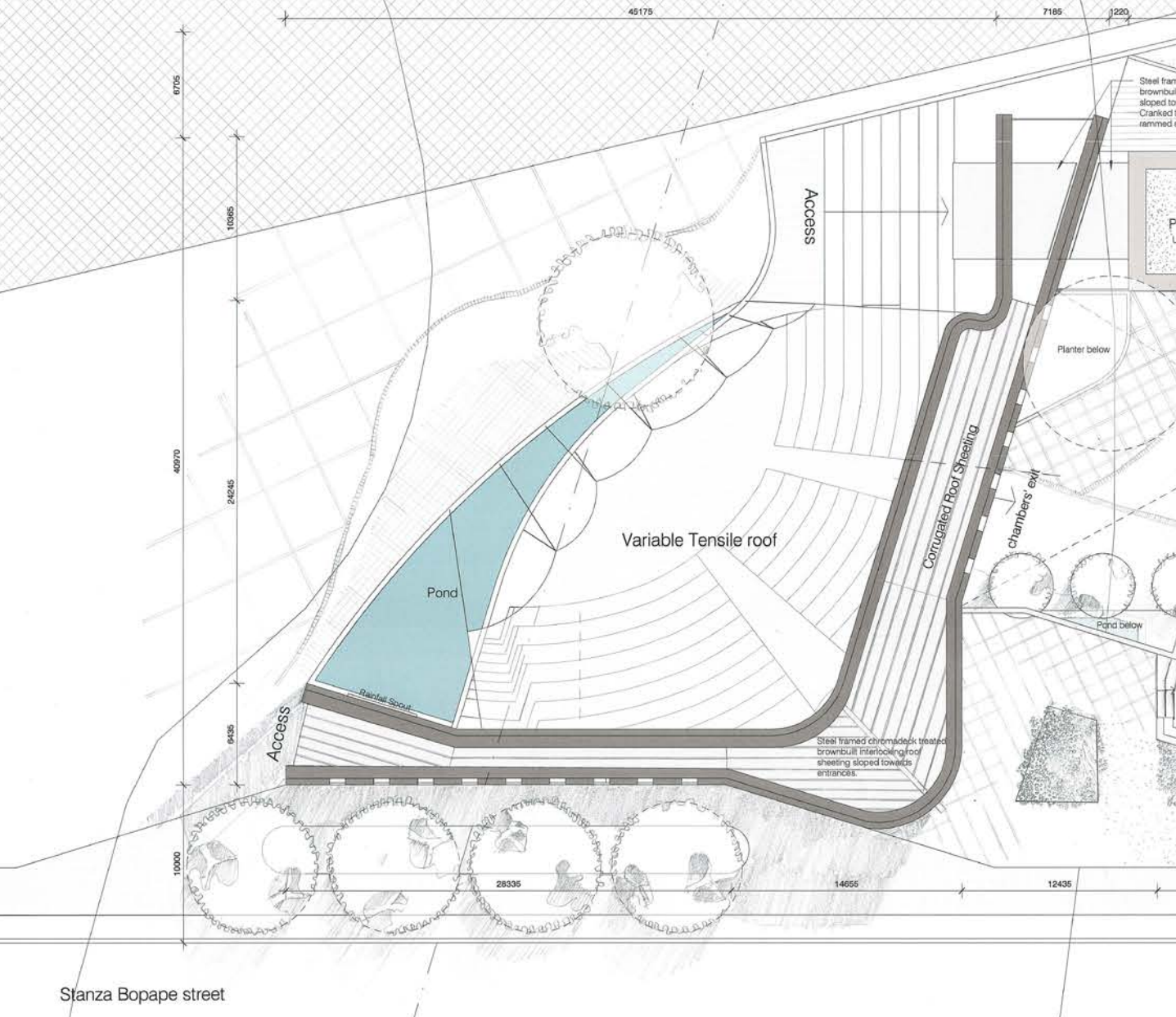

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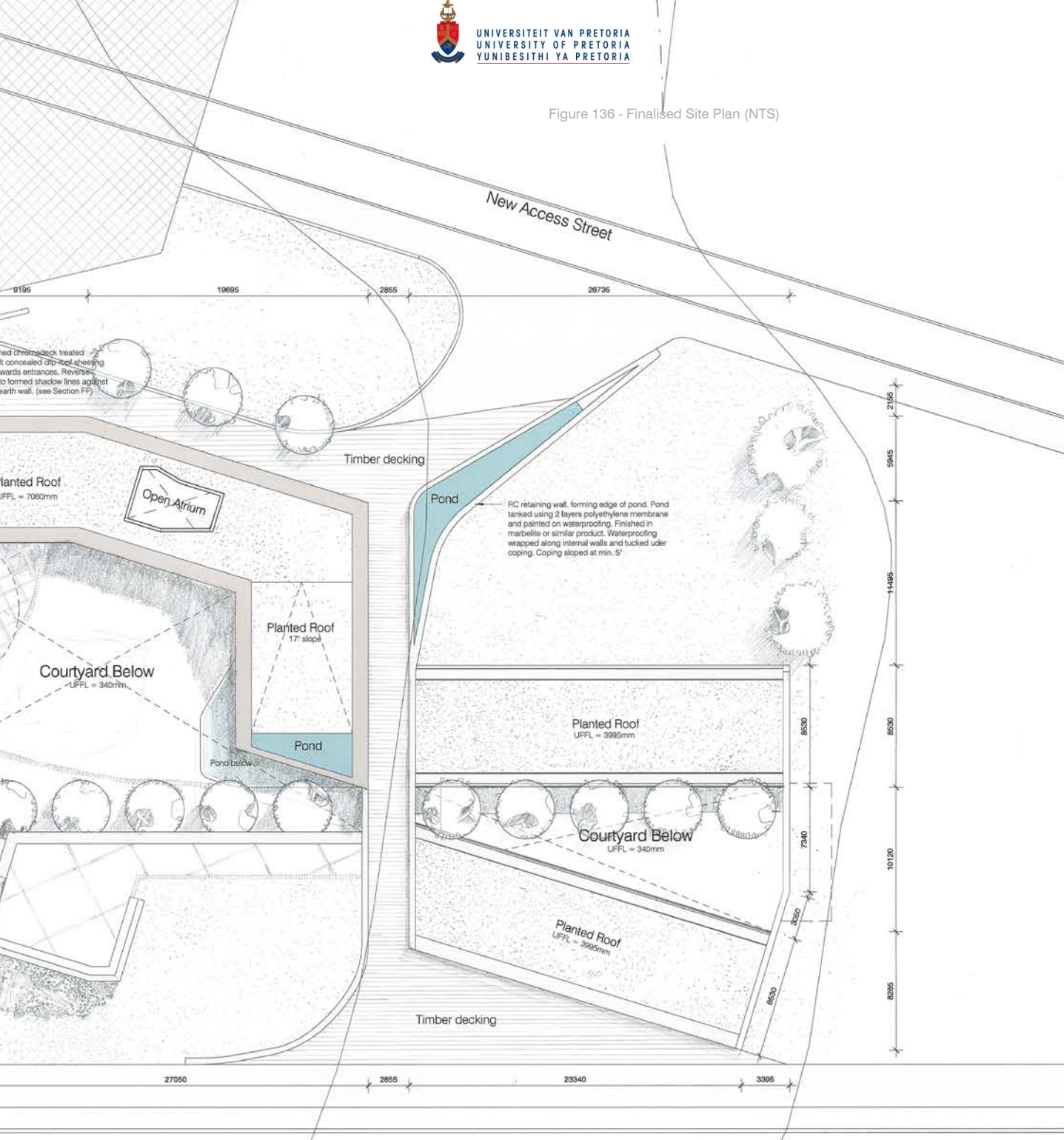
Figure 136 - Finalised Site Plan (NTS)



