

PART VII Reflection

This chapter will reflect upon and discuss critical aspects of the research process. The research process is closely linked to the research questions and the steps taken in order to reach the final part of the thesis as indicated in the figure on the right. This chapter will outline overall limitations on the methodology and data gathering but will also critically evaluate the strategic design intervention through outlining constraints and (ethical) considerations

Stages to reflect upon:



INTRODUCTION

1. The relationship between (global) contemporary trends and current urban planning practices in Dar es Salaam

PROBLEM FIELD

- Scientific and societal relevance



DEFINITION

METHODOLOGY

- Methods and data gathering: limitations and constraints



DISTINCTION

2. The connection of the socio-economic background of Dar es Salaam to its spatial manifestation and present-day structuring

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Translating post-development

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

- Limitations of spatial analysis on societal change and the multi-dimensional city



INTERPRETATION

3. The shaping and pressurising of spatial and non-spatial structures on the nature of local urban livelihoods and their determination of their welfare

4. The interpretation of infrastructure, public space and development for the African city and its local scaled communities

LOCAL FRAMEWORK

- Generalising and determining pressing challenges and conditions

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- Connecting ill-defined concepts to space



INTERVENTION

5. Spatial strategies and design principles to guide and tangible and intangible growth of local livelihoods and the (re-)definition of the conditions for infrastructure and public space

CASE STUDY MAGOMENI

- Identifying areas of intervention

SPATIAL DESIGN STRATEGY

- Solving non-spatial issues through spatial design
- Socio-political systems and proposing new conditions
- Ethical issues or dilemmas (right to the city)



EVALUATION

6. The translation of a post-developmental perspective, offering a co-productive, sustainable and capacity building framework to other cases and reflection upon 'The African City'

- Graduation studio and course
- Lessons learnt

Figure 128 Research process stages of reflection

1. On Introduction

PROBLEM FIELD

Societal and scientific relevance

Firstly, Africa's rapid urban growth is in line with trends and challenges observed in most emerging and developing countries in the Global South. This thesis positions itself at the intersection of these pressing issues that are being intensified by this rapid urbanisation and where research, especially within the Global South, is lacking. However, while knowledge and research on the African continent remains relatively limited, there has been an increasing interest in African cities by urban planners, designers and scholars. According to Avermaete and Logae (2010), the contemporary conditions of the African city are appealing because they invite a reconsideration of the existing western paradigms of understanding urban development. All too often, urban scholars and policy makers discuss African cities as a manifestation of the failure of development. Where, unlike cities in the West, the evolutionary process of development have stalled or been disrupted. But while African cities do experience those infrastructure, governance, financial and population challenges, these challenges are not the sum of the experiences of its citizens. This thesis tried to contribute to a greater understanding of African urban actors and their ingenuity. In addition, when doing research on Africa for Africa, it is important not to fall back to the assumptions of universal applicability and scientific superiority of Western theories (Pieterse, 2017). Through adopting a post-developmental approach, this thesis aimed to add to the body of science from a more holistic viewpoint.

Secondly, we are living in an era where substantive spatial issues regarding environmental sustainability (for example regarding energy and water) are often placed to the foreground of academic research. In contrast, this thesis placed a strong emphasis on normative values such as inclusiveness, liveability and wellbeing. Through addressing policies and regulatory planning mechanisms in combination with the cultural and historic background of the city, this thesis can deepen other fields of knowledge as well.

2. On Definition

METHODOLOGY

Methods and data gathering: limitations and constraints

This thesis had set out various methods for data collection and analysis such as literature review, mapping, photographing and fieldwork. Unfortunately, some of the methods were less used or had a lower impact than expected, which required an adaptation or limitation during the research process.

Firstly, the knowledge gap in Africa entails a lack of available data in both literature and online information systems such as GIS. For this reason, many maps were made with the help of OpenStreetMap and Google Earth as basis together with empirical knowledge. Certain common functions that are available in Europe such as street view, 3D or even more detailed zoom-ins were not available in this context. Maps and data that were accessible online were outdated, unreliable or did not fully capture the information needed. This required being sensitive and careful towards data sources and finding creative ways to collect data. While creating detailed and politically correct maps were beyond the scope of this research, the lack of data does exemplify the need for more research to be done in Africa and the importance of having access to open source data.

