ARCHITECTURE IN EUROPE AND THE SOUTH: SOME AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

Christopher Cripps

Introduction

The teaching and practice of Architecture in 'the North' remains Eurocentric. This means that the way in which aid, in the form of capital projects (schools, hospitals, buildings for development and governance) is provided, contributes to poverty and dependence. This paper argues that the mind-set of Architecture and Urban Design academies and practices in the North continues also to block the development of the capacity of dependent, less-developed Southern countries to create an autonomous Architecture; an Architecture which could contribute to self-confidence and independence.

Recommendations are made, below, about the way in which the European Commission could influence thinking, research and practical projects in 'the South' with which it is engaged. The commissioning of new projects needs to be linked to the questioning of the remaining 'colonising' assumptions in European design theory and practice. Commissioning of construction projects needs to include capacity building in academies and practices in the countries which are the subjects of the projects. Attention and resources need to be directed to setting up this new approach.

Get your own house in order

This paper arises from travel for the last fifteen months through Africa, India and SE Asia, and the previous fifteen years spent practicing as an Architect in the UK. The practice to which I refer was a "community technical aid" co-operative which offered technical support to land and building based projects. Its ethos was derived from a critique of the oligarchic nature of Architecture in the provision of buildings in the social sector in the UK. We became Architects "on tap, not on top". We worked with the techniques of community involvement, at first using methods for participation in a 'functionalist' approach to design, such as those now promoted by the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation called 'Planning for Real'[1]. Participants were able to express their needs and ideas by making and moving cards and models around in public workshops. This happened at the level of the single building, the complex, the neighbourhood or small town.

Something was lacking in the eventual built outcomes, in that there was no mechanism for expression of the visual, formal, symbolic, or significatory aspirations and visions of the participants. We turned to creative artists in the community to help unlock this aspect of the process. Here we were, incidentally, discovering that the exclusion of art from architecture practice had been part of the oppressive nature of the Modern oligarchy. I will return to these methods later on, but it is sufficient to say now that we did, I think, unwittingly begin to create culturally[2] distinct buildings,

---

[1] See www.nifonline.org.uk for more information about these methods

[2] Williams (1976: 80) quoted in Smith (2001: 2) gives three current uses of the term "culture":
- To refer to the intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development of an individual, group or society.

buildings with which users and occupants could identify at a number of levels from the practical to the symbolic.

Our projects began to include work for minority ethnic groups in the cities of Gloucester, Birmingham and London in the UK. It became necessary to understand the situation and culture of people, which referred back to origins in Africa, Asia and Latin America to whose architecture I had no access. I travelled partly because in many ways, in music, in food, for example, globalisation had resulted in a new diversity in my own world. But of diversity in Architecture I could find little or no evidence. What was happening? I reasoned that the same processes of oligarchy which were affecting communities in the UK, were prevalent in the production of buildings in other countries. They were conceived in Northern academies and practices and exported to the South. As I travelled, I searched in vain for the 'post-colonial' critique in Architecture, which clearly existed in other subjects. Amongst the prevailing apparent chaos, which constituted Southern cities and their buildings I found only the remnants of Beaux Arts colonial buildings, occasionally the mimicry of indigenous traditional cultures in these and later Modern buildings.

On my return, I looked for friends with whom I could share my views and rediscovered the UK's 'Society of Black Architects'. This is an organisation of Black and Asian Architects who experience discrimination in their employment on grounds of their race and colour. This is not, as yet, an organisation which tackles the question, "What is 'Black' Architecture like?". But I heard that some lecturers who were providing a space for race issues in the subject, exploring a new approach, were being blocked by their academies. This situation also apparently existed in the USA. I recalled my own days as student, and then lecturer in Architecture where students from the South, who were good for paying fees, were written off as being less capable as students of Architecture.

'The South' in Architecture theory and history

 Following a fruitless search as I travelled around the world, I found the first proper critique of the subject on my return: Lesley Naa Norle Lokko's anthology *"White Papers, Black Marks: architecture, race, culture"*. Lokko pointed out that there were a small number of works coming from this perspective in the USA[3]. She has brought together a collection which ranges from racialised critiques of the city[4] to detailed enquiries about the application of 'other cultural' identities to design. Felecia Davis, for example, describes her search for "the boundaries constructed between history

---

- To capture a range of intellectual and artistic activities and their products (film, art, theatre). In this usage culture is more or less synonymous with "the Arts", hence we can speak of a "Minister for Culture".
- To designate the entire way of life, activities, beliefs and customs of a people, group, or society.

