

Gerhard Bosman

Dr Gerhard Bosman,
Earth Unit, Department of
Architecture, University of
the Free State, P.O. Box 339,
Bloemfontein, South Africa.
Phone: 051 4012332,
Email: <bosmang@ufs.ac.za>

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Ownership and care in culturally significant architecture: Three case studies

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Abstract

Public buildings are not permanent, but at most durable and robust enough to outlast a few generations. Earth-constructed buildings, as soft architecture used for public buildings, need more care and maintenance than buildings in brick, stone, concrete and steel. The ownership and care of private and public buildings reflect social attitudes and sustainable means. The attitudes towards the durability and technical performance of building materials can lead to the rejection of earth architecture, due to the high maintenance required. Negative attitudes discourage the use of traditional earth-constructed buildings in Africa.

Case studies show the ownership and care in maintenance as temporal reflectors of the communal well-being. This care or no care becomes a celebration or rejection of the built environment. The argument is that, without ownership, public buildings constructed in conventional building materials can deteriorate faster than well-accepted maintained earth-constructed buildings of cultural significance. This phenomenon should be considered if public buildings are built in contemporary earth construction.

Keywords: Attitudes, cultural significant architecture, earth architecture, temporal ownership

Abstrak

Publieke geboue is nie permanent nie. Dit is hoogstens duursaam genoeg om 'n paar generasies te oorleef. Grondkonstruksie-geboue as sagte argitektuur, gebruik as publieke geboue, het meer sorg en onderhoud as geboue van baksteen, klip, beton en staal nodig. Die eienaarskap en sorg van privaat en publieke geboue toon die sosiale houdings en volhoubaarheidsvermoë aan. Houdings teenoor die duursaamheid en tegniese handhawing

van konvensionele geboue verwerp publieke grondkonstruksie, weens die hoë onderhoud daaraan. Negatiewe houdings ontmoedig die gebruik van tradisionele grondkonstruksie-geboue in Afrika.

Gevallestudies van eienaarskap en sorg (onderhoud) van publieke geboue dui op tydelike gemeenskaplike welvaart. Die argument is egter dat publieke geboue in konvensionele boumateriaal sonder eienaarskap vinniger kan verweer en agteruitgaan as aanvaarde goed onderhoude grondgeboue van kulturele belang. Hierdie verskynsel moet in gedagte gehou word indien publieke geboue in kontemporêre grondkonstruksie gebou word.

Sleutelwoorde: Houdings, grondkonstruksie, kultuurbelangrike argitektuur, houdings, tydelike eienaarskap

1. Introduction

The human body needs buildings for protection in the same way as the human spirit needs architecture. To maintain body and spirit, human beings will often go to great lengths to nourish, protect and care for the body. To maintain buildings, human beings often show the same care. This care can become more complex and cultivated, and even experienced as cultural ownership, especially if the building is considered to be architecture that holds and protects memory, time, culture and identity. Holl, Pallasmaa & Peres-Gomes (2006: 34) support the notion that dwellings are the refuge of the body, memory and identity. Furthermore, architect and scholar Fidel Meraz (2008: 2-12) views conservation as the collective endeavour that compels temporal consciousness of cultivated care about architecture as space. The first space that human beings experience as dwelling space is in the female body. The womb is a container that expands and retracts as space (Figure 1). This space is the physical and temporal space that later opens up into a bigger dwelling, shared by more individuals. Dwellings form a settlement, settlements grow into cities, and cities into a metropolis. The womb is the most fragile space and the metropolis the most robust space. The same can be said about soft and robust building materials. Raw earth-building materials, stabilized with natural materials such as straw, bitumen and lime, can be considered soft architecture (Houben & Guillaud, 1994: 150-161). Raw earth-building materials were often and are still used for dwellings to form resilient envelopes that can be changed, remoulded or reshaped (Frescura, 1981: 25-30). This can result in soft architecture that needs more human care. Over time, private buildings globally have continuously been built in earth-construction techniques.



Figure 1: Alexandra Florschütz, *Womb of the world*, 2011, oil and mix media on canvas, private collection

Source: Florschütz, 2011

On the other hand, contemporary public buildings and monuments are seldom built in earth. More durable, robust and dense building materials are traditionally reserved for more important or significant buildings.



Figure 2: The medieval castle and cathedral surrounded by timber structure dwellings
Source: Frampton, 2001: 5

If a public building as institution is built in earth, it will often be stabilised or protected in order to make it more robust and durable (Taxil-Wardell, 2015). Monumental architecture built in earth seldom survived the onslaught of time. Monuments built in stone and, in later years, in steel and reinforced concrete are easier to maintain and conserve. It can also be illustrated that social influence as well as social norms and values dictate what building materials are used. Frampton (2001: 5) illustrates the solid and thick stone walls with carved openings (stereotomic) of the medieval castle and cathedral, built in stone masonry, in contrast with the more fragile infill work of wattle and daube with straw, covered with the plaster work in clay, within the timber structure (tectonic) houses (see Figure 2).

