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Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:

2023-07-12

Deposited version:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Pacheco, M. (2022). Rehearsing experts and 'inperfs': Crossing transnational housing narratives in West Africa. *Planning Perspectives*. 37 (5), 921-948

Further information on publisher's website:

[10.1080/02665433.2022.2108887](https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2108887)

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## **Rehearsing Experts and “Inperts”: Crossing Transnational Housing Narratives in West Africa**

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# Rehearsing Experts and “Inperts”: Crossing Transnational Housing Narratives in West Africa

## Abstract

In the early days of the United Nations, the main form of aid in the field of housing took the shape of technical assistance. Although the pool of specialists was almost coincident with those from colonial networks, the ambitions and limitations of international, non-governmental and neutral cooperation, implied a reconceptualization of the world division inherited from the colonial period and its replacement by a new paradigm centred on the idea of “development”. This manifested itself right from the start in the redefinition of the *modus operandi* of the expert and in the production of a particular form of knowledge that challenged the previous expertise, influencing narratives on the built environment around the world.

This paper examines the 1954 UN Housing Mission to the Gold Coast and its outcomes, along with the formative example of the previous 1950 mission to prepare the UN Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. The case study provides an insight into the relationship between the idealization of international cooperation and that of the expert in the field of housing, while the emphasis on research and education, and the subsequent foundation of a new school, offers a starting point for a critical analysis of its counterpart, the “inpert”.

## Keywords

United Nations; International Expert, Inpert, Technical Assistance, Housing Mission, Gold Coast, Kumasi, Charles Abrams, Otto Koenigsberger, Vladimir Bodiatsky, John Lloyd

## Introduction

During the second half of the 20th century, with the polarization of the capitalist and communist blocs and the decolonization process, a number of transnational agencies began focusing on peacekeeping. During the early years of the UN, this new world order, which was based on security, economic progress, and the development of

international law as a means of achieving social progress and securing a better life for humanity everywhere,<sup>1</sup> was approached from multiple angles in its various specialized branches: economics and finance, public health, human rights, education, transport and communications, etc. Housing was at the intersection of these themes, bringing together a disperse network of UN activity and expertise.

The birth of this new force, with an ambition to act worldwide and with support from member states with different interests, implied a certain depoliticization as well as a particular diplomacy. With no funds to act globally, which clearly excluded the possibility of providing financial aid and restricting technical assistance to the payment of salaries and fees, mission costs, conferences and exhibitions that would enable surveys, research, training, and pilot projects,<sup>2</sup> it soon became clear its impact would depend on its influence at the public policy level while maintaining its necessary neutrality. This transnational role involved a major effort to centralise and gather knowledge that had previously been retained at the national level. One of the first priorities, therefore, was to promote the continuous international exchange of technical experiences and information between the various countries, combining the knowledge of both hemispheres. This strategy was the basis for the constitution of teams, the definition of missions, the drafting of reports and was incorporated in all the work carried out.

This means the UN's influence was felt before specific action began, mainly through the way it defined the production of that knowledge, the underlying processes and methodologies and its objectives as part of a wider effort to systematize and

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<sup>1</sup> *United Nations in Pictures*, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Abrams, *Man's Struggle for Shelter*, 92.

disseminate knowledge on a global scale, as can be seen in the surveys, reports, statistics, data analysis, bibliographic compilations and even cartography made available by the Department of Public Information.<sup>3</sup>

At first, the Division of Social Affairs also tried to collect studies and information through the *Housing and Town and Country Planning* bulletin. In 1949, with the creation of the Housing and Construction and Planning Section (HCPS), the UN sought to take more direct action on these issues, particularly regarding the production of research and housing policies that framed international interventions. Although the UN drew on the same experts as the United Kingdom or France, which sought to maintain their influence over their declining empires, or the United States, which was a relatively new major political player, in its epic quest for geopolitical power as the Cold War emerged, many publications and documents reveal its aim to regulate and reinvent the activities of these experts in the context of international cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

In 1950, the Dutch sociologist Anne van der Groot, who headed the UN Housing and Urban Planning Section, appointed an Expert Reconnaissance Mission to Asia and the Far East to prepare the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance (EPTA). This programme was to extend projects, that existed in Latin America since the 1930s, albeit small scale, around the world and to define goals and guidelines for structuring them. Following a request in 1954 from the Gold Coast government, at the time a British protectorate, to the UN, and in accordance with the Basic Technical Assistance Agreement between the organization and the UK, the Gold Coast Mission was created

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the report on the state of world map-making, *Modern Cartography*.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Crane, “Study on Methods” and “Experience of National Government”.

to examine the country's housing problems, to offer advice and provide recommendations.

Housing issues were from the outset integrated into the Social Affairs Division, which at the time worked under the banner of “help[ing] people help themselves” as the basis for all sustainable development, promoting education to this end. While the Reconnaissance Mission called for “the need to train personnel” and for UN support in this area, the Gold Coast Mission went further by proposing the creation of a new school of community planning and a new professional who could respond to the complex multidisciplinary web of housing issues. This article focuses on the Gold Coast Mission, whose report represents an early translation of the idea of the expert that was embedded in the Reconnaissance Mission. Both reveal the emergence of these new experts, who were prepared to act globally, and their particular way of addressing development planning actions. Their focused efforts on educational development as a way of addressing the housing problem in a broader context were the basis for the definition of the “inpert” through a new professional who was prepared to intervene locally.<sup>5</sup> Through education, and the “inpert”, a model for disseminating knowledge on housing and planning at a planetary scale was put forward.

### **Assembling Experts**

Defining those responsible for a mission was as important as they were difficult to recruit. Assembling a team, rather than an individual, had the advantage of ensuring it was qualified to work in different fields and backgrounds, which contributed to the desired neutrality and philosophical breadth, with inputs from experts who acted as direct channels to bring the specific knowledge of different nations and their

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<sup>5</sup> Term coined in Abrams, Charles. “Report of UN Mission to Turkey.”, 11.

institutions. On the other hand, finding those who could stay for the length of time desired overseas, who would pass the scrutiny of the UN doctors' health examinations, or who were willing to be scrutinised by the American authorities was not always an easy task.<sup>6</sup>

The model for creating a team was, to some extent, implicit in the Reconnaissance Mission and was developed further in their report. Headed by the American civil engineer and city planner, Jacob Crane, who had been the director of the Housing and Home Finance Agency (1947-1954), it included three international experts from Britain, the Netherlands, and the Philippines, who all had overseas experience. The rapporteur, Robert Gardner-Medwin, chief architect and planning director at the Department of Health for Scotland, had worked as an urban planner and housing adviser in the West Indies since 1943, guiding the thinking of the Colonial Office and of colonial administrators in the region.<sup>7</sup> Jacobus Thiksse, from the Netherlands, was a civil engineer, planner, professor of urban planning and head of the central planning office in Bandung, Java, where he had lived since the 1920s.<sup>8</sup> The secretary, Antonio Kayanan, was an architect, engineer, planner, professor and head of planning, and the first Filipino involved with the national urban planning commission responsible for the reconstruction of Manilla. The team symbolically represented different powers and newly independent nations, providing a link to British and Dutch colonial planning practices, recent American housing policies and to the expertise from the recently independent countries. The group was a way of facilitating the gathering of information:

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<sup>6</sup> Abrams, *Man's Struggle for Shelter*, 93; Bodiansky, "Letter to Charles Abrams 7 October 1954."