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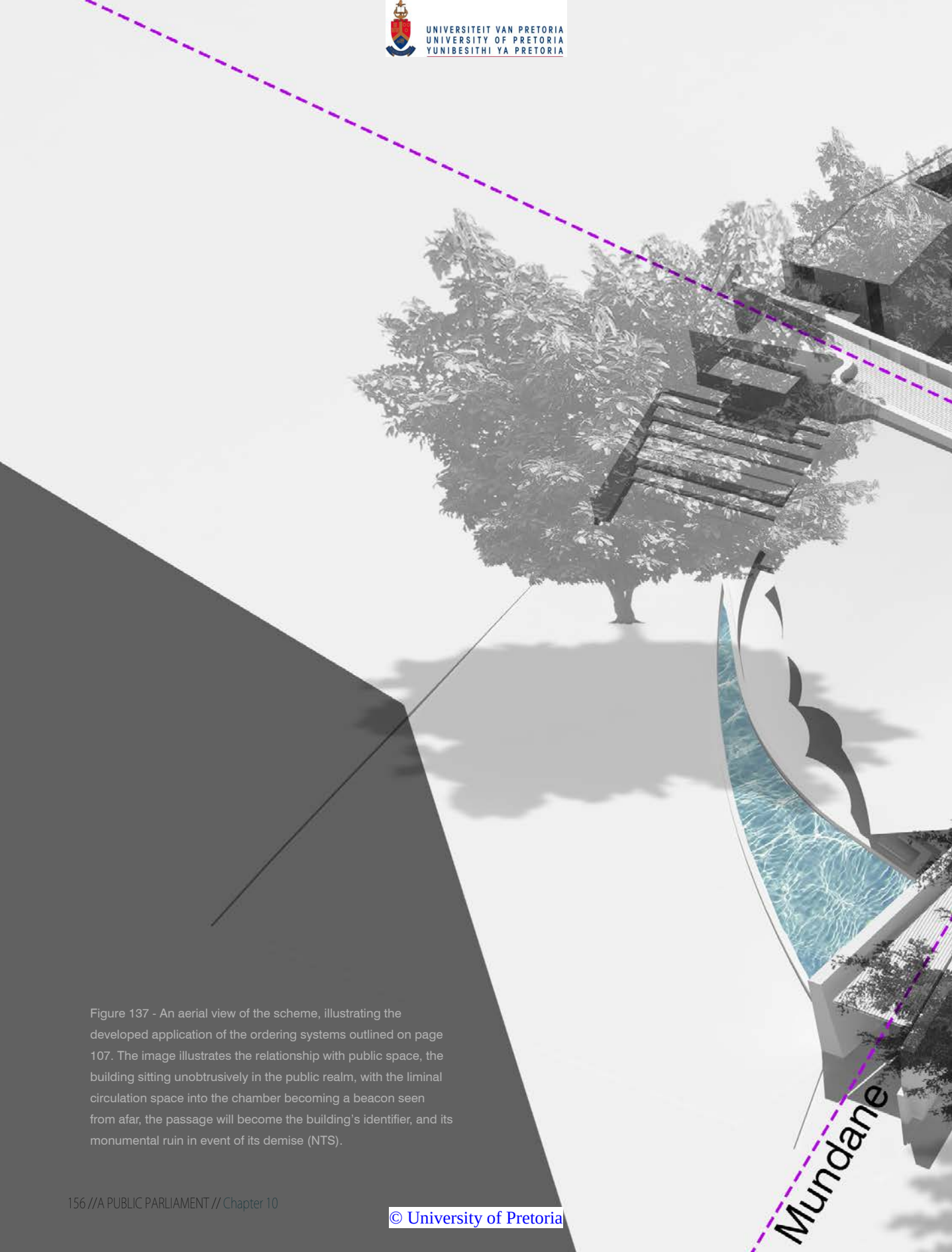

Figure 137 - An aerial view of the scheme, illustrating the developed application of the ordering systems outlined on page 107. The image illustrates the relationship with public space, the building sitting unobtrusively in the public realm, with the liminal circulation space into the chamber becoming a beacon seen from afar, the passage will become the building's identifier, and its monumental ruin in event of its demise (NTS).

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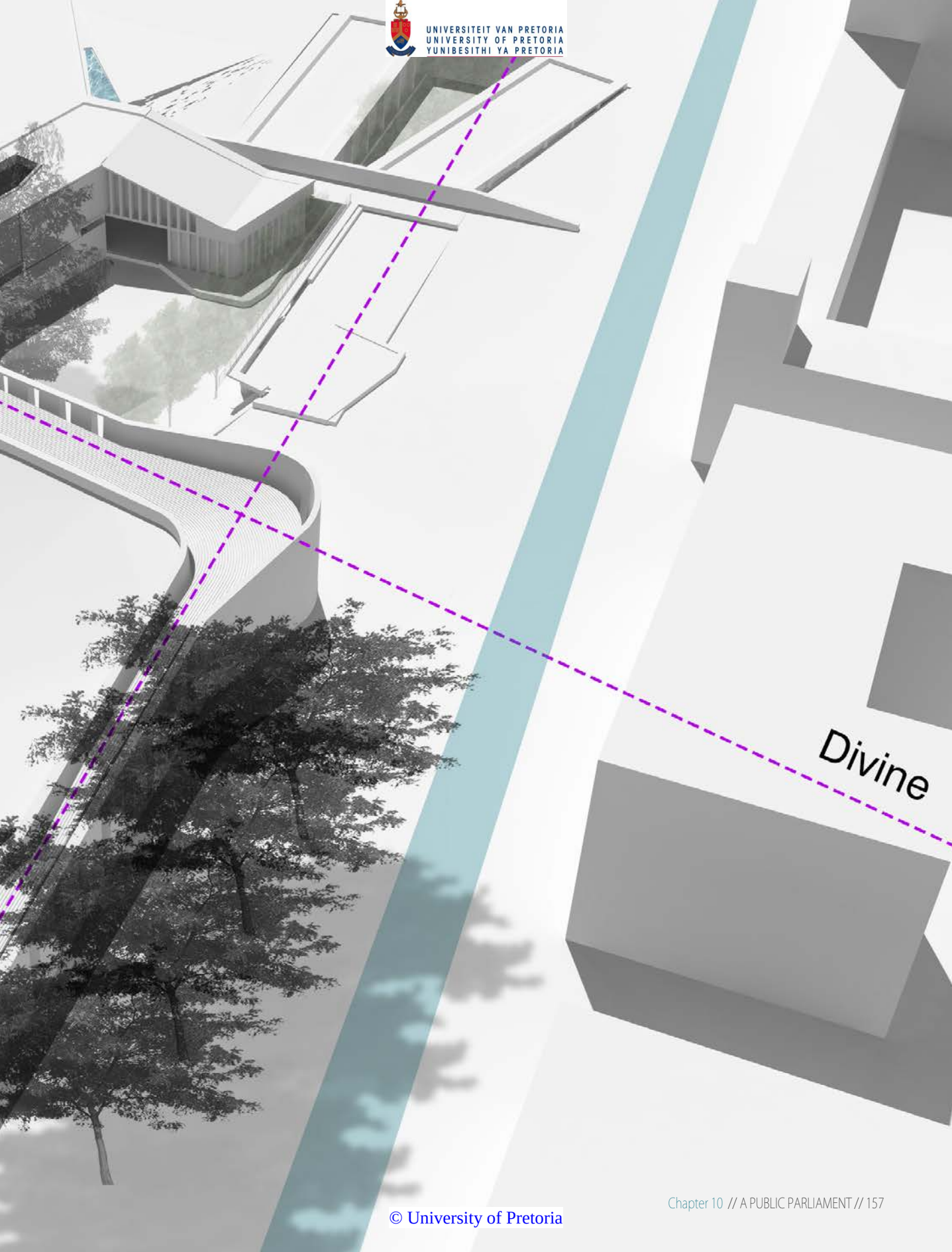

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10.2.1.Ground Floor Plan

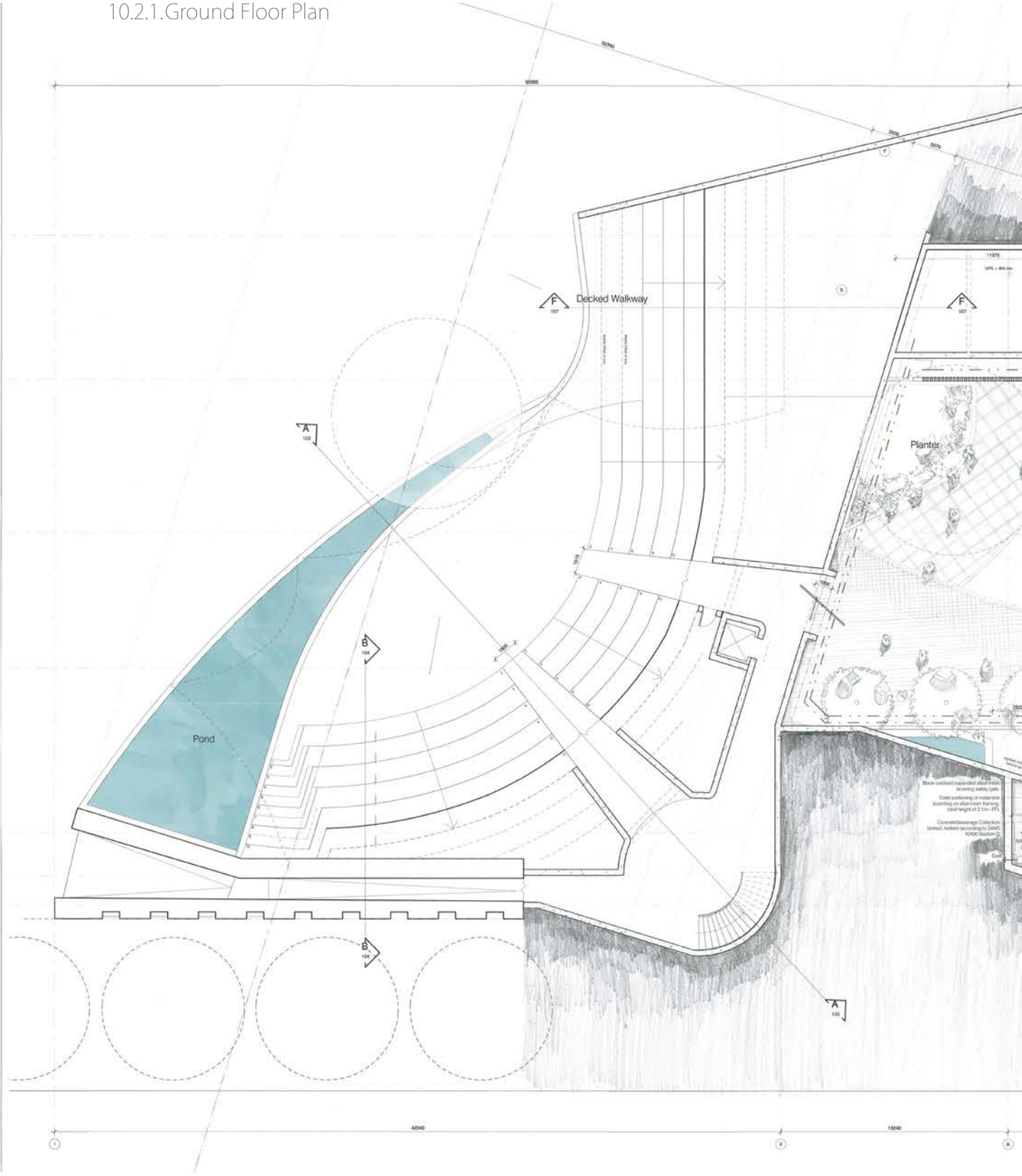

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Figure 138 - Finalised Ground Floor Plan (NTS)

