

International Committee for the  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

Urbanism + Landscape E-proceedings 7 • July 2017

**CONSERVING AFRICAN MODERNISM**

Workshop Report July 9-12, 2017  
Scottish Centre for Conservation Studies  
University of Edinburgh

Conference at the Pathfoot Building, Stirling University  
(RMJM 1966-7), (left to right): Alistair Fair, Iain Jackson,  
Ola Uduku, Diane Watters, Shantanu Subramaniam



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## INTRODUCTION

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This research initiative sought to enable architects, planners and designers involved in the conservation and recording of 20th century modernist architectural heritage in Africa to attend a workshop in Edinburgh focused on the sharing of research and practical experiences and challenges with Scottish practitioners and academics involved in Scottish and international built heritage conservation at the SCCS and Historic Environment Scotland. Ilze Wolff, from Docomomo South Africa, and Wolff Architects, Cape Town and Joe Addo, from ArchiAfrica, and holder of a major Getty-fund conservation-development grant for the Children's library in Accra, Ghana, both delivered keynote talks at the workshop.

In terms of outputs, the workshop aimed to:

- enable the discussion of future research and teaching collaborations between the SCCS and conservation teachers and practitioners in Africa
- allow for the exchange of ideas and discussion and comparison of challenges related to conservation of modernist buildings in Africa and Scotland
- establish further Scotland-Africa knowledge exchange links via visits to HES and Scottish buildings as case studies to demonstrate good practice in conservation.
- enable further outreach activities with the hosting of a Docomomo ISC U+L, Africa group meeting within the duration of the workshop visit.
- begin preparatory work on a joint paper with SCCS and Africa guests discussing the differences and similarities of conserving 20th century architecture in Africa and Scotland, with the aim of submitting it to the Docomomo 2018 International conference.

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## ATTENDEES & SPEAKERS

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Ola UDUKU, Reader, University of Edinburgh / ESALA

Miles GLENDINNING, University of Edinburgh / ESALA

Ruxandra STOICA, University of Edinburgh / ESALA

Rexford Assasie OPPONG, KNUST University, Kumasi

Iain JACKSON, University of Liverpool

Shantanu SUBRAMANIAM, University of Edinburgh / ESALA

Ilze WOLFF, Chair of Docomomo South Africa and Co-Director of Wolff Architects, Cape Town, South Africa (attended 9-11 July)

Shilo HOPE (attended 11 July), Member of Docomomo-South African Chapter

Joe ADDO Chair ArchiAfrika and MD Constructs Ltd. Accra, Ghana (attended virtually 10-11 July)

Alistair FAIR (attended 12 July), University of Edinburgh / ESALA

Diane WATTERS (attended 12 July), HES / ESALA

The keynote speakers, Ilze Wolff and Joe Addo were both scheduled to arrive for the conference on Saturday. As Joe Addo was in the end unable to obtain a travel visa from the British High Commission in Ghana to enable him to attend the conference, he subsequently contributed to the two days of the conference using the media sharing software Skype. Images of this are captured in the meeting records produced in these proceedings. Other attendees either attended all sessions or were in attendance for some periods of the workshop as above noted.

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## WORKSHOP CHRONOLOGY

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### Sunday 9th July 2017: WORKSHOP DAY 1

Directed by Miles Glendinning, Ola Uduku and Ilze Wolff  
Walkabout Tour of Edinburgh's Old Town

### Monday 10th July 2017: WORKSHOP DAY 2

#### MORNING SESSION

Docomomo African Interest Group Meeting

#### AFTERNOON SESSION

Shantanu Subramaniam  
Dissertation Presentation on Community Centre Buildings of the  
Tropical Modernist 1945-1977 period

Joe Addo  
Skype Presentation on Ghanaian Modernism

Ilze Wolff  
"Clocks on the Floor"

### Tuesday 11th July 2017: WORKSHOP DAY 3

#### MORNING SESSION

Group discussion on framing of the proposed Docomomo Africa Paper  
on Modernism in Africa

#### AFTERNOON SESSION

Outlining of future objectives

#### EVENING

Walkabout tour of the Quatermile Development by Clive Fenton

### Wednesday 12th July 2017: WORKSHOP DAY 4

#### Scottish Modernist Urbanism Tour

Tour of Cumbernauld led by Diane Watters and Miles Glendinning

Tour of the Raploch Regeneration Area, Stirling, led by Ola Uduku

Tour of the University of Stirling, led by Miles Glendinning and Alistair  
Fair

On Sunday 9th July Miles Glendinning and Ola Uduku conducted a walkabout tour of Edinburgh's Old Town. During the tour Miles, Ola and Ilze were able to walk from the top of the Royal Mile down to the Scottish Parliament, noting the specific geographic features of Edinburgh's old town, and how this had shaped the radical modernising interventions in the city fabric since the early 19th century. On the walk Miles also identified significant phases of housing developments on the Royal Mile, from the late 19th century to the present day.