Dagmar Weston reminds us that significant architecture is the deep expression of a physical and cultural context that can sustain human activities in a living setting with a durable embodiment (Emmons, Hendrix & Lomholt, 2012: 5). People will show either care or no care towards their public buildings. This care influences the temporality of architecture.

The aim of this article is to show that socially accepted public buildings in raw or stabilised earth-constructed building material can be maintained and conserved if embedded in the accepted cultural context of the community. The argument is that, without ownership, public buildings constructed in robust conventional building materials can deteriorate faster than well-accepted and maintained soft earth-constructed buildings of cultural significance. The next section relates to the temporality of earth-constructed buildings. This is followed by the care and ownership of culturally significant architecture. To illustrate this, the influence of culture, climate and available building material, with references to the vernacular architecture from the early colonial epoch in South Africa, will be discussed. Two South African case studies and one West African case study, visited by the author, will be used to illustrate the presence and absence of ownership on the maintenance of public buildings that hold elements of cultural significance.

2. Literature review

2.1 Temporality of earth-constructed buildings

Architects do not want to see their well-designed, successful buildings being removed or destroyed, but buildings do deteriorate. The functions of buildings often change or old buildings get a second life with a new use. This is beyond the architect's control, as stated by Rapoport (1969: 1), who believed that the designer does not control the physical environment of man (as built environment).

Public buildings are temporal and do not last forever, but some are more enduring than others. To own and care for buildings, things and objects, somewhere in time, reflects context. According to Meraz (2008: 20), context is "founded on the notion of architectural heritage conservation being understood as the preservation of buildings, places, sites and cities with special cultural value from deterioration and disappearance". This conservation of buildings also reflects cultural resources and time. Jokileto (1999: 199) refers to historicity in the modern sense of "significance in cultural heritage [as] a creative and unique expression by a particular artist or community ... [that] represents the relevant cultural context".

Buildings constructed in sustainable earth material, which uses very little energy to construct, can be considered soft architecture that reflects culture and temporality, but they can last longer than buildings constructed in conventional building materials. Guillaud (2010: 7-17) reminds us that earth construction, as a discipline,

addresses social economics, the physical and chemical composition of matter and materials, the anthropology of habitat, and the conservation and management of built heritage. To this, Fontaine & Anger (2009) add the technological and architectural innovations that earth construction holds in contemporary architecture.

The many advantages of earth as building material are well known: availability in large quantities, low price and ease of use by all; good fire resistance, as well as thermal and acoustic insulation properties that contribute to the interior comfort of dwellings. The shortcomings are mainly low mechanical characteristics, unsatisfactory resistance to weathering, and liability to volume changes. Clay soils can be corrected by physically changing their texture (grain-size distribution), as well as their chemical and mechanical action (Siyon Siwe, 1983: 43). Local experience has indicated the move to modern, environmentally unfriendly building materials (Steÿn, 2009). Furthermore, the contemporary use of earth and building material is well documented worldwide (Fathy, 1973; Houben & Guillaud, 1994; Kennedy, Smith & Wanek, 2002; McHenry, 1984; Seth & Seth, 1988; Ngowi, 2001). Besides the usefulness of earth as building material, there is a legacy of vernacular and cultural traditions reflected in contemporary architecture and substantial heritage of well-conserved earth-constructed buildings in Africa.

2.2 Care and ownership of culturally significant architecture

Earth construction, as a discipline, presents the opportunity for the application of technological and architectural innovations in contemporary construction. There is also an increasing need for research on the cultural values of earth construction (Guillaud, 2010: 17). The basic maintenance that few communities show towards their public buildings should be considered, since the upkeep of the private dwelling is primarily the responsibility of the home owner. Institutional buildings in the community are in the public domain and the maintenance thereof is the responsibility of a local, regional or national body or council. Other aspects such as culture, taking ownership, shared values and religion should be considered in order to explain why communities will share these responsibilities for the maintenance of their public buildings, or why buildings will be left in disrepair.

The concern is not simply about how people embrace or reject concepts of building culture and building material; it is also about the whole experience of people being in, and interacting with their built environment. Culture and religion provide shared concerns,

values and beliefs, and keep human beings together as groups (community) in places (settlements). In his reflection on Cesare Brandi's (1906-1988) paradigmatic *Theory of restoration*, Meraz (2008: 21) refers to culturally significant architecture (hereafter CSA). The question should be asked as to whether the physical care and ownership of public buildings reflect on the values and belief of the communities that currently or at one time occupied a public building they considered to be CSA. CSA often becomes concrete holders or containers of ideal life on earth. In the words of Holl *et al.*:

The timeless task of architecture is to create embodied existential metaphors that concretize and structure man's being in the world ... architecture materializes our image of ideal life (Holl *et al.*, 2006: 37).

