Figure 1 Vic Adegbite (chief architect), Jacek Chyrosz (design architect), Stanislaw Rymaszewski (design architect), International Trade Fair, Accra, 1967 (photo by Jacek Chyrosz, 1967; Jacek Chyrosz Archive, Warsaw; courtesy of Jacek Chyrosz).
Architects from Socialist Countries in Ghana (1957–67): Modern Architecture and Mondialisation

ŁUKASZ STANEK
University of Manchester

When seen from Labadi Road, the buildings of Accra’s International Trade Fair (ITF) appear among abandoned billboards, scarce trees that offer shade to resting taxi drivers, and tables where coconuts, bottled water, sweets, and telephone cards are sold next to the road. The buildings neighbor the La settlement, where streets meander between houses, shops, bars, schools, and shrines, while on the other side of Labadi Road, at the seashore, a luxurious housing estate is under construction next to upscale hotels that overlook Labadi Beach. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s leader after the country achieved independence (1957), initiated the fair as a prestige project, but it was opened on 1 February 1967 by Joseph Arthur Ankrah, the chairman of the National Liberation Council, who led the putsch that toppled Nkrumah in 1966 (Figure 1). Once conveying a sense of radical modernity, the buildings have suffered from underinvestment and insufficient maintenance, but most of them are still in use, rented for exhibitions that take place every few months, for political rallies, and for religious services (Figure 2).

From 1962 to 1967, the Ghana National Construction Corporation (GNCC), the state office charged with design, construction, and maintenance of governmental buildings and infrastructure in Nkrumah’s Ghana, designed and constructed the ITF. The designers of the fair were two young architects from socialist Poland, Jacek Chyrosz and Stanisław Rymaszewski, who worked with the Ghanaian Victor (Vic) Adegbite, the chief architect. Chyrosz and Rymaszewski were employed by the GNCC on a contract with Polservice, the so-called central agency of foreign trade, which mediated the export of labor from socialist Poland. At the GNCC, they worked together with Ghanaian architects and foreign professionals, many from socialist countries.

This collaboration reflected the alliance of Nkrumah’s government with socialist countries, which was demonstrated at the fair by the exhibitions of Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Hungary, and Poland (Figure 3). At the same time, the Ankrah administration used the fair to facilitate Ghana’s reopening toward the West. Hence, the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), two major allies of Nkrumah, were absent. By contrast, the two pavilions not to be overlooked were those of Great Britain, Ghana’s former colonial ruler and its main trade partner, and the United States, which granted Ghana loans for its many infrastructural projects in the 1960s, in particular the Akosombo Dam, financed jointly with the United Kingdom and the World Bank. India was represented as a member of the Commonwealth rather than as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, since Nkrumah’s attempt to position Ghana among Egypt, India, and Yugoslavia as one of the leading nations of the movement was abandoned after the change of the regime. Collaboration among African countries was particularly favored, not as a way of carrying on Nkrumah’s vision of pan-African union but with a more modest aim, that of the stimulation of trade among African countries. Displays representing African countries were gathered in the round Africa Pavilion at the end of the ramp through which visitors entered the fair, before they moved on to Pavilion A (the “Made in Ghana” pavilion) and the pavilions rented to other countries and Ghanaian state firms.

Launched by Nkrumah’s regime and “adjusted” by the National Liberation Council to the new geopolitical...
The constellation of Ghana, the design, construction, operation, and composition of the fair reflected the broad international relations of Ghana in the 1960s and the variety of global networks in which the nation was enmeshed: U.S.-based Bretton Woods institutions, development aid from the British Commonwealth, technical assistance programs of socialist countries, collaboration within the Non-Aligned Movement, and support programs operated by the United Nations. The fair was but one among several hundred buildings designed and constructed by the GNCC that combined resources circulating in these worldwide networks with those made available by means of local and regional ones.

In this sense, the architectural production of the GNCC may be seen as a part of the process through which modern architecture was becoming the worldwide technocultural dispositif of planetary urbanization after World War II. Architectural historians have identified several conduits of exchanges that contributed to the postwar mobilities of modern architecture—conduits not always easily distinguished from one another: colonial and postcolonial links, networks set up by the United States and Western European countries in response to the perceived Soviet threat, international institutions such as the United Nations and its agencies, and economic globalization. This article complements that work by addressing networks among socialist countries, a topic that until recently has been almost completely absent from the historiography of modern architecture outside Europe. My discussion of these networks is based on materials housed in the archives of Ghanaian institutions in Accra, as well as in public and private archives in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, and Poland, complemented by collections in the United Kingdom and the United States. Particularly important sources in this research have been the Ghanaian daily journals published between 1957 and 1967, which I have reviewed day by day in order to contextualize the ITF within the overall building activities that took place under Nkrumah.

In this article I describe the architecture constructed and, often, designed by the GNCC by making use of resources from the competing networks of worldwide cooperation and solidarity that intersected in Nkrumah’s Ghana. In order to stress the multiplicity of these networks and the antagonisms between them, I prefer to speak about the *mondialisation* of architecture rather than about its “globalization.” This distinction has been developed by several authors, including Henri Lefebvre and, more recently, Jean-Luc Nancy. For these authors, the worldwide (*le mondial*) is less an accomplished process and more a horizon of practice, an experience, a project. As Lefebvre argued, the emergence of the world as a dimension of practice, which he called *mondialisation*, was facilitated by the growing strength of various forces: the world market, worldwide transportation and communication technology, transnational political associations, global mass movements, ecological threats on a planetary scale, the tendency toward complete urbanization, and the “urban problematic” as the stake, site, and discourse of political projects. These forces contribute to the “worldwide experience” by conveying often competing ways of becoming worldly, alternative visions of the world as a whole, its plural imaginations, and alternative ways of “practicing” the world, the world as an abstraction becoming “true in practice.”

*Mondialisation* is hence not so much opposed to globalization; rather, the U.S.-backed, global spread of economic and political phenomena known to English-language readers since the 1970s as “globalization” is to be seen as just one among many possibilities of *mondialisation*. Socialist internationalism and the Non-Aligned Movement, with their anti-imperialist and antiracist discourse, were other such possibilities.

In what follows I will offer a glimpse into the articulation of these *mondialisation* dynamics in the GNCC architectural production. This requires addressing networks of architectural expertise beyond the metropolitan model of dissemination, which is still dominant in the historiography of postwar modern architecture outside Europe and the United States.
Much of this research has focused on so-called tropical architecture, the self-assigned name of a network of architects and urban planners operating within the British late colonial and Commonwealth context, who exerted a particularly important influence in the West African colonies: Gold Coast (later Ghana), Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Gambia. Like similar programs carried out by French, Belgian, and Portuguese colonial governments after World War II, British tropical architecture aimed at adapting the principles of modern architecture according to local specificities outside Europe. On one hand, as a technological phenomenon, tropical architecture has been analyzed by historians as a transfer of norms, standards, and technical details from the colonial capital to the peripheries. Influenced by science and technology studies (STS), this research has focused on the labor of stabilization and reproduction of networks in which those “immutable mobiles” or “global forms” circulated between the metropolis and the colonies and, later, countries of the British Commonwealth. On the other hand, as a cultural phenomenon, tropical architecture has been understood as a mode of dissemination of modern architecture aimed at normalizing the relationship between the colonies and the metropolis. In these accounts, tropical architecture has been theorized as a variation of metropolitan modernism, modified according to local climatic, technological, and social conditions and reproduced in the postindependence period.

