

Re-Visioning Black Urbanism and The Production Of Space

This Is Not A Gateway Post-Salon Essay

Paul Goodwin and John Oduro in conversation

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Essay: 30th June 2008

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INTRODUCTION

This 'in-conversation' between Paul Goodwin and John Oduro was commissioned by This Is Not A Gateway (TINAG) to explore the key questions and ideas raised during the TINAG Salon 'Re-Visioning Black Urbanism and The Production of Space'. The Salon was held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London on the 25 February 2008. The Nash Room was at capacity. This 75+ audience were as critical to the success as the multi-disciplinary speakers assembled.

TINAG was also delighted to support the launch of John and Paul's partnership *Office of Metropolitan Alternatives (OFFICE/MA)*. John is a Fulbright Scholar and London based practicing architect. Paul is a Curator of Cross Cultural Programmes at Tate Britain and a visiting research fellow at Goldsmiths College. Their project is dedicated to exploring alternative narratives between the production of urban space and minority peoples.

TINAG is compelled to undertake inter-disciplinary an approach when discussing and investigating the agents at work in our cities – particularly those that are not immediately considered or recognized in official circuits. This pursuit – to bring people together, to share their insight and experience, from a range of perspectives – is a result of a driving curiosity to know more, a lot more about cities. There is a growing sense of urgency to unearth and to develop new knowledge as cities are quickly becoming home to the vast majority of us across the globe. 'Black Urbanism' and its surrounding debates and discourses are certainly not 'main stream' ideas ... yet. It is our ambition that through this 'in-conversation' TINAG and Office M/A can make a small but worthwhile contribution to this much needed discussion. The ideas, highlighted here by John & Paul have a great deal of potential to re-shape the physical production of space as well as furthering a worthwhile body of knowledge.

IN CONVERSATION

This salon was prefaced by the following set of questions:

- *'At this time of rapid growth and transformation of cities, how are black artists, architects, cultural workers and urban practitioners re-thinking and re-visioning the process of change and the creation of new urban spaces, real or imagined?*
- *Black cultures have been active agents shaping the form and function of cities across Europe. How are past contributions understood and misunderstood?*
- *How can Black Urbanism be read in the fabric of the built environment and in the shape of public and civic spaces?*
- *How is black urbanism being implemented today; formally within urban & regeneration policy and independently by communities and individual practitioners?*
- *How can architecture and urbanism engage constructively with 'otherness' and 'difference' within the fabric and wider morphology of cities?*
- *Can or should 'Black Urbanism' be built?'*

JOHN: The first question we should probably deal with...the question we're probably asked most often...

PAUL: What exactly is Black Urbanism?

JOHN: Exactly. I guess in my mind, I believe that Black Urbanism is an emerging discourse on how notions of 'blackness' or difference can offer new and perhaps overlooked understandings of the form and function of the contemporary city. Blackness in its various forms is a cultural formation that was initially born out of the African Diaspora, but through time and travel, it has expanded to signify more than simply racial or ethnic boundaries. Blackness, in many ways, has come to represent an alternative to mainstream modes of living within cities. Whether through hip-hop culture, or the sensibilities typified by the jazz age, many individuals worldwide identify with blackness in order to find new ways of exploring and experiencing urban life.

PAUL: I agree. Blackness has come to be a meta-signifier for difference in the urban environment. There has been a long history of the appropriation of black culture by other cultures. At this current phase of appropriation taking place in the age of international media and globalisation, this means that blackness as a cultural signifier is refracted across many

different surfaces: music, dance, food, fashion, art, language. We want to explore the ways in which blackness is in dialogue with architecture and urbanism in this theoretical context.

JOHN: The relationship of ethnicity and race to the development of urbanism seems to be a under researched topic. Much of the work exploring the impact of minorities on the production of urban space has generally been framed by racism/anti-racism discourses. While this is incredibly important research, it's not the whole of the story. There is a lot to be learned from the subjective experiences of people productively occupying the margins of urban space.

