

# From “Patrimoine partagé” to “whose heritage”? Critical reflections on colonial built heritage in the city of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>1</sup>

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This paper questions the binary structure of the notion “shared heritage”/ “patrimoine partagé” that has emerged in recent debates on built heritage in former colonial territories. In the discourses of, for instance, ICOMOS, the notion stands for a heritage “shared” by former “colonizers” and former “colonized”, both categories being considered – albeit often implicitly – as homogenous entities. In line with Stuart Hall, I will argue for an approach to colonial built heritage that takes up the more complex nature of the question “whose heritage?” By focusing on the remarkable colonial built architecture of the city of Lubumbashi, situated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I will make a plea for re-thinking and re-positioning this legacy as a critical filter between colonial history and postcolonial memory, thus extending traditional standards of documenting built legacy through formal description and physical assessment that often isolate buildings from their urban as well as historical contexts (social, economic, cultural and/or political). Being influenced by the work of the *Mémoires de Lubumbashi*-group as well as recent scholarship in the field of architectural history informed by postcolonial studies, the approach on built heritage presented here is twofold. On the one hand, a plea is made to link the city’s urban form to colonial history by relating it to the cosmopolitan society that produced and experienced it. On the other hand, an approach is suggested that acknowledges how specific urban places and buildings in the city are

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1 This paper is based on my earlier research on colonial architecture and urbanism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which resulted in a PhD at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Ghent University (Johan Lagae, “Kongo zoals het is”. *Drie architectuurverhalen uit de Belgische koloniatiegeschiedenis (1920-1960)*, 3 vols., unpublished, 2002). It is further informed by a series of visits to the city of Lubumbashi in the summer of 2000, September 2005, December 2006 and August 2007. I would like to thank all those who have been helpful in facilitating those visits and with whom I have been able to exchange ideas, most notably prof. Jean-Luc Vellut, prof. Donatien Dibwe Dia Mwemba, prof. Michel Lwamba Bilonda, professor Donatien Muya, Hubert Maheux, Marine Issumo, Moïse Panga, Serge Songa Songa and the members of the artists’ collective *Le Vicinos Club*, among which Sammy Baloji and Patrick Mudekereza. The project has further more benefited greatly from the work done by Maarten Liefvooghe and by students of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Ghent University during a research seminar in 2006. I finally want to thank Bernard Toulrier, Mercedes Volait and Tristan Gilloux for the fruitful exchanges of ideas on the topic of heritage in formerly colonized territories.

currently being re-appropriated as “lieux de mémoire” by a variety of agents that do not necessarily (want to) share this heritage.

*Key words:* Colonial Architecture, Built Heritage, Democratic Republic Congo, Lubumbashi

### “Whose heritage”?

On February 2nd, 2005, the eve of the day on which the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren was to open its major exhibition *Memory of Congo*. The colonial Era, a curious event occurred in Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The equestrian statue of King Leopold II that had been lying in a warehouse on the



Fig. 1: Demolished 1920s building in the city centre of Lubumbashi, (photograph Serge Songa-songu, 2007)

outskirts of the city for more than thirty years was re-installed in the city centre. It was mounted on the pedestal in front of the main railway station, where the statue of King Albert I had once stood.<sup>2</sup> The statue had originally been erected in 1928 and during the colonial era it powerfully embodied Belgian colonial power in what was once the capital

<sup>2</sup> The monument could not be reinstalled on its original location, which was on the square in front of the *Palais de la Nation*, as in 2001 a sumptuous memorial for the late president Laurent Désiré Kabila was erected on that spot.

city of the Belgian Congo.<sup>3</sup> In the context of Mobutu's *authenticité*-policy that aimed at erasing all traces of colonialism, the statue had been dismantled in the late 1960s. The then Minister of Culture of the RDC, Christophe Muzungu, presented the re-installment of the statue as part of a larger, future project intended to remind the Congolese of their history, including the colonial past, because "a people without history is a people without soul."<sup>4</sup>

The Congolese initiative and the opening of the *Memory of Congo*-exhibition received international press coverage. Both events made it to the front page of several leading newspapers in Belgium, being presented as indicators of a shared moment of "mémoire retrouvée" in the former colony and mother country.<sup>5</sup> However, in Belgium as well as in Congo, the re-installment of the equestrian statue caused divergent reactions. While the replacing of the statue was applauded by some, others regarded the action as a tribute to a "génocidaire", thus expressing a critical stance on the Belgian colonial enterprise that has been widely popularized ever since the publication of Adam Hochschild's bestselling 1998 book *King Leopold II's Ghost. A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*.<sup>6</sup> After less than 24 hours, the equestrian statue was again removed, for a profound "cleaning operation" as described in the official press statement. It has not been put back into place since. The statue still stands today in the courtyard of the *Institut des Musées Nationaux du Congo*, ironically one of the most secure and least accessible locations in Kinshasa.<sup>7</sup>

The replacement of the equestrian statue of Leopold II and its subsequent removal clearly demonstrate the strong potential of physical remains of the colonial era to trigger and (re-)activate colonial memories. The episode forms a telling example of what the editors of a recent theme issue of *Politique Africaine* have described as "des pratiques poli-

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3 On this statue, which is an exact copy of the equestrian statue erected at the side of the Royal Palace in Brussels in 1926, see *Léopold II : monuments de Bruxelles et de Leopoldville*, Brussels, Vromant, s.d.

4 Christophe MUZUNGU as quoted in A.P., 'Rise and Fall of a brutal king'. *The Times*, February 4th 2005. See also, *De Standaard*, February 4th 2005, p. 1. Discussions on the topic of reinstalling former colonial monuments in Kinshasa had been going on for quite a while. The director of the Congolese National Archives, Antoine Lumen-ganeso Kiobe, for instance, had already made several pleas to revive interest in this particular colonial heritage, see among others his appearance in the documentary on Kinshasa by J.F. BASTIN & I. CHRISTIAENS (Paris, 2002). A few months before the event, *La Pléiade Congolaise. Mouvement des Libres Penseurs* tried to gain support for a study of these monuments. Cf. an unpublished text of the association, 'De la restitution des symboles du passé colonial à la mémoire commune de la République Démocratique du Congo et du Royaume de Belgique', kindly transmitted to me by its Vice-Président François Kakonde in November 2004.

5 *Le Soir* headed « Congo : la mémoire retrouvée » in an article by Colette BRAECKMAN, a leading journalist on African affairs.

6 HOCHSCHILD'S book, that makes strong claims on the atrocities and violence during the leopoldian era, has led to large controversies in Belgium and produced a quite unproductive debate between believers and non-believers. This debate resonated strongly in the press coverage of the *Memory of Congo* exhibit, which was by many perceived as an attempt to counter Hochschild's book. Adam Hochschild wrote a very critical review on the exhibition's catalogue in *The New York Review of Books* ('In the Heart of Darkness', vol. 52, nr. 15, October 6th, 2005), in which he also stated that the exhibition failed to address openly the continued violence of Belgian colonialism in the Congo. For a response by Jean-Luc Vellut, scientific director of the exhibition, and a consequent reply by Hochschild, see *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 53, nr. 1, January 12th, 2006.

