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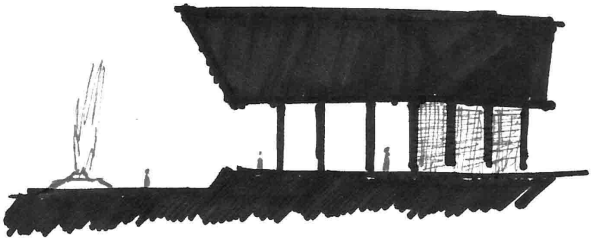
When power stepped off its pedestal ... the design of the Pan-African Parliament

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2008-10-08T07:27:53Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/5734

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- On elevation the vaulted roof is detailed to emphasize the depth of the truss system, giving the appearance of a heavy monolithic element. By the roof extending far beyond the convex mirrored glass facade, the illusion of the monolithic roof floating above and beyond the building is created. This humbles a person entering under the huge canopy and gives the building it's prominent presence.



Analytical sketch: monolithic roof element

Overall we see the building both in it's site and in its architectural response creating a prominence for itself and reflecting a sense of power.

Three point perspective analysis

In this analysis, we will look at the building from three perspectives.These are:

- From the perspective of the patron of the architectural edifice
- From the perspective of a visitor orientating himself within and in relation to the building
- From the perspective of an onlooker passing the building from the street

These reflect the positions with regard to the OAU and AU as previously explored in this chapter. The purpose is to assess whether these opinions of perception of an elitist organization can be read in its architecture.



The building seen from the perspective of the patron to the architectural edifice

In the discussion of the AU's opinion of itself it was concluded that the AU is a legitimate organization based on the efforts of the OAU and the struggles of the African people in liberating the continent from colonialism.

The building was not commissioned by the OAU but by the Nigerian government in order to host OAU and other international conferences. In the analysis of Abuja's master plan issues of clarity and legitimacy of built form were central overlapping with the earlier conclusion of the AU's opinion of itself. As such, our analysis of the building from the viewpoint of the patron of the architectural edifice will focus on clarity and legitimacy efforts as seen through the architecture.

If one look at the building two architectural elements feature prominently namely the 'monolithic floating' roof and the proportionally smaller red concrete columns. The building is symmetrical about it's centerline and its volume is read as a singular element. This simplicity of form ties in closely to the primary role of the OAU namely the promotion of African unity. Although the OAU consisted of 53 member states each with it's own unique traits and peculiarities, which could have been symbolized in the architecture, the building exhibits neutrality that speaks more about unity than representing diversity.

The dominant monolithic roof, being the main element of the building appears to hover over the building, which seems to disappear on the front elevation using a full height mirrored glass facade,convexly curved on plan. The roof appears to float however, it does not speak of a lightness of construction. Instead, the roof dominates over the building and even though it creates a large volume beneath it, it seems to hang heavily over this volume. From the perspective of human scale, the monolithic roof appears daunting.

The use of vast flat landscaping separates the building from the street, from which it is fenced off and closely monitored from security personnel in the perimeter guardhouse. An axial view of the building seems to echo the well-publicized view of the White House in Washington, through its use of symmetry, landscaping as



Juxtaposed photos of the OAU Conference Center and White House
(Nakamura, ed. 1994:52)
(www.answers.com , cited 10 July 2007)

a separation device and layering of visual elements such boundary fencing, shrubs and fountains.

Viewed in totality the building is a clear icon of unity and importance, using architectural articulation devices such as symmetry, proportion, materiality, and architectural emphasis on a singular element. As such, we see the building reflecting the opinions of its patron, the Nigerian government and its beneficiary the OAU. With a single glimpse, the building reflects who is allowed to access it and the importance of the functions it houses, revealing the importance of the beneficiary organization, the OAU, and its elitist nature.

As such we conclude that the building reflects the OAU's opinion of itself as being a top-down exclusive body.

The building from the perspective of a visitor

This view epitomizes the media's view of the OAU.In the earlier discussion this was explored and the media's cynicism was revealed, calling the OAU 'a trade union of dictators' and a 'collaborative club of perpetual self preservation'.