Furthermore, being-in-the-world, according to Heidegger, is to live in a particular place and its things connected with the place as the comprehensive "somewhere" (De Beistegui, 2005, cited in Meraz 2008: 13). Human beings are absorbed in their own interests, social intercourse and practical tasks. These human concerns (care) are world based. Care reflects human concern towards the world, just as Heidegger's explanation of temporality also relates to care (Meraz, 2008: 13). The founder of phenomenology Edmund Husserl, in reaction to "being aware of streaming through time", explained temporal as the character of objects that are developed in time (Moran, 2005: 139). CSA are thus temporal buildings.

2.3 The influence of culture, climate and building material on architectural typology

According to Rossi (1982: 41), typology in architecture is "[t]he analytical moment of architecture', through which a formal constant in a 'study of types of elements that cannot be further reduced' can be recognised". The physical characteristics of these types of building structures such as loadbearing stone or brick masonry work are in contrast with non-loadbearing infill building materials in between column and beam building structures. The use of these types of structures are connected to a regional or vernacular building culture that reflects and is influenced by the available building material of the context (Frampton, 2001: 5-7). Architectural typology, in available materials, also reflects on the building skills at a specific time. The way in which communities care for their public buildings is also connected with the time when, and the place where building materials were available for the first time. This is evident in Africa as well as on other continents. Building typologies,

influenced by materials such as corrugated iron, can be illustrated as in western American building styles. The climate dictated the use of two architectural typologies for territorial-style *adobe* houses. The two traditional types of buildings were the “flat-roofed building of one or two stories with [a] brick coping at the top of the wall”, and the pitched roof mountain style in colder regions where “snow accumulation made flat-roofed structures impractical” (Seth & Seth, 1988: 59). The length and proportions of roofing timbers in western America dictated the pitch of the roof that served as the traditional guideline for vernacular building globally (Seth & Seth, 1988: 60). The same roofing limitations were evident at the seventeenth-century Cape of Good Hope, where early settlers changed their building patterns and type of structure to suit their new environment (Pearse, 1968). This change involved moving away from using earth to using other materials.

With the arrival of the Dutch at the Cape in the mid-seventeenth century, new forms of building styles evolved in response to local conditions. The Fort (later replaced by the Castle) was the first building, followed within a few years by the construction of houses and other types of buildings. In his book, *Rural shelter in southern Africa* (1981), Frescura shows that using earth for constructing walls was mainly done in the drier areas of South Africa. The environment or the availability of materials typically determined the type of material used for wall construction in different areas.

Jan van Riebeeck's arrival and the availability of European commodities soon influenced the preferences of the indigenous people. On 22 November 1652, Van Riebeeck noted in his diary that the price of a sheep was paid in copper wire (of the sheep's length), while tobacco and pipes were distributed as gifts (Schoeman, 2002: 26). New needs were established in the traditional cultures of the indigenous people. Not only did the European arrivals have an impact on the indigenous people, but they also had to adjust their own building standards in the new environment. The Fort was built with sod walls (Potgieter, 1970a: 506), which gradually disintegrated with each succeeding rainy winter. The half-baked or sun-baked bricks were easily affected by moisture, so they had to be plastered and whitewashed with lime (Kench, Goldblatt & Courtney-Clarke, 1990: 11), thus needing less maintenance.

The walls of the houses often had no foundations and were built directly onto the ground, with a thicker base that tapered towards the roof. Roof beams of local timber supported the reed *brandsolder*, a ceiling made of Spanish reeds bound together and covered with a

layer of clay as fire insulator. The roof was finished with a thick layer of the abundant local *dekriet* (*Dovea tectorum*). Outside Cape Town, house walls were generally built of undressed stones, or sometimes of sun-baked bricks, with clay mortar. Lime mortar was rarely used.

After searching for clay, Van Riebeeck established his first brickyard. He described the first bricks manufactured as “fine red bricks like Leyden bricks”. They proved to be of poor quality, with a “limited life of about nine years” (Potgieter, 1970a: 506). The bricks were porous and did not weather well (De Bosdari, 1971: 20). The gateway and the residential buildings within the Fort were built with bricks imported from the Netherlands.