<sup>7</sup> Harris, A mixed message, 170.

<sup>8</sup> Shoshkes, "Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and the Internationalization of Planning Education", 71.

for instance, a chapter about the Philippines was added without visiting the country since Kayanan “was already familiar with it”. In their report, they emphasized the need for a team to ensure diversity, stressing that it should ideally consist of three members, each from different countries, as a way to cover such aspects as economy and administration, construction and planning in different territories. Their ability “to act as UN ambassadors” was also noted. Team members were expected to have “good communication skills to gain the trust and respect of senior local government officials”, so they would help to gather data about a particular country or region and be receptive to receiving advice. Preferably, they should be appointed in consultation with the requesting governments and stay for periods of two years or more, which was the time needed to train nationals and develop work to a stage at which it could be handed over.<sup>9</sup> This role was stressed by Technical Assistance Administration in their briefings, and part of their specific instructions:

“To the degree that you can present your knowledge in such a manner as to avoid offending the traditions and beliefs of the people, and to the degree that you can adapt your knowledge so that it contributes to the maintenance and growth of the elements of value in their basic culture, you will make a contribution of enduring worth and significance. (...) Those methods that have been successful and that had utility in our own social and economic environment frequently require drastic modification before they can be adapted to the needs of the people of the country in which you will be working. (...) In working among people who have different values, different ethical concepts, different convictions and prejudices, different habits of thought and methods of work, it is above all essential, without sacrificing personal integrity, to seek understanding and to practice tolerance. (...) when you take the oath of office as United Nations official, you assume certain additional responsibilities (...) You represent no longer only your own profession or your own country, but you represent the United Nations as a whole. You embody the

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<sup>9</sup> Expert Mission, *Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, 46-7, 97, 143, 176-7.



spirit and ideals of the United Nations, and this fact must be reflected in all your acts.”<sup>10</sup>

The Yugoslav architect Ernest Weissmann, then head of the Housing and Town and Country Planning Agency (HTCP) in the UN Social Affairs Division, followed those principles when he appointed the Gold Coast team, which were reflected in the terms of the basic agreement: one expert in the field of housing administration and finance; one expert in the field of land policy, community planning and housing needs and designs; one expert in the field of building techniques and production of building materials.<sup>11</sup> Its leader, Charles Abrams, was a Polish-born American lawyer, chairman of New York City Advisory Committee on Housing and consultant of the Federal Government; a professor of housing policy at the School of Social Research and University of Pennsylvania, and the New York State rent commissioner. When Weissmann read Lewis Mumford’s flattering review of Abrams’ book, *Revolution in Land* (1939)<sup>12</sup>, he asked him to extend his interpretation of US land tenure practices to other countries, resulting in the publication of “Urban Land Problems and Policies” (1953).<sup>13</sup> His worldwide study and his extensive experience on the subject enabled him to “draw upon a catalogue of existing programmes and the policies relating thereto”,<sup>14</sup> granting him a place in many future UN missions. Vladimir Bodiansky, was a Russian-French engineer, advisor on Housing for Monet Plan, whose early career was spent

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<sup>10</sup> Keenleyside, “Letter to Charles Abrams with United Nations Technical Administration Mission Guidelines.”

<sup>11</sup> “Supplementary Agreement No. 7 to the Basic Agreement between the United Nations, and the Government of the Gold Coast for the Provision of Technical Assistance.”

<sup>12</sup> Henderson, A. Scott. *Housing and the Democratic Ideal*, 89.

<sup>13</sup> Vale, *Educating Planners at the MIT*, 51; Finch, *Charles Abrams: A Biography*.

<sup>14</sup> Abrams, Koenigsberger and Bodiansky, *Report on Housing in the Gold Coast*, 1.

working with the Russian government on the construction of the Bokhara railway in Uzbekistan, and who went on in French Africa: first in Congo assisting the government as the chief engineer in the Great Lakes Railway Company; then in Morocco planning and building as head of ATBAT Afrique, where he had to deal with mass migration from rural areas.<sup>15</sup> His collaboration with Le Corbusier on the UN headquarters in New York (1946–49) acquainted him with the early UN Aid organization and agents (Figure 1). The team’s direct link with the Gold Coast was Otto Koenigsberger, a German trained as an architect at the Technische Hochschule Berlin, and who had recently been appointed a consultant on housing and planning to the Volta River Project Preparatory Commission<sup>16</sup>, which endowed him with “knowledge of the country and an understanding of individuals and government officials”<sup>17</sup>. The expected impact of the planned hydro-electric dam in south-west Gold Coast<sup>18</sup> was similar to one he had knowledge of from his time in New Delhi, where he was director of housing for the Indian government’s Ministry of Health, involved with the mass relocation of refugees from Pakistan following independence and the partition of the country.<sup>19</sup> He was a recognised expert also in Burma, where he served as a housing adviser to the Government<sup>20</sup>, and in the English-speaking world, where he used to publish<sup>21</sup> and as Planning Advisor to Basildon. Furthermore, the knowledge and contacts made while conducting extensive research as Housing Research Fellow at the School of Hygiene

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<sup>15</sup> Frapier, “The Career of Engineer Vladimir Bodiatsky”.

<sup>16</sup> Koenigsberger, *The Volta River Project*; Sir William Halcrow et al, *The Volta River Project*.

<sup>17</sup> Abrams, Koenigsberger and Bodiatsky, *Report on Housing in the Gold Coast*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> D’Auria and Meulder, *Unsettling Landscapes*; Jackson et al, *The Volta River Project*.

<sup>19</sup> Liscombe, “In-dependence”; Lee, Von Damm and Fenk, *Otto Koenigsberger*.

<sup>20</sup> Koenigsberger, ‘Housing and Town Planning Problems in Burma’.

