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Cultural Heritage Preservation Meets Modern Port Development: Securing the Integrity and Authenticity of the Lamu Town World Heritage Site in the Face of Current and Future Challenges

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Cultural Heritage Preservation Meets Modern Port Development

Securing the integrity and authenticity of the Lamu Town World Heritage Site

In the face of current and future challenges

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World Learning SIT Nairobi: Health and Community Development

Spring 2010

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Abstract

This study identifies the current major threats to the Lamu Town World Heritage Site, which lies on the coast of Kenya. Lamu gained status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its well preserved Swahili living culture as well as the physical representations of that culture in architecture etc. Lamu is a tourist hotspot within the region and hosts over 50,000 for the Maulidi Festival alone. However, the town is in desperate need of infrastructure development if it is to be maintained for the future. The greatest barrier to development and cultural heritage preservation is the lack of a Management Plan for the World Heritage Site, which although it is a requirement for enlistment has not been produced within the last eight years. With the incoming development of a new transport corridor to serve the East African Community, Lamu district will host a mega-port only miles away from the World Heritage Site. This new development if left unmonitored, will exaggerate the current problems which exist, particularly fresh water supplies which serve Lamu Island and the surrounding communities.

Introduction

In 2001, Lamu's Old town was inscribed on the United Nations Environmental (UNESCO) World Heritage list because of its historical significance as an epicenter for trade in the East African Region and its living embodiment of Swahili cultural heritage. However, the very criteria under which Lamu was inscribed have been the result of relative isolation from the outside world and modernity. For the people of Lamu today who depend upon traditional economic activities like fishing, dhow production and repair, and wood-carving, World Heritage Status has brought them recognition, yet has failed to provide them with any significant economic benefit.

However, plans for the development of a mega-port set to begin this year in the Lamu district could drastically change the fate of Lamu's people. The proposed port at the nearby Magagoni Creek would stimulate economic growth for the entire East African region however; its promise of economic prosperity also brings the potential for damage to the marine ecology, the natural environment, limited fresh water supplies and the inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure of Lamu Town. Members of the Lamu County Counsel, town elders, the National Museums of Kenya, UNESCO and local residents are concerned about the impact of the port upon the community. Serving as the region's epicenter for economic activity could threaten the livelihoods of the local residents, and the integrity and authenticity of their cultural heritage.

A HISTORY OF MARITIME TRADE AND THE EMERGENCE OF SWAHILI CULTURE

Serving as the center of international maritime trade is nothing new to Lamu town; in fact before the development of the port at Mombasa during colonial rule, Lamu was the main port of call which connected merchants to the resources of inland East Africa. For centuries the East African region has been linked to the global trade networks by the Indian Ocean, with natural harbors facilitating maritime trade, and alternating monsoon winds carrying merchant ships to and from Arabia, Persia, and India. This strategic location combined with

the abundance of natural resources available for export brought East Africa in contact with the outside world as early as the 8th or 9th century (A2). With the exchange of goods, came an interaction between peoples, and traders from Europe, Arabia, and India settled in the region, they formed new families with the inland African populations, creating a unique ethnically Swahili people (*Waswahili*). Between the 13th and 15th centuries, Swahili civilization flourished and consisted of more than three hundred independent city-states (D4; 4). Of these early settlements, Lamu town remains the “oldest and best-preserved living settlement among the Swahili towns on the East African Coast (D4; 4).”

LAMU’S SIGNIFICANCE FOR ISLAM

The earliest settlements excavated along the Lamu archipelago, date back to as early as the 8th and 9th century, and were all distinctly Islamic. Some consider the nature of Islam present in the archipelago to resemble the Islam of the earliest followers of the Prophet (A2). Lamu has served as an important Islamic religious center for the past two hundred years, which contributed to its listing as a world heritage site. Given that, “Researchers and scholars of Islamic religion and Swahili language come to Lamu to study this cultural heritage, which is relatively unchanged (D4; 4).” Lamu serves a unique purpose in the lives of Muslims in the region and beyond.

