

Multiple Mnazi Mmoja.

Exploring Identities of Contemporary African Urban Landscapes through an Experimental Architectural Studio: Unit 15X at the GSA

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Abstract

This paper argues for the appreciation of multiple identities present within cities in Africa by discussing the pedagogic experiment of an architectural design studio and the design projects of the studio between 2017 and 2019. Mnazi Mmoja is a Kiswahili phrase loosely translated to mean "one coconut tree"- oneness in a post-colonial context. This paper interrogates the problematic single-stroke description of African challenges, a continent with over 51 countries with diverse cultures, ethnicities, and urban morphologies. The paper argues that there are many Mnazi Mmoja. *Unit 15X's* design teaching strategy has been to challenge knowledge in architecture, landscape, and urban design by first taking students at the University of Johannesburg to other African countries to foster cultural awareness. Secondly, *Unit 15X's* studio utilizes landscape themes, allowing students to research complex relationships between urban inhabitants and their landscapes and their production to enhance critical awareness and move beyond aesthetic explorations. Our curiosity guides us to understand what it means to practice architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and planning by interrogating public spaces on the continent. This paper discusses *Unit 15X's studio exploration of Larval (Emergent) Landscapes* on the public space of the Mnazi Moja site of historical and cultural significance in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania through two students' speculative design projects. Two students' projects, *The Anti-Atlas*, and *The One Coconut Tree*, explore the concept of Mnazi Mmoja- 'oneness' - to pause questions that challenge planning and design legislations and begin to speculate on how indigenous knowledge, multiple identities, and African material conditions can be (re)-applied to contemporary contexts in order to raise awareness of: identity; multiculturalism in cities; post-colonial urbanism within cities in an attempt to reinterpret the multiple representations of the concept of Mnazi Mmoja.

Keywords: transformative pedagogy, decolonizing, identities, urban, multiculturalism, Mnazi Mmoja

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Identity of African Cities

It is fair to say that the identity of African cities is in a state of flux as they all face similar unprecedented challenges linked to rapid urbanization, internal and local migration, growing population, increasing densification, economic upheaval, liberal multicultural politics, the end of post-independence euphoria, and growing impact of climate change (Abbot, 2012: 427; Myers, 2011). Important in the identity of African cities is how they have been viewed, analysed, interpreted and written about in the past, through the lens of Western worlds (Abbot, 2012: 402). African cities have been seen as failed, riddled with crisis urban environments, with overcrowding, increasing informal settlements prone to environmental disasters, high unemployment, violence and failed economies with an ever-growing informal sector (Myers and Murray MJ, 2007: 1). In this critique of African cities, there is little discussion of the resilience and innovation of inhabitants of African cities. These challenges call for new understanding of the identities and material conditions of African cities to be investigated.

Identity in cities is formed by who has access to its facilities. Nearly all “modern” African cities were established during the colonial period and initially were exclusionary in use to the settlers with the indigenous peoples granted limited access or spatially segregated, as exemplified by Apartheid system in South Africa and Namibia. During the colonial era, state ideology defined Africans as rural dwellers and, were regarded accordingly as temporary workers in the city (Myers, 2011: 52, Gervais-Lambony, 2006). Upon attainment of independence, freedom meant access for people to the cities, but in most cases, this has meant access to public spaces which came in various forms and scales. In the main, informal occupation of land for dwelling and conducting business in the cities has been the most transformative aspect of cities in post-colonial Africa and has been written about widely by many academics and scholars.

What has not been studied widely in African cities is public spaces as part of urban infrastructure both existing and emerging, and how the local ‘new’ inhabitants are utilizing these transforming spaces. There is growing recognition of the role of public space in cities globally, and in Africa in providing equitable access to facilities for citizens (Garau (undated), UCLG. 2015). Abbot (2012: 418) posits that the only way African cities can provide meaningful sustainable development is by rediscovering the true nature of public infrastructure which includes public space and its role in contemporary society. True nature of public space speaks to matters of identity and who among the citizens identifies with such spaces and how they use and occupy them. This has been the objective of the research design studio, *Unit 15X*, in the Graduate School of Architecture (GSA) at the University of Johannesburg- to understand how public spaces as public infrastructure of African cities are evolving and to draw lessons from this knowledge. *Unit 15X* has explored various public spaces in African cities, the latest being *Mnazi Mmoja*, a ceremonial space in the heart of the city of Dar es Salam. It is through the public space of *Mnazi Mmoja* that *Unit 15X* derives its conceptual meaning of *Mnazi Mmoja* (*One coconut tree*) translated as “we-are-one” - in Ki-Swahili the main language of a unified Tanzania.

Identity as a Transient Concept

Mnazi Mmoja translated to mean “we are one” which is taken from *Kiswahili* language that signifies the unification of inland Tanganyika and the Islands of Zanzibar to make

one identifiable country of Tanzania after independence in 1960 and symbolically commemorates the traditional gathering place of Tanzanian villagers and townspeople in the shade of a tree (Myers, 2011:44). And so, in our exploration of public spaces, we found public spaces named Mnazi Mmoja in the city of Dar es Salaam and in Stone Town of Zanzibar. Others posit that the term Mnazi Mmoja signifies the political unification of Tanzania- unifying mainland Tanganyika and the Islands of Zanzibar- as the country was conceived as a one-party state ruled by the Chama Chama Mapinuzi Party (CCMA) under the African socialist leader Julius Nyerere.

