PLANNING THE "MULTIRACIAL CITY":

Architecture, Decolonization and the Design of Stability in British Africa (1945-1957)

By

Rixt Woudstra

B.A., Art and Architectural History, University of Amsterdam, 2010
M.A., Art Studies, University of Amsterdam, 2013

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Signature of Author: _____

Department of Architecture,
August 7, 2020

Certified By:_____

Timothy Hyde
Associate Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture, Dissertation Supervisor

Accepted By:_____

Leslie K. Norford
Professor of Building Technology
Chair of the Department Committee on Graduate Students

Dissertation Committee

Chair
Timothy Hyde
Associate Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Readers
Mark Jarzombek
Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Arindam Dutta
Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Itohan Osayimwese
Associate Professor of the History of Art and Architecture
Brown University

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Abstract

In the two turbulent decades before most British African territories gained independence, British authorities reorganized rapidly growing cities such as Nairobi, Kampala, and Accra by constructing state-sponsored housing estates for African families. This dissertation examines how these late-colonial housing projects were part of a larger effort to maintain control over British Africa during a moment frequently described by colonial officials as "instable," but which for many others held the promise of a different, independent future. I argue that British architects and planners collaborated with labor experts, sociologists, and social welfare workers to prevent anticolonial protests, labor strikes, and mass demonstrations, and to create a "stable" black working class.

Building on archival research and fieldwork in Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, I explore four interrelated architectural and spatial strategies employed by British colonial architects and planners: the promotion of the sociological construct of the "multiracial city" to reduce racial tensions; the creation of community centers to stimulate social cohesion; the design of built-in furniture to modernize the domestic sphere; the engineering of new building materials to improve the durability of housing estates. While the political process of decolonization is frequently discussed as a moment of rapid change, this dissertation shows that architects and planners, such as Alfred Alcock and Leonard Thornton-White, participated in the drawn-out negotiation between colonial rule and self-government. Their designs aimed to impede anticolonial struggles for self-determination, racial equality, and social reform and thus postpone the looming prospect of independence.

This dissertation also investigates the British welfare state's *imperial* dimensions. The construction of late-colonial housing estates was entangled with the design of council flats in London, Liverpool, and other English cities. The case studies demonstrate that the principles of social welfare, founded on the ideal of a modern, more equal society, served to support a violent political system of extraction and labor exploitation abroad. The housing estates in Britain's African territories were presented as progressive investments to benefit local workers but were, in fact, designed to avoid uprisings that would interrupt Britain's lucrative supply chain.

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Index of Acronyms

AA: Architectural Association, London, United Kingdom

AAP: Alfred Alcock Papers, Oxford University, United Kingdom

CO: Colonial Office

CPT: Cape Town University, Cape Town, South Africa

DAM: Deutsches Architektur Museum (German Architecture Museum), Frankfurt

NBRI: National Building Research Institute, Pretoria, South Africa

LSE: London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom

PRAAD: Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Accra, Ghana

TNA: The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom

Notes on Nomenclature

While this dissertation is written in American English, quotations from British architects, planners, and colonial officials are included in their original British English. For example, the word "stabilisation" is used in direct quotations, the same word appears as "stabilization" when not used as a direct quotation.

To avoid confusion, I refer to the former British African colonies by official colonial names, although present-day names are mentioned.

All translations in Chapter 2 from Ernst May's German quotations to English are my own. I am also responsible for the translations in Chapter 3 from Afrikaans to English.

INTRODUCTION

Architecture and Stability

In November 1952, a decade before most British colonial territories in Africa became independent, twenty government-employed British architects and planners gathered in Pretoria, South Africa's capital. The participants worked in different parts of British Africa, in cities such as Nairobi, Accra, Lagos, Lusaka, Dar es Salaam, and Bathurst (present-day Banjul, the capital of Gambia). They had congregated for the first inter-African conference on "sub-economic," or state-sponsored, housing design and construction which brought together colonial experts in the field of architecture and planning from across the continent, hosted in the gleaming modernist building of the South African National Building Research Institute. For these architects and planners, the conference also offered an opportunity to look back at what had been accomplished in the field of housing in British Africa in the past years. For many, this was the first time they had met in person, although they knew of each other's work through dispatches sent out by the Colonial Office, or through *Colonial Building Notes*, a journal focused on architectural construction "overseas." The conference agenda revolved around financial concerns, management issues, and technical matters, such as building materials and construction techniques.[1]

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[1] Anthony Atkinson, "Memorandum on Housing in Africa," October 1953. Colonial Office (CO) 859/491, The National Archives, Kew (TNA); Colonial Office, "Housing in the British African Territories, 1952," January 1953. CO 859/490, TNA. The conference, titled Regional Conference on Housing Research in Africa South of the Sahara was organized by the Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa South of the Sahara.

Conspicuously absent from the meeting's agenda, however, was mention of the social and political changes that provided the backdrop for this gathering. These building projects that had changed cityscapes across the continent coincided with the grueling struggle for independence, often ferociously repressed, which took place during the two decades following World War II. Indeed, one month earlier, Kenya's governor, Evelyn Barring, had declared a "state of emergency" in one of Britain's most-prized colonial possessions. Responding to the protests of the Kikuyu, who rebelled against the encroachment of white settlers in Kenya's fertile Highlands—and more generally, low wages, harrowing working conditions, widespread impoverishment, stringent taxation, the restrictions on free movement, and a lack of electoral representation—the British military launched a brutal counter-insurgency program that lasted for several years and led to the detention of thousands of Kikuyu.[2]

By 1952, most colonial governments in British Africa had been involved, at least to some extent, in state-sponsored housing programs focused on settling black, male workers and their families in rapidly growing, industrializing cities such as Kampala, Nairobi, and Accra. Following the election of the Labour Party in July 1945, hundreds of estates were built, scattered across British territories in Africa, mostly financed through long-term loans offered by the Colonial Office. They were inhabited by railway workers, government clerks, drivers, dockworkers, and factory employees. These housing programs were part of the new colonial development policy implemented by Clement Attlee's Labour

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[2] On the conflict better known as the "Mau Mau" rebellion, see, among others: Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005); David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2005).

administration, which focused, at least outwardly, on increasing colonial welfare, but which

primarily concentrated on the intensified extraction of colonial resources and the

exploitation of black labor. Architects and planners, white, primarily male and mainly

British, designed and planned entirely new neighborhoods, of semi-detached, one-story

houses with shared cooking and washing facilities. At least on paper, these estates—often

modeled after postwar council housing projects in London, Hull, Portsmouth, and other

English cities—also contained primary schools, playing fields, health facilities, community

centers, and other social and cultural amenities oriented towards forging a "stable

community."[3] Construction continued in the 1950s until the early '60s, when many British

colonial territories in Africa became independent, following years of anticolonial protests,

labor strikes, and relentless lobbying efforts of politicians, activists, and union leaders.

The objective of these housing programs was "stabilization," a new term used by

colonial officials that was directly related to architecture, signifying a degree of

permanence, as well as steadfastness. Stabilization—a phrase that came to dominate

postwar British colonial labor policy and was subsequently adopted by colonial officials in

French West Africa and the Belgian Congo—referred to settling black workers and their

families close to the workplace by, among other things, providing affordable family

housing.[4] Whereas earlier large-scale housing projects (often sponsored by British-owned

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[3] Leonard Thornton-White, Leo Silberman, and P. Anderson, *Nairobi: Master Plan for a Colonial Capital. A Report Prepared for the Municipal Council of Nairobi* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1948), 8.

[4] On British and French colonial labor stabilization policies, see: Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987). Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). On labor stabilization policies in the Belgian Congo, see, among others: John Higginson, *A Working Class in the Making:*

corporations) consisted of male-only barracks for African laborers—frequently referred to

as "bed-spaces"—the postwar housing programs focused instead on the nuclear family. The

presence of wives and children came to be considered as a stabilizing factor. Architects and

planners, frequently assisted by labor experts, anthropologists, social welfare workers, and

specialists in "race relations," designed new neighborhoods to create a compliant and more

productive black labor force. The design of these estates was rooted in the perception that

an orderly living environment, if aided by, as one architect stated, "intensive propaganda

based on the African's psychology," could help control and even change human behavior.[5]

Simply put, colonial administrators believed that promising a new, modern life in the city,

and providing the housing this required, would make residents less likely to strike and less

eager to demand self-government. As one colonial officer working in Nyasaland and

Rhodesia (a territory that today consists of Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) put it in 1954,

"Africans" required "adequate housing" or else "all stability and all progress can well be

undermined and overthrown."[6]

       To colonial subjects, and to British audiences at home, these modern homes were

presented as a sign of British investment into colonial welfare. In white settler colonies

such as Kenya or Rhodesia, they were even said to contribute to the creation of a

"multiracial city," a place where "black and white" would live together "in peace and

Belgian Colonial Labor Policy, Private Enterprise, and the African Mineworker, 1907-1951 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

[5] Ernst May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," *Architectural Forum* 88 (1948): 50.

[6] "Statement to Parliament by the Prime Minister," Gersfield Todd, U.K. High Commissioner in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, November 2, 1954. T220/779, TNA.

mutual respect."[7] Photographs and articles in local, British-owned presses promoted the

new neighborhoods as pleasant, spacious, and modern environments, as did films made by

the Colonial Film Unit, a special organization set up by the British Ministry of Information

in 1939 to distribute propaganda in the British colonies. An image of a housing estate in the

Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), disseminated in Britain through the Central Information

Office, shows a peaceful scene of one-story houses with pitched roofs, shuttered windows

and a small verandah on a curving, paved road. **(Figure 0.1)** During a period defined by

anticolonial protests, labor strikes, and the breakdown of the colonial system—a process

framed by British colonial administrators as "decolonization" in an attempt to veil the

unwieldy and oftentimes violent demise of empire in an aura of orderliness—such imagery

served to recast colonialism as a benevolent, modernizing force, involved in social welfare

initiatives. These state-sponsored housing programs were part of a campaign to win over

colonial subjects' "hearts and minds."[8]

This dissertation addresses these entanglements between architectural design

and anticolonial protests and labors strikes in the two decades leading up to independence

by exploring the different ways in which the Colonial Office became involved in and

steered the construction of "African housing."[9] Rather than attempt a comprehensive

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[7] Letter of the representatives of African Newspapers Limited to P. B. Fletcher, Minister of
Native Affairs, Department of Native Affairs, Salisbury, March 4, 1955. T220/769, TNA.

[8] The slogan "hearts and minds of the people" was first used in the 1950s by Field Marshal
Sir Gerald Templer to describe Britain's brutal counter-insurgency program in Malaya
(present-day Malaysia). See: Erik Linstrum, *Empire of Minds: Psychology in the British
Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 156.

[9] Throughout the 1950s it was often referred to in official reports as the "African Housing
Problem." See, for example, George Tyson, Chairman of the Nairobi City Council, *The
African Housing Problem*, February 1953. CO822/588, TNA.

overview of postwar state-sponsored housing policy in the British African colonies, this dissertation highlights specific architectural and spatial strategies developed and deployed by architects and planners to prevent further labor strikes and anticolonial uprisings, and create a "stable" black working class instead. Focusing on the period between the end of World War II and the Gold Coast's independence in 1957, I examine the ways in which architects and planners sought to enhance social stability during a period frequently described by colonial officials as "instable," but which for many others was a struggle for equality and freedom. I trace the involvement of several architects and planners—often in collaboration with labor experts, sociologists, anthropologists, and social welfare workers—in several architectural and urban design projects that sought to modernize, elevate, and transform its future residents. Instead of understanding these estates as investments into the social welfare of colonial subjects, I argue that these design projects were part of a larger effort to maintain control over British Africa.

The role of architecture and planning in the process of stabilization merits attention because it illustrates how design not only mirrored the transition of power during the last decades of imperial rule but also purported to play an active role in averting "disturbances." Architectural historians, including Ola Uduku, Mark Crinson, Iain Jackson, and Tim Livsey, have done much work to examine architectural construction and design during the end of the British empire. They have charted the emergence of "tropical modernism," often exemplified in large-scale institutional buildings that emerged across decolonizing British Africa during the 1950s and '60s.[10] They, among others, have

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[10] Ola Uduku, "Modernist Architecture and "the Tropical" in West Africa: The Tropical Architecture Movement in West Africa, 1948-1970," *Habitat International* 30 (2006): 396-411; Mark Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (Aldershot: Ashgate,

demonstrated how British architects reimagined architectural design in the colonies as a distinct form of expertise, blending knowledge about architectural construction with climatological data, as a way to safeguard the architect's position during the transition from colonial rule to independence. Yet such histories tend to obscure the ways in which political "instability"—resulting from burgeoning demands for higher wages, increased political representation, or self-government in the two decades leading up to independence—led to the transformation of urban environments in British Africa. In discussions of late-colonial architecture and urbanism, anticolonial protests, mass demonstrations, or labor strikes are often mentioned in passing, rather than as a central social force to which colonial architects and planners responded and which decisively shaped architectural and urban form.[11] In contrast, this project demonstrates that state-sponsored housing construction during the last two decades of colonial rule was, in part, a reaction to anticolonial strikes and labor protests.

Thus far, in the colonial context, the relation between architecture and race—defined here as "a concept of human difference that established hierarchies of power and

2003), Mark Crinson, "Imperial Modernism," in *Architecture and Urbanism in the British Empire*, ed. G.A. Bremner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 198-238; Tim Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017); Iain Jackson, "Tropical Architecture and the West Indies: From Military Advances and Tropical Medicine, to Robert Gardner-Medwin and the Networks of Tropical Modernism," *The Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 4 (2017): 710-38. On tropical architecture, also see: Jiat-Hwee Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Colonial Networks, Nature, and Technoscience* (London: Routledge, 2016); Hannah le Roux, "The Networks of Tropical Architecture," *The Journal of Architecture* 8, no. 3 (2003): 337-54.

[11] Notable exceptions here are, among others, Samia Henni, *Architecture of Counterrevolution: The French Army in Northern Algeria* (Zurich: gta Verlag, 2017). Ginger Nolan, "Cash-Crop Design: Architectures of Land, Knowledge, and Alienation in Twentieth-Century Kenya," *Architectural Theory Review* 21, no. 3 (2016): 280-301.

domination between Europe and Europe's 'others'"—has generally been understood as an

issue at the urban scale. Various studies have shown how colonial architects and planners

since the beginning of the twentieth century designed segregated cities, often camouflaging

racist beliefs as concerns about hygiene and health.[12] Yet assuming responsibility for

housing colonial subjects during the postwar period also allowed colonial officials,

architects, and planners not only to control *where* people lived, but also *how* people lived.

This project therefore points to a crucial but less evident aspect of the relationship between

architecture and race at the scale of the building and the neighborhood; the layout and

design of these neighborhoods and dwellings exemplify what architects, planners, and

colonial officials considered appropriate living environments for black working-class

families living in Nairobi, Kampala, or Kumasi during the 1940s and '50s.

This dissertation looks at four distinct case studies in Kenya, Uganda, and the

Gold Coast, as well as in South Africa, a member of the British Commonwealth. Each case

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[12] Charles L. Davis, Irene Cheng and Mabel Wilson "Introduction," in Charles L. Davis, Irene Cheng and Mabel Wilson, eds. *Race and Modern Architecture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 4. See, among others, Ambe Njoh, "Colonial Philosophies, Urban Space, and Racial Segregation in British and French Colonial Africa," *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 4 (2008): 579–99. Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); Robert Home, *Of Planning and Planting: The Making of British Colonial Cities*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013); Nezar AlSayyad, *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992); Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Anthony King, *Urbanism, Colonialism and the World Economy: Cultural and Spatial Foundations of the World Urban System* (London: Routledge, 1990); Garth Myers, *Verandahs of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003); Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire des Villes d'Afrique Noire: des Origines à la Colonisation* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993).

study highlights a specific architectural or spatial strategy to promote the stabilization of the government clerks, railroad employees, and factory workers. These four chapters are organized based on scale; they move from city planning to neighborhood design, and from the interior and its furniture to building materials. Their protagonists are several architects and planners—most of whom were present at the conference in Pretoria in 1952—employed by local government councils, public works departments, or state-sponsored research institutes. Together, these chapters show that stabilization policy shaped state-sponsored architectural and urban design in British Africa across different scales. The policy determined new building codes and informed plans for traffic circulation, just as it influenced furniture design, the construction of community centers, and the use of particular building materials. At the same time, the case studies highlight that stabilization manifested itself differently in vastly diverse social, political, and economic contexts—territories tied to Britain through varying mechanisms of control. These chapters also point to the different personal trajectories and political motivations of the architects and planners involved; while some were staunch defenders of colonialism, others became involved in the struggle for racial equality.

Housing and the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts

During the 1940s, state-sponsored housing construction became a central focus of British colonial policy, as part of a broader push for increased investment into colonial development and welfare in British Africa. In 1940, Parliament passed the first Colonial Development and Welfare (CDW) Act, allotting £5 million pounds annually to

development and welfare projects, and £500,000 every year for research schemes.[13] The

money financed "schemes for any purpose likely to promote the development of the

resources of any Colony or the welfare of its people."[14] Five years later, Parliament

approved the second CDW Act, which came into effect in April 1946. By then, 595

development and welfare projects, including housing construction, and 105 research

schemes in the British colonies had already been set in motion, with a total cost of

£28,841,000.[15] The second CDW Act continued along similar lines, making even more

money available for development; £120 million over the course of ten years, with a limit of

£17.5 million per annum.[16] In 1951, an additional £28 million was allocated, exclusively

for the purposes of housing construction and slum clearance. Although the CDW Act of

1940 predated the election of the Labour Party in 1945, it was Clement Attlee's Labour

government that became closely associated with colonial development policies. Indeed, for

the socialist Labour Party, with its long-standing critique of British imperialism, colonial

development offered, as we will see, a political strategy to redefine its engagement with

Britain's empire.

These investments in colonial development and welfare were not limited to the

African colonies but were also implemented in other parts of the empire, including Jamaica,

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[13] Charlotte Lydia Riley, "'The winds of change are blowing economically': the Labour Party and British overseas development, 1940s-1960s," in *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?,* ed. Andrew Smith and Chris Jeppesen (London: University College London Press, 2017), 47.

[14] Malcom MacDonald, Secretary of State for the Colonies, cited by Riley, "The Labour Party and British overseas development, 1940s-1960s," 47.

[15] Riley, "The Labour Party and British overseas development," 47.

[16] Ibid., 48.

Barbados, British Guyana, and Malaya (present-day Malaysia).[17] Still, most of these efforts

were focused on Britain's African colonies—a territory that consisted of Nigeria, the Gold

Coast (present-day Ghana), Gambia, Sierra Leone, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (Sudan),

Somaliland (Somalia), Tanganyika (Tanzania), Kenya, Uganda, Nyasaland (Malawi),

Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Bechuanaland (Botswana),

Basutoland (Lesotho), Swaziland (Kingdom of eSwatini), Mauritius, Zanzibar, and the

Seychelles. **(Figure 0.2)** Together, these colonies made up the overwhelming majority of

Britain's empire during the postwar period. By then, the Colonial Office considered British

Africa the "core of our colonial possessions."[18]

During the 1940s, government officials came to consider the active development

of colonial resources—in British Africa, efforts ranged from a large-scale irrigation scheme

in Swaziland to produce rice and sugar, to a cattle ranching project in Bechuanaland, the

establishment of fish farms in Kenya, and poultry production in the Gambia—as the

solution for Britain's postwar economic deficit.[19] According to Britain's Foreign Secretary

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[17] In terms of housing, see for example: Great Britain, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, "Housing Accomplishments in the British West Indies," *Ekistics* 7, no. 42 (1959): 309-13; Richard Harris, "Making Leeway in the Leewards, 1929-51: The Negotiation of Colonial Development," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33, no. 3 (2005): 393-418; Richard Harris, "From Miser to Spendthrift: Public Housing and the Vulnerability of Colonialism in Barbados, 1935 to 1965," *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 3 (2007): 443-66.

[18] Cited in Joanna Lewis, "The Ruling Compassions of the Late Colonial State: Welfare versus Force, Kenya, 1945-1952," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2, no. 2 (2001): doi:10.1353/cch.2001.0035.

[19] On agrarian colonial development initiatives, see: Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), 208-53. Also see: Rohland Schuknecht, *British Colonial Development Policy after the Second World War: The Case of Sukamaland, Tanganyika* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010). On the role of science in colonial development policy, see: Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the*

of State, Ernest Bevin, the mobilization of colonial resources was vital for Britain's

economic postwar recovery and political recuperation. To provide for the basic subsistence

of its population, Bevin argued, Britain depended on the cheap import of raw materials

from the colonies, as well as the export of manufactured goods to the colonies.[20] Likewise,

Creech Jones considered colonial development to play a crucial role in the "battle for

stability and prosperity in Britain."[21] Or, as the writer George Orwell put it, without the

empire, England would be reduced "to a cold and unimportant little island where we should

all have to work very hard and live mainly on herrings and potatoes."[22] Despite the

apparent failure of many of these postwar development projects—most notably the East

African Groundnut Scheme, a project to harvest peanuts in Tanganyika—imports from the

British colonies grew by about £160 million between 1945 and 1951.[23]

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Britain ruled its overseas

territories based on the idea that the colonies were financially self-sufficient.[24] The notion

of the self-supporting empire was encapsulated in the decentralized style of colonial

Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870-1950 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Christophe Bonneuil, "Development as Experiment: Science and State Building in Late Colonial and Postcolonial Africa, 1930-1970," *Osiris* 15, no. 1 (2000): 258-81.

[20] Charlotte Lydia Riley, "Monstrous predatory vampires and beneficiary fairy-godmothers: British post-war colonial development in Africa" (PhD diss., University of London, 2013), 78-80.

[21] Arthur Creech Jones cited in Riley, "British post-war colonial development in Africa," 79.

[22] George Orwell cited in Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe after Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 41.

[23] Jim Tomlinson, "The Empire/Commonwealth in British Economic Thinking and Policy," in *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 223.

[24] Riley, "The Labour Party and British overseas development," 46.

management, better-known as "indirect rule." Popularized through Lord Lugard's work on British imperialism, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (1922), indirect rule preserved traditional ("tribal") political institutions and incorporated them within the colonial administration to govern large populations through a small minority.[25] This understanding of imperial rule, historian Charlotte Lydia Riley has written, was "based on 'conquest, exploitation and subjugation', impulses that might have been justified through Enlightenment claims to universal principles but that functioned only to deny these principles to the colonial subjects against whom they were employed."[26]

Yet by the 1940s, the ideology of indirect rule that underpinned Britain's attitude towards Africa during the first half the twentieth century was exchanged for an emphasis on "development." Investing in the colonies would yield higher profits and, at the same time, as many Labour Party politicians claimed, would help develop the colonies themselves. The historians Anthony Low and John Lonsdale have coined the distinctive phrase "second colonial occupation" to describe the period after World War II.[27] Likewise, the historian Robert Pearce has described this moment as a "turning point" in colonial policy.[28] Instead of the paternalizing notion of "trusteeship," colonial administrators underlined that

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[25] Michael Collins, "Nation, state and agency: evolving historiographies of African decolonization," in *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?,* ed. Andrew Smith and Chris Jeppesen (London: University College London Press, 2017), 20.

[26] Riley, "The Labour Party and British overseas development," 46.

[27] Anthony Low and John Lonsdale, *"*East Africa: Towards a New Order 1945-1963," in *Eclipse of Empire*, ed. Anthony Low (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1991), 164-214.

[28] Robert Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1948* (London: Cass. Rolland, Louis and Pierre Lampué, 1982).

Britain's relationship to its overseas territories should be considered as a "partnership" that benefited both parties.[29] "This focus on development rather than the maintenance of colonial rule," Riley has argued, "enabled the Labour Party to engage with the politics of colonialism while simultaneously critiquing others – including, importantly, the Conservative Party as a whole – for their supposedly exploitative and imperialist attitudes."[30] Many members of the Labour Party presented colonial development as a catalyst for economic, but also social and political change in the colonies.[31] According to Arthur Creech-Jones, the Colonial Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Rita Hinden, founders of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, a Labour Party organization focused on colonial issues, colonial development would ultimately culminate in self-government.[32] Yet despite such lofty promises and self-serving justifications for Britain's continuing presence

[29] Sarah Stockwell, "Imperial Liberalism and Institution Building at the End of Empire in Africa," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, no. 5 (2018): 1012.

[30] Riley, "The Labour Party and British overseas development," 51. On the Labour Party and development, also see: Billy Frank, Craig Horner and David Stewart, eds. *The British Labour Movement and Imperialism* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010); Paul Kelemen, "Modernising Colonialism: The British Labour movement and Africa," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34, no. 2 (2006): 223-44.

[31] On the Fabian influence on colonial rule, see, among others, Joseph Snyder, "The Fabianisation of the British Empire: Colonial Summer Conferences and Community Development in Kenya, 1948-1956," *Britain & the World* 13, no. 1 (2020): 69-89; Daniel Smith, *The Influence of the Fabian Colonial Bureau on the Independence Movement in Tanganyika* (Athens, OH: Ohio University, 1985).

[32] Riley, "The Labour Party and British overseas development," 51. Hinden was author of numerous articles and publications on colonial policy and Africa. See, for example, Rita Hinden, *Plan for Africa. A report prepared for the Colonial Bureau of the Fabian Society* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1941).

overseas, the main beneficiary of colonial development policies was Britain's population at home.[33]

How effective the Colonial Office was at promoting colonial development projects as investments into colonial welfare, is evident from a description in the *New York Times* in 1947. The article portrayed the East African Groundnut Scheme, one of Britain's most infamous postwar development projects, as the "extension of socialism to the colonies."[34] The Colonial Office presented the scheme as a project that created employment opportunities and led to the construction of housing, schools, healthcare facilities, and infrastructure. Investment in colonial development was thus framed as a means to improve local living standards and to elevate and modernize colonial subjects. During a turbulent time marked by anticolonial uprisings and labor strikes, as well as increasing international criticism on imperialism, Britain publicized its interventionist approach as a form of progress.[35]

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[33] Riley, "British post-war colonial development in Africa," 79.

[34] "Nut Farming," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1947, cited in Stefan Esselborn, "Environment, Memory and the Groundnut Scheme: Britain's Largest Colonial Agricultural Development Project and its Global Legacy," *Global Environment* 11 (2013): 65.

[35] See: Jessica Lynne Pearson, "Defending Empire at the United Nations: The Politics of International Colonial Oversight in the Era of Decolonisation," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 45, no. 3 (2017): 525-49; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). On the emerging discourse on self-determination, see: Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019). Also see: Anthony Dirk Moses, Marco Duranti, and Roland Burke, eds. *Decolonization, Self-Determination, and the Rise of Global Human Rights Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

An emphasis on development and welfare, the historian Joseph Morgan Hodge

has written, also helped to reframe political unrest as "a question of economic and social

planning."[36] Anticolonial protests and labor uprisings were cast as "technical problems"

that were not caused by colonial oppression and racial discrimination but by poverty and

deplorable living circumstances.[37] Similarly, the anthropologist James Fergusson has

characterized development as an "anti-politics machine," "depoliticizing everything it

touches, everywhere whisking political realities out of sight, all the while performing,

almost unnoticed, its own pre-eminently political operation of expanding bureaucratic state

power."[38]

Moreover, colonial officials and politicians presented colonial development as a

method to help colonial subjects "prepare" for independence. In 1943, Oliver Stanley, the

Colonial Secretary of State for the Colonies, professed that Britain's goal was to assist the

colonies "along the road to self-government within the framework of the British Empire."[39]

Through development, he and others claimed, colonies would gradually reach a "stage of

ripeness" after which they would be ready for independence.[40] But colonial officials also

emphasized that, in the interim, colonial subjects were not prepared for self-government.

As historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has remarked, they were considered "*not yet* civilized

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[36] Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert*, 264.

[37] Ibid., 263, cited in Riley, "The Labour Party and British overseas development," 46.

[38] James Fergusson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*: *Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), xiv-xv.

[39] Cited by Stockwell, "Imperial Liberalism," 1013.

[40] Kofi Abrefa Busia, "Self-Government," *West African Affairs* 9 (1951), 13-4.

enough to rule themselves."[41] Colonial officials also remained ambivalent about exactly

how long the "road to self-government" might be. By the mid-1940s, either self-

government or an alternative means of governance that tied the colonies to Britain in a

looser way, was still a distant point on the horizon. According to Kwame Nkrumah, the

first President of independent Ghana, the promise of self-government through development

was "erroneous and misconceived." Colonial powers, Nkrumah wrote, could not "afford to

expropriate themselves."[42] Expressions like "partnership" were "means to cover the eyes of

colonial peoples with the veil of imperialist chicanery."[43]

       State-sponsored housing was both a byproduct of colonial development and

welfare policies—a way to make visible Britain's investment into colonial welfare—as well

as a means to enable such policies. Like other large civic infrastructure—schools,

universities, hospitals, maternity wards, and water and sanitation schemes—housing

schemes demonstrated Britain's supposed dedication its overseas territories. Building

housing, as politician John Maclay wrote in 1954, not long before his appointment as

Minister of State for the Colonies, was one of "the most practical ways of showing that the

partnership policy means something."[44] Yet, as colonial officials, architects, planners,

social welfare workers, and labor experts discussed at length, housing projects also

facilitated the formation of a more efficient, stable, and compliant labor force, "necessary

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[41] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 8.

[42] Kwame Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle Against World Imperialism* (Accra: Guinea Press, 1957), 7.

[43] Ibid.

[44] John Maclay, MP to G. Baxter, Commonwealth Relations Office, ca. 1954. T220/769, TNA.

for the expansion of industry."[45] Rooted in metropolitan ideas about the relation between good housing and labor productivity, including William Beveridge's *Full Employment in a Free Society* (1944), housing came to be considered as one of the key factors that would make colonial development a financial success. According to colonial officials and others involved in housing, decent dwellings, built for families, contributed to bodily health and therefore to labor efficiency.[46] More generally, housing, in combination with other social and educational facilities, and in some cases, strict pass laws and vagrancy acts, would lead to "modern, regular, timebound, life," colonial officials, architects, and planners argued.[47]

As early as 1944, the Colonial Office appointed a Colonial Housing Research Group, a group consisting of colonial officials, labor experts, healthcare specialists, engineers, anthropologists, and architects, to gather information about housing construction in Britain's overseas territories.[48] To centralize housing efforts, they proposed opening up local research centers focused on building materials and construction techniques, for example in West Africa—a project that took years to materialize.[49] In 1948, partly to curb

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[45] "A Bold step in the Right Direction," *African Weekly*, February 23, 1955. T220/769, TNA.

[46] For an example, see: G.A. Tyson, *The African Housing Problem,* February 1953. CO822/588, TNA.

[47] Thornton-White, Silberman, and Anderson, *Nairobi, 8.*

[48] Colonial Housing Research Group, "Minutes of 3rd Meeting, Held in Dover House Conference Room, on Friday 27th October, 1944." CO927/6, TNA. The architect was Jane Drew, who had recently been appointed as Assistant Town Planner in West Africa. See: Mrs. Maxwell Fry, "Some Notes for Discussion at the Colonial Housing Research Group Meeting on 27th October of the Proposed Building Research Station for the West African Colonies." CO927/ 6, TNA.

[49] See, for example: Colonial Research Committee, "Housing Research in West Africa, Memorandum by Colonial Office." CO927/6, TNA. "Proposal to Establish a Building Research Centre in West Africa." CO927/6, TNA.

the escalating costs of overseas housing construction, the Colonial Office hired a Colonial

Liaison Officer, George Atkinson, to oversee housing design in Britain's empire.[50]

Atkinson, an architect who frequently travelled between different parts of the empire, also

initiated *Colonial Building Notes*, a periodical with technical information about colonial

housing and building. Several years later, the Colonial Office created a special Colonial

Housing and Town Planning Advisory Panel.[51] While housing construction was left to

colonies themselves, these official bodies played an important role in gathering and

disseminating ideas about housing design, stabilization, and labor efficiency.

       Within the field of architectural and urban history, scholars have explored

specific aspects of state-sponsored housing construction in the British African colonies. The

historian Robert Home, for example, has written about the transition from barracks to

family housing in Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia), in the "Copperbelt," the

location of large-scale mining operations, whereas the geographers Richard Harris and

Alison Hay have explored housing policy in 1940s and '50s Kenya.[52] More recently,

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[50] Arthur Creech-Jones, Circular, 28045/66/48, "Building Research," June 9, 1948. CO927/35/6, TNA.

[51] Colonies: Housing and Town Planning Advisory Panel," *The Architect's Journal* (August 1953), 196. CO359/309, TNA. Also see: Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture*, 171-82.

[52] Robert Home, "From Barrack Compounds to the Single-Family House: Planning Worker Housing in Colonial Natal and Northern Rhodesia," *Planning Perspectives* 15, no. 4 (2000): 327-347; Richard Harris and Alison Hay, "New Plans for Housing in Urban Kenya, 1939-1963," *Planning Perspectives* 22, no. 2 (2007): 195-223; Richard Harris, "From Trusteeship to Development: How Class and Gender Complicated Kenya's Housing Policy, 1939-1963," *Journal of Historical Geography* 34, (2008): 311-37; Richard Harris and Alison Hay, "'Shauri ya Sera Kali': The Colonial Regime of Urban Housing in Kenya to 1939," *Urban History* 34, no. 3 (2007): 504-530. Also see: Richard Harris and Garth Myers, "Hybrid Housing: Improvement and Control in Late Colonial Zanzibar," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 66, no. 4 (2007): 476-93.

Viviana d'Auria has examined housing design in the Gold Coast in the period the country

transitioned from colonial rule to independence.[53] Looking beyond the British African

colonies, Bruno de Meulder and John Lagae have studied state-sponsored housing

construction in the Belgian Congo during the 1950s, led by the *Office des Cités*

Africaines.[54] Building on this growing body of research, this dissertation demonstrates that

ideas about labor stabilization shaped housing projects throughout the British African

colonies during the last two decades of colonial rule and across different architectural and

urban scales. At the same time, however, this project demonstrates that stabilization was

not a coherent, consistent policy and took on different forms in response to widely varying

social, economic, and political contexts.

Welfare at Home and Abroad

The building programs that changed British colonial cities such as Nairobi, Kampala, and

Accra, were entangled with the ambitious proposals that shaped Britain's postwar built

environment. The construction of these state-sponsored housing estates in British Africa

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[53] Viviana d'Auria, "In the Laboratory and in the Field: Hybrid Housing Design for the African City in Late-Colonial and Decolonising Ghana (1945-1957)," *The Journal of Architecture* 19, no. 3 (2014): 329-56.

[54] Bruno de Meulder, *Kuvuanda Mbote: Een eeuw architectuur en stedenbouw in Kongo* [Kuvuanda Mbote: A century of architecture and planning in the Congo] (Antwerpen: Hautekiet/deSingel, 2000), 185-251; Sofie Boonen and Johan Lagae, "Ruashi, a Pessac in Congo? On the Design, Inhabitation, and Transformation of a 1950s Neighborhood in Lumumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo," in *The Politics of Housing in (Post)Colonial Africa*, eds. Martina Barker-Ciganikova, Kirsten Rüther, Daniela Waldburger, Carl Bodenstein (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2019): https://opr.degruyter.com/the-politics-of-housing-in-colonial-and-postcolonial-africa/sofie-boonen-and-johan-lagae-ruashi-a-pessac-in-congo-on-the-design-inhabitation-and-transformation-of-a-1950s-neighborhood-in-lubumbashi-democratic-republic-of-the-congo/

coincided with the preparation of urban plans for Greater London, Plymouth, and other cities heavily damaged during the war, which left nearly 450,000 housing units destroyed, the majority of which were in London.[55] Already during the war, exhibitions such as *Rebuilding Britain* (1942) had stirred intense debate about the reconstruction as well as the transformation and modernization of British cities. In 1945, the widespread damage provided a mandate to the newly elected Labour Party, which promised voters a "New Britain."[56] While they pledged to take control of the economy, to offer social insurance, and to provide national healthcare—policy proposals put forward by the Beveridge Report (1942)—their main priority during this period was housing construction.[57] Throughout the late 1940s and '50s, the Attlee government oversaw a comprehensive housing program that transformed Britain. It led to the construction of numerous new council estates, mainly two-story semi-detached houses, and several entirely new towns on London's outer ring. During the years Labour was in power, some 804,921 council houses were built.[58]

Britain's postwar reconstruction and the creation of the British welfare state has been covered extensively by architectural and urban historians, including Nicholas Bullock

[55] John Boughton, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (New York: Verso Books, 2018), 90.

[56] On Labour's successful campaign and the role of publicity and propaganda, see: Laura Beers, "Labour's Britain, Fight for it Now!," *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009): 667-95.

[57] On the Beveridge Report, widely considered as the foundational document of Britain's postwar welfare state, see among others, George R. Boyer, *The Winding Road to the Welfare State: Economic Insecurity and Social Welfare Policy in Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), 260-285. Also see: Roger E. Backhouse and Tamotsu Nishizawa, eds. *No Wealth but Life: Welfare Economics and the Welfare State in Britain, 1880-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[58] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 105.

and Mark Swenarton.[59] Bullock and others have written about the Attlee government's

long-term housing program as well as the short-term emergency scheme of thousands of

prefabricated houses. They have explored reconstruction plans such as Patrick

Abercrombie's and John Forshaw's visionary, bold *County of London Plan*. They have also

probed the 1946 New Towns Act, which aimed to resettle inhabitants from Britain's

overcrowded and damaged cities in new socially-mixed towns that catered to both the

working- and middle-classes.[60] They have also examined the design of council housing like

Lansbury Estate in the London neighborhood of Poplar, which featured prominently in the

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[59] The literature on Britain's reconstruction is vast. See among others, Tom Avermaete, Mark Swenarton, Dirk van den Heuvel, eds. *Architecture and the Welfare State* (London: Routledge, 2015); Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-war World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2002); Mark Clapson and Peter J. Larkham, eds. *The Blitz and its Legacy: Wartime Destruction to Post-War Reconstruction* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). Also see: Catherine Finn, *Rebuilding Britain's Blitzed Cities: Hopeful Dreams, Stark Realities* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2018); Elizabeth Darling, *Re-forming Britain: Narratives of Modernity Before Reconstruction* (London: Routledge, 2007); John Gold, *The Practice of Modernism: Modern Architects and Urban Transformation, 1954-1972* (London: Routledge, 2007); John Pendlebury, Erdem Erten, and Peter J. Larkham, eds. *Alternative Visions of Post-War Reconstruction: Creating the Modern Townscape* (London: Routledge 2015); Peter J. Larkham and Keith D. Lilley, "Plans, Planners and City Images: Place Promotion, and Civic Boosterism in British Reconstruction Planning," *Urban History* 30, no. 2 (2003): 183-205. For an account of urban renewal in British cities in the 1960s, see: Otto Saumarez-Smith, *Boom Cities: Architect-Planners and the Politics of Radical Urban Renewal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Nicholas Bullock, "Building the Socialist Dream or Housing the Socialist State? Design versus the Production of Housing in the 1960s," in *Neo-avant-garde and Postmodernism: Postwar Architecture in Britain and Beyond*, eds. Mark Crinson and Claire Zimmerman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 321-42.

[60] Anthony Alexander, *Britain's New Towns: Garden Cities to Sustainable Communities* (London: Routledge, 2009); Mark Clapson, *Invincible Green Suburbs, Brave New Towns: Social Change and Urban Dispersal in Postwar England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Rosemary Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia: An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). On the role of private developers in British new town planning, see: Janina Gosseye, "'Uneasy bedfellows' conceiving urban megastructures: precarious public-private partnerships in post-war British New Towns," *Planning Perspectives* 34, no. 6 (2019): 937-57.

Festival of Britain in 1951, where its intricate plan of two-story yellow brick houses and mid-rise flats was cast an exemplary model of Britain's postwar housing efforts.[61] Such scholarship has showed that the "planning of the built environment—from new towns, to social housing, to schools, and universities, hospitals, and health centres, to leisure and sports complexes, to arts centres—was one of the key areas in which the welfare state sought to achieve its ambitions of economic redistribution and social welfare."[62] In Britain, architects and planners contributed to the creation of housing estates and neighborhoods which, at least in theory, were built for a relatively wide-range of inhabitants and contained a number of social- and educational facilities, such as nurseries and community buildings, with the aspiration of crafting a more equal, and less class-based society.

Yet few architectural and urban historians have addressed the welfare state's *imperial* dimensions and the ways in which reconstruction planning and the development of the British welfare state coincided with a colonial development and welfare policy focused on the construction of housing, health centers, schools, sport facilities, and community centers. The emergence of the welfare state in Britain, and the built environment that gave shape to this new socio-political constellation, is widely considered to be a national affair. The concurrent implementation of social welfare policies in Britain's empire, on the other hand, is generally understood as a history that largely took place "overseas." One reason for this disjunction between national and imperial histories of the welfare state is that the tenets

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[61] Designed by Frederick Gibberd, the neighborhood was inhabited by many dockworkers who worked in the nearby East India Docks. See, for example, Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and Its People* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 158-78.

[62] Tom Avermaete, Mark Swenarton, and Dirk van den Heuvel, "Introduction," in *Architecture and the Welfare State*, eds. Tom Avermaete, Mark Swenarton, and Dirk van den Heuvel (London: Routledge, 2015), 1.

of the British welfare state, revolving around an increasingly economically and socially

equal society, are difficult to square with a violent political system entrenched in social and

racial inequality. Recently, however, historians have begun to examine how the social

welfare schemes that surfaced in the years following World War II intersected with the

Labour Party's colonial development policies. Joanna Lewis, for example, has investigated

the social welfare policies implemented in the British settler colony Kenya during a period

of colonial reform and social unrest.[63] As Lewis showed, many of these welfare policies

contained were modeled, or inspired, by social welfare schemes instigated in Britain.[64] The

work of Lewis and others underlines the necessity of thinking of metropole and colony

together, bounded together by a "welfare network" that stretched beyond Britain's national

borders.[65]

Similarly, some of the same architectural and urban concepts that gave rise to the

postwar built environment in the metropole also shaped the design of neighborhoods and

housing estates in Britain's African colonies. The architects and planners involved in these

colonial schemes were familiar with subjects that dominated postwar British architectural

and urban planning, and with European developments in architecture and planning, more

generally. Trained at the Architectural Association (AA) in London or other British

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[63] Joanna Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya 1935-1952* (Oxford: James Curry, 2000); James Midgley, David Piachaud, eds. *Colonialism and Welfare: Social Policy and the British Imperial Legacy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011).

[64] Lewis, "The Ruling Compassions of the Late Colonial State," doi:10.1353/cch.2001.0035.

[65] The term "welfare network" is from Amelia Lyons, who has shown, looking at the French context, how a centrally organized "welfare network" played an important role in portraying Algeria as an indispensable part of France during the French-Algerian War. See: Amelia Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State during Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

schools, many studied and referenced Patrick Abercrombie's reconstruction plans for

London and his ideas about building "community" through neighborhood units. They were

familiar with metropolitan debates about urban congestion, and the proposals of the

Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS), the British delegation of the Congres

d'Internationeaux d'Architecture (CIAM), to improve urban circulation during the 1940s.

