

chapterthree

Programme: The Built Environment Staging Centre

Introduction

In the previous chapter it was established that new types of relationships and interaction are needed to restore the segregated relationship between theory and practice. The proposal is to design a Graduate Staging Centre (GSC) for the Built Environment (Built Environment Staging Centre -BESC). The programme's main functions are to facilitate relationships between:

- Theory and practice within the built environment;
- The different departments within the Built Environment at UP;
- UP Main Campus and South Campus; and
- UP and the public.

Stage [steɪj] Stag-ing [stay-jɪŋ]

-noun, verb, staged, stag-ing

A single step or degree in a process; a particular phase, period, position, etc., in a process development, or series.

A raised platform or floor, as for speakers, performers, etc.

The scene of any action.

A place of rest on a journey; a regular stopping place.

The distance between two places of rest on a journey; each of the portions of a journey.

To present, produce, or exhibit on or as if on a stage.

To plan, organize, or carry out (an activity), especially for dramatic or public effect.

(<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/staging>).

Existing relationships between theory and practice

In Figure 3.1 existing relationships between theory and practice are listed. The graphic also demonstrates an imbalance in the current relationships, tending towards the industry's inactive role in education.

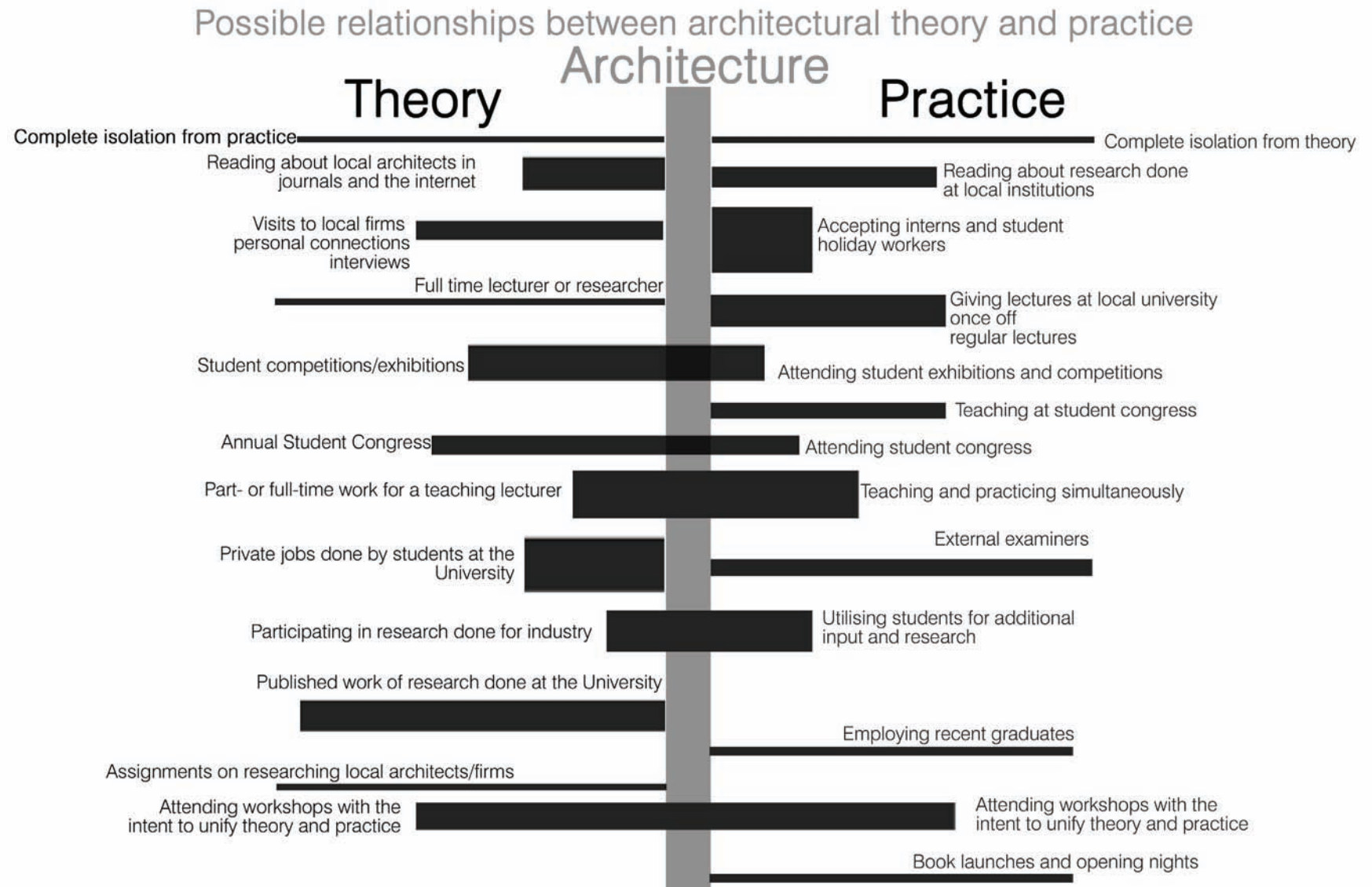


Figure 3.1 Possible relationships between theory and practice

New sustainable relationships between theory and practice

The new types of relationships that need to be established have to develop from the current relationship between theory and practice. Currently, there is very little interaction between students and members of the industry on a formal as well as an informal basis. Therefore, both formal and informal relationships need a platform for development that can later lead to more integrated relationships.

The Bauhaus building in Dessau, Germany, was identified as a building and series of events that has made a long-term impact on the nature of

architecture as we know it today. The Bauhaus succeeded in effectively merging theory and practice.

There are more examples of schools or programmes that attempted to merge theory and practice, for instance, Rural Studios (Fig 3.2 - Fig 3.3) at Auburn University in Alabama (<http://www.cadc.auburn.edu/rural-studio/>) and Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West (Fig 3.4 - Fig 3.5), intended as a camp for architectural students (<http://www.global-writes.com/chronological/?-Token.article>). Even though there is much to be learnt from these

programmes, there is no school or system as influential and revolutionary as the Bauhaus.