7 In the course of 2004 the statue was transported from the Office of Public Transport in Kinshasa to the site of the *Institut des Musées Nationaux*, which is part of what is known locally as "l'enclave présidentielle"

tiques du passé colonial”, through which memories become “grey”, or, in other words, “un mélange à doses variables” of “white” and “black” memories that cannot be reduced to a simple juxtaposition, just as colonial history cannot be written simply in “positive” or “negative” terms.<sup>8</sup>

Colonial memories are, as scholars like Johannes Fabian have convincingly argued, of course as much about forgetting as they are about remembering and history informs them in complex ways. And indeed it is not by replacing or removing a statue that history can be unveiled or erased. The legacy of the colonial era has many faces. In relation to the topic under discussion here, one might recall the following remark made by the Congolese historian Michel Bilonda when commenting upon Mobutu’s policy of dismantling statues and changing street names referring to the colonial era: “Le plus grand monument de Léopold II, n’est pas la statue équestre qui trônait devant le palais de la Nation, mais bien la République Démocratique du Congo elle-même, dont la 2<sup>ème</sup> République [which indicates the era of Mobutu’s reign] était si fière de sauvegarder l’intégrité territoriale”.<sup>9</sup>

This brief chronicle of the equestrian statue of Leopold II offers a useful starting point for a critical reflection on the issue of colonial legacy, and on current debates concerning colonial built heritage in particular. Indeed, the episode of the re-installment of the statue reminds us of the fact that legacy is not only about the conservation of physical remnants of the past, but also about negotiating meanings embedded in these artefacts. It will be argued here that in order to develop a meaningful approach to the colonial built legacy, it is important to focus not only on its tangible aspects (through operations of documentation, conservation or even restoration), but also to seriously engage with its intangible aspects (history, memory).

One of the key notions that has emerged in recent, institutional debates on the topic of colonial built legacy is “shared heritage”. The scientific committee of the *International Council on Monuments and Sites*, or ICOMOS, dealing with colonial built legacy, for instance, is operating under the label “Shared Built Heritage”. While the official mission statement of the committee does not explicitly explain the term, discussion with several of its members indicates that it was chosen to underline that every initiative regarding this built legacy should be rooted in a dialogue in which former “colonizers” and “colonized” can engage on a basis of equality.<sup>10</sup> Referring to the notion of “patrimoine partagé” in

8 DESLAURIER C. & ROGER A., ‘Mémoires grises. Pratiques politiques du passé colonial entre Europe et Afrique’, introduction to the theme issue ‘Passés coloniaux recomposés. Mémoires grises en Europe et en Afrique’, *Politique Africaine*, nr. 102, June 2006, pp. 5-27. The cover of the issue shows a photograph by Marie-Françoise Plissart of the equestrian statue of Leopold II when it was still kept in the grounds of the Office of Public Transport.

9 Michel LWAMBA BILONDA, *Histoire de l’onomastique d’avenues et de places publiques de la ville de Lubumbashi (de 1910 à nos jours)*, Presses Universitaires de Lubumbashi, Lubumbashi, 2001, p. 64. Bilonda made this statement in a critique on Mobutu’s policy of dismantling statues and changing names related to the colonial era from the mid 1960s onwards.

10 The mission statement has it that the ICOMOS international Committee on Shared Built Heritage “supports public and private organizations world-wide in safeguarding, management and documentation of heritage and promotes and encourages its integration in today’s social and economic life” (ICOMOS SBH leaflet, 2003). The

an introduction to a recent volume *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. L'expérience française* edited by the French Institut National du Patrimoine, Bernard Toulhier takes a more outspoken position by arguing that the colonial built legacy no longer belongs to those who built it, but rather to those who inhabit it. In his opinion the latter should be left the choice and the responsibility of deciding what should be transmitted to future generations. Arguing that the creation of a colonial heritage implies "revendiquer une filiation, se fabriquer sa propre paternité à laquelle les anciens colons et les colonisés s'identifient." Furthermore, Toulhier hints at the paradox that is inherent in such a process, as it forces the former « colonized » to appropriate a "foreign" culture.<sup>11</sup> His remarks offer a first complication to an all too easy usage of the notion "shared heritage". In her contribution to the same book, Mercedes Volait adds another critical note by reminding the reader that any involvement of colonial heritage inevitably "heurte à plein fouet une question sensible en Europe même, et singulièrement en France: celle du statut accordé à l'histoire coloniale – une histoire qu'on préfère au fond occultée plutôt que dévoilée".<sup>12</sup> In this respect it is very telling that the initial label of the ICOMOS scientific committee was "Colonial Built Heritage." The word "colonial" was dropped over the course of time because it aroused discussion among its members and, more importantly perhaps, because it formed a negative backdrop when applying for government funding in the Netherlands, where the committee is based.<sup>13</sup>

In the Belgian context, the episode of the re-installment and subsequent removal of the equestrian statue of Leopold II forms a powerful indicator of the tension that exists between "shared heritage" and "dissonant history". But it also reminds us of the fact that "artefacts are not static embodiments of culture but are, rather, a medium through which identity, power and society are produced and reproduced", as is argued in the 2000 *Values and Heritage Conservation Report of the Getty Conservation Institute*.<sup>14</sup> Cultural heritage is indeed always a "social construct" to which multiple values are ascribed in dynamic processes of (re-)appropriation and negotiation. Interestingly the editors of a recent issue of the jour-

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committee is based in the Heritage House of ICOMOS Netherlands, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. On Icomos in general, see [www.icomos.org](http://www.icomos.org).

- 11 TOULIER, B., 'Introduction', in TOULIER, B. & PABOIS, M. (ed.), *L'architecture coloniale. L'expérience française*, Institut National du Patrimoine, Paris, 2005, p. 23. I use the translation "a foreign culture" for the French "une culture exogène".
- 12 VOLAIT, M., "Patrimoines partagés": un regard décentré et élargi sur l'architecture et la ville des XIXe et XXe siècles en Méditerranée', in TOULIER, B. & PABOIS, M. (ed.), *L'architecture coloniale. L'expérience française*, op. cit., pp. 121-122.
- 13 The then chairman of ICOMOS SBH, Cor Dijkgraaf, mentioned these two reasons underlying the change in name in a letter to the members of the committee and interested parties, dated April 17th 2003, indicating that the Dutch government officials would not give no subsidy to a committee with the word "colonial" in its name. On the difficult relationship of the heritage milieu with the qualification "colonial", see VAN ROOSMAELEN P., *Le positionnement de l'héritage colonial bâti*, in TOULIER, B. & PABOIS, M. (ed.), *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. Expériences européennes*, Paris, 2006, p. 157-160.
- 14 AVRAMI E. & MASON R. (ed.), *Values and Heritage Conservation. Research Report*, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles, 2000, consulted online: [http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/pdf\\_publications/values-rpt.pdf](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications/pdf_publications/values-rpt.pdf).

