

STONE TOWN

BEYOND TOURISM AND HERITAGE



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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the Indo-Zanzibari community's daily practices that shape belonging in the historic city of Stone Town, Zanzibar, and their methods of community-based, socio-spatial maintenance of space. To address this overlooked and obscured topic related to conservation, results from a participatory photography methodology are analysed. The remote, participatory image-based research (RPIBR) allows the Indo-Zanzibaris to document their under-researched spatial priorities and negotiations, giving them agency due to the insider knowledge and co-curated documentation.

The visual analysis across 64 images shows Indo-Zanzibari belonging grounded in routine trade-focused activity, improvised contemporary additions and wide networks of circulation beyond the heritage-inscribed boundaries of Stone Town. Practices interpreted as chaos or neglect, are reframed to show the collective community familiarity and responsive knowledge to contextual constraints and the complicated conditions of the country.

By focusing on evidence of everyday practice, Indo-Zanzibari presence is shown through urban responsibility and spatial negotiation rather than a curated display of performed heritage outside of lived necessity. The dissertation questions the nature of traditional conservation guidelines, emphasising the need to shift priority away from tourism and static heritage narratives, which aim to simply preserve the built environment, and instead draw attention to community and cultural survival. The grassroots approach underscores the need to utilise more inclusive research methods, focusing on the co-creation of knowledge from the everyday inhabitants themselves.

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I am deeply grateful to the contributors who generously shared their time, photographs, and experiences. Thank you to Fatima for the countless conversations and encouragement, and to my mother for sharing her own memories and knowledge of Zanzibar with me.

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Shabbir Girnary (1968–2022). He was born and raised in Stone Town and was like a father to me. Although he is no longer here, his love for the city remains at the heart of this study.

1 GLOSSARY

TERMS

Utamuduni: Raised platforms, used for resting and socialising, often found in semi-public or domestic spaces.

Baraza: A bench along the front of a building for informal, socialisation.

Mabungo: A tropical fruit commonly eaten in Zanzibar as a snack or made into juice.

Asheri: A local term for the Ithna Ashari (Twelver Shia) branch of Islam.

Waqf: Charitable endowment in Islamic law, where property or assets are community-owned.

Urojo: Zanzibari diasporic street food, also known as Zanzibar Mix, made from mango, turmeric, potato, and lemon.

Verandah: A roofed space attached to a building that sits between inside and outside.

Curio shops: Small retail spaces selling heritage-related or collectible objects, mainly for tourists.

Madrassa: An Islamic school where religious learning takes place.

Forodhani: Social space on the waterfront that comes alive in the evenings with food stalls and gatherings.

Samovar: A metal container used to heat water for tea.

Jaali: Perforated stone, wood, or plaster screen with South Asian origins.

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2 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary and scholarly discourse of Stone Town (ST), Zanzibar has widely focused on issues of tourism and heritage, with minimal emphasis given to the maintenance of the city through the various diasporic communities who continue to shape the city. The complex, historic migratory patterns shape the identities of current Indo-Zanzibari inhabitants. The Indo-Zanzibari community has resided on the Island for over two centuries, preceding initial Portuguese colonisation for trade and labour related reasons. This dissertation sources new data, creating a present-day archive from a small portion of the Indo-Zanzibari community, showcasing their everyday life and spatial adaptation. From the results of a participatory photography methodology, referred to as Remote Participatory Image-Based Research (RPIBR) in this study.

This dissertation investigates the following questions:

1. What does RPIBR reveal about the everyday, diasporic life of Indo-Zanzibaris in ST that heritage or tourist narratives overlook?
2. How is heritage lived when necessity requires divergence from standard conservation guidelines?
3. How does the Indo-Zanzibari community operate in ST's migratory and circulation networks?

The structure of this study is linear, with the introduction outlining ST's context and the research questions and aims. The literature review then introduces the topic through scholarship in six sections, assessing key discourse around migration histories, representation of the community, heritage critique, spatial diaspora theory, and participatory photography. The methodology chapter details the decisions and process of data collection and analysis. The RPIBR results are presented in the following chapter, arranged by contributor with the exact or approximate locations of each. The core written analysis chapters follow, supported by diagrammatic analysis, discussing the key themes. The conclusion synthesises the results and implications on heritage and tourism procedure as well as archival creation. Supporting material, such as direct familial historical archives, are in the appendix, followed by the bibliography and list of figures.

FIGURE A HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Includes adapted historical and artistic reference images.



3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have extensively discussed the history of the Indian Ocean Trade and layered colonial history that have led to the static preservation of ST, disconnected from inhabiting communities (Wood et al. 2016, Lexo Africa Expedition 2025). The literature review discusses topics around formal heritage conservation and the prioritisation of visual aesthetics aimed at tourism or heritage. The spatial and diasporic theory forms a basis to analyse the visual evidence from the RPIBR method.

3.1 MIGRATION AND COMMERCE

ST is described as a hybrid “city where the rich and poor lived together” (Folkers and Van Buiten 2019) composed of merged Arab, Indian, European features as a result of the migration histories (AP Central 2006, Posnansky and Chittick 1978, Meier 2016). These scholars contribute to the study through the discussion of multi-cultural trading practices and their significance in shaping ST. The gap of these historical studies is the lack of focus on the evolution of these practices and the contemporary usage of the architectural environment. This dissertation aims to bridge these limitations, by grounding focus on visual evidence of the present-day conditions in ST.

Contemporary and foundational island formation scholarship argues the necessity of alternating short-term migration cycles for island survival, showing interdependence on the geographical links to the mainland (Pallaver 2022, Williamson, MacArthur, and Wilson 1969, Nicolini 2022, Cousin 2009, Kelman 2023, Declich 2018). Prendergast et al (2016) discusses the recent formation of Zanzibar, approximately 9-12,000 years ago, due to environmental and climatic changes. This reveals that the island itself is more dynamic and contemporary than it is often conveyed in discussion and representation, contradicting the desired, strict preservation approach that ST is subject to (Ingrams 1931, Thornton 2007).

Historically, Zanzibar was a popular location for trade and resting stops, due to the predictable monsoon wind routes. The island was recognised as a valuable geographic link from East Africa to Arabia, South Asia, and Europe (Sheriff 1987, Knappert 1992, Pollard and Kinyera 2017, Crisp 2020). Existing literature explores the trade-related migration between Zanzibar and the mainland. Scholars reveal that Indian relocation to East Africa preceded Portuguese rule in the 1500s and Omani rule further

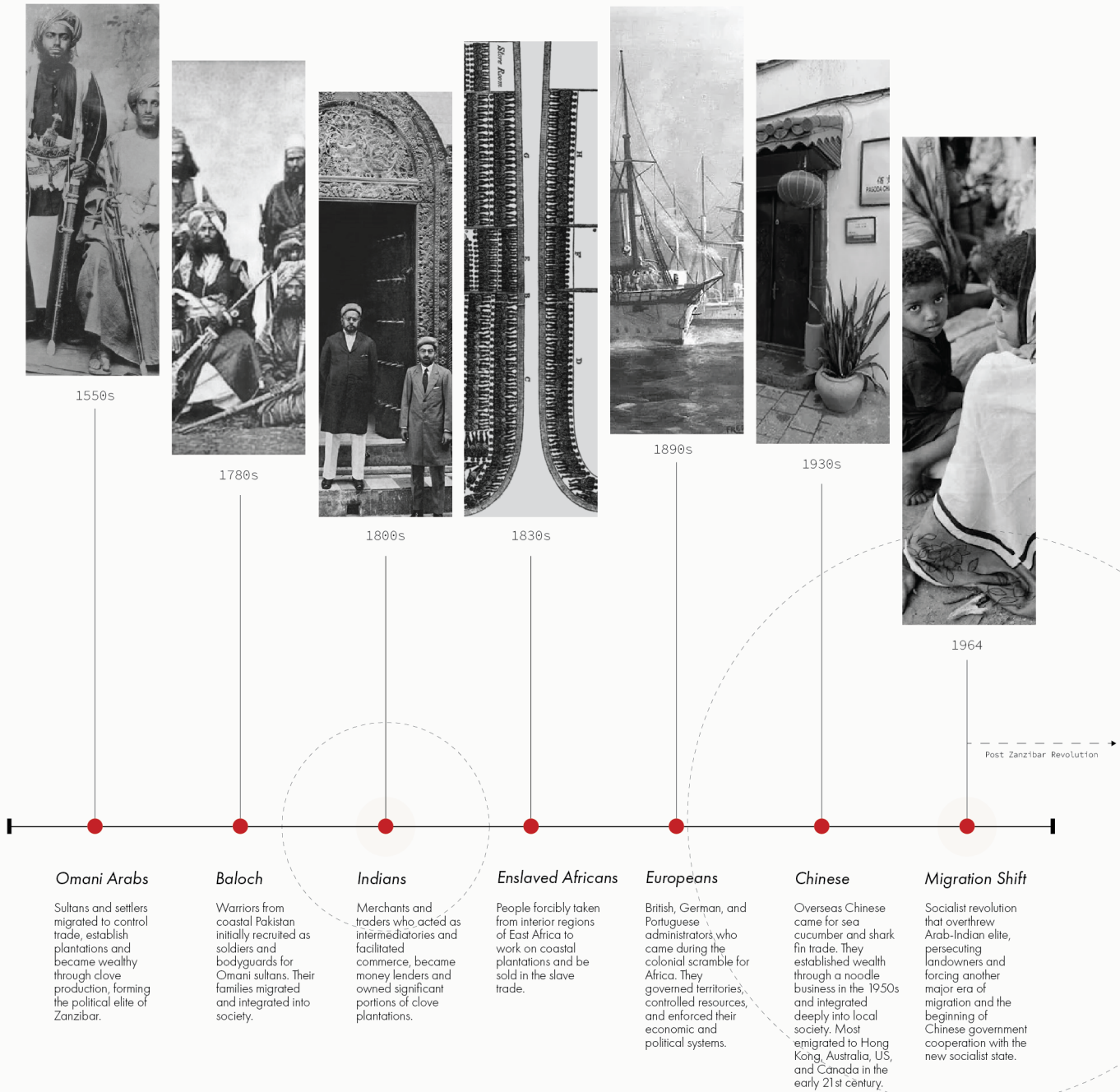
strengthened the migratory conditions, due to the political-economic interdependence of the island (Burton 2024, Pouwels 2002, Masebo 2016, Bakari 2012).

The desire for control over Zanzibar was rooted in economy and labour, exploitative to natives and marginalised migrant communities, to facilitate the Indian Ocean trade through its convenient location (Castro 2021). Under Omani rule, the island served as the hub of the ivory and slave trade in the 19th century, with enduring socio-economic consequences to the long-term status of Zanzibar, even under the British Empire and the abolition of slavery (Strickert 2023, Fouéré 2020). This sheds light on how movement and migration can shape environments through social structures and hierarchical systems. This contributes to the notion that communities must work together to embed their belonging and identity into the place. Building on these insights, this study aims to investigate how these pre-existing conditions are lived with on the island and its geographic network and how the migrant Indo-Zanzibari community negotiate with the town's pressure to showcase its' complicated heritage.

Under the Omani Empire, migration expanded further, with groups like the Balochis and Persians undertaking military positions and educated Indian merchants migrating to trade. Multiple scholars discuss how the British Empire intensified the Indian migration pattern, employing them to become middlemen between the elites and the natives, to facilitate practices of finance and commerce (Wahab 2022, Ghai 2013, Bennett 1978, Gregory 1993, Nicolini 2022, Akinola 1972, Chiteji, n.d.). Historians argue that not all Indian migrants were highly educated or employed in privileged positions, as shown through evidence of their employment in the Mombasa-Uganda railway construction (Gunston 2004). In 1901, over 20,000 poor Indian labourers worked on the major structure, with thousands injured or dead during the development (Gunston 2004). This informs the study showing how the many stages of colonialism used marginalised and migrant communities regardless of background or inscribed status. Despite this, the community still integrated into society post-migration in varying degrees, as shown in data from 1924 to 1948, with them settling long-term in Zanzibar (Ramadhani 2017). This information provides a basis to investigate the circulatory activity a shifts of the community, especially in response to the intensified cycle of migration post-1964 revolution. The exclusion towards the diasporic Indo-Zanzibari and Omani-

FIGURE B MIGRATION TIMELINE

Includes adapted historical and artistic reference images.



Zanzibari communities led to a loss of their positions in society, creating the narrative of them being outsiders (Lodhi 1986, Al-Wais 2025, Marshall 2025, Bertz 2021). This resulted in violence, forced displacement, property possession, and expulsion, with high death tolls, reported in mixed numbers, with Western newspapers citing 2,000 to 4,000 deaths (Sheriff and Ferguson 1991, Parsons 2003, Diwakar 2021, Keshodkar 2013, R.P.L Loimeier 2009). This is significant for this dissertation as it gives insight on the representation of the Indo-Zanzibari community and provides context on the interdependent nature of migration between ST and areas outside of its official UNESCO boundary.

The key gap in these valuable historical sources is a collective under-representation of the Indo-Zanzibari community's current negotiation with their shifting positions in history, which this study aims to bridge through community-led, visual evidence.

3.2 SOCIO-SPATIAL ADAPTATION TO COLONIAL PLANNING

Existing literature traces ST's urban development within the Indian Ocean trade network under Omani imperial rule and British colonial governance, with discussion around architecture's role in creating an artificial, outwards-facing narrative of cultural hybridity (Prestholdt 2017, Sheriff 1987, Sheriff 1995, Sachedina 2013). Historians discuss how cultural elements, like Arab introduced coral-rag construction, carved doors and features like Indian verandahs and jaalis, became symbols of embedded cultural belonging and hierarchy in material forms (Myers 1997, CO3 2016, 2022, 2025, Callenberg 2016, Hellerström 2021). Home (2015) discusses the British Empire's use of racial segregation in colonial planning to differentiate parts of ST, as shown in Fig. C. This equated hierarchy to permanence, and this notion continues to persist through the official UNESCO boundary between ST and N'gambo inscribed in the 2000s (UNESCO 2018). This shows the continuation of these hierarchies and class-based separation, leading ST to be seen as its own independent region with distinct, withstanding formal heritage practices. This has a noticeable, subsequent effect on the under-funding and inadequate planning in surrounding areas, like N'gambo, relative to ST.