Some also kept up with the rapid developments in the construction industry, including the

mass-production of thousands of small, simple prefabricated houses for families left

homeless after the Blitz, intended for temporary use. In addition to *Colonial Building Notes*

and other publications on construction in Britain's empire, they read and published in

British magazines like the *Architectural Review* and *The Builder*.

Conversely, ideas that originated Britain's colonies—specifically, as we will see,

the idea of "racial integration" through architecture and spatial panning—found their way

back to an increasingly multiethnic Britain.[66] Through the 1948 Citizenship Act people of

the British colonies obtained the same nationality rights as residents of the United

Kingdom; suddenly, they were all "citizens of the United Kingdom and the Colonies."[67]

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[66] See, among others, Marc Matera: *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

[67] Frederick Cooper, "Decolonization and citizenship: Africa between empires and a world of nations," in *Beyond Empire and Nation: The Decolonization of African and Asian Societies, 1930s-1970s*, eds. Els Bogaerts and Remco Raben (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2012), 39-68; Randall Hansen*, Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35-61. Also see: Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Katleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Immigration, 'Race' and 'Race Relations' in Post-war Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

Such rights enabled inhabitants from the British colonies to relocate to the British Isles, resulting in the so-called "Windrush" generation—workers from the West Indies who came to Britain during the late 1940s and '50s in response to labor shortages.

Exactly how entwined state-sponsored construction in postwar Britain and the overseas colonies were, becomes clear when we take a look at the architecture and planning experts that made up the Colonial Housing and Town Planning Advisory Panel, a special committee set up by the Colonial Office in 1953. They included Lionel Brett, a member of the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS) and planner of Hatfield, one of Britain's new towns, William Holford, professor of town planning at University College London and author of, among others, a plan for area around St. Paul's after 1945, and Desmond Heap, City Solicitor of the Corporation of the City of London and expert in town planning legislation.[68]

Yet the architecture of Britain's postwar welfare state and the housing estates built in Britain's African colonies were also connected in a different way. The wealth generated through colonial development and the exploitation of colonial labor would help finance the creation of the "New Britain." The housing estates in Nairobi, Kampala, Accra, and elsewhere exemplify a distorted vision of social welfare. They were modeled after metropolitan ideas but primarily revolved around labor efficiency and stabilization. While architects, planners, and colonial officials presented these projects as tropical versions of council housing in London or Liverpool, the reality was different. Small, sparsely furnished

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[68] "Colonies: Housing and Town Planning Advisory Panel," *The Architect's Journal* (August 1953), 196. CO359/309, TNA. On Brett, see: Smith, *Boom Cities*, 124-58. On Holford, who was born in South Africa, see: Gordon Cherry and Leith Penny, *Holford: A Study in Architecture, Planning and Civic Design* (London and New York: Mansell, 1986).

and lacking electricity or running water, these late-colonial state-sponsored housing projects make visible how the postwar welfare state was premised on an ideology of white supremacy.

Housing, Protest, and the Colonial Archive

This project builds upon research in the archives and photographic collections of the British Colonial Office held in the British National Archives, and records preserved in state archives and libraries in former colonies such as Ghana. It also relies upon information found in several personal archives of architects, planners, sociologists, and anthropologists in the United Kingdom, Uganda, and South Africa. Such archives, the architectural historian Itohan Osayimwese reminds us, are "sites of knowledge production where the colonial state collected, included and excluded, ordered and reordered information in the belief that comprehensive knowledge would lead to total control of colonized societies."[69] They are organized, as the anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued, to emphasize the actions of white, Western, male actors, while eliding black agency.[70] Consequently, they often downplay strikes, protests, and uprisings (and Britain's frequently violent responses) while underlining colonial agency in the form of tangible changes, such as state-sponsored housing estates.

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[69] Itohan Osayimwese, *Colonialism and Modern Architecture in Germany* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), 14-5.

[70] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). Also see: Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

An emphasis on stabilization, then, requires a reading *against* the archive. This means, for example, paying close attention to the specific rhetorical expressions and formulations within colonial reports and correspondences. Terms such as "stabilization," as well as the "multiracial city," were part of a self-correcting tendency among colonial officials, architects and planners. They are an example of what the philosopher Roland Barthes has described in his essay "African Grammar" (1957) as "cosmetic" language. In his analysis of the rhetoric of French colonial reports and other types of official communication, Barthes pointed out that, here, language bore little connection to reality. The bureaucratic, often technical terminology highlighted colonialism's civilizing mission and, as Barthes wrote, helped to provide "a cynical reality the guarantee of a noble morality."[71] While, for example, British colonial architects, planners, and officials promoted the idea of a multiracial city as being informed by principles of inclusion, it was defined by practices that perpetuated exclusion.

The term "decolonization"—a word used with increasing frequency by British administrators during the late 1940s and '50s—is another example of cosmetic language. Decolonization, as historian Stuart Ward has noted, was an expression which originated in Europe. That is, decolonization "was made in Europe, as part of a major realignment of metropolitan assumptions and expectations with an ever-encroaching post-imperial world."[72] It was an invention of British colonial officials and intellectuals to give a chaotic

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[71] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 153. I thank Samia Henni for pointing to this text in her lecture at the Architectural Association in London, "Anticolonial Commitments," on November 28, 2019.

[72] Stuart Ward, "The European Provenance of Decolonization," *Past & Present*, vol. 230, no. 1 (February 2016): 231.

and disorderly process an orderly and structured appearance. Kwame Nkrumah has described decolonization as "a word much and unctuously used by imperialist spokesman to describe the transfer of political control."[73] It is not surprising that canonical books on the struggle for independence, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, or Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955), Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and Colonized* (1957), George Padmore's *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* (1956), and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The World and Africa* (1947) make no mention of the word decolonization.[74]

The "Commonwealth"—a notion that occurred with increasing frequency in colonial reports, letters, and memos—was another construction invented to ensure control over a rapidly disintegrating empire. Instead of a violent struggle, decolonization was framed as the gradual transition from empire to Commonwealth. During the 1940s and '50s, the Commonwealth was imagined and described by politicians as a "multiracial community" that tied Britain to its Dominions, such as Canada and Australia, but also to its

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[73] Nkrumah cited in Ward, "The European Provenance of Decolonization," 253.

[74] Ward, "The European Provenance of Decolonization," 255.

former colonies.[75] The idea of the Commonwealth, historian Priyamvada Gopal has remarked, preserved the "cherished mythology of an Empire that ruled in order to free."[76]

At the same time, reading against the colonial archive also means close observation and reading between the lines, as well as broadening the scope of research by including archival materials not previously considered relevant to architectural history. Technical descriptions about building materials in the colonies, for example, can also be mined as statements about colonial subjects' living standards. Meanwhile, documentation generally regarded as outside of the scope of architectural history—in this case, labor surveys and other material related to labor strikes and labor productivity—can offer valuable information about housing policy and housing design. Finally, reading against the archive also requires paying attention to the incongruities and discrepancies between architectural plans, often bold and comprehensive, and the reality. While policy briefs about housing in British Africa sent out by the Colonial Secretary of State gave the

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[75] The phrase "multiracial community" was famously used by Hugh Gaitskill, leader of the Labour Party during the 1950s, in his speech at a Labour Party Conference in 1962. Quoted by David Russell, "'The Jolly Old Empire': Labour, the Commonwealth and Europe, 1945-1951," in *Britain, the Commonwealth and Europe*, ed. Alex May (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 9. On the "multiracial Commonwealth," see: Peter Caterall, "The Plural Society: Labour and the Commonwealth Idea, 1900-1964," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, no. 5 (2018): 821-844; Christopher Prior, "'This Community Which Nobody Can Define': Meanings of Commonwealth in the Late 1940s and 1950s," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 47, no. 3 (2019): 568-90; Arnold Guy, *Towards Peace and a Multiracial Commonwealth* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1964). On the transition to Commonwealth, see: Buettner, *Europe after Empire*, 37-49. Mark Crinson wrote about the Commonwealth in relation to the Commonwealth Institute in London, see: Crinson, *Modern, Architecture and the End of Empire*, 100-126. Also see: Claire Wintle, "Mapping Decolonisation: Exhibition Floor Plans and the "End" of Empire at the Commonwealth Institute," *British Art Studies* 13, https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-13/cwintle

[76] Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London and New York: Verso, 2019), 11.

impression of a centralized, coherent, and informed colonial housing policy, the reality was

very different. Attempts to construct housing were largely chaotic, *ad hoc*, and

uncoordinated.[77]

Chapter Overview

In four chapters, moving from the scale of the city to the neighborhood, and from the

design of the house to its building materials, this project seeks to offer an account of some

of the varying ways in which architects and planners in different parts of British Africa

were involved in the project of stabilization during a period marked by labor strikes and

anticolonial protests. Chapter 1 explores how stabilization policy informed colonial city

planning by looking at one of the most ambitious colonial urban development plans created

during the 1940s and '50s: the postwar plan for Nairobi. Designed by the architect Leonard

Thornton-White, a former Vice President of the Architectural Association (AA) in London,

and the sociologist Leo Silberman, an expert in "race relations," or the management of

racial tensions, the plan envisaged Nairobi as the thriving economic capital of British East

Africa and as the center of Kenya's lucrative coffee, tea, and sisal industry. Under the guise

of social welfare, combined with seemingly progressive ideas about "multiracialism,"

Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan set out to restrict the mobility of Nairobi's rapidly

growing black working class through infrastructural planning and an emphasis on

neighborhood design. This chapter shows that Thornton-White and Silberman relied on the

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[77] On the discrepancies between planning and execution in a colonial context, see: William Cunningham Bissell, *Urban Design, Chaos and Colonial Power in Zanzibar* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011).

ideas, visual language, and rhetoric of British architects such as Patrick Abercrombie to reinforce existing segregated patterns in a city dominated by a stringent "color bar." Here, postwar stabilization policy focused on limiting the movements of Nairobi's black inhabitants while stimulating the flow of cash crops via Nairobi to Kenya's port, and onwards to Tilbury, Hull, and the international markets.

Chapter 2 recounts the largely forgotten story of the Colonial Office's plan to construct "community centers" across British Africa to stimulate a sense of social cohesion but also to prevent further social unrest. In the colonies, community centers, a novel type of building constructed at the center of many British neighborhoods during the 1940s, were promoted to educate, elevate, and modernize colonial subjects. This chapter explores the German architect Ernst May's plans to expand Kampala, Uganda's commercial capital and center of the country's thriving cotton industry. May, an architect and planner primarily known for his efforts to design working class housing in interwar Europe, developed a scheme that included housing estates for black working-class families, as well as community centers and a wide-range of other social, recreational, and educational facilities. Contrary to British community centers, however, May's plans offered a much less organic view of community. This chapter shows that for May, and for the Uganda government, community centers were envisioned as an instrument to create a settled—and more productive—black workforce.

Chapter 3 explores ideas about stabilization in relation to housing and furniture design. Focusing on the "furniture survey" of the white South African architect Betty Spence in Orlando East, one of Johannesburg's black townships, this chapter traces how in late 1940s and early '50s apartheid South Africa, the social survey became an instrument

for architects to examine the dwelling needs of the "Urban Native." Whereas British sociologists, involved in housing projects in postwar Britain used surveys to democratize the planning process, Spence treated the survey as an anthropological study, a method to study the dwelling habits of the *nie-blanke*, the non-white. Spence portrayed township inhabitants as an "unstable community," who were in the process of settling down. The solutions Spence proposed—modern, affordable, built-in furniture inspired by the British Utility Furniture Scheme—could help, in her view, to "stabilize" residents and prevent further social unrest. This chapter also sheds light on some of the interactions between architects and planners working in the British colonies and South African architects.

Finally, Chapter 4 looks at building materials for state-sponsored housing estates and stabilization policy. Under the strain of postwar shortages of concrete, steel, and corrugated iron in Britain, colonial architects and engineers began to explore possibilities to use local building materials, instead of continuing to ship materials from Britain to its colonies. This chapter investigates the experiments of the British planner and engineer Alfred Alcock in the Gold Coast with "stabilized" rammed earth, or rammed earth mixed with a small amount of Portland cement. Throughout the late 1940s and '50s, Alcock promoted reinforced rammed earth as an inexpensive, yet modern building material for state-sponsored housing projects in the British "model colony." But while stabilized rammed earth was a durable material—more durable than regular rammed earth construction—it was also a material with a specific expiration date of thirty to fifty years. Reinforced rammed earth was robust and durable enough to secure Britain's near-term colonial ambitions, but not in the long-term. In this chapter, I argue that the widespread

usage of stabilized rammed earth was a response to Britain's gradual recognition that its occupation of large parts of Africa would, sooner or later, come to an end.

Each of these architectural and urban projects coincided with and responded to strikes, uprisings, and protests for higher wages, better working conditions, increased political representation, and self-government. Working in Kenya, Thornton-White was once stuck in Mombasa during a city-wide labor strike that brought the entire city to a standstill and made the British government "completely ineffective."[78] Silberman was appointed to the Nairobi project to prevent further "tension" or "race conflict."[79] May arrived in Kampala weeks after the country's first nation-wide strike had been forcefully put down by the police. The submission of his final plans overlapped with more protests organized by labor unions against the exploitation of cotton growers. Spence's survey of Orlando took place several years after one of Orlando East's residents had organized a massive protest against overpopulation. Thousands in the township squatted nearby vacant municipal land.[80] Spence's research coincided with nonviolent rallies, marches, and protests against the introduction of new apartheid laws organized by the African National Congress. Alcock's work in the Gold Coast overlapped with the country's first nation-wide protest, a protest that, according to the British-owned newspapers, unleashed "the Frankenstein monster in African nationalism."[81] Instead of referring to these uprisings, mass

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[78] Thornton-White to Silberman, Mombasa, January 19, 1947. B25, BC353, Thornton-White Papers, Cape Town University (CPT).

[79] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 1, 9.

[80] Alfred William Stadler "Birds in the Cornfield: Squatter Movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1979): 93-123.

[81] Cited in Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, 161.

demonstrations, and strikes in passing, this dissertation argues that they were a central social force to which architect, planners, and colonial officials responded.

Together, these chapters highlight the different ways in which architects and planners helped shape and facilitate the new colonial development policy implemented by Clement Attlee's Labour administration during the last two decades of imperial rule. It shows how design not only mirrored the transition of power but also purported to play an active role in averting strikes, uprisings, and demonstrations. While presented as investments into local social welfare this project argues that these housing programs were part of a larger effort to maintain control over British Africa.

CHAPTER ONE

East African Trunk Roads and Nairobi's Parkway System: Leonard Thornton-White's and Leo Silberman's Development Plan

> *"Needless to say, we won't call it "segregation" as this word would cause revolution..."[82]*

Leo Silberman to Leonard Thornton-White, 1947

1.1. "Nairobi—Officially a City from To-Day"

On March 30th, 1950, thirteen years before Kenya became independent, Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, arrived in Nairobi. Prince Henry traveled on behalf of the Crown to hand Frederick Woodley, Nairobi's mayor, the royal charter, a roll of parchment enclosed in a richly decorated, gold-encrusted case. **(Figure 1.1)** Nairobi, the capital of the British settler colony Kenya, one of Britain's most prized colonial possessions, had officially become a city. The bequest confirmed Nairobi's special status; the colonial town was the first in Britain's sprawling empire to receive city status. The British media that covered the commemorative event emphasized the city's rapid urban transformation. "What was once a swampy land," one newsreel stated, had become a "great African metropolis…a centre of ever-growing industry and nationwide commerce." Grand modern hotels and blocks of flats had been built "where once the skin huts of Masai herdsmen stood." Newspaper articles

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[82] Silberman to Thornton-White, London, June 2, 1947, 3. Thornton-White Papers, BC 353 B25, Cape Town University (CPT).

and newsreels showed high-rise buildings and bustling boulevards. Airports, trains, and cars had replaced "carts and rickshaws."[83] **(Figure 1.2)** The royal charter established Nairobi's position as a modern city and colonial capital—a capital with straight, paved roads and a growing number of gleaming high-rise offices that orchestrated and enabled Britain's extraction of Kenya's vast agricultural resources. **(Figure 1.3)**

These flattering accounts ignored the citywide boycott of the events associated with the charter, initiated by some of Nairobi's most influential labor unions, such as the East African Trade Union.[84] Black union leaders like Fred Kubai and Bildad Kaggia, together with Makham Singh, an Indian labor union activist, urged workers to stay at home instead of attending the planned parades. Most of them were poorly paid laborers working in harrowing conditions in Nairobi's factories or the Kenya-Uganda railway yards.[85] While Prince Henry and mayor Woodley drove from the Eastleigh airport to city hall, many of Nairobi's streets remained empty. Kubai and Kaggia feared that the royal charter would result in further expansion of the city, and therefore in further infringement upon areas occupied by Africans, including the already overcrowded Kikuyu reservation located just outside of Nairobi. "For the underpaid wage-workers and the miserable unemployed alike," historian David Anderson has noted, "the royal charter was nothing more than a symbol of

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[83] Colonial Film Unit, *Nairobi,* London, 1950. Cited in Tom Rice, *Films for the Colonies: Cinema and Preservation of the British Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 172. Also see: "Royal Charter for Nairobi: From Swamp to City within the Span of a Lifetime," *The Times*, March 30, 1950, 7.

[84] On the role of Kenya's labor unions during the 1940s and '50s, see: Shiraz Durrani, *Trade Unions in Kenya's War of Independence*, Kenya Resists, no. 2 (Nairobi: Vita Books, 2018).

[85] On labor conditions in colonial Kenya more generally, see: Opolot Okia, *Communal Labor in Colonial Kenya: The Legitimization of Coercion, 1912-1930* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

their oppression. The strike was a brief, belligerent show of defiance, deliberately timed to

prick the bubble of white self-congratulation."[86] With their boycott, the strikers aimed to

show that this was not the "progress of millions of toiling people" but that of "a handful of

capitalists" instead.[87] The strike was an indication of the escalating conflicts between white

settlers and black workers during the late 1940s and '50s. In the years previous, labor

strikes and boycotts, often violently stifled by the police, had become increasingly common

in the British colony.[88]

The plan that propelled Nairobi's transformation into an "African metropolis" was

developed by Leonard Thornton-White, a former vice-President of the Architectural

Association (AA) in London and Leo Silberman, a German sociologist and self-proclaimed

expert in "race relations," or the management of racial tensions.[89] **(Figure 1.4)** They were

hired in 1945 by the Nairobi Municipal Council.[90] Like Herbert Baker, the British architect

responsible for Nairobi's classicist, monumental government buildings, both lived and

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[86] Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged,* 181.

[87] Makham Singh cited in Alice Hoffenberg Amsden, *International Firms and Labour in Kenya: 1945-1970* (London and New York: Routledge, 1971), 32.

[88] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "The Strike Movement in Colonial Kenya: The Era of the General Strikes," *Transafrican Journal of History* 22 (1993): 1.

[89] "Nairobi—officially a city from to-day," *The Star, Johannesburg, Transvaal*, March 30, 1950. BC 353, F4, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

[90] The plan was published as Leonard Thornton-White, Leo Silberman, and P. Anderson, *Nairobi: Master Plan for a Colonial Capital. A Report Prepared for the Municipal Council of Nairobi* (London: HSMO, 1948). Thornton-White and Silberman were also assisted by a South African engineer named P. Anderson. Previously Anderson had been involved in the design of Vanderbijl Park, an industrial city in Gauteng, South Africa. Anderson was primarily involved in the engineering aspects of the Nairobi plan and did not contribute to its conceptual framework. The fact that there are no letters between Thornton-White and Anderson in Thornton-White's archive compared to Thornton-White's and Silberman's extensive correspondence further underlines Anderson's relatively marginal role in the project.

worked in South Africa; Thornton-White headed the School of Architecture at the

University of Cape Town and Silberman worked in the Department of Social Studies at the

University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. The central aim of the Nairobi project,

completed in 1946 and officially published in 1948, was to further strengthen the capital's

role as the center of Kenya's extremely lucrative tea, coffee, and sisal industry. "It is quite

obvious," Thornton-White disclosed to *The Daily News*, a South African newspaper in

1946, "that this Colony is forging ahead and has a very big future."[91]

Aside from sweeping plans to improve Nairobi's circulation, one of the project's

main ambitions, at least outwardly, was to create "proper urban communities" for the city's

black working-class.[92] In line with Kenyan colonial labor policies, Thornton-White's and

Silberman's plan aimed to "stabilize" Nairobi's African population.[93] The scheme reserved

nearly 3,600 acres, or nearly seventeen percent of the city's acreage for subsidized housing

for black families, funded either by the government or directly by the municipality.[94] This

separate zone—an area that would become known as the Eastlands—was located to the east

of the city's center and bordered the industrial area, home to among others, the Kenya-

Uganda Railroads, one of Nairobi's main employers. By 1945, this area already contained

three housing estates inhabited by railway workers their families, including Makongeni, a

project consisting of rows of brick cottages with small gardens.[95] **(Figure 1.5)** Thornton-

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[91] "South Africans Help to Plan Kenya's Post-War Development," *The Daily News*, ca. 1946. BC 353, F4, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

[92] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 7.

[93] Ibid., 8.

[94] Ibid., 57.

[95] Richard Stern, *Housing the Urban Poor in Africa: Policy, Politics, and Bureaucracy in Mombasa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 204. By 1950, new

White's and Silberman's plan proposed to extend this area by reserving unoccupied

government-owned land for more housing estates.[96] When Prince Henry visited Nairobi in

March 1950—he likely drove through the area on his way from the Eastleigh airport—this

swath of land resembled a building site, with some housing projects finished, others still

under construction. By 1950, partly as a result of Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan,

some 15,000 residents, employed as government clerks, railway workers, office assistants,

cashiers, and factory workers, inhabited these subsidized houses.[97]

Despite the fact that today's city center is still roughly organized according to the

framework proposed by Thornton-White and Silberman, the development scheme has

received little scrutiny from architectural or urban scholars. The plan is most often

understood as a project that reinforced Nairobi's segregated urban layout.[98] While accurate,

housing estates such as Starehe, Ziwani, Marurani, Bondeni housed 15,000 black inhabitants. Older estates, Pumwani, Kariokor, and Shauri Moyo had over 20,000 residents. Also see: Gordon Ogilvie, *The Housing of Africans in the Urban Areas of Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Information Office, 1946).

[96] On housing construction in Nairobi before Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan. See: A. M. Martin, P. M. Bezemer, "The Concept and Planning of Public Native Housing Estates in Nairobi/Kenya, 1918-1948," *Planning Perspectives* (2019): DOI: 10.1080/02665433.2019.1602785. For an extensive overview of colonial housing policy in Nairobi and Mombasa, see: Stern, *Housing the Urban Poor*, 1978; Harris and Hay, "New Plans for Housing," 195-223; Harris, "From Trusteeship to Development," 311-337; Harris and Hay, "The Colonial Regime of Urban Housing," 504-30.

[97] David Anderson, "Corruption at City Hall: African Housing and Urban Development in Colonial Nairobi," *AZANIA: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa* 36-37, no. 1 (2001): 138.

[98] Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Nairobi's Self-Help City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1977), 57; Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 190; Anderson, "Corruption at City Hall," 138-54. Anja Nevanlinna offers the most extensive analysis of the plan, yet does not relate to the work of Thornton-White and Silberman to contemporary thinking about race relations. Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna, *Interpreting Nairobi: The Cultural Study of Built Forms* (Helsinki, Syomen Historiallinen Suera, 1996), 158-86.

such accounts fail to take the distinct context of the postwar period into consideration—a period marked by Britain's efforts to increase colonial extraction through development as well as increasingly frequent labor strikes. More importantly, these studies overlook the ways in which Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan was focused on managing "race conflict."[99]

In contrast, this chapter argues that during a time of civil unrest, Thornton-White's and Silberman's scheme advanced an ideology that borrowed from a new sociological field of study focused on managing racial frictions through, among others, improving "inter-racial contact."[100] For instance, Thornton-White and Silberman proposed the construction of various "inter-racial" spaces in the city. At the same time, they promoted the project as a scheme for a "multi-racial society," or a plan that would benefit Nairobi's entire population.[101] Thornton-White's and Silberman's proposal, in other words, was an attempt to recast British colonialism as a benevolent force, pushing for progress, modernization, and development, even as it imposed racial segregation.

Meanwhile, Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan embraced the ideas, visual language, and optimistic rhetoric of British postwar reconstruction projects to position Nairobi as a central node in Britain's "Development Empire."[102] Through an examination of the official report of the Nairobi plan and Thornton-White's and Silberman's private correspondence, I show that the project focused on strengthening Nairobi's economic

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[99] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 9.

[100] Leo Silberman, "Social Postulates of Planning," *South African Architectural Record* 28, no. 9 (September 1943), 218.

[101] Thornton-White, et al., *Nairobi*, 9.

[102] Ibid., 50.

position by expanding the city's infrastructure, connecting the capital to a growing

transportation network that covered East Africa, and at the same time, by settling Nairobi's

growing African working class in separate state-sponsored housing estates close to the

city's industrial area. Put differently, Thornton-White's and Silberman's scheme aimed to

stimulate the movement of goods—cash crops such as tea, coffee, and sisal—while

reducing the mobility of the city's black working-class.

1.2. Planning the "New Nairobi"

The Nairobi that Thornton-White and Silberman encountered during their first visit in

1945, coming by boat from South Africa, was a burgeoning city in transition. During the

years following World War II, Nairobi went through a period of rapid economic growth,

driven by a rise in demand for the export of agricultural produce and foreign

investments.[103] Since the early twentieth-century, Nairobi occupied the center of the

lucrative trade in coffee, tea, and sisal—cash crops planted at European-owned plantations

in the Central Highlands and harvested by black Kenyans, often working under harrowing

conditions. Most produce was routed through Nairobi before making its way to Mombasa,

Kenya's harbor city on the Indian Ocean.[104] As the town grew, attracting a number of

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[103] See, for example, David Gordon, *Decolonization and the State in Kenya* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 106. On Kenya's economic development in the post-war period, also see: Robert L. Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire: State and Business in Decolonizing Egypt, Nigeria, and Kenya, 1945-1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[104] On agricultural production in Kenya and black labor, see for example: David Anderson and David Throup, "Africans and Agricultural Production in Colonial Kenya: The Myth of the War as Watershed," *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 4 (1985): 327-45. On some of the architectural implications of the cash-crop economy, see: Nolan, "Cash-Crop Design," 280-301.

British and international businesses, the idea of Nairobi as the thriving center of a white-dominated East Africa took hold. *National Geographic Magazine* described Nairobi in an article, titled "Britain Tackles the East African Bush," as "popping at the seams with newcomers. Hotels are packed, housing shortage is acute and building costs are high."[105]

Nairobi was built, like many British settlements in Africa, as a railroad town. In 1899, the Kenya-Uganda railroad, a project also sometimes called the "Iron Snake" or the "Lunatic Express," reached an empty stretch of land, located in the middle of the East African Protectorate.[106] The train came from Mombasa, the Swahili port city located on the Indian Ocean. Before the railroad's arrival, several trading routes cut through the area, routes that allowed for the exchange of goods between the Maasai and the Kikuyu.[107] This stretch was the last flat expanse before the Central Highlands, a region of arable land suitable for tea- and coffee farming. In the years thereafter, the Central Highlands also became known as the "White Highlands," a phrase that referred to the large number of British farmers that settled there, systematically stripping the Kikuyu of their land and forcing them into wage labor, often under harrowing conditions.[108] In the decades following

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[105] "W. Robert Moore, "Britain tackles the East African bush," *National Geographic*, no. 48 (March 1950): 313. Cited in Anderson, "Corruption at City Hall," 138.

[106] See, among others, Neera Kapila, *Race, Rail and Society: The Roots of Modern Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenway Publications, 2009). The East African Protectorate was a forerunner of the Kenya colony.

[107] Peter Makachia, "Evolution of Urban Housing Strategies and Dweller-Initiated Transformations in Nairobi," *City, Culture and Society* 2 (2011): 221. The name Nairobi came from *enkare nyrobi*, the place of cold water.

[108] On the Highlands, see for example: Simon Coldham, "Colonial Policy and the Highlands of Kenya, 1934-1944," *Journal of African Law* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 65-83; Timothy Parsons, "Being Kikuyu in Meru: Challenging the Tribal Geography of Colonial Kenya," *Journal of African History* 53 (2012): 65-86.

Nairobi's establishment, the railroad remained central to the town's economic and urban development. Rail transport enabled the swift passage of Kenya's cash crops from the Central Highlands, via Nairobi, to the international markets. **(Figure 1.6)**

In the early 1900s, Nairobi had a population consisted of around 9,000 inhabitants, a number that included British settlers, Indian laborers—who had arrived initially as railroad workers—black servants, soldiers (*askari*), and workers from different parts of the East African Protectorate. The historian Luise White has described Nairobi during this early moment as a town that "consisted of huts made of wattle and daub, or grass; government buildings; Railway Quarters; and a rebuilt Indian Bazaar, all laid out in a piecemeal fashion and surrounded by infant suburbs and five African villages separated by arable land."[109] **(Figure 1.7)** By 1945, when Thornton-White and Silberman arrived, Nairobi had transformed into a sprawling town with over 100,000 inhabitants, the vast majority of whom were black.[110] **(Figure 1.8)** The "infant suburb" described by White had developed into several spacious neighborhoods occupied by the free-standing houses of white settlers—sometimes even Edwardian manor houses—located to the north and east of the town's center. Many of the city's Indian inhabitants lived in neighborhoods to west of the center, while Nairobi's black residents occupied self-built settlements on the town's fringes or resided in one its many male-only barracks, which were located on the terrain of employers such as the Kenya-Uganda Railroads. Nairobi was also a city dominated by a stringent "color bar," which prevented Nairobi's African and Indian residents from

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[109] Luise White, *The Comforts of Home*: *Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 40.

[110] Anderson, "Corruption at City Hall," 140.

accessing the same social services and recreational facilities as the city's white settler

population.

Thornton-White's and Silberman's master plan for Nairobi, which served as a

guideline for the Nairobi Municipal Council, envisaged Nairobi as a central node in

Britain's postwar "Development Empire."[111] The scheme for Nairobi provided a framework

for its projected expansion during the next twenty-five years—a timeline that indicated

Britain's unwavering commitment to colonial rule in Kenya, despite growing international

criticism on the British empire expressed by, among others, the United Nations.[112] The

project, estimated to cost 800,000 pounds sterling (approximately 320 million pounds in

today's worth), was one of several urban development schemes created for different parts

of British Africa during the late 1940s.[113] It was also one of the most ambitious postwar

plans. According to the *East African Standard*, the project catapulted Nairobi into a new,

modern era, one that followed decades of settler pioneering: "Liberty to build where and

what one liked, to come into town by any road and park the car of bus almost anywhere, is

coming to an end. Progress requires regulation of individual freedom and whim. The town

plan marks the close of the happy-go-lucky era and of pioneer urban development."[114]

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[111] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 50.

[112] Ibid., 1. See, for example: Alan Burns, *In Defence of Colonies: British Colonial Territories in International Affairs* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957); Pearson, "Defending Empire at the United Nations," 525-49.

[113] Nairobi—officially a city from to-day," *The Star, Johannesburg, Transvaal*, March 30, 1950. BC 353, F4, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

[114] "A New Nairobi," *East African Standard*, February 6, 1946. BC 353, F4, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

The newspaper also described the project as a "utilitarian" plan. Instead of encumbering Kenya's governor Philip Mitchell with visions for "'vistas' and 'Appian ways' and the nebulous things which have done duty in the past," Thornton-White's and Silberman's project concerned itself with "severely practical questions," including the location of industry, traffic circulation, and housing development.[115] It was, indeed, primarily a transport plan and a zoning scheme, separating residential areas from commercial and industrial sections. **(Figure 1.9)** The plan, based on a civic survey and numerous interviews with colonial administrators, welfare officers, planners, architects, and businessowners of companies such as the Kenya Coffee Works—all of them white— proposed a re-organized administrative and business center and a significantly expanded area with subsidized housing estates for Nairobi's rapidly growing black working class.[116] It also enlarged the industrial area, home to among others the Kenya-Uganda Railroads, Nairobi's principal employer and owner of large areas of land within the city. **(Figure 1.10)**

Although the *East African Standard* characterized the plan as purely "utilitarian," Thornton-White and Silberman did propose the construction of a grand avenue through Nairobi's new civic center, with a fountain in the middle and lined by the town's city hall, the court, a cathedral, and several commercial businesses. **(Figure 1.11, 1.12)** At the end of this axis, Thornton-White and Silberman envisaged a monumental parliament building, a building that, in their view, would not just serve Kenya but all of British East Africa, a

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, vi-vii. One of the architects interviewed was Dorothy Hughes, a British architect raised in Kenya. Hughes was head of the East African Institute for Architects and was responsible for the design of projects such as the Cathedral of the Holy Family (1960). Thornton-White's diaries reveal that Hughes hosted him in Nairobi on at least one occasion.

territory that consisted of Kenya, Uganda, the Sultanate of Zanzibar, and Tanganyika

(present-day Tanzania), a British mandate territory taken over from Germany following

World War I.[117] Eventually, the parliament, designed during the early 1950s by the Nairobi-

based architect Amyas Connell—a former founding member of the Modern Architectural

Research Group (MARS), a think tank consisting of several modern British architects—

was built slightly further away, not at the end of the avenue, but next to it. The design

featured a tower modeled after the Big Ben, an aesthetic choice that emphasized Kenya's

close connections to London.[118] **(Figure 1.13)**

The project presented Nairobi as a center of exchange, circulation, and

distribution.[119] A key objective of Thornton-White's and Silberman's project was

improving Nairobi's traffic circulation. The scheme prepared Nairobi for the motor age—a

means of transportation that was on the rise, primarily among the city's white settler

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[117] While Kenya's new parliament building would never serve British East Africa, the secretariat of the East African High Commission, an inter-colonial organization that administered, among others, the East African railway network and the East African postal service, was established in Nairobi in 1948. See: N. J. Westcott, "Closer Union and the Future of East Africa, 1939-1948: A Case Study in the 'Official Mind of Imperialism,'" *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 10, no. 1 (1981): 67-88.

[118] "Circular to Members" Institute of South African Architects, January 24, 1950. BC 353 Additions, A7, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. Amyas Connell moved to East Africa in 1945. He eventually formed TRIAD Architects. On Connell, see Dennis Sharp, "The Modern Movement in East Africa: The work of Amyas Connell (1900-1980) in Tanganyika and Kenya with reference to the crisis of decoration in modern African architecture," *Habitat International* 7, no. 5-6 (1983): 311-26. Thornton-White and Connell knew one another and visited each other during Thornton-White's stay in Nairobi. See: Thornton-White's dairy, October 17, 1946. BC 353 A, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. The new parliament building replaced the Government House, designed in the late 1920s by the Herbert Baker, who was also responsible for the design of the nearby Law Courts and of the Railroad Headquarters.

[119] "A New Nairobi," *East African Standard*, February 6, 1946. BC 353, F4, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

population, but one that was also increasingly used to transport cash-crops and other goods from the countryside to Nairobi and beyond.[120] Like Patrick Abercrombie's and John Forshaw's visionary scheme for London's postwar reconstruction, the *County of London Plan* (1943), Thornton-White and Silberman pushed for the construction of a "parkway system" for fast, vehicular traffic and a system of local roads that connected to the parkway system at regular intervals.[121] **(Figure 1.14)** The Nairobi plan thus separated different types of traffic: pedestrian and vehicular, but also local and regional. **(Figure 1.15)** By March 1950, part of the main new thoroughfare was under construction, a road that cut through the center, named the Princess Elizabeth Highway.[122] **(Figure 1.16)**

This road, part of the parkway system, connected to various "East African trunk roads" that passed through Nairobi.[123] In Thornton-White's and Silberman's vision, Nairobi's parkway system would also be linked to the "East African Highway," a scheme that was supposed to tie Kenya's coast to towns further inland, such as Jinja and Kampala in Uganda, as well as to Rhodesia's "Copperbelt," the site of large-scale British mining

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[120] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 70. Thornton-White specifically inquired about car-ownership rates, also with regards to the "percentage of owners by the different races" to Harold Thornley Dyer, Nairobi's city planner. Thornley Dyer to Thornton-White, Nairobi, February 18, 1948. BC 353, B23-24, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. On automobile traffic among white settlers in Africa, see: Gordon Pirie, "Automobile organizations driving tourism in pre-independence Africa," *Journal of Tourism History* 5, no. 1 (2013): 73-91.

[121] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 57.

[122] After Independence, in 1963, the highway was renamed Uhuru Highway, meaning freedom in Swahili. See: Ambe Njoh, "Toponymic Inscriptions and the Articulation of Power in Built Space in Africa: The Case of Dakar and Nairobi," *Journal of African and Asian Studies* 52, no. 8 (2017): https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909616651295

[123] The mixing of traffic, Thornton-White and Silberman opined in the official report, was the "prime evil of the modern age, with its pedestrians, cyclists, private cars, buses, lorries, military vehicles and troop movements." Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 53.

operations. As architectural historians Kenny Cupers and Prita Meier have argued,

postcolonial highway projects in East Africa, such as the Trans-African Highway—an

ambitious post-colonial proposal to unite Africa's newly independent nations during the

1970s—aimed to spur inter-African connectivity and the "formation of a new continental

collectivity."[124] The new roads projected by Thornton-White and Silberman, however,

largely followed the extractive logic of the existing colonial railroads. Like the Kenya-

Uganda railroad, Nairobi's new parkway system and the roads it would link to, primarily

served to accelerate the movement of tea, coffee, and sisal to the Indian Ocean.

Nairobi's new parkways system also catered to British businessmen who

commuted to Nairobi's commercial and industrial heart from the elevated suburbs on the

city's north-side. These roads also offered better connections between the center and "up-

country," the white suburbs and farm areas outside of Nairobi's municipal boundaries.[125]

These areas included Karen, named after one of its best-known inhabitants, Karen Blixen,

author of *Out of Africa* (1937) and co-owner of a large coffee farm. (Karen was also home

to the architect Ernst May, whose plan for Kampala is the subject of Chapter 2.) The

propaganda film *Nairobi*, produced by the Colonial Film Unit in 1950 to celebrate

Nairobi's newly acquired city status, depicts British business men driving in and out of the

city for work.[126] While intended for an African audience, the film begins and ends with

sequences of cars flooding Nairobi's avenues, leaving and returning to the city's suburban

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[124] Kenny Cupers and Prita Meier, "Infrastructure between Statehood and Selfhood: The Trans-African Highway," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 79, no. 1 (2020): 64.

[125] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 3.

[126] Colonial Film Unit, *Nairobi,* London, 1950. British Film Institute, 459207.

areas. Like Thornton-White's and Silberman's scheme, the film presented Nairobi as a

thriving economic center, rapidly expanding, and well-connected through its advanced road

network.

Thornton-White's and Silberman's ideas about infrastructural planning were

rooted in concepts that dominated British planning during the 1940s, specifically plans for

London's postwar reconstruction. Starting in the early decades of the twentieth century,

planners, architects, civil engineers, surveyors, and politicians across Britain, and

particularly in London, were increasingly preoccupied with traffic circulation and urban

congestion. Before the war, the British Ministry of Transport had finalized an extensive

survey of London's traffic problems, the *Highway Development Survey*. Through sixty new

road developments in Greater London, it plotted to relieve traffic congestion in an

increasingly noisy, busy, and clogged city.[127] During the same time, traffic lights,

pedestrian crossings, and guard rails were installed to separate pedestrians from motor

cars.[128] In 1943, Abercrombie, a professor of planning at the University of London, and

Forshaw, an architect of the London City Council (LCC), completed a sweeping, visionary

plan for London's postwar reconstruction. Among other things, they proposed a new

network of radial roads connected to a motor ring-road, that bypassed London's

neighborhoods and separated different types of traffic.[129] **(Figure 1.17)**

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[127] See: David Rooney, *Spaces of Congestion and Traffic: Politics and Technologies in Twentieth-Century London* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 32-4.

[128] Ibid., 87-117.

[129] Patrick Abercrombie and John Forshaw, *County of London Plan* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1943).

Similarly, the MARS Group, composed of the architects, engineers, and designers Maxwell Fry, Amyas Connell, Berthold Lubetkin, Lionel Brett, Wells Coates, Aileen and William Tatton Brown, Ove Arup, Frederick Gibberd, and others—many of whom would be involved in architectural construction in Britain's African colonies— produced various plans for London in the 1940s that focused on improving the city's traffic problems.[130] More radical than Abercrombie's and Forshaw's scheme, their unexecuted *Plan for London* (1942) imagined an almost entirely new city: an efficient machine, consisting of a central vertebrae home to the city's offices and shops, connected to outlying residential districts through futuristic-looking highways.[131] **(Figure 1.18)** The plan emphasized continuous flow. Instead of traffic lights, it promoted elevated roads and viaducts. Efficient circulation, they claimed, not only enhanced opportunities for commercial transactions but also offered increased possibilities for human contact.[132]

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[130] The group acted as the official British chapter of CIAM, and was committed to bringing the ideas of people such as Le Corbusier, Siegfried Giedion and Walter Gropius to Britain. Other members were Misha Black and Felix Samuely. John Gold, "The MARS Plans for London, 1933-1942: Plurality and Experimentation in the City Plans of the Early British Modern Movement," *The Town Planning Review* 66, no.3 (July 1995): 243-67.

[131] Gold, "The MARS Plans," 243-67. Thornton-White, while never a member of the MARS Group, was familiar with the work of the organization, published in British magazines such as *Architectural Review* during the 1930s and '40s. Various members the MARS Group served as faculty of the AA, where Thornton-White worked as Vice-President for part of the 1930s. When Thornton-White relocated to South Africa, he stayed in touch with Maxwell Fry, one of the MARS Group's founding members. Fry, who continued his architectural career in West Africa, occasionally visited Thornton-White at his house in Constantia, South Africa. Fry also wrote Thornton-White's obituary in 1966. See: Maxwell Fry, "Obituary Professor Thornton-White," *RIBA Journal* 73 (February 1966): 88. Thornton-White also recurrently referred to Fry in his letters to Silberman, yet not always in a positive manner.

[132] John Gold, "The Death of the Boulevard," in *Images of the Street: Planning, Identity and Control in Public Space*, ed. Nicholas Fyfe (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 52.

Circulation, the architects Aileen and William Tatton Brown declared in "Theory of Contacts," a report accompanying an earlier plan developed by the MARS Group, was essential for London's social harmony and social stability.[133]

Thornton-White's and Silberman's scheme was firmly grounded in such metropolitan ideas. They deployed a similar visual language but also a similar rhetoric, one that revolved around progress, modernization, and efficiency. However, Thornton-White's and Silberman's parkway system did not increase opportunities for human contact but decisively separated Nairobi's white businessmen from Nairobi's black working class, which mainly moved between the city's subsidized housing estates and the industrial area. During the 1940s, car-ownership was on the rise among Nairobi's white settler population, whereas many of Nairobi's black inhabitants moved through the city on foot, by bicycle, or by public transport.[134] This distinction was also clearly visible in Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan; the Eastlands—the part of Nairobi they proposed to transform into an area with vast housing estates for black working-class families—mainly featured roads for bicycles. Modern ideas about transportation planning offered a tool to decrease racial mixing, or in Thornton-White's and Silberman's words, "racial permeation." [135]

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[133] Ibid. "Theory of Contacts" accompanied a 1938 proposal by the MARS Group exhibited in the Burlington Galleries in London.