I thought Munira Murza [in the course of the salon discussion] made a very relevant point when she asked: 'if black urbanism exists, then what is white urbanism? I think that white urbanism is urbanism, as we generally understand the discipline, as it is taught and discussed in universities world over. What I believe to be crucially important is that this knowledge is generally based on white western male cultural subjectivities that have been rendered invisible. We accept most of this knowledge as rational and universally applicable while rarely interrogating the hidden biases and cultural assumptions that may exist. It's kind of a hegemonic form of urbanism.

PAUL: Modernist architects such as Le Corbusier have long been obsessed with the literal and figurative aesthetic qualities of whiteness. Whiteness has long been associated in the architectural imagination with qualities of purity, cleanliness and order. By contrast, blackness has been associated with the opposite: disorder, and danger. Arguably, this was played out in the colonial context where colonial spaces were literally designed with gleaming white buildings to alienate the non-white natives. Whiteness and its relationship with blackness has always been just under the surface of thinking, writing and making architecture. It forms a large part of the architecture unconscious. Black urbanism can be a way of beginning to explore those unnamed territories.

JOHN: And this is where Office MA comes into play.

PAUL: Exactly. Office MA will serve as a platform for exploring the relationships between minority cultural groups and the form and function of urban space. We are interested in the multiplicity of cultural formations existing within the African Diaspora and how these groups are in dialogue with the other peoples and cultures co-existing within the western city. With Office MA, we are trying to move from theory to practice. Or rather, we're trying to set up a space where theories or ideas regarding Black Urbanism can be tested, considered and researched within the context of real world spaces.

JOHN: We're kind of a cross between a think tank, design practice, and artists collaborative. The hub of our activity will occur on our website OfficeMA.org. It will serve as a space for debate, a site to showcase new ideas, and home to a kind of online archive of data of visual, audio and written material that, in our minds, exemplify aspects of Black Urbanism. We hope architects, and urbanists interested in these kinds of issues might use the site as a resource in their design work.

THE DISCUSSION

The event was organised by This Is Not A Gateway as an open discussion between Paul and John, and four invited speakers; photographer Rehan Jamil; David Ubaka, Assistant Director for London; Andrey Philips, Director of Curating Architecture at Goldsmiths College; and Karen Woodley, the Chief Executive of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust. Trenton Oldfield, Coordinator of This Is Not A Gateway, chaired the salon. The participants were selected to offer a broad range of both theoretical and practical perspectives on questions related to the Black Urbanism project. Each was asked to present 'real world' projects to illustrate their positions and the audience was invited to offer comments and questions.

PAUL: I began the event by tracing the evolution of my thinking on Black Urbanism. I discussed my involvement with the housing protests movement of West African immigrants in Paris during the early '90s. These immigrants became politicised through a number of brutal expulsions from gentrified housing in the eastern part of Paris. In response to these actions, they occupied public spaces, set up tent cities, and recreations of African villages in public space in the heart of Paris. These protests galvanised a number of other movements and started a national homeless awareness movement that has since become international.

The dominant mode of understanding what was happening in those movements was that this was the emergence of a new ghetto. The site of black African families occupying public space in Paris caused mass panic and provoked a public debate about the fear of the importing the American style black ghetto into France.

JOHN: I found this very interesting, but I kept asking myself: what makes this special? There are tent cities and refugee situations all over the world. Was there something special about this one beyond the ethnicity of the occupants?

PAUL: This wasn't simply a collection homeless protesters or anarchist squatters; these were Africans living their life as if they were in a village back home. What astounded me was the reaction of the media to what was described as a non-French alien presence. The only lens they seemed to be able to view these events through was the framework of the negative ghetto. But for me, I saw these movements as a way of re-framing the image of Paris. They revealed the existence of alternative ways of living or inhabiting the city that were previously invisible, and they challenged French social and spatial norms regarding housing and cultural assimilation.

