

Architecture is political.

Even when we think we are working professionally apart from any such power constraints we are already so caught up in it we can hardly breath. Politics *is* at the centre of everything we do as architects; which is as it has always been - spatial expressions of the surrounding ideologies, our own, our clients, those hidden imperatives in the architectural brief.

Recognizing such an environment gives us the consciousness and focus we are needing now as much as in the last century, trying as we must not to be overly trapped in the economic disparities we seem bound to perpetuate, the status quo we often naively maintain in constructing the environments in which much of humanity is desperate to find a place.

Architecture *otherwhere* attempts to aggravate these circumstances in order to open and allow us as architects the space in which to interfere with the way things are done, disrupt what has always been, to offer up other ways, alternative paths, another space. Practices just barely hinted at times, making an appearance as an avant-garde, not to be so quickly absorbed into the mainstream.

Architecture *otherwhere* is a manifesto that is uncalled for, impolite, without followers, no obvious reason to be, reflective perhaps of the complex and insecure politics of our age yet deeply conscious of the next generation's boundless enthusiasm and energies, the energies which I am fortunate to experience daily where I teach, the energies contained within these congress walls.

In thinking about this congress some four years ago it was the alternative global maps and visions of the last century to which I turned - with the first postwar UIA Congress in Lausanne in 1948 as "Architecture (was) Faced with its New Tasks" - with a simple diagram by the economist François Chesnais of the global economy in its spatial relations between the centers of capital accumulation and the isolated exploited peripheries - with the Dymaxion Map of Buckminster Fuller which had no "right way up" - with the trip of the artist Francis Alÿs from San Diego to Tijuana that forced him to travel around the globe in order to bypass that fenced border - with the city of the whole inhabited earth, or Eucumenopolis, of the urban planner Constantinos Dosiadis - with the currents of the Gulf Stream and El Niño that flow across national boundaries like pollutants to blanket the globe - with the "Seven Bridge Towns to Link Four Continents" of the architect Yona Friedman - and finally with the tale recorded by the Uruguayan writer and journalist Eduardo Galeano:

*"In the twelfth century, the official geographer of the kingdom of Sicily, al-Idrisi, drew a map of the world, the world that Europe knew about, with south on top and north on the bottom. That was common in mapmaking back then. And that's how the map of South America was drawn eight centuries later, with south on top, by Uruguayan painter Joaquin Torres-Garcia. "Our north is south," he said. "To go north, our ships go down, not up." If the world is upside down the way it is now, wouldn't we have to turn it over to get it to stand up straight?"*

Even though acknowledgment of centuries of uneven development does little to bring about real reparation or offer solutions that do not perpetuate more of the current unjust trajectories already in place, shuffling things around (as has already begun in areas of academic enquiry in terms of the *question of the other*) presents powerful possibilities for probing, for addressing concerns put aside, and we should be acting immediately,

and not in some indeterminate future. For we are post- too many things now: colonial, communist, capitalist, utopian, ecological, post-humanity.

What if we hesitate for a moment, seeking not only consensus or commonality alone, instead we follow a turbulent stream of ideas and scenarios, especially listening to stories that take us to fantastic, intriguing or even ordinary realms in which irrationalities sit alongside efficiencies, beauty lies in engineered solutions, structural tensions give way to poetic introspection, glances of anxiety returned as glimmers hope. What worlds will emerge?

Architecture is cultural.

Built form demands to be interrogated culturally anew with many of its brutal and speculative forces out of alignment. So we might still have peripheries, not to replace centers, but instead put these spatial hierarchies in past tensions. We might bring about other regions (such as the Indian Ocean coast, the imaginary archipelago, or the lost frontier). We might embrace other practices (that are collaborative, spontaneous and critical). We might reach out to each other (as global neighbors, as communal bystanders or as mutual migrants). We might take other positions (in each others backyards, as contemporary brethren, as enduring presences).

What might this gathering consist of if not chaotic platforms or ideas on auction? What if we do not only offer visions and promises but spontaneous irritants, details from within the thick of things? Bringing more of us into the conversation while challenging existing rhythms and patterns will necessarily present harmonic discord, interferences as much as cacophony. This is a polyglot of sounds and languages, concerns that are the very public yet intimate life of a global congress.

We must not leave here without continuing the tasks of having gone elsewhere or having thought otherwise. Tasks that must begin within the organizations under whose auspices we gather here today, that is the UIA and our professional national organizations, our academies, our governments, our public with whom we build.

Architecture is social.

Getting somewhere else, in a better position, has often seen us caught between historical promises and broken utopias. Still we face further decades of insecurity and mayhem. For UIA Durban 2014 we are interested in those architectural projects and strategies recently engaged, about to happen; our rapidly evolving global built environment and how we operate as architects within it.

We are coming together as architects, individuals with the burden of our geographical and historical trajectories temporarily suspended, upended. No longer south looking north, east opposed west. Less global stratifications embedded in the conversation that has long dictated who talks and who listens, knowing that when we return home even though some things will remain the same, we can no longer consider them normal.

In Durban this new geography, imagined worlds once or only just being conceived, digital realities, visions of areas mired in harsh realities - all this is being brought together for us to engage with our wildly divergent views.

We have invited architects, activists, officials and community organizers to join in these discussions that we expect will spill over into informal conversations. We encourage participants to put to one side geography, camps and disciplines, not to leave them behind (deeply held beliefs and concerns that they are) but in order to initiate unimagined alliances and venture past territories. We are reaching here for

transformative modes of architectural practice across the social and spatial realms from where we have all just travelled.

Architecture connects.

We called for proposals showing architectural scenarios, strategies and fantasies that address the complex, sometimes contradictory, demands of practice. What interventions and intentions are likely to modify or disrupt our world, our way of building, even our imagination? Though our housing and public facilities, shops and parks continue to invite familiar and efficient modes of interception, we still need to ask how else things can be done, how much more must be done, where on earth do we go next.

For we are still today facing globally the questions asked by the African-American novelist Richard Wright following his attendance at the Bandung Conference in 1955 in Indonesia, the meeting of Asian and African states that took place at the beginning of the long period of desegregation and decolonization:

*“How can the spirit of the Enlightenment and Reformation be extended now to all men? How can this accidental boon be made global in its effect? That is the task that history now imposes upon us. Can a way be found purged of racism and profits, to meld the rational areas and rational personnel of Europe with those of Asia and Africa?”*

We are linking across the globe with shared spatial streams through Europeans, Asians, Africans and Americans working on newly consolidated architectural projects.

We are after a highly concentrated confrontation with our architectural world turned upside down. Our congress is being developed to provide many points of view from carefully constructed but freely dispersed positions. Architecture understood as more

than a utility or enclosure, a critical component of our survival, another version of our dreams. Buildings and structures that are ambitious responses to economic crises, housing shortages, declining communities, lost causes.

Architecture activates.

Like others here I also want to remind us of two decades of democracy in this country, South Africa, of centuries of conflagration on this continent, of the enormous sacrifices made by many, of the anger and fear that had to be overcome in our society, and of the compromises that had to be made to forge the consensus that is our democracy.

Few architects found a role to play in challenging apartheid but many of us understand today our responsibility in meeting the social and environmental challenges we share with each other and with the rest of humanity.

Our creative capacity for spatial disruption, our built innovations, our sensitive and moral architectural formulations, are all demanded here as inspirational forces. Against the decline of utopias we must once again find architectural wonder. Experimental, spontaneous and poetic as much as socially engaged practice must remain central to the projects and activities we bring to our commitment as architects.