Speaking, Gesturing, Drawing, Building: Relational Techniques of a Kreyòl Architecture

by

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> Entre los labios y la voz, algo se va muriendo.
> Algo con alas de pájaro, algo de angustia y de olvido.

[Between the lips and the voice, something goes dying.
Something with the wings of a bird, something of anguish and oblivion

Last, but not at all least, I thank my friends and family. L & Christina Nichols-Chestnut, Peter Adams, and Dan McAnulty have been with me in good and bad times, equally prepared to wonder at the world and call "bullshit." I wish that my brother Alexis were still here wondering with us, but he left me with the gift of his incessant "I have a question" which has proved to be a most potent research tool. The love and support of our parents Elsa and Jerry Brisson is the foundation of my curiosity. Finally, this research brought me to Léogâne where I found much more than I was looking for. I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Ricardo JN Baptiste and to the home we are building.

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List of Abbreviations

AfH	Architecture for Humanity
AIAH	Association des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtiens [Association of Haitian Engineers and Architects]
ARC	American Red Cross
CIAT	Comité Interministériel d'Aménagement du Territoire [Interdepartmental Committee for Territorial Planning]
CNIAH	Collège national des Ingénieurs et Architectes haïtiens [National College of Haitian Engineers and Architects]
CRUT	Centre de recherches urbaines-travaux
HfH	Habitat for Humanity [Habitat Pour l'Humanité]
IHSI	L'Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (Haitian Institute of Statistics and Informatics)
ISPAN	Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National
MTPTC	Ministère des Travaux Publics, Transports et Communication (Ministry of Public Works, Transportation, and Communication)
NGO (INGO)	(international) Non-Governmental Organization
UCLBP	Unité de Construction de Logements et de Bâtiments
UEH	Université d'État d'Haïti [State University of Haiti]
UIA	Union internationale des Architectes [International Union of Architects]
UniQ	Université Quisqueya

Notes on Language

This dissertation draws on written and oral sources in French, Haitian Kreyòl [Creole], and English. I have endeavored to accurately represent material in its source language, but a few complicating factors lead to ambiguity. Despite movement toward codified spellings, one continues to find variations in written Kreyòl which I have replicated when quoting from written material. Otherwise, the Kreyòl words in this dissertation are spelled in accordance with Valdman and Iskrova's *Haitian Creole-English Bilingual Dictionary* with the exception of the place name, Leyogann, which phonetically calls for this spelling "an+n" (and not Leyogan as given in Valdman). The final complication is that bilingual speakers in Haiti do not just switch from one language to another, but as linguistic anthropologist Alison Joerz has noted may be using a form of bivalency drawing on French and Kreyòl simultaneously.[1] Having learned Kreyòl first and only studying written French after the fact it was difficult for me to track such instances and default to Kreyòl in transcription. Theoretically, I also draw on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa to understand the multiple languages and variations of languages that exist in speech and writing within the borderlands where multiple cultures, races, classes encounter each other.

Within each chapter I have elected to use French, Kreyòl, or English orthography to write place names based on the dominant language of the material under consideration, with an exception for the country name. I use the English spelling of Haiti throughout for clarity within an English-language document.

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[1] Joersz, "What's Wrong with Haiti?," xii–xx.

Haitian Kreyòl	**French**	**English**
Ayiti	Haïti	Haiti
Dabòn	Darbonne	Darbon
Leyogann	Léogâne	Leogane
Jakmèl	Jacmel	Jacmel
Pòtoprens	Port-au-Prince	Port-au-Prince
Okap	Cap Haïtien	Cap Haitien

Grammatically, Kreyòl uses independent modifiers to indicate number and tense. For example:

kay + la = a house	nou konstwi = we build
kay + yo = houses	nou te konstwi = we built

Where I use Kreyòl words (nouns) without translation to describe specific concepts or types I have chosen to omit the modifier and trust the reader will be able to understand if it is singular or plural from context.

Unless otherwise indicated all translations are my own.

Note on Confidentiality

Throughout the dissertation I write about experiences and conversations with interlocuters of diverse backgrounds. I have used pseudonyms to refer to the majority of these individuals, but I have made exceptions for those who have published material which I draw on here as another form of evidence and relevant scholarship as well as for individuals involved in national politics or otherwise publicly recognizable. I have broken with ethnographic convention to name organizations, particularly the foreign non-governmental organizations involved in post-disaster housing construction in Leyogann. In the case of Vilaj Abita in Chapter 5, the place is unavoidably recognizable to anyone familiar with the area and the fact that the settlement (Abita) is eponymous with the organization (Habitat for Humanity) means that a pseudonym would be futile.

Abstract

The vernaculars and creoles—architectural and linguistic—used to produce most of the global built environment continue to be delegitimized as ways of knowing, building, and inhabiting. This dissertation recuperates these voices in an ethnohistorical examination of building practices in Leyogann, Haiti in the 2010s. Shared mediums of communication provide an inclusive lens through which to analyze the design practices of architects, builders or bòsmason, and residents. I ask how such diverse actors communicate design ideas within and across social hierarchies. While using media in common, the enunciation of design ideas via hand drawn plans or digitally drafted drawings, via French or Kreyòl, via justifications of normativity or aesthetic quality correlates with the class position and training of architects, bòsmason, clients, and self-builders. Communication is relational and mediated, in this case, by speech, gesture, drawing, and building; therefore, it manifests differentials of power often marked by nationality, language, gender, and race. I theorize Kreyòl architecture as a process of on-going creolization that encompasses difference and contradiction to produce a more inclusive narrative of building culture.

Architecture in Haiti, often figured as absent or scarce by international observers, has a long history of indigenous, colonial, postcolonial, modern, and neoliberal building practices informed by social and political phenomena. I begin to fill this lacuna without replicating historic forms of exclusion by considering, at once, the house building practices of university-educated architects, of contractors with vocational and jobsite training, and of self-building homeowners. This dissertation draws on fieldnotes from ethnographic observation, audio recordings,

interviews, reports, photographs, online media, text exchanges, and documents from libraries and personal papers to interrogate how people produce residential architecture in western Haiti. I situate my study in Leyogann, a city peripheral to the capital of Port-au-Prince but at the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake to destabilize preconceived narratives of architecture as restricted to a cosmopolitan elite.

The analysis of quotidian building practices reveals a more fluid field of relational and contingent design practices than those codified by the discipline of architecture. Haitian architects, like their international colleagues, face contradictions between professional ideals of serving the public good and daily practices occupied with instrumental drawing and coordination. They experiment with different forms of communicating their value and expertise to clients but serve a minority. In turn, bòsmason become designers in practice as they build houses for clients designing in-situ as they resolve client imaginaries with project constraints. Misalignments in design intentions and expectations arise when actors communicate in disparate registers marked by their social positions. The negative outcomes of such miscommunication are demonstrated in the design and redesign of post-disaster housing. Intentional or not, design imbues symbolic meanings in houses communicating both belonging and exclusion. At its best Kreyòl architecture describes the liberatory function of home as people are related through complex topographies of land, history, politics, and ancestry.

This dissertation elides typical categorizations of style or pedigree and to legitimate the design practices of people historically excluded from, or marginalized within, the discipline of architecture. Understanding how architects, engineers, contractors, and residents in Leyogann conceive of houses and how they communicate their priorities elucidates the fraught relationships in design and construction. Apprehension of creolized bodies of knowledge and

design strategies also establishes a base from which a safe, joyful, and dignified built environment can be imagined.

Introduction

Opening: A Disaster Foretold

> "[Il] faut cesser de construire notre vulnérabilité"
> (We must stop building our vulnerability).
> —*Claude Prépetit*

In October 2009, engineer and geologist Claude Prépetit warned a gathering of government officials and engineers—as he has throughout his career—that Haiti was at great risk of a disaster in case of a large earthquake.[2] Numerous fault lines crisscross the country and the last major earthquake had been in 1842.[3] Energy accumulated in these fault lines threatened dense areas of low-quality construction around Pòtoprens which were built in liquefaction zones where the ground would roll in an earthquake and put houses and building at risk of collapse. In December 2009 he repeated his warning for the French-reading public in an interview with Le Nouvelliste, the national newspaper.[4] On the afternoon of the twelfth of January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck. It devastated Leyogann and Pòtoprens killing an estimated 250,000 people and displacing at least 1.5 million Haitians from their homes. Buildings from meager self-built shelters to the neoclassical National Palace collapsed. The chronological proximity between Prépetit's public warnings and the event underscores the tragic gap between technical knowledge and its implementation in the built environment. The historical consequences and present risks of

[2] Prépetit, "Cesser de Construire Notre Vulnérabilité."
[3] Disastrous earthquakes were also reported in 1701 and 1781.
[4] Clitandre, "Vivons-nous sur une poudrière?"

seismic activity in both the north and west of the country were known by historians, engineers, and architects, alike.

Ten years after the earthquake, building regulation continues to be inadequate. Engineers and architects, including Prépetit, concur that a similar earthquake today would cause equivalent or even greater damage.[5] The dysfunctions of the government certainly contribute to the weakness of regulations in both decree and execution. Persistent and increasing economic poverty also puts quality building materials out of reach for many Haitians. These are impediments that are difficult to address directly via architecture. Nonetheless, it is important we ask: what is the role of architects within this landscape? Why hasn't professional expertise had more of an impact on policy, implementation, or common building practice? Seismic resistance is just one—albeit a devastatingly critical—aspect of building design, but it serves to expose the stakes of a disconnect between professional knowledge and common practice. A disconnect which is profound in Haiti but international in scope.

The dramatic structural failures of steel and concrete on January twelfth provoked a large international response. The response included teams of local and foreign engineers who surveyed and evaluated the damage to structures. They translated cracks, fissures, twisted columns into spray painted icons that indicated whether a building was safe to inhabit, could be remediated, or was damaged beyond repair. These surveys could diagnose building failure but could not treat the underlying conditions of vulnerability. Reconstruction initiatives like the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission co-chaired by then Haitian prime minister, Jean Max Bellerive, and the former president of the US, Bill Clinton, highlighted the need to "build back better" through international competitions and commissions.[6] Training programs proliferated to instruct Haitian

[5] Charles, "Haiti's 2010 Earthquake Killed Hundreds of Thousands. The next One Could Be Worse."
[6] For a critical overview of the persistence of this slogan see, Katz, "Build a Better Slogan."

builders in principles of seismic constructions. Certainly, there was and continues to be a need for training in the extremely diffuse construction sector, but Haitian architects and engineers like Prépetit—many trained in the very same North American and European schools as international consultants—have been at work in the country throughout the twentieth century. A culturally imperial project of importing "Western" architecture, as if it were absent, will not address the failures in the built environment that produced the disaster of *douz janvye* [January twelfth]. To move towards equitable and resilient architectures for all, including the most vulnerable, it is critical to understand how architecture is practiced in Haiti today and to be broadly inclusive of multiple kinds of designers and builders. This attention is necessary to identify strengths in those architectural practices which are working—building well.

In this dissertation I ask, how do people communicate design ideas to themselves and others? To answer this, I center the processes by which people design buildings to circumvent problematic dichotomies of knowledge and style (modern and vernacular, architect and builder, west and other). I argue that such oppositions have obscured the ubiquitous and interdependent nature of design as acts of communication facilitating the production of the built environment. I have learned through ethnographic research that people describe buildings to each other using techniques like references to existing works, floor plans or blueprints, illustrations, verbal descriptions, physical mock-ups, etc. Architects, engineers, contractors, clients, and storytellers alike use assemblages of such techniques, though depending on their training and identity they may privilege certain communicative techniques over others. A client might download an image from the internet; an architect may draw a sketch; a bòsmason [masonry contractor] could refer to a prior built project. What they have in common is that they are engaged in relational processes of design through communication. This dissertation is a concrete inquiry into the

techniques of communication used to imagine and execute architecture in Haiti, including those named in the title: speaking, gesturing, drawing, and building. In it I argue for the centrality of communication in architecture and consider the Haitian Kreyòl language as both medium and analogue.

I name speaking, gesturing, drawing, and building as examples of relational techniques to emphasize that architecture comes into being only through exchange and interaction. The communication of ideas, dreams, forms, and materials relies on speaking and hearing, gesturing and perceiving, drawing and seeing, building and inhabiting. In Haiti, these communication techniques are distinctly creolized. They mediate relations of being *youn ak lòt* [one with the other] an interconnectedness which is key to understanding place in the Caribbean. Writer and cultural theorist, Édouard Glissant wrote about creolization as being a form of complex mixing characterized by its processes and not the contents or sources on which those processes act.[7] Creolization brings content into relation in particular places and "relation is only universal through the absolute and specific quantity of its particularities."[8] Relational techniques of design then are methods of making predicated on the connections between specific people. Relational techniques may be open and unfixed processes, but they also happen in place and through very tangible exchanges of material and knowledge.

The object of the title, a Kreyòl architecture, indicates that this dissertation on architecture in western Haiti is framed by the linguistic and cultural formation of Haitian Kreyòl (one of two constitutionally recognized languages in Haiti, the other being French) and not as a nationalist project though national identity and history inevitably surfaces. "Kreyòl pale, kreyòl konprann" [Kreyòl spoken, kreyòl understood]—the spoken language is an interpretive

[7] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 89.
[8] Glissant, 178.

framework. It undergirds communication in place and about space. Moreover, this dissertation is about *a* creole architecture. It is an instantiation which is neither monolithic nor absolute. Haitian Kreyòl is one of many creoles developed and spoken throughout the Caribbean and other sites of colonization. What is learned here about practices of communication in architecture is particular, but it can also serve as a precedent for understanding design in other contexts of cultural exchange within unequal power relations. I develop Kreyòl architecture as an analytical frame to consider an inclusive set of design practices in Haiti across and outside of the institutional discipline of architecture, specific to their territory and embedded in historic and contemporary global currents.

In this introduction I will position myself and the dissertation first by offering some historical and geographical background on my research sites in western Haiti (Pòtoprens and Leyogann). This is followed by the introduction of key theories and terms to conceptualize a Kreyòl architecture: practice in architecture, creolization of culture, and the signification of vernacular as a descriptor of languages and buildings. I then describe how this research has been conducted using mixed methodologies including ethnographic and documentary research to build on prior work in design, architecture, and Haiti. In closing, I sketch out the progression of chapters in the dissertation.

Site: Haiti, Ouest department

Given Haiti's remarkable position in world history, it is notable that its architecture has been largely disregarded as a subject for study. Haiti is often invoked as either the first free Black republic or with "the phrase:" the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere.[9] In other

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[9] Historian Marlene Daut discusses the challenges of ensuring new narratives of Haiti not contribute to such harmful images of Haiti as those encapsulated in this oft-used phrase in Daut, "Haiti @ the Digital Crossroads.". She points to Dreyfuss' apt capturing of this linguistic phenomenon of the "the phrase" in "A Cage of Words." This phrase in

words, the success and failure of Black sovereignty eclipse the country's history.[10] As will be discussed in greater length in Chapter One, there is little published about Haitian architectural history by domestic and foreign scholars but what has been circulated foregrounds the monumental structures of the Citadel Laferrier and the Palace Sans-Souci built in the years after independence (1804) or decontextualized rural houses.[11] These limited episodes in Haitian building culture parallel the exceptional and exclusive narratives of Haiti's independence and impoverishment. As anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued, and a new generation of scholars have continued to analyze, the treatment of Haiti as exceptional (be that exceptionally abject or spectacular) serves as cover to position it outside of normal, natural, comprehensible frameworks, and to omit it from global histories.[12] Trouillot wrote that "the more Haiti appears weird, the easier it is to forget that it represents the longest neocolonial experiment in the history of the West."[13] This binding of studies of Haiti, particularly by foreign researchers like myself, to projects of isolation, obfuscation, or extractive utility, make it a fraught endeavor to make claims for the global disciplinary relevance of this dissertation research. Nonetheless, it is important for architects and builders in Haiti to have access to studies of the built environment

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any reporting about the country of Haiti flattens and excludes the possibilities of richer and more complex stories of the place and the people.

[10] Brandon Byrd examines how African Americans post-emancipation assigned importance to Haiti as a precedent for Black leadership and governance in Byrd, "Black Republicans, Black Republic.". On the other hand, in "Voodoo, Zombies, and Mermaids" Potter analyzes US news reporting on Haiti which has framed Haiti as a failure repeatedly throughout the twentieth century through repetitive vocabulary of crisis, poverty, and instability.

[11] Extant publications include Minosh, "Architectural Remnants and Mythical Traces of the Haitian Revolution: Henri Christophe's Citadelle Laferrière and Sans-Souci Palace"; Mangonès, "The Citadel as Site of Haitian Memory"; Duhau and Davoigneau, "Cap-Haïtien versus Jacmel, essai sur la ville en Haïti"; Phillips, *Gingerbread Houses*; Pierre-Louis, "Restoration and Social Value of the Historic Gingerbread Houses"; Moholy-Nagy, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America*; Upton and Vlach, *Common Places*, 1986; Bulletin d'ISPAN

[12] Trouillot, "The Odd and the Ordinary: Haiti, the Caribbean, and the World," 3, 6–7; Benedicty-Kokken et al., *The Haiti Exception*; Clitandre, "Haitian Exceptionalism in the Caribbean and the Project of Rebuilding Haiti"; Daniels, "Mirror Mausoleums, Mortuary Arts, and Haitian Religious Unexceptionalism"; Daut, "Today's 'Haitian Exceptionalism'"; DeGraff, "Creole Exceptionalism and the (Mis)Education of the Creole Speaker"; Jean-Charles, "The Myth of Diaspora Exceptionalism"; Polyné, *The Idea of Haiti*.

[13] Trouillot, "The Odd and the Ordinary: Haiti, the Caribbean, and the World," 7.

and their practices. And throughout the Americas (north, south, and the Atlantic), if not globally, scholars of architecture can benefit from considering deeply how communication provides insight into variegated building cultures across traditional historiographic divisions.

One symptom of the exceptional flattening of Haiti is a presumption of national similarity despite local particularities. In a study of architecture, place is primary, and my research is based in two cities, Port-au-Prince or Pòtoprens and Léogâne or Leyogann (French and Kreyòl orthography). Despite being a small country, just 27,560 km^2 (10,640 square miles), there is

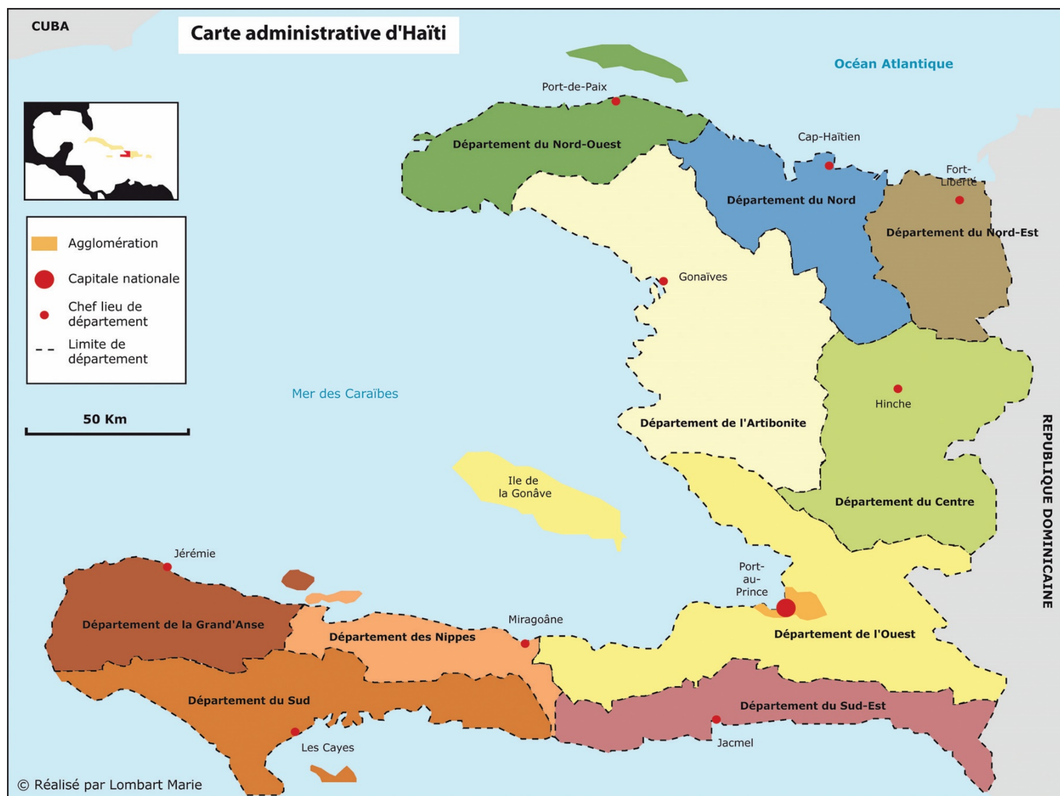

Figure Introduction-1 Map of administrative departments of Haiti (Lombart, Marie, Kevin Pierrat, and Marie Redon. "Port-au-Prince : un « projectorat » haïtien ou l'urbanisme de projets humanitaires en question." Cahiers des Amériques latines 2014/1, no. 75)

significant regional variation across the ten departments (an administrative unit of territory) in Haiti (Figure Introduction-1). My research has been conducted in the Ouest [west] department and supplemented by travel in the southern peninsula. While certain conclusions particularly about the disciplinary discourse of architecture centered in Pòtoprens can be taken as definitive

of the national situation, other findings are restricted to the locales in question unless confirmed by study in comparable sites in other departments.

Urban histories in Haiti have focused primarily on the capital of Pòtoprens in correspondence with its increasing centrality since the late nineteenth century.[14] Despite recurring discussions of the benefits of decentralization and the need to increase capacity of regional cities in Haiti, contemporary architectural practices outside the capital are almost entirely neglected. As a capital city, Pòtoprens is an omnipresent foil in the historiography and ethnography that follows, and I spent almost half of my time there to observe the contemporary architecture scene and to be able to access libraries and scholars. Pòtoprens cannot be ignored, but it can be decentered to tell more inclusive narratives that trouble well-practiced tropes about the ills of urbanization or the urban-rural divide.

In this dissertation, I intentionally destabilize accepted perspectives, centering, decentering, and recentering places, people, practices, and concepts. This is a necessary starting point for decolonizing received histories and theories of architecture. I center my study in Leyogann, a municipality thirty kilometers west of the capital of Pòtoprens. Relative to Pòtoprens, Leyogann is a peripheral town; for much of its history it has been a primarily rural, sugar producing commune connected to a small central town on a colonial-era street grid. In 1924 it had a population under 7,500 people.[15] Before the 2010 earthquake its population was estimated at 181,709 and according to 2015 estimates had increased to 200,000.[16] A popular

[14] The key text being the multivolume history of Pòtoprens written by Georges Corvington, *Port-Au-Prince Au Cours Des Ans: Tome I-IV*. More recent scholarship includes Lucien, *Une modernisation manquée: Port-au-Prince (1915-1956)*, 2013; Payton, *And We Will Be Devoured: Construction, Destruction, and Dictatorship in Haiti*.
[15] "Data on the Physical Features and Political, Financial and Economic Conditions of the Republic of Haiti" (Imp. Aug. A. HERAUX, 1924), I5b 28, Bibliothèque Frere Chretienne.
[16] "Population totale, population de 18 ans et plus ménages et densités estimés en 2015" [Total Population, Population of 18 and over, Households and Densities Estimated in 2015] (PDF). IHSI (in French). March 2015. Archived from the original (PDF) on 6 November 2015. Retrieved 8 May 2017

perception among long-time residents was that the population has increased markedly since the earthquake as people from "other" places came to take advantage of aid distribution creating distinctions between people "from" Leyogann and those "staying" in Leyogann. In comparison to the rest of southern Haiti, Leyogann is relatively central (one can make a round trip to the capital in one day), an urbanized zone, increasingly a satellite of the metropolis. The dual identity that Leyogann carries as both rural and city, outside of yet connected to Pòtoprens, creates competing priorities for land management and municipal government. It influenced the forms of housing aid and their distribution after the 2010 earthquake.

The earthquake on the twelfth of January is a major inflection point for the built environment in Leyogann and Pòtoprens. It also precipitated my engagement in Haiti first through non-profit design and work and then through this research. Because my professional work and ethnographic research followed the earthquake, I cannot make comparative claims based on my own observations, but the earthquake is a register of profound change for understanding the built environment and building practices in Haiti. At the same time, historical documents show that problems with regulation, land management, material quality and access, and education predate the earthquake and persist through today. In Leyogann, just kilometers from the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake, ninety percent of structures in the town were damaged.[17] This means that large quantities of international attention and aid came to Leyogann in the immediate post-quake moment and through 2013 making it hypervisible to international audiences as a site of disaster and disastrous aid. The damages of the earthquake and the damages of the international response to the earthquake have been poignantly written about by

[17] SODADE, "Plan d'urbanisme Pour La Ville de Leogane et Sa Region Periurbaine," 6. Dabòn where I stayed was around 12 km (7.5 miles) from the epicenter (18.457°N, 72.533°W) while downtown Vil Leyogann is a further 6 km (3.7 miles).

others.[18] As the city closest to the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake, Leyogann makes an obvious and internationally legible case study. However, the accessibility of prior studies of Leyogann (notably by anthropologists Serge Larose in the 1970s and Karen Richman from the 1980s) and its being a regional city with a proximate relationship with Pòtoprens are equally important, although often overlooked, characteristics that make for a compelling case study. In this dissertation I attend to the medium-term situation six to eight years after the earthquake when damage and reconstruction was still visible, but many construction projects did not have a direct connection with the earthquake. This timeframe is important as it looks at impacts of the disaster

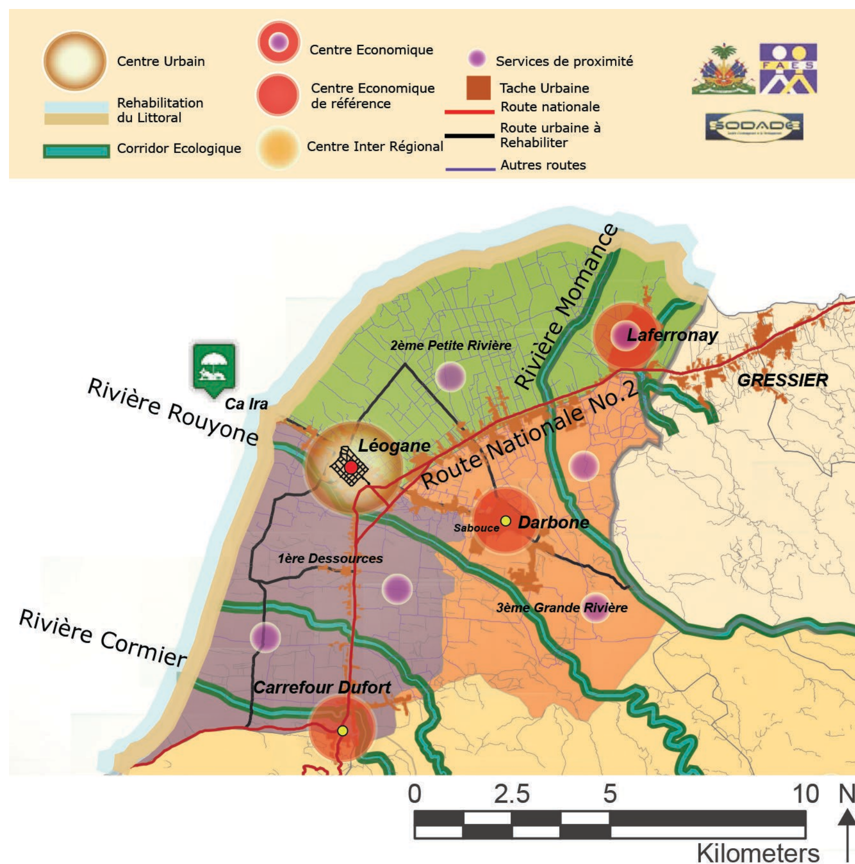

Figure Introduction-2 Map of urban sections of Leyogann indicating commercial centers and roads (SODADE. "Plan d'urbanisme Pour La Ville de Leogane et Sa Region Periurbaine." Fonds d'Assistance Economique et Sociale, January 12, 2012.)

[18] Texts on the earthquake and secondary disaster of aid are many but include Bell, *Fault Lines*; Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By*; Schuller, *Humanitarian Aftershocks in Haiti*; Wagner, "Haiti Is a Sliding Land: Displacement, Community, and Humanitarianism in Post-Earthquake Port-Au-Prince."

beyond the typical horizon of relief projects. While people continue to live with tangible artifacts of the earthquake like so-called temporary shelters, a new normal has been established.

An interlocked patchwork, the thirteen sections of the commune of Leyogann vary from a moderately dense residential and commercial urban center, through peri-urban zones of mixed land-use, to entirely rural and unelectrified areas in the foothills (Figure Introduction-2). Throughout the commune, commercial activity lines automobile routes while less dense and more agricultural land use lays beyond these corridors. The sugar plantations that once surrounded the colonial era downtown grid have been broken down into smaller and smaller holdings that are now popular areas for a form of suburban development fueled by remittances and returning members of the diaspora.[19] About two-thirds of the population of the commune of Leyogann live in what the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Informatics (IHSI) categorizes as urban areas and the other third in rural conditions. What can be misleading about this characterization is that in each section there are agglomerations of commerce and density along transportation corridors with agricultural land-use in proximity to the linear built-up zones. The interweaving of urban and mercantile spaces with small and medium scale agriculture in Leyogann is also typical of much of the Haitian landscape. By setting up a research project in Leyogann it is possible to offer findings about Haitian building practices of relevance in other regional towns and rural agglomerations outside of the highly urbanized capital.

Practice

A fundamental assumption of this dissertation is that architecture is a *practice*, meaning above all that it is multiple. Architecture as practice, means that it is habitual, that it is temporal, that it involves training, that it is tacit knowledge in action, that it is artistic, meditative,

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[19] SODADE, "Plan d'urbanisme Pour La Ville de Leogane et Sa Region Periurbaine."

repetitive, manual, business, intentional, rote, etc. Architecture is not inherently "professional" though it has been professionalized. Professionalization and disciplining can be observed in the practiced performance of architect-as-expert in schools via the critique, in practice through client presentations, and in a hybrid instance of the practitioner's portfolio lecture typically presented at schools of architecture. Such performances are used to authorize professional architects and their architecture. But because this dissertation aims to consider Kreyòl architecture as a practice of design which is inclusive of professional architects but not exclusive to them, I draw on theories of practice and communication which are at work in both explicit and tacit design activities that may or may not be apprehended by the discipline.[20]

Considering architecture as a capacious realm of activities defined not by practitioner's identities but by the co-creation of spatial ideas opens the possibility of inclusive narratives of building culture. In *Architecture: The Story of Practice,* Dana Cuff suggested a cultural definition of the activity of design, asking us to imagine that:

> Every individual with a voice in the design process is a kind of a designer - the client, the engineer, the contractor, the inhabitants, the college president, the fundraiser and so on. The architect-designer, among those individuals, has the added responsibilities of coordinating all contributions and giving them some spatial expression. Design, then, is taking place whenever any of these actors makes plans about the future environment.[21]

The architect-designer still has a particular set of expertise, but Cuff's framing of many design actors shows architecture as a product of relationships and dialogue, of competing and complementary interests. Cuff argues that people are designing whenever they make plans about the future environment. I ask: how do they make these plans? My research suggests the answer to this question is: by communicating with each other. I work from a definition of architecture as

[20] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*; Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*; Gutman, *Architectural Practice: A Critical View*; Abbott, *The System of Professions*.
[21] Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, 61.

spatial ideas which are communicated or mediated through some form of representation. Communication is a relational activity often engaged with other people, but it is possible to communicate with oneself as in a sketch, working out a detail, preparing a list. In this way, alone or in collaboration, architecture appears as a practice of communication.

Masons, contractors, technicians, suppliers, architects, engineer-architects, architecture faculty, residents, clients, civil servants, and international non-governmental organization staff are all participants in an inclusive landscape of domestic architecture in contemporary Haiti. Philosopher Jürgen Habermas theorized rationality as consisting of "how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge."[22] Each of these actors should be assumed to be rational and knowledgeable participants in architecture. Language is one medium for coordinating action in Habermas' theory of communicative action, but the actions of building are coordinated through other symbolic and representational mediums including gesture, physical referents or precedents, models or mock-ups, drawings, and other documents. Sociologist Gina Neff describes three main roles for documents as recording actions, delimiting organization, and supporting conversation.[23] How designers produce and use speech and other mediums of communication to coordinate design action varies widely but communicative action situates the practices of seemingly disparate groups of people contributing to the built environment within a continuum and not in polar categories, like those of vernacular and modern or formal and informal.

In the production of the built environment, the social relationships of design are indivisible from material and technical systems of representation and construction. Writing about technological systems, and not architecture specifically, historian Thomas P. Hughes

[22] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 11.
[23] Neff, Fiore-Silfvast, and Dossick, "Materiality."

characterizes the problems that they are intended to solve as having "to do mostly with reordering the physical world in ways considered useful or desirable, at least by those designing or employing a technological system."[24] What is useful or desirable is a product of the socialization of those people engaged in design. In this way, designed artifacts, including buildings, carry socially constructed characteristics into the future where they are part of the received environment.[25] Relatedly, sociologist Arjun Appadurai, who famously theorized the "social life of things," maintains that objects are "designed things" with links, associations, trajectories, affinities, and more.[26] This means that when people design with objects and within systems there is a feedback loop between past, present, and future social constructions. Objects and material systems then function as a form of media through which today's designer engages with yesterday's designer. There is an accretion of designed systems in building and a sublimation of the points in the past when someone chose to build in one way and not another for some set of reasons. In this way language, visual documents, and physical materials become media through which people communicate rational ideas to coordinate cooperative action.

People communicating *youn ak lòt* establishes relationships as an inextricable component of design processes. People use what I refer to in the dissertation title as "relational techniques" meaning that in design there are particular and skillful ways of connecting and communicating ideas and intentions. Glissant meditated on relation at length and writes that "relation is the knowledge in motion of beings."[27] The dynamic and co-constitutive quality of knowledge that Glissant highlights serves as a foundational assumption of this study that knowledge is realized in relationship and through communication. It is poetic but it is also common. Relation for

[24] Hughes, "The Evolution of Large Technological Systems," 53.
[25] Hughes, 77.
[26] Appadurai, "The Social Life of Design," 259.
[27] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 187.

Glissant is not abstract, it is realized, and it is realized publicly, in common places.[28] Fundamentally multiscalar, relation describes individual encounters but also characterizes the Caribbean as a site of creolization. In Glissant's words "The Caribbean may be held up as one of the places in the world where Relation presents itself most visibly… [The Caribbean] has always been a place of encounter and connivance and, at the same time, a passageway toward the American continent."[29] The ideas of relation and creolization explored here are not meant to be taken as? universal concepts but rather to highlight the particular ways in which encounters, exchanges, movement, and mutuality inform design practices in Haiti.

Creolization

> Pou moun Karayib, pawòl la se premye son. Bri a lesansyèl nan lapawòl. Espektak se diskou. Kreyòl la òganize diskou kòm yon eksplozyon son.
>
> For Caribbean man, the word is first and foremost sound. Noise is essential to speech. Din is discourse. Creole organizes speech as a blast of sound.[30]

Glissant emphasizes the sonic quality of creole language. What does creole architecture sound like? Thinking through the orality of creoles, particularly Haitian Kreyòl, undermines the primacy of the visual in architectural analysis and shifts attention from products to processes. How do we relate through speech and sound to architecture? What do we say to each other to make architecture? How does Kreyòl organize space? Creolization offers a grounded theoretical lens which, like relation, is not immaterial and is realized in common spaces of encounter. It requires attention to temporality and geography, qualities often denied to architecture beyond the established European canon. Language and building culture move together in the discussion of

[28] Glissant, 203.
[29] Glissant, 33.
[30] Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, 123–24, quoted and translated in Ulysse, "Caribbean Rasanblaj (Introduction)."

Kreyòl and creolization. Creole languages and architectures can and have been categorized as vernaculars, every day and ordinary. But because the vernacular has been defined as a global negative by exclusion from Western epistemologies, I begin with the active and constructive narrative of creolization while acknowledging relevant literature on vernacular and othered architectures globally.

Creole, originating from the Latin *creare,* speaks of the making, production or bringing forth of something. From the seventeenth century in the French Atlantic empire, creole came to refer biologically to people (and livestock and plants) born in the colonial territories but not indigenous to them. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall encapsulated this local but not indigenous identity as a confluence of African, European, and American "presences" which constituted créolité. Like Glissant, he describes the process of creolization as the variable combination of these presences which produced new cultures based on the translation of multiple originals within a particular site.[31] The concept of presences that Hall uses evokes the environment inclusive of humans which assists in the apprehension of the creolization of architecture. Hall's diagram retains the presence of indigenous peoples, which is significant because the indigenous Carib and Taino are often absented as contributors to creolization. This absence is perhaps unsurprising given the genocide that accompanied European settler colonialism. However, this erasure of indigenous peoples is not only inaccurate, but it also diminishes the complexity of place-based knowledge in creole cultures. Nevertheless, the tri-partite diagram can belie the asymmetries and imbalances of relationships between the constituent groups. As anthropologist Richard Price cautioned scholars to remember, "after all, it is speakers of diverse languages who meet and communicate, languages do not. Human beings meet and engage one another; cultures

[31] Hall, "Créolité and the Process of Creolization," 32.

do not. Individuals who claim multiple identities interact with one another; ethnicities do not."[32] The trends that are described by creolization are comprised of individuals with unique accumulations of identity and knowledge. Above all, creolization, and Kreyòl architecture as theorized in this project, are relational processes of communication practiced by people.

Language is an omnipresent medium of communication and a site of detailed studies of creolization. Creole languages produced in the multilingual Caribbean synthesized two or more linguistic roots into new languages which were supplements to the indigenous, African, and European languages brought into proximity by colonization and the transatlantic slave trade.[33] Haitian Kreyòl developed in colonial Saint-Domingue and has been written and spoken continuously. Speakers of Haitian Kreyòl form the largest community of creole language speakers and the majority of Haitians are monolingual Kreyòl speakers.[34] Nevertheless, it was not recognized as an official language until 1987 demonstrating the political devaluation of Kreyòl and monolingual Kreyòl speakers. Despite Haitian Kreyòl and French now having nominally equal status as official languages, government documents continue to be produced primarily in French and, while movement is being made towards primary education in Kreyòl, most education continues to be delivered in French. Linguist Michel DeGraff calls this segregation of knowledge a "linguistic apartheid" that maintains power in the hands of elites and international actors that can only be undone when Kreyòl speakers are educated and producing knowledge in their maternal language.[35] Building culture reproduces this "linguistic apartheid" as the formalized disciplines of architecture and engineering are codified, taught, and publicized

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[32] Price, "Créolisation, Creolization, and Créolité," 216.
[33] Glissant, "Creolization in the Making of the Americas," 83.
[34] DeGraff, "Creole Exceptionalism and the (Mis)Education of the Creole Speaker," 125–26. DeGraff estimates that French is spoken by only about one-fifth of the population.
[35] DeGraff, 139–41.

in French while construction sites are, unsurprisingly, acoustically marked by the common language Haitian Kreyòl. Creole language then is instrumental for building, but Haitian building culture is also a product of creolization.

A cluster of English and French terms in circulation (creole, creolization*, créolité*, and *créolisation*) represent different constellations of intellectual and literary traditions which theorize the formation of new societies in the Caribbean due to the violent and extractive systems of colonization, plantation agriculture, and chattel slavery. Anthropologist Richard Price described the historic context of this creation:

> Within this prototypical space of death—indeed, often within the complex interstices that divided it internally—displaced Africans, a motley crew of Europeans, and what remained of Native American populations forged new, distinctively American modes of human interaction. Together, through the complex processes of negotiation between such individuals and groups, which we call creolization, they created whole new cultures and societies. That is the miracle. That is what creolization-with-a-*z* tries to investigate.[36]

Price locates creolization in this concrete and historical context because he is arguing against a tendency towards what he perceives to be a metaphoric use of *créolité* and *créolisation* (with-an-s) that either reifies nationalistic nostalgia or that has been applied to global phenomenon of transfer and hybridization.[37] Creolization is not a new universalism.

Scholars who have written about Haiti including Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Sidney Mintz, Richard Price, and Mimi Sheller have argued that a historicized understanding of creolization is grounded in what Sheller terms "specific social and cultural itineraries."[38] Trouillot adds that "we have not thought enough about what went on in specific places and times to produce a

[36] Price, "Créolisation, Creolization, and Créolité," 215–16.
[37] Khan, "Good to Think?"
[38] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 196; Mintz, *Three Ancient Colonies*; Price, "Créolisation, Creolization, and Créolité"; Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges."

model sensitive enough to time, place, and power."[39] Creolization then as a cultural analytic must be grounded in observation of the actual negotiations and interactions that constitute it including power dynamics between individuals and classes of people. The hegemonic biases of the historical record means that there are silences where evidence of creolization in the everyday activity of anonymous people would be found. Such absences, Trouillot argues, have led creolist scholars "to infer the past from the present."[40] Literature on creole and vernacular architectures that has analyzed the past from material artifacts in the present has obscured the ways in which the meanings of creolized cultural formations like building, but also religion and language, change in time and in space.[41] There is further work to be done using archaeology and other historical methods to better understand, for example, the evolution of rural peasant housing typologies in nineteenth century Haiti, but for now my research moves around these absences by focusing on an analysis of the present where quotidian action and communication can be observed. Attempting not to overextend inferences about the past from the present, I do consider how the past is used to endorse or explain contemporary design practices and to resist the denial of temporality and intentionality to vernacular practices like Kreyòl architecture.

I offer the neologism of Kreyòl architecture to describe design practices in Haiti through theories and daily practices of creolization that recognize the complex, transnational processes of building cultures. I propose it as an alternate route to understanding architecture without accepting received binaries of modern and vernacular or formal and informal architecture. Anthropologist of architecture, Marcel Vellinga, compellingly argues that the persistence of "the

[39] Trouillot, "Culture on the Edges," 194.
[40] Trouillot, 193.
[41] In "Culture on the Edges" Trouillot observes that the practice of Haitian vodoun is an engagement with creolization and the contents of vodoun have changed over time and even if they had not the meaning of rituals serving the gods of Vodoun have changed over time and depending on place, 196.

vernacular" in architectural scholarship reveals an on-going approach to "the architecture of the Other" which is often concerned with material production but is not defined in itself and rather serves as a foil to determines the limits of formal or canonical architecture.[42] Vernacular and informal buildings have been defined by tropes of timelessness, primitiveness, and instinctiveness in the disciplines of both architecture and anthropology which have been thoroughly critiqued but not entirely replaced. [43] Scholars have studied the building practices of people and places constructed as outside, peripheral, colonized, or othered via distinct methodologies from hegemonic cultural production. Thinking with Bruno Latour, a rhetorical move that separates vernacular from modern, claims a teleology of progress to the contemporary for the modern and denies coevalness and change to others artificially positioned as pre-modern.[44] The paradoxical refusal of modernity to Black nations is glaring in Haiti, a nation whose genesis is an inextricable product plantation capitalism and who played an integral role in the age of republican revolutions.

The irregular treatment of temporality aligns with the critique enunciated by anthropologists including Johannes Fabian that the practice of ethnography was predicated on the epistemic dominance of European observers and the denial or distancing of temporality between scholarship and objects of study (people and their communities).[45] Studies of vernacular architecture, often in dialogue with anthropological studies of material culture, have struggled with the question of temporality in part because of the epistemic distancing Fabian describes, but

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[42] Vellinga, "The End of the Vernacular," 2011, 172.
[43] The 1980s marked a period of self-critique of the discipline of anthropology including key figures (primarily white men) James Clifford, George Marcus, Johannes Fabian, Michael Fischer, etc. that led to questioning the cultural dominance of Europe and whiteness in ethnography. Contemporary scholars of vernacular architecture in Thomas Hubka, Dell Upton, John Vlach, and Henry Glassie were also attentive to the marginalization of builders from the canon, but the ongoing separation of quotidian or vernacular building from canonical architectural histories belies the incompleteness of the project.
[44] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 39.
[45] Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

further complicated by the co-presence of built artifacts of many ages and the continual processes of maintenance, upkeep, and expansion involved in occupying spaces. The open-ended and unfixed nature of building is particularly congruent with Glissant's characterization of creolization as unfixed and "[balancing] between the present moment and duration."[46] Despite the appearance of solidity and fixedness in place architecture moves with time and assembles ideas and materials with global itineraries.

Kreyòl architecture describes practices grounded in Haiti and Haitian history but offers a methodological and conceptual approach of utility in other sites. Urgent calls for global architectural history and the decolonization of architecture theory highlight the importance of developing methods to research the built environment at the intersection of global and local histories. Recent scholarship has shown how modern architecture and other architectures are co-constitutive and indivisible practices. Design studies scholar Fernando Lara's work on house building in middle- and lower-class neighborhoods of Sao Paulo shows how construction workers and builders carry knowledge of styles and techniques between the city center and favelas.[47] In her revisionist history of German modernism, architectural historian Itohan Osayimwese traces the impact of colonial projects in Africa and African building culture on German architecture.[48] In both bases the presumptive center of discourse is in fact in relationship with and mutually constituted with peripheral sites and actors. Lara along with built environment scholar Sara Lopez go beyond geographic recentering and bring attention to disciplinarily marginalized practices, namely those of contractors, construction workers, and migrant home builders to reveal complex itineraries of architectural knowledge and practice that interact with

[46] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 35.
[47] Lara, "Illiterate Modernists: Tracking the Dissemination of Architectural Knowledge in Brazilian Favelas."
[48] Osayimwese, "Prolegomenon to an Alternative Genealogy of German Modernism"; Osayimwese, *Colonialism and Modern Architecture in Germany*.

disciplinary boundaries but do not adhere to them. My study begins here in a peripheral location with maligned or overlooked designers. I argue that Kreyòl architecture includes the practices of people trained in the international discipline of architecture alongside practices of people trained in vocational schools, on work sites, and through direct experience of the built environment. Kreyòl architecture treats these designers and their practices as coeval and mutually constituted.

Methodology

In the introduction to the E-mesferica issue, *Caribbean Rasanblaj*, Gina Athena Ulysse quotes Madame Jacqueline Epingle saying that,

> Ou pa chwazi sa ou vle le w'ap fè yon rasanblaj, ou ranmanse tout bagay …
> You don't pick and choose when you make a rasanblaj, you gather everything.[49]

Epingle offers an organic definition of research. Ulysse does not translate rasanblaj, insisting on its Kreyòl sound. Ulysse defines rasanblaj: "n. assembly, compilation, enlisting, regrouping (of ideas, things, people, spirits. For example, fè yon rasanblaj, do a gathering, a ceremony, a protest)."[50] A rasanblaj as Ulysse describes it is, variably, a catalyst, a keyword, a method, a practice, and a project. I pick up rasanblaj as a methodology of gathering up that which I found that illuminates Kreyòl architecture. The collection includes stories, pictures, paintings, materials, documents, etc. I am aware that everything I found depended on who I was, where I was, and when I was there in my *milieu.*[51] Where one looks, who one talks to, who one is, each of these influences what wants to be found and who wishes to share what with you. Who I am—a white-presenting US citizen, a Latinx woman, an architect, a student and alumni of multiple

[49] Ulysse, "Caribbean Rasanblaj (Introduction).".
[50] Ulysse.
[51] "milieu" derives from the old forms of *mi* and *lieu*, middle and place. *Merriam-Webster.com*. 2019. https://www.merriam-webster.com (5 March 2019).

elite institutions, an able bodied researcher armed with a motorcycle helmet (that fits easily over my hair), a queer person in a heterosexual relationship, the child of middle-income parents with advanced degrees—fundamentally shaped my research experience, methods, and findings. It meant that I was able to access some information that others cannot and that I was, in turn, unable to receive some information accessible to others. By humbly (and self-reflexively) conducting this rasanblaj, I am endeavoring to not replicate the conquering forms of knowledge gathering and exploration at the base of so many disciplines and, without a doubt, at the roots of both architecture and anthropology. If the research question is, what does a Kreyòl architecture sound like? Then the first methodological question must be, *sak pase?* What's going on?

This dissertation is at heart an ethnography, supported by an historiographical assemblage and applied to a theoretical interpretation of domestic space in Haiti. My primary, recognizable methodology is ethnography, a practice of extended observation and listening which shares a quality of close attention with the practice of site visits in architecture. The practices are dissimilar in terms of duration with ethnography involving extended periods of time and in turn paying greater attention to social relationships than the physical environment which dominates an architectural site visit. My fieldwork consisted of observing people engaged in the creation and use of the built environment as much as or more so than observing the built environment, itself. I took the social interactions and behaviors that are central to anthropological inquiry seriously, but I also attended to visual and physical realm as equally salient sources of information. Written fieldnotes based on observations form the bulk of my data, but the sketches, architectural drawings, and photos I made during fieldwork are critical pieces of information about the built environment as I observed it and as it was interpreted or explained to me. In an ethnohistorical fashion, I looked not just to living interlocutors but to the documents produced

and stored—intentionally or otherwise—in the contemporary moment and the past to verify or complicate my observations of design communication.

I extend the concept of rasanblaj to my engagement with scholars and literature across disciplines and areas bringing together scholarship in architecture, anthropology, science and technology studies, Haitian and Caribbean studies, and communication theory to ask questions about the construction of the built environment. I began by reacting (generatively) against problematic representations of the architecture of the other by Bernard Rudofsky and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy. But I build upon the work of architectural scholars of the latter half of the twentieth century who broke open an art historical tradition to ask questions about people, culture, economics, and politics in the built environment like Dolores Hayden, Anthony King, Amos Rapoport, and Gwendolyn Wright.[52] To think about how to study and write about architecture outside of—but always still in relationship with—the imperial metropoles of Europe and the United States I draw on postcolonial architecture histories by Esra Akcan (Turkey-Germany), Arindam Dutta (India-Britain), Itohan Osayimwese (south-western Africa-Germany), Łukasz Stanek (Ghana-USSR), and Mabel Wilson (Black America-US), and who navigate the power dynamics of cultural production in colonial and postcolonial settings.[53] Studies of everyday building with or without pedigreed architects are complicated and with a problematic history which anthropologist Marcel Vellinga contextualizes and critiques effectively in his on-going scholarship. Nevertheless, methods developed by Thomas Hubka, Henry Glassie, and Dale Upton for the study of vernacular architectures in the United States and by Jay D. Edwards and

[52] Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*; Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*; King, *The Bungalow*; Rapoport, *House Form and Culture.*; Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*; Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*.
[53] Akcan, *Architecture in Translation*; Dutta, *The Bureaucracy of Beauty*; Osayimwese, *Colonialism and Modern Architecture in Germany*; Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism*; Wilson, *Negro Building*.