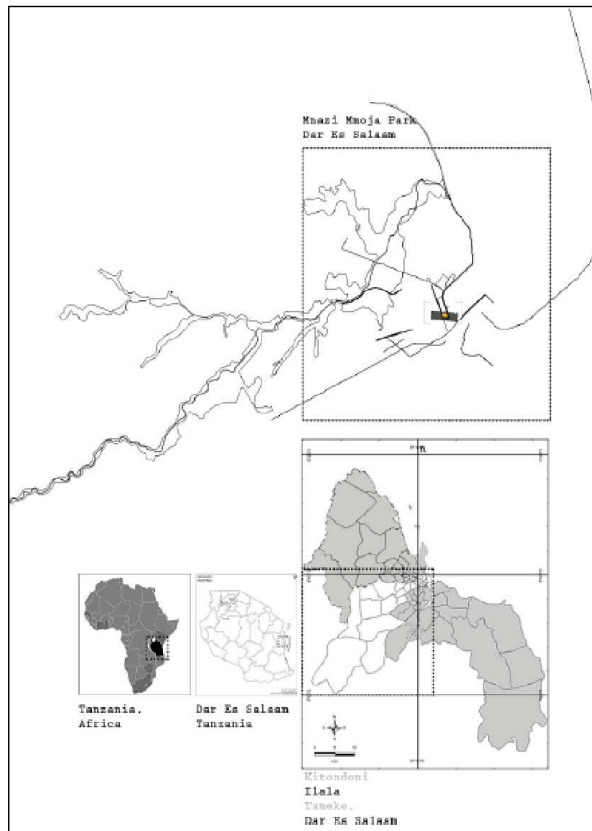


Figure 1: Location of Mnazi Mmoja Public Space in Dar es Salaam Tanzania. Source Smith,2019.

We have borrowed this idea of Mnazi Mmoja ‘oneness’ - as a starting point to interrogate, the deep history of public spaces as sites of multiple identities, that may be obscured by Tanzania’s post-independence drive for ‘oneness’ and seek to bring to light, representative multiple identities that might inform how we can begin to conceive, conceptualize and to design future public spaces in African cities. In a manner like that of Myers’ (2011:42), we start with making the assumption that understanding one African city’s evolution could be a basis for identifying common themes in urban development that may be applicable to other cities on the continent and other parts of the world. We use the principle of ‘oneness’ to interrogate the Mnazi-Mmoja public space in Dar es Salaam as it offers us the chance to identify themes that may be common and applicable to other public open spaces on the African continent. From the themes identified at Mnazi Mmoja we will interrogate the themes through the work of

our students' propositions on what public spaces mean and could be, what shapes their identity and how they could be reimagined.

Mnazi Mmoja is an open space- a green space in the city, marked with monuments that tell the selected history of Dar es Salaam (Fig1). The students' projects reveal the 'hidden' histories of *Mnazi-Mmoja*, one that speaks of: spatial segregation; forced removals; imperial domination by the Omani Kingdom, colonial German and British establishments; pre-colonial racial segregation; a post-colonial site of reconciliation, contemporary site of economic liberalization; a contested site for the contemporary unemployed inhabitants of Dar es Salaam; and a site of rigid planning regulations by city officials. *Unit15X* studio challenges its students to re-interpret *Mnazi Mmoja* in ways that spoke to the needs of current inhabitants of multiple identities of Dar es Salaam.

Unit15X Studio: The Research Design Studio

In the typical architecture studio design tasks and explorations are set by the design lecturer with emphasis on the students to provide novel ideas about the problem at hand that are many times insular and reliant on the students' skill to imagine a range of solutions. Reference to global canons of knowledge i.e. modernism and post-modernism, sometimes leads to a design agenda in the studio that is devoid of contextual interrogation and integration - design for the sake of design. In the context of global discourse decolonizing knowledge (Abbot, et. al, 2018) the *Unit15X* Studio in the GSA proposes an approach to design exploration that interrogates context and uses it to develop responsive projects that respond to the challenges of the context. In line with arguments for decolonizing the curriculum, *Unit15X* subscribes to the notion of students being co-creators of knowledge with as much agency as their studio masters (Freire,1993). Secondly, *Unit15x* argues that the challenges of the local context provide students with an opportunity to engage in a transformative learning experience that will develop the scope of architectural education in a relevant and responsive manner. Decolonizing the curriculum challenges the design studio masters to explore ways of bringing excluded voices into the architecture studio, especially those of indigenous voices that have historically and by design been left out of the mainstream discussion on architecture and urban issues (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Thirdly, we recognize that architecture programmes have lagged behind other professions like, planning and urban design, developing learning that responds to the social, economic challenges of the context (Rakodi,1996,48). Finally tackling complex problems, like public space, helps us to break notions of covert learning inherent in most architectural programmes, that the architect is the sole designer of a product, process or a place. In *Unit15X* studio one of our objectives is to reveal the importance of co-creation through understanding of broader systems, economic, social and environmental that underpin every design product or process. Thus, we deliberately engage our students in investigation, interrogation, design and speculation of landscapes of public spaces because no single individual or designer is responsible for success of a place - public spaces have many actors as realized by early 19 Century architects that their individual building designs fell short of achieving the 'beautiful city' and become increasingly concerned with arrangement of spatial of the urban context (Rakodi, 1996). Hence our focus of public spaces is not intended to achieve the Utopian concepts of the City Beautiful in the African context, but rather to explore ways in which our future architects can better

define their role in the broader systems of changing cities - climate change, loss of biodiversity, densification and urban sprawl- through a search for “solutions from below” that take into consideration, actually existing social conditions (Bekker and Leilde, 2006).

Unit 15X studio’s teaching approach is underpinned by exploring broader issues that affect public spaces in African cities as a way to better understand how contemporary infrastructure challenges can be understood and how they may be approached and how new identities can be defined and forged (Abbot. 2012). Underlying *Unit 15X* approach is the conviction that architecture and urban planning are “tangible tools” with which to explore and imagine post-colonial public spaces in African cities (Myers, 2011:46).

