SWAHILI
HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPES

Report on the Historic Urban Landscape Workshops and Field Activities on the Swahili Coast in East Africa 2011-2012

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HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPES OF THE SWAHILI COAST: NEW FRAMEWORKS FOR CONSERVATION[1]

Joseph Heathcott (PhD),
Associate Professor of Urban Studies
at The New School (United States of America)

INTRODUCTION

Efforts to save elements of the Swahili built environment have been hampered over the past half century by colonial legacies that frame conservation in terms of pure architectural typologies and racially distinct building cultures. Conservationists have drawn on these legacies to define particular elements as "traditional", and therefore worthy of protection. But the construction of normative knowledge about the built environment based on uncritical notions of tradition and archetype constitutes a substantial problem for historic preservation at the level of townscape (Lowenthal, 1988: 384-406; Gospodini, 2004: 229-231; Greenfield, 2004: 165-168). The problem arises from a classic teleology. Those elements determined to be traditional are folded into portfolios of privileged structures warranting protection, which then constitute the common understanding of the historic built environment. Those structures falling outside this rubric warrant few protections, regardless of their age, function, utility, or importance within local lore. Thus, conservation efforts grounded in the identification and salvage of so-called pure typologies can weaken the complex, accretive, dynamic grain of the Swahili city. Ironically, however, the "traditional" forms of the Swahili city emerged within the crucible of an ever-changing urban condition where the "tradition" was innovation. Thus, the question arises as to the ultimate object of conservation practice in urban areas: saving select buildings of architectural merit, or the cultural processes that made such buildings possible in the first place?

Over the past decade, scholars and practitioners have addressed this basic question through critical reappraisals of conservation in urban areas around the world (OrbaĐli, 2000; AlSayyad, 2001a; Tung, 2002, ICOMOS, 2005, Bandarin and Van Oers, 2012). While many and varied, these efforts culminated in the landmark adoption of the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2011). Premised on "the dynamic nature of living cities", the new Historic Urban Landscape approach seeks "integration of historic urban area conservation, management, and planning strategies into local development processes". The approach

1 An earlier, truncated version of this paper appeared in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (2012).

Fig. 1. The edge of growth, Lamu. The scene overlooks the inlet and Manda Island in the background. The new home construction in the foreground expands the city, with the concrete block construction providing an apparent contrast to the whitewashed coral buildings that comprise the Old Stone Town.

shifts emphasis from the monumentalization of architecture to the "conservation of urban values" that undergird the life of the city. As the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation states, the practice of conservation should move beyond the architectural archetype to embrace historic urban contexts and "the interrelationships of their physical forms, their spatial organization and connection, their natural features and settings, and their social, cultural and economic values". In this way, the Recommendation provides conservationists with the conceptual tools to articulate heritage concerns to the ever-changing conditions and always incomplete processes of cities in the twenty-first century.

Still, the adoption of the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation opens up challenges for heritage conservation that can only be met by the conduct of new research. Such research, according to the Recommendation, "should target the complex layering of urban settlements" in order to develop new interpretive and practice frameworks. This chapter considers these challenges in the context of the Swahili coast – an archipelago of cities and towns along the Indian Ocean stretching from southern Tanzania to northern Kenya (fig. 2). Through a close examination of everyday spaces in Swahili cities, this study problematizes heritage practices as they developed in the post-colonial period, and explores how the Historic Urban Landscape approach might transform such practices. Such careful reading of the Swahili built environment reveals key locations where urban spaces are formed, contested and remade. The study concludes that in order to reflect the dynamic, multifaceted and cosmopolitan character of Swahili cities, conservationists must pay close attention to the ill-fitting spaces where landscape innovations arise. Not only will this approach auger a more socially just organization of urban cultural resources, but it will more accurately reflect the lived realities of Swahili cities in a global age.

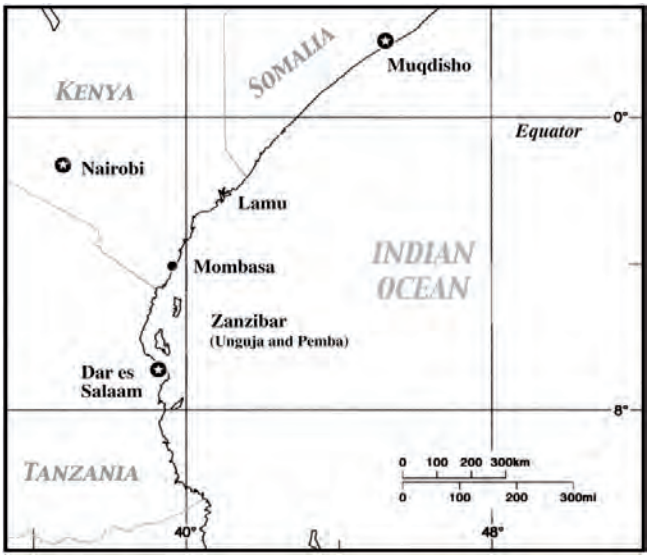

Fig. 2. The Swahili coast of East Africa. United Nations Department of Public Information, Cartographic Section, Map No. 3857, 1994; Adapted by Joseph Heathcott, 2006.

THE ORIGINS OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION ON THE SWAHILI COAST

Much of what we understand about the Swahili urban heritage emerged from a remarkable series of studies undertaken in the 1970s. Beginning in 1971, architect Usam Ghaidan led a team of surveyors, graphic artists, and craft specialists in a rigorous survey of the Swahili built environment. Funded by the Kenyan Ministry of Lands and Settlement, the landmark study defined and analysed the major building typologies of Lamu, grounded in the context of ecology, history and townscape. "The surviving towns and ruined sites of the East African Coast", wrote Ghaidan, "are heir to a distinctive urban tradition that is over 1,000 years old" (Ghaidan, 1976: ix). Ghaidan and his colleagues walked through hundreds of buildings, measuring them against an exhaustive inventory of architectural traits and decorative characteristics. The team produced a set of findings that quickly came to constitute core technical knowledge of the Swahili built environment (fig. 3). Ghaidan concluded the study with a detailed set of recommendations for strengthening the local ordinances, national policies and economic incentives to conserve the historic architecture of Lamu.

Over the next three decades, many of these recommendations bore fruit. Lamu engaged in a slow but deliberate conservation process. The Kenyan National Museum expanded the gazette of historic places to include scores of vernacular buildings, sites, and structures throughout the country (Hart, 2007: 46-48). Both Kenyan and Tanzanian ministries made investment in historic architecture a priority, seeing the value in terms of both nation building and tourist revenues. And UNESCO declared the Old Stone Towns of Zanzibar (2000) and Lamu (2001) to be World Heritage Sites, establishing a series of benchmarks for implementing conservation programmes (UNESCO, 2001, 2007).

While it remains a major accomplishment, Ghaidan and his team illuminated only one aspect of the "distinctive urban tradition" that undergirds the Swahili townscape. Indeed, the very impetus of the survey, according to its authors, was to develop knowledge of this urban tradition in order to preserve it against what they saw to be the relentless march of modernity. They selected Lamu because, as Ghaidan argues, it is the only one among 80 Swahili settlements that retains "its traditional character almost completely", having escaped "the pressures of modern urban growth" (Ghaidan, 1976: ix). For Ghaidan, Lamu provided a pure case of an authentic Swahili town against which other settlements could be measured, judged, and conserved.

Ghaidan's study of Lamu grouped buildings into six architectural typologies: traditional stone houses, stone veranda buildings, shop-front buildings, mud and wattle buildings, mosques, and non-conforming structures (fig. 3). While each typology received attention, the team singled out the stone houses, veranda buildings, and some shop fronts and mosques for close analysis and conservation efforts.

Thus, while Lamu might have contained a greater density of these highly valued architectural typologies than other Swahili cities, it is the very fact of their valorization above other elements of the built environment that made Lamu appear to Ghaidan and his team to be a purer townscape. This implied that Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, and other cities suffered a degraded, less authentically Swahili condition. But what if Swahili urbanism derived not from a set of selective architectural typologies but from something else? Where would that lead historic preservation efforts on the East African coast?

