

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR NG'AMBO, ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

Sandman, H. & Suomela, M. (2020, forthcoming). Probing for resilience: Exploring design with empathy in Zanzibar, Tanzania. In Martins, M. Fayazi, M., Hobeica, L., and Kikano, F. (Eds.), Enhancing Disaster Preparedness from Humanitarian Architecture to Community Resilience. Elsevier.

Sandman, H. (2020, forthcoming) Shouldn't All Architecture Be Designed with Empathy? A case of affordable housing design in Zanzibar. Architectural Research in Finland, 3(1), 2020.

INTRODUCTION

There is an acute need for housing globally. This need is also present in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The development of the center of Zanzibar town will challenge the current situation in the central area of the city, Ng'ambo. This area needs to accommodate more inhabitants, as the city is growing fast, and an expanding urban sprawl is a threat to the already densely populated island. There is a risk that the cultural, both tangible and intangible

heritage vanishes, if the real estate market alone guides the development. To preserve the intangible heritage, the original inhabitants would preferably remain on site and be involved in the development of the area. The people in Ng'ambo are in a vulnerable situation, many of the inhabitants have lived in the area for generations and have planned to continue to do so.

THE PROPOSAL

This proposal constitutes an action research case, being part of my doctoral studies on user engagement in design. The project is done in collaboration with the Department of Urban and Rural Planning of Zanzibar. My role was to plan a proposal for affordable mixed-use housing with a higher density than the present building population of the Ng'ambo area engaging the inhabitants in the design process. The proposal presented here is a result of design probing, ethnographic observations, interviews and workshops arranged in the neighborhood together with 13 families living on the site in 2016. The collaboration with the inhabitants is based on an agreement that the people inhabiting the neighbourhood now

would be compensated by receiving a flat in the same size as their current house. Some minor changes in the division of space might occur when precise measurements of each house will be incorporated in the design. The site for the study is in the South East corner of Kisimamajongoo in Ng'ambo, beside the Southern end of Michenzani building number 5. The block covers eight of the existing plots, currently occupied by inhabited Swahili-style houses. Two of the houses are inhabited by tenants, one elderly woman runs a madrasa school in her living room and one house has a small salon. One of the houses has recently been sold to a potential developer.



Left and right: Placement of the house

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The proposal is based on the data obtained through the collaboration with the inhabitants as well as influenced by the housing tradition in Zanzibar in general. The building type can simply be presented as a combination of an enlarged freely interpreted Omani-style courtyard house assembled of Swahili-style single family houses in multiple layers. This proposal is a three-floor (ground-floor + 2 floors) unit 24 apartments forming a block with an inner green courtyard. The green space is 64m² and follows the guidelines of an 8m² absorption area for storm water for each existing plot. The fundamental idea is that there is flexibility in the individual form of each apartment. The plan can be formed according to the wish of the coming inhabitant, while it can also be

incrementally changed with time within the external walls of the building. The aesthetics of the elevations is planned to allow flexibility and “chaos” within given frames. The plan solution is nevertheless bound to the circulation routes and the wall containing plumbing and ventilation. The placement of circulation and plumbing follows the Swahili tradition of having the “barasa” (veranda), a semi-public outdoor space by the entrance followed by the semi-private “ukumbi” (living room), and accommodating kitchen, bathroom and toilets in the private parts in the back of the house. The floorplan leaves space for a cross ventilated space with the function of the backyard of the traditional Swahili house.



Streetscape



Courtyard



Elevation

In the Zanzibarian climate this space is very livable throughout the year and could, as an affordable option constitute a big part of the apartment. The system is explained in the typical floor plan. An area for a septic tank or other solution for waste-water needs to be placed next to the house. There is an option to place solar panels, urban gardening, a pergola with climbing vegetation or a simple roof on the roof-top, to ex-

tend the use of that area. Parts of the rooftop can also be constructed to be private attached to more luxurious apartments if built on the top floor. After the compensation 12 apartments of 45m² and 4 apartments of 85m² would be left to put on the real-estate market or to rent out. Ground-floor apartments can be changed to shops. Small and big apartments can also be combined.

Content continues on the next page.

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12 apartments of 85m²

12 apartments of 45m²

(Alternatively, less apartments combined with shops or less,
but larger apartments.)

