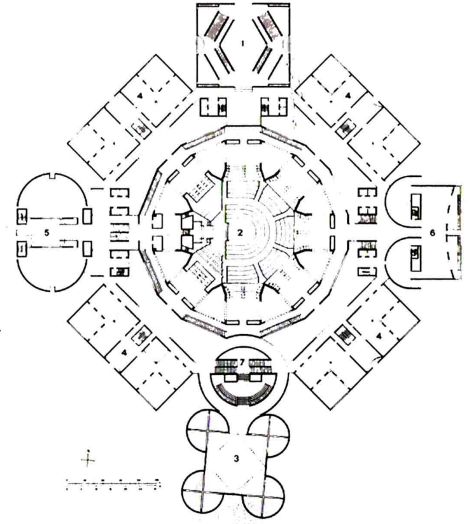


The building is not accessible to the public. They are however allowed to use the southern plaza plinth that raises dramatically and bridges over a road. People can walk up to the door of the hall of debates but they are not permitted to access the building.

From the perspective of architectural 'style', the buildings do not seem to search for a national identity nor look to perpetuate local traditions. Goldhagen states that Khan "refused to defer to the clients request for Islamic imagery such as a dome...Khan was not aiming at a legibly 'contextual' style" (2001:186)

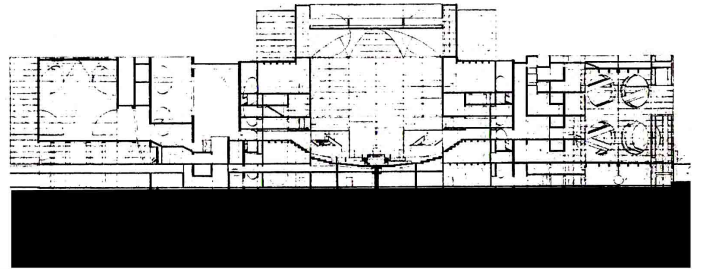
Vale refers to the building as "a product of a highly personal design methodology, explicitly intended to generate international recognition. As much as the capital complex is and was put forward in the name of national identity (both East Pakistani and Bangladeshi) it is a cry for international identity." (1992:241) Doruk reinforces this idea: "Until very recently all the rest of the world knew about Bangladesh was that it was a country of human misery and social instability : floods , famine and occasional coups. Then all of a sudden this building put Bangladesh on the roster of nations boasting the most sophisticated examples of contemporary architecture" (in Vale 1992:241)



Plan of the Assembly building

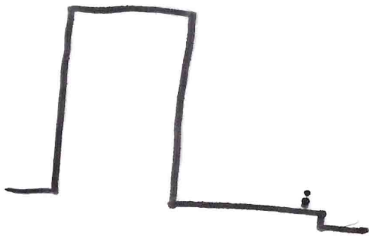
- 1 Entrance hall
- 2 Assembly chamber
- 3 Hall of Debates
- 4 Offices
- 5 Chamber of ministers
- 6 Recreation room
- 7 Courtyard for ablutions

Plan and section of Assembly building (Giurgola 1979:121)



As such we see the building becoming a symbol of power by using the following strategies:

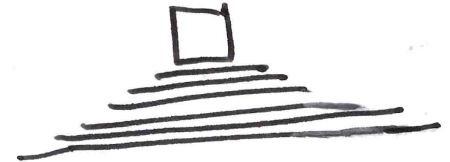
- The use of sheer monumentality of scale, both in terms of the building and the treatment of the large site in contrast to the tightly packed urban fabric of Dhaka.
- The building creates a contrast to Bangladeshi architecture and urban fabric highlighting itself as an icon of change and development
- By using a famous architect and one of the most influential modernist masters, the complex put Bangladesh on the map
- The use of a monumental plinth creates an emotive processional, especially in light of the monumentality of the architecture and site
- The use of water to reflect the building, seems to double the height of the building and creates a tranquil setting for the complex