Colonial material interventions were central to ST's development, despite the inclusion of non-British

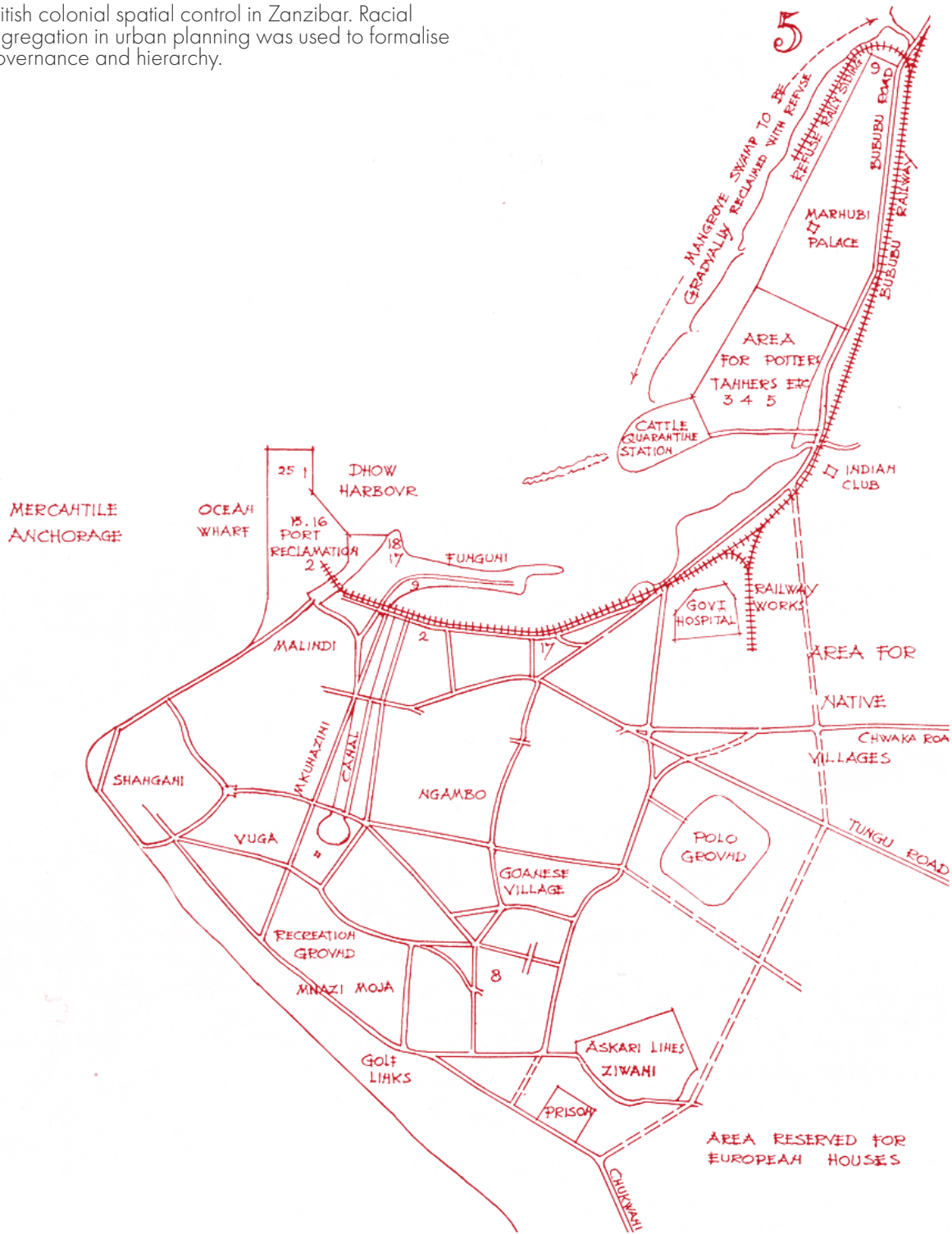
professionals designing the urban architecture of the city. The discussion of the temporary colonial additions, such as materials like corrugated metal roofing, is reflective of the continuing social class structures and the limited consideration for the everyday long-term occupants, typically poorer migrants and temporary labour (Home 2015). Urban space was conceived as European, with civil servants and African populations residing in N'gambo (William Cunningham Bissell 2011). Myers (1994, 1997, 2003) extends this by exploring how N'gambo's architectural landscape was relegated to more temporary, informal structures, such as Swahili huts, which would stray from the desired European vision of ST. In the 1990s, during a period of neo-liberalism, ST's governance became mostly separate from the rest of Zanzibar. The 1996 Tourism Zoning Plan, with economic reform and population control, subjected ST to a different planning regime from the rest of Zanzibar (Haji, Mohammed, and Ufuzo 2006). This historical insight provides a basis to assess how the diasporic communities have adapted the environment to live with these enforced colonial systems over time.

Rezaei (2019) explores a unique perspective of everyday social space in ST, documenting the importance of urban, outdoor elements such as the baraza in daily social life. Whilst there is little discussion in existing scholarship of how urban elements of such have evolved, this is a key framework to assess the importance of the outdoor urban environment. This supports the argument that ST's urban form has historically evolved through negotiating functionality and inherited, existing morphology rather than its static preservation (Rashid and Shateh 2012). Current debate on Zanzibar's architecture frames material changes and conservation as technically and climatically due to the decay from factors like moisture exposure and salt corrosion (Ali et al. 2024). This is supported by Jasinski (2021) through his discussion regarding the negotiation of materials due to the environment, for example, the crenellated roofing, which was replaced with corrugated metal roofing systems aligned with socio-economic factors in the British protectorate era. Both pieces of literature discuss the specialist, heritage-adjacent repair that may be inaccessible to most residents, as expert technical intervention is typically required. This study aims to address the literary limitations around the lack of focus on the city's inhabitants and their daily rituals of repair, outside or around colonial expectations of conservation, through the community's insider documentation of ST.

FIGURE C 1923 BRITISH PROTECTORATE MAP.

Adapted from Haji, Mohammed, and Ufuzo (2006)

British colonial spatial control in Zanzibar. Racial segregation in urban planning was used to formalise governance and hierarchy.



A core urban theory explored by Guma et al. (2023) discusses the persistence of cities through social practices of adaptation. In the context of ST, this is expanded on by Beck (2023), who reads features like exposed wiring and infrastructural additions as long-term occupation, not disorder. Leaks and stained surfaces show visual evidence of adaptation in this way, and her argument frames the community as active makers of space instead of passive victims to the climate and other external factors, like politics. This is an important framework for this study as it is concerned with the social, lived practices in ST and informs a state of knowledge of the features to pay attention to during analysis. This also provides context to understand the colonial influence on existing notions of formal conservation, further discussed in Section 3.4.

3.3 INDO ZANZIBARI COMMUNITY

Lally (2015) explains the Indo-Zanzibari community's reputation as "settled" and "strangers" simultaneously, showing the ambiguity of their positions in East Africa. Scholars add further discussion to this, exploring their central economic and labour-based roles despite this semi-outsider status (Jakhu 2020, Oonk 2013, Burton 2013). The discussion of the Omani elite encouraging long-term Indian family settlement, shifting the initial cultural migration restrictions on Indian women, reveals the importance of the Indo-Zanzibari community in society and the desire for their societal assimilation (Oonk 2006). Studies have also shown the economic impact of Hindu Baniyan traders and Muslim merchant groups, like the Khoja, Bohra and Memon communities, whilst experiencing social liminality in the hierarchical environment (Lentin 2020, Srinivasan 2000). The community kept and negotiated existing practices of diet, marriage, and business (Oonk 2013, Mesaki and Bapumia 2015). These are important frameworks to understand the under-explored contemporary positions and practices of Indo-Zanzibaris, providing a lens to observe the methodology to explore retained intergenerational patterns of culture and trade-related practices.

The concept of enframing describes the colonial organisation of societal hierarchies, placing Europeans at the top, followed by Arabs, then Indians and eventually native Africans (Mitchell 1991). This caused ambivalence between communities as access to housing and resources were defined by these exclusionary practices. The British enforced separate structures for each racial group and education was

central to this process. Indo-Zanzibaris invested in separate education facilities, reinforcing their identity and intermediary role between Europeans and Africans (Oonk 2006). Language policy also became a site of identity politics and hierarchy (Wahab 2022). This created an unequal political landscape where diasporic communities were seen as adversaries, further heightened by Karume's racialised statement showing evidence of nationalist perspectives framing the Indo-Zanzibaris as illegitimate outsiders (Fouere 2013).

The work of Ajit Singh Hoogan, an Indian architect in charge of ST's urban planning, explores the colonial middle position of Indo-Zanzibaris. Scholars study the architectural hybridity he designed into ST, in line with the colonial expectations (Myers 2003, Sakr 2025, Pitcher 2004, Issak 2023, Owere 2025). These hybrid forms are symbolic architectural features, representative diasporic migratory identity. Hoogan's position is representative of early Indo-Zanzibari settlement and their role in shaping ST, allowing this study's analysis of the RPIBR to be grounded in this ideology that sheds an alternative light on heritage discourse, not around sultans or monumentalised architectural forms. While scholars often discuss the preserved architectural hybridity, each culture is diluted to its specific architectural contributions. This shows further scholarly disengagement towards the community's collective efforts of adaptation (Bertz 2014). This dissertation aims to bridge this research gap, through observing the alterations and maintenance composing a form of urbanism by daily community agents, subverting or maintaining this inscribed hybridity.

Discourse also centres around the suspicion around the reputation of Indo-Zanzibaris which led to the community to migrate abroad or to the mainland for economic opportunities adding to the complex network of migration of the Indo-Zanzibaris (Myers 1994, Burgess 2018, Burgess, Issa, and Hamad 2009, UK Parliament 1964). This led to the creation of a fragile sense of belonging, as echoed by Loimeier (2018) rather than secure settlement, which is an important narrative to consider in the analysis stage. Gunarslan (2020) adds to this narrative explaining the partial, conditional return possible after the 1980s, producing another key point of migration along with new circulatory patterns between ST and the mainland. These sources repeat the trend of historical significance however have a lack of current ethnographic accounts or community-based evidence. A key article that looks at their interwoven

FIGURE D 5 IS FOR SAMOSA PHOTOGRAPH

Adapted from Young (2020)



cultural influence and importance in society is shown briefly through the article *S* is for Samosa, where Young (2020) focuses on the presence of Indian food culture in a school. Photographic evidence for an Indian item defining a letter of the alphabet, the basis of Swahili and English language, shows the deep-rooted integration of the community in ST's hybrid society. This dissertation extends this photographic evidence and examines the spatial agency of the community and how their small gestures define the city's urbanism.

3.4 TOURISM AND HERITAGE CRITIQUE

It is argued that historic urbanism must be understood through an evolving, dynamic lens to make sure conservation does not become visually catered to tourism or Western heritage ideals, risking the loss of daily life (Orbasli 2016). This dissertation echoes that while tourism can fund restoration, organisations like UNESCO and the Stone Town Conservation and Development Authority (STCDA) need to consider how it may accelerate displacement or community marginalisation. Mainstream scholarship on heritage environments demonstrates that cultural preservation aimed at external audiences uproots daily inhabitants, providing an insight into the adverse effects of heritage and tourism (C. Davis 2005). Wider criticism supports this, demonstrating that historic cities, such as Venice, run the risk of becoming curated museums where populations become symbolic, losing their agency and homes (Giuffrida 2022).

Scholars echo this in the context of ST extending discourse on the contradictory nature of heritage preservation (Haji, Lwoga and Adu-Ampong 2025). Conservation standards in ST prioritise aesthetics over viable functionality, restricting community adaptation to contemporary changes. This results in space becoming inhabitable in light of technological advancements. Keough (2011) further critiques the UNESCO status given to heritage locations, as this triggers overtourism, resulting in a demand for accommodation, stores, and electricity. This negatively impacts and even damages these protected sites despite having strict conservation guidelines. This argument is extended in this study by focusing how ST has been adapted to accommodate for the accelerating rate of tourism.

The theory of survivalist architecture is discussed by Roy (2005), providing a framework for understanding

the existence of "wire spaghetti" (Beck 2023) and incremental repairs despite the strict heritage controls are guidelines being tolerated, but workarounds are needed. Combined with previously discussed scholarship, UNESCO can be seen as an extension of a colonial lens as they are externally defining the value of a location whilst overlooking the requirements of the occupants (Beck 2023). This dissertation builds on the need to accommodate for flexible adaptation by analysing the visual evidence of these dynamics existing outside of listed heritage structures through the lens of the people living there.

UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape approach acknowledges the necessity to consider socio-economic factors and processes in conservation efforts (UNESCO 2013). The gap remains in its implementation as current approaches still focus on institutional planning tools, supporting Habraken's (2007) discussion of heritage conservation. He explains how current fixed, formal architectural practices separate buildings from the people that inhabit them. This reflects the colonial planning of ST discussed in Section 3.2, where visual coherence and appeal to outsiders are prioritised at the expense of everyday use. In ST, the community's efforts are often framed as illegible as they are not anticipated by institutional frameworks. Building on these arguments, scholars argue that informal repairs are not opposed to conservation standards but are instead essential for historic environments to survive through use (Nigar and Selim 2025). Previous studies across many years show that when authority is in a mode of control and limited to professionals, improvised practices tend to emerge in response (Mkumbukwa 2017, Shacklock 2006). This results in marginalising the everyday diasporic communities who maintain these places without involvement in officially recognised practice, as further discussed by Hellerstrom (2021) in the context of ST and N'gambo. This dissertation is grounded in this argument through visually documenting of the everyday labour and spatial practices in response to inadequate formal systems. The aim is to focus on the contemporary environment rather than retreading the well-known history of the city, to examine how belonging is maintained by and around the Indo-Zanzibari community.

3.5 DIASPORA AND SPACE

The research on African urbanism is key to understanding operational informality and movement in ST to see how residents adapt buildings and

spaces that are not accommodated for future change (Simone 2004). Presence and belonging are rooted in acts rather than something envisioned or designed. Indo-Zanzibari spatial practices in ST operate with this same logic as discussed by scholars (Beck 2023, Rezaiaei 2019), challenging frameworks that equate presence with organised permanence. Diaspora theory provides insight into space being defined by the multiple cultural histories, hierarchies and adapted practices that intertwine (Mukta and Brah 1999). Other scholars extend this idea of community identity being centred around mobility practices and memories (De Jong 2011, Price 2020, De Costa 1989). The limitations of these concepts lie in their abstract and social orientation, with limited insight or evidence into the communities relationships with architecture.

The concept of diasporic urbanism further discusses space as relational and practice-based, arguing for the necessary accommodations for lower socio-economic backgrounds to have ownership of designing their own spaces (Awan 2011). This dissertation builds on Awan's theory to analyse how ordinary people become agents of making their own spaces in ST. Discussion also moves closer to materially understanding diaspora, conceptualising it as "urban design from below" (Mack 2014). However, the analytical gap lies in the limited insight into heritage contexts. Other scholars support the argument that domestic and urban spaces appear to be liminal, but the gap lies in the abstraction, with buildings and maintenance practices remaining under-discussed (Sakiz 2023, Ahmad 2015).