In particular, since 1866 every year the town has been host to the *Maulidi festival* which venerates the birth of the prophet Mohamed, the founder of Islam. The festival draws members of “the Muslim community from all over East and Central Africa as well as the Gulf (D4; 4).” This year in March, the festival brought more than 50,000-60,000 visitors to Lamu both national and international (C11, C17). With the festival characterized by a series of traditional cultural and religious activities in addition to some which are a bit less traditional (like donkey races), “Maulidi is a celebration that brings together the ancient and the modern in a cultural pot.(C11).”

COLONIAL RULE AND INDEPENDENCE

During Colonial rule, the British developed a modern port at the coastal town of Mombasa and with it a railway line which extended to Nairobi and into Uganda, placing Mombasa at the center of maritime trade for the region. In addition, the British abolished the slave trade, sending Lamu into decline (D4; 5). With the majority of cosmopolitan and economic activity based in Mombasa and Nairobi, the northern coast of Kenya was left relatively undeveloped. Under colonial rule, Lamu did however find some hope in the flourishing export of “mangrove poles which were in huge demand in the Middle East (D4; 9).” Unfortunately for Lamu, as with the abolition of the slave trade, “with the abolition of mangrove cutting in the 1980s, the town’s economy collapsed (D4; 9).” Luckily for the residents and their unique heritage, after gaining independence from the British Government, the 1970s brought foreigners who embraced the beauty and history of the island and with increasing interest over the years, and “by 1990 the town had recorded an average of 3000 foreign visitors per year (D4; 9).”

LAMU’S INSCRIPTION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

At the 25th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2001, the efforts of the National Museums of Kenya were rewarded with Lamu’s inscription on the World Heritage List. With the recognition of the role of the Swahili people and their culture by an international body, many believed that Lamu would finally receive funding to develop the town’s infrastructure and residents anticipated increased tourism and economic benefit.

The three major criteria given by the committee are (as cited within the inscription document):

Criterion (ii): The architecture and urban structure of Lamu graphically demonstrate the cultural influences that have come together there over several hundred years from Europe, Arabia, and India, utilizing traditional Swahili techniques to produce a distinct culture.

Criterion (iv): The growth and decline of the seaports on the East African coast and interaction between the Bantu, Arabs, Persians, Indians, and Europeans represents a significant cultural and economic phase in the history of the region which finds its most outstanding expression in Lamu Old Town.

Criterion (vi): Its paramount trading role and its attraction for scholars and teachers gave Lamu an important religious function in the region. It continues to be a significant centre for education in Islamic and Swahili culture.

For the people of Lamu town, this declaration was met with optimism that their 'traditional' town would be given the assistance it needed to conserve the unique cultural heritage and to move Lamu into the 21st century. Although the numbers of tourists visiting the island increased initially, the industry went in to decline after the 2007 Post Election Violence in Kenya and residents still barely manage to subsist off of their meager incomes. For Lamu Town, World Heritage status recognizes the unique cultural heritage that has existed in near isolation from modernity, but has the potential to bring in revenue through tourism to support cultural heritage management. Up to now, the potential to exploit Lamu's cultural resources in order to generate income for the local population and to aid in cultural heritage management programs (protection, preservation, conservation, etc.) has not be fully realized.

TOURISM AND THE FUTURE PORT

Unfortunately in the past, foreigners who already have the wealth and capital to invest in the industry have been the ones benefitting most from Lamu's tourism. Locals have been left to get by on minor income generating activities like production/sale of handicrafts, henna painting, dhow and donkey rides, etc. The wealthy foreigners build multi-million dollar villas and hotels which cater to the needs and expectations much better than a mere guest house has the capacity to do.

For residents who have been unable to reap benefits from tourism and the enlistment of Lamu as a world Heritage Site, the government of Kenya's plans to develop a new mega-port within the district have brought the possibility for alternative employment and economic prosperity. For the residents of Lamu who have been excluded from modern development, the creation of a new port which will place them in the eye of the storm, so to speak. The

port will serve the entire East African region and is expected to be the largest maritime port to date. The plans include a railway network, road network, modern airport, oil pipeline, and oil refinery, will cost upwards of \$3.5 Billion for the entire project, and are expected to be completed within five years (C13).