<sup>21</sup> Koenigsberger, ‘Indian Housing Problems’; Koenigsberger, ‘New Towns in India’.

and Tropical Medicine in London on housing in tropical areas was instrumental to the assignment. All three were also familiar with the members and ideas of the Reconnaissance Mission. Abrams was a close associate of Crane, both of whom had taken part in the 1954 Housing Exhibition at the UN Seminar on Housing and Community Improvement in Asia and the Far East in New Delhi. Coordinated by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, she consulted Koenigsberger in advance.<sup>22</sup> Before leaving for the first UN Housing Mission in 1949,<sup>23</sup> Crane met Koenigsberger in Delhi on site visits,<sup>24</sup> which included his own projects as the official UN report states,<sup>25</sup> as does the Gardner-Medwin report.<sup>26</sup>

The team was transnational, with extensive geographical, political, economic, and social experiences, and it was multidisciplinary, with different backgrounds and complimentary fields of expertise. It was also part of the emerging CIAM-UN network, which criss-crossed British and French empires that were struggling for new ways to implement their political and economic power, the American and European vanguard and the new foreign aid machinery. Together they embodied the idealization of a politically neutral transnational role, the ideal of international cooperation on specific tasks that the UN sought to achieve, inscribed within the larger agenda of helping with the emergence of a single world culture. However, this internationalisation was often challenging. In the Gold Coast Mission, for example, Bodiensky was accompanied by his 26 years old son, Vévé, who acted as his interpreter, secretary and photographer,

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<sup>22</sup> Shoshkes, *Jaqueline Tyrwhitt: A Transnational Life*, 155.

<sup>23</sup> Harris, 'The silence of the experts', 171, 176.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson, *Tropical Architecture and the West Indies*, 185.

<sup>25</sup> Expert Mission, *Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, 54, 60, 78.

<sup>26</sup> Gardner-Medwin, *United Nations and Resettlement in the Far East*, 290.

since they believed that their “work divides in two, 1) what we see and 2) what we do”<sup>27</sup> and therefore hoped to use the material in a variety of ways, from producing a film for educational purposes to covering the mission for suitable publicity.

### **Crossing routes, converging networks**

A mission had to be prepared carefully if it was to be able to carry out an exhaustive surveying of a country’s problems. This implied the coordination of field trips, meetings with government officials and visits to all administrative institutions and organizations, to ensure they got a comprehensive overview of urban policies and legislation, pilot projects, the state of education and research. The whole organization was designed to facilitate the main task of the expert, which as the Reconnaissance Mission noted, was “to unite the various skills available” and “gather the scattered publications by different actors in the field,” as “the first step toward a systematic study of housing, its shortcomings and possible remedies” and “basis for future action”.<sup>28</sup> The mission was often an opportunity for experts to get to know each other and establish contacts and transnational networks that would serve future UN missions.

This task frequently began before the mission itself, through international seminars such as those promoted by the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP). On this occasion, the mission was preceded by a ten-day seminar promoted by the Colonial Office as part of the Summer School on Colonial Administration at the offices of the Colonial Administrative Service (former Tropical African Service) in Cambridge. Convened between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 4<sup>th</sup> September under the auspices of the

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<sup>27</sup> “United Nations Technical Assistance Administration Press Conference Draft”

<sup>28</sup> Expert Mission, Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia, 123, 144.

British government, experts from all over Africa exchanged views on housing problems and policies on the continent, enabling the three team members to interview about 30 Gold Coast officials ahead of the mission.<sup>29</sup> In the meantime, Abrams completed his first UN mission to Turkey (September 24-October 5, 1954)<sup>30</sup>, an experience that was to have a lasting impact on those that were to follow. Koenigsberger, in turn, spent the previous six weeks in the Gold Coast, familiarizing himself with the country.

The team members finally met in Accra on 1 November 1954, staying in the ministerial bungalows at the Government Hospitality Center. Abrams stayed until 16 December, while Koenigsberger and Bodiansky remained a month longer. They travelled about 6,500km, crossing almost every district in the country by air to “gain an impression of the varying styles of traditional architecture and different traditional systems of housing groups and social patterns” (Figure 2). Then they viewed certain sections by road to inspect housing estates, such as those by the Town Planning Officer, A.E.S. Alcock<sup>31</sup>, construction techniques and slums (Figure 3). During the tour, the team visited government departments and offices, schools and research stations, where they interviewed over 200 people, including politicians, officials and a range of other people, including tribal chiefs and elders, architects, engineers, geologists, university staff, local and foreign contractors, businessman, associations of landlords and houseowners, tenants and ordinary citizens<sup>32</sup> to collect basic data that would allow a comprehensive overview of the pattern of housing; the government housing activities; social, economic, financial, design, building materials, and land administration data as a basis for housing

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<sup>29</sup> Abrams, Koenigsberger and Bodiansky, *Report on Housing in the Gold Coast*, 158.

<sup>30</sup> Abrams, Charles. “Report of UN Mission to Turkey.”

<sup>31</sup> “Visits of the Mission to Housing Estates.”

<sup>32</sup> Abrams, Koenigsberger and Bodiansky, *Report on Housing in the Gold Coast*, 1, 158-65.

policy, etc.<sup>33</sup> This was normal procedure during the early days of development planning, which incorporated insights from different disciplines and blended both the physical and social aspects through the use of surveys, interviews, community involvement and topic reports, and was expressed in the terms of reference agreed.

The mission programme was also important for promoting and disseminating the work of the UN, in which, as the Reconnaissance Mission report notes, the experts played an important role. In addition to general activities, special events were also planned, including a housing seminar, a press conference and a broadcast interview on the mission's programme and objectives, the experts' roles and views, and specificities of an international organisation such as the United Nations, considering that the proper conveyance of information to the people was one of the most important means of getting the work of the United Nations known and establishing an understanding through the newspapers of the kind of work it was trying to do:

“There seems to be a misunderstanding about what the United Nations team of experts is. (...)

One of our problems is to help developing countries to achieve their aims and develop rationally. (...) We are not regularly employed by the United Nations; they select experts from all over the world who may be able to help particular countries. It is sometimes felt that the only way to solve the housing problem is to build houses! It is much more than that (...) The most important things are proper management; education of personnel and proper people to operate the programme and manage the enterprises; in all this the United Nations is prepared to help you. (...) We are not interested in making money but want to promote the Charter of the United Nations which hopes to obtain lasting peace in the world.”<sup>34</sup>

Another particular aspect was the aim of capitalizing on these missions to establish regional relationships that could contribute to the advancement of knowledge

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<sup>33</sup> Asufu-Adjaye [Minister of Works]. “Letter to Charles Abrams 5 November 1954.”

<sup>34</sup> “United Nations Technical Assistance Administration Press Conference Draft.”

and promote contacts and possible future missions. At the end of the trip, Koenigsberger and Bodiensky went on to work in other African countries to pursue comparative studies and investigations in adjoining countries, where they sought to enhance the education-related issues raised during the mission, which would help finalize their report. Koenigsberger continued to Nigeria, where he met with the principal and staff of the Nigerian College of Technology at Ibadan to discuss technical education in Africa and later on to Rome to meet the Italian Minister of Agriculture to discuss the land reform work being developed there, to visit the FAO headquarters, investigate the use of indigenous materials and the potential of some domestic methane gas plants and their role in the Italian rural resettlement schemes. Bodiensky went to Dakar to meet the people in charge of the French African Building Research Centre and the Centre de Formation Professionnelle Accélérée, which was created following the 1949 Development Plan for French West Africa.<sup>35</sup> Both the team and the mission were therefore vehicles for the circulation and transfer of ideas and methods that crossed the circuit and barriers of previous geopolitical logics.