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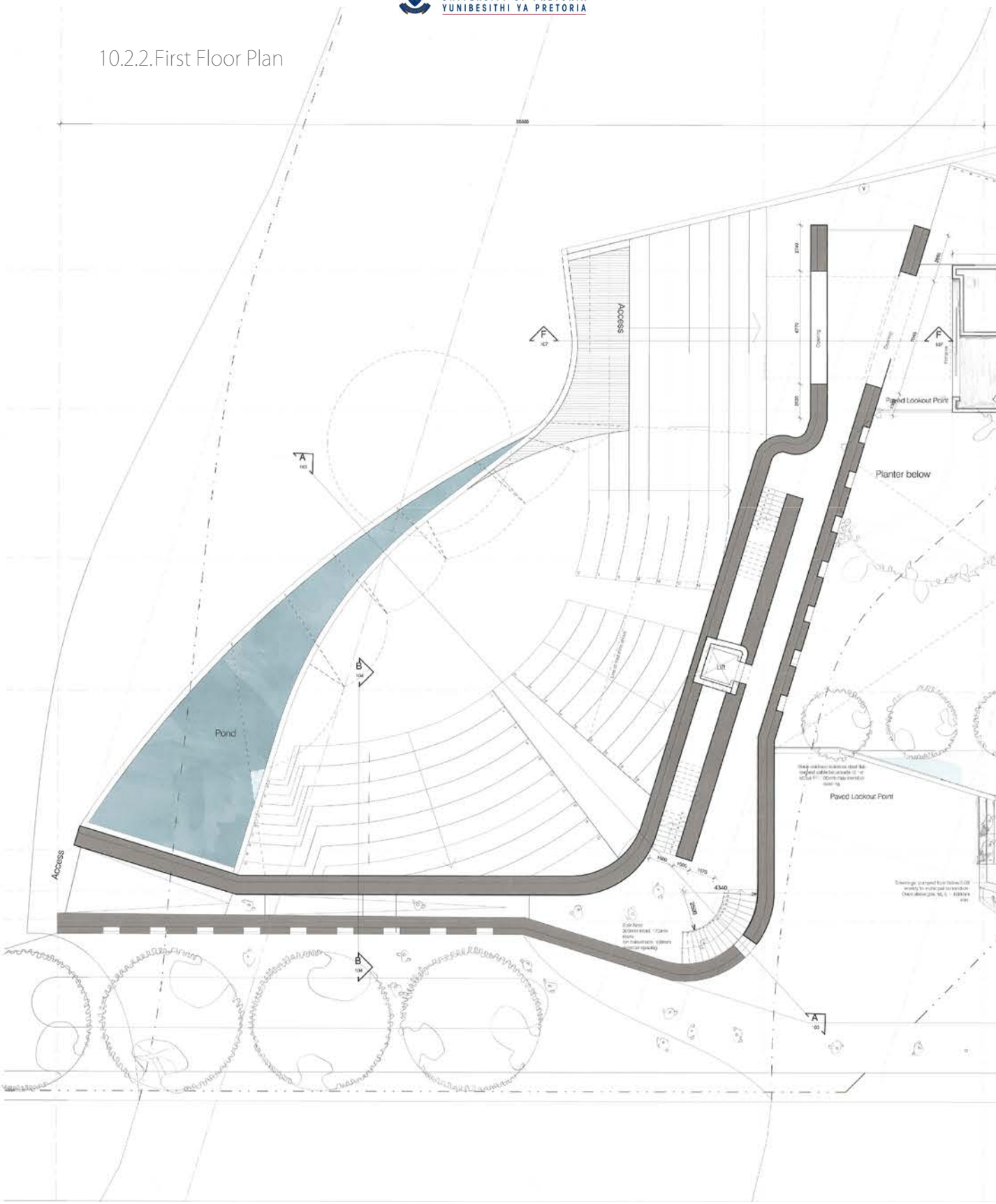
10.2.2. First Floor Plan



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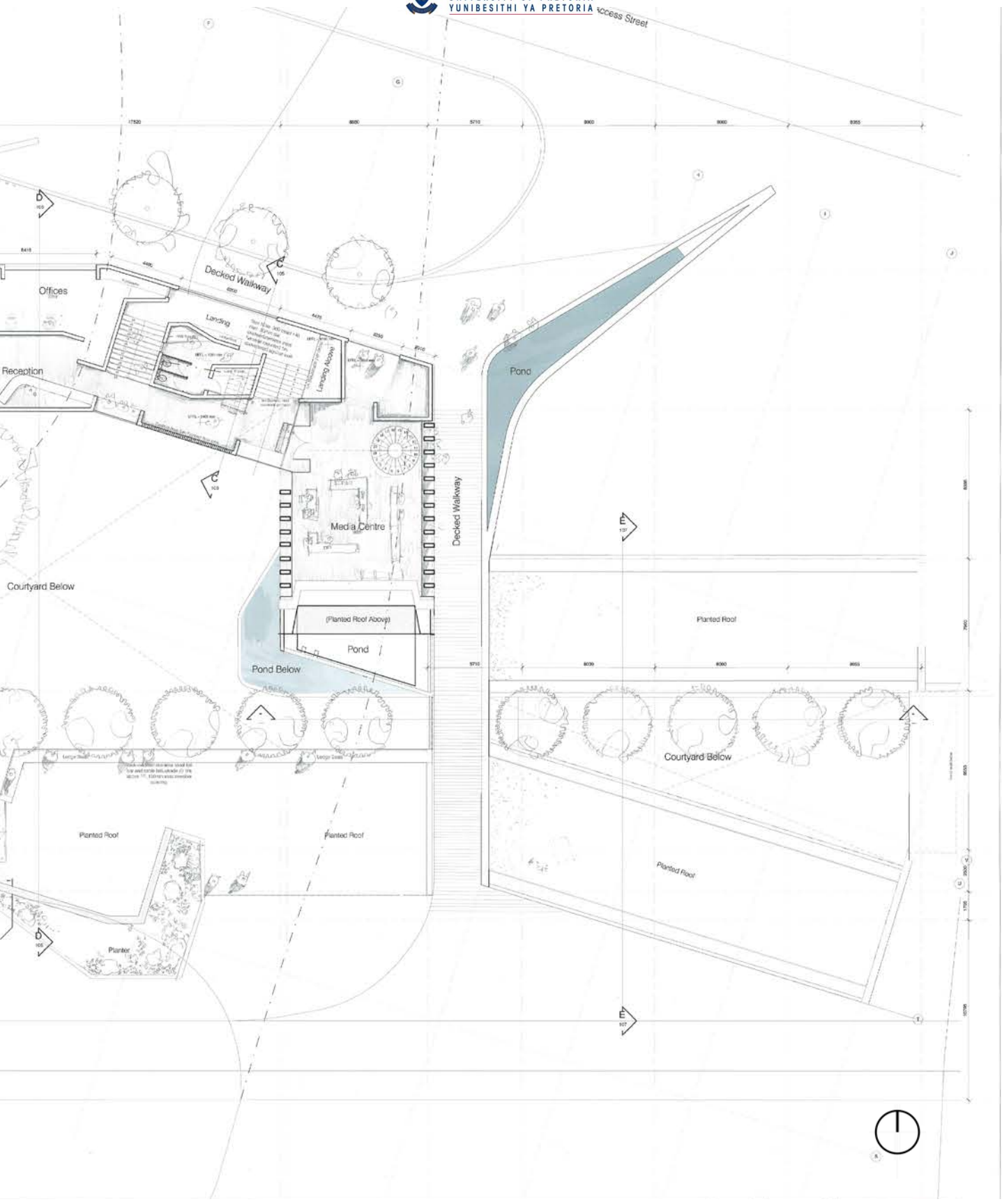