The Setting

OVERVIEW

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Lamu Old town is located along the coast of Kenya, within the Lamu district, and on an island of the same name (Figure 1). Lamu town lies along the eastern side of the island and is accessible primarily by sea, with an airstrip on the adjacent Manda Island which services air travel (Figure 2). The town has one main jetty, the Mokowe jetty with dhows and speed boats which shuttle to and from neighboring islands each day. “The three main islands of Lamu, Manda and Pate are a blend of deep blue channels and coral reef, wide sandy beaches and mangrove-protected bays. To the North, Kiwayuu Island, which has a narrow, strip of beach surrounded by reef (D4; 4).”

The historic old town consists of a matrix of narrow streets (less than 8 feet wide), and stone and coral houses of traditional Swahili architecture. The town is home to only two motor vehicles, one belonging to the district hospital which lies at the southern end of town, and the other to the district Commissioner. The primary mode of transportation is by foot; however there are around 3000 donkeys which are utilized for transport of people and goods.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Electricity for the island is supplied by diesel powered generators at the Lamu Power Plant (at the southern end of town), is unreliable at best, and remains unavailable to some residents living outside the main town (particularly the informal settlements which have appeared recently). The town lacks any system of waste disposal and despite efforts to

develop a modern sewage system, “the current design of waste and rainwater [flows] to the sea via open drains,” and poses “huge health and environmental concerns (D4; 16).”

POPULATION

The District is estimated to have a population of about 80,000 people, with some 15,000 plus living in and around the urban center of Lamu town itself (D4;4). For those 80,000 residents, the major modes of economic activity consist of “tourism, agriculture and fishing” (D4; 4).

FRESH WATER SUPPLY

Due to its location on Lamu Island within the Indian Ocean, fresh water supplies are crucial to human habitation of Lamu town. “The source of water for Lamu Island is from Shella well-field located 2 kilometers south west of the Lamu Town and comprises of 30 shallow wells [...]. These wells are located within a catchment zone, primarily formed of curvilinear sand dunes, [...] (D3; See figure 5).” Unfortunately unregulated development encroaching on the sand dunes (Figure 8) has led to contamination of some of the freshwater wells. Developments threaten the dunes’ natural ability to act as a membrane that separates the intrusion of saline water from the adjacent coastline into its underground aquifers. Of these 30 wells, only 13 of them are currently operational. These “shallow wells are also the only source of fresh water to the neighboring islands of Manda, Kitau and Mokowe town.” Because, “over exploitation of fresh groundwater” has already contaminated “their entire fresh water resources [with] saline ocean water (D3; Appendices Page 1).”

The Lamu County Council and the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) have been at arms over gazettelement of the area with investors and developers wising to subdivide and profit from the sand dunes desirable location along the picturesque waterfront beaches.

Unfortunately the protection of the dunes has become a politically charged issue, which has put the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Lamu West Constituency, Fahim Twaha, in conflict with the council and the NMK (C18, C19, C25, and C27). Last year the NMK commissioned a 'Groundwater Resources Assessment' (D3) to address the issue. Additionally the United Nations has requested the Government of Kenya to show more commitment to preserving the World Heritage Site, citing the threat to the sand dunes.

PROPERTY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONCERNS

In addition to the threat to the sand dunes, one of the primary concerns of UNESCO and the NMK is the “mass transfer of housing property away from local families who are holders and protectors of the intangible heritage” (Dr. George Abungu in C27). After Lamu Town was listed as a World Heritage Site in Dec. 2001, a wave of wealthy foreigners rushed in to buy up property at low prices as investments for developing hotels, villas, and holiday homes. For the locals owning property, especially within the historical old town, the cost of restoration of their homes was often too high and the appeal of getting rich quick through sale too tempting. As a result the town saw a significant loss of local residents and an influx of outsiders with different cultural backgrounds, religions, and beliefs infiltrating the Swahili stronghold. Many residents fear further migration away from the historic zone will lead to increasing changes in the social and cultural fabric of the town. However, on the other hand, wealthy foreigners have been able to preserve the historic houses and bring in foreign donors to help in community development.