The Bauhaus has been analysed and opportunities have been identified in order to establish a system from which a sustainable relationship between theory and practice can be developed (see Appendix A).

Three types of relationships have been identified from the possible solutions discussed in Chapter two and the Bauhaus precedent study. These are: social, intellectual and practical

relationships. Social or informal interaction can be used to initiate more formal interaction between theory and practice and vice versa. The one type of relationship is used to aid the development of the next.

Figure 3.6 indicates how these relationships were identified. The opportunities identified were reduced and condensed and certain programmatic functions were assigned to each relationship. The programme was then developed to accommodate the identified relationships.



Figure 3.2 Project by Rural Studios



Figure 3.3 Students of Rural Studios



Figure 3.4 Exterior view of Taliesin West



Figure 3.5 Interior view of Taliesin West

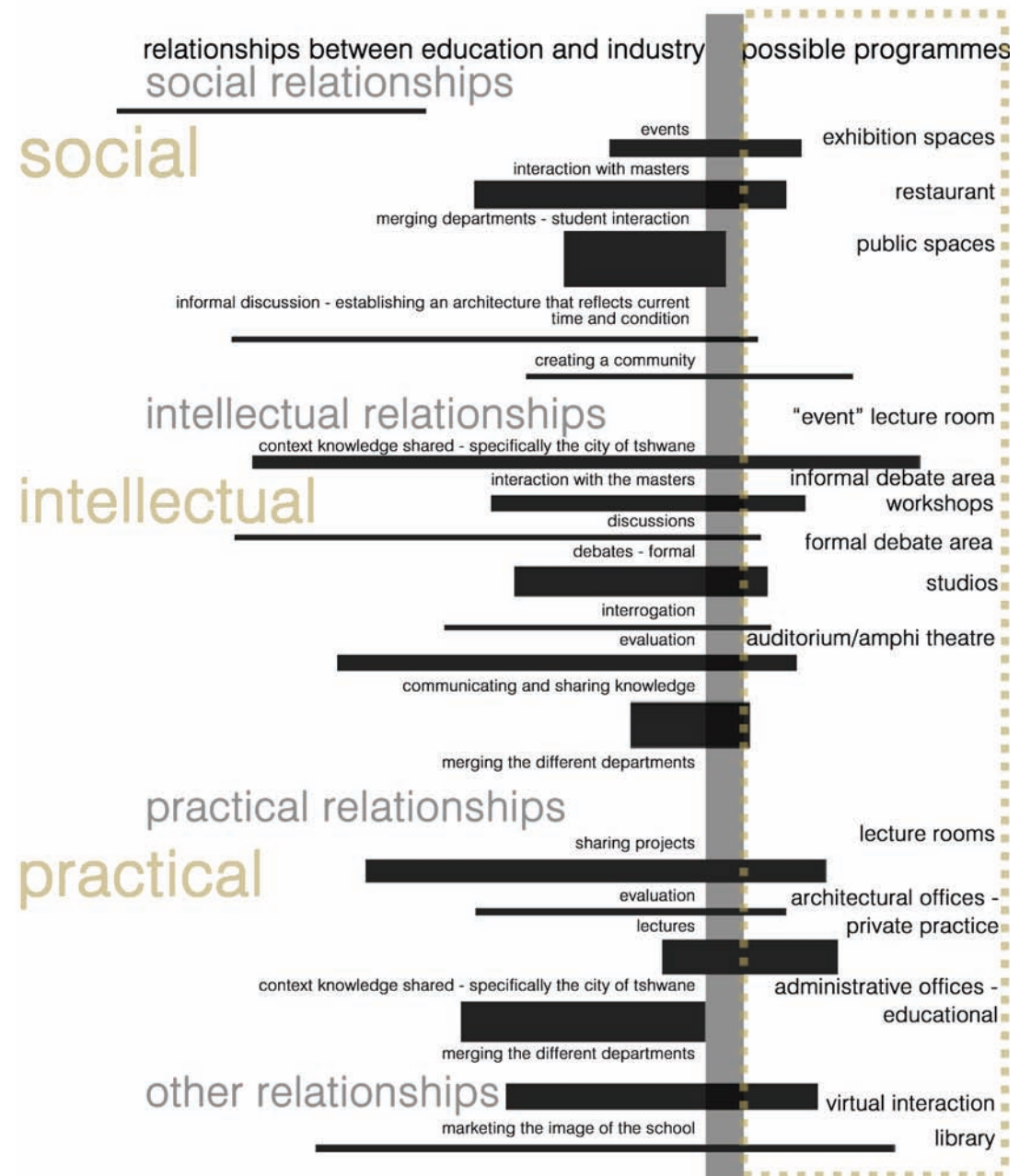


Figure 3.6 Programme establishment

Graduate Staging Centre – Built Environment Staging Centre

Graduate Staging Centres (GSCs)

The capricious relationship between architectural education and the industry is not an isolated occurrence as many other professionals, such as artists, engineers and lawyers, experience the same lack of integration between the education and the practice of the profession. The proposal is to create GSCs that can showcase the work that is produced by the students in order to inform the industry and the general public of the nature of their education as well as putting the syllabus and educational quality within the public domain; this will allow the industry to assist in the quality control and structure of the education of the students. These centres will act as urban foyers that facilitate the possible relationships between education and the industry of the respective professions.

The GSCs are proposed to be on the periphery of UP in order to create a better interface between the university and the public. The nature of the relationships that exist between academia and industry cannot be pre-determined or stipulated. Accessibility and inclusivity of the GSCs are therefore important in facilitating the desired relationships.

Each GSC will have its own requirements and the nature of the possible relationships between the industry and the educational facility will be different at all GSCs. The location of the GSC, the type of industry, the nature of the existing relationship between an industry and an educational facility, etc. will be amongst the factors that need to be identified before a GSC is constructed.