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10.3. Interaction

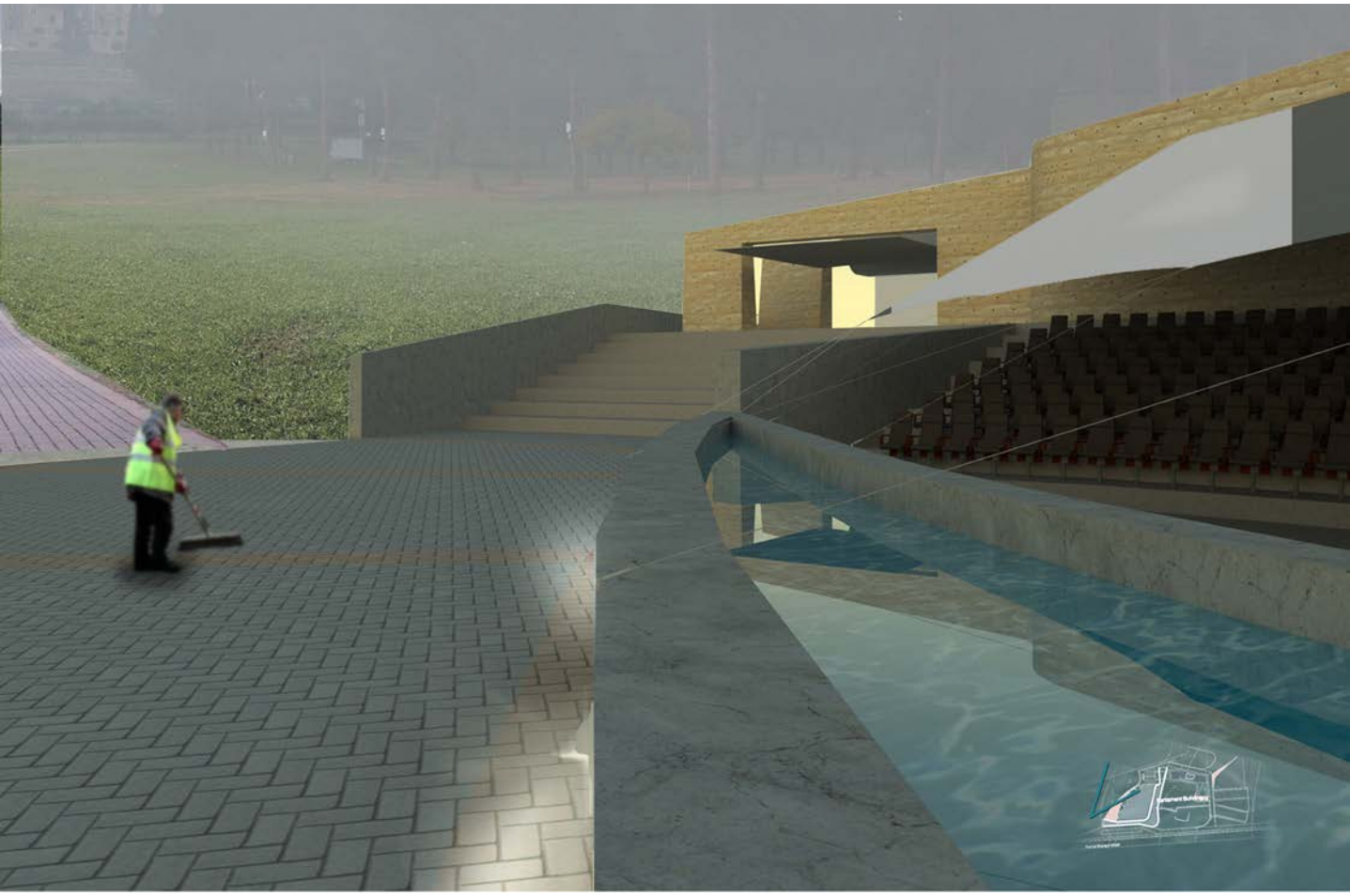

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Figure 140 - A quiet morning outside the parliament chamber
Figure 141 - Protest has broken loose
(computer generated impressions, graphic collage)

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Figure 142 - The Northern Edge of the building, showing the through way over the courtyard and occupiable edge of the media centre.

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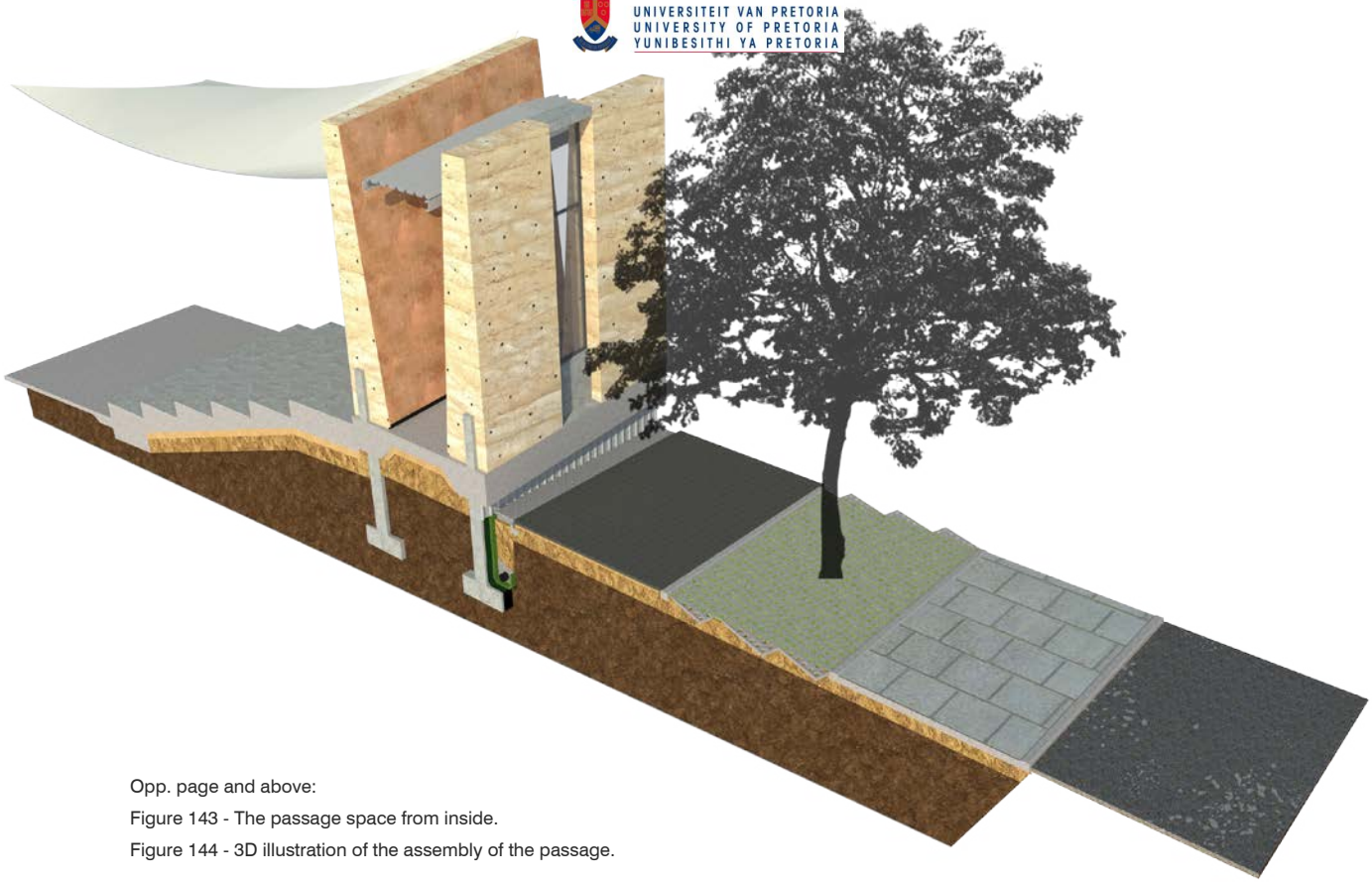

Opp. page and above:
Figure 143 - The passage space from inside.
Figure 144 - 3D illustration of the assembly of the passage.

10.4. Liminality of Junctions: Processional Entrance & Passage (Section BB)

The passage was developed with attention given to the edges of planes and materials. The intention was, again, to interrogate how different planes touch each other and how different junctions are mediated.

The floating roof above the passage is pulled away from the walls, and echoes the lines of the floor, which leaves it floating away from the walls where it is suspended, because of the tapering nature of the walls. This gives the impression that it belongs to the floor and not to the walls. The grey colour of the chromadeck coated sheeting (left exposed and without ceiling, also mirrors the floated concrete below. The floor and roof plane become an enveloped for those within. The walls, that do not meet the roof or the floor (by means of steel skirting detail) become the guiding element that houses the space laterally. This implies guidance and stability, which is exploited by the narrowness of the space - the implication of forced contact and interaction remains clear.

The edge condition of the passage was criticised for its poor space-making on street side, however, this was intentional. The space on street side is designed to become a quick transitional zone. The slotted windows in the rammed earth wall also make the internal space one where only fleeting glances of figures on the other side become possible. This renders users inside and outside as anonymous to each other - their identities are not important, rather their presence as part of the agreement between parliamentarian and public is important.

The profiled off-shutter concrete edge of the parliament passage is a detail repeated throughout - the vertical emphasis reminding those outside the building of the functions below. The lines appear to pull the ramp towards the ground, to which it belongs.

