



unfuse

Legeza

Swahili heritage hub design in Lamu

<https://competitions.uni.xyz>



Img_1: Aerial view of the town of Lamu

Premise

A city consists far more than its buildings and its people. It is constantly evolving and undergoing diverse mutations of natural and cultural changes. It moves to the rhythm of the people.

But have you ever heard of the **island with borrowed culture? Lamu is a place like no other located in Lamu Archipelago, housing the oldest known Swahili settlement.** The Swahili people living in Lamu have a peculiarity about them, they share a unique relation with numerous provinces. The island has seen multiple visitors from all of the world, contributing to the refashioned Swahili culture that we see today. The diverse identity can be seen in it's language, arts, clothing, food and architecture.

Lamu grew with a force to be reckoned with and the world saw its potential, but then what changed? What is the secret behind this island's rich and colourful culture?



Img 2: Annual donkey race conducted on the island

Buildup

Chinese burial ritual, Indian motifs used on the traditional kanga, portuguese textiles have all made their perpetual place in Swahili culture. It started back in 14th century, when Arab traders established a seaport on the island to trade ivory, timber and mangroves. **They began to settle among the Africans of the coast, resulting in the emergence of a people and culture known as Swahili.** By 17th century, the region was dominated by slave trade, during which it saw the most economy boom. Following the scramble for east africa of late 19th century, **until most countries abolished slavery as a result the trading activities declined.**

Drawing influences from the Chinese, Portuguese, German, Indian and Arabian visitors, Lamu created a unique amalgamation of its own over the centuries. **Today, the locals cherish and preserve their new and evolved identity.**

Though, now, Lamu island faces a wave of change that threatens to alter the isle and its unique culture forever.



[img_3](#): LAPSSET project under progress

Issue

What does development actually look like? In case of Lamu, a massive seven part development infrastructure project called [LAPSSET](#) threatens to alter the lives of the locals forever. The ambitious undertaking aims to link will link Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan through railways, highways, pipelines and a 32-berth deep-sea port in Lamu.

Although the project intends to boost trade and secure Kenya's position as regional harbourmaster, many residents view it with grave misgivings. They fear that the development might destroy their historic town and their culture. The port would be located within few kilometres of the town, and the traffic and construction could cause Environmental and heritage issues. [\[1\]](#)

How can we ensure to preserve Lamu's unique heritage that has been developed over the years?



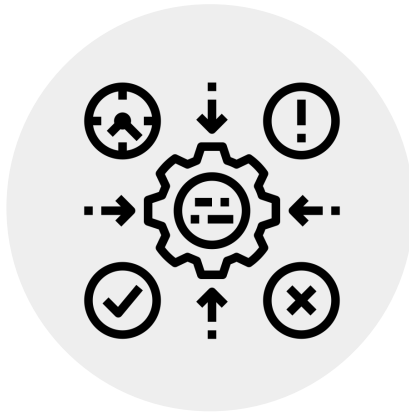
Img 4: Locals in their traditional kanga clothing

Brief

The rich and multilayered culture of the swahili people is what makes the island of Lamu distinctive.

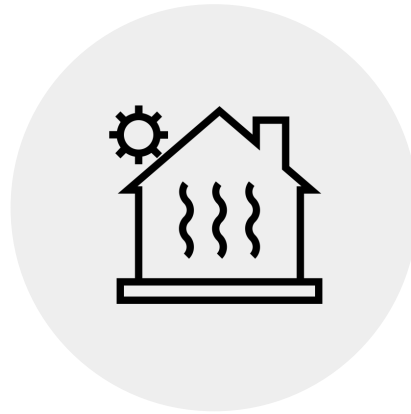
The design proposes to create a cultural hub that promotes swahili heritage by providing a holistic architectural experience. It should aim to showcase the art forms and customs of the island's distinctive culture.

The designed complex should be able to host events and annual ceremonies to promote the beauty of island's landscape and the uniqueness of its people. It should act as the destination where one can get a taste of Lamu's history as soon as they step in.