nal Autrepart. *Revue de sciences sociales au Sud* dedicated to the theme of heritage in cities of the South did not entitle the issue *Inventer le patrimoine moderne dans les villes du Sud*.<sup>15</sup>

Seen from this perspective, the notion “shared heritage” proves problematic for several reasons. It is misleading in that it suggests that the values attached to the legacy are shared between the former “colonizers” and “colonized”. As the episode of the equestrian statue suggests, this is not necessarily the case, all the more so since within each of these categories divergent reactions to the initiative were to be noted. As one case study in this paper will make clear, artefacts do not even have to be objects of a shared interest to have a “heritage” potential. Finally, the usage of the notion of “shared heritage” might lead to an obscuring of the power mechanisms and structures at work in heritage practices and policies in former colonized territories. To begin to unravel some of the complexities involved in such enterprises, any reflection on the colonial (built) legacy should therefore, I suggest, return to the basic, but fundamental questions raised by Stuart Hall when he discussed heritage as a discursive practice in the context of 1990s multicultural Britain, namely *whose heritage are we actually talking about? Who is it for? And who is concerned by it?*<sup>16</sup>

### **Towards an alternative way of documenting Lubumbashi’s built heritage**

Addressing such questions in relation to colonial built heritage demands an approach that goes beyond the traditional standards of documenting built legacy through formal description and physical assessment that often isolate buildings from their urban and historical contexts (social, economic, cultural and/or political). It demands alternative ways of documenting the architecture and urban form of the colonial era, ways that seek to establish meaningful but sometimes complex relationships between built fabric, history and memory.

The colonial built legacy of Lubumbashi, the mining city in Congo’s province of Katanga formerly known as Elisabethville, offers a particularly interesting case to discuss such an alternative approach to colonial built legacy. The city possesses a remarkable urban and architectural legacy that has already been object of historical research, publications and exhibitions in the last decade.<sup>17</sup> Recently, this legacy has also drawn attention as a potential “heritage”. In September 2005, for instance, the French Cultural Centre in

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15 EL KADI, G. et. al. (ed.), ‘Inventer le patrimoine dans les villes du Sud’, theme issue of *Autrepart*, nr. 33, 2005 (my emphasis).

16 HALL, S., ‘Whose Heritage? Un-settling “The Heritage”, RE-imagining the Post-Nation’, in SARDAR Z. et. al. (ed.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, Continuum, London, 2002, pp. 72-84.

17 The architecture and urban planning of Lubumbashi have been studied in the context of PhD dissertations by Bruno DE MEULDER (KULeuven, 1994) and Johan LAGAE (UGent, 2002). In 2000 Bruno De Meulder organized an exhibition on colonial urbanism in the Congo under the title *Kuvuande Mbote. Een eeuw architectuur en stedenbouw in Kongo* (deSingel, Antwerp), in which some attention was given to Lubumbashi (the early urban history of Lubumbashi also forms the subject of one of the chapters in the accompanying catalogue with the same title). Lubumbashi was one of the 3 cities highlighted in the exhibition *Congo. Paysages urbains. Regards croisés* (CIVA, Brussels) that presented both historical documentation and the work of contemporary Congolese artists (curators: Johan Lagae & Marc Gemoets). A catalogue based on the latter exhibition is forthcoming.

Lubumbashi organized the *Premières journées du patrimoine en Afrique francophone* at the initiative of its dynamic director Hubert Maheux. Consisting of an exhibition of photographs, a conference and a series of guided tours, the initiative aimed at "sensibiliser la population à la qualité architecturale de la ville, et pour sa prise en compte dans l'aménagement urbain".<sup>18</sup> Currently, the French Ministry of Culture is preparing an architectural guide for the city.<sup>19</sup> Since 2006, a similar initiative has been undertaken within the architectural school of La Cambre in Brussels.<sup>20</sup>

The latter initiatives are important in primarily aiming to create and stimulate an awareness of the importance of this legacy among a variety of stakeholders, at a time when the city of Lubumbashi is undergoing a tremendous evolution. Indeed, the city is currently witnessing an economic upheaval unprecedented in the last decades. It has led to a frenzy of building activity which is exerting immense pressure on the existing real estate, especially in the city centre. As a result, the urban landscape is changing at a dramatic pace.<sup>21</sup> In 2006, the first historical building in the heart of the city was torn down to make place for a new structure, while several complexes are currently being topped with extra storeys with little or no respect for the existing architecture. The new provincial governor, Moïse Katumbi Chapwe, has shown some awareness of the problem. He recently took action to preserve a certain visual coherence of the streetscapes in the city centre<sup>22</sup> and also prevented the imminent demolition of a major building in Luishia.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the economic interests are such, that one can only speculate what the city will look like five years from now.

If it is thus appropriate to mount and continue actions emphasizing the interest and importance of Lubumbashi's built legacy, the introduction in Lubumbashi of a heritage

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18 See <http://lubumculture.site.voila.fr/expopatri.htm>.

19 A first, small publication prepared under supervision of Hubert Maheux and Marc Pabois, with the title *Republique Démocratique du Congo. Lubumbashi. Ville minière du Katanga 1910-2010. L'Architecture* is to be published in April 2008. For a first statement on the project, see PABOIS M., *Lubumbashi, un musée d'architecture à ciel ouvert*, in *Nzenze*, jg. 1, nr. 1, 2006, p. 24-26.

20 In the context of this initiative, a round table discussion entitled *Afrique: le patrimoine colonial, une identité à partager* was organized on November 24th, 2006, at the La Cambre school. An inventory of the architectural legacy of Lubumbashi is currently under preparation.

21 Visiting the city in December 2006 and again in August 2007, I was able to observe the immense change, not only in terms of traffic, but also in terms of the change of the urban landscape.

22 In order to put an end to the visual chaos in the city centre, Moïse Katumbi Chapwe decreed that all buildings in Lubumbashi's city centre be painted in a similar colour that can best be described as a nuance of brown-orange. Even if the implementation has not been totally successful so far, the initiative already has a strong overall effect on the streetscape.

