

RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE 'PRESIDENTSPLEIN' (RED SQUARE)

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
RATIONALE.....	3
BACKGROUND.....	4
DEEP MAPPING OF PRESIDENTSPLEIN/RED SQUARE.....	8
The area in front of the Main Building.....	9
The varied materiality of the Square.....	19
The absence of the President CR Swart statue.....	21
The 1938 Centenary Ox-Wagon Trek Monument.....	28
The 'Emerging' Red Square	30
RECLAIMING THE PRESIDENTSPLEIN/RED SQUARE	39
PROCESS IMPLICATIONS	40
CONCLUSION	40
LIST OF REFERENCES	42

INTRODUCTION

This document draws out ways in which the University of the Free State (UFS) may creatively reinterpret, reimagine and re-appropriate aspects of the Red Square (Presidentsplein). With this mind, this document should be read as an exercise in heritage management aimed at further stimulating diversity, inclusivity, and social justice on the Bloemfontein campus. This document should, therefore, be read as a proposal that seeks to activate relevant institutional processes. As such, nothing stated under this proposal has any status other than that of initiating relevant processes as may be determined by applicable institutional structures.

Various suggestions have been made about how the Red Square could potentially be approached. The suggestions should be understood as routes towards inceptual and inclusive praxes. The hope is that this will elicit creative responses that reach across divisions of tradition, culture, gender, and race to inspire shared and re-birthed institutional imaginations that draw from the deep wells of our shared humanity.

In short, the goal of this document is to facilitate discussions aimed at enabling the diverse voices of the UFS to express themselves amidst well-known efforts to reclaim its public spaces for democratic, participatory purposes. So, again, from this vantage point, it is important to restate that this document relates the findings of a hermeneutical exploration. It does not offer a definitive answer nor serve as an ending to the stories of the UFS.

RATIONALE

The ways in which spaces and residues of symbols of the past are reinterpreted and expanded to fit current needs should:

1. represent current realities of how South Africans and members of the University community are striving to achieve participatory democracy marked by nation building and social cohesion.
2. present ideal notions of participatory democracy, and cohesive national identity that are yet to be realized.
3. open artistic spaces for the creative reshaping of the cultural imagination by telling different multifaceted stories of shared histories; and therefore
4. be conducive for teaching, learning, critical thinking, research, engaged scholarship, and dialogue in general—in line with the University's mission and vision.

The UFS Integrated Transformation Plan (ITP) says:

“A transformed university in South Africa will be one which strives for social justice in everything it does. It will be an institution where its diverse people feel a sense of common purpose and where the symbols and spaces, systems and daily practices all reflect commitment to openness and engagement. It will respond to the needs of the local community, while at the same time participating in the global knowledge production. It will be an institution that has engaged actively with its colonial and apartheid legacies, and which recognizes its common humanity and the universal nature of the intellectual endeavour. A transformed university will be a place for competing views, disagreements, and sometimes even discomfort” (UFS, 2017).

The UFS holds that academic excellence together with human dignity can only be achieved in spaces that promote values of participatory democracy, imbued with *ubuntu* in how people

meet and converse. Thus, in addressing its legacy, the University seeks to not merely crudely displace extant histories that painfully recall colonial and apartheid histories and legacies. As an expression of its broader commitment to care - the University seeks to reinterpret, relocate, reimagine, re-appropriate, and re-situate names and symbols to produce a heritage that further stimulates diversity, inclusivity, and social justice. The intention is that the envisioned heritage of the University will be one that enhances its critical research, teaching, engaged scholarship and administrative missions.

BACKGROUND

In tune with the aspirations of the Constitution of South Africa, to build a state founded on the promotion of human rights, human dignity, and participatory democracy; since 2009, the UFS has taken various steps to re-imagine the Red Square. This work is done so that all University places, symbols, and spaces contribute to a broader narrative of shared histories while contributing to the establishment of a democratic and just new Institutional and national culture that is distinct from unjust histories and legacies of apartheid.

One of the key heritage resources on “Presidentsplein” (Red Square) is the Main Building, which was completed in 1909. The Main Building enjoys Provincial Heritage status. Later additions to the Main Building included the North Block, built in 1914, and South Block, erected between 1929 and 1932. Architects of buildings on the Square appear to have sought “to incorporate all the major architectural styles of the western world and South Africa into a harmonious architectural unity” (Van Schoor cited in Fourie, 2006: 20).

The Square also featured the statues of the Presidents M.T. Steyn (erected in 1929) and C.R. Swart (erected 1994)¹. The M.T. Steyn statue, C.R. Swart statue and a 1938 Symbolic Great Trek Commemoration Monument (installed in 1940) are/ were the monuments existent within the “Presidentsplein” (Red Square) space.

The composition of the Square described above tended not only to speak about Afrikaner histories but also affirmed the values and ideals associated with Afrikaner nationalism. As composed above, the space accentuated the significance of Presidents M.T. Steyn and C.R. Swart who were seen to be significant white leaders that advanced the vision of a segregatory notion of nationhood. The idea of an apartheid notion of nationhood is promoted by the way in which the Square also incorporated the 1938 Ox Wagon Trek Monument.

In 2009, in tune with the aspirations of the Constitution of South Africa, to build a state founded on the promotion of human rights, human dignity, and participatory democracy, the University acquired sixteen new contemporary public artworks as part of the Lotto Sculpture-on-Campus Project (2009 – 2012)². This project sought to promote the culture of participatory democracy by promoting notions of ‘meeting’ through, for example, availing through public art, physical

¹ Brenda Schmahmann (2017) argues that the increasing influence of Afrikaner nationalist ideas on the campus of the University of the Free State provided the context for the installation of the MT Steyn statue (in 1929) and Great Trek monument (in 1940). She further notes that the CR Swart statue was installed at a time (1994) when it was clear to many that the ideals held by his representation were not consistent with the social justice agenda of Higher Education.

² The project was initiated to create an enabling environment which promoted a greater understanding, respect, and appreciation of cultural differences. It was inspired by the creation of an array of humanising spaces, designed to enrich the educational and multicultural experience of students and staff by stimulating dialogue and providing a setting for discourse.

spaces or areas in ways that promote dialogue; and ‘conversation’, by eliciting discussion and critical thinking by the agency of pertinent and striking nature of the subject matter of the public art. This project also included the installation of the contemporary sculpture, *The Thinking Stone*, commissioned to enhance the multicultural experience of students and staff at the Square, and to challenge extant nationalist political symbols.

Recent developments in the Square, which were spurred on by student demands for the decolonisation of the University, include the University’s donation of the statue of C.R. Swart to the Voortrekkers Farm. Approval for relocating the statue to the Doornkloof Voortrekker Farm was granted by the Free State Heritage Resources Authority after the statue was dismantled and removed after the Shimla Park Incident. The University also facilitated the relocation of the M.T. Steyn statue to the Anglo-Boer War Museum. This entailed thorough legal and consultative processes that led to approval being granted by the Free State MEC for Sports, Arts, Culture & Recreation.

To further re-humanise the space and the Bloemfontein campus at large, the University has also established a sustainable indigenous and waterwise garden at the Square.



Drone photo of the Square in 2017



Drone photo of the Square, April 2021



This document aims to present the perspective of the UFS with respects to the reimagination and heritage management of the Presidentsplein, an area at the University's Bloemfontein campus that is commonly called The Red Square. The document will therefore:

1. proffer a deep mapping³ of the Red Square to draw out a close reading of the character of the place—its sensibilities, embodied experiences and lived historicity, and to explore the context from a wide range of perspectives.

³ This brief deep mapping applies interdisciplinary and critical methodologies. It therefore moves beyond the quantitative focus that has dominated 'site analysis' and 'cartographic mapping' efforts for so long. It aims to draw close to the character of the place, its lived sensibilities, embodied experiences and lived historicity, and explores the context from a wide range of perspectives. It is difficult to define deep mapping. In fact, Roberts (2016) have speculated that it is of little use to define deep mapping, since it is often a case of responding critically to the hegemony of representation. In general, the move is from realistic representation to multi-faceted, open-ended revelation. If mapping is generally seen as a representation of the physical features of a region and their spatial relationships, then deep mapping tries to understand the lived spatiality of a place as a regioning of concerns. However, if deep mapping is to provide a wider perspective, then (of course) it need not dismiss traditional means of mapping.

