

Renaissance of the Ramp: Reconceptualization of National Assembly's Architectural Symbolism and Accessibility

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the architectural potential through the functional extension of the plaza and reconstruction of the symbolic National Assembly to answer questions. Creating a space of ramps will heighten perceptions of accessibility of the National Assembly. The plaza becomes the place of communication as it establishes a new relationship between the space of the ramp and the National Assembly. Today, the perception of the National Assembly in Seoul, Korea is as an authoritarian and inaccessible space. The large plaza in front of the building is only accessible if one passes the security check; as a result, normal citizens rarely use the area. Because the building is only 30 years old, rebuilding an entire new structure is neither feasible nor plausible. Considering this situation and the history, what kind of architectural transformation could be made to change people's perception towards the National Assembly Building and its surrounding area? What architectural language or device could be used to enhance the accessibility and symbolism of the space?

The space of the ramp symbolizes equal accessibility and facilitates a political dialogue between citizens and the government. Instead of being a mere vertical circulation device from floor to floor, the ramp is designed in diverse ways to acquire a more meaningful status, both functionally and symbolically. Unlike the columns which were used merely as ornamentation in the National Assembly, columns in the new architecture structurally support the ramp as well as symbolically support people coming to this new space to see the National Assembly from different perspectives. The monumentality of the authoritative architecture becomes diluted through a transparent and approachable public space that generates a new image of Korea's political architecture. This architectural intervention hopefully results in changing the perception towards the National Assembly from an authoritarian and inaccessible space to an open and accessible space.

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Chapters

One.

History of Korean Politics - p. 11

Two.

Development of Ramp - p. 23

Three.

Political Architecture and Ramp as Public Space - p. 33

Four.

Site and Project Iterations - p. 43

Five.

Final Project - p. 55

One.

History of Korean Politics

In South Korea, people are in the midst of political turmoil as the former President of South Korea, Park Geun-hye was impeached on March 10, 2017. The evidence of her involvement in the Choi Soon sil scandal emerged after a lengthy independent investigation (Fig 1). Many citizens celebrated on that day and considered it a rebirth of democracy in South Korea. Many citizens protested peacefully with candles as the impeachment proceeded and could be a lesson to other people in countries where democracy is also threatened (Fig 2). The impeachment itself was therapeutic, yet we should remember that it is quite sad and shameful that we voted for her at the first place even though she was a daughter of the former dictator.

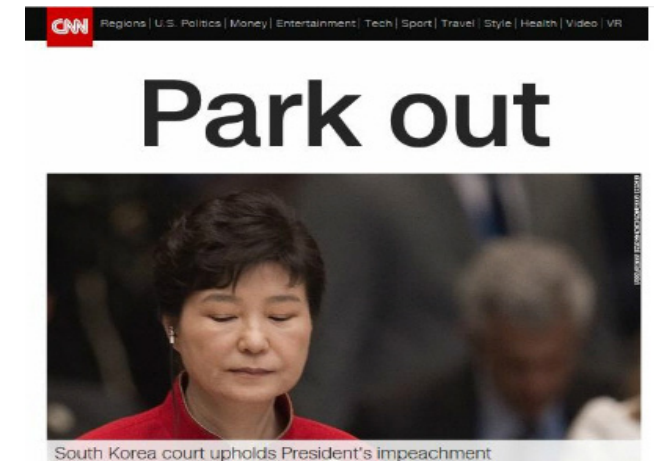


Figure 1. President Park's Impeachment

source: <http://www.mediatoday.co.kr/?mod=news&act=articleView&idxno=135544>



Fig 2. Candle Protest for Park's Impeachment

source: http://image.ytn.co.kr/general/jpg/2016/1217/201612172212089029_t.jpg

South Korea has been experiencing many political problems in addition to the president's recent impeachment. Politicians don't do their jobs properly, fighting in the National Assembly or not participating at all (Fig 3 and 4). We have arrived in this state of turmoil because our immature democracy has been unable to keep up with rapid economic development. In the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of one person of South Korea, the value has increased from 64 dollars in 1955 to 27,226 dollars in 2015 (Fig 5). As a result of this rapid economic development – the so called "Miracle of Han River" - South Korea recorded 1,411,246 million dollars and ranked 12th out of 198 countries in 2016's GDP rankings recently published by the World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table>). However, unlike the gradual increase in GDP, past voter turnout for member of the National Assembly generally decreased from 76.1% in 1967 to 54.2% in 2012 (Fig 6). Apart from economic development, public disappointment in political figures results in distrust and indifference toward government.



Fig 3. A Frequent Fight between Politicians

source: <http://korean.people.com.cn/mediafile/201012/09/F201012091316258686701931.jpg>



Fig 4. Empty Seats of the Cabinet Meeting in the National Assembly

source: <http://image.koreatimes.com/article/2016/02/23/20160223193749561.jpg>

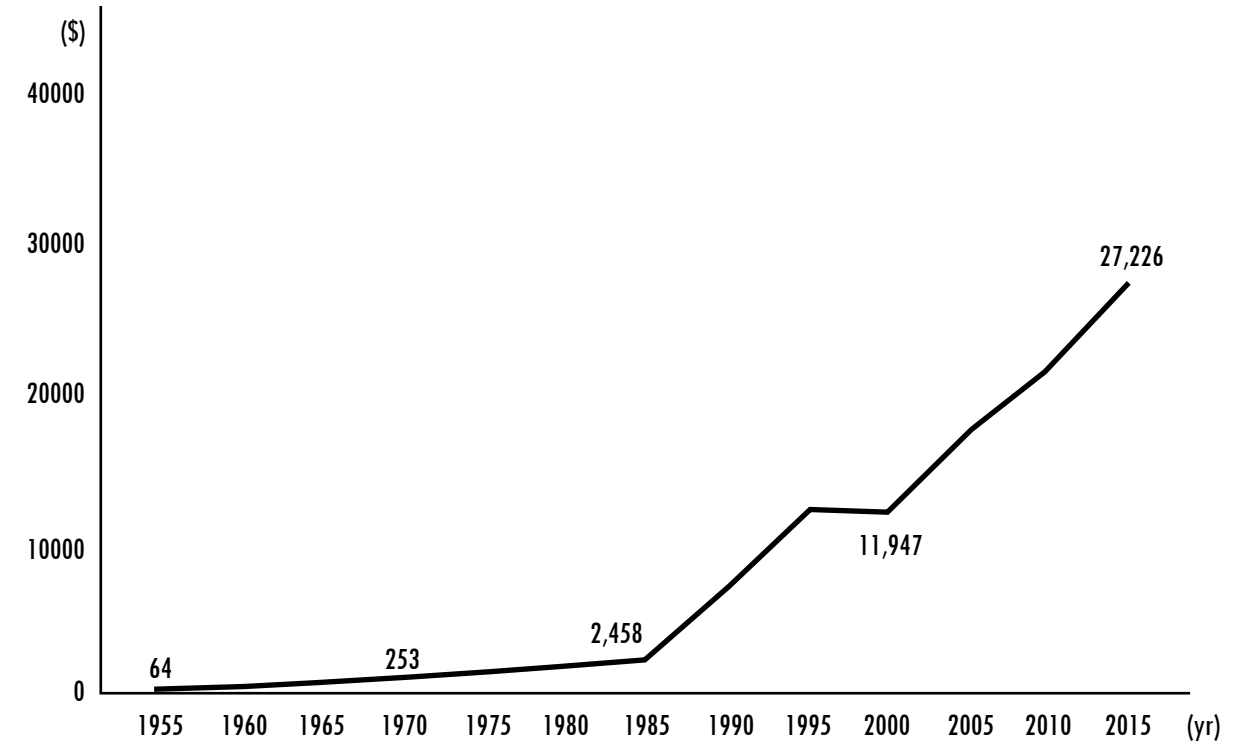


Fig 5. Past Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per one person of South Korea

source: <http://ecos.bok.or.kr/flex/EasySearch.jsp>

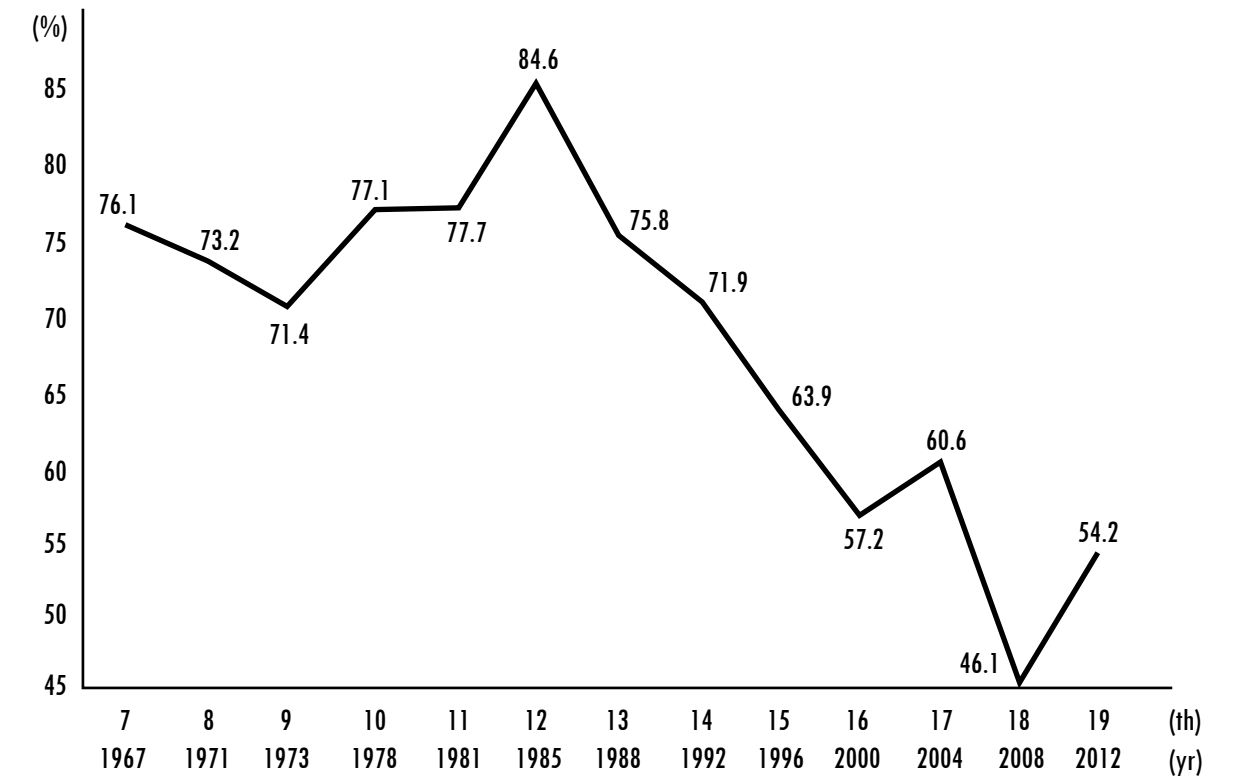


Fig 6. Past Voter Turnout for Member of the National Assembly

source: http://nationalatlas.ngii.go.kr/pages/page_438.php

After the Japanese occupation and Korean War, Korea was ruled by dictators. Generals such as Park Chung-hee - the father of the recently impeached president - gained their power through military coups (Fig 7). Although the economy of South Korea was rapidly developed during his regime, many people who sought democracy and freedom were sacrificed. When General Park was assassinated in 1979, General Chun Doo-hwan quickly sorted out the mess and took over the reigns of South Korea. General Chun's military junta was notorious for oppressing democracy from the start of its administration. In 1980, Chun initiated the Gwangju Massacre and enforced the unification of all broadcasting systems (Fig 9). This period of history was so sad and tragic that they continue to be remembered for years through books and movies. For example, the movie "A Taxi Driver," which is about a taxi driver who struggled to save a reporter and normal citizens during the Gwangju Massacre, hit the cinemas and recorded over 12 million viewers in 2017 (Fig 10). Only 24 years later, President Kim Young-sam was elected through a democratic vote after the dictatorial regimes.



Fig 7. General Park Chung-hee
source: <https://thenewspro.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/63-1.jpg>



Fig 9. Gwangju Massacre
source: <http://i.huffpost.com/gen/2961698/images/o-142-facebook.jpg>



Fig 10. Film "Taxi Driver" Poster
source: <http://img.insight.co.kr/static/2017/06/14/700/1km4n17e68qz4996uo3e.jpg>

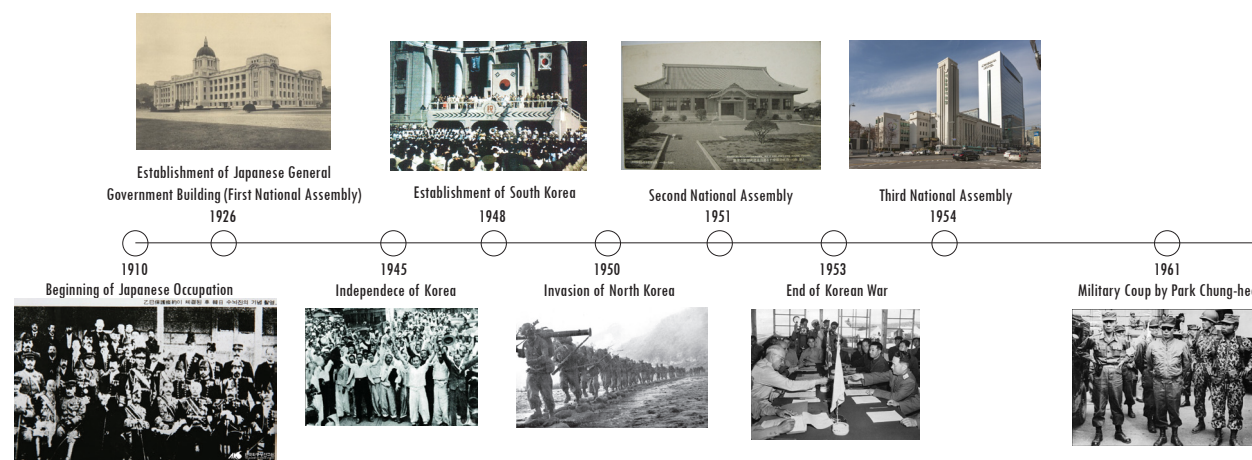
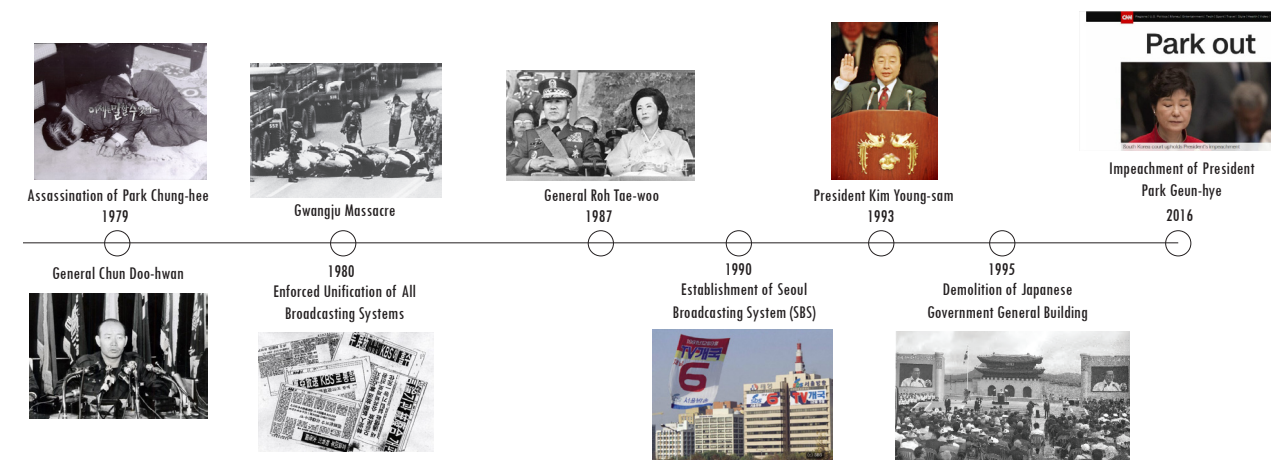


Fig 8. Timeline of the History of the Korean Democracy



The National Assembly Building itself is architectural evidence of authoritative and dictatorial power. After the Joseon dynasty lost its sovereignty to Japan in 1910, Japan decided to erect a building to house a new colonial administration. To legitimize Japanese colonial occupation and rule most of the Gyeongbokgung palace buildings were demolished. Japan also moved the main gate of the palace (the Gwanghwa gate) to the east wall and constructed their government building right in front of the palace to obstruct the view of the Gyeongbokgung palace from central Seoul (Fig 11 and 12). Some people argued that the introduction of the Japanese building was intended to suppress the spirit of the Joseon dynasty and cut off the flow of Feng Shui, annihilating the national spirit of the Joseon dynasty (Choi, 2010, p. 195). Even after the independence of Korea was declared in 1945, the Japanese General Government building was used as the first South Korean National Assembly until 1954. The National Assembly was formerly held in the Seoul Metropolitan Council building until 1975, when Park Chung-hee decided to construct a new building for the national assembly (Fig 13 and 14).

