

# Challenges and Recommendations for ‘Visitors’ Teaching Design in the Developing World towards Sustainable Equitable Futures:

## Four Divided Nations



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*All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.* – Edmund Burke

### Introduction

The four arenas of architectural and design education explored in this article are Sri Lanka, Korea, Cyprus, and Uganda, each of which graciously welcomed the author’s teaching and research for a year or so as Visiting Professor. The study attempts to pave the way for further exhaustive international exchange and cooperation in the design arts towards long-term poverty reduction and sustainable development. The arts in particular have much to glean from indigenous cultures and crafts in informing design, making such exchanges mutually beneficial (in multitudinous directions). Additionally, the developing world now has virtually ubiquitous access to digital technologies (if only through ‘cracked’ programmes and computer ‘hacking’ levelling the playing field) enabling information exchange and design exploration at the highest levels, particularly in the fields of affordable housing, education, and health facility planning. While sustainable development in the ‘third’ world needs

nurturing, patterns of globalisation suggest that the cultivation of ‘ethical intelligence’ also merits utmost, concomitant attention.

A sidelight to this paper is a brief exploration of how the architecture and interior design of these four countries, which have suffered extreme strife and division (through civil war and/or outside intervention), reflect this division—typically through monumental symbolic architecture (e.g. political agendas) or neglect (e.g. poverty imposed through failure to ‘toe the line’). The study is aimed at professionals engaged in design education both within and without the developing world who endeavour to foster sustainable equitable development; a common model involves ‘live-project’ service-based pedagogy and/or ‘incubator’ hands-on apprenticeship (experiential education).

### Ethical Intelligence

As has been extensively documented, corruption and/or greed along with lack of appropriate and relevant education are generally considered major impediments to equitable development.<sup>1</sup> It is my argument that appropriate design education should include time management (often involving ‘cultural readjustment’), marketing and language skills, and a focus on ‘ethical intelligence’; otherwise technical design know-how may serve little towards ‘making poverty history’ (Oxfam slogan). For the purposes of this paper, ‘ethical intelligence’ is defined as

the intelligence that structures stable and dynamic rules that determine the action of the individual in his environment. It determines his capacity to add value, his influence on the environment and on others and his time management. On the one hand, the rules are stable since they respond to a purpose that is defined by the level of ethics within which the individual acts. On the other hand, the rules are dynamic, because despite the fact that the individual is at a certain level, he is capable of determining alternative strategies that satisfy the objective he is seeking within that level. Ethics is defined as a set of rules that are functional to a situation and to a certain perception of an accepted moral, and are supported by a complementary ideology.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Corruption major impediment to advancing development, warn UN officials*  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33190&Cr=corruption&Cr1> last accessed 28.05.2012

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unicist.org/papers/ontology\\_ei\\_en.pdf](http://www.unicist.org/papers/ontology_ei_en.pdf) last accessed 28.05.2012

For this author, one of the biggest challenges to teaching in the above four arenas representing diverse levels of ‘development’ was the relative and varying nature of ‘ethical intelligence’ encountered. At the onset I would immediately like to differentiate ethical intelligence from ‘academic politics’ (‘ferocious because the stakes are so small’<sup>3</sup>). Many academic circles exemplify competitive behaviour among students, staff and faculty which often casts a shadow over the generic ‘ethical intelligence’ of a place; the manner in which such competitiveness is manifested can reflect individual character and, when extreme, tarnish reputation (cheating, dishonesty, fraud, for instance). Job, status and grade contest (similar to sibling rivalry) takes many forms; while not peculiar to the developing world, a dearth of ethical intelligence, or ‘alternative’ ethical systems (often categorised as ‘culture’ or more blatantly as ‘corruption’), not only inhibits equitable development but creativity and productivity, so important to sustainable high design.

### Overview

The instructor’s task in a problematic ‘developing’ milieu, in this author’s view, is to instil a sense of ethical intelligence as defined above and the need thereof, disengage from local academic politics, and focus on educating students, research, community outreach, the promotion of development initiatives within the context of academe engaging students and faculty alike (‘live projects’ as a more sustainable use of the university), and the advancement of essential skill sets and collaborative human interaction (team work). Local staff is often threatened by newcomers (and paid far less—or more); ‘coffee’ or luncheon invitations, fieldtrips, and book exchanges can often help build bridges. ‘Chemistry’ issues and personality conflicts are not uncommon; in the developing world singularities like culture shock, climate adaptation, health issues (e.g. dengue, malaria, heat exhaustion, poor diet etc.),

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<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayre's\\_law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayre's_law) last accessed 28.05.2012

superstition (e.g. ‘auspicious days’, fear of witchcraft), disregard for punctuality (alternative notions of time), and language barriers frequently complicate one’s job.

The overseas design teaching experience can be tremendously enriching in manifold ways, particularly for designers who enjoy and appreciate travel--with patience, humour, and compassion, great strides can be made towards positively impacting local communities and educational methodologies. In North Cyprus, students systematically did not show up until three weeks after the official start of classes and then expected ‘make-up’ attention. While these students were not mentally deficient, treating them with kindness (facetiously as if they were) allowed a connection which eventually helped the students to see they were wasting their parents’ money and cheating themselves out of the full opportunity offered. Conflict in Sri Lanka resulted in students banning a fieldtrip hours before departure, requiring patience, understanding, and alternative strategizing. Belief in the powers of witchcraft threatened to keep a student in Uganda from participating in a site visit to an area his family considered dangerous (he ended up participating anyway and had a terrific experience). In Korea language problems created contractual misunderstandings and delays, requiring mediation. Exposure to the wealth of architectural and natural wonders of these places, along with active student progress, made such frustrations manageable (and it is important to find venues of personal satisfaction and ‘downtime’ to preserve one’s ‘mental health’ and efficiency); in the end, for every student reached (most cannot afford a ‘western’ education abroad), the prognosis for ‘development’ improves.