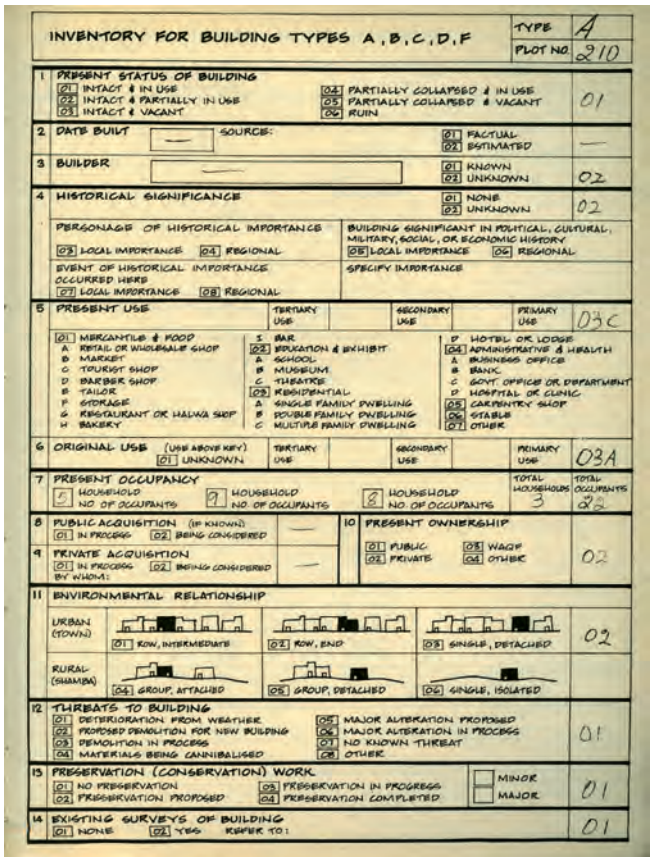

Fig. 3. The Inventory of Usam Ghaidan. Working under the auspices of the Ministry of Lands, Ghaidan's team produced a detailed redaction of the Swahili built environment, coding homes, shops, mosques, and other structures against an inventory of physical characteristics.
From Lamu: A Study in Conservation, 1976.

TOWARDS A HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE INTERPRETATION

Two principal shortcomings arise from Ghaidan's typological approach. First, those buildings that fell outside "traditional" architecture types were marginalized through the rhetoric of pathology. For example, the team faulted mud and wattle or *macuti* buildings – the most common residential structures on the island – for their supposed lack of architectural merit and their impermanence, arguing that, rather than conservation, they required "improvements" (Ghaidan, 1976: 69-72). Yet many "non-conforming" building types are, in fact, as old as the "traditional" stone houses; these seemingly incompatible buildings play a crucial role in forging adaptation, experimentation and innovation – qualities that power urban change over time (Brand, 1995; Groth and Bressi, 1997; Simone, 2004: 202-207). The second shortcoming of the typological approach is that it renders opaque the origins, meanings, and changing functions of buildings, substituting broad taxonomic categories for revelatory descriptions. If Swahili architecture constitutes a material inheritance, then the organization of preservation taxonomies suggests an effort to control what anthropologist Yukiko Koga (2008: 223) calls the "instabilities of inheritance". In the context of the Swahili townscape, instabilities such as the ruling class' Arabic origin myths, the racial foundations of oppression, religious tensions, and the legacies of slavery could potentially undermine the nation-building project and economic development potential of historic preservation.

Beyond the limitation of typology, however, lies the more basic question of what constitutes the "distinctive urban tradition" of the Swahili coast. Is it a collection of resultant buildings and structures, or is it the cultural forms, meanings, and impulses that give rise to landscape developments over time? Should the Swahili urban tradition be located in a select grouping of pure case townscapes or architectural typologies that exist apart from modernity? In reality, Swahili towns have never been isolated from the currents of the modern world; rather, their landscapes reflect an ongoing dialogue with and incorporation of new external forms (Simone, 2004: 162-166, 202-207). So where does that leave Ghaidan's notion of a "distinctive urban tradition" for the Swahili coast?

Instead of recapitulating Ghaidan's "distinctive urban tradition", this paper explores an approach to Swahili heritage conservation grounded in the broader notion of "urbanism" and informed by the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*. Urbanism refers here to the constitution of cities and city life through politics, economies, social relations, and cultural forms. Scholars who study urbanism regard built environments as both registers and generators of human creativity, social meanings, and power relations. For urbanists, cities are constituted through a dynamic and ever changing mosaic of temporal, spatial, scalar and social relations (Amin and Graham, 1997; Lefebvre, 1974; Mumford, 1938). Because they continually shift, recombine, and adapt, cities are always and inevitably unfinished propositions (Beauregard and Haila, 1997; Shane, 2005). Viewed in this way, Swahili urbanism is not synonymous with particular typologies of architecture, historic eras of development, or modes of town planning, though these are important elements. Rather, Swahili urbanism emerges from the dynamic tensions between land and sea, place making and world seeking, restlessness and cosmopolitanism, which in turn shape the architecture and landscape condition (Mazrui, 1996: 158-161; AlSayyad, 2001(b)).

The following sections trace these tensions through variations in urban spaces of four major cities of the Swahili coast: Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam in United Republic of Tanzania, and Mombasa and Lamu in Kenya (see fig. 2). In order to inform preservationist discourse and practice, the paper presents a

series of short case studies of particular Swahili spaces that most acutely reveal the tensions between dynamic urbanism and the conservatory project and, therefore, offer opportunities for meaningful reinterpretation. The limited argument here is that these landscapes evidence a heritage best characterized as dynamic rather than static, recombinant rather than pure. The broader claim advanced by this paper is that Swahili town conservation will be most effective when it is conceived not as a mission of antique salvage, but rather as one more overlay in a series of landscape innovations characteristic of Swahili urbanism.

THE SWAHILI WORLD

The Swahili coast of East Africa is a system of island archipelagos and mainland port cities bound by language, colonialism, and monsoon trade winds. Early sojourners to the East African coast from Oman, Yemen and Persia encountered an array of small settlements along the coast, at times fragmented or isolated, and at other times conglomerated in complex social and political alliances (Pearson, 2002: 78-83, 155-161; Horton and Middleton, 2000: 72-75; Allen, 1993: 80-82). For one thousand years, merchants, missionaries and migrants have moved people, ideas and goods in a triangular circuit linking East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, India, Indonesia and China (Sheriff, 1995: 8-15; Pearson, 2002: 63-72; 85-97; Kagabo, 2000). The cosmopolitan maritime society that emerged from this circulatory system established significant port cities by the fifteenth century, and by the eighteenth century a Swahili urban archipelago stretched from United Republic of Tanzania to Somalia (Middleton, 1992: 120-138).

The Portuguese and Yemeni Arabs dominated the Swahili coast through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, succeeded by the Omani Sultanate, which ruled through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from its capital at Zanzibar (Nicholls, 1971; Bhacker, 1992: 88–96). Merchant families amassed substantial fortunes through slave trading, importing of goods, and plantation-based export production (Depelchin, 1991: 14-21, 28-33). Sequent German and British colonial occupations were brutish, but relatively short, stretching from the late nineteenth century to the post-Second World War decades. Tanganyika gained formal independence in 1961 and Kenya in 1963. The islands of Unguja and Pemba – together known as Zanzibar – gained independence in 1963 as a constitutional Sultanate, which was overthrown a year later. In 1964 Zanzibar united with mainland Tanganyika to form the United Republic of Tanzania.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s leaders of the East African nations attempted a variety of development initiatives to jumpstart their postcolonial economies, from command production and nationalization in the United Republic of Tanzania to public-private partnerships, import substitution, and market policies in Kenya (Biermann, 1998: 149-167; Ahluwalla, 1996: 5-12). However, since at least the early 1980s, tourism and related services have provided major sources of foreign exchange and investment, and have led GDP growth in both countries (Sindiga, 2000). Heritage tourism on the Swahili coast accounts for a substantial part of this growth over the past 30 years (Kierkegaard, 2001: 59-63).

DYNAMIC URBANISM IN THE SWAHILI TOWNSCAPE

The openness of Swahili culture and language is reflected in its ever-changing and always incomplete built environment, and it is this dynamic urbanism that emerges from the following case studies. Motivating this paper is a set of basic questions. What is the relationship of this extant tradition of dynamic urbanism to the conservatory project? How can heritage professionals, urban designers and preservation planners move beyond practices governed by aesthetic categories and functional typologies? How can preservation efforts derange the static quality of current policy and instead incorporate dynamic urbanism as a mode of spatial artistry and place making?

This paper follows Usam Ghaidan and his earnest team of surveyors in reading the Swahili townscape as evidence of an urban tradition (Goin, 2001). But the urban tradition drawn from the following cases does not refer to fixed data points, unchanging *mentalités*, or timeless accomplishments of architecture. Instead, the cases present an urban condition formed by absorption, contradiction and innovation – all grounded in a culture characterized by motion and world seeking. Like most maritime peoples, the Swahili developed transoceanic connections, absorbing influences from multiple contact societies (Bhabha, 1994; Young, 1995). Their culture reflects the early globalization of maritime societies through commerce, war, sojourn and (eventually) tourism, with influences spread through language, food, fashion, architecture and urban form (Kaur and Hutnyk, 1999; AlSayyad, 2001b; King, 2004; Kraidy, 2005: 4-6). Moreover, Swahili cities, like all urban settlements, absorb these global influences with varying speed and intensity, while rates of change differ from one period to the next. And innovations in building, design and spatial organization reflect cultural exchanges that occur at multiple scales, along shifting lines of power, with varying degrees of impact (Harris, 2005; Beattie, 2008: 53-54). Thus, Swahili cities can be characterized by what theorist Graham Shane (2005) calls "recombinant urbanism", an approach that views cultural forms as contingent, architectures as layered and interwoven, and cities as platforms for experimentation and change.