Neither side of this metropolitan model of architectural dissemination helps us to understand the building production by the GNCC. While architects from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia considered their designs at the GNCC as a continuation of their previous projects back home, the architecture of the GNCC cannot be reduced to a sum of European “modernisms.” Headed by Ghanaians with international education and experience, responding to the technopolitical road map of modernization taken by the authorities, and accompanied by a self-aware discourse in the popular and professional press, this production needs to be seen as an assemblage and allocation of resources from competing networks intersecting in Ghana. These resources included labor (intellectual and manual), building materials, construction technologies, technical details, images and discourses, building norms and standards, and principles of design. The admission of these resources to Ghana and their transfers between particular networks were regulated by specific entrance protocols and gatekeeping procedures, such as precredited contracts, technical assistance programs, and free market agreements, but also by cultural hierarchies and competing scenarios of modernization supported by various international experts advising the Ghanaian authorities. By addressing the protocols that granted or blocked the entrance of particular resources to particular networks, this article captures both sides of the mondialisation dynamics of the architectural production of the GNCC: the mobilization and appropriation of resources from the global networks operating in Ghana and the antagonisms between those networks.

I will begin with an overview of the intersecting networks, the resources that circulated within them, and their entrance conditions to Ghana. In the second part of this article I will show how these resources were deployed in the GNCC’s architectural production and instrumentalized within the modernization processes pursued by the regime. I will argue that this instrumentality took the form of the redistribution of everyday places and times according to categories conveying the postcolonial modernization project, such as the “modern” division of labor and new socioeconomic hierarchies. Yet, while in the Ghanaian press the GNCC architectural production appears as seamlessly combining resources from competing networks within the idiom of modern architecture, the focus on one particular resource—architectural labor—reveals the antagonisms between these networks. In the third part of this article I will show how these antagonisms were articulated in the architectural production
in Ghana. The GNCC designers from socialist countries, including the architects of the ITF, aspired to international architectural culture, but in the face of the accelerating economic competition with British architects and Ghanaians educated in the West, their claim to this shared culture was challenged. This challenge was formulated in the Cold War discourse about the West’s cultural superiority over the “East.” In the article’s final section, I will show how, in response, architects from socialist countries legitimated their work in West Africa by pointing at their experience of both state-led postwar modernization in Eastern Europe and Eastern European architectural culture since the late nineteenth century, with its contributions to nation-building processes and its ambiguous experience of “colonization.”

Networks of Architectural Resources in Nkrumah’s Ghana

The Ghana National Construction Company, the predecessor of the Ghana National Construction Corporation, was created in 1958 as a joint venture between the government-owned Industrial Development Corporation (60 percent) and the Israel Construction Company–Solel Boneh (40 percent). Established one year after Gold Coast declared independence from the United Kingdom under the ancient name of Ghana, the company was responsible for the construction of buildings and infrastructure within governmental programs of economic and social modernization. In 1962 it was nationalized and merged with the former colonial Public Works Department (PWD) to create the GNCC. This genealogy resulted in continuity between the activities of the GNCC and the colonial PWD. The transfer of expertise was conveyed by specifications, technical papers, and handbooks published since the early twentieth century by PWD branches in West Africa; guidelines published by various Ghanaian ministries; and such manuals as Village Housing in the Tropics (1947) by Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry. They provided recommendations about architectural typologies and urban layouts, some information about vernacular housing types in British West Africa, pragmatic solutions for issues of hygiene and transportation, suggestions for ways of handling local and imported materials in the climatic and social conditions in question, and typical details. These publications were available to and used by architects working in the postindependence PWD and GNCC in Accra.

The continuity between the colonial and the postindependence planning institutions in Ghana was also a personal one, and it was targeted by the policy of Africanization launched by the government. Following independence, supervising positions were increasingly assumed by Ghanaians, including Kojo Gyinaye Kyei, A. K. Amartey, O. T. Agyeman, and Vic Adegbite. Adegbite’s biography itself reveals the internationalization of Ghanaian architecture. A graduate of the architectural school at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Adegbite received a UN fellowship to specialize in housing design at the Inter-American Housing Center in Bogotá, Colombia, and traveled to study housing programs in Jamaica and Puerto Rico. He returned to Ghana in 1956, and, as the head of the Ghana Housing Corporation, he was responsible for such prominent designs as the Ghana Farmers’ Office (1960) and the headquarters of the Convention People’s Party (CPP, 1960), the party headed by Nkrumah. While most Ghanaian architects taking up leadership positions in the early 1960s were educated in the United Kingdom and the United States, by the mid-1960s they were joined by Ghanaians trained in the Soviet Union, such as A. W. Charaway and E. G. A. Don Arthur.

This process was a gradual one, however, and in the first years after independence the PWD and the GNCC depended heavily on a foreign workforce. Until the early 1960s, smaller buildings were designed and constructed by the PWD/GNCC, while more prestigious and singular buildings were designed by British architects based in Accra or abroad and executed by the PWD/GNCC. Several of these architects subscribed to the principles of tropical architecture, represented in West Africa by buildings by Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, the Architects Co-Partnership, James Cubitt, John Godwin and Gillian Hopwood, and Kenneth Scott. Launched by colonial administrations in the 1940s, tropical architecture came to be presented by its protagonists in the next two decades as an international community of professionals who offered their services to the new independent states. Along these lines, many of the Accra-based proponents of tropical architecture were active in Ghana after independence, including Kenneth Scott, who designed the Kumasi Stadium (1958), the Korle Bu Hospital and its numerous extensions in the 1960s, and the Volta River Authority building in Tema (1964). The National Archives Building in Accra, designed in 1959 by Nickson, Borys & Partners (Figure 4), was added to the National Museum designed by Fry, Drew, Drake & Lasdun (1957). Drew and Fry continued to participate in discussions on the future of Ghanaian cities during the 1960s and designed a number of housing projects, as did the Architects Co-Partnership and Miles Danby. Many of these structures were built in Kumasi, where the campus of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) became a major building site for British architects. Gerlach & Gillies-Reynburn, as well as Barnes, Hubbard & Arndel, worked on numerous buildings for educational institutions, while A. Gilmour designed several carefully detailed private bungalows whose wooden frames offered an alternative to the concrete structures of Scott’s Accra villas.

British contractors continued to play an important role in Ghanaian architecture after independence. In the 1960s
Taylor Woodrow continued commissioning British architectural and engineering firms, including Ove Arup and Partners, which opened offices in West and South Africa during the 1950s, and George Paton, the designer of the landmark Ambassador Hotel in Accra and its subsequent extensions. In the course of the early 1960s, the GNCC increasingly kept design commissions for itself, and the International Trade Fair was a case in point. British professionals still played an important role in the design of the fair, however; they included R. H. C. Hammond, a Commonwealth expert in exhibition design, who was commissioned to draft the functional program of the fair. Also, most of the construction materials for the fair—from louver windows and the aluminum sheets for the round roof of the Africa Pavilion to the fountain at the ITF grounds and fittings for particular pavilions—were shipped from Britain.

From the beginning of the 1960s, construction activities in Ghana were supported by a number of bilateral agreements between Ghana and the countries of the British Commonwealth, in particular Canada, which provided materials, design, equipment, and training staff for Accra’s Technical Training College. Architects from Italy and France were also increasingly present in Ghana based on credit agreements with these countries. For example, the new terminal for Accra Airport was underwritten by the French government and constructed in the mid-1960s by French companies according to a design by Pierre Dufau. Dutch engineers were working at the Korle Bu estate projects as well as at the ITF, and shortly after the end of Nkrumah’s regime, the West German Trade Union Organization was contracted to build houses for workers in Accra. At that time, Ghana received a significant group of African American professionals, including the architect Max Bond, who was employed at the GNCC, where he designed the celebrated Bolgatanga Library (1965) and delivered several other designs for Accra, such as the Studio and Practice Hall for the National Orchestra (1964). Following the first contract (1961) between the Greek firm Doxiadis Associates and the Ghanaian Ministry of Works and Housing, the largest external commission of the period, the design of the master plan of the new town of Tema, went to Doxiadis, which was also commissioned to design the large commercial area in Central Accra, a project never realized.

