

"CITIZEN ARENA : Citizens Against Pseudo-Democracy"

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Abstract:

Any governance system is defined by the placement of 'power' in it and in democracy the supreme power is vested in the people. However, the Citizens of Bangladesh are not aware of the power that their constitution offers them. Therefore, they are unable to exercise them. As a result, the power of the people remains idle. This creates an imbalance in the distribution of power between the governance and the governed, which results into 'Pseudo-Democracy'. This project provides the citizens with a platform, where they can get the opportunities to be aware of the power that the constitution offers them and how power works in the governance system. Not only that, they will also be able to practice these powers through this project. As a whole, this will be a platform for the Citizens to be aware and act, which will be known as 'Citizen Arena'. Citizen Arena will not only educate people in 'power', but also will provide them with opportunities to exercise those power. Here in this project citizens will be brought to a more engaging relationship with the constitutional rights to keep Democracy upright.

Acknowledgement:

'Citizen Arena' was a concept that from its conception to its completion has grown to maturity with the help of many. Perhaps, this is what made the project all the more engaging. Therefore, I am sincerely grateful to many for their contribution to help me realize this project.

Firstly, I would like to thank Almighty Allah for his blessings and guidance over these past 5 years. A special thanks to my family for keeping me in their prayers and for the patience, tolerance and love with which they have showered me all this time.

A special acknowledgement is due to my course instructor A.F Mahmudun Nobi, without whose continuous guidance, ideas, appreciations, the project would have not been possible. I would also thank Dr. Mohammad Habib Reza and Shakil A. Shimul for allowing me to do an unconventional project and guiding me in whatever way possible.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all my batch mates, and juniors for extending their helping hands whenever it was required. I would specially take the following names, Mridul, Maisha, Abir, Asif, Shatil, Zabed, Kader, Anisha, Walid, Towhid, Sakib, Tabib for their continuous support.

Last but not the least, I am very much grateful to Reshmeen Nusrat, for her never ending motivation and encouragement through the whole journey, without which 'Citizen Arena' would have remained only as a concept. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 01:

Background of the project

1.1 Project brief

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1.4 Proposed programs

CHAPTER 01:

Background of the project

The project is unique in the sense that there is no existing proposal as such and the project cannot be easily placed in any particular typological categories. It is an architectural response to the existing political relationship between the governance and the Citizens of Bangladesh. There has not been any precedence of such project in Bangladesh. The purpose of the project is to provide the citizens of the country a platform, where they will be able to learn about their constitutional rights, and will also be able to exercise those rights from that very platform.

1.1 Project brief

Title: "Citizen Arena : Citizens Against Pseudo-Democracy"

Client: Citizen Organizations (Citizens for Good Governance, Democracy Watch, Election Working Group, BELA, Ain O Shalish Kendro, Electoral Integrity Project, BNWLA).

Site Location: As there is no proposal of this project, hence there is no specific site already proposed. But this project demanded a central location, well connected to the rest of the city. Not only that, it had to be around the administrative body of the government, and also required a vast open site, for the monumentality of its physical and metaphysical purpose, as this project represent the Citizens of the country. Considering all the conditions, the Old-Airport site has been decided to be the potential site for the project.

Site area: 106 acres

1.2 Project Introduction

To understand and recognize any political system, it is fundamentally important to understand it's distribution of 'Power'. The placement of power between the governed and the governing body determines the nature of the political system. The placement of power decides the nature of governance, for example, in a 'Monarchy' power resides with monarchs, in a 'Dictatorship' with the dictator. In the same way, in a Democracy, the supreme power of the state should be vested in the citizens. Through the citizens the power disseminates to the institutes of Democracy, therefore to the government.

In democracy, power always resides with the people and that is what made democracy so popular. Democracy gives citizens the power to demand accountability and the right to choose or decide for their own. In fact, the very notion of democracy is to give power of the state to the people, diminishing any chance for any individual group to possess absolute power.

This project proposes a center where citizens will be educated about Democracy, how democracy works, why 'power' is so important in a democracy, how government works, and how to organize power to create pressure in order to achieve what is desired by the majority. Along with the edutainment center, there will be facilities for citizen groups or forums that will give them a platform to have open dialogues, to exchange ideas about governance, to organize citizens and create educated collective opinion about decisions that governments take.

In brief, 'Citizen Arena' will make citizens aware of the power they have in democracy and how can they organize it and apply it constructively to create pressure on the governing bodies in order to achieve a common demand.

1.3 Objectives of the project

- Educating citizens in their Democratic rights.
- Familiarizing citizens with the constitutional rights.
- Providing scopes to the citizens to exercise their rights.
- Providing civic education.
- Creating a bridge between the citizen organizations and the citizens.
- Providing citizen organizations a stronger ground, with the power of the citizens.
- Creating a public space, combined with cultural essence.
- Providing a platform to contain citizens' voice.
- To create a monument dedicated to Democracy.

1.4 Given Programs

As this project is a self-developed project, no program requirement is given. But to have a starting some major programs need to be assumed.

Programs	Area
Admin	10,200 sqft
Assembly hall	5028 sqft
Freedom-Gallery of Political arts	26,200 sqft
Equity- Gallery of Constitution	16,300 sqft
Justice- Gallery of extra judicial acts	14,900 sqft
Representation- Gallery of manifestos and political promises	13,700 sqft
Petition Gallery	88,350 sqft
Civic Education	15,700 sqft
Legal Aid Service	13,000 sqft
Lawyers' Lounge	9600 sqft
Auditorium	14,064 sqft
Canteen	11,300sqft
Total	2,38,342 sqft

In the proposed design, in addition to providing these opportunities, the design will include the buffer space or event space to catalyze the social interaction with the society.

CHAPTER 02:

Site Appraisal

2.1 Site Considerations

2.2 Site

2.3 Reasons for choosing the site

2.4 Connectivity of the site

2.5 Surroundings of the Site

2.6 Detail Area Planning

2.1 Site Considerations

The initial considerations:

- The site should be a very well connected area in the city, so as to attract as many people as possible.
- The project should be around the government administrative offices and Institutions.
- The site should not belong to any specific neighborhood and be surrounded by mixed use development and public spaces of different scales.
- The site has to be large in area, to complement the monumentality of the project.
- The site should be/have the potential to develop into a public space in the future.

2.2 Site

Site for this project is chosen at the southern part of the Tejgaon Old Airport. The site is located between the government administrative zone and National Institutions. The site has Prime minister's office on its east, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar (Govt. administrative zone) on its west, Legislature on its south west, two museums on its south. In the north of the site there is 350 acres of lush green landscape, which is proposed by the Govt. as recreational zone.



Fig 2.1 : Site location, Source : Author

2.3 Reasons for choosing the site

- Located in the midst of the administrative zone and public institutions.
- Have potentials to become a vibrant public space in the future.
- Lush landscape of the site.
- Vastness of the site.
- Centrally located in the city

2.4 Connectivity of the site

- Site Has three major avenues running on the three side of it : Shaheed Sharani, Bijoy Sharani and Begam Rokeya Ave.
- Major drawback of the site is that along with the site, the whole old airport area lacks east to west connection.
- Major Bus-stoppage at the south-west corner of the site.

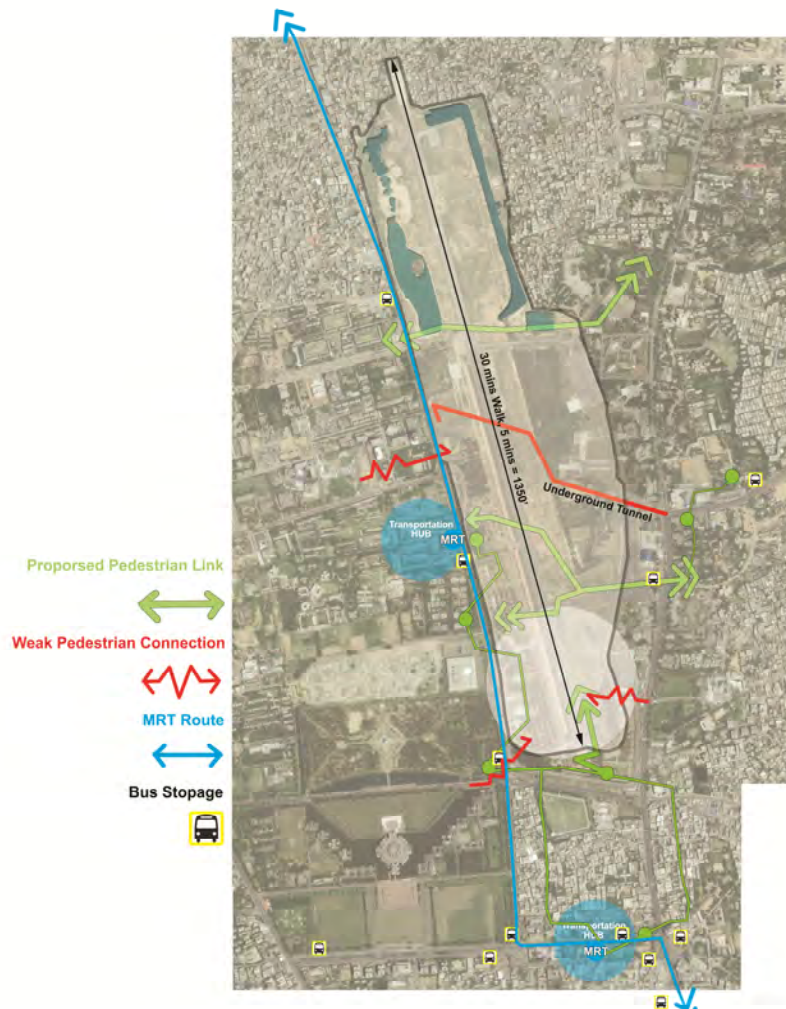


Fig 2.2 : Connectivity, Source : Author

2.5 Surrounding Of the Site

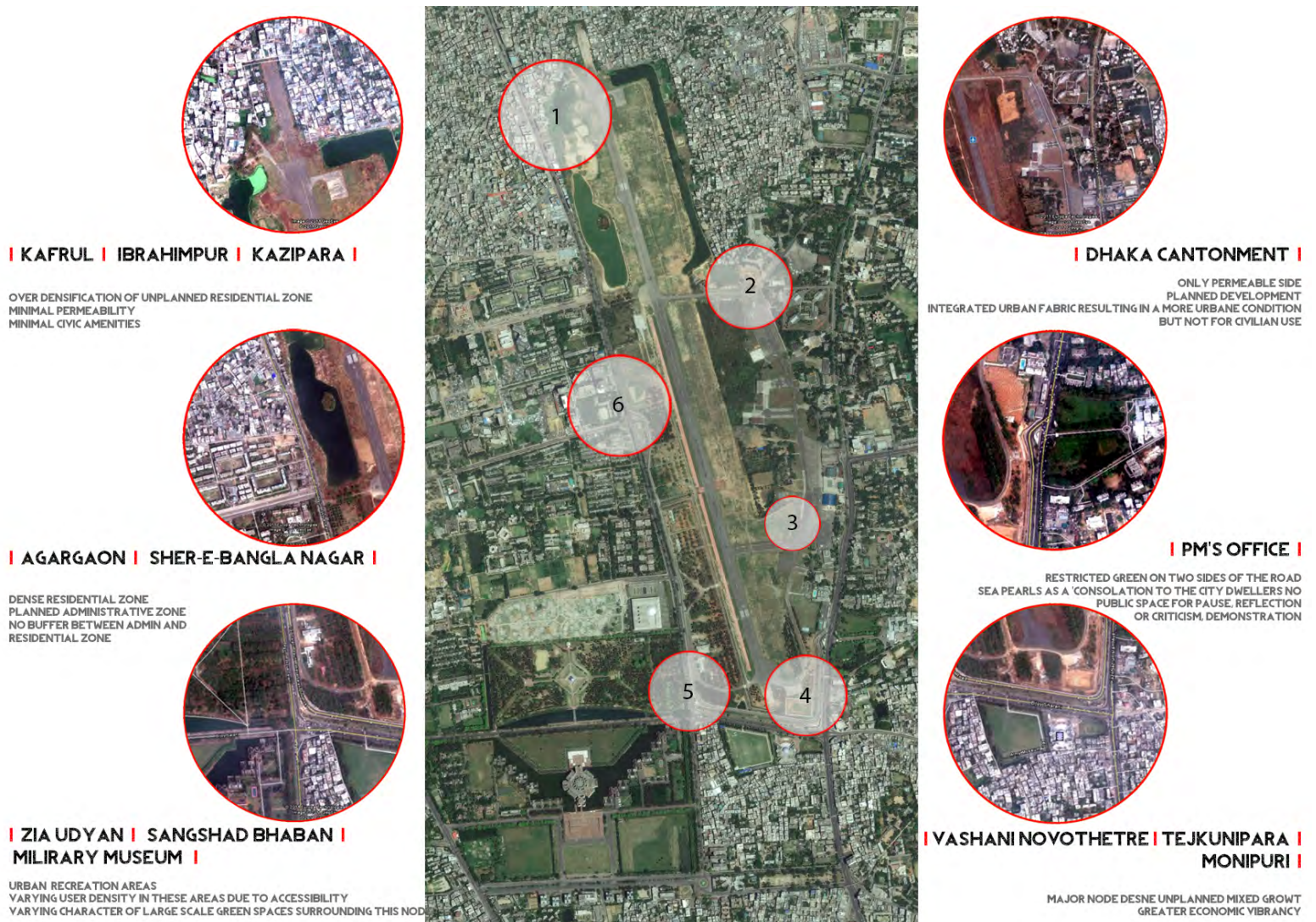


Fig 2.3 : Site Surroundings, Source : Author

2.6 Detail Area Planning

Govt. land use proposal for old airport :

- Recreational Space
- Park, Lake
- Former runway would become Parade Ground
- Parade Gallery