Fast-forward 15 years later, in New Orleans and the tragic situation that occurred in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This event revealed a similar dialectic of invisibility and the struggle for survival in black urban communities. I attended a conference in New York that discussed how we might rebuild New Orleans. What was significant about the conference was that it was organised by the department of Jazz Studies. The idea was to have the input of jazz artists, bluesmen, architects, etc... to find solutions drawing on aspects of black creativity. I found this to be a powerful way of thinking urbanism.

JOHN: In my own work as an architect, I've been thinking about similar questions—i.e. the link between black creativity and the production of space—well before I knew you Paul, or had heard the term Black Urbanism.

As a student in architecture school I often found design inspiration by exploring the culture of minority groups and marginalised people. My presentation focused on one example of this practice: the design of a performing arts centre in Tennessee that was heavily influenced by an exploration into the form and culture Break Dancing. By mapping the movement of a break dancer (b-boy) captured on 30 seconds of video, I sought to diagram the shape of the space he occupied through time. I was hoping to find a form that might spatially express the kind of tension created by the break dancer's movement. The b-boy is continually re-assigning which parts of his body come in contact with the ground, and in the process, constantly inventing relationships between his body and the landscape beneath him. He scrambles on his feet, jumps on his hands, spins on his head, bounces on his bottom. Sometimes he physically lifts himself off the ground and tenuously freezes himself in mid air.

PAUL: I imagine that, in the midst of one these freezes, the viewer is afforded a rare moment of stillness; a 'pause' allowing him to comprehend exactly how the break dancer arrived at this position, while simultaneously anticipating when the moment will end and what the dancer might do next.

JOHN: Yes. I've been enthralled by this playful manipulation of the viewer's sense of time and space. Could my performing art's centre offer a similar experience I wondered? This question led me into a broader exploration of the 'performance tactics' used by the break dancer. I became particularly interested in how the break dancer appropriates utilises public space, in particular use of a flattened cardboard box to delimit the space upon which the b-boy performed. In addition to the practical benefit of protecting the b-boy to from the pavement, the box more importantly ensures that the b-boy can occupy just about any space, at any time. This flexibility allows the b-boy to again, constantly improvise new relationships to the city.

PAUL: So in a way, these initial explorations into break dancing lead you to broader issues regarding public space?

JOHN: Right. What can the tactics used by the break dancer's (and others like him), tell us about public space? Perhaps more importantly, this initial exploration drew out several key questions that continue to stay with me now. How do I translate this kind of experience, which may not immediately appear to be architectural, into a spatial language that uses mass, light, texture, surface quality, function, and construction as its vocabulary? How important is it that people see

the original references to break dancing in my final design; or more generally, what are the implications when the legibility of the object's initial source of inspiration, or its "blackness" begins to disappear?

PAUL: This is a crucial question – this idea of where 'blackness' begins and ends in the process of design – that I think we are both still working through. It relates also to the broader question which came up several times in the course of the salon, of exactly what do we mean by 'blackness' and to what extent are we speaking about a form of architecture and urbanism that is based exclusively on

the Black or African diasporic experience or something that is more universal. On reflection, I think that this tension that runs through the very idea of Black Urbanism can be a fertile source of ideas, reflection and research. In my opinion blackness is a much more flexible and elastic concept than the way it is usually deployed in urban discourse. For example, there is a very specific history of blackness here in the UK that has been politically articulated to include the Asian experience. This is one of the reasons why we wanted to invite Rehan Jamil to the salon so that the dynamics of what is happening in so-called 'Muslim' or 'Asian' urban spaces are also brought into the discussion.

REHAN JAMIL

JOHN: Rehan presented his ten year photographic study of the East London Mosque Project. The development of the mosque has a fascinating 80 year history and demonstrates a prime example of minority community-led initiative within the built environment. In the 1990's as the final phase of the mosque began, a developer also set its eyes on an adjacent property and a stand-off with the London Borough of Hackney began. Eventually, the Muslim community was given planning permission and the construction of the extension proceeded. It was around this time that Rehan began his photographic study – with the aim of documenting the complexity within the Muslim community.