Many residents moved away to Mombasa or other towns along the coast to invest the money made from the sale of their homes, however many also simply moved to the edge of town, resulting in outcroppings of informal developments. These informal developments have emerged upon land which was previously used for farming, and often lack electricity and clean water access. Currently there are efforts being made to address the issue and create a plan to improve and formalize the developments.

THE NEW PORT

The port project, set to begin this year at Magagoni Creek, on the mainland near Lamu and Manda Island (See Figure 4), is part of a broader proposal for the development of a “Second Transport Corridor.” The transport corridor will connect Lamu, Southern Sudan, and Ethiopia through railway lines, a road network, an oil refinery, oil pipeline, with a modern airport in Lamu, and the Lamu free port (D1; See Figure 3).

Recently, with the growing Kenyan economy “there has been a steady increase in cargo traffic through the East and Southern Africa ports which calls for the expansion of the capacity (C13),” however the Kilindini port in Mombasa “cannot be expanded because of natural limitation on the harbor (C29).” The new proposed port in the Lamu district is seen as a solution to the current struggling system, and for prospectors the site appears ideal due to it the proposed its “natural, wide and deep harbor that is navigable... [which] can easily be widened and deepened to accommodate the mega size container ships within a short period (C28).” Taken directly from the “Proposal for the New Transport Corridor from Lamu to Southern Sudan and Ethiopia”, a new port development is more optimal to expansion of Mombasa’s port and “the best option for all concerned (D1; 6)” because:

“As a new port, it will easily handle the enormous amount of material required to construct the railway line, the oil pipeline and the oil refinery. The railway line could in fact be constructed inlands as the materials are off-loaded from the ships. The port of Mombasa and the existing road and rail network cannot possibly handle the massive volume and weight of materials that will be required for the Southern Sudan reconstruction and the added transit goods from Ethiopia. Lamu offers a viable alternative (D1; 5).”

The project “could transform trade in this region and knit together Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, eastern Congo and southern Sudan as never before (C29).” Ethiopia and Uganda are both land locked nations which currently depend upon Kenya’s Mombasa port and require an accessible and reliable port. Uganda “currently depends on the aging Kenya/Uganda railway (D1; 3),” which dates back to the turn of the 19th century and is “in need of reconstruction (D1; 4).” In order to facilitate the major oil exports due to

come out of Southern Sudan's promising crude reserves, "construction of a railway link and an oil pipeline to the coast of Kenya" is a crucial part of the plan (D1; 3). Kenya's current aging refinery "needs to be rebuilt and expanded to cope with growing demands for oil products (D1; 4)." The new refinery would process crude from Southern Sudan and "serve the East Africa market and that of other parts of the world (D1; 4)." To accommodate for the 'nuclear city' which is anticipated to develop around the economic hub, an airport will be built as well.

Although there is a significant following for the development of the port by the Kenyan Government, the Kenyan Ports Authority (KPA), and foreign donors locals fear that the new port will have an adverse impact upon the fragile ecosystems within the nearby marine reserve and the historical/archeological sites which are scattered through the islands of the archipelago. So far there no impact assessments have been conducted on the port proposal or the mega-development project will have upon the natural environment and marine life or the nearby historical/archeological sites. UNESCO has spoken up and requested an impact assessment for the Lamu Town World Heritage Site.

The former transport minister, Chirau Ali Mwakwere referred to the port's development as "the realization of what you might call a dream (C29)." For the local fishermen who depend upon marine life, the realization of such an invasive project might look more like a nightmare. Clearing of mangroves for the port is feared to reduce habitats where fish and crustaceans breed, and dredging will eliminate the large rocks which lie in the channels which the "the fish hide (C29)."

In fact, China has not only made a committed to funding the construction of the second port in Lamu but has already offered grants of Sh540 million (C16) and more recently extended a second grant of SH1.2 billion (C15)." As progress is made towards the 'realization of the dream' it has become time for the people of Lamu to prepare for what the future will bring. The property values within the area have already begun to rise, prompting

businessmen, politicians and even locals to seize vacant land illegally and resell it. Just as World Heritage status brought in hordes of foreigners and inland Kenyans, the announcement of the plans for the port will only make matters worse by further increasing the area's population.