Relational spatial theory can support the urban diaspora theories in the context of ST. Massey's (1994) theory of power geometry frames space as something experienced unevenly due to unequal mobility and resource access. She also discusses how cities are dynamic and open due to the mobility and change they are subject to, which mirrors the history and context of ST and the migration of Indo-Zanzibaris. Her spatial theories lack how they are applied in everyday space. This is something that is bridged by scholars in contemporary literature, which frames diasporic engagement as a learned, practice developed through sustained responsibility (Gans 2022, Chrestu and Mavroudi 2018, Ghoche and G. Galan 2019). This perspective is relevant in ST, where belonging is maintained through property, labour and adaptation that can be applied to the visual analysis. Buildings are framed as unfinished objects by Ingold (2001, 2011), where they are seen as process-

oriented through living and dwelling. This is a valuable way to reframe Indo-Zanzibari presence through placemaking to analyse ST outside of Western perceptions of the climate-related decay and loss of inhabitancy.

The intersection of diaspora theory and spatial theory acts as a framework to analyse the analytical results. While these theories can be abstract, they can be underpinned by visual evidence of the current practices in ST.

3.6 PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY

How insider communities view and live with their spatial negotiations can be understood through participatory photography by community members themselves. Haraway (1988) discusses how all knowledge is partial and can be biased, a basis to analyse images as situated knowledge. In this sense, participatory photography can be seen as grounded in lived practice rather than just external analysis. This approach can also be seen through the lens of decolonising methodologies, to shift the analysis away from extractive research and towards community agency (Smith [1999] 2012). To extend this, in this study, the Indo-Zanzibaris are given agency to photograph the features and places that they consider important in their day-to-day functions. This is helpful to attempt to avoid the imposition of Western heritage or touristic narratives around ST to lower the risk of misreading data.

Visual scholars note that photographs also shape reality by the framing of attention and value, contributing to the knowledge that image interpretation is important when collecting data, as they are evidence of spatial practice (Berger 1972, Hall 1997). Extending this, Azoulay (2008) frames photography as a civic encounter, highlighting the political underlying tones of images. These theories, tied to the practice of participatory photography, are important to ground abstract diaspora and spatial theories in lived realities without reliance on overly symbolic or reductive interpretation.

4 METHODOLOGY



CONTRIBUTOR 1 (C1)

CONTRIBUTOR 2 (C2)

CONTRIBUTOR 3 (C3)

CONTRIBUTOR 4 (C4)

CONTRIBUTOR 5 (C5)

FIGURE E COMBINED RESULTS OF THE RPIBR

4 METHODOLOGY

Knowledge is co-created and co-curated through collaborative practice, hence this dissertation's use of a qualitative and interpretive methodology. This combines participatory photography, visual ethnography, and mapping to explore how members of the Indo-Zanzibari community experience and represent their lives in ST beyond the touristic lens. The aim is not to map monumental architecture or to fix or fossilise their lives, but to reveal the hybridity and layers that connect this community's ongoing cultural identity to ST. This study is shaped by the author's "insider-outsider" position, informed by Indo-Zanzibari heritage rooted in ST (Ademolu 2023, Bukamal 2022, Yip 2023, Dwyer and Buckle 2009). This dual perspective enables reflexive engagement while maintaining critical distance, deepening the study's analysis of belonging, migration and cultural continuity.

4.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

4.1.A Remote participatory image-based research

This study adapts ideas from photovoice (Wang 1999, Svensson 2017, Blackman and Fairey 2007) and shares key principles such as the commitment to prioritise contributors' perspectives and spatial knowledge. This study's methodology has some differences from photovoice, therefore will be referred to as Remote Participatory Image-Based Research (RPIBR). Wang originally gave cameras to people who would not otherwise have access to them while running group workshops with the aim of community empowerment and advocacy. RPIBR keeps photovoice's focus on what contributors see and know. However, the setup and goals have differences. It is a way for the community members to reflect on the realities of their lives and to investigate the things that are not as obviously seen (Wang 1999). RPIBR can document underrepresented material practices like corrugated metal roofing and improvised wiring, which professional heritage organisations typically exclude (Mirzoeff 2006).

One of the key reasons for these changes from photovoice is due to the advancement of technology since the 1990s as the contributors already own smartphones or cameras and know how to practice casual photography. There was also the possibility of working remotely, as contributors could send images via WhatsApp on their own accord, rather than following a research schedule. This was practical due to limitations on visiting ST whilst already

studying abroad but additionally reflected how the contributors live with two of them regularly travelling between Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam. Their mobility is part of the pattern of diasporic life in East Africa between Zanzibar and the mainland. The varying presences allow for this dissertation to explore and consider broader senses of belonging and migration, which is a methodological strength. Therefore, this selection does not claim to be a purely local selection following Haraway's idea of situated knowledge (1988), acknowledging that ways of seeing are shaped by human experiences of diaspora, migration, and privilege.

Photovoice also included group sessions where participants shared and discussed their images together. The contributors in this dissertation have different relationships to ST and work in different industries, therefore collective organisation was not the goal. The aim is to see how their various positions, whether living in ST full-time, periodically or commuting in for work, shape what they value spatially and choose to photograph. Wang's ideologies also focused on marginalised groups who need platforms to be heard in the context of the nineties. However, the contributors in this case are business owners, photographers, and gallery operators, so the goal is not to provide them with a voice but instead to draw on their visual knowledge that they casually produce anyway. Unlike photovoice, this study is shaped by the author's familial and social ties to ST's Indo-Zanzibari community, positioning the work within the diaspora rather than as external observation. Participants were invited to photograph what they chose and how they chose to frame it, while interpretation and analysis remained the author's responsibility. Rather than relying on participant commentary as primary data, the study employs RPIBR alongside Getty AAT-style tagging (Soergel 1995) and architectural analysis, with attention to who produced each image shaping interpretation. This approach enables the ethical generation of new knowledge grounded in insider access and contextual understanding not available through existing, formal archives or secondary sources.

4.1.B Contributors

The contributor's names are not used to protect their privacy. All contributors are Indo-Zanzibari and have existing community or familial connections to the researcher.

<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Description</i>
1	Born, raised and still lives in ST, running his curio-shop and residing above it.
2	A permanent Dar Es Salaam photographer who visits ST for long-term periods
3	Born and raised in ST and has migrated to Dar Es Salaam. He spends half of the year in both locations, managing several businesses and a curio-shop in ST.
4	A permanent resident of Dar Es Salaam who visits for short-term increments. His previous generations lived and traded in ST, with their late grandfather's shop still active in ST today.
5	Born, raised in ST, running an intergenerational curio-shop in the city but has migrated to N'gambo and commutes to ST now.

4.1.C Data Collection

The brief and image collection

Contributors were sent a brief study message via WhatsApp, as detailed below.

I just need 5-10 photos from you in Stone Town for my dissertation. They can be new photos or ones you already have. Anything from your everyday life such as your shop or workplace, a street corner, a cat, a baraza, a book, a view, your kitchen. Anything that feels personal or familiar to your perception of Stone Town.

Please keep geotagging turned on if possible when taking the photos, so I can map them in Stone Town (I can help if you're unsure how.) If this is not possible, the approximate location or address via a caption will do if you're happy to share it.

You can send the photos directly to me here on WhatsApp on my number please! +44XXXXXXXX

All photos can be anonymous if you wish. Faces, family names, or any personal details can be blurred or removed. If you want to withdraw any images after providing that is perfectly fine too, just let me know.

Your contribution will help document and represent our community's continuing presence in Stone Town, rarely shown in Western academic research.

Thank you for taking part. I'd love to stay in touch to share the progress and final results.

Kind regards,
Maria

- Whatsapp message sent from researcher to contributors

The dissertation's focus was briefly explained, and it was clarified that images would be used for academic analysis. Some participants later withdrew or found they could not commit the time required, and these decisions were respected without question. As participation included family members, friends, and members of a wider community, the research operated through relationships of trust and peer collaboration rather than a conventional researcher-subject dynamic. Contributors maintained full control over what they shared, including ownership of their images.

The images were shared via WhatsApp for practicality and proved to be an efficient form of communication. The contributors are anonymised, though their businesses or photographic styles may be identifiable within the Indo-Zanzibari community. This potential identifiability was mentioned and accepted, and they were happy to be included.

Challenges

WhatsApp unexpectedly stripped geotags from all images, requiring manual location mapping for each photograph. This shift altered the research process and revealed differences in how contributors documented space. When geotagging proved unreliable, C1 consistently shared live locations while photographing, allowing images to be mapped in real time. Other contributors provided exact addresses or street names for retrospective mapping, combining newly taken and earlier photographs. One dataset showed that many images fell outside ST's official boundaries, clustering along or beyond the N'gambo edge. This finding is analytically significant, though the focus on ST is not intended to reproduce colonial-era spatial divisions, but to concentrate on areas with the densest Indo-Zanzibari architectural presence.

Another limitation was the limited street-level coverage from web-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS), most notably Google Maps. This shows the lack of priority given to heritage locations, especially those with limited vehicular access. The structural bias in mainstream GIS is revealed by the difference in street-level data between non-Western heritage locations like ST and Western sites like Venice, as illustrated in the appendix (Fig. A1).

Unexpected results

Several contributors occasionally sent additional captions, stories or contextual details with some images, which added valuable information. Notes about who built a workshop, or how old certain items are or why particular alleys mattered personally. These were treated as supplementary context rather than primary data. Some contributors initially hesitated to contribute, questioning whether their everyday photographs held research value or citing time constraints. Participation requirements were intentionally minimal, with contributors asked to submit five to ten images, no fixed deadlines, and freedom to photograph whatever they felt was relevant. Once participation began in September 2025, engagement shifted noticeably. Some contributors initially submitted only the minimum number of images but became increasingly invested, continuing to share photographs even as late as December 2025. Some also exceeded the suggested limit, with some contributing more than twenty images. This pattern highlights how RPIBR can prompt heightened spatial awareness and reflection among everyday inhabitants, encouraging them to reconsider what they value in the spaces they occupy. As everyday practices and community life in Zanzibar are often absent from official archives, this process also functions as a form of grassroots archive-building. The images contribute to a visual repository of lived experience that would otherwise remain unrecorded, extending the archival creation beyond institutional and state-led records.

Image selection

Near-duplicate images were excluded unless variation revealed obvious spatial or material differences. Where contributors submitted more than the suggested number of images, additional photographs were included to preserve representativeness. The aim was to ensure that the analysed set reflected each contributor's range of spatial priorities rather than enforcing uniform quantities. As participation was voluntary and open-ended, consistency in image quantity and quality across contributors was not imposed. Uneven levels of visual documentation were treated as analytically informative rather than methodological limitations.

4.1.D Data Collection

Coding process

Image analysis initially involved manual coding through the development of a bespoke architectural syntax inspired by the Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus (Getty AAT). This framework was used as a simplified structural reference rather than a fixed descriptive template, with each photograph tagged and the syntax expanded iteratively as new images were analysed. The intention was to generate a coded dataset that could be examined for recurring tag clusters to form the analytical backbone of the study. However, reflection on the initial coding revealed limitations linked to positionality and method due to the insider–outsider perspective shaped knowledge. The absence of strict terminological rules led to slippage between overlapping terms, such as “threshold,” “doorway,” and “entrance,” resulting in an inconsistent syntax.

AI software was used to help standardise image tagging. Claude AI was selected as a controlled vocabulary tool to apply Getty AAT–style terms consistently across the dataset. The prompt can be seen in the appendix (Fig A2).

Other models were tested but introduced interpretation or narrative beyond what was visible. Claude was chosen because it remained focused only on visible features and produced a more consistent syntax. A clear tagging brief was provided, as outlined in the next section. Claude AI, as a coding assistant, was consistent, and every image was treated in the same way, making patterns easier to analyse without bias or the urge to expand on certain features. The limitation is that Claude did not possess the state of knowledge discussed in the literature review. In response, every tag was checked and corrected, then replaced in cases of irrelevance, drawing on my own architectural and ethnographic knowledge. Using AI tools comparable to coding software or a structured analytical framework. Its use was also exploratory, evaluating the suitability of this emerging tool for image-based research. Given the author’s insider–outsider position within ST’s Indo-Zanzibari community, the tool additionally helped introduce analytical distance, reducing the influence of prior familiarity and assumptions. The dataset was then analysed, and key thematic clusters were identified.

4.2 MESS IN METHOD

This study’s “messy method” accepts uncertainty and non-linearity in the research (Mellor 2007), which is built on the ideas of Appignanesi and Garrett (1995) who encourage working without clearly defined rules to visually expand analysis. This research similarly unfolded through iterative cycles of analysis and writing, shaped by staggered data collection. This reflects the idea of double-fitting, where data and theory keep adjusting each other (Baldamus in Erickson and Turner n.d.). Bates’s characterisation of research as navigating “blind alleys” (cited in Green, in Mellor 2007) aligns with this study’s iterative and non-linear yet thorough data collection process.

Challenging a single-truth model, this approach treats photographs as meaning-making practices that reveal layers of ST beyond standard methods (Law 2004). This research, therefore, moves beyond traditional architectural analysis. Scholars also call this unshaven research, accepting the complexity of knowledge instead of trying to clean it up, allowing for a close reflection of the fluidity and mixed interconnectivity of the Indo-Zanzibari community. The analysis was iterative and reflexive, shaped by repetitive engagement with the photographs and journal notes. Meaning developed through iterative cycles of looking and writing with the utilisation of diagrammatic analysis.