Secondly, fieldwork was an important part to shape the empirical knowledge of this thesis. However, the possibility of making photographs, recordings, videos posed great difficulties. People were very hesitant towards being photographed or filmed and bringing outside a proper camera was not even an option. Even when joined by Tanzanian urban planning students and explanation in Swahili of the project, we were often asked to delete photographs. Majority of the photographs used in this thesis were made with a cell-phone which resulted in lower quality images which were often skewed or entirely unusable. In addition, conversing with locals was difficult due to my foreign appearance and inability to speak the Swahili language. From whichever background the apprehensive and protective behaviour of locals in Dar es Salaam is coming from, there is an indication and clear lack of understanding about the value of urban planning and comprehensive data collection. It also showcases how important it is to firstly build distinct relationships to gain trust before diving and researching into personal livelihoods in an unfamiliar context. This unfortunately requires a substantial amount of time, which was not possible within the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, the four months stay in Dar es Salaam and working with both Tanzanian and South African students has greatly enlarged the empirical notions within this thesis. It posed an opportunity to meet like-minded people and (re-)consider knowledge that was previously collected.

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Figure 129 Group of men leisurely sitting next to the road in Dar es Salaam, apprehensive towards photographing

3. On Distinction

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Translating post-development

The theoretical discourse of post-development was the starting point and backbone of approaching the research on Dar es Salaam. The position adopted in this thesis takes the way people live seriously and does not view them as incomplete or in 'need for development'. Rather, through in-depth observations and field work experiences, it takes their lives as the standard and searches for methods in which spatial and planning practices can accommodate them. It is not only about different ways of organising life, but equally about alternative ways of understanding the world.

It is important to note that this thesis did not aim for an alternative development. As Ziai (2017a) states, if the goal of looking for alternative developments is defined by modern, industrial capitalist societies, then even alternative development remains firmly grounded in the West or, more precisely, hegemonic models of politics (nation state and liberal democracy), the economy (neoliberal, globalised capitalism) and knowledge (Western science). Thus, instead of assuming a single path forward to a good society, the potential of Western alternatives to these models to improve human well-being will remain untapped. In this thesis, this was translated to researching the individual motivation and inspirations of communities and creating approachable spatial design interventions.

Additionally, it meant recognising how development is materially embedded within the contemporary ideas of neoliberal development. Rather than displacing or marginalising local activities or dismissing people's desire for 'development' as the result of ideology and manipulation, based on privileged knowledge of their 'real' needs, it looks at their complex engagements with ideas of development while in search for ways to support them. If we want to take the post-developmental imperative of 'development pluralism' seriously, we need to consider non-Western alternatives as well to redefine development. This takes into account not only different paths to modernity, but also different ideas of a 'good life' altogether.

Furthermore, this thesis does not generally reject all elements of modernity or promotes cultural hybridisation. On the other hand, it follows the approach of sceptical post-developmentalism which is critical towards cultural traditions, abstains from articulating desirable models of society and employs a dynamic and constructivist concept of culture (Ziai, 2017b). Instead of using the best guidebook or searching for an optimum approach, this approach leads to a radical democratic position. And can thus be a potential contribution to a non-Eurocentric and more power-sensitive theory of positive social change, which follows up on the discourse of 'development' read as a discourse of rights.

Limitations of spatial analysis on societal change and the multidimensional city

For urban planners and designers, the main field of intervention is urban space. Space is a tangible discourse that has changed overtime and can thus be measure, quantified and submitted to various scientific hypothesis. However, a city consists of multiple dimensions and urban space is not synchronic with societal change. Kempen and Marcuse (1997) also stress that 'spatial change is both a consequence and a cause of changes in the lives of urban residents, but those changes cannot be adequately captured through examination of only spatial patterns'. The multi-layered nature of urban life cannot be derived from merely its physical aspects. While certain societal trends shaped physical structures within the city, this thesis did not attempt to link all societal changes to space. For this reason, not all results were concluded in maps, but also text, images and diagrams were created to reach an overview of the context of Dar es Salaam. It carefully connected various methods of researching and evaluating all of which related to urban planning. What should be noted is that also this can never encompass the entire 'African city'.