### **The [model] Report**

There was a general ambition that some reports would constitute a primary source of literature about some countries, which for that reason would be of particular importance to collect as much information as necessary for the purpose of dissemination. The report was published in 1956, which was not usual since most reports remained classified within UN facilities, failing in their dissemination purpose. Of the 21 reports Abrams was involved in during his time as a UN adviser, this was the only report of his that he

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<sup>35</sup> Koenigsberger and Bodiensky. "Letters to Technical Assistance Recruitment.";

Koenigsberger, "United Nations Housing Mission Report on the Work Done in Rome."

saw published.<sup>36</sup> The reason for this was precisely the Reconnaissance Mission's broad interpretation of the term "housing", to include "housing and community development or houses and home environment", while also considering "the [explicit] problems of neighbourhoods and of town and regional planning"<sup>37</sup> and the shift it initiated from prescribing specific constructions to the definition of policies that would frame future interventions. This had direct implications on capital management by governments and banks, on social policies, private property and, consequently, on private investment. As Abrams said, "an extravagant reference to the desirability of private enterprise may stir up Russian criticism, while recommendations for socialization may alarm the capitalist nations. Reports may therefore be neutral on political issues and not too critical of people, policies, or programmes".<sup>38</sup> In the case of the Gold Coast the ownership of urban properties and private Building societies were a hot topic, many times discussed, as there was a general concern from the government of its de-regularization and transfer to foreigners, particularly to South African and Rhodesian firms.<sup>39</sup> Because of this, the Reconnaissance Mission had warned about the need for a critical restraint of "western prejudices", demonstrating throughout its text the equal importance of diplomacy in matters of international cooperation, especially in the colonial transition, with such statements as: "western ideas should not be transplanted without change" and "governments must decide which western methods can be adapted to the evolving way of life in their countries".<sup>40</sup> Still, on the need to express oneself in a politically correct

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<sup>36</sup> Henderson, *Housing and the Democratic Ideal*, 175.

<sup>37</sup> Expert Mission, *Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, p.8.

<sup>38</sup> Abrams, *Man's Struggle for Shelter*, 94.

<sup>39</sup> Koenigsberger. "Letter to Charles Abrams 5 January 1955."

<sup>40</sup> Expert Mission, *Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, 36.



manner, using the neutral content and language an institution like the UN required, Abrams added that this simultaneously carried with it a disadvantage, since most reports were too often “written in guarded language or failed to grapple with all the realities”.<sup>41</sup> The time between the end of the mission and the publication of the report was dedicated not only to the edition of intermediation reports, submitted during the mission, but also to the discussion of the topics approached with numerous stakeholders who gave their opinion on those in which they were specialists, such as the Building Research Station, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research or individual personalities belonging to institutions such as MIT. The consecutive discussion and revision of the final document, and its organization, resulted in a manuscript that was complimented at the UN and considered an example, for which it was printed to be used as a model to guide other teams.<sup>42</sup>

The Gold Coast report was the result of many interim reports, their discussions during the mission and the incorporation of subsequent comments and suggestions. The remaining chapters were written by Koenigsberger and Bodiansky separately, on their return to London and Paris, after spending almost three months in the Gold Coast, and then meeting for a week in London in March 1955 to go over corrections, the translation from French and its finalisation.<sup>43</sup> The manuscript, edited in the end by Abrams, began with introductory studies on the country’s rural and urban growth and the impact of the transitional political, economic, social and land context. It defined objectives and needs, covering various topics on which housing policies were dependent: administration (land, clouded and unmarketable titles, old housing and slum clearance, rent controls,

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<sup>41</sup> Abrams, *Man’s Struggle for Shelter*, p.94.

<sup>42</sup> Abrams, “Letter to Kwami Nkruma 16 November 1956.”

<sup>43</sup> Abrams, Koenigsberger and Bodiansky, *Report on Housing in the Gold Coast*, 71-82, 158-65.

administrative reorganization), financing (building societies, loans ordinance), education (training and research) and construction (building regulations, materials, limestone deposits and hydraulic binders, pre-fabrication). Some of the topics were expanded upon in separate appendices that made specific recommendations. Also attached was all the information considered useful (Figure 4), such as graphs, memos, documents studied by the mission (that provided an important overview of the existing bibliography on the subject), as well as a list of all the people contacted and who had collaborated with the mission (which mirrored the complete diagram of existing institutions, government offices, departments and respective underlying administrative and political articulation, facilitating contacts for future interventions, while validating the institutional level of the mission). This methodology assumed the survey of certain problems and solutions could be applicable to other countries: that is, there was an expectation it could result in possible knowledge migration. This could be the case where a solution found in a place like “a combined latrine-bathroom unit (...) proved to be very effective” and therefore could be adapted elsewhere”.<sup>44</sup> Or a devised solution, like the “Roof Loan Scheme” that was contained in the report, and which was later modified to make it applicable to Bolivia, Nigeria and other countries.<sup>45</sup>

A substantial part of the report was devoted to the implementation of long-term policies, particularly education and research. One of the recommendations deserving special attention concerned technical education, since the lack of qualified personnel was highlighted as a major obstacle preventing resolution of the housing problems and, consequently, of all other recommendations dependent on it. The report suggested a

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<sup>44</sup> Expert Mission, *Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, 134.

<sup>45</sup> Taper, “Charles Abrams in Ghana”, 51.

five-year development plan should include the expansion of vocational training centres as well as technical institutes and trade schools, since they all “served useful functions in building up the pool of skilled workers”. To that end, they had a ten-step procedure to guide it, involving the local government, interior, education, housing, social welfare and labour ministries and departments, all working closely with the building industry. The spectrum of recommendations was surprisingly broad: at times very general and with a large degree of specificity at others. It included such issues as the recruitment of specially trained technical instructors in rural areas for mass education on self-help; methods to encourage increased productivity in the construction industry; the establishment of an immigration policy to encourage the entry of skilled craftsmen (while noting it could be set as a condition for the entry of Italian contractors that they train African apprentices); expansion of the existing technical education programme suggesting the French model of short classes for craftsmen, evening classes and courses; provision of accommodation for teachers; introduction of classes for draughtsman; assistance to African and other contractors (mutual credit associations, mandating the use of local materials and the creation of vocational courses). Corruption in the construction industry was also addressed, as was support for small local contractors and domestic manufacturers, the distribution of loans and access to public works. Given the shortage of planners, engineers, architects, and surveyors, it recommended the establishment of a school for community planners. To this end a committee of UN experts was to be appointed to draw up a detailed programme for the school, to develop a syllabus, and to make the necessary arrangements for the establishment of the course as quickly as possible. This was to start under a “parent school” in the UK to benefit from its experience (including the recruitment of British teaching staff for the Gold Coast and to welcome especially talented students), while the British school obtained

information about the problems in developing countries. Until the necessary skills, which at the time were either non-existent, scarce or inefficient, were being developed, a design centre was to be set up to prepare “suitable and simple designs, adapted to the climate and sufficiently detailed to facilitate immediate construction” whose “distribution by local authorities to the public would avoid many of the difficulties encountered by licensing authorities, builders and investors”. The preparation of these designs, specifications and estimates required the employment of qualified architects who were expected to have "completed the special course in tropical architecture at the Architectural Association in London or its equivalent".<sup>46</sup>