5 RBIPR RESULTS

5 RBIPR RESULTS

- 5.1 CONTRIBUTOR 1 (C1)
- 5.2 CONTRIBUTOR 2 (C2)
- 5.3 CONTRIBUTOR 3 (C3)
- 5.4 CONTRIBUTOR 4 (C4)
- 5.5 CONTRIBUTOR 5 (C5)

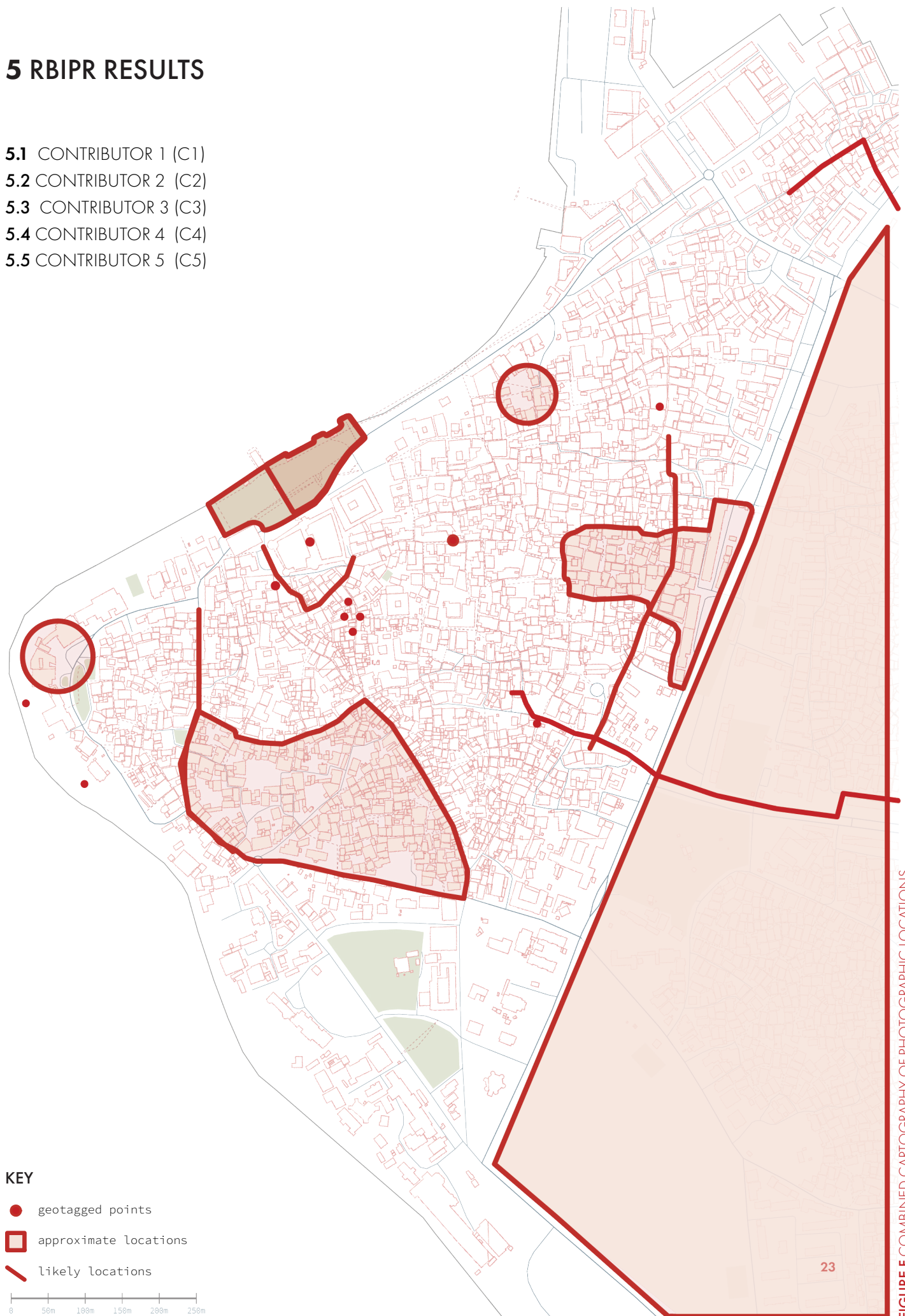


FIGURE F COMBINED CARTOGRAPHY OF PHOTOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

CONTRIBUTOR 1

FIGURE G C1'S IMAGE MAPPING

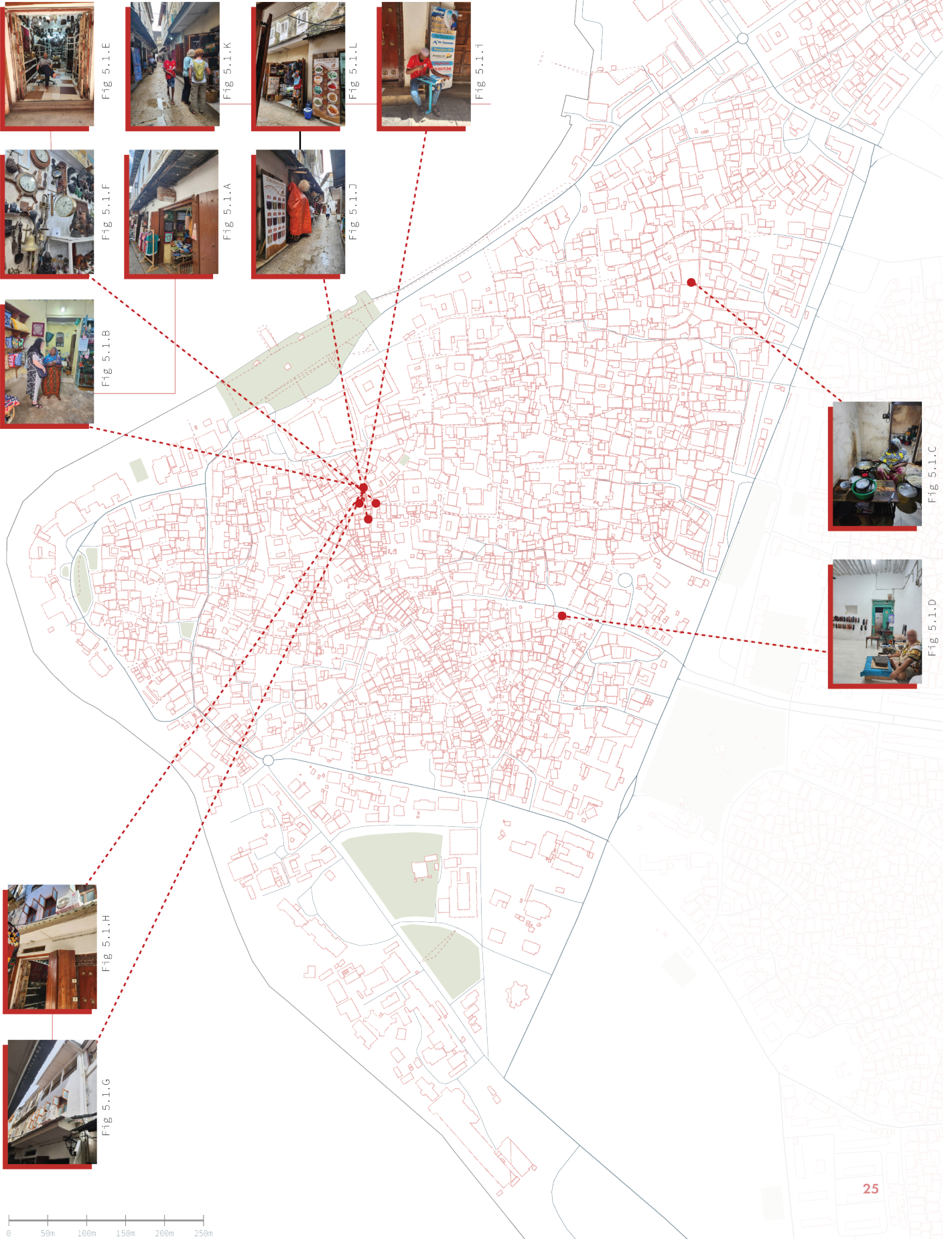




FIG 5.1.A
Photograph of a co-operative textile shop

Tags
timber overhang
shopfront threshold
hand-painted signage
stacked textiles
studded door



FIG 5.1.B

Interior shot of women's cooperative speaking to a tourist

Tags

concrete floor
stacked shelving
exposed bulb
commercial exchange
repurposed doorframe



FIG 5.1.C

Popular food preparation of Urojo, a fusion zanzibari dish combining African and Indian ingredients

Tags

stained plaster
charcoal stove
makeshift counter
stacked cookware
exposed wiring



FIG 5.1.D

An Indo-Zanzibari craftman handcrafting and repairing shoes with a century old stone

Tags

carved doorway
exposed beams
sandal display
courtyard seating
tiled floor
religious calendar

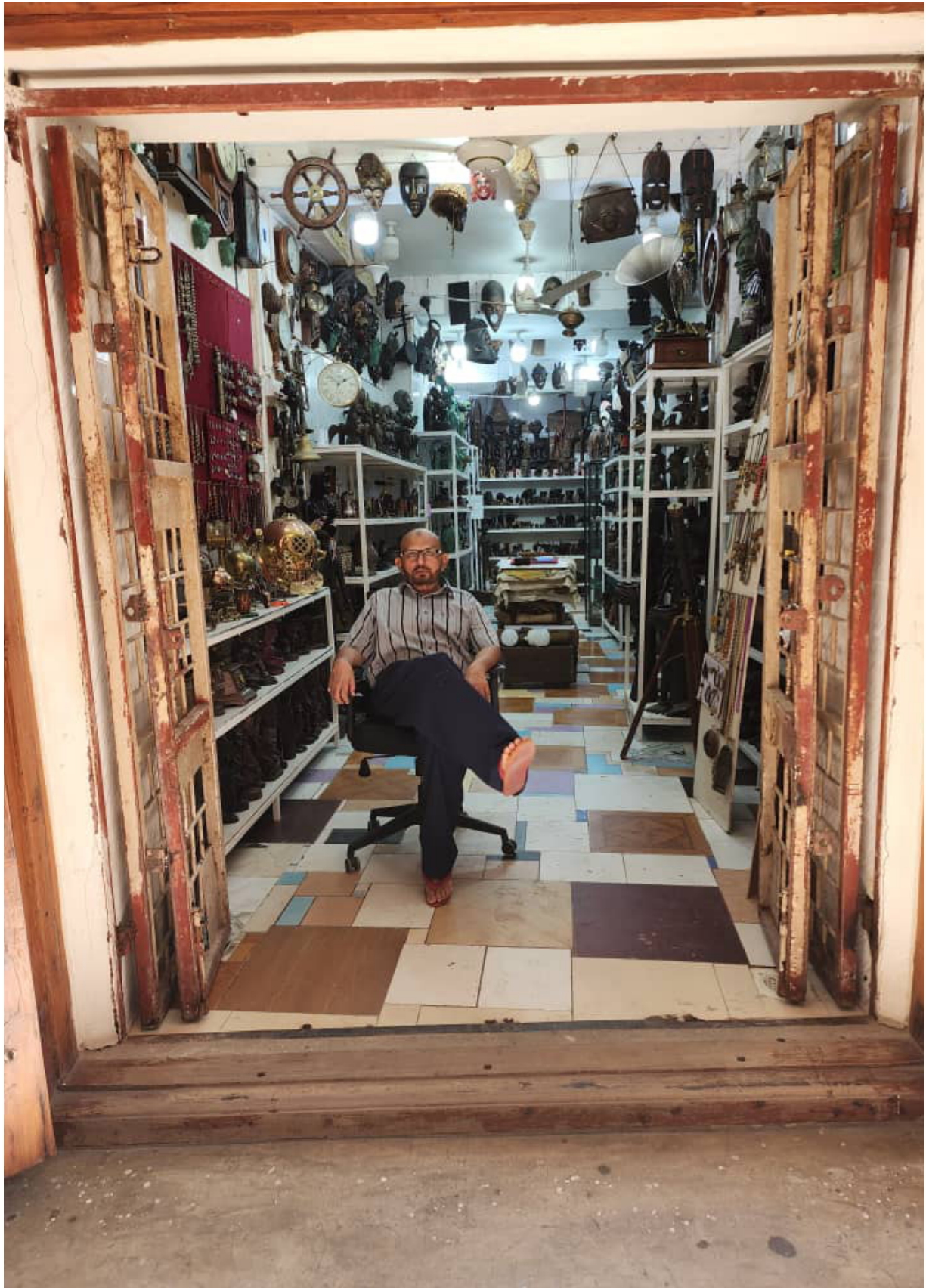


FIG 5.1.E

C1 in his Indo-Zanzibari curio-shop and gallery, sitting on a contemporary chair in the threshold

Tags

weathered doorframe
patchwork tiles
maritime objects
threshold step
retrofitted lighting



FIG 5.1.F

Interior curio-shop stock in C1's shop

Tags

wall-mounted collection
exposed wiring
ship's wheel clock
carved masks
contemporary tiles



FIG 5.1.G

C1's Indian Shopfront house.

Tags

- weathered plaster
- external wiring
- corrugated awning
- verandah
- narrow alley



FIG 5.1.H

Exterior view of C1's Indian shopfront house

Tags

carved door
AC unit
stepped windows
hanging textiles
corrugated canopy



FIG 5.1.1

A hand crafted jewellery maker and his portable set-up opposite C1's curio-shop

Tags

airline signage
carved doorway
street seating
concrete pavement
doorway advertising



FIG 5.1.J

Streetscape around C1's shop with a modern banner and temporary plastic tarp covering movable furniture

Tags

spice signage
narrow alley
timber overhang
wrapped cargo
tourist-local interface



FIG 5.1.K

Neighbouring stores and socio-economic activity around C1's curio-shop

Tags

paved alley
metal awnings
tourist-local encounter
open shopfronts
mixed signage



FIG 5.1.L

Store opposite C1's curio-shop

Tags

louvered shutters
 corrugated awning
 algae-stained facade
 tourist merchandise
 exposed cables

CONTRIBUTOR 2

FIGURE H C2'S IMAGE MAPPING

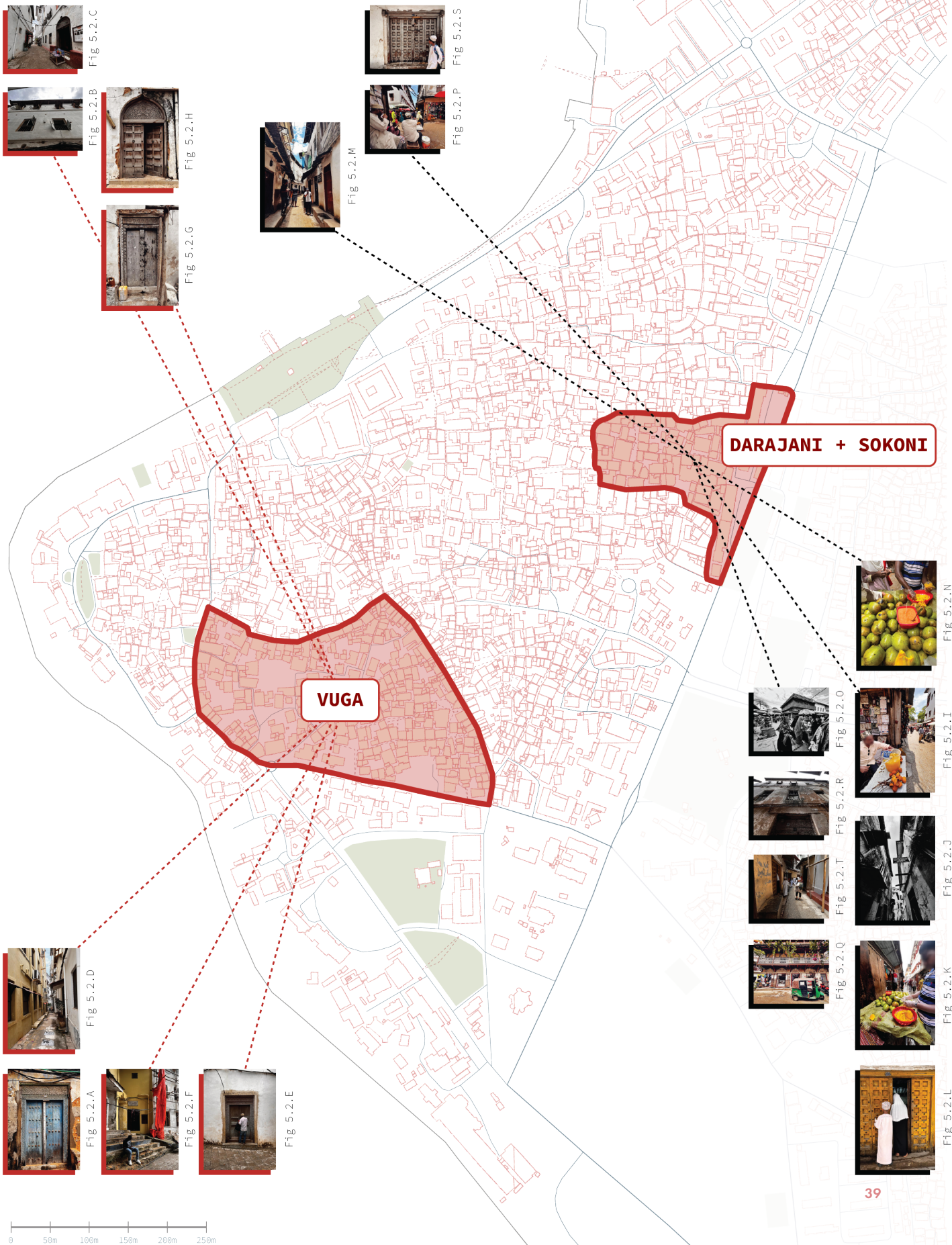




FIG 5.2.A

Photograph of door in Vuga

Tags

- carved lintel
- brass studs
- eroded plaster
- exposed cables
- worn threshold



FIG 5.2.B

Upward view of louvered shutters of a likely inhabited home

Tags

- shuttered windows
- whitewashed facade
- corrugated roofline
- barred openings



FIG 5.2.C

Streetscape of Shangani Street with a Chinese restaurant on the street.