### The Dangers of ‘Going Native’

Cultural adjustments can have negative as well as positive results when adaptation involves the acquisition of customs that counter ‘ethical intelligence’ and hinder development. For instance, adopting the habit of showing up late for class, studio or meetings because that is the local ‘cultural norm’ defeats the purpose of one’s anticipated influence. In

some cultures routine deception and lying (diplomatic ‘white lies’ so as not to offend, for example) constitute a cultural norm, and picking up this trait can not only be counter-productive but dangerous, as corruption and fraud can follow. Periodic furlough (as with embassy staff)—if only ‘mental travelling’ through books and film—is advisable, providing it does not become abusive.

Other cultural attributes, such as respect for elders and courtesy salutations rather than getting right to the point (as in the case of Korea and Uganda), are of course well worth adopting. Learning a local language always builds bridges, while bargaining like the ‘natives’ can be interpreted either as miserliness or savvy. Context is important in assessing ‘ethical’ and appropriate conduct.

### Protocol, Etiquette and Nepotism

Different cultures have different takes on protocol, etiquette and nepotism. In South Africa at present, for instance, polygamy is largely considered acceptable (as in many Islamic countries); witness Zulu President Zuma’s four wives. Nepotism and cronyism in Africa are well documented and in many countries considered ‘the norm’. In North Cyprus, two of my colleagues had their adult children working for them as teaching assistants in the Faculty of Architecture, and contracts were issued which stated that ‘employees could not leave the country without the employer’s permission’. Since North Cyprus (TRNC) was not officially recognised as a ‘country’, the general consensus was that ‘anything goes’. In South Korea, little work was expected of older professionals. In Sri Lanka, loud speakers went off at 4:00 in the morning on neighbouring street corners with booming Buddhist chants, waking entire communities. In several of my teaching arenas, computers were monitored via ‘Remote Desktop’ with related ‘hacking’ and/or my office was ‘bugged’. So what does one tolerate and respect while teaching abroad? Where does one draw the line and what should one impart to one’s students (some of whom are engaged in rampant ‘computer hacking’)? Some

singularities are difficult to change or impact (e.g. 4:00am loud-speaker chanting), so it is imperative to find constructive ways of dealing with such day-to-day cultural frustrations to avoid ‘throwing in the towel’.

### Brief Background

I was a Fulbright professor to Colombo School of Architecture and the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka from 2005-2006, taught at Duksung Women’s University in Seoul, Korea from 2008-2009, the European University of Lefke and Girne American University in (North/Turkish) Cyprus from 2009-2010, and Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi, Uganda from 2011-2012, with intermittent teaching stints in Hawaii and England (and as a Cambridge University Wolfson College Visiting Scholar, an Affiliate Member of Cambridge’s Centre of African Studies, and a Visiting Scholar to Cambridge University’s Centre of Development Studies 2011-2013). Previously I had taught between Stanford University in California and Paris and l’Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées in Paris for six years while maintaining a private architectural and interior design practice.

I discovered the Fulbright opportunity through <http://www.cies.org/>, the job in Korea via [www.acsa-arch.org](http://www.acsa-arch.org), the job in Cyprus via [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk), and the job in Uganda through a contact made at a conference on architectural education in Turkey (where, as in Turkish North Cyprus, underpaid [relative to the other arenas discussed] academics are expected to work the same year-round 9-5 office day as administrative staff) during the spring of 2009. Fuelled by the Fulbright, I purposefully sought out teaching jobs abroad to the end of furthering fieldwork and research in the domain of sustainable development and because, like most architects, I loved to travel, screening teaching advertisements more by location than by job description.

Interestingly, I ended up predominantly in ‘divided nations’ (‘dystopias’ if you like) where the fragmentary political situations render development particularly challenging. My

background in anthropology and sociology at Swarthmore College whet my appetite for working with diverse peoples and cultures, and teaching has allowed me direct contact with the society and mores of the uncommon, exotic nations I visited—professional practice from an overseas base or foreign service employment would indubitably not have afforded such profound intermingling and I am most grateful for the posts I was entrusted to, as my experiences were both personally and professionally highly rewarding and formative. I shall discuss each stint and corresponding findings briefly, make comparisons (potentially spurious as they may be), draw conclusions, and suggest recommendations (both for teaching and development).

