Abstract

This paper initially briefly reviews different approaches to urban studies in African urban areas as an introduction to the intention in establishing a link between an understanding of the social significance of the city and the political economic structures which largely produce urban form. The focus is Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, which previously was called Lourenço Marques (under colonialism) and Xilunguine in XiRonga, the language of the historic local inhabitants of the surrounding region. The paper reviews the city centre’s history as a backdrop to understanding more recent developments, discussing how changes in the wider political economy of the city are reflected in urban form, yet arguing for an enhanced role of social and cultural agency in challenging the constraints of such parameters – where architects and planners can play a key role.

Keywords

Urban development; urban history; Sub-Saharan Africa; Maputo Mozambique; city centre; social life, new international political economy

Introduction

Research in African cities has historically varied across various disciplines with limited integration or inter-disciplinary activity. In addition, serious study of urbanism south of the Sahara was a relatively late development as during the colonial period it suited the dominant powers to underplay pre-colonial African urban history and indigenous forms of urbanism. In more recent times urban research in the region has become predominantly short term development-oriented and normative, although a re-emergence of critical studies is in evidence and most recently a possible resurgence of studies of longer term change which avoid some of the determinism of the dominant paradigm, or the reactive stance of critical studies (Jenkins 2009b). While geographers have examined the structural impacts on urban form, architects and urbanists often have not integrated this form of analysis with their physically focussed work, thus overly stressing the agency of the ‘designer’ of buildings or urban form. However this agency-focussed approach is also embedded with a range of values to what is ‘good’ in the ‘urban’ which is largely deductive and draws on Northern Experience. The fundamental aim of this paper is to advocate for both more inter-disciplinary research (drawing together that of architecture, urban design, social science and the humanities – especially history) and also advocate for research that can approach evolving Sub-Saharan Africa urbanism from an inductive point of view, permitting new forms of analysis to develop that are, more appropriate to emerging forms of
urbanism, and thus both challenge developmentalist approaches with its implicit Northern analytical concepts - yet not become critically detached from praxis in proactive urban development.

The core subject for this paper is Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, called Lourenço Marques by the dominant mercantile and subsequent colonial Portuguese powers, and Xilunguine by the local indigenous population. The analysis draws on both published texts (written and graphic) and extensive personal engagement in research, urban development practice and living in Maputo/Xilunguine for some three decades. It thus draws both on more traditional ‘academic’ sources as well as wider forms of experiential understanding. The examination is structured in major periods of political economic difference, highlighting the social life and agency which either underpinned or was submerged in these periods, and in so doing draws on a new international political economy approach. These six major periods are: the early mercantilist period of city development; the subsequent early, middle and late colonial periods; and the initial and more recent post-Independence period. This more structural urban development analysis is then used as the basis for suggestions of the contemporary role of agency within Maputo concerning how we see the city and its development/evolution.

Urban development in Maputo – the changing role of the city centre

The early mercantilist period - a slowly expanding trading outpost

Remains of human settlements have been found near Maputo that date to the first century in the Current Era, but these were used by mobile hunting/fishing/gathering communities. More prolonged settlement traditions have been dated in the region from the 9th century, when extensive regional and some long distance trade was also practised (through East African links to the Persian Gulf). The bay which the city stands on was ‘discovered’ by Europeans after rounding the Cape near the end of the 15th century and named after the Portuguese navigator Lourenço Marques who first surveyed the bay in 1544. While a series of temporary settlements were established for trade throughout the 16th and 17th centuries - including eventual competition by the Dutch, British, Austrians and French - the Portuguese finally created a permanent settlement towards the end of the 18th century. Their area of influence was, however, very limited and the settlement was predominantly a trading station for ivory and other natural products destined for export, as no precious metals were found in the interior this far south. Changing socio-political structures within the indigenous peoples of the region (speeded up by the Mfecane diaspora) as well as alternative aspiring colonising powers (English to the South based on ‘Port Natal’ and Boer republics on the interior highlands) meant that Portuguese dominion was continually threatened until the latter part of the 19th century with the establishment of international agreements on colonial boundaries. This then led to wars of ‘pacification’ by the Portuguese state of the – by then strong - indigenous states to create a colony per se, including the Gaza empire north of the city (in the province now of the same name) and the Swazi state (now independent Swaziland).