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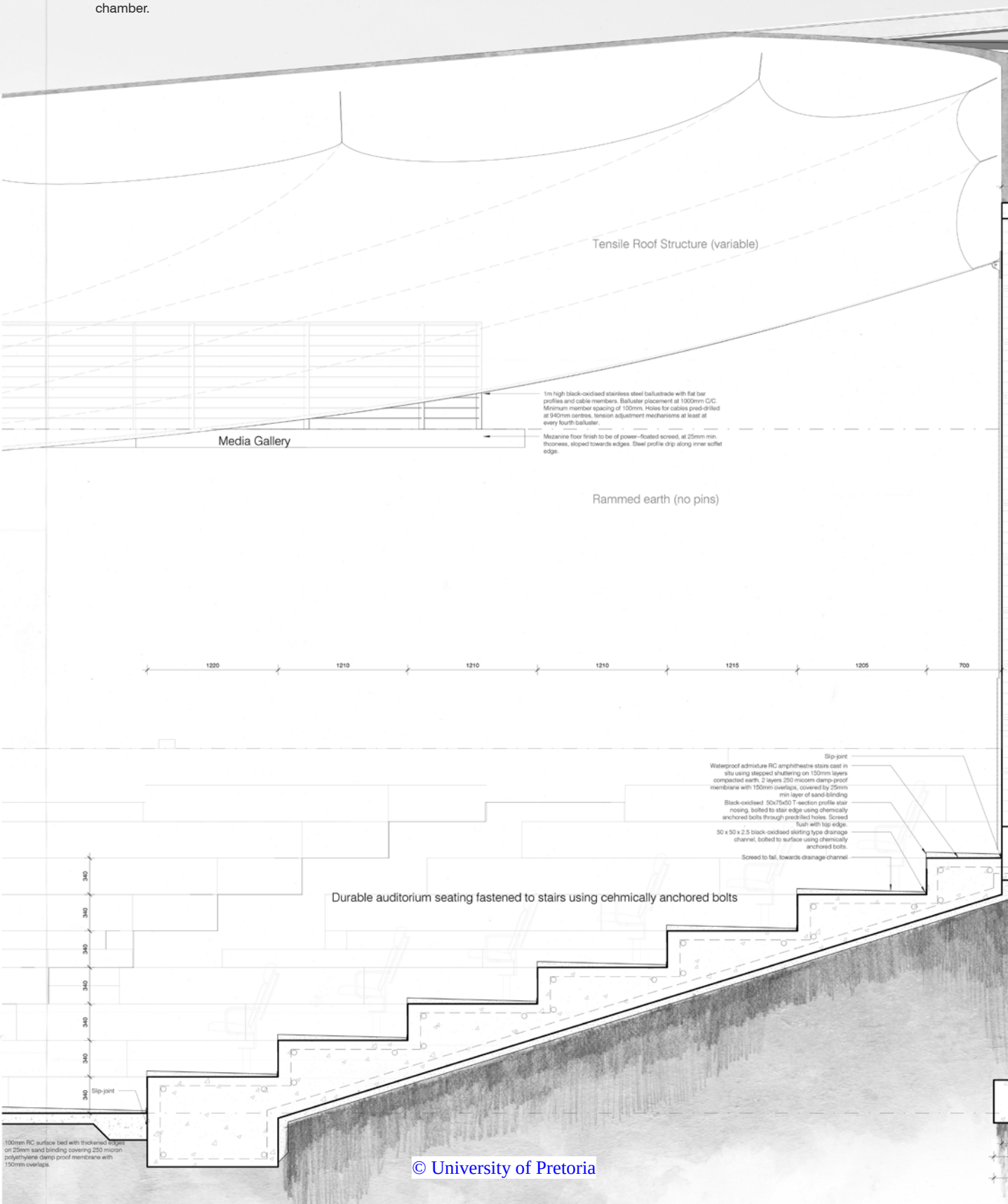
Figure 145 - Section BB, through the passage into the discussion chamber.



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10.5. Occupied Circulation: The Office building stairwell (Section CC)

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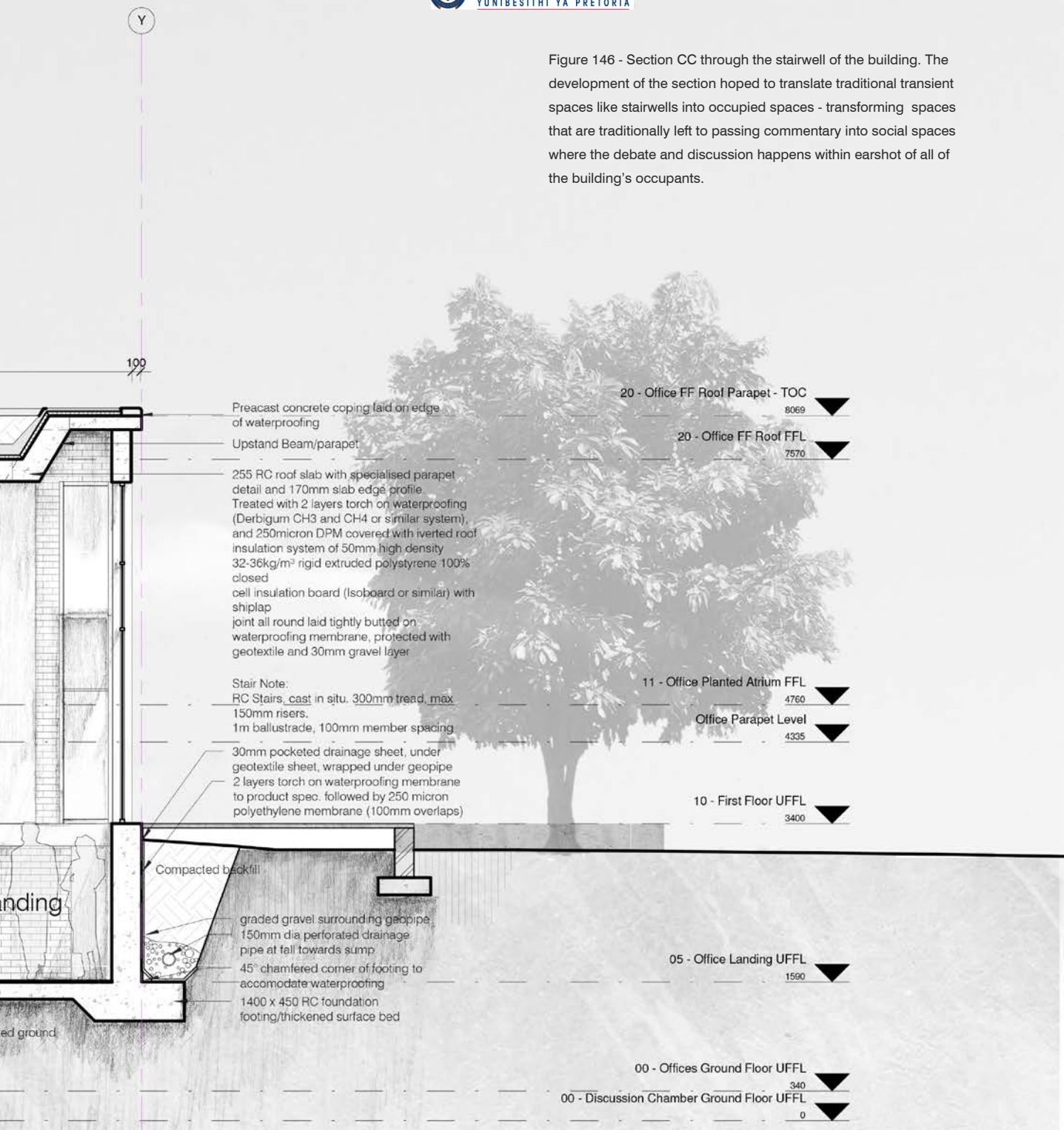

Figure 146 - Section CC through the stairwell of the building. The development of the section hoped to translate traditional transient spaces like stairwells into occupied spaces - transforming spaces that are traditionally left to passing commentary into social spaces where the debate and discussion happens within earshot of all of the building's occupants.

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Figure 147 - Section through the 3D model cut at Section CC, showing the reverse.
Figure 148 - The Section illustrates the occupation of the landing as third space, encouraging observation of the activities of others, again focussing on the idea of accountability and the interplay between privacy and accessibility to information.

