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Oficinas de Muhipiti:

an experience on strategic planning in a World Heritage context

Through a cooperation agreement between the project and PhD programme Patrimónios de Influência Portuguesa (Heritages of Portuguese Influence) from the University of Coimbra (Portugal) and the Faculdade de Arquitetura e Planeamento Físico (Faculty of Architecture and Planning) from the University Lúrio (Nampula, Mozambique), we are organizing a workshop entitled *Oficinas de Muhipiti: planeamento estratégico, património, desenvolvimento* (Muhipiti Workshop: strategic planning, heritage, development) that will be held on the Island of Mozambique on 19-29 July 2017. Muhipiti is the Macua's language name for the Island, a heritage site inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.x

For decades the island is claiming for a development model that simultaneously assures the well-being of its inhabitants and the preservation of its cultural heritage assets and values. Notwithstanding a bunch of initiatives from diverse origins, nothing really new or even promising arrived. Now, the settling in the Island of University Lúrio's new Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences could trigger that goal. The defy of the six *Oficinas* (from the overall strategic view to housing) is to produce a comprehensive and integrated brain storm on that, involving the inhabitants, local, regional and national agencies, NGOs, the Portuguese Cooperation (Camões, UCCLA), UN-Habitat and three architecture schools. The outputs will be expressed in a final exhibition (on display in Portugal, after passing through Maputo) and a book, but also some direct and almost immediate delivering is expected.

Beyond a specialist's well-known line of thought on integrated conservation planning, this cooperation action follows the most recent international outcomes regarding urban resilience, sustainability and development, as the *New Urban Agenda* and the *Sustainable Development Goals*, but also UNESCO's recommendations as the 2015's *Hangzhou Outcomes* in which formulation we have participated.

We propose to present to the African Urban Planning II International Conference a first-hand report and reflection on the *Oficinas de Muhipiti...*, initiative which we expect can succeed as an example of a good-practice regarding the integration between urban planning and heritage policies in Africa.



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opportunity framework and basic concept

As we announced on the abstract-proposal, under a cooperation agreement between the *think-thank project* and PhD course Heritages of Portuguese Influence (PIP), from the University of Coimbra, and the Faculty of Architecture and Physical Planning, from the University Lúrio (UniLúrio), involving also the Department of Architecture from the University of Coimbra, we¹ had organized the workshop *Oficinas de Mubipiti/Mubipiti Workshops: strategic planning, heritage, development* (Oficinas), that took place from 19 to 29 of July.

The basic concept was simple and acquainted: to connect strategic planning and heritage conservation for a sustainable development formula. In fact, since its inscription on the UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1991, the Island is claiming for an integrated development model that simultaneously assures the welfare of its inhabitants and the preservation of its cultural heritage assets and identity values. Notwithstanding various initiatives from diverse origins, often under UNESCO's guidance, some conservation improvements were achieved, unfortunately not sufficient to produce the huge leverage effect that is needed. We become convinced that it is due essentially to the lack of synergies, coordination and compromises between policies, public opinion and public bodies, including some NGO and foreign countries cooperation agencies. More than big gestures, projects and initiatives, good chooses of small actions and gestures and an integrated management could be determinant.

Last year the Mozambican Government approved the *Regulation for Classification and Management of Mozambique Island Built Heritage and Landscape*. This Regulation is accompanied by a *Catalogue of Classified Built Heritage of Mozambique Island*. Now it is being carried out a *Revision of the Conservation and Management Plan for Mozambique Island: 2010-2014*. Both processes, promoted by the central government under UNESCO pressure, are the clearest evidence of the enormous difficulties a developing country has to cope, simultaneously, with conventional conservation requests and socio-economic dynamics, especially when the community in place live with an enormous lack of the basic. Just to give an idea how things really are, in 2006 it has been created a special cabinet to the day-to-day Island heritage management. The Cabinet for the Conservation of the Island of Mozambique (GACIM) functions under direct command of the National Directorate for Cultural Heritage from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism without any architect, archaeologist, historian, etc.

