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Towards a *Rough Guide* for Lubumbashi, Congo. Rethinking “shared built heritage” in a former Belgian colony¹

An endangered built legacy?

As recent visits to Lubumbashi in December 2006 and August 2007 amply revealed, Lubumbashi, the city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo known during colonial times as *Elisabethville*, is witnessing an unprecedented economic revival as a result of the general expectation, however skeptical, that the outcome of the successful organization of the first democratic elections since the early 1960s will finally produce an era of political stability.² Especially the mining area of Katanga, which due to its immense wealth of mineral resources has always been the economic backbone of the country, is currently the major focus of foreign investors, leading to a rapid increase of immigration and hence a growing pressure on Lubumbashi's real estate. Prices for renting or buying rooms, flats, houses and office spaces in what is after all a relatively small city centre, have tripled and even quadrupled in recent months. And the formal building sector that lay dormant for decades, is witnessing an unseen revival, prices of building materials such as cement having skyrocketed. The year 2006 also witnessed the first demolition of (part of) a historical building in the city centre. A commercial building of the 1920s, adjacent to the so-called ELAKAT-complex, was torn down in order to erect a new structure, and all over the cities extra storey are being mounted on top of existing structures. While the current provincial governor, Moïse Katumbé, has already displayed some awareness for the issue of urban aesthetics,³ it is timely to start a profound reflection on built heritage in Lubumbashi.

Such a reflection was in fact already initiated a couple of years ago. The current director of the *Espace Francophone* of Lubumbashi, Hubert Maheux, has been instrumental in putting the heritage issue on the agenda by organizing *Les premiers journées du patrimoine en Afrique francophone* in September 2005. Consisting of an exhibition on photographs on the city's heritage by the young Congolese artist Sammy Baloji, of a series of guided tours and of a conference with both local and foreign contributors, the event had the explicit ambition of creating a broad awareness of the city's remarkable architectural legacy and to stimulate local policy makers to take this heritage into account in matters of urban governance.⁴ Following up on this initiative, the French Ministry of Culture is currently pursuing a mission of documenting and describing the city's built legacy along the standards commonly applied in French practices in the field of “patrimoine”, putting large emphasis on formal description and physical assessment. A similar project recently was started within the architectural school of La Cambre in Brussels.⁵

Such initiatives are worthwhile, as they aim to draw attention to a built legacy that is not only unknown among the general public in the West, but that for a very long time has also been overlooked in the milieu of architectural historians. The city of Lubumbashi, as I will demonstrate further in this paper, houses an architectural legacy parts of which fully deserve to be included in surveys of 20th Century architecture in Africa. It ranges from early colonial bungalows over fascinating art deco public buildings such as the post office or the Palace of Justice to striking postwar constructions such as the former *Athenée Royal*, the cultural complex, hospitals and schools as well as some residential houses. Marc Pabois, who is in charge of the inventory that is currently being prepared by the French Ministry of Culture, formulated it poignantly by stating that Lubumbashi is a “musée d’architecture à ciel ouvert”.⁶ By focusing mainly on material aspects in defining the heritage value of the built legacy, such approaches are, however, inscribed in longstanding European practices in the field of heritage policy and concur with a “Western” conception that defines architecture in terms of “monumentality”, “durability” and “history”. Such were precisely the terms used by colonial architects and urbanists to define Central Africa as an architectural “terre vierge”.⁷ It comes as no surprise in this respect that the attention of these initiatives has been oriented almost exclusively towards the buildings in the former *ville européenne*, while the large built production in the *cités* has hitherto largely been neglected in the surveys.

My take on the topic of built heritage differs in that it draws on recent reflections and debates of those circles within the milieu of conservationists and experts of heritage that have plead for a shift in perspective from “tangible” to “intangible” heritage. The 2000 *Values and Heritage Conservation Report* of the Getty Conservation Institute, for instance, stipulates that “artifacts are not static embodiments of culture but are, rather, a medium through which identity, power and society are produced and reproduced”.⁸ Cultural heritage then can be seen as a “social construct” to which multiple values are and can be ascribed. A recent issue of the journal *Autrepart. Revue de sciences sociales au Sud*, dedicated to the issue of heritage of mostly former colonial territories was not by coincidence entitled “Inventer le patrimoine moderne dans les villes du Sud”.⁹

I am not, however, looking at the built production in Lubumbashi from an exclusive heritage perspective. In fact, my approach is as much concerned with questions of historiography, to be understood here as the rewriting of both architectural history and the history of colonialism. What my current research on the city aims to arrive at, is constructing an alternative reading of the built legacy of the city, that crosses disciplinary boundaries while incorporating a multitude of perspectives and voices. In this paper, I will only be able to point at some aspects of the underlying framework. I will discuss basically three points of entry, focussing first on colonial built heritage as an object of architectural history, second, on its relation with colonial history and third, on its potential as a “reservoir” of memory. Each section will be illustrated with particular architectural cases. In an epilogue the first outline will be sketched out of how

one could conceive a *Rough Guide* on Lubumbashi's architectural legacy, offering an alternative to coffee table book-like publications such as *Asmara. Africa's Secret Modernist City*. In that respect, my approach and thinking has not only been inspired by the stimulating intellectual work done in Lubumbashi by local scholars working within the "Mémoires de Lubumbashi"-group,¹⁰ but also by Caterina Borelli's fascinating documentary "Asmara, Eritrea".¹¹

Colonial built heritage and architectural history. The need for a trans-national and local perspective

