



## COMMERCIALIZED PRAXIS OF PAROCHIAL HUMAN SETTLEMENT SPACES A CASE OF MSIMBAZI IN DAR ES SALAAM – TANZANIA

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### ABSTRACT

It is becoming increasingly clear that parochial human settlement spaces have been engulfed by the commercial activities to the extent that spiritual and associated architectural qualities are widely deteriorating. Parochial human settlement spaces in its nature are intended to provide religious environment to the community members in order to listen the word of God. Unguided commercial spaces have emerged and changed drastically spiritual spatial planning, landscape, and its architecture. This research article has explored various commercial issues and forces affecting religious human settlements. Case study method was employed in the research and Msimbazi parochial human settlement was selected to be the research platform because of its outstanding data and information. Interviews and photographic registration were the key data collection tools that were used. The research has found out that Msimbazi parochial human settlement is commercializing at a fast rate but it is able to handle both religious and commercial undertakings and keep the pace of the changing world of the modern life, technology and architecture. Local authorities are urged to closely work together to accommodate internal and external commercial forces affecting religious human settlements.

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### INTRODUCTION

Kiondo *et al.*, (2017) describes human settlements as a place inhabited more or less permanently. It includes buildings in which people live. According to Louis (2003), parochial human settlements started to transform from religious to commercial undertakings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Transformation forces such as population mobility, commercial activities, urban secularism, and other social issues have functional influence from mono to multi-usage of the religious spaces. Over recent years, economic forces have influenced the size and importance of the parochial human settlement spaces within the business community. Parochial human settlement configurations have drastically transformed its space, density, technology, values derailed and lost their meanings of religious intensions.

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As a result, parochial human settlement configurations increased number of people in neighborhood; enlarged parochial economy; changed cultural values; and has significant impact in changing religious environment to commercial parochial human settlements. These changes are interrelated; they do not always mean growth, but may also mean decline, both of which can be viewed quantitatively and qualitatively as well as positively and negatively (Bambang, 2001). A parochial human settlement which grows quantitatively in terms of buildings may experience a decline in its quality, or vice versa to different viewers and perceptions. There can be a progressive change in the economic structure and social organization followed by a dramatic increase of the population and change of the entire parochial human settlement spaces in relatively short period depending on social values. Lekule (2004) explains that places are dynamic through residents' engagement in various manmade activities which results into spatial and structural changes of a particular place over a period of time. A Space can be defined as an amount of area of a place that is empty or

available for use. Western descriptions associate physical form with enclosed object, activities and human perceptions (Lefebvre 1995). Space is what you have in front of you and above you and to a lesser extent below you, and gives a freedom to view. Hillier (1996) conceive space as an external projection of social and mental behaviour. Basic arguments confirm that there are some difficulties in defining and conceptualizing space as a single entity. Most of our common notion and definition of space do not deal with space as an entity in itself but tie itself with some other entities that are not space by themselves. For example a concept of spatial enclosure, this describes space by reference to physical forms rather than as an object in itself.

This is the commonest architectural way of describing space, perception of space or use of space. It is argued that a space has no time element and but it has a moment with mankind. On the other hand Britannica online encyclopedia defines space as a boundless three dimensional object and has relative position and direction. Mbisso (2017) underscores that a space can be viewed as absolute or as a relationship to objects. The absolute view holds that space which can be described as independent entity without necessarily taking into account external forces behind its creation. In this argument, (Hillier 1996; Low 2002) indicate space transformation as a by-product of multiple usage by expressing that the multiple usage of spaces are the ones that cause transformation of a bigger picture. Place is therefore more than a space qualitatively and quantitatively. A place extends more widely than its location. A place has to have material culture, social dimension, shape, texture and appearance. Ideally, Leach (1997) explains that design principles for architects, engineers and urban planners conceive space in abstraction before it is realized to an actual object, but user's space is actual, real and experienced in everyday life. The changing of religious spaces to commercial spaces in parochial human settlements is therefore calling for thorough critical thinking and understanding of its conceptual and material realization.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

