

STAND/FADA/UJ

09.09.2016

Decolonising architectural education and spatial justice

**COMPETITION FOR SPACE, POWER AND AUTHORITY
IN THE CITY AND ON CAMPUS**

Amira Osman

HOW WE PRACTICE

....a reason why we seem to be unable to achieve any progress in the built environment and housing fields.

As these voices keep telling us, “trust me... I know”, they have been unable to listen to any other voice of reason.

Through recent experiences, it is very clear that the loudest voices are rarely the voices of reason.

“Trust me... I know...” Personal reflections on the decolonisation debate

Practice in the Built Environment is difficult to change because it is culturally rooted and technology cannot solve the housing problem – unless the technology emerges from some social understanding that is collectively shared.

But who is listening?

Our contributions to the field are constantly dismissed. Our writing and knowledge contributions considered irrelevant. Is this selective memory, deliberate obliteration or innocence?

“Trust me... I know...” Personal reflections on the decolonisation debate

WHITE BLACK
MALE FEMALE
?

“Trust me... I know...” Personal reflections on the decolonisation debate

....so I consulted with my friend about what I should say on Women in Architecture.

Knowing my thoughts about Zaha, she advised me not to speak too much about her. I replied: do I now have to defend Zaha the same way we support Hillary Clinton? She reminded me of Trevor Noah saying: *"If Hillary loses, we get Trump; if Hillary wins, we just get another bad president."*

So I guess, that is another way of saying that Zaha was just another bad architect.

Having been reprimanded in a crit many years ago by my then lecturer, the late Prof. Omar Al Agra, at the University of Khartoum, that I was “obsessed with geometry”, I made an effort later in my studies and career to try and understand, at a deeper level, the idea of forms and how they related to site, city and society.

I do not claim to have ever understood Zaha’s work at a deeper level – nor was I inspired enough to check it out.

<http://uj-unit2.co.za/thecontroversy-aroundzaha/>

Playing with form and technology at the expense of people and their daily, lived experience is something that our male-dominant profession tends to do.

A women architect can be as much a culprit, as a male architect, in perpetuating egotistical, elitist and irrelevant modes of practice in the profession.

“Trust me, I know” – personal reflections on being a women in architecture

The irony is that the same Euro-centered, male-dominated profession is now entering the arena of poverty, informality and disadvantage with the same kind of “big attitudes” and “big thinking” practiced in the rest of the profession.

So we are now having to deal with “celebrity” slums (as someone referred to Kibera in Nairobi) and the celebrity architects that have now made those slums their new playgrounds.

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Reporting From The Front

Venice Biennale

Traditionally only deals with issues that are of interest to other architects

Identifying problems that every citizen can not only understand but actually have a say in: immigration, water, land capacity, waste...

An immediate, positive response from people who don't normally get involved with architecture – across both the developed and developing worlds.

It's time to rethink the entire role and language of architecture

Alejandro Arevena

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/20/rethink-role-language-architecture-alejandro-aravena>

We want to understand what design tools are needed to subvert the forces that privilege individual gain over collective benefit; to highlight cases that resist reductionism and oversimplification, and to not give up on architecture's mission to penetrate the mystery of the human condition.

Present examples where organised communities and empowered citizens, sometimes without any formal design training, have been able to improve their own built environment.

It's time to rethink the entire role and language of architecture

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<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/20/rethink-role-language-architecture-alejandro-aravena>

News of Aravena being awarded the 2016 Pritzker has been reason for some controversy amongst architectural professionals – and judging by social media in SA, there are reservations from SA architects around the award with some even mentioning other architects who were perceived to be more worthy of the award.

Aravena... is mostly known for his significant contribution towards re-thinking housing for the poor in well located city sites through a partnership (a “do-tank”) known as Elemental.

<http://uj-unit2.co.za/alejandro-aravena-pritzker-2016-and-some-reflections-from-a-residential-open-building-perspective/>

Thorsten Deckler:

- the “myth of creative genius”
- “mainstream architectural media drowns out work like this.”

<http://uj-unitz.co.za/alejandro-aravena-pritzker-2016-and-some-reflections-from-a-residential-open-building-perspective/>