

DESIGN WITHOUT A DESIGN



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ACCRA / GHANA



5°36'53"N 0°12'21"W

The site and services project proposed for the city of Accra in Ghana, where the first core housing experiments carried out by Otto Koenigsberger in the 1960s were located, envisages the construction of service blocks in connection with infrastructural systems. While the arrangement of the blocks outlines the overall urban system, the individual service centers are slowly absorbed by self-built houses. This design strategy overshadows the control of the formal dimension of architecture, but it proves to be an effective tool for the promotion of economic, social, and cultural development given its sensitivity to the housing needs of individuals within an overall community growth process. The reconstruction of urban areas affected by extreme events requires a concrete response to the rise in demand for housing and services, but it is also vital to ensure an urban environment capable of stimulating the community's socioeconomic growth.

The progressive development approach supported by the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s for the construction of housing and neighborhoods in developing countries offers con-

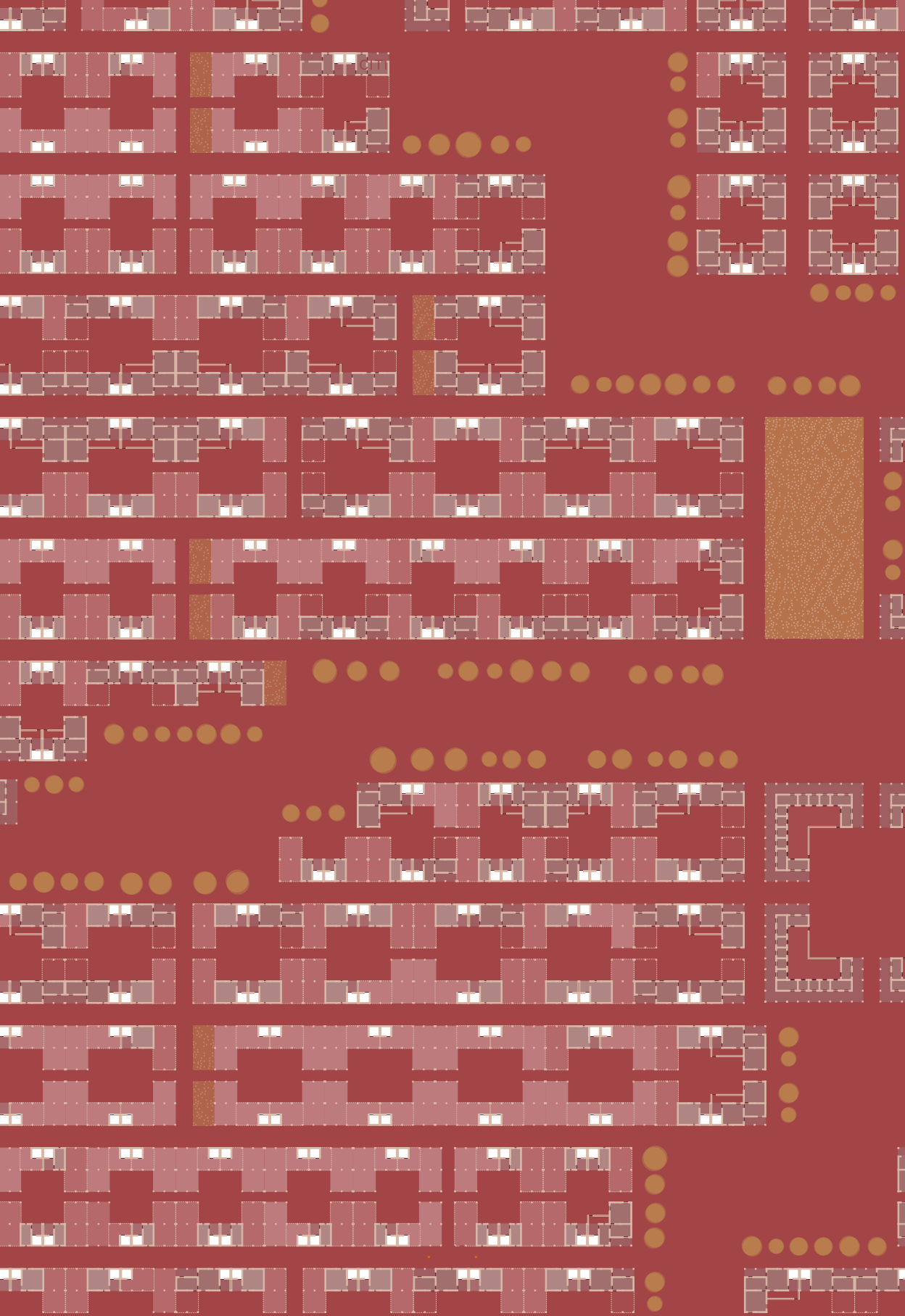
crete examples that are still relevant today in promoting significant urban models. Compared to traditional low-cost public building programs, with centralized and hierarchical management that requires a great deal of resources in the face of static and often socially stigmatizing urban and architectural models, upgrading and sites-and-services projects provide an alternative to individual strategic aspects of urban planning and minimal architectures that can be expanded over time directly by the inhabitants.

