



Delft University of Technology

A is for Africa

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Publication date
2017

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
The Beeker Method

Citation (APA)

Russell, P. (2017). A is for Africa. In A. Folkers, & I. Perzyna (Eds.), *The Beeker Method: Planning and Working on the Redevelopment of the African City* (pp. 147-150). African Studies Centre.

Important note

To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
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The Beeker Method

**Planning and Working on the
Redevelopment of the African City**

Retrospective Glances into the Future

Edited by Antoni Folkers and Iga Perzyna

This project was funded by:

**creative industries
fund NL**



Universiteit
Leiden



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Occasional Publication 27

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Cover design: Heike Slingerland

Cover photo: Aerial photograph of western Ouagadougou (ca.1978). Author unknown. Copyrights: African Architecture Matters

Cover photo backside: Coen and Zanda. Author unknown. Source Coen Beeker
Layout: Sjoukje Rienks, Amsterdam

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Printed by Ipskamp Printing, Enschede

ISBN: 978-90-5448-160-7

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A is for Africa

Peter Russell

The indications are that the greatest potential for change is in Africa. It is also the place where the greatest potential to make more people's lives better can be realized. This is an issue of architecture and the built environment. This continent has long been synonymous with failed investment and corruption. It is the place where people with good intentions went to see their hopes and dreams quashed, for any number of reasons, including the two mentioned above. Yet, there are places with stable governments and stable growth, and a growing middle class looking to invest its new wealth. Inevitably, investment means construction. So there is a real need for excellent architecture and planning that can ensure the retention of value.

A pour Afrique

L'Afrique, parce que tous les indices montrent un potentiel croissant de l'Afrique pour le changement. C'est aussi le lieu où il y a les plus grandes chances d'améliorer la vie du plus grand nombre de gens. C'est un enjeu pour l'environnement et le milieu bâti. Ce continent fut trop longtemps synonyme d'investissements ratés et de corruption. Ce fut le lieu où se brisaient les bonnes intentions de nombreux habitants, pour diverses raisons, y compris les deux mentionnées ci-dessus. Pourtant, il y a encore des pays avec une gouvernance et une croissance stables ainsi qu'une classe moyenne en progression et qui cherche à investir leurs nouvelles richesses. Inévitablement, investir rime avec construction. Il y a donc un vrai besoin pour l'excellence en matière d'architecture et d'urbanisme qui pourrait assurer la cristallisation de cette valeur.

Where in the world do we want to go? TU Delft is recognized as a top technical university in the world. The Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment is among the top ten schools worldwide. As such, the world looks to us for guidance and leadership, if not for cooperation and collaboration.

The answer is Africa. I say this not because we have a long history there or because of some personal connection. It is because all of the indications are that the greatest potential for change is in Africa. It is also the place where the greatest potential to make more people's lives better can be realized. This is an issue of architecture and the built environment. To begin with, Africa is not a country: it is a continent and it is huge. It has 64 countries and territories of varying size and wealth, encompassing 1.2 billion people. This continent has long been synonymous with failed investment and corruption. It was the place where people with good intentions went to see their hopes and dreams quashed, for any number of reasons, including the two mentioned above.

Yet, since the turn of this century, a few African countries have experienced something we in Europe take for granted: good governance. A decade and a half of this in some African countries has allowed citizens in those countries to believe in the rule of law and has permitted their economies to grow in a solid, stable fashion. In countries with growing economies, there is a consistent correlation between GDP per capita and car ownership. Once people have their phones, a threshold of approximately 4,000 USD/head is where car ownership takes off. Interestingly, this levels off at about 12,000 USD/head. This is because most people do not need or want two cars. Instead, they want to own a home.

In these countries, with stable governments and stable growth, there is a growing middle class looking to invest its new wealth. Instead of putting their wealth in offshore bank accounts, people are looking to invest in their own country. Inevitably, investment means construction. Then there is a real need for excellent architecture and planning that can ensure the retention of value. This means there is also a need for excellent architects and planners. This is where TU Delft's Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment can play a role. As a leading school of architecture, we can establish relationships in education and research to help improve the quality of the universities and hence their graduates, their scholarship and their research. We are also flanked by several TU Delft initiatives that will help to build and ensure excellence and capacity.

To be clear, there are already excellent architects in Africa. The Makoko Floating School designed by Studio NLÉ in Lagos is a perfect example. Facing an almost impossible problem, NLÉ figured out a solution that is responsible and ingenious. It is not that there are no brilliant planners in Africa; it is just that there will need to be more of them. There is and will be a need for a multitude of ingenious and responsible architects, engineers and planners. The

expected population growth in Africa will essentially double the population by 2050, meaning 2.4 billion people. This is an increase of over 40 million people a year – that is a new Netherlands every six months for the next 30 years. Most, if not all of this growth will take place in urban areas. This means that the way we plan our cities will also need radical help, if not a fundamental change in how we think, understand, plan and manage these cities.