During all this period (mid 16th to late 19th century), the settlement that has become Maputo was established on the northern side of the estuary leading to the bay on a sandy island cut off from the mainland by swamps (see Figure 1). The morphology of the fairly precarious settlement was one predominantly of defence – from its siting to its built environment. This latter was evidenced in the fortified wall with bulwarks to the north to protect against land attack (with only one access route in and out), these defences continuing round to the west and east, where they linked to the fortress looking to the sea (against alternative maritime attack). Defensive construction accentuated the natural features of the island setting. As in most early Portuguese overseas town-building, the actual form of

---

1 For more on this approach see Jenkins et al (2006)
2 This section draws Jenkins (1999, 2000), updating as relevant.
layout was not determined by a rectangular grid as in the Spanish ‘Law of the Indies’, but more ‘informally’ developed around a central square (praça) permitting a public gathering space and also clear lines of sight from the fortress – and the site of the eventual governor’s house (shown in black on Rua de Alegria near the Praça). Access routes were predominantly east-west with a secondary open space and public water supply (‘fonte’) near the entry point to the island. On the beach there was a short quay and the all-important customs house (black H shape on plan) as the fragile Portuguese state presence largely depended on local taxation. This morphology reflects the dominance of the main powers over the settlement (military, administrative and religious – although the location of the first church is unclear) and the island setting reflected the settlement on Mozambique Island – the main Portuguese settlement of the period much further north, and much more important until the late 19th century in economic terms.

Figure 1) The initial permanent settlement and early ‘city centre’ (1876 plan)

The precarious nature of the trade in the region (which changed from ivory as elephant populations were decimated to hides, amber, and other natural products\(^3\)) was also reflected in the nature of the construction. The first ‘permanent’ constructions of locally quarried stone, mud and lime from oyster shells were only built from the 1830s after the passing invasions of the Mfecane to create the northern Gaza state, and some subsequent immediate military stability was achieved. Land control was initiated in 1858 and land became leased from the Crown from that period, as a mechanism to raise new forms state income. The same year the settlement only had 888 residents, including 364 locals, 384 slaves (and another 11 freed slaves) with 73 Europeans and 51 Asians. The influence of the Portuguese was probably not more than some 10 km around the bay, including negotiated settlements with the local Xi-Ronga Mpfumo and Matola clan chiefdoms who were involved in elephant hunting and other trade – and also has some intermarriage between these indigenous elites and the foreigners in the settlement. In this period, the ‘city centre’ - if it can be called this - was where trade, political administrative control (governor and customs) and military defence all came together around the ‘Praça de Picota’ (later Praça Sete de Março), in fairly typical mercantile small town form. All this was, however, just about to change with the discovery of gold in Lydenburg across the border in the Transvaal a few years before.

\(^3\) Having concluded that there was no source of precious metals in the hinterland.
The early colonial period – establishing the city area

Whereas transport from the port into the interior had been predominantly focussed on elephant hunting and other trade in natural products (slaving having always been a minor activity in the south of Mozambique), there was now an imperative to link with the interior highveld goldfields, as the geographical nearest port. A road to Lydenburg was initiated in the 1870s and then from 1877 a railway link to the Transvaal was also planned. This, however, was only constructed after 1886 (taking 9 years to complete) due to political issues around the South African Republic and Boer Wars – and routed to Johannesburg with the subsequent discovery of gold there in 1885. The settlement was elevated to town status in 1876 and then city status in 1887 as it became the main port for access to the goldfields, the fastest growing economy of the region. This led to significant changes also in the city’s morphology with urban development across the swamp to the higher inland plateau being planned from 1878 when a more permanent bridge was built. From 1886 a land registry was established and in 1887 an expedition from the Portuguese Ministry of Public Works developed the first definitive expansion plan incorporating a 2 km radius to the north within the city, based on the central praça in the original settlement and following a grid-iron layout (see Figure 3 and 4). However, it took some ten years for prior land claims and disputes to be resolved and also eventually for a new township to be incorporated that had been established separately from the official plan from the 1880s on the nearby Polana headland overlooking the bay from the west.
Figure 3) The city in 1900 showing the 2 km radius layout and separate township on the Polana headland.

Figure 4) showing the relation between the original settlement and the new city centre (from Mendes 1985).
The town and then city of Lourenço Marques grew rapidly in the latter part of the 19th century – from 1844 to 1896 by sevenfold, with roughly equal proportions of Africans, Asians and Europeans. The city status and changing external circumstances had led to new church, hospital and barrack buildings outside the fortifications (see Figure 5) as well as construction of a proper dock (for steamship traffic) and new customs house on the shore side of the original settlement. Towards the end of the century major landfill of the swamp were undertaken, including providing for the railway access to the city. Piped water and an abattoir and cemetery were other public works funded by the state, although most roads remained unpaved. Customs remained the major financial base for the Portuguese government as little other form of productive activity took place in or around the settlement other than trade. However land leasing and sale by the state was another source of income – especially within the newly planned urban circumference, but also outside of this, where some enterprising investors acquired large areas for speculation (see below on Sommerschield). A further growing source of income for the State from this period and up to the present was through the taxation of migrant labour to the mines and farms of South Africa.

