Tales of two capital cities: Urbanistic heritage and urban resilience

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Abstract

Due to its early beginnings, Portuguese empire established urban settlements on America, Africa and Asia seashores as bridgeheads and nodes of its network system. Some of those urban structures become capital-cities of territories, which, in turn, become countries after decolonization. Against what was usually said and has been convened by the colonial propaganda, those capital-cities were not symbols, they do not represented the territories they headed, but the colonial matrix, the metropolis. Lisbon's functional, built and spatial quotations were (by times still are) common on Salvador, Rio, Goa, Pangim and also in Luanda and Maputo. They also materialized some metropolitan utopias impossible to become reality due to the strength of pre-existence.

The decolonization process of the former Portuguese African colonies created a sudden void on that overseas urban connection. Those capital-cities become fully or partially void of their population, symbolism, functions, connections, senses. Its colonial communities become dismantled and new ones must be raised up, this turn genuinely based on the concept of capital city as head of a surrounding territory. It is a long, complex and always incomplete process of transformation by reciprocal influences between the urbanism and architecture of the city and its community. Among all it become crucial the integration of the segregated districts and the reconciliation of the new full fellows citizens with the urbanistic and architectonic legacy of the formers.

Based on empiric research about urbanistic heritage on Luanda and Maputo, this paper aims to review and bring to debate some current heritage concepts, in order to contribute to the construction of a theoretical frame that empowers a sustainable reconciliation and assumption of all legacies as seminal parts of these new nations identities and futures.