This correlation between the lack of skilled labour in the various areas of the housing sector and its problems had been noted by the Reconnaissance Mission, which believed “the UN could do a great service by providing technical assistance in regional planning – for example, professional experts for long periods at short notice to initiate regional surveys, advise on regional development plans and assist in the establishment of vocational training facilities”. A much longer-term need was for graduate training for architects, as well as postgraduate training for planners, while in the medium-term, this need was to be met through two- or three-month crash courses taught by foreign specialists working in the housing area. The report specifically mentioned the “draft scheme for a central School of Architecture and Regional Planning published by Dr O. Koenigsberger”, expressing the mission’s support for it since “the course would place considerable emphasis on housing in its context of community and regional planning”.<sup>47</sup>

In their analyses of the Reconnaissance Mission report, produced shortly after its

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<sup>46</sup> Abrams, Koenigsberger and Bodiensky, *Report on Housing in the Gold Coast*, 29-33.

<sup>47</sup> Expert Mission, *Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, 21, 34, 79-81.

publication<sup>48</sup> both Gardner-Medwin and Koenigsberger paid particular attention to the issues of the shortage of qualified personnel with experience of large-scale planning and housing, and the lack of professional training facilities, both of which underlay the mission's conclusion as to the need to involve the UN in the coordination of research and training programmes through technical assistance. Gardner-Medwin took the opportunity to once again mention his particular interest in Koenigsberger's work in India, this time with reference to the self-help pilot project in Faridabad, precisely because no contractors were employed, and instead "schools and vocational training workshops were set up and all the necessary building materials and parts were produced on site"<sup>49</sup>, just as the Gold Coast team aimed to do. In fact, Koenigsberger, had been devoted to the subject for some time at different levels. Just before the Gold Coast Mission, he, together with George Atkinson – the colonial liaison officer at the Building Research Station – and Leo de Syllas, who had worked with Gardner-Medwin in the West Indies,<sup>50</sup> was involved in the creation of a 'tropical architecture course'.<sup>51</sup> Established in the wake of the 1953 London conference on tropical architecture, where the theme of appropriate education for those working in the tropics took on particular prominence, it eventually became a reality in 1954 at the Architectural Association in London (AA) following almost a year of negotiations (in the beginning led by Maxwell Fry, whom Koenigsberger would replace three years later).<sup>52</sup> Abrams had also been involved with academe since 1935, and particularly with pedagogical and academic

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<sup>48</sup> "Housing in the Tropics." 1952.

<sup>49</sup> Gardner-Medwin, "United Nations and Resettlement in the Far East", 297; Koenigsberger, "Low Cost Housing In South and South East Asia".

<sup>50</sup> Jackson, *Tropical Architecture and the West Indies*, 177.

<sup>51</sup> Koenigsberger, Otto. 1953. "The Tropical Course at the Architectural Association."

<sup>52</sup> Wakely, "The Development of a School", 338.

experiences at the New School of Social Research, where he constructed a unique curriculum of an housing course covering a wide range of subjects, from construction to housing finance.<sup>53</sup> And in his “explanatory” UN mission to Turkey, he recommended and drafted a budget plan for the establishment of a UN-sponsored school in Ankara to be overseen by the Department of City Planning at Penn University, where he had taught since 1952, in order to address problems he considered similar to those on the Gold Coast, as he acknowledged with Weissmann. The concept was inspired in the already existent UN School of Public Administration in the country, which had a city planning course in its curriculum.<sup>54</sup> The idea had been discussed during the very first weeks of the mission in correspondence with Weissmann<sup>55</sup>, who was in favour of it, and then with the Prime Minister.<sup>56</sup> For him, the proper development of a country could not be assured through the aid of foreign experts alone, although such experts were needed to advise on the creation of such institution, to staff it with competent teachers during the early years and to train Turkish architects and planners in both teaching and in the practice of the profession over the long term.<sup>57</sup> He most likely used his experience in the Gold Coast “to further develop his conceptualization of the idea of training and education”<sup>58</sup> in the Middle East and the other way around, as “the problem of setting up a planning course” was a “research project in itself”.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Henderson, *Housing and the Democratic Ideal*, 86.

<sup>54</sup> Abrams, “Letter to Ernest Weissman 10 February 1954.”

<sup>55</sup> Abrams, “Letter to Ernest Weissman 14 November 1954.”

<sup>56</sup> Taper, “Charles Abrams in Turkey”, 47-8; Abrams. “Interview with the Prime Minister.”

<sup>57</sup> Abrams, “Memorandum on the Establishment of a School of Architecture and Community Planning in Ankara.”

<sup>58</sup> Erdim, Burak. *Landed Internationals*, 1709.

<sup>59</sup> Abrams, Charles. “Letter to Ernest Weissman 31 October 1954.”

However, Abrams' team went further than just proposing the foundation of a school: it also proposed the creation of a new professional, of a kind of superhero who could combine all the skills the Reconnaissance Mission showed were required. The team lamented the lack of "housers": that is, "experts in general housing and community development problems".<sup>60</sup> What Crane's team called "housers", the Gold Coast Mission called "community planners", emphasizing their "social responsibility in a developing country", and describing them as "general practitioners" in Appendix E, where the topic of technical education was further elaborated. Their model followed the logic of the medical profession with its general practitioners and specialists. This was justified by the scarcity of qualified personnel and the length of time it would take to train a sufficient number of the first such professionals to address the problem, since the few that had already been trained in Europe or the US would not be enough for many years, and this delay was considered a luxury no developing country could afford. The "general practitioners" should be highly recognised professionals:

"men who know enough of planning to choose sites for development, survey them and prepare simple plans for town extensions or village development; men who know enough of architecture to design and construct residential houses, schools and other simple public buildings; men who know enough of quantity surveying and accounting to prepare estimates and value properties; men who know enough of municipal engineering to cope with village roads, wells, drains and other tasks of this nature and enough of administration and law to be able to put their own projects into practice".<sup>61</sup>