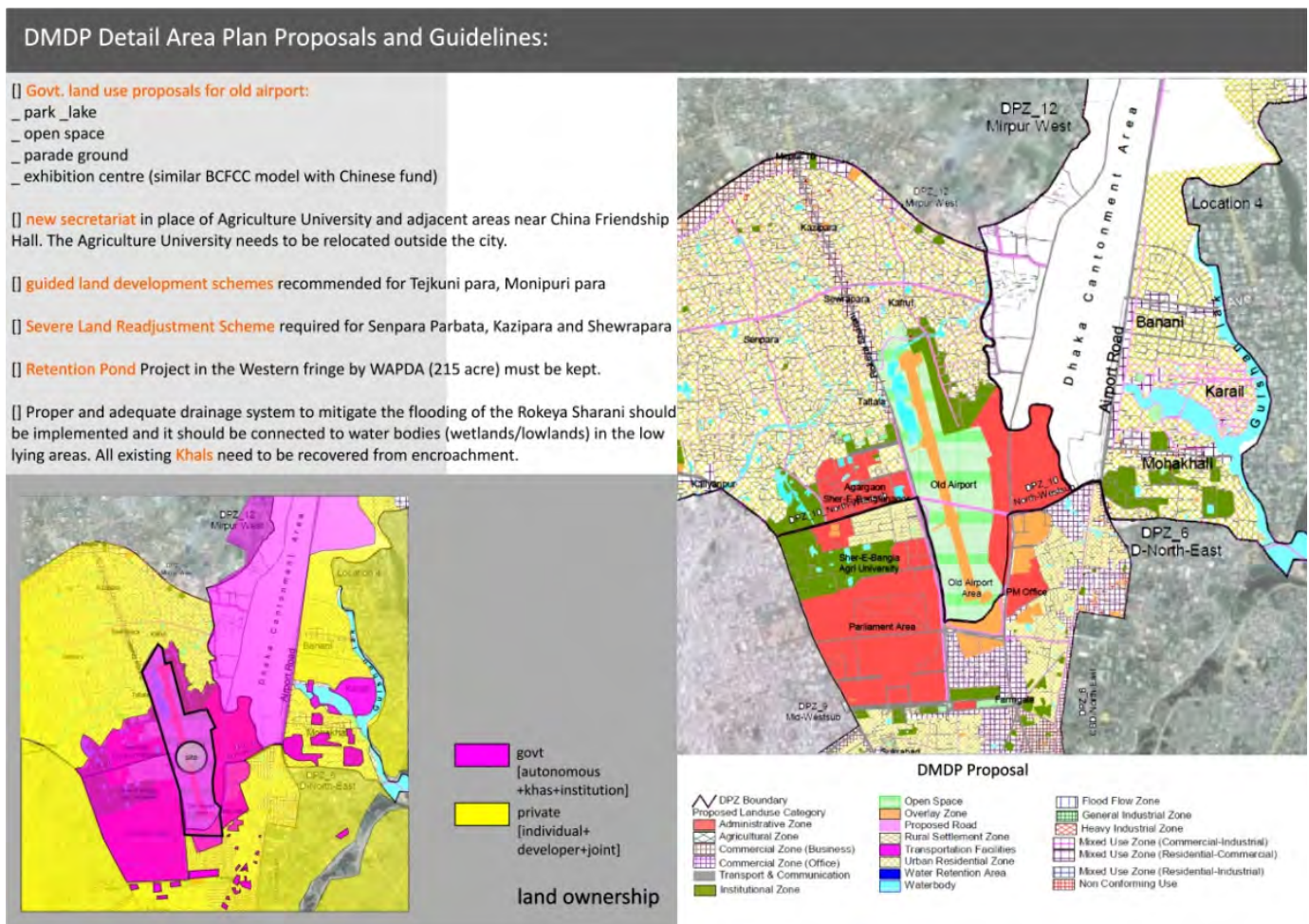


Fig 2.3 : DAP, Source : Tanzil Idmam

CHAPTER 03 :

Literature Review

3.1 What is Pseudo-Democracy?

3.2 How Democracy can turn into Pseudo-Democracy?

3.3 What Distributes power in a Democracy

3.4 Constitution of Bangladesh

3.5 Citizen Organizations / Civil Society

3.1 What is Pseudo-Democracy? :

Pseudo- democracy, also called a partial democracy, low intensity democracy, empty democracy or hybrid regime, is a governing system in which, although elections take place, citizens are cut off from knowledge about the activities of those who exercise real power because of the lack of civil liberties. It is not an 'open society'. There are many countries "that are categorized as neither "free" nor "not free," but as "probably free," falling somewhere between democratic and nondemocratic regimes." This may be because a constitution limiting government powers exists, but its liberties are ignored, or because an adequate legal constitutional framework of liberties does not exist.



Fig 3.1 : Pseudo-Democracy, Source : Author

3.2 How Democracy can turn into Pseudo-Democracy :

Pseudo-Democracy is the resultant of the imbalance of power in between the governance and the governed. Democracy distributes power to the government and citizens through the laws and articles of constitution and constitution balances power between these two bodies. When the citizens are unable to exercise their rights due to ignorance, or unwillingness, these rights remains idle, which gives the government the chance to exploit citizens rights. This situation creates imbalance in the distribution of power in democracy. As a result, Government and its institutes become much more powerful than the citizens, which is a pseudo-Democratic condition.



Fig 3.2: Pseudo-Democracy, Source : Author

3.3 What Distributes power in a Democracy:

In a Democracy, power is distributed through constitution. Constitution is the sacred book, where the rights and the limits of power is determined in a state. A constitution is a set of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organization is governed. These rules together make up, i.e. constitute, what the entity is. When these principles are written down into a single document or set of legal documents, those documents may be said to embody a written constitution; if they are written down in a single comprehensive document, it is said to embody a codified constitution.



Fig 3.3, Source : Author

3.4 Constitution of Bangladesh:

The Constitution of Bangladesh is the supreme law of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. It was adopted on November 4, 1972. The constitution establishes a unitary state and a Westminster form of unicameral parliamentary democracy. It was originally written in English and was not translated into Bengali until 1987. Bangladesh's Constitution and all laws are now in both English and Bengali.

The document's original drafters, notably Dr. Kamal Hossain, have called for major reforms to bring it in line with the 21st-century.

There are pro-government law and articles in the constitution that empower the Government, and with that power government run its activities, at the same time, the constitution empower the citizens to counter the power provided to the government. Therefore, when the citizens do not apply their power, the balance of power gets diminished.

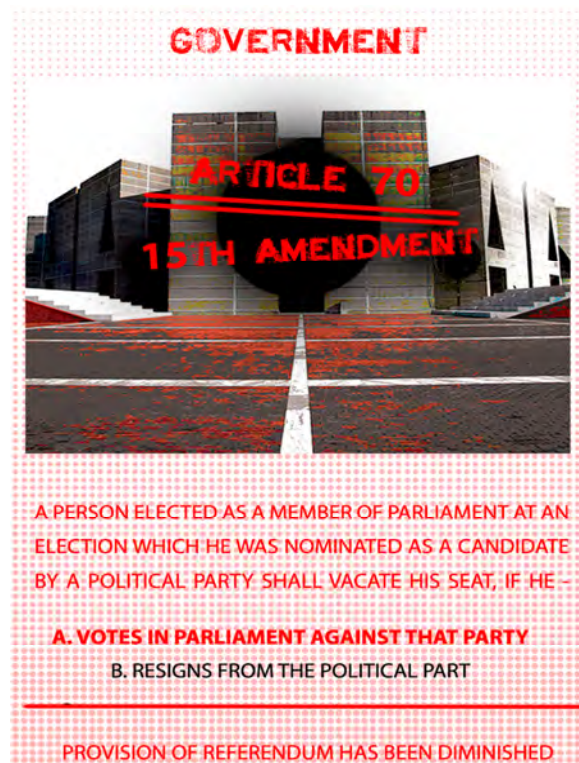


Fig 3.4 : Article 70, Source : Author

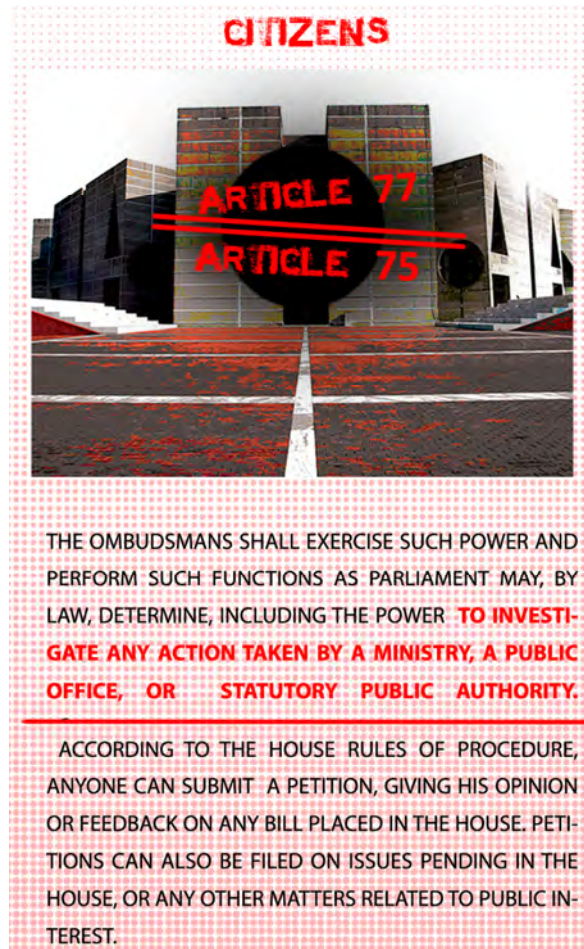


Fig 3.5: Article 75 and 77, Source : Author

3.5 Citizen Organizations / Civil Society :

Civil society is the "aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens." Civil society includes the family and the private sphere, referred to as the "third sector" of society, distinct from government and business. Century Lexicon defines civil society as 1) the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens or 2) individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government.

Sometimes the term *civil society* is used in the more general sense of "the elements such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, etc, that make up a democratic society



Fig 3.6 : Citizen Organizations, Source : Author

3.6 Basic Functions of Citizen Organizations :

The literature on relations between civil society and democratic political society have their roots in early classical liberal writings like those of Alexis de Tocqueville. However they were developed in significant ways by 20th century theorists like Gabriel Almond and Sidney, who identified the role of political culture in a democratic order as vital.

They argued that the political element of political organizations facilitates better awareness and a more informed citizenry, who make better voting choices, participate in politics, and hold government more accountable as a result. The statutes of these organizations have often been considered micro-constitutions because they accustom participants to the formalities of democratic decision making.

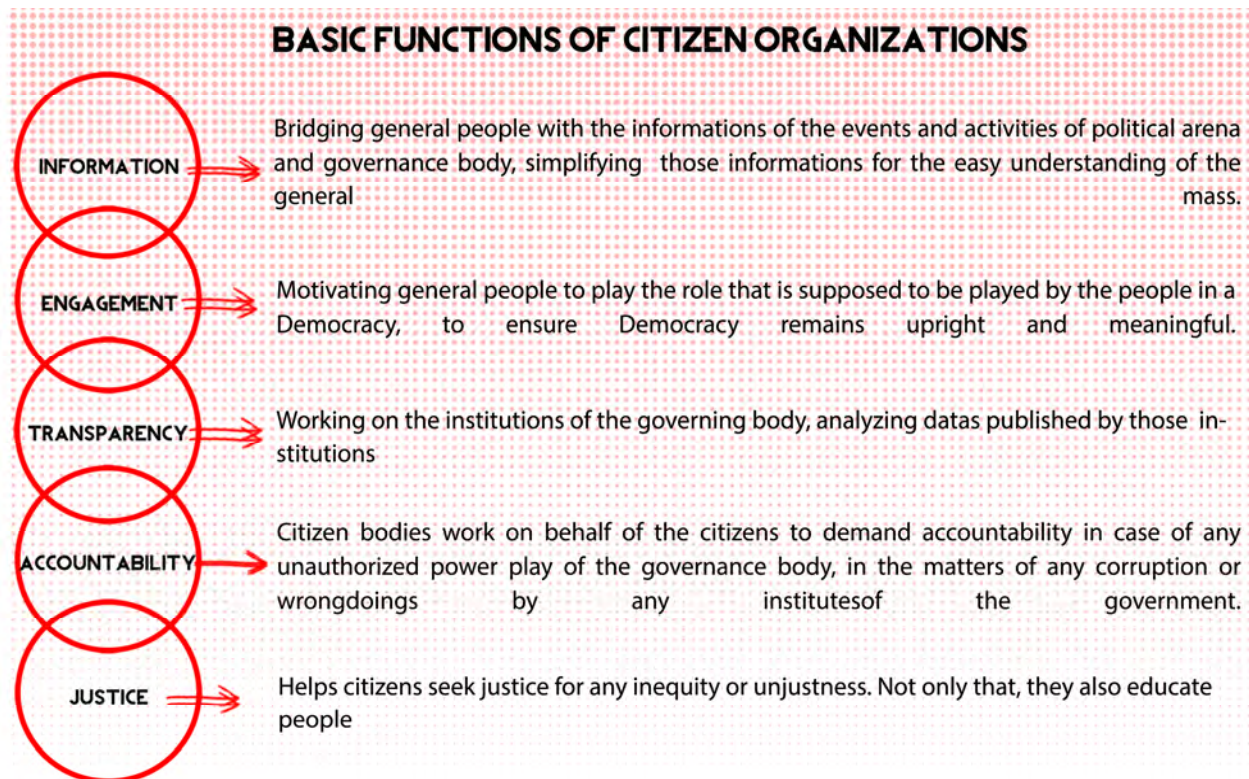


Fig 3.7 : Basic Functions of Citizen Organizations, Source : Author

3.7 Citizen Organizations of our country and their activities :

CITIZENS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE
AIN O SHALISH KENDRO
DEMOCRACY WATCH
ELECTION WORKING GROUP
THE ELECTORAL INTEGRITY PROJECT
BNWLA
BELA
TIB
O INITIATIVE

Fig 3.7 : Prominent Citizen Organizations in Bangladesh, Source : Author



Fig 3.8 : Activities of Citizen Organizations in Bangladesh, Source : Author

CHAPTER 04:

Case Studies

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Case study 01_Tiananmen Square, Beijing

4.3 Case Study 02_Museum of Australian Democracy

4.4 Case Study 03_The Open Parliament of Albania

4.1 Introduction:

Since, it is a self-developed project, projects that are programmatically exact the same couldn't be found. Therefore, in this chapter, those projects are discussed, which have inspired me in some degrees, for their ideas, formal and spatial quality.

4.2 Case study 01_Tiananmen Square, Beijing:

It is commonly understood that Tiananmen Square was the undisputed choice of the students for the demonstration venue, and this understanding is based on the assumption that the square was already a place of symbolic importance in Beijing in the early 20th century. At the time of the May Fourth Movement, however, the square was not as important a public space in Beijing as Central Park (Zhongyang gongyuan) or the New China Gate (Xinhuamen) of the Central and South Lakes (Zhongnanhai, the residence of the President). Tianan Gate was a site neither for popular demonstrations nor for official government ceremonies. The empty space was only the intersection of the newly opened up north–south and east–west axial roads in Beijing.