23 The building in question is the girl's school built in Luishia the 1950s, which constitutes a remarkable architectural ensemble and is an institute with historical relevance. It was built in the 1950s at the initiative of Jules Cousin, the then director of the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, and recruited its students from the colonial establishment, and after independence, from the Congolese elite. see KABWE W., « Gouverneur élu du Katanga Moïse Katumbi opposé à la destruction des écoles Luisha et Kakontwe de la Gecamines », *Le Potentiel*, August 17th 2007. Under the title "Sauver Luishia" an association of Congolese former female students started an internet campaign on August 17th 2007 to halt the planned demolition. I thank Eric Kennis and Donatien Muya for bringing this event to my attention.

policy that focuses mainly on material aspects for defining the value of the built legacy can and should be questioned. Longstanding European practices in the domain of conservation and restoration of built heritage more often than not are underscored by a conception that tends to define architecture in terms of “monumentality”, “durability” and “history”, while formal and spatial inventiveness as well as technical innovation are still used as key criteria in the selection of buildings and sites worthy of attention. Applying such terms and criteria to evaluate the built legacy of the colonial era ignores the fact that during colonial times these constituted the basis of argument put forward by western architects that Sub-Saharan Africa was an architectural “terre vierge”. Indeed the “traditional” African built forms could not be described, let alone valued, by such a frame of reference.<sup>24</sup> Not surprisingly, in many cases heritage initiatives in former colonized territories have tended to privilege the architecture of the former *ville européenne* over the immense built production in the so-called *cités* that is considered of less or no importance, thus reiterating, albeit often unconsciously, a colonialist discourse.<sup>25</sup>

If documenting the built legacy of Lubumbashi seems the first obvious step in developing a heritage policy for the city, caution should be exercised when establishing the frame of reference used to define the selection criteria of what should be documented in the first place. Rather than defining the value of the built legacy mainly in art historical terms, I argue for a pluridisciplinary approach.<sup>26</sup> My take as an architectural historian on the built heritage question in Lubumbashi in fact draws on insights from recent architectural historiography that since the early 1990s has been influenced by postcolonial studies,<sup>27</sup> while it is also informed by the emerging interest in African urban spaces in the domain of the social sciences.<sup>28</sup> But it is equally indebted to the fascinating work on Lushois urban memory, by scholars like Johannes Fabian, Bogumil Jewsiewicki and members of the locally based group “Memoires de Lubumbashi,” such as Donatien Dibwe and Gabriel Kalaba.<sup>29</sup> My approach then seeks to point out, first, how, why and by whom

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24 For a discussion of the architectural debate on colonial construction in Congo in which such issues were at play, see LAGAE J., “Kongo zoals het is”, *op. cit.*, part I.

25 While this holds true for the current project on Lubumbashi of the La Cambre school, the French initiative in Lubumbashi does take some of the buildings in the *cités* and especially in the workers’ camps of the Gécamines into consideration. For a more general discussion of this phenomenon in African contexts, see for instance COQUERY-VIDROVITCH C., ‘Conclusion’, in TOULIER, B. & PABOIS, M. (ed.), *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. Expériences européennes*, pp. 209-219; SINOÛ A., ‘Enjeux culturels et politiques de la mise en patrimoine des espaces coloniaux’, in *Autrepart*, nr. 33, 2005, pp. 13-31.

26 See in that respect also Johan LAGAE, ‘L’Architecture coloniale en République Démocratique du Congo : pour une approche pluridisciplinaire du patrimoine’, in TOULIER, B. & PABOIS, M. (ed.), *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine. Expériences européennes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-131.

27 I am thinking here on the work of scholars like Zeynep ÇELİK, whose book *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations. Algiers under French Rule* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997), remains a key reference for any research on colonial architecture and urban planning.

28 See for instance SALM, S.J. & FALOLA, T. (ed.), *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 2005.

29 For an overview of the “memory work” in Lubumbashi, see JEWSIEWICKI B., ‘Travail de mémoire et représentations pour un vivre ensemble : expériences de Lubumbashi’, in DE LAME D. & DIBWE DIA MWEMBU D. (ed.), *Tout passe. Instantanés populaires et traces du passé à Lubumbashi*, Africa Museum/L’Harmattan, Tervuren/Paris, 2005, pp. 27-40.



Lubumbashi's built legacy was produced and, second, how it has been re-appropriated over time by a wide variety of agents, some of them simply re-using it as available hardware while others have invested it with new meanings through divergent, sometimes even conflicting operations.

Such a positioning of Lubumbashi's colonial built legacy as a critical interface between colonial history and postcolonial memory, I argue, can provide a meaningful alternative to the format of a classical architectural guide, and offer a more sound starting point for a debate on the city's built heritage. For what is needed is not only a documenting of architecture through factual descriptions and visual material, but also an approach that allows for re-situating buildings in their changing urban and broader political-cultural contexts, while simultaneously linking them to the subsequent urban societies that occupied and experienced these spaces. Rather than focusing on buildings as isolated artefacts then, I argue for a reading that considers them as complex historical documents. Apart from formal description or physical assessment, issues of location – i.e. the relationships of a particular building to its surrounding urban fabric or other buildings in its vicinity –, of patronage and of use over time then become crucial elements of analysis. By shifting the perspective from "shared heritage" to "whose heritage", such an operation also allows us to critically question the "binary" character of the notion of "shared heritage" that all too often remains defined in terms of homogenized categories of (former) colonized and (former) colonizer.

Such an approach underscores a work-in-progress project that by 2010 will result in an interactive multimedia database on Lubumbashi's colonial built legacy.<sup>30</sup> While it is not possible within the confines of this paper to fully elaborate the concept underlying that project, in which local artists participate, the discussion that follows focuses on two particular sites in Lubumbashi that will provide insight into its possible *modus operandi*. Through the first case, the former theatre building, the notion of "shared heritage" will be questioned by pointing out divergences within the community of former "colonized" in the postcolonial context. The second case, the Jewish cemetery, highlights how the heterogeneity within Lubumbashi's white colonial society is currently re-surfacing in the way the city's built legacy is re-appropriated. In both cases, the discussion draws on the concept of "lieu de mémoire" which the French historian Pierre Nora introduced in the mid 1980s, defining it as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community".<sup>31</sup> Even though the application of Nora's concept in African contexts has been highly contested, especially within the milieu of French Africanists,<sup>32</sup> it remains useful for architectural historians. For, as Héléne Lipstadt has argued, it reminds us, first, of the importance of the spatiality of memory, and, second, of

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30 This project was started in 2006. A first phase was funded by the Cultural Department of the Flemish Community.

31 This quote refers to the 1996 English translation of Nora's work, while the concept was initially developed and used in a series of publications in French that appeared from 1984 onwards.

32 See for instance MONIOT, H. 'Faire du Nora sous les tropiques?', in J.P. CHRÉTIEN J.-P. & TRIAUD J.-L. (ed.), *Histoire d'Afrique. Les enjeux de mémoire*. Karthala, Paris, 1999, pp. 13-26.



