

Decolonizing spaces: A (visual) essay on strategies of appropriation, transformation and negotiation of the colonial built environment in postcolonial Congo

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ABSTRACT

This paper starts from the assumption that the current physical landscape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be read as a territorial palimpsest which testifies to a continuing process of layering uses and meanings, a process that occurred during colonial times but is still ongoing today. Through a series of case studies, each of which is introduced by a recent photograph taken by the authors, we aim to decode particular colonial spaces in the DRC and show how they were (re)constructed and shaped over time and thus became “decolonized.” In doing so, the analysis touches on issues of both (post)colonial history and memory. A wide variety of typologies of former colonial spaces has been chosen, from buildings to urban spaces, and from privately owned sites to more official institutions, located in cities like Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, as well as in the region of the Lower Congo. As such, the series presented here illustrates a number of strategies of appropriation, transformation and negotiation of colonial built legacy that are indicative of both official policies of (re)use and informal practices of everyday survival.

Colonial legacy, postcolonial heritage and African appropriation

In November 2009, Magnum photographer Carl De Keyzer published *Congo (belge)*, a photographic account of the travels he made through the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereafter DRC) in recent years, using a 1950s tourist guide as a tool to retrace sites deemed “of interest” by the Colonial Information Services of the time (De Keyzer, 2009). *Congo (belge)* is a massive book, presenting via large-size photographs a huge number of physical remnants of Belgian colonization in the DRC: former colonial villas, official buildings and offices, missionary posts, schools, leisure resorts, research centers, railroad infrastructures, hydroelectric plants, industrial sites, mining compounds and more. The book and the

accompanying exhibit, that opened in January 2010 at the FotoMuseum in Antwerp, have received remarkable attention in the national media, demonstrating that the Congo is still very much a hot topic in Belgium.¹ The fact that 2010 marks the fiftieth anniversary of DRC's independence is, of course, creating momentum for a *réveil* in the interest in Belgian colonial history, but that *réveil* was in fact already initiated more than a decade ago when Adam Hochschild wrote his bestselling 1998 book, *King Leopold II's Ghost. A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*—a book which established within popular discourse Belgium's reputation as one of the harshest colonial regimes in Africa. The major 2005 exhibition, *The Memory of Congo: The Colonial Era*, mounted by the Royal Museum for Central Africa, the *lieu de mémoire* of Belgian colonialism par excellence, further revived Belgian colonial history as a topic of both popular and academic interest.²

Within that context, the *Congo (belge)* project stands out because of its explicit focus on the physical legacy of Belgian colonialism, a topic that, though the subject of scholarly research since the mid-1990s,³ has largely been overlooked in more popularizing discourses on Belgium's colonial past. It is highly significant in that respect that *Congo (belge)* has triggered both critical acclaim—already in December 2009 it was nominated “the most beautiful book of 2010” and the “most relevant account on the Congo” by several critics—and acerbic comments stating that Carl De Keyzer's photographs of the often ruinous state of the Belgian colonial legacy sustain an image of the Congo as a country in complete disarray. Some have even accused him of cynically celebrating the beauty of decay, and it has been noted that former colonials have left the exhibit in tears, their tranquil memories of a long bygone past shattered by the direct confrontation his photographs offer with the contemporary condition of the Congo. *De Standaard*, one of the leading Flemish newspapers, tried to poke up the controversy by publishing the rumor that the Congolese president, Joseph Kabila, was “not a fan of Carl De Keyzer” and, after having seen the book, had put him on the black list of people who would no longer receive a visa for the Congo (Schelstraete, 2010; see also Strubbe, 2010).⁴

The controversy indicates the extent to which physical legacy can act as a powerful mediator between colonial history and postcolonial memory. As such, it has a lot to offer researchers interested in complex processes of decolonization. What the photographs of Carl De Keyzer, in fact, demonstrate is not only that the physical remnants of Belgian colonialism, even if often in a dilapidated state, are still largely defining the landscape in which contemporary life in the Congo unfolds—not only in the urban centers, but also in the more remote regions of the territory—but also that, over time, these former colonial sites have been reused and appropriated and consequently have taken on new meanings. In a recent talk, the photographer explicitly argued that what he was really interested in was shooting images whose *décor* consists of a colonial legacy, but with a foreground depicting

the Congo of today (Carl De Keyzer, presentation of the *Congo (belge)* project at FoMu life, lecture at the FotoMuseum Antwerp, March 25, 2010). In other words, *Congo (belge)* provides us with a sample of how colonial space has been “decolonized” in the DRC.⁵

Steering clear of the somewhat problematic term “shared heritage” (*patrimoine partagé*) that has recently surfaced in the discourses of international organizations, committees and working groups working on the built environment in former colonial territories,⁶ this essay seeks to add some thoughts on such processes of “decolonizing spaces.” It is an empirical exercise commenting on photographs taken by the authors during their research on colonial architecture and urban planning in the Congo over the past ten years. The images presented here show a series of sites whose colonial origins are traced and contextualized, using archival and published sources as well as local fieldwork notes and oral accounts.⁷ We will read these sites here as being part of larger urban contexts that bear the traces of colonial planning policies and dissect them as territorial palimpsests that speak of a continuing process of layering uses and meanings, a process that occurred during colonial times but is still ongoing today.⁸ The analysis, then, not necessarily focuses on the shift from colonial to postcolonial times, but also pays attention to evolutions within those two time frames. While deliberate, our choice of sites is, of course, not exclusive. Other sites could equally have been selected. The geographical scope of this essay is much more limited than what is presented in Carl De Keyzer’s *Congo (belge)*, but it was crucial that at least one of us had visited each site discussed here over the past years. As a result, a major focus is on Kinshasa, the Bas-Congo region and the city of Lubumbashi. But within that limit, our choice aims at displaying a broad typology of former colonial spaces, from buildings to urban spaces, and from privately owned sites to more official institutions. Taken together, the series of sites presented here illustrates a number of strategies of appropriation, transformation and negotiation of colonial built legacy indicative of both official policies of (re)use and informal practices of everyday survival acting on physical spaces in the challenging reality of contemporary DRC.



Figure 1: Kinshasa, urban square in the Kintambo neighborhood (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2007)

In 1881, Henry Morton Stanley founded, under the authority of King Léopold II, the first colonial post of what was to become Léopoldville, the capital city of the Belgian Congo. As the site, he chose a hill in the close vicinity of the existing village of Kintambo that has subsequently been renamed Mont Stanley (today Plateau Ngaliema). The making of Léopoldville, nowadays known as Kinshasa, was not, as classic colonial historiography has it, a purely colonial enterprise. In fact, the city did not develop from virgin soil (*terre vierge*), but was rather built in an area where various African villages existed. Hence, the process of colonization of Kinshasa was geared from the very beginning by a process of negotiation between local and foreign actors (St-Moulin, 1971).

Already during Kinshasa's initial transformation into a colonial camp during the late nineteenth century, African and European people lived separated in different quarters, on both sides of the central market square of Kintambo. This binary structure, composed of well dimensioned concessions for Europeans and grid-

shaped encampments for Africans, both in the vicinity of the port and industrial area of Ngaliema, came into existence rather spontaneously. In fact, no building or town ordinances that explicitly proscribed segregation along racial lines existed before 1930.⁹ Rather, the colonial order itself created a social and economic stratification of the site and de facto resulted in a residential separation of colonizer and colonized. But even after 1930, when segregationist policy and planning started to be implemented by the colonial government, racial segregation was still largely directed by regulations which imposed first and foremost economic and social restraints. For instance, while African people were not prohibited by law to live in the new town Joli Parc, situated east of Kintambo and designed in the late 1950s according to “garden city” principles, social habit and economic limitations discouraged them from living there.

Although Kintambo lost importance from the 1930s onwards, in favor of the fast-growing administrative and commercial quarters of Kalina and Kinshasa, these patterns of segregation at Kintambo are still highly visible today. After independence in 1960, President Mobutu and his entourage settled at the former Mont Stanley and thus consolidated colonial lines of power. Whereas most of Kinshasa’s popular neighborhoods, such as Kintambo, were severely degraded after independence due to the collapse of the state machinery and the economic crisis, the neighborhood of Joli Parc and the newly emerging Ma Campagne became highly serviced and fortified enclaves for rich businessmen, politicians, sportsmen and musicians. Some of the inhabitants of Kintambo still work in the industrial site of Ngaliema, but most of them are employed in the informal economy or seek solace in the so-called pentecostal churches. Every building on the central square of Kintambo, called Kintambo Magasin, in fact accommodates commercial or religious activities, and facades have been transformed with huge billboards. Yet, commerce also takes place here in a more hidden, informal way. People who at first glance seem to be ordinary passersby are in reality operating as money changers, hairdressers or shoeshine boys or providing pay phone services, working in accordance with the secret and illegal but notorious system of *cooperation* (“*la coop*”; see Nzeza Bilakila, 2004). As Yoka writes, “Let me tell you this: In Kinshasa nobody works, but everybody ‘cooperates.’ (...) But in Kinshasa, he who doesn’t risk anything, ends up with nothing at all” (1995:15–16). The only thing that seems to be lacking in this important trade of the *cooperation* is the physical infrastructure we traditionally expect to come along with the services it offers to the customer (De Boeck, Van Synghel, and Kalimasi, 2005).



Figure 2: Kinshasa railroad (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2007)

During the late nineteenth century, today's vast and polycentric city of Kinshasa, the former Léopoldville, developed out of two separate colonial posts, Léo-Ouest and Léo-Est. Coinciding with two pre-colonial villages (Kintambo and Kinshasa), these new settlements were interconnected by a railway. In Léo-Est, which was the main commercial center and the heart of Léopoldville, it was this railway and an undefined "no man's land" that marked the boundaries of the European quarter, separating it from the African neighborhood. However, due to the limited available space in the city center, the European quarter gradually extended into "no man's land," thus neutralizing from the 1920s onwards the railway's role as a physical barrier between the communities. Around the same time, the colonial government determined that this railway going through the center of Léopoldville was no longer suited for the cargo trade it was carrying daily, and consequently decided to move it.¹⁰

This relocation of the railway became the topic of a fierce contention between the local government (Comité du District Urbain) and the railway company

(Compagnie du Chemin de fer), each forwarding different plans and ideas. Around 1932, the expropriation of African houses began, and the construction of a new railway commenced according to a trajectory that, due to the economic crisis, was defined along the cheapest and shortest possible connection between Léo-Ouest and Léo-Est. The local government initially envisioned the new railway as a physical barrier between the European quarter and the African neighborhoods. It never functioned that way, however, as it actually ran directly through the latter part of the city.

After independence, due to the economic crisis and the degradation of the port infrastructure, the railway passed into disuse. Informal commercial activities, not permitted in the African quarters during colonial times, began to pop up along the railroad and radically transformed the railway into a market area in close vicinity of the central market of Kinshasa. Today, trains coming from and going to Matadi pass very rarely through this busy market space, which is called *le rail* by the city's inhabitants (known as Kinois). Nowadays the railway functions primarily as a well appreciated shortcut through the dense urban fabric of Kinshasa, with its overcrowded network of houses and streets. It thus allows quick mobility in the city center for pedestrians in an urban environment that suffers from severe traffic congestions and insufficient—and in any case for many *Kinois* too expensive—means of public transport (Mwanza wa Mwanza, 1997).



Figure 3: Boma, former hospital for Africans (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2008)

Along with education, medicine formed one of the spearheads of Belgian colonization (Janssens, Kivits and Vuylsteke, 1992). In the “pioneering” era, medicine was primarily oriented toward the wellbeing of the white explorer/colonizer, but from the 1920s onwards, the colonial state, using missionary congregations, developed an explicit policy of guaranteeing the health of the African population, combining philanthropic ideas with considerations on how to stabilize the labor force needed for economic exploitation.¹¹ In the decades to come, a fine-grained network of hospitals and dispensaries was implemented, covering almost all of the Congolese territory by the mid-1930s. This was complemented by ambulant medical missions that reached out to remote and difficult-to-access areas.

Within the context of the Ten Year Plan for the Social and Economic Development of the Congo (1949), a second large-scale building campaign in the medical field was started in order to replace the often poorly constructed facilities of the preceding decades. It created, mainly in the urban centers, a number of imposing hospital complexes in modernist style that embodied the introduction of a colonial welfare state during the postwar years. As icons of a modernizing Congo, the buildings featured prominently in contemporary propaganda campaigns alongside images presenting the training of a Congolese medical staff, both male and female. Photographs of an African with a microscope indeed form a *topos* of postwar colonial visual imagery.¹²

Today, notwithstanding continuous efforts to erect new medical facilities—a significant number of which are Chinese initiatives—the largest part of the health care infrastructure in the DRC still consists of the buildings erected in the 1950s. Often rundown and lacking up-to-date equipment, facilities like the hospital in Boma that was originally built for Africans, are still functioning. Currently receiving, and often surviving on financial and technical support from the Belgian government (Coopération Technique Belge), NGOs and foreign aid, such medical facilities demonstrate continuities in social welfare practices and hence, in dependency, from colonial to postcolonial times. But for many Congolese, hospitals also remain, as in colonial times, sites of the encounter with a form of “rationalized” and “scientific” medical expertise, which has not replaced but rather coexists with continuing “traditional” health practices.¹³



Figure 4: Lubumbashi, “balloon house” in the *quartier Tshamilemba* (photograph: Johan Lagae, 2006)

Lubumbashi, or Elisabethville—as the capital city of the Katanga province was called during colonial times—has always been regarded first and foremost as a mining city. Indeed, the impact of the Union Minière du Haut Katanga (U.M.H.K.) on the city’s development can hardly be underestimated. The strong presence in current Lushois urban memory of the Swahili notion of *Kazi* (paid labor) testifies to the extent to which daily life was governed, not only during the colonial era but well into the postcolonial times, by economic and social practices set by the U.M.H.K. or Gécamines, as it was called after independence (Dibwe Dia Mwembu and Jewsiewicki, 2004). From the early 1920s, the U.M.H.K. developed strategies of social engineering in an effort to create and maintain a Congolese workforce, encompassing, among others, the provision of new, comfortable housing for its laborers and their families, as well as proper schools, dispensaries and the like. Alongside the European quarter and the so-called *cité indigène* (native town), the

U.M.H.K. workers' camp became an autonomous urban entity that made up Lubumbashi's identity (Chapelier, 1957).

This also holds true of the two large-scale workers' camps of the local railway company, the *Compagnie de Chemin de fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga* or B.C.K., the other colonial enterprise that had a significant impact on Lubumbashi's urban development. While the first camp from the 1920s, called *quartier Maramba*, displays a grid-like configuration of modest houses that echoes the militaristic layout of the camp schemes of the early colonial period, the second camp, *quartier Tshamilemba*, erected in the postwar years, testifies of the growing effort to provide more comfort for the Congolese employee and his family.¹⁴ It was also during this period that both the colonial government and private entrepreneurs started to develop various kinds of model houses that would augment cost efficiency and speed up the construction process. Several housing types to be assembled from prefabricated building materials in aluminum or concrete are documented in official archives. A particularly intriguing experiment in this respect is the series of nine "balloon houses." Probably based on earlier experiences in Dakar, Senegal, this was a housing type that combined innovative concrete construction with an effort of the government to define a living environment considered appropriate for Africans (Bruyère, 1952).¹⁵ Drawing on vague and simplistic anthropological notions, the dome-like form and circular layout were indeed presented in the accompanying discourse as particularly suited to African domestic practices, while, in fact, they were a direct result of the construction technique of spraying concrete over a trellis kept in shape by an inflated balloon.

Until recently, the two workers' camps still belonged to the railway company, with a large part of the houses being rented to its employees. In contrast to parts of the former "native towns," such as the *quartier Kamalondo*, where the urban landscape witnessed significant transformations in recent decades, the former B.C.K. camps remained largely intact for a very long time. A visit in the summer of 2007 revealed that the built fabric was hardly transformed, and the open spaces that were part of the original configuration in most cases were still intact, albeit they were often used to grow vegetables. Informal talks with local inhabitants revealed that these particular urban settings in contemporary Lubumbashi provided living environments that, due to their low density and durable construction, were highly valued. Yet, over the last two years, this situation has been changing rapidly as the B.C.K. started to sell its built infrastructure. People have been buying not only houses, but also parcels within the former railroad camp site, and are now building new structures that are drastically altering the urban landscape of these sites.¹⁶ Perhaps in a couple of years, one will have to look hard to find a trace of the "balloon houses," just like today one needs a good guide to locate the experimental houses of the 1950s built by the National Office of Transport (ONATRA) in *camp Cabinda*, a neighborhood in one of Kinshasa's now densely populated "*cites*."¹⁷



Figure 5: Kwilu-Ngongo, bowling alley at the Compagnie Sucrière Congolaise (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2007)

Founded in 1925, the Compagnie Sucrière Congolaise, or sugar refinery of Kwilu-Ngongo, the former Moerbeke-Kwilu, is situated in the Lower Congo region, somewhere halfway along the road connecting Kinshasa to the harbor city of Matadi. At that time, the Sucrière (as it is mostly referred to) was an important trade center in the Belgian Congo, housing 161 Europeans and 8,945 African laborers.¹⁸ In addition to the sugar refinery, the vast sugarcane plantations, the railway station and the residential areas for Europeans and Africans, several services for the European community were located on site, such as a hospital, a school, a church and leisure facilities, turning it into a self-sufficient environment, but also a kind of heterotopia that allowed one to escape from the bustling urban milieus of colonial Kinshasa or Matadi.

After a period of disuse, the Sucrière now remains the only sugar exporting company, the productivity of which has been highly increased by recent

investments.¹⁹ As a joint venture between a well-established family within Belgium's *haute finance* (60%) and the Congolese State (40%), it now constitutes one of the biggest private employers of the country, providing several services for its employees and their families (about 60,000 people), such as schools, hospitals and cultural associations. In addition, the refinery aspires to implement an important developing program for the broader region, planning medical dispensaries in several villages, its own airport and a new railway station. At the same time, the Sucrière recently ceased the sale of sugar to local entrepreneurs to focus primarily on exports to Europe, thus undermining opportunities of economic benefit for the local community.²⁰

Despite the good intentions and large investments of the Belgian/Congolese company to keep up with global developments and modernize after independence, the Sucrière offers the image of a colonial scenery frozen in time. The tiny and carefully kept concession of the Belgian and Congolese executives of the company, the former white residential area, with its paved roads, beautiful flower beds, swimming pool and bowling alley, still echoes the artificial tranquillity of former colonial life. It stands in blatant contrast to the vast unserved working-class areas dating from colonial years, hidden in clouds of red dust. Most of the people living in this area are unemployed, some being unskilled refugees from Angola looking for fortune over the border. In Kwilu-Ngongo, the spatial, social and economic hierarchies of earlier times thus seem to be reiterated, albeit it in a somewhat different form.



Figure 6: Lubumbashi, former hospital for Europeans (photograph: Johan Lagae, 2005)

Clearly standing out in the surrounding barren landscape at the outskirts of Lubumbashi, this former hospital for Europeans, designed in the mid-1950s by an architect of the local Public Works Department, forms a lasting testimony of the city's spatial segregation along racial lines. Indeed, the hospital was built at the side of the old European neighborhood situated at the greatest possible distance from the *quartier Kamalondo*, which at the time formed the heart of the city's African neighborhood. Such a choice seems to confirm the continuity of the medical discourse on the "sanitary syndrome" that had been crucial in legitimizing the spatial division of the colonial cities in sub-Saharan Africa into "white" and "black" quarters ever since the 1920s. Indeed, it was in the early 1920s that an explicit spatial division was implemented in Lubumbashi by destroying the existing African settlement and relocating it away from the European center by introducing a 700-meter-wide *zone neutre* or *cordon sanitaire*.²¹

Nevertheless, this peripheral location of the hospital for Europeans was not the preferred choice of the medical staff. From the late 1940s, doctors had in fact been asking to build the new medical facility next to the hospital planned for Congolese that was to be built in the middle of the *zone neutre*. In discussions with the Comité Urbain, doctors maintained that, given the scientific progress made since the interwar period, a separation between the two hospitals on medical grounds could no longer be justified. Initially, the central colonial government in Brussels seemed inclined to support such a proposition, albeit for purely economic reasons. Several members of the local Comité Urbain proved much more reluctant for such juxtaposition. But one has to actually read between the lines of the reports of the Comité Urbain to unveil the segregationist nature of their arguments, as formulations gradually became much more implicit, no doubt due to growing international critique on colonial policies. In the end, the two new hospitals were constructed miles apart, suggesting that a segregationist line of thought still very much structured the colonial order of things even a few years before Congo would gain its independence.

The 1950s hospital for Congolese, an imposing structure with facades punctuated by rudely designed sun-breaking devices, was built in the *zone neutre*, as planned. Despite extremely difficult conditions in terms of the supply of essential facilities, such as water and electricity, it is still in use as a medical institution today. The former hospital for Europeans never served its original purpose, as it remained unfinished on the eve of independence.²² It currently houses the Central Administration Services of the University of Lubumbashi, whose campus is only a short drive away. As such, the building which is known in local parlance as the “white elephant” because of the sculptural awning hovering over the main entrance, forms a telling example of the uninhibited way in which colonial built fabric has been put to new uses without major transformation during the postcolonial era. But this case is interesting because the reuse ignores the *architecture parlante* (“speaking architecture”) of the complex. Ironically, the University President’s office is located just underneath the former *mortuary*, the original function of which can in fact be recognized by its telling form: a coffin.



Figure 7: Kinshasa, central market (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2008)

During the colonial era, the central market of Kinshasa was one of the first public facilities to be created in the city and the only one to be shared by the African and European community (on its history, see Beeckmans, in press). Originally situated in an undefined no man's land between the *ville européenne* and the "native towns," from 1925 onwards the site of the market became encapsulated by the expanding European quarter. In the mid-1930s a more explicit spatial segregation along racial lines was implemented in Kinshasa through the creation of some explicit buffer zones between the African and European neighborhoods, thus creating a partial *zone neutre* in line with contemporary practices in colonial urban planning. This spatial segregation, however, was immediately challenged by the passage of Africans to the market, which by now had become an integral part of the European quarter of the city. Moreover, parts of the newly introduced *zone neutre* were gradually being appropriated by Africans in order to establish commercial areas that were more in the vicinity of their living quarters.

The presence of African tradesmen and customers in the European quarter caused European protest, as it was considered unhygienic and inappropriate. In order to remedy the situation, the government moved the market to the *zone neutre* in 1943, not only because it was reluctant to establish public functions in the African quarters, but also for purely pragmatic reasons. This new central market was a large attraction to intermediate groups within Kinshasa's colonial society, such as Greek and Portuguese traders. The market thus changed the *zone neutre* from a separating spatial device within the city's urban structure into an area of exchange and encounter.

After independence in 1960, the central market's location was again challenged when the MFU, a French urban planning mission, arrived in Kinshasa at the request of the Congolese government.²³ Aiming to decrease the dominant character of the central market, while simultaneously proposing a solution to the congestion of the existing city center, the MFU opted for a delocalization of the administrative and commercial heart of the city, including the market, closer to what had become the geometric center of the urban figure due to the city's expansion over years. At the initiative of President Mobutu, however, and in contradiction to the MFU master plan, the central market area was maintained and even upgraded via a new, modernist-looking market infrastructure of concrete shell-shaped pavilions that greatly increased its occupancy. Originally designed to accommodate 3,500 stallholders, today it is used by 30,000 vendors. While archival sources do not allow us to unravel the motivation behind Mobutu's initiative, one can assume that this intervention for one of Kinshasa's most crucial public sites was a deliberate choice not to await the slow implementation of the MFU master plan, but to opt for a more direct operation that would have an immediate and highly visible impact on the capital city's image.

As Kinshasa keeps on expanding, the central marketplace now occupies a rather eccentric position vis-à-vis the largest part of the city. The lootings in the early 1990s, and the total collapse of public services and administration that followed, resulted in a serious degradation of the market infrastructure, while the recent construction of stores on the site of the central market by now omnipresent Lebanese real estate agents has further augmented the pressure on this part of the city center. Today the sculptural roofscape of the market building is being appropriated by gangs of street children, or *Shegue*, who survive by performing small jobs for market traders and by collecting remnants of food they find in the market. As in colonial times, the central market remains the urban site par excellence that reveals the complexity of agencies at work in the city of Kinshasa. It remains by far its most important crossing point of interests, lifestyles and cultures and forms one of the prime urban sites where one can grasp the essence of Kinshasa as a *ville flux* (see Malaquais, 2005), a place defined by flows of goods and people that establish links with both the local and the global.



Figure 8: Kinshasa, view on the runway of the N'Dolo airport, as seen from the inside of an aircraft (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2008)

During the interwar years Kinshasa developed in the absence of an overall master plan, with the European neighborhood expanding to the extent that it touched the spatial boundaries of the first organized “native towns.” Although this lack of a clearcut spatial separation between Europeans and Africans was lamented by some in the early 1930s, it proved too difficult to alter substantially. One wonders to what extent this situation influenced the planning of Kinshasa’s airport in the N’Dolo quarter in the early 1940s, as indeed its runway constitutes a major physical barrier between the old city and the new postwar *cités* and satellite towns erected to accommodate Kinshasa’s rapidly expanding urban population. After the Second World War, Sabena, Belgium’s national airline company, started to expand its activities in the Congo and, as part of an ambitious plan to become a major player in the international airline network covering the African continent, bought new aircraft carriers. This initiative immediately led to a discussion on the extension of the N’Dolo airport in general, and its runway in particular. The discussion is revealing

in terms of the tension between ideology and pragmatism that underscored colonial planning policy, not only in Kinshasa but in the Belgian Congo as a whole.²⁴

Georges Ricquier, an architect-urbanist invited by the government to provide a new master plan for Kinshasa in the context of the Ten Year Plan for the Social and Economic Development of the Congo, initially proposed to extend the runway. His extension plan for the N'Dolo airport, part of a project aimed at creating a colonial capital city of imperial grandeur (Ricquier, 1950), was soon questioned by the colonial administration, as the extension of the runway would create immense detours for the large numbers of Congolese who resided in the newly created *cités* but worked in the city center as clerks, domestic workers, shop assistants and the like. The idea of expanding the airport was quickly abandoned, and a search for a site to build a new airport began. Finally, the proposal of Maurice Heymans, then head of the Service of Urban Planning in Kinshasa, was implemented (Heymans, 1950). It consisted of a plan to extend the city toward the east via the creation of the satellite town and the airport of Ndjili. Built according to the most up-to-date standards of the time—its runway was the “longest in the world” as Sabena propaganda had it at the time—the N'Djili airport still functions today as an important hub in the global airline network, even though its infrastructure has hardly been upgraded since the time of its construction in the mid-1950s.

The N'Dolo airport, however, also continues to function. Although the colonial government planned a housing project on the site and the MFU proposed transforming it into a new and ambitious city center, these plans were never realized. Today, the N'Dolo airport houses inland flights of airline companies, some of questionable reputation. Its grounds, however, are increasingly being appropriated by the neighborhood's inhabitants who, in their daily struggle for survival, have started to cultivate vegetables just next to the airport's dilapidated runways. The N'Dolo airport thus has become a prime site of the “ruralization” of Kinshasa's urban spaces (De Boeck and Plissart, 2004; Tollens, 2001).



Figure 9: Luishia, salon in the former Institut Sainte-Marguerite (photograph: Johan Lagae, 2000)

The Institut Sainte-Marguerite, currently known as the Lycée Lubusha, is an imposing educational facility situated 87 kilometers from Lubumbashi, the capital city of the mining province of Katanga. Founded in 1948 at the initiative of and largely financed by Jules Cousin, one of the then leading figures of the Union Minière du Katanga, the institute was to provide education for the daughters of African laborers of the mining enterprise (Mère Générale, 1951; Roger, 1967). As such, it forms a telling illustration of the paternalistic nature of labor policies in the Belgian Congo. While testifying to Cousin's genuine humanitarian concern to emancipate African women by providing primary education as well as training in domestic skills, the school was also a tool to create "Christian households" that would more easily comply with the norms and forms of Katanga's thriving copper industry.

Due to the immediate success of the initiative, the institute had to expand shortly after, in the early 1950s. Cousin granted the commission to design the important new complex—for a population of over 400 pupils, with classrooms, dormitories, teacher's residences, a church, leisure facilities and so forth—to Yenga,

a Lubumbashi-based architectural office that was to author some of the most prominent postwar public buildings in the capital city of Katanga province (Lagae, 2003). Building completely from local natural stone, the architects opted for a formal language that echoes the vernacular architecture of the Ardennes, Cousin's native region in Belgium. To this day, the tomb of Cousin's spouse Marguerite, integrated in the site in 1962, bears testimony of his personal investment in the site. Quite significantly, as a visit to the complex revealed, the portraits of Mr. and Ms. Cousin were still decorating one of the salons in the teacher's block as late as 2000.

During the postcolonial era, the Institut Saint-Marguerite became one of the most important educational centers for African female students in the country, counting among its students the daughters of the new political and economic elite of the DRC. Although the institute has lost some of its former grandeur, has been faced with substantial pupil dropout and its facilities are rather rundown, it remains a reputed center of knowledge. In August 2007, due to the economic revival that followed presidential elections in 2006, the fate of this reputed school became uncertain, as it was integrated into a mining concession granted by the Kinshasa government to foreign entrepreneurs. Eager to maximize potential profits, the new owners planned to destroy the huge complex in order to free the site for mining purposes, as well as to extract the minerals contained in the natural stones from which the building is constructed.

In the absence of a heritage policy in the Congo that would enable the safeguarding of buildings as significant works of architecture—there is a Congo Unesco branch, but hitherto it has concentrated on the protection of the national parks of the DRC—the complex was eventually saved from destruction, as one local newspaper reported (Kabwe, 2007), by an intervention of the provincial governor of Katanga, Moïse Katumbi. His intervention might well have been triggered by an Internet campaign, entitled “sauver Luishia,” that was spontaneously mounted by a former student of the institute to mobilize the school's alumni the moment the news of its imminent destruction was announced.²⁵ As such, the former Institut Sainte-Marguerite provides us with a telling, yet rare illustration of how a colonial building can become a *lieu de mémoire* that is so meaningful for Congolese as to create a local awareness of its importance as a legacy, an awareness strong enough to counter blatant operations of pure economic exploitation dominating everyday reality in DRC.



Figure 10: Kinshasa, SOGIAF apartment building (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2008)

Following the economic boom of the immediate postwar years in the Belgian colony, Brussels' entrepreneurs and real-estate agents discovered Kinshasa as a promising working terrain. In only a couple of years, the urban landscape of the capital city of the colony changed drastically with the introduction of high-rise apartments buildings aligning large boulevards in the city center (Lagae, 2007). Offering opportunities for architects, these new buildings demonstrated the profound process of modernization that took place in the Belgian colony. In the colony, one contemporary Belgian architect observed, apartment buildings were being constructed of which "our cities in Europe should be jealous" (Stiénon, 1954:25). This new urban landscape was played out in the visual propaganda of the period as the icon of "*le nouveau Congo*." In a canvas entitled *Léopoldville 2000*, that forms part of his famous series *Mwana Kitoko* and that depicts a fragment of a facade of a 1950s apartment building designed by the architect Claude Laurens, the renowned Belgian painter Luc Tuymans evokes this theme (Hoet, 2001).

Architect Claude Laurens indeed was a protagonist of the postwar urban development of Congo's capital city (see Lagae and Laurens, 2001), or, as the architectural historian Udo Kultermann once put it, "...it is first and foremost the Belgian [sic] architect Claude Laurens that shaped the image of the capital city of Leopoldville" (Kultermann, 1963:23). Heading an already established practice in Brussels, he traveled to the Congo in 1951 to study projects for Sabena, the national airline, as well as for influential Brussels' entrepreneurs. The SOGIAF apartment building, a fragment of which appears in Tuymans' painting, is situated in the heart of the commercial center of Kinshasa, near the golf course, and was erected in 1951–1952. Being Laurens' first building in the Congo, it already displays the Corbusian-like design elements that were to define the "tropical modernism" he introduced in the Congo: *pilotis*, *brise-soleils*, *claustras*. As the starting point of a series of apartment buildings for Europeans he was to realize in the following years, the SOGIAF building also comprises all programmatic elements defining up-market living standards for "the modern white man" in 1950s Kinshasa: spacious rooms, terraces offering panoramic views of the city and the surrounding landscape, a well-equipped kitchen and bathroom, easy accessibility to parking areas and amenities to facilitate the work of African domestic personnel, while at the same time keeping their presence discreet.

When the number of Europeans residing in the Congo diminished drastically after independence in 1960s, and even more so after Mobutu nationalized Congo's economy in 1973 by declaring the *Zairianisation* (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998:675–686), the residential spaces of the former white community in Kinshasa were rapidly occupied by Africans. As the new elite, like the Belgians before them, preferred individual housing over collective forms of living and sought refuge from the bustling city center in the tranquility of neighborhoods farther away, like Macampagne or Joli Parc, apartment buildings in the city center were mostly

appropriated by African middle and lower classes. Thanks to the quality of the materials initially used, the main structure of these buildings still largely survives, with only small changes inside and out testifying to how current inhabitants are trying to adapt a Western model of living, initially designed for a single family, to everyday dwelling practices of often large and extended families.

In that respect, the reappropriation of 1950s apartment buildings sometimes proves challenging. Often the particular distribution of space that was to accommodate the presence of domestic personnel in a colonial household has proven insufficiently flexible to easily adapt to new modes of use, as the number of people living in the apartment has risen considerably and their interrelations differ from that of a single-family household. Furthermore, the concept of natural ventilation, one of the guiding principles of the “tropical modernism” introduced in the Congo to provide what Laurens defined as “the comfort of the white man,” is not always appreciated by Congolese, as for some it creates the experience of an unpleasant draft. Transformations to the facade are thus sometimes to be understood as efforts to alter the aspect of the “breathing wall,” a device designed to let the breeze through. But there are other forms of external appropriation. The appearance of satellite antennas on most apartment buildings in the city center of Kinshasa testifies to the ambition of the *Kinois* to connect themselves to the outside world, even if the provision of electricity in a city like Kinshasa is by no means guaranteed. Moreover, one cannot but notice in the initially open and inviting facade of the SOGIAF building also the current omnipresence of latticework, bars, grilles and other forms of security that have become a hallmark of residential life in Kinshasa since the 1980s—a phenomenon coined in common parlance as “bunkerization” of private life.



Figure 11: Kinshasa, dismantled monument of King Albert I (photograph: Johan Lagae, 2007)

In 1923, the colonial government decided to move the seat of the colonial administration from Boma to Kinshasa, but it would take until 1929 before the latter became the capital city of the colony in practice. The decision was accompanied by an urban plan that aimed to join the two existing settlements, Léo-Est and Léo-Ouest, with a new centrally located neighborhood in which all important official buildings would be erected, such as the residence of the governor general, the palace of justice, the post office and the central administration. Prominent officials proclaimed high ambitions for what in their opinion should become a capital city worthy of representing Belgium as a colonial power. However, the whole scheme and other grandiose projects, such as the late-1940s plan for “le Grand Léo,” designed by architect-urbanist Georges Ricquier, were to remain largely paper architecture. Pragmatism and short-term solutions geared the urban development of Kinshasa (Lagae, 2007).

If the government failed to use architecture and urban planning to shape its image, Belgian identity was written into the urban space of Congo’s cities from the mid-1920s onwards via official monuments. This was particularly the case in Kinshasa. In 1928, for instance, an equestrian statue of King Leopold II, the “founding father” of the Belgian Congo, was inaugurated on the square in front of the lot where the new residence of the governor general was to be built. Monuments dedicated to the memory of the soldiers fallen during World War I or celebrating the successful enterprise of building a railroad between Matadi and Kinshasa were other important icons of Belgium’s presence in the Congo. Often they were used as sites for public events of symbolic nature, such as parades of the Force Publique, the colonial army.

In 1939, the square in front of the central railway station was embellished by an important monument in honor of King Albert I. On an imposing architectonic ensemble, composed of a circular podium and two obelisk-like structures that ended the vista of the main boulevard of Kinshasa, was placed a large-scale statue of the king. Included in the architecture of the monument were two large-scale bas reliefs, evoking the substantial royal support for the domains of colonial agriculture and medicine. Instead of an equestrian statue, which was the classical convention for royal monuments, Albert I is presented here in colonial outfit, at the explicit request of the committee that organized the competition for the design of the monument. Because of the 1928 visit that the Belgian king and queen had paid to the Congo, the committee argued, the royal image that would be familiar to the “native population of Kinshasa” was indeed that of the king in “tropical dress” and not on horseback.

Years after the declaration of Congo’s independence, on June 30, 1960, the monument of Albert I and the equestrian statue of Leopold II were still standing in Kinshasa’s city center, not only as physical markers of the former colonial power but also as enduring testimonies to the relationship between the Belgian dynasty and the colonial enterprise in the Congo. It was only in the late 1960s, when Mobutu

initiated his policy of *Nationalisme congolais authentique*, better known as the ideology of the *Recours à l'Authenticité*, that such traces of the colonial era became embarrassing. Within a few years, not only all remaining colonial monuments were dismantled, but also the colonial “urban text” of street names and denominations was erased—Léopoldville, for instance, being renamed Kinshasa. Congolese subjects even had to Africanize their Christian first names given to them during colonial times and Mobutu replaced Western costume by a new dress code, the *abacost* or *à bas le costume* (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998:675–686).

New sculptures, designed by Congolese artists trained at Kinshasa’s Academy of Fine Arts, soon were to replace the original bronzes of the colonial monuments, the latter being transferred to various warehouses at the outskirts of the city, where they have been lying around for decades. Since the mid-1990s, however, several projects were proposed by Congolese historians, archivists, museum curators and other stakeholders to revisit this particular colonial heritage. The most striking, no doubt, was the initiative—albeit very short-term—of the then Minister of Culture, Christophe Muzungu, to reinstall the equestrian statue of Leopold II in the city center on February 3, 2005.²⁶ Today, the remaining parts and pieces of the former colonial monuments have been gathered in the courtyards of the Institut des Musées Nationaux. Decontextualized and placed in a completely random configuration in the open spaces between the various pavilions of the museum complex, the sculptures form a kind of surrealist theater ensemble, almost like a still from a strange and mute performance on colonial memory taking place against the backdrop of the imposing landscape of the Congo River and the skylines of Kinshasa and its “mirror city” Brazzaville. No doubt it is here that one can best start to question the notion of “shared (colonial) heritage” that has emerged in international debates on how to develop policies regarding physical colonial legacies. For who could be sharing these physical reminders of the colonial era, now relocated to a site that, because it is situated in the *enclave présidentielle*, in fact remains for the average *Kinois* one of the least publicly accessible spaces of Congo’s capital city?



Figure 12: Kinshasa, Place des Artistes, also known as (Rond Point) Victoire (photograph: Luce Beeckmans, 2008)

During the colonial period, the urban square Rond Point Victoire was situated at the crossroads of the main arteries linking the planned *cités* of the postwar era with the African neighborhoods built in Léopoldville during the interwar years. As such, it was a key node in the mobility network that structured the capital city of the Belgian Congo. Lying at the junction of what was at the time the Avenue Prince Baudouin and the Avenue de la Victoire, this place was devoted to the victory of the Allies in World War II.

It was exactly in this area of town that began the Congolese uprising against Belgian colonial power, which was to lead to the colony's independence only a year and half later (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998:720–721). On January 4, 1959, in the aftermath of a football match in the nearby Stade Roi Baudouin, supporters joined a tumultuous gathering at the seat of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) after a political meeting presided over by the future first president of the independent Congo, Joseph Kasa Vubu, was canceled. The event sparked riots

against Europeans in general, and Portuguese and Greeks shopkeepers in particular, as these occupied the commercial areas closest to the scene. After independence, as a mark of honor, the Avenue Prince Baudouin was renamed Avenue Kasa Vubu. Today, the street forms a *lieu de mémoire* of Congo's independence struggle.

In 1990, a monument entitled *Main d'Artiste* was erected in the center of the square in honor of the creativity of Congolese artists. Designed by the artist Liyolo Limbe Mpuanga, author of some of the most striking monumental sculptures in Kinshasa's public spaces, it coincided with the change in name of the square itself. On official maps, it is now indicated as Place des Artistes, yet, in common parlance, it still is referred to as (Rond Point) Victoire. As a consequence, many foreigners often confuse the monument by Liyolo with the *Monument de la Victoire*, located on the Boulevard de Lumumba in Limite, the latter being dedicated to the martyrs of colonial repression.

(Rond Point) Victoire remains one of the most important transport junctions in Kinshasa and as a consequence is often congested with taxi-buses and people. It is here that the bustling city life of Kinshasa becomes palpable, with its notorious flows of people, walking on foot or moving around in completely rundown vehicles, as well as the latest models of four-wheel drive. Situated close to the Matonge neighborhood, which until recently was reputed as being the most vibrant nightlife spot of the city, (Rond Point) Victoire is the crossing point of local and internationally renowned artists and the home base of several hotels and notorious nightclubs and discotheques, such as La Crèche and Akropolis, whose fake Greek temple facade dominates the square. Attracting artists, musicians, street gangs and prostitutes, (Rond Point) Victoire is a prototypical urban space of Kinshasa, that *ville spectacle* where one's presence, daytime and night, requires constant negotiation, in particular with local police forces.²⁷ It is "*a voir absolument*" ("a place to be visited absolutely"), suggests *Le Petit Futé Congo*, the most recent tourist guide for the country, published in 2007 and primarily targeting an audience of expats, Congolese businessmen and investors of all kind. Needless to say, during colonial times, with a curfew restricting mobility between the *ville européenne* and the African quarters, tourist guides did not highlight (Rond Point) Victoire. Rather they advised to visit the *cité indigène* in the morning: "That is the moment when it is at its busiest" (*Guide du Voyageur au Congo belge et au Ruanda-Urundi*, Office du Tourisme du Congo belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, Brussels, 1954 [3rd ed.], p. 355).

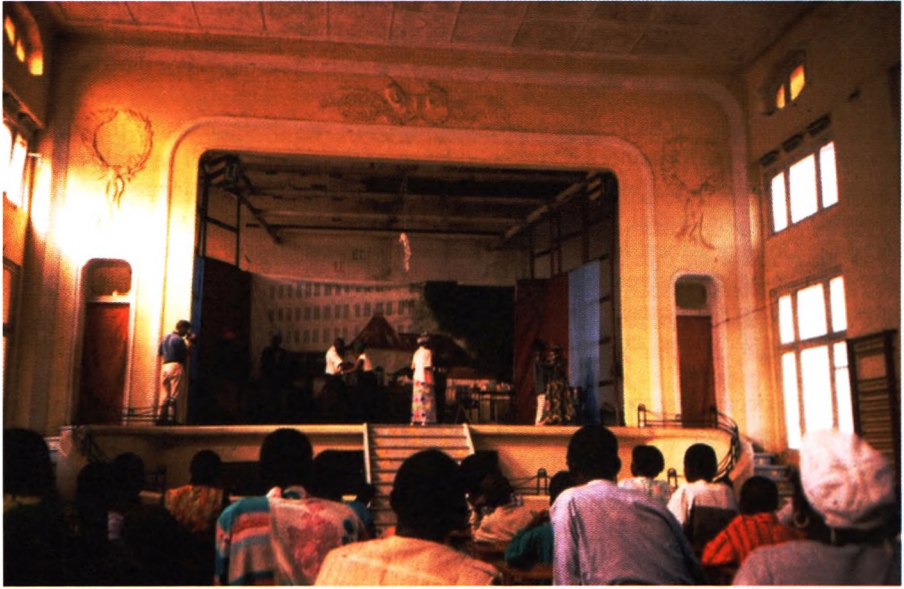


Figure 13: Lubumbashi, theater hall at the former Institut Marie-José (photograph: Johan Lagae, 2000)

If Kinshasa was Congo's administrative center, and hence called in colonial parlance the *capital du papier* (capital city of paper work), then Lubumbashi, the urban center founded in 1910 as a result of promising mining prospections in the wider Katanga region, was regarded as the *capital du cuivre* (capital city of copper). Hosting the main seat of the Union Minière du Katanga, this mining city was one of the major nodes in the economic network of Belgian colonization. It is this economic context that explains why, despite the limited size of the city's population, an urban landscape and culture emerged already in the 1920s that, according to contemporary sources, echoed those in the mother country. Public buildings, such as the post office, the palace of justice, multiple hotels, a gentlemen's club, a cathedral and a cinema, were erected on strategic points in the grid-like layout of the so-called *ville européenne*.

Crucial components in this creation of a white urban society were the Catholic schools for European boys and girls, the College St.-François and the Institut Marie-José, respectively. Recruiting their student population not only from Lubumbashi, but also from the white community of the wider Katanga region—they were

primarily based on the regime of the boarding school—both are imposing structures, built over a period of almost 20 years, with the major building campaigns dating from the mid-1930s. Not only do they impress by their sheer size, but they were also well-equipped for sports and leisure, both having large swimming pools constructed in the 1930s. The gym hall of the Institut Marie-José was designed such that it could also host theater performances. Correspondence of the time, as well as oral accounts, suggest that these facilities not only served training purposes, but were also crucial components in the social life of Lubumbashi's white community, like Kinshasa, where the Collège Albert I and the Institut Sacré-Coeur played a similar role. Much more than being exclusive sites of education, these colonial school complexes were major instruments for creating a sense of belonging and a feeling of home that were so fundamental to the colonizer in the negotiation of his or her condition of displacement.

On rare occasions, the gym and festivities hall of the Institut Marie-José, today known as the Lycée Tuendele, still hosts events that reach out to the larger community of Lubumbashi. In 2000, for instance, the famous locally based theater group *Mufwankolo* performed a piece, “Maisha ya Lubumbashi” (“*Lubumbashi hier et aujourd’hui*,” “Lubumbashi past and present”), in this space, as part of a cultural program on urban memory in Lubumbashi, initiated by Bogumil Jewsiewicki and a group of local scholars and university professors.²⁸ As Donatien Dibwe Dia Mwembu has argued, the *Mufwankolo* group brings “popular theater” similar to the “popular painting” that thrives in the Katanga region. Its performances give voice to a local collective imagination, and, in its use of laughter, its theater is a form of *thérapie ultime* (Dibwe Dia Mwembu, 2005). What is striking in this respect is that the *Mufwankolo* group uses as backdrop of its theater a painted canvas depicting the town hall of Lubumbashi, a modernist building designed in the 1950s but only executed after independence, and the pavilion of Governor Wangermée, one of the earliest colonial buildings in the city. Displaying the two symbols of colonial power that also frame the complete colonial era of Lubumbashi, the canvas can thus be read, as Bogumil Jewsiewicki has done (2005:30), as testifying to the accomplished domestication of the colonial urban landscape by the *Lushois*.

NOTES

¹ The project *Congo (belge)* is complemented by a book and exhibition project, *Congo belge in images* (curated by Carl De Keyser and Johan Lagae), that presents a selection of atypical photographs on the early colonial period from the collections of the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium. Both events were highlighted in the leading Flemish and Francophone press (e.g., *De Standaard*, *De*

Morgen, Le Soir, La Libre Belgique), and interviews with Carl De Keyzer were broadcast on national radio and television.

² For an overview of the current state of Belgian research with relation to the colonial past of the Congo, see Vanthemsche (2006). On the exhibition, see Vellut (2005).

³ This research was mainly initiated by Ph.D. research of Bruno De Meulder (Catholic University Leuven, 1994) and Johan Lagae (Ghent University, 2002).

⁴ In a reaction to continuing depiction of the Congo as a bankrupt country, Lambert Mende Omalanga, the Congolese Minister of Communication and official spokesman for the DRC government, countered the statement that Carl De Keyzer had become persona non grata, writing that it was nothing but a rumor (*De Standaard*, February 17, 2010).

⁵ The discourse on “decolonization” in the field of history of architecture has been triggered by a number of sociologists and anthropologists. See De Boeck and Plissart (2004); Trefon (2004).

⁶ For a critical discussion of the use of this notion in relation to the DRC, see Lagae (2008).

⁷ Archival research was done in Belgium (Africa Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brussels; Archives d’Architecture Moderne, Brussels; Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren; Kadoc, Leuven), as well as in the Congo (Archives Nationales du Congo, Kinshasa; Service des Travaux Publics, Kinshasa; Bureau d’Etudes et Aménagement Urbain, Kinshasa; Service des Travaux Publics, Lubumbashi; the Archives du Cadastre, Lubumbashi).

⁸ In our use of the notion “territorial palimpsest,” we are referring to the work of André Corboz (2001), rather than to Andreas Huysen’s (2003) well-known analysis of the relationship between space and memory.

⁹ The 1931 International Conference *Urbanisme aux colonies*, held in the context of the Paris *Exposition Coloniale Internationale*, can be regarded as a turning point in this respect. For a contemporary comment on the Belgian colonial policy in this regard, see Schoentjes (1933). The topic of implementing urban segregation along racial lines via urban planning policies and practices has received deep scholarly attention in recent years. For some general discussions from a comparative perspective, see Coquery-Vidrovitch (2005) and Goerg (2003); for elaborate analysis of this issue in particular locales, see, e.g., Bigon (2009) and Goerg (1997).

¹⁰ For a broader context of railroad policies in the Belgian Congo at the time, see Blanchart (1999).

¹¹ There is important literature on the relationship between medicine and labor policy in colonial Africa. Studies on this topic in the Belgian Congo have focused largely on the mining industry (see De Meulder, 1996; Higginson, 1989). For an

analysis of the social engineering of the Union Minière from the perspective of memory, see Dibwe Dia Mwemba and Jewsiewicki (2004).

¹² None of the Africans, however, were granted a doctor's degree before independence, notwithstanding their profound six-year training and the complex and responsible tasks they often performed in daily practice.

¹³ On the impact of the introduction of colonial medical practices on Congolese society, see Hunt (1999).

¹⁴ For a series of model houses, see, e.g., Centre d'Etude des Problèmes sociaux indigènes (1949).

¹⁵ We thank Bernard Toulrier for sharing his knowledge on the use of these "balloon houses" in Dakar, Senegal.

¹⁶ Information drawn from a discussion in Ghent with Aimé Kakudji, researcher at the University of Lubumbashi, February 23, 2010.

¹⁷ The situation in *camp Cabinda* in Kinshasa was observed in early February 2010.

¹⁸ The Compagnie Sucrière is mentioned with a brief history in contemporary travel guides, such as the *Guide du voyageur au Congo Belge et au Ruanda-Urundi*, edited by InforCongo, the colonial documentation service in 1958.

¹⁹ On the current official profile of the *Compagnie Sucrière de Kwilu-Ngongo*, see http://www.finasucre.com/en/activity/compagnie_sucriere.php.

²⁰ In recent years, local newspapers and Internet sites, such as *Le Potentiel* and *Debout Congolais. Journal du Peuple*, have commented on and critiqued the commercial strategies and the labor policy of the Compagnie Sucrière.

²¹ For sources on urban segregation along racial lines, see Bigon (2009), Coquery-Vidrovitch (2005) and Goerg (1997, 2003). For a discussion of the particular situation in Lubumbashi around 1930, see the special issue of *Essor du Congo*, published on the occasion of the 1931 international trade fair of Elisabethville, in particular the contribution of the then Commissaire du District, R. Hins.

²² Some oral accounts indicate that a structural problem, discovered during the construction process, was responsible for slowing down execution and for the ultimate decision not to use the building as a hospital.

²³ On the MFU, see Beeckmans (2009). An article based on this paper is currently in preparation for publication in the Africa issue of the architectural journal *OASE*, to be published in autumn 2010.

²⁴ De Meulder (2000) discusses the general outlines, as well as some in-depth cases, of colonial urban planning in the Belgian Congo.

²⁵ Une ancienne de Luishia, "Sauver Luishia: le cri de coeur d'une ancienne contre le bradage minier au Congo." <http://cheikfitanews.over-blog.net/article-7039706-6.html>.

²⁶ On the various Congolese initiatives to deal with colonial heritage in general, and monuments in particular, see Dupont and Lagae (2008).

²⁷ The notion of Kinshasa as a *ville spectacle* where “*des formes d’hédonisme et de narcissisme sans cesse inédites se ritualisent*” (“new forms of hedonism and narcissism are constantly being shaped and played out”) is taken from Yoka (1999:16).

²⁸ The play was part of the cultural program entitled *Ukumbusho (souvenir)*; see Sizaïre (2001), especially pp. 179–181.

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