

AUTONOMY

ARCHITECTURE

ZEITGEIST.



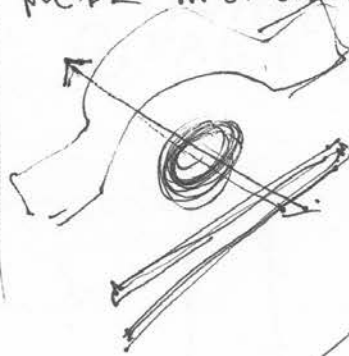
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NOEMAN FOSTER WILLS FABER + DUMAS BUILDING 1914

MEIER M OF CONTEMPORAN APX BARCELONA



WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO
ACHIEVE MY UNDERSTANDING
OF THE BUILDING.
WHAT ARE THE VALUES
IT HAS



Figure 60 - Page from author's journal dated 22 March 2010. The lowest drawing shows the notion of the precinct as a series of objects through which protectors and the public move en route towards the Union Buildings.

OBJECTS ALONG ROUTE.

EFFECT ON GRANDEUR?

AGE OF UNION

→ SALE?



Chapter 7:
PRECINCT
Development of the Programme

7.1. Site delimitation: defining the precinct

This section can be viewed as an extension of the analysis of the site documented in Chapter 2.

The area focused on for the scheme can be described using the working areas identified by Newtown Landscape Architects as I and K, the Southern Lawns and the South western traffic triangle (Muller & Young 2005:18).

The sites are both considered of relatively high importance. The lawns, however poor the condition of the grass and the age of the trees, still meet Baker's original intent of providing uninterrupted views to the buildings. The presence of the General Louis Botha monument also contribute to the value according to National Heritage Resource Council definitions (ibid: 67).

The triangle plays host to pedestrians, mostly passing through the site to the grounds or using the parkland as recreational place (during lunchtime there are a number of napping bodies under the trees). The value of the triangle, however, is regarded as medium (ibid: 75) because of the presence of the canon monument, which is lowered due to its disconnection from the main estate grounds.

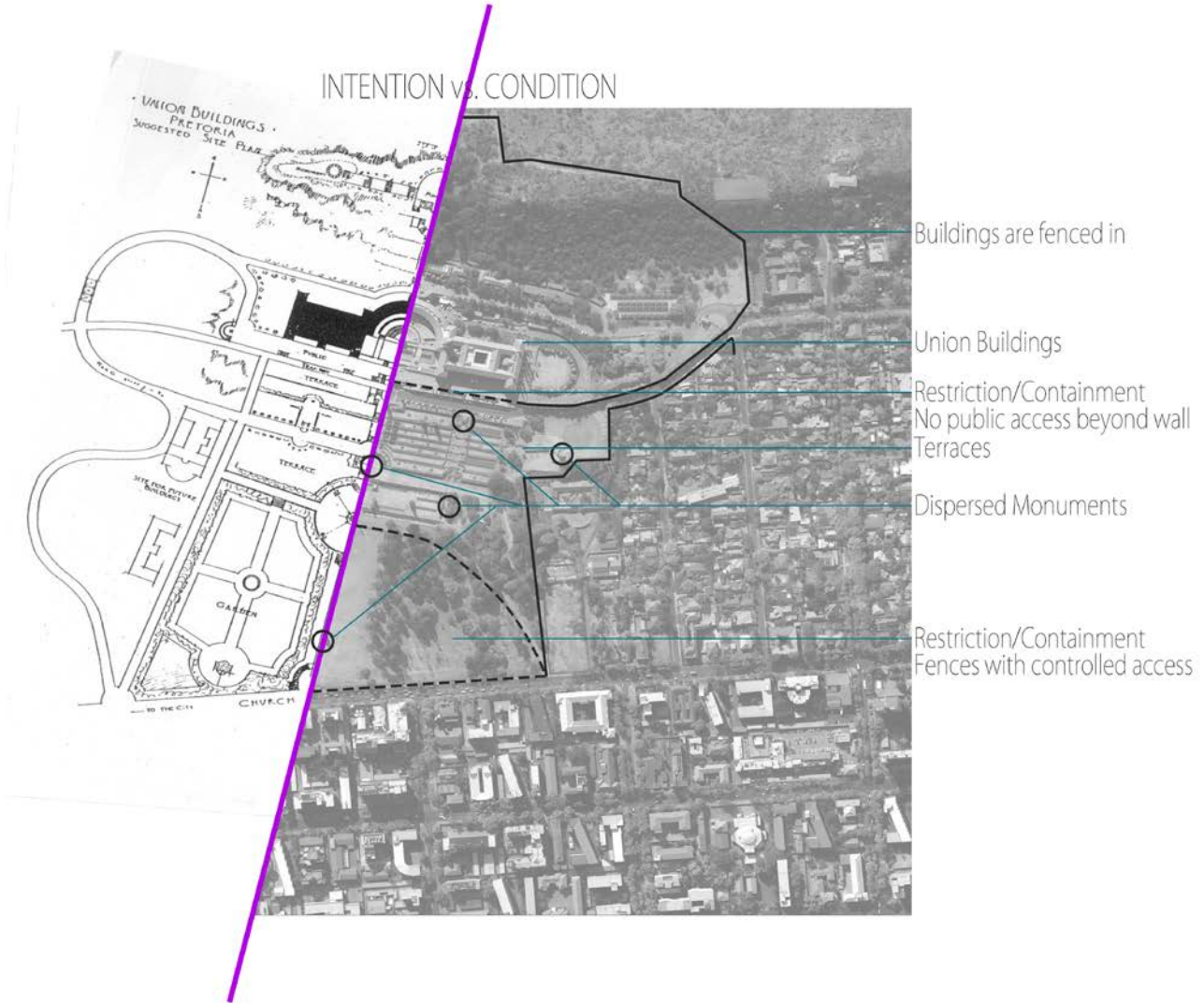
With regard to the urban framework and the identification of the route of protest and the connection of public spaces, the precinct identified was chosen because of its role along the route. The site serves as the final transition from the streets and onto the grounds, from the realm of the city (mundane) into the realm of the divine (government). The site in itself was also identified because of its poor interface with the street, often very busy with vehicles, leaving the grounds underutilized by daily city dwellers. The site is the threshold between the grounds, the upper portion of the Southern Lawn (where protestors congregate) and the city. It is the liminal space between the city and the government edifice.