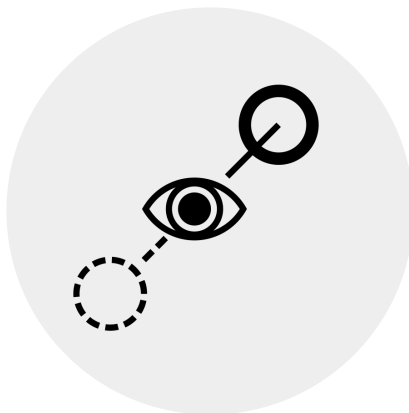
Context

Considers local context in terms of the community, user needs and materiality



Passive

Incorporation of natural light and ventilation techniques



Interpretation

Embodying all these into an architectural outcome which connects - Place - Country - World.



Commerce

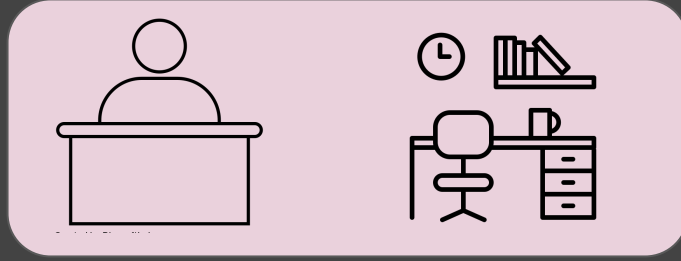
Modes of revenue generation & exchange of local commodities

Objectives

The following objectives can be a point of beginning to conceive this design. The designed cultural hub should be able to cater to 800-1000 people at once.



10%
Administration

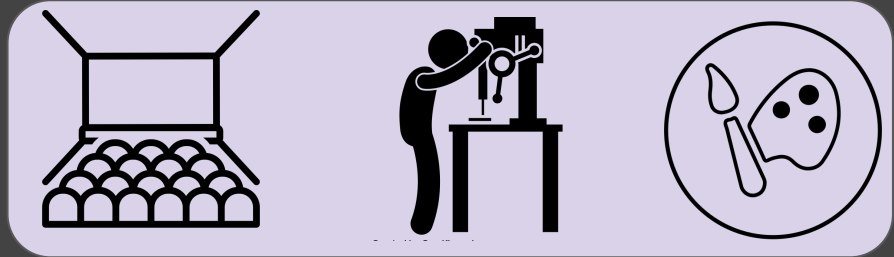


Reception, waiting
lobby, entrance

Offices, storage,
security



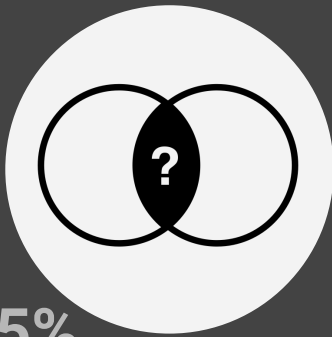
30%
Cultural



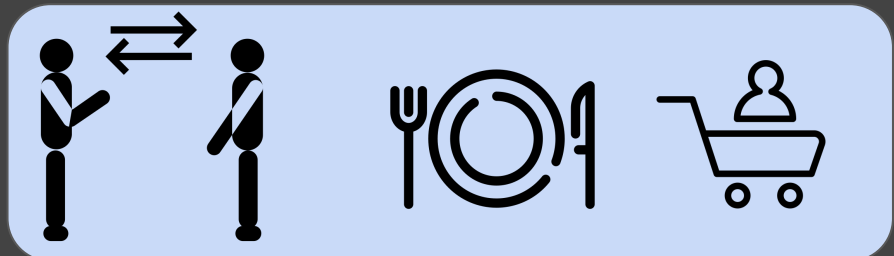
Exhibition space, hall,
auditorium,
performance area