4. On Interpretation

LOCAL FRAMEWORK



Figure 130 Flooding Dar es Salaam 2019

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Generalising and determining pressing challenges and conditions

The local framework chapter further explored pressing issues and non-negotiable conditions related to spatial planning. It aimed to provide a general impression on how critical spatial and societal systems in the city work without comparing them to Western societies. Researching these critical items in detail, involved certain generalisations. For example, people and demographics were generalised in order to address and highlight vulnerable groups to environmental threats within the city. The exact effects of those threats might vary per area and individual.

Furthermore, the impression of the consequences of non-negotiable conditions on local networks mostly stems from empirical experience and working in practice in Dar es Salaam, which lessens validity.

Connecting ill-defined concepts to space

The conceptual framework chapter is framed around the intersection between theory and space. The modern definitions of public space and how space can affect its users have been discussed from the perspective of various bodies of knowledge. However, while research on human behaviour and well-being in the Global South is not new, relating those concepts to space is largely under researched. Through various methods, such as photographing, drawing, interviewing, mapping and personal experiences, the use of space in Dar es Salaam has been mapped. Parallel to this mapping, the concepts on how public space can be understood from a theoretical perspective has been reflected. While the methods used in this chapter to map the different types of appropriation of space, can be easily replicated the reflection on theory can never be fully objective and should be critically considered when translating this research to other areas.

5. On Intervention

CASE STUDY:
MAGOMENI

SPATIAL DESIGN
STRATEGY

Identifying areas of intervention

First, the case study location of Magomeni was taken to deepen the research and to address possible interventions. While the case study site is representative of other areas within the city, it does not encompass all types of livelihood activities, building typologies, household categories or any other 'generalised' idea of the city. For example, a large part of this research focusses on the effect of city scale development projects and their interconnection with local communities. However, not all areas within the city are considered within these governmental development projects. Areas further away from the city centre and far beyond the interest of governments might lead to different conclusions on how to guide and support local livelihoods.

Secondly, four strategic projects were determined to pose the urgency to develop other types of infrastructure besides road infrastructure. These areas were considered as they encompass all elements defined within the analytical and conceptual framework chapter. One part of Magomeni area was taken as empty site to pose design questions and display sample interventions. To take this area as empty site does not fully match with the current (unknown) developments and regulations. Intervening in existing and highly developed urbanised areas will definitely pose other challenges, which was beyond the scope of this thesis to fully cover.

Solving non-spatial issues through spatial design

The reviving interest in developing countries has brought the discussion on master planning back to the table. According to Watson (2009), this revival is oftentimes centred around that planning could play a role in promoting sustainable urbanisation and developing new approaches to planning. Despite these innovative aspects, elements of traditional master-planning can be evident and new approaches to spatial planning are shaped by older thinking and by the impact of traditional land use management systems (Todes, Karam, Klug, & Malaza, 2010). The desired integration between sectors, structures and socio-economic layers are rarely achieved by mere plans on paper. This all points to the need for greater attention to debating alternative forms of spatial planning and their appropriateness to various contexts, but also questions whether urban design plans as created now, in the form of one dimensional maps, is the form we should strive for.

In this thesis, the masterplan and design proposal are not a set in stone, they are a framework focussed on process and methodology. Areas of interest and importance are highlighted along with suggested ways to deal with the processes besides the map. And whilst the spatial framework addresses and stems from 'higher visions' of inclusiveness and justice, it does not attest to entirely solve these issues with the solutions proposed. It is geared towards public life and proposes ways on how space can be arranged to suggest social interactions and how it can lead to opportunities for socio-economic change. A starting point for urban designers is not to only see the map as end product, but to strive for those previously mentioned normative aims and acknowledging that more steps are required to implement a masterplan.