In this analytical exploration, we will look at the building through the eyes of a visitor accessing and orientating himself to the building

Accessing the building would be near impossible especially during conferences if the visitor did not have the correct invitations and/or clearances to enter the property. (Raheem: 2007) Assuming however that the visitor was allowed to enter the property the first point of access to the site would be at the guardhouse along the boundary fence of the property.

Upon gaining clearance from the security personnel, the visitor would drive adjacent to the building and park in the designated parking area, which is separate from the processional vehicular route used by dignitaries. The visitor would then proceed on foot perpendicular to the axis of symmetry, entering the building at one of the three doors on the glass facade, being the second point of access control.

Access to main conference hall is clearly restricted and the only accessible spaces would be the front foyer and if allowed the first floor public and press galleries. Orientating himself within the building would be a simple task, given the simple layout of the building.



From this and our previous analysis, we conclude the following:

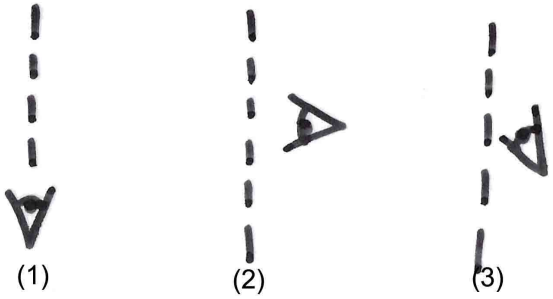
- The building is highly secured using physical barriers such as high security fences and active security in the form of security guards housed in the perimeter guardhouse. This filtering device regulates who may enter and who may not. This acts as a deterrent to casual visitors wishing to gain access to the property.
- The building is a pavilion, set back and separated from the street by the use of a vast grass plane with low shrubs to facilitate views to the building as well as surveillance of the building and property.
- The sequence of views is important. To a visitor the first view would be an axial one portraying the full power of the building (1). The next view would be perpendicular to this axis entering the building on foot from the parking lot (2). The 3rd view , now under the monolithic roof at a diagonal to the axis of symmetry facing the main facade. This is different to the entrance sequence of a dignitary, who would view the building firstly on axis and finally enter the building on the same axis line. Although the visitor enters the building, using the same entrance point his entrance sequence characterizes his place in the building, i.e. being of lesser importance to that of the dignitary.



Analytical sketch: perimeter security



Analytical sketch: pavilion building typology



Analytical sketch: sequence of views

- The restriction of access to the property, building and main conferencing hall, except as to view it from first floor press and public galleries, reinforces the hierarchy of user in the building.



As such from the view of a visitor orientating himself to/within the building the architecture can be seen to reflect the media's opinion of the OAU being a top-down institution.

The building from the perspective of an onlooker passing by from the street

In the conclusions of the view of ordinary people of the OAU, predominantly negative opinions were discovered. Some of the comments quoted called the OAU "a toothless dog" and "Africa's robbers union", revealing a lack of confidence in the OAU given its elitist nature.

As previously discussed the complex makes use of perimeter security and active monitoring by security personnel housed in the perimeter guardhouse The complex also uses the flat vast plane of grass in front of the building as a devise of separation from the street.

The building however is designed to be best viewed from afar, demonstrating power through architectural articulation. This includes layering devices such as the perimeter fence, low shrubs, the axially located feature fountain and the powerful building profile against the backdrop of the sky and Abuja's natural and built landscape. The axial view creates a rich layering of elements, crating a perspective of the building that portrays a sense of power in a similar way as viewing the White House upfront from the street.

As such, we see that from the perspective of an ordinary person passing by, the use of strong visual devices embodies the power of the architecture and organization/event that it houses within.
As such we conclude that from this perspective the architecture reveals the elitist view of the OAU.



Conclusion: OAU Conference Center, Abuja, Nigeria

From an urban perspective, Abuja was designed on the principals of centrality of government and a separation of the three arms of government from the people. The three arms zone is simultaneously legitimized using designed visual links from the publicly accessible central plaza as well as using Aso hill as a backdrop. This use of natural landscape gives the three arms zone 'power by association'.

