CHAPTER 1

Overview and Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

All cities are in a state of flux. N. J Habraken compares the built environment to an "...organism more than an artefact." (HABRAKEN,1998:24) He states that; "The living environment can persist only through change and adaptation." but David Lowenthal describes the necessity to preserve the past. He states that; "The past is integral to our sense of identity."(LOWENTAL,1985:13) These opposing ideas create an opportunity to explore a condition which can occur in-between two ideologies. A city needs to change to survive but requires the remnants of its past for its identity.

The importance of any built heritage which may exist in cities is easily threatened by inappropriate development due to increases in economy or neglect. However, equally damaging is the threat that rigourous preservation processes have on the vibrancy in present social and cultural activities, through gentrification. A balance needs to exist within a city between the current functioning, future development and the response to historical fabric.

The debate of change versus preservation is more complex when considering post-colonial African cities. Independent African countries face the challenges of not only creating an identity that relates its to the residual local and colonial past, but balancing it with an emerging social and political climate.

Within the historical precinct of Baixa(Downtown) Maputo, this dissertation seeks to propose a possible intervention to revitalise activity, energy and vibrancy using the existing and perpetual elements of place as .

The site chosen for exploration is a single street, Rua de Bagamoyo which is found in the historical core of Baixa.

Image 1.2: Photograph showing decaying state of buildings within Baixa . Photograph by Author 2011 Rua Consiglieri Pedroso

Image 1.3 Photograph Showing Maputo Shopping, A new development within Baixa that has insensitively gentrified the area.

1.2 THEORETICAL POSITION

The elements of place are determined through the theoretical exploration of Jane Wollford in terms of her twelve points of contextualism and then expanded.

The first expansion of Wolfords theory is that of heritage and historical significance. The Burra Charter and Nara Document are used as a framework for photographic analysis of historical photographs depicting previous manifestations of place.

The photographs used are those of reknowned Mozambican photographer; Ricardo Rangel who documented the night life and prositution in mozambique during the sixties and seventies. HIs work was chosen as most of the photographs were taken in *Rua de Bagamoyo*, allowing a direct comparison.

Ricardo Rangels photographs depict activity and interaction with built fabric which is further explored in the current context using the theories of Fran Tonkiss and Bryan Lawson to grasp the relationship between the use of space and the user. Specifically how elements within the Built fabric influence human interaction.

Study of the street and social interactions shows many aspects of human activity being intangible. Mathematical harmonic theory is used rationalise the energy used and produced in the street, allowing for a solution to create balance that also allows for variation.

Image 1.4: Photograph showing vacant sections of Rua de Bagamoyo .
Photograph by Author 2011 Rua De Bagamoyo

1.3 Exploration of problem

1.3.1 Problems in the Physical Context :

With reference to the physical context ,"There are two threats to the Baixa at this time: the life history of the buildings, places and space being threatened by development and the developers feeling threatened by the preservation of history"(MABANA and LAGE, 2009: 1).

The threats proposed by Mabana and Lage are not the only problems encountered, they refer to the threats to development and potential but not to the existing problems. The buildings are not only threatened by development but also by decay and ruin.

Both economic development and urban decline have had a similar result in the built form in the way in which buildings relate to the public realm. The newer buildings, alterations weathering of buildings have resulted in a decline in the way buildings on the streetscape provide for the public user. The threshold of public and private space has become less permeable and buildings have become inconsiderate to the neighbours. Historically buildings provided shaded arcades over pavements whether they be the Victorian cast Iron balconies or modernist recesses but current development indicates how the these varying degrees of threshold and public interaction have been forgotten.

"The outside-inside relation which is a primary aspect of concrete space implies that spaces possess a varying degree of extension and enclosure. "(NORBERG-SCHULTZ, 1980: 19) This notion of extension is what is being lost.

1.3.2 Problems with the Social interaction of Space.

This dissertation does not only focus on the physical but also on the social and intangible and problems

exist within the social spacial relationships . Baixa has a richness and diversity of programmes but within the specific historic core of Baixa, the existing programmes do not allow for a 24 hour functionality, resulting in an inconsistent use of space and concentration of users, which creates opportunity for criminal activity.