## I

### Sri Lanka

While war has now ‘unified’ Sri Lanka and ‘eliminated’ the threat from the Tamil Tigers, enforced ‘homogeneity’ is not unproblematic. I taught in the south of the island in Colombo but visited the north with Habitat for Humanity, working on tsunami reconstruction (see images of student work below) and flooding research. The exercise was demanding due to the extreme heat, mosquito population (dengue as opposed to malaria being the major risk) and acute poverty, particularly in the north and tsunami camps. Additionally I volunteered my services to a church group (St. Andrew’s Scots Kirk, Colombo) engaged in tsunami rebuilding, which landed me in the field about twice a month. St. Andrew’s picked up some of my student ‘live project’ housing design work and started building from these designs; occasionally construction had to be delayed a month or more as the future occupants insisted on commencing work on ‘auspicious days’ only, despite their desperate need for shelter. Additionally, ‘locals’ typically modified these designs either to save on cost, simplify construction, or, possibly, to appropriate funds. With all the donations pouring in for post-tsunami disaster relief work (forty thousand people lost their lives in just ten minutes in Sri Lanka alone), one had to ask where all the international ‘star architects’ were. The Sri Lankan

Red Cross alone received over \$500,000,000 in aid (which this NGO claimed it was ‘saving’ for ‘long-term development’).



*Sri Lankan student work (prototypical disaster relief housing)*

Teaching was facilitated through a Sri Lankan friend and former IDBE Cambridge classmate, Eeshani Mahesan, who was lecturing at The Colombo School of Architecture (which she later headed) and invited me to co-teach a studio with her as part of my Fulbright; my ‘salary’ was covered by the U.S. Government (little did I know that this experience was to start a nomadic ‘live projects’ teaching interlude or ‘gypsy office’ heavily dependent on virtual space, academe and high tech). For the six years I taught ‘live project’ studios at Stanford (contributing momentum for a later ‘d.school’),<sup>4</sup> I worked abroad (in Mexico and Guatemala mostly) from a university home base; now I was working in the field/on site with local staff and students in a local university setting. In some ways this venue was more challenging and in other ways it was easier, with the proximity and local ‘know-how’ facilitating construction and site supervision. Though studios and classrooms were basic and often not air-conditioned, students were generally hard-working, punctual and industrious despite the sweltering heat, and working on disaster relief projects provided a unifying common, urgent goal.

In Sri Lanka I visited the major work of Geoffrey Bawa, Chelvadurai Anjalendran (who graciously welcomed me to his home) and other remarkable designers who influence me to this day. The cost of building in Sri Lanka is extremely low relative to other parts of the world, enabling high-end detailing and interior design fantasies like swimming pools in

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.stanford.edu/class/cee137/> last accessed 04.06.2012

bathrooms, outdoor showers etc., with the up-market design sector among the most high-end I have seen. Pursuant to my séjour in Sri Lanka I spent a year teaching at Judson University outside Chicago facilitating a live village project (now under construction) for tsunami widows in South India (see [www.StudioImpact06.com](http://www.StudioImpact06.com)), a camp centre for underprivileged children in the Bahamas, and later, in conjunction with Duksung and the University of Hawaii, an eco-village for Fiji (currently on the ‘back burner’). My experience in Sri Lanka kindled my appreciation for the ‘extreme’, and it was in South Asia that I learned that funding is only one ingredient for sustainable development, and that, when misappropriated, it can certainly be a deterrent.



*'Lace House' (Tsunami housing prototype), by Marga Jann / Poetic Licence*

## II

### Korea

My heart leapt when I saw the ad for the teaching job in Seoul, as I had wanted to get to the ‘Far East’ since childhood, and the Far East kept its promise. I transferred there from the University of Hawai’i, which has a strong focus on the Asia Pacific region, and in this sense was well prepared. In addition, my grandchildren were a quarter Korean, which lent incentive. I first visited Seoul with my eight U. Hawaii D.Arch. students for a week in the autumn of 2007, which opportunely ‘paved the way’. Eight interior design students from

Duksung Women's University then visited us at U.H. in February 2008 before I started teaching at Duksung in March of that year, with the exchange proving highly successful.

The most important challenge in Korea was indubitably language; though I was informed that my Korean students all spoke English, the level of their English was elementary. So I was expected to teach 'Design English' as well as Interior Design. Another surprise was the racial homogeneity of Korean society, particularly coming from the multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity of Hawai'i. I was about a head taller than everyone and truly felt like a 'Martian'; with the influx of NGO workers in Sri Lanka after the tsunami, I found the Sri Lankans to be more relaxed with foreigners than the Koreans. At the time of writing, inter-racial and inter-cultural marriages are driven by socio-economic needs with little mainstream understanding by Korean society, and Confucian 'machismo' is often syncretically mixed with the dominant Christian faith. At night one drives through a relentless sea of fluorescent red crosses floating above a plethora of churches—a virtual and welcoming light show.

Yet another big challenge, for this designer, was the visual disturbance of huge graphics covering most Korean shop windows from top to bottom in Hangul (otherwise a beautiful, calligraphic script) and the relentless social housing blocks (which are now being designed with more variety and flair). The good news about the housing blocks is that they have largely solved the problem of Seoul's informal settlements. Invitations, while appreciated, typically arrived the day of or even a few hours before an event, and sometimes the confusion and lack of forethought equalled that of typical 'laid-back' developing countries. The foreign faculty had an expression for anything which required patience and understanding 'beyond the norm': 'T.I.K.' or 'This is Korea'.

From a design perspective, the manifold historic palaces and residences, ‘secret gardens’, stunning architectural offices and projects (e.g. Heyri Art Valley<sup>5</sup>), rightly flaunted by my welcoming and gracious Korean colleagues, totally outweighed any exasperating cultural experiences. I readily learned to bow rather than shake hands, show appropriate reserve, and share Korean salutations. Contemporary Korean design and fashion competed with the traditional on every level; one had to learn to interpret Hangul posters to take advantage of some of the most extraordinary fashion shows and museum exhibits this author has witnessed—information was not readily shared with ex-pats in English.