The exploration of the site and its potential began with studying the intentions of Baker for the site and the present day situation. Many of Baker's initial ideas were never realized, others were and have merely been lost with time. Other changes are very recent and mostly relate to access control within the grounds.

Figure 61 - The working areas established for Newtown Landscape Architect's 2005 heritage audit on the Union Buildings Estate (Muller & Young, 2005:18) (Delimited precinct highlighted by author.)



INTENTION vs. CONDITION



7.2. Conceptual Thinking

The process of developing the design stemmed largely from an investigation into the nature of the transition spaces. Using the proposed spatial syntax of the programme (Chapter 5) as a departure point an investigation into the democracy of traditional parliament was undertaken.

Using the thoughts of Dovey (1999) regarding the democratic nature of transitional spaces in the old Australian parliament as opposed to the new and the postulation that democracy is manifest in the liminal and not the programmed, concrete aspects of government institutions, the spatial syntax was investigated to reveal opportunities of liminality.

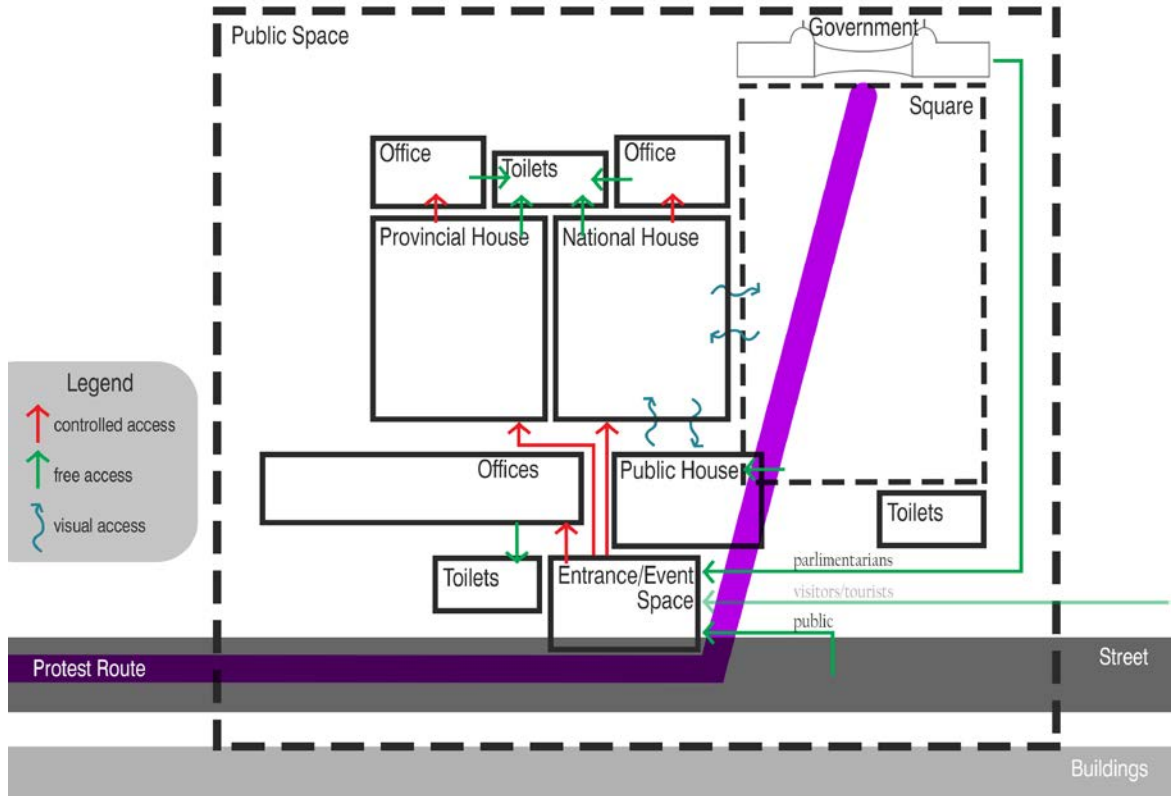
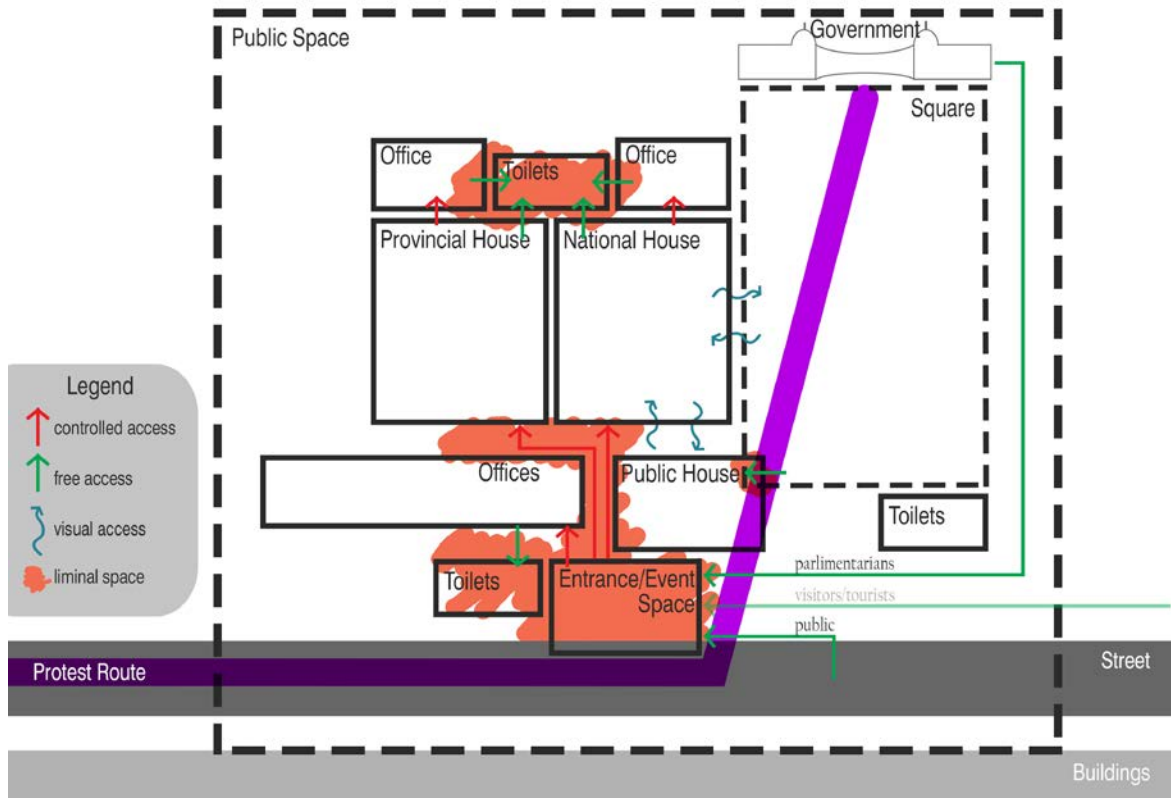