It was only after the experience of international isolation during the Congo crisis (1960) and after Western funding for the Akosombo Dam was secured (1961) that Nkrumah decided to formalize the opening of Ghana toward socialist countries. This coincided with Soviet leader Nikita
Khrushchev’s policy of supporting newly independent states in opposition to the United States and its allies. Together with Guinea and Mali, Ghana became a testing ground for the Soviet policy in West Africa, which took the form of economic rivalry and the dissemination of propaganda.\textsuperscript{16} The circulation of Soviet printed materials was followed by the establishment of field bureaus for the chief Soviet information agencies and newspapers, and by the granting of fellowships for Africans to study in the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{17} Under Nkrumah, architectural examples from socialist countries were often more visible to the general public in Ghana than those from the West, since the press presented images of newly constructed public buildings and housing neighborhoods in Beijing, Shanghai, Moscow, Leningrad, Rostov-on-Don, Budapest, Warsaw, Constanța, and East Berlin, as well as “socialist” new towns Dunajvívos in Hungary and Nowa Huta in Poland, which Nkrumah visited in 1961.\textsuperscript{18} In the course of the 1960s, the Ghanaian authorities were increasingly susceptible to the influence of socialist, and sometimes specifically Soviet, models of development in key sectors, in particular agriculture, industry, and social services.\textsuperscript{19} Besides the attractiveness of the model of fast-track, state-led urbanization by industrialization, members of the government in Accra stressed that “modern scientific socialism” was suitable for Ghana because it would allow the preservation of the principles and ideals of the traditional communalistic society.\textsuperscript{40}

The opening of the Soviet embassy in Accra (1959) and the Ghanaian embassy in Moscow (1960) preceded Ghana’s establishment of relations with socialist countries in Eastern Europe and the PRC, and it was in Accra that the Chinese prime minister Zhou Enlai announced in 1964 the “Eight Principles” that were to define PRC aid to Africa in the decades to come.\textsuperscript{41} Soon to follow were treaties of economic aid and technical assistance, all registered by the U.S. embassy in Accra with growing unease.\textsuperscript{42} Most contracts signed between Ghana and socialist countries concerned the construction of precredited industrial facilities, including cement factories and steel rolling mills that furnished the basis for the Ghanaian construction industry.\textsuperscript{43} The GNCC realized health, transport, and industrial facilities according to designs delivered by Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, and Poland, and these countries sent specialists to supervise the construction of the buildings.\textsuperscript{44} Contracts for architectural and planning projects were signed as well, and in June 1961 Ghana and the Soviet Union agreed that nine Soviet architects and engineers would be sent to Ghana to design residential areas for Accra (for 25,000 people) and Tema (for 15,000 people). The project for the housing district in Accra adapted the Soviet typology of the mikrorayon, or microdistrict, to the tropical climate, with a layout that took advantage of the wind from the ocean.\textsuperscript{45} The residential area in Accra was designed as part of the Korle Lagoon Development Project, which also included a cultural and amusement center, a sports center, public beaches, and the spectacular African Unity Tower.\textsuperscript{46}

Critical of the “uneven quality” of the Eastern bloc technical assistance to Guinea, Ghanaian officials raised doubts about the actual gains of such projects for the recipient countries.\textsuperscript{47} Delivered by teams working abroad, at best on the basis of short visits to Accra, the plans for such projects as the Korle Lagoon scheme were created without sufficient knowledge of local technical, financial, and organizational constraints. That is why this project was shelved; the same was the case with the seashore development in Central Accra, delivered by the Bulgarian state firm Technoexportstroy.\textsuperscript{48}

The real impact on the development of Accra was made by those architects from socialist countries who were employed by the PWD, and later by the GNCC. Among them was Charles Polónyi, the Hungarian member of Team 10, who worked at the GNCC in 1963–64 on a contract with TESCO, the International Organization for Technical-Scientific Cooperation, which managed the export of intellectual labor from socialist Hungary.\textsuperscript{49} Polónyi designed the Flagstaff House housing project (1964) (Figure 5) and other housing projects in Accra, industrial facilities in Accra and Tema, and numerous proposals for the Osu Castle, or Christiansborg, the seat of the government.\textsuperscript{50} In 1964 he left to join the architectural faculty of KNUST in Kumasi, an international group of teachers that included the Czech architect Jan Skokánek as well as the Yugoslav (Croatian) architects Miro Marasović, Berislav Kalogjera, and Nebojša Weiner and the engineer Zvonimir Žagar. They made significant contributions to modern architecture in Ghana, both through their teaching and through the projects they designed as employees of the Development Office (later the Architect’s Office) of KNUST (Figure 6).\textsuperscript{51} Another teacher at Kumasi was the Croatian architect and sculptor Niksa Ciko, who came to Accra in 1960 and was employed by the PWD until 1962, contributing to the design of Police Headquarters in Accra (1962), among other projects.\textsuperscript{52} During the 1960s, the PWD/GNCC employed also at least four Bulgarian architects on contracts with Technoexportstroy. They were responsible for governmental buildings in Accra and other cities; among them was Ivan Naidenovitch, superintendent architect for schools.\textsuperscript{53}

Yet the largest group of foreign architects at the GNCC during the 1960s, at least twenty-six architects, came from socialist Poland.\textsuperscript{54} Engineers and technicians in a separate group were responsible for construction drawings and the supervision of construction sites—seven Polish engineers worked on the ITF project alone, and Polish foremen were employed to train Ghanaian workers.\textsuperscript{55} On top of this, at
least five Polish architects and planners were working at the Town and Country Planning Department (TCPD). Besides Chyrosz and Rymaszewski, the group of Polish architects at the PWD/GNCC included Witold Wojczyński and Jan Drużyński, the designers of the Job 600, which consisted of the Banqueting Hall and the Conference Hall (1965) and the renovation of the State House with a hotel slab serving as its background (1965) (Figures 7 and 8). The complex was one of the most visible projects carried out under Nkrumah—and the most notorious, constructed for the 1965 Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit at a time when Nkrumah’s economic policies were bringing about food shortages in the country. Jan Laube designed numerous educational facilities in Accra, Jarosław Nowosadski was responsible for a number of health care facilities (Figure 9), Jakub Kotliński was the superintendent architect responsible for hospitals, and Kazimierz Sierakowski was the superintendent architect for police stations.

Among the thirty-one Polish architects and planners working for the PWD, GNCC, and TCPD in the 1960s, eight were women; this reflected the high status of female architects in Poland since the interwar period and the career opportunities open to expatriate professional women in 1960s Ghana. The Polish sculptor Alina Ślesińska was invited to Ghana, and her design for the monument for Kwame Nkrumah was realized on the grounds of the Ideological Institute in Winneba. Hannah Schreckenbach, an émigré from the GDR who studied in Karlsruhe and...
London, became superintendent architect at the GNCC and was responsible for a large number of prominent projects, including the extensions of the Parliament House in the 1970s.62

With architects from Ghana, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia at the GNCC (joined by professionals from West Germany, the United States, the Philippines, and India),61 the corporation contributed to the cosmopolitan milieu of architects in Nkrumah’s Ghana. There were a limited number of places where these architects could meet, including KNUST, which became a site of exchanges between Ghanaian, American, British, and West German architects and their fellow professionals from Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia. The geodesic KNUST pavilion at the ITF, built by Ghanaian students of Buckminster Fuller when he was a visiting professor at the university, resulted from such contacts. Several architects crossed Cold War divisions, including Charles Polónyi, invited to join KNUST by the dean John Lloyd (1964), who was aware of Polónyi’s activities as a member of Team 10.64 To both worlds belonged
also those émigrés from Poland who settled down in the United Kingdom during or after World War II, came to Gold Coast as colonial officials, and stayed in Accra after 1957; they included Eligiusz Daszkiewicz, a graduate of the Polish School of Architecture opened in Liverpool during the war, and Olgierd Wojciechowski, who worked at the PWD and later the GNCC as chief architect under the nickname Ludlam.65 A small number of expatriate architects at the GNCC cooperated with private firms in Accra; this was the case with Hannah Schreckenbach.66

The GNCC and the Modernization of Ghana

The preceding overview shows the variety of the worldwide networks that were conveying resources for space production in Ghana, resources that the GNCC combined with others, provided through local and regional networks, before assembling and allocating them. This agency of the GNCC was at the heart of Ghana’s modernization processes, which included industrialization, collectivization of agriculture, and the creation of programs of welfare provision (health, education, housing) and programs of support for national culture and heritage.67 I suggest conceptualizing this agency of the GNCC as an attempt to unify the times and places of the Ghanaian society divided according to colonial, “tribal,” and ethnic categories and to redistribute them according to the postindependence socioeconomic order and the “modern” social and technical division of labor.