During the debate, Rehan characterised the architecture of the mosque as an imposing island in the heart of East London. He wondered how open the mosque presented itself as a public space. Could it have included a coffee shop or other public facilities in open to all members of the local community to congregate in its concourses? He cited a similar space in the West London mosque as a functioning example of a mosque that used open public space to draw in and engage with non-Muslim members of the population. Rehan also expressed disappointment in the mosque's extremely conservative design claiming that a mosque does not require a minaret, nor dome, in order to be a functioning religious space. Why wasn't there an international design competition, he asks, sitting this failure as another missed opportunity to open up the space of the mosque to a wider audience.

PAUL: Rehan's point ties in very well with one of the most important aspects of black urbanism that needs to be discussed: the relation between ethnicity, culture and urban space. There is a danger that black urbanism can be interpreted as advocating an 'ethnicised' conception of architecture; in other words, black buildings for black people and Muslim buildings for Muslim people; a kind of closing of public spaces around essentialist notions of culture. I think a clear consensus emerged from the discussion that black urbanism is a much more complex formulation that is about opening up the city and its public spaces to cross-cultural and global dialogue. After all, places like Whitechapel, Peckham or Southall are extremely diverse, contrary to their image as 'ghettos' in the media. These spaces are shaped by the logics of global diasporas. Diasporic spaces tend to be characterised by multiple flows of different cultures, dialects and regions.

DAVID UBAKA

JOHN: The next presentation of the evening came from David Ubaka, an architect and assistant director of Design for London, the architecture and planning office for the Greater London Authority.

PAUL: We selected David to offer a policy oriented perspective on Black Urbanism. We wanted someone with practical experience to engage with our more experimental ideas. We wondered, how receptive might a public official dealing with regeneration in London be to the alternative perspectives we've been developing.

JOHN: David gave a sense of what this official response might be in the preface to his presentation when he stated that the Greater London Authority believes that whatever is done in the development of London spaces, must be done for the people who pay their council tax. He demonstrated his commitment to this principle by describing a series of projects being pushed forward by Design for London.

I found myself particularly interested in his description of the Tate Gardens/Windrush Square Redevelopment Project in Brixton, a neighbourhood long regarded as centre of Afro-Caribbean culture in London. The project, as David described, aims to unite two existing public spaces, Tate Gardens and Windrush Square, which are currently disconnected by a road. This project has not only been met with practical concerns for the safety and comfort of its users in regards to adjacent vehicular traffic, and ongoing struggle to root out 'anti-social' behaviour; it also has received much criticism from local community members seeking a design that will acknowledge the historic and symbolic significance associate with these spaces—Tate Gardens being associated with the colonial sugar magnate, Henry Tate; Windrush Square named in commemoration of the famous ship who's arrival to UK after the second world war, signalled the beginning of a great wave of Caribbean immigration to the UK.

David suggested that these concerns were acknowledged in the selection of Scottish landscape architects Gross Max over several other high profile design firms. Gross Max refused to begin without engaging in what David described as 'major community workshops. The proposal that was subsequently produced, according to David, offered an 'open' public space that could accommodate a variety of uses from the area diverse population. At the same time, the design integrated elements inspired by the historical and symbolic significance of the site; most notably, the use of sugarcane as key a landscape element.

To David it appears, this project serves as an example of how Black Urbanism is actively being revised today, as diversity and equality initiatives are increasingly introduced into public development processes, for example in the process of contract bidding and selection and in the use community design consultation.

PAUL: In a way, he was normalising black urbanism within the discourse of public consultation and traditional planning practice within the west. I can understand this neutral line in a way: Design for London must be seen as representative of all Londoners, or as David stated, "there is a requirement in government to make this country belong to its people and not its politicians". David's stance represents a common misconception about our mobilisation of the word blackness, in other words, as a form of identity politics that is only relevant to a small minority of the population. This is not our intention at all. In fact, we believe blackness can be more open and complex than this limited understanding allows.

