

# **Architectural Culture in Translation: Post-war Cities and African Villages**

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## **Abstract**

By the end of World War II, much of Europe and several other regions worldwide were devastated. The war had killed 35 million people, while sustained aerial bombardment had badly damaged several major cities, among them Berlin, Dresden and Kassel, in Germany; London, in Britain; Warsaw, in Poland; Rotterdam, in the Netherlands; Tokyo, Nagasaki and Osaka, in Japan.

After the conflict, geopolitical insecurity and human unsettlement guided the mobilization of urban planning and architectural design. In the moment of extreme urgency because of houses shortages, mass reconstruction and planning programs rebuilt and transformed previously devastated urban regions. However, a crescent discontent emerged among CIAM members who lacked confidence in old institutions based on pre-war ideologies. The intense desire for stability developed in the architectural discipline into the search for a new kind of society, the questioning of modern culture and the critique of the CIAM's Charter of Athens.

The essay examines the new interest on traditional African architecture that flourished in this period (1940s - early 1970s) as argument of discussion in the work of groups, institutions, and associations in charge of the reconstruction. The article describes the connections and exchanges between developed and underdeveloped countries – especially the African ones. It questions why these bodies focused on the connection between communities and habitat in the African village and how they addressed the relation between communities and neighbors in the sub-Saharan regions.