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# Unlikely Collaborations? Planning Experts from both Sides of the Iron Curtain and the Making of Abuja

Anne-Katrin Fenk/Rachel Lee /  
Monika Motylińska

## ABSTRACTS

Als so genannte „Spielwiese des Kalten Krieges“ war das postkoloniale Subsahara-Afrika ein umkämpftes Territorium im ideologischen Machtspiel, das die zweite Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts beherrschte. Doch trotz der Spannungen zwischen Ost- und Westblock boten die blockfreien Nationen des „Südens“ auch Möglichkeiten für unwahrscheinliche Kollaborationen. Im Bereich der Stadtplanung ist dies bei der Entwicklung neuer Hauptstädte zu beobachten. Abuja, die neue Hauptstadt Nigerias, dient als ein anschauliches Beispiel. Unter Einbeziehung verschiedener Stimmen (vor allem aus den USA und dem Vereinigten Königreich) konzentrieren wir uns in diesem Artikel auf das Engagement der DDR und insbesondere auf den Beitrag von Heinz Schwarzbach. Durch die Analysen auf Makro- und Mikroebene hoffen wir, die bestehenden Planungsgeschichten des Kalten Krieges zu differenzieren. Und auch wenn die DDR als zweit- oder dritrangiger Spieler erscheint, stellt die Tatsache, dass überhaupt Personen aus der DDR am Abuja-Projekt beteiligt waren, die allgemeine Erzählung des Kalten Krieges in Afrika grundsätzlich in Frage.

As a so-called “playground of the Cold War”, post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa was contested territory in the ideological power game that dominated the second half of the twentieth century. However, despite the tension between eastern and western blocs, the non-aligned nations of the “South” also provided opportunities for unlikely collaborations. In the realm of urban planning, this can be observed in the development of new capital cities. Abuja, the new capital of Nigeria, serves as a potent example. While including a variety of voices (notably from the USA and UK), in this article we focus on the involvement of the GDR and particularly on the contribution of Heinz Schwarzbach. By providing analyses at both macro and micro scales, we hope to

complicate existing Cold War planning histories. And even though the GDR appears as a minimal player, the fact that figures from the GDR took part in the Abuja project at all fundamentally questions the general narrative of the Cold War in Africa.

## 1. Introduction

Writing to colleagues in September 1978, the architect and urban planner Heinz Schwarzbach gave his impressions of his first three weeks in Nigeria, where he had been engaged by the national government to work on the development of the new capital city, Abuja. Schwarzbach, whose professional base was at that time the Institute for Advanced Training [*Weiterbildungsinstitut*] in Weimar, German Democratic Republic (GDR), began his letter with a description of Lagos:

*Lagos is a distressingly ugly city, just a city for cars [...]. The cityscape is determined by a flyover, built by Julius Berger. There are no pedestrians; there are drivers and there are vendors who scurry between the cars, carrying the most incredible things on their heads.*<sup>1</sup>

In addition to illustrating his disdain for the city's lack of pedestrian accessibility, this short excerpt also shows the East German planner's interest in a major infrastructure project built by the West German construction company Julius Berger Nigeria Plc. Although he was not aware of it when he wrote the letter, during the Cold War, both Schwarzbach and Julius Berger, as well as a diverse range of international actors from both sides of the Iron Curtain and local figures, would contribute to the making of the new Nigerian capital. By documenting and exploring these cooperations, this article seeks to complicate binary narratives of the Cold War, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of the period. It further suggests that in former colonial environments that were undergoing nation-building processes, strict distinctions between East and West, or socialist and capitalist, were less disruptive than in other parts of the world. Indeed, despite the tension between the eastern and western blocs, the non-aligned nations of the "South" provided opportunities for unlikely collaborations.<sup>2</sup> Thereby, the agency of the non-aligned nations in creating such opportunities was crucial, as the following citation evidences:

1 Letter from Heinz Schwarzbach to colleagues in Weimar, 19 September 1978, University Archive Weimar (UAW), I 10 900 – Reisen in- und aus nichtsoz. Ausland.

2 Lukasz Stanek's research on the work of architects and planners from former communist nations around the world has shown that in the Middle East and Africa such collaborations were not as unusual as might be presumed. See Ł. Stanek, Introduction: The 'Second World's' Architecture and Planning in the 'Third World', in: *The Journal of Architecture* 17 (2012) 3, pp. 299–307; idem, Miastoprojekt Goes Abroad: The Transfer of Architectural Labour from Socialist Poland to Iraq (1958–1989), in: *The Journal of Architecture* 17 (2012) 3, pp. 361–386; Ł. Stanek (ed.), *ABE Journal: Socialist Networks*, in: *ABE Journal. Architecture beyond Europe* no. 6, <http://dev.abe-journal.eu/index.php?id=773> (accessed 5 March 2015); Ł. Stanek, Architects from Socialist Countries in Ghana (1957–67) in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 74 (2015) 4, pp. 416–442, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2015.74.4.416> (accessed 20 October 2019); idem, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War*, Princeton, NJ 2020.

*Most of the twenty-eight independent states of Africa have tended to align themselves with one of two blocs – African blocs, to be sure, but oriented in many important ways either to East or West. [...] The new governments have signed trade and credit agreements with Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, China, Hungary, and East Germany on the one hand; with Scandinavia, Japan, West Germany, Britain, and America on the other.<sup>3</sup>*

It seems that the Cold War was significantly warmer in the South. In the realm of urban planning, Abuja serves as a potent example.

After its discovery in 1958, oil became a determining factor in Nigeria's economy, rendering it one of the most sought-after states for Western and Eastern business interests in post-colonial Africa. At the same time, after gaining independence and following a devastating civil war (1967–1970), the government of Nigeria committed to bolstering its national narrative.<sup>4</sup> The need to create unity was the driving force behind relocating and rebuilding the capital from scratch within a so-called ethnically neutral landscape.<sup>5</sup> To accomplish this goal, the planning of Abuja in the late 1970s and 1980s witnessed the collaboration of architects and planners of diverse nationalities, traversing East-West and North-South divides. Nigeria's political decision to seek out international urban planning services by commissioning foreign parties enabled these transnational and trans-ideological collaborations to take place. Planning principles and policies from historically competing systems were integrated within the project: North American based liberalized market policies of the Garden City met the modernist town planning principles of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), Great Britain's post-World War II new town practices were combined with Japanese urban design as well as planning and engineering expertise from European socialist countries, India, Vietnam, and Tanzania, among others. This took place within a relative void of national urban policies in Nigeria.<sup>6</sup> Abuja could thus be designated as a site of negotiated twentieth century planning policies. By examining the making and early implementation of the Abuja master plan produced by this unexpected constellation of 'experts', this article sheds light on the mechanisms and structures of international urban planning projects in the second half of the twentieth century through the voices of three protagonists.