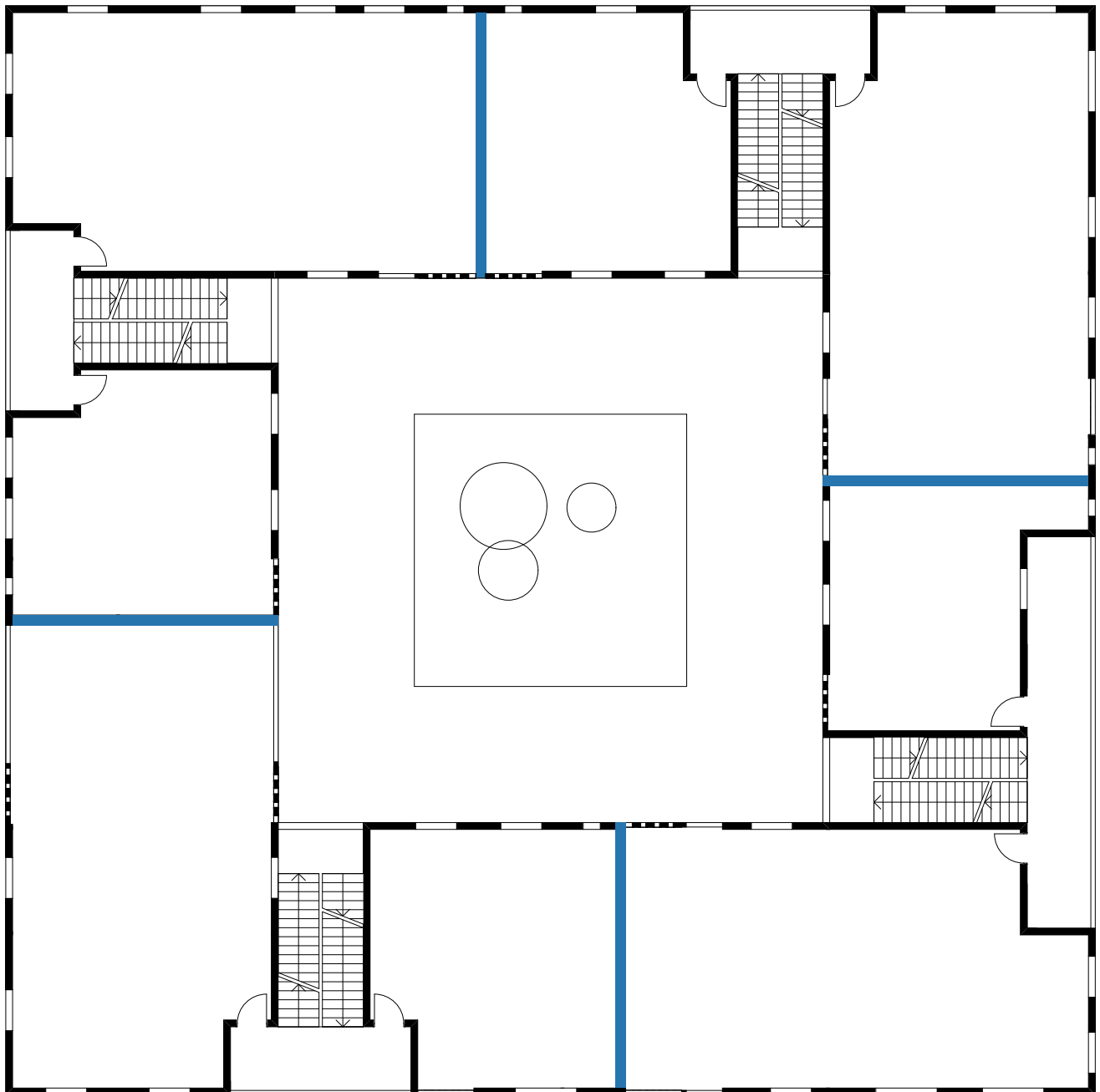
An approximate price for construction (2016) according to
calculations of 600 US\$/m² GFA results in:

3,154,911,400 Tsh

1,400,000 US\$

1560m² UFA (usable floor area, apartments)

2304m² GFA (gross floor area, walls and stairs included)



Typical Floor Plan
not scaled