Public consultation is something I've been thinking about for a long time; in particular, the role that art and artists can play to improve these processes. For example, there is a group called General Public Agency. They're a group of architects and designers who are often hired by governmental bodies to 'creatively manage' development projects. They serve as a kind of interface between the public and the state. They employ a curatorial logic in dealing with public consultation, that is to say they treat the generation of space like a site specific work of art. They're in the process of developing a master plan for the Thurrock area in the Thames Gateway.

ANDREA PHILIPS

PAUL: Andrea is the assistant director of the MFA in Curating at Goldsmith's. She is a theorist who works on spatial practices in public art. In the past I've discussed ideas about black urbanism with Andrea and she was quite sceptical about any ethnicised notions of architecture or space. We wanted to invite someone with a specifically critical or hostile perspective on black urbanism to balance the debate.

JOHN: She certainly did offer this by contemplating what the results might be if Black Urbanism was successfully pursued. With the statement 'I want to talk about money. Cash,' Philips hypothesises into a discussion exploring the potential commoditisation black culture as it becomes and packaged under the name Black Urbanism. Philips comments 'as soon as [black culture] begins to take on a recognisable shape as a culture form the appellation "black" is slapped on it and [businesses can] market it as a commodity".

Andrea used the example of Saadiyat Island (The Island of Happiness), a \$2.7bn development just off the coast of Abu Dhabi to illustrate her argument. Fuelled by complex layers of money, principally oil money, the development has been organised as a culturally distinctive tourist capital of the UAE and will become home to projects developed by many of today's most celebrated international architects including Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, and Jean Nouvel.

PAUL: I found this to be a very interesting example as Andrea is interpreting blackness as an expanded field beyond ethnicity. She took the debate internationally and explored how similar issues are playing out in Abu Dhabi.

JOHN: She concluded her argument by describing the intention of Saadiyat's developers that the project might serve as a kind of new model for urban culture in the Middle East, and draws a comparison between this goal and what she perceives as similar intentions motivating the Re-Visioning Black Urbanism project. In Philip's view, Saadiyat island represents a kind of 'limit or the horizon of a certain version of black urbanism'; a place where the modern architectural discourse, a social agenda, and the financing needed to achieve this agenda have come together in a 'perfect storm' of sorts. While she doesn't see this as immediately negative or even possible in London's intensely developed context, she thought it as an interesting way of reformulating the questions in which we are asking.

KARIN WOODLEY

PAUL: Karin serves as Chief Executive of Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust that fosters employment skills in ethnic minorities and black youth to take up active roles in design related professions. Karin has worked for many years within the voluntary sector specialising in community development work and arts projects.

The Stephen Lawrence centre in Deptford is housed in a building designed by architect David Adjaye. It is the first purpose built centre for inner city youth to train in the practices involved in urban design and regeneration. The centre was named after a young black teenager from South East London who was brutally murdered by five white racist youth. The most poignant aspect of this tragedy was that Stephen very much wanted to be an architect. His death and the subsequent controversy brought increased awareness to the issue of black people engaging with urbanism.

JOHN: We selected Karen hoping she could bring a kind of grassroots organiser perspective to the debate. We didn't want to hold purely theoretical discussion; and thus, we were interested in the perspectives of people who were dealing with some of the questions proposed by Black Urbanism in real world contexts.

PAUL: Karen defines Blackness as a political term, as a framework for mobilising people. For it is more than just a kind of by-product of diversity or multicultural policies. Karen argued Black Urbanism should be produced from the bottom up meaning, not as a top down dictate of bureaucratic policy. Karen sees education as the key to democratising the regeneration processes which has historically excluded minorities and disadvantaged communities because of the highly specialised language that defines the discourse. As an antidote to this alienation, The Stephen Lawrence trust aims to develop black and minority ethnic shapers of urban space. In this model education as a non prescriptive approach to Black Urbanism is the key. In other words young people would be educated as design professionals and encouraged to grow and mature within the profession.

JOHN: For Karen it's all about investing in young people. Regardless of the theory, moving minorities into the design professions is contingent upon getting youth critically interested in the idea space, and early.