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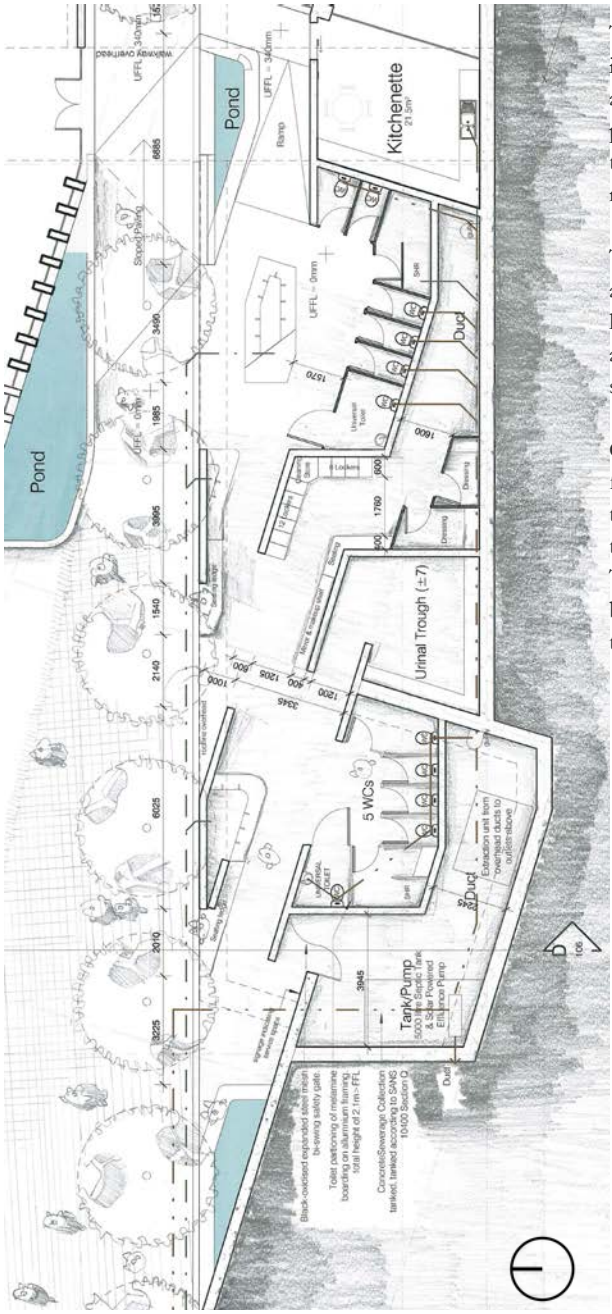
10.6. Privacy vs. Access: Democracy of the toilet



The resolution of the toilets developed from numerous iterations of the transitional spaces in between the physical accommodations of traditional toilets. The line between privacy and publicness was interrogated and resulted in the layout being opened up onto the courtyard, allowing minimal private spaces despite where absolutely necessary.

The ritual of cleansing post ablution became a public activity where eye contact between users becomes more likely. The implementation of trough basins and urinals and the minimum legally allowed spacing between users in space.

Careful consideration was given to the legally allowed sizes for passages and thoroughfares, and the limits were pushed to create awkward points of conflict between users - despite the inherent openness of the facilities to the courtyard. These tensions between geometries and between users and building aimed to instil constant self-awareness in relation to self and others and space.

Opp. Page and above:
Figure 149 - The view back onto the main courtyard.
Figure 150 - The final proposal for the toilets' layout.

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10.7. Surveyed Democracy: The courtyard

Figure 151 - The main courtyard of the building.

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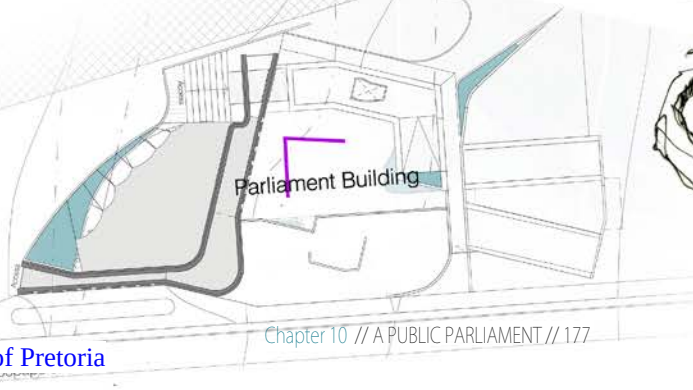

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Figure 152 - Section DD cutting through the courtyard, and the water and sewerage tanks located South and North of the courtyard.

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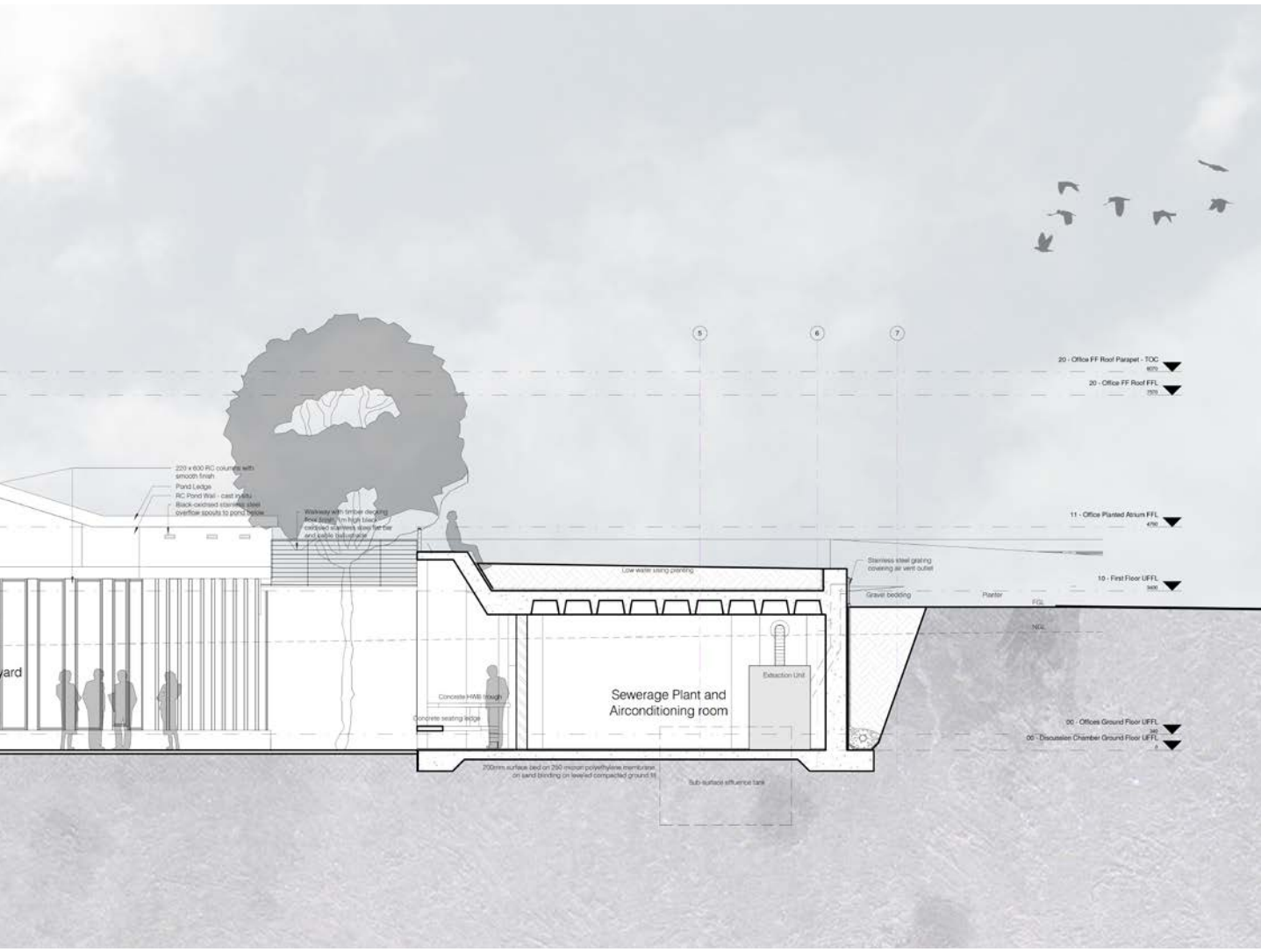