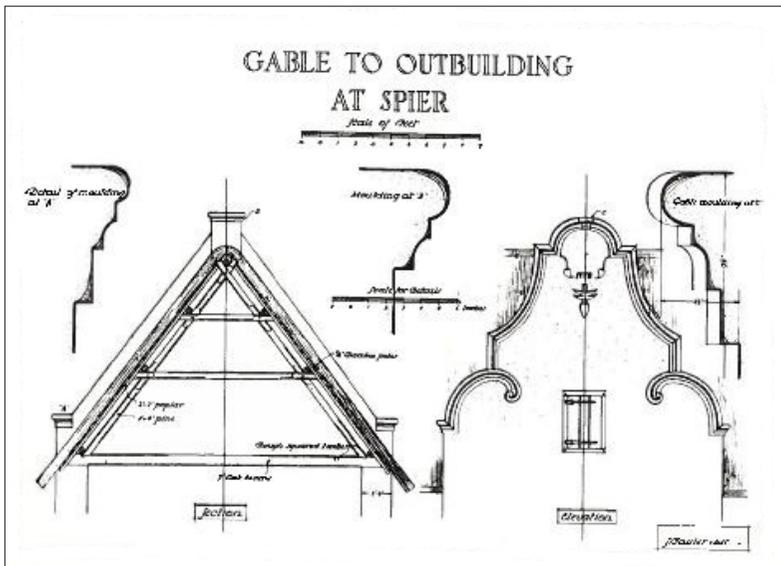


Figure 3: Details of a gable and timber roof structure of Spier outbuilding

Source: Pearse, 1968: 19

In terms of climate and technical performance, a combination of fire and driving winds proved a forceful argument against the use of thatched roofs in seventeenth-century Cape Town (Frescura, 1989: 39). In place thereof, the earth-covered, flat-roofed technology (*brakdak*) was not entirely waterproof, and needed constant maintenance. By 1660, the fear of fire led to the use of burned roofing tiles (Potgieter, 1970a: 506).

The climate was harsher than that of Holland. The driving rain, together with the sudden change in temperature, affected the bricks

and tiles. By the end of 1663, most of the buildings were covered with plaster. They were also whitewashed with lime burned from sea shells, while thatch was reintroduced (Potgieter, 1970a: 507). The typical Cape buildings (see Figure 3) reveal the community's detail and care toward their buildings.

3. Case studies

Case studies were selected based on public buildings that were socially accepted by the local communities at one stage, and on the question as to why these buildings lasted longer than some public buildings in more robust materials. The three case-study buildings are at opposite ends of the African continent, and one case study is juxtaposed to promote the use of earth architecture in contemporary South Africa. The Genadendal Mission buildings, constructed in raw sun-dried earth blocks on the Mission square of Genadendal in the Western Cape Province and the cement masonry constructed at the Steinkopf Community Centre in the Northern Cape Province, both in South Africa, will be compared with the raw sun-dried earth blocks-constructed Great Mosque of Mopti in Mali, West Africa. The importance of ownership and care of earth-constructed buildings will be illustrated to show how this impacts on the temporality of public buildings. The ownership and care of public buildings in earth construction reflect the general well-being of the community they serve and support the importance of the vernacular heritage of Africa.

3.1 Case study one: Genadendal Mission buildings, Western Cape Province, South Africa

The Genadendal Mission buildings were founded in 1737 by the Moravian Mission in the Baviaanskloof, also known as the Riviersonderend Valley east of Cape Town (Potgieter, 1970b: 138). George Schmidt started with a small Khoisan Christian congregation that later constructed the first sun-dried earth-block buildings. Over time, more buildings with earth walls were constructed.



Figure 4: Photos of heritage earth-construction public building on Church Square in Genadendal

