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FROM LOURENÇO MARQUES TO MAPUTO:
URBAN SPACES AND URBANITIES 'IN THE MAKING'

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ABSTRACT

Forty years after Mozambique's Independence from Portugal (25th of June 1975), the difficulties in managing the modern architectural heritage of colonial origin (which represents the bulk of the edification within the limits of the so-called 'city of cement' of Maputo) are evident. The structural adjustments programmes, consequence of contrasting doctrinal changes and expressed in the adoption of specific economic reforms, along with the prolonged civil war (1974-1992) that intensified the dislocation of the rural population to the cities, contributed to the progressive degradation of the historic urban centres and their services. The densification of the 'informal' occupation of the urbanized areas was accompanied by ruptures in the urban customs, or in other words, by the 'ruralisation' of the city. Even thought one should not underestimate the practical difficulties of undertaking empirical urban research in the region, the approach to its complex urban reality cannot be made having as only references the colonial product, nor, on the other hand, the urban model propagated by the West. After all, what exists in these urban areas is a form of urbanity in its own right, which needs to be comprehended as such. In the first part of this paper, I focus on the social and economic transformations in the urban and architectonic framework that took place in the postcolonial context in Maputo. In the second part, I address the measures that have been undertaken by Mozambican officials and the difficulties that arise in the management and enhancement of the modern colonial heritage.