At the level of the building it was shown that through architectural strategies employed suc as the emphasis on the monolithic roof to create a strong profile to the building, differentiated entrance sequences, composed perspectives and the use of landscape as a device of separation, that the building reinforces the opinion of the OAU as an exclusive top-down institution.

The building was also analyzed from the perspectives of the patron of the architectural edifice, a visitor and an ordinary person viewing the building from the street. It was concludes from all three perspectives that the architecture reinforces the view of the OAU as an elitist body.

As such, we see a correlation between the opinion derived earlier in this chapter of the OAU as a top down institute and the architecture, which strongly affirms this.



Photo of parliamentary complex and motorcyclist , Abuja
(www.bnoack.com/photopages/abuja.html , cited 9 July 2007)

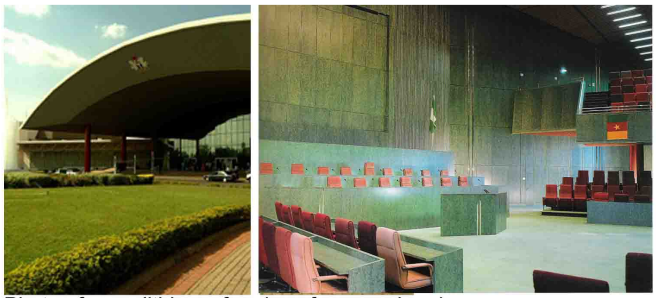


Photo of monolithic roof and conference chamber
(www.unaids.org , cited 4 July 2007)
(Nakamura, ed. 1994:59)





Comparison between Africa Hall, headquarters of the OAU & the new AU, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

This comparison compares the OAU headquarters to the AU headquarters, in order to discuss the architectural devices employed in both buildings related to the portrayal of power.

The main purpose of this section is to ascertain whether the opinion of the OAU and the AU elitist organizations can be read in the architecture.

This analysis will be approached in a similar manner as to the earlier analysis of the OAU Conference Centre in Abuja. Firstly an analysis of the urban context will highlight the strategies employed with regard to the relationship between the buildings of power and the buildings of everyday life.
Secondly an analysis of the buildings will highlight the relationship between form, function and the portrayal of power.
Thirdly we will look at the buildings through the eyes of the patron of the architectural edifice, a visitor to the building and an onlooker passing the building from the street, and draw overall conclusions.

