

https://dspace.org/

Sherehe ya Chai transmutation of kikuyu vernacular as an immersive tea tasting retreat

Ngibuini, Jason

2018

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28065

Ngibuini, Jason. 2018. Sherehe ya chai :transformation of Kikuyu Vernacular into an immersive tea tasting retreat, University of the Witwatersrand, https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28065

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Title:	Aromatic Retreat
Student Name:	Jason Ngibuini
Student Number:	704287
	School of Architecture & Planning
	University of the Witwatersrand
	Johannesburg, South Africa
Supervisor:	Diaan Van Der Westhuizen
Date:	14 May 2018

A research report for a design proposal submitted to the Faculty of Engineering and the Build Environment, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Architecture (Professional).

Declaration

I, [Jason Ngibuini 704287] am a student registered for the course Master of Architecture (Professional) in the year 2018. I hereby declare the following: I am aware that plagiarism [the use of someone else's work without permission and/or without acknowledging the original sources] is wrong. I confirm that the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have stated explicitly otherwise. I have followed the required conventions in referencing thoughts, ideas, and visual materials of others. For this purpose, I have referred to the Graduate School of Engineering and the Built Environment style guide. I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my own work.

1 – Provisional Title: Aromatic Retreat: Exploring the ritual of tea as a social exchange

Physical Context:

The research is based in the agricultural region of Limuru in Kenya. Limuru is known for its fertile lands in which large amounts of tea are grown and harvested. Yet the tea industry is under heavy economic strain due to high levels of production exceeding the amount of tea exported.

Social Context:

Many of the locals in Limuru rely on the shoe factory or the agricultural labour for work. With an understanding of the current conditions of the post-colonial town, Limuru has manifested into a region that is bound between agricultural harvesting and processing.

Topical Position:

The research looks into broad field of tourism in Limuru and the potential to link agriculture with local tourism. This concerns itself with establishing new relationships between agriculture and leisure. Although this is a topic that also contributes into a large economical field, this could inspire a need to create a platform for larger debate regarding how the agricultural environments can become an important part of a leisure. Thus this highlights the inclusion of the community in the commercial sector of the agricultural production.

2 – Intended Research Theme:

This design explores the agricultural highlands of Limuru in Kenya in the aspect of three broad themes.

The Tea Industry in Kenya: which explored that history of how tea and how it was introduced to Kenya as well as the current systems that play a role in both tea cultivation and processing.

Theory: The second aspect looks in the *theories* that are relevant to critical regionalism and phenomenology: characteristics that can contribute to a ritual of tea with the traditional methods of construction.

Site and Context: This involves analysing the current context of Limuru, ranging from agriculture and production to recreation and tourism.

The research report investigates theories and concepts of dwelling, immersive experiences, traditional building method in the context of Limuru.

The research aims to create an architectural domain (building) that can house the production of tea as well as a cultural experience of tea tasting

Research Questions

"How can tea consumption within the rural context of Limuru be used to promote Kenya's unique heritage?"

"Could an agriculture and industrial landscape be merged to reconcile aspects of nature with machine? "

How can tea production and consumption be introduced into an architectural domain (building) which acts as an agent of cultural exchange.

"Could the infusion of both local building techniques and implementations of sustainable technologies be used to relink the past to process of a new architectural creation that is critically conscious of its regional context?"

Aims and Objectives:

The research proposal aims to explore an alternative strategy for the town of Limuru that could influence the way in which visitors can experience tea plantations. With the rise of development in the rural context of Limuru, efforts have been made to introduce tourism to the tea farms, yet there is still a potential to expand into local tourism.

The objective is to reconcile the agricultural and industrial landscape that play an important role the cultivation and production of tea. The reconciliation of these spaces aim to create framework that will allow users to engage in the learning of both tea cultivation and production in one inclusive environment.

Furthermore, the research aims to discover ways of bridging the gap between traditional architecture and technological advancements in the transformation of sustainable architecture. Thus creating a platform that creates a dialogue between the traditional methods of timber construction with the program of an agricultural production facility.

By Identify strategies of expanding on the economic cycle of tea cultivation, production and consumption the research proposal ultimately aims to provide an alternative to allow tea farmers to scale their tea farming businesses.

3 – Relevant literature and precedents

Literature Review

McHARG, I. (1969). *Design with Nature*. New York: Natural History Press

In 'Design with nature' by Ian McHarg, the author discusses how to break down a region into its appropriate land use. Through an understanding of the use of landscape, we can optimize the potential to expand its function.

I plan to use the theories expressed by Ian, to gain an understanding of the context of Kenya's landscapes and its significance to the regions of tea production.

The author describes the process that nature has to create and in its creativity, it offers intrinsic opportunities for human uses.

Mostafavi, M. and Doherty, G. (2010). *Ecological Urbanism*. 1st ed. Switzerland: Lars Muller Publishers.