Since several years now, architectural historians have been starting to develop an interest in 20th Century architecture in sub-Saharan Africa and one could argue that it currently has become one of the most popular, if not fashionable topics of inquiry.¹² At a rapid pace, the documentation on the built production in this region is extending, filling in the many blind gaps that were left in Udo Kultermann's seminal survey of 1963, *Neues Bauen in Afrika*, and the recent, more elaborate but still highly selective volume on Sub-Saharan Africa he edited for the series *World Architecture. A Critical Mosaic* in 2000.¹³ Yet, it seems that quite a lot of the current studies still are using the frameworks of those earlier publications. Quite often, attention is paid first and foremost to those buildings that appear striking examples of modern architecture –the images of Kultermann's 1963 survey still have a strong appeal– or to those constructions that were authored by prominent members of the Modern Movement –the example of Ernst May comes to mind.¹⁴

Discussing the corbusian-like work of architect Claude Laurens in Kinshasa, I have already argued elsewhere that such an approach risks of missing the essence of such built production that though somewhat generic in appearance, is more often than not heavily influenced by local contexts of economic, political and socio-cultural nature.¹⁵ Before illustrating that point using the case of Lubumbashi, I want to argue first that even within an analysis that remains strictly within the confines of architectural history, more attention could and should be paid to the question of networks and spheres of influences operating in ways that cross national as well as linguistic boundaries. In this respect the common model of a transfer operating from the *métropole* to the colony is far too reductive. Recent scholarship by Mercedes Volait or Eric Verdeil that focuses on networks of expertise linked to issues of migration and exchange, has revealed the complexity of the import/export phenomenon, showing how models and ideas travel along often sinuous and sometimes surprising trajectories. Further more, their work stresses the importance of paying attention to the often overlooked local actors that impacted on modes of production.¹⁶

Lubumbashi provides an interesting case in this respect, first and foremost because of the very cosmopolitan nature of the colonial society that produced its urban form and built

fabric.¹⁷ It is striking for instance that one of the first articles in a Belgian architectural journal, dating from 1911 -being only one year after the city's foundation-, precisely lamented the fact that the building market was being dominated by "gens d'ailleurs", in case Italians and Greeks.¹⁸ As the first route to the outside world did not link the city to the inner land of the Congo, let alone to Kinshasa, but rather was the railway line that ran via Bulawayo in the current Zambia directly to Cape Town in South Africa, Lubumbashi, and indeed the whole of Katanga, basically belonged to the cultural sphere of influence of *l'Afrique australe*. One can easily trace this southern influence in the urban landscape. Suffice to look for instance at the early colonial bungalows that were built in the 1910s, the origin of whose prefabricated metal building components should be sought rather in South Africa and the then Rhodesia, than in Belgium. The presence of 1920s houses built in the so-called 'Boer style', the formal language of whose gables refers directly to Cape Dutch architecture, is another indicator of the important influx of expertise and models related to an immigration from the South. It is only from the mid 1920s onwards, when the city centre of Lubumbashi started to be shaped by erecting public buildings, that the role of Belgian architects became more important and that a direct import of architectural languages *en vogue* in the mother country appeared. Locally residing architects such as Raymond Cloquet or Julien Caen produced work that testifies of an ambition to build "modern" in the Congo. Such attitude is not only noticeable in their interventions in the urban landscape, or in Cloquet's own writings, but was strikingly manifest in the exhibition architecture of the 1931 *Exposition Internationale d'Elisabethville*.¹⁹

The dominance of foreigners on the building market, however, remained strong throughout the colonial era. It should further more be reminded that, contrary to the situation in Belgium, architects, and especially those working on an independent basis, were far from being the main actors in Congo's building sector.²⁰ One of the most striking houses in Lubumbashi's city centre, built in 1946 and testifying of the perseverance of an inclination towards Art Deco among the city's elite, in fact was designed and built by an Italian entrepreneur, named Bianci.²¹ The same holds true for the largest part of the built legacy of the native towns, or *cités*. While Ruashi, the last native town to be erected by the colonial government, was designed by architects of the *Office des Cités Africaines*, whose worked attracted international professional acclaim,²² the majority the buildings in the other *cités* were built according to type-plans produced mainly by the engineering staff of the official services, while Belgian construction firms such as *Beame Marpent* also tried to gain access to what they considered a profitable market as housing shortages in the *cités* were immense. A most intriguing example of how the built legacy even in this domain was sometimes the product of trans-national trajectories, is provided by the nine so-called "maisons ballon-type" erected just outside of the *Ruashi* quarter, in the zone of the worker's camp of the railway company. Built according to a new technique of concrete construction, that has its origin in the United States, a study entitled *Contribution à l'étude des habitations pour indigènes au Congo belge* and presented in 1952 to the *Institut Royal Coloniale belge*, suggests that it was via its large-scale

use in Dakar, Senegal, that this housing type arrived in Lubumbashi.²³ The example points at a fruitful venue for future research, namely the study within the larger framework of the Cold War era of the American infiltration in Sub-Saharan Africa in the immediate post-war years via the import of building expertise and technology, as well as planning consultancy.

A similar complex *filiière* of models, in architectural rather than constructive terms, underlies the residential complex built in 1956-57 by the architects Philippe Charbonnier and Julian Elliott, the first being the son of a well established family of Belgian entrepreneurs active in Lubumbashi, while the latter is nowadays especially known as one of South Africa's most prominent campus architects. Both men had met while studying architecture in Cape Town. Although a sensibility of African vernacular architecture underscores the complex's clustered lay-out of individual housing units around private and shared outdoor spaces, an interview conducted with Elliott in August 2007 also pointed out that shortly before starting the design, he had been travelling through Europe, visiting among others Le Corbusier's work, while during his residence in London, where he worked some time for the office of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, he also came across the emerging discourse of Team X.²⁴ All of these various strands of ideas and influences come together in this peculiar project, in which Elliott lived during his Lubumbashi years. The fact that it is the only built project in the Congo to receive ample attention in Udo Kultermann's surveys of 1963 and 2000,²⁵ testifies to its doubtless architectural quality, but also hints at some of the mechanisms and biases underlying his selection, that seems intrinsically related to media attention in leading architectural magazines of the time and/or to personal contacts with the architects presented.