[134] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 70.

[135] Ibid., 49.

1.3. Thornton-White and Silberman: From South Africa to Kenya

By the 1940s, Thornton-White was already celebrated as one of South Africa's "leading architects."[136] Following his appointment as vice-President of the AA, a position that made him well-acquainted with London's architectural scene, the British architect and planner had become the University of Cape Town's first Professor of Architecture and Head of its Architecture Department in 1937.[137] He was, according to an article in *The Cape Times* announcing his arrival in South Africa, a "confirmed modernist"—a distinction he earned in part through his participation in *The Modern Homes Exhibition* of 1934 in London, a project that brought him into contact with members from the MARS Group.[138] In South

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[136] "South Africans Help to Plan Kenya's Post-War Development," *The Daily News*, ca. 1946. BC 353, F4, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

[137] "Persoonlijk," *Die Burger*, December 13, 1948. BC 353, F5, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. At the University of Cape Town, Thornton-White would play an instrumental role in developing the architectural program and served as Dean of the Faculty of Fine Art and Architecture. Here, he taught some of South Africa's leading postwar architects, including Julian Beinart, and assisted in bringing architects such as Buckminister Fuller to the school to lecture. It was Thornton White who recommended Beinart for the prestigious Baker Fellowship, which he won. See: Thornton-White to "Jack" (?), Registrar of the South African Institute of Architects, September 9, 1960. BC353, B26-L13, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. On Buckminister Fuller, see: Thornton-White to "Ian," October 27, 1958. BC353, B26-L12, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. About Buckminister Fuller, Thornton-White wrote, "What a man! He did not just 'give-off' enthusiasm, 'encourage' enthusiasm, or anything of that sort; he just was enthusiasm. … Bucky … made a very deep impression on us, not because of his geodesic domes, but because of the depth and wholeness of his outlook…The man is as near to a genius as I ever hope to see." In the same letter, he talked about Richard Neutra, who apparently showed up a week or two later without an invitation. Neutra "told us just nothing," Thornton-White wrote. "If Bucky is a near genius, then R. N. is the nearest thing to the compleat [*sic*] Charleton [*sic*] that I have ever met."

[138] "For the U.C.T.," *Cape Times*, July 27, 1937. BC 353, F5, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. Compared to the white, concrete asymmetrical dwelling designed by the architectural group Tecton, which consisted of architects and MARS Group-members such as Berthold Lubetkin and Denys Lasdun, Thornton-White's brick house with its heavy, awkwardly proportioned facade appeared nearly classicist. On Thornton-White's participation in Gidea Park, see: BC 353, B11, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. Thornton-White's architectural design in Gidea Park was heavily influenced by his stay in Rome from 1928 to 1930 as a

Africa, Thornton-White continued his architectural career by designing his own modest

house outside of Cape Town, located between Constantia's vineyards, and a multiple-story

brick office building in the city's center that also received press from British magazines

such as *Architectural Review*.[139] Still, he became best-known for his urban plans, most

notably his contribution to the design of Cape Town's waterfront area in the late 1930s.[140]

The scheme altered Cape Town's relation to the ocean, with the intention of transforming

the city into the "Gateway of Africa."[141] **(Figure 1.19)** At the same time, however, the plan

improved the railway's access to the oceanfront and proposed the destruction of several

black communities in Cape Town's inner city to make way for new highways.

Silberman, a Jewish émigré from Frankfurt who taught social studies at the

University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, collaborated with Thornton-White on the

Rome Prize winner. In Rome, he became interested in the monumental architecture of
Marcello Piacentini, see: BC 353, B3, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

[139] His own country house in Constantia (1941) was featured in the *South African
Architectural Record* in December 1943. "Green Valley, Constantia, Cape. A Country
House for the Architect, Professor L. W. Thornton White, F.R.I.B.A.," *South African
Architectural Record* 28, no. 12 (December 1943): 301-4; "'New Look' in Metal:
Deciduous Fruit Board Headquarters, Mill Street, Cape Town. Architects: Thornton White,
Pryce Lewis & Sturrock," *Architectural Review* (June 1954): 410; "New Flour Mill at
Rondebosch, Cape: Architects: Thornton White & Partners," *South African Architectural
Record* (1949): 187-91.

[140] "Foreshore Scheme: How the City Will Grow. Cape Town of the Future," *The Cape
Argus*, August 23, 1937, 17. BC 353, F2, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. See further: F.
Longstreth Thompson and L. W. Thornton White, *Report on the Town Planning Advisors
on the Cape Town Foreshore Scheme* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1940).

[141] Leslie Witz, *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts*
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 187. Also see: Nicholas Michiel Botha,
"The Gateway of Tomorrow: Modernist Town Planning on Cape Town's Foreshore 1930-
70" (PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 2013).

Nairobi plan.[142] During the 1940s, Silberman, an expert in colonial affairs who had finished

his degree at the University of Oxford, was at the start of an academic career that would

eventually lead him back to Britain via South Africa.[143] Silberman's position on a planning

team was rather unusual; he was brought on specifically, according to the Nairobi report,

because the "sociological difficulties of a new and multiracial urban area" necessitated the

expertise of a sociologist.[144] This, Thornton-White and Silberman commented in the report,

was "still somewhat of an innovation."[145] In Britain, sociologists were not appointed on

planning teams until the late 1940s, when for example, the sociologist Margaret Willis was

appointed to assist in the design of the Lansbury Estate in Poplar—a London neighborhood

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[142] Roy Turner, "Leo Silberman," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 9, no. 2 (January 1961): 218. It is unclear whether Thornton-White hired Silberman, or the Nairobi Municipal Council did.

[143] In Britain, Silberman taught at the University of Liverpool, where he continued to work on racial issues. Here, he collaborated with Dennis Chapman, a social psychologist (see Chapter 3) on a research project exploring racial prejudice and discrimination in Liverpool schools. See: Dennis Chapman et al., *Colour and Class in Six Liverpool Schools* (Liverpool, University of Liverpool Press, 1950). In the decade thereafter, Silberman moved to the United States to teach at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. Silberman, who established himself as an expert on East Africa and who spoke Swahili, also worked for UNESCO and the International Labor Organization in Geneva. He returned to East Africa with a grant from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1958, to study border disputes between the Somaliland and Ethiopia, a project that brought him under scrutiny of the CIA. During this time, he came under scrutiny of the CIA. Although he was never charged with anything, the CIA's documentation described Silberman as someone who wrote "exceedingly well, and has considerable experience in Africa," but also had a "reputation for being glib, slick, quick-tongued" and creating "impressions which are not true." See: David Price, *Cold War Anthropology: The CIA, the Pentagon, and the Growth of Dual Use Anthropology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 224. Silberman's publications included: Leo Silberman, "Change and Conflict in the Horn of Africa," *Foreign Affairs* (1959): 649-59 and Leo Silberman, "Ethiopia: Power of Moderation," *Middle Eastern Journal* (Spring 1960): 141-52.

[144] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 1.

[145] Ibid.

wiped out by the Blitz.[146] Put differently, Silberman's role was to mitigate the mounting

racial tensions, or "frictions," in the city, as manifested by, among other things, the

recurring labor protests.[147] In 1942 alone, there were nineteen labor strikes in the British

colony.[148]

Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan for Nairobi marked the beginning of a

relatively successful, yet increasingly strained collaboration that lasted for two years and

resulted in two other plans for British East Africa: one for Kenya's harbor city Mombasa

and one for Port-Louis, the capital of the island of Mauritius, a colony taken over from the

French by the British in 1810.[149] **(Figure 1.20, 1.21)** While still working on the plans for

Nairobi, Mombasa, and Port-Louis, Silberman moved from the University of

Witwatersrand to the sociology department at the University of Liverpool in 1947. The

transfer forced Thornton-White to complete most of the work, such as data gathering and

interviews, by himself.[150] Like Nairobi, both Mombasa and Port-Louis were the location of

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[146] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 99.

[147] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 1.

[148] Nicholas Githuku, *Mau Mau Crucible of War: Statehood, National Identity, and Politics of Postcolonial Kenya* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), 126.

[149] Leonard Thornton-White, *A Master Plan for Port Louis, Mauritius: A Report* (Cape Town: Thornton-White, Pryce Lewis & Sturrock Architects & Town Planning Consultants, 1952).

[150] Thornton-White was increasingly critical about the quality of Silberman's work. In 1947, in relation to Mombasa project, Thornton-White wrote in a letter to Silberman: "You must have been very very tired Leo when you wrote that chapter. I find that I can accept neither its form nor its details…I cannot even show them [the Board] the many notes you sent to me last January, because they are only preliminary baby talk about the problem and not a serious analysis." Thornton-White to Silberman, Mombasa, October 7, 1947. B25, BC353, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. For the Mombasa plan, Thornton-White rewrote the parts submitted by Silberman, stating they are inaccurate. In another letter to one of the architects in his office in Cape Town, Thornton-White described Silberman as a

civil unrest and strikes during the 1940s. Despite their different social, political, and geographical contexts, both projects were informed by many of the same ideas that characterized the Nairobi plan. The proposed interventions focused on zoning and regulating traffic to stimulate the colonial economy and, at the same time, to prevent further strikes or uprisings.[151]

Although the official plans only hinted at the civil unrest in East Africa, they repeatedly mentioned "frictions," the "clash of cultures," or "race conflict," in their private communication.[152] For instance, one of Thornton-White's visits to Mombasa coincided with a large-scale labor strike organized by the town's dockworkers, utility workers, government workers, and domestic servants. The strike, which became known as Mombasa's General Strike, brought the town to a "standstill," and made the British government "completely ineffective," Thornton-White wrote to Silberman:

> More than a dozen ships are lying idle, waiting for labour…The military huts above the harbour were completely burnt out and the navy were just in time to save an ammunition store. A frigate has its guns trained on the fort and the streets are patrolled by the services, rifles and machine guns, though I do not think there has been any shooting. There has been a good deal of mob looting, the head shaving and

"nuisance." Thornton-White to Pryce, Mombasa, September 19, 1947. B25, BC353, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

[151] "£1,750,000 Development Scheme for Mombasa's Old Town," *The Kenya Daily Mail*, July 27, 1946. BC 353, F2, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. In Port-Louis, Thornton-White also designed workers' housing for one of the island's sugar estates. Leonard Thornton-White, *Report on the Housing of Sugar Estate Workers* (Port Louis: J. Eliel Felix, Government Printer, 1949).

[152] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 1, 9.

mild torture of natives attempting to work. The whole strike is in my opinion very

well organized…"[153]

If "strikes should be avoided," Silberman wrote to Thornton-White in return, "then [the

British leadership] must do something imaginative." Their plan for Mombasa, Silberman

added, would "push development" and turn the city into Kenya's "showplace."[154]

1.4. Better Housing, Better Workers

The urban transformation of Nairobi coincided with the colonial administration's

recognition, as historian Frederick Cooper has argued, that black workers were a class that

"posed a distinct danger of collective action."[155] At the same time, a more productive labor

force—workers who would not interrupt production by striking or by returning home for

extended periods of time—came to be considered as one of the key factors for Kenya's

economic development. "In order to increase production," Kenya's Labour Commissioner,

E. M. Hyde-Clarke, stated, "we have got to have either more labour or better labour, and I

have a very firm conviction that the answer lies in the second."[156]

The plan for Nairobi was a direct response to multiple government reports

concerned with labor efficiency and the prevention of labor strikes.[157] During the 1940s,

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[153] Thornton-White to Silberman, Mombasa, January 19, 1947. B25, BC353, Thornton-White Papers, UCT. On the 1947 Mombasa strike, see: Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 234-41.

[154] Silberman to Thornton-White, London, June 2, 1947. B25, BC353, Thornton-White Papers, UCT.

[155] Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 138.

[156] E. M. Hyde-Clarke cited in Cooper, *On the African Waterfront*, 119-20.

[157] A report on labor in Mombasa written by the Philips Committee, for example, responded to a series of repeated citywide strikes that brought the town to a near stand-still and caused a state of "near panic" among government officials. Cooper, *On the African*

newly appointed labor experts, such as C. H. Northcott, the President of the British Institute

for Personnel Management, conducted various labor surveys in different parts of East

Africa. Northcott, for example, surveyed Kenya-Uganda Railway employees in Nairobi,

publishing the results as the *African Labour Efficiency Survey*. Northcott, who was trained

in modern labor management theories, emphasized the need for higher wages but also

singled out malnutrition, a lack of education, and adequate supervision as factors that

diminished labor efficiency in Kenya.[158] According to Northcott, the railway mechanics he

observed and interviewed, "worked continuously and well, manifested initiative, did work

of good quality, and took pride in it."[159] Meanwhile, Northcott was critical of the Kenya-

Uganda Railway's British managers, business executives, and foremen who considered

their employees to be inefficient and indolent. With higher wages, better social benefits,

and better supervision, they could work as well as anyone, Northcott argued. Nineteenth-

century, industrializing England was frequently invoked as a framework of reference in

these surveys. For example, in a survey of labor efficiency which focused on the East

African Tobacco Company in Kampala, the economist Walter Elkan complained that the

situation in the factory resembled "more the England of Robert Owen than that of the

Institute of Personnel Management," referring to the English organization for labor

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Waterfront, 69. Also see: G. Orde-Browne, *Labour Conditions in East Africa* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1946).

[158] C. H. Northcott, *African Labour Efficiency Survey* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1949).

[159] C. H. Northcott cited in Linstrum, *Empire of Minds*, 145. Northcott's investigation also led to a debate in the House of Commons, where a Labour MP urged for investigations into the "grave discontent among African workers as a result of continued colour discrimination, grievances concerning alienation of land, and a lack of opportunities for advancement." Ibid., 145-6.

management.[160] At the same time, publication of the surveys came to be considered as potential cause of further protest. Northcott, for example, was urged to amend his conclusions for fear that "African political agitators" would seize the publication of his report as an opportunity for "a good deal of unrest."[161]

One of the crucial issues identified by these inquiries was the lack of adequate housing. Assuming a relation between "good" housing and social stability, Northcott and others speculated that permanent family housing close to the workplace would help increase labor productivity and prevent further urban uprisings. These reports recommended providing state-sponsored housing—a process that became known as stabilization and came to dominate, as Cooper has argued, postwar colonial labor policy in Kenya.[162] While stabilization was a response to an urbanization process that began long prior to the developmental politics that emerged in the 1940s, increasingly frequent strikes gave a particular urgency to the administration's shift to build housing for black workers and their families. Stabilization became a strategy to improve labor productivity as well as to counter what British administrators perceived as political and social "instability." Indeed, in 1946, one of the colony's annual reports confirmed that long-term labor policy was now "directed toward the stabilisation of urban workers, with a consequent need for increased

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[160] Walter Elkan, *An African Labour Force.* East African Studies, no. 7 (London: King and Jarrett, 1955), 16. Also see: Walter Elkan, "Migrant Labor in Africa: An Economist's Approach," *The American Economic Review* 49, no. 2 (May 1959): 188-97; Walter Elkan, *Migrants and Proletarians: Urban Labour in the Economic Development of Uganda.* East African Institute of Social Research (London: Oxford University Press, 1960). Thornton-White and Silberman also referred to nineteenth-century England in their plan, see: Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 6.

[161] Cited in Linstrum, *Empire of Minds,* 145.

[162] Cooper, *On the African Waterfront*, 1987; Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 137-41.

social services and higher wages."[163] Thornton-White's and Silberman's project aligned

with these new objectives; they proclaimed that their scheme aimed to promote the

"stabilisation of the urban African population."[164]

During the early decades of the twentieth century, Nairobi's economy depended

on an exploitative system of male migrant wage earners who were hired for weeks or

months, before being dismissed. In the administration's ideal vision, workers owned a

shamba, a fertile piece of land, where they lived with their wives and children, grew crops,

and where they returned when the work in Nairobi was completed.[165] They were migrant

workers whose permanent abode, the colonial administration claimed, was elsewhere, in the

"native areas" of Kenya.[166] Partly to prevent families from settling in the town and partly to

keep labor costs low, workers were paid a bachelor's wage, entirely insufficient for

supporting a family.[167]

The authorities' insistence on a migratory labor force stemmed from the

contradiction that undergirded the British colonial system of governance until World War

II, also known as "Indirect Rule," a system popularized through Lord Lugard's publication

The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (1922). British colonial officers, such as Lord

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[163] Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 125.

[164] Thornton-White et al., 57.

[165] Harris and Hay, "New Plans for Housing," 202.

[166] Robert Home, "Colonial Township Laws and Urban Governance in Kenya," *Journal of African Law* 56, no. 2 (October 2012): 175-93.

[167] See for example, Frederick Cooper, "From Free Labor to Family Allowances: Labor and African Society in Colonial Discourse," *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 745-65.

Lugard, relied upon the power of local rulers, "chiefs," to control their populations.[168]

Fearing that urban environments were spaces which stimulated political mobilization, this

decentralized system of administration endeavored to prevent rapid social change.[169]

A key characteristic of indirect rule was a deep-seated anxiety about

"detribalization," or the disintegration of existing "tribal" structures, which colonial

administrators reckoned would occur if Africans were to permanently settle in Nairobi.

Such ideas were corroborated by early twentieth-century British anthropologists like

Bronislaw Malinowski, who argued that "culture contact" would take place through

urbanization. Malinowski, for instance, expressed his concerns about "detribalised" black

South Africans he encountered during a visit to the country in 1930. He labelled them

"sociologically unsound." They had lost the order of "tribal" society but failed adjust to

"European" society.[170]

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[168] See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996) Also see: Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity. The W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). Mamdani has argued that this bifurcated structure was also engrained in the colonial legal system. colonial administrations maintained two separate legal systems, side-by-side. British, "modern," law governed British residents while customary, "tribal," law administered Black inhabitants. The settlement of Black laborers in Nairobi thus blurred the clear distinctions set up by the colonial state by moving from the increasingly overcrowded "reserves," spaces allocated for Black settlement, to the "township," the area within Nairobi's municipal boundaries.

[169] Godwin Rapando Murunga, "The Cosmopolitan Tradition and Fissures in Segregationist Town Planning in Nairobi," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 3 (August 2012), 464.

[170] Malinowski cited in Jason Hickel, *Democracy as Death: The Moral Order of Anti-Liberal Politics in South Africa* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2015), 93.

In Nairobi, many workers lived on the land of their employer in so-called "bed-spaces," sometimes also called *lhandies*, that provided little more than a bed.[171] In 1906, a new law required companies to provide housing for their black staff members. The Kenya-Uganda Railroads, for example, maintained several barracks, providing 1683 bed-spaces.[172] Even well into the 1940s, employers and the Municipal Council continued to build "bachelor-type" accommodation for male black laborers in Nairobi—a fact which underlines that the administration's shift to construct state-sponsored housing for black families in the Eastlands was gradual rather than abrupt. Others, working as domestic servants, lived in servant's quarters typically located at the back of the dwelling or in garden shacks.[173]

As historians such as White have described, many also settled down illegally on Nairobi's fringes, where they constructed large houses, keeping half of the residence to themselves and renting the other half.[174] In the early decade of the twentieth century, these villages—including Kibera, home to various Luo migrants, and Pangani, a lodging area for residents who came from the coast—consisted of some one-hundred-fifty to two-hundred houses. Nairobi, the historian Andrew Hake wrote, was a "self-help city," dominated by vast stretches of self-constructed houses.[175] Despite the existence of these illegal settlements, colonial officers persistently, yet often erroneously, described Nairobi's black

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[171] Harris and Hay, "The Colonial Regime of Urban Housing," 513-18.

[172] Cooper, *On the African Waterfront*, 48; Harris and Hay, "New Plans for Housing," 198.

[173] Harris and Hay, "New Plans for Housing," 199. Harris and Hay underline the significant role of employers in the provision of housing in colonial Kenya.

[174] White, *The Comforts of Home*, 45-6; Harris and Hay, "The Colonial Regime of Urban Housing," 506: ft. 6.

[175] Hake, *African Metropolis,* 1977.

inhabitants, employed in the town's service industry and by the Kenya-Uganda Railroad Company, as "impermanent" dwellers.

In the period between 1905 and the mid-1940s, the municipality continuously struggled to control black settlement—and movement—within its municipal borders. In 1919, the Town Council of Nairobi decided to regularize one of the "African" settlements within the city boundary and laid out several plots, sewage services, and water pumps. This "Native location," called Pumwani, located close to the Uganda-Kenya Railroads on Nairobi's east-side, served to house all Africans employed in Nairobi who could not find housing through their employers.[176] **(Figure 1.22)** The geographers Richard Harris and Alison Hay have written that most of the houses built in Pumwani took on the form of "Swahili-style housing" consisting of various rooms along a central corridor, with a kitchen and latrine built at the end.[177] By 1934, the Land Commission counted 317 dwellings.[178] In Pumwani, the administration also attempted to impose restrictions on the area's inhabitants. Pumwani, for example, was regulated by a strict curfew; inhabitants were not to leave the "location" between 10pm and 5am, nor were Britons allowed to be present in Pumwani during these hours.[179] "Control over Africans' housing," White asserted, "became control over urban Africans."[180]

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[176] White, *The Comforts of Home*, 46-7. Also see Bodil Folke Frederiksen, "African Women and Their Colonisation of Nairobi: Representations and Realities," *AZANIA: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa* 36-7 (2000-2001): 223-34.

[177] Harris and Hay, "The Colonial Regime of Urban Housing," 526.

[178] Ibid.

[179] White, *The Comforts of Home*, 46-7.

[180] Ibid., 47.

Another legal measure to control black movement was the introduction of the

kipande (pass) system in 1915, which required black males over the age of fifteen to carry a

card around their neck at all times—a variation of infamous South African pass laws. The

card, which contained their employment history and fingerprints, had to be carried when

leaving the reserves for the township.[181] The *kipande*, Kenny Cupers and Prita Meier have

written, "restricted their physical mobility and reduced them to laboring things—stock to be

moved, rather than individuals to move of their own accord."[182] A set of vagrancy

ordinances passed during the same time considered anyone without a *kipande* as a vagrant,

who could therefore be detained in prison. Such laws, historian Robert Home has noted,

became increasingly strict during the 1940s. In 1947, for example, the authorities proposed

to expand the administration's power to deport any black man within Nairobi who was

unemployed for longer than three months.[183]

A drawing in Thornton-White's and Silberman's report—one of the few worked

out in detail—exemplifies how they intended to promote stabilization. **(Figure 1.23)**

Mirroring Abercrombie's plan for London, Thornton-White and Silberman envisaged the

Eastlands as an area of several, distinct neighborhoods, or "neighborhood units" for black

working-class families.[184] The neighborhood unit (a subject further discussed in Chapter 2)

dominated 1940s reconstruction planning in Britain. In Abercrombie's scheme, as in the

Nairobi plan, these self-contained residential areas were separated from the rest of the city

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[181] Home, "Colonial Township Laws," 179.

[182] Cupers and Meier, "The Trans-African Highway," 74.

[183] Home, "Colonial Township Laws," 180.

[184] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 46.

by roads or green spaces. They also included various social and educational facilities, as well as health care centers. Thornton-White's schematic plan for one of these neighborhoods shows a variation of slightly curving streets with terraced houses and detached dwellings. The drawing presents the area as an idyllic neighborhood, conveniently located close to the Nairobi's industrial zone, with lots of green space and, in the middle, shops, a nursery, a church, and a large community center. "Neighborhood planning," Silberman wrote to Thornton-White,

> gets over the question of 'horizontal mobility' as I like to call it, or racial permeation, as it might fix people in their present residential area. Also it makes for increased social services for the natives, which is what I feel, is most needed. And it meets the 'atmosphere' of European small townishness which is Nairobi…Needless to say we won't call it 'segregation' as this would cause revolution nor need any plan have the stigma of segregation.[185]

For Thornton-White and Silberman, neighborhood planning, particularly in combination with increasingly stringent vagrancy laws and the *kipande* system, offered a tool to create a largely segregated city.

1.5. Nairobi as "Multiracial City"

In 1943, two years before travelling to Nairobi, Silberman offered his views on planning and "race relations," or the management of racial tensions, during a symposium at the

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[185] Silberman to Thornton-White, London, June 2, 1947, 3. BC 353 B25, Thornton-White Papers, CPT. In the same letter, Silberman criticized neighborhood planning, "The neighborhood ideology, of which I was always a critical follower, seems to have had its run and is beginning to be *vieux jeu* in England. Rightly so since it doesn't amount to much more than emphasising the virtues of the village community…" Silberman's sentiments echoed the criticism of a growing group of British architects and sociologists during the 1940s and '50s on neighborhood unit planning, see Chapter 2.

University of Witwatersrand's School of Architecture in Johannesburg.[186] The symposium

was organized to celebrate the opening of an exhibition, *Rebuilding South Africa*, inspired

by *Rebuilding Britain*, a show on British reconstruction planning organized by Jane Drew

(another MARS Group member) at the National Gallery in London.[187] Like *Rebuilding*

Britain, the exhibition in Johannesburg consisted of large panels that juxtaposed

photographs and infographics with text and tackled issues including sprawl, overcrowding,

and transport. What was different, however, was the focus on racial segregation and "inter-

racial contact."[188]

In his talk, Silberman put forward some of the ideas that also underpinned the

Nairobi project. He described society as consisting of different groups, each with its own

interests and cultural habits. Silberman's thinking—which was closely associated with that

of the South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR), located on the campus of the

University of Witwatersrand—was rooted in the idea of pluralism, or the "plural

society."[189] Alfred Hoernlé, for example, chairman of the SAIRR and Professor of

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[186] Leo Silberman, "Social Postulates of Planning," *South African Architectural Record* 28, no. 9 (September 1943), 215–20.

[187] In his opening address, H. J. Van Eck mentioned the exhibition in the National Gallery. "Opening Address," *South African Architectural Record* 28, no. 9 (September 1943): 208.

[188] Silberman, "Social Postulates," 218.

[189] Such ideas were shared by other British and South African sociologists working in Africa, including Cyril and Rhona Sofer, trained at the University of Cape Town and the London School of Economics. In their survey on industrialization and housing in Jinja, in Uganda, they described it as a "plural society." See: Cyril and Rhona Sofer, *Jinja Transformed: A Social Survey of a Multi-Racial Township* (Kampala: East African Institute for Social Studies, 1955). Also see: "Race Relations in East Africa: Perplexities of a Plural Society," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 40, no. 157-60 (1949): 140-5. On the SAIRR, see: Ellen Hellman, *The South African Institute of Race Relations, 1929-1979* (Johannesburg: South African Institute for Race Relations, 1979); Paul Rich, *White Power and Liberal Conscience: Racial Segregation and South African Libertarianism* (Manchester and Johannesburg, 1984); Saul Dubow, "Race,

Philosophy at the University of Witwatersrand, described South Africa as a "multi-racial

State," consisting of "Natives," "Europeans" "Asiatics," and "Cape Coloureds."[190] In *South*

African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit (1939)—a book cited by Thornton-White and

Silberman—Hoernlé argued that South Africa was divided "by the tensions and frictions

resulting from the mutual antagonisms" between these four groups.[191] Relating these

insights to planning, Silberman put forward the idea of "voluntary segregation."[192]

According to Silberman, who self-identified as a liberal, segregation was a natural process;

he reasoned that people "like their own kind," and he doubted whether "many non-

Civilization and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-war
Years," in *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*,
eds. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (London: Routledge, 1987), 71-94.

[190] Alfred Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit. The Phelps-Stokes
Lectures, University of Cape Town, 1939* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press,
1945), 143-4. Hoernlé, a German-born philosopher and liberal thinker who had, like
Silberman, studied at the University of Oxford, developed some of these ideas about
pluralism under the tutelage of political thinkers at Oxford such as Bernard Bosanquet and
Harold Laski, who promoted political pluralism and the idea of decentralized state. On
Laski, see for example, Paul Lamb, *Harold Laski: Problems of Democracy, the Sovereign
State and International Society* (New York: Palgrave Macmilllan, 2004).

[191] Hoernlé, *South African Native Policy,* 147.

[192] Leo Silberman, "Social Postulates," 218.

Europeans would desire a mixing of the races."[193] Moreover, "accepting a measure of racial

segregation," would help to prevent racial tensions.[194]

Established in 1929, the SAIRR was concerned with scientific research on the

"native question."[195] The white, mostly English-speaking liberals and Jewish émigrés who

led the institute believed that through gathering and disseminating knowledge, race

relations could be improved.[196] Race relations—a phrase first used by Chicago School

sociologists such as Robert Ezra Park—moved away from the study of race as a biological

category and pseudo-scientific ideas about "racial hygiene" but increasingly focused on

social dynamics.[197] For several decades, the SAIRR published a quarterly journal, *Race*

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[193] Ibid. Both Silberman and Thornton-White considered themselves as liberal thinkers and opposed to the increasingly strict segregationist policies in South Africa. Thornton-White was also involved in the small Fabian Society in Cape Town, an outpost of the socialist society in Britain. During the 1950s, Thornton-White became active in anti-apartheid politics at the University of Cape Town and chaired the Academic Freedom Committee, a committee that advocated against the removal of the already very few Black students enrolled at the University under apartheid laws such as the Extension of the University Education Act in 1959. Still, despite his repudiation of apartheid politics, Thornton-White never considered returning to Britain and continued to teach and practice in South Africa for the rest of his life, unlike other South African-based architects during this period.

[194] Leo Silberman, "Social Postulates," 218.

[195] Saul Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-1936* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 16.

[196] During the 1940s, the institute came under attack by organizations such as the African National Congress failing to firmly distance itself from the apartheid government headed by D.F. Malan, elected in 1948.

[197] Clapson points to the occurrence in the term in 1919, in relation to the Chicago Commission on Race Relations investigated racial riots in the city. Mark Clapson, "The American contribution to the urban sociology of race relations in Britain from the 1940s to the early 1970s," *Urban History* 33, no. 2 (2006): 255. The SAIRR was funded by the Phelps-Stokes Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, American organizations which supported research on race relations in the United States. See: Dubow, *Racial Segregation,* 156; R. Hunt Davis, "Charles t. Loram and an American Model for African Education in South Africa," *African Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (September 1976): 87-99.

Relations, that contained contributions by economists, sociologists and political scientists about interracial relations. The institute's overall aim was to "work for the establishment of goodwill and practical co-operation between the various racial groups in the population."[198] To do so, the SAIRR was involved in several social welfare initiatives, such as the development of libraries in townships. Its liberal vision was one not of radical reform but gradual change through investment in social welfare and inter-racial cooperation.[199]

In his talk during the opening of *Rebuilding South Africa*, Silberman also argued that "inter-racial contact" could help relieve racial frictions and tensions.[200] According to

[198] C. M. Hore-Ruthven, "The South African Institute of Race Relations," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36, no. 144 (July 1937): 311. The idea of society composed of different, segregated groups, was similar to the vision developed by Robert Ezra Park during the early decades of the twentieth-century. Park, who had worked for the African-American educator and sociologist Booker T. Washington on race related issues and labor conditions in the segregated American south, was known for his investigations into racial and cultural relations in the Chicago. "The turn from "society to societies, i.e. social groups" that Park encouraged," historian David Zimmerman has written, "was a political strategy as much as a social-scientific methodology, both describing and prescribing an imperial matrix of fixed and stable differences." David Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 232.

[199] In Britain, race relations did not develop as a separate discipline until the late 1940s, in response to migration to the United Kingdom and to the escalating racial tensions in places such as Kenya and Rhodesia. A landmark in the development of race relations as a distinct discipline of research was the establishment of the Institute for Race Relations (IRR) in 1952, embedded within Chatham House in London, the Royal Institute for International Affairs. In 1958, the Institute became an independent organization, and continues to exist today. See: Henry Hudson, "Race Relations in the Commonwealth," *International Affairs* 26, no. 3 (1950): 305-315. Also see: Brett Bebber, "The Architects of Integration: Research, Public Policy, and the Institute of Race Relations in Post-imperial Britain," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (2019): https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2019.1638627; Chris Waters, "'Dark Strangers' in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2 (April 1997): 207-38; Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Paul Rich, *Prospero's Return? Historical Essays on Race, Culture and British Society* (London: Hansib, 1994).

[200] Silberman, "Social Postulates," 218.

Silberman, cities had to promote "nuclei of inter-racial contact," places such as universities, museums, shops, and social clubs, where different races could meet. He also argued that Joint Councils, organizations with a racially mixed membership, would help improve race relations.[201] Joint Councils, located in different places throughout South Africa, were the SAIRR's primary vehicle to promote "practical co-operation."[202] The SAIRR coordinated the activities of these organizations, whose members consisted of various, white and black, liberal academics, politicians, churchmen, and social workers. According to historian Saul Dubow, the Joint Councils were concerned with social welfare related issues but "also attempted, through a process of discussion and research, to 'build bridges' between whites and blacks, on the one hand, and influence government policies, on the other."[203] Through studying race relations and creating Joint Councils, the supposedly liberal members of the SAIRR thought they could improve the increasingly tense situation in South Africa. Yet by believing that race relations boiled down to issues of inter-personal communication, Silberman and his colleagues tended to downplay structural questions about racial oppression and exploitation. Their work disguised the role of the economic and political institutions that perpetuated racial inequality.[204]

Similarly, Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan for Nairobi referred to the creation of several spaces in the city, such as parks, libraries, and "meeting halls," that

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[201] Ibid.

[202] Hore-Ruthven, "The South African Institute of Race Relations," 311.

[203] Dubow, *Racial Segregation,* 156.

[204] Stephen Steinberg made a similar argument in relation to the work of Park and his Chicago School colleagues. Stephen Steinberg, *Race Relations: A Critique* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

could be "a meeting point for many peoples" and used according to the different interests of the "many cultures that are thrown here together in crazy-quilt fashion from three continents."[205] In this way, the project aligned with the overall plan of the British government to promote "more contacts, more race relations, more social mixing…"[206] Within a town dominated by a strict racial hierarchies, such ideas offered the impression of social reform.[207]

One example Thornton-White and Silberman might have had in mind was the United Kenya Club, Kenya's first inter-racial social club. Established in 1946 with the support of Philip Mitchell, Kenya's governor, Ernest Vasey, a businessman and mayor of Nairobi, and Tom Askwith, Nairobi's African Affairs officer, the United Kenya Club was an organization whose official goal it was to improve "social relations among the races in Kenya."[208] The club, located in Nairobi's center, had thirty-three founding members, eleven

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[205] Thornton-White et al., *Nairobi*, 54.

[206] Ibid., 10. They juxtaposed this with South Africa's increasingly segregationist policies, which envisioned the "minimizing of the inter-racial contact" as a "solution of the racial problem."

[207] Fenner Brockway, a British MP, attempted to make the "color bar" in Kenya illegal in the 1950s, but failed. See: Gopal, *Insurgent Empire*, 403-24.

[208] Julius Simiyu Nabende, "The History of the United Kenya Club, 1946 to 1963" (master's thesis, University of Nairobi, 1990), 86. Vasey was also a member of the Legislative Council from 1945 to 1959. See: Tignor, *Capitalism and Nationalism at the End of Empire*, 309-11. In 1958, after the Mau Mau, Vasey declared on BBC that he considered it necessary for the Legislative Council to have an "African majority," a position much-opposed by many white settlers in Kenya. See: David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: The Man Kenya Wanted to Forget* (Nairobi and London: Heineman, 1982), 96. On Tom Askwith, see his memoir, which also contains a chapter on the United Kenya Club and interracial relations: Tom Askwith, *From Mau Mau to Harambee: Memoirs and Memoranda of Colonial Kenya*, ed. Joanna Lewis (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1995). It was Askwith who became responsible for developing a large-scale program of civic reform, or "rehabilitation," during the "Mau Mau rebellion," the protest of the Kikuyu against the dispossession of their lands, the low-wages, harrowing working conditions, and systemic inequality, brutally repressed by the British Army. Askwith played an important

of whom were black.[209] The club held weekly meetings and invited speakers such as Tom

Mboya, leader of the Kenya Local Government Workers Union, and Jomo Kenyatta,

Kenya's future president.[210] "In light of the extraordinary economic inequalities in Kenya,"

historian Caroline Elkins has written, "this club may appear to have been a minor

achievement, but in the context of the time and place its founding was revolutionary."[211]

Mitchell, Vasey, and others also pushed for increased political representation of Nairobi's

black inhabitants. A sign of gradual progress was the appointment of two Africans, Francis

Khamisi and Muchohi Gikonyo, to the Municipal Council in 1946.[212]

    At the same time, Thornton-White and Silberman legitimized their decision to

construct a separate area for "African" housing not by advocating for racial segregation (or

at least not outwardly) but by pointing to people's own internal motivations to cluster. In

1952, Thornley Dyer, Nairobi's city planner and close collaborator of Thornton-White and

Silberman, articulated some of these ideas when he stated that

> Although the political policy for the multi-racial town is one of non-segregation of
> races, it is found in practice that *segregation is a natural process* similar to that
> among different income groups in Britain. European, Asian and African can live
> amicably in the same town provided sufficient land is made available for housing

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role in the forced relocation of thousands of Kikuyu into "villageisation camps" for
purposes of control, surveillance, and re-education between 1952 and 1960. See: Elkins,
Britain's Gulag, 101-5.

[209] Nabende, "The History of the United Kenya Club," 27.

[210] Christine Stephanie Nicholls, *Red Strangers: The White Tribe of Kenya* (London:
Trimwell Press, 2005), 248.

[211] Elkins, *Britain's Gulag*, 102.

[212] "The Courts Ordinance," *Kenya Gazette*, June 18, 1946, 308. Such views were
vehemently opposed by the "Highlanders" on the Council, who generally advocated for
stricter segregation laws and argued against reform.

each group, but the wide differences in habits, customs and outlook make it desirable that they should not live cheek by jowl. The planning criterion in this respect is therefore for *natural but not enforced segregation.*"[213]

In Thornton-White's and Silberman's project, social and cultural differences replaced biology as an organizational mechanism to insist on essential, and often insurmountable, difference. Borrowing from the SAIRR's model of "practical co-operation," the Nairobi plan allowed limited "inter-racial contact" through a small number of shared public spaces. On the whole, however, Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan consisted of separated neighborhoods, divided through parkways, secondary roads, and green spaces—a largely segregated city, advertised widely as multiracial. Rather than a "naïve vision" rooted in British superiority, the notion of a "multi-racial society" was a well-thought out political strategy to maintain control and prevent further civil unrest in the British settler colony.[214]

This chapter has showed that Thornton-White's and Silberman's project aimed to stimulate the movement of goods—cash crops such as tea, coffee, and sisal—while reducing the mobility of the city's black working class. Here, the idea of a multiracial city meant the inclusion of housing for Nairobi's black working class within the municipal boundary precisely to prevent, in Thornton-White's and Silberman's words, further "racial permeation." Instead of considering Thornton-White's and Silberman's proposal to create "proper urban communities" as a shift towards a more open, inclusive city, the continuity of the *kipande* system and the attempts to propose more stringent rules indicates that the

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[213] Harold Thornley Dyer, G. I. Burke, "Influence of Economic Factors on Criteria for Community Planning," Commission for Technical Co-operation Conference, South Africa, 1952. CO859/314, TNA (emphasis mine).

[214] "Naïve vision" is the historian David Gordon's interpretation of "multiracialism" in postwar Kenya. See: Gordon, *Decolonization and the State,* 223.

intention to create a vast zone consisting of subsidized housing estates was just another step

in a long struggle to control black occupancy within the city.

CHAPTER TWO

Community Centers, Tea Houses, and Open-Air Cinemas: Ernst May's Designs for a Kampala Neighborhood

"Town planning must, for success, be accompanied by intensive

propaganda, based on the African's psychology."[215]

Ernst May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 1948

2.1 Kampala: A Town "Composed of Different Races"

On March 7, 1945, *The Uganda Herald*, the local British newspaper, recounted the visit of

the German architect and planner Ernst May to Kampala, a town located in the British

Protectorate of Uganda.[216] May traveled to Kampala from his home and studio located in

the leafy suburb Karen in Nairobi, where he had been based since the 1930s and ran a

successful architectural practice, mainly catering to well-to-do British settlers. In Kampala,

May, a staunch supporter of British colonialism, presented his ambitious vision for the

rapidly growing center of Uganda's profitable cotton industry. During a public meeting

held in Kampala's High Court, he laid out his proposal for two new neighborhoods to be

located on the town's east side, consisting of 32,000 new houses, nearly doubling the

town's population. In the neo-classical High Court building, he also elaborated on his ideas

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[215] May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 46.

[216] "Kampala Development Scheme: Mr. May's Exposition," *The Uganda Herald*, March 14, 1945, 6.

to construct a remarkably high number of educational, social, and recreational facilities. This included primary and secondary schools, health centers, shops, sports grounds, and even a spacious exhibition center. Even more extraordinary were plans for a promenade flanked by merry-go-rounds, a tea house, a cinema, an open-air theatre, and several "community centers," a new type of building for community meetings and educational courses for adults.[217] Over the next two years, May developed an ambitious plan to transform Uganda's "cotton town"—a town located at the center of a territory that provided Lancashire's textile mills with thousands of bales of cotton every year.[218]

While the gathering was attended by only a few of Kampala's British occupants, *The Uganda Herald* noted the presence of a significant number of "Africans"—the term used to denote a large number of ethnic groups present in East Africa long before the arrival of the British in the late nineteenth century.[219] Among those to show up that Saturday afternoon were most likely several Ganda, people who belonged to the centuries-old Buganda kingdom, which ruled a vast territory in East Africa through a complex administrative system and whose capital, the *Kibuga*, was located immediately next to the

[217] May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 50.

[218] Mahmood Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1983), 11. During the 1930s, Uganda became the British empire's largest producer of cotton. See: Jonathan L. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 45; Cyril Ehrlich, "The Marketing of Cotton in Uganda, 1900-1950: A Case Study of Colonial Government Economic Policy" (PhD diss., University of London, 1958); Christopher Youé, "Peasants, Planters and Cotton Capitalists: The "Dual Economy in Colonial Uganda," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 2 (1978): 163-84. On British efforts to grown "empire cotton" more generally, see: Jonathan E. Robbins, *Cotton and Race across the Atlantic: Britain, Africa, and America, 1900-1920* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, University of Rochester Press, 2016).