John Vlach in Haiti and the French Atlantic, specifically, were instructive.[54] Anthropological studies of architects at work by Dana Cuff, Keith Murphy, and Albena Yaneva uncover the culture of architects at work in the production of the built environment and in the production of discourse about design.[55] Fernanda Lara's and Sarah Lopez' work investigating builders in Sao Paulo and western Mexico, respectively, offered me a model for synthesizing the practices of construction and labor with the design activities often mistakenly ascribed uniquely to architects but which are in use by many types of builders.[56]

Claudine Michel, who has cultivated and stewarded Haitian studies through the association and journal, describes Haitian studies as both a discipline and an interdiscipline with a geographic reach that extends across the world with the Haitian diaspora and as a place where scholars of many disciplinary identities have come together to re-evaluate the territorial and institutional limits of research.[57] Within Haitian studies and in Haiti texts and people intermingle as sources that structure and inform my research. Architects and interlocutors like Gladys Berrouet, Didier Dominique, Daniel Elie, Sabine Malbranche, and Marc Roger offered me frameworks for understanding architects and architecture in Haiti both in dialogue and in their written work through historical, spiritual, professional, and political lenses. Perhaps the best-known work on Haiti known by historians outside of the area is Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past,* and the racialized politics of space and memory which have produced such a notable gap in scholarship on the built environment moved me towards rasanblaj as method to hear narratives that are intentionally absented from archival records. Ethnographic and historical

[54] Edwards, "Creolization Theory and the Odyssey of the Atlantic Linear Cottage"; Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*, 1975; Hubka, *Houses without Names*; Upton, "Ordinary Buildings"; Upton and Vlach, *Common Places*, 1986.
[55] Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*; Murphy, *Swedish Design*, 2015; Murphy, "Design and Anthropology"; Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*.
[56] Lara, *The Rise of Popular Modernist Architecture in Brazil*; Lopez, *The Remittance Landscape*.
[57] Michel, "Kalfou Danje: Situating Haitian Studies and My Own Journey within It," 197.

accounts from scholars (Haitian and foreign) across the twentieth century who paid particular attention to space and place, including but not limited to Georges Anglade, Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, Melville Herskovits, Alfred Metraux, Sidney Mintz, Serge Larose, Karen Richman, and Trouillot, created a collaged historical background through which I begin to contextualize my observations in the 2010s in relationship to the preceding decades and century.[58] Their narratives in collection contradict pernicious and latent ideas of stasis or absence of architecture of places, like Haiti, excluded from the history of Western architecture.

Chapter Structure

I begin the dissertation with a chapter which is itself a rasanblaj of historical narratives of dwelling spaces in Haiti. The following four chapters focus on design actors. These chapters consider architects and their institutional and professional organizations in the capital, peripheral architects practicing in Leyogann, contractors or bòsmason involved in tacit design through construction, and the residents of an NGO-built settlement in Leyogann who make homes within humanitarian aid shelters. The dissertation closes with a chapter on concepts of collective dwelling within a Haitian Vodou metaphysics.

Chapter One opens withs a historiographic survey of the architectural histories in Haiti to restore temporality and the sociopolitical entanglements of building practices to the idea of residential Haitian architecture. Focusing on narratives of twentieth century housing, but also reaching back to indigenous buildings and their nineteenth century representations, I use the concept of rasanblaj as methodology to make of ethnographic and historical research into a continuous, somewhat overlapping, and sometimes contradictory narrative of house building by

[58] Anglade, *Atlas Critique d'Haïti*; Comhaire-Sylvain, "The Household In Kenscoff, Haiti"; Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*; Métraux, *Haiti*; Larose, "The Haitian Lakou: Land, Family, and Ritual"; Richman, *Migration and Vodou*; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

both economic and political elites and marginalized people building in peripheral sites. I bring together archival materials, oral histories, unpublished manuscripts, and books by Haitian scholars with limited circulation to consider four major images or imaginaries of housing: the small, rural *ti kay;* bourgeois, gingerbread style houses; mid-century, tropical modernist houses; and *Maison Miami*, imaginaries of North American housing translated into concrete block houses. In this ethnohistorical account based on visual and oral documents, I diagram historical narratives of twentieth century residential architecture in Haiti that address housing often divided and occluded by the major axes of temporality and class. Chronological developments in housing coincide with global material trends; class variation also manifests in material differences and the scale and siting of housing. A through-line in the historiography is anxiety about modernization—its benefits, its lack, its desirability, its damages, its materiality (reinforced concrete), its inaccessibility, its inevitable encroachment, etc. Commentary—anxious and otherwise—about Haitian houses is as important as the traces they have left in photographs, drawings, and texts. Occupation, dictatorship, urban migration, environmental degradation, financial restructuring, new technologies, and global trade, have all impacted the processes and narratives through which Haitians dreamed, designed, and constructed houses. This chapter diagrams their relationships with the extant typologies and caricatures of Haitian residential architecture to move towards a nuanced historical narrative based in time, place, and practice.

In Chapter Two, I move from histories of buildings towards the institutional scenes of architecture where architects and engineers gather to discursively establish their professional identities. In documentary discourses produced by the professional societies of architects and engineers, first the Association des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtien (AIAH) and then the Collège national des Ingénieurs et Architectes haïtiens (CNIAH), I explore how the professions

developed in relationship with global disciplinary trends. Events at Université Quisqueya, a private university with an architecture program, serve to elucidate how the professional identity of architects is reproduced and contested by students in their formation. The institutions of architecture in Haiti are almost exclusively centralized in Port-au-Prince underlining that not just class but geography makes architecture services inaccessible to much of the country. The inaccessibility of architectural services to outside of business, elite, and state clientele is not unique to Haiti, but the extreme polarization of social and economic positions exacerbates this phenomenon. Repeatedly, the centralization of wealth and power geographically and demographically impedes the impact of professional architects on the built environment.

Closely related to the preceding chapter, Chapter Three features the quotidian design practices of architects working as sole practitioners in Leyogann. Turning from written, disciplinary declarations and towards the spoken and drawn design practices of architects there is an implied linguistic shift from the French of Chapter Two to a fluid hybridization of professional jargon in French and daily communication in Kreyòl. Architects practicing in the relative periphery of Leyogann have been disciplined by a cosmopolitan idea of architecture and architects and they simultaneously negotiate the treatment of architecture as a secondary or superfluous service. They operate as architects, but also as engineers, teachers, businesspeople, and politicians. The contingent nature of their identity architects reveals the fluidity between categories of designers and builders. Their practices suggest how global and local techniques of design are used in tandem in Haiti and more than the rarefied quality of architecture as disciplinarily maintained in the capital, the instrumental design practices observed in Leyogann serve middle-class and diasporic populations translating across certain social-spatial divisions.

Chapter Four features bòsmason [masonry contractors], the primary builders of Haiti and the de facto designers of most Haitian lower- and middle-class housing, as key actors in the development of contemporary Kreyòl architecture. I argue that bòsmason design *in situ*, or on site and in place. There is a tension in the identity of bòsmason who can be respected and successful businessmen, but are also often categorically maligned as uneducated, informal builders. In fact, bòsmason are a heterogenous group of skilled and semi-skilled builders with widely varying levels of education and work quality. The lack of building regulation extends to the certification of bòsmason who may have been educated in a trade school or may have accumulated knowledge working on construction sites in Haiti or other Caribbean and American nations. Hyper local practices of bòsmason are enmeshed in transnational flows via their own education and work experience and through clients who have or continue to live abroad and commission projects back home. As such, bòsmason engage in personal and symbolic transnational exchanges of building norms and styles to build *bèl kay* (a nice or beautiful house) for their clients. Though untrained in architecture, bòsmason draw basic floorplans but their design practices are largely tacit and unmarked. They're in situ design practices are situated, conducted as needed, and its methods are dependent on the relationships between the actors involved, and it is a creolized practice based on local, Caribbean, North American, and European referents.

In chapter five on *kay èd* [aid house], I argue that there is a fundamental disconnect between the communicated intentions and received perceptions of post-disaster shelter in Leyogann. This case study is based on surveys, interviews, and observation in a 300-house settlement built by an international NGO in Leyogann in the years after the 2010 earthquake. The houses given to beneficiaries were the product of fractured and unresolved communications

between diverse participants. Rather than re-centering the foreign actors who dominated the initial design of a resettlement "village" this ethnography considers the design of these houses as an on-going process that began with the displaced person's camp established by residents, included a contested participatory design process, and continues today with the adaptation and inhabitation of the site. The accepted practices of communication used by international NGOs – reports, site plans, social media – were tailored primarily to donor audiences and professional collaborators and not to the intended recipients of aid. A project logic produces orderly and quantifiable shelters. In lived experience, residents only partially understand the intentions and constraints of the project design. Residents engage in a post-occupancy design process of domesticating these aid shelters as they adapt or augment them to create living spaces.

To integrate the preceding narratives of the variety of designers and communication techniques involved in making houses, the sixth and final chapter considers the concept of home itself. Chapter Six unpacks some of the ways in which *lakay* [home]—a Haitian homeplace—is established and maintained through networks of relationships with people and land. Recognizable examples of collective dwelling including *lakou* [yard] have been established by and sustained by practices at once pragmatic and mystical including the sharing of space, food, ritual, and labor all of which situate people in relationships with each other and places. Belonging to a place and critical spatial practices of occupying the land in question grounds any functioning definition of lakay in the historical formation of Haiti through the forcible displacement of Africans and the indigenous Taino.

Conclusion

Attempting to question and reveal the practices of communication constitutive of design requires the observation of ephemeral acts, built artifacts and historical documents. My goal here

is to reframe design as part of a poetics of relation. Recalling Glissant, "relation exists in being realized, that is, in being completed in a common place," and the encounters of designers in Haiti suffused with power dynamics and global histories realize a Kreyòl architecture. What does a Kreyòl architecture sound like in conversation? How is it described by people with bodily actions? How is it made visible via professionalized drawings as well as in sketches and illustrations? How is it communicated in the building process itself through references to existing structures, mock-ups, and in situ manipulations of materials? The processes which are Kreyòl architecture take primacy over an attempt to define its form, appearance, or resemblance. It exists in being realized.

This dissertation research was motivated by my desire to contribute to the amelioration of the built environment in Haiti in a way that I was uniquely positioned for. Though I take a strengths-based approach to studying local building practices, it is a simple fact that building failures contributed to the extreme death toll of the 2010 earthquake and that substantial changes in building regulation have not been implemented in the intervening years. The depth and complexity of building practices that I analyze in this dissertation provide a base from which that much needed reforms for a safer built environment must be based in existing knowledge and in relationship to emplaced techniques. It resists the separation of technoscientific, traditional, pragmatic, and place-based knowledges and accepts the historical and contemporary imbrication of Western architectural traditions with Kreyòl architecture by Haitian architects and builders. This dissertation aims to contribute to the project of decolonizing architectural history and theory by centering practices doubly marginalized by geography and demographics.

Builders, including architects, practice a Kreyòl architecture as they communicate across registers, languages, and borders to construct space. In this study I focus on the construction of

domestic space—a tactic to select a comparable project type that all Kreyòl architects participate in. Moreover, as will be expanded on in the closing chapter, home is entangled with belonging and houses are often—though not always—homes. Home-building, then, is a particularly poignant means of "enacting new imaginaries of the possible" as each design embodies a dream of a possible life. [59] In this quotidian act of futurity and hopefulness, Haitians claim, *nou la*—we're here; we're okay (right now).

[59] Sadiyah Hartman, public lecture Feb. 25, 2019, University of Michigan, Department of History

Chapter 1
Homes in *Rasanblaj*: Assembling a Historiography of Residential Architecture in Twentieth Century Ayiti

On an early evening at an architecture panel held on the gallery of the Maison Dufort, a restored turn of the century, gingerbread-style house, Michèle Pierre-Louis of FOKAL asked of the panelists, “is there a Haitian architecture, or not?” An architect and faculty member at the Université d'Etat d'Haïti, countered that, rather, “we should be asking what is Haitian architecture?” Of which I ask, why are these existential questions the terms of the debate? Why has architecture in Haiti, as in so many other marginalized locations, not been apprehended or historicized? Michel-Rolph Trouillot connected the unthinkable revolution in Saint-Domingue to an analysis of how power affects the production of histories and archives. And though there is scholarship on architecture in Haiti that considers post-revolutionary state buildings and government-sanctioned historic zones, the sites of daily life—the weathered concrete houses of the professional class and the precarious, incrementally built structures of the lower classes; flashy contemporary mansions and sequestered compounds of modest buildings in lush landscapes—are only minimally or incidentally represented in archives. Archives in Haiti, official and otherwise, are difficult to access and documents themselves are at risk of degradation

and destruction by political and physical forces (though important work is underway to ameliorate some of these risks).[60]

A political history of Haiti signals how archival sources and documentation accumulated unevenly throughout the century. The US military and administrative occupation from 1915 – 1934, thoroughly documented certain aspects of their mission, particularly roads built with forced labor and *gendarme* (police) stations, but they were largely uninterested in the domestic space of those outside the merchant and elite classes. The terror of the Duvalier regimes from 1957 – 1984 produced immense silences as people continue to avoid speaking openly about this time and their experiences. The chaotic transitions of the Aristide and defacto governments in the 1990s produced its own quality of absences born of violence, as well as administrative discontinuity. On top of this history, the 2010 earthquake devastated the built environment, its documentation, and, most importantly, the people who created and inhabited it. If as Lauri Anderson sang (remixing an African proverb) that, "when [her] father died, it was like a whole library burned to the ground," then innumerable libraries were lost on January twelfth.[61] In addition, physical libraries, like that which historian Georges Corvington had amassed for his encyclopedic writing on Port-au-Prince were destroyed in the quake. At the Bibliothèque Nationale, after having book request after book request unfilled, a librarian explained to me that

[60] Critical, meaning both necessary and self-reflexive, digitization projects are underway with the Digital Library of the Caribbean, l'Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National, the British Library, Bibliothèque Haïtienne des Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne Collections, Duke University and Radio Haiti, and certainly others, to stabilize and hopefully increase access, including in Haiti, to physically vulnerable documents.
[61] Though many uncited English references quote "When an elder dies, a library burns to the ground," it may be more specifically a West African belief that when a Griot dies, a library burns to the ground suggesting that it is not just the quotidian experiences of a life but the histories, genealogies, songs, and stories that a Griot held that comprised the lost library, LoConto, Clark, and Ware, "The Diaspora of West Africa."

several shelves in the architecture and urbanism section were damaged in the quake leaving less than fifty linear feet of books in the subject area.

But the national library was never a comprehensive collection. The decentralized nature of knowledge production in Haiti means that both published and unpublished documents are in eclectic locations — but the question is where? Who knows where they are? And who can access them? With all the resources of a white, US-based researcher backed by prestigious institutions, it is difficult to locate documents – and it is even more so for Haitian students. Beyond these problems of access, much knowledge about architectural history in Haiti exists as monologues with minimal reference or attribution. Personal channels and face-to-face interactions are primary modes of distribution. In the course of my research, I was privileged to receive several expository lectures on the history of Haitian architecture which assembled similar components – the Taino, the forts of Dessalines, the palace and Citadel of King Christophe, port towns, gingerbread houses, rural peasant houses, and perhaps a modernist reference. These recitations resembled each other suggesting a shared historical narrative, but the only published survey in French or English that I have found is Michael Doret's *The History of the Architecture of Ayiti* (self-published and held in just four libraries in the US and France with digital records). Creating an apparent absence in historical scholarship on Haitian architecture.

Orally transmitted historical narratives are also expert forms of knowledge and often sites of resistance to dominant historiographies, but a polarized class structure means that they are only available to a small group of peers and students and maintaining this history without publication reinforces the exclusivity of architectural history. Ranajit Guha called for "a creative engagement with the past as a story of man's being in the everyday world," to reclaim the

privilege of history to those it has been refused.[62] Writing a historiography of Haitian houses is a tactic to legitimate a subject doubly erased by the refusal of history to non-Europeans and the marginalization of ordinary life and non-pedigreed architecture. The expanding body of work in architecture that takes up ethnographic methods to study design and in anthropology that takes design as a subject, is responding to this desire to engage the quotidian practices of architecture. Just as physical structures cannot be isolated from social structures, neither can historical narratives transmitted about architecture be separated from contemporary practices. Nor can ethnographic studies of architecture stand without critical histories of power. Therefore, the conceit of this chapter within a broadly ethnographic dissertation about communication (and its failures) in residential design is that history is a practice of communication used by architects (and architectural historians) to reform past and future architectures. In this way it is crucial to consider who has said what and how about the built environment in Haiti.

To not reproduce inequities in historiography, I will frame the chapter with a discussion of the stakes of historical temporalities that figure certain architectures as historical or not, vernacular or modern, continuous and ruptured narratives. The detailed work of George Corvington on Port-au-Prince and the *Bulletin* of the Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National (ISPAN) on urbanism, monumental, and institutional architecture are not discussed at length since they do not engage with residential building, but they make an important contribution to the history of architecture and urbanism. With these stakes in mind, I propose a matrix for considering categories of residential architecture that emerge from historical literature and contemporary discourses. I will review the historiography of each of these – by no means

[62] Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History*, 6.

definitive – categories, before closing with consideration of how their composite historiography builds up an image of the creolized cultural product of architecture in Haiti.

Methodology:

Returning to Gina Ulysse's concept of rasanblaj as a method of "assembly, compilation, enlisting, regrouping," I gather up what I have found about historical Kreyòl architecture. I visited national and community libraries, bookstores and personal collections, read society journals, scanned Haitian and US government documents, interviewed scholars and practitioners, toured neighborhoods, sat and listened to elders, and followed Facebook and WhatsApp groups, listening for incidental and intentional discussions of residential architecture. No one can offer an exhaustive and complete image, but this is my rasanblaj of houses. Without direct access to the past, this is a rasanblaj of partial images and narratives. My recounting stories I have received puts a distance between what was and what has been said about it. The former being irrecoverable, the latter becoming history.[63]

Residential architecture in Haiti is often characterized in polarized terms, as "bad" or "charming," poor or old, traditional, or modern. In this rasanblaj, I lean on another Haitian concept, that of the *kalfou* [crossroads or intersection] with spatial, as well as spiritual, implications. The kalfou of temporality and class manifests variations in form, location, material, and scale in residential architecture. Arranging historical materials around this intersection clarifies that which is considered to be old or traditional and that which is considered to be new or modern have more to do with historiography than chronological time. In the four quadrants

[63] Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History*, 51. Thinking with the concept of Itihasa which Guha describes as an indigenous Indian form of storytelling which has been assimilated into world-history through colonization.

described by this kalfou, I locate two "traditional" types used in discourse: the ti kay and the gingerbread house; and two "modern" types: a pedigreed modernism and quotidian modernisms. I will outline a historiography of these discursive types in relationship to the intersections of class and historicity.

Timeless and historical narratives:

In 1851, German architect, Gottfried Semper, was taken with the replica of a "Caraib" hut built in the Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition in London (Figure 1-1). In this hut, he saw the empirical evidence of the primitive hut exemplifying the four elements of architecture. Critically it was, "no phantom of the imagination, but a highly realistic exemplar of wooden construction, borrowed from ethnology."[64] Semper was invested in an evolutionary theory of architecture and he took the primitive hut here as an anthropologically substantiated fact of life for Carib people. The extreme asynchrony of this example is jarring and obfuscating. How could

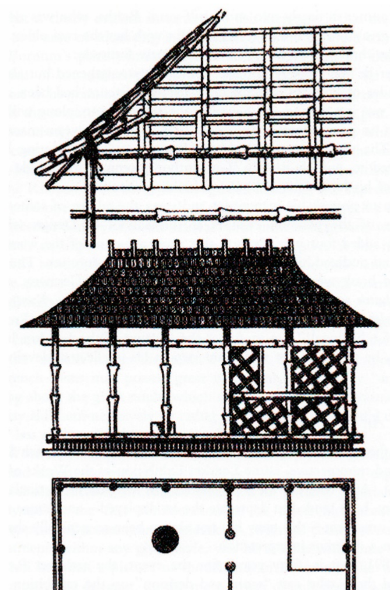

Figure 1-1 Caraib Hut, The Great Exhibition, London (G. Semper, Der Stil, vol. II., 1863)

[64] Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism*, 35–36.

he find the evolutionary roots of modern architecture in this structure physically built in 1851 based on contemporaneous observation of dwellings in Trinidad? The colonial histories of Trinidad and Haiti diverge significantly, but prior to European contact in 1498 and 1492, respectively, both were sites of settlement by the Taino and European colonization decimated both their populations. It appears that a more significant indigenous population persisted in Trinidad with as many as a 1,000 Amerindians identified within the 17,700 inhabitants of Trinidad in 1797.[65] Nonetheless, any building practice in the mid-nineteenth century would inevitably have been a hybridized product of plantation colonialism. To posit that an artifact observed in nineteenth century Trinidad could exemplify an evolutionary origin for contemporaneous architectural styles requires a framework – one which Semper shared with the vast majority of Western scholars – that indigenous peoples and their cultures are timeless and non-historical, that their time is never contemporary.[66]

Figure 1-2 : Taino caney or residence for chief and kin: section and plan, reconstruction in Cuba (Valmé, Gilbert. Atabey, Yacayequey, Caney: 144)

[65] Brereton, Bridget (1981). *A History of Modern Trinidad 1783–1962*. London: Heinemann Educational Books
[66] An idea thoroughly examined in Fabian and Columbia University., *Time and the Other*.

In a contrasting narrative that posits historical continuity, Haitian geographer, Gilbert Valmé, describes the territorial settlement and architecture of the Taino, who inhabited Quisqueya—the Arawak name for the island that Columbus and his compatriots would rename Hispañiola—through archaeological data and cross-island comparisons. Regional settlement patterns were related to kinship and tribal networks and environmental conditions. Valmé suggests, though, that the forms of individual settlements and buildings were aligned with cosmological formations of the Taino. Namely, the *poto mitan*, a Kreyòl term for the central, supporting pole of a conical roof structure, corresponds to *l'axis mundi,* or world axis, which connects the realm of the sky to the realm of the earth.[67] In this interpretation, he implicitly calls up an architectural and religious continuity between the Taino *caney* – a collective sleeping and living quarters – and contemporary structures: the *chacun*, a covered exterior gathering space; and *hounfò,* temples for Vodou services which are oriented around the *poto mitan* (Figure 1-2). The continuity of this narrative is echoed and expanded by architect and sociologist, Didier Dominique and Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique, who located a point of transmission at Puerto Real – the site of a sixteenth century Spanish city on the northern coast where the first enslaved Africans were brought in 1550. There, early physical evidence of creolization exists in the form of a new ceramic type, "colonoware."[68] Moreover, after the self-identified *armée indigène* defeated Napoleon's troops, general turned emperor Dessalines restored the Taino name, Ayiti, to the newly independent nation in 1804. Further evidence of exchanges between indigenous

[67] Valmé, *Atabey, Yacayequey, Caney, 6000 ans d'aménagement territorial préhispanique sur l'île d'Ayiti*, 153.
[68] Dominique and Beauvoir-Dominique, *Textes à Conviction*, 74.

people and enslaved Africans can be found in studies of maroon communities in colonial Saint-Domingue as well neighboring islands.[69]

Indigenous Caribbean dwellings have been narrated, on the one hand, as a timeless instantiation of the architecture of the “other” by European observers like Semper, and, on the other, as part of a genealogy of structures and symbols by Haitian scholars like Valmé and Dominque-Beauvoir. The former denies history to subjects considered less than fully human yet, the former can lead to overly determined narratives that resolve the unrecoverable silences produced in the traumatic ruptures of colonization, genocide, and the transatlantic slave trade. Theorizations of *créolité* developed in literature suggest one way to think through both or multiple temporalities and the frictions and power imbalances between European, African, and indigenous roots.[70] The house in Haiti is and has been a site of rupture and discontinuity, at the same time as it manifests potent contacts and syncretism.

The Ti Kay:

The *ti kay* is a recurrent idea of a rural peasant house, any discussion of which is inherently incomplete without a discussion of the lakou, a yard and collective dwelling space. The ti kay is represented through a colonial lens by the US Marines, as a background element of nostalgic pastoral tourism imagery, and as an anthropological site of vernacular building, but representations like that in Ossey Dubic’s "La Plaine de Léogâne" present the house more holistically as part of social life and agricultural production. The ti kay is often considered to be a so-called vernacular form such that it is temporally suspended in a past that is romantic or

[69] See J. Scott, The Common Wind, chapter one for a discussion of “masterless” people
[70] Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant, *Éloge de La Créolité*; Enwezor, *Créolité and Creolization*.

backwards (or both) depending on the perspective of the observer. Yet, the ti kay is consistently situated in a rural context and often serves as a foil to ideas of urbanization and modernization. Jay Edwards' scholarship on creole and linear cottages across the Gulf Coast establishes a regional context to understand the ti kay within broader creolization studies.[71] While he surfaces rich sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Saint-Domingue, now Haiti, documentation of changes in the ti kay in the early twentieth century are less evidenced.

The idea of the ti kay has been stretched, deformed and reformed, to include the colonial-era quarters of the enslaved population, peasant houses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it has even been redeployed for post-disaster shelters in the twenty first century. Like other "unhistorical" architectures as slighted by Western history a la Banister Fletcher, yet the ti kay has not received a diachronic analysis that considers its historical development. As a vernacular, the rural, peasant house is temporally suspended in a past that is romantic or backwards depending on the perspective of the observer. Yet, it is always situated in a rural context and often serves as foil to ideas of urbanization and modernization. A folklorist gloss on a *maison paysanne,* described it first of all as being impeccably clean due to its courtyard being swept daily and, secondly, as consisting of two rooms – a salon and a bedroom (both of which would be used for sleeping at night).[72] This morphology of a two room house with a pitched roof and rooms enfilade situated in a courtyard and associated with *paysanne* or peasantry is a through line in narratives of the ti kay, though the number and arrangement of rooms vary based on direct

[71] See Edwards, "Unheralded Contributions across the Atlantic World"; Edwards, "Shotgun"; Edwards, "Creolization Theory and the Odyssey of the Atlantic Linear Cottage."
[72] Institut Français d'Haïti and Ministre de la Coopération et du Développement, *Objets Au Quotidien: Art et Culture Populaire En Haïti*, 11.

observation. Except for the woman implied by the activity of daily sweeping, the agency of residents is unremarked.

US. Occupation and the "Primitive Hut": 1915-1934:

The archival record of rural housing in the nineteenth century is thin, but with the coincident popularization of photography and the US Marine occupation of Haiti beginning in 1915, an unintended archive of the rural ti kay was produced by soldiers for reports. Particularly in an album from the First Brigade, soldiers photographed the people, landscapes, and buildings they observed. Assembled in 1920, as the occupation's justification was turning from political and economic stabilization to a civilizing narrative of development, these portraits of Haitian with their houses are framed as primitive and lacking. The archive of the occupiers will never give up its absences, but notable in the photographs of rural houses, only one has been plastered (Figure 1-3). The other houses have been constructed with *clissage* – palm or strips of wood woven between poles – which is exposed, either unplastered or not yet plastered. Multiple

Figure 1-3 Photograph Album, First Brigade, United States Marine Corps in Haiti (Papers of Roscoe Conkling Simmons, 1904-1951)

interpretations of this are possible: one, these are new – not yet completed – structures; and two, they have been built by people without the minimal resources to plaster and seal the house. The absence of information about the location or inhabitants of these houses leaves their interpretation open to all these possibilities and more.

It is also unresolved in reading these photographs how or why the subjects were selected; for example, were they photographed because they supported the soldiers' preconceptions of "authentically" Haitian habitats or did logistical circumstances dictate that they were only exposed to a particularly poor milieu? The agenda of the photographer and the final report by an officer may or may not have coincided.[73] Unlike photographs of municipal and military sites in Port-au-Prince these images are captioned only, Haiti or in one poignant case, "Natives, Haiti" (Figure 1-4). The identification of a group of people in a yard as "natives" underscores the perception of Haitians, particularly of the peasantry, as primitive and indigenous – outside of the modernization project that they were undertaking in the capital of Port-au-Prince.

Figure 1-4 Photograph Album, First Brigade, United States Marine Corps in Haiti (Papers of Roscoe Conkling Simmons, 1904-1951)

[73] The photographs are mounted in an album bound with a typewritten report of the First Brigades operations from 1915-1921 and conditions preceding and at the end of their deployment. "Photograph Album, First Brigade, United States Marine Corps in Haiti (Papers of Roscoe Conkling Simmons, 1904-1951)."

Haïti Cherie, Tropical retreat, 1950s:

After the US. occupation, during the presidency of Dumarsais Estime and into the early years of the dictatorship of François Duvalier, Haiti experienced popularity as tropical tourist destination. Postcards, illustrations, and photographs show similar rural houses but framed now romantically as the authentic background of an exotic paradise. Here timeless that was rendered as primitive by military occupiers could now be framed as the pure, untouched, and pastoral setting for tropical retreat by wealthy tourists from North America and Europe. Writing about this so-called, golden age of tourism in Haiti, Brenda Plummer describes how liberal US aversion to conformity in materialism, increased acceptance, even fetishization, of bronzed skin combined with the perceived security resulting from US-backed loans and financing, all merged to, "[facilitate] the transformation of the Haitian image in the popular American mind from that of a dangerous, hostile land inhabited by superstitious and bestial blacks, to that of a picturesque country whose charms included the quaint and colorful customs of its good-hearted, if unschooled, citizens."[74] At least since the "Haitian Renaissance" popularly marked by the founding of Le Centre d'Art in 1944 and persisting into the contemporary moment, art and tourist paintings often present concordant idyllic images of a rural and pastoral way of life that parallels tropical and exotic portrayals of "Caribbean-ness" throughout the region.[75] These images depend on an exterior representation of ti kay as formally consistent objects in the landscape, settings for daily life in the surrounding space. The unrepresented interiority of the *ti kay* suggests a visual metaphor for the superficial apprehension of the subjecthood of its inhabitants, peasants doubly othered by the global North and the Haitian elite.

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[74] Plummer, "The Golden Age of Haitian Tourism," 15.
[75] Haffner, "'No Word for "Art" in Kreyòl': Haitian Contemporary Art in Transit," 3.

An Ethnographic Gaze, 1960-80s

These treatments are familiar as narratives of vernacular architecture in the global south. As discussed in detail in the introduction, vernacular architecture has been presumed to be stable and unchanging, place-based and the result of continuous knowledge transfer, and thus free of and denied the dynamic shifts and changes of "historical" architecture.[76] Simultaneously contesting and indulging such notions, the work of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, overshadowed by Bernard Rudofsky's more popular *Architecture without Architects,* focused on North America and led her to include Haitian examples in her eclectic study of anonymous architecture.[77] Despite the questionable choice to include the Citadelle Laferriere, a monumental state-sponsored structure, alongside generic examples of houses, sheds, and other small, anonymously built structures in other countries, Moholy-Nagy's unpublished photos from travels in Haiti show a fascination with ti kay (Figure 1-5). In her notes she attends to materials but gives little indication of location or social setting. This is just one example of how low the resolution of data collected on dwellings that are not part of the codified canon of architecture even by scholars particularly interested in them.

Figure 1-5 Anonymous houses, Haiti (Sibyl Moholy-Nagy Papers, UCSC, A-8 - 4.13 HT 3, 5-10)

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[76] Vellinga, "The End of the Vernacular," 179.
[77] Moholy-Nagy, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America*.

On the other hand, scholarship on ti kay as Haitian vernacular by domestic architects including J.B. Millet, Didier Dominique, and Gladys Berrouët underline the ways of living that were integral to domestic architecture and the integration of house structures into outdoor living spaces. Unfortunately, none of the pertinent work done by Haitian researchers has been published or circulated. Located in personal papers and possibly in the uncatalogued collections of ISPAN, this is important work to e recuperated and compiled to establish the state of knowledge.[78]

In her 1980s thesis, J.B. Millet thoroughly documented and analyzed ti kay, and the conceptually and spatially inseparable *lakou* [family compound] sited in the northern department and the central plateau. In contrast to contemporaneous work by US scholar, John Vlach, who prepared dimensioned plans of houses in the south with only walls and apertures, Millet's house plans include the furnishings that mark spatial function, as well as detailed site plans describing the primary functions that occur in outdoor spaces: food prep, cooking, washing, domino playing and other forms of socializing.[79] House size varies dramatically in relationship to resources. Millet describes a hierarchy of ti kay ranging from the most meager one-room *kay a tè* – an A-frame shack, to two, three and up to five rooms.[80] In common, all rooms are arranged enfilade or connected directly so that one passes from one to the other without the use of corridors. She

[78] Unpublished thesis by Janine Millet, Michel Oriol, and Patrick Virex, cover a range of interpretations of vernacular architecture in Haiti and Hispoñiola (or the island as a whole including Dominican Republic) according to Didier Dominique. Apart from Millet, I have been unable to locate and read these documents.
[79] Vlach, "Sources of the Shotgun House: African and Caribbean Antecedents for Afro-American Architecture. (Volumes I and II)"; Millet, "Arquitectura Haitiana."
[80] The *kay a tè* literally, a house on the ground, is a house without walls, just a pitched roof forming a triangular cross-section for the barest shelter. This was most common as a part-time shelter near one's fields but could also be the primary shelter for an extremely poor family. In the contemporary moment in Leogane this is not a form that can be found. The poorest shelters are rectangular and fashioned from cast-off materials: tarps, scraps of wood planks and corrugated metal, sticks.

speculates that the gallery was a French-colonial influence, an addition to a rectangular house built with *clissage,* wattle and daub, and a pitch roof. Galleries were popular in French colonist's houses and so their addition to a little house would demonstrate the achievement of a certain economic position.[81] In the simplest case of a two-room house, the gallery is found on the front face covered by the floor of an attic storage space. In larger houses of three to five room the gallery shifts in position and may be flanked by an extending room or two. Through her detailed and specific documentation, Millet arrives at a taxonomic understanding of ti kay without reducing or abstracting out local and familial variations and offers the sort of scholarship which in conversation with studies of other regions and temporalities points towards a way of comprehending ti kay as a nuanced facet of Haitian architecture.

Drawing methodologically from the social sciences, Amos Rappaport offered another significant break with art historical traditions to consider architecture as a cultural product and cultural setting. Integrating this and archaeological and geographic techniques, scholars like Henry Glassie, Dell Upton, Thomas Hubka, and John Vlach were writing about vernacular architecture as part of the material culture of America – meaning mostly the United States but also a selection of houses in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere in Haiti in Vlach's work.[82] In contrast, John Vlach's dissertation research documented precisely the dimensions and materiality of houses in the western department of Haiti.[83] Far less attention was paid to how the houses were situated or lived, or by whom. Moreover, he studies structures in modern day Nigeria, Haiti, and

[81] Millet, "Arquitectura Haitiana."
[82] Hubka, "Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form"; Vlach, "Sources of the Shotgun House: African and Caribbean Antecedents for Afro-American Architecture. (Volumes I and II)"; Upton and Vlach, *Common Places*; Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia*; Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture*.
[83] Vlach, "Sources of the Shotgun House: African and Caribbean Antecedents for Afro-American Architecture. (Volumes I and II)."

Louisiana to construct an asynchronic, geographic evolutionary narrative of African diasporic vernacular housings. Contemporary evidence of dimensions and photographs are conflated with the historical displacement through the transatlantic slave trade. This work offers useful evidence of housing types in the 1970s, but the asynchronic evolutionary interpretation should be again, and always, suspect.

As discussed in detail in the introduction, vernacular architecture has been presumed to be stable and unchanging, place-based and the result of continuous knowledge transfer, and thus free of and denied the dynamic shifts and changes of "historical" architecture.[84] Due to this framing, it is difficult to discern an accurate chronology of technical and aesthetic developments in the Haitian ti kay. During fieldwork, inquiries into the age of a given house was often answered with a recollection tied to the informant's age. In one family compound in Cormier, Leyogann, a woman that was in her seventies could date the house as having been finished when she was a child. Outside Dabòn, Leyogann, another house has the date that the concrete porch floor was poured in the 1960s; the house predates that but an indeterminate number of years. Based on these vague datings, I presume that the subjects of research in John Vlach's and J. B. Millet's thesis were unlikely to have been built prior to the 1910s, and mostly after the beginning of the US occupation in 1915. In which case, what was the form, material, and ornamentation of typical ti kay prior to the 1920s, prior to US. Occupation? I continue to search for documents – paintings, etchings, written accounts – that can recover this patrimony that predates popular photography.

[84] Vellinga, "The End of the Vernacular," 179.

Gingerbread Houses

Turning to the upper classes and the urban environment, the gingerbread style in Haiti refers to a broad collection of houses built between 1898 and 1935, characterized by decorative trim work, complex steeply pitched roofs, and generous porches and galleries. These houses embodied the wealth of the upper and merchant classes in the early twentieth century. More so than other types, gingerbread houses have been documented and written about by architects, lay enthusiasts, and non-governmental agencies. From impressionistic studies, like artist Anghelen Phillip's oft-cited *Gingerbread houses: Haïti's Endangered Species* to technical preservation reports like those produced here at Columbia University, the gingerbread houses – primarily identified within Port-au-Prince – have been posited since at least the 1970s as a part of Haitian patrimony at risk of loss and destruction (Figure 1-7).[85] Michel Doret, maintained that the gingerbread style houses were, "distinguished in the world by [their] own characteristics, a charm and an attraction that seduces the foreigner and gives a stamp of authenticity to our island."[86] Claims to authenticity should come with flashing red lights. A cursory visual comparison between turn of the century residential architecture across the Americas: in New Orleans, San Francisco, and Curaçao, and other sites of French colonization like Madagascar in Africa, suggest that the gingerbread is a creolized form constituted by multi-directional flows of influences in a cosmopolitan sphere of colonial and postcolonial metropoles and peripheries.

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[85] See the following: Phillips, *Gingerbread Houses*; Columbia University and Graduate School of Architecture, "The Gingerbread Houses of Port-Au-Prince, Haiti"; "Preserving Haiti's Gingerbread Houses: 2010 Earthquake Mission Report | World Monuments Fund"; "Saving the Gingerbread Houses of Port-Au-Prince"; Pierre-Louis, "Restoration and Social Value of the Historic Gingerbread Houses."

[86] Doret, "Un Abrégé de l'histoire de l'architecture Haïtienne," 79–80. (*translation by author)*

In the 1890s the wealthy merchant and elite classes began to leave downtown Port-au-Prince blaming "social ills" including poor drainage, congestion, frequent fires, street commerce for more serene retreats in the then pastoral setting of Bois Verna and then further out from the center in Turgeau.[87] Part of this political and economic reality, the gingerbread style emerged by 1898 and continued to be a popular building style through the US. occupation until 1935. Doret defines the gingerbread style not just as a set of physical characteristics, but as an architectural artifact of a lifestyle particular to Port-au-Prince between 1900 and the 1930s that accommodated socialization and what he called, idleness, on covered galleries.[88] Signaling economic stratification during the US Occupation, these ostentatious displays of wealth coincided with a downturn in the overall Haitian economy and the depletion of domestic timber resources and the increasing importation of bricks and lumber.[89] The economy that produced these large houses

Figure 1-7 Collège Fernand Prosper, Port-au-Prince c. 1920, Anghelen Phillips (Gingerbread Houses, 1975)

Figure 1-7 21 Ave. Rue Dr. Audain, Port-au-Prince 1913, Anghelen Phillips (Gingerbread Houses, 1975)

[87] Lucien, *Une modernisation manquée: Port-au-Prince (1915-1956)*.
[88] Doret, "Un Abrégé de l'histoire de l'architecture Haïtienne," 79–80. (*translation author's own*)
[89] Henochsberg, "Public Debt and Slavery: The Case of Haiti (1760-1915)," 36.

also supported the hiring of some of the first formally trained Haitian architects and engineers. The names of the commissioning owners and their architects are family names that persist in the contemporary elite professional (and political) sphere.[90] If naming is a first step in becoming historical, the capacity afforded to these upper-class houses to identify their owners and designers allows these houses to be considered over others as an "authentically" Haitian architecture by writers like Doret.

Nonetheless, existing scholarship, like artist Anghelen Phillip's oft-cited *Gingerbread Houses: Haïti's Endangered Species*, refers to their "vague" origins, their "elegance and mystery" (Figure 1-7).[91] This wonder at the "at once typically and inexplicably Haitian," nature of this style reveals a persistent failure to consider architectural production in Haiti rigorously—to disambiguate critical differences in material and form—and in the global ecosystem of which it has always been. [92] Historicization by non-specialists like painter Guerdy Préval and artist Anghelen Phillips while insightful creates confusion by including nineteenth century Creole Townhouses that are typical of the historic centers of Cap-Haïtienne and Jacmel, as well as New Orleans' French Quarter.[93] They are multi-storied, with commercial activities on the ground floor and living and entertaining space above but they were typically built of stone or brick walls, with filigreed ornamentation of the balcony in wrought iron, and often were built as attached houses on a continuous block on colonial era grids. Rather the late Victorian shotgun

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[90] Notable architects and engineers involved in this movement include Léon Mathon (1873-1954, arch, Paris), Max Ewald, Georges Baussan (1875-1958, arch, Paris), Frédéric Doret Sr., Léon Maignant, Eugène Maximilien (1875-1950, eng, Haiti – work stint in Paris).
[91] Phillips, *Gingerbread Houses*, 7.
[92] Herbeck, *Architextual Authenticity*, 34.
[93] Creole townhouse is adopted here from its usage in New Orleans to describe a similar, contemporaneous style of mixed-use residence as described in Sauder, "Architecture and Urban Growth in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," 97.

houses of the lower lying regions of New Orleans share more stylistic traits with the Haitian gingerbread as both feature jigsaw cut wood trim, turned spindles, and ornate brackets.[94] They also suggest a mediating scale between the grand gingerbread estates of Port-au-Prince and more modest middle-class and peasant structures in downtown, regional centers like Jeremie and Les Cayes, and even the ornamentation of the eves of some rural ti kay. Professor and architect, Alex Duquel, discusses the gingerbread style as a Haitian vernacular architecture due to its beneficial climactic controls in the form of tall, peaked roofs, high ceilings, and deep galleries that manage the tropical environment, storms, and seismic risks.[95] This is a reasonable evaluation and there are several passive climatic strategies embedded in the gingerbread style that would be welcome re-introductions in contemporary design.

On the other hand, why are the gingerbread houses, along with the post-revolutionary fortresses, singled out above all else as valuable patrimony for preservation efforts? Almost certainly, the wealth and position of their former inhabitants has bolstered their position as sites of value. What social structures and class positions are idealized in restoration? The tendency of scholarship both in and on Haiti towards exceptionalism forecloses understanding the postcolonial style of early twentieth century gingerbread houses as both locally specific and constituted within a cosmopolitan culture. As such they could be understood as a twentieth century creole architecture: emphatically Haitian and inevitably global.

[94] Sauder, 105.
[95] Private interview, March 2018.

Tropical Modernism to Maison Miami

In contrast to these discursively historic and authentic forms, the vast majority of architecture in Haiti, residential and otherwise is built in concrete. Cast-in-place and concrete block have been understood as modern materials for going on a century. Architects trained and practicing in the lineage of international modernism were responsible for the design of many upper-class residences and state-built housing for lower-classes from the 1940s on. By the logics of class and power, there should be and is more documentation of these modernist projects than quotidian concrete houses by small-scale contractors, nonetheless, the residential work of well-known architects is poorly documented and under theorized. There were certainly effects on contractor-built houses, but more evidence would be needed to consider them comparable to what Fernando Lara terms, illiterate modernists, working in Brazil.[96]

State-sponsored modernization projects both under President Estime and Duvalier attempted to use modernism and modern town planning for high profile projects to improve Haiti's international image. Estime's 1949 bicentennial exhibition on the waterfront of Port-au-Prince was an administrative city, but the simultaneous project of Belladère, on the border with the Dominican Republic, was an endeavor to design a complete modern city, including housing, by a team of Haitian architects and engineers.[97] Projects like this paved the way for the careers of the "third generation of Haitian architects" who Doret identified as practicing in a modern style in terms of line and material.[98] The criteria for inclusion are not clear and he offers two partially

[96] Lara, "Illiterate Modernists: Tracking the Dissemination of Architectural Knowledge in Brazilian Favelas."
[97] "Belladère, La Nouvelle," 2.
[98] Doret makes special mention of seven architects and engineers: René Villejoint (l'Ecole Speciale Supérieure des Travaux Publics et du Bâtiment de Paris), Max Ewald (l'Ecole Beaux-Arts or l'Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture et à l'Institut d'Urbanisme – both cited in consecutive paragraphs), Gérard Fombrun (l'Université d'Etat d'Haïti), Albert Mangonès (Cornell University), Paul Mathon (training not indicated), Pélissier and Villemenay (training not indicated), Camile Tesserot (training not indicated), "Un Abrégé de l'histoire de l'architecture Haïtienne," 80–81.

overlapping lists but among them three were trained in Paris, one in the US at Cornell, one at the state university in Port-au-Prince and for three he fails to include information on where they were trained. One possible interpretation is that he did not indicate their educational institutions because they were not formally trained – alternatively, they may have taken courses at the state university, but may not have received their diplomas. The balance of these educational paths supports popular understandings that many architects were trained abroad – in this generation France was still more popular, in the coming decades Mexico (and other Spanish speaking territories – Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic) and the United States would become educational destinations. The persistent families begin to emerge as well – he speaks of Gerald Fombrun, Albert Mangonès, and Paul Mathon – the children of these architects continue to practice in Port-au-Prince today.

Unlike the administrative city of the bicentennial exposition, Belladère, close to the border with the Dominican Republic, was an endeavor to design a complete modern city – including housing – by a team headed by the architects, Franck Jeanton and René Villejoint along with engineers Paul Pereira and Clement Pauline. They designed and oversaw the first phase of construction of Belladère which opened in 1948 (Figure 1-8).[99] While the special issue of ISPAN dedicated to the Belladère project goes into some detail about the design of the public structures; namely, the boys' and girls' schools, mayor's office, and hotel nightclub, little is said about the residences indicated on the site plan and shown in two exterior photographs. No indication of the layout of the houses is made but from the facade, where four windows symmetrically flank a covered entry way, and in the footprints on the site plan we can see that

[99] "Belladère, La Nouvelle," 2.

they are of a modest scale and single level. The horizontal emphasis of the roof line, porch, and cantilevered lintels above the window openings all resonate with the aesthetics of the International Style that its designers would have been exposed to during their education in France.

Fifteen years later, François Duvalier also set out to build a modern city, but in his name and inspired by Brasilia. Publicity materials described how Duvalierville was a symbol for the modern improvement of the country. As in other cité ouvert or public housing projects, the "sanitary" housing which was to be built to replace poor self-built housing was fundamentally

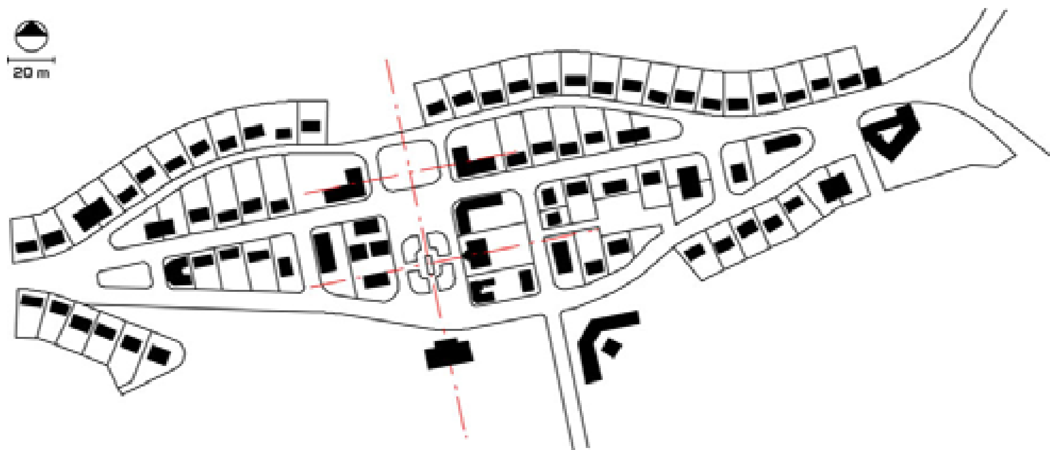
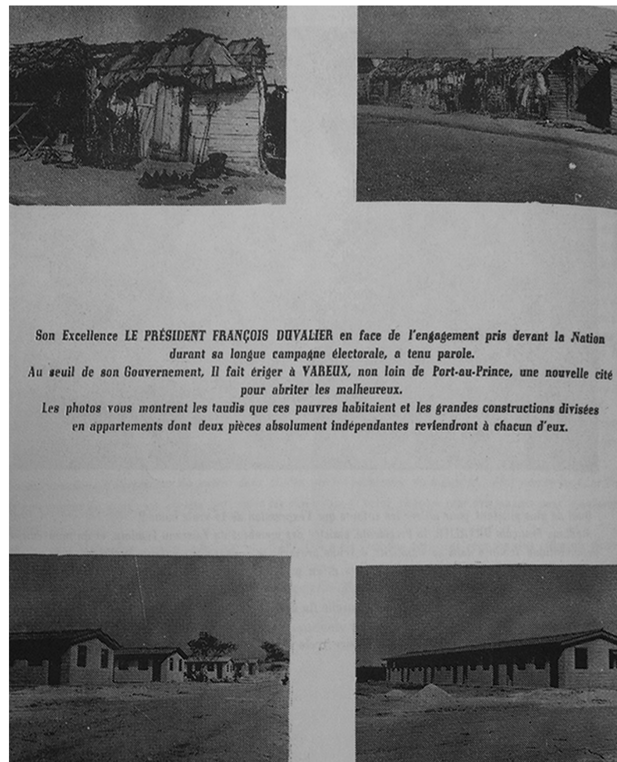


Figure 1-8 Site plan of Belladère showing central axis and footprint of government buildings around the plaza and residences on the upper spine (Bulletin d'ISPAN 12)

inadequate.[100] Families were allocated two rooms transposing the small peasant house into concrete block but without accounting for lost outdoor living spaces and social networks. Begun in 1961 with displacement of the villagers of Cabaret, the full scope of the project was never completed and in 1986 when son Jean-Claude Duvalier left power, residents were still clamoring for potable water provisions.[101]

[100] Boucard, "Impact Psycho-Sociologique Du Transfert Des Anciens Résidents de La Saline a La Cite Simone O. Duvalier No. 1."
[101] Williams, "Haiti Name Changed."

Duvalier’s government was explicit in their expectation that housing could be used to rehabilitate the disorderly masses. Trained as a medical doctor and the director of the ministry of public health during Estime’s presidency, Duvalier and his Duvalierville fits in line with a biopolitical belief in the capacity for orderly, sanitary housing to create an orderly, productive population. Whether or not that is possible, in Duvalierville, as in an earlier project, Cité Simon, the modern option was fundamentally inadequate.[102] Families were to be allocated two rooms –



Son Excellence LE PRÉSIDENT FRANÇOIS DUVALIER en face de l’engagement pris devant la Nation
durant sa longue campagne électorale, a tenu parole.
Au seuil de son Gouvernement, Il fait ériger à VAREUX, non loin de Port-au-Prince, une nouvelle cité
pour abriter les malheureux.
Les photos vous montrent les taudis que ces pauvres habitaient et les grandes constructions divisées
en appartements dont deux pièces absolument indépendantes reviendront à chacun d’eux.