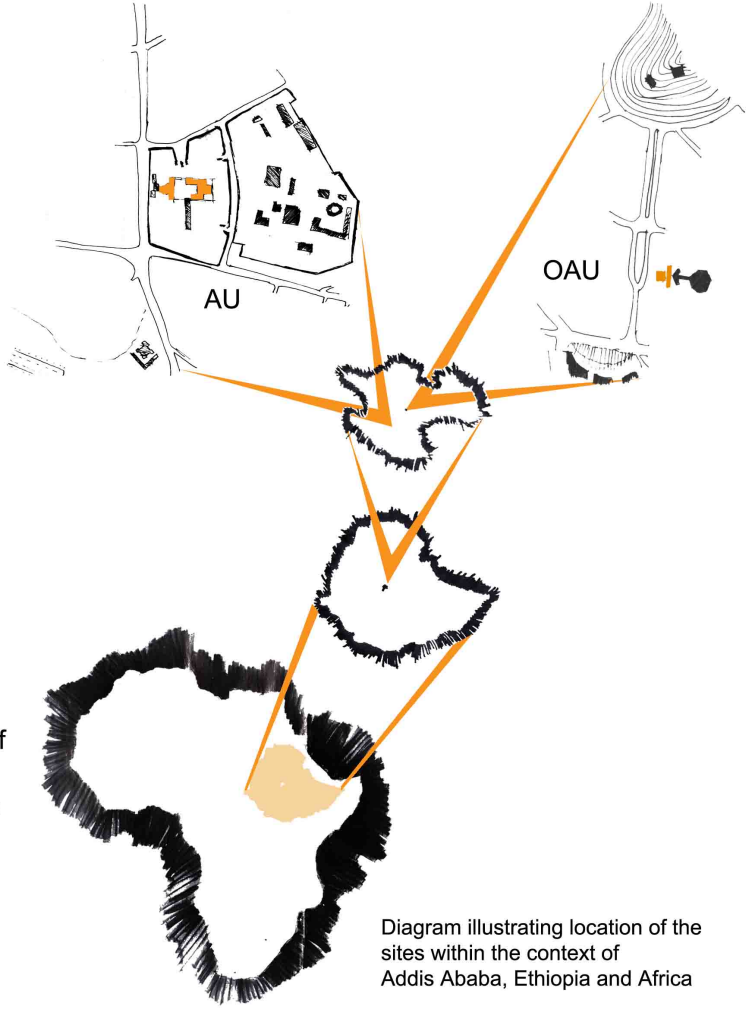


Diagram illustrating location of the sites within the context of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Africa

These buildings are located in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, which has an estimated population of 2.97 million. The city has no rural parts and as such is 100% urbanized.
(www.wikipedia.org/wiki/addisababa.html , cited 9 June 2007)
Unlike Abuja, Addis Ababa was not a newly planned modernist capital. Its history can be traced back to 1886 where Emperor Menelik and his wife Taitu established the city.
(www.wikipedia.org/wiki/addisababa.html , cited 12 June 2007)
The city's early development centered around three nodal points: The Menelik palace (being the political and administrative center), the Arada St. George Church (social and religious center) and the Arada area (business and market center). Until the arrival of the Italians in 1936, who occupied Ethiopia for a period of five years, the city grew spontaneously in all directions; with particular emphasis toward the north, northwest and south of the nodal points.
(www.telecom.net.et ; cited 04 July 2007)

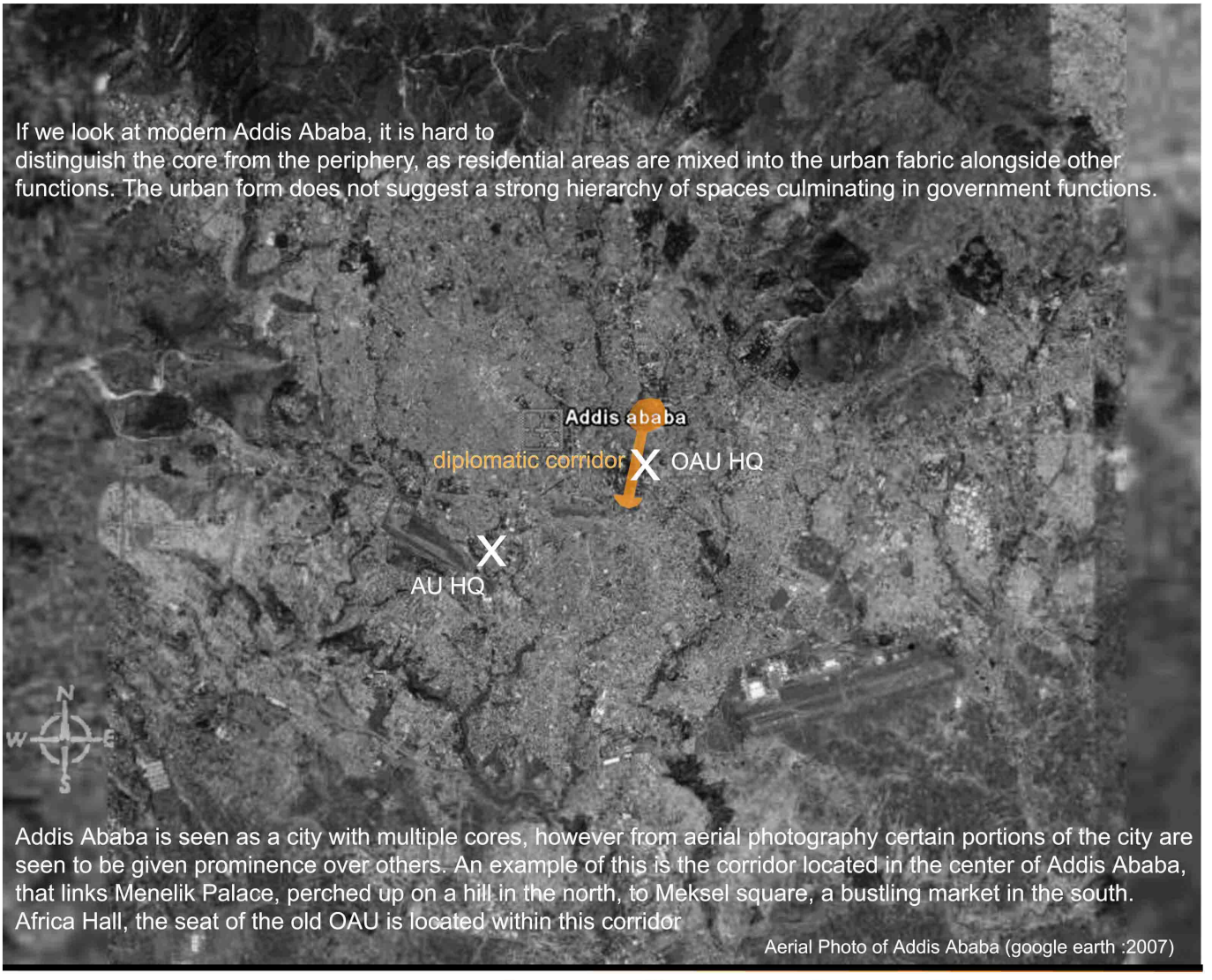
The Addis Ababa city government website continues to outline subsequent master plans the most important being the I Guidi & C Vale plan of 1936 and the Sir Patrick Abercrombie plan of 1956. The I Guidi & C Vale plan envisioned the city composing of two parts namely the 'European city' and the 'Native city' to the west of it. The Abercrombie plan, designed by the planner of greater London, envisaged radial and ring roads intended to channel vehicular traffic outward from the city center, as well as the introduction of satellite settlements in all directions around the city core.
(www.telecom.net.et ; cited 04 July 2007)