[3] Lokko (2000) and in the USA, for example, King (1997)

[4] Stanton (2000:114) "the oppression from which they (white settlers) fled was more likely identified with the city, always the primary metonym for society as a whole………..the problematic image of the urban itself is now inextricable with Americans (with) African-slave ancestors…..the American city is now the black city"p.129. "on the other hand, the countryside and its surrogate urbanisms sing the clear song of Arcadian harmony" p.130. See also for example at the scale of the urban/nation/global Goldsmith (2000)

and memory in the formation of narratives" for a design for the African Burial Ground in Manhattan. She was interested in "critical invention which reconfigures 'African' and its traditions and allows for many more identities to co-exist simultaneously"[5].

Looking again at some of the theoretical positions of Architecture teaching in the UK, I found that despite 'globalisation', there seems to have been no shift from the teaching of history as the 'Modern' lying in a direct path back to (European) classical antiquity. The rest of the world is approached as the subject of the European project. Africa was 'discovered', for example. India and China are perceived *from* the west, their influences *taken for* the west. Time and again on my visit to Africa, history was related as beginning with the European explorers. Only Mohammed, the semi-educated guide in the Dogon country, began his account with the great kingdoms of West Africa[6], which, he said, were followed by the arrival of the Europeans and slavery. The effects of colonisation remain; history isn't related as having begun from within a people or nation in West Africa, as it is in Europe. The orders and constructs of Ancient Greece and Rome have been important in a European Architecture. It is just as significant for an Architecture of West Africa that a non-hierarchical form of 'the urban' probably existed prior to the arrival of Islam[7], that there were the empires of the middle ages prior to the arrival of the Europeans and transatlantic slavery, and that animist traditions continue their presence into contemporary life.

Although sometimes seen as the field in which the notion of the 'post-modern' was first located, it seems that Architecture may only just be beginning to take in the post-colonial critiques that exist in cultural studies and other subjects[8]. In Architecture, significant sites in other cultures are at best 'tacked on' to an account of the development of a universal set of ideas about space and form, which emanate from Europe, going back to it's antiquity. Yet if the Architects in Europe are to recognise the legitimacy of other countries and regions as being truly independent, each with their own 'autonomous' modernity, this stance has to change. European colonisation of Africa and elsewhere, as in the examples which follows, has surely at least to be included in Europe's understanding of it's own history.

At the very time when the avant-garde in Europe could be seen to be borrowing ideas about abstraction, from the sight of the newly-available African sculpture, for the development of an abstract Modern Art, the British Colonial Governor of the Gold Coast was saying that "The West African Negro has never sculpted a statue, painted a

[5] Davis (2000)

[6] Reader (1998) It can be said that even these kingdoms were a response to the threat posed by invading Arabs from across the Sahara from the 11thC onwards, hence a response to Islam, another incursive force.

[7] Ibid. pp227, 228 extrapolates from the myths and legends of pre-historic West Africa that "myths and material symbols remind all involved of the expectations that bind the regional community. Herein lies the origin of in-situ ethnic elaboration and the device that maintains ethnic boundaries….the counteracting forces of ethnic identity in the (Niger) delta – where the demands of specialisation pushed groups apart while the requirements of a generalised economy pulled them together – created a dynamism that ensured growth and the establishment of urban settlements. Groups congregated by choice. This is an instance of transformation from a rural to an urban society that did not establish a hierarchical society and coercive centralised control, with the many ruled by the despotic few. The process was one of 'complexification' rather than centralisation"

[8] Eg Appiah (1992), Said (1993), Bhabha (1994)

picture, produced a literature or even invented a mechanical contrivance worthy of the name"[9]. This is indicative of the slow and painful struggle for Africans to be recognised as equal human beings by the Europe of the 20th Century. The struggle for recognition by contemporary African artists continues[10].

Lagae's account of the display of colonies in the grand exhibitions between 1867 and 1958 in France and Belgium shows their need to convince visitors of the "civilising mission of colonialism". Particular emphasis was placed, in the presentations, on 'progress' which stood for "modernisation, as implemented through technology, that mirrored or even represented the western world itself". Authentic displays were hybrid mixtures of European and Indigenous architectural languages, in which morphological elements selected from the native built environment were recombined according to western design rules[11]. Lagae recounts the swaying back and forth of the portrayal of the colonial project in its Architecture between uncompromising modernity, a continuing Beaux Arts style and the sometime application of traditional Africana to either. An influential Belgian Architect thought that colonial sections should be laboratories for developing a contemporary colonial architecture[12]. Lagae credits one occasion when the pre-conceived notions of colonial imagery are blurred and an intriguing hybridity is embodied in design[13].