Figure 1-9 "The pictures show you the slums that these poor people lived in and the large buildings divided into apartments, two absolutely independent rooms of which will come back to them." In Duvalierville, Un Symbol (BFLG)

not two bedrooms, but two rooms – transposing the one to three room peasant house into concrete block but without accounting for the outdoor living space that had surrounded those minimal structures to provide space for cooking, socializing, bathing, work and rest (Figure 1-9).

[102] Boucard, “Impact Psycho-Sociologique Du Transfert Des Anciens Résidents de La Saline a La Cite Simone O. Duvalier No. 1.”

In a short vignette in Graham Greene's satirical novel about the Duvalier dictatorship, an American politician and investor on being brought to see Duvalierville under construction describes the view beyond the exuberant cockfighting ring where, "there were four houses built with tilted wings like wrecked butterflies; they resembled some of the houses of Brasilia seen through the wrong end of a telescope" (Figure 1-10).[103] These single family dwellings had rooms for interior living and small yards for outside living, small gardens, etc. These structures were primarily allotted to supporters of Duvalier, members of the Tonton Macoutes – the violent secret police force, and other people acceptable to the Duvalier government.

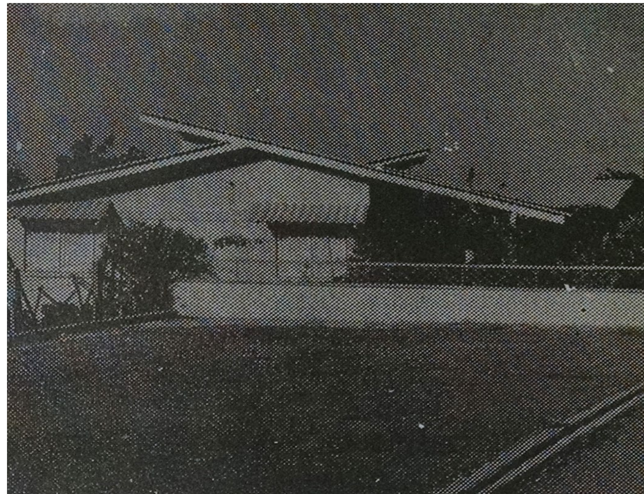


Figure 1-10 : Single family housing units in "Duvalierville, Un Symbol" (BFLG)

Despite the national reputation of an architect like Albert Mangonès, who was most famous not for a building for his sculpture, the Nèg Mawon, across from the National Palace, there is an absence of histories and theorization of residential modernist architecture in Haiti. The documentary film by Arnold Antonin, *Albert Mangonès: l'espace public*, despite its titular

[103] Greene references the state-planned project for the capital of Brazil, Brasilia in the 1960s which featured designs by Oscar Niemeyer. Duvalierville was internally compared to or modeled after certain characteristics of Brasilia but was built on top of the existing town of Cabaret and began with the clearance of existing residences. "Island Luminous." from Island Luminous, http://islandluminous.fiu.edu

Figure 1-11 Residence of Mr. and Mrs. André Mangones, Albert Mangones, Port-au-Prince 1942 (A.D. White Architectural Photographs, Cornell University Library)

Figure 1-12 Residence, R. Malbranche, Port-au-Prince, c. 1970 (personal papers)

interest in Mangonès' public work, incidentally, offers a rare consideration and documentation of his residential projects in Port-au-Prince and Martissant (Figure 1-11). Mangonès was responsible for many projects for intellectuals and artists, elites, and the professional class, including his own home and the popular mid-century nightlife and resort spot: Habitation Leclerc in Martissant. He and his contemporaries negotiated professional practice under dictatorship, balancing security, and complicity to live under a terrorizing dictatorship. The years of Papa Doc in fact saw the extensive construction of houses for the new middle class of Duvalierists, particularly in Delmas and Martissant. A descendant of R. Malbranche recalls that many of those who had the means to build and employ her father were Tonton Macoutes (Figure 1-12). Commissions such as they can be presumed to have been both politically and economically expedient.

One way of situating these projects in the global trends of modernism is through a genealogy that traces the pedagogical training of Haitian architects and engineers in France and the United States or with professors from a prior generation trained overseas. The other way

which perhaps offers more space for considering the national trend versus individual pedigree is in relationship to other so-called tropical architectures. Within the discourse of critical regionalism, Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre curated modernist architects practicing in post-colonial contexts after 1945. While recovering the potentially overlooked work of architects in the global south like Lina Bo Bardi and Minette de Silva, their narrative exemplifies tropical architecture as a shifting discourse that, as Jiat-Hwee Chang argued from the Singaporean context, privileges climate and technical knowledge over the grounded practices of tropical places that emerge from social, political, and economic concerns as much as climactic.[104] At issue here is how to usefully locate the work of modernist architects in Haiti within a global portfolio without indulging the othering framing of the tropical as a site of sensuality.

In the search for defining characteristics of modernism in places that have been constructed as not of the west, Vikram Prakash raises the question whether it isn't just modernism.[105] Despite the complete absence of Haiti and Haitian architects from the academic canon of modernist architecture, they were not just influenced by but physically present in the same European and North American milieu credited with the development modern architecture styles. From unconfirmed reports that Robert Baussan, Georges Baussan's son, worked in Le Corbusier's atelier, to the thoroughly documented presence of Albert Mangonès among the artists of the Harlem Renaissance, we must be careful that in trying to recuperate what has been marginalized, we don't reinforce its position in marginalia. Modern architecture in Haiti is one of many centers in tropical post-colonial countries as well as northern, imperial, and equally post-colonial, countries.

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[104] Chang and King, "Towards a Genealogy of Tropical Architecture."
[105] Prakash, "Third World Modernism, or Just Modernism: Towards a Cosmopolitan Reading of Modernism."

Figure 1-13 Gary Channel (1959) La quête de l'eau (Expressions Galerie d'Art)

Modern Vernacular, Concrete Block houses

A more quotidian modernism of less explicit lineage saw the rising middle-class neighborhoods of Martissant and Delmas filling not just with commissioned works from pedigreed architects as mentioned prior. Rather they were largely built by contractors in a modern style featuring detached and sometimes sculptural columns, open floor plans, smooth plaster finishes, interpenetration of exterior and interior spaces. In some cases, builders deploy similar formal and spatial techniques to the pedigreed modernists suggesting a similar phenomenon as architectural scholar Fernando Lara has described, in the Brazilian context, of builders integrating modernist principles regardless of their disciplinary knowledge of the movement.[106]

Anecdotally, the period of extreme instability after the end of the Duvalier regimes in the 1980s was a turning point in architectural form as people increasingly invested in enclosures for

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[106] Lara, "Illiterate Modernists: Tracking the Dissemination of Architectural Knowledge in Brazilian Favelas."

physical and psychic protection.[107] Finding a division line between middle- and lower-class instances of these structures is difficult but important in terms of building quality, methods, materials. Because this type of residential architecture is not apprehended by the architecture discipline there is very little documentation and even less to discuss in terms of historiography. There were public discourses framing the lower-class versions of concrete block houses in aggregate as a menace or ill to be resolved – or removed.[108] Contemporary practitioners, much like their forefathers (or actual fathers) in the 1960s, describe these middle- and lower-class structures as an unfortunate and recent incursion. At the turn of the twenty first century, different labels for these block houses – *kay modèn*, *kay blòk, maison Miami,* or *kay Delmas*—each flag subtle connotations of class, scale, quality, and form for Haitians.[109] Yet, none of them are considered to be "authentically" Haitian. They are modern, imported, inauthentic, and a break from "how things were before" - a constantly renewed rupture over the course of at least fifty years of discourse.

Nonetheless, artistic representations demonstrate that similar structures have been built since at least the 1950s. As rendered in Channel's 1950s neighborhood, the relative socioeconomic status of the builders and inhabitants of modest, concrete block homes was higher than it is today (Figure 1-13). Additionally, the influence of an International Style aesthetic of rectilinear, grids, flat roofs, and subdued decorative motifs has waned. From examples at the turn of this twenty first century, one finds an increase in actual, or often faux, pitched roof lines,

[107] Personal conversations with Gladys Berrout and Jacques Jean Ververt
[108] Blanchet and Pereira, "Le problème du logement à Port-au-Prince"; Mangonès, *En toute urbanité*.
[109] Maison Miami references Miami Florida, but also North American suburban houses in general and Delmas refers to a municipality within metropolitan Port-au-Prince built up significantly since the 1970s first by rising middle and upper classes. Houses in Delmas could be characterized as more suburban than the dense historic row houses of downtown Port-au-Prince or country home styled houses of Bois Verna (c. 1920) and Petionville (c. 1990 to present).

decorative plaster work, pseudo-classical column capitals, and other tasted dismissed by the architecture discipline. Beyond the façade, partially enclosed indoor/outdoor living areas are increasingly enclosed. In contrast to the upper- and middle-class manifestations of concrete construction, most residential construction is an aesthetically consistent type of housing featuring rectilinear volumes, with minimal window and door openings. Though size and material quality vary, it proliferates both in insecure urban neighborhoods—slums or bidonvilles as they are widely known—as well as in lower-middle class housing within urban, peri-urban, and even predominantly rural area. This can be considered as a contemporary and urban cousin of the *ti kay* serving the poorer end of the economic spectrum. It is not recognized by trained architects as architecture; nonetheless, this modern vernacular emerges from local conditions. It is built in concrete, the most readily available local material – despite there being no domestic producer of reinforcing steel. It does not respond particularly well to local climactic conditions of heat and dust, but their weight serves to resist hurricanes and tropical storms. Explicitly, they are designed for security; small apertures, elaborate metal bars and gates, and concrete block fences all respond to – often substantiated – fears of insecurity, theft, and violence. Ironically, given poor construction standards, the weight and enclosures used to create a sense of psychic security put people at grave risk for catastrophic failures like pancaking in the 2010 earthquake, and inevitable future seismic events.

In the larger context of Latin America and the Caribbean, a modest, block typology recurs while locally preferred materials – concrete block or ceramic bricks – for wall infill may vary. Lara, in studying middle-class housing and *favela* homes in Rio de Janeiro, describes how modernism became vernacular in Brazil. Morphological and ornamental styles used in upper-class homes and Brazilian modernist institutional projects were adopted by contractors and

laborers who would also be responsible for building middle-class and lower-class homes for themselves or clients.[110] Whereas in Brazil, modernism became immensely popular as a style for both state and private building, in Haiti modernism was deployed in state-sponsored projects in the mid-century as described earlier in this chapter but did not become integrated into a national consciousness of a design identity. Prior to the 1980s, characteristic motifs of modernism: flat roofs, horizontal windows, free-standing columns, and interpenetration of interior and exterior space were common features in working, middle- and upper-class houses. Since 2000 at the latest, decorative, and formal elements from North American developer housing – pediments over window openings, ornamented columns, plaster cornices and other non-structural features of facades have been popularly applied to structural similar forms creating, perhaps, an "illiterate postmodern" pastiche. This rapid evolution suggests that concrete block construction signifies less a modernist heritage and more a continued effort for modernity.

Conclusion:

If anything, the irregularities of this historiography point to several urgent avenues for historical research into Haitian architecture, particularly with regards the second half of the twentieth century. Bearing in mind the US occupation from 1915-1934, Estime's popular building campaigns in the 1940s, the Duvalier's' dictatorship from 1957-1986, and the instability that followed through the election of Aristide and subsequent coupes, a political history of Haiti signals how archival sources and documentation accumulated unevenly throughout the century. As an administrative occupation, the US military and government thoroughly documented certain aspects of their mission, particularly public works and institutional building projects, but

[110] Lara, "Modernism Made Vernacular: The Brazilian Case."

they were largely uninterested in the domestic space of those outside the merchant and elite classes. The terror of the Duvalier regime produced immense silences, and chaotic political maneuvers in the last decade of the twentieth century has resulted in absences born of administrative dysfunction and partisan discontinuity. On top of all this, the 2010 earthquake devastated the built environment and its documentation, and, most importantly, its creators and caretakers.[111] Nonetheless, a contemporary historical approach attending to social medias, bureaucratic histories, and oral histories in addition to formal archives has a wealth of information at hand to investigate deeply, the what, how, and why of Haitian architecture.

Attending to the breadth of these narratives leads to us questioning when Haitian architecture has been posited, as in the case of peasant houses, as a timeless instantiation of the architecture of the "other" in relation to an occidental tradition, in contrast to a continuous tradition of structure and symbolism within a Haitian cosmology. The first denies history to subjects considered less than fully human and, yet the second can lead to overly determined narratives that resolve the unrecoverable silences produced in the traumatic ruptures of colonization, genocide, and the transatlantic slave trade. Here we try to thread the needle of exceptionalism. Just as Kreyòl is not a bastardization of French, so architectural styles in Haiti related to global trends are neither imports nor imitations. They are Kreyòl phenomena embedded in international media and particular to their place, time, and author.

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[111] I am particularly mourning here the staff of the national planning and mapping offices who died along with at least 150,000 other people. I am also marking the loss of personal libraries like that of historian Georges Corvington which was one of the most extensive collections of documents about the physical history of Haiti and of damage to the Bibliothèque National and other libraries.

Chapter 2
L'Architecte: Discourse and Discord in the Establishment of the Profession

Celebrating the successful completion of the final design studio by nine architecture students at the Université Quisqueya (UniQ) in Port-au-Prince, the professor Alex Duquella offered some reflections to the future architects on the potential of design via text message:

> On doit réfléchir à créer à prendre des initiatives. Tout un pays à construire.
> Nous attendons un emploi.
> Nous avons appris une forme d'architecture. Nous devrions travailler sur d'autres formes associées aux modes de construction traditionnelle pour utiliser les matériaux locaux et la main d'œuvre locale. Pour réduire les coûts et permettre plus d'emploi.
> Notre créativité peut aller vers des domaines variés que l'école n'a pas encore envisagés.
> [We must think about design taking initiative. A whole country to be built. We are waiting for a job.
> We have learned a form of architecture. We should work on other forms associated with traditional building methods that use local materials and local labor. To reduce costs and allow for more jobs.
> Our creativity can go into various areas that the school has not yet considered.][112]

Duquella's call to action and change in the profession elicited the following response from a student:

> On a été formé à répondre aux attentes des clients à satisfaire le client
> Hier j'ai pu assister à une partie de la présentation ils ne sont pas nombreux les projets qui vise un problème au sein de la société et être une solution
> [We have been trained to meet the expectations of clients, to satisfy clients.
> Yesterday I was able to attend part of the presentation, there [were] not many projects that targeted a problem within society and [aimed] to be a solution]

[112] Alex Duquella, WhatsApp message to author, July 15, 2018. Duquella forwarded the conversation to me following my participation as an external reviewer for the course in question.

To which Duquella responded :

> Je ne comprends pas. Les projets abordent des problèmes de la société. Il faudrait questionner la méthode et le coût et la participation des gens aux problèmes de leur milieu.
> I do not understand. The projects address the problems of society. The methods and the cost and the participation of people in the problems of their environment must be questioned

Both the professor and the student identified a discordance between the practice and education of architects. Both identified certain shortcomings of the school. Both advocated for architects to contribute to positive social change through the built environment. And yet, they arrived at opposite evaluations of the same projects. Duquella felt that the public-serving projects that students had undertaken—including cultural centers, transportation terminals, sports facilities, and a fire station—directly addressed social problems. He called attention to the passivity of the architecture profession itself and campaigned for engagement with local building traditions. The student, on the other hand, did not see projects targeting social problems. He perceived their curriculum as being oriented not toward social problems and their solutions but primarily towards private, presumably wealthy, clients. This student desired even greater attention to social problems and solution-oriented design proposals. The discordance between this professor and student of different generations and social positions captures several unresolved questions about the role and responsibility of Haitian architects.

In this chapter, I consider how similar misalignments have been made throughout the published discourse of architectural institutions and how they are reproduced in the socialization of architects through design education and by the national professional association. I look at instances when architects have made explicit and implicit claims to the roles, responsibilities,

and regulation of architects to understand how claims to serving the public good misalign with practices that depend on wealthy and powerful clients or interests in Haiti. Centralization of political and economic power in the capital of Port-au-Prince extends to the architectural institutions in which disciplinary discourses are produced. The primary contributors to institutional discourse are architects and engineers from privileged backgrounds with the means and access to participate in or lead these institutions. With these social dynamics in mind, this chapter cannot claim to be an exhaustive consideration of architectural practices in Port-au-Prince but provides, rather, a discursive analysis of the authorized institutions that work to define and propagate the discipline.

The first section of the chapter considers written discourse produced by the two architectural societies in Haiti in the twentieth and twentieth-first centuries: Association des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtiens (AIAH, 192X-196X) and Collège national des Ingénieurs et Architectes haïtiens (CNIAH, 1972-present). I begin with a historical overview of the development of architectural institutions, both educational programs and the professional societies, since the late nineteenth century. I then turn to a close analysis of published texts found in archives and private papers in which architects and engineers have defined the scope of their professions. These documents issued by AIAH and CNIAH, sequentially, whose members had graduated from schools of architecture and engineering. The discourses represented by these documents is informed by the habitus of architects, which is developed through socialization and professionalization inside universities, firms, and professional organizations.[113] Therefore, in the second section of the chapter, I analyze the internal dialogue of architects in formation at the

[113] Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*; Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*.

UniQ, one of the two architecture programs in the country, through a film screening and design studio reviews I was invited to as a guest reviewer.[114]

This chapter investigates the question of what constitutes architecture as a profession in Haiti, a question of interest to individuals who identify themselves as architects. The operational definition of an architect in Haiti is a person with a domestic degree in architecture approved by the secretary of education or an equivalent degree from a foreign institution. This is the basic criterion used to admit architects and engineers into CNIAH.[115] By this definition, my training in architecture would have qualified me for membership despite being unlicensed in the US. While I did not become a member during my ethnographic fieldwork and despite my status as a foreigner, professional architects still recognized me as a fellow architect and communicated with me as such. Because of our shared training and my subject expertise, I was welcomed into educational spaces, design firms, meetings of the professional organization, and join informal gatherings of young professionals where I was very much a participant-observer.

Based on my ethnographic participation in formal meetings, social events, and educational activities, I analyze the formation of architects and their personal and professional identities from a perspective that complicates the written claims of their institutions. My own training at a U.S. university and in a Western modernist tradition requires a self-reflexive interrogation of the assumptions I bring to the observation and analysis of architectural pedagogy and practice. While I played an active role in project-design reviews and classroom discussions

[114] The second program is at the state university UEH, I was invited by faculty associated with UniQ and tried but was unable to secure invitations to events at UEH. I met with the vice rector of research at UniQ to explain my project but did not have a formal scholarly relationship with the school.

[115] The application in 2018 required a modest membership fee, biographical information, a copy of one's diploma, curriculum vitae, identity card, and any prior CNIAH certificate

focused on questions of design, the central focus of my research was on the ways faculty and students communicated design ideas and professional values. Discursive definitions of the profession as it has been and should be often recurred in dialogue, text messages, and activities, particularly among a new generation of architects and engineers who were working to chart the directions of their careers.

By examining an architecture community based in Port-au-Prince, I show how they represent themselves to internal and external audiences. The AIAH charter and journals and CNIAH conference proceedings and contemporary publicity materials are unambiguous statements about the profession produced by the profession, though they also indicate internal debates and conflicts. Though framed as publicly facing documents, there is no statistical evidence of readership available making it difficult to determine the extent of their influence outside of the association's membership. Much as the steel of seismic reinforcement is hidden from sight, encased in concrete, the disciplinary function of architects is obscured by polarized social strata. The mismatch between institutional discourses and the daily experiences of practicing architects undermines the coherence and power of professional organizations. Working within these limitations, I aim to identify some of the sources of discordance between the definition and practice of architecture in Haiti. This kind of discordance is not new, similar issues resurface in documents spanning over seventy years, nor unique to Haiti.

However, the centralization of academic and professional institutions in Port-au-Prince as well as particularities of language, class, race, and politics make it a case worth studying. While focused on practices in Haiti, it is key to recall that the country is not isolated and that there has been a continuous exchange between global and local architectural communities through media, education, and the movement of architects themselves.

A brief history of Haitian architectural institutions

Despite irregularities and scattered documentation, architecture institutions in Haiti offered narratives of their activities via charters, organizing documents, publicity, and internal debates. An important contribution to the study of global practices of architecture and to the history of architecture in Haiti could be made in the writing of a more complete institutional history of the professional societies of architects and engineers in Haiti over the course of the last century. and would require the collection of oral histories and personal papers, given the paucity of archival records available. Nonetheless, the brief history given here marks key moments, figures, and institutions in the definition of architecture in Haiti.

Masons and carpenters from France and Africa, enslaved and free, in addition to French engineers (both civil corps and private citizens) operated in colonial Saint-Domingue (1659-1803) and the apprenticeship of master builders and carpenters presumably continued in independent Haiti throughout the nineteenth century.[116] Two of Haiti's most well-known monuments, the Citadel and the Palace Sans-Souci, built in the years immediately after independence in 1804 stand as evidence of engineers at work in the country.[117] But the institutional history of architecture in Haiti begins with the establishment of the École des

[116] Gauvin Bailey uses colonial archives to show the activities of an ecosystem of builders in the French Atlantic. While his study of practices in Haiti ends with the revolution, Georges Anglade's connection of the craftsman's workshop with the formation of lakou—and common sense—suggest that master builders and carpenters who were free people of color or enslaved under the colonial regime would have continued their trade in independent Haiti. More research on the building trades during the nineteenth century remains to be done. See Bailey, *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire*; Anglade, *Atlas Critique d'Haïti (Digital)*.

[117] The credit for the design of the Citadelle Henry (also known as Citadelle Laferrier) is not entirely resolved but according to Bulletin d'ISPAN No. 8, Gérard Jolibois wrote that Henry Barré was the Haitian engineer on the project in "Le saviez-vous," *Le Nouveau-Monde*, November 5, 1980

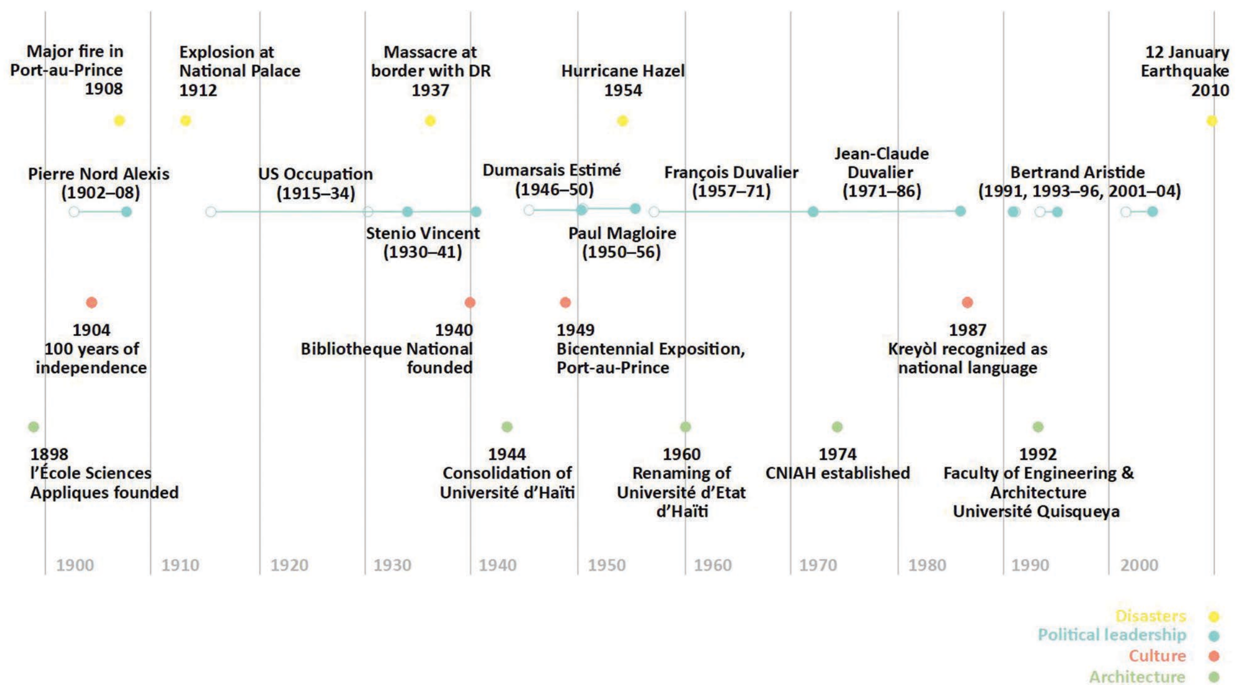

Figure 2-1 Timeline of major political, natural, and professional events in twentieth century Haiti

Science Appliquées in 1898 by a group of architects and engineers returned from training in France. The school began providing technical training that combined the study of civil engineering and architecture to prepare future generations of engineer-architects and the first graduates received their diplomas in 1905.[118] The school became known as the École Polytechnique and was eventually incorporated into the Faculté des Sciences at the Université d'Haïti (today the Université d'État d'Haïti) (Figure 2-2).[119] Prior to the formation of the École des Science Appliquées, Haitians were obliged to study abroad. After its creation, many Haitian architects and engineers continued to choose to attend universities abroad for varied reasons such that through the present day there is a confluence of educational backgrounds with representation of North American, European, and Latin American schools in the profession.

[118] Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, "Charte," 47.
[119] Doret, *History of the Architecture of Ayiti*, 1:56.

Figure 2-2 Faculte des Sciences building, Port-au-Prince c. 1970, R. Malbranche (personal papers)

In 1923, the first formal association of architects, AIAH, was founded with around fifty members.[120] In 1959, a contributor to the *Revue de l'Association des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtiens* (Revue) wrote that the association struggled to establish itself in the 1920s and then passed through a long period of "lethargy" until 1943.[121] This so-called lethargy coincided with the administrative and military occupation of Haiti by the U.S. Marine Corps (1915–1934). A number of major infrastructure projects were undertaken by the Ministry of Public Works during the period of U.S. occupation, including the building of road networks, bridges and canals, as well as the continued centralization and expansion of Port-au-Prince, but the US controlled much construction either explicitly or implicitly at this time.[122] It is unclear what impact this had on the business activities of Haitian architects and engineers but the administrative control of the US may have contributed to the weakness of the new professional organization.

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120 "Quelques Mots Sur La Revue," 7.
121 "Quelques Mots Sur La Revue," 7.
122 Lucien, *Une modernisation manquée: Port-au-Prince (1915-1956)*.Page needed

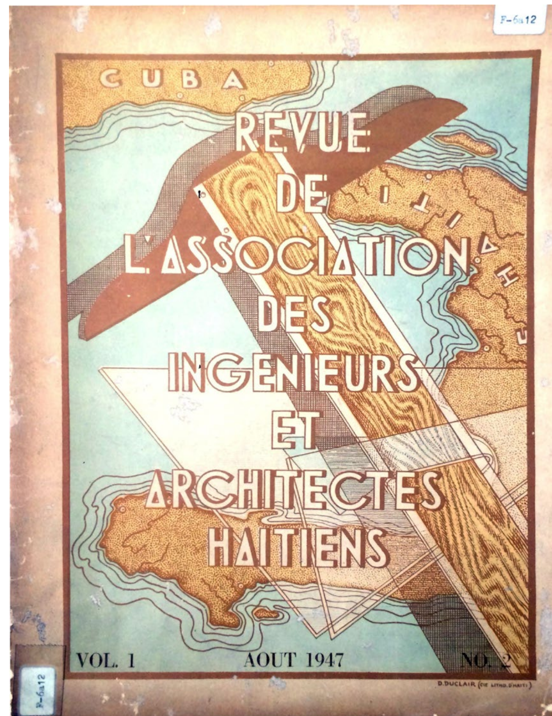

Figure 2-3: Cover of 1947 edition of AIAH Revue (Schomburg Center)

After the end of the occupation, Haitian President Dumarsais Estimé undertook large public works projects, including the Bicentennial Exposition in Port-au-Prince and the town of Belladère in the north during his administration (1946–50). Concurrently, AIAH was reinvigorated by new leadership and listed 204 active members in the 1947 *Revue* (Figure 2-3).[123] There was a gap in publication from 1947 until 1955 when the association published a formal charter that defined the scope and responsibilities of building professionals and the government of Haiti issued a decree that established codes for residential construction.[124] Without knowing the authors of the residential construction code, it cannot be said definitively

[123] "Revue de l'Association Des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtiens, Vol. 1 - No. 2," 37. Issue number 1 has not been located in the archives and a note in the introduction to no. 2 suggests it may have been in a newsletter format which may not have been retained or submitted to the archives.
[124] "Revue de l'Association Des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtiens, Vol. 2 - No. 1," 52 ; Décrie No. 55-1394, October 22, 1955

that the two documents were developed in tandem, but both were published in October of 1955 and appear to work together to formalize and regulate the built environment and professional activities. This momentum was interrupted by the political turmoil of 1956–57 which resolved in the election of François Duvalier.[125] The last identified *Revue* was published in 1959, and contributors discussed at length the state of the profession and the importance of the 1955 charter. It also listed its roster of 408 members which was double that of 1947.[126] Without mention in accessible documents, it is difficult to say at what point AIAH completely ceased to operate but given the antagonism of the Duvalierist state towards institutions outside of the executive branch that Michel-Rolph Trouillot notes it is likely that there is a correlation between this dormancy and Duvalier's consolidation of power in the 1960s.[127]

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the education of architects and engineers continued at the École Polytechnique and then under the auspices of the Faculté des Sciences which eventually merged with a number of schools and programs to form the Université d'Haïti. As Darlene Dubuisson writes in her study of Haitian intellectuals, the public university has been the standard bearer for higher education in Haiti since its formal establishment in 1944. Reformulated as the Université d'Etat d'Haïti (UEH) in 1960 under Duvalier, the institution has been known as both a site of political resistance and as having served the interests of the socioeconomic elite of the country.[128] The first graduates of the École

[125] In December 1956 President Paul Magloire fled the country and his vacancy was followed by a six-month period of unstable governance with François Duvalier elected and sworn in as president in June 1957.
[126] "Revue de l'Association Des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtiens, Vol. 2 - No. 1," 58–61.
[127] First elected in 1957—a period of tumult noted in the preface to the 1959 *Revue*—Duvalier purported to be unanimously re-elected in 1961 and declared himself President for Life in 1964. Trouillot writes that "the Duvalierist state could not tolerate the existence of any institution out of the Executive itself. Thus it shattered the internal hierarchy within each of the country's institution," it is reasonable to consider this as a contributing factor to disappearance of AIAH. In *State Against Nation*, 173.
[128] Dubuisson, "Place-Making in a Fractured Academic Landscape," 90–92.

Polytechnique were awarded diplomas in 1905. The size of cohorts increased on average over the decades until by the 1940s and 1950s there were ten to twenty civil-engineer and architect-engineer graduates each year.[129] Many Haitian students, particularly those from families with economic means, continued to study abroad and either emigrate or return with their international perspectives on the built environment. During the regimes of François and later Jean-Claude Duvalier (1971-86), a substantial number of intellectuals and members of the professional class emigrated abroad.[130] While it cannot be confirmed, it is likely that there was attrition in the ranks of architects and engineers in tandem with this migration.

Nonetheless, in 1974, Jean-Claude Duvalier's government issued a decree establishing CNIAH as a non-state body with the responsibility for oversight and regulation of architects and engineers. Despite political turmoil after Duvalier was removed from power, CNIAH's activities continued, at least intermittently, through 1988 when they hosted a conference discussing urgent challenges facing the country's architects and engineers. At some point during the political insecurity of the mid-1990s and early 200s, CNIAH was reanimated in 2010 in the aftermath of the earthquake and has been active since. They continue to meet and expand their website at the time of writing in 2020 and are debating a name change and clarification of the function of the body either as an order or an association—a debate tied to questions about the role of a professional society which I will discuss in the closing section of this chapter. Like AIAH which preceded it, CNIAH's publications have been intermittent and signal periods of organizational activity and dormancy in relationship with national politics.

[129] Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, "Charte," 47–52.
[130] Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, 173–74.

Contemporaneous with the establishment of CNIAH, the Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National (ISPAN) was formed in 1979 as an autonomous unit of the Ministry of Culture and Communication to preserve monuments and sites of importance for national heritage. ISPAN's early work included the large-scale restoration of the Citadelle Laferrier outside Milot in the north of Haiti. A generation of architects and preservationists, including prominent architects Albert and Frédérick Mangonès and Patrick Delatour, worked with UNESCO and the World Monuments Fund on high-profile preservation projects. Since 2009, ISPAN has published the monthly *Bulletin d'ISPAN*, both in print and in digital form, to share research and activities related to Haiti's built heritage.[131] Unlike the AIAH *Revue*, the *Bulletin* features historical and archaeological information about heritage sites. Although it has been directed primarily by architects it is focused on historic preservation and not the contemporary profession.

In 1988, two years after the end of the Duvalier regimes, alumni from the UEH and international universities alike contributed to the establishment of UniQ, a private university. Four years later, in 1992, UniQ established a school of engineering and architecture which now offers degree programs in several specialties. Unlike at UEH, the engineering and architecture curricula at UniQ were independent from one another. Meanwhile, government disinvestment in public education since the 1990s and the devastation of the 2010 earthquake have restricted the UEH's capacity to compensate instructors, offer regular courses, and provide other components

[131] There was a gap in publication from December 2009 – January 2010 due to the earthquake on January 12 when ISPAN's Port-au-Prince offices were destroyed and the entire country was in crisis. Publication resumed with a February issue (no. 10).

of education despite high demand.[132] While not subject to the vicissitudes of state funding, the private UniQ has also faced financial challenges and its brand-new campus was completely destroyed in the 2010 earthquake. Students at both UEH and UniQ experience delays in completing their degrees in part due to inconsistent course offerings. Such instability in higher education alongside the intermittent activities of the professional association likely contribute to a paucity of historical knowledge of the discipline.

Disciplinary definitions

In this section, I focus on how architects and engineers used documents including the charter of AIAH (1955), the articles establishing CNIAH (1974), a CNIAH conference publication (1989), and the current CNIAH website (2018-present), to define architects, engineers, and their responsibilities with regard to the built environment. The ways in which architects use professional organizations and events to communicate their assumptions about and/or hopes for their profession to each other and a presumed broader public are important for understanding misalignments among ideals, practice, pedagogy, demands, and needs.

The AIAH 1955 charter is the most complete document defining the roles and responsibilities of the represented professions: architects, engineer-architects, and engineers, as well as related tradespeople and artisans. The charter also lays out recommendations for reforming the construction industry through further regulation of building codes, training and oversight of builders, and a series of regional offices for urban planning. The then Secretary of Public Works Raoul Saint Lo wrote an introduction to the charter charging that "an elite group

[132] The investment in and control of UEH since its inception is a complex and politically entangled story discussed in much greater depth in Dubuisson, "Place-Making in a Fractured Academic Landscape."

such as l'Association des Ingénieurs et Architectes cannot shirk the duties of the elite."[133] Astutely and without derision, Saint Lo addressed the fact that the membership of AIAH was an elite group through education and, in most cases, family background. He connected that power with social responsibilities, a paternal attitude that undergirds the rest of the document and establishes an audience. While in the front matter AIAH vice-president Arnold de Delva identifies a potential readership of both professionals and laypeople, the bulk of the document attends to the issues of the professions and the differentiation between architects, engineers, and other building practitioners.[134] Both objectives are focused primarily on interested parties, namely, architects and engineers, and there is no evidence in the text of its circulation to a public outside of these building professions.

An internal focus continues in comments from then-director of the École Polytechnique, Maurice Latortue, who framed the purpose of the charter as creating a moral obligation to be respected by all individuals practicing architecture and engineering in Haiti. This obligation was self-imposed by the professional organization and not by the state. The "rights, duties and responsibilities," as defined by the charter, rest on ethical and technical claims for the professions, though the text does not lay out legal repercussions for failure to adhere to the responsibilities defined within it. The language of the charter implies that self-regulation would avoid the possibility of corruption or non-expert oversight, but it also placed the regulation of building professionals outside of the realm of public accountability.

The role of an architect by AIAH was defined in relationship with the other two professional classifications represented by the organization: engineers and engineer-architects.

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[133] Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, "Charte," 5.
[134] Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, 11.

All three could bear responsibility for ensuring structural stability, adhering to building codes, overseeing contractors' and subcontractors' execution of plans, and assessing material quality.[135] The engineer and engineer-architect were additionally trained in structural calculations, while architects and engineer-architects specialized in the coordination of social and aesthetic concerns in the composition of spaces. Despite their hybrid identity of engineer-architects, a dichotomy between structure and design will resurface in the next two chapters about architects and builders in practice. It is difficult to say now how the practices of members in the 1950s may have aligned with or diverged from the professional ideals laid out in the charter, but the shared education and significant collaboration between architects, engineers, and engineer-architects was evidenced by the named contributors to the AIAH *Revue* and the leadership of AIAH, which included architects and engineers.

The notable differentiation of architects from engineers in the AIAH charter had to do with the consideration of aesthetic and spatial qualities. The specialized architect was:

> One who seeks and enhances the aesthetic forms suitable for the expression of a work which, in accordance with the rules of art, responds to needs and conditions to adorn a community. He devises and draws up—for his part—the plans and details of a building. He takes responsibility for the interior decor, the furniture, the gardens, and deals with all the functional and aesthetic questions of the project. He remains the sole owner of his plans. He can carry it out. He has the right to visit the building site at any time and to demand respect for his units when the realization of the work is not entrusted to him. He is obliged to render his plans in a manner guaranteeing the prestige of the profession and to provide any additional explanation or sketch—however negligible—required by the contractor or the owner. He is responsible for making his design consistent with the applicable laws governing the art of building.[136]

[135] Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, 20–21.
[136] *Original*: L'architecte est celui qui cherche et met en valeur les formes esthétiques convenant à l'expression d'une oeuvre qui, en fonction des règles de l'Art, répond aux besoins et aux conditions qui embellissent l'existence dans une communauté. Il conçoit et dress - en ce qui le concerne, - les plans et détails d'une construction. Il s'occupe du

The definition is dense and describes several domains where the architect is understood to have both expertise and responsibilities. The first claim is that he—and though he is used as a universal pronoun in correspondence with the masculine gender of *architecte* in French, it also indicates the dominant identity of architects at the time—use aesthetics to express and enhance the built environment, including through interventions in realms like décor, furniture, and landscaping that are not strictly building. Secondly, architects create drawings to organize and detail projects that are their products and intellectual property. As continues to be the norm, the charter defines the mutual obligation established between the architect and client in the floor plan wherein the architect is charged with ensuring that the plans conform with established laws and for issuing explanatory sketches as necessary. In turn, a builder contracted by the client is responsible for constructing the structure in accordance with the plans and permitting the architect to visit the site to observe the work to ensure the fact.

A two-part definition of an architect's practice as being concerned with aesthetics, form, function, and expression, on the one hand, and the production of drawings which create contractual obligations and ensure building regulations, on the other, echoed contemporaneous global debates with which AIAH members engaged. A declaration from the Union Internationale des Architectes (UIA), disseminated at the Congress of Lisbon in 1953, was printed immediately following the AIAH definition of the architect connecting the specificity of the Haitian charter to an international discourse about the identity and role of an architect. The UIA wrote:

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décor, de l'ameublement, des jardins, et traite de toutes les questions fonctionnelles et esthétiques de l'oeuvre. Il reste seul propriétaire de ses plans. Il peut exécuter. Il a le droit de visiter à tout moment les chantiers d'exécution et d'exiger le respect de ses modules quand la réalisation de l'oeuvre ne lui est pas confiée. Il est obligé de donner à ses plans une présentation garantissant le prestige de la profession et de fournir toute explication ou tout croquis supplémentaire - si négligeable soit-il - réclamé par l'exécutant ou le propriétaire. Il est responsable de l'harmonisation de sa conception avec les lois en vigueur régissant l'art de construire." Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, 19–20. (translation by author)

> The architect is one who, a master in the art of building, orders space, creates and animates the places intended for man to assure for him the best living conditions. He has mastered the art of composition, the knowledge of materials and techniques, and is experienced in their implementation. By his aptitudes and his training, confronting realities, he strives to capture the spirit of his time, to recognize human needs, spiritual and material, and to express it in his projects.[137]

This passage from the UIA declaration foregrounds composition, atmosphere, and culture as the domains of impact for architects. Both the AIAH charter and the UIA declaration describe an ineffable quality of the architect's practice to express the conditions of a community, but where the AIAH definition balanced an architect's vision with a client's need and wishes, the UIA declaration is a more grandiose endorsement of the architect as a masterful artist. The architect's role is characterized in the UIA statement as a humanistic endeavor to create the "best living conditions" that "capture the spirit of his time"—the *zeitgeist* or *le génie* [the genius but also engineering]. Assertions of his "mastery" are repeated to underscore that the composition and the integration of spaces are the results of professional expertise, which may otherwise be difficult to evaluate objectively. The UIA declaration indicates an integration of human needs, composition, materials, and technical implementation in architectural practice and a self-imposed moral obligation to serve humanity and the common good. Taken together, the two definitions reify the architect—both the working professional and the concept—as a conduit for expressing human character and the integration of pragmatic and poetic needs. But the difference in tone, one more pragmatic and focused on services provided to a client and the other espousing high-minded

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[137] Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, 19–20. Original: "L'architecte est celui qui, maître en l'art de bâtir, ordonne l'espace, cré et anime les lieux destinés à l'homme, pour lui assurer les meilleures conditions d'existence. Il possède l'art de la composition, la connaissance des matériaux et des techniques, l'expérience de leur mise en œuvre. Par ses aptitudes et sa formation, affrontant les réalités, il s'efforce de saisir l'esprit de son époque, de connaître ses besoins humains, spirituels et matériels, et de l'exprimer dans ses réalisations." (translation by author)

ideals for mankind, foreshadows the discordant exchange about the social versus client orientation of architectural education that opened this chapter.

In November 1988, the CNIAH convened for a conference, "Les Tâches urgentes pour les années 90" (Urgent Tasks for the '90s), which recited a number of urgent challenges faced by architects and engineers committed to "la reconstruction de notre pays" (the reconstruction of our country). Just two years following the ouster of Jean-Claude Duvalier, the reconstruction of the country spoke not just to physical infrastructure but to the repair of social relationships and democratic governance. The language of crisis, urgency, and reconstruction, as well as the themes raised in the proceedings (seismic risk, water resources and potable water infrastructure, working-class housing, and the underdevelopment and under-utilization of local expertise) are familiar and persistent characters in twentieth-century discourse about the built environment in Haiti.[138] The contributors implied that architects and engineers had a responsibility to address public risk through their professional expertise on subjects including seismology, potable water infrastructures, and land surveying. These proceedings echoed the desire expressed by the AIAH in the 1950s for architects and engineers to be more impactful actors in the nation's built environment. The reform-minded presentations of the 1988 conference indicated a desire to regulate not just CNIAH members but also the built environment in Haiti at large. Unfortunately, neither goal seems to have been meaningfully accomplished, as evidenced by recurring damages to the built environment throughout Haiti as a result of flooding, hurricanes, and the 2010 earthquake.[139]

[138] Greg Beckett traces and critiques the construction of an idea of Haiti as being in a state of constantly recurring crisis in Beckett, "Rethinking the Haitian Crisis."
[139] The disastrous impact of severe weather is discussed in Felima, "Haiti's Disproportionate Casualties After Environmental Disasters."

CNIAH has been meeting regularly since 2011 in the wake of the earthquake to bolster the profession. During my fieldwork active topics of debate had less to do with public mandates and more to do with outreach to increase awareness of architects, the importance of hiring certified architects and engineers, and internal conflicts regarding membership, operations, and the role of the organization. While the majority of architects enrolled in CNIAH in 2019 were women, the image of an architect continues to be male, well-educated, and upper class excluding many people from full participation.[140] In accordance with bylaws, meetings have been publicly announced on radio and in the newspaper, but since 2019 a website and social media presence has been increased by younger board members which, at minimum, makes information about the organization accessible to people with internet access and French literacy. The website stated that their "mission is to promote and regulate the profession in order to ensure the quality of services and works built to serve the population," and that an architect's primary role is to listen to and assist clients with site design, arrangement of interior spaces, and exterior appearances.[141] While consistent with earlier declarations by AIAH that an architect "devises and draws up… the plans and details of a building" and ensures that the design is consistent with applicable building laws, the CNIAH mission in 2019 demonstrated a rhetorical shift towards a service relationship with clients.[142]

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[140] A partial membership list was published in 2020 which indicated 44 active architect members (inclusive of engineer-architect and architect-urbanist). Based on the conventional gender associated with first names it appears that 24 of 44 architect members of CNIAH in 2020 are women, "Liste des Architectes Actifs." "Liste des Architectes Actifs."
[141] "Pourquoi Engager Un Ingénieurs Ou Architecte."
[142] Association des ingénieurs et architectes haïtiens, "Charte," 19–20.

Disciplinary formation

As the sole criterion for membership in the CNIAH, a degree in architecture and/or engineering is the key qualification for professional credentialing. The universities where students are educated are important sites of disciplinary formation in which both faculty and students engage in the explicit transmission and reproduction of architectural knowledge. Most/all members of the CNIAH are trained at either one of the two universities offering degrees in architecture in Haiti, UEH and UniQ, if not at a university abroad. Within these schools, students learn to do what architects—especially those architects who are their teachers—say architects do or should do, but what architects say they do and what they do often belong to different systems.[143]

Schools are sites of cultural reproduction in anthropologist-sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's term. Within these sites students enter with existing social positions and gain new identities, as architects in this case. Bourdieu posits that "habitus is genetically (and also structurally) bound to a position."[144] The fact that many architects—in Haiti as in the US and many other places—come to school with a bundle of social identities including their class position, linguistic skills, and race or color. Both language and skin color serve as metonyms for class position with fluency in French (and its accenting) along with lighter skin commonly correlating with high socioeconomic position. The linguistic apartheid that linguist Michel DeGraff describes and was discussed in the Introduction means that architectural and engineering knowledge—and the rest of university education—privileges French spoken by a minority of Haitians over Kreyòl spoken by all Haitians. Within these broader social registers architecture students develop relationships

[143] This fact is not unique to architects but is commented on by Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice*, 7.
[144] *La Noblesse d'état*, p. 9 in Costa, "The Logic of Practices in Pierre Bourdieu," 878.

with architectural knowledge dependent on where they study, either the Université d'État d'Haïti (UEH) or Université Quisqueya (UniQ) in Haiti or a university abroad. The effect of this composite of personal identity and university-specific positions on the habitus of architects is not fixed or deterministic. Nevertheless, assumptions about the background of architects inform how roles, rules, and regulations of architects and architecture are actively debated. The debate over the appropriate role and behavior of architects may be one of the defining features of the field.

I arrived one afternoon at UniQ for a screening of the documentary film, *Albert Mangonès: L'espace public* (2004), about the renowned Haitian architect and artist active from the 1940s to 2000s.[145] The documentary reflects on the life and artistic and architectural practice of the late Albert Mangonès. He is widely known as the sculptor of the *Nèg Mawon* (the unknown maroon) in the plaza facing the National Palace, which has become a national symbol. He was also part of a generation of modernist Haitian architects whose designs were characterized by the use of horizontal planes, flat roofs, wide openings, and connections between interior and exterior spaces built with reinforced concrete.[146] In the film, which was released two years following his death, a narrator describes Mangonès' life and works along with historic photographs. Interwoven with this biography, Mangonès himself, along with a cadre of Port-au-Prince architects, appears as a talking head, reflecting on his artistic and design practices as well as the political challenges of working during the Duvalier era and spearheading the establishment of ISPAN which restored iconic monuments such as the Citadel Laferrière. Mangonès had trained at Cornell University in the U.S. in the 1940s and was engaged during his fifty-year career with international trends in modernism, the Négritude movement in the U.S. and the

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[145] Antonin and Brisson, *Albert Mangonès*.
[146] Doret, "Un Abrégé de l'histoire de l'architecture Haïtienne," 80.

Caribbean, the design of the bicentennial site in downtown Port-au-Prince, historic preservation during the Duvalier era, and more. The biographical documentary on Mangonès offered a case study for students of how national and international histories of art, architecture, and politics intermingled.

The event was just beginning as I walked in and took a seat at the end of one of several rows of folding chairs. In the audience were dozens of students and a few faculty members, along with a few individuals from the Port-au-Prince architecture community. Frédérick Mangonès, a practicing architect and Albert's son, was there to introduce and discuss the film. A professor prefaced the documentary with remarks on the importance of the event as a pedagogical opportunity for students to increase their knowledge of Haitian architecture in the twentieth century. The programming attested to the importance that at least some members of the faculty attached to students' knowing about and valuing a Haitian modernist. While there are both architectural history and architectural theory courses as part of the degree program, faculty bemoaned an ahistorical attitude among students that recalls similar complaints in the US universities I have studied and taught in. The film screening sparked a dynamic question-and-answer session which revolved around questions of what is characteristically Haitian in architecture and the tension in education between conceptual and pragmatic ideals of architecture.

When the documentary finished, students posed questions to Frédérick Mangonès, which revealed their preoccupations about the nature of architectural design in Haiti. The first question came from a young woman, who asked, "What is characteristic of Haitian architecture?" The question reframed a key theme of the architectural theory course which she and her cohort were concurrently enrolled in. In the theory course, they were working in groups to study regional

precedents in different provinces and address the question themselves. Mangonès responded that it is easier to say what Haitian architecture is not. He first moved to eliminate the early twentieth-century gingerbread style houses, which are frequently offered as an example of Haitian architecture.[147] He also dismissed so-called tropical modernism as characterizing Haitian architecture, although he did note that Haitian architecture was sympathetic to certain tenets of tropical modernism in terms of the arrangements of interior and exterior spaces and the treatment of light and shadow. A young man in the back interjected to ask what he thought about the style of building in Delmas, a municipality in metropolitan Port-au-Prince. Mangonès chuckled that unfortunately the so-called Delmas style is probably most characteristic of Haitian architecture—indicating that he wished it were not. He described the style of Delmas houses typified by solid concrete walls and roofs, low ceilings, and very small windows that make them very hot and not well suited to the climate. Contrasting the gingerbread and modernist styles, which have been recognized as architecture by cultural heritage reports, with common Haitian building styles as identified in Delmas highlights the discord between the discipline of architectural design theory as taught in the university and dominant trends in construction.