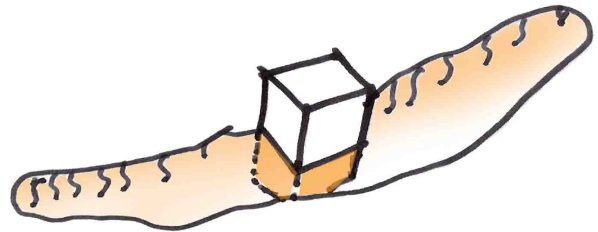
Analytical sketch: monumental scale



Analytical sketch: creating contrast to existing context



Analytical sketch: use of a famous architect and a monumental plinth



Analytical sketch: reflective pool mirrors building



Building as seen through the theoretical context

The use of architecture to construct nationalism

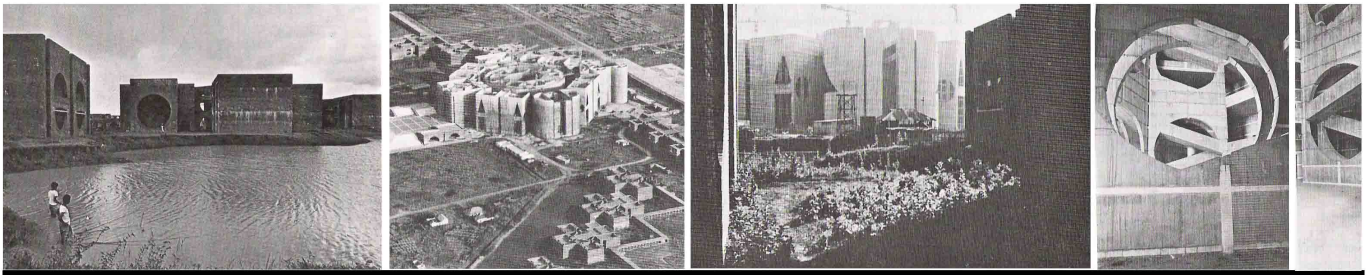
This building does not attempt at creating any resonance to the architectural, historical and political context, however it is seen as a 'result of a highly personalized design methodology' carried out in the hands of Louis Khan, one of the most influential and recognized western architects. The architectural vision was easy to appropriate by Bangladesh although its design was undertaken for the previous regime against which they fought a war of independence. At a historic level the building was used as an attempt of a particular ruler to bolster support by investing huge sums of money into an iconic piece of architecture that was 'for the people'. One of his employees encapsulates this in a letter to Khan, in which he writes of the client: "he will spend as much money as he must, disregarding the budget, he will justify it by having buildings to show" (in Goldhagen 2001:164)

As such it really did not matter to the patron what the buildings were designed or were to come to represent, as long as they were impressive and bolstered support for his political aspirations

The role of the elite in the production of the architecture that reinforces the political status quo

This is shown in the complex in two ways. Firstly Ayub Khan, the patron, envisaging the construction of "a great government complex, hoping that if the East Pakistanis saw a lot of money spent on a monument to their importance they would repay him with their votes." (Goldhagen 2001:164) Secondly by the grand scale of the project is a clear indication of the importance of government, this made it easy (even though it was financially strenuous) for the Bangladeshis to complete the project as a symbol of national pride.

Photos of complex (Giurgola 1979:115-128)



The postcolonial project that in attempting to differentiate itself from colonial legacies actually recoup the colonial spatial and architectural methodologies

In the initial stage of the project the site and grand vision of the architecture while attempting to become a symbol of East Pakistani nationalism recouped colonial methodologies of adopting and architectural vision to create the existing context, using vastness of site and monumentality to create a citadel of hope

Architecture an icon of economic development

- In the initial stages the creation of a grand vision and substantial economic investment, architecture was used at a political tool in order to gain voter support
- In the implementation stage after Bangladesh gained its independence the project was used as a symbol of national pride and creating an internationally recognized icon to symbolize development on an international level

Conclusion

From the site analysis it was discovered that it was chosen for reasons to its proximity to the military airport that would also transport MP's and the president from West Pakistan, also due to its large

land size on the outskirts of the city, that would contrast the existing context and highlight the creation of a monument 'for the people'. It was hoped that this highly visible icon would result in votes for the patron.

From an architectural perspective the complex makes use of grand scale, differentiation from context, use of a large publicly accessible plinth as well as the creation of reflection pools that create a tranquil setting , to portray power through its architecture.

When considering the building within the theoretical context, it was discovered that the building was more about personal design methodologies of the architect, than it was about creating a national identity. The grandness of the scale and use of a novel design and a foreign construction method resulted in the project being viewed as a sign of progress and thus it was philosophically possible for the independent Bangladesh to construct the building of the same design and vision as the previous regime. The completion of the project is seen as an icon of economic development bringing it in line with the list of nations that "boasted the most sophisticated examples of contemporary architecture."



