

RWANDA – AN AFRICAN WAY

Architecture in Light of the Dawn

Symposium on June 16, 2009, SiemensForum Munich

spacial
solutions



Clare Akamanzi, *trade lawyer*
Deputy CEO in charge of Business Operations and Services, Rwanda Development Board, Kigali

Intercontinental Networking and Cooperation

Creating a future in Rwanda – the role of Foreign Direct Investment

The importance for global interdependence continues to manifest itself in several aspects as countries deliberately or inadvertently interact with the rest of the world. Rwanda is no exception. Having arisen from one of the most catastrophic horrors in the 1994 genocide, Rwanda has rebuilt itself and won the confidence of the world, as it has demonstrated the possibilities of accelerated growth even from such a terrible past.

With a 7.8% average economic growth, Rwanda continues to be an attractive place to do business. Foreign Direct Investment is particularly sought after to complement economic activities in the country. Rwanda recognises and seeks after foreign investors to bring capital, technology know how and create jobs for Rwandans.

Existing International and regional companies such as South Africa's MTN, Luxemburg's Tiggo, America's Contour Global have already demonstrated that foreign investments can significantly contribute to economic development. The extent, scope and suitable environment to optimise this impact will continue to be interest for further reflection, as this presentation will attempt to cover.

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Prof Roland Dieterle, graduate engineer, architect
Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences,
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An African Way Architecture in Light of the Dawn

The initiative for the projects presented in the exhibition and the symposium was taken by the country itself. In the Kigali Convention Complex and the Kivu Lake Resort and Business Hotel projects Rwanda presents itself as a self-determined and self-confident entity – Rwanda is a client, not an applicant. The projects are to be understood as a statement: To gradually and actively engage in “business relations”, instead of “aid relations”, with “donor” countries. The mere commitment of an international hotel chain to operate hotels in the region is perceived internationally as a breakthrough.

Much more is expected of us, the consultants, than erecting functional enclosures. We received the task to realise icons that stand as a symbol for the own identity as much as for the integration into the international world – landmarks that are of course functional, affordable and economically viable. In this respect Europe is seen as a role model for perfection, quality and reliability, while the up-and-coming regions of Asia and the Middle East are clearly seen as sources of dynamism, richness of imagery, experimentation as well as efficiency.

An important theme is also that of combining the necessary frugality of means with a richness of aesthetics – a visual richness that develops naturally, without the need for contrived originality – images that convey their interrelation with the location, but are also free enough to be appreciated from an independent, modern and international perspective. There is yet another expectation: a luxurious flair to be visible as a symbol of advancement. The client and the design team, however, considered this to be an opportunity to emphasise Rwanda’s role as a pioneer in the region in terms of developing a better understanding of life and economic activity based on the principles of holistic sustainability.

With this in mind the experiment and the challenge to the architects was to create images that do not only reflect the African roots, but in particular the rich, but partially hidden culture of Rwanda, to communicate these in an understandable way and to create acceptance thereof. In the speech it is explained how memorable images, in the truest sense, and “natural” project solutions have been developed, identified based on the found structures – ranging in scale from the urban planning level to the detail of the furnishings.

It is shown how it is possible, at least in this case, for an explicitly wished for foreign partner to contribute to a self-determined future vision – at eye level – providing services instead of charity or missions. If the country and the region are understood more thoroughly and perceived in a more differentiated light through these projects and the reports about it, then from the point of view of the client this already makes a considerable difference.

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Prof Thomas Hundt, graduate engineer, architect
Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences,
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Rwanda Museum

Concept for an innovative State Museum

Two trains of thought to address the question: why does a time-honoured institution like a cultural-historical museum come into existence amid the new “Convention Center Complex” in Kigali?

1. The construction of a building is an act of manifestation. The structural shape of the Convention Center creates a sense of identity – the dome emblemizes the emerging country. The functions of the individual building parts point to a modern service enterprise-enabling event, congress, hospitality and business. The museum however, represents the soul of the constructional agglomeration – a scene of history dedicated to storytelling.

For a country like Rwanda – with a worth telling and instructive history, forward looking and actively shaping its future – the spatial manifestation of cultural heritage in form of a museum is the opportunity to encounter her own utopia.