On January 16th, 2009, the Transport Minister at the time, Chirau Ali Makwere visited Lamu town and held a forum at the Lamu Fort to inform locals about the development of the new port. Unfortunately the locals were less than pleased at the lack of community involvement over the previous four years of planning, and several community groups and the Lamu County Council issued memorandums in response. Among the concerns they expressed a desire for more forums to be held in the area so as to empower and sensitize our communities and other co-managers on the impacts of the project. However, there have been no more forums held to date. They also expressed the concern to combat and prevent illegal allocation or acquiring of land by those wishing to profit from resale after property values rise.

According to the chairman of the Lamu cultural promotion group Ghalib Alwi, "The rush for land inspired by the proposed sea-port development has further compounded the dire situation of the indigenous communities by sending their quest for traditional rights to their land to oblivion (C27)." Mr. Alwi accused the political elite of grabbing land which has belonged to the indigenous populations for centuries.

Methodology

Before travelling to the site (Lamu town) background research was conducted in Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenya to find information on the history of Lamu town and the reasons for its World Heritage List inscription. The majority of information available on the current issues facing Lamu, and the plans for the new port were found in newspaper articles published primarily in the Nation and the Standard.

After arriving in Lamu town, informal discussions were conducted with about twenty residents who were willing to talk about the issues. Those included fishermen, dhow operators, speed boat operators, people working in shops along the seafront, employees of hotels serving visitors to the island/town and a primary school teacher. To get a more informed perspective on the reality of those issues I met with about ten people who work for the National Museums of Kenya including those in the conservation office, the Lamu Fort Library, the Education Officer, and a tour guide. After discussing my project, acquiring some more formal documents from the Museum, and gaining information I was referred to some of the village elders. First I met with a Swahili scholar and village elder. After these discussions I took notes, and when people were willing, I took notes during our conversations. Each day I wrote reflections on the information I received from these interactions.

In addition, five unrecorded formal interviews were conducted with a set of 18 questions (See Appendix 2). I took notes on all of the respondents' answers during these interviews. All of the formal interviewees were chosen because they are native to Lamu and are active in political and social issues. The interviewees consisted of a former chairman of the Lamu County Council, a local cleric and social activist, a local politician and social activist, a youth educator for the NMK, a teacher and scholar who has worked in conservation of the historical sites within the district. I also had in depth discussions with residents of Lamu who come from upcountry and are not native Swahilis, and foreigners visiting, living, and working on the island.

Discussion and Analysis

For Lamu Town, the greatest barrier to effective management of and overall prosperity as a UNESCO World Heritage Site has been the absence of a Management Plan of the site. Despite the fact that the document is a statutory requirement of the World Heritage Committee (as prescribed under Paragraph 24 part (b) Section (ii) and Paragraph 44 part (b) Section (v) of the committees operational guidelines for the convention), after

almost nine years the document only exists in draft form. The purpose of a management plan is to address the needs of conservation and a detailed schedule of how those needs will be met and by which agencies. The responsibility of producing the document rests with the State Party, in this case the Government of Kenya; however the formulation of the plan is in the hands of the National Museums of Kenya.

My initial concern is how was Lamu Town enlisted without a management plan? The answers I found after speaking with those who work for the National Museums of Kenya include: a) the profound desire of all involved for Lamu to succeed as a World Heritage Site, b) for it to serve as an example for other historical sites particularly within Africa, and c) to show the world that not only do Kenya and Africa have a living heritage worth enlisting, but also that effective cultural heritage management is possible in Africa. However because of the convoluted nature of the workings of the Kenyan government there has not been agreement between the parties involved. Due to political ties, issues like defining the barriers of the water-catchment zone of the Shella sand dunes on Lamu island have put Members of Parliament (MPs), The Lamu County Council(LCC), and the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) at odds with one another.

To prevent issues like the water-catchment zone from halting progress and to avoid similar problems, The Local Planning Commission was created in 2004/2005 to “provide a sound base for all heads of department to marry their ideas in cognizant to the status of Lamu being a World Heritage Site (D5; 23).” Unfortunately, I fear that alignments still exist between the members of the Planning Council and the respective stakeholders which prevent the stakeholders from reaching a consensus. As others have expressed in the past, I emphasize the extreme importance of this document for the future well-being of the world heritage site. A management is necessary in order to effectively manage the current threats facing the World Heritage Site and to ensure that Lamu’s infrastructure is developed adequately enough to cope with future problems, like the proposed port.