Australian Parliament House, Canberra, Australia;
by Mitchell Gurgola and Thorp architects completed 1988

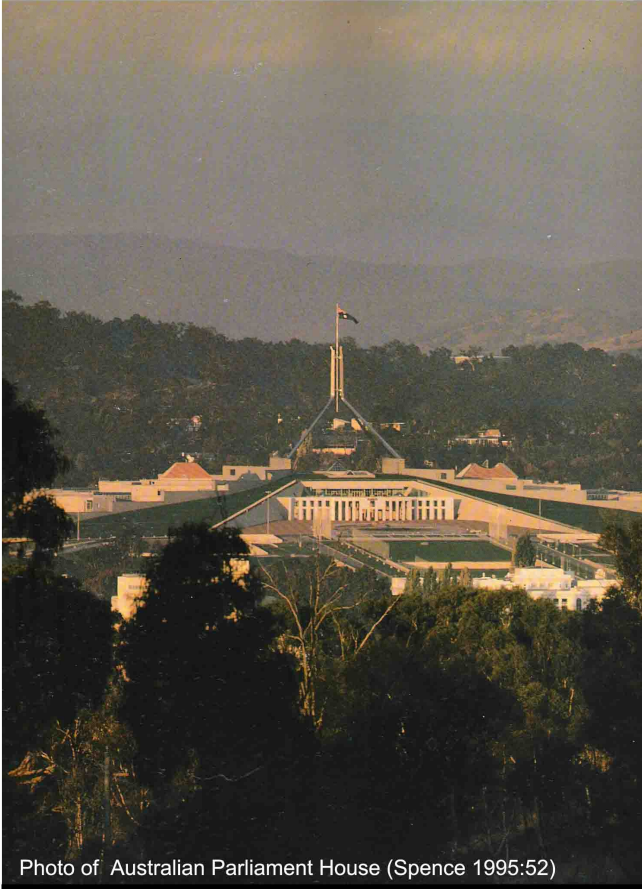


Photo of Australian Parliament House (Spence 1995:52)

“Mitchell/ Guirgola & Thorps design for the parliament house in Canberra is a brilliant resolution of seemingly contradictory requirements. The concept grew out of the circularity of the site and a sympathetic interpretation of the Walter Burley, and Maria Mahoney Griffin Plan. The building completes the parliamentary triangle and creates both a powerful and legible heart for the city and symbolically for the continent.” (Spence 1988a:48)

Canberra in a similar manner to Washington and Brasilia is a capital designed on a virgin site as a symbol of unity. The Parliament House of Canberra which houses the house of representatives and its related offices, senate and its related offices, a wing for ministers and the national parliament, cannot be seen in isolation of the Griffin plan for Canberra.

The project has been both praised, fiercely debated and criticized. The building complex uses 3 strong symbols namely the parabolic curved walls, the hill which ramps over the building and the flag mast.

Site Analysis

In analyzing the site, this section will consist of two parts. The first will look at understanding the Griffin master plan, and the second part will consider the relationship of this master plan, the Parliament House and the rest of the urban fabric.



Walter Burley Griffin and Marian Mahoney Griffin won the competition to design the master plan of Canberra in 1912. "The plan envisaged the Molonglo River valley as a great auditorium surrounded by hills which were to remain in their natural state, the hills to the north were the upper galleries, the lower slopes the auditorium, and the expansive man-made lake in the valley was to be the arena. The slopes to the south of the lake formed a terraced stage for a triangular group of government structures culminating in the 'Capital' -an assembly building for the people placed on a hill above the parliament, which was on a lower shoulder called Camp Hill- with the higher southern hills and distant mountains as a backdrop." (Spence 1988b:33)

This hill which was to house an 'assembly building for the people', later became known as Capital Hill and it represented the heart of the city and Australia with radials extending in the direction of the cardinal points.



Sketch of Canberra (after Tombesi 2003:16)



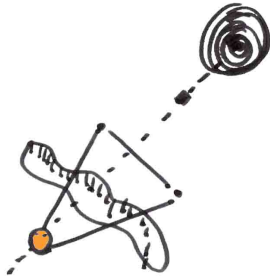
Aerial photograph of Canberra (goggle earth :2007)



Aerial photograph of the complex (goggle earth :2007)



The essentials of the Griffin plan were the lake, the parliamentary triangle, Capital Hill and the land axis. North and northeastern avenues extending out from capital hill to two nodal points that were to house the other two arms of government formed the parliamentary triangle. A transverse avenue linked these two nodes, enclosing the parliamentary zone and part of the lake. The land axis ran from capital hill through the center of the parliamentary triangle, the war memorial and to the peak of mount Ainslie.