Aims of GSCs

The main aim of the GSCs is to establish better, sustainable relationships between the theory and the practice of the respective fields. Further aims are to:

- Link the relevant departments within the vicinity – Architecture, Construction Economics and Town and Regional Planning (also Visual Arts and the Music Departments are included);
- Include the community into the GSCs through the incorporation of relevant programmes that encourage the direct community to use the spaces;
- Design pedestrian-friendly buildings;
- Be public transport orientated.

This dissertation proposes a GSC for the Built Environment specifically. The programme of the building is determined by the requirements of social, intellectual and practical relationships.

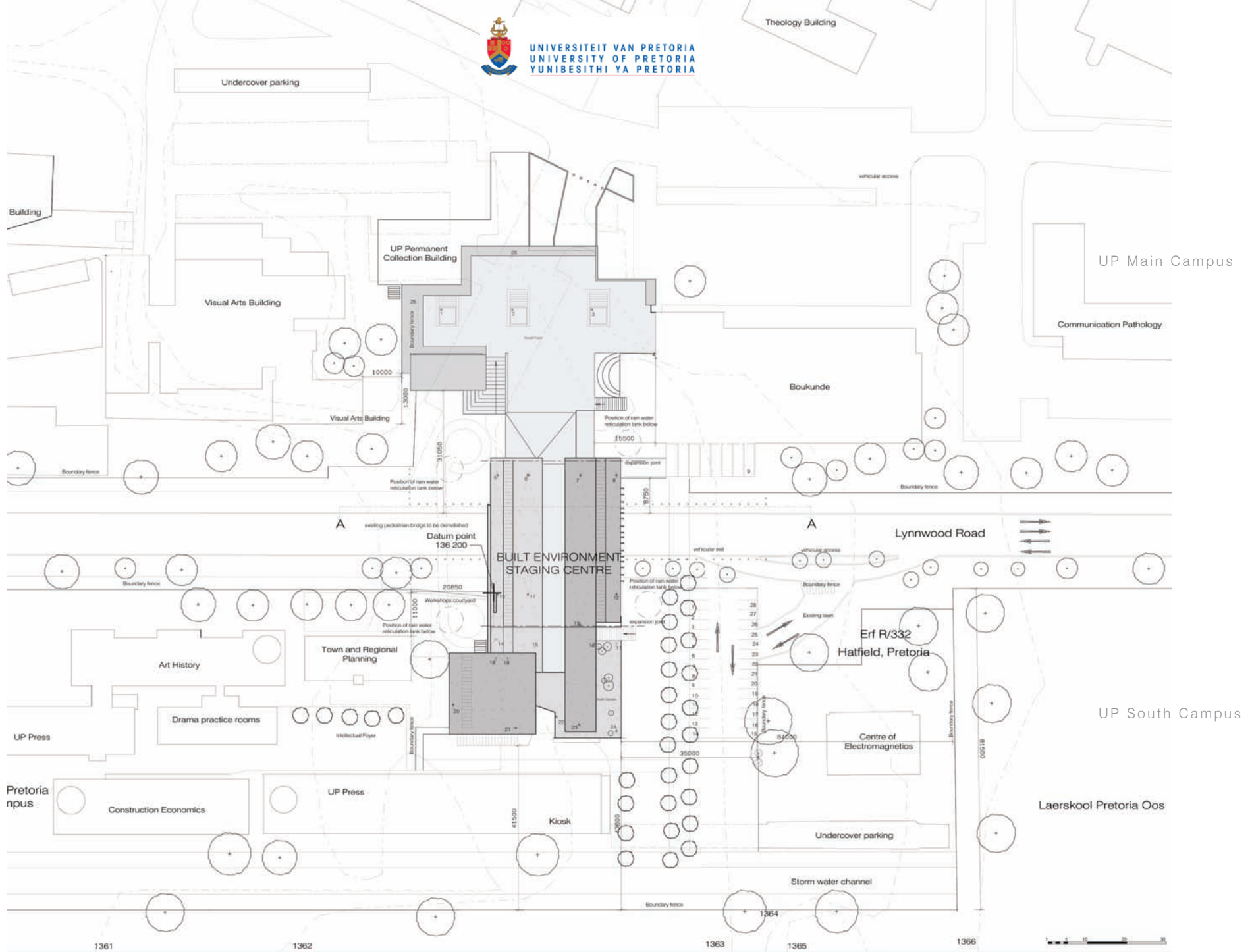


Figure 3.7 Site Plan

Social relationships

Social relationships are defined by interaction that takes place on an informal, spontaneous level. These relationships can be viewed as friendships between students, members of the industry and the public.

The most important part of the design consists of exhibition spaces that can facilitate social relationships. The exhibition spaces are complemented by the inclusion of public spaces and a restaurant.

Exhibitions will form the main attraction element in the design. The main exhibition space is situated on the Bridge Level, framed by workshops and studios. The spaces that support and define the main exhibition space are versatile and can become part of the main exhibition corridor. The space thus has the ability to be anything from a narrow linear exhibition on a walkway to a broad, large exhibition space that can manipulate the viewer into many spaces as part of the journey across Lynnwood Road (Fig 3.8 - Fig 3.11).

On ground level the threshold into campus is enlarged and softened to turn the space into an urban foyer. Figure 3.8 indicates how public space is extended into the University's grounds in order to make the University more accessible and permeable, without jeopardising the integrity of the University's security systems.

On the northern side of Lynnwood Road a formal exhibition space is situated on street level; this is a formal foyer into the University, showcasing some of the work that is produced by students at UP. This exhibition space on street level then also acts as a prelude to the new exhibition building that is proposed on the corner of Tukkielaan and the Ring Road, next to the Visual Arts Building (NVABES). This building will house the University's permanent collection; therefore it should also be a publically accessible building.

