

BOOKS AND REVIEWS



FUGITIVE ARCHIVES: A SOURCEBOOK FOR CENTERING AFRICA IN HISTORIES OF ARCHITECTURE

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Fugitive Archives is the outcome of the project *Centering Africa: Postcolonial Perspectives on Architecture*. It is a collection of primary sources chosen by the research fellows Doreen Adengo, Dele Adeyemo, Warebi Gabriel Brisibe and Ramota Obagah-Stephen, Rachel Lee and Monika Motylinska, Ikem Stanley Okoye, Cole Roskam, Łukasz Stanek, and Huda Tayob. According to the editors, Claire Lubell and Rafico Ruiz, the 'Fugitive' emerged in one of the conversations, in which Ikem Okoye talks about 'fugitive architecture' which "seemed to operate under the radar of European colonists but that has since also escaped the attention of architectural or urban historians."

Fugitive Archives is not a book about African architecture or its history, but a collective reflection on ways primary research can shift established bodies of knowledge to position Africa at the center of modern and emergent architectural histories. Appreciating that traditional archival material is unavailable the authors had to develop new ways of 'finding', 'seeing', and 'listening'. The sources presented here are starting points for engaging with experiences of African architecture that

were considered irrelevant or difficult to access and therefore not included in the canon of global architecture references.

The sourcebook emerged from a shared goal to have the projects intersect in various ways and to generate something useful for emerging scholarship. It is structured in three sections with projects grouped according to analogous approaches to primary research with the researchers developing their own logic for how their sources intersect.

Archives 1 - 3 have Ikem Okoye, Cole Roskam and Łukasz Stanek bringing together multilingual texts, largely written, and published from the 1960s through 2010s, that capture the transnational circulation of spatial ideologies, practices, and influences in post-independence Africa. The texts are first-person accounts and manifestos and though not in direct dialogue, their adjacency offers glimpses into how different individuals in countries like Guinea, Nigeria, and China considered the goals, tools, and responsibilities of architecture beyond colonial precedents. Presented chronologically, they reveal practices, positions, and unexpected connections often overlooked in overarching historical narratives.

Archives 4 and 5 are presented by Dele Adeyemo and Huda Tayob, drawing on works of cultural production from the 1950s through the 1970s as lenses for spatial critique. This section attests that urban and architectural archives are widespread, but we have to rethink where to look for them. They select music, films, theatre, and exhibitions produced, in for example Johannesburg and Accra, within the context of urbanization, decolonization, and pan-Africanism. These works often provide an alternative to contested state narratives and the ongoing coloniality of social and economic networks.

The final section, comprising Archives 6 - 8 are provided by Doreen Adengo, Warebi Brisibe & Ramota Obagah-Stephen, and Rachel Lee & Monika Motylinska. The authors expand what is understood as architectural evidence, arguing for the place of oral histories and ephemera as part of official archives. Ephemera can be a sketch of the setting of a conversation or an administrative memo of colonial and postcolonial planning as seen in Port Harcourt. It can be a fragment of narrative evidence found in the margins that foreground the positionalities in a German design office operating across Africa. Or it can be documentation of how young women living in a modernist university residence in Kampala had to find ways to live in an under-maintained, precarious space.

Interwoven with these archives are conversations with the authors about the different methods and the challenges encountered when locating, accessing, and constructing archives. The edited transcripts are the principal texts of the book, consistently foregrounding the voices of the researchers, becoming primary sources themselves—records of connections between diverse methods and positionalities.

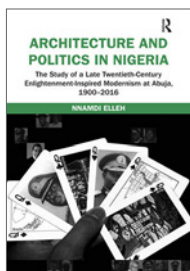
The notion of centering that *Fugitive Archives* puts forward is not an argument about geography but rather about methods that can emerge by privileging actors who are rooted in diverse knowledges and experiences of space. At the heart of this exploration is the desire to move marginalized perspectives back to the center. This cannot simply be reoriented toward the contexts they originate from; it must be grounded in specific modes of recording, communicating, and learning. It posits that in the creation of African architectural archives that are appropriately situated, new forms of evidence need to be constructed that disrupt the colonial or Western knowledge frameworks which still determine what is worth archiving. The sources collected in this landmark publication have emerged through these disruptive practices. They are also finite and highly subjective, not suggesting a conclusive portrait but rather opening new lines of inquiry for

uncovering and reconstructing many more hidden histories.