Exploring Teaching in Architecture and Planning Contemporary African Context

It is important to explore the identity of contemporary public spaces in African cities from their initial creation as part of cities and towns in the colonial period whose purpose was to serve the interests of the European settlements. The design of such public spaces reflected the imported interests of safety, health and ideals of beauty borrowed from the European experience (Rakodi: 1996, 46). In the post- independence era public spaces have evolved to assume new roles based on democratic principles and equitable access for all to public infrastructure including public spaces (Garau, undated). At best, some public spaces have been retained in design, quality and maintenance regimes with little room for the general public to reinvent the use or appearance of public space. In these cases, symbols of independence have replaced colonial figures or have been placed on prominent locations on the sites. In the worst-case scenario, colonial public spaces have been overtaken by new users with new functions rendering their designs to be dysfunctional and unrecognizable. As African cities have grown, there has been a need to design public spaces with a new kind of identity that expresses the changing aspiration, hopes and vision of citizens. The design of such spaces is once again problematic in that most designers, planners and landscape designers have training that is European oriented or have actually trained in the West. Finding the new spatial language and methods with which to engage and design new public spaces is driven by *Unit 15X*’s conviction that the quest to define new post-colonial spatial order, will not as Demisses argues, be found in the government planning offices or gated communities, by will instead be found in the “ ‘ingenuity with which African urban residents have developed novel strategies’ for confronting the ‘structural and social crisis confronting them’ ” (Demissie in Myers, 2011: 58), found in crowded the informal markets, streets and settlement of African cities. *Unit 15X*’s focus on informal public space is to extend the post-colonial spatial discussion to architecture, landscape architecture and urban design that has already begun in the sister fields of the arts: film photography, sculpture and painting.

Architecture, Urban Design, Planning and Landscape Architecture

Problems of African cities’ developing context are different from those of the Western world. Cities in Africa continue to experience rapid growth and urbanization, have little resources for the built infrastructure; and have weakly developed governing processes based on truly democratic ideals (Myers. 2014, Rakodi, 1996,49). Solutions of these

unique African problems require rethinking of the skills, competencies and skills of professionals in the built environment which have perhaps not been provided by their education and training as suggested by Zetter (1996). Professionals, architects, planners, urban designers and landscape architects in these emergent African cities are tasked with design of new infrastructure and by default the task of creating new identities. This is a complex task that needs professionals to be consciously prepared for, otherwise they run the risk of repeating the mistakes of their educational and professional heritage located in Western education. Any new language in African cities that will help to define and galvanize new identities of public infrastructure and more specifically public spaces needs will have to emerge from critical engagement with the context to understand local people's cultures and processes. This is understanding what *Unit15X* aims to engage students in various contexts in African cities, to provide a deepened and critical analysis and assessment of contemporary people processes and their influence in contemporary public space and city-making. *Unit15X* searches for news representational skills and competences that the architects, planners, urban designers and landscape architects needs to develop in order to define new identities of public spaces in African cities signifying what Zetter (1996,58) describes as a new paradigm for the built environment professional in the developing world. This new paradigm through seeks a new identity by envisioning what Myers (2011) calls alternative post-colonial African cities through multiple avenues: critical re-writing of African histories: developing multiple themes of Afro-centric architecture; and, re-thinking the curricula for architecture and planning school through African planning and socio-cultural process. It is the re-envisioning of curriculum that is the focus and driving force of *Unit15X* research studio. The studio experiments with various themes that speak to the many characteristics that shape the identities of African cities.

Unit 15X public space research studio is built on four key assumptions that seek to address the challenges of African cities: Firstly, it is that understanding of public space in a rapidly urbanizing African cities requires an integrated approach, one that breaks the artificial boundaries set by professions that Rowland describes as '...jealously guarded professional territories.' (Rowland, 1996; Zetter, 1996). We use this position to challenge current educational systems of built environment professionals in Africa. Secondly, there is a lot of learning from studying novel processes of how people appropriate design utilize public space, and their limitations thereof, in both formal and informal public spaces in cities. Public spaces offers the opportunity to explore the potential of informal settlements and public spaces to define postcolonial *citiness* in Africa (Myers, 2011:70) Thirdly, in African cities have a colonial heritage that combines with inequalities, social, economic and spatial, of contemporary societies in cities and that continues to shape public space through archaic planning regulations and processes and new policies that driven by liberal democratic process of free-market policies and agenda (Myers, 2011) . Fourthly, the *Unit15X* studio acknowledged the changing processes of knowledge production and in the process who knowledge gets recognized in the learning process and who knowledge is ignored in public spaces. This assumption is driven by the need to interrogate the multiplicity and hybridity of identities that inhabit the contemporary African cities (Bekker, 2006:207). We interrogate historically how public space was used to separate, erase and subjugate certain communities in cities and use that investigative processes to envision new identity of public spaces in African cities.

Assumptions of *Unit15X* Studio and its Speculative Design Approach

Unit15X Studio learning is tailored to address public open spaces because it challenges established and traditional principles of design by asking students to think in an integrated manner. Once students realize that there is no one designer, actor or participant in public space, but that there are instead, multiple users of public space with a hybrid of converging identities that the designer has to contend with. In doing this we are stretching the scope of the architecture and design research methods exploration used in the studio (Abbot et al,2018,108), and raise questions about the new skills that design architects must employ as lagging group of role players in urban affairs of postcolonial Africa (Rowland, 1996). *Unit15X* Studio uses speculative design of public spaces to imagine future diverse, innovative and alternative public space environments that respond to the multiple identities and factors of African cities; economic, social, cultural and ecological.