Also in this very year, the UniLúrio's created in the Island, in provisional facilities, its new Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FCSH). By that, university becomes another Island's public body. We believe that, in a mid-term basis, it can be the key-element to the end of stagnation. To start, in no more than five years the university's settling will implies the additional presence in the Island of around thousand students, teachers and support staff that, as an academic community, surely will have different urban day to day life perspectives, inputs and expectations. The public bodies with management duties on the Island and its surrounding territory (the Island municipality, the Island district and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and, through it, the UNESCO) can just ignore that new fact, but they can also intervene in order to take full profit from all its potential, and also to prevent eventual nasty effects.

That opportunity for an Island's sustainable development model leveraged by the university settling, implies a holistic strategic planning action that, as we have said before, brings under the same broad equation urban heritage and urban sustainable development, with all the array of other problematics and defies both invoke. A few reasons rend obvious that the first moves should come from the UniLúrio, specifically from its Faculty of Architecture and Physical



Planning (FAPF), with whom we are cooperating precisely on the ongoing Master in Land Development and Urban Management and for the forthcoming Master in Heritage and Development, that will have its venue at the Island and will also involve the FCSH. Within that broad context, unleashed by a direct challenge from the UniLúrio's Dean, a year ago PIP proposed its partners from UniLúrio the production of the workshop whose critical report is now being elaborated under the form of a traveling exhibition and a book. For this paper's short presentation, we selected some issues from it for which we would like to have your comments and contribution.

academic environment and action setting

Within that context and taking advantage from previous experiences², along the resulting operative aims we have just summarised, the *Oficinas* was also conceived as *open-science* and *open-teaching* action. Its methodologic formula consists on the setting up of 6 workshop teams, *oficinas*, each one in charge of a specific task with synergic bonds to the others. Every *oficina* was integrated by 2 to 3 students from the final graduation years of both architecture courses (UniLúrio and Coimbra) and by a professor, PhD student or recent doctorate with diverse disciplinary backgrounds from each university, that together coordinate the team. A small group of senior professors with planning and/or heritage backgrounds stimulate, supervise and assure the synergic integration of the 6 teams. The lack of previous work links and habits between the 49 participants, or the 7 to 8 members of a team, has render as an advantage due to the tight calendar of points of situation open to public participation, and the final exhibition, which pressured the overcome of divergences. In other words, with only 9 full days to comply the tasks, there was no time for conflicts or expression of idiosyncrasies.

Also relevant were: i) the meticulous preparation of logistics and of the handiness of materials, supports and tools; ii) the availability of al kind of data about the issues addressed by all teams; iii) a concise (**all less than 1.200 characters**) and clear commission text for each *oficina*, that has been previously released and discussed. Also crucial was the set of conferences given by Mozambican specialists on issues as heritage conservation and management plans, environment and waste management, shipwreck archaeology, sociologic characterization and challenges, and, mainly, the fieldwork where interaction with the communities becomes a relevant complement to public visits and vivacious points of situation debates open to everyone. It was also relevant the explanation on the actions carried out together by Portuguese Cooperation with UCCLA (Union of the Portuguese Language Capital Cities) within the project *Portuguese Cooperation Cluster for Mozambique*, launch in 2009. The *Oficinas* ended with an *interim exhibition of results* and, on the following morning, a *dhow* (traditional boat) regatta, both involving considerable numbers of Island's inhabitants. To build public reliability is hard, takes a long time and demand persistence.