Each of the cases that follow can be most accurately conceptualized in terms of recombinant urbanism; they are sites of rich, unstable and shifting human dramas that flow through – and are shaped by – urban space over time. What makes this accretive and recombinant landscape "Swahili" is the cultural system that undergirds its formation. While dynamic, landscapes nevertheless accrue innovations

through the interpretive web of culture – the beliefs, values, customs and meanings that comprise a social group (Groth and Bressi, 1997: 5-11; King, 1984: 5-7). Moreover, these landscape accretions reflect the interventions of a range of actors specific to the place and with differing scopes of authority, influence and power – from politicians and wealthy landowners to bureaucrats, planners, conservationists and ordinary citizens engaged in their daily routines (Habraken, 2000: 42-54, 88-96; Harvey, 1989: 68-75).

While not a treatise on the intricate temporalities of Swahili town building, the following cases examine artefacts of those temporalities, and must account for them in the interpretive scheme. Different elements of any urban landscape change at different rates, some elements appearing more durable than others (Brand, 1995: 17-23). But what we perceive as durable features of the urban landscape are, in reality, either changing at a less perceptible rate or constructed of solid materials that mask their contingent existence. Meanwhile, those landscape elements that appear ephemeral to us often mask the deeper cultural continuities that produce them. Thus, the cases included here should not be read as archetypes of a categorically pure Swahili urbanity, but rather as nodal spaces where a range of actors have introduced, contested and worked through landscape elements over time. Such spaces pose critical challenges to conservation discourse and practice, and therefore merit close attention.

Commercial spaces

For at least a millennium, trade and commerce have lain at the heart of Swahili culture. But the modes of commerce and the spaces of exchange have changed and multiplied over time. Rather than stable, authentic Swahili cultural artefacts, commercial spaces in the cities and towns reflect the multiplicity of origins and the cosmopolitan character of coastal life. At first glance, for example, the market in the Old Stone Town of Zanzibar would appear to derive its form from the bazaar, with its narrow passages and dense framework of buildings (fig. 4). However, the market mingles Middle Eastern, Bantu and Indian traditions of display and exchange. Moreover, it is also a space re-engineered more recently by colonialism. Beginning in 1904, British architects designed a series of Beaux-Arts market buildings to rationalize commercial activity and to centralize spaces of exchange for purposes of surveillance and control. Over time, the energetic life of Swahili commerce spilled out into a dense, twisting, makeshift network of stalls. The wooden kiosks depicted in fig. 4 comprise one small section of the larger web of markets that meander through the western edge of the Old Stone Town.

The markets encompass several interlaced building types beyond the British structures and their manifold additions. Narrow alleys grow even narrower with the additions of grade-level kiosks, sheds and projecting rooms attached to older shop fronts. Dozens of vendors sell their wares from "container shops" made from discarded shipping containers hauled over from the port. Moreover, many vendors have transformed their container shops into virtually permanent structures with the addition of walls, roofs and awnings. Other vendors lack permanent space and sell their wares from bicycles, carts, collapsible awnings and other apparatus (fig. 5). Thus composed, the markets thread through and link together numerous transportation stages, neighbourhoods and civic buildings.

Fig. 4. Darajani Old Market, Zanzibar. One of several markets in Zanzibar town, Darajani comprises the largest shopping district on Unguja Island. The section of old Darajani above specializes in print materials, vegetables, legumes and spices.

Fig. 5. Darajani Old Market, Zanzibar. Vendors deploy a plethora of selling strategies that add to the compositional complexity of the market. It is a series of spaces undergoing constant alteration and change.

Vendors array their stalls with produce from near and far: spices, dried and fresh fish, fruits, rice, cloth, coffee and household utensils. Also on display are compact discs of East African, Egyptian and American pop music, as well as videocassettes of films from Hollywood, Bollywood and Hong Kong; most of these discs and cassettes are bootlegged at studios in Dubai and shipped to markets around the world. Newsstands display the latest periodicals from near and far. Men cluster at the stands to breathe in the newsprint – Swahili urbanites are eager consumers of information, constantly hungering for world news.

In keeping with Islamic social mores, men predominate in the market. But Zanzibar is part of the United Republic of Tanzania, and is by law a secular State; as a result, women constitute a substantial presence in public life. The Swahili market is also a place for chance encounters between young people who find themselves momentarily free from the surveillance of adult relatives. Men may pass as women, wrapped head to toe in the full body covering and veils of *hijab*. Women likewise may conceal the elaborate palette of fashions and adornments available to islanders through maritime exchange with Saudi Arabia, Iran, Indonesia, China and India, and influenced by the abundant supply of Bollywood films (Fuglesang, 1994: 114-126; 166-173). Many of the younger men evince a decidedly Western taste for clothes – especially hip-hop fashions obtained from the *mitumba* (used clothing) stalls. Market vendors trade not only goods but also information, news and ideas with one another and with their customers.

This porous, accretive built environment of the market frames the quotidian activity of commercial exchange, and shapes social relationships in the process (Beattie, 2008: 45-46). It provides for daily encounters, both regulated and insurgent, between buyers, sellers, hawkers, tourists, young lovers, expatriates and officials. But conservation officials decry the ramshackle additions to the "original" British market buildings. As planner Francesco Siravo put it in the *Plan for the Historic Stone Town* (1996: 168), "the proliferation of uncontrolled commercial structures and spreading of informal vending areas [have] serious and potentially disruptive implications for the future of the entire area". The evidence provided for this claim, however, is primarily aesthetic: the makeshift accretions detract from the architectural integrity of the colonial structures. The conservation discourse emphasizes the architectural form over the social utility and human creativity embodied in the market landscape.

Another kind of commercial space, the informal street market in Mombasa (fig. 6), emphasizes the accretive and makeshift nature of daily trade culture. Of course, Mombasa is a very different place from Zanzibar, even though it remains at heart a Swahili coastal city. Unlike Zanzibar, Mombasa pulses with a continuous flow of activity. It is the busiest, most crowded and hectic city on the coast, where Swahili urbanism collides with and quickens to the hyperactive rhythms of Kenyan culture and civic life. On the streets and in the clubs, traditional Swahili *taraab* music, with its molasses pacing, coastal moods, and ponderous, orchestral complexity gives way to the rollicking, melodious, uptempo guitar twang of Zairian *soukous*. In Mombasa, the frenetic pace does not slow beneath the *jua kali* (hot sun) as it does in Zanzibar.

Fig. 6. Selling the products of the *jua kali*. The Sidiriya district of Mombasa shown here concentrates large stores, small shops, carts and kios ks devoted to selling household dry goods. The vendors above belong to the *jua kali* union – a trade federation of informal producers and marketers headquartered upcountry in Nairobi.

Jua kali is also the moniker given to the informal economy that occupies every nook and cranny of the streets. In fig. 6, *jua kali* vendors set up in the middle of a street intersection to hawk their wares from pull carts. They sell household utensils, cooking pots and pans, trunks, oil lamps and other objects fabricated from recycled metal in backyard operations. Deprivation in materials has led to a range of innovations in the production of the necessities of life. Energized by the tradition of Swahili artisanship, the *jua kali* account for the major portion of the movements, sights, smells and sounds of Mombasa's busy street life. This informal craft and production sector also supplies the goods, services and innovations that undergird the everyday urbanism of East African cities (King, 1996; Macharia, 1997: 53-60). Employing nearly 6.5 million people in Kenya alone, this so-called "informal" sector is the leading arena for the creation of jobs and absorption of surplus labour in the nation (Adero, 2006).

Mombasa, the largest of East African coastal cities, teems with multi-ethnic and transnational commerce. Rural Mijikenda traders sell their produce in the city's many open-air markets. Maasai artisans display crafts on makeshift tables along Digo Road. Elite Kenyans from Nairobi as well as foreign nationals from Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Britain and

Germany control the banking, financial and investment sector, as well as most of the major corporations. At the crux of this bustling commercial network is the diverse Indian/Pakistani community – or *wahindi* in Swahili. Many of the shops along the streets pictured in fig. 6 are owned by wahindi families.