Fig. 2: Theatre building, Lubumbashi, arch. Yenga, 1953-56, (photograph Johan Lagae, 2005)

the need to address not only the tangible but also the intangible aspects of built form.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the capacity of “lieux de mémoire” to take up new meanings over time – a capacity that for Nora was one of the main elements that made “lieux de mémoire” exciting – is particularly helpful to chart ruptures and continuities from colonial to postcolonial contexts, as the work on Algiers by Zeynep Çelik has so convincingly illustrated.<sup>34</sup>

### **Lubumbashi’s theatre building, a cultural legacy or a postcolonial “lieu de mémoire”?**<sup>35</sup>

The former theatre of the city of Lubumbashi is one of many public buildings in the city that is well preserved and still functions, even if its use has changed over time. It was originally built as part of a larger cultural complex that also encompassed a music school and a museum.<sup>36</sup> The theatre terminates the vista of a wide avenue. The use of symmetri-

33 LIPSTADT, H, ‘Review of Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: the Construction of the French Past*’, in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, nr. 2, 1999, pp. 243-245.

34 ÇELIK Z., ‘Colonial/postcolonial Intersections. Lieux de mémoire in Algiers’, in SARDAR Z. et. al. (ed.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, Continuum, London, 2002, pp. 72-84., pp. 61-72.

35 A more substantial article discussing the history of the building of the theatre and its main actors in the wider context of cultural institutions erected in Congo during the colonial era, is currently being prepared.

36 The museum, currently lead by Donatien MUYA, is one of the most dynamic cultural institutions in the RDC. It housed the several exhibitions organized by the “Mémoires de Lubumbashi”- group and has an extensive collaboration program with the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren. The former music school now houses the local branch of the National Radio and Television broadcasting company.

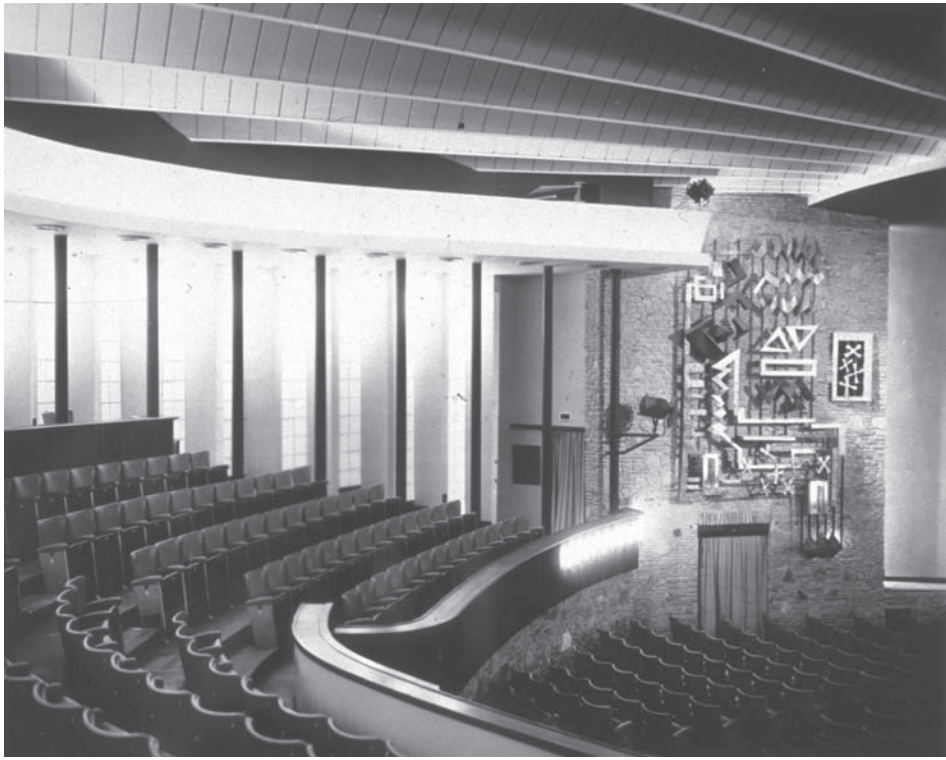


Fig. 3: Original interior view of the theatre building. Archives of Claude Strebelle, Liège (courtesy Claude Strebelle)

cal axially in its volumetric composition serves to give it a monumental presence in this particular urban setting. Well equipped and in tune with up-to-date standards, its concept was innovative. The stage not only opens on to an inner theatre room with over 600 seats, but it also allows for an audience capacity of 2000 people assembled in an open air patio on the back side of the main volume.<sup>37</sup>

The building was designed by Claude Strebelle, who shortly after receiving the commission founded an office of young, locally residing architects, operating under the label *Yenga* (Swahili for "to build").<sup>38</sup> The sculptural design approach, which is even more prominent in the adjacent museum building, a project of *Yenga* dating from 1959-61, testifies to a clear ambition to define a new, contemporary architecture for Africa that could offer an alternative for the orthodox tropical modernism that swept through the conti-

37 A project description by the architects, discussing the program and lay-out appeared in a 1957 issue of the Belgian architectural magazine *Rythme* devoted to architecture in the Congo ('Yenga', *Rythme*, nr. 23, 1957, pp. 14-16).

38 See LAGAE, J. 'Claude Strebelle' / 'Yenga', in A. VAN LOO (ed.), *Dictionnaire de l'architecture en Belgique de 1830 à nos jours*, Mercatorfonds, Anvers, pp. 536-537/p. 604.



Fig. 4: Original interior view of the theatre building. Archives of Claude Strebelle, Liège (courtesy Claude Strebelle)

ment during the 1950s.<sup>39</sup> The decorative program of the theatre building was in tune with this architectural ambition. The interior decoration was executed by local, Congolese sculptors and painters, such as Mwenze Kibwanga, Bela and others who had been trained in the art studio of Pierre-Romain Desfossés and the Art academy of Laurent Moonens.

The building invites evaluation as a structure of significant cultural [importance?] legacy, given the status of its designer within Belgian architectural history and the fact that it immediately received national and international critical acclaim.<sup>40</sup> The same holds true for the inner decoration, which has been studied by both Belgian and Congolese art historians – indeed, the work of the Congolese artists attracted international attention at the time. Some of this art production is included in the prestigious, recently published *Anthologie de l'art africain du XXe siècle*.<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding the quality of the overall mainte-

39 One can think here of the work of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew in West Africa. For Congo, the work of architect Claude Laurens is exemplary of orthodox tropical modernism.

40 Udo KULTERMANN, for instance, briefly mentions it as noteworthy in his seminal 1963 survey *Neues Bauen in Afrika* (Wasmuth Verlag, Tübingen, p. 23).

41 CORNELIS, S., 'Éléments pour une approche historique des arts plastiques Européens et Africains non traditionnels au Congo belge (1940-47) et leur situation dans le contexte culturel de la Colonie', in *Revue des Archéologues et Historiens d'Art de Louvain*, vol. XXXI, 1998, pp. 143-156; CORNELIS, S., 'Naissance d'un académisme', in FALL N. & PIVIN J.-L., *Anthologie de l'art africain du XXe siècle*. Editions Revue Noire, Paris, 2001, pp. 164-167; BADI BANGA NE-MWINE C., *Contribution à l'étude historique de l'art plastique zaïroise moderne*, Editions Malayika, Kinshasa, 1977, pp. 76-89.

nance of the building itself and the survival of most of the inner decoration, the colourful mural frescoes depicting animals that decorated the stairwells have now disappeared behind a coat of white paint.<sup>42</sup> From a heritage perspective, one might raise the question as to whether action should be taken to try and restore these frescoes.