Colonial built heritage and the historiography of colonialism. Re-situating buildings in their (urban) contexts

Scholarship on colonial architecture and urbanism produced since the early 1990s has demonstrated how an analysis of urban form and buildings in formerly colonized territories not only widens our understanding of architectural history as such, but how it also provides tools to critically re-assess the history of colonization itself.²⁶ While the common practice of heritage inventories is to treat buildings as isolated objects, describing them in terms of formal appearance, technical innovation, and, in some cases, changes in use, a lot is to be gained by an alternative reading that re-situates buildings in their urban context, as choices of location are seldom coincidental. Elsewhere, I have made this case by focusing on specific buildings of the interwar period in Lubumbashi, in order to illustrate the contested nature of the urban territory.²⁷ In this paper, I will develop a similar argument by discussing, albeit it briefly, some cases from the postwar period.

The first is the former *Athenée Royale*, which I consider one of the most intriguing architectural ensembles in the city. It was built in the late 1940s by René Schoentjes and G.

Van Grunderbeek. The building of the school, of course, relates to the Ten Year Plan for the Social and Economic Development of the Congo of 1948-49, in which a large emphasis was put on educational matters. The scale of the complex, its diagonal positioning within the urban grid that strengthens the perspective on the main entrance, as well as the choice of architectural language all can be understood, however, in other terms. For one thing, they can be related to the preference for monumental classicism which at the time was the style favored by the colonial government.²⁸ Yet, they might also be read as directly responding to the two nearby located educational institutions of catholic signature, the *Institut Marie-José* and the *Collège Saint-François de Sales*. The main structures of these large-scale complexes date from the 1930s, and clearly revealed the ambition of the catholic missionaries to mark their presence in the urban landscape via creating appealing but primarily imposing architectures. As already in the late 1940s, liberal ministers in Belgium were starting to question the missionaries' monopoly in the domain of colonial education, the building of the atheneum was an urban operation geared by a highly charged political agenda.²⁹

Besides school infrastructure, the Ten Year Plan also sought to stimulate the development of the colony's medical infrastructure. In Lubumbashi, this led to the construction in the mid 1950s of two new hospitals, one for the white and one for the African community, that were to replace the older, run-down facilities. In their elaborate formalism, the one leaning more towards a modernist idiom, the other combining a classical symmetrical lay-out with austere façades composed of heavy concrete framework acting as *brise-soleil*, both testify of the architectural ambition of their designers.³⁰ More interesting, however, is their location and what it reveals about the segregated nature of a colonial city like Lubumbashi in the immediate postwar years. While both hospitals were erected outside the grid of the *ville européenne*, the hospital for Africans was located within the so-called *zone neutre*, the *cordon sanitaire* introduced in the early 1920s as a buffer zone between the *ville européenne* and the first native town, the commune Kamalondo. In this, it was in tune with long established and internationally accepted colonial zoning principles based on considerations of hygiene.³¹ The hospital for the white community was built on the opposite side, at the largest possible distance from where lived the majority of the native population. While this might nowadays seem an obvious choice, considering the segregated nature of colonial planning practices common in sub-Saharan Africa, what is striking is that during the discussions on the location of these new medical facilities occurring within the *Comité urbain*, doctors had in fact been arguing that from a medical point of view there no longer was any sound argument not to combine both hospitals in one complex within the *zone neutre*.³² Initially, the central colonial government in Brussels seemed inclined to support such a proposition, albeit out of a purely economical reasoning. Several members of the local *Comité urbain* proved much more reluctant towards such a juxtaposition. But one has to actually read between the lines of the reports of the *Comité urbain* to unveil the segregationist nature of their arguments, as formulations gradually became much more implicit, no doubt as a result of growing

international critique on colonial policies. The final choice of the location of the hospital for whites, however, makes it explicitly clear that a segregationist line of thought still very much structured the colonial order of things few years before Congo would gain its independence.

A more complicated, because seemingly opposing set of ideological agendas geared the building of the former theater of Lubumbashi, that forms part of a larger cultural complex encompassing also a music school and a museum. Ending the vista of a major boulevard on the edge of Lubumbashi's *ville européenne*, the design that is sculptural in its overall appearance, still draws explicitly on Beaux-Arts compositional principles to grant it a monumental feel in tune with its urban setting. Yet, it was inspired by clear desire of its authors, the collective of young and locally residing architects operating under the label *Yenga*, to invent a contemporary African architecture, an ambition that is revealed even more strongly in design of the adjacent museum. Described by the editors of the locally edited, artistic magazine *Jeune Afrique* as "the most modern cultural complex to be found in Africa", the building received ample attention in the professional as well as popular press. Udo Kultermann also mentions it as noteworthy in *Neues Bauen in Afrika*. Contemporary critics particularly praised the choice of having contemporary Congolese artists, such as the painters Pili Pili and Bela, design the interior decoration. Claude Strebelle who was not only the leading member of *Yenga*, but also artistic director of the magazine *Jeune Afrique* which provided these artists a platform, was instrumental in the choice. While these elements suggest a reading of the building as a site of cultural encounter, looking closely at its specific location and unveiling its patronage leads to a contrasting conclusion. Built with financial aid and ideological support of the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga* and the railway enterprise B.C.K, both driving forces of the city's economy and crucial pillars of the Belgian colonial project, the building should be primarily understood as the product of a deliberate policy of using culture as a strategic tool of colonization. In his inauguration speech the *Commissaire du District* of the time stated unequivocally that "to colonize means to project into space civilization", whereby "civilization" was to be understood as cultural expressions coming from the *métropole*. At the inauguration evening in 1956, it was the *Théâtre National de la Belgique* that performed for an exclusively white audience.