Two Studio Projects: Challenges, Process, Emergent Themes and Identities

To examine the two *Unit15X* studio projects offered in 2019 in the context of emerging identities of urban affairs in the built environments offers the opportunity to interrogate the effectiveness of key informants in the transformative teaching process that we have engaged in. This we have been able to do in a number of ways: firstly, to be able to reflect on the changing studio agenda in the service of the postcolonial African society; secondly, to reflection on the teaching competencies versus the skills and competences students need to acquire to be effective in complex African urban mix of emerging urbanity; and thirdly to be able to envision, by means speculative design- spatial exploration of environments that take advantage of people's novel initiatives in various African urban contexts.

The context in which we framed two studio projects is in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. For this study the discussion focuses on two projects that were done in 2019 by two *Unit15X* masters students on the *Mnazi Mmoja* site, an important public space centrally located in the city of Dar es Salaam. *Mnazi Mmoja* has survived as a public space because of its history as well as its identity, which has been interpreted in part as a site that represents independence of Tanzania from colonial British rule in 1960 as well as the symbolic unification of mainland Tanganyika and the Islands of Zanzibar which together make up the country of Tanzania.

Mnazi Mmoja site is symbolic of Tanzania's independence and unification, and so yearly celebrations to commemorate these events have been held on this site. In the eyes of many Tanzanians, *Mnazi Mmoja* public space provides a new identity of freedom attained in 1960, and that event has been marked in concrete by the erection of the eternal flame- the *Torch of Liberation* (fig3) on the location central the park. This important symbol of post-independence identity of the public space has led to the preservation and protection of *MnaziMmoja* as an important public space in the history of Tanzania. Control of *Mnazi Mmoja* public space is under the Ilala Municipality of Dar es Salaam.



Figure 2: Mnazi Mmoja Public Space site in the middle of the city of Dar es Salaam (source Masango, 2019)

As it is in the central part of the city, pressure of development is an ever-present threat over *Mnazi Mmoja* from both formal and informal business. More recently, in the post liberalization era of the economy in the 1990s, increased numbers of informal business entrepreneurs arriving in the city of Dar es Salaam, have posed even greater threats to any public space, as space is seen as a potential site for business. The threat of *Mnazi Mmoja* being taken over by informal traders is a lingering challenge for Ilala Municipality authorities and their solution has been to erect a wall fence (Fig 4) around the whole of *Mnazi Mmoja* site so as to control its functioning and use.

There are a few gates which are accessible only under permission and the public is only allowed free access on Independence Day which is commemorated annually on 9 December. This has led to a situation of overcrowded streets around *Mnazi Mmoja* for most of year as, informal traders try to conduct their business between the sidewalk and streets. The meaning of *Mnazi Mmoja* as a public space is only experienced for one day in a year and a few when people are granted access for permitted functions by Ilala Municipality. People have minimal connection to *Mnazi Mmoja* public space, our student's projects became a means to speculate about how new meanings and identities might be explored that the authorities could use to revitalize a public space like *Mnazi Mmoja*.



Figure 3: Mmoja “Torch of Liberation” Monument on Mnazi Mmoja public space signifies Tanzania’s Independence Day. Picture by authors, 2019.



Figure 4: Mmoja Mmoja’s edges are ‘protected’ by a fence which restricts traders and users to the congested street bordering the public space.

In such a pressured and dynamic environment, it may be informative to provide alternative interrogation of the public spaces that might bring broader means and possibility to point to new uses and functions of the site. The two students' projects were selected because they raised critical issues of history and identity embedded in the public space of *Mnazi Mmoja* - Bonolo Masango whose project is entitled *The Anti-Atlas* and Veronica Chipwanya whose project is entitled *The One Coconut Tree* were selected.

The Anti-Atlas- Bonolo Masango

The first project, entitled the Anti-Atlas New Cartographies of Mnazi Mmoja Open Space by Bonolo Masango investigates the truthfulness of maps and their representation in Dar es Salaam, through the public spaces site of *Mnazi Mmoja*. Masango was drawn to study the site because of its rich colonial and pre-colonial Omani history and questions its representation as a wonderful green space for leisure on maps of the city of Dar es Salaam that does not reveal its original function during the colonial period – that of a *Cordon Sanitaire* (Sanitary Barrier) used to separate the European (German) from the native populations or other races (Seifert & Moon 2007: 49, Sulemanji, M. 2017).

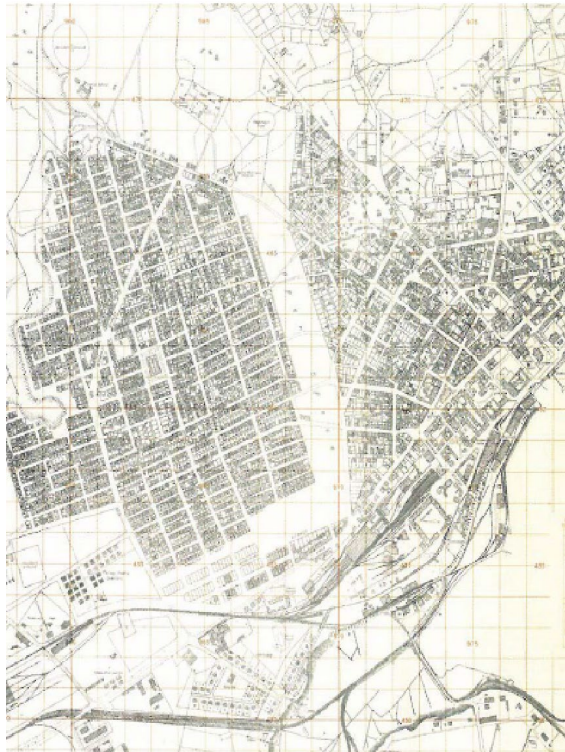


Figure 5: Cordon Sanitaire is marked by the gap in between settlements – the current location of Mnazi Mmoja. Source Masango 2019.