The wahindi have been an important part of the Swahili economy for at least 300 years, settling in Kenya and Tanzania first as merchant traders and, through much of the twentieth century, as soldiers and railroad workers in the British colonial project (Romero, 1997: 93-106; Kagabo, 2000: 239-254). Today, Indian immigrants and their naturalized descendants control much of the middling trade, from warehousing to wholesaling and small dry goods retail. They also purvey a large share of the city's *matatus* – the brightly coloured buses and vans that constitute the backbone of the mass transit industry. The wahindi are Gujarati and Punjab, Goan and Pakistani, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Jain. Their temples dot the landscape, and their languages, music, performances, and religious parades and festivals add to the cosmopolitan character of Swahili street life (Salvadori, 1989).

Interstitial spaces

Like commercial spaces, interstitial spaces expose both important Swahili cultural practices as well as the conservation discourses that surround those practices. Interstitial spaces constitute socially marginal moments of transition between landscape elements. They are worlds betwixt and between where urban practices collide, categories unravel and spatial innovations accrue. Very often they also provide the urban connective tissue where distinct architectonic forms shift, change and recombine.

Fig. 7. The jagged edge of Old Stone Town, Lamu. This intersection of paths and structures marks the porous and shifting boundary between the so-called "Old" Stone Town and the "New" Town of *makuti* houses.

The photograph in fig. 7 documents the border in Lamu between Mkomani (Old Stone Town) and the "newer" districts of *macuti* (wattle-and-daub) homes known as Langoni. This border constitutes a classic case of interstitial collision and it documents three key features of Swahili urbanism. First, the border provides an archive of detailed environmental building knowledge gathered from sources throughout the Indian Ocean rim. Second, it records a spatial-temporal matrix comprised of varied, interpenetrating processes of Swahili coastal home building and place making. And third, it exposes the fault line along which conservationists have differentiated architectural forms to support particular heritage claims.

Much of what we currently delineate as the Old Stone Town developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under the dominion of the Omani Sultanate, and the "traditional" Swahili homes reflect the changing tastes of their builders. The stone house is dominated by a walled courtyard, from which recedes a stack of rooms that grade the spatial flow from the public to private realm (fig. 8). Ceilings are high for maximum air circulation, and room depths are squat, limited by the length of the mature mangrove poles that comprise the joists. Closely packed residential groups describe large block forms, or *mitaa*, usually inhabited by kinship groups (clans). The divisions between these building groups constitute the street pattern as well as gradations of status within the townscape (Horton, 1997). Narrow streets omit sun and conduct ocean breezes, keeping the town cool even at the hottest time of day.

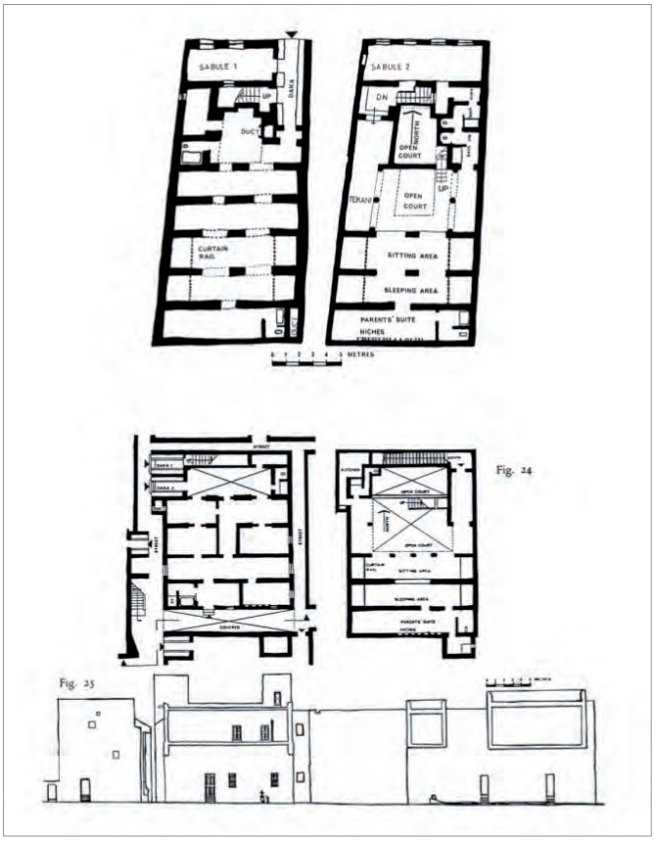

Fig. 8. Plan and section of an Old Stone house in Zanzibar. Like most vernacular residential forms, the Old Stone house presents as multiple variations on a few themes. From *Zanzibar: A Plan for the Historic Stone Town* (1996).

Meanwhile, what Ghaidan referred to as the "unimproved" macuti house follows a vernacular plan that resembles building types found up and down the East African coast. Mangrove poles provide the framing structure, with wattle and daub or crushed coral comprising the walls. A high-peaked thatch roof ensures a maximum of cool air circulation. Most macuti homes contain one room. In rural areas, home expansion is merely a matter of adding one-room buildings

to the compound. In tighter urban areas, families expand the size of their macuti homes by enlarging the ground plan or adding stories vertically.

Some of these macuti houses accumulated architectural modifications, context adaptations, expansions and fashion upgrades over time, according to the flow of wealth into the towns. In fact, many of the celebrated stone houses began their existence as the very wattle-and-daub structures that today press against the boundaries of the Old Stone Town (Horton, 1994: 147-152). Incremental changes over time, such as replacing thatch walls with lime whitewashed coral, re-enforcing ceilings to produce usable rooftops, and articulating homes with architectural fashions from Yemen and Oman, transformed "non-conforming" macuti houses into "traditional" stone houses (Bissell, 2007: 194-195; Donley-Reid, 1990: 114-122). Thus, in boom times, macuti neighbourhoods such as Langoni in Lamu would undergo phase changes, either through rapid upgrading or through multiple tear-downs to make way for the construction of purpose-built "traditional" stone houses (Donley-Reid, 1990) – often constructed of concrete block (see fig. 1). Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this complex, contrapuntal process of modification and rapid transformation constituted the Swahili town-building process.

For conservation officials, however, the grand stone house has long represented the end-state of the Swahili urban tradition. The valorization of stone houses in conservation policy reveals the ongoing commitment to distinct racial typologies and the preference for origin stories that privilege Arab over African roots. Ironically, while the "traditional" Swahili buildings of the Old Stone Town receive much attention from conservation officials, tourists and government programmes, these structures are based on relatively recent architectural borrowings from Yemen, Persia and India. The borrowed forms date to the sixteenth century, and most Stone Town houses standing today were constructed between the late eighteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. The existing macuti houses, while technically much younger (most have been built within the last 20-30 years), reflect a much older vernacular building form – a coastal house plan that predates even Swahili culture itself. Over time, the collision of these two town house forms resulted in an ever-shifting, interstitial line of demarcation that defines ever-shifting class and cultural boundaries. Such divisions persist today and continue to underpin the political culture of Zanzibar. But the colliding forms and porous edges depicted in figs. 1, 7, and 8 reveal alternative origin stories borne out by the ever-incomplete Swahili townscape.

In Dar es Salaam, another interstitial space reveals the social relations present in the landscape: the shoreline. Depicted in fig. 9, the beachfront shanties index the social inequality and creative resistance of people who have been pushed literally to the margins of the city. Here Swahili urbanism transects – and is transformed by – competing versions of cityscape. Located on the mainland, Dar's urban form reflects the powerful influence of Tanzanian national culture. The old city of Dar es Salaam unfolds within the long imprint of Omani Arab design, German military engineering, British town planning and the Tanzanian post-colonial socialist State. While the Tanzanian parliament transferred the functions of government to the centrally located city of Dodoma, Dar remains the unofficial national capital; only the National Assembly has relocated (Lusekelo, 2004; Kaufman, 1977). Dar retains most offices of State, embassies and agency headquarters, as well as museums, cultural institutions, theatres, cinemas, and all the varied features of a tourist and leisure economy.

Fig. 9. Seaside as shop floor and neighbourhood, Dar es Salaam. Only a few yards from Dar's principal coastal motorway stretches an "informal" community of squatters. Some use the land primarily for work, as a dry dock for boat and net repair as well as a station for drying fish. Others have made homes out of the rusted ships lining the beach.

At the core of Dar es Salaam, as in all Swahili cities, is a cosmopolitan maritime culture oriented toward motion, commerce and trade. A great diversity of people and purposes crowds the waterfront promenade, mingling amid the clutter of boats, kiosks, drying fish and nets, all aerated by the breezes off the Indian Ocean. Mixed into this framework are the great temples of the merchant Indian families, high-rise office buildings, shopping malls, petrol stations, fast food chains, and other accoutrements of transnational post-modernity. Today the metropolis radiates in every direction inland from the ocean, sprawling into the hinterlands via tentacular roadways.