History, memory and colonial built legacy. Re-thinking the notion of "shared heritage"

The case of the former theater is also a good starting point to introduce a third and final perspective, through which one can critically assess Lubumbashi's built legacy, namely the relationship between memory and heritage. In a recent symposium on colonial built heritage, held at the *Institut National du Patrimoine* in Paris in autumn 2005, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch has argued that we should not only look at this legacy in historical terms, but also take seriously the "memory work" that is related to it.³³ Pierre Nora's concept of "lieux de

mémoire”, which he defined as “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community”,³⁴ might provide an interesting tool in this respect, even though its use in African contexts has in fact been highly contested, especially within the milieu of French Africanists –one should read in this respect Henri Moniot’s text with the telling title “Faire du Nora sous les tropiques”.³⁵ I follow Hélène Lipstadt’s argument that the concept is useful for architectural historians because it reminds us, first, of the importance of the spatiality of memory, and, second, of the need to address, even in dealing mainly with physical fabric, not only the tangible but also the intangible aspects of built form.³⁶ The capacity of “lieux de mémoire” to take up new meanings over time –a capacity that for Nora was one of the main elements that made “lieux de mémoire” exciting- is particularly helpful to chart ruptures and continuities from colonial to postcolonial contexts, as the work by Zeynep Çelik on Algiers has so eloquently illustrated.³⁷

Lubumbashi’s former theater building forms a telling example, as its consecutive re-uses over time have produced considerable shifts in its meaning. The theatre building was in fact “politicized” immediately after Congo’s independence.³⁸ Only days after June 30th, 1960 the Congolese politician Moïse Tshombe claimed independence for the province of Katanga, in an effort to gain autonomy for the wealthiest region in the Congo. He installed the Katangese parliament in the theater building, and it was depicted on the new money bills of the *Banque Nationale du Katanga*, thus turning it into a symbolic site of Katangese secession that in the end was short-lived as national unity was already restored in 1963. A painting from the *Histoire du Zaïre*, a series of early 1970s canvases by the Congolese painter Tshibumba Kanda Matulu, links the theater building directly to this particular political event investing it with a symbolic meaning that is thus more closely related to a Katangese than to a Congolese identity.³⁹ After a series of subsequent transformations in program, to complicated to tackle in this brief discussion,⁴⁰ the building serves since December 2006 as the seat of the *Assemblée Provinciale* of Katanga, which operates under the aegis of the recently installed national government. Considering the growing tensions between some influential Katangese politicians and the central seat of state power in Kinshasa, one can only wonder if the role of the theatre building as a Katangese instead of Congolese “lieu de mémoire” will be revived.

The impressive production of so-called popular painting in Lubumbashi and other expressions of urban memory, point out that physical “lieux de mémoire” need not be remarkable architectural artefacts. In fact, the city’s prime postcolonial “lieu de mémoire” is not even a building, but the urban silhouette formed by the *terril* and chimney of the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga*, or the *Gécamines* as the mining enterprise is nowadays referred to.⁴¹ Omnipresent in colonial propaganda, serving to convey an image of the Belgian Congo as a haven of progress and modernity, its recurrent appearance in Congolese “popular” painting has been, especially in the last decades, closely linked with the negotiation of *Lushois*

memories of that bygone era of prosperity, when the mining industry formed the economic backbone of the city and offered the majority of Lubumbashi's African population working opportunities. Research by local scholars on such memories that in a time of massive unemployment and economic hardship are shaped around to the notion of *Kazi*, or "travail salarié", indicates that the Congolese perception of the colonial past is complex, being neither a mere nostalgic longing for, nor a radical rejection of the colonial order.⁴²

These two cases exemplify to what extent physical sites have become "domesticated" by the current inhabitants of Lubumbashi through a physical re-appropriation and changing of use, as well as through investing them with new meaning. Such processes of "domestication" and "appropriation", that occur at different levels and various intensities not only in Lubumbashi but in all formerly colonized environments, have led to the emergence of the notion of "shared heritage" in current debates on colonial built heritage. Within ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, for instance, the scientific committee dealing with this topic operates under the label "Shared Built Heritage", in order to point out that any heritage policy in a postcolonial context should be based on a dialogue between former "colonizers" who produced this legacy, and former "colonized" whose everyday reality it forms part of.⁴³ In his introduction to *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. L'expérience française*, a 2005 book edited by the French *Institut National du Patrimoine*, Bernard Toulhier similarly puts forward this notion of "patrimoine partagé" yet argues more explicitly that this is not a relationship of equality. In his view, the colonial built legacy no longer belongs to those who built it, but to those who inhabit it, granting the latter the responsibility of policy making in this domain while fully acknowledging the paradox inherent in such process, as defining it as part of their own heritage indeed implies on the part of the former "colonized" the appropriation of a "foreign culture" (a "culture exogène").⁴⁴

While I fully subscribe Bernard Toulhier's nuanced analysis, that is informed by a large expertise of doing fieldwork in Africa, and his plea to keep the notion "colonial" in the discussion -even if organizations such as ICOMOS have deliberately chosen to eliminate it, because it raises sensitive questions concerning colonial history-,⁴⁵ I would like to question the binary structure that still seems to be underlying his use of the concept of "shared heritage" by again returning to the cosmopolitan nature of the Lubumbashi's colonial society. I have pointed out earlier in this paper how this characteristic informed the production of the city's built fabric. It also raises fundamental questions for the development of a heritage policy.