This sourcebook is fugitive in that it is a sort of transitory archive itself, reflective of a moment in time. The sources themselves were often produced covertly under colonial and early postcolonial structures of oppression, by those living within conditions of fugitivity. We also cannot ignore the inherent contradictions: only one source is not in a colonial language; there are few sources produced by women; and the reproductions mostly originate from Western collections and libraries. These limitations only reinforce the need to recognize the ceaseless emergence of new histories of modern architecture and to record and amplify the evidence created by researchers who embody Africa's diverse spatial lineages, experiences, and knowledges. It is an argument for the primary as an inherently situated and material experience.

Fugitive Archives is intended as a critical resource for students, educators, and researchers, to expand existing archives and offer different and alternative perspectives of what constitutes the history of modern African architecture.

Mark R. O. Olweny



**ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICS
IN NIGERIA:
THE STUDY OF A LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY
ENLIGHTENMENT-INSPIRED MODERNISM
AT ABUJA, 1900-2016**

2020
NNAMDI ELLEH

In 1976, the Nigerian military government under General Murtala Muhammed decided to move the country's capital from Lagos to a geographically central location, Abuja. The origins and aftermath of

this decision are the primary concern of this monograph by Professor Nnamdi Elleh, an eminent scholar of African architecture and urbanism. In *Architecture and Politics in Nigeria*, Elleh tells a multi-perspective story about post-colonial modernism and nation-building, the power struggle between military and civilian politicians, and "the complicity of international planning and architectural 'stars' those global professionals concerned primarily with making their name on projects such as this one."¹

Architecture and Politics in Nigeria is a result of decades of research—it was the subject of Elleh's doctoral dissertation at Northwestern University, USA. Its premise is that the plan for the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and the Federal Capital City (FCC) was rooted in the colonial boundaries that created and later amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates into one Nigeria, as well as in the national reconstruction and modernization projects after Nigeria's civil war (1966-1970). The book shows how the architects who designed the FCT master plan regarded the capital-city building project as a means to communicate and shape the principles of democracy in the public sphere in Nigeria. And yet, the new capital city's civic and public spaces quickly became arenas where access, uses, and meanings of citizenship became monitored under the threatening gaze of the [political] elite, thereby challenging the very principles of democracy the city postures.

The book begins with a literature review and grounds the research in the theoretical concepts of Edmund Husserl's 'lifeworlds' and Jürgen Habermas's 'public sphere'. While these theoretical groundings are convincing, the integrity of the book's research might stand without them. In Chapters 3 and 4, the author traces the desire for a capital city back to the imposed borders of British colonial rule and to the post-civil war reconstruction program. Chapter 5 looks at how the oil economy enabled and fueled this desire to fruition. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 delve into the details of the architectural designs and influences

from American Thomas Todd, Japanese Kenzo Tange, the British Milton Keynes Development Corporation, and the Greek Doxiadis Associates². Through these chapters, the book reveals the foundational extent to which the FCT project was a global endeavor in its conceptualization and execution. The book culminates in Chapter 9 and an epilogue, both of which examine the case to be made for Abuja as a modern capital city and, as such, a site for social transformation and power struggles.

The book departs delightfully from the usual academic history monograph by demystifying some of the processes that went into its making, including the author's own experiences and interview transcripts with key insiders involved in the making of Abuja. In unmasking his research process, the author allows us to see the challenges involved in the process of gathering his research material—from being picked up by the police in Abuja to a seemingly futile research trip to Kenzo Tange's office in Japan. These animations of the history-making process make the book easily readable while adding depth and texture to the national reconstruction story so often told in the abstraction of the past and political concepts. For instance, in Chapter 4, when Elleh interviews Nseigbe, one of the three Nigerian architects involved in the original FCC masterplan. Elleh asked if they had intended to use Abuja to invigorate African architecture, and Nseigbe replied, "There is nothing cultural about such monumental projects. They should be for functional purposes."³ Later, Nseigbe added that the Abuja project was part of a 'political pacification' for different constituencies around the country. (This pacification was explained as compensation for other political losses, defeats, or debts owed.)