Ecological urbanism which is describes as a successor to landscape urbanism, draw to inspire an urbanism that is more inclusive and sensitive to the environment. The theoretical ideas expressed by the various contributors of the book, outlines a holistic approach to the management of cities.

With the issues that surround production and consumption in the tea industry, the theories discussed in the theme will help establish the relationship that people and cities have with limited environmental resources.

Shannon, K. (2012). *The Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory: Landscapes*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, p.627.

"Landscapes are seen as potential receptors of new economic development, sites of transformation and areas to be reclaimed. At the same time, they also have the potential to become an operative tool to actively resist the globalizing and homogenizing tendencies of built environments" (Frampton 1995; Shannon 2004).

The term, landscapes has over the course of the years been transformed from the discourse of art and scenery to the scientific patterns of an ecosystem. This understanding of the landscapes as sites of transformation will play an important role in defining the potential of building in relation to landscape.

Coates, G. (2007). *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Biotechnology and Regional Integration*. 1st ed.

In this chapter, author Gary Coates questions on the importance of cultural, ecological and economical themes that form, in what he describes, an authentic architectural regionalism.

I plan on using the insights of Coates reasoning to better understand the relationships between the resources that a bioregion provides and the inhabitants of its region.

Vongkulbhisal, S. (n.d.). *Ethical Relativism and Critical Regionalism: an Ethical Viewpoint on the Non-Western Architectural Professions*. College of Built Environments. University of Washington

Ethical relativism which is described as the theory in which morality is relative to the norms of a particular culture. It looks into the understanding that an action can only be determined as right or wrong depending on the moral norms of that particular society. I plan on using knowledge to form a basis for an argument around the need to relink pre-colonial morals in a modernized society.

Frampton, K. (1983). Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance. [Essay] ahameri.com/cv/Courses/CU/Arch%20in%20Theory/Frampton.pdf.

In 'Towards a Critical Regionalism' author Kenneth Frampton outlines six points as a criteria towards achieving an architecture that is sensitive to its environment and landscape. Kenneth describes

In the last point ' The visual versus the tactile ' the author places an emphasis on the importance of tectonics and how through the tactile approach to design we as architects can begin realize the poetics of construction through tectonics.

Precedents:

Tea House / A1 Architects

The tea house designed by A1 Architects is located in Prague, Czech Republic

The architects describe the tea house as a structure that that is ready to surprise its visitors upon entering its interior. Its relationship with its surrounds provides different perspective of the garden in which it is situated. The structure is built in a circular platform that is enclosed by translucent dome that diffuses the natural light. The translucent domes resemble the hearth and the sky. The tea house, which serves as a place of gathering for guests, brings with itself a brief moment of anticipation as a way of providing an enjoyable experience.

Constructed with oak, the structure stands on stones that are sourced from a nearby pond. A minimalistic effect is achieved by mimicking the colouring effect of a building in a garden.

"The inner walls are constituted on one side by a view of the garden and on the other a clay parget. Guests set themselves down on the matt and the hearth is welded black steel. The dome laminated within is pasted with paper, through which light shines and invitingly illuminates the space inside." (ArchDaily, 2009)

This project is an example of an architecture that is conscious of its surroundings and incorporates elements of its landscape into the tea house. This serves as an analysis that can be incorporated in a region like Limuru, which is known for its sceniclandscapes.

https://www.archdaily.com/26964/teahouse-a1-architects

ONE Teahouse / MINAX Architects

Designed by firm Minax architects, the One tea house located in Shanghai Shi. The architect describes the project as one – just like the activity of drinking tea - that is rooted on the spiritual fulfilment between human and nature.

The project is an example of tectonic expression where 999 wooden sticks are arranged in a rectangular room that is cut out of an oval space. The tea house which contains different geometries and shapes all display an order.

The project is an example of how I could potentially use tectonic expression to create a space that immerses a user in a higher state of consciousness. (Archdaily, 2018).

https://www.archdaily.com/894020/one-teahouse-minax-architects

4- Methodology (Methods of Inquiry)

The framework for the research methodology is based on "Architectural Research Methods" by authors Linda Groat and David Wang. *(Architectural Research Methods, 2013).* This method focuses on a research process that can be implemented across a wide range of architectural research themes such as technical aspects, theoretical approaches and humanities.

The Theoretical/Conceptual framework would be based off of the diagram [Figure 4]

The diagram is broken into four frames which outline the methodology that will be implemented throughout the research phase.

The first frame is known as **Systems of Inquiry**: here a basis for the design constraints are defined by the Problem statement. This introduces the tasks that would be carried out throughout the research that follow up on a research question.

The second frame is known as **School of Thought**. This process involved the mode of analysis that will generate an understanding of the basis of the theory of the research proposal. The knowledge gathered in this process will aid in the research designs that will follow in the next frame.