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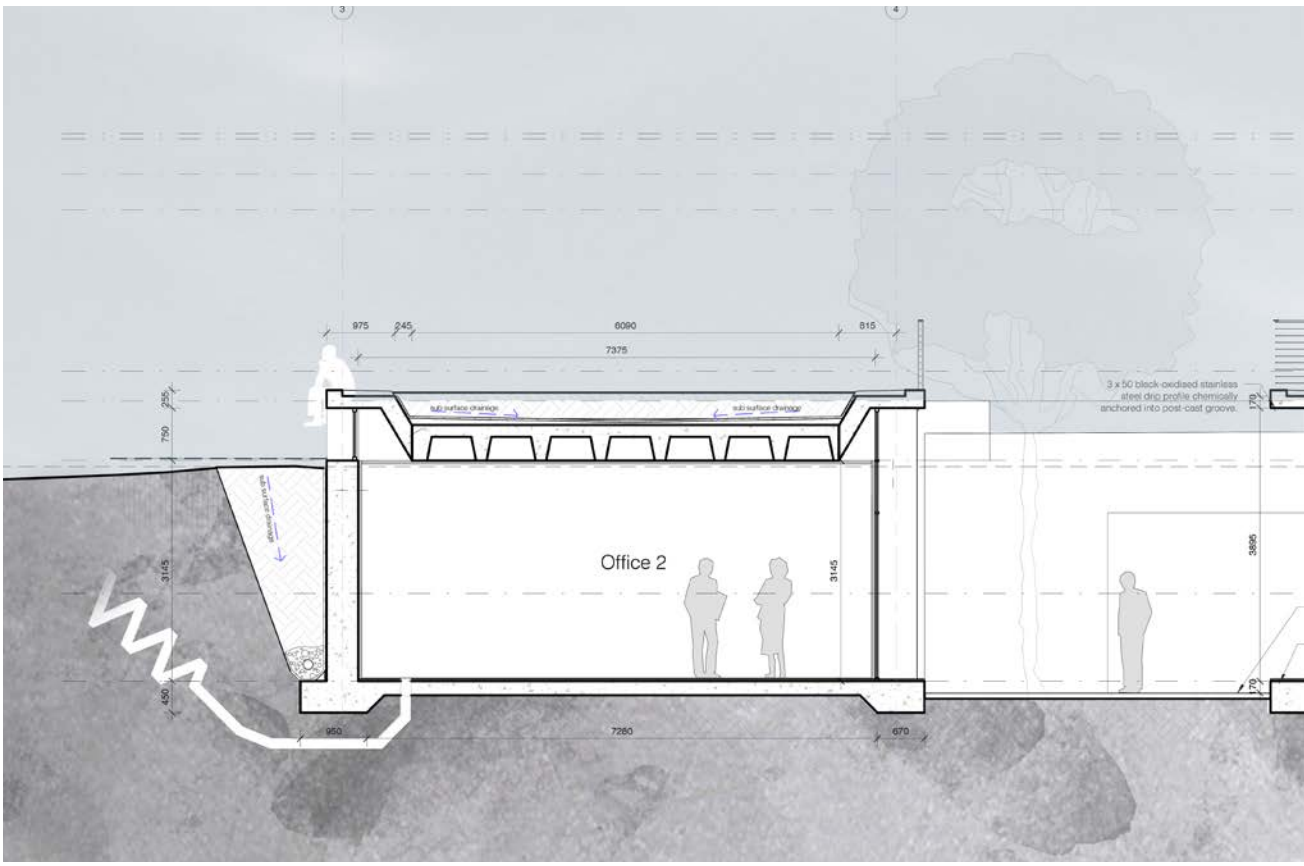
10.8. Surveyed Democracy: Office Space

Opp. page and below:
Figure 153 - Sketches illustrating the development of the character of the courtyard in the office wing.
Figure 154 - Section EE, through the office wing and courtyard.



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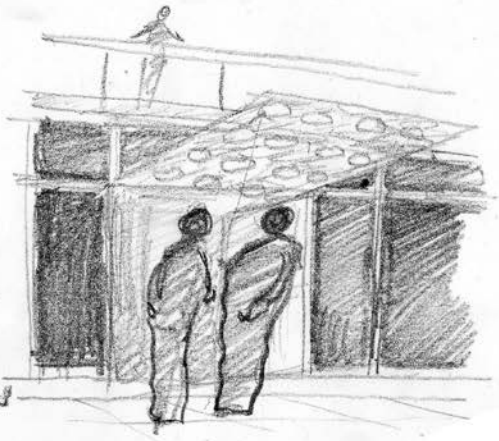
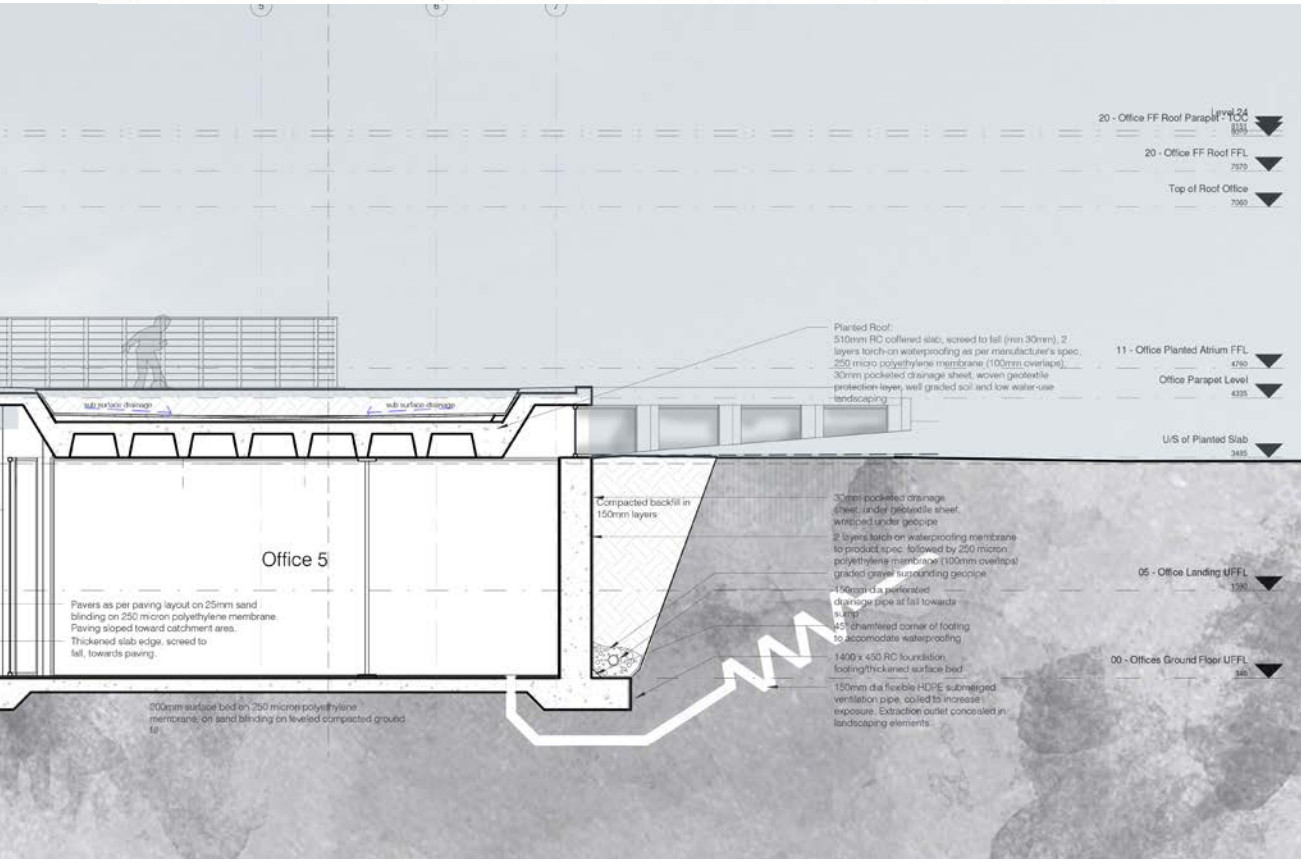


Overhead screen =
Impression of privacy - liklihood of pause and discussion increases.
Shading device -of facade and courtyard
Device to show occupancy - those above can see when people are working below
Security - upswing steel louvred screen can act as seuirty gate when in closed position.



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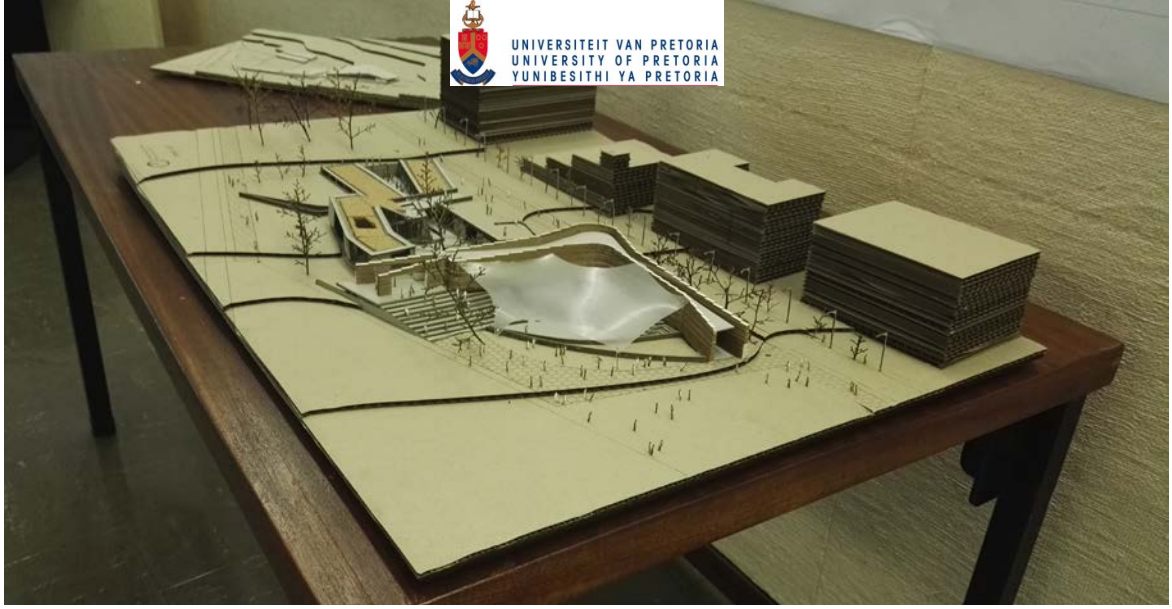