The city’s role also changed vis-à-vis its wider hinterland. The 1884/5 Berlin Conference had divided up most of Sub-Saharan Africa between European colonial powers primarily interested in assuring preferential access to natural resources and eventual markets for their industrialised output. This required evidence from Portugal that it actually dominated its claimed territory in Mozambique and led to the establishment of hut taxes for the indigenous populations with this, and ‘pacification’ of the indigenous states By 1887 some 13,500 hut taxes in the city’s surrounding hinterland were being collected from some 14 subordinated clans. This was enforced by a significantly strengthened military presence, including the symbolic construction of a new barracks on the traditional cemetery of the Mpfumo clan to the northwest of the planned city on the high ground, and then another to the northeast in the ‘English’ town that was incorporated into the urban plan. This latter was the base for the expeditions that conquered the indigenous Gaza state in the last years of the 19th century. With the relative decline in the trade in the central region of the then declared Portuguese colony, the capital of the country was transferred to the city of Lourenço Marques from Mozambique Island in 1895.

The emerging capital city could boast a planned grid-iron network of roads and land registry for urban development and soon also had further key public buildings: the Municipal Market, main Post Office, Public Works, Tax Office, Customs House, Hospital, Police Station, Port Captaincy Building, National Press Building, main Railway Station, Law Courts etc – and several other major commercial and private buildings (including banks, shops and the British Consulate). However, while the above were generally in imposing neo-classical style permanent construction (Figures 6 and 7), many of the new residential buildings in the expanded city area were in temporary materials – corrugated iron sheeting, but also cast iron (components and buildings) being the dominant form. Much of the demarcated urban area remained under-developed for many years as the plans of 1903 and 1940 below indicate (figures 8, 9).
Figure 6) The main Post Office (1899)

Figure 7) The old Club Hotel, now France-Mozambique Cultural Centre
The 1903 plan envisioned a whole new city with key public investments such as the vastly expanded port and railways to the southwest, and the cemetery to the middle north, but also shows the slow build up of the new urban area. The concentration of development is in the old central area, now expanding across the swamp with wide Southern European style boulevards and including a large area dedicated to a botanical garden. The other fairly developed area is the previous ‘English’ settlement to the east on the high headland. At this stage the landfill of the port (southwest) was underway and had not begun in the bay area east of the old centre. In several places existing roads or lanes have been included in the grid-iron and the axial orientation of these has not been dominated by the previous central Praça de Picota, although this does have one short axial line (see also Figure 4). Rather the new cross city axis (then ‘Avenida Dom Carlos’) bounding the all important railway and dock area, as well as the original settlement to its north, is taken as the starting point for the orthogonal pattern. The Praça is, however, the centre of the circular 2 km radius urban circumference.

This plan essentially signifies three key changes in the underpinning urban spatial development in an early period of colonial city development. Firstly the plan does not respect or adhere much to physical features such as the slopes of the headland (crossed directly by roads ignoring gradient) and coastline (progressively being infilled) – to create later problems of erosion and drainage for the downtown area. Secondly, while the old urban centre still has symbolic and social value (e.g. for cultural and political occasions such as in the Praça Sete de Março, as contemporary photographs of the era show), this is subordinated to the new planned (and ordered) future which reflects the realpolitik and subservient state-oriented economy of the colony. Thirdly this envisioned urban future, while integrating the unavoidable present, also was inspired by a vision based on quite weak socio-economic perceptions of urban development and as such represented an ideal more than a pragmatic approach to urban management. Notably there is little evidence for any analysis of the actual situation or trends in urban development as the basis for future planning, this being dominated by visionary aspiration.

Figure 9) the 1903 city plan  
Figure 10) The 1940 city plan

The plan from 1940 is much more pragmatic, showing the formal and less formal (yet still legal) actual extensions of the city. Importantly, however, it also now includes a proposed extended city centre, expanding into the landfill bay to the southeast and infill between the previous planned circumference and the incorporated headland town. While this plan is much more of a cadastral map than a planned projection, it clearly shows the limitations of urban management in the de facto expansion areas to the north. To the northeast a planned expansion is underway around the then airfield – however hampered by the problems of acquisition of land immediately to the north. Here the early resident Norwegian Dr Sommerschield had astutely acquired a 1000 Ha area in the Polana chiefdom from 1899 and sold this speculatively to a South Africa real estate company who were in the end forced to sell to the government only in 1953 after considerable and costly litigation. To the northwest, in lower lying and often flooded area, no such large concessions had been made but this had developed in a piecemeal fashion of land sales to Portuguese settlers (as the Africa population was not permitted to own land until 1961). Given the lack of any state approach to land or housing provision until the mid 1940s for the indigenous population, who were attracted to the city to work or
passed through the city en route to migrant labour positions in the neighbouring states, this whole area
developed as an informal dormitory suburb for the low-income population with few urban rights
under a laissez faire urban administration. Here they rented shack accommodation provided by
colonial settlers – often behind local shop/bars called ‘cantinas’ – in ‘comboios’ (trains) of lines of
back to back corrugated iron sheet rooms with virtually no services. The earliest aerial photo coverage
of the city in the late 1920s shows this large urban informal area well established and with the second
most important (and indeed largest) municipal market at its core in Xipaminine.