PAUL: Karen emphasised this point when discussing the David Adjaye designed Stephen Lawrence building. The building itself acts as an exemplar, a 'model' of what an architect of a global, cross-cultural perspective can achieve. Adjaye himself is also an interesting example in this instance. He's black, from Ghana, but grew up in Tanzania and Japan.

JOHN: ...and sites practicing in Portugal and the modernist work of David Chipperfield as influential to his work. At the same time he references the spaces, places, and objects in Africa as key design influences.

PAUL: Exactly! He folds all these signifiers into his work. Adjaye represents the kind of open and fluid sense of Blackness that we're interested in exploring. Here you have this black architect who, in reality, represents a certain kind of globality, a kind of African modernity. Kids may initially relate to him or his work through his blackness, but they are exposed to a broader global palette of spatial experiences. Zaha Hadid as an Arab woman who in many ways is the face of contemporary architecture, serves a similar function.

JOHN: We have to say though, part of what enables Adjaye do this is his class status. Should class rather than ethnicity, really be our object of study? Should we be exploring how class plays out in contemporary urbanism, rather than blackness?

PAUL: While class is definitely important, and affords Adjaye a certain access to international circuits of architecture prestige, it's not a sufficient explanation. Adjaye is constantly classified as a 'black architect'. His blackness is seen as part of what makes him stand out.

JOHN: But at the same time critics ask 'what makes his work distinctive in comparison to the host of other contemporary international architects?' It's almost as if they're begging to see evidence of his blackness in his buildings.

PAUL: Adjaye refuses to be contained by any single cultural aesthetic. He makes references to African objects and spatial practices, but he refuses to be defined by a singular notion of blackness. Thus what becomes important is how he translates blackness into more open spatial and architectural languages.

IN CONCLUSION

PAUL: For me the Salon opened up as many questions as it answered. This is not necessarily a bad thing in my opinion, in fact, this was the very purpose of the Salon; to work with an organisation such as This Is Not A Gateway and to lay out the questions in the context of an institution like the ICA. It was the opportunity to question the very possibility of Black Urbanism: it's viability as an intellectual project; as a useful resourceful for designers; its economic viability; its applicability to public policy; and it's use as a tool to inform education that emerges from a history of struggle.

JOHN: During the next phase of this project we'd like to focus on Peckham in South London as a case study to begin to address some of these points. Peckham is a disadvantaged neighbourhood in South London undergoing rapid urban transformation and regeneration. The local authority has spent over £10 mil on a number of high profile regeneration projects in this area alone. At the same time, there is an incredibly diverse local population, a large portion of which are from Africa and the Caribbean. Focusing on the following themes; future visions, networks and migration, branding space and commodification, we intend to do research in Peckham and stage a number of interventions in order to open up its potential as a site where a new form of urbanism is emerging.

Paul Goodwin and John Oduroe would like to thank Alison McDougal-Weil for her contribution to this work.

BIOGRAPHIES

Paul Goodwin, Director Office For Metropolitan Alternatives

Paul Goodwin is an urban theorist and curator. He is an Associate Fellow at the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR), Goldsmiths, University of London. At CUCR he is director of *Re-Visioning Black Urbanism*, a project that explores how multiple modes of 'blackness' engages with the dynamics of contemporary urbanism in the UK. The project outputs include exhibitions, film screenings, lectures, seminars and publications. Paul has recently been appointed as the Curator of Cross-Cultural Programmes at Tate Britain. He is the Director of the Office for Metropolitan Alternatives (Office/MA) an urban think tank and creative intervention office based in London. www.officema.org

John Oduroe, Associate Director Office For Metropolitan Alternatives

John Oduroe, a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University's School of Architecture, came to London in 2005 as a Fulbright Scholar to explore how ideas of class, race and culture relate to the production of urban space. His studies at the University College London Department of Geography led him to explore how the aesthetics of Black Diasporic culture could influence and inspire architectural form making. John is integrating these concepts into professional practice as the Associate Director of Office/MA, as an architectural designer for Orbit Architects Ltd., and as the lead environment and installation designer for the New York based dance and performance company Echo: System.