Masango's investigation of map making – cartography- suggests that green space was a tool for colonial town planning. This planning strategy resulted in forced removal of the African population who lost their land, culture and values associated with their ancestral lands. Masango used this history of *Mnazi-Mmoja* open space as the *Cordon Sanitaire* shown as the open space in figure 5 to explore and reveal the boundaries and territories that form the contested public space as the major design project.

Masango's project proposes indigenous cartography – a non-western mapping method - as a strategy to deconstruct the historical creations of colonial cartography to reveal the physical and non-physical boundaries and territories that continue to influence people's experience of the *Mnazi-Mmoja* open space. Masango argues that indigenous maps making, is as important as the product itself, their means lies much in the making as in the interpretation of the constituent parts.

Masango's project raises questions of land ownership, territory, and identity to heighten our understanding and conception of future public spaces on the African continent. Moreover, it illustrates that although colonial cartographic maps are presented to be neutral and objective, are imbued with manipulation techniques that hide and erase certain social groupings, engineer class distinctions, promote a language of exclusion and ethnocentricity (see Figure 6).

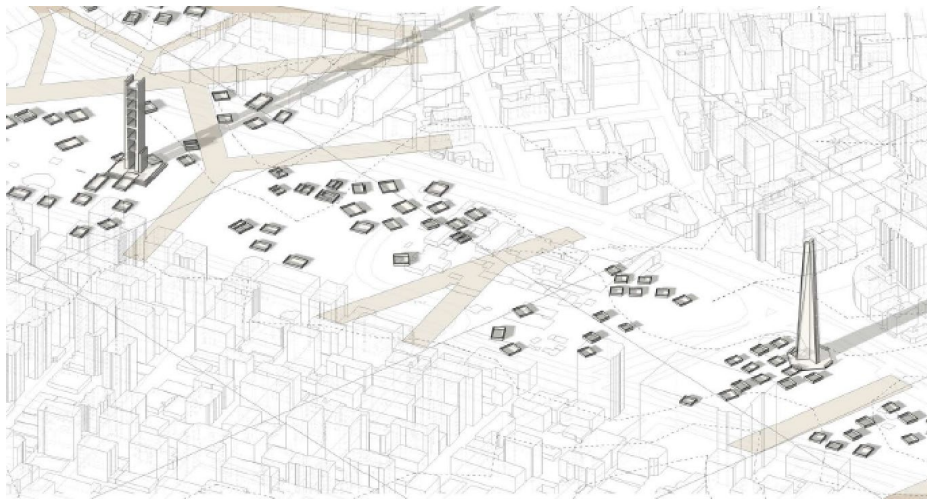


Figure 6: Countering the single narrative of Mnazi Mmoja site and its monuments by revealing the footprints of the lost homes and bringing life, memory and belonging to a landscape.

Source: Masango 2019.

Masango's deconstruction of cartography uses Mnemonic, Cosmographic and Solicited maps to reveal indigenous occupation and extended displacement of indigenous people on *Mnazi Mmoja* public open space. She borrows James Corners 1996 concept of 'Taking Measures Across the American Landscape' to imagine new relationships between contemporary users of the site who are presently restricted to the periphery of Mnazi Mmoja as shown in figure 4 above. Masango proposes three measures of Mnazi Mmoja that reflect that value of its relationship with the citizens of Dar es Salaam: *The Measure of Land*; *The Measure of Faith*; and, *the Measure of Control*. In the *Measure of the land*, illustrated by the collage in figure 7, Masango, records the contemporary user and uses of Mnazi Mmoja which on a daily basis are restricted on the periphery of the public space (illustrated in black solid fill), maintained and defined by the fence surrounds it.

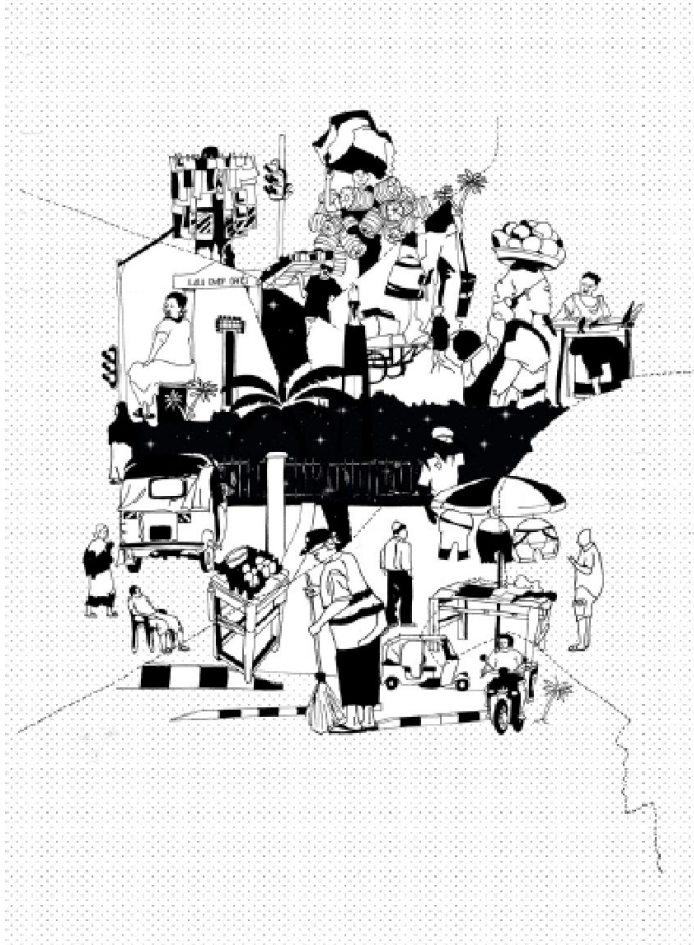


Figure 7: The Measure of Land. The image shows the relationship that the people have with Mnazi Mmoja site. Inhabitants use the periphery of Mnazi Mmoja to make a living or traverse to another place but sadly the open space remains inaccessible due to the fence. Source: Masango, 2019.