Workshop, seminar
area, stage

Gallery space to
promote arts & culture



45%
Common



Spaces for interaction,
recreation

Cultural food stalls,
restaurant, cafe

Retail, traditional
textiles, delicacies,
craft bazaar



15%
Services



Surveillance room,
storage, electricity

Utilities, washroom,
drinking fountain

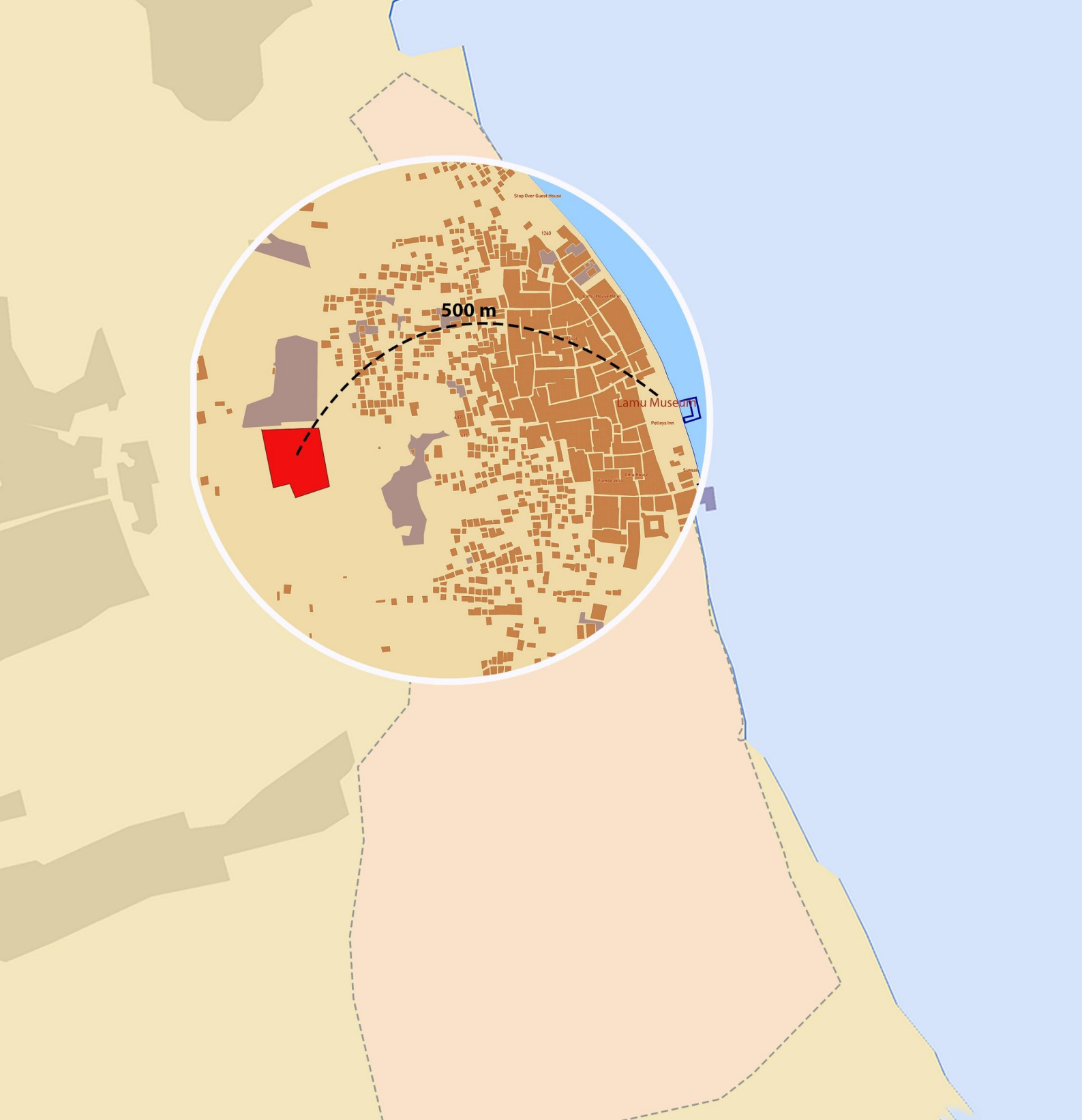
Programmatic Outline

The above can be used as a point of reference to bifurcate different functions of the complex. However, new functions and categories can be added as per design requirements.



Lamu, Kenya

Lamu Town is a small town on Lamu Island, which in turn is a part of the Lamu Archipelago in Kenya. Lamu Island has been continuously inhabited for over 700 years since Arab traders established a port there. Being a small island, everything is located in a close proximity making walking the most preferable option.



