

INTRODUCTION

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BUILDINGS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Access to formal education has long been considered essential to progress by people in Africa. The design and building of educational institutions were also an important part of the post-war modernism construction boom around the world and on the African continent, coinciding with post-independence nation-building. From the 1940s through to the early 1970s, ambitious nations from Algeria to Zimbabwe invested in universities and higher educational buildings as both literal and physical centers of intellectual advancement for their nations' youth in that jubilant era, heralding freedom from colonization and the emergence of self-rule.

More than half a century later, these edifices borne of hope and expectation have generally stood the test of time and remain recognizable features in many African cities and landscape settings. How these structures have fared architecturally and how they have been adapted or incorporated into contemporary life varies by country, institution, and socio-political context: an important subject to be studied. As the provision of educational buildings is still important to African nations and is part of the global sustainable development goals, what better time to revisit those purpose-built institutions in a time of hope and exuberance? Especially as their relevance remains critical to the development of Africa's best and brilliant young minds?

This special issue of the Docomomo Journal focuses on educational institutions, particularly universities and other higher educational establishments built in Africa from the late 1940s to the 1970s, as instances of shared' social, political, cultural, economic, and architectural heritage. This architectural heritage has been shared through actions of coercion, co-option, and co-operation between various proximal African countries, former colonial powers, and contemporary socio-economic partners. Many contributions are linked to the Shared Heritage Africa (SHA) Project—funded by the German Foreign Ministry (Auswärtiges Amt)—, which focused on the documentary rediscovery of modern university campuses as examples of cultural landscapes from the period of independence from colonial rule.

Our specific focus on tertiary educational institutions, in particular, is because "universities were crucial institutions in decolonizing nations" (Livsey, 2017, p. 2) and served as "catalyst(s) for technological development" (Adjei and Oppong, 2017, p. 436). The construction of higher education institutions

in the second half of the 20th century demonstrated some continuities in historical trajectories, such as the positioning of Western education in “ivory towers” separate from existing African contexts (Uduku, 2018). Additionally, many European architects from different countries and for various reasons came to Africa to build and teach architecture (Intsiful, 2016; Stanek, 2020). Yet, disruptions were also evident in the increasing number of African and Black diaspora architects creating and studying architecture in this era of independence (Stanek, 2020; Manful, 2016; Uduku, 2018; 2008; Le Roux and Uduku, 2004), many of whom were working and studying in the margins and peripheries of their national contexts.

We also acknowledge that despite African Modernism being a much more studied area in the 2020s than it had been at the end of the 20th century, there remain relatively few publications on the subject. Furthermore, the publications that do exist tend to have been written by non-indigenous scholars who, despite rigorous scholarship in the subject area, often espouse views from a Western socio-philosophical perspective and not necessarily from an indigenous local-context-focused viewpoint. *Docomomo Journals* in 2003, 2013, and 2020 have incorporated themed editions that include contributions from Africa (Uduku, 2003), sometimes technical, sometimes aesthetic, and sometimes historical, but a complete thematic issue devoted only to the continent has yet to be published.¹

This publication presents a great context to revisit Modernism in African countries through a collection of fascinating accounts of educational buildings as well as various people who contributed to their design and construction. This journal offering is less of a retrospective and more of a varied collection of papers that encounter African architecture at different historical and contemporary levels, with some approaching the theme from a photographic perspective. Several articles are from the Docomomo Shared Heritage Africa Project Fellows, complemented by contributions from both seasoned and early-career researchers who present their research and writing to this unique, thematic journal edition.

The contributions selected for this collection each responded in creative, insightful ways to our call for essays and articles that ‘seek to rediscover projects situated at the periphery of the main architectural discourse, referring to built heritage that has either been forgotten, relatively undocumented with limited publicity or discussion, despite their social, economic, and political significance.’

For example, Adefola Toyé’s essay titled *Learning from the Recorded Histories of Nigeria’s First Post-Independence Universities* draws from her ongoing research on Nigeria’s historic universities of the 1960s to reflect on the myriad silenced and excluded sources in mainstream historical records about the founding and construction of higher educational institutions in Nigeria. In an essay that seeks to center previously marginalized African voices in historical records, *African Agency and Colonial Committees at Fourah Bay College: An investigation into the architecture and planning of the new Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone*, co-written by Ewan Harrison and Iain Jackson, the authors explore the history of Fourah Bay College in Mount Aureol, Freetown, Sierra Leone. Through their investigation of West Africa’s oldest Western-style university campus, the authors show that Africans exercised agency in the design and construction of the college. *A Tropical Modernist Architect: Prof. John Owusu Addo*, written by Prince Charles Kwabi, is an appreciation of the architecture of Professor John Owusu Addo, one of Ghana’s first indigenous

¹ The following Docomomo Journals were published: *Modern Heritage in Africa* No. 28 (2003), <https://docomomojournal.com/index.php/journal/issue/view/72>; *Modern Africa, Tropical Architecture*, No. 48 (2013), <https://docomomojournal.com/index.php/journal/issue/view/dj-48>; *Tropical Architecture in the Modern Diaspora* No. 63 (2020), <https://docomomojournal.com/index.php/journal/issue/view/dj-63>.

architects who worked both as an educator in Kumasi and as an architect in Accra and Kumasi. Following a recent trend of telling the stories of indigenous African architects who were involved in the Modern Movement, Kwabi discusses a solo project of Owusu Addo as an example of a forgotten masterpiece in dominant narratives of Tropical Modernism. In their article *The Higher School of Agriculture of Mograne (1947-1952) in Tunisia. A referential architectural work of Jean Pierre Ventre*, Salma Gharbi and Hédi Derbel explore the production of university institutions in Tunisia. Another interesting campus example is examined in the article *Reviving the Modern Architecture of Arieh Sharon's Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria*, where authors Bayo Amole and Emmanuel Babatunde Jaiyeoba take a closer look at the particularities of this institution and its conservation efforts. They call to attention the current decline of the buildings in the university and advocate for urgent action towards preserving this example of Tunisian Modernism.

Some of the authors have used a comparative approach to exploring the shared architectural heritage in African countries. Emmanuella Ama Codjoe and Justicia Caesaria Kiconco, from Ghana and Rwanda, respectively, have constructed their essay *A Comparison of two Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa Reflections on the Impact of Modern Design on African Primary Schools* in this spirit. They compare the anglophone and francophone colonial influences, the different trajectories, and the current uses of two schools in their countries (Éole Belge in Kigali, Rwanda, and Republic Road School in Tema, Ghana) to show similarities in design borne out of architectural networks in the post-independence era. Similarly, *The Great Hall, KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana; Parliament of Bunyoro Kitara Kingdom – Rukurato Hall in Hoima City, Uganda*, which describes contrasting approaches to public building conservation through the 'Great Halls' (assembly halls) of two universities in East and West Africa, is written by Timothy Latim (Uganda) and Jonathan Agbeh (Ghana) and curated by Professor Ola Uduku. In their essay *Uganda International Conference Center and Nile Hotel. A faint memory of past geopolitical alliances and ideals in Kampala, Uganda*, Milena Ivković and Frank van der Hoeven discuss an "overlooked and undervalued" example of shared modernist architectural heritage between Yugoslavia and Uganda. With regard to the current status of modern heritage in Africa, an analysis and comparison of the documentation efforts of the Docomomo National Working Parties is presented in the article *Connecting the Dots: A Global Exploration of Local Inventories* by Meric Altintas Kaptan, Aslihan Ünlü, and Uta Pottgiesser.

This special issue contains several essays that report on and discuss collaborative workshops and exhibitions. Nnezi Uduma-Olugu, Adeyemi Oginni, Oluwaseyi Akerele, and Ademola Omoegun discuss the Nigerian edition of the African Architecture Writing Workshop ran by Professor Ola Uduku, Dr. Irene Appeaning Addo, and Dr. Kuukuwa Manful in *Documenting the Re-use of Modern Buildings: An Appraisal of a 2022 British Academy Writing Workshop of Postgraduate Students and Researchers*. The article *Campus Utopias: A Visual Rereading* by Esther Gramsbergen, Yağız Söylev, and Ayşen Savaş describes a collaborative "multidisciplinary graduate course" by the Architecture Departments of TU Delft and METU Ankara, which included a case study of Obafemi Awolowo University in Nigeria. The course culminated in an exhibition of 3D digital drawings, models, collages, and physical reliefs.

The fellows of the Shared Heritage Africa (SHA) Project that this journal issue stems from have contributed an essay that discusses their "varied experiences" of the architecture explored through the project. With the title *What is*

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shared about African Modernism? What is African about Modern Heritage?, Immaculata Abba, Tubi Otitooluwa, Bola Oguntade, Jonathan Kplorla Agbeh, Emmanuella Ama Codjoe, Christine Matua, Timothy Latim, and Justica Caesaria Kiconco discuss eight examples of modernist architecture in their respective countries through elements and themes such as non-inclusivity, natural ventilation, and shifting boundaries. Through their explorations of these buildings, they suggest that “modernist architecture forms a part of African culture,” but “this may not necessarily translate into African heritage.”

Two book reviews complete the collection of contributions to this special issue. Mark Olweny reviews *Fugitive Archives: A Sourcebook for centring Africa in Histories of Architecture*, edited by Claire Lubell and Rafico Ruiz. Olweny asserts the “need to... record and amplify the evidence created by researchers who embody Africa’s diverse spatial lineages, experiences, and knowledges.” Immaculata Abba reviews Nnamdi Elleh’s *Architecture and Politics in Nigeria: The Study of a Late Twentieth-Century Enlightenment-Inspired Modernism at Abuja, 1900–2016*, calling it a ‘delightful’ departure from typical academic histories and a “resource for thinking about spatiality, urban planning and civic space in relation to the design ethos of modernism.”

This special issue of the *Docomomo Journal* has succeeded in its aim to provide a new platform for the exploration of the architecture of higher education on the African continent, mainly by African authors, some of whom are writing their very first academic articles. It is the hope and aim of the editors that many more such volumes are produced—of African authors writing about the architecture, architects, and builders of and from their continent.

It is the hope and aspiration of the editors that many more such volumes are produced, that showcase the work of young African and Africa-based authors, writing about the architecture, architects, and builders of and from their continent.