2. contribute new creative possibilities to explain how the University can further reclaim the Square for democratic purposes; and
3. present an overview of key implications of this process of re-imagining the Square, and how this could be foreseen in the future.

DEEP MAPPING OF PRESIDENTSPLEIN/RED SQUARE

The Red Square in front of the Main Building of the UFS is generally perceived as the main ceremonial space of the University. Despite past efforts to 'rebrand' the Square, most people know the space as the Red Square. The open space is demarcated by the Equitas Building, the Johannes Brill Building, the Idahlia Loots Building, the H. van der Merwe-Scholtz Hall and the Main Building (which dominates the space). Towards the east, the u-shaped layout of these buildings opens with an expansive view towards the CBD of Bloemfontein. On a clear day, one can see all the way to the Black Mountain at Thaba 'Nchu. One can therefore argue that visual underpinnings exist for approaching the Red Square as a symbolic unifying space within the Mangaung Metro.

While the effort of deep mapping inevitably draws from the whole of the above-described ensemble, three focus areas are highlighted (see Figure 1). These areas are of particular concern due to their heritage associations. Although these highlighted areas could be seen as potential spaces for intervention, the entire Square must be considered in its totality and in a concurrent manner to transform the lived experience of students and staff on the Square. One such area, for example, is the so-called "The Gallery" (located adjacent to the fountain) which could be enhanced with subtle creative interventions to complement the other areas.

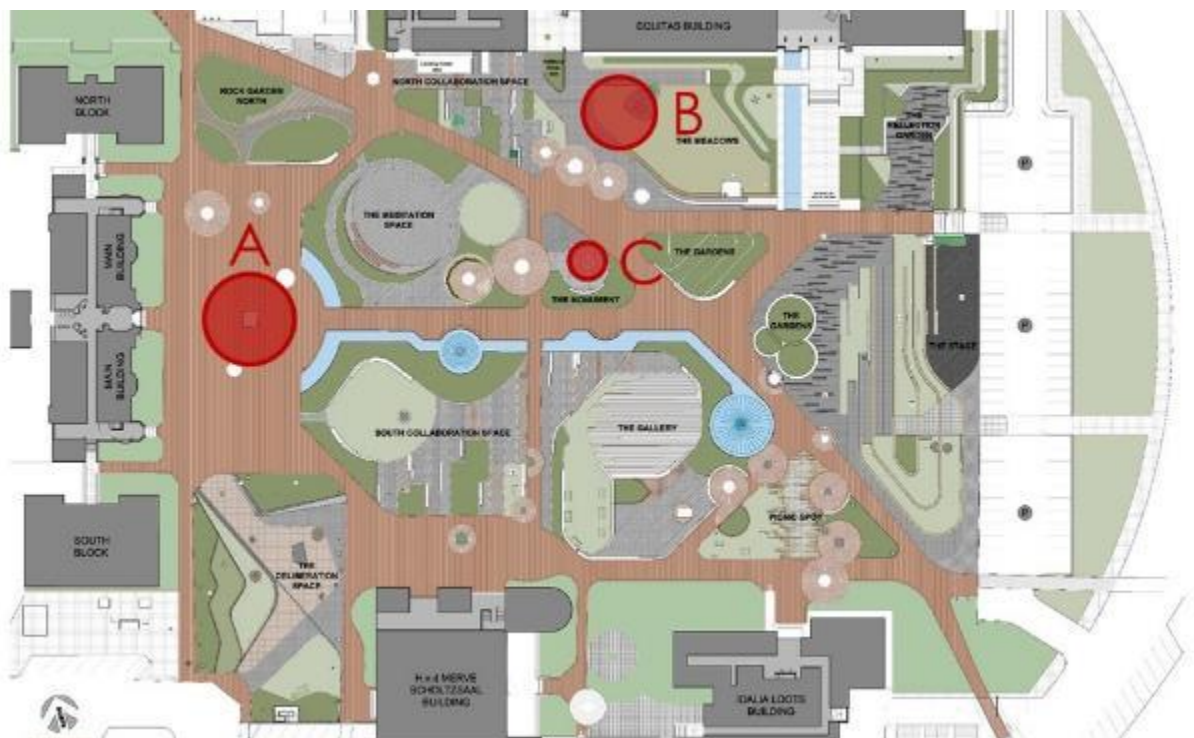


Figure 1: The new layout of the Red Square. The three focus areas (important due to their heritage associations) are highlighted. A: The position of the President MT Steyn Statue (relocated), B: The position of the President CR Swart statue (relocated), and C: The position of the 1938 Centenary Ox-Wagon Trek Monument (DESTUDIO Architects).

The area in front of the Main Building

Of particular interest is the general historical development of the Red Square and focus on the area in front of the Main Building. This area includes the previous position of the President M.T. Steyn Statue.

Figure 2 is one of the earliest photographs documenting the landscape which would eventually house the UFS. From this photograph one can imagine that for some years after the completion of the Main building in c. 1909, it essentially stood in the veld – in the Free State landscape (Figure 3). The potency of the Free State landscape runs deep. It is an aspect of the province which President Nelson Mandela remembered most vividly: “The province of the Orange Free State has always had a magical effect on me ... With its flat dusty landscape as far as the eye can see, the great blue ceiling above, the endless stretches of yellow mealie fields, scrub and bushes, the Free State’s landscape gladdens my heart no matter what my mood. When I am there, I feel like nothing can shut me in, that my thoughts can roam as far and wide as the horizons” (Mandela, 1994:160).



Figure 2: View from Bloemfontein to the west c. 1902. The area in the foreground would be developed into King Edward VII Park in the following years. In 1905, 300 acres west of the Park (presumably on the horizon in this photograph) was granted as new home for Grey College (MM 1905: 18) and, eventually, the University of the Free State. On the back of the photograph is written “The willows are seen on the left of the picture. Alongside (the white streak stretching from left to right) is No. 8 General Hospital of the British Army” (Collection of the photographer of The Friend, FSPAR, Box: A566/443).



Figure 3: The newly completed Main Building and ManneteHuis (Later, in 1922, named, House Abraham Fischer) set in the Free State grass veld (FSPAR, Photograph no: VA 8132). 1909.

Of course, the ellipse in the quoted statement indicates that a fragment of the quoted text is omitted. The omitted text is sobering and saddening. The full quote begins as follows: “The province of the Orange Free State has always had a magical effect on me, though some of the most racist elements of the white population call the Free State their home. With its flat dusty landscape as far as the eye can see ...” (Mandela, 1994:160). What is sobering and saddening is to realise that the history of colonialism and apartheid so blighted Mandela’s experiences of the landscape that it worked to shut down experiences of freedom that were otherwise engendered by the liberating openness of the landscape.

In a different era to that in which Mandela wrote the above passage, at the UFS, it is now a thoroughgoing aspiration to re-create a liberating openness that can overcome colonial, apartheid, patriarchal and other forms of stifling, stagnancy inducing, and misanthropy-imposing-thinking-and-practices which has had some expression in the spatial design of campuses. This aspiration has had some expression on the UFS Bloemfontein campus. Consider, for instance, the network of red walkways created as a phased rollout since 2002 on the Bloemfontein campus (Figure 6). Initially an approach formulated by Prof. Bannie Britz, these walkways evolved from studying the current use of spaces and then aiming to dignify the way people walk across them.

The walkways were also enlivened by adding small pockets of stationary space where paths crossed or changed direction. These ‘eddies’ in the river were envisioned as places where dialogue, debate and other kinds of critical engagement could take place. A goal that aligns with current concerns. Yet, when it was necessary, Prof. Britz would boldly carve new shortcuts for students, like the route from the back of the Agriculture Department to the Akasia residence. In contrast to this evolving network, the main paths present in the 1936 map (highlighted in red on Figure 5) show a very different approach. Long axial power statements and even two thirds of the fabled *patte d’oie* (goose foot), a three-pronged urban layout made famous in Versailles and other Baroque palaces, can be observed; radiating power from the

centre into eternity (Figure 4). The 2016 map (Figure 6) shows a much more integrated network, in contrast to the impositions of the 1936 map.



Figure 4: The three tree planted boulevards of the patte d'oie (goose foot) radiating out from the Sun King at Versailles.