Analytical sketch: Griffin master plan

Griffin left Australia in 1920 due to “outback resistance and bureaucratic obfuscation” to full implementation of his master plan (Frampton 1989:15)
The Griffin plan was compromised due to a provisional parliament building being constructed below capital hill in 1921 effectively compromising Griffin’s proposal by sitting in the middle of the line of site that was needed to form the land axis. (Spence 1988b:33)

In 1978, Griffin’s land axis was revived by the National Capital Development Commission’s plan to reinstate the land axis as a tree lined mall creating a variety of viable landscaped public spaces including a cricket oval. This plan prompted the Commission to consider creating a new parliament that would replace the 1927 provisional parliament, in spirit of the original Griffin plan. As such, capital hill was chosen as the site for the new parliament.

The site is cut off from the rest of the fabric of Canberra by two concentric rings of road circulation. The third inner ‘ring’ is rectangular and surrounds the parliamentary complex connected to the outer circulatory rings and city at five points. Two of the points are the north and northeastern avenues that from the parliamentary triangle and the other two flank the land axis. The last of these connections connects to the ministerial wing of the complex in the south. In essence, the site is an island of a giant traffic circle encircled by the two concentric rings of the road circulation system. The site is also a hilltop that overlooks the valley of Canberra. Although there are multiple points of road connections to the site, and the site is highly visible to motorist encircling on their daily commute, it is cut off from the urban fabric and hence the everyday lives of ordinary people.

Connections to the fabric are mostly visual occurring along the lines of the celebratory land axis. The building that occupies the site is , as such, viewed as a destination

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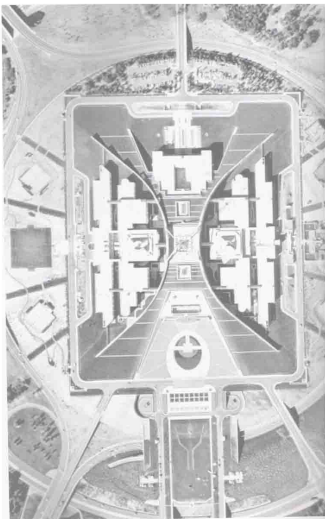
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DESIGN

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DESIGN

and landmark point. The site is a product of the Griffin plan, and as such perpetuates the hierarchy of spaces intrinsic to the plan, in which institution of power are celebrated and exemplified above other functions of the city. This reinforces a clear distinction between the roles of governors above governed, affording spatial privilege to the former, and as such perpetuating an elitist position.

Architectural response: Form, function and the portrayal of power



Aerial photograph
(Tombesi 2003:140)

The complex comprises of the National Parliament, House of Representatives and its related office wing, Senate and its related office wing. The buildings main elements are the parabolic curved walls, the landscaped hill that extends over the chamber of parliament and the pyramidal flag mast that holds an oversized Australian Flag at the original height of Capital Hill. (Tombesi 2003:144)

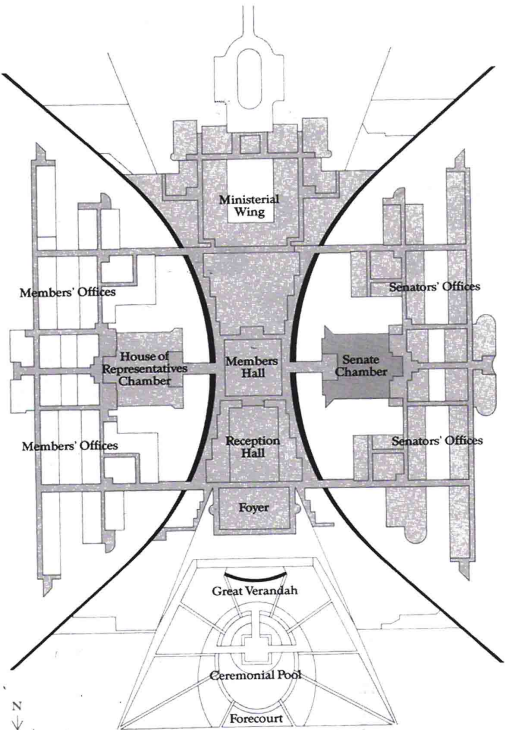
The plan of the complex is a cruciform of main spaces. To the west and east are the chambers for Senate and the House of Representatives, respectively. The ministerial wing is located to the South, which is also the entrance used by the prime minister and his ministers. The north has a public forecourt carved out of the hill that overlooks Canberra's land axis. The center of the complex houses the national parliamentary chamber. As such we see the plan being a symbolic representation of the confluence of these four groups.