Fig 4.1 : The “empty space” and ruined Tianan Gate in early republican Beijing. Source: Jiu Jin Da Guan (1992)

As a political symbol, the importance of Tianan Gate, the main gate of the Forbidden City, was not comparable to the importance of Front Gate, which was located at the hub of Beijing's transportation network and appeared grand and magnificent to the common people (Bredon, 1982, p. 21).

Tianan Gate was located inside the Imperial City and gave onto a secluded palace square that was forbidden to the public. Neither was the gate regarded as the

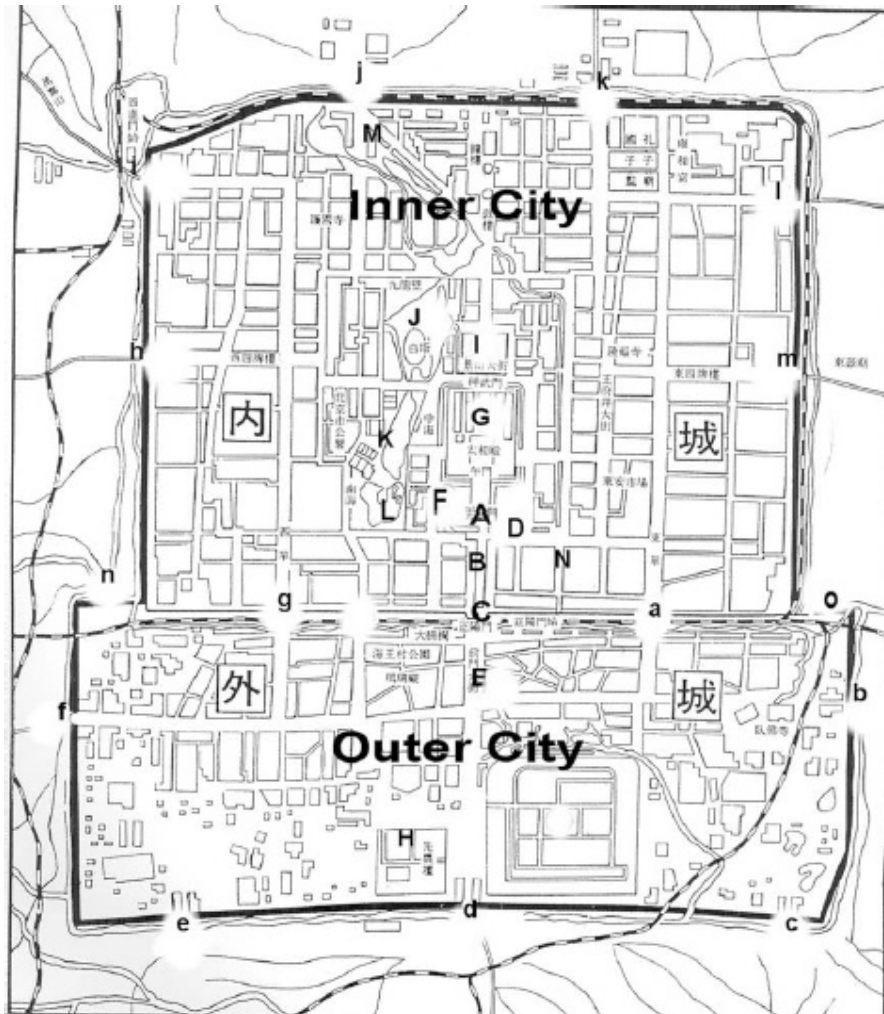


Fig 4.2 : Beijing in early 20th century: City walls, gates, new roads and public parks. Places of importance:

A: Tianan Gate; B: Chinese Gate; C: Front Gate; D: Changan Avenue; E: Front Gate Main Street; F: Central Park; G: The Forbidden City; H: Altar of Agriculture Park; I: Scenic Hill; J: North Lake; K: Central and South Lakes; L: New China Gate; M: Lake of Ten Temples; N: Legation Quarter

Source: Jiu Jin Da Guan (1992)

“gate of the nation” in imperial China. The “gate of the nation,” which was situated midway between Tianan Gate and Front Gate, was the main entrance to the Imperial City and was called Great Qing Gate in the Qing dynasty, and Chinese Gate in republican China (Dong, 2003, p.27). On the eve of the demonstration on May 4, Tianan Gate was a gate of only secondary importance compared to Front Gate or Chinese Gate.



Fig 4.3 :An oil painting portraying the May Fourth demonstration in front of Tianan Gate.
Source: www.csdzyx.com



Fig 4.4 : Tiananmen Square in 1990s.
Source: Lu (2000)

4.3 Case Study 02_Museum of Australian Democracy:

Housed in one of Australia's most-loved buildings, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House brings the journey of Australian democracy to life—presenting its past, present and possible futures.

Provides a range of innovative exhibitions, tours and public programs that challenge and inspire. There are also special activities and spaces for children to explore.



Fig 4.5 : Old Parliament House in Autumn. Museum of Australian Democracy collection.

Source : <http://moadoph.gov.au/>

Old Parliament House was the home of the Federal Parliament from 1927 to 1988. During this time, great changes took place in Australian social and political life. This is the building in which democracy matured in Australia. It was here the nation was shaped.

The building was designed by John Smith Murdoch; the first Commonwealth government architect. He was asked to design a 'provisional' building intended to serve as a parliament for 50 years. Around the building grew the new Australian capital city of Canberra. The need for a national capital arose when the Australian colonies united to form the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901

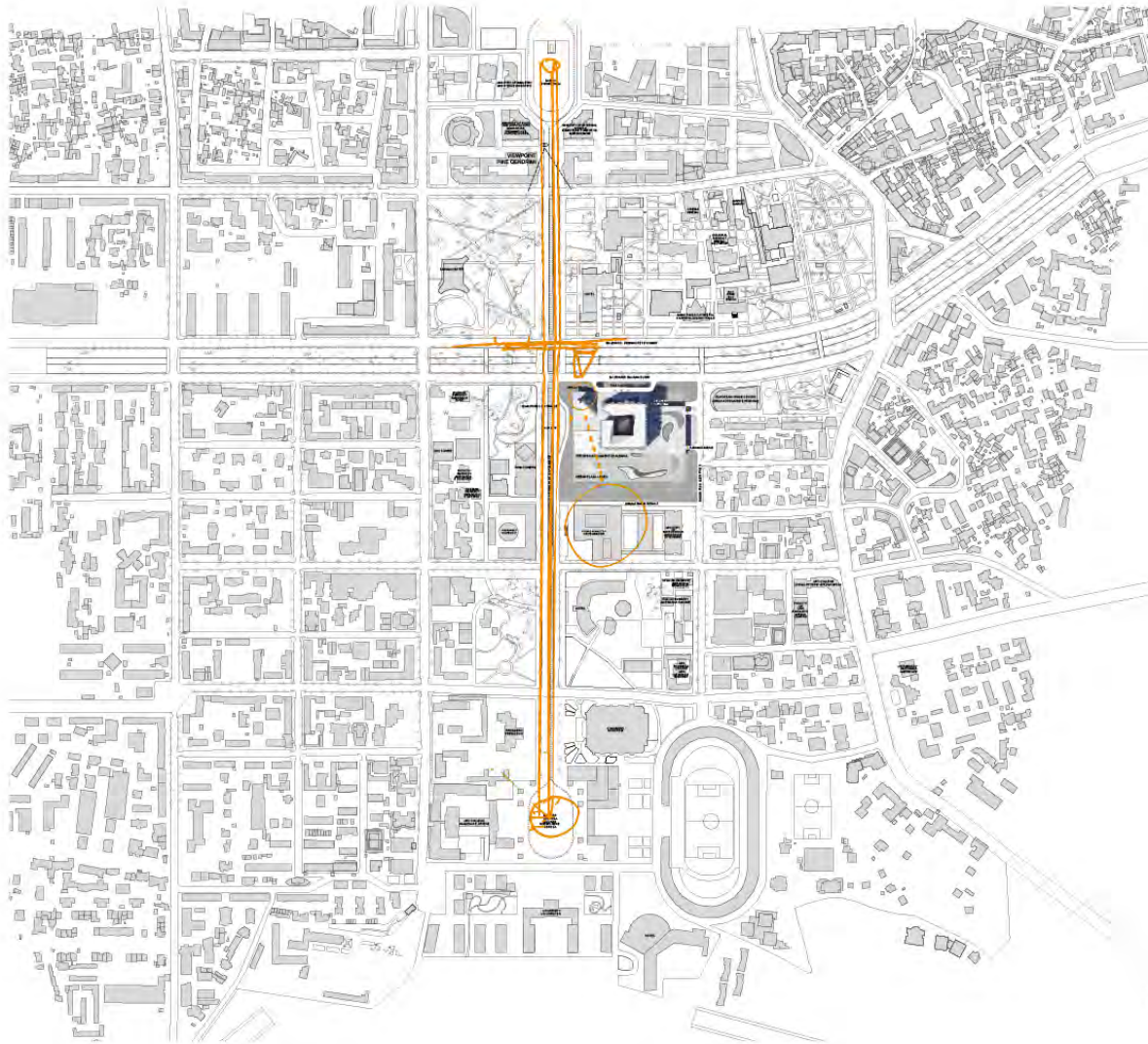
Parliament House was like a town within the city of Canberra. It had its own library, post office, barber, carpentry workshop, bars and dining room. By the 1980s, thousands of people worked in the building including politicians, parliamentary staff, Hansard reporters, journalists, dining room and bar staff. During its life as a working parliament, this building was the setting for many of Australia's major political events. Debates that influenced the future of the nation took place here, key decisions were taken, political careers were made and ended.



Fig 4.6 :Galleries Museum of Australian Democracy collection.
Source : <http://moadoph.gov.au/>

4.4 Case Study 03_The Open Parliament of Albania:

As the future political center of the Albanian Republic, the Open Parliament of Albania creates an outstanding architectural landmark in one of the main parts of Tirana's urban fabric. Situated



Site plan

Fig 4.7 : Siteplan, Source: <http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>

The design incorporates fundamental democratic values such as openness, transparency and public co-determination. The simultaneity of competing political concepts within a democratic society is translated into the design concept: Different building elements are not opposed, but coexist in one building ensemble with a contemporary aesthetic that allows visualizing new functions and meanings.

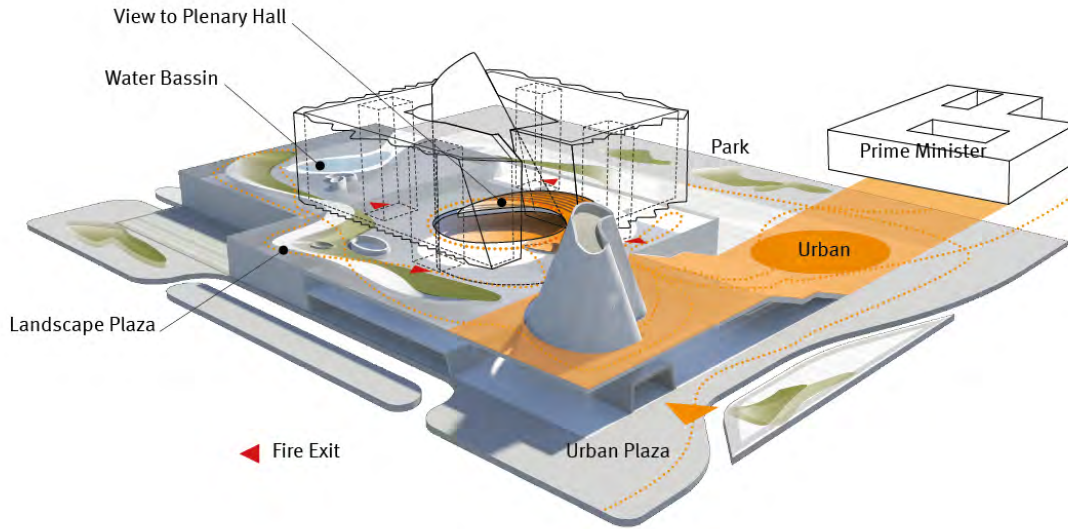


Fig 4.8 , Source: <http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>

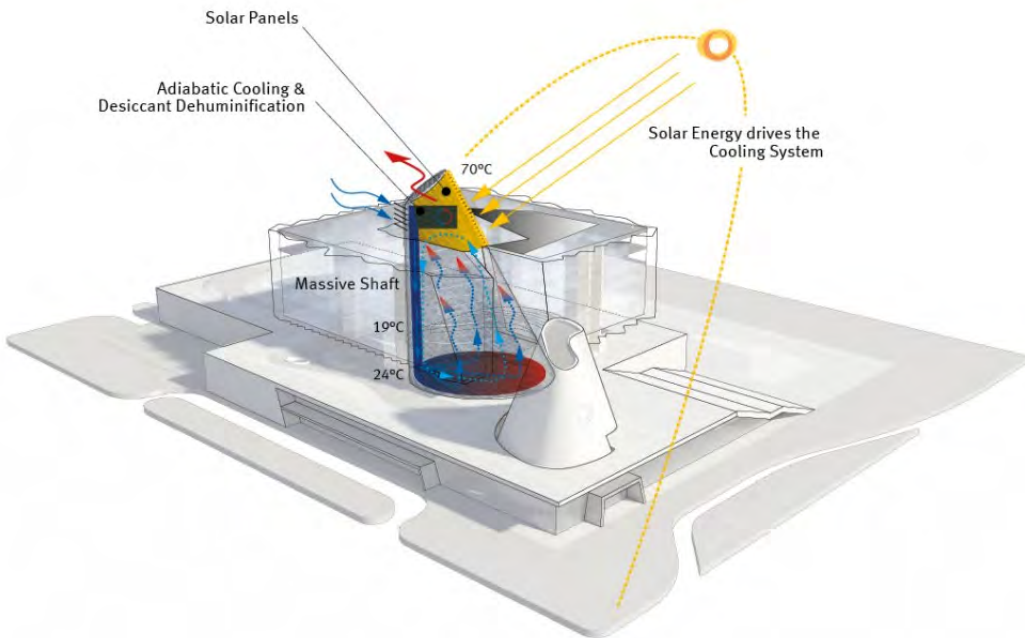


Fig 4.9 : Climate response, Source: <http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>