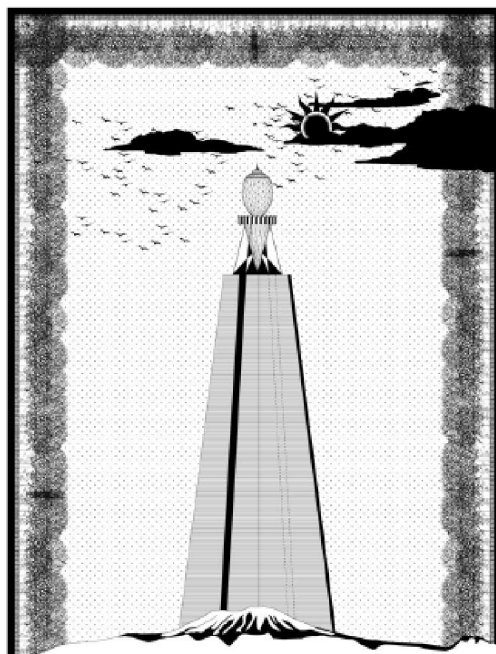


Figure 8: The Measure of Faith: On it, lies the independence monument that commemorates Tanzania's independence from colonial rule. The torch was symbolically placed on the top of Mount Kilimanjaro and on the 9th of December 1961 during Independence people marched to that exact spot in Mnazi Mmoja. Source: Masango, 2019.

In taking *The Measure of Faith*, shown in figure 8, Masango records peoples' associations of joys and struggles of human life and the aspirations for freedom and independence that Mnazi Mmoja represents through the Uhuru Freedom Monument located on the public space.

In Figure 9, showing *the Measure of Control*, Masango exposes the tools and processes of ownership of Mnazi Mmoja public space by the government through the legislation and local authority of Ilala Municipality and the day-to-day custodian of the site.

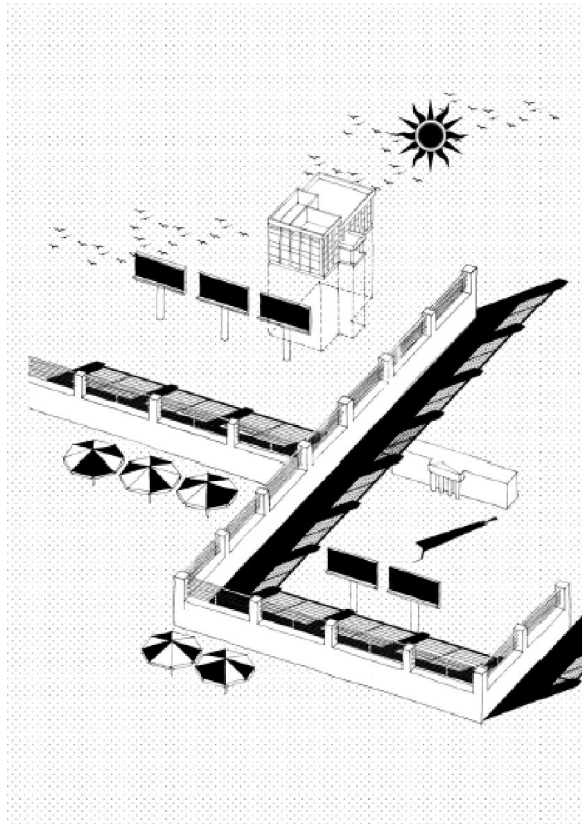


Figure 9: The Measure of Control Mnazi Mmoja site is controlled by legislative powers, where the legislation outlines that a public open space must have a fence to protect it from encroachment, yet the local government continues to erect buildings on it.
Source: Masango, 2019.

These measures enable us to visualize the complex relations associated with Mnazi Mmoja and variant claims to its ownership as a public space by multiple identities of stakeholders, all of whom need to be consulted in the transformation of the sites. In thinking about the future transformation of Mnazi Mmoja, Masango (2019) suggests two taxonomies as strategies to enable us to imagine Mnazi Mmoja as a representative, responsive and evolutionary public space: 1). a Taxonomy of Indigenous Maps; and 2). a Digital Taxonomy. As a Taxonomy of Indigenous Maps, Masango imagines Mnazi-Mmoja, as a communal space and place that benefits the local community. African cartographic culture allows Masango to speculate on how diverse and marginalized ways of map-making can be used to bring new meaning to contemporary design of public spaces. Masango uses indigenous “cartographic” symbols to emphasize the importance of communal meaning in the making of public space.



Figure 10: A Taxonomy of Indigenous Cartographic Communication (in Masango, 2019)

In Digital Taxonomy, Masango plays the role of contemporary mapmaker by using communal information gathered from digital platforms - Instagram users on Mnazi Mmoja site- to produce a of a “continuous-map”, that gets updated when the people on Mnazi Mmoja post images of it (Masango, 2019:94). Masango imagines the contemporary map of Mnazi Mmoja public space to be one that needs to be a changing map that is updated in real-time as characters change and different events take place on it. As people’s pictures and stories appear on contemporary map, updated by the #Mnazi-Mmoja, Masango envisages that live cartography allows the people on the site the freedom to participate in the map-making process by them to be able to continuously manipulate and change the narrative to reflect their interests. The contemporary live map is no longer a mere 2D frozen narrative generated by those in power, but it now has multi-dimensions that reflect other qualities that come closer to revealing Mnazi Mmoja’s sense of place.