The importance of research was partly a legacy of colonial practice that had been common within the British Empire since the 19th century and that had been

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<sup>60</sup> Expert Mission, *Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> Abrams, Koenigsberger and Bodiansky, *Report on Housing in the Gold Coast*, 97.

perpetuated by international agencies during the period after the First World War: the practice of funding scientific research, which was regarded to be an instrument of “economic development”.<sup>62</sup> The emphasis on training and education, and particularly on increasing the supply of a better educated workforce was something new. The Reconnaissance Mission report developed it as an idea and set forth a general strategy to be considered when appointing experts to missions to ensure they included specialists in professional education and vocational training, who would be able to organize and obtain assistance to establish courses.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Follow-Up Mission(s) and the Definition of the “Inpert”**

In December 1955, Koenigsberger returned to the Gold Coast for six months to May 1956, to work as a Housing Coordinator, as recommended by the first mission. As he acknowledged in his second report, “the main tasks of the first UN Housing Mission were surveying, diagnosing and prescribing; those of the second were implementing and suggesting measures”.<sup>64</sup> During this time, and similarly to Abrams’ efforts in Turkey, he continued lobbying for the new school and establishing institutional contacts, just as he had begun to do in London where he met such figures as Minister of State Kojo Botsio at the Gold Coast office in London<sup>65</sup>, who wanted to have the school attached to University of Science and Technology at Kumasi (later Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology at Kumasi — KNUST) — as it had already the facilities for

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<sup>62</sup> Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture*, 174-75.

<sup>63</sup> *Expert Mission, Low-Cost Housing in South and South-East Asia*, 46, 97, 123.

<sup>64</sup> Koenigsberger, “Housing in Ghana Part 2”, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Koenigsberger, “Memorandum”.



training in engineering and geodesic surveying, giving it authority to negotiate on his behalf.<sup>66</sup>

In November 1955, following a series of meetings and exchanging correspondence on procedural issues – such as who should advise whom, who the two experts should be, the exact form of the course and thus of the practitioner – Koenigsberger established the team that would define the course content and structure: Professor J. A. L. Matheson from the Civil Engineering department of Manchester University and Gardner-Medwin, who was at the time professor of architecture and civic design at Liverpool University.<sup>67</sup>

On the occasion of the 1953 Tropical Conference, of which Gardner-Medwin and Koenigsberger were on the organizing committee, they listened to the enthusiastic speech delivered by the British planner, Max Lock, on the unprecedented opportunities that “architectural education and training for the tropics” opened up for new patterns of education. His idea was to fully link artistic and technical training, and research with practice, through a preliminary basic three-year course that would address all building and technical methods, for which any student showing talent would be awarded a scholarship that would “enable them to come to the UK to attend a full-time educational course”.<sup>68</sup> After their first meeting in India when the topic was raised, and following the experience of the creation of the course at the AA, this seemed a rather exciting opportunity to put into practice what most of the audience at the time said was an ideal solution to the problem of architectural training in the tropics: the establishment of schools in those countries. Furthermore, they were also engaged together on the Preparatory Committee of the Association for Regional Planning and Development,

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<sup>66</sup> Letter from Dr W. E. Duncanson to H. M. Collins, 8 December 1955.

<sup>67</sup> Koenigsberger, Letter to Sir Alexander Morris Carr-Saunders, 23 November 1955.

<sup>68</sup> Lock, “Architectural Education and Training for the Tropics”, 111-12.

sharing the same views, and in the organization of its first conference, which Lock and Bodiensky also attended.<sup>69</sup>

The committee finally came together in Kumasi in April 1956, where it met college staff, engineers, architects, and town planners who had links to the college. It also visited “typical examples of village and town developments in the Kumasi region; old and new buildings for primary and secondary schools, a trade school and a rural development centre; the new Technical Institute, and many recent buildings, ranging from the Kumasi hospital to a self-help project for a village community centre”. It went on to Accra with the Principal and the Registrar, where it “inspected” old and new housing estates and attended several meetings with members of the government.<sup>70</sup>

Eventually the report to the Council of Kumasi College of Technology was delivered, and later included in Koenigsberger’s second report, *Housing in Ghana: Part 2*.

As soon as it became clear the new school would be determined politically by UK professional standards and retain a dependency on Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) there was institutional resistance to the concept of the “general practitioner”. Consequently, after discussing it with Koenigsberger, the team, which expressed its doubts about the analogy with medicine, proposed an alternative composite four-year course in architecture and building with a common two-year base, with the last two years split into three branches (architecture, housing and community planning, building and quantity surveying), with the possibility of a fifth year overseas that would lead to different degrees (architecture, town planning, building technology) (Figure 5).

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<sup>69</sup> “International Conference on Regional Planning and Development, Bulletin No.1.”

<sup>70</sup> Gardner-Medwin and Matheson, *Report to the Council of Kumasi College of Technology*, 23.

They noted the importance of receiving training in design and construction that was appropriate to West Africa and the need to study the region's economic, social, and physical factors, all of which should be carried out as a joint project in the proposed Building Development Centre (formerly the Centre of Design). There should be specific training to ensure the use and understanding of local materials and construction methods, as well as climate factors that were specific to West Africa.<sup>71</sup>

Although the course was considered over-optimistic in terms of length and the proposed "common ground"<sup>72</sup>, eventually, the School of Architecture, Town Planning and Building opened at KNUST in 1958. The year after saw the establishment of the Building Research Group in cooperation with the Buildings and Roads Research Institute under a mutual technical assistance scheme between the governments of Ghana and the UK. The agreement, following practice within the British Empire, was based on the assumption the UK would provide Ghana with experts who could fill technical and professional specialists in temporary or advisory roles, while Ghana would provide local research opportunities.

Ghana's housing shortage was worsening in the meanwhile, and in 1960 the government again sought advice from the UN through the TAA on the relationship between the need for skilled planners and other labour needs in its development process. Acting on behalf of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, Professor Peter Oberlander of the University of British Columbia then recommended the establishment of an Institute of Community Planning attached to KNUST as an alternative to the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 26, 36-8.