In what follows I will show how this redistribution of times and places was conveyed, manifested, stabilized, and reproduced in the GNCC’s architectural production. A particularly useful source for this task is the Ghanaian daily press, including such publications as the Evening News (founded by Nkrumah in 1948 as Accra Evening News), the official newspaper of the CPP and always at the forefront of the ideological battle; the Daily Graphic (established in 1950); and the Ghanaian Times (founded in 1958). Almost every day, these newspapers presented photographs of buildings by the GNCC, and the accompanying texts suggested to readers how to speak about these new structures, how to look at them, how to use them, and how to be at home in them. In this sense the press participated in the processes of spatiotemporal redistribution of the new Ghanaian society rather than simply informing about those processes.68

The architectural production of the GNCC was far from homogeneous, as was captured in the headline on a 1961 article in the Daily Graphic: “Modern Buildings Are Simple in Form—but Old Designs Are Still in Use.”69 The “old designs” were typically constructed by local communities by means of self-help and voluntary contributions, often with some financial support from the government. Many of them were designed according to colonial typologies and built with local materials in resettlement villages at the time of the construction of the Akosombo Dam.70 In schools constructed by the GNCC, pitched roofs and verandas were sometimes combined with expressive elements in reinforced concrete, as in the staircases in the Accra Academy extension; such elements undermined the sharp opposition between “old designs” and “modern buildings.”71 Until the early 1960s, the latter were generally designed by private architectural architects from socialist countries in Ghana (1957–67)
practices in Accra and Kumasi and constructed by the GNCC; later, they were designed directly by the GNCC. As an index of the “changing face of Ghana,” they straddled various visual idioms, from tropical architecture through expressive compositions such as the Tamale Cathedral to sophisticated appropriation of vernacular forms, as in the Regal Cinema in Accra (1970). Some of these buildings were also explicitly called “modern” or “modernistic” by Ghanaian commentators who described the specific experience of these structures.

“Modern buildings” did not constitute a discrete category, delineated by sharp borders, but rather a broad field, defined by a number of points of radiation. Among them were new high-rises marking the skyline of Accra, such as the Job 600, the Korle Bu Hospital, and the new Police Headquarters, a “modernistic” composition of large surfaces of shutters placed in an overarching structural frame (Figure 10). This building was featured in the press when it was opened by Kwame Nkrumah, and the portraits of the leader on the patterned backgrounds of such structures as the CPP headquarters and the Trade Union Congress (TUC; Arthur Lindsay and Associates, 1961) were powerful examples of such points of radiation (Figure 11). Several buildings in Kumasi were presented by the press as examples of “Nkrumaistic architecture and planning.” Most of them were added to the university campus, including the Unity Hall and the Faculty of Architecture (Miro Marasović, 1968) (Figure 12), followed by the Faculty of Pharmacy (Nebojsa Weiner, opened after 1970). The association of modern architecture with Nkrumah’s rule came most dramatically to the fore in a list of buildings singled out as targets for bomb attacks by, presumably, conspirators planning to overthrow Nkrumah in 1961; the list, made public by the police, included the headquarters of the CPP and TUC, as well as the extension of the Osu Castle and the Black Star Square. This association continued after the end of the regime, and accusations that Nkrumah had squandered state resources and appropriated them illegally typically included mention of the Job 600 and the Peduase Lodge, the presidential holiday resort and retreat near Aburi designed by Vic Adegbite (1959).

This figure-ground effect, by means of which a building provides background for the leader who, at the same time, presents the building as a “revolutionary display of architectural maturity in Nkrumaist Ghana,” was a specific case of a more general syntax that was conveyed by hundreds of black-and-white photographs of buildings published in the
Ghanaian press during the 1960s. At its most abstract level, this syntax was that of line and surface: a balcony railing on the background of a wall; delicate profiles framing glass and openwork screens; a slab of ceiling visually detached from the wall by a sharp shadow; a structural frame capturing the whole volume of the building; a patterned surface of cement bricks; new roads and pedestrian crossings whose geometry is revealed by aerial photographs (Figure 13). This fascination with straight lines and smooth surfaces was shared by numerous authors, who described suave movements of the eye or of cars. One among them was particularly impressed by the new road from Adomi to Tema, which, “like a Roman Road . . . goes on for miles in a straight line” and allows for the car to move “so smoothly over its very good surface that one could relax and enjoy the very pleasant scenery of the surrounding countryside.”

According to these accounts, improvements in infrastructure allowed people to see the country with new eyes, and those coming back to Ghana after a stay abroad would see that it “has progressed in all fields . . . particularly in the field of architecture.” The architecture of the GNCC had provided new landmarks for Accra; this becomes apparent when one compares two maps of the city—the “Kingsway” plan of 1958 and the tourist map of 1965 (Figure 14). Whereas the older plan presents the landmarks of Accra as an accumulation of heterogeneous buildings in colonial historicism, art deco, and tropical architecture, the newer map shows the city as fundamentally modern, defined by radio masts and other buildings produced by the PWD/GNCC, such as the parabolic Presidential Tribune (1961) at the Black Star Square (Independence Square), the Flagstaff House, the Police Headquarters at the Ring Road, the State House Complex, the fountain at the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, and new pavilions of the Korle Bu Hospital.

Figure 12  Miro Marasović, Hall 5 (Independence Hall), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, mid-1960s (photo by Nebojsa Weiner after completion; Archive of Nebojsa Weiner, Zagreb; courtesy of Nebojsa Weiner).

Figure 13  “. . . And I See Springing Up Cities in Africa” (“Scenes around Ghana [3],” in the series “This is the New Ghana Kwame Nkrumah is Building,” Evening News, 21 May 1963, 6).
architecture was pointed out by the press, which described new “stately” buildings of ministries (such as the Ministry of Communications in Accra, 1963), praised “massive commercial buildings such as the new banks and new shops” (this included the emblematic Bank of Ghana, 1958, and the rhythmic boxes similar to oversized shopwindows of the People’s Shop in Central Accra, 1962), and admired “modern bungalows” such as those designed by Polónyi for the Roman Ridge in Accra (1964).86

The addressee of this architecture was a new collective body unified against inherited, ethnic divisions, in line with Nkrumah’s condemnation of “tribalism,” and redivided according to the principles of a new societal organization. Particular importance was placed on housing projects for low-income groups, such as three blocks of eighteen flats each designed by Stanisław Rymaszewski at the GNCC and built at the Switchback Road between 1964 and 1967.87 Low-income housing estates were also constructed in Accra’s Kaneshie and Lartebiokorshie neighborhoods. In the latter, finished in 1962, each of the buildings consisted of six self-contained flats, each with a chamber, hall, kitchen, bathroom, and toilet, to be rented at moderate price.88

The repetition of the buildings on the allotments was by no means seen as monotonous; rather, it was a sign of plenty. This visual effect was also conveyed by the repetition of the same photographs, which returned over and over again in the press, and not always with the same captions.

