

OMBURO:

*the link between water
access, re-housing and
mycelium*

from too little to too much

WATERBODIES & NOMADIC CULTURES:

*What is the relation between waterbodies and nomadic
cultures - in the context of Namibia?*

MIA BARNARD

MSc Architecture and the Built Environment
Technische Universiteit Delft
2022/2023

INSTITUTION

Technische Universiteit van Delft
TU Delft

Faculty of Architecture and the Built
Environment
Julianalaan 134, 2628 BL Delft
The Netherlands

CONTRIBUTERS

Architecture and Research
Vanessa Grossman
Theory and History
Rachel Lee
Building Technology
Rufus van der Ban
Industrial Design and Mycelium
Joana Martins (IDE)

AUTHOR

Mia Barnard
DOB | 11 March 1997
Student Number | 4612949

MSc Architecture
Explore Lab Graduation Studio



abstract

Namibia has been home to some of the world's oldest ethnic groups since the dawn of civilization. One of these cultures is the Himba, often referred to as 'the last true pastoral nomads' of Africa. They are known for inhabiting the water-scarce desert region of Kunene in Namibia for centuries. Now, various factors, including climate change and the absence of governmental support, are forcing the Himba population to decide which aspects of 'modern' culture to incorporate into their everyday lives.

After decades of declining rainfall and rising temperatures, drought and *omakururukiro yokuti* (over-utilized land and vegetation) are the reality. The Himba is therefore forced to rely on their nomadic origins for survival, and to travel southwards, 'following the water', to Windhoek which is the capital of Namibia. On arrival, they are confronted with inequality apparent in the African urban built environment and take part in the rapid urbanization of Windhoek. They settle in *townships*, in *shacks*, located on the outskirts of the city, where access to water and sanitation is limited. Due to landscape topology, climate change and other factors, the high possibility of flooding poses a new risk. Indeed a life-threatening choice: surviving drought in Kunene or surviving floods in Windhoek.

As a result, water is not only important in culture, migration, and climate change. It also has an impact on the built environment and livelihoods in Windhoek townships, particularly Katutura (meaning "the place we do not want to be"), where access to water is limited, creating a disconnect from "access to citizenship." Consequently, the project is centered around the African proverb: *Return to old watering holes for more than water; friends and dreams are there to meet you*, with the goal of creating a communal area for the community to gather and engage in water-related activities, translated to *Omburo* (waterhole).

Omburo raises the following question: "How can we rethink architecture in a world with finite resources?" by generating the search for novel indigenous building materials. This then led to the introduction of mycelium in conjunction with local indigenous encroachment bushes, which can be used to create sustainable building elements (building blocks) and serve as the primary construction for incremental housing in the township, all while creating job opportunities and improving Katutura's socioeconomic conditions.

As a whole, *Omburo* can be regarded as a waterhole integrated with mycelium spores that spreads across the township while establishing a community area where 'friends and dreams' can be met.

from too little to too much