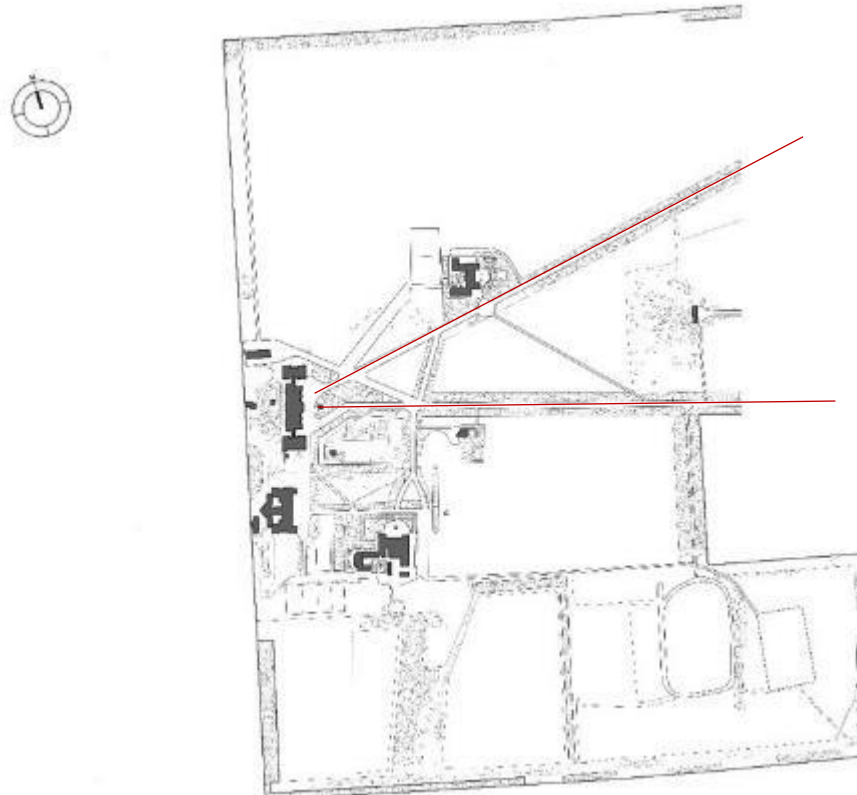


Figure 5: UFS Bloemfontein campus in 1936 (Auret). The Main Building becomes the focus for culminating routes.

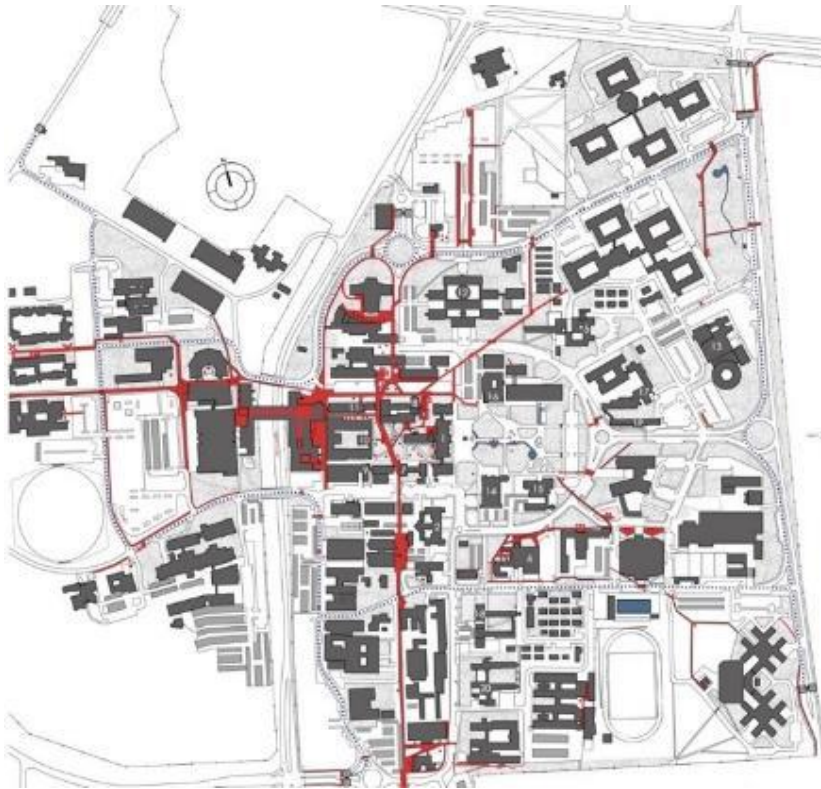


Figure 6a: UFS Bloemfontein campus in 2016. All new walkways and benches (red dots) built since 2002 indicated in red. The Red Square is still in its 'Presidentsplein layout'. Some of the more recent red paths have deviated sharply from the initial intentions of Prof. Britz, as directed by Prof then Vice Rector Neil Viljoen and Rector Fredrick Fourie, and merely follow the road, instead of envisioning new possibilities for pedestrians. Some of the new paths continue to follow the planning intentions of Prof Britz as one can see in the social area behind the Main Building, at the Mooimeisies Fontein, etc.



Figure 6b

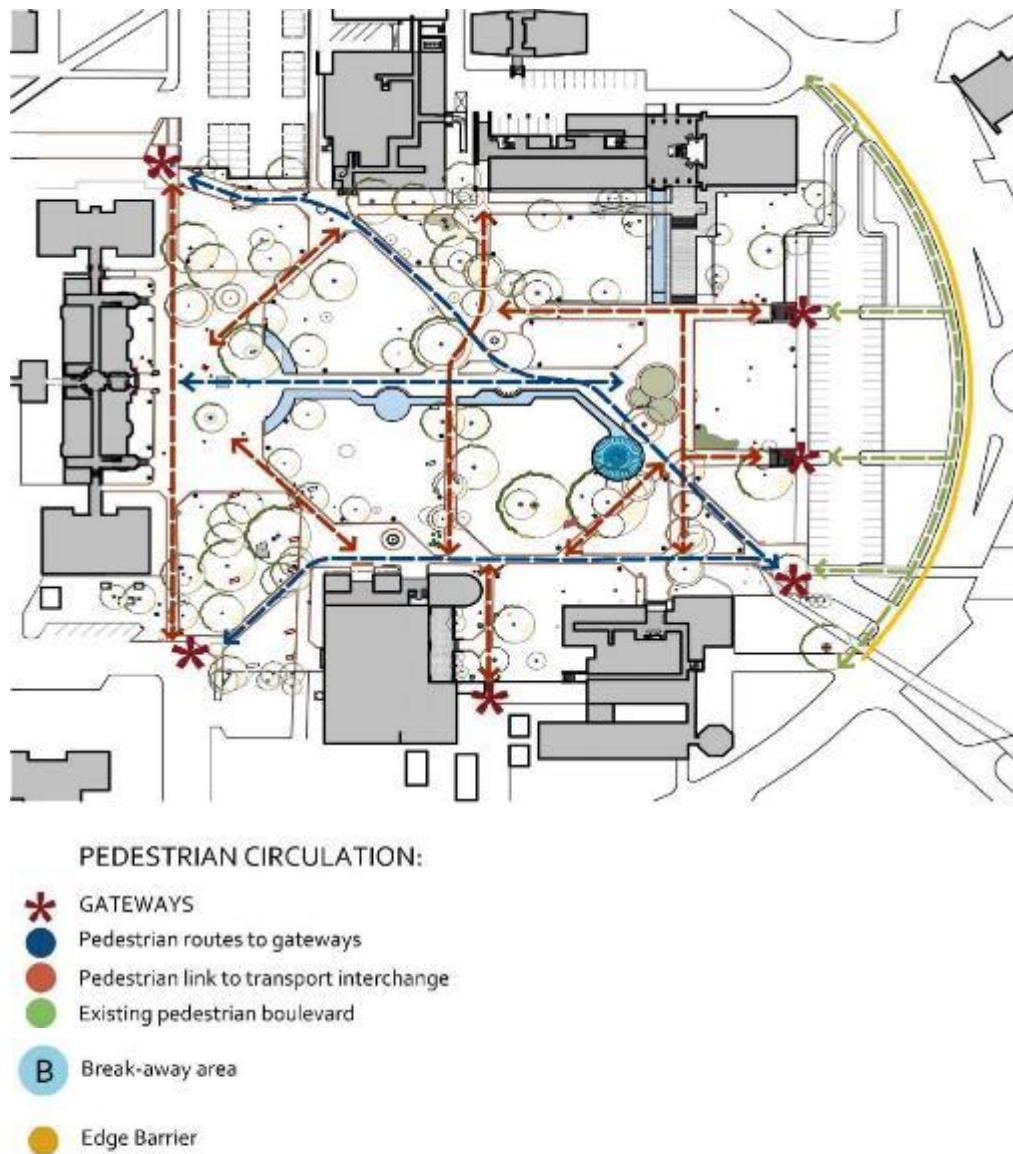


Figure 6c: Credit for image: DeStudio Architects

The pedestrian route system designed and implemented in the era of Prof Frederik Fourie and the late Professor Britz, started with the main building - resurrecting it as the focus of the campus and gradually circled outward to include ever larger areas of connectedness. All major pedestrian routes as envisaged by the above-mentioned endeavour were implemented. To improve the 'legibility' of the campus, the primary/main pedestrian routes were paved with red pavers and the secondary routes were built with grey pavers.