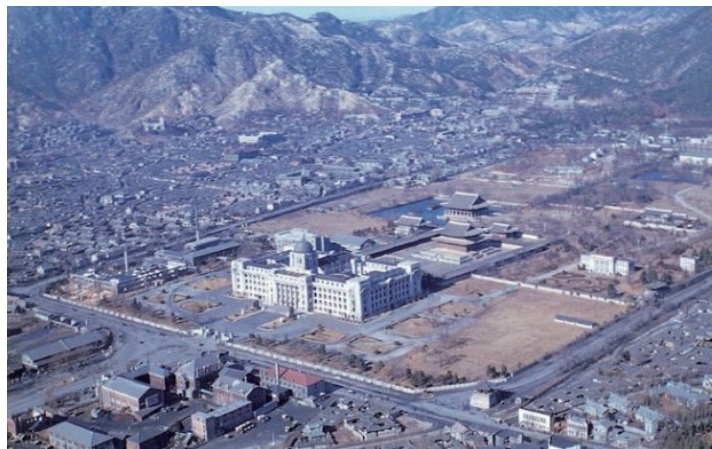


Fig 11. Japanese Government-general Building

source: http://blogthumb2.naver.net/20151005_248/saskian_14440096303640JNAi_JPEG/5441d8a80416d32f7bf0.jpg?type=w2



Fig 12. Japanese Government-general Building

source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/0d/Japanese_General_Government_Building_1995.jpg/800px-Japanese_General_Government_Building_1995.jpg



Fig 13. Seoul Metropolitan Council Building

source: http://www.junggu.seoul.kr/tour/xml/48/2648_image1_1.jpg

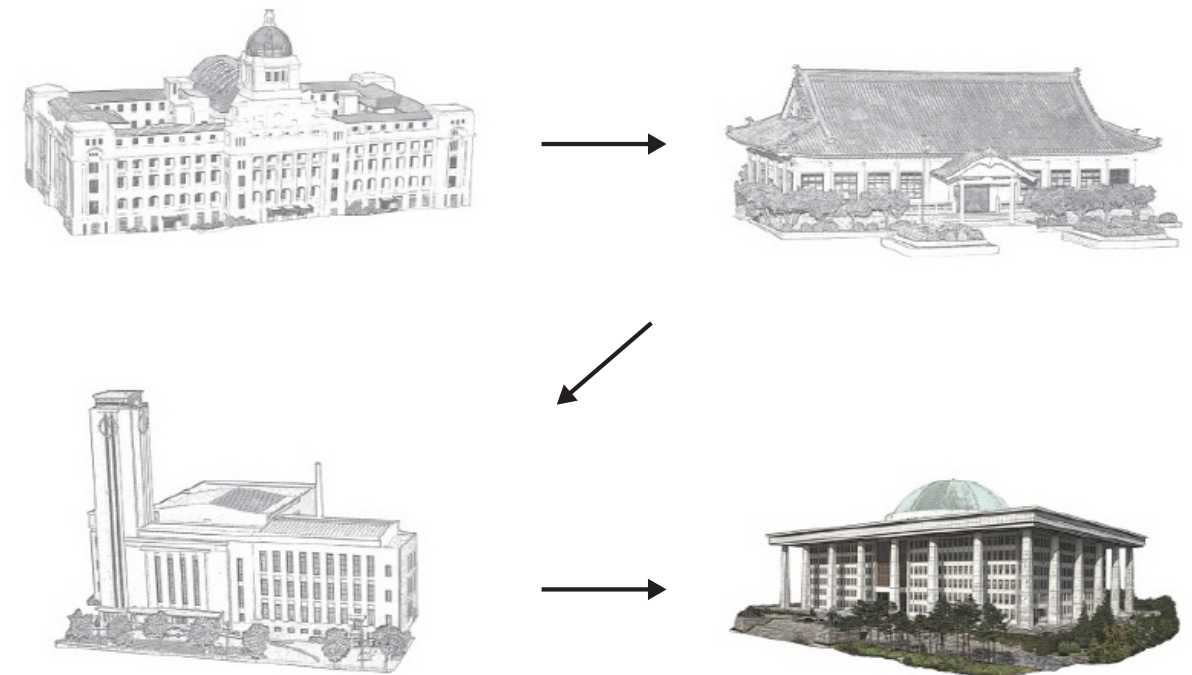


Fig 14. Changes of the National Assembly Building

source: http://img.khan.co.kr/news/2015/10/03/l_2015100301000409200030783.jpg

The process of designing the building was confusing and full of bureaucracy. Six different architects were selected in a seemingly ambiguous method that combined an invited competition and public competition. Therefore, the final design was not the true voice of these architects (Fig 15 and 16). The giant dome was added because General Park thought that such a building must have a dome (Fig 17). The space under the dome is rarely used since there is no function and it is difficult for the public to access (Fig 18).

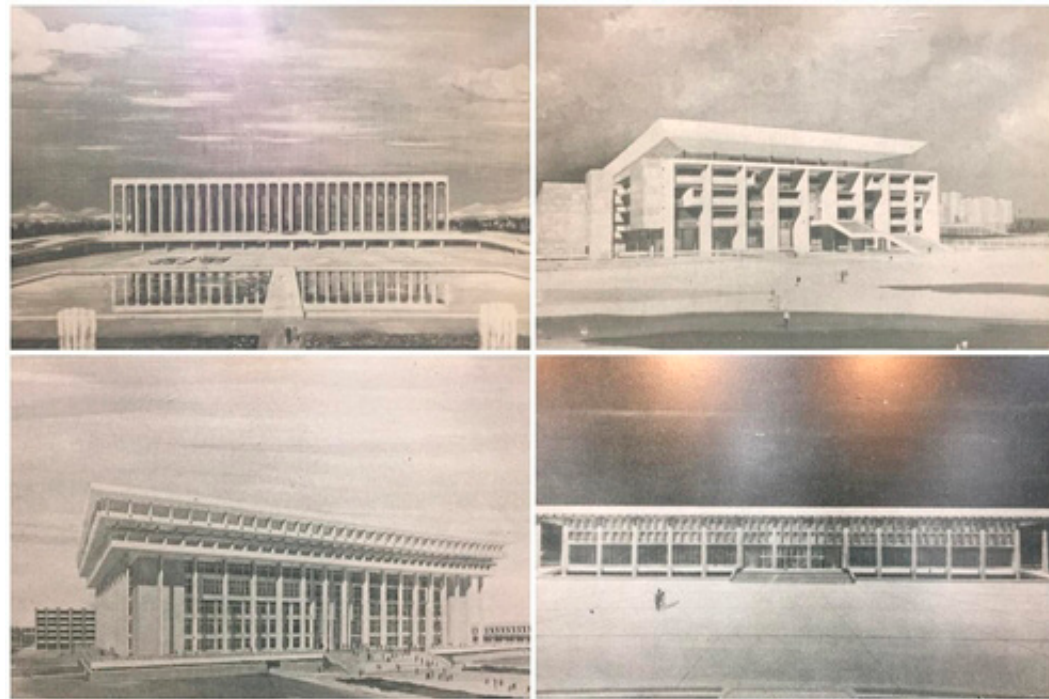


Fig 15. Initial Proposals of the National Assembly Building
source: http://image.chosun.com/sitedata/image/201610/30/2016103000418_2.jpg



Fig 16. The National Assembly Building in 1974
source: http://image.chosun.com/sitedata/image/201610/30/2016103000418_1.jpg



Fig 17. An Article about the Construction of the Dome
source: <http://h2.khan.co.kr/201510030030431>

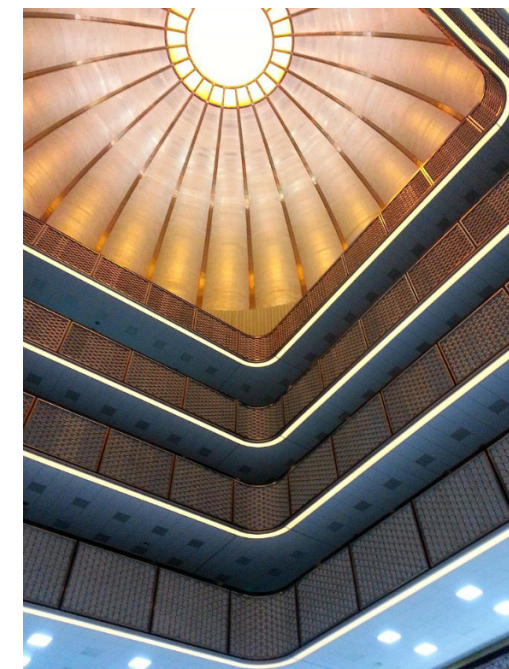


Fig 18. Rotunda Hall under the Dome
source: <http://cfite24.uf.tistory.com/image/2416BB3C51F87A4020E1AB>

The columns, which were structural at the beginning of the design, changed to become mere decoration (Fig 19 and 20). The proportions were dramatically changed, as Park wanted 24 columns to symbolize 24 hours a day. The idea of creating a linear open area for circulation and public needs from the building to the other side of the island - such as La Defence in France - was not realized (Fig 21 and 22). In "Architecture and Urbanism in Modern Korea," Inha Jung explains the reasons why the initial plan failed. The author writes:

Swoo-Geun Kim's innovative plan for Yeouido was not realized for two reasons. First, by order of President Park, a large asphalt-paved square, about 36,000 sq m in area, was created at the center of the island as a site for large ceremonial gatherings. Kim's plan was not compatible with this huge square. Second, and a more serious issue, the developer of the project and the construction companies were uncertain whether the elevated highway would depreciate the value of the surrounding land (Jung, 2013, p. 54).

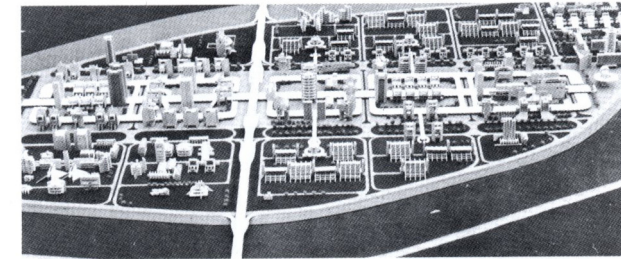


Fig 21. Yeouido Development Plan and the Current Setting
source: Architecture and Urbanism in Modern Korea - Inha Jung p.55

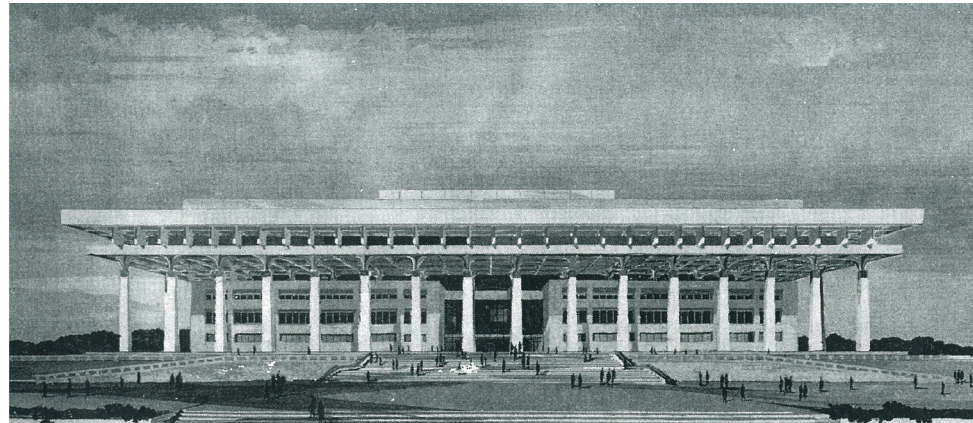


Fig 19. Initial Proposal of the National Assembly Building
source: The National Assembly Library (www.assembly.go.kr)



Fig 20. Initial Proposal of the National Assembly Building
source: The National Assembly Library (www.assembly.go.kr)

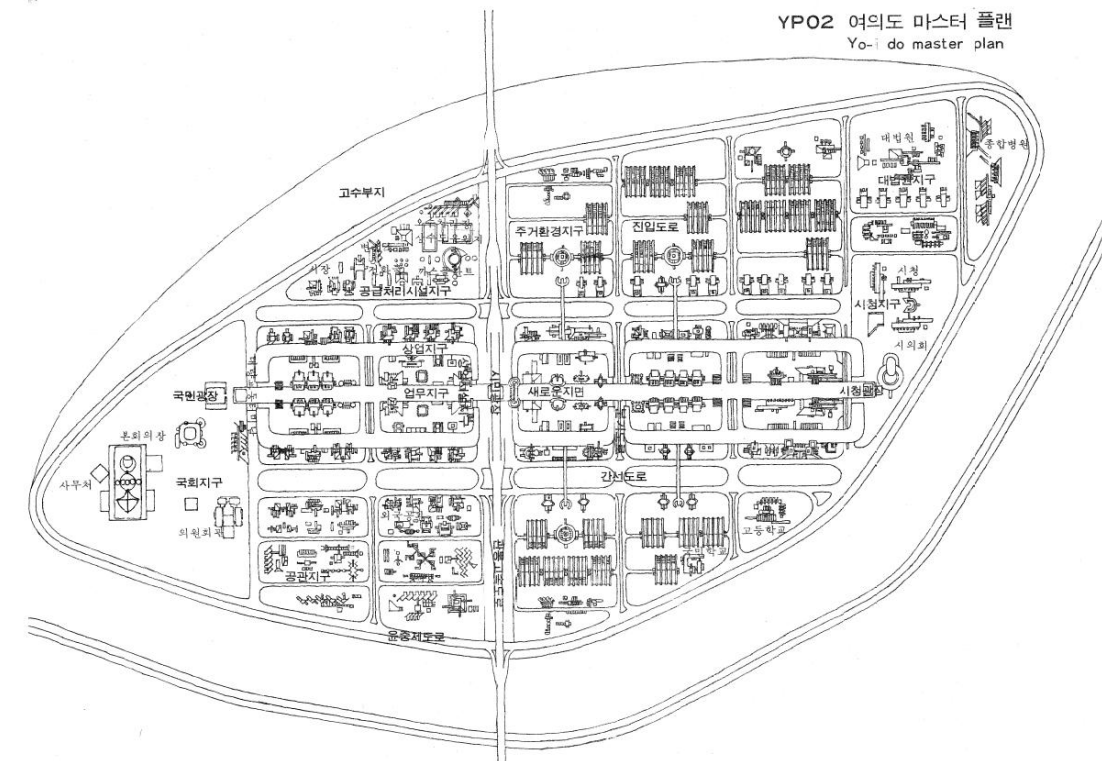


Fig 22. Initial Yeouido Master Plan
source: [http://www.aorum.re.kr/upload_files/BuildingDB/CityPlanModel/17/CityPlan_17_PIC\(18\).jpg](http://www.aorum.re.kr/upload_files/BuildingDB/CityPlanModel/17/CityPlan_17_PIC(18).jpg)

Today, people’s perception of the National Assembly Building is an authoritarian and inaccessible space. The large plaza in front of the building is only accessible if you pass the security check. As a result, normal citizens rarely use the area (Fig 23 and 24). Because the building is only 30 years old, rebuilding an entire new structure is not feasible or plausible. Considering this situation, what kind of architectural transformation could be made to change people’s perception towards the National Assembly Building and its area? What architectural language or device could be used to enhance the accessibility and symbolism of the space? My thesis examines the architectural potential through the functional extension of the plaza and the reconstruction of the symbolic National Assembly to answer these questions. The architectural language that will be studied and used is ramp.



Fig 23. The Police in front of the National Assembly Building
source: http://www.sisa-news.com/data/photos/20101249/art_1291780113.jpg



Fig 24. Fences surrounding the National Assembly Building
source: <http://www.taogi.net/files/attach/entry/0/144/files/%EC%8A%A4%ED%81%AC%EB%A6%B0%EC%83%B7%202016-12-03%20%EC%98%A4%ED%9B%84%203.43.36.png>

Two.

Development of Ramp

Today, the ramp is mostly used as a means of mobility. However, in ancient times, ramps were used in more diverse ways. First, ramps were frequently used for functional purposes such as in dolmen or pyramid construction (Fig 25 and 26). Ramps were also used in other functional purposes. When Rome invaded Masada, they installed a giant ramp to carry their siege weapons to the top of the hill (Fig 27). Rome also built sloped aqueducts so that they could get fresh water from mountains to their cities (Fig 28). Ramps were also strongly related to class difference in sociopolitical aspect. These two ramps were only allowed for emperors and separate users based on the means of transportation, walking versus hooved animal, where these depended on the social classes (Fig 29 and 30).

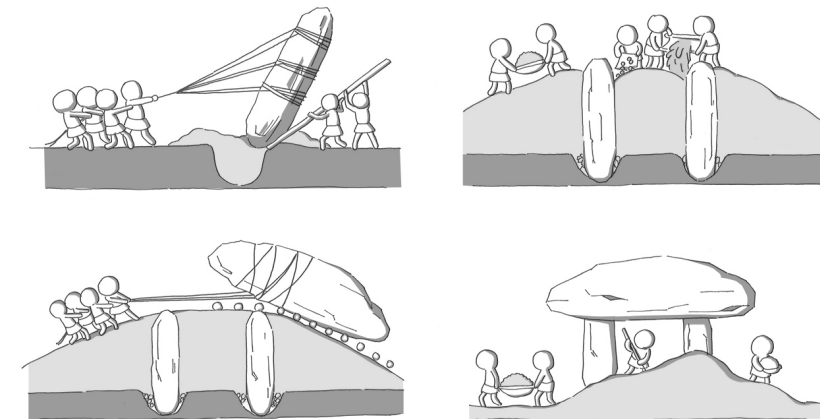


Fig 25. Construction Process of Dolmens
source: http://world.kbs.co.kr/special/unesco/common/images/excellent_unesco7_3.jpg

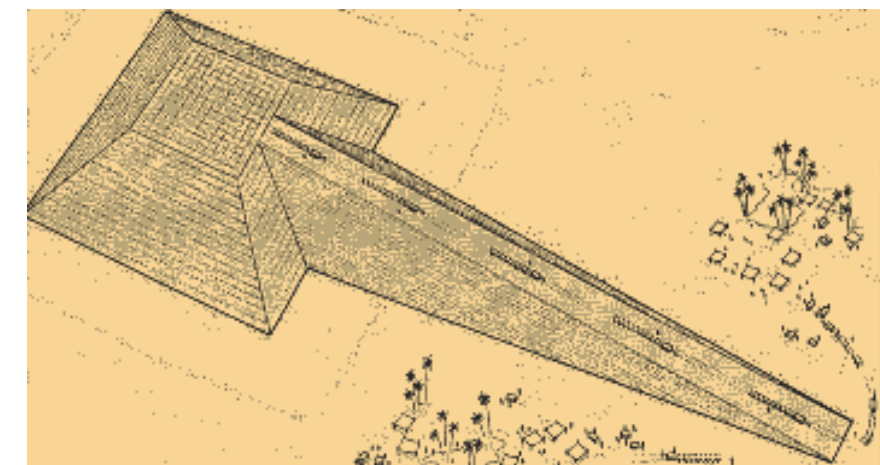


Fig 26. Pyramid Construction
source: <http://www.lookategypttours.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/ramps-of-the-pyramids.gif>