At the same time, the differentiation of housing served to educate readers on social distinctions emerging within the Ghanaian society after independence. For example, an article on housing policies in Ghana showed images of housing for lower-, middle-, and higher-income groups, with subtle differences in architectural expression.89 This differentiation continued in articles on hotels and motels made available to inhabitants and visitors according to their income: from economic motels in Accra, consisting of modest bungalows, to the expressive composition of volumes and large-scale surfaces of openwork screens and wide windows in the spectacular first-class hotel for foreign businessmen in Takoradi.90 Readers learned to recognize the luxury in modernist designs conveyed by variations in volumes, materials, details, and patterns—and the journalists never failed to mention the costs of each construction. This included, in particular, the Ambassador Hotel, synonymous with luxury in Ghana, and the “elegant” VIP flats near the Korle Bu Hospital.91 Such luxury was condemned as ostentatious when privately owned by a minister or a chief justice (a condemnation often preceding a purge) but praised when it was seen as a benefit for all, such as the “luxury” Tema Community Centre.92

The capacity of modern architecture to provide backdrops on which elements are both united and distinguished conveys the logics of modernization in “the new Ghana Kwame Nkrumah [was] building.”93 Construction workers, schoolchildren, athletes, party officials, women, students, and engineers proudly presented the buildings they had built or that were offered to them by the government—and at the same time, on the backgrounds of these buildings they appeared as members of specific social and professional groups, distinguished by attributes such as school uniforms or nurses’ aprons (Figure 15).94 In these buildings everybody had their proper places, like the schoolgirls framed by the grid of the extension of the Aburi Girls Secondary School.95 These structures stabilized the new spatiotemporal order; for example, the People’s Shop in Accra was open late at night and hence “prevented many workers from running away from their jobs to shop during business hours.”96 The modernizing objective of such architecture is evident: the girls of the Aburi school, an extension to a college designed by Fry and Drew in 1955, were prepared to “challenge men for top jobs,” and the cold storage in Tema reduced the hours of commuting for many women.97 The experience of a modern everyday was also at the center of the International Trade Fair when it opened with displays of commodities from all around the world, numerous restaurants and snack bars,
a cinema, an exhibition gallery, and a drive-in banking window (the first in Ghana) (Figure 16).98

It was by contributing to the modernization of both the visual and the social fields, rather than simply by signifying modernization, that the newly erected buildings in Accra helped Ghanaians to “eradicate the colonial mentality” that was “induced” by their “contact with Europe”—as the foreign minister Kojo Botsio put it during the opening of the Workers’ College in Accra.99 To receive this message it was sometimes enough to look at the newly constructed buildings—as Joe Joseph argued in the Daily Graphic. He exhorted his fellow citizens to prepare for the 1965 OAU summit, urging taxi drivers to be polite and creditable to visitors coming to Accra and bus conductors, managers of hotels, and shop assistants to be helpful as well as neat in appearance; he further asked the general public not to use the gutters and sidewalks as dumping grounds. This long list of urbane virtues was triggered by the view of the “affectionate ‘Job 600’ towering high” on the horizon, and its photograph was reproduced next to Joseph’s article so that his readers could participate in the didactic effect of this building.100

Built around the colonial State House, the Job 600 demonstrated the ambition of GNCC architects to manage the past and to integrate it into the modernization project. In 1961 the press drew the attention of the recently created National Museum and Monuments Board to the colonial architecture as a matter of public concern, including European military ensembles around Cape Coast and British bungalows in Kumasi.101 Appropriating the colonial past into the new visual coherence of the Ghanaian state could mean a careful placing of volumes in a historical context. This was the case with the extension of the Osu Castle by the GNCC.102 While Wojczyński’s project of the cabinet wing adjusted the volumes and open galleries to the proportions of the historical structures (Figure 17), Polónyi’s extension of the chapel wing of the castle included a vertical white cube furnished with bay windows of reinforced concrete and gargoyles that evoked historical military architecture.103

Yet the true challenge was to turn precolonial heritage into a resource for the postindependence society. “We have a culture which we are proud of and determined to preserve,” claimed one author, and a reader wrote a letter to the editor of the Daily Graphic in which he urged the preservation of Ashanti temples as a part of the “world history of architecture.”104 “Blending Ghanaian, traditional life with modern ways of living” was presented as a pressing task for architects and urban planners, who were called upon to design buildings according to “traditional and cultural patterns.”105 An example favorably discussed was the Junior Staff Housing at Osu Castle (1961), designed by the British architect Derek Barratt at the PWD. One enthusiastic reviewer asserted that this ensemble “express[ed] the fusion of African and European cultures needed in Ghana today,” in contrast to the “foreign types dumped down here regardless, as is unfortunately so often the case.”106 The negotiation between traditional and modern forms was at the center of the project of a chief’s residence in Bolgatanga by Vic Adegbite and Jacek Chyrosz (1962): an orthogonal house under a flying roof, surrounded by a set of semicircular screens that evoked the spaces between traditional round buildings of the Bolgatanga region and at the same time regulated sun exposure and airflow.107 This building was planned to be constructed of sandcrete and stabilized earth bricks, in line with the calls of some Ghanaians to abandon imported materials in order to end Ghana’s economic dependence on industrialized countries and to “project African personality in our buildings.”108 The expectation to convey the cultural specificity of Ghana was also addressed in the design of the ITF. However, rather than quoting specific building traditions of particular ethnic groups, when designing the Africa Pavilion of the ITF Chyrosz and Rymaszewski chose the form of an umbrella, the symbol of power and prestige in West Africa, which they saw as a more general cultural reference.109
Tropical Architecture as Cold War Discourse

In the private archives of the European architects hired by the GNCC, their designs for Ghana appear as points in their personal creative trajectories, carrying on the discussions in architectural culture in Budapest, Sofia, Warsaw, and Zagreb. By contrast, in the Ghanaian press these architects’ names were almost never mentioned, and the architecture of the GNCC appeared to be the result of collective work that seamlessly combined resources, including the labor of architects, foremen, and workers, regardless of the networks that brought them to Ghana.

From this perspective not much changed after the coup where the architects from Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia were concerned. Unlike the Soviet, PRC, and GDR advisers, who were expelled from Ghana, professionals from other socialist countries were invited to stay and to contribute to the development of the country together with specialists from the West.\(^{110}\)

The site of the International Trade Fair was a case in point: photographs from the construction site published in the Ghanaian press showed the Polish designers working for the GNCC in friendly conversations with British advisers and U.S. experts.\(^ {111}\) The architecture of the fair, with its elementary volumes, levitating roofs, and rhythmic patterning, appeared as a part of such international professional culture as well. The fair had nothing to do with the historicist, socialist realist style that the educated Ghanaian public could have associated with buildings in socialist countries, since photographs of many such structures from the late 1940s and early 1950s were widely circulated under Nkrumah.\(^ {112}\) Rather, the design of the fair, together with many other designs of the GNCC reviewed in the previous section, subscribed to the register of tropical architecture represented by a number of prominent buildings in Accra since the late colonial period and appeared to develop the principles of modern architecture beyond political divisions. Yet a closer look at the fair challenges this assumption, and in the final part of this article I will discuss how Cold War antagonisms were articulated in the architectural production in Accra in spite of the shared design culture of the architects involved.