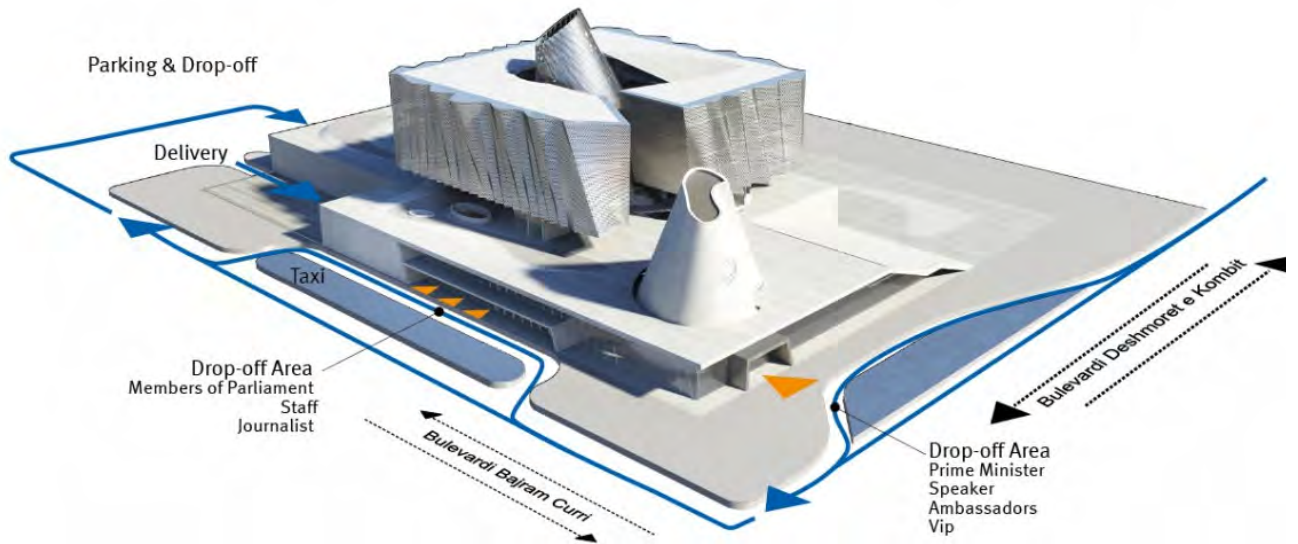


Fig 4.9.1 : Connection, Source: <http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>



Fig 4.9.2 : Elevation, Source: <http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>

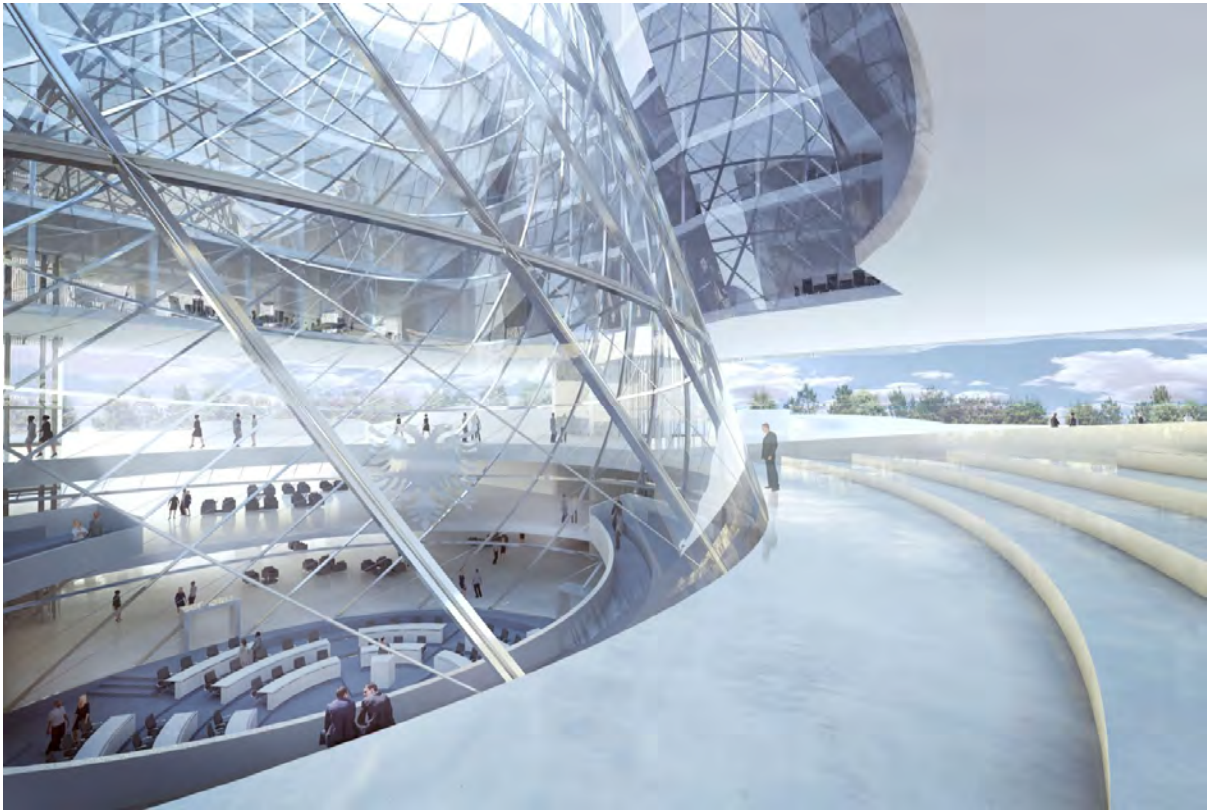


Fig 4.9.3 : Interior, Source: <http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>

CHAPTER 05:

Programs and Development

5.1 Proposed Programs and Rationale

5.2 Self Developed Programs

5.3 Other Proposed Programs

5.4 Area Calculation

5.1 Proposed Programs and Rationale

As the project is unique and unprecedented in its purpose, some of the programs are self-developed and the others are usual. Programs of this project can be described in the following manner :

5.2 Self Developed Programs

Four Galleries :

Four galleries that represents the four core ideas of Democracy, which are also known as the 'Four Pillars of Democracy"-

- **Freedom-** Gallery of political arts : This gallery symbolizes the first pillar of Democracy- Freedom. Freedom of thought and expression. Nothing more can be more expressive than arts. So, this gallery is dedicated to the political arts and installations, that respond to the current political situations.
- **Equity-** Gallery of Constitutional rights : This is the gallery which will contain and explain the constitutional rights through the help of info graphic and other medias. This gallery is dedicated to the second pillar of Democracy- Equity, as constitution as an idea was created to establish equity in the society.
- **Justice-** Gallery of Extra-Judicial acts : Citizens must be aware of the extra-judicial acts and how they are deprived of their right to have justice. This Gallery will exhibit the examples of extra-judicial activities, for example- cross-fire, extra-judicial captivity, breaching of judicial decisions in governance etc. Justice is the third pillar of Democracy, and this gallery is dedicated to exhibit-'injustice' to educate citizens about justice.
- **Representation-**Gallery of manifestos and political promises: Representation is the fourth pillar of Democracy. This galley will exhibit the manifestos and will explain them to citizens through displays and info graphics, both printed and digital. Political parties come into government by making promises through manifesto. It is the right of the citizens to get the opportunities to review the party manifestos and make educated decisions.

Petition Gallery- This project will often organize petitions for the citizens to participate in the parliamentary decisions through parliamentary petition committee. To aware, explain and popularize the cause of the petitions, a petition gallery will be required.

LED Action Panels- Giant LED panels cladding the facade, will display motion-graphics and info-graphics to aware citizens. Not only that, these panels will also attract people and will create vibrant urban spaces.

Assembly Hall- An assembly hall will be required for the members of citizen organizations, prominent citizens, citizen representatives to house meetings, conferences, conversations. This will house the meetings of the Citizen Arena administration.

5.3 Other Proposed Programs :

Legal Aid Service : Voluntary lawyers service will be provided from the citizen organizations to help citizens get justice and for this service consultation rooms will be needed.

Civic Education : Civic education is essential to educate groups and communities to build up common voice in order to be heard. To train groups of citizens, multi-purpose spaces are provided.

Auditorium : An auditorium will be required to hold seminars, indoor cultural events, to house film-festivals etc. This will also attract citizens, and will help the project to be a part of the cultural life of the city.

Canteen : A canteen will be needed for the administration personals, and visitors that will come to participate in civic education and legal consultation.



Fig 5.1 : Program Description, Source: Author

5.4 Area Calculation :

Programs	Area
Admin	10,200 sqft
Assembly hall	5028 sqft
Freedom-Gallery of Political arts	26,200 sqft
Equity- Gallery of Constitution	16,300 sqft
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Chapter 06

Design Development

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Connecting the axis

6.3 Concept Development

6.4 Form Development

6.3 Programmatic Layout

6.4 Final Design Drawings

6.1 Introduction

As the site is a part of a bigger urban picture of Dhaka city, it was required to deal with site first. A great significance of the site is that it is one of the last remaining urban landscape. So, the greeneries of the site has a major importance. Not only that, the surrounding areas of the site also demand connections through the site. So, designing the site's access, links through the site, as a whole the total landscape of the site had to be considered first. Then, the form was developed according to the concept.

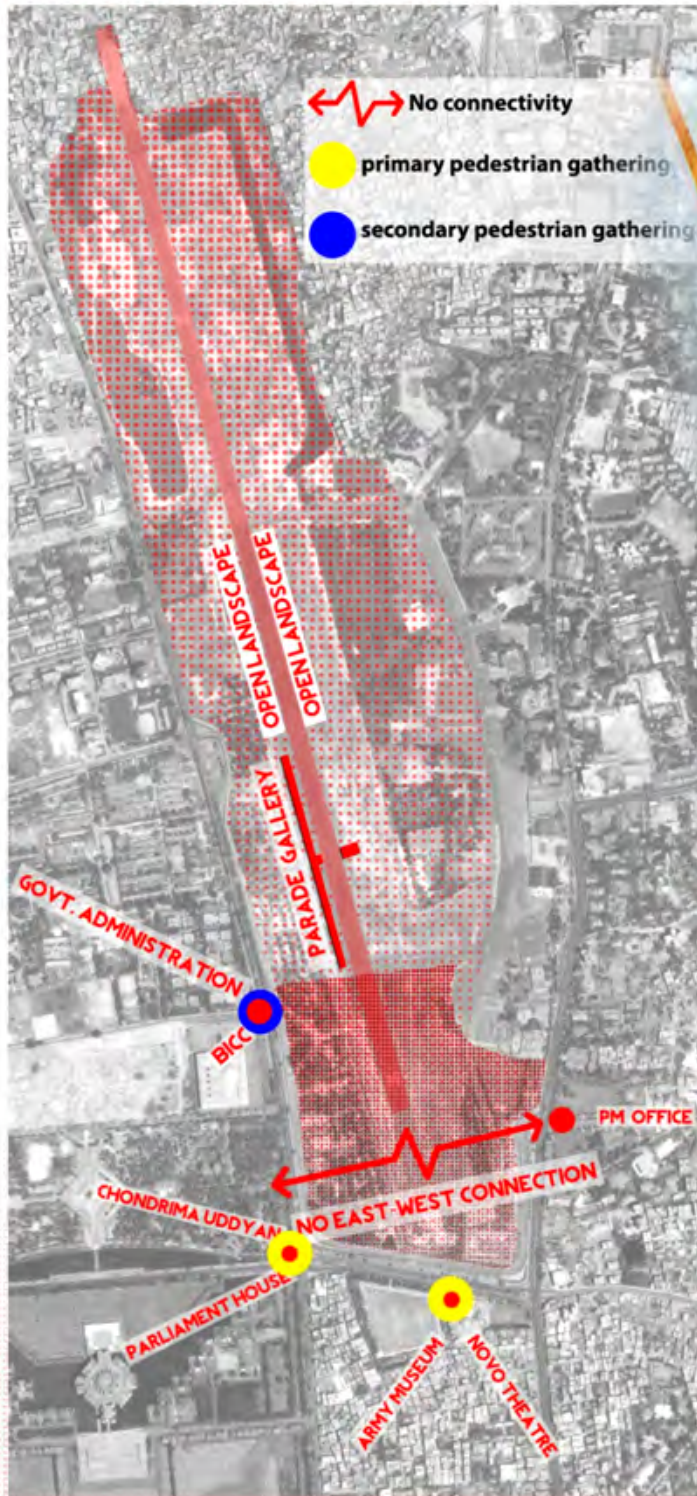
6.2 Connecting the axis

The site is oriented to one major axis, which is defined by the 'Parade Path' (old runway) and the 'Parade Path' is further marked significantly by the surrounding vegetation created as buffer layer for the former use of the 'Parade Path' as a runway. The 'Parade Path' creates an axial aperture towards the site from the rest of the old airport.

The site has major public places on its south, east and west, but it lacks a connection between the east and west, which makes it difficult for the pedestrians to move from east to west, as they have to go around the ninety acres of the site.

So, the primary task was to connect the east and west right through the main axis of the site, creating a secondary axis.

IMMEDIATE SITE SURROUNDING



AXIAL APERTURE



Fig 6.2.1 : Connections, and Greeneries; Source : Author

6.3 Concept Development

'Four Pillars of Democracy'

The concept of the project is developed from the very basic principles of Democracy, which are popularly known as "The Four Pillars of Democracy : Freedom, Equity, Representation and Justice". Democracy actually stands on these four core ideas. Therefore, for this project these four pillars became the base of the formal development.

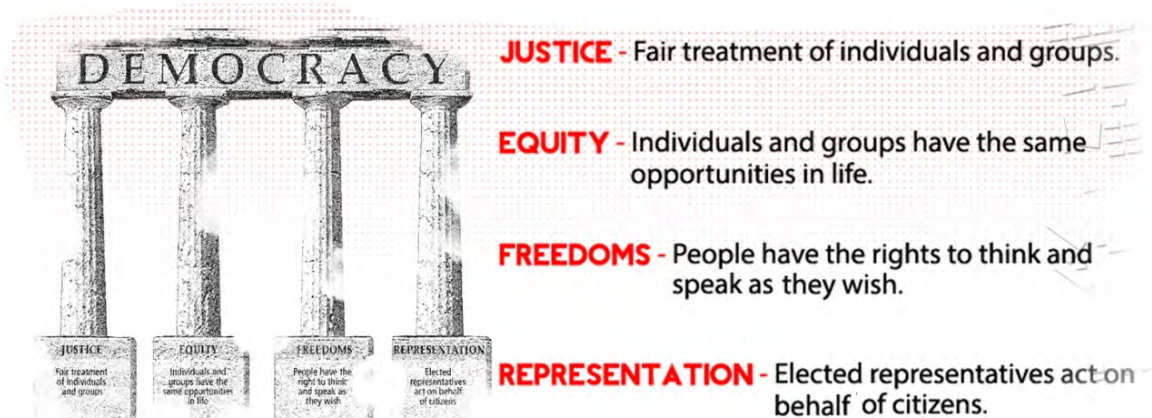


Fig 6.3.1; Source : Author

Many political theorists believe and indicate that these founding ideas of Democracy actually originates from enlightenment ideas based constitution "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen", the first ever constitute that includes all men as equals and indifferent to all the citizens regardless of color, gender or class.