Tags

- heritage signage
- street vending
- carved doorway
- narrow alley
- moveable furniture



FIG 5.2.D

Alleyway with multiple, varying facade conditions and a man resting on a plinth in the distance

Tags

- narrow passage
- AC units
- planted pots
- drainage covers
- utamaduni



FIG 5.2.E

Man entering a carved heritage door

Tags

- carved doorframe
- entering threshold
- stained plaster
- external wiring
- raised step



FIG 5.2.F

A man sitting worn stone steps beside a freshly

Tags

scaffolding
red tarpaulin
worn steps
painted facade
seated figure



FIG 5.2.G

Weathered door with temporary timber scaffolding

Tags

- decaying frame
- brass studs
- eroded threshold
- debris
- plastic items



FIG 5.2.H

Weathered arched carved heritage door against a
an eroding, damp traced wall.

Tags

- arched transom
- weathered panels
- brass studs
- crumbling plaster
- open door



FIG 5.2.1

Street vendor selling Mabunga juice in the Darajani market area

Tags

street vending
timber overhang
textile display
plastic items
weathered wood



FIG 5.2.J

Narrow alley on Kiponda Street with a multilingual signboard of an Asheri Waqf committee.

Tags

- community signage
- peeling render
- eroding stone
- balconies
- exposed wire



FIG 5.2.K

Street vendor peels raw mango on a movable, improvised counter in Darajani

Tags

street vending
wet pavement
corrugated canopy
threshold economy
hanging items



FIG 5.2.L

Two figures enter through a yellow wooden door in Darajani, most-likely a Madrassa

Tags

paneled door
entering threshold
Islamic dress
weathered timber
numeric plaque

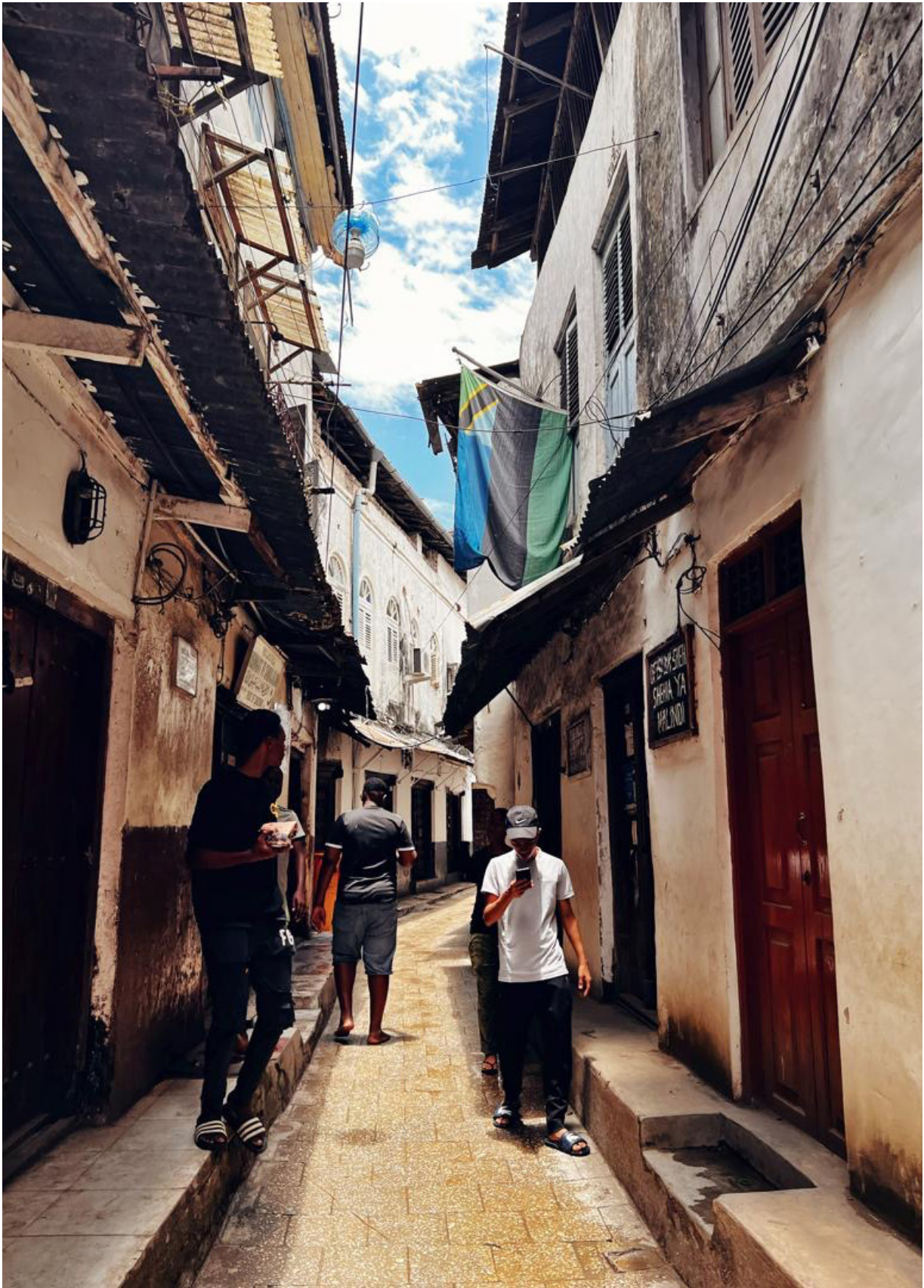


FIG 5.2.M

A Tanzanian flag hangs above a narrow alleyway

Tags

stepped alley
timber overhangs
hanging flag
damp-traced walls
community signage



FIG 5.2.N

Street vendor sells raw mango on a movable,

Tags

- fruit
- makeshift counter
- gloved handling
- pedestrian exchange



FIG 5.2.O

Socio-economic activity in Darajani

Tags

- islamic attire
- street stalls
- verandah
- mixed commerce
- makeshift counter



FIG 5.2.P

Social gathering and consuming of goods bought from Mabunga juice vendor in Darajani

Tags

- street congregation
- timber arcade
- technology shop
- open window shutter
- plastic items



FIG 5.2.Q

A carved veranda and arches frame small shops and parked tuk-tuks

Tags

- carved transom
- verandah
- tuk-tuk
- tourist merchandise



FIG 5.2.R

A weathered facade with open windows on top floors and a carved doorway

Tags

- vertical facade
- carved lintel
- barred windows
- makeshift shutters
- weathered plaster



FIG 5.2.S

A boy in Islamic attire glances at a weathered, wooden window frame

Tags

- decaying frame
- observing child
- numeric plaque
- threshold collapse
- weathered plaster



FIG 5.2.T

Children leaving madrasa showing everyday social activity in a narrow street

Tags

- madrasa procession
- painted doorway
- bamboo scaffolding
- narrow passage
- graffiti markings

CONTRIBUTOR 3

FIGURE I C3'S IMAGE MAPPING



Fig 5.3.A



Fig 5.3.C



Fig 5.3.B



Fig 5.3.E



Fig 5.3.G



Fig 5.3.H



Fig 5.3.F



Fig 5.3.J



Fig 5.3.D



Fig 5.3.K



Fig 5.4.M



Fig 5.4.L

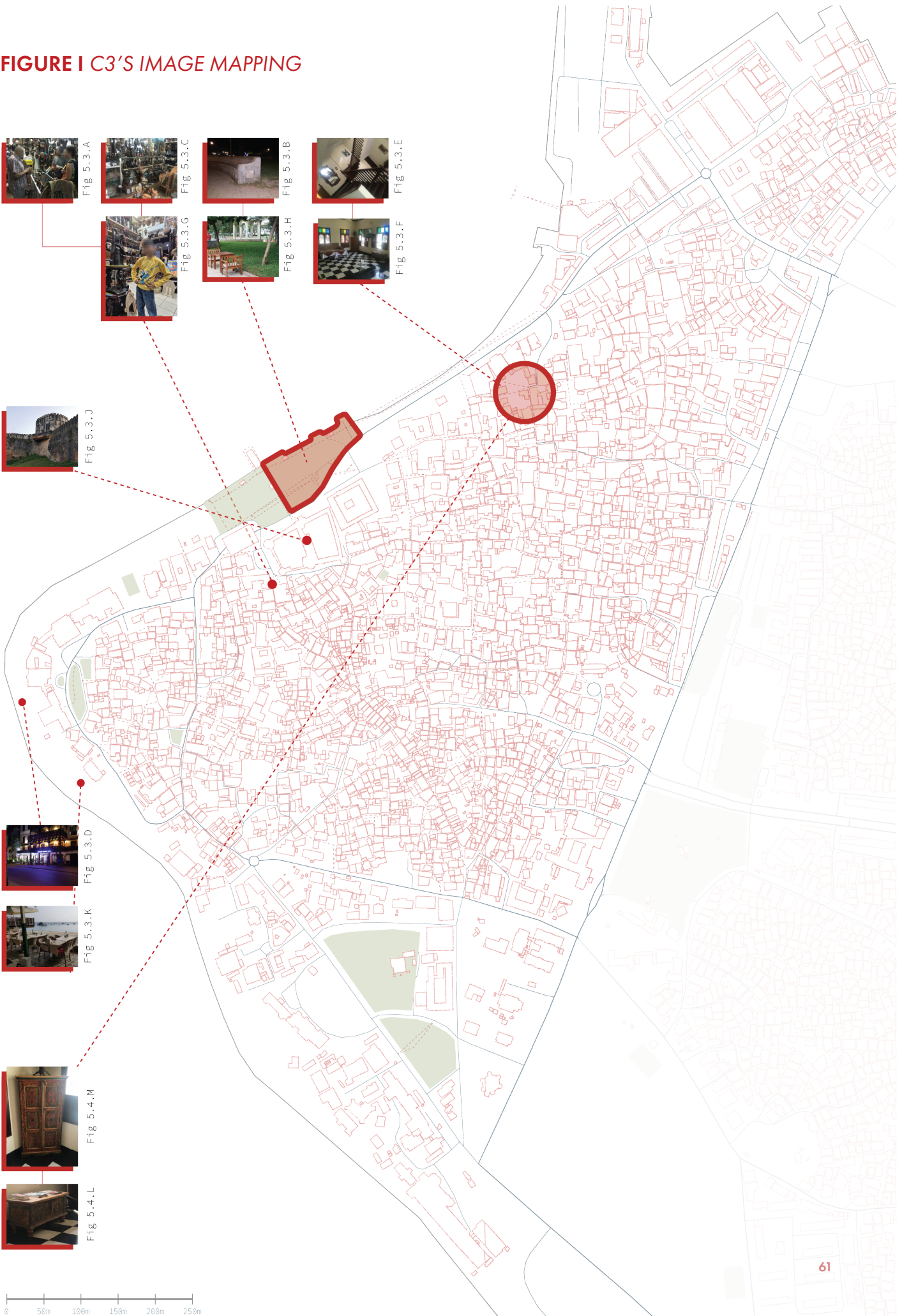




FIG 5.3.A

C3's curio-shop with trading activity being conducted by his father

Tags

- curio shop
- merchant encounter
- dense display
- glass counter
- carved masks



FIG 5.3.B

A baraza in the night-time in the social area of Forodhani

Tags

- baraza
- seafront promenade
- tiled emblem
- nighttime documentation
- edge condition



FIG 5.3.C

C3's curio-shop and stock

Tags

- curio density
- Zanzibari chest
- gallery interior
- mixed provenance
- glass counter



FIG 5.3.D

Regularly frequented seafront hotel

Tags

- stained glass
- uplighting
- wide street
- commercial signage
- verandah



FIG 5.3.E

Photographed interior, presumably of seafrent hotel

Tags

- timber staircase
- interior courtyard
- colonial-era traces
- wall hangings



FIG 5.3.G

Colonial traced photographed interior

Tags

- stained glass windows
- colonial era traces
- furnished reception room
- brass samovar
- carved furniture



FIG 5.3.H

C3's child in their curio-shop family business showing intergenerational heritage.