Jan Gehl mentions the idea of the 24 hours city in his exploration of the improvements done to Melbourne from 1994 to 2004 in the publication; *Places for people. He states; "With today's more portable work practices and flexible schedules, people also want ready access to recreation on a 'just-in-time' basis – and nightlife is considered a vital component of this lifestyle and amenity mix."* (GEHL, 2004: 42)

Baixa does not have a lack of night-life but rather a lack of continuity of activity throughout, The night-life is concentrated to *Rua de Bagamoyo* but the type of night-life activity which consists of bars, striptease establishments and prostitution is in direct contrast to the day-time activities such as government offices and municipal departments and banks which close early in the afternoon, creating an in-cohesive transition of activity into evening. See fig 1.4

1.3.3 PROBLEMS WITH TOURISM

Mabana and Lage state that: "The Baixa of Maputo has a huge historical, cultural and tourism potential, to be valued as a cultural heritage."(MABANA and LAGE, 2009: 2) Although this statement is uncontested, the result of viewing the area as a place for tourism potential lends itself to threat of gentrification and manufactured authenticity which may jeopardize the very cultural heritage mentioned.

John Urry in his book *The Tourist Gaze,* states that "Tourist spaces are organised around staged authenticity" and that "The development of the constructed tourist attraction results from how

Image 1.5: Photograph   of the tourist market which has replaced the general saturday market at Praca de 25 Juhno . Photograph by author February 2011 Praca de 25 Juhno

those who are subject to the tourist gaze respond, both to protect themselves from intrusions into their lives' backstage and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents for profitable investment." (URRY, 2002) This response is evident in Maputo as the city already changes its nature on days when cruise ships from South Africa arrive, where the informal vendors, respond by selling crafts and curios rather than the general products they sell on other days, it must then be noted that permanent increase in tourism may change the nature of trade within the Baixa area completely.

1.3.4 Problems with Reputation:

Baixa is hampered by negative reputations for criminal activity and immorality, due to the prevalence of prostitution and petty crime. This is in direct contrast to the nostalgia for the night-life district of the 60's and 70's as documented by Ricardo Rangel that romanticizes the prostitution and glamour of dance shows and cabaret.

These negative connotations are borne out of the way the decline in the street has resulted in a feeling of vulnerability, and a lack of security. The area does not have the necessary elements of urban infrastructure to create a feeling of safety. This is due to:

The state of decline of the night-life activity leaves parts of the street empty after dark and this vacant urban environment creates tension and feelings of insecurity.

Poor lighting and visibility results the feeling of an unsafe environment.

Due to the increase in vacant lots and abandoned buildings, there are spacial opportunities for opportunistic crime.

Reputation being subjective does not hamper the vibrancy of the activity at night but causes persons working in the area to vacate the area as soon as

Image 1.4: Rua de Bagamoyo's Ladies of the night. Photograph by Author 2011 Rua De Bagamoyo

possible allowing for different users to inhabit the space at night, exacerbating the discontinuity of activity between work hours and night-life.

1.3.5 REAL WORLD PROBLEM:

Currently a delicate balance exists between a diversity of activity and richness of function within Baixa, Maputo and the heritage value of existing historical buildings. Due to the urban decline and decay within the Baixa, the area is at risk of further decay and eventual loss of historical built fabric, but an equally relevant threat is that of gentrification and subsequent loss of social diversity through re-development.

1.3.6 SPECIFIC PROBLEM

Through urban decline and unconsidered development Rua de Bagamoyo has lost and is continuing to lose cultural significance to its current users. What was once considered a destination for social interaction now contains residual nostalgia within a continuous programmatic function. This decline is due to a unbalanced conflict and duality between the daytime activity and its after dark counterpart.

1.4 AIMS

The aim is to create a strategic urban plan and architectural example that uses existing richness and vibrancy specific to place as the core design generators whilst allowing for economic development and financial influx to an area in a state of urban decline.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

Contextual analysis and engagement with place can be used as a framework to understand a specific site and identify the Genius Loci or spirit of place.

The spirit of place which is expressed by different elements of place, including the tangible and intangible aspects can be used to revitalise an urban area.

Revitalisation of an area can be achieved by identifying and celebrating what already exists through architectural intervention.