In order to provide an answer to such a question, it is important to re-situate the theatre building in its historical context, as both its form and decoration speak of an underlying colonialist agenda. Built with the financial aid and ideological support of the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga* and the railway enterprise B.C.K, both driving forces of the city's economy and crucial pillars of the Belgian colonial project in the Congo, the initiative for Lubumbashi's theatre building testifies to a deliberate policy of using culture as a strategic tool of colonization. In his inauguration speech the *Commissaire du District* of the time stated unequivocally that "to colonize means to project into space civilization", a statement in which "civilization" stood for cultural expressions coming from the *métropole*.<sup>43</sup> While the choice of having contemporary Congolese artists decorate the interior seems to express a genuine interest in contemporary African culture, it should also be remembered that these artists worked in an artistic milieu that was itself pervaded by the ambivalences of the colonial era, rather than providing a completely free forum for Congolese artistic expression.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the work of the Congolese artists was limited to the interior decoration, while the commission for the main sculpture of the front façade was given to a Belgian artist, Claude Charlier, who had arrived in the Congo in the early 1950s and would become professor at the local art academy in 1956.<sup>45</sup> This difference between in- and outside recalls the hierarchy between "indigenous crafts" and "colonizers' architecture" characteristic of colonial representations at international exhibitions and thus seems in line with the master-servant discourse that underscored colonial cultural politics in Congo, as it did elsewhere.<sup>46</sup>

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42 This could be established during a visit to the building in September 2005, in the context of the *Premières journées du patrimoine*, organized by Hubert Maheux. From contemporary newspaper clippings, collected by Laurent Moonens and now held in the archives of the History Department of the Royal Museum of Central Africa (Tervuren), it could be established that these mural frescoes were executed by Kazardi and Kamba, two young painters of Moonens' atelier.

43 The full quote, in French, reads: "Coloniser, c'est projeter dans l'espace la Civilisation. Ce theatre, désormais, sera un témoignage de la nôtre et apportera – lui aussi – un remède à la stagnation en multipliant des contacts avec la Métropole spirituelle dont nous avons le culte et la nostalgie." HENROTEAUX, 'A Elisabethville. Inauguration du théâtre', *Jeune Afrique*, nr. 24, 1956, pp. 41-42.

44 This milieu edited the art journal *Jeune Afrique*, of which Claude Strebelle was artistic director. On the position of the journal see HALEN, P 1989 : La première revue "Jeune Afrique" ou les ambivalences d'un projet culturel néo-colonial au Congo Belge (1947-1960). In A. VIGH (ed.) 1989 : *L'identité culturelle dans les littératures de la langue française*. Actes du colloque de Pécs 24-28 avril 1989, Paris, 203-216. For a critical Congolese view on this art, termed as a « courant officiel », see NDAYWEL È NZIEM I., *Histoire générale du Congo de l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique*, Duculot, Paris, 1998 (2nd. ed.), pp. 490-492.

45 For a concise biography of Claude Charlier, see 'Claude Charlier, graveur van de Katangese munten', in *Muntinfo. Het magazine van de koninklijke munt van België*, nr. 45, oktober 2007.

46 The growing literature on representation in the context of world and international exhibitions offers particular insights in the cultural politics of various colonial contexts. For a concise analysis of this aspect in 1930s exhibitions with relation to the Congo, see LAGAE J., 'Displaying Authenticity and Progress. Architectural Represent-

When assessing the heritage value of the theatre building, we should thus take into consideration that the theatre building was first and foremost a cultural institution oriented towards a white, mainly Belgian audience, as this forces us to identify for whom this work could have the potential of being (re-)appropriated as a cultural heritage. It is telling in this respect that the first retrospective article ever written on the architecture of the theatre appeared in *Sous les Palmes*, a newsletter edited by the association of the former female students of the *Institut Marie-José*, the school known nowadays as the *Institut Tuen-dele*.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to assess the heritage value of the theatre building, to investigate the ways in which its consecutive re-uses over time have engendered considerable shifts in meaning, not only of the complex itself but also of its urban setting. In fact, immediately after Congo's independence, the theatre building was "politicized", when on July 11th, 1960, the Congolese politician Moïse Tshombe declared the independence of Katanga and installed the Katangese parliament in the theatre, perhaps as it was the only building in the city fit for such a purpose.<sup>48</sup> Depicted on the money bills of the *Banque Nationale du Katanga*, the theatre, however, soon became the symbol of this political event. Even if Katanga's independence was short-lived, national unity being restored in 1963, this symbolic connotation of the theatre reappeared in the early 1970s in a painting from *Histoire du Zaïre*, a series of canvases by the Congolese painter Tshibumba Kanda Matulu that form a striking expression of "memory work". By including the inscription "Le 11 juillet 1961 [sic], le Katanga devient indé[pendant]" Tshibumba explicitly relates the building to this particular episode in Congo's postcolonial history. In his conversation with Johannes Fabian, the scholar who documented and presented an in-depth analysis of this series in his seminal book *Remembering the Present*, the Katangese painter explains the importance of the building as the "house in which Tshombe assumed power... and therefore he put it on a bill of Katanga money".<sup>49</sup>

The theatre thus offers a fine example of a "lieu de mémoire" whose meaning has changed radically from colonial to postcolonial times, speaking differently to former "colonizers" and "colonized". But what makes the building particularly interesting for our discussion of the notion "shared heritage", is that it can be regarded first and foremost as a Katangese, instead of a Congolese "lieu de mémoire". Rather than being the

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tation of the Belgian Congo at international Exhibitions in the 1930s', in SARDAR Z., CUBITT S. & Rasheed A. (ed.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, Continuum, London/New York, 2002, pp. 47-61.