Andrea Phillips, Assistant Director of Curating; Director of Curating Architecture, Goldsmiths College

Andrea Phillips writes and lectures on spatial politics and sociality in relation to contemporary art and architecture. www.gold.ac.uk/visual-arts/curating-architecture

Rehan Jamil, Photographer

Rehan Jamil is a humanistic photographer primarily concerned with communities in transition. He has recently completed a 10 yr project 'The East End of Islam' documenting the Muslim Community in Tower Hamlets and their lives around the East London Mosque - one of the largest capacity purpose built mosques in Europe. Rehan works as a freelance photographer providing editorial images to urban regeneration programmes. His work has been exhibited in the group show ZEROZEROZERO (Whitechapel Gallery, London 1999); Station Gallery (Frankfurt 2000); and the touring exhibition Common Ground (2003) commissioned by The British Council; Changing Faces 02 (2003) and PSP Beautiful Script exhibition (2005).

Karin Woodley, Chief Executive, The Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust

Karin Woodley has been engaged with cultural activism and race equality for over 25 years. Karin is currently CEO of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust. Notable previous posts include: Artistic & Executive Director of the Tabernacle Centre and Chief Executive of the Minorities' Arts Advisory Service. Karin has also been employed as a management consultant, trainer and researcher specialising in the black voluntary sector and cultural diversity. Karin has served as an adviser to local, regional and national government, the Arts Council and Black Arts organisations in UK, USA and Southern Africa. Karin has been active for many years on a number of community boards. Academic appointments have included University of Amsterdam (Johannesburg), Dillard University (New Orleans) and currently Birkbeck College.

David Ubaka, Assistant Director, Design For London

A Chartered Architect and Urban Designer, David also has a Masters Degree in Computer Aided Design. After practicing in the private sector for 10 years at senior level, David joined Transport for London in 2002 quickly being promoted to Design Champion (2003). He was accountable for TfL's design vision and to ensure all modal transport projects integrate optimally with surrounding neighbourhoods. By 2005 he was Head of Service of a specialist design team - Urban Environment. David promoted the benefits of good design throughout TfL, encouraging the highest quality in all new investment in the transport built environment. He was the Pan-TfL focal point and the lead on all strategic urban design/planning issues, as well as detailed townscape, architectural and interior design issues. He manages external stakeholder agency relationships with the boroughs and organisations (e.g. CABE, English Heritage). David created an Urban Design Policy for TfL and the first monetised methodology for valuing Public Realm improvements. He sits on the Project Boards for most major Transport Projects in London. In 2007 David and his team became part of Design for London, where he has recently been promoted to Assistant Director.

THIS IS NOT A GATEWAY

This Is Not A Gateway {TINAG} creates arenas/stages/platforms for emerging academics, activists, politicians, artists, documentary filmmakers, human rights campaigners, novelists, architects, regeneration managers and more, whose point of reference is the city. Operating across disciplines, TINAG encourages inter-cultural dialogue and rigorous production via its four main strands: FESTIVAL / SALONS / PUBLICATIONS / LIBRARY & ARCHIVE

Cities are going to be home for the increasing majority of us, right across the globe and TINAG's activities are informed by a belief that a great deal more agency is needed for people, who are going to inherit future spaces.

TINAG does not have a curatorial agenda. Instead questions, ideas and projects, related to cities shape our activities. TINAG's role is that of coordinators providing the infrastructure and support to enable participants to hold their own workshops, film screenings, seminars, parties and more. TINAG believes key questions, approaches and strands relating to cities will emerge through the participant-led activities.

TINAG are putting out a call for people working on and in cities to come forward with proposals for salons, discussions, exhibitions, music events, film screenings... To submit a proposal please email coordinators@thisisnotagateway.net

TINAG is coordinated by Deepa Naik and Trenton Oldfield.

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