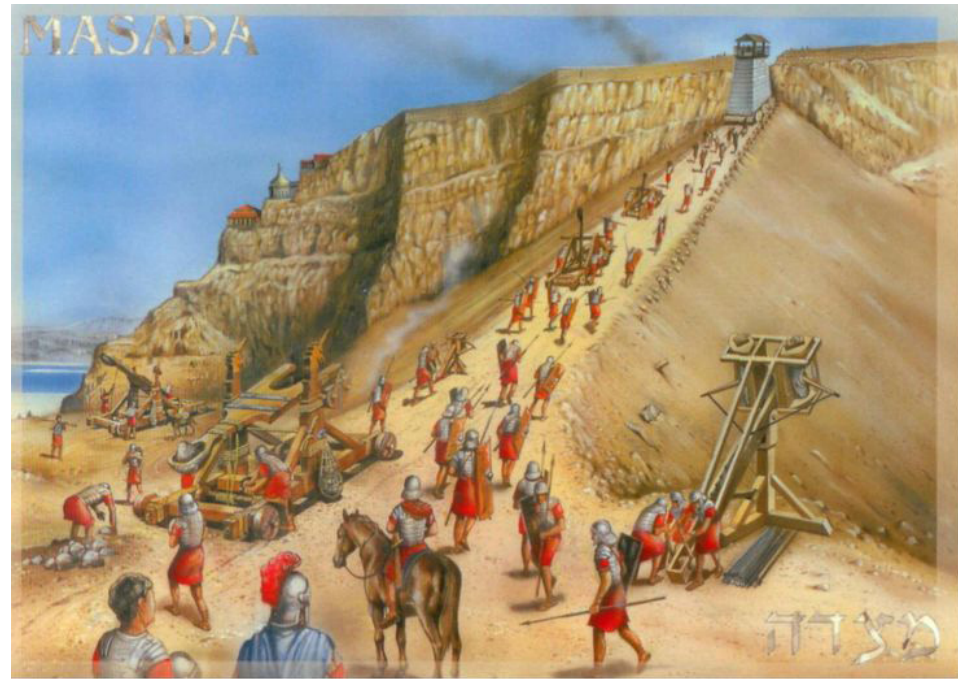


Fig 27. Rome Invading Masada

source: <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/f4/34/08/f43408549addefc3b2966a76702d9348--roman-legion-greek-history.jpg>

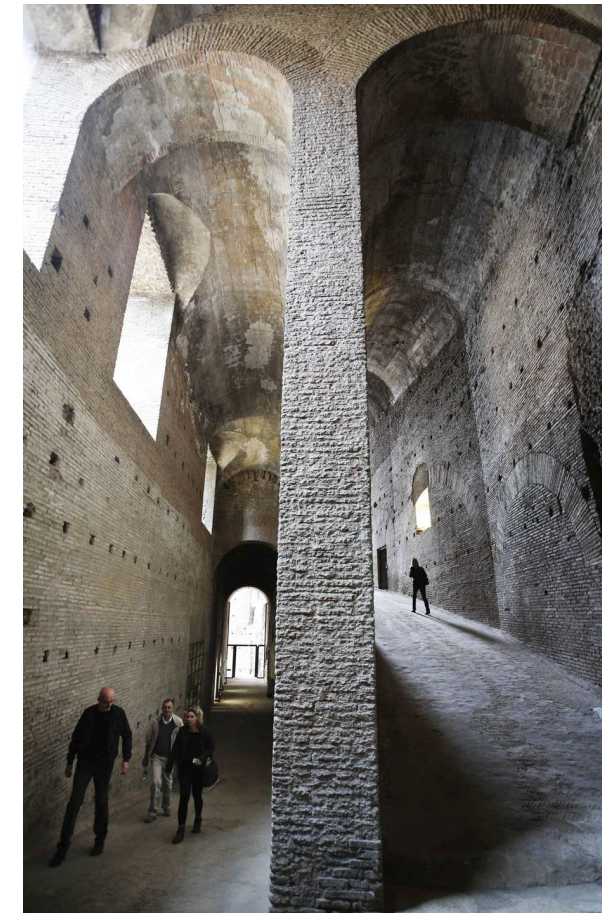


Fig 29. Roman Emperors' Ramp

source: http://wpmedia.nationalpost.com/2015/10/italy_ancient_ramp2.jpg?quality=60&strip=all



Fig 28. Roman Aqueduct

source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d8/Pont_du_Gard_Oct_2007.jpg/1200px-Pont_du_Gard_Oct_2007.jpg



Fig 30. Forbidden City Marble Ramp

https://media.npr.org/assets/img/2013/11/01/large-stone-carving_wide-196a509c-363c0494cc35a8b90f46e7d6f031249c.jpg?s=1400

These different aspects of ramps are simplified in modern architecture which sought out ease and convenience. After the devastating World War 1, architects at that time faced the increased housing demands and met urgent needs for a quick method of reconstruction. Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier was a pioneer of modern architecture who proposed the standardized housing system so called Maison Dom-ino, which is the combination of the words Domus (House) and Innovation (Fig 31). He writes:

A structural system was conceived - a framework - completely independent of the floorplans of the house: this frame carried the floors and staircases. It was to be fabricated out of standardized elements to be attached to one another permitting great variety in the grouping of the houses. The reinforced concrete was to be made without formwork; to be more exact, there would be a special arrangement set up on the site which would permit the pouring of absolutely smooth and level floor slabs by means of a simple scaffolding of double-T beams fastened temporarily to collars fixed to the top of each column; the columns of reinforced concrete poured at the commencement of the work would be aligned by the above system of scaffolding. . . . This would result in a completely new method of construction: the windows would be attached to the structural frame, the doors would be fixed with their frames and lined up with wall panels to form partitions. Then the construction of the exterior walls could begin (Le Corbusier, 1914).

Le Corbusier proposed Maison Dom-ino using stairs as a means of connecting different flat surfaces. Stairs were marginalized as each floor itself which became open and flexible due to the development of structural elements and the idea of free plan. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe was another architect who established and strengthened the idea of free plan further. Along with his other conceptual projects like the Friedrichstrasse skyscraper, "Office Building" contains his incipient idea of free plan. Mies describes:

Bright wide workrooms, uncluttered, undivided, only articulated according to the organism of the firm. . . . This post-and-beam system supports the ceiling panel, which angled vertically upward at the end of the cantilever arms, becomes exterior skin and serves as back wall of the shelving, which was moved to the exterior walls in order to keep the interior uncluttered (Mies van der Rohe, ed. Mallgrave et al, 2008, p. 205).

Mies already envisioned how open space could be achieved and could have economic feasibility even in a somewhat authoritative and bureaucratic office environment. He imagined uncluttered interior space through introducing the post-and-beam system, a by-product of industrialization and advances in various materials and technologies. Mies already started thinking of separating architectural elements into two groups: one is the floor and the non-load bearing walls, while the other is the roof (or ceiling) and load bearing walls (or columns). Though he did not mention the floor specifically in this case, it can be easily interpreted that he wanted to put all the load bearing to exterior walls in order to have wide workrooms which must include the floor. Mies van der Rohe's idea of the grid and free plan liberated architects in some senses yet put them onto the flat terrain.

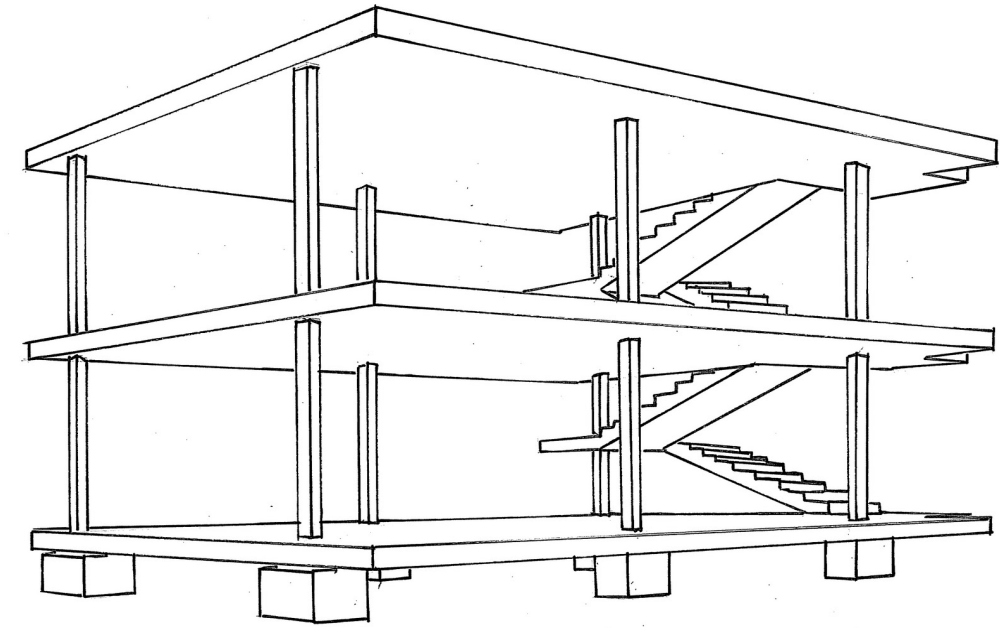


Fig 31. Maison Dom-ino by Le Corbusier
source: <https://amayaharvey.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/20110128160957473.jpg>



Fig 32. Seagram Building by Mies van der Rohe
source: https://designkultur.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/mies_van_der_rohe_seagram_building_chicago2_jpg.jpg

As flat architecture became mainstream and the elevator technology rapidly developed, the ramp became simple and secondary - serving as means of accessibility. ADA regulation related to the use of wheelchair also accelerated this process of the ramp being simplified and secondary.

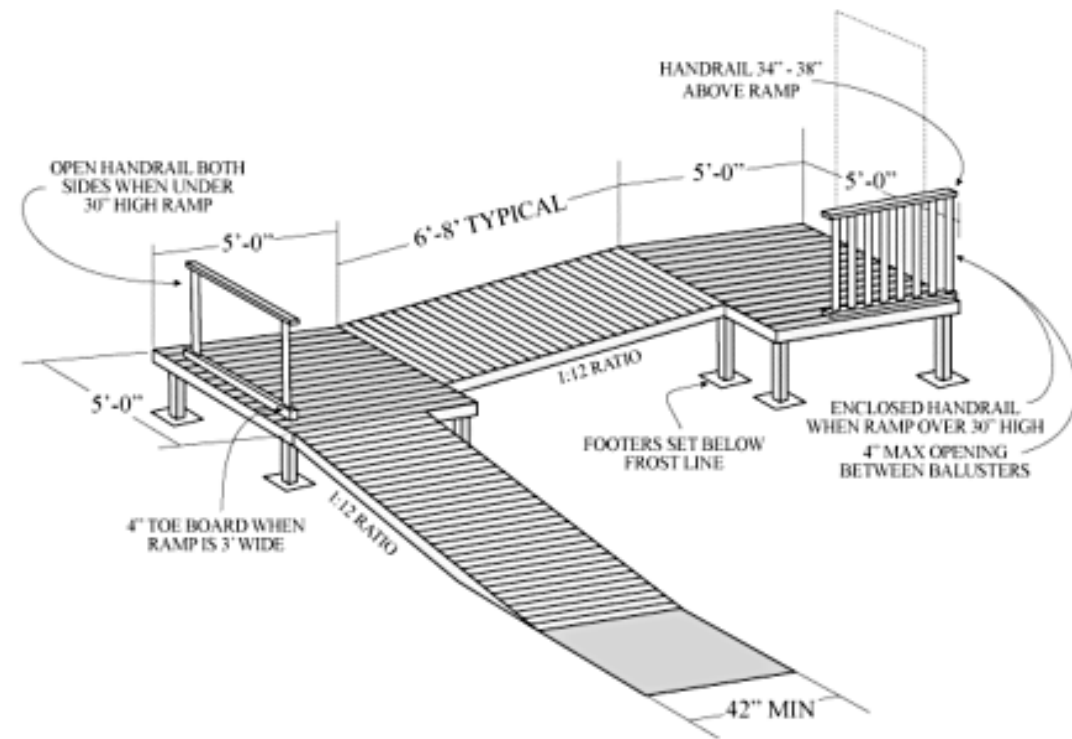


Fig 33. ADA Regulation

source: <https://www.lowes.com/projects/images/how-tos/Building-Supplies/build-a-wheel-chair-ramp-buildingtheramp.jpg.gif>



Fig 34. Typical Elevator

source: <http://alltypeselevators.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/elevators.jpg>



Fig 35. Typical Ramp

source: <http://www.stonefieldeng.com/media/ee4cb326-8d10-4cee-99dc-194f138d98e1/E51-ng/Services/ADADesignAndCompliance/ADAMain.jpg>



Fig 36. Apartments in Seoul, South Korea

source: http://menu.mt.co.kr/moneyweek/thumbnail/2017/11/10/06/2017111010418026129_1.jpg

Claude Parent and Paul Virilio proposed a concept of tilting the ground in order to revolutionize the old paradigm of the vertical wall and flat floor. In their book "The Function of the Oblique," Paul explains their theory about the inclined plane. He describes:

'The function of the oblique' had its origins in the concepts of disequilibrium and motive instability. The idea of using the earth's gravity as a motor for movement inspired a very Galilean utilization of the INCLINED PLANE - a building form in which the horizontal was used only as a means of establishing a 'threshold' between two slopes.

After the HORIZONTAL order of the rural habitat in the agricultural era, and the VERTICAL order of the urban habitat in the industrial era, the next logical (or, rather, topological) step was for us the OBLIQUE order of the post-industrial era.

To achieve this, it was necessary to discard the notion of the vertical enclosure, whose walls are made inaccessible by gravity, and to define habitable space by means of wholly accessible inclined planes, thereby increasing the usable surface areas. This was, in essence, the principle of HABITABLE CIRCULATION (Virilio, ed. Johnston, 1996, p. 12).

Wall and floor became an experience and slope implied the pace of the movement such as climbing up and down (Fig 37, 38, and 39). The idea of oblique surfaces has huge potential but this extreme proposal could not cross the boundary of actualization.

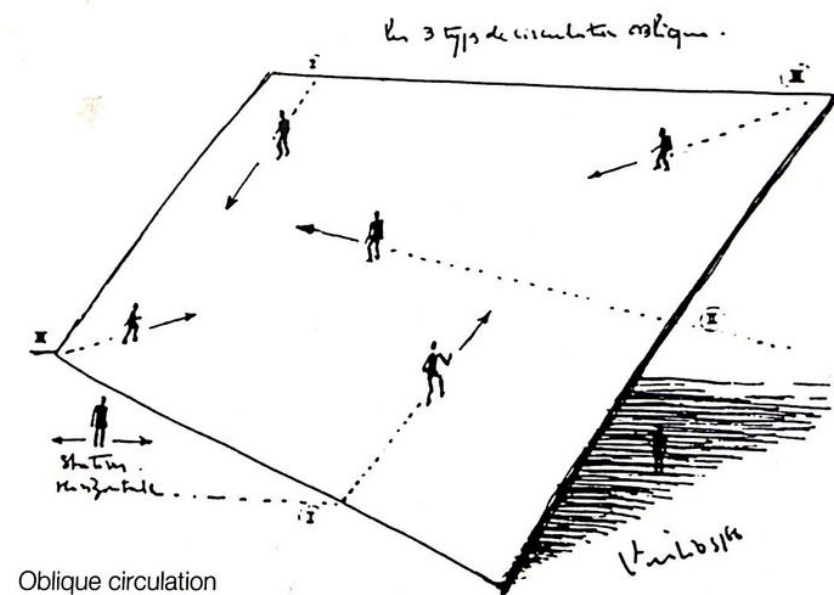


Fig 37. The Function of the Oblique
source: Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, The Function of the Oblique, 1996, p. 12

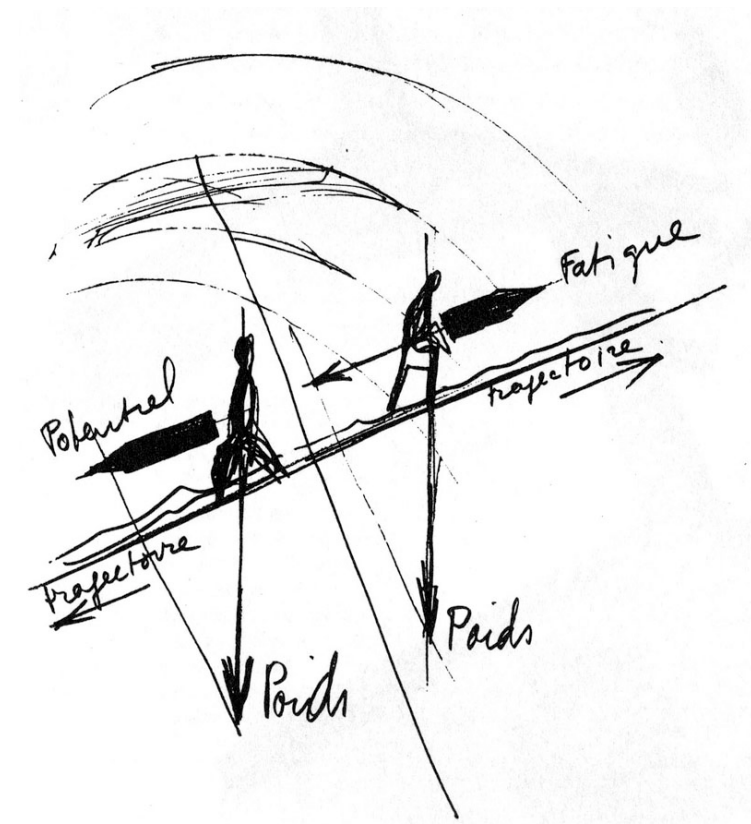


Fig 38. The Function of the Oblique
source: Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, The Function of the Oblique, 1996, p. 67



Fig 39. The Function of the Oblique
source: Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, The Function of the Oblique, 1996, p. 8

Three.

Political Architecture and Ramp as Public Space

Architecture of political power relies on clear separations and thresholds. One can find evidence of these thresholds from the pictures of the candle protest near the blue house in South Korea and in those of a protest near Japan's parliament (Fig 40 and 41).



Fig 40. Candle Protest near the Blue House

source: http://ph.joongboo.com/news/photo/201612/1125339_1028224_2637.jpg



Fig 41. Protest Near Japan's Parliament

source: http://img.yonhapnews.co.kr/etc/inner/KR/2015/08/31/AKR20150831182500073_01_i.jpg

This relationship between architecture of political power and separation may be traced back in history. A king or emperor separates his palace from regular citizens and their living environments in order to express social power and hierarchy. This type of architecture symbolizes the central figure of political power (Fig 42 and 43).