A restaurant is proposed on the southern side of Lynnwood Road. The restaurant socially links the public street

UP Main Campus

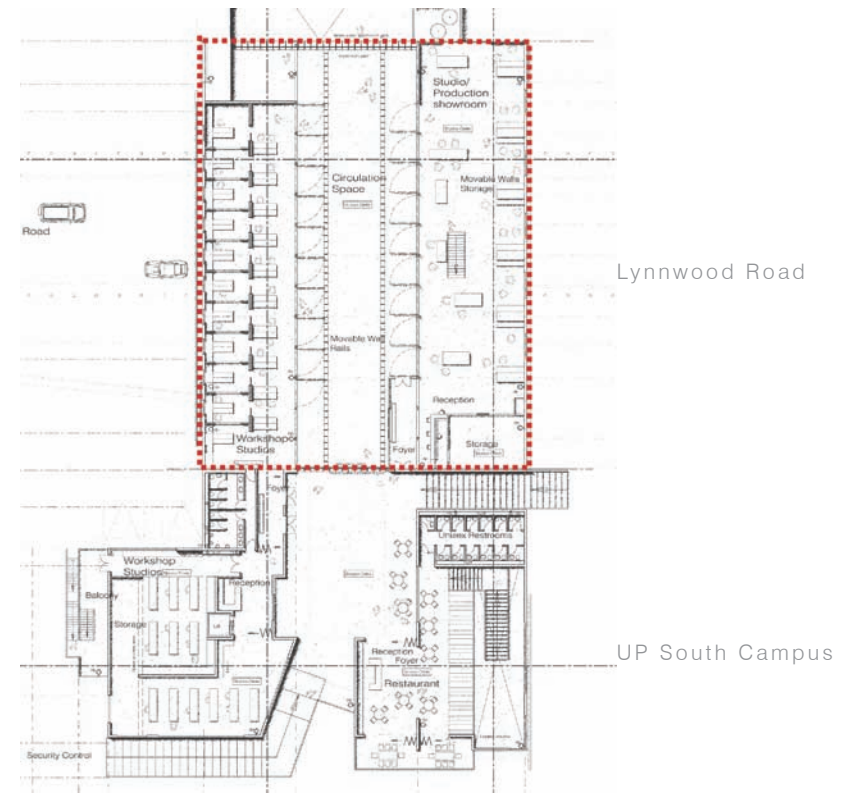
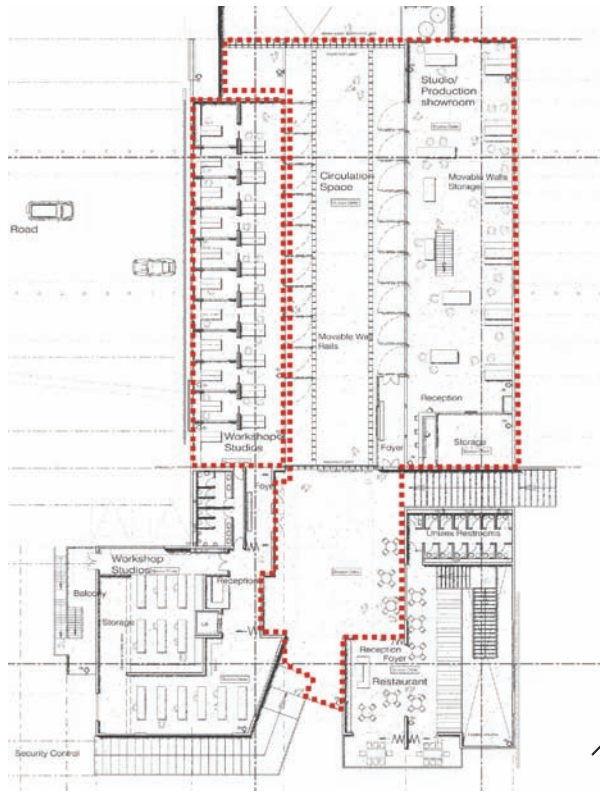


Figure 3.8 The bridge structure used as one space

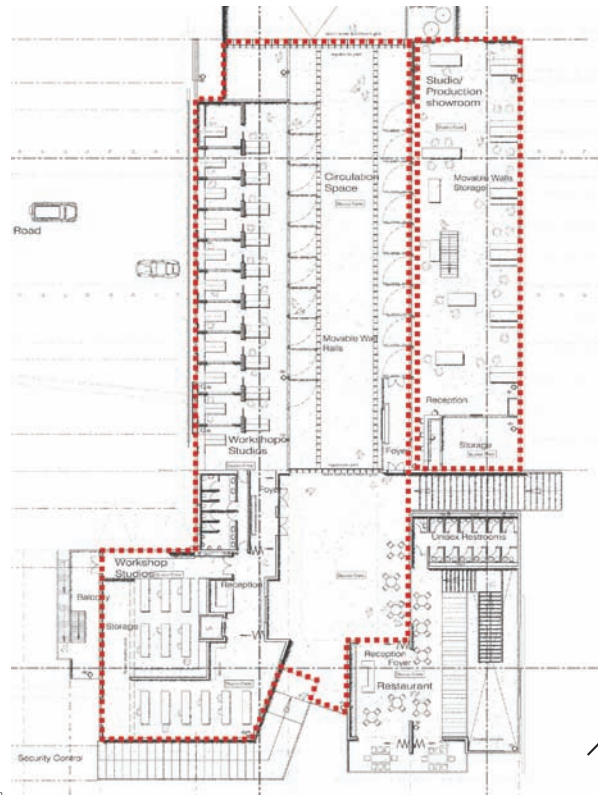
level with the main exhibition space on the bridge. Public accessibility and inclusivity is enhanced through the incorporation of a restaurant (Fig 3.12). The restaurant can then be used to cater for events, whether the events are social, intellectual or practical.

Social relationships can be anything from a quick conversation while passing a fellow student to a late night dinner with practicing professionals. These relationships are not regulated or manipulated, but encouraged through the design.