Despite the United Republic of Tanzania's commitment to *ujamaa* (socialism), the Swahili coast has long been part of transnational and global networks of trade. In the background of fig. 9, an emergent skyline announces the most recent wave of global commerce, let loose after 1986 by a series of liberalizing reforms imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a condition of debt service. This new wave of capital formation proliferates spatially in the offices of multinational banks, investment firms, brokerage houses, petrochemical corporations, and other agents of global commerce that co-locate in the new central business district. The glass boxes of this new high-rise landscape reflect the modernist quest for architectural transparency and render legible the space of capital accumulation, even as they obscure the channels through which wealth and power are organized (Lemmens and van Tassel, 2005: 166-167).

However, as structural adjustment policies induce the socialist State to recede from its once broad commitments, the visual evidence of inequality proliferates. In the foreground of the photograph, the rusty hulls of discarded freighters and tugboats – artefacts of older waves of capital accumulation – have been recycled into a makeshift residential landscape, literally anchoring people to the ocean's shore. Lining the urban beach, these discarded watercraft provide shelter for port workers, fishermen, dislocated families, prostitutes, vendors, and others requiring proximity to the port or to downtown Dar. This squatter settlement, like others that ring the peri-urban areas of Dar, concentrate people within communities that often lack key services such as potable water, electricity, sewage and waste removal. In this respect, squatters are the front line of urbanization, and the makeshift landscape reflects the incapacity of the formal city to absorb the rapid influx of newcomers (Obudho and Mhlanga, 1988: 5-12; United Nations Human Settlement Programme, 2003: 11-15; 23-31).

At the same time, the shantytowns provide a crucial platform for newly arrived migrants from the upland *shambas* (rural farms) of the interior (Neuwith, 2007: 73-75). Residents have equipped the relegated boats with clotheslines, cook stoves, and even small box gardens on the decks. Vendors set up blankets and tables to sell produce, charcoal, flour and oil, used clothes, snack foods and other goods. This interstitial self-built neighbourhood reflects both the relative tolerance of the Dar municipal government as well as the astounding creativity of Swahili people to shape space within a maritime material culture – indeed, in the case of reclaimed boats, making homes out of the very symbols of that culture (Lugalla, 1995: 73-92; Nnkya, 2006).

Public spaces

At the core of the Swahili townscape of Lamu is the square, the chief public space of the city and a superbly scaled setting for the conduct of daily life (fig. 10). The baking equatorial heat and the austerity of the midday sun against coral whitewash promote calm, slow, shade-seeking movements as residents traverse the pavement and linger beneath the ample trees. But while the square might appear durable and timeless to visitors, it is in fact a fully modern construction. It came to life as the result of the Sultan's chief public works project – the reclamation of land from the sea – and later underwent a slow but deliberate restoration funded by major multilateral development organizations.

Under the Omani Sultanate, Lamu grew in size and prominence, becoming one of the leading trading ports of the Swahili coast by the mid-nineteenth century. Though nominally part of British imperial expansion in East Africa through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Lamu was sufficiently remote to maintain a degree of autonomy. However, hardships imposed by the First World War, coupled with the construction of deep-water ports in Mombasa and Zanzibar in the 1920s and 1930s, sent Lamu into a long, precipitous decline.

Fig. 10. The Town Square of Lamu, Kenya. Often described as a "classic" Swahili space, the Lamu Town Square is actually part of a modern system of public works initiated by the Sultan and carried forward by the British.

After decades of lassitude under British rule, the post-colonial government of Jomo Kenyatta initiated a technocratic conservation and planning effort in the 1980s, grounded in the important early work of the architect Usam Ghaidan. In 1983 the Kenyan Parliament passed the Antiquities and Monuments Act, empowering the National Ministry of Works and the Kenyan Museums to produce a Conservation Plan for Lamu. The Ministry engaged Francesco Siravo to produce a conservation plan for Lamu focusing on key sites and structures, such as the Old Fort, the Town Square, and the Sea Wall. With funding from the Ford Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency, Norwegian Aid, and the United Nations Development Project, Siravo and his team completed the plan in 1986 (Hoyle, 2001: 299-303). This effort recharged Lamu – especially the square and the old urban core – with an infusion of expertise and capital. In 2001 UNESCO placed Lamu's Old Town on the World Heritage List.

Physically, the town square is resultant space, conscribed by Lamu's chief municipal buildings – the fort, post office, customs house, market, district commissioner's headquarters, and rows of old Indian and Yemeni merchant houses. One gains access to the square from the north, south, and west via narrow streets, and from the east via the customs walkway that communicates between the fort and the seaside docks. Socially, the square provides a space of circulation, overlap, and encounter between the wealthier families of Mkomani (north of the square) and the poorer families of Likoni to the south (Ghaidan, [1975] 1992: 61-65).

The British colonial administration used the fort as a prison, but today it houses a Swahili culture museum, the city's main public library, and conservation offices and laboratories. The interior courtyard of the fort has also become one of the city's principal gathering spaces for concerts, rallies, and other public performances. Such adaptive reuse demonstrates the determination of Swahili people to experiment with and transform even the most obdurate architectural forms of their towns. But conservationists should avoid the temptation to view the forts and squares along the East African coast as traditional spaces of Swahili public culture. Rather, these spaces reflect the critical intervention of a modern State-

directed, international donor-financed urbanism geared towards reformatting a productive but declining "shop floor" waterfront into a site of consumption, tourism and leisure.

A similar process formed the main public space of Zanzibar's Old Stone Town, the waterfront park of Forodhani (fig. 11). Today the park is central to the heritage infrastructure in Zanzibar, foregrounding the island's principal tourist attractions, the Ngome Kongwe (Old Fort) and the Beit al-Ajaib ("House of Wonders"), once the Sultan's ceremonial palace and today the island's main museum. The Fort contains tourist shops and a restaurant, together with an amphitheatre for concerts, performances and major annual island events, such as Sauti ya Busara (a music festival) and the Dhow Countries International Film Festival.

At the same time, Forodhani is a major civic amenity for island residents where the maritime city embraces its waterfront as a site of leisure. Protected from the ravaging currents of the Indian Ocean, Zanzibar's Stone Town has served as an important transoceanic port for two centuries. For much of that time, what is now Forodhani was the site of the island's principal customs station. In the 1930s, however, port traffic shifted to a new harbour developed by British colonial authorities. The Tanzanian national government completed the new harbour in the 1960s with major industrial-scale offloading facilities. While hand-built dhows continued to transport goods and people, their share of maritime commerce fell to the transoceanic tankers loaded with uniform shipping containers. Meanwhile, in 1935-1936 court officials developed Forodhani as a staging ground for the silver jubilees of King George V and Sultan Khalifa. Since then it has remained Zanzibar's principal waterfront amenity (Siravo, 1996: 141-142).

Recently refurbished, Forodhani is a bright, tranquil open space with small clusters of vendors, tourists, students, and passers-through. Groups of children wander down during their breaks from the Madrassas to take a dip in the ocean. Workers occasionally take meals or stretch out on the grass to nap, though most Zanzibaris spend the afternoon hours indoors away from the baking equatorial sun. Tourists hang out on the bandstand after spending an hour or two across the street in the Old Fort and nearby Beit al-Ajaib. After relatively quiet days, the night-time park comes to life. Zanzibaris young and old, male and female, gather at the park to promenade, to meet with relatives and friends, and to cool down from a day of blazing equatorial sun. Vendors set up long tables laden with fried squid, urchin, and shrimp, as well as fresh coconut milk, Coca Cola, chai, tamarind soda, and sugar cane. Families, neighbours and friends gather to visit and talk well into the night. Periodically the bandstand serves its intended function as a venue for a traditional *taraab* ensemble or pop group performance.

With the extension of the routine hydrofoil ferry service from the mainland in the 1990s, however, many more Maasia vendors have crowded into Forodhani during the evening. As a result,

Fig. 11. Bandstand at Forodhani Park, Zanzibar. Tranquil by day, the seafront park comes alive nightly with food vendors, hawkers, occasional concerts, strolling families and tourists.

citizens of Zanzibar increasingly regard the waterfront park as a space primarily for tourism. And tourists, who typically use the park space as a respite between visits to island attractions, remain unaware that Forodhani is itself a space produced by histories of colonialism and post-colonial nation building.

Expansion spaces

Markets, stone town houses, waterfront parks and shorelines occupy the old core of Swahili coastal cities. But these cities must grow outward in order to accommodate newcomers, expanding into their peri-urban hinterlands. And while this growth may seem inexorable, the frameworks and modes of expansion are by no means inevitable; rather, urban growth has always been an intensely political process.