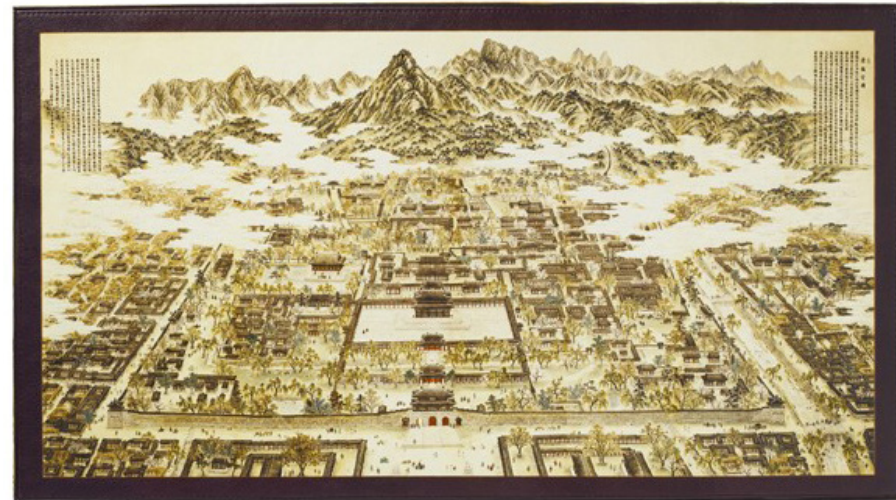


Fig 42. Gyeongbokgung Palace
source: http://mblogthumb1.phinf.naver.net/20120327_192/khmall_ch-f_1332826143094uGtgD_JPEG/CHF-0213detail_6001.jpg?type=w2



Fig 43. Babylon Palace
source: <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/bc/13/8f/bc138f8733a9908413137857304e2e1f.jpg>

On the contrary, the ramp and inclined surface can symbolize equal accessibility. ADA law implies that the ramp makes architecture physically accessible for everyone (Fig 44). It also offers equal visual access to everyone compared to a flat surface where your view might be blocked by a person in front of you (Fig 45).



Fig 44. Accessible Ramp
source: https://www.morethanmobility.com/components/com_virtuemart/shop_image/product/Flat_Panel_Ramp_4f34ed0300316.jpg

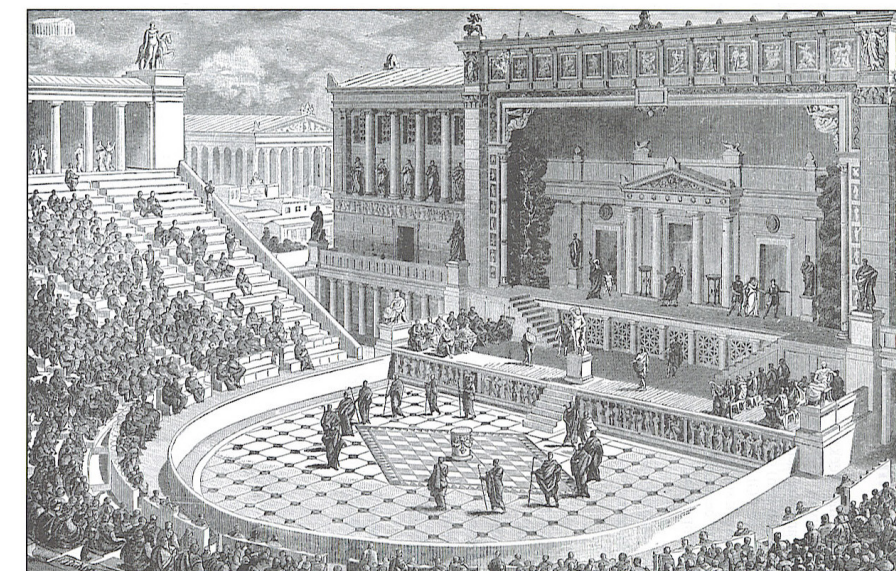


Fig 45. Ancient Theater
source: <https://images.fineartamerica.com/images/artworkimages/mediumlarge/1/the-theatre-of-dionysus-athens-greece-ken-welsh.jpg>

Inclined surfaces have also been popular in public spaces. The Pompidou Center Plaza and Piazza del Campo in Siena, Italy are two great examples where people enjoy sitting or lying on the surfaces and taking a rest (Fig 46 and 47).



Fig 46. Piazza del Campo, Siena
source: https://i1.treearth.com/photos/4238/plaza_del_campo_en_siena.jpg



Fig 47. Pompidou Center Plaza
source: <https://i.pinimg.com/564x/4b/98/fe/4b98fe302872e428bf6ef5beb9ac365--landscape-steps-mali.jpg>

There are some precedents that attempt to use the ramp as a symbol of equal accessibility. Le Corbusier designed Carpenter Center where a central ramp penetrates the gallery. Here, people who are using the ramp can have visual access to the building even if they don't have to be involved in the program. The public is allowed to engage with the interior of the building. This conception contrasts with the buildings in Harvard yard where there is a clear threshold between buildings and the ambulatory path (Fig 48 and 49).

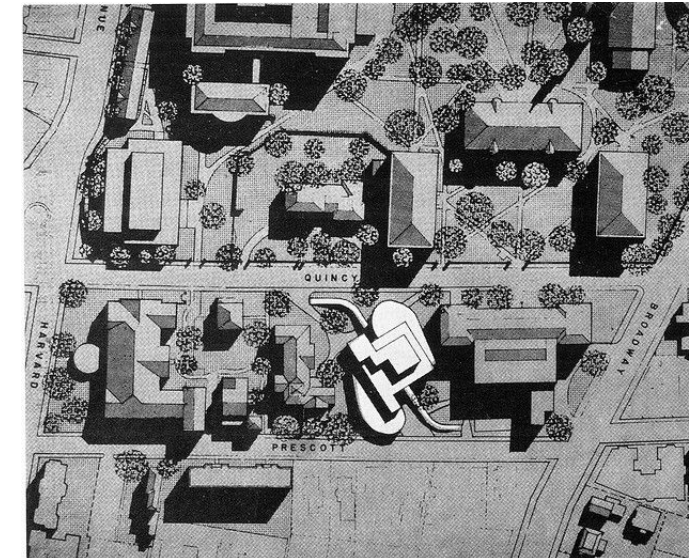


Fig 48. Carpenter Center by Le Corbusier
source: https://en.wikiarquitectura.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Carpenter_center_37-1024x838.jpg



Fig 49. Carpenter Center by Le Corbusier
source: <http://classconnection.s3.amazonaws.com/1416/flashcards/678373/png/presentation-013-035.png>

Snohetta’s Oslo Opera House includes a ramp that offers visual access from the building’s exterior and physical access to the roof that can be used as a public hang out spot or stage for events. The ramp becomes a destination (Fig 50). BIG designed the Danish Pavilion for the Shanghai Expo where both walking people and bicycle riders can enjoy the building. Here, the ramp allows equal access of different means of transportation (Fig 51).



Fig 50. Oslo Opera House by Snohetta
 source: http://www.publicspace.org/timthumb.php?src=/app/webroot/files/urbanps/projects/F171_07.jpg&w=1000&h=678&zc=1&q=95



Fig 51. Danish Pavilion by BIG
 source: <https://images.adsttc.com/media/images/5008/f468/28ba/0d27/a700/0ed8/slideshow/stringio.jpg?1414380524>

David Gissen proposed the reconstruction of the Acropolis ramp. Including smaller fragmented passageways and small one-person only elevators would solve inaccessibility problem. His suggestion was to revive the original giant 30 feet wide and several hundred feet long ramp. He said that this ramp is architecture, landscape and infrastructure. The ramp was a key element to convert the Acropolis back to civic and religious site as people ascend the site together (Fig 52). Frank Lloyd Wright offered a continuous helix ramp where you can appreciate art pieces in different ways. Reichstag Parliament by Norman Foster has a glass dome and a helix ramp. The glass dome can be interpreted as political transparency and the ramp around the dome could foster a welcoming of the public (Fig 53).



Fig 52. The Path to the Acropolis by David Gissen
 source: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/b1/71/59/b1715929675e30c9769e6c1892936c01.jpg>



Fig 53. Reichstag Dome by Norman Foster
 source: <https://www.german-way.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Berlin-Reichst-spiralvw890.jpg>

In his writing “Function and the Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture,” Umberto Eco once compared a stair and an elevator saying that although both a stair and an elevator have the function of going up, the stair symbolizes and implies the movement of going up while an elevator doesn’t. He describes:

According to an immemorial architectural codification, a stair or a ramp denotes the possibility of going up. But whether it is a simple set of steps in a garden or a grand staircase by Vanvitelli, the winding stairs of the Eiffel Tower or the spiraling ramp of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum, one finds oneself before a form whose interpretation involves not only a codified connection between the form and the function but also a conventional conception of how one fulfils the function with the form. Recently, for example, one has been able to go up also by means of an elevator, and the interpretation of the elevator involves, besides the recognition of the possible function – and rather than being disposed to the motor activity of moving one’s feet in a certain way – a conception of how to fulfil the function through the various accessory devices at one’s disposal in the elevator. Now the ‘legibility’ of these features of the elevator might be taken for granted, and presumably their design is such that none of us would have any trouble interpreting them. But clearly a primitive man used to stairs or ramps would be at a loss in front of an elevator; the best intentions on the part of the designer would not result in making the thing clear to him. The designer may have had a conception of the push buttons, the graphic arrows indicating whether the elevator is about to go up or down, and the emphatic floor-level indicators, but the primitive, even if he can guess the function, does not know that these forms are the ‘key’ to the function. He simply has no real grasp of the code of the elevator. (Eco, ed. Leach, 1997, p. 177)

He insisted that the elevator is like moving from box to box and doesn’t engage the procession of ascending. Based on his argument, the ramp could both symbolize the accessibility of the space and allow for the procession.

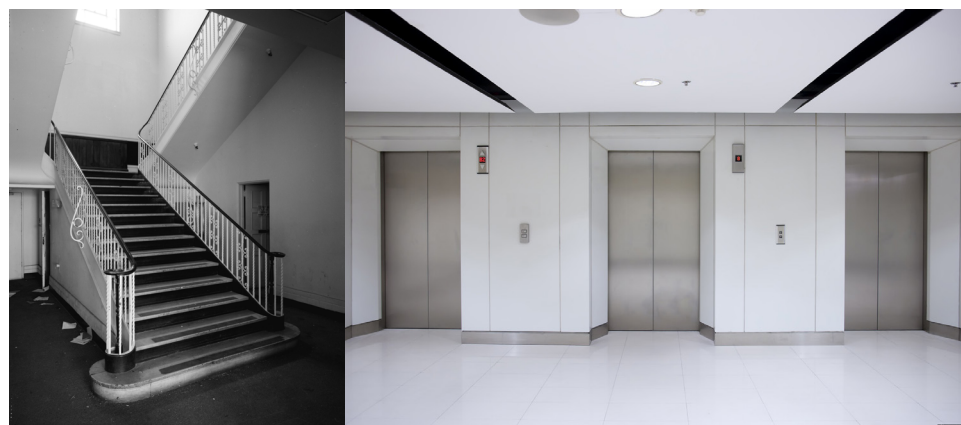


Fig 54. Stair and Elevator

source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/b/b2/Stairway_in_ford_plant_in_LA_from_HABS.jpg/220px-Stairway_in_ford_plant_in_LA_from_HABS.jpg

The National Assembly has a ramp, but it is a 21st century version of a Roman or Forbidden City Ramp. It is used for escorting people of authority. Drivers ascend the ramp, drop off members of the National Assembly and then head towards parking lots (Fig 55 and 56).



Fig 55. Car Ramp of the National Assembly Building

source: http://pds.joins.com//news/component/htmlphoto_mmdata/201708/05/42014f1f-99dc-453d-bda0-1cc8dbafcb0e.jpg



Fig 56. Escorting People of Authority

source: http://img.hani.co.kr/imgdb/resize/2011/0127/00382436605_20110127.JPG

Four.

Site and Project Iterations

There are 9 provinces in South Korea: North Chungcheong, South Chungcheong, Gangwon, Gyeonggi, North Gyeongsang, South Gyeongsang, North Jeolla, South Jeolla, and Jeju Special Self-Governing Province. The site of National Assembly is located in Yeoui Island, which is in Yeongdeungpo District in Seoul.



Fig 57. A Providence Map of South Korea

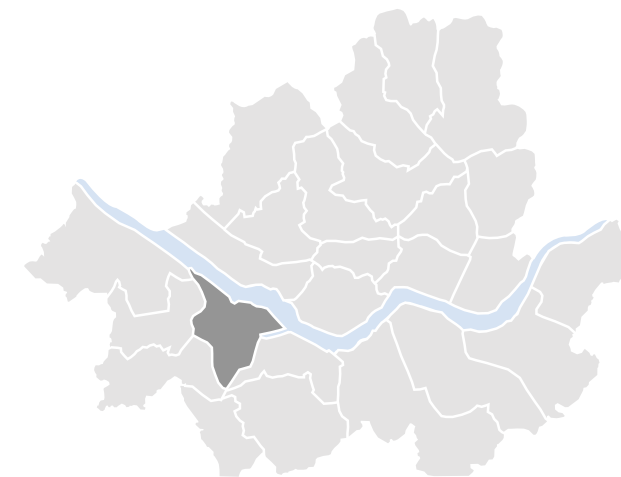


Fig 58. A District Map of Seoul

People generally come to this island through public transportation, as Seoul is famous for having a well-established transportation system.



Fig 59. Aerial View of the Island

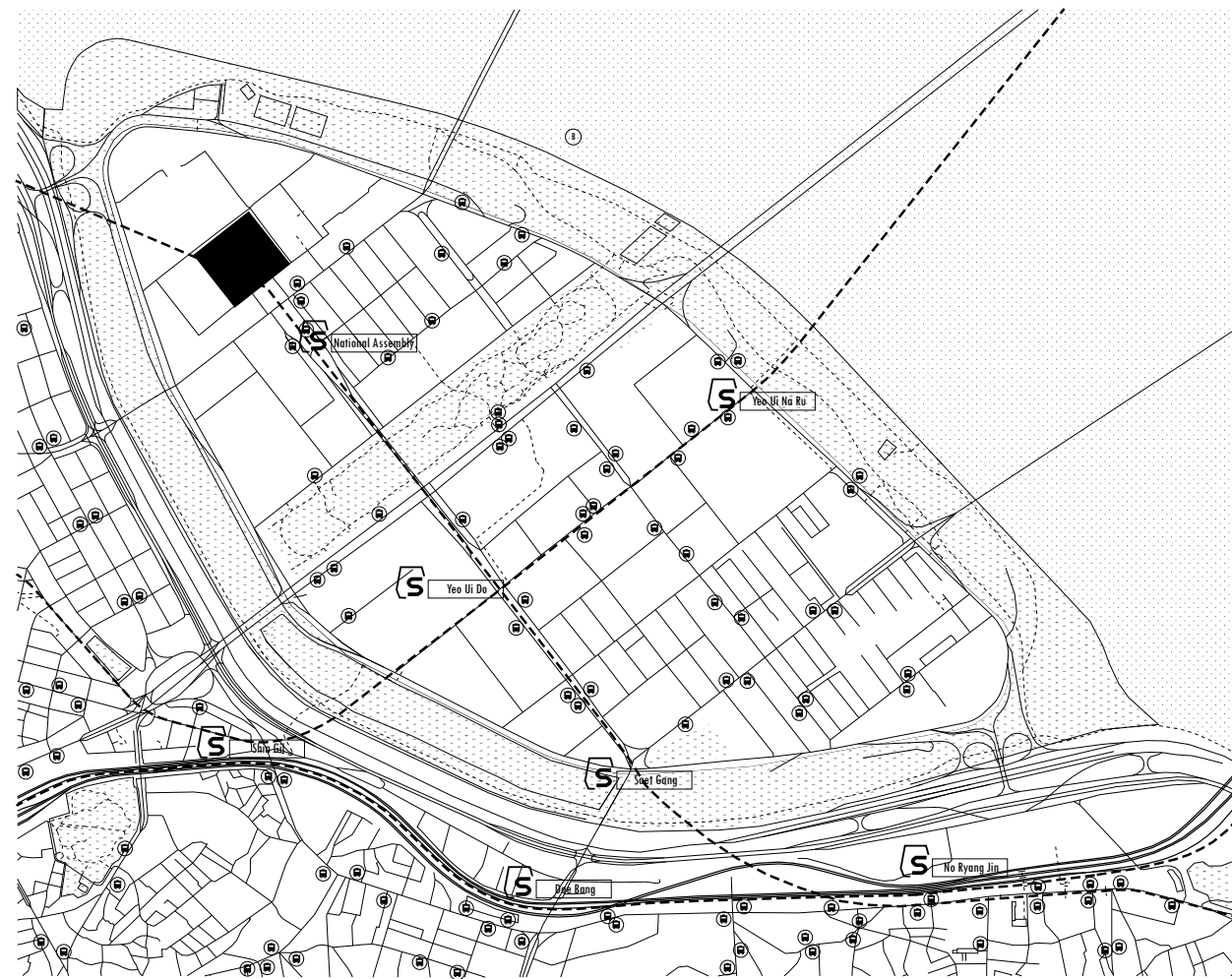


Fig 60. Map of Public Transportation in Yeoui Island

There is a National Assembly Station in front of the site through which people mostly visit the site. This map also shows the security check points for entering to the site.