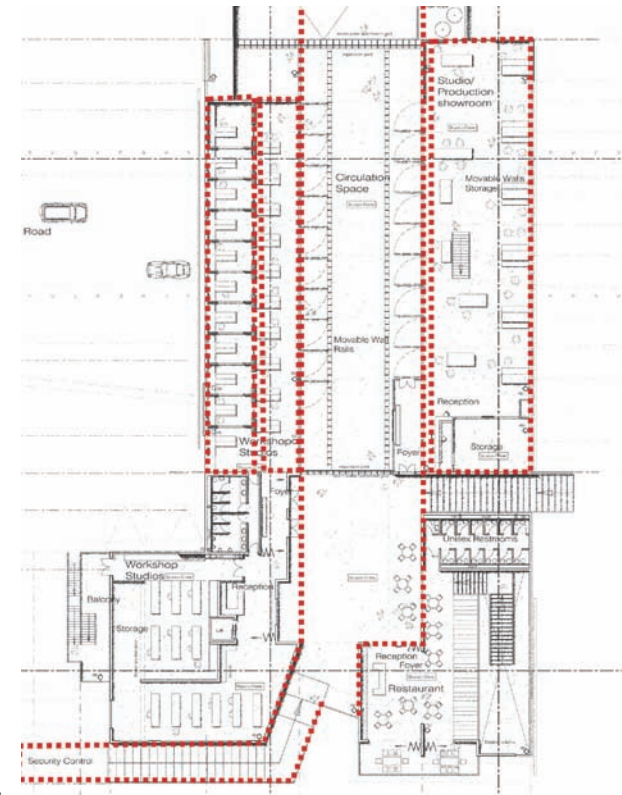
↑ North

Figure 3.9 Combining the main circulation space and Production Studios



↑ North

Figure 3.10 Combination of Workshop Studios and main circulation space



↑ North

Figure 3.11 All spaces used separately

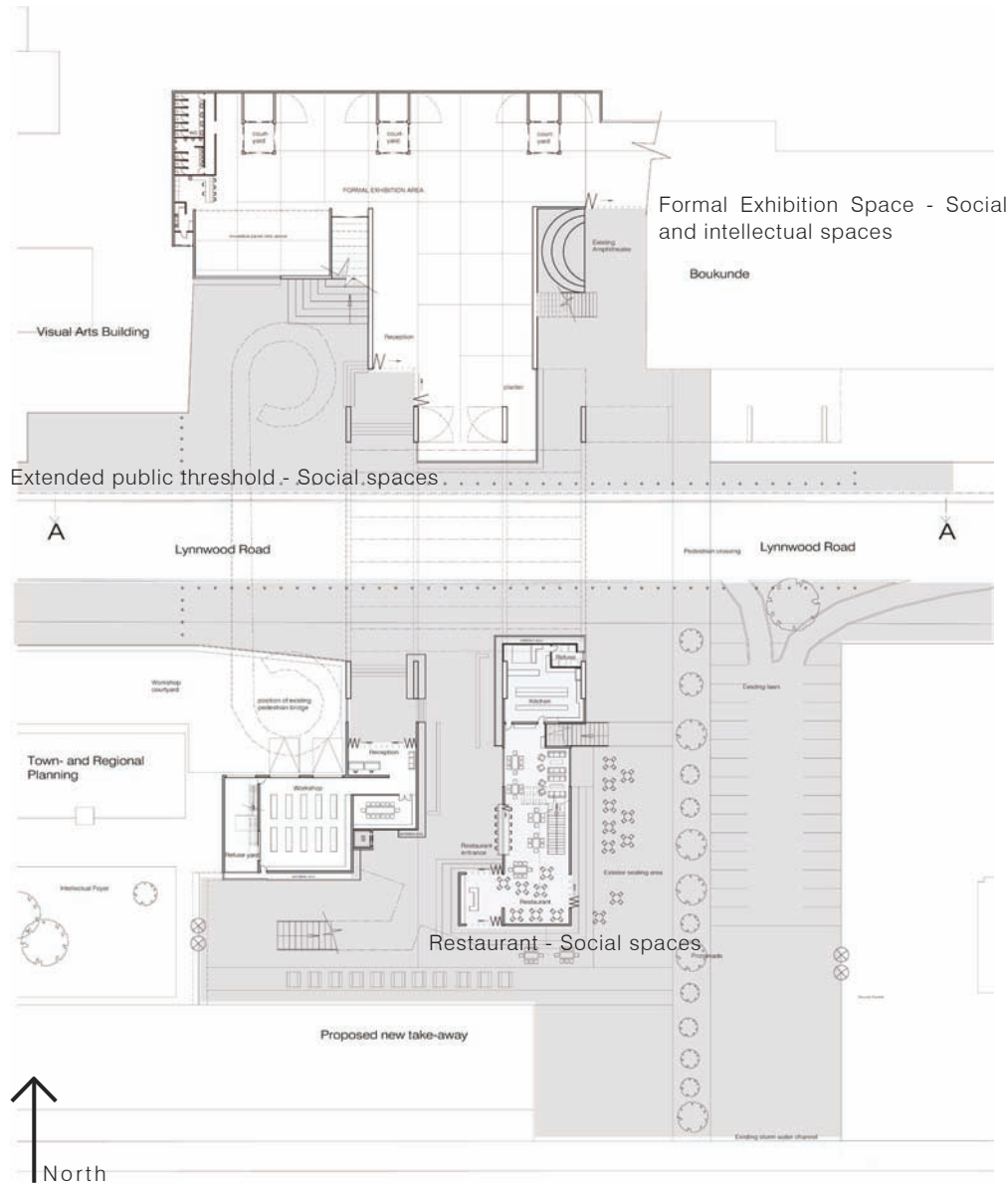


Figure 3.12 Ground Level - diagram depicting extended thresholds

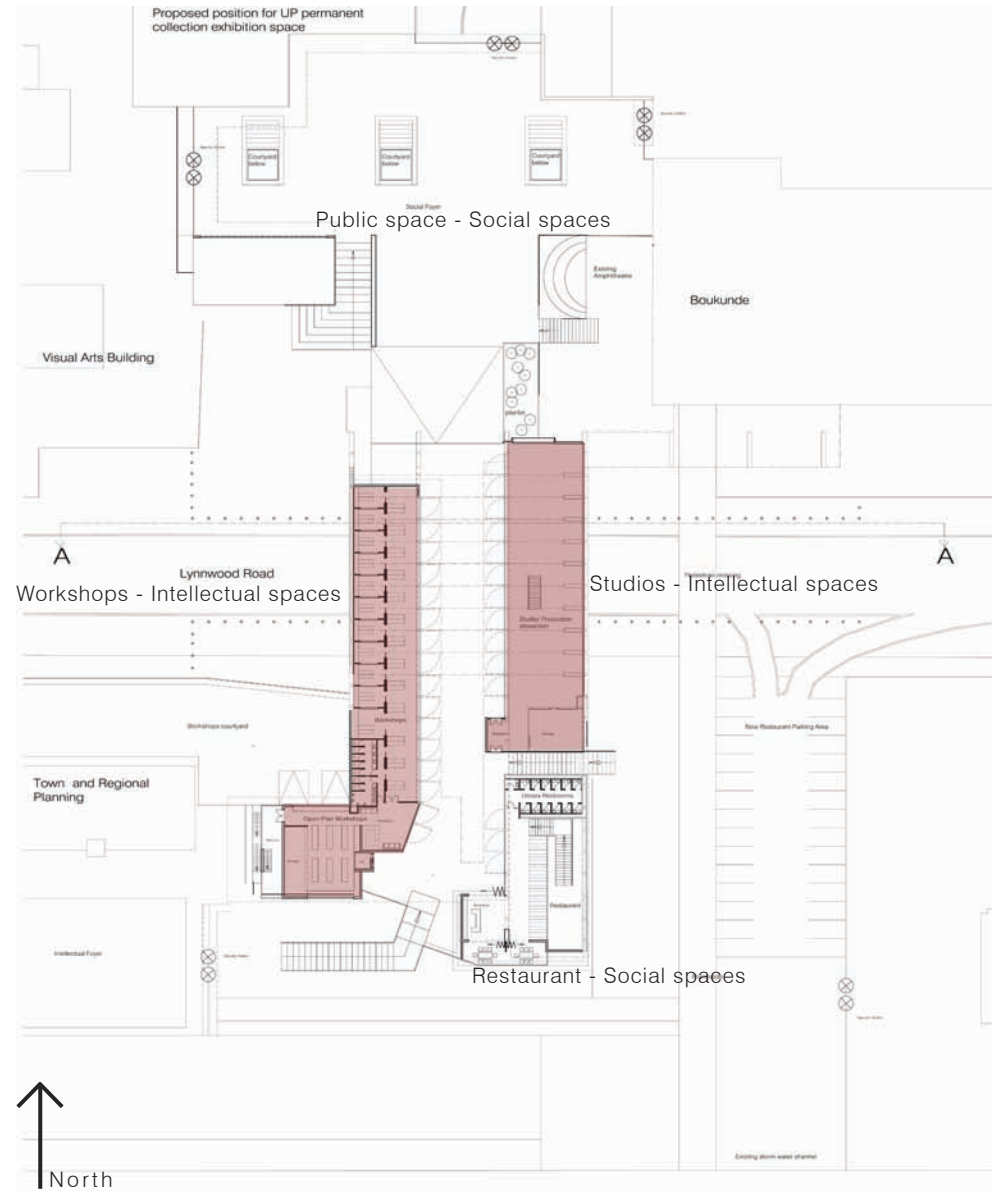


Figure 3.13 Bridge Level - diagram of spaces defining the main exhibition space

Intellectual relationships

Intellectual relationships are defined by student interactions amongst each other and the industry where skills are transferred and conversations are experience- or academically orientated. These relationships are semi-formal but not as regulated or structured as completely professional relationships.

An 'event' lecture space together with seminar rooms, design studios, informal debating areas, workshop studios and seminar rooms are designed to accommodate this type of relationship

The design studio and workshop studios (Fig 3.13) are housed in the structures that define the main exhibition space. These spaces can also be called "production centres".

The design studio is similar to the existing studios inside Boukunde, but the space is designed to showcase the production process of architecture. Ample storage space in the studios allows for furniture to be temporarily stored while the spaces are used for exhibition. The accessibility both physically and visually stimulates intellectual interaction.

The workshop studios are spaces where members of the industry - whether industry representatives, architects, artists, contractors, etc. - are appointed to present workshops to the students. This type of education is important to allow the industry to be able to manipulate the type of knowledge that is obtained at a university and to present the latest technologies and skills. The spaces need to be adaptable

to facilitate many different types of presentations and practical workshops. The ideal is to present workshops in such a way that the students have to complete practical tasks, or do physical projects, that can be exhibited in order to encourage intellectual relationships.

The Formal Exhibition Space, on ground level towards the north of Lynnwood Road, also provides smaller seminar rooms for private discussions and interaction between students and members of the industry. Smaller workshops and lectures can also be held in these spaces. The private seminar rooms can be manipulated to form part of the formal exhibition space and will only be closed when in use.

West of the existing Boukunde building an existing amphitheatre, that can

seat at least fifty people, is currently neglected and under-used. This space will be revamped to form an integral part of the design. This is an exterior space that can easily be used for small events such as movie evenings and informal debates. The amphitheatre acts as a link between the new inhabited bridge and Boukunde on street level.

An "event" lecture room for more formal events is required. However, the type of events that will be hosted will mostly take place after hours. Boukunde has many lecture facilities that can be used for such events. The ideal venue would be Room 1-10, situated on the south western corner of Boukunde, on street level. An exterior door, not currently in use, can be used for access to Room 1-10. Another "event" lecture room would therefore be unnecessary.