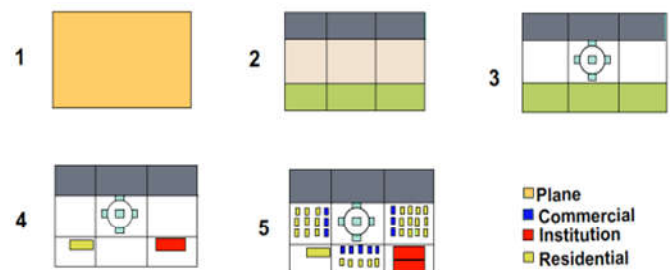
Several research strategies exist but this study has scientifically selected case study became the most informative, and Msimbazi parochial human settlement to be the research arena because of its richness of information. The historical strength of Msimbazi human settlements is clearly observed from its architectural face of historical religious buildings such as that of its church and residential buildings for the clergy men and women to dwell and conduct religious activities on daily basis.

In tandem, commercial premises are also observed to co-exist within Msimbazi parochial human settlements ranging from small retail shops to mini-super markets; mobile banking facilities to conventional commercial bank building; and outdoor gathering shades to spacious prestigious indoor social halls. Interviews, architectural sketching and photographic registration were among main data collection tools that were used to produce reliable and valid information. Collected data and information were categorized, analyzed and reported in a format of a scientific research paper. Research findings from Msimbazi parochial human settlements case study are found to be reliable because they can be generalized into wide contexts with similar commercialized religious situations in the world.

## RESULTS

Empirically, an interviewee named John Masatu revealed that there have been embarrassing situations with regards to urban parochial human settlements with an anticipation of finding stronger, pure and better parochial human settlements in cities like Dar es Salaam than in rural contexts. According to John, rural parochial human settlements are still intact for mono-use in respect of religious objectives and undertakings. To his surprise, he found parochial human settlements in Dar es Salaam city are completely different from what he expected. He further narrated that parochial human settlements in cities, particularly in Dar es Salaam, are hybrid of both religious and commercial undertakings.

There are several aspects which affect the growth and dynamics of a parochial human settlement spaces, including economical difficulties, deterioration of religious faith, population growth, availability of public infrastructural services such as roads, car parking, buildings and change of land uses. These are among major driving forces of human settlement dynamics. All these aspects are interrelated. Transformation of parochial human settlement spaces comes about as result of increased commercial activities within religious spaces. Figure 1 is a schematic parochial human settlement sketch showing progressive transformational changes from an empty space to densely religious-cum-commercialized parochial human settlements.



Source: Rimisho 2014

**Figure 1. Space Transformation from Empty Land to Institutional Commercial Parochial Human Settlements**

It is essential to explore the intrinsic nature, dimension, source and factors for space transformation of the parochial human settlements. Parochial human settlements spaces embrace peoples' faith, social and economic undertakings. Like any reality of life, parochial human settlements space is related to three generic space concepts namely forms, structures and functions (Kiondo *et al.*, 2017). In other words, any parochial human settlement space may be subjected to formal structural and functional analysis. Swai (2009) argues that spatial-functional relationship of the commercial activities has the relation between the form of the commercial space, location, size, building structure, street quality and the nature of the activity is important to be established. These are attributes that guide prospective business people in making decisions towards commercial investment. Msimbazi parochial human settlement transformation has attracted small and medium entrepreneurs from different backgrounds and gender to invest and thus contribute to self-employment. Lekule (2004) argues that the location of a space is not absolutely important but the degree of peoples' engagement into a space is of paramount significance towards social and economical transformation.

## Msimbazi Parochial Banks, Hostels, Halls and Surroundings

Msimbazi parochial human settlement is space comprised of social activities which has transformed space utilization to other functional spaces such as social halls, canteen, computer training centers, tailoring marts, bookshop, commercial banks (figure 2), schools, dispensaries, hostels, wedding fund raising meetings, wedding ceremonies, as shown in the figures 3.