[219] Land Officer, "Planning of Residential Areas on Kololo and Naguru," *The Uganda Herald*, March 7, 1945, 12.

township.[220] Their presence was not surprising: one of the two neighborhoods in May's extension plan was intended for male, black, mostly unskilled workers, and their families, although not necessarily Ganda. Many Ganda were landowners and worked as clerks, traders or middle-men in the cotton industry, not as low-skilled laborers employed by the Kenya-Uganda Railroads or by one of Kampala's many cotton ginneries.[221] Rather, May's housing project was planned for workers who had moved to town in recent years, coming from different parts of eastern Africa, and belonged to different ethnic groups, including the Banyankole, Batooro, Luo, and Acholi. Some rented accommodation within the *Kibuga* or settled down in self-built housing on Kampala's fringes. Others lived in male-only company-owned barracks. In the German architect's view, educational, cultural, and social facilities were to play a role in "stabilizing" these recently migrated workers and their families in Kampala. Schools, community centers, parks, and other social and recreational amenities would help to create "community" and, as he argued in the official publication associated with the plan, to "induce the African labourer to come more stable."[222] The

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[220] See, among others, Earle, *Colonial Buganda*, 2017. More generally see: Ogenga Otunnu, *Crisis of Legitimacy and Political Violence in Uganda, 1890 to 1979* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); David Ernest Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: Study of Bureaucratic Nationalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1961). On the political relation between the Buganda Kingdom and the British government and the development of the township of Kampala, see: Aidan Southall and Peter Gutkind, *Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and its Suburbs* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1957).

[221] "Some Preliminary Notes on the Housing Situation in Uganda," ca. 1953. CO822/715, TNA. See also: Walter Elkan, *An African Labour Force.* East African Studies, no. 7. (London: King and Jarrett, 1955). Elkan, a development economist associated with Makerere College in Uganda did extensive research on labor productivity in the East Africa Tobacco Factory during the 1950s, in the same vein as the labor efficiency surveys in Kenya in the 1940s, discussed in Chapter 1.

[222] Ernst May, *The Kampala Extension Plan: Kololo Naguru* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1947), 10.

construction of housing and proper neighborhoods would prevent the worker from "wandering back to his native village after a few months of work, a practice which is most detrimental to any kind of systematic trade or production."[223]

But May's project was also a direct response to the country's first nationwide strike, initiated by black workers in the cotton industry, just weeks before the German architect's first visit.[224] In January 1945, laborers in cotton ginneries in Entebbe, the country's administrative capital, had refused to show up to work, demanding higher wages. What started in Entebbe spread like wildfire across the country. The strikes lasted for weeks, with thousands of workers participating and making their dissatisfaction visible through protests on the streets. Armed with stones and sticks, they attacked Indian-owned cotton ginneries and British properties.[225]

The uprising immobilized the country that Winston Churchill once described as the "pearl of Africa" for its fertile lands and natural beauty, urging colonial officials to "concentrate on Uganda."[226] Railway services from Nairobi were disrupted, telegraph wires were cut, and food supplies intercepted. The scale of the protests surpassed any previous "disturbances" and took the colonial administration by surprise. Newspapers like *The*

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[223] Ibid.

[224] On the 1945 strikes, see: Gardner Thompson, "Colonialism in Crisis: The Uganda Disturbances of 1945," *African Affairs* 91, no. 365 (October 1992): 605-24; Carol Summers, "Ugandan Politics World War II (1939-1945)," in *Africa and World War II*, eds. Judith A. Byfield, Carolyn A. Brown, and Timothy Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 480-98. On colonial unrest during the postwar period in Uganda more generally, see: Timothy Oberst, "Transport Workers, Strikes and the 'Imperial Response': Africa and the Post World War II Conjecture," *African Studies Review* 31, no. 1 (1988): 117-33.

[225] Earle, *Colonial Buganda*, 63.

[226] Winston Churchill, *My African Journey* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1909), 209.

Uganda Herald described the situation as "disorderly" and professed fear and horror of the

"violent acts of intimidation" that transpired.[227] In the years after that, labor organizations

such as the Bataka Party and the Farmer's Union attempted to renegotiate the Protectorate's

relation to the British government through organizing mass meetings and strikes, and

through lobbying efforts in London.[228] **(Figure 2.1.)** While British officials in Uganda

presented May's design as a project to provide affordable housing and improve colonial

subject's living standards, its central aim was to prevent further social unrest and

conflict.[229]

    May's plans for Kampala, which were only ever partially executed, have

commonly been studied in isolation.[230] Except for recent work by Regina Göckede and

Andrew Byerley, scholars have understood May's designs in British East Africa in the

context of his earlier architectural and urban designs in Weimar Germany.[231] Mainly, Kai

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[227] "Widespread Strikes in Kampala: Picketers Cause Many Disorders," *The Uganda Herald*, January 17, 1945, 1.

[228] Summers, "Ugandan Politics World War II," 482.

[229] May, *The Kampala Extension Plan*, 18.

[230] Eckhard Herrel, *Ernst May: Architekt und Stadtplaner in Afrika 1934-1953* (Frankfurt: DAM, 2001) provides an overview of May's work in Africa. In 2011, Herrel's efforts were translated into an exhibition at the Deutsche Architektur Museum in Frankfurt. See: Claudia Quiring et al., eds. *Ernst May 1886-1970* (Munich: Prestel, 2011).

[231] Regina Göckede points to the necessity of relating May's work to late-colonial politics in "The Architect as Colonial Technocrat of Dependent Modernisation: Ernst May's Plan for Kampala," in *Afropolis – City, Media, Art*, eds. Kerstin Pinther, Larissa Forster, and Christian Hanussek (Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2012), 54-65. Andrew Byerly's detailed and excellent account focuses on one specific and somewhat separate part of the Kampala plan, Wandegeya. Contrary to previous scholarship, Byerly also takes in account issues such as local land politics. See: Andrew Byerly, "Drawing White Elephants in Africa? Recontextualizing Ernst May's Kampala Plans in Relation to the Fraught Political Realities of Late-Colonial Rule," *Planning Perspectives* (2018): https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2018.1425635.

Gutschow has considered May's proposition for Kampala in line with his plans for *Das Neue Frankfurt*, the well-known transformation of Frankfurt in the late 1920s into a city with thousands of apartments for lower-class German workers, an immense project directed by May and celebrated today for, among others, the implementation of Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky's modern kitchen designs.[232] Yet such interpretations have failed to connect May's project to the shifting political situation, and more specifically, the protests of Uganda's cotton workers during the 1940s and '50s. Nor have they related May, as a foreigner, to the colonial welfare and development policy as implemented by the British Labour Party in the 1940s, and its emphasis on "sub-economic" housing construction.

One possible explanation for this omission is the apparent difficulty of aligning May's socialist ideals about equality and better living circumstances for the working-classes, as embodied by *Das Neue Frankfurt* as well as his design for the steel-workers' city of Magnitogorsk in the USSR in the early 1930s, with those of the violent racial politics of Britain's administration in East Africa, rooted in inequality and the negation of

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[232] Kai Gutschow has examined the Kampala extension plan, specifically its cultural amenities, but does not link it to broader discussions about labor stabilization or civil unrest. Kai Gutschow, "Das Neue Afrika: Ernst May's 1947 Kampala Plan as Cultural Program," in *Colonial Architecture and Urbanism in Africa: Intertwined and Contested Histories,* ed. Fasil Demissie (London: Routledge, 2012), 373-406. The literature on May's work in Frankfurt is vast. Aside from Susan Henderson's exhaustive study, *Building Culture: Ernst May and the New Frankfurt Initiative, 1926-1931* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2013), see: Christoph Mohr and Michael Müller, *Funktionalität und Moderne: Das Neue Frankfurt (1925-1933)* (Köln: Fricke im Rudolf Müller, 1984); Barbara Miller Lane, "Architects in Power: Politics and Ideology in the Work of Ernst May and Albert Speer," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, no. 1 (1986): 283-310. On May's collaboration with Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in Frankfurt, see: Sophie Höchhausl, "From Vienna to Frankfurt Inside Core-House Type 7: A History of Scarcity Through the Modern Kitchen," *Architectural Histories* 1, no. 1: 1-19, http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ah.aq.

equal rights.[233] Hence, the two decades that May spent in East Africa, between 1933 and 1953, during which he also constructed a substantial number of villas for white settlers, various office buildings for British companies, and an extravagant hotel for British vacationers, are often seen as an aberration within an expansive career that revolved around worker's housing.

A close examination of May's extension plan for Kampala yields a different perspective, however. In this chapter, I argue that May envisaged his plan to assist in stabilizing Kampala's labor force through stimulating a sense of community. Through neighborhood facilities, specifically the community center, May's project aimed to impose upon its residents a British way of life rooted in values such as responsibility, self-reliability, duty, and loyalty. Following a discussion of community development and the Colonial Office's plans to construct a network of community centers across the British empire during the 1940s, I turn to May's extension plan for Kampala and compare his designs to two other abstract plans for "African" neighborhood units: one developed by Roy Gazzard, a young British graduate from the Architectural Association (AA) in London who worked as a town planner in Jinja, another town in Uganda, the other by Harold Thornley Dyer, Nairobi's town planner. Together, these examples show how ideas about stabilizing black workers and their families through creating community centers and other

[233] On May's work in Russia, with the "May Brigade," in the years before he moved to East Africa, see, among others, Thomas Flierl, "Ernst May's Standardized Cities for Western Siberia," in *Urbanism and Dictatorship: A European Perspective*, eds. Harald Bodenschatz, Piero Sassi, Max Welch Guerra (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015), 199-216; Koos Bosma, "New Socialist Cities: Foreign Architects in the USSR, 1920-1940," *Planning Perspectives* 29, no. 3 (2014), 301-28; Natallia Barykina, "Transnational Mobilities: Western European Architects and Planners in the Soviet Industrial Cities, 1928-1933," *Planning Perspectives* 32, no. 3 (2017): 333-52.

social and recreational facilities extended far beyond Kampala's municipal boundaries.

2.2. Community Development: From "Mobile Information Teams" to Community Centers

May's design responded to "community development," a colonial policy, which, as historian Joanna Lewis has suggested, combined British principles of community with the ideal of self-reliance.[234] The Colonial Office, hesitant to implement the same standards of social security adopted in Britain following the seminal Beveridge Report (1942), adamantly promoted community development as an alternative to social welfare measures implemented in the "motherland."[235] It was, in the words of Arthur Creech-Jones, Colonial Secretary of State, "a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community, with the active participation, and if possible, on the initiative of the community."[236] Community development efforts occurred in rural areas as well as in rapidly growing towns, where community development officers aimed to propel inhabitants into action with the help of particular "techniques" such as cinema that lifted the

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[234] Joanna Lewis, *Empire State-Building: War & Welfare in Kenya, 1925-52* (Oxford: James Curry, 2000). On mass education and community development, see, among others: John Holford, "Mass Education and Community Development in the British Colonies, 1940-1960: A Study in the Politics of Community Education," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 7, no. 3 (1988): 163-83. On concurrent community development efforts elsewhere, see, for example, Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2015). One of the projects discussed by Immerwahr is the American urban planner Albert Mayer's project in Etawah, India in 1948, which highlights the central role of the planner in postwar community development.

[235] Andreas Eckert, "Regulating the Social: Social Security, Social Welfare and the State in Late Colonial Tanzania," *The Journal of African History*, 45, no. 3 (2004): 467-89.

[236] Arthur Creech Jones cited in "Editorial," *Mass Education Bulletin* (1949), 2.

"psychological morale."[237]

In 1950, Edward Roland Chadwick, a "community development officer" in Eastern Nigeria and a sought-after speaker for training courses on community development in Britain and its African territories, outlined the basic tenets of community development based on his own practical experience.[238] Following general theories that came to define development thinking more broadly during the post-war period, Chadwick framed community development as a linear modernization process that implied the overcoming of "backwardness" caused by poverty and a lack of education.[239] Community development initiatives, led by other community development officers like Chadwick, encouraged local communities to undertake a variety of projects in the realms of public health, agriculture, and education that would lead to a "better" standard of living—a standard defined by living circumstances in mainland Britain. Like community development initiatives elsewhere, most notably the rural development schemes by the American urban planner Albert Mayer in India during the late 1940s, community development's success as defined by Chadwick rested on people's initiative.[240] "A mere desire for progress," Chadwick opined, was not enough. Written in paternalistic language rooted in racist stereotypes, Chadwick continued,

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[237] Edward Roland Chadwick, "The Anatomy of Mass Education," *Mass Education Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (March 1950): 30-6.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid., 31. Also see: Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing bureaucrats, backward Africans, and the development concept," in *International development and the social Sciences*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 64–92.

[240] See for example, Nicole Sackley, "Village Models: Etawah, India, and the Making and Remaking of Development in the Early Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 4 (September 2013): 749-78.

"The desire must be so keen as to drive the community to overcome its natural inertia and to convert its potential energy into what the mathematicians call kinetic energy."[241] The material goals of community development, in Chadwick's view, whether a road, a school, a well, or a maternity ward, were less important than the experience of working together towards a common goal and learning to collaborate and negotiate.

Community development, led by officers such as Chadwick, reduced local populations to passive subjects, waiting to be propelled into action. Just as development economists such as Paul Rosenstein-Rodan believed in the idea of a "Big Push," a substantial financial investment to activate underdeveloped countries' economies, community development relied on the efforts of a foreign agent—the community development officer—to energize local communities.[242] One of the central tenets of community development during the 1940s was that to become self-reliant, these communities required assistance from an outside "expert." At the same time, the generic category of "community," as architectural historian Ijlal Muzaffar has argued, rendered vastly different geographical areas into the working terrain of a relatively mobile, foreign expert.[243]

Chadwick published his article in the *Mass Education Bulletin*, a short-lived but

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[241] Chadwick, "The Anatomy of Mass Education," 32.

[242] Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, "Problems of Industrialisation of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe," *The Economic Journal* 53, no. 210/211 (June-September 1943): 202-11; Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 2011).

[243] Ijlal Muzaffar, "'The World on Sale': Architectural Exports and Construction of Access" in *OfficeUS Agenda*, eds. Eva Franch I Gilabert et al. (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2014), 227-39.

significant outlet for ideas about community development during the late 1940s and early 1950s, published by the Colonial Office. Initially, "community development" and "mass education" were terms used interchangeably, although community development was increasingly preferred. (*Mass Education Bulletin* changed its name to *Community Development Bulletin* in 1951.) While mass education focused primarily on education in the classroom and literacy, community development comprised a wide range of activities and thus better concurred with the Colonial Office's policies regarding welfare and development.

In 1941, the Colonial Advisory Committee on Education had published a report titled *Mass Education in African Society* (1941), which underlined the necessity of "mass literacy" campaigns to accompany the fast-paced economic change propelled by the increased focus on the development of material resources. Mass education, and later community development, thus accompanied technocratic, top-down development initiatives instigated across British Africa during the 1940s, like the hydroelectric Owen Falls dam. Colonial administrators perceived the alleged lag between economic development and social change as a "real danger of social upheaval."[244] Colonial officials also argued that economic change led to the "disintegration" of existing social systems. As an antidote to this broad and somewhat undefined set of social issues, the Colonial Office proposed an equally indeterminate and pliable remedy: community development.

During the middle of the 1940s, the Colonial Office became particularly fearful of the return of millions of African soldiers enlisted in the British colonial army during World

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[244] "Mass Education in African Society: A British Colonial Office Publication," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 43, no. 171 (April 1944): 93.

War II. In Uganda, as historian Carol Summers has observed, "77,000 newly cosmopolitan soldiers began to return home, and war-impoverished Britain considered how to repay debts to Uganda that included more than a million pounds sterling in direct lending and thee million from the Cotton and Coffee Fund, as well as soldier's wages and more abstract indebtness."[245] Accustomed to a "higher standard of life," soldiers had the potential to transform into "an explosive element."[246] In his pamphlet "An African Soldiers Speaks" (1946), Robert Kakembo, a veteran from Buganda, described the Ugandan soldier as someone who has learned "to read and write…[is] used to reading newspapers, to listening to wireless broadcasts…[who] will never submit to the neglect that the uneducated masses, back home in the villages, undergo."[247] In his ten-year development plan for Uganda, solicited by the Colonial Office, the British scientist Edgar Barton Worthington also linked community development to the return of soldiers to Kampala and elsewhere.[248] Community development initiatives would offer a panacea against the "dullness of life" encountered upon arrival.[249] In other words, underneath community development's aims, framed in an upbeat and positive language of "partnership" and "co-operation," lingered fears about

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[245] Summers, "Uganda Politics World War II," 482.

[246] "Mass Education in African Society," 93.

[247] Kakembo cited in Summers, "Uganda Politics World War II," 482-3.

[248] Edgar Barton Worthington and Douglas Harris, *A Development Plan for Uganda*: *The 1948 Revision of the Plan* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1949), 53. Worthington worked on the African Research Survey with Lord Hailey and subsequently served as a scientific secretary on the Colonial Research Committee. After World War II, he joined the East Africa High Commission and, in 1950, became the first secretary-general of the Scientific Council for Africa South of the Sahara. See: Helen Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory*: *Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2011), 115-6.

[249] Worthington, *A Development Plan*, 53.

social upheaval.

Community development officers like Chadwick played a key role in encouraging and assisting people in undertaking a particular project. Throughout the late 1940s and early '50s, the Colonial Office appointed community development officers across the British African colonies. These, British, mostly male, officers were trained through specific courses in the United Kingdom, such as the Eastbourne Mass Education (Community Development) Course.[250] Another critical component of community development was the training of local, black interlocutors, who assisted community development officers like Chadwick. Institutions such as the Jeanes School in Kabete, outside of Nairobi, offered nine-month courses in community development and social welfare work.[251] At the Jeanes School, the training course was specifically tailored to former *askari*, soldiers who had served in the British colonial army.[252] A separate course for women—often the wives of black community development officers in training— concentrated on different aspects of the home and the household, such as sewing, knitting, and the making of clothes.[253] While Chadwick framed the rapport between a British community development officer and a local community in terms of a "partnership," it was a

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[250] Harold Allen, "The Eastbourne Course," *Mass Education Bulletin* 1, no. 4 (September 1950): 61.

[251] H. Mason, Principal, Jeanes School, "The Training of Social Welfare Workers in Kenya," *Mass Education Bulletin* 1, no. 4 (September 1950): 65-71. Also see: Lewis, *Empire State-Building*, 230-2.

[252] The idea was that after several years of work, African community development officers would be sent to the London School of Economics or the Jan Hofmeyer School of Social Work in Johannesburg—the only South African school that accepted Black students during apartheid. Lewis, *Empire State-Building*, 227, 230-2.

[253] Mason, "The Training of Social Welfare Workers," 70. On women and community development in British East Africa, see: Lewis, *Empire State-Building*, 21-81.

relationship characterized by inequality. For one, community development officers received a salary, paid for by the newly released Colonial Development and Welfare funds, whereas the labor expected of residents was unpaid.

A defining aspect of British community development in Uganda and elsewhere was the use of particular "techniques" to stimulate and arouse people's interest. Community development officers used posters and examples to explain and propagate, sometimes packaged in the form of short plays. Another method used was the organization of competitions. In Uganda, for example, "Better Housing" competitions were organized in various rural communities, including in Busoga, one of Uganda's traditional kingdoms. Here, colonial administrators organized a competition for the best homestead to encourage "better" construction and design with local materials such as mud and reed.[254] **(Figure 2.2, 2.3)** According to Busoga's Provincial Commissioner, T. Cox, these competitions had

> a remarkable effect on the life of the people…over a great part of the [Busoga] district the decrepit insanitary houses of the past are being replaced by well built, well cared for, clean and well ventilated buildings with proper latrines, kitchens and wash places; compounds are tidy and well looked after…but the most beneficial result of all is the growth of community spirit and a readiness to co-operate with each other, due to the fact that in competitions the emphasis is upon community work.[255]

Through competitions, inhabitants would improve their standard of living, while building

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[254] See for example, Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Department of Community Development for the Year Ended in 31st of December 1952* (Entebbe: Uganda Government Printer, 1953).

[255] T. Cox, "Village Competitions in the Eastern Provinces of Uganda," *Journal of African Administration* 4, no. 1: 27-9, cited in Richard Vokes, "Photography, exhibitions and embodied futures in colonial Uganda, 1908-1960," *Visual Studies* 33, no. 1 (2018): 20.

up "community spirit."

Likewise, the Uganda Department of Education published informational brochures and books on subjects such as the household, to be read out loud in the classroom. Ena Phyllis Clark's *Homecraft Notes for African Teachers* (1947) and Esther Koeune's *The African Housewife and her Home* (1952) provided counsel on how to furnish and keep the house clean. Phyllis Clark and Koeune, both employees of the Uganda Department of Education and middle-class British women, propagated values such as thrift and simplicity.[256] These publications embodied critical principles of community development, including the attempt to elevate people's living standards, mainly through their own efforts, and the notion that development offered a way forward. Koeune, for example, promoted the use of furniture that could be self-made from local materials such as sisal, papyrus, reed, and banana fiber.[257] **(Figure 2.4)**

Increasingly, educational films became an essential part of community development instruction and winning over people's "hearts and minds." Films, Chadwick wrote, were "useful in raising moral to a high level and maintaining it there. The enthusiasm of a village for community work after it has seen on the screen a moving picture of itself working on a community project has to be seen to believed."[258] In 1939, the British Ministry of Information had established the Colonial Film Unit to disseminate war

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[256] Britta Schilling, "Design Advice for the African Home: Translating "Colonial Style," 1945-1962," *Interiors* 5, no. 2 (2014): 179-97.

[257] Ibid., 191-2.

[258] Chadwick, "The Anatomy of Mass Education," 34.

propaganda in the overseas territories.[259] (To test the effectiveness of films for adult

"education," the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa had sent

Julian Huxley, the biologist and member of the Fabian Society, to East Africa ten years

earlier.)[260] After World War II, the Colonial Film Unit began with the production of

educational films for a black audience to be used for community development purposes.

Subjects ranged from agriculture (*Cattle Farming in East Africa*,1949), to ways to improve

business (*Good Business*, 1947), to hygiene and health (*Village Development*, 1948), and

housing construction (*Better Homes*, 1948). Some were documentaries, others were short

feature films, including *Smallpox* (1950), shot in Nigeria, detailing the story of a man who

refuses to be vaccinated by the Sanitary Inspector. Chadwick himself featured in one of the

best-known documentaries produced by the Colonial Film Unit, *Daybreak at Udi* (1949).[261]

In the Oscar-winning film, we see Chadwick assisting the local community in a long and

arduous but ultimately successful process of constructing a maternity ward.

In Uganda, *Daybreak at Udi* and other films were shown throughout the

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[259] On the Colonial Film Unit, see: Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe, eds. *Film and the End of Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Tom Rice, "'Are Your Proud to Be British?': Mobile Film Shows, Local Voices and the Demise of the British Empire in Africa," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 36, no. 3 (2016): 331-51.

[260] Around the same time, the Carnegie Foundation and the International Missionary Council sponsored the Bantu Education Kinema Experiment, an organization that created various films for an African audience to improve communal village ties during a period of increasing urbanization through labor migration. Glenn Reynolds, "The Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment and the Struggle for Hegemony in British East and Central Africa, 1935-1937," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 29, no. 1 (March 2009): 57-78.

[261] Ben Page, "'And the Oscar Goes to…Daybreak in Udi': Understanding Late Colonial Community Development and its Legacy through Film," *Development and Change* 45, no. 5 (September 2014): 838-68.

country.[262] A new department, Public Relations and Social Welfare, set up in 1947—

around the time May presented his final designs to Uganda's Governor—focused on

community development initiatives and the dissemination of British propaganda. Here,

community development consisted of six "demonstration teams," or "Mobile Information

Teams" made up of one British community development officer and eight to ten African

team members, often trained at a local program at the prestigious Makerere College in

Kampala, who drove across the Protectorate in a van with a portable stage, posters, models

and a film projector.[263] **(Figure 2.5)** Shows were held in and surrounding Kampala and

across the Protectorate's provinces. The colonial government considered the screenings as a

"useful method of getting across constructive propaganda on health, agriculture and other

subjects."[264] According to the department's first annual report, the six cinema vans covered

15,292 miles and held 491 shows during 1947.[265] Audiences ranged between 200 and

1,500. **(Figure 2.6)**

However, Chadwick and others also pointed to the limitations of using film as a

method for community development. The difficulty of cinema screenings carried out by a

demonstration team driving through a particular area was the absence of long-term

guidance on a particular community development project. Or, as a British officer employed

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[262] Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Public Relations and Social Welfare Department. For the year ended 31st December 1950* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1951), 13.

[263] "A Survey of Mass Education in British African Colonies," *Mass Education Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (December 1949): 9-11.

[264] Ibid.

[265] Uganda Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Public Relations and Social Welfare Department 1947-1948* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1949), 7.

in Uganda put it,

> The outstanding weakness of the technique of a Mobil Information Unit (and of cinemas) is, in a sense, the mobility. To awaken interest and inspire enthusiasm, as a kind of educational Flying Squad…and then to pass on – is not enough: there must be a 'follow up' on the spot, through capitalising the interest and enthusiasm aroused."[266]

Without continuous guidance, community development officers argued, their efforts would fail. Developing "community spirit" required more than a single film screening organized by a "Mobile Information Team" or the occasional visit of a community development officer to check-in on the construction of a road or a maternity ward.

As early as 1945, the Colonial Office had begun to look into the possibility of constructing "community centers," buildings which, in Britain, were built since the late 1930s at the center of new neighborhoods. In Britain, community centers hosted a wide variety of educational and recreational activities, mainly focused on adults. In the colonies, community centers were envisioned as spaces through which a sustained form of community development could take place, as an alternative to the agile nature of the demonstration team. If community centers across Britain focused on creating a sense of cohesion within newly built neighborhoods, the type of community center envisioned by the Colonial Office also concentrated on enhancing a sense of social stability and, perhaps most importantly, preventing "a repetition of…the disturbances."[267] The Colonial Office described community centers as facilities that assisted in "breaking down the isolation of

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[266] Confidential: Memorandum on Public Relations & Social Welfare in Uganda, A.E. Dickson. January 11, 1946: 3. CO536/215, TNA.

[267] Confidential: Memorandum on Public Relations & Social Welfare in Uganda, A.E. Dickson, January 11, 1946: 3. CO536/215, TNA.

the individual, and the re-education of anti-social members of the community."[268] Moreover, contrary to Britain, community centers, sometimes also called "social welfare centers," would, according to the Colonial Office, be spaces where "representatives of all races" would meet, and thus play an essential role in improving "inter-racial" contact.[269] "Community centers," historian Joanna Lewis wrote, "became part of the postwar package of low-level social engineering, both a focal point for restless soldiers and a work station for social welfare workers."[270] In Uganda, the community center was described as a space where colonial subjects could, for example, be educated in cotton prices—a subject that had led to the 1945 protests—so that cotton growers could understand that the prices were not "fixed by some inscrutable whim of the Uganda Government, but by world prices established at Wall Street."[271]

In 1945, Kenneth Blaxter, Assistant Secretary to the Colonial Office, sent out a memorandum to all overseas territories to encourage the construction of such buildings, including Uganda.[272] Community centers, he wrote, would provide a permanent base for community development officers, from where they could host a wide-ranging of different activities, including cinema screenings, lectures, study groups, concerts, physical training classes, and social meetings. Blaxter envisioned a vast network of community centers that

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[268] British Information Services, *The British Colonial Empire in 1948* (New York: British Information Services, 1949), 44.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Lewis, "The Ruling Compassions of the Late Colonial State," doi:10.1353/cch.2001.0035.

[271] Confidential: Memorandum on Public Relations & Social Welfare in Uganda, A.E. Dickson, January 11, 1946: 3. CO536/215, TNA.

[272] "Community Centres." CO859/113/6, TNA.

stretched to the different corners of the British empire, of buildings which helped promote

"community spirit" and a wide-range of British values such as responsibility, self-

reliability, duty, and loyalty.[273] Despite the community center's slightly different role in

Britain, Blaxter also included two booklets on community center design in Britain, titled

Community Centres (1944), published by the British Ministry of Education, and

Community Centres and Associations (1944), written by E. Sewell Harris of the National

Council of Social Service.[274] While these publications paid attention to developments

across Britain, there was one project in particular that stood out: Patrick Abercrombie's

County of London Plan (1943). This proposal—a plan that would have a significant impact

on May's plan for Kampala—recast London as a series of natural neighborhood units,

centered around primary schools and community centers, sometimes combined into one

building.

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[273] Ibid.

[274] Great Britain, Ministry of Education, *Community Centres* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1944); Edward Sewell Harris, *Community Centres and Associations* (London, National Council of Social Service, 1945).

2.3 May in Kampala

Kampala, a British town, not yet officially considered a "city," was governed directly by the Uganda administration located some twenty-five miles away in Entebbe. If Entebbe, strategically located on Lake Victoria, was Uganda's administrative capital, Kampala was the country's commercial capital—the final node in Britain's East African railway system that swiftly moved the country's cash crops, cotton but also increasingly coffee, to the Indian Ocean. It was a town, the political scientist Mahmood Mamdani has written, dominated by "cotton ginneries, coffee pulparies and tobacco factories."[275]

The hilly settlement developed around a fort established by the British colonial administrator Frederick Lugard in the late nineteenth century. By the mid-1940s, it consisted of some 4,000 British settlers and over three times the number of Indian inhabitants, most of whom had been forced to resettle in East Africa to work on the railroads.[276] May's project to expand the town, overseen by the newly-appointed Governor of Uganda, Jonathan Hathorn Hall, was part of a larger effort to industrialize and develop the protectorate. Hall's leading venture consisted of the construction of a hydro-electric dam in the White Nile, close to Lake Victoria and near the town of Jinja. May also prepared an expansion plan for Jinja, although the design itself has never been identified.[277]

[275] Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda*, 11.

[276] Robert Gregory, *India and East Africa: A History of Race Relations within the British Empire, 1890-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Sana Aiyar, *Indians in Kenya: The Politics of Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). Also see: Sana Aiyar, "Anticolonial Homelands across the Indian Ocean: The Politics of the Indian Diaspora in Kenya, ca. 1930-1950," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 4 (October 2011): 987-1013.

[277] The Deutsche Architektur Museum in Frankfurt, which holds Ernst May's archive and various of his other designs in East Africa, does not have the plan for Jinja in their

What distinguished Kampala from Nairobi was its location next to the *Kibuga*, the sprawling capital of the extremely wealthy Buganda kingdom. Buganda, headed by the *Kabaka*, King Muteesa II, was never conquered by the British but had negotiated protectorate status in 1900. This impeded Britain from making other types of territorial claims on Uganda.[278] For decades, Buganda remained a virtually self-governing kingdom under British rule, administered by the *Lukiiko*, the Buganda parliament. During the 1920s, however, Britain's civilizing mission and ideas about development began to clash with Buganda's ideas about self-rule. These clashes only intensified during the 1940s, when Britain introduced new policies that revolved around development, welfare, and modernization. In particular, proposals broadcasted by the Colonial Office to incorporate Uganda into a "multiracial" East African federation, received severe backlash, resulting in massive boycotts and strikes organized by the Bataka Union and others.[279] Britain's strained relationship to Buganda during the 1940s was one of constant negotiation, made more difficult by Buganda's role as a principal sponsor and creditor of Britain's war efforts. By financing Britain's participation in World War II, the historian Carol Summers has claimed, "British ideas of imperial superiority and patronage" were overturned, "creating an imbalance that implicitly called on Britain to reciprocate with its own gifts, loyalty, and

collection. The Makerere University Library in Kampala purportedly has a copy, but I was unable to locate it.

[278] Carol Summers, "Local Critiques of Global Development: Patriotism in Late Colonial Buganda," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 47, no. 1 (2014): 24-5.

[279] This resulted, eventually, in the deportation of the Kabaka, in 1953, an event that became known as the "Kabaka Crisis." Summers, "Local Critiques of Global Development," 26-7.

opportunities in the war's aftermath."[280]

By 1945, May had lived and practiced in East Africa for over a decade. In 1933, he and his family had arrived in Mombasa, the Kenyan harbor city located on the Indian Ocean, on board one of the ships of the Union-Castle Mail Company that sailed between Southampton and Cape Town through the Suez Canal.[281] That year, to escape the rise of national-socialism in Germany and the increasingly ferocious attacks on his architectural designs and socialists ideals, May bought a plot of farmland close to Mount Kilimanjaro in the British Protectorate of Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania), where he intended to farm coffee.[282] Not long after, however, he resettled in Nairobi, where he built his own house and architecture studio at Marula Lane 116, in the wealthy suburb of Karen. In Nairobi, May designed the Karen Golf Course, as well as villas for British settlers and German expatriates, including Sir Derek Erskine, member of the Kenyan Legislative Council, the coffee exporter Charles Dorman, and the Swiss botanist Peter Bally.

It remains unclear why May set his mind on East Africa—colleagues such as Martin Wagner, the city planner of Berlin, and Margarette Schütte-Lihotzky, the Austrian architect with whom May collaborated in Frankfurt and Russia, left for Turkey, hoping to get to the United States—but the presence of a significant number of Germans in East

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[280] Summers, "Ugandan Politics World War II," 482.

[281] May to Hartmann (his mother), Port Said, March 13, 1933. 60-902-000, Ernst May Archive, Deutsche Architektur Museum (DAM).

[282] May to Hartmann, March 26, 1933. 60-902-000, Ernst May Archive, DAM. May refers to the person who sold him the land in Tanganyika as an acquaintance but did not mention his name.

Africa possibly influenced his decision.[283] In a letter to his mother, May underlined that the

plot of land he had bought was located close to former *Deutsch Ostafrika*, an area of East

Africa that had become a British "Mandated Territory" after World War I.[284] What also

might have persuaded May to relocate to British East Africa, was his proficiency in English

and his familiarity with British architecture and planning through the two years he spent in

London in the 1910s. After finishing his architectural education, May worked for the

British planner and architect Raymond Unwin on the design of the Hampstead Garden

Suburb.[285]

During the two decades May practiced in British East Africa—still the least studied

period of his extensive career—the German architect entrenched himself in Nairobi's

architectural circles. He ran his firm, Ernst May & Partners, with various registered British

architects such as L. G. Jackson.[286] May also became acquainted with various British

architects like Amyas Connell, who had come to East Africa in 1947 to design housing for

a sisal estate in Tanganyika and remained to design the buildings of the Kenyan parliament

(discussed in Chapter 1).[287] Connell, who had been a member of the British-based MARS-

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[283] Letters to the former city planner of Berlin, Martin Wagner, who fled to Turkey, point out that May was not, unlike several of his colleagues in the Weimar Republic, interested in moving to the United States. Wagner eventually left Turkey for a position at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he was hired to teach city planning. Wagner encouraged May to do the same. See, for example, Letter from Martin Wagner to Ernst May, Istanbul, March 12, 1937. Nürnberg, GNM, DKA, NL May, Ernst, I, C-722: https://kuenste-im-exil.de/KIE/Content/EN/Objects/wagner-brief-may-1937-en.html?single=1

[284] May to Hartmann, March 26, 1933. 60-902-000, Ernst May Archive, DAM.

[285] Susan Henderson, "Römerstadt: the modern garden city," *Planning Perspectives* 25, no. 3 (2010): 324.

[286] Göckede, "The Architect as a Colonial Technocrat," 57.

[287] Connell founded TRIAD Architects and Planner in the early 1960s.

group, lived in Nairobi and frequently visited May's house in Karen. Connell's wife, Maud

Hargrove, remembered May as "a little bit of an old fakir but most entertaining."[288] May

also must have been acquainted with various architects employed by the Town Planning

Department in Nairobi, including Harold Thornley Dyer, his assistant Helga Richards, and

Erica Mann, an exiled Romanian-Austrian architect trained at the Académie des Beaux-Art

in Paris.[289]

May was, as Kenny Cupers and Prita Meier have written, "a determined defender

of colonialism."[290] They have noted, for example, how he envisaged the Oceanic Hotel on

Kenya's Swahili coast, one of May's most exuberant designs, as an "oasis of white

European civilization."[291] While admired in studies of tropical modernism for its expressive

and colorful façade, May built the structure, now demolished, as a holiday destination for

Kenya's colonial elite. Letters and lectures also give the impression of May as an ardent

[288] Letter from Maud Hargrove (Connell's first wife) to Dennis Sharp, August 8, 1983. Dennis Sharp Papers, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

[289] Helga Richards moved to the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) in the late 1940s. There, she assisted Alfred Alcock (the subject of Chapter 4), with several projects, including the publication of the *How to Build* series, which promoted modern housing construction and village planning, using simple drawings. Erica Mann worked at the Town Planning Department for nearly forty years. She was involved in the founding of two architectural magazines, *Plan East Africa* and *Build Kenya*. Mann was, as Benjamin Tiven has pointed out, friends with Otto Koenigberger, the German architect and lecturer at the Architectural Association's Department of Tropical Architecture. In the 1970s, they worked together on various projects for UN Habitat. On Erica Mann, see: Benjamin Tiven, "On *The Delight of the Yearner*: Ernst May and Erica Mann in Nairobi, Kenya, 1933-1953," in *Netzwerke des Exils: Künstlerische Verflechtungen, Austausch und Patronage nach 1933*, eds. Burcu Dogramaci und Karin Wimmer (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2011), 147-161. Also see: Rachel Lee, "Erica Mann and an Intimate Source: Some Notes on Kenny Mann's 2014 Documentary *Beautiful Tree, Severed Roots*," *Architecture Beyond Europe Journal* 4 (2013): https://journals.openedition.org/abe/3391.

[290] Cupers and Meier, "Infrastructure between Statehood and Selfhood," 69.

[291] Ibid.

supporter of colonialism. He, for example, repeatedly described Kenya's inhabitants in terms of racialized stereotypes such as "lazy" or "primitive," and considered European presence indispensable for the development of the "dark continent."[292]

Although May resided in Nairobi, he was familiar with Kampala. In 1938, the architect designed a modest commercial building in the town's center, a building that, with its curved façade and ribbon windows, closely resembles the rounded apartment blocks in the heart of Römerstadt, one of the best-known structures May designed during his tenure in Frankfurt. Still, May was an unusual candidate for the extension of Kampala, a prestigious government commission. For part of World War II, May was interned, like many other German residents living in East Africa, in Ganspan, a British prison camp in South Africa. May's German citizenship made him an official enemy of the British empire.[293] During this period, May repeatedly attempted (and failed) to find a teaching position in the United States by writing to German friends and colleagues who had obtained jobs across the Atlantic Ocean, including Walter Gropius and Martin Wagner. When May presented his ideas in Kampala in March 1945, World War II had not yet officially ended. Not surprisingly, *The Uganda Herald* carefully avoided mentioning May's German citizenship. For May himself, the commission offered a first chance since relocating to East Africa to work on a significant public scheme, an opportunity he had been yearning for, as letters to Lewis Mumford, with whom he began corresponding during his exile in South Africa, testify.[294]

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[292] See, for example, Ernst May "Wohnungs- und Städtebau in Afrika" [Housing and City Planning in Africa], 1961. 60-902-000, Ernst May Archive, DAM.

[293] Göckede, "The Architect as Colonial Technocrat," 57.

[294] May to Mumford, September 28, 1940, March 4, 1941, and July 6, 1942. Cited in

Much of what May knew about Kampala, aside from his visits and official government documentation such as Worthington's *Development Plan for Uganda*, derived from a previous plan and description of the town by Albert Mirams, a former Town Engineer in Bombay and Town Planning Advisor of Uganda between 1928 and 1929.[295] Mirams' plan rendered the Kibuga invisible and depicted Kampala as a European-Indian zone instead. **(Figure. 2.7)** In addition, Mirams suggested the use of barbed wire to separate the male-only barracks, or "bed-spaces" for black laborers built near the Kenya-Uganda Railways headquarters, from the rest of the city—a material the British had deployed liberally during the Anglo-Boer Wars in South Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century.[296] A photograph in Mirams' *Kampala: Report on the Town Planning and Development* (1930) depicts the town, during the first decades of the twentieth century, as a settlement of white one-story colonial residences sprawling on a hillside. **(Figure 2.8)**

During Miram's period, the colonial administration in Uganda relied on civil legislation to maintain a degree of racial segregation in Kampala-Kibuga. In theory, bylaws prevented "African" settlement within the municipal boundaries of Kampala by prohibiting construction with "impermanent" materials, or earth, clay, and straw—materials often used by Ganda and others for housing construction.[297] Instead, only "permanent" materials such

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Gutschow, "Das Neue Afrika," 240.

[295] Contrary to Mirams, May never obtained an official title. On Mirams, see: Robert Home, *Of Planning and Planting: The Making of British Colonial Cities*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 197, ft. 3. Mirams' plan for Kampala was prompted by the arrival of the railroad in Kampala in 1931, following years of cumbersome and perilous labor.

[296] See: Aidan Forth, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876-1903* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2017).

[297] See, for example, Ambe J. Njoh, "Urban planning as a tool of power and social control in colonial Africa," *Planning Perspectives* 24, 3 (2009): 301-17. Liora Bigon has pointed out that elsewhere in British Africa, the distinction between "flammable" and "non-

as brick, concrete, and steel were allowed (on the distinction between "impermanent" and

"permanent" building materials, see Chapter 4). Yet except for brick, most of these

materials were imported from overseas and thus prohibitively expensive and out of reach

for many Ganda. One notable exception was the imposing neo-classical Buganda palace,

built in the 1920s by an unidentified architect, standing on top of Mengo hill. Conversely,

British residents were not allowed to acquire land outside of Kampala's municipal

boundaries. While the land within Kampala belonged to the Crown, most land that

surrounded it was owned by the King of Buganda or other Ganda. Administered through

the *mailo* system, a quasi-freehold system of land tenure, the sale or lease of such land to

non-Africans was prohibited.[298]

However, as William Cunningham Bissell, Swati Chattopadhyay, and others have

pointed out, the notion of the "dual city," a "black" and "white" town, is rooted in an

abstract perception.[299] The reality was messier and more complex. Ganda or other Africans

who lived in the Kibuga were free to enter Kampala. They often worked in Kampala, as

clerks, builders, or in the cotton business. The growth of Kampala as a center for the cotton

and coffee industry had led to the growth of a black working class, who worked in the

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flammable" materials determined zoning rules. Liora Bigon*, A History of Urban Planning in Two West African Colonial Capitals: Residential Segregation in British Lagos and French Dakar (1850-1930)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), 86-93.

[298] On land tenure in Buganda and the so-called *mailo* system, see: A. B. Mukwaya, *Land Tenure in Buganda: Present Day Tendencies* (Kampala: East African Institute for Social Studies, 1953).

[299] Cunningham Bissell, *Urban Design, Chaos, and Colonial Power,* 2011; Swati Chattopadhyay, "Blurring Boundaries: The Limits of 'White Town' in Colonial Calcutta," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59, no. 2 (June 2000): 154-179. Also see: William Cunningham Bissell, "Between Fixity and Fantasy: Assessing the Spatial Impact of Colonial Urban Dualism," *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 2 (March 2011): 208-29.

railyards, the cotton ginneries, factories and municipal offices.[300] Especially during the

1940s, boundaries blurred. During this period of rapid population growth, there were

several applications of "non-natives" to lease land and live in the Kibuga.[301] At the same

time, many Africans from different parts of Uganda settled down in illegal settlements on

the town's fringes.