Following the unresolved question of what characterized Haitian architecture, another student asked about the difference between a "concept" and a *parti*, turning the conversation towards studio pedagogy and implicitly calling out the tradition of the École des Beaux-Arts where the *parti* described the basic scheme of a building. The disjuncture between an idealized theory of architecture and the applications of practice surfaced in students' preoccupation with a

[147] Michel Doret in "Un Abrégé de l'histoire de l'architecture Haïtienne." for example, argues that the gingerbread was the first and possibly only authentically Haitian architectural style because it was the first style built by Haitians trained in architecture (or engineering).

perceived conflict between *parti* and programmatic or economic concerns. The discussion expanded to include other faculty in the room, one of whom said there could be "a tyranny of the concept" and that an architectural concept might actually have relatively mundane priorities, such as meeting the program or the budget, using a particular material, or making occupants feel comfortable. This debate pointed towards submerged conflicts over different design pedagogies in the school that privileged formal composition, as in the *parti,* over the pragmatics of a service-oriented small business. Just as the separation between disciplinary coherent styles and popular buildings troubled architecture students' conception of a Haitian architecture, the dichotomy set up between conceptual design and pragmatic concerns revealed a split between the discipline of architecture and the business of building and between architects and builders, which fed a disciplinary anxiety in students.

Habitus in design reviews

In a ritual observed at most architectural schools world-wide, at the midpoint and end of each semester, architecture students present their projects to a gathering of faculty, visiting architects, and their classmates.[148] In its most common form, students are expected to explain their design process and resultant proposals through a verbal narrative accompanied by presentation drawings and models. In turn reviewers comment directly on the design proposal and often also critiqued students' presentation styles and communicative techniques. They simultaneously critiqued architectural design and professional comportment. By way of their

[148] Gaffney, "Communicating about, in, and through Design"; Murphy, Ivarsson, and Lymer, "Embodied Reasoning in Architectural Critique," 2012.

commentary and responses, reviewers communicate to students where their projects align and diverge from the norms of both a global architecture discipline and local building culture.

On a hot July morning in 2018, a few weeks after beginning of *péyi lòk* (literally the country locked, but essentially a general strike) had delayed this review—I arrived for the final presentations by students in Composition IX (Compo IX), the last course before their thesis. A handful of students had large format printed drawings and renderings hanging on the walls, and chairs with attached desks served as slightly unstable model stands. Another group of students milled around with rolls of drawings waiting for someone to return with masking tape to hang their drawings up on the concrete block walls of the studio. Students arrived prepared to present the development of their semester-long projects via drawings, models, and verbal presentations. With their drawings hung on a classroom wall as a background and parallel channel of visual communication, one by one, students spoke to describe the program, location, and premise of their projects. Based on these media, external reviewers, including myself and other faculty and professionals, then asked questions to clarify their understanding of the proposal, asked questions to demonstrate oversights in the proposal, made comments and delivered opinions about each one in turn. At the end of the day, the reviewers met privately with the professor to evaluate the projects and determine/assign grades.

One goal of the degree in architecture is presumably to teach students "how to design," but enmeshed in learning how to design is how to *talk about* design—with oneself, one's peers, and clients or external viewers.[149] Both of these pedagogical goals are approached in UniQ's

[149] Certainly, the formation of architectural habitus is part of this but interesting work in conversational analysis and communication in discipline investigates the specific mechanisms used to regulate oral communication within the design disciplines; see, Dannels, "Performing Tribal Rituals"; Murphy, Ivarsson, and Lymer, "Embodied Reasoning in Architectural Critique."

design studio course, which is a project-based course where students develop individual or group proposals in response to a brief describing a program and site. Talking about design—one's own and others'—happens in the classroom space and is crystallized in the event of the "review" such as the one I attended. The review is familiar to architects around the globe who, like me and the students at UniQ, have been trained in schools descended from the beaux-arts and polytechnic traditions.[150] Within this internationally recognizable review format, students, faculty, and reviewers engage in a lengthy and intense exchange across several modes of communication including drawings, models, speech—both expository and dialogic—in order to transmit, debate, and refine design ideas. Inside UniQ, where I was invited to several events, the architecture design review was also a potent site for observing how social hierarchies and didactic feedback intersected to produce architects and reproduce architectural discourse.

Design reviews brought students, faculty, and local architects into contact with each other in the subjective evaluation of students' design projects with respect to conceptualization, technical detailing, presentation style, programmatic and climactic functions, and the aesthetic qualities of projects. Linguistic anthropologist Keith Murphy and colleagues have shown how architectural references are invoked through talk, gestures, and drawings, and these analogies are "a key means for socializing students into certain aspects of professional architecture and modeling the application of relevant architectural knowledge."[151] The design review is a space almost overloaded with explicit and implicit communication about the role and practices of

[150] The relationship between the polytechnic and beaux-art French system is discussed by Ulrich Pfammatter in *The Making of the Modern Architect and Engineer.* These influences are particularly direct in the context of Haitian architecture and engineering schools founded and staffed by alum of respective programs in France since the 19th century as discussed by Sophonie M. Joseph in "Urbanisme in Ayiti: Diffusion, Decentralization, and Disaster."
[151] Murphy, Ivarsson, and Lymer, "Embodied Reasoning in Architectural Critique," 530.

architects delivered with authority from professors and guests as students test out their own performances.

The architecture review as practiced at UniQ, like many universities globally, reproduces a hierarchical system by/in its very spatial arrangement, with student standing opposite a seated panel.[152] The entangled activity of understanding and evaluating undertaken by the panel is informed by the intersections of class, colorism, age, gender, and language. In the Compo IX review described above, the panel was composed of the professor, two other faculty members from the department, me, and a local architect. Two of the faculty members had studied in Haiti: one at UniQ and the other at UEH. The other three panelists, including me, had studied at universities and/or practiced in the U.S. Given these backgrounds, the panel's feedback on student projects was based in our academic and professional experiences both in Haiti and the U.S. and shifted between the codes, norms, and languages of multiple sites.

Figure 2-4 Photo of review at UniQ (Jean-Marc Tribie, 2018)

Reviews at UniQ typically began with presentations by students in French conveying a sense of formality and professionalism, while in debate and conversation language use became

[152] The choreography and performance of relative power is described in excellent detail albeit in the US context in Webster, "The Analytics of Power: Re-Presenting the Design Jury."

more fluid with people switching between Kreyòl and French. Upsetting the typical lamination of language, class, and color, I—generally the only foreigner and only white person present—could not converse in French though I could follow their presentations with visual aids, and so offered my feedback in Kreyòl, likely shifting the linguistic balance of the conversation. By the time of the final reviews, my linguistic limitations were known, and the professor repeatedly asked students to speak in Kreyòl "for our guest," gesturing with an open arm towards me and seeming to take some pleasure in the fact. In these cases, my presence interrupted a normative linguistic hierarchy in which French was the preferred means to convey expertise, and at least one student chose to present in French despite the professor's direction. As students spoke to the reviewers, or as the reviewers spoke to students and to each other, the uses of language—whether Kreyòl, French, English, and professional jargon—indexed the complex interaction of education, class, age, and experience in the establishment and conferral of expertise.[153]

How students presented their work impacted the direction of conversation among the reviewers.[154] For example, one student's proposal for a commercial center in Jameel did not include a site plan showing it in relationship to major landmarks (main streets, shoreline, north arrow), which created confusion about its location and context that had to be resolved through verbal description. Floor plans that either did not follow drawing conventions or lacked representation of landscaping led to reviewers asking a series of question about how people would circulate through and use the space. These questions served both as a chance for the

[153] Abbott suggests that professional expertise in fact defines a class in and of itself but external class position intersects with professional identity in Haiti, if not everywhere, to constrain possibilities, *The System of Professions*, 174.

[154] As an active participant in this exchange, I did not take notes on the exchanges between students and reviewers, but rather on my understanding of the projects in order to pose my own questions and offer—hopefully constructive—criticism; therefore, the detail of these exchanges is gleaned from notes taken for a different purpose and lack some desirable details about the form of conversations.

students to clarify their design ideas to the reviewers and as a first level of critique. On one level, the questions implied a criticism of the capacity of the drawings to communicate clearly and, on another level, they indicated an evaluation of the quality of the students' overall designs, which may have overlooked key considerations. Drawing standards are referenced and upheld both as part of the disciplinary habitus and to make ideas legible, which becomes clear when four trained architects are struggling to make sense of a drawing. Though the reviewers' critiques involved subjective evaluation, they also revealed in action whether the information prepared by students adequately express their design ideas to professionals in the field. The underlying assumption is/was that these skills would eventually be used to communicate to clients and other non-architects. While the professor evaluated students' physical drawings and plans, he also evaluated their verbal facility in communicating design ideas.

Just as the review is a site where faculty and students engage in dialogue about architectural knowledge and reinforce social hierarchies, so too, does it allow students to explore what their future role as architects might consist of. The student's commentary within the class text message chain at the beginning of this chapter hinted at the tension between the economic realities facing many Haitian architects, who make their living on residential projects for wealthy, private clients, and a disciplinary commitment to addressing social problems via the built environment. On the UniQ architecture program website, the university advertises that recent graduates can work on architecture and urbanism projects, either in a private firm or a public institution, using skills in drawing and physical model-making, 3D modeling, landscape design, and interior design.[155] The breadth of professional opportunities imagined on the website

[155] "Formation En Architecture."

contrasts with the student's perception that they are being trained to cater to private clients. Only limited employment opportunities exist in the public sector. Positions within the Unité de Construction de Logements et de Bâtiments publics (UCLBP) and the Comité Interministériel d'Aménagement du Territoire (CIAT) were scarce and working for the government would not necessarily address the social problems that the students raised. In one faculty member's estimation, most students who receive diplomas in architecture from UniQ will stay in Port-au-Prince to work, even if they grew up elsewhere, or try to leave the country for more training and work. Another part-time faculty member observed that students may go to work in allied building fields, and those who pursue architectural practice are likely to begin with drafting and modeling work in positions that they secure through connections with faculty, reviewers, or family and social networks. Graduates' first independent projects will likely be for family members or close family friends. Without demographic data, these observations from faculty are anecdotal but align with perceptions of the architectural profession in other countries.

In the debates or conversations occurring in studio reviews, film screenings, and social media groups, the students and faculty—professional architects themselves—were engaged explicitly and implicitly both in the formation and critique of the identity of an architect. In exchanges inflected by academic hierarchy and persistent social identities (class, age, race, and colorism, etc.), the expected behaviors and design products of architects were communicated by faculty and external reviewers to students. In turn, students both integrated and challenged the discursive definition of architects as established/upheld/promoted/championed by their instructors and reviewers. The claims of the school, students' observations about those claims, and students' career aspirations did not necessarily align, and students were attentive to and commented on inconsistencies in the rhetoric of their professors and the university. The tensions

between the ethically motivated role of the architect as a professional responsible for the built environment and constraints on the daily practices of architects were felt acutely by students as they attempted to understand what it is that they were learning to do and envision what they would do as architects themselves.

Conclusion

The stakes of misaligned definitions and understandings of the role of architects and engineers are high given the vulnerability of Haiti to natural hazards in the continued absence of significant building regulations and oversight. The inconsistency and conflicts that have arisen in the professional societies weaken their capacity to organize for or implement changes. And the polarization of the building industry with architects replicating an elite position undermine collective action. A final anecdote about the activities of CNIAH from 2018 until the time of writing 2020 demonstrate the continuing challenges facing a professional society and the discipline in Haiti.

In the spring of 2018, a special general assembly of CNIAH was called to hold emergency elections to replace six of nine board members who had resigned due to internal conflicts. My motorcycle taxi driver dropped me off at the security gate of the chic Hotel Montana on a muggy evening since motorcycles—really motorcycle drivers—are prohibited from the grounds of high-end hotels, and I walked up the parking lot into the lower level of the terraced hotel where the general assembly was convened. We were seated at large round tables in a beige conference room, and people moved around and socialized in advance of the meeting coming to order. The resignation of two thirds of the board made it clear that there was conflict in the leadership of the CNIAH. In fact, the meeting began with a motion from the floor to

suspend the meeting on procedural grounds; the motion failed. As it came to pass after much debate, five candidates were nominated, and there was a break for refreshments as well as for negotiations to continue. By the end of the break, a sixth candidate, Yves François, had been convinced to be nominated. François had returned to Haiti in 2006, after having emigrated to the U.S. as a child, being trained as an architect there, and establishing a successful business in New York City. He addressed the general meeting in Kreyòl—not having been educated in Haiti, he was less comfortable in French—and it was a remarkable moment to hear Kreyòl used for official business in this elite space. The newly elected board finished out the term, and a new board and president were put in place by the regular elections of 2019. There appears to be more stable leadership and forward momentum coming particularly from younger members, but the contemporary debates within the CNIAH encapsulate much of the uncertainty and discord that was implied in the irregular publications of AIAH and percolating up in student commentary within the university.

Later in 2018, there was a proposal to increase the membership fees for the CNIAH substantially and, while the proposal was eventually abandoned, it stoked fierce debate about what the value of membership in the CNIAH is and what the organization's purpose is or ought to be.[156] These questions, which have risen to the surface in publications of AIAH and CNIAH throughout the twentieth century, have now been posed directly by the board of directors to its membership. In June 2020, a CNIAH website page asks: "Le CNIAH, une association ou un ordre professionnel?" (CNIAH, an association or a professional order).[157] Because the decree of

[156] Membership dues had been (and continue to be) 500 Gourdes for registration and 2500 Gourdes (approximately 40 USD in February 2018) in annual fees. It was proposed to raise them to 750 USD.
[157] "Le CNIAH, une association ou un ordre professionnel ?"

1974 that established the CNIAH did not specify the nature of the institution, there is an ambiguity that results in some professionals and members of the general public understanding CNIAH to be an association of construction-sector professionals. The board offered a description of associations and professional orders to inform members preparing to vote on whether CNIAH will be an association or a professional order and whether to keep the current name or change it to the Ordre des Ingénieurs et Architectes d'Haïti. The board defines an association as a contract between multiple people agreeing to pursue the project for which it is incorporated. Advocating for the status, economic, or working conditions of architects and engineers would be a project for an association. On the other hand, a professional order is "a body designated by law to which the State delegates the power to supervise the access and exercise of a profession in order to guarantee the execution of the risky activities associated with it with competence and integrity."[158] The professional order would establish its own rules and discipline and registration with the order would be a condition for practicing architecture and engineering.

The discussion invited on the webpage features members of many points of views, some of whom endorse the adoption of the title of a professional order and the greater regulation of the professions. Others argue that a "collège" and the establishing decree already indicated this role for the organization, and no name change is necessary just better marketing. No one advocates for the CNIAH to be named an association in the terms given. Therefore, it appears that architects and engineers active within the CNIAH endorse the role of a national body, which regulates their professions and in which membership is required to practice. What is not clear is

[158] "Le CNIAH, une association ou un ordre professionnel ?" (Original: "Un ordre professionnel est une organisme désigné par la loi auquel l'Etat délègue le pouvoir d'encadrer l'accès et l'exercice d'une profession afin de garantir l'exécution compétente et intègre des activités à risque qui la caractérisent.")

how to go about making that a reality. A former secretary general of the board, Ginette Baussan wrote that "the decree [of 1974] obliges all engineers and architects practicing in Haiti to register with the CNIAH. Many qualified professionals refused to subscribe to this obligation and have never registered."[159]She asked whether without regular funding and state support the CNIAH would have the capacity to control the professions throughout Haiti. The historical weakness and instability of the institution creates an uncertainty over its capabilities to enforce any definition or credentialing of architects and engineers.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, a massive influx of financial aid, non-governmental agencies, and international organizations were contributing to or led discussions about the need for education in the building trades and the adoption of regulations. Some of these conversations did include Haitian professionals, but much of the international response to the earthquake ignored or marginalized Haitian professionals. This attitude was made explicit in comments by one NGO director, who said that "there's a total lack of qualified architects, urban planners, builders and zoning experts."[160] His statement was incontrovertibly false, but statements like his indicate that international organizations did not engage with the professional organization or professionals or even consult them and were a form of epistemological erasure of Haitian building professionals and their expertise. This epistemological erasure by foreigners is imperialist and racist, unfortunately it can masquerade behind the fact that the professional organization of architects and engineers is not widely known. Haitians and foreigners, both in the

[159] Ginette Baussan, June 16, 2020 comment on "Le CNIAH, une association ou un ordre professionnel ?" (Original: "le decret oblige tous les ingenieurs et architectes pratiquand en Haiti à s'inscrire au CNIAH. Beaucoup de professionels qualifies refusaient de se souscrire à cette obligation et ne se sont jamais inscrits."
[160] Conor Bohan, founder of the Haitian Education and Leadership Program (HELP), in Lacey, "Education Was Also Leveled by Quake in Haiti."

construction industry and outside of it—do not know about the professional organization and do not know how to confirm the qualifications of building professionals. There appears to be widespread miscommunication and misunderstanding about the role of architects and engineers, which undermine their ability to act to ameliorate the built environment.

The through line of this chapter is the tension between the ideals of the profession of architecture and the actualities of their practice. In documents like the AIAH charter to expectations of both students and faculty at UniQ there is a shared belief that architects should respond to human spirit and work to improve society through the built environment. But like the student whose complain began this chapter observed, "we have been trained to meet the expectations of clients, to satisfy clients." He saw a disjuncture between lofty project posed by his professor and the pragmatic reality facing himself and his classmates. A conflicted identity at the core of the profession and its educational system is mirrored in the intermittent emergence and disappearance of the professional society. This chapter ends with the open question, what is CNIAH? Is it an association or a professional order? The question remains: what is the role of architects collectively? Until there is an integration of social goals and private interests it does not appear likely that this question will be answered.

Chapter 3
Achitèk Fè Plan: Practicing Architecture in the Periphery of the Periphery

> Enjenyè fè kay solid, achitèk fè bèl kay.
> [Engineers make strong houses; architects make beautiful houses.]
> —Bòs Thomas

Time and again in Haiti, I would mention to someone casually that I was an architect and, in response, that person would tell me about the house they hoped to build on a piece of land they owned. In two separate instances that I recall, a person pulled out a folded-up sketch of a floor plan from their wallet and asked me something along the lines of "what do you think of this?" and in another I was cajoled into drawing a schematic house plan for the acquaintance of a friend while we relaxed at his beach-side restaurant in exchange for a few beers (and with strict instructions to consult an engineer or dependable mason for dimensions). I want to imagine that sketch now folded up and tucked away in his wallet, waiting for a year when he has enough funds to start building. What these spontaneous interactions taken together point to is the clarity that people untrained in architecture had about me as an architect. I make floor plans and I have a unique qualification to read and comment on plans, particularly for houses.

Sitting and chatting with Angeline, my neighbor and the cook at the guest house where I stayed in Leyogann, she said plainly that architects *fè plan* (make plans). But architects are too expensive and only people with money can afford to commission them. She contrasted this 'making of plans' with a more typical project approach taking place at the guest house. Angeline recounted the process as follows: the owner had an idea of the type of house he wanted; he called

a *bòs* [contractor] to explain his idea to him; and a construction crew began to build it. Devising a detailed plan did not appear to have been part of the workflow. Angeline felt that an architect would have prepared a more thorough plan before commencing with construction. A plan in her description then is a plan in two senses: a floor plan and a plan of action.[161] The floor plan, as an object and an idea recurred as a totem of architecture. This popular recognition of architects' work raises the questions about why architectural services are so rarely used.

The contractor Bòs Thomas who features in the following chapter, told me one day that most Haitians think that architects make *bèl kay* (beautiful or attractive houses) but that they depend on an engineer to make them *kay solid* (solid houses). He elaborated that people understand simple structures as being more solid than "more complicated" houses. The dichotomy that Bòs Thomas identified between bèl kay and kay solid*,* the domain or responsibility of architects and engineers, respectively, provides a grounded thesis on the limitations of architects in Haiti. His comments brought several questions to mind, including: What is a beautiful house? How does an architect make a house beautiful? Why is complexity positively associated with beautiful design but negatively correlated with structural stability? As a trained architect myself, albeit from a different geopolitical background, I hold the belief that a building cannot be "well designed" without conforming to basic engineering principles. Nevertheless, Bòs Thomas' definition of an architect as a producer of bèl kay reveals a fundamental problem for the profession. If aesthetics is separated from structural stability, the latter is prioritized, and architects' services are secondary to engineering services and potentially at cross purposes.

[161] "plan: detailed formulation of a program of action" *Merriam-Webster.com* 2020. https://www.merriam-webster.com/ (6 August 2020).

These two grounded definitions of architects: *achitèk fè plan* [architects make plans] and *achitèk fè bèl kay* [architects make beautiful houses] frame key questions motivating this chapter's analysis of architects' practices in Leyogann. What do architects do? What value is there in what architects do? And what value is their work perceived to have? In contrast to the institutional declarations of architecture's disciplinary aims described in the preceding chapter, how do architects outside of the capital practice their trade?

Theoretically and methodologically, this chapter engages "periphery" as an idea bundled with physical geographies and professional relationships. I review the theorization of Haiti as occupying an outer periphery by historian Robert Fatton and extend this relational model of nested peripheries to understanding the relative marginalization of rural Haiti to urban Haiti, of architects to engineers, and of architects in Leyogann to architects in Pòtoprens. Then, I examine these issues in relation to two architecture practices in Leyogann. I analyze how these architects use drawings in tandem with dialogue and how they construct value for their professional expertise. I conclude that architecture in the periphery is characterized by instrumental communication of design ideas, deploying both drawing and language, in the management and direction of construction projects. I found that professionals removed physically and socially from centralized institutions engaged in a continuum of practices moving between construction, engineering, architecture, business, and politics.

During my fieldwork, I approached architects to be interlocutors as an architect myself who was conducting research into our shared profession albeit across an international divide. In Leyogann, I negotiated with the local architect Gérald to work for him on the design of some of his projects both so that I could observe his practice and learn about architectural design in Haiti from his perspective. We were in conversation for more than a year, though I only actively

worked with him for a four-month period, helping develop drawings for two residential projects and concluding with a formal interview. I met Michel, an engineer-architect also in Leyogann, much later in my research and conducted two lengthy interviews with him, one at a job site and the other at his office. Though I did not have observe his design process directly, his commentary often elucidated and confirmed themes that emerged in my work with Gérald. Though I separate the narratives and observations of these Leyogann-based architects in this chapter from the discussion of the disciplinary institutions in Pòtoprens in the preceding chapter, I was moving between the two cities and research sites every week or two to maintain relationships and observe architecture practice in both the center and the periphery. The relative proximity of the two sites makes it notable that there was almost no overlap or interaction between them.

My insider-outsider status gave me the perspective to notice certain unstated assumptions and ideas, which were taken as given by… without much verbal justification. Interlocutors such as Gérald were much more explicit with me about their reasoning or aspects of practice than…, which they perceived to be particular to Haiti and different from US practices. Despite our differing nationalities, we spoke similar disciplinary languages as two architects trained in the modernist architecture tradition. There are many embedded assumptions about architectural design and representation that I may not have perceived as remarkable, so I take a reflexive approach to what I observed and to what was displayed to me in order to make sense of the many modes of communication that architects were using with myself and others. My own identity, capacities, and limitations serve as a register against which to view communication processes, which included speech and drawing and involved switching between languages—literal and metaphoric—for audiences.

Peripheral Practices

Architects and architecture in Haiti are enmeshed in a postcolonial, cosmopolitan realm and participate in multidirectional flows of aesthetic, pedagogical, technical, and professional ideas. Despite a preoccupation by a few architects with the imposition or importation of architectural styles—from the colonial era to now—all and nothing is entirely external. In creolization, as described by writer Édouard Glissant, a new and unfixed form of expression is a supplement to the multiple roots from which it emerged.[162] This understanding of creolization refuses linear genealogies of the diffusion of modernism from colonial metropoles outward or even a postcolonial model of reciprocal influence. Architects, like other members of the privileged class in Haiti, are often mobile and multilingual, able to travel and study in French, English, and Spanish in Europe, North America, Latin America, and other Caribbean nations. Architects, firms, and institutions in Pòtoprens have been in relationships with international peers abroad and with foreign firms and NGOs that move through the city. Nonetheless, architects in Pòtoprens expressed anxiety about what constitutes a Haitian architecture. Haiti as a whole has been marginalized or silenced in Western discourses on modernity. This occlusion extends to Haitian architecture, which is notably absent from the historiographies of both modernism and Caribbean architecture writ large.[163] Architects' own characterization of certain styles (colonial, French, Beaux-Arts, Modern) as having been imposed or imported through colonization, occupation, and cultural imperialism reinforces a perception of Haitian architecture as peripheral.

[162] Glissant, "Creolization in the Making of the Americas," 80.
[163] Michel Trouillot's celebrated *Silencing the Past*. makes the argument that it was intentionally silenced by the "unthinkable" reality of Black sovereignty. The most visible erasure of Haitian architects and engineers arises in the inclusion of the monumental Citadelle Laferriere commissioned by King Henri Christophe in Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America*. despite being credited to a Henri Beese and Henri Barre (Crain, Historic Architecture in the Caribbean Islands, 297). A number of treatments of Caribbean architecture do not include examples from Haiti including: Museum of Modern Art (New York and University of Technology (Jamaica), *Caribbean Modernist Architecture*; Delle and Clay, *Archaeology of Domestic Landscapes of the Enslaved in the Caribbean*; Slesin, Cliff, and Chabeneix, *Caribbean Styles*.

Instead of addressing this anxiety directly but rather by decentering the architects of the elite in the capital and looking towards the "periphery of the periphery," other questions open up about how architects in Haiti practice. Leyogann is about thirty-five kilometers (twenty-two miles) outside of Pòtoprens. Its geographic position is a synecdoche for being peripheral, a phenomenon of interdependent but hierarchical economic, political, and discursive relationships between the two cities. Fatton Jr. described Haiti as being in the "periphery of the periphery" within the Caribbean, which is peripheral as a whole to the colonial metropole.[164] Colonial relationships were predicated on the extraction of resources from peripheral locations for the benefit of those at the center. This extractive relationship has persisted in the unequal relationship between Haiti's economic elite—nearly always *moun lavil* (city people)—and the countryside.[165] The increasing centralization of Pòtoprens over the course of the twentieth century has intensified the hierarchical relationship between the national center and its peripheries, both regional cities and the countryside.[166] This hierarchical structure branches out such that *vil Leyogann* (the city of Leyogann) is a relative center for the rural sections of the *arrondissement* (FR: a regional territory), which are *andeyo* (outside, rural zones).

National pride in Haitian peasant culture and the valorization of tradition coexist with economic exploitation of the countryside and its dismissal by city-dwelling elites as backward.[167] This aligns in many ways with the misleading separation of modern architecture from vernacular building. In Haiti, a false dichotomy between the named architects responsible for conceiving designs and the anonymous builders working with received (traditional or popular) designs maps

[164] Fatton, *Haiti*.
[165] Trouillot underlines that a focus on the split along class, geographic, color, linguistic, and religious lines can obscure the exchanges between these opposed positions. It is a single society with "two parts in an unequal but complementary relationship." Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, 81.
[166] Bellegarde-Smith et al., "Haiti and Its Occupation by the United States in 1915," 33.
[167] Trouillot, *State Against Nation*. *CHECK FOR PAGE CITATION – SEE THRESHOLDS ARTICLE*

onto class and geographic location.[168] A dichotomous understanding of these practices fails to account for the continuum of practices, which are revealed in peripheral locations such as Léogâne, where the boundaries between architecture, engineering, and building slide into one another.

Architects living and practicing outside the metropolitan capital have been trained in a cosmopolitan modernist milieu, and they continue to be mobile participants in transnational cultural flows. Since the only university architecture programs in Haiti are in Pòtoprens, all Haitian architects, by definition, studied either at the Université d'Etat d'Haïti (UEH) or Université Quisqueya (UniQ) in Port-au-Prince, or at a foreign university. The movement of architects into and out of these centers is neither unidirectional nor constrained to education. For example, Michel had worked in Florida, while Gérald traveled to New York periodically and met with clients living abroad on those trips. Though they traveled for work, neither was a member of the Collège national des Ingénieurs et Architectes haïtiens (CNIAH), and their discursive and professional practices were significantly more isolated than those of architects I spoke with in the capital.

Architectural practice in Leyogann is peripheral on multiple levels. Not only do architects practice at a remove from the institutional and collective centers for architecture located in the capital, but architectural services are also understood as peripheral—or superfluous—to engineering services. The educational structure of architecture as a specialization of engineering, such as at UEH, maintains the position of architecture as a secondary discipline to engineering in

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[168] While there are "anonymous' builders in Port-au-Prince producing what might be called a modern vernacular, the idea of traditional Haitian architecture is almost exclusively constituted as rural (the gingerbread style houses being one potential exception). Marcel Vellinga exposes the assumption in many studies of vernacular architecture that it built not just without experts but without "conscious intent" and instead emerges as instinctual or a "native genius" in Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's figuration. Vellinga, "The End of the Vernacular"; Moholy-Nagy, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America*.

both epistemic and economic value.[169] Even in urban areas like Pòtoprens, Haitian architects are contracted to work on only a minority of building projects. This appears to be an extreme instance of an international phenomenon, as architects in the US have also declaimed the problem of being "perceived as producing unaffordable esoteric products."[170] Pòtoprens contains spaces to reinforce the identity of architects socially and to valorize design activities through associations and artistic or social events. In Leyogann, however, architects practice in relative isolation without a social network to maintain boundary conditions between themselves, engineers, and contractors.

Of note about architects practicing outside of the capital is just how few of them there seem to be. In the 1950s the AIAH *Revue* indicated representatives from each of Haiti's departments, but in a 1970 census that collected employment information only a handful of university educated engineers or architects were recorded outside of metropolitan Pòtoprens.[171] There are no indications that the relative imbalance of architects and engineers in the metropolis and the rest of the country has changed in the intervening decades. Between 2016 and 2018, I was able to identify just four people trained as architects in Leyogann with only two practicing locally. Even if there are additional individuals with architectural education in Leyogann, there are exceedingly few practitioners in proportion to the approximately 200,000 residents.[172] The

[169] This structure mirrors similar structures in Latin America including in Brazil where Ana María León describes how the discipline of architecture was a specialization of engineering [er a 1933 decree and even though it has been an independent degree within the School of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU) at the University of São Paulo since 1948, it continues to be implicitly secondary to engineering in "Vilanova Artigas: Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo Da Universidade de São Paulo FAU USP."
[170] Dickinson, "Architects Design Just 2% of All Houses–Why?"
[171] In a country wide survey conducted in 1971, data was collected on population, education, profession, and a number of other social indicators. Outside of what it defines as the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, the survey methodology is unclear. The base demographic information on rural population is indicated to have been collected by a 1969 army corps which used representative samples to estimate population in unaccessed areas. See "Recensement General de La Population et Du Logement, Vol I-II."
[172] "Population totale, population de 18 ans et plus ménages et densités estimés en 2015" [Total Population, Population of 18 and over, Households and Densities Estimated in 2015] (PDF). IHSI (in French). March 2015. Retrieved 8 May 2017.

architecture profession in Haiti as elsewhere has a long-standing relationship with power—governmental, financial, and otherwise—which raises questions about how architectural practices in a peripheral location such as Leyogann may shift when functioning in proximity to smaller-scale, regional power brokers instead of large, centralized institutions.[173]

The professional trajectories of the four architecture graduates that I identified outline some of the challenges facing architects throughout the country, especially those outside the centralized economic and political activities of the capital. The youngest, Sebastien, had graduated from UniQ just a few years before we met and worked for the national preservation organization Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National (ISPAN) in their Pòtoprens offices. He lived with his family in a rural section of Leyogann (described in Chapter Six), though he worked and rented a room in the capital on weekdays and returned home on weekends. This schedule is common among students from Leyogann who study in Pòtoprens, as the commute can vary from about ninety minutes in the best case to several hours in case of heavy traffic, inclement weather, or blockades. In this way, Leyogann is close enough to Pòtoprens that people can commute yet sufficiently distanced by the time and money required for transportation to be considered peripheral to the capital. Another UniQ graduate in Leyogann, identified for me by her former professor, was no longer practicing architecture but owned and operated a market and gas station with her spouse. The design of the neatly tiled restrooms with daylighting and passive ventilation at the gas station bespoke her architectural training (widely known as the best facilities on the national road heading south). Nevertheless, her livelihood was based on a business that was mostly unrelated to design.

[173] The broad theme of architecture and its relationships with power and governance is treated from a variety of perspectives in Aggregate Architectural History Collective (Group), *Governing by Design: Architecture, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century*.

Gérald and Michel, already briefly mentioned, were the only two actively practicing architects I met/encountered in Leyogann. Gérald was also an alum of UniQ, having attended in its early years in the 1990s. He worked on residential projects for private clients, including those in the diaspora, as well as projects for the Catholic diocese and a telecommunications company. Even so, his architecture practice was complementary to his other work as the director of a primary school and as a political candidate. Michel had studied at UEH but finished his degree at a private engineering program and identified as an engineer-architect. He, too, worked on residential projects and intermittent commercial building projects. These four profiles of people trained in architecture, who either commuted to work in the capital, had a non-architecture related business, worked in multiple domains (including but not restricted to architecture), or had integrated design and construction businesses, point to the breadth of strategies employed by Haitians with architectural educations to maintain a livelihood. The next section focuses on these last two individuals, Gérald and Michel, effectively the only two practicing architects in Leyogann. I discuss in detail how these two undertake design through visual and verbal communication among themselves, with clients, and to contractors.

Two Leyogann Practices

Gérald's office is on a minor cross street of Grand Rue, the principal boulevard in downtown Leyogann, which starts at the bypass of the national road and runs through the central plaza. While it does not advertise itself with any sign, the two-story, white building wordlessly advertises the profession of the owner through its distinctive appearance. It is distinguished in form and placement from the older homes with raised porches and the newer houses hidden behind tall concrete walls. A cubic ground floor is juxtaposed with a cylindrical upper floor; though, this formal play is largely obscured from the street by a mature flowering tree centered

along the facade. Two narrow windows on the ground floor suggest transparency, though, in fact, the glass blocks are backed with a one-way mirrored film. Gérald's office was built on the street edge of his family's lot where he grew up. The office building and two brick-red entry gates enclose his father's *kay ansyen* (KR: old-fashioned house) and a courtyard. One afternoon, Gérald and I sat in the shade of the porch of the kay ansyen, which was trimmed in the same brick red as the contemporary structure facing us. Gérald described to me how he had engineered the rectilinear frame of beams and columns and then played with the geometry of the walls within the frame. The design logic he described, treating the columns and walls as separate systems, aligned with his training in the modernist tradition. Though the disciplinary genealogy of his design exercise would not register for many viewers or visitors, its distinctiveness called attention to the profession of its occupant, and both exemplified the self-expression idealized by many architects in Haiti? and served as a calling card for his design expertise.

Engineer-architect Michel's office was also aesthetically distinct from the surrounding built environment. The short face of the narrow rectangular floor plan was parallel to the road. The roof line was steeply pitched, and the long facade was punctured with varying sizes of rectangular and square window openings. Michel had not yet finished the buildings so only one room was fully enclosed and in the others the window and door apertures remained open. The walls had been finished with a basic gray mortar but not yet painted. As with Gérald, the office design appeared as opportunities to express his identity as an engineer-architect through the careful treatment of form, fenestration, and light. Michel spent most of his workdays on construction sites, so he did not regularly use his home office, which was outside of downtown close to the national road. The property was enclosed by a low, wood picket fence, which had been broken by road crews and intentionally left unrepaired by Michel in a small act of protest.

The family house where he lived with his wife and children was set well back from the road beyond a large driveway, a platform for a pergola, and a grassy lawn. The two-story concrete house did not differentiate itself aesthetically from the middle-class houses common to the area.

In their daily practices, the design styles that Gérald and Michel brought to their offices were secondary to their design work for clients and, in fact, design work was secondary to other economic activities. They both presented as professional middle-class men, neither economically vulnerable nor ostentatiously wealthy. Their two practices shared many features but also differed in terms of the number of projects they took on. Both were sole practitioners retained for residential and small commercial projects. Clients for residential projects had to have the resources to pay a premium for engineering and architecture services and for a higher level of quality in construction, meaning that both Gérald's and Michel's clientele primarily included local businesspeople and emigrants who had either returned or were preparing to return to Leyogann. Both depended on residential commissions, but Michel had a pending commission for a shopping complex on the national road and had built a large multistory structure for a construction supply company down the road. Gérald had recurring contracts with a telecommunication company in the rural department of Nippes, to the west of Leyogann. At the time of our interviews, Michel was frequently traveling for extended periods of time to work on a residential project in the central plateau in the north of the country. Their projects in other regions indicate that they had profession mobility between peripheral regions, but neither had projects in Pòtoprens. Most of the architects' work was located within the commune of Leyogann where they had social and business networks.

Seated at a large, round, custom-built, wood table that anchored Gérald's office, I asked him why he became an architect. He responded that he liked engineering and wanted to have a

profession that would give him the most liberty. By his account, an engineer is obliged to work for a firm or construction company, but an architect you get to be at the top of…. He brought his flattened hand up to touch his forehead to emphasize "the top" level. Gérald's desire for independence resonates with sociologist Robert Gutman's observation that the field of architecture attracts "students who assume that practice permits an unusual degree of individualized, creative self-expression."[174] While Gérald may have been pursuing the mythical freedom of the individual architect, his one-man shop still involved the social construction of architecture through the everyday dialogue and customs that form what architectural theorist Dana Cuff would term a "culture of architectural practice."[175] Cuff has shown how architectural practices are characterized by collective activity and complex communication practices in the office and how client-designer meetings produce not just buildings but also documents.[176]

Cuff was concerned that the profession of architecture operated in a restricted field of beliefs, training, and practices that de-emphasizes collective activity, negotiation and communication with clients, and the dispersed labor of customary practices.[177] This serves as one analytic for understanding the misalignment between the valuation of architecture by architects and by clients. The two active practitioners I identified in Leyogann were both sole proprietors who worked independently and in coordination with others. Both Gérald and Michel were in near-constant dialogue with collaborators: clients, contractors, engineers, businesspeople, etc. Design and management formed a continuous practice for Gérald and Michel as they worked to make plans and supervise construction. As linguistic anthropologist Keith Murphy has demonstrated, everyday design dialogue draws on cultural phenomena such

[174] Gutman, *Architectural Practice: A Critical View*, 108.
[175] Cuff, 5.
[176] Cuff, *Architecture*, 4.
[177] Cuff, *Architecture*, 61.

as… and laminates ideological claims of worth and value into design decisions.[178] If popular expectations are that architects "fè plan" and make "bèl kay," but architects are primarily engaged in dialogue—often mediated or assisted by drawings—to communicate design ideas and coordinate construction, then there is a significant difference between their work and common misconceptions of their work. Ethnographic descriptions of these two practices in Leyogann outline ways that Haitian architects working outside of the metropolis reconcile their daily practices with the rhetorical value of their profession. and I will argue that their peripheral architecture practices are central models for an expanded field of architecture.

Fè Plan – Drawings in Practice & Dialogue

Writing in the US in the 1920s, W.B. Field said that "architectural drawing is the graphic language by which the architect develops and records his ideas and communicates his instructions to the builder... the architect thinks on paper."[179] In other (Kreyòl) words, architects fè plan. Planning and drawing are often/usually entangled with each other. In my observations in Leyogann, the floor plan was the primary technique for architectural thinking and communication by architects as well as by engineers and contractors. Gérald and Michel both stated explicitly that drawings are a form of communication, which they use to convey information to themselves and to their collaborators. Michel described his process:

> I begin with something like a draft. I take the proposal, all of the ideas [about] what he needs exactly. I listen. I take notes. I start to draw… First, I have to understand… to put exactly what he needs on the land.[180]

His self-reflection recalls the argument of architectural historian Hyungmin Pai that architectural texts are "neither the innocent tools of practice nor merely its end product, but the

[178] Murphy, *Swedish Design*, 41.
[179] Johnston, *Drafting Culture*, 43.
[180] Interview, July 19, 2018.

very constituents of practice... Discourse, simply put, is language and signs in use."[181] Pai identified a shift in architectural discourse at the turn of the twentieth century from an understanding of diagrams as artistic rendering toward an instrumental discourse in which diagrams are used to control the object of knowledge.[182] The architects in Leyogann worked primarily with just such an instrumental, diagrammatic logic, as they prepared plans meant to direct the construction of buildings rather than to visualize a composition.

In his sparse office, Michel flipped through his project files and pulled out a floor plan with few details. He pointed out that this plan was for a *kontremèt* (master builder), Michel stated, "I made a sketch for him. He has the knowledge, so I don't need to lose time to make it just so."[183] Michel's explanation encapsulated his view of drawings as tools to communicate information to specific audiences. Michel noted that if he were collaborating with a foreign architect like myself then he would have to give a "better explanation." Without a shared knowledge base, more information about the construction would be needed, and explicitly drawn details, including the placement of reinforcements, would facilitate understanding across differences in training and habits. He observed that French and US architects coming to build in Haiti--as after the 2010 earthquake--had their own styles. "Structure," according to him, "is not different. It's the same all over the world," even though details in the execution may be different. While many conventions of architects' drawing practices are linked through historical traditions of pedagogy and professionalization across France, the US, and Haiti, regional variations arise and are visible in measurement units, material supply chains, and popular building systems.[184]

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[181] Pai, *The Portfolio and the Diagram*, 6.
[182] Pai, 163.
[183] Interview, July 19, 2018.
[184] Some of these differences can be noted in graphic standards and construction manuals in circulation. Early in my work in Port-au-Prince an architect colleague gave me a digital version of Ernst Neufert's *les Élements des projets*

By attending to the function and audience of any given drawing, Michel tailored his practice of communication to particular readers: himself, colleagues, the building department, clients, or foremen. The level of resolution in his drawings was determined by the knowledge shared by both author and reader as well as by the scope of work (i.e., contracts and compensation).

Elaborating details in plans—the inclusion of symbolic and representational notation about construction—requires time and effort. The more explicit and thorough the details are the less ambiguity occurs, but there is a cost associated with higher resolution drawings. For Michel, the level of detailing in a plan depended not just on audience (as with the *kontremèt*) but also upon "the kind of project… the kind of client." If a client were willing to pay for additional labor, then he would spend more time on design. If they were not, he would scale back accordingly. Michel worked repeatedly with certain contractors and tradespeople and, since they were accustomed to working together, he was confident that "they [knew] what they [were] supposed to do." In this way, the accrual of shared experience meant that his drawings could be schematic but still legible to collaborating tradespeople. Moreover, the dominance of constrained masonry construction in Haiti results in a standard material palette, which reduces the range of possible variations in construction details. While Michel worked full-time in architecture and engineering and, as a site supervisor, could ensure that his team of tradespeople understood his plans as drawn, Gérald split his time with his position at the school and was often away from the construction site. To compensate, he employed a younger engineer who was responsible for overseeing his sites and who translated directions from the plans to the foremen and bosses. In Gérald's case, the legibility of the plan to the engineer was key since the architect was not

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de construction (7th edition) on a USB drive to regularize my plans. The ideological importance of standards embedded in texts like Neufert's is discussed in Harwood, "The Interface, Ergonomics and the Aesthetics of Survival."

typically available to make verbal clarifications on site. In both Michel's and Gérald's practices, drawings were approached as tools for communicating information about a design and, therefore, did need not to duplicate information that would be understood from prior experiences or normative construction practice.

Initial sketches and drawings might be characterized as the product of an internal dialogue by the architect. But when the drawing became a tool to communicate with clients and contractors Gérald's and Michel's plans became a form of external communication. One impact of my fieldwork was that for a few months Gérald worked with another architect—myself—creating a third realm of dialogue which was not typical for his practice as we developed two house designs in conversation and drawing. Through drawings and reviews of drawings Gérald externalized ideas about design and architecture to me as we communicated both instrumentally, that is, to complete the contracted work, and reflectively to discuss how and why Gérald made the design decisions that he did. What was made explicit in dialogues between us during the design process may or may not be legible to clients or occupants experiencing the end product, but it revealed many of the intentions and assumptions in his design. Much of what Gérald shared with me about architecture was transmitted while reviewing drawings via three modes of communication: verbal description, verbal references to examples, and finally sketching by hand. In a practice common to architecture studios globally, we sat side by side and looked at drawings on paper or on a laptop screen and discussed adjustments to be made. Almost exclusively, we worked with the floor plan, although we also discussed information in the vertical dimension and in accompanying elevation and section drawings.[185] Often we held these conversations at the

[185] Elevation and section drawings are vertical planar projects meaning that they show the exterior vertical face of a building (elevation) or a cut-away of the middle of a structure (section) without perspective. If one imagines the impression an open doll house would make on a sheet of paper this approximates a section drawing.

large meeting table in his office, but also sometimes while sitting on the porch of the house behind the office or even in folding chairs set up in the shade outside the school he directed. In this way, the work of designing was not restricted to an office but initiated by the presence of drawings.

In what would end up being our last design meeting, Gérald began by noting that we should not mark the drawings—floor plans for a freestanding home—meaning that we would only engage with them through gesture and speech. Keeping the drawings clean indicated that he intended to show them to the clients and wanted them to be presentable. Since printing depends on electricity and most often had to be done at a print shop with a generator, Gérald treated printed drawings with care and, even though final edits would be made, this version would likely be used for reference in discussions with the client. Instead of marking revisions with a pen, Gérald held up the drawings and stared at them intently. When I gestured to particular details, he responded "not yet." He looked over each plan, moving only his eyes. He held the sheet tilted up at an angle from the table, laying it down flat to point out issues with his finger or a capped pen. These comments varied in scale and complexity, from moving the center line of a row of columns, to extending the depth of a gallery, to spelling corrections, to making a freestanding column round instead of square in order to remove "dangerous" corners. He often repeated his

notes three times, perhaps a teacher's habit to encourage memorization. Whether he was acting as a teacher or as a boss, his corrections and directions made implicit design decisions explicit.

Gérald made many implicit claims about the correctness or appropriateness of design choices as he sketched over printouts of the plans, I had drafted using Computer Aided Design (CAD) software. He responded to the plans in speech and drawing simultaneously as he made revisions. His implicit claims had less to do with norms of construction and more to do with cultural norms, including instances where architecture would communicate the status and/or hierarchy of its occupants. He linked the size of rooms and quality of materials with household

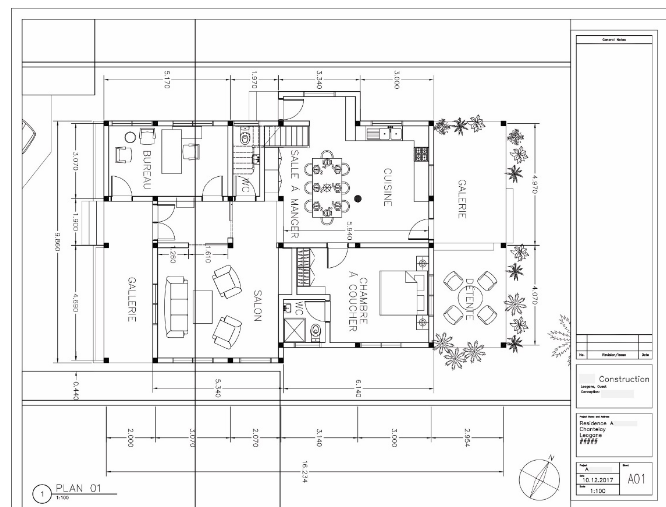

Figure 3-1 Floor plan for Gérald's client (author, 2017)

position (such as owner, children, and domestic workers). A few examples of his edits included the relationship of the house and the *dépendance*, or a suite for a live-in domestic worker. On one occasion, he set as a parameter that there should be a circulation path all the way around the house so that the main house would not touch the exterior site wall. On the other hand, the dépendance (live-in worker's quarters) was expected to use the exterior wall as one or two of its walls to conserve materials and minimize cost. The material justification for the dépendance being integrated with the property wall elided the symbolic marking of the social status of its inhabitants. The disposition of rooms in the dépendance also responded to the hierarchical

positions of domestic workers vis-à-vis their employers. Once, while finalizing the dimensions of rooms for a dépendance (a bathroom, bedroom, and the storage depot), Gérald pointed out that the bedroom was too large, explaining that the "servant's quarters should be smaller than the bedrooms in the owners house." The classed juxtaposition between the main house and the dépendance is particularly stark and exemplifies how design choices communicate information about social position.

Gérald's comments regarding spatial hierarchy were more frequent earlier in the design process as we made major changes to the shape, size, and configuration of rooms. Spatial hierarchies operated more subtly as we negotiated the size and position of bedrooms and other program spaces within the main house. For example, Gérald noted that the master bedroom should be bigger in absolute square footage than any of the other bedrooms; it should have the largest bathroom and balcony; and it should have optimal window placements and view. In this way, architecture, particularly interior architecture, would demonstrate the relative status of household members in plan and in the final construction. What Gérald called a simple bedroom would be approximately sixteen square meters, in comparison, to twenty square meters for a master bedroom.[186] Michel produced similarly normative dimensions but gave them as 4.8 by 4.8 meters or twenty-three square meters (sixteen by sixteen feet by his conversion). He clarified that this would be a medium-sized bedroom for a child. Ultimately, for Michel the dimensions of a room depended on expected furnishings, the size of bed, the owner, and the overall budget. For him, granular understandings of normative ways of living based on social position were necessary to design a client's home to their satisfaction. Typically, these assumptions would not

[186] Neither area includes the en suite bathroom which he estimated 4-5 sq.m. Other average middle-class dimensions: kitchen (25 sq.m.), salon or living room (20-25 sq.m.).

need to be expressed verbally but would register in their accordance with client expectations when built.

The preceding commentary addresses appropriately large floor areas, but over-sized rooms were equally inappropriate, a subjective evaluation based in expectations and desires. Gérald often disparaged the use of space that exceeded its needed size or did not serve a valued purpose as *gaspillage* (FR: waste).[187] From the placement of staircases to the inclusion of irregular vestibule spaces, Gérald would indicate that a design needed to "pa gaspiye lespas" (KR: to not waste space). One characteristic that Gérald identified as distinguishing architects from engineers and bòsmasons was that architects looked to maximize living space and did not reflexively place all walls in line with the column grid, which could result in undersized and oversized rooms.[188] For Gérald, it was important that architects reflected on the appropriate distribution of space in plan so that as much of the floor area as possible contributed to useful and valued spaces, thereby ensuring cost and space efficiencies for his client. A gaspillage of space cannot be precisely defined; it frequently depends on context. A double-height entry vestibule, which offered ceremony and grandeur to the entrance as well as a quality of light and ventilation, was not a waste of space in his estimation, but an excess of space around a turn of a stair leg--also double-height--was categorized as such. The valuation of space relative to the material costs of construction is very much a question of taste, which Galen Cranz has defined as the combination of symbolic and pragmatic functions. like grandeur and ventilation, respectively in the case of an entrance way.[189] In the examples above, what functioned to produce or

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[187] Gaspillage, a noun in French, gaspiye, the verb for wasting in Kreyòl.
[188] The integration and separation of columns from walls recalls arguments for the separation of the skin and structure of the building in European modernist theory. Fernando Lara notes that certain formal ideas from modernism may be at odds with construction methods in lower- and middle-class housing which use walls as formwork and creating structurally integrated walls that are at odds with the principles of modernism in "Illiterate Modernists: Tracking the Dissemination of Architectural Knowledge in Brazilian Favelas," 217.
[189] Cranz, "A New Way of Thinking About Taste."

reproduce aesthetics and spatial hierarchy was informed as much by professional and cultural norms of architecture as by tacit understandings of social status.