Source: Newsferret, 2013: online

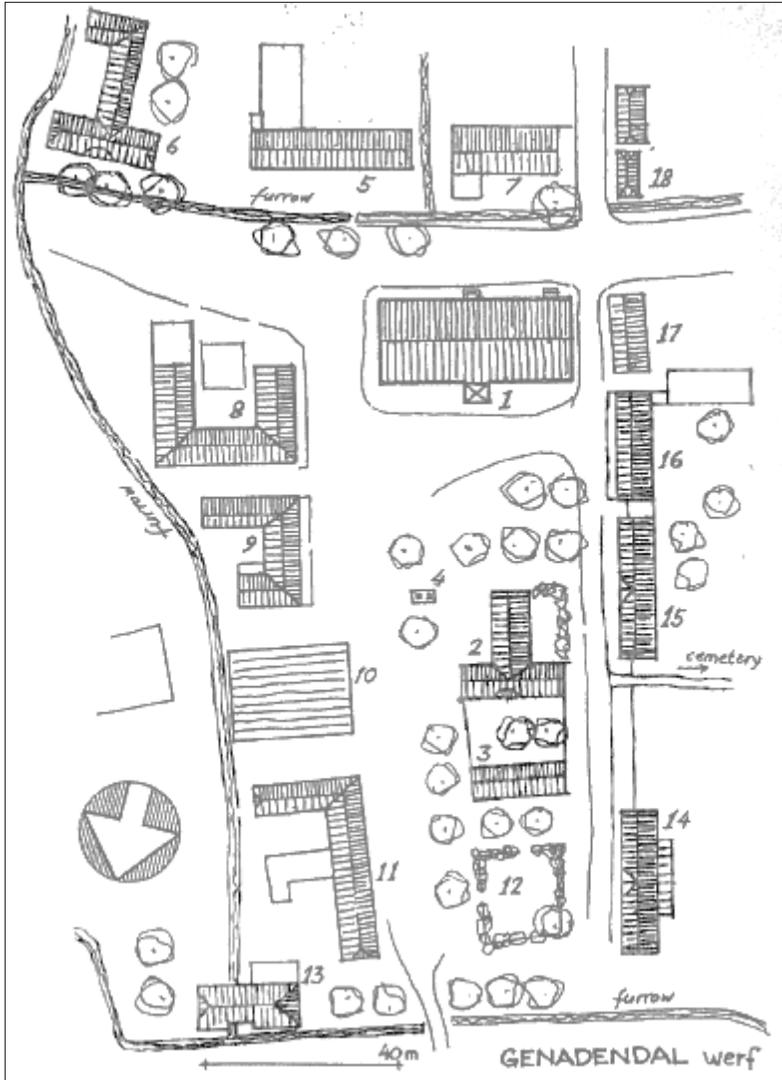


Figure 5: Plan of earth-constructed buildings of the Moravian Mission around Church Square in Genadendal

Source: Fransen, 2004: 431

By 1813, the town had 1 157 inhabitants and, by 1970, there were 3 091 inhabitants (Potgieter, 1970b: 138). Currently, 25 of these buildings, in styles such as Cape Dutch, Victorian, Neo-Classical, Neo-Renaissance and East European Baroque, are declared national

monuments (see Figure 4). Sixteen of these buildings, dating from 1737 to 1899 and built around the church square (see Figure 5), are still well maintained and cared for (Newsferret, 2013: online). These buildings can be considered CSA, built using the same earth-building techniques described in Section 2.3.

The same locally sourced reeds are used for the maintenance of the original thatched roofs. Repairs to the earth walls are done with sun-dried earth blocks made from local clay soil (Potgieter, 1970b: 138). Clay plaster, stabilized with 10% lime, was used over the past few years, although some of the original exterior plaster work was not lime stabilised. Other recent changes were done to the interior layout of a few of the smaller buildings, in order to accommodate new uses, such as tourist accommodation. The character of the building complex has not changed a great deal over the past few decades (Fransen, 2004: 431). Oil-based paints and timber varnish are new products used on the majority of exterior timber surfaces. Some compacted earth floors have been replaced by concrete floors and impermeable floor finishes. This created problems with rising damp in most of the earth walls as a result of the rise of water around the packed stone foundations. The problems should be supervised over time to prevent permanent damage to the earth-constructed walls.

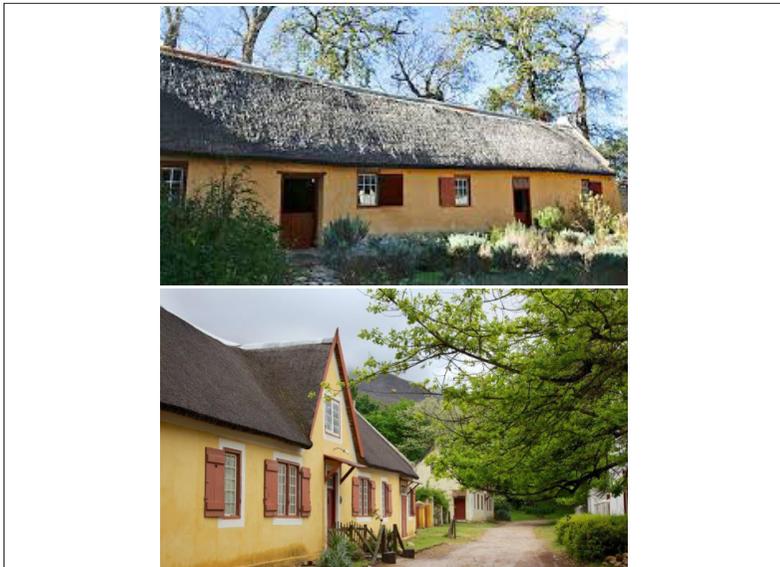


Figure 6: Photos of earth-construction private building around Church Square in Genadendal