By the time May was invited to Uganda, a colonial memo characterized Kampala-

Kibuga as a town where unskilled workers lived in "dirty hovels and cramped single

rooms."[302] Moreover, because of low wages and a lack of affordable housing, there was "no

real stability among the working population."[303] Many workers came to town to earn

money but never really settled. After a few weeks or months, they returned home, to their

families. May's Kampala plan, however, promised 32,000 houses, half of which were

designated for black workers and their families. His project, he claimed, would "prevent a

continuous coming and going of African labor."[304]

2.4 "Culture Comes to Kampala": Neighborhood Units and Community Centers

May worked on the Kampala extension project with his British assistant Christopher

Maynard Pearce from 1945 to 1947, when he published his ambitious proposal as *The*

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[300] Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda*, 11.

[301] In 1944, for example, there were 66 applications of "non-natives" for land leases in the Kibuga. See: Aidan Southall and Peter Gutkind, *Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and its Suburbs* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1957), 9.

[302] "Some Preliminary Notes on the Housing Situation in Uganda," undated. CO822/715, TNA.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Ernst May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 46.

Kampala Extension Plan. The project, which remained largely unexecuted and was never formally accepted by Uganda's government, combined the principles of community development with those of the "neighborhood unit." The neighborhood unit was a notion that dominated reconstruction planning in Britain and was popularized through Patrick Abercrombie's plan for London, despite its much longer historical pedigree. In 1944, the neighborhood unit, defined as a distinct spatial area containing a variety of social, commercial, and educational facilities, had been formally adopted as a model for postwar reconstruction planning in Britain. World War II had left thousands of people in Britain homeless and displaced. The neighborhood unit offered a remedy to replace the areas heavily damaged by the Blitz and bring back a sense of cohesion and unity. Two publications by the British Ministry of Health, the *Design of Dwellings* and the *Housing Manual*, argued that by planning separate, clearly identifiable "social units" of 5,000 to 10,000 people, Britain's "community spirit" could be lifted.[305] The neighborhood unit appealed to wartime sentiments of solidarity but also offered a remedy for the alleged loss of community in both rural and urban environments as a result of urbanization and industrialization. It evoked a particular kind of nostalgia for village life. "The community sense," Abercrombie wrote, "has largely been lost in our overgrown cities, though it still in part survives where neighboring villages or outlying suburbs."[306] By preparing Britain for the future, planners looked back to an idealized version of the country's past, one

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[305] Great Britain: Ministry of Health, *Design of Dwellings* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1944); Great Britain: Ministry of Health, *Housing Manual* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1944).

[306] Patrick Abercrombie and Edward Lutyens, *A Plan for the City and County of Kingston upon Hull* (Hull, A. Brown & Sons, 1945), 55.

characterized by community life in small villages in the countryside.[307]

Abercrombie's postwar reconstruction plans for Plymouth (1942) and Hull (1944), as well as the better-known *County of London Plan* (1943), developed together with John Forshaw, chief architect of the London City Council, embraced the idea of the neighborhood unit.[308] Abercrombie's and Forshaw's bold, utopian proposal for London reconfigured the heavily damaged city as a series of separate neighborhood units. It also recommended rehousing some 500,000 London residents in new satellite towns outside of the city. The project envisioned London as a well-functioning machine and, at the same time, as a patchwork of different communities. **(Figure 2.9)** As architectural historian Kenny Cupers has pointed out, the mechanical rationality of the neighborhood unit overlapped with a distinctly spiritual notion of social life and community.[309]

In a nearly half-hour-long promotional film produced by the Ministry of Information, titled *The Proud City*, Abercrombie and Forshaw informed London's inhabitants how working-class neighborhoods would be transformed into several distinct

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[307] Abercrombie was also a founder of the "Campaign to Protect Rural England," to preserve the British countryside and prevent urban sprawl. See: Michiel Dehaene, "A Conservative Framework for Regional Development: Patrick Abercrombie's Interwar Experiments in Regional Planning," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 25 (2005): 131-48.

[308] See: Abercrombie and Lutyens, *A Plan for the City and County of Kingston upon Hull*, 1945; J. Paton Watson and Patrick Abercrombie, *A Plan for Plymouth* (Plymouth: Underhill Ltd, 1943); Patrick Abercrombie and John Forshaw, *County of London Plan* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1943).

[309] Kenny Cupers, "Mapping and Making Community in the Postwar European City," *Journal of Urban History* (2016): 4, DOI: 10.1177/0096144216675044. Within CIAM, much of this discourse would be subsumed within the 1951 conference, on the "Core" and the "Heart of the City." Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, Joseph Lluís Sert, and Ernesto N Rogers, eds., *CIAM 8: The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life* (London: Lund Humphries, 1952).

units.[310] **(Figure 2.10)** By rezoning, for example, Stepney, an area on London's eastside, relocating the area's industry to its peripheries and redirecting car traffic to bypass the neighborhood, several "social units" would emerge. Each of these units was centered around a primary school and several basic facilities, such as grocery shops, to provide for people's daily needs. Abercrombie's and Forshaw's plan thus reinforced the identity of existing neighborhoods through radical reorganization.[311] Even though the project was quickly shelved because of austerity measures, it had a significant impact on postwar urban planning in England and also, as this chapter shows, in Britain's colonies.

Abercrombie's and Forshaw's vision for the "Capital of the Commonwealth" had a utopian bend because it imagined a more egalitarian society and promoted the integration of London's different social classes.[312] In their view, neighborhood units were to contain different types of housing, council flats and privately-owned homes, to provide for "a greater mingling of the different groups of London's society."[313] Neighborhood units, then, functioned as small villages, where people from different social classes lived in close proximity, attended the same church, shopped in the same stores, and went to the same school. Such ideas were reiterated by, among others, Lewis Silkin, Britain's Minister of Town and Country Planning during the 1940s. When introducing the 1946 New Towns Act, Silkin emphasized he was "most anxious that the planning should be such that

[310] *The Proud City: A Plan for London*. Directed by Ralph Keene. (London: Ministry of Information, 1946).

[311] Abercrombie and Forshaw, *County of London Plan*, 28.

[312] Abercrombie and Forshaw cited in Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 73.

[313] Ibid.

different income groups living in the new towns will not be segregated."[314]

Besides the primary school, Abercrombie and Forshaw also highlighted the role that the "Community Building" played in strengthening community ties. During the 1940s, the community center was a new building type that hosted community meetings, offered classes to adults, and accommodated performances and concerts.[315] In a survey of community centers in England in 1942, Flora Stephenson, the first women to obtain a graduate degree in planning from MIT, and her husband, an architect who assisted Abercrombie and Forshaw, underlined community centers' different functions.[316] They were constructed for a wide range of activities, held in class rooms and assembly halls, and on sportsgrounds. Some of them doubled as health centers, others, like Impington College in Cambridgeshire designed by Maxwell Fry and Walter Gropius, as schools.[317] **(Figure 2.11)** The broad variety of buildings included in the Stephensons' survey, suggested that what community was and how it was created, was still somewhat undefined. Community centers, they concluded, were such a new phenomenon that they were yet to become "part of the pattern of British life like the local school, library or public house."[318]

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[314] Silkin cited by Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 77.

[315] Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 65.

[316] Flora Stephenson and Gordon Stephenson, *Community Centres: A Survey* (London: The Housing Centre, 1942).

[317] For a discussion of Impington College, see Alan Powers, *Bauhaus Goes West: Modern Art and Design in Britain and America* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2019), 66-70. Aside from Maxwell Fry, several other designs included in the survey came from architects who also practiced in East Africa, including William Holford, Professor of Town Planning at the University of London and architectural advisor to the Colonial Office and Sir Alexander Gibbs, whose civil engineering firm was responsible for large-scale infrastructure projects across British Africa, including the construction of Owen Falls Dam in Jinja, Uganda.

[318] Stephenson and Stephenson, *Community Centres*, 3.

Like Abercrombie's and Forshaw's project, May envisaged Kampala as a town composed of different neighborhoods. Following the contours of Kampala's rolling hills, the German architect envisioned three new neighborhoods, built on land east of the town's center—one of the few unoccupied stretches in Kampala's vicinity owned by the British Crown instead of the Kingdom of Buganda. **(Figure 2.12)** Named after the steep hills on which they were built, the neighborhood closest to Kampala's center was to be called Kololo, the neighborhood after that, Naguru. Kololo catered to Kampala's "European" and "Asian" population, Naguru to "Africans." Further south, closer to the town's industrial area and located on flatter land, May envisioned a smaller-sized neighborhood for itinerant black workers named Nakawa.[319]

Both Kololo and Naguru, planned for, respectively, 11,000 and 15,000 inhabitants, were divided into several neighborhood units of approximately 2,000 residents. They were pedestrianized areas and consisted of terraced and detached houses. Within each neighborhood unit, May envisaged a school, a playground, and several shops to satisfy residents' daily needs. For example, Naguru was divided into six neighborhood units, separated by green parkways. **(Figure 2.13, 2.14)** Yet instead of Abercrombie's and Forshaw's conception of the neighborhood unit as a mixed community, these were homogenous areas, both in terms of race and class. Naguru was to be a neighborhood for working class black families. Nakawa, on the other hand, was intended for itinerant male laborers, continuing the British colonial tradition of "bed-spaces."

Moreover, if neighborhood units in Britain were imagined as recreating English

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[319] Nakawa was not part of the initial commission but was added later.

small-town living, May envisaged the different units in Naguru as evoking, in some sense, "tribal" village life. The neighborhood unit, in his view, offered a remedy against "detribalization" and assisted residents in adjusting to fast-paced city life. The small scale of the neighborhood unit—much smaller than in Abercrombie's and Forshaw's plan for London—would help "reduce the alarm that the African may feel at the contrast between his traditional native village life and the life of the town."[320] Such ideas, of the neighborhood unit as a space in-between, were also exemplified by a prototype for a prefabricated house May patented during this period: a "hut" of concrete arch-shaped panels. **(Figure 2.15)** The design, which consisted of two rooms, with a sink and some storage space in the middle, would offer a smooth, frictionless transition between a structure built with thatch—one of many indigenous building types seen across Uganda—and a modern, concrete house. May's design reduced the varied and distinct architectural histories of the Ganda, Ankole, Tooro, Acholi, Nubi, and Kenya Luo into one single, abstracted structure.

In May's plan, the neighborhood unit would bring residents together through the provision of certain shared social, cultural, and educational facilities. Several units together would form a "community," associated with a different range of social, cultural, and educational amenities, including a secondary school, a sports center, a communal market, a hotel, churches and mosques, recreational clubs, as well as a community center. In addition, May's plan contained a large park, located between Kololo and Naguru, with an exhibition complex, a theatre, and large sports fields for cricket and basketball, a tea house, as well as an open-air cinema. **(Figure 2.16)** His project, he claimed, would make "the life of the

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[320] May, *The Kampala Extension Plan*, 6.

African laborer richer beyond just working to provide the bare necessities of life."[321]

       May's schematic design for a community building, which also doubled as a school—the only communal facility he worked out in more detail—consisted of an elongated plan, with one wing.[322] The slender hook-shaped building encompassed differently sized rooms, oriented towards a half-enclosed outside area. **(Figure 2.17)** The entrance of the building, framed by a porch, gave way to a hall containing a small library, and to the other side, an assembly hall. On one side, the design contained classrooms that were reached through an open space—just as in Impington College in Cambridgeshire. The other wing, separated from the main building, comprised a living space for the community development officer, and additional spaces for sports. But if Impington College or other British community centers were led by a voluntary committee consisting of neighborhood residents, May's design offered a much less organic view of community. The activities May envisaged to take place in and around the center, and in the larger central park, were particularly British, like tennis, squash, cricket, and sipping tea. Moreover, the community centers in May's project, were to be administered by appointed community development officers. Creating community, here, primarily meant education in British culture, much like *assimilation*, the ideology that underpinned French colonial policy.[323] For success, May wrote, planning had to be "accompanied by intensive propaganda, based on the African's

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[321] Ernst May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 46.

[322] The design was included in May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 1948.

[323] See for example, Mamadou Diouf, "The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project," *Development & Change* 29, no. 4 (1998): 676-91; Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and association in French colonial theory, 1890-1914* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

psychology."[324]

The neighborhood unit and the community center as means to stabilize and settle black workers continued to guide May's thinking throughout the rest of his career in East Africa. During the 1950s, the neighborhood unit also underpinned the design of a municipal housing project in Mombasa, Kenya's port city. Mombasa's flat land allowed for the construction of prefabricated, three-story apartment buildings, with balconies, verandahs, and curved roofs, intended for black families or, in some cases, bachelors.[325] They were oriented towards a central green space, containing a playing field, a health center, a primary school, and a community center. **(Figure 2.18, 2.19)** They contained one bedroom, a living room, a small kitchen, and a toilet, while shared showers were located on the ground floor. **(Figure 2.20)** Photographs of the finished project depict the "African neighborhood unit" as a modern, spacious environment of flats interspersed by communal green spaces, much like the new housing estates that emerged across Britain during the same period. **(Figure 2.21)**

Around the same time, Harold Thornley Dyer, Head of the Kenya Department of Housing (and close collaborator of Thornton-White and Silberman, as discussed in Chapter 1), presented a remarkably similar project for an "African neighborhood."[326] Thornley

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[324] May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 46.

[325] "A Prototype African Housing Scheme Designed by Dr. E. May and Partners, Architects, East Africa," *South African Architectural Record* (July 1953): 39-41. Also see: Caleb Edwin Owen, "Recreating Citizens: Leisure, Mobility, and Urban Status in Late Colonial Kenya," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2018): 85-109.

[326] Harold Thornley Dyer and G. I. Burke, "Influence of Economic Factors on Criteria for Community Planning," *First Inter-African Housing Research Conference*. Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara, Pretoria 1952. CO859/314, TNA.

Dyer's design also consisted of rows of family housing oriented around an assembly of communal amenities, including several community buildings, a primary school, and an open-air cinema. **(Figure 2.22)** In Jinja, Uganda's second-largest town and the site of Owen Falls Dam, a large-scale hydroelectric development project, a young British architect called Roy Gazzard, trained at the AA, worked on a comparable project.[327] To accommodate the town's rapidly growing population, Gazzard devised a scheme for a neighborhood unit that consisted of rigid rows of housing separated by allotment gardens.[328] **(Figure 2.23)** Gazzard, like May, claimed to integrate "detribalizing" migrants into Jinja by providing "an improved environment comparable in amenity to that enjoyed in the countryside" and offer opportunities for its inhabitants to become "acculturated."[329] Though May's ideas have often been considered in isolation, Thornley Dyer's and Gazzard's plans indicate that notions about the neighborhood unit as a vehicle for community building and stabilization circulated widely through late-colonial British architecture and planning culture. Indeed, in 1954, the neighborhood unit was formally adopted in Uganda as a solution for planning "African" communities.[330]

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[327] The dam was designed by Harry Ford and Alexander Gibbs. See: "Buildings in Kampala, Jinja and Mbale, Uganda," *The Architects' Journal* 121 (April 1955): 508-10.

[328] On Gazzard, see: Jesse Meredith, "Decolonizing the New Town: Roy Gazzard and the Making of Killingworth Township," *The Journal of British Studies* 57, no. 2 (2018): 333-62. On the housing estates in Jinja, see: Andrew Byerley, "Displacements in the Name of (Re)Development: The Contested Rise and Contested Demise of Colonial 'African' Housing Estates in Kampala and Jinja," *Planning Perspectives* 28, no. 3 (2013): 547-70.

[329] Meredith, "Decolonizing the New Town," 341.

[330] Uganda Department of African Housing, *Statement of Policy on African Urban Housing* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1954).

2.5 Preparing for Citizenship

Britain's new postwar built environment was to produce a "new type of citizen, a healthy, self-respecting, dignified person with a sense of beauty, culture and civic pride," as Silkin stated in 1946. In contrast, May's extension project for Kampala was to help *train* its inhabitants in citizenship.[331] Through participation in the organization of the neighborhood unit, inhabitants would practice skills the German architect deemed necessary for eventual self-government. Participation in local organization would awaken a sense of responsibility. His proposal for Kampala, May wrote, was meant to "provide for such administrative, social and cultural institutions as will enable even the primitive type of African gradually to make himself acquainted with the rights and duties of citizenship on a democratic basis."[332] Whereas the sweeping interventions that altered Britain's postwar built environment aimed to create new and different citizens—in part through a renewed sense of what Silkin termed "neighbourliness"—the tenants of Kampala's new housing estates, May's comments emphasized, were *not yet* considered citizens.

May's project coincided with the publication of a report titled *Education for Citizenship* (1948)*,* which followed *Mass Education in Africa* (1943), both published by the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies.[333] The report, written by several esteemed social reformers such as Margery Perham, a well-known Oxford historian of

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[331] Silkin made this statement to the House of Commons, when introducing the 1946 New Towns Act. Silkin cited in Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners: The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 186.

[332] May, "Culture Comes to Kampala," 46.

[333] Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, Colonial Office, *Education for Citizenship in Africa* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1948).

colonial administration and a proponent of colonial social welfare, and backed by Creech

Jones, emphasized the crucial role of "education for citizenship" during the transition

towards self-governance in British Africa.[334] Education in the rights and duties of

citizenship would help, the report argued, prepare colonial subjects transition from colonial

to self-government. "In this period of rapid transition," Perham and her colleagues

underlined,

> education becomes of greater importance and urgency than ever before, and must
> aim at fulfilling the special needs created by the social and political changes. It is
> not enough to train patient and skillful and reliable farmers, artisans, clerks, and
> minor-grade employees; it is not enough even to train professional men, technicians
> and men capable of assuming responsibility in managerial and administrative
> positions. We have to go further and train men and women as responsible citizens of
> a free country.[335]

Education for Citizenship urged colonial administrators across Africa to cooperate and

allow colonial subjects to obtain practice in managing their own affairs. Throughout, the

report emphasized education in combination with training: education in self-government

would only have an impact if it was also brought into practice.[336] May's extension plan

enabled such practice through allowing for the participation in the organization of local

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[334] On Perham, see among others: Alison Smith and Mary Bull, eds. *Margery Perham and British Rule in Africa* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Joanna Lewis, *Empire State-Building,* 89-100; Alison Smith, "'Dear Mr Mboya': correspondence with a Kenya nationalist," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19, no. 3 (1991): 159-84; Michael Twaddle, "Margery Perham and *Africans and British Rule*: A wartime publication," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 19, no. 3 (1991): 100-11. It is important to note that Perham resigned from the committee before the report was published.

[335] Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, *Education for Citizenship,* 6.

[336] Ibid., 17. "…citizenship is not merely subject of the school curriculum, which can be adequately learnt from books or in the class-room. It can only be adequately learnt by practice and experience."

community, for example, at the level of the neighborhood unit.

These ideas also intersected with significant legal changes engendered by the 1948 Nationality Act, which made every inhabitant of Britain's colonial empire "a Citizen of the United Kingdom and its Colonies." The act, according to historian Frederick Cooper, "created something of an echo of what the French were doing—a second tier Commonwealth citizenship, derivative of the primary citizenship of the Dominions, but applied to the colonies as well."[337] The Nationality Act extended citizenship to all colonial subjects for as long as their countries were part of the empire. It allowed them to enter the United Kingdom—a shift that gave rise to the arrival of the well-known "Windrush" generation in Britain. The historian John Belchem has argued that the 1948 Act purported to promote "harmonious political relationships in colonies moving towards independence."[338]

Education for Citizenship, which had its origins in several summer schools held in Cambridge on colonial governance during the late 1940s, identified civic education, or education for citizenship, as obtaining a "certain habit of mind."[339] The report's authors

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[337] Frederick Cooper, "Restructuring Empire in British and French Africa," *Past & Present* 6 (2011): 202.

[338] John Belchem, *Before the Windrush: Race Relations in 20th Century Liverpool.* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), 121. In some instances, the 1948 Act also resulted in a different attitude towards colonial subjects. For example, Leo Silberman, the sociologist responsible for the Nairobi development plan (discussed in Chapter 1), argued in an article published by the Fabian Colonial Bureau that "The colonial must be treated as a citizen." Leo Silberman, *Crisis in Africa. A Fabian Colonial Bureau Pamphlet.* (London: Fabian Publications, 1947), 19.

[339] Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, *Education for Citizenship,* 13. See Holford, "Mass Education and Community Development," 163-83. Also see: Joseph Snyder, "The Fabianization of the British Empire: Postwar Colonial Summer Conferences

pointed to particular traits of character they associated with the ability to govern successfully. Most important was confidence in one's fellow citizens, self-reliability, a sense of responsibility and duty—values at "the heart of European civilization."[340] The report encouraged classroom teachers to emphasize these specific traits of character in their lessons. For adults, *Education in Citizenship* recommended the use of cinema. The report, historian Joanna Lewis has argued, "underscored the commitment to implanting a British-style franchise alongside what was described as the 'democratic spirit of native constitutions.'"[341]

Another notable set of publications on civic education printed during the late 1940s and early '50s were written by a British civil servant named Vincent Llewellyn Griffiths, who taught at the Institute of Education at Bakht er Ruda in Sudan. Assisted by the education advisor to the Colonial Office, Christopher Cox, Griffith published three books called the "Good Citizen" series. In *Character Aims* (1949), *Character Training* (1949) and *Character: Its Psychology* (1953), Griffiths singled out "those particular qualities of character and attitudes of mind on which the effective working of self-government and the reputation abroad of a self-governing people must ultimately so largely depend."[342] They were comparable to those listed in *Education in Citizenship*: "self-

and Community Development in Kenya and Uganda, 1948-1956" (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2017).

[340] Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, *Education for Citizenship,* 14.

[341] Lewis, "The Ruling Compassions of the Late Colonial State," doi:10.1353/cch.2001.0035.

[342] Vincent Llewellyn Griffiths, with assistance of Abdel Rahman Ali Taha, *Character Training*: *An Explanation of the Principles of Character Training for Parents* (London: Longmans, Greens & Co, 1949), Christopher Cox, "Foreword to the Series": v.

reliance," "responsibility," "loyalty" and "self-discipline."[343] Like *Education in Citizenship*, the books targeted a male audience. Written for use in boys' schools, they envisioned a male-governed future.

Another, slightly different publication, titled *Thoughts on African Citizenship* (1944), written by Thomas Reginald Batten, Vice-President of Makerere College and the Director of the Social Studies Department in Kampala, explicitly situated local community as a training ground for the nation.[344] Contrary to *Education in Citizenship*, Batten focused less on the development of the individual but highlighted the need to create "national unity" instead. For Batten, the crucial problem hindering progress to self-government was not so much a lack of specific character traits, but rather the absence of a sense of national unity; Uganda was a territory that consisted of many different ethnic groups, combined under British rule. In Batten's view, only awakening a "true sense of citizenship" on a local level would lead to national unity.[345]

In Uganda, some of these ideas were also brought into practice at the Local Government and Community Training Centre, a training center for community development officers located in Entebbe, Uganda's administrative capital. In 1954, nearly ten years before Uganda would become independent, the center ran its first "citizenship course" for government employees and village chiefs.[346] The course, which lasted a full

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[343] Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, *Education for Citizenship,* 21.

[344] Reginald Thomas Batten, *Thoughts on African Citizenship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944). Batten came to Uganda following a career in education in Nigeria. Another example is H.A. Harman, *The Citizen of Africa* (London: Longmans, Green & Co: 1938).

[345] Thomas Batten, *Thoughts on African Citizenship*, 15.

[346] The institute still exists and is known as the Nsamizi Training Institute for Social Development. The community development course included all subjects discussed in the

month, would help "give Africans a fuller understanding of the duties of a good citizen," and consisted of lectures on topics such as water, food, health, transport, government, education, freedom, and safety.[347] These lectures purported to help future citizens understand their responsibility in, for example, keeping their homes clean and their villages orderly.[348]

Classes such as the "citizenship course" in Entebbe, publications like *Character Aims*, and May's Kampala plan, recast the question of citizenship as a psychological matter, placing responsibility with the colonial subject. May explicitly stated it was residents' own responsibility to become acquainted with "the duties and benefits" of citizenship. "It is up to the African," he wrote, "to make the best possible use of the help and instructions given to him by the Protectorate Government and by his more advanced co-citizens to provide that he is capable of mastering the gigantic task of bridging the gap which still separates him from a full share in the duties and benefits of modern civilization."[349] May, as well as other colonial officials, implied that the British colonial administration was there to help guide the colonial subject to reach a particular stage of development, likening the "African" to a child in need of assistance of a father figure. But, as Kofi Abrefa Busia, a nationalist leader from the Gold Coast wrote, "the question 'Are we ripe for self-government?' is not a

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citizenship course, plus extra classes on the techniques of adult education, the use of films, etc.

[347] Patrick Williams, Local Government and Community Development Training Centre, "What are the objectives of the Centre?" ca. 1954. CO822/1142, TNA; "Citizenship Course," Course List, 1954. CO822/1142, TNA.

[348] "Training for Citizenship in Africa: Initiative of Uganda Government," *East Africa and Rhodesia*, August 19, 1954. CO822/1142, TNA.

[349] May, *The Kampala Extension Plan*, 6.

sensible question to ask: for it assumes that there is a stage of ripeness which we have to reach. No one can define the stage which a colony must reach in order to be 'ripe' for self-government."[350] According to historian Erik Linstrum, the idea of training in citizenship, therefore, served "as much to justify the continuation of British rule as it was to prepare the indigenous elite for self-government."[351] Books such as the *Good Citizenship* series entertained the possibility of independence but continued to regard political transition as a distant objective. Similarly, May pointed out that it was impossible "to predict how long this process [of training in citizenship] will take."[352] In other words, these initiatives implied that participants would only be ready for self-governance *after* training and education.[353]

By reframing self-governance as a goal that depended on personal development, publications such as *Education in Citizenship* presented social and political mobilization as a form of self-realization, a psycho-social process. The historian Carol Summers has showed that British politicians, educators, and sociologists in Uganda often effectively deployed the metaphor of "adolescence" to describe the position of the "African" during this historical moment.[354] While the idea of education in citizenship built upon the

[350] Kofi Abrefa Busia, "Self-Government," *West African Affairs* 9 (1951), 13-4.

[351] Linstrum, *Empire of Minds*, 173.

[352] May, *The Kampala Extension Plan*, 6.

[353] Britta Schilling has made a comparable argument about the educational books on the home and the household, such as *The African Housewife and Her Home* (1952). Schilling, "Design Advice for the African Home," 193.

[354] Carol Summers, "Adolescence versus Politics: Metaphors in Late Colonial Uganda," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 78, no. 1 (2017): 117-36. Before, colonial administrators often compared Africans to children. Frederick Lugard, for example, the British captain who claimed to have conquered Uganda, famously described the African as a "late-born child in the family of nations," someone who must be "schooled in the discipline of the

nineteenth-century ideal of the "civilizing mission," it also explicitly cast the "African" as a person in transition to adulthood. Yet the idea of education in citizenship or training for self-government also allowed colonial administrators and politicians to explain strikes and anticolonial uprisings as a form of adolescent rebellion, a coming of age process, rather than a response to decades of suppression and inequality. Or, as the authors of *Education in Citizenship* argued, Britain should "not regard the beginnings of a demand for self-government as evidence that the Colonies have been misgoverned."[355] Rather, the rise of nationalist, anti-imperial movements was considered proof that the British administration had fulfilled its task.

2.6 Towards Independence

The completion of May's Kampala project coincided with more mass meetings across Uganda organized by the Bataka Union and the Farmer's Union. They protested against the exploitation of African farmers, specifically cotton growers. Many of their grievances were directed against the British and Indian domination of the cotton industry in Uganda, which prevented Africans from ginning their own cotton and exporting it. They also protested the Lint (cotton) Marketing Board's fixing of prices for raw cotton. While this allegedly helped to offer price stability, it also allowed the Marketing Board, a British state-led enterprise, to

nursery." Frederick Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, London, 1893), 74-75. Cited by Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, "Margaret Trowell's School of Art. A Case Study in Colonial Subject Formation," in *Wahrnehmung, Erfahrung, Experiment, Wissen Objektivität und Subjektivität in den Künsten und den Wissenschaften*, ed. Susanne Stemmler (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2014), 104.

[355] Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, *Education in Citizenship*, 12. "For this reason, we welcome these nationalist movements, and part of our problem is to find ways of using their abundant energy in constructive work for the common benefit."

control export and pay artificially low prices to black growers.[356] In 1949, another nation-wide strike was organized. Thousands rioted for weeks, destroying numerous buildings across town, until British troops were called in from Kenya and the protests were violently repressed, leading to numerous deaths and over a thousand arrests.[357] The Bataka Union also sent one of its leaders, Semakula Mulumba, to London, to lobby for the rights of black workers in Uganda, although neither Colonial Office or the United Nations was very responsive.[358]

Meanwhile, Kampala rapidly changed. Large-scale modernist structures, some sponsored through the colonial development and welfare grants, were built across the city. At Makerere University, the British firm Norman & Dawbarn constructed several new dorm buildings and a new library, **(Figure 2.24, 2.25)** all paid for by the Colonial Office; Mulago hospital, another project sponsored through the colonial development and welfare policy, was under construction. **(Figure 2.26)** The call for a new headquarters of the Uganda Electricity Board on Jinja Road in Kampala's center, garnered proposals from a large number of architects, including May, as well as Peter and Alison Smithson, although

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[356] On the Lint (Cotton) Marketing Board, see: J. J. Olaya, "Marketing Boards and Post-War Economic Development Policy in Uganda 1945-1962," *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics* 23, no. 1 (1968): 50-8.

[357] Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, ca. 1935-1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 101-2.

[358] Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 308. Also see: Carol Summers, "Slander, Buzz and Spin: Telegrams, Politics and Global Communications in the Uganda Protectorate, 1945-55," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 16, no. 3 (2015): 1-13.

it was a South African firm who won the commission.[359] **(Figure 2.27)** Peatfield &

Bodgener, two young graduates of the AA, completed the National Theatre building,

characterized by its brise-soleil stretching along the curved façade. They also designed the

country's striking Parliament building.[360] **(Figure 2.28)** May himself contributed by

designing the National Museum in the early 1950s, a structure, that with its two wings—

one for ethnographic displays, the other for contemporary exhibitions and activities—

clearly fit within the framework of community development, modernization, and welfare

proposed by the Colonial Office.[361] **(Figure 2.29)**

     The museum, however, which had appeared in May's initial plan as a "cultural

center," was among the few parts of the project that was actually constructed. By the early

1950s—construction delayed by the 1949 riots and, more generally, a lack of financial

resources—little had come of May's comprehensive program of neighborhood units. A

report from the newly established Housing Department in Kampala indicated that by 1955,

365 houses were completed in Naguru, while 1,180 were built in Nakawa, far less than May

had anticipated.[362] There were just four shops in Naguru, a clinic, and a nursery. Nakawa

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[359] On the competition see: "Uganda Electricity Board: Architectural Competition for a New Head Office Building, Kampala," *South African Architectural Record* 11, no. 38 (1953): 22-44.

[360] The National Theatre building sadly is currently threatened with demolition.

[361] Around the same time, May designed another cultural center in Moshi.

[362] The construction work was outsourced to various British companies, such as Stirling Astaldi, a company engaged in construction of housing, railways, highways, and airports across East and West Africa in the 1950s. The Department oversaw the planning and daily administration of Naguru, Nakawa, as well as other "African" housing estates built in Uganda during the 1950s; Walukuba, in Jinja, Kiwafu, Katabi, and Manyago in Entebbe, Maluku and Namakwekwe in Mbale, Nagongera Road near Tororo, and Ntinda in Kampala, located next to Naguru. While most of the senior officers, architects, inspectors, and engineers working for the Department were British, many engineers and other

had none.[363] Indeed, one report from the early 1950s remarked that "one cause of the very real unpopularity of housing estates such as Naguru is that they contain none of the amenities or services such as schools which make urban life tolerable."[364]

Moreover, instead of the different types of houses May had envisioned, the plain dwellings were mostly semi-detached or row houses, varying from one- to three-roomed apartments with communal kitchen and sanitary facilities. The houses were positioned in a loose manner, surrounding a common green space, interspersed by trees. **(Figure 2.30)** In the spirit of self-reliance, the material for the houses was primarily local, except for the asbestos sheet roofs. Locally-sourced earth, mixed with a little amount of cement, provided the material for the apartments. Most houses were, as anticipated, inhabited not by Ganda but by families from other parts of East Africa.[365]

The Uganda government never accepted May's final scheme, although it still served as the impetus for the development of Naguru and Nakawa.[366] Uganda's governor, Hathorn Hall, and other colonial officials agreed that as a theoretical, abstract plan, May's proposal had potential, yet the vast number of social amenities was deemed extravagant and inconceivable.[367] Even more so, administrators opposed to May's patronizing tone. They

employees were Africans trained at the Public Works Department's engineering school.

[363] Uganda Government, *Annual Report of the African Housing Department for the year ended 31st December 1954* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1955), 9-10.

[364] "Some Preliminary Notes on the Housing Situation in Uganda," ca. 1953. CO822/715, TNA.

[365] Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen in the Making,* 46-9.

[366] Ibid.

[367] Uganda Government, *Annual Report of the African Housing Department for the year ended 31st December 1954* (Entebbe: Government Printer, 1955), 17.

resisted his frequent references to the primitive nature of the "African." What Hathorn Hall described as May's "music-hall Teutonicness of thought and method of expression," did not align with the rhetoric of partnership and equality that permeated community development.[368] Administrators feared local responses to the proposal and, therefore, prevented its publication in Ganda newspapers such as *Matalisi* and *Gambuza*.[369] They even refused to print it as a government publication, which led May to self-publish the plan in Nairobi.[370]

The community center in Naguru, also serving Nakawa, finally opened its doors in January of 1954. What the center looked like is difficult to know—Naguru was demolished in the 2000s—but it most likely consisted of a small, single-story hall, just like the Mengo Social Center, built several years before in the Kibuga.[371] **(Figure 2.31)** There was a Boys' Club, plans for a Tennis Club, several adult education classes organized by Makerere University, and a monthly dance evening, which brought in some profits.[372] Political activities, however, were, as in all community centers, strictly forbidden.

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[368] Ibid.,18. Jonathan Hathorn Hall, Some Notes on the Economic Development of Uganda. 1946. CO536/218, TNA.

[369] On Luganda newspapers in Uganda, see: Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000). Some of these papers were restricted in 1948 by the colonial administration.

[370] Byerley, "Re-Contextualizing Ernst May's Kampala Plans," 16-9. By publishing the plan, May hoped to garner international attention that would lead him to the United States or back to Germany. Not long after finishing his designs for the National Museum in Kampala, May returned to Germany, his departure hastened by the outbreak of the "Mau Mau" rebellion in Kenya. Back in Europe, he became city planner of Hamburg and started the last phase of his expansive career. In Germany, May frequently lectured about his experiences in East Africa.

[371] The officer of the Mengo Social Center was trained at the Jeanes School in Kabete.

[372] Uganda Government, *Annual Report of the African Housing Department 1955*, 9.

At the end of that first year, one of the Housing Department's annual reports concluded that despite "much good work," the community center had not managed to become an "integral part of the life of the estate."[373] The unsatisfactory results in Kampala mirrored the outcomes of a survey on community centers in different parts of the British empire held by the Colonial Office in 1952. Even though over five-hundred centers had been built in the eight years since Blaxter's initial memorandum, the results were generally disappointing.[374] Many community development officers reported a lack of interest; few residents showed up for activities.

In the meantime, in Britain, the design of the neighborhood unit was never without criticism. Throughout the late 1940s and '50s, several studies condemned the neighborhood unit's central idea: that something as elusive as community could be planned by an outside organization. In 1948, the sociologist Ruth Glass concluded, based on a survey of the British new town of Middlesbrough, that neighborhood unit design did not automatically improve social relations between residents. Planned neighborhood units, Glass argued, would never even come close to resembling life in a village.[375] Leo Kuper, a South African sociologist who worked on a postwar plan for the British city of Coventry, came to a similar conclusion. There was "no simple mechanical determination of social life

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[373] Uganda Government, *Annual Report of the African Housing Department 1954*, 8.

[374] United Nations Series on Community Organization and Development: United Kingdom Territories, 1953. CO859/410, TNA. In Uganda, twenty-three centers were built in total.

[375] Cited by Cupers, "Mapping and Making Community," 11. Ruth Glass, *The Social Background of a Plan: A Study of Middlesbrough* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948). Glass worked on the project with Jacqueline Thyrwitt. Glass would become known for coining the term "gentrification." She was also one of the first to explore postcolonial migration to London. See, for example: Ruth Glass, *Newcomers: The West Indians in London* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960).

by the physical environment." "The social consequences of the plan" depended on residents' own intentions, he argued.[376] Later studies such as Michael Young and Peter Wilmott's *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957) pointed to the importance of social relations within older inner-city working-class neighborhoods. Young and Wilmott's study, widely read by British planners during the late 1950s and '60s, offered a warning against centralized, top-down planning.[377]

Similar sentiments transpired in discussions about the design of Kampala during the 1950s. Nigel Oram, a British anthropologist and colonial officer employed by Uganda's Department of Native Affairs, described another neighborhood in Kampala—like Naguru and Nakawa planned by the Uganda Department of African Housing—as "dead" and lacking "any feeling of corporate life."[378] According to Oram, the idea of neighborhood unit planning, which had defined Uganda's housing policy after 1945, had been largely unsuccessful. Instead, not unlike Young and Wilmott's study, Oram underlined the vivacity of self-built areas on Kampala's fringes, which he characterized as "teeming with life and activity."[379] "Let us build on such feelings of community as is already there, and give native enterprise as free as a reign as possible. The result will be neither tidy nor impressive, *but it will be alive*."[380]

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[376] Leo Kuper cited by Oram, "The Problem of African Settlements," 9.

[377] Michael Young and Peter Wilmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London: Routledge, 1957).

[378] Oram, "The Problem of African Settlements," 7.

[379] Ibid.,11.

[380] Ibid. (Emphasis mine). Another publication, *Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and its Suburbs*, written by two anthropologists working for the newly-established East African Institute for Social Research (EAISR) in Kampala, came to a similar conclusion. They also

This chapter has explored May's plans to expand Kampala, Uganda's commercial capital and center of the country's thriving cotton industry. It has showed that for May, and for the Uganda government, community centers became an instrument to create social cohesion and to prevent further social unrest. The community centers, parks, and other social and recreational amenities plotted by May would help "induce the African labourer to come more stable."[381] May envisaged community centers as spaces to educate, elevate, and gradually modernize colonial subjects. Through neighborhood facilities, specifically the community center, May's project aimed to impose upon its residents a British way of life rooted in values such as responsibility, self-reliability, duty, and loyalty—values necessary for obtaining self-government. Instead of considering May's project in relation to his previous designs in Germany, this chapter has pointed out that the Kampala scheme was a response to Uganda's shifting political situation, particularly the recurring protests of Uganda's cotton workers during the 1940s.

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argued that slum clearance through eviction was not only very expensive, it was also "politically unwise." Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen in the Making*, 49.

[381] May, *The Kampala Extension* Plan, 10.

CHAPTER 3

Built-in Kitchen Cabinets and Bunk Beds: Betty Spence's "Furniture Survey" in Johannesburg's Townships

> *"Owing to the wide difference between our two cultures it is almost impossible for the European to understand the Native outlook and therefore equally impossible for him to build houses for the Native people to live in."*[382]

> Betty Spence, "The Problem of the Location: A Report on Housing Conditions in Ten Transvaal Locations," 1943.

3.1. "How Our Urban Natives Live"

In October 1950, the *South African Architectural Record* devoted an entire issue to a single research report. In "How Our Urban Natives Live," the white South African architect Betty Spence, a lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand's School of Architecture in Johannesburg, reported on the dwelling habits of black South Africans living in the township of Orlando East, located on the flat, windy plains southwest of Johannesburg.[383]

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[382] Betty Spence, "The Problem of the Location: A Report on Housing Conditions in Ten Transvaal Locations," *South African Architectural Record* 28, no. 2 (February 1943): 26.

[383] Betty Spence, "How Our Urban Natives Live," *South African Architectural Record* 35, no. 10 (October 1950): 221-36. While Spence was responsible for writing the article's main body of text, Mokhetle wrote a short appendix on life in Orlando East. On Spence, see: Elisa Dainese, "Histories of Exchange: Indigenous South Africa in the South African Architectural Record and the Architectural Review," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 74, no. 4 (December 2015): 443-63. Little is known about Anna Mokhetle.

(Figure 3.1) The report conveyed the results of Spence's recent research. In 1949, the architect had conducted a "furniture survey" with the help of Anna Mokhetle, a black woman trained at the Jan Hofmeyr School of Social Work in Johannesburg—the first South African institution to train black social workers.[384] In Spence's view, furniture was directly related to housing design; well-designed mass-produced housing started with an assessment of how people used and furnished interior spaces. Mokhetle, instructed by Spence, interviewed Orlando East's inhabitants to find out what types of furniture residents owned, to what extent the cramped and overcrowded two- and three-room houses were furnished, but also how and at what time of day the furniture was used. "How Our Urban Native Lives" was dotted with numbers and tables, and also included several drawings of some of the houses' interiors, giving the reader insight into how tenants had positioned the different pieces of furniture. While the widely read architectural magazine had published articles on designs for the townships before—particularly during the 1940s and '50s as the government moved towards more stringent and increasingly cruel enforcement of apartheid policies—information of this kind, detailing how people in townships *lived*, had never appeared on the pages of the *South African Architectural Record*.[385]

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[384] The school was founded in the 1940s by Ray Philips, an American Christian missionary, and was funded through the Department of Native Affairs and the mining industry. Many of the professors who taught at Hofmeyr were white English-speaking liberals. Some of the school's students, such as Winnie Mandela, became active in the African National Congress (ANC) and outspoken anti-apartheid activists. Grace Davie, *Poverty Knowledge in South Africa: A Social History of Human Science, 1855-2005* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 150-2.

[385] The *South African Architectural Record* replaced *Building* in 1925, the official journal of the Association of Transvaal Architects, a quarterly publication founded in 1916. The magazine published articles on new architectural developments in South Africa as well as town planning projects and conferences and occasionally reported on major buildings abroad. During the 1930s and '40s, the South African architect Rex Martienssen was one of its editors. Martienssen, influenced by le Corbusier, eventually became a member of CIAM.

Spence, a left-leaning liberal who would become involved in anti-apartheid politics during the late 1950s, published her survey while the African National Congress (ANC) launched its "Programme of Action," a program of nonviolent rallies, marches, and protests. The campaign, led by Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and others, responded to the introduction of new apartheid laws and the increasingly strict enforcement of already existing discriminatory laws following the election of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party in 1948. Such laws not only pressed for stricter spatial segregation but they also sought to further eliminate black political representation. Two years later, the ANC started the "Defiance Campaign of Unjust Laws," one of the largest campaigns of nonviolent resistance in South Africa.[386] On April 6, 1952—the day white South Africans celebrated the 300th anniversary of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape of Good Hope—mass rallies attended by thousands of black South Africans were held across the country.[387] **(Figure 3.2)** With the Defiance Campaign, the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) took on a more aggressive approach in the struggle for equality and freedom. They called for mass boycotts and acts of civil disobedience to openly defy the discriminatory laws. Within that same year, over 8,000 black men, like Nelson Mandela, and women, such as

See: Gilbert Herbert, *Martienssen and the International Style: The Modern Movement in South African Architecture* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1975), 16-7.