In thinking through plans, the designers in question come to understand and manipulate the specific constraints of a given project within a framework of expectations about what is considered appropriate and respectable. Michel highlighted the instrumental use of different qualities of drawing, whether used to communicate with himself via sketches or with builders. Degrees of detail varied depending on the target reader's expertise and shared knowledge. Gérald's drawing reviews elucidated the importance of taste and social convention in the planning of space to suit a client's future use. These methods? of architectural practice are not unique to Gérald and Michel, Leyogann, or even Haiti, but they are important observations of daily practice that demystify disciplinary claims. The ways in which they resolve demands on their time, their drawings, and their proposals are calibrated to their specific context in Leyogann.

Architects' Value & Values

As addressed in the introduction to this chapter, if many people understand that architects build bèl kay and that beauty is secondary and separate from solidity, then the value of architects' services comes into question. If architects are considered less necessary than engineers, then they are obliged to demonstrate the value they add in terms of design or economy. For his part, Gérald offered four explicit arguments for the value of an architect in distinction from either a contractor or an engineer. They included aesthetic quality, good management of space and treatment of the site, construction costs, and environmental benefit. In our concluding interview, he emphasized the third argument: overall cost efficiency, which he presumed—as did many of his peers in Pòtoprens—to be the most compelling to clients. Gérald

argued that architects' commitment to their clients' best interests, including their financial interests, demarcated architects' practices from those of bòsmasons and contractors, whom he presumed to be maximizing their own profit.[190] He argued that architects deliver benefits to their clients in both up-front and long-term costs, since they consider the scope of the project and the quality of construction during design. Moreover, he argued that, because architects set a fixed fee based on project costs, they are not incentivized to draw the work out. His specious implication that contractors are incentivized by day-based fees to extend construction did not align with my observations of contractors who also quoted projects based on their scope, although their subcontractors and tradespeople were paid per day. Nevertheless, straw-man arguments such as this were one of several on-going rhetorical moves by Gérald to differentiate the professionalism of the architect from the informality of the contractor.

In practice, Gérald demonstrated his architect's responsibility to the financial implications of design decisions in the iterative planning of rooms and other spaces. For example, in a project where the client had requested a living room, a dining room, and a kitchen, Gérald instructed to me to design an eat-in kitchen instead of a separate dining room. He explained that it was our responsibility to counsel the client on how to minimize the size and cost of the house. He assumed that the family would use a separate dining room just once or twice a year for a special occasion, and a formal dining room would add unnecessarily to the building area and increase construction costs. Instead, he moved to enlarge the kitchen and introduced a step up into the eating area to define a dining space that could be used regularly. There is a risk that an architect assured that he knows better than his client may overlook pertinent needs, but

[190] This ethical commitment arises in literature on the knowledge-based professions as in Abbott and Abbott, *The System of Professions*; Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*; Sarfatti Larson, "Emblème et exception. La définition historique du rôle de l'architecture."

there is a reasonable argument to be made that with experience and specialized knowledge he can interrogate and refine what clients understand as their needs.

Another familiar cost-based justification for architectural services (which I observed in both Leyogann and Pòtoprens) was that architects avoid mistakes and unforeseen expenses because they plan projects prior to construction. Precision and accuracy are associated with cost savings, which justify and offset the additional cost of architectural services. In a very concrete example, Gérald noted that a building whose surfaces are not level or perpendicular will cost clients substantially more to finish as the plaster, painting, and trim will have to compensate for irregularities. By this logic, quality construction might be cheaper or equivalent in cost to poorly executed work. Gérald contended that the costs arise in different places, whether in the planning or the plaster. In this way, Gérald directly connected professional expertise to material cost and explicated a professional responsibility to protect the financial interests of a client. While architectural services were broadly understood by Haitians to be expensive and inessential, Gérald made his counterargument that, in fact, architectural services result in cost efficiencies in contrast to contractor-led projects.

The other arguments that Gérald offered for the value of an architect–including aesthetics, spatial planning, and sustainability–intersect with construction and maintenance costs but also engage experiential qualities whose value is difficult to quantify. Constructing elements such as columns and footers is substantially more expensive than a plain? infill wall, so much so that the number of columns in a project serves as a shorthand for cost-estimates as will be discussed in the following chapter. For both economic and safety reasons, the number of columns and their disposition in a grid supporting a rigid structure receive a significant amount of attention from architects, builders, and clients alike.

The opposition of bèl kay and kay solid described at the beginning of this chapter implies a separation of structural design made visible in columns and spatial planning, but neither an aesthetic nor a structural approach exists independently. For example, the first iteration of plans that I drafted for two of Gérald's residential projects were based on information given to me: the type and quantity of rooms, the number of floors, the site dimensions and conditions (sun path, streets, neighboring buildings). The first drafts of the plan addressed the positioning of rooms and circulation, so significant revisions to the plans were necessary to align the walls with a feasible structural grid. Gérald commented that it was important that we had started the plans without a structural grid in place so that we could, in his words, do what we do as architects, "imagine good, beautiful spaces." He explicitly connected architects' practice to the design of bèl kay. In contrast, he said that one can identify a house designed by an engineer because the spaces are defined by the grid without deviations to accommodate the users' experience of the space. Gérald saw an architect's role as prioritizing the future occupants' comfort and ease and then reconciling those spatial requirements with the structure and the budget. One unintended outcome of this could be that an occupant might not immediately perceive where the structure was despite a rational and functional grid being in place. Imagining "good, beautiful spaces" was only one step in the design process, and those spaces were rigorously organized in relationship to a structural grid. This example counters the notion that architecture is merely concerned with making pretty and complicated buildings at the expense of structural stability. and presents that bèl kay and kay solid are not mutually exclusive categories but two interdependent aspects of design.

Structural stability has a particular resonance in Leyogann where eighty percent of buildings were damaged in the 2010 earthquake.[191] Michel recounted that after the earthquake he was able to demonstrate to potential clients that his higher-priced services were worthwhile, since none of his projects collapsed. Similarly, Gérald identified his design for the renovated mayor's office as a consequential project in his portfolio. The portion of the building that he had been responsible for renovating was undamaged in the earthquake, while the rear portion with which he was not involved had collapsed. The durability of their projects demonstrated in a grim way the value of their expertise. Both Gérald and Michel were committed to a professional identity authorized by competency and concern for public safety and understood these concerns to operate in tandem with other domains of architectural expertise, including aesthetic quality, spatial arrangement, construction quality, and sustainable environmental benefit.

Most of these two architects' time was spent managing and communicating with the people involved in their business and building projects. With his bundle of professional identities as a school director and political candidate, Gérald was always busy and usually attending to an irregular but inevitable stream of people who come to his office for meetings or to seek him out. I never saw Gérald sitting and working alone. He was occupied by discussing issues with people, reviewing documents presented to him, listening and offering advice, and delivering orders for next steps. Michel, for his part, spent much of his time on construction sites supervising the execution of his plans. They communicated with people all day, sometimes through the drawings, which served as a totem for their professional identity, but visual communication appeared secondary to the verbal negotiations involved in construction management.

[191] I do not have evidence to determine whether use of "solid" or "kay solid" changed after the earthquake but such a comparison of word usage would help elucidate the implications of the concept.

Verbal and non-verbal modes of communication were bundled with titles, class, education, and other social signifiers to confirm the professional authority and expertise of the two architects not just as builders but as contributors to community structures—physical and social. Architects and engineers in Leyogann like Gérald, but also Eng. Bouquet who owned a building supply company, were respected not just for professional credentials but for their community participation. In the year prior to our meeting, Gérald had been an opposition candidate for political office, and he continued to be sought out for advice that blended the political with the technical. One afternoon, two representatives from a rural section of Leyogann came to see him to discuss the need for a bridge to access their neighborhood during the rainy season when the river separating them from the main road was dangerous to cross. Evaluating the technical requirements of a bridge in this site and its associated costs drew on Gérald's knowledge of structures, but his political knowledge was also useful for them to revise their argument as they looked for political support. In this way technical, political, and community knowledge made Gérald a valuable counselor.

Both Michel and Gérald explained that their services and knowledge was valuable and important for the construction of safe and beautiful buildings. They also struggled with communicating this value to clients hesitant to pay for services not required by any enforced governmental regulations. Michel consciously adapted his practice to this reality by adjusting the amount of time he spent in schematic designs to correspond with clients' capacity or desire to pay for those services. Gérald had developed a complex, rhetorical argument for the architect's value based on the interlaced domains of aesthetics, spatial arrangement, construction, and sustainability. However, Gérald also had work outside of architecture to complement a relatively small number of commissions. With daily activities that included construction management,

client conversations, material procurement, being consulted for advice, organizing community events, and sketching or drawing, the sole practitioners in Leyogann engaged in an expanded architectural practice that might be better characterized as design-build in Michel's case and multi-disciplinary consultation in Gérald's case. They may have been adjusting to the financial realities of practicing architecture in a peripheral location, but they also demonstrated flexible approaches to drawing, thinking, and talking about building.

Conclusion

In a text exchange with Gérald a couple of years after our work together, he inquired about my activities: "You're not working on architecture? Making plans, doing projects and other [things]."[192] In his message, he characterized the work of architecture as making plans and working on projects. In the practices of Gérald and Michel glimpsed here, it appears that the musings of Angeline and Bòs Thomas about the function of architects bear out. Architects make plans, both visual and conceptual. The floor plan is an object of attention both in practice and as a symbol of design, but Gérald and Michel use the graphic representation of plans instrumentally to communicate ideas to themselves, to their clients, and to other building professionals.

The practice of architecture as observed in Léogâne can be broadly characterized as "fait projet" (doing projects), requiring a shifting set of skills, including supervising construction, managing clients, and sketching and drawing plans. The traditional realm of design in the devising and drawing of a building was limited to solitary work on the part of these architects to be completed as efficiently as possible, but design in communication began in conversations with clients well before the first sketch was made and continued on the construction site in dialogue

[192] *Original :* Ou pap travay sou architecture à? Fait plan, fait projet et autres (a mix of Kreyòl and French orthography)

with builders. Michel made explicit that his drawings were resolved to a level corresponding with the knowledge and experience of the builder who would receive the design. The cooperation of an architect and a builder in the interpretation of designs or drawings was invisible in institutional definitions of the architect as the masterful producer of drawings in Chapter Two but, in Leyogann, drawings served an instrumental role of communication between architects, clients, and builders. Without regulation by the state, blueprints did not need to demonstrate adherence to best practices in building, rather drawings and verbal communication were used by Gérald and Michel to facilitate structurally sound and aesthetically valued buildings.

In this chapter, I have examined the roles of two architects as communicators occupied in the management of projects and the direction of people. These roles involve external dialogue with collaborators and internal dialogue with themselves, which depends on but also exceeds drawn plans. They do not produce comprehensive drawing sets but focus on the drawings and drawing resolution necessary to communicate the design to the client, the permit office, and the builders calibrated to the specific audience and context. Though their architectural services are seen as overlapping with or subordinate to engineering, Gérald and Michel both balanced the spatial experience of building occupants with concerns for structural stability. The dichotomous conception of bèl kay as the domain of architects and kay solid as the domain of engineers obscures their interdependence, diminishes the economic value given to architectural services, and disregards the coherent and essential architectural practice of making plans and ensuring their execution.

Architects in Leyogann certainly draw floor plans, but they also are substantially involved in supervising construction. They establish design ideas through floor plans and

communicate verbally with builders and clients throughout the construction process. Architects' personal offices, designed to their own taste, demonstrate an aesthetic approach distinct from engineer- or contractor-designed structures, but the economic value of their aesthetic and planning work is frequently seen as minimal. The humanistic goals put forth by professional organizations in the previous chapter included tailoring the built environment to the pragmatic and poetic needs of Haitians. Unfortunately, Gérald commented on the scarcity of work amid the political protests referred to as *peyi lòk* beginning in 2018 and exacerbated by the *mond lòk* (worldwide lockdown) of COVID-19 in 2020: "The way the country is, it is not easy for people to hire an architect for plans and for supervision." Dependent on discretionary spending, Haitian architects are in a precarious profession.

Chapter 4
Bòsmason: In situ Design and Incremental Practices

Figure 4-1 Workers excavating foundation trenches at Chantye Divisyon, Leyogann, Haiti 2018

Drawing in Place

By the time I would arrive at Bòs Thomas' construction site by *divizyon,* the neighborhood that border the national highway where it forks to bypass or head into downtown Leyogann, the sun would be high and bright over the walled in and unshaded lot. He and his crew were a couple of hours into the day's work. In the days prior to Bòs Thomas contacting me about this job, his crew had cleared the site of what few trees had been on it, built a rectangular reference frame of wood slats around the site of the future house, and dug out trenches a meter deep for the foundation walls. The core crew of five men and the *bòsmason* (contractor)*,* Bòs Thomas were using a grid of white string to guide the placement of steel reinforcing cages into the foundations when I arrived. To stay out of the house-sized string maze and the harsh sun I sat

on the thin ledge of not more than six or seven centimeters that ran along the base of the property wall in a shrinking wedge of shade to observe the days' activities.

Moving along the edge of the frame closest to me, Bòs Thomas was measuring the distance from between one line of columns to the next so that he could mark the location with a set of three, asymmetrically positioned nails. Based on the dimensions from the plan he drove a nail in to mark the center of the line of columns. Once he had done that he called out to Lewis, a crew member, who was on the opposite side of the building footprint to confirm the distance from the center line nail to the next nail. Lewis responded "*sis*" and Bòs Thomas yelled back "*sis agoch o sis adwat?*" [six to the left or six to the right?]. Turning his back to Thomas to face the wood slat to look, Lewis gestured to Bòs Thomas' left, waving his right forearm down a couple of time. With this information, Bòs Thomas hammered a nail in six centimeters to the left of the center nail, another much closer in on the right-hand side, and bent the center nail over to wrap the white string around the base of the center nail and pull a taut line from side to side (Figure 4-2).

The orientation that was communicated through verbal and physical means between Lewis and Bòs Thomas would not have to be repeated. From this point forward a direction could

Figure 4-2 Nails to anchor guidelines and disambiguate direction, Leyogann 2018

be given as to the "six side" and regardless of a worker's body position this would serve to indicate what could be globally described as south by southwest on the site. The uneven spacing of nails served a communicative function to disambiguate directions on site and is just one example of how certain physical materials on the construction site served representational functions as symbols in a drawing would. On a blueprint, a north arrow would serve as a symbolic reference for direction and architects often use the approximate cardinal direction to name each building edge—i.e., the east or south facade. On this construction site, a physical device—asymmetric nails—disambiguated directions on the construction site at the same time as it served a mechanical function as an anchor for guidelines. In this way, Bòs Thomas transcribed design information onto the construction site, drawing the floor plan in place to communicate with his workers and complete the design.

Techniques like these asymmetric nails facilitate Haitian contractors transcribing drawings on site. They may use spray or chalk to mark the horizontal locations of wall openings or plumbing and electrical installations or permanent markers to indicate vertical position of reinforcing beams or wall openings on column reinforcement bars. These are each practices of communication where the symbolic representation of design is intertwined with construction techniques to translate design information from the bòsmason's mental image or foundation plan onto the site. This drawing in situ does not lend itself to large creative moves, like reversing the direction of a stair in a sketch, but instead resolves smaller and more mundane questions that arise in the resolution of a design idea from a plan into a building. Regardless of how simple of a foundation plan drawing—or sketch—a contractor may be working with; it is transferred into a three dimensional grid on the site as the crew transposes dimensions and column positions from abstract lines on paper into measured lengths of strings and fixed posts. This is not a novel

practice, nor one particular to Bòs Thomas, Leyogann, or Haiti. It bears careful attention though because in this context substantial design qualities can be imparted via primarily verbal communication between the supervisor, the client, and the building crew.

In this chapter, I argue that *bòsmason* (masonry contractors) design *in situ*, which is to say they design on site, or in the same place and time as they build. Architectural design is typically attributed to architects and is practiced in a studio and on a drafting table, but in Leyogann and in much of Haiti outside of Pòtoprens and Okap where design offices work on large or high-end projects, the design of most buildings, both commercial and residential, never pass over an architect's table or under an architect's hand. Rather, bòsmason like Bòs Thomas are largely responsible for conceptualizing and executing buildings without a self-conscious design practice. Their in-situ design practice is situated, it is conducted as needed, its methods are dependent on the relationships between the actors involved, and it is a creolized practice based on local, Caribbean, North American, and European referents. In order to theorize this in situ design practice I will discuss first the daily practices of bòsmason including drawing, building, and planning with clients; then, the weakness of municipal planning and regulation and its impacts on house building, and finally, how knowledge and expertise are accumulated and evidenced by builders in Leyogann.

In Situ Practices of Bòsmason

In both linguistic and cultural senses, the practices of bòsmason are an ever-evolving product of the creolization of building practices and technologies. Edouard Glissant describes creolization as a process which is always open and never fixed. He characterizes it as a dialectic between oral and written discourses such that "creolization, one of the ways of forming a complex mix—and not merely a linguistic result—is only exemplified by its processes and

certainly not by the 'contents' on which these operate."[193] As such, architecture is a cultural product which can also be characterized as undergoing creolization as its practices and technologies are a complex mix resulting from transnational exchanges through trade, education, migration, and many media (including but not limited to design portfolios, social media, print culture, television and video). Because it is the process of mixing that characterizes creolization and not any particular product, it is possible to posit that creole architectures of separate epochs are similar in the process of creolization even if the resultant aesthetic diverges significantly. In this way, the popular "Gingerbread" style (1880-1920) of wealthy households was a creole architecture which has been credited as a result of the return of Haitian architects educated in Paris, French artisans' shops in Haiti, imported prefabricated decorative elements, the global impact of Victorian architecture, and the ascendancy of German economic influence in Haiti.[194] Though this style was first established among the wealthy urban elite it would diffuse into smaller middle- and lower-class housing in decorative embellishments like filigreed wood trim. The turn-of-the-twentieth-century Gingerbreads are materially and aesthetically distinct from what is sometimes referred to as Maison Delmas, box-like, flat-roofed concrete middle-class housing that characterized the municipality of Delmas since the 1970s under the Duvalier's. Nonetheless, the education of architects and engineers abroad or domestically with faculty trained abroad, global styles including modernism, and the economics of building materials like concrete and wood, all influenced its development. In process, these styles are similarly creolized albeit distinct. In the contemporary moment suburban speculative housing from North America, reinforced concrete construction techniques used in the United States, France, and former French

[193] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 89.
[194] In "Preserving Haiti's Gingerbread Houses: 2010 Earthquake Mission Report | World Monuments Fund"; Columbia University and Graduate School of Architecture, "The Gingerbread Houses of Port-Au-Prince, Haiti." Jardin, Lisandre. Gingerbread: Patrimoine de Port-au-Prince? (thesis). Université Libre de Bruxelles. 2014

colonies and protectorates in the Caribbean, the availability of imported materials from corrugated aluminum sheeting to rebar, and remittances from Haitians abroad are just some of the salient influences on creolized building practices. Such transnational exchanges of discourse and the physical migration of builders and clients alike, bring many cultures into relationship with each other in a Kreyòl architecture which is uniquely executed in situ, informed by temporal, geographic, and classed positions.

As discussed in the introduction, creole languages, like vernacular architecture, have been maligned by Western disciplines. Creolization and Kreyòl here resist this casting and instead speak to the specificity of cultural formation through dialectic exchanges within racialized and classed power relationships. The belittlement of vernacular and quotidian architectures by the architecture discipline as unconscious or intuitive design denies reason to its makers. Looking to describe vernacular building in the United States, Thomas Hubka wrote:

> Vernacular building method is unselfconscious only to the degree that the design system is not articulated in drawings or written words and is not continuously analyzed by its practitioners. It is, however, a systematic method of design facilitated by a highly structured, traditional mental language (or architectural grammar).[195]

The misapprehension of a system which is not necessarily articulated in self-conscious design documents which Hubka highlights here is similar to the dialectic between oral and written discourses that Glissant identifies within creolization. What the marginalization of vernacular and creolized architectures does is diagnose a problem with practices without recognizing the systems that designers are functioning within. As in literature on informality, informality arises in realms not governed by formal rules or in situations where formal

[195] Hubka, "Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Designers and the Generation of Form," 428.

institutions are not functioning.[196] Vernacular systems arise in situations where disciplinary architecture does not function. Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy present a view of "'urban informality' as a system of regulations and norms that governs the use of space" which is "a significant zone of transactions for the middle-class and even transnational elites."[197] Development within the systems of regulations and norms that AlSayyad and Roy describe are not anarchy, as they have been referred to by Pòtoprens urbanists, but a system in itself that everyone from the very poor to very wealthy participate in.[198] Moreover, it is a logical response to the widely perceived absence of the state—particularly outside of the capital—captured in the refrain "nou pa we leta" (we don't see the state).[199] The stakes of understanding in situ design are embedded in these larger debates about vernacular and informal systems. The friction between systems of representation in written and visual documents are particularly visible in the moments when bòsmason who largely operate and are educated within informal systems do engage with intermittent government regulation. Reform initiatives committed to improving the built environment through training struggle to navigate the relationship between oral, written, and visual communication in the Kreyòl practices of bòsmason.

What can be observed in building practices in Leyogann, though, is that depending on the relationship between bòsmason, clients, and laborers drawings and written documents are one mode of communication used as beneficial in coordination with oral dialogue and physical marks. Some bòsmason working for low-income clients on small projects may produce no drawings and simply discuss the dimensions, mark them out, and begin, while others with more

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[196] Waibel and McFarlane, *Urban Informalities*, 171.
[197] Roy and AlSayyad, *Urban Informality*.
[198] This fear of anarchic development has been voiced many times but an early account of the increasing informal development of Port-au-Prince can be found in Blanchet and Pereira, "Le problème du logement à Port-au-Prince."
[199] See data from Schuller NSF 2016-19

technical education or when working larger projects may create relatively detailed foundation plans and schematic plans of the finished house. There is a continuum of design communication within which they operate in response to a given situation.

Mason and Bòsmason:

Figure 4-3 A bos' signature on his handicraft, a small footbridge over an irrigation canal, Dabòn, Leyogann, 2018

Bòsmason, the principal actors of this chapter, include builders with varying levels of formal education, expertise, and economic positions. Bòsmason are responsible for concrete block construction, which is such a ubiquitous construction system in southern Haiti that they are, in fact, involved in the majority of building. *Bòs* is a common honorific for a supervisor or man in charge including but not limited to construction. While the title is not explicitly gendered, I have not encountered a woman *bòs*.[200] Similar to the use of "boss" in some regional US dialects the title is used for supervisors, including the building trades, but also informally for a person in charge of something and as a sign of respect. The honorific *bòs* then recognizes a hierarchical position and a bòsmason then refers to a head mason or builder and the far less common title,

[200] The overwhelming dominance of men in the construction trade in my fieldwork means that I will use masculine pronouns and man throughout this chapter not in a universal sense but to mark the observed gender of the actors in question.

kontremèt, refers to a master builder with a great deal of experience. The compound construction of *bòs-* + *mason* parallels the compound etymology of architect, *arkhi-* (chief) + *tektōn* (builder), to name a person in charge of masonry or building, respectively.[201]

Following the head-builder etymology adapted from Kenneth Frampton, I use architecture here to refer to the mixed activities of developing form with respect to utility and art.[202] The skill set of a particular bòsmason or the scope of work completed on a particular job, may or may not meet some litmus test for professional "Architecture" but they are often implicitly or explicitly responsible for the conception and design of residential structures either in their entirety or in their articulation. Their design process is more fluid and situational than that which has been codified by academic and professional systems of architecture, particularly with respect to actors and phases. As craftspeople a bòsmason's experiential knowledge of construction and spatial norms inform their implicit design practices executed through directive sketches, reading prepared plans, and spoken direction. In a building culture almost entirely dominated by concrete masonry block construction, it then follows that bòsmason come to function in many ways as an architect in practice, if not in profession.

As this and the preceding chapter destabilize boundaries between architects and builders, the historical constitution of a disciplinary boundary separating architects as producers of architecture from builders or craftspeople is relevant. I work to avoid the problematic framing of Haitian bòsmason as a "contemporary ancestor" by arguing not that an older relationship between building and architecture persists in vernacular or quotidian building, but rather that a narrative of design that centers builders will describe the realm of activity in the construction of

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[201] OED 3rd edition "architect" https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/m_en_gb0038260?rskey=MjKwmb&result=4101 (accessed Aug 9, 2019)
[202] *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, 5.

the built environment which includes professionals identified as architects alongside the majority of builders. The question is then how is design commissioned, communicated, and executed? In the earliest instances of creole architecture in what is now Haiti and was then called by the French, Saint-Domingue, civilian buildings were commissioned within an ecosystem of architects, builders, carpenters, and labors and included white, Black, and mixed-race people, free and enslaved.[203] On the basis of notarial documents including contracts, Gauvin Bailey describes how buildings were commissioned and paid for. There are notable differences between the contractual arrangements with white builders versus free people of color with the latter using more oral agreements and more often paid in installments or exchange.[204] Relevant to contemporary practice are the ways in which building program, dimensions, materials, and payment were used to define the scope the project.[205] Especially for free people of color, there are no extant floor plans or elevations describing the design of the buildings they were contracted to build. Design appears to have occurred in execution in the interpolation between the client's requirements and an aesthetic resolution informed by norms of the time.

The contemporary bòsmason I observed also engaged in realizing the details of clients' stated needs. In different cases they could receive a verbal description of the client's program, a drafted plan from an engineer, or an eclectic variety of images. Each of these design documents provide some, but not all, information about the house to build and would require some degree of translation onto the site for construction. In response, bòsmason made incremental design decisions along the way in dialogue with their clients and their crew. When drawing a plan for a client Bòs Thomas described his process as beginning with asking them what they wanted and

[203] Bailey, *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire*.
[204] Bailey is able to trace the involvement and skill level of enslaved people in bills of sale but they are not visible in building contracts.
[205] Bailey, *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire*, 111–14.

based on the number and size of rooms he would "draw a plan… make it nice" and then build it. His design practice occurred—unremarked upon—somewhere within these simple steps and communicated obliquely in drawing, speech, and gesture. In this way bòsmason participate in an in-situ design process which is characterized by intermittent construction phases, informal design documents, and broad agreement on social norms. In this incidental design process bòsmason disambiguate or explicate design details as needed and largely, on-site. The project which opened this chapter, *Chantye Divizyon* (construction site at the forked road), serves as a case study of the practices of communication which bòsmason use in situated and relational design as they interact with the state, with clients, with themselves, and with their crew.

Chantye Divizyon: Tracing the Plan

In Leyogann in 2017 and 2018 while I was doing my fieldwork, there was constant background of construction. My neighbor up the road was overseeing a project for his brother; my own quarters were being finished when I arrived, and my landlord continued on with a third floor on his house; his brother was building down the road. Given the destruction of the earthquake in 2010, a significant amount of construction in the early 2010s was reconstruction of what had been lost, but alongside the loss came change including an influx of new residents in Leyogann coming both from the rural south and from Pòtoprens. As such, new construction continued to replace destroyed housing, but it also responded to perennial motivators to build new or larger houses as families grow or accumulate resources and accommodate new residents. While I could observe building activity from the scale of simple, post and beam structures to multi-story middle-class concrete houses all around, where and when was design happening? Between the commission of a four-bedroom house and the execution of a given structure, design happened. I hypothesized that it was happening in the conversations on and around these very

building sites between bòsmason, work crews, and clients or their representatives and turned my attention towards active construction projects in search of this ephemeral and unremarked activity. One of the ways that I found projects was by taking walks and simply introducing myself to people building and inquiring about their projects.

One day in September, I walked past a long idle project which had rapidly expanded from a small platform into a large two-story affair. A young man returned from New Jersey was completing a house for his parents and introduced me to Bòs Thomas, a tall man with a deep voice and a long face, with a serious demeanor but also often joking with his crew. He welcomed me onto the construction site and showed me around explaining what each space would become and how in the next phase they would enclose the second-floor platform and create a double-height atrium in the home. Bòs Thomas vetted me and my research project inquiring as to where the data I collected would go and when, where, and in which languages I would be publishing. My answers were satisfactory, as he then consented to be interviewed by me and became an important source of information and access to mid-scale residential construction projects like this one in Leyogann.[206] Bòs Thomas was born and grew up in Leyogann on his father's lakou which had been started by his grandmother. One of eight children, Bòs Thomas moved to Gwadloup (Guadalupe) in the late 1990s where he worked in construction. There he had worked for a French engineer who provided seminars for his staff on technical construction and mentored Bòs Thomas. In 2009 he returned to Haiti and Leyogann and began to take on small projects. He credited his technical knowledge to the training he received while working in Gwadloup, but to receive a diploma Bòs Thomas enrolled in and graduated from a technical school in Pòtoprens. Just a year after his return to Haiti, the 2010 earthquake devastated Leyogann, but none of the

[206] In this chapter I will default to Haitian Kreyòl orthography unless the source indicated French in writing or through spoken inflections.

houses that Bòs Thomas had worked on since his return were destroyed (yo pat tonbe/they didn't fall). The durability of these structures bolstered his reputation and served as evidence that his higher-than-average construction costs were well spent on seismic reinforcement. When I met Bòs Thomas he was in such demand that he had a queue of projects booked. Word of mouth and recommendations led him to predominantly work for Haitians from Leyogann who were living and working in Gwadloup and undertaking house projects for eventual return to their hometown. In the summer of 2018, as I was concluding my research, insecurity began to escalate in the country as popular protests broke out against mounting inflation, political misappropriation of PetroCaribe funds, and the IMF-mandated removal of gas tax subsidies. These protests which continued into 2020 have been called *peyi lòk* because they have used the roadblocks and strikes to impede economic activities including construction. By the end of 2018, Bòs Thomas had decided to return to Gwadloup for more stable work and living conditions and at the time of writing he continues to live and work abroad.

Knowing that I hoped to observe a residential project from the beginning, Bòs Thomas called me a few months after our initial interview and invited me to come and observe a new project of his, *chantye divizyon*. It was a typical project for Bòs Thomas: a two-story house, with a 247 square meter (2,658 square feet) footprint, for a *dyaspora* client living in the United States.[207] Bòs Thomas communicated with the client periodically by telephone. A cousin of the client who lived in Leyogann and who also worked in construction was responsible for purchasing materials and checked in on the site every couple of days. According to Bòs Thomas

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[207] *Dyaspora,* the Haitian Kreyòl word for diaspora, carries many layers of meaning for Haitians living in-country and abroad, but as Edwidge Danticat quotes writer Gérard Alphonse-Férère, "diaspora is a 'term employed to refer to any dispersal of people to foreign soils.' But in the Haitian context it is used 'to identify the hundreds of thousands of Haitians living in many countries of the world,'" in *Create Dangerously* (2011). I use it intentionally here as the building practices of the *dyaspora* seem to be marked by similar tensions having to do who has stayed and who left, why and what benefits or pretentions may be carried back in migration and repatriation.

the design of house like this generally proceeded in one of two ways. Either the client would give him a plan that they had had prepared by an engineer or architect or even themselves, or the client would communicate to him what kind of house they wanted in terms of parameters like the number and size of rooms, bathrooms, floors or stories, and living spaces. In the first case, he functioned as a contractor executing the plan as given and his design responsibilities would be restricted to resolving possibly incomplete information in the vertical dimension including the height of window openings or roof slopes. In the second case, he would begin by drafting a plan that accommodated their requests and their site dimensions (Figure 4-4). He would charge for the work of preparing a plan separately from and prior to construction. This work of translating a client's program into a floor plan is arguably at the heart of an architectural practice. Bòs Thomas reflected on this saying "*M trase, men m pa trase kòm yon achitèk. Seminè mwen te resevwa, li pèmèt mwen trase, pèmèt mwen li plan*" (I draw, but I don't draw like architect. The seminars I received, they allow me to draw, allow me to read a plan).[208] He says that drawing and reading plans are skills that he and other trained bòsmason acquire but also implies there are additional techniques that an architect might use. He implies that there is a gap between tracing or drawing a plan and designing a plan [fè konsepsyon plan]. Nevertheless, design is certainly being undertaken and executed in bòsmason-drawn plans so the nature of this gap may be a matter of degree.

[208] Interview, September 15, 2017

Translating References:

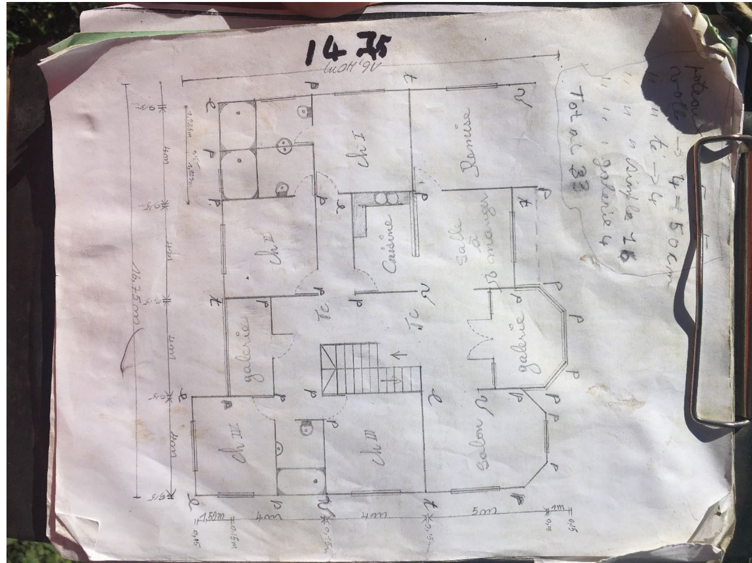

Figure 4-4 Plan de distribution/Floor plan for Chantye Divizyon (Bos Thomas, 2018)

The design of the *chantye divizyon* project exemplifies the hybrid responsibilities of bòsmason as builders and in situ designers. Bòs Thomas recalled the client telling him that he would like a house "like this"—this referred to illustrations of a suburban house model called "Siena Gardens" from a US company which sells house plans (Figure 4-5). The client had sent him two sheets of images; one sheet showed three stylistic variations on a two-story model and the other sheet offered three more stylistic variations on a single-story model. The house-building company has complete brochures for these house designs on their website which include basic floor plans indicating the size and arrangement of rooms, but only the pages with the facade illustrations were included in the communication between Bòs Thomas and his client. Bòs Thomas carried these sheets underneath the floor plan on the clipboard for this project as part of the documentation of this project. The facades, which are all based on the same floor plan, vary window shapes, roof lines, and finishes to create distinct appearances. The arrangement of the front rooms including a sitting room, a foyer, and a garage can be inferred from the facade illustrations. With these in hand Bòs Thomas was responsible for drafting a floor

plan based on the client's program which included four bedrooms on the ground floor, a garage, a sitting room, and a master suite on the future second floor.

The floor plan that Bòs Thomas prepared synthesized the program requests from the client with certain formal features from the "Siena Gardens" facades. Key features that Bòs Thomas transposed from the facade illustrations to the floor plan include: the articulation of the centerline of the facade, the positioning of the garage on the right-hand side (with respect to a viewer facing the house), a small, covered entrance patio to the left of the centerline, and a large and decorative window opening into the living room placed beside the entrance way (Figure 4-4). Though I wasn't present for the discussion between Bòs Thomas and his client regarding the "Siena Gardens" precedent, the fact that the reference was composed of six variations suggests, that there was a certain degree of flexibility in the idea of similarity here. Moreover,

Figure 4-5 Third-party renderings for reference in design of the house at Chantye Divizyon: (left) two-story model, (right) single-story model

the inclusion of both single- and two-story models recalls the mutability of single-story houses often built in Haiti with the intention of adding a second story in the future. For the company that produced the referenced house designs, the consistent feature in each of these models was the

floor plan, yet the floor plan was not included as a reference for the design of the *chantye divizyon* project. The facade of a US-suburban home—literally, a collection of images—was more significant to the client than the spatial arrangement of the house that would have been indicated in a floor plan. The floor plan designed by Bòs Thomas responded to these images and carried certain formal qualities over, but the plan corresponded with local norms and his understanding of the client's future use of the house.

The design work that a bòsmason like Bòs Thomas executes in the drawing of a plan like that for *chantye divizyon* is often unrecognized by the discipline of architecture either because of the identity and training of the person drawing or because these representational forms (the schematic hand-drawn floor plan and the corporate cut-sheet) are taken to be external to the profession. Hyungmin Pai writes that the texts of architecture which include standards, journals, and plates are not tools of practice but constitute practice. The discourse of "language and signs in use" includes blueprints but also the supporting visual media accessed by architects.[209] In parallel, visualizations like those of "Siena Gardens" contribute to a design discourse between clients and builders—both those who purchase the floor plans in the United States and bòsmason like Bòs Thomas who integrate them into their design practice in a way presumably unanticipated by the creators.

In the cases I observed in Leyogann there is not a dichotomy so much as a gradient between the representational practices of architects and bòsmason. Therefore, the question at hand is not what is within, marginal to, or external to any discipline, but rather, what do representational documents do bòsmason create and use? The floor plan and illustrations presented here serve to communicate spatial and aesthetic ideas between Bòs Thomas and his

[209] Pai, *The Portfolio and the Diagram*, 6–7.

client. In the creation of the floor plan Bòs Thomas was in conversation with himself about how to realize a house which conformed with the client's requests and the norms or expectations attached to the commission. In its final state, the floor plan served to communicate certain qualities of the house, namely the size, layout, and shape of interior spaces to the client. It also communicated the metric area of the house and the structural sufficiency of the foundation plan to the municipal government for taxation and building permitting. The facade illustrations, on the other hand, were provided by the client to communicate a general sense of the desired massing and aesthetics of the house to the bòsmason. Bòs Thomas did not render any three-dimensional views or vertical plane views (sections and elevations) of the house. As will be discussed later, he is able to build with only the plan because of norms that he, his client, and his work crew share. Structural details and vertical dimensions are not represented in the plan because they are either presumed or left to resolution on-site. In this case, he also depends upon the shared images of a model house given as a reference. The design documents that bòsmason use and create are pegged to the act of communicating house designs, but they do not include exhaustive details. These may be implied but ambiguous and left to be clarified through verbal and gestural direction in situ during the construction of the house.

Though I note that there is information implicated but not represented in the plan, a good deal of information is notated in the plan. Throughout construction but especially while the lines for the foundation trenches and column positions were being laid out, Bòs Thomas had a clipboard in his hands or nearby which held the documents for the project. The floor plan sat on top. The plan indicated the dimensions between walls and columns as well as column types. He referenced it frequently during site preparation while the trenches for foundation walls and column footers were being excavated. The hand-drafted sheet used on graphic standards legible

across our respective nationalities and languages to indicate the placement of walls, doors, windows, stairs, and kitchen and bathroom fixtures. Text indicated the intended use for all rooms on the ground floor. Dimension strings—lines divided by tick marks that separate discrete lengths indicated in decimal format to the side—were drawn along three of the four sides of the floor plan. Window opening are indicated on the plan by doubled lines parallel to the wall line, but their exact dimensions were not indicated. Their relative position and size would be set by Bòs Thomas during the construction of the walls. Bòs Thomas used letter codes to indicate the three types of columns to be installed—those with square, T-, and L-shaped rebar cages. In the notes at the top of the sheet, Bòs Thomas has tabulated the number of each column type and the total number of columns, thirty-three (Figure 4-4). The column count is noteworthy since contractors and architects, alike, in Leyogann used the number of columns as a shorthand for estimating project size and cost. The information embedded in the plan with graphic and textual symbols outlined his design for the house but also depended upon his presence on-site to communicate it verbally to the crew, adding information or clarifying ambiguities as they proceeded.

The plan as described above served an important function as a medium of communication of the design as transposed from the client's desires, but on paper it served only Bòs Thomas and, infrequently, the technician preparing rebar cage. For the rest of the crew, the plan became legible as it was translated into a physical grid of string, nail anchor points, and marks. Key intersections were marked with permanent marker so they could be replaced if a line had to be moved out of the way—which happened often as wheelbarrows and materials were moved around the site. This three-dimensional transposition became the drawing that everyone saw, read, and manipulated. An analog for the frame of drawing, the first intervention on the site had

been to establish a perimeter frame using wooden stakes and slats. Because the house would be built relative to this frame its squareness was repeatedly tested. Once in place, all measurements and orientations were made relative to the frame. The practice of relative position underpins both drafting and construction as errors or changes can be compounded in interrelated systems of structure and enclosure. As the site was filled in, Bòs Thomas' instructions were increasingly given relative to the existing structure. In a moment when Bòs Thomas and his foreman were confirming the type and orientation of an interior column, they looked together at the plan—a rare occurrence—and pointed in sequence from columns on the plan to those already installed discussing the new column in relative terms, "like this" and "by that," to the other columns. Additionally, vertical information about the height of intermediate beams in the walls and window or door openings was added with spray paint or permanent markers. All these actions blur the division between design, representation, and construction.

Clients & Economics

In the contemporary United States, the vast majority of middle-income housing is built and designed speculatively for purchase and buyers' design input may be limited to choosing between a number of finishes or among limited variations as in the "Siena Gardens" facades. In Haiti, the inverse is true; low-income and high-income clients alike commission the building of their houses and therefore have direct influence on its design despite economic constraints. Nevertheless, a bounded range of styles and forms are commonly used as social expectations inform home building. As at *chantye divizyon,* they are often more concerned with the program and facade of the house and leave the resolution of these symbolic features to the builder.

Less antagonistic than relationships between architects and clients, bòsmason still described clients as possible impediments to their work. They raised concerns about client

expectations, changes to the design, and resistance to spending on materials or labor up front. Strategically, Bòs Thomas would estimate the price of a project in phases because if he offered a quote for the whole project—even though it was the same cumulative cost—the client could refuse to pay. While he did not come out and say that they were illogical, the strategy indicated how he understood client's decision-making tendencies. Across the economic spectrum, there is not a culture of mortgage lending in Haiti and so clients build as much of a project as they can afford to at a time. Projects are broken into phases, some of which, like additional floors may be conceived of from the beginning but planned for an indeterminate date in the future; many are never completed.

At the same time procuring materials was a significant aspect of building cost and building quality. Other bòsmason and architects that I spoke with attributed poor building quality to clients who resisted paying more for better quality materials or more cement and reinforcing bars. The responsibility for purchasing materials resting with clients holds positives and negatives for both parties. Because the client purchases materials the bòsmason do not have to take a risk in procuring materials and then waiting on payment; the client is assured that the bòs is not making a profit by overcharging for materials. On the other hand, since the quantity of materials is dictated by the bòsmason's design it is crucial that this information is clearly communicated to the client or their representative and that they purchase what is requested. Neither of these actions were guaranteed, but procuring materials and supplies is a critical part of the house building process and depended on the relationship of trust and communication established (or not) between a bòsmason and his client.

Municipal Regulations and Planning

Building by bòsmason—and all builders—is largely self-regulated in the absence of significant regulation or oversight by governmental agencies, but the formal venue for building regulation is the local municipal engineer's office. In 2017, I met with the current municipal engineer, a political appointee of the mayor, Engineer Wilson and one of his colleagues in his office inside Leyogann's city hall. His office was to right of the entrance into the modest neoclassical building and it was enclosed by wood paneled partitions that reached to seven or eight feet providing just a modicum of separation from the entry hall. Eng. Wilson described his office as having oversight of building and regional planning. They would review plans and confirming calculations for permit applications and visiting building projects for inspections and, in the realm of planning, prepare plans for municipal projects, management and improvements to city cemetery, and conducting studies for canalization. In fact, the municipal engineer represented a very partial institution, largely disregarded except when a builder or homeowner needed to get a building permit and pay the associated taxes.

When I met with Eng. Wilson, he had been in the position for four years since the inauguration of the current mayor. He was frank that there was no continuity across administrations and claimed to have no access to documents from his predecessors including a substantial planning document that was produced by a consortium of stakeholders in 2012 to plan for reconstruction and development in the aftermath of the earthquake.[210] While the centralized national offices responsible for construction and planning including the MTPTC, Unite de Construction de Logements et de Batiments Publics (UCLBP), and Comité Interministériel à l'Aménagement du Territoire (CIAT) have large-scale regional plans, these

[210] SODADE, "Plan d'urbanisme Pour La Ville de Leogane et Sa Region Periurbaine."

plans are not being operationalized through local government. Documents like the 2012 regional plan are created, but if they are not circulated or implemented, do they communicate anything? What role do documents that are never acted upon have in design? Arguably planning documents like the 2012 plan serve several purpose including creating constituencies and building political coalitions but at least in Leyogann in the 2010s they did not have a significant or direct influence on the built environment.

Even if Eng. Wilson or someone else in the mayor's office were charged with implementing a regional development their lack of staffing and the uneven submission of private projects would impede the work. Without even factoring in political will, the government offices responsible for regulation and enforcement lack the staff to begin to contemplate compliance.[211] In 2012, there were just six employees in Leyogann's department: a chief, Eng. Wilson's predecessor, a deputy and four inspectors trained by the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications (MTPTC), the national office for building regulation.[212] It was unclear in 2017 how many staff Eng. Wilson had. Moreover, the low rate of projects submitted for permitting would make it challenging to ensure development in accordance with a regional plan.

Defacto regional development is instead directed by individual, private actors including large land holders.[213] At a regional planning level, in Leyogann, the rapid transition of agricultural land into residential construction occurs through individual choices by large property owners and single-family home builders about land use, building placement, and property demarcation. Builders and residents alike pointed to the lack of planning having a negative effect on roads, sanitation, water, and more. Minimal regulation and oversight of building by

[211] This phenomenon is widespread and not limited to the construction sector nor to Leyogann.
[212] Joachim, "Post-Earthquake Housing in Haiti."
[213] Including those with access to state land, i.e. politicians who may grant permissions or create titles… so unconfirmed…

governmental agencies means that bòsmason—and all builders—are largely self-regulated in ensuring the structural stability of the structures they build, and homeowners make individual choices about land use, building placement, and property demarcation.

The concrete activity that the municipal engineer's office was visibly engaged in was the review of applications for building permits. During our meeting, a permit application was dropped off and the cover sheet listed the required documents: a foundation plan, a floor plan, construction details, the land title, and a copy of the identity card of the person requesting the permit. Later Eng. Wilson mentioned that geotechnical tests should also be submitted, but that they can only be processed in a lab in Pòtoprens implying that they are not consistently conducted. Additionally, both the landowner and the engineer should submit their credentials, but that most people do not have an engineer because of the expense of the services. He speculated that they prioritized spending money on materials over professional services. Neither he nor his colleague would make an estimate about how many permit applications are submitted each year but noted that people would prefer not to apply since they don't want to pay the taxes that are assessed based on the project size. His colleague offered that people resent paying a tax since their properties are not improved by municipal amenities like roads, water, or sanitation systems. While he offered this logical explanation that aligned with popular sentiments that people see taxes as onerous since they do not result in improved municipal services, he would not suggest that fault lay with either landowners or with the city. It was a descriptive statement about the way things are and like much of the interview side stepped any evaluation or indication that they felt responsible for improving the situation at hand.

Building permits and good quality construction are not causally linked, but the common understanding among bòsmason, lay people, and even Eng. Wilson was that in the absence of

regulation much building is not done to appropriate standards. Documents are understood to equal accountability, but the cycle is incomplete. Foundation plans may meet technical specifications, but this does not guarantee that the foundations that are built do. Eng. Wilson estimated that the percentage of buildings which comply with norms of good construction might be fifty percent and then almost immediately revised his estimate down to twenty or thirty percent. His estimate was based on his perception and not any form of statistics but given the speed with which he reduced his confidence level to less than half suggests that the quality of the built environment in Leyogann—as elsewhere in Haiti—continues to be extremely poor and vulnerable to earthquakes from the nearby fault lines, severe storms, and flooding of the low-lying plains. Eng. Wilson did think that building practices had changed after the earthquake since people were acutely aware of the risks of seismic and activity. While they may understand some basic principles of seismic and hurricane resistant structures., he thought that the situation could be improved if each building project had the oversight of an engineer. At the same time, he intimated that that was an economic and logistical impossibility. The municipal engineer's own description of how the formal system should work highlighted how out of alignment it is with how informal systems *do* work.

Knowledge & Credibility

In the absence of meaningful municipal regulation and the impediments to engineering services, the skill and knowledge of bòsmason contracted by clients across the economic spectrum carries outsize importance in ensuring the structural integrity of new construction. Education and certification of builders serves two major purposes. First, education and certificating programs are intended for knowledge acquisition by participants Secondly, diplomas, certificates, and exams all serve as proof or endorsement that a builder has a particular

expertise. Bòs Thomas exemplified how these two purposes may not coincide. He described how he learned most of what he knows about masonry and engineering from a supervisor in Gwadloup; on his return to Haiti, he went to a technical school because he needed a diploma to prove to people that he was a competent builder. Knowledge acquisition may happen (or may not happen) in both formal training through a technical school or in on-the-job training. Therefore, there is a blurred boundary between expertise and credibility. Expertise is gained through both hands-on experience and formal training programs. Credibility can be established both through word of mouth or a portfolio of work and via diplomas or certificates.

The interpenetration of labor—skilled tradespeople and contractors—with the more formal realms of architect-designed housing, commercial, and government projects is one way that builders without formal education may accrue new skills and methods.[214] Nonetheless, internal and external migration of Haitians does lead to movement and cross-pollination. Workers may move between the rural areas and provinces and the capital of Pòtoprens as temporary workers and as wage laborers in neighboring Caribbean countries particularly the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, and Guadalupe, to periodically receptive Latin American countries: most recently Brazil and Chile, as well as to wealthier countries in the global north, like the United States, Canada, and France. In all these migrations, craftspeople and future home builders accumulate knowledge and references from living in differently constructed built environments but also by working on projects. Just as Bòs Thomas brought his experience working in Guadalupe to bear in his work in Leyogann but adapted to the local market, other bòsmason like Bòs Alexis who lived and worked just outside of Vilaj Abita the site of the next

[214] Fernando Lara turned his focus to contractors in Brazil in the methodological tradition of US vernacular studies and spatial syntax. What he noted was that modernist styles could be found not just in upper and middle class housing but also in low-class housing, even in the informal settlements of Rio/Sao Paulo (?) called favelas

chapter, made comparisons between the Bahamas where he had lived for a time and Haitian building practices. While disciplinary ideas about architecture and engineering diffuse through marked transnational educational and policy exchanges, the impact of transnational activities of builders and laborers are even more difficult to document.[215] Nevertheless, transnational experiences in building contribute to the ongoing process of creolization in Haitian design and construction.