Figure 62 - The spatial syntax of the proposed programme (Author's diagram)

Opp. Page:

Figure 63 - The Spatial Syntax diagram with liminal spaces highlighted (Author's diagram)

The diagram below was developed to understand the relationship between different aspects of programme. The relationship between spaces was based upon the limited understanding of current parliamentary process which was supplemented by speculation. Access between spaces is also shown, some spaces being freely accessible to all in the prior space, while others are access controlled. Because of the expected decorum of the parliamentary process, it is understandable that certain parts of the building remain inaccessible to the public. Where possible and necessary, however, the implication of accountability and public involvement has been addressed by suggesting where mere visual access can be included.



The focus on liminality then saw the identification of the liminal space becoming paramount. These spaces would then become those under most scrutiny, providing an opportunity for innovation and exploration of the theoretical investigation.

The liminal spaces in the building were identified as the passages and toilets and staff canteens and even service yards. Spaces where there is no room for showboating and smoke and mirrors. Everyone moving through a corridor is equal in that they each are being imposed upon by the confines of the space. They cannot always choose with whom they occupy a space. They are subject to others as much as others are subject to them.

Majority of these spaces, as the idea of liminality would imply, are only temporary spaces. They are transitional and thus never occupied for long periods of time by the same people. The moment of democracy is thus brief. The exploration hoped to identify ways in which this moment of liminality could be extended and exploited.



7.3. Precinct Proposal: Iteration 1

The initial noteworthy iteration aimed to marry the intentions of Baker and the intentions that would increase the quality of the public space.

Using existing phenomena, the location of the protest route and existing taxi stop was accommodated. The position of the main building was determined in a manner that addressed the visual connection between the grounds and the building, protestors and the parliamentarians and the daily public and their government.

The assumption that the building will function as part of a precinct saw the employment of Baker's original series of government buildings flanking the square. These, in combination with the form of the parliament building, hold the space and provide a back to the public space.

The axis of the divine is captured and the placement of a large tree on its end serves as beacon and gathering point outside the building.

The existing informal traders along Stanza Bopape street are accommodated in a more formal structure that also acts as the taxi stop on site. There is also a formal transport drop-off within the precinct, a decision made to encourage filtration of people into the site.

The inclusion of parking at the base of the Union Buildings Estate hopes to draw tourists who currently only access the site from above and never traverse the grounds to the street below, into the public realm encourage *cross-pollination* between tourist specific activities and daily public space.

Figure 64 - Precinct design iteration 1. Manipulated from original explorations based on analysis of existing conditions, historic intentions and the requirements as set out in the project brief. (24 April 2016)