Socio-political systems and proposing new conditions

To propose a project that fits the African context, means letting go of the practical premise of realisation. Even while this project did not detail any costs or created specific timelines for realisation, there is a recurring recognition of limited resources and weak governmental institutions. Introducing urban plans that are beyond the prevalent templates in African cities thus requires a sense of inventiveness that might not be necessary in Western countries. This involved types of intervention that also poses great challenges in practices. The thesis called for governmental institutions to break tradition. Being open for to experimentation and acknowledging the power of citizens is a big step for governmental institutions to make in order to deal with their limitations. The proven ability of citizens to build houses, solve water issues and initiate community activities is much greater. Merely setting guidelines and acknowledging that not all needs to be controlled is a process of mind-set change. Urban planners and designers can be a key figure to lead these changes.

Ethical issues or dilemmas regarding the design proposal

What makes it African?

One of the most significant ethical considerations in this thesis is the attempt to design an 'African' spatial strategy. People often view Africa as one country which has the same issues everywhere. But Africa is not a country and as a continent and has as much cultural diversity as comparing Spain to the Netherlands. A second consideration is that it is not an authors' decision what is African or not. However, the term is specifically used to highlight the controversialities there are with the understanding of Africa and what is African.

This thesis is not meant to generalise Dar es Salaam, or the case study site in comparison to other areas in Africa. The spatial strategy proposed in this thesis is constructed to develop an 'Africa' together with its citizens and to create an build environment that they are surrounded and evolving with. The citizens are not just considered as African because they are locational wise in the continent of Africa, but their interactions and connections that have created certain socio-cultural behaviours is what together makes them 'Africans'.

Whose right is it?

This thesis tried to seek a balance with the interests of property owners and the social needs of urban inhabitants. It contradicts contemporary initiatives that remain mostly within a liberal-democratic framework and as a result, struggle to augment the rights of urban inhabitants against the property rights of owners. Currently, as Lefebvre (1996) states, in almost every city in the world, the property rights of owners outweigh the rights to use space, and the exchange value of property determines how it is used much more than its use value. Under capitalism, spaces in the city are carved up into isolated segments by the system of each private property. In order to manage these spaces, they are segregated into discrete zones by producing detailed plans for land uses. A separation which is parallel to the specialisation and compartmentalisation characteristics of the capitalist division of labour. This functional separation of uses, in addition to various forms of residential segregation is stored in sterilised spaces and prevents the coming together of spaces that encounter play and interaction (Purcell, 2014).

Altogether, this thesis approach on Lefebvre's 'appropriation of space' is a way to rethink the concept of rightful ownership and to transform our notions about who rightfully owns the city. It integrates tools and infrastructure that can be used in common and can potentially support surrounding livelihood activities. However, effort by civil society groups to experiment with and learn about the political utility of the right to the city idea is still required. One emphasises the importance of community members mobilising and taking direct control of their own neighbourhoods, but also focusses more on the inclusion of the mechanisms of the state through participatory policy initiatives. Secondly, the ideas proposed on infrastructural elements for public spaces could support local livelihoods in this thesis are by no means definitive or exclusionary. They open up the debate on possible outcomes and pose the urge to further test and investigate together with local users.

The dilemma between man and nature

This thesis demonstrated some instances where helping people and supporting nature can go hand in hand such as organic agriculture, sustainable public parks, resource efficient buildings and multipurpose infrastructure. Quoting Sachs et al. (2002): 'on macro-scale, the reconciliation of environment and development agendas remains light years away'. Sachs et al. (2002) explain how typical environmentalists are seen to be opposing deforestation, chemical agriculture or expansion of power plants, while developmentalists are pushing for marketing timber, expanding food supplies or electrifying villages. This thesis only showcased micro scale possibilities, but how to respond to the desire for growth, whether it be economic or social growth, without upsetting ecological systems is still a puzzle for the 21st century. The dilemma of either aggravating the threats caused by nature by pushing for development or aggravating the crisis of economic resources by insisting on the protection of nature is one to be further explored and did not fully attest to the scope of this research. As Sachs et al. (2002) also states, it is not that humanity faces a choice between human misery and natural catastrophe, but meeting this challenge requires revisiting the technologies, institutions and the world views that dominate the globe today.