The account nicely portrays the issues which concern the process of design *by* Western academies *for* Africa. Firstly there is the appropriation of traditional forms by Western practice and academia without accreditation, without recognition of their authorship, and hence without any participation of the people whose culture they serve[14]. Secondly there is the application of tradition to new building designs by a 'donor' country, it's re-presentation as the gift of the subject peoples' own culture back to them, in a manner which effectively relegates them as incapable. Africa continues to suffer from the "ecological imageries built on primeval symbolism of wild animals roaming the plains and forests …. (and) mummified architectural images that negate African creativity and control of the physical environment" [15].

---

[9] Araeen, Cubitt & Sardar (2002: 36)

[10] As recounted in Kasfir (1999)

[11] Lagae (2002:47)

[12] ibid. p.54

[13] ibid. p.53 The cupolas in Lacoste's Congolese section at the 'Exposition Coloniale Internationale', Vincennes, 1931 "…..clearly refer to native architecture. These cupolas consist of a structural wooden frame, lefty unconcealed on the inside and covered with straw on the outside. The frame is made of pre-fabricated elements, permitting easy assemblage on site and allowing large spans without secondary supports…. This structural solution was regarded as being highly innovative, and l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui described it as a totally new concept offering promising prospects for future generations".

[14] On our journey, one of the very few places where art was accredited to African artists as individual people, as it always is in the North, was in an exhibition of Photographs by Margaret Courtney-Clarke at The Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York 28.1.02-30.3.03, "The Art of African Women: Empowering Traditions". It is sometimes only on presentation of so-called 'tribal art' in this way that the general lack of attributed authorship becomes noticeable and remarkable.

[15] (Akmang-Parry, 2001: 76). Says that images of Africa in the West reinforce it's portrayal "as the continent of underdevelopment, anchored firmly in economic backwardness and political quagmire". Bhabha (1994:) quotes Fanon in this respect, who "recognises the crucial importance, for subordinated peoples, of asserting their indigenous cultural traditions and retrieving their repressed histories. But he is far too aware of the dangers of the fixity and fetishism of identities within the calcification of colonial cultures to recommend that 'roots' be struck in the celebratory romance of the past, or by homogenising the history of the present…"

Thirdly there is the idea of hybridity in Architecture. Bhabha sees hybridity as a powerful tool for combating dominant discourse and structures of power[16]. It implies the recognition that almost any African today, for example, is neither solely African nor Western, but both: in effect we all have multiple identities. But the outcome should not be a fusion of the two identities, (inevitably the absorption of one by the other, e.g. the African by the Western), but a combination on equal terms in which both have something to offer, an outcome in which both find something new - the innovative structural solution offered by the Congolese-type dome, "offering promising prospects for future generations" both in Europe and Africa, for example[17].

Fourthly and fifthly there are the extremes of a reversion to the Beaux Arts, the uncompromisingly European language, and the move into an absolute modernity, a supposedly value-free alternative.

Modern Architecture for the South

A recent exhibition in London of the work of British Architects in West Africa from the 1950s to the 1960s is illustrative of the subsequent moment of 'decolonisation'[18]. In the immediate post-colonial period, British Modern Architects were sent or invited to Nigeria, Ghana and elsewhere to build new schools, universities, and hospitals. Their 'international' style, by having eliminated its Beaux Arts clothing, was assumed to be liberating, above and beyond questions of power (here, just as it did in the working class communities in the UK). But 'Modernisation' of Africa still seems also to have carried a 'civilising' mission, albeit within a different political framework, as in the following dialogue between two of its principal exponents: "Maxwell Fry: 'A Nigerian aesthetic? On what would it be based that is as solid as the plywood techniques, the old timber traditions of Finland?' Jane Drew: 'If a Nigerian genius were to be born, upon what deeply-felt indigenous art might it not feed – and be better digested, perhaps, than Picasso's reactions?'"[19].