The focus on tropical architecture offers an entrance point to this discussion. The design of the ITF followed the principles spelled out by Fry and Drew in their Tropical Architecture in the Humid Zone (1956) and other publications, with climate, local materials and technologies, and people’s needs and aspirations identified as “main considerations influencing architectural design in the tropics.”\(^{113}\) Climate was the first concern for the architects of the fair, and both its layout and particular buildings were designed with natural ventilation, open to breezes from the ocean, with pronounced eaves providing shade and protection from rain, open brickwork of the walls offering shade and ventilation, and roofs raised above the buildings and volumes raised above the ground to secure airflow. Climate was abstracted into an operative model by means of a section that isolated particular factors (daylight, glare, rain, ventilation) and reassembled them into one single drawing. This was consistent not only with the approach advocated in Tropical Architecture but also, more generally, with the privileging of the section in the representation and management of the climatic conditions in postwar architecture, as presented, for example, in Techniques et Architecture in 1952 by means of diagrams that could be directly translated into specific designs and were widely circulated in Francophone Africa in the 1950s and 1960s.\(^ {114}\) The section was also the main design tool for all buildings of the ITF. The designers of the Africa Pavilion conceived it by rotating the section around its central symmetry axis, and in Pavilion A the section was projected on the façade, which, in this way, was turned into a pedagogical diagram demonstrating the principles of rainwater disposal, ventilation of the building, control of glare, and access of sunlight (Figure 18).\(^ {115}\) It was this very same approach, of designing a building by means of a section, that won one
of the second prizes for the Polish team (to which Chyrosz belonged) in the competition for the cultural center in Leopoldville, today Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (1959)—the singular event that opened the doors to West Africa for Polish architects.116

Fry and Drew’s second postulate, that of using local materials and technologies, was a challenge they and other “tropical” architects working in West Africa struggled with in their practices. As was the case with such prominent buildings in Accra as the National Museum and the National Archives, the main materials of the fair were reinforced concrete and cement blocks, steel construction for roofs, and aluminum covering. These materials, including louver windows, another emblematic detail of tropical architecture, were all imported in 1960s Ghana, since the Ghanaian building industry was only slowly taking off. However, several temporary buildings at the fair were constructed by the GNCC from local materials, including the Cocoa Industry Pavilion, designed by Jan Laube, and the Timber Industry Pavilion by Chyrosz and Rymaszewski, in their words a “truly African architecture” (Figure 19).117 The Timber Industry Pavilion was a hanging structure of shades made of plywood supported by mahogany pillars. The plywood was produced in Ghana from local hardwood and tested for resilience to West African climate and insects.118

Finally, Fry and Drew’s third recommendation, that of accounting for “people’s needs and aspirations,” when applied to the ITF, displayed the challenge addressed by Tropical Architecture: the imperative to respond to the needs of a rapidly modernizing population from within the processes of modernization, which included the modernization of those very needs.119 In other words, the ITF subscribed to the principles of tropical architecture to no lesser extent than its most visible examples in Accra and encountered the same challenges that “tropical” architects faced in their own work. Furthermore, these architects shared with the designers of the ITF the suppliers of materials as well as the contractors.120 They included state firms such as the GNCC and the State Construction Corporation and private ones, both international firms with representatives in Accra and local contractors, operated by expatriates or Ghanaians.121 The affiliation with tropical architecture was further strengthened by photographs taken by Jacek Chyrosz shortly before the opening of the fair, showing the rhythmic patterning of the varying surfaces, slender pillars on contrasting backgrounds, and deep shadows emphasizing the volumes. In another photo taken by Chyrosz, a low viewpoint makes a railing appear as a colonnade, almost as monumental as the schools by Fry and Drew shown in black-and-white photographs in a 1955 theme issue of Architectural Design (Figure 20).122

This aspiration of Polish architects to participate in an international community that adapted the principles of modern architecture to tropical conditions was supported by publications that started to appear in Poland in the early 1960s in response to the increasing number of export contracts for Polish architects.123 An example is the 1965 paper “Budownictwo w warunkach klimatu tropikalnego” (Construction in the condition of tropical climate), which gathered basic information about the climatic factors a designer needed to take into account and their influence on detailing and materials.124 These texts, as well as Soviet publications on architecture in hot climates, generally available in socialist Eastern Europe, typically included British, French, and U.S. references in their bibliographies, and many featured photographs reproduced from Fry and Drew’s Tropical Architecture.125 In spite of the Cold War context of the engagement of socialist countries in technical assistance and export of labor, the social and political conditions of working outside Europe were rarely mentioned in professional publications. The ideological part of the training was left to a few hours of instruction included in a course organized by the Centre for African Studies of Warsaw University; professionals about to leave Poland on Polservice contracts were supposed to attend this course.126

Yet, in spite of a shared body of principles, materials, contractors, modes of representation, and architectural
precedence, the ITF was never included in publications about tropical architecture. Particularly striking was the absence of any presentation of the fair’s architecture in the journal *West African Builder and Architect*, which featured the most relevant buildings associated with tropical architecture from Ghana and Nigeria during the 1960s and became a major vehicle for the promotion of their designers. This absence cannot be explained by a lack of awareness about the ITF on the part of the editors of the journal, given that images of the fair’s Africa Pavilion appeared in an advertisement for Naco louver window systems that ran in two issues.127 Neither is it likely that the editors deemed the fair not significant enough to feature on the pages of the journal, since the ITF was one of the most visible projects of the decade in West Africa, appearing on the covers of magazines in Ghana and elsewhere.128

The main reason for this omission was that *West African Builder and Architect* was invested in prolonging the existence of British colonial networks in the Commonwealth. The architects featured in the journal were members of the Royal

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**Figure 19** Vic Adegbite (chief architect), Jacek Chyrosz (design architect), Stanisław Rymaszewski (design architect), Timber Industry Pavilion, International Trade Fair, Accra, 1967 (photo by Nebojsa Weiner, 1967; Archive of Nebojsa Weiner, Zagreb; courtesy of Nebojsa Weiner).

**Figure 20** International Trade Fair, Accra, 1967 (photo by Jacek Chyrosz, 1967; Jacek Chyrosz Archive, Warsaw; courtesy of Jacek Chyrosz).
Institute of British Architects (RIBA)—that is, the very group whose economic interests were undermined by the GNCC, which was increasingly taking over control of the whole building process, from design to construction. With the withdrawal of the GNCC from commissioning architectural designs to RIBA architects, these architects had to rely on private investors, themselves under threat by Nkrumah’s nationalization policy. Design authorship seems to have been the criterion for publication in West African Builder and Architect, since the journal presented buildings designed by RIBA architects even if they were constructed by the GNCC. The competition between the GNCC and other architects in Accra sometimes took direct forms: for example, Nkrumah invited both Kenneth Scott and Witold Wojcyszki of the GNCC to submit designs for his private theater; the commission, not realized, went to Wojcyszki, as he recalls. On an institutional level, the competition between these two groups was reflected in the existence of two professional organizations of architects in the first half of the 1960s: the Gold Coast Society of Architects (GCSA), founded during the colonial period (1954), and the Ghana Institute of Architects (GIA), founded in 1962. Most architects from socialist countries working for the GNCC were members of the GIA, including Chyrosz and Rymaszewski.

Yet on the pages of West African Builder and Architect this economic rivalry was translated into what Carl Pletsch has called the “Cold War division of intellectual labor” in Western discourse. In this discourse, the Cold War appeared as a mode of production of knowledge in which cultural works were assumed to be produced only by the “First,” “democratic,” “free” world; by contrast, the “Second,” socialist world could, at best, produce industrial and engineering works. Within Western Cold War discourse, labor under socialism appeared as “non-free,” forced labor; hence, it could not produce cultural objects, which, in this discourse, require the work of free, creative, and spontaneous subjects.

In other words, architects from socialist countries perceived themselves as members of one world of international architectural culture, together with professionals from the Commonwealth, or Western, networks. But in fact the “worlds” they belonged to were not exactly the same, and the transfers between these worlds were subject to gatekeeping procedures. In the reports on socialist countries in the Ghanaian press, their technical prowess was presented hand in hand with their cultural achievements. By contrast, the condition of visibility of a cultural object from a socialist country within Western discourse—and its condition of entry to the market of intellectual labor controlled by Western institutions—was its translation into a technical object, deprived of cultural capital. This devalorization procedure was conveyed by Fry and Drew, who, in Tropical Architecture, compared the massive change under way in the “tropical zone” to changes in Soviet Russia but noted that the latter were operating under “coercion” and for that reason were of lesser value. That such Cold War division of intellectual labor permeated West African Builder and Architect can be confirmed by a second look at the journal, which, in fact, did mention the ITF—not, however, in the section presenting architectural designs, but in brief reports titled “Developments in Ghana,” where the fair was discussed as an infrastructural and engineering project. The text implied that the GNCC was the contractor rather than the planning office, the designers of the buildings were not mentioned, and neither drawings nor photographs were published.