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Designing diversity

Many items within this thesis consists of schematic drawings and a collection of ideas for intervening. This is firstly because the focus is on the process and integration of the citizens, giving them back agency to their environment. This means that the final decision making on what should happen at certain areas is a result of collaborative decision-making. Secondly, this stems from the belief that more diversity is needed to be introduced into the neighbourhood. However, diversity is something that is not pre-designed. One could design different sizes and shapes of buildings, but the same group of people (income, age, household etc.) could technically move in. It is ethically incorrect and not possible to force people to do something or live somewhere. What (spatial) design can do is offer opportunities and to do things outside of their comfort zone and initiate interactions that would otherwise not occur. What should be noted is that this requires placing trust in people as an urban designer, but also as the government, and that citizens should be able to appropriate space according to their livelihood and preferences.

6. Evaluation

On graduation course and studio

The research groups within the Urbanism department demonstrates how diverse the built and unbuilt environment is and the great part urban planning and designing can play in this. The multiplicity of our field is showcased in the diversities of scales, locations, topics and actuality, which also indicates how education and research (should) transform over time in order to keep up with developments. Markedly, a great deal of urbanisation is taking place without any sense of control or awareness. The learning, un-learning and deconstruction of historic planning and spatial narratives were crucial to the process of my project, but it also placed a strong emphasis on forward thinking and flexibility in an attempt to get a grip on future prospects.

Moreover, the Urbanism track at TU Delft places a strong emphasis on the promotion of resilient and sustainable urban development to ensure long-term growth. The understanding of resiliency and sustainability may vary per project and location. In retrospect, this thesis tried to take an integral, yet critical approach to the various aspects of not only environmental, but also social sustainability.

Furthermore, the Complex Cities studio aims to have a thorough understanding of diverse contexts from a focus on substantive issues (for instance energy, water, housing or economic structures), and normative values (environmental sustainability, social equality or economic competitiveness). This thesis is set within the sphere of global trends but tries to connect global issues to local cultures and livelihood activities to improve normative values on justice and resiliency. Here, a de-westernised, post-developmental approach to research and planning is believed to be crucial for a project to set ground in a multi-opinionated world. In addition, one of the main points of departure in the Complex Cities Studio is to critically question the role of the planner or designer in an increasingly complex spatial and social condition, which was also highlighted in this thesis through the integration of different fields on knowledge, appreciating plurality and linking institutional and spatial analysis. However, with a concluding note, we are never done learning.

Lessons learnt

Knowledge from practice

In total, I have spent 4 months working and living in Dar es Salaam. The knowledge gained from practice and being in the city was key in shaping my understanding about the context and further defining my research. It has also inspired me to do work in comparable environments in the future. Furthermore, doing research within a context which is largely unfamiliar and lack of available data has taught me to make assumptions based on empirical knowledge. Having an open mind was required in more subjective matters like social norms, traditions and receptiveness to alternate theories and ideas. Moreover, there is a thin line between proposing naïve interventions, while still trying to be visionary and push existing boundaries.



Figure 131 Apartheid Museum, Johannesburg, July 2019
DOSU project's Tanzanian and South African participants on 1 week knowledge exchange to Johannesburg

This is especially a challenge with sensitive topics considering the Global South. Many people have never experienced those situations, but everybody seems to have an opinion about it. I tried to stay true to myself and the observations I did in Dar es Salaam and to integrate objective analysis in complex notions. However, no matter how much attention is paid to reduce any threats to the validity of results obtained or how great care is taken to remove bias, expectation and opinion from the matter in question, I never grew up Tanzanian or lived there for multiple years. Even when the research focusses only on what can empirically or theoretically be supported by facts, I am not an expert with Urban planning in Africa. But then again, when are you?

Urban designers

Urban designers are dreamers. They are visionaries who aim for inclusiveness, equality, justice and sustainability. And that all within the realm of space, spatial interventions and masterplans. But not all problems can be solved through space. I have learnt that space should instead be viewed as an element that can guide opportunities. A different way is to leave space to the capabilities and imagination of its users. This different way of thinking about space involves other ways of designing. Rather than purely creating maps, designing processes and other skills of the urban designer should be addressed. However, there are still great steps to be taken, not only from the side of the urban designer and researcher, but especially within practice where other roles of the urban designer and planner have not been recognised to full extent.