

NASJONALMUSEET FOR KUNST, ARKITEKTUR OG DESIGN

THE PILOT: THE NORDIC TANGANYIKA CENTRE (1963–68)

The exhibition at the Nordic Pavilion at la Biennale di Venezia has been titled “FORMS OF FREEDOM: African Independence and Nordic Models”. The exhibition will explore and document how modern Nordic architecture was an integral part of Nordic aid to East Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. The resulting architecture is of a scope and quality that has not previously been comprehensively studied or exhibited. One of the projects in the exhibition is *The Nordic Tanganyika Centre*.

Intro: African Independence and Nordic Models

The liberation of Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia in the 1960s coincided with the founding of state development aid in the Nordic countries, where there was widespread belief that the social democratic model could be exported, translated, and used for nation-building, modernization and welfare in Africa.

The leaders of the new African states wanted partners without a murky colonial past, and established solid bonds with the Nordic countries, built on a mutual belief in progress. During a few intense years in the 60s and 70s, Nordic architects contributed to the rapid process of modernization in this part of Africa.

These young architects found themselves in the field between building freedom and finding freedom: Building freedom denotes nation-building through city planning, infrastructure and industry, and institutions for education, health, and state bureaucracy, whereas finding freedom points at the modernist, experimental free area that emerged from the encounter between Nordic aid and African nation-building.

The pilot: The Nordic Tanganyika Centre (1963–68)

“... the Tanzania Government would like more Kibahas, and as many as possible!”

President Julius Nyerere, 10 January 1970

In the spring of 1961 the members of the Nordic Council entered into a partnership agreement to lend technical assistance to developing countries. Tanganyika gained its independence later that same year and was chosen as the first cooperating country for the joint Nordic aid program. In 1962, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden signed an agreement with Tanganyika to develop a multi-institutional center for health, education and agriculture in Kibaha outside Dar es Salaam.

As part of the new nation building, this first concrete manifestation of joint Nordic aid materialized in the experimental zone between Nordic social democracy and emerging African socialism. As a decentralizing and modernizing initiative, this facility became the prototype that President Julius Nyerere wanted to replicate all over Tanzania, Tanganyika’s successor state. The center, now Kibaha Education Centre, is still running.

TIMELINE

1961: Tanganyika (later Tanzania) gains independence

1961: The Nordic Council decides on a common foreign aid policy

1962: Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway sign agreement with Tanganyika to establish a multi-institutional center for health, education and agriculture in Kibaha outside of Dar es Salaam

1963: Planning starts

1964: Julius Nyerere inaugurates the Rural Training Centre

1966: Kibaha Secondary School is completed, for 600 boys from all over Tanzania

1967: Kibaha Training Health Centre is completed. Capacity 200,000 patients a year, and a three-years education program for 20 nurses

1968: The Nordic Tanganyika Centre is completed, also containing a library, sports fields, an assembly hall, shops, and housing and administration buildings

1970: Tanzania takes charge of the center, renamed Kibaha Education Centre. The center is still running.

Architects: Christoffersen & Hvalbye

Site Architects: Torvald Åkesson, Halvor Fossum, Liv Skeie et al

Commissioner: The Government of Tanganyika

Technical Planning: Norconsult AS

Building Contractor: Italian Construction Co. Ltd.