The middle colonial period – rapid expansion and state control

Of importance to this paper, by 1940 the real basis for Portuguese occupation in the southern part of
Mozambique in a middle colonial period is thus graphically portrayed in this latter plan. Excluded
from the ‘city’ (what we would now call the ‘formal’ area), the now dominant African population was
forced to occupy liminal spaces – physically at the margins of this city as noted above (including
marginal in terms of urban rights and services) or within this in servants quarters as many other settler
states in the region. The ‘rentier’ basis for the colonial economy, based on taxation of transport and
trade as well as migrant labour to South Africa (contracted from 1928) is thus expressed in the
encirclement of the city to the northwest (informal housing for indigenes) and southwest (where the
all important port and railway continued to expand into the bay). To the northeast there is the other
end of the socio-economic and political scale with the urban settler elite being increasingly ensconced
in the emerging highest class suburb built on the previous airstrip (now being relocated to the north
just beyond the informally occupied area). To the south east the city centre is planned for a major
expansion into newly created land – following the important west-east access which skirts the old
centre and has now become the true centre of gravity for commercial and business activity. Visions
for this form of continued colonial development informed the second formal urban plan developed in
the late 1940s as follows.

By the Second World War the city’s demarcated area had begun to fill up as the population rose due
to growing trade with fast expanding urban areas in the Witwatersrand and intervening areas, and
Portuguese emigration policies which stimulated migration of the increasingly landless poor from
Europe to the ‘overseas territories’ (as they were known). By 1930 the official population of the city
had grown to over 20,600 inhabitants, by 1940 up to 44,700, and by 1950 90,000. Trams provided
access to the farther parts of the formal urban area and increasingly opened up the coast to the north
for recreation. This also opened up the city for tourism - mainly from the South African Transvaal.
Despite there being no formal separation of races, there was evidence of this in urban occupation, as
with class, with Africans in the informal areas, Asians in the low part of the city near the commercial
centre and Europeans divided by class – lower income to the west and higher income to the east and
north (Mendes 1979). In addition to the economically dominant transport sector, industry (mostly
basic import substitution for local consumption) had begun to be developed in the southeast near the
port and then to the north between the city and the new airport and along the main road north out of
the city, north of the informally settled area mentioned above.

In the formal urban area construction was now predominantly in permanent material with more
buildings going up to 3-4 stories as land became more expensive. Limited recognition of an
‘assimilated’ African population has been legislated however and a special housing area had been
provided for this group between the city proper and new airport in a low-lying area. In general,
however, there was a continued laissez faire policy to the now extensive informal settlements to the
north and northwest, although some control over permanence of construction as this was all
considered temporary and easily removed. These areas had few services and – as many were low
lying – were seasonally flooded, however they also represented an increasingly consolidated urban
form.

The laissez faire approach continued as a backdrop to the 1952-5 urban plan for the city- developed in
Portugal by the Urban Planning Office for Overseas Territories - with whole areas of the city left as
‘reserves’ – those with the complex mix of necessary if unofficial African urban settlement and small
rentier settler activity, effectively creating a constraining ring around at least half of the northern area for potential expansion. Part of this, however, was indicated for re-development (mainly around the state-rented housing for the assimilated class in the ‘Bairro Indigena’). This plan, as the previous ones, was based on a vision rather than more detailed research and analysis (it pre-dated the above studies). However, new expansion areas for industry are also shown immediately outside the ring to the north, both east and west of the airport, both partly later developed. The other main features detailed in the published plan are the massive urban expansion to the northeast, over land recently acquired from the speculators, with a Beaux Arts urban layout incorporating the already existing city golf course. The emphasis was thus on upper income housing provision, given the historic provision of housing for lower income (settler) groups to the west of the city – although here again some re-development of the informal ring was envisioned immediately outside of what by then was called the ‘cement city’ (‘Cidade de Cimento’). The previous vision for the eastward expansion of the city centre as a grand government centre – very like Lisbon – is reinforced here in the land use zoning and particularly in the aspirational graphics (see Figures 11-13). These show a formal quayside for ceremonial occasions, surrounded by new monumental civic buildings, only one of which was ever built (the previous Ministry of Finance). Despite the trend in the period of a move to air travel, the airport in counterpoint was sited in the midst of fields to the north with no ostentatious ceremonial buildings – rather it is flanked to the south by industrial areas and housing for the assimilated class of Africans.