[img 6:](#) Site location

Site Plan

The site is located on the outskirts of lamu town. Most of the hotels are located within 1km radius enabling easy accessibility. A local museum is located within 500m reach of the site. Therefore, the designed cultural hub may not hold relics or artifacts.

Ground coverage: 30% | height restriction: 16m | Site Area 8 acres | [2°16'06.2"S 40°53'47.7"E](#)
 | Only regulations to be followed: Height restrictions - 60m , Set backs of 10m on all 4 sides,

Guidelines

You have to deliver an architectural outcome on the following site, based on the given outlines.

- Recommended number of sheets/presentation images/boards:

5 (Five) of size [**2362px x 3544px**] or [**400mm x 600mm in 150 dpi**] in portrait digital format (**JPEG only**).

Minimum 3 (Three) & No maximum sheet limit. Each image should be less than **15MB**. (Do not submit PNG format)

Minimum requisite submission are sheets/boards + Cover image containing:

- Site plan (Compulsory)
- Key conceptual sections x 1 (Minimum)
- 3D views x 4
- Cover image / Thumbnail of size 2000px x 1000px or larger in aspect ratio 2:1.
- Answering 6 FAQs #
- This is the link for new file sizes, [here](#).

#The FAQ's have to be answered as instructed in the FAQ document in the 'additional resources folder'.

Deadlines

Discover the competition schedule and deadlines on the competitions page or on this link - [Schedule](#).

Resources

This competition contains additional resources that contains a set of files useful to complete the competition submission. This folder is made available on your profile dashboard automatically as soon as you register.

This additional resources folder of this competition contains: Submission Format files in PSD | AI | InDD, FAQs, High Res maps, Sketchup Model of the site and CAD file of the site plan.

Rules

- + The competitions is open for **students and professionals** from all the disciplines of design.
- + The team limit for this competition is **4 members maximum per team**.
- + You can register more than one team but they have to be registered separately.
- + Ensure that the final sheets submitted **do not include your name or any other mark of identification**. Your submission is linked to your user account which stands as your identification.
- + This is a design **ideas challenge only**. There is no built commission/realization associated with the problem.
- + In case of publication in yearbook we will reach out separately for selected entries.

Pro-Tips

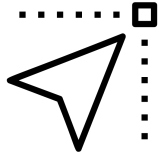
- + Use exploded views to discuss multi levelled conceptual models better.
- + Mention sheet number on corner of every sheet.
- + Plagiarism of any idea / form / design / image will be disqualified with a notice.
- + All the sheets or images will be viewed on a digital device. **e.g.** Laptop screen or projector. Uploaded sheets or images will not be physically printed for evaluation. The submission hence should be prepared for digital viewing only.
- + Submit JPEG images only. (PNG will not function)
- + Learn



Awards

Grants of up to a total of **20,000\$** can be won on this challenge. Learn more about the full conditions on the competition page [here](https://competitions.uni.xyz).

The entries will be judged by an international jury of the competition on the following criterions:



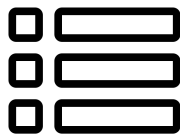
Presentation

The fundamental to a good entry is a good presentation.



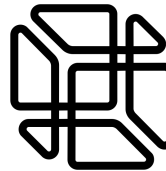
Concept/Idea

Quality of thought and intent in pre-design phase.



Spaces/Programme

How the spaces are calculated and ordered.



Design Outcome

The final architectural outcome of the solution.

Judging Criteria

The judging panel can also add other criterions based on their internal discussions - which will be in line with the problem statement. Participants are advised to fulfil above given criterions first in their design.

About

unfuse

Unfuse serves as a unit block for Uni in the field of Architecture. It intends to break the fusion of traditional design barriers and methodologies by making it a platform for experimentation and conceptual exchange of ideas in architecture, urbanism, society, culture and ecology. It is a research initiative dedicated to providing opportunities for designers from all domains to explore ideas that go beyond the boundaries of architectural discipline and enrich our built environment; thereby opening up possibilities for promotion of architectural thought at a global level

Queries: support@uni.xyz

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Preserving the old time swahili culture

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