With my students we tackled several ‘live projects’; of most interest perhaps is the Seoul History Museum plaza and interiors (see images below). While the exterior plaza (now built) is somewhat disappointing relative to the design work done, we were pleased with the interior renovation work. The ‘live project’ concept was new to the university and students, as were 3D animations and direct client contact (in this case with the chief curator), and it was rewarding to introduce new methodologies. As with Sri Lanka, all computer programmes were accessible. Students were exceptionally hard-working, and if anything, due to their troubled history, which is not the focus of this paper, Koreans place an extreme emphasis on higher education, with Korean youth largely being ‘over-educated’, highly competitive, and enormously creative.



*Korean student live project design work: Seoul History Museum Exterior Plaza and Interior Exhibit  
(Duksung Women's University Interior Design Department)*

<sup>5</sup> [www.heyri.net](http://www.heyri.net) last accessed 04.06.2012

In 2009 I had the opportunity to visit, but not teach in, North Korea. Having worked and lived in Communist Poland and the Soviet Union, I felt very much ‘at home’, though in a time warp where faces looked different while the dominant culture felt comparable. Like Sri Lanka, the north was very poor; I saw few cars, omnipresent soldiers, and everyone, wearing similar white and blue traditional clothing, rode bikes. Some shops only had one can in the window; from the architecture I could have been in Moscow or Warsaw during the 1970’s. Propaganda was everywhere; one dared express only prescribed thoughts and feelings—at the centre of which was the ‘dear leader’ (a pseudo ‘deity’)—who saw that everyone had what they needed and who made everyone ‘happy’. The experience was ‘surreal’ and some of my fellow travellers and colleagues were reprimanded for laughing at the political slogans and rehearsed explanations; we were heavily escorted everywhere.

### III

#### Cyprus

Of the four countries briefly reviewed in this article, Cyprus was perhaps the most problematic and challenging to navigate. The animosity between north and south was very pronounced, even among intellectuals and fellow professors. I taught both in the north and the south—primarily in the north, but occasionally as a guest critic at the University of Nicosia, which culturally and academically provided a ‘breath of fresh air’. Harvard had opened an Institute for the Environment with Cyprus University of Technology in Limassol which welcomed me from time to time, and I often crossed the border. While the North was not officially Islamic, a culture of control and surveillance governed daily life as well as academics. Additionally, the originally stunning island was being developed with no thought to sustainable planning or zoning.

Academic politics were pronounced, and my non-negotiable Christian French-American background proved an impediment. Positively impacting development promised to

be tricky. The kind Indian engineer and dean who originally hired me navigated the indigenous culture with far more savvy than I. And my professional experience and academic credentials, stellar in the ‘West’, did little for me in the Eastern Mediterranean. Like Korea, students spoke very little English, necessitating a heavy reliance on graphic communication, and studio size was enormous. Never-the-less, I managed to bond with my apprentices (if only through patience and humour) and saw some terrific work, despite students’ reluctance to show up till three weeks after the start of term. Though the computer in my office did not function and I lived an hour and a half away, I was asked to turn up daily to occupy this office (which did have a beautiful sea view) from 9am till 5pm. Because I worked enormously hard and was used to the freedom western academics enjoy, this request went unheeded, and despite overt faculty concern my stance was eventually respected. While no built work materialised (except for a slew of imaginative birdhouses), the students enjoyed designing a community centre for the local village and a new architecture school, which received some encouraging press coverage.

After six months of the long commute, I transferred to an institution closer to my village home in Bellapais, and, given the unavoidable, abundant sun in Cyprus, worked on research involving a recreational solar park (and design competition) destined for the ‘buffer zone’. The idea was to get the north and south to collaborate on producing sustainable solar energy for the island and beyond in anticipation of the eventual fuel shortage while concurrently providing a huge green area or recreational ‘eco-park.’ My students primarily worked on a tangential competition for revamping the old Olympic Park in Berlin, which is about as ‘live’ as things got in North Cyprus—and some of the solutions were remarkable (see below example). Again, academic politics proved ‘ferocious’ in this arena. But I made good friends throughout the island and enjoyed my stay tremendously, though I soon realised it was not an appropriate long-term base for a professional woman with my profile unless I wanted to be constantly ‘hitting my head against City Hall’.



*Schindler Competition 2010 Entry, Berlin Olympic Park Rehab, by Kumsal Akdogan*



*Canterbury Campus Rehab, by Mehmet Cihan Çağal*

To conclude, the synopsis of a recent book by Chris Payne is worth quoting, if only for its humour:

Chris Payne writes a hilarious surreal account of life as a university professor at a dysfunctional university in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. On the beautiful island of Cyprus, little works as you expect it to, from the primitive plumbing to the maniacal university bus service. The American Institute of Cyprus is a seat of higher learning like no other. The place is chaotically organised for the students who attend class only if they feel like it. They cheat on their exams, photocopy textbooks illicitly with university approval, and deliberately fail their courses to avoid military service. Meanwhile, the management spends its time devising all sorts of ingenious money-raising scams and schemes to cheat students and teachers alike, while the AIC owner's business strategy is to sell as many university degrees as he can alongside his cake shops and motorcycle franchises. But then, as everyone says, "this is Cyprus," an Edenic Mediterranean paradise where everyone is on the make and the only guiding principle is "money is money."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Payne, Chris, *Encounters with a Fat Chemist: Teaching at a University in Northern Cyprus*, AuthorHouse, 2012 <http://www.authorhouse.co.uk/Bookstore/BookDetail.aspx?BookId=SKU-000575529> last accessed 20.06.2012