Figure 11 The 1952-55 urban plan
This Southern European form of urban plan, based on grand spatial visions but limited pragmatic analysis was inevitably going to encounter difficulties in implementation in the realpolitik of the city. As soon as it was published land speculators purchased and divided a new urban area near the planned axis to the sea from the new residential centre around which the Beaux Arts northern development revolved – creating the unauthorised Bairro Triunfo that remains today. The ‘suburbios’ or ‘caniço’ areas (called after the tendency for African city dwellers to build with reeds due to lack of any secure tenure) were never re-developed as projected, partly due to the lobby of the small-scale settler class whose livelihood depended on the exploitation of this land for the low-income population, and partly due to the costs of re-development. Instead new developments tended to leapfrog this informal ring to
areas such as Barrio Jardim near the zoological garden to its north, or to the new town created in the 1960s in Matola to the west of Lourenço Marques.

This **middle period of colonial city development** thus presented rather a crisis for the city centre per se. While assuming the downtown area, which had developed as the basis for commercial and economic development, would retain this character, and expand to the east as before into the land reclaimed from the sea, there was a much higher emphasis on the civic nature of this development – something that was dependent on massive state investment linked to the moderate expansionist interests of the Estado Novo dictatorship in Portugal from the 1930s, but in the event was never forthcoming from the metropole. The other new Beaux Arts centre projected to the north was to have a more residential and commercial focus, but inevitably would have detracted from some of the necessary investment for the existing downtown. It was never developed however as in fact the city region became the focus for the last phase of colonial city-building.

*The late colonial period – continued rapid expansion but reduced state control and greater private sector investment*

In the late 1960s the impossibility of implementation of the 1950s plan was an accepted fact and a local Urban Planning Office within the city council was established. This – differently from the previous plans – started with analysis of the actual land use and potential development, and also examined the city region and not the limited area of the city council per se – thus including the newly emerging ‘sister’ city of Matola to the west. Matola began to develop in the mid 1960s with new impetus for inward foreign investment as Portugal changed its legal structure concerning this form of development, and the new large scale industries opted to install themselves in new areas far from the cramped areas available in the Lourenço Marques city area (and also presumably from the related taxation). Associated with the new industries (mineral port, oil refinery, cement factory etc) were new up-market and middle income residential areas – and importantly (for the first time) low income housing areas as sites & services – a form of development well established in surrounding Anglophone colonial and post-colonial states, but never attempted in Lourenço Marques. Contrary to previous plans, these urban plans were functional in focus (actual and proposed land use, main transport routes/new airport location, new tourist developments etc). They served as the basis for a new master plan developed by a contracted consultant (Portuguese urban planning engineer Mario de Azevedo).  

---

4 Reflecting the change in Portugal from urban planning by architect urbanists following the Beaux Arts tradition to a more pragmatic urban engineering tradition.
The Azevedo plan was prepared 1967-9 and approved 1972 – for the whole metropolitan area it covered (Figure 14). It can be seen as the first modern era urban plan for the city and was developed by an expanded team including a traffic engineer, demographer, economist, landscape architect, sociologist and a historian as well as a local team. As well as various studies of accesses, land use and zoning, the plan included proposals to upgrade the ‘caniço’ areas in the immediate ‘inner ring’ around the ‘cement city’ – i.e. the areas to the northwest of the original city area. During the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s the economy of the city grew rapidly as new foreign investment rushed in – yet the areas for physical expansion were limited. This led to a rapid growth of high rise building in the central areas of Lourenço Marques, and significant new private sector as well as state investment – fuelling a building boom which could only be partly responded to by the existing architectural community and hence a ‘hey-day’ for those architects which were established.

However, although this late colonial period of urban development was much more closely based on an improved understanding of the reality of the fast growing city, it – crucially – ignored the wider political context of the liberation wars. By the time the 1972 urban plan was published major new investments in city expansion to the northeast (liberated when the Sommerschield concession dispute was resolved), such as the vast Bairro Kock including a new railway shunting yard with its associated industrial area and new upper income housing north of the existing formal city area, were being abandoned due to the prevailing political and economic climate in Portugal. The April 1974 Carnation
Revolution led to the abrupt de-colonisation of the country and handing over of power to the coordinated liberation front FRELIMO, with limited violence, but significant exodus of the settler population. The city thus went through a period of stasis in its formal development, but concurrent peripheral development as many of its indigenous residents – often heads of households on their own - opted to bring their families in from rural areas to join them, rapidly expanding the ‘caniço’ and re-occupying areas which had recently been clear through relocation programme for the 1970s formal urban development.

