

REFLECTION REPORT

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Densification without segregation

Introduction

The studio of Global Housing engages with pressing dwelling issues in developing territories dealing with the rapid growth in urbanized areas. For this subject the studio aims to investigate design methods and strategies to provide housing for the urban poor in the developing territory of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia. Within the research phase different problems in different parts of the city have been articulated. My site of intervention is Merkato area, which is known as the biggest open-air market of Africa. The site characterizes itself by a grid established by the Italian occupation. Today, as part of the market activities, Merkato has become of (highly) financial importance, making this area one of the most populated areas with the highest density. The Merkato, as the city of Addis, consists of a large part out of informal settlements (city: 76%). In this part of the city, due to its highly populated area, the informal settlement has reached its maximum growth, resulting in the deterioration of the living environment within the informal settlements. As part of this development the city of Addis wants to demolish the informal settlements, to introduce a higher density within the city center. In the Merkato area, this development has resulted in the destruction of the market place and introduction of new commercial developments such as westernized shopping malls and office spaces. In this strategy the city of Addis mostly caters for the upcoming middle class but forgets to cater for the poor in the social ladder. As part of the market, the Merkato is best known for its identity. This identity is formed by the grid and balance between the formal and informal market and on the other hand the density caters for this identity too, but densification has resulted in a lack of private space. Streets are used as public and private space.

Research question:

The new commercial developments are endangering the identity of the Mercato. An imbalance is occurring between the informal and formal market. The current trend of migration from the rural areas and the economic importance of the Mercato set this area under permanent pressure. This pressure has overtaken the Mercato residential area by densifying it and resulting in overcrowdedness. The living conditions are deteriorating and spatial qualities are being lost.

How can a housing scheme contribute to maintain the identity of Mercato and its culture values, while densifying the area for future needs?

Design

My direct answer to this question would be to redevelop the residential area and develop a strategy with a housing scheme for affordable housing that caters for the identity of the Mercato and its existing culture while densifying

the area. I believe this project can make an important contribution to the debate of slum upgrading and mass housing in a wider context. It can contribute on the discussion on how to deal with densification and cooping with the identity of a place.

By doing so, I analyzed the existent plot to better comprehend the existing structuur. The grid of the Mercato is very strong en dominant. While densification has reached a maximum capacity, it has changed this plot enormously. The boundary of the plot has transform over time. In my design approach I start from the understanding of this plot. A hard border co-exists within the streets. By creating a flow for the informal market, streets get structuralise again. In places were commercial functions are not properly integrated. Streets become abounded.

As a strategy I formulise a routing or flow in which a balance is seek between the formal and the informal. The grid is used as part of the formalizes space, in these street formal commercial and office space can be found. The plot is field with enclose building block that in which a communal courtyard is reviled, within this courtyard communal activities can take place and/or other informal more private activities such as home production. In several places this plot is perforated to open up the area. On the other hand a routing is created for the informal market, this routing/flow creates in-between spaces threw the grid and seeks on promoting the further development of this strategy threw out the grid. As part my intervention can be seeing as different puzzle pieces that can organically grow in Mercato grid.

With in the typology required for this intervention, I make use of a mixed dwelling types, in which I distinguish three different target groups: the rural immigrant seeking for a temporarily home, low-income mercato workers already based in the mercato area and middle low-income mercato workers. In this case I try to make a comparison with the stable condominium dwelling, but criticised it by not capable of integrating with the context of Addis as a city.