Nothing could illustrate this point more clearly than a website that was mounted some years ago on the Jewish cemetery of Lubumbashi by Moïse Rahmani, who also authored a popularizing history of the Jewish presence in the Congo.⁴⁶ Addressing the worldwide Jewish diaspora, it invites its members to add personal information (textual or visual) on the many

Jews that are buried in this impressive burial ground, the individual tombs of which are all documented through photographs and name indexes. In such a way, the website turns this particular site at the outskirts of the city, close to the industrial zone, into a virtual “lieu de mémoire” that can also operate from a distance. In fact, the Jewish community in Lubumbashi has been so small in number for decades to such an extent that it was forced long ago to close down the city’s synagogue which once proudly marked the important Jewish presence in the Congo.⁴⁷ From the viewpoint of architectural history, one can easily make the claim that it deserves the label of a construction of national interest as the building, designed in 1929 by the prominent Belgian architect Raymond Cloquet, is one of the first examples of the introduction of modern brick architecture in the colony. Through its particular location, it also raises intriguing questions concerning the social position of the Jewish community vis-à-vis the colonial establishment, especially considering the important demographic shifts that occurred around the time of its construction.

But in terms of “shared heritage” one should first and foremost wonder why this particular building, that has been standing vacant for such a long time, did not become subject to acts of re-appropriation and wasn’t given up under the pressures of the real estate market. Both the Jewish cemetery and the synagogue indicate that the notion of “shared heritage” seems to miss the point that built legacy in fact does not have to be shared to be meaningful. Instead of thinking in terms of “lieux de mémoire” that create one, overriding collective identity –which in Nora’s initial definition and use of the concept was of course that of French national identity-, could we not extend the concept to address the fact that cities can indeed harbor a multitude of “realms of memory”, each addressing different audiences that not necessarily have to interact? Perhaps it is more appropriate then to leave behind the notion of “shared heritage” and to return to the set of basic, but key questions that Stuart Hall once raised when discussing the discursive nature of heritage in the context of multicultural, 1990s Britain: whose heritage we are actually talking about? What it is for? And who is concerned by it?⁴⁸

Epilogue: a guide for whose architectural heritage?

Raising such questions is one thing, starting to provide some elements of an answer is quite another. How could we proceed in conceiving a project on Lubumbashi’s architectural legacy that does not isolate and fix built artefacts in an inventory that follows standard procedures of current, western-based heritage practices, but that seeks instead to unravel some of the complexities raised in this paper? How to begin to construct a concept that is multilayered and allows to regard the built legacy as a construct produced by a cosmopolitan society that itself was structured along the racial and social hierarchies of colonialism, but that simultaneously can evoke some of the implications of the various forms of its re-appropriation not only by the different actors who currently occupy it, but also by those who, from a distance and via new media, reclaim it through “memory work”?⁴⁹ How to address the fact that even young *Lushois*

artists working within the same milieu, can have a completely oppositional take on the same physical sites, as was demonstrated by the confrontation between the work of cartoonist Tetshim and that of photographer Kiat Wandad in the 2007 exhibition *Congo. Paysages urbains. Regards croisés?*⁵⁰

Rather than trying to invent a completely new concept, I would suggest that the format of an architectural guide might provide us with some ordering principles that could effectively be subverted to such ends. The guide as a format has the advantage of the clarity of structure. Like an encyclopedia, it uses the individual entry, or lemma, to communicate information and this principle grants every selected item an equal legitimacy within the overall survey. Furthermore, architectural guide books seek to locate the selected buildings on maps, and in some cases even provide the reader with pre-programmed routes or promenades, linking discrete points on a spatial trajectory that is not conceived to be experienced as a continuous urban travelling but rather as a walk creating of a series of successive, but separate moments of excitement. How precisely one navigates between such points is of less importance. These ordering principles in themselves have a certain neutrality. It is in the selection, of course, that resides the subjectivity of the guide, a subjectivity that operates both at the level of the choice of the individual item, as on that of the thematic narrative that guides the promenade, be it geographical (walking a specific neighborhood), chronological (combining the built production of a certain era), or stylistic (the art deco walk, the promenade of modernist buildings,..). More often than not, the criteria that underlie such choices remain implicit, or are based on the premise that there exists something as a generally accepted consensus on value, which in the case of architectural guides is of course a consensus relying on the canon of architectural historiography. If postcolonial scholarship in the realm of architectural history has made one thing clear, it is that the canon is in itself a construct that demands constant critical inquiry and re-assessment.

What I propose then as an alternative, is, as idea, rather evident and perhaps not even all that original.⁵¹ What we need is an approach allowing to incorporate more multilayered selections that operate along a wider variety of criteria, but that essentially acknowledges explicitly its subjectivity. The way I have selected the cases discussed in this paper, speaks of course as much of my proper personal fascinations, than it is related to my plea to combine perspectives of architectural history, colonial historiography and memory work. That is one major lessons I have drawn from my encounters with both scholars and a collective of young artists in Lubumbashi. An alternative guide should thus, ideally, be produced as a collaborative work. Contemporary technologies create opportunities for such endeavors and a current experiment I am trying to mount involves the creation of an interactive database, the interface of which uses the strict ordering principles of the architectural guide, yet tries not to lay claims on the content every participant to the project can contribute.⁵² Simply put, it aims at offering a web-based platform that invites a variety of people to define personalized

promenades in Lubumbashi, through which one can discover particular aspects of the city and its urban form. These promenades can be either realistic, linked to personal experiences, or fictional, and even include narratives linked to “rumor” and “urban myth” that are such important aspects of Congolese urbanity. Such promenades can thus be situated in the present, but also in the past –in order to highlight, for instance, particularities in the city’s history- but might even be walks in an imaginary Lubumbashi of the future, an idea that was inspired by encountering the work of *Tetshim*. Combining text, maps, photographs, films, and oral history, this might lead to an architectural guide that invites visitors to follow multiple promenades, each unveiling a different city.

