

25 Years Euregional Prize for Architecture

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Re:linked Relicts

Participant info

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Project info

During my visit to Tanzania, I stumbled upon Kunduchi Ruins. Since my thesis talks about the Romantic potential of ruins, I was immediately fascinated by this peculiar architecture. Research learned these weathered stone structures are remains of an Islamic trade settlement, dating back to the fifteenth century. These ruined trading towns dot the African coasts, once they formed a merchant route going all the way up to China.

Given the research question of developing strategies for eco-tourism along the East-African coasts, I found in this historical trade network the perfect underlay for an unique touristic and local experience. By architectural interventions on these ruined towns, it is the aim to open up and relink these remote and forgotten sites of culture and trade by means of water transport. Thus once again creating places where different cultures meet while benefitting both from this connection. Water transport would furthermore be very welcome as a secondary transport system in this region troubled by bad roads and congested major cities.

In Kunduchi this results in a long-drawn pier, a literal landmark indicating the hidden ruin site. A distinct line creates a path between the Indian Ocean and the ruins, relinking the ruins back to their origin. At the Ocean, the pier is present as an infrastructure for docking. However towards the ruins, the pier is swallowed by the ruin hill, making visitors aware of the height difference. At the height of the ruins, the pier is nothing more than an unpretentious walkway, preserving the atmosphere generated by a baobab dominating over the ruins. In between these two poles, different conditions are generated for trading, dwelling, learning. The intervention is a simple gesture that underlines the relation of the ruins to its wider environment and remembers the wonder of a trade network.