Masango (2019) asserts that, “...live cartography gives us a glimpse into the sense of place of Mnazi Mmoja open space and reveals the needs or urban desires of the users on site. Most of the stories that were posted outside the site were tagged to be in the site, this could be because of the users’ desire to access the public space.”

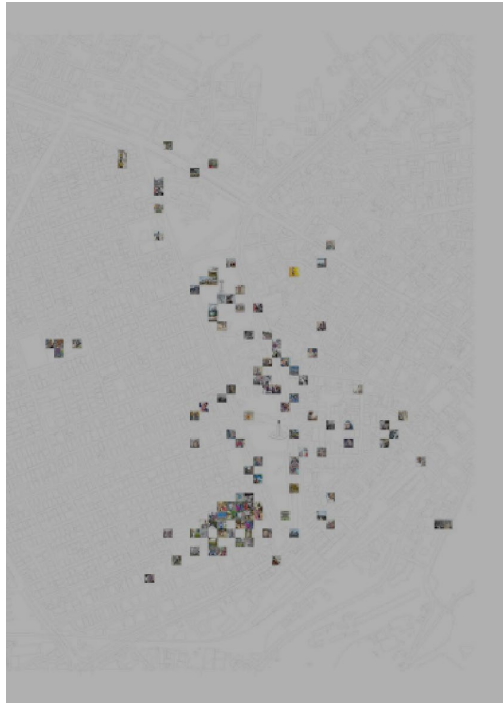
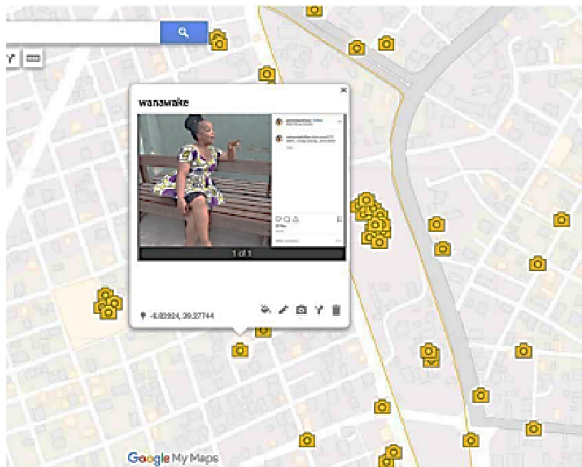


Figure 11. Digital Taxonomy shows how using social media and the internet could inform designers and planners of the uses and needs of people on Mnazi-Mmoja a site as a possible new form mapping.
Source: Masango 2019.



What does the Live Map tell us?

The Live Cartography gives us a glimpse into the sense of place of Mnazi Mmoja open space and reveals the needs or urban desires of the users on site. Most of the stories that were posted outside the site were tagged to be in the site, this could be because of the users' desire to access the public space.

The map also identified the need for women and children on the site. Recreational activities also occur on the periphery of the site and the user's stories tell us that they may want to use the site for recreational purposes.

Figure 12: Instagram image of #Mnazi Mmoja expressing the need for women and children on the site.
Source: Masango 2019.

Masango's project suggests that we examine map and plans of public spaces in ways that reveal layers of meanings, marginalized communities and cultures that provide the basis through which true ownership and identity to public spaces could be achieved. The proposed new cartographies speak to Harley's call for an epistemological shift in the way we interpret the nature of cartography by looking for new rules for map or plan making. Masango's rules includes, firstly, engaging indigenous cartographic that reveal

our complex and diverse past and secondly, developing digital taxonomies that require us to apply innovative digital technology for the general public who are users of public space to participate in mapmaking, thereby making the cartographic process a democratic one. The designer, planner or the bureaucratic official are not the only one with the power to make decisions about change in public spaces, thereby giving public spaces diverse and democratic identities in terms of making.

The One Coconut Tree - Veronica Chipwanya

The second project, entitled *The One Coconut Tree*, interrogates Mnazi Mmoja as a public space that fails to recognize its changing role in the contemporary city of Dar es Salaam by examining the commemoration of Tanzania's Independence Day that signifies freedom from colonial British rule. The thesis argues the festivities of the December 9 Independence Day Celebration on Mnazi Mmoja, remain steeped in marking the symbolic crashing of colonial legacies, through continued display of military might through marches, political party aligned speeches, choirs, and dances, but speaks little of reinvention of Tanzania's wider heritage and multiple identities. (Chipwanya, 2019). The design of Mnazi Mmoja continues to evolve in the manner similar to the colonial interpretation by erection of the monument – Uhuru (Freedom) Monument (figure 3) which, as Chipwanya argues, together with the existing monuments provide visual narrative that speaks to the legacy of colonial German and British rule and ignores indigenous Tanzanian heritage. Further, the daily experience of Mnazi Mmoja public space by inhabitants of Dar es Salaam is one of restrictive access, as it is only opened to the general public during momentous events such as the Independence Day Celebration which is hosted by the government of Tanzania. Access to the public spaces is controlled by Ilala Municipality and citizens of Dar es Salaam have to obtain permission to use the Mnazi Mmoja public space, which many may interpret as challenging the very freedom that Uhuru Monument symbolizes - freedom of movement and freedom to enjoy public space in the city. Instead, city authorities' only solution is to erect a fence around Mnazi Mmoja in an effort to preserve its integrity (figure 4). It is important to note that 'the fence' is legislated under the Planning Act of Tanzania, CAP 355 (The United Republic of Tanzania, 2007) and therefore freedom of movement, in this case, access across the Mnazi Mmoja public space, is restricted by legislation. The current state of Mnazi Mmoja public space provides an opportunity to imagine new functions and new narratives that engage multiple identities richly informed by the diverse identities of the Kiswahili culture. Chipwanya (2019) observes that Kiswahili culture has engendered national pride in Tanzania and argues thus that the Kiswahili visual lexicon can be used to re-imagine the event of December 9 Independence Day Celebration on Mnazi Mmoja public space. Chipwanya proposes the design of an event that subverts (through protest) the formality of the current military event. The event itself speaks to Tanzania's multiple identities, cultures, histories and an interpretation of contemporary uses and functions on Mnazi Mmoja public space (figure 13), it simultaneously dismantles the boundary wall around Mnazi Mmoja to make it accessible.