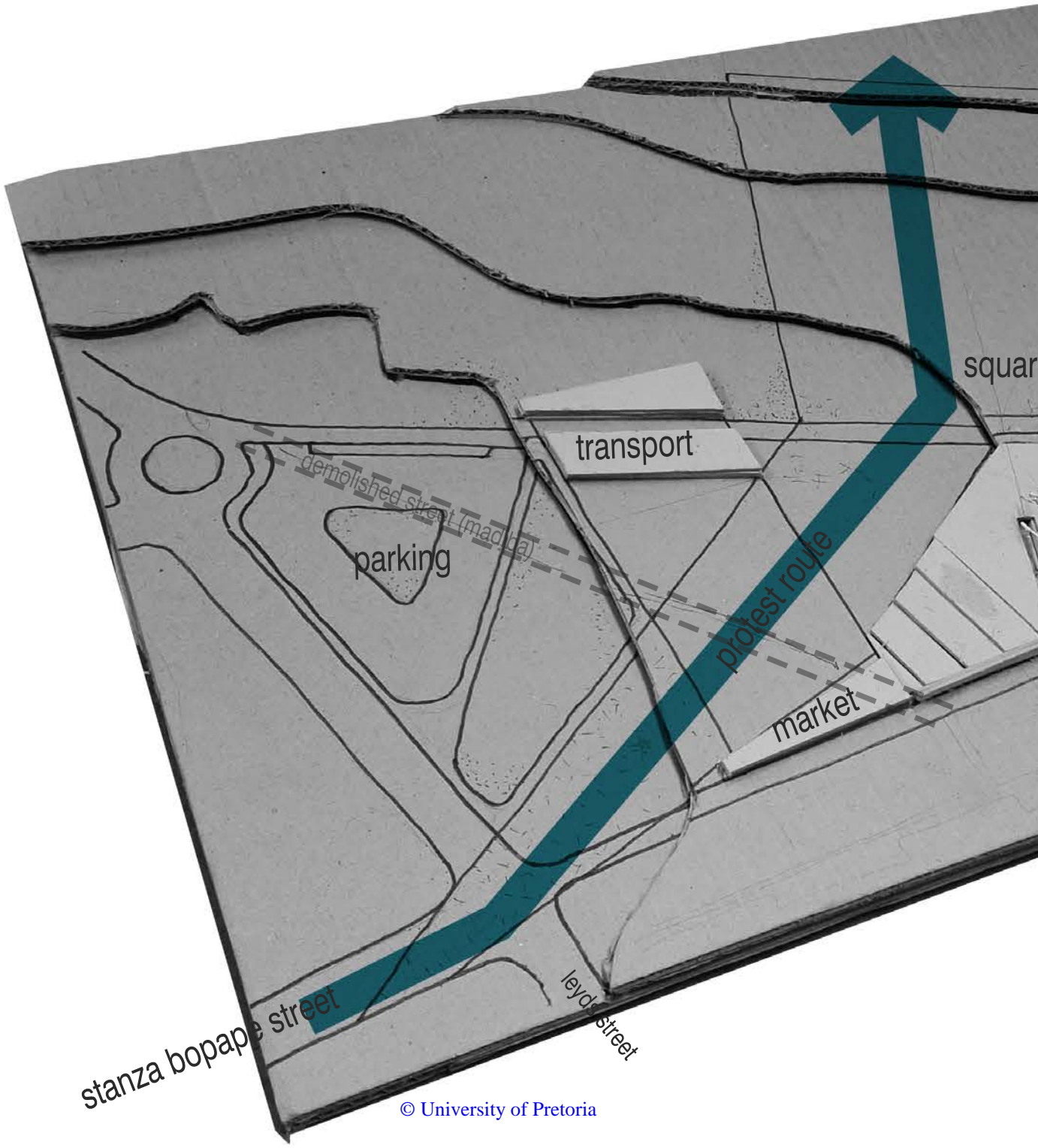
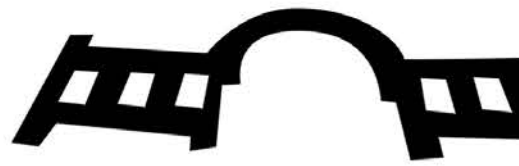


7.4. Precinct Proposal: Iteration 2

The development outlined in the second iteration shows only minor alterations. The first is illustrated in later model, whereby the slot that was to capture the axis is opened to create a space for external gathering. The location of public informal gathering space at the culmination of the divine access marks the shift in focus from government (divine), to the inclusion of the public (the mundane).

Additionally, there was exploration into the manner in which the auxiliary governmental functions flanking the square should be housed. The iteration shows an amalgamation of forms (which was later critiqued at ignoring the human scale and eliminating the opportunity for intimate spaces in between buildings).

Figure 65 - A second iteration of the precinct proposal, with limited alterations from the first. (26 April 2016)



7.5. Precinct Proposal: Iteration 1 & 2: Model

The model served to illustrate the intention with regards to the relationship with ground. The attempt was for a subtle building, absent of the traditional grandeur associated with government buildings.