The transnational narrative of the development of the Abuja master plan is complex and ambiguous. Involving a diverse array of figures in shifting constellations – the majority of whom are not named in planning documents – it spans at least six continents and 40 years. Reflecting this spread, archival and other sources pertaining to the project are located around the globe. Despite our commitment to consulting as wide a range of

3 W. Schwarz, The Cold War and the African States, in: Commentary (June 1962), <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-cold-war-the-african-states/> (accessed 10 October 2019).

4 S. Samaila, Politics of heritage: Ethnic minorities and the politics of heritage in northern Nigeria, in: R. Lee/D. Barbé/A.-K. Fenk/Ph. Misselwitz (eds.), Things don't really exist until you give them a name. Unpacking urban heritage, Dar es Salaam 2017, pp. 124–129.

5 Interview with Stephen Lockwood by Rachel Lee, Transcript, 19 September 2018.

6 A. Mobugunje, Abuja: The Promise, the Performance and the Prospects, in: M.S.U. Kalgo, Olatubosum Ayileka (ed.), Abuja: Review of the Masterplan, Ibadan 2001, pp. 1–10.

material as possible, the picture remains imbalanced and incomplete, raising questions about how to write accurate histories of such projects. Research funding that contributed to the preparation of this article came from two research projects, both focused on the international role of the GDR.<sup>7</sup> Thus, while including a variety of voices (notably from the USA and UK), in this article we focus on the involvement of the GDR and particularly on the contribution of Heinz Schwarzbach. The article is framed by an analysis of the GDR's geopolitical and economic policies in relation to Africa and an exploration of architecture and planning projects on the continent. It then zooms in to the case study of Abuja, focusing on the work of Heinz Schwarzbach and the planners 'from the West' with whom he cooperated – particularly Stephen Lockwood (USA) and John Napleton (UK) – thus traversing the stereotypical boundaries associated with the Cold War.

This section is complemented by observations on the role of the construction company Julius Berger – which proved to be a key player in the development of Abuja. By providing analyses at both macro and micro scales, we hope to complicate existing Cold War planning histories. And even though the GDR appears as a minimal player, the fact that figures from the GDR took part in the Abuja project at all fundamentally questions the general narrative of the Cold War in Africa.

## 2. The GDR and Relations with Nigeria

Histories of post-World War II western European, Israeli and US American architecture, planning and development policies vis-à-vis decolonizing societies and new nation states have recently begun to be researched and written. These often point out the continuation of colonial policies or the development of neo-colonial methods – tropical architecture, Point 4, Rockefeller Foundation, UN Habitat etc.<sup>8</sup> However the role of socialist /

7 The projects are: "Architecture, Planning and Foreign Policy: Israeli and GDR Development Cooperation in sub-Saharan Africa 1950–1990", a 3-year research grant directed by Haim Yacobi (Ben Gurion University) and Philipp Misselwitz (TU Berlin) on which Anne-Katrin Fenk and Rachel Lee were employed; "GDR Architecture Abroad. Projects, Actors and Cultural Transfer Processes", a two-year research grant at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS), Erkner, funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation October 2016–October 2018; principal investigators: Christoph Bernhardt and Andreas Butter, postdoctoral researcher: Monika Motylińska.

8 See, for example, K. Arts / A. K. Dickson (eds.), *EU development cooperation. From model to symbol*, Manchester / New York 2004; C. Lancaster, *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, development, domestic politics*, Chicago / London 2007; P. Hansen, *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism*, London 2015; H. le Roux, *The Networks of Tropical Architecture*, in: *The Journal of Architecture* 8 (2003) 3, pp. 337–354; J.-H. Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Colonial Networks, Nature and Technoscience*, London 2016; K. De Raedt, *Between "True Believers" and Operational Experts: UNESCO Architects and School Building in Post-Colonial Africa*, in: *The Journal of Architecture* 19 (2014) 1, pp. 19–42; A. Levin, *Exporting Architectural National Expertise: Arie Sharon's Ife University Campus in West-Nigeria (1962–1976)*, in: R. Quek / D. Deane / S. Butler (eds.), *Nationalism and Architecture*, Farnham 2012, pp. 53–66; O. Uduku, *Modernist Architecture and "the Tropical" in West Africa: The Tropical Architecture Movement in West Africa, 1948–1970*, in: *Habitat International* 30 (2006) 3, pp. 396–411; I. Jackson / J. Holland, *The Architecture of Edwin Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew: Twentieth Century Architecture, Pioneer Modernism and the Tropics*, Farnham 2014; A. Iyer Siddiqi, *Architecture Culture, Humanitarian Expertise: From the Tropics to Shelter, 1953–93*, in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 76 (2017) 3, pp. 367–384; R. Lee, *Constructing a Shared Vision: Otto Koenigsberger and Tata & Sons*, in: *ABE Journal*.

communist actors is less well understood. The GDR's position in particular remains under-researched. GDR foreign policy was conceived of and mediated as a tool for the class struggle on a global scale. Current research shows a much more fragmented picture – presenting a chimera of strategies that were packed in the propaganda of solidarity, but driven by a need for economic survival and a striving for international recognition.<sup>9</sup> Especially at an early stage, projects were small-scale manoeuvres, often initiated and dependent on highly personalized relationships, following a trial and error approach, rarely with sufficient budgets to follow up.<sup>10</sup>

From 1956, the GDR attempted to enter the African market through various economic, political, cultural and technical operations and contracts.<sup>11</sup> After failing in Asia,<sup>12</sup> a rapprochement with Africa offered a great opportunity in the face of the Hallstein doctrine, which denied the GDR recognition as an independent state. The political leadership of the GDR began seeking trade relations with African nations that were moving towards independence, especially Ghana and Nigeria. However, it soon became clear that the GDR was taking the wrong approach to the African market, a circumstance that would not improve in the following years, and that this rather damning internal report confirms:

*The increase in the volume of trade with Africa in 1958 is obviously completely inadequate and proves that the GDR's foreign trade did not understand how to make even the slightest use of the opportunities that presented themselves.*<sup>13</sup>

The first trade relations between the GDR and Nigeria were developed on the basis of free currency transactions, through intermediaries mainly operated by British companies. The entry into trade relations with Nigeria was justified politically by employing the ideological argument of supporting the independence struggle. This was all the more necessary, as from the beginning the Nigerian market was judged to be capitalist.

It was not unusual for the newly independent states of Africa to approach the countries of the “North” independently – often without positioning themselves between the increasingly polarized political blocs. Numerous memos document that above all the independent African countries demanded financial support through loans as well as edu-

Architecture beyond Europe 2 (2012), <http://abe.revues.org/356> (accessed 17 December 2018); Idem, Otto Koenigsberger, Transcultural Practice and the Tropical Third Space, in: OASE 95 (2015).

- 9 C. Bernhardt/A. Butter/M. Motylińska (eds.), *Between Solidarity and Business. Global Entanglements in Architecture and Planning in the Cold War Period (Rethinking the Cold War series)*, Berlin/Boston, forthcoming. See also: H. Büschel, *Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe: Deutsche Entwicklungsarbeit in Afrika 1960–1975*, Frankfurt am Main 2014.
- 10 Bundesarchiv DN1/11432, Abkommensunterlagen (Sonstige Abkommen wie z.B. Kulturabkommen, Rundfunkabkommen, WTZ etc.) betreffend, Dahomey 1962, Ghana (1959–65, Guinea 1958–67), e.g. DIM, Länderberichte, Deutsches Institute für Marktforschung, Föderation Rhodesien und Nyasaland, Juni 1961.
- 11 Bundesarchive Berlin DN 1/10145, Vermerk vom 30.1.1959 über die Handelsbeziehungen der DDR zu den Afrikanischen Staaten.
- 12 Bundesarchiv DN1/10170 – Indonesien, Abkommen aus den Jahren 1956–1963.
- 13 Bundesarchiv, DN 1/10145, Ministry of Finance, Department of Foreign Exchange, International Financial Relations Sector, Trade Agreement Preparation, includes Sudan, Tanganyika, Nigeria, VAR, Note on GDR/Nigeria trade relations, 1959.

cation and professional training opportunities in the GDR. However, the GDR could rarely meet such demands – a first consequence of the escalating Cold War of Development Loans<sup>14</sup>. This often presented the GDR with enormous political challenges, as it was economically fragile and subjugated to a problematic special position within the political structure of the Eastern bloc.

### 3. GDR Architecture and Planning Projects in Africa and Attempts to enter the Nigerian Market

The majority of the GDR's construction projects in Africa were realized after the 1960s. However, a few were carried out during the early postcolonial phase. These included the construction of state printing presses in Conakry, Guinea (1959–1962) and in Tema, Ghana (1961–1964) as well as the cement plant in Alexandria (1960s). Yet it was not until the initially successful cooperation with Zanzibar, later united with Tanganyika, that the GDR succeeded in achieving a stronger foothold in the African market.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of the 1970s the international construction market had become highly differentiated. In comparison to West German construction companies and those from other members of the eastern bloc, the GDR played a minimal role in this respect,<sup>16</sup> apart from the specialized construction of cement plants. This was due to the fact that the restructuring of the construction industry, the rationalisation of the construction process and the standardisation of “typifications” in the GDR took their toll on overseas interests. In addition, projects such as the modernization of cities and very specific cybernetic discourses in the building and administrative disciplines promoted an introverted GDR perspective – out of step with international urban discourse.<sup>17</sup>

A focus on the industrial prefabrication of building elements was part of this shift. The GDR's inability to win international contracts even in this specialized context became clear in negotiations with Nigeria, circa 1978: The fact that the construction of a prefab housing plant would take three years, led to an immediate cancellation of the contract, which was subsequently awarded to an Irish company.<sup>18</sup> In some ways, the GDR “missed the boat” on the African construction market: On the one hand GDR companies failed

14 E.g. C. Lawson, Soviet Economic Aid to Africa, in: *African Affairs* 87 (1988) 349, pp. 501–518.

15 L. Wimmelbücker, Architecture and city planning projects of the German Democratic Republic in Zanzibar, in: Ł. Stanek/T. Avermaete (eds.), *Cold War Transfer: Architecture and Planning from Socialist Countries in the 'Third World'*, special issue of *The Journal of Architecture* 17 (2012) 3, <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjar20/17/3?nav=toCList> (accessed 21 June 2019), pp. 407–432.

16 Bundesarchiv, DH 2/2302, Bauakademie der DDR, building information, document abolishment and provision, study about the building market of the BR Nigeria, 15.10.1983.

17 Deutsche Bauakademie, *Die Aufgaben von Städtebau und Architektur beim umfassenden Aufbau des Sozialismus*, 6. Industrielles Bauen, Standardisierung und Typenprojektierung, Arbeitsmaterial zum Hauptreferat für die 9. Plenartagung der Deutschen Bauakademie, 1964: “The transition from handicraft to industrial building production is tantamount to a revolution in the building industry. (...) It was not until socialism that it became possible to follow the path of industrialization in the building industry with all its consequences.”

18 Interview with Heinz Schwarzbach by Anne-Katrin Fenk, 30 November 2018.



to prepare themselves for the international market, and, on the other, in comparison to western countries, the GDR could not muster sufficient construction capacity. There was a shortage of skilled workers and resources.

The 1980s represented a turning point: the need for hard currency led to an international and capital market policy adjustment. In 1983, after the deployment of a handful of GDR construction experts to Nigeria, the GDR's Academy of Architecture (Bauakademie der DDR) commissioned a study for possible construction contracts in Nigeria. These studies clearly show that the largest contractors in Nigeria at the time were West-German, building mostly large-scale infrastructure projects, healthcare facilities as well as industrial projects such as automobile factories, steel or pharmaceutical plants. In the area of social (public) buildings, only Hungary, Romania and the USSR from the eastern bloc were able to hold their own. New housing projects were largely planned by major British or French firms. For the GDR, entry into the Nigerian market presented a real challenge:

*As described [...] some European, capitalist countries dominate the Nigerian construction market. Especially West-Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy have been present for many years [...]. Since an entry into the Nigerian market [...] is only possible through mixed companies [...] such a company would have to be founded or the purchase would have to be made into already existing ones (USSR, Hungary). [...] In addition, a long-standing presence in the Nigerian market, personal relationships and "market maintenance funds" [German: Marktpflegegelder, euphemism for bribery] play a role that should not be underestimated in penetrating the Nigerian market.<sup>19</sup>*

Despite the earlier failure, the GDR was still speculating that it could export housing factories that would be used in the construction of Abuja, which may have been a reason for allowing Schwarzbach's involvement. This can be seen most clearly in the example of a study on the adaptation of the WBS 70<sup>20</sup> prefabricated building system for the "development market".<sup>21</sup> The documents also evidence the reduction in ideology in the GDR's export policy. This becomes comprehensible in particular by the adoption of a more business-like language. The technical references used for the study were also all of international importance – beyond the Cold War's borders. The most frequently quoted book *Tropenbau. Building in the Tropics* by Georg Lippsmeier,<sup>22</sup> a West-German architect, was diametrically opposed to the official political orientation of the GDR. None-

19 Bundesarchiv, DH 2/2302, Bauakademie der DDR, building information, document abolishment and provision, study about the building market of the BR Nigeria, 15 October 1983.

20 WBS 70 is a GDR-specific form of a highly industrialized, building system with prefabricated panels. From the mid-1970s it developed into a building system which found the greatest possible application in new construction. The standardisation, and only a small range of types, generated the typical appearance of the new housing estates in the GDR.

21 Bundesarchiv, DH 2/23668, Bauakademie der DDR, Institut für Wohnungs- und Gesellschaftsbau, Department Elementezentrum, Study "Product Offer for Housing and Social Construction in African Nation States" (Initiative Research Export) – Offer Solutions for Reinforced Concrete Construction Elements.

22 G. Lippsmeier et al., *Tropenbau, Building in the Tropics*, Munich 1980.

theless, changing the rigid specifications of the prefabricated construction technique to accommodate Nigerian climatic (and social?) conditions proved difficult:

*At the same time, however, it must be noted that the concrete solutions, especially their details, are not directly transferable to construction in the desired customer field (tropical and subtropical countries).<sup>23</sup>*

With the building of Abuja, the GDR was hoping to have a new opportunity to export its prefabricated housing technology. This was one of the reasons they were keen to get involved.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4. International Collaboration in Abuja

While the creation of a new capital city in Nigeria was certainly catalysed by the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), Nnamdi Elleh traces its history to the country's late nineteenth century colonial origins and early twentieth century attempts to administratively “amalgamate” the disparate regions of the vast West African territory under British control.<sup>25</sup> In the early 1970s, in an effort to counteract the tension and violence between the many Nigerian ethnic groups that had culminated in the Biafran War, the Nigerian government took the decision to establish a new capital city at the geographical centre of the country, in an area where no single group dominated. Abuja is located within the Federal Capital Territory which was established in 1976 on land characterized by small settlements: about 125,000 people lived in 840 villages at a low density of 16 persons/km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>26</sup> As neither Muslims, Christians nor Ancestor Worshipers dominated among the inhabitants, the territory was regarded as culturally and religiously “neutral” and therefore suitable as the site for the new capital city that would help to unify the fractured country.<sup>27</sup> Funding the project through wealth derived from petroleum export, the Nigerian government sought proposals for a master plan for the capital city.<sup>28</sup> Although this stage of the planning process has been described as a competition,<sup>29</sup> specifics about who participated and how it was organized have not yet surfaced.<sup>30</sup> According to Stephen Lockwood, Abraam Kruschkhov of Archisystems (Los Angeles) and director of the consortium International Planning Associates (IPA), that was awarded the commission in June 1977, was

23 Bundesarchiv, DH 2/23668, Bauakademie der DDR, Institut für Wohnungs- und Gesellschaftsbau, Department Elementezentrum, Study “Product Offer for Housing and Social Construction in African Nation States” (Initiative Research Export) – Offer Solutions for Reinforced Concrete Construction Elements.

24 Interview with Heinz Schwarzbach by Rachel Lee, 9 July 2014.

25 N. Elleh, *Architecture and Politics in Nigeria: The Study of a Late Twentieth-Century Enlightenment-Inspired Modernism at Abuja, 1900–2016*, Milton Park et al. 2017, p. 69.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 79 and S. C. Lockwood, *Abuja: Planning the New Capital of Nigeria – Unique Symbol or Urban Prototype*, in: T. L. V. Blair, *Urban Innovation Abroad. Problem Cities in Search of Solutions*, New York 1984, p. 266.

30 And Elleh does not include the competition in his timeline (Elleh, *Architecture and Politics*, p. 290).

informed about the Nigerian government's plans by an art dealer acquaintance in New York who strongly encouraged him to submit an entry.<sup>31</sup> Kruschkhov then put together a team consisting of the urban planning practice Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd (WMRT) of Philadelphia, and Planning Research Cooperative (PRC) of Washington DC.<sup>32</sup> While Kruschkhov played a crucial role in securing the commission, the majority of IPA's planning work was conducted by WMRT and PRC.

At around the same time, the Nigerian government began assembling a team to manage the project in Nigeria. Alongside the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) Board was the Technical Assessment Panel, an International Review Panel, and a contingent of unnamed FCDA Staff Members. While the International Review Panel consisted of experts who had been involved in the planning of other large new towns around the world – M.N. Sharma, Chief Architect of Chandigarh, India; G. Kahama of Dodoma, Tanzania; Charles Conrad of the National Planning Commission in Washington DC; and Fred Roche of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) in the UK – the Technical Assessment Panel was made up of mainly Nigerian architects, planners and engineers, as well as a few foreign experts. These included Heinz Schwarzbach, an architect-planner based in Weimar with experience in practice, research and teaching, who had been eager to work internationally for some time.

## 5. Heinz Schwarzbach: International Mobility, Transnational Cooperation, and Local Challenges

When Schwarzbach had inquired about joining the team of technical experts who would undertake the rebuilding of the devastated city of Vinh in Vietnam in 1974, he had been told that they needed engineers rather than architects. Four years later, however, when Nigerian government officials approached the GDR government about hiring a team of experts to work on the new capital city plan, Schwarzbach was suggested as a potential candidate. Two weeks after an interview at the Hotel Metropol in Berlin, Schwarzbach received his contract as Chief Architect and Planner of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA). Schwarzbach recalls the process as follows:

*I wanted to emphasize once again that the initiative came from the Nigerians, they wrote to the Americans, the English, the Poles and the GDR ... my predecessor was an Englishman who had spent an awful lot of money, they dismissed him and probably they then thought let's try the people from the East. Interviews were conducted in both Lagos and Geneva. Luckily, the Nigerian minister at the time had a soft spot for the Eastern countries.<sup>33</sup>*

31 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

32 Kruschkhov knew the senior partner David Wallace from the 1940s when they had worked together for the Chicago Housing Authority.

33 Telephone interview with Heinz Schwarzbach, interview by Anne-Katrin Fenk, Rachel Lee, and Monika Motylińska, Erkner, 17 September 2018.

Following a two-week (!) training course on the geography, politics, and culture of Nigeria, Schwarzbach and seven others – a team of doctors and engineers – travelled to Lagos with their partners to begin their work on the capital city project. In terms of hierarchy, Schwarzbach was the most senior member of the FCDA's architecture and planning team within the Nigerian government, and also the highest paid member of the GDR team, as he recalls.<sup>34</sup> First in Lagos and later at the site of the new capital itself, together with his team of largely Nigerian staff he was responsible for coordinating the work on the master plan, and managing the incoming tender applications. In letters to his colleagues in Weimar he remembers developing designs for housing and neighbourhoods, formulating building regulations and dealing with the “endless bureaucracy and double work.”<sup>35</sup>



Fig. 1. Heinz Schwarzbach with Mobolaji Ajose-Adeogun and Alhaji Abubakar Koko in Nigeria, 1978 (photo with water damage). Courtesy of Heinz Schwarzbach.

Apart from a few discreet hints, in his letters Schwarzbach, did not write about supposed or actual divisions of the Cold War. Instead he keenly observed the circumstances in Lagos and on the planning site, with a preference for anecdotes highlighting supposedly exotic experiences, a vibrant local market in Suleja or the long waiting periods and challenges of communication and logistics. His commentaries are marked with both sympathy for the mistreated, as in the remark “Often my heart bleeds [when I witness] how the petty local workers are hustled and neglected”, and superficial framing of racial differences and gendered othering, as in the description of Lagos:

34 Telephone interview with Heinz Schwarzbach (note 33).

35 UAW, I 10 900 – Reisen in- und aus nichtsoz. Ausland. Original: unendliche Bürokratie und Doppelarbeit.

*There are so many exotic pictures and proud figures – women carrying children on their backs with large loads on their heads, women with many small braids or huge shawls, with straightened hair they frequently look like rats.*<sup>36</sup>

Such statements meant only for a small group of colleagues offer insights into personal narratives not written for a broader audience or in any official context. These are especially valuable as ‘snapshots’ of particular positionalities (of a male planner from the GDR) at the time when he was present in Nigeria, as contrasted with his retrospective statements in the interviews, which were more filtered through the later experiences, awareness of the academic conventions and socially acceptable language. Nevertheless, it can only be speculated if the remark that,

*in our group, we often think how much easier it would be to bear with restrictions, mishaps and strains, and how much more we would have preferred to offer our workforce and our knowledge to a socialist-oriented developing country, and not this greedy, corruption inclined, rich Nigerian upper class*<sup>37</sup>

had a hint of irony which could be understood by close colleagues or was a sincere expression of frustration with local circumstances. Another possibility here is that the author was playing a game with the East German censorship, knowing that even private correspondence could be subjected to checking.

The change of tone between Schwarzbach’s private letters as quoted above and his official reports is apparent. In the latter, the focus lies – in accordance with the interests of the addressee, the Institute for Advanced Training – on the possibilities of implementation of knowledge gained in Nigeria for the courses and seminars in Weimar. However, a recurring source of Schwarzbach’s discontent, underlined both in the official documents and in our interviews, was the disappearance of a cache of materials and publications he had shipped from Nigeria to the GDR, with the intention of including it in the collection of the Institute for Advanced Training. This anecdote points to the fact that our perception of planning activities in Abuja in the late 1970s and 1980s is based on a limited number of sources – and to the element of chance involved in dictating which documents became available in archives and which were lost.

Far from feeling intimidated by a project that was directed by planners from the capitalist West, Schwarzbach, who was well versed in international planning ideas, found the experience very enriching, and, despite having a different ideological background, took advantage of the opportunities the project gave him to contribute his considerable expertise and skills. He manoeuvred and negotiated between socialist, capitalist, and local expectations

36 “Es gibt so viele exotische Bilder und stolze Gestalten – Frauen die Kinder auf dem Rücken gebunden mit großen Lasten auf dem Kopf, Frauen mit vielen kleinen Zöpfchen, oder riesigen Tüchern, mit entkrausten Haaren sehen sie leider aus wie Ratten.” Letter from 19 September 1978 to friends and colleagues from the Institute for Advanced Training, UAW, I 10 900/10 900 – Reisen in- und aus nichtsoz. Ausland.

37 Letter from 9 April 1979 to friends and colleagues from the Institute for Advanced Training, UAW, I 10 900 – Reisen in- und aus nichtsoz. Ausland.

that often collided, as the planners were confronted not with one Nigerian way of life, but with dozens of regional traditions to be taken into consideration, e.g. living outdoors, polygamy, and living in large families.<sup>38</sup> Schwarzbach enjoyed substantial mobility during his tenure. As well as travelling between Lagos and the Suleja Base Camp near the capital city site, which he compared to “living on the moon” in “barracks made of polyurethane foam where you sit like you’re in a tin can”,<sup>39</sup> he also travelled to Washington DC and Philadelphia to take part in meetings with IPA, to Wales to inspect prefabricated building elements, and to Milton Keynes to work on the detailed plans for the first residential district. According to Schwarzbach, despite the very challenging working conditions, particularly on site at Abuja where he and his FCDA team were stationed for the majority of the project (living and working in temporary buildings constructed of locally made cement bricks after termites had destroyed previous buildings made of sandwich board panels), the design process was one of constructive exchange in which all those involved were able to express their opinions on aspects of the plan, both in Nigeria and on his trips to the USA and UK.

## **6. Situating Schwarzbach’s Work Alongside that of his International Colleagues: Stephen Lockwood and John Napleton**

IPA directed their operations from the USA, and the project partners only travelled to Nigeria for important occasions, such as the final presentation of the master plan in February 1979. However, a Resident Manager – the architect, urban designer, and infrastructure planner Stephen Lockwood of PRC – was their representative, or “man on the ground” in Nigeria.<sup>40</sup> For three years Lockwood spent two weeks of every month in Nigeria, “handling anything that required direct cooperation with the client or ‘being there’.”<sup>41</sup> He also carried technical material between Philadelphia and Lagos where PRC maintained a liaison office with support staff. His contributions to the project were significant, particularly in the selection of the site for the new capital city and development of the Logistics Plan which addressed infrastructure development, construction schedule and related requirements.

While the political decision had been taken to locate Abuja in the central part of Nigeria, and maps had enabled the FDCA to identify a rough area for the site, extensive aerial reconnaissance and multi-factor site suitability analyses had to be carried out to determine its precise location, scale, and configuration. Among other considerations, flat land to accommodate an international airport with a 15,000 ft runway had to be available. Natural water features and interesting topographical elements befitting a capital city site

38 Letter from 18 December 1978 to friends and colleagues from the Institute for Advanced Training, UAW, I 10 9001 10 900 – Reisen in- und aus nichtsoz. Ausland.

39 Ibid. Original: “wir leben hier wie auf dem Mond”, “Baracken aus Polyurethanschaum, in denen man sitzt wie in einer Konservendose”.

40 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

41 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

were also sought. One of the IPA team's first tasks was to find such a site. To do this, Lockwood and IPA environmental experts were flown around an 8000 sq.km. area in a helicopter. Because the region was largely 'undeveloped' in terms of infrastructure, the Nigerian army placed canisters of aviation fuel in a few strategic locations, allowing the helicopter crew to land, refuel, and continue their survey.



Fig 2. Stephen Lockwood (centre) and colleagues on a break from a "ground truth" flight. During these helicopter expeditions favoured locations for the site of the new capital were analysed regarding geology, topography, landscape, water bodies, and views. Courtesy of Stephen Lockwood.

IPA's master plan for Abuja included both the Capital City Master Plan and a development plan for the region, with resettlement villages for those forced to leave their homes by the development of the capital, and satellite cities, later designed by Schwarzbach's colleague, G. Wagner of the Bauakademie in East Berlin. Taking advantage of the topography and natural beauty of the area, Abuja is dominated by Aso Hill, a rocky outcrop on which the central axis, which comprises governmental, commercial and cultural facilities, is focused. Similarly to Brasilia, an acknowledged source for the project<sup>42</sup> and a city that Lockwood visited as part of the preparation of the master plan,<sup>43</sup> two wings of residential districts branch out on either side, responding to the topography of the site. The residential areas were conceived at the scale of "mini-cities" of 100–200,000 inhabitants, and subdivided into neighbourhood units of 40–60,000, linked by public transit

42 The Federal Capital Development Authority, *The Master Plan for Abuja the New Federal Capital of Nigeria*, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979, p. 99.

43 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

spines in “development corridors”. An additional network of parkways and freeways was to serve private cars and other vehicles.

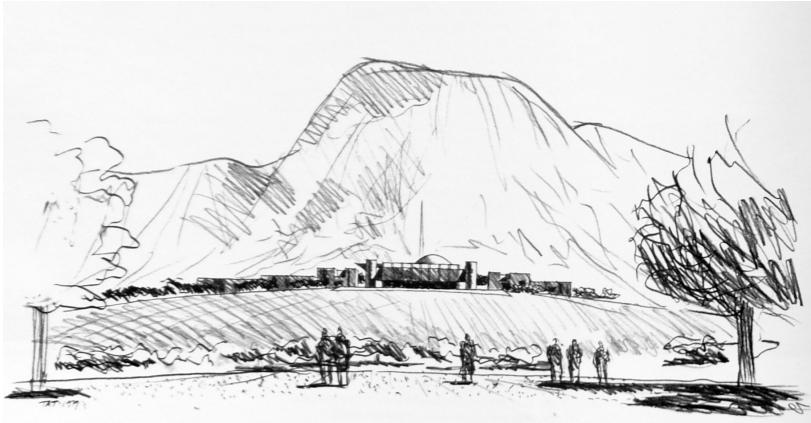


Fig 3. View of the parliament building from the central area of Abuja. Aso Hill dominates the backdrop. Federal Capital Development Authority, 1979, p. iv.

Stephen Lockwood’s activities intersected with Schwarzbach’s as both took part in Technical Assessment Panel meetings during the development of the master plan. Lockwood also remembers enjoying professional discussions with Schwarzbach over lunches and dinners. Trained in the US as an architect and planner, Lockwood was aware of the strong architectural and planning culture in pre-World War II (eastern) Germany. Initially, however, he was not sure how to interact with his colleague from the other side of the Iron Curtain, wondering to himself, “should I really be talking to him?”<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting that Schwarzbach encountered similar feelings when meeting West-German colleagues for the first time. As they initially spoke to each other in English, their national identities were downplayed. This broke the ice and led one of them to later say, “Oh, it is possible to talk to you!”<sup>45</sup> Although on a macro level the Abuja project seemingly smoothly combined actors from the eastern and western blocs, such everyday encounters show the extent to which Cold War propaganda had affected people’s lives and inhibited their interactions.

The Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) made up another significant contingent of the foreign architects and planners working on Abuja. Similar to IPA, most of the work by the British group was conducted from their domestic base in the UK. John Napleton, a traffic and infrastructure planner, directed MKDC’s activities in Abuja between 1978 and 1982. According to Napleton, the connection between the

44 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

45 Interview with Heinz Schwarzbach (note 33).



Nigerian government and the Milton Keynes group came through Fred Roche, General Manager at MKDC, who met a senior FCDA official at a conference on new towns held in Iran. Napleton's work began with a month-long consultancy, during which he selected architecture and planning consultants to take part in the project. Because the FCDA was satisfied with his work, MKDC was awarded subsequent contracts that included developing an engineering and infrastructure system for the whole city, conducting the detailed planning of a housing district – the so-called “accelerated district” – and culminating in the short-lived award of the contract for the prestigious central area. According to Napleton, MKDC lost the central area commission to Kenzo Tange due to bribery:

*One time Fred Roche and I were in Lagos and we had just been awarded the full design consultancy contract for the central area of Abuja, which was an area the size of central Milton Keynes. The whole lot, everything, all the buildings, hotels, infrastructure, the lot. It was a vast appointment. And about two days later we found we had lost it because it had been given to a Japanese architect called Kenzo Tange<sup>46</sup> in a sudden change of mind by the Nigerian cabinet. So probably, in my view, backed by substantial payments to somebody or other – but this was usual in Nigeria.<sup>47</sup>*

Corruption was also alluded to by both Lockwood and Schwarzbach in our interviews with them. Indeed, Lockwood's firm (PRC) eventually pulled out of Nigeria because US corporate tax and audit laws, notably the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (1977) was a major handicap to US businesses working in Nigeria. Together with the difficulty of obtaining payment in hard currency, this Act put PRC (Nigeria) Ltd. out of business as they were unable to pay the bribes and employ the third party agents necessary to win commissions.<sup>48</sup> Towards the end of his tenure, Schwarzbach spent six weeks in Milton Keynes working with the MKDC on the plans for the accelerated district – the first residential area of the master plan to be realized. The detailed drawings were submitted to the FCDA in 1980, and the contract for the realization of the work was awarded to the West-German construction company Julius Berger.<sup>49</sup> MKDC remained actively involved in the Abuja project until late 1982, when the situation in Nigeria was getting “politically hairy”<sup>50</sup> and the government seemed likely to fall.

Besides Lockwood and Napleton, on a day-to-day basis, Schwarzbach worked closely with Ikema, a young architect who, originally from Nigeria, had studied in Stuttgart and

46 It is interesting to note that despite his limited contribution of the design for the central area, which built substantially on the work of IPA, Kenzo Tange has wrongly been canonized as the designer of Abuja (for more on this see Elleh, *Architecture and Politics*, p. 79 and pp. 134–143).

47 Interview with John Napleton (b.1944) by Sheila Lindsay, Digital recording, Living Archive Milton Keynes, [http://www.livingarchive.org.uk/content/catalogue\\_item/the-peoples-history-of-milton-keynes/oral-history-audio-recordings-of-residents-who-moved-into-milton-keynes-to-work-for-milton-keynes-development-corporation/interview-with-john-napleton-b-1944](http://www.livingarchive.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/the-peoples-history-of-milton-keynes/oral-history-audio-recordings-of-residents-who-moved-into-milton-keynes-to-work-for-milton-keynes-development-corporation/interview-with-john-napleton-b-1944) (accessed 10 May 2020).

48 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

49 Ibid.

50 Interview with John Napleton by Sheila Lindsay (note 47).

had been working in the USA before the Abuja commission. He also cooperated with planners and architects of other nationalities.



Fig. 4. Schwarzbach and international colleagues. From left to right: Ngungen from Vietnam, Johanssen from Sweden, Schwarzbach, and a group of unnamed Polish engineers. Courtesy of Heinz Schwarzbach.

Like the East German team, a group of Polish engineers, including some with previous experience abroad in Afghanistan, were based full-time in Nigeria, as was a Swedish surveyor, and engineers and other workers from India, Vietnam, and the Philippines.<sup>51</sup> None of these people are acknowledged by name in the master plan document, presumably being categorized as “staff members of the Federal Capital Development Authority.” The Abuja project thus raises questions regarding authorship in international planning projects. Considering the thousands of named and unnamed people involved in the planning of Abuja, untangling who designed what is practically impossible, as Schwarzbach’s own case demonstrates. While Schwarzbach maintains the significance of his responsibilities, and Napleton confirms that Schwarzbach was “deeply embedded in the whole process,”<sup>52</sup> Lockwood stated that “his [Schwarzbach’s] roles in the project were not very clear.”<sup>53</sup> While Lockwood was aware the Schwarzbach had an office with the FCDA and was an active member of the Technical Assessment Panel, their discussions regarding the Master Plan were informal. In an interview, Schwarzbach recollected that one of his contributions to the master plan had been the inclusion of a narrow park that flanks the

51 E.g. A letter from 19 September 1978 to friends and colleagues from the Institute for Advanced Training, UAW, I 10 9001 10 900 – Reisen in- und aus nichtsoz. Ausland.

52 Interview with John Napleton by Rachel Lee, 27 August 2018.

53 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

north-western edge of the central area, extending to Aso Hill, joined by the parkways and containing cultural and recreational infrastructure as well as a meandering stream.<sup>54</sup>



Fig. 5. Landscape plan of Abuja showing the water feature. Federal Capital Development Authority, 1979, p. 9.

Comparing it to the late eighteenth century Park an der Ilm in Weimar – Schwarzbach’s hometown – with its river, Goethe House and museums, similarities emerge. Within the new federal capital of Nigeria Schwarzbach had included a piece of Romantic German planning culture. While for Schwarzbach this green space was intended to improve the quality of life for the inhabitants of Abuja, for Stephen Lockwood it represented one of the failings of the project, namely the lack of international, and particularly local Nigerian planning experience of the team:

*[The] water feature expresses the limitations of doing the master plan in the way it was done. Water borne diseases were not really thought of. The idealisation throughout the plan reflects that the work was done by a non-Nigerian team based on international principles. If everyone had lived and worked in Nigeria for a long time before working on the plan, the plan would have probably been very different.<sup>55</sup>*

Apart from a number of the Polish engineers, none of the team, including IPA and the MKDC contingent, had previous experience of working in the Global South, and no development planners – urban planners with specialist training that focused on planning issues in the Global South – were involved.<sup>56</sup> John Napleton also expressed his disapproval of the water feature, for health and economic reasons:

54 Interview with Heinz Schwarzbach (note 24).

55 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

56 Ibid.

*Keeping the river open was not a good idea because of water borne diseases. The water would have to have been carried through site on culverts, which would have been massively expensive. There was no way it could be turned into Weimar.*<sup>57</sup>

Neither the water feature, nor the long, narrow park were ever realized. Lockwood, whose inputs to the project included reviewing alternative sites, maintains that his contribution – as member of a planning team – was “modest”,<sup>58</sup> while Napleton sees his personal role as much more significant. In an interview, he recalled meeting a minister from Nigeria in England in the early 1990s. In an attempt to get Napleton back on board, the minister reportedly said:

*Mr Napleton, you did a wonderful job on Abuja, but since you left we have made a mess of it, and we want you to come back. [...] Mr Napleton you are the founding father of our capital city.*<sup>59</sup>

Far fewer open questions regarding authorship remain, however, in the realization of Abuja and the construction work that followed the approval of the master plan.

## **7. The Elephant in the Room: West-Germany and the Implementation of the Master Plan**

As underlined by one of the Nigerian planners involved in the review of the Abuja master plan conducted in the 1990s, Johnson Falade,<sup>60</sup> the role of another major actor should be scrutinized in order to understand power structures behind the development of Abuja. The silent protagonist of the development process was the construction company Julius Berger Nigeria Plc., a subsidiary of Bilfinger Berger corporation (since 2012: Bilfinger SE) – mentioned already in the introductory quote by Heinz Schwarzbach, in which he commented on the cityscape of Lagos as dominated “by a flyover, built by Julius Berger”. This was a reference to Eko Bridge – the first investment of the company from West Germany in Nigeria that was completed in 1969. It paved the way for further investments in transport infrastructure (e.g. the harbour on the Tin Can Island, several highways, further wide-span bridges in Lagos) and, in the following decades, in almost every other area of construction industry.<sup>61</sup>

57 Interview with John Napleton (note 52).

58 Interview with Stephen Lockwood (note 5).

59 Interview with John Napleton (note 52).

60 Interview with Johnson Bade Falade by Monika Motylińska, Lagos, 2 September 2018. Falade was a lecturer at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, besides he worked in several positions with the United Nations Systems including the UNDP and the UN-Habitat.

61 B. Stier/M. Krauß, Drei Wurzeln – ein Unternehmen. 125 Jahre Bilfinger Berger AG, Verlag Regionalkultur, Ubstadt-Weiher, 2005 pp. 469–475.

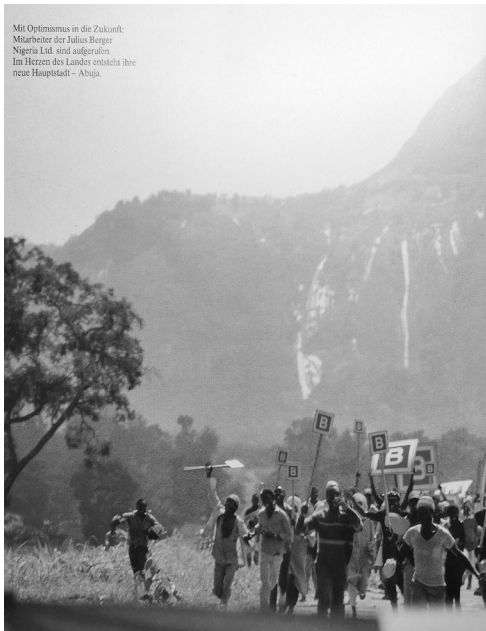


Fig. 6. Fragment of the image from a Julius Berger Nigeria official publication with a caption in propagandistic tone: “with optimism in the future: workers of Julius Berger Nigeria Ltd. are called upon. In the heart of the country their new capital is being built – Abuja.” Source: D. Blum, *Bauen in Nigeria – Eine Dokumentation der Julius Berger Nigeria Ltd., Tochtergesellschaft der Bilfinger+Berger Bauaktiengesellschaft*, Wiesbaden 1981, p. 206.