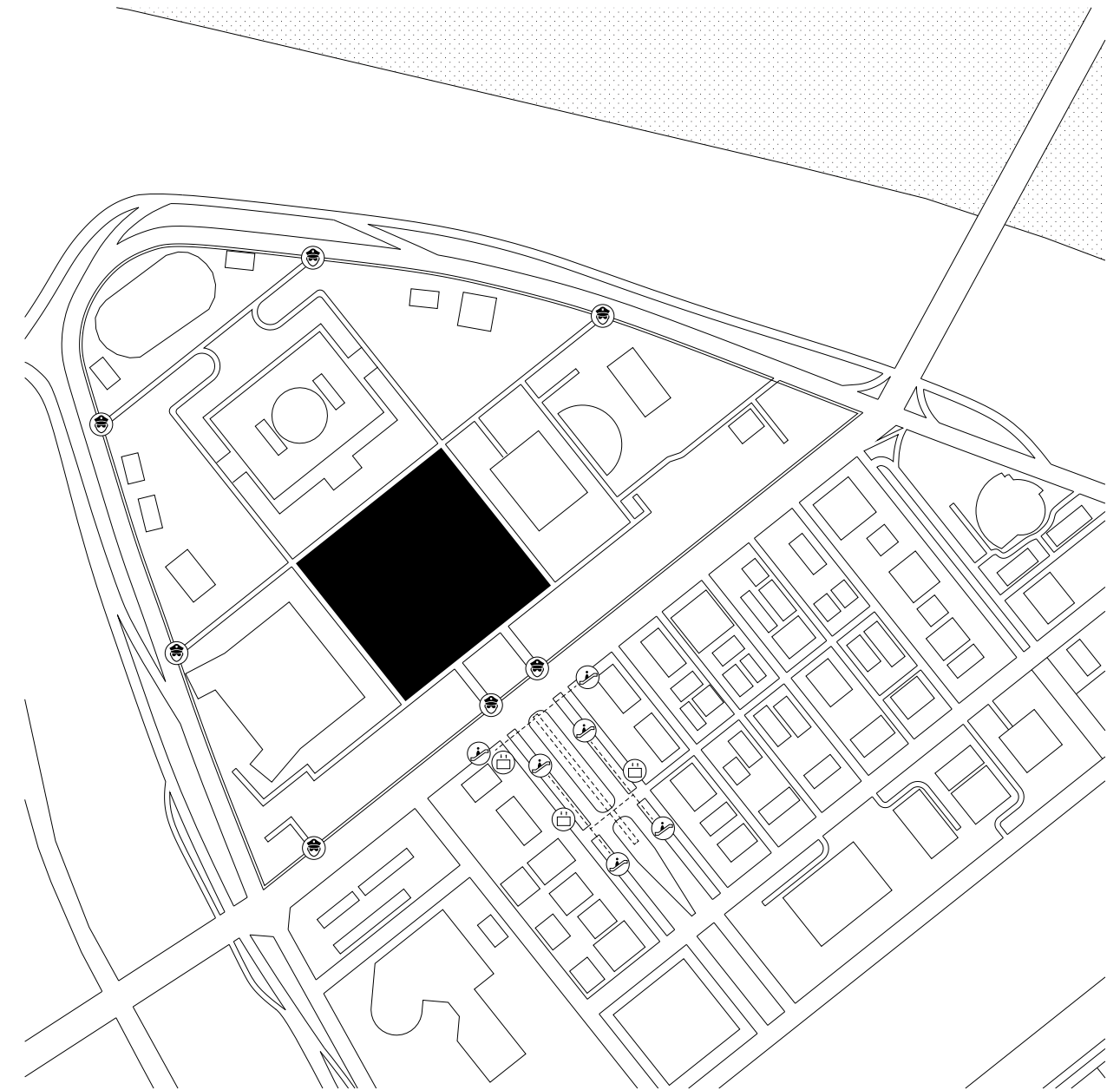


Fig 61. Map of Accessibility near the Site

These concept models tested different potential idea of ramp spaces. The first concept model sought the combination of ramp and ground so that they blend into one continuous surface. The second model attempted to find a pattern that is made out of repeated variations of ADA-regulated ramps and it tested the potential giant ramp surface such as Sienna Plaza. The third concept model revives the linear axis of the original planning of the island and proposes viewing decks of different locations and heights to see the National Assembly Building with new perspectives.

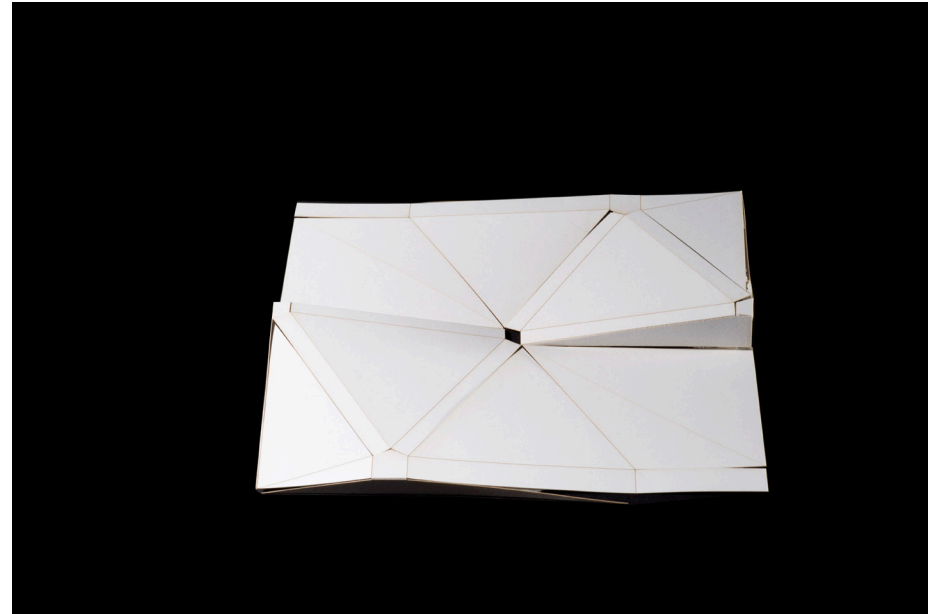


Fig 62. First Concept Model

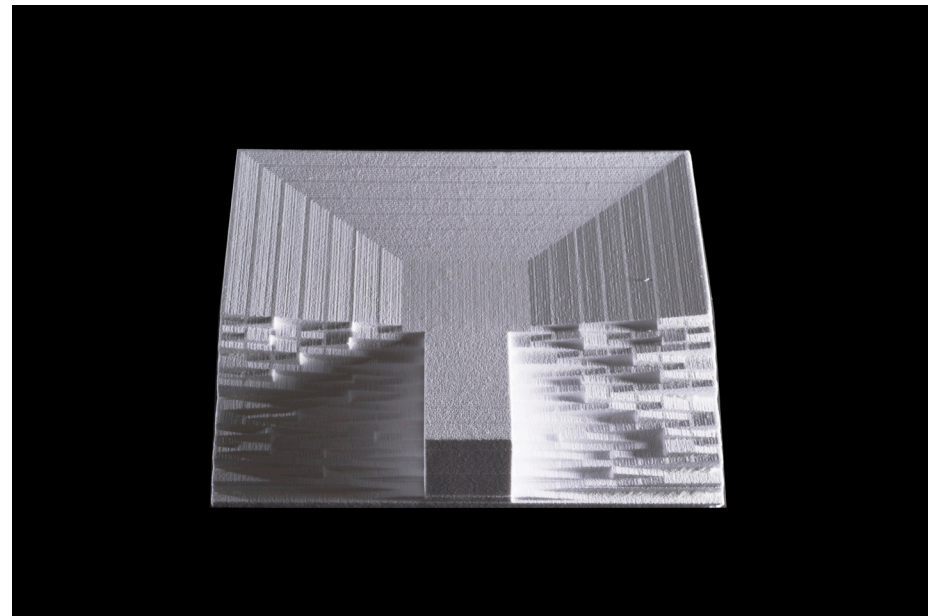


Fig 63. Second Concept Model

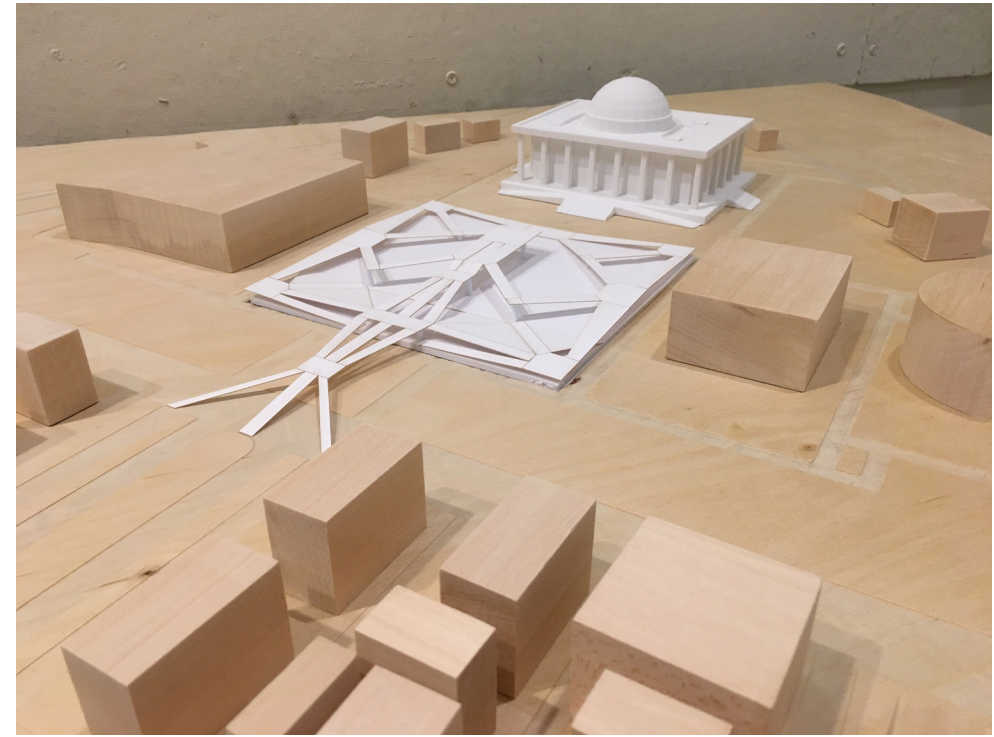


Fig 64. Third Concept Model

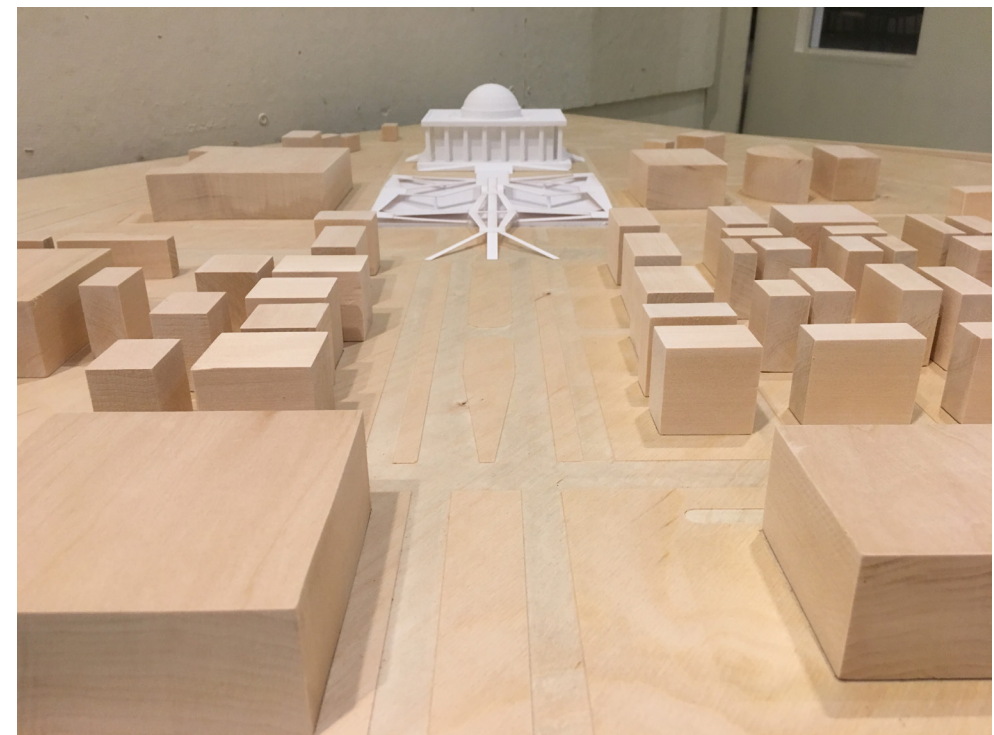


Fig 65. Third Concept Model

By synthesizing ideas from three conceptual models, I developed a more practical model. Four legs support the mega structure with retail space underneath for shopping. Upper floors consist of offices and a plaza for relaxation and small concerts. The top viewing deck is the final destination for visitors where they can see the National Assembly Building from up high. Void spaces of existing cross axis allow visual access between each building, from the subway station, and along the central axis of the original island plan.