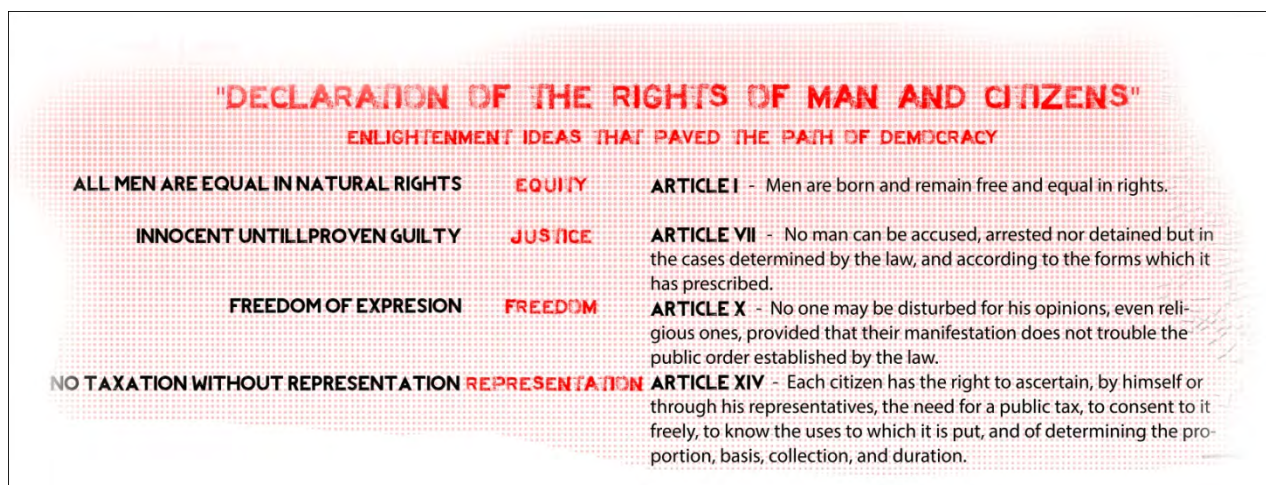


Fig 6.3.2; Source : Author

The objective was to develop a really simple form from a simple concept, so that it can be graspable by citizens from all aspects of life. So, these four pillars are simply taken as forms, and arranged in such a manner that it creates a gateway.

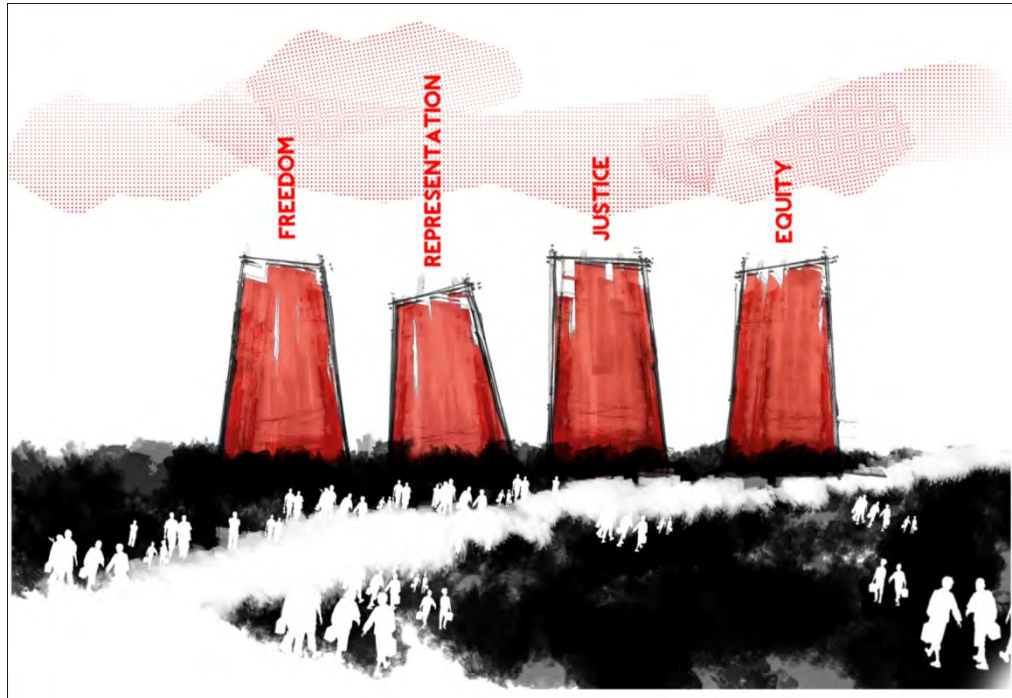


Fig 6.3.3; Source : Author

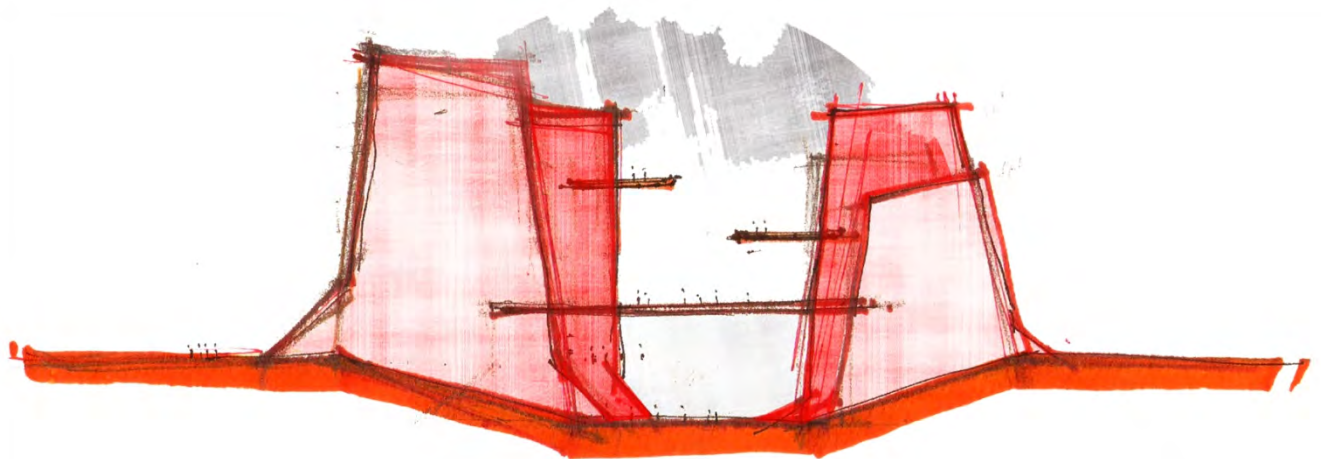
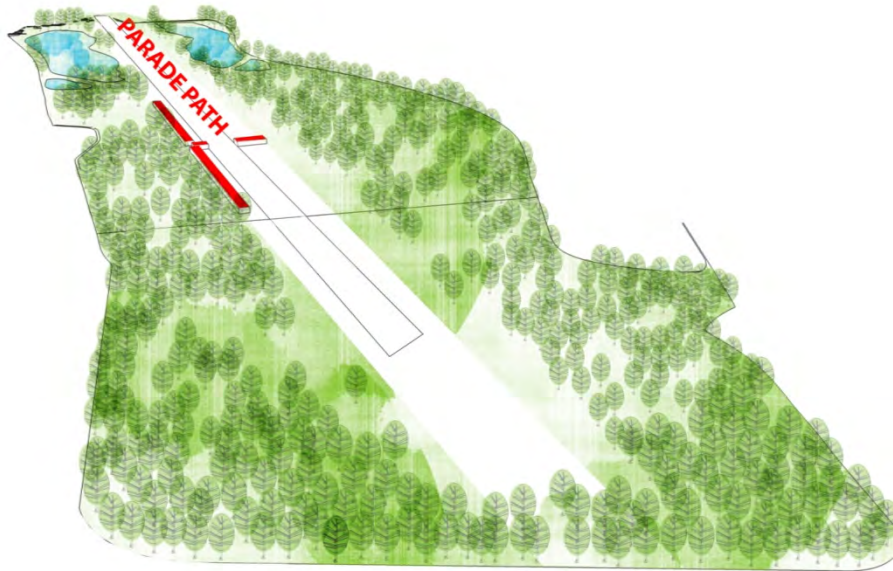


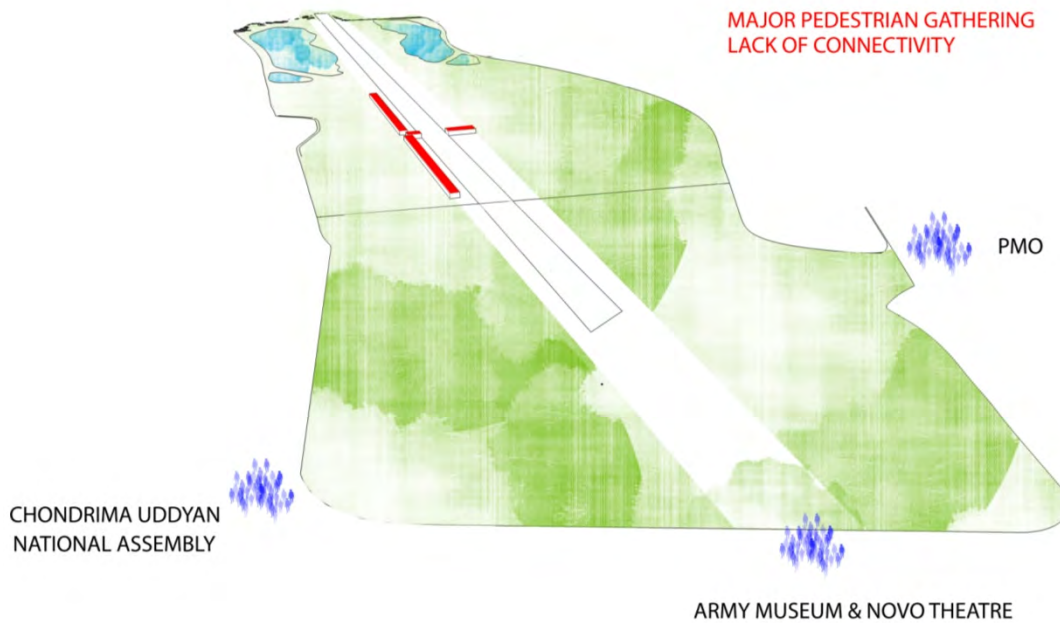
Fig 6.3.4; Source : Author

6.4 Form Development

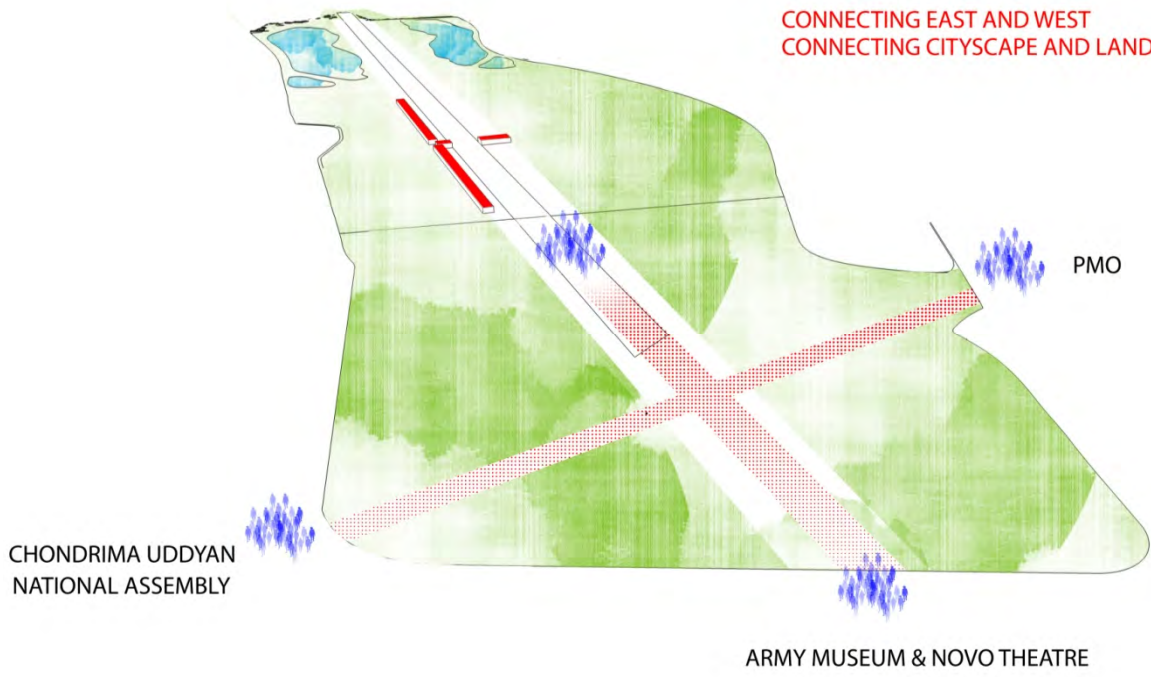
The form is directly generated from "The Pillars of Democracy", Placing them as a Gateway on the point where two axis cross, that expresses itself as conjunction between the lush landscape and the cityscape, a point of termination or beginning to the 'Parade Path'.



