

The Macuti House in Ilha de Moçambique: Transforming the other side of a World Heritage Site.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D

Abstract:

The thesis investigates a framework for urban heritage planning based on extensive fieldwork in the southern part of Ilha de Moçambique, an urban World Heritage site on the Indian Ocean coast in Northern Mozambique. The conflict between development and conservation in the earlier "native quarters" settlement, lacking decent urban infrastructure and economic income opportunities leads to a focus on integrated planning practice. Through interviews and mapping exercises with local residents and heritage managers, civic everyday values and a wish for economic development appear as a clear basis for dialogue on policy and implementation between planning authorities and community institutions. This could increase trust in the planning apparatus. Heritage values are an aspect to be considered as part of a wider urban planning practice and upgrading of living conditions in the area.

The meaning of built heritage is investigated in a context of African urbanism, postcolonial heritage and lack of institutional planning capacity, and suggestions include more intensive work on collecting oral histories, stories important to people's everyday lives and multiple perspectives on the history of the island known for its plurality of cultures. These histories contain perspectives bridging the perceived urban dichotomies of the island.

The investigation takes point of departure in surveys of current transformation of the Macuti House typology, generally seen as main carrier of heritage value in the southern part of the island. The Macuti house is often presented from a fairly romantic vernacular perspective, in the official policy documents. In the thesis this perspective shifts towards a more urban outlook with a focus on the street space and the particular shape of the spaces between the streets and the buildings supporting a certain form of urban life, as well as the shape of local social and cultural institutions facilitating a way of life. Here we also find values, which can form a basis for official heritage narrative and policy.

The thesis proposes a framework for heritage planning as a continuous process and dialogue, where the workshops and surveys carried out in the context of the research project form a basis for further discussion. This could lead to a reframing of heritage values in a way bridging the urban divide between the north and south in the island, the perceived divide between conservation and development, and the divide between tangible and intangible heritage values, supporting local social and human development.