Source: Newsferret, 2013: online

3.2 Case study two: Steinkopf Community Centre, Northern Cape Province, South Africa

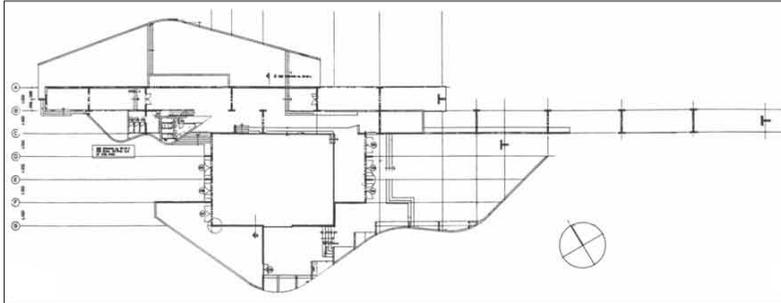


Figure 7: Steinkopf Community Centre, plan

Source: Beck, 1985: 13

In the Namaqualand district, approximately 50km north-west of Springbok, a Nama settlement was established near a water source in a sheltered valley. In 1818, the London Missionary Society sent Heinrich Schmelen there to found a mission station. By 1840, the town Steinkopf was well established with a church, a small school and some houses. By 1973, the settlement had 1 800 inhabitants. The discovery of copper in the area brought some infrastructure development (Kokot, 1970: 265). During 1979, a mining company commissioned the Cape Town-based architects Uytenbogaardt and Rosendal to design a community building for the extreme semi-arid climate of Northern Namakwaland (see Figures 7 & 8).



Figure 8: The context with the Steinkopf Community Centre in the foreground and another community centre in the background

Source: Wolff, [n.d.]: online

The small town had modest brick and corrugated roof dwellings with few real public buildings. According to the architects (Beck, 1985: 13), the programme was confirmed by the local community and the site established on a former communal vegetable garden. The building was designed from the basic need for place and shade on a featureless site. The building was designed for a hall to be used as gathering space. This place creates shade in the form of a colonnade along access routes (Beck, 1985: 13). The architects utilised the local building culture of masonry skills. Local bricklayers completed the brick construction of the massive walls and arches.



Figure 9: No maintenance on the cement brick-constructed Steinkopf Community Centre in the Northern Cape Province, South Africa

Source: Author, 2007

Lithuanian-born American architect Louis Kahn often mentioned efforts in his buildings to show how the buildings “speak” of the way in which they were put together (Leslie, 2005). Kahn’s work was the inspiration for Uytendogaardt’s Steinkopf Community Centre building and design approach, since he studied for two years with Kahn in the 1950s (Beck, 1985: 13). Both architects refer to the integrity of a building’s structure and material use within the nature and best properties of the material; bricks that work best in compressive strength; to celebrate bricks as arches built into load-bearing cement brick walls. Reinforced concrete elements were used, exposing the function within the structure. A suspended ceiling was avoided to show all the services within the spaces.

Most of these efforts are visible in the Steinkopf Community Centre building. Marcus (2009: 32-40) points out Khan’s consideration of the performance of the room as a place of the mind: “... a room is not a

room without natural light ... architecture comes from the making of the room". This can be observed in the hall as a communal room with curved ceilings to filter the harsh semi-desert light, reflected by this concern of natural light. This space with washed light was cathedral-like at some point in time (see Figures 8 & 9). Even nowadays, the architectural fraternity view the building's influence from Kahn, localised as a significant South African architectural gem.

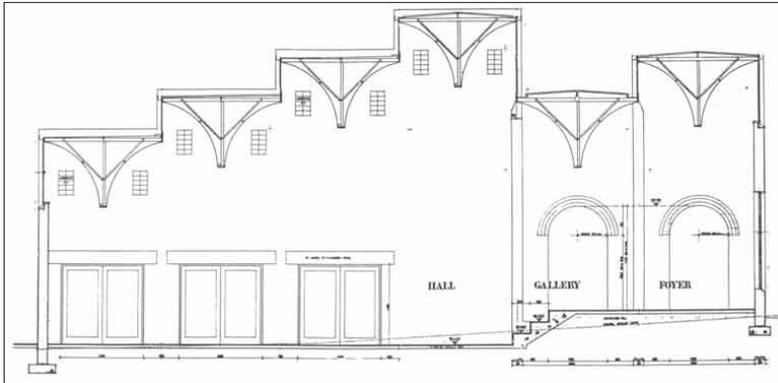


Figure 10: Steinkopf Community Centre, cross-section

Source: Beck, 1985: 13

Bell (2012) believes that "it remains arguably Uytenbogaardt's most pure design". But, even though this is an architectural masterpiece, over time the community stopped using the building. The joinery work in the building is now dilapidated (see Figure 11). The local council does not maintain it. The local community uses it as a public space for meetings:

... with all its joinery gone and just the walls, the roofs and the landscape of terraced floors remaining, the building is breathing much better than before. The urban space of the building is now used to traverse through, ride bikes, sell drugs, make art and socialise (Wolff, [n.d.]: online).



Figure 11: Steinkopf Community Centre, photo taken in 2007 (top) compared to recent photos of interior space in 2012 (bottom)

Source: Author; Bell, 2012

3.3 Case study three: The Great Mosque of Mopti, Mali, West Africa

The development of building material and its application in public buildings in the rest of Africa happened at a different pace. The cases of earth-constructed mosques in West Africa illustrate the argument of care and ownership. The architecture in Mali is as diverse as that in South Africa. Both countries were former colonies, and both are very poor to relatively poor developing countries with many socio-economic and cultural challenges. However, the Great Mosque of Mopti reveals a different approach to the current care, ownership

and maintenance of a public building constructed in earth. The same can be said about other well-known and documented mosques in Timbuctoo and Djenne visited by the author in early 2008.