Fig 66. Midreview Concept Model



Fig 68. Birdeye View

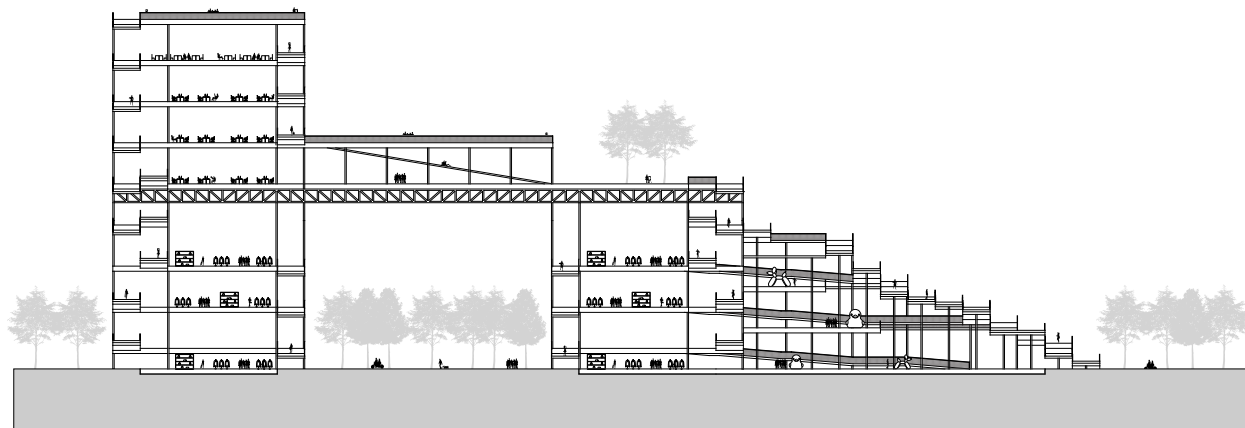


Fig 67. Section of Structural Legs

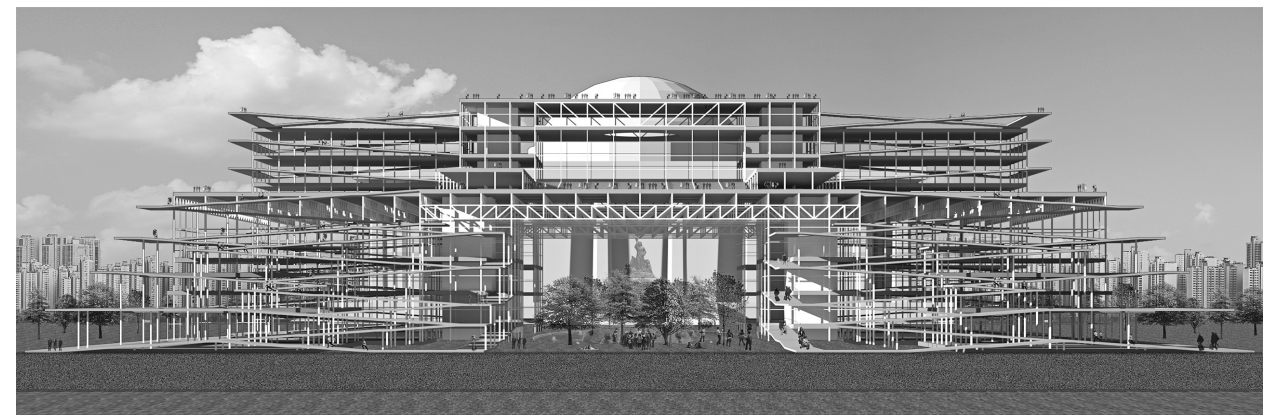


Fig 69. Front View

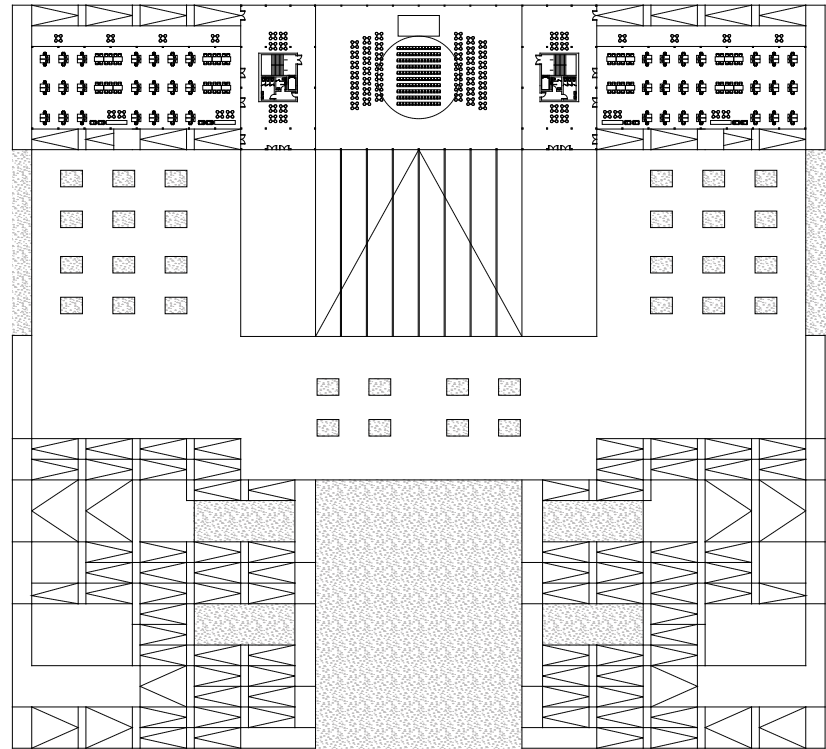


Fig 70. Upper Level Floor Plan

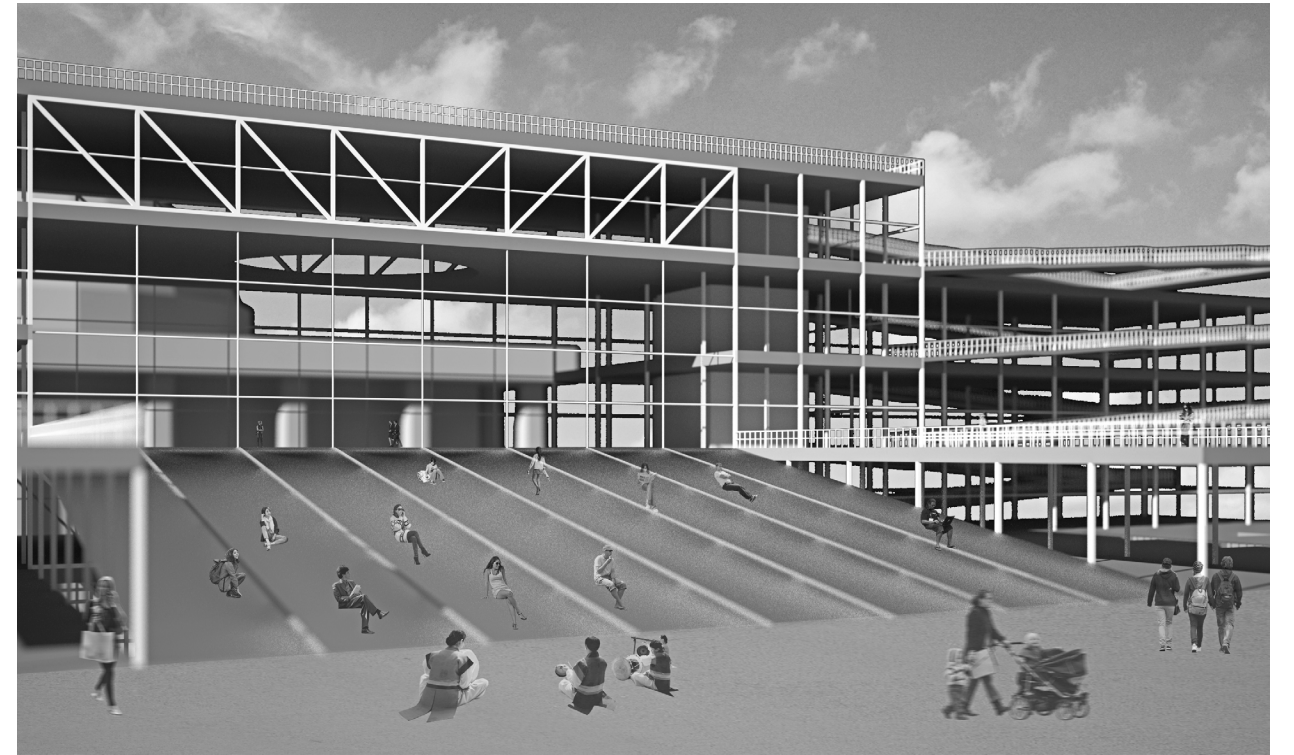


Fig 72. Public Plaza on the Upper Level Platform

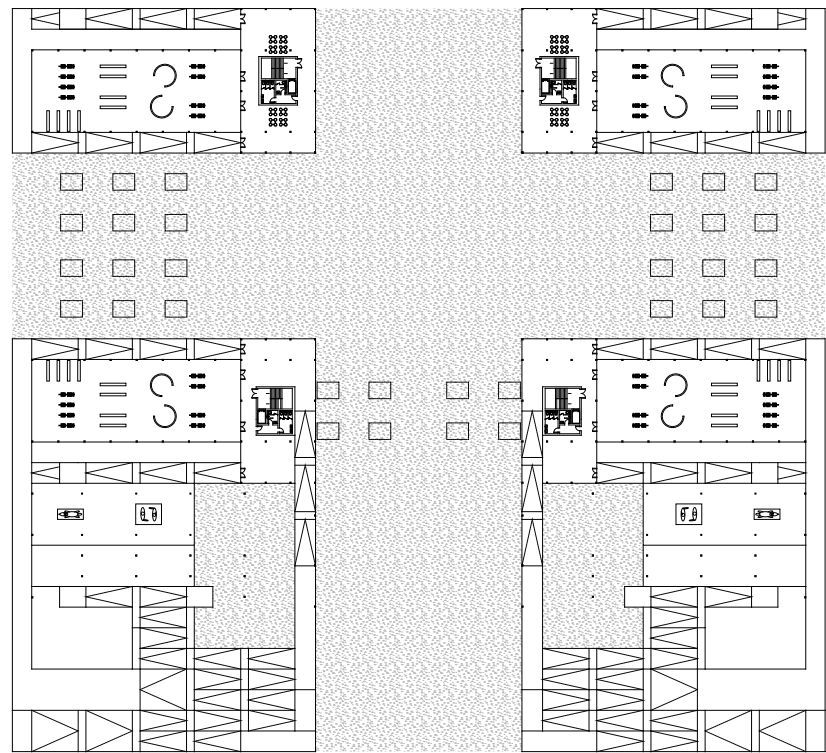


Fig 71. Lower Level Floor Plan

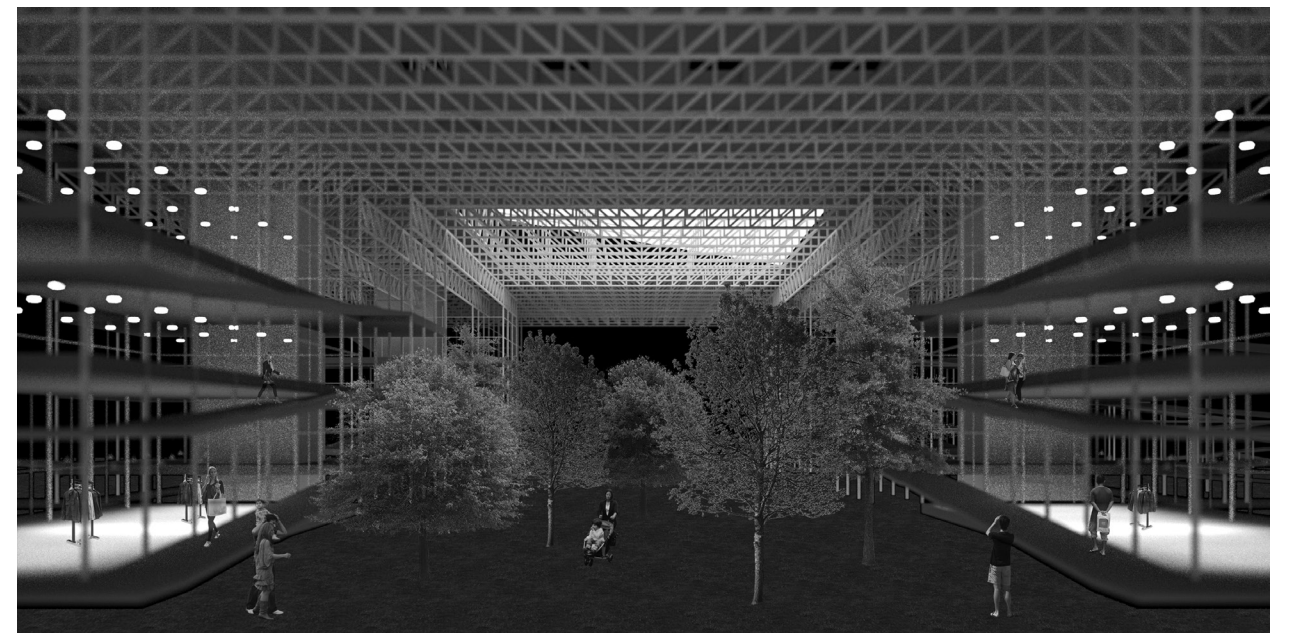


Fig 73. Night View

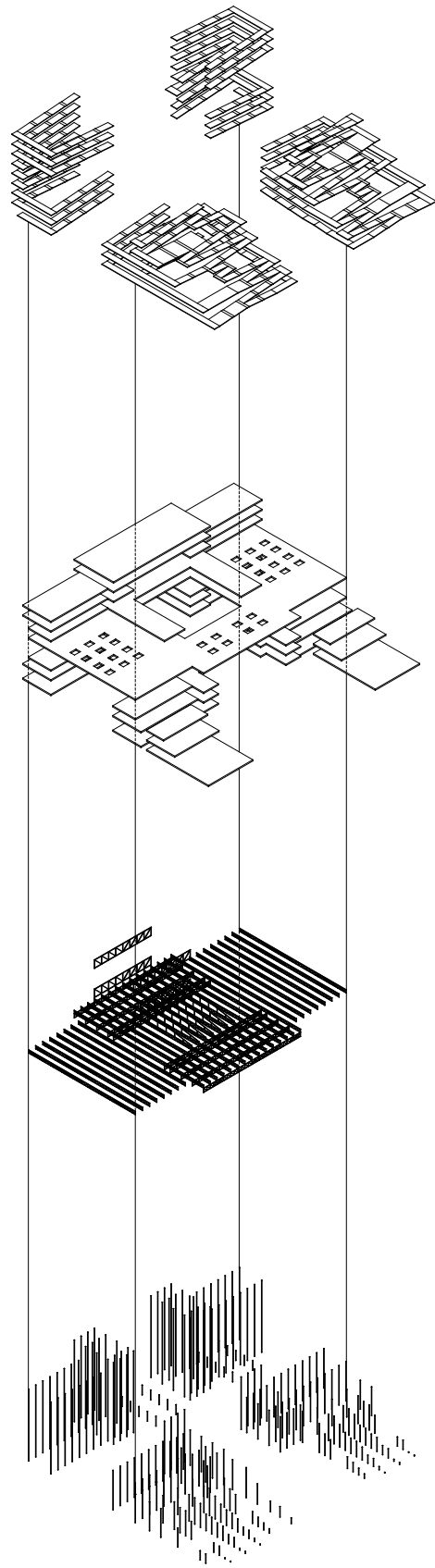


Fig 74. Structure Diagram

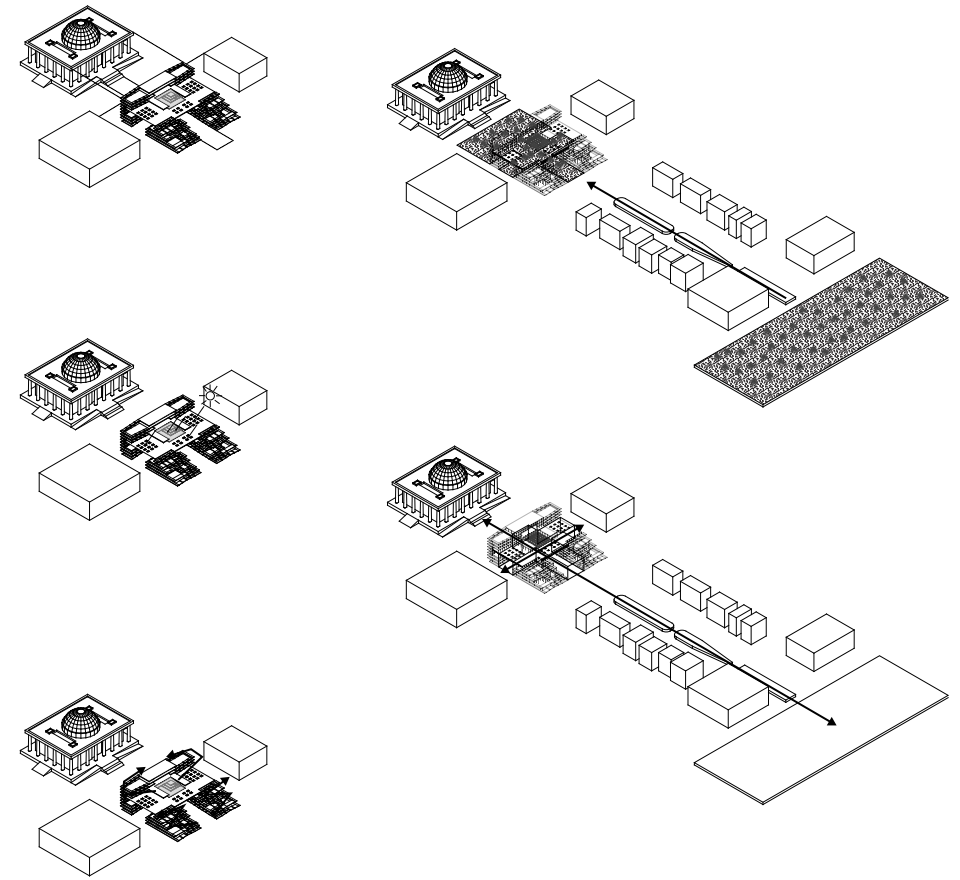


Fig 75. Conceptual Diagrams

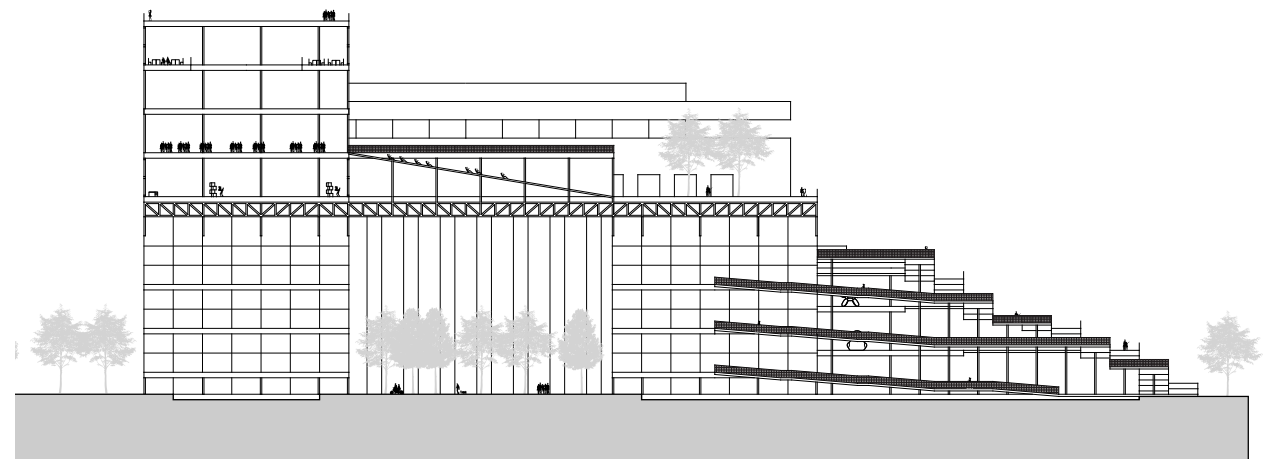


Fig 76. Section of the Public Plaza

Five.

Final Project

Based on the previous studies, I realized that practical, structural, or environmental approaches were not ideal. I decided for my final project to be more abstract so that people can easily understand the conceptual goals of the project. I intended to make accessibility easily apprehensible through both site and building strategies. The project begins with borrowing the architectural elements from the National Assembly Buildings.



Fig 77. Birdeye View of the Existing Site

source: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/cb/c5/ae/cbc5ae3c856121ad6dd95e656bd4c0dc.jpg>

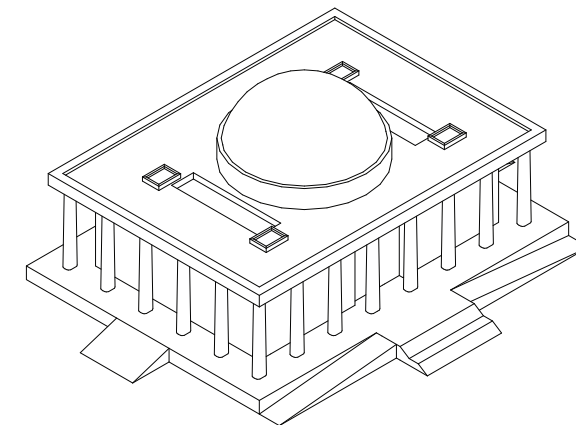


Fig 78. Diagram of the National Assembly Building

Three architectural elements - dome, column, and ramp - symbolize authority in the National Assembly Building. A dome was added at order of General Park, but the public does not easily access it. The column was added as mere ornamentation after the building's proportion changed after adding the dome. The ramp is used for escorting people of power.

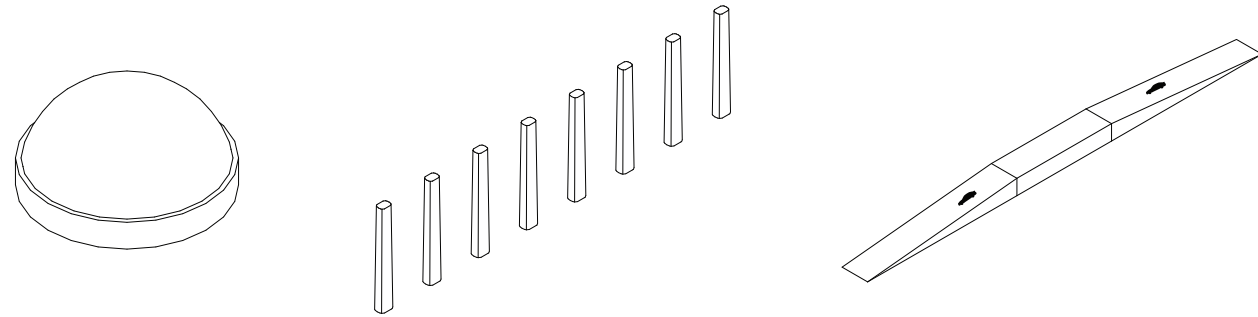


Fig 79. Three Architectural Elements of the National Assembly Building

I am going to use the same three elements in a more accessible and democratic way. The void of the dome transforms into a public space, where people can rest underneath on an inclined surface, play on playgrounds, or skip through fountains. The column – instead of being heavy and decorative – becomes light and structural, accumulating for the visual effect of blurring the façade of the National Assembly building. The ramp becomes fully public. People walk along the ramp to the top viewing deck to see the National Assembly building in different perspective and to interact with other people.

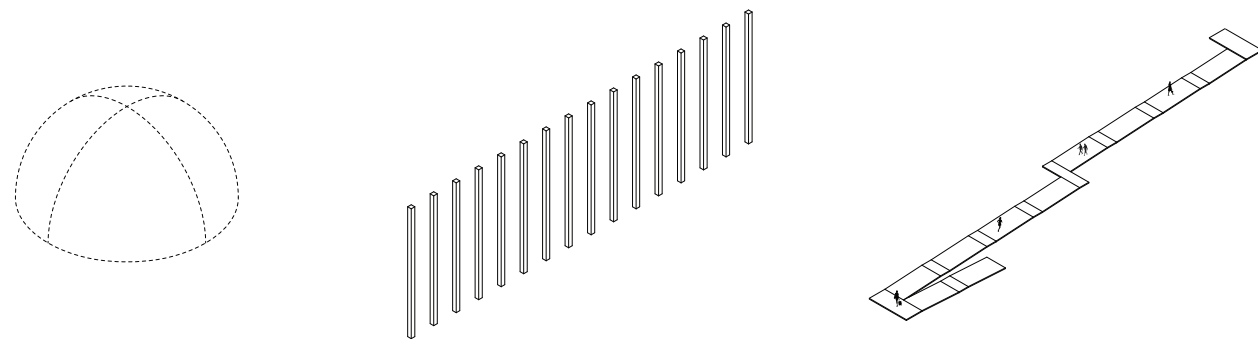


Fig 80. Transformation of Three Architectural Elements

Creating a space of ramps will help people think about the accessibility of the National Assembly. The plaza becomes a place of communication as it establishes a new relationship between the ramp space and the National Assembly.



Fig 81. Birdseye View of the Transformed Plaza

Instead of being a mere vertical circulation device from a floor to another floor, the ramp itself could be designed in different way and acquire a more meaningful status in both functional and symbolic point of view. Columns also symbolically support people's coming to this new space to face the National Assembly in totally different perspectives.