There is, of course, a certain *naïveté* in this whole operation. Content is never completely value free, and neither is a chosen format. Every project of collaborative work entails decision making processes that are always hierarchical and power related. The availability of financial resources and their origin impacts in decisive ways on output. Further more, there are limits to the complexity one can include in terms of the superposition of layers of information, the interweaving of narratives and the striving for a maximum multiplicity of voices. Beyond a certain point, the risk of information overload and becoming incomprehensible inevitably slips in. No surprise then that the project has proved a much more complicated undertaking than was initially assumed. To date, apart from an overwhelming collection of data, we have yet to pass from the phase of a rough sketch to the elaboration of a workable, online guide, which no doubt will not be a simple task. What remains the essential driving force that perpetuates the project, however, is the conviction that we should, as architectural historians operating on and in African contexts, at least try to incorporate an explicit consciousness about the constructed and discursive nature of our own practices in the domains of both heritage and historiography.

¹ This paper is based on my earlier research on colonial architecture and urbanism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which resulted in a PhD at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Ghent University (2002). It is further informed by a series of visits to the city of Lubumbashi in the summer of 2000, September 2005, December 2006 and August 2007. I would like to thank all those who have been helpful in facilitating those visits and with whom I have been able to exchange ideas, most notably prof. Donatien Dibwe Dia Mwemba, prof. Michel Lwamba Bilonda, professor Donatien Muya, Hubert Maheux, Marine Issumo, Moïse Panga, Serge Songa Songa and the members of the artists’ collective *Le Vicinos Club*. The project has further more benefited greatly from the work done by Maarten Liefoghe and by students of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Ghent University during a research seminar in 2006.

² The ongoing incidents in the Eastern part of Congo of course serve as an indicator of the fragility of the current stability.

³ Moïse Katumbé recently decreed that all buildings in Lubumbashi’s city centre be painted in a similar colour in order to avoid visual chaos. While the implementation of the decree proves problematic and while is questionable in its goal, the initiative nevertheless demonstrates an awareness for urban aesthetics. Moïse Katumbé further more has been instrumental in preventing the demolishing the girl’s school built in Luishia the 1950s, which constitutes a remarkable architectural ensemble and is an institute with historical relevance, see KABWE W., « Gouverneur élu du Katanga Moïse Katumbi opposé à la destruction des écoles Luisha et Kakontwe de la Gecamines », *Le Potentiel*, August 17th 2007. I thank Eric Kennis and Donatien Muya for bringing this event to my attention..

⁴ MAHEUX H., *Patrimoine architecturale de Lubumbashi*, <http://lubumculture.site.voila.fr/patriarchi.htm>.

⁵ In the context of this initiative, a conference and round table discussion entitled “Afrique: le patrimoine colonial, une identité à partager” were organized on November 24th, 2006, at the La Cambre school.