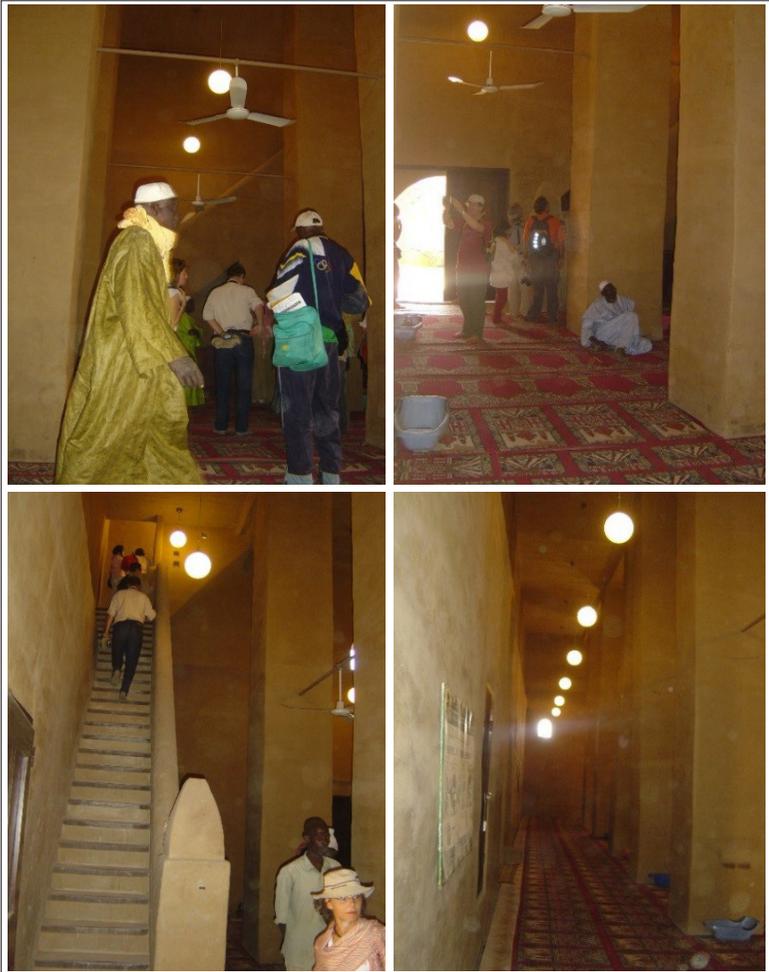


Figure 12: Interior spaces of the Great Mosque of Mopti, Mali, West Africa

Source: Author, 2008

The Great Mosque of Mopti, also known as the Komoguel Mosque, was constructed between 1933 and 1935 in a Sudanese architectural style (Mopti, [n.d.]: online). The small 100m² building is diagonally placed on an irregular shaped site, surrounded by an average

2 500mm-high boundary wall. The roof is supported by massive earth-constructed sun-dried block columns (see Figures 12 & 13), parallel to the *qibla* wall (indicating the direction of Mecca).



Figure 13: Great Mosque of Mopti, plan showing the main tower and *mihrab* and *qibla* wall

Source: Mopti, [n.d.]: online

Although much smaller, the design of the mosque is based on that of the Djenne mosque model (Mopti, [n.d.]: online). The city Mopti is a city at the heart of the Niger River. The area around the mosque is densely populated and, with its vibrant markets and private dwellings, forms a central, economic and cultural focus.



Figure 14: Architect Gisele Taxil-Wardell explains the construction process and conservation work done in the building of the Great Mosque of Mopti

Source: Author, 2008

The mosque was restored between October 2004 and June 2006, with conservation funding from the Aga Khan Trust (Taxil-Wardell, 2015). The buildings received cement-coping elements during previous restoration attempts in the 1970s. These efforts created more damage

to the earth clay plaster walls and structure. Project architects Gisele Taxil-Wardell and Wilfredo Caracas proposed an intervention of deep insertions to remove damaged structure and rebuild walls with the same earth material (*banco noir* and *banco blanc*) used decades earlier. This conservation effort also included the training of young apprentices in masonry, plastering and carpentry (see Figures 14 & 15). On completion of the project, approximately 30 apprentices received comprehensive training in related fields of caring, maintenance in the original materials of black and white earth mixes with straw and timber work (Mopti, [n.d.]: online).



Figure 15: The restored rooftop with minarets, tower and facade of the Great Mosque of Mopti

Source: Author, 2008

4. Discussion

The notion that everybody's work is nobody's work is often true. A community that shares the responsibility of caring and maintaining their buildings reflects its ownership and shared interest, values and beliefs.