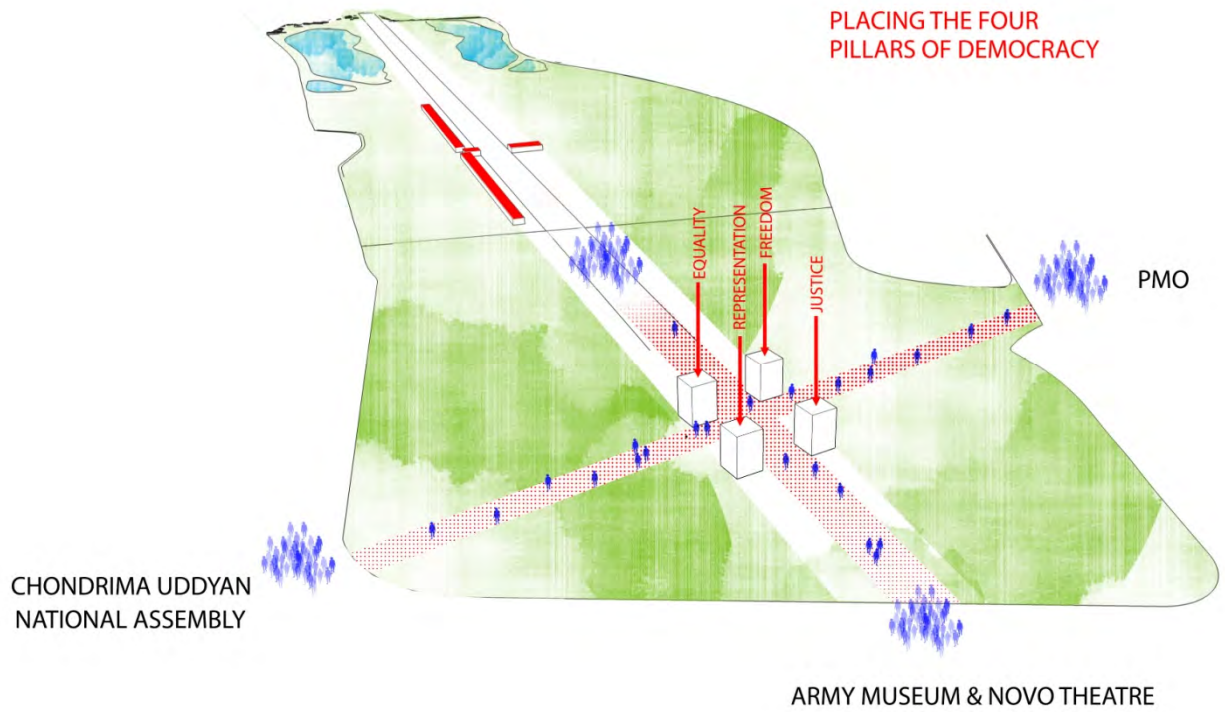
Vegetation creates Axial Aperture

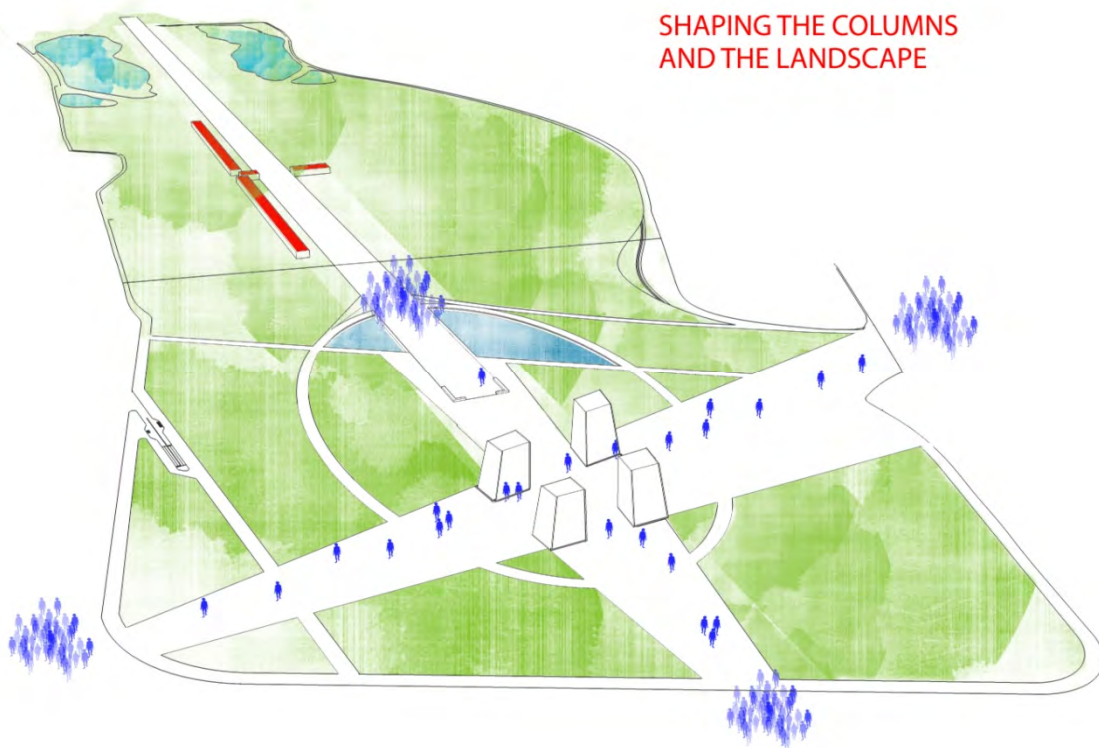
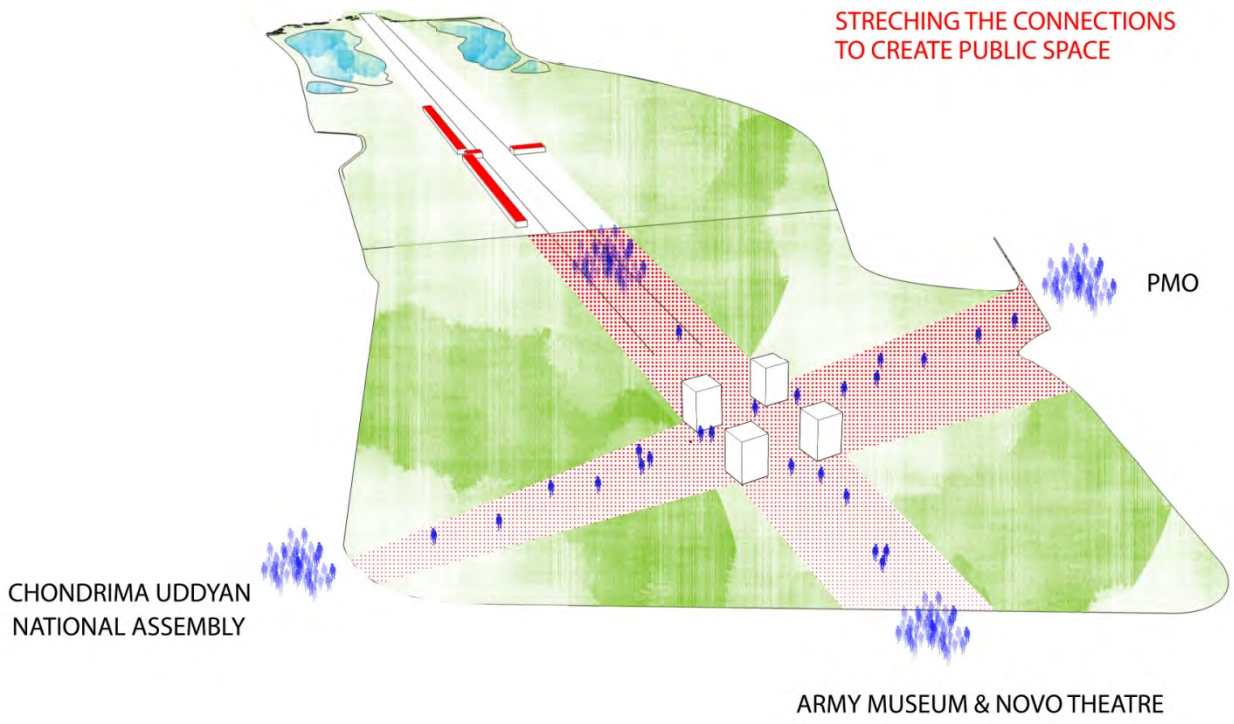


CONNECTING EAST AND WEST
CONNECTING CITYSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE

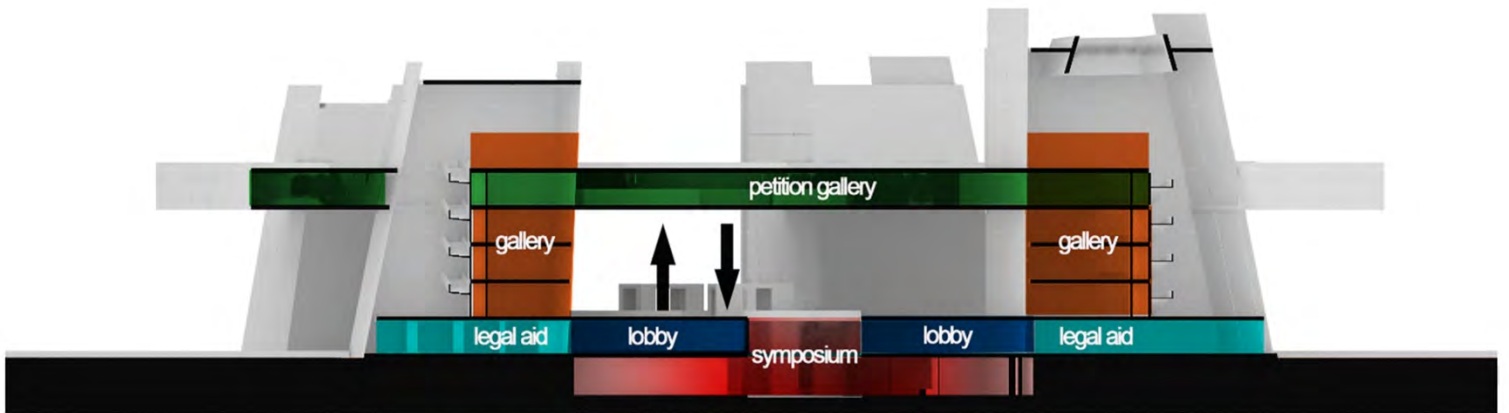
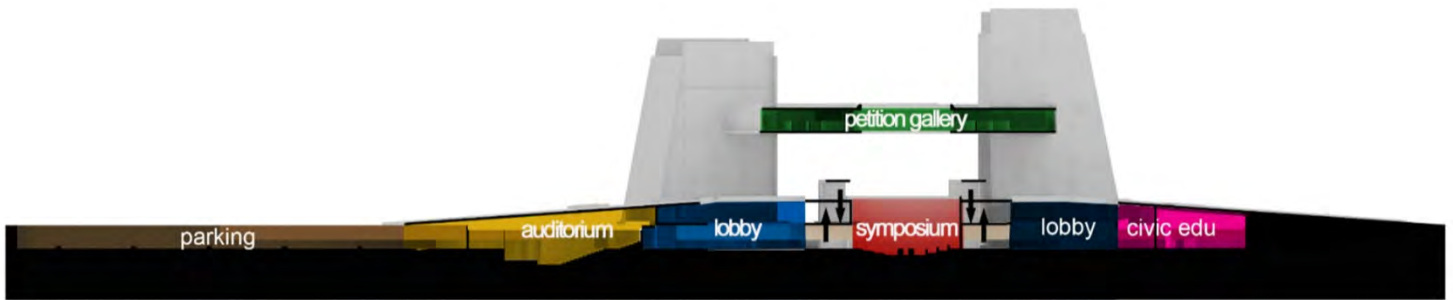