Post-Independence – continued physical expansion, contraction of economic function, renewed state functions

After Independence there was an ‘inter-regnum’ period of urban development when formal sector activity largely ceased as the private sector either abandoned its operations or waited to assess the position of the new government, and the state sector was in considerable disarray with the rapid exodus of the settler community which largely populated it. While most new built investment stopped, some urban development activities were undertaken with state engagement – a flood resettlement scheme with United Nations support which eventually led to a peri-urban sites and services / self-help housing project and a separate inner ring neighbourhood upgrading project (Maxaquene/Polana Caniço). In addition there was an attempt to take over abandoned unfinished buildings by the state as a way to provide new government facilities for the expanding state sector. The increasingly socialist-oriented new government nationalised all land and rented and abandoned property in 1977 and began to re-allocate rented housing to needy families (as well as those who came to assist the new regime from overseas) in the late 1970s (Jenkins 1990). The new political orientation focused on rural development as the basis for a ‘great leap forward’ in industrial capacity – much also destined for the countryside. The state took over many abandoned construction and construction material firms as well as most banks which had financed built environment developments, and re-oriented this to support its development process. The end of the 1970s saw this clearly evidenced in a 10 year development plan (1980-1990) to overcome under-development with few state controlled resources being made available for urban areas, including the capital – whose name was now changed to Maputo, after one of the important historic chiefdoms of south of the bay.

The overall effect of this was a severe contraction in formal urban development, but on the contrary a rapid increase in informal urban development as many previous controls of population movement were lifted. The city’s population grew rapidly, replacing the settler exodus, but predominantly in the so-called ‘caniço’ areas. These rapidly expanded beyond the existing ‘inner ring’ and the stalled formal sector developments which were started in the 1970s on the (then) city periphery (see Figures 15-17). In 1980 a new city council urban planning and construction department was created, linked to the National Housing Directorate which had been implementing the UN assisted sites & services and upgrading pilot projects. This new planning unit had extremely limited means and strategically opted to focus on developing an outer ring of basic residential areas (with minimal services due to lack of state investment) to order land use in the fast growing peri-urban areas. It demarcated over 10,000 plots based on urban plans, with some basic infrastructure, and provided basic guidance for self-managed house construction to new and existing residents between 1981-86 (Jenkins 1998).
The impact on the city centre in this period was marked. The previous bustling and rapidly verticalising central business district ‘Baixa’, with its major associated entertainment and commercial infrastructure, began to ‘hollow out’ as food became channelled through state ration shops throughout the city and many businesses closed or were run down. The new reinforced state did not concentrate its activities in the downtown business area, as many of its new ministries and directorates etc were located in buildings being finished with state investment and hence spread throughout the ‘cement city’ – mostly on the Polana headland where much of the stalled investment had been directed. The major downtown market became for a time almost deserted (1983-4) as the impact of state commercial control and adverse climatic effects hit home (floods and drought alternating). This was all underpinned by an implicit anti-urban bias in government policy (see Jenkins 2006). While a certain level of civic activity was retained in these areas, this was significantly reduced (except when national rallies were held in Independence Place in front of the city council headquarters building).

In the mid 1980s the then National Housing Directorate, together with the City Council Urban Planning and Construction Department prepared a structure plan for the city, focussing on the peri-urban expansion areas predominantly, with limited attention to the central ‘cement city’. However this plan was never clearly approved, partly due to the lack of any clear legislative basis. The growing commodification of urban land (Jenkins, 1998, 2001) also undermined the effect of any such nationally supported initiative at local level. Growing corruption around urban land allocation eventually led to the closure of the city council urban development programme in the latter part of the 1980s at the precise time that the city was experiencing a renewed spurt of growth due to the civil war. By the late 1980s the country had negotiated with external donor agencies and went into a structural adjustment period – overtly focussing on reducing state roles in the economy and what was perceived as urban bias in development. This was compounded by the growing effect of civil war. Initially funded by ‘Rhodesian’ and then South African white elite governments, this spread throughout the country to affect the outskirts of the city in the late 1980s. The effect of this was twofold: the rapid increase in population fleeing insecurity in rural areas in the Southern part of the country into the city and a retraction of the expanding periphery due to military incursions – and hence an extreme densification of the peri-urban as well as the city centre. Peace negotiated in 1992 was predicated on constitutional change to a liberal economy and multi-party democracy and led to another abrupt change of fortune of the city.