The provision of safe pedestrian routes was symbolic of a decision to reclaim the campus for pedestrians and to keep vehicle traffic as far possible to the edges of the campus. A recent addition of a tactile paving system significantly enhances the navigability of the campus (and the Square specifically) for pedestrians with sight impairments and speaks to the guiding principles of the UFS regarding transformation, inclusivity and care.



Figure 6d

From a spatial perspective, the recent removal of the President M.T. Steyn statue could be seen as an opportunity to reinterpret the space in front of the Main Building to recall something of the landscape-embedded, liberating openness in which the Main Building once found itself.

Due to its topological location (on the 'Bult') the Red Square's heritage landscape not only includes its physical reality, but also the views it enables (Figure 7, Figure 8 and Figure 9). These views often include more historical density than evident at first glance.



Figure 7: On the Red Square the urban axis of St Andrew's Street culminates in the Main Building. On a clear day one can even see the Black Mountain of Thaba 'Nchu on the horizon; a view which visually unites the Mangaung Metro. But, with the help of perspective, one can see that the alignment is not precise, as evident in this historical aerial photograph.

Figure 8 shows the axis leading up to the Main Building from a bird's eye perspective. Suddenly the slight misalignment of the University's axis (hardly noticeable on plan) is rendered obvious.



Figure 8: Bloemfontein from the air c. 1930. From this perspective the slight misalignment in the St Andrew's Street axis is exaggerated (FSPAR, Photograph no: VA 5828).

Some views (Figure , Figure and Figure) seem innocuous, but hide latent histories.



Figure 9: In the distance one can see the Free State Stadium and remember the 2010 Soccer World Cup, where Bloemfontein found creative ways to re-use their old stadium rather than building a new stadium (as so many other Metro's did). Looming in the distance stand the cooling towers of the third power station. At the foot of one of these cooling towers stands the Wesleyan School building in which the ANC was founded in 1912. Due to the obscurity of its location the school building was spared, but the Wesleyan Church (which was demolished to build a commercial building on the corner of the site), and the adjacent St Patrick's church was less fortunate. To build the third cooling tower in c.1953 authorities had to demolish the old St Patrick's Church (on the right), once one of the key buildings of Waaihoek.



Figure 10: (Left) Close at hand stands the H. van der Merwe-Scholtz Hall, a gathering place, but also a building designed by the famous Church architect, Gerard Moerdijk ... the man who also designed the Voortrekker Monument. (Right) On the southern edge of the square stands the Administration Building. Even this building has an obscure reference beyond itself. The footprint of this building is eerily like the footprint of the most prominent administration building in Bloemfontein, The Verwoerd Building (now OR Tambo House).



Figure 11: Aerial photographs of the Administration Building (left) and OR Tambo House (right) (Google Earth).



Figure 12: Mid-century Maitland Street (now Charlotte Maxeke Street). Notice how the silhouette of the old Government Building (a tower reconstructed by the British after the 1907 fire during the Imperial Summer) has been obscured by the bulk of the Verwoerd Building (now OR Tambo House). In this case, the heritage density of the street has been diminished by contemporary investments and concerns (Collection of the photographer of The Friend, FSPAR, Box: A566/449).

The varied materiality of the Square

The Square also tells different stories through its materiality; from artificial pragmatics to artistic appropriations to various brick narratives (Figure 14 - 17).



Figure 13: Late afternoon sunlight animates all textures on the site, both the seam in the artificial grass (left) and the lines etched on the Thinking Stone (right). On the right example, we are reminded of the presence of the First People of South Africa, and the ways in which their symbols were incorporated into their everyday practices and had a deep relationship with nature. For instance, the rock engravings at Driekopseiland are at times hidden by site conditions, like the direct light of midday, a cloudy day or a flood covering the island. At other times their works are celebrated and accentuated by natural phenomena like a thin film of water or low angle rays of the sun in the morning or the evening.



Figure 14: Granite insertions in the everyday (left), 'real' concrete bricks and fake concrete stones (middle), brick bricks and fake concrete bricks (right). How much can we read into the materiality of the Square?



Figure 15: The Square also contains many instances where materials are used in ways which fall outside their normal use. Sometimes with innovative/endeearing outcomes, but at other times resulting in poor finishes.



Figure 16: Bricks cut into unfeasibly small segments resulting in a poor junction (left) and a seemingly random stone incorporated at the base of a column.



Figure 17: An ensemble of manhole covers on the Red Square, even one from Limpopo.

The Red Square therefore raises interesting questions at the intersection of maintenance, materiality, idealism, pragmatism, symbolism, historicity, obscured historical connections and the potential for participation.



Figure 18: Names mean things, but it seems as if the naming intentions of university branding campaigns have been thwarted in the past by student initiatives. Students know the place as the Red Square. No evidence could currently be found in the public domain that the Red Square is called Presidentsplein by students, staff, or any other stakeholder.

The absence of the President CR Swart statue

In February 2016 the statue of President C.R. Swart was forcefully removed from its granite seat by protesting students. What remained on site for a period (several months after), were the broken granite boulders covered in graffiti as a marker of the events which had occurred, and which was a symbol of the students' call for transformation. After negotiations to donate the statue concluded, the statue and the granite boulders were subsequently removed and areas around were upgraded with new paving and seating.

In 2020, at the time when the site-visits for the deep mapping were conducted, the plaque for the tree planted by C.R. Swart had been moved to prevent damage in the course of landscaping work that was in progress and it was placed casually against a tree (Figure 21).

Obviously, this situation was temporary. Heritage legislation requires the University to appropriately recognise the previous location of the heritage object. What is required is a 'marker' as an indicator of the fallen statue to add to the heritage density of the space. Indeed, by April 2021 the plaque had been re-installed and was being protected from any harm that could befall it on account of ongoing landscaping activities.



Figure 19: Plaque for the tree planted by CR Swart.



Figure 20: The tree planted by CR Swart (in the centre of the frame), with the re-installed plaque barely visible in front (and to the right) of it.

This should not be a marker which replaces one symbol with another nor celebrates a “lost” statue (for example in the form of a plaque), but a creative intervention which is integrated into the overall conceptual logic of the Square and speaks to UFS core values. One could, for example, imagine the route from its original location to the pond being traced.

It is important to contrast the violence of this event with a reinterpretation celebrating the values of the UFS. In this case, one can think of a symbolic recreation of space, such as the one in Freedom Park’s *Isivivane* (Figure 24). As accompaniment to Lady Justice (forever staring down with uncovered eyes at the C.R. Swart statue in the pond) (Figure 22), the judicial

nature of the space may be enriched with a cultural space associated with notions of justice, negotiation, and inclusivity. This could also be a space where the traditional games played in the *Kgotla* may be re-enacted. In this way, the space may be construed as a dense space of dialogue (focused on the notion of justice) aimed to celebrating the potential for meaningful compromises and learning from systems of traditionally practiced participatory democracy.



Figure 21: New paving and seating surrounding area B (left). The plaque commemorating the tree planted by CR Swart on its side and casually leaning against the tree it commemorates (right).



Figure 22: Lady Justice (left) and the toppled statue (right).



Figure 23: The situation in 2020.



Figure 24: Isivivane, Freedom Park, Pretoria. The spiritual resting place for those who helped liberate South Africa, the Isivivane is made up of the Lekgotla – the meeting place, built around the uMhlankosi tree, and the Lesaka – the burial ground, marked by boulders from around the country. (Image accessed from <https://www.freedompark.co.za/index.php/stay-informed/images-of-freedom-park/isivivane-gallery.html>)

There are also other spatial phenomena which contribute to this narrative of inclusivity and negotiation, evident in the overlapping circles found as a recurring theme in the Red Square (Figure 26a, 26b, and 26c).