The blocks shown in figs. 12 and 13 grew out of the controlling vision of British town planners as they expanded and reconfigured old Mombasa into the space of a new, modern city. Bounded by Moi Avenue, Haile Selassie Road, Uhuru Gardens and Jamhuri Park, this is one of Mombasa's densest neighbourhoods. It is not the old stone town familiar to tourists, with its sixteenth century Portuguese Fort Jesus and its eighteenth and nineteenth century whitewash coral stone townhouses of the Shirazi elite. But it is as much a part of the evolution of Swahili urbanism, and today houses far more people than the older historic districts. This effort to inscribe colonial authority into the organization of Swahili urban spaces reached its pinnacle in 1963 with the publication of Harold Thornley Dyer's Master Plan for Mombasa (Mombasa Municipal Council, 1963). Dyer's plan contended with the fact that large numbers of people from rural areas were migrating into Mombasa, dislocated by a long legacy of colonial agricultural and land use policies that favoured large landowners (Cooper, 1987). But colonial planning efforts faltered before the footloose migrations, entrepreneurial energies and rapid informal build-out of the metropolis. Dyer's plan went largely unimplemented in any case, mooted by the achievement of Kenyan independence in 1964. Nevertheless, builders filled the expansion district with new structures throughout the post-Second World War decades, as development carried forward regardless of the political regime. The result was a densely packed, richly textured neighbourhood with complex block morphologies, irregular parcel geographies, and a hierarchy of roads from well paved to non-existent (Varkey and Roesch, 1981).

Today, the expansion neighbourhood contains a workaday jumble of shops, offices, hotels, rooming houses, apartments, garages, and restaurants (fig. 13). There are also cinemas, music clubs, taverns and other establishments geared towards leisure time. Many of the buildings house residential and low-budget tourist hotels. Rooftop laundering, evident in both figs. 12 and 13, reveals the presence of a sojourning population of newly arrived migrants, displaced and relocating families, office workers, students, and budget-minded backpackers from around the world. More than a handful of the hotels tolerate or openly purvey prostitution. With so many people in transitional circumstances, the expansion neighbourhood attracts a variety of con artists, plying their trade amid an ever-changing international population. And throughout the night, the twang of live Afro-pop bands washes over the blocks, occasionally drowned out by the thundering base of American hip hop or Egyptian disco blaring from the passing *matatus*. In many respects, the expansion neighbourhood is where the Swahili city remakes itself in a post-colonial world.

Fig. 12. Rooftops of Mvumoni district, Mombasa. The image, taken from the sixth floor of a hotel on Moi Boulevard near Uhuru Park, shows an area just outside the Old Stone Town. Today Mvumoni serves a bursting population with residential flats and hotels.

Fig. 13. Mvumoni district, Mombasa. This mixed-use area features numerous commercial enterprises, from cafés and restaurants to pharmacies, hardware stores, cloth merchants, cinemas, banks, furniture and household-goods shops.

Within the expansion districts in Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, and other British-controlled Swahili cities, planners and builders populated the blocks with buildings conceived in a new architectural vocabulary distinct from the Old Stone Town. The clean-line modern buildings depicted in fig. 14 offer a case in point from Dar es Salaam. Conceived as offices and residences for the urban elite, colonial planners located these buildings close to the political and commercial centre of Dar. Yet as with the derelict ships that line the Dar shore, Swahili urbanites have reformatted these mid-century modern structures for new residential and commercial uses. Modern architecture spread through channels of colonialism – whether by the French in Indochina and West Africa or the United States of America in Puerto Rico and Philippines or the British in India and East Africa. From the 1920s through the 1950s, British town planners, architects, and engineers in Dar emulated their counterparts in Nairobi and Mumbai, laying

out new districts in an attempt to create a legible, predictable and controlled urban landscape (Willis, 1993: 118-122; 145-160). After independence, the Tanzanian national political class readily adapted these modern blocks to suit their needs for an in-town residential and commercial landscape. The architecture firms of C.A. Bransgrove, French and Hastings, Anthony Alameida, B.J. Amuli and H.L. Shah designed the bulk of the city's modernist buildings between the late 1940s and the early 1970s (Lemmens and van Tassel, 2005: 160-162).

Fig. 14. Mussaji Building (1954), architect unknown, Dar es Salaam. Dar bears a substantial imprint of successive colonial occupations, from Omani port developers to the German street grid to the art moderne architecture favoured by British builders.

The Mussaji Building (1954), pictured in fig. 14, is a five-story block of flats near downtown Dar that typifies the best features of durable colonial architecture. Located in a bustling neighbourhood of apartments, greengrocers, clothing stores, restaurants and cinemas, the building contains 16 apartments as well as two storefront shops at street level. The bisymmetry of the modern façade is accentuated by the seemingly machine-tooled Art Deco vertical elements in the centre and by the dramatic circular corner balconies that cantilever over the street. Casement windows ensure that the building imbibes the cool ocean breezes. A riot of wires crosses and connects buildings to one another and to the street posts; the posts conduct the electric grid throughout the city, delivering power to licit and illicit hook-ups.

Swahili urbanism is highly adaptive and open to influences from afar. Viewed abstractly, this building could just as well be in Miami or Tel Aviv. However, examined *in situ* it is clearly part of the diverse architectural conversation of polyglot Dar es Salaam. The knot of wires suggests not simply connectivity, but also fundamental qualities of Swahili urbanism – adaptability, problem-solving, making do, absorbing change. Cities of the East African coast have digested wave after wave of imported and imposed architectural traditions, urban design schemes and technological interventions, incorporating them successively into the local idiom. Such importations become part of the Swahili urban condition with its rich vocabulary and wide-ranging syntax of many tenses and moods.

Template spaces

Even more obdurate than the forts and squares are intrusions into the landscape made by authorities deploying the intellectual apparatus of techno-rational city planning. On the outskirts of the Old Stone Town, in the Michenzani neighbourhood, a regiment of concrete slab tower blocks defines a wholly new urbanism for the Swahili context (fig. 15). A relic of the revolutionary Zanzibar government's socialist reconstruction, these modernist towers resemble the many thousands of such developments in Berlin, Paris, London, Warsaw, Moscow, Chicago, Kiev, Budapest and Prague. Like the Art Deco structures in the expansion districts, the buildings deploy architectural style in order to set them apart from the old city. But unlike the Art Deco buildings, which are defined by their spatial condition, the tower blocks themselves define the space around them. Designed in the International style and constructed by the East German Government between 1965 and 1968, the blocks challenge the landscape with an insistent rectilinear form. The international vocabulary eschewed history in favour of design out of time – a rejection of the architectural past and its oppressive cultural baggage. In place of the particularistic vernacular of the Swahili built environment, with its stark differences rooted in colonial underdevelopment, caste and religion, the East German architects believed that the modernist housing projects would discipline a new spatial format for an egalitarian Zanzibar. This design agenda reflected the aspirations of President Abeid Amani Karume's administration to extend the modern secular State to the provision of basic needs, and to get people out of their "mud hut" dwellings, which Karume viewed as a legacy of colonial underdevelopment (Meyers, 1994: 452-458). The adoption of modernist architecture also reflected the broader post-colonial deployment of Western categories to make claims about African progress and modernity (Hosagrahar, 2005: 131-147).

To a large degree, the socialist project was a victim of its own success and excess. To begin with, where Karume and his architects saw "mud huts", there were actually well-established neighbourhoods of older, solidly constructed homes, each of which played a part in a complex system of ownership, exchange and intergenerational kinship ties. Once replaced with tower blocks, the new socialist landscape did

not so much provision a public good as it did establish a cipher in local power politics. The tower blocks themselves proved to be well enough built and arrayed with sufficient amenities to attract the notice of government patronage networks. Wealthy, politically connected families took up apartments in the tower blocks, sometimes converting their old stone houses into hotels for the tourist market – "authentic" Swahili digs for European consumers (MacCannell, 1999: 96-107). Routine political cronyism trumped the government's vision of a socialist housing paradise for the masses.

Fig. 15. Tower Blocks of Michenzani, Zanzibar. Laid out along two broad intersecting boulevards, these East-German-designed, Soviet-era apartments introduced a new urban form to the island. Despite their popularity, Karume's government completed only nine of the 20 towers planned.

Today, the tower blocks are an integral part of the Swahili townscape. The long tradition of hybridity in Zanzibar led to the rapid absorption of the towers into the open, flexible Swahili vernacular. The German-designed tower blocks proved to be no more "internationalist" than the already world-aware Swahili townscape, and the tower blocks derive from a European vernacular that is every bit as rooted in a particular history as is the Swahili built environment. Indeed, as Jyoti Hosagrahar (2005) has argued in the case of Delhi, the very notion of "traditional" architecture is itself a modernist concept that serves to legitimate the authority of Western architects to define the "universal" language of design. Residents of Zanzibar have rendered the a-historical historical, bending the universal aspirations of modern architecture and the nationalist project of the revolutionary government into local networks of patronage. And in any case, cosmopolitan Swahili society had already provided its own version of internationalism, one that absorbed and announced new ideas through an East African cultural vantage.