Fig 82. Ramp

It is a public place for families, couples, and friends to enjoy, hang out, and chill. Flat fountains and playground will attract kids to play. Slightly inclined surface allows people to sit or lie down the ground. They could take a rest under the shadows of the grid of the structure.

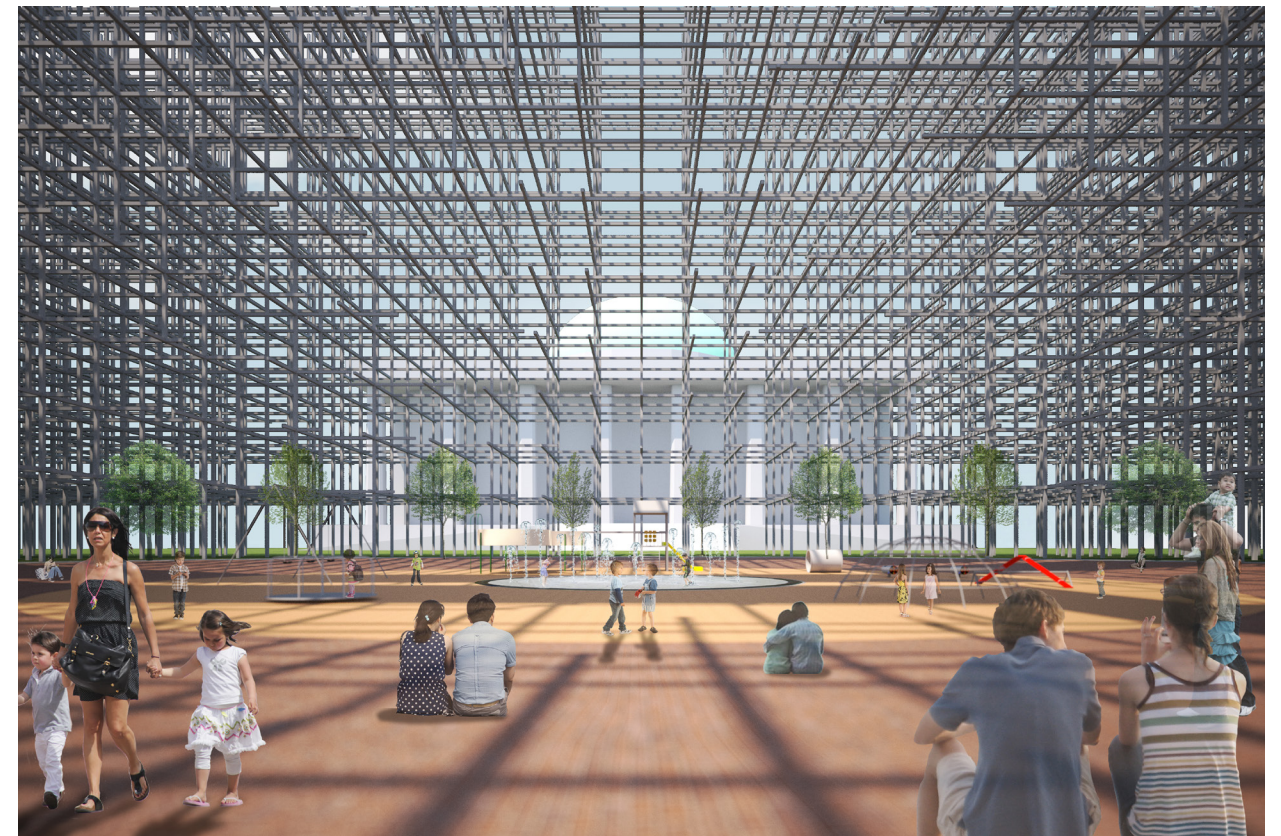


Fig 83. Playground

The structure permits people to improvise and to invent their own views of the National Assembly Building.

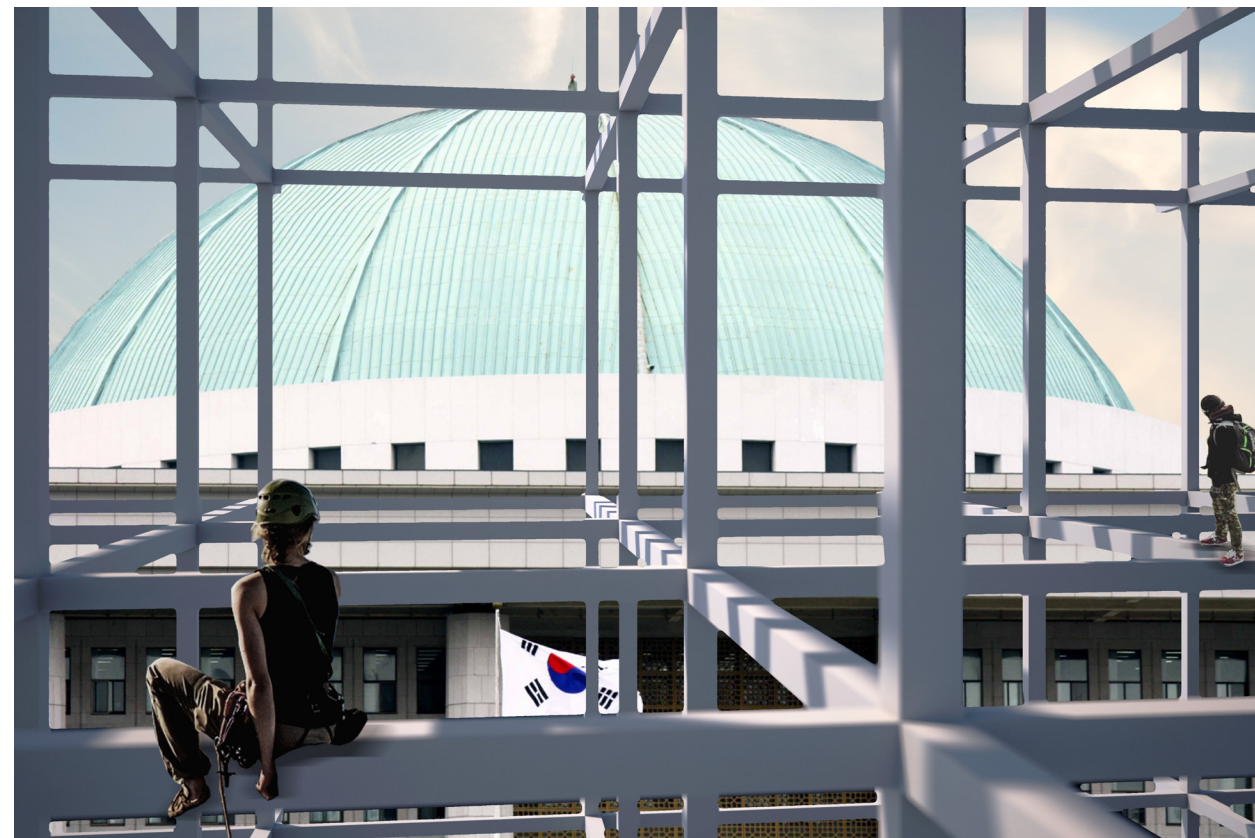


Fig 84. Urban Climbing

What kind of environment will be made through binary opposition of contrasting architecture? Solid, Serious, Classical, Permanent, Heavy, Opaque, Inaccessible, and Authoritative, Versus Void, Playful, Contemporary, Ephemeral, Light, Translucent, Accessible, and Public. The space may facilitate a political dialogue between citizens and the government. Instead of attaching something on the actual National Assembly building, having an equal distance between two architecture is an act of appreciating and respecting the existing history and condition. Instead of proposing revolution, I propose something more in line with the tone of the candle protests. I believe that modest actions can speak in louder and more subversive ways.



Fig 85. Art Spaces

A delicate cloud of white-painted steel bars inspires new readings of the National Assembly. The monumentality of authoritative architecture becomes diluted and blurred through translucent and approachable public space that generates a new image of Korea's political architecture. The fragile cloud of structure appears to merge with the classical structure of the National Assembly, inhabiting it both physically and emotionally.

The temporality of structure and scaffolding will change the façade image of the National Assembly building from timeless and complete to on going and in progress. This architectural enhancement hopefully results in changing people's perception towards the National Assembly; from authoritarian and inaccessible to open and accessible.