The parabolic walls of the complex frame views from the forecourt out over Canberra, with specific emphasis on the land axis and parliamentary triangle. It is also related to the curvilinear form of the radiating roads. The parabolic walls allow the landscape to flow over the building and main parliamentary chamber and its approaching spaces. This reinforces Griffin's concern for the hills and mountain peaks to remain in their natural state. This feature allows the public to walk onto the parliamentary landscaped roof and overlook parliamentary sessions through the skylights. This vantage point being the city's highest point captures panoramic views over the city. Corrigan notes the public's delight to be allowed to access the landscape roof and overlook both the parliamentarians and the picturesque views outward over Canberra, however he notes that within a month of the complex's

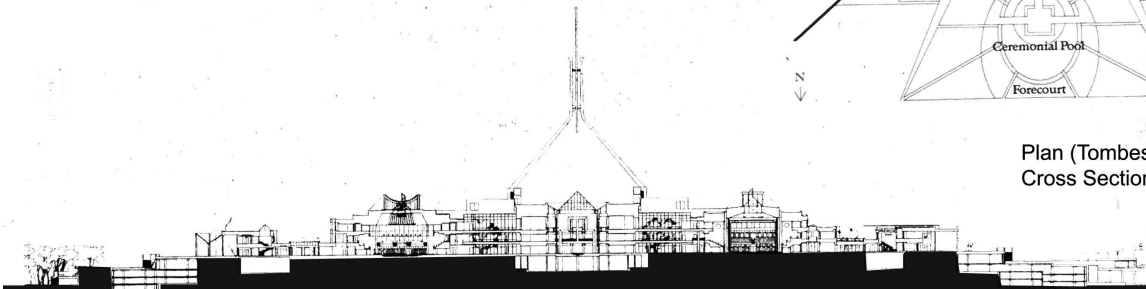


official opening barricades were put up denying the view over the parliamentarians and “yet another political promise had been broken. The hill had become a building after all.” (1988:61)

In architectural circles, the complex has been praised as a synthesis of the Griffin plan, tight building program and stringent space requirements, as well as taking a stance of becoming a “monumental anti-monument.” (Frampton 1989:15) however criticism against the complex is that the overall complex is not readable and perhaps “best viewed from an airplane.” (Corrigan 1988:61) this view is reinforced by Tombesi: “the plan might have looked convincing from the air, but retained none of its urban encompassing power when approached at ground level.” (2003:141)



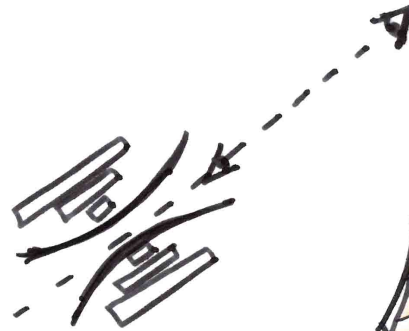
Plan (Tombesi 2003:140)
Cross Section (Spence 1988b:44)



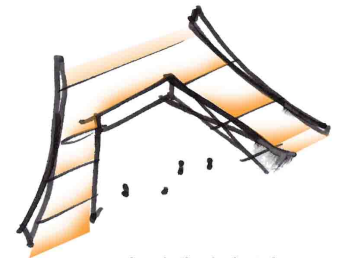
From the above discussion as well as an understanding of the building plan we see the architectural portrayal of power in a number of ways, of which four are highlighted:

- The use of symmetry that extends the land axis of the city into and over the building. This creates strong axial views across to the city, and strong axial views from along the land axis to the building complex.
- Although the building tries to underpin its monumental scale by wrapping the landscape over it, the enormity of scale is clearly readable. The scale of the building complex to that of a person is so large that it is hard to get an overall sense of the building when approaching on foot. "The plan might have looked convincing from the air, but retained none of its urban encompassing power when approached at ground level." (2003:141)
- The use of easily recognizable symbols such as the oversized flag and flag mast gives the building gravitas by associated with a well-recognized symbolic set.
- The use of landscape, in particular the extension of the hill over the main spaces of the building, links the building to ideas of the natural. The use of landscape is extended to the urban master plan that frames the Capital hill against the backdrop of other natural hills giving it power by association,

and creating strong layered axial views from across the city.



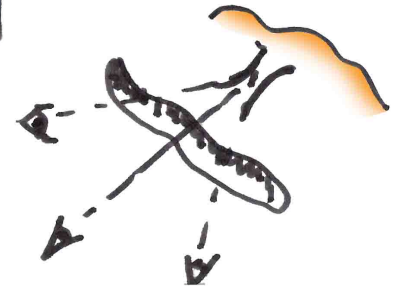
Analytical sketch: symmetry and axial views



Analytical sketch: monumental scale



Analytical sketch: direct symbols



Analytical sketch: landscape and the idea of the natural

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