The National Museums of Kenya has made specific efforts targeted at formulation of a management plan, on April 24, 2006 they held a "Sensitization Seminar on the formulation of a management plan for the Lamu World Heritage Site (D6)," at the Lamu Fort. The Seminar identified the issues which currently needed to be addressed, and the relevant stakeholders. IN addition the topic "Is the listing of Lamu on the World Heritage list a blessing or a curse?" was also discussed and the need to include the local community was highly emphasized.

However, during my informal discussions and formal interviews I was told time and again that the community had not been involved adequately and that most of the residents lacked an understanding of what it meant for Lamu to be a World Heritage Site. They were not aware of the issues, whether it was due to lack of effort on their part, or whether it was the responsibility of the LCC and the NMK to promote more community awareness is unclear. What is clear however is that effective community involvement in cultural heritage management is necessary for the integrity and authenticity of the site to be maintained. It's not that the people don't have an ownership of their culture, I found that the Waswahili are a very proud people and as my interviewees emphasized, "they just have to be called." It's time for action to be taken, and for people to ask questions of the institutions responsible, to secure the future of Lamu. If action is not being taken, then it is the responsibility of the people whose culture heritage is threatened to involve themselves, or they can sit back drink Chai and watch modernity and progress pass them by.

One of the major issues which must be addressed is unregulated development around the world heritage site, on and around the sensitive water-catchment zone as well as the informal settlements which have cropped up on the edges of Lamu Town and around the island. The sand dunes are first and foremost the lifeline of the world heritage site. "The sustainability of this world heritage site is not only dependant on its unique architecture but also the living culture of the people that depend on the fresh water supply (D3; Appendices 2)." Those very aquifers are the reason that the culture emerged in the place it did, without

sufficient availability of water, humans could not have inhabited the island for over 700 continuous years (D5; 20). The fresh water not only sustains the people whose culture is the concern, but having “a reliable and sustainable supply of portable water” was in fact “among the factors considered in approval of Lamu Island as a heritage site (D3),” and “in the absence of water there is no guarantee that Lamu World Heritage Site will continue to be habitable (D5; 21).”

The NMK is committed to “ensure that this important water resource is protected from any form of encroachment (D5; 21),” and commissioned the “Groundwater Resources Assessment of Lamu Island along Coastal Kenya” in 2009. It would be highly beneficial to read the assessment for anyone who doubts the importance of the sand dunes and the negative impact that developments have upon the uptake and storage of fresh water. The document was conducted by an expert in the field and provides a wealth of information on the specific scientific processes which function to maintain the balance of the system.

When it comes to informal settlements, the reasons which have caused people to develop them are the result of marginalization at the hands of several factors. First of all, many people live there who either could not afford their houses within the town itself, could not afford to renovate their houses, or simply chose to sell and ‘get rich quick’ when property values and demand rose within the town. Others have come in to the town in search for employment in the tourism industry and due to economic barriers have no other option. When there was no affordable housing within the town, the outward expansion began. “Lack of housing and land within the town itself has forced the local people to venture into developing satellite towns to cash in to the multitudes of immigrants flocking in to Lamu (D5; 10).”

One of the major consequences of these settlements has been the elimination of Shambas (farms/fields). “The areas where some of the settlements have been developed were initially meant for agricultural purposes but the owners went on to haphazardly

subdivide the area into small plots to cater for housing development (D5; 10).” However, for the individuals who live within these informal settlements, the lack of planned infrastructure and development has forced them to live in conditions that aren’t entirely sanitary. The Lamu County Counsel did take action and “identified special areas [...] as dumping sites” within the communities to reduce the haphazard waste disposal which “caused huge environmental problems,” to the remaining agricultural areas (D4; 11).