## IV

### Uganda



[http://www.dipity.com/tlickr/Flickr\\_safari\\_zebra/](http://www.dipity.com/tlickr/Flickr_safari_zebra/)

Uganda, from where I write (in conjunction with my Cambridge affiliation), has been an unexpected marvel; the face of Africa is changing rapidly and radically. The Chinese are ‘everywhere’ working on development projects, much as the West ‘infiltrated’ China to this end. Little rivals the African ‘big game’ safari, particularly now that hunting has been banned and eco-tourism is thriving in its stead. While it is a luxury to have the opportunity to visit first-hand the architectural and urban wonders of our planet, it is quite another to witness ‘God’s creation’<sup>7</sup> as it was indubitably originally intended; there is simply no comparison between animals in their natural environment and the local zoo. Africa is perhaps one of the best last places to experience ‘divine design’, not only in its wildlife but in its extraordinary natural landscape; to my view it is the designer’s high priority and *duty* to sustainably preserve and respect this ‘last frontier’. The downside to this wonder is contrasting extreme poverty, violence and corruption<sup>8</sup>, which typify many African countries. The current birth rate in Uganda, for instance, is seven children per woman (among the highest in the world).<sup>9</sup> High-end architecture is rare in Uganda outside the upmarket safari lodge and hotel circuit, though some eco-tourist lodges are architecturally truly remarkable.

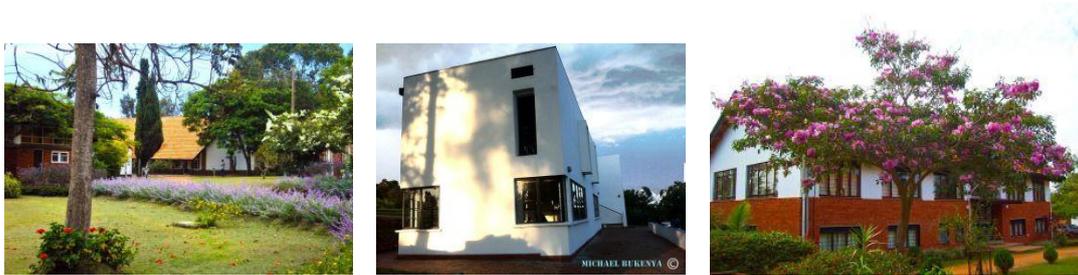
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<sup>7</sup> Holy Bible, New King James Version, Romans 1:20

<sup>8</sup> Daily Monitor, *Ugandans stash 400b(sh/ \$162 m) in secret Swiss banks*, 22 June 2012, pp. 1, 3  
<http://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/Ugandans+stash+400b+in+secret+Swiss+banks/-/691252/1432518/-/format/xhtml/-/mlpk2kz/-/index.html> last accessed 22.06.2012

<sup>9</sup> [www.ubos.org](http://www.ubos.org) last accessed 04.06.2012

My Faculty campus block at Uganda Martyrs University (opened in 1993) was designed by Belgian engineer Firmin Mees; the original Nkozi campus, set in a natural bird sanctuary ‘deep in the bush’ two hours southwest of Kampala, was a former convent and dates from the 1950’s. The grounds are exquisitely maintained and local architects have designed and constructed additional buildings since which are, to my view, highly commendable (see photos below).



*Uganda Martyrs University Main Campus, Nkozi (far right: Registry Building by Mark Olweny)*

Culturally, Uganda has perhaps been as demanding as Korea, particularly regarding notions of time (though they beat those of my North Cyprus students); while Koreans tend to be punctual, notice is often given at the last minute—Ugandans, on the other hand, typically show up late for everything. The level of Ugandan students’ English was excellent in comparison (and most Ugandan students speak 2-5 indigenous languages fluently), with four of my first year students becoming semi-finalists, and a recent graduate a finalist, in the 2011 Berkeley University Annual Essay Competition for Architectural Design Excellence.<sup>10</sup> It is not unusual for family members to be employed by the same employer (as with Stanford University, for instance<sup>11</sup>), and seniority appears to play a major role in local politics. The ‘ethical’ system seems to be a syncretic mix of ‘tribal’ culture, current-day international (and often ‘unprincipled’) business practice, and Judeo-Christian values.

<sup>10</sup> Kudos go to teaching assistant Guy Mambo for his initiative in launching and supervising this ‘live project’.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.glassdoor.com/Reviews/Employee-Review-Stanford-University-RVW889907.htm>, last accessed 04.06.2012



*Edirisa Rubona Uganda Martyrs University Orphanage 'live project' at Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda (Crafts Centre design by UMU student Pam Akora, top right; Nursery School and Library design by students Nicholas Barisigara and Henry Twahirwa, top left and bottom; initial library concept by Joseph Kasimbi)*

Taking attendance encouraged students to show up on time, and staggering deadlines helped with meeting deadlines. Climate (relatively cool due to the altitude) and diet have been fairly easy to navigate, with a constant, abundant supply of bananas, avocados, and bottled water delivered weekly. Live projects have included an orphanage at Rubona, Lake Bunyonyi in the southwest of the country (see images of student work above) and a small plaza for the US Embassy in Kampala (under construction, photo below), both of which, though sometimes taxing, have been motivational and educational for students and teaching staff alike. Students had not been using animations, videos or electronic presentations to showcase their work, so a multi-media palette was introduced (which, however, has been slow to catch on).