Elleh's research masterfully examines the pull factors that moved the government in the direction of Abuja, and so, push factors that stood as reasons to move away from Lagos fell outside its scope of inquiry. Scholars like Salau (1977)⁴ and OluSule (1985)⁵ discuss these push factors, and future research in the history of Abuja could benefit

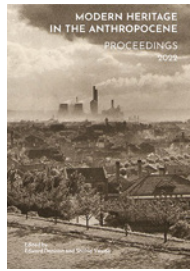
from connecting the research on both push and pull factors. What more, beyond geographical preference, can the abandonment of Lagos tell us about the founding desires and principles of Abuja?

For researchers particularly interested in African modernism, this book offers a resource for thinking about spatiality, urban planning, and civic space in relation to the design ethos of modernism. Its chapters (6, 7, and 8) on global actors connect the Abuja master plan to a global ideology of modernism via foreign contractors and partners, many of whom situated the ethos of their practice—and hence, their contribution to the master plan—in the modernist tradition. As the first significant study of Abuja's history, planning, and development, this book serves as a point of reference for scholars of African modernism, African architecture, the socio-politics of architecture, and African politics.

Immaculata Abba

ENDNOTES

- 1 Watson, Vanessa. 'Introduction' in Elleh, N. (2016). *Architecture and politics in Nigeria: The study of a late twentieth-century enlightenment-inspired modernism at Abuja, 1900–2016*. Taylor & Francis.
- 2 For more literature on foreign collaborators, see: Fenk, A.-K., Lee, R., & Motylińska M. "Unlikely Collaborations? Planning Experts from both Sides of the Iron Curtain and the Making of Abuja." *Comparativ*, vol. 30 no.1, 2020, pp. 38–59. <https://doi.org/10.26014/j.comp.2020.01-02.03>
- 3 Elleh, N. (2016). *Architecture and politics in Nigeria*, p.88.
- 4 Salau, Ademola T. "A New Capital for Nigeria: Planning, Problems and Prospects." *Africa Today*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1977, pp. 11–22. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4185727>. Accessed 2 July 2023.
- 5 OluSule, R. A. "The Arguments against Very Large Cities in Nigeria: A Non-Western Urban Planning Angle." *GeoJournal*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1985, pp. 401–07. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41143860>. Accessed 7 July 2023.



MODERN HERITAGE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE PROCEEDINGS

2022

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MoHoA is a global collaborative founded on an equitable and restitutive agenda aimed at decolonising, decentering, and reframing the recent past to achieve equitable and sustainable futures. It was established in the wake of the 20th anniversary of the Modern Heritage Programme, jointly initiated by UNESCO, ICOMOS, and DOCOMOMO, which presented a timely and important opportunity to critically reflect on the transformative cultural experiences and global consequences of the recent past that heralded the Anthropocene and its planetary impacts. Despite these impacts, the 'modern' era and its legacies are comparatively undervalued and overlooked, while simultaneously being concentrated in 'the west' and interpreted through 'western' values.

Since its inception in early 2020, MoHoA has hosted numerous thematic workshops and two international conferences. The first, *Modern Heritage of Africa*, was hosted by the University of Cape Town in September 2021, and the second, *Modern Heritage in the Anthropocene*, was hosted by The Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL) in partnership with the School of Architecture, University of Liverpool. These events provided diverse platforms for marginalised voices, underrepresented histories, and the

presentation and advancement of knowledge associated with modern heritage through the publication of two Conference Proceedings and two MoHoA special editions of *Curator: The Museum Journal* (65:3 and 67:1).

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/21516952/2022/65/3>



MoHoA is also responsible for the publication of the *Cape Town Document on Modern Heritage*. Conceived in the spirit of the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994), which successfully achieved a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualisation of authenticity globally, the *Cape Town Document* seeks to reconceptualise 'modern' heritage by relieving it of its Eurocentric, homogenising, universalising, developmental, and colonial associations and references. By recasting it as a plural and planetary phenomenon, this wider reframing seeks to enable a fuller and more complete account of modern heritage by recognising and ascribing value to experiences that have been overlooked, marginalised, trivialised, or excluded from the existing canon.

<https://mohoa.org/resources/symposium-on-modern-heritage-of-africa/>