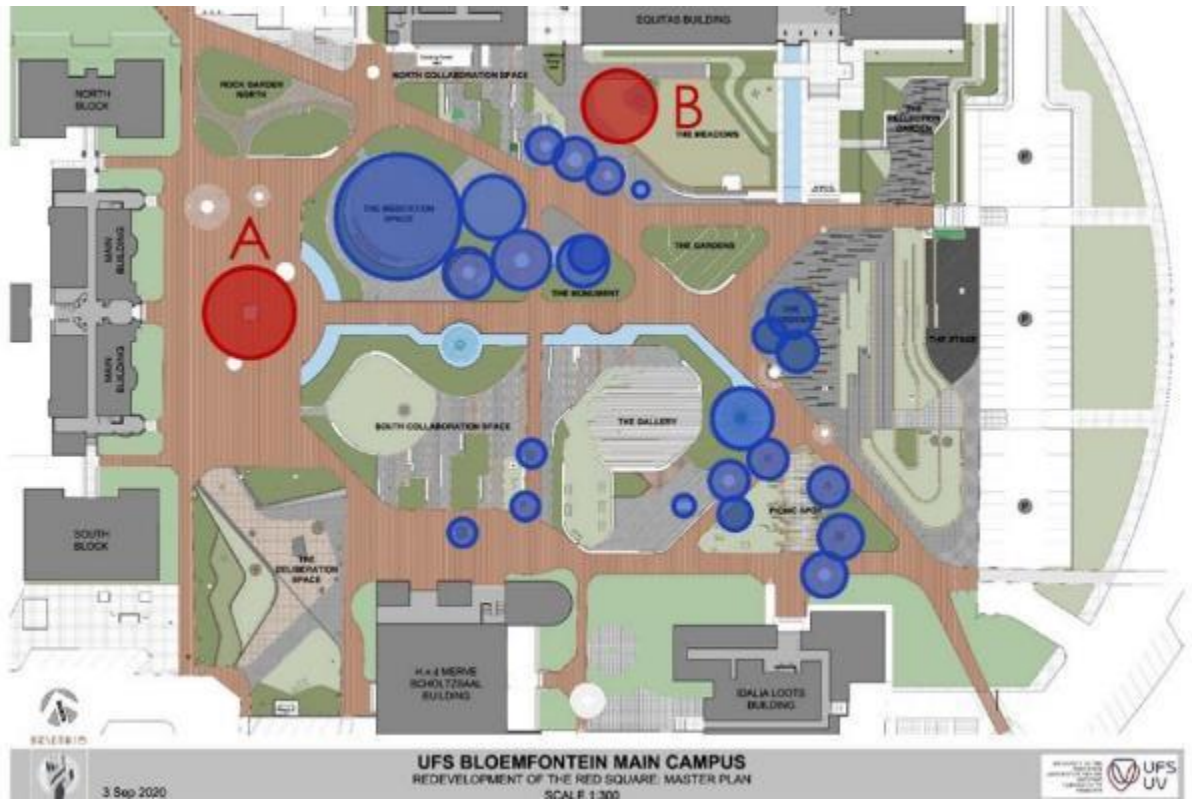


Figure 25: Circles (intersecting and in tension) indicated in blue (DESTUDIO Architects).



Figure 26a.



Figure 26b.



Figure 26c.

The 1938 Centenary Ox-Wagon Trek Monument

The 1938 Centenary Ox-wagon Trek monument (Figure 27a, Figure 27b) was erected to commemorate the Great Trek of 1838, the journey of Boers from the Cape to the hinterland of South Africa, which assumed centrality in Afrikaner nationalist discourses (Schmahmann 2017: 30), and which was re-enacted in 1938. These kinds of monuments trace the symbolic route (between Cape Town and Pretoria) re-enacted as part of the festivities. This monument is clearly connected to the stirring of nationalist Afrikaner aspirations. While this was an important historical event, its political connotations can no longer be reconciled with the values of the UFS, and this monument should also be reinterpreted in a space inspired by the contemporary democratic values the UFS espouses. In particular, the reinterpreted space should be conducive for teaching, learning, critical thinking, research, engaged scholarship, and dialogue in general. It should be a space that inclusively celebrates the many histories of the UFS while inducing towards the further deepening of democracy and social justice.

One could, for instance, imagine the significance of the 'rock' motif or iconography, which is prominent in the Square's aesthetic history, in reimagining the Ox-Wagon monument. The plinth of the Ox-Wagon monument supports a rock and is encrusted with stones. This also recalls the rock motif prominent in the boulders of the C.R. Swart statue seat and the dolomite plinth of the M.T. Steyn statue.

Rocks are imbued with varied spiritual and cultural meanings. Traditionally rocks are used to mark a significant place. 'Rock' is also the iconic visual language of the artwork *Thinking Stone* (Figure 28), a large granite stone which evokes reference to the significant prehistorical site of Driekopseiland, its 3000+ engravings or petroglyphs, and indigenous knowledge systems.

Brenda Schmahmann (2015) explains that the *Thinking Stone*⁴, an anti-monument in its nature in the sense that is low, horizontal and invites people to sit on it, touch it and climb on it, is a direct contrast to the Ox-Wagon monument and serves as a vehicle for celebrating sophisticated representations which were marks on the land prior to colonialism. Thus, it is possible to consider the materiality of the Ox-Wagon monument to reference it and redefine it. For example, the stones of the monument could be repurposed.



Figure 27a: The 1938 Centenary Ox-Wagon Trek Monument in its current setting.

⁴ The *Thinking Stone* serves as a literal seat as well as a locus for interchange and reflection. Various idioms, proverbs and quotes pertaining to the rocks and stones are sandblasted and written in languages from the Free State in the “cracks” of the stone. Brenda Schmahmann (2015) explains that the stone signifies an imperative to exact retribution but the *Thinking Stone*, far too weighty to throw, points implicitly to the fertility of violent acts of conflict and its title *Thinking Stone* suggests the value of intellectual reflection rather than stone throwing to negotiate difference.



Figure 27b: The materials of the 1938 Centenary Ox-Wagon Trek Monument (left) and the political aspirations commemorated by its erection (right).



Figure 28: Willem Boshoff, *The Thinking Stone*, 2011, Black Belfast granite, 480 x 335 x 120 cm.

The 'Emerging' Red Square

This section briefly seeks to note the character of an 'Emerging' Red Square. This Red Square is a cultural sphere that is co-produced in daily interactions of users of the space with changing cultural accoutrements that mark the area. Among others, the 'Emerging' Red Square is composed of:

1. everyday practices by which people are giving unintended or unscripted meanings to the spaces that compose the Red Square.
2. landscaping that (following Prof. Britz's guidance) features paved paths that reflect people's desired routes for traversing through, and practices of engaging within the Red Square.
3. landscaping and gardening that intends to promote communing within the precinct of the Red Square.
4. opening space on the Square by the removal of the M.T. Steyn Monument.
5. buildings and artistic materials that are found in and that mark out the space; and
6. M.T. Steyn and C.R. Swart statues that are removed.

In the above context, the Square has been opened, both physically and symbolically. It has again become a space of possibility. A new unity shivers beguilingly on the horizon. However, at the moment it is still the kind of openness beholden to, as the architect Robert Venturi put it, "the easy unity of exclusion". In contrast to this meagre, impoverished situation, where one achieves unity by excluding hard problems, Venturi advocated the "difficult unity of inclusion" (1966: 16). This 'difficult unity' is simultaneously open, adaptable, and 'united' in the sense that it can accommodate the unscripted lives of institutions, but also rich, dense, and 'deep' in that it pays homage to all the difficult associations of places. Consider the following anecdote:



Figure 29: UFS students participating in the Jerusalema dance challenge on the square. The fact that the square has been 'opened up' (by removing the President M.T. Steyn statue) has made other kinds of more ephemeral spatial expressions possible. These kinds of impromptu actions may be more important than one thinks in making opportunities for developing social cohesion possible.