In the 1960s a 'Tropical School' of Architecture was set up in London[20] with the purpose of adapting Modern methods to the African and other equatorial climates. Schools of Architecture such as that at the Kumasi Institute of Science and Technology, Ghana, were set up to teach the Tropical style. The appropriate research included experiments with alternative technology which recognised the possibilities of indigenous construction methods – but not culture[21].

---

[16] Bhabha (1994: 243)

[17] See note 13 above

[18] British Architects in West Africa: exhibition at the Architectural Association, London, December 2002-January 2003

[19] Ihejirica (2000:185)

[20] Based at the Architectural Association , later became the Development Planning Unit at University College, London.

[21] In discussion, Dr.G.W.K.Intsiful, Senior Lecturer in Architecture at the Kumasi Institute of Science and Technology recalled how a British Architect who was involved in setting up their course sent the entire 1969 class to London for several weeks. Naturally, on their return home, many, if not most of them attempted to reproduce their London experiences in their studio work. He lamented the lack of an authentic Ghanain architecture because many Ghanaians believe strongly that they are from a backward environment and that they can only be seen to be making progress if they copy what obtains in Western cities. Kumasi, November 2001

The work of Le Corbusier in India tells a similar story: Chandigargh, the new capital for the now divided Punjab was to be a model in city planning "for India and even the world.....to be achieved using the best expertise in the West". Le Corbusier was suggested by Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, his "lofty visions and ideals were in harmony with Nehru's aspirations".[22] All of the protagonists were members of CIAM[23]. In the new Capitol building, "he avoided the conventional symmetry of the traditional Empire style and pursued the drama of a sacred theatre[24]". But this can also be seen as a wilful importation of world architecture sites/references into a country, which already has many highly developed commonly understood Architectural languages, and arguably the richest, most complex, collection of symbolic buildings in the world. "The impression conveyed is that he would have preferred that the inhabitants were grateful to him for enlarging their emotional knowledge of Architecture........His ideas on cosmology were cryptic and esoteric. Yet for him, they were to be accepted and understood by everyone, without explanations"[25].

The relevance of the work of Le Corbusier, Louis Khan, Charles Correa and others who worked at, or made the pilgrimage to Ahmedabad, the centre of Architectural Modernity in India after independence is now being re-evaluated. The capacity of India to debate and develop its modernity is much further advanced than is the case in Africa[26].

Architecture and the South today: the post-modern era

What is the neo-liberal consensus in the case of Architecture? The point is that the above antecedents of our relationship with the South remain unchallenged and inform our present relationship. These are "hypotheses which underpin the neo-liberal approach". The above incursion of the Modern European establishment into West Africa and India was mostly taken over by events, and petered out as did classical Modernity in the North, although some threads continued[27]. But I contend that debates about African architecture are still at their height in the academies outside of Africa, in Europe and America. Southern schools of Architecture are under-

---

[22] Antoniou (2003)

[23] Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne

[24] Antoniou (2003:74) says the Capitol was to be "worthy of sacred spaces such as Teotihuacan in Mexico and the Giza pyramids in Egypt and, most sacred of all to Le Corbusier, the Acropolis in Athens…" Again, at the Assembly Building "…the main doors, in 55 brightly coloured panels on either side (a gift form the French Government) make up the largest painting by Le Corbusier, depicting his own philosophy of life, in terms of the cosmos, nature, man and the discovery of numbers…"

[25] Antoniou (2003:75)

[26] For a full account see Lang, Desai and Desai (1997)

[27] For example the UK's Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has continued to validate courses in Architecture validation in Kenya, Singapore and New Zealand. As the RIBA president put it, *"Some* (external validations) *are in schools left over from colonial days"*. The RIBA's validation role has recently been extended to over 100 other schools worldwide in order, in his view, to help them get access to commissions from the neo-liberal institutions, *"inward investment is often tagged to the use of an accredited architect…Qualifications in Chile (for example) are not respected in most of the anglo-saxon world, although they have had schools since the 1840s"*. Interview with Paul Hyett, February 2003.

resourced, unregarded, invisible. Civil war in Nigeria, conflict and economic disaster in places like Mali and Ghana, destroyed much of any colonial period Architecture or Planning 'infrastructure' that existed. It is only now slowly, if at all, being replaced.

In the present era, advanced buildings and ideas about them are mostly exported wholesale from the North. Picture the buildings which are the components of the financial institutions and good governance: the bank, the assembly building, the presidential palace, the mall, the five star hotel, the big hospital, the airport etc. How many of these are funded or sanctioned/commissioned by the World Bank, UNESCO, WHO, or the EC? Are they not part of the edifice of neo-liberalism, part of what needs to be questioned?