Since the beginning of the process we figure out that it will be very important, not only to involve as much as possible the population, but also to lend them something concrete, a signal that we really are not there only to ask things, invade the privacy of their homes, thoughts and wishes, to tell them what they should do, as many others have done during the last decades, with equal goodwill and, probably, better heritage policies skills. But at the end population usually retains the idea that for these experts heritage is more important than them, a result we have definitely to avoid. That is why taking into account the UniLúrio's challenge of giving real sense to the research and documentation centre, CEDIM, created in 2011 and still in a vegetative state, and realizing that it will be a cyclopean task raise it as a bodily and useful library and copies archive, it has been decided to frame it, on a mid-term base, not only as a



virtual data base, but also as the dialogue and operational platform between UniLúrio, the population and the public bodies. In other words, CEDIM should become the R&D (research & development) platform of services and knowledge transfers between UniLúrio and the Island. The first step was to empower it as the destination and repository of the *Oficinas* outputs and follow up.

Considerable data and knowledge on the Island historic and contemporary realities is available. Since the beginning of the process we are gathering it on a cloud, wishing (and planning) to process it in order to constitute an online data base with a GIS architecture, what will allow it to establish direct connection between data-knowledge and its related territory. But we must wait for the cadastral land survey that is now being initiated within the *Portuguese Cooperation Cluster for Mozambique* we referred before. The online data base will be the materialization (paradoxically in an immaterial support) of one of CEDIM foundational aims, but what about research? What are the research priorities, the research lines CEDIM should promote?

It becomes obvious that its central focus should be the integrated conservation of the Island, fomenting strategic planning actions converging into a development model based on the heritage values and other kinds of potentialities of the Island and its territory. All that made the *Oficinas* the really founding-operative episode of CEDIM, and also of the forthcoming Master in Heritage and Development. Nevertheless, there cannot be any confusion between that aims and the constitution of Island's strategic, heritage conservation, management or any other plans or ordinances that only government, regional or municipal bodies could promote³. It is not university's attribution, but some simulation (and stimulation) could be undertaken, and its results figured out as reliable components of forwarded institutional solutions.

conspicuous looks to each *oficina*

The *strategic planning* simulation undertaken by the *Oficinas*, also under the keywords *heritage* and *development*, have two extreme beacons-themes *oficinas*, both with a holistic scope and inter and transdisciplinary focus and methods, but absolutely diverse operative purposes. If ***Oficina 1. Strategies for the Island sustainable development*** was directly looking for items clearly formulated that can/ should be inscribed in action plans with integrated management profiles, ***Oficinas 6. Muhipiti's Centre of Interpretation*** (CIM) must search the trends to establish that centre as a privileged and permanent dialogue platform about the Island between all agents and stakeholders in place. We hope it is clear they are absolutely complementary, but if we can assume that *Oficina 1* commission do not need explanation, the same do not happen with the 6.

The creation of CIM is undertaken as a key decision within the framework of CEDIM's/ UniLúrio's agenda. Not something inspired in museums or similar, but a dynamic structure that should have as main goal a permanent dialog with the Island population. Interpretation for and from the population, not a welcome or explanation centre for visitors. Of course, if the contents become real, up to date, considered reliable by the population, they will become the most precious condensed data about the Island for the visitors. It will be a polynuclear structure articulated with the most various cultural expressions, from the *tufo* (typical dance) groups, till the Island Museum. This brief description of what it is being planning to be the CIM, sorts out from the work of the dedicate *oficina* that has been created within the *Oficinas* with that specific purpose. Now they are still work on defining the layout and contents of the first space that it is hoped to open till the end of the year, substituting in the CEDIM's room at the Municipality building the *interim exhibition of results* the *Oficinas* open on its last day. But something from the future exhibition is already there.



We are talking about the two models the *Oficinas* had built before and during the event, one of the Island at a 1:1.000 scale, the other of the Saint Sebastian Fortress at a 1:200 scale. Its building processes were also a survey and research one, and its offer to the Island a very well-received statement on the UniLúrio's commitment with the Island and its development.