[386] Goolam Vahed, "'Gagged and trussed rather securely by the law': The 1952 Defiance Campaign in Natal," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* 31, no. 2 (2013): 68-89. See also: Saul Dubow, *Apartheid, 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (London: Longman, 1983), specifically Chapter 2, "The creation of a mass movements: strikes and defiance,1950-1952"; Gail Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1978).

[387] Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, "The 1952 Jan Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History in South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 34, no. 3 (1993): 447-68.

Lilian Ngoyi—both residents of Orlando West, located next to Orlando East—were arrested for sitting on benches marked "for Europeans only," and for entering the "European" entrance at railway stations or post offices. Others were jailed for challenging the strict pass laws, which regulated black South Africans' access to urban areas like Johannesburg.[388] Meanwhile, in Orlando East, James Mpanza, founder of the local Sofasonke ("We shall all die together") Party and member of the Orlando Advisory Board, fought for better and more housing in the township. Several years before Spence's survey, Mpanza, together with hundreds of Orlando East's residents, had occupied nearby vacant municipal land. In a monumental act of resistance, they had squatted the land and erected houses to protest overpopulation in Orlando East.[389]

Through an investigation of Spence's and Mokhetle's work in Orlando East, this chapter traces how in late 1940s and early '50s South Africa, the social survey became an instrument for architects—an exclusively white profession in South Africa—to understand the housing needs of what Spence called the "Urban Native." For Spence, surveying offered a mechanism to circumnavigate, at least in part, the increasingly complex racial politics of early 1950s South Africa. Yet, whereas British sociologists, involved in postwar housing projects in Britain, considered surveying a key component of democratic planning, Spence treated the survey as an anthropological study, a method to study the dwelling

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[388] Dubow, *Apartheid*, 43.

[389] Kevin French, "James Mpanza and the Sofasonke Party in the Development of Local Politics in Soweto" (master's thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 1983). Also see: Alfred William Stadler "Birds in the Cornfield: Squatter Movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1979): 93-123; Baruch Hirson, *Yours for the Union: Class and Community Struggles in South Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1990).

habits of the *nie-blanke*, the non-white.[390] Spence described township inhabitants as an

"unstable community," who were in the process of settling down.[391] In Spence's view, the

solutions she proposed—modern, affordable, built-in furniture—would help to "stabilise

the already uprooted Native population."[392]

Spence conducted her research in Orlando East for the South African National

Building Research Institute (NRBI), a state-sponsored organization. Together with the

National Housing and Planning Commission (NHPC) and the Department of Native

Affairs, the NBRI worked on standardizing the design of township housing and funded

research on construction methods, building materials, financing, and the layout of

apartments. Government officials often presented the construction of township housing as a

form of social welfare, a way to improve the miserable living circumstances of South

Africa's black inner-city inhabitants. In the early 1960s, for example—over a decade after

D.F. Malan's apartheid government had come to power—a government publication stated

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[390] On the use of the social survey in Britain during this period, see: Henry Cohen, "Social Surveys as Planning Instruments for Housing: Britain," *Journal of Social Issues* (Spring 1951): 35-46; Glass, Ruth. *The Social Background of a Plan: A Study of Middlesbrough* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948). On the use of social surveys in housing design more generally in the 1940s and '50s, see: Cupers, "Mapping and Making Community," 1-20. Also see: Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project*: *Housing in Postwar France* (Saint-Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.) On the use of geographical surveys in urban planning and architecture in the postwar period, see, for example: Tom Avermaete, "Crossing Cultures of Urbanism: The Transnational Planning Ventures of Michel Écochard," *OASE* 95 (2010): 22-33.

[391] Betty Spence, *Prefabricated Houses for Africans*, 1948, 2. CO927/36/1, TNA. As in British Africa, a similar discourse around stabilization surrounded the design of townships. Black South Africans living in cities like Johannesburg were described as "rootless masses" during the mid-1940s. According to government officials, townships helped create a stabilized, and permanently urbanized Black South African workforce in cities such as Johannesburg. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 100.

[392] Spence, "The Problem of the Location," 25.

that "homes have been built for 1,200,000 black men, women, and children who formed the great majority of the workers living in "shanty town" slums crowding around South Africa's centres of industry."[393] Instead of endless rows of "matchbox" houses, surrounded by fences and inhabited by people who were forcibly displaced, the publication described "happy, well-housed communities in a score of brand-new cities and towns inhabited by nearly three million people."[394] **(Figure 3.3)** While many white South African liberals like Spence did not idealize the living conditions in the townships, they too deemed the production of housing in the townships the responsibility of white South Africans—an idea exemplified by Spence's use of the phrase "our Urban Natives" in the title of her article in the *South African Architectural Record*. "We provide housing," she wrote elsewhere, "for those who cannot house themselves…"[395]

Johannesburg's population had increased rapidly during World War II, attracting black South Africans from areas such as the Orange Free State, the Natal, and the Transvaal, who looked for employment in the service industry or the mines surrounding the city. During the mid-1940s, Johannesburg's black population nearly doubled, leading to vast illegal settlements within the city and overcrowding in existing townships such as Orlando East.[396] Legally, only African servants were allowed to live in cities. Laws such as

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[393] Union of South Africa, South African Information Service, *In the Republic of South Africa: Each a Roof of His Own* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkers, Ltd., 1962), n.p.

[394] Ibid. The literature on the spatial politics of apartheid is vast, see for example: David M. Smith, ed. *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa* (London and New York: Witwatersrand University Press, 1992).

[395] Betty Spence, *Prefabricated Houses for Africans*, 1948, 11-2. CO927/36/1, TNA.

[396] Alfred William Stadler, for example, estimated that during the 1940s, between 60.000 and 90.000 people settled down in squatter camps in Johannesburg and surroundings. See:

the Native Urban Area Act of 1923 required local authorities to establish separate

"locations" for black South Africans residing in urban areas and forced them to carry

permits to enter cities such Johannesburg.[397] An amendment to the same law in 1937

prohibited black South Africans from acquiring property in urban areas. At the same time,

laws such as the Slum Act of 1934 sanctioned the destruction of primarily black

communities in cities without necessarily offering alternative housing options in the

townships.[398] During the late 1940s, architects estimated that approximately a quarter of a

million government-funded houses for black South Africans would be required to "solve"

the housing problem. "It is fair to say," one of Spence's colleagues at the NBRI, the

architect Paul Connell, wrote, "that Native housing, in the urban areas especially, ranks as

one of the biggest organization and construction problems that has ever had to be faced in

our history and it probably outweighs every other project in the importance of its social and

economic consequences."[399] In the mid-1940s and '50s, the design of township housing

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Stadler "Squatter Movements in Johannesburg," 93. Approximately four times that number lived in permanent dwellings surrounding Johannesburg. Davie, *Poverty Knowledge,* 145.

[397] Susan Parnell has argued that in the early twentieth century, the city of Johannesburg—founded as a mining camp—was characterized by racial integration, rather than racial segregation. While some Africans from within the Union resided in compounds, most employees lived in informal settlements in the city center, alongside Mozambicans, Swazis, and immigrants from the United Kingdom and India. As a result of anxiety about crime, health, and labor productivity, slums came to be regarded as a "Native problem," despite the presence of many poor Europeans in the slums. See: Susan Parnell, "Race, Power and Urban Control: Johannesburg's Inner-City Slum-Yards, 1910-1923," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): 615-37. Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nutall made a case for thinking about Johannesburg not as a city defined by segregation and separation but as a city "of flows, of flux, of translocation." See: Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nutall, "Writing the World from an African Metropolis," *Public Culture* 16, no. 3 (2004): 347-372.

[398] See: Susan Parnell, Racial Segregation in Johannesburg: The Slum Acts, 1934-1939," *South African Geographical Journal* 70, no. 2 (1988): 112-26.

[399] Paul Connell, "Native Housing and its Architectural Aspects," Fourth Congress of the Institute of South African Architects and Chapter of South African Quantity Surveyors,

became a subject fiercely debated during conferences held at the University of Witwatersrand and in the pages of the *South African Architectural Record*.

The construction of township housing during the early years of the apartheid regime has been extensively studied by historians such as Grace Davie and Ivan Evans and architectural historians such as Clive Chipkin, Derek Japha, Nicholas Coetzer, and Hannah le Roux. The upsurge in construction during the years following the United Party's election in 1948, was accompanied by the widespread use of technical and social science research, including, among others, various social surveys.[400] This moment yielded, Ivan Evans noted in his account of the expanding bureaucracy of the apartheid state, "an explosion of research" marked by the "relationship between 'the technical sciences' and urban Native administration."[401] Scholars such as Chipkin and Japha have studied the standardized housing plans based on "minimum dwelling standards" by architects such as Douglas Calderwood, one of Spence's colleagues at the NBRI, and examined the creation of "model" townships, including Kwa-Thema, outside of Johannesburg, using a strictly regimented, assembly-line method of construction. Township housing, the historian Grace

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Durban, 12th-17th May 1947, *South African Architectural Record* 32, no. 6 (June 1947): 166. In the 1930s, Connell devoted his thesis to the "Native Housing Problem." Connell and his fellow students proposed a Corbusian housing scheme, consisting of prefabricated concrete high-rises, surrounded by green space.

[400] Davie, *Poverty Knowledge*, 2015; Ivan Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1997); Clive Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style: Architecture and Society 1880s-1960s* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1993), 211-7; Derek Japha, "The Social Program of the South African Modern Movement" in *Blank – Architecture, Apartheid and After*, eds. Judin, H. and Vladislavic, I. (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 1998): 423-37; Nicholas Coetzer, *Building Apartheid: On Architecture and Order in Imperial Cape Town* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013); Hannah le Roux, "Designing Kwa-Thema: Cultural Inscriptions in the Model Township," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 54, no. 2 (2019): 273-301.

[401] Evans, *Bureaucracy and Race*, 137.

Davie reminds us, "needed to be rationalized so as to produce the cheapest possible homes for the largest number of black Africans already living in the city."[402]

Yet little attention has been paid to research conducted by architects working for the NBRI on the standardization of township housings' furniture, nor to the role of the social survey in housing design. Within an organization fixated on rationalization, optimization, and efficiency, Spence's and Mokhetle's charts, drawings, and tables in the *South African Architectural Record* drew attention to what the British sociologist Dennis Chapman—whose research Spence relied on—had termed "homemaking" in the 1940s.[403] Through their survey, Spence and Mokhetle pointed to the incongruities between designers' visions and tenant's needs and highlighted the role of residents in adapting the austere spaces of the Orlando East houses, despite the harsh realities of the apartheid era. As perpetual renters, tenants were unable to make substantial changes to their houses and were faced with eviction when they did. In "How Our Urban Natives Live," Spence demonstrated how the occupants in Orlando East had transformed the sterile, bare, and uniform spaces into personalized homes.

Nonetheless, Spence also relied on the results of the survey to push her ideas about the optimization of the township house—ideas rooted in British (and European) wartime furniture- and housing design. Spence, who had spent time in Britain studying housing design in the 1940s, insisted on several space-saving solutions: built-in kitchens, bunk beds, foldable tables, built-in benches, and clothing storage. While these spatial

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[402] Davie, *Poverty Knowledge,* 147.

[403] Dennis Chapman, *The Home and Social Status* (London: Routledge, 1955).

interventions would optimize the small space of the township house, they also introduced

what Spence termed "better design" to residents.[404]

3.2. A Furniture Survey in Orlando East

Spence chose Orlando East, located approximately 10 miles from Johannesburg's center—

an area that today is part of Soweto, or the South Western Townships—as the location of

her survey because it represented a "fairly well established community of poorer urbanized

Native families."[405] Orlando East was also one of South Africa's first formally planned

townships and one of the first that experimented with the provision of state-sponsored

standardized housing for black South Africans.[406] In 1931, the same year South Africa

acquired dominion status and became a self-governing territory, the South African

architecture firm Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner won an open competition of

Johannesburg's City Council to design a "Model Native Township."[407] The project was

situated, as the architectural historian Jeremy Foster has written, behind the city's

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[404] Betty Spence, "Furnishing the Home of the South African Bantu," in *Proceedings-Technical Papers Regional Conference on Housing Research in Africa South of the Sahara*, *vol. I* (Pretoria: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), 17.

[405] Spence, "'How Our Urban Native Lives," 221.

[406] Other nearby areas, like Klipspruit (later renamed Pimville), were more informally planned "locations," where most residents had to build their own dwellings.

[407] "The Klipspruit Town Planning Competition," *South African Architectural Record* 16, no. 63 (September 1931): 86-91.

"unsightly mine dumps" and in the "veld," the open and uncultivated grasslands surrounding Johannesburg.[408]

Orlando East served to rehouse some of the black residents who were forcibly removed by the Council from their inner-city dwellings in neighborhoods such as Doornfontein, where they often lived in illegally built shacks without sewerage or water supplies. Most residents were factory workers, others worked as domestic servants. Geographer Susan Parnell has argued that during the early decades of the twentieth century, before the official adoption of apartheid in 1948, these inner-city slums were cast by the city's white ruling classes, despite their racially-mixed population and the presence of many "poor whites," as "African enclaves and as an African problem."[409] The creation of separate, controlled living spaces for black residents away from the center but close to Johannesburg's mines, was touted as a cost-effective solution and as a form of urban renewal. To obfuscate the racial politics behind such forced displacements, government officials spoke about neighborhoods that were "dis-established" rather than razed, just like architects and planners who, during the 1950s, insisted on using professional planning terms like "satellite communities" instead of townships.[410]

Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner, who had previously been responsible for projects such as the Plaza Cinema, one of the city center's imposing Art Deco buildings, laid out a

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[408] Jeremy Foster, "The Wilds and the Township: Articulating Modernity, Capital, and Socio-nature in the Cityscape of Pre-apartheid Johannesburg," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 71, no. 1 (March 2012): 50.

[409] Parnell, "Race, Power and Urban Control," 631.

[410] Chipkin, *Johannesburg Style,* 213.

low-density, orderly neighborhood, connected to Johannesburg by train and by bus.[411]

(Figure 3.4) The bungalow-type houses, 5,891 in total, were plain and simple, located on individual lots. In an attempt to keep costs down, they were left unplastered and bare from the inside by the construction company, without interior doors, floors, or ceilings. **(Figure 3.5)** Houses did not have private bathrooms. There was also no electricity, no street lights, only a few water taps, and roads were left unpaved, which made them dusty in the summer and marshy during the rains.[412] There was talk of surrounding the township by a fence.[413] Within a few years, over 35,000 people lived in Orlando's houses.[414] Dwellings—rentals that could, like all township houses, not be owned by its black tenants—faced inwards, toward a shopping area, a church, or a school, to create a sense of "community." According to Foster, Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner's urban design and its rational architecture served to "encourage civilized, orderly lives, and produce new citizens, families, and communities."[415] While presented as a garden city surrounded by a green belt—firmly separating the township from Johannesburg's white and wealthy suburban areas—the reality was a reservoir of cheap black labor for work in Johannesburg's gold mines and factories, and in the city's service industry, confined to relentless rows of single-story red

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[411] Notably, Herman Kallenbach, a German-Jewish immigrant, was one of Gandhi's close friends. He struck up an intimate friendship with Gandhi during the twenty-one years Gandhi spent in South Africa. Kallenbach designed the Satyagraha House in Johannesburg, where they lived together for over two years. Kallenbach also offered Gandhi a plot of farmland outside of Johannesburg, where Gandhi established his "Tolstoy Farm." See, for example: Mike Alfred, *Johannesburg Portraits: From Lionel Phillips to Sibongile Khumalo* (Houghton: Jacana Media, 2003), 20-31.

[412] French, "James Mpanza and the Sofasonke Party," 34.

[413] Ibid., 46.

[414] Stadler "Squatter Movements in Johannesburg," 95.

[415] Foster, "The Wilds and the Township," 51.

brick houses. **(Figure 3.6)** Ngoyi, who lived in a concrete township house not far from Orlando East, described them as "match-boxes." "Now the roof of my house is cement, the walls cement, the floor cement. In winter these houses are a fridge, in summer an oven. No white in this country can ever be accommodated in them."[416]

In 1940, briefly before finishing her architectural education at the University of the Witwatersrand, Spence had become known in South Africa's architectural circles for publishing an article titled "Native Architecture"—the first essay printed in the *South African Architectural Record* devoted to indigenous South African architecture.[417] In the piece, featuring several of her own photographs, Spence urged architects to study the South African *kraal* (an Afrikaner word used to designate an enclosed circle of livestock) and other types of indigenous architecture, rather than look to European examples. "South Africans are too inclined to look overseas for inspiration," Spence wrote. "According to many of them we have no artists, no authors, no musicians, no good plays or concerts, in fact no culture…The indigenous architecture, that of the Native, has never been considered at all."[418] She described her own experience visiting a settlement of indigenous worker's housing outside of Johannesburg, containing a variety of intricately decorated mud houses accompanied by a courtyard, which she, in her romanticized vision, praised for their charm and simplicity. **(Figure 3.7)** What particularly impressed Spence, was how the dwellings

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[416] Lilian Ngoyi cited in Barbara Caine, "The trials and tribulations of a Black women leader: Lilian Ngoyi and the South African liberation struggle," in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present*, eds. Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Daskalova (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 97.

[417] Betty Spence, "Native Architecture," *South African Architectural Record* (November 1940): 387-91.

[418] Ibid., 387.

were "part and parcel of their surroundings." Here, she wrote, "Nature was used as part of the design—a tall tree to balance a spreading kraal, a poinsettia bush vivid against grey wall, a back screen of blue gums."[419] Such idealized interpretations of indigenous South African architecture during the 1940s and '50s, as the architectural historian Elisa Dainese has argued, hinged on an appreciation rooted in a false idea of "original purity."[420]

In the years after that, as journals such as the *South African Architectural Record*, led by CIAM-member Rex Martienssen, as well as the British *Architectural Review*—then under the editorship of Nikolaus Pevsner—showed a nascent interest in indigenous South African architecture, Spence continued to publish on the subject.[421] In the 1950s, for example, she and the South African architect Barrie Bierman wrote a richly illustrated article for the *Architectural Review* reviewing the architectural customs of the Ndebele, whose tradition of creating colorfully painted houses with geometric patterns was gradually giving way to the "more powerful Western culture."[422] For Spence, Martienssen, and others at the *South African Architectural Record*, the study of indigenous architecture served as an impetus to renew the character of architectural modernism in South Africa—just like European architects' widespread fascination for the "timeless," "anonymous," or "primitive" architecture of the Mediterranean during the same period.[423] With similar vigor,

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[419] Ibid., 390.

[420] Dainese, "Histories of Exchange," 461.

[421] Ibid., 443-63.

[422] Barry Bierman and Betty Spence, "M'Pogga," *Architectural Review* 116, no. 691 (July 1954): 34-40.

[423] See for example, Jean-François Lejeune and Michelangelo Sabatino, eds. *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean: Vernacular Dialogues and Contested Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009). Another example, from the late 1950s, in Sibel Moholy-Nagy's *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture* (1957), and Bernard Rudofsky's

they published articles about Cape Dutch farmhouses and other Afrikaner heritage, which

Spence also extolled for the simplicity of their white-plastered walls and their *stoep* (an

Afrikaner term for verandah or raised platform in front of the house.)[424] At the same time,

however, for Spence and some of her fellow students—and later colleagues—at the

University of the Witwatersrand, these studies of the Ndebele murals, Xhosa houses, and

Sotho homesteads were hard to separate from the rapid migration of black South Africans

to cities such as Johannesburg and the proliferation of South Africa's townships. For them,

the study of indigenous architecture offered a key to an alternative way of designing

segregated living environments for black South Africans, away from the rigidity and

monotony of places such as Orlando East and more attuned to residents' alleged

predilections.

During the 1940s, Spence, who never questioned the idea of segregated

townships—at least not openly—also became interested in the living conditions of what she

and others termed "urban Natives," black South Africans living in or nearby cities. In 1943,

she published "The Problem of the Location," a lengthy article in the *South African*

Architecture Without Architects (1964). See: Hilde Heynen, "Anonymous architecture as counter-image: Sibel Moholy-Nagy's perspective on American vernacular," *The Journal of Architecture* 13, no. 4 (2008): 469-91; Felicity Scott, "'Primitive wisdom' and modern architecture," *The Journal of Architecture* 3, no. 3 (1998): 241-61.

[424] For example, Spence wrote an article on Reddersburg, a Cape Dutch village on the windy planes of the Orange Free State, see: Betty Spence, "Reddersburg," *South African Architectural Record* 27, no. 1 (1942): 3-5. Barry Bierman completed his Ph.D. on Cape Dutch architecture. Some of this work, with its attention for the architecture of the everyday, possibly served as an inspiration for the architect Denise Scott Brown, born in Johannesburg. Ayala Levin briefly discusses Scott Brown's relation to Johannesburg in Ayala Levin, "Basic Design and the Semiotics of Citizenship: Julian Beinart's Educational Experiments and Research on Wall Decoration in Early 1960s Nigeria and South Africa," *ABE Journal* 9-10 (2016): 77-105.

Architectural Record, based on substantial research of ten "locations," (another word for

townships) in the Transvaal, one of South Africa's provinces located in the northeast,

bordering Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe), Portuguese East Africa

(Mozambique), and Swaziland.[425] Most of the sites, some near farms, others near mines or

other industry, consisted of self-built housing. **(Figure 3.8, 3.9)** Only a few of the locations

she visited contained municipal "sub-economic" housing, since South Africa's first

subsidized housing projects for the townships were only initiated in the 1930s—Orlando

East being an early example. Published seven years before "How Our Urban Natives Live,"

the article signified the beginning of Spence's long-standing concerns about the design of

housing in the townships and, more specifically, their layouts and furnishings.

One of Spence's main objectives was to point to the deplorable living

circumstances of black South Africans living in the townships, making a first pass at using

systematic research to substantiate her claims. Instead of relying on a survey, however, as

she would in "How Our Urban Natives Live," here Spence grounded her opinions on on-

site observations and a few informal interviews with tenants and white South Africans who

administered and controlled the "locations." Based on her findings, she concluded that the

dwellings were too small for the number of people that inhabited them, hard to keep clean,

not well lit, and lacked appropriate ventilation. Moreover, the "primitive method of

construction," consisting of a combination of locally-burnt bricks, thatch, and corrugated

iron, meant that the houses quickly fell into disrepair and did not offer any protection

against the South African climate. "The resulting hovels," she wrote, "constructed entirely

from materials costing nothing are often more like rabbit warrens than human

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[425] Spence, "The Problem of the Location," 25-38.

habitations."[426] "That present Native living conditions are appalling no one in their senses will deny," she concluded.[427]

While Spence criticized the quality of self-built houses, she also denounced many of the municipally-built dwellings on the "locations." "I think it lacks much, not the least of which is in appearance," she wrote, speaking of the standardized housing constructed in the townships she visited. "The individual house is certainly not constructed with an eye to looks and the result of extensive municipal construction is undiluted monotony…"[428] Besides their uniformity, she also judged the floorplan of some of these structures, which seemed to ignore tenants' predilections. Inhabitants missed their "beloved verandah," and disliked the location of the kitchen in the front of the house. Yet, because of the "wide difference between our two cultures," it was "almost impossible for the European to understand the Native outlook and therefore equally impossible for him to build houses for the Native people to live in."[429]

The solution to the deplorable living circumstances in these "locations," in her view, was somewhere in-between, or a "compromise between our two cultures."[430] To let residents build with the little financial means they had, without supervision, would lead to slum conditions, she warned. On the other hand, showing her prejudices about township residents as "primitive" and "uncivilized," she argued that the houses should not be too

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[426] Ibid., 25.

[427] Ibid.

[428] Ibid., 35.

[429] Ibid., 26.

[430] Ibid.

refined either. "The fully equipped European house or flat block is not only too expensive to be practical but also too sophisticated for the Native mind in general at its present stage of development."[431] In Spence's view, the inhabitants were "in development" or in transition between "two cultures," caught between the "tribal" village and modern urban life—a conception that also would also come to typify her ideas in "How Our Urban Native Lives."

What Spence had in mind, then, was exemplified by the two plans she included in the article, to be used as examples for residents. **(Figure 3.10, 3.11)** They were one-story buildings, to be constructed with easily obtainable materials such as thatch, stone plinth, and unburnt or burnt bricks. Attuned to limited financial possibilities of the location's inhabitants, Spence imagined them as consisting of a core—a kitchen and a bedroom—that tenants could expanded over time. Contrary to the rectangular layouts of state- or municipal-sponsored housing, Spence's designs consisted of a variety of irregularly ordered spaces bordering a courtyard.

Seven years later—around the time she was appointed as a part-time lecturer at her alma mater, the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, and she had started building her own house in the leafy suburban neighborhood of Pine Parks—Spence turned her eyes to a township closer to Johannesburg.[432] Although it was Spence who coordinated the survey published in the *South African Architectural Record* in 1950, Mokhetle gathered the information presented in "How Our Urban Natives Live." In Orlando East, Mokhetle

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[431] Ibid., 25-6.

[432] She designed the house together with her British-born husband, Carl Pinfold. Pinfold was appointed as a lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand in 1948.

surveyed 63 randomly selected houses, a little over 1% of the total number of dwellings. (A year earlier, a sociology student named Jacqueline Eberhardt had conducted a social survey in Orlando East to gather information on income and employment in the township, and Eberhardt's research rendered, Spence argued, a more extensive survey unnecessary and allowed for a specific focus on furniture instead.)[433] Mokhetle gathered information about how the separate rooms were furnished, how many pieces of furniture people owned, and what type of furniture it was—"European-style" or based on local styles and manufactured in the township. Yet Mokhetle also inquired where people slept, where and when they ate, and where children did their homework. Spence's main interest, in other words, was not the furniture itself, but rather how the tenants, men, women, and children, used the one- and two-bedroom houses in Orlando East. **(Figure 3.12)**

Mokhetle was not named co-author of the article, although Spence did acknowledge her contribution in the text. "How Our Urban Natives Live" also included a short appendix written by Mokhetle herself, which captured the harsh living circumstances in Orlando East—the only time the magazine printed a piece by a black author during the 1950s. Compared to Spence's slightly dry, straightforward analysis, Mokhetle's section provided a more intimate account of daily life in the township. She portrayed Orlando East

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[433] Eberhardt continued her studies in Paris under Marcel Griaule and Claude Lévi-Strauss and would become a well-known anthropologist. Spence and Mokhetle's survey took place not long after Ellen Hellman's detailed sociological survey of Rooiyard, an inner-city slum in New Doornfontein, Johannesburg, was published, even though she conducted the study in the 1930s. Hellman who was involved with the South African Institute for Race Relations (see Chapter 1), also taught at the Hofmeyr School of Social Work, where Mokhetle studied. Ellen Hellman, *A Sociological Study of an Urban Native Slum Yard* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press and the Rhodes-Livingston Institute, 1948).

as a community defined by scarcity, a neighborhood where people struggled to provide for their families, despite long hours of work, and children grew up without much supervision.

Based on the information gathered by Mokhetle, Spence described the two- or three-roomed houses in Orlando as congested:

> The general impression given by an average Native house is crowded and dark, rather like a poor imitation of a Victorian interior…The walls are covered with pictures, mostly family portraits…Windows are curtained, floors are often covered with linoleum and bits of carpet, and sundry flower vases and other ornaments stand on table tops which are protected by cloths and doilies.[434]

Most rooms were used for sleeping, including the living room, and sometimes even the small verandah. Spaces were used in flexible way, and tenants folded out mattresses at night. On average, the survey pointed out, three people slept in each room, and in many cases, even four or six. The average number of pieces of furniture owned by tenants was twelve, and chairs, beds, and benches were the most common types of furniture.

She illustrated her point through several detailed drawings of furnished interiors in Orlando East, in the same clear-cut yet distinguishable style that also marked her later work, combining images with short texts. Spence's drawing of one of the three-roomed houses, belonging to the family of a municipal clerk who worked in Johannesburg, demonstrates how crowded the dwelling were. The drawing indicates that the tiny living room simultaneously functioned as a bedroom. **(Figure. 3.13)** The bedroom itself did not have enough space for two beds, so the wife and eleven-year-old son slept on the floor, while the husband's mother and baby daughter slept on the bed.

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[434] Spence, "'How Our Urban Native Lives," 226.

Spence's work was closely affiliated with that of the British sociologist Dennis Chapman. During the war, Chapman had contributed to the British Wartime Social Survey, a large-scale survey on different aspects of life during the war in Britain. Chapman surveyed different households in Scotland, as well as in Middlesbrough, a city in north-east England. [435] Chapman, whose work Spence referred to, was also the author of *The Home and Social Status* (1955), in which he further examined the relation between housing design, furniture, and social status. Chapman, as well as Spence, considered "homemaking," or the process through which inhabitants created a home, as an expanded if unofficial, mode of design. Spence's and Mokhetle's survey pointed to tenants' dwelling preferences but also underlined how inhabitants had transformed the bare, uniform spaces of the houses in Orlando East into personalized homes, despite the restrictions that prevented significant changes.

At the same time, Spence's and Mokhetle's survey highlighted the incongruities between Kallenbach, Kennedy & Furner's vision and residents' needs. Aside from the apparent lack of space, the survey clarified that residents in Orlando East were dissatisfied with the absence of proper flooring and interior ceilings. Their survey also stressed the need for more built-in storage space to avoid, in Spence's words, "the untidy and demoralizing heaps of possessions which collect in the houses in back yards."[436] Moreover, the survey pointed to tenants' frustration with the layout of the houses. Women especially disliked the

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[435] On Chapman, see: Trevor Keeble, "An Unknown Radical: Dennis Chapman and The Home and Social Status," *Design and Culture* 1, no. 3 (2009): 329-44. Chapman, who became professor at the University of Liverpool, collaborated with the sociologist Leo Silberman during the 1950s (see Chapter 1).

[436] Ibid., 236.

position of the kitchen in the front. They preferred its location at the back of the house, which offered more privacy. What Spence failed to mention in "How Our Urban Natives Live," however, was that many of these subjects had been raised repeatedly by local community organizers, like James Mpanza, active on the Orlando Advisory Board, a local organization with an advisory function.[437] Throughout the 1930s and '40s, the Orlando Advisory Board had advocated for more and better housing, in addition to improved sanitary facilities, better water supplies, street lights, improved healthcare facilities, and more efficient and cheaper transport to Johannesburg.[438] While Spence presented the survey as an instrument to understand people's needs, she approached the project as an anthropological study—a method to study the dwelling habits of the *nie-blanke*, the non-white. She recognized tenants' agency to shape their own living environments but failed to acknowledge their political agency.

3.3. Built-in Kitchen Cabinets, Bunk Beds, and Utility Furniture

Spence considered the heavy, bulky, wooden furniture she observed in the small township houses of Orlando East as inefficient. In some of the houses, Mokhetle had observed complete dining sets, including large wooden tables and chairs, or living room suites, sometimes even Chesterfield couches.[439] Most popular, one furniture salesman informed Spence, were a "highly polished imitation walnut veneer dining room suite" and a "five

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[437] French, "James Mpanza and the Sofasonke Party," 60.

[438] Ibid., 52.

[439] Spence, "'How Our Urban Natives Live'," 232.

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piece (twin beds, two wardrobes and dressing chest) bedroom suite."[440] In "How Our Urban Natives Live," Spence suggested a variety of space-saving solutions instead, including built-in fittings and foldable furniture—ideas that were rooted in British and European wartime furniture designs, including the wartime Utility Furniture Scheme.

Tenants in Orlando East bought their furniture in "outlying shopping centres," in specific stores, and small workshops in the townships, which were illegal but whose existence was condoned by the authorities.[441] **(Figure 3.21)** These shops were often located at the back of houses, in corrugated iron shelters, or on the verandah. They were run by men who were either self-taught furnituremakers or had received training in a trade school.[442] Because wages were purposefully kept low and furniture was relatively expensive, residents of Orlando East furnished their houses gradually. "First the cheap and useful articles in the kitchen are bought, then one or two beds and finally, when funds allow, money is invested in the dining-room suite. Sometimes ancient pieces, gifted from Europeans or bought second hand, crowd out the small rooms, but in preference the brightest and shiniest articles are bought from European shops."[443] Tenants acquired these articles through a "hire-purchase" system, which allowed them to pay monthly fees, with interest, until they owned the furniture. Another system was the "lay-by" scheme, where occupants paid in installments and received the item after paying in full. According to

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[440] Ibid., 233.

[441] Ibid.

[442] Ibid., 234-5.

[443] Spence, "Furnishing the Home," 11.

Spence, some of these firms who sold "expensive and quite unsuitable furniture to the

African people," made significant profits.[444]

In 1948, Spence had spent four months in Britain through a scholarship from the

British Council. Although she was there mainly to study prefabricated housing

techniques—immediately after World War II, Britain turned to the production of thousands

of prefabricated emergency houses for people left homeless after the Blitz—she also paid

close attention to the layout of these small houses and their furniture designs.[445] In

Prefabricated Housed for Africans (1948), the unpublished report based on her research,

she reviewed the different prefabrication techniques used across Britain but also considered

their application to township housing on the Witwatersrand.[446] In her report, Spence

discussed several different possible modular layouts of township houses, for different

family sizes.

Many of these prefabricated British houses, such as the "Mark V Temporary

House" by Arcon (Architectural Consultants), contained built-in kitchens and other

features, including wardrobes, a larder, and various cupboards. **(Figure 3.14)** The Mark V

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[444] Betty Spence, *Prefabricated Houses for Africans*, 1948, 11. CO927/36/1, TNA.

[445] On Prefab housing built under the Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act of 1944, see: Boughton, *Municipal Dreams*, 91-3; Nick Hayes, "Making Homes by Machines: Images, Ideas and Myths in the Diffusion of Non-Traditional Housing in Britain 1942-54," *Twentieth Century British History* 10, no. 3 (1999): 282-309; Brenda Vale, *PREFABS: A History of the UK Temporary Housing Programme* (London: E & FN Spon, 2005); Christine Wall, *An Architecture of Parts: Architects, Building Workers and Industrialisation in Britain 1940-1970* (London: Routledge, 2013); Colin Davies, *The Prefabricated Home* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005).

[446] Betty Spence, *Prefabricated Houses for Africans*, 1948. CO927/36/1, TNA. Spence's publication was sent to Housing Departments across British Africa by the British Colonial Housing Liaison, Anthony Atkinson in 1949.

model, whose steel frame was designed by the engineer Ove Arup in collaboration with architects Edric Neel, Rodney Thomas, Raglan Squire, and Jack Howe, was one of the more popular designs.[447] In 1943, the corrugated-clad model, of which 86,000 were produced, was exhibited in the gardens of the Tate Gallery together with three other models selected by the Ministry of Work.[448] **(Figure 3.15)** (Arcon also had several meetings at the Colonial Office to develop their model for distribution to the colonies but the project failed.)[449]

In *Prefabricated Housed for Africans*, as in "How Our Urban Natives Live," Spence also promoted the use of built-in furniture to optimize the floorplan of the township house. The layout of the kitchen, Spence suggested, could be improved by positioning the kitchen facilities along one wall, like in the Mark V house. Spence likewise endorsed the use of built-in storage space for clothes, foldable tables, and built-in benches. **(Figure 3.17, 3.18)** Contrary to the Mark V house, however, Spence suggested bunk beds to further reduce the size of the bedrooms.[450] **(Figure 3.16)** Even though such built-in fittings would make construction slightly more expensive, she argued that this increase could be paid back through the reduction of floor space. "It is possible for a room containing a pair of bunks, a built-in cupboard and a small table to be reduced to 50 sq. ft. This area is below that

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[447] Edric Neel had worked with Wells Coates and Denys Lasdun. Jack Howe contributed to the design of Impington College with Maxwell Fry and Walter Gropius; a project discussed in Chapter 2.

[448] "The Arcon Temporary House Mark V." CO822/136/3, TNA.

[449] Edric Neel to J.H. Wallace, Colonial Office, October 1, 1947. CO927/35/4, TNA.

[450] Betty Spence, *Prefabricated Houses for Africans*, 1948, 13. CO927/36/1, TNA.

allowed by existing regulations, but it provides better accommodation than the present

conditions where children sleep in groups on the floor."[451]

In 1952, during a presentation at the inter-African housing conference held in

Pretoria, Spence urged for additional research into residents' circulation within the house to

further optimize the floor plan. In other European countries, she stated, such research had

"revolutionized the shape of rooms and has had a consequent effect on house planning."[452]

In 1944, for example, the British architect Jane Drew had published a well-received

analysis of kitchen design based on circulation studies—work that was rooted in the

revolutionary studies of the Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in the 1930s.[453]

(**Figure 3.19**) In the conference proceedings, Spence included an example of circulation

within a dining-kitchen in a township house. (**Figure 3.20**) Yet, if Drew's studies of

people's movements disclosed intricate circulation patterns through the different parts of

the kitchen, Spence's diagram showed a few simple lines between a small, modest kitchen

block, fitted along one wall, and a dining table.

One of Spence's final recommendations in "How Our Urban Native Lives" was to

launch a specific furniture line for township houses, consisting of simple and practical

designs, produced by a furniture cooperative led by black South Africans who had followed

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[451] Spence, "How Our Urban Natives Live," 236.

[452] Spence, "Furnishing the Home," 14. At the conference, Spence presented her work alongside Harold Thornley Dyer, Nairobi's city planner, George Atkinson, the Colonial Office's housing advisor, and Alfred Alcock, a planner based in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana), whose work is the subject of Chapter 4.

[453] See Mark Llewellyn, "Designed by women and designing women: gender, planning and the geographies of the kitchen in Britain, 1917-1946," *Cultural Geographies*, no. 10 (2004): 42-60.

a course in furniture design.[454] What Spence imagined was a line of "Utility Furniture,"

mass-produced by factories operated by the furniture cooperative. During World War II, the

British government had instigated a similar project: the "Utility Furniture Scheme," an

emergency furniture project to ensure affordable, simple wooden furniture.[455] The scheme,

which ran from 1942 to 1948, allowed the state to control the entire production scheme,

from the supply of timber to the production and sales. With designs developed by Gordon

Russell, a British designer and promotor of the British craft tradition, and Jack Pritchard,

one of the founders of Isokon Furniture Company and a champion of Bauhaus design, the

Utility Furniture scheme also offered an opportunity to introduce simple, modern designs to

a wide audience.[456] **(Figure 3.22)**

Spence had something similar in mind for Johannesburg's townships, even though

there was no tradition of wood furniture making, nor was wood particularly easy to come

by. Modern furniture—design that was, according to Spence, simple, affordable and

functional—was still a novelty in Johannesburg during the 1950s. Or, as the *South African*

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[454] Spence, "How Our Urban Natives Live," 236.

[455] See: Jonathan Woodham, "Britain Can Make It and the history of design," in *Design and Cultural Politics in Britain: The Britain Can Make It Exhibition of 1946*, eds. P.J. Maguire, and Jonathan Woodham (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 17-28; M. Denney, "Utility Furniture and the myth of Utility 1943-1948," in *Utility Reassessed: The Role of Ethics in the Practice of Design*, ed. Judy Attfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 110-24; Suzanne Reimer and Philip Pinch, "Geographies of the British government's wartime Utility furniture scheme, 1940-1945," *Journal of Historical Geography* 39 (2013): 99-112.

[456] On Gordon Russell, see: Jonathan Woodham, "Managing British Design Reform I: Fresh Perspectives on the Early Years of the Council of Industrial Design," *Journal of Design History* 9, no. 1 (1996): 55-65. On Pritchard, who lived in the Isokon Flats in Hampstead, see: Magnus Englund, "Isokon Furniture – Modernist Dreams in Plywood," *Docomomo Journal* 58 (2018): 82-5; Leyla Daybelge and Magnus Englund, *Isokon and the Bauhaus in Britain* (London: Pavilion Books, 2019). Walter Gropius was one of the designers, as were Marcel Breuer and Lázló Moholy-Nagy.

Architectural Record wrote in 1953, "In South Africa, contemporary design in furniture was, with the exception of a few isolated examples of purpose-made articles, non-existent until 1945."[457] There were a few stores, such as Harpurs in Hillbrow or Contemporary Design, which sold "modern furniture design," either imported from Sweden or Britain, or manufactured after European designs.[458] **(Figure 3.23)** Contemporary Design, for example, led by the Johannesburg architect Bernard Wiehahn, sold designs by the British designer Dennis Lennon, an architect who had worked for Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew in London. Lennon was responsible for much of the furniture design at the 1951 Festival of Britain, as well as projects such as the interiors of the modernist Ridgeway Hotel in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia).[459] **(Figure 3.24)**

These ideas highlight that, ultimately, Spence not just aimed to optimize and improve the small indoor spaces of township houses but also envisioned it as an opportunity to modernize the domestic sphere. She pushed for built-in furniture, even though many tenants had indicated otherwise. In their interviews with Mokhetle, the majority of the participants had stated that they were not interested in bunk beds and other types of built-in furniture. Dismissing the answer to this question as invalid—people did not even know what bunk beds were, she wrote—Spence nevertheless recommended bunk beds and other types of space-saving, yet modern furniture. Like the Utility Furniture

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[457] "South African Furniture," *South African Architectural Record* 38, no. 7 (July 1953): 28.

[458] Ibid., 24-34.

[459] Ibid., 32-4. On the Ridgeway Hotel, see: "Ridgeway Hotel, Lusaka: Architect: G.A. Jellicoe," *Architectural Review* (February 1954), 96-100.

Scheme in Britain, Spence's line of "Utility Furniture" would introduce modern design to the townships.

3.4. Urbanization and Disorganization

According to Spence, efficient township housing design required investigation into people's dwelling habits. Since it was nearly impossible, as she wrote, to understand "the Native outlook," surveys offered a solution.[460] She presented the study of furniture in Orlando East as a viable method for white architects, like herself, to obtain knowledge about the township's black inhabitants and their needs. "Before an effective plan can be made," Spence began her report,

> it is essential to know a subject in detail, yet for many years we have been designing houses for urban Natives on approximate guesses as to their way of life—guesses which range the full gamut from those which assume that the Native is completely Europeanised to those who consider that locations [townships, ed.] should be built up in tribal tradition.[461]

One of Spence's colleagues at the NBRI, the architect Douglas Calderwood made a similar point during the 1952 conference on housing design held in Pretoria. "In Native housing, house design faces numerous unknowns and it is only from social research that the designer can approach his task with any degree of confidence. Design of Native housing cannot be successful when based upon prejudices, opinions and isolated personal experiences."[462]

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[460] Spence, "The Problem of the Location," 26.

[461] Spence, "How Our Urban Native Lives," 221.