These are the products of the change which followed from the period of Modernism in the North: postmodernism, "a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order – what is often euphemistically called modernisation, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism"[28]. For architecture this meant "an emphasis on playful rather than serious design; radical eclecticism, the hybrid and adhocism to replace monumental uniformity; buildings that copy other styles and engage in an ironic pastiche; fragmentation of design…; buildings which appeal to ordinary people, with semiotic codes that they can understand and enjoy…"[29]. In the new phase of urbanisation and expansion of the worldwide economy, Architects in the North accepted the pastiches and the politics of consumption on which post-modern theory elaborates.

But it does not refer to the 'neo-colonial', or the 'post-colonial'. It takes, perhaps, even a step back from the issues which were being debated about the exhibition pavilions of colonial times. The relationship between 'post modern' and 'post colonial' thinking is the subject of much debate. Postmodern 'hybridity' as quoted above is different from the 'hybridity' which Bhabha sees as a site of resistance against western hegemony. Postcolonial analysis is dismissed by some as being too esoteric, unable to tackle actual neo-colonial power relations, narcissistic, an obsession of the 'bored and overfed'[30]. But, as Abrahamsen argues, postcolonialism's concerns with the relationship between power and knowledge – and practices and institutions – can be seen to provide theoretical and perceptual resources of particular pertinence[31]. In her terms, it seems that it's application to a subject such as Architecture will be nothing but of mutual benefit; "for post colonialism the encounter with a more empirically orientated discipline may help expand its focus and field of enquiry away from preoccupations with the past and its representation, towards critical analyses of contemporary institutions and practices of power[32]".

The new global market expansion from the 1970s to today has brought great changes in property development and construction, which are making containers for the consumer goods, global lifestyles, communications networks etc of the new economic

---

[28] Jameson (1988)
[29] Smith (2002:217) and classically in Venturi, Scott-Brown, Denies and Izenour (1977)
[30] Epco (1995) in Abrahamson (2003)
[31] Ibid., p.209
[32] Ibid, p.191

order. Trans-national construction companies organise projects on an ever more global basis. These are clothed in universal, global icons such as Ronald McDonald, Disney, with regional Arab, south-east Asian, Japanese or other equivalents. They are produced by the same Eurocentric practices, located in the North. With the collapse of Modernism, while continuing their ideas about form in thin debates about postmodern styles as above, Architects in the North put most of their energy into embracing, 'expressing', the new technologies of steel, glass, servicing systems, components, computer-aided design. They are unquestioning of their cultural and their global social effects, or of the globalising context in which these skills are being developed.

The design and construction mechanisms of these projects are now becoming so information-technology-capital-intensive, with such integration between previously separate intellectual and technical branches of Architecture, Engineering, Cost Controlling, Project Planning, and component design and manufacture that they are becoming ever more unattainable and exclusive. Just now the focus seems to be on separating and securing the value of these 'global' *intellectual* processes and their interconnections, and how they can be marketed[33]. The intellectual processes remain in the North, while the manufacture of building materials and components is being exported to the South, as with other manufacturing, where labour is cheaper.

The impact on the South is that the gap between trans-national projects and local systems of construction is widening. In the South, there has been at the national or sub-regional level a veritable explosion of the use of modern components such as aircon units and concrete structures in an anarchic and idiosyncratic way, very often 'concretising' traditional forms and equally often incorporating (mimicking) European gothic and classical languages in a riotous and totally 'disrespectful' fashion. Post modern theorists might ask us to respect, live with and enjoy these events, while in Bhabha's terms they might equally be seen as an aspect of a challenging hybridity.

The new phase of economic growth has its repercussions on the peoples of the South, and indeed the North, as its subjects. The mobility of capital is such that some even question the continuing relevance of the South as a separate category, viz. the arrival of modern malls in the South and increased poverty of migrants in the North. The trans-national economy is the source of power, its subjects are an increasingly mobile population. Bhabha characterises hybridity in this context as a powerful tool in undermining nation-ness, dominant discourses and structures of power, where the postcolonial migrant "can destabilise traditional identities and violate supposedly mutually exclusive categories because they are simultaneously both of east and west"[34]. Once you have entered the all-pervasive Mall, you are also a westerner, wherever you are. I argue that these are issues which need to be examined in any discourse in Architecture.

