

The premise of progress

A Senior high school in Nima, a distressed neighbourhood located north of central Accra, the capital city of Ghana in West Africa.

Nima is an extremely dense community, where land is very scarce. Single floor, clay built compound houses occupy the entire neighbourhood. Spatial planning is lacking, infrastructure is limited and overcrowding proposes a severe problem. Nima, a neighbourhood which is a direct result of rapid urbanization has long been considered an illegal squatter settlement with a reputation as a place undergoing rapid physical and social decay. Furthermore, academic achievement in Nima is very low, a large percentage of the population has never received any education. This knowledge, along with Nima's bad reputation has created a shared frustration among the youth due to lack of jobs and opportunities.

It is time for Nima to create its own opportunities and unlock its potential by providing further education for its youth. Today most children of Nima attend primary school but then drop out, both because of economical as well as geographical reasons as there are no secondary schools within the neighbourhood. Therefore this thesis proposes a much needed Senior high school within Nima, where children can continue their studies locally.

Finding a space for a Senior high school for 500 potential students within Nima is a major challenge. Therefore the design utilizes the potential in the space directly above the existing local market. The market is well established and located along Nima highway. The market features a noticeably different typology from the rest of the neighbourhood. It consists of temporary structures made from corrugated steel roofs and timber columns. The structures are in poor condition and their solitary function is to provide market vendors with shelter and shade. The main concept behind the design derives from this knowledge and replaces the temporary market structures with a raised school building which then instead supplies the market with a safe and permanent roof. The design respects traditional building patterns by mirroring the shape and materials of the surrounding clay compound houses while exploring a more pragmatic and innovative use of land and space.

Inspired by the words; "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress. In every society, in every family." by the Ghanaian diplomat Kofi Annan, the project hopes to support Nima to develop its image and help its youth to create a more prosperous future for themselves.

Sigurlín Rós Steinbergisdóttir