*U.S. Embassy Kampala 'live project' plaza design, FOBE first year students*

Teaching has been done by locals in conjunction with quite a few visiting architects and designers, mostly in rotation and typically from Australia, Europe or the United States. I was not given a computer, work station or office due to space shortage and my own initial acquiescence, so worked from and held office hours in the housing I had been provided, which I ‘redecorated’ immediately upon arrival, and where internet access as well as electricity proved extremely erratic. This situation, while challenging and somewhat isolating, contrasted vividly to the other extreme of the Turkish North Cypriot *modus operandi* obliging teaching staff to sit in shared offices daily regardless of school holidays. The official UMU Faculty office block housed a campus architect’s headquarters and private practice/community design service (‘in-house consultancy’) as well as the usual academic and administrative activities, with boundaries in Uganda somewhat blurred relative to ‘Western’ notions of ‘space planning’. Mobile phones and radios were ubiquitous throughout the country, though there was a pronounced ‘digital divide’.

Tangential to any ‘dystopia’ was a strong Christian spiritual community—the church and religious dimension of the original founding body, whose mission of sustainable service-learning and ethics/good governance pedagogy proved robust and consequential. In the north of the country, for instance, colleagues were very actively engaged in work towards the reintegration of formerly abducted children/child soldiers.<sup>12</sup> While I have not yet been to the north of Uganda, the *YouTube* video concerning Joseph Kony (largely considered ‘ten-years-too-late’) has brought substantial attention to the atrocities the region has seen.<sup>13</sup> The scars left by the Amin regime are beginning to heal although corruption remains rampant;<sup>14</sup> this quagmire is being re-visited with the recent discovery of oil (in environmentally-sensitive

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<sup>12</sup> Angucia, Margaret, *Broken Citizenship: Formerly abducted children and their social reintegration in northern Uganda*, Amsterdam, Rozenberg Publishers, 2010

<sup>13</sup> [www.kony2012.com/](http://www.kony2012.com/) last accessed 24.06.2012

<sup>14</sup> *Uganda anti-graft chief to press ministers' case*, Associated Press, April 13, 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/04/13/uganda-anti-graft-chief-to-press-ministers-case/> last accessed 24.06.2012

areas) and through the Inspectorate of Government formed in 1986.<sup>15</sup> Additionally and promisingly ‘Switzerland’s *Restitution of Illicit Assets Act* provides a roadmap for nations who seek Swiss government help in recovering funds that their corrupt leaders stored in Swiss banks’ (to date Switzerland has acknowledged Ugandan deposits of close to \$200m).<sup>16</sup>

The north of the country remains largely ignored and ostracised due to previous political affiliations, and NGO’s are still to be found ‘everywhere’ in the now distant Kony aftermath. There are over thirty-three languages in Uganda, not including the official language, English.



*Unyama, northern Uganda*  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/katine/2008/feb/19/background>



*Kabale, southern Uganda*  
<http://www.getinvolved.ca/2011/12/49892/>

### Comparisons

While a few comparisons have already been made, further basic similarities and differences can perhaps be identified between the four teaching contexts (at the same time recognising the dangers of generalisation and bearing in mind the respective ‘developing’ situations). While each culture requires a specific set of intervention tools, all require patience, humour, compassion, and energy, with background experience undoubtedly advantageous. As mentioned, boundaries of ethical intelligence which allow one to operate without compromising one’s moral standards (or moral compass) are wisely established. While the four cultures I interacted with all demonstrated fairly severe levels of inefficiency,

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.igg.go.ug/about/mandate/> last accessed 29.06.2012

<sup>16</sup> Daily Monitor, *Ugandans stash 400b(sh/ \$162 m) in secret Swiss banks*, 22 June 2012, pp. 1, 3  
<http://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/Ugandans+stash+400b+in+secret+Swiss+banks/-/691252/1432518/-/format/xhtml/-/mlpk2kz/-/index.html> last accessed 28.06.2012

naivety, and inward focus, each had a wealth of indigenous design traditions and customs from which much can be gleaned, and a host of warm, welcoming people. Faculty salaries were rarely paid on time or in a consistent manner, with the exception of the European University of Lefke, North Cyprus and the Fulbright Commission in Sri Lanka. The brothel, gambling/casino and trafficking culture of North Cyprus, indifferent to human rights, was downright dangerous; sand flies (midges) replaced mosquitoes and carried potential leishmaniasis; water was 'semi-potable'. The low-grade war and Tamil suicide bombings in Sri Lanka while I was there were perhaps less treacherous, while political unrest and overcrowding in Uganda (Kampala especially) warranted vigilance. Korea, apart from North Korea and the attributes already described, was indubitably the most 'developed' of the four 'nations'. In each region, computer programmes, films and music were 'hijacked' (illegally downloaded and copied), with racism on the grounds of appearance or religion fairly extensive (e.g. in Uganda, I was constantly called and identified as a white person or 'muzungu'). When I tried to apply for Sri Lankan citizenship to 'test the system', I was advised that one could apply only if born in Sri Lanka or had a Sri Lankan parent (yet the whole world educates, employs, and naturalises Sri Lankans!).