<sup>72</sup> Chitty, "Report on Visit to Kumasi and Zaria".

existing Department of Town and Country Planning<sup>73</sup>, which was consistent with the recommendations Weissmann had made during a visit to the country the previous year. Its aim was to train planning assistants, which was again described using the metaphor of medicine: “while other academic programmes aim at training doctors, the Institute in Ghana is training medical assistants, stretcher bearers or perhaps nurses”.<sup>74</sup> Despite this, when a 1962 UN mission on physical planning arrived in Ghana to work alongside the government in preparing a national development plan, there were only ten planning officers in the country. A two-year postgraduate course in regional planning was then proposed for the School of Architecture, Town Planning and Building in Kumasi, which would be open only to selected graduates in economics, geography, civil and agricultural engineering, and architecture.<sup>75</sup>

### **Reconceptualizing Local Expertise**

Following an accreditation visit to the school in 1963, the university council considered closing it down. Koenigsberger, then director of the AA’s Department of Tropical Studies (formerly the Department of Tropical Architecture), persuaded the council not to do so, with the support of the newly-appointed director, William Allen, who was putting into practice recent architectural education policies on the school, such as environmental studies and building science.<sup>76</sup> A cooperation agreement was established between the two schools, something that had not been possible before, despite Koenigsberger's efforts first with the Planning School at University College London

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<sup>73</sup> Oberlander, “Planning Education for Newly Independent Countries”, 122.

<sup>74</sup> Apud Vilorio, *Education for Planning*, 50.

<sup>75</sup> Koenigsberger, “Teaching Methods for Settlement Planners and Builders”, 149-54.

<sup>76</sup> Crinson and Lubbock, *Architecture: Art or Profession?*, 144-53; Zamarian, *The Architectural Association in the Postwar Years*, 123.

through William Holford<sup>77</sup>, and later with the University of Liverpool<sup>78</sup>. He personally challenged John Lloyd, a former first-year AA master with whom he shared many ideas about teaching and its relationship to research, to accept the position of dean and to reorganise the course, giving him an intense briefing, which included Kwame Nkruma's ideas.<sup>79</sup>

“Without Otto [Koenigsberger], Kumasi would never have existed, as the university council had decided to abandon architecture, looking upon their first attempt as a complete failure. Otto persuaded them to give it another try, got the backing of the AA and off we went.”<sup>80</sup>

Leaving at very short notice, Lloyd's task was both to reorganise the course and expand its capacity to provide the necessary professionals required for the whole of Ghana's construction industry. There was also the ambition to turn the school, which at the time was one of only five architecture schools in Africa, and the nearest to it being in northern Nigeria, into an international reference.

The reforms he introduced sought a convergence of some of the principles underlying the foundation of the course as contained in the first UN report with existing Africanization policies. This was certainly also the result of the meeting with Abrams, who had returned to Ghana that year (Figure 6). He considered the British-based curriculum he found, directed towards “an idea of another place, with its denial of the here and now and the past” and the students’ “detachment from ‘Ghanaian reality’” by “consciously cutting off their origins”, “tragi-comic in its irrelevance”.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Koenigsberger, “Letter to William Holford 14 November 1954.”

<sup>78</sup> “Letter from the Vice Chancellor of Liverpool University to Robert Gardner-Medwin 27 April 1955.”

<sup>79</sup> Author's interview with John [Michael] Lloyd, 2016, Alicante.

<sup>80</sup> Lloyd, “Symposium Otto Koenigsberger”.

<sup>81</sup> Lloyd, “Design Education in the Third World”, 367-8.

In the Geddesian spirit that united all those who preceded him – Crane, Abrams, Koenigsberger Gardner-Medwin (and Max Lock) – Lloyd introduced courses, interdisciplinary seminars with contributions by specialists in other departments (Kofi Asamoah-Darko from geography, C. Kwesi Graham from sociology) and by renowned international professors (such as Buckminster Fuller, Sylvia Crowe and Eustaquio Toledo) to discuss the effects of the climate, social organisation and technology on architectural and urban forms, since he believed “vital areas such as housing had little to do with architecture as conventionally understood, but have much to do with politics, economics, population and social studies”.<sup>82</sup> Following the suggestion of several African delegates at the 1953 conference<sup>83</sup>, he replaced the more orthodox programme of (Western) architectural history with “visual surveys of Africa” led by Labelle Prussin, who wrote the first book on architecture in Ghana, in which through extensive photographic surveys she sought the “essence of African space”, and occasionally by Paul Oliver, who went on to publish the *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture*.

Given the scale of the scarcity of skilled labour in Ghana, there was a pressing need for the school to engage with social problems, which enabled it to transform most of its programmes into live programmes, particularly in the Volta River resettlement projects, which placed the academy at the direct service of research applied to society (Figure 7). The close collaboration brought students, staff and the Department of Housing and Planning Research (the former Building Research Group established in 1959) into close contact with local communities. This was facilitated by various officials and government departments, such as the Department of Social Welfare, the Community

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>83</sup> Lock, 1954. “Architectural Education and Training for the Tropics”, 114-16.

Development Office and the Chief Medical Officer, and was similar to the dynamic Gardner-Medwin and Matheson had envisioned existing between the school and the Building Development Centre. In turn, the Building Research Group, which acted as a consultant on resettlement for the government, supported by school staff, worked with the Tema Development Corporation, a public entity established in 1952 and headed by the first certified Ghanaian architect, whose housing and planning consultant was the Greek firm Doxiadis Associates. Another of its goals was to provide feedback to inform teaching at the Faculty of Architecture. The close articulation, together with the contacts with officials who provided valuable information on the ground and with the international aid machine, exposed students to such subjects as rural resettlement, housing, the organization of social buildings and very specialised knowledge techniques, ensuring a commitment with housing construction.<sup>84</sup>

The school's *modus operandi* followed the pattern of international aid reports, engaging with specific social problems that, like malaria, were sometimes seemingly unconnected to architecture. It often began with specific requests, as was the case of the first assignment prepared by Lloyd for third-year students, which took them to Nangodi, an area rife with river blindness, to prepare a "total plan embracing agriculture, housing, utilities and all components to make a living, pleasant and efficient new environment".<sup>85</sup> The students stayed in the area with the support of the Department of Social Welfare while conducting various surveys, and were welcomed by the chief, elders and people of Nangodi. The fieldwork began with a reconnaissance and exhaustive collection of existing information (historical background, soil fertility, etc.). It went on with

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<sup>84</sup> Lloyd et al, *Nangodi Report*.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

interviews and topographical and planning surveys, measurement of compounds, photographs of spaces within compounds, accounts of services, livestock, etc. and their statistical treatment. This resulted in the production of original material and data by students and staff, which was also an ambition of the first team of experts and the methodology they imprinted, to which was added another dimension that had been almost absent from the work of the previous UN experts: the graphic and visual information — in the case of the Gold Coast Mission, the photographic material collected was never included, although extensively developed later by the Bodiaskys. Lloyd described it as the need to develop “the ability to devise solutions”, but also “to diagnose and to prognosticate”.<sup>86</sup> (Figure 8)

In other words, they sought to be a combination of a broader capacity for investigation and analysis and a more contextual, direct response to a problem. The importance of dissemination, as stressed in the formative reports, and the emphasis on publication of what could be the first source material for teaching in the follow-up mission report,<sup>87</sup> was reflected in Lloyd’s strategy. Published as *Kumasi Occasional Reports*, the school’s work was being shared as something more than “just teaching architecture (in the traditional sense)”.<sup>88</sup> The original scientific research was further developed and eventually became instrumental in the work of students and teachers in subsequent years. This was an example of work being developed in response to the work begun two years earlier through the Nangodi project (Occasional Report 2), which “investigated the possibilities of producing a habitable unit of any shape capable of repetition and combination (...) to be constructed of local soil”, with the first parabolic

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<sup>86</sup> Lloyd, “The Quality of Architectural Education”.