Socialist Labor and Eastern European Experience

The discourse on the “Cold War division of intellectual labor” pointed at the conditions of labor rather than at ideology, aesthetics, or technology as a critical line of division between architects from socialist countries and those from the West. Indeed, the conditions of labor at the GNCC were distinct from those at private practices in Accra. The differences included remuneration and taxation (for example, besides paying taxes in Ghana, Polish architects were paying substantial fees to Polservice) and the organization of labor (with less apparent hierarchies among architects, where one could be the design architect for one project while answering to somebody else on another project).

These differences did not suggest, however, that the work of GNCC architects was “non-free” in any meaningful sense. While most architects from socialist countries in Ghana were dissatisfied with the bureaucratic constraints imposed on their work under socialism, they perceived their employment at the GNCC as an alternative to conditions back home, not as their extension. They held this view in spite of the fact that some constraints continued in the GNCC, and their employment was differentiated according to citizenship (for example, the Polservice contracts were limited to three years, after which the architects had to return to Poland, while architects who were citizens of Yugoslavia were not subjected to such strict time limits). Although Polservice took political views into account in the recruitment for contracts abroad, professional experience and knowledge of English were more important criteria and could trump political disloyalties toward the regime—in particular since Ghanaians participated in the last round of interviews in Warsaw. Few architects from Poland and Hungary working in Ghana were card-carrying members of the Communist Party in their respective countries; neither Chyrosz nor Rymaszewski was a party member. The fact that Charles Polónyi was not a member deprived him of state commissions in Hungary and motivated him to leave for Ghana. Those among the
Polish group who were suspected to be informants for the secret police were socially isolated by others. Even functionaries of the regime presented themselves as pragmatic in West Africa: Rymaszewski recalled that the Polish trade counselor “told us upon our arrival to Accra that they don’t need people for slogans but people who can get things done.”

This ambiguous relationship with the regimes in their countries resulted in a balancing act between the necessary maintenance of links with state institutions back home and their strategic loosening. While institutions in Poland and Hungary responsible for the export of labor to Ghana, such as Polservice or TESCO, encouraged the contracted architects to facilitate new commissions for companies back home, these architects were reluctant to follow such instructions. More often than not, they were skeptical about their professional prospects upon their return home and, rather, invested in networking in Ghana. For Rymaszewski, this strategy paid off: after returning to Poland in 1967, he went back to Ghana two years later, against the recommendation of Polservice but at the explicit wish of the Ghanaian authorities. This fine-tuned distance from official institutions of their countries of origin was reflected in the everyday lives of Eastern European architects, who, in contrast to Soviet technicians, preferred to socialize with their Ghanaian colleagues rather than at official ceremonies in their embassies: “My Ghanaian boss, Vic Adegbite, taught me how to dance the twist,” recalled Rymaszewski.

In other words, if architects from socialist countries needed to legitimate their work in West Africa, it was not because of its presumably “non-free” character. Rather, the challenge was to prove their professional and cultural credentials. As Polónyi recalled about a press conference during his stay in Nigeria (1969–76): “The first question put to me was the following: ‘You are Hungarians. You never had colonies. You don’t have any tropical experience. Do you consider yourselves competent to prepare a master plan for a city in West Africa?’” In response, Polónyi pointed to his tenure at KNUST but also to his previous experience in the resettlement projects in 1940s Hungary. Other Eastern European architects also stressed their involvement in state-led planning, industrialization, and urbanization after World War II. For example, Grażyna Jonkajtys-Luba and Jerzy Luba linked their Labadi Slum Clearance scheme, developed at TCPD in Accra (1965), to their previous work on the postwar reconstruction of Warsaw, and in particular to their projects for the neighborhood of Powiśle, one of the poorest and most underdeveloped parts of Warsaw.

Polónyi also stressed a longer cultural tradition that, in his view, aligned Eastern Europeans and West Africans. He argued that both had experienced “colonization” by external powers, and this shared experience allowed him to “understand” the Africans. Ghanaians reporting on Eastern European countries in the 1960s drew parallels between the colonization of Ghana and the long history of domination over the territories between Prussia and Austria to the west and Russia and the Ottoman Empire to the east. For example, a Ghanaian journalist argued that because Bulgarians were “five hundred years . . . under the Turkish rule,” they “understand the African and are very sympathetic with her struggle for the liberation of [the] continent from foreign domination.” (This, however, contrasted uncomfortably with a number of racist incidents against Africans in Sofia at that time.) Similarly, Josip Broz Tito pointed out the parallels between the history of Yugoslavia and that of West Africa, and Nkrumah himself used the term “Balkanization” to refer to the dangers faced by a divided Africa.

The Eastern European architectural culture invested, since the late nineteenth century, in the integration of territories characterized by multiple cultures and emerging from cultural dependence on external powers was a reference point for a number of architects from the region working in postindependence West Africa. This experience informed the work in Nigeria by Zbigniew Dmochowski, an architect and scholar at the Institute of Polish Architecture at the Warsaw Polytechnic during the 1930s and a teacher at the Polish School of Architecture in Liverpool during the war. Unwilling to return to Soviet-dominated Poland after the war, he stayed in the United Kingdom, and in 1958 he was appointed to the Department of Antiquities in Lagos, where he initiated a program of mapping Nigerian vernacular architecture. This program, which he continued after Nigeria’s independence (1960), employed techniques that he had developed while making his prewar measured drawings of wooden architecture in what was then eastern Poland. Dmochowski dedicated his study to the “architectural youth of Nigeria,” who should accept “tradition as the starting point of their creative, independent thinking” and “evolve . . . a modern school of Nigerian Architecture.” A different experience of the Eastern European architects—one of rupture rather than of evolution—that reverberated with political cultures in postindependence West Africa was interwar functionalism in such contested territories as Moravia and Silesia. The radiant modernity of new governmental buildings in Brno and Katowice manifested a break with the past associated with German historicism and hence the support of new states reemerging after World War I, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The attitude toward colonization was ambiguous in Eastern European architectural culture, however. This included Polónyi, who bemoaned the “colonization” of Hungary by the Soviet Union but admitted the gains of the Austrian “colonization” of the Danube basin after Turkish rule. In Poland, colonial fantasies were developed during the
interwar period by the Maritime and Colonial League, which demanded colonies for Poland. Much more real was the program of “internal colonization” of the eastern territories of interwar Poland, underdeveloped and inhabited by national minorities, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Jewish. In these “borderlands,” the typology of the Polish gentry country house was applied not only to housing but also to numerous railway stations and post offices, schools, and military barracks. The journalist Ryszard Kapuściński grew up in such a “colonized territory” in the 1930s and later discovered similar territories in Africa when reporting on the emergence of postcolonial countries, including Nkrumah’s Ghana. Kapuściński and the left-wing part of the Polish intelligentsia did not cherish any sentiment for colonialism, and this attitude was only strengthened by German-Nazi biopolitics, which most Polish architects working in Ghana had experienced firsthand.

Because of this historical experience of both the colonized and the colonizers, which was very well understood by the Ghanaian elites, the arrival of Eastern European architects complicated the logics of subalternity in Ghana, and in particular the clear-cut cultural hierarchies between Africans and Europeans inherited from the colonial period. The changed conditions of labor were the very site of this complexity; in the words of one architect in Accra, “I remember very well these Eastern European architects, because it was the first and the last time that a white man had an African boss in Ghana. It never happened before and it never happened after.”

