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DIAMANG'S URBAN PROJECT
BETWEEN THE PEACE OF VERSAILLES AND THE COLONIAL ACT

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the early stages of urban development of the Lunda region as a result of Diamang - Angola Diamond Company settlement in 1917. To support the diamond mining activity in the Angolan northeast, until then devoid of any intervention within the framework of the Portuguese colonial project, it was crucial to construct the necessary structures for a further inhabited area. Despite the critical and unstable moment in national and international politics, between the Peace of Versailles (1918) and the Colonial Act (1930), Diamang asserts itself in a powerful and paradigmatic way. The study of housing typologies and collective programs uncovers the presence of a rigid hierarchical social system, which, despite suggesting a strong mimicry of life in the “Metrópole”, also incorporates the indigenous culture in its planning. In this regard, the paper intends to analyse the Company's urban strategies, identifying the first settlement models and their possible relation with the native pre-existences, as a primordial way of guaranteeing the establishment of workforce. It is possible to recognise that, in the Lunda Region, the “effective occupation” promoted by Estado Novo was overtaken by Diamang’s “scientific occupation”; thus, one may ask what was the autonomy of private companies in the development of former Portuguese colonies. Although in the middle of 20th century the Company’s development project would become aligned with the Portuguese overseas policies, in its first years it stood out as an important and original approach to the colonial process.