2. The philosopher Hermann Lübke wrote in his book “Der Fortschritt und das Museum (Progress and the Museum)” ‘progressive musealization makes us compensate the incriminatory experiences of a fading cultural intimacy caused by the tempo of change’.

Hence, he interconnects the retrospective notions of collecting and conserving performed by a museum to the future oriented disclosure of knowledge and research. For Rwandans and foreigners alike – thus, for the target group of the museum – the numerous exhibits and contents will appear extraneous and familiar at the same time. No other medium makes the tension between identity and alterity (Korff) more experienceable than a museum.

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Andrea Jeska, freelance journalist, Lübeck

Rwanda Rising

Land of Thousand Hills between Future and the Past

Over the past 15 years, Rwanda, land of thousand hills, has gone through a phase of unparalleled transition: it has risen from the human and civil debris of genocide to a role model for Africa. Though natural resources are scarce and the country has no vital role in the world economy, Rwanda aims to develop into “Rwanda Enterprise” based on Agenda 2010 – a service hub for East Africa based on the example set by Dubai and Singapore.

Rwanda’s government has been making great efforts in creating an international network and attracting international investors. President Paul Kagame creates opportunities in the IT, tourism, telecommunications, real estate and banking industries not only for big enterprises, but also for small and medium-sized companies. His motto: Rwanda needs investment rather than development aid.

For German companies this approach is a great opportunity to participate in Rwanda’s peaceful future. Starting from scratch in July 1994, Kagame has laid the foundation for reconstruction, however the real construction has yet to take place.

For centuries, the Western world has misused Africa for its own purpose, has destroyed landscapes, rites, traditions, yes, even the soul of Africa’s people. Today, Rwanda is at eye level with investors in Africa. Construction and business, investment and entrepreneurship need to be integrated into the country and should aim to meet the needs of its people. This is also the approach taken by Spacial Solutions. Professor Dieterle’s landmark buildings respect the African way of life and embrace tradition, nature and environment.

Rwanda has, after it buried the dead, devoted itself to the future. If the new aims are well used and if - with the help of Western countries – Rwanda has a prosperous future, this future will heal the past.

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Prof Dr Dieter König, geographer
Department of Geography, Institute for Integrated Sciences, University of Koblenz

Towards Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Rwanda

Rwanda is one of the biodiversity “hot spots” in Africa. With the Nyungwe Forest, Rwanda owns the largest cloud forests of East Africa with a large number of endemic species which can only be found in Rwanda - or only here and in the neighbouring countries. At the same time, the pressure on natural resources is extremely high in a country with more than 400 inhabitants/sq km almost 90 percent of whom live from subsistence farming.

In this situation, the conservation of natural resources – the unique biodiversity and ecological functions of the cloud forests and savannahs as well as soil fertility – cannot be achieved by a set-aside policy alone. In order to preserve biological diversity and agricultural resources, it is essential to develop sustainable land use methods and to spread them amongst the rural population.

The presentation will start with a demonstration of the extraordinary biodiversity, landscape diversity and beauty of Rwanda. Then the focus will be on the over-exploitation of natural resources and the resulting degradation processes, followed by possible solutions: Sustainable land use systems, which imitate the structure of natural rain forests by a multi-storey cultivation of crops and trees and thus allow increasing productivity and avoiding further degradation of soil and water resources. Based on more than twenty years of research in Rwanda and on the experience gained with the implementation of the results in smallholder’s agriculture, the possibilities and limits of a transformation of the Rwandan landscape towards a sustainable use of natural resources will be identified.

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Axel Steinberger graduate engineer, architect
Associate and Managing Director Atelier Integral Ruedi Baur Zürich

A Visual Language for Rwanda

In our work for Rwanda we have started the search for a unique form of expression for the culture of the country. This involvement with Rwanda represents a continuing process of discovering new ways and forms for visually portraying its history, its current development and its visions for the future. In a process reminiscent of laboratory work, we distil a visual language that reflects on one side the modernity, aims and aspirations of Rwanda, while at the same time referencing the culture and history of the country as its basic aesthetic principles.