- ⁶ PABOIS M., *Lubumbashi, un musée d'architecture à ciel ouvert*, in *Nzenze*, jg. 1, nr. 1, 2006, p. 24-26.
- ⁷ See LAGAE J., "'Kongo zoals het is'. Drie architectuurverhalen uit de Belgische koloniatiegeschiedenis", unpublished PhD, Ghent University, 2002.
- ⁸ AVRAMI E. & RANDALL M. (red.), *Values and Heritage Conservation. Research Report*, Los Angeles, 2000, online version http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/pdf_publications/valuesrpt.pdf
- ⁹ EL KADI, G. et al. (ed.) 2005 : Le patrimoine moderne dans les villes du Sud: une articulation en tours entre mémoires locales, modernités urbaines et mondialisation, *Autrement*, 33.
- ¹⁰ Since the late 1970s, scholars like Johannes Fabian and Bogumil Jewsiewicki have been researching expressions of urban memory in so-called "popular" culture: theatre, painting, music, fashion as well as through oral history. In recent years, a group of local researchers has been closely involved, leading to a wide collection of scholarly publications, exhibitions and related catalogues. See a.o. JEWSIEWICKI B., *Travail de mémoire et représentations pour un vivre ensemble : expériences de Lubumbashi*, in DE LAME D. & DIBWE DIA MWEMBU D. (red.), *Tout passe. Instantanés populaires et traces du passé à Lubumbashi*, Tervuren/Parijs, 2005, p. 27-40 ; SIZAIRE V (red.), *Ukumbusho (souvenir). Mémoires de Lubumbashi: Images, objects, paroles*, Parijs, 2001.
- ¹¹ BORELLI C., 'Asmara, Eritrea', 63 min., 2007. See also <http://www.anonime.net/asmara>.
- ¹² The program of the upcoming *Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians* can serve as an illustration of this growing interest in academic circles. *Docomomo* has put Africa to the fore as a central focus of its interest. See a.o. the special issue on Africa of the *Docomomo journal*, published in 2005.
- ¹³ KULTERMANN, U. 1963 : *Neues Bauen in Afrika*. Tübingen: Wasmuth Verlag; KULTERMANN, U. 2000. Sub-Saharan Africa. Volume 6 in the series *World Architecture. A Critical Mosaic*, FRAMPTON K.(ed.), Springer Verlag, Wien, 2000.
- ¹⁴ HERREL E., *Ernst May. Architekt und Stadtplaner in Afrika 1934-1953*, Deutsches Architektur Museum, Frankfurt-am-Main, 2001.
- ¹⁵ LAGAE J., 'Claude Laurens and a modern architecture for "le nouveau Congo". Assessing postwar tropical modernism in a colonial/postcolonial context', paper presented at the VIIIth International DOCOMOMO Conference, 2004. In this respect, see also WINDSOR LISCOMBE R., 'Modernism in Late Imperial British West Africa: The Work of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, 1946-1956', in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 65, nr. 2, 2006, pp. 188-21.
- ¹⁶ NASR J. & VOLAIT M., *Urbanism. Imported or Exported ? Native Aspirations and Foreign Plans*, Chichester : Wiley Academy, 2003; VOLAIT M., *Architectes & Architectures de l'Égypte Moderne 1830-1950, Génèse et essor d'une expertise locale*, Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris, 2005; VERDEIL E., themanummer "Experts nomades", *Géocarrefour*, nr. 80/3, 2005. This particular topic of transnationalism and networks of expertise that fall outside the common categories of architectural historiography, was addressed during a round table discussion that I have organized on December 19th, 2007 at the INHA in Paris and in which participated Bernard Toulhier, Mercedes Volait, Ola Uduku and Madalena Cunha Matos.
- ¹⁷ For a late 1940s survey of Lubumbashi's population, pointing out its cosmopolitan nature both from a European and an African perspective, see MINISTÈRE DES COLONIES, *Urbanisme au Congo belge*, Bruxelles, [1950]. For more recent surveys, see BRUNEAU, J.L. & PAIN, M. (1990) *Atlas de Lubumbashi*, Université Paris X, Nanterre
- ¹⁸ DE HERTOGH A., *Page coloniale. Pour commencer*, in *Tekhné*, jg. 1, nr. 1, 1911, p. 10-11.
- ¹⁹ See for instance CLOQUET R.: *L'Art de bâtir au Katanga*, in *Le Matériel Colonial*, nr. 104, 1932, p. 57-74; CLOQUET R., *L'Architecture. Le carnet de l'Architecte*, in *Essor du Congo*, album édité à l'occasion de l'Exposition Internationale d'Elisabethville, May 1931, n.p ; *Ce que fut l'Exposition Internationale d'Elisabethville. Un interview avec Raymond Cloquet*, in *Le Soir Illustré*, 28 November 1931, p. 12-13
- ²⁰ For qualitative data on the topic, see LAGAE J., "'Kongo zoals het is'", op. cit., part I.
- ²¹ This information was provided by the current owner of the house, Marine Issumo, who has been living in Lubumbashi during her youth. We are currently conducting research in several archives, both in Belgium and in Lubumbashi, to situate the importance of Bianci in the post-war construction of Lubumbashi.
- ²² On the work of OCA, see De Meulder B., *Kuvuanda Mbote. Een eeuw architectuur en stedenbouw in Congo*, Hautekiet/deSingel, Antwerpen, 2000, chapter 14.
- ²³ This study was authored by M. BRUYÈRE. For the use of this system in the French African context, see 'Introduction', in TOULIER B., *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. L'expérience française*, INP, Paris, 2005.
- ²⁴ Interview with Julian ELLIOTT, August 26th, 2007, Cape Town.
- ²⁵ While Kultermann does name several projects in the Congo he considers noteworthy, the only other project to be presented through visuals and to receive an extended, laudatory comment is an unbuilt competition project for the Cultural Center of the Belgian Congo of 1959 by the Japanese architect Takamasa Yoshizaka.
- ²⁶ See in particular ÇELİK Z., *Urban form and colonial confrontations. Algiers under French Rule*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.

²⁷ LAGAE J., 'Colonial encounters and conflicting memories. Shared colonial heritage in the Belgian Congo', in *Journal of Architecture*, vol. 9, Summer 2004, pp. 173-19; LAGAE J., 'Rewriting Congo's colonial past. History, memory and colonial built heritage in the former Belgian colony', paper presented at the SAH/INHA International Symposium Changing Boundaries – Architectural History in Transition, Paris, 2005.

²⁸ LAGAE J., 'Le Petit Belge a voulu faire grand. The troublesome construction of the Résidence du Gouverneur Général du Congo Belge in Leopoldville (1922-1960)', in *METU-Journal of Architecture*, vol. 20, nrs. 1-2, 2000, pp. 6-27.

²⁹ I deal with this issue in detail in my PhD in the chapter on the building of *the Collège du Saint-Esprit* in Bujumbura Burundi. Bram Cleys has discussed similar phenomena arising in the post-war period in the city of Luluabourg in the Kasai region.

³⁰ Architects were Albert De Lay (hospital for whites) and Noël Van Malleghem (hospital for Africans). The latter had also executed an urban survey and drawn up a masterplan for Lubumbashi at the command of the Ministry of Colonies in the late 1940s.

³¹ For a blunt statement on the medical reasoning underscoring the planning concept of the *cordon sanitaire* in Lubumbashi, which was in fact a common line of thought in colonial planning at the time, see HINS R, *L'Urbanisme au Katanga*, in *Essor du Congo*, mei 1931, s.p

³² The discussions in fact spans almost 10 years, from the mid 1940s to the mid 1950s. See reports of the *Comité Urbain* in Lubumbashi, Africa Archives, Brussels, fund 3°DG.