*Edinburgh Old Town Tour:  
Figs.1 (left) Geddes's Ramsay Garden  
Fig 2 (right) Basil Spence's 1967 Canongate  
Housing*

The full workshop began at 10:30am. The timetable had to be altered to enable Skype conversations to be held with the keynote speaker, Joe Addo, who could not attend the conference in person owing to visa difficulties. Railway disruptions on Monday morning also delayed the arrival of two workshop participants.

The day's events began with a Docomomo African interest group meeting, discussing the development of a position paper focusing on modernist heritage and conservation in Africa, to be written and presented at the 2018 Docomomo International biennial conference, in conjunction with the ISC U + L (reflecting the prevailing stress to date on urban and landscape subjects).

It was proposed that the full paper would be co-written by members of the Ghanaian and South African groups, with consultation and comment from other African Docomomo working groups, and edited by Ola Uduku in her capacity as chair of the Africa interest group. It was agreed that the paper should foreground the unique nature of building restoration and conservation in Africa.

There was an urgent need both to consider ways to interest and teach young Africans about their more recent heritage and also to create a conservation framework for teaching that reconciled the Western canon with frameworks of storytelling and local knowledge, recognising the latter as being valid ways of engaging with and recording African architectural history.

Furthermore, Joe Addo stressed the importance of including other forms of culture - music, literature

and other artistic endeavours - in the exploration and recording of Africa's built heritage.

The meeting also reflected on the first Docomomo interest group meeting held in Lisbon in 2016, and its objectives - which were being fulfilled by the successful organisation of the present Edinburgh meeting. It was mooted and proposed that the next meeting should be held in Cape Town in 2019. The meeting ended at lunchtime with a further session planned to take place on Tuesday.

The Monday afternoon session had all participants in attendance and began with a presentation from an M.Sc. dissertation student, Shantanu Subramaniam, who had conducted extensive dissertation research in Ghana which focused on visiting and recording community centre buildings built during the 'tropical modernist' post WW2 – 1970s period by a range of expatriate architects including Maxwell Fry, Jane Drew, Max Bond and Miles Danby.

This was followed by a Skype presentation by Joe Addo explaining his involvement with Ghanaian modernism, over many years stretching from his childhood to the successful funding award received from the Getty Foundation by his organisation ArchiAfrika to rehabilitate Lasdun's Accra Children's library. "Modernism is in my DNA", was Joe's personal view of the importance of the Ghanaian modernist movement to his development as an architect. The presentation was supported by Joe and archiAfrika's video clip "Mami Wata-National Heritage", backing the Ugandan Docomomo and heritage groups currently protesting the demolition of the Uganda

National Theatre.

Finally, Ilze Wolff, architect and research fellow, presented a thought provoking paper titled “Clocks on the Floor”, which presented a close socio-cultural, historical and architectural study of the Trueform factory building in Cape Town. This was a paper which incorporated archival research and critical sociological research into race and spatial relations in Cape Town in the apartheid era and the post-1996 aftermath, as encapsulated within the walls of a symbolically prominent and well-loved Cape Town factory building. The paper was also supported by a video clip recording local Capetonians’ memories of work and life at the old Trueform factory.

The workshop ended at 5pm with a vote of thanks from the host and organiser, Ola Uduku to all participants, and the promise that the issues raised would form the basis of Tuesday’s workshop discussions. Miles Glendinning then hosted an informal evening meeting over drinks to which all participants were invited.



*Fig 3 Ilze Wolff’s Presentation, “Clocks on the Floor”*



*Fig 4 Conference scene*

Tuesday's meeting started at 09:30 and welcomed Shilo Hope, a member of the Docomomo South Africa chapter who was visiting the UK.

The morning session began with a second skype session with Joe Addo in Ghana, to conclude discussions related to the framing of the proposed Docomomo Africa paper on modernism in Africa to be written and presented at the Docomomo International Conference taking place in Ljubljana in 2018.

The following was agreed:

The central theme of the paper would be that of "metamorphosis".

Areas to be included were:

- collaboration of Docomomo with ArchiAfrika – particularly in outreach activities related to involving schools of architecture in Africa
- the need to include a cultural perspective and programme to Docomomo activities in Africa
- exploring of conservation heritage teaching as part of the architectural syllabus in Africa

The meeting also confirmed that:

- The possibility of instituting regional Docomomo working-groups in sub-Saharan Africa, on the model of the Iberian group (and with the agreement of existing national groups), would be suggested and discussed at Docomomo 2018 – particularly for Southern, Eastern and Western Africa: this would hopefully allow financial and organisational problems currently obstructing DOCOMOMO growth in Africa to be circumvented.