If we look at modern Addis Ababa, it is hard to distinguish the core from the periphery, as residential areas are mixed into the urban fabric alongside other functions. The urban form does not suggest a strong hierarchy of spaces culminating in government functions.



The Abercrombie and Guidi/Vale master plans
(www.telecom.net.et ; cited 04 July 2007)

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Addis Ababa is seen as a city with multiple cores, however from aerial photography certain portions of the city are seen to be given prominence over others. An example of this is the corridor located in the center of Addis Ababa, that links Menelik Palace, perched up on a hill in the north, to Meksel square, a bustling market in the south. Africa Hall, the seat of the old OAU is located within this corridor

Aerial Photo of Addis Ababa (google earth :2007)

From this, the following is concluded:

- It is hard to distinguish the core from the periphery of the city, as residential areas are mixed into the urban fabric.
- There are certain portions of the city that are given prominence and these are found around the three historic cores of Menelik Palace, Aranda St Georges Church and the Aranda business area
- From an urban scale buildings of political power, either occur along these areas of greater prominence (Africa hall) or are integrated into the surrounding mixed urban fabric (AU headquarters)

Form, function and power

It is firstly important to note that buildings of such a nature always involve heightened security measures, and these measures extend to information of the buildings and in most cases, photography and sketching are forbidden within and in close proximity to the buildings.

I have been liaising with many local sources in Addis Ababa in order to get any information and base documentation on these buildings however many of these sources have led to dead ends. According to Alemayehu Kidie, an architecture student attending the University of Addis Ababa,

"These are secured buildings because of their use, it is even forbidden to take a photo of this building. If someone finds you taking a photo, your fate is in jail."

I managed by chance to meet a South African lift technician who recently was flown out to service the lifts at the AU headquarters. When I questioned him about the building, he said: "Arrangements had to be made from South Africa, when I got to the building a security guard escorted me to the area where I had to do my work. I didn't walk around anywhere else because the cameras are always looking, security is very heavy."
(Interview Ben Mkonza, senior lift technician, Schidler S.A)

As such, the analysis is based on published information, and photographic sources that were managed to be sourced, under these tight security constraints

Africa Hall, OAU Headquarters, Addis Ababa Ethiopia



Photo of Africa Hall
(www.uwm.edu/Libraries/digilib/cities/index.html, cited 10 May 2007)