- 47 DORMAL M., 'La fonction crée la forme – le théâtre', article originally published in the early 1990s in *Sous les Palmes*, the journal of the former students of the *Institut Marie-José*, consulted online: <http://users.skynet.be/fa331911/divers/cadrei.htm>. The *Institut Marie-José*, the origin of which goes back to 1912, was founded as the first school for white girls in Lubumbashi. It still functions today.
- 48 DIBWE DIA MWEMBU, D. & KALABA MUTABUSHA, G., 'Lubumbashi: des lieux et des personnes', in DE LAME D. & DIBWE DIA MWEMBU D., *Tout passe*, op. cit., pp. 41-74.
- 49 The depiction should read "le 11 juillet 1960,..." , but then the *Histoire du Zaïre* should not be seen as an accurate survey of Congo's history. Its importance lies, as Fabian argues, in its capacity of presenting a powerful narrative of how the past is remembered via the present. FABIAN, J., *Remembering the Present*. Painting and Popular Culture in Zaire, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996, p. 105.

symbol of a collective national identity – which was in fact the role originally assigned by Nora to a "lieu de mémoire", as he developed the concept to rewrite French national history –, the theatre speaks of an explicit moment in time when Congo's national unity was under serious threat. When Mobutu resumed power and re-installed national unity, he significantly renamed the theatre the "Bâtiment du 30 juin", after the date of Congo's national independence.<sup>50</sup> Given the fact that the theatre nowadays acts as the seat of the *Assemblée Provinciale* led by the charismatic figure Moïse Katumbi Chapwe, and that rumours of a revival of Katanga's claim for more autonomy are currently in the air, one can only wonder about the extent to which the current political situation will affect the building's significance and meaning in the years to come.<sup>51</sup> Addressing the question "whose heritage?" in relation to the theatre building in Lubumbashi, confronts us head on with a complicated set of issues.

### **The Jewish cemetery of Lubumbashi, a virtual "lieu de mémoire" of a formerly cosmopolitan colonial society**

The Jewish cemetery of Lubumbashi, situated next to the industrial zone of the city, on the opposite side of the railway and thus a site quite remote from the city centre, allows for a further critical assessment of the notion "shared heritage". The cemetery is impressive in size and counts several large tombs that testify to the once important position of the Jewish Community in Lubumbashi's urban society.<sup>52</sup> But it also forms a powerful reminder of the cosmopolitan nature of the city's colonial past, a characteristic that invites us to rethink our understanding of Lubumbashi as being just another Belgian colonial city. At first sight, its urban landscape indeed points to the presence of the three main actors of the colonial enterprise: State, Church and Companies, while the insertion of a *zone neutre* or *cordon sanitaire* between the European and African neighbourhoods in the early 1920s translated into spatial terms a colonial order based on the racial segregation that underscored Belgian colonial policy, especially in urban settings.<sup>53</sup>

In reality, however, this apparent colonial, binary structure was much more com-

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50 In his study of the changing denominations of streets and urban squares of Lubumbashi, Michel LWAMBA BILONDA does not point at the particularity of the change of name of the theatre building, even though he does pay attention to Mobutu's effort to erase traces of the Katangese independence struggle (LWAMBA BILONDA M., *Histoire de l'onomastique*, op. cit., pp. 51-52 & 64).

51 The *Assemblée Provinciale* was installed in the theatre on December 18th, 2006. On Katumbi's growing reputation, see KABWE, W., 'Congo-Kinshasa: Katumbi l'exemple', *Le Potentiel*, December 5th 2007, consulted online on <http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/200712050365.html>.

52 On the history of the Jewish community in Congo, see the popularizing book by RAHMANI, M., *Shalom Bwana. La saga des Juifs du Congo*, Romillat, Paris, 2002. For the specific situation in Katanga, see BOURLA ERRERA, M., Moïse Levy. *Un Rabbin au Congo (1937-1991)*, La Longue Vie, Brussels, 2000. A concise historical analysis of the Jewish presence within the city is presented in ESGAIN N., *La vie quotidienne à Elisabethville (1912-1932): émergence d'une culture urbaine*, unpublished master's thesis, History Department, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1997. For a in-depth historical analysis of the Jewish community along the railroad from Cape town, with focus on Zambia and some information on Congo, see MACMILLAN H. & SHAPIRO F., *Zion in Africa: the Jews of Zambia*, I.B. Taurus, London, 1999.

53 On the aspect of racial segregation in the Belgian colonial context, a most useful study remains BRAUSCH G., *Belgian Administration in the Congo*, Institute of Race Relations, Oxford, 1961.



Fig. 5: Jewish cemetery, Lubumbashi (photograph Johan Lagae, 2006)

plex. Because of its particular geographical location, situated on the crossroads of Central and Southern Africa, Lubumbashi was a cosmopolitan urban enclave, in terms of both the European and the African population.<sup>54</sup> Rather than being connected directly to the rest of Congo, let alone, Kinshasa, the city was linked from 1910 onwards – the year of the city’s foundation – to the outside world via a railroad coming up from Cape Town in South Africa via Bulawayo, a location in what is nowadays Zimbabwe.<sup>55</sup> Lubumbashi’s urban culture thus was highly influenced by immigration from *l’Afrique australe*, while the large colonial enterprises operating in the city recruited their African labour from further afield. On top of this cosmopolitan aspect, social differences cut across Lubumbashi’s urban society and structured relationships within as well as between the white and black urban communities.

This heterogeneity was translated both in spatial terms and in the built fabric of the

54 For a late 1940s survey of Lubumbashi’s population, see MINISTÈRE DES COLONIES, *Urbanisme au Congo belge*, Bruxelles, [1950]. During the 1950s the Institut Royal Colonial Belge would publish several demographic studies. For a more recent survey, see BRUNEAU, J.L. & PAIN, M., *Atlas de Lubumbashi*, Université Paris X, Nanterre, 1990.

55 It should be added that from very early on another railroad ran via Bulawayo towards Beira, located on Africa’s East coast.



urban landscape, demonstrating the extent to which Lubumbashi's urban space was a contested rather than a shared territory. The various groups within the white community of Lubumbashi seem to have been concentrated in specific areas. Italian, Greeks and Portuguese traders, sometimes referred to as "second rate whites", for instance, were located in those areas of the *ville européenne* nearest to the *cit *, as well as in a particular neighbourhood called Bakoa, outside its boundaries.<sup>56</sup> The first urban plans of the *cit * Albert I, nowadays *Commune Kamalondo*, show a similar social stratification being projected onto an isotropic spatial grid, with "Noirs civilises" and "Hindus" being situated in those areas closest to the road that linked the *cit * to the European town.<sup>57</sup>

By erecting distinctive buildings on select locations within Lubumbashi's *ville europ enne*, the various European communities sought to affirm their identity clearly in the urban landscape. The palace of justice, the town hall, the gentlemen's club, the cathedral and the governor's residence, all situated along a main boulevard of the grid that crosses the *Place Royale*, the so-called *Avenue de Tabora*, marked the Belgian presence.<sup>58</sup> Italians built a consulate that by its building mass and stylistic treatment clearly stands out in the street. At almost exactly the same time, the Protestant missionaries erected a Methodist Church in neo-gothic style, while in 1956 the Greek community, who already possessed a clubhouse, inaugurated their orthodox church.