Design/ Production Studio

Pedestrian Walkway

Workshop Studios

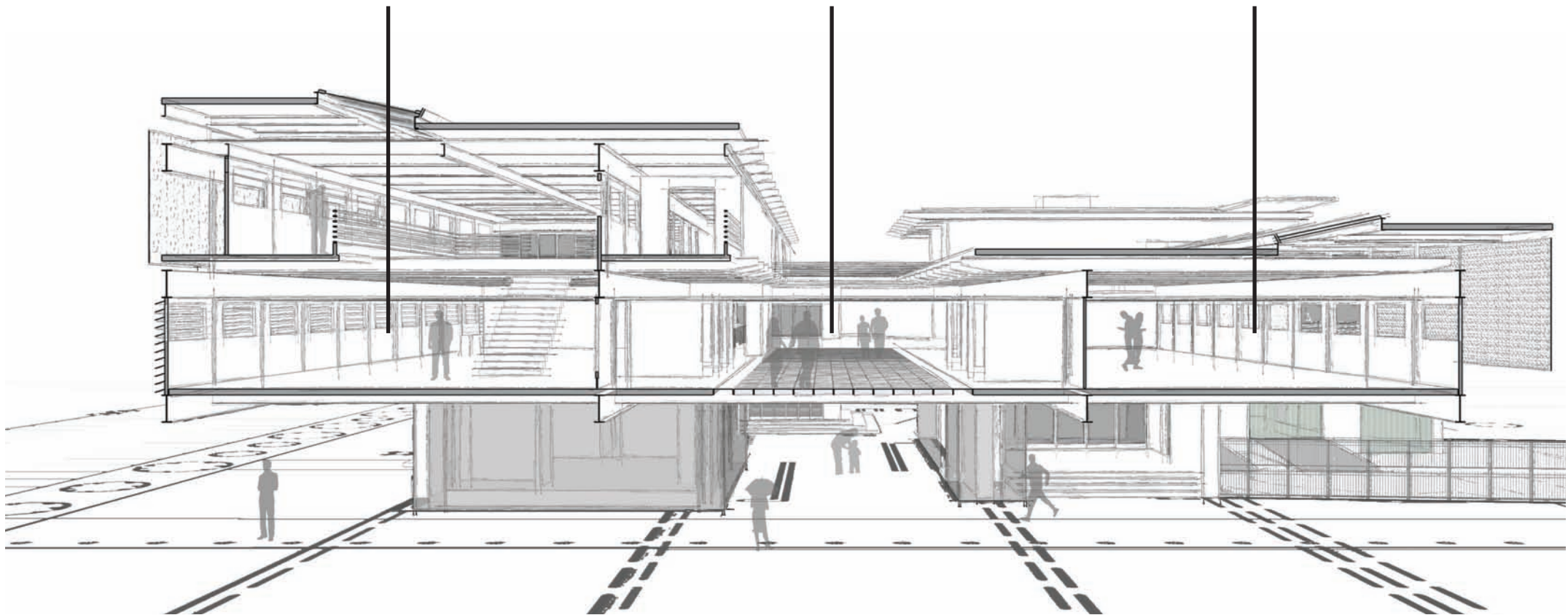


Figure 3.14 3D section explaining the interaction between the studios and the public walkway

Practical relationships

A practical relationship is where a formal, regulated relationship is established between students and or members of the industry. This is currently done through the weekly “School Lectures” held at Boukunde: members of the industry present their work in order to expose the students to architectural practice.

The proposal is to establish an office where students and members of the industry can simultaneously engage in projects (Fig 3.15). This will enable members of the industry to utilise the innovation and manpower of the students. This will empower the students to work on projects that will actually be executed. Through this arrangement students obtain experience, members of the industry

are given the opportunity to share their experience and the revenue obtained through these projects can be reinvested into architectural education, making the building partly financially independent.

These incubation offices aid students in the transition process between education and practice. The offices can be visited by any member of the public, giving them access to current developments in architecture.

Other practical relationships can also be established through more regular and scheduled sessions with members of the industry, where skills and experiences are transferred to better prepare students for the work environment.