The other 4 *oficinas* have more concrete scopes and clear delimited areas of intervention. **2. Public Spaces** and **4. Plan for a community centre** addressed the public spaces (always a high relevance issue in an urban structure) and **3. Master plan for the fortress reuse** and **5. Macute Houses** to specific building-programmes. Both pairs snitch the structural division of the Island layout between the *stone and lime town* and the *macuti* (the palm leaves roof's raw material) *town*. Even if that has become ethnically and racially faded, it stills formerly-urbanistic clear, as it is on day-to-day life. Macute is a living urban area under an enormous transformation stress, what is not only justified by the poorness of its inhabitants, but mainly by its colonial layout as the *city of the non-citizens*, the black's neighbourhood, with all the lack of basic infrastructures that had determined. The *stone and lime town*, once the place of the merchants, traders and colonial occupants, today balances between public bodies headquarters, touristic facilities and a huge amount of ruins and void buildings. Only a small part of the population lives there, mostly in worst conditions than those in *Macute town*.

Oficina 2 was commissioned with the liberty of address public spaces as they figured out better, but forcibly taking into account three things: a) Elect study cases from both areas; b) Establish connection with other Island public spaces projects as the one (between Nalia Market and the Paiol) that is being implement by the Municipal Council within the *Portuguese Cooperation Cluster for Mozambique*; c) The *Preliminary Study on Public Spaces of the Ilha de Moçambique*, made in 2011 by the Center of World Heritage Studies of the College of Design at the University of Minnesota. The work developed by this *oficina* raised up a conspicuous set of problems and more than present solutions, suggest some methods of approach, some type-solutions. It would be impossible to raise up a stabilized proposal for the huge range of problems and large area, that lays between the Saint Sebastian Fortress and the North built limit of the *stone and lime town*.

Oficina 4's mission was to redraw or, better, to urbanistic re-manage the large area that once was the square-garden that lays between the hospital, the west seashore, the North boundary of the *Macuti town* and the South limit of the *stone and lime town*, but today is occupied with a semi-ruined school, hut-restaurants and an array of other things. Although the chaotic reality, stills is the preferred public space for the inhabitant's informal encounters, but also for political meetings, community parties, etc. The symbolism and monumentality of the hospital building and of the public space as connection between both *towns*, surely are the reasons for that. The *oficina* developed a deep study on the community and identity meaning of the space, desirable new functions and urban design scenarios. The motto was not a building programme, but the formal and symbolic potential for a public space as city centre.

As mentioned before, the settling of the new UniLúrio faculty in the Island occurs in interim facilities. That is why the definitive place, the Saint Sebastian Fortress, despite some conservation intervention made a few years ago under Japanese founding⁴, does not proof to be adjusted nor sustainable for use. A few years ago, the FAPF made a reuse project that has a main problem: it will be extremely expensive to concretize. The mission that *Oficina 3* has dealt with consists in, taking as departure points all the former projects and complying with heritage conservation requests, propose typified solutions for a low-cost and low-specialized execution, possible to promote under a rhythm of small contracting with Island small contractors. Beyond allowing UniLúrio to cope with the issue, it will promote the developing of a sustainable local built economy and employment. Theirs proposals included the settling in the



fortress complex of other agencies and the reversion of some conservation mistakes perpetrated during the last interventions.

As *Oficina 3, Oficina 5*'s commission directly departs from the settling of the new UniLúrio's faculty in the Island. The starting idea was to study solutions that simultaneously verify three requests: A. Considerably improve life conditions; B. To preserve traditional layout and materials assuring low-cost and self-made interventions; C. To create conditions to host a university student and with that to add some ease to the usual skinny family budget. Not surprisingly each of these requests triggered many others and we think that more than stabilized answers the team created a methodologic road-map to research it. Within the synthetic approach we are forced here, we must add that the Macuti houses quick transformation is one of the hot points of discussion between standard conservationists and the population. That's an issue that leads us directly to a few final notes.

final notes

In Southern African's Western born heritage conservation concepts and methods