The starting point for us therefore is the interpretation of this unique cultural landscape of Rwanda. Its inherent traces and patterns make itself readable as an abstract manifestation of the culture and society. The most striking distinguishing features come from the unique topography and network of paths. These linear “veins” cover large portions of the country, dividing, connecting and structuring the countryside, giving it its characteristic look. The “Culture of Paths” in Rwanda therefore forms one of the most important building blocks in the creation of a visual language. Building upon this, we try to develop a flexible set of form-giving principles that can be applied in various forms and at differing scales for both 2- and 3-dimensional uses. In part these principles have already acted as influencing factors on the architecture, the interior design and the landscaping. These are also to be integrated as overriding principle into the aesthetic of the museum and the exhibition graphic.

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Prof Dr Rainer Tetzlaff, *political scientist emeritus*
University of Hamburg, Wisdom Professor of African Development Studies, Jacobs
University Bremen

Rwanda – Perspectives for the 21st century

Rwanda – is known as „the land of a thousand hills“, a country of magic beauty tucked away in the heart of Africa. It is often compared with Switzerland – Rwanda a tropical version of Switzerland, with her breath-taking views and crystal-clear lakes.

Since the early years of this new century the Government of Rwanda finished the transition period, adopted a new constitution and undertook a number of reforms to expand the collection and management of taxes. Sectoral strategies for education and health were implemented. President Paul Kagame took a tough stand on the fight against corruption. Given the costly processes of reconciliation and justice, it is justifiable that the present government of Rwanda tries to diversify, decentralize and privatise the national economy.

Despite great efforts to rebuild the collapsed economy after the war, there are still many difficulties and challenges for the people of Rwanda. The population density on arable land is high, even if urbanisation has slightly reduced population density in rural areas. About 90% of the population are economically engaged in agriculture, besides coffee, tea and banana plantations, mainly in subsistence farming. Young Rwandans are in urgent need of employment opportunities. The government in Kigali has emphasised the necessity to improve productivity and reduce poverty through economic growth. With the assistance of the international donor community Rwanda hopes to halve poverty by 2015. It requires resources far beyond Rwanda's own.

At the same time it is quite remarkable that the government tries to reduce Rwanda's foreign aid dependency and to open up new paths for economic growth and income generation activities for the many unemployed people.

“Africa is poor, but potentially rich: rich in terms of its natural resources, and rich in terms of the latent entrepreneurship and remarkable resilience of its people. Obstacles facing Africa include an inappropriate business environment, infrastructure, barriers to competition, customs procedures and taxation, bureaucratic red tape and image issues. Together we can remove the obstacles that stand in the path to Africa's prosperity” – said Ex-President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mpaka, now Vice President of the “Investment Climate Facility for Africa” (ICF) recently. Rwanda belongs to the few African countries that participate in a process of social and economic change which gives hope for acceleration of economic growth and faster human development. Is Central Africa at a “turning point”?

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Univ-Prof Sophie Wolfrum, graduate engineer, architect
Chair for Regional Planning and Urban Development, Faculty of Architecture, Technical University of Munich

A Masterplan for KIST – Kigali Institute of Science and Technology Establishment of a Faculty of Architecture in Rwanda

Master plan KIST

The Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) signed a memorandum of understanding on the 2nd of February 2009. As requested by the Rwandese Ministry of Education, the Faculty of Architecture will provide technical and personnel assistance during the development of an architectural faculty at KIST.

As part of the cooperation with KIST, in the summer semester of 2009 and winter semester of 2009/2010 an urban planning project will be carried out at my department (Urban and Regional Planning) in cooperation with Professor Gerhard Hausladen's Department for Building Climate Control and M & E Engineering. The development of a master plan for the approximately 25 ha campus of KIST, centrally located in Kigali, is a real and very urgent project.

In the first week of June a workshop in Kigali is focussing on the following aims and subject matters:

- Discussion and evaluation of the program, spatial structuring and strategy for the preparation of a master plan with representatives of KIST.
- Acquisition and deepening of knowledge of the urban space in Kigali.
- Analytical investigation of the city in the light of specific historical, social, cultural, topographical, technological, ecological and in particular climatic aspects.
- At the same time the students at KIST will be introduced to the various fields of architecture. The first group of students have just taken up their studies. This cooperation is designed to establish a working partnership between the students of TUM and those of KIST in small groups.

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