The important Jewish community in Lubumbashi had a synagogue built in 1929. Its particular location, situated on the extremity of the boulevard that symbolically represented the Belgian presence in the city – the synagogue 'mirrors' the cathedral on the *Avenue de Tabora*-, raises intriguing questions concerning the social position of the Jewish community vis- -vis the colonial establishment, especially considering the important demographic shifts that occurred around the time of its construction.<sup>59</sup> From an architectural point of view, it is one of the most remarkable buildings in the city. Designed by the prominent colonial architect Raymond Cloquet, it forms one of the first examples of the

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56 Currently research is being conducted in the *Archives du cadastre* (Office of Land Registry), conserved both in Belgium and in Lubumbashi, in order to map a social geography of Lubumbashi in the early colonial period. For first results on a preliminary study on Bakoa, see SONGASONGA S., 'Les archives du cadastre comme source de l'histoire : le cas du quartier Bakoa   Lubumbashi', unpublished paper presented at the International Workshop 'Sights, sites and spaces', University of Kinshasa, September 2007.

57 See Africa Archives, Brussels, file 3 DG 15.953, 'Cit  indig ne Elisabethville avec plans/cartes et photos'. An article discussing the development of Lubumbashi's urban structure and the changing boundaries between the « European town » and « native towns » is in preparation.

58 The name *Avenue de Tabora* already points at the 'Belgian symbolism' of this urban axis, as it refers to the famous victory of the Belgian colonial army over the Germans in East Africa in 1916, an episode that played an important role at the time in an effort of nation building, see DELPIERRE, G., 'Tabora 1916: de la symbolique d'une victoire', in *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine*, vol. 22, 2002, pp. 351-381.

59 Already in 1911 a *Congr gation Isra lite* was founded in Lubumbashi, counting mainly Jews from South Africa among its members. In the late 1920s and 30s many of these would leave because of economic hardship, only to be replaced by the expanding immigration from mainly South-European Jews. This also induced a shift from a community with a primarily Ashkenazi background to one almost exclusively constituted of Sephardic Jews. See a.o. BENATAR J. & PIMIENIA-BENATAR M., *De Rhodes   Elisabethville: l'odyss e d'une communaut  Sephardic*, Ed. SIIAC, Paris, 2000.



Fig. 6: Synagogue, Lubumbashi, arch. Raymond Cloquet, 1929 (photograph Johan Lagae, 2005)

introduction of modern brick architecture in the colony.<sup>60</sup> According to criteria common in the French practice of *patrimoine*, one could easily claim it to be a building of "national interest".

A once proud landmark indicating the important Jewish presence in the Congo, the synagogue has now stood vacant for decades, the Jewish community having declined to numbers too small to support a synagogue of such size.<sup>61</sup> Strikingly, the building has never been re-appropriated. It still belongs to the small remaining Jewish community who secures its maintenance. This ongoing effort to hold on to the synagogue points to the value it still represents for the former and current members of Lubumbashi's Jewish community. It is the Jewish cemetery, however, that has become the privileged object of an explicit act of re-claiming a site as "heritage". A couple of years ago, the whole area was cleaned up and a website on the cemetery was posted on the internet by Moïse Rahmani, who also authored a popularizing book on the history of the Jewish community in Congo, based largely on oral history.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, by documenting the individual tombs through photographs and name indexes, the website invites people to add personal information (textual or visual) with relation to family members buried there. In such a way, the website turns this particular site at the outskirts of Lubumbashi into a virtual "lieu de mémoire".<sup>63</sup> The example indicates the extent to which a physical site can actually be re-appropriated from a distance by those who no longer live in the city. In that sense, it is not a heritage "shared" by former "colonizers" and "colonized", but a legacy that speaks to a very particular group that in fact surpasses the confines of Lubumbashi's former urban society. The website indeed turns the cemetery into a heritage site that addresses the worldwide Jewish diaspora.

### In conclusion

By discussing the theatre building and the Jewish cemetery, this paper shows how investing meaning and adhering value to physical remnants of the colonial era is intrinsically linked to issues of identity and belonging. While it is important to understand the historical context in which such sites are rooted in order to assess their potential heritage value, this paper argues that it is of equal importance to take into serious consideration the "memory work" that is invested in them. Many other examples of Lubumbashi's built

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60 On Cloquet's importance for colonial architecture, see Johan LAGAE, 'Raymond Cloquet', in A. VAN LOO (ed.), *Dictionnaire de l'architecture en Belgique de 1830 à nos jours*, Mercatorfonds, Anvers, pp. 212-213.

61 To make a synagogue operational, the Jewish community should count a minimum of 12 adult men.

62 [Http://www.sefarad.org/diaspora/congo/cimetiere](http://www.sefarad.org/diaspora/congo/cimetiere); RAHMANI M., *Shalom Bwana. La saga des Juifs du Congo*, op. cit. In this context, it can be mentioned that several other white communities with historical ties to Congo's colonial past (Greek, Italian, Scandinavian) have started to document their histories and memories in recent years.

63 This website is not unique in reclaiming physical sites in Lubumbashi as "virtual lieux de mémoire". An equally telling example is Masomo. *Le site des anciens élèves du Katanga* (<http://www.masomo.be/valves.htm>), that is organized along the former students communities of schools such as the *Institut Marie-José*, the *Collège Saint-François de Sales* or the *Athénée Royale* in Lubumbashi. While acting first and foremost as a forum for exchange and encounter mainly, but not exclusively, oriented towards members of Lubumbashi's former Belgian community, the site does offer interesting information and iconographic documentation on the school buildings, although it is not compiled with scientific rigour.

legacy could of course be given to make that claim. One can think for instance of what is probably the most important “lieu de mémoire” in Lubumbashi, the urban silhouette formed by the terril and chimney of the *Gécamines*, or the *Union Minière du Haut Katanga* as it was called in colonial times. The extensive research of the “Mémoires de Lubumbashi”-group as well as the recent photographic projects of Sammy Baloji offer us fundamental insights into the way in which this particular urban site, once an icon of colonial propaganda, is still relevant to contemporary *Lushois*, albeit in often very different ways.<sup>64</sup> This also became clear during the first heritage days in Lubumbashi in 2005, when the dramatic changes that the silhouette had undergone, thanks to the re-exploitation of the former mining dump, became the subject of heated discussion.

By choosing sites that are not only lesser known, but that also act as “lieux de mémoire” for different communities that coexist but do not necessarily interact, this paper aims first and foremost at breaking up some of the implicit assumptions embedded in the concept of “patrimoine partagé” or “shared heritage”. It challenges in particular its underlying binary construction as a heritage shared by homogenized communities of former “colonizers” and “colonized”. What is needed to overcome such assumptions, it is suggested here, is a return to that crucial and often unsettling question “Whose heritage?”

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64 See for instance DIBWE DIA MWEMBU, D. & JEWSIEWICKI, B., *Le travail hier et aujourd’hui. Mémoires de Lubumbashi*. L’Harmattan, Paris, 2004. For the work of Sammy Baloji, see a.o. TURINE Roger Pierre, *Les arts du Congo d’hier à nos jours*, La Renaissance du Livre, 2007, pp. 140–145.