Tags

- generational presence
- curio shop
- casual inhabitation
- ebony carvings
- intergenerational business



FIG 5.3.1

Social activity occurring in social areas of the Forodhani area

Tags

- outdoor seating
- colonial pavilion
- tree canopy
- public promenade



FIG 5.3.J

The old fort

Tags

- coral rag construction
- vegetation overgrowth
- cultural venue
- defensive ramparts



FIG 5.3.K

An unidentified seafront restuarant with human activity

Tags

- seafront restaurant
- dhow anchorage
- harbor vista
- leisure infrastructure
- patterned tiles



FIG 5.3.L

Carved chest used as a storage, display environment

Tags

- Zanzibari chest
- gallery display
- checkerboard floor
- turned feet
- functional heritage



FIG 5.3.M

Indian heritage pattern and colours on a carved cabinet

Tags

Painted cabinet
floral motifs
gallery furnishing
layered paint
domestic heirloom

CONTRIBUTOR 4

FIGURE J C4'S IMAGE MAPPING

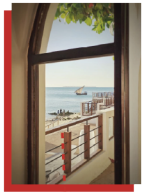


Fig 5.4.I



Fig 5.4.J



Fig 5.4.H



Fig 5.4.C



Fig 5.4.B



Fig 5.4.G



Fig 5.4.A



Fig 5.4.D



Fig 5.4.E



Fig 5.4.F





FIG 5.4.A

A streetscape showing utamaduni and economic activity

Tags

- narrow alley
- hanging textiles
- wooden balconies
- shuttered windows
- exposed cables



FIG 5.4.B

C4's late grandfather carrying out activities of craft in the workshop area of his store

Tags

- vaulted ceiling
- carpentry workshop
- carved chests
- barred windows
- tool display



FIG 5.4.C

Photograph of the city from a rooftop *verandah*

Tags

layered roofscape
minaret and spires
corrugated iron
port infrastructure



FIG 5.4.D

Commercial street showing socio-economic activity and human interaction

Tags

alley conversation
overhead cables
shopfront signage
street surveillance



FIG 5.4.E

Cat resting in threshold human activity occurring in the background

Tags

- threshold edge
- weathered plaster
- stone paving
- alley depth
- animals



FIG 5.4.F

Cats resting on plinths

Tags

carved doorframe
weathered timber
doorway occupation
animals



FIG 5.4.G

Street scape of a modern, contemporary store and vehicles oarked outside

Tags

- paneled doors
- lattice transom
- parked motorbikes
- striped awning



FIG 5.4.H

Cat in the Forodhani park gardens

Tags

- open lawn
- concrete wall
- planted vegetation
- animals



FIG 5.4.H

Outwards view from an interior space on the seafront looking out to a sailing dhow

Tags

- framed view
- wooden balustrade
- dhow sailing
- foliage overhang



FIG 5.4.1

A streetscape with vehicular access

Tags

- landscaped approach
- classical facade
- planted palms
- paved driveway

CONTRIBUTOR 5

FIGURE K C5'S IMAGE MAPPING



Fig 5.5.D



Fig 5.5.C



Fig 5.5.B



Fig 5.5.A



Fig 5.5.E



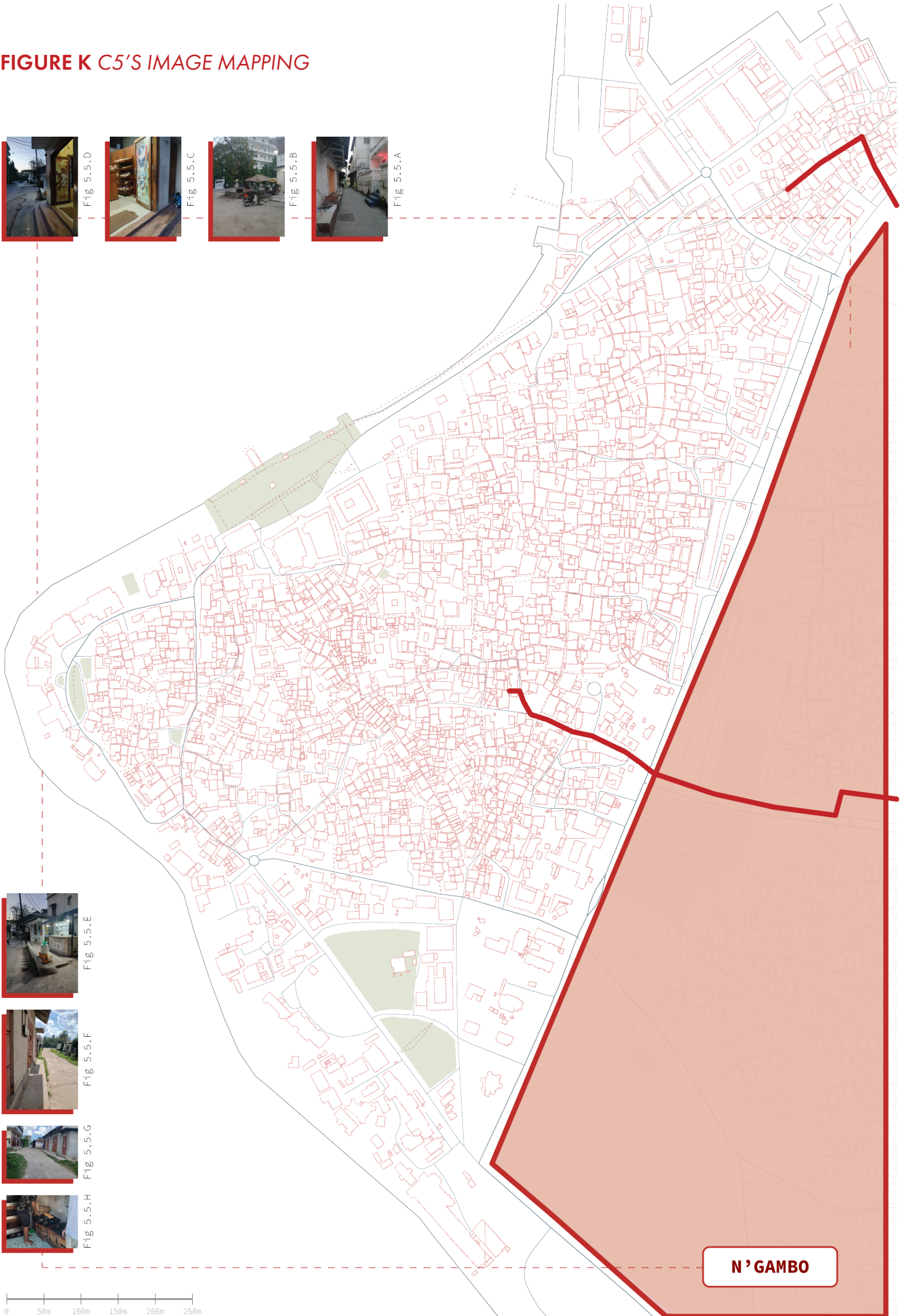
Fig 5.5.F



Fig 5.5.G



Fig 5.5.H



N' GAMBO



FIG 5.5.A

Streetscape across the boundary of ST and N'gambo

- Tags**
- concrete baraza
 - balustrade balcony
 - dusk light
 - empty alley

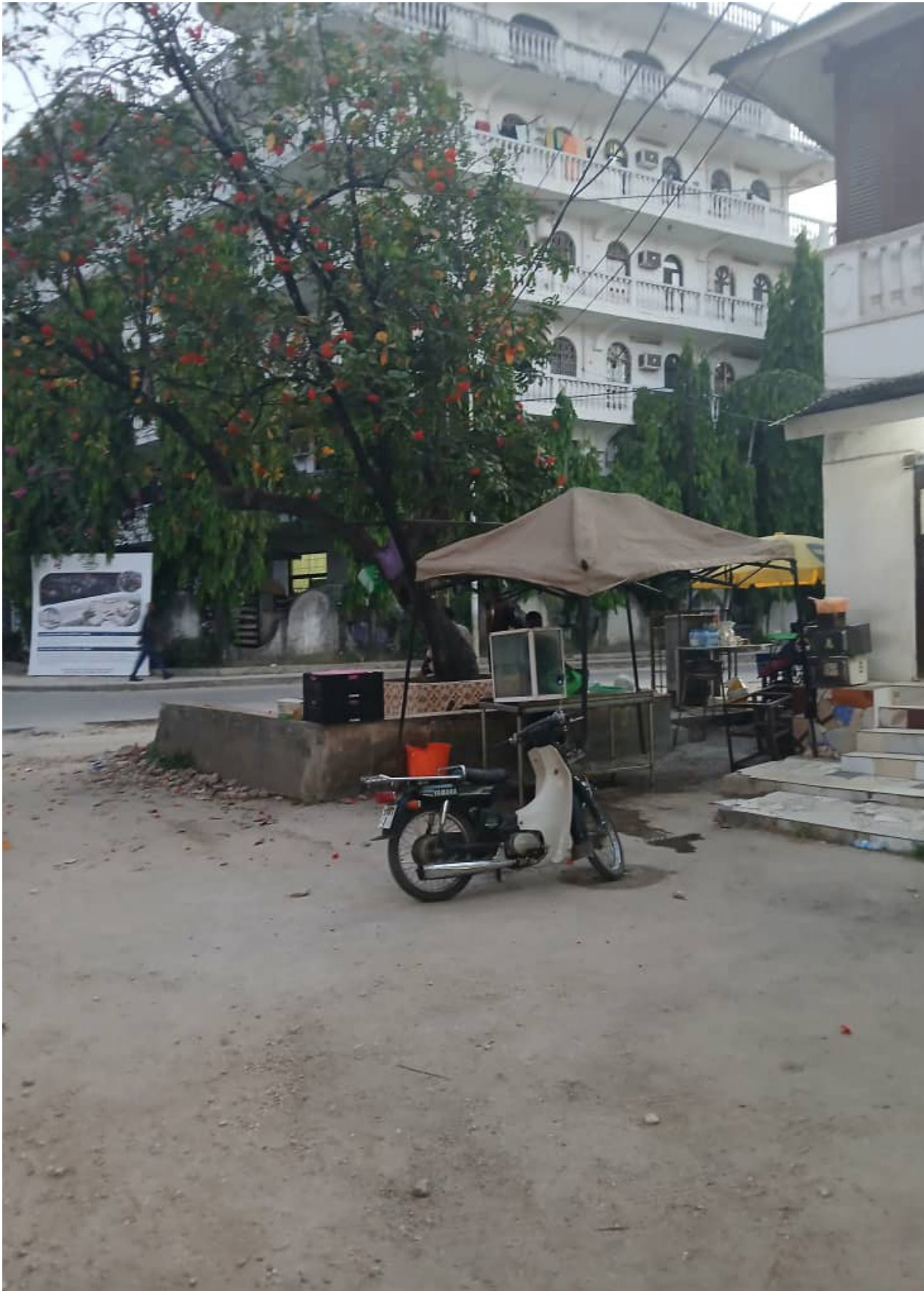


FIG 5.5.B

Streetscape across the boundary of ST and N'gambo

Tags

- street vending
- temporary canopy
- multi-story building
- paved opening



FIG 5.5.C

Interior of a bakery across the boundary of ST

Tags

- bakery display
- branded door
- mixed flooring
- food display



FIG 5.5.E

Streetscape across the boundary of ST and N'gambo

Tags

- wide street
- modern shopfront
- glass storefront
- stepped platform



FIG 5.5.F

Food kiosk on street in N'gambo

Tags

- street kiosk
- scalloped awning
- water containers
- roadside placement



FIG 5.5.G

Residential area in N'gambo

Tags

- unpaved road
- grass verges
- paneled door
- palm trees



FIG 5.5.1

Streetscape in N'gambo

Tags

- residential street
- concrete facades
- wooden doors
- signage remnant



FIG 5.5.J

Labour occuring in a bakery in N'gambo

Tags

- bread baking
- metal shelving
- tiled floor
- brick oven

6

ANALYSIS

6 ANALYSIS

The RPIBR results reveal three key ways Indo-Zanzibari diasporic presence is tied to ST, diverging from the typical heritage and touristic lens. Firstly, activities and practices of craft, labour and trade are seen across the images as the continuation of Zanzibari heritage. Secondly, adaptation and additions of contemporary elements are visible as markers of time and a form of resistance to colonial heritage frameworks. Thirdly, patterns of temporary and permanent circulation emerge from the varying backgrounds of the contributors and through the visual analysis of their relationships with ST.

6.1 NETWORKS OF TRADE

6.1.A ECONOMY, LABOUR AND CRAFT

Across the images, everyday economic activity is revealed as a key factor of Zanzibari living heritage and cultural continuity in ST. Economic benefit drives the purpose of the buildings photographed, serving the financial survival of trading communities and residents. The pattern of Indo-Zanzibari businesses appears as traditional tourist-oriented curio-shops, featuring densely curated interiors that fill the spaces to their maximum extent. This is a practical response to the spatial limits of traditional Indo-Zanzibari shopfront houses, as seen in Figs. 5.1.E, 5.1.F, 5.3.A, 5.3.C, and 5.3.H. C1 and C3 both highlight architecture as retail infrastructure and display platforms, with items hanging from ceilings, doorframes, and walls. The interchangeable use of “curio-shop” and “gallery” emphasises the focus on the visual function of these spaces. Objects are arranged to face the street, maximising visibility on narrow alleyways, which demonstrates a responsive curatorial tactic aimed at passersby and tourists. These small-scale adaptations carefully uphold legal conservation standards while reorienting space to accommodate trading needs. This prioritises functional use over Western or colonial expectations of visual aesthetic order, reframing high visual density as adaptations to spatial constraints.

Comparative visual analysis over two different time periods reveals insights into the consistency of heritage stock across Indo-Zanzibari curio-shops. The businesses of C1 and C3 exhibit souvenir items, hand-carved art, and maritime objects, as shown in Fig. 5.1.F. When compared with two photographs from direct familial archives of a curio-shop in the 1990s, the stock appears to be unchanging as history in its essence is not alterable. This suggests the enduring character of history in Indo-Zanzibari businesses through the arrangement and selection of stock. Most of these items were once functional, however, they now serve as exchangeable assets for tourists or collectors. They are physical, small-scale, unchanging symbols of history, indicating that even when the community sells heritage, it remains reflective of the diasporic Zanzibari cultural roots and does not aim to mask histories.

A recurring feature is the way shop interiors and stock spill onto the street, with items displayed at the threshold, as seen in Figs. 5.1.A, 5.1.D, 5.1.K, 5.1.L, 5.2.I, 5.2.K, 5.2.P, 5.2.Q, 5.4.A and 5.4.D. The repurposing of these spaces initially conceived as simple passages, demonstrates the Zanzibari community’s proactive design strategies to sustain their economic activities and livelihoods in ST. These artisanal heritage doors are non-modifiable and

have long attracted tourists, generating high footfall. When non-invasively used as display surfaces, they offer a trading advantage due to their visibility and photographic appeal. The visual pattern of edges and thresholds functioning as social spaces, most notably seen in Fig. 5.1.E, by diasporic communities and neighbours- whether domestic or commercial- provides an ideal means to foster socio-economic connections.

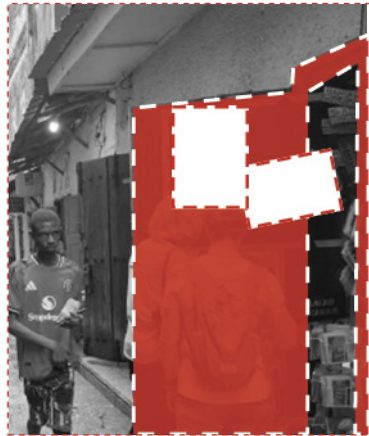
A pattern that surfaces in C1’s collection of images is the focus on people deliberately and visibly performing labour and trade. The photographed businesses in his daily practices show an economic presence rooted in repetitive interdependence. Their close urban proximity suggests an overlapping demographic despite the diverse forms of trade.