Within Haiti, formal vocational education and training programs are an important part of the educational ecosystem. The Ministry of National Education and Vocational Education (MENFP)[216] registers all vocational schools and administers annual exams in each field. I had hoped to observe the education of masons at Le Centre Catholique De formation et production De Léogâne (CCFPL, the Catholic center for training and production of Léogâne) in the Gran Rivyè section. It had been founded and funded by a foreign monastic order following the 2010 earthquake and was registered with MENFP and preparing students for annual national examinations. Unfortunately, by the spring of 2018 only a couple of trades were still being taught at the school in Leyogann and much of the facility which included welding, woodworking, and automotive shops, classrooms and laboratories was dormant. Most of my interlocutors had received their formal training at schools in Port-au-Prince, commuting daily or weekly. Despite the number of people—builders, clients, architects, politicians, etc—who pointed to a lack of training as a core problem with the built environment and the enthusiasm of many young men to become certified in a building trade, vocational educational is troubled by

[215] See Sophonie Joseph, "Dissertation title," … 2020.
[216] Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle, http://menfp.gouv.ht/

similar challenges facing other sectors of Haitian education including tuition expenses, irregular course offerings, under-paid or unpaid teachers, all of which leads to low completion rates.[217]

In addition to the system of trade schools, workshops and other short-term training programs are another form of accruing expertise or at least the appearance of it as evidenced by certificates of completion. In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, a few new technical schools like the one in Leyogann were established in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, but far more widespread were short-term training programs and workshops meant to instruct builders in seismic-resistant construction techniques or other targeted topics. NGOs including the American and Canadian Red Cross offered workshops and construction guides in Leyogann. These programs and materials focused on knowledge acquisition by untrained builders and laypeople or clients and offered clear but simple guides in the form of illustrated handbooks and practical tests. For example, the American Red Cross handbook shows a man holding a concrete block. It tells you that if you test five blocks by dropping them from chest height and three or more break, they are not of adequate quality for building. This hands-on information is clear and useful especially for very low budget projects, but it is not a substitute for systematic training of builders.

In Leyogann, several builders' and homeowners' paper certificates surfaced as evidence of their participation in NGO organized workshops providing an intermediate level of credibility. In example, a man, Leon, laboring on a construction site near Vilaj Abita (the NGO-built housing site discussed in Chapter Five) told me about his struggles finding work in the building industry. Leon described for me how he had learned about concrete block construction while working and that he done some training programs. He went into the rough temporary shelter clad

[217] Someone must have statistics on Haitian education degree attainment/retention?

in oriented strand board panels that he was living in and emerged with a couple of large yellow envelopes and a plastic document folder. He pulled out several certificates including three from the post-quake period, 2012 and 2013. Two certificates were associated with the construction of *Vilaj Abita* across the street—one for a community governance course and the other specifically for risk prevention in masonry buildings signed off on by the lead NGO and its partners. He also had a certificate from a training program for solar panel installations that had been conducted by an unrelated NGO also working in the area. Dating back to 2001, he had a certificate of appreciation signed off on by then President Preval for his work on the repair of the sugar processing facility in Dabòn. This portfolio of certificates served as evidence that Leon had objectively verifiable knowledge and experience in building. It appeared that he produced these documents to validate his experience to me but shared that these workshops had not led to continued employment. Particularly after the earthquake many government and non-governmental actors identified training as a more durable intervention to improve the knowledge base of largely untrained builders like Leon and presumably by extension the quality of the built environment.

Quotidian Design

In architectural scholarship, "other" buildings designed by engineers, contractors, and homeowners have been differentiated from "formal" architecture as being vernacular, traditional, anonymous, primitive, unpedigreed, etc. What close observation of the practices of bòsmason in this chapter and architects in the preceding shows us is that the division between their design practices is one of degrees and not of absolutes. There may be aesthetic or formal clues in the finished product which can be read by an attentive observer to indicate who or how a given

structure was designed, but the socioeconomic system is more salient to their difference than an aesthetic vocabulary.

The definition and reproduction of the everyday has to do at once with immediate, local, and personal choices by people and with the structural systems within which they live and operate. From this point of view quotidian design and professional design are differentiated from each more by their relationships with formal institutions than with the work they do. Arjun Appadurai observed that "ordinary human beings continue to be designers of social forms, especially of those forms that define and reproduce the everyday,"[218] despite a gap which emerges in industrial capitalism between the quotidian design practiced in everyday life and professionalized design labor. When bòsmason design with their clients they choose to comply with certain norms and expectations and they may choose to depart from certain norms and expectations to create distinction.[219] In effect, these choices are design and, when the medium is building, this is architecture. Because the subject of investigation here are the practices of communication that constitute design for the bòsmason, human relationships are central, but material, technological, and economic systems are also active mediators of communication.

The realm of residential design is very much a realm of identity performance as people build both for shelter and comfort and to demonstrate or define success to their family, community, and themselves.[220] Both bòsmason and architects, in part, translate clients' desires into built form which requires an understanding—be it explicit or implicit—of the symbolic functioning of architecture with regards to class and social position in their local context. Many

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[218] Appadurai, "The Social Life of Design," 256.
[219] In Appadurai, *The Social Life of Design,* he writes that designed objects are produced by "social actors who elect to comply with certain rules, fulfill certain obligations, meet certain expectations, and make various deliberate social efforts."
[220] For example, Sarah Lopez discusses how Mexican migrants use house building in their hometowns as a form of self-expression and to demonstrate the success of their migrant labor (Lopez, "The Remittance House: Architecture of Migration in Rural Mexico," 39.

bòsmason—and architects—emphasize the pragmatic basis for their decision-making, but fundamental components of a structure including roof profiles, columns, window openings, and the distribution of rooms all involve both utility or function and symbolic meanings.[221] On the other hand people make decisions based on unexamined preferences. My neighbor explained that he chose a particular column mold because it was different and not common. Decisions about form, finishes, and scale of the components all communicate information about the social position of the owner and their preferences. To make these decision builders must understand what local norms are regarding massing and ornamentation for a particular project. In the absence of substantial design documents, bòsmason and client depend on these shared norms to ensure that a built house communicates an appropriate image of its owner.

Quotidian architecture then appears to depend upon a design process which is extended through construction and conducted in dialogue between builders and clients. For bòsmason and foremen the strategy of creating just as much documentation and representation as necessary to satisfy regulations and avoid conflict with a client is incentivized. Design details can and almost inevitably will be resolved as needed in the building process. Communication between bòsmason, their clients, and construction workers is primarily oral and both builders and clients may use physical demonstration or reference to present or mediated examples to discuss and visualize designs. Minimal drawings—primarily foundation and structural plans—leave many ambiguities which are resolved either through the application of norms by long-standing collaborators or in accordance with the local building culture. Details may be disambiguated as needed during the construction process through talk: directions and corrections. Ad hoc systems of communication can work, but they can also fall apart when if a team or a builder and client

[221] Cranz, "A New Way of Thinking About Taste," 130.

fail to understand each other. This brings the activity of design back to a question of relationality between social and material systems.

Bòsmason, foremen, and construction workers have been figured—not just in Haiti—as representing “local” knowledge of a lower-class with less institutional education presumed to have restricted access to global knowledge. In Leyogann we see that Haitian builders migrate for economic reasons and work with engineers or master builders of varied background. They accumulate a creolized assemblage of design and construction knowledge that is place-based and more accessible to non-elite Haitians making their practices a potent vector for amelioration of the built environment.

Chapter 5
Kay Èd: Domesticating Humanitarian Shelter

On a bright afternoon, while conducting a survey with a young man on the shallow concrete porch in front of his small, pastel-painted house in a row of similarly pastel houses built by an international non-governmental organization (NGO) that lined a packed dirt road, a friend of his came over to see what I, the *blan* [white/foreigner] was up to.[222] Turning to me, she said, "you can see the houses and know they were given by an NGO because they're all the same. Would you live in one of these?" It felt like she was trying to start an argument with me, a representative of the *blan,* and by implication someone complicit in the construction of this space, but she raised two key observations about the structures built by non-governmental organizations after the 2010 earthquake. First, they are legible on sight as *kay èd* [aid house] distributed by NGOs and secondly, they are inadequate as homes. I answered her no, I would not choose to live in one of these houses—really shelters. The meager and repetitive structures appeared to communicate to her a message about the value ascribed to herself and her neighbors by international NGOs. That they were worth less than an actual house.

The houses would never be considered adequate in the United States, even as "tiny homes." Technically, this is because they were not conceived of as houses but as cores to which residents would add onto. The core house is an international strategy to provide transitional

[222] Throughout this chapter, I will use NGO (non-governmental organization) rather than INGO to mean international NGOs to reflect the accepted usage among study participants. See Lewis and Schuller, "Engagements with a Productively Unstable Category" for a nuanced discussion.

shelters which can become houses through incremental improvement. The lived reality is that many families are living in the structures without improvement. The irregular water and sanitation infrastructure, minimal footprint, and ambiguous land tenure all undermine the "adequacy" of the core shelters as housing within the framework of the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.[223] Internationally defined project intentions to provide core shelters to a larger amount of people create tension with similarly internationally defined protections and minimum standards, but it is people like this young man and woman who live the uncomfortable mismatch between good intentions and adequate housing.

The young woman had said, "they're all the same." Whether she meant the specific structures in this settlement, *Vilaj Abita* [Habitat Village] or NGO-built shelters in general, the houses were instantly recognizable as a particular set and as a type of alien structure found scattered throughout Leogane following the earthquake.[224] Within this settlement, the structures

Figure 5-1 An unoccupied and unmodified Abita house across the road from a large unbuilt lot

[223] "CESCR General Comment No. 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Art. 11 (1) of the Covenant)."
[224] In this chapter I will use common English orthography for place names (i.e. Leogane and Port-au-Prince) in accordance with the reports and documents US-based NGOs like Habitat for Humanity produced with the exception of local place names which either did not feature in NGO reports or whose Kreyòl orthography was used in English-language documents (i.e. Vilaj Abita).

were unrelentingly uniform. On the exterior, only the paint color changed alternating between five pastel options made available to the original beneficiaries. Many residents have landscaped and enclosed their lots introducing visual variation to a site that resembled countless barren camps in Haiti and around the world when it was first opened. Named a village but referred to as a *bidonvil* [slum] by residents in the surrounding community, the houses in this settlement were only desirable in contrast to the ad hoc settlement of Modsòl neighboring it where people who did not succeed in securing a house in Vilaj Abita have made do with self-built houses and more precarious land tenure.

Without apology or blame, how it is that a group of generally well-intentioned actors, including residents, NGO staff, volunteers, and local contractors could have assembled and invested a huge amount of resources—time, labor, and money—into a housing project that left most who were involved dissatisfied with the process and the outcomes? How and what did stakeholders communicate to each other in the design and construction of post-disaster housing? What did they attempt and fail to communicate in the process? Theorist of urban space, William Whyte, wrote, "The great enemy of communication, we find, is the illusion of it."[225] When people from diverse classes, nationalities, linguistic communities, and racial categorizations, try to imagine and execute a design after significant trauma, it is inevitable that participants will understand the project in divergent ways. This is a story of intentions communicated, plans made, and needs expressed, all without being heard or understood.

In this chapter, the design and construction of Vilaj Abita, a 300-house resettlement project in a peri-urban zone of Leogane, Haiti serves as a case study to understand how mismatched techniques of communication led to frustration and shortfall in community-building.

[225] Whyte, "Is Anybody Listening?"

The ambiguity of communication and the power dynamics of expertise that architects, builders, and residents navigate in any project was polarized by more extreme differences in language, access, and power among participants based on nationality, race, and class. In close examination of singular moments in a lengthy and chaotic design process, I consider in this chapter how the form and distribution of shelters represented foreigners' (mis)understandings of recipients; how timing, language, and metrics of success were not aligned among participants; how the delivery and reception of information was not understood in the same way by different constituents; and finally, how residents are working within the constraints of the design and their socio-economic position to make homes out of shelters.

The project in question, Vilaj Abita, was the result of a nominally participatory process involving international and the in-country office of Habitat for Humanity (HfH), consulting work from Architecture for Humanity (AfH), community representatives, and displaced people hoping to be beneficiaries of the project.[226] It is not an egregious example of a post-disaster construction or participatory design process. In fact, it utilized many professional best practices, and, yet the project was considered to have been unsuccessful by many stakeholders. It is simple to criticize top-down and non-reflexive shelter provision projects which were plentiful in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. As a case study, Vilaj Abita is important to understand precisely because dialogue and participation were stated goals that were pursued via various strategies and nonetheless miscommunication and distrust resulted.

Just off a major road in the Grand Rivyè section of Leogane, a small sign posted on the corner of a gravel intersection marks Vilaj Abita and thanks the former US president Jimmy Carter for his generosity as a supporter of HfH. In daily conversation the word "vilaj" is dropped

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[226] Habitat for Humanity was registered as non-profit in Haiti as Habitat pour l'humanité but the international and domestic organizations function in tandem and I will use the English through for clarity.

and the area is simply referred to as Abita (the NGO Habitat for Humanity is also collapsed into the mononym Abita, but I will refer to the organization as HfH for clarity). The use of the term village was intended to express HfH's communitarian hopes for the project, but it calls up a twentieth-century lineage of global development projects.[227] Since the 1950s, lower-class Haitians have been subjected to a number of urban and rural development schemes, involving government housing on isolated properties on the periphery of Port-au-Prince or in the countryside with limited access to socioeconomic activity and infrastructure.[228] These projects were largely the undertakings of the state until the 1970s, when international aid, led by changes in US policy, began to be channeled around the Duvalier-era state and more extra-governmental and non-governmental agencies became sponsors of projects in Haiti.[229]

The lines between development projects and post-disaster displaced person camps have become increasingly blurred with the increasing adoption of an attitude towards disaster aid as development opportunity since the 1990s.[230] Vilaj Abita, the village in question in this chapter, is a small and relatively successful project. It is relatively successful in as much as it was actually built, and it is occupied. Though this may appear to be a low bar it is one not met by other post-disaster housing projects including government-backed projects northeast of Port-au-Prince including the Building Back Better Communities model housing competition at Zoranje spearheaded by Clinton Global Initiative, and the largely empty Village Lumane Casimir.[231] Village appears to be overdetermined and applied to planned residential zones which correspond

[227] In *The Neocolonialism of the Global Village*, Nolan investigates the violent and colonial roots of the humanitarian technology of the "global village" coined by Marshall McLuhan in the 1960s.
[228] Including Estime-era *cite ouvre* projects and the construction of Beladè in the north, Duvalier-era projects like Cité Simone ne Cité Soleil and Duvalierville ne Cabaret, as well as international development projects like Marbyel in the south.
[229] Schuller, "Haiti's Republic of NGOs."
[230] Monk and Herscher, "A Discussion on the Global and Universal"; Fan, "Disaster as Opportunity?"
[231] Charles, "Building Permanent Housing Remains Haiti's Biggest Challenge Following the 2010 Earthquake"; Brisson, "Neocolonial Form in a Postcolonial Landscape."

with an imaginary rural idyll only in terms of their isolation. Vilaj Abita is bounded and has a legible identity but it is a negative identity and the kinship and economic networks that might be expected in a village are tenuous at best. The village is unrealized in the daily life of Abita as it is unspoken in its designation.

Methods:

This narrative ethnography of a single NGO-built post-disaster "village" in Leogane, uncovers the multiple, contradictory experiences of a wide variety of stakeholders in the construction and occupation of an ambitious and imperfect project. Using interviews, social media, reports, and direct observation of the social and physical environments, I reconstruct and analyze the processes of design and construction. I look at both the initial construction and the on-going work of habitation and adaptation of the built environment. For two eight-week research periods in the summers of 2016 and 2017, myself and two different colleagues, both male graduate students at UEH, made daily trips to the site to observe the social and physical environment and to conduct surveys and both formal and informal interviews with residents. The survey we administered is part of a multi-site, longitudinal study of the long-term impact of NGOs in southern Haiti.[232] In the following year, I conducted periodic follow-up visits to observe continuing changes to the social-physical environment. The primary data in this chapter comes from informal conversations, formal interviews, and site observations over these two years.

Based on this methodology, my narrative foregrounds the perspectives, which are certainly not homogeneous, of current residents and members of the administrative committee

[232] Schuller, Mark. Exit strategies: Assessing long-term social, cultural, and political impacts of the depart of INGOs in rural Haiti (NSF Career Grant #1455142)

who were involved in the on-going adaptation of the site. Since HfH ceased work in Leogane in 2013, three years before this research began, the perspective of the NGO is drawn out from a combination of public documents and interviews or reflections from people who worked directly for HfH or who consulted on the project. Oral recollections frame the narrative but are supplemented and triangulated with documents and photographs from the HfH website and social media accounts as well as reports and documents that residents shared with me during fieldwork.

As with any building project, Vilaj Abita can be viewed through different timeframes. From the perspective of HfH and international donors the project lasted for two or three years from conception to opening. From the perspective of residents, the project's history began in the days following the earthquake and continues through the present moment and into a projected future. The period of design and construction by HfH, unequivocally past, is represented here through oral recollection, visual documentation, and in the artifact of the built project. Groundwork, foundations, and lower walls were built over the course of two years by locally hired masons and laborers. Their steady work was interrupted by two work weeks (one-week each) when over a hundred international volunteers descended on to the site to assist with final assembly of wood-framed walls and roofs. Four to five years after the HfH-directed design and construction phase was completed (by their evaluation), Vilaj Abita is occupied, but it continues to be in a constant state of design and construction as residents adapt and expand the housing to suit their needs. The day-to-day activities that I have observed and documented in fieldnotes, sketches, and photographs over the course of two years represent an on-going design process with a shifting cast of characters and movement from centralized planning to individual tactics of inhabitation in a differentially comprehended project.

Setting:

The shallow 7.0 Richter-scale quake that shook Haiti on January 10, 2010 was centered just south of the plains of Leogane and about 25 kilometers (16 miles) from Port-au-Prince. As a result, an estimated 80% of structures in Leogane were destroyed or suffered irreparable damage with the attendant loss of life and massive displacement.[233] Between the 3,000 NGOs estimated to have been working in Haiti prior to the earthquake and the influx of new NGOs, so many aid workers arrived in Leogane that they were "tripping over each other," in the words of one former NGO employee.[234] Though the proximity of Leogane to Port-au-Prince allowed some NGOs to work in both cities, traffic jams could prolong the short trip interminably and a focus on efforts in the capital of Port-au-Prince by the UN Shelter cluster meant that Leogane was treated as a distinct and remote site.[235] But both as the epicenter of the quake and a commune with ample former agricultural land available, Leogane more closely resembled long-standing models that presumed flat and empty sites for temporary and long-term housing of internally displaced people. Many NGOs entered Leogane to implement relief strategies based on a rural model, but failed to account for the entanglement of urban, peri-urban, and rural land use patterns in the region.

The thirteen sections of the commune of Leogane range from its relatively dense residential and commercial urban center, through peri-urban zones of mixed land-use, to entirely rural and unelectrified areas in the mountains.[236] The sugar plantations that once ringed the colonial-era downtown grid have been broken down into smaller and smaller holdings that are

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[233] SODADE, "Plan d'urbanisme Pour La Ville de Leogane et Sa Region Periurbaine."

[234] An estimate given by Prime Minister Bellerive in contrast to the estimate of 10,000 used by UN Special Envoy to Haiti since 2009, President Bill Clinton as discussed in Schuller, "Haiti's Republic of NGOs."

[235] See Schuller, *Humanitarian Aftershocks in Haiti* for a discussion of the exclusionary form of the coordination meetings which were held weekly at the militarized UN base and primarily in English.

[236] A commune is a political territory distinction in Haiti, similar to a county in the United States. The commune of Leogane includes the cities and town of Leogane, Petit Goave, and Gran Goave as well as the rural plain.

now popular areas for a form of suburban development fueled by the diaspora.[237] In the post-quake moment, the preexisting climate of converting agricultural land to residential use facilitated the acquisition of large unbuilt lots by NGOs who could secure a land title from the state or a private seller to what was often contested or ambiguously held land.[238] To avoid land tenure issues, some NGOs focused on providing temporary shelters (T-shelters) or permanent houses next to destroyed household for individuals who could confirm their identity and their title to the land. On the other hand, projects like the one considered in this chapter that built

Figure 5-2 Boundary road along Abita facing in the direction of Wout Dabòn (2017)

clusters of shelters on greenfield sites, benefited people who had been renting houses or lacked clear land titles. In the end the conversion of cane fields into Vilaj Abita produced a new form of ambiguous land tenure for so-called homeowners on land procured by HfH from the mayor.

Vilaj Abita was constructed in Santo, a zone within the Gran Rivyè section of Leogane. Santo can be characterized as a linear agglomeration with a density of residential and commercial buildings lining *Wout Dabòn*—a major but unpaved road that connects the national

[237] SODADE, "Plan d'urbanisme Pour La Ville de Leogane et Sa Region Periurbaine."
[238] Etienne, "Land Rights, Land Recovery and Post-Earthquake Recovery in Port-Au-Prince and Leogane."

road about four kilometers to the west to the Dabòn market and rural foothills beyond. Behind the road corridor low density housing and small agricultural plots extend out to bounding rivers to the north and south. At an intersection marked by a soccer field, a lottery booth, a motorcycle taxi stand, and a dry goods boutique on each of its four corners, one turns north towards Abita. On this secondary road one passes a few residences but there is a cluster of commercial enterprises: boutiques, food stands, a restaurant-bar. At the immediate edge of Abita, there was a municipal Centre d'Urgence [emergency center] for disaster preparedness and on the opposite side of the street a charitable health clinic with irregular hours operated by an unrelated NGO. On one side of the road there was an assortment of self-built houses and a cluster of NGO-built shelters that more closely resembled garden sheds. On the other side Vilaj Abita was laid out on a distorted grid and flanked by a self-built settlement Modsòl (also built after the earthquake).

In the days immediately following the earthquake, locally displaced people, followed by others from further out communities, erected temporary structures on the soccer field along Wout Dabòn. At that time, there was little development beyond the playing field and instead a swath of agricultural land where sugar cane was cultivated. At some point after the earthquake and prior to HfH's building project these cane fields were burned. The timing and extent of the fire as well as who was responsible for it and their intentions were unclear in recollections by residents of Vilaj Abita and Modsòl—alternately called *Kan Brilè* [burned cane] in direct reference to this event.[239] The status of this land continued to be multiply understood with some residents reporting that HfH had paid the taxes on the land for five years and after that residents would become responsible for taxes. Other residents understood the lot where their house was located to be theirs though there were no property surveys. The agreement HfH signed with beneficiaries

[239] Kan brilè was a second moniker for the area Modsòl that led my research partner and I to inquire why it would be called *kan brilè* and only then did residents offer stories about the burning of the cane fields.

described HfH as having secured from the concerned government officials the "right to use the land" and that land would "remain the business of the state but the houses are for the beneficiaries."[240] Regardless of legal status, the community understanding of land tenure within Vilaj Abita was ambiguous.

The constituencies of Vilaj Abita were also multiple and unstable but can be broadly separated into local residents or affiliates of the HfH. The temporary camp set up on the soccer field was largely occupied by preexisting residents of Santo who had been displaced by the earthquake. A leadership committee was formed within the camp which became the first representative body to engage with HfH. A number of individuals from the camp leadership moved into positions on the oversight committee for Vilaj Abita or on the advisory council of elders called *Tèt Kole.*[241] Select members of these groups reported having advised HfH in choosing beneficiaries who would receive houses and came to be perceived by neighbors as a selection committee. The distribution of houses by HfH and other NGOs produced three constituent groups in Santo: those selected as beneficiaries of HfH, those that received housing aid from other NGOs (without land), and those that did not receive any substantial housing aid.[242] When Abita first opened, all its residents were beneficiaries who had been obliged to volunteer labor to their houses and who had participated in self-government workshops as part of the exchange. Soon after, beneficiaries began to rent or sell their properties, such that when I began my research, the residents of Abita included some original beneficiaries, but also many

[240] *Original:* "Habitat Pour l'Humanité te negosye, daprè sa konstitisyon an mande, avèk tout ofisyèl konsène nan gouvènman ayisyen an e te resevwa nan men yo dwa pou li itilize tèren (vilaj la konstwi sou li a)… Li rete klè ke nou tout dakò ke tèren an rete zafè Leta men kay yo se pou benefisyè yo."
[241] Tèt kole [heads united] appeared here to be an independent group but in name resonates with the peasant political resistance group "Tèt kole ti peyizan ayisyen"
[242] Here substantial housing aid includes the provision of temporary or permanent structures that were engineered to last for more than a year. Any wood or metal framed structures or concrete block structures. Tarps which were widely distributed and continue to be used by the extremely poor for shelter do not constitute housing aid in my analysis.

residents who were renting from the owner or who had bought their house from original beneficiaries. HfH had attempted to avoid commodification of the shelters in this way by vetting applicants and requiring their participation in construction and self-government workshops. Nonetheless, beneficiaries made use of the houses and property in many ways. The market to rent and buy Abita houses resulted in a sector of the population who had not been a part of the original design and construction process (although a few had been but were declined or unable to apply). In neighboring Modsòl, many people had arrived there in hopes of benefitting from housing aid from HfH or other NGOs but had not received substantial aid.

On the NGO side there were also multiple constituencies with varied identities. HfH had a country office in Port-au-Prince that had been operational for years prior to the earthquake and whose staff was primarily Haitian. HfH staff from the US were also involved in decision-making about the project and a project team from the US was employed for the duration of design and construction to direct the realization of the project. HfH did not employ an architect on the project team, but architects from Architecture for Humanity played a brief but pivotal role in the design of Vilaj Abita in a consulting relationship preparing site plan options and conducting a community design workshop in 2011 and 2012. Significant design work occurred off-site in architecture and engineering offices in Port-au-Prince and overseas, but HfH had final responsibility for the design and execution of the site plan and houses. Significant changes and clarifications were made to schematic designs prepared by architects making clear how design exceeds a narrow site of exchange and is an on-going process engaging any number of stakeholders. In this case, administrators, local authorities, hopeful beneficiaries, engineers, architects, community representatives, and fundraising managers were all involved, albeit

asymmetrically, in contributing to and influencing the final design of the Vilaj Abita site plan and housing units.

Little Boxes:

When the young woman said that the houses were all the same, I thought, not for the first time, of the Malvina Reynolds song "Little Boxes":

> There's a pink one and a green one
> And a blue one and a yellow one
> And they're all made out of ticky tacky
> And they all look just the same [243]

While Reynolds' song continued on to critique the homogenization of the US middle-class in 1960s and there are substantial morphological differences between the row houses in Daly City which inspired her and the shelters at Abita, the repetition, the meager variation in paint color, the thinness of the materials, the pretense towards independence via homeownership in the form of a little box echoed 1960s northern California in western Haiti in the 2010s. The houses at Abita are nearly square boxes with pitched roofs, numbered and arranged along the perimeter of blocks which vary slightly in dimension with a few cut away corners and cul-de-sacs. In tracking which households we had interviewed I found these variations in plan but the perception from the dirt and gravel grid of roads that separate each block is one of uniformity. And yet, compared to other resettlement projects, the repetition here has been relatively subdued as many residents have enclosed their lots, built additional structures, and planted decorative and fruiting plants introducing visual variation to the site, but its generic nature is still legible. HfH distributed t-shirts that read "homeowner" on the back to beneficiaries; they could be seen in publicity photographs from the volunteer work weeks, but did they "own" houses, core houses, or shelters

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[243] Malvina Reynolds wrote the song in 1962 but the cover by Pete Seeger in 1963 is the version that became famous and which I heard in my head, Seeger, *Little Boxes*.

(or homes)? Without deeds for the parcel of land could they own the building? The HfH agreement guaranteed their right to *use* the land. The conflicting assemblage of messages that "homeowners" occupied temporary shelters meant to serve as the core of built out houses on

Figure 5-3 Interior of an unoccupied Abita house with no interior partition walls (2016)

land that belonged to the state or the NGO or maybe the resident, undermines a reading of these as houses and underscores that the clear object of aid was a little box.

These little boxes were made not of ticky tacky but of concrete, wood, fiber board, and corrugated aluminum. The model for the Abita house was approximately 200 square feet (20 square meters) of interior space (Figure 5-3).[244] Optional interior partitions built of oriented-strand board and stick lumber were installed to divide the space into two-halves or one-half and two-quarters. The concrete slab extended out in front of the house to form an elevated porch under the overhanging roof and stepped down from the rear door to the yard. There were wood-

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[244] The agreement between HfH and beneficiaries indicated that the house would measure *preske* [almost] 20 square meters. By eye I estimated it at 15 square meters. The exact dimension is likely between these two figures.

shuttered window openings on each wall. The houses were built on cast concrete foundation slabs with concrete block walls up to a meter in height, and the upper walls were framed in dimensioned lumber and clad in waterproofed high-density press board. The corrugated metal roof had a thin layer of insulating foam sheet tacked on the interior and is secured to the wood posts with aluminum hurricane straps. In the rear yard of each house there was a small structure intended for bathing and fitted for either a composting or pit toilet. There is no waste management system in place for composting, so they are either used as pit toilets or have been converted to another use like storage or a pantry in the absence of any kitchen facilities. Neither piped water nor electrical infrastructure was installed on the site. One or two water pumps were installed in an open space on each block, but less than half continued to function, and many were locked and managed by a caretaker who made the pump accessible to block residents at set times and for a maintenance fee. Solar powered streetlights were installed but their batteries have been stolen and they no longer work. SEDAVAS, the neighborhood committee, had begun installing new wooden lighting and electrical poles but they had not been connected during my fieldwork. During the day there is little shade in the streets and yards without trees. At night, the neighborhood is very dark with small points for light from telephones, solar powered and kerosene lamps. Again, these houses and their disposition are neither bad nor good. The houses were neither the best nor the worst NGO-built houses in the area. The infrastructure (or lack thereof) was not adequate but a similar lack can be observed in nearby rural areas. But it was HfH and its affiliates who made choices and trade-offs in budgeting and design, not the residents, and this too undermines the rhetoric of beneficiaries as homeowners.

By way of comparison and contextualization, there were several typologies of houses built in Leogane by a variety of NGOs after the quake that were divided into two major

categories: temporary and permanent structures. Among temporary structures (T-shelters), there were two primary typologies: boxes and frames. The boxes were built of stiffened panels or a minimal frame wrapped in a single, solid material (plywood, oriented-strand board, pressboard) on all sides including the roof, while the framed structures (wood or metal) had pitched, corrugated metal roofs and some form of infill or sheathing provided by the NGO or the recipient. Reusable and modifiable frame structures emerged from a movement in the shelter provision sector to consider temporary shelter as "a process, not a product" which provides immediate relief and contributes to reconstruction in the medium to long term.[245] The recipient was expected to replace short-term enclosure materials like tarp with wood, concrete block, metal sheeting or other locally "appropriate" materials.

The rhetoric regarding permanent and shelter structures among NGOs creates confusion in evaluating the scope and quality of work completed. For example, in September 2011 CORDAID reported having completed 1,610 "permanent T-shelters" which used a panel system expected to last 15 years and having distributed 4,268 of "shelter frame" kits in Leogane.[246] The paradox of a permanent temporary shelter can be understood if temporary and permanent as adjectives ceased to indicate the duration that a family may use a shelter and rather serve to indicate the durability or quality of materials. Though NGOs understood these "permanent temporary" structures as part of an on-going process of upgrading by recipients, residents and contractors in the area identified these structures not as part of a process but as low-quality products. As shelter materials from tarps to structural panels were being used and reused at least through 2018, their quality of durability was of greater import than the classification of the original NGO unit.

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[245] Shelter Centre, "Transitional Shelter Guidelines," 99.
[246] "Result Update: September 2011."

Bòs Alex, a mason, who was employed by several NGOs including HfH, offered his interpretive framework on kay èd*,* aid houses. In contrast to NGO terminology of temporary shelters, cores house, and permanent houses, he explained the structures within a hierarchy of materials from weak to strong. He classified the Abita houses as permanent structures, not temporary, due to their deep foundations and concrete walls, but their small footprint and use of wood framing and paneling meant that they were not as good as the entirely concrete houses Food for the Poor had built in his neighborhood. The Food for the Poor house example was mentioned by several Leogane residents as a "good" NGO house. It has two bedrooms, a sitting room, a kitchen, and a modern plumbed toilet. It is built of concrete block with a corrugated metal roof. Materially and in form it corresponds with residents' expectations of a "modern house."

Like Bòs Alex, HfH recognized the liminal position of the Abita structures as neither temporary nor permanent. In reports they stated that they had completed more than 300 core houses in Leogane. According to the Shelter Centre, core houses refer to "building at least one complete room of a final house, in order to offer shelter while the remainder of the house is completed."[247] Former staff of HfH acknowledge that it was their expectation that the Abita houses would be augmented by beneficiaries, but current residents do not recall this expectation. Rather, residents spoke about the inadequate space in the houses to accommodate their family, particularly while sleeping. They did not understand these as starter structures but simply as houses that are too small and lacking in infrastructure. Nonetheless, residents with means are building additions and secondary structures to the core houses While the limited intentions for the houses and the economic reasoning to build more but smaller structures were probably

[247] "Country Strategy Sheet: Haiti"; Shelter Centre, "Transitional Shelter Guidelines," 8.

presented to beneficiaries, this was not recalled. The status of these structures as shelters or houses, complete or incomplete, provisional, or inadequate shifts based on subject position.

The failure to communicate intentions and limitations of the housing project between HfH and Abita residents was not the only site of conflict and misunderstanding. There were internal divisions within HfH; not unique to this organization, people and offices with different roles and relationships to the site had divergent priorities for the project. On-site managers, the country director's office, and the international volunteer coordination team were each responding to distinct responsibilities, separate forms of accountability, and different constituents. This means that while those closest to the future residents and the daily work of construction were in a privileged position over beneficiaries, they also expressed frustration with the design of the houses and the construction process. One person described his desire and efforts to organize workshops and opportunities for residents to participate in design and planning, but he acknowledged that given the timing of the project and competing priorities there was little chance to incorporate feedback. Despite seeming to have more agency than residents, the former HfH employee spoke as a participant within a system in which their influence was restricted. Schuller has written about the process of "becoming an NGO" as a bureaucratic disciplining of labor that transforms projects and projects managers under the influence of logistics and reporting.[248] Required to interface with an international apparatus for fundraising, marketing, coordination of volunteer labor, the project manager and the design of Abita took on characteristics which conformed with the system of international aid that they were a part of but which had little to do with local realities. Delivering quantifiable amounts of aid that are legible to foreign donors–three hundred houses –and which provide an opportunity for volunteer-

[248] Schuller, "The Anthropological Uses of Haiti: A Longue Durée Approach," 27–28.

tourism (and its associated donations) appear to be the invisible engine of a highly diffused design process.

Figure 5-4 Architect hands out site plans (HfH publicity image, May 2011)

A Community Design Meeting:

In May 2011 HfH contracted Architecture for Humanity (AfH) to prepare site plan options and conduct a community design meeting. Few current residents recall this event clearly, but it was publicly documented by HfH on social media with photographs, captions, and commentary, all in English directed towards their US donor base. The images serve as evidence of community engagement for an external audience, but they only show the delivery of information. In one image we see a large print out of the site plan in color taped to the wall of the shed where the meeting is being conducted while an architect, a white woman, stands and hands out letter sized print outs to attendees seated in rows (Figure 5-4). Most people are heads down looking at the paper and one person's arm is outstretched to receive a copy. The printed sheets show a bird's eye axonometric of the first phase of the project and a couple of different layouts for distributing houses on the blocks are shown as roof plans (looking straight down without perspective). The next image focuses in one woman in a bright blue t-shirt looking intently at the plans; it is caption "A community member reviews the site plan." I thought the woman resembled a former camp committee member but when I showed her the picture, she corrected

me and identified the person as a Haitian staff member of HfH. Not only did the person who captioned this post misapprehend her identity, the fact that any Haitian could be construed as a community member by US staff and donors meant that her actual identity and role was irrelevant to the performance of the post. Her race and nationality make her a functional subject to publicize the participatory activity. Regardless, the question is begged – what is it to review a site plan? We can see her attention as she looks at her copy with her finger placed on it, but we cannot see comprehension or reaction. Does she and the hopeful beneficiaries sitting beside her understand the plan? What was their reaction? Information was presented in this community meeting but whether it was received it less certain.

Another photograph shows a second architect, a white man from the United States, pointing with his finger to a zone in the overall site plan; his mouth is slightly open as he, presumably, describes what the drawing signifies. Perhaps he explained how the color of plots was keyed to indicate residential and other program types. This architect spoke some Kreyòl so it is possible that he communicated key information to monolingual attendees in Kreyòl, but the resolution of information was likely restricted either by his fluency or by translation if it was delivered in English. The site plan incorporated three phases of execution to build residential blocks and zoned areas for collective and commercial activities. Houses were shown sited forward on their lots to provide space for gardening and additional structures to the rear or side. These choices responded to their engagement with HfH, these community members, Haitian colleagues, and other projects they were working on in other regions of the country. A former volunteer recalled concerns about project priorities including the fact that the budget did not go towards kitchen or integrated toilet facilities, but in a consultative role AfH had limited control

over the process and outcome. Another affiliate, a Haitian architect, recalled a sense of unease about the relationship between the community and HfH.

The deployment of community design strategies like those used in this project: participatory mapping, community meetings, training workshops, and a demonstration model require careful analysis and still do not ensure effective and meaningful dialogue or mutual comprehension. As public policy analyst Sherry Arnstein made clear in her ladder of citizen participation model, when community participation does not influence the final product it is at best consultative.[249] Nonetheless, participatory strategies migrated from the state into the NGO sector in the 1990s as large funders like the World Bank adopted mandates based on, "growing evidence that participation improves the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of projects, while strengthening the ownership and commitment of governments and stakeholders."[250] With more or less regard given to the question of the actual power held by participants, charitable organizations have come to lean on community participation to satisfy large funders like the World Bank and defend against critiques of external imposition of project designs.[251] Unlike with state actors, which are at least nominally accountable to its citizens, international NGOs like HfH are primarily accountable to foreign donors. Beneficiaries have little recourse, symbolic or otherwise, if their participation does not manifest in control or influence of final outcomes. Moreover, in a post-disaster situation, it is difficult to scaffold a meaningful participatory process as the trauma of the event, the logistics of displacement, and the power relationships between charitable organizations and beneficiaries all impede effective engagement.[252]

[249] Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation."
[250] World Bank, "World Bank Policies on Development."
[251] Fan, "Disaster as Opportunity?"
[252] Bowd, Özerdem, and Kassa, "A Theoretical and Practical Exposition of 'Participatory' Research Methods."

A community meeting like the one documented by HfH demonstrates at best a consultative role for participants. Only if their feedback is incorporated into the implemented plan can this process rise up the rungs of Arnstein's ladder beyond placation. In interviews, respondents told me variously: that they never saw a plan for the site; that there were no meetings; that there were a lot of meetings; that there were meetings every Sunday afternoon. Recollections are multiple and contradictory. Without documentation it is not definitive that their participation was tokenistic, but the fact that residents have little to no recall of the event and a variety of speculative theories about the spatial arrangement of the village, suggests that from their perspective this was not a significant or meaningful event.

Current residents of Abita may be original beneficiaries who had varying levels of involvement in the process, but many are renters, or people who have purchased the house from the original beneficiary. Since they were not stakeholders during the design phase, these newer residents did not have an opportunity to participate in the design process. When original beneficiaries and residents were asked about the decision-making processes around the design of the houses, they recall different aspects of the process. A youth organizer told us that, "NGOs consulted with the state which could give them the land for them to be able to build...[then] they just came to realize the plan." He did not recall anyone having seen a plan before its execution. Based on the record of the community meeting, we can objectively know that some people did see a plan, but its legibility was partial at best. While his recollection does not align with accounts from project managers and other community representatives, it does exemplify a common sentiment that decision-making, or design happened without community input.

On the other hand, Patrice, a middle-aged woman who runs a boutique selling dry goods and cold beverages from her yard, recalled clearly that after clearing the site of grass and rocks

HfH built a demonstration house, “for everyone to come see what house they were giving here.” This model was eventually integrated into the rest of the houses around it and is undifferentiated from its neighbors today. That no significant modifications were made confirms that the primary purpose of the model house was to communicate via a physical model to potential beneficiaries what was being offered. That there were no design modifications indicates that this was not a tool to solicit feedback. All the same, Patrice says that some people said they liked it and others, like herself, did not like it, but that people who were disappointed had not been listening. She recounted, “all the time I was going to meetings, [if] there was a seminar, I went to the seminar… someone called me and told me where the model house was. A person there [at the model] told me that her husband could make a house like that, but it is on land that we haven’t had to leave.” For Patrice, the model clearly communicated to her what to expect from the Abita house. She did not think there was enough space in it for her and her children and it lacked sanitation, but she needed a house, and this was what was available to her.

As Patrice spoke about her need for this house, she slid into an account of how the block wall of her old house had fallen on her when she went in to grab her baby during the earthquake. This sort of traumatic association with a house affects people’s desires in reconstruction. Sociologist Ilionor Louis terms the attitude of being obliged to receive what is offered as *assistancialisme* and links it to the infantilizing and often racist modes of aid dispersal that encourages a prolonged state of waiting and diminished agency.[253] In this way Patrice understood what was available, a small shelter with solid walls and a roof on a piece of land, and that it was better than what she had, some assemblage of tarps, boards, and poles on a municipal soccer field. Without ameliorating or at least actively acknowledging the power imbalances

[253] Louis, “L’Infantilisation Des Bénéficiaires de l’aide Des ONG Après Les Séismes Du 12 Janvier.”

present in such a situation it is difficult to imagine design dialogue occurring. The house provided by HfH was the option available to Patrice to rehouse her family; therefore, her serious critique of its design was disengaged from her desire to acquire one. In the second phase of house construction, some beneficiaries did reject the house and take the land. This has resulted in a patchwork of empty lots and a combination of HfH and self-built structures across the road from the neighborhood understood as Vilaj Abita. The access to land was what Patrice and the protesting beneficiaries valued most and the outcomes of resistance confirmed that Patrice was justified in her evaluation. The alternative to accepting the house as designed was no house.

Domestication:

Jean's house was on the corner of an interior block facing a fenced in open area with a tattered tent used for community meetings, is Jean's house. The house was painted pink and he had painted in script, "Jezi beni nou" [Jesus blesses us] on the exterior wall next to the door. Next to this benediction, Jean posted a small sign painted on plywood advertising his cell phones charging business.[254] There was a small solar panel connected to a car battery secured inside of the house so that he could operate all day. Jean was an original beneficiary selected by the HfH committee to receive a house and he participated in volunteer construction activities. He lived in the house with his wife, a young woman relative, and three children. From the exterior only the painted sign and benediction distinguish it from the original model but inside Jean had conjured four rooms within this small volume. Half of the space served as a living and dining room with three to four chairs, the charging cabinet, open shelves for dishes, and a rug where the kids played and took naps. The other half of the space was divided into two ground floor bedrooms with one separated vertically by a lofted sleeping platform. Jean procured extra materials from

[254] 10 gourdes to charge a phone which was a typical price for the service at the time in this area.

the house construction: two-by-fours with metal hangers and press board with a faux wood grained, waterproof veneer, to build out this loft that he slept on to make room below for the women and children. He also built a shed in the backyard to use as a kitchen and depot to store cooking equipment. The front of edge of the lot was lined with a row of bushes that have grown up guided by lines of barbed wire strung between wooden posts. A couple of young fruit trees and a few corn and bean plants were growing in the side and rear yard. Jean and his family had domesticated this meager shelter to accommodate their household.

Jean's household demonstrates one of the ways in which residents have adapted the Abri houses to their needs. Without building an extension or second structure, the interior modifications permited the entire family to sleep inside the house. In simulation of a larger home, he has created separate bedrooms with some level of visual privacy distinct from a sitting area for daytime activities. Jean would like to build an addition to create more space but it was not feasible without steady work. The household's primary income came from the cellphone charging business, so without cash, Jean had invested time, labor, and materials to design solutions within this undersized space. Other residents have also made modifications within the structure of the core house, while those with more cash resources have built extensions or additional free-standing structure in the yard area. These heterogeneous approaches are all the result of organic design processes that necessitate imagining the house at least incrementally better. The implicit nature of these quotidian design decisions means that residents like Jean did not produce drawings or even necessarily communicate their intentions to anyone. Some idiosyncratic and some very common needs among residents drove modifications and improvisation with available materials guided these adaptations.

Much of the housing improvement being built in Abita and neighboring Modsòl used common materials (concrete block, corrugated aluminum, and milled or hand-hewn lumber), but the materials that NGOs imported for post-disaster permanent and temporary shelter construction became part of these material assemblages. These aid materials had been selected by external logics including the International Building Code, building standards and economies of production and manufacturing in the countries where NGOs had their headquarters. Building materials are standardized in dimension and quality by the complex interplay of distribution networks, customary units, and logistical concerns. These norms were carried with them when they were imported. Many materials for NGO shelters were shipped in for assembly or even partially assembled abroad. One justification NGOs used for importing materials was the poor quality of domestic products, which they could rhetorically demonstrate through the widespread destruction of the earthquake. The more second more plausible explanation was that material shortages and (pre-existing) exploitative trade deals translate into prohibitively expensive building materials in Haiti before and after the earthquake. Tax-free import by registered international NGOs reduced their cost and created a stream of subsidized materials that would be

Figure 5-5 Pre-fabricated, cross-braced wood panel frames for resale (Leyogann 2018)

sold off by local coordinators and recipients. Re-used material stores bought and sold NGO shelter materials, like roof trusses, plywood sandwich panels, and metal sheeting. In the self-built Modsòl next to Abita, structures combining regular materials and components of aid shelters transmuted the dimensions and certain logics of these materials into their own designs.

In contrast, certain intentional moves by NGOs to accommodate for future adaptation and construction were not clearly communicated. In the case of Abita, on the rear of each house there were two concrete ledges protruding from each of the back corners. Used for sitting, for stacking dishes being washed, or just collecting dust, they caught my attention and I inquired about their purpose multiple time without finding an explanation. Finally, a foreign project manager explained to me that these were cast to encase steel reinforcement cages (rebar) extending from the foundation. From his perspective, the design followed a norm in Haitian construction to leave rebar projecting from walls and roofs so that future additions can be structurally tied into the original building. This shared idea led HfH to include these tie-ins in the design of the houses; however, according to US and European norms, they cast a protective concrete casing around the rebar to prevent oxidation. A contractor could easily break this casing open with a sledgehammer, but residents and local builders did not see exposed rebar and did not understand these ledges as tie-ins. Because this technically safer modification was not understood by residents, it was unused, and additions appeared to be structurally independent of the core Abita house. Two nearly coincident practices varied just enough that the utility of an intervention was lost in translation.

Conclusion:

The line between miscommunication and malpractice is less than definitive. Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti concerns about mismanagement of relief funds were widespread. In

2015, ProPublica reported that the American Red Cross (ARC) had spent $500 million dollars and built six houses. The article inspired outrage over the waste of resources and apparent dishonesty to donors by ARC and other international NGOs. It prompted a public response from ARC, in which they claimed that the headline misrepresented their activities and that the money had been disbursed through several other forms of shelter assistance, that equating complex budgets with the output of individual houses was reductive.[255] Although the facts underlying the original reporting and the organization's response were in agreement their framing and interpretation diverged sharply. The discourse around the ProPublica article replicated for a US audience a sense of the confusion, of misaligned expectations and evaluation criteria that had arisen in many post-disaster housing projects in Haiti.[256] Distrust and miscommunication abounded in relationships between international NGO workers, their Haitian colleagues and contractors, and beneficiaries in all directions, leading to accusations of lying, graft, redirecting materials, misrepresentation of scope, unnecessary delays, irresponsibility, and failure to follow through on promises or adhere to contracts, etc., if not formally then via whispers and back-channel discussions.

As this chapter shows, the veracity of any singular narrative is impossible—and in many ways irrelevant—to ascertain. Rather, at stake is how such tragic miscommunication arose and persisted while vulnerable, displaced people were waiting for somebody to do something and living in woefully inadequate and precarious conditions. Post-quake, the ambiguity of communication and the power dynamics of expertise, nationality and resourcing attenuated long-standing issues of communication, participation, and inclusion in design. In Vilaj Abita, the form

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[255] Elliott, "How the Red Cross Raised Half a Billion Dollars for Haiti"; Meltzer, "The Real Story of the 6 Homes in Haiti."
[256] Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By*.

and distribution of shelters represented foreigners' (mis)understandings of recipients. Timing, language, and project scope were not aligned among participants; and the delivery and reception of information was not understood in the same way by different constituents. All these challenges, and more, contributed to the creation of a ghetto-ized neighborhood of unstable and frustrated tenants.

To reduce this narrative to two protagonists (HfH and the residents) would be an oversimplification. It is important to keep in mind that neither of these groupings was monolithic, and many interests, motivations, and perceptions were present within each. What is apparent from these vignettes is that HfH used a number of techniques legible to themselves to communicate design ideas to residents and include them in the development of the project; yet, according to many residents—though not all—this never even happened. Even when there is photographic evidence of these constituents in a space together looking at drawings as in the community design meeting, there was not consensus on what that event was. HfH's desires to cultivate a sense of ownership and community among the beneficiaries was not realized.

Communicating to residents through meetings and word of mouth in Kreyòl, internally in more meetings and reports, and to international donors through social media and brochures in English, HfH spoke to multiple constituencies. Residents nominally were able to respond to HfH through their representative committee, but the widely divergent recollections of events suggest that information did not pass clearly in either direction through the committee. The initial design of the houses and site is generally understood to have arrived as a fait accompli and on-going design of adaptations and additions go undocumented as the result of the immediate and unmediated practices of self-building.

Major misalignments in expectations occurred when the scope of the project was reduced. Social media posts at the launch of the project defined a plan to build 500 houses and to coordinate with other NGOs on community programs which never materialized. Other partnerships did result in the installation of pumps, a community garden, and composting toilets but none of these were maintained when the partner organization completed their work in Santo or Haiti. Due to cost over-runs including for increased security needs and a work stoppage, HfH ceased building after completing the 300 shelters and half of the original site plan. HfH re-evaluated its scope, but this change was not as widely disseminated or understood as the original proposal had been. As such many residents, and hopeful neighbors in Modsol, the adjacent squatter settlement, continue to expect that HfH will return to build more houses and community facilities like sports bleachers, school, church, market and more.[257] HfH has modified its project format in Haiti and is focused on land tenure policy and neighborhood development in New Canaan, north of Port-au-Prince, and grants for house repairs in impoverished neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince. There is no indication that they will return to work in their eponymous settlement, Abita.

Critiques of the practices of NGOs can draw on documented activities. Investigating the living situation seven years after the disaster in question and three to four years after a projects' completion illuminates the narrative of the beneficiaries and residents whose voices are underrepresented in the historical record but whose engagement with the site and project outlasts any member of the NGO team. When interrogating myself and my research partner as to our intentions, Jean told us that a string of people have come through Abita "because life is bad here,

[257] Elkins Voltaire analyzes the quality of religious belief that is mirrored and imbricated in the waiting and hoping for the return of NGOs and further external resources, in "ONG Ann Ayiti, Lafwa, Lespwa, Fristasyon Ak Reziyasyon."

people want to learn about us." This is the unfortunate outcome of this case. Life is bad. The houses are small, the economic opportunities are non-existent, and residents feel like they have not been heard and that there is no one to hear their concerns. If architects, planners, municipal leaders, and NGO staff are to learn from the design and adaptation of the project not just out of the morbid curiosity that Jean points to but to actually ameliorate future projects, they must invest in matching communication to audiences. Intentions and declarations are meaningless if they are not heard, understood. Community feedback can only be solicited *after* a community understands a proposal and it is not beneficial to consult a community if their feedback will not be integrated into the final product.