Like the tower blocks, the practice of heritage conservation – represented by the incised sewer cover in fig. 16 – constitutes a radically new template of urbanism layered atop the Swahili coast. This emergent form of townscaping has generated new divisions of wealth as residents convert historic resources (houses, beaches, old forts, antiques, crafts, performance traditions) into valuable commodities for tourists (Bissell, 2000). As a systematic encoding of the landscape, however, heritage practice will have a much more far-reaching impact on Swahili urbanism than the more dramatic, but spatially limited, intervention of modernist tower blocks. In deploying these codes, municipal officials, religious leaders, scholars, and civic activists in Swahili cities confront basic questions about how to organize collective memory into official narrative. What are the frameworks of selection? What elements are to be included or excluded in the telling of stories about the past? How can conservators capture the dynamism and cosmopolitanism that produced the townscape through a process that fixes narratives and finalizes the accretions of history?

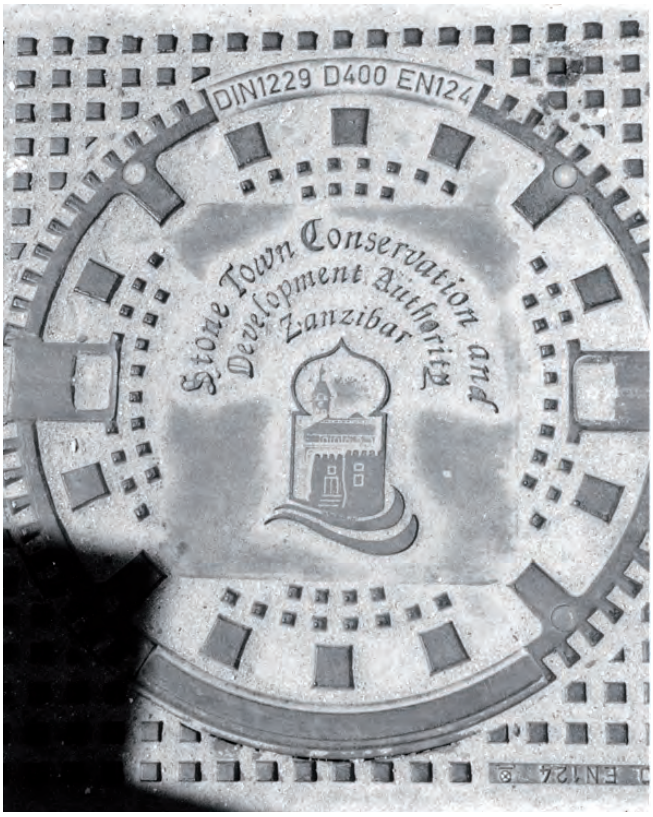

Fig. 16. Incised Sewer Hole Cover, Zanzibar. The design and distribution of this infrastructure element announces the reach of a new kind of urban political entity – the conservation and development authority.

As the "Tintin in Zanzibar" mural in fig. 17 suggests, high-style, tourist-oriented architecture formed the basis of the new political economy of conservation, as townscape diversity subsumes beneath elite narratives of history and place. In the mural, the Old Fort of Zanzibar looms behind Tintin's speeding automobile, providing the exotic backdrop against which the European colonial adventure unfolds. Likewise, the white sand baked into the crevices of the sewer hole cover underscores the connection of land and town to the great Indian Ocean. To this extent, both the Stone Town Conservation and Development Authority and the anonymous muralist accurately link the Swahili built environment to the oceanic currents, monsoon winds, and colonial interventions that shaped coastal mobility and commerce over the centuries. The objection that these representations are likely to have emerged from the canny design hand of Swahili artists does not diminish the complex histories of colonialism and elitism that underlie such urban imaginaries.

Fig. 17. Mural, Zanzibar. This painting on the wall of a residential building in Old Stone Town depicts intrepid journalist Tintin and his dog Snowy, creations of the Belgian cartoonist Hergé, driving past the Old Fort.

Absent from the representations are the many and diverse elements that comprise the ordinary Swahili townscape: wattle-and-daub macuti homes, commercial buildings, warehouses, schools, hospitals, libraries, university campuses, giant high-tech loading cranes, parks, soccer pitches, socialist housing schemes, discarded ships, and the many and sundry place-making practices of Swahili men, women and children. The onion dome of the mosque describes a seemingly timeless Islamic culture, but obscures the long histories of struggles among Islamic sects, between Muslims and animists, as well as the presence of a wide array of religious traditions and influences. The sewer cover image freezes a vision of the Swahili past untroubled by wars, colonial occupation, anti-colonial struggle and other historic ruptures. To be sure, these depictions of heritage in the form of the mosque, palace and fort draw on important elements of Swahili coastal history. But they also reveal a highly selective architectural vocabulary that privileges a particular origin narrative, which in turn exerts a profound influence over political and economic priorities in heritage investments (Horton and Middleton, 2001: 16-21; Pouwels, 2004: 35-37, 127-133; Bissell, 2007).

Finally, the sculptural quality of the sewer hole cover belies the fact that, rather than a stand-alone piece of art, it is a mechanically reproduced image broadcast throughout the sewer network. On the one hand, as a product of industrial design its replication suggests that the architectural achievements of the Swahili and European elites can now be read as part of the Swahili commonweal, successive idioms formed and reformed into a unified vernacular expression available to all through the technocratic benevolence of the State – a proper narrative of conservation and power. However, the extension of this image is limited by the scope of the sewer system, which in turn is limited by decisions of elite officials regarding the location of public capital improvements. Ironically, these popular artistic forms (the incised sewer hole cover, the mural) promote an elite-driven conservation narrative to the foreign investors and well-off families that reside atop the sewer network and to the tourists who share their world.

THE FUTURE OF URBAN HERITAGE CONSERVATION

In 1985, the governing Revolutionary Council of Zanzibar adopted a Master Plan for the city. Prepared by a team of urban planners from China, the document did not establish an explicit scheme for the preservation of Old Stone Town, but did recommend the formation of a heritage conservation effort geared to tourism, development and foreign exchange (UNESCO, 2001: 19-20). Responding quickly to these recommendations, the Zanzibar Government authorized the Stone Town Conservation and Development Authority to make a rudimentary assessment of Zanzibar's building stock. Then, in June 1992, with funding from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, planners working under the auspices of the Ministry of Water, Construction, Energy, Lands and Environment launched an extensive inventory of the physical fabric of the Old Stone Town (Balcioglu, 1995: 131-132). The result of these efforts was the Stone Town Conservation Plan, adopted in 1994 and featuring thoroughly revised baseline maps, a database of architectural, social, economic, and land tenure conditions, infrastructural and streetscape reports, and traffic flow analyses (Siravo, 1995: 135-138). To activate the plan, the Tanzanian Government directed the STDCA to exercise oversight of a range of new building codes, and to develop linkages to bilateral and multilateral agencies.

Over the course of two decades since the adoption of the Stone Town Conservation Plan, a range of local, national, and international bodies have contributed to the rehabilitation of hundreds of Stone Town buildings. Major grants from the Aga Khan Trust had already resulted in the restoration of Grade I listed buildings such as the Beit al-Ajaib, the Old Fort, the Custom House, the Dispensary, and the People's Palace. Between 1998 and 2004, the STDCA partnered with the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency to operate the Stone Town Urban Housing Rehabilitation Programme. The Programme funded the restoration of nine large historic stone houses owned by the Government or religious charities for the purpose of providing low-income housing to over 500 families (Jodido, 2011: 192). Throughout the early to mid-2000s, successive restoration projects generated a raft of detailed case studies and new technical knowledge covering restorative practices such as floor repair, wall bracing techniques, coral aggregation, lime mortar and wash, window treatments, arch reconstruction, drainage, and timber conservation (Battle and Steel, 2001; Carbonetti, 2004). Thus, in considering the future of urban conservation on the Swahili coast, the challenge is not a lack of technical knowledge or State legal authority. And while funds are limited, both the Tanzanian and Kenyan Governments remain committed to partnering with non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, and international signatory bodies to effect conservation projects. Rather, the major challenge is to increase the relevance of conservation to everyday urban life, whether by increasing awareness among building owners and tenants or expanding participation by citizens in all levels of decision-making.