All four societies were curious and watched me closely, but nowhere was surveillance as rigorous as in North Cyprus, where distrust and resentment (as well as nepotism) were widespread. Upon crossing the border from south to north, one was immediately hit by an onslaught of fake products in shop fronts (e.g. imitation Dior bags etc.). Students typically 'copied and pasted' together papers from the internet (granted English was not the local mother tongue) and were routinely found cheating on exams. Despite the fact that North Cypriots have EU citizenship, the 'limbo' status of the 'Turkish Republic of North Cyprus' (much like the former northern Tamil 'state' in Sri Lanka) ate away at legitimacy in other areas. The 'ethical intelligence' of North Korea needs little discussion.

Most annoying in each arena was the frequent phenomenon of success or achievement being met with jealousy or controversy rather than appreciation (e.g. as a ‘hit for the team’); in the ‘less developed’ milieus students were often more discouraged than encouraged (with negative reinforcement rather than positive reinforcement being the norm), and helping students achieve success did not seem to be high on the academic agenda (one could argue that an ‘old-fashioned’ teaching methodology remained in place). Finally, many students in the diverse cultures dreamt of ‘getting out’ beyond just ‘seeing the world’—possibly as a result of film and the internet—rather than ‘thriving where they were planted’ or making things better; most cannot leave (for any substantial period of time) due to financial or political constraints. Development strategies need to exemplify positive change and improvement and produce concrete, meaningful, and visible results--or the ‘brain drain’ phenomenon will indubitably continue to gravely impact all four countries.

### Recommendations and Conclusions

International academic exchange in the design arts and architecture is critical to sustainable equitable futures; gleaning information off the world-wide web is not by itself adequate or as effective as direct contact, and development needs to occur in multitudinous beneficial directions. While sometimes challenging, teaching architecture and design abroad is enormously rewarding provided one stays healthy and does not compromise moral fibre or take oneself too seriously. There is a huge demand for design professors in the ‘developing world’ warranting further exploration and consideration—particularly in this downturn economy. Many universities are establishing ‘extension’ or satellite campuses overseas further enabling global outreach (e.g. Harvard in Cyprus, Stanford in Paris, Carnegie Mellon in Qatar).

Apart from the recommendations cited earlier, this author advocates extensive research before travelling, and if possible, an initial exploratory visit to check out living

arrangements, faculty facilities, ‘local colour’, university ethos, and related academic agendas. One needs to have (or develop) a sense of adventure--but more and more, even in ‘deepest darkest Africa’ for instance, one finds familiar products, English spoken, a relative amount of ‘creature comfort’, internet, mobile phones, and friendly faces. Dialoguing with people from the country one is travelling to on one’s home front often dispels fantasies and fears, and sitting in on a few classes upon arrival often helps to understand and navigate local expectations and teaching styles. Joining clubs (e.g. chess, film, dance, music, art, book, soccer, choir, etc.) and support and/or church groups can provide a valuable alternative social ‘network’ and information resource. Some cultures may be too antithetical to one’s own moral fabric and in the final analysis should be avoided no matter how enticing the salary offered.

Finally, expecting the unexpected is part and parcel of any interchange. Deans come and go, coups and wars happen, laws change, friends move on, and our climate has destabilised the world over. Taking one day at a time is the ultimate best counsel, and being a ‘tourist’ wherever one finds oneself—i.e. ‘stopping to smell the roses’—lends perspective and critical refreshment. Without balance and boundaries, the overseas educating experience can become draining rather than enriching, with students (and administrators) ubiquitously vying for as much of one’s time and energy as they can get. Again, teaching architecture and design in the developing world towards sustainable equitable futures must include a focus on ethical intelligence, marketing and language skills, and time management in addition to standard prescribed pedagogies.

## ANNEX

### Architecture of Divided Nations

This diversion is the subject of a larger study, but insofar as architecture and design tend to reflect the culture of a people, one can glean much about a place through its buildings and infrastructure—e.g. relative wealth, politics, worldliness, integrity, morals, morale, status, aspirations, and so on—all helpful to the visitor. The most obvious example is perhaps the dilapidated ‘Communist-style’ architecture of North Korea (what this author sees as reflective of a ‘culture of mediocrity’) epitomised by the monumental unfinished ‘bombshell’ of the Ryugyong Hotel in Pyongyang (reflective of a pretentious unworkable political



*The (unfinished) Ryugyong Hotel, Pyongyang, North Korea*

<http://www.instantshift.com/2009/02/19/80-strange-and-fantastic-buildings-architecture/>

system) compared to the expansive modern (albeit homogeneous) skyscraper development and building in South Korea (e.g. Gangnam, Seoul). In its way architecture reflects the ‘secrets and lies’, work ethos, creativity, productivity (or lack thereof) and other attributes of a civilisation (e.g. the Great Pyramids of Egypt serve as a testimony to ostensible intense exploitation and cruelty as well as the pharaohs’ take on death); it can relate and document stories of division, civil war, conflicting values, and strife—narratives of east versus west, for instance, rich versus poor. And in the divided nations discussed above, architecture documents many sad, sometimes hopeful, and sometimes horrific tales.