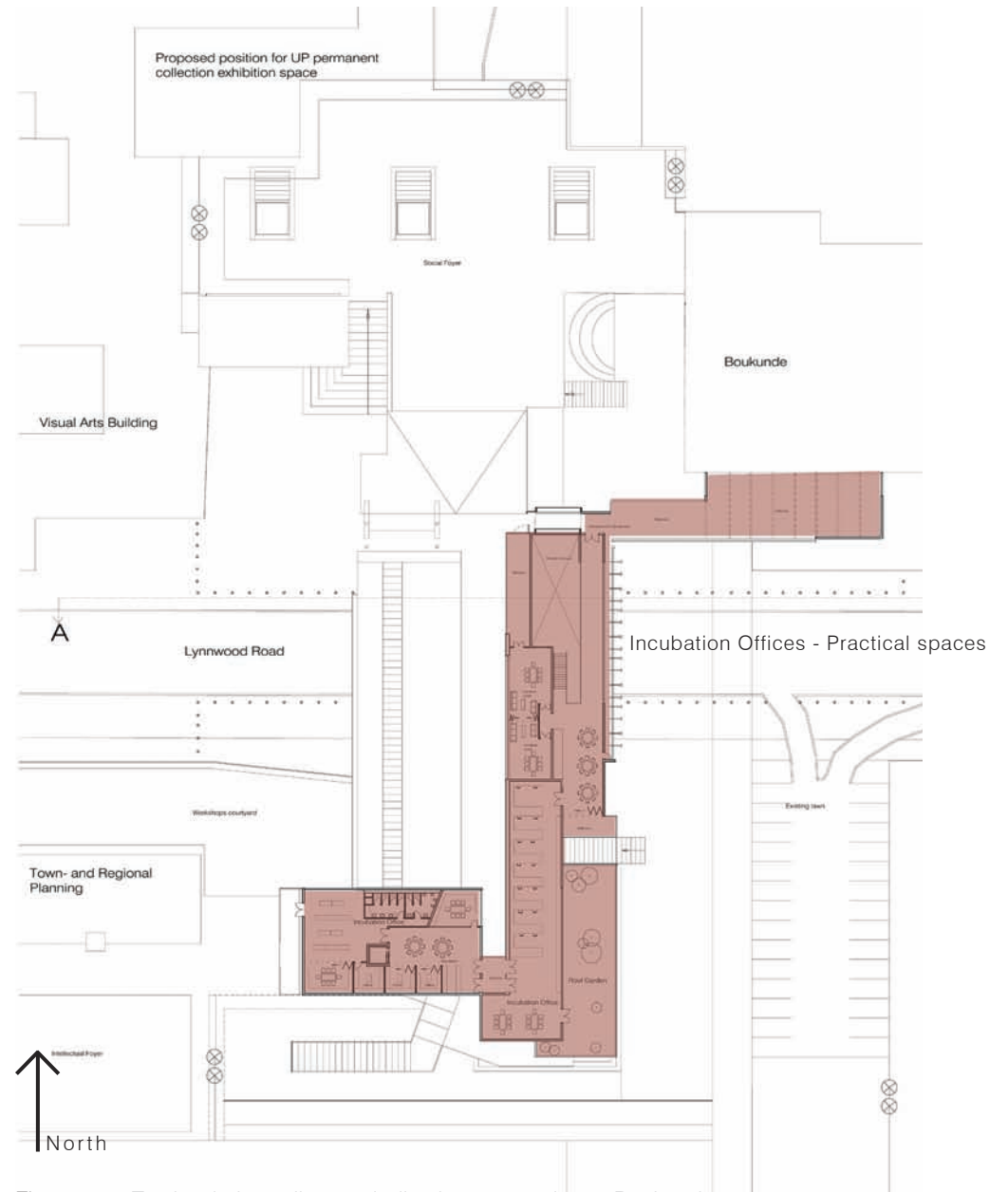


Figure 3.15 Top level plan - diagram indicating connection to Boukunde

Relationship between Main Campus and South Campus at UP

The proposed pedestrian walkway links South and Main Campuses as it becomes an inhabited bridge over Lynnwood Road (Fig 3.16). The programming is organised so that most of the activity will happen on South Campus: the restaurant as well as the entrances to the design studio and workshop studios are situated towards the south. Furthermore the structure becomes a much more inclusive, contextualised, pedestrian walkway than the current pedestrian bridge over Lynnwood Road.

Relationship between the University and the public

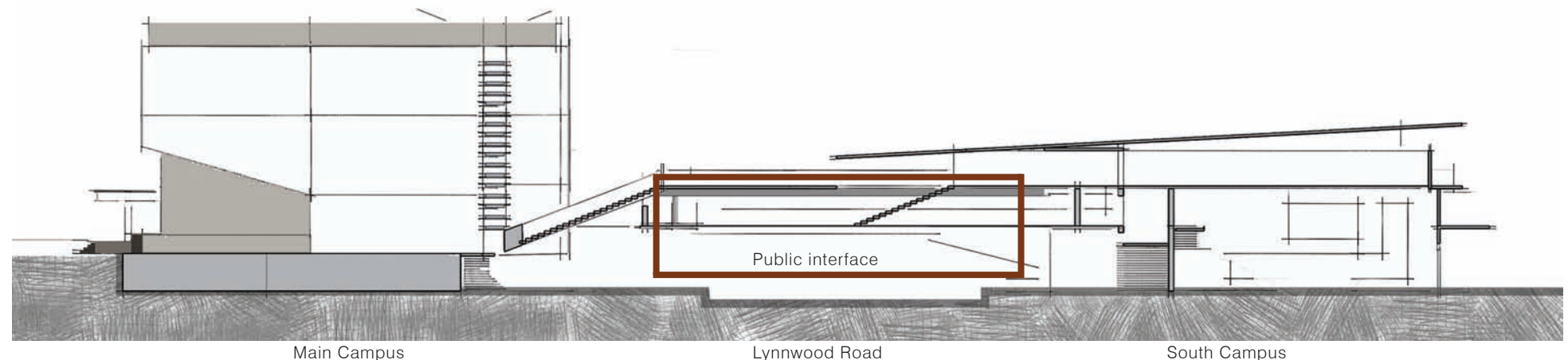
As stated previously, the University has identified its interface with the public as problematic. The university is experienced as an inaccessible, isolated island due to the security fencing. An interface that communicates events and achievements at UP is needed to reconnect the University with its local community. The location of the building, being a bridge over Lynnwood Road, is the ideal opportunity to create a better interface between the University and the public.

The relationship between the relationships

The eastern and western sides, or in this case facades of the bridge, will communicate to the fast travelling vehicular traffic through billboards that act as communicative devices and sunscreens, protecting the interior exhibition spaces and offices from direct sunlight.

Public accessibility and events will allow members of the community to physically interact with students and work that is produced at UP.

The spaces where the interaction between the segregated entities overlaps are called foyers. The foyers all have different characteristics ranging from formal foyers where users are introduced into a space to more informal, urban foyers and public spaces. The concept of foyers is discussed in Chapter six of this dissertation.



Conclusion

The proposed programme, a Built Environment Staging Centre, is one that will currently serve the relationship between theory and practice best. However, it is important that the designed spaces can be manipulated and changed as the requirements of the relationship between theory and practice change.

The hierarchy and area of the exhibition spaces will probably change over time as the relationships become more stable and working relationships between education and the industry improve.

The programme should therefore not be seen as a stagnant intervention, but as the first layer or stage of programming. Over the years the programme will undergo many stages and change and development is inevitable.