Source: Rimisho 2014

**Figure 2. Bank Building within Msimbazi Parochial Human Settlements**



Source: Rimisho 2014

**Figure 3. Msimbazi Shaded Space for Social Gatherings**

## Modernization, Commercialization and Modification of Parochial Human Settlement Spaces

Architectural modernization in its broad sense has influenced the transformation of Msimbazi parochial human settlement spaces. The German introduced modern building facilities and social infrastructure during the colonial period such as roads, electricity and water supply as the start of architectural modernization and it has continued to positively influence the development of Msimbazi parochial human settlements in various ways. Mostavi (2013) contends that the duality between architecture and life is not only reflected in designed and constructed projects but provides opportunities to evaluate its architectural styles and peoples' ways of life. Picon (2013) further emphasize that the thirsty for progressive development of human settlements and its environment protection is hinged onto a careful and well thoughtful spatial planning, architectural and engineering design considerations. Advanced provision of social facilities and infrastructure has made Msimbazi parochial human settlements more orderly and attractive. Local economic growth has produced further physical developments, which have contributed to the expansion of Msimbazi parochial human settlements as a commercial hub.

New business developments are greatly concerned with making quick profits from their private commercial activities. For example, the change of building facades of new constructed university branch of St. Augustine University in Dar es Salaam is one of the recent manifestations of such commercialization within Msimbazi parochial human settlements. Commercialization tends to involve free market economies, which considers the most profitable use of spaces in the most desirable, efficient and profitable manner. Each single square meter ( $m^2$ ) of Msimbazi parochial human settlement space has been designated to capture the optimum economic profits. Recently, Msimbazi parochial human settlement land has mostly been used for commercial activities. There is also a tendency of changing land use from large to small commercial plots so as to maximize space use and profit. Extensive development of shopping kiosks has indicated massive advancement of larger commercial interests in the commodification of spaces in Msimbazi parochial human settlement space. Political economy between the formal and informal sectors as well as between public and private interests demonstrates how various human settlement spaces have been constantly contested and operationalized.

In general terms, modernization, commercialization and commoditization of space tend to overlook the social issues, which are often associated with intangibles but of critical importance. Regardless of the progress of these key processes, Msimbazi human settlement spaces have demonstrated its remarkable capacity of accommodating modernity while continuing its traditional and primary goal of religious undertakings. Modern and traditional, large and small co-exist and complement each other. The blend between modern and traditional flavour is shown by the presence of several retail shops and mini-supermarkets within the vicinity as exemplified in figures 4 and 5.



Source: Rimisho 2014.

**Figure 4: Mini-supermarkets within Msimbazi Human Settlements**

## DISCUSSIONS

Frampton (2003) argues that vernacular and modern architecture co-exists in the contemporary world of endless movement of people from one corner of world to the other. These movements have cultivated a contemporary spaces and places of hybrid cultures, art and technology. The resultant is a paradoxical creation of an international based "world culture" a culture which belong to no one but the universe. International architectural style built structures such as skyscraper buildings with glass façades are found in tropical countries with hot humid climate.





Source: Rimisho 2014.

**Figure 5: Commercial Kiosks within Parochial Msimbazi Human Settlements**

Figure 6 shows St. Joseph Cathedral built in Dar es Salaam in 18th century enjoying benefits of low density human settlements without the need of artificial indoor cooling systems. At the moment the cathedral is in serious need of indoor artificial cooling systems because of huge glaring effect from the massive high-rise glass facade commercial buildings engulfing it as vividly seen in figure 7. The cathedral was energy-efficient building in its early years of existence but not anymore. It has now become energy inefficient and expensive to run and maintain in achieving indoor human thermal comfort. Nammdi (1997) contends that the origin of African architecture exists and it is rooted in African culture and unique ways of life. It has existed for thousands of years ago but today's trained architects do not pay attention to this fact in shaping the fast changing skylines of African cities. It is important for local authorities like the Dar es Salaam City Council to put in place regulations that will protect scenery of conserving buildings from being blocked by commercial skyscrapers which are speedily emerging. The London City authority for example, has planning laws which disallow high-rise structures from impeding beautiful views of historic buildings. St. Paul Cathedral is the best iconic building in the city of London and its sights are clearly protected by the planning laws for all city dwellers and visitors to enjoy despite of massive construction of skyscrapers within its vicinity as seen in figure 8.