Many of the challenges facing residents of Abita are not architectural in nature but are problems of economics, politics, regional infrastructure. But land tenure, house design and size, site services, and even material sourcing do intersect with the architectural discipline. Affecting these realms require advocacy based on professional capacities to apply technical expertise to resilient and sustainable designs. In post-disaster contexts, technical concerns such as the widespread failures of poorly reinforced structures can dominate conversations of reconstruction. Such engineering concerns are critical, but truly sustainable solutions must fit with locally specific constraints of economics, politics, and culture and have meaningful dialogue at their core and in their execution and resolution—dialogue based on mutual respect and common languages.

Chapter 6
Lakay se Lakay: Homeplace and Collective Dwelling

Lakay se lakay
Home is home

—Haitian saying

Sebastien is a young architect who works in Pòtoprens but is from the rural Kòmye section of Leyogann on its western edge. After meeting in Pòtoprens and discussing typical homes in Leyogann, Sebastien invited me to visit his neighborhood on this bright Sunday. We met at Kalfou Kolas, an intersection on the national road, just before Kalfou Dufort where it branches to the south and the west, toward the cities of Jakmèl and Okay. On foot, we set off to visit a couple households on either side of the national road and then turned onto the smaller dirt path that led to what Sebastien called "his zone," where he and his extended family lived. He was particularly interested in showing me examples of *ti kay* or traditional houses which are typified by a sequence of one or two rooms and a porch, built with wooden posts and varied types of infill (described in more detail in Chapter One). Sebastien and I walked down the well-shaded dirt road quickly leaving the noise and dust of the highway behind. We turned right onto a smaller path that cut through a line of trees and undergrowth and led us to a cul-de-sac ring by houses that formed a compound called Gran Lakou. While "lakou" generically denotes a courtyard space, in "Gran Lakou," the term is used in a socio-spatial sense, referring to the system of cooperative living on family land that emerged following Haitian independence in 1804.

Children were playing on, running around, and sitting among the tombs of a family cemetery at the center of the lakou. Residential lots were distributed along the outer edge of the cul-de-sac. We walked past the cemetery to a household on the opposite side. There we met Sebastien's friend, Jean Marc, who came out of a pink-and-blue *ti kay* to speak with us in the yard (Figure 6-1). As Sebastien was making introductions, he said that this was Jean Marc's house, but Jean Marc clarified that it had actually been his grandfather's in a conversational reframing that pointed to a subtle but important dimension of home ownership. Since the house had belonged to a deceased family member, it was part of Jean Marc's patrimony, which he had a right to use but not to claim as an individual nor, most likely, to sell for personal profit. This offhand comment gestures toward the nuances of language and belonging captured in *demanbre*—land that anchors kinship relationships through collective property claims—which will be discussed later in this chapter. Jean Marc had a right to use his grandfather's house because of his belonging to this place and to this family, but his claim would not extend to sole ownership of the property.

Gran Lakou preserves many historic traits of a rural family compound and resembles descriptions of historical lakou in literature and oral histories. It manifests the entangled property, kinship, and spiritual systems that shape belonging in collective dwelling spaces. The site of Gran Lakou and the neighborhood around Kalfou Kolas encompasses the key thematics of this chapter: houses, land, lakou, and tombs, and their role in grounding Haitian concepts of belonging. How do Haitian homes communicate belonging through their physical form and material aesthetics? In what ways are the stakes of being at home—of belonging to a place—no more and no less than liberty? This chapter investigates the significance and content that people

Figure 6-1 Front of Jean Marc's house in Gran Lakou (Leyogann, 2018)

communicate to themselves and to each other through their homes on symbolic, social, and spiritual levels.

The chapter addresses domestic environments and collective dwellings, beginning the concept of home (*lakay* singular/plural) as a discursive index of belonging, as a concept grounded in a Vodou metaphysics, and as a genre of physical structures embedded in systems of economic and symbolic value, as theorized by Haitian architects. I then turn toward the phenomenon of collective dwelling through a genealogy of socio-spatial forms, including but not limited to lakou. The dominance of the lakou in the representations of the rural Haitian domestic sphere belies diverse relationships among people, ancestors, economies, and land. I review historical and anthropological studies, before turning to a design project by Centre de Recherches Urbaines-Travaux (CRUT) which imagined a reparative use for collective dwelling practices in Haiti at the end of the twentieth century. In the third and final section, I return to the spiritual and symbolic form of dwelling manifested in houses for the dead. Funerary architecture recalls many

of the key themes in the construction and maintenance of home and belonging amid displacement and insecurity. The optimism of building and dwelling at home returns in the closing case of a neighbor building a new home and maintaining her family's land.

Gran Lakou is in the Cormier section of the commune of Leyogann, where the plains end and the terrain rises up into the Massif de la Selle, which separates Leyogann from the south-east part of the country.[258] The mountainous topography of Cormier is distinct from the flat, urban zones of downtown Leyogann and the more densely populated Grand Rivyè section of Leyogann where the preceding chapters of the dissertation were set. Despite Sebastien's intention to show me traditional dwellings (in other words, old houses), an important feature of the housing in Kalfou Kolas was their continued evolution. Contrary to persistent ideas from twentieth century scholarship on vernacular architectures, these older houses were neither timeless nor isolated from the contemporary moment.[259] In some cases, concrete columns had replaced older wooden columns, while wooden shutters remained in place. Elsewhere, damaged wattle and daub walls had been patched with corrugated metal or tarps. Extended families lived in new houses of concrete block, set next to plywood shelters dating from the post-quake years, set next to much older houses with original rubble rock walls but porches renovated concrete breeze block. They were part of spatial and material assemblages that included both older and newer techniques and structures.

The use of houses changes in addition to material changes. For example, Jean Marc, the young man in Gran Lakou, lived alone in his grandfather's former home that had once,

[258] Leyogann is both a town and a larger administrative unit, a commune, of 385.23 square kilometers (148.73 square miles) the bulk of which is rural and comprised of a combination of a plain and mountainous terrain.
[259] An ahistorical or timeless treatment of architectures of people not considered Western has been rigorously critiqued by scholars including Nader AlSayyad and Marcel Vellinga, nevertheless, foundational studies of rural Haitian houses by Vlach and even recent housing surveys including LIc'NS and XX disregard when houses were built or had major repairs or additions.

presumably, housed a family. He marked this change, noting that it had once been surrounded by neatly arranged flower beds. The person who tended to the flower garden is unspoken but underscores the entanglement of homes and inhabitants. For many city dwellers in downtown Leyogann or Pòtoprens, life in a rural compound such as a lakou was a nostalgic memory or an inherited oral history. In Kalfou Kolas, on the other hand, a spatial arrangement inscribed by multiple generations was still inhabited and maintained, neither frozen in time nor intentionally preserved. In this instance of a lakou, the accretions of history and the contemporary moment coexist as people negotiate and sustain daily life.

Homeplaces

Writer and theorist Édouard Glissant asserted that the abyssal beginnings of African diasporic populations in the Caribbean meant that belonging had to be reinvented in the modern crucible where European, African, and Indigenous Americans lived within the violent system of colonization and plantation slavery.[260] Displacement and relocation are also the foundations of homeplace as theorized by the cultural theorist bell hooks:

> Many narratives of resistance struggle from slavery to the present share an obsession with the politics of space, particularly the need to construct and build houses. Indeed, black folks equated freedom with the passage into a life where they would have the right to exercise control over space on their own behalf, where they would imagine, design, and create spaces that would respond to the needs of their lives, their communities, their families.[261]

hooks connects the literal construction of home with the right to self-determination, which motivated independence struggles, and which continues to motivate the on-going resistance required to maintain a measure of liberty for Haitians and other African diasporic communities in the Americas. Homemaking is understood as a long-term practice of everyday labor and

[260] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 6-8.
[261] hooks, “Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice,” 147.

everyday care that makes a continuum of the construction of a house with the maintenance of the home. The typical activities of homemaking: cooking food, cleaning laundry, tending the garden, raising children, practicing spirituality understood as women's work have been separated from the creative act of constructing a house. Nonetheless, these two temporal scales of homemaking function together as "critical spatial practices" that resist dominant social orders through everyday activities and creative practices.[262] Recognizable examples of collective dwelling in Haiti, including craft workshops, lakou, and the regional bourg-jardin [town-fields], were all established by and sustained by social exchanges at once pragmatic and mystical including the sharing of space, food, ritual, and labor, all of which *demanbre nou*—put us in relationship—and situate us in place.

There are parallels in the motivations and challenges to creating and maintaining Black vernacular homeplaces in the American south and rural Haiti although the intersections of class, race, and color within racial hierarchies mean that experiences in the U.S. and Haiti are markedly different. In the US context, bell hooks draws attention to the importance and rarity of what she called "homeplaces," where African descendants had the freedom and control to build in response to their own self-determined needs and in resistance to the dominant white supremacist society surrounding them.[263] hooks figures Black vernacular architecture in the rural, southern United States as a practice of liberty and resistance. This is comparable with anthropologist and historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot writing that "peasants of all times and places have given high priority to land; but in Haiti, the acquisition of family land and the laborers' right to the product

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[262] Andrea Roberts makes a related claim through the concept of "homeplace aesthetics" in her study of freedom colonies in eastern Texas where descendants of post-emancipation homesteaders use "meaning, values, and tactics" to preserve their family patrimony in "Until the Lord Come Get Me, It Burn Down, Or the Next Storm Blow It Away."
[263] hooks, "Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice."

of the labor on such land were the terms under which freedom was first formulated in the history of the nation."[264] Struggles for self-determination, particularly by rural peasants in Haiti, have underscored the fundamental bonds between identity, liberty, and land tenure.[265] Cultivating homeplaces through a process similar to that illustrated by hooks offers the potential to establish belonging after the abyssal beginning of the middle passage.[266] The power of constructing and maintaining homeplace can be a pleasurable form of resistance, as with the joy that hooks' father took in sitting on the porch with her uncle, "thinking imaginatively" about the house he would build.[267] Homeplace in hooks' work appears as conceptual kin to the phenomenon of family land which has been examined extensively in the Caribbean.[268] Both point to the entanglements of home, kin, land, and freedom in the wake of slavery across the Americas and particularly in Haiti.

This chapter argues that imagining home is a constructive act of identity and liberty through which people maintain a sense of belonging. hooks wrote that "it has been primarily the responsibility of black women to construct domestic households as spaces of care and nurturance in the face of the brutal harsh reality of racist oppression, of sexist domination."[269] This is an act of homemaking both via construction and via everyday maintenance. The work of care and maintenance that hooks calls out has been historically characterized as feminine, in contrast to

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[264] Trouillot, *State Against Nation*, 39.
[265] For a discussion of the tension between export-oriented plantation agriculture pursued by Haitian and independent agrarian desires of the recently emancipated populace of Haiti see Fatton, *The Roots of Haitian Despotism*, 63-8. This fundamental conflict continued after the revolution and land tenure in the nineteenth century is insightfully discussed in Schneider, "Racial Property and Radical Memory."
[266] The abyssal beginning is a thematic from Édouard Glissant's work as interpreted in Drabinski, *Glissant and the Middle Passage. Philosophy, Beginning, Abyss.*
[267] hooks, "Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice," 148.
[268] For example in Casimir, *The Caribbean*; Crichlow, "An Alternative Approach to Family Land Tenure in the Anglophone Caribbean"; Hume, "Death and the Construction of Social Space: Land, Kinship, and Identity in the Jamaican Mortuary Cycle"; Larose, "The Haitian Lakou: Land, Family, and Ritual"; Olwig, "Caribbean Place Identity."
[269] hooks, "Homeplace (a Site of Resistance)," 384.

the masculine realm of construction—though it may be worth noting that this split is replicated in hooks' own narrative. In line with contemporary literature on maintenance and design, I argue for the treatment of home building and home maintenance as activities on a continuum of home making.[270] In Haiti, the imagination of home is informed by a history of revolution, traditions of collective dwelling and action, and a postcolonial relationship with Europe and North America. These global references give rise to a panoply of housing dreams, from those that would become modern like the "west" to those that would cultivate diasporic lakou networks; from suburban subdevelopments to environmentally integrated planning. Whatever ideal form Haitian imaginaries of home may take, the gravitational center that tethers them all to the concept of homeplace are relationships between places and people.

I consider the concept of lakay as analogous to that of 'homeplace,' as developed by hooks in regard to the southern US. Sitting in the same room at the Université Quisqueya in Pòtoprens where architecture students and I had attended design studio reviews (described in Chapter Two), with painted concrete block walls, glass jalousie windows, and creaking wall fans a panel of Haitian scholars from a variety of disciplines triangulated the term "lakay" across Kreyòl, French, and English as "lakay/foyer/home," demonstrating how it operates at multiple scales and within multiple registers.[271] The writer Pauris Jean-Baptiste of the Akademi Kreyòl foregrounded how the concept of lakay operates according to context, including the countryside, the town or regional commune, a neighborhood, and a family or individual residence.[272] Beyond these physical scales, he called attention to the capacity of the word to refer to Haitian society, as

[270] Mattern, "Maintenance and Care."
[271] This trilingual rendering is taken from the title of the panel discussed below, "Lakay/Foyer/Home" at the Haitian Studies Association's 2018 annual conference with presenters, Pauris Jean-Baptiste, Michel Acacia, Pierre Buteau, Mireille Pérodin Jérome.
[272] Pauris Jean-Baptiste, "Lakay nan konsepsyon anpil Ayisyen," Haitian Studies Association Annual Conference, Port-au-Prince, November 9, 2018.

in the colloquial phrase "*lakay pa bon*,*"* meaning that society is not well. He argued that, when a speaker associates themselves, another person, object, or idea with a lakay, the term situates the subject within a network and within a place. He explained, "*li demanbre nou"*—it puts us in relationship. The way in which demanbre relates people through land is both legal and spiritual and will be discussed later. There is an intimacy within lakay, or a lakay is where there is intimacy. Jean-Baptiste noted that the nature of this intimacy varies, but it is consistently characterized by a relationship of belonging "*youn ak lòt*—"—one with the other.

Just as "home" is a polysemic word in English with a range of meanings that depend on scale and context, so too, does lakay have a range of meanings, including those outlined by Jean-Baptiste. Lakay derives etymologically from the indigenous Taino word *Cahay*, which referred to the region of Xaragua in the vicinity of present-day Pòtoprens and Leyogann.[273] This etymology completes an almost incredible spiral such that home points back to the central geography of this dissertation and binds lakay to a specific location. A relationship of belonging to a place, as expressed through lakay, exists for Haitians living in the country/on the island as well as abroad. The immigrants who comprise the diaspora are situated simultaneously in two places with allegiances to both.[274] Sociologist Michel Acacia pointed out that lyrics, for example, frequently refer to *moun lakay mwen* [my people] in songs speaking of a desire to return home. Another common refrain, *pa ka retounen lakay la*—you cannot return home—highlights the immigrant experience of being distanced from one's original home and never entirely at home in one's new situation.[275]

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[273] Jeannot Hilaire renders lakay (Haitian creole) as coming from Cahay in *L'édifice Créole En Haïti: Histoire de La Formation de La Langue Haïtienne*, 8–10:119. In García Bidó, *Voces de Bohío: Vocabulario de La Cultura Taína*, 34. Cahay is defined as referring to the region of Xaragua and alternately rendered as Cahai or Zahai.
[274] Laguerre, *Diasporic Citizenship*.
[275] Michel Acacia, "Le 'chez soi' dans la musique compas haïtienne de la diaspora des années 1970-1980," Haitian Studies Association Annual Conference, Port-au-Prince, November 9, 2018.

Displacement serves as a counterpoint to belonging in narratives and artistic productions of the Haitian diaspora. The fracturing of place-based bonds is not only evident in the case of international emigration but is also present in internal migrations, especially in the tensions and movements between rural and urban realms. The centralization of Pòtoprens during the twentieth century has resulted in a dearth of economic, educational, political, and professional opportunities outside of the capital. Therefore, Haitians from all areas of the country have been displaced from the homelands that many closely identify with as they migrate into the sprawling metropolis.[276] While the urban context is not prohibitive of place-based associations and the formation of lakay, some of which have evolved in place, access to urban property can be economically prohibitive, and place-based connections are weakened by instability and displacement. Moreover, the establishments of elite households within impenetrable compounds on what were the outskirts of the city in the early twentieth century have resulted in the isolation of powerful families from collective conceptions of urban space.[277] The concept of lakay functions not just as a site of belonging but also as a form of separation that can have both positive and negative consequences for individuals, families, and the public sphere, since boundaries simultaneously enclose and exclude. The linguistic and the architectural converge in lakay to communicate belonging conceptually, geographically, and materially.

Nostalgic, pragmatic, and utopian engagements with collective dwelling vary in their relationships to a communal ideal inherent to a Vodou metaphysics. Within a Vodou metaphysics, the notion of belonging is imbued with ancestral and spiritual connections. According to religious studies scholars Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel,

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[276] Carline Noailles finds that 78% of residents of the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince in 2003 indicated a place of origin in a department other than the West based on IHSI, RGPH 2003. "Identification and Explanation of Regional Development Poles in Haiti," 26, Table 2.
[277] Lucien, *Une modernisation manquée: Port-au-Prince (1915-1956)*, 1: Modernisation et centralisation:145.

metaphysics shapes a community's beliefs about self, other, and ritual. As they explain, "Vodou metaphysics differs somewhat from Western definitions in its earnest communal grounding."[278] Vodou metaphysics, Roman Catholic theology, Enlightenment philosophy, and yet other world views are all present in contemporary Haiti as a result of centuries of creolization. Collective networks of relationships take precedence over individual ties in the "neo-African spiritual system, philosophical construct, and religion."[279] Vodou has been widely practiced throughout Haiti's history and is central to narratives about the revolution and the formation of the republic, though not all Haitians practice it today.[280] Vodou beliefs, spoken or sublimated, serve as a metaphysical framework for knowledge and aesthetics.[281] This repository includes an aesthetics of the lakay or Haitian homeplace, which is predicated on communal bonds between humans and environments.[282]

Vodou metaphysics highlights a social imaginary of an environment of well-being that exists in what Michel and Bellegarde-Smith highlight as "the intricate ties of daily existence, as they exist between lwa, ancestors, oneself, and extended families... as linkages existing vertically and laterally—at the crossroads and in the crucible."[283] The intersection of the quotidian and spiritual realms implicated by such linkages are most visible in the closing section of this chapter, which discusses funerary architecture, but the concept of intersection (*kalfou*) describes a spatial and energetic relationship. Like lakay, *kalfou* is polysemic, describing geographic locations such as Kalfou Kolas where roads intersect, at the same time as it can denote a site of

[278] Bellegarde-Smith and Michel, "Danbala/Ayida as Cosmic Prism," 459.
[279] Michel and Bellegarde-Smith, "Vodou."
[280]As in Mintz and Trouillot, "The Social History of Haitian Vodou," 124; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 101.
[281] Michel and Bellegarde-Smith, "Vodou," 1366.
[282] Bellegarde-Smith and Michel, "Danbala/Ayida as Cosmic Prism," 476.
[283] Bellegarde-Smith and Michel, 476.

change and transformation.[284] Relationships among family, environment, and ancestors all intersect in lakay. Nevertheless, most people live in environments where such material and spiritual integration of ancestors and families, human communities, and more-than-human environments, is stressed, disrupted, or absent. An idealized way of life which is environmentally, spiritually, and ancestrally grounded then serves as an important register for the analysis and design of Haitian dwellings.

Lakay: Material and economic production

Studying residential architecture in Haiti requires locally grounded theories, informed by Western and Vodou metaphysics, and necessitates a turn to Haitian architects' discourse about domestic architecture in face-to-face conversations and mediated through their written publications. In this chapter, I analyze three documents and ethnographic encounters with architects J.B. Millet, Didier Dominique, and Gladys Berrouet, who have studied Haitian residential architecture within the framing of the lakou, habitat, and vernacular habitat. All three architects integrate international techniques and theories of architecture with Haitian practices based on first-hand experience working and studying both in Haiti and abroad. They also work from a basic premise, in accord with a Vodou metaphysics, that domestic architecture in Haiti is fundamentally integrated with site and landscape. At the scale of a dwelling, the lakay exceeds the discrete unit of a house—a domestic space delimited by walls and a roof—both in terms of the relationships described above and in terms of outdoor living spaces.

[284] In "Kalfou Danje: Situating Haitian Studies and My Own Journey within It." Michel discusses *kalfou* in relationship to Haitian studies where methodologies, disciplines, epistemologies, and more intersect. In the "Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti." Beauvoir-Dominique and Dominique connect *kalfou* with the social-political project as a transformative site for the conversion of "exploitative, dominant and dehumanizing [processes]… into the collective construction of human society" [plate 3].

J.B. Millet's undergraduate thesis for the Universidad Nacional Autónoma México describes the variations and consistencies in Haitian lakou. Millet surveyed and interviewed households in the northern regions of Haiti to draw site plans of lakou, including house plans, vegetation, and outdoor programs. She illustrated the integrated nature of yard space and multiple built structures by rendering the whole environment in the same style and with the same level of precision. Over the course of my research, I met Millet twice, first at a meeting of the Collège National des Ingénieurs et Architectes Haïtiens (CNIAH), where I was able to introduce myself and my research and later in a meeting at her office in Delmas, where she flipped through the original copy of her thesis with me and we were able to discuss her observations. Without more time with the document a more detailed analysis of the work is not yet possible, but regardless her peers recalled the work as part of the body of knowledge about rural architecture.

Didier Dominique had named Millet's thesis as an important visual source on vernacular habitats. Findings from her survey appear to support claims from Dominique's 1998 essay, "Habitat vernaculaire: Concepts pour une méthodologie de recherche," co-authored with architect and preservationist Daniel Elie and architect and former Secretary of State for Public Security Robert Manuel. In the paper, they called for a new research methodology, which would move beyond the descriptive methodologies that characterized previous scholarship on vernacular architecture in order to study holistic vernacular habitats.[285] Even though they began by emphasizing the limits of descriptive methods, their enumeration of the parameters used by existing studies of rural vernacular architecture demonstrated the need for comparative analysis based on direct observation and description of vernacular habitats within physical and social contexts.

[285] The paper "Habitat Vernaculaire: Concepts Pour Une Méthodologie de Recherche." was co-authored for the 1998 meeting of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) in the Dominican Republic.

By identifying environmental, formal, and symbolic characteristics of a typical Haitian rural house, the authors described the logic of a vernacular habitat without fixing it as having a particular form. They highlighted certain aesthetic, material, and topographic qualities of rural vernacular habitats, including its siting, with attention to topography to protect from weather and water ways, techniques of illumination, ventilation, and basic similarities/standard in plan and dimensions, roof type (pitched or hipped), absence of internal corridors, scale, and integration with nature. The authors caution that there are regional differences with regard to shape, orientation, color scheme, type of foundation or pad, openings, materials, decorative elements, and organization of exterior and internal spaces.[286] The theoretical argument of "Habitat vernaculaire" indicates the need for studies like Millet's, which attends to particular localities, to inform comparative research on the characteristic parameters that they described.

A contrasting to the conceptual framing of "Habitat vernaculaire," another Haitian architect, Gladys Berrouet shared a state-commissioned report she had prepared on residential design and construction, "Habitat-Construction," with me. In a series of meetings at the Albert Mangonès-designed house she was staying at in Bois Verna—a temporary residence since her house had been irreparably damaged in the earthquake—Berrouet would often make connections between our conversation and a document in her library of books and documents that she compiled during her career working variously for the Haitian government, with UN-Habitat, and other non-governmental agencies. The report "Habitat-Construction," which was prepared with a team of architects, engineers, and sociologists for a national program on appropriate technologies for construction in 1991, incorporated a comparative approach into its methodology by selecting

[286] Further work is needed to compare existing surveys and documentation of houses in the north and south of the country to establish significant variations in housing styles by region. Dominique, Manuel, and Elie, 2.

six disparate projects in the south, west, and north of the country.[287] The researchers used a survey tool to capture comparable data across sites in addition to site visits to report on the particularities of each site and project. Berrouet and her team described a family compound called Gran Kafé on Montagne Noire above Petionville, which exemplifies the concept of a domestic environment as an assemblage of houses, structures for cooking and sanitation, trees and plantings, yard spaces, water sources, and tombs.[288] Gran Kafé is, like Gran Lakou, also a large lakou with seventeen houses been built over the course of many years to accommodate new households within one extended family. The houses were built with concrete block walls on foundation platforms that used local rock. Most of the houses had corrugated metal sheet roofing, but the more recent houses and extensions were topped by reinforced concrete slab roofs. Berrouet's team selected the site for observation because the head of the lakou was a mason, and many of his sons also worked in construction trades. Since rock from a local quarry served as a primary source of building material prior to the popularization of concrete-block construction the economic change from this material change were close at hand. Gran Kafé thus manifested the entanglements of material and technical systems with economics, labor, and status.

In "Habitat vernaculaire," Dominique, Elie, and Manuel had identified the importance of studying vernacular habitats as products of dialectical relationships among economic, ideological, symbolic, social, and aesthetic systems, and many of their arguments resonated with emerging scholarship from the time that undertook material analyses of global vernacular

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[287] Appropriate technology as a concept emerged from "Small is Beautiful" by Ernst Fritz Schumacher in 1973. He and colleagues worked to focus development away for large "advanced" technical interventions and towards what they understood to be people-centered technologies which were typically small in scale, relatively affordable within local economic systems, and independent of national energy infrastructures.

[288] Gladys Berrouet, is an architect who trained and practiced in Port-au-Prince but who was engaged in international conversations about housing and development in the Third World through UN-Habitat; Berrouet, Berrouet, "Habitat-Construction," 2.

architectures.[289] Dominique, Elie, and Manuel emphasized the need to "analyze the built environment as a social product within the framework of the reproduction of labor forces, placed in a given economic and political system."[290] The case of Gran Kafé demonstrates one such analysis, as Berrouet and her team describe the incorporation of new aesthetics into the family compound. Berrouet observed, first, that the masonry trade was being passed from father to son at Gran Kafé, indicating that they held some collective knowledge of masonry albeit outside of formal training. The family's engagement with the building industry had an implied relationship with a new construction aesthetic, which was manifest in the style of doors and windows, as well as in the preference for using concrete block instead of stone for new construction of load bearing walls, retaining walls, water reservoirs, and garden walls. The report produced by Berrouet and her team was strongly influenced by the professional prejudices of the researchers—all of them architects and engineers—as they wrote that these improvements being made with the newer concrete technology were not a "technological innovation but [a] misuse of construction techniques and materials, a 'rough' replica of the elements of urban construction."[291] This analysis negatively judged the family builders for their incomplete technical comprehension of the differences between rock and concrete block as construction materials and foreshadowed the report's conclusion about alternative "appropriate technologies." Since the concrete industry and adoption of concrete techniques in Haiti—and globally—are part of complex and contested narratives of imperialism, corruption, and modernization, "Habitat-Construction" failed to

[289] Though there aren't explicit connections between this work and that of scholars like Amos Rapoport and Jean-Paul Bourdier this call for the situating studies of "traditional" environments within cultural or anthropological studies was being formalized in the late 1980s and early 1990s through forums like the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE) founded in 1988.
[290] (original) "On analyserait alors le bâti en tant que produit social dans le cadre de la reproduction des forces de travail, replacé dans un système économique et politique donné," Dominique, Manuel, and Elie, "Habitat Vernaculaire: Concepts Pour Une Méthodologie de Recherche," 9.
[291] (original) "Aucune innovation technologique sinon une mauvaise utilisation des techniques et matériaux de construction, une réplique 'brancale' et grossière des éléments de la construction urbaine." Berrouet, 14.

account for the sociocultural entanglements of the family's domestic "improvements."[292] In fact, the process of change within Gran Kafé exemplifies the global phenomenon of vernacular architectures, as observed by anthropologist Marcel Vellinga, in that they are "subject to continuous processes of occupation, conservation, renovation, demolition, interpretation, adaptation, and so on."[293] Vellinga's point does not contradict Berrouet's observation of poorly engineered concrete block construction and low-quality block production, but it should temper conclusions about how and why families adopt new techniques and materials into the construction of their domestic environments. For example, her team collected data on labor and material costs and found that, while concrete block produced on-site by local laborers are perceived to be less expensive, they are nearly as expensive as industrially produced blocks with greater compression strength. Labor costs are averaged over an entire project and not typically calculated on a per-block basis, such that industrial production of concrete blocks would seem to be an economically preferable improvement to construction quality. However, side-by-side cost comparisons of building materials do not account for the social value of on-site labor, which can be executed by members of a social network. For that reason, some of the other case studies in "Habitat-Construction" from the 1990s, including projects in the north near Milot and in the south outside Jacmel, featured options for building materials whose integrity would not depend on industrial production facilities. In those locations, people were working on scaling up experimental and historic techniques for producing and building with ceramic or terra cotta tiles, clay fired bricks, and compressed earth blocks. Berrouet's analysis is informed by a technocratic

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[292] Claire Payton has written about the political entanglements of cement production under Duvalier in Payton, "Building Corruption in Haiti." Diana Martinez connects concrete technology with US military occupation in the Philippines in "Concrete Colonialism." Forthcoming work by Vyta Baselice promises to elucidate the entanglements of the US concrete industry and US imperialism more broadly.
[293] Vellinga, "Living Architecture," 20.

stance toward evaluating construction and subscribes to a project of modernization. Nonetheless, the report models the ambivalence of Haitian architects' discourse around rural building tradition as both backwards and full of potential for economically and environmentally integrated improvements in building.

Attention to materials does not preclude attention to the economics of labor, which also inform Berrouet's accounting of construction habits and costs. The labor of "anonymous" builders has been frequently overlooked in touchstones of literature on vernacular architecture, obscuring the fact that buildings are part of economies of exchange.[294] People with specialized knowledge and experience have presumably played a role in construction for most of history. In the Caribbean, documentary evidence of the exchange of that knowledge and labor for economic value—be it cash, goods, or reciprocal services—exists since at least the seventeenth century.[295]

The authors of "Habitat vernaculaire" brought attention to the economic systems in which land, building materials, and labor are valued and exchanged in the construction of lakay. In a provocative move, they argued that vernacular habitats should be defined, not in contrast to modern architecture, but rather as dwellings that are constructed through non-capitalist exchanges. Their economic definition of the vernacular recalls the etymology used by political theorist Ivan Illich to define the vernacular as that which is domestically produced and not obtained through monetized exchange outside of the household.[296] If one uses Dominique, Elie, and Manuel's proposition, then local and renewable materials are not just part of an

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[294] The popular work of Bernard Rudofsky in *Architecture without Architects* exemplifies the treatment of building traditions as sculptural and ethnographic objects divorced from their producers. The slightly early work of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy recognizes the presence of design intentions but in the very titling of the work, *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America*, attributes this agency to anonymous and thereby unknowable builders.
[295] This has taken varying forms based on race and class during colonialism and post-independence. In *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire*. Gauvin Bailey describes how enslaved Africans, free people of color, and white Europeans all contributed to the building trades via agreements both oral and written.
[296] Illich, "Vernacular Values."

environmental relationship but also a mode of exchange outside of capitalist modes of production and circulation. It also accommodates theorizing vernacular habitat as a phenomenon that is not inherently rural, as some scholars have suggested, but rather characterized by a set of social and economic practices that can be found in different settlement forms, including linear agglomerations, villages, informal settlements, and urban neighborhoods. The construction of houses with materials that circulate in capitalist markets, for example cement, but are built with on-site exchanges of labor and services create hybrid conditions and friction between systems.[297] In this way, alternative labor arrangements like *konbit*, collective agricultural work with a strong place in the Haitian imagination as a model of collaborative work outside of a cash exchange, can be related to a type of cooperative construction by people in on-going social relationships with one another.[298]

These three texts on lakay and vernacular habitats more broadly allow for an approach to homeplace that is not predicated on form but, rather, on the relationships—familial, social, and economic—which are foundational to the making of home. Certainly, there are materials and styles that are characteristic and recognizable as being associated with time periods, geographic locations, and class, but, as Dominique, Elie, and Manuel have reminded us, those are the results of "the built environment being a use value that is produced, consumed, exchanged, in a series of complex social relationships."[299] In these locally grounded theories, lakay describes an interconnected environment of households, yard space, and other support spaces for the conduct

[297] An interesting question that would require further research is whether the common phenomenon of clients not paying contractors or subcontractors in a timely manner can sometimes be understood as a form of exchange that is nominally monetized but the debt might function more like a gift economy where social ties are maintained by non-cash exchanges?
[298] Vannier, "Rational Cooperation."
[299] (original) "le bâti étant une valeur d'usage qui se produit, se consomme, s'échange, dans une série de rapports sociaux complexes," Dominique, Manuel, and Elie, "Habitat Vernaculaire: Concepts Pour Une Méthodologie de Recherche," 9.

of everyday life. Given the dynamic process of living, homeplaces change with their homemakers and in tandem with economic, technological-material, and social systems. Yet, the sense of belonging associated with lakay, as described at the beginning of this chapter, is profound.

Kay la: Making meaning with houses

Buildings do not speak per se, but people speak, and they often speak of themselves through their homes. How people make meaning about themselves and others through building is a vast question with often problematic answers.[300] The symbolic, psychological, and cultural significance of home cannot be understated and has been studied and commented on across disciplines. I argue that homeplaces communicate belonging and ground relationships; therefore, a brief treatment of the common characteristics of Haitian houses and how they are used to signify an individual identity or social position is called for. Meanings are legible in houses because people recognize and connect their visual qualities with established norms.[301] Conversely, designers and builders use established norms to confirm or project ideas about a proposed structure's inhabitants.[302] Approaching meaning in architecture is complicated by the entanglement of pragmatic and symbolic functions in any given object or technique. In the case of Haitian domestic architecture, the symbolic functions are those that represent or communicate aspects of a person's or family's identity, while pragmatic functions meet needs via culturally dependent methods. The integration of these two realms forms what architectural scholar Galen

[300] Often problematic because the question has often been asked and answers by outsiders about "othered" communities. Regardless, the ambiguity of material signification and a desire for meaning as exemplified by European architecture's classical turn and more recently environmental behavioral studies has produced immense amounts of literature on the question of meaning or signification of architecture across geographies, styles, and ideologies.
[301] These ideas have been explored in design studies particularly in the work of Amos Rapoport including *House Form and Culture.*
[302] Designers may "use" norms by manipulation, inverting, or disrupting them.

Cranz has called “taste” and is part of how people distinguish themselves from each other.[303] As such, what is said and understood through homemaking is not absolute and depends on context and position.

Finials, a vertical ornament placed at the peak of a roof, exemplify this ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings embedded in house design. It is common to see variations of a finial on older Haitian homes, both on large, gingerbread-style houses built by the wealthy and small houses of the lower classes. Whether rendered as a tapered pole of wood or wrought iron or as a small, shaped plank, finials are attached where the inclines of the roof planes meet (Figure 1-7). As mentioned in Chapter One, such a feature is present in late nineteenth-century architecture in many geographic locations outside of Haiti. It is neither unique nor universal. In my conversations with Haitian architects, finials were not remarked on even in discussions of gingerbread-style or rural architecture. This absence of interest in finials is perhaps surprising, given the preponderance of attention paid by preservationists to the gingerbread-style.[304]

A single architectural detail demonstrates the potential for multiple interpretations. As Sebastien and I were standing in front of a house in Kalfou Kolas, we looked at the peak of a hipped roof where a wooden plank with beveled upper corners and a triangular notch at the bottom was affixed at the apex. I asked Sebastien what he thought of the decoration. At first, he said it did not mean anything to him other than making the house “bèl” or pretty. On reflection, he suggested it made the facade look clearly like the front of the house— “it says hello.” Anthropomorphic storytelling such as this, where the pragmatic function of the facade as an entrance is conflated with the social action of greeting, is typical of a narrative practice used in

[303] Cranz, “A New Way of Thinking About Taste,” 130.
[304] See Chapter 1 for a selected bibliography of studies on Port-au-Prince’s gingerbread houses.

architecture design studios and not surprising given our shared education as architects.[305] A few minutes later, standing outside another house, Sebastien noted that the vertical plank here reminded him of a human figure, moving from his earlier abstract interpretation to a figurative one. Another interpretation came up when walking in the foothills nearby with Isaiah, an artisan who had trained as a civil engineer. He suggested that vertical planks such as these had a mystical quality akin to the *poto mitan*—the central pole of a temple and a conduit between spiritual and terrestrial realms. Like so many elements of the built environment, this vertical ornament becomes a part of an unremarkable background, but it is common enough to be recognized, and its unfixed meaning accommodates multiple explanations by different viewers.

Pluripotential symbolism also exists in the decorative element of paint colors. Pink, alone or paired with white and other colors, is a popular Haitian house color. In her study of northern Haitian dwellings, Millet cataloged relationships between colors and Vodou spirits. There is a broad recognition that certain colors are associated with particular spirits or cults, but color is not semiotically fixed to a spiritual register. Within a Vodou cosmology pink recalls Èzili Freda, but in a secular context it is a color that may or may not carry any signification beyond its popularity. For instance, one house in Kalfou Kolas was freshly painted with a dusty blue base and the trim and details covered with a saturated coral pink tone (Figure 6-2). I asked the woman who lived there why she chose these colors, to which she responded, “because it’s what we had.” Her pragmatic reasoning shows how an ornament like paint with the capacity to signify does not always carry an underlying meaning. There are codified color schemes for secular institutions including blue for police stations and green for hospitals and medical services. In “Habitat vernaculaire,” the authors speculated that the increased availability of industrially produced

[305] For a careful analysis of storytelling in the context of architectural education mode, the pin-up, see Murphy, “Building Stories.”

paints reduced the symbolism of house colors.[306] Their hypothesis may be born out in this case, at the same time, the woman's reply may have simplified or obfuscated additional decision criteria. Either way intention and received meaning do not have to align and a viewer, like Sebastien, Isaiah, or myself, will interpret color and form within our varied schema.

Where the finial or a pleasant color scheme might signal welcome or well-being, ubiquitous defensive design details make contradictory statements. Focusing on relationships as constitutive of homeplace up to this point has featured belonging, but relationships of suspicion, betrayal, threat, and mistrust of others also influences the design of residential space. Modernist architect Albert Mangonès suggested that violence—real and imagined, state and popular—has had a particular influence on Haitian house design. He wrote that "the need to protect, to defend against every possible aggression, occult or evident, is always present and even affirmed in the manner of building the home in Haiti."[307] The demands of security and protection contradicted the modernist principles of open floor plans and large apertures that he espoused and imply tensions between upper- and lower-classes. While open designs maximizing breeze and shade

Figure 6-2 House in Kalfou Kolas (Leyogann 2018)

[306] Dominique, Manuel, and Elie, "Habitat Vernaculaire: Concepts Pour Une Méthodologie de Recherche," 4.
[307] Mangonès, "Architecture in Question," 847.

would appear—particularly to designers from temperate, northern climates—as pragmatic responses to heat and humidity, insecurity drives other pragmatic choices.[308] Walking around Kalfou Kolas, Sebastien repeatedly pointed out instances where vents or shutters on the *galata* [overhanging attic space over a porch] had been closed off with wood planks. Historically, this space was used for storing food products such as corn and coffee, which would benefit from ventilation while being protected from animals or theft. At some point, people felt the need to close these openings. Houses, like the ti kay, with shuttered doors on two or more face that can be opened during the day for cross-ventilation are closed tight at night despite the persistent heat. An indeterminate bundle of physical and mystical risks makes leaving a house open at night unpopular to say the least, even though it can mean sleeping in hot, humid conditions.[309] Such a defensive attitude in architecture can be observed across class lines, even though the technologies used to secure a house or a property may vary in lower- and upper-class housing and rural versus urban neighborhoods.

In interviews, architects repeatedly addressed security concerns to explain or motivate major building features including property walls and gates and small or heavily barred windows. National events in the twentieth century radically altered Haitians' attitudes toward the built environment. The precise correlation between partisan political movements and housing technologies requires additional research, but the use of urban space and the production of architectural forms transformed radically under the U.S. occupation (1915-34), the Duvalier

[308] Jiat H Chang discusses how Western colonial and neocolonial discourses of modern architecture privileged climate as a dominant design criterion in tropical architecture (*A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Colonial Networks, Nature and Technoscience*.). Mangonès would have been familiar with such discourses from his training in Belgium and the United States (Cornell University).
[309] Thermal comfort varies with cultural norms. I am certainly not the only foreign researcher who has been chastised for leaving my door open to catch a breeze or trying to go out into the yard at night because I am not habituated to the temperature.

regimes (1957-86), and during the insecurity of the 1990s.[310] Anthropologist Erica James explains that a terror apparatus, which was a feature of François Duvalier's government, manipulated cultural taboos to damage familial relationships and communities.[311] The adoption of techniques to fortify and protect domestic spaces, including wrought iron barriers, imposing property walls, and perimeters decorated with broken glass and razor wire, all demonstrate a popular demand to defend domestic architecture. The construction of homeplace includes hospitality and protection. Neither inherently positive nor negative, the lakay is formed through the active construction and maintenance of social, economic, and place-based relationships formed by complex histories. Material, spiritual, and semiotic systems are entangled in their production and interpretation.

Lakou: Collective dwelling

The following sections shift attention to the lakou and practices of collective dwelling. The communal orientation toward the human and non-human environmental sphere that is implicated by a Vodou metaphysics informs the exploration of the significance of collectivity in Haitian spatial practices. As the authors of "Habitat vernaculaire" argued, a fixed definition of rural building typology is less relevant than understanding the processes by which habitats are built and inhabited. Significant here is how collective dwelling practices in Haiti have been described and rhetorically mobilized in the imagination of ideal ways of living. This section concludes with the CRUT proposal for a repatriation center that imagines a future for collective dwelling as a reparative practice for contemporary ruptures.

[310] Jean Ververt, Jacques. Personal interview. 14 June 2018.
[311] James, *Democratic Insecurities*, 80.

The lakay is predicated on a defined space within which a group of people belong. The collection of environmental and social relationships within lakay underpin a whole genealogy of Haitian spatial practices of habitation, land tenure, and labor, which I gather under the umbrella concept of collective dwelling. The most discussed of these practices is the lakou, though a variety of community networks—established through land, labor, and dwelling—are embedded in the long history of conflict between capitalist and peasant projects in Haiti. Historical sociologist Jean Casimir wrote that the nineteenth century lakou system in Haiti was a counter-plantation technique for establishing family and community structures after the forcible isolation of individuals by the middle passage and plantation slavery.[312] The formation and maintenance of community networks through land and dwelling appears as a strategy responding to a history of dispossession.

An inviolable relationship of belonging is encapsulated in the concept of demanbre, which describes the inalienable rights of inheritance by all family descendants to a portion of family land. The grounding of kinship by property is a significant practice, given the long and profound history of displacement in the genesis of Haitian and Caribbean identity. Through the transatlantic slave trade Africans arrived at the ambiguous shore of an unknown land and there, Glissant writes, "the absolute unknown, projected by the abyss and bearing into eternity the womb abyss and the infinite abyss, in the end became knowledge."[313] The abyssal root of Caribbean knowledge and theory that Glissant foregrounds intensifies the significance of belonging in place and homemaking.

The abyssal origins of Caribbean identity marked just the first in a centuries-long sequence of forcible displacements and emplacements of Black people in the Americas.

[312] Casimir, *The Caribbean*, 156.
[313] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 8.

Katherine McKittrick described how Black women, men, and children have been required to "be placed and displaced… Black subjects have to 'go' and inhabit somewhere."[314] This unfinished history of violent control over where people can or cannot be—whether people can or cannot be—is the frame within which homeplace, in hooks' terms, emerges as an act of resistance. The liberatory practices of Black homemaking in Haiti and elsewhere in the African diaspora are bittersweet, born of necessity.

Relationships among people, ancestors, economies, and land motivate the historical development of collective dwelling practices. Geographer Georges Anglade contextualized shifting communal relationship and attendant spatial practices within Haiti from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Rural living, by Anglade's analysis, has been structured by patterns of production, consumption, trade, politics, and culture undermining the possibility that the rural peasantry was ever isolated or independent of the country's urban center and regional networks. He categorized three historical spatial orders beginning with eighteenth-century workshops, which were composed of free people of color and enslaved people, nineteenth-century kinship-based lakou, and twentieth-century *bourgs-jardins,* referring to the territorial relationship between localized markets and small-scale farmers (Table 3).[315] The communal place-based relationships of these three formations appear as "critical spatial practices" that resist the hegemony of global capitalism by establishing variable systems of collective insurance and mutual aid to their members.[316]

[314] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 12.
[315] Georges Anglade credits the term "bourg-jardin" to the local theorization of a Haitian immigrant in the Bahamas, Timac Télisma who said "*Nous ne sommes pas dispersés mais organisés en bourgs-jardins.* (We are not dispersed but organized in bourgs-jardins)" Anglade, *Atlas Critique d'Haïti (Digital)*, 86.
[316] Rendell, "Only Resist."

As forms of exploitation shifted over the centuries, so too did Haitian's spatial and economic counter-practices. Anglade described how, during the colonial period, space was intentionally fragmented to separate enslaved people from common backgrounds, but workshops and provision grounds worked by the enslaved formed a site of resistance to bondage. In the nineteenth century, extended family networks connected through housing and family farms—lakou—resisted the power of large landholders and the dominating system of plantation labor. A kinship based lakou was maintained through everyday acts of sharing space, food, ritual, and labor outside of or in the margins of capitalism. Casimir posited that lakou resisted the plantation economy, which had been transferred from colonists to *grandon* (large landholders), even though the lakou were still in part tied to the capitalist system. The centralization of markets in Pòtoprens and regional nodes weakened the foundations of lakou as an intermediary structure for consolidating agricultural goods for trade. The continued division of family land eventually exhausted the lakou system. While genealogical relationships still exist and exert powerful influences in neighborhood clusters and around local markets, the small number of multi-generational lakou that have persisted in the twenty-first century no longer order space as they did in the nineteenth.[317] An organization of bourg-jardin emerged with the centralization of Haiti's economy and governance in Pòtoprens due in part to the U.S. occupation. "Critical spatial practices" are necessarily in a constant state of change in relationship to dominant and global systems.

Table 1 Georges Anglade's matrix of Haitian spatial organizations (Atlas Critique d'Haïti 1982)

Time period	*Spatial order*	*Collective dwelling*	*Relationship*
1664 – 1803	Fragmented	Workshop	Enslavement
1804 – 1915	Regionalized	Lakou	Kin

[317] Anglade, 133.

Time period	*Spatial order*	*Collective dwelling*	*Relationship*
1915 – 1980	Centralized	Bourg-jardin	Neighbors

As Anglade has shown, the lakou system was not the only instance of collective dwelling in Haiti's history, but it is a dominant reference for collective life in the social imagination and therefore worth unpacking at some length. Education scholar Charlene Désir theorizes the lakou as "more than a community; it is a theoretical and social framework and an integral part of the social fabric of Haiti." In this way, lakou as a concept has exceeded the nineteenth-century spatial-economic practice described by Anglade. The lakou encompasses land, family, and ritual; but it is complicated by the mutability of its signification and its organization.[318] Attempting to fix a singular definition onto lakou would diminish its capacity to encompass both a shifting morphology and a social concept.[319] I trace the following historiography which, inevitably, does not include every instance in which lakou appears in the scholarship, but fills a gap comparing and reviewing a plethora of analyses.

The practice of small-scale agriculture emerged during the colonial era on provision grounds, garden plots allocated to certain enslaved people on which they grew agricultural products for consumption and sale in regional markets.[320] Following independence in the early nineteenth century, the new Haitian state's transfers of land, confiscated from French plantation owners and given to former soldiers and political appointees, created a landscape of properties

[318] Research by Haitian architect J.B. Millet in "Arquitectura Haitiana." demonstrates some of the variations in the physical disposition of houses and activity areas in *lakou* in different regions of Haiti.
[319] This capaciousness has made it both a potent and fetishized idea for designers. Following the 2010 earthquake many international non-governmental organizations and collaborating architects (including the author) drew on partial definitions and understanding of the *lakou* in design proposals for housing reconstruction. Many such examples of its rhetorical use can be found among the submissions to the Building Back Better Communities exposition, 2011. See also Holl et al., *New Haiti Villages*; Mayne et al., *Haiti Now*.
[320] Dubois, *Haiti*, 104–11.

held and cultivated by families through the lakou system.[321] The lakou marked a profound synergy between people and their land such that one operational definition of "family" was a group of descendants "occupying or originating from a clearly defined piece of land."[322] According to this definition, land rights were at the heart of the lakou system and effectively constituted kinship. "Counter-plantation" practices such as the lakou system, which included extended families living in proximity to one another on the demanbre and collaborating in agricultural labor, afforded peasants economic independence from large landholders.[323] This form of joint, collective ownership might appear as "a palpable utopia" in Casimir's terms, but the lakou system was part of the quotidian world. As demonstrated in twentieth-century case studies by anthropologists Serge Larose and Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, the hierarchical relationships between lakou founders and their descendants, along with the gendered dynamics that privileged male heirs despite universal inheritance, complicate a utopian collective vision.[324] Comhaire-Sylvain described the insecurity of women who had a house on land owned or managed by male family members. Gendered power dynamics resulted in male descendants with greater economic means possessing more authority in decision-making regarding family landholdings. Collective dwelling in lakou provided for support via distributed childcare, space for living, and food sharing within compounds or between family-neighbors, but the system was by no means perfectly egalitarian. Nonetheless, the lakou system of the nineteenth century

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[321] The complicated history of land rights and the transfer of lands seized by the Haitian government to military personnel and as political favors following the revolution is addressed in Lacerte, "The First Land Reform in Latin America: The Reforms of Alexander Pétion, 1809-1814"; Schneider, "Racial Property and Radical Memory."

[322] Attention should be paid to the evolving nature of language and in the 2010s the term family may have been used in other ways. Writing in the 1970s, Serge Larose also offers definition of a family as "an unrestricted ego-oriented set of relatives," "The Haitian Lakou: Land, Family, and Ritual," 189.

[323] Casimir considers the function of yards, family land, and joint, collective ownership not just in Haiti but in various Caribbean sites including but not limited to Jamaica. The *konbit* was a form of reciprocal collective labor in the Haitian countryside, *The Caribbean*, 117.

[324] Larose, "The Haitian Lakou: Land, Family, and Ritual"; Comhaire-Sylvain, "The Household In Kenscoff, Haiti."

offered the material means to be independent of—or at least operate in the margins of—the imperial-capitalist system.