For over 80 years, large numbers of faithful inhabitants of Mopti still unite in their prayer times, especially during Friday prayers. This weekly unifying character makes this worship ceremony an instrument for maintaining and strengthening social ties (Mopti, [n.d.]: online), while simultaneously giving historical and architectural importance within a touristic, cultural and spiritual space.

The combined efforts of the earth building complex in Genadendal shows that the community and the Moravian Mission in Africa are not only repairing, but also maintaining the rich cultural history of Genadendal as a place within the community. Du Plessis (2002: 29)

mentions the “strengths [of sustainable settlements] are [the] labour-intensive construction methods, locally sourced materials and highly structured, internally networked and mutually supportive communities”. This combination of efforts, ownership and care are not visible in Steinkopf.

By contrast, the community or the local council of Steinkopf has struggled to care for and maintain their building for the past 36 years. It is possible that the attitude towards the building could have changed over the years. The more fragile parts of the building were neglected into the current state. It is also possible that the height of the curved plaster board ceiling made maintenance difficult or that limited skills made the maintenance problematic. The steel and brickwork stood the test of time, but broken windows and doors indicate that the community has not owned the building for the past few years. A thorough survey will need to be conducted in order to establish the reasons for the current state of the building. If the building was not accepted from the start, it could have been totally destroyed, but this is not the case. The nearby second community centre building can be considered a more successful building, despite its poor architectural quality. Nowadays, the first community centre building by architect Uytendogaardt cannot be considered CSA, since the community currently experiences the building in a different light. The building is at most only significant to students in architecture and South African architects. The local Steinkopf community does not experience the same care and ownership as, for example, in the Genadendal Mission buildings. The use of the Steinkopf building has changed for whatever unknown reasons. It is important to illustrate that care and ownership are vital for public buildings to survive.

There has been an influx of modern and postmodern styles into South Africa, despite the poor climate and technical performance of the stylistic elements, or the lack of practical climatic elements such as verandas and louvres. It has also been influenced by issues of aesthetics, style and status. Consequently, Frescura (1989: 38) argues that those architectural styles are often not a matter of individual style, but are strongly related to the values of dominant groups. He questions the role that climate and technical performance played in predetermining man's choice of his own built habitat. It should be asked at what stage these choices cease to be guided by pragmatic factors and are “overtaken by consideration of aesthetics, style and status”. It should be considered that architecture stopped being a matter of individual choice and is strongly connected with the values of a larger group.

The current community of Steinkopf is not aware of, and does not relate to the vision of Uytendogaardt's idea of dwelling space in the landscape. In the harsh semi-desert landscape, even robust materials such as the shell or container could not hold the softer, more fragile parts from disappearing over the past 36 years. The fact that cheap material is not available near the site can be considered. The political climate of the 1980s, when the community was conceptualized and constructed, could have played a bigger role in the social acceptability at that time, but this is now lost. It is possible that, at the time the building was built, the generation living around the centre did experience ownership.

Efforts can be made to both promote the architectural value of the building and involve the current community to again experience ownership. In the case of the Mopti Mosque, new interest and generous funding for conservation have created a renewed interest that adds value to the building and the surrounding community. The attitude of the community has changed since they were involved in skills transfer and job creation over a period of three years during the restoration process around the Mosque. The community plasters and maintains the Mosque after the rain season. The current community has new skills to take care of the building. However, this value can change in future, placing the Mosque in harm's way for future generations.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This article discussed and illustrated the effect that ownership and values have on the general care and maintenance of public buildings. Public buildings in conventional building materials are as fragile as earth-constructed public buildings. The way in which human beings go about in a day-to-day relationship with buildings reflects the cultural values towards that building and the community's ability and means to create and care for CSA. The example of the Great Mosque of Mopti shows how monumental earth buildings as soft architecture are taken care of by the users within the tradition of annual festivities and religion.

The Genadendal Mission buildings, as monumental earth buildings, have changed, but the character and structures had enough value for the community to care for over the past 250 years. The cultural significance of this complex has been celebrated since 1980 (as historical heritage site) to create CSA within the church square as cultural holder.

The Great Mosque of Mopti and the Genadendal Mission buildings are currently considered to be CSA, due to the continued community involvement in between generations in the form of skills transfer and job creation; an understanding of building materials and building techniques used to care and preserve its character, and a sense of ownership experienced by communities at opposite ends of the African continent.

The Steinkopf community building, as iconic modernist architecture in robust steel and masonry work, currently does not have the same status, since the community does not hold the building in the same high regard as is the case with Mopti and Genadendal. In the absence of community involvement, understanding material and techniques, and a sense of ownership, the Steinkopf community building, as a poetic piece of architecture, will not become significant for the community. Architecturally significant buildings are temporal and are connected to current communities' values and sustainable means.

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