These goals can only be accomplished by creating more inclusive narratives of architecture, landscape, and history. Where, then, do the concepts of a dynamic, recombinant, and cosmopolitan urbanism outlined in this paper take us as we deliberate new conservation practices?

While the following recommendations draw from the Swahili case, they nevertheless have broad implications. Currently, UNESCO recognizes over 260 World Heritage Cities and around 350 World Heritage sites located within cities. These urban heritage sites, particularly in the global South, face substantial challenges, including unyielding rural-to-urban migration, rapid and poorly planned development, and unsustainable competition for resources (Bandarin and Van Oers, 2012: 75-76, 175-182). To adapt heritage practices to these challenges, UNESCO adopted the *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape*. It constitutes a major improvement on current practices, providing general guidelines for the framing of urban heritage in the context of the dynamic character of cities.

Based on the Swahili case, several recommendations follow – three major conceptual shifts and four policy implications that emerge from such shifts. First, heritage officials should reframe the discourse of conservation in order to remove the language of stasis and archetype from heritage programming, cultural resource management, and restoration practice (Sinha and Sharma, 2009: 204-205). Typically, conservationists strive to describe the "period of significance" for buildings and structures, and subsequently to devise codes geared towards restoring the historic built environment to an archetypal norm. Thus, history begins and ends comfortably in the past. But as Jorge Otero-Paillos, Amita Sinha and others have argued, conservation should not simply unfold as an artefactual discipline, archival project, or spatial fix; rather, it should enrich our "sense of time" while providing a new point of departure for incorporating historic resources into urban development (Otero-Paillos, 2005: iv; Nagpal and Sinha, 2008: 59; Sinha and Sharma, 2009: 209-210). After all, conservation is both a spatial and a temporal discipline, and its practice should not result in the sublimation of change over time to the reification of space.

Second, heritage officials should interrogate the ways in which current conceptualizations of Swahili history limit conservation discourse, and in turn urban form. As William Bissell argues in the case of Zanzibar, most conservation efforts have failed "to account for or even grasp the intricacy of social relations and spatial practices in the city". Up and down the Swahili coast, heritage consultants and bureaucrats continue to deploy essentialist racial categories such as African, Arab and Indian, mapping them against batteries of built environment traits, ultimately reifying colonial categories and exacerbating the social and economic cleavages of Swahili cities (Bissell, 2007: 182-184). This permits the construction of colonial nostalgia for tourist consumption, but it does little to embed historic cultural resources within the lived experience of daily life for most citizens of the Swahili coast. Instead, deliberations over the form, nature and meaning of Swahili urbanism – and over the cultural significance of the historic built environment – ought to include a broad segment of the population. Major international signatory bodies, including the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), have identified the unequal distribution of access to planning around cultural resources to be a problem of profound importance (ICOMOS, 2004: 9-10, 41-44).

Third, heritage and town planning practice should recognize that designations such as "Old Stone Town" are ultimately discursive creations, formed and concretized by successive political commitments. Indeed, as Shirine Hamadeh (1992) has argued in the case of the Islamic "Walled City", the notion of something called an "Old Stone Town" is largely a colonial construction, reinforced by post-colonial heritage practice. In shifting to the view of Swahili urbanism as dynamic, recombinant and cosmopolitan, heritage officials can begin to redraw the relationship between "historically significant" and "non-conforming" landscapes, looking to the social utility of the historic built environment for clues to its potential for adaptation. Clearly, all landscapes are historically produced; how we define significance and what we do with that definition is the key consideration. While buildings designated as "historic resources" will inevitably exist in tension with buildings that are not so designated, this tension can be either damaging or productive. The productivity of these tensions depends on how far citizens of Zanzibar or Mombasa or Lamu are consulted in the heritage process, and on the extent to which investments in designated and undesignated landscapes are equalized.

Four general policies emerge from this broad reconceptualizing. The first policy is perhaps the most readily enacted: to incorporate recent research findings on Swahili history into the definition and interpretation of designated historic buildings. Current research demonstrates that much of the historic Old Stone Towns of Swahili cities are accretive landscapes; that they did not well up whole cloth from some unitary vision, but rather settled into their current state through centuries of improvements, multiple cycles of investment and decline, and changing tastes and fashions. Many of the greatest stone buildings began life as "non-historic" wattle-and-daub "huts" – a form once derided by colonial and conservation officials. Rather than uniformly ethno-racial taxonomies such as "African" or "Indian" or "Arab", historic preservation narratives should incorporate research that indicates a far more diverse and intertwined set of influences on the built environment, from multiple borrowings to intermarriages that together create hybrid, creolized and cosmopolitan landscapes.

The second policy that emerges in the case of Swahili town conservation is to broaden substantially the definition of historic significance, coupled with a recalibration of restoration standards. By expanding the net, heritage officials will capture more buildings within the "historic" purview, bringing far greater inclusiveness to the narrative of place. This will require the first major attempt by conservationists to look beyond the

Old Stone Towns to the surrounding urban frame, to examine and record the twentieth-century built environments reflected in the preceding photographs – and to do so in historicized terms. The expansion of historic significance will have the additional benefit of de-territorializing the Old Stone Towns, wrenching these districts out of their "island within an island" isolation and placing them into much-needed dialogue with the cities that surround and sustain them. At the same time, this expansion should be coordinated with an effort to fine-tune the restoration standards, graded against considerations such as level of significance, degree of need, current uses, local interests, and time to completion. A laddered approach to restoration will avoid blanketing cities with inappropriately uniform codes while staunching tendencies toward dislocation that can result when codes are applied to properties where residents have no capital to invest.

The third policy that emerges from this study is that of investment parity. Conservation officials should advocate a linked development process where capital sums invested in "historic" neighbourhoods are matched by similar sums invested in "non-historic", especially low-income neighbourhoods. This is not only socially just but also good preservation practice. As Stephen Battle (1991: 33) observed, the worst outcome would be to establish a tightly defined, geographically contiguous "historic" area of elite homes surrounded by an ocean of poor neighbourhoods stressed by lack of funds to lift buildings out of decline. Even modest parity can produce more egalitarian results; while 100,000 shillings invested in an elaborate Old Stone Town mansion may not go far, the same amount invested in a poor neighbourhood – especially in infrastructure – produces substantial multiplier effects. After all, funds spent on conservation are social investments like any others, and should be broadly deployed. The Stone Town Urban Housing Rehabilitation Programme detailed earlier in the paper provides a model for greater equity. But such investments should not stop at the edge of the Old Stone Town. Ultimately, linked development funds for infrastructure upgrading in poorer neighbourhoods constitute another form of heritage practice.

Finally, the fourth policy that emerges from the findings of this study is perhaps the most challenging of all: to make the heritage process transparent to all citizens. At the simplest level, this suggests a significantly expanded role for citizens in the process of identifying, defining and interpreting the heritage resources of their city. But beyond public input meetings, design and planning workshops, focus groups and surveys, this policy also suggests an active role on the part of heritage officials to lay bare their own practices. For example, Old Stone Town house museums should be reinterpreted to include not just lessons on Swahili architecture and urbanism, but also accounts of conservation practices as they change over time. The socially constructed nature of heritage should be reflected in any historic buildings open to the public through practices such as: leaving small sections unrepaired; peeling back layers of construction to reveal original (less highly regarded) materials; delineating the codes that govern the restoration; identifying the complex history of ownership and use of buildings; adopting contemporary designs for all future additions and changes. Conservation ideology is deeply embedded in a long history of colonial and post-colonial political practices. Swahili citizens can at once be proud of their built heritage and at the same time cognizant of the global tourist desires served by that heritage. This transparency makes for a richer conversation about heritage, to be sure, but it also brings citizens a modicum of control over their own history as they imagine a future for their past.

CONCLUSION

In the end, like all elements of architecture and urbanism that have washed over Swahili cities and towns, conservation provokes yet another round of accommodation and resistance. Residents contest representations of the past and raise questions about how certain historic built elements come to be supported by public investment while other elements fall outside of the conservation narrative. Indeed, the flexible nature of Swahili urbanism hints at one possible future of the past: that conservation will settle into the townscape not as a last proclamation of the order of things, but rather as one in a succession of landscape innovations. The problem with this outcome is that it eludes basic questions of cultural patrimony, of the social constructed-ness of heritage infrastructure, and of the just distribution of access to cultural resources. To be sure, the heritage tourism industry accounts for an ever-increasing share of the Gross Domestic Product of Global South nations such as the United Republic of Tanzania and Kenya (Rypkema, 2005), and the Swahili cities are major generators of this revenue. But without significant shifts in how Swahili architecture and urbanism are conceptualized, donors, state officials, local practitioners and outside conservationists will continue to isolate the historic built environment from its dynamic origins and contexts. The result will be not only historically problematic but also culturally and economically unjust.

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