[462] Douglas Calderwood and L. Vincent, "House Design," in *Proceedings-Technical Papers Regional Conference on Housing Research in Africa South of the Sahara*, *vol. I* (Pretoria: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1952), (IId) 2. Such ideas also resonated more widely across British Africa. A report on an experimental pilot low-cost

Other surveys conducted by the NBRI during this period were primarily household surveys, focused on gathering basic facts about income and family size.[463] Until Spence's research project, no architect or sociologist at the NBRI had considered using survey techniques to question residents' needs.

Yet, whereas British sociologists such as Ruth Glass, involved in postwar housing projects in Britain, considered surveying a crucial component of democratic planning, Spence treated the survey as an anthropological study.[464] For Spence, the survey was a method to study the dwelling habits of the *nie-blanke*, the non-white. Moreover, instead of collaborating with local political organizations, like the Orlando Advisory Board, she used the results to corroborate fraught ideas about the township inhabitant as being "in development." In Spence's view, inhabitants were gradually transitioning from an urban, rural existence to a European, urbanized lifestyle. Her writing was punctuated by psychological projections that underlined black South Africans' rural background. In Spence's view, they were "born to a simple, rural existence" and "never quite adjust

housing scheme in the city of Khartoum in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, for example, noted the leading influence of the NBRI on housing design. It emphasized that surveys were "increasingly recognized as a fundamental step in the planning of towns and cities…the slogan "we must study man before we can plan" is becoming increasingly popular with architects and planning authorities." Saad Ed Din Fawzi, *Social Aspects of Low-Cost Housing in the Northern Sudan* (Khartoum: Sudan Government, 1954), 79. Also see: Gareth Curless, "'Better housing conditions are of vital importance to the ordinary man': slum clearance in post-war Khartoum," *Urban History* 43, no. 3 (2016): 557-76.

[463] See, for example: H. J. J. van Beinum, "A Study of the Socio-Economic Status of Native Families in the Payneville Location, Springs," *NBRI Bulletin* 8 (1952): 60-68. On surveying in South Africa more generally during this time, especially the groundbreaking work of the sociologist Edward Batson, see Davie, *Poverty Knowledge,* 103-41.

[464] See, for example: Glass, Ruth. *The Social Background of a Plan: A Study of Middlesbrough* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1948).

themselves to the whirl of city life…"[465] In reality, however, many were displaced to

townships like Orlando East from vibrant, dense, cosmopolitan inner-city neighborhoods

such as Sophiatown.[466] Yet by presenting Orlando East residents as rural migrants instead

of modern, cosmopolitan urbanites, Spence helped maintain what James Fergusson

described as the "orderly divisions between traditional and modern, native and Western,

and rural and urban."[467]

Like Chapman, Spence understood the way houses were furnished as a reflection

of people's social and cultural status. Inhabitants expressed themselves through the material

culture of the home. In Orlando East, she interpreted the mixture of European furniture and

locally-made craft objects as an indication of tenants' gradual transition towards a

European, urbanized lifestyle. Despite the persistence of what she understood as certain

"tribal" customs—eating on the floor, or women and children eating separately from men—

inhabitants were "well on the way to adopting a European mode of living in their

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[465] Betty Spence, *Prefabricated Houses for Africans*, 1948, 18. CO927/36/1, TNA.

[466] The photographs of the Black South African photographer Ronald Ngilima, who lived in the Benoni Location, a mixed-race township in the East Rand, in the late 1950s and early '60s, of life in the townships, as well as township interiors, provide an interesting counterpoint to Spence's observations. See: Sophie Feyder, "Portraits of Resilience: A Review of the Ngilima Collection," *Critical Arts* 32, no. 1 (2018), 137-149; Sophie Feyder, "Lounge Photography and the Politics of Township Interiors: The Representation of the Black South African Home in the Ngilima Photographic Collection, East Rand," *Kronos* 38 (2012): 131-53. Also see: Rebecca Ginsburg, *At Home with Apartheid: The Hidden Landscape of Domestic Service in Johannesburg* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

[467] James Ferguson, "Formalities of Poverty: Thinking about Social Assistance in Neoliberal South Africa," *African Studies Review* 50, no. 2 (2007): 73. Also see: James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

houses."[468] In another presentation, Spence likened this process of modernization to the transition from the medieval English cottage to the modern house.[469] Five hundred years later, black South Africans underwent the same process: from the round "hut" to a square, modern, furnished, house.

Like her colleagues at the NBRI, Spence framed black urbanization as detribalization, or the crumbling of "tribal" social structures through rural-urban migration. According to South African anthropologists and sociologists like the Jewish émigré Haskel Sonnabend, a professor at the University of Witwatersrand, rapid urbanization had a detrimental effect on kinship relations.[470] They argued that modern, individualistic, fast-paced city life clashed with "tribal" forms of social organization. Sonnabend and others warned that urbanization resulted in complete "disorganisation," or social unrest.[471] Spence and her colleagues presented townships as orderly environments that prevented such disturbances and helped residents adept to urban life. Or, as Spence, put it, "Good housing would go a long way towards counteracting these evil effects [of detribalization]. Not only

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[468] Spence, "How Our Urban Native Lives," 235.

[469] Betty Spence, "Furnishing the Home of the South African Bantu," in *Proceedings-Technical Papers Regional Conference on Housing Research in Africa South of the Sahara*, *vol. I* (Pretoria: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), 1-15.

[470] Haskel Sonnabend, "Sociological Approach to Housing and Town Planning" Science in the Service of South Africa, University of Witwatersrand, July 8th-10th, 1946. *South African Architectural Record* 32, no. 2 (February 1947): 23-6.

[471] Ibid., 26. For more information about Sonnabend, and his involvement in the planning of Afridar, a settlement for Jewish settlers in Israel, see: Ayala Levin, "South African 'know-how' and Israeli 'facts of life': the planning of Afridar, Ashkelon, 1949-1956," *Planning Perspectives* 34, no. 2 (2017): 1-25.

should the housing be good but the inhabitants should be given a sense of 'belonging'."[472]

In Spence's view, built-in furniture would help do exactly that.

Ideas about the "urban Native" being in development, left their mark not just on Spence's proposals but on the architectural design and urban layout of South African townships, more generally. One of Spence's colleagues at the NBRI, Paul Connell urged architects to attempt to understand the "psychological aspects" of the "Native" who was undergoing a transition from rural village to modern city life. Connell, like many others, cast economic opportunity as a psychological transformation, contending that the black South African moved "from one cultural and economic level to a totally different one."[473] Connell pushed for townships planned as garden cities, consisting of undulating roads and houses separated by greenery—forms that, in Connell's view, more closely resembled the organic ideas of community found in traditional South African architecture.[474] "We are dealing with a primitive and backwards people…[whose] mental makeup is relatively easily changed, for better or worse, simply by altering their environment."[475]

[472] Betty Spence, *Prefabricated Houses for Africans*, 1948, 18. CO927/36/1, TNA.

[473] Connell, "Native Housing and its Architectural Aspects," 166; Paul Connell et al. *Native Housing: A Collective Thesis* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1939).

[474] Connell, "Native Housing and its Architectural Aspects," 166-70.

[475] Connell et al., *Native Housing*, 50. Cited by Jason Hickel, "Engineering the Township Home: Domestic Transformations and Urban Revolutionary Consciousness," in *Edkhaya: The Politics of Home in KwaZulu-Natal*, eds. Megan Healy-Clancy and Jason Hickel (Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2014), 144.

3.5. From Johannesburg to Liverpool

What Spence's exact role was at the NBRI, aside from her Orlando East survey, remains

unclear. She worked for the organization only briefly, less than two years. The impact of

her research on the design of the infamous standardized township houses— developed by

various architects working for the NBRI, the NHPC, and the Department of Native Affairs

during the early 1950s—is difficult to gauge. These designs, the NE51, or "Non-European

1951" series, consisted of different types of red brick dwellings with pitched roofs,

containing a minimum of three rooms.[476] **(Figure 3.25)** Some designs, like the NE51/6

type, were conceived as detached houses, yet most were semi-detached dwellings. Only one

model, the NE51/9 house, contained an inside bathroom. None of them had built-in fittings,

although the size of the individual rooms was based on a basic analysis of circulation routes

and different furniture groupings. **(Figure 3.26)** Plans to produce a line of utility furniture

never proceeded, however. Throughout the 1950s, the standardized houses—falsely

envisioned as idyllic garden city houses, set within a green space—proliferated throughout

South Africa's townships.[477] **(Figure 3.27)** Like the dwellings in Orlando East, they were

houses based on a "brutally reductive conception of people's needs."[478]

During the 1950s, Spence remained in Johannesburg. In 1952, Spence published

Build Your Own House: The Owner-Builder Guide, a guide for black South Africans to

build their own houses in the townships, written in "easy English." Commissioned by the

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[476] Le Roux, "Designing Kwa-Thema," 273-301.

[477] See: Douglas Calderwood, Gavin Hector, *A New Native Township for Witbank Municipality*, Pretoria: National Building Research Institute, 1951. The other township was Kwa-Thema, outside of Springs.

[478] Margaret Daymond, "From a shadow city: Lilian Nogyi's letters, 1971-80, Orlando, Soweto," *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writing* 5, no. 1 (2005): 52.

NBRI, it contained many detailed illustrations, similar to those in "How Our Urban Natives Live."[479] The guide, packed with technical instructions, helped residents construct a two-room dwelling. Over time, they would be able to expand it to a six-room house. **(Figure 3.28)** For Spence, the project provided a solution to overcrowding in the townships. It offered residents a chance to improve their living conditions. Yet, as Hannah le Roux has argued, the shift towards incremental self-built housing was also a reflection of the NBRI's "failure of the cost savings in their pilot schemes to reduce the rents to affordable levels for most workers."[480] During the same time, the NBRI also began to encourage more affluent township residents—inhabitants who barely made more than minimum income— to build their own housing. In collaboration with the Institute of South African Architects, they developed several standardized plans, misleadingly presented as sleek bungalows.[481]

(Figure 3.29)

In the late 1950s, Spence and her family were forced to leave South Africa as a result of Spence's and her husband's involvement in the anti-apartheid movement, although little is known about their activities.[482] They resettled in Britain, leaving most of their belongings and the house they designed in Pine Parks behind, a one-story modern dwelling, comprised of several closed and semi-enclosed courtyards.[483] **(Figure 3.30)** The family moved to Liverpool, where Spence's husband began a Ph.D. at the University of

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[479] Betty Spence, *Build Your Own House: The Owner-Builder Guide.* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1953).

[480] Le Roux, "Designing KwaThema," 18.

[481] National Building Research Institute and the Institute of South African Architects, *Housing Brochure* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1952).

[482] Private correspondence with Zara Muren, Betty Spence's daughter, December 13, 2019.

[483] "House Pinfold," *South African Architectural Record* 39, no. 4 (April 1954): 33-38.

Liverpool's Department of Architecture. In England, Spence continued to write about

architecture and spatial planning, though only sporadically and mostly avoiding subjects

related to South Africa. During the 1970s, she contributed several reviews to British

magazines such as the *Town Planning Review*, often using her husband's last name,

Pinfold.[484] One of her final projects was an exploration of contemporary playground design

in Britain, sponsored by a RIBA award.[485]

This chapter has examined Spence's research on housing in the township of

Orlando East and her proposals to optimize the small interiors spaces. Through an

investigation of Spence's work, this chapter has traced how the social survey became an

instrument for South African architects to understand the housing needs of what Spence

called the "Urban Native." Yet whereas for British sociologists questioning inhabitants

about their dwelling preferences was a crucial component of democratic planning, Spence

treated the survey as an anthropological study. Presenting the inhabitants of Orlando East as

people who were in transition—caught between a rural and an urban, modern, lifestyle—

she used the survey to push her own ideas. Built-in kitchen cabinets, bunk beds, and

foldable tables optimized the small interior spaces of township housing but also helped

tenants adapt to a European way of life.

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[484] Betty Pinfold, "Living Space by R.G. Booth," *The Town Planning Review* 41, no. 4 (1970): 390-391.

[485] Betty Pinfold, "Urban Parks for Youngsters," *RIBA Journal* 80 (1973): 152.

CHAPTER 4

Semi-Permanent Bricks and Durability Tests: Alfred Alcock's Experiments in Kumasi and Accra

> *"I am ... anxious that Colonies should avoid the error of constructing buildings of a more permanent character than circumstances warrant…In present circumstances, it may well be wrong to build too well."*[486]

Arthur Creech Jones, Secretary of State for the Colonies,

Circular Cost of Buildings in the Colonies, 1948

4.1. "Gold Coast: Houses that Last"

In 1948, images of rows of small houses, recently erected on the outskirts of Kumasi, a town in the Gold Coast's inland (present-day Ghana), appeared on cinema screens across Britain.[487] The five-minute-long black-and-white film was produced by the Colonial Film Unit and was part of a periodically-released newsreel, *Colonial Cinemagazine*, that offered insight into social and economic developments in Britain's overseas territories. The film, titled "Gold Coast: Houses that Last," focused on a state-sponsored housing estate constructed with an unusual building material: stabilized rammed earth bricks, consisting of a mixture of cement and locally-sourced earth. The film was typical of the new language of

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[486] Arthur Creech Jones, "Cost of Buildings in the Colonies," July 27, 1948. Circular 16664/48, 1. CO927/136/3, TNA (emphasis mine).

[487] "Gold Coast: Houses that Last," *Colonial Cinemagazine* 23 (Colonial Film Unit, 1948), black and white, 10 min. British Film Institute, 366700.

partnership and co-operation that came to define Britain's engagement with its colonies during the post-World War II period. Other subjects covered in *Colonial Cinemagazine*, presented in a similarly positive and optimistic vein, included reports on boy-scouts in Uganda, a new method to extract palm oil in Nigeria, and a sports game between Nigeria and the Gold Coast.[488] Together, such reports showed "progress" in the British colonies, prompted by British investment and expertise.

Purposefully absent from "Gold Coast: Houses that Last," or any of the other films, was coverage of the anticolonial riots that took place in Kumasi and other towns throughout the West African colony that same year—riots, one of the English newspapers, the *Gold Coast Weekly Review,* wrote, that had unleashed "the Frankenstein monster in African nationalism."[489] These "disturbances," during which European stores were looted and attacked, lasted for one week and resulted in twenty-nine deaths and over two hundred injuries. In an attempt to police the "completely out of control" masses, officers used teargas and batons.[490] Not long after, Kwame Nkrumah, an American-educated socialist and organizer of the 5th Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in 1945, established the

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[488] "New Films" *Colonial Cinema* 3, no. 1 (March 1945): 23; "Nigeria - A Modern Method of Palm Oil Extraction" *Colonial Cinemagazine* 23 (Colonial Film Unit, 1948), black and white, 10 min. British Film Institute, 366700.

[489] Cited in Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa*, 161. For an extensive discussion of the Accra riots, see: Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society,* 248-60.

[490] This phrase was used by the protest's organizers, an association called the United Gold Coast Convention. They sent a telegram to Arthur Creech Jones, the Colonial Secretary of State, demanding immediate political reforms: "Unless Colonial government is changed and new government of the people and chiefs installed at the centre immediately conduct of masses now completely out of control with strikes threaten in Police quarters and rank and file Police indifferent to orders of officers will continue and result in worse violent and irresponsible acts by uncontrolled people." Cited in Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 253.

Convention People's Party. This party declared immediate self-government as its aim.[491]

Nkrumah sought political independence through "positive action," a series of non-violent

tactics, such as strikes and protests directed at the colonial administration. In 1951, three

years after the riots, the Convention People's Party won the majority of seats during the

first open elections, forcing the British administration to enter into a transition process

much sooner than the British administration anticipated. On March 6, 1957, with the world

watching, the Gold Coast became Ghana—the first British colony in Africa to become

independent.[492]

      Like other newsreels produced by *Colonial Cinemagazine*, the film framed the

construction of the state-sponsored housing project as an example of Britain's benevolent

influence and modernizing force in Kumasi, specifically, and Britain's colonies, more

generally. The main focus of the film were the bricks made of an aggregate of Portland

cement, a fine powder made of limestone imported from Britain, laterite, a particular type

of earth rich in iron and aluminum, common in West Africa, and some water. Using

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[491] Nkrumah organized the Pan-African Congress with the Trinidadian political activist
George Padmore, who ended up moving to Ghana after Nkrumah's ascendance to power.
The conference in Manchester was attended scholars and activists, including Jomo
Kenyatta, Kenya's future president, and the American sociologist and civil rights activist
W.E.B. Du Bois. The literature on Nkrumah is vast. See among others: Jeffrey Ahlman,
Living with Nkrumahism: Nation, State and Pan-Africanism in Ghana (Athens, OH: Ohio
University Press, 2017); David Birmingham, *Kwame Nkrumah: The Father of African
Nationalism* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998); Harcourt Fuller, "Father of the
Nation: Ghanaian Nationalism, Internationalism and the Political Iconography of Kwame
Nkrumah, 1957-2010," *African Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2015): 33-69.

[492] After independence in 1957, the economist W. Arthur Lewis joined Nkrumah as
economic advisor, while W.E.B. du Bois and Shirley Graham du Bois, at the invitation of
Nkrumah, also settled in Accra. The city, Adom Getachew, wrote, "became a black
cosmopolis, hosting nationalist and freedom fighters from across the continent." Adom
Getachew, "Kwame Nkrumah and the Quest for Independence," *Dissent* 66, no. 3 (2019):
40.

wooden molds, local workers pressed—or "rammed"— the cement together with heaps of earth to create identically shaped and sized blocks. **(Figure 4.1)** The designer responsible for the estate's construction, a relatively unknown British-born engineer and planner named Alfred Alcock, described the material as "swishcrete," a term that combined the words "swish" (earth) and concrete, but also cleverly camouflaged the unequal nature of the mix, which consisted mostly of locally-sourced earth. The import of a material manufactured in Britain combined with British technical expertise resulted, the film seemed to suggest, in the creation of an affordable and—perhaps more importantly—*durable* building material.

Through such investments in the Gold Coast, Britain claimed to help the colony "prepare" for the transition to self-government, a process that in 1945 was estimated to take another thirty years.[493] In the meantime, however, British companies continued to cheaply extract cocoa, the Gold Coast's main cash crop, from local farmers located in the Kumasi region, before funneling it to the international markets. By the 1940s, the Gold Coast had become one of the world's leading suppliers of cocoa. The Gold Coast was one of Britain's most prosperous overseas territories and colonial administrators commonly described the Gold Coast as a "model colony"—a phrase that referred more to the country's profitable economy than to anything else.[494] Or, as the African-American writer Richard Wright wrote in *Black Power* (1954), his chronicle of the nationalist revolution in the Gold Coast during the 1940s and '50s: "Before the coming of Nkrumah, the Gold Coast had been referred to

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[493] Thirty years was the number mentioned by Alcock in "Housing Plan for Ashanti and the Colony," written in 1945. Alfred Alcock Papers, Mss Afr. S 666, Bodleian Library, Commonwealth and African Collections, Oxford University.

[494] See for example, Sir Reginal Saloway, "The New Gold Coast," *International Affairs* 31, no. 3 (1955): 469-76.

as the "model colony" that is, a place from which a fabulously high return could be gotten

on modest investments without a need to fear native unrest or reprisals."[495]

By 1948, when "Gold Coast: Houses that Last" was produced, several colonial

architects, planners, and engineers in countries including the Gold Coast had experimented

with different types of building materials, either local or imported from England. Until

then, many of the materials used for the construction of Britain's physical infrastructures in

Africa—such as steel, concrete and corrugated iron—were brought in from the "mother

country."[496] In fact, as far back as the seventeenth-century, most of the bricks used to build

the numerous British slave forts that still mark the West African shoreline were shipped

from Europe, purportedly for reasons of quality.[497] By the 1940s, the Gold Coast imported

cement, roofing sheets, steel, wallboards, paints, and fittings from Britain. In 1939, for

example, briefly before the outbreak of the War, 64,000 tons of cement were shipped to the

Gold Coast.[498] However, the shift towards a policy that centered on development and

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[495] Richard Wright, *Black Power* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1945), 119. On Wright's period in the Gold Coast, see: Kevin Gaines, "Revisiting Richard Wright in Ghana: Black Radicalism and the Dialectics of Diaspora," *Social Text* 19, no. 2 (2001): 75-101. On African-American involvement in anti-colonialist movements more generally, see: Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[496] See John Weiler, "Colonial Connections: Royal Engineers and Building Technology Transfer in the Nineteenth Century," *Construction History* 12 (1996): 3-18. There were several experiments to transport prefabricated structures to the British African colonies during the 1940s, including the "Mark V" house, a house built to remedy the postwar lack of available housing in the United Kingdom, discussed in Chapter 3.

[497] Louis Nelson, "Architectures of West African Enslavement," *Buildings & Landscapes* 21, no. 1 (2014): 102-3. Also see: John Kwadwo Osei-Tutu, ed. *Forts, Castles and Society in West Africa: Gold Coast and Dahomey, 1450-1960* (Leiden: Brill, 2018) and the first chapter of Louis Nelson, *Architecture and Empire in Jamaica* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

[498] R.W. Nurse and A Pott. *Report on a Visit to West Africa, Building Research Station*, May 1947, 7. CO927/34/2, TNA. Despite this focus on imported materials, many European

investment in local social welfare—and with it, the task to construct state-sponsored housing estates as visible reminders of that new "partnership" program—required a different approach.

This dissertation has argued that the principal objective behind the design and construction of hundreds of state-sponsored housing estates for black families built across British Africa during the 1940s and '50s was the "stabilization" of its residents. Anxieties about social stability and labor productivity, the previous chapters have demonstrated, steered infrastructural planning, the design of neighborhoods, community centers, and other social facilities, as well as houses and furnishings. In this final chapter, I show that concerns regarding social stability also influenced design and construction at the scale of the estates' building materials. Adding a small amount of cement to locally-sourced earth, to use Alcock's words, "stabilized" the substance and made it robust, more resilient, and more durable. In Alcock's view, a more durable and resilient dwelling would help create a lasting, stable community of residents. This, in turn, meant a compliant and more productive labor force. This chapter traces how Alcock, an engineer and planner who worked closely together with the better-known architects Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew but whose own activities have remained unstudied, presented swishcrete as a substance that aligned with the Colonial Office's push towards welfare, development, and modernization.

A close reading of the project in Kumasi and Alcock's later "experiments" with soil in a laboratory-space in the Gold Coast's capital, Accra, also suggest that architects,

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architects working in various African colonies had long emphasized that importing materials was costly and impractical. See, for example: Osayimwese, *Colonialism and Modern Architecture in Germany*, 147-9. On the merging of local materials and traditions and imported materials, see: Harris and Myers, *Hybrid Housing*, 489-90.

planners, and engineers became preoccupied with the material because it had a specific

expiration date. New building laws instituted in the Gold Coast in 1945 determined that

houses built with these "unconventional methods" were required to have a "useful

structural life of thirty years."[499] Alcock's "durability tests" also pointed out that houses

built with swishcrete would last thirty to fifty years before they started to crumble—a

timeframe that mirrored the Colonial Office's approximation of British presence in the

Gold Coast before independence. Alcock's investigations during the 1940s, then, can be

seen as a reflection of the British colonial project's increasingly uncertain future during the

post-World War II period. The widespread usage of stabilized rammed earth was a response

to Britain's gradual recognition that its occupation of large parts of Africa would, sooner or

later, come to an end. Stabilized rammed earth was robust and durable enough to secure

Britain's near-term colonial ambitions, but not in the long-term. Although self-government

in the Gold Coast was still a distant prospect for the Colonial Office in the 1940s, a matter

of several decades, the explosive anti-colonial demonstrations that erupted across the

country in 1948 were an unnerving reminder for many colonial administrators of the

precariousness of British rule. In the same year that "Gold Coast: Houses that Last"

appeared—and the same year the "Accra Riots" took place—the Colonial Office sent out a

dispatch on the soaring costs of construction in the colonies. In the memo, Arthur Creech-

Jones, the Colonial Secretary of State, warned against the "the error of constructing

buildings of a more permanent character than circumstances warrant …" "In present

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[499] Town and Country Planning Board, "Housing Policy: Some Point of Consideration"
November 8, 1945: 6. C.S.O14/3/497, Public Record and Archives Administration
Department (PRAAD), Accra.

circumstances," he wrote, "it may well be wrong to build *too well*."[500] Contrary to more expensive, and more durable materials, stabilized rammed earth required minimal financial investment while yielding maximum results. As such, construction with stabilized rammed earth mirrored, but also enabled the Colonial Office's postwar focus on colonial development.

4.2. Designing the Asawasi "Experimental" Housing Estate

Partly as a result of the booming cocoa market, Kumasi had grown significantly, beginning in the years preceding World War II. By 1945, the town of Kumasi had a population of approximately 48,000 inhabitants, primarily Asante people.[501] Kumasi was founded in the early eighteenth-century as the capital of the powerful Asante empire and was home to the Golden Stool, a throne cast in gold that was believed to contain the spirit of the Asante.[502]

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[500] Arthur Creech Jones, "Cost of Buildings in the Colonies," July 27, 1948. Circular 16664/48, 1. CO927/136/3, TNA (emphasis mine).

[501] After independence, Kumasi became the location of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), whose architecture program became a site of innovation. Here, Ghanaian architects taught side-by-side with architects from America, including Max Bond and Buckminister Fuller, and from Eastern Europe, including Charles Polónyi, the Hungarian Team 10 member. See, for example, Lukasz Stanek, "Architects from Socialist Countries in Ghana (1957-67): Modern Architecture and Mondialisation," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 74, no. 4 (December 2015): 416-42.

[502] Kumasi was allegedly founded by Nana Osei Tutu, the *Asantehene*, the chief of the Asante. The empire's expansion, which in the middle of the eighteenth-century had become the most powerful state in West Africa, rested upon the Asante's mining of gold and the trading of slaves to companies such as the British Royal African Company for the trans-Atlantic slave-trade. See, among others, Tom McCaskie, *Asante, Kingdom of Gold: Essays in the History of an African Culture* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2015). On Asante nationalism during the struggle for independence, see: Jean Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

British visitors during this time, such as Thomas Bowditch, a traveler employed by the African Company of Merchants—a successor to the Royal African Company—commented favorably upon Kumasi. Bowditch in particular complimented the town's architecture; its courtyard houses constructed of timber, bamboo and mud plaster, adorned by bas-reliefs containing depictions of animals and plants, painted red and white, paying them a great deal of attention in his book *Mission from Cape Coast Castle to Ashantee* (1819).[503] **(Figure 4.2)**

In the late nineteenth-century, not long after the Berlin Conference that formalized the "Scramble for Africa," the British occupied Kumasi following a series of wars better known as the Anglo-Asante wars and forced the Asante empire to become a British protectorate. In 1896, the British sent the *Asanthene*, the chief of the Asante, Prempeh I, into exile in the Seychelles and razed the city, taking many precious pieces of Asante gold—some still held in British collections today. In the years thereafter, British occupation transformed Kumasi; colonizers constructed a fort on a ridge above the city, drained the neighboring wetlands, and laid out a market place.[504] In 1903, the railway from Sekondi-Takoradi, the Gold Coast's port city, arrived in Kumasi to transport gold, timber, and increasingly, cocoa beans to the coast. **(Figure 4.3)** By the 1930s, Kumasi had become the

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[503] Stephan Schmidt, "Cultural Influences and the Built Environment: An Examination of Kumasi, Ghana," *Journal of Urban Design* 10, no. 3 (2005): 355.

[504] Schmidt, "Cultural Influences," 357. On the planning of Kumasi, also see: Liora Bigon, "Bubonic plague, colonial ideologies and urban planning policies: Dakar, Lagos, and Kumasi," *Planning Perspectives* 31, no. 2 (2016): 205-26.

center of the Gold Coast's booming cocoa industry, the colony's most profitable cash crop.[505]

The 1948 census indicated rapid growth in Kumasi; only one in three of the town's inhabitants was born in the city and nearly half of the population had lived there less than five years.[506] Alcock's estate, built on land leased from the *Asanthene*, was an attempt to remedy the town's expansion and offer affordable modern homes to recent migrants, most of whom were laborers in the cocoa industry or worked in colonial administration.[507]

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[505] Cocoa was first brought to the Gold Coast in the middle of the nineteenth century, most likely by a group of Basel missionaries, who distributed the seeds among villagers. By the 1880s, various farmers had begun to farm cocoa in different parts of the Gold Coast, particularly in the forests of Akim Abuakwa in the south-east. In contrast to Trinidad or Suriname, where cocoa was grown on plantations, most cocoa produced in the Gold Coast came from farmers who burnt a patch of forests and planted cocoa together with other food crops, such as cassava, yams, and maize. The Gold Coast's cocoa boom, the historian Corey Ross has argued, depended on Asante smallholders. See, Corey Ross, "The Plantation Paradigm: Colonial Agronomy, African Farmers, and the Global Cocoa Boom, 1870s-1940s," *Journal of Global History* 9, no. 1 (2014): 49-71; Roger Southall, "Farmers, Traders and Brokers in the Gold Coast Cocoa Economy," *Revue canadienne des études africaines / Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1978): 186-211; Josephine Millburn, "The 1938 Gold Coast Cocoa Crisis: British Business and the Colonial Office," *African Historical Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1970): 57-74; Gareth Austin, "The Emergence of Capitalist Relations in South Asante Cocoa Farming, c. 1916-33," *Journal of African History*, no. 28 (1987): 259-79.

[506] According to the 1948 census, less than half of Accra's population was born in the town. One third of the population had lived there for less than five years. Alisdair Sutherland, "Housing and Town Planning as Instruments of Social Control in Africa," 2. Conference held at the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, University College Ibadan, 1956. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

[507] In 1945, Alan Burns, the Gold Coast's governor, had issued a new ordinance that allowed the colonial government to acquire or take over land for the construction of housing estates, in case the colonial government was unable to come to an agreement about the lease or sale of the land with the lawful owner. Alan Burns, *Housing Schemes (Acquisition of Land) Ordinance, 1945*, April 21, 1945. C.S.O 14/3/497, PRAAD.

During a time of rapid growth and industrialization, the Asawasi estate served to stabilize part of Kumasi's labor force.

Set on a sloping site on Kumasi's east-side, the state-sponsored estate consisted of a variety of single-story houses with pitched roofs, most with verandahs. The first "experimental" phase, completed in 1945, during which Alcock tested construction with stabilized rammed earth, contained 96 single rooms. Eventually, the entire project, designed in close collaboration with the British architects Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, appointed as Town Planning Advisors to West Africa in 1944, comprised of 100 three-roomed houses, 98 two-roomed houses, 636 single quarters for junior artisans, and 400 single quarters for laborers.[508] **(Figure 4.4)** With ultimately over a thousand dwelling units, the project was of an unprecedented scale for the former capital of the Asante Kingdom. Asawasi also was, with the exception of the erection of a temporary housing project in 1939, after the Accra earthquake, and several state-sponsored housing projects in Accra built to improve sanitary conditions, the first large-scale state-subsidized housing project in the British Gold Coast.[509]

The houses designed by Alcock for Asawasi's first phase were arranged as a series of interlocking buildings facing a shared courtyard. **(Figure 4.5)** With six rooms

[508] Alcock thanked Fry and Drew several times in documentation regarding Asawasi, pointing to their close collaboration. Alfred Alcock, "Housing Estate Construction in West Africa," 5. CO 927/6/7, TNA. The rent for a single room was set at nine shillings, which was approximately 12 percent of a laborer's income when employed by the local government or town council. Gold Coast Department of Housing and Social Welfare, *The Asawasi Housing Scheme: Building in Stabilised Laterite* (1948), 19. CO927/36/1, TNA.

[509] See for example, "Social Housing in the Gold Coast," *Colonial Building Notes* (September 1950) no. 2: 1-2. Also see: Richard Acquaah-Harrison, *Housing and Urban Development in Ghana, with Special Reference to Low-Income Housing* (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2004), 27.

under one roof, they resembled military barracks. The basic design resourcefully alternated the entrance of the rooms to the front and back, providing slightly more privacy to inhabitants. **(Figure 4.6)** Verandahs were added to all rooms and the rooms in the middle of the building contained additional space to house a small shop. Ancillary buildings, located at the end of each barrack, contained shared kitchen facilities, while lavatories and laundry facilities were positioned in the center of each courtyard or communal green space.[510] Although Asawasi was "experimental" in terms of its building material, the estate's architectural typology dated from the period from the 1930s—a typology rooted in military architecture that typified the system of itinerant laborers living in "bed spaces" seen across British Africa. The second phase of the project, built several years later, also comprised two- and three-roomed houses with their own kitchen, bathroom, and garden. **(Figure 4.7, 4.8, 4.9)** Inside, the rooms contained some built-in storage space: two concrete shelves, a hanging rod, and a wooden shelf—much like the propositions for built-in furniture made by the South African architect Betty Spence, as recounted in Chapter 3.[511]

Like most state-sponsored housing projects built in British Africa during this period, Alcock's design revolved around the nuclear family. If most of Kumasi's original courtyard dwellings, often intricately decorated, housed multiple generations in several

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[510] In fact, the layout of Asawasi's first phase resembled an earlier worker's estate built in West Korle Gono, east of the center of Accra. Constructed in 1937, the estate was constructed, just as Asawasi, as an open compound, with four barracks with verandahs opening up towards a shared courtyard space, containing a building, most likely a kitchen or bathroom. Unknown, "Notes on Government and Municipal African Housing Schemes in West, East and South Africa," September 1944. CO927/6/5, TNA.

[511] Alfred Alcock, "Housing Estate Construction in West Africa," 4. CO927/6/7, TNA.

buildings oriented towards a central space, Alcock's apartments were built for the worker and his family.[512]

The specific layout of the houses, facing each other, disclosed Alcock's intention to create a "community" at Asawasi. **(Figure 4.10)** So did his inclusion of the other facilities on the estate, such as stores, a school, a health center, sports fields, a church and mosque, and a community center. As Chapter 2 showed, many of these new estates were modeled after British "neighborhood units" and were intended to evoke a sense of community by being built as a small village. Asawasi's first phase was laid out like a checkerboard; four blocks of houses faced each other, forming a rectangular green space. Here, Alcock invoked the ideas of the British architect Charley Reilly, whose thoughts he recited in lectures and talks.[513] Reilly, a professor at Liverpool University, came up with the idea of building housing estates facing rectangular green spaces, or "village greens," instead of along streets, an idea that was brought into practice in several British postwar new towns. Since the housing blocks at Asawasi had alternating entrances, with some apartments opening up to the front, others to the back, the backside of the apartment blocks opened up to another square, forming an ongoing pattern, or a "system of village greens."[514]

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[512] Alcock pointed out that the town consisted of approximately 1,500 compounds, containing on average eight rooms. Alfred Alcock, "A Rehousing Scheme for Kumasi: A Preliminary Report," undated. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. S 666.

[513] On Reilly, see: Peter Richmond, *Marketing Modernisms: The Architecture and Influence of Charles Reilly* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001).

[514] Alfred Alcock, "Problems of Town Planning, Including Slum Clearance," Lecture given by Mr. A.E.S. Alcock, Secretary Executive Officer, Town & Country Planning Board to Accra P.E.A. February 28, 1952: 6. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

At the same time, however, the open layout of Alcock's estate offered less privacy than, say, the traditional compound house, which was oriented inwards and closed off by a high wall. At Asawasi, residents faced the common green space—and each other. According to Alcock, this layout would stimulate a sense of community, but it also made it easy for community development officers, stationed at the estate's community center, to maintain oversight. Through the creation of such residential units and by providing for people's "day to day needs close to their homes," Alcock wrote, "the excitement, which people feel and need when they live in towns, can be canalized as it were into good social activity reducing crime and delinquency to the minimum."[515] This way, he argued, planning could help "stabilise the heterogeneous population" that moved to towns like Kumasi and Accra.[516]

One of the black-and-white photographs included in *The Experimental Housing Estate at Asawasi* (1945), an album assembled by Alcock to document the construction of the Asawasi estate in the town of Kumasi, shows a black man pushing soil into rows of large wooden molds assisted by a long wooden stick.[517] **(Figure 4.11)** Behind him, another worker removes the casts, leaving out the blocks out to dry on the concrete surface. A third man, with a spade in his hand, walks away, possibly to return with more of the cement and earth mixture. Created for the Colonial Office in London, the compilation of photographs, accompanied by a detailed document containing technical descriptions, illustrated the

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[515] Ibid., 4.

[516] Ibid., 2.

[517] Alfred Alcock, *The Experimental Housing Estate at Asawasi*, 1945. CO96/781/1, TNA.

possibility of building affordable and durable housing with a locally-sourced, yet labor-intensive material.

Through a process of trial-and-error on the building site, Alcock determined that the optimal ratio of Portland cement to laterite earth, a type of earth with high iron contents, was 1 to 20.[518] Laterite was dug up nearby and mixed with cement and a small amount of water. Instead of building walls of rammed earth, as was common in West Africa and the method used for the construction of Kumasi's compound housing, Alcock opted for bricks to improve the structure's strength. The bricks were cast in place on a flat earthen surface, too fragile to be moved after they were taken out of the wooden molds. According to Alcock, they were left out to dry for two weeks before being used, to prevent the bricks from cracking. **(Figure 4.12)** While drying, their strength improved. To further increase the material's durability—and to cover up the raw surface of the stabilized earth bricks—the interiors were coated with a mixture of sand, clay, and cement, as well as a layer of limewash. The exteriors were subjected to a coating of lime and cement. The roofs presented another test; after several unsuccessful tests using stabilized rammed earth, Alcock resorted to concrete tiles, manufactured by a simple hand-press tile machine. **(Figure 4.13)** For some of the buildings constructed during Asawasi's second phase, a "Landcrete" brick-machine was used, a hand-operable machine, probably imported from South Africa, developed for making bricks out of stabilized earth.[519]

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[518] Alfred Alcock, "Further Experiments in Building at Kumasi," March 31, 1945. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.; Alfred Alcock, "Housing Experiments in West Africa." CO927/6, TNA.

[519] Gold Coast Department of Housing and Social Welfare, *The Asawasi Housing Scheme: Building in Stabilised Laterite* (1948), 13. CO927/36/1, TNA.

Alcock studied local rammed earth construction, as his lectures and articles demonstrate. But Alcock was also in contact with the British Building Research Station, who provided him with technical information about the properties of Portland cement and the mixing of cement and earth, while he responded with updates about his experiments. In Britain, during World War II, stabilzed soil had been used for the construction roads and airport landing strips, and the British Building Research Station and other laboratories, like the Road Research Laboratory, had conducted research into the properties of stabilized earth.

The estate was one of Alcock's first projects in the British "model colony." In 1944, not long after the Kumasi Town Council was established, Alcock had become Town Engineer in Kumasi, the Gold Coast's second-largest town and the center of the colony's cocoa-growing region. Trained as an engineer in Britain, Alcock relocated to Kumasi after nearly twenty years in Public Works Department in Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), leaving the country four years before it became independent.[520] In Ceylon, he was most likely involved in the construction of a variety of utilitarian architecture and infrastructure—the means through which, as architectural historian Peter Scriver has written, "the British were significantly restructuring the Indian subcontinent both spatially and technologically."[521]

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[520] "Annual Confidential Report: Alfred Edward Savige Alcock." B.S. C58, PRAAD.

[521] Peter Scriver, "Empire-Building and Thinking in the Public Works Department of British India." *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Peter Scriver and Vikram Prakash, eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2007): 69; Ministry of Local Government and Housing (Housing Division). Colonial Service. Annual Confidential Report (Professional and Technical), 1956. B.S. C58, RRAAD.

Particularly in comparison to the well-documented careers of Maxwell Fry and

Jane Drew, appointed as Town Planning Advisors to West Africa in the same year,

Alcock's work has been overlooked thus far, in part because little information is available

about his work in either Ceylon or the Gold Coast.[522] In the late 1940s, Alcock succeeded

Fry and Drew as Town Planning Advisor to the Gold Coast and moved to Accra not long

after completing the Asawasi project. In this capacity, he played a crucial role in various

state-sponsored housing estates, planning projects, and infrastructural schemes, most

notably the design of New Tema, a town that resettled inhabitants displaced by the

construction of the Akosombo Dam, a new hydro-electric dam in the Volta River during the

1950s.[523]

Still, it was for his "experiments" on the stabilization of earth that he became

known outside of the Gold Coast in select circles. Throughout the 1940s and '50s, the

Colonial Office circulated his technical guides and papers throughout the "Overseas

Territories." Here, Alcock emphasized that the "experiment" in Kumasi had been a success;

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[522] One exception is Viviana d'Auria's article, "In the laboratory and in the field," 329-55. Fry, who served in the British Army in West Africa, was employed as the first Town Planning Advisors to the Resident Minister of the British West African Colonies, covering the Gold Coast as well as the vast territory that comprised Nigeria, the Gambia and Sierra Leone, a position financed by Colonial Development and Welfare Funds. Telegram from Arthur Creech Jones to Sanford, Resident Minister, September 4, 1943. CSO20/12/14, PRAAD. Drew was hired as his assistant, primarily focusing on the Gold Coast and Nigeria. see: Iain Jackson and Jessica Holland, *The Architecture of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew: Twentieth Century Architecture, Pioneer Modernism and the Tropics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014); Iain Jackson, "Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew's Early Housing and Neighborhood Planning in Sector-22, Chandigarh," *Planning Perspectives* 28, no. 1 (2013): 1-26; Rhodri-Windsor Liscombe "Modernism in Late Imperial British West Africa: The Work of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, 1946-1956," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65, no. 2 (2006): 188-215.

[523] Iain Jackson et al., "The Volta River Project: Planning, Housing and Resettlement in Ghana, 1950-1965," *The Journal of Architecture* 24, no. 4 (2019): 512-48.

with this project, he had proven that soil stabilization was a "structurally sound method of building."[524] The use of "unconventional materials and methods" had also resulted in a "considerable saving in cost of construction."[525] (The estimated total cost of the estate was 214,270 pounds, worth nearly nine million pounds sterling today.)[526] For Alcock, stabilized rammed earth signified a "revolution in building materials," a method to, at least partially, circumvent the colonial construction industry's dependence on imported building materials.[527] During a moment of soaring building material shortages in Britain—materials in high demand to rebuild the country's infrastructure and construct thousands of dwellings for people left homeless after the Blitz—Alcock's proposal sounded promising to the Colonial Office.

Like other architects, planners, and engineers working in British Africa during the period following World War II, Alcock claimed in his unpublished memoir about his time in the West African colony that he "worked for long hours" to help his "friends on the way to Independence."[528] On another occasion, during a West African radio broadcast in 1950, Alcock emphasized that his primary concern was the "lives of the Africans." His energy, as an engineer and planner, he claimed, was "primarily devoted to planning for the

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[524] Alfred Alcock, "Housing Estate Construction in West Africa," 5. CO927/6/7, TNA.

[525] Ibid.

[526] Gold Coast Department of Housing and Social Welfare, *The Asawasi Housing Scheme: Building in Stabilised Laterite,* 1948, 21. CO927/36/1, TNA.