By contrast, the pattern in C3’s images show ST in a more still, less human-activity centred perspective across a wider scale, focusing mostly on enclosed commercial and domestic interiors. This is a more curated, controlled view of architecture and urban space, with a focus on permanence. This can be read as attachment to formal, touristic standards shaped by his current position as someone who spent most of his life in ST but has migrated to the mainland. Although C1 and C3 sell similar stock to the same demographics, the key distinctions emerge in their visual documentation of what they find meaningful in ST. This pinpoints how Indo-Zanzibari belonging is non-uniform and shaped by the circulation relating to commerce.

A rare feature of C1’s collection is the exact location data for each image, shared by the contributor, allowing for detailed documentation of daily practice. Figs. 5.1.A and 5.1.B show different communities and their businesses sitting on Gizenga Street, demonstrating the proximity, diversity, and familiarity of socio-economic life. The women’s cooperative store photographed is not Indo-Zanzibari, but their prominence in C1’s everyday life shows their participation in the same economic environment in the dense urban plan of ST. Upon further research, the goods sold in the cooperative store are produced and sourced in the mainland, extending the ongoing historical geographic interconnections discussed in Section 3.1 (Zanzibar Eco 2019). This is an expected condition as Zanzibari belonging has historically been dependent on centuries of macro-micro circulation.

A recurring spatial condition made visible in the

FIG 6.1.A THRESHOLDS AS DISPLAY SPACES



RPIBR results, is the presence of craft responsive to practicality and economic survival. Skills that overlap craft and labour through inherited knowledge can be seen as byproducts of lived heritage. Indo-Zanzibari craft is shown in 5.4.B, where C4's late grandfather practised carpentry in an enclosed workshop with tools practically arranged on the walls. These are not curated decorative or saleable items, and are genuine symbols of work. 5.1.D shows an Indo-Zanzibari shoemaker with his century-old stone, showing the endurance of long-standing cultural practices carried forward. The stone is a physical marker of migration and shows how diasporic cultures endure through intentional temporal continuity. Other communities practising acts of craft and labour in ST appear in Figs. 5.1.C, where a woman sits on the floor preparing Urojo in a non-performative, long-used interior space, and 5.1.I, highlighting a street-level set-up of a jewellery maker. Fig. 5.5.J shows the daily necessity-focused act of breadmaking. This tasking, traditional preparation in N'gambo shows community effort and care to preserve daily heritage practices, even outside the official UNESCO preservation boundary. In these images, the surrounding architecture varies from historic interiors to simple concrete. However, the buildings are not the focal points, showing the Indo-Zanzibari community values functional activity as opposed to static architecture in the backdrop. This exposes the limitations of conservation as the communities all interconnect outside of staged architectural heritage. This also supports the literary argument that Zanzibari communities were always historically intertwined and are interdependent on each other's commercial practices.

6.1.B PATTERNS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC OCCUPATION

Short-term occupation is a trend across Figs. 5.1.I, 5.2.I, 5.2.K, and 5.4.D. The urban spaces are defined by temporary labour. C2's images, 5.2.I, 5.2.N, 5.2.O and 5.2.P, focus on street commerce in Darajani and Sokoni. Short-term commerce is shown by circulatory, social encounters preserving ST's heritage without disrupting the protected architecture. In contrast, C1 and C3 show their value in permanent commercial spaces. These differentiated spatial relationships co-exist, and the contributors' positions show the importance of considering individuals in ST's wider geographic network. C5's images further expand spatial relationships, showing pronounced temporary commerce in N'gambo, highlighting that

informal occupation is part of Zanzibari heritage and blurs the lines separating both parts of the island. This highlights the importance of these liminal spaces, prompting heritage conservation frameworks to account for these movable spaces in agendas, instead of focusing on the permanent structures.

Across Figs. 5.4.E, 5.4.F, and 5.4.H, a rare and briefly documented condition of multi-species presence is shown through cats resting on transitional spaces and plinths, pinpointing the use of these areas as frequented, lived zones. The cats are additional occupants to the people who navigate the same spaces as resting zones. They are therefore symbolic indicators of spatial repetition and familiarity. This shows that ST's culture is built through the outdoor social spaces and underscores how heritage frameworks need to respond to the city's unique, layered socio-spatial patterns to accommodate all inhabitants instead of just tourists.

6.1.C SYNTHESIS

The curio-shops interiors, thresholds, alleyways and markets across the RPIBR results, show ST as a socio-economically interdependent place, constantly shaped through craft, labour and trade. The preservation of businesses and property shows what the Indo-Zanzibaris value in ST. They are agents of their lived environment, and this is representative of the island's heritage. Across the boundary to N'gambo, similar trading practices can be seen in the urban environment. This extends the argument that heritage persists through the active participation of carrying it forward, not through authoritative professionals dictating architectural conservation. This is especially true when heritage frameworks, like the STCDA, prioritise the preservation of monumental, touristic architecture, like the House of Wonders, over the vernacular socio-economic urban architecture.

FIG 6.1.B PHYSICAL SYMBOLS OF CRAFT AND LABOUR



6.2 LAYERED IMPROVISATION

6.2.A ADAPTED SURFACES OVER TIME

Deteriorating wood and eroding stone are commonly tagged across many threshold images. The heritage doors maintain their original, functional intent despite decay, as seen in Figs. 5.2.E and 5.2.H. It can be assumed that repair attempts have been made by the community to the ageing features in response to necessity, with tolerance to formal conservation guidelines (Steel and Battle 2001). This suggests that occupants prioritise daily use through presumed non-specialist knowledge and resources, building on the discussion of the limitations of conservation in Section 3.4. This shows community acceptance of imperfect maintenance. Figs. 5.2.A, 5.2.C, 5.2.E, 5.2.F, 5.2.G, 5.2.H, 5.2.J, 5.2.R, 5.2.S and 5.2.T highlight the use of industrial materials like brick patchwork, such as cement-filled gaps on stone walls, as an improvised substitution. Plastic tarps over makeshift scaffolding, broken windows, layers of different stone and patchwork tiles are traces of active human response to changing factors outside of control.

At a macro scale, Fig. 5.4.C shows patchwork repair as a widespread and systemic human condition. This unique, non-street-level perspective sheds light on the Indo-Zanzibari community's relation with ST and reinforces their collective efforts to maintain the city. Non-uniform, corrugated metal roofs are in the foreground, as shown in Fig. 6.2.A, showing adaptive responses to the climate and materials not intended for long-term occupation. The sustained use of colonially introduced, corrugated metal roofing shows the Zanzibari community living with conditions that they did not initially have agency over, extending the theory of survivalist adaptation. Whilst the mismatched, industrial roofing systems clash with the historic landscape of ST, the image reframes this condition as a defining factor of the urban fabric instead of an anomaly to it. Additionally, whilst the damp-stained older building contrasts with the recently restored white building in front, the co-existence of their materials can be read as acts of ongoing maintenance. Selective investment and gradual repair are essential across the layers of ownership and occupancy in the city. The different life stages of the materials indicate the continuous acts of repair occurring across ST through generations and various eras. This challenges the linear nature of heritage conservation, showing the non-uniformity of architectural performance when photographed from within the community. This also gives insight into the lived reality of the residents, showing the city as a site with ongoing, everyday heritage efforts, contrasting the standardised, planned colonial vision of ST.

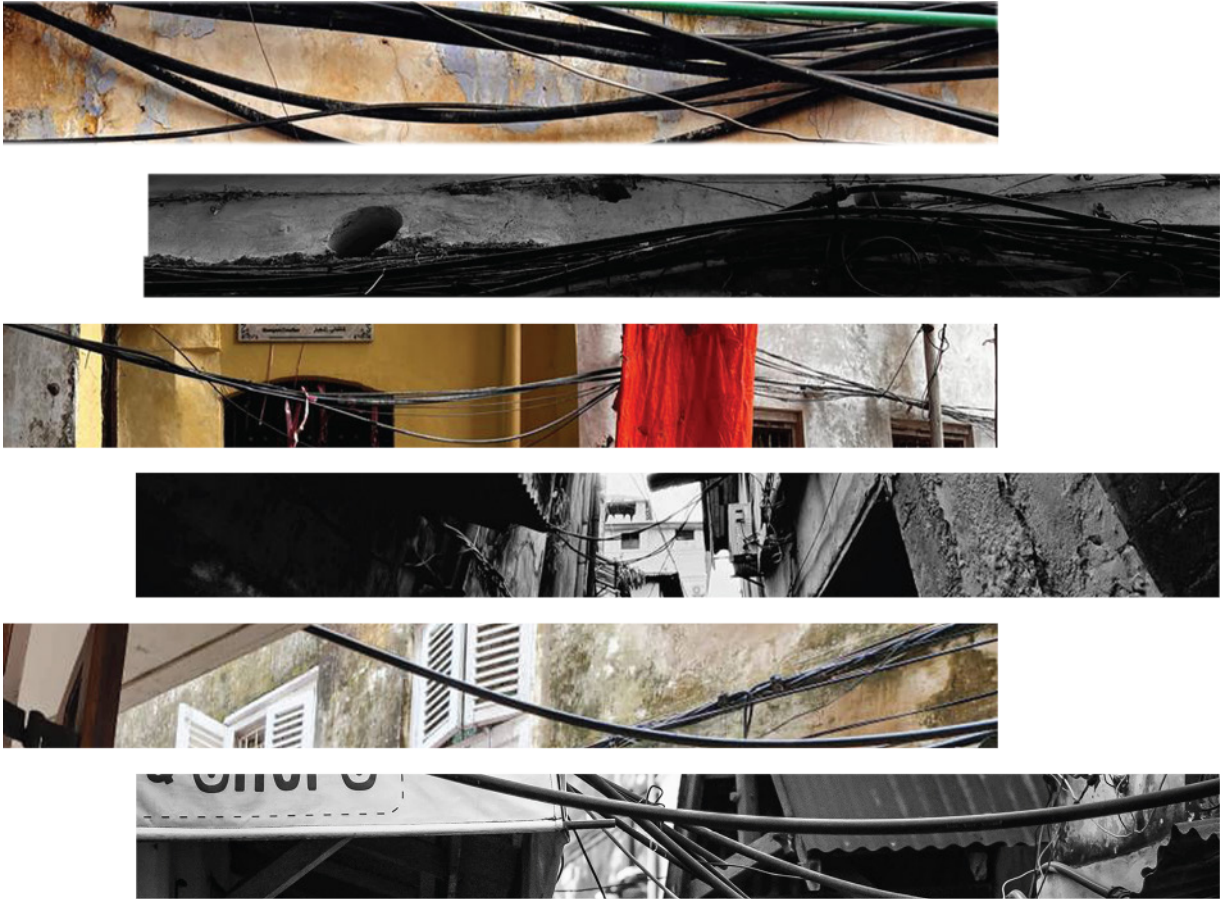
6.2.B INFRASTRUCTURAL ADDITION

Extending the relevant discussion of ST's "wire spaghetti" (Beck 2023), the RPIBR results show a pattern of cables and pipes in ST as necessary adaptations to create a contemporary, liveable environment in relation to emerging technologies. The urban environment was not initially conceived by the planners to accommodate future electrical infrastructures, such as air conditioning, internet connection, or even lighting. The exposed, casual wires routed along doorframes and facades are affordable, prompt, minimally invasive adaptations that work around the formal heritage guidelines. The cables mark human decisions shaped by lived requirements and trade operations. Another recurring feature of exposed infrastructure is the retrofitted air-conditioning units, seen around commercial architecture in Figs. 5.1.G, 5.1.F, and 5.2.D. Their presence can be attributed to factors such as curiosity owners having more income to install these systems, and tourism may also be a key reason to preserve the stock and art within, as well as for customer comfort and appeal. The uneven distribution of air-conditioning units across the images, with none being photographed by C5 in N'gambo, indicates that the systems are selective individual investments to further increase economic profits in areas with economic demand. This extends the notion that spatial additions and negotiations are built around tourism as the key marker of value. These infrastructural adaptations support the argument that community additions reveal the inconsideration of the heritage frameworks, around the residents' functional needs. Informal, technological adaptation keeps the city inhabited, and this calls for the reframing of heritage and tourism-focused conservation to allow for the adaptation of space for current and future

6.2.C CONTEMPORARY ADDITIONS

The pattern of varying degrees of modern items and materiality shows quick, temporary responses to ongoing conditions of urbanism. Parallels between Figs. 5.1.E, 5.1.F, 5.3.A, 5.3.C and 5.3.H can be seen through the minimal storage units curating white interior furniture consistent between both C1 and C3's shop interiors. A more contemporary addition seen in Fig. 5.3.C is the glass display cabinet. The modern furnishings provide a sense of order and control to the visual density of the stock within, a potential attempt to align with Western, touristic expectations of interior appeal. In contrast, C1's photography of other community businesses, in Figs. 5.1.B, 5.1.C and 5.1.D, shows mismatched furniture alongside wall-mounted, mixed-material storage. This is indicative

FIG 6.2.A ADAPTATION AND AGE



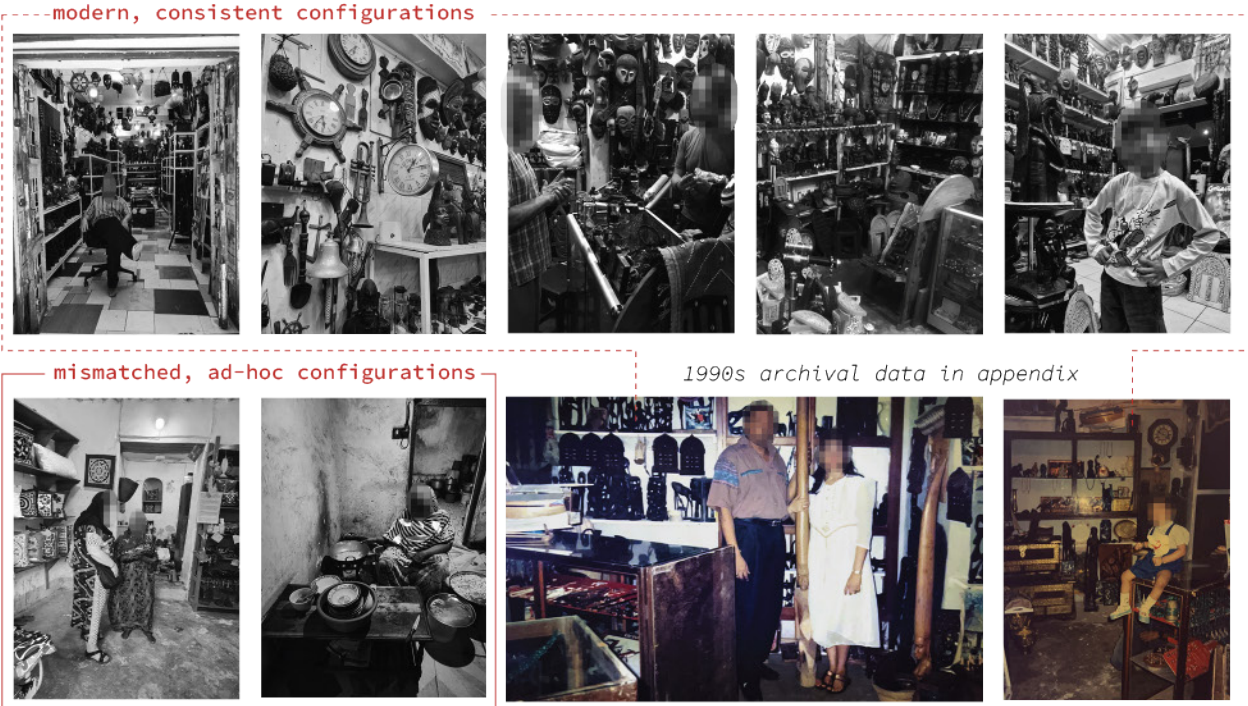
of gradual additions instead of a unified, planned interior which undergoes additions and changes from the inhabitants.