The company was registered in the 1960s with 100% German capital, however, the shares of local stakeholders (esp. governments of Lagos state and the plateau states) have subsequently risen as a consequence of legal requirements, so that since 1979 the company has had a 60% involvement of Nigerian capital.<sup>62</sup>

From Lagos as the largest Nigerian city and business hub, Julius Berger expanded its zones of influence across the whole country and became involved in the realization of the majority of construction projects in Abuja. Strikingly enough, this dominance of a single company – perhaps due to its ubiquitousness in the Nigerian context of the 1970s and 1980s – has not been reflected upon by Schwarzbach, whereas both Napleton and Lockwood mentioned the significant role of the construction firm in our interviews with them. However, the history of the construction of infrastructure and large-scale architecture in Abuja has become an important chapter in the self-depiction of the company. In this narrative of success and overcoming logistical challenges in this vast sub-Saharan country, the “swift and efficient” work that began in 1981 with the preparation of the terrain between the rainy seasons. This haste was crucial as originally the Nigerian federal government had intended to move to Abuja as early as 1983.<sup>63</sup> In doing so the company followed a long-term strategy of securing as many commissions as possible within the Federal Capital Territory. In one of Berger’s lavish coffee table books, it was stated that:

62 D. Blum, *Bauen in Nigeria – Eine Dokumentation der Julius Berger Nigeria Ltd., Tochtergesellschaft der Bilfinger+Berger Bauaktiengesellschaft*, Wiesbaden 1981, p. 57.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[...] *shovel excavators, roller compactors, crawlers, low-loading trucks and trailers are rolling almost without a pause to their sites of operation. And that is why 40 of our men had moved from the swampy bush and mangrove regions of Lagos to the favourable altitude of 400 metres.*<sup>64</sup>

Yet this was just the beginning of the labour and capital intense involvement of the Julius Berger company in Abuja. Since the 1980s it has developed a profile as a general contractor, able to provide for the whole construction chain – starting with the supply of construction materials such as cement or steel, up to turn-key projects and production of interior design, as described in the following enumeration:

*Thus, Julius Berger now has its own company quarrying and processing granite into wall or floor cladding, granite flooring, stairs, tiles and special products for household applications [that] were previously non-existent in Nigeria. And it also now produces a large range of general building materials such as terrazzo and tiles, as well as the famed red concrete roof tiles now sported by many buildings in Abuja. (These are so popular, meanwhile, and have so proven their worth, that some houses have even opted for plastic imitations!) The Julius Berger product line also includes a full spectrum of pre-cast concrete parts, as well as aluminium window frames, doors, and sun breakers.*

*Then there is also the Julius Berger furniture manufacturing facility in Abuja, the Abuja Furniture Production company. Furniture designed jointly by Nigerians and Europeans is produced here ready for a life in a building Julius Berger has been commissioned to erect, or elsewhere: made from top-quality local wood in keeping with European designs, the range includes superior functional furniture, fitted kitchens, and fitted offices, dining and coffee tables, wardrobes, cabinets, and chairs.*<sup>65</sup>

To paraphrase, even if such marketing propaganda should be treated with caution, Julius Berger International has played a seminal role in the creation of the built environment in Abuja.

In this regard, the erection of the federal capital has become a crucial phase in the expansion of the firm in the country, as it enabled the contractor to gain even wider access to political and economic stakeholders. In geographic terms, Abuja was considered an outpost base for focusing new activities in central and northern parts of Nigeria. Moreover, the ongoing development of the new capital city and the ever-growing maintenance needs have led to follow-up commissions, thus cementing the presence of the company from Wiesbaden in the most populous African country.

64 Ibid.

65 D. Blum/J. Gaines, Julius Berger in Nigeria 1970–1995; A Documentation on Julius Berger Nigeria PLC An affiliated Company of Bilfinger, Wiesbaden 1995, p. 101.

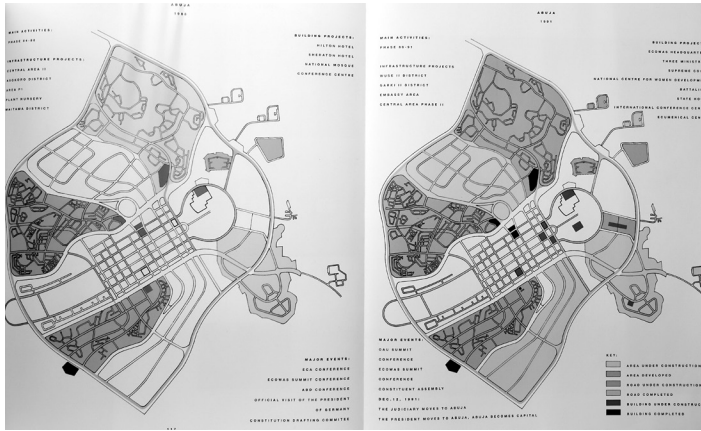


Fig. 7. An illustration from the publication celebrating 25 years of Julius Berger Nigeria Ltd. Depicted are diverse construction activities of the company in Abuja in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Source: Blum/Gaines, *Julius Berger in Nigeria*, pp. 117–118.

Nowadays functioning under the name Julius Berger International, it continues to be the main contractor for the construction of the Nigerian capital. Yet what may look like a simple success story of market conquest by a construction company with its origins in Germany calls for a much broader scholarly investigation including not only transnational entanglements behind the planning of Abuja but also underlying environmental issues or resettlements of the population living in the area – only then can the history of the Nigerian capital can be depicted in a much more nuanced way.<sup>66</sup>

## 8. Conclusion: Making a Capital City

Abuja offered a diversity of professional groups opportunities to exhibit know-how in the field of urban development and planning, and establish themselves internationally, while coincidentally providing vast possibilities for investment. As the “biggest urban planning project in the world”<sup>67</sup> at the time, it is of no surprise that the planning documents refer to large iconographic projects such as Chandigarh, India or Islamabad, Pakistan, to name just two, in whose ‘successful’ histories the IPA and FCDA hoped to align themselves. Whether the case of Abuja is a Cold War anomaly, a collaborative bright spot in a period defined by fear, or indicative of a movement that was taking place across the First, Second and Third Worlds requires more research. As demonstrated above, it was the agency of actors from the Global South that facilitated the transnational and trans-ideological exchange, enabling boundaries to be broken and productive co-operations to take place.

66 Interview with Johnson Bade Falade (note 60).

67 Interview with John Napleton (note 52).

Furthermore, myriads of individual or collective, expressed or implied motivations and agendas have intersected in the development of the capital city.

Abuja cannot be considered as a concluded project, as more recent developments demonstrate. In 2006 Albert Speer and Partners (AS+P) were commissioned to provide a revised master plan for Abuja. A globally active architecture and planning firm headquartered in Frankfurt am Main, AS+P have since received follow up work in Abuja. The domination of globally operating German firms such as Julius Berger and AS+P over international alliances or indeed a shift towards commissioning Nigerian planning and construction firms deserves a more detailed examination.