Figure 13 Reimagined Mnazi Mojo public space as an open and fully accessible to the public, this has not been the case in over 14 years. (Source: Chipwanya,2019)

Chipwanya names the event Mnazi Mmoja translated from the local Kiswahili language to mean the one coconut tree, a metaphor used to describe symbolic unification of mainland Tanganyika and the Islands of Zanzibar that resulted in the one country of Tanzania after gaining independence for British rule in 1960. The event explores the complexities in uniting the Kiswahili people through the counter-event that imagines the life of the Mnazi Mmoja in the future as an open and accessible public space. The project tells the new story of Mnazi Mmoja through celebration of Independence Day through dance as a protest, unlike the usual military parade that have traditionally marked the occasion. Chipwanya imagines the reclaiming of the public space by enacting an inclusive dance on Independence Day on the site with participants drawn from the Sukuma, the Makonde, Zaramo, Arabic and Maasai tribes that defines and make visible the complex and dynamic relationship between Omani immigrants and the indigenous people along the East African. Chipwanya's illustrations, depict a gradual takeover, of the conventional military parade held on Mnazi Mmoja, that traditionally marks Independence Day and symbolized the unrivaled obedience of the military to the president and the military strength of the nation by the counter-event of indigenous dancers whose dress and masks contain subliminal acts of disobedience (figure 14). Chipwanya (2019) concludes that:

“Through multi-cultural dance what has been embodied in this event is a reinstatement of the consciousness of heritage and the desire to preserve it for future generations. The opportunity to confront or challenge the individual's current perception of identity against the politically conditioned or forced identity.”



Figure 14. The Independence Day Dance is reimagined as a multicultural protest geared towards making Mnazi Mmoja an accessible public space. Source: Chipwanya, 2019.

Chipwanya proposes a new choreography of dances that replaces the forced sense of political unity and identity that is symbolized by past military parade in Independence Day on Mnazi Mmoja public space. A new parade is imagined containing Arab Folk Dance, Arabic Belly Dance, Maasai Jumping Dance, Sukuma, Chagga, Zaramo, Makua, Makonde dances dance breakdown which counter the military style marches on Mnazi Mmoja, whose walls are proposed to be broken down to allow for new functions. Chipwanya's, project of the Independence Day Event through a re-imagining the multi-cultural Dance, provide us with a method of interrogating and challenging current celebratory uses for public spaces that are informed by a strong sense of identity such as the struggle for political freedom, yet the manner in which the multi-cultural Dance is celebrated continues to exclude other cultures. Chipwanya's project, defines a process

through which the multi-cultural Dance can be used to create a new and contemporary sense of identity of diverse heritage that define public spaces.

The two projects, describe the challenges that schools of architecture, planning and urban design and indeed all other professions or discipline involved in planning, design and maintenance of public spaces, ought to address if teaching and practice has to respond to the needs of society and cities in Africa. The projects begin to address Myers and Murray's (2007) concerns that school of planning and architecture in Africa have not engaged critical reflection of what they teach their students.

Conclusion

When the studio set out to examine the public space Mnazi Mmoja, the studio leaders had envisaged a conventional exploration of the projects that led, as normal would in studios architecture or landscape architecture programmes, to a design resolution with solutions clearly worked out for implementation. Instead, the two students' projects by Masango and Chipwanya discussed above led us to broader epistemological questions that would turn the studio on its head and challenges how we ought to critically think about design in public spaces.

The two projects presented here challenges, the silo nature of teaching architecture, planning, landscape architecture and urban design in African schools. The projects suggest inclusion of disciplines like, legal studies, art, cartography, heritage studies etc., suggesting that schools of architecture ought to rethink their profession, perhaps invent ones that can directly respond to the issues informed by their unique identity. While the two projects leave us with design alternatives with which to suggest improvement to Mnazi Mmoja public space, they also pause critical questions about our role as spatial disciplines and professions responsible for shaping public spaces and societies.

The two projects in the studio provide us with three points on which to reflect and challenge our accepted roles as built environment professionals and practitioners. These are as follows:

- A) That we have for too long uncritically accepted descriptions and conceptions of professions based on Western deals of built environment professionals and that it is time rethink these colonial definitions and to develop new ones based on the African identity and the lived and material postcolonial conditions in its cities
- B) Schools of built environment programmes in Africa are key to leading this transformative trajectory by developing innovative teaching approaches that are multi and cross disciplinary in order shape a new African identity of public space and infrastructure in the next fifty years of African design in the urban space?
- C) New rules and regulations, guided by multiple identities and ideals of spatial justice in urban context, the need to be developed to guide professions and the public in the making of new urban spaces.

In carrying out a research studio using public space as the vehicle for interrogating identities in cities, we hope that Unit15X studio has begun to empower students to recognize the vital role that the public could play in shaping identities of future African cities and to realize that cities do indeed have multiple identities such as has been revealed in Mnazi Mmoja public space- its postcolonial 'oneness' is made up of multiple identities.

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