The academy and practice now

---

[33] Eg at the "Construction Plus" Conference, RIBA London February 2003, "Doing the Knowledge: How to Manage what your Company Knows" Architects, Engineering, Construction and Finance developed security and networking systems for projects.
[34] Bhabha (1974:   ) Bawa, Barragan

The main impact of the North's Architecture on the South has been through it's uncritical work on those trans-national projects which are seen as outside the fields of 'Poverty' or 'Development'. Various specialisms have emerged to deal with the latter. At York University Architecture School in the UK for example, there is a Department of Post-Conflict Reconstruction which centres on the growing construction technology of international care and disaster relief agencies. There are a number of specialist schools in particular cultures, for example, the teaching of Hindu Architecture at Prasada, part of De Montfort University in Leicester, which has a substantial Asian population, or Islamic studies in Architecture in the Princes School in London, located close to the Bengali community. Then there are the increasingly well-established historical studies in support of heritage sites both in Europe and the South, feeding the Heritage and Tourism industries.

The mainstream, Eurocentric, Architecture project has slipped through the net of criticism and concern about poverty in the South. It can be argued that the very separateness of this concern may actually help to make underdevelopment a form of identity in parts of the postcolonial world[35]. The UNESCO web-site is an example: Habitat (housing, poverty), Culture (which includes all forms of art but not Architecture), Historic sites and buildings are all headlined, but there is no mention of Architecture. It is not regarded as being relevant to the subject of development, has no capacity to transfer its experiences other than as part of the trans-national monolithic project[36].

In contrast, therefore, to the 'poverty' specialisms, is the continuing mono-cultural mainstream, which provides the rationale to the big, trans-national, architectural project and example for the many 'untrained' imitators around the world who regard a Western identity as synonymous with wealth and success. The necessity for a cultural critique of mainstream Architecture has gone un-noticed, while concern for the South has become specialised in its focus on poverty per se. This is the culture and the site which I propose, in this paper, should be challenged. These are the beneficiaries of major commissions which the EC could seek to influence. These are, to use the seminar themes, the "experiences and practices" which are transferred to the South in a way that does exacerbate rather than alleviate poverty. It's ideology has not changed in a manner which could make it susceptible to penetration by the South. The donor agencies do not make any connection between the commissioning of expertise for the big trans nationally-organised project and it's cultural and wider economic effects.

What alternatives are emerging?

The South appears to not even think about this topic, other than to want, in the circumstances of a split identity, Western products, which include new buildings. This brings me back mechanisms for re-introducing concerns with culture, with Art and Architecture, with which I began.

---

[35] Gupta (1998) quoted in Abrahamson (2003:202)
[36] There are exceptions like Fathay (Egypt), Craterre Group (W.Africa), Bawa (Sri Lanka), Barragan (Mexico) and others – although all of these can be seen to be confined to the 'extended domestic' project.

Discourses in the Architectural establishment are changing in a way which will make them more susceptible to debates about cultural hegemony. At the same time the new economic order is having to become more multicultural in its nature in order to continue to grow. Akash Kapur talks of a 'new cosmopolitan class that has emerged triumphant from' the new economic order. 'Today's post-colonial authors', he says, 'confidently occupy a terrain charted by the rise of global capitalism and culture'. Culture brokers rather than culturally marginal, they 'possess the financial means and cultural vocabulary to have two homes' and 'display none of the tortured relationship to home evident in the works of such writers as Naipaul and Walcott'[37]. He is not celebrating this, but pointing out that the agenda is moving from its territorial/cultural base to a new one in which wealth is the sole measure of legitimacy.

The move of Artists out of the traditional categories, painting, sculpture, music, dance, film etc., to work across-mediums and the justification of their work at a conceptual level has also made them, and hence a way of thinking about culture, more accessible to Architects and the design process. The debates are increasingly about modernity and traditions at a deeper and more serious level than that implied by the acceptance of adhocism, hybridity and pastiche of the post-modern consumer culture[38]. They can be more of the same, and careful analysis is needed to locate the processes of empowerment as opposed to disempowerment here.

Liebskind, for example, currently one of the North's most favoured Architects, does powerfully portray social meanings in the Jewish Museum, Berlin, and the War Museum of the North, Salford. For the latter, he dropped teapots out of his window in order to embody the shattered globe in the concept for his building. The aim, at least, is for the building to embody an idea, it aims to have a meaning. In another example, Imre Makowitz drew a peeled apple from which he derived the design of his remarkable church at Pecs, the embodiment of balance as signified by an ancient celtic symbol, part of the rebirth of the Hungarian Nation.