The greatest strain on Lamu’s already inadequate infrastructure has been due to a threefold increase in population. “The economic and tourism boom has also pulled a number of prospective job seekers to Lamu, hence straining the infrastructure that was meant to accommodate a population of 6,000 people instead of the current 15,000 people (D5; 23).” The open drainage system which used to be appropriate for sewage and waste water is “old and outdated. The current design [...] needs quick attention. Lamu rapid expansion and growth in population, has put more pressure on the drainage infrastructure posing huge health and environmental concerns (D5; 16).” Although price estimates of the project have been given, the NMK and LCC both agree it needs to be done, and UNESCO has requested it be done, the people of Lamu still use the same dilapidated system.

Similarly, Lamu town also still lacks any kind of waste disposal system. Garbage collection is solely the responsibility of the LCC, however “it is apparent that the cash-strapped Council has no capacity to consistently clean the town (D5; 17).” The lack of resources prevents the formal government run system of waste collection, and without the ability to transport garbage off of the island, they have resorted to designating land fill sites to at least contain the waste. The town’s garbage collection vehicle is a “single and old tractor which constantly breaks down cannot live up to the workload. If the Council is serious in cleaning up the town then at least three tractors will be required (D5; 17).” Lack of funding appears to be the most vital barrier to elimination of waste within the town. Community motivated action could organize a system at little or no monetary cost which could combat

the problem, but then again, there are plenty of idle young men who could be employed through waste management with the LCC if funding existed.

“Since the nomination of Lamu Old Town as a World Heritage Site, private investors have been increasingly buying properties that after restoration are either converted to villas or private holiday houses. This trend had drawn mixed reaction from the local community. Such that there are those who believe that the presence of rich European developers in Lamu will bring in job opportunities and wealth to the local people while others of course, see the developers as a threat to the culture and beliefs of the local people. D5; 11-12).”

The influx of foreigners to the island has brought much to Lamu; however is the presence of foreigners and their corresponding foreign cultures a threat the Lamu town’s integrity as a World Heritage Site? Foreigners buy property because they desire a piece of the coastal jewel after viding on holiday and falling in love with the historic town. Those foreigners invest in the houses and restore them to the beauty of pristine Swahili architecture; “the European developers have to a certain extent been saviors of the Lamu built heritage which was under the threat of gradual destruction owing to lack of maintenance by mostly poor owners (D5; 12).”

When locals cannot afford to repair their homes, and they lie in ruin heritage suffers. The Swahili architecture of Lamu makes “buildings the core ingredient that makes Lamu a World Heritage Site...(D5; 6),” thus “severe loss of the building stock in Lamu stone town and its unique value will [...] endanger the status of World Heritage Site (D5; 8).” Thus foreigners are preserving heritage in ways which locals cannot and are aiding in the integrity of the World Heritage Site.

However, for every foreigner who buys up a house, a local is displaced. The locals who opt to sell, ‘get rich quick’ and often choose to move to Mombasa or other towns along the coast where their money will go further and there are more amenities available than on the island. Others move out to the edge of town and into the informal settlements. Unfortunately for those who understand that cultural integrity is more than just the structures of a town, “with the reigning free market economy, it is becoming very difficult to convince

the local people not to sell their properties (D5; 23).” Without regulations in place to prevent sale of houses, and the property values continues to rise (especially with the plans for a new port just a few miles away) it appears that locals will continue to have their prices met. “Perhaps, the solution to this is for the government to set laws that will encourage people to lease their properties instead of selling (D5; 23).”

Often these foreign private investors convert the properties to “villas or private holiday houses (D5; 11).” These are then sought out by other foreign tourists and in the end the largest income generating activity is in the hands of foreigners. *Locals are selling their land, rather than utilizing it as a resource to make more money – why are locals not engaging in the sectors of tourism like hotels, private villas etc. which are most profitable?*

The answer is simple. In order to develop a property to the status of a hotel, villa, or resort one must first have the capital to invest in the improvements, second must possess the know how to cater to the tourists, and third must have the desire to do so. Due to the nature of Islam and its predominance within the town, most locals would not permit alcohol within these properties, which is often not conducive to the preferences of the westerner on holiday at the beach. However, there has to be some way to merge the high income generating business of tourism and the cultural heritage which draws tourists to the island in the first place.