- Efforts will be made to help and ensure that the Africa Modernism Interest Group 2019 will take place in Cape Town, potentially in collaboration with the UWC

- For the time being the Docomomo Africa group will remain attached to the Docomomo International Scientific Committee of Landscapes and Urbanism (ISC U+L), reflecting both the commonality of interest in urban/landscape subjects, as well as organisational economy.

The meeting ended at lunchtime.

The final workshop session took place from 2pm – 5pm on Tuesday afternoon

The key issues discussed related to future development of research and teaching activities in Africa related to conservation and heritage.

It was agreed that:

1. There was value in exploring the possibility of creating 'MOOC' and other open learning courses such as the GAHTC-funded teaching material for areas outside of Western Europe for African schools of architecture
2. Support should be given to Illze Wolff's initiative to explore the creation of a new approach to teaching architecture linked with her residency at the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape (UWC)
3. The development of future research links that were "south-south" and also north-south should be supported, particularly in the area of conservation



of urban heritage, landscapes and in the relatively newly highlighted area of considering modernist buildings and their inherent promotion of passive cooling systems and sustainability in their use of local materials, low energy intensive cooling systems and other sustainable design features such as rainwater catchment etc.

4. Various forms of media would be used to spread information about the workshop and its objective to involve other African countries and schools of Architecture in activities related to the objectives of the Docomomo Africa group and also Archiafrika. Iain Jackson will be posting information about the workshop on his transnational architecture blog, whilst Ilze Wolff will send information about the meeting back to the Docomomo South Africa group.

Ola Uduku will be sending information about the meeting to Docomomo International and Miles Glendinning will be reporting the outcome of the meeting to the ISCU+L which hosts the Docomomo Africa Interest Group.

5. Further areas of local-international and north-south co-operation were also considered including links with the Docomomo Macau group, MARC at the University of Manchester and other people and institutions engaged in heritage research in Africa such as Mark Olwney at Uganda Martyrs University, and teams in Kenya and elsewhere.

Ola will also circulate a first draft of the proposed collaboratively written position paper on recording and preserving modernist heritage in Africa.

The workshop closed at 5pm.

A group from the workshop met with Clive Fenton, Secretary of Docomomo-Scotland, who gave an heritage tour of the new Quartermile Development, now partly owned by Edinburgh University; this concluded the day's activities at c. 7pm.



*Fig 5 Conference Scene*



*Fig 6 Scenes from the tour of the Quartermile Development, led by Clive Fenton, Secretary of Docomomo-Scotland*

The workshop concluded with a Scottish Modernist Urbanism Tour, which covered the contrasting urban and landscape ensembles of Cumbernauld New Town and Stirling University. The tour took place from 10am -4pm.

### **Cumbernauld**

The visit to Cumbernauld was led by Diane Watters, lecturer at the SCCS and investigator at Historic Environment Scotland.

It covered the original Northside and Southside residential zones (planned from the late 1950s), including a detailed exploration of both the low-rise high-density housing typical of the town, and the multi-storey blocks currently threatened with demolition. The visit was rounded off with a tour of the pioneering, megastructural Town Centre Phase One (1963-7), guided by Miles Glendinning

### **Stirling**

#### **Raploch regeneration area**

Led by Ola Uduku, the Stirling visit began with a walking tour of the Raploch area, which gave an introduction to the contemporary regeneration which had taken place. Miles Glendinning and Diane Watters gave further information about the older housing schemes which existed in the area.

#### **University of Stirling**

Miles Glendinning and Alistair Fair gave a brief overview of the historical context to the foundation of the University. It was the only newly created campus university in Scotland after the Robbins report on higher education in the UK. This made

it contemporary with the new campus universities built in Africa in the late 1950s and 60s. Its main architects, RMJM, were also involved as educational consultants for buildings in Africa, and the university had hosted the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe as a Fellow and writer-in-residence in 1974. The visit covered the MacRobert building in the Central Area, the Hostels near the lake, and ended at the Phase 1 complex of 1966-7 (Pathfoot Building), with the tour viewing the tribute there to Chinua Achebe. The tour and final part of the workshop concluded at 4pm.



*Figs 7 & 8 Post Conference Tour of Stirling University Campus*

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**DOCOMOMO International** is a non-profit organization dedicated to the DOcumentation and COnservation of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the MODern MOVement.

It aims to:

- Bring the significance of the architecture of the Modern Movement to the attention of the public, the authorities, the professionals and the educational community.
- Identify and promote the surveying of the works of the Modern Movement.
- Promote the conservation and (re)use of buildings and sites of the Modern Movement.
- Oppose destruction and disfigurement of significant works.
- Foster and disseminate the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation and adaptive (re)use.
- Attract funding for documentation conservation and (re)use
- Explore and develop new ideas for the future of a sustainable built environment based on the past experiences of the Modern Movement.

The mission of the **ISC/Urbanism+Landscape** is to promote research, documentation and protection of modern ensembles and environments, as opposed to individual 'setpiece' monuments. In practice, our current work focuses almost exclusively on research and documentation.

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