[527] Alfred Alcock, "Housing Plan for Ashanti and the Colony," 1945. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

[528] Alfred Alcock, *Winds of Planning Change before Independence,* 1975, 9. Alfred Alcock Archive, MSS. Afr. r. 178.

people of this country."[529] But underneath such benevolent language lingered concerns about maintaining social stability during a period of great social and political change.

Particularly in Kumasi, a town of significant economic interest to Britain, preserving social stability was one of the colonial administration's main concerns. Alcock's "invention" buttressed and facilitated an extractive economy aimed at increasing Britain's wealth following World War II. In his pamphlet *Towards Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle Against the World*, written in 1945 but not published until 1962, Nkrumah concluded that "beneath the 'humanitarian' and 'appeasement' shibboleths of colonial governments, a proper scrutiny leads one to discover nothing but deception, hypocrisy, oppression, and exploitation."[530] The colonies, Nkrumah continued, "are thus a source of raw materials and cheap labour and a 'dumping ground' for spurious surplus goods to be sold at exorbitant prices…That is why it is incoherent nonsense to say that Britain or any other colonial power has the 'good' intention of developing her colonies for self-government and independence."[531] During a moment of great economic precarity, Britain could not afford to extricate herself from the colonies.

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[529] Broadcast on "Our Job and How We Do It," November 24, 1950: 4. Alfred Alcock Archive, MSS. Afr. s. 666. "It is the flexibility of the planning that makes it possible. Planners are not dictators nor do they follow a policy of segregation of races. To the planners peoples of all races and colors are human beings and it is for the lives of human beings that planners plan."

[530] Kwame Nkrumah, *Towards Colonial Freedom: Africa in the Struggle against the World* (Accra, Guinea Press, 1957), *7*.

[531] Ibid., 8.

4.3. In the Laboratory: Inventing a Modern Material

In November 1952, the *Gold Coast Weekly Review*, the main British news outlet, published

an article about a small laboratory in Accra led by Alcock and associated with the newly

established Ministry of Local Government and Housing, titled "Accra Laboratory Tests

Make Houses Cheaper."[532] Not long after the completion of Asawasi, Alcock relocated to

Accra to become Secretary and Executive Officer of the Town and Country Planning

Board, the Gold Coast's first national organization concerned with architecture and

planning. In 1952, when the Town and Country Planning Board was absorbed by the newly

established Ministry of Local Government and Housing, Alcock became Town Planning

Advisor of the Gold Coast.[533] The article recounted some of the laboratory's experiments

with swishcrete, which the author argued would "improve their buildings [the Gold Coast's

inhabitants] at a cost within their reach."[534] One of the photographs in the article showed

several black laboratory assistants analyzing soil samples and testing the material's

strength. The other image displayed a bulky cabinet containing over a hundred cylinder-

shaped soil samples from different parts of the country with varying percentages of

Portland cement. **(Figure 4.14)** By bringing soil into the laboratory, Alcock removed the

material from its common associations with dirt and disease and transformed it into an

object of development—a material that could be engineered. The political theorist Timothy

Mitchell has argued that throughout the twentieth century, the expertise of engineering and

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[532] "Accra Laboratory Tests Make Houses Cheaper," *Gold Coast Weekly Review*, November 19, 1952, 2. British Library, British Newspaper Archive.

[533] Ministry of Local Government and Housing (Housing Division). "Colonial Service. Annual Confidential Report (Professional and Technical), 1956. B.S. C58, PRAAD.

[534] "Accra Laboratory Tests Make Houses Cheaper" *Gold Coast Weekly Review*, November 19, 1952, 2. British Library, British Newspaper Archive.

technology was constituted and enabled through distance and separation.[535] If Asawasi had been the result of a gradual process of trial-and-error on the building site, in the laboratory, Alcock oversaw a scrupulous research process, further separating stabilized rammed earth from more "traditional" modes of rammed earth construction.

Alcock's work in the laboratory specifically focused on maximizing stabilized rammed earth's strength while adding the minimum amount of Portland cement necessary to prevent the soil samples from shrinking or cracking. Several reports from Alcock's laboratory published during the late 1940s and '50s, carefully document the different methods used to test the materials. Many photographs show how the different soil samples were examined through various "durability tests."[536] Laboratory assistants used "weathering," a process that simulated outside conditions, in which cylinder-shaped samples different amounts of Portland cement added to them were exposed to several cycles of "wetting" and "drying." **(Figure 4.15, 4.16)**

By bringing swishcrete to the laboratory, Alcock also signaled that stabilized rammed earth was a modern material. Various promotional pamphlets, produced by the colonial administration juxtaposed stabilized rammed earth dwellings with local structures built with laterite and other materials.[537] The results obtained at Asawasi, one booklet published by the Department of Social Welfare and Housing (the Ministry of Local

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[535] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 15.

[536] Town and Country Planning Board. *Building Research Reports.* Report no. 1. January 1948. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

[537] Gold Coast Department of Housing and Social Welfare, *The Asawasi Housing Scheme: Building in Stabilised Laterite,* 1948, 23. CO927/36/1, TNA.

Government and Housing's predecessor) concluded, would pave the way for a large-scale

rehousing program in the Gold Coast, improving people's living standards by the "gradual

elimination of the mud and wattle dwelling which is the home of vectors of multifarious

diseases."[538] The thin layer of internal and external white coating that covered up the

stabilized rammed earth bricks at Asawasi, served not only a structural purpose but also an

aesthetic one; from the outside, Alcock's designs appeared as if they were produced with

"modern" materials.

Alcock also presented stabilized rammed earth as modern by accentuating the

different techniques used for construction. For Alcock, the history of architecture was

closely tied to the development of tools, and hence, construction techniques.[539]

Construction with earth, he wrote, had evolved over the past centuries because of the

invention of increasingly advanced tools. While low-key, the wooden molds, the hand-

operated tile-press, and the Landcrete machine used at Asawasi had one significant effect:

the ability to produce identically shaped blocks and tiles. Stabilized rammed earth blocks

were infinitely replicable and reproducible. One of Alcock's criticisms of locally produced

earth bricks, such as the pear-shaped *tubali* used in the northern part of the country, was

that they were unevenly shaped and sized—a result of "the crude preparation of the clay

and the inferior craftsmanship."[540]

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[538] Ibid.

[539] Alfred Alcock, "Alternative Methods of Construction: Earth Building in West Africa" *Proceedings – Technical Paper, Volume 1 – Sections I, II, and III. Regional Conference on Housing Research in Africa South of the Sahara* (Pretoria: National Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1952): 2.

[540] Alfred Alcock, "Housing Experiments in West Africa": 3. CO927/6, TNA.

As such, Alcock's approach to earth as a building material differed starkly from the interest of architects like Hassan Fathy—someone whose work Alcock was familiar with—or Barrie Bierman, active in South Africa, in the use of mud bricks.[541] If Fathy's fascination with earth was, as Panayiota Pyla has shown, rooted in a false sense of historicity, a "homogenizing view that conflated many different formal precedents and building techniques from diverse cultural provinces of Egypt," Alcock attempted to do the opposite, disassociating the use of laterite in Asawasi from "traditional" construction in Kumasi and elsewhere.[542]

Alcock's "building research" should be considered as part of a broader expansion of colonial scientific research in the mid-twentieth century—a shift that historians have often credited to Lord Hailey's *African Research Survey* (1938), a decade-long project that served, as the historian of science Helen Tilley has argued, to "master Africa's environments and its human inhabitants through scientific management and planning."[543] Tellingly, in the introduction of the hefty tome, over 1,000 pages long, Lord Hailey, who directed the survey with the assistance of several anthropologists, including Audrey Richards and Lucy Mair, described the vast continent as "a living laboratory, in which the

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[541] In 1947, Barrie Bierman, a colleague of Betty Spence (the subject of Chapter 3), wrote an article in the *South African Architectural Record* to promote construction with earth in South Africa. Bierman's argument was closer to Fathy, who also encouraged mud as a regional material, better suited than, for instance, prefabrication. Barrie Bierman, "Mud as a Building Material," *South African Architectural Record* 32, no. 9 (1947): 248-53.

[542] Panayiota Pyla, "The many lives of New Gourna: alternative histories of a model community and their current significance," *The Journal of Architecture* 14, no. 6 (2009): 720.

[543] Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory*, 4.

reward of study may prove to be not merely the satisfaction of an intellectual impulse, but an effective addition to the welfare of a people."[544]

Alcock was one of a number of engineers, engineers, and planners who conducted research on building materials and construction methods for housing in the colonies. Social and scientific research, and specifically material science research, became a central component of postwar British colonial policy focused on development, social welfare, and modernization. In 1944, a research group established by the Colonial Office, the Colonial Housing Research Group, had recommended investigations into the use of local building materials for the construction of state-sponsored housing estates. According to Drew, a member of the group, local building materials offered an alternative to the high costs of imported building materials, shipped from Britain.[545] Similarly, another member of the group, Audrey Richards, the anthropologist who had assisted Lord Hailey with *The African Survey*, argued that "reduction in the cost of building houses for urban natives" could only be realized by "better use of traditional building materials, the discovery of new local materials, improved transport or local production of materials; or, alternatively, by the import of building materials at a vastly lower cost than heretofore."[546] Yet these materials, the Colonial Housing Research Group wrote, needed testing to "provide data under 'laboratory' conditions."[547] The postwar policy proposals of the Colonial Office,

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[544] Lord Hailey cited in Tilley, *Africa as a Living Laboratory*, 5.

[545] Jane Drew, "Proposed Building Research Station for the West African Colonies" Colonial Housing Research Group, 9, ca. 1945. CO927/6, TNA.

[546] Audrey Richards, "Some Notes on Building Research in East Africa," 1944. CO927/6, TNA.

[547] "Memorandum on the recent discussions between the West African Town Planning Office, the Colonial Housing Research Group and Other Interested Institutions on Building Research in West Africa," 1945. CO 927/6, TNA. There were discussions in the Colonial

architectural historian Jiat-Hwee Chang has remarked, were rooted in "fundamental faith in the transformative power of science and technology" and a belief that the "application of technoscientific knowledge would enable socio-economic development and provide for welfare."[548]

At the same time, however, scientific research, or testing under "laboratory conditions," enabled the colonial administration, as Alcock's research showed, to minimize investments into social welfare projects. Alcock's tests focused on finding the appropriate balance between Portland cement and laterite to create a mixture with an approximate life-span of thirty to fifty years—a timeframe that resembled the Colonial Office's estimation of British colonial rule in the Gold Coast before it would obtain independence. In striving to yield maximum results for minimum costs, Alcock's approach echoed the axiom that underpinned the Colonial Office's postwar colonial policy; during this period of economic precarity in Britain, British colonial and welfare policies focused on generating rapid economic development through minimal investments and through an exploitative system of colonial labor.

Scholars such as Paul Rabinow and Gwendolyn Wright have famously framed the French colonies, and their architectural and planning projects, as "laboratories," testing-sites for architectural ideas to be implemented in mainland France.[549] In contrast, Alcock's

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Office to establish a shared West African Building Research Institute to be located in Ibadan, Nigeria, affiliated with the British Building Research Institute, but this took years to materialize, after Alcock started his laboratory in Accra.

[548] Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture,* 174.

[549] See: Rabinow, *French Modern,* 1989; Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 1991.

laboratory was focused on optimizing architectural construction with materials deemed outmoded in England. Instead of a workshop for metropolitan architectural innovation, Alcock's experiments served to buttress an extractive colonial economy—an economy that generated the wealth used for the construction of the "new Britain" at home.

4.4. A "Semi-Permanent" Material

That stabilized rammed earth was a material with a life-span of thirty to fifty years was also evident from Alcock's classification of his creation as "semi-permanent." Building materials in the Gold Coast, as in other British colonies, were, according to most municipal bylaws, classified into two categories: "permanent" and "temporary."[550] Permanent building materials were generally understood as imported materials such as cement, steel, and bricks. A handbook on "African Housing" published by the Central African Council in 1949, for example, categorized brick, stone, and concrete as materials used for the construction of "permanent" housing.[551] Materials such as earth and thatch, on the other hand, were used for the construction of "temporary" housing.[552] But by mixing earth, a "temporary" material, with Portland cement, a "permanent" material, Alcock had created a different category altogether—a new classification with consequences for, among others, the country's bylaws.

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[550] R.W. Nurse, A Pott. "Report on a Visit to West Africa, Building Research Station," May 1947. CO927/34/2, TNA.

[551] The Central African Council, "Report on African Housing," 1949. CO927/35/4, TNA.

[552] Ibid.

One of the reasons earth and thatch were classified as a "temporary," was because they required more frequent upkeep than "permanent" materials. In *Village Housing in the Tropics* (1947), a guide on village planning for local administrators and chiefs in the Gold Coast and beyond, Fry and Drew described laterite as having a "limited life":

> However intelligently these indigenous methods of construction are handled, they can only be regarded as *temporary*. They seldom remain water-tight, and though they may be given almost continual maintenance, they have but a limited life against the ravages of termites and weather.[553]

But, as Fry and Drew's description indicates, these categories also roughly corresponded with "European" and "African" or "indigenous." Whereas housing for British subjects and colonial administration buildings were built with "permanent" materials, most locals used "temporary" materials. Building materials were signifiers of what the cultural theorist Stuart Hall termed "pigmentocrcacy," and what Frantz Fanon named the "racial epidermal schema": the strict regimentation and hierarchy of skin color in colonial society.[554] Any recognition that these classifications and concerns about permanence and durability were firmly rooted in a Western conception of architecture—one that, as the art historian Labelle Prussian has argued, has prevented many from properly understanding structures built with

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[553] Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry in collaboration with Harry L. Ford, *Village Housing in the Tropics. With an Introduction by Iain Jackson* (London: Routledge, 2014), 101 (emphasis mine).

[554] Stuart Hall with Bill Schwarz, *Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 41; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), 112.

earth, thatch, and other materials—was not surprisingly absent from Fry and Drew's analysis, or Alcock's descriptions.[555]

This dichotomy between "permanent" and "impermanent" material was also ingrained in the country's building code. Accra's and Kumasi's bylaws, based on British building regulations, prohibited, at least until the early 1950s, the use of "temporary" or "sub-standard" materials for housing construction. Fry and Drew, for example, wrote that building regulations in Kumasi were strict, but that on the town's border, one could see "squalid towns and villages built of swish and odd materials…"[556] Such practices were common; many other towns in British Africa, including Kampala, had similar bylaws. These building regulations made construction with West Africa's most common and affordable building material—soil—illegal and forced inhabitants to use imported, and therefore more expensive, materials. Because of these strict bylaws, Alisdair Sutherland, a British planner and a colleague of Alcock in the Gold Coast, wrote that "the majority of town dwelling Africans are not able to afford the capital necessary to build houses for themselves, now that the traditional local materials and methods of construction do not meet the standards laid down by the local bye-laws."[557] The bylaws also allowed for the clearance of areas not constructed with "permanent" materials, such as Ussher Town (an

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[555] Labelle Prussin, "An Introduction to Indigenous African Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33, no. 3 (October 1974): 183-4. Also see: Labelle Prussin, *Architecture in Northern Ghana: A Study of Forms and Functions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969.)

[556] Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, *Office of the Town Planning Advisor to the Resident Minister, West Africa, Draft Town Planning Scheme: Report Kumasi* (1945), 57. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

[557] Alisdair Sutherland, "Housing and Town Planning as Instruments of Social Control in Africa," 5. Conference held at the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, University College Ibadan, 1956. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

area better known as James Town) in Accra. In the 1950s, for example, Alcock developed a plan for slum clearance and large-scale redevelopment for the neighborhood, replacing the existing houses built with earth and thatch.[558]

Following Alcock's invention, however, the bylaws in Kumasi and Accra were amended. In 1945, after the first phase of Asawasi was completed, Fry and Drew proposed to change Kumasi's bylaws. They suggested to extend the town's civic boundaries to include the Asawasi housing scheme, but also recommended dividing Kumasi into two different sections. One part of the town would follow the existing, strict building regulations, while the other part would permit construction with "established swish."[559] (Little is known, however, about whether this was indeed implemented and how it impacted the city.) Several years later, in 1956, Alcock succeeded in revising Accra's building regulations. He headed a committee to revise Accra's 1944 building regulations, out of line with "modern building practice elsewhere in the world."[560] One of the committee's main accomplishments was the relaxation of the regulations concerning building materials. Alcock and his colleagues proposed that "soil-cement be considered as a material which meets the full standards required by the building regulations provided it is used for small buildings only…[561] The new bylaws also allowed, in certain areas of Accra, the "use of soil

[558] Alfred Alcock and Helga Richards, "Slum Clearance in Ussher Town: Pilot Scheme for A Block of Flats for Fishermen." Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

[559] Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, "Office of the Town Planning Advisor to the Resident Minister, West Africa, Draft Town Planning Scheme: Report Kumasi," 1945, 57-59. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

[560] Ministry of Housing, Office of the Town Planning Advisor, "Report of the Committee on the Revision of het Accra Building Regulations," Accra, 1956, 1. Alfred Alcock Papers, MSS. Afr. s. 666.

[561] Ibid., 5.

or swish without cement in walls the use of grass or thatch on roofs and the use of other sub-standard materials in common use in villages in rural areas."[562]

4.5. An Austere Modernism

While Alcock experimented with stabilized rammed earth in the Gold Coast's inland, rammed earth mixed with cement was also considered, briefly, as a viable option for postwar construction in Europe itself. Across Europe, left shattered and destroyed after the War, several architects experimented with dwellings that contained rammed earth walls. In France, for example, the Ministry of Reconstruction encouraged construction with rammed earth during the 1940s, particularly in the damaged areas where more common materials such as bricks were scarce. **(Figure 4.17)** Yet few such projects were actually built. As one French architect put it, the presence of sufficient amounts of stones, rubble, and gravel had made it "unnecessary to use other than the conventional methods of natural or artificial stone masonry, employing a smaller labour force than would be required for rammed earth construction."[563] In mid-century Europe, rammed earth, even in its stabilized form, was considered an inferior alternative to "permanent" materials such as stone, both less durable and more labor-intensive.

These considerations did not, however, prevent "swishcrete" from being used across the Gold Coast and other British colonies during the 1940s and '50s. Not long after

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[562] Ibid.

[563] André Marini, "Rammed earth technique in France," *Housing and Town and Country Planning*, 4 (October 1950), 20.

Alcock's successful experiment in Asawasi in 1945, "swishcrete" became the material of choice for other housing estates built throughout the West African colony. These included the North Efia Kuma estate in Takoradi, the Gold Coast's port city, also constructed under the auspices of the Town and Country Planning Board. North Efia Kuma was developed for local dockworkers, containing, like Asawasi, over 1,000 units.[564] Other examples included workers' housing at the prestigious Achimota School in Accra, the Gold Coast's foremost college, and the quarters for employees of the West African Cacao Research Institute, located in Kumasi.[565] Not long after, stabilized rammed earth estates appeared in Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania), and Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe). During the early 1950s, *Colonial Building Notes*, the journal distributed by the Colonial Office on material science research and construction in the British colonies, published several articles on rammed earth, including not only Alcock's work in Asawasi but also several state-sponsored housing estates in Kampala and Jinja—some of which were built following Ernst May's plan for Kampala, discussed in Chapter 2.[566] **(Figure 4.18, 4.19, 4.20)** Although little is known about most of these building projects, they do further underline the entanglements between the investments into social welfare and the extractive colonial economy. While cast as a sign of British investment into the Gold Coast by films such as

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[564] "The Gold Coast: Social Housing." CO96/819/18, TNA.

[565] Ibid.

[566] "Stabilised Earth Walls – Construction," *Colonial Building Notes* 8 (August 1952), 1-10; "Stabilised Earth Walls – Surface Finishes," *Colonial Building Notes* 14 (July 1953): 1-8; Alfred Alcock, "'Swischrete': Notes on stabilised cement-earth building in the Gold Coast," *Colonial Building Notes* 16 (September 1953), 1-9; "Details of costs of stabilized cement-earth building, Uganda, 1952," *Colonial Building Notes* 16 (September 1953); 10-2.

"Gold Coast: Houses that last," housing dockworkers or employees whose task it was to optimize cocoa farming, also, unquestionably, benefitted the British postwar economy.

Swishcrete, a material that required little skill to build with, was also increasingly promoted by the Colonial Office as a substance that colonial subjects could use to construct their own houses. Stabilized rammed earth made an appearance in several films produced by the Colonial Film Unit, films that were shown across British Africa, as Chapter 2 demonstrates, with the use of cinema vans or in newly constructed community centers. *Better Homes*, for example, produced in 1948, featured the construction of a stabilized rammed earth house somewhere in East Africa. The instructional film intended to show how "a good permanent house may be built using mainly materials which are available on the spot."[567] The film follows a British colonial administrator who arrives in an unnamed village by car. In the village, he helps a resident to construct a new, and "better," house—a house different from the round, mud dwelling with, as the film shows in close-up, several cracks in the walls. The newly-built house, rectangular instead of round, and containing windows and a door, lasted "much longer than the ordinary mud dwelling." The film ends by encouraging viewers to also build with stabilized rammed earth:

> Better homes for Africans is more than mere words, it is a practical plan. Use the local materials that surround you and ask the local administrator for advice. They will be pleased, and you will be much more pleased.[568]

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[567] Colonial Film Unit, *Better Homes*, 1948. 11 min., black & white. British Film Institute National Archives, 366717.

[568] Ibid.

Likewise, *Housing in Pise de Terre* (1951), a movie produced in the settler-colony

Rhodesia, and *Why Not You? A Film for the Family* (1950), a film set in Uganda, also

focused on stimulating spectators to use swishcrete to build new houses.[569]

  Films like *Better Homes* presented building with stabilized rammed earth as what

the architectural historian Farhan Karim has described as "a kind of modernism of

austerity" for the non-Western hemisphere.[570] Building with stabilized rammed earth

limited the size and shape of buildings. The material was only strong enough for single-

floor, modest structures. But *Better Homes* and other movies promoted austerity or

simplicity as one of the core values of "good" housing—types of structures, Alcock

remarked, that aligned with the resident's "simple human needs."[571] To build "well,"

Alcock wrote in a book titled *How to Build: Size and Shape*, intended for inhabitants in

West Africa, was to "build simply." Good housing avoided "large sizes, complicated

shapes and expensive materials."[572]

  The notion of a "modernism of austerity" was also at the heart of the *Ideal Home*

Exhibition, a show held at the Accra Community Center in 1956, one year before the Gold

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[569] Public Relations Department, Film Production Unit, Rhodesia and National Housing Board, Southern Rhodesia, *Housing in Pise de Terre*, 1951. British Film Institute National Archives, 59570; Colonial Film Unit, *Why Not You? A Film for the Family*, 1950. 10 min, black & white. British Film Institute, 12189.

[570] Farhan Karim, *Of Greater Dignity than Riches: Austerity and Housing Design in India* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 101-4.

[571] Alfred Alcock, Helga Richards, *How to Build: Size and Shape* (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1958): n.p.

[572] Ibid., 1.

Coast became the first British colony in Africa to be "granted" independence.[573] The show, where several community development officers also promoted swichcrete, was held in the Accra Community Center, a striking modernist building, designed by Fry and Drew in 1953, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, in the heart of Accra, situated between Ussher Fort, a Dutch fort built in 1648, and Christiansborg, the seventeenth-century Danish castle, and the seat of the British colonial administration. The project, the first of its kind, organized by Alcock at the Housing Department, and in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and the Federation of Gold Coast Women, was one of many "community development" initiatives held at the Center.[574] The exhibition, opened by the Gold-Coast Governor's wife, Lady Aden-Clarke, put on display model houses, model kitchens, and bedroom- and sitting furniture, but also included demonstrations of the Landcrete machine, the self-operable block-making device used for the manufacture of stabilized rammed earth blocks. **(Figure 4.21)** Swishcrete had become part of the "ideal home."

By this time, the United Nations and other international organizations concerned with housing also began to spur construction with stabilized rammed earth, to be used for building across the "developing world."[575] In 1954, international architectural "experts" affiliated with the United Nations designed a stabilized rammed earth-wall house as part of the International Exhibition on Low-Cost Housing in New Delhi, a show that coincided with the United Nations' first Regional Seminar on Housing and Community

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[573] On the 1967 Ideal Home Exhibition in Accra, see: Bianca Murillo, "Ideal Homes and the Gender Politics of Consumerism in Postcolonial Ghana, 1960-70," *Gender & History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 560-75.

[574] "'Ideal Home Exhibition' Drew 2,000 Visitors a Day," *Gold Coast Weekly Review*, September 5, 1956, 4-5. British Library, British Newspaper Archive.

[575] Karim, *Of Greater Dignity than Riches*, 101-4.

Improvement.[576] Following this exhibition and gathering, attended by the architects and

planners that would come to dominate the emerging field of international housing

construction such as Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and Ernest Weissman, the United Nations

repeatedly published about earth construction and encouraged its use across the globe.

While touted as a viable and inexpensive alternative to cement and stone, many of these

publications emphasized that the substance was "stabilized" and contained a certain amount

of cement, disconnecting stabilized rammed earth, like Alcock did, from its alleged

associations with dirt and disease. Or, as the author of a 1958 United Nations manual on

construction with stabilized soil wrote: to minimize the "psychological difficulties" of

living in a dwelling composed of soil, the word "soil" had to "be kept in the

background."[577]

Alcock's research in West Africa was picked up by these circles. As early as 1951,

an extensive article by Alcock appeared in a special edition on rammed earth of the

Housing Town and Country Planning Bulletin, a magazine published by the United

Nations. Alcock also collaborated with Charles Abrams, Otto Koenigsberger, and Vladimir

Bodiansky, who on behalf of the United Nations, came to the Gold Coast in 1956 for a

"housing mission."[578] Unsurprisingly, following the Gold Coast's independence in 1957,

Alcock continued his career as a housing advisor for the United Nations, focusing on low-

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[576] Ibid.

[577] Robert Fitzmaurice, *Manual on Stabilized Soil Construction for Housing* (New York: Technical Assistance Program, United Nations, 1958), 117.

[578] "Annual Confidential Report: Alfred Edward Savige Alcock." B.S. C58, PRAAD, Accra.

cost technologies and local building materials.[579] One of his projects was a United Nations Technical Assistance mission in Panama City, focused on resettling squatters.[580]

4.6. "Winds of Change"

On March 6, 1957, during a celebratory day in Accra attended by thousands, including international visitors such as Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King, Ralph Bunche, Richard Nixon, and George Padmore, the Gold Coast was the first British colony in Africa to become independent, with Nkrumah as its prime minister.[581] Ghana's Independence Monument, located less than one kilometer from where in 1948 the Accra Riots began, was erected to celebrate the event. Meanwhile, British news outlets repeatedly emphasized the ways in which Britain had "prepared" the Gold Coast for independence and would continue to support Ghana. They also underlined that Ghana would still be tied to Britain as part of the "multiracial" Commonwealth. Several years thereafter, Nkrumah would describe Britain's continuing economic grip on Ghana, through the presence of various businesses,

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[579] d'Auria, "In the laboratory and in the field," ft. 76. It should be noted that Alcock was one of several British architects who worked for the United Nations after the collapse of empire. The transfer of expertise also points, as others have pointed out, to the transfer of methodologies and techniques from a colonial to a post-colonial context. Robert Gardner-Medwin is another example. See: Iain Jackson, "Robert Gardner-Medwin and the Networks of Tropical Modernism," *The Journal of Architecture* 18, no. 2 (2013): 167-95.

[580] Another one of his projects was a mission on "self-help" housing in South-East Asia, see: Alfred E. Alcock, K. N. Misra, J. L. McGairl, and C. B. Patel, "Self-Help Housing Methods and Practices in South-East Asia," *Ekistics* 16, no. 93 (1963): 81-7.

[581] Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below: Pan-Africanism, The Cold War, and the End of Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 164.

including Cadbury and other cocoa producers, as "neocolonialism"—an advanced form of colonialism which followed the loss of direct political power.[582]

In a brief, unpublished manuscript called *Winds of Planning Change before Independence*, written in 1974 after retirement, Alcock looked back at his time in the West African colony during this period of transformative social and political change. The title of Alcock's manuscript was a direct reference to a speech given by the British conservative Prime Minister Henry Macmillan in South Africa in 1960, in which he famously described the rise of national consciousness throughout Africa as the "wind of change…blowing through this continent."[583] In the manuscript, Alcock narrated, in a straightforward manner, how the demise of British power in the Gold Coast, and the increasing influence of people such as Nkrumah had informed the administration's approach to building and planning in the country. "Planning policy after 1945," he wrote, "underwent accelerating change as the years passed and political events began to have far reaching effects."[584]

Alcock mentioned, for instance, that racial segregation in planning was abandoned. He also noted that the Town and Country Planning Board itself gradually changed because of the "Africanisation" of civil service. In 1951, following the first sweeping victory of the Convention People's Party led by Nkrumah, many British officials

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[582] Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Nelson, 1965).

[583] On Macmillan's speech, see for example: L. J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell, eds. *Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Ritchie Ovendale, "Macmillan and the Winds of Change in Africa, 1957-1960," *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 2 (1995): 455-77, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00019506.

[584] Alfred Alcock, "Winds of Planning Change before Independence," 1975*,* 8. Alfred Alcock Archive, MSS. Afr. r. 178.

were given the opportunity to retire. "Most of them who found themselves out of sympathy with the changes in colonial policy and the movement towards independence for the African people retired immediately," Alcock stated.[585] Others gradually retired in response to particular political changes they disliked. Alcock himself, a liberal who supported the transition to independence, stayed until 1957, when he was discharged. What Alcock's manuscript highlighted was that independence was a long and slow process in the Gold Coast which unfolded over the course of several years.

This chapter has argued that one of the other ways in which the impending prospect of independence informed state-led architectural construction and urban design was through the use of stabilized rammed earth as a building material for the state-sponsored projects in the West African colony and beyond. Alcock, with the help of propaganda films such as "Gold Coast: Houses that Last," presented "swishcrete" as a novel material that aligned perfectly with Britain's postwar colonial policy focused on social welfare, development, and modernization. By bringing stabilized rammed earth into the laboratory, Alcock disconnected the material from its associations with "traditional" ways of building, and contrary to practitioners like Hasan Fathy, promoted the substance as a modern material—a material that aligned with the "simple human needs" of its inhabitants. If the other chapters have uncovered how concerns about social "instability" informed design at the scale of the city, the neighborhood, and the house, this examination of Alcock's work in the West African colony has shown that such ideas also informed the material composition of the bricks that made up many of these state-sponsored estates. If in Britain, stabilized earth was a material associated with movement and mobility, used for

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[585] Ibid., 9.

roads and airport landing fields, in the Gold Coast, Alcock hoped it would settle—

"stabilize"—Kumasi's labor force.

This chapter has also argued that architects and planners like Alcock became

preoccupied with the material precisely *because* it had an expiration date. With his

"durability tests," Alcock developed a material that would last thirty to fifty years—a

timeframe that mirrored the Colonial Office's own predictions for how long Britain would

be present in the Gold Coast before independence. If, as Ola Uduku and others have argued,

tropical modernism became a type of architecture that reflected the area's transition to

independence, considered "neutral" as opposed to the more colonial style of building,

Alcock's experiments point to a different way in which architecture responded to the

looming end of colonial rule. Instead of creating a way of building that allowed architects

such as Fry and Drew to continue to build in the former colonies, even after they had

become independent, architects like Alcock actively responded to the increasingly

ambiguous future of Britain's colonial project during the post-World War II period.

Alcock's attempts to optimize swishcrete by minimizing the amount of Portland cement,

mirrored but also facilitated the Colonial Office's postwar colonial policy focused on

maximizing economic development in return for minimum investments.

EPILOGUE

Welfare and the End of Empire

"There is no English history without that other history."[586]

Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," 1991

On January 4, 1953, George Atkinson, the Colonial Housing Advisor for the Colonial Office, had just finished a tour of multiple housing estates in Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania), and Zanzibar.[587] During the same trip, Atkinson also visited South Africa, where he had attended the first Inter-African Housing Conference in Pretoria and supervised a smaller gathering of British colonial experts in housing—the meeting mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation. There, Atkinson met Thornley Dyer, the urban planner who had been closely involved in Nairobi's postwar development plan. He also listened to Betty Spence, who presented her work on furniture in township housing and Alfred Alcock, who spoke about his experiments using earth as an affordable, modern building material. Atkinson then toured several of Johannesburg's "model townships," presented as exceptional examples of "sub-economic" housing. For several days, Pretoria

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[586] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in *Race and Racism: A Reader*, eds. Les Back and John Solomos (New York: Routledge, 2000), 147.

[587] George Atkinson to "Rogers," January 4, 1953. CO822/715, TNA.

was the center of architectural and planning expertise in what Atkinson termed the "African housing situation."[588]

The conference signified a moment of transition. A close look at the conference proceedings reveals a shift in focus from rental housing to ownership—whether through tenant-purchase schemes (projects that enabled tenants to own their property after a set number of years) or through self-built housing, constructed with the assistance of the municipality or government. Ownership was believed to increase social stability. Or, as Atkinson stated one year later in a memorandum on housing in British Africa, "families who own their homes are more likely to feel that they have a stake in society, and so have an active interest in the building up of a stable community."[589] The conference formalized the gradual transition from the construction of state-sponsored housing estates to alternatives, including self-built housing on serviced plots, a housing strategy that later became known as "sites-and-services." This shift was prompted by the high costs of housing construction, particularly in combination with the low rents that could be charged for "sub-economic" apartments. But it was also an indication that Britain's presence in Kenya, the Gold Coast, and other territories was increasingly tenuous and a recognition that, sooner or later, Britain's occupation of large parts of Africa would come to an end. As anticolonial resistance across Britain's African colonies magnified and political reforms persisted—in 1951, Nkrumah's Convention People's Party had won the first open elections in the Gold Coast with an overwhelming majority, making the transition to self-government

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[588] Ibid.

[589] George Atkinson, "Memorandum on Housing in Africa," September 11, 1953. CO859/491, TNA.

an inevitable fact—British colonial architects and planners proposed to transition to a form of housing that required less financial investment.

The conference also meant a divergence from metropolitan solutions to state-sponsored housing construction. In postwar Britain, housing estates had appeared across the country. These new estates, such as Alton West in London, were increasingly monumental, what Reyner Banham and others famously described as "brutal," a term that became closely associated with the architecture of the British welfare state. But while housing estates in Britain grew taller, eventually culminating in "streets in the air," Atkinson and others at the Colonial Office promoted a "modernism of austerity" abroad: small, self-built houses, primarily made of local materials.[590]

The focus on self-built housing, located on plots of lands serviced by the municipality or government, was continued during the post-independence era by international organizations such as the United Nations, as has been pointed out by Ijlal Muzaffar and others.[591] In fact, several architects and planners employed by the British

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[590] The phrase "modernism of austerity" comes from Farhan Karim. See: Karim, *Of Greater Dignity than Riches*, 2019.

[591] Ijlal Muzaffar, "The Periphery within: Modern Architecture and the Making of the Third World (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007). Also see: Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, "Architectural Culture, Humanitarian Expertise: From the Tropics to Shelter, 1953-93," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 76, no. 3 (2017): 367-84; Petros Phokaides, "Rural Networks and Planned Communities: Doxiadis Associates' plans for rural settlements in post-independence Zambia," *The Journal of Architecture* 23, no. 3 (2018): 471-97; Nancy Kwak, *A World of Homeowners: American Power and the Politics of Housing Aid* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). For other examples of international experts continued to work in Africa post-independence, see: Stanek, "Architects from Socialist Countries in Ghana (1957-67), 416-42; Ayala Levin, "Haile Selassie's Imperial Modernity: Expatriate Architects and the Shaping of Addis Ababa," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75, no. 4 (2016): 447-68; Tom Avermaete, "'Neues Bauen in Afrika': Displaying East and West German Architecture during the Cold War," *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 3 (2012): 387-405.

colonial administration, like Alfred Alcock, would later work for the United Nations and other international organizations concerned with housing development.

A lesser studied history is that of the British colonial architects and planners who returned home to Britain to work on housing and planning in an increasingly multiethnic Britain. Through the 1948 Citizenship Act, colonial subjects and residents from former colonies were allowed to settle in Britain, despite active opposition from British politicians and the British public. It was an attempt, Maya Goodfellow has argued, to "keep a semblance of imperial unity through open borders" while the empire was crumbling.[592] This legislation resulted, among others, in the "Windrush" generation—workers who came from Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago in response to labor shortages in Britain and whose legal status is, once again, subject to debate today. To some of the architects returning from British colonies, designing council estates and new towns at home offered an opportunity to apply some of the racialized planning paradigms developed in British Africa in the decades before. For example, Roy Gazzard, a town planner in Uganda during the 1950s, described one of the towns he designed, Killingworth, in northern England, as a "laboratory for an experiment in racial integration."[593]

The work of Gazzard and others is one example of how architectural developments in the colony and metropole were intimately entangled. One aim of this

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[592] Maya Goodfellow, *Hostile Environment: How Immigrants Became Scapegoats* (New York: Verso Books, 2019), 55. On housing and postwar migration, see: James Rhodes, "The rise and fall of the 'inner city': race, space, and urban policy in postwar England," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 17 (2019): 3243-59; Deborah Philips, Malcolm Harrison, "Constructing an Integrated Society: Historical Lessons for Tackling Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Segregation in Britain," *Housing Studies* 25, no. 2 (2010): 221-35.

[593] Roy Gazzard cited by Meredith, "Decolonizing the New Town," 334.

dissertation has been to show that the interaction between Britain and its African colonies—and the entwinement of social welfare and decolonization—was fundamental to the making of postwar "new Britain." Conversely, decolonization was not a history that only took place "overseas." The British welfare state and its built environment manifested British ideas of progress, emancipation, and equality, but they were also shaped by the experience of decolonization. As historian Jordanna Bailkin has argued, the "postwar" and the "postimperial" are often—and incorrectly—seen as two divergent and rarely intersecting strands of history.[594]

Architectural and urban histories of postwar Britain and its built environment in the 1940s and '50s, with its unrivaled investments into housing and community welfare, generally frame this period as a moment of modernization. Yet often such narratives avoid mention of Britain's postwar, interventionist, colonial developmental policies that perpetuated a regime of extraction and labor exploitation—policies instigated to create a "new Britain" at home. Put differently, the increasingly high standard of living of Britain's working classes during the 1940s and '50s was made possible, in part, by the work of the underpaid laborers in Britain's cotton ginneries, tobacco- and tea factories, and cocoa plantations. "Coloniality," Walter D. Mignolo has written, is the "reverse and unavoidable side of 'modernity'—its darker side, like the part of the moon we do not see when we observe it from the earth."[595] The creation of the British welfare state, and the built

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[594] Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012). Also see: Bill Schwarz, *The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[595] Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 22.

environment that gave shape to this new socio-political constellation, was not merely a national project—it was one contingent on Britain as an imperial power.

Architecture offers a lens through which to look at the imperial dimensions of the welfare state because it renders visible, often painfully so, the notions of racial difference embedded within this system. An examination of the "African housing situation" during the mid-century shows a distorted mirror of metropolitan welfare policies, one that revolved primarily around "stabilization," settling black workers close to the workplace to increase labor productivity and efficiency. Housing programs in Kampala, Nairobi, and elsewhere offered workers and their families the promise of a new, modern life, yet were primarily designed to avoid labor strikes or anticolonial uprisings that would interrupt Britain's supply chain. In Britain, these housing projects were presented, through carefully construed propaganda images, as tropical versions of council estates in London, Liverpool, and Hull. Yet in reality, the pared-down dwellings in Kenya, Uganda, the Gold Coast, and elsewhere—small, with shared cooking facilities, outside toilets and lacking electricity— only distantly resembled the housing erected in 1940s and '50s Britain, with running hot water, electrical lighting, indoor kitchens, and bathrooms. Instead, these housing estates exemplify the ways in which British colonial architects and planners executed their projects in the name of modernization, employing the rhetoric of social welfare, but in service of a deeply problematic worldview rooted in racist ideas and an ideology of white supremacy.

In *Race and Modern Architecture*, Charles L. Davis, Irene Cheng, and Mabel Wilson argue that "…to understand the imbrication of race in modern architectural history, we must not only incorporate previously excluded building practices, but we must also look to the heart of the canon, deconstructing that which appears universal, modern and

transparent."[596] Sometimes, they write, this means "uncovering the role of racial thought in familiar objects and narratives, including those in which race does not appear at first glance to be operative."[597] In the case of the architecture early British welfare state, however, many of these objects and narratives are hiding in plain sight. But because these housing estates were built overseas, in countries no longer formally tied to Britain, it is easy to glance over this uncomfortable aspect of a period primarily known in British architectural and urban history for its commitment to improving the living conditions of the working classes rather than for labor exploitation, colonial violence, and anticolonial struggle.

Today, these late-colonial housing estates still mark the cityscapes of the territories that Britain occupied for decades. In Nairobi, Kaloleni—a colonial-era housing estate built for railway workers located in the area that Thornton-White's and Silberman's development plan aimed to enlarge—the small, brick, one-bedroom houses line the neighborhoods' roads, many altered and expanded, and many in desperate need of repairs.[598] **(Figure 5.1)** In a peculiar twist of history, Kaloleni's social hall was declared a national monument in 2015. Kaloleni hall, a brick, symmetrical structure with a tiled roof, was originally designed to host recreational and educational activities for the estate's inhabitants. Yet it became a location where community organizers, labor union activists, and politicians, including Tom Mboya, Milton Obote, and Jomo Kenyatta, met in the struggle for independence. **(Figure 5.2)** Throughout the late 1940s and '50s, thousands of people gathered in Kaloleni for political meetings. Kaloleni's social hall was, for example,

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[596] Davis, Cheng and Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 4.

[597] Ibid., 11.

[598] Constance Smith, *Nairobi in the Making: Landscapes of Time and Urban Belonging* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019).

where representatives of Kenya's trade unions gathered to organize the boycott of the visit of Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, in 1950. It even became known, colloquially, as the "House of Parliament."[599] While built by Nairobi's colonial municipality to create a stable, compliant, and productive black working class, Kaloleni became a well-known site of anticolonial resistance.

What happens if we think of Kaloleni together with Lansbury Estate, located in London's eastern edge? Or what about Thornton-White's and Silberman's plan for postwar Nairobi and Abercrombie's design for London, the "Capital of the Commonwealth"? Is it possible to see the temporary prefabricated housing program in Britain and experimentation with "stabilized" rammed earth housing abroad as part of the same history, related to the lack of building materials in postwar Britain? More importantly, how do we reckon with the histories of dissent, struggle, and violence associated with these colonial architectural and urban designs? Future research can shed light on the ways in which the architectural manifestations of a new, progressive, equal society were entangled but also clashed with architectural forms developed to patrol residents' movements and to optimize an exploitative system of extraction. Yet to continue to narrate the history of the postwar British welfare state as a national history is to perpetuate the false, but for many comfortable, illusion that what happened overseas had little effect on domestic affairs.

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[599] Frederiksen, "African women and their colonization of Nairobi," 229. Also see: Bettina Ng'weno, "Growing Old in a New City: Time, the Post-Colony and Making Nairobi Home," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy Action* 22, no. 1 (2018): 26-42.

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