The influx of outsiders has had a significant impact upon the cultural integrity of the town, and the once dominant Muslim faith of island residents, now has been joined by those of different faiths and those who have no faith. In my interviews and discussions I found that the older population sees a change in the new generation and is concerned over a loss of moral values. They complain that the young men no long go to the mosque, they choose to dress in ways which do not align with Islamic principles (sleeveless shirts, shorts, etc), wear ‘rastas’ or dread-locks in their hair and do not act in accordance with Islamic morals

engaging in activities like drug use. In particular, the beach boys who cater to foreign tourists are seen as a disgrace by many.

How can the next generation gain a greater appreciation for the more traditional values of their parents and grandparents? I argue that increased cultural activities which cater to the youth and which blend the traditional with the modern will be highly effective. Also, one of the greatest factors which pulls youth away from the island is the desire for a quality education. If the currently failing schools were given more resources, perhaps more youth would attend secondary school on the island, instead of being sent to Mombasa. With the bright youth remaining on the island and incentives for valuing cultural heritage were in place, the integrity of Lamu's Swahili heritage would be ensured for future generations.

With all of these factors taken in to account, the proposed and almost certain development of a new port at Magagoni creek will be to the detriment of the Lamu World Heritage Site and its people. The increase in population of those who the port will employ, or those seeking employment will place further strain upon the already dilapidated infrastructure of the town. The drainage system and the lack of a waste disposal policy will further pollute the town and increase health and environmental hazards. The water supplies, if further depleted or encroached upon will not be able to sustain new residents or new communities which may crop up in the area, let alone the existing ones. If locals continue to sell their houses as demand for property near the port increases (and thus price increases), there will be fewer guardians of the living culture and thus the heritage site will inevitably fall in to decline. If the education and employment opportunities available in the town or the area are not increased, those who seek quality education or already have the education which qualifies them for higher paying jobs will have no other choice but to continue to migrate outwards.

Conclusion

For the people of Lamu town, inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Dec. 2001 has failed to bring significant economic benefit due to lack of proper promotion and the lack of a concrete Management Plan. The current state of the town combined with the impact of the proposed port upon the district could further marginalize the local population and serve as a barrier to overall prosperity.

In order for the people of Lamu to prosper in the World Heritage Site, the integrity and authenticity of its cultural heritage to be retained, and to move into the future as a sustainable human development, action needs to be taken on part of the Kenyan Government, the Lamu County Council, the National Museums of Kenya, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Potential actions that could have a profound benefit upon the future of the town include but are not limited to:

1. The finalization and implementation of a proper site Management Plan which would:
 - a. improve the overall infrastructure of the town (i.e. sewer system and waste disposal)
 - b. and address threats to the integrity of cultural heritage (i.e. encroachment upon the water catchment zone, influx of foreigners, outward migration of local population, and informal settlements)
2. Prepare impact assessment reports on the proposed port's impact upon historical sites within the Lamu District, as well as the natural environment
3. Dissemination of information to locals on issues like port development and barriers to infrastructure development.
4. Improving education available to locals and increasing community awareness on the significance of being a UNESCO World Heritage Site
5. More involvement of the local population in government (local and national)
6. Increased efforts to promote and improve the quality of tourism products and facilities
7. Diversification of economic activity on Lamu island and within the town

Recommendations

This study could be extended by following up on the issues and concerns addressed within the paper. Efforts to produce the management plan will need to take in to account what in particular is preventing the finalization of the current draft. If I had more time I would like to interview individuals specifically on the realization of the management plan, including more people who work within the conservation office in Lamu and those who work for UNESCO. Impact assessments could and should also be conducted to foresee the impacts the port will have upon the historical sites and marine environment within the Lamu archipelago.

In addition proposals to put into action the suggestions I have made can also be formulated and action can be taken on specific tasks which could help secure the future of Lamu as a World Heritage Site. For example, organizing a cultural or world heritage promotion event which would be appealing to the youth and involve them in what is going on. Organizing further community awareness campaigns and working toward great dissemination of information on current events which affect the everyday lives of the local population. I hope to be able to pursue future work in regards to the issues address in this project, and am eager to see how the events unfold for Lamu in the future.