The dialogue between Art and Architecture is re-emerging in the North. But it is as yet again unaffected by the postcolonial questions. It could go either way – a new kind of 'Beaux Arts', for example, or the recognition of a challenging hybridity. Equally, Architects and Artists in the South who are would-be collaborators in such an approach continue also to struggle for recognition.

The process of art-collaboration in the design of big projects, as well as the community-based practice which I had experienced, do point to where a 'cultural' component could come from. The South could claim these methods in order to have a voice. The design process has to be unpicked, right from the very first time at which an idea for a new project is born, through the complex and sometimes highly technical design stages, construction, and commissioning to operational planning for its end

---

[37] Kapur (2002:8)

[38] See, for example "Local Sites of Global Practice", an account of the symposium at Yale School of Architecture April 4-5 2003: "The symposium focuses on the Middle East as a ricxh and complex setting in which to study the issues of influence, dissemination and appropriation because it has been- and remains – the site both of deep traditions and rapid modernisation….Gulsam Nalbantoglu will present the unique history of modernism in Republican Turkey…..Lalya Dibya will trace the origins of modern Iranian painting as an encounter between tradition and modernity…" Isenstadt, Pelonken, Rizvi (2003: 18)

use. Assumptions which are made about people's lives, the points in the process where components of 'a culture', are made, can be found and questioned. The methods of doing this are part of the change. Every culture has its creative people. Visual artists have a special (but not exclusive) relevance to Architecture, they can and do 'en-visage' a culture, and could inform the design process in different ways at different stages. So also can anyone who can write, talk, tell stories, dance, make music, poetry etc. Combined with the techniques of 'community involvement', which I mentioned at the beginning, these could make a powerful difference to the nature of new projects in the South.

None of this will be effective without an awareness of the context in postcolonial terms. And the Northern neo-liberal consensus will still be deaf to Southern language until it can shift its own racist/Eurocentric stance. A shift from the Eurocentric basis of history and theory in the Architecture and Urban Design academies of the North, is a prerequisite for the debate to open with the creative Artists and Architects who live and work in the South. The debate could develop between those both North and South who are able to portray the formal and visual hybridity which is experienced by the majority of us who live, whether we like it or not, between our own traditions and nation-nesses, and the artefacts and cultures of trans-national agencies, between the shopping mall and our own homes.

Recommendations for topics to be researched and research methods to be used

A mechanism is needed to focus support on this approach. Currently I am proposing a research project which will have the following main areas of work:

(i) to gather and formulate theory and history in the field of post-colonial studies in Architecture and Urban Design.
(ii) to identify a number of sample design projects in the North in which minority ethnic groups are tackling the issue of identity.
(iii) to forge links between the above two and those in the South who are working in the same way, with the same questions, such that the work is sited equally North and South.
(iv) to develop the mechanisms for change.

It is necessary to know how the design of big projects is commissioned, where are the points of access for the cultural critique? A slice from the budget of any construction project can be used to force attention on its cultural context – a Cultural rather than an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)[39]? In the UK Artists are being introduced to Architecture projects by this means, in what are called "% for art" policies.

Who could make this happen? The impetus for alternative approaches in the UK seems to be emerging partly from the experience of members of diasporic communities. Africans, Asians and others who have trained as Architects, are asking the questions. In the UK there is a confluence between members of the Society of Black Architects, academicians such as Lokko who edited the anthology on Architecture Race and Culture, and Oduku who organised the exhibition about British

---

[39] Although in an EIA there is scope for inclusion of cultural issues.

Architects in West Africa, and is now proposing the African Workshops[40]. Beginning with tackling racism in the workplace, a new generation of Black and Asian architects seem to be leading the way.