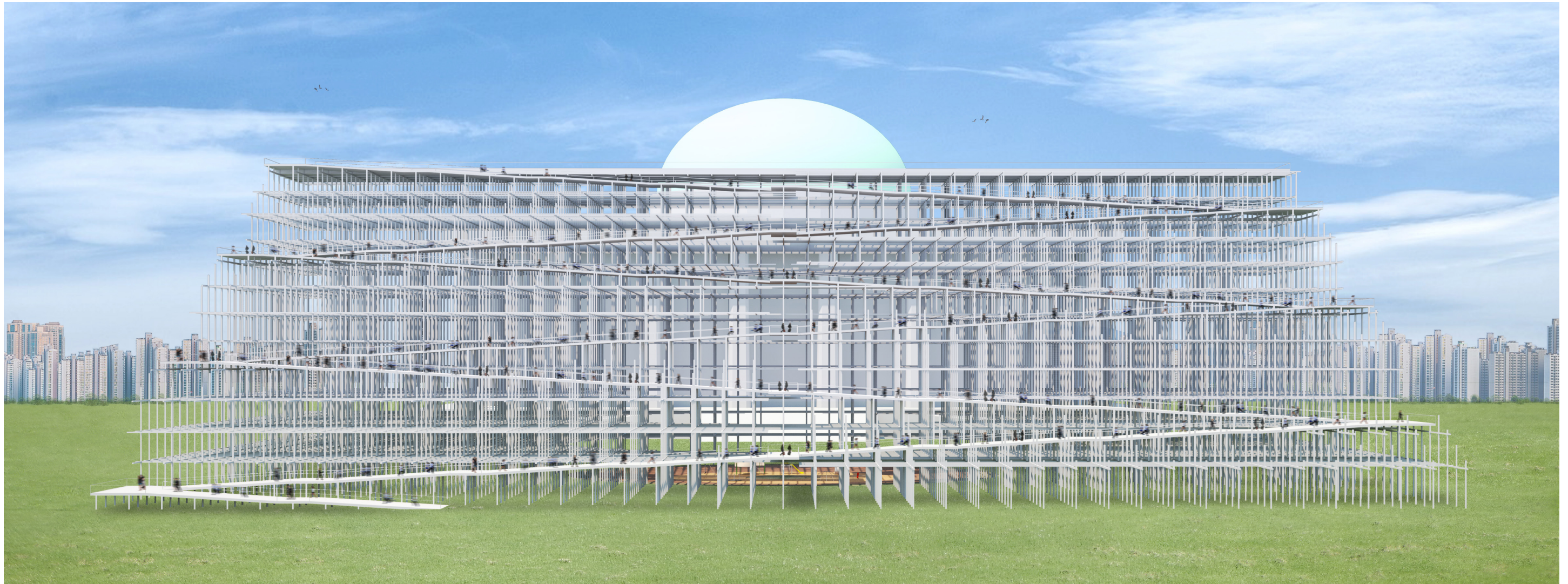


Fig 86. The Blur

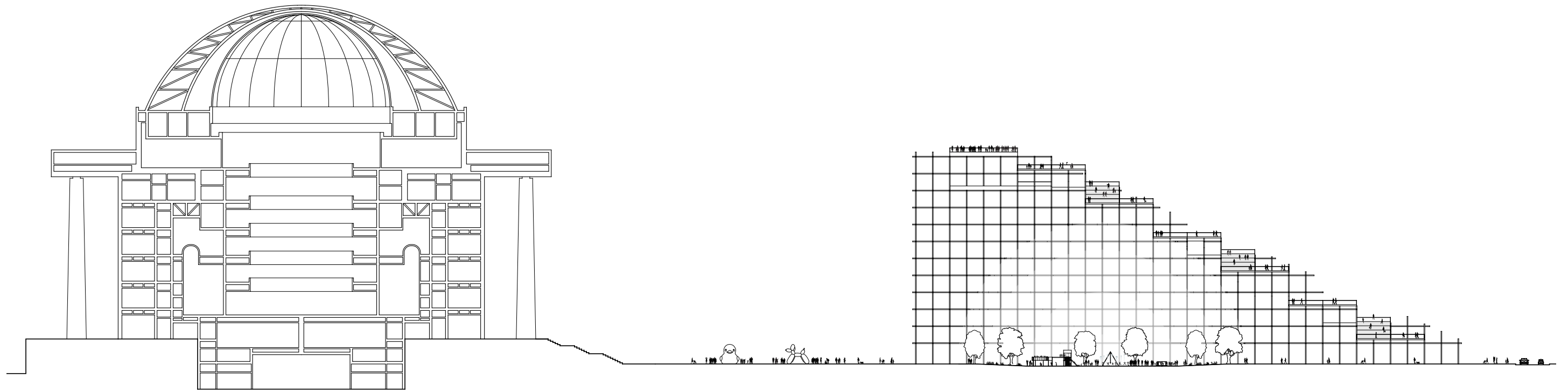


Fig 87. Section

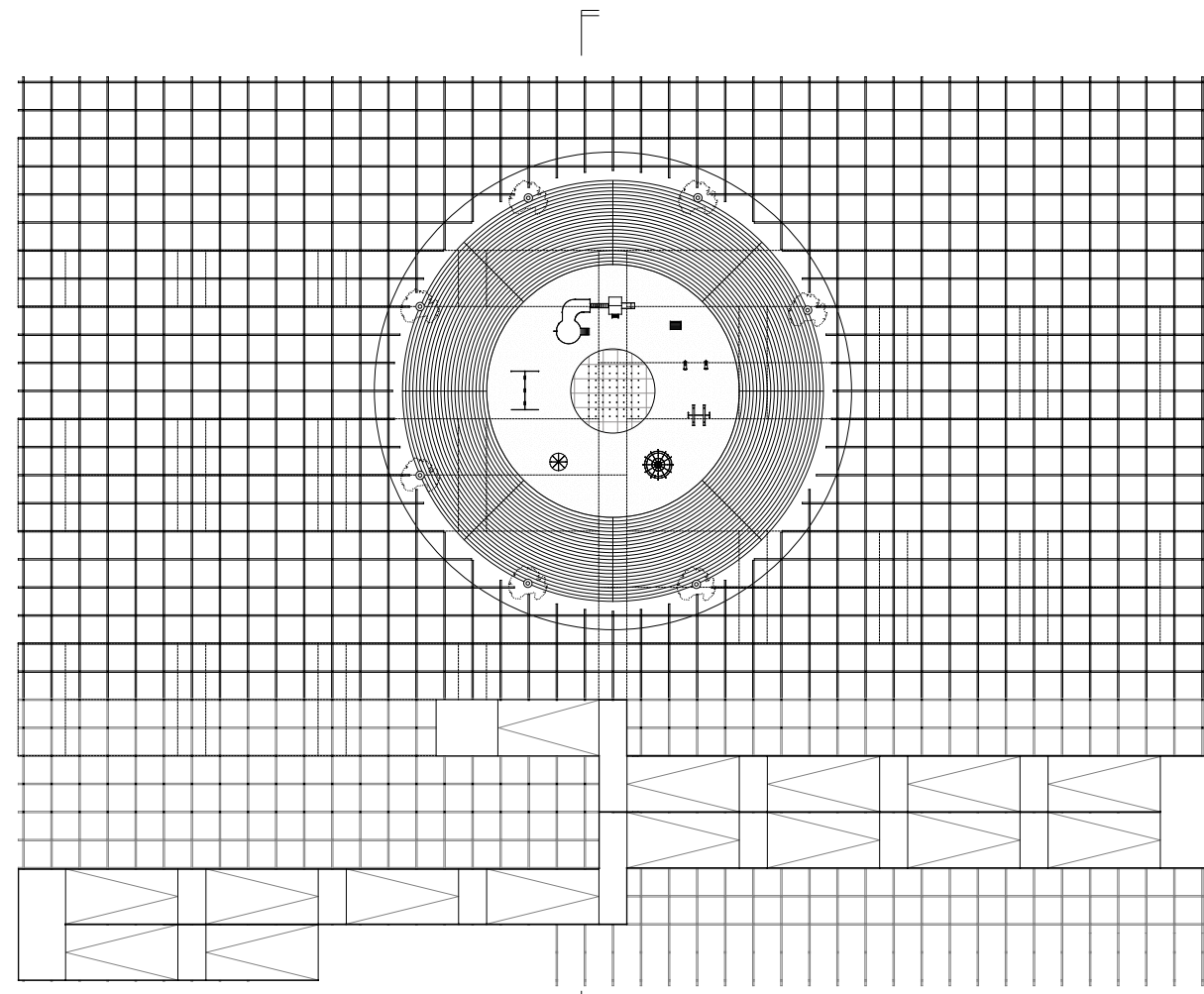


Fig 88. Ground Plan

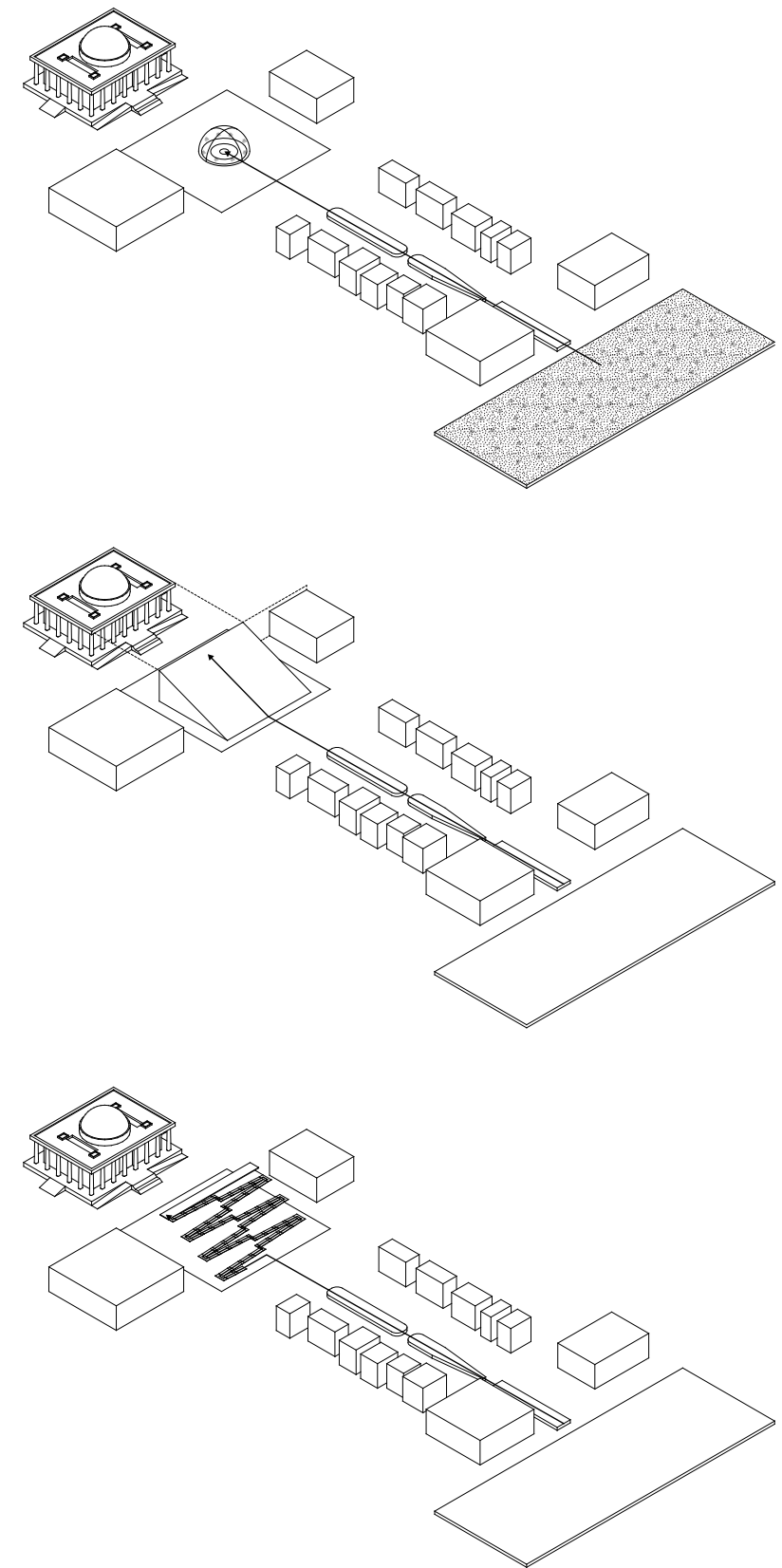
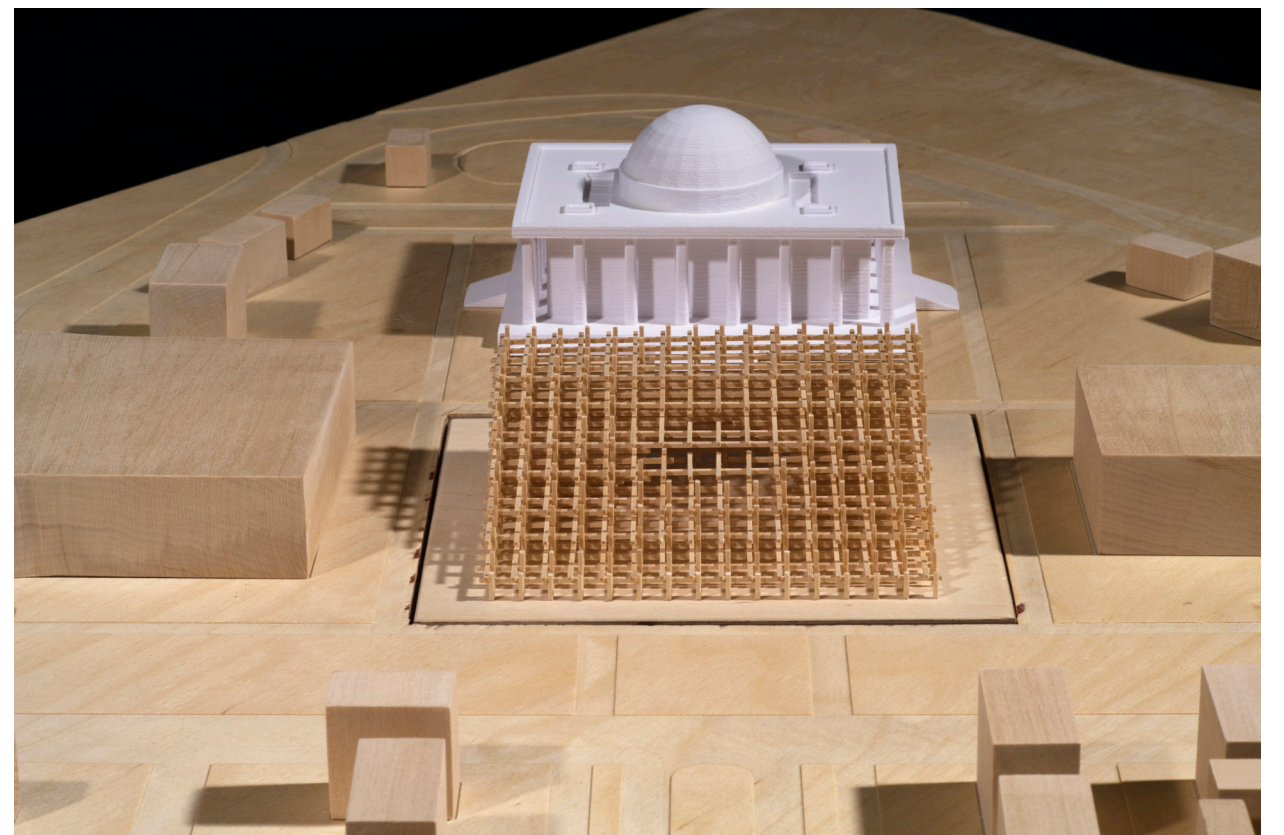
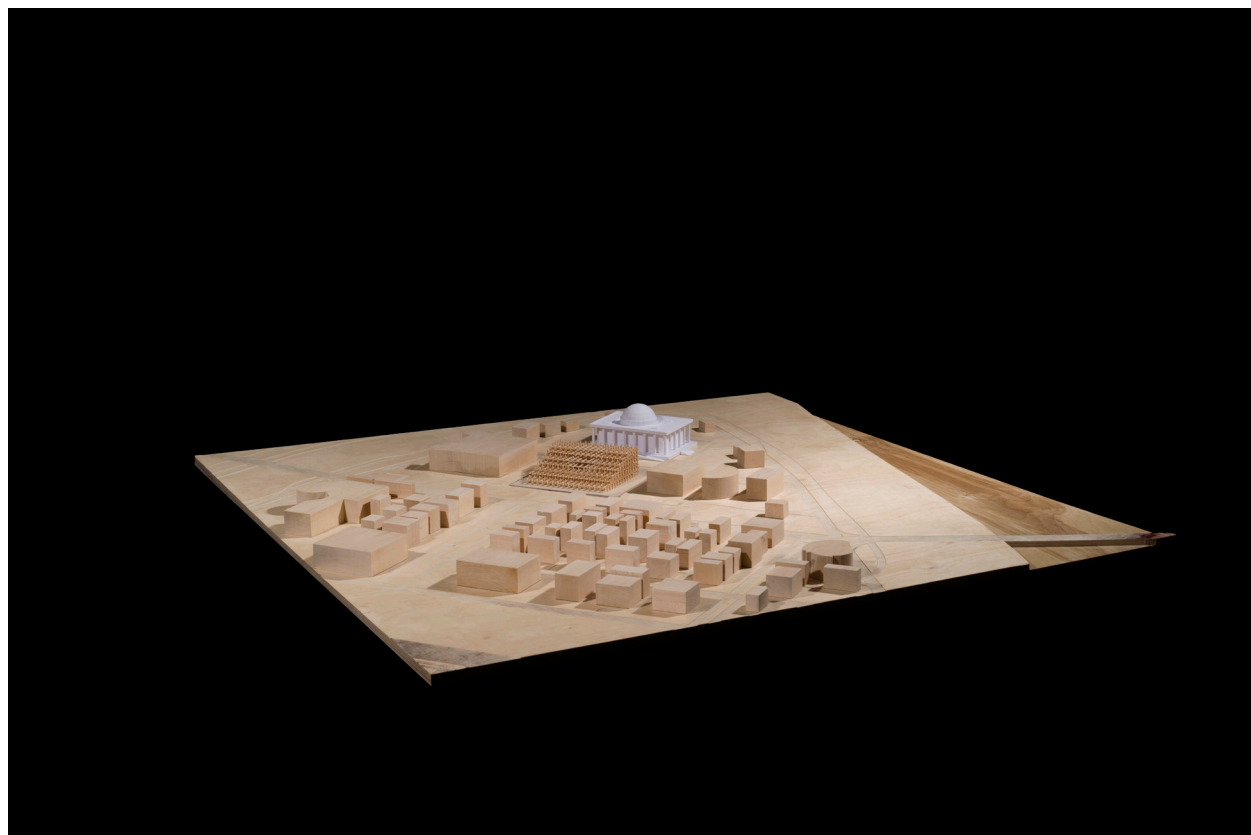
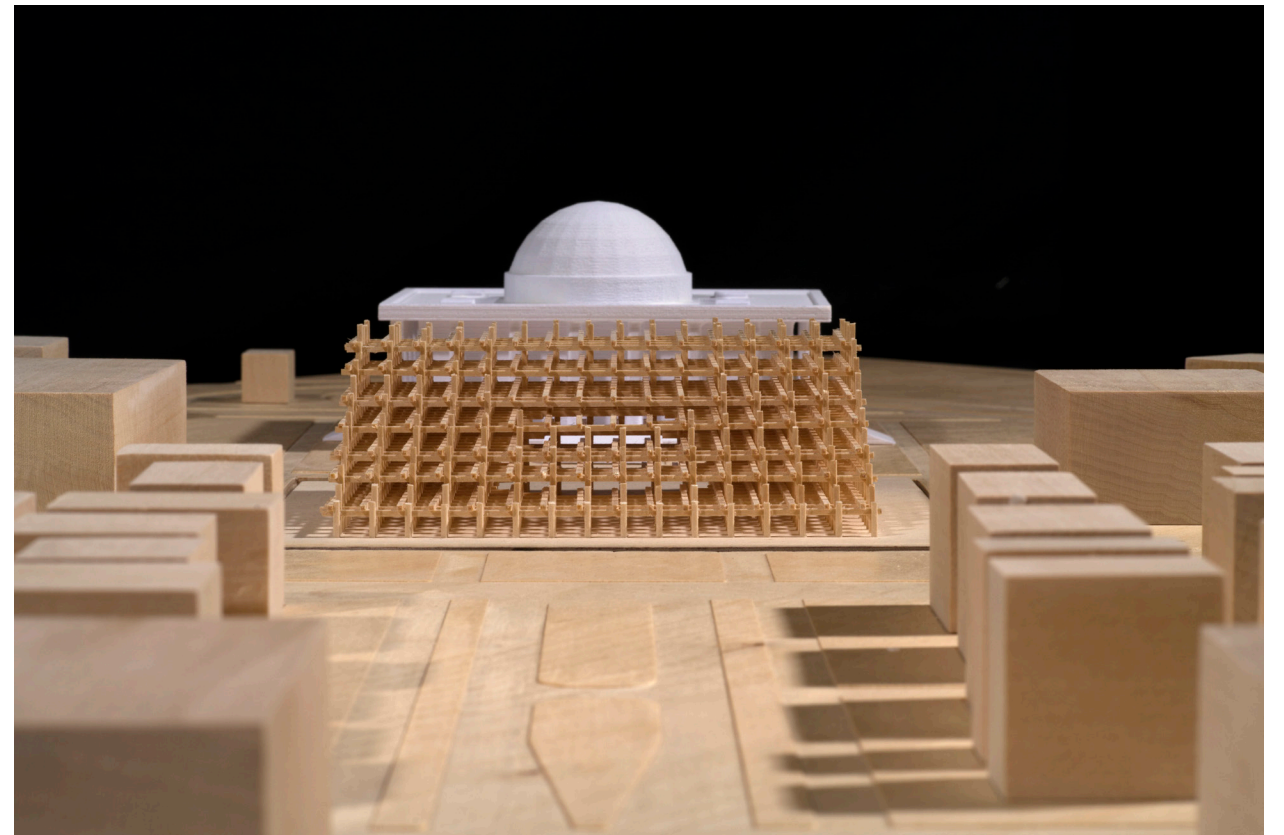


Fig 89. Conceptual Diagrams



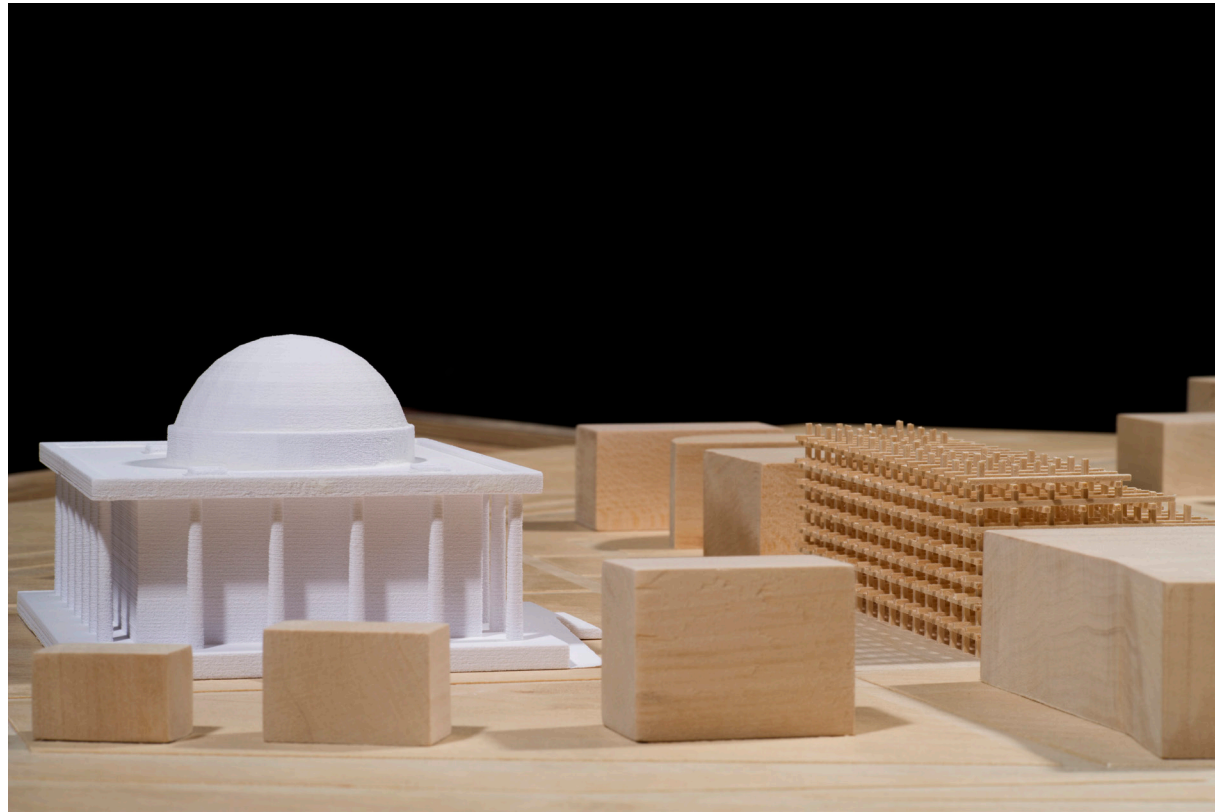


Fig 90. Final Model

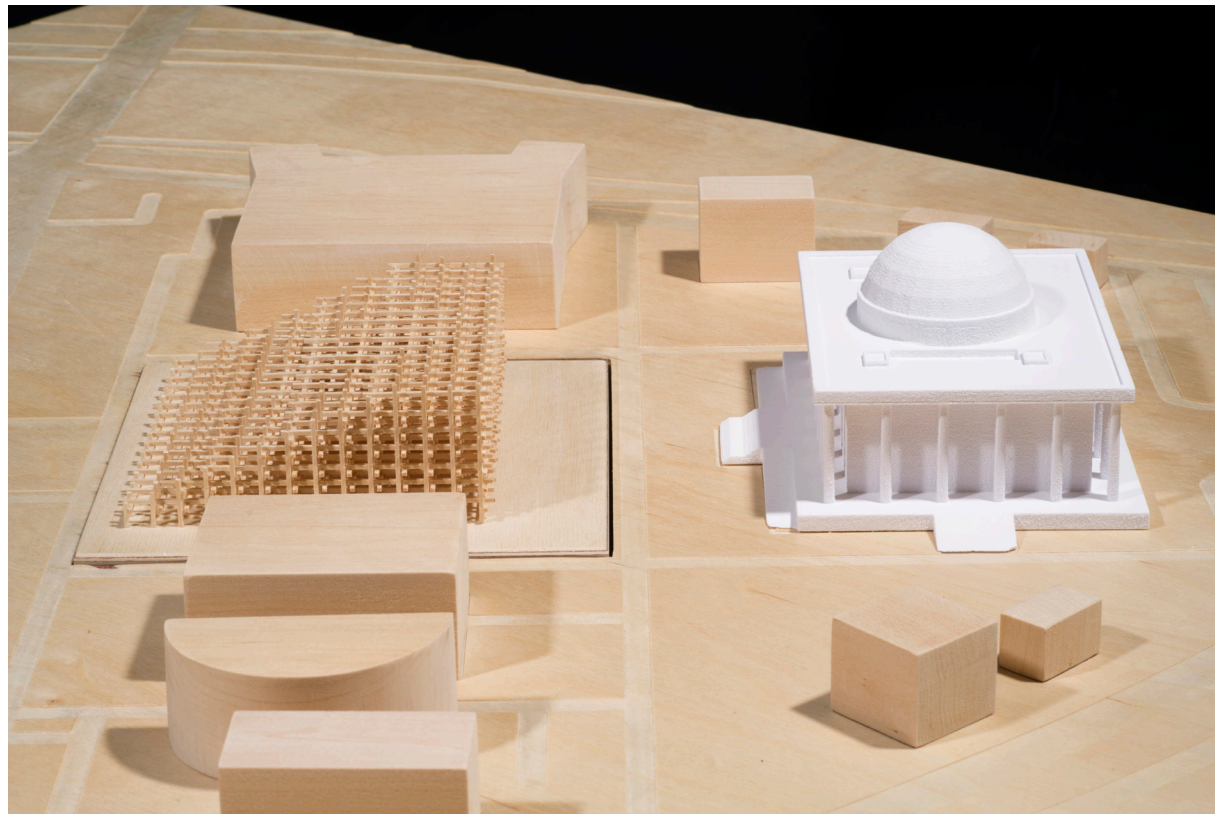


Fig 91. Thesis Defense at 12.21.2017



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