³³ COQUERY-VIDROVITCH C., 'Conclusion', in TOULIER B. & PABOIS M. (dir.), *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. Expériences européennes*, Institut National du Patrimoine, Paris, 2006.

³⁴ This quote refers to the 1996 English translation of Nora's work, while the concept was initially developed and used in a series of publications in French that took off in 1984.

³⁵ MONIOT, H. 1999 : Faire du Nora sous les tropiques?. In J.P. CHRÉTIEN and J.L. TRIAUD (ed.) 1999 : *Histoire d'Afrique. Les enjeux de mémoire*. Paris: Karthala, 13-26.

³⁶ LIPSTADT, H. 1999 : 'Review of Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: the Construction of the French Past*', in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 2, 243-245.

³⁷ ÇELİK Z., Colonial/postcolonial Intersections. Lieux de mémoire in Algiers. In Ziauddin SARDAR et. al. (ed.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, Continuum, London, pp. 61-72.

³⁸ See in this context the contribution of DIBWE D. & KALABA G. in DE LAME, D. & DIBWE D. 2005 : *Tout passe. Instantanés populaires et traces du passé à Lubumbashi*, Tervuren /Paris: Africa Museum/L'Harmattan, pp. 41-74

³⁹ In his conversation with Johannes Fabian, who documented and presented an in-depth analysis of the work in his seminal book *Remembering the Present*, the Katangese painter explains the importance of the building as the "house in which Tshombe assumed power... and therefore he put it on a bill of Katanga money". FABIAN, J. 1996: *Remembering the Present. Painting and Popular Culture in Zaire*. Berkeley: University of California Press. The painting bears an inscription "On July 11, 1961 [sic], Katanga becomes independant", the error being characteristic of the fact that the paintings of Tshibumba should be regarded as "memory work", not as historical depictions.

⁴⁰ A more in depth analysis of Lubumbashi's theatre building and its role as "lieu de mémoire" will be presented at the upcoming SAH Annual Meeting in April 2008.

⁴¹ This urban silhouette is currently subject to a major physical change, as the *terril* is being recycled, an entrepreneurial initiative financed with foreign investments that has aroused a local heritage debate during the 2005 *Journées du patrimoine* in Lubumbashi.

⁴² On the *kazi*, see KLAUBER, V. (Ed.) (2004) *Mémoires de Lubumbashi. Le travail hier et aujourd'hui*, L'Harmattan, Paris, as well as other fundamental « memory work » on the mining industry done by Donatien DIBWE.

⁴³ The scientific committee on "Shared Built Heritage" of ICOMOS is based in the Netherlands. See http://www.international.icomos.org/isc2_eng.htm

⁴⁴ TOULIER, B. 2005 : 'Introduction'. In B. TOULIER and M. PABOIS (ed.), *L'architecture coloniale. L'expérience française*, Paris: Institut National du Patrimoine, 11-23

⁴⁵ See in this context also VAN ROOSMAELEN, P. 2006: Le positionnement de l'héritage colonial bâti. In B. Toulhier and M. Pabois (ed.), *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. Expériences européennes*, Paris : Institut National du Patrimoine, 157-160.

⁴⁶ <http://www.sefarad.org/diaspora/congo/cimetiere>; RAHMANI, M. (2002) *Shalom Bwana. La saga des Juifs du Congo*, Romillat, Paris. Several other white communities with historical ties to Congo's colonial past (Greek, Italian, Scandinavian) have started to document their histories and memories in recent years.

⁴⁷ The Lubumbashi synagogue was the most important in the whole of the Congo. To make a synagogue operational, the community should count a minimum of 12 adult men.

⁴⁸ HALL, S. 2002 : Whose Heritage? Un-settling "The Heritage", RE-imagining the Post-Nation. In Z. SARDAR et. al., editors, *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*. London: Continuum, 72-84.

⁴⁹ Remarkable in this respect is the extent to which groups of former "colonizers" are actively engaging in "memory work" through new media such as internet sites and chat sessions. See for

instance the website <http://www.masomo.be>, that offers a dynamic platform for exchange, meeting and discussion among the members of former school communities in Katanga.

⁵⁰ In the drawings of Tetshim, the architectural legacy of Lubumbashi's city centre plays a prominent role and becomes an actor of its own in the narrative. Settings are often imaginary compositions based on existing buildings represented in a realistic style. The photographs of Wandad offer a completely different gaze. They are in tune with the trend in African photography to focus on the appropriation of urban space. Existing buildings then become almost anonymous screens, a mere physical hardware without any representational value. Both Tetshim and Wandad are members of the artists' collective *Le Vicinos Club*, whose work has recently attracted attention in Belgium. See TURINE R.-P., *Les arts du Congo: D'hier à nos jours*, Ed. Luc Pire, Brussels, 2007. Architect Marc Gemoets, with whom I co-curated the exhibit, was responsible for the selection of the artworks.

⁵¹ In recent years there is a growing interest in finding news ways (or rereading older ones) of mapping cities in order to unravel spatial, social, cultural dimensions. To name but two recent publications, that provide theoretical reflexion as well as specific cases: MÖNTMANN N. et. al., *Mapping a city. Hamburg-Kartierung*, exhibition catalogue, Kunstverein Hamburg/Hatje Cantz, 2003; POUSSIN F. (ed.), *Figures de la ville et construction des savoirs. Architecture, urbanisme, géographie*, CNRS Editions, Paris, 2005.

⁵² This first phase of this projet was started in 2006 and was conducted in close collaboration with Maarten Liefoghe and webmaster Jef Vervoort. It further involved a punctual participations by scholars and artists in Lubumbashi.

