

African City: towards a new paradigm – “chameleonic” urbanism for hybrid cities

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Abstract:

African cities demands growing net articulation between their formal centre and vast informal polymorphic suburban housing areas. A new urban paradigm should be proclaiming: in it are formulate proposals that aim to consolidate an improved adapted adjustment between regular patterns (attached to macro scale planning) and plural configurations of self organized city, based on micro stratagems developed by indigent citizens on their everyday life. This new urban paradigm relays on nature and collective/public spaces as major elements to reassemble fragmented African urban spaces: [re]developing wide [re]distribute social services, public equipments and civic infrastructures in the extension of African City – urban progress articulated with improvement of living human conditions, combining both with overall sustainability. The new paradigm point out to flexible and regenerative morphologies on urban space, sensible and capable to adapt to multicontexts – “chameleonic” urbanism bases itself on multiple and mixed visions of micro units inherent to African City, proposing derivate forms from themselves.

Keywords: African City; Formal and informal; Prolific forms; New paradigm; “Chameleonic” urbanism; Principles with open forms; Hybrid cities.

The African City forces the reconceptualization of common formal and quite static strategies close to regular and tight urbanism; because it manifests a strong developmental and/or survival instinct (Koolhaas define it as *real time solutions for real time problems*). Therefore, it’s urgent to understand it (socially, culturally, environmentally, economically, territorially, etc.), respective current identities and [re]sources in order to anticipate the sort of combinations and variations – endogenous or exogenous – that might occur on it urban space, merging linear geometries with complex ones trough a transformational and incremental methodology which narrows the gap between arbitrary and indiscriminate morphologies (with high levels of variability) and regular urban tissue. In this sense, it’s necessary to reveal African urban characteristics and qualities, codified in to subelements, which admits affinity with distinct processes of urban transformation: between formal and informal, colonial and post-colonial, globalization and local conditions, resources, technologies and environmental requests – making them interconnected and interact.

Actions like addition, affixation, conversion, modification, permutation, repetition, overlapping, substitution, subtraction, compose a renewal mix cognitive hypertext which expresses diverse types of African urban renovation. “Chameleonic” urbanism regards derivative morphological components which [re]create urban qualities friendly to already existing signification and its prolific forms, admitting city organization supported by a series of contrast sequences. This kind of urbanism faces cities in terms of its inhabitant’s selfvolition, presenting malleable and adaptive responses to their questions on different parts of the African urban space, stepping away from abstract and alien schemes which ignore its realities and specifications. This paper emphasise the need to think about urban principles with open forms that absorb the irregular, the unpredictable, the apparent disorder, the spontaneous innovation by *in situ* creative imitating urban actions.

Introduction

The African City is a set of meanings which conditioned the process of its urban transformation. They are practices that require the perception of the diverse realities here operated, as well as the differences between

them, crossing formal and informal (making them inner-actors). For many African cities centres it is important the diagnostic of the potential transformation that can be found in their neighbourhoods, throughout solutions and socio-urban innovations there conducted (Raposo and Salvador, 2008). It will be through the examining of the energies and the capacities involved in the construction of the housing unit, place of symbolic investment choice, that one can identify the mutations that better reflect historical changes, social innovation, cultural cross and technological adaptations (Salvador, 2004). The developments on this issue reveal the appearance of new social and ideological cartographies despite of hegemonic visions, which observe how it has been creating a network of critical and creative resistance based on cultural, plural and multifaceted crossings of alternative urban [micro]experiences. They integrate a range of informal spaces and marginal experiences as components of a comprehensive urban living, often ignored, stigmatized, segmented or arranged in thematic enclaves. What is advocated within this paper is an overview of the African City, paying special attention to its urban specifications and qualities and, between the macro and micro scales, linking them together.

African City: Present Urban Condition – Complexity and Difference

African City suffered the effects of a vigorous process of accelerated urbanization that produced many of its unfolding urban fabric, transforming its typologies, urban forms and their inherent limitations – it reveals a seemingly limitless expansion of the urban area. This process escapes to any simplistic notion of territoriality, in that it extends its structural [sub]systems, capturing continuously the surrounding space, creating and modifying [sub]orders which embody themselves in urban topographies fragmented, but interconnected. It assumes multiple levels of [re]reading, various experiences and complex social layers that do not fall into sectarian urban proposals.

Its current condition (in transition, imprecise) seems in socially fragmented and apparently uncoordinated representations, which make clear the conflict for and against difference and plurality. Attempts to enshrine the African City totally planned proved to be sterile: the future life of their centres is intimately related to their own outskirts – that will no longer be outskirts. Their complex urban spaces go beyond the geographical, urban or demographic boundaries, given that they propose many different ways of acting or express themselves, which exceed predetermined planned limits. It is in the suburbs that more significant urban transformations occur. As Salvador (2004) refers, due to explosive growth, that metamorphosis was (mostly) carried out in a spontaneous way, largely outside of the political and administrative control. With the large population flows from rural areas, the suburbs of most major African cities have become a huge yard. The ingenious and creative alternative micro-systems found there to address the urgency of living are relevant elements of analysis, whose knowledge is essential in addressing the major urban problems, but also in the evaluation of the transformation possibilities and future upgrading of their urban spaces.

The extensive growth and the expansion of their administrative boundaries reflect changes in form and lifestyle of the citizens, which occurