

5

**A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUILT FORM AND CULTURE:  
The Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence and its environment.**

**By  
MAJAHAMAHLE NENE MTHETHWA**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Architecture**

**Supervised by  
Professor D. A. Japha**

**Department of Architecture and Planning  
Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment  
University of Cape Town  
April 2001**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

---

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people and organisations without whom this research would not have been realised:

**My supervisor, Prof. D. A. Japha:**

I took on a challenging subject, which was made easier by your wise guidance. The knowledge you have imparted in me will see me through to a brilliant career – both teaching and practising in the field of architecture. Your critique of my work was consistent and exemplary. I also gained an invaluable experience in the studio, tutoring under your guidance – your approach and the projects were enjoyable. I am also grateful for your overall assistance beyond my studies.

**Regine Heuschneider:**

My gratitude to all the help you gave me in terms of editing and proof-reading. Thanks for being patient and tolerant regardless of all the pressure I piled on you as a last minute rush. Your suggestions and critique were very constructive and useful in helping me to compile a professionally written final document.

**The National University of Science and Technology:**

My gratitude goes to my sponsors, NUST for their financial support throughout my studies. I am particularly grateful to Pro Vice Chancellor, Prof. C. B. Nyathi (until December 2000), the Acting Pro Vice Chancellor, Prof. A. E. Taigbenu (from January 2001), the Registrar, Mr M. T. Kariwo, Mr J. V. Mhlanga, Mrs M. Bidi and Prof. A. D. C. Hyland for their support at various stages of my studies. I also thank the Bulawayo City Council for giving me an opportunity to work on the Mayor's Residence project, particularly in its developed stages. *Lihle elikaMthwakazi.*

**UCT Department of Architecture Seminar Group:**

Thanks to members of the Seminar Group that were directed by Prof. I. Prinsloo and later by Dr. A. Karam. Particularly, I would like to thank Dr. Crispino Ochieng, Temitope Awe and Noleen Murray for their support at various stages of my research. My sincere gratitude also goes to Professor Jo Noero for his timely critique – it made all the difference.

**Dr A. Karam:**

Thanks for the encouragement especially towards the end of this thesis. I am grateful for your help both within and outside my study programme.

**Peter D. Sibanda:** Thanks for the professional assistance and advice you rendered, especially with reference to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. You were a great team member. **John A. Knight:** My sincere gratitude for introducing me to professional practice. I particularly would like to thank you for the contribution you made in the conceptual development of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, especially with regard to your 3-D sketches and the way you handled the design team.

**My family:**

Thanks for your support, emotional and otherwise. Thanks to Mr R. Gumede for his help during my fieldwork – you were a joy to work with.

Last, but not least, I thank God for seeing me through my research, which was riddled with trials and tribulations, but still, in the end, very much enjoyable.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this to my mom: a very courageous woman who stood by the rights of all her children under very difficult circumstances.

## ABSTRACT

---

Inspired by the lack of debate around desirable national architectural qualities and characteristics in Zimbabwe, this study is intended to provide a platform from which such debate can begin to happen. The core of the research is an analysis of a case study in which identity issues were important, a project for a proposed Executive Mayor's Residence project in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

In order to establish a critical framework for the analysis of the project, the initial chapters of the thesis examine various key issues of importance to designers in considering the relationship between built form and culture. Definitions are provided of key concepts such as culture itself, and, using core secondary texts, the thesis examines what the concept of cultural supportiveness might mean and how identity issues in design might be approached. The approach to these is broadly historical, considering supportiveness and identity issues as revealed in key theoretical work and important contributions to architectural practice.

The thesis first examines Amos Rapoport's theoretical proposals regarding the proper basis of cultural supportiveness, and his suggested method of analysing what is required in any given context, concluding that, while offering many valuable insights, this method is also problematic in complex, multi-ethnic cities such as are found in many parts of the third world, including Zimbabwe.

The thesis then examines key contributions to the identity and local appropriateness debates made by practising architects in the third world since the pioneering work of Hassan Fathy. Whether or not local culture is engaged with or not and in what way are important issues in any architect's approach to questions of identity. The thesis therefore examines. This requires consideration of the relationship between specifically architectural propositions on the questions and theories of culture and identity more generally. This thesis suggests that the various historical positions taken by social theorists on the question of identity – in particular the modernist view that identity is tied to and can be altered by the process of modernisation and the postmodern view that identity is more fluid and subject to choice and contestation on the basis of more complex

variables - can be more or less matched in architectural practice. The first view was at the root of modernist interventions in the third world. The second is the basis of many post-colonial counter proposals in contexts such as India.

It is argued that cultural connectivity is a prime determinant of local identity and the local appropriateness of built environments. Where applicable, this study refers to private and public projects that support this argument from the Indian sub-continent and other selected environments.

In the contemporary environment which has produced Bosnia, Kosovo and Rwanda, the double sided nature of identity construction cannot be ignored: on the one hand the foundation for cultural appropriateness and local pride; on the other the basis of reactionary ethnic politics. Architecture too has become involved in such debates, and the theoretical section of the thesis concludes by examining the role of architecture in the politics of identity construction, as manifested particularly in certain types of public architecture, of which the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project is an example

The thesis then uses the conclusions drawn from the consideration of this material to analyse the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. Additionally, fieldwork material gathered from a few isiNdebele-speakers selected because of their likely familiarity with tradition and traditional practices was used in assessing the fit of the proposed project in the cultural landscape of Bulawayo.

Having outlined the theoretical approaches to the study of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture, the research thereafter focuses on an analysis of the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project to judge its performance in terms of its cultural connectivity with reference to these theoretical terms.

The case study highlighted a number of elements that are a manifestation of a local culture and historical setting. It was found that these elements could be used at various levels of architectural and planning practice. Two proposals are suggested for further

studies that could be conducted in this regard. The first one involves looking at how people perceive built forms through analysing their perceptions on the environments that they live in and a chosen built project and its environments. The second one is centred on the local appropriateness of a range of projects located in various parts of the country in order to facilitate the development of national architectural characteristics that are sensitive to local cultures and settings.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>FIGURES</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>PLATES</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>PART I INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b><u>1.0 INTRODUCTION</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 DEFINING THE PROBLEM AND THE OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2.1 Definition of the problem</b>	
<b>1.2.2 Objectives</b>	
<b>1.3 SETTING OUT THE SCOPE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.3.1 Delimitation of the research parameters</b>	
<b>1.3.2 Definition of terms</b>	
<b>1.3.3 Stating the assumptions</b>	
<b>1.3.4 Hypotheses</b>	
<b>1.3.5 Importance of the study</b>	
<b>1.4 CONCEPTS AND THEORIES</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.5 KEY QUESTIONS, RESEARCH METHOD AND MATERIALS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.5.1 Key research questions</b>	
<b>1.5.2 Research methods and materials</b>	

## **PART II: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES**

<b><u>2.0 THE CONCEPT OF SUPPORTIVENESS</u></b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.2 THE CONCEPT OF SUPPORTIVENESS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.2.1 Definition of the concept of “Supportiveness”</b>	
<b>2.2.2 The concept of culture</b>	
<b>2.2.3 Rapoport’s approach to culture</b>	
<b>2.3 CULTURE-RESPONSIVE BUILT ENVIRONMENTS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2.3.1 Introduction</b>	
<b>2.3.2 Relationship between tradition and culture</b>	
<b>2.3.3 Group definition and the problem of supportiveness</b>	
<b>2.3.4 What is being supported?</b>	
<b>2.3.5 What is supporting?</b>	
<b>2.3.6 Who is to be supported?</b>	
<b>2.4 THE ANALYTICAL METHOD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO DESIGN</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2.5 CONCLUSION: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES</b>	<b>46</b>
<b><u>3.0 THEORISING IDENTITY</u></b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.2 THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>3.2.1 Definitions and concepts</b>	
<b>3.2.2 Identity conceptualised as fixed</b>	
<b>3.2.3 Identity conceptualised as alterable by social processes</b>	
<b>3.2.4 Identity conceptualised as constructed</b>	
<b>3.3 IDENTITY IN ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3.4 VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE: Its relation to cultural connectivity</b>	<b>63</b>

<b>3.5 THE EMERGENCE OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM</b>	<b>67</b>
3.5.1 Introduction	
3.5.2 Development of regionalism with respect to issues of localness	
3.5.3 Critical regionalism and local identity	
<b>3.6 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>73</b>
<b><u>4.0 RECENT ARCHITECTURAL APPROACHES TO “LOCALNESS”</u></b>	
<b><u>AND REGIONAL ISSUES</u></b>	<b>75</b>
<b>4.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>4.2 MODERNISM AND IDENTITY IN THE THIRD WORLD</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>4.3 FINDING THE LOCAL VOICE</b>	<b>94</b>
4.3.1 Modernist/local syntheses as post-colonial responses to de-colonisation	
4.3.2 Critical regionalism as a response to localness	
<b>4.4 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>126</b>
<b><u>5.0 PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY</u></b>	<b>128</b>
<b>5.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>5.2 IDENTITY ISSUES WITH REGARD TO PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE</b>	<b>131</b>
5.2.1 Introduction	
5.2.2 Issues pertaining to the concept of national identity	
5.2.3 National identity and the siting of public buildings	
<b>5.3 NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE PARLIAMENT COMPLEX:</b>	
<b>The Sri Lankan Case</b>	<b>140</b>
5.3.1 Introduction	
5.3.2 The cultural setting of the parliament complex	
5.3.3 The Sri Lankan Parliament: The politics behind its site and architecture	
<b>5.4 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>152</b>

# **PART III: THE BULAWAYO MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT: OUTLINE AND ANALYSIS**

<b><u>6.0 THE PROPOSED MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT: Background and</u></b>	
<u>Concepts</u>	155
<b>6.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	156
<b>6.2 INITIAL PROPOSALS OF THE MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT</b>	157
6.2.1 Introduction	
6.2.2 The historical background	
6.2.3 The design brief and issues of symbolism	
6.2.4 The city context: first and second proposals	
<b>6.3 FINAL PROPOSAL OF THE MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT</b>	171
6.3.1 Introduction	
6.3.2 The third conceptual proposal	
6.3.3 Building forms and space schedules	
6.3.4 Materials	
<b>6.4 CONCLUSION</b>	187
<b><u>7.0 THE PROPOSED MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT:</u></b>	
<u>A Critical Analysis</u>	188
<b>7.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	189
7.1.1 Theoretical backdrop	
7.1.2 Proposed analytical criterion	
7.1.3 Critical issues to be analysed with regard to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project	
7.1.4 Structure of the analysis	
<b>7.2 THE MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT: The Question of Identity</b>	195
7.2.1 Introduction	
7.2.2 The concept of identity in relation to the project	

<b>7.3 THE MAYOR’S RESIDENCE PROJECT: Symbolism and</b>	
<b>Regional Identity Issues</b>	<b>209</b>
7.3.1 Introduction	
7.3.2 KoBulawayo: Its history and symbolic significance	
7.3.3 Relevant symbolism issues pertaining to the site	
7.3.4 Issues of the building form	
7.3.5 Materials	
<b>7.4 THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSED</b>	
<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>7.5 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>PART IV: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</b>	
<b><u>8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</u></b>	<b>234</b>
<b>78.1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>8.2 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS</b>	<b>238</b>
8.2.1 Mayor’s Residence project and the concept of “supportiveness”	
8.2.2 The concept of identity in relation to the Mayor’s Residence project	
8.2.3 Regional identity: the performance assessment of the Mayor’s Residence project	
<b>8.3 PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH</b>	<b>245</b>
8.3.1 Practical sources of identity construction for the region	
8.3.2 Contributions made by the study	
<b>8.4 RECOMMENDED FUTURE RESEARCH</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>8.5 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: MAYOR’S RESIDENCE PROJECT: Selected working drawings</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: FIELDWORK INTERVIEWS: Two Selected Samples</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>276</b>

## **FIGURES**

---

<b>FIGURE</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
Fig.2.1- Two analytical axial components: “dismantling” of the concept of culture (Source: Rapoport, A., 1990, pp.) .....	25
Fig. 2.2- Activities within a single setting versus activity systems in systems of settings (Source: Rapoport, A., 1990, pp (Fig. 2.3) .....	35
Fig. 2.3- Tracing the changes over time (Source: Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., 1991, pp. 44) .....	37
Fig. 2.4- Cultural changes in tandem with the built environment (Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., 1991, pp. 43, Fig. 3.1) .....	38
Fig. 2.5- Identifying characteristics of traditional, changed and new environments (Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., 1991, pp. 46) .....	39
Fig. 2.6- Identification of the characteristics of environments, ranging from the traditional to the modern. (Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. 1991, pp. 47) .....	40
Fig. 2.7- Elements of culture core and corresponding physical elements (Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., 1991, pp. 49) .....	42
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
Fig. 3.1- Jorn Utzon’s Bagsvaerd Church - North elevation and section (1973-76) (Source: Frampton, K., 1983, pp. 23.) .....	71
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
Fig. 4.1- The Delhi, showing ancient and modern empires (Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 89.) .....	80
Fig. 4.2- Preliminary design for the Viceroy’s House, New Delhi, India showing Indian-derived domes. (Source: Richardson, M., 1994, pp. 60) .....	81
Fig. 4.3- Lutyens Indian motifs exploration. Shown are chattri, a small Indian roof pavilion, and the chujja, the projecting stone cornice and the pointed arch to the Palladian window. (Source: Richardson, M., 1994, pp. 61.) .....	82
Fig. 4.4- The Viceroy House: bell-form application. (Source: Irving, R. G., 1981, pp. 189.) .....	83
Fig. 4.5- The Viceroy’s Court showing the Jaipur Column (Source: Irving, R. G., 1981, pp. 246.) .....	84
Fig. 4.6- Chandigarh town plan (1951) showing the grid pattern (Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 190.) .....	85
Fig. 4.7- A sketch of the Governor’s Palace showing elements of traditional Indian beliefs and social setting. The parasol was incorporated into the design. In the sketches, symbolism issues were addressed through tilted roof forms and their link to the bull’s horns. (Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 193.) .....	86
Fig. 4.8- The Legislative Assembly in Chandigarh showing a tilted roof form resembling a bull’s horns and a sketch showing the source of inspiration.) (Source: Evenson, N., 1971, diagram 95 and Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 193) .....	86
Fig. 4.9- The High Court showing the raised roof as part of dealing with ventilation. (Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 195.) .....	88
Fig. 4.10- The Open Hand sketch and its application in the design. (Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 200.) .....	89
Fig 4.11: Jantar Mantar- in Delhi (Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 196.) .....	89

Fig. 4.12- The Parliament Building roofscape drawn from a local early 18th century building (Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 196.) .....	90
Fig. 4.13- Millowners' Association Building, showing application of brises-soleil on a large scale. (Source Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 207.) .....	91
Fig. 4.14- Site plan. Entrances are approached by steps (upper and lower right of the plan). The underground vaults are supported by pillars. (Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 137) .....	96
Fig. 4.15- A section showing a maze of pillars inside the cave-like spaces. (Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 140) .....	97
Fig. 4.16- The Parek House, Ahmedabad (Source: Correa, C., 1984, pp. 42) .....	101
Fig. 4.17- Parek House, winter section as express by an eastern elevation (Source: Correa, C., 1984, pp. 43) .....	102
Fig. 4.18- The Tube Housing, a response to local climate: A concept drawn from local vernacular architecture. (Source: Correa, C., 1984, pp. 30 and 31) .....	104
Fig. 4.19- Plan of a projected country house by Mies Van de Rohe (Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 11) .....	105
Fig. 4.20- Plan and section of A. S. H. De Silva House, 1960 (Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 11) .....	105
Fig. 4.21- The De Silva House showing use of materials to blend with local environment. (Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 47) .....	106
Fig. 4.22- Orthographic Views of Seema Malaka Temple in Colombo showing the dominance of roof architecture by Bawa (Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 163) .....	110
Fig. 4.23- Efrain Gonzalez Luna house: Plans. (Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 49) .....	113
Fig. 4.24- Gustavo R. Cristo House, Guadalajara, built 1930 – 31 showing roof terraces. (Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 46) .....	114
Fig. 4.25- Urban Project Plan (top left); The view of the roof top parallel to the promenade, with the elevator tower and bridge in the background (top right); the entrance floor plan and typical unit floor plan (bottom) (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 239) .....	116
Fig. 4.26- View of the kidney-shaped internal courtyard. (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 82) .....	118
Fig. 4.27- conceptual drawings, including a volumetric sketch (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 154) .....	119
Fig. 4.28- House at Riva San Vitale. (Source- Pizzi, 1998, pp. 22) .....	121
Fig. 4.29- An axonometric section showing detail of the wall (figure on the left), and the façade in relationship to the villa. (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 78) .....	121
Fig. 4.30- Axonometric drawing of Bankinter and the villa. (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 79) .....	122
Fig. 4.31- A pedestrian walk on the Philopappus Hill showing spaces that can accommodate both small gatherings and large assemblies - illustrating the application of the pathway concept. (Source: Lefaivre, L. and Tzonis, A., 1985, pp. 20.) .....	124

## CHAPTER 5

Fig. 5.1- Perspective of the parliament complex island (Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 195.) .....	142
Fig. 5.2- Floor plan of chamber at lower level; Section through Parliament Chamber and preliminary sketches showing the dominant structure of the Chamber. (Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 163) .....	143

Fig. 5.3- A diagram of Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte, showing how the design put focus on the ancient capital and parliament whose symbolic importance is emphasised by the surrounding Buddhist meditation centres (Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 201.) .....	145
Fig. 5.4- The island of Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte (past) juxtaposed against the new island Parliament (present)- both being Sinhalese islands. (Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 207.) .....	148
Fig. 5.5- Security concerns were behind an island Parliament. (Source: Vale, L. J., 195, pp. 205.) .....	148
Fig. 5.6- The Sinhalese cultural groove (Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 195) .....	150

## CHAPTER 6

Fig. 6.1- The plan of the initial scheme (Source: Bulawayo City Council Mayor's Residence Project Drawing File) .....	163
Fig. 6.2- Bulawayo in relation to other cities. (Source: NUST Master Plan Report, pp. 1.2) .....	164
Fig. 6.3: The location of the proposed Mayor's Residence. (Source: The Bulawayo Road Map) .....	165
Fig. 6.4- Site of the proposed mayor's Residence. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	167
Fig. 6.5- the second proposed scheme of the Mayor's Residence. (Source: From the Bulawayo City Council, Mayor's Project Drawing Files) .....	170
Fig. 6.6- The elevation of the proposed second scheme. (Source: From the Bulawayo City Council Mayor's Project Drawing Files) .....	170
Fig. 6.7- Analysis of KoBulawayo (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report, Fig. 3) .....	172
Fig. 6.8- Analysis of Selbourn Park Site. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	173
Fig. 6.9- Analysis of the Site (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	173
Fig. 6.10- Analysis of the Movements on Site (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	174
Fig. 6.11- Concept Analysis (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	175
Fig. 6.12- Form Analysis at Concept Stage (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	175
Fig. 6.13- 3-D Analysis of the Concept Integration (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	176
Fig. 6.14- Concept Development and Analysis. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	176
Fig. 6.15- Concept Development (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	178
Fig. 6.16- Executive Mayor's Residence Concept Development (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	178
Fig. 6.17- Site and Concept Integration (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	179
Fig. 6.18- Concept Exploration Development (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	180
Fig. 6.19- Mayor's Wing: Space concept development. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	181
Fig. 6.20- Guest Wing: Space concept development. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	181

Fig. 6.21- Space development: Mayor's and Guest Wings. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	182
Fig. 6.22- Executive Mayor's Residence: Preliminary Space Concept. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	183
Fig. 6.23- Site Plan: Mayor's residence. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	184
Fig. 6.24- Floor Plan: Mayor's Residence. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	185
Fig. 6.25- Perspective of the proposed Mayor's Residence project (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	186

## CHAPTER 7

Fig. 7.1- A typical layout of <i>umuzi</i> (a traditional isiNdebele homestead). (Source: Drawn by author) .....	202
Fig. 7.2- the partial plan of the Mayor's Residence project: Showing the two wings and the Conference Centre. (Source: The Bulawayo Executive Mayor' Residence Project Report.) .....	203
Fig. 7.3- Partial Perspective: showing cone-on-drum construction. (Source: The Bulawayo Executive Mayor' Residence Project Report.) .....	205
Fig. 7.4- Section: Showing deep ceiling and eaves. (Source: The Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence- Detailed design.) .....	208
Fig. 7.5- The location of KoBulawayo (Source: Sabinet: <a href="http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.Html">http:// www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite / projects / OB / Bulawayo. Html</a> ) .....	210
Fig. 7.6- The Proposed Mayor's residence: plan. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	219
Fig. 7.7- Building forms concept development (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	223
Fig. 7.8- Perspective of the proposed Mayor's Residence project (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	224
Fig. 7.9- Building form development (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	225
Fig. 7.10- Form analysis of proposed buildings. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	226
Fig. 7.11- Circulation concept and building forms (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	227
Fig. 7.12- Integration of circulation and building forms. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	227
Fig. 7.13- 3-D analysis of building forms integrated into the site. (Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report) .....	228

**PLATES**



<b>PLATE</b>	<b>Page</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3.0</b>	
Plate 3.1- Night view of the Grand Louvre, Paris: The glass pyramid playfully fusing two incongruent images of glass and pyramid. (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 226) .....	62
 <b>CHAPTER 4.0</b>	
Plate 4.1- Dealing with local climate: Shells showing snouts with apertures to capture air and light. (Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 135) .....	96
Plate 4.2- Shells showing some of the snouts with apertures to capture light and fresh air. (Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 134) .....	98
Plate 4.3- Entrance is approached down a flight of steps into a cave-like interior. (Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 135) .....	99
Plate 4.4- The effect of combining modern and traditional materials. The patio (Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 11) .....	108
Plate 4.5- View to the end pavilion of the temple clearly showing the effect of deep eaves (Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 162) .....	109
Plate 4.6- Efrain Gonzalez Luna house: Massing of elements, articulation of openings and the play of light and its ambient qualities. (Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 48) .....	111
Plate 4.7- Efrain Gonzalez Luna house: Shades: view below the pergola. (Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 50) .....	111
Plate 4.8- Luis Barragan House and Studio: Use of colour on the roof deck. (Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 123) .....	113
Plate 4.9- The Canyeret development showing the elevator tower and bridge. (Source: Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 238) .....	115
Plate 4.10- Detail of the façade beneath the promenade and cathedral. (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 240) .....	117
Plate 4.11- View into the Library entrance (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 153.) .....	120
Plate 4.12- Exterior view of the building showing its indebtedness to the Roman tradition of large-scale brick constructions, which still dominate the Iberian landscape and cityscapes. (Source: Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 132) .....	123
 <b>CHAPTER 6.0</b>	
Plate 6.1- Aerial photograph of the location of the Mayor's Residence. (Source: The Harare Surveyor General's Office) .....	166
Plate 6.2- the national University of Science and Technology: View to the North from site. (Source: Taken by Mr P. D. Sibanda) .....	168
Plate 6.3- the view into the CBD (Source: Taken by Mr P. D. Sibanda) .....	168
 <b>CHAPTER 7.0</b>	
Plate 7.1- The Gweru Mayor's Residence. (Source: The Chronicle, 9 August 2000) .....	199
Plate 7.2- <i>Umuzi</i> : Showing its typical components in 3-D form.	

(Source: Drawn by author) .....	206
Plate 7.3- <i>Umuzi</i> : Showing the four gates cordially arranged.	
(Source: Drawn by author) .....	207
Plate 7.4- Lobengula's wagon shade	
(Source: Sabinet: <a href="http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.Html">http:// www.bufau.bham.ac.uk /newsite / projects / OB / Bulawayo. Html</a> ) .....	213
Plate 7.5- Homesteads surrounding the King's Residence	
(Source: Sabinet: <a href="http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.Html">http:// www.bufau.bham.ac.uk /newsite / projects / OB / Bulawayo. Html</a> ) .....	213
Plate 7.6- KoBulawayo in 1890s	
(Source: The Bulawayo Mayor's Residence Project- Report) .....	214
Plate 7.7- The circular sitting arrangement can be observed in this instance with the King's House behind him.	
(Source: Sabinet: <a href="http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.Html">http:// www.bufau.bham.ac.uk /newsite / projects / OB / Bulawayo. Html</a> ) .....	215
Plate 7.8- The Location of prominent Bulawayo Civic Buildings	
(Source: Bulawayo City Council- Town Planning Dept.) .....	221

# **PART I:**

## **INTRODUCTION**

(Chapter 1)

# **CHAPTER 1.0**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

Many current scholars hold the view that buildings should be designed to take cognisance of ways in which local people interpret built form.<sup>1</sup> If this premise is accepted, it then it follows that built environment professionals need to understand how environments, spaces and forms are perceived by different cultural groups and sub-groups, and how different spatial arrangements can either support or impede locally and culturally derived patterns of use. Such understanding can provide a starting point for identifying underlying elements which are of practical and symbolic importance to given cultural groups, so that these elements can be incorporated into design and planning concepts. Such issues concerning the socio-cultural appropriateness of architectural constructions within specific environments need to be explored and clarified by careful, in-depth analysis of selected case studies, either of projects that are still in progress, or of already existing buildings and complexes. In Zimbabwe, such studies of how local cultural groups use and perceive space are long overdue. The present thesis addresses this subject matter by conducting an analysis of a building project with some implications for interpreting the nature of the relationship that exists between built form and culture.

This subject of locally appropriate built forms and environments is complex, hence the intention of this research is to place issues of “locally appropriateness” in a broader theoretical perspective before testing their applicability in this specific project and its environment. Key literature dealing with design issues from a cultural perspective has sought to make the case that the aim of designers seeking to be culturally sensitive should be to design culturally supportive environments, with cultural supportiveness understood as involving both the accommodation of lifestyle, culturally driven practices and culturally derived concepts, and symbolic imperatives. Thus, key literature dealing with these issues will be critically reviewed. Where appropriate and relevant to the research contained in this thesis, specific ideas, models and concepts will be focused on in greater detail.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example see Abel, C., *Architecture and Identity: Towards a global eco-culture*, Architectural Press - an Imprint of Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 1997.

The particular focus of this research will be a project that the author worked on from its inception to the working-drawings stage. This was a project in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, the Executive Mayor's Residence project for the Bulawayo City Council. The proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's official residence was of provincial, even national, importance due to the fact that this was one of the proposed Executive Mayors' residences that had been gazetted by the Government of Zimbabwe for all cities in the country in 1996. Moreover, the Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project is the first one to address the issue of "cultural" appropriateness of Zimbabwean architecture.

The assumption in pursuing this study is that environments may be designed and created to accommodate specific lifestyles and activities and to symbolise social values and relationships. This assumption is the basis for the work of one of the key theorists to be discussed in this thesis, Amos Rapoport,<sup>2</sup> which in turn has provided this thesis with the necessary theoretical background to questions of identity which are engaged with in later chapters (Chapters 3 to 5).

## **DEFINING THE PROBLEM AND THE OBJECTIVES**

Given this background, it is the primary intention of this thesis to examine issues pertaining to local identity, i.e. how buildings may be read as carriers of local symbolic meaning. However, the work is placed in a broader theoretical context by the examination of a wider range of issues pertaining to the degree of fit between built form and culture.

The thesis begins with a critical investigation into issues of how environments may be designed to match and support the behavioural patterns or cultural needs of its inhabitants. To investigate issues of behavioural/environmental support this thesis proposes to develop an approach to setting criteria to judge the success and or failure of buildings or proposed projects in this respect.

After developing this theoretical approach, the developed criteria will be used to analyse and assess a public building project in Zimbabwe, the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. Where appropriate, the study will be applying gathered fieldwork information to contribute towards the local appropriateness performance debate of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. This project and its immediate environment were selected as appropriate material for this study for the following reasons:

- The architects specifically tried to use a design that employed locally appropriate forms which embodied historical values, and thus ultimately attempted to define and develop a local cultural identity;
- The proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project was intended to be a public institution, a socio-cultural and political symbol and also a private residence; it is furthermore a semi-public building in a residential area;
- The residential area where the building was to be situated, is itself particularly interesting. This area, Selbourne Park, is an affluent and relatively new suburb, where many new stands and even are currently being developed.

For these reasons, the author finds this project to be appropriate for contributing towards a local and national debate on the particular characteristics of Zimbabwean regional architecture in its various local contexts. Therefore, this research will attempt to formulate certain skills that can be used to design locally and culturally appropriate built architecture for any given environment, taking into consideration the relationship between built-form and culture, with the concepts of "supportiveness of lifestyle" and particularly "identity" being core themes. The initial chapters (Chapter 2 through to Chapter 5) will approach this subject from a general point of view in order to look at how definitions of "supportiveness", "culture", and "identity" have been defined in past and current theoretical literature and how these developments were absorbed into architectural practice. The subsequent chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) will critically test the cultural appropriateness of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project against the backdrop of developments in architectural theory and practice with respect to broader meanings of lifestyle - supportiveness and identity.

---

•<sup>2</sup> . . . His work with respect to this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Taking into account the endeavour to develop locally appropriate built environments with particular interest in Zimbabwe and its general regional location, the objectives of this study are stated as follows:

1. To develop a critical theoretical basis that outlines an approach through which to study and analyse the nature of the relationship between built form and culture;
2. To assess the likely performance of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project in terms of local appropriateness, through applying basic principles drawn from the proposed research approach to the study of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture;
3. To identify whether, for isiNdebele-speakers selected because of their likely familiarity with tradition and traditional practices, there are local culturally derived lifestyle practices which were successfully addressed, or whether there are practices that should and could have been discovered and imparted with symbolic expressions by the project design concept, but were not;
4. To identify whether there are architectural symbolic representations in this project and the selected environments that are valued as expressions of a desired local "identity" by these isiNdebele-speakers.

Various approaches could have been adopted to the selection of fieldwork respondents, dependent on the scope of the study. A fuller and more suggestive range of responses could have been obtained from respondents selected on the grounds that they might be expected to have different views of tradition. Differences in age, social status, education and gender, for instance, might have been used to select a broader category of respondents for interviews. Time and scope constraints prompted the more limited choice made here, although within the category of respondents approached, an attempt was made at selecting respondents from areas representative of Rapoport's traditional to modern environments spectrum.<sup>3</sup> Taking the compilation process of respondents into account, it should therefore be pointed out that information from informally selected respondents is not representative of amaNdebele culture but a pointer to possible future investigations

---

<sup>3</sup> A detailed study of this concept is described in Chapter 2.

on issues of “supportiveness”. The first objective will be covered primarily in the next four chapters (Chapters 2 to 5) and the other three objectives will be addressed in Chapters 6 and 7.

## **SETTING OUT THE SCOPE**

Although many disciplines are concerned with cultural identity, including archaeology, psychology, anthropology, ethnology, geography, and planning, this research will look mainly at the field of architecture, although it will also draw on research from other disciplines.

The scope of the research will be defined by the following:

- It will be limited to the areas in and around Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.
- Although the focus of the study will be a semi-public project in Bulawayo, “identity” questions will be carried out with respondents in various other residential environments ranging from “traditional” to “modern”.
- Information gathered from respondents will be used to help in the compilation of criteria for judging the anticipated performance of the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence project with respect to issues of “identity” and “cultural appropriateness” in the light of conclusions drawn from theoretical research that forms the foundation of the study.
- While accepting that the concept “supportiveness” as applied to architecture involves a range of factors – culture, climate, skills, economical and political conditions, available materials etc, – the study will focus primarily on the cultural aspects of appropriateness.
- It will deal with culture/environment interactions in terms of both “supportiveness” and “identity”.

- It will examine both explicit attempts by the designers to address issues of “cultural appropriateness” and “identity”.
- While focussing primarily on architecture and architectural literature, the research will also draw on relevant literature from other disciplines with regard to “identity” as well as on method literature generally from the social sciences.

The following are definitions of terms that are frequently used in the study:

- Executive Mayor: City Mayors with powers to rule over certain critical issues in terms of the running of cities under their jurisdiction.
- The Executive Mayor’s Residence: An official residence for an Executive Mayor while in office. The Government proposed these for all Mayors in the country in 1996. Additionally, Mayors were also given executive powers to make uncontested final decisions concerning the running of their Cities. In the text it will also be frequently referred to as the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence.
- AmaNdebele: A Zimbabwean tribe founded by King Mzilikazi who migrated northwards from KwaZulu in South Africa during the Mfecane wars and settled in Matebeleland in modern-day western and south-western Zimbabwe around 1838. They are a sub-tribe of Southern Africa’s amaNguni people.
- IsiNdebele: The language spoken by amaNdebele people.
- MaRozvi: A Zimbabwean tribe. They are part of a broader maShona tribal grouping.

The study has used the following three main sources to conduct an analysis of a specific case study. The first source is the research material with regard to various approaches to the study of the relationship between built form and culture; the second is material related to the building project itself; the third is information gathered from fieldwork through interviewing selected respondents.

Creation of locally appropriate built forms requires an understanding of how local people interpret their environment and built forms. It is with this in mind that the current

research was embarked on. The main hypothesis is investigating the nature of relationship between built form and culture, and that the case study project which is analysed in Chapters 6 and 7, successfully reflected this relationship. The research will approach this hypothesis by looking at the three basic concepts of “culture”, “identity”, and “supportiveness” which were discussed earlier

This study aims to contribute to the field of study of the built environment:

- Firstly, the study will contribute towards initiating and increasing national and regional interest in and around research into the meanings of local cultural spaces and how such knowledge could be applied architecturally to develop a sense of cultural identity. This contribution of how space is perceived in terms of built forms and environments in Zimbabwe is long overdue. This is particularly so when it comes to local planning practitioners and architects using this information to develop concepts for built forms and environments. The soul-searching question would be whether the built environment, which is currently being created, is ultimately appropriate for Zimbabwe as a nation and in this particular case, for Bulawayo as a city.
- Secondly, this research hopes to initiate architecturally oriented Environmental-Behaviour Studies in Zimbabwe, especially a study of the relationship between culture and built form. This initial study of amaNdebele cultural space will employ methods that can be applied to any given situation that warrants a study of culture/built form relationship. Consequently, this would enable similar studies to be carried out for any of the “cultural” groups around the country, thereby contributing towards an articulation of the characteristics of Zimbabwean architecture.

On a broader perspective, this study will contribute towards assisting local architects and planning practitioners in their developments of design concepts that locals can identify with, thereby developing culturally appropriate environments and a cultural identity that reflects local practices and values.

## CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

In principle, this study is concerned with how we look at tradition, in general terms, as well as how a chosen group of people in Zimbabwe perceives space and built forms. In this respect, there are three important perspectives from which the basic concepts of the study are derived, and these are: romanticism, structuralism and anthropology. The distinction should be based on a romantic appropriation dealing only with forms considered appealing or quaint; structuralism being concerned with underlying order, and anthropology being concerned with cultural practices and symbolic meanings.

The two concepts of “culture” and “identity” pose challenging questions for architects. Why should architects and other professionals in the field of built environments incorporate an awareness and understanding of culture into their designs? Given that most societies nowadays are affected in many ways by cultural globalisation, and that this often gives rise to tension and to complex and sometimes conflicting relationships between constantly adapting traditional practices and values and constantly changing external cultural impositions, what precisely is this “culture” to which architects should respond? Even within groups identified as “cultural groups” by means of common attributes such as language, is it possible to talk about shared culture at the level of practices which affect the use of space and which are subject to values regarding the interpretation of form? The questions that are raised in relation to the concept of “culture” are also relevant to “identity”. Why should architects design buildings to reflect the identity of inhabitants? In so far as the concept of identity is concerned, are groups not defined in far more complex and overlapping ways rather than by simple stereotypes? Within groups which are crudely defined, for example, on the basis of ethnic stereotypes, are there sub-groups with different attitudes and practices? How are these sub-groups defined?

There are numerous ways of defining the concept “culture”: as a set of resources that people use to construct identities (in other words, as a symbol system); as a way of coping with environmental settings (i.e. as ecological adaptation); and as a way of life

typical of a group (thus, as lifestyle).<sup>4</sup> The use of lifestyle in defining the concept of “culture” connects with two key attributes of architecture: its “supportiveness” of patterns of activities and practices, and its presentation to the external world of some statement about desired “identity”. All these concepts will be of importance to this study but only with respect to those aspects of culture that directly influence the way groups perceive and build their environments to reflect those aspirations that identify them as a group. The study will further consider culture “as a range (or repertoire) of resources that may be assembled, asserted, repressed, rejected or imposed in different situation”.<sup>5</sup>

There are also various approaches to the study of culture/built form relationships. Many of these attempt to link culture to built-form and ultimately to built-environment by considering the transfer of various properties from traditional to modern environments. Rapoport's work is one of the best examples of this approach.<sup>6</sup>

He suggests that the concept “culture” is too broad to be useful. To counter this problem, Rapoport therefore “dismantles” the concept into two axial components.<sup>7</sup> The first refers to concrete social group expressions, such as clans, religious institutions, family structure and gender roles, or status hierarchies. The second is a series of increasingly definitive components starting from “culture” through “world view”, “values”, “lifestyle” to “activities”, of which the last two are of much interest to Rapoport's approach of “systems of settings” which provides a backdrop to the concept “lifestyles and system of activities”.

---

•<sup>4</sup> Rapoport, A., “Foreword”, in Low, S. M., and Chambers, E., (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xii. Also see Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 41 – 48 and Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 42.

•<sup>5</sup> Quotation from Harris, P., “Culture and Identity in Early South African Labour History” in *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Collected Seminar Papers No 45*, University of London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1993, pp. 13.

<sup>6</sup> See for example the chapters by Rowe, P. and Lang, L., in Low, S and Chambers, E., (eds), *Housing, Culture and Design*; and also the articles cited in the following two notes.

•<sup>7</sup> See particularly the following articles by Rapoport, A., “Systems of activities and systems of settings” in Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 9 - 20: “An Approach To Designing Third World Environments”, *Third World Planning Review* Vol. 1 No 1, Spring 1979, pp. 23 - 40; “Culture. Site Layout and Housing”, *Architectural Association Quarterly*, No .1, 1980, pp. 4 - 7: “The Use and Design of Open Spaces in Urban Neighbourhoods”, in D. Frick (Ed), *The Quality of Urban Life*, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1986, pp. 1159 - 175; “Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design”. *Habitat International*, Vol. .7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 249 - 268.

This approach seeks to determine the fundamental structural aspects of traditional environments that can be combined with appropriate modern elements. Although, according to Rapoport, this approach can be applied in any given context, its application in rapidly changing cultural contexts, like “third world” environments, requires an additional concept – that of the “culture-core”.<sup>8</sup> This culture core concept assumes that, although cultures do change, there are certain components that possess inertia. Those components that are resistant to change are called “culture-core elements” and they are directly influenced by that particular culture. Supportive environments are a result of a synthesis of components that are resistant to change and valuable new ones, whereby the ‘older’, resistant elements remain dominant. This concept entails a definition of “cultural groups”, and the identification of built and environmental forms associated with culture-core elements. These built and environmental forms are identified by analysing a wide range of environments occupied by each “cultural group”, categorised in a horizontal relationship from “traditional’ to “modernised” and high to low social status, and using both geographical and temporal comparisons. The culture-core elements can then be formulated from this horizontal range and incorporated into new built and environmental forms.

Problems do however arise from Rapoport’s approach. The main problems arise with regard to defining groups to be considered by the approach and the political complications that are aroused or caused by the method. In most Third World countries, the way that groups are defined by Rapoport may create a political outcry. In view of such problems, the current thesis has had to take into account more recent literature, firstly on identity and secondly on the concept of culture as a set of resources that people use to construct identities. The main problem of Rapoport’s approach, as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2, is the way in which it deals with symbolism issues. Accordingly, the current research has attempted to address this problem by developing a further and more complex concept of “identity”. The development of the concept of “identity” in the social sciences will be traced, together with parallel developments in

---

•<sup>8</sup> See particularly the article by Rapoport, A. and Hardie, G., "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in Tipple, A. and Willis, K., *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 35 - 61.

architectural practice and thinking. Most of the works to be looked at in terms of architectural practice will be drawn from third world environments, as this is also the area focussed on by this study.

Further developments with regard to the concept of “identity” in architectural practice will be looked at, and these will be drawn mainly from critical regionalist theorists like Kenneth Frampton and some Greek architects. Other perspectives on tradition will be drawn from Christian Norberg-Schulz whose contribution to the subject of locally appropriate architecture is taken from the point of view of psychic connections to a place. Recent studies with respect to the study of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture will be discussed in Chapter 5 after which an outline and analysis of the case study will be presented in the subsequent two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7).

The following concept of “identity” will be employed in this thesis: Identity is not assumed to be necessarily and naturally inherent to groups, however defined. Nor is it an inevitable product of social processes such as modernisation. Rather, it is the complex product of many interrelated factors (language, race, ethnicity, class religion, occupation etc). The key literature for the study will therefore be the work done by Rapoport; literature in Southern Africa dealing with “identity”; and the literature on regionalism in architecture.

## **KEY QUESTIONS, RESEARCH METHOD AND MATERIALS**

This thesis will attempt to answer the following general key questions regarding central concepts of “culture”, “supportiveness”, and “identity”:

- What is the meaning of “supportiveness” and how has the concept been variously applied in architecture in terms of defining the relationship between an environment and its inhabitants?

- What is the meaning of “culture”? How have various definitions been used to analyse the nature of the relationship between culture and built form and environment? How did these approaches address issues of symbolism?
- How has the concept of “identity” been defined in social sciences and how was the evolutionary path of the concept reflected in architectural practice, particularly in third world environments?
- The approach of some postmodernists to “culture” as a resource for conceptualising identity was criticised by some Critical Regionalism theorists as tending towards abuse (this will be discussed in later chapters - specifically Chapter 3 and 4). This led to the development of more critical approaches to “local appropriateness” in architectural practice. In this respect, it can be asked: What developments took place in architectural practice in response to “local appropriateness” and “regional identity”?

This thesis will attempt to answer the following more specific key questions regarding the proposed Mayor’s Residence project:

- What was the intention regarding cultural identity in the design of the Mayor’s Residence project, how did these intentions address supportiveness and identity issues, and how were these issues given expressed architecturally?
- How well does the project, as the product of these intentions, work? For instance, if “supportiveness” was an aim, how well is the project going to support local lifestyle and cultural practices? If the creation of a particular symbolic persona was regarded as important, how is the project being received and interpreted symbolically by would-be users? Are all the would-be users the same in this regard, or are there different groups of would-be users who perceive and would intend to use the building in different ways? What does the building mean to the selected respondents?
- In terms of “supportiveness” and “identity”, how does the project fit into the world of support and identity issues as highlighted by the present study?

This research thesis will combine an architectural analysis with studies of how environments are used by conducting social research within the relevant communities.<sup>9</sup> It will examine design intentions and informally select respondents for casual discussions to gather information to either support or refute the arguments for or against the assessed likely performance of the Executive Mayor's Residence project as determined by theoretical findings on issues of "supportiveness", "culture" and "identity" pertaining to built environments. The study will also analyse actual patterns of use, as well as users' perceptions about such use. Each of these analytic routes presupposes particular methods. The methods used for the purposes of this thesis will be fieldwork, interviews and library research. The social research will be qualitative not quantitative, and thus computer models and architectural graphics will be employed to analyse respondents' perceptions of the proposed Mayor's Residence project. Qualitative research will be used to help with the identification of significant patterns and in understanding their significance.

As for the study of the proposed Mayor's Residence which is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, drawings and related information on the project were secured from the Bulawayo City Council's Architectural Section. A number of other institutions, including the Bulawayo National History Museum, which is involved in the reconstruction of KoBulawayo, were contacted for background information.

With regard to the overall structure of the thesis, the next chapter (Chapter 2) looks in detail at one of the key concepts employed in this study, i.e., the issue of "supportiveness". This chapter also provides a background for a discussion of the concept of "identity", which forms the subject matter of Chapter 3. This, too, is a central concept in this study in terms of understanding the nature of the relationship between built form and culture. The question of identity raises issues of local appropriateness, which will be looked at in Chapters 4 and 5, by looking at how locally appropriate environments have been and can be designed by architects and planners and the politics behind public

---

•<sup>9</sup> See an article by Chokker, B., "Environmental-Behaviour Design Research Techniques: An Appraisal and Review of the Literature With Special Reference to the Environmental and Planning-Related Information Needs in the Third World", *Research and Policy Review 13, Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 19, 1987, pp 7 – 32; Leedy, P. D. *Practical research: Planning and design*, Sixth edition. Prentice-Hall, New Jersey, 1997; Patton, M. Q. *Qualitative evaluation methods*, Ninth edition, SAGE, California, Beverly Hills, 1988.

architecture in relation to the question of identity. Thereafter, once the theoretical concepts have been defined and examined, they will be used to conduct a critical, in-depth analysis of a particular case study in a third world environment: the Mayor's Residence project in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. This case study forms the subject matter of Chapters 6 and 7. Thereafter - conclusion - Chapter 8.

## **PART II:**

# **CRITICAL REVIEW OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES**

(Chapters 2 to 5)

exchange and control, most of which are design issues. The support implied by this concept refers to that which gives substance to the local values and lifestyles, thus ensuring economic, social and environmental sustainability. The term “supportiveness” as used in policy formulation, for instance in order to give access to land and provide financial assistance, etc. has been developed by Dewar in his studies of the South African context.<sup>15</sup>

Many third world countries have concentrated on invisible supportive elements such as the formulation of policies that govern public housing production. Most of these have concentrated on “supportive” housing production policies that are implemented from the base upwards.<sup>16</sup> This approach to “supportiveness” entails that the various government departments construct at least the core-housing units to accommodate individuals, families and communities, but with minimal interference on the ground. This aspect of the creation of housing requires a balance between government intervention and the needs of user families and communities, and is exemplified by Sri Lanka's Million Houses Programme<sup>17</sup> (carried out between 1978 and 1983) and various Indian<sup>18</sup> housing projects. There are some, though, who argue that such a proposed balance between government and users involving both material production and institutional support, is misguided. They argue that it will eventually lead to similar problems with regard to cost, sustainability and cultural appropriateness as those that ultimately rendered the Sri Lankan One Hundred Thousand Housing program ineffective,<sup>19</sup> and that it, moreover,

---

<sup>14</sup> Turner, J. F. C., “Future Directions in Housing Policies”, in *Habitat International*, Vol. 10, No.3, 1986, pp.7. There are also a number of articles in this volume of the journal that expound widely on the subject.

<sup>15</sup> Dewar, D. et al, *Theories of Urbanisation and National Settlement Strategy in South Africa*, Working Paper No. 21, Urban Problems Research Unit, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1982; Dewar, D. et al, *Urbanisation: Responses and Policies in Four Case Studies: Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe*, Working Paper No. 21. Urban Problems Research Unit, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1982.

<sup>16</sup> See Sirivardana, S., in *Habitat International*, Vol. 10, No.3, 1986, pp. 107.

<sup>17</sup> See Sirivardana, S., in *Habitat International*, Vol. 10, No.3, 1986, pp. 91 – 108; Robbins, E., “Culture, Policy and Production: Making Low Cost Housing in Sri Lanka” in: Low S. and Chambers, E. (Eds.) *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 1989, pp. 57 – 71.

<sup>18</sup> Lang, J., “Cultural Implications of Housing Design Policy in India” in: Low S. and Chambers, E. (Eds.). *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp.375 – 391.

<sup>19</sup> Robbins, E., “Culture, Policy and Production: Making Low Cost Housing in Sri Lanka” in: Low, S. and Chambers, E. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. 59.

will benefit only a relatively small urban elite.<sup>20</sup>

The concept of “supportiveness”, however, is also one of the ways through which some scholars have sought to define the desired relationship between built form and culture, and this is the definition of supportiveness that will be explored in this chapter. This conceptual approach has been developed mainly by Rapoport. This chapter will thus explore Rapoport’s approach to the concept of support, as well as some of its possible practical applications. The final sub-section will discuss the various problems and other issues that are related to Rapoport’s approach to “supportiveness” and the relationship between the built environment and culture.<sup>21</sup> The particular significance of considering this work in detail is that it specifically purports to offer a methodology for creating culturally appropriate environments in third world countries, and in so doing, naturally provides a definition of what “cultural appropriateness” means.

## THE CONCEPT OF “SUPPORTIVENESS” WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE

It is widely accepted that built environments are created to accommodate specific lifestyles and activities and thus symbolise social values and relationships.<sup>22</sup> Rapoport’s work over many years has been largely focussed on analytical methods designed to increase the possibility of a better cultural and behavioural fit or match between people

---

<sup>20</sup> See Tomlinson, R., *Urbanisation in Post-Apartheid South Africa*; a large part of the book is devoted to making this case.

<sup>21</sup> See Rapoport, A., “Cultural and Urban Order” in: Agnew, J. et al, (Eds.), *The City in Cultural Context*, Allen and Unwin, London, UK, 1984, pp. 50 – 75; Rapoport, A., “Foreword”, in Low, S., M., and Chambers, E., (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xi – xxi; by Rapoport, A., “Systems of activities and systems of settings” in: Kent, S., (Ed.), *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1990 pp. 9 - 20; “An Approach To Designing Third World Environments” in: *Third World Planning Review* Vol. 1 No 1, Spring 1979, pp. 23 - 40; “Culture, Site Layout and Housing” in: *Architectural Association Quarterly*, No .1. 1980, pp. 4 - 7; Rapoport, A., “The Use and Design of Open Spaces in Urban Neighbourhoods”, in: Frick, D., (Ed.), *The Quality of Urban Life*, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1986, pp. 159 - 175; “Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design”, in: *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5\6, 1983, pp. 249 - 268.

<sup>22</sup> See Rapoport, A., “Systems of activities and systems of settings” in: Kent, S., (Ed.), *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1990. pp. 9 – 20; Rapoport, A., “Foreword”, in Low, S. M., and Chambers, E., (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 1989. pp. xi – xxi.

and their environments. An environment where this match is good, is also a supportive environment.

In any environment-behaviour framework, culture plays an important role<sup>23</sup> because many of the critical human factors, which affect the fit between people and their environment, are culture-based. Therefore, to understand Rapoport's concept of "supportiveness", it is necessary to begin by looking at his concept of culture and its relationship to the environment.

Rapoport argues that any specific problem in environment-behaviour relations (EBR) can be understood in terms of the three basic questions:

- What characteristics of people as individuals, as members of various groups, and as members of a species are significantly related to the particular built form?
- What effects do various environments have on people, what groups of people are affected, under what sets of conditions, and why?
- Given the two-way interaction implied in the first two questions, what precisely are the mechanisms that link people and their settings or surroundings?<sup>24</sup>

"Culture" is a complex concept that has been approached in various ways in the main theoretical literature on the subject, and it accordingly plays a significant role in Rapoport's three EBR questions. Rapoport refers to three basic conceptual definitions of the term 'culture': "a way of life typical of a group; a system of schemata transmitted symbolically; and a way of coping with the ecological setting".<sup>25</sup> These three definitions are coined around the activities of culture, i.e. what it does. What exactly do these

---

<sup>23</sup> See Rapoport, A., "Foreword", in Low, S. M., and Chambers, E., (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xi – xxi; Rapoport, A. "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., (Ed.), *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-cultural Study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 9 – 20 and some of sources of Rapoport mentioned elsewhere.

<sup>24</sup> Rapoport, A., "Foreword", in Low, S., and Chambers, E. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xii; Rapoport, A., *Cross-Cultural Studies and Urban Form*, Urban Studies and Planning Program, University of Maryland, pp. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Rapoport, A., "Foreword", in Low, S. M., and Chambers, E., (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xii. Also see Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 41 – 48.

<sup>25</sup> Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 42.

definitions mean? An answer to this question is given by other culture theorists, such as Michael,<sup>26</sup> who broadly defines “culture” as consisting of transmitted and created patterns of values, ideas and other meaningful systems or factors that shape human behaviour, and the artefacts produced through such behaviour.

In conceptualising “culture” as “a way of life typical of a group”,<sup>27</sup> Michael implies that “culture” is a product of cumulative and commonly shared experiences of a group of people, which is transmitted downwards through the generations. For example, some communities may relish eating locusts and mice, while others shudder at this thought. Thus, “culture” can be thought of as a set of commonly shared and learned ways of life, consisting of the totality of tools, techniques, social institutions, attitudes, behaviour patterns beliefs and values pertaining to that culture group.

Although human beings share with other animals the ability to perceive physical signs, human beings alone have the capacity to conceive universal symbols or meanings and hence the ability to transmit culture symbolically. Unlike animals, whose mode of communication is determined by instincts and biological urges, “culture”, according to Michael,<sup>28</sup> implies the capacity of human beings to transcend their biological or organismic condition, as well as the condition of their environment. Within the human species, moreover, language constitutes an important and influential vehicle of social communication. Michael<sup>29</sup> argues that “culture” constitutes the main store of commonly shared experiences and ways of life, as well as the main vehicle by which these are transmitted from one generation to the next. In fact, this unique ability of the human species to create symbols has enabled it to create language. Symbolism is, therefore, a very strong and useful aspect of any definition of “culture” in the context of architecture, because it points to a need for understanding and interpreting environments, for asking not just how they operate, but also what they mean. The definition of culture as a symbolic system has also been propounded by anthropologists such as Geertz, who define the term “culture” as denoting a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings

---

<sup>26</sup> Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India. 1989. pp. 44.

<sup>27</sup> Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India. 1989. pp. 42.

<sup>28</sup> Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India. 1989. pp. 44.

embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms,” by means of which human beings communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.<sup>30</sup>

Of the various definitions of “culture” proposed by Rapoport, the one that regards “culture” as “a way of coping with the ecological setting”, is the most controversial. There are some sociologists and historians, as pointed out by Michael, who argue that culture is controlled by climatic and geographical features - the so-called geographical determinist approach.<sup>31</sup> This approach suggests that human qualities, such as intelligence, and other social issues, such as economy, are in fact determined by climatic conditions. However, this thesis will not be pursuing this particular approach. The most useful approach for the purposes of this study will be the one that is followed by cultural anthropologists, which emphasises the influence of culture on the selection of environment.<sup>32</sup>

While recognising these various general perspectives on culture, Rapoport’s own analytical approach begins by suggesting that the concept “culture” is too global and abstract to make any valuable and meaningful contribution to the study of the relationship between culture and built form.<sup>33</sup> He therefore develops his approach by “dismantling” the concept of “culture” into two analytical axial components (represented in Fig. 2.1),<sup>34</sup> enabling him to identify what elements of the built environment are necessary and need to be supported.

The first analytical axis is composed of concrete social group expressions such as clans,

---

<sup>29</sup> Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 45.

<sup>30</sup> See Geertz, C., *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1973, pp. 89.

<sup>31</sup> These are Alfred Weber and R. M. MacIver, among others see Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 47 – 58.

<sup>32</sup> Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 48 and 54 – 58.

<sup>33</sup> See particularly Rapoport, A., *Cross-Cultural Studies and Urban Form*, Urban Studies and Planning Program for The University of Maryland, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> See particularly the following articles by Rapoport. A. “Systems of activities and systems of settings” in: Kent, S., (Ed.), *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 9 – 20; Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G.. “Cultural Change Analysis: Core Concepts of Housing for the Tswana”, in: Tipple, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*. Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 35 – 61.

religious institutions, family structures, gender roles or status hierarchies. Thus, the first axis links culture to built form by concretising, for instance, family and kinship structures and cosmological representations into architectural expressions as in the New Zealand's Maori with their Marae.

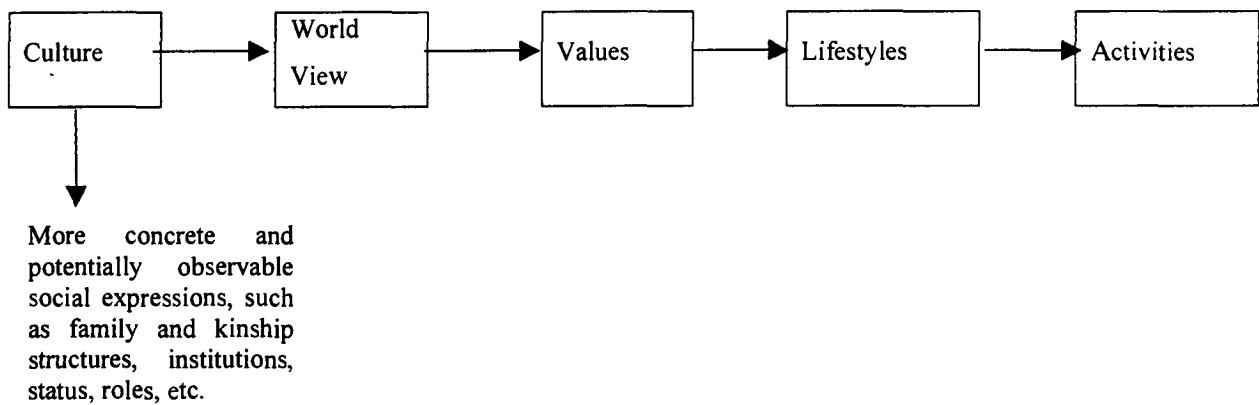


Fig.2.1- Two analytical axial components: “dismantling” of the concept of culture  
(Source: Rapoport, A, 1990, pp. 10)

The second analytical axis is a series of increasingly specific and definable components starting from “culture” and moving through “world view”, “values”, and “lifestyle” to “activities”. Each of these components will be examined and defined more fully hereunder, beginning with “world-view”. There are some theorists like Michael<sup>35</sup> who define “world-view” as the inside view, the ways in which individuals typically see themselves in relation to their world. He expounds on his definition by saying that “world-view” includes the mapping of that particular world (referring to categories used in one’s perceptions of the familiar and of the strange). “World-view” also refers to the differential emphasis placed by individuals on what they perceive and the choices they make among known alternatives. “Values” are ideas about what is important or what is good and bad in a society.<sup>36</sup> Values, which are controlled by group preferences, tastes and choices, belong to a particular culture. “Lifestyles” refer to interactions between

<sup>35</sup> Michael, S. M., *Culture and Urbanization*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, India, 1989, pp. 44.

<sup>36</sup> See Taylor, P. *Investigating Culture and Identity*, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London, 1997, pp. 27. For a more detailed conceptual approach see Rescher, N., *Introduction to Value Theory*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1969.

environment and behaviour. For example, an individual living in an upmarket suburb behaves differently from someone in a slum. “Activities” are directly linked to lifestyle, for example, in most countries one finds golf courses near upmarket residential areas and low paying sports facilities in low-income areas.

Using the components of the second axis, i.e. “world-views”, “values”, “lifestyles” and “activities”, Rapoport suggests that it may be possible to demonstrate that particular parts of the environment are congruent with - or “supportive” of - specific lower-level components (or expressions) of culture, given an understanding of the mechanisms that link them.<sup>37</sup> What this means in specific terms will be explored below by investigating how environments can be designed or planned to respond to “culture”.

## **CULTURE-RESPONSIVE BUILT ENVIRONMENTS**

In order to understand Rapoport’s theoretical construction of the concept of culture in relation to the built environment, one has to comprehend what he means by “traditional”, and more specifically, what he means by “traditional environments”. Rapoport considers “development” and “modernisation” - both of which ultimately introduce new elements in traditional environments - to be associated with culture change.<sup>38</sup> A slow culture change allows for a synthesis of traditional and modern elements to occur, whereas a faster culture change can result in the obliteration and violation of elements of “traditional” environments. It is this balance in the process of synthesis between traditional and modern elements which is so important, and which thus provides a challenge with respect to the creation of culture-responsive environments. Rapoport approaches this challenge by defining the term “traditional” as referring to anything that satisfies two conditions, i.e.,

---

<sup>37</sup> Quotation from Rapoport, A. “Systems of activities and systems of settings” in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 10.

<sup>38</sup> See Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. “Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana”, in: Tipple, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 36.

- it is a product of transmission, and
- it has cultural origins involving a common group of people.<sup>39</sup>

He identifies “tradition” with conservatism in the sense of accepting the past, thus ensuring continuity, and further adopts the position that tradition does not need to be either rejected or embraced *in toto*. In other words, it is entirely possible to admire traditional artefacts, while simultaneously rejecting the tradition that produced them; or to carry out traditional practices in non-traditional environmental settings (lifestyles or social arrangements).<sup>40</sup> Thus, various parts of a tradition may change differentially: some elements of a tradition may in fact remain virtually unchanged and may be comfortably combined with new practices, particularly in developing countries. Rapoport argues that this aspect of tradition and its differential adoption at different times in different places makes it possible to identify ties between some aspects of tradition, as a general concept, and built environments. He, however, questions how this can be achieved. Being a very general concept, “tradition” is potentially applicable in various domains that include law, art, philosophy, lifestyles, politics, government settlements, built environments, images and values, among others. It follows that different mechanisms of transmission may be used, although all will involve people; this is because only people transmit traditions (as they do culture), and only people pass on artefacts or shape them by translating schemata and patterns into built form.<sup>41</sup> Rapoport’s concept of “traditional built environments” includes those that are typically described as primitive or vernacular, and he provides examples of this nature in his book *House Form and Culture*.<sup>42</sup>

Rapoport suggests that the creation of a supportive environment begins by acknowledging that the complete replacement of traditional elements with new modern elements in built environments is normally undesirable. It is therefore crucial for new

---

<sup>39</sup> See various definitions and concepts in Bourdier, J. P. and Alsayyad, N., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, University Press of America, 1989, particularly the studies by Bourdier, J. P. and Alsayyad, N. pp. 5 – 25 and Rapoport, A. pp. 77 – 105.

<sup>40</sup> Rapoport, A., “Attributes of Tradition” in: Bourdier, J. P. and Alsayyad, N., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, University Press of America, 1989, pp. 81.

<sup>41</sup> Rapoport, A., “Attributes of Tradition” in: Bourdier, J. P. and Alsayyad, N., *Dwellings, Settlements and Tradition: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, University Press of America, 1989, pp. 84.

<sup>42</sup> Details of these types of environments are given in Rapoport, A., *House Form and Culture*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1969, pp 6 – 7.

environments to support the continued existence of traditions and traditional lifestyles or activities (insofar as it is practical) whilst also accommodating architecturally and socially valued new modern elements.

Rapoport thus argues that supportive environments are often a synthesis of traditional and modern elements, which therefore implies that elements from both sources are necessary if built environments are to be both wanted and supportive, although supportiveness usually involves traditional social units and institutions and suitable settings for those.<sup>43</sup> These traditional elements will, however, only become acceptable if appropriately desirable images and meanings associated with modernity are communicated by means of simultaneously providing many of its undoubted instrumental benefits in the form of comfort, health, reduced maintenance, etc.<sup>44</sup>

In his approach Rapoport considers appropriate planning and design to be culture-specific and hence group-specific, thus necessitating the identification of relevant groups prior to preparing the initial design. Social and cultural variables are critical in helping to define the nature of the relevant groups, and to describe underlying structural elements of traditional environments and underlying behavioural patterns associated with these environments.

Group definition is an important and crucial aspect of Rapoport's approach to his study of the relationship between built form and culture and can be hypothetically defined in terms of known literature, general knowledge, researcher's own knowledge and so on. Rapoport suggests that for his model to work for any particular group, there are four sets of issues<sup>45</sup> that need to be identified:

- The relevant critical, central or core social units of the group and their role in that particular culture (they may be kin groups, age groups, castes, ethnic, religious or

---

<sup>43</sup> See Rapoport, A., "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., (Ed.). *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 9 - 20; "An Approach To Designing Third World Environments" in: *Third World Planning Review* Vol 1 No 1. (Spring 1979) pp. 23 - 40; Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", in: *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 249 - 268.

<sup>44</sup> See the similarity between this and the relationship between tradition and built environment given above.

initiation groups, linguistic groups, various types of social networks, etc.).

- The corresponding physical units at different scales. This point concerns the importance of considering a broader view of the setting. In this context it may be considered that human beings do not live in isolated dwellings - their actions and lifestyles define systems of settings that are comprised of villages, neighbourhoods, streets, open spaces, entire settlements, etc. The analysis of physical units begins at the broader level with the community, passes through the middle range (namely micro-neighbourhoods and housing groups), and ends with the individual dwellings and even parts thereof.
- The units of social integration or interaction within the group in question and, at least in some cases, with other groups.
- The group institutions. These concern the highly culture-specific ways in which certain common economic, recreational, ritual, governmental and other activities are carried out - which in turn leads to highly culture-specific environments.

The definition of the “group” is derived from two primary considerations regarding environmental fit in “third world” environments: cognitive distance and rate of change. Cognitive distance concerns the degree of difference between traditional and modern cultures; rate of change refers to the rate at which modern cultural aspects are introduced into traditional cultural environments.<sup>46</sup> The process is intended methodically to capture elements that could be employed architecturally to affirm cultural identity and improve environmental supportiveness.

Rapoport defines cognitive distance as the extent of the differences in lifestyle, social organisation, values, behaviour, and built environment between traditional and modern cultures.<sup>47</sup> Urbanisation is likely to be more problematic and traumatic to hunter-

---

<sup>45</sup> Rapoport, A., “Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design”, *Habitat International*. Vol. 7. Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 257.

<sup>46</sup> Rapoport, A. and Hardie, G., “Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana”. in: Tipler A. and Willis K. *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge. London and New York. 1991 pp. 37 – 38.

<sup>47</sup> See Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., “Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana”, in: Tipler, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge. London and New York. 1991. pp. 38.

gatherers than to villagers and urbanites. The greater the differences in lifestyles, social organisations, values, behaviour and built environments between the traditional culture and the modern one, the more disruptive the change will be and the more supportive the environment will need to be. "Criticality" can be defined as the extent to which modernisation affects a given culture in a specific environmental setting. In both contextual situations referred to by Rapoport, criticality increases from the urbanised to the traditional environments; this suggests the importance of modulating the rate of change by providing particularly supportive environments when the rate of change is fast.

In a situation where both contextual variables are relevant, the level of criticality is even higher, which makes it crucially important for that environment to play a supportive role. Rapoport argues that supportive environments can in fact reduce or even eliminate stress by modulating the rate of change, thus providing (or "buying") time for creative synthesis to occur naturally.<sup>48</sup> He further argues that, although environments are not major determinants, they do have quantifiable effects on people, particularly in conditions of reduced competence with respect to, for example, physical disability and rapid culture change.

Rapoport raises three questions with respect to "supportiveness" and the modulation of the rate of culture change:

- What is being supported?
- What is supporting it?
- How is it being supported?<sup>49</sup>

The first question refers to components of lifestyle and their expression. The second question concerns the specifics of physical units or systems of settings. The answer to the last question specifies various mechanisms: instrumentally supportive elements; latent characteristics such as meanings communicating status or identity, and financial,

---

<sup>48</sup> See Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tipler, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Rapoport, A., "Foreword", in: Low, S., and Chambers, E. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xvi; Rapoport, A., *Cross-Cultural Studies and Urban Form*, Urban Studies and Planning Program, University of Maryland, pp. 38; Rapoport, A., "Culture, Site Layout and Housing", *Architectural Association Quarterly*, No. 1, 1980, pp. 6.

economic or physical security.<sup>50</sup>

With regard to creating supportive environments, Rapoport suggests further concepts of “system of activities”, “system of settings” and “culture-core”. These concepts are developed in the context of environments that are supportive of the local cultural context and its inhabitants’ values and lifestyles. The following sub-sections deal with each of the questions mentioned above in detail, starting with the first one: “What is being supported in a culture responsive built environments?”

In a broader sense, a culture-responsive supportive environment should be supportive of the various cultures of its inhabitants, in other words the important activities, components and institutions of the culture in question. Lifestyle is an expression of culture and can be defined as the result of choices made about how to allocate resources - economic and symbolic resources, effort, time and so on.<sup>51</sup> Rapoport has found lifestyle groups to be a very useful factor in studies of built environments.

The various activities carried out by a cultural group are an expression of the particular lifestyle of that group. By considering the activities themselves in more detail, as well as the issues surrounding these activities, it can be identified which elements should be supported. When considered these elements, both cross-culturally and over time, the range of activities that people carry out seems significantly more limited than the variety of environments that have been created for them, hence the need to break down the concept of activities even further. The reason for having a variety of environmental/design solutions for any given activity is due to the fact that different routes are taken in determining the nature of the final product, and it is influenced by the four components of activities given by Rapoport.<sup>52</sup> Any activity can be seen as involving four components:

- The activity itself

---

<sup>50</sup> Rapoport, A., “Foreword”, in: Low, S., and Chambers, E. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xvii.

<sup>51</sup> Definition given in Rapoport, A., “Foreword”, in: Low, S. , and Chambers, E. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xvi.

- How it is carried out
- How it is associated with other activities and combined into activity systems
- The meaning of the activity.

Identification of an activity and its latent aspects is a way of linking the physical and non-physical aspects of the environment. At this level, we begin to look at the nature or meaning of an activity and its relationship with lifestyle. As one moves from the first through to the fourth component of an activity, the variability with lifestyle and ultimately culture increases hence the incredible variety of environments that have been created for any given activity. In brief, the nature of the final product determined by an activity varies with culture and accounts for the variety of environments created for any given activity. A rudimentary activity such as cooking can result in significantly variable (and thus numerous) solutions, depending on how it is carried out, how it is associated to other activities, and what meanings are associated with it. The range of possible solutions for any activity becomes even more varied when it comes to the meaning of that activity, and the emphasis also shifts from the physical and instrumental aspects of the activity to its subtle cultural specifics.

Rapoport suggests that the distinction which is often made between the “function” and “meaning” of a given activity is a fallacy, as meaning is an integral part of function. The variability of built environmental solutions for given activities necessitates not only the consideration of an activity, but of “systems of activities”, and these vary greatly among cultures as well as among different groups within a given culture. This then implies that the design of environments should target support structures that can be linked to appropriate activity systems that are then in turn intrinsically linked to culture. In the design of built environments, these social and cultural structures and institutions need to be linked to physical settings, i.e. fixed-feature and semi-fixed feature elements, including not only dwellings and other specific settings (which will need to be identified) but to numerous other inter-linked settings. The nature and extent to which these systems

---

<sup>52</sup> Rapoport, A, “Systems of activities and systems of settings” in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990. pp. 11.

are applicable will also need to be discovered, not merely assumed or, worse, ignored.<sup>53</sup> Studies suggest that activity systems are organised in time and space, which implies that, when designing a built environment, one has to consider activity systems, not individual activities.

It can also be concluded that one cannot merely consider a building in isolation, because people do not live in, or act exclusively in, a single building; instead, they use various buildings, a variety of outdoor spaces, settlements and even whole regions: they in fact inhabit cultural landscapes.<sup>54</sup> This therefore calls for considerations that go beyond architecture - considerations that look at architecture in its broader context. This argument introduces yet another specific concept, namely the systems of settings, which are supported by culture-responsive environments.

A setting is any milieu that defines a situation and reminds occupants of the rules and behaviours appropriate in that setting. This makes deliberate and conscious action possible.<sup>55</sup> The settings themselves and their boundaries are culturally defined, as are the rules that govern them, thus implying their cultural variability. The in-built rules of the system compel people to behave in particular ways. Individuals, who have been 'trained' to recognise the relevant cues and clues, are then able to effortlessly interpret and conform to the built-in instructions of these systems. The appropriate interpretation of the cues from the system will, theoretically, enable people to behave in certain ways once they enter the system. This only works, however, if people are indeed able to decode the cues; they do so by drawing on their implicit knowledge of situations, rules, appropriate behaviours, and the like.<sup>56</sup> This once again highlights the cultural specificity of settings, hence their link to built environments that in turn requires supportive structures around it to have a positive result on its inhabitants.

---

<sup>53</sup> Rapoport, A. , and Hardie, G. "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tiple, A. , and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York. 1991. pp. 39.

<sup>54</sup> Rapoport, A. "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1990, pp. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Rapoport, A. "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 12.

<sup>56</sup> Rapoport, A. "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1990. pp. 13.

The built environment is made up of a number of settings that are highly culture-specific. Given this condition, says Rapoport, the environment can be conceptualised as consisting of fixed-feature elements (buildings, floors, walls, etc.), semi-fixed-feature elements (furnishings, interior and exterior, of all sorts), and non-fixed-feature elements (people and their activities and behavioural attitudes).<sup>57</sup> All of these elements to some extent provide essential cues and thus guide and control behaviour.

The same space can then become a different setting through changes in the semi-fixed elements and varied activities of the occupants.<sup>58</sup> The role played by occupants and their activities in varying settings cannot be used to study past environmental activities in that space, thus making it difficult to infer what activities may be common in a specific environment. This difficulty consequently makes it crucial to take note of the semi-fixed cues. The following example will illustrate this point. During the week a certain piece of land may be used as a car park; over the weekend, though, it can be converted into a flea market merely by changing semi-fixed elements and occupants of the piece of land. In most cases semi-fixed elements, perhaps in the form of umbrellas, stands, carts displays, etc. are used as cues, all of which will alter the applicable rules and the repertoire of activities permitted in that space.

In smaller traditional societies, there are either extremely subtle cues that can not be easily noticed or read by most outsiders, or behaviour may be so entrenched that its modification occurs naturally. Fixed-feature elements do not change easily, whilst semi-fixed elements change more easily, depending on the relevant activities. The implication is that such elements become critical for the study of activities in settings: even at the scale of the single setting, its architecture, i.e. the totality of the fixed-feature elements, is not sufficient to be an object of analysis.<sup>59</sup> Different settings are knitted into a single unit by the way people use them through behaviour circuits - in other words, activity systems

---

<sup>57</sup> Rapoport, A, "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 13.

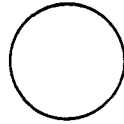
<sup>58</sup> Rapoport, A, "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 13.

<sup>59</sup> Rapoport, A, "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 13. The list given is not meant to be comprehensive, nor are the points placed in order of importance - it is merely illustrative.

(as illustrated in Fig. 2.2).

---

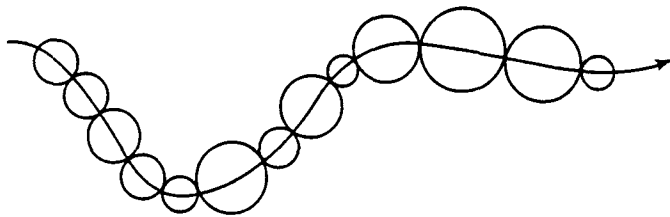
Rapoport's argument is that if a circle represents a setting, then:



the concern is not only with activities within that setting but,



with systems of activities that occur in a system of settings.



---

Fig. 2.2- Activities within a single setting versus activity systems in systems of settings  
(Source: Rapoport, A, 1990, pp. 13)

The assemblage of several settings into systems can be carried out in a variety of ways, all of them responding to cultural differences as expressed in lifestyles and activity systems. In such a system a number of things may vary:

- The nature of the settings.
- How and by whom such settings are used, depending on the appropriateness, meaning, supportiveness etc. of these settings.
- Who and what is included or excluded.
- The rules that apply in them.
- The cues provided by the settings.

- The reasons for variability of sequences, i.e. the diverse nature of arguments behind the design of cues in a given system.
- The linkages and separations among settings, i.e. the nature and types of relations between settings.
- The nature of linkages and barriers, i.e. the nature of design elements that link and separate given settings.
- The sequence of settings, i.e. the order in which they are assembled.<sup>60</sup>

The environment cannot be conceptualised as merely comprising a system of settings, but it can also be considered to be an organisation of four variables from the perspective of the built environment: space, time, meaning and communication. It follows, then, that activities vary not only in terms of the fourfold division discussed above - the activity itself and how it is performed (instrumental aspects), how the activities are grouped into systems (involving communication) and the meaning(s) of such systems - neither are they organised only in space.<sup>61</sup> The variability of systems of settings is also influenced by time, thereby introducing a temporal component. On the one hand this involves varying the sequence of activities in time as well as in space, their tempos (number of activities per unit time) and rhythms (the periodicity of activities related to different cycles: lifetime, annual seasonal, profane time/sacred time, day/night etc.). On the other hand, this temporal component of activities introduces the possibility that organisation in time may be substituted for organisation in space. For example a community hall may be used for a variety of functions or activities, such as church services, indoor games and sports, or other functions like wedding parties at different times of the day or week.

Rapoport has also developed the concept of 'systems of settings' to include housing, which is a fixed-feature element of the environment. He defines housing as "a system of settings within which certain systems of activities take place".<sup>62</sup> This definition also links

---

<sup>60</sup> More variables are suggested by Rapoport in Rapoport, A, "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 14.

<sup>61</sup> Rapoport, A, "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in: Kent, S., *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An interdisciplinary cross-cultural study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Rapoport, A., "Foreword", in: Low, S., and Chambers, E. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative Perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xii.

the theoretical base mentioned above to the built environment. Housing types and qualities reflect the lifestyles of the owners, and are thus also a reflection of their culture.

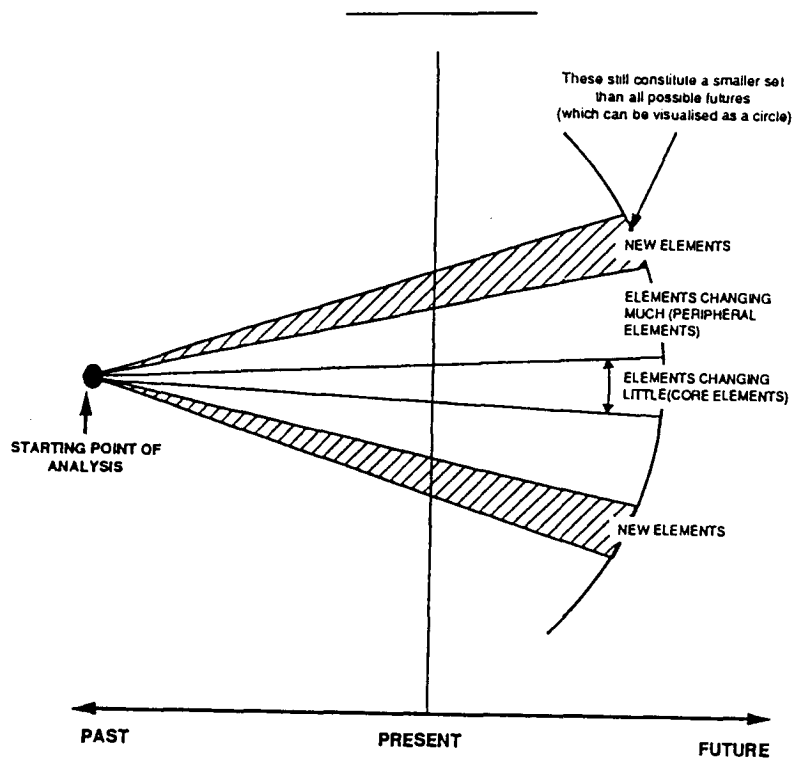


Fig. 2.3- Tracing Changes over time  
 (Source: Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. 1991, pp. 44)

Settings are produced by various groups of inhabitants whom the environments are designed to support. These groups belong to specific cultural orientations whose basic character is also supported by the environment. How is this done? In other words, whom does the supportive environment support or need to support?

In determining who needs to be supported, one has to understand the dynamic processes of culture changes and associated changes to the built environment. In this regard, the problem becomes one of identifying persisting traditional elements, as well as disappearing, changing, or new elements. Any approach that attempts to obtain this kind of information will be either longitudinal - i.e. rural to urban environments of a given setting - or historical, hence the implicit need for longitudinal research in environment-behaviour research. Hence, it is very important to conduct longitudinal research in the

field of environment behaviour, and also to obtain accurate historical data; these will make it possible to develop more general theories in environment-behaviour studies.<sup>63</sup> The method is however fundamentally historical, in the sense that it attempts to create a baseline of the traditional environment and culture from which, through multiple layers of environments over time, it is then possible to identify both persisting core traditional elements, as well as changing, disappearing and newly introduced elements (see Fig. 2.3).

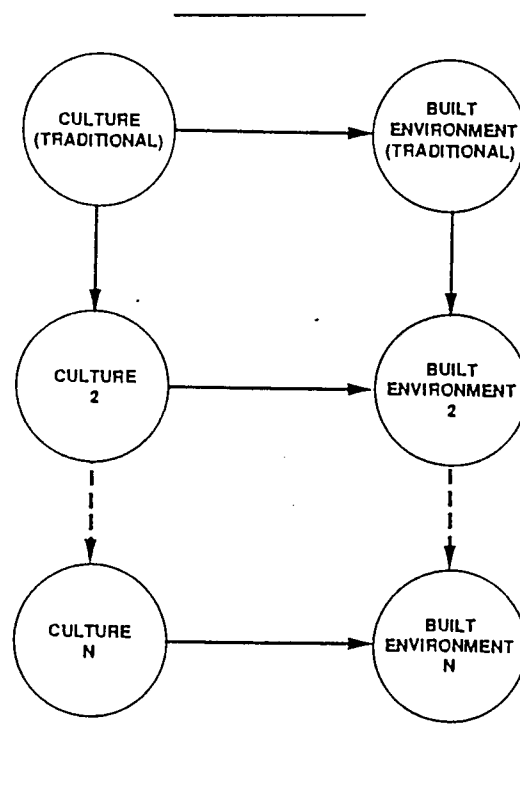


Fig. 2.4- Cultural changes occurring in tandem with the built environment  
(Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., 1991, pp. 43)

This is the method that Rapoport employs in seeking to discover, in highly specific contexts, the changes and dynamics of the situation, so that what is being given up, modified, retained or adapted is seen to provide clues as to the relative importance of elements, as well as inferences about why these elements are important.<sup>64</sup> It is through

<sup>63</sup> See article by Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tiple, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 42.

<sup>64</sup> See article by Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tiple, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 42.

such relative importance that one can identify what Rapoport calls culture-core elements - an important feature of his approach. Although this process can be distorted by political, economic and other similarly conditional factors, changes that are observed do provide clues to prioritised elements as well as their relative importance.

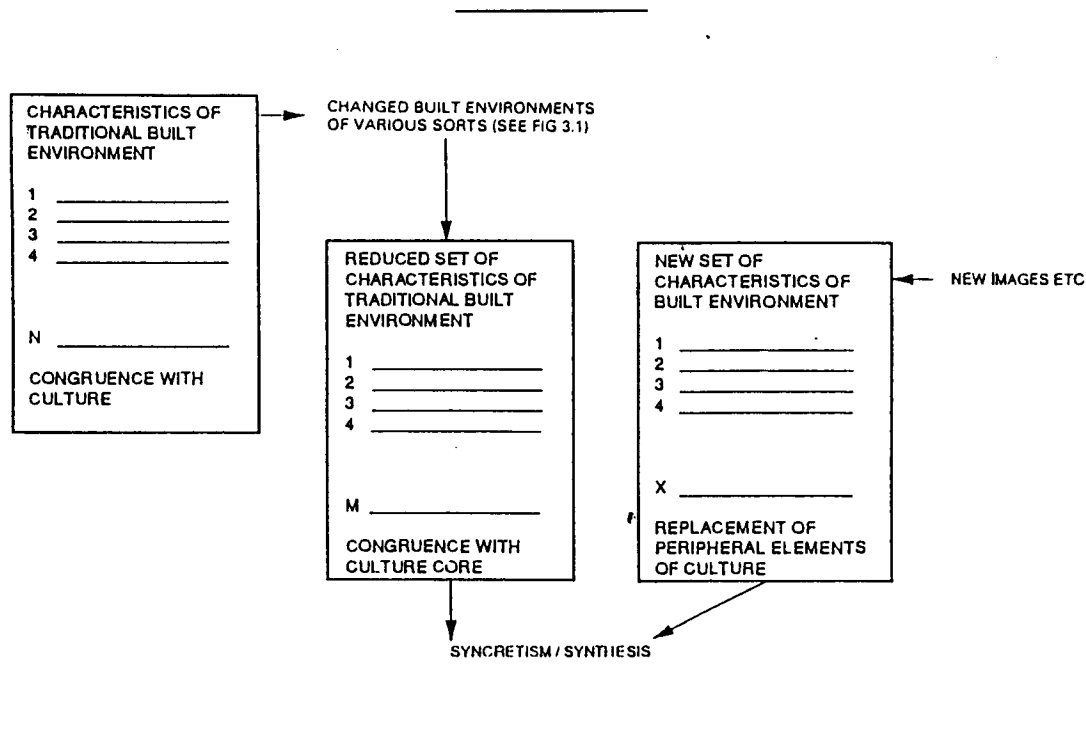


Fig. 2.5 - Identifying the characteristics of traditional, changed and new environments (Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G., 1991, pp. 46)

According to Rapoport, this approach can be applied in any given context, but particularly in rapidly changing cultural contexts, such as “Third World” environments. For example, Rapoport and Hardie carried out a detailed study along these lines in Botswana: In this case study house forms were found to change very slowly, if at all, and were found to be generally consistent over both space and time?<sup>65</sup>

Figure 2.4 illustrates a global analysis showing culture changing in unison with changes in the built environment. The diagram also identifies three sets of elements: core elements (social, cultural and physical), peripheral elements and new elements. The link between

<sup>65</sup> See article by Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. “Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana”, in: Tipple, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 35 – 61.

the analytical method (discussed above) and the design necessitates the establishment of a baseline from which these environments can be analysed; Rapoport establishes this to be the traditional environment where similar characteristics are reflected in the culture being studied.

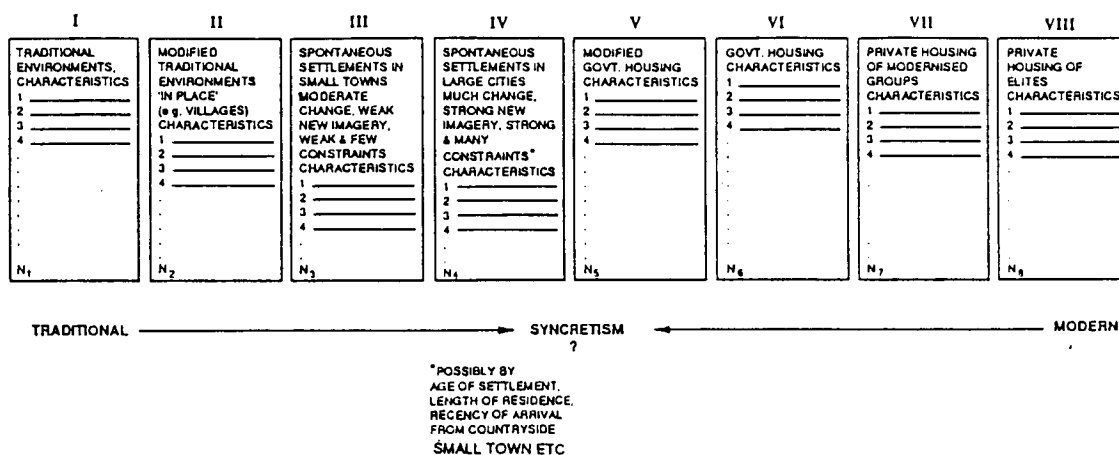


Fig. 2.6- Identification of the characteristics of environments, ranging from the traditional to the modern. (Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. 1991, pp. 47)

Two observations emerge from this: The changed environment now has less core elements, and new elements have been incorporated into both the environment and the culture. These two then combine in a process known as syncretism or synthesis (as depicted in Fig. 2.5 and 2.6). It is at this juncture that the analysis proceeds from either the traditional or from the modern direction. From the traditional end of the spectrum, the key problems include establishing what the pre-contact situation was like. Further, what archaeological data is available to assist in gathering information on traditional elements for the groups being studied. This then provides the reason for studying modified traditional environments in the most remote villages and other settlements. In these environments, one has to look at what elements changed first. This process leads to an analysis of more 'modernised' settlements that have been influenced by television

By carrying out studies of environmental quality, one will be attempting to identify critical social units and the corresponding physical forms, as well as places of social interaction with equally corresponding institutions. The result of these sorts of studies is that they begin to unfold appropriate relationships among activity systems with their corresponding systems of settings, which must be planned and designed. How, then, does Rapoport's theoretical approach inform the design and planning of built environments?

## THE ANALYTICAL METHOD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO DESIGN

The analytical method outlined so far represents a possible step to formulating a design theory based on man-environment relations with respect to what should be done and why. This is achieved by identifying the relationship between culture-core elements and the supportive elements of the built environment. The objective of Rapoport's proposed method is to develop strategies to discover various cultural elements of given groups in and around a chosen area by studying traditional, modern and mixed environments, as defined by his theoretical approach.<sup>69</sup> It can be observed that many third world cultural groups are 'modernising' and hence going through rapid culture-changes. This is the main reason why there is such an urgent need to identify "core elements, those which are both important and invariant (or relatively so) in situations of rapid change" in order to ascertain what is essential for creating a supportive environment.<sup>70</sup>

In attempting to apply his approach in the field of design, Rapoport "dismantles" certain concepts that he deems to be too broad. For example, in one of his papers,<sup>71</sup> Rapoport considers 'developing countries' to be such a concept. He believes that giving a person a problem of designing for "developing countries", or "the poor" does not help in terms of

---

<sup>69</sup> See particularly the articles by Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. "Cultural Change Analysis: Core Concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tipple, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp.35 – 61; Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 249 – 268; Rapoport, A., "An Approach to Designing Third World Environments", *Third World Planning Review*, Vol. 1 No. 1, Spring 1979, pp. 23 – 40.

<sup>70</sup> The quote comes from Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 258, wherein he elaborates further upon this approach.

<sup>71</sup> See Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 249 – 268.

defining a group for the purposes of establishing its environmental planning and design requirements. These concepts are far more useful in their dismantled form, in terms of defining the nature of relevant groups and they do offer descriptions of relevant lifestyles and preferences, thus assisting in defining the nature of appropriate environments for specific groups.

The importance of cultural variables and the consequent need for design to be culture-specific is common to all developing countries. In practical terms, it means that unique approaches must be developed for each cultural group - or country. Identification and definition of the nature of groups given elsewhere in this chapter enables one to move to the next step of specifying what should be done and why. Rapoport considers "development", "modernisation" and other concepts of a similar nature to be examples of culture change. Culture change has been seen to be inherently stressful, particularly when its rate is high, hence the need to modulate it and to create supportive environments to facilitate the process. Culture change is also influenced by culture specificity. In his approach Rapoport assumes that the result of culture change (and hence of the resulting environments) will not be (or should not be) to create a single model, or even a copy of Western cultures or environments.<sup>72</sup> He proposes that this cultural change should be a product of a creative synthesis of old (traditional) and new (modern) elements that can be conceptualised into any activity system, thus informing new planning and design schemes.

Australia's Aborigines provide an interesting example of creative synthesis. It was generally thought that one of the Aboriginal cultural practices of ritually moving through their lands (one of their core elements) had vanished. It was later discovered that they still followed their ritual movements through their lands (a ritual popularly known as "going walkabout"), but instead this was being done using pick-up trucks rather than on foot. It is these forms of syncretism that need to be discovered, as they can not only be used in drawing up new design and planning solutions, but can also be found to be very supportive. It is at this point that appropriate information on the environments needs to be

gathered, which can then be used to reduce stress by modulating rates of change, and thereby providing a time delay that will allow syncretism to occur naturally. Rapoport argues that the goal of this process is to avoid an overly rapid, and hence destructive, rate of change by providing an appropriate environmental quality based on the discovery as to what would be supportive environments in any given case.<sup>73</sup>

Rapoport suggests that in traditional groups there is a tendency to reject traditional environments. It is important to study such rejection in greater detail by considering the meanings of these elements and their fundamental images and ideals.<sup>74</sup> He proposes two methodological approaches to this form of study. The first one is the consideration of specific culture change elements and the dynamics of the setting to enable clues to be derived from identifying which of these elements are being retained, adopted and discarded. These criteria (viz. of what is being adopted, retained or discarded) creates a hierarchy, which then enables the identification of culture-core elements and those elements of the environment associated with it - which is the second approach.<sup>75</sup>

Understanding various environments ranging from traditional to modern ones involves carrying out interviews with inhabitants of those environments. Such interviews require group definitions, whose criteria can be in terms of the traditional-modern spectrum and other factors such as gender, age, class, social status, education, etc. Identification of residential environments within the traditional-modern spectrum is also closely linked to corresponding cultural activities and lifestyles. These cultural activities and lifestyle patterns generate what would be classified as cultural sub-groups. The key question in this regard will be how to make decisions with respect to sub-groups.

In conclusion, the analytical method outlined by Rapoport is particularly useful in terms

---

<sup>72</sup> Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 255.

<sup>73</sup> Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 255.

<sup>74</sup> Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983, pp. 258.

of developing techniques that are used in discovering culture-core elements of selected groups in and around environments of interest. This is carried out through the identification of groups, for each of which issues may be quite different - a key aspect of Rapoport's analytical method.<sup>76</sup> Culture-core elements can then be incorporated in the design of new environments in such a way that they become supportive of the culture of the environment's inhabitants.

## CONCLUSION: Problems and Issues

Rapoport's approach gives a good base from which important questions with regard to the issue of "supportiveness" can be raised. This approach does however produce problems in certain other settings particularly in those that have a high level of sensitivity to ethnicity and racism. In general, there are three aspects of the method that can be identified as potential problem areas:

- Group definition.
- Political connotations of ethnically and racially oriented process of choosing respondents.
- The problem of urban homogeneity that stems from criticality and cognitive distance in Third World urban settlements.

The questions that Rapoport asks about supportive environments requires the identification of groups being studied; in this regard he states that "one needs to discover the group's important characteristics and how these interact with various elements of the built environment".<sup>77</sup> Although Rapoport in his approach argues that a wide variety of criteria can be used to define groups without delving into ethnicity, it is impossible to do

---

<sup>75</sup> Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tipple, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp.35 – 61; Rapoport, A., "Development, Culture Change and Supportive Design", *Habitat International*, Vol. 7, Part 5/6, 1983.

<sup>76</sup> See figure 3.4 in Rapoport, A. and Hardie, G. (1991). "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in Tipple A. and Willis K., *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 48; and Rapoport, A. "Systems of activities and systems of settings" in S. Kent, *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 9 – 20.

so in the South African context. In South Africa, at least, it is hard to see how the culture-core method could be applied except by using what could be called ethnicity-tradition packages to define groups - a comment borne out of Rapoport's and Hardie's Mmabatho-Mafikeng study on core concepts of housing for the Tswana. In this context, Rapoport's approach would not have yielded the depth of intended results if group definition had not been done on ethnic basis.

The complexity of group definition in this context is further amplified by the fact that identity construction in South Africa's urban centres is considered to be fluid and influenced by a kaleidoscope of issues that include "clan, class, ethnicity, race, gender, age, community and nationality"<sup>78</sup>. This is further complicated by whether an individual elects or not to be part of a given group. Given this background, it is therefore apparent that using Rapoport's method of group definition would touch raw nerves in the very sensitive issues of ethnicity and racism in countries such as South Africa. The same argument could be used for the Zimbabwean situation, where race and ethnicity are even more sensitive, particularly given the country's recent history.

The second problem concerns the political connotations of the ethnically and racially oriented process of choosing respondents. Given that one would proceed with the idea of ethnically defining user groups, the South African context introduces further complications brought about by the level of politicisation of ethnic identities in the country as a result of years of colonisation and apartheid rule. Constructing identity around a single ethnic group in any urban setting is, therefore, not only fraught with dangers, but is also virtually impossible due to the ethnic diversity of both urban and rural environments.<sup>79</sup> This applies even to supposedly mono-ethnic showpieces of former Bantustan capitals, such as Mmabatho-Mafikeng where fifty years ago less than half the household heads in the so-called location were "Tswana".

---

<sup>77</sup> Quotation from Rapoport, A. and Hardie, G., "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tittle A. and Willis K. *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 40.

<sup>78</sup> Harries, P., "Culture and Identity in South African Labour History", in *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Collected Seminar Papers No 45*, University of London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1993, pp. 13.

Therefore, no single culture core could ever be applied to the shared public environment. In theory, culture-core based constructs could be used only to develop options at the scale of smaller neighbourhoods; but then formally demarcated ethnic enclaves would become the basic way that the need for environmental difference would be recognised. This would hardly seem an appropriate route to follow, given that such ethnically pure neighbourhoods were the ideal models that were used to cement the hegemony of apartheid.

The final problem is that of criticality and cognitive distance which is relevant in contexts with a long history of traditional urban settlements. Most traditional urban settlements in third world countries have a fairly short history, which implies that it is difficult to find a rich spectrum of mediating patterns from which to draw culture-core elements that can then be applied in contemporary environments. It may be argued that urban influence on the South African countryside is already so pervasive, that the concept "high criticality" may not be appropriate anyway. But the point still holds that traditional rural forms in most of the country, with their underlying space patterns derived from separate huts around a cattle byre (*isibaya*), seem to offer little even in the way of underlying structures that could be transferred to cities.<sup>80</sup>

It is due to these potential problems that may arise in other settings caused by Rapoport's concept of the culture core, that propels this study to look at the issue of local cultural appropriateness as an alternative to studying the relationship between built form and culture. Since culture is a very dynamic phenomenon, it is relatively difficult to design for, hence other theorists use site-specific features to define the relationship between culture and built form and environment.

There are numerous parameters for determining local appropriateness in as far as built environments and forms are concerned, and these include culture, climate, economic

---

<sup>79</sup> Drummond, J. and Parnell, S., "Mafikeng-Mmabatho" in Lemon, A. (Ed.), *Homes Apart*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991, pp. 163 and 166.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted from Japha, D. A. text. Got these from his disk with his permission. I could not get source where material was published.

conditions, region and religion - elements that can all be associated with local identity. Traditional environments, through the life experiences of locals, embody most of the ideals of local appropriateness particularly in terms of response to climatic conditions, which are eventually related to the culture of that region or micro-region. This study looks at region and climate as the main determinants of local appropriateness, and how these are ultimately connected to local culture - that is, if culture<sup>81</sup> is defined as a way of life typical of a group or a system of schemata transmitted symbolically or a way of coping with a specific ecological setting.

Taking these points into account, it can be seen that Rapoport's approach is fairly deterministic and gives a design prescription drawn from studies of culture of given communities. This approach presupposes that there is a fixed way of designing for given cultural groups; this would result in the creation of stereotypical solutions, hence it is important to search for an alternative approach to the problem.

The next chapter explores the possibilities that are offered by approaching the study of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture through site-specific features and the concept of identity construction that emphasise symbolism issues which are not successfully addressed by Rapoport's approach.

---

<sup>81</sup> See the definition of culture by Rapoport, A., "Foreword", in: Low, S. M., and Chambers, E., (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A Comparative perspective*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xii.

## **CHAPTER 3.0**

### **THEORISING IDENTITY**

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of identity is a complex one, and has become the subject of vigorous debate in the social sciences.<sup>82</sup> The identity issue opens up the question of symbolism - how buildings are read or interpreted and what they mean and to whom. While it would seem clear that an analysis of the environmental support required for functional aspects of tradition and culture can be carried out with Rapoport's "systems of activities and systems of settings" concept, this is perhaps less clear with regard to symbolic questions.

When defining the concept of identity, Rapoport is sensitive to the fact that while it may be a property of groups, identity also involves both self-definition and definition by others. It also involves far more than just ethnicity or race, being also constructed, for example, on the basis of language, religion, occupation, caste, occupation, ideology, and social status.<sup>83</sup> As we have seen, however, while he recognises the complexity of identity formation, Rapoport's method of establishing the desired functional and symbolic connections between an environment and the people it accommodates privileges ethnicity above all other identity constructing factors. This occurs because of his use of the "culture-core" concept to attempt to derive key features of tradition that need to be supported. The analysis following from the use of this concept assumes that identity construction comes mainly from using available cultural and material resources from a spectrum of cultural representations extending from the "traditional" to the "modern".<sup>84</sup>

But recent literature on the subject of 'identity' raises two questions as to the adequacy of this approach. First, there is the question as to whether identity can be fixed so firmly on a point in a progression from the traditional to the modern. Second, any identity analysis

---

<sup>82</sup> Most authors in this book look at the concept of identity and modernity from various points of view. See Hall, S., et al (Eds.), *Modernity and its Futures*, Polity, Cambridge, 1992. See particularly Hall, S., "The Question of Identity" in: Hall, S., et al (Eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures*, Polity, Cambridge, pp. 273 – 316 and Taylor, P. *Investigating Culture and Identity*: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London, 1997. Also see Taylor, P., *Investigating Culture and Identity*, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London, 1997 and Geertz, C., *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1973, pp. 261 – 263.

<sup>83</sup> See Chambers, E. and Low, S. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A comparative perspective*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. iv – xv.

that starts with ethnicity as the primary factor will have problematic consequences in multi-ethnic, identity-fluid environments.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to investigate identity and localness issues in general and particularly those issues implicated in the relationship between built form and culture. In view of the fact that in the third world identity, culture and tradition are always intimately interrelated, a primary question will be how to define the concept of tradition, in a world that is increasingly being affected by globalisation. This chapter will thus consider each of the following issues in turn:

- a look at the historical developmental path of the concept of identity in social sciences;
- an analysis of the impact of social theories on the concept of identity in architectural practice and thinking, with specific focus on third world environments, as this is particularly relevant to this study;
- a look at how reconsideration of vernacular architecture has impacted on issues of identity and localness in the third world; and
- a discussion of the issues surrounding regionalism and critical regionalism. The rise of critical regionalism reflects a developmental path followed by theoretical issues on localness and regional appropriateness issues in architecture.

The chapter deals with identity in general, as well as the historical rise of concern for identity issues in the third world, for engagement with local vernaculars and for aspects of regionalism/critical regionalism. This objective implies that this chapter will draw on social and cultural theory as well as on the literature dealing with identity in architecture. The next chapter (Chapter 4) will thereafter look at examples in architectural practice that illustrate the theoretical issues on identity and localness which are raised in this chapter.

---

<sup>84</sup> See article by Rapoport, A., and Hardie, G. "Cultural Change Analysis: Core concepts of Housing for the Tswana", in: Tipler, A., and Willis, K. (Eds.), *Housing the Poor in the Developing World*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, pp. 35 – 61.

## THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

Identity is intricately linked to culture, in that individuals from given societies share common values and ways in which they view the world around them. Identity is thus the product of a set of constructs through which human beings see themselves and through which others see them. The historical trajectory of our current understanding of identity and its constituent elements has already been traced in the various literature on the subject. For example, Stuart Hall<sup>85</sup> gives the following three very different historical definitions of identity, based on changing perspectives on the nature of the human subject:

- The first definition of identity is derived from the concept of the ‘enlightenment’ subject, based on a notion of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, and with a stable central inner core. An individual’s identity in this instance is conceived to have first emerged when the subject was born; thereafter, the identity evolves and develops as the individual grows older, while simultaneously remaining essentially the same throughout the individual’s life, i.e., the individual is endowed with a fixed identity from birth to death by means of factors such as ethnicity.
- The second definition of identity is derived from the concept of the sociological subject, whose inner core was formed in relation to significant others, who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols - the culture - of the worlds he/she inhabited. Identity in this situation is conceived as something passed down from one generation to another through encoded cultural symbols and from contacts outside the immediate social world. Here, because identity is expected to be a product of a social environment, and because the social environment of an individual may change, a degree of flexibility in identity formation is accepted. For example, this view would accept that in third world societies, identity could be affected by modernisation.
- The third definition of identity is derived from post-modern concepts of the subject, which accept no fixed, essential or permanent identity. The consequence of this position is that identity can be selected, imposed, assumed or rejected according to

how subjects perceive themselves or are categorised by others. Moreover, this kind of identity is variable in time and space. A wide range of cultural resources can be used to construct such identities

These ways of conceptualising identity - as either fixed, or as subject to social forces such as modernisation, or as even more fluid - are broadly mirrored in the historical treatment of identity in the Southern African literature. In the discourse of colonial identity, including that in South Africa, identity was considered to be fixed forever, or at least very difficult to change, and to be primarily a question of ethnicity. Ethnic categories have long been used to identify distinct groups of human beings and in the past were used to justify colonial domination and even genocide.<sup>86</sup> History shows that over the centuries groups of human beings have on many occasions developed an identity based on the dichotomy of "us and them". While us-them distinctions have often been made on grounds other than ethnicity, for example Occidental/Oriental, Moslem/Christian and Christian/Jew, ethnic distinctions have been among the most widely used.<sup>87</sup> Certain phenotypic features have often been marked as the primary means of identification.

Taylor argues that the modern concept of identity based on race has its origins in the eighteenth century, when scientists began trying to produce racial classifications of humans, in the same way that biologists had produced classifications of plant and animal species.<sup>88</sup> This classification was further intensified in the nineteenth century, as physical differences were equated to either race superiority or race inferiority. This development of race identity and its equation to racial superiority prompted the emergence of racism and gave the excuse for and impetus to the slave trade in the eighteenth century. Racism not only provided justifications for political domination and economic exploitation, but it is also one of the primary influences negating - or affirming - a sense of individual and group worth, passing final judgement on the value of a particular history, culture and

---

<sup>85</sup> Hall, S., "The Question of Identity" in: Hall, S., et al (Eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures*, Polity, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 275 - 277.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, P., *Investigating Culture and Identity*, Harper Collins Publisher Ltd., London, 1997, pp. 111.

<sup>87</sup> Jordan, G. and Weedon, C., *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Post-modern World*, Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1995, pp. 252.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, P., *Investigating Culture and Identity*, Harper Collins Publisher Ltd., London, 1997, pp. 114.

language, as well as of physical appearance and presumed intellectual capacity.<sup>89</sup> In this respect, identity constructed from phenotypic features provides no option for individuals to choose to be anything else. Identity construction derived from biological features such as race is therefore a fixed identity phenomenon.

When biological features are used as the key to defining identity, for obvious reasons identities so defined tend to be inflexible - at least to those doing the defining. Some theorists like Hall<sup>90</sup> argue that this inflexible approach gradually became less restrictive and deterministic as a result of social processes that were traced by sociological theories in the early twentieth century and which developed a concept of a “human subject” and its corresponding “identity”. This meant that individuals could have different identities, as defined by their private and public worlds. Compared to identity construction through phenotypic features, this approach provided a degree of flexibility in that the individual could either define his/her own identity (in the private sphere), or his/her identity could be defined by and in relation to others (in the public sphere).

Interestingly enough, one of the early studies that pointed to this more flexible approach to the concept of identity was carried out in East London, South Africa. This was a study by the anthropologist, Philip Mayer, in the late 1960s to early 1970s.<sup>91</sup> In his study of a Xhosa community, he recognised that there were those individuals who migrated from their rural homes and settled in the city permanently (the immigrants) and those who moved into town but still maintained their rural roots (migrants). Mayer’s study concentrated on the levels of urbanisation of the latter group i.e., migrants. His study discovered that amongst the so-called rural-rooted individuals there were two distinct identities: “School” and “Red”.<sup>92</sup>

These two identities were drawn from social contacts and activities within migrant

---

<sup>89</sup> Jordan, G. and Weedon, C., *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and the Postmodern World*, Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford, 1995, pp. 252.

<sup>90</sup> Hall, S., “The Question of Identity” in: Hall, S., et al (Eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures*, Polity, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 275 – 277.

<sup>91</sup> Mayer, P., *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservation and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, London, New York and Toronto, 1971.

workers' respective communities. The characteristics of the "School" group identity were the following:

- Access to or appreciation of higher education: People who belonged to the "School" group were relatively highly educated and this enabled them to be liberal in their approach to life through an appreciation of different lifestyles and cultural practices around them;
- Adoption and/or appreciation of Western social practices: This group adopted and/or appreciated Western lifestyle patterns and values due to the relatively higher levels of education, relatively close contacts with Europeans and influences from Western media such as radio and television in the city;
- Appreciation of and participation in Western religious practices: In addition to traditional religions, this group of individuals had a broader access to various Church denominations and other religious institutions in their urban communities, and this provided additional resources to the manner in which they defined/identified themselves; and,
- Exposure to various entertainment facilities: In town there were wider choices around which individuals in this group could build their associations. These included various codes, such as soccer, rugby, concerts, shows, etc.

The characteristics of the "Red" group, on the other hand, were the following:

- Low or no education: In terms of the concept of identity, this group had fewer resources due to less or no access to education (in this instance, access to a different cultural orientation from that of the traditional Xhosa culture);
- Traditional social practices: The individuals in the "Red" group were inclined to follow traditional practices and lifestyle patterns and values. Red is derived from the type and colour of the clay soil used by Xhosa people to paint or decorate their facial and body features as part of their traditional rituals or dressing codes;
- Practice and appreciation of traditional religion: The "Red" migrants were more inclined to follow traditional religions and their associated rituals. This aspect made

---

<sup>92</sup> Meyer, P., *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservation and the Process of Urbanization in a South African City*. Oxford University Press, Cape Town, London, New York and Toronto, 1971, pp. 15.

them more conservative in their identity construction processes; and,

- Limited entertainment: Entertainment options in the countryside were limited. There were certain ways and social associations that were available to them, for instance, beer drinking for elderly people, stick-fighting for the youngsters and a few other options, depending on the setting and the cultural interests of the individual.

These two distinct identities, i.e., red and school, were precipitated by the nationalist government's legislation that restricted citizenship status of the country's black population in urban areas. People with section 10 rights had legal access to permanent life in the city; those without could remain in the urban areas only for fixed periods as migrant workers. This legislation created individuals (migrant workers) who shuttled back and forth between urban and rural social networks.

With social networks in both urban and rural areas at their disposal, migrant workers were able to establish themselves in both situations by adjusting their habits and behaviour according to their circumstances. The diversity of town life resulted in a class structure, as opposed to the classless one found in the countryside (rural); this presented more of a problem to a migrant than to someone who was town-born, because he/she had to start afresh in the process of urbanisation. The migrant could choose to mix a number of activities, which a town-born person could not do due to the already fixed way of life imposed by friends and kin since birth. For example, a migrant could choose to move between different drinking places and different churches or religious groups, whereas a town-born individual could not do this.

From Mayer's study it can be concluded that people with the same cultural background or social worlds, but with different life circumstances, developed clearly different identities (which Mayer termed "Red" and "School"). Unlike the fixed version of the concept of identity previously discussed, modernisation processes have thus introduced a degree of flexibility in the concept of identity.

The conceptual approaches to the question of identity that have been discussed so far are

first, that identity is fixed through factors such as ethnicity; and second, that identity is variable and can be affected by factors such as modernisation. This sub-section now looks at the development of the concept of identity in even more flexible, post-modern terms. Two key issues arise in this regard: first, the proposal from Geertz and others that a wider range of elements might be involved in the construction of identities than had previously been thought; and second, that culture generally can be seen as a set of resources which people use to construct their identities, and that identity must consequently be conceptualised in far more fluid and situational terms: as able to be chosen, rejected, assumed or imposed.

Geertz<sup>93</sup> suggested that the following might all play a role in identity construction:

- Assumed blood ties - the defining element in this category is that of quasi-kinship;
- Race - here the defining element is based on phenotypic physical features such as skin, colour, facial form, stature, or hair type;
- Language - the reference in this category is to linguistics communication;
- Region - the defining elements here are geographical features such as islands or intervening mountains and rivers;
- Religion - this employs systems of belief as a point of reference;
- Custom - in this category ties are based on behavioural attitudes and patterns.

Various combinations of these elements, according to Geertz, become resources through which individuals achieve self-identification and through which identification may be imposed by others. The central theme in much of current writing on the concept of identity has been influenced by Geertz's work, anchored around the key concept of fluidity, a concept with particular bite in the context of post-colonial Africa - which is an area of particular interest to this study. Fluidity implies that identity is not the inevitable

---

<sup>93</sup> Geertz, C., *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Basic Books Inc., New York, 1973, pp. 261 - 263; Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 50. Battarbee, following a similar line of thought, gives two bases from which identity is derived: Biological basis of one kind or another - determined by age, sex, or some genetic feature such as skin pigmentation. Features specifically cultural in origin - these are determined by language, religion, nationality, occupation, social stratification and links with certain institutions. In: Battarbee, K., "Images of Identity in Southern African Literature after Apartheid", *A paper for the Conference "National Identity and Democracy, March 14 - 18, 1997"*, University of Western Cape, Cape Town, 1997, pp. 2..

result of biological characteristics or of a particular level of social or economic development, but that it is constructed or can be imposed in much more complex ways. The concept of fluidity implies that since identity shifts according to how the subject is addressed or represented, identification is not automatic, but can instead be won or lost.

For post-modernists the construction of identity occurs by employing a wide range of cultural resources and is not unified around a coherent self.<sup>94</sup> Instead, they argue that an individual should be seen as fragmented into a variety of selves - different selves might emerge in different social contexts, as various social constructs are mobilised for identity making.<sup>95</sup> This set of concepts is the consequence of well-known post-modern arguments about de-centring of the subject, the de-essentialisation of the social, scepticism towards grand narratives and the post-modern emphasis on textuality.<sup>96</sup>

The emergence of post-modern culture is increasingly being linked to the process of globalisation. Globalisation is a descriptive term given to the process whereby what happens in one society is increasingly interconnected with events in other parts of the world. This, it is suggested, impacts on individuals' senses of identity. Firstly, it gives a wider range of resources on the global arena from which identity constructions can be drawn. Secondly, given the global mobility of traditionally space-bound cultures, globalisation has also produced many contexts characterised by particularly complex interactions between tradition and modernity, and between internal established traditions and external, often more marginal traditions. Identity responses to these environments can become extremely complex.

To summarise, then, conceptions of identity arising from modernist theory accepted a degree of fluidity in the construction of identity. The concept of identity as fixed by ethnicity and race has been rejected by modernist thinking, and thus identity was discussed in terms of relatively few defining factors (public and private social worlds) and relatively fixed social processes such as modernisation. Various post-modernist

---

<sup>94</sup> See Taylor, P., *Investigating Culture and Identity*: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London, 1997, pp. 24.

<sup>95</sup> Taylor, P., *Investigating Culture and Identity*, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London, 1997, pp. 218.

theories take this flexibility even further, by arguing that identity is fluid and not fixed, that it is constructed in far more complex ways, and that many factors can contribute to its construction.

How did these theoretical developments in the social sciences with regard to the concept of identity impact on architectural thinking? It appears that they triggered a progression of new theoretical approaches to architectural thinking whose central concern can be considered to be issues of regional appropriateness and localness. What follows, then, is an investigation of how these developments with regard to the concept of identity in the social sciences were reflected in architecture, with specific reference to third world built environments.

## **IDENTITY IN ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE**

This section will trace the various theories of identity with respect to the built environment, with particular focus on third world environments, with the intention of contextualising the case study, which will be analysed in later chapters. The current emphasis on culture and identity issues in architecture and the built environment is generally the result of questions posed in the following two contexts. The first was that of third-world countries, such as India and Egypt after decolonisation, where local architects asked questions about the appropriateness of global modernism to their newly liberated countries. The second context is that of the West itself, where post-modernist challenges to modernist propositions about meaning have re-established an interest in the cultural dimension of architectural performance. These questions have had both theoretical and practical implications, affecting how architectural ensembles have been analysed as repositories of meaning and identity, and also how architects have approached the task of addressing identity issues in their designs.

It has been frequently argued that modernists did not value cultural connectivity, i.e.,

---

<sup>96</sup> See Taylor, P., *Investigating Culture and Identity*, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London, 1997, pp. 217 –

engagement with local cultural patterns or local meaning systems, such as those embedded in vernacular traditions, or that they did this in such an abstract way that the original meanings were lost. This applies particularly to third world environments, where climatic and other rational factors were the main concerns for modernists. In the context of the subject of this thesis, i.e., to understand the nature of the relationship between built form and culture, cultural connectivity relates to meaning systems and culturally generated patterns of use.<sup>97</sup>

In support of the fact that modernists lacked interest in cultural connectivity, Chris Abel<sup>98</sup> has argued that proponents of the Modern Movement were philosophically speaking rationalists, i.e., modelling their reasoning around that of early Greek geometers.<sup>99</sup> In accordance with this approach certain propositions are taken as given, as unquestionable truths whose criteria of rightness were not based on experience. In architectural Modernist theories, the ascribed basis of priori ratification was correspondence with the “Spirit of the Age”, the so-called *Zeitgeist*. Consequently, the modernists considered form to be logically deducible by considering naturally unfolding historical processes. This approach to reason highlighted modernists’ lack of concern with issues such as culture, with more emphasis placed on rational/objective issues such as climate, as shown by Le Corbusier’s early works in India.<sup>100</sup> Abel further qualifies this point by arguing that for key modernists the products of the Modern Movement were to be measured, not against any empirical evidence derived from present and past experience, but against the manner in which they could be shown to be deduced from basic premises.<sup>101</sup>

Unlike modernists, post-modernists did not subscribe to grand theories that proposed rational principles purely for functional reasons, but instead embraced more playful and divergent styles whose sources varied from one project to the next. The pyramid at the

---

220.

<sup>97</sup> See how the concept of “culture” is defined in Chapter Two.

<sup>98</sup> For Chris Abel’s approach to the subject of architecture and its relationship to social and cultural identities from a broad range of knowledge, see Abel, C., *Architecture and Identity: Towards a global eco-culture*, Architectural Press - an imprint of Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 1997.

<sup>99</sup> Abel, C., *Architecture and Identity: Towards a global eco-culture*, Architectural Press - an imprint of Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 1997, pp. 77.

<sup>100</sup> These are given in the next chapter.

entrance of the Louvre in Paris (Fig. 3.1), is a good illustration of this.

Various post-modernist theories that were developed and put into practice by both Western and third world architectural theorists and practitioners were all a search for regional and local appropriateness reflecting the historical development of identity in social theories. These developments in architecture, in general, generated interest in “culture” and its corresponding vernacular traditions, as it was perceived to embody the desired regionally and locally appropriate qualities. Regionalism and vernacular specialists in design in fact were a precursor to architects’ responses to decolonisation in third world environments.



Plate 3.1- Night view of the Grand Louvre, Paris: The glass pyramid playfully fusing two incongruent images of glass and pyramid.

((Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 226).

---

<sup>101</sup> Abel, C., *Architecture and Identity: Towards a global eco-culture*, Architectural Press - an imprint of

What follows is an attempt to trace the developments with respect to issues of “identity” in architectural theory and practice. There are three main considerations:

- First world theory.
- Developments in the third world after decolonisation.
- Points of commonality between them.

The following section expounds on issues of cultural connectivity and how they were given an impetus by vernacular architecture. The search for local identity and regional appropriateness brought vernacular architecture to the fore, thus inspiring architectural practitioners in third world environments in various ways. This will be illustrated in greater detail in the examples given in Chapter 4.

### **VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE: Its relation to cultural connectivity**

The vernacular or traditional or anonymous architecture became a point of departure for architects who took into consideration local or regional appropriateness and identity. These include neo-conservative post-modernists on a global or international scene and vernacular specialists. This thesis deals with identity issues in third world environments, where ongoing local vernacular architectural traditions are a key factor in the creation of current architectural identities; this is an aspect which will be highlighted more fully in the next chapter (Chapter 4). The following, therefore, is a preliminary discussion of vernacular architectural traditions and how they inspired modernism and post-modernism, with the aim of providing a backdrop to how local architects in third world environments have handled issues of place in identity-making. The level of synthesis between modernism as practised in the West and third world vernacular traditions effectively defines cultural connectivity and hence the concept of identity in architectural practice in third world countries. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate the relationship between vernacular architecture and other architectural styles with respect to the rise of identity issues in architectural theory and practice, in general, and cultural connectivity, in particular.

Vernacular traditions can be considered to be a rich and ready source of cultural connectivity due to their embodiment of tried and tested solutions to local conditions such as climate and ingenious use of local materials. In his work, Paul Oliver<sup>102</sup> defines vernacular architecture to be comprised of dwellings and all other types of buildings, as being related to their environmental contexts and available resources and as being customarily owner- or community-built by using traditional technologies. He further states that all forms of vernacular architecture are built to embody specific needs and accommodate particular values and economic conditions, as well as ways of living for the culture that has produced them.<sup>103</sup> As a result of these qualities, over the centuries there have been numerous and diverse uses of vernacular architecture, particularly in the West. One such example is the Gothic style, which responded to the vanishing of pre-industrial environment by referring back to simpler forms, shapes and designs, and to the lifestyles of the past.

However, there are three broad characteristics of architectural types that are derived from vernacular sources, i.e. architecture as:

- An iconic, picturesque evocation of symbolic identity;
- Determined by climate, material or function; and
- The embodiment or expression of experiential, emotional, spiritual and sensory qualities.

Due to the fact that vernacular or traditional architecture is considered to express the cultural values and lifestyles of the people that produced it, it can be considered as a valuable link between architecture and local cultural values and settings. These autochthonous archetypes are seen as pure and wholesome and are contrasted with imported architecture, which is thought of as unsuited to local needs, conditions or identity.<sup>104</sup> Picturesque archetypes of vernacular architecture are normally constructed through categorisation of a few aspects of a building such as the plan form, the most common features of an elevation, decorative details or fenestration etc., and they are best

---

<sup>102</sup> Oliver, P. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World Vol. 1: Theories and principles*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. xxiii.

<sup>103</sup> See the section on Fathy whose attitude towards tradition agrees with this point of view.

<sup>104</sup> Palvides, E., in: Oliver, P. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World Vol. 1: Theories and principles*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 12.

achieved using local materials with (a fairly reluctant use of) more modern technology.

The creation of local identity through the architectural evocation of the vernacular has at times served a variety of social goals and has been used effectively in the establishment of ethnic ideology in the nineteenth century Europe.<sup>105</sup> Ethnically pure forms of vernacular architecture were intensely researched in attempts to establish national identity. Nazi Germany exemplifies a rather extreme political exploitation of vernacular architecture in expressing conservative ideologies and a return to traditional values.

In architecture, modernists were inspired by vernacular traditions that they perceived as being:

- severely utilitarian with respect to the application of materials and technology,
- functional with respect to adaptation to climate, accommodation of activities and utilisation of site; and
- beautiful with respect to sculptural expressions of mass and volume as a result of manipulating the plan and section to accommodate the needs of the user(s).<sup>106</sup>

Vernacular architecture was thought of as having achieved perfection through rational responses to severe resource limitations over a long period of time; it was considered to be an architecture of necessity rather than of pride and prestige. In this respect modernism used vernacular architecture as a tool to justify rationalist approaches to architectural design, where formal properties, rather than cultural and environmental performance, were given priority and emphasis - an attitude that produced results that later sparked criticism of modernism. Critics believed that the widespread application of modernist architecture in the 1950s and 1960s created an architecturally bland and monotonous environment.<sup>107</sup>

One of the staunchest advocates of a greater degree of sensitivity towards local

---

<sup>105</sup> Palvides, E., in: Oliver, P. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World Vol. 1: Theories and principles*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 12.

<sup>106</sup> See Palvides, E., in: Oliver, P. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World Vol. 1: Theories and principles*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 13.

<sup>107</sup> Palvides, E., in: Oliver, P. (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World Vol. 1: Theories and principles*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 14.

vernacular architectural traditions was Bernard Rudofsky, who mounted an exhibition of wide ranging vernacular architectural traditions in 1964 at the New York Museum of Modern Art entitled “*Architecture without architects*”.<sup>108</sup> Rudofsky argued that an understanding of traditional environments and their associated anonymous architecture was important in that it gave an insight into what Western architects in third world environments had to confront.

Rudofsky’s proposal is one of many vernacular-based approaches to identity. His proposal is a formal approach that is also expressed by neo-conservatives such as Stern (and maybe even modernists, the difference being transformation of the originals).<sup>109</sup> The other vernacular-based approach to identity is that driven by cultural patterns, as in Rapoport. There are theorists like Kenneth Frampton, who criticised the vernacular-based approaches to identity and that criticism gave birth to Critical Regionalism. Critical Regionalism can then be considered as an alternative to vernacular-based approaches to identity.

Critical Regionalism, like vernacular-based approaches, still addressed issues of local appropriateness. In as far as issues of regional appropriateness and localness are concerned, Critical Regionalism went beyond the mere hypnotic qualities of traditional architecture exhibited by older phases of Regionalism. Critical Regionalist theories advocated the consideration of local qualities, such as light quality and landscape. The search for the *genius loci* at a global level revived concerns of Regionalism and became a tool for responding to decolonisation in third world environments. In such environments it also gave rise to vernacular specialists who sought forms from local vernacular traditions in order to create local place identities.

So far in this Chapter we have discussed the beginnings of theories on regional appropriateness by various radical post-modernists who developed the Critical

---

<sup>108</sup> He later released a publication of the same title. See Rudofsky, B., *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture*, Connecticut Printers, Inc., Hartford, Connecticut, 1965.

<sup>109</sup> This is a paraphrased expression of my Supervisor, Prof. D. A. Japha’s idea. (not published).

Regionalism Movement. The following section looks at Regionalism and its contribution to the question of identity as well as its importance to this study.

## THE EMERGENCE OF CRITICAL REGIONALISM

Regionalism in architecture has a long history whose roots can be traced back at least to 19<sup>th</sup>-century English Picturesque Movement. It advocates the design of forms derived from a structure's *genius loci*<sup>110</sup> in response to regional and local appropriateness issues. The *genius loci* or 'spirit of the place' is the concept that Christian Norberg-Schulz developed in an attempt to explore the relationship between human beings and their built environment.<sup>111</sup> This section suggests different approaches to questions of region and localness from influential theorists in the field. At the end of the section, the shortcomings of Critical Regionalism as an approach to the study of the relationship between built form and culture are discussed. It will further be explored how national identity issues offer an effective way of achieving *genius loci* with respect to the question of identity.

Regionalism can be classified into three developmental phases, namely:

- Romantic Regionalism: This phase of regionalism, for example, invoked the remains of Gothic monuments as evidence of national, native genius, and upheld them as examples to be followed in the revolt against the "international" norms of Neoclassicism and early functionalist architecture.<sup>112</sup> In this phase localness issues were modelled around issues such as nationalism that drew its regionalism values from a nation's political and economic sphere of influence. This gave rise to the internationalisation of those regional architectural qualities that had been found in colonial architecture and that expressed and perpetuated universal rules;

---

<sup>110</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1992, pp. 17.

<sup>111</sup> Norberg-Schulz, C., *The Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Academy Editions, London, 1980, pp. 5.

- **Conservative Regionalism:** This form of Regionalism sought local expressions by encouraging a liberalism where local architectural forms were promoted and advanced. However, as much as it purported to encourage liberalism and reform, it was also repressive and chauvinistic in nature because it effectively encouraged forms that were tribe based. As a result it was abused by Nazis and Fascists in Europe. Another form of Conservative Regionalism was used to promote tourism and it did so by using tribally based forms as well. Conservative Regionalism provided critiques to the tendencies of architecture to be wholly involved in surface changes of fashion rather than in fundamental transformations of human relations. The resulting architecture was thus one of nostalgia and memory that was designed to trigger the recognition of an identity based on a common ethnic past. It was at its peak in the 1930s;
- **Critical Regionalism:** This was free of the nationalist and racist connotations of its predecessor (Conservative Regionalism). It was free of imperial and restrictive ways of designing, and was critical and fluid in its approach - hence its name. It took into consideration issues such as the climate, the quality of the local light and the geographical nature of the site, rather than factors such as culture.

Described as neo-conservative, the attitude of post-modernist theories towards architectural design paradigms and their romanticised cultural references were attacked by Critical Regionalism theorists such as Kenneth Frampton and the Greek architects Pikionis, Lefaivre and Tzonis. These theorists advocated a critical consideration of local underlying physical structural elements that included local landscape features, the quality of the light, climate and broader cultural settings and values - not just local vernacular traditions. This approach introduced an even greater degree of cultural connectivity than post-modernist theoretical proposals, and hence gave rise to an even greater degree of fluidity, as it connected the local “culture” to its physical, social and ecological setting.

---

<sup>112</sup> Lefaivre, L. and Tzonis, A., “The Grid and the Pathway: An introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis in the Context of Greek Architectural Culture” in: Lefaivre, L. and Tzonis, A., *Atelier 66: The Architecture of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis*, Rizzoli, New York, 1985, pp. 14.

In his approach to the subject of locally appropriate forms, Frampton proposes six points of resistance to modernism and argues for a postmodernist philosophical architectural approach which he calls critical regionalism.<sup>113</sup> In brief these points are:

- Culture and civilisation
- The rise and fall of the *avant-garde*
- Critical Regionalism and world culture
- The resistance of the place-form
- Culture versus nature: topography, context, climate, light and tectonic form
- The visual versus the tactile

The first two points will be touched on only briefly whilst the last four are of particular interest to this study and will be expounded on in greater detail herein.

With regard to “culture and civilisation”, Frampton argues that the modern building is now being controlled by optimisation of technology and this is being done at the expense of the creation of locally appropriate urban built forms. The restrictions jointly imposed by automotive distribution and the volatile play of land speculation tend to limit the scope of urban design to such a degree, that any intervention tends to be reduced either to manipulation of elements predetermined by the imperatives of production, or to a kind of superficial masking which modern development however requires in order to facilitate marketing and the maintenance of social control.<sup>114</sup> This phenomenon in today’s architecture results in diametrically opposite forms of designing - one that embraces and stretches the limits of technology, and the one that uses the whims of façade “dressing” to mask the harsh realities of globalisation.

This is echoed by Hannah Arendt when she argues that today’s civilisation has increasingly become that of “means and ends”, whereby civilisation is concerned with

---

<sup>113</sup> See Frampton, K., “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance” in: Foster, H., *The Anti-Aesthetics: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Port Townsend, 1983, pp. 16 - 30 and Frampton, K., *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Thames and Hudson Ltd. , London, 1985, pp. 313 - 327.

<sup>114</sup> See Frampton, K., “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance” in: Foster, H., *The Anti-Aesthetics: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Port Townsend, 1983, pp. 17.

instrumental reason and culture, addressing specifics of expression.<sup>115</sup> Frampton relates Heidegger's two alternative conceptions of space, the Latin *spatium in extensione* and the Teutonic *Raum*, to two modes of experiencing the built form and the environment: the unobstructed clarity of the measured, rationalised opticality of formal representation versus the phenomenologically thick, bounded, material experiences of touch, hearing and smell.<sup>116</sup> This approach therefore, further points to the celebration of "localness" by suggesting a site-specific rootedness of architecture.

With regard to Frampton's second point, the modernisation of architecture and society and the emergence of the *avant-garde* are inseparable. Over the past century-and-a-half *avant-garde* culture has assumed different roles, at different times facilitating the process of modernisation and thereby acting, in part, as a progressive, liberative form, at times being virulently opposed to the positivism of bourgeois culture.<sup>117</sup> In 18<sup>th</sup> century neo-classicism, *avant-garde* architecture played a major symbolic role in the propagation of a universal civilisation, whilst in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it assumed a reactionary role towards neo-classicism and industrialisation. Through different architectural periods - Futurism, Purism, Neo-plasticism and Constructivism - the failures of *avant-garde* can be accounted for by its promotional attitude of a universal civilisation through its liberative nature.

Architects from different regions have responded to the philosophy of local appropriateness in varying ways with the works of architects like Jorn Utzon responding by a process of assimilation and reinterpretation, as evidenced by the Bagsvaerd Church, near Copenhagen (See Fig. 3.2).

The subtle and contrary allusions incorporated into this folded concrete shell roof have far greater consequence than the seeming perversity of reinterpreting an Oriental timber

---

<sup>115</sup> See essays by various theorists, especially one by Frampton, K., "The Status of Man and the Status of His Objects: A Reading of the Human Condition" in Hays, K., M. (Ed.), *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, The Trustees of Columbia University in the New York and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1998, pp. 359 – 377.

<sup>116</sup> See Frampton, K., "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance" in: Hays, K. M., (Ed.), *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, The Trustees of Columbia University in the New York and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1998, pp. 359.

form in Occidental concrete technology; for while the main vault over the nave suggests by its scale and top illumination the presence of a religious space, it does so in such a way as to preclude an either exclusively Occidental or Oriental reading of the form by which it is constituted.<sup>118</sup> In Western culture, the vault symbolises sacredness, and concrete was employed to increase the Church's physical capacity.

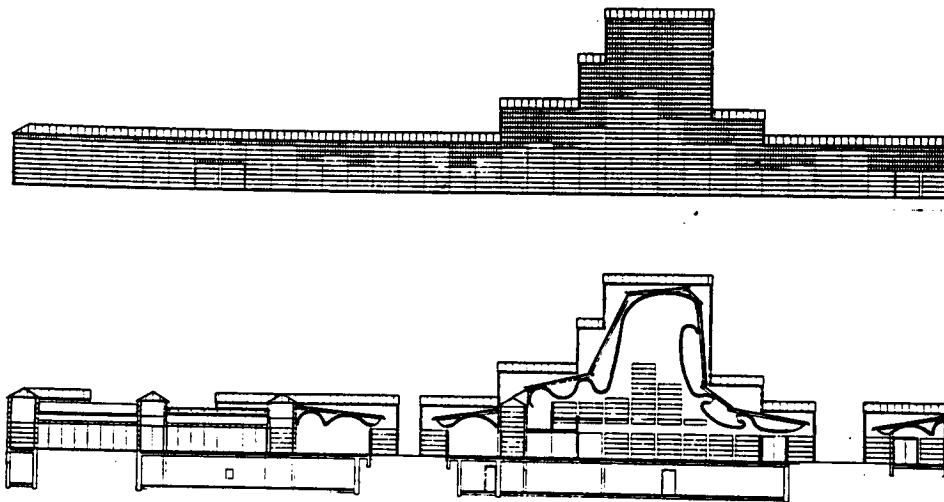


Fig. 3.1- Jorn Utzon's Bagsvaerd Church - North elevation and section (1973-76)  
(Source: Frampton, K., 1983, pp. 23.)

Critical regionalism was also achieved through addressing tectonic forms that were assumed to transform the earth's surface, thus creating a level of harmony with the particular landforms on which the building is sited. One architect whose work embodies these values is Luis Barragan, whose architecture has been influenced by his childhood memories from a family farm in Mexico. His architecture is earthbound and "compounded of enclosures, *stelae*, fountains and water courses; an architecture laid into volcanic rock and lush vegetation; an architecture that refers indirectly to the Mexican *estancia*".<sup>119</sup>

<sup>117</sup> See Frampton, K., "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance" in: Foster, H., *The Anti-Aesthetics: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Port Townsend, 1983, pp. 18.

<sup>118</sup> Frampton, K., *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1985, pp. 315.

<sup>119</sup> Frampton, K., *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1985, pp. 318.

In the 1970s and 80s, Critical Regionalism was buckling under the pressure to appeal to a wider public audience and risked reverting to the older forms of regionalism which were not only ethnocentric but also sentimental and scenographic. Due to some of these pressures critical regionalism struggled to effectively identify a *genius loci*, to establish 'placeness', and to sustain a sense of community in the highly hostile conditions of the contemporary no-man's-land that exists on the periphery of the post-industrial, post-urban landscape, conditions of a seemingly uncontrollable chaos of form, meaning, function and human ties.<sup>120</sup>

Whilst Frampton, Tzonis and Lefaivre celebrate "localness" by employing the physical aspects of architecture, Christian Norberg-Schulz introduces his concept from a psychic point of view. There are not different kinds of architecture, but only different situations, which require different solutions in order to satisfy man's physical and psychic needs.<sup>121</sup> Schulz's approach to the concept of identity is through linking psychic aspects of human beings' existential space through basic psychic functions of orientation and identification. This approach uses emotions as an instrument of defining human beings' identity and thus becomes a source of orientation in and towards the world at large.

Norberg-Schulz's approach to the concept of "localness" examines the relationship between man and his built environment. There are three fundamental ways through which human beings attempt to put into practice their understanding of nature, namely through:

- Visualising - an understanding of nature is expressed through the design and construction of buildings;
- Complementing - understanding nature by adding that which is lacking;
- Symbolising - translating an understanding of nature into another form or medium.

All these processes of understanding nature require local knowledge - and hence "localness". In general we may conclude that 'place' is the point of departure as well as

---

<sup>120</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1992, pp. 19.

<sup>121</sup> Norberg-Schulz, C., *The Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, Academy Editions, London, 1980, pp. 5.

the goal of our structural investigation; at the outset 'place' is presented as a given, spontaneously experienced totality, at the end it appears as a structured world, illuminated by the analysis of the aspects of space and character.<sup>122</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The present chapter has set out to trace the historical developments of the concept of identity in social theories and how this was reflected in architectural thinking. It was discovered that the developmental path of the concept of identity, from the fixed via the fairly flexible and changeable to the fluid in social theories, can be analysed in a parallel manner in architectural thinking by means of an analysis of the history of cultural connectivity.

The discussion began by considering architectural theories that highlighted "fixed" identity - as exemplified by the works of the Modern Movement whose approach used only rationality or formality as a basis for their design paradigms. Thereafter we looked at post-modernist theories, which introduced divergent and playful forms, and brought about a degree of flexibility or changeability in the definition of identity. These theories enabled practitioners in third world environments (an area which this thesis focuses on) to search for local solutions to suit their cultural and ecological settings. With regard to the two approaches that were discussed, one was inspired by local vernacular traditions, whereas the other synthesised modernism and local vernacular traditions. These latter developments exemplified more fluid definitions of identity.

Vernacular traditions provided architects and planners in third world environments with an alternative source through which to develop locally appropriate forms. This laid a foundation with respect to place-centred identity construction, which was explored by Critical Regionalism theories. These theories created even higher levels of fluidity, as they looked beyond just culture as a response to the question of local identity. They

---

<sup>122</sup> For more, see "Preface" of Norberg-Schulz, C., *The Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*.

proposed an attempt to define local identity without becoming embroiled in the vernacular.

In summary, then, this chapter set out to investigate and analyse social developments with regard to the concept of identity as reflected in architectural theory and practice, together with the corresponding symbolism issues in built environments. Developments on the question of identity in social theories, as we have seen, are reflected in architectural theory and practice in four major approaches:

- the revival of historical forms by so-called neo-conservative post-modernists;
- the search for appropriate ways to theorise regional responsiveness by radical post-modernists (Critical Regionalism and the debates surrounding it);
- the understanding of cultural issues in design brought to the table by vernacular specialists; and
- the response of third world architects to decolonisation.

The first two were dealt with in this chapter and the last two will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter (Chapter 4), which looks at various architectural examples pertaining to the theoretical discussion in this chapter.

The main critics of what the researcher calls vernacular-based cultural connectivity were Kenneth Frampton and a couple of Greek architects such as Pikionis, Lefaivre and Tzonis (who advocated what is called Critical Regionalism), some of whose works will be discussed in the next chapter (Chapter 4). A broader perspective in terms of Regionalism that considers identity created by public architecture will follow the discussion on Critical Regionalism in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 4.0**

### **RECENT ARCHITECTURAL APPROACHES TO “LOCALNESS” AND REGIONAL ISSUES**

## INTRODUCTION

A discussion of the concept of identity in social theories and how these were reflected in architectural thinking was provided in the previous chapter (Chapter 3). It was revealed that the approach to the question of identity through cultural connectivity was criticised by some theorists like Kenneth Frampton, as they argued that it tended to abuse “culture” as a resource for defining identity with respect to built environments.

The current Chapter is a practical application of the theoretical developments that were discussed in the last chapter, beginning with modernism and its associated fixed concept of identity. The first section of the chapter looks at various examples on the Indian sub-continent as practices by some renowned Western architects. Thereafter the chapter traces certain developments in architectural practice that can be regarded as a search for locally appropriate forms. It begins by looking at the revival of historical forms by so-called neo-conservative post-modernists, which gave rise to cultural issues in design. The chapter then looks at three other developments in architectural practice that reflected the fluid concept of identity as defined in social sciences; these are:

- the understanding of cultural issues in design as highlighted by vernacular specialists;
- the response of third world architects to decolonisation;
- the search for appropriate ways to theorise regional responsiveness by radical post-modernists (i.e. Critical Regionalism and the debates surrounding it).

The researcher argues that the question of whether or not architects engaged with local culture was more critical in third world countries, since the official architectural language employed in these environments was predominantly Western and therefore to a large extent displayed Western culture and identity. It took a while for the designers of these Western-derived styles to come to terms with the actual environments in third world countries in terms of incorporating local culture and hence, aspects of identity. The resulting spectrum of degrees of cultural connectivity and hence, historical developments of the concept of identity, and their trajectory in architectural practice is evidenced by architectural developments in third world countries like those of the Indian sub-continent.

In this respect, the Indian sub-continent, in particular, witnessed an intervention by distinguished Western individuals such as Edwin Lutyens, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn, which laid a foundation for later architectural developments.

Cultural connectivity in some third world countries, like those in the Indian sub-continent, became an important issue at the height of colonialism. It was characterised by the incorporation of some traditional Indian architecture into the design of various buildings in the New Delhi capitol, reluctantly introduced by Edwin Lutyens in his Viceroy's House.<sup>123</sup> This marked the beginning of cultural connectivity in architectural practice in the sub-continent that was to be furthered by Le Corbusier and Kahn in the design of Chandigarh and the Capital Complex of Dhaka in Bangladesh, respectively. These developments in cultural connectivity introduced a degree of flexibility that was to be tackled by local third world architects with an even greater degree of cultural connectivity through the use of workable solutions in terms of climatic and cultural appropriateness based on vernacular traditions.

To develop the argument further, the author will try to discover how the increased degree of cultural connectivity affected symbolism and the concept of identity in certain third world environments. Having considered developments of the concept of identity in the Western world, as exemplified by Le Corbusier's early modernist works, how did Western architects approach the subject of cultural connectivity in third world environments, given their very different cultural setting? With the rise of new states from the post-colonial era, how did local architects too address issues of cultural connectivity and hence the question of identity? The historical trajectory of the concept of identity in third world environments can be traced in connection with attempts to create a dialogue with local traditions or vernacular architecture. This development was executed in three ways with increased criticality in importance of local content:

- Tentative attempts at incorporating local traditional forms by modernist and Western individuals. This is best exemplified by the works of Lutyens, Le Corbusier and Kahn on the Indian sub-continent;

---

<sup>123</sup>

See details in the next sub-section.

- Analysis and articulation of local architectural traditions as part of a wider social and architectural post-colonial response to de-colonisation. Some of the most prominent contributors to this developmental path of the concept of identity in third world countries are Raj Rewal, Charles Correa and Balkrishna Doshi on the Indian sub-continent. For example, Charles Correa developed the “open-to-sky” concept, and his “tube-house” prototypes were influenced by the Indian climatic and cultural conditions, as in his Parek House, in Ahmedabad (1968) (see Fig 4.19 and 4.20). This approach to the concept of identity was also carried out through developing hybrid architectural models that were a product of an equally informed dialogue with modernism. Relevant contributors to this historical developmental path of the concept of identity are Geoffrey Bawa of Sri Lanka and Luis Barragan, although the built few, albeit mainly expensive houses for wealthy clients. Geoffrey Bawa’s Sri Lankan parliamentary complex which employed local material and deep eaves drawn from local vernacular traditions is one such example and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
- The last category dealt with undiluted vernacular architectural models as a tool of decolonisation, and this is exemplified by Hassan Fathy’s work in Egypt.

## MODERNISM AND IDENTITY IN THE THIRD WORLD

Beginning with the transformed styles of Western traditions, exemplified by the then current Western high style building of colonial architecture, some architects, both Western and local, in the third world grappled with the challenges of creating “culturally” appropriate environments through incorporation of local vernacular elements with regional spatial qualities and forms.<sup>124</sup> Architectural developments on the Indian sub-continent typify a developmental path followed by the concept of identity in third world environments that the author of this thesis finds particularly intriguing considering the nature of architectural projects in the region and their attitude towards issues of *genius*

---

<sup>124</sup> Abel, C., *Architecture and Identity: Towards a global eco-culture*, Architectural Press - an imprint of Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 1997, pp. 153.

*loci* and cultural connectivity.

On the Indian sub-continent, the internationalisation of modernism sparked a debate in terms of the degree of incorporation of local vernacular content into the built environments particularly with respect to public architecture e.g. Lutyens' New Delhi, commissioned in 1912 and only realised in its final form in 1931.

The master plan for New Delhi was a combination of grid and hexagonal planning that was super-imposed on a landscape north of Old Delhi (Fig 4.1). Compared to Old Delhi, New Delhi was rigidly designed and defied the landscape features and its cultural setting. In designing this urban project, Lutyens' master plan entailed the demolition of local monuments that he thought were of lesser importance and anything else that seemed to interfere with it. Existing monuments that did not conform to Lutyens' predominantly hexagonal order were pronounced to be awkwardly situated, thereby considered to be "spoiling avenues and building sites".<sup>125</sup>

The street plan of New Delhi has a system of grand diagonal avenues and road-points delineating giant hexagons interlocked with the grid pattern, thus showing no consideration of the proposed city's cultural or geographical setting. It was this reluctance to accommodate the structural qualities of the landscape and initiate a dialogue with local vernacular traditions that prompted some critics to label Lutyens' design as severely rigid.<sup>126</sup>

This rigidity was carried over to the design of The Viceroy, that was part of the Delhi Parliamentary complex<sup>127</sup>, although the final product was in fact a compromise between Western and local traditional forms, for example by its adoption of the flat Indian dome. His early sketches for this building complex further confirmed Lutyens' belief in the

---

<sup>125</sup> Irving, R. G., *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1981, pp. 80.

<sup>126</sup> Irving, R. G., *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1981, pp. 81.

<sup>127</sup> Baker, who designed the then equally symbolically significant South African Union Buildings in Pretoria, was assigned to design the Secretariats. The relationship between the Secretariats and the Viceroy House on the Raisina Hill was a bone of contention between the two architects involved in the scheme.

superiority of Western architecture over local forms. He felt that India had no real architecture and considered Indian buildings to be tents and stones and nothing more. Hence his reluctance to engage with local traditions, resulting in a weak cultural connectivity and consequently, a relatively rigid concept of identity at this stage.

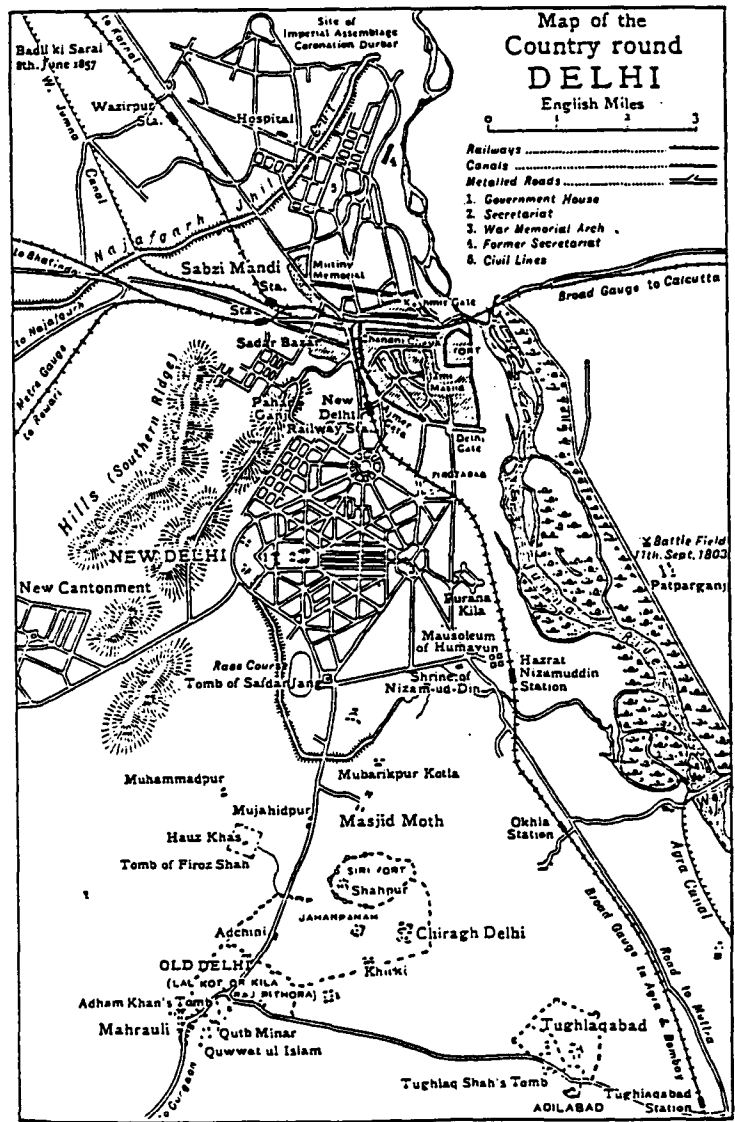


Fig. 4.1- The Delhi, showing ancient and modern empires  
(Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 89.)

With pressure from politicians who were eager to maintain political diplomacy with India, Lutyens achieved a high level of abstract precision and balance that he had never

attained before, and which he was only to equal again in his memorial to the fallen of the First World War - the cenotaph in London.<sup>128</sup> Some early designs of the Viceroy's House showed Lutyens' attempt at marrying Western and Indian forms of architecture, by designing High Renaissance dome and Palladian windows that looked less ecclesiastical and more in sympathy with the domes of India, thus implicitly declaring a respect for the Raj (Fig. 4.2.)

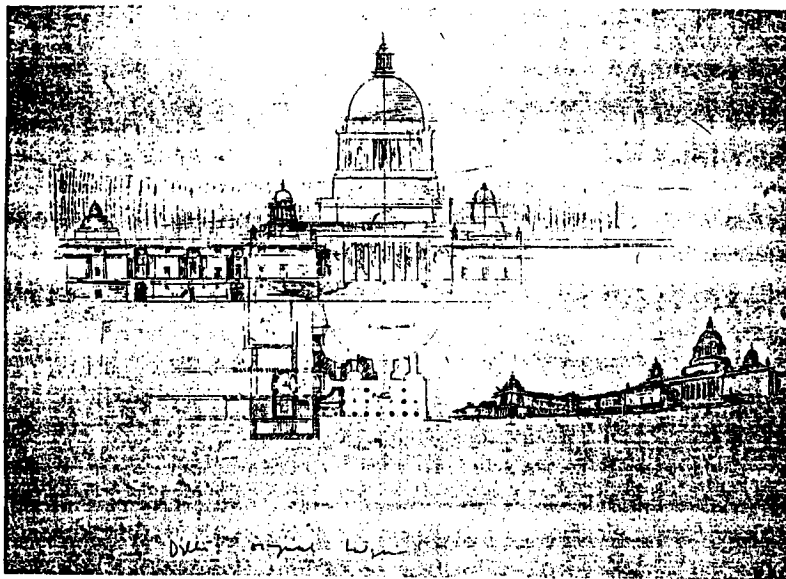


Fig. 4.2- Preliminary design for the Viceroy's House, New Delhi, India showing Indian-derived domes.  
(Source: Richardson, M., 1994, pp. 60)

The dome itself was the centrepiece of the project; it rose approximately fifty metres above the forecourt, precisely at the centre of rectangular space bounded by the angles of the four wings and athwart the space's principal diagonals. The imposing dome base, which is more than three times the hemisphere's height, sits on circular drums and ponderous square plinths, designed to give an impression of Pharaonic Egypt which was meant to symbolise the authority and permanence of colonial power.

From the early stages of the design Lutyens had believed in an ordered, monumental

<sup>128</sup> See Frampton, K., *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1985, pp. 211 - 212 and Irving, R. G., *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*, Yale University Press, New Haven and

architecture for New Delhi based on the logic/rationale of classical tradition, even though both the King and the Viceroy favoured the Indian style.<sup>129</sup> In the end the Viceroy was convinced by what he saw as a compromise in Lutyens' sketches of late 1912, which suggested a synthesis aspired to by British policy in India, showing an exploration of Indian motifs (see Fig. 4.3).

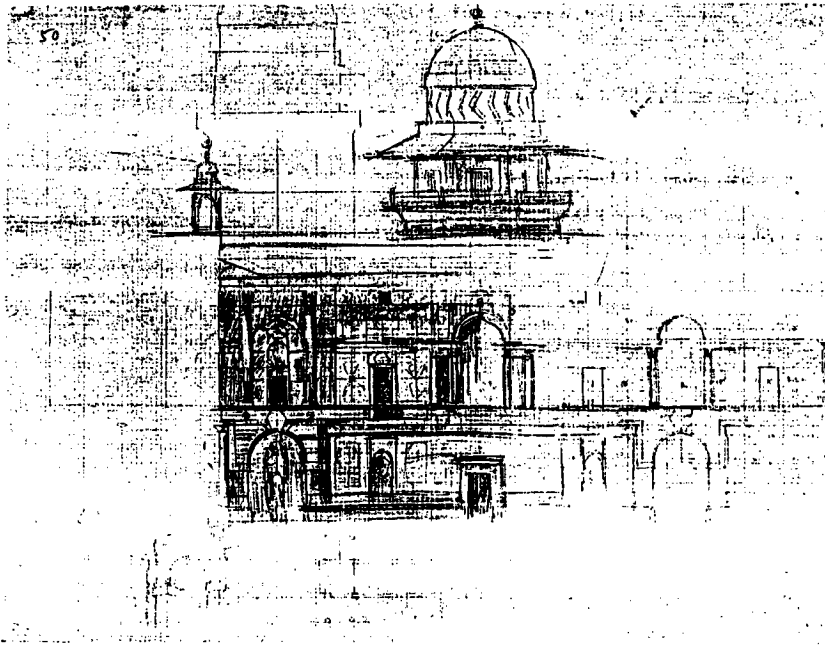


Fig. 4.3 - Exploration of Lutyens' Indian motifs. Shown are the chattri, a small Indian roof pavilion, and the chujja, the projecting stone cornice and the pointed arch to the Palladian window.

(Source: Richardson, M., 1994, pp. 61.)

In the final scheme the Palladian windows and High Renaissance dome were removed in favour of the lower Indian dome and roof fountains. Also of symbolic importance is the bell-shaped fruit of the sacred lotus representing the womb of the universe to the Hindus and whose symbolism was recognised by Lutyens in the Viceroy (Fig. 4.4), and which is widely employed in Mughal architectural ornaments. As a symbol of vibration, the cosmic creative force, the bell played a part in early Buddhist ceremonial and has an integral role in Hindu worship to this day.<sup>130</sup>

---

London, 1981.

<sup>129</sup> Richardson, M., *Sketches by Edwin Lutyens*, Academy Editions, London, 1994, pp. 61.

What is more striking in the final design of Viceroy House was the detailing that was done in and around it, for example the Viceroy's Court, which was a symbolic extension of the palace designed by Lutyens. The red sandstone retaining wall that emerged from the basement level of the building bounded the British complex with a local hill focusing on the Jaipur Column in an all-embracing manner, thus serving both as a unifying element and as a symbol of imperial domination (Fig 4.5).



Fig. 4.4- The Viceroy House: An inversion of downward taper of drop ornaments in angel bells common in Mughal architecture.  
(Source: Irving, R. G., 1981, pp. 188.)

The work of both Lutyens and Baker, the two architects involved in the New Delhi project, initiated a debate as to the appropriateness of forms adopted for the Indian landscape. Although the design of the New Delhi project attempted to incorporate several Indian motifs and elements drawn from a few of the oldest Buddhist monuments, some distinguished Indians architectural theorists and practitioners feel Lutyens was an unsympathetic observer of Indian culture. They consider his Delhi scheme to be a grandiose colonial piece with only very superficial reference to the local culture.

---

<sup>130</sup> Irving, R. G., *Indian Summer: Lutyens, Baker, and Imperial Delhi*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1981, pp. 183.

However, Lutyens' minimal consideration of local culture initiated a debate that was to be taken on board by Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn who also had to design capitals and capitols in the region under somehow similar cultural conditions years later. Vale<sup>131</sup> clarifies this by pointing out that what mattered at that point was not the specific form of indigenous references, but the fact that local architectural traditions were considered at all. This marked the rudimental elements of the development of cultural connectivity in third world environments.



Fig. 4.5- The Viceroy's Court showing the Jaipur Column  
(Source: Irving, R. G., 1981, pp. 246.)

Whilst Lutyens' project was designed to assert imperial superiority, Le Corbusier's Chandigarh was designed to mark the rise of a great nation by putting India on the global map as a leader in moral regeneration. Chandigarh was conceived / built at the time when India was partitioned, during which Punjab was divided with the Capital City Lahore on the Pakistan side. Being built after India's independence, Chandigarh was an expression of the Indian dream of realising self-determination, at a time when Ghandi's emphasis on rural development was being replaced with a greater focus on cities. This dream was

<sup>131</sup> Vale, Lawrence, *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, London, 1992, pp. 94.

aspired to by the then Indian Prime Minister, Nehru, who proclaimed: “Let this be a new town, symbolic of the freedom of India, unfettered by the traditions of the past. An expression of the nation’s faith in the future”.<sup>132</sup> These remarks from a very influential political figure impacted heavily on the planning of Chandigarh and its symbolism, specifically with respect to local cultural, climatic and site contextual qualities.

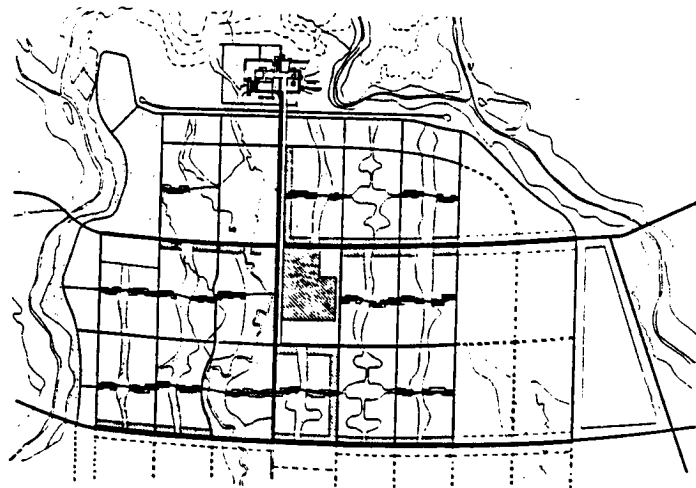


Fig. 4.6- Chandigarh town plan (1951) showing the grid pattern  
(Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 190.)

A significant number of possible sites were chosen for the city’s location, with the final one being located between two river valleys, just off the main Delhi to Simla line, a safe distance from Pakistan and at a point where the huge plains began to fold into the foothills of the Himalayas.<sup>133</sup> In Hindu “Chandi” means “the goddess of power” and this suited the symbolic significance of the City and its auspicious setting. In Le Corbusier’s scheme, which was an amendment and improvement of Mayer’s, was a symbolical representation of the head, body, arms, spine and stomach of the nation, which was accentuated by main routes crossing in the centre of a Cartesian proportional grid formation (see Fig. 4.6).

<sup>132</sup> Evenson, N., *Le Corbusier: The Machine and the Grand Design*, Studio Vista, London, 1971, pp. 98.

<sup>133</sup> Curtis, W. J. R., *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*, Rizzoli International Publication Inc., New York, 1986, pp. 188.

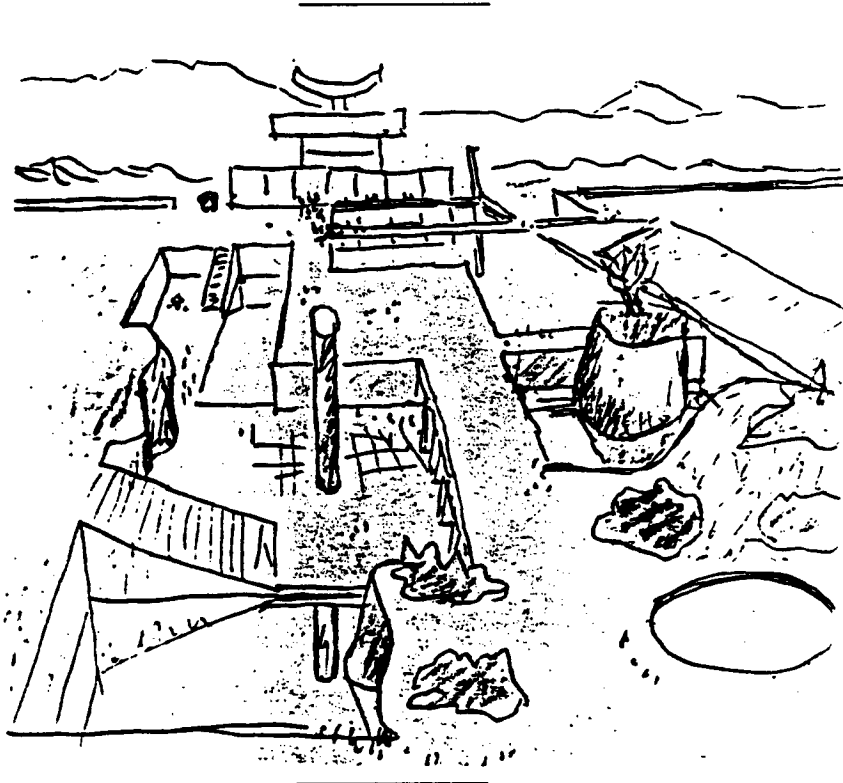


Fig. 4.7- A sketch of the Governor's Palace showing elements of traditional Indian beliefs and social setting. The parasol was incorporated into the design. In the sketches, symbolism issues were addressed through tilted roof forms and their link to the bull's horns.  
 (Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 193.)

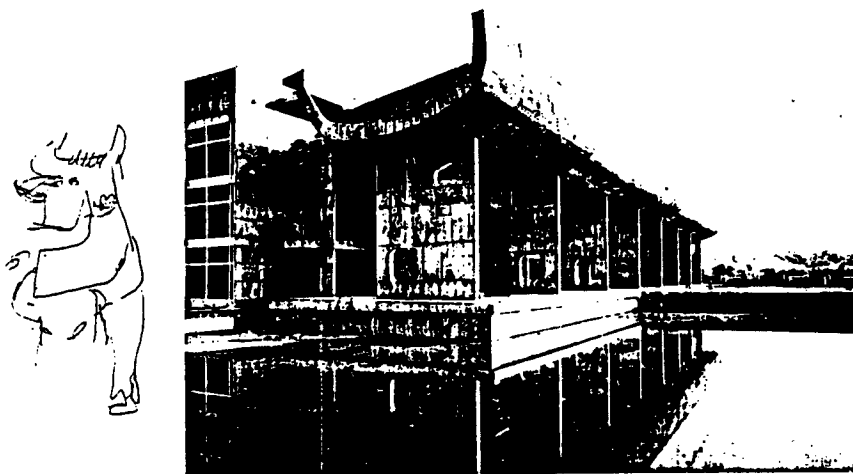


Fig. 4.8- The Legislative Assembly in Chandigarh showing a tilted roof form resembling a bull's horns and a sketch showing the source of inspiration.  
 (Source: Evenson, N., 1971, and Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 193)

<sup>133</sup> Curtis, W. J. R., *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*, Rizzoli International Publication Inc., New York, 1986. pp. 188.

Le Corbusier's design followed the prescription of his ideas of a "city": separate zoning of living, working, circulation and leisure areas; the fusion of country and city through the planting and provision of trees and parks; rigid geometrical control and delight in grand vistas and processional axes; a sense of openness rather than of enclosure; and lastly, a lingering hope that urban order might bring social regeneration in its wake.<sup>134</sup> Chandigarh, as designed by Le Corbusier, reflected his reassessment of his philosophical direction away from modernism. Despite his sweeping absolutist urban planning philosophy, as exemplified by the Plan Voisin of Paris, Le Corbusier modified his abstract propositions considerably to deal with local conditions in relation to site, climate, culture and tradition. Curtis points out that Le Corbusier's studies and his admiration of the Raj's New Delhi and Lutyens' Viceroy's House enabled him to produce a synthesis of Grand Classical and Indian traditions with a statement of modern aspirations.<sup>135</sup>

Even after making considerable efforts in responding to the desires of the Indian Prime Minister Nehru, Le Corbusier's Chandigarh epitomised the internationalisation of modernism by locating Euro-centric urban design conceptions in culturally different environments. In Le Corbusier's case, this design approach resulted in the capital lacking not only spatial variety and visual interest, but also the functional viability of a traditional Indian town. Some critics argue that Indian vernacular buildings, employing narrow streets and a relatively dense pattern of inward-oriented courtyard houses, represent a far more sophisticated method of coming to terms with a tropical climate, a predominantly pedestrian environment, and a need for privacy, than is evidenced in the misplaced Garden City ambience of Chandigarh.<sup>136</sup>

Le Corbusier's relative sensitivity to Indian cultural setting and tradition was reflected in his use of symbols in his architecture, which were to an extent connected to local traditions. These are the bull and its horns, the protective or overhanging roof (parasol), the "Open Hand" and the wheel. The use of these forms, which could be related to

---

<sup>134</sup> Curtis, W. J. R., *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*, Rizzoli International Publication Inc., New York, 1986, pp.

190.

<sup>135</sup> Curtis, W. J. R., *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*, Rizzoli International Publication Inc., New York, 1986, pp.

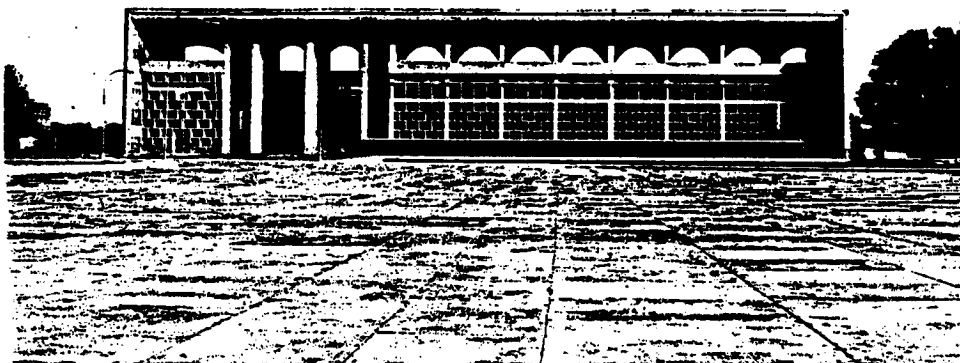
190.

<sup>136</sup> Evenson, N., *Le Corbusier: The Machine and the Grand Design*, Studio Vista, London. 1971, pp. 105.

vernacular traditions, is considered to be more culturally sensitive than the Lutyens' designs, and hence display an increased flexibility in the definition of the concept of identity in architectural practice with respect to the Indian sub-continent.

Firstly, the bull is connected to Hindu iconography. In his sketches Le Corbusier made a comparison between tilted roof structures and the bull's horns. Le Corbusier used the symbolism of horns in another part of the Governor's Palace as part of a proposed sculpture that featured a combination of the bull's horns with an aeroplane's propeller to signify his proposed future of India in relationship to Western culture (Fig. 4.7).

Another structure which used the bull's horns was the Legislative Assembly (see Fig. 4.8). The roof form with its deep eaves, was in this case also used as part of a shading system/ to provide shade? It is clear from his designs that Le Corbusier believed that India's future laid in a fusion of traditional rural and modern values.



---

Fig. 4.9- The High Court, showing the raised roof as part of dealing with ventilation.  
(Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 195.)

Secondly, the protective or overhanging roof (parasol) is an ancient symbol of state authority, also found on top of Buddhist stupas and in much later Islamic monuments in domical and arched form. In the Governor's Palace domical variants of the parasol were

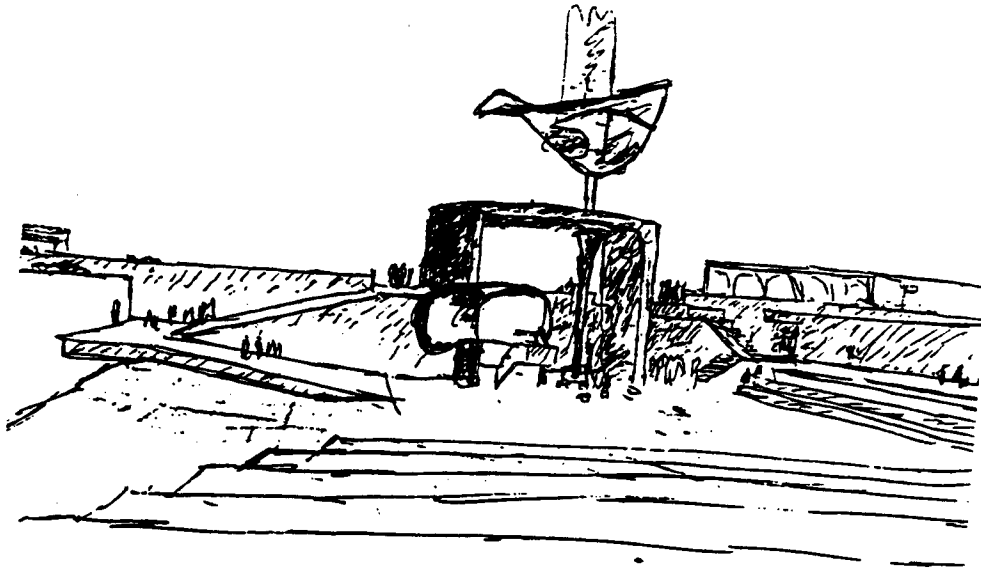


Fig. 4.10- The Open Hand sketch and its application in the design.  
(Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 200.)



Fig 4.11: Jantar Mantar- in Delhi  
(Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 196.)

lifted at the four corners by the use of slender supports through which the sky could be seen; this moreover improved ventilation. Variants of the sheltering roof were used in various buildings, including the High Court, which was conceived as a huge open-sided box under a giant roof, standing on a grand order of concrete piers (Fig. 4.9).

Thirdly, the “Open Hand” was used by Le Corbusier to symbolise international peace, transcending politics, caste, religion, and race. This was the symbol that he had hoped to erect at the Governor’s Palace, where the two could be silhouetted against the sky and the mountains beyond (see Fig. 4.10) - but it was never constructed because it was considered undemocratic by Nehru.



Fig. 4.12- The Parliament Building roofscape based on a local early 18th century building  
(Source: Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 196.)

Lastly, the wheel, just like the parasol, is an ancient image of complex religious and political meaning touching on cosmic and solar themes; it is also a modern Indian Nationalist symbol. This was used to bring light into the Assembly Building by breaking through the roof of the room to form a tower. The tower echoed the Greek Pantheon - a microcosm linked through its oculars to the planetary order - but the idea (or symbolism)

of a ray of light bringing its renewing power to the darkness and touching a shaft of stone is also found in Hindu temples.<sup>137</sup> The tilted tower of the Assembly Building might have been inspired by the abstract constructions of Jantar Mantar in Dehli, a building which was constructed in the early eighteenth century (see Fig. 4.11 and 4.12).

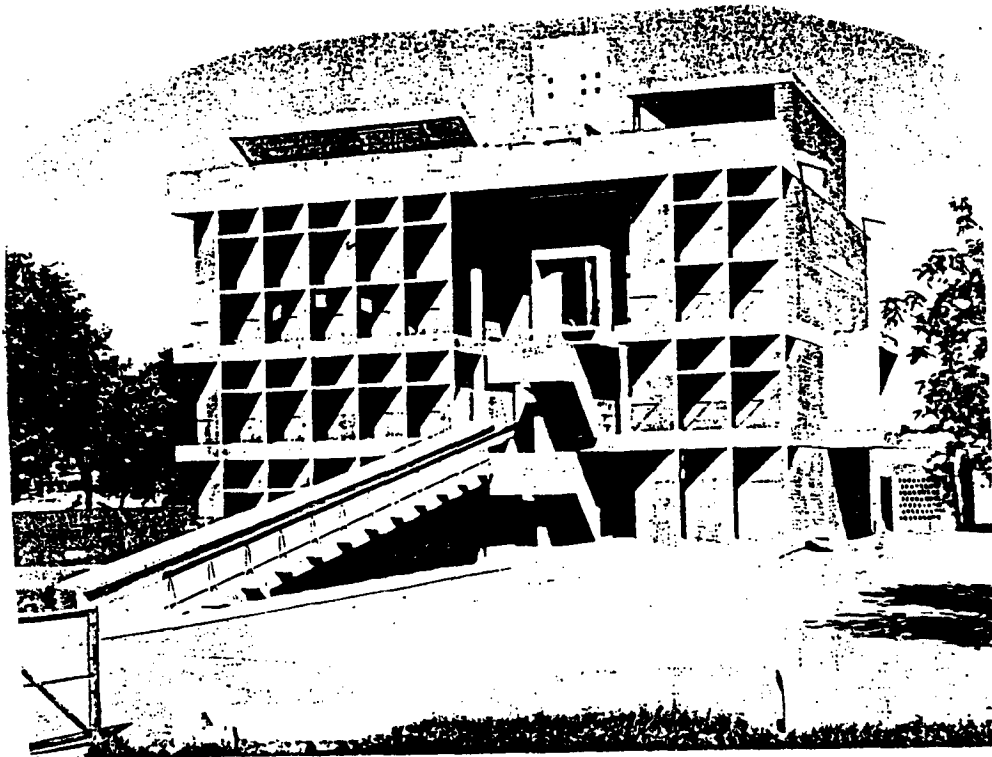


Fig. 4.13- Millowners' Association Building, showing application of brises-soleil on a large scale. (Source Curtis, W. J. R., 1986, pp. 207.)

Le Corbusier's attempts to incorporate local traditions and cultural situations were also complemented by the way he dealt with local climate by using roof overhangs, parasols and sun-shading fins, the brise-soleil. The brise-soleil was employed in the Secretariat building and other projects in the region, most notably the Millowners Association Building (Fig. 4.13). In the Secretariat Building itself the air movement was encouraged by fans, as air-conditioning proved to be very expensive. Although Le Corbusier attempted to adjust his designs for Indian climatic conditions, his solutions were not

<sup>137</sup> Curtis, W. J. R., *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*, Rizzoli International Publication Inc., New York, 1986, pp.

effective enough, as a comparison with projects by local architects like Charles Correa, Balkrishna Doshi and Raj Rewal will show.

For now we will briefly look at one of the projects in the region that was carried out by Louis Kahn. This was a particularly influential project, as it acknowledged local traditions, thereby increasing the sense of cultural connectivity, and as it looked at a broader range of resources through which identity could be constructed in local terms.

Like Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn's projects on the Indian sub-continent had far reaching influences on future architecture. His architecture influenced - directly and indirectly - the thinking of architects in the region and it provoked deeply emotional responses. The most important of Louis Kahn's work was the Capital Complex in Dhaka. This particular project and that of Le Corbusier's Chandigarh are architectural landmarks that combined to influence the architectural destiny of the Indian sub-continent, particularly with respect to cultural connectivity and the concept of identity.

The significance of the Capital Complex has become inextricably linked with the national and political struggle of the Bengalis, not through political and ideological symbolism but by the intensity of Bengali sphere of influence. How much Kahn in the final analysis participated in this process is open to question. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that his understanding of architecture was expressed most powerfully and meaningfully in the Capital Complex of Dhaka. It was, in particular, the idea of the Parliamentary assembly as an institution arising out of the fundamental desires of man, and consequently meeting as the origin of the city which was emphasised in the Dhaka complex. It ultimately created an unforeseen empathy between Kahn's ensemble and the Bengali collectiveness.<sup>138</sup>

In both Le Corbusier's work and in Kahn's, there is a sense of tension that is created by the attempted marriage between modern technology and vernacular forms, and which

---

196.

<sup>138</sup> Futagawa, Y., "Louis I. Kahn: National Capital of Bangladesh", *Global Architecture*, A. D. A. Edita, Tokyo, 1984, pp. 2.

creates a dilemma, in that it is unclear whether it is a celebration or a deconstruction of modernism. Architects in third world countries, through attempts to find a local architectural voice, pursued an increased cultural connectivity in architectural practice by employing local vernacular traditions with their architectural spatial qualities, forms and materials in their design and planning patterns. Unlike the Westerners Le Corbusier and Kahn, local architects of later generations on the Indian sub-continent and in other similar environments engaged far more intensively with vernacular traditions, in some instances combining them with modernism and thus introducing fluidity into the concept of identity. This meant that architects had at their disposal a complex resource base, which endowed these environments with a particular place identity.

To summarise briefly, up to this point this section has looked at fixed models of identity, and to some extent, at the beginnings of changeable concepts of identity. As has been shown, Lutyens' approach was more on the fixed end of the spectrum, with Le Corbusier and Khan's projects being more flexible.

The advent of postmodernism was heralded as a return to populism, one that recognised cultural and environmental performance and the quality of built environments after the excesses of the International Style. Social postmodernist theories<sup>139</sup> defined identity in terms of a de-centred subject, implying that an individual is fragmented into a variety of selves and therefore its identity was considered not to be fixed, essential or permanent. This meant that identity was socially constructed from a complex combination of resources. This definition of identity in social theories impacted on architectural thinking and practice heavily, because it freed up designers to employ a complex combination of variable resources such as culture, material, climate, geographic etc. in the process of designing and creating built environments. This development, in turn, gave local architects in third world environments an opportunity to search for a truly local voice in architecture. These developments, then, marked the upper end of flexibility in the creation of identity and the beginnings of fluidity and flexibility in architectural thinking and practice.

## FINDING THE LOCAL VOICE

Given an architectural practice climate that allowed and even encouraged the use of diverse resources and the corresponding degree of flexibility in identity conceptions as practised in the Western World, how exactly did post-modernism address the question of identity in third world environments? The postmodernist use of divergent and playful forms, marking a break from the formal approach of modernism, was a trend-setting development that saw architectural practitioners in the third world drawing inspiration from their vernacular architectural traditions. Some of these architects took up this challenge through seeking local content in terms of appropriate climatic responses, cultural appropriateness, technological expertise and the use of local materials in accordance with local economic conditions.

Hassan Fathy of Egypt, for example, turned to vernacular architecture for material and aesthetic enrichment of local architecture. In a period when modernism rejected traditional and historical models and was rapidly internationalising, Hassan Fathy attempted to maintain or synthesise tradition and technology in his works and thus attempted to revive some of Egypt's vernacular architectural traditions and construction techniques by using local materials and craftsmanship. In his approach he was not opposed to innovation, but he did feel that technology should be subservient and appropriate to social and cultural values. His book *Architecture for the poor* (1973) was a call for an integration of nature and industry and was a precursor to the ideals of sustainability. He suggested that it was necessary to find a solution to the hitherto insoluble problem of the clash between the products of industry, the demands of nature and of society and the usefulness of subjecting technology to the economy and materials of a particular region.<sup>140</sup> In this respect he was proposing a subordination of technology to the spirituality and philosophy of local traditions, specifically for third world countries.

---

<sup>140</sup> Steel, J., *An Architecture for People: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, pp. 12.

In his argument in favour of the preservation of traditional values and environments, he maintained that once a particular tradition was established and accepted, the individual artist's duty was to keep this tradition alive. Not only that, but he should give the tradition an additional momentum by his own invention and insight in order to prevent it from coming to a standstill.<sup>141</sup> Fathy's career was guided by six general principles:

- The primacy of human values in architecture;
- The importance of a universal rather than a limited approach;
- The use of appropriate technology;
- The need for socially oriented, co-operative construction techniques;
- The essential role of tradition; and
- The re-establishment of national cultural pride through the act of building.<sup>142</sup>

The first of Fathy's guiding principles was a pointer to today's increasing concerns about the wanton destruction of the environment and cultures found in them. This principle was first evident in his project in New Gournah, rural Egypt.<sup>143</sup> In his projects, he employed enclosed courtyards and domed and vaulted roofs that were drawn from local traditions, and he used local materials (mud bricks) and encouraged the use of ancient crafts that included lattice mud-work. Fathy talked of the death of indigenous styles of architecture in Egypt, and inspired him to look for those forms on the Egyptian landscape to see if these could be preserved and used in the provision of housing, particularly for poor rural populations. Fathy developed some interesting Egyptian traditional spaces like the courtyard and the *qa'a*, the main reception room of a house. These were also used in conjunction with mainly traditional materials.

As in Egypt, an even intense debate on the development of locally appropriate built environments took place on the Indian sub-continent, and references to vernacular

---

<sup>141</sup> Steel, J., *An Architecture for People: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, pp. 12.

<sup>142</sup> See Steel, J., *An Architecture for People: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997, pp. 16.

<sup>143</sup> There are two main sources of his work: Fathy, H., *Architecture For The Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1973 and Steel, J., *An Architecture for People: The Complete Works of Hassan Fathy*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1997.



Plate 4.1- Dealing with local climate: Shells showing snouts with apertures to capture air and light.  
(Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 135)

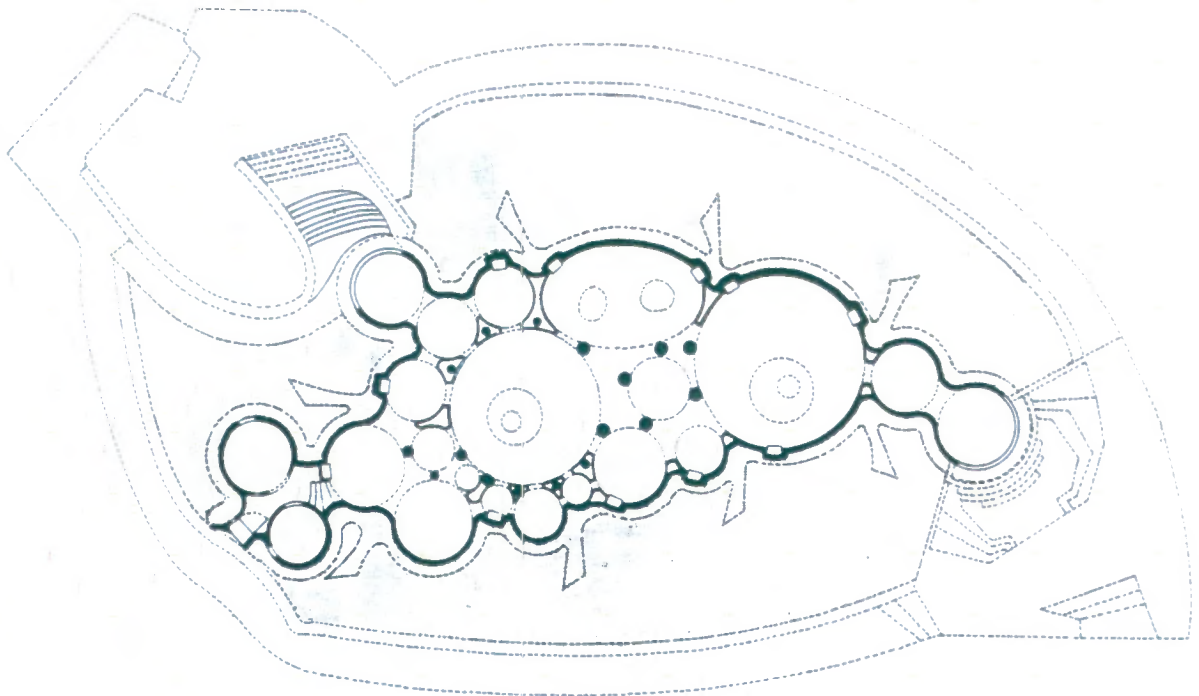


Fig. 4.14- Site plan. Entrances are approached by steps (upper and lower right of the plan). The underground vaults are supported by pillars.  
(Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 137)

architectural traditions can be traced back to Le Corbusier and other European individuals who contributed immensely in terms of designing influential buildings in the region. Being a third world environment, the Indian sub-continent provides an appropriate place from which to select various architectural works that have been carried out by notable architects, especially those that attempted to develop culturally appropriate forms sensitive to local cultural settings. The Indian architects, Doshi and Correa fall into this category, and the work of Kahn and Le Corbusier provided a starting framework.

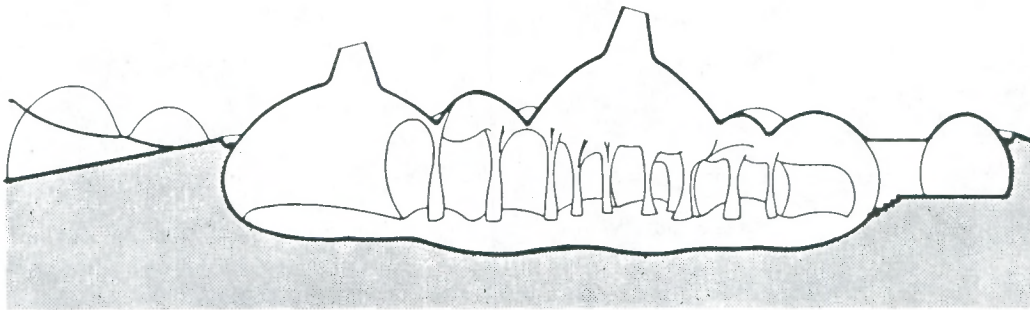


Fig. 4.15- A section showing a maze of pillars inside the cave-like spaces.  
(Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 140)

Doshi's architecture can be divided into three distinct chronological phases: In the 1960's and early 1970's, his work was influenced by Modernism. Thereafter, until the 1980's, his work evidences a search for indigenous Indian models. Lastly, in his current phase, his work has evolved into almost primal, mystic studies related to early Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic models and completely excludes Western influences.<sup>144</sup>

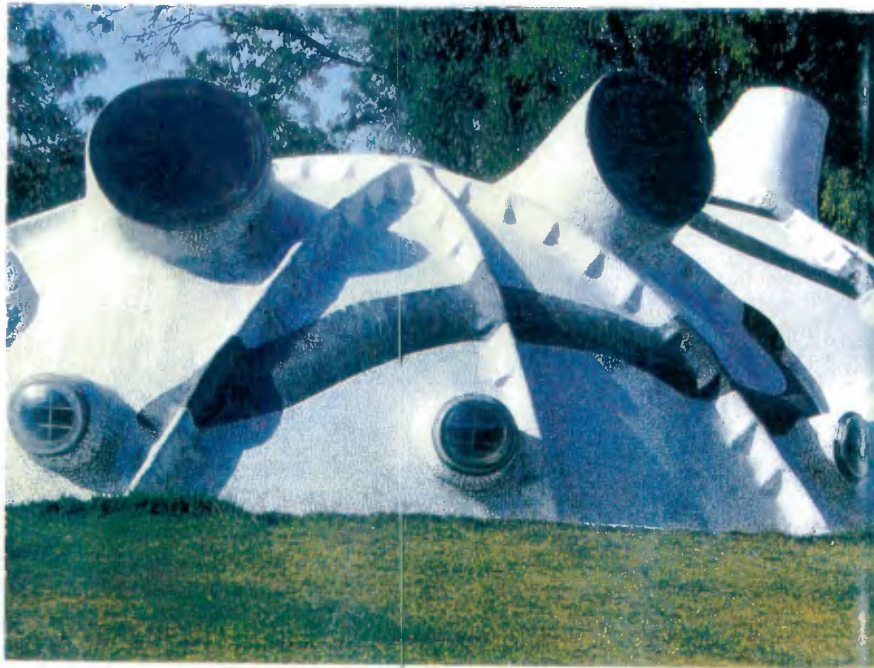


Plate 4.2- Shells showing some of the snouts with apertures to capture light and fresh air.  
(Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 134)

Rather than presenting the neat, tripartite evolution from Corbusian rationalism toward proto-Gandhian mysticism, as some would characterise his increasingly complex *oeuvre*, Doshi's work has consistently revolved around:

- notions of the interrelationship of indoor and outdoor space;
- an appropriate and honest approach to materials;
- proper responses to climate and landscape; and,
- observance of hierarchy and order that have always been present in the best modern architecture and conspicuously absent in poor imitations.<sup>145</sup>

In dealing with interrelationship between outdoor and indoor that deal with the expression of cosmic relationships, Doshi insists that aesthetics in design should also include local symbolism and its associated concepts.

<sup>144</sup> Steel, J., *The Complete Architecture of Balkrishna Doshi: Rethinking Modernism For The Developing World*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1998, pp. 7.

The cultural connectivity in Doshi's work is most effectively illustrated in his recent works - the Husain-Doshi Gufa (a combination of both residence and art gallery, see Figs. 4.14, 4.15 and Plates 4.1 - 4.3.) and the Bombay Diamond Bourse. Both highlight the rich story-telling traditions of India. The gallery, which is clearly expressionistic, relies on images of the primeval cave, *chaitra*, *stupa* and female breast, formative and nurturing symbols that contrast sharply with the earlier rectilinear buildings also designed by Doshi for the campus of the Ahmedabad School of Architecture near the perimeter of the site.<sup>146</sup>



Plate 4.3- Entrance is approached down a flight of steps into a cave-like interior.  
(Source: Steel, J., 1998, pp. 135)

<sup>145</sup> Steel, J., *The Complete Architecture of Balkrishna Doshi: Rethinking Modernism For The Developing World*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1998, pp. 8.

<sup>146</sup> Steel, J., *The Complete Architecture of Balkrishna Doshi: Rethinking Modernism For The Developing World*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1998, pp. 201.

Some of Doshi's<sup>147</sup> principles of Indian traditional architecture that he believes would enrich contemporary architecture are the following:

- The mythical sense of space often evident in traditional architecture which is not confined only to either open or closed areas;
- Following a flexible rather than rigid approach to structure - thus creating a sense of space and psychic interchange that can be felt by people visiting the building;
- The search for timelessness - this is a principle learnt from Louis Kahn's description of historical precedents as 'open-ended';
- An incorporation of symbolism - this aspect stems from Doshi's notion of flexibility and can be accommodated by a mixture of structural systems; and,
- The concepts of *vastu* (environment), *purusha* (energy) and *mandala* (astrology).

These five concepts have been combined into a diagram to assist builders determining of orientation of the buildings on the site in relation.

Another Indian architect, who has derived his architectural language from the Indian climatic conditions and culture and has thereby effected a local response to de-colonisation, is Charles Correa.

Indian traditional architecture can be described as one of recession, of indoor and outdoor spaces that merge into one another, the use of which is determined by the climate or the seasons, and not by the activity within them.<sup>148</sup> The prominent characteristics of Indian architecture are therefore those that take into account climatic conditions, namely horizontal roof forms and platforms, open colonnades, verandas and courtyards with fountains (to keep the houses and their immediate surroundings cool).

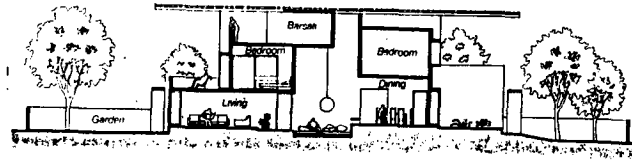
Correa<sup>149</sup> argues that the Indian sky has greatly influenced the relationship between human beings and built form. Warm late evenings and early mornings are ideal for

---

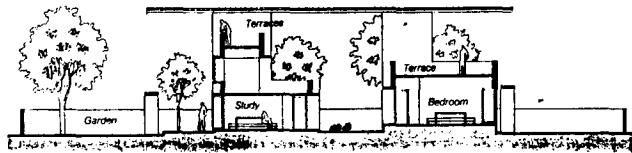
<sup>147</sup> Steel, J., *The Complete Architecture of Balkrishna Doshi: Rethinking Modernism For The Developing World*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1998, pp. 26. For detailed description of these points see pp. 23 – 27.

<sup>148</sup> Cantacuzino, S., "Charles Correa" in: Correa, C., *Charles Correa*, Concept Media, Singapore, 1984, pp. 10.

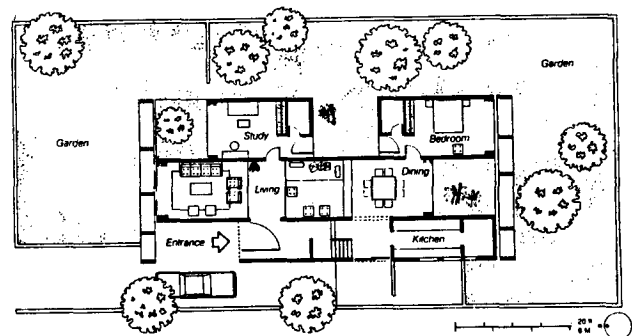
<sup>149</sup> Correa, C., "The Blessings of the Skies" in: Correa, C., *Charles Correa*, Concept Media, Singapore, 1984, pp. 18.



Summer section



Winter Section



Plan

Fig. 4.16- The Parek House, Ahmedabad  
(Source: Correa, C., 1984, pp. 42)

people to be in outdoor spaces under the deep blue skies. Such spaces have an infinite number of variations: one steps out of the room... into the verandah... and hence on to a terrace... from which one proceeds to an open courtyard, perhaps shaded by a tree... or by a large pergola overhead.

The climate of the Indian sub-continent has also influenced Correa in another way, i.e. with regard to the need to limit energy costs, especially the use of air-conditioning. This aspect of Correa's architectural development resulted in the adoption and development of the "tube house" typology. This is an extruded house typology that stems in part from the Moghul tradition and in part from the megaton form derived and adopted from Le Corbusier's works after the Second World War. A tube house is a "narrow dwelling, twelve feet wide, with sloping roofs and vents situated at the point of their intersection" and "focused on an internal patio, which in fact is "barely open to the sky" thus, being an antithesis of the open-to-sky concept.<sup>150</sup>

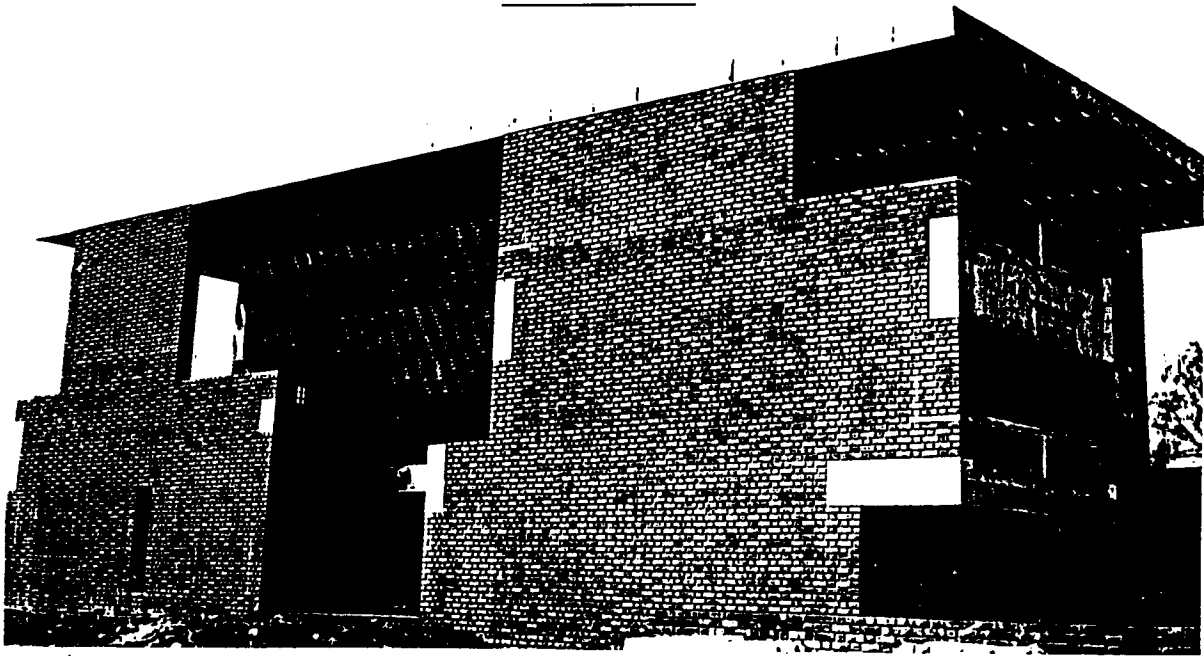


Fig. 4.17- Parek House, winter section as express by an eastern elevation  
(Source: Correa, C., 1984, pp. 43)

<sup>150</sup> Frampton, K., "The Works of Charles Correa" in: Correa, C., *Charles Correa*, Concept Media, Singapore, 1984, pp. 8.

In most of his works, Correa employed local cultural elements like *chhatri*, a traditional Indian overhead canopy, in dealing with the hot. The canopy is used extensively by Correa in most of his projects, with Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya (1958-63) being one of his outstanding works.

The icy cold winters and simmering hot summers of northern India use sunken courtyards that provide access to lower rooms, with canopies being stretched to the peripheral boundary of the courtyard to trap the cold overnight air from these lower rooms in summer. The effectiveness of the courtyard and canopy typologies is seen in most of Correa's work and this theme can be seen clearly in his other three projects: the Kasturba Smadhi in Poona, the unbuilt India Pavilion for Expo 70 at Osaka and the Crafts Museum in Delhi. In all these projects the principle of the *chhatri* is jettisoned and instead the architecture becomes that of a built hill of steps and platforms, which are cut open to admit light to the levels below.<sup>151</sup> The Parek House, in Ahmedabad (1968), employed the "tube house" quite elegantly, with the architectural section being an evolution from an earlier project done in 1967 - a house in Cablenagar Township, Rajasthan. The building was designed to keep cool both in winter (or night) and summer (or day).

The "summer section" is a pyramidal interior that closes at the top to minimise heat gain, while the "winter section" is an inverted pyramid that is meant to maximise heat gain. The site on which this building is built, is on an east-west orientation along the main axis. Hence the plan consists of three bays, so that the summer section in the centre is sandwiched between (and thus opposite) the winter section on one side and the service bay (for circulation, kitchen and toilets) on the other.<sup>152</sup> See Figs. 4.16 and 4.18 for an illustration thereof.

To summarise, then, up to this point, we have traced the evolution of the concept of identity in the built environment from an introduction to a more fluid concept, through the use of traditional forms as a post-colonial reaction to, finally, de-colonisation. As will

---

<sup>151</sup> Cantacuzino, S., "Charles Correa" in: Correa, C., *Charles Correa*, Concept Media, Singapore, 1984, pp. 11.

<sup>152</sup> Correa, C., *Charles Correa*, Concept Media, Singapore, 1984, pp. 42.

be explored hereunder, another form of post-colonial response to de-colonisation was that

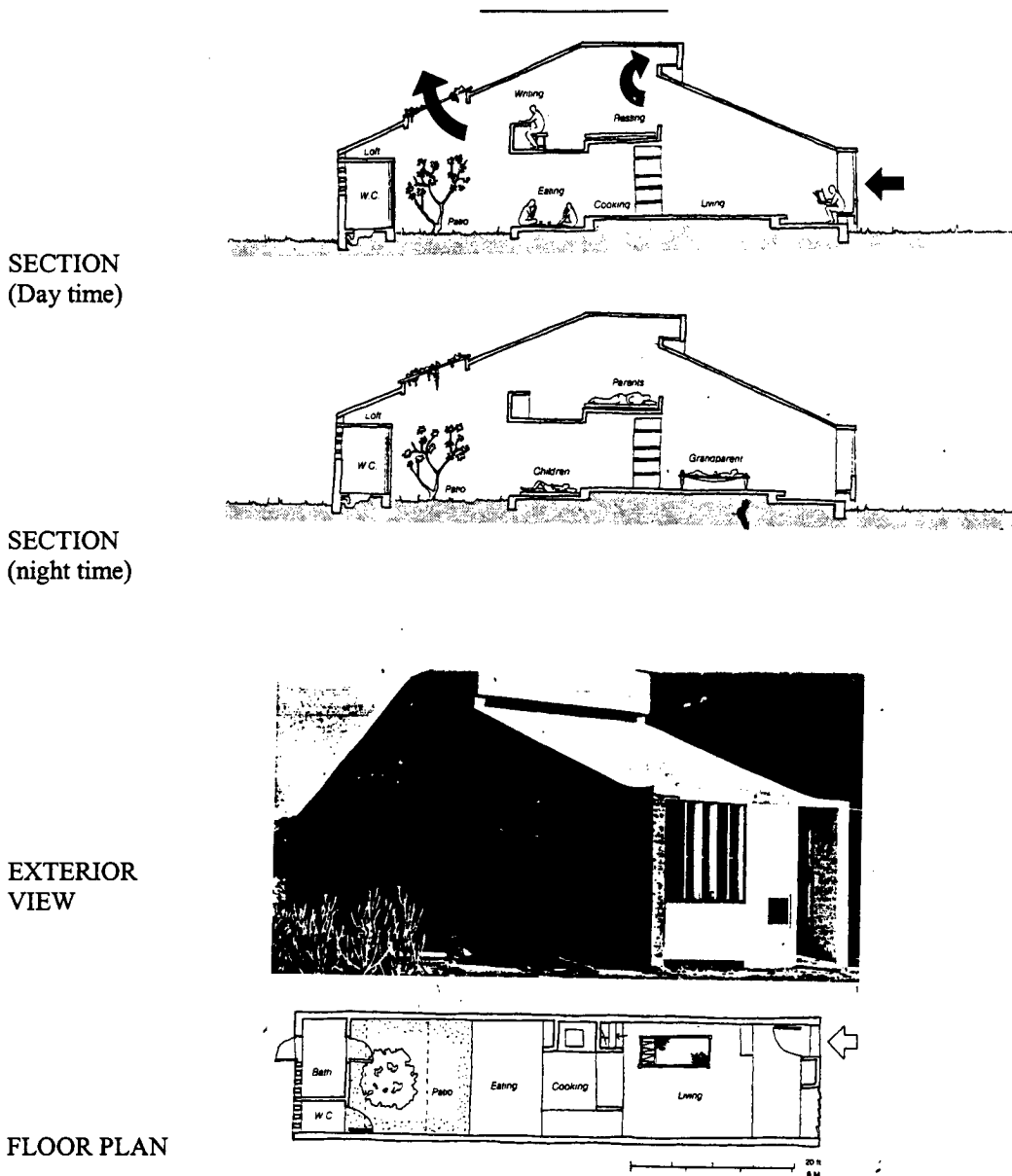


Fig. 4.18- The Tube Housing, a response to local climate: A concept drawn from local vernacular architecture.  
 (Source: Correa, C., 1984, pp. 30 and 31)

of attempting to localise modernism by synthesising it with local vernacular traditional architecture; this can be seen in the works of Bawa and Barragan, whose works will be the subject of the following discussion. Both of these architects, as we shall see, created an architecture that is locally appropriate by employing traditional spaces and a combination of local materials and modern technology.

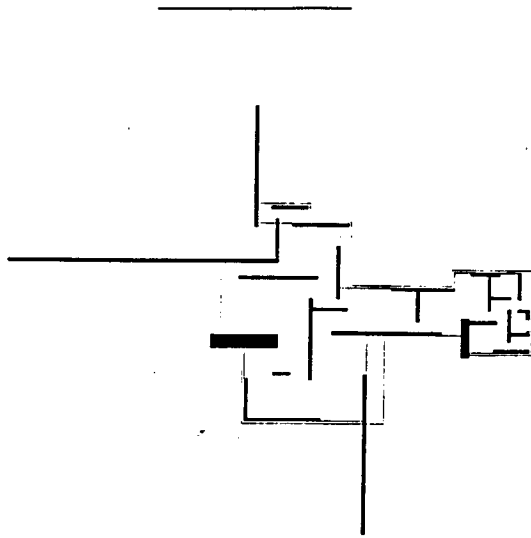


Fig. 4.19- Plan of a projected country house by Mies Van de Rohe  
(Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 11)

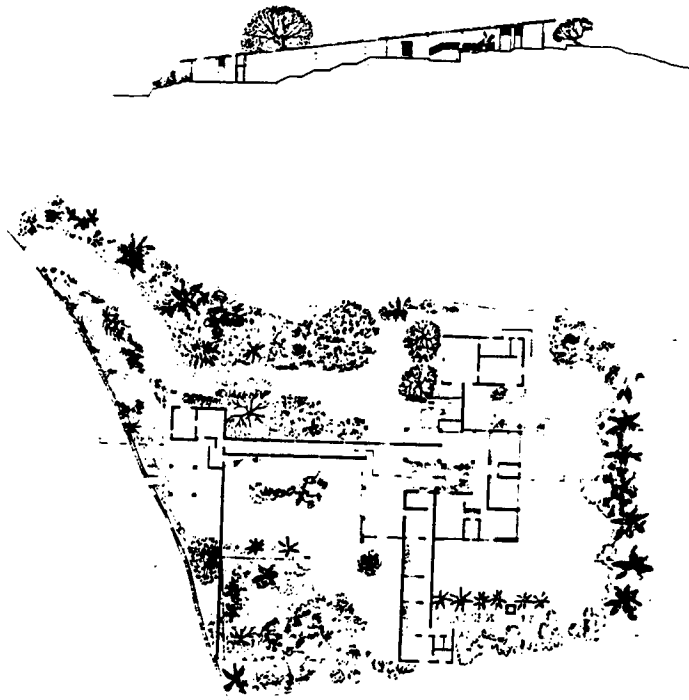
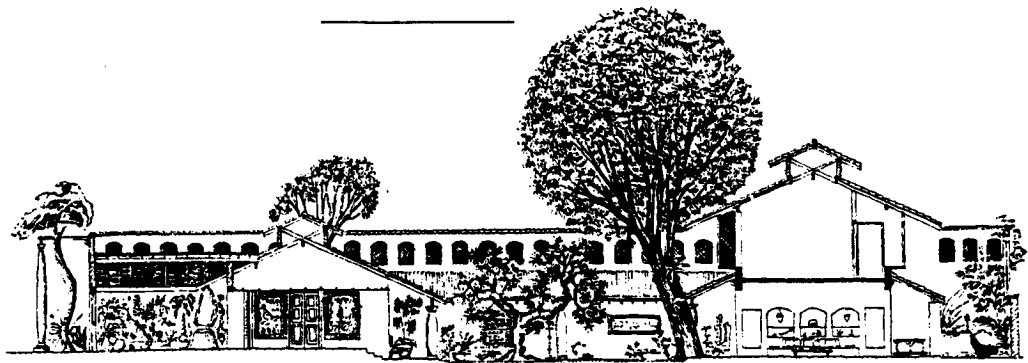
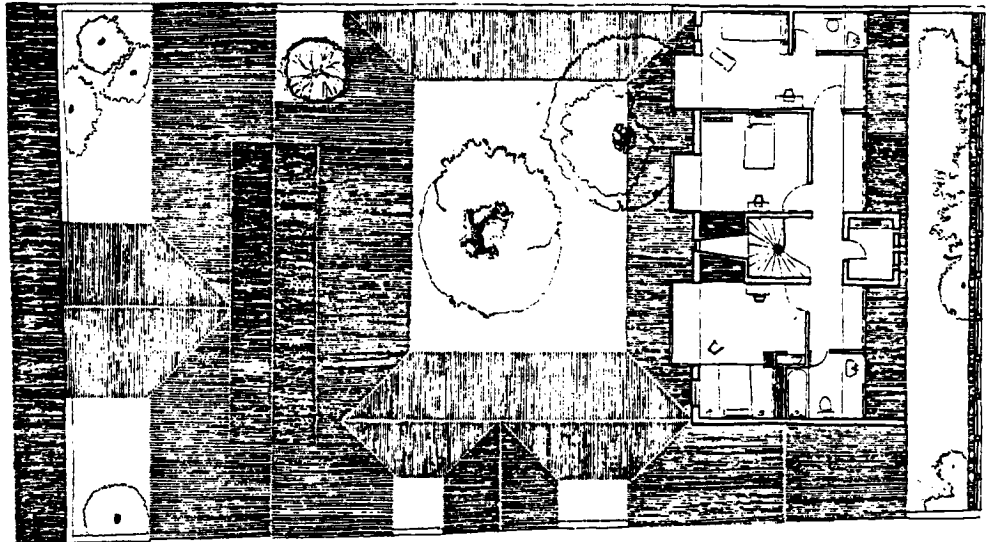


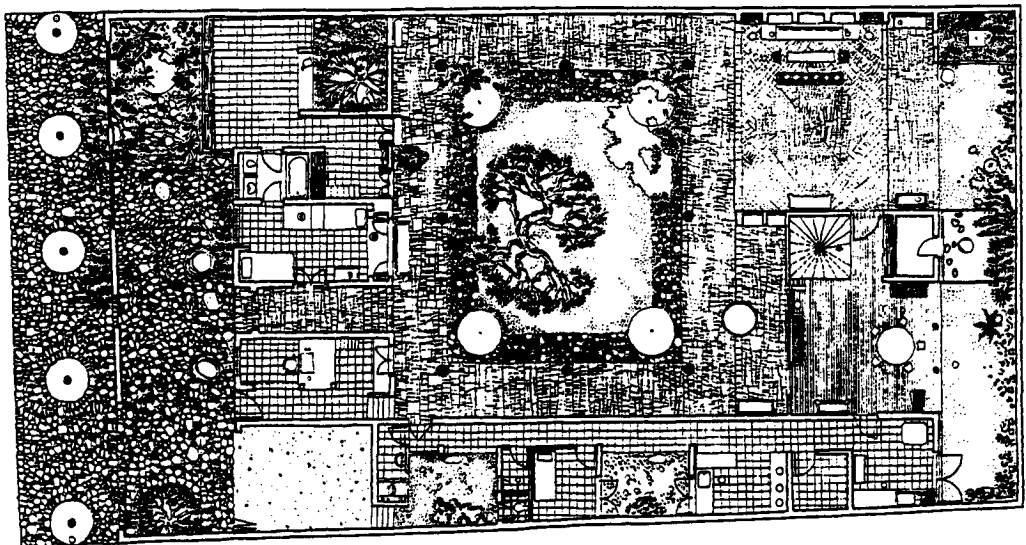
Fig. 4.20- Plan and section of A. S. H. De Silva House, 1960  
(Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 11)



Section



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan

Fig 4.21- The De Silva House showing use of materials to blend with local environment.  
(Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 47)

The Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa's career began at the tail end of modernism and, like many of his contemporaries, his early and subsequent work was a process of learning from modernism and reinterpreting local vernacular architectural forms in a contemporary way. An example of Bawa's early buildings that showed direct transactions with modernism was that of A. S. H. de Silva house built in 1960. This building recalled Mies van der Rohe's brick country house built in 1923. As in most of his projects, the landscaping plays a very important part with the introduction of courtyards and fountains (see Figs. 4.22 and 4.23). Bawa's conception of a building is strongly influenced by the character of the natural terrain, the vegetation, the potential for developing vistas out into the landscape, and hence, light and shade; and of course, the interrelated and ever present aspect of climate.<sup>153</sup>

As can be observed in his garden designs and private houses projects, Bawa is a proponent of an architecture that grows from the landscape. This effect is achieved by the appropriate use of materials, siting of the building on the landscape and use of sensitive scale. In his A. S. H. de Silva house project, Bawa combined modern technology and traditional elements with local building materials and limited imported glass and reinforcement steel. As in most of his projects, the patio and courtyard were used as organising elements with natural vegetation incorporated into the design (see Fig. 4.24 and Plate 4.1).

The other technique that Bawa used in the synthesis of modernist elements and traditional architecture was the recycling of components preserved from old buildings. These included ancient artefacts, columns and windows and they were employed in new contexts, as in the demolition and reconstruction of the Lydia Gunasekera compound.

One archetypal element that is constantly re-deployed in Bawa's buildings, comparable to the *dana salarwa*, is a traditional, long, colonnaded room open on both sides and devoted uniquely to periodic offering of food to assembled Buddhist monks.<sup>154</sup> Such use of traditional space is enhanced by the incorporation of local materials and technology.

---

<sup>153</sup> Taylor, B. B., *Geoffrey Bawa: revised Edition*, Thames and Hudson, New York, 1995, pp. 9.

Bawa's architectural style is, thus, a reflection of the geographical location of Sri Lanka itself, with its long tradition as a trading port between Oriental and Western countries.



Batik mural in the patio of the house



View through the living room from the patio

Plate 4.4- The effect of combining modern and traditional materials. The patio  
(Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 11)

This intermingling of Occidental and Oriental traditions was further nurtured by Sri Lanka's colonial past and thus makes room for historical references to traditional forms which was not permissible in the modernism era. Roof forms also play a major role in Bawa's architecture and display a direct influence from Sri Lanka's tropical conditions. This can be seen in his parliament project<sup>155</sup> as well as in many of his other domestic architectural projects. Bawa believes that the roof is the most constant of all the building elements and that it moreover has unique aesthetic qualities. Often a building only consists of a roof, columns and floors - and it is the roof that dominates, shields the inhabitants, and gives the contentment of shelter.<sup>156</sup>



Plate 4.5- View to the end pavilion of the temple clearly showing the effect of deep eaves  
(Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 162)

Sri Lanka's tropical climate coupled with heavy rains necessitates deep eaves and steeply pitched roofs, where in some instances the roof is raised to facilitate ventilation, the creation of grand views and the creation of cool interior spaces. Bawa uses such deep

<sup>155</sup> The project will be discussed in detail later in connection with Sri Lanka's national identity and symbolism.

eaves at any form of scale as evidenced by the Seema Malaka - a Hunuptya Buddhist Temple (see Plate 4.5 and Fig 4.22).

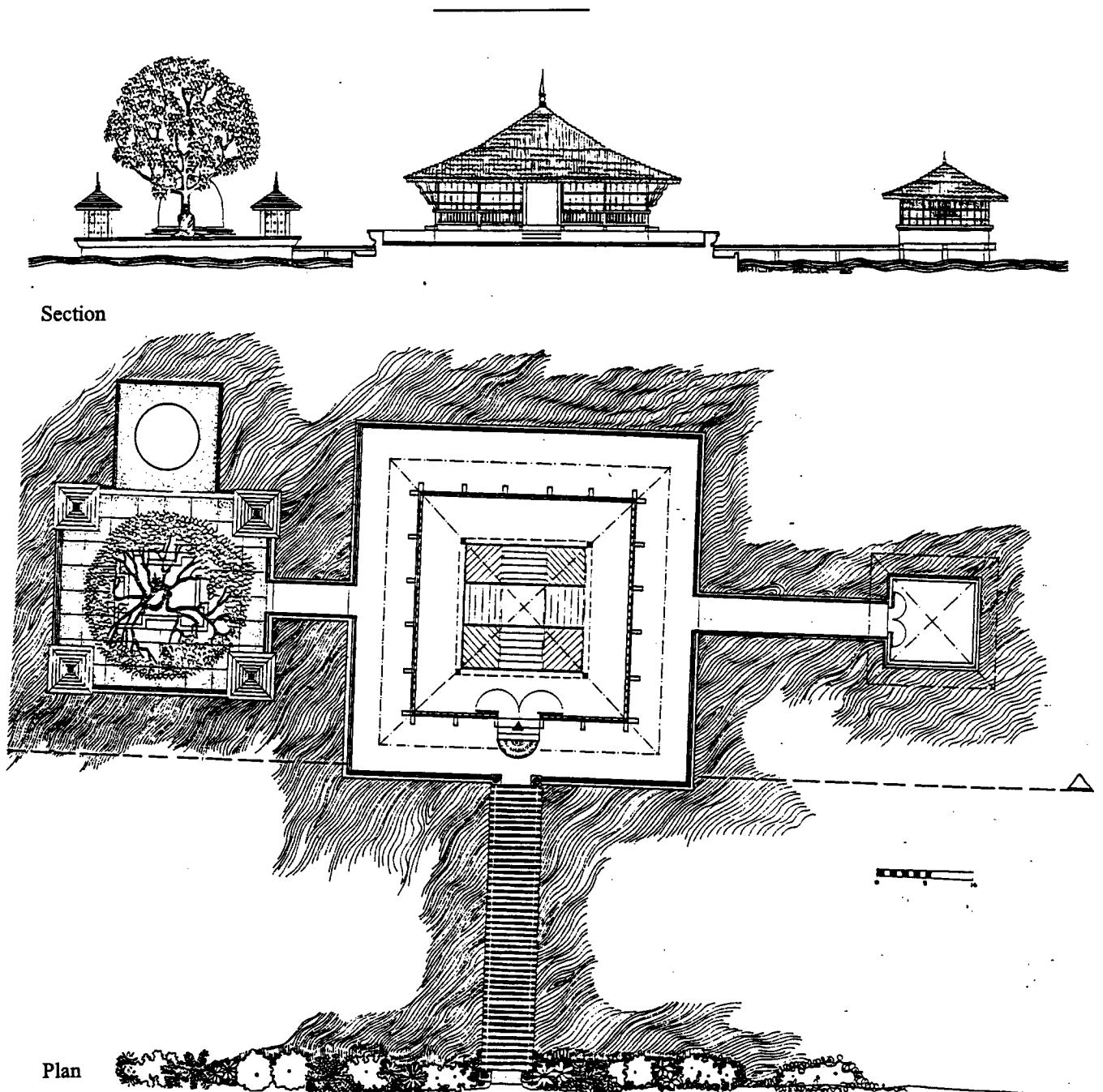


Fig. 4.22- Orthographic Views of Seema Malaka Temple in Colombo showing the dominance of roof architecture by Bawa  
(Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 163)



Plate 4.6- Efrain Gonzalez Luna house: Massing of elements, articulation of openings and the play of light and its ambient qualities.  
(Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 48)



Plate 4.7- Efrain Gonzalez Luna house: Shades: view below the pergola.  
(Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 50)

In the same way as Bawa, who drew inspiration from vernacular architecture in his attempts to localise modernism in Sri Lanka, Barragan's work was inspired by traditional Mexican architecture, with climate and landscape playing major roles with him as well. He talks of "sweet memories of marvellous fountains; dark ponds in recesses of abandoned orchards; the curb stone of shallow wells in convent patios; the unassuming

architecture of the village and provincial towns and its whitewashed walls; the peace found in patios and orchards and the colourful streets of Mexico's cities and villages".<sup>157</sup> His architecture was a combination of surprise, mystery and memory, as exemplified by most of his projects in Guadalajara, Mexico, where he spent most of his early years.

The best of all of Barragan's projects in Guadalajara was a house designed for Efrain Gonzalez Luna, built in 1928, which synthesised local cultural and building traditions with elements of Mediterranean vernacular architecture which Barragan had absorbed during an earlier trip to that area of the world. The building also incorporated various architectural elements that were to mark Barragan's architecture: the placement of outer walls; the careful articulation of the windows; the play of light and its different effects; the intercommunication of garden, pond and inside areas; the introduction of colour as a defining and celebrated element; the choice of materials; and the use of the roof terrace for social events and private reflection.<sup>158</sup> (See Figs. 4.23, 4.24, and Plates 4.6 – 4.8).

The most interesting aspect of the Efrain Gonzalez Luna house is the way he handled its massing and volumes. The building employs various geometric elements (semicircles, squares, rectangles and other forms) that are juxtaposed to give free flowing spaces that relate with the outdoors. The walls are punctured to create a sense of depth through their shades and the arches were drawn from Mediterranean traditions. The use of terraces and pergolas provided pleasant outdoor areas that could be used for different activities depending on the weather conditions. Arches, courtyards and patios clearly played a major role in Barragan's houses in Guadalajara, as further exemplified by the two Rental Houses for E. Robles Leon and Gustavo R. Cristo House. The creativity of Barragan's architecture is vivified by his house designs throughout Mexico, as he dealt with each problem and each project as a separate entity and on its own merits.

One of the projects that best reveals his basic philosophy and thinking with regard to architecture was the design of his own residence. As in most of his architecture, he also

---

<sup>157</sup> Rispa, R., *Barragan: The Complete Works*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1996, pp. 22.

<sup>158</sup> Rispa, R., *Barragan: The Complete Works*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1996, pp. 47.

uses emotion and beauty to describe his house, which he maintains, is not a cold piece of architecture but has emotional meanings and associations for him.

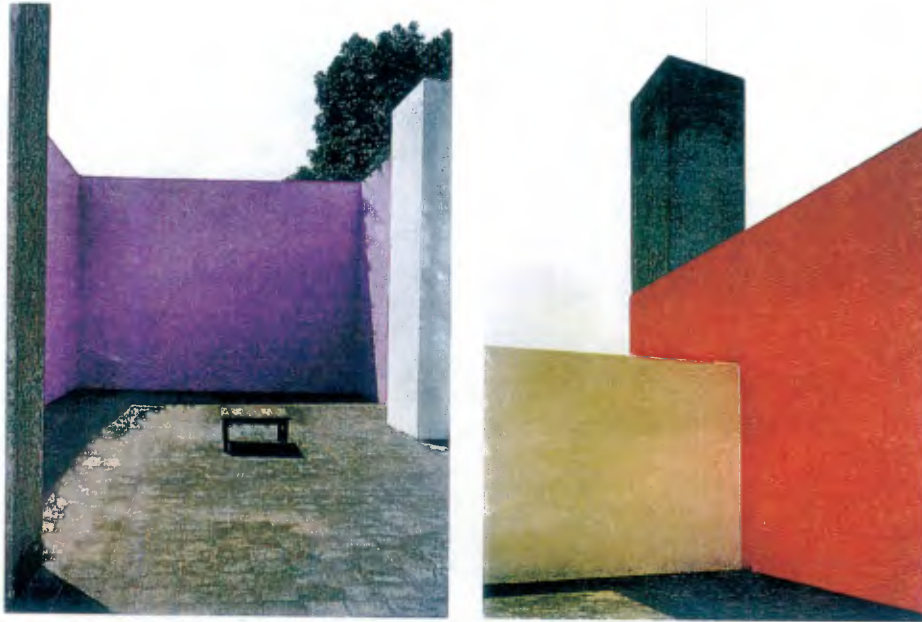


Plate 4.8- Luis Barragan House and Studio: Use of colour on the roof deck.  
(Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 123)

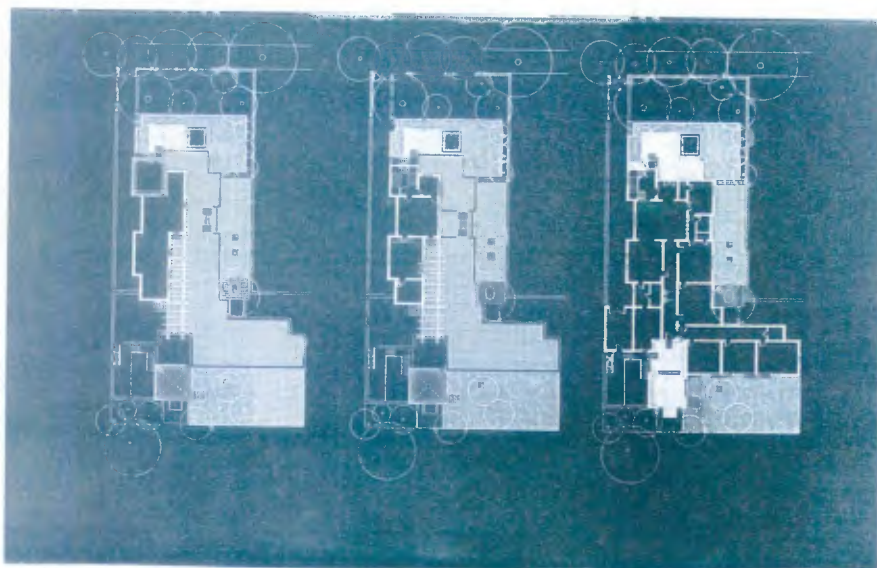


Fig 4.23- Efrain Gonzalez Luna house: Plans.  
(Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 49)

Physically, the house is divided into two levels with a vast double height living-room space, modulated and articulated by low walls that do not reach the ceiling.<sup>159</sup> The short walls enable light to filter through, thus creating a variety of shadows in the open space(s). From the living room there is a picture window - a feature that he uses regularly in his projects -, which presents a view of the garden. In this house, again, roof terraces were also used, and colour was used to create vivid outdoor rooftop areas.

This final example concludes the discussion of how third world architects have attempted to localise modernism by seeking a local language of architectural expression, thus bringing about the revival of local vernacular architecture and localising modernism by synthesising it with the local vernacular. These developments have created a fairly broader base of resources that encourage a fluid and flexible concept of identity to be engaged with in architectural practice, which reflects the more recent developments in social theories.

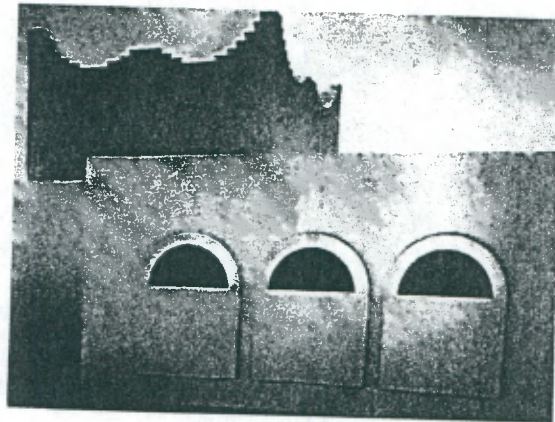


Fig. 4.24- Gustavo R. Cristo House, Guadalajara, built 1930 – 31 showing roof terraces.  
(Source: Rispa, R., 1996, pp. 46)

The approach to architectural design paradigms as related to cultural connectivity, which was discussed above, was criticised by proponents of Critical Regionalism who

---

<sup>159</sup> Futagawa, Y., "Luis Barragan House and Atelier for Luis Barragan Tacubaya. Mexico City. 1947. Los Clubes, Suburb of Mexico City. 1963-69. San Cristobal, Suburb of Mexico City. 1967-68 (with collaboration of arch. Andres Casillas)" in *Global Architecture*, A. D. A. Edita, Tokyo, 1994, pp.

advocated a critical employment of local qualities other than just culture. Proponents of Critical Regionalism proposed a design approach based on structural elements drawn from the local context. This design approach acknowledges the benefits of modern technology but uses it to build on what is inherently local with issues of landscape, quality of light and ingenious use of local materials playing central roles.



Plate 4.9- The Canyeret development showing the elevator tower and bridge.  
(Source: Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 238)

Regionalism identifies with specific and local determinants of design forms, as opposed to those that are general and universal. Both Romantic and Critical Regionalism used the existing architectural attributes of the region to achieve regionalist aims, i.e. to tag onto a building its 'place' and 'social' identity.<sup>160</sup> Critical Regionalism, which is also known as

<sup>160</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1992, pp. 17.

new regionalism, sought local identity in that it aimed to express aspirations of liberated architectural forms from those imposed by powers perceived to be foreign and illegitimate. The distinctive character of Critical Regionalism is not only 'adversary', as with Romantic Regionalism; it is 'critical' as well.<sup>161</sup> In this sense, Tzonis and Lefaivre use the term 'critical' to denote the concept of challenging not only the actual world but also the authenticity of possible world-views.

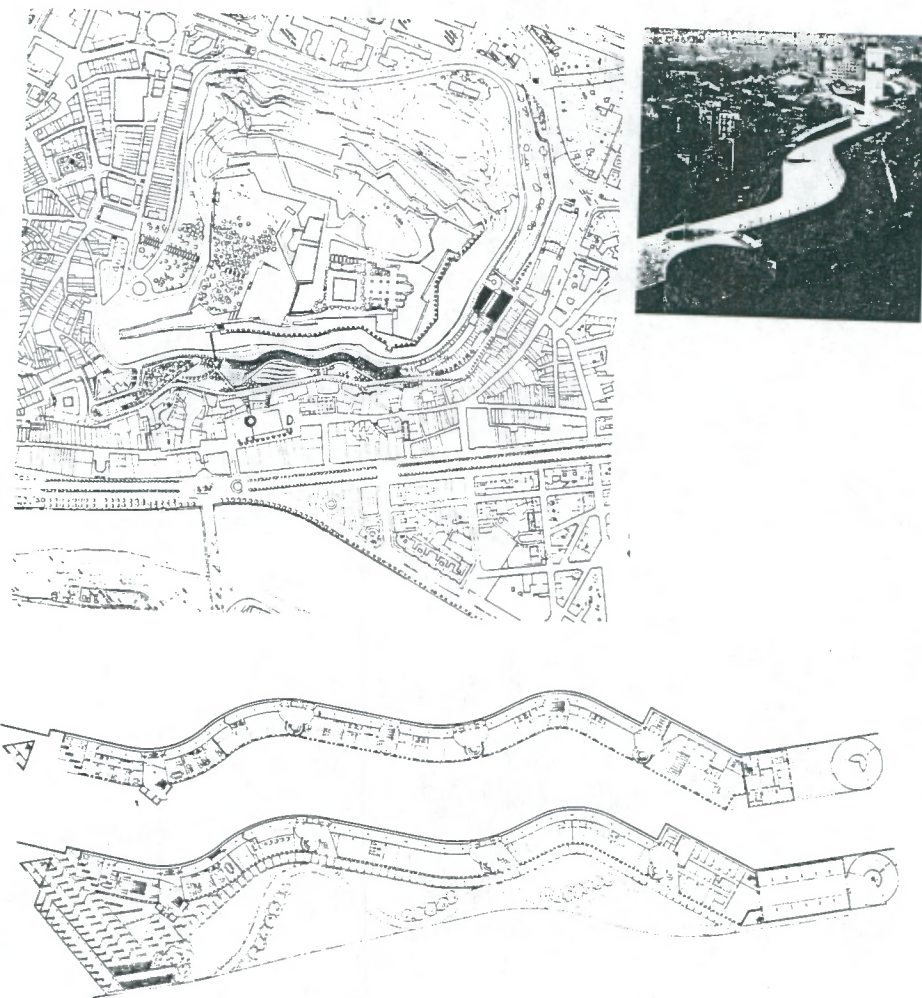


Fig. 4.25- Urban Project Plan (top left); The view of the roof top parallel to the promenade, with the elevator tower and bridge in the background (top right); the entrance floor plan and typical unit floor plan (bottom)  
(Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 239)

<sup>161</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson,

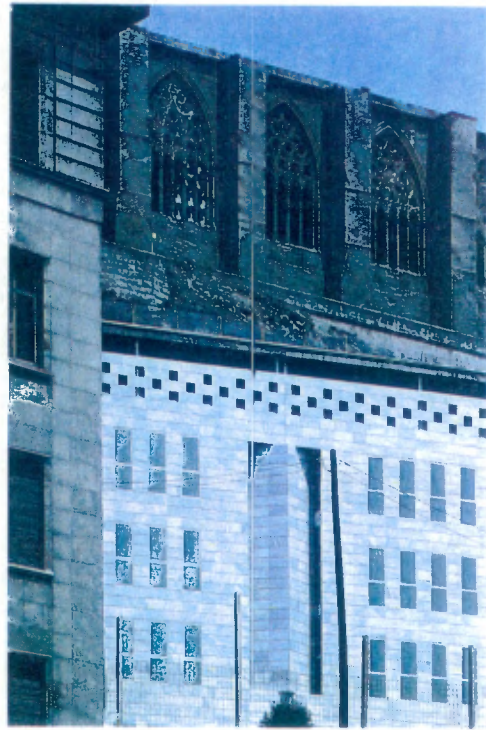


Plate 4.10- Detail of the façade beneath the promenade and cathedral.  
 (Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 240)

The central idea of Critical Regionalism is not to have values that are inward-looking but rather to be open and broad in its perspective and not confined to its ethnic territorial boundaries. This approach of Critical Regionalism is typified by the court house - the Barrio del Canyeret, designed by Amado and Domenech (Lerida, Spain, 1982 – 90). Its “form repeats elements from the fortification above the new building which corresponds to the wave-like shape of the citadel and results in a form reminiscent of a wall enclosing a coherent old town”.<sup>162</sup> (See Fig. 4.25, Plate 4.9, and 4.10.)

The most striking aspect of this building is its composition, which consists of two basic elements - a wall and a tower, which are familiar urban and historical forms in the region - and hence their functional and regional symbolic purposes. The architecture of this project is not scenographic, but neither is it the commercial kitsch of tourism: Instead, it

---

London, 1992, pp. 18.

<sup>162</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1992, pp. 17.

is a product of Critical Regionalism that has respect for regional elements, which are combined with modernist *avant-garde* themes.

This sets the stage for questioning the ideas of 'styles' that are found in architectural historical periods. What role does the style of architecture offer a common person at the bottom of the social ladder, particularly when considering that such styles tend to be portrayed as fashionable and are thus often uneconomical and unaffordable? To this effect Tzonis and Lefaivre have developed a critical viewpoint which is cognitively and aesthetically based on the concept of 'defamiliarisation' as derived from the literary critic Victor Schklovsky in 1920.<sup>163</sup>

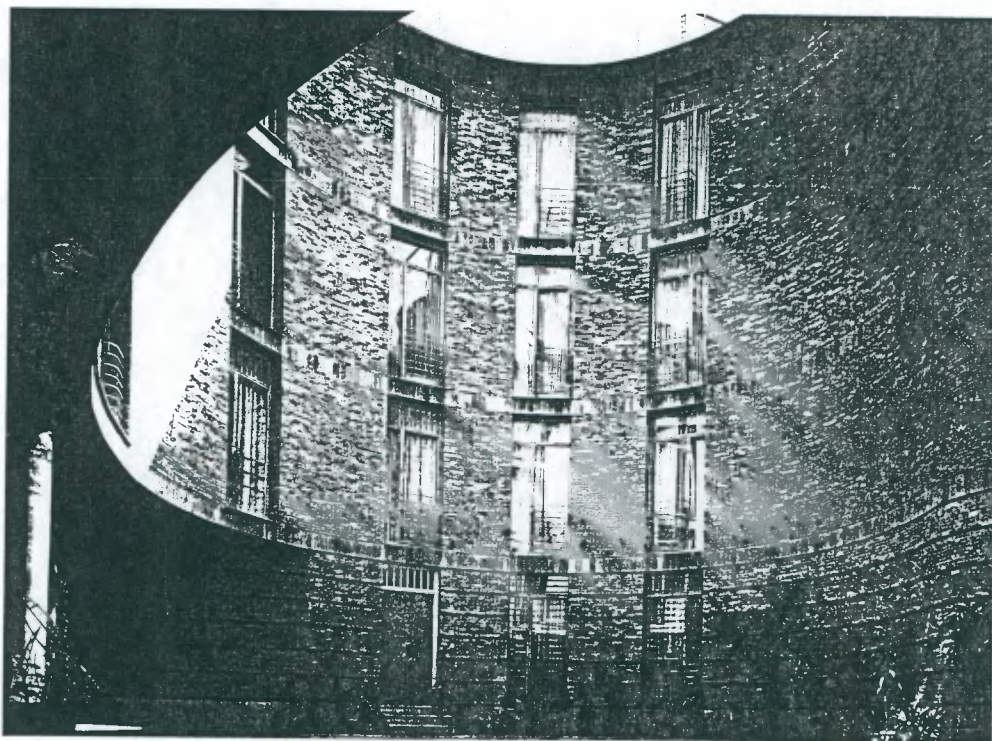


Fig. 4.26- View of the kidney-shaped internal courtyard.  
(Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 82)

Where necessary, the sentimentality effect can be removed by means of unfamiliar forms, like the replacement of a regionalist rectilinear form by a heart-shaped one in the Cruz and Ortiz project of a Manzana patio in the housing project in Seville, Spain (1974 – 76) (Fig. 4.26). By introducing such an architectural component traditionally associated with the community, the intention of the architects is to remind its users of its meaning and warn of the potential loss of that original sense of community, which might occur in the process of technological advancement and bureaucratic rationalisation of the city.<sup>164</sup> This strategy outwardly achieves an aesthetic form, but ultimately leaves the spatial composition unchanged.

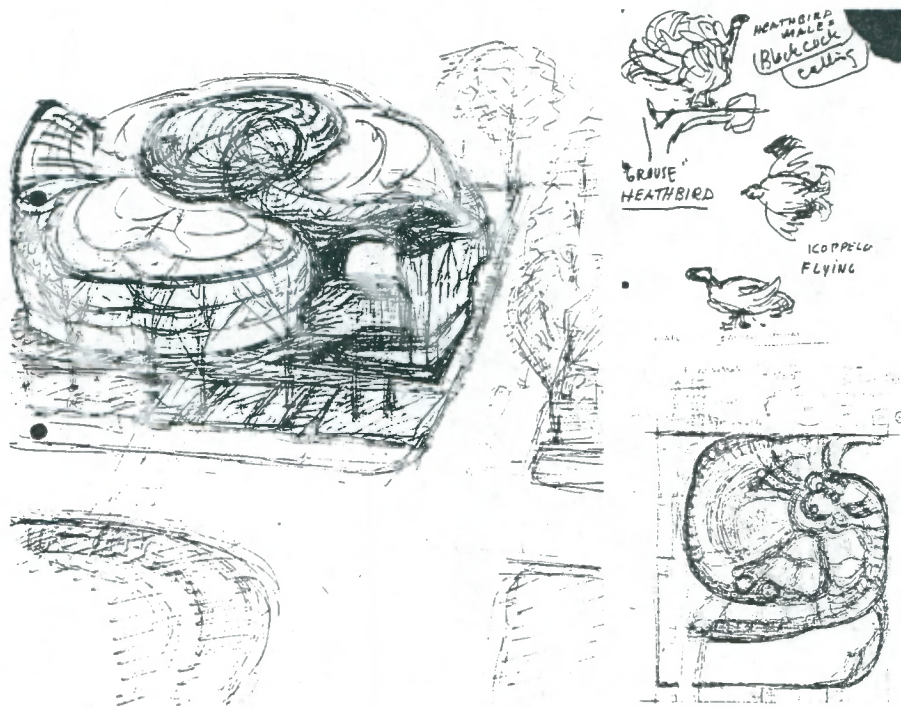


Fig. 4.27- conceptual drawings, including a volumetric sketch  
(Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 154)

<sup>163</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1992, pp. 18.

Another strong development of Critical Regionalism is one that derives identity of a place by employing local myth and iconology. This approach is used in a number of countries one good example is the Tampere Main Library by Raili and Reima Pietila (1978 – 86) which employed the primordial icon of a bird-like form, marrying it with contemporary technology and public life (Fig. 4.27 and Plate 4.11). The Portuguese architect, Alvarho Siza Vieira, combines articulated local materials, craft work and light with modern architectural techniques as a way of responding to local conditions. One of his projects that embodies such a response to the topographical features of a site, is the Beires House.



Plate 4.11- View into the Library entrance  
(Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 153.)

Another good example is Mario Botta's house at Riva San Vitale in Switzerland (1971 – 73) (Fig. 4.28), where "the three-dimensional scheme of the building is extracted from the region, then transferred back to the new structure by using rustic constructions to be

<sup>164</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson.

found locally”.<sup>165</sup> In both these examples, the architects concerned employed forms that were not informed by nationalist sentiments, commercialism, tourist romanticism or contemporary consumerism interests.



Fig. 4.28- House at Riva San Vitale.  
(Source- Pizzi, 1998, pp. 22)

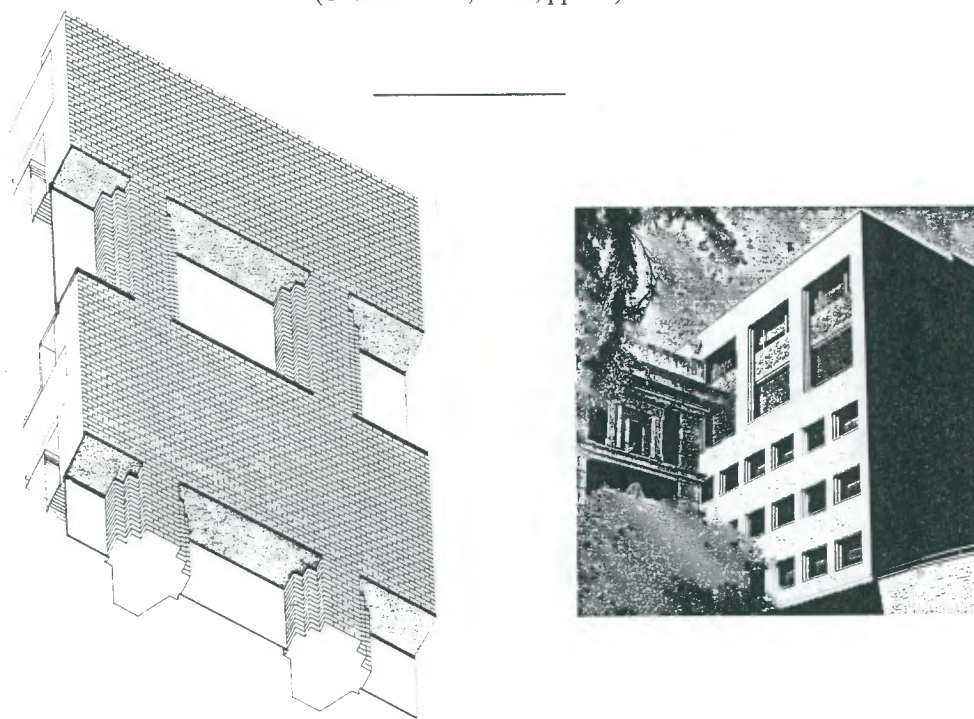


Fig. 4.29- An axonometric section showing detail of the wall (figure on the left), and the façade in relationship to the villa.  
(Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 78)

London, 1992, pp. 18.

<sup>165</sup> Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., *Architecture in Europe Since 1968: Memory and Invention*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1992, pp. 19.

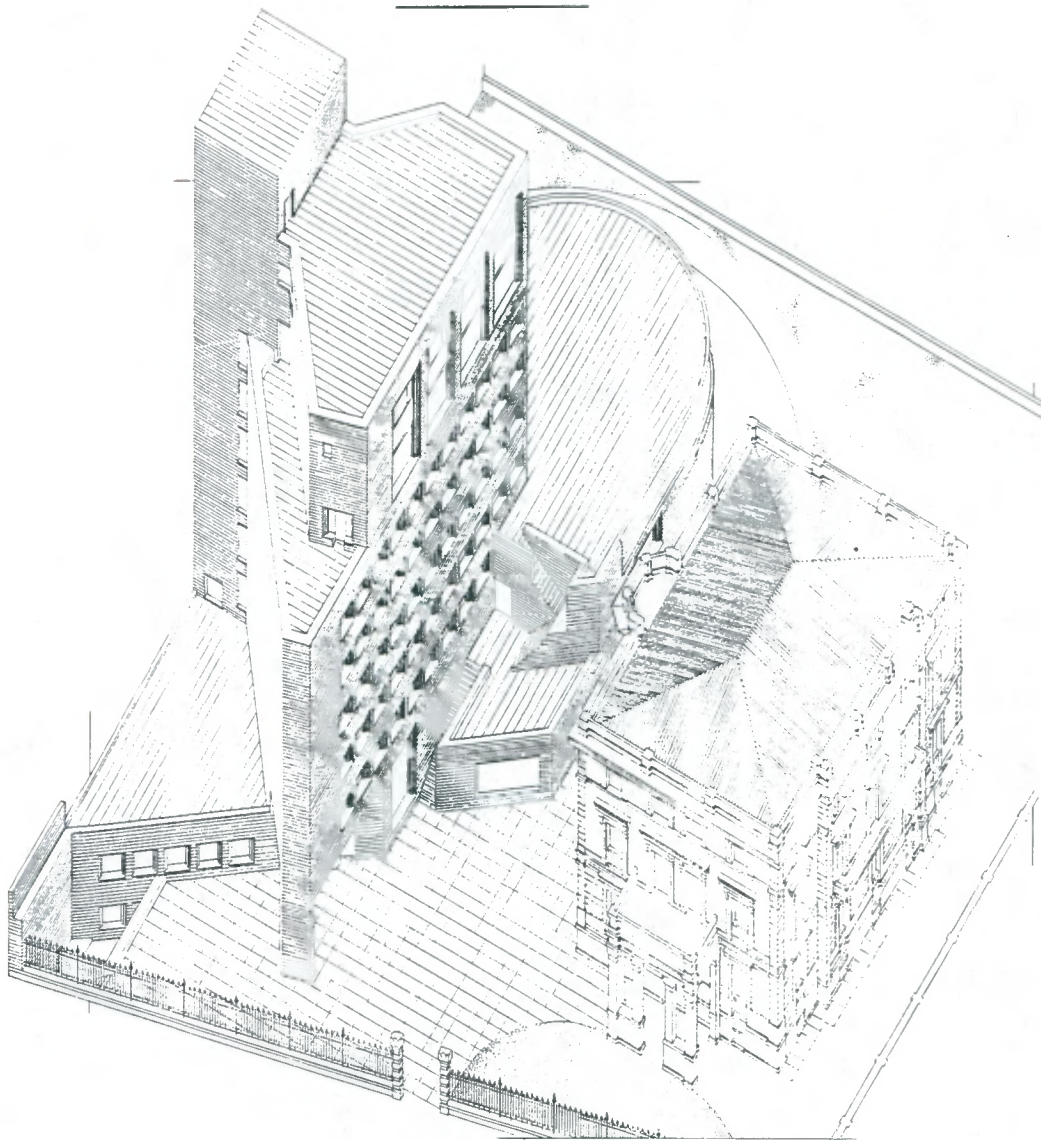
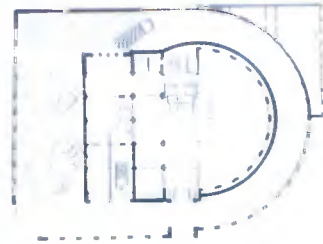
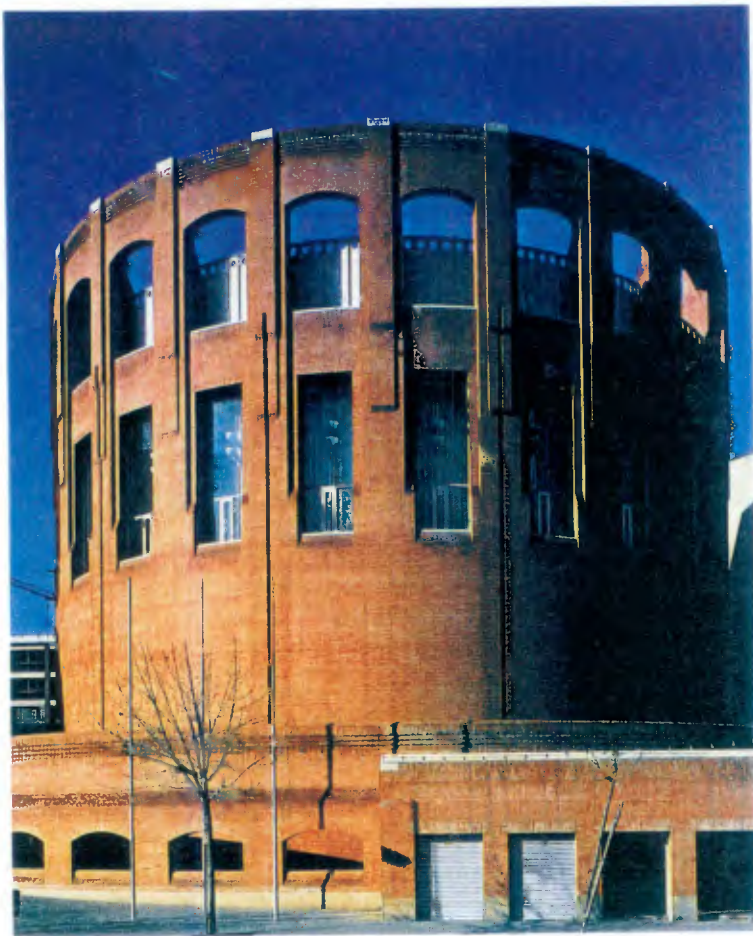


Fig. 4.30- Axonometric drawing of Bankinter and the villa.  
(Source- Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 79)

Another approach to Critical Regionalism is to identify, isolate and schematise regionally derived architectural elements, which can then be re-created as new components in a new context. An example of this particular approach can be found in Spanish architecture by Rafael Moneo's Bankinter (Madrid, 1973 – 76) (see Figs. 4.29, 4.30) and Clotet and Parico's Banco de España in Gerona near Barcelona (1982 – 85) (see Plate 4.12). In these projects pure prismatic volumes constructed from bricks are elements associated with Critical Regionalism.

Façade details



plan



Section

Plate 4.12- Exterior view of the building showing its indebtedness to the Roman tradition of large-scale brick constructions, which still dominate the Iberian landscape and cityscapes.  
(Source: Tzonis, A. and Lefaivre, L., 1992, pp. 132)

In Greece, the works of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis and their team known as Atelier 66, personifies Critical Regionalism. With its roots outside Greece, Greek Regionalism began from the historicist phase that followed the nineteenth-century War of Independence (1821-1832). This strain of Regionalism provided the framework for all phases of regionalism that were to follow in Greece. The courtyard is an important element of Greek architecture which had faced extinction and was being reintroduced in the environs of Athens by some architects. Throughout the ages, the courtyard provided an intermediate space between the life of the interior and that of the public street.<sup>166</sup>



Fig. 4.31- A pedestrian walk on the Philopappus Hill showing spaces that can accommodate both small gatherings and large assemblies - illustrating the application of the pathway concept.  
(Source: Lefaivre, L. and Tzonis, A., 1985, pp. 20.)

Being a nation seeking its own identity, architectural expressions such as the pedimented portico, the *stoa*, the *propylea*, the pyramid base, temple-like articulations of prismatic volumes and the grid were portrayed in Greece as unifying elements and as restoration of the natural order of things. The grid pattern took centre-stage in Greek architecture as a regional element in the second half of the nineteenth-century, when it was used in terms of the structural frame.

<sup>166</sup> Frampton, K., "Greek Regionalism and the Modern project: A Collective Endeavour" in: Lefaivre, L. and Tzonis, A., *Atelier 66: The Architecture of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis*, Rizzoli, New York, 1985, pp. 2.

Historicist Regionalism remained influential in Greece well into the twentieth century, but began to face rejection in the second half of the twentieth century, championed by figures like Pikionis, Konstandinidis, Tzonis, and Lefavre. Pikionis, whose landscape work was free of technological exhibitionism and compositional conceit of the 1950s, was one of the pioneers of the Modern Movement.

Pikionis' pedestrian way is conceived as a chain of lived-in places, unfolding around the hill and creating spaces for solitary contemplation, for intimate discussion, for small gatherings or for a vast assembly (Fig. 4.41)<sup>167</sup>. To ensure the success of his project, Pikionis used certain 'place' components that he drew from folk architecture. In that sense, the path signified more than just a facility, or a corridor or a connecting element for two spaces. Pikionis explains the psychology of the pedestrian walkway in the following manner: *"Like the grid pattern, it is a cultural object, it carries within its fabric a commentary about contemporary architecture, life, and society. It is a petrified stream of passages and places, man-made places that carry a moral statement. Even when empty, they have a voice. They are a protest to human associations, the dissolution of human contact, the turning of the meeting into transaction."*<sup>168</sup> Both the grid and the pathway also appear in Antonakakis, another Greek architect, as an element, which reinterprets the fundamental organising principles that are embodied in an individual building, a house, and or even a room.

To conclude, then, in this section, we saw how Critical Regionalism has tried to deal with localness and identity and how this was carried out through various approaches that all sought to enhance the identity of place. This approach is heavily dependent on climate and geographical setting and thus a form of Regionalism drawn from national identity issues has superseded this ultra-localised approach. This will be the topic of the next chapter (Chapter 5).

---

<sup>167</sup> Lefavre, L. and Tzonis, A., "The Grid and the Pathway: An introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis in the Context of Greek Architectural Culture" in: Lefavre, L. and Tzonis, A., *Atelier 66: The Architecture of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis*, Rizzoli, New York, 1985, pp. 20.

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of this chapter has been to provide a number of architectural examples that can be seen to reflect the theoretical developments that have been discussed in Chapter Three. In pursuit of this objective, Modernism in third world environments was discussed, by citing examples on the Indian sub-continent that marked the onset of changeable identity conceptions. Thereafter, further examples were looked at, this time from various Postmodernists like Bawa and Correa whose degree of engagement with local vernacular traditions gave rise to more fluid concepts of identity.

The approach to cultural connectivity as increasingly employed by some architects was criticised by some theorists accusing it of tending to abuse “culture” as a resource through which identity construction could be realised. For example, the aesthetics employed by Barragan in his works have been perceived by critical regionalists to be ‘hypnotic’, particularly as a result of the extensive use of colour and his sense of composition. Most architects in third world environments in their attempts to localise their architecture through finding inspiration from local traditions, as seen with architects like Correa, Doshi, Barragan, and Bawa, tended not to consider other factors. Thus, for instance, Fathy’s failure to consider other factors, for example economic, political as well as supportive technological techniques and materials in his projects in New Gurna in rural Egypt, was one of the key issues criticised by Critical Regionalists like Kenneth Frampton.

However, Critical Regionalism too had its shortcomings. For example, it failed to develop design forms derived from the *genius loci*, as explained in the last chapter (Chapter 3), and has accordingly been eclipsed by a more embracing approach to issues of identity and localness that seeks to establish what Norberg-Schulz calls existential foothold. To investigate issues of *genius loci* with respect to the question of identity and localness, Chapter Five will look in more detail at public architecture and its ability to

---

<sup>168</sup> Lefavre, L. and Tzonis, A., “The Grid and the Pathway: An introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis in the Context of Greek Architectural Culture” in: Lefavre, L. and Tzonis, A., *Atelier 66: The*

embody national identity qualities. Lawrence Vale's work will thus form the basis of the following chapter which will be looking at the issue of identity construction issues with respect to public architecture and how this is used to bring about the *genius loci*, 'the placeness of a place', or the 'spirit of a place'.

## **CHAPTER 5.0**

### **PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY**

## INTRODUCTION

Recent work on the relationship between built form and culture that has posed the question as to whether the pursuit of local identity may be sometimes problematic. A study by Lawrence Vale<sup>169</sup> of the power, politics and identity issues behind public architecture has highlighted this development. The study of the concept of identity may be approached from a multitude of directions that include food, clothing, lifestyle, music, the built environment, the nature of one's social networks, etc.<sup>170</sup> More specifically, Vale's study focuses on the expression of identity in public architecture.

This present chapter seeks to critically analyse Vale's approach to the concept of identity through studies of how public architecture is being conceptualised and how power and politics play a critical role in this regard. The reason for looking in such detail at Vale's study is that the material presented by him can assist us in improving our understanding of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture through identification of pertinent / relevant elements in the built environment. Also, the concept of identity as addressed in Vale's work is a further development of the identity issues as applied to built environments which have been explored Critical Regionalists. An approach to regionalism by Critical Regionalist employs specific local geographical parameters such as the quality of the light, specific landscape features, culture and ecology in developing an identity of place. In contrast, regionalism, as practised by architects and designers whose objective it is to create a sense of nationhood, is guided by national boundaries. Vale's study is, therefore, of critical importance to this thesis because it discusses what this researcher considers to be the most recent developments of the concepts of identity and issues of localness with respect to built environments. This is particularly so with those environments that are designed to ultimately reflect national identity. National identity is a component of the broader issue of localness, where political boundaries and

---

<sup>169</sup> See examples in Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992. This chapter is based mainly on Lawrence Vale's above work, in which he conceptualises identity in a fluid manner as being a complex product of various factors like economy, race, region, religion, class etc.

<sup>170</sup> These approaches to the study of identity issues are discussed in more detail by Paul Taylor in: Taylor, P., *Investigating Culture and Identity*, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London, 1997. See also the first section of Chapter Three in this thesis.

the sphere of influence of that particular nation, rather than specific local geographical confines are the determining factors.

It is, therefore, important to look at the forces that control and influence conceptions of national identity, specifically with respect to built environments - and this is the aim of the present chapter. In order to do so, this chapter looks at issues of public architecture with its associated politics of identity. The first section considers the forces behind the creation of national identity, the concept of nationalism, the various forces behind the adopted architectural characteristics, and the siting of public institutions such as parliamentary complexes and capital cities.

Thereafter, the second section of this chapter discusses a quintessential example that embodies all the issues that have been discussed in the first section, specifically the politics and power games involved in creating a national identity. As such an example, the author has chosen Geoffrey Bawa's Sri Lankan Parliamentary Complex on the basis of the following three main reasons:

- firstly, the qualities of this particular project illustrate the key points that have been raised in section one with regard to national identity and the interplay of political and power forces around public architectural institutions;
- secondly, it balances modernism, as practised in the West, with local architectural traditions (vernacular), as practised in Sri Lanka, and,
- lastly, its third world setting is of particular interest to this study because it gives a platform from which we can ultimately begin to conceptualise approaches to issues of identity, symbolism and the general relationship between built form and culture in third world environments generally, and more particularly in Zimbabwe and its general regional location.

## **IDENTITY ISSUES PERTAINING TO PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE**

While Critical Regionalists defined identity in terms of cultural settings and localised geographic and climatic conditions, some architectural practitioners and theorists in the field of public architecture have defined the concept of identity using political boundaries and associated power games that are of national, regional and even international significance. National identity thus takes on many forms and attracts a variety of forces, largely dominated by the political decisions of the ruling class.

Identity conceptions moulded by public architecture are an attempt by designers to physically articulate national characteristics that are part of nation building. Nation building is a process that takes a long time to achieve, particularly in countries where there are various contending groups located in regional centres. Ruling classes in various countries have responded to this challenge in different ways: some through designing entirely new capital cities and some through designing new parliamentary buildings within old capitals. This type of manipulation of the built environment to achieve national unity has been done by a number of post-colonial rulers.

Manipulation of the built environment within national boundaries by using public architecture has proved to be an effective method in creating a sense of national identity and unity as evidenced by public buildings in developed countries like the United States of America and its Capitol Hill and the Australian Parliament. This section will be focussing on the creation of national identity and the influences of the various forces that come into play in this regard. The reason for this is that, before looking more deeply into the dynamics of manipulation of the built environment for political, economical, geographical reasons and the underlying forces involved in nation-building, it is important to understand the concept of national identity itself.

In the case of formerly colonised countries, the creation of a national identity goes hand in hand with the decolonisation process. This process involves far more than merely a political change of government; it entails a far-reaching alteration of social and cultural

consciousness, one that is not easily or fully achieved.<sup>171</sup> The nature of nationalism that supports a drive for independence in the name of freedom and self-determination is different from the one that is required in defining the identity of a politically independent individual. Thus, national identity in both cases brings in play forces from different sources which, in some instances, may be diametrically opposed. In most third world countries, for example Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and Nigeria, it was in fact easier for various tribal groups not to identify with the colonial masters, who happened to be of a different race, than it has been to identify themselves as Zimbabwean, Sri Lankan or Nigerian respectively. The challenge to the ruling classes is to identify and consolidate a new collective subject to whom the actions of the state may be internally connected.

The concept of national identity is complicated and impossible to separate from the concepts of nation and nationalism. Nationalism can be defined as the theory of political legitimacy that upholds the maintenance of political and national unit congruency. Generally, historians and theorists agree that nationalism gives birth to nations, and not vice versa. Nationalism is a modern concept born in the late nineteenth century alongside industrial capitalism, and strengthened by a central but participatory political administration and an increasingly global economy.

In most third world countries the articulation of nationhood is made more difficult by the entrenchment of the 'divide-and-rule' tactics that were previously employed by colonial powers and are even perpetuated by some of the post-colonial rulers. Other leaders of new states have further amplified the existing divisions between different groups of the population through the siting of new capitals and capitols, e.g. the siting of Sri Lanka's Capitol Complex. In some countries, though, national identity has been constructed through the positive use of architecture, urban design and planning in symbolic form. Nigeria and Australia both attempted to create national unity and identity through the appropriate design and location of their new capitals. In the case of Nigeria, the location of Abuja was decided upon in relation to other capitals on the African continent, thus

---

<sup>171</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 45.

underpinning the broader geographical contextual factor, and the level of politics of identity embodied in public architecture.

Symbolism, in combination with other factors like historical importance, political status, economical conditions, geographic features, among others, in this instance provides one of the strongest forces on the basis of which decisions on the siting of a country's capital can be made. Modern cities play major symbolic roles in their environments, for example, Chandigarh. Since the advent of modern capitals about two hundred years ago the capital has been called upon to incorporate a number of functions under its jurisdiction, with housing of government administration and its magnified symbolic presence being the most significant ones.

Programmatically, the modern capital is expected to be both the practical and the symbolic focus of national administration and, especially in states emerging from control by an external power, it is also expected to serve as the focus of efforts to promote a sense of national identity.<sup>172</sup> The profile assumed by the modern capital is similar to that of ancient capitals, in terms of legitimising the power of the ruling clique or individual. Modern capitals have immense pressures in creating unity and identity for diverse cultures and ethnic groupings particularly in newly independent states. This envisages and necessitates the creation of strong symbolic features by using the capital and its associated public buildings to mark the intentions of the state.

In more distant times selection of a capital city was usually motivated by the presence of a shrine, a defensible fortress or a trade route; in the modern age, new capitals are most often sited to favour political factions.<sup>173</sup> These political factions can be derived from ethnic differences, religion and internal competition for national resources, each of which can be influential in the siting of the capital. These differences also contribute immensely to the symbolism of the capital, and can be made even more significant by government bureaucratic structures strategically located around the capital. While in the past palaces

---

<sup>172</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 15.

had always been maintained as virtually self-sufficient mini-cities, the concept of a city to showcase the organs of government administration is a fairly modern idea.<sup>174</sup> Whilst in the eras gone by the administration of the territories required large armies, this is no longer the case with modern states. In modern day capitals, the emphasis of the administration is on democracy, thus entailing the creation of institutions to uphold the institution of democracy. This at the same time results in the creation of a bureaucracy, whose physicality is intended to build a sense of national identity.

Identity manifests itself in numerous ways, from the very subtle to the physically visible. Objects, events, monuments and ceremonies contribute immensely to the creation of symbolism and the identity of a given social grouping. Symbols assume higher levels of communication in terms of social identity and can take on many shapes and forms. When looking at national identity, flags and icons of leaders who have been responsible for the creation of those nations and states are immediately observable features. These, in turn, are often associated with party emblems and other accepted logos and slogans of national government.<sup>175</sup> In this respect architecture and urban design are ready signatures of national identity. Consequently, political leaders of various nations have used the design of new capital cities or capitols, in terms of siting and architectural language, as means of creating a desired national identity. Although there are other factors, like climate, accessibility, economic sensibility, regional influence, and internal or external decree, all of which will usually have been considered in the siting of new capitals and capitols, the need to achieve national unity has been an overriding factor in many countries.

Capital cities and parliamentary buildings, by virtue of being national in character, provide a very rich source of identifying the people of that particular nation. An astute siting of these public institutions is particularly important in situations where these were designed after independence, as they can make or break a country's nationhood. The identity celebrated by parliamentary buildings can however be susceptible to

---

<sup>173</sup> See Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 16.

<sup>174</sup> See Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 16.

manipulation by various forces, but on the positive side, it can also grow from natural forces in that particular nation. In some instances the architecture adopted may even become a starting point for the creation of national identity.

Many previously colonial countries have gained their independence since the end of the Second World War. Along with this independence came the task of forging national identities, and in some instances the building of new capital cities and parliament buildings, as well as other public works. In countries faced with the task of building new capital cities and parliament buildings, there were the forces at play in deciding the siting of these and other public facilities. Whose and what symbolism, if symbolism was indeed an objective, was adopted in the ultimate design? The decision to build a new place for government is always a significant one; the decisions about where and how to house it are more telling still.<sup>176</sup> There is no society without its contradictions, and rulers often want to celebrate these when given an opportunity, especially through the use of government buildings. Government projects, especially those of national importance like the parliament, effectively reflect the aspirations of the ruling class. The ruling classes celebrate their power by adopting an architectural language of public buildings with a very visible presence.

The word “capitol” originally denoted a citadel on a hill, and thus a capitol complex is the capitol itself and its relationship to the whole assemblage of building structures around it. The governors attempt to show that the way in which the capitol works is visually communicated to the governed by means of the buildings’ designs. Capital cities, likewise, do not merely come into existence on their own. Various forces that come into play include the will of people around its siting and historical circumstances. There are three different kinds of modern capitals - evolved capitals, renewed evolved capitals and

---

<sup>175</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 47.

<sup>176</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 10.

designed capitals.<sup>177</sup> Of the three types, evolved capitals generally do not have a readily identifiable architectural focus, whereas the other two do.

Buildings are products of the cultural and social conditions in which they are situated, and this is particularly so with public institutions.<sup>178</sup> By so doing buildings become an object of identity construction and a number of parliamentary buildings in different countries may respond to this issue differently. The product of these buildings is also influenced by choices determined by architects and designers.

Unlike in vernacular traditions, the boundaries used in the construction of national identity, in accordance with Geertz's definition of that concept, creates problems, as they cannot be comfortably accommodated within the confines of a single pluralist state. To the contrary, they are known for their divisive rather than for their bonding nature. The degree and intensity to which these identity elements are used, also vary from one country to another. Politics plays a major role in determining the significance of chosen elements of identity, and the ruling classes of any given grouping are usually influential in choosing symbolic representations of these when it comes to public architectural images. In a pluralist society these symbolic representations become highly charged politically and therefore divisive, as the ruling elite attempts to reinforce or redirect the balance of cultural power.

The task of creating national identity is a conscious effort by government leaders and their architects through manipulation of the environment, either by erecting a parliamentary complex building or, more drastically through statutory means, by constructing a new capital city. This development will take place within the following three frames of references, which have been identified by Vale<sup>179</sup>, through which the symbolism of the city and the associated parliamentary complex is constructed and expressed:

---

<sup>177</sup> For details see Vale, L., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 16.

<sup>178</sup> For details see Vale, L., *Architecture, Power and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 18.

- Sub-national identity - referring to the sub-national group allegiances and preferences of the sponsoring regime
- Personal identity -suggesting the priorities of the architect's long-term design agenda, and
- Supranational identity - being indicative of the government's interest in pursuing international identity.

The first of these frames of references for the design of postcolonial parliament buildings and new capitals, i.e. identity as a product of sub-national groups; deals with specific references to politically preferred national groups chosen by the ruling elite on the basis of ethnicity, race, region class etc.

Regarding national building complexes as an architectural symbolic representation of national identity is very simplistic, although in some instances such complexes may be designed to illustrate or embody unique aspects of the new state, especially if they are intended as a political statement to neighbouring states. However, the technique of using public architecture to construct national identity is complicated by the fact that new states are rarely homogeneous. In this case the problem arises as to whom to represent amongst the various groupings within the state boundaries.

In colonial times, various groups, including those that were mutually opposed, were grouped together and forced to accept each other; as a result they recognised state boundaries long after the United Nations had done so. The colonial governments in these situations acted as a stabilising factor, at times with a high degree of brutality. Vale<sup>179</sup> also argues that developments within colonial states created sharp contrasts between urban and rural communities with the numbers in the latter dominating those of the former. This situation resulted in local rather than national or regional active membership of the state and it thus curtailed the effectiveness of national identity construction.

---

<sup>179</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 48.

<sup>180</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 49.

A second frame of reference for the design of postcolonial parliament buildings and new capitals is personal identity. This is mainly a personal predilection of both the designer and the sponsoring politicians. To give substance and legitimacy to their designs, these individuals may associate their solutions with affiliated groups, thus pointing out the fact that design decisions are often made to legitimise individuals' own sense of national identity. In the case of the architects involved, they are most likely to be influenced by various media (which may include glossy architectural journals) and by the knowledge from their training - which is likely to be Western in nature. In making design decisions architects either opt for so-called state of the art technology and design philosophies, or alternatively celebrated precedents, no matter how far afield or culturally inappropriate these may be.

The appetite for grander architectural buildings/projects in most third world countries has, in the past, necessitated the engagement of expertise from Western countries due to the level of technology required.<sup>181</sup> Given this attitude, if local architects were indeed given the task of designing capitol complexes, they would most likely engage Western expertise in the form of engineers and project managers. This gives rise to a situation that is likely to affect design decisions, particularly with the use of materials and technologies that are not quite familiar to local architects. In a similar sense, the ruling elite too may see Western models as a sign of progress and development (irrespective of whether this is really true), as we can see with Chandigarh and Brasilia. Given these facts, it is clear that architecture and the urban design of capitol complexes, like other large-scale public works which are intended to be symbols of nationhood, can exhibit personal preferences and ties to both the local and the global economy.

As given by Vale, a third frame of reference for the design of postcolonial parliament buildings and new capitals is the government's interest in treating architecture as a visible symbol of economic development which promotes national pride by bringing

---

<sup>181</sup> For example the works of Le Corbusier and Kahn are discussed in Chapter Four. In Zimbabwe and other African countries there has been a heavy involvement of Chinese and other experts from East European countries in the design and construction of public institutions. For example, the National Sports Stadium in Harare was designed and constructed by the Chinese, and the Harare International Airport was also designed and constructed with a large amount of foreign input.

international recognition.<sup>182</sup> Although parliament buildings and new capital cities are intended to demonstrate a developing country's ability to equal the West on its own terms, the advent of modernism resulted in the development of watered-down versions of the so-called International Style. Looked at from this angle, capitol complexes and capitals in third world developing countries have often been designed to suit the tastes and dictates of Western consumers and have nothing to do with local cultural and environmental setting.

With these factors mitigating against locally appropriate architectural and planning solutions, there have been a couple of capitols designed as a response to local conditions, cultural or otherwise. For example, the Sri Lankan capitol complex designed by Geoffrey Bawa, which is a pointer towards possible future developments in terms of the concept of identity. The above is an interesting example, in that it also reflects some of the intentions of and challenges faced by the designers of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project – in particular to design a culturally and regionally appropriate solution whose tastes and dictates are attuned to local consumers and local environments.

The Sri Lankan Parliamentary complex is also relevant to this study due to its third world environmental setting, which, as we have stated, is an area of particular interest to this thesis. The researcher is interested in the developments of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture with specific reference to Southern Africa and Zimbabwe. In this respect, Bawa's capitol complex within its specific cultural and economic setting crystallises challenges that also lie ahead for architects in Sub-Saharan Africa and other third world environments with respect to issues of identity construction and localness. The Sri Lankan Capitol complex was chosen as an example for further discussion due to its level of success in bringing together most of the ideas discussed in the thesis up to this point.

---

<sup>182</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 53.

## **NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE PARLIAMENT COMPLEX: The Sri Lankan Case**

Sri Lanka's 1977 parliamentary elections brought a new Government into power which immediately set about to bring into fruition plans of building a new parliamentary complex. Previous Governments had at one point or another discussed the idea of building a new Parliament, and government architects had already prepared sketches on a site in the middle of Colombo. The following sub-sections will thus look at this building and the identity issues behind the siting of the final project.

Vale<sup>183</sup> argues that the inspiration of the new building coincided not only with the coming to power of a new regime, but also with two other crucial political developments, each of which weakened the National Parliament as an institution. The first one was an introduction of a new constitution that gave the then Prime Minister executive powers, thus effectively conferring upon him the presidential post as well. In the years preceding this event the Prime Minister had taken control of yet another important institution for running the country - the machinery of the Constitutional Government. The second development was the revival of fighting between the country's major ethnic groups - the Sinhalese majority, who controlled the government, and the Tamil minority, who are presently still pressing for an independent state of Tamil Eelam. What follows is an analysis, involving architectural and political issues, of the Sri Lankan Parliament and the impact made by the two just mentioned developments.

The construction of national identity is affected by a whole range of forces: most importantly, these include political personalities, the architect's objectives and the country's objectives at an international level. The patterns of ethnic, religious, linguistic and political affiliations in Sri Lanka are extremely complex. It is because of these complexities which are inextricably linked to the siting of the capitol complex in any

---

<sup>183</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 190.

context, that it is necessary to give a brief background of the particular situation pertaining to the Sri Lankan parliamentary complex.

The 1981 census determined that, of a population of about 15,000,000, 74% were Sinhalese Sri Lankans and the population was predominantly Buddhist.<sup>184</sup> The Tamils are divided into two groups - the Hindu Tamils who live primarily on the Jaffna Peninsula, who constituted 12% of the population, and the Indian Tamils, who constituted 6% of the population and live primarily in the Central Highlands and the south. The latter were 'imported' by the British in the nineteenth century to work the tea plantations, whilst the Jaffna Tamils have a long history on the Island that dates back two thousand years, including the time of the ancient Tamil kingdoms. It is the Jaffna Tamils who are fighting for an independent state. Additionally, 7% of the Island's population is Moslem, there is a sizeable multi-ethnic Christian, mainly Roman Catholic component as well. In recent decades, which have seen the Indian Tamils, Sri Lankan Tamils and Moslems each forming several movements and creating new identities, the Sri Lankan political scene has been both diverse and divisive.<sup>185</sup>

The advent of Independence and a strong push by successive governments for Sinhala as a single national language has seen the resurgence of two millennia old animosities between the Sinhalese and Tamils with sustained eruptions of violent resistance. This case thus provides an example of some of the difficulties that were faced by or are still being faced by newly independent states in constructing a coherent national identity. It had been easier for the indigenous population of Sri Lanka during colonial times to construct their identity in opposition to the British, who, after all, had distinctly different phenotypic features. The dawn of independence however meant that political leaders had to grapple with the problem of building a coherent and cohesive new identity, which could no longer be constituted in opposition to the colonial powers.

---

<sup>184</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 192.

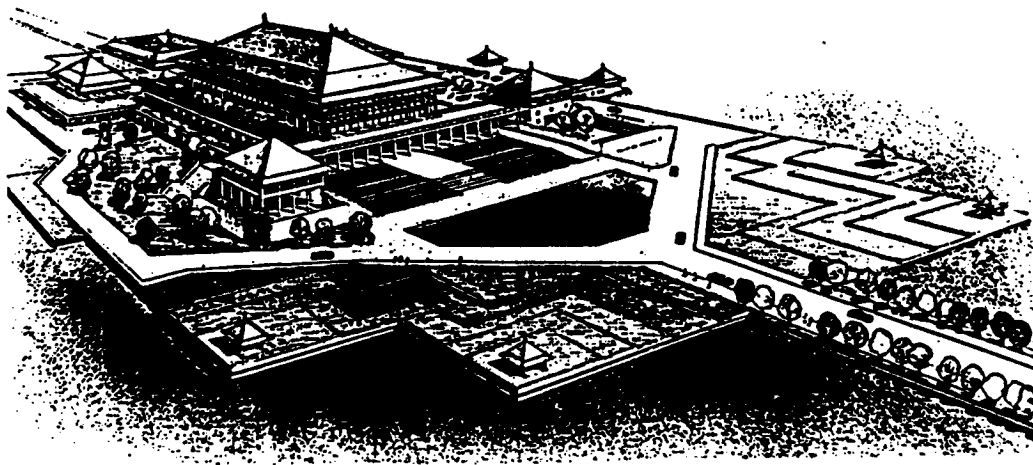


Fig. 5.1- Perspective of the parliament complex island  
(Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 195.)

Adding to the already volatile political landscape, the government of Sri Lanka promoted the Tambiah notes and revived their sponsorship of Buddhism, as an integral feature of Sinhalese national identity and cultural pride. In 1972, the country's first post-independence constitution not only entrenched Sinhala as the official language, but also established Buddhism as the only religion meriting state support.<sup>186</sup> This resulted in the total marginalisation of the Tamil population, with their participation in government dropping by approximately forty percent from 50% in 1956 to 10% in 1980.

Previous governments before 1977 had chosen a site in the middle of Colombo as a site for the proposed parliament building. The new Government of 1977 however elected to have new sketch plans drawn for a new site in an undeveloped area outside Colombo. The area, Kotte, which had been an important city in the pre-colonial era, was chosen as the new Capital and a new Parliament was to be built there. This location of the Parliament was a consolidation of Sinhalese supremacy on the whole Island, which aimed

---

<sup>185</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 192.

at centralising all resources and political power in the hinterland of the Sinhalese-dominated area. This is not, however, primarily a matter of architecture but of attempts to manipulate urban design to serve political ends.<sup>187</sup>

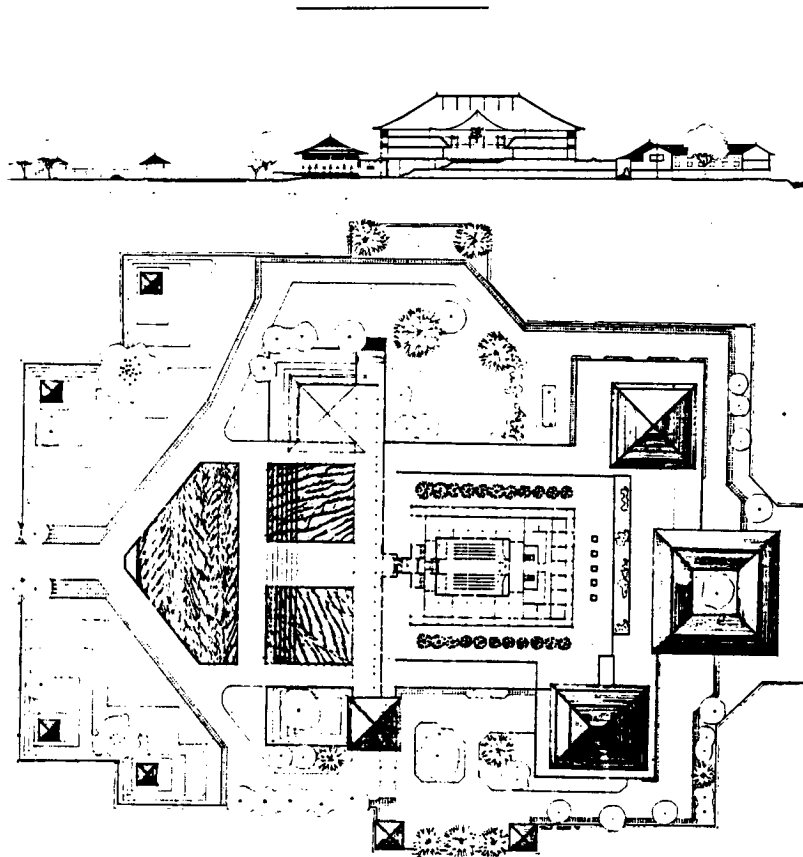


Fig. 5.2- Floor plan of chamber at lower level and Section through Parliament Chamber.  
(Source: Taylor, B. B., 1995, pp. 163)

Vale<sup>188</sup> in his study considered the following three factors with regard to the meaning of the capitol and the important political conditions embedded in the choice of the site.

- Geoffrey Bawa's architectural pluralism;
- The politics of a parliamentary island;
- The Sinhalese master plan.

<sup>186</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 193.

<sup>187</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 193.

The following is a detailed study of each of these points.

The architecture of the parliament that was proposed by Bawa, is a symbolic representation of Sri Lanka's traditions. This was done tastefully without capriciously mimicking local forms. In his architecture Bawa chose to tread the middle ground between modernism and literal localism, which is also embodied and expressed in the concrete Papua New Guinean Parliamentary building - The Haus Tambaran. Vale points out that the strength of the Bawa's design lay in his ability to draw from a wide spectrum of Sri Lanka's eclectic architectural history. Bawa's parliament building design is inclusive in its approach to history without descending into caricature or pastiche.<sup>189</sup> Although Bawa showed his grasp of religio-royal architecture as well as of its vernacular roots, he equally showed his understanding of Western architecture that he had acquired through training and travelling.

If the parliament building could have been disassociated from politics, Bawa's architectural solution might have achieved a less symbolically contentious status. Vale<sup>190</sup> argues that it is precisely because parliament buildings are so directly engendered by politics and commissioned with political as well as aesthetic intent, that they cannot be separated from politics for very long, ironically. The parliamentary complex symbolically represented Sri Lanka itself by being built on an island of a marshy site, Fig.5.1. The marsh was dredged to form a large man-made lake (known as a tank) with wide shores that were to be later thickly planted with indigenous trees and vegetation.

The parliament complex was also a vivid interpretation of Sri Lanka's prominent traditional landscape features: temple complexes and palaces were linked by man-made lakes whose water was used for irrigation purposes - a feature that is still part of Sri Lanka's luscious tropical landscape. In its true middle of the road approach, in terms of the balance between the modern and the purely traditional, Bawa's parliamentary complex recalls Sri Lanka's colonial past of Portuguese, Dutch and British nature. Its

---

<sup>189</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 194.

visual similarity to a fortress is handled at a human scale, where there is a clear articulation of hierarchy.

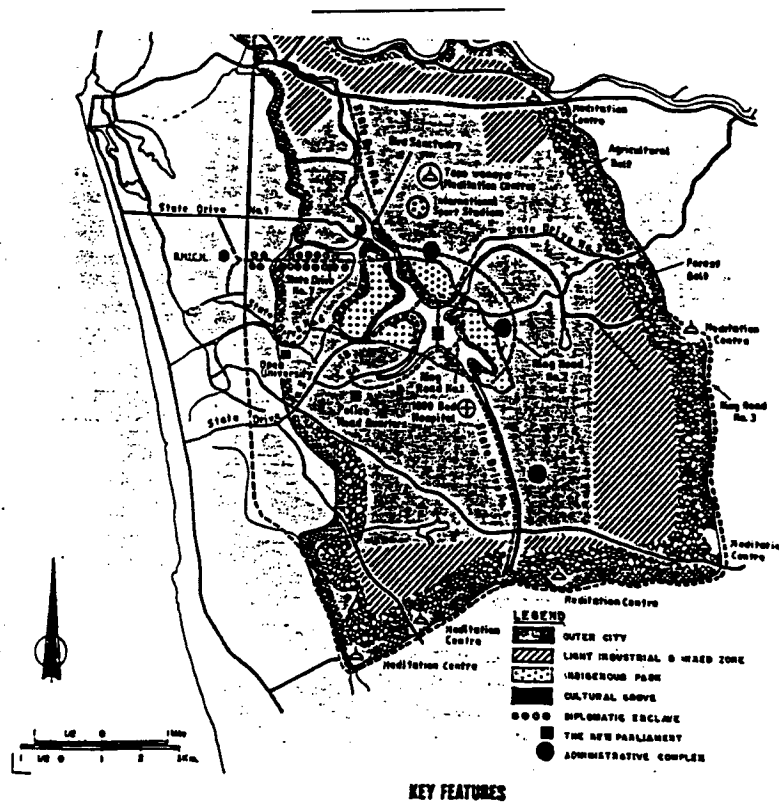


Fig. 5.3- A diagram of Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte, showing how the design highlighted the ancient capital and parliament whose symbolic importance is emphasised by the surrounding Buddhist meditation centres  
(Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 201.)

The symbolically massive scale, resembling that of the traditional temple, was achieved by having one dominant structure in the middle with subservient structures around it. With this arrangement, the parliamentary chamber is granted positional and visual supremacy, while other functions, such as the Members of Parliament's dining facility, the reception hall, a service block and security offices, are distributed into smaller pavilions which radiate from the central portion in a pinwheel manner, Fig. 5.2.<sup>191</sup> Open colonnades and arcades, suggestive of the streets of colonial Colombo, were employed as

<sup>190</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 194.

<sup>191</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 195.

linking spaces. Although they were of European derivation, local traditional craft persons gave colonnades employed at the parliament complex a local context by handcrafting them using traditional techniques.

As in most of his works, Bawa's articulation of the roof forms with deep eaves that have been moulded around protection against tropical rain, is undeniably Sri Lankan. Though the graceful, evocative rooflines of the building may be the complex's dominant formal aspect, many who have visited it prefer to emphasise its careful, thorough integration with the landscape and climate of Sri Lanka, so characteristic of Bawa's smaller building projects.<sup>192</sup> While in his smaller projects Bawa worked with nature, at this site he actually attempted to recreate typical Sri Lankan lush vegetation - a move meant to dilute the politically selected site. To determine the ultimate success of the integration of the parliament complex with the surrounding nature, we will have to wait for the recreated vegetation to reach maturity.

Whilst the architecture of the complex incorporated local traditional forms, its siting embodies deep political motives that cemented the political stronghold of the majority Sinhalese hegemony in the whole island. Although the symbolic reference to the man-made dams and other forms of water bodies were alluded to, the use of a single access to link the complex with the surrounding mass of land was driven more by security concerns than by traditional and historical precedents. By pointing out this factor Vale argues that he was not diminishing the importance of both concerns but rather recognising that form and social context are inseparable and that architectural form responds simultaneously to many diverse issues.<sup>193</sup> The siting also indicates that the government wanted to create a buffer zone between itself and the protesting public, although in the end this buffer zone was not a sufficient barrier.

There are other factors that prompted the construction of a new parliament but do not pertain to the parliamentary complex island's design. A new parliament complex was in

---

<sup>192</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 197. See a listing of some of these projects in the last section of Chapter Three.

fact long overdue because of a threefold increase in parliamentary members in the 1970s. The Old Parliament in the centre of Colombo did not provide sufficient accommodation for its members, but the delay in the construction of a new parliament in the 1960s was due to lack of funds, as these were being drained by another huge government public project - the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference.

The 1970s also witnessed the expansion of Colombo's Commercial Business District and the relocation of non-commercial activities, including the parliament. Some would have preferred the parliament to be relocated to more central cities in the hinterland of the Sinhalese, such as Kandy and Anuradhapura. However, ultimately Kotte was chosen as the new capital and site of the parliament, firstly because of its proximity to Colombo and secondly because of its historical importance for the Sinhalese people.

The parliament complex can be viewed as a temple to Sinhalese nationalism and a personification of the rule of President Jayewardene under whose government it was commissioned. The full name of the site, namely Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte, although it was named nearly five hundred years ago, had two advantages: amplification of the symbolic rule of President Jayewardene and taking advantage of the familiarity of the name and its appeal to the majority Sinhalese people. Vale says that the economic sense of buying less expensive and undeveloped land outside Colombo (which was a consideration), was overshadowed by its the significance of the area. Four miles outside Colombo, Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte is no mere suburb: it was once a fortified island redoubt of a city of major stature in pre-colonial Sri Lanka (see Fig. 5.3).<sup>194</sup>

In the fifteenth century, Kotte was home to a Sinhalese royal capital that controlled the whole island. With the upsurge of violence between the Tamil and the Sinhalese in 1983, it would seem appropriate to assume that President Jayewardene was looking to the past to symbolise his intentions of achieving a similar control over the whole of Sri Lanka.

---

<sup>193</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 200.

<sup>194</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 201.

Some theorists argue that although the Kotte parliamentary complex resembled an Indian Hindu temple, it had an even stronger resemblance to Buddhist complexes.

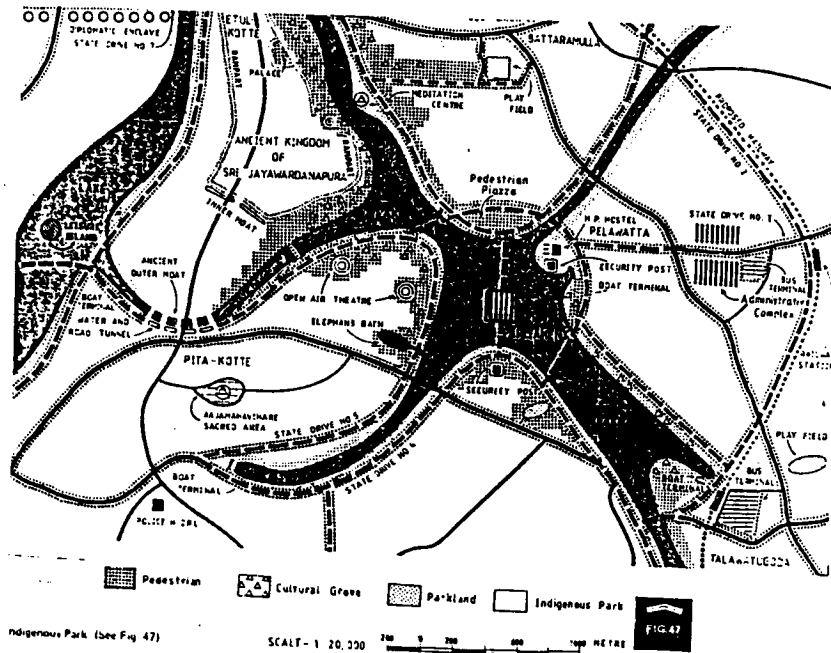


Fig. 5.4- The Island of Sri Jayawardhanapura Kotte (past) juxtaposed against the new island Parliament (present) - both being Sinhalese islands.  
(Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 207.)

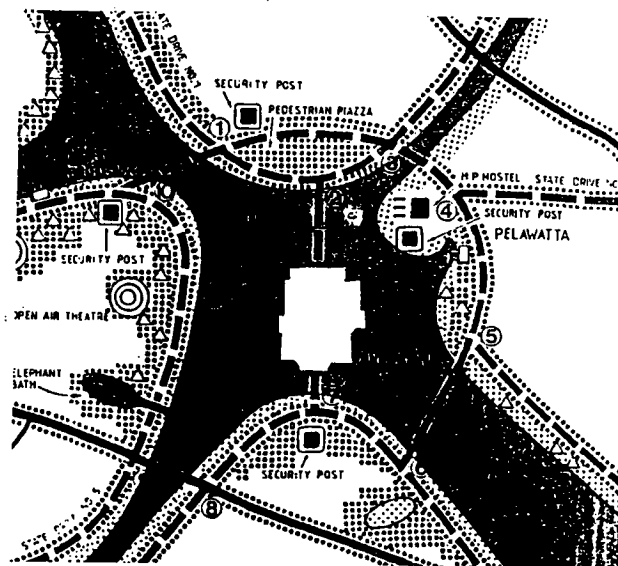


Fig. 5.5- Security concerns were behind the design of an Island Parliament.  
(Source: Vale, L. J., 195, pp. 205.)

Just as in previous eras, both Tamils and Sinhalese recalled the glories of historically important places in order to serve present political goals and in this respect, Kotte is no exception. There were two other great kingdoms on the Sri Lankan Island before the arrival of Europeans and they were based in Jaffna and Kandy. In comparison to the kingdoms in of Kandy, Anuradhapura, and Polunaruwa, the one in Kotte was small, so much so that one would question its selection as a site for a building of such national importance as the parliament complex. It would seem that the main reason for this choice was that the other sites were far away from the current Sinhalese locus of power - Colombo. To give Kotte the same historical impetus as the other sites, the government of President Jayewardene had to create an exaggerated mythology to suit its own needs.

Through words and through juxtapositions of designs, it is this association between the glories of the old and the renaissance of the new that the promoters of the new capitol complex sought to portray.<sup>195</sup> The master plan clearly shows the intention behind the juxtapositions of the parliamentary complex with the ancient Sinhalese citadel - namely, a reaffirmation of the country's Buddhist heritage.

The fifteenth century fortress and the twentieth century parliamentary of Bawa had both been built on islands and showed an extreme preoccupation with security, almost bordering obsession, Fig. 5.4. The difference between the two is that the latter was in control of the island in peaceful times, whereas the former is suffocating under military pressure from the minority Tamils in a country, which is almost in socio-economic collapse. The only aspect of the design that was ultimately of national representative or indigenous character was the plantings on and around the site.

The other factor, besides the reference to ancient kingdoms, that was emphasised by the design, , and received relentless propaganda to promote the stature of Kotte, was the security of the parliamentary complex. The design of the complex with its security posts in the east, west, and north and south resembles that of a historical fortress which is guarded jealously by the king's armies . This was done at the expense of the main reason

behind the construction of the parliament complex - namely, to promote democracy in an inclusive manner, Fig. 5.5.

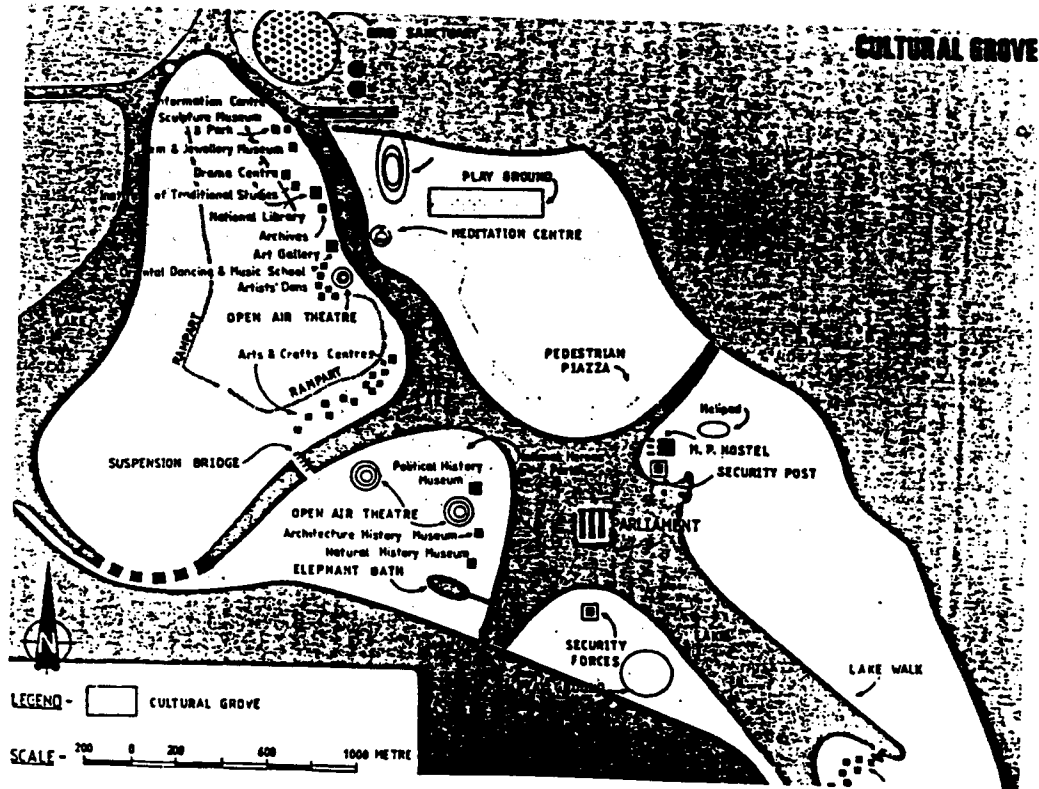


Fig. 5.6- The Sinhalese cultural grove  
(Source: Vale, L. J., 1992, pp. 195)

The alienation of minorities such as the Tamils was carried still further by Jayewardene's successor, President Premadasa, by linking the parliamentary complex to a Sinhalese cultural ritual - *gam-udawa* (or village reawakening) where annual pageants are held in various villages featuring cultural buildings, including a miniaturised parliament complex. The master plan for the site included places of spiritual significance that had originally been designed for Buddhist meditation, thus further confirming Sinhalese domination, Fig 5.6.

<sup>195</sup> Vale, L. J., *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992, pp. 203.

In addition to creating an already culturally biased site, the master plan further proposed the creation of a Cultural Grove, Fig. 5.6, to be situated on a site between the ancient Sinhalese citadel and the parliamentary complex. This complex is to house the proposed Architecture History Museum and Political Museum, thus further emphasising the will to ensure Sinhalese supremacy on the Sri Lankan Island.

The three factors behind the reason for a detailed study of the Sri Lanka Parliament Complex, as given in the introduction of this chapter, provide a useful basis for a much wider analysis of another project, also situated in a third world environment - that of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project in Zimbabwe. This latter case study will consider in detail all the theoretical issues that have been raised throughout the current thesis. Furthermore, to a certain extent it is possible to identify similarities between the Sri Lankan Parliamentary Complex and the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project; these are:

- In both cases the relevant issues of place, character and identity are intertwined with local cultural conditions and local architectural traditions.
- The political forces that were at play in the design of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project and the amount of public interest in the project which was generated despite the fact that the Bulawayo project is only of regional significance (i.e., Matebeleland Province), were similar to those pertaining to the Sri Lankan Parliament, which is, however of national importance. It is, though, through regional identities that a national identity can be constructed. The development of architectural characteristics of regional public building institutions is an important step towards the construction of architectural elements that exude national identity.
- Both projects went beyond the confines of geographic locations by tackling social issues that are beyond the immediate environs of the project.

The study of the Sri Lankan Parliamentary Complex and the theoretical material presented in the preceding three chapters of this thesis therefore, set the stage for a thorough analysis of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. Questions raised are: What are the issues around public architecture and how is national identity literally built

into these institutions? The next section tackles the first major issue of this chapter, namely identity issues generated by public architecture.

## CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter further developed the symbolism issues that were initially raised in Chapter Two during an analysis of Rapoport's approach to the study of the relationship between culture and built form, albeit in a broader scope than in the two previous chapters (Chapters 3 and 4). These issues of symbolism were related specifically to the discussion of forces around national identity and nationalism and how these forces influenced the location of recently built capital cities and the architectural character of recent capitols.

The architecture developed by Bawa went to great lengths to be as inclusive as possible, but the socio-political forces involved seem to selectively welcome only a segment of Sri Lankan society by way of recalling ancient history and glories to serve present political ends. A proper siting of the parliamentary complex might have created the desired national identity through encouraging a debate on these types of public institutions of national importance. However, all this sounds utopian in the face of the many forces involved in the construction of a national identity.

The next chapter, (Chapter 6), then, is about a discussion or outline of a case study that could be said to fall into the same league as the parliamentary complexes which were discussed in this chapter, albeit smaller in scope and scale - the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence, in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Did the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project reflect the identity of its setting, if this was the objective? The efforts of the next chapter are aimed at critically analysing the project's concept and design in conjunction with its associated historical developments and setting.

The next chapter, together in conjunction with the theoretical issues that have been discussed in the previous chapter, lays a solid foundation for an in-depth analysis of the Bulawayo Mayor's residence project in Chapter Seven.

## **PART III:**

# **THE BULAWAYO MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT**

## **OUTLINE AND ANALYSIS**

(Chapters 6 and 7)

## **CHAPTER 6.0**

### **THE PROPOSED MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT:**

#### **Background and Concepts**

## INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters gave various examples of architects and individuals whose works addressed the concept of “localness” in their design of buildings and environments by employing “culture” as a valuable resource through which local “identity” could be constructed. Most of these examples were drawn from third world environments, where there has been a growing desire to construct new national identities that reflect the post-colonial social and political order, with interesting developments having taken place on the Indian sub-continent in particular. The author of the present thesis holds the view that a post-colonial debate in architectural practice in Zimbabwe is long overdue, but also acknowledges that changes are beginning to happen in this country. The case study selected for this research, namely the proposed Mayor’s Residence project in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, is evidence of such changes. As will be shown, it was the intention of the project’s designers’ to develop a post-colonial identity for the region through addressing local historic and cultural issues.

The Bulawayo Mayor's Residence was selected as the case study for this thesis because, unlike other projects around the country, its designers specifically attempted to address the issue of “local appropriateness”. One of the objectives of this research is to assess the ultimate success of the project in this respect. The relevant terms on which this success can be evaluated have been developed in the previous three chapters and will be applied in the following chapter (Chapter 7). The present chapter will mainly provide the background to this project by discussing its history. Periodically further questions will be raised as pointers to pertinent issues to be evaluated in Chapter 7. It will demonstrate that as the three-phased design development of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence progressed, issues of local symbolism increasingly gained designers’ interest and focus. During the first design phase, the site had not yet been identified or decided upon. During the second phase, the site had already been chosen, but the design solution did not reflect the local historical and cultural setting. Lastly, during the third phase, which produced the final proposal, the designers attempted to address local cultural issues and the city's historical setting by applying the fundamental organising principles of a local historical settlement.

They also tried to deal with a range of other “localness” issues, related to site conditions, climate and available building materials. We will now look at these developments in detail.

## **INITIAL PROPOSALS OF THE MAYOR’S RESIDENCE PROJECT<sup>196</sup>**

The Urban Areas Act gazetted by the Government of Zimbabwe in 1995 entailed the establishment of new Executive Mayoral posts with official residences for each of the Executive Mayors in all cities throughout the country. There are a series of issues that could be raised in terms of opportunities presented by these enacted projects to professionals in the built environment. One of these is the implication of the Act on the cities concerned in terms of image-making and identity construction, and the manner in which architects could have approached this apparently new archetype in the country’s built environment. The other issue could have been the design opportunities presented by these projects to built-environment professionals with respect to the debate on the question of locally appropriate built forms and environments. What approach was possible in the design of these projects and was local appropriateness an issue at all? The question of local appropriateness was in fact not an issue in any of the projects except for one. This is testimony to the lack of co-ordinated debates around projects of regional and national importance that is currently prevailing in the country, particularly within the community of built environment professionals. The next sub-section looks at the historical background of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor’s Residence project, followed by a critical analysis of its first two phases of the design development through which it will be attempted to answer the questions raised above.

The enacted Government legislation required each of the residences to be designed as an official home for the incumbent Executive Mayors during their five-year terms. This condition meant that the incumbent Mayor was to move into the residence together with

provisions and image-making from one residence to another; the specific details were to be determined by the designers and the client. This flexibility that was inherent in the provision of the Executive Mayors' residences provided designers and planners with two main options with different levels of "identity" construction. The first option, aimed at national identity construction, would have been to design a prototypical building to be duplicated throughout all cities as per the provisions of the Act. This could have meant a minimal consideration of local conditions, with space and form being major determinants. Within these parameters, a more positive development could have been effected either by the Government Architect or through a commissioned national competition. A vigorous debate could have been generated on what an "Executive Mayoral Residence" is and how this could be designed to create a national character and iconography. In this particular approach the Government would be the client. The second option might have concentrated on architectural solutions drawn from local vernacular traditions, with each residence being individually designed to suit its setting (geographical, cultural, political, social...), with the relevant city councils being the clients. A debate on this option, focussing on issues of "localness", could have been encouraged among regional and local urban residents as well as the whole community of built environment professionals. Debates with regard to the first option would have focussed primarily on issues of national symbolism, while in the second option, issues of regional identity would have been debated.

In effect, then, both options would have resulted in discussions and debates on whether these mayoral residences were public or semi-public buildings or institutions. This could also have clarified the most suitable location of the buildings, i.e., whether they should be located in commercial or rather in residential areas. In the case of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence, it might have been suggested that the building could be located near the Civic Centre, in the vicinity of other major official buildings of the City Council, such as the Tower Block, Revenue Hall and the City Hall. Unfortunately these were all missed opportunities.

Council, such as the Tower Block, Revenue Hall and the City Hall. Unfortunately these were all missed opportunities. The Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project was primarily designed by the City's Architectural Section. Spatial requirements were mainly determined by the function ascribed to the Executive Mayors Residences by the Act - as a home for the Executive Mayor during his term of office, with sufficient guest rooms as well as accommodation for the support staff.

The Council's Five-Member Committee and the Senior Architect jointly developed the initial brief of the project that was further refined as the project design progressed through to the third phase.

The first scheme of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project was developed from the basic requirements provided by the Government legislation. In the absence of a chosen site, the first scheme was largely an exploratory one centred only on spatial provisions: It provided two three-bedroom blocks for the Mayor and his guests respectively. This basic brief changed slightly after the first scheme, with the second brief also providing for a conference facility that became part of the second phase of the project design development. A major change occurred after the second scheme had been presented to the Council. The Council requested a design solution that reflected "local" conditions. This requirement by the Council was to have a fundamental impact on the final design phase, as it encouraged the incorporation of issues related to the concept of "localness", details of which will be revealed later on in this chapter.

The client (the Bulawayo City Council), through its Five-Member Committee, did not elaborate on what exactly they meant by "local", but the Council Architect understood it to mean a design solution that reflected isiNdebele "history and social order".<sup>197</sup> The City Architect thus suggested to the Five-Member Committee that the best form that represented the City's cultural setting was the historical settlement of KoBulawayo, and

this became a critical point in terms of designing a culturally appropriate project for the City. From here on KoBulawayo assumed a central role in the design of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. An issue which will be addressed in the next chapter (Chapter 7) is the appropriateness of KoBulawayo as a representative of what is "local", especially considering that Bulawayo is fast becoming a metropolitan city.

During the development of the last (third) scheme more "local" cultural symbols were incorporated into the scheme, and these included a traditional conference sitting arrangement. As the brief developed from the first through to the third phase, spaces were divided into public and private areas, where necessary, to reflect the building's semi-public nature. The Council Architect also suggested that since the building expenses were to be shouldered by ratepayers, it was critical that the building had to take this factor into account. To fulfil this requirement, he suggested an introduction of public spaces like the conference room and the Mayor's Home Office, where he could be seen by the public as well as his official guests. In this respect, the building would have addressed the question of its public-private role as both a residence and a mini-conference facility. Also taken into account was that the elected Mayor was to occupy the residence for a specified period to fulfil both his/her public duties and also to be assured of his/her private life. Thus it was proposed to build warehouses on the site, where the Mayor could store his/her personal property during his term of office.

The semi-public nature of the building can be considered an appropriate response to the call for "localness" made by the Council, in that semi-public spaces, such as an outdoor space for men's multi-domestic purposes (*idale*), are part of isiNdebele culture.<sup>198</sup> But the ultimate questions would be How appropriate was the application of this traditional space concept in a building of this nature? And how much did this contribute to the concept of

---

<sup>197</sup> This information was solicited from Mr. P. D. Sibanda the City Council then, during one of the informal interview we had. Unfortunately, there are no written documents on the City Council reports to this effect but the spatial form of the historical city of KoBulawayo subsequently became the basis of the final proposal. Also see, Nyathi, P., *Traditional Ceremonies of AmaNdebele*, Mabo Press, Gweru, Zimbabwe, 2001.

<sup>198</sup> This can be confirmed by the interviews carried out with respondents in Appendix B, pp. 256 of this thesis.

“localness”? The following is a schedule of the relevant spaces that made up the Mayoral residence:

1. PUBLIC SPACES:

These were made up of

- the entrance forecourt
- a foyer
- a conference room
- an information and exhibition space
- a cloakroom and WC

2. THE MAYOR’S WING:

Public Areas

This was made up of

- formal lounge
- formal dining room
- home office
- bar
- kitchen

Private Areas

The Mayor’s wing had

- an entry porch
- a kitchen
- a dining room
- 2 living rooms
- 2 bedrooms: non-en suite
- 1 bedroom with en suite
- the Mayor’s bedroom with an en suite and a study room

3. THE GUEST WING:

Public Areas

- an entry porch
- a living room
- a kitchen

Private Areas

- 3 bedrooms, all of them with en suites

#### 4. SERVICE

Supporting staff were

- 4 x Kitchen Staff
- 2 x Gardeners
- 1 x Chauffeur

Spaces for these were

- storerooms
- warehouses
- laundry
- garages
- guardroom

#### 5. RECREATION

These were

- a swimming pool
- a tennis court

This brief was a product of all three phases of the design development, and the symbolism issues raised were in terms of the architectural character of the proposed building with respect to its spatial arrangements, forms and materials.

The next sub-section discusses developments of the concepts of the Mayor's Residence project with particular focus on "supportiveness" and symbolism issues. This process of consideration at the issues of symbolism only began at the start of the second phase

The City Council's Architectural Section executed the first and second phases of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, with the first one largely looking at spatial issues in terms of functional requirements, the scope of the design being limited by the fact that an appropriate site for the project had not yet been decided on. It had a symmetrical plan, organised around an east-west axis. A brick paved ground where flag-posts were to be erected divided the entrance and exit ways axially, thereby marking the entrance to the complex. There were four distinctive rectangular blocks of buildings that formed a square courtyard.

Circulation and other functional spaces like spa pools joined each of the two blocks on either side of the axis (Fig. 6.1). At the top of the axis there was a gazebo that was designed as a place for relaxing next to the swimming pool with sitting areas on either side of it. Further, the scheme also linked the Mayor's guest and service wings together with servants quarters, with a rectangular block allocated to each of them. The main buildings were rectangular blocks with hip roof forms while the workers' quarters were rectangular with gable roof forms.

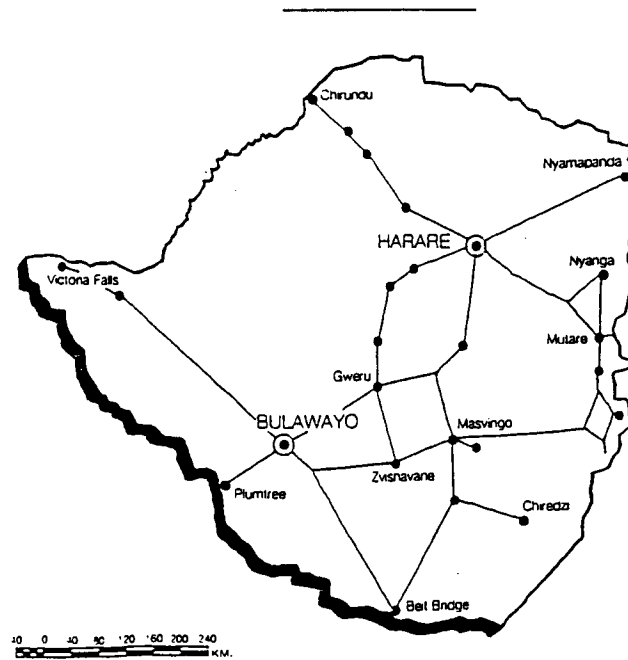


Fig. 6.2- Bulawayo in relation to other cities.  
 (Source: NUST Master Plan Report, pp. 1.2)

Generally, this was a very mundane even boring scheme without any particularly strong philosophical approach. The proposal addressed neither site nor cultural issues. In this respect, the scheme also did not address issues of “localness” which were defined in the later brief that was developed through discussions between the architect and Council representatives. At this first stage of design, no site had been selected, nor was the brief clear in terms of symbolic and spatial requirements besides having the Mayor's and the guest wings. Some of these above-mentioned issues in the brief were only initiated by the second scheme after the selection of a site.

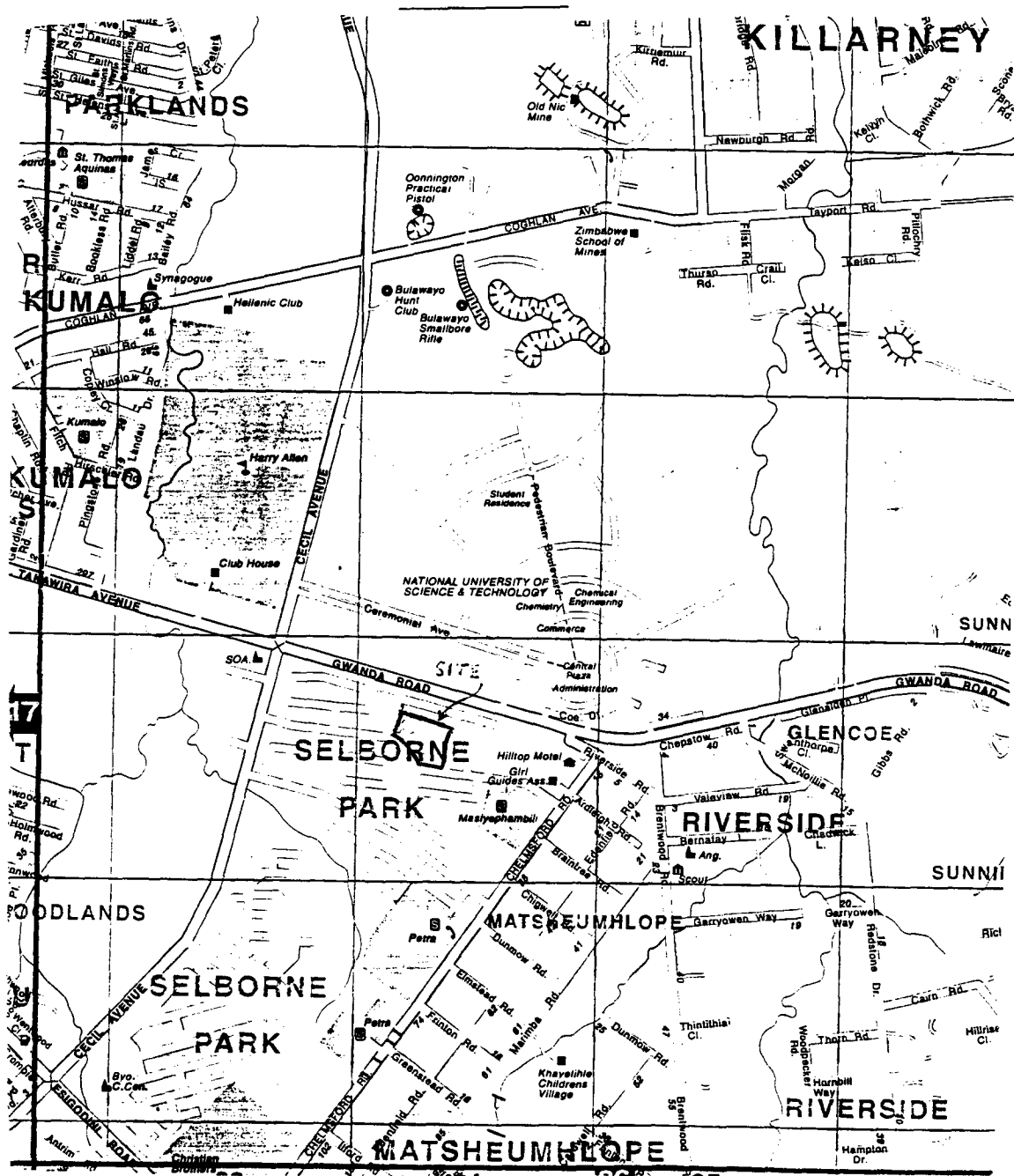


Fig. 6.3: The location of the proposed Mayor's Residence.  
 (Source: The Bulawayo Road Map)

Identification of the actual location and site for the proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence gave the design an impetus that it had lacked in the first scheme. It must be asked however, whether, considering Bulawayo's regional location, the chosen site was of any symbolic significance and how this impacted on the design solution?

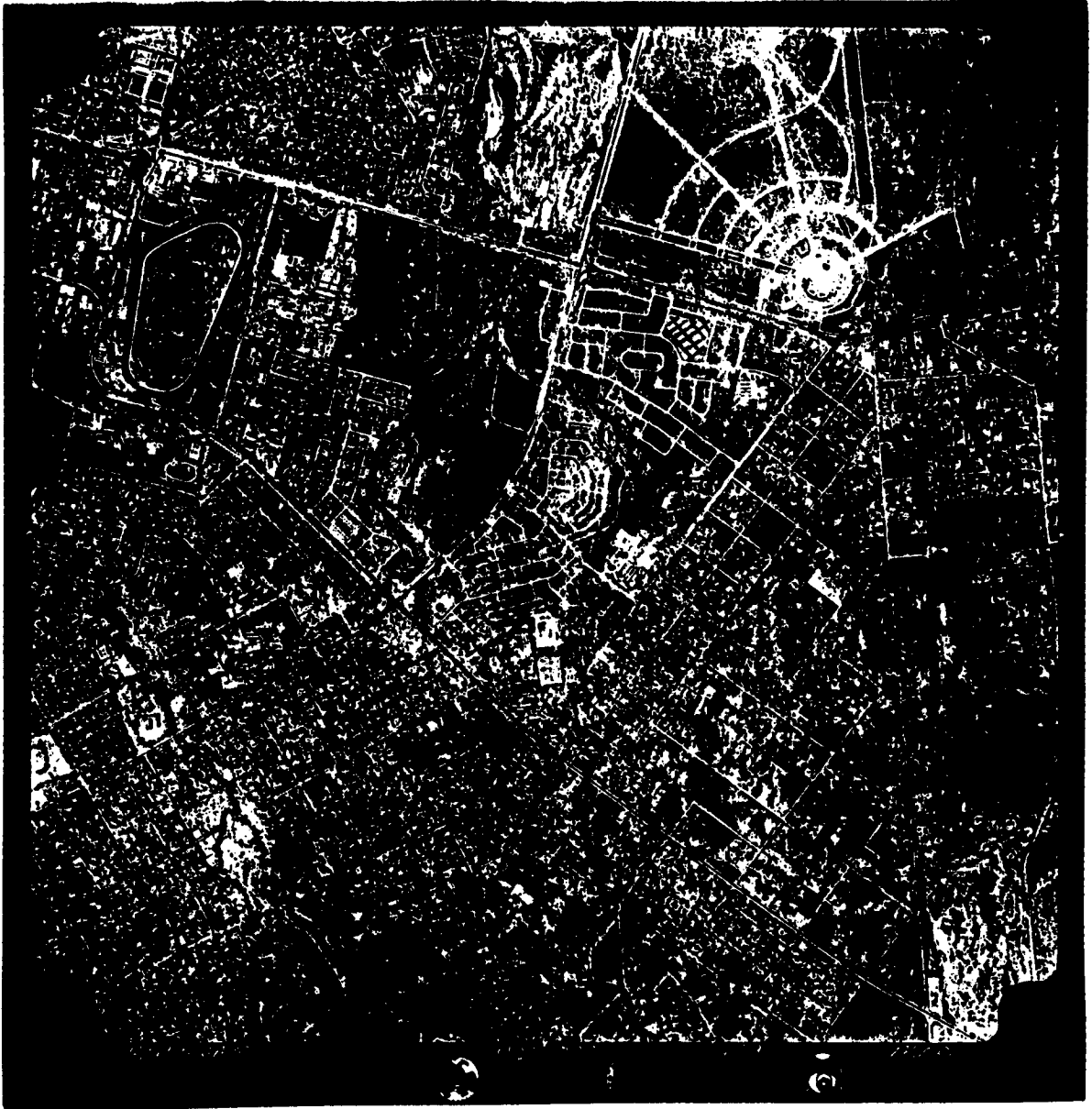


Plate 6.1- Aerial photograph of the location of the Mayor's Residence.  
(Source: The Surveyor General's Office)

Bulawayo is the provincial centre of Matebeleland (one of Zimbabwe’s regional provinces) and the second largest city in Zimbabwe, with a population close to one million and is linked to other urban centres in the country and neighbouring states by air, road and rail (Fig. 6.2). The city has a tropical climate and due to its high altitude its temperatures can vary greatly from night to day, summer to winter. The summer rains also vary greatly and are interrupted by dry and cold winters with very windy conditions in the months of July to September.

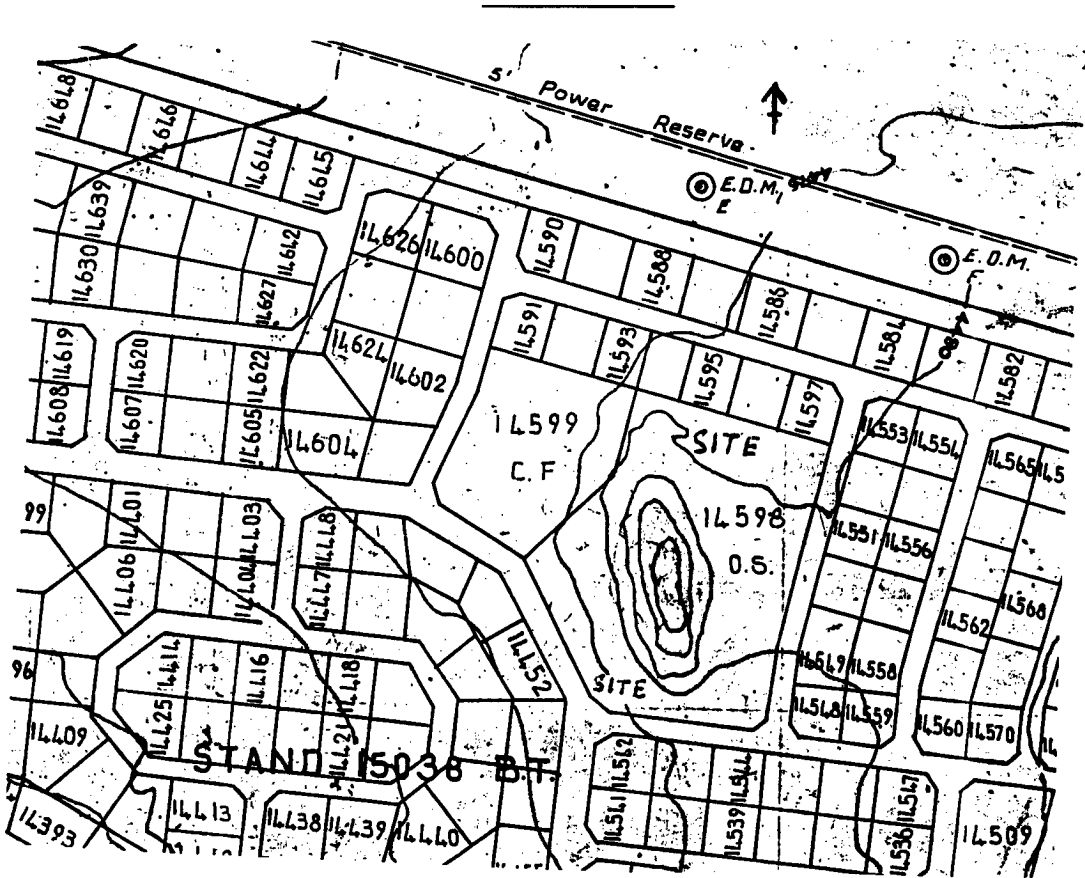


Fig. 6.4- Site of the proposed mayor’s Residence.  
 (Source: The Mayor’s Residence Project Report

The city generally has low- and high-density suburbs located on the eastern and western parts of the Central Business District, respectively. It was in one of its low-density suburbs that the City Council chose to locate the proposed Executive Mayor’s residence. The City Council’s Town Planning Department chose Selbourn Park to be the location of the proposed Mayor’s Residence, see Fig. 6.3, and Plate 6.1.



Plate 6.2- the national University of Science and Technology: View to the North from site.  
(Source: Taken by Mr P. D. Sibanda)



Plate 6.3- the view into the CBD  
(Source: Taken by Mr P. D. Sibanda)

The chosen site of the proposed Mayor's residence is just off Gwanda Road, which is the main link of Bulawayo, Beitbridge through to Johannesburg, see Fig. 6.3. The initial site chosen was in a valley, indicated in figure 6.3, but during a visit by some of the City Councillors they noticed a hill outcrop up the valley and they decided that it was more appropriate for the proposed building, see Fig 6.4. This portion of the hill was originally designated as a public park and is still covered with natural vegetation, flora and fauna.

Across Gwanda Road to the northeast, there is the National University of Science and Technology (Plate 6.2 and Fig. 6.3), and to the northwest, there is the Central Business District, (Plate 6.3). The hill has an elongated ridge that stretches in a north-south direction where the east-west slopes are steeper.

The selection of a hill outcrop as a site for a settlement was a prominent feature of amaNdebele on their northward migration from KwaZulu and in present-day southwestern and western Zimbabwe before the demise of their Kingdom.<sup>199</sup> Symbolically, the hill outcrop selected for the site took on the status of amaNdebele historical settlements. In this respect, the outcrop identified the proposed building with a chain of traditional amaNdebele settlements.

The second scheme took into consideration the elongated outcrop ridge by keeping the symmetrical axis as an organising element. Besides this symmetrical axis, the second scheme was also similar to the first one in that it kept the Mayor's and the guest wings and a servants' quarters. The second scheme however responded to site conditions by having the main building block sitting on the flat top of the outcrop with views into the City Centre being of primary importance.

The conference space was first incorporated in this second scheme. The main entrance foyer, which had a veranda facing the City end, led straight into the conference space (see Fig. 6.5). The Mayor's and guest wings were on the same level on either side of this

central conference centre. A rotunda with a tiled roof, which was adopted from Hampshire County Infant School, was employed to visually highlight the conference centre. Apart from adapting itself to a small extent to the geography of the terrain, the scheme did not however address the local cultural setting in any way. At this level it was still fulfilling the parameters of the brief with respect to space schedules, and it also only minimally addressed site conditions: actually, it simply flattened the site without taking advantage of the site's slope and the opportunity to play with numerous levels.

A grand entrée with a curved roof form with classical columns marked the main entrance foyer into the mansion, while the City end had a gable roof form. In terms of spaces, the Mayor's wing catered mainly for his family and immediate family guests, while the formal guest wing provided bedrooms, lounge and other related convenience spaces (Fig. 6.6).

To conclude this section, then, it is clear from the above, that both of these schemes in fact served as exploratory platforms which ultimately generated a lively debate around the concept of "localness" and cultural connectivity. These concepts were to be central in the last and final phase of the design development of the Bulawayo Mayor Residence project, particularly with respect to issues of symbolism and national identity.

## **THE FINAL PROPOSAL OF THE MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT**

The presentation of the second scheme proposed by the Council's Architectural Section finally introduced issues of local symbolism. Subsequently and in response to the second proposal, after the Council had asked for a solution that reflected local cultural and a social setting, the Council Architect convinced it that the historical settlement of KoBulawayo was the most appropriate symbol for the region. However, it must be asked how appropriate this symbolism really was for a building that was to embody both a public and a private character? Further, besides the KoBulawayo settlement that was

The third and final proposal introduced two main symbolism issues in order to address the question of “localness”:

- The adoption of an abstract circular plan. This was a response to local historical and cultural setting of the project.
- The use of winding roads joining various courtyards. This was a response to the hill outcrop on the site. This can also be seen as a historical solution that has been used previously in ruins around the country, including those of Great Zimbabwe and Khami.

The conceptual outline that follows hereunder will highlight these and other similar aspects of the design that addressed the question of “localness”. The relevant symbolism aspects will largely be analysed in detail in the next chapter (Chapter 7).

Analysis of KoBulawayo in the 1890s

- Gateways
- Exterior enclosure
- King's Residence
- King's Precious Possessions

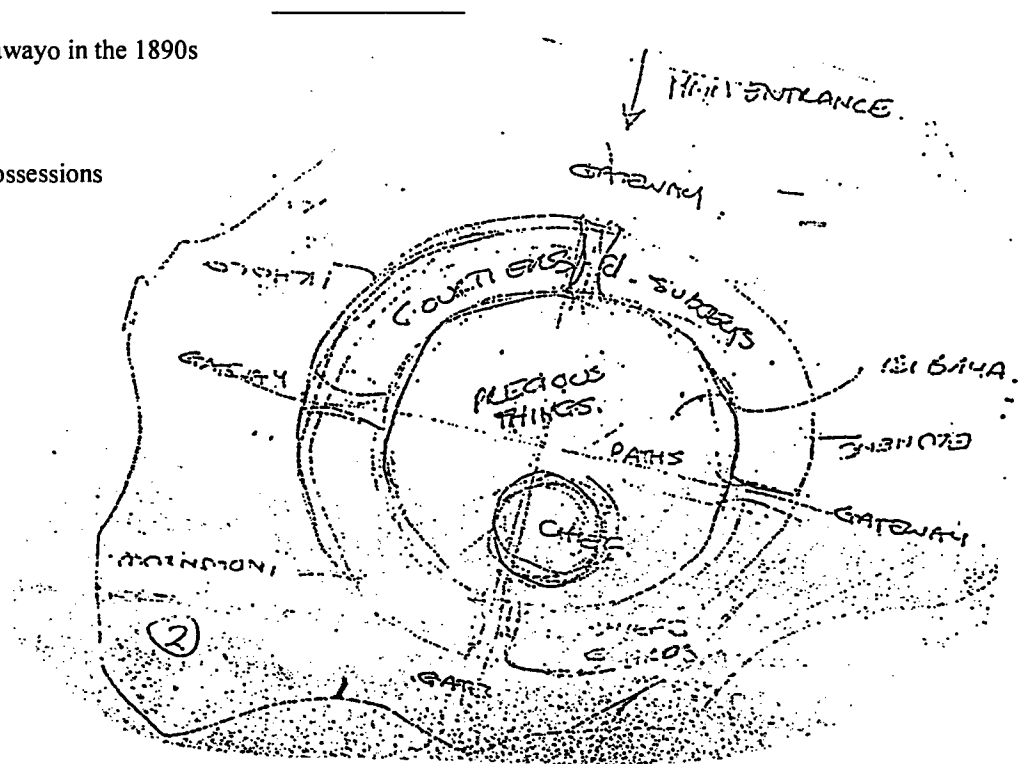


Fig. 6.7- Analysis of KoBulawayo  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report, Fig. 3)

As has been indicated above, the third phase of design development of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project centred on the historical settlement of KoBulawayo as it had been in the 1890s.

-The analysis of the orientation of the site integrated with the concept of KoBulawayo

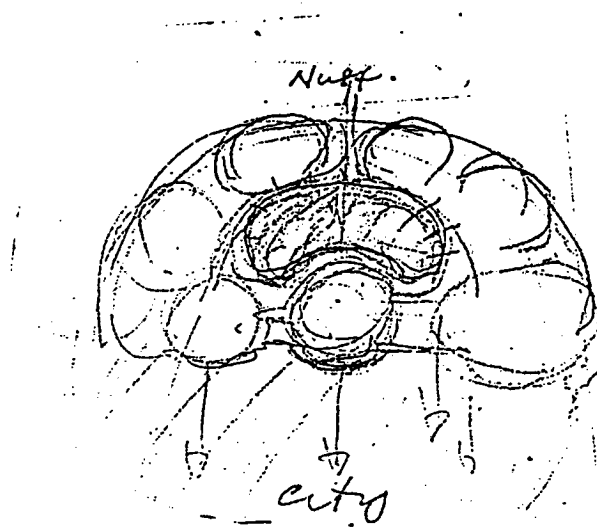


Fig. 6.8- Analysis of Selbourn Park Site.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Sequential Analysis of the Site.

- Inside
- Outside
- Neighbourhood

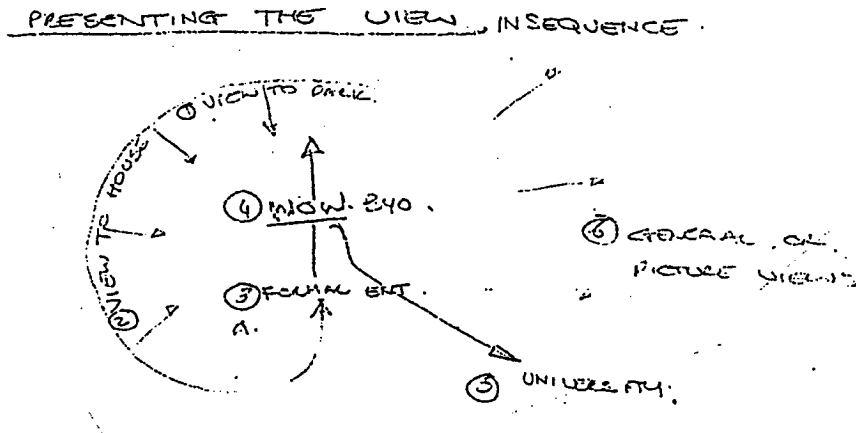


Fig. 6.9- Analysis of the Site  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

As has been indicated above, the third phase of design development of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project centred on the historical settlement of KoBulawayo as it had been in the 1890s. The central area of this settlement had been reserved for keeping treasured items and goods and this included kraals for keeping cattle herds over night. The circular form had four entrances, with the King's residence located off-centre towards the southern entrance. Concentric settlements close to the central court were reserved for close royal members with the commoners occupying outlying areas, (see Fig. 6.7).<sup>200</sup>

The next step in addressing the concept of "localness" was an integration of the orientation of the site (similarly to KoBulawayo) in order to suit the site's geography and terrain.

Analysis of the movements on site.

- Views. Views into prominent areas in the City were emphasised, i.e., the City Centre and the University
- Sun. The circulation of the sun around the site was analysed to take the ridge of the site into account.
- Circulation. The ridge was analysed in relationship to the circulation to maximise the element of surprise.

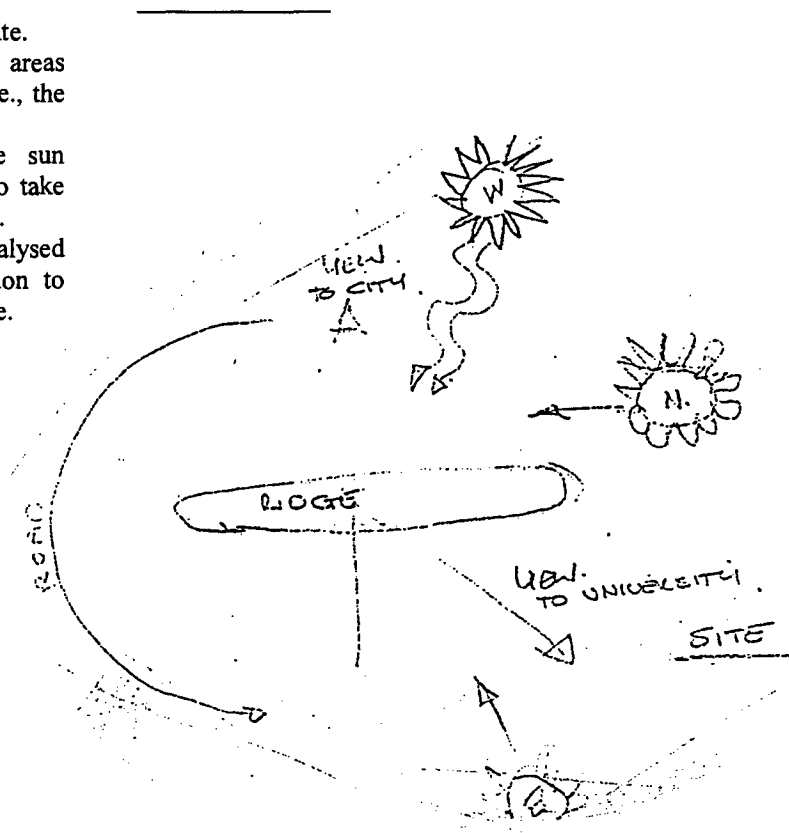


Fig. 6.10- Analysis of the Movements on Site  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

<sup>200</sup> Ransford, O., *Bulawayo: Historic Battlefield of Rhodesia*, A A Balkema, Cape Town, 1968.

Concept Development  
-Further Integration of KoBulawayo analysis  
and Site Layout

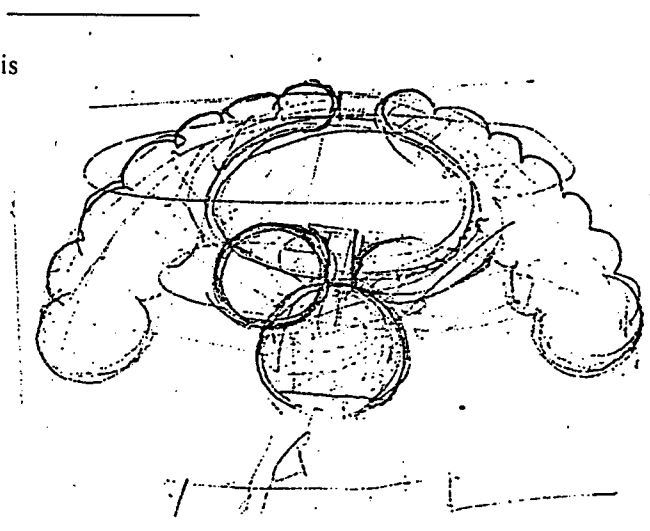


Fig. 6.11- Concept Development  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Concept Development  
-Integration and Site Analysis of  
Surrounding Forms and Concept.

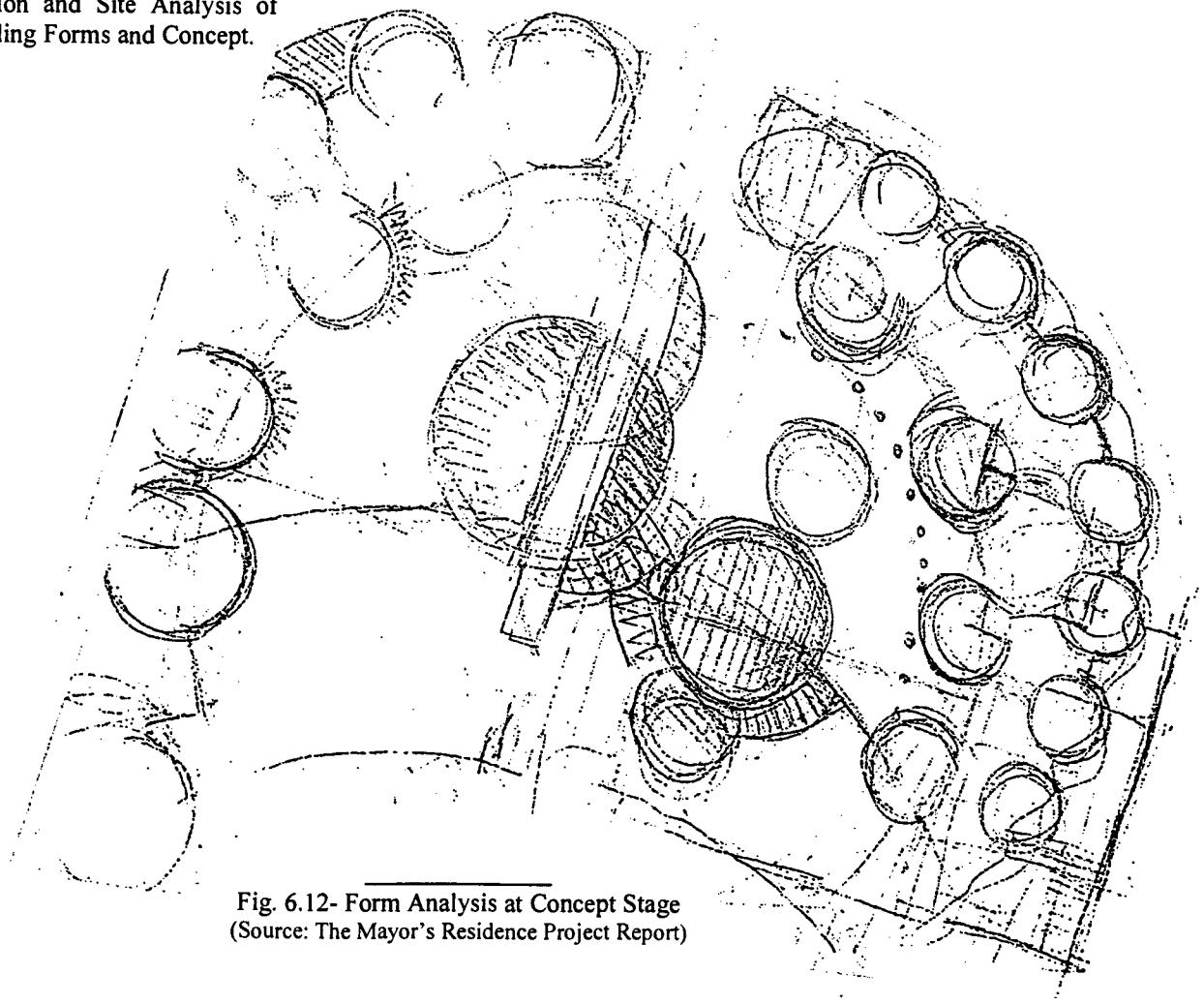
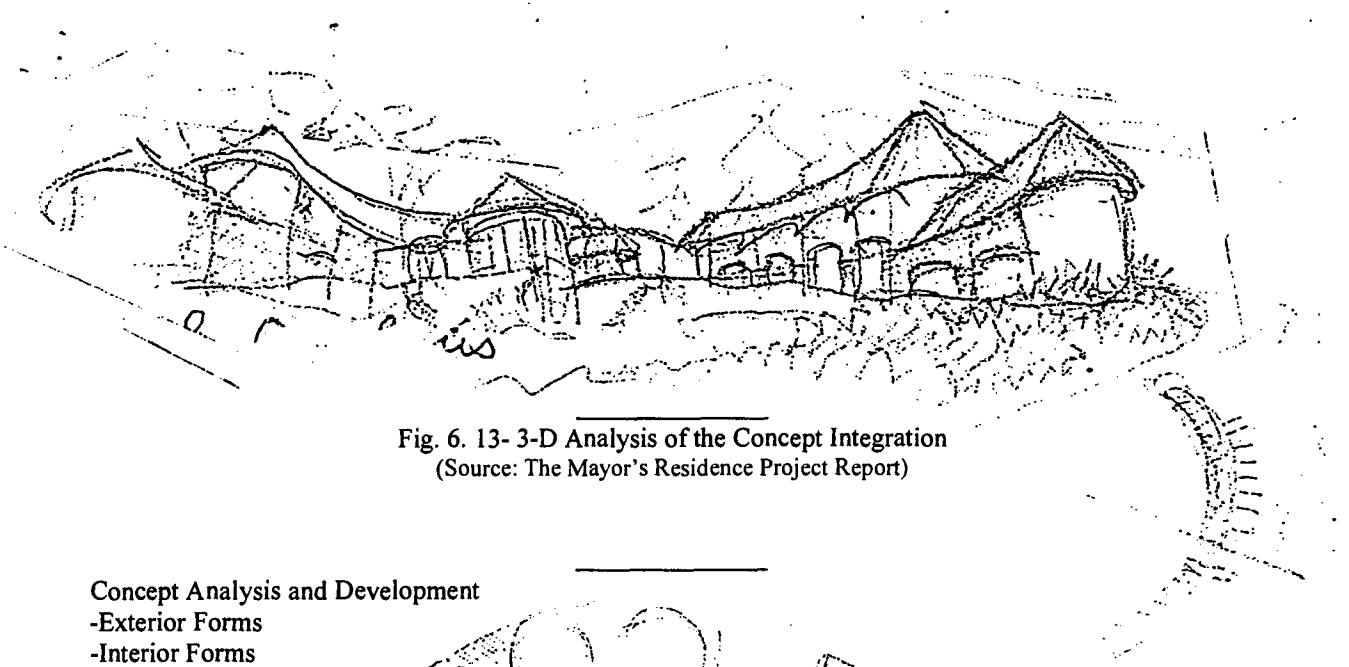


Fig. 6.12- Form Analysis at Concept Stage  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

---

**Concept Development**

- 3-D analysis of this concept development

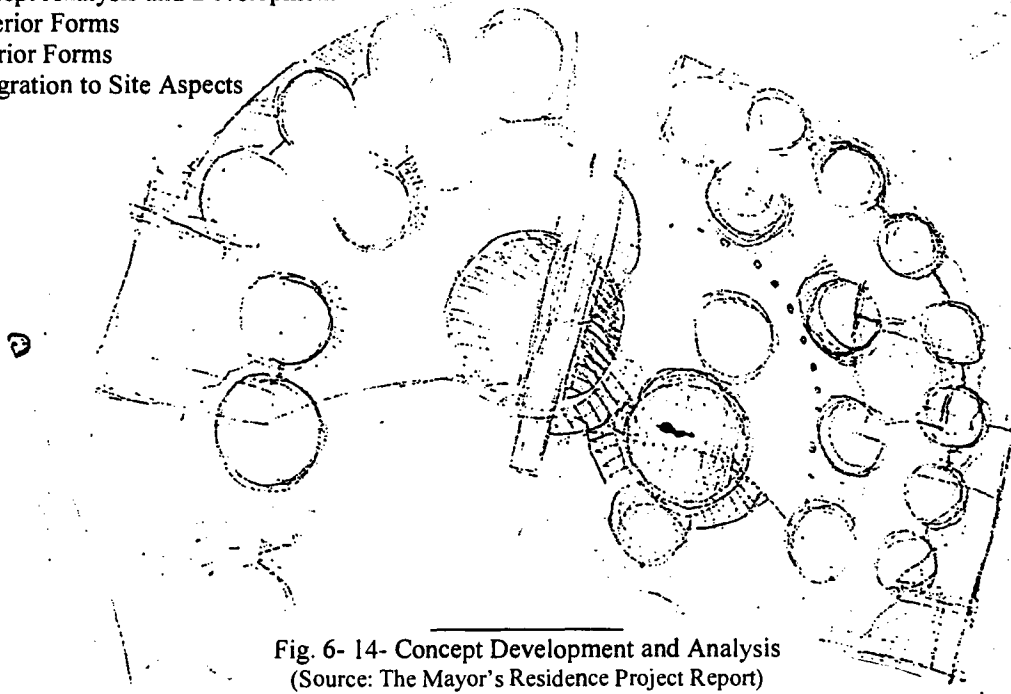


**Fig. 6- 13- 3-D Analysis of the Concept Integration**  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

---

**Concept Analysis and Development**

- Exterior Forms
- Interior Forms
- Integration to Site Aspects



**Fig. 6- 14- Concept Development and Analysis**  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

From the above discussion it is clear that, unlike the first and second phases, the third design attempted to integrate the proposed building with conditions on site and this included the landscape and the views. Further explorations were carried out and were mainly aimed at the creation of courtyards and forecourts; these are a typical feature of

City Centre and The National University of Science and Technology. See figures 6.8 to 6.10 which illustrate how movement was incorporated into the layout of the site.

From the above discussion it is clear that, unlike the first and second phases, the third design attempted to integrate the proposed building with conditions on site and this included the landscape and the views. Further explorations were carried out and were mainly aimed at the creation of courtyards and forecourts; these are a typical feature of local historical stone ruins and were found to be appropriate for the site (see Figs. 6.11 and 6.12). A three dimensional analysis of roof forms was developed to suit local traditional ones, with similar explorations and analyses being carried out with respect to plan forms (Figs. 5.13 and 5.14).

The third phase of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project had thus introduced a two-dimensional analysis of KoBulawayo as part of a response to what was termed "local" in the brief. The second issue that responded to this requirement "localness" was the way in which the site was handled in response to its spatial requirements and building forms.

At this point of design development, a vertical integration of the principle of KoBulawayo with the site to create a coherent concept became critical and it was resolved that the proposed structures were to cause minimum interference with the landscape. The way to achieve this was sought by analysing historical ruins in the country, one of which is found on the outskirts of the modern City of Bulawayo - the Khami Ruins. These ruins used winding walkways, buttressed by retaining stone walls to take individuals from the lowest to the highest point of the site. Furthermore, the higher a building or space was, the more important it was. The residences of the royal family, the religious leader and the King's advisor were highly ranked, and were accordingly located at the top of such settlements.<sup>201</sup> A similar line of thinking was adopted in developing the concept of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. This resulted in the integration of both the two-dimensional qualities of the historical settlement of KoBulawayo with a variety of site levels (see Figs. 6.15 to 6.18).

---

<sup>201</sup> See Garlake, P., S., *Great Zimbabwe*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973.

The layout of the proposed project and its building forms were designed to follow various routes to the top of the hill outcrop.

Concept Design Development  
-Integration of Forms and Circulation Analysis

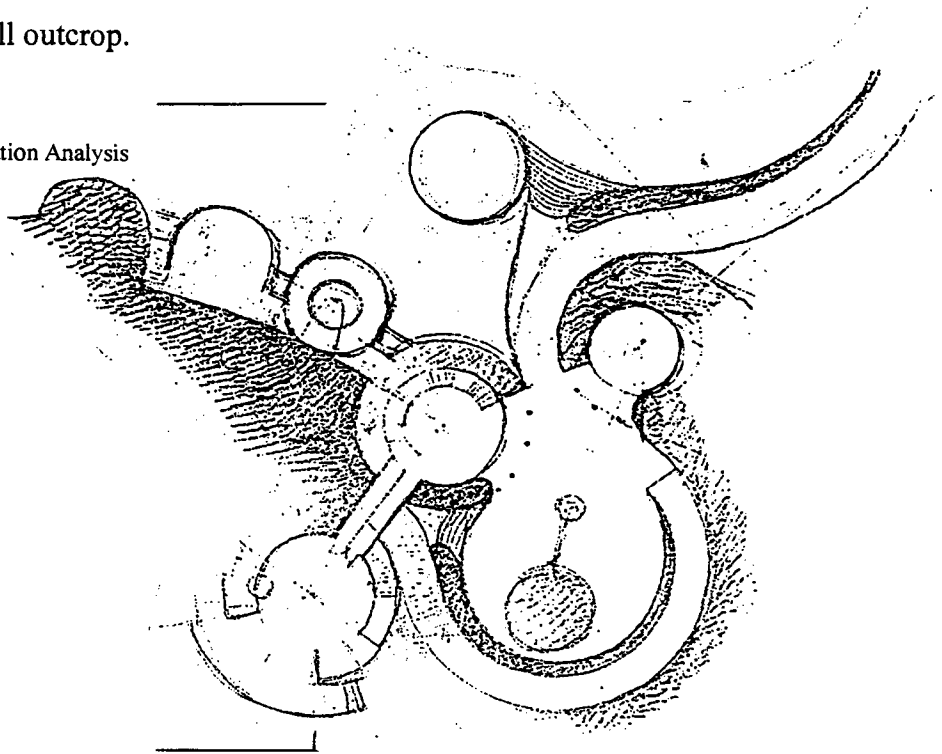


Fig. 6.15- Concept Development  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Executive Mayor's Residence  
Concept Development  
-Circulation within the Site. Based  
on layout of local historical ruins.  
-Block Concept Forms  
Relationship. This explored circular  
traditional house forms as part of  
localising the design solution.

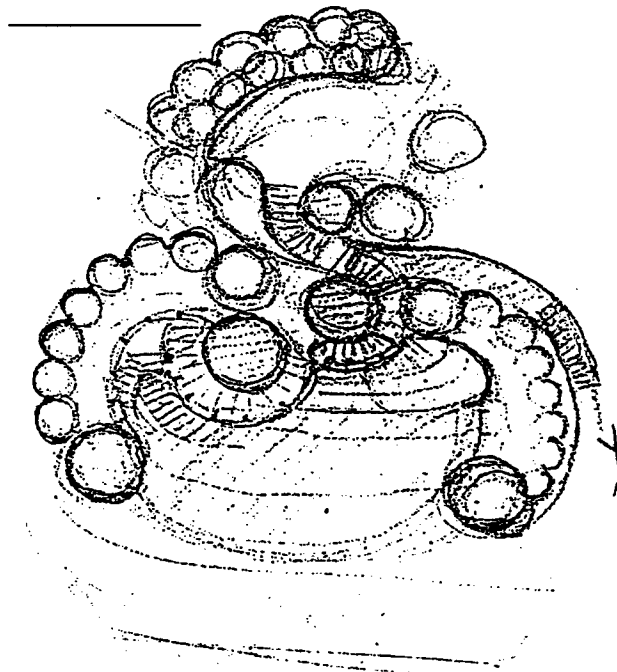


Fig. 6.16- Executive Mayor's Residence Concept Development  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

The roof forms together with the general building forms were a variant of traditional isiNdebele huts. The cone-on-drum building types were used instead of the original beehive structures, partly as a response to climatic conditions and partly to protect the timber against termites. This aspect of the third scheme was one of the architects' responses to the council's request for a "locally" appropriate design solution. In contrast with the rectangular building forms that had been utilised in the second scheme, the third phase design development sought to use the circular forms from local vernacular traditions. Most of these sketches are accompanied with notes describing issues that were considered to accentuate the fundamental principles of KoBulawayo, and local traditional lifestyles and values.

#### Site and Concept Integration

-Site Exploration. Buildings in local historical ruins were built on platforms. In this case designers explored possibilities of using circular platforms.

-Integration of Site and Forms. This part saw an exploration of curved forms as part of designing buildings in harmony with the site.

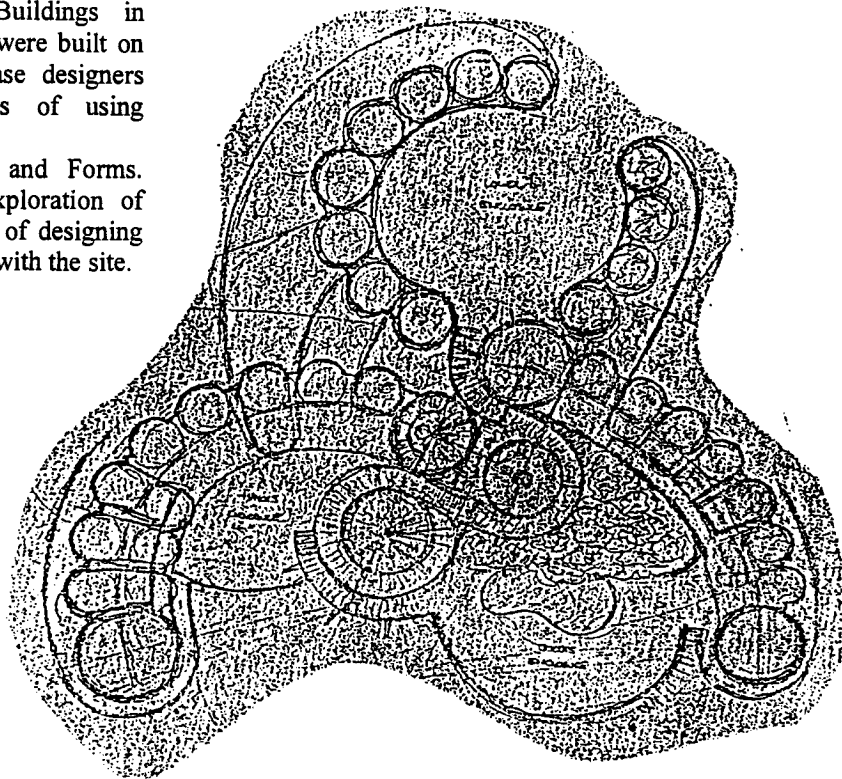


Fig. 6.17- Site and Concept Integration  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Accommodation was divided into five broad spatial groups that reflected the proposed building's semi-public status. These were public spaces, the mayor's wing, the guest wing, the service wings and the recreation areas. The proposed public spaces were an

entrance forecourt, foyer, conference room, information and exhibition spaces, cloakroom and wet closet.

The mayor's wing was divided into private and public spaces (Fig. 6.19). The public spaces were to be a formal lounge and dining room, home office, a bar and a kitchen, while private spaces consisted of a study, dining room, living room, two bedrooms with en suites, one bedroom with a separate bathroom and the mayoral bedroom suite.

3-D Analysis: Perceived Forms Analysis. The idea behind the 3-D exploration was to symbolically accentuate the importance of the Mayor in the City - the "King" of the City - but how effective and appropriate was this?

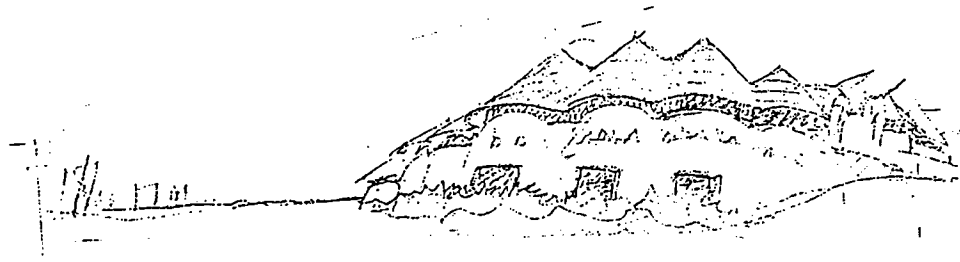


Fig. 6.18- Concept Exploration Development  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

The guest wing (Fig. 6.20), which was part of the abstract circle forming KoBulawayo, was to have a dining room, lounge, kitchen, three bedrooms with en suites and the main guest bedroom suite.

At the conceptual level both wings were designed to step down the hill facing the City Centre. Even with this "stepping", both ends had sufficient space to provide double floors at the far ends. Both wings together formed a pair of horns bisected by an open space (entrance forecourt), which was envisaged as "a centre of poise". From here one could either enter the wings or the conference centre and home office block a few metres ahead (Fig. 6.21).

Space Concept Development Analysis  
-Mayor's Wing Space Analysis. Public areas were closer to the entrance forecourt with more private spaces at the far end of the wing.

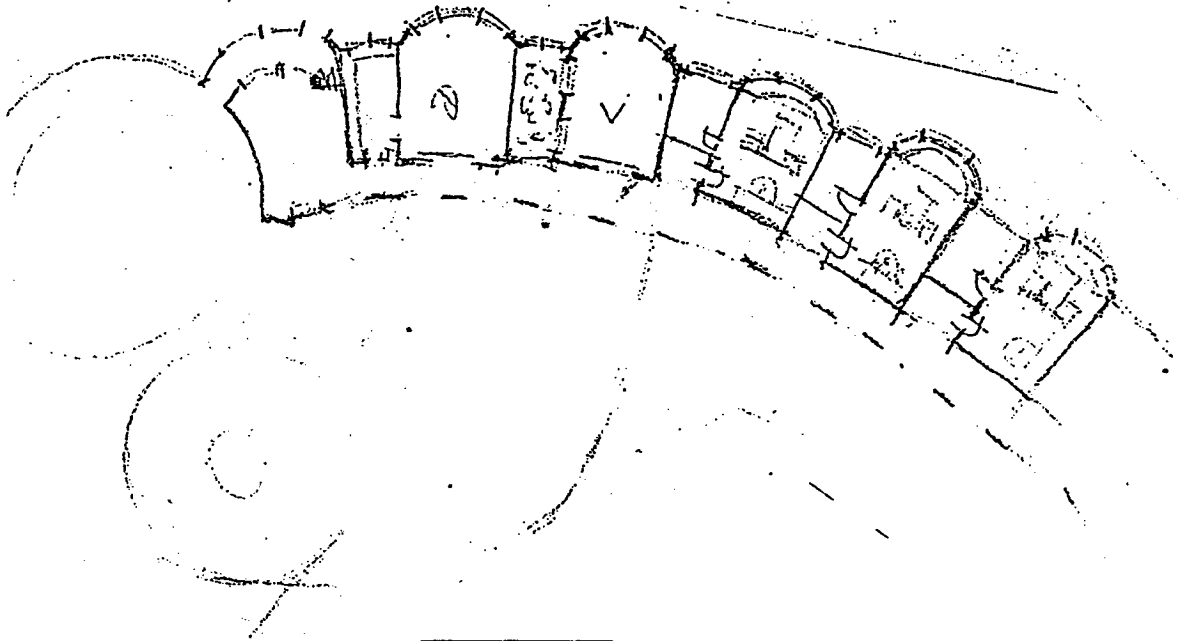


Fig. 6.19- Mayor's Wing: Space concept development  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Space Concept Development Analysis  
-Guest Wing Space Analysis. The main bedroom was placed at the end with relatively more public spaces near the entrance forecourt.



Fig. 6.20- Guest Wing: Space concept development.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

The entrance forecourt is also a typical feature of isiNdebele homesteads, and can be in the form of *idale*. The second scheme did not have a space of this nature but it was found fitting to incorporate it in the new design as a part of “localising” the building, as the form was drawn from local traditional spaces. What can also be observed in this conceptual sketch are the rudimentary developments of the “*Indaba Tree*” concept which symbolised a meeting place for “*uBulawayo*” - Bulawayo’s citizens - with the Mayor being “the King”. This was one of the collage concepts raised in the design.

Mayor’s Wing

- Entry porch
- Kitchen
- Dining room
- 2 Living rooms
- 2 Bedrooms: non-en suite
- 1 Bedroom with en suite
- Main bedroom with
  - Study room
  - En suite

Guest Wing

- Entry porch
- Living room
- 3 Bedrooms: all en suite
- Kitchen

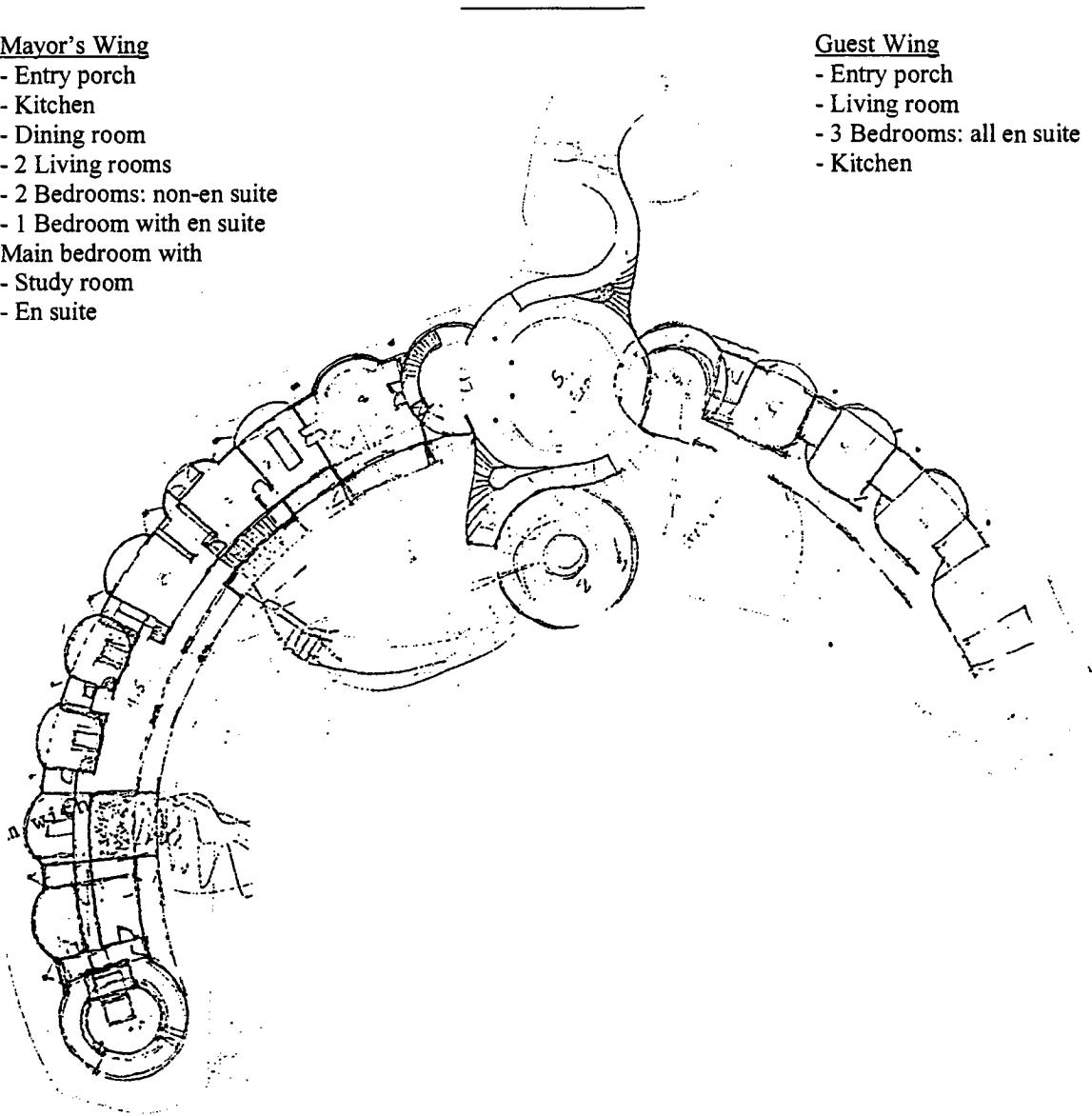


Fig. 6.21- Space development: Mayor’s and Guest Wings.  
 (Source: The Mayor’s Residence Project Report)

The service wings were to accommodate domestic staff, a gardener and a chauffeur. In addition to these there were to be a staff kitchen, storerooms, warehouse, laundry, garages and a guardroom. The recreation part was to have a pool and tennis courts.

The above was the initial scheme that was presented to the Council's five-member committee which liased with the client (the City Council). The scheme was accepted in principle but there were a couple of reservations and further changes were effected, taking into account the various comments from the committee. The main changes centred around the Main Bedroom on the Guest Wing and the Mayor's Bedroom in the Mayor's Wing.

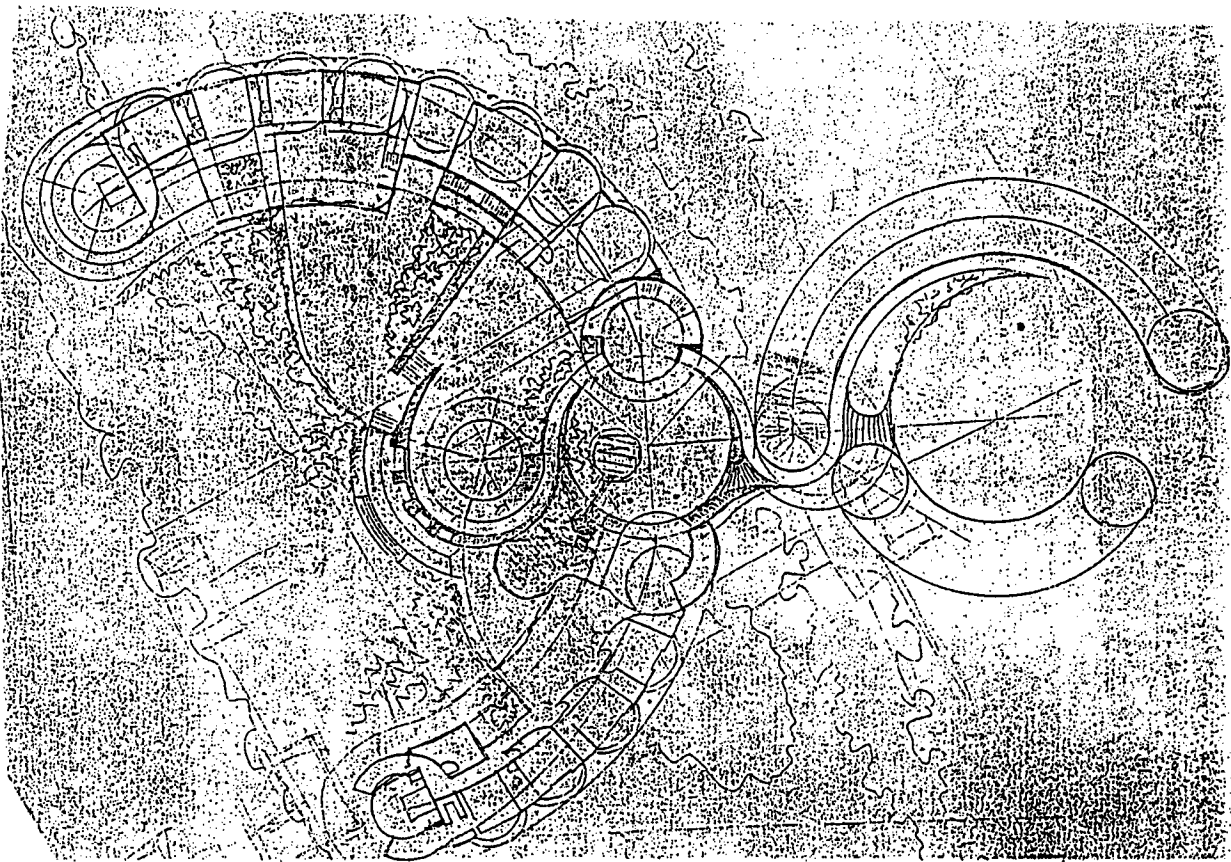


Fig. 6.22- Executive Mayor's Residence: Preliminary Space Concept.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

To conclude this part of the discussion, then, this section attempted to highlight various symbolic issues that were developed by the design team with respect to the proposed

Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. Although the researcher at several points in the discussion indicated the importance of issues of "supportiveness" and "identity" (which will be discussed in the next chapter - Chapter 7), he generally attempted not to pass any judgements so that the reader would be able to visualise and understand the thinking process that went into the project.



Fig. 6.23- Site Plan: Mayor's residence.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

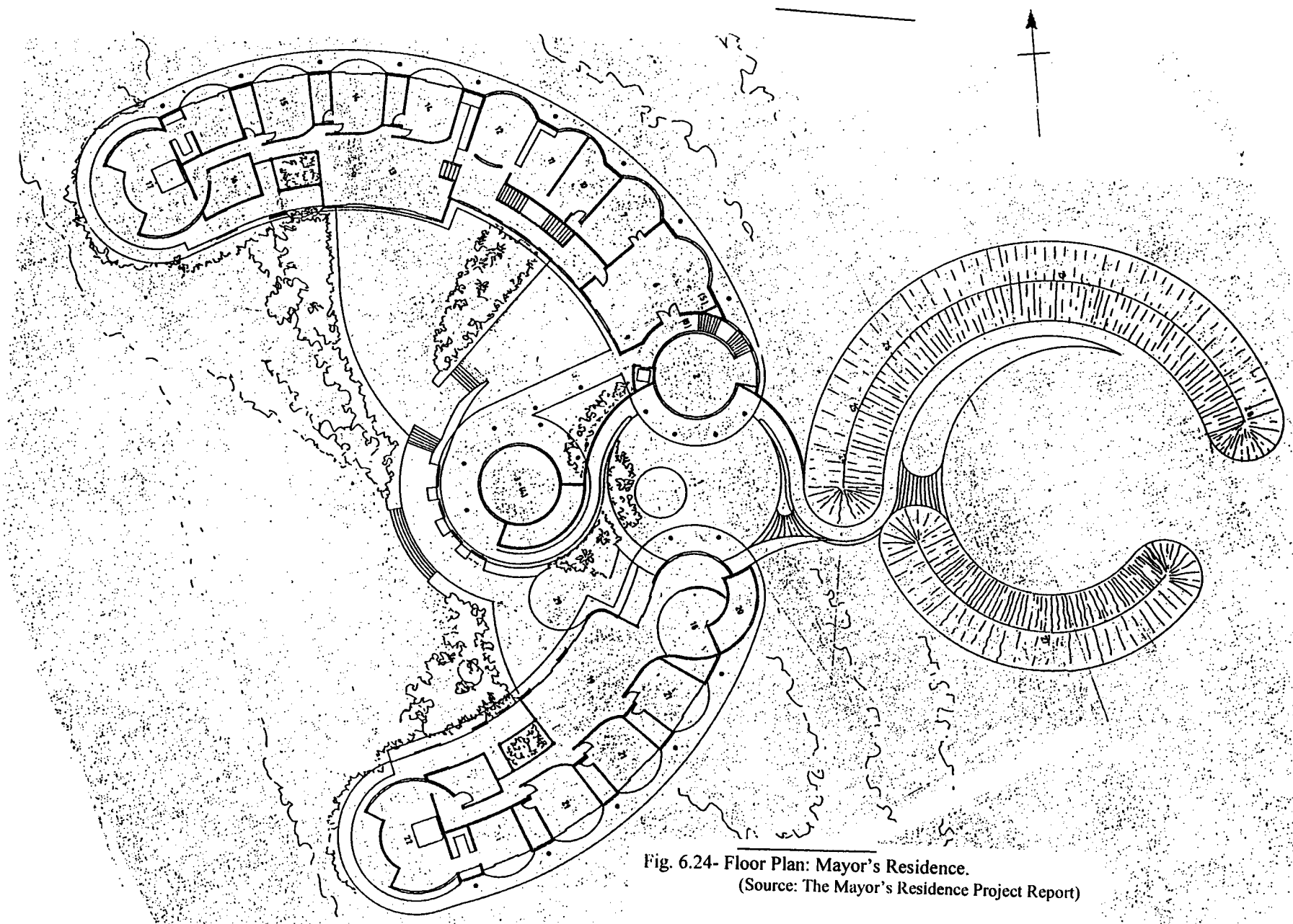


Fig. 6.24- Floor Plan: Mayor's Residence.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

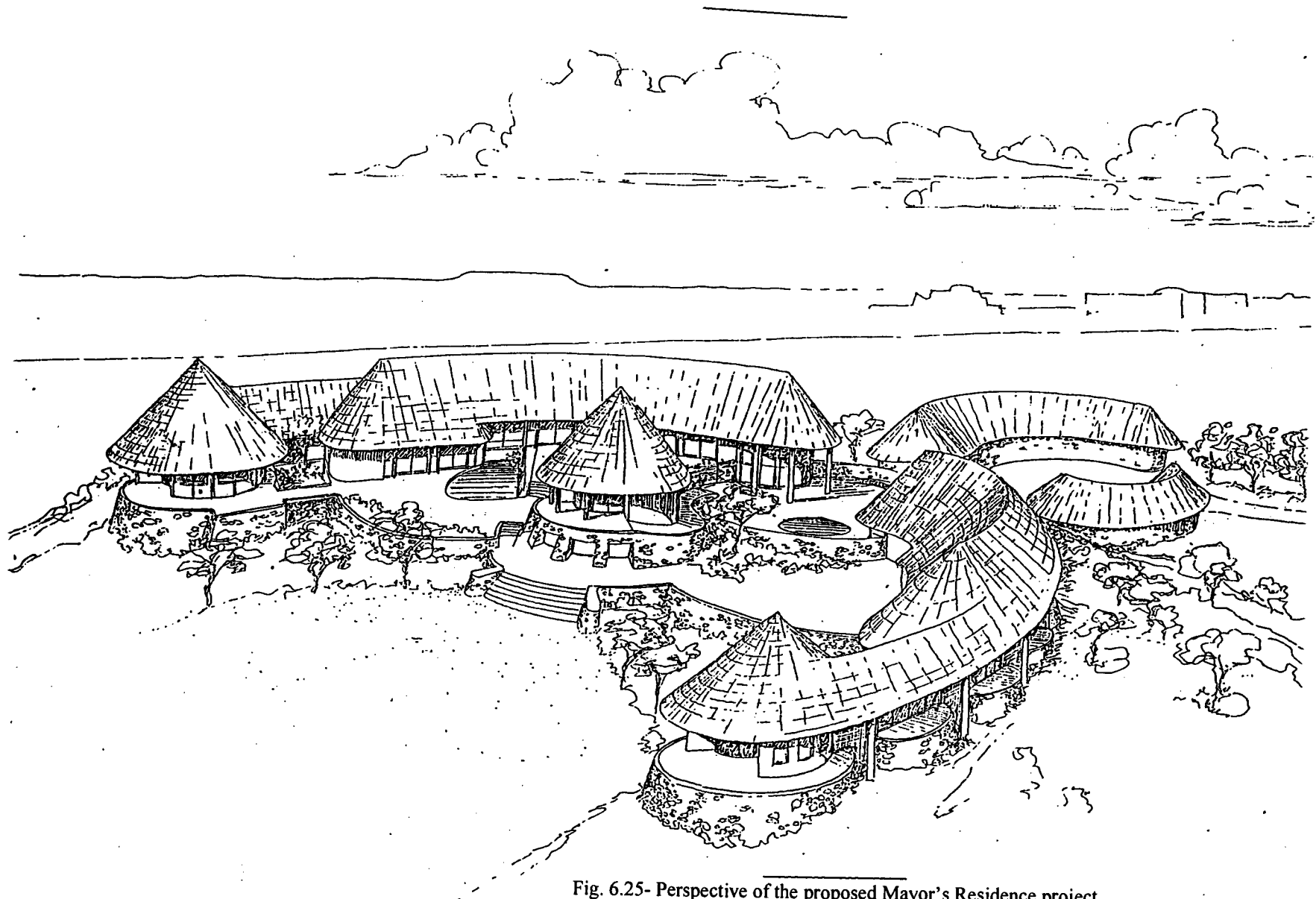


Fig. 6.25- Perspective of the proposed Mayor's Residence project  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

This section is particularly important, because it gave rise to the language that eventually made the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project a worthwhile case study for this research. At the core of the project were the underlying ideas that had been extracted from the analysis of the historical settlement of KoBulawayo that the Council architect thought would be the most appropriate source for "localness" as had been requested by the Council.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project was carried out in three different stages that increasingly addressed "local" symbolism issues. The first one was designed before the site had been decided on as a result it lacked depth in terms of addressing site conditions and hence also the question of "localness". Furthermore, it did not address its local cultural setting, as these were not an issue at that stage. The proposal of the second scheme which occurred after the site had been selected, only minimally adapted itself around the hill outcrop site. It used a flat plan that ignored local levels and topographic features. This scheme, too, did not raise any "local" cultural issues, as they were still not a requirement in the brief that was being developed by the City's Senior Architect and the Council's Five-Member Committee.

After the presentation of the second scheme, however, the Council representatives requested a solution that responded to the local cultural environment. It was this request that initiated a greater engagement with "local" cultural conditions. The Council Senior Architect convinced the representatives that the historical settlement of KoBulawayo would be the most legitimate source for this task. It was at this point that the proposed building took on a significant symbolic status in its response to "localness". In addition to this, there were other sources of "localness" that were discussed, and which will be detailed in the next chapter together with how appropriate they ultimately were. The next chapter will also look at how the design responded to the question of "identity" and the concept of "supportiveness".

## **CHAPTER 7.0**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSED MAYOR'S RESIDENCE**

## INTRODUCTION

As the previous chapters (Chapters 2 through to 5) have demonstrated, the focus of this thesis is to develop and apply a theoretical framework to the analysis of a chosen case study – the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence project – whose concept and issues around it were outlined in the last chapter (Chapter 6). The issue of supportiveness is of importance primarily to the execution of the public functions of the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence project. Only speculation and prediction is possible here, since the project is not completed. The major focus of the analysis is on symbolic readings and the issues regarding local fit. Interviews with elderly men, the custodians of tradition, were held to clarify certain aspects of the reading of tradition. In order to clarify these aspects (social hierarchy, cultural practices and customs, architectural spatial planning, building form, materials used and the associated technology) they were interviewed on issues such as their sense of ‘home’, preferences of burial places, religious inclinations, preference of built forms, etc.

What are the decisive factors or criteria for judging the cultural appropriateness of an existing building or proposed project? How does the proposed project of Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence perform in the light of the criteria developed from the question above?

The answer to the first question is critical in determining the quality of the performance (forecasted or actual) of existing buildings or proposed projects with respect to their cultural specificity or cultural connectivity in a given cultural setting. From the discussion in the previous chapters, the following have been identified as important issues from which criteria for judging the cultural appropriateness of an existing building and/or proposed project can be derived:

- **Supportiveness:** This is mainly drawn from Rapoport’s work on the subject. Extensive fieldwork will have to be carried out to define necessary systems of activities and systems of settings, depending on the issues at stake. The work required

to identify what should be done in a large neighbourhood, with living, working, recreation, education, etc, is not the same as for a single project such as the Mayor's Residence. The point is that supportiveness of the residence must be considered from the perspectives of the living conditions of the Mayor and from the political functions the residence must perform. In this instance, the political functions are the most critical. This requires understanding values, lifestyles and activities in the chosen environments. These then become the criteria derived from supportiveness issues. If the function of the building enhances the quality of lifestyles, values and activities then the building or proposed project can be said to be supportive. This exercise is also about perceptions and using these perceptions about the environments in which people live, where existing buildings are sited, the architectural language of such buildings. The level of supportiveness can then be analysed from the collected data and researched material. Alternatively, it may also be possible to offer a more theoretical prediction of performance by considering the intentions of project's design team and architects and analysing the concept with respect to cultural supportiveness.

- **Application of elements from local vernacular traditions in design solutions:** This issue concerns the use of vernacular-based architectural elements, which can be either low style (forms and environments designed by people for people) or 'high style', as designed and developed by local architects. "Old" Regionalism falls into this category, as it simply addresses the sentimental aspect of vernacular architecture without considering issues such as quality of light, appropriateness of materials and local landscape qualities. Therefore, a locally appropriate building or proposed project has to employ forms as depicted by local vernacular styles (low and high).
- **Regional identity:** The criteria under this issue are: local quality of light, underlying structural elements of landscape, views, climate, and other culturally derived aspects like forms and materials. A project that successfully addresses these issues is said to be locally appropriate. This issue is more wide-ranging in its application than what vernacular specialists (high style) do, as most of the latter tend to look at architectural

traditions (both high and low styles) in conjunction with specific local features just mentioned. In actual fact, in its key form, known as Critical Regionalism it provides an alternative to vernacular-based approaches to identity as discussed in Chapter 3.

- **National Identity:-** The criteria drawn from this issue are: site, vernacular architectural traditions and symbolism. This issue considers the political debate around decisions with regard to the siting of public buildings and the sources of architectural elements used in the design project or building. Under this issue, a locally appropriate building or proposed project is determined by: a general political consensus on the siting of building and/or proposed project; incorporation of an acceptable architectural language drawn from national vernacular traditions that does not favour any national sub-groups; use of politically acceptable symbolism drawn from national history; a successful location that is considered to enhance the economic being of the nation, etc. Factors like local climate, landscape features, national cultural artefacts, for example, can also affect the cultural appropriateness of an existing building and/or proposed project.

The proposed criteria for determining the cultural appropriateness of an existing building and/or proposed project can be used with regard to any building or project. It should be noted that the first criteria of supportiveness differs from the other three because its application is more effective when analysing existing buildings as it involves what is called post-occupancy evaluation, i.e. evaluating performance (cultural, services, environmental or structural) of a building after it has been occupied. This is beyond the scope of this study. Supportiveness issues could be applied to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project only in a very limited way – to some extent to the Mayor's family life, assuming these issues to be relevant, but also to the settings for public functions in the residence. It is thus only possible to conduct a speculative local appropriateness analysis with regard to the performance, with respect to public functions, of the proposed building.

Interviewing the Mayor about his family's life and other issues around the proposed residence was not carried out due to circumstances beyond this writer. Therefore, this study will not look at supportiveness issues with respect to the Mayor's family life. Therefore, local appropriateness performance of the proposed project will be assessed in conjunction with the other three criteria as they deal more directly with design issues of the project. The last two criteria will be used to analyse the performance of the intended functions, symbolically and physically, as designed by architects and to make a speculative assessment of the building performance when built.

In addition, this chapter will draw its assessment of the performance of the proposed project from the information that was gathered during fieldwork in and around Bulawayo. Initially the fieldwork exercise was meant to elicit the range from which culture core elements could have been determined. This is because Rapoport's entire approach to the studies of supportiveness – which originally formed the theoretical basis for the research - is characterised by determining culture core elements that are extracted from a range of responses given by fieldwork respondents within the traditional/modern environment spectrum. The interview approach that was to be applied in the analysis of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project was designed to elicit the necessary range in this regard. Respondents were to be from a wide range of sub-groups, selected on the basis of factors such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, education status, class etc. However, with regard to the fieldwork actually carried out for this research thesis, the time constraints experienced meant that the respondents interviewed were only elderly men from traditional/rural to urban/modern environments. They were easily accessible and are considered to be the custodians of culture in amaNdebele society, alongside elderly women.

Interviewing might have been used for a broader purpose, but in this study it was decided to use interviews mainly to address a few key questions regarding tradition and its interpretation, hence the choice of respondents. This study, as it turned out, is not primarily about perceptions of the building. It is about the theoretical framework that might be applied to analyse buildings or proposed projects. Detailed questions regarding building performance are beyond the scope of this research because the project was not

built at the time of carrying out the fieldwork and even at the time of completing this thesis.

The interview schedule itself was a compilation of identity-based questions that were designed for informal discussions on the respondent's general knowledge of isiNdebele culture and its associated artefacts that were felt to identify amaNdebele as a cultural subgroup. For instance, they were asked what their religion was, and whether they believed in the monarchy system of government. Also asked was what the respondents understood to be the elements of an isiNdebele homestead.

Most Zimbabweans have what they a rural home even if they own houses in the urban areas. Respondents were asked where they call home and where they would like to be buried. Answers to these types of questions were then used to find out how they felt about the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. Respondents from a typical Matebeleland rural environment like eSomankantane in Nkayi to the urban high-income and classy suburbs like Selbourne Park – the site of the proposed Mayor's project – were sought. This was inspired by Rapoport's method that employs a traditional to modern environment stratification in its endeavour to identify culture core elements. Since the selection and interviewing of respondents was informal, the information from these interviews is going to be used sparingly to highlight certain issues with regard to supportiveness and question of identity.

The local fit analysis will be carried out by applying derived criteria to the project. To do the above, the chapter will be organised as follows.

- **Issues of supportiveness and the concept of identity:** Issues of potential supportiveness will be addressed with respect to predicted performance and the concept of the proposed final scheme. The concept of identity vis-à-vis the examples discussed in Chapter 4 will also be considered, as well as issues of local vernacular traditions and architectural models, which may have influenced the design.

Effectively, the first two criteria mentioned above<sup>203</sup> will be used to ascertain the degree of cultural connectivity of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. In addition, information obtained during fieldwork and points raised in the media debate on the proposed project will be used where relevant.

- **Regionalism issues with respect to construction of identity:** This section will form the major part of the chapter. The last two criteria mentioned above<sup>204</sup> will be applied to a discussion of the issues raised by Critical Regionalists issues pertaining to the appropriateness of the language used by the project, taking into consideration the public nature of the proposed building. What regional elements have been identified and /or developed by the project and what has influenced the siting of the project? These are the questions that will be asked at this point.
- The media (radio, television, newspapers) also to some extent contributed to the proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project and other residence projects around the country. This section will look in detail at this debate and consider its significance.<sup>205</sup> Issues of national (or in this instance, provincial) identity are particularly relevant here. The media debate called attention to the politics that inevitably surround public projects. Respondents talked to were well versed with some of the issues in this debate and therefore some of their views and comments will be used to analyse the local socio-cultural appropriateness of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project.
- **Conclusion:** The conclusion of this Chapter 7 will briefly recapitulate the salient points of this chapter. It will thus initiate a process that will be completed in the final chapter of this thesis – Chapter 8: Conclusion. The latter will try to determine the ultimate success of the architects involved in the Mayor's Residence Project with

---

<sup>203</sup> Namely, the issue of supportiveness and the application of elements from local vernacular traditions in design solutions.

<sup>204</sup> Namely concerns of regional / provincial and national identity

<sup>205</sup> Although the debate on the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence has died away, it is a difficult situation with built residences of Harare, Chinhoyi and others in the country where debates are couched on the political rather than architectural arena. But then it is all about architecture, power and politics.

regard to creating a locally appropriate design and initiating an “identity” debate in architectural practice, specifically in the city of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

### **THE MAYOR’S RESIDENCE PROJECT: The Question of Identity**

The concept of supportiveness has been widely used in the field of architecture but the most useful approach for the purposes of this study has been the one that Rapoport uses in attempting to understand the nature of the relationship between built form and culture. It is a widely accepted phenomenon that built environments are designed and created to embrace specific lifestyles and activities and are crystallisation of the occupants’ social values and lifestyles.<sup>206</sup> Rapoport has, over many years, been a leading figure, producing works that reflect this school of thought and developing analytical methods designed to improve cultural and behavioural matches between given environments and their occupants.<sup>207</sup> In terms of his theory, environments with a good match are said to be supportive. The level of this supportiveness is measured by a broad post-occupancy evaluation exercise. This was not possible for this particular research. What is possible is to predict the impact of the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence project on the lifestyles and social values of inhabitants likely to occupy the building, if built, and those in its immediate environs, as well as its influence on the general theoretical debate surrounding these issues, specifically - that of conducting analysis in accordance with Rapoport’s systems of values and settings concept.

In an attempt to determine the cultural supportiveness and appropriateness of the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence project, Rapoport’s approach was applied in two ways: Firstly, it was applied in the selection of respondents and study areas to cover the traditional/modern spectrum of environments in and around Bulawayo for fieldwork purposes. As has been explained earlier, however, the selection criteria used herein reduced the importance of the fieldwork due to it’s the exclusion of a large number of

---

<sup>206</sup> See details in Chapter Three of this research.

<sup>207</sup> See Chapter Three of this research.

categories of other sub-groups. Second, it evoked questions of identity, which in turn raised issues of symbolism, i.e. how buildings are 'read' and what they mean. This was done by tracing historical developments of the concept of identity in social and architectural theories. But, the focus at this stage is the analysis of the Mayor's residence using the criteria of supportiveness.

Residence (theoretically) expected to perform in terms of its cultural appropriateness? There are two issues that, theoretically, have a potential to limit the supportiveness of the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence in terms of lifestyles and values of Bulawayo's Residence. The first one is that the environs around where the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence is to be sited are generally inhabited by a high class society whose lifestyles, as was discovered during fieldwork, are mainly confined to sporting activities like golf and tennis. The siting poses a problem in terms of reducing accessibility to the majority of the city's residents. Secondly, Mayoral candidates are normally treated to a high standard of living, as evidenced by the need to provide them with public facilities such as the proposed residence. In this respect the Mayors elected to run the city become associated with high-class leisure activities and thereby alienating the majority of the residence, once again. However, they administrate a mostly lower-class urban population. In terms of the forms used, the project would have been successful, as it did incorporate forms associated with the vernacular traditions, as was discovered in the fieldwork interviews (see Fig. 7.1). A theoretical assessment of the supportiveness of the proposed Mayor Residence is crippled by lack of post-occupancy evaluation information. Unlike issues of supportiveness, the question of identity can be employed in a much effective manner to judge the appropriateness of this case project.

It is proposed in the current thesis that the historical developments of question of identity in architectural theory can best be understood by analysing the degree and nature to which design and planning paradigms have engaged with local culture over time. The following debate assesses the performance of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project with respect to local appropriateness and identity construction issues raised by this study.

The debate also gives an outline of the resource base and how it was used in the project's conceptual development.

To analyse the proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence in terms of its design language and the concept of identity it utilised, it is important to refer back to Chapter 3 where this concept was developed from two main sources - social and architectural theories. It was observed that the historical development of the concept of identity was related to how architects and planners addressed the question of cultural connectivity. The proposed Executive Mayor's residence project can be said to have addressed the question of cultural connectivity with respect to the following two issues:

- **Engagement with local social and cultural issues.** Vernacular traditions embody the social orders and cultural values of the peoples that produced them. This is evident from the works of Oliver, Rudofsky and Fathy (see Chapter 4). As has been pointed out in Chapter 6, the historical city of KoBulawayo was chosen as the core of the design concept with supporting elements being drawn from the planning layout aspects of local historical ruins such as the Great Zimbabwe and Khami.<sup>208</sup> The ultimate purpose of this was to create locally appropriate built environments and to define a local identity. The architect(s) specifically decided to use the circular form frequently employed by the amaNdebele and other amaNguni sub-tribes. In the centre of a circle of surrounding buildings (those of the royal family located in a specific point on the circle) were the kraals, to ensure the safe keeping of sheep, goats and the herd of cattle.<sup>209</sup> The reason for this was historical: When KoBulawayo was first built, warfare was a common occurrence, and thus the most valued possessions were placed in the middle of the settlement to protect them.<sup>210</sup> With respect to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence Project, the most valuable 'goods' were considered to be conferences, as evidenced by the location of the conference hall in the centre of the complex. Symbolically, the reason may have been that conferences represent

---

<sup>208</sup> See Garlake, P., S., *The Great Zimbabwe*, Thames and Hudon, London, 1973.

<sup>209</sup> See Biermann, B., "Indlu: The Domed Dwelling of the Zulu" in Oliver, P., *Shelter in Africa*, Barrie and Jenkins Ltd., London, 1971, pp. 96 – 105.

<sup>210</sup> See Rasmussen, R., K., *Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, Rex Collings, London, 1978.

progress, particularly in terms of discussions about the city's welfare. In this particular case, though, such vernacular forms were used to invoke past memories of only a section of all the different peoples of the Matebeleland region.

- **Addressing local climatic and site conditions.** Vernacular architecture was considered by modernists to offer perfect design solutions that economically used materials and spaces (see argument in Chapter 4), and that responded perfectly to the prevailing climatic conditions. Addressing the local climate and site conditions ensures a higher degree of local appropriateness and, hence, cultural connectivity. With regard to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence the buildings were designed to minimise the negative effects on the environment, the landscape features and the local vegetation. Climatic conditions were also taken into account. All the above are regarded as elements of critical regionalism.

With respect to the first point (regarding the influence of KoBulawayo on the concept of The Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project), it can be argued that there are actually many other ethnic and racial groupings that make up the population of Bulawayo. Why choose models from one group from the region? In fact, the amaNdebele themselves are a conglomerate of tribes that range from the amaNguni who migrated northwards in the first half of the century, to the Tonga people of the Zambezi valley. Why specifically choose forms that reflect the amaNguni group of the amaNdebele people? Some of these questions were raised by architects in their design, but the ultimate factor was based on the impact of amaNguni people in the region in recent history. The European population was also considered in the design process, but only minimally. These issues concerning the politics around the design and siting of public buildings will be addressed in detail in the next section.

The following expands upon the two points made above with respect to the question of cultural connectivity, using appropriate illustrations where relevant.

How and to what extent did the proposed building in fact respond to the local cultural setting, given the City's cultural diversity? How did the proposed project's climatic settings and site conditions influence this response?

Unlike the developments of other Executive Mayor's residences around the country, particularly those of Harare and Gweru, see Photo 7.1, the architects in this case did not employ motifs and forms associated with modernity or use classical language that did not match local settings. Instead there was a deliberate engagement with various social, cultural, historical and political issues, with culture being particularly important in addressing the concept of identity. It must be asked, however, whose idea of "culture" was incorporated into the design concept and why?



Plate 7.1- The Gweru Mayor's Residence.  
(Source: The Chronicle, 9 August 2000)

The council of the City of Bulawayo is dominated by blacks and most of them are of amaNdebele descent. It has been argued / can be argued that it was their dominance in the city administration that was a deciding factor in choosing that particular culture and those vernacular traditions.

In fact, one can also question the wisdom of choosing any single vernacular tradition at all – and of propagating it – in such a culturally diverse city as Bulawayo. If it was indeed a question of creating a local identity, as the City Council wished to do, why did they eventually opt for a local vernacular-based solution instead of a high local style? A partial answer to this question is that in Zimbabwe there is a very limited debate, at the moment, as to what are authentically Zimbabwean architectural elements. The use of KoBulawayo as a historical architectural precedent is becoming more widespread in the Matebeleland region, with the National University of Science and Technology being one of the complexes created along similar lines. The use of the concept has not yet however reached a critical level where it can be said to be creating a regional identity, particularly with regard to its three dimensional aspects.

The cultural connectivity of the project was enhanced by the use of various analysed underlying principles of the historical settlement of KoBulawayo. These elements included conical versions of roof forms, circular plan forms, finished roof tiles that resembles grass, the *Indaba* Tree, among many others. The importance of the historical settlement is due to the fact that it was the last traditional settlement before the onset of the region's colonialism process.<sup>211</sup> The historical city also marked the demise of a monarchy whose origins lay in the coastal areas of modern day KwaZulu-Natal, hence its sentimental value to the region's population. The remainder of this section attempts to clarify the nature and degree of cultural connectivity achieved by the designers and thus how the concept of identity was addressed.

The underlying architectural principles of KoBulawayo appear to be an appropriate source through which architects of the region can start enhancing cultural connectivity as

---

<sup>211</sup> See Ransford, O., *Bulawayo: Historic Battlefield of Rhodesia*, A A Balkema, Cape Town, 1968.

part of wider pre-colonial responses to de-colonisation processes, because they address local historical forms that evolved over time and symbolise various elements drawn from local cultures. It can actually be argued that as missionaries and traders were also residents of KoBulawayo, the city was home to all the different peoples of the region hence its architectural and social significance.

The use of local cultural forms like the courtyard and the "cone on drum" forms in the Mayoral project design as an approach to cultural connectivity is critical because KoBulawayo settlement embodied some of the basic principles that can still be seen in traditional isiNdebele homesteads (*imizi*). These principles include the handling of spatial qualities created through the specific location of components of the homestead. The hut used by boys is located near the gate to the cattle kraal (*isibaya*) which is located to the west of the homestead (see Plate 7.2). In traditional isiNdebele societies boys are responsible for the safe keeping and security of cattle and other livestock. In the KoBulawayo layout, *isibaya* for cattle and other livestock was located in the centre of the settlement within the security bounds of the King's warriors. The warriors' residences therefore were closer to *isibaya seNkosi*, (the King's kraal). Due to the nature of the region's societies at the time, which were constantly at war (*Mfecane* wars) with each other, a circular settlement shape was perceived to offer maximum security for the King, the royal family and the livestock.

The other aspect of KoBulawayo that still persists in *imizi* is the courtyard (*iguma*). In KoBulawayo the courtyard was located just off centre and was used for military parades and other traditional functions such as *ukuchinsa* (carried out at the start of the first crop ripening) and *inxwala* (carried out to celebrate the onset of the rainy season). The proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project used a series of courtyards, three of which were the main ones:

- The first one was for service vehicles as well as a parking area for important guests and visitors and servicing. This can be viewed in terms of one of the spaces of a traditional isiNdebele homestead (*umuzi*) called *idale* where "men's" daily activities

like oxen jock making and general woodwork amongst other activities are usually carried out. This can also be used as a conference centre where meetings for dowry arrangements and payments are made.

To the west of the homestead there are kraals and at the back there are granaries. The front row of huts comprises rooms for boys and for girls. Kitchens are near the back row. In between the kraals and the homestead is an open space call “*idale*” for general use and sometimes for welcoming visitors.

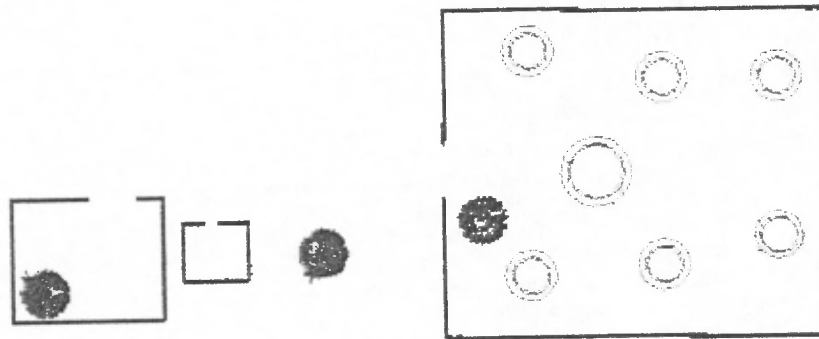


Fig 7.1- A typical layout of *umuzi* (a traditional isiNdebele homestead).  
(Source: Drawn by author)

- The second courtyard, which is a level above the first one, was the arrival forecourt for both the Mayor’s and Guest wings. As was gathered from the fieldwork interviews, some of the *imizi* had *idale* inside the homestead boundary (*uthango*). In terms of function this resembled that of the first courtyard.

- The third *iguma* of the scheme was the main one; it was conceptually “bounded” by the City and the Mayor’s and Guest wings.<sup>212</sup> The equivalent of this layout in KoBulawayo was the royal courtyard (*inkudla*) which was used for military parade and other public functions, whilst in the proposed Mayor’s residence project the space was to be used as a public park from which the residence could be viewed. The proposed park extends beyond the curving road to the City side. The main *iguma* of the *umuzi* was used for general purposes, including as a playground for children.

The above approach of using local architectural elements to design locally and culturally appropriate solutions can be considered to be a positive development, but how appropriate were these elements in fact in a new archetypal building of the nature of the Mayoral Residence project? To reply thereto, in terms of isiNdebele culture the elements were indeed appropriate, as will be shown later in the discussion, due to the fact that the modern City of Bulawayo is considered to be a “homestead” whose family “head” or “King” is the Mayor. If considered from that perspective, then the design elements are indeed culturally appropriate.

The fieldwork gathered information on the respondents’ knowledge of *umuzi*. Fig. 7.1 was a typical response. The spaces indicated by the respondents were also found in one form or another in the historical settlement of KoBulawayo, hence its importance as a starting point for initiating developments of locally appropriate forms of architectural design that exude and foster local identity.

One of the respondents, when asked to name the proposed Mayor’s Residence, gave it the name *Emagumeni* – meaning “the home of courtyards”. This not only reflected the importance of courtyards in isiNdebele homesteads generally, but also pointed to the extensive use of courtyards in the design of the Residence project (see Plate 7.4).

The courtyards became increasingly important as the vertical height of the entire project increased: In other words, the lowest courtyard was the garden park for public use, followed by the car park for the guests and visitors. The entrance forecourt was the

---

<sup>212</sup> See illustration of the concept in Chapter 6.

highest and thus symbolically, also the most important. This was not only a response to cultural spatial arrangements, but was also to site conditions. The buildings also responded to prevailing climatic conditions in this otherwise hot region by using deep ceiling spaces to encourage air circulation.

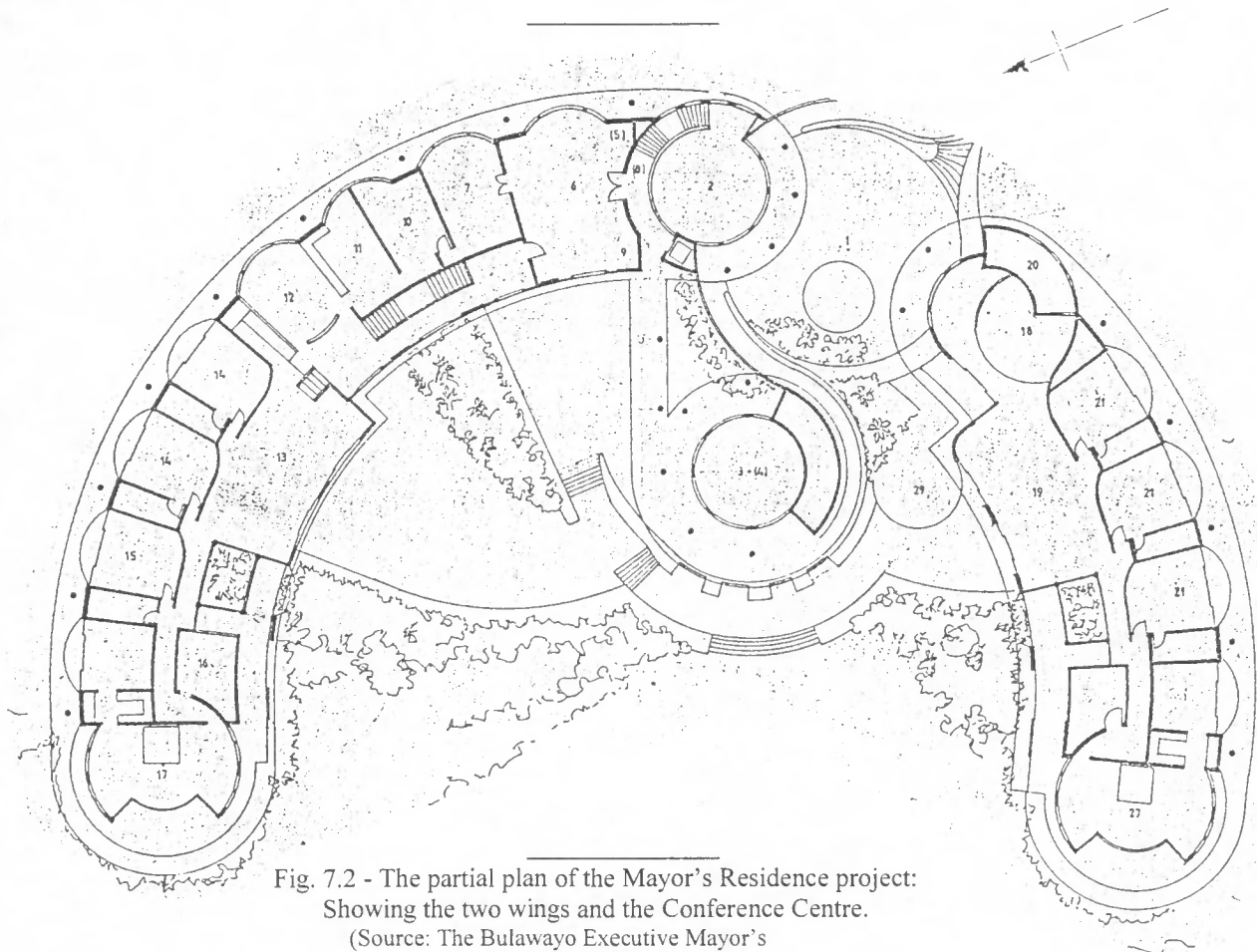


Fig. 7.2 - The partial plan of the Mayor's Residence project: Showing the two wings and the Conference Centre. (Source: The Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence Project Report.)

Another aspect of KoBulawayo that is echoed in the spatial layout of an *umuzi* is a tree found inside the multi-purpose *idale*. In the KoBulawayo settlement the tree was called the *Indaba* Tree - interestingly, the original tree of KoBulawayo is still alive. A modern-day equivalent of *idale* is a royal conference centre or high courtroom (*inkudla*) which is of a higher spatial status due to its association with the King or Chief. With regard to the Mayor's Residence project, the Conference Centre and the Mayor's Home Office symbolically represented the *Indaba* Tree (see Fig 7.2), the details of which will be discussed in the next section, which deals with the project's symbolism issues.

In addition to the two-dimensional layout patterns of the various buildings, a more three-dimensional dialogue with local culture also occurred in the conceptual development of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project. The historical settlement of KoBulawayo had mainly consisted of beehive huts, except for a few houses included King Lobengula's residence and the European Missionaries' compounds. Instead of using the traditional amaZulu beehive structures in the Mayor's Residence project, however, the designers chose to employ versions of the cone-on-drum forms (see Fig. 7.4). The aim was to complement the original conceptual layout of KoBulawayo where the beehive structure began a metamorphosis into cone-on-the-drum structures.

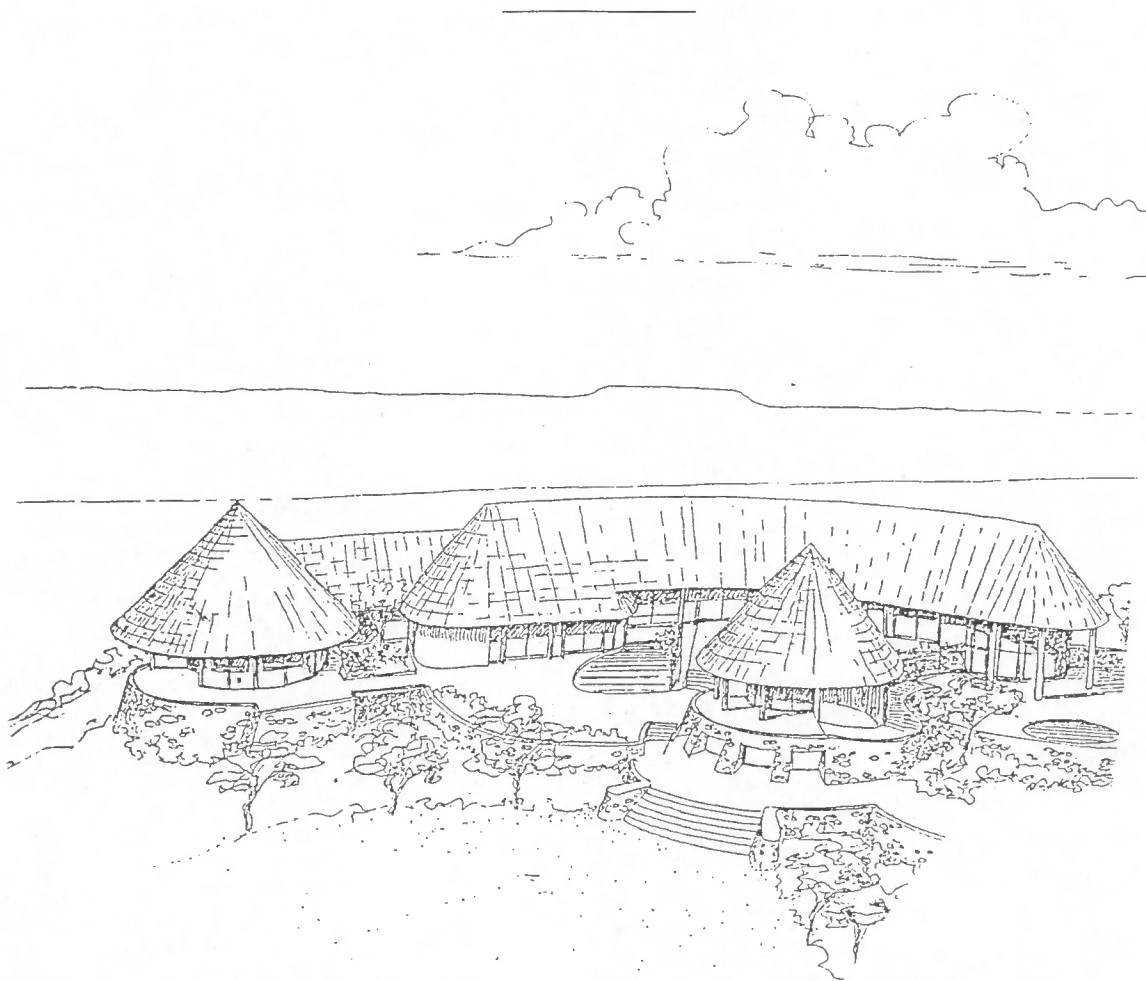


Fig. 7.3- Partial Perspective: showing cone-on-drum construction.  
(Source: The Bulawayo Executive Mayor' Residence Project Report.)

Bulawayo does not get as much rain as the coastal areas of KwaZulu-Natal, where the cone-on-drum form was not used due to heavy rainfall patterns that are damaging to the drum walls. The other factor that necessitated the employment of the cone-on-drum construction was to avoid termites, which are a problem in this region and could destroy thatching grass and timber construction members in very short periods of time.

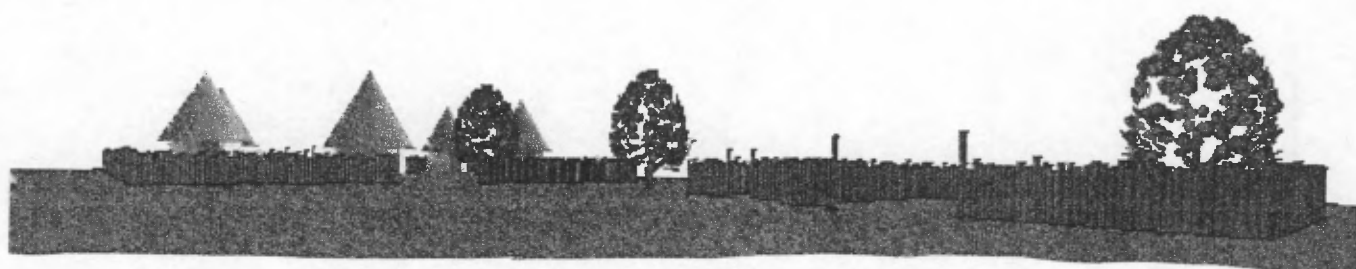


Plate 7.2 *Umuzi*: Showing its typical components in 3-D form.  
(Source: Drawn by author)

The cone-on-drum construction is widely used in Zimbabwe and in other Southern African regions. Plate 7.2 and Fig 7.1 shows a 3-D sketch that depicts much of what most respondents agreed to be typical elements of *umuzi*, drawn on the basis of fieldwork information. The similarities between the 3-D sketches in plate Fig. 7.3 and Plate 7.3, especially of the roof forms, are clearly visible.

Entrances are also critical features of isiNdebele homesteads, as gathered from fieldwork interviews. Although KoBulawayo might have had numerous gates, it is likely that there were four main ones that were cordially arranged. This form of arrangement was also

referred to by a couple of respondents from the field interviews (for example, the respondents coded as R3 and R4, (see Appendix).

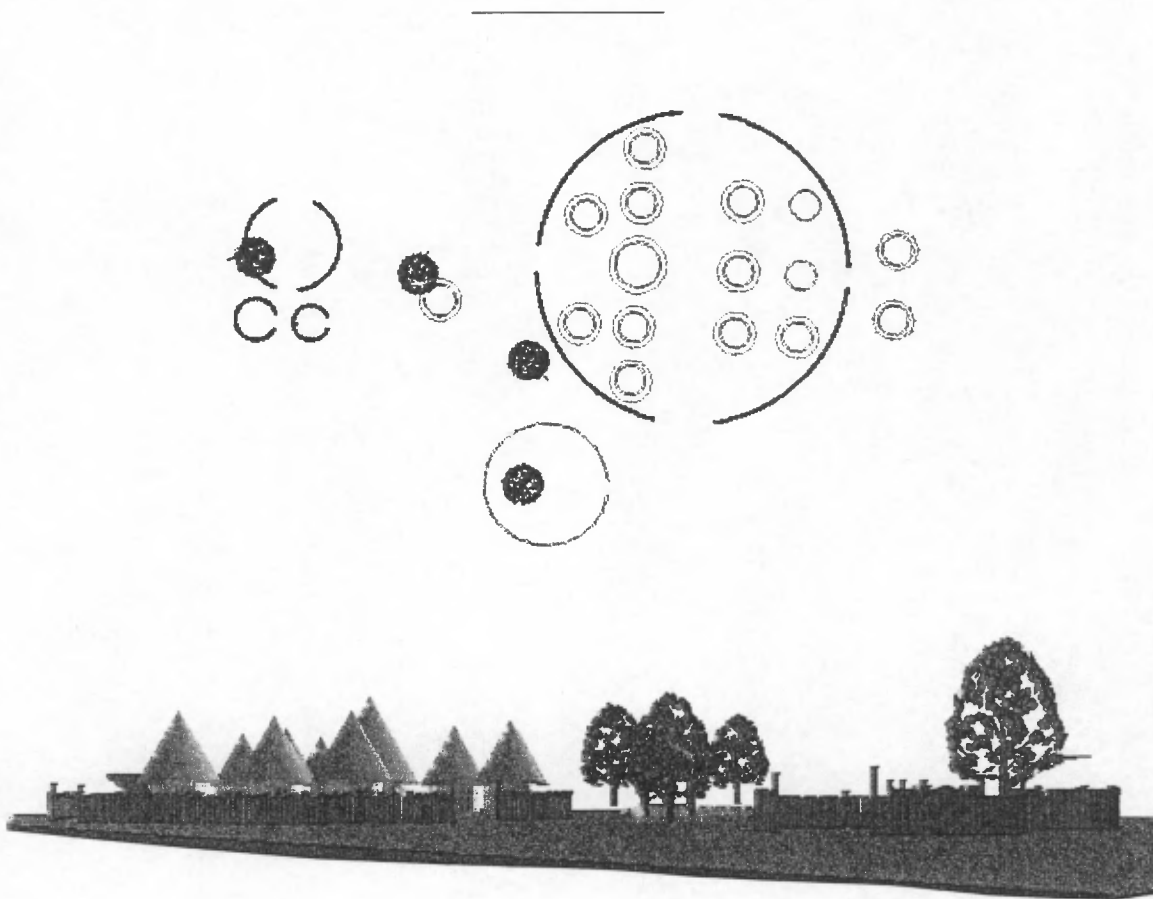


Plate 7.3- *Umuzi*: Showing the four gates in cardinal positions.  
(Source: Drawn by author)

In this arrangement the most important entrance was the southern one which was supposed to be used by the people from the south (*abeNzansi*), followed by the northern entrance to be used by those from the north (*abeNhla*). Residents of the settlement itself used the entrance from the east (*eMpumalanga*) for private purposes, while the one to the west (*eNtshonalanga*) was used when going to the kraals. This whole arrangement was also typical in isiNdebele homesteads (see Plate 7.3), not only in KoBulawayo. The proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence concept plan used mainly two formal entrances, the eastern and the western ones, which were determined to a large extent by

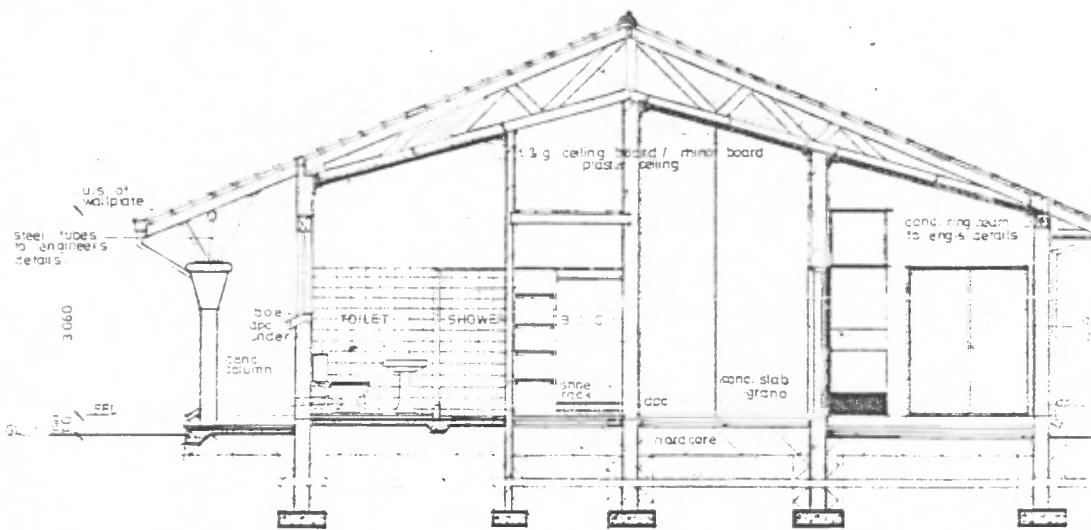
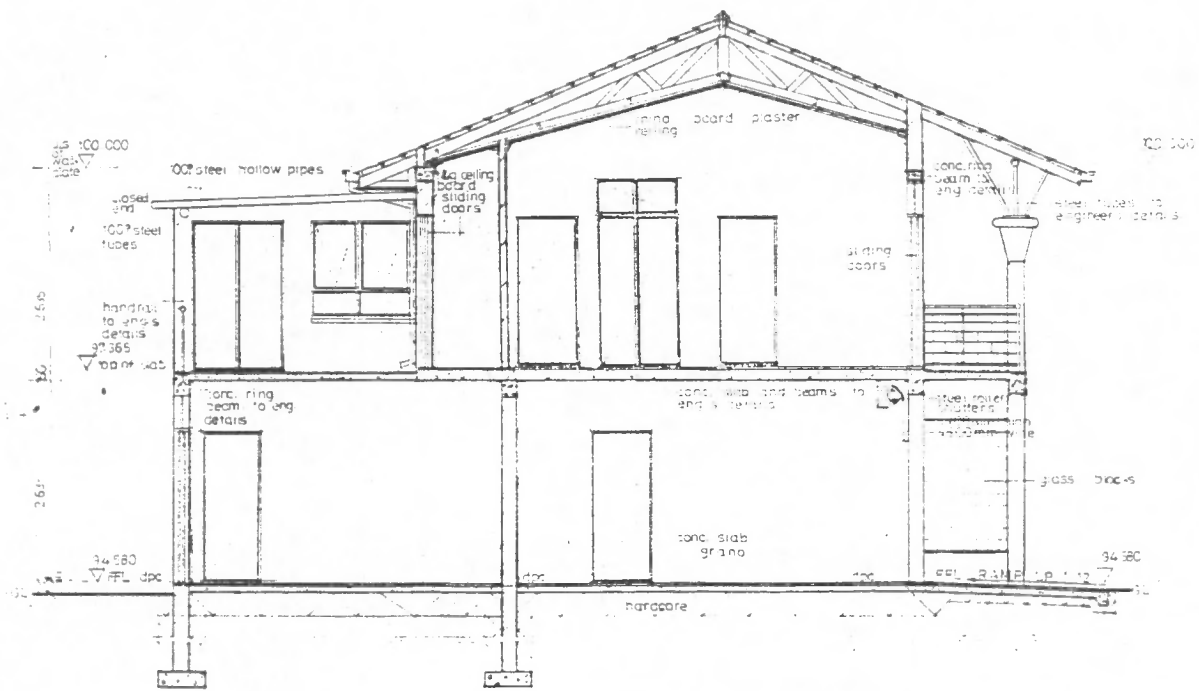


Fig. 7.4- Section: Showing deep ceiling and eaves.

(Source: The Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence Report, Drawing No. BA 1340/05 Date: 03/1998.)

the site conditions. To further increase the cultural connectivity of the proposed Mayor's Residence project, the designers connected the courtyards by using walkways similar to

the ones found at the historical ruins of the Great Zimbabwe and Khami. These ruins had been constructed by *maRozvi* people - one of the *maShona* sub-tribes found in Zimbabwe. In this way, the present-day project was to be linked to historical precedents.

In terms of the concept of identity, the proposed Mayor's Residence project synthesised elements from a number of sources that included both local vernacular traditions (in its use of spaces, forms and materials – see brief details with respect to materials in the next section) and modernism (in terms of functional spaces and materials). In so doing the designers took a step towards initiating a more fluid identity formulation in their architectural practice and language.

The question of identity also to a certain extent introduced issues of symbolism (i.e. in terms of wanting to know how buildings are read and what they mean). The next section thus deals with the symbolism issues of the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project and its intended and actual regional identity.

### **THE MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT: Symbolism and regional identity issues**

Whereas the previous section looked at the sources of cultural connectivity and hence mapping out the concept of identity, the current section looks at the issues of symbolism that contribute to broader perspectives of "identity" through the architecture of public buildings and projects. This section also tested the design of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project using the third and fourth criteria stated at the beginning of the chapter, i.e. the performance of the proposed project with respect to the formulation of regional and national identity. It will further look at local and national identity issues raised by the project and the debate that characterises the architecture of public institutions. The intention is to consider the appropriateness of the forms associated with the critical regionalism and local identity. Most of the issues to be discussed in this sub-section emerged during the development of the final concept that was carried out by the City's Architectural Section in collaboration with local practices. They will thus be analysed in

terms of their successes and/or failures in developing regional elements and their critical use.

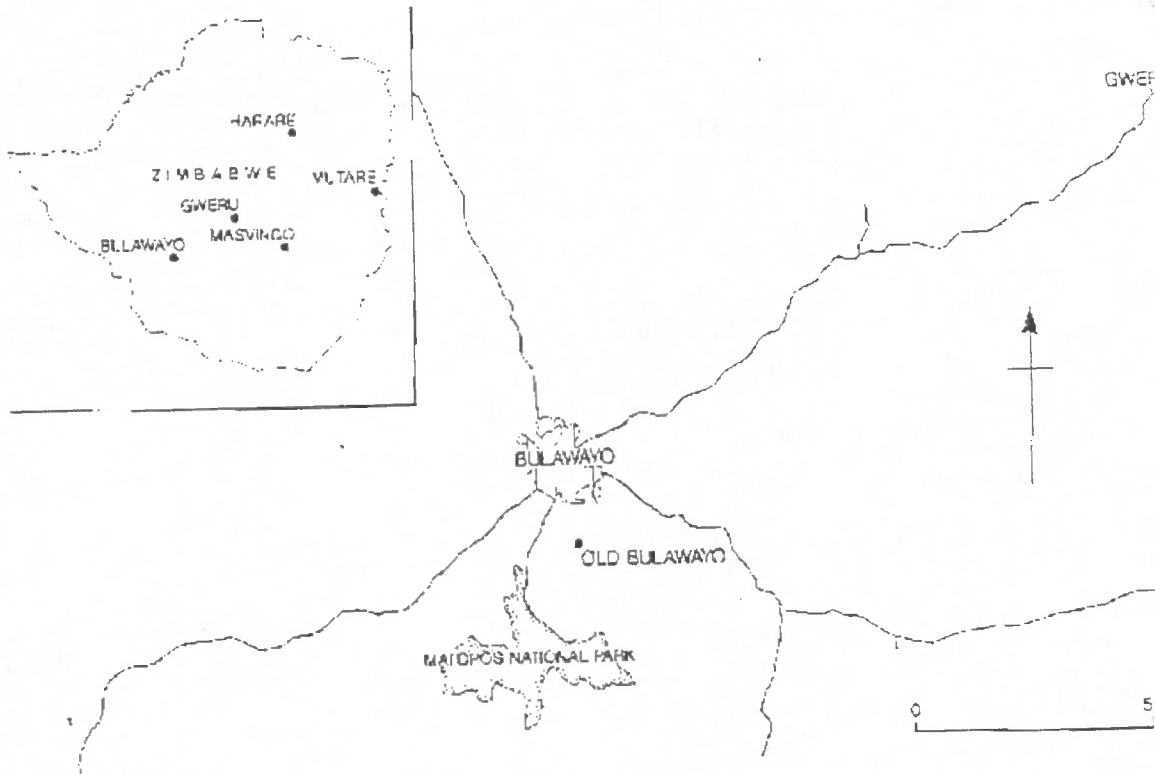


Fig. 7.5- The location of KoBulawayo  
(Source: Sabinet: [http:// www.bufau.bham.ac.uk /newsite / projects /  
OB / Bulawayo. Html](http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.Html))

As has been explained in Chapter 6, a five-member Committee was nominated to represent the City Council and to oversee the project's development. The presentation of the final scheme to this committee and the subsequent debate as to who was to develop the scheme, initiated a debate centred on issues of cultural appropriateness and identity

with respect to built environment. These debates are worth analysing in more detail. What follows is a look at the symbolism of the history and layout of KoBulawayo and its influence on the Mayor's Residence project. Other ideas around the social and cultural setting will also be analysed in the context of symbolism issues that impacted on the project. Related issues to be discussed at a later stage in this section are the building form and site and how these impacted on the project's symbolism, along with the public debate on some aspects of the project.

The appointment of a local architectural practice to work in conjunction with the City Council's Architectural Section brought about a broader perspective regarding the issues at stake in the project's conceptual development. The primary drive of the design was to create an architectural construction imbued with local cultural and environmental values, especially considering the fact that this was a new archetype being developed in the country. Responding to the fairly briefly phrased requirements emphasising historicism, designers involved in the project endeavoured to marry the basic symbolic principles of the historic City of KoBulawayo, with those of historical ruins around the country and other similar sources.

The majority of the people in this region identified with and could relate to the symbolism and history of KoBulawayo, as it was one of the major settlements that existed at the onset of colonialism in Zimbabwe. In view of its historical significance to the peoples of the Mabeleleland and its embodiment of vernacular spaces and forms, it can easily be argued that this city was a legitimate starting point from which the region's identity could begin to be initiated. Above all, it signified the maturity of the tribe founded by King Mzilikazi<sup>213</sup> when he migrated northwards from KwaZulu in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The question to ask in this respect then, is how successfully did the designers approach this task?

---

<sup>213</sup> An interesting history of King Mzilikazi, who passed away on 5 September 1868, the leader and founder of amaNdebele nation is given by P. Nyathi in Bulawayo's Sunday weekly newspaper- The Sunday News, 13 August, 2000, pp. 10 & 17.

Before this question can be answered, it is important to understand the underlying conceptual and symbolic principles of KoBulawayo and how they were applied in the design of the Mayor's Residence project.

The underlying principles of the historical settlement of KoBulawayo, i.e., its circular plan with a courtyard in front of central or off-centre beehive units housing royal family members, are a ready purveyor of "identity" for the modern City of Bulawayo in particular and the region of Matebeleland in general due to its historical and cultural significance. It is for this reason that a detailed analysis of the settlement is necessary so that its symbolism can be decoded for possible future use in designing and planning purposes. Interestingly, the historical settlement of KoBulawayo is currently under reconstruction with the help of the British Government, and there are also strong calls for the revival of an amaNdebele monarch with a ceremonial King by prominent amaNdebele cultural pressure groups, academics and traditionalists.<sup>214</sup> The amaNdebele Kingdom was one of the most coherent monarchies in the region in pre-colonial Southern Africa and its last major settlement, KoBulawayo, was destroyed by settlers in the 1890s.

The settlement of KoBulawayo was built in 1870 by King Lobengula and was a culmination of the migration of amaNdebele nation founder, King Mzilikazi, and his followers from KwaZulu to present day Matebeleland reacting to the pressures of Mfecane wars of the 1910s and early 1920s.<sup>215</sup> The amaNdebele nation was made up of conglomerates of tribes that were incorporated into the original group of the amaKhumalo and other amaNguni clans, which migrated northwards from KwaZulu after disagreements with King Tshaka, and which maintained their identity and language. The amaNdebele State was thus a multi-ethnic, complex society, which owed much of its success to a military and political organisation derived, in part, from its amaZulu heritage.<sup>216</sup>

---

<sup>214</sup> See The Dispatch, 30 April 1999.

<sup>215</sup> For more information on the early history of Mzilikazi and the amaNdebele nation see Rasmussen, R. , K. , *Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, Rex Collings, London, 1978.

In front of Lobengula's Palace was a stone wagon shed, Fig. 7.6, also believed to have been built by Europeans.



Plate 7.4- Lobengula's wagon shade  
(Source: Sabinet: [http:// www.bufau.bham.ac.uk /newsite / projects / OB / Bulawayo. Html](http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.html))

A number of round houses of traditional Zulu beehive structures were also built inside the Royal Enclosure, possibly as residences for Lobengula's wives and some of the Royal family members.

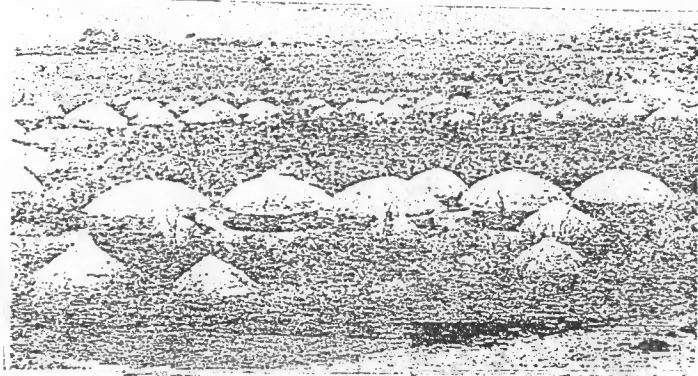


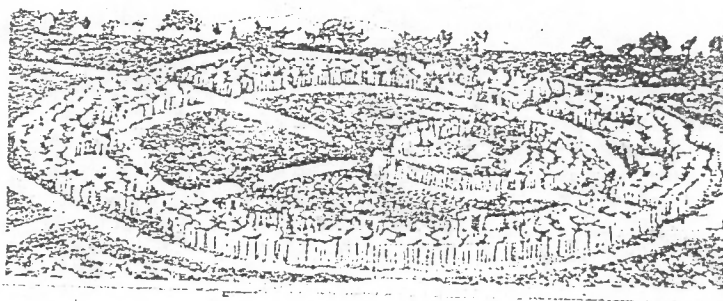
Plate 7.5- Homesteads surrounding the King's Residence  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

The followers of Mzilikazi arrived in the present day Matebeleland in two groups in mid-1839 and 1840 – with the one group led by Gundwane Ndiweni and the other by King Mzilikazi himself. On their arrival they established many settlements under Mzilikazi and his son and heir, Lobengula. These settlements clearly reflected their amaZulu heritage. This is exemplified by the layout of KoBulawayo, which was the seat of power of the amaNdebele Kingdom from 1870 to 1881, during part of King Lobengula's reign. The name Bulawayo was adopted from a similarly named settlement in KwaZulu, which was Tshaka's headquarters.

---

#### KoBulawayo in the 1890s

- The central area was a livestock kraal for sheltering livestock at night.
- Ownership of cattle vested in the King (a sign of wealth and power).
- The King's Residence was central and surrounded by the houses of his protecting subjects, Impis.
- Circular structure.
- The King had access to all his subjects.



---

Plate 7.6- KoBulawayo in 1890s  
(Source: The Bulawayo Mayor's Residence  
Project- Report)

KoBulawayo was built on a sort of square plateau with each side approximately a thousand metres in length, with the incline of the slope varying from one side to the other. The mainstay of the settlement was the 100m diameter Royal Enclosure (*isigodlo*), which was at the heart of the settlement and surrounded by a massive timber palisade – a feature that can still be seen in some present-day amaNdebele homesteads. Within the Royal Enclosure there was King Lobengula's Palace – a rectangular brick house which is

believed to have been built by European traders and the foundations of which can still be seen today.

There is also evidence that the Royal Enclosure contained grain storage bins as well, as stone foundations have been identified by archaeological surveys that are currently underway on the site.<sup>217</sup> The Royal Enclosure was, in turn, surrounded by an empty space, the Central Enclosure, which may have been used for military training, parades and safe keeping of livestock.

The dwelling units for the commoners formed the outer ring of the settlement, approximately 500 metres in diameter. These were round beehive shaped structures of compactly arched wattles and wickerwork covered on the outside by a thick layer of thatch.<sup>218</sup>

Between *isigodlo* and the outer ring of the settlement there was a large open space, the Main Enclosure, which was used for military parades and traditional ceremonies like *inxwala* (celebrated at the onset of the rainy season when the trees are in bloom).

Current archaeological surveys have found one to the Northwest of the Royal Enclosure incorporating a narrow processional passage defined by stone walls. About 250 metres east of the settlement there were residences of European traders whose ruins can still be seen to date.

The initiation of the identity debate as a result of the various conceptual proposals of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project came at a time when the City was, and still is, deeply involved in search of its soul. Underdevelopment and political upheavals in the Matebeleland region as a whole dominated the first decade of the country's independence in 1980. This meant there was little time for self-reflection and thus the region did not have an opportunity to define the parameters of its own identity. The City

---

<sup>217</sup> On Sabinet: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.html>.

<sup>218</sup> Ransford, O., *Bulawayo: Historic Battlefield of Rhodesia*, A. A. Balkema, Cape Town, 1968, pp. 34

of Bulawayo has in the recent years earned itself the tag of “The City of Kings” due in part to its historical links to KoBulawayo. In addition to that settlement, there were a series of other, similarly historically significant settlements that included King Mzilikazi’s Inyathi settlement of eMhlahlandlela and a number of others like eGabheni and eKuphumuleni, which were founded in the region during the northward migration from KwaZulu. All these settlements were modelled around traditional amaZulu settlements, which were circular in plan with the central part reserved for cattle and other treasures.

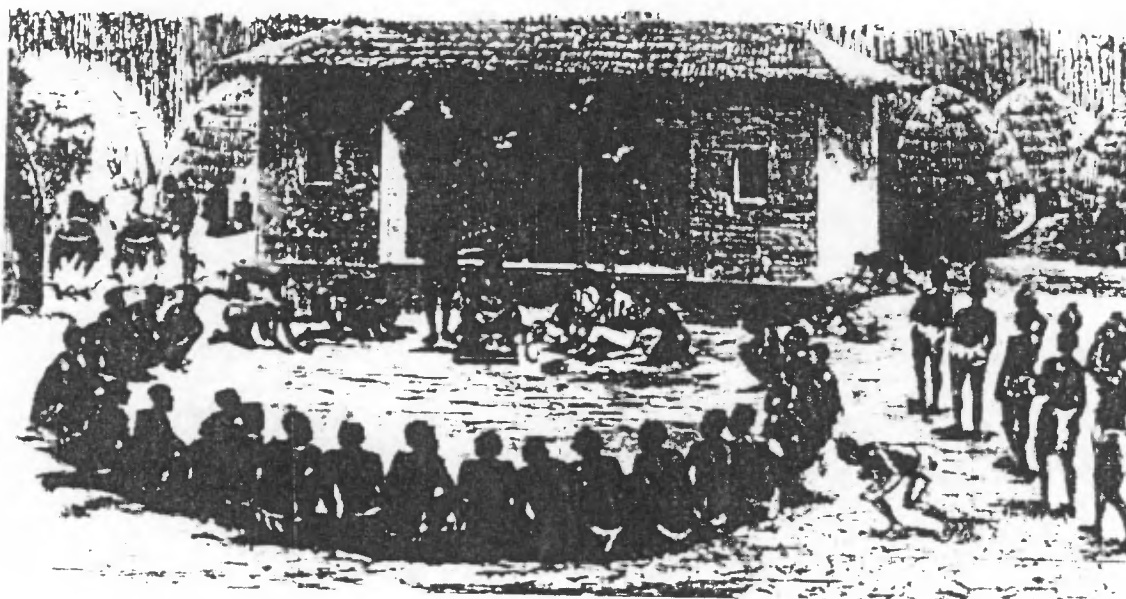


Plate 7.7- The circular siting arrangement can be observed in this instance with the King’s House behind him.  
(Source: Sabinet: [http:// www.bufau.bham.ac.uk /newsite / projects / OB / Bulawayo. Html](http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk/newsite/projects/OB/Bulawayo.html))

How was the symbolism of KoBulawayo incorporated into the design of the Mayor’s Residence project and how appropriate was this ultimately for the scheme? Symbolically, the design of the Mayor’s Residence showed the importance of the King in the amaNdebele society. When the King had an *Indaba* (conference), the *Inkundla* (Conference Centre) normally had a tree which he would lean against when addressing his subjects – the *Indaba* tree. On either side of the *Indaba* tree there would be his *Ibutho*

*le Imbovane* (warriors or royal guard) forming a semi-circle to the left and right of him with the subjects sitting in front of him.

This sitting arrangement around the *Inkundla* was infused into the concept of the Mayor's Residence project with the two residential wings (namely the Mayor's private residence and the guest wing) representing the two wings of the *Imbovane*. The Conference Centre and the Executive Mayor's Home Office were accommodated in the same building unit and symbolically represented the Indaba Tree.

The two wings representing the royal guards, the *Imbovane*, were designed to face the city centre, which in turn symbolically represented the King's subjects, the commoners (*uzulu*). The other amaNdebele-oriented symbolism embodied in the proposed Executive Mayor's Residence was the bull's horn, a battle formation that was invented by Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa clan (amaNyambose) and later perfected by King Tshaka of the amaZulu. This battle formation was used by the amaNdebele on their northward advance and also under King Lobengula. The two wings thus symbolically represent the "horns", whilst the Conference Centre and the Home Office represented the "head".

Symbolism was also drawn from other historical sources to be superimposed on the Residence's proposed layout – for instance the construction and walkways of stone ruins built by the *maRozvi* tribe in and around Zimbabwe (which was discussed earlier) and the horseshoe shape. The horseshoe shape is supposed to symbolise the European population and its important colonial history in the region. Moreover, a number of battles had been fought in and around the modern City of Bulawayo at the onset of colonialism in Zimbabwe, and horses had been a strong weapon. Hence the conceptual symbolic importance of the horseshoe to that section of the region's population.

Given all these intertwining concepts, how appropriate were they ultimately for the design of the Mayor's Residence project (which was intended to become an archetype)? At the planning level, the conceptual circle of KoBulawayo was indeed appropriate, in that it emphasises the residence of the King. However, at the architectural level, it is rather unfortunate that there is no documentation of the traditional spatial layout of the

King's Residence except for the rectangular brick building built by European missionaries and the King's visitors. The Mayor is symbolically the "king" of the City in terms of its administration and interests. In this respect the attempt to develop an architecture that reflects this, was a step in the right direction.

The most appropriate conceptual development was actually that of the *Indaba* Tree. The symbolism implied by this concept is in perfect harmony with the proposed project, in that the Mayor's post exists because only because of his 'subjects', i.e. his assistance and advisors, councillors, and the City's residents. By planning the layout of the residence to face the City Centre (which represents the "commoners"), *uBulawayo*, as the amaNdebele would also call it, the designers' concept became a cultural icon that has the potential for wide-ranging applications in similar future projects.

Other conceptual considerations, such as the use of the bull's horn formation and even perhaps the horseshoe, might have been more suitable for military institutions (e.g. army barracks) than for the present proposal. These will probably be suitably applied in future projects in the region.

Critical Regionalism argues for the employment of local structural elements of the environment as an alternative to vernacular traditional forms. These include site-specific factors such as the topography, the quality of the light and the ingenious use of local materials. As has been discussed in Chapter Four, Critical Regionalism opposed sentimentality, ethnocentric values or regional chauvinism. How does the proposed project fare with respect of the underlying concepts outlined to this point?

The concept developed up to this point appears to be ethnocentric mainly due to its reference to a settlement (KoBulawayo) constructed by a certain ethnic group (the amaNdebele). As has been described earlier, the settlement accommodated all races and other local groups – mirroring the fact that the amaNdebele is a multi-ethnic society. References – expressed in the symbolism of the site and the building form – have also been made to other local settlements built by other ethnic groups.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
LIBRARY



UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARY  
540 EAST 57TH STREET, CHICAGO, ILL. 60637

site of the project, which also played an important symbolic role and is the subject of discussion in the next sub-section.

The hilltop site was symbolically important in that it resembled the geographical features of the settlements of the amaNdebele Kings Mzilikazi and Lobengula, who had built their cities on hilltops and plateaux.<sup>220</sup> The hill outcrop is high enough to give magnificent views of the Central Business District, the National University of Science and Technology and stretching as far as the horizon. The height also gave the designers a further advantage in terms of playing with different levels; these enabled them to employ the winding walkways that can also be seen in the historical *maRozvi* stone ruins, which too had been built on hilltops.

Symbolically, the height of the site also enabled architects to represent the social hierarchy of the amaNdebele monarchy's spatial arrangements by placing the most important spaces at the top of the hill outcrop.<sup>221</sup> These were the Mayor's Conference Room and Home Office, which also symbolically represented the King's *Indaba* Tree. The lowest spaces were the car park, garages and servants' quarters on the eastern side of the site (see Fig. 7. 13).

The third (and final) design concept thus emphasised the specificity of the site by considering the significance of the views of prominent features around the City, such as the National University of Science and Technology and the City Centre. The architects chose not to level the site and put up an equally flat structure on the site; instead the building structures were designed to harmonise with the site conditions and its slopes.

Despite these positive aspects, certain criticisms were also levelled at the designers of the project. It was suggested that there are far higher hill outcrops in the city – in both low (wealthy)- and high-density (poor) residential suburbs that might have actually worked

---

<sup>219</sup> The lower level plan covering the ends of the Mayor's and Guest wings is given in Appendix A together with other drawings of the Mayor's Residence project. See pp. 252 – 255.

<sup>220</sup> see Rasmussen, R. , K. , *Migrant Kingdom: Mzilikazi's Ndebele in South Africa*, Rex Collings, London, 1978.

<sup>221</sup> See Sibanda, M., et al, *The African Heritage: A history for O' Level Secondary School, Book 3*, Zimbabwe Publishing House, Harare, 1999, pp. 18.

even better. In terms of the information gathered during fieldwork, some respondents suggested that the proposed Mayor's Residence could have assumed a far more regional identity, not only limited to Bulawayo.

Some respondents (for example, those coded RN2 and R4, see Appendix on pages 250 – 269.) argued that the conference centre could have been designed to accommodate all the chiefs and other town and city leaders in the region, and that sufficient accommodation could have been provided in the guest wing so that the complex could be used for mapping out developments for the entire region.



Plate 7.8- The Location of prominent Bulawayo Civic Buildings  
(Source: The Harare Surveyor General's Office)

A further criticism was that the complex could have been better placed along other civic buildings belonging to the City Council, so that it could have assumed a more public status. In this way the proposed building might have had a larger impact in terms of initiating a debate on what is locally appropriate in as far as public buildings are concerned. In turn, future public buildings could have been designed to take cognisance of public opinion. The proposed building, even in its present location, will (once it has been constructed) have a similar status to Bawa's Parliamentary complex in terms of its symbolic value. This would have been enhanced even further if public accessibility (as symbolised by the concept of the *Indaba* Tree) was made one of the top priorities. A site nearer to the Civic Centre would have been the most appropriate.

The changes suggested by some of the respondents were not going to affect the building status and general concept, but might have added to what was already there. Respondents who criticised the architects for a poor choice of a 'hill' were firmly supported by the fact that the outcrop is only about 15 metres high, therefore did not succeed in emphasising the social hierarchical structure of the amaNdebele monarchy that they regarded highly.

Furthermore, the concept would have worked even better if the three components – the guests' wing, the mayor's residence and the conference centre – were made much more independent of each other, although still arranged in a circular form. That way Mayor's Residence would have been a complex urban scheme with a large conference centre and a guest bedrooms complex with a regional appeal in terms of its symbolic qualities and accommodation.

According to most respondents, an isiNdebele house is circular in form and has right-hand-side doors. The sitting areas are divided into those for men (usually behind the door) and those for women (usually on the left-hand side). The reason for the men sitting behind the door was so that they could use the door as a shield in the case of enemy attacks. In the olden day the family father took the first sitting place behind the door, known as *empundu*. These cultural details were however never considered during the design development. If they had, the design might have placed the Mayor's Wing in

relationship to the Conference Centre on the right hand side – which is where the Guest Wing was in fact placed. The way it should have been done might have been even more symbolically appropriate, as an isiNdebele house normally faces to the west, away from the prevailing winds from the east. In this particular case the Mayoral complex was facing the City Centre to the west of the site.

The court that is bounded by the Executive Mayor's residence and guest wings that formed part of the semicircle is the most public of them all as this links the residence to the rest of the city.

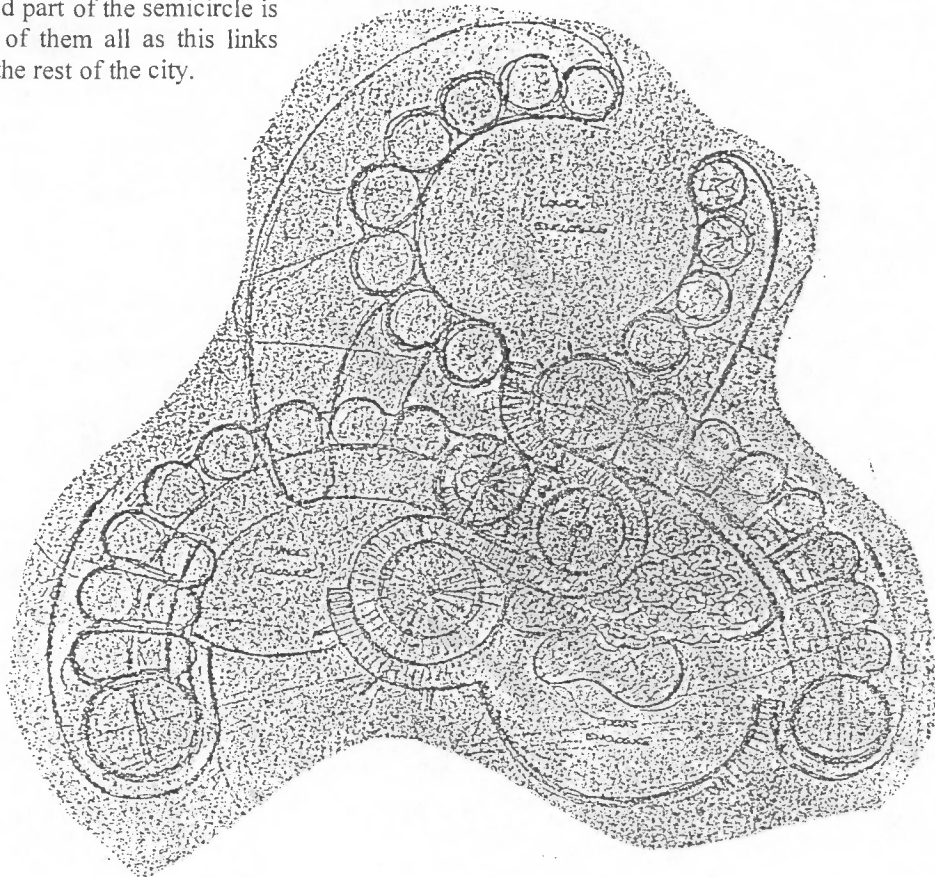


Fig. 7.7- Building forms concept development  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

In accordance with information gathered from the respondents during fieldwork, *isibaya* (the kraal) and *idale* (arrival place for visitors and a place where the men carried out their carpentry and other duties) are generally located to the west of the homestead. The respondents thus said that the general layout and the planning of the site was indeed

appropriate, if one considers the Central Business District, which is to the west, to be *idale* or *isibaya*.

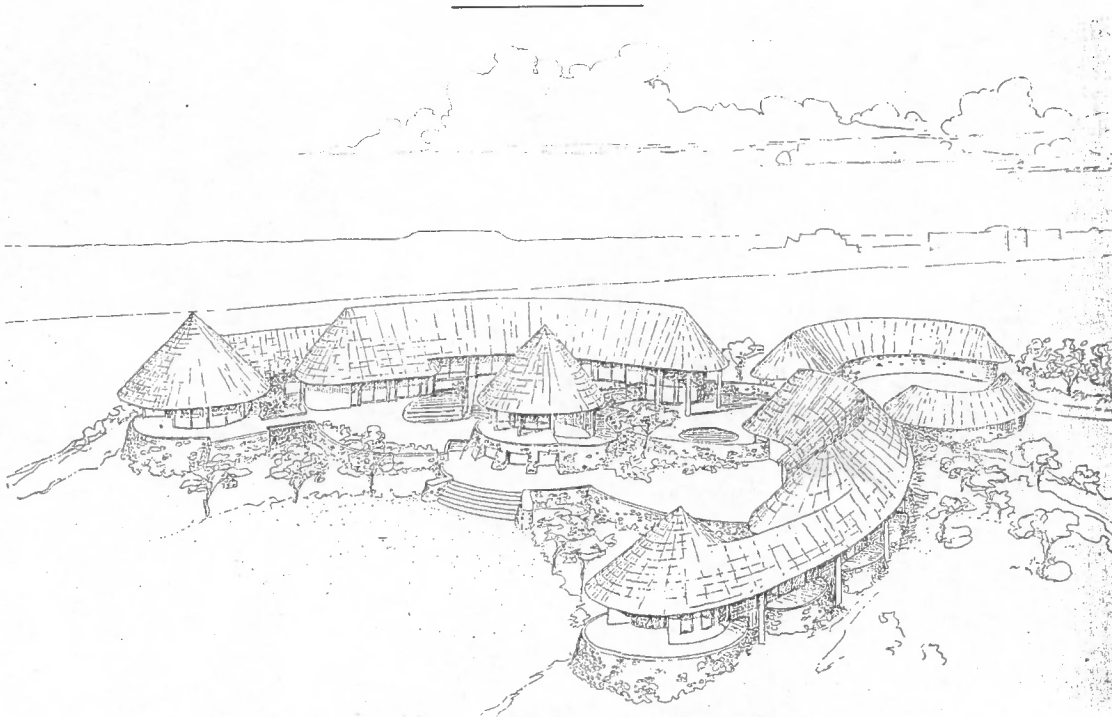


Fig. 7.8- Perspective of the proposed Mayor's Residence project  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Two vital aspects needed to be considered for the concept of the residence – the orientation around a north-south axis and the use of central elements. In terms of the brief, the conference centre was considered to be a very important element. This was because it firstly recalled the amaNdebele *Indaba* Tree (a place where elders discuss legal and political ideas), and secondly because of the traditional and cultural role of a fire place (where communal family youngsters listen to the elders tell tales or men discuss ideas). The importance of the conference centre was also emphasised by its vertical location on the hill with a splendid view into the city towards the “king’s” subjects.

Scenographic tendencies or hypnotic qualities were circumvented in this scheme by using building forms that are a hybrid of traditional forms and modern functional spaces. Instead of using single round huts, a combination of curved building forms was proposed by incorporating the proposed building into the surrounding geographical environment.

The designers also attempted to develop one of the basic aspects of Critical Regionalism - the creation of a bounded architecture that stresses the territory created by the structure erected on the site and not one that emphasises the building as a free-standing entity.

Initially, the Mayor's and the guest wings were designed to stretch from the low level on the eastern side up the hilltop and down at the front of the peak/ hill outcrop. The idea was part of integrating the concept of KoBulawayo and site conditions.

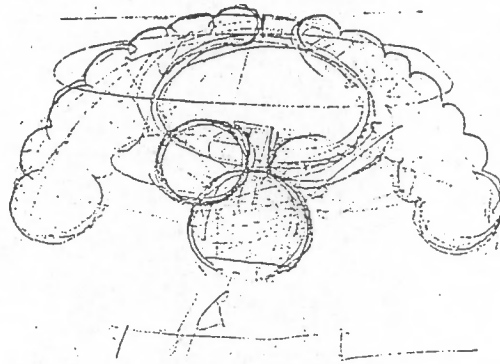


Fig. 7.9- Building form development  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

As has been discussed previously, circular forms were adopted to match the general forms of the King's historical City. These were meant to create a traditional settlement atmosphere. Where possible, conical roof forms were proposed, otherwise the roof forms followed circular and curved plan forms. This concept was carried out even at the smaller scale, as reflected in the details of the fenestration and column forms. A number of respondents thought the design was successful in terms of creating an ambience typical of an amaNdebele homestead. Some believed that the house form could have been even more successful if tent-like roofs had been implemented. This is known as *ukuqgokisa* (to dress the house up) (see Respondents coded RN2 and R4 in the Appendix, also mentioned by LD1 – not included in the Appendix.)

The use of an abstract circle in conjunction with the *Indaba* Tree was also considered to be particularly appropriate in that it reflected the place of the Mayor as the “king” or “father” of the City. As Bulawayo is the provincial capital of Matebeleland, it therefore

follows that it has to have a building that can be used by someone of the stature of the Mayor who minds uBulawayo (the Bulawayo's residents) and who, in turn, has to be minded / protected by *imbovane*.

The idea proposed circular building forms sitting on curved platforms, thus creating walkways similar to those created by the timber palisade of KoBulawayo. The drum-on-cone idea was being developed at this stage.

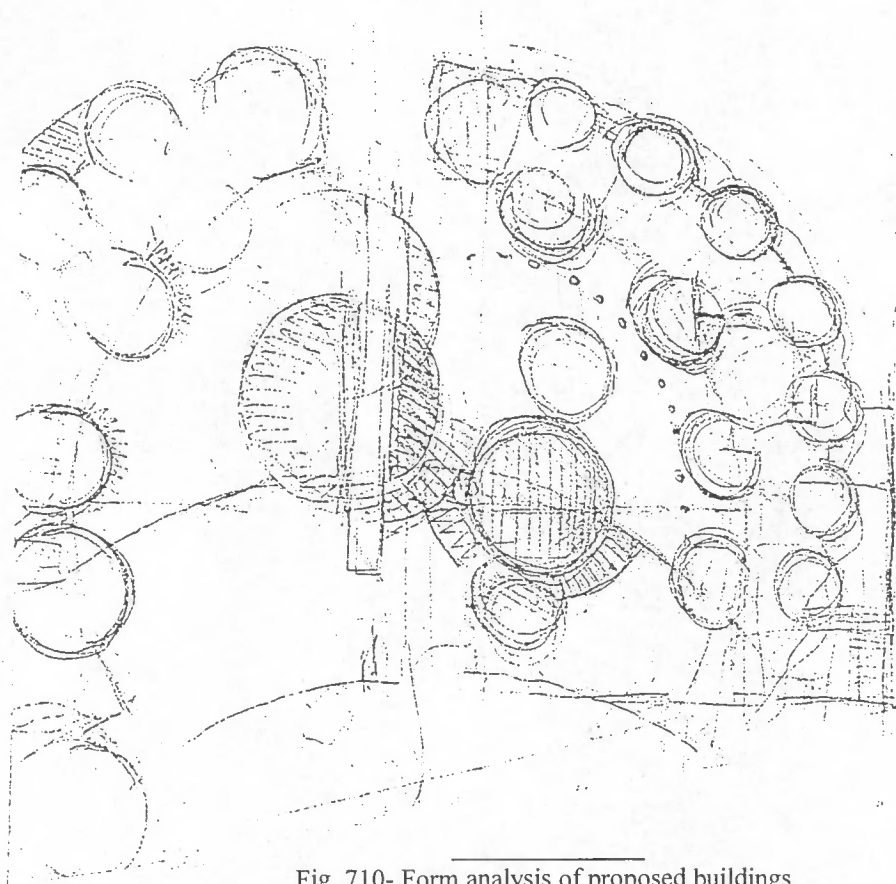


Fig. 710- Form analysis of proposed buildings.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Respondent RN2 argued that the uBulawayo are like the King's sons and daughters who act like arrows that protect him from enemies.<sup>222</sup> This line of thinking was supplemented and substantiated by quotations from the bible, Psalms 127, which emphasises the importance of the King and his security.

<sup>222</sup> See the interview with Respondent coded, RN2 section 7, question (c).

Circulation in the mayoral complex was also developed around the traditional building forms. As the building was located on a hill, the circulation was designed along the same lines as those found in the Khami and Zimbabwe Ruins.

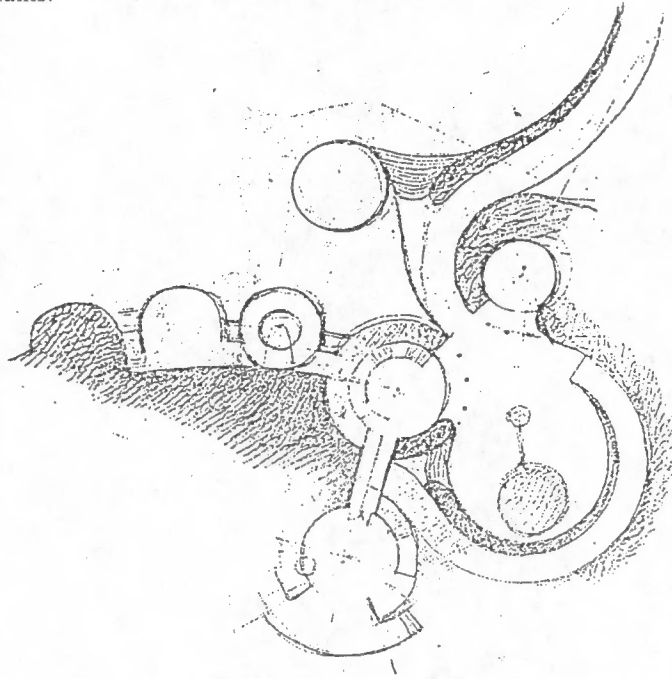


Fig. 7.11- Circulation concept and building forms  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

The winding route to the peak of the hill outcrop is shown in figure 7.20. (point 13) The curved form of the buildings was beginning to take shape with multiple curved platforms supporting the foundations.

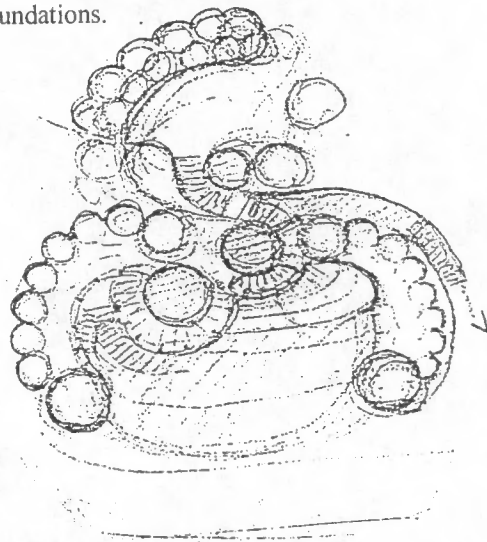


Fig. 7.12- Integration of circulation and building forms.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Further explored was the cone-on-drum concept of that is currently the most popular in the region and in other parts of Southern Africa Fig. 7.21.

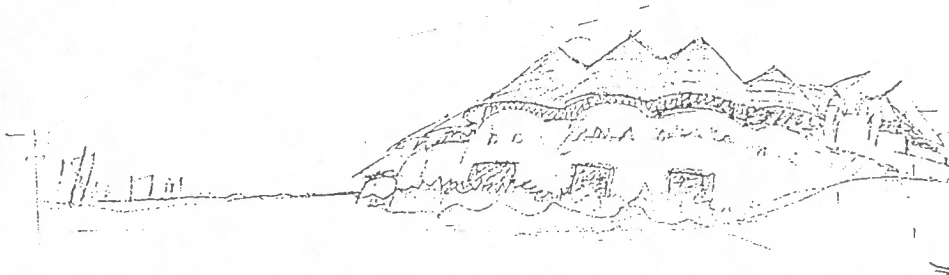


Fig. 7.13- 3-D analysis of building forms integrated into the site.  
(Source: The Mayor's Residence Project Report)

Most materials that were specified were those that blended into the local environment and created and enhanced the atmosphere of a traditional homestead. Hence the use of earthy coloured bricks and stones for prominent building walls and retaining walls. Roof slates were chosen because of their flexibility, which could conform to the conical and curved forms of the proposed roofs. This flexibility was used to achieve an effect of thatching and to highlight the overall fluidity of the proposed roof forms. Pine panels were proposed as ceiling materials. Concrete columns were used throughout the whole complex to mirror the palisade that had been used in KoBulawayo.

## **THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

The importance of this project was evidenced by the attention it received both from the Councillors and the public. The intensity of interest necessitated a presentation of the conceptual sketches to the full Council meeting. The City Council set up a committee of five representative members who were responsible for the development of the brief and the project and who acted as mediators between the design team and the client- the Bulawayo City Council. The two initial proposals generated various debates that eventually resulted in the overall review of the brief, as outlined in the preceding section

(as well as in Chapter 6 in greater detail). The ensuing debate generally addressed issues of symbolic representation

Generally, the construction of the Executive Mayor's Residences in all Cities around the country as stipulated by the Government's Urban Areas Act, 1996, was controversial, especially considering the country's economic turmoil during that time. Of all the projects around the country, the one in Harare received the most negative publicity due to its astronomical construction costs. Although initially planned for the purposes of this research study, the author could not get information and drawings on the building from the project architects responsible for the Harare complex, and thus it was not possible to conduct a comparative study of the two projects. The Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project was also not spared the controversy either - the construction cost was estimated to be ten million Zimbabwean dollars in 1998.<sup>223</sup>

The public debate on the Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project gained momentum after the Council's land surveying engineering departments released their topographic survey findings on the site. The soil testing session allegedly discovered three graves, as was published in the Chronicle<sup>224</sup>, a local daily newspaper. This revelation prompted calls from local amaNdebele cultural groups and academics urging the Council to find an alternative site because they insisted it was taboo to build on graveyards<sup>225</sup>. The most vocal of these cultural groups were Imbovane and Vukani Mahlabezulu who are presently still campaigning for amaNdebele cultural revival and awareness in the region. Their protests were followed by other Councillors demanding the abandonment of the project altogether.

The hilly outcrop on the chosen site was quite influential in the development of the concept and the design team felt that changing the site would radically affect the overall form and spatial design of the project. Thus they were reluctant to look for another site. The City Council requested further investigations into these alleged human bones to be

---

<sup>223</sup> See The Chronicle, 12 July 1998

<sup>224</sup> See The Chronicle, 7 March 1998.

<sup>225</sup> See The Chronicle 11 March 1998.

carried out by the Bulawayo Natural Museum and the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe. The initial investigations pointed out that “shards of pottery discovered at the site showed that those buried at the stand could have been early maShona settlers who occupied parts of Southern Zimbabwe<sup>226</sup>” in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. As the pottery shards that had been found on the site were relatively thicker than those of the amaNdebele people, it had been concluded that these belonged to maShona sub-tribes. Scientific investigations into the bones were to be carried out later while the debate on the location of the Mayor’s Residence project raged on.

As these public debates unravelled, the economic woes of the country continued unabated and as a result introduced another dimension to the discourse - the economic viability and necessity of the project. A large section of the public was not aware that the construction of mayoral mansions had in fact been enacted by the Urban Areas Act of 1995 and this was re-explained by the Council’s Town Clerk as clarification for the need to have the project constructed. There were calls for the Government to fund the project instead of Bulawayo ratepayers. The residence was reportedly going to cost ten million Zimbabwean dollars as of July 1998<sup>227</sup>.

After all the debate on the relocation of the Mayor’s Residence project that had been instigated by the initial findings of alleged graves, comprehensive scientific tests concluded that the bones discovered were animal bones not human ones<sup>228</sup>. These conclusive tests brought an end to the debates about the location of the Mayor’s Residence project, which meant that a more productive discourse could now take shape. This direction of the debate was about to begin as the City Council organised a competition for the name of the new Mayoral Complex. But before they could do that this was overtaken by the debate above. Naming of the residence could give pointers to some of the culturally supportive elements that would help shape the City’s architecture in the future. A number of names were proposed by respondents talked to during the fieldwork interview; a couple of them are given here:

---

<sup>226</sup> See The Chronicle 12 March 1998.

<sup>227</sup> See The Chronicle 12 July 1998.

<sup>228</sup> See The Chronicle 10 October 1998.

- *Ingobo ka Mthwakazi* – The purpose of this building is to influence the region in terms of cultural renaissance for the Matebeleland.
- *Imbizo ka Langa - Ilanga* means sun and was the totem of Mzilikazi's Khumalo clan. When a King dies it is said "*ilanga litshonile*"- meaning the sun has set. *Imbizo* was Lobengula's royal regiment that was given the task of repelling European invading colonialists from Mthwakazi (amaNdebele territory). The name therefore reflects the historical and cultural background of the amaNdebele people.
- *KoMthwakazi* or *Esidikidikini* or *Engqongweni* - *Mthwakazi* is an isiNdebele term meaning Matebeleland. *Esidikidikini* means 'where everything happens' i.e. a nerve centre of all activities; this referred to the importance of the Mayor in the City and a form of Parliament where laws are made. *Engqongweni* means the topmost part of something especially with reference to a tree or a geographical feature.

To conclude the above section, the Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project could have been more productive had it considered some of the underlying conceptual principles raised in the above discussion. In any case the main debate touched on the suitability of the site in consideration of customs of isiNdebele culture and the naming of the residence was sparked by the conceptual direction taken by the designers which was different from other proposed residences around the country. Very few of similar projects around the country, to date, have adopted the subject of local architectural and cultural appropriateness in their schemes.

## CONCLUSION

Given the information gathered during the fieldwork and the fact that at the writing of this thesis the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project had not yet been constructed, it was not possible to determine its ultimate degree of supportiveness. This shortcoming meant that the author had to develop a different viable route towards an effective analysis of the proposed project by looking at its symbolic significance and the manner in which the designers have addressed issues of identity (personal, regional and

national). This approach to the analysis of the project was made possible by initially looking at Rapoport's work in Chapter 3, which was thereafter developed into a consideration of identity issues.

Using information gathered in the previous chapters, a number of interesting issues were raised with respect to symbolism issues related to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project. These included a consideration of local cultural traditions, historical setting, site and climatic conditions. Due to a high degree of engagement with local culture through the use of traditional forms, local materials and incorporation of local landscape conditions into design solutions, it can be concluded that the project design assumed a high degree of fluidity in terms of the concept of identity. The regional significance of the project was achieved by addressing issues from a historical setting – primarily the historical city of KoBulawayo. In view of its geographical location in Matebeleland, other respondents argued that the project was supposed to include a much larger conference centre to accommodate various players in the development of the region. In any case by virtue of being the home of the person who oversees the affairs of the largest city in the region, the project did also to a large extent assume regional significance.

Having arrived at this stage of the research, what are the lessons that can be drawn from this thesis and what can be learnt from the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, particularly with respect to the development of local identity in and around Bulawayo? The next Chapter (Chapter 8: Conclusion) will attempt to answer these questions and will also look back at the whole study and make certain recommendations with regard to future studies.

## **PART IV:**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

(Chapter 8)

## CHAPTER 8.0

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## INTRODUCTION

As this thesis has illustrated, the relationship between built form and culture is a very complex one. This research has investigated the intricacies of this relationship by testing the level of “local appropriateness” of a specific project in a particular region, namely Zimbabwe, where studies of how local cultural groups use and perceive space have been long overdue. This research focused on a specific region in Zimbabwe where the isiNdebele culture predominates. It further set out to assess the likely performance of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor’s Residence project in terms of local appropriateness, through applying basic principles drawn from the proposed research approach to the study of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture. The proposed approach to the study of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture was developed in theoretical chapters of this research (Chapters 2 to 5) and will be used, where relevant, in conjunction with information obtained during fieldwork. The conclusions drawn and the lessons learnt from this study of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor’s Residence project can potentially be applied in analysing future projects in the region. There are also various pointers to possible future research studies.

Before considering these issues in further detail, the following section of this concluding chapter will briefly reflect on some of the issues discussed in the thesis so that appropriate conclusions can be drawn.

The following five objectives were set out at the onset of the research:

- The first was to develop a theoretical basis with which to approach the study and analysis of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture. This theoretical basis was developed with the aim of determining the “local appropriateness” of any project, with particular focus on public projects in relatively recently decolonised countries where identity is an important issue. While it was accepted that the concept of “supportiveness” as applied to architecture might involve a range of factors such as culture, climate, skills, economical and political conditions,

available materials etc., the study focused primarily on the cultural aspects of appropriateness.

Whilst this first objective focused on the development of a more general theoretical approach, the four remaining objectives centred on determining the cultural appropriateness performance of a specific project in a third world environment – the Bulawayo Executive Mayor’s Residence project.

- To assess the likely performance of the Bulawayo Executive Mayor’s Residence project in terms of local appropriateness, through applying basic principles drawn from the proposed research approach to the study of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture;
- To identify whether, for isiNdebele-speakers selected because of their likely familiarity with tradition and traditional practices, there are local culturally derived lifestyle practices which were successfully addressed, or whether there are practices that should and could have been discovered and imparted with symbolic expressions by the project design concept, but were not;
- To identify whether there are architectural symbolic representations in this project and the selected environments that are valued as expressions of a desired local “identity” by these isiNdebele-speakers.

The randomly selected respondents come only from a specific amaNdebele sub-group and therefore represent only certain views. Therefore, fieldwork information used in assessing the local appropriateness of the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence project does not represent amaNdebele views *per se* but those likely to support the perpetuation of amaNdebele tradition. Therefore, it can be pointed out that those research findings using this fieldwork information cannot be generalised, because the sample is too small and the selection process was not sufficiently random. The supportiveness criteria were not applied to the Bulawayo project. Supportiveness issues could have been applied to the Bulawayo project only in a very limited way – to some extent to the Mayor’s family life, assuming these issues to be relevant, but also to the settings for public functions in the

residence. In Chapter 7 the supportiveness criteria were applied to the Mayor's Residence project only with respect to the public functions of the residence.

The question now is whether and to what extent the study fulfilled these five objectives. It can also be asked how the proposed case study fared against the theoretical approach and the fieldwork findings. In order to address the research objectives, the following process was followed.

1. Identifying relevant key theories and approaches in existing literature on the studies of the nature of the relationship between built form and culture. Key theories were identified in terms of supportiveness issues that were discussed in Chapter 2 where key theorists were Rapoport, Dewar, Turner and Habraken.
2. Outlining the evolution of the concept of identity in social sciences and examining how this was absorbed into architectural theory and practice.
3. Identifying the above theoretical and practical events with specific reference to developments in third world environments to contextualise the case study project in an identical environment to enable the assessment of its likely performance with respect to issues of supportiveness and identity.

The first point looked at the development of the approach that eventually led to an analysis of Amos Rapoport's approach to the concept of "supportiveness". It was found that although Rapoport's approach to the study of the relationship between built form and culture was solid it did not address issues of symbolism effectively thus leading to questions of identity which became the cornerstone in the discussion of identity issues outlined in Chapters 3 to 5.

The second point thus focused on the historical development of the concept of "identity" in social theories, and how this was mirrored in architectural practice with particular reference to third world environments. In architectural practice there were a number of vernacular-based approaches to identity such as the formal approach expressed by some neo-conservatives such as Stern. Others were culture-driven such as the proposals by Rapoport.

Critical Regionalism was an alternative development to vernacular-based alternatives by attempting to deal with identity without drawing from vernacular architectural traditions and their hypnotic qualities. Critical Regionalists advocated a non-sentimental concept of “identity” that was all-encompassing, taking into account climatic conditions and topographical qualities, with the building being an integral part of its surrounding environment rather than an independent entity. Critical Regionalism was in turn challenged (on the grounds that its politics were inadequate) by a politicised regionalist approach towards the concept of identity. Identity construction is a doubled-sided phenomenon: on the one hand the foundation for cultural appropriateness and local pride; on the other the basis of reactionary ethnic politics. Architecture too has become involved in such debates as manifested by architects’ projects analysed by Vale in his work that became the basis for the discussion in Chapter 5 which highlights the role of architecture in the politics of identity construction. A similar manifestation of politics in identity construction manifested itself in the Bulawayo Mayor’s Residence as seen in Chapters 6 and 7.

The following section is a summary of the findings of this research and will be followed by its practical and theoretical implications. The last main section deals with recommended future research studies.

## **SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The study, investigated some theoretical literature suggesting how tradition might be approached, and some examples of practical work where tradition was an issue. In this respect, there are three important perspectives from which the basic concepts of the study are derived, and these are: romanticism, structuralism and anthropology. The distinction should be based on a romantic appropriation dealing only with forms considered appealing or quaint; structuralism being concerned with underlying order, and anthropology being concerned with cultural practices and symbolic meanings. Amos Rapoport has made significant contributions to this final approach. Over many years, his

work has been largely focussed on creating analytical methods to increase the possibility of a better cultural and behavioural match between people and their environments.

In terms of Rapoport's approach, a "supportive" environment is said to be one where there is a good cultural and behavioural fit between people and their specific environment. It was in fact through his concept of "supportiveness" that the original study topic of this thesis with regard to the nature of the relationship between culture and built form was approached. Rapoport, as we have seen in Chapter 2, approached the subject by arguing that "culture" was too broad and too global a term when studying the relationship between built form and culture, he accordingly "dismantled" the concept into more manageable concepts drawn from two entities, (see Chapter 2). The most fruitful and significant of the interrelated concepts for the purposes of this thesis dealt with "lifestyles", via his "systems of activities and systems of settings" concept.

To determine the ultimate cultural appropriateness performance of a building project, it is required to research the impact of the constructed building on the lifestyles and values of the inhabitants in its wider setting. With respect to actual supportiveness of an existing building there are two important factors to take into account. First, the building's immediate environs in combination with its entire broader environs and, secondly, the impact of its housed functions together with the impact of these functions on the "system of activities". This task involves research on how the inhabitants living near (or in) the specific building's neighbourhood actually perceive and use buildings and environments. However, with respect to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project (being the practical case study discussed in Chapters 6 and 7), the actual "supportiveness" could not be measured in practice, because the building had not yet been constructed at the time of carrying out the fieldwork and writing up this research report. Instead, the author of this research chose to analyse the predicted supportiveness of the project, and using Rapoport's theoretical that deals with the fit between systems of activities and systems of settings as a stepping stone to enquiring what buildings mean and how they are read – i.e., their identity, or what they symbolise.

Although Rapoport acknowledges that “identity” is a property of cultural groups both through self-definition and definition by others, he only defines the concept of identity in terms of ethnicity. The definition of identity however involves more than just ethnicity and race; among others, it involves a complex combination of language, religion, occupation, caste, occupation, ideology, status, etc.<sup>213</sup>. It was discovered, however, that while Rapoport recognises the complex nature of identity formation, his method of establishing the desired functional and symbolic connections between an environment and its human inhabitants privileges ethnicity above all other identity constructing factors. This is revealed by the manner in which he uses the “culture-core” concept. The analysis following from the use of this concept assumes that identity construction comes mainly from using available cultural and material resources from a spectrum of cultural representations along the “traditional” to “modern” spectrum.

Two questions exposed the inadequacy of this approach were raised by this study, prompted by research into recent literature. The first one questioned whether identity could be fixed so firmly on a point along the traditional to modern spectrum / progression. The second question highlighted the problematic nature of any identity analysis that starts with ethnicity as the primary factor in multi-ethnic, identity-fluid environments.

The study delved into architectural and more general identity literature in its investigation of the identity issues implicated in the relationship between built form and culture. At the heart of this investigation lay the question of how to think about tradition in a world that is increasingly being affected by globalisation. This question was addressed by examining how identity was defined in modernist and postmodernist terms, and how these influenced architects working in third world physical and cultural environments and their vernacular traditions. Resources from social and cultural theories as well as recent developments in identity literature in architecture were used for this examination.

---

<sup>213</sup> See Chambers, E. and Low, S. (Eds.), *Housing, Culture and Design: A comparative perspective*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. xiv – xv.

The following paragraphs will provide a brief summary of the issues related to identity and the relationship between built form and culture, and how these developments were explored historically in the social sciences and in architectural practice. Thereafter, we will apply the knowledge derived from this inquiry to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, with specific reference to the concept of "identity". After that, we will further investigate how certain issues raised by Critical Regionalism are implicated in the relationship between built form and culture, and how these were subsequently over-arched by broader regional issues, such as the design of public buildings (for example, parliamentary complexes and capital cities).

As clearly illustrated by the present study, the concept of identity is intricately linked to culture through individuals' shared common values and world-views. In this respect, identity is viewed as a product of a set of constructs through which individuals see themselves and through which others see them. Recent literature in social theories often traces the historical developments of our current understanding of identity and its constituent elements. An example of this is provided by Stuart Hall,<sup>230</sup> who gives the following three very different historical conceptions of identity, based on changing perspectives on the nature of the human subject:

- That derived from the concept of the enlightenment subject, based on a notion of the human person as a holistic individual whose inner-core was considered to be fixed through factors like ethnicity, race religion, class gender, and others.
- That derived from the concept of the sociological subject, whose inner-core was conceived to be formed in relation to significant others, who mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols - the culture - of the worlds he/she inhabited. Here there is a degree of flexibility in identity formation, which can be affected, for example, by modernisation.
- That derived from post-modern concepts of the subject, rejecting any fixed, essential or permanent identity. The consequence of this definition is that identity can be selected or imposed according to how subjects perceive themselves or are categorised

---

<sup>230</sup> Hall, S., "The Question of Identity" in: Hall, S., et al (Eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures*, Polity, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 275 – 277.

by others. In this instance identity could be constructed through a complex combination of resources.

Some analysts trace the historical developments of the concept of identity in social theories in terms of how individuals employed resources that were made available to them by social processes.<sup>231</sup> It was argued that similar developments of the concept of identity in architectural practice could best be understood in terms of the degree and nature of engagement with the local culture or vernacular traditions in design and planning thinking philosophies, i.e., its degree of cultural connectivity. The concept of cultural connectivity proved to be vital in tracing historical developments of the concept of identity in the architectural practice of most third world countries. This is particularly so when considering that some of these countries had to attempt to find a local voice and define their post-colonial national identities through various de-colonisation processes, one of which was manipulation of built environments.

Given the developments in architectural practice in third world countries with respect to the concept of identity, whose typical example was given in terms of developments in the Indian sub-continent (see Chapter 4), what level of cultural connectivity was actually achieved by the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project? In responding to the challenge of designing for "localness", what were the resources employed? As has been demonstrated in Chapter 5, the resources employed in designing the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project were drawn from various sources, including local cultural, social and historical sources. The degree of engagement with local vernacular traditions in designing the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project can be determined through its successful employment of core concepts of the historical settlement of KoBulawayo – the seat of amaNdebele nation under King Lobengula – and other isiNdebele values, lifestyle and building patterns (such as, for example, *inxwala* and *inkundla*).

---

<sup>231</sup> See Chapter Three where the works of Geertz, Harris and Taylor were discussed. The historical development of the concept of identity in social sciences varied from those that employed single resources only, for example race, religion, ethnicity etc, by introducing a degree of flexibility (as in modernism) and finally by using a combination of a host of resources (as in post-modernism).

How successful was the attempt to develop a local architectural language in the design of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, and how appropriate was the language used? The next section briefly summarises the determination on the performance of the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project with respect to cultural appropriateness (these were discussed comprehensively in Chapters 6 and 7).

The assessed performance of the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project in terms of its attempt to construct its physical and symbolic users' identity (i.e., its cultural connectivity) was determined (see Chapter 7) by looking at the following two aspects. The first of these was its engagement with local social and cultural issues; the second was the way in which local climatic and site conditions are addressed. The former was highlighted by the symbolic use of elements from the historic settlement of KoBulawayo. For instance, an abstract circular form was derived from KoBulawayo, while its three-dimensional form was based on elements drawn from local historical ruins (the Great Zimbabwe and the maRozvi people's Khami ruins), particularly as regards the circulation from the low-lying area to the top of the hill. The circular form further reflected the historical social set-up of the amaNdebele settlement where herds of cattle and other livestock were kept near the centre of the settlement with the Royal residences just off the centre and the commoners' settlements forming concentric circles in outlying areas.

In addition to the abstract use of elements of KoBulawayo, the designers also incorporated other cultural and social elements of local people's lifestyles, traditions and building forms. Among these are traditional isiNdebele homestead elements, like the courtyard and the layout of the homestead. Also used in the scheme was the Royal amaNdebele sitting arrangement around an *Indaba* Tree. This sitting arrangement was used as an organising element of the design, with the "tree" to be symbolised by the building that was to house a conference facility and a home office. These facilities were considered to be of higher value and importance in the same way that the *Indaba* tree was used as a support for the King in his sitting position when talking to *izinduna* (chiefs) or other subjects. The proposed building's massive base walls and buttresses also instilled a "fortress" feeling that underscored the importance of the adopted symbolism in

isiNdebele social and cultural settings as well as its status in the hierarchy of other spaces in this complex.

The second aspect of the design that allowed the project to achieve a higher degree of cultural connectivity was the manner in which designers addressed local climatic and site conditions. In terms of the criterion of vertical height, the most important spaces were allocated the prime positions with the best views on top of the site's hill outcrop. Just as had been done in the historical ruins (such as Khami, for instance), the importance of individuals was indicated by their position on the hilltop – the higher they were located, the more important they were. If one considers the unique combination of such topographical adaptations and layout patterns, the modern technology used and traditional local as well as modern materials, then in fact this project is in the same league as the projects of Bawa and Doshi that were looked at in Chapter Three. By incorporating specific elements and principles dating back to the historical settlement of KoBulawayo – which is virtually an icon in the region in which the modern city of Bulawayo is located – the project effectively achieved a fairly high degree of cultural connectivity. It also contributed in interesting ways to the creation of a regional / national identity. The relevance of amaNdebele vernacular traditional elements and others employed in the design was outlined in Chapter 7. The City of Bulawayo is conceptually considered to be a 'homestead' as pronounced by the isiNdebele phrase *omuzi omkhulu wakoBulawayo* implying the 'Great Homestead of Bulawayo'. The Mayor's administrative and political position in the City is equated to that of a father or King of a homestead. In totality, the above argument indeed proves the fluidity with which designers initiated local identity formulation. It can be concluded that the project indeed achieved a degree of fluidity in terms of the concept of identity although there is a lot of room for improvement as alluded to in Chapter 7.

Having discussed the research in general and used the material gathered in the fieldwork as well as in the theoretical research to analyse the proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project, what are the wider implications of the study, both practically and theoretically?

## PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

One of the aims of this study was to initiate and encourage a debate on what can be termed “the Zimbabwean architecture”, which, in itself, is still in the process of being defined. The author hopes that this study will assist in provoking a productive and critical engagement with local vernacular architectural traditions. Furthermore, it is asked how such an engagement can be used to mould a more recognisable national architectural character, which will in turn help to create culturally appropriate environments. The present study has raised a number of issues that can be taken further by willing professionals in the built environment, and it also identified possible sources from which identity construction elements could perhaps be derived. These can also assist in the creation of a national identity, specifically in the case of projects that are of national rather than merely regional importance.

As was highlighted in Chapter 6 and 7 the layout of the historical settlement of KoBulawayo proved to be an invaluable source of identity construction elements that can be applicable in an urban environment as well as in a rural setting. Diverse planning and architectural elements were discovered which could be applied to future projects. The most prominent of these was the use of the circular form as an important organising element, which took the layout of the local landscape into account through its orientation and consideration of cardinal directions. The next prominent element concerned the arrangement of the various elements according to their relative importance, with the central elements assuming the most prominent status.

Another element identified herein which can potentially be applied to future architectural and planning projects, was the sitting arrangement (for meeting or conferencing purposes) in a meeting place which is also still used in traditional isiNdebele homesteads to this day. These meeting places known as *idale* or *inkundla*, depending on status, invariably had a tree (an *Indaba* tree), where a prominent figure (a King in the case of KoBulawayo) seat in front of the tree thus facing *uzulu*. . In front of the figure (or King) the audience formed a semi-circle with the guards completing the circle behind the King.

This circular sitting arrangement contributed significantly to the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, where the proposed Conference Centre and Home Office assumed the position of the *Indaba* Tree. The height of the "tree" could be determined by the topography of the site. If it were to be located in the Central Business District, for example, it could be a multi-storey building, whereas if it were situated in a rural environment, it could simply be a small though still important building. In the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project it was a double storey building with varying levels. Its symbolic importance was further emphasised by its position on the hillock.

From the field interviews it transpired that a number of elements, that were not implemented in the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, could be drawn from traditional isiNdebele homesteads which could be critically applied in future projects in and around Bulawayo in terms of the building forms, cultural spatial quality, and the planning arrangements. The roof forms suggested by some of the respondents were the most prominent feature, with some suggesting a tent-like roof form using thatch. Looked at critically, this can potentially be applied both in rural and urban settings and in residential and commercial projects. The Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project, as was discussed in Chapter 6 and 7, used curved forms to achieve this effect; but with more time and further investigations into the design of a suitable roof, it might have been decided that tent-like roof forms might indeed have been more effective.

The Conference Centre or Home Office block was to be constructed in stone – which was also used in the Great Zimbabwe Ruins and the Khami Ruins, and which is in fact embedded in the name "Zimbabwe" itself, which means "stone houses" in chiShona (one of the Zimbabwean tribal groupings). In this respect, the project was beginning to take on a national character and thus to create a national sense of identity. A further feature was the way in which the routes from the lowest to the highest levels on the Mayoral Complex project were connected, namely by winding walkways. The proposition that the walkways be constructed using stone paving and curbing thus in fact made the architecture of the proposed Mayoral Complex more culturally appropriate and at the same time gave it a recognisable national character.

With regard to the actual location of the site, the Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project might have made an even greater more impact at regional level if it had been appropriately located. A more central location could have achieved this. The author argues that the best site could have been near other prominent civic buildings of the City, i.e., closer to the City Hall or the Tower Block area (see Figure 7.14 for the proposed location). Furthermore, the conference centre could have been designed to accommodate larger crowds, thus working in conjunction with the City Hall. On site just proposed (see Fig. 7.14) individual elements of the Mayor's Residence project would be loosely connected to achieve a graduated privacy setting. These perceived shortcomings of the project can in a positive way be part of important future research.

## **RECOMMENDED FUTURE RESEARCH**

A more critical analysis of the proposed Bulawayo Mayor's Residence project might have been achieved had the project been built and analysed in terms of actual performance with respect to "supportiveness". In this study "supportiveness" was primarily used as a stepping stone to an investigation of symbolic issues around built environments. Yet it could easily have generated a full study on its own, if the building had already been constructed and its impact on its local and wider environment could have been ascertained. Further studies could thus be carried out on built projects from this angle, analysing their "supportiveness" and their cultural and ecological appropriateness. This form of research could be done through analysis of the project and its environs along the "traditional" to "modern" spectrum, followed by fieldwork research on how respondents in fact perceive the environments they live in as well as the case study building(s).

This type of research problem entails defining who should be asked questions about the built projects, with different user groups being identified, who, hypothetically, might react to the building in different ways. Unlike this study where the issue was "what does

the building tell us”, the proposed further study could focus on “how people perceive the building”. This study could then be composed of two broad groups of users of the case building: those residing (or working) in it and those who view it purely as a symbolic cultural and / or City statement. The latter group of respondents would include academics and elders from a specified social group and that group’s particular social settings. With this categorisation of environments from which respondents are chosen, it can be assumed that different responses would be given. In this proposed research it could therefore be hypothesised that these different responses would reflect different positions along the “traditional” to “modern” environmental gradient, as identified by Rapoport, and that other factors, such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, level of education, etc, are important as well.

Key questions regarding the building location and its wider environment would mainly be concerned with respondents’ perceptions as to the “supportiveness” of the building:

- What range of sub-groups and environments must be identified to encompass the necessary range of approaches in and around the chosen city to determine culturally based lifestyle practices and symbolically expressed identities (as manifested environmentally)? On what basis can this difference be defined (urban orientation, age, gender, political affiliation, etc.)?
- Who are the residents of each environment type (i.e. how can they be defined in terms of group identity and lifestyle practices)?
- What role do local cultural practices play in their way of life, and in what ways is the environment of the public space and the domestic environment of their neighbourhood supportive or not of such practices?
- What role do global symbolic motifs associated with modernity on the one hand, and motifs associated with local tradition and culture on the other hand, play in the way that people / respondents present themselves symbolically?
- Do the designs of the building’s immediate environs and the other case environments show any attempt to be “supportive”, and of what? Or do they present some sort of symbolic statement based on local cultural values, and how do the residents interpret and relate to the designers’ efforts?

- How do the residents of these areas reflecting different approaches to the supportiveness and identity issues, themselves act in relation to these issues?
- What are the systems of activities that can be found in each of these areas, and how are they supported by architectural expressions associated with local tradition and cultural practices?
- How do the residents of the project's environs react to architectural expressions given to the systems of activities found in their neighbourhood? Are these expressions considered to be supportive?
- What does the case study building mean to its political users, to ordinary people, to long time urbanites and to recent migrants, to rich people and poor people, to men and women, to old people and young people, etc?

In addition to engaging in this route for the study of the nature of relationship between culture and built form, further studies involving various cultural groupings can be carried out in search of architectural elements that can be used to develop and nurture / strengthen a country's national identity. Information gathered from these proposed studies would complement the findings of this present study, thus ultimately assisting built-environment professionals in dealing with residential, commercial, semi-public and public projects by giving these projects an appropriate local cultural and environmental context.

## CONCLUSION

The route taken by the study was particularly enlightening in terms of understanding the nature of the relationship between culture and built form and it proved to be useful to an analysis of the proposed Bulawayo Executive Mayor's Residence project. Of particular importance in the study was the analysis of the concept of "supportiveness" which formed the foundation for later chapters with regard to decoding symbolism issues as these are embedded in our built environments. The enquiry into issues of symbolism has

in turn led to studies of the concept of identity, which was explored from the dual perspectives of social sciences and architecture.

Although there have been very interesting developments in terms of ascertaining the local appropriateness of built environments in some third world countries, particularly in the Indian sub-continent, far more work is required in Zimbabwe, as there is currently a lack of debate around what constitutes regional and national architectural characteristics. Although the present study did indeed identify some very important elements that could be put into practice in future projects, further research work is required to invigorate a debate around what is currently being described as eco-cultural architectural issues.

**APPENDIX A:**

**MAYOR'S RESIDENCE PROJECT: Selected working drawings**