Recommendations

1. **Support is needed for a project for investigating and implementing this approach in East London University and with Naerus partners.**

2. **Selection of advisors to projects must call for compliance with these recommendations.**

3. **EC Funded construction projects in the South must seek to include measures for capacity building of Architecture and Urban Design expertise in subject localities through a "percent for Art" policy.**

4. **Generally, pathways for collaboration between cultural projects and the field of Architecture and the Urban must be found and supported.**

5. **Research of a theoretical and historical perspective in Architecture and Urban Design institutions, which is a critique of Eurocentrism, should be called for. This should apply post-colonial theory, and prioritise history and theory, which is centred on Southern cultures, colonisation, migration etc.**

6. **Architecture and Urban Design for biennales, showcases, and other exhibitions should be considered as an opportunity for the South to "write back", experiment with their experience of the modern world in a reversal of the roles of the "Exhibition" of the colonial period.**

7. **Support must be given to tackling racism in the practices and academies in European countries which deliver projects.**

8. **Support must be given to making resources of the European Architecture and Urban Design academies available to the South, and for initiating a dialogue with Southern partners[41].**

9. **Support should be given for exchange of experience and dialogue between minority communities and peoples in Europe and projects in the countries of origin of the participants' cultures.**

---

[40] A current proposal from Glasgow in Scotland is to "develop a platform of discourse and ideas, through a series of workshops in Africa. The aim is to produce a space for dialogue between European Architects and Planners and West African Sites that will critically examine the history and potential of design as an element within development". Themes include "design and education: rethinking modernist models" and "architecture, networks and places: mobility in and beyond Africa as a dominant condition – challenges to the notion of place-making embedded in design". Refer to Ola Oduku, Strathclyde University.

[41] Eg workshops in above note.

Dr. Christopher Cripps, University of East London:　　　　**April 2003**
m: +447739518607 e: crisps@ziplip.com

Bibliography

Abrahamsen, Rita. 2003. "African Studies and the Postcolonial Challenge" in "*African Affairs*" (2003) 102, pp.189-210 Oxford: OUP

Akmang-Parry, Kwabena. 2001. "Otherising Space and Cultures" in "*Journal of Cultural Studies: Africa and the Politics of Knowledge*", Vol 3 No.1 Lagos

Antoniou, Jim.2003. "Chandigargh: Once the Future City" in "*The Architectural Review*" Volume CCXIII No 1273

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1992. *In my Father's House: Africa and the Philosophy of Culture*. New York: University Press

Araeen, Rasheed, Cubitt, Sean and Sardar, Ziauddin. 2002. *"The Third Reader on Art, Culture and Theory"*. London: Continuum

Bhabha, Homi. 1994. *"The Location of Culture"*. Routledge

Davis, Felecia. 2000. "(un)Covering/(re)Covering" in Lokko (2000) p.348

Dyckhoff, Tom. 2003. 'Behind the Façade' in "*The Guardian Weekend*" London, February 8 2003

Epco, D. 1995 "Towards a post-Africanism" in "*Textual Practice*" 9,1

Gupta, A. 1998. "*Postcolonial developments: Agriculture in the making in Modern India*" Durham, NC, Duke Univeristy Press

Ihejirika, Edward. 2000 "Intensive Continuity" in Lokko (2000) pp.183-193

Jameson, Fredric. 1988. "Postmodernism and consumer society" in Kaplan, Ann E. (ed) "*Postmodernism and its Discontents*". Verso.

Isenstadt, Sandy , Pelonken, Eeva-Lisisa and Rizvi, Kishwar . 2003. "Local Sites of Global Practice"in "*Constructs*" Yale School of Architecture, Spring 2003

Kafir, Sidney Littlefield. 1999. "*Contemporary African Art*". London. Thames and Hudson

Kapur, Akash. 2002. 'Politics into Economics Don't Go', "*Index on Censorship*" 3

King, Anthony D. 1997. "*Culture, Globalisation and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representations of Identity*". Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press

Lagae, Johan. "Displaying Authenticity and Progress" in Lokko (2000) pp 47-60

Lang, J., Desai M., and Desai, M., 1997. "*Architecture and Independence: the search for identity in India 1880-1980*" Delhi: Oxford University Press

Lokko, Lesley Naa Norle, ed. 2000. "*White Papers, Black Marks - Architecture, Race, Culture*" London:The Athlone Press

Reader, John. 1998. "*Africa: a Biography of the Continent*"

Said, Edward. 1993. "*Culture and Imperialism*". London: Chatto and Windus

Smith, Phillip. 2001. "*Cultural Theory*". Blackwell

Stanton, Michael. 2000. "The Rack and the Web: the other city" in Lokko (2000) pp114-145

Venturi, Robert, Scott-Brown, Denies, and Izenour, Steven 1977. *"Learning from Las Vegas"*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Williams, Raymond. 1976. "*Keywords*". New York: Oxford University Press.