In the instance that Figure 29 one captures a moment when students organised a *Jerusalema* dance challenge event on the Red Square in front of the Main Building. The dance follows a 'square dancing' format. It seems that each student was given a few gold stars to stick on their

spot to orientate themselves while dancing. Currently the non-descript nature of the paving and the general lack of a defined spatiality necessitates these kinds of ad hoc actions. In that sense the openness of the new square is quite ‘forgiving’. It is more open and user-friendly due to the removal of the statue, which essentially acted as a static, hierarchic mass dominating the space and limiting its use, but this new openness could also be argued as offering little in terms of meaning or significance. From a heritage perspective it is unsatisfactory that the foundations of the Steyn statue are merely paved over. In contrast, there needs to be, as the Spanish architect Enrique Miralles (1998) argued, efforts to achieve a critical “density” of content and memorialisation. In this sense, the goal would be the simultaneity of freedom and density, openness, and significance.

The following may be an example of this kind of thinking. The static axial symmetry of the Main Building may be enlivened by the sympathetic, but much more dynamic, multi-stage symmetry embodied in the Basotho ornamental system of *Litema*. *Litema* patterns evolve within a grid, but instead of following static symmetries of power as in the Baroque, these are fluid grids more like the gold stars of the *Jerusalema* moment. These dynamic symmetries within the system depend on the symmetries in the parts, an interdependence akin to the notion of co-dependence evident in *Ubuntu*. Moreover, *Litema* is derived from the ploughing of fields, an intimate relationship between efficient planting and the contours of the topography. Therefore, *Litema*, besides being a cornerstone of an underrepresented culture⁵ in terms of campus aesthetics, also recalls the Free State landscape. One should also not forget that *Litema* recalls much more fundamental human (inter-cultural) propensities like mark-making, symbolism, communal action, and ornamentation. In contrast to the ornamental systems of the West (evident in the styles of the Main Building), *Litema* is formulated and executed by the women of the household. Instead of systems of power, these are applied during times of celebration and commemoration.

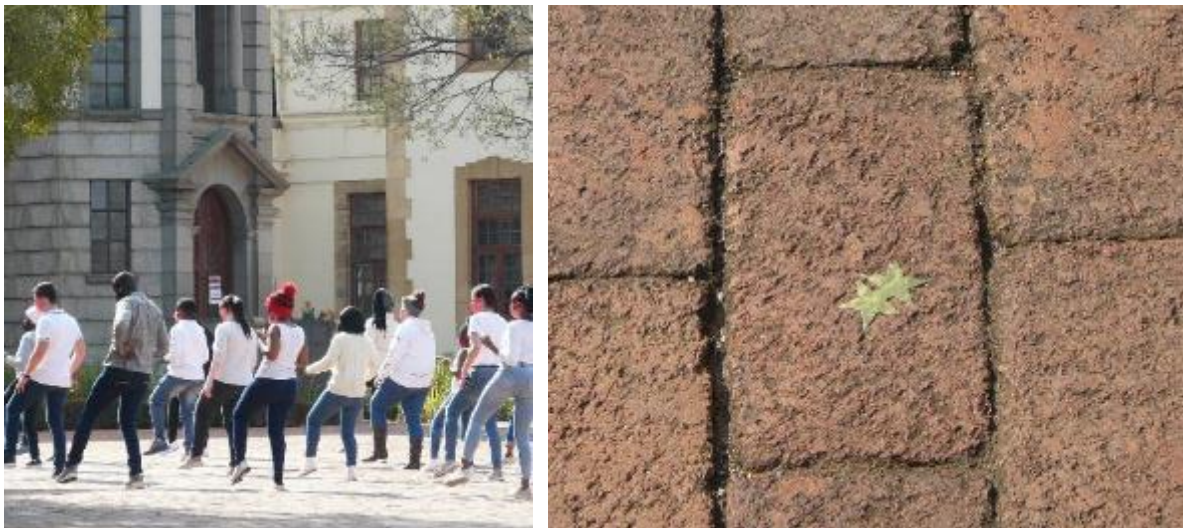


Figure 30: Dancing in the free space (left) and an embodied moment captured in gold stars (right).

⁵ *Litema* patterning (with other symbols) is incorporated into another artwork on campus, namely the Philosophers’ Circle, in the West Block.



Figure 31: A house painted in Litema patterns showing the beauty of the handmade aesthetic, where irregularity, personal concerns and histories, careful making, order, and a different kind of symmetry are reconciled in a form of dwelling. (Image accessed from <https://www.designindaba.com/articles/point-view/geometric-designs-basotho-called-litema>).

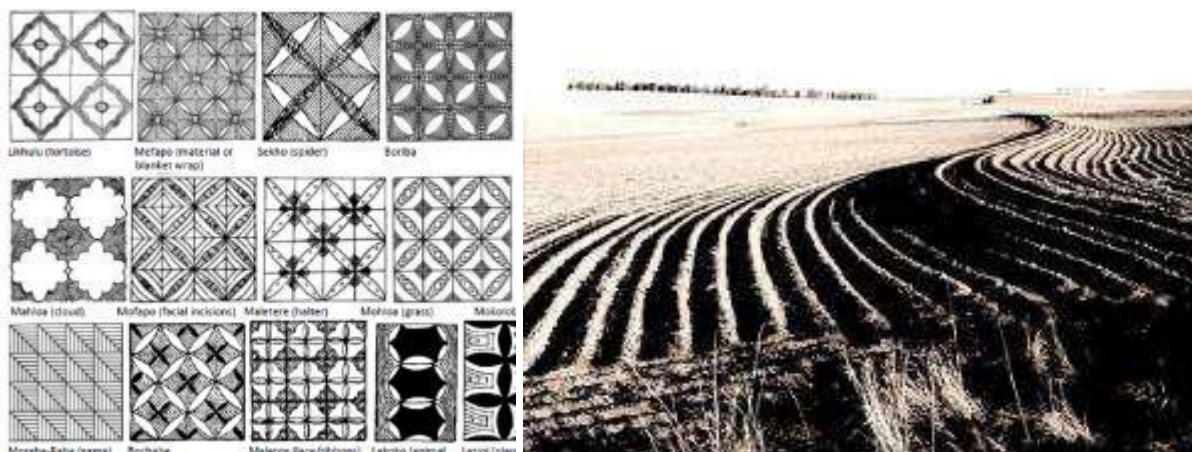
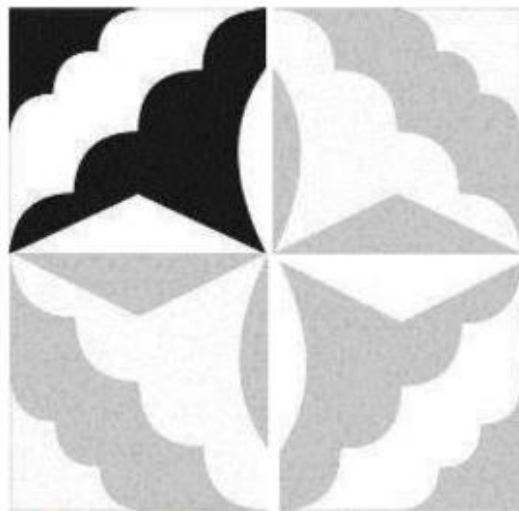
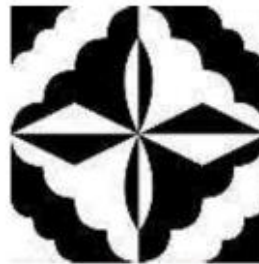


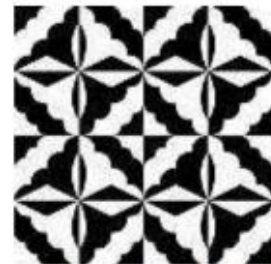
Figure 32: The integration between the organic and the grid in Litema ornamentation (left) inspired by the pattern making implied by ploughing lands (right) (Beyer, 2014: 9 & 71). Litema is a cultural technique typical of the Free State.



One-square motif



Four-square pattern



Sixteen-square pattern

Figure 33: Constructing a Litema pattern by mirroring and inverting the primary motif. A symmetry of interdependence. The Litema methodology can be followed with any graphic 'input' (Beyer, 2014: 57).

The newfound openness of the space in front of the Main Building need not lead to a loss of density. The current paving over the position of the President M.T. Steyn statue (Figure needs 'marking'). This 'mark' should be an indicator, one which not only suggests the space as historically significant (to fulfil heritage legalisation requirements) but one that celebrates a more inclusive narrative/s and embraces the desired openness of a democratic space – a space that is conducive to dialogue, learning and togetherness. This calls for an artistic intervention which could be understood as existing not in a form of an adorned object, but rather fully integrated into material ('fabric') of the space and understood through the bodily 'experience' of a person in the space (loosely defined as experiential art). *The Monument to the Women of South Africa* (Figure 34) is an example of these types of artistic interventions, which can activate and animate the experience of a space.