---

5 The plan did include a separate associated document identifying key built heritage for conservation but this was never adequately debated or had any effect outside limited technical circles.
The recent post-Independence period - fast expanding multi-national business and cultural hub

The transition from a collapsing proto-socialist state to what some international organisations see as an exemplary liberal democracy has seen continued rapid change in the city. Despite the rigours of the effects of structural adjustment the city has continued to grow rapidly demographically and physically, and now its natural population growth has more of an effect than in-migration; despite economic development at a macro-scale, there is increased urban poverty and polarisation of socio-economic groups; and despite multi-party democracy and decentralisation of politics to two autonomous city councils for the greater Maputo area, one political party has dominated national and local politics, transforming itself seemingly smoothly from a socialist to a nationalist centrist bourgeoisie party. With the new constitution most state rental housing was sold off although land is retained in state ‘ownership’ (actually formally trusteeship using usufruct titles). The liberalised housing market and growing elite socio-economic capacity has led to a proliferation of coastal closed condominium developments and some redevelopment of the ‘cement city’ area – mainly in the sought after Polana and Sommerschield areas until recently.

Again in the late 1990s there was an attempt to develop an overview of the city in a World Bank sponsored Metropolitan Structure Plan for the newly autonomous municipal areas of Maputo and ‘sister –city’ Matola, as well as expansion areas in the surrounding Maputo Province. This, and subsequent other international agency funded attempts to address strategic physical issues at a city regional scale (such as environmental management), have however all come to nothing, despite detailed plans being produced based on reasonably exhaustive empirical studies. The main reasons have been: the lack of any adequate legislation to approve such plans; the limited technical capacity to undertake urban management that they require to be implemented; the weak fiscal base of the new city authorities; and limited political will to control rampant land speculation - at elite and lower income levels (Jenkins 2009). Most recently a new structure plan has been produced for the Maputo city council by the university and one for Matola is being developed, to a great extent re-cycling and updating the 1999 metropolitan plan. These most recent plans, however, focus predominantly on projected land use and are not based on in-depth empirical studies of city and city-region functions such as transport and investment trends. However they may serve as the basis for application of the fairly recently approved planning law and urban land use regulations to permit more orderly urban land development.

During this period the city centre ‘came back to life’ with rapid intensification of commercial and cultural activities including informal retail. Many old tourist facilities have been re-developed and new ones built. Banks have also proliferated in the ‘Baixa’ central business district, including finishing a high rise bank and office block beside the main city market which had remained unfinished since the early 1970s. Most importantly for the city centre is that this has finally moved into the reclaimed land east of the old centre, along Av 24 de Setembro. This area had remained virtually unused since its reclamation in line with the 1940s plan – within only the permanent Commercial Fairgrounds (FACIM) with some associated restaurants and recreational facilities being built in the 1960s. Although, as originally envisioned in the 1950s, the first buildings in the extended city centre were in fact state investments – such as the new Mozambican television studios and new Ministry of Finance building, these have quickly been surpassed in the late 1990s and into the new millennium with new speculative office blocks, shops, hotels, petrol stations and other services. The avenue has become something of a US-style strip development as it is based on the one main access route (which is also a major cross-city route). While many of the buildings are limited in height to under 10 stories, this is now again changing with new proposals for high rise (see Figure 18).
The new verticalisation which is taking place contemporaneously is repeating the cycle of the 1970s – due to the limited availability and access to centrally located urban land. The newest buildings are more than 20 stories and located in the central business district (old and new areas) - as well as some along the coastline. The most recent announcement is the Maputo Business Towers with a 41 storey glass tower (with 5 storey underground car park and 35 stories of 150m2 luxury apartments, the rest being office space) to be built next to the existing National Printers (a historic building from 1906) – see Figure 19. This follows a new 5 storey mall which is still not fully occupied and a series of other new private and public investments (e.g. the new national Water Directorate building).
A future city centre for all?