The old airport of Nicosia, Cyprus has not been touched since the uprisings of 1974; a plane that never took off still sits on the runway in what is now known as the ‘buffer zone’

between north and south; driving by one has the uncanny sensation of yet another time warp. Similarly, housing projects in Famagusta decay behind miles of barbed wire; inside, dinner has remained untouched for decades as Greek Cypriots abruptly arose fleeing for their lives and leaving behind everything they owned (as did Turkish Cypriots in the island's south). Forgiveness is seemingly not on the near horizon, with Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike showing reluctance to move on. The age-old dichotomy is similarly reflected in hybrid or recycled religious structures—cathedrals which have become mosques and mosques which have become churches (see photos below).



*Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque, formerly Saint Nicolas Cathedral, Famagusta, Cyprus*  
<http://www.defence.pk/forums/world-affairs/68865-mosques-around-world-3.html>



*Selimiye Mosque, formerly Cathedral of St Sophia, Nicosia/Lefkosia, Cyprus*  
<http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-77426677/stock-photo-selimiye-mosque-in-nicosia-formerly-cath-drale-sainte-sophie-nicosia-northern-cyprus.html>

Much of the housing in northern Sri Lanka until recently consisted of bombed-out art nouveau buildings such as those in Jaffna or make-shift tents employing large, black plastic ‘garbage’ bags as the primary building material. Habitat for Humanity has been active throughout the north attempting to restore dignity to survivors of both the tsunami and war.

Evidence of Sri Lanka's indigenous 'star architects' is limited to the south—due to a host of logistical, political, and economic reasons—all hinted at through the island's built form (as with the above example). The siting of religious structures (Buddhist stupas versus Hindu temples) clearly reflects the divide (interestingly, a north-south phenomenon in each of the four countries, with the least 'development' or greater incidence of poverty found in the north).

In Uganda, the thatched huts of the neglected northern hinterland contrast vividly with the more substantial masonry construction boasting corrugated iron roofing of the south (see photos, page 19), where shopping malls and urban congestion abound. Faceless towers reflect Kampala's rapid urban growth, originally dictated by British colonial planning, now revealing extensive haphazard, labyrinthine tessellation. Kampala's Mulago Hospital, initially a gift from the British, lies in functional shambles, a testament to poor maintenance reflecting a sorely lacking sense of ownership.

These examples are but a brief demonstration of architecture's descriptive character. As dress can often disclose the tastes and personality of an individual, so man's larger built habitat testifies to broader issues, such as indifference to the environment, power struggles and turf wars, ideological disagreements and disunion. The architecture of divided nations is one of contrast: heterogeneity rather than homogeneity, dominance versus subjugation, propaganda versus authenticity. As a design educator in the developing world one has the rare opportunity to concurrently visit, observe, and theorise about the local built environment, with students willingly serving as cultural intermediary. In each country I was able to practice through the design and/or renovation of my own homes and the facilitation of university live projects; I am particularly grateful to the staff and students who made these experiences so rewarding and for the cross-cultural friendships forged.

*Episode Two to follow...*

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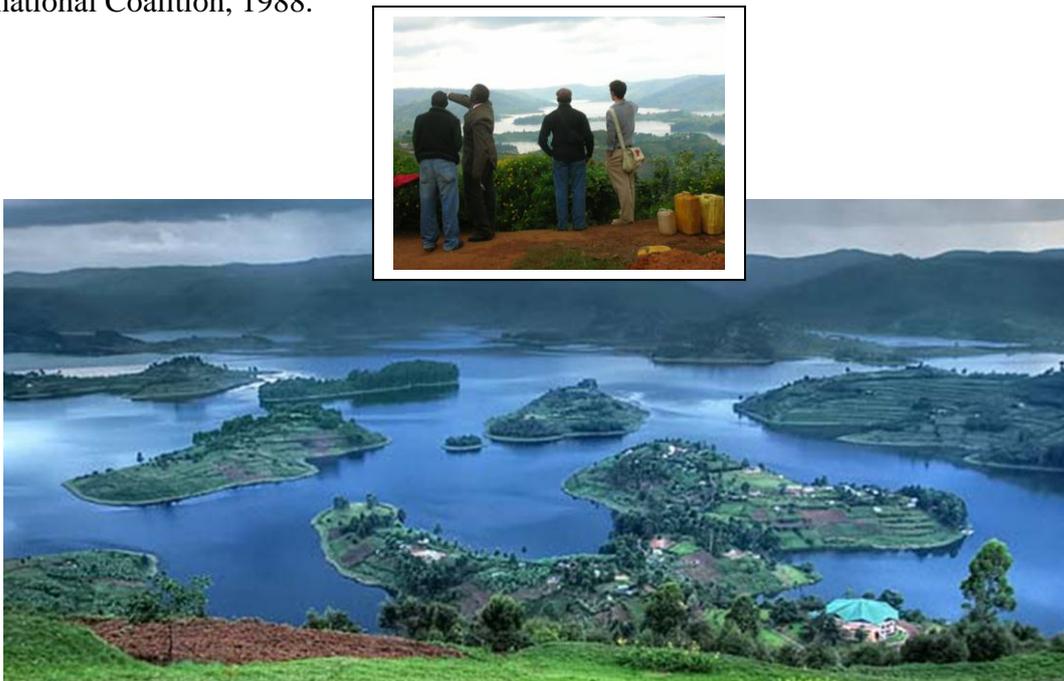
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*Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda (Children's Village Site)*