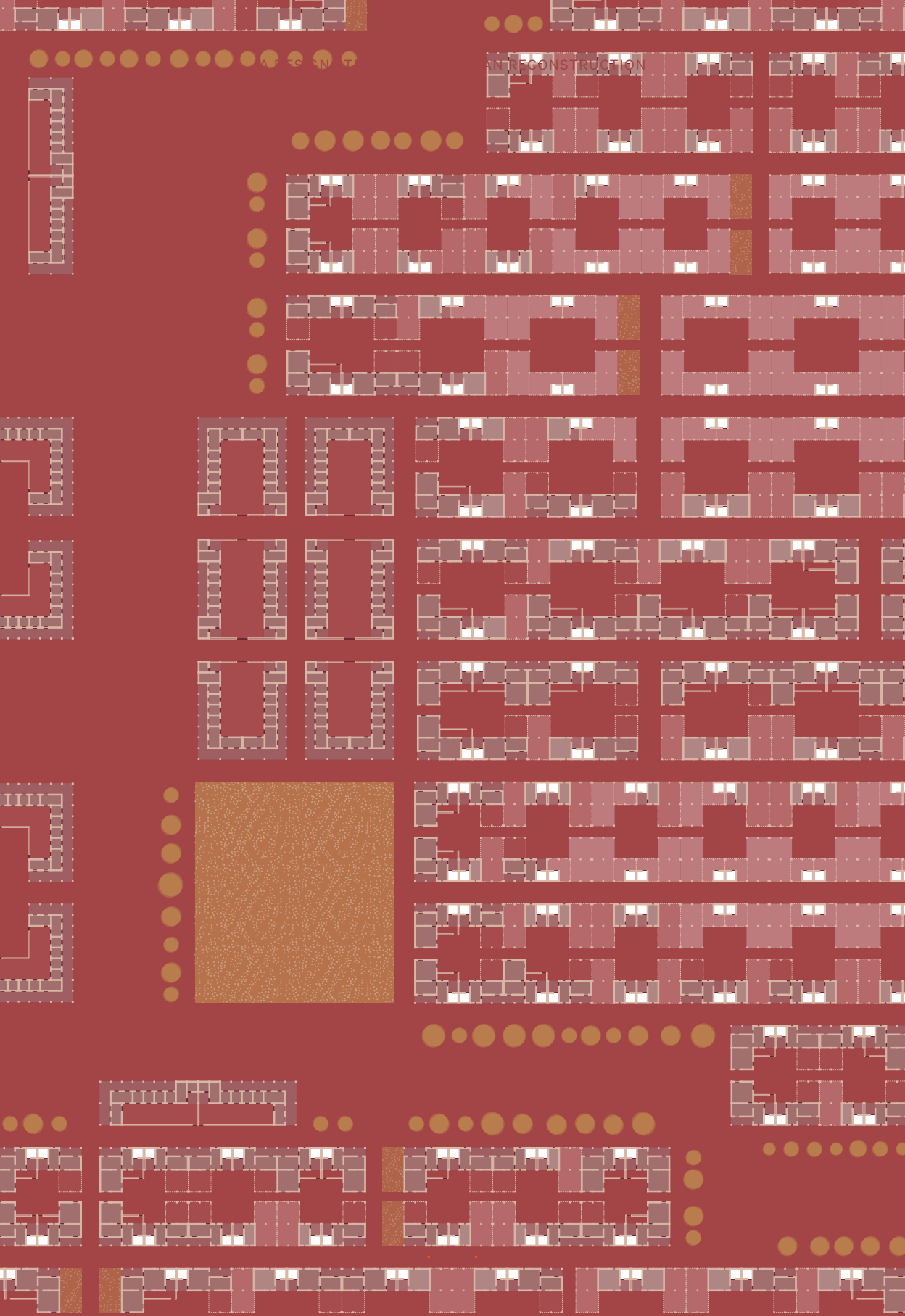
The supply of plots equipped with essential infrastructures and of minimal mass-produced services has multiple advantages: it allows for the inclusion of a wider range of beneficiaries, it guarantees a better location for the categories that most need to access the services of the city, and it allows the inhabitants to modify their homes according to specific needs and economic capacities.

The process of simplification of the architectural form that leads to the definition of a minimum space, the need to guarantee flexible and adaptable functional programs, and the possibility of expansion over time are the principles of a “design without a design,” an architecture that attempts to influence the formation of spontaneous settlement processes, accepting the risk of losing its formal integrity and maximizing flexibility to meet the needs of the users. The designer must be able to imagine how the elementary and standardized architecture can be slowly modified and transformed by foreseeing an inaccurate but concrete urban scenario. The trigger element that will generate the urban form is a nucleus that houses essential services and that can expand horizontally or vertically depending on the pursued density. It can be an enclosure that immediately defines the overall urban form and whose interior spaces will be modified at a later time, or be made up of complex construction elements.









AN RECONSTRUCTION