The third frame is **Strategies.** This stage involves skilful planning that gives structure to the research. The structure of the plan will be formulated under the following headings

1. *Desk Research: This will be conducted by online research done in order to gain background information and insights into the tea industry in Kenya. This will include information such as statistical reports, company reports and media publications.*
2. *Fieldwork Research: This will be set around research that is carried out in Limuru. This would include gaining an understanding of the regional development of Limuru. The documentation of the fieldwork will involve processes of both sketching and photography.*
3. *Interviews: These would be conducted in the form of interviews and questionnaires that aim to gain an understanding of the small-scale tea farming industry in Kenya. Interviews will be done on specialists in the field of tea cultivation and production.*

The fourth frame is called **Tactics** and refers to specific techniques that will be used to generate preliminary explorations for the research proposal. The research tactics will involve an experimental, simulation and modelling phase. The aim is to test various proposals with the use of architectural drawings, sketch models and digital modelling that will merge important aesthetic, functional and construction aspects into a synthesised design proposal.

5 – Program & Site:

The site is located on a farm portion known as Kiambethu Tea farm. Situated in the highlands of Limuru, the farm is known for historical contribution to tea cultivation in Kenya. The site is currently owned and run by the granddaughter of A.B. McDonnell who first grew tea in the highlands.

The site has undergone many social and economic layers that have contributed its historical significance.

Site: the site is currently a tourist attraction, where the current owner provides tours of the farm accompanied by a complimentary lunch and tea tasting. Although the farm has been opened to tourists, the farm still operates as a tea farm that sends its tea leaves to a nearby tea factory for processing.

Their proposal aims to look at the various scales of its regional context, the agriculture, the factory and the residential in order to create a design that reintroduced a tea production factory and tea tasting centre - introducing cultural exchange in the form of tea tasting.

The design will look at functions for tea cultivation, production and tasting. These would include a green house, collection centre/maintenance yard, tea processing factory, offices and a tea tasting centre.

6 – Schedule of submission dates

Q1	
Research topic / poster:	22 February 2018
First review:	15 / 16 March 2018
Q2	
Design workshop:	5 - 9 April 2018
Second review:	19 / 20 April 2018
Draft essay / visual analysis:	7 May 2018
Submission research proposal / ethics:	14 May 2018
Third review:	18 / 19 June 2018
Q3	
Technical workshop:	19 - 23 July 2018
Fourth review:	2 / 3 August 2018
Intention to submit:	20 August 2018
Submission draft research report:	27 August 2018
Q4	
Final submission research report:	1 October 2018
Fifth review:	22 / 23 October 2018
Final Oral Examination:	19 – 21 November 2018

7- Bibliography

McHARG, I. (1969). *Design with Nature*. New York: Natural History Press, p.103.
Please enable flash to have the best experience

En.wikipedia.org. (2018). Limuru. [Online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limuru [Accessed 20 Feb. 2018].

Shannon, K. (2012). *The Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory: Landscapes*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, p.627.

Frampton, K. (1983). *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance*. [Essay] ahameri.com/cv/Courses/CU/Arch%20in%20Theory/Frampton.pdf.
COATES, G.

Coates, G. (2007). *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Biotechnology and Regional Integration*. 1st ed. [ebook] New York: Princton Architectural Press, pp.350-360. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/9267411/Biotechnology_and_Regional_Integration_in_Vincent_B._Canizaro_ed._Architectural_Regionalism_Collected_Writings_on_Place_Identity_Modernity_and_Tradition_New_York_Princeton_Architectural_Press_2007 [Accessed 28 Apr. 2018].

Russ, J. (1995). *A Bioregional Perspective on Planning and Regional Economics*. [Online] Trumpeter.athabascau.ca. Available at: http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca/index.php/trumpet/article/view/306/458 [Accessed 29 Apr. 2018].

Heath, K. (2009). *Vernacular architecture and regional design*. 1st ed. [Place of publication not identified]: TAYLOR & FRANCIS.

Vongkulbhisal, S. (n.d.). *Ethical Relativism and Critical Regionalism: an Ethical Viewpoint on the Non-Western Architectural Professions*. College of Built Environments. University of Washington

User, S. (2015). *Our History*. [Online] Limurucountryclub.co.ke. Available at: http://www.limurucountryclub.co.ke/index.php/about-us [Accessed 30 Apr. 2018].

Agri Tourism. (2017).What is Agri-tourism all about? - Agri Tourism. [Online] Available at: http://www.agritourism.in/blog-post/what-is-agri-tourism-all-about/ [Accessed 15 Mar. 2018].

Kenya-information-guide.com. (2015). *Kikuyu Tribe - the Largest Tribe in Kenya: History and Culture*. [Online] Available at: http://www.kenya-information-guide.com/kikuyu-tribe.html [Accessed 4 May 2018].

ArchDaily. (2009). *Teahouse / A1 Architects*. [online] Available at: https://www.archdaily.com/26964/teahouse-a1-architects [Accessed 12 May 2018].

ArchDaily. (2018). ONE Teahouse / MINAX Architects. [online] Available at: https://www.archdaily.com/894020/one-teahouse-minax-architects [Accessed 12 May 2018].