<sup>87</sup> Gardner-Medwin and Matheson, *Report to the Council of Kumasi College of Technology*, 30.

<sup>88</sup> Author’s interview with John [Michael] Lloyd, 2016, Alicante.



vault, models of the parabolic houses recommended in the report and prototypes erected at Labun and Nangodi.<sup>89</sup>

The research developed and reports produced were a partial reflection of the school's relationship with its "parent", the AA. This happened mainly through the Department of Tropical Studies, through occasional visiting lecturers such as Jane Drew and particularly through lessons by former students, who, together with current students, addressed environmental problems in experimental ways. These young teachers included the Ghanaian John Owusu-Addo, the Anglo-Jamaican Patrick Wakely and Kamil Mumtaz from Pakistan. Kamil's brother Babar, a faculty member responsible for the 9<sup>th</sup> Occasional Report, "Transition: A Study for the Development of a Community in Northern Ghana" following completion of his first year at METU in Ankara (which was a result of Abrams' UN mission), completed his studies at KNUST in 1967, proving the international character of both schools, after which he immediately joined the staff. The following year, he and Ghanaian students Eve Adebayo and Clement Berbu Karikari (1968-69) brought all this experience to the AA, where they completed their DTS postgraduate studies, exemplifying the multi-directional flow of expertise between schools.

## **Conclusion**

The Gold Coast Mission was one of the first examples of technical assistance in the context of the EPTA in the field of housing, to rehearse many of the principles elaborated by the Reconnaissance Mission, which was established to prepare future missions. It therefore stands as an example of development strategies at the time and is representative of the shifting role of the international housing expert, giving an insight

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<sup>89</sup> Fullerton, *Sundried Block in Low Cost Housing*, iv.

into the skills and tools this expert was to master, the knowledge expected from him, and the techniques, formats and media required.

The mission's recommendation for the foundation of a new school reveals the importance given to housing management and the recognition of the role of public education in the problems and possibilities of housing and community development. The broad interpretation of housing that this “new expert” intended to cover, and the concentration of action in the policy domain, changed the theoretical boundaries of both research and action, which were no longer limited to problems of technology, building construction or design. In this activity context, the TA issued studies on land problems and policies, financing and education planning while stimulating collaborations and pilot projects, field research and cooperation in the establishment of housing centres. The mission’s recommendation for the foundation of a school paved the way for an articulation between the expert and the “inpert”, that is to say, between international and local intervention.

Abrams’ definition of the “inpert”, first conceived in Turkey, as someone who would understand architecture, housing policy, economics, urban land problems, administration, sociology, urban planning, finance, law and legislation, transport and all related disciplines<sup>90</sup>, was first translated into the field by Matheson and Gardner-Medwin during the follow-up mission, alongside the founding of the school. Lloyd’s work at KNUST was a result of a combination of several key characters and fundamental moments, the birth of technical assistance at the UN (Asia and Far East), two missions (Africa, Middle East) and not least the intellectual debate at contemporary international meetings at which architects from all over the world gathered to discuss

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<sup>90</sup> Abrams, *Man’s Struggle for Shelter*, 103.

the problem of housing and “the South”. It was a revision of the principles of the first and second UN reports, as well as a reconceptualization of the division between experts and “inerts”. This was also made possible through the assistance of a generation of teachers who had already experienced themselves a second cycle of an experiment in architectural education at the DTS, further improving and boosting their own training, that according to Abrams “was helpful but not sufficiently comprehensive to produce the general expert needed in the field”.<sup>91</sup>

Kumasi represents a truly transnational experiment, a southern incubator for subsequent experiments that followed. While Abrams, Koenigsberger and Gardner-Medwin were to cross paths at the UN on several other occasions, they each individually continued to seek to link housing and education in different ways. Abrams’ efforts bore fruit in Ankara, while Koenigsberger's persistence in introducing the subject of education and of moulding professionals who were particularly suited to housing problems continued throughout his career: for example, with the UN Mission to Malaysia in 1970<sup>92</sup>, illustrating the world spread of an involving model of housing strategies.

The UN missions enabled unique encounters that went beyond their premise. Bodiansky, for example, would be responsible for the Accra masterplan, undertake the organisation of a Seminar on housing in West Africa and the dissemination of the idea of “Habitat pour le plus grand nombre”, making a set of recommendations to the Technical Assistance Administration together with Tyrwhitt. Although calling for site-specific, country contextualized housing solutions, and advocating the need for non-

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p.104.

<sup>92</sup> Koenigsberger, “Teaching Methods for Settlement Planners and Builders”.

western approaches, international experts acted as agents of global dissemination of ideas, exporting knowledge, procedures, and methodologies in the “developing world”, which provided the testing ground for new housing, planning, and training concepts. Through education and the establishment of schools in the nation’s cities where policies were made and could be influenced, they believed it was possible to achieve the UN aims on a continuous basis.

### **Disclosure statement**

The author declares no potential conflict of interests.

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### **Figure captions**

Figure 1 Vladimir Bodiatsky working on drawings for the UN headquarters, New York, 1947. Source: United Nations Archives.

Figure 2 Map with the itinerary of the UN Housing Mission in the Gold Coast. Source: Gold Coast Report, 1954.

Figure 3 Village in Ghana photographed from the air (detail of northern savannah village). Source: Charles Abrams: Papers and Files, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections Cornell University Library.

Figure 4 Gold Coast Report, 1954.

Figure 5 Gardner-Medwin and Matheson: chart of proposed Courses in Architecture and Building, and Outline of proposed syllabus for Housing and Community Planning Course, 1956. Source: Report to the Council of Kumasi College of Technology, on Professional Education in Subjects Allied to Building, Annex to Housing in Ghana Part 2.

Figure 6 Charles Abrams working on the Roof Loan Housing Project, Ghana, 1963. Source: Charles Abrams: Papers and Files, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections Cornell University Library.

Figure 7 Visiting a prototype of 4-unit landcrete construction designed by Faculty of Architecture and Planning KNUST (John [Michael] Lloyd, first on the right), Ghana, 1963. Source: Charles Abrams: Papers and Files, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections Cornell University Library.

Figure 8 John [Michael] Lloyd on a study trip in Navrongo, Ghana, 1966. Source: Courtesy of John [Michael] and Catherine Lloyd.