Conclusions: Not Another Modernism

In recent years, scholars have demonstrated that the global mobility of modern architecture after World War II did not mean its homogenization. Against reductive critiques of globalization as leading to a regime of sameness where everything resembles everything else, scholars have pointed out the differentiation and specificity of postwar modern architecture around the world, sometimes captured in concepts of “African,” “Eastern,” and “Third World” modernisms and, more generally, “other” modernisms. This study contributes to such efforts. By putting aside the metropolitan model of architectural transmissions, I have argued that the process in the course of which modern architecture was becoming the technocultural dispositif of urbanization outside Europe and North America cannot be reduced to the exports from one or more “centers.” Yet this renouncement of the metropolitan model requires a theorizing of difference in the worldwide mobility of architecture that is not based on the polarity between “center” and “periphery,” “core” and “margins,” “the same” and “the other.” This is why I have not approached the architecture of the GNCC as “Ghanaian modernism,” let alone as a sum of Eastern European “other modernisms.” Rather, I have theorized the difference of the GNCC architecture as compared with architectural production elsewhere by focusing on the antagonisms between competing “projects” of the world, according to the concept of mondialisation. From this perspective, I have studied the architecture in Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah as produced from within antagonistic visions of global cooperation and solidarity that mobilized the circulation of resources and regulated the gatekeeping procedures between these networks at a variety of scales.

Ghana lost its visibility as a beacon of decolonization after the fall of Nkrumah, but the mondialisation of modern architecture described in this article was about to be generalized in the years to come. Over the course of the 1960s, this process was facilitated by the increase in the number of architects from European socialist countries working abroad. For example, while in 1965 Ghana received most of the Polish specialists in Africa (102 people), in the following years that number quickly declined, and in 1971 Nigeria was on the top of the list (94), just a little ahead of Algeria (91). These architects were welcomed in countries that were nominally socialist or ruled by socialist parties but whose governments negotiated their positions across Cold War rivalries rather than siding with one or the other hegemonic bloc: Syria since the 1960s; Iraq after Abdel Karim Kassem’s coup d’état in 1958 and later under Saddam Hussein; Afghanistan between 1953 and 1973, when the Afghan government accepted assistance from both sides of the Iron Curtain; Algeria under the Boumédiène regime (1965–78); Libya under Muammar Gaddafi (after 1969); and, after the 1960s, Nigeria, Kuwait, and others. Employed by state offices and private firms, architects from socialist and Non-Aligned countries worked in competition and, sometimes, in cooperation with architects from the West, as well as architects from regional networks and local professionals and administrators. In this sense, far from being an exceptional case, the architectural production in Nkrumah’s Ghana manifested the mondialisation dynamics that were to shape the urbanization processes in the coming decades of the Cold War.

Notes

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6. Regarding such UN programs, see, for example, Charles Abrams, Vladimir Bodiansky, and Otto H. G. Koenigsberger, _Report on Housing in the Gold Coast_ (New York: United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, 1956).


28. The designs by Gerlach & Gillies-Revynburn included the Great Hall at the Kwan Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi (ca. 1964; see Crinson, "Dialectics of Internationalism," 146) and the Achimota Primary School (1961), AESL Archives, Accra. See also Barnes, Hubbard & Arndel Architects and Town Planning Consultants, Wizasso Teachers Training College, drawings, 1961, AESL Archives, Accra; A. Gilmour, designs of private bungalows, 1960–62, AESL Archives, Accra.


54. I compiled the list of the Polish architects during my research at the AESL Archives in Accra in June 2012 and corroborated it by querying the SARP Archive (Warsaw) and other archives, and through interviews with Bulgarian, Hungarian, and Polish architects.


57. State House Complex (Job 600), drawings and photographs, 1965, private archive of Witold Wojczyński, Warsaw; see also SARP Archive, Warsaw, dossier 770.


59. See, for example, O. J. Ludlam (chief architect), J. Laube (superintendent architect), A. Gadomska (project architect), Accra High School, drawings, 1967, AESL Archives, Accra; E. Y. S. Engmann (engineer in chief), O. J. Ludlam (chief architect), J. Kotliński (superintendent architect, hospitals), Extension to the School of Hygiene, Korle Bu Hospital, drawings, 1970, AESL Archives, Accra; S. F. Kwaku (chief engineer), Vic Adegbite (chief architect), J. Kotliński (project architect), New Laboratory

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70. The women included Anna Gadomska, who contributed to designs of numerous schools, including the extension of Accra Academy (1967), designs for students' lodgings (1967–69), and the design of the ITF; Barbara Zbąska-Bartoszewicz, who designed numerous housing projects in and outside Accra (1965–67) as well as the Kumasi Relay Station (1967); and Emilia Massalska, who, during her two stints in Ghana, was responsible for hospital buildings in Accra and Sunyani (1966–71) as well as the layout of the Central Department Area in the ministries complex in Accra (with Kamiński, 1968). Others were Teresa Kulikowska, responsible for the interior design of the Oso Castle (1964); Maria Hatt, the designer of the telecommunication engineering school in Accra (1966); and Maria Waschko, who designed an office building, a hotel, and bungalows in Accra (1969–74); see AESL Archives, Accra. At TCPD, Maria Ostrowska-Podwysokoowa contributed to master plans of numerous Ghanaian cities, including Sekondi-Takoradi, and Grayyna Jonkajtys-Luba, together with her husband, Jerzy Luba, delivered detailed traffic master plans of Accra, the Labadi Slum Clearance project, and numerous landscaping projects, including Marine Drive and Korle Bu Lagoon in Accra; see SARP Archive, Warsaw, dossiers 344, 711, 739.


72. Hannah Schreckenbach, email correspondence with author, December 2012; Hannah Schreckenbach, with the assistance of Jackson G. K. Abankwa, Construction Technology for a Tropical Developing Country (Eschborn: German Agency for Technical Cooperation for the Department of Architecture, University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, 1983).

73. Jacek Chyrosz, telephone interview by author, July 2012.


76. Schreckenbach, email correspondence with author, December 2012.


78. These papers addressed a limited readership but reached a much broader audience than professional journals such as West African Builder and Architect or debates at KNUST; see Jennifer Hasty, The Press and Political Culture in Ghana (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). Given that most articles did not carry bylines and that by the mid-1960s, the newspapers were subject to increasingly tight censorship, one can only speculate about the authors, who seem to have included journalists, practicing architects, state officials, and, sometimes, academics. See “Kumasi Stadium—A Real Sculpture in Concrete,” Daily Graphic, 21 June 1961, 7; see also the critique of the design of the National Theatre in Accra by Dorothy Padmore, “It Means Living Theatre Not Building,” Ghanaian Times, 12 June 1961, 10; and “Exciting Housing That Fuses 2 Worlds,” Daily Graphic, 19 July 1961, 7.


84. Žagar, telephone interview by author, February 2013; Weiner, telephone interview by author, February 2013.


103. E. Y. S. Engmann (engineer in chief), O. J. Ludlam (chief architect), W. Wojcieszky (project architect), Osu Castle, extension to the offices of the prime minister, n.d., AESL Archives, Accra. For Polónyi’s projects for the Osu Castle, see note 50.


112. See note 38.


115. Chyrosz and Rymaszewski, “Międzynarodowe Targi w Akrze.”


121. Jacek Chyrosz and Nebojsa Weiner, telephone interview by author, February 2013. Of particular importance for the construction of the ITF was the firm A. Lang; among other contractors operating in Accra and Kumasi, Weiner mentions J. Monta and E. Tonione.


125. For example, Ziółek’s paper (ibid.) was illustrated with photographs of West African architecture by Drew, Fry, and Scott. In another paper, Ziółek suggested that designers should learn from countries with extensive experience in tropical construction, and his bibliography included French,