PLACING THE FOUR
PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY

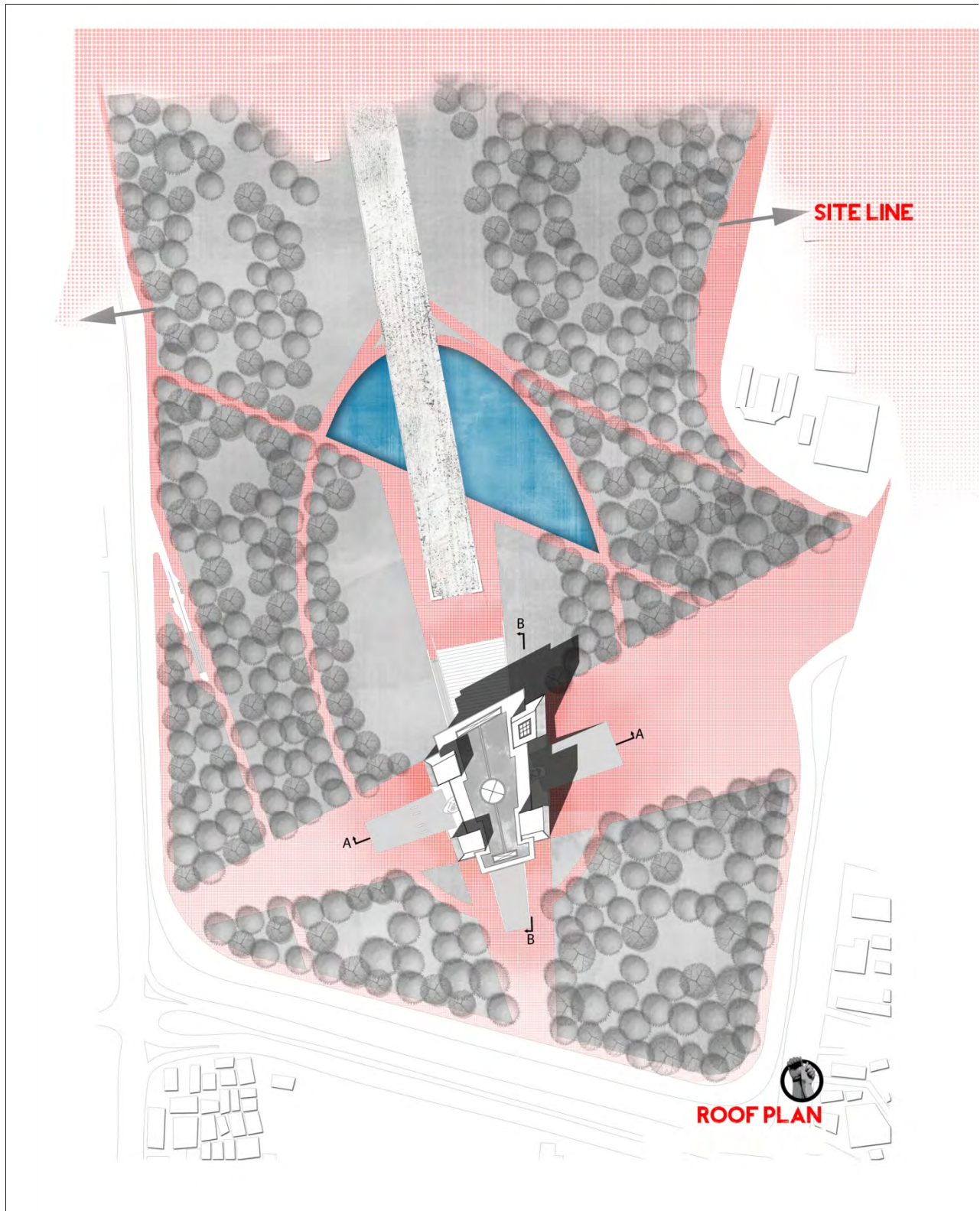




6.3 Programmatic Layout

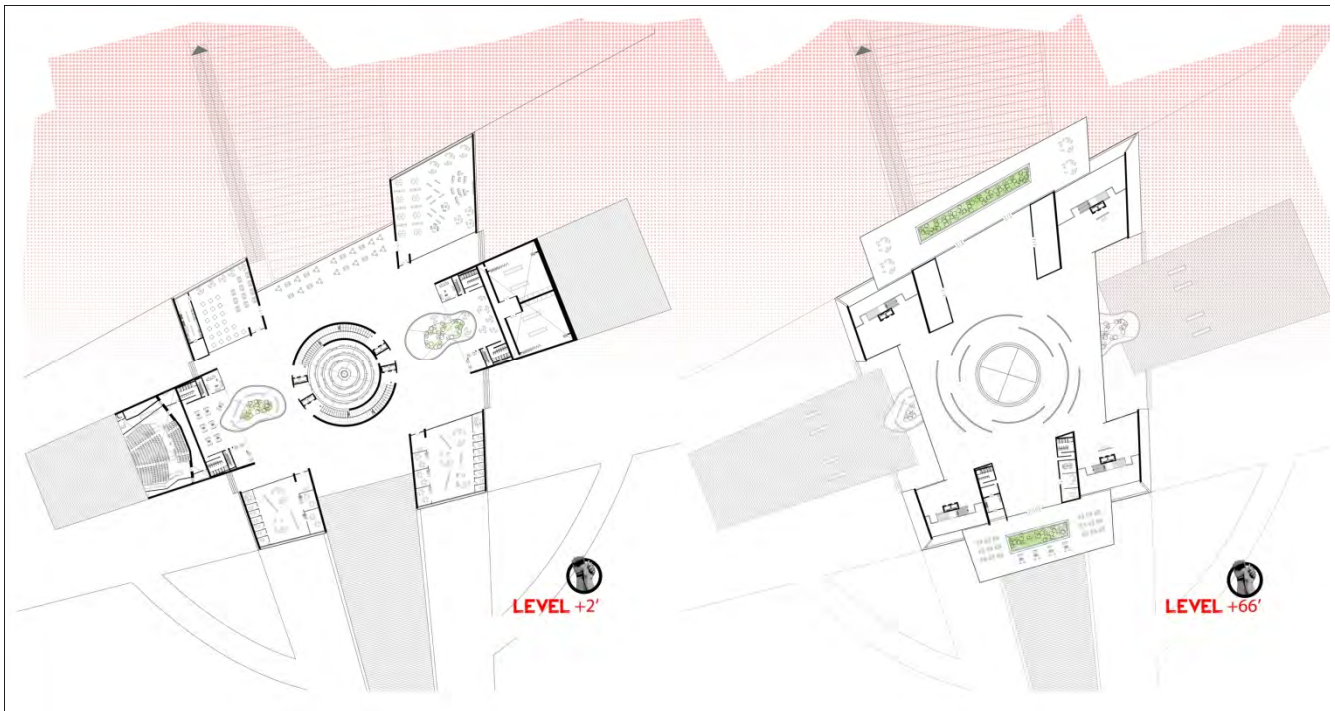
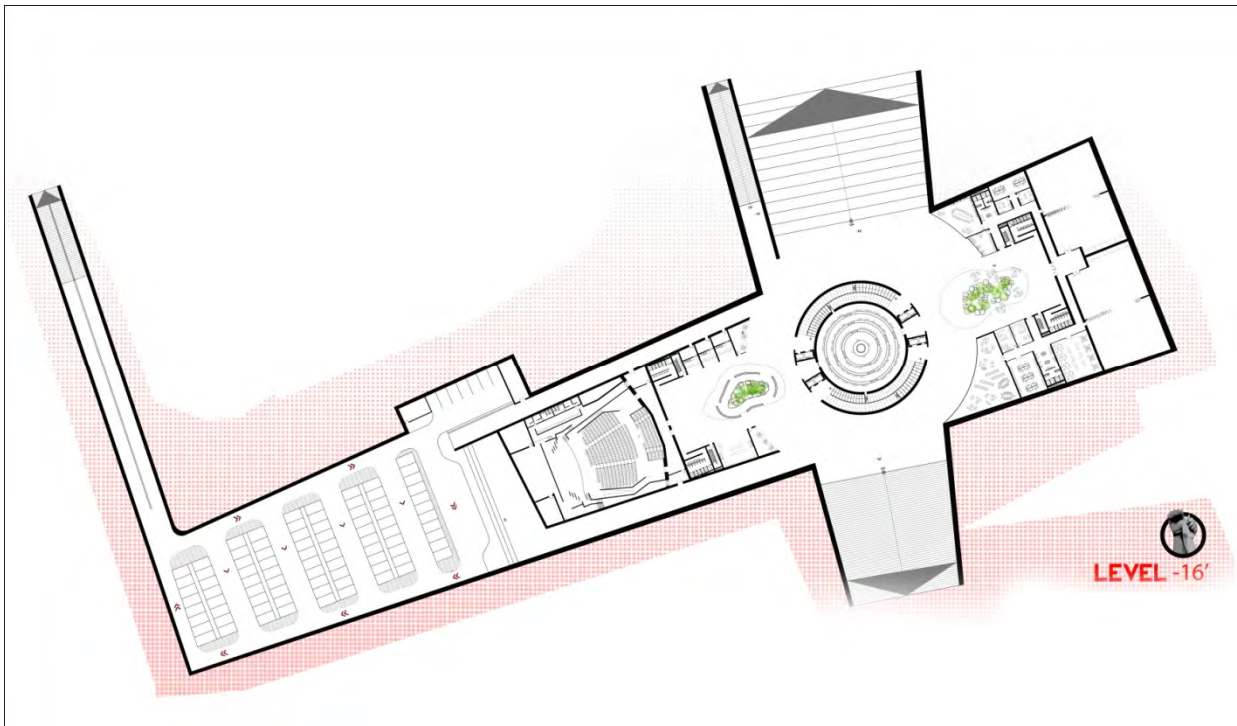


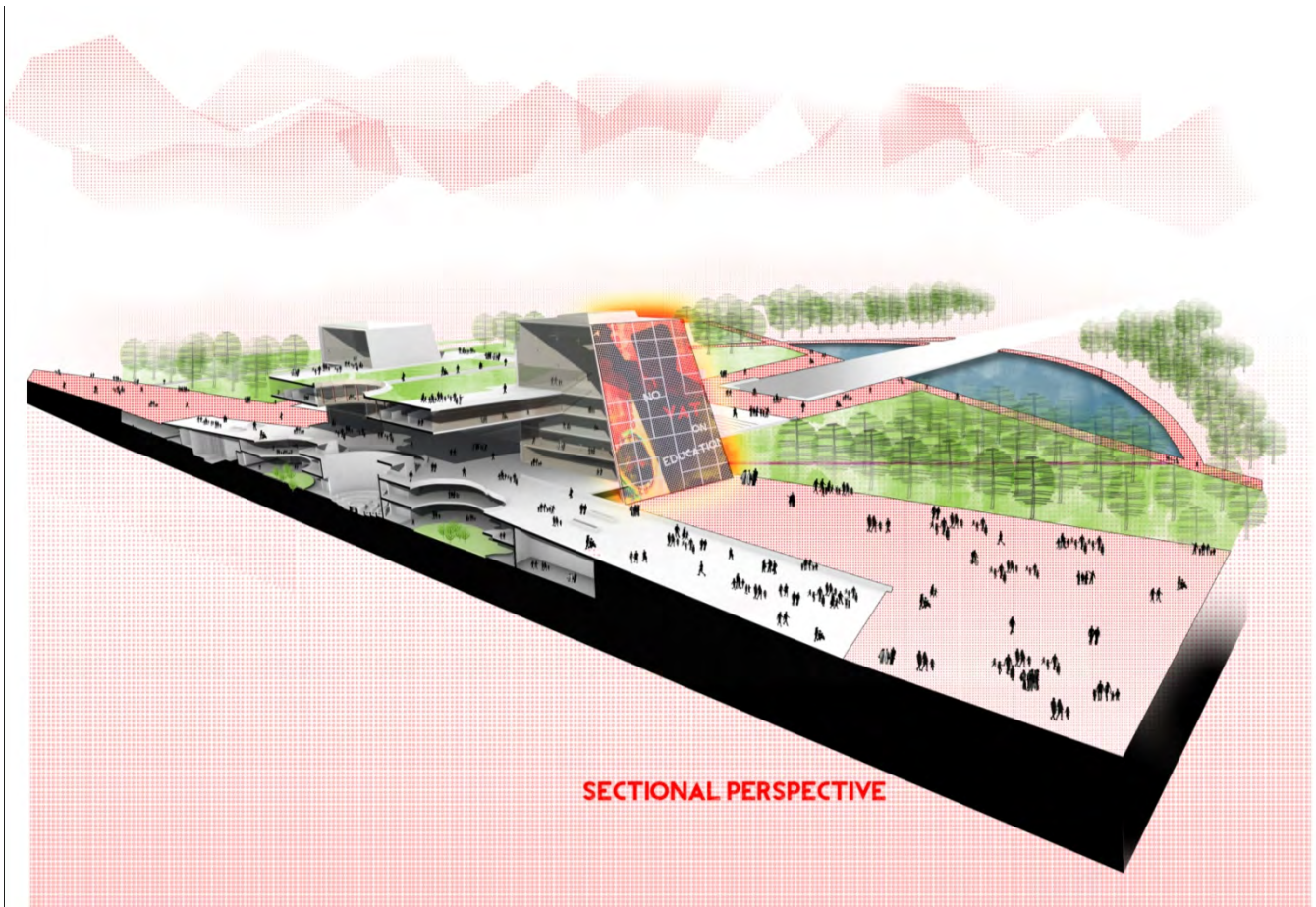
6.4 Final Design Drawings

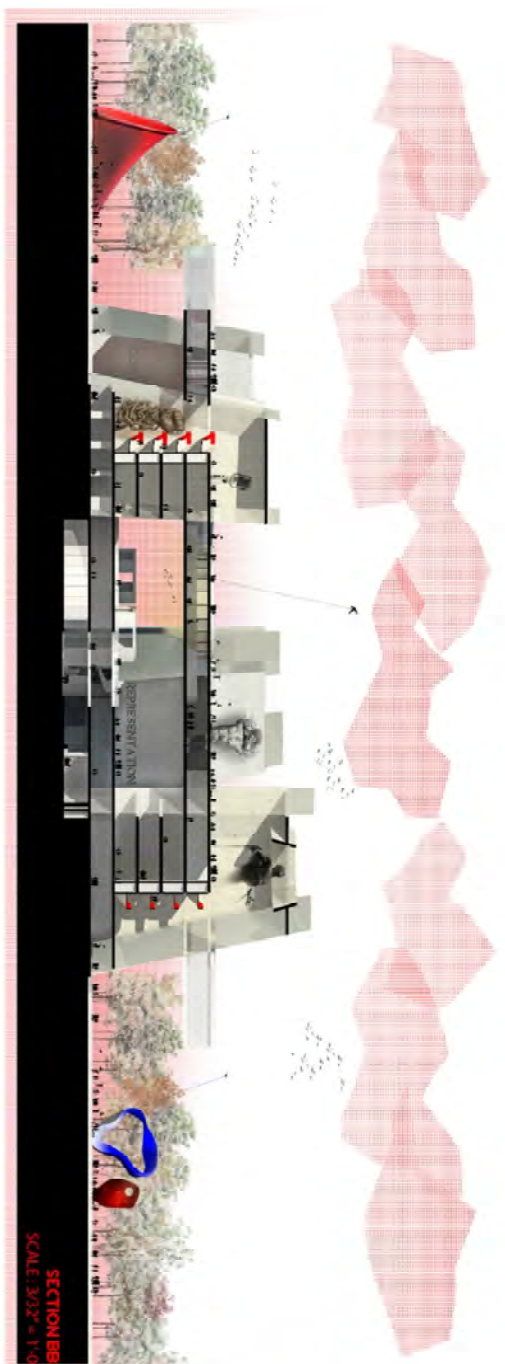
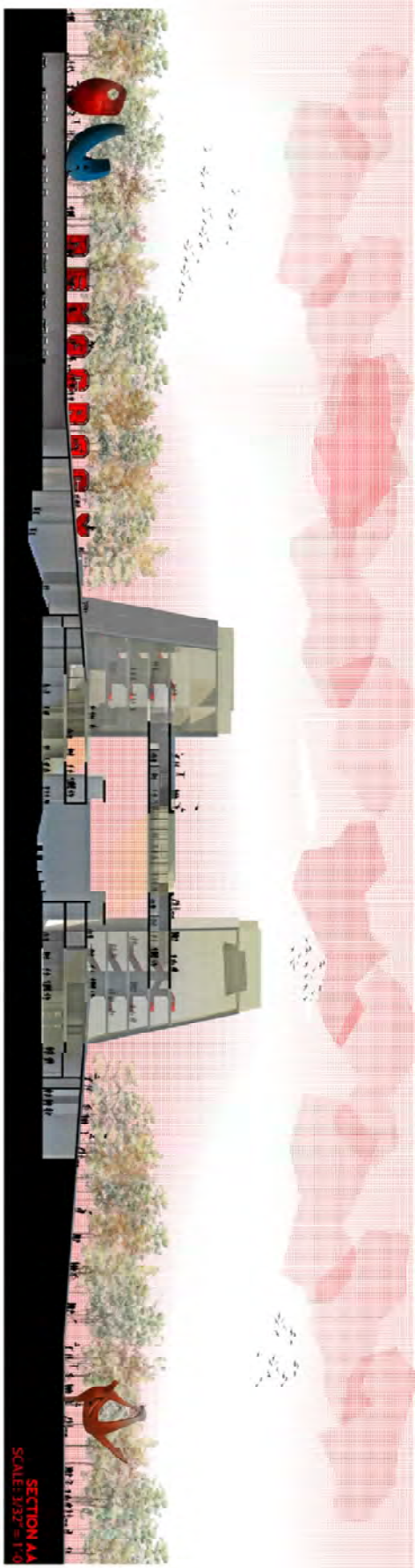