Source: Moshi 2009

**Figure 6: Freestanding St. Joseph Cathedral in Dar es Salaam City**



Source: 2017 Field Survey

**Figure 7: St. Joseph Cathedral (See the Tower) in Dar es Salaam City Engulfed with High-rise Glass Façade Commercial Buildings**



Source: 2017 Mosha's Visit in London

**Figure 8: St. Paul Cathedral Views in London Protected by the Planning laws**

Seifert *et al.*, (2012) highlights various efforts towards achieving coherent tropical architecture including publications such as *"Tropical Architecture in the Dry and Humid Zones"* by Maxwell Fry and *"The Manual of Tropical Housing and Buildings"* by Konigsberger. The objective of these efforts include finding an appropriate design approach responsive to the climate in Tanzania was championed by famous and seasoned Tanzanian Architect Antony Almeida and Pancho Guedes in Mozambique. This phenomenon of unrealized coherent tropical architecture could be coming from the invention of high-tech means of passive in-door cooling systems such as air conditioning machines and so forth. Moreover and surprisingly, in the near past a structural engineers in Tanzania must specify that their structural drawings are in compliance and conformity with the London Country Council in the process of applying building permit from the local authorities. Structural engineers must declare that *"I hereby certify that plans, sections, calculations and particulars submitted are in respect of the building specified are in conformity with regulations of the London country for reinforced concrete British country codes of practice structure for being in force with such modifications of the said regulations as are permitted by the London Country Council"* (Mosha 2007). Logically it shouldn't be in conformity with British country code of practice which is for cold weather but should be in conformity of local Tanzania country codes which are supposed to be suitable for tropical climate!

## Conservation and Dynamics of Parochial Spaces

The role of Msimbazi parochial human settlement spaces include cosmological axis of heritage value that has guided the physical development to its current morphology. Al-Asad *et al.*, (2016) explains new models of planning practices which encompasses innovative approaches which involves local people and Spatial Planners and other professionals in planning human settlement spaces. Different forces such as that of economy, modernization and commercialization have transformed Msimbazi human settlements. There are notable buildings of heritage values with specific architectural styles such as Msimbazi Church (figure 9) and the orphanage building with distinct historical characters. Several historical buildings are replaced by contemporary modern buildings such as that of University of Dar es Salaam's chapel (figure 10). The architectural diversity and heritage values are of critical importance in enhancing continuity of the cultural memory of Msimbazi parochial human settlement spaces and historical buildings. Replacement of heritage buildings endangers Msimbazi historical significance. Kiondo (2017) argues that historical and architectural generation of buildings should be monitored in terms of re-development to exhibit responsiveness to the existing buildings, streets, and urban spaces.



Source: Rimisho 2014

**Figure 9: The Historical Church at Msimbazi Human Settlements**



Source: 2017 Field Survey

**Figure 10. The Chapel of University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania**

## Conclusion

Generally, global parochial human settlements started to transform to commercial undertakings way back in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Transformation forces include increased people

mobility, new ways of life due to economical growth and cultural changes. Notably, parochial spaces have significantly changed from its fundamental religious roles to commercial businesses such as banks, social halls, educational centres, hostels and healthy centres. Urban parochial human settlements is drastically transforming much faster than rural human settlements primarily because urban economy is growing faster than that of the rural. Like many other attractive urban human settlements, Msimbazi parochial human settlements have attracted commercial investments with both positive and negative impacts to the livelihood of the place and its immediate neighbourhood. Provision and availability of social infrastructural services such as roads, water supply, power supply, schools, dispensaries and banks have positively changed the social and economic boom of Msimbazi human settlements.

This religious paradigm shift is similar to what has happened in Europe and elsewhere in the world with extreme limited number of worshippers to fill huge churches and cathedrals. But casinos, nightclubs, museums and cultural exhibition centres are usually full of customers! Modernity in its general terms of life and architecture has streamlined negatively the treasured spiritual life of the people in modern history. Msimbazi parochial human settlements have however managed to accommodate modernity and religious moral values. The old and monumental conserved Msimbazi church is still performing its religious undertakings under the umbrella of Dar es Salaam archdiocese in a very exemplary manner parallel with commercial activities. Msimbazi church is an icon of Msimbazi neighborhood as it is a case with St. Joseph cathedral to the city of Dar es Salaam. A great lesson learnt from London city authority and its icon of St. Paul cathedral is to put planning laws and regulations to safeguard the beauty of iconic buildings such as Msimbazi church and St. Joseph cathedral to be protected to allow visibility to all people. Foreigners and locals should be able to understand traditional, historical and modern architecture of our times. Local authorities should work closely with professionals to conserve architecture of the past while keeping pace with the modern world of information, communication, technology and architecture.

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