Figure 34: Monument to the Women of South Africa, Malibongwe Embokodweni, Amphitheatre at Union Buildings, Pretoria. Architect: Marcus Holmes, Artist: Wilma Cruise. On 9 August 2002, a monument was unveiled to commemorate the 1956

Women's March. It starts on the steps of the amphitheatre with the keywords of the petition inscribed in metal on the risers. Climbing the stairs, you trigger a sound message in eleven official languages, "wathint' abafazi wathinti' imbokodo" (you strike the woman, you strike the rock). When you reach the vestibule, there in the centre lies an imbokodo, a small grinding stone atop a larger grinding stone representing the labour of women. Image courtesy of Wilma Cruise. Photograph by Adam Cruise.

As a precedent one could consider the thousands of unobtrusive (but carefully crafted) brass Stolpersteine across Europe, inserted into existing cobble stone pavements outside of buildings from where Jews were abducted during the Holocaust. The goal is not only to pay tribute to historical events, but to "initiate discussion and stimulate thought" (Culture trip, 2020). In this way the heritage density of the space is enlarged, dialogue is encouraged, and the sidewalk remains 'open' and usable as a kind of free space.



Figure 35: In 2020 all traces of the President M.T. Steyn statue were removed, and the excavations were being paved over (Photograph by Hendrik Auret).



Figure 36: Stolpersteine (Culture trip, 2020: online).

From these observations certain possibilities are liberated. First, the idea of heritage density in combination with the clarity and freedom of openness seems essential. This draws its inspiration from the liberating openness of the Free State landscape in concert with the density of lived human historicity. Second, heritage resources which have been relocated need to be acknowledged with marking. This is a matter of heritage fidelity (and acknowledging changing attitudes towards certain ideals). Third, the materiality of any insertion is significant and carries implied meanings. Fourth, a form of humble, flexible, and inquisitive thinking should be promoted in contrast with the static impositions of the past. Following from this, alternatives to the static symmetry of the Main Building should be investigated. *Litema* was mentioned as an alternative which offers various gifts:

1. *Litema* offers a traditional aesthetic approach rooted in Basotho culture, but it is also inspired from agricultural engagement with the landscape. While it is primarily a form of creative expression traditionally practiced by women, *Litema* also speaks to the much broader human propensity for mark-making, symbolism, and ornamentation.
2. *Litema* offers the possibility to interpret core values of the UFS and represent it within a traditional methodological system. For example, the *Litema* pattern in Figure 37 is derived from the open book motif included in the academic crest of the UFS. One could argue that crests and other symbols change over time, and that the square should be a place for artwork instead of branding. In that case, one could suggest that *Litema* patterns be designed in collaboration with an artist and derived by a process of inclusivity and participation from the UFS community.



Figure 37: *Litema* pattern derived from the 'open book' motif on the academic crest of the UFS (Sample design by Hendrik Aurret).

In line with the principles mentioned above one could arrive at the following visualization:



Figure 39: Emergent possibilities and associations amid a dense layering of influences, voices, and narratives (Sample design by Hendrik Aurret).

Figure 39 envisions a dense layering of influences, voices, and narratives, yet provides a usable, free space; a place of openness where students may express themselves, or merely pass through a richly layered space. This amalgamation unites various disparate voices: the Main Building, including various architectural styles from the West, the *Thinking Stone* including relief markings own to the First People, and the *Litema* 'language' used to creatively engage with core values of the UFS, like the open book signifying "knowledge and inspiration" (UFS Corporate identity elements, 10). The *Litema* methodology recalls the connection to the ploughed lands and liberating landscapes of the province. Lastly, *Litema* carries another latent symbolism. The art form is usually practised on walls. Using it on the floor indicates that the walls between people have come down – one of the first requirement for any kind of sensible dialogue and social cohesion.

The reinterpreted Red Square should give new recognition and renewed value to the people of the Free State Province, while celebrating humanity. What the responses to the findings of the deep mapping have tried to show is that a further step beyond origins and principles are necessary. Initially, the goal was to move beyond the old model of a space subjected to 'object-fixation' (statues), towards a search for systems of meaningful engagement (like *Litema*, *Kgotleng* or the relocation of statues), but now, when considering what lies before the origin, the need arises to enquire what it is that substantiated the origin. The German philosopher, Martin Heidegger (1938:242-243/191) described this kind of approach as a form of inceptual thinking:

[Inceptual] thinking no longer possesses the advantages of a “system” ... In place of systematics and deduction, there now stands historical preparedness for the truth of being. Such preparedness above all requires that this truth itself already create, out of its scarcely resonating essence, the basic traits of its site (*Da-sein*). The human subject must be transformed into the builder and steward of that site.

Heidegger saw humans as beings of emplaced care (*Dasein*) who always already find themselves in a spatial world of emplaced regioning concerns and a temporal situation of care. However, the task is not only to think of the situation as it is, or even, as it has been. Instead, those who aim to re-envision their spatio-temporal existence, those who wish to poetically engage in the sense that all making derive from the Ancient Greek term for making, namely *poiesis*, need to think inceptually to question the assumptions and modes of care that underpin their principles.

This is a way of thinking that only a being of care can accomplish, for care does not prescribe how people ought to be, but merely (and momentarily) sustains that sense of awareness that may help architects [and other practitioners of *poiesis*] await, listen for, and let be, by means of architecture, the way mortal beings always already are. The burden of care is that *Dasein* should remember the way it is, in order to think as a response to that which substantiated the inception of that which is. All *poiesis* sprouting from this kind of awareness will take the form of a response rather than an imposition or an assertion; a form of *poiesis* that is fundamentally response-able. The resulting works can be considered *appropriate* in that they are grounded both in the way in which mortals always already are, and in the way in which the emplaced regioning of the situation always already happens. Moreover, they will be *revelatory*, since they are ‘delivered’ with the help of *Dasein*’s unique personal awareness living as a being of emplaced care. (Auret, 2019)

In conclusion, the suggestions made above should not be understood as a set of visual forms/structures to be introduced on the Square, but rather as routes towards forms of inceptual thinking which could inspire these visual forms. Ultimately, we are suggesting an experience-rich move from ‘objects’ to ‘processes’, and from ‘origins’ to ‘engaging that which sustained the inception’, with emancipatory intent. For instance, one might find that the *Litema* patterning might not be used as a visual form, but that the way of life which sustained the practice of *Litema* (like aspects of culture, community, land, rhythm, alternative forms of symmetry) might materialise into an end product that looks very different to *Litema* but makes sense to the place and its uses. In that sense, *Litema* would not be the product, but the source for designing, i.e., the design may be born from interrogating or reinterpreting the ideas (or worldview) which sustained an encompassing practice like that of *Litema*.

The hope is that, by engaging with the foundations of such deeply inclusive practices, and by drawing near what it means to be human between this particular earth and sky, one would be able to arrive at creative acts that (even if they seem ‘new’) will be able to reach across traditional divisions and inspire a sense of shared captivation in staff, students, graduates, their families and other members of the public.

RECLAIMING THE PRESIDENTSPLEIN/RED SQUARE

The UFS understands that academic excellence together with human dignity can only be achieved where participation is granted to all in ways that comport with ubuntu. It is recommended that:

1. the University continue with the aim of promoting the Red Square as a place for democratic 'meeting' and conversation (as originally imagined with the abovementioned Lotto Sculpture-on-Campus Project).
2. the Presidentsplein is formally renamed⁶ *Kgotleng*⁷.
 - a. A *kgotla* is a public meeting, a community council, or a traditional law court of a Basotho village.... In South African English, a *lekgotla* is a meeting to deliberate upon issues. The idea a *kgotla* may in some sense remind readers of the ancient Greek notion of an agora – which was a central place in a city where the citizenry met to deliberate in ways that are often seen to have anticipated Western democratic civil society. At least, as at an agora (cf. Mouffe, 2000), contesting ideas were deliberatively pitted against each other. For this reason, to speak of *kgotleng* is to raise the notion of a space in which *ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo*, to the fiercest of verbal fights takes place (Ashworth & Ashworth, 2019), on the understanding that “the highest form of war is dialogue”. Traditionally, *kgotla* were spaces for all to be heard as societies attempted to arrive at just solutions to problems. So, to name this central court at the heart of the Bloemfontein campus, *Kgotleng*, is therefore to pay homage to the ideal of the University as a space *par excellence* for the deliberative contestation of ideas in pursuit of better forms of communing under which all can be the most that they can be.
 - b. The name *Kgotleng* is not qualified by a prefixing name, so that the idea of meeting that it calls upon is as unqualified and open as possible. This is useful as this openness invites the understanding that the space inspire the deliberations held in it to open up multiversal, pluriversal, or universal engagements, imaginations and re-imaginings among the University's communities.
3. Within the precinct of the *Kgotleng*, various smaller *Kgotla*'s may be named in ways that will reflect and amplify the values of the University
 - a. Thus, you may have,
 - i. Dialogue *Kgotla* – to name a space where there is an amphitheatre in the newly landscaped gardens of the current Presidentsplein.
 - ii. Care *Kgotla* – to name another space.
 - iii. Social Contract *Kgotla* (akin to Poelanong, space of reconciliation).
4. The introduction of contemporary artwork/s, in the form of seating or experiential spaces that continues to promote values of meeting and conversation.
5. Relocation/reinterpretation of the Ox Wagon Monument; and
6. Use of *litema* motifs, that add a deep layer of agricultural, feminine and Basotho and other cultural references, in the labelling of the heritage sites (and adjacent sites), or to memorialise relocated monuments.

⁶ The renaming process must follow the processes of the University as outlined in the Naming and Renaming Policy of the University. It is intended that this proposal will serve as a proposal to activate relevant institutional processes. As such, nothing stated under this proposal has any status other than that of initiating relevant processes as may be determined by applicable institutional structures.

⁷ There is a space near the Students' Centre that is called Student *Kgotla*. This naming suggestion is complementary to, but not in conflict with, that name.

PROCESS IMPLICATIONS

To achieve the above, it will be necessary to

1. follow relevant institutional and legal process of public consultations that relate to the management of national heritage sites. The intention should be to take steps in ways that comport with the values of democratic participation, in addressing the merits of this proposal and of any other proposals which may ensure as due processes unfold; and
2. secure necessary budgetary resources.

CONCLUSION

How may a heritage space be recast in ways that support and enhance the University's commitment towards critical research, teaching and engaged scholarship? This document outlined ways in which the UFS may creatively reinterpret, reimagine and re-appropriate aspects of the Presidentsplein (Red Square) as a form of heritage management aimed at further stimulating diversity, inclusivity, and social justice on campus.

After aligning said concerns with the goals of the University's ITP, the document then synthesised the findings of a 'deep mapping' of the Red Square. First, the deep mapping process recalls the profound connection the Main Building originally enjoyed with the Free State landscape. It then reflected upon the ways in which the vehicular and pedestrian routes changed over the years, from *Beaux Arts* illusions of grandeur to a dense, integrated, yet 'messy' network. Similarly, the mapping process revealed the ways in which the Square (as a space which offers a certain level of 'prospect') is enmeshed in the visual networks of the city and therefore gathers a rich variety of views and vistas, each harbouring intriguing micro-connections, but also creating a visionary and symbolic Metro-scale connection between Bloemfontein and Thaba 'Nchu. Next, the materiality of the square was analysed, after which the possibilities for reinterpreting the previous site of the President C.R. Swart Statue and the current location of the 1938 Centenary Ox-wagon Trek monument were discussed. Finally, the potential opened due to the relocation of the President M.T. Steyn Statue was considered. While the newfound openness of the Square can be understood as a physical and symbolical act of liberation, and now offers a wide range of opportunities for participation, the point was also made that openness need not equate emptiness. In contrast, it is important to find and sustain a critical density of content and memorialisation, so that the space may be simultaneously dense and free, open, and significant. Each in their own way, these monuments triggered questions about contemporary commemoration and how to maintain a high level of fidelity to best heritage practices amid the transformation of public space.

Various suggestions have been made about how particular spaces (like A, B and C) could potentially be approached, but the deep mapping process also revealed shortcomings in the way people generally think about intervening in a situation. Ultimately, it became clear that despite efforts to move beyond the object-fixation of monuments, it was possibly not enough to shift focus towards processes and traditional systems (like *Litema* and the *Kgotla*). While these systems offer various gifts in terms of principles they stand for and possibilities for artistic expression, the real task may be to think more inceptually. To not only think about principles and origins, but to think of that which substantiated the origin.

For instance, it may be more fruitful and less exclusionary to think about ways in which the latent meaning of the stones gathered in the 1938 Centenary Ox-wagon Trek monument may be reinterpreted, rather than trying to relocate the monument. In addition, maybe it is the journey of the President C.R. Swart Statue that needs to be memorialised (rather than its static position), or it may be necessary to consider the ways of being which substantiated the development of something like a *Kgotla*, rather than focusing on the anthropological characteristics and associations of the space itself. Similarly, when considering the gift of an ornamental system like *Litema*, it may be more revelatory to consider the way of life which sustained the practice of *Litema* (like aspects of culture, community, land, rhythm, alternative forms of symmetry), rather than becoming fixated on visual forms characteristic to the system. In these cases, the practice of *Litema*, or the *Kgotla* space or the stones as artifacts would not be the focus or even offer a systematic process to follow. Instead, the design may be born from interrogating or reinterpreting the ideas (or worldview) which sustained an encompassing practice like *Litema*, a space like a *Kgotla*, or an act of memorialisation like the 1938 Centenary Ox-wagon Trek monument.

The overarching goal of following this kind of inceptual approach would be to gain access to the wide-ranging human concerns which substantiated the inceptions of deeply inclusive practices (like *Litema*, *Khotleng* and commemoration). The hope is that a creative response based on such an awareness will be able to reach across divisions of tradition, culture, and race, and inspire a sense of shared captivation, drawn from the deep wells of our shared humanity.

Drawing on this kind of inceptual awareness allows thinking to find its voice amid an extremely broad conversation currently trying to come to grips with the ways in which institutions hope to reclaim public spaces housing divisive heritage content for democratic, participatory purposes. Due to its hermeneutic nature this document cannot offer a definitive answer or serve as an ending to the story. Instead, the goal is to describe an appropriate way to enter into the dialogue informing creative participation, and carefully consider the steps that need to be taken in future.

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Auret, H.A. 2019. The responsibility of architecture: beauty, justice, and the call of care. *Beauty and Justice Conference*, Bloemfontein, 8 August 2019.
- Beyer, C.M. 2014. Litema: revival of a disappearing art [dissertation]. Bloemfontein: Central University of Technology.
- Culture trip. 2020. The Deeper Meaning Behind Berlin's Brass Cobblestones. Available from: <<https://theculturetrip.com/europe/germany/berlin/articles/the-deeper-meaning-behind-berlins-brass-cobblestones/>> [Accessed 6 September 2020].
- Fraser, N. 1990. Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social text*, (25/26): 56-80.
- Fricker, M. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Harvey, L. and Knight, P.T. 1996. *Transforming Higher Education*. Open University Press, Taylor & Francis, 1900 Frost Road, Suite 101, Bristol, PA 19007-1598.
- Heidegger, M. 1938. *Contributions to philosophy (of the event)*. Translated by Rojcewicz, R. & Vallega-Neu, D. 2012. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mandela, N. 1994. *Long Walk to Freedom*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Marschall, S. 2019. The long shadow of apartheid: a critical assessment of heritage transformation in South Africa 25 years on. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 25(10): 1088-1102.
- Miralles, E. 1998. *Shadows and Alphabets* [video]. Available from: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kQOyhjrOP4&t=567s>> [Accessed 8 September 2020].
- Mouffe, C. 2000. Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism," *Political Science Series*, 70: 1-17. Institute for Advanced Studies: Vienna.
- Roberts, L. 2016. Deep Mapping and Spatial Anthropology. *Humanities*, 5(5).
- Schmahmann, B. 2015. Professorial Inauguration Lecture. (Accessed 5 November 2020).
- Schmahmann, B. 2017. A Thinking Stone and some Pink Presidents: Negotiating Afrikaner Nationalist monuments at the University of the Free State. Miller, K. Schmahmann, B. (eds.) 2017: 29 – 52.
- UFS Corporate identity elements, n.d. Available from: <https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/all-documents/01-corporate-identity-elements.pdf?sfvrsn=3697b921_0> [Accessed 6 September 2020].
- Venturi, R. 1966. *Complexity and contradiction in architecture*. 2nd edition (2008). New York: Museum of Modern Art.