The city centre of Maputo is definitely once again in transition, with strong international investment in the built environment which seems strangely de-linked from the world recession. In this the balance of power between the state and the market in determining urban form has swung once again to an extreme, and the state’s presence is largely absent with virtually no planning and/or construction control. In fact the state at national level is a promoter of inward investment and facilitates this in the locality of the city, the new independent city council playing a minor role in both promotion and regulation. In this, the wider lower income population of the city, which came to occupy spaces in the central ‘Baixa’ in the proto-socialist initial post-Independence period (such as low-income residents in state rented properties that have not be bought out, informal vendors and homeless kids) are likely to be soon pressurised out. This – as in all previous manifestations of the city centre – reflects the political, social and economic realities of the context, now with quite extreme forms of socio-economic polarisation, weak local political and governance structures and elite-focussed speculative development. The ‘cement city’ once again seems to be becoming the space for the elite where the subaltern only has limited and controlled access, as in the colonial period. However, the nature of segregation is no longer racial (although never was dominantly so in Mozambique) but socio-economic – however cultural forms also have an important role in this scenario. Currently the dominant cultural form is exogenous with ‘development’ lauded as being international and architectural form following international post-modern or Southern African regional styles (e.g. the postmodern neo-venetian style much used in South Africa – see Figure 20). In the midst of this flurry of international speculative investment, the city’s history and the country’s cultural traditions are seen as of little if any value and thus standing in the way of progress – whether built heritage (historic or more recent) or other endogenous forms of cultural expression in built form. Unfortunately this bodes ill for an inclusive future Mozambican city for all.
As noted in the introduction to this paper, Xilunguine was the term that the indigenous Ronga people used to refer to the ‘city’ – the place of strangers. This referred above all to the ‘cement city’ as they early on had established places of their ‘own’ in cultural terms (within strict socio-economic and political parameters) within the co-called surrounding ‘caniço’ areas. Here, while traces of the early inter-linkages between the VaRonga clan chiefs and mercantile elites were submerged in the whole colonial and later proto-socialist period – they have re-emerged in the de facto way that the majority now get access to peri-urban land from the ‘nativos’ or those with traditional land rights in the fast expanding peripheries of city – and this link between modernity and tradition is now sanctioned by the state in various ways. However the relatively short period in which the majority of the city’s residents would have clearly understood the ‘cement city’ - and especially the downtown central ‘Baixa’ area - to be inclusive of them in the immediate post-Independence period, despite all its urban deterioration, seems now to be fast vanishing. The city centre of Maputo thus seems doomed to return to be a new Xilunguine in the light of weak political will and local forms of governance, dominated by international speculative funding and limited cultural valorisation of the endogenous. The opportunity to guide exogenous forces to assist create a more endogenous form of urban development (evolving from existing ‘indigenous’ roots as most processes of adaptation do6) thus seems unlikely in terms of the built environment in this context – whether for the centre of the peri-urban areas.

The main focus of this paper with its historical analysis of changing urban form set within an new international political economy analysis is that the built environment largely reflects the dominant political and economic realities of each period. However within these structural parameters there is always room for manoeuvre and space for social and cultural agency. What is striking about Maputo’s city centre is not the effect of the wider international political economy on the changing built

---

6 It is important to avoid the closed forms of definition of ‘indigenous’ (‘originating naturally’) – which in reality reflects continual and evolving adaptations to ‘tradition’ – through a focus on the more open ‘endogenous’ (‘growing from within’).
environment, but the seeming lack of interest to filter this and adapt this through local cultural agency. Thus, despite the national university having trained architects/planners/urban designers for about a decade and a half, there is limited impact by these built environment professionals in reflecting on what sort of city is emerging in the ‘cidade cimento’ (especially the CBD) and the fast expanding peri-urban areas. The university itself has undertaken some important studies (both with its own limited resources and in partnership with other researchers), but has limited influence on any policy in terms of urban development. This may be partly due to weak organisational professional structures, but also the competitive architectural environment. It is also probably a legacy of the limited focus on the wider built environment in terms of urban planning in the curriculum. However this growing body of professionals is increasingly engaging with urban development issues and can have an influence. Independently other cultural actors can reflect on the form of city emerging and highlight this in more proactive ways. To date there is a string tradition of popular theatre with social critique, but this has not permeated other cultural forms of expression. In parallel there could be much more nuanced treatment of urban issues in the media, especially newspapers. Agency matters – while Mozambique as all countries needs to operate within quite limited political and economic options, what form of city is created – and more importantly – how urban spaces are used and accessed – depends more on agency than structure. Professionals in the built environment can play an important role in stimulating wider discussion of this in Maputo.

References


Jenkins, P (1998) National and international shelter policy initiatives in Mozambique: housing the urban poor at the periphery, PhD thesis School of Planning & Housing, Edinburgh College of Art / Heriot-Watt University

Jenkins, P (1999) “Maputo city: the historical roots of under-development and the consequences in urban form”, Edinburgh College of Art/Heriot-Watt University, School of Planning & Housing, Research Paper No. 71


Jenkins, P (2001) “Emerging land markets for housing in Mozambique: the impact on the poor and alternatives to improve land access and urban development - an action research project in peri-urban Maputo”, Edinburgh College of Art/Heriot-Watt University, School of Planning & Housing, Research Paper No. 75, 2001


Jenkins, P (2009a) “African cities: Competing claims on urban land”, chapter in African Cities: Competing Claims on Urban Spaces, Nugent & Locatelli (eds), Brill: Leiden

Jenkins, P (2009 forthcoming) “Lusophone Africa: Maputo and Luanda”, chapter in Capital Cities in Africa South of the Sahara, Therborn & Bekker (eds), Human Science Research Council (S Africa) and CODESRIA (Senegal)


Mendes, M C (1985) “Maputo antes da Independência: geografia de uma cidade colonial”, Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical: Lisboa