This plays on the idea of returning the sacralisation of democracy to a mundane level. It also aims to reduce the scale of government buildings in relationship to the street, the occupation of which addresses the idea of threshold of the grounds, the occupation of historically liminal space and the accessibility of government.

In this manner, the precinct acts as an occupiable gateway between the city and the sacred space of the Union Buildings.

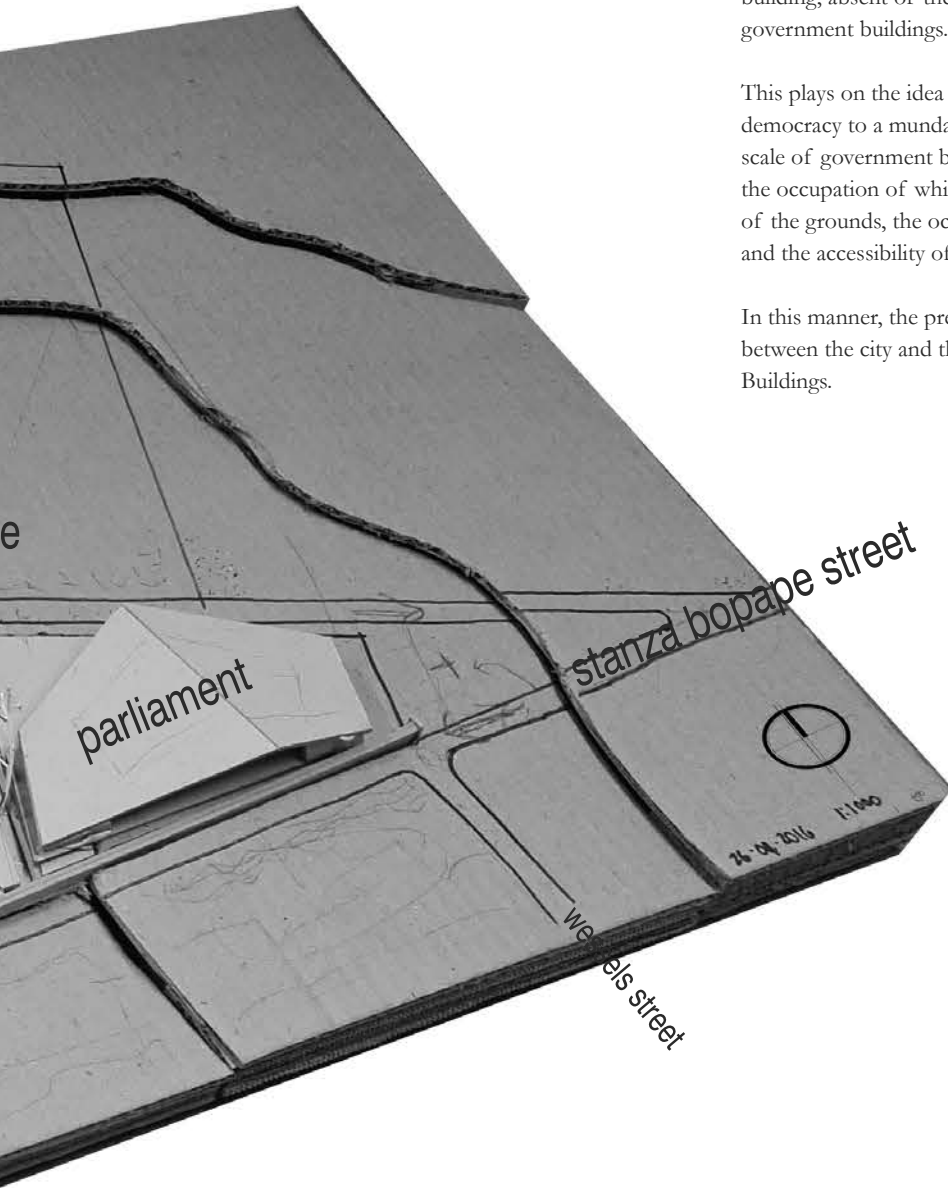


Figure 66 - Model illustrating the initial proposal for the precinct and a conceptual exploration of the building form determined by the site. (Precinct iteration 1; Building Concept) (26 April 2016)