Temporary mobile furniture is made visible across the exterior urban streetscapes, for example, C2's images in Darajani and Sokoni show tables used for the display of food or drink in the alleyways. C4's RPIBR results support this, with Fig. 5.4.A showing plastic chairs and items similarly placed along thresholds and passageways supporting informal, street-level social activity. This may again be due to reasons related to affordability, but also ease of relocation and replacement, enabling the daily community to adapt to the spatial heritage constraints and lack of vehicular access in ST's alleyways. In N'gambo, C5 photographs similar contemporary furniture and makeshift ad-hoc structures for purposes like shading and sitting. This underscores the community's agency over flexible space-making, allowing them to participate in urban design without investing long-term money or effort. The coexistence of the historic materiality and contemporary, movable furniture shows the temporal layers of habitation in ST and N'gambo and shows that they are similar despite the official boundary between them. The contrast between the heavy, permanent stone walls and the modern, cheap furniture reframes adaptation as a practical spatial response. Like the improvised infrastructure, the community simultaneously adapts against and along the heritage guidelines. This can be read as the community's prioritisation of social and economic life over aesthetic conformation. Heritage in this reading is not undermined, but instead the conditions around it shift to accommodate the changing socio-economic realities of the inhabitants who live and sustain it.

6.2.D SYNTHESIS

The analysis argues that conservation occurs when operational practices step outside of the norms and expectations of formal conservation. Temporary additions and patchwork conditions may appear incremental and uneven, but are necessary for the long-term usability of buildings with strict guidelines to survive long-term and remain usable with the changing technological future that was not known or accounted for in the initial design of the simple, stone structures. Informal adaptation is therefore a key driver in ST, rather than a threat to the desired aesthetics of heritage. This extends the state of knowledge, critiquing the limitations of heritage conservation, showing adjustment as the key driver instead of preserving the original form. The RPIBR results show that the authority over heritage environments like ST and the guidelines used by external professionals in the industry should be called into question if they require this level of effort to be adapted in line with modern technology.

FIG 6.2.B MATCHING VS MISMATCHED FURNITURE INTERIORS



— cut-outs of contemporary furniture + additions
extracted from RPIBR results



6.3 BELONGING AND CIRCULATION

The juxtaposition between contemporary life and the preserved heritage elements is shown through the RPIBR results, most notably Fig. 5.1.I. An airline banner advertises flights, and it rests on a typical heritage carved Zanzibari door, highlighting the technological advancements of life outside of the intended preserved state of the city and the key, embedded practice of circulation in ST. For the Contributors 2,3, and 4, routine travel between the mainland and Zanzibar is regular and ordinary, reflecting the historical geographic connectivity around the island, for various reasons, such as work, education, or family. This is expected due to the long-standing migratory practices between these areas in general. The ordinary presence of this advertisement in a small, independent, economic alley, opposite a curio-shop which sells heritage, shows that belonging is maintained through different degrees of operational mobility, not just permanency. Upon further research, there are multiple daily flights and ferries showing the entanglement between both places, reinforcing that ST's isolated, heritage status is not reflective of lived practice. This image therefore indicates how contemporary developments are present in ST, despite the desired ahistorical preservation approaches.

Fig. 5.4.C becomes a significant observational asset in this analysis, showing cargo cranes and port infrastructure in the backdrop of the urban architectural conditions. This reinforces ST's status as a working port with ongoing maritime use, rather than a constrained urban artefact as it is often framed. Similarly, C4 captures an ocean view, in Fig. 5.4.I, through a residential window, capturing the dhow sailing. Nature becomes a stage for heritage through movement. This may be a form of temporary accommodation, and hence the orientation towards the sea, rather than the interior land of ST, reflects his spatial relation to the city, shaped by constant travel to the mainland. In this way, C4's individual position extends the historical Indian Ocean circulatory practices where arrival and departure defined relationships to ST, made more pronounced by the shifting migratory patterns.

There are multiple underlying tones of dual-city occupation in the image sets from C3, who spends half of the year in ST managing his curio-shops and then returns to Dar Es Salaam to maintain his mainland businesses and primary household. His photography of restored interiors in combination with two generational members of his family, in Figs. 5.3.A and 5.3.H, reflect migration-based access. While

most of his images are centred around moments of stillness, the pictures featuring his family and business are captured with intimacy, representative of his embedded, intergenerational presence in ST. It can be extrapolated that property ownership and inheritance are his tie to the city, making his circulation economically feasible and giving him the sense of familiarity and simultaneous distance to appreciate features preserved and catered to the touristic eye.

A rare photograph of a child in the dataset shows an interior commercial space, as shown through the image of C3's son, in Fig. 5.3.H, showing his child's familiarity and casual nature in this interior space. If we assume that this inherited curio shop will be passed down to his son as most have historically, this migratory cycle from the mainland to ST extends even further across layers of time. This points to the significant role of property ownership in continued occupation and responsibility for community-based heritage maintenance across multiple generations.

Both C2 and C4 have similar patterns of connection and circulation between ST and Dar Es Salaam. C2 spent parts of her childhood in ST, hence her images reflecting a close familiarity with the city in conjunction with a distanced composition in her photography and stylistic choices, such as filters. She focuses on images that tourist lenses often photograph, such as heritage doors, but she emphasises eroding stone and material decay, as seen in Figs. 5.2.A, 5.2.C, 5.2.E, 5.2.G, 5.2.H and 5.2.L. This balance between insider-outsider perspectives may indicate her relationship to ST being grounded in memory and nostalgia rather than daily navigation. It could be read that she romanticises the adaptations and materiality due to her slightly distanced, unknown position, allowing her to more freely perceive space, without other obligatory activities taking precedence. Her image set does not focus on interiors or active involvement in property or business, but is framed through patterns of movement, seen in the album of pictures from the temporary market scenes. This shows the significance of the outdoor urban space even in semi-outsider perspectives, underscoring the importance of its consideration in tourism or heritage debates around ST.

C4 has a clear difference in his connection to ST, due to the photographs of his intergenerational family workshop, which is still operating. His reasons for returning may also have practical ties, such

as maintenance, family, or business. His sense of belonging is grounded in nostalgia, similarly to C2, but also in familiar repetition. This can be interpreted due to his intimate representation when capturing community members, his late grandfather and even cats. These cases may show the differentiated senses of belonging between two people from similar backgrounds, showing the varying levels of spatial belonging across the Indo-Zanzibari community.

The image set from N'gambo, photographed by C5, is an unexpected additional result extending observations about circulatory analysis beyond this study's initial aims and hypothesis. The images are mostly outside, framed by movement between locations, concentrating on urban thresholds and edges. The environment is unpaved with more temporary structures, showing C5's spatial relationship as continuously defined by passing spaces rather than occupying them. This can be seen as a reflection of the under-invested and under-prioritised areas outside of ST by Zanzibar's governance. This extends the lens of C2's temporary, commercial images, with improvised metal frames and plastic items present because of daily use and passersby. ST and N'gambo are therefore shown as interdependent, despite the formal heritage boundary, as they are sustained by patterns of movement. C5 commutes from N'gambo to ST to his curio-shop, having recently migrated, and his continued work in the city is representative of the negotiations between residence and circulation of the Indo-Zanzibari community. The migration's reasons are unknown, and it can be presumed that it is due to the displacement occurring in the heritage city of ST due to rising costs and property crisis, reflecting the scholarly discourse regarding historical cities driving out residents and becoming a museumised place.

6.3.A SYNTHESIS

The varying circulatory relationships to ST across the contributors show how residence and travel are key to the city's essence. C1's consistent, repetitive occupation of space shows an intimate connection to the city he has lived in for his entire life. C3's seasonal patterns of short-term migration reflect the modern reality for many Indo-Zanzibaris, shaped by socio-economic or political reasons. C4 and C2 maintain their connections through return similarly but engage through their artistic, career-oriented lenses. Finally, C5 documents rare, unexpected moments on the edge of the boundaries of ST and N'gambo, showing the perspective of someone who participates in the traditional and historic Indian merchant economy without residing there. The different spatial relationships of each contributor are markers of heritage themselves. Human connections to ST are either voluntary or obligatory, have economic agendas or familial archives. Property ownership complicates the patterns of Indo-Zanzibari spatial engagement as it may symbolise a practical necessity to maintain these spaces, but equally shows an intergenerational connection of the contributors to the city. In cases where it can be assumed that property ownership is not the key driver of return, it creates a different dialogue to analyse choice and memory-driven attachments to ST, such as those of C2. This produces conditions resulting in different rates of return and travel, but none are more or less important in showing that permanence does not equal diasporic belonging.

7 CONCLUSION

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The aim of this dissertation was to investigate the three interconnecting questions related to daily lived practices, circulation, and heritage outside of the mainstream tourism perspectives.

The method of RPIBR develops a grassroots approach to documenting heritage and non-monumental architecture. The visual archive produced shows the lived heritage of the community's engagement in ST's urban space and architecture, giving the under-represented Indo-Zanzibari community visibility that is often minimised in official conservation discourse. This underscores the importance of participatory methods as a crucial tool in data collection, as it allows the people themselves to take agency in showing their lived practices and realities, which may be missed in researcher-led studies. This pilot project also bridges the GIS mapping limitations. Even though the research was conducted remotely with a small sample size, a wide scope of ST was covered in the RPIBR, reinforcing the need for dominant mapping systems to increase their attention to often overlooked heritage areas, especially when budgetary limitations do not apply. This exploratory study also utilises artificial intelligence to code the images, showing the benefits of using it as a supporting research tool to provide an unbiased, consistent analytical structure to support the critical analysis.

The study suggests several paths for further research, such as the following:

- Collaboration with more participants with varying backgrounds in ST to comparatively co-create larger archives and ground-up mapping.
- Explore these topics over a longer timeframe, potentially following the same contributors or a larger range, allowing for insights on residency and migration.
- In-person site visitation to see ST through the researcher's position in the community and allowing for physical interviews and first-person application of the state of knowledge.

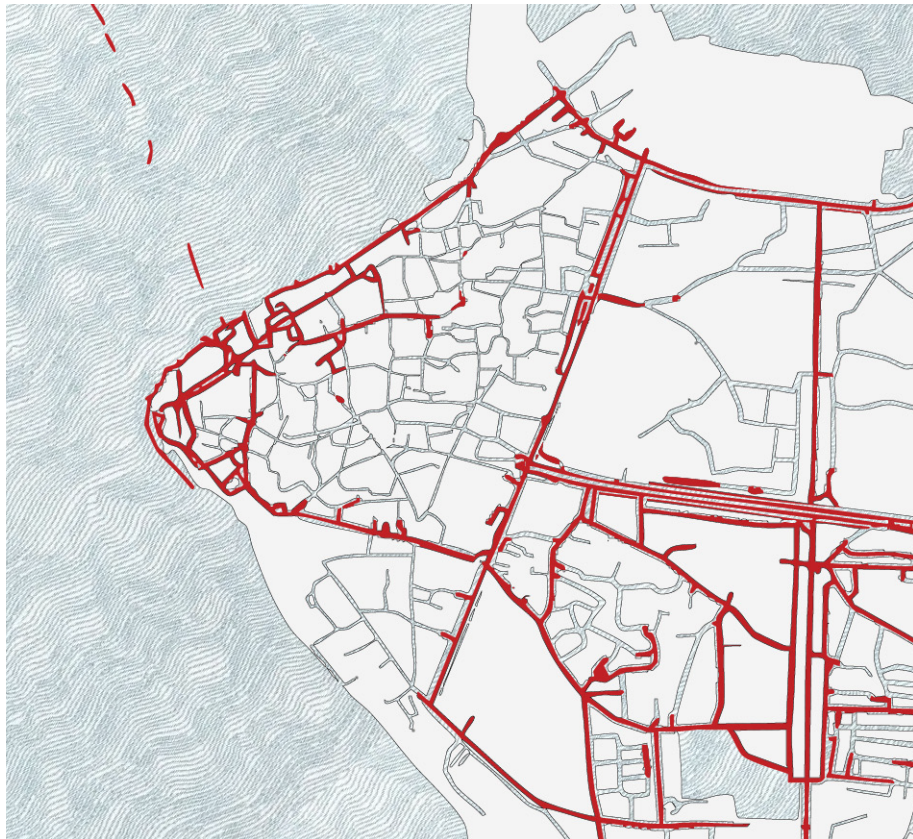
The study reveals that Zanzibari heritage is a complex topic due to ST's need to grapple with factors like emerging technologies, living residents and increasing tourism. The methodology results show Zanzibar negotiating with the country's changing, complex priorities and concerns, whilst the residents simultaneously attempt to uphold ST's focal status as a heritage monument for economic and cultural continuity. By showing the endurance of the historic urban city because of informal community-based adaptation, rather than despite it, this dissertation calls for revisions in current heritage and social architecture approaches.

This dissertation does not aim to generalise the collective community's experiences or reduce the complexity of the Indo-Zanzibari community, however what is made known about them through the findings of the limited sample size, is their active role in maintaining ST's heritage through collective care, return and economic acts. Despite widespread migration at multiple scales across history, the community uphold their heritage in Zanzibar, be it temporarily or through permanent residence. At smaller scales, such as commercial interior configurations, the community's practices persist with minimal changes across time. The Indo-Zanzibaris' knowledge and familiarity with ST's heritage is emphasised through their embedded participation with other diasporic communities inhabiting the city to pragmatically maintain the everyday spaces that matter to them. Overall, this study underpins the need for heritage conservation guidelines to move beyond authoritative, outsider ideas of preservation in non-Western cities. This highlights the need to inclusively research inhabiting communities and their acts of sustained living that define the continuation of genuine heritage.

8

APPENDIX

FIGURE A1 COMPARITIVE FIGURE OF STREET LEVEL MAPPING



STONE TOWN

□ Street View Routes



VENICE

□ Street View Routes

FIGURE A2 CLAUDE AI PROMPT



Heritage is lived before it is preserved.

Personal print edition of MArch Dissertation
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