Larose emphasized, on the other hand, that lakou are dynamic. They are newly established, gain and lose connected property, and eventually disappear over time, feeding into one aspect of variability in the meaning of the term.[325] This dynamism in the formation and functions of lakou has been framed as decline by earlier scholars, including anthropologist Remy Bastien, who wrote about the lakou in the context of the valley of Marbial in the late 1940s.[326] In 1948, Bastien reported that the lakou, like other social institutions, was in decline, though he did identify one that included ten households, twenty-seven members, and three generations.[327] Bastien characterized the lakou as "the residence unit of the large family," which is established by the continuous occupation of a region of land by a single family. During the same period, Comhaire-Sylvain had observed that peasants in the mountainous rural zone west of Pòtoprens were increasingly forming a "modern version" of the lakou, with three or four houses for members of a family (parents, children, and siblings) built on property originally owned by a parent but which has now been divided.[328] Bastien and Comhaire-Sylvain both foregrounded the durability of a family's claims on a geographic location, which corresponds with the neighborhood relationships of the "bourg-jardin" as described by Anglade while the economic self-sufficiency of a lakou became secondary. According to Anglade's formulation, the phenomenon of collective dwelling is not exclusively rural, as there are many urban examples of lakou, where multiple generations of a family reside within walled compounds or shared

[325] Larose, "The Haitian Lakou: Land, Family, and Ritual," 484.
[326] The valley of Marbial was the site of UNESCO's Fundamental Education Project from 1948-1953 which focused attention on this rural site in the southwest of the country, Bastien, "Haitian Rural Family Organization."
[327] Bastien, 481.
[328] Comhaire-Sylvain, "The Household in Kenscoff, Haiti."

buildings, as well as spiritual lakou where members convene for rituals. By the 1970s, when Larose was studying lakou in Leyogann, extant residential lakou could not be characterized as the same self-sufficient domains that they were in the nineteenth century. Even though they lacked the material means to be economically independent, the spatial practice of lakou—like that observed in Gran Lakou at the beginning of the chapter—may have been preserved to "fulfill new functions in the wider society" including the maintenance of place-based relationships of belonging.[329]

A lakou established continuity with the past through inheritance. However, as part of the religious system of Vodou, property rights were only a portion of inheritance. Belonging made up the other portion. Larose described how, in Leyogann, the demanbre, "through its cemetery, its cult house and its trees which are repositories of the family spirits, … [was] the basic unit of peasant religion."[330] The lamination of spiritual practices with family land, housing, and the environment means that lakou can be interpreted through both secular and spiritual lenses, but neither view is complete in isolation.[331] Though the size and quantity of lakou diminished during the twentieth century, Michel maintains that it continues to serve as a metonym for "relational spaces that serve our communities, ensure participation and ownership in communal affairs, and provide pillars to build and develop projects and possibilities of all types that benefit the group."[332] A challenge in discussing the material practices of the lakou is that as a relational

[329] Larose, "The Haitian Lakou: Land, Family, and Ritual," 484.
[330] Larose uses French orthography *démembré* in contrast to Haitian Kreyòl, *demanbre* to refer to the inherited land to which all descendants of the founding ancestor have an inalienable claim; 490.
[331] For example, there are famous *lakou* with proper names, such as Lakou Souvnans in Gonaïves or Lakou St. Michel in Port-au-Prince, which are religious centers for distinct and recognizable communities of Vodou practitioners. Spiritual practices with *lakou* can be presumed to vary as much Haitian Vodou itself varies with locality and over time. Mimerose Beaubrun discusses these spaces from an internal and spiritual point of view in *Nan Dòmi*.
[332] Claudine Michel, "Vodou: Theory and Praxis in Conversation," in *Sak Pase? N'a Pe Koute. Dites donc,nous sommes à l'écoute" [Tell Us, We're All Ears]*, Mirebalais, Haiti, 2009, as quoted by Charlene Désir in "Diasporic Lakou," 281.

space it can describe physical and metaphysical relationships. As an epistemological tenet of a Haitian worldview, lakou in any register calls up the communal nature of an interconnected environment.

Lakou: Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti

The communal relationships between humans and the non-human environment, which underpin the preceding discussions of lakay, vernacular habitats, lakou, and bourg-jardin, have served as powerful bases for design imagination. A polemical proposal for a "Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti," prepared by the Haitian urbanism research group Centre de rechèchis urbaines-travaux (CRUT), serves as an example of a synthetic design for collective dwelling grounded both in the discipline of architecture and in Vodou metaphysics.

In May 1994, CRUT published a report outlining plans for a "Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti" (WRCH), which was a polemical vision for the return of Haitians dislocated by economic precarity and political violence through the construction of a class-conscious, primarily agrarian collective.[333] At the time of publication, a post-coup military regime controlled Haiti, and the resulting political violence and economic instability of this period was associated with a drastic increase in the number of asylum-seekers and emigrants leaving Haiti.[334] The absences that widespread emigration has caused in families throughout the country were one of the motivations for a repatriation program. In broad strokes, the WRCH was a proposal for a rural complex with short- and long-term residences, agricultural fields, light industrial production, and spaces for collective assembly, education, and governance. The proposal envisioned collective forms of living and production as reparative practices for

[333] The author was given access to an original copy in the personal papers of Didier Dominique and the following analysis is based on this document and conversations with Dominique.
[334] 21, 245 refugees were intercepted between January 1981 and Jan 1991; double that, 41,141 were stopped between October 1991 and January 1993, in "Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti," 1.

individual and national traumas experienced in the preceding years.[335] The emphasis on self-reliance within the collective recalls Casimir's argument that the lakou was a counter-plantation practice through which people were able to sustain their livelihood outside of a larger system of oppression. WRCH rejected the private property system implicated in the lakou system in their response to the neoliberal world order, which had shifted its extractive form away from plantation agriculture. The posture of resistance persisted.

In this way, the CRUT proposal offered an image of a utopian society projected within the context of the 1990s. Sociologist Ruth Levitas identified the potential of "utopia as architecture… [as] a provisional hypothesis about how society might be, offered as part of a dialogue, neither intending nor constituting a forecast, recognizing itself as in part a present future." [336] The proposal for a center for the repatriation of economic and political migrants put spatial precedents from Haitian rural life—past and present—in dialogue with a socialist ideology. There is a tension in the proposal between aspects of the design that were carefully grounded in vernacular traditions, on the one hand, created through the spatial imagination of peasants, and the abstraction of a project-scaled plan, on the other, which respects the idea of environmental integration but lacks a site and which is influenced aesthetically and formally by the authors' professional education in architecture.

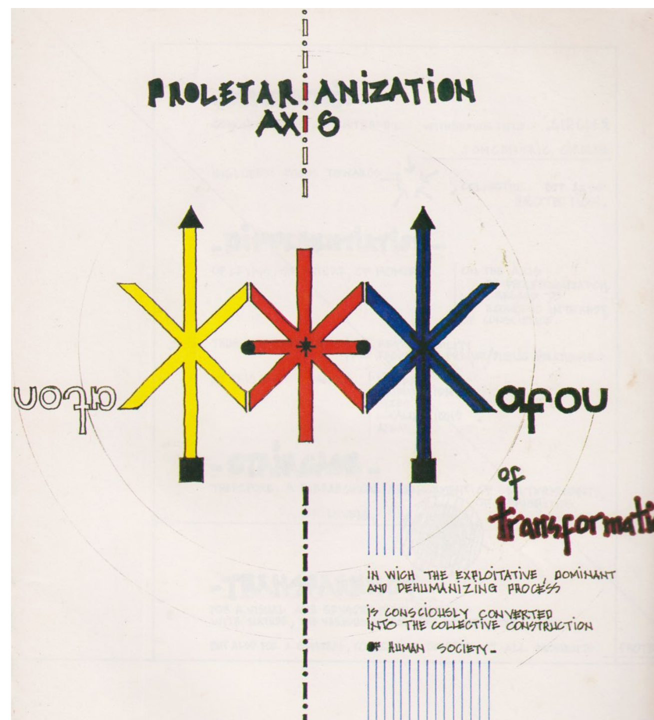
The lead authors on the CRUT proposal, Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique, and her spouse Didier Dominique, were personally and professionally situated to develop the utopian vision of the WRCH in Haitian cultural syncretism. Beauvoir-Dominique was an anthropologist committed to the study and preservation of Haitian culture; she was also the daughter of the

[335] The proposal directly addressed the intense violence and displacement during the military regime that governed Haiti from 1991 until shortly after the proposal was published in the fall of 1994, but it also describes the experience of exile and displacement experienced during the Duvalier regime and the 1980s.
[336] Levitas, *Utopia as Method*, 198.

high-profile Vodou leader, Max Beauvoir, and a *manbo* (priestess) herself. In addition to being an architect and professor, Dominique has also worked in transnational labor movements such as *Batay Ouvriye*. Individually and together, they wrote social and political analyses of land use and architecture in Haiti and researched Haitian peasant society and grassroots forms of organization, including Vodou societies.[337]

Situationally and conceptually, the WRCH proposal is a "provisional hypothesis" of a new form of collective dwelling informed by Dominique and Beauvoir-Dominque's engagements with vernacular architecture, architectural history, anthropology, Vodou metaphysics, and worker's rights. In the proposal, the authors described the sociopolitical context for the project, including migration patterns in the late twentieth century, immigrant experiences abroad, and a process for recruiting and preparing migrants to return to their

Figure 6-3 Conceptual diagram of WRCH (CRUT 1994)



[337] Rachel Beauvoir and Didier Dominique discuss grassroots form of organization in Haitian peasant society in a contemporaneous radio interview on *Entre Nous*. See also Beauvoir-Dominique and Dominique, *Textes à Conviction*; Beauvoir and Dominique, *Savalou E*; Beauvoir-Dominique, *L'Ancienne Cathédrale de Port-Au-Prince: Perspectives d'un Vestige de Carrefours*.

homeland. Through a policy and program narrative, the authors aimed to counter the destructive phenomena of "refugees, camps, and expulsions" with constructive strategies of "repatriation, center, and insertion" and to push critique into transformative design.[338] The proposal continues with conceptual diagrams and site plans that illustrate and develop the text proposal; these visualizations form the primary material for the analysis to follow.

The third diagram explicitly connects the project with a Vodou metaphysics, wherein the kalfou is understood as a site of transformation (Figure 6-3). The authors draw the "kafou (sic) of transformation in which the exploitative, dominant and dehumanizing process is consciously converted into the collective construction of human society."[339] This transformative kalfou is further adorned in the next illustration as a site diagram which describes the relative spatial and conceptual relationships between the different components of the center's program, including residential, assembly, and production areas (Figure 6-4). The site diagram works on representational and symbolic levels, resembling a spiritual symbol, *vèvè,* elaborated on the intersecting axis. At the geometric and conceptual center of the site, the circulation paths intersect; these crossroads are a large assembly area for community gatherings and a weekly market. To the right-hand side are dormitory-style dwelling units for newly repatriated workers, offices for health and legal services, and elementary and high schools. Production premises for agricultural and semi-industrial work are on the left. At each end of the vertical axis, residential clusters are arranged around open spaces for outdoor activities. In the interstitial spaces between these four quadrants are meeting spaces for the administration of the collective. Perpendicular and bisecting circulation routes extend out toward agricultural fields, transportation corridors, and nearby rural agglomerations. Dominique understood the visualization as a diagram of

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[338] Beauvoir-Dominique and Dominique, "Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti," 15.
[339] Beauvoir-Dominique and Dominique, n.p. [3].

relationships between program areas, which would have to shift to accommodate topographic and environmental features of a selected location before becoming a site plan.[340] Nevertheless, the kalfou at the center of the project would be fixed by its symbolic and pragmatic function as the nucleus of the repatriation program.

The WRCH engaged "critical spatial practices" for communal benefit, which recalls Désir's theorization of lakou as a social framework. However, CRUT characterized the WRCH as a break from "the small land-owning peasantry which is historically limited in its form, but instead carries ahead the bearing elements of that mode of production's transformation."[341] The distinction between collective ownership of land in the WRCH and collective claims of inheritance within the nineteenth century lakou system are key. Democratic governance and

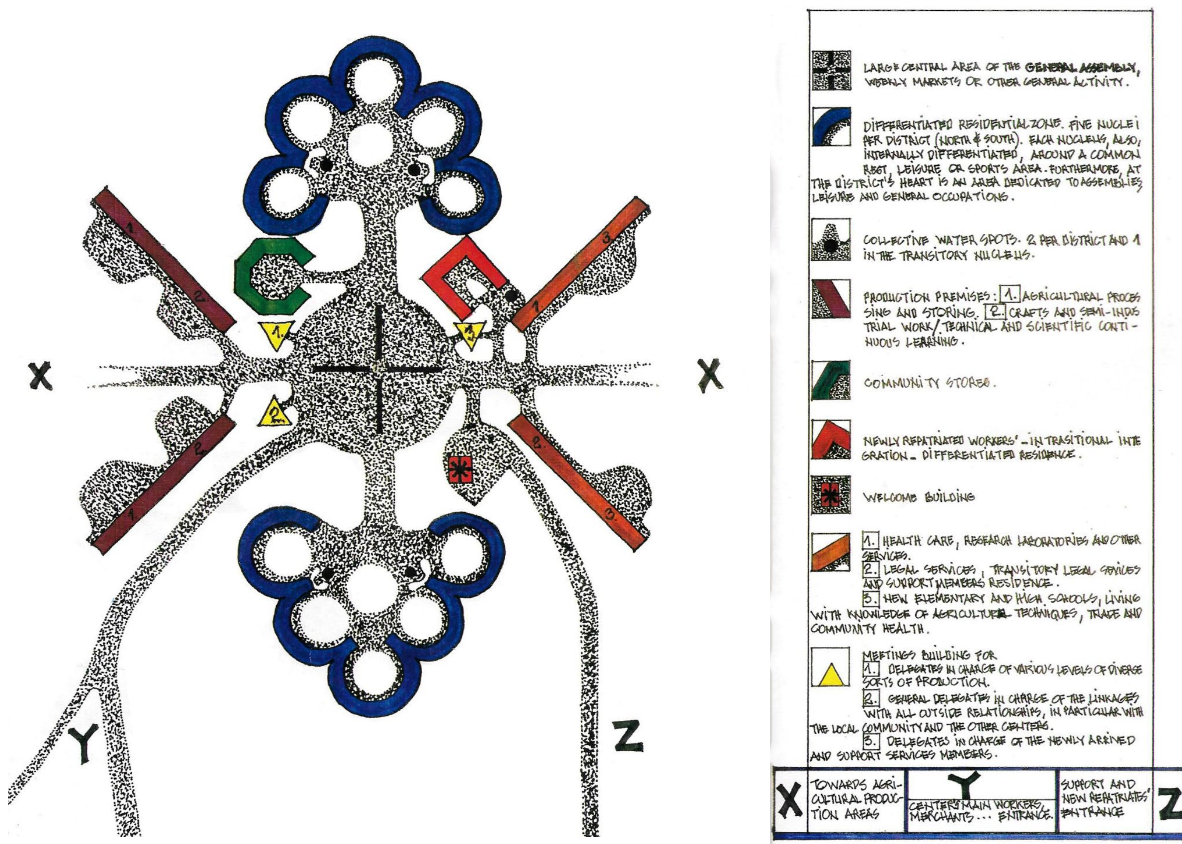

Figure 6-4 WRCH Program and site diagram with key (CRUT 1994)

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340 Didier Dominique in discussion with the author, July 30, 2018.

341 Désir, "Diasporic Lakou"; Beauvoir-Dominique and Dominique, "Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti," 22.

collective ownership—determined by sociopolitical solidarity rather than kinship ties—distinguished CRUT's WRCH and its ideologically socialist underpinnings from the lakou system. The proposal attempted to disaggregate the hierarchical outcomes of the private property model that structured the lakou system from its otherwise collaborative, quotidian practices. It is within the resolution of the residential zones of the WRCH proposal that the sympathies and conflicts between past and future forms of collective dwelling emerged.

CRUT offered three images of collective dwelling arranged along a rhetorical spectrum, leaving space open in blank lots for future ways of dwelling that they themselves could not foresee (Figure 6-5). The prototypes describe a range of living conditions, from highly communal living situations to independent spaces for individual families. Components common to rural Haitian houses are disposed on each plot: structures for sleeping and interior activities,

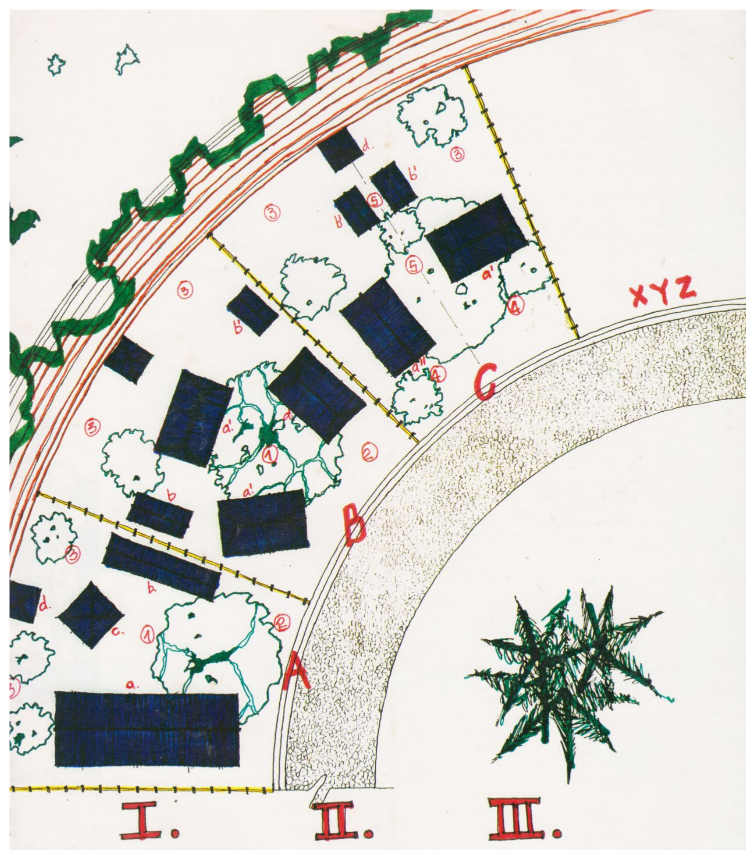

Figure 6-5 Three variations on perimeter residential lots of WRCH (CRUIT 1994)

kitchen facilities, yard space with trees, and sanitary facilities with latrines and showers. A section drawing shows how these program elements are sequenced to create a radial progression from collective to individual space on the site (Figure 6-6). A common open space planted with trees at the center of each residential cluster is separated by a path from the house and yard spaces, while private spaces for sanitation are located at the outer periphery. The CRUT proposal simultaneously visualizes the possibility of communal living in shared spaces and anticipates potential conflict between members of a family group in a cohabitating collective.

A legend states, the first residential option (A) is a collective accommodation for "the most conscious repatriates… [a]s well as those having smaller families (mainly bachelors)." Residents would occupy one of five private bedrooms arranged linearly and connected by an open-air gallery. In this arrangement, they would share outdoor, kitchen, and sanitary facilities. It is evident from the commentary that living in this manner was judged to be the fullest expression of the cooperative ideals of the center, though it best supports returning immigrants without spouses or children. In contrast, the third option (C) is explicitly planned for an independent family unit. The lot is divided in half lengthwise to accommodate two families with separate houses, yards, kitchens, and sanitary facilities. It is expected that larger families (six to eight members) or those whose "characteristics are the least close to the collective phase" would live in this setting.[342] Between these two options, the intermediate housing structure features three family houses arranged around a main yard and two kitchen facilities. This intermediate arrangement is most reminiscent of the historic lakou with multiple generations of an extended family living on a shared lot though with separate houses. Having one less kitchen than house indicates that food sharing or collaborative domestic work would occur in this setting. Though

[342] Beauvoir-Dominique and Dominique, "Workers Repatriation Center of Haiti," n.p. [7].

the first case of dormitory-like living is judged to be the most collective, the arrangement of the intermediate case—in which three families, regardless of kinship ties, share collective resources—appears to be most in line with preexisting models of collective dwelling in Haiti. Nonetheless, a contradiction between kinship and voluntary association is manifest in these three housing proposals. The potential for a new form of collective living is suggested in the blank lots (X, Y, and Z) where participants might invent new or hybrid spatial practices.

CRUT imagined a collective utopia in the WRCH as an act of resistance against persistent forces: dehumanization and alienation, imperialism, and migration, necropolitical violence and disenfranchisement. The WRCH and the lakou both foreground collective living as "critical spatial practices" within a Vodou metaphysics and a socialist politics. Membership in the WRCH meant relinquishing the pursuit of private property, as in the lakou system, on which

Figure 6-6 Section through residential lot of WRCH (CRUT 1994)

to establish a household and create an inheritance. Purchasing property was and continues to be a challenging or prohibitive undertaking for many Haitians in a polarized economy. Instead of inheritance, the WRCH depends on an extensive education and economic program, which is not inherently attached to a particular physical environment, even though its intended outcomes are

implied in the physical plan. A reader can imagine both the possible realization and failures of the WRCH. In any case, the proposal does create an opportunity to imagine the world otherwise. CRUT's image of collective dwelling did not depend on a romantic idea of return to a mythical past of harmonic kinship groups. Instead, the WRCH sketches out a place and a process that begin to heal the accumulated damages and ruptures among Haitians and their land. The built environment cannot repair social relationships, but the collectivity rhetorically centered in these spatial practices offers, at least, a dream of repatriation that moves the impossible into the realm of the imaginable. If what is at stake in collective dwelling is emancipation from systems of oppression, integration, and transformation through supportive relationships, then the provisional hypothesis of utopia is an important act of inventing space in visual and verbal dialogue.

Tombs

CRUT's proposal for a repatriation center responded to the gravity and complexity of issuing a call for Haiti's large diasporic population to return at a turning-point in Haiti's history. The document visualizes possible futures for homeplaces that would care for the social, economic, psychic, and political challenges facing migrants and refugees in their home country. Its authors imagined a space and a process that would support the return of the living, but the structures built for the final homecoming are the closing image of lakay to be treated in this chapter. Houses for the dead anchor families to ancestral lands and surface assumptions about the construction and maintenance of homeplace and belonging. Often marked by a cross–both a literal and syncretic kalfou--tombs and mausoleums where the deceased are buried materially manifest the intersections between the living and the dead, between families and ancestors.

In a conversation with a senior scholar in Haitian studies who, on learning that I was conducting field research in Leyogann, excitedly informed me that he was moun Leyogann (a

person from Leyogann) and that he would be buried there. These two declarations were sequential and interdependent. Despite being a long-term resident in the U.S., his lakay, the place where he belonged, was without question Leyogann. The strength of his attachment to the land of his ancestors and his spiritual home was evidenced by his projected future permanent dwelling there in death. As seen in the central cemetery at Gran Lakou, tombs and mausoleums for ancestors both mark and fix family land. Not only are tombs sited in proximity to homes in rural Haiti, but they also often share formal characteristics. Funerary architecture creates a remarkably stable physical link between people and place and communicates information about the identity and status of the deceased and their family in ways similar to domestic architecture. The networked relationship of owning and belonging transcends the threshold between life and death in tombs and mausoleums.

Reading tombs as houses for the dead highlights the abstract connection between dwelling in death as in life, which takes on a special significance in Haiti. Now and again this parallel is made explicit when tombs and mausoleums are rendered quite literally as houses. During a conversation, Lewis Clorméus, a sociologist, showed me a photograph on his phone of a tomb that he had seen near his family home in the Grandans, which was decorated like a miniature house with doors and windows painted on its sides. The roof was pitched and painted a dark brown, mimicking that of a traditional house. More common than literal representations of houses such as this are metaphoric comparisons between tombs and houses in texts, especially in descriptions by foreigners, which often carry condescending overtones. In two accounts of cemeteries in Pòtoprens, journalists compared the form of tombs and mausoleums to houses of the well to do. In a sensationalist report on grave robbing from 1994, one Associated Press

journalist noted that “some look like fancy cottages.”[343] Following the 2010 earthquake, journalist Ed Pilkington reiterated this view, describing the tombs and mausoleums of the large cemetery in downtown Pòtoprens as “miniature suburban houses.”[344] Built in concrete block and decorated with tile and decorative metal screens or gates, there are formal and material commonalities between contemporary house building and funerary architecture, particularly large mausoleums. At the same time, the journalistic attention to the house-like qualities of the tombs in Pòtoprens’ dense cemeteries also highlight class differences in housing quality. The funerary structures reminded these authors of “fancy cottages” and “suburban houses,” characteristics of which contrast sharply with the meager size and inadequacy of the houses of people in the lower classes. There is a patronizing element to these international observations about the quality and expense of funerary versus domestic architecture, which echo classed judgments about how and where impoverished people spend money at the same time as they point to a real conflict in economic priorities.

A person may be able to project a higher socioeconomic status in funerary architecture than in the quotidian architecture of their daily life or, more accurately, their family can invest in

Figure 6-7 Laundry drying on tombs outside of Okay (2012)

[343] “Rampant Grave Robbing Is Latest Haitian Horror.”
[344] Pilkington, “No Room in the Cemetery for Haiti Dead.”

a monument that projects an appearance of permanence and security. There are serious financial implications to this practice. Researching in the Cul-de-Sac plains northeast of Pòtoprens in the 1970s, anthropologist Gerald Murray learned that masons were charging between 200 and 400 US dollars to build a typical tomb and that the cost of tomb construction outpaced the cost of the cottages that many peasants in the region occupied.[345] Such a divergence in the cost of daily life and funerary rites put a major strain on families. Financing large and expensive tombs is often expected of family members working abroad and therefore out of scale with local incomes.[346] Financial and logistical burdens may cause burials to be delayed, but by its nature there is more urgency to pay for and construct tombs or mausoleums to commemorate a life lived than there is for an improved house or an addition that anticipates the future. The symbolic function of funerary architecture thus outweighs the pragmatic function of domestic architecture. While technically occupied by the deceased, tombs and mausoleums are perceived from the exterior; therefore, attention and budget can be given over entirely to materials, exterior finishes, painting, wrought iron, and decorative elements to create an outward-facing image of well-being.

The aspect of funerary architecture in the rural south of Haiti that first drew my attention was their integration into the environment of the household and their use in everyday activities such as drying laundry or corn (Figure 6-7). In 2012, I traveled to the southern peninsula with a colleague to visit his family home. As we drove through the plains outside Okay, I watched small houses, aid shelters, and tombs painted in bright pastels flash by, interspersed with the fresh green of rice and vetiver fields. The scales of houses, shelters, and tombs that were visible from the road were all somewhat comparable. The smallest tombs sat above ground, slightly larger than the coffin sealed inside them, whereas mausoleums could be three to four meters (nine to

[345] Murray, "Population Pressure, Land Tenure and Voodoo: The Economics of Haitian Peasant Ritual," 301–2, 315.
[346] Richman, "Mortuary Rites and Social Dramas in Léogâne, Haiti," 144.

twelve feet) long and/or wide, large enough to fit one or more tombs. Many had tall vertical profile walls at the head of the tomb. A few had partial or incomplete roofs.

The quotidian integration of the tomb within an occupied habitat is more common in rural areas than in in higher-density residential zones. Many forces may lead to increased use of cemeteries for burial and family abroad die and may or may not repatriate their remains. If the tomb was one physical marker of a family's ancestors and an anchor of the demanbre, what does it mean for genealogical habitats to become detached from the deceased? The daily interactions between generations become thin at the same time as for those displaced from *lakay mwen* (their home) because they live and work in the capital or abroad, funerary architecture physically marks a particular form of homeplace.

In Leyogann, the municipal cemetery on the edge of town was a quiet place most days (Figure 6-8). Periodically, a funeral procession would wind through the perpendicular grid of downtown en route to bury the deceased. The entrance to the cemetery is through a new, low,

Figure 6-8 View from inside of Leyogann cemetery (2018)

concrete boundary wall, across the street from a *taptap* station where a queue of pick-up trucks provides public transportation to the west. A sparsely ornamented pergola suggests an intention to establish a space in front of the cemetery, but the posts and beams cast meager shadows. While new tombs and mausoleums have been built and others repaired, evidence of the earthquake's damage remains in cracked and broken structures. Most of the mausoleums are marked with family names, though a few read "*à louer*" [for rent], meaning that a family could pay annual fees for access to a compartment inside the mausoleum. Land and construction continue to be a part of economic systems, despite the spiritual and emotional resonances of funerary rites and architecture. A person may be freed from bondage or class position in death, but their surviving families are not.

Any notion of stasis in funerary architecture is illusory; these structures and spaces continue to be part of ongoing events. Like the town and surrounding region, the cemetery in Leyogann was severely damaged by the 2010 earthquake. Almost two years later, anthropologist and writer Laura Wagner visited the cemetery at the beginning of November 2012 for *fèt gede*—a celebration of the Gede spirits who are intermediaries between life and death and saw that:

> The cemetery in Leyogann lies half on its side. So many of the tombs, in powdery whites, blues, pinks, and grays, collapsed on douz janvyè, in this seaside town twenty-nine kilometers from the capital, the epicenter of the quake. The master of the cemetery … shows me the vast, unmarked land where he buried the countless dead. It is now green and overgrown, swallowed up, and I murmur somewhat meaninglessly that the tropics have a short memory. Just beyond the mass grave, there are fields of sugarcane.[347]

Her reflexive observation that the tropical landscape has a short memory may have lost its meaning, but the fact that plants grow so quickly and building materials get broken down by

[347] Wagner, "Haiti Is a Sliding Land: Displacement, Community, and Humanitarianism in Post-Earthquake Port-Au-Prince," 420.

the hot and humid weather means that places like this mass grave rapidly fade into the landscape. To hold a physical mark in the landscape requires constant maintenance—homemaking.

My observations on funerary architecture in southern Haiti skim what is a deep topic, in part because it is a topic that is difficult to research—too close to beliefs and private family affairs, a potent encounter between the syncretic religious practices of many Haitians. Nevertheless, it is important to include funerary architecture in the frame of lakay because tombs and mausoleums raise fundamental questions about the temporal and physical location of bodies, and they make spiritual and metaphysical themes unavoidable. When I shared my curiosity about the tombs with my colleagues, they offered me a gentle and indirect caution. They recalled a young architect, a Haitian raised abroad, who had studied southern Haitian tombs some years ago, but he was stymied by people's responses. They said that, even though his family was from the region he was studying, people did not want to talk about tombs with him, or they gave him misleading or incomplete information. Years later, while conducting research with Bòs Thomas, I asked if he had ever built tombs. He laughed and said not anymore; "they are too small," and he is too busy with larger and more profitable projects. He then asked me: "Why do you ask?" I responded that I had read that Haitian masons had primarily been tomb builders prior to the popularity of concrete block construction and that I had heard that the orientation of tombs was determined by masons via some form of spiritual divination. He smiled and said I was asking better questions but gave me no answers.

These two responses from interlocutors signal the limits of certain forms of knowledge-making in relationship to burial and commemoration. Therefore, this section marks the role that graves have played in the domestic environment in rural, southern Haiti, and it gestures to the source of power in funerary architecture that exceeds the frame of scholarly research, at least in

my current study.[348] There are also aspects of mourning that should be left interred, undisturbed by the scholarly gaze.[349]

Conclusion

In closing, I offer the image of one last house. Angeline's house, across the street from the guest house where I stayed in Leyogann, grew from an empty lot and an idea into piles of sand and gravel, and finally into concrete block walls and a roof over the two years I stayed there (Figure 6-9). When I left in July 2018, the walls and roof had been constructed, but the house had not yet been plastered nor had doors and windows been installed. Rebar poked out of the roof and the porch platform, anticipating a connection point with stairs yet to be cast and a possible future second floor. Square columns with decorative capitals flanked a shallow porch and entrance to the living room, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms built out on the first floor. Part of the funding for this transformation came from Angeline's contract to prepare food for my

Figure 6-9 Angeline's new house awaiting finishes (Leyogann 2018)

[348] There is future work to be done systematically observing and comparing the ornamentation of tombs alongside the family histories of the deceased and their kin. In dialogue with religious studies scholars including those cited in this text, it should be possible to uncover more nuances about funerary rites and their manifestation in the construction of tombs and mausoleums.

[349] In her autoethnographic text *Nan Dòmi,* anthropologist and musician Mimerose Beaubrun returns often to the tension between her desire to know and to understand and the unknowable and unreachable *Ginen-an* that her teacher is guiding her to.

research partners and myself lodging in the guest house. For two summers, this increase in cash-flow from a U.S.-based research grant helped build the house she had dreamed of.

One afternoon, Angeline and I sat in the shade and watched her husband and other men pour the roof slab with bucket after bucket of concrete. The moment was sweet as we watched her dream home come together, although she confessed, she would have preferred a metal roof. The house may not be finished for several years, but just as hooks had been delighted by the possibilities of her grandmother's ever-expanding house, Angeline delighted in the future projected through the not yet complete structure. The unfinished houses like Angeline's that dot the plains of Leyogann gesture to stories of coming and going, accumulation and loss and, above all, a commitment to the construction of *lakay mwen* (my home).

It was also bittersweet for me to watch it being built as it would change the dynamic of the property where she and her family currently lived. A couple of minutes' walk from the site of this new house, through a cluster of houses and across an irrigation channel, Angeline lived in a ti kay handed down from her husband's family. Mature trees and flower bushes buffered her yard from the sun and dust and marked a calm and fresh space where she received a steady stream of neighbors and visitors including me. There we would sit on little chairs under the porch or in the moving shade and talk, watch, and listen.

This chapter has unpacked some of the ways in which the Haitian homeplace, the lakay, is established and maintained through networks of relationships among people, places, materials, and symbolism. Returning to the opening epigraph, "lakay se lakay" or home is home. Belonging to lakay operates at several scales, but across these scales it connects people to places, to one's homeland—be that a family plot or the country of one's parents. The relationship between

critical spatial practices of living and belonging to the place in question grounds any functioning definition of lakay.

Belonging is anchored by the formations of lakay, lakou, and tombs, each of which are physical manifestations of social relationships. The concept of homeplace is a potent analytic for these structures because it foregrounds the power of dreaming and realizing spaces or, as is being argued through the dissertation, to design. The imaginative potential of a self-determined future animates the construction and maintenance of homeplace. That belonging is established through two common Kreyòl phrases: *youn ak lòt* [one with another] and *nou la* [we are here]. Within the lakay we are *youn ak lòt,* situated and defined by our relationships with people. Performance studies scholar Mario LaMothe has commented on the plural construction of *nou la*: "We cherish the Kreyòl pronoun 'nou,' 'we' because the Haitian does not breathe, speak, walk, dance, love, mourn, or transition alone."[350] *Nou la,* a standard response to the question "How are you?" can be a statement of simple fact, "I'm here," but it is also an assertion of solidarity and persistence. Persistence in being and in being here.

[350] "Nou la, pi rèd" an assertion of presences and resistance also served as the conference theme for the Haitian Studies Association in 2020. LaMothe, "Our Love on Fire," 265.

Conclusion

The vernacular and creole languages—linguistic and architectural—used to produce the majority of the global built environment continue to be delegitimized as ways of knowing, building, and inhabiting by an architectural discipline centered in the global north. This dissertation has worked to recuperate these voices using ethnographic and archival research to study how contractors, architects, and other house builders communicate design ideas within and across social hierarchies. The analysis of quotidian building practices reveals more fluid models of relational design practices than those codified by the discipline of architecture, although misalignments between exigencies and policies continue to contribute to a broadly vulnerable built environment. The assemblage of cases here contributes to my theorization of Kreyòl architecture as a syncretic and embodied practice of home building which negotiates the transnational circulation of people, technologies, images, and materials.

My research centered peripheral practices, namely those of historically marginalized designers in Leyogann, Haiti. Leyogann is thirty-five kilometers outside the capital of Port-au-Prince and just a few kilometers from the active fault line that made it the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake. It is a peripheral site that is, in fact, central to understanding how we as a global society are encountering socioeconomic polarization, internal and transnational migration, and environmental disasters. In the aftermath of the earthquake, there were urgent calls to improve building standards since, as the saying went, "earthquakes don't kill people, buildings do." However, nearly ten years later, only a small percentage of people live, work, and study in significantly safer structures today than they did before the earthquake. Some of the most

vulnerable people displaced by the earthquake now live in worse conditions due to persistent fall-out from the disaster exacerbated by spiking inflation and government corruption. Nonetheless, there are—and have always been—a subset of tradespeople, contractors, engineers, and architects building well-engineered and well-executed structures who meet the challenges and demonstrate the potentials in residential construction. Instead of asking how to tell people how to build their houses, I ask *how* do people design their houses?

During eighteen months of fieldwork, I observed house builders operating across languages—spoken, aesthetic, and technical—that drew on global and diasporic experiences. I analyzed communication as the performative medium of an architecture practiced by people including—but hardly limited to—pedigreed architects. Hierarchies of power and privilege were signified among the different house builders that I observed—architects, engineers, contractors, homeowners, government, and non-governmental agencies—through language and aesthetics. Across these divisions, people enact a Kreyòl architecture which, like the language, is syncretic and dynamic. It is formed and reformed in dialogue with people, with their hopes and dreams, with their land and materials.

The formulation of my research project to investigate how people communicate design ideas from one to the other intentionally sidesteps a classification of elite residential building as "Architecture" to the exclusion of the rest. Rather, I explore how design is a set of activities engaged by architects, architect-engineers, contractors, clients, NGOs, and truly anyone with a stake in producing the built environment. In the analytical tradition of Henri Lefebvre, people produce space through social relationships and activities.[351] This pluripotent project aims to contribute to contemporary scholarship on the history and theory of the architecture profession,

[351] Lefebvre, *La Production de l'Espace*.

global history especially archipelagic histories of the built environment in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, and urban geography and anthropology in Haiti. Studying communicative practices of design in Haiti sits in a peripheral relationship with existing and growing scholarship on the history of the architectural profession focused thus far on the United States analyzing the significant effort made to create and maintain boundaries between experts and non-experts, "gentlemen" and laborers.[352] Methodologically and geographically this study expands the edges of who, where, and how architects practice. This interlocks with an expectation that my work will contribute an egregiously overlooked, decontextualized, and dehistoricized site to global histories of architecture. And finally, this work complicates theorization about the built environment in Haiti. Instead of treating unregulated building as un-authored and chaotic environmental force (see the popularity of *anarchie* as an adjective in urban planning texts and practices), I offer a method for beginning with agents of design and assuming rational action in order to, eventually, conceive of systemic interventions.

The first chapter is guided by the question of what a Haitian architecture is, and, beneath that, what is the significance of its not having been historicized. To trace a historiography with a dearth of written histories, I collected visual, written, and oral narratives that were available. These narratives organize around some recognizable images of Haitian residential architecture that I categorize as the ti kay, the gingerbread, tropical modernism, and quotidian modernisms. These housing types are neither fixed nor absolute and future work could and should investigate the commonalities and gradations between them. Shared patrimony has been obscured by the

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[352] Arredondo, "The Making of Elite Architects in Mexico During the Twentieth Century"; Bailey, *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire*; Blau, *Architects and Firms*; Deamer, *The Architect as Worker*; Gutman, *Architecture from the Outside In*; Hurx, *Architecture as Profession*; Johnston, *Drafting Culture*; Norwood, "PLATFORM"; Pai, *The Portfolio and the Diagram*; Woods, *From Craft to Profession*.

overdetermined association of design with class position, urban and rural settings, and material palettes.

Some of the gaps and false dichotomies within the historiography of Haitian architecture may relate to the limitations of the profession in Haiti—and elsewhere. Therefore, the second chapter attends to the struggle to reconcile ideals of the profession to contribute to social good with economic pragmatism that privileges the desires of a moneyed clientele. In the professional organization and in university programs, explicit and implicit claims are made for a humanistic project of architecture, but they are not yet integrated or resolved with daily practice. This unresolved tension is intimated in documents across the twentieth century and continues in contemporary debates about the formation and regulation of the profession.

Moving outside of the center, Chapter Three follows an alternate route in the independent practices of Leyogann distanced from disciplinary debates and engaged in pragmatic valuations of their work. Architects and non-architects, alike, recognize the central activity of architecture as making plans. Drawing plans, and being strategic about the resolution of those plans, is a significant part of the activities of the architects featured in this chapter. I observed a practice integrated with building—and still financially unstable. Though removed from the disciplinary debates in the capital, interlocutors worked against perceptions of architecture as a luxury or optional expense and argued for the value of their services in terms of planning. Drawn floor plans represent a labor of imagination and consideration of social norms, construction contingencies, and the quality of space.

Design in the fourth chapter on the practice of bòsmason has less to do with the conception of space and more to do with the resolution of space within tacitly accepted norms. Bòs Thomas also draws floor plans and as instructions for himself they were very simple. The

details of execution were laminated in by him through gesture and conversation with workers on site. The translation and really completion of the design in place is what I term in situ design, which depends upon expertise. Bòsmason and builders are local producers of architecture, but as this case demonstrated migration and experience working with other professionals results in creolized building practices informed by global assemblages.

International entanglements are forefront in Chapter Five which analyzes the design of a post-earthquake settlement in a sufficiently long timeframe to see both the international NGO and eventual residents as designers expressing their ideas about shelter and home in Vilaj Abita. Miscommunication and misaligned valuations undermined an effort on the part of Habitat for Humanity (HfH) to build a community. Whether it is possible for an external organization to ever build a community which it is fundamentally not a part of is a question for further reflection. What is apparent in Abita is that the inadequacy of shelters for people's livelihoods aligned with an international attitude towards Haitians as deserving of a bare minimum—a racialized image of bare life. Nevertheless, in the years since HfH departed some residents have domesticated these structures and made them fit—at least incrementally better—their lives.

The final chapter moves away from the constructive act of design to inquire into what and how homes mean in Haitian culture. Beyond pragmatics of shelter, the design of houses elicits strong reactions because they integrate, often implicitly, symbolic registers of communication about social identity and position. Home or lakay is established through belonging. Multiscalar relationships between land and people frame theorizations of domestic space in Haiti including the lakou. A profoundly complex concept grounded in Vodou metaphysics and Haitian independence, this chapter again assembles images, descriptions, and analysis of lakou by architects, anthropologists, geographers, historians, and inhabitants to

survey potentials and contradictions. This chapter connects architecture back to the act of resistance that survival was and is in a necropolitical system that devalues Black life. Building homes is intimately connected to imagining the future of oneself and one's family. Designing may be, at the end, envisioning a place in the future.

This dissertation which is a first small gesture to open ambitious themes and questions that could occupy several scholars' careers, nevertheless, does something. I do this rasanblaj—this gathering together of diverse voices and places—to make a claim that there is a Kreyòl architecture and it is part of a poetics of relation. Kreyòl architecture exists in communication between people and is realized in communal relationships between people places.

Future Directions

I expect that the work of this dissertation—both the fieldwork and the writing—will feed into on-going projects. The ethnographic work at the center of the dissertation is the beginning of a monograph I plan to write which develops the concept of concept of Kreyòl architecture as a practice of dialogue and exchange with similarities to linguistic and literary processes of creolization. Kreyòl architecture is both rooted in Haiti and a product of transnational circulation of people, technologies, images, and materials. By situating my dissertation research on the design and construction of houses in Léogâne within broader regional and historical contexts, this text will explore the intimate desires, global influences, and collective politics of residential architecture.

The first dissertation chapter serves as a framework or guide to preparing a history of twentieth century architecture in Haiti. It has mapped out presences and absences, flagged conflicting narratives to be explored. When the political and public health situations permit, I look forward to continuing this work in the archives of the national heritage organization, Institut

de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National (ISPAN). I know that these archives include preservation plans for major monuments, but interlocuters recall a few unpublished thesis and studies of vernacular architecture being deposited with ISPAN which I hope to find. These materials should offer deeper historical insight and documentation of residential architecture in Haiti during the twentieth century. As I discussed in chapter one, the archive of the Haitian built environment must be construed broadly and draw on archives like ISPANs which are in the process of indexing and document stabilization but also oral histories of practitioners and professors and personal papers.

As a first step towards assembling a history of Haitian architecture, I plan to edit a volume focused on nineteenth and twentieth century architecture and urbanism provisionally titled, *Haitian Architecture in Rasanblaj*. Rasanblaj provides a framework for a polyvocal history which gathers a wealth of dispersed and largely unpublished knowledge about post-revolutionary architecture in Haiti into a widely accessible format. In addition to my own contributions on housing in the twentieth century, I will be soliciting chapters from elder architects and urbanists in Haiti, mid-career Haitian academics, and an emerging cohort of junior scholars based primarily in North America including historians, geographers, urban planning and architecture scholars. Substantial primary documents from personal collections and from the ISPAN archives will be interpreted by the international cohort of scholars within a global history framework to offer complex narratives of buildings in Haiti as part of transnational exchanges of culture, technology, politics, and capital. The collective nature of this project means that this published historical survey of Haitian architecture will reflect in form and content the diversity of perspectives within Haiti's national identity that contribute to its syncretic building culture.

Building upon this project I plan to conduct new ethnographic fieldwork with in Haitian diasporic enclaves in the United States to extend the transnational design narratives that I began observing from Léogâne. Immigrants living abroad are a major source of remittances that may be used for construction and overseas commissions are significant drivers of construction. The ways in which internal and international migration influence home building pertains not just to the Haitian diaspora but across the Americas.[353] During dissertation fieldwork I was not able to observe client-builder communication, particularly because several of the projects I observed were commissioned by clients in the United States and Guadalupe. This means that there is a gap in Chapters Two and Three which this new project would address. Interviews and participant-observation with Haitians from Léogâne living in the United States who are financing construction in their hometowns could fill this gap while elucidating details about the transnational diffusion of design and construction ideas.

This dissertation leaves me with more questions than I began with and suggests several avenues for future research and collaborations. The history of construction materials from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries in Haiti, particularly in response to global politics or economics and local disasters, begs investigation. In response to earthquake and fires, but also lumber prices and deforestation, the construction of Pòtoprens and other regional cities shifts between stone, wood, and masonry systems. Comparative work on the uptake of cement and concrete in neocolonial states including Haiti and the Philippines would also be interesting.[354] I would like to engage in or support more in depth comparative and descriptive work on "traditional" rural typologies to use and extend extant surveys from the last fifty years by

[353] This has been shown in the case of Mexican-US communities by Sara Lopez in *The Remittance Landscape* and more broadly in post-war US migrant communities in Lozanovska, *Migrant Housing*; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.
[354] Martinez, "Concrete Colonialism"; Payton, *And We Will Be Devoured: Construction, Destruction, and Dictatorship in Haiti*.

Haitians and foreign researchers.[355] My work has been centered in the Ouest department and focused on social and discursive practices. Archeological and historic preservation techniques could add relevant information about how material and form have changed over time. The second chapter on architectural institutions in Pòtoprens points towards the need for historicization of the profession in Haiti. Such a history should systematically collect oral histories of living architects and assemble institutional archives for AIAH, CNIAH, and UEH.[356] It is also interesting to think through media studies methods to consider an expanded realm of architectural representation to include paintings, photographs, artisanal object, music videos, and literature. Popular media may offer a methodological avenue to construct a more complete narrative the Haitian built environment across silenced periods and obscured places.

An underlying argument of this dissertation is that architecture as a discipline has marginalized and suppressed the critical and omnipresent agency of people (including architects). People design architecture and the architecture that they design—and build—reflects their social and material contexts. Despite the seeming banality of this argument which has been put forth many times before, the centrality of people, be they builders, architects, engineers, homemakers, or residents, to the construction of the built environment is not yet central to the research, teaching, or practice of architecture. Understanding how architects, engineers, contractors, and residents in Leyogann conceive of houses and how they communicate their priorities may make it possible to imagine changes to architecture, construction technology,

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[355] Sources include Millet, "Arquitectura Haitiana"; Vlach, "Sources of the Shotgun House: African and Caribbean Antecedents for Afro-American Architecture. (Volumes I and II)." In addition, a number of small investigations have been undertaken by students in Haiti, the United States, and Canada (that I have identified) and could contribute to geographic and temporal breadth.

[356] There are likely archival challenges from at minimum the fact that ISPAN and the Faculté de Science buildings were both destroyed in the earthquake.

urban and regional planning, and financing that might begin to support, instead of undercut, individual and community efforts to improve their environments.

While contextually specific to the Caribbean, the creolization of communicative practices in design contributes to our understanding of the built environment as produced by the uniquely local constructions of global flows of knowledge. My study elides typical categorizations of style or program to legitimate the design practices of people historically excluded from, or marginalized within, the disciplinary bounds of architecture. In turn, I hope to contribute a new perspective to theorizations of creolization based not just in language but in embodied building practices and spatial realities. I hope that my research contributes a new perspective to challenge the dominance of white supremacy in the field of architecture, but also to elucidate the fraught relational activities of design and their concrete relevance to Haitian studies, NGO studies, and the anthropology of design.

I understand myself as collaborating with colleagues in Haiti and North America in a multi-disciplinary project to ameliorate the under-representation and devaluation of Haitian knowledge that has reinforced the dominance of foreign expertise in post-disaster and development interventions. Haiti is often erroneously taken as an exception, but polarized vulnerability to disaster is an increasingly global trend visible in extreme ways here. The nuanced study of quotidian building practices offers a perspective from which practitioners and theoreticians can align themselves to respond more inclusively to the onslaught of climactic and political crisis facing the world.

Because I too hope to see the “talents and fervor of the architects of Haiti” and of the US and of the world mobilized to build societies in right relationship with the environment and each other, I close with an extended quote from architect Albert Mangonès. The unity he foresaw has

not yet come to pass and was violently interrupted just a couple of years after he wrote this in 1992:

> From the great tumult of confrontations which the nation is living today, I remain convinced that there is already emerging, under our eyes perhaps, even though they may not see it, the breakthrough of a profound rallying movement which initiates, through hardships, bitterness, and trial and error, the dawning of a unity unheard of in the history of the Haitian people. To the gestating society which thus announces itself, an architecture for women and men in the apprenticeship of liberty is necessary, an architecture more open to a rehabilitated nature, an architecture stripped of the flashy rags of false comfort, an architecture which will base itself on the search for a more intimate integration of the yard space and the family habitat as shelter for the welcoming functions of the group. It is around such a project that one hopes to see mobilized the talents and the fervor of the architects of Haiti.[357]

[357] Mangonès, "Architecture in Question," 1992, 848.

Appendix

Library & Archives Accessed

BLD	Bibliyotèk Lespwa (Dabòn)
BNH	Bibliothèque Nationale d'Haïti
BFLG	Bibliothèque de Saint-Louis De Gonzague
BMBL	Bibliothèque Marie Bonheurese Léogâne
SCHM	Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture Herskovits, Melville J. (1895-1963) and Frances S. (1898-1972). Papers, 1882-1972.
HRVD	Houghton Library, Harvard University W. Cameron Forbes Additional Papers, 1904-1931 (MS Am 1192-1192.13).

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