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GLOBALIZATION OF ARCHITECTURE:THEORIZING A NEW AGENDA FOR NIGERIAN ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract:

This paper begins with a review of the opinions of some leading scholars about the positioning of Africa (and by implication, Nigeria) within "the new world order", globalization. The summary of these opinions is that Africa has not yet been advantageously positioned in globalization, even within its natural sphere, the continent of Africa. The paper further discusses the effect of globalization on architecture, a scenario that is described, by some, as the "globalization of architecture". Options have been discussed, on the theoretical basis, on the subject of projecting Nigerian Architecture, within the current scenarios of "globalization of architecture", firstly within Africa and also within "the new world order". The emphasis on a "theoretical agenda" is informed by the belief that, in the absence of a well-articulated and predetermined "theoretical agenda", it may be difficult to compete with other major role-players, who have already become better entrenched in globalization. The paper therefore recommends the formulation of a "theoretical agenda", which must cover all the major facets of Nigerian Architecture, namely: architecture faculties, works of Nigerian architects and practices, and also projecting the talents of younger architects.

Keywords: Agenda, Architecture, Globalization, New, Theoretical.

Introduction

This paper is an advocacy for a timely development of a new theoretical agenda to guide the teaching and practice of architecture in Nigeria in the face of an inevitable global phenomenon - globalization. Two concepts that are contained in this preliminary or introductory statement of the intent of this paper deserve further elucidation; they are advocacy and theory. The paper dwells only on the premise of advocacy because the subject-matter of positioning of Nigerian Architecture within the sphere of globalization is too vast to be covered in one article or to be addressed by only a few persons. It will demand collective efforts within the whole spectrum of Nigerian Architecture itself. The advocacy is for a theoretical agenda because the forces that propel globalization in the world today are sometimes so immense that wherever and whenever they are unleashed within a specific sphere, the principal actors within that specific sphere may find out that it is already too late to develop suitable theoretical agenda to meet the realities after they would have already ensued in practice.

Longworth has attempted to explain this specific scenario, with specific reference to the case of the "Asian Tigers" beginning from the late 20th century, in the article, "The New Global Economic Order". According to him, for as long as the funds (from globalization) were flowing into Asia, "the nations had no interest in adopting those safeguards". Although the safeguards mentioned above refer to financial and banking policies, the general interpretation that may be deduced is that nations may find it too late to develop safeguards (including safeguards in professional practice) once the funds begin to flow in from globalization. In his discussion on the peculiarity of the experience of the "Asian Tigers" (as compared to long-established Western capitalist nations) Longworth offered the following explanation: "…many Western nations learned that uncontrolled capitalism can destroy as surely as it builds. Over the years,

they put in place a web of rules and regulations to prevent excesses, enforce accountability, and ensure safety nets …" (Longworth, 2005). The relevance of all this to Nigerian Architecture may be explained in the following ways.

Architecture is about development, and development demands and attracts funds. One aspect of globalization involves the flow of funds and investments into nations, in a scenario in which "the control of national governments over economic activity" is seriously weakened (Longworth, 2005; Beinart, 2005; Mazrui, 2005). In this scenario of weakened "control of national governments" only the concerted efforts, appropriate interpretations of the evolving scenarios and timely interventions by the professional class can save the professionals themselves; and that is the premise of the theoretical agenda.

Globalization and Africa

According to the definition of globalization credited to British economist, Anthony Giddens, (from his work: 'The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy'), "Globalization can be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant realities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". It has further been described, by Longworth, as a "new global economic order". According to him, it is "a catchall term for many processes that are at the heart of the global economy". The operation of this new global scenario is described as one that "enables any entrepreneur to raise money anywhere in the world, and with that money, use technology, communications, management, and labour located anywhere the entrepreneur finds them, to produce goods and services" – the new "global corporation" (Longworth, 2005). Global trends that have led the world to globalization have been analyzed by scholars. Two of these trends, relate directly with the subject-matter of this paper:

- Global communications, which have been made possible by "technological breakthroughs such as the semiconductor and the communications satellite". Mazrui refers to this as a "new network of the information superhighway" (Longworth, 2005; Beinart, 2005; Mazrui, 2005).
- A new scenario that has affected the controls previously exercised by governments over economic activities within their domains. This has been described as "the wave of deregulation, which began in the late 1970s and weakened the control of national governments over economic activity". Beinart attributes this scenario to "the devotion to unregulated capitalism" (Longworth, 2005; Beinart, 2005; Mazrui, 2005).

The posture of Africa within this globalization scenario has been further analyzed by other scholars. On the issue of the weakening of government control over economic activities within its domain, Beinart further describes globalization as a global integration, which "diminishes government's freedom of action, forcing them towards neoliberal economic policies". He has observed that while the Cold War lasted the United States and the USSR continually extended aid to Africa for the purposes of furthering their respective ideological dogmas. According to him, the advent of globalization, which (in time) coincided with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, has created a new scenario in world affairs. His opinion is that "since the United States no longer sees Africa as part of a global struggle that threatens its security, the anticommunist rhetoric that used to elicit aid no longer exists". He further elucidates on the position of Africa within the age of globalization in the following words: "It is the devotion to unregulated capitalism, more than either democracy or strategic advantage, that determines the treatment of African countries in the age of globalization" (Beinart, 2005).

From Beinart's perspective, we see Africa (in the age of globalization) as a continent that must create its own means of survival (in the absence of substantial foreign aid) within a scenario of globalization, which is accompanied by the diminishing of the freedom of action of national governments. Africa's respected scholar, Mazrui, has in what he describes as the narrower sense defined globalization as "the maturation of global capitalism and its interdependencies, alongside a new network of the information superhighway". Elucidating further on Africa's posturing within the "age of globalization", he has

described a paradoxical scenario in which "the African people have been moving closer to the national center" (of political, business and economic affairs), "but at a time when the African governments have been losing their influence in world affairs". According to him, in the "age of globalization", the "African state has seemed to be moving deeper into the global periphery" (Mazrui, 2005). In general, Mazrui has summarized these scenarios with the following words: "Africa has been experiencing in the 1990s internal democratization and external marginalization at the same time. The African state has been receding into the shadows; the African people have been emerging into the national light". In short, as a result of her internal problems (mostly self-inflicted), that had spanned several decades since the era of national independence in Africa (i.e. throughout the second half of the 20th century), Africa is now saddled with the problem of belatedly charting its course into real democracy, while the rest of the world is securing positions in the "age of globalization". Mazrui has, however, also suggested that it may be the destiny of Nigeria and South Africa to chart Africa's preliminary course within the "age of globalization". According to him:

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- When Nigeria does succeed in putting its house in order, and when South Africa consolidates its new system under majority rule without having to lean on the stature of Nelson Mandela, Africa as a whole will have two clear leaders on the world stage. Sometimes a continent needs some of its members to be "more equal than others" if leadership is to be sustained'.

"The African Condition in the Shadow of Globalization": Mazrui, 2005.

One point becomes very clear from these discourses: to view globalization only in the context of the new and immense opportunities offered by advances in communication technology is "to look at only one side of the coin". The impacts of globalization on local businesses are also very relevant; this includes the impacts of globalization on Nigerian Architecture as a local business (as defined by the ARCON Decree No 10 of 1969). The Wikipedia article on globalization has described a scenario in which globalization has so far resulted in the decline in local businesses and the rise of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, while it has, at the same time, resulted in the reduction of poverty in other sub-regions such as: Latin America; and East Asia and Pacific [Globalization. (2007, September 22).].

In his work, "Globalization and its Discontents", Stiglitz has argued that the "neoliberal assumptions" that form the fundamental bases of globalization are "fundamentally unsound". He has thus traced the low levels of development in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the "age of globalization" to the unsoundness of these "neoliberal assumptions" [Globalization and Its Discontents. (2007, September 16)]. Furthermore, in his work "Making Globalization Work". Stiglitz has observed that the "neoliberal assumptions" of globalization have affected the developing nations adversely, by depriving local businesses, commerce and industry, and also the poor in general, of access to credit [Making Globalization Work. (2007, September 18)].

Globalization of Architecture

The phrase, "globalization of architecture", appears in the article, "1991: Architecture" of the Collier's Year Book for the year 1991 (reproduced in **Microsoft ® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005**). In the said article, it is reported that "globalization of architecture continues to increase, as North American, European and Asian – mostly Japanese – architects increasingly took on major projects outside their home countries" (1991: Architecture. In **Microsoft ® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005.**). Although the very fact of architects taking on projects outside their countries may not be strange, the emphasis is on the increases in the trends in the current "age of globalization". It would appear that these noticeable increases must have warranted or justified the coinage of the phrase: "globalization of architecture".

The foregoing leads us to the point of attempting to examine the possible impacts of all the above scenarios on Nigerian Architecture, as we know it today. We proceed from the basic understanding that since the 19th century, architecture and the entire building industry have been involved in the business of

creating the environments for big businesses; and in the course of this, they have also evolved into very significant businesses in themselves. The definition of globalization (by Anthony Giddens), applied to Nigerian Architecture, appears to suggest that, in the "age of globalization", there is the possibility that issues pertaining to Nigerian Architecture and substantial aspects of building developments and construction in Nigeria, may be "shaped by events occurring many miles away". Consequently, a few preliminary questions instantly arise pertaining to the posturing of Nigerian Architecture within the "age of globalization", namely:

- Is the Nigerian government or political structure going to be willing or capable to stand by the prescriptions of the ARCON Act No. 10 of1969 (and amendments) and protect Nigerian Architecture in the face of a globalization scenario in which an entrepreneur from a "global corporation" in planning to invest huge funds in a business venture (that involves substantial architectural inputs) in Nigeria?
- Is there a possibility that a Nigeria business concern that is operating in partnership with a "global corporation" will prefer to exploit the weakened "control of national governments over economic activity" and conduct architectural and construction business, to the total disregard of the provisions of the ARCON Act No. 10 of 1969?
- Is there a chance that the weakening of "control of national governments over economic activity" could also result in the weakening of the applicability of the ARCON Act No. 10 of 1969 within the "age of globalization" in Nigeria? ARCON Act No. 10 of 1969 is a government act or regulation that is supposed to operate in a scenario in which the "control of national governments over economic activity" is being weakened in the "age of globalization".
- Is there a possibility that scenarios, such as these, are already unfolding in Nigeria? If so, then the case of a new theoretical agenda deserves utmost urgency.

The questions above apply to the entire building industry in Nigeria, but it may the duty of Nigerian Architecture to take the lead. They are, however, issues that may place Nigerian Architecture (and certainly the entire professional class in the Nigerian building industry) in contention with three very powerful blocks, namely: the Nigerian political class, the Nigerian business class and the "global corporation".

When the position of Mazrui is interpreted in the context of Nigerian Architecture, it would appear that it is the expectation of some African scholars and perhaps other valuable opinions that when Nigeria puts "its house in order" it will begin to take a leadership role in the conduct of African business within the "age of globalization". The fulfillment of such roles, which has now begun to be expectations of respected African opinions (Mazrui, for example), will not be a product of "chance encounters by individual Nigerian architects"; it establishes the premise for the advocacy for a "theoretical new agenda" to meet the demands of an equally new era – the "age of globalization".

Theorizing a New Agenda

In discussing the issue of theorizing a new agenda for Nigerian Architecture, we are certainly not going to deal with solutions but posers, which hopefully, may lead to answers, in the end. These posers refer to two principal aspects of Nigerian Architecture, namely: the situation of the Nigerian architectural student, scholar or researcher in the "age of globalization", on the one hand, and the situation of Nigerian architectural practice in the "age of globalization", on the other hand.

Internet Studio and Nigerian Architecture: In the "age of globalization", the internet-studio has become an indispensable tool in diverse aspects of architectural studies and research. Persons who are engaged in the study of architecture (architectural theory and history, architectural design, urban planning, modern building and constructional systems and techniques etc), in the absence of internet-studios, are already clearly disadvantaged.

One must praise the ingenuity of the current Nigerian architectural students, who continually spend their

money in internet-cafes, to make up for the deficiencies encountered in some Nigerian architectural faculties that lack internet-studio facilities. However, such "unguided self-help efforts" (of students at public internet-cafes) do not totally make up for formal instructions of students in the internet-studio. The suggestion being made here is that the time has come, when the collective body of Nigerian Architecture should make the internet-studio a pre-requisite for accreditation at every level of formal architectural education. The internet-studio, as it is presently constituted, gives cause for some sorts of sober reflections, on the part of the Nigerian (or African) architectural student, researcher or scholar.

There are, presently, hardly any web-sites that present contemporary architectural works (of Nigeria or Africa). For example, one of the leading architectural web-sites (GreatBuildings.com) has currently (in September, 2007) about 32 entries on Africa, out of a total of more than 5,500 entries around the world; predictably, nearly 50 percent of these entries refer to Ancient Egypt. At the moment, there is no entry labeled directly as pertaining to Nigeria, but one of the entries is exceptionally curious. It is: "Ibibio Village"; location – Cameron; style – African vernacular architecture. There is probably something wrong with that entry, but it portrays the dangers of passive participation in the "age of globalization" propelled by what Mazrui has described as the "new network of the information superhighway".
On the whole, under the present positioning of Nigeria and Africa in the era of communication technology and the age of globalization, a Nigerian architectural student, scholar or researcher (studying or researching on a subject that pertains more to architecture in Nigeria or Africa) is likely going to have more materials and references to cite from abroad than from Nigeria or Africa (the study-area). This is a disservice to Nigerian architecture; it establishes the need for the establishment of the authentic identity of contemporary Nigerian (and also contemporary Africa) Architecture within the premise of the communication technology (internet) of the "age of globalization". Presently a "wide gap in internet" waiting to be filled by a web-site on contemporary Nigerian (and African) Architecture.
Our curricula for architectural education will also be affected by these developments. For example, the curriculum for photography will have to be reviewed in order to give our students adequate exposure in the current techniques in digital photography and the associated computer software for photography.

Nigerian Architecture - Awards, Competitions and Reviews: In the "age of globalization" we will be confronted with the problems of creating the means of projecting Nigerian Architecture and Nigerian architects. Projecting Nigerian Architecture, in the present era, will require websites in internet (as has already been discussed). It will involve the coverage of at least three aspects of Nigerian Architecture, namely:

- Projecting the works of already established and mature Nigerian architects.
- Projecting the talents of young Nigerian architects.
- Projecting the Nigerian faculties of architecture.

Firstly, we must examine the constraints. The environment of architectural practice is one in which self-advertisements of the architect and his/her works are abhorred. We also practice in an industrially handicapped environment. In the industrialized world, manufactures of diverse building components and materials are usually anxious to advertise, on their web-sites, architectural works in which their products have been applied. In doing so, they end up also projecting the architectural works and also the architects. The Nigerian architect is unable, at the present state of our nation's industrialization, to benefit from this aspect of projection.

Awards of Distinctions: Awards of distinctions have proven to constitute a very useful medium of projecting architects. It may be earned in two principal ways, namely: through professional reviews of works of architecture, and also through participation in competitions. With the Nigerian Institute of Architects poised to celebrate its golden jubilee in the next three years, we already have a body of professional Nigerian architects capable of assessing completed works of architecture and also outstanding competition entries for awards of distinctions.

Competitions: Competitions have often also provided the means for projecting architects and architecture into limelight. The principal essence of the competition is not the cash prize; it is by far more fulfilling to reward leading competition entries by awards of distinctions than by cash prizes. It would probably be incorrect to generalize that all architects, who so far excelled in international competitions, have always had records of awards of distinctions from their respective places of practice. However, most of the architects, who have often been invited to participate in limited international competitions, have often had some records of awards of distinctions from their permanent places of practice. The Nigerian architect, who enters international competitions, without awards of distinctions earned in his/her seat of professional practice, may be doing so from the point of disadvantage. It will certainly be to the greater advantage of Nigerian Architecture to institute diverse awards of distinctions that may be won through national competitions or through reviews of completed works.

Experimental Projects: The experience from other lands shows that competitions may be established on the basis of real projects or on the basis of experimental projects. In some countries (for instance, the former USSR), experimental projects have sometimes been used as a method of developing the architectural parameters for the resolution of emerging sociological problems before such issues become topical in the political consciousness of the nation. A foremost example of such use of experimental projects (in the former USSR) was in the development of facilities for tourism.
USSR relied extensively on the concept of experimental projects for the development of its parameters for the architecture for resort development (in the 1970s and 1980s), at a time when there was a general lack of scholarly materials on this aspect of architecture. The results have been a phenomenal success, leading to advancements in resort developments on the Black Sea coasts of Russia, Abkhazia, and Ukraine etc.

One instance, that would probably demand experimental projects in Nigeria, is the Universal Basic Education (UBE), which has become one of the topical sociological issues, since the rise of democracy in Nigeria. This has involved the transformation of primary schools to meet the requirements of the UBE programme, but what we have observed, in practice, has been the addition (sometimes purely at random) of some new classroom blocks to existing schools, often with little or no attention being paid to layout planning. The following questions do arise:

- Is the architecture of the UBE supposed to be as simplistic as that?
- Is layout planning not relevant in the UBE scheme?
- Would it not be to the greater benefit of Nigerian Architecture to develop the architectural parameters of the UBE scheme (by experimental projects) involving young Nigerian architects in national competitions?

Such national architectural competitions, based on experimental projects are rewarded through various categories of awards of distinctions, would create avenues for the recognition, elevation and exposure of the talents of young Nigerian architects, in a depressed economy where architectural commissions have been very scanty for a couple of decades now.

The application of the concept of experimental projects towards the development of architectural parameters for the resolution of emerging sociological issues is not, by any means, unfamiliar particularly since the advent of modernism in architecture. Traces of this trend are recognizable in the following scenarios:

- Metabolism, the Japanese movement in modern architecture that was led in the 1960s by KenzoTange and later by Fumiko Maki.
- Archigram, which emerged in England also about the same time (in the 1960s) and was led by Peter Cook, Ron Herron and others.
- The visions of the ideal city plan and the “city of tomorrow” proposed by Le Corbusier's (the Swiss-born French architect Charles Jeanneret).
- The *Futurist Manifesto* of 1914, proposed by Italian architect Antonio Sant'Elia, towards a

modern architecture that is characterized by glass, steel and concrete etc. (Ghirardo, 2005).

Nigerian Architectural Faculties: Projecting the Nigerian faculties of architecture is also a matter that demands significant and urgent attention. We may begin at the point that over several decades now, research works at master's degree, PhD and post-doctoral levels have been proceeding at the Nigerian faculties of architecture. It may be preposterous to presume that the political body of Nigeria will reach out to the libraries of these faculties to assemble useful information for nation building. The first step is probably for Nigerian Architecture to establish a central medium for assembling and categorizing such research works, and granting awards of distinctions for outstanding research works. Assembling and categorizing research works in a central medium provides the following advantages:

- Firstly, it provides a good resource pool for future research activities.
- Secondly, it provides a central resource data bank for the national political body, in the circumstances that the nation may wish to apply such research efforts towards nation building.
- Thirdly, it projects outstanding research works and their authors, and also the works of Nigerian architecture cited, nationally and internationally.

Such resource pools of local research works (probably published or listed on our web-site) will have two principal effects, namely:

- Appropriate projections of local research activities could lead to international co-operations, and eventually the uplift of the international statures of the Nigerian architectural faculties themselves.
- Projection of Nigerian architectural works that have been reviewed in such research activities.

Reviews and Listing of Notable Nigerian Architectural Works: Finally, another reliable method of projecting contemporary works of Nigeria Architecture and also Nigerian architects (the authors of such works) will be through reviews published on web-sites. It must first be observed that reviews, conducted by the authors of the works themselves, fall far short of the international standards or criteria for reviews. This will require a collaboration between two principal arms of Nigerian Architecture, namely: Nigerian architects in practice; and Nigerian architects in the academia. To foster this objective, it will become necessary for Nigerian architects in practice to open up opportunities for Nigerian Architects in the academia to spend their sabbatical leaves or their research vacations in their respective practices. Needless to say that there are already many outstanding works of contemporary Nigeria Architecture that have not yet been probably projected to international limelight, because their reviews have not yet been published (in the “age of globalization”, that certainly means on internet). Listing of notable Nigerian architectural works may not have to be confined to contemporary architectural works only. Other architectural works that have significant relevance with the history of Nigeria as a nation, and also with various aspects of the cultures of the people of Nigeria in general, may also deserve to be listed.

Conclusion

In this paper, the subject of theorizing a new agenda for the projection of Nigerian Architecture in its totality (the mature architects and their practices, the talents of young Nigeria architects, Nigerian architectural faculties etc.) within the “age of globalization” has been discussed. The conclusion is that it may be difficult to project Nigerian Architecture within the “age of globalization”, without a website that has been collectively created, by Nigerian architecture, for the purpose. Some websites have been listed for reference, namely: about.architecture.com, GreatBuildings.com, www.archipedia.org, www.architecture.com (the web-site of the Royal Institute of British Architects - RIBA). In establishing a website for Nigerian Architecture, the strategy adopted in the case of about.architecture.com and GreatBuildings.com may have to be explored. The web-sites about.architecture.com and GreatBuildings.com are a web-sites sponsored and hosted by the New York Times Company (of USA).

In Nigeria today, we have a good number of newspapers published daily on the internet. Perhaps, if we take a cue from this, we could work out collaborations with some newspaper houses in Nigeria towards the hosting of a special website for Nigerian Architecture (probably, Nigerian Architecture.com).

In pursuit of these objectives, we will create immense opportunities for interactions between Nigerian architects in the academia, and other Nigerian architects in practice, to the greater glory of Nigerian Architecture.

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Electronic Resources

GreatBuildings.com

www.archipedia.org

about.architecture.com (about.com:architecture)

www.architecture.com (The web-site of the Royal Institute of British Architects - RIBA)

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