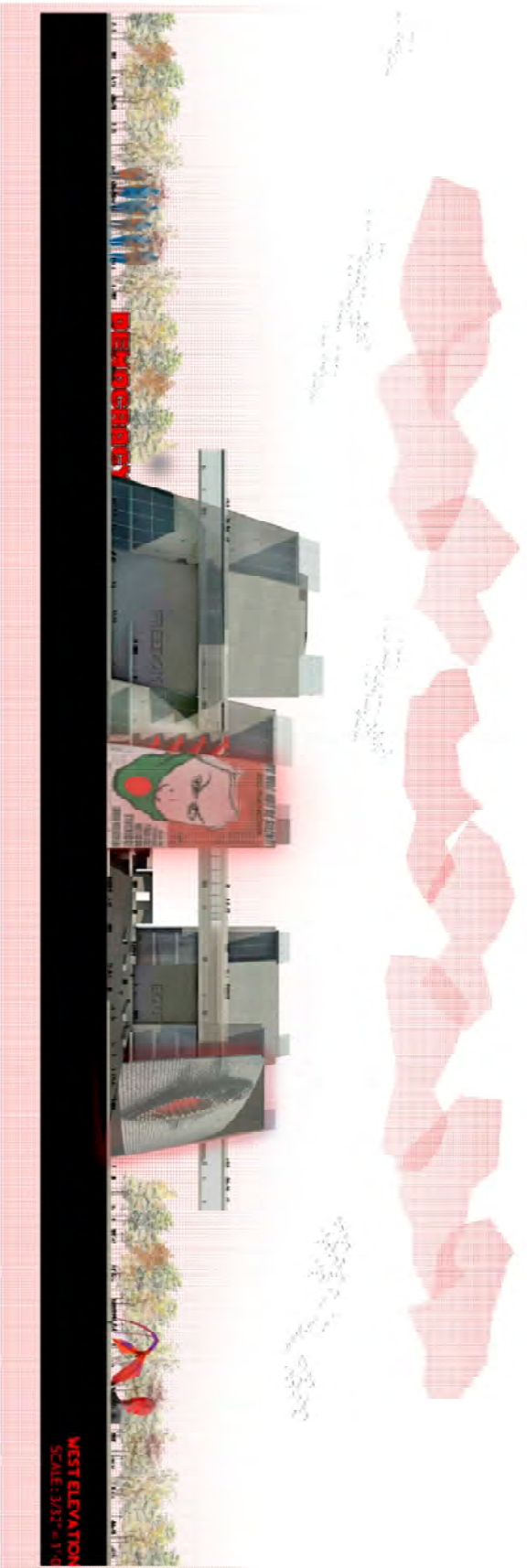
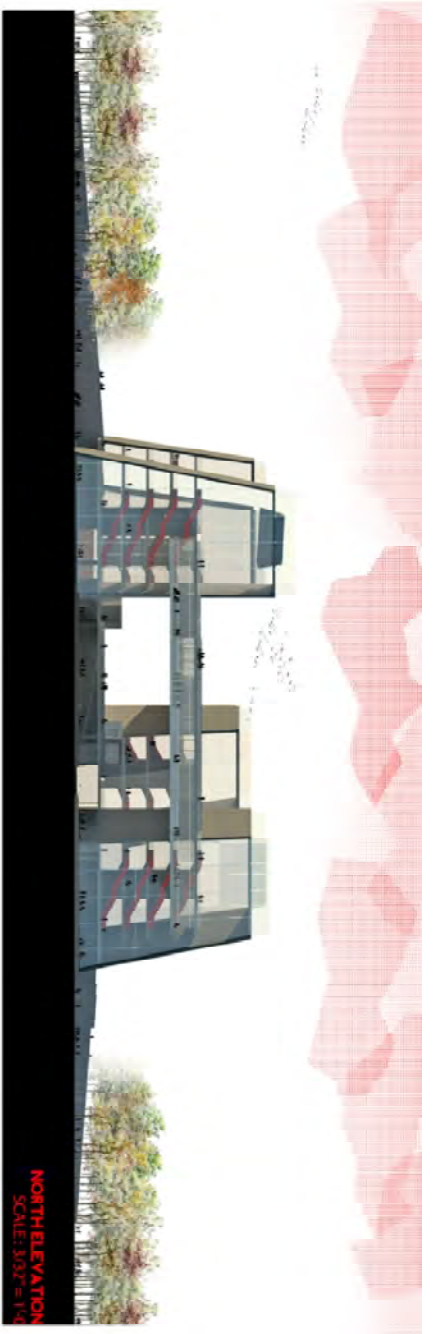


ADDRESSING OVERALL LANDSCAPE



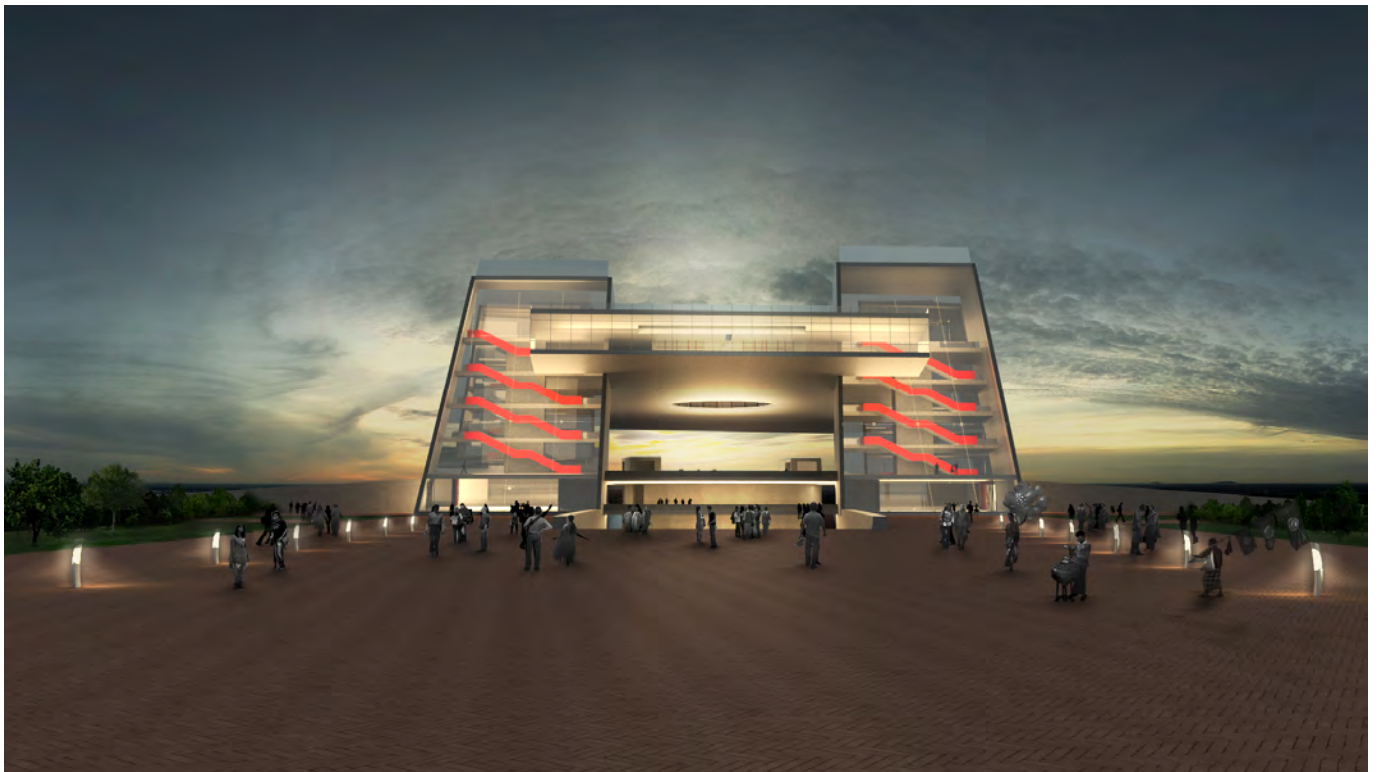
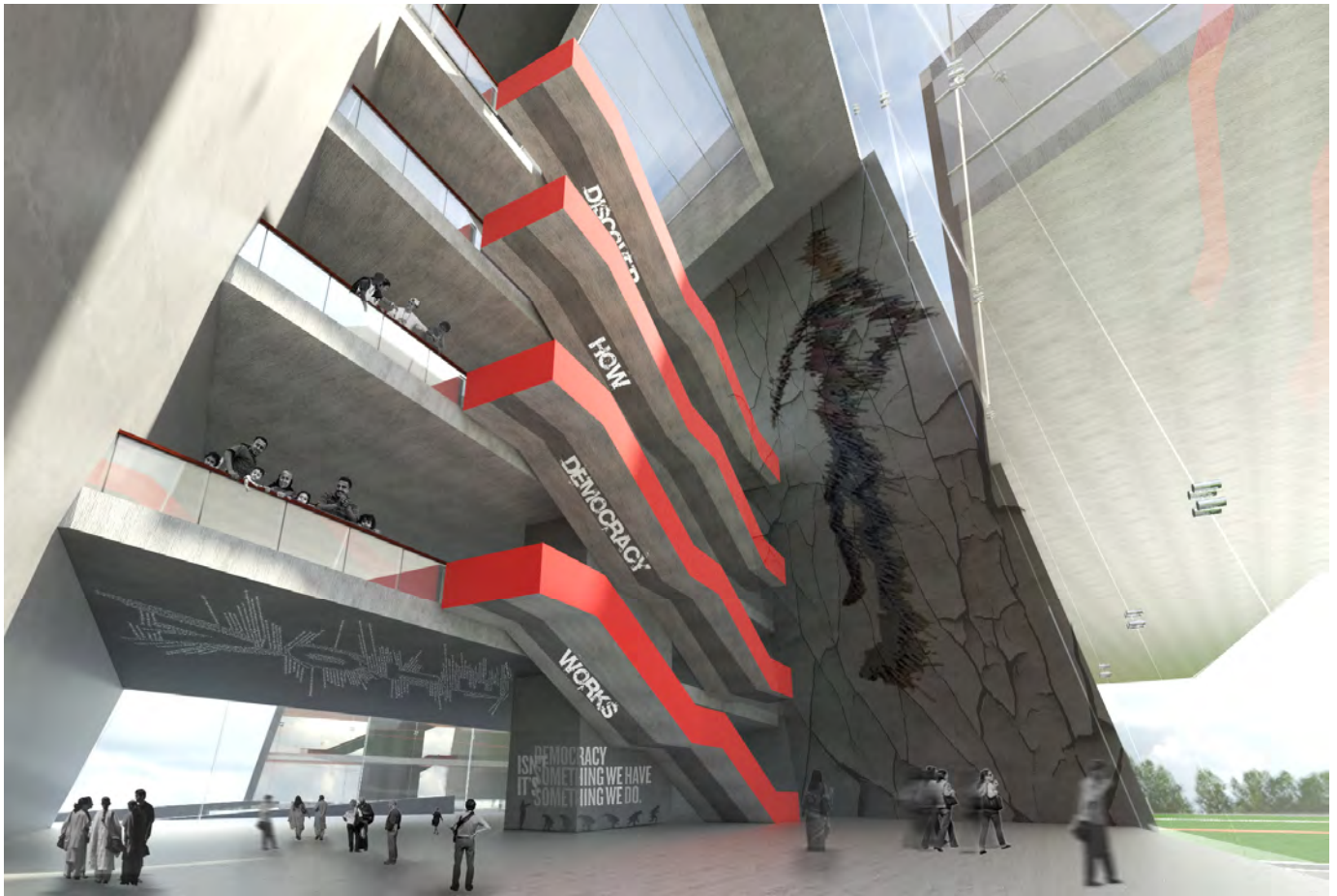


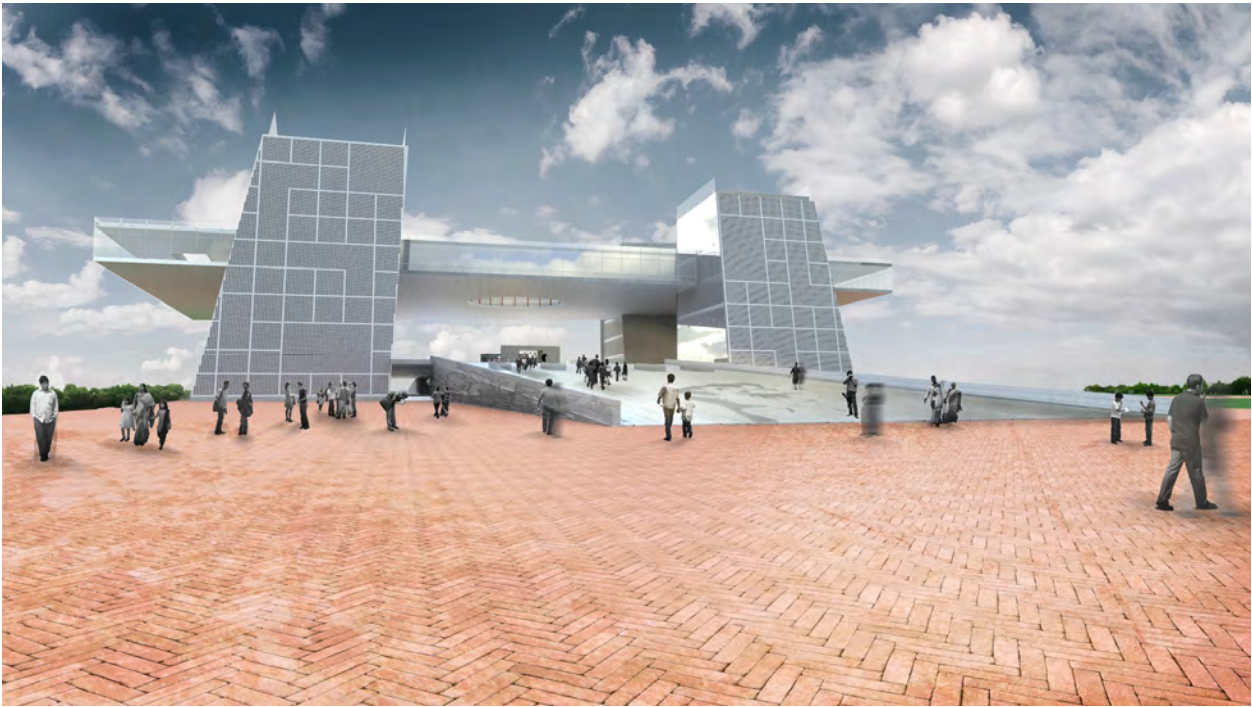




6.4 Rendered Images







Conclusion :

The quality of democracy in a country solely depends on the quality of the citizens. To keep democracy upright, aware participation of citizens is mandatory. Without citizens keeping their government in check, it is inevitable that the government will fall into corruption. To create empowered citizens it is essential to educate the citizens about the power that constitution has bestowed upon them, because only aware citizens can act. Citizen Arena aims to bring that awareness amongst the citizens, educate them to claim their rights in the ways that democracy provide, and a platform to practice those rights and to express their voices. This project will teach citizens to use the tools of democracy to keep the government continuously in check and will establish a new relationship between the governance and the government, where citizens will have the power over the Governance and Democracy will be established.

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