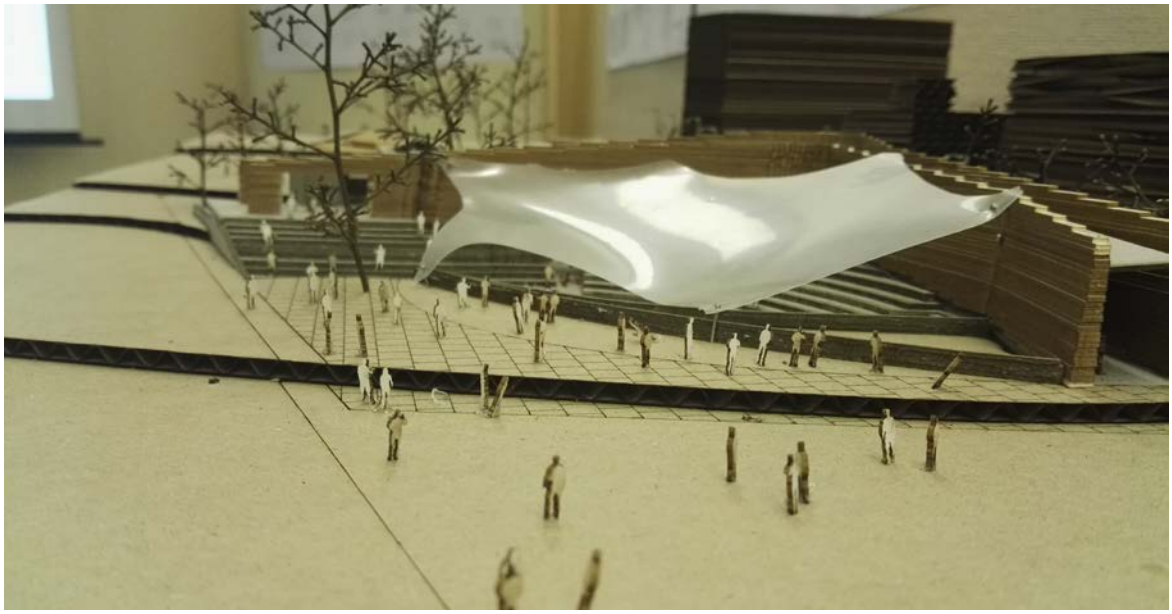

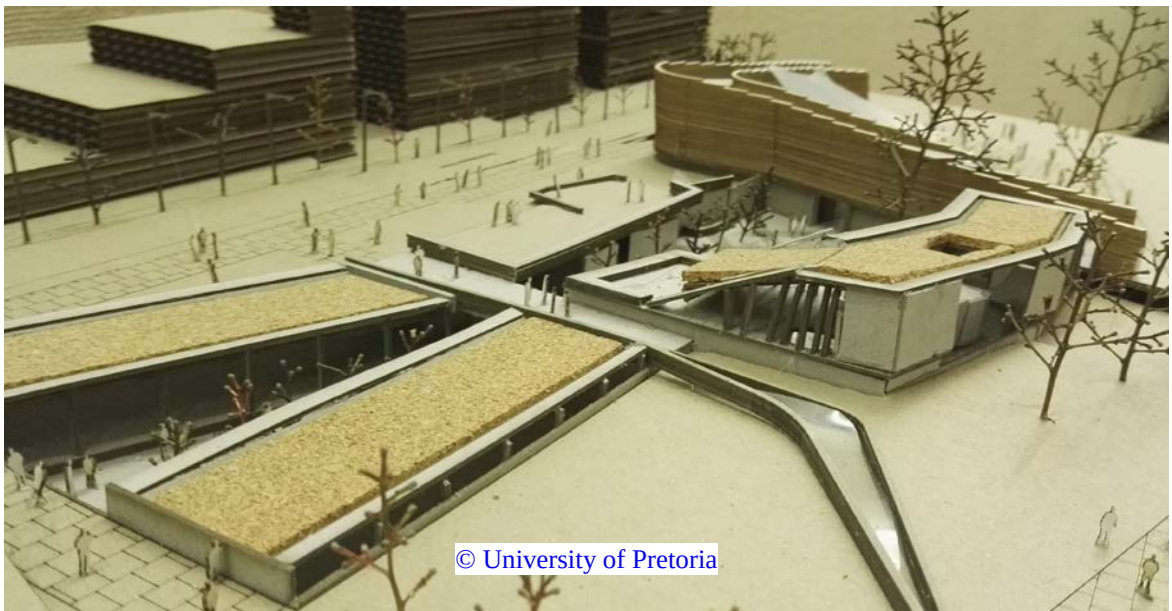

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Figure 153 - Photographs of the final 1:200 model.

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Chapter 11:

POSTSCRIPT

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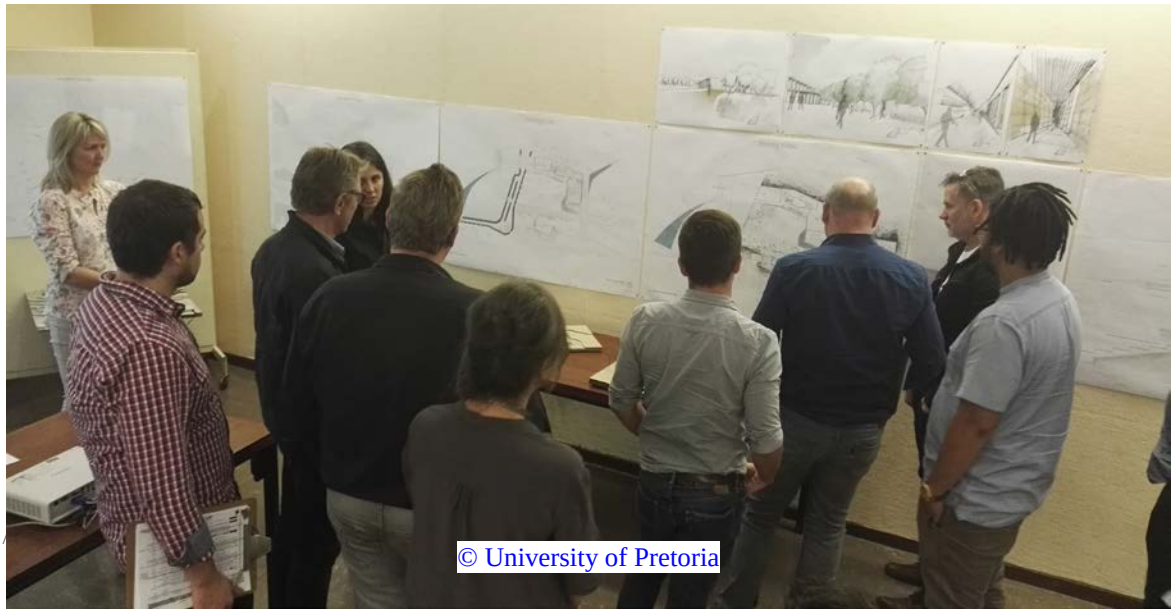

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In conclusion

During my architectural education I have often been reminded that architecture cannot be used as a tool for social engineering. Reared as architectural student in a school that prides itself on a regional approach, another reminder was always of the importance of context. Despite the success of the second message in my education, the first has always been a fine line that I fondly dwell very near to.

South Africa is littered with unrest and volatility presently. At the departure of this scheme things had slowed after a personal experience of the turmoil watered a seed that had been planted when the only architecture I practiced was with Lego.

"I refused to write about the flight of a bird or growing of a flower (during apartheid). I could not write about that when people are being killed by the system." James Matthews, South Africa Struggle poet (Kamaldien 2016)

I concede that architecture is not a tool for social engineering, at least not in such direct terms. However, architecture, in times of strife and turmoil both socially and environmentally, can no longer afford to be reduced to a practice of the wealthy, where displays of aesthetics allow it to remain absent from discussions of transformation and radical accountability. Architecture, and architects, need to begin engaging with the issues at hand and create environments that serve an ever-changing society.

As outlined by Da Costa and van Rensburg (2008), bricks and mortar cannot change the lives of people. It is in the programmatic accommodation of our buildings that we fulfil our roles as architects. We cannot simply design buildings that introduce form to pre-determined function; it renders us no more than the draftsmen of others' dreams.

The division between formal and functional issues in architecture diminishes the engagements of architects with issues of power… This division between form and program is an ideological division which is ultimately untenable. It serves to sustain the illusion that architecture can be practiced in a realm of autonomy from social power (Dovey, 1996: 27-28).

In the investigation undertaken herein, I have kneaded issues of my time using the skills of my trade. I have hoped to uncover the realities of what it is South Africans want (democracy) and identified where it lives (public space). I have acknowledged where it plays (parliament) and tried to establish an interplay between these elements on a site that is rife with contestation and conflict. By acknowledging the mundane life of democracy and the extraordinary expectations people have from it, I have hoped to identify the position of architecture within the discourse.

Besides the intricacies of liminal spaces in the programme and theoretical continuum at hand, the value of designing occupiable liminality far surpasses this scheme. By designing liminal spaces; toilets, sidewalks, passages and façades, in a manner that declares them occupiable, we manage to include the 99% as clients of our buildings. This renders architecture the playground for all of humanity, so that our public buildings and spaces become truly public once more.

The realization of this scheme, as with any other addressing a theme that is continually in flux, has raised as many questions as it has answered. It has certainly fueled a curiosity that has burnt for as long as I can remember and has fostered the tools needed to further investigate and experiment.

Opp. page:
Figure 156 - Photographs of the final examination 22 November 2016.

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ADDENDUM

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