Conclusion

This chapter extended the urban design into the architectural design stage, choosing three salient features of the urban design proposal to develop and explore. The two pedestrian connector axes and the subterranean parliament. The chapter focused on the design of the subterranean parliament as this was the original intention of this thesis.

The parliament subverted the existing spatial hierarchy norms of political architecture, giving over the entire ground floor to the city and its pedestrians. The levels of the parliament moved from public to semi public to ceremonial with further descent into the ground.

In the main chamber the existing norm of separating and isolating the public seating to an upper gallery was challenged. This challenge introduced a raked seating level that spanned between the members seating on the floor below to the level above. This became the dominant feature of the space drifting the spatial hierarchy in favor of participating members of public, n.g.o and civic groups creating a more inclusive basis for interaction.

Material choices also challenged the existing norm of romanticizing idealized cultural items or landscapes. The suggested symbolism referred to the real conditions on the continent resonating the purpose of establishing the AU and PAP: the involvement of all Africans in solving the real issues facing the continent.

As such we see the architectural design creating the environment in which the achievement of the PAP’s core inclusive mandate is highly possible, linking the PAP to the everyday life of ordinary Africans.
Overall Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to design the permanent home of the PAP, in order to contest the elitist perception of this important continental institution. Through this document it was discovered that the PAP’s architectural competition brief would perpetuate the elitist perception of this institution and as such the thesis challenged this brief on two important grounds. These were against the isolated competition site and against the architectural recommendations that were based on the existing hierarchies in political architecture.

Throughout this thesis the importance of inclusiveness was stressed and it was on this basis that the case study buildings were analyzed, appropriate site arrived at, site analyzed, design methodology developed and urban and architectural solutions arrived at. The resultant built environment created proved to be a vibrant, 24 hour active multifunctional precinct. By looking beyond the boundaries of the site urban connections were created benefiting both the ordinary person by shortening and simplifying pedestrian paths, as well as the PAP by exposing it to the maximum possible number and mix of users, making achievement of its core mandate highly feasible.

This thesis proved that when power stepped off its pedestal, when the monument met the mundane the vicious cycle of perpetuating unnecessary hierarchies is broken and new ways and thinking are sought that seeks to benefit the widest possible range of people.

At an initial presentation in early 2007, an external examiner seeing the potential of this thesis asked: “Does this have to become another building?” At that point it was uncertain what she meant. An intensive year of research, hard work, much thought and many, many hours later the answer arrived at is a simple one: Now that I think of it, no it doesn’t have to be...

With many thanks to my family, mentor, critics and friends
Mohammed Adam
16 October 2007