We do have help in this area, and maybe even a secret weapon. The Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS) offers a place to try out some of these methods. The City of Amsterdam has set itself up as a living lab, in which new methods of understanding urban issues can be developed, tested and deployed. Amsterdam is clearly a safe city. The problems facing it are nice ones to have. But that also means it is the perfect place to test systems and methods before turning to the truly wicked situations. A wired city deploying tens of thousands of sensors to collect information and produce ‘big data.’ Indeed, the analysis of this information may allow us to see solutions that were not envisaged before. Until now, we have had to compartmentalise our cities – by field and by geography. Using new types of analysis, the ‘data-lake’ of our cities can now show us things we could not see or envision before. This is the promise of AMS – testing new ways of understanding our cities. Providing this information will allow us to make better decisions and enable us to better manage our cities.

Better decisions mean we can be more efficient with our energy and our natural resources. This is immensely important in Africa. The continent currently produces only as much energy as Belgium, with a population two magnitudes larger. Catching up with population growth and the demands for energy and resources will be crucial to human development there.

Frugal innovation

Other institutions, like the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Centre for Frugal Innovation, will help on smaller scales. By focusing on leveraging innovation, the LDE Frugal Innovation group is pursuing bottom-up strategies to meet demand despite scarcity. This has proved to be a perfectly complementary method in Africa. As an example, the Solarkiosk project, led by GRAFT Architects from Berlin, is providing power to off-grid communities. These kiosks let people charge their phones and act as a watering hole. They also happen to lengthen the day by providing light after dusk, which assists commerce and education in these communities. So, architects are working on both top-down and bottom-up projects. We are also working to establish the

networks to foster mutual advances in knowledge. The African Architecture Network is one such organisation. It will provide the leverage to create a network of excellent schools of architecture and the built environment in Africa, with TU Delft helping to foster its growth and cement its longevity. We do not want to lead per se, but to enable the way forward.

TU Delft and Africa

The TU Delft Global Initiative is also working in concert with these goals. Interestingly, an initial survey within the faculty found a surprising number of links with the African continent and activities already in place. Thus, this is not so much the start of something new as it is the coordination and accentuation of activities and collaboration already underway. Africa is on the map, on our radar, and we are stating it here. To be perfectly honest, the faculty is not interested primarily in helping. Instead, we simply want the best minds at TU Delft, be they students, researchers or academics. In short, we want the best minds in Africa to do their Master's thesis, their PhD, or their research project here with us. One way to facilitate this is to create a Fellowship Programme. By allowing the best of the next generation of urban planners and managers in Africa to coalesce at AMS, for example, we can create the best place in the world to discuss and analyse the wicked challenges in urbanization that are facing us. When these people return to their cities, they will be alumni of TU Delft and likely take on positions of leadership. Our alumni are the real fruits of this endeavour. Again, the future is there to be designed and determined. Africa is the place where a lot of bright futures are not inevitable yet – it is our task to change that.

Technical University in Eindhoven (2004). At IHS (since 2007) she works on and manages training and advisory work in fields of participation, self-organization, co-creation in urban governance and social innovation for urban planning and sustainable urban development mainly in Africa, Europe and Latin America.

Peter Russell has been Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at TU Delft since 2015. Prior to this, Peter Russell was Professor of Computer Supported Planning in Architecture (CAAD) at the RWTH Aachen University. He also served as Rector's Emissary for Alumni Affairs at RWTH, where he was also Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and chaired the Dean's Council. He is a partner in architectural practice IP Arch GmbH and served as vice-chairman of the German Architecture Dean's Council (DARL). From 2012 to 2013, he served on the Council of the Association for European Education in Architecture (AEEA/EAAE). He is also a founding member of the newly formed European architectural research network ARENA.

Anteneh Tesfaye Tola studied Architecture and Urban Planning at the Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia, followed by a Masters of Advanced studies in Urban Design at the ETH Zurich in Switzerland, with a study on urban transformations in developing territories, taking Brazilian cities as a case. Currently, he is a PhD candidate at the Delft Technical University with research entitled *The Making of Places of Coexistence – Addis Ababa*. His study takes housing as a protagonist in the make-up of cities of rapid urbanization and intends to investigate local responses to global urbanization trends in contexts of rapid urbanization. He has had a total of eight years' experience of engaging both in the practice and academics of design and planning being a lecturer at the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development of Addis Ababa University.

Martien de Vletter is an architectural historian who started her career in 1997 at the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam. In her capacity as the Chief Curator from 2004 until 2008, she worked on exhibitions and publications regarding Dutch architecture and urbanism of the seventies, tropical architecture in Indonesia, and monographic projects on Asymptote, UNStudio and J.J.P. Oud, to name a few. In 2008, she became publisher of SUN Architecture Publishers in Amsterdam, responsible for more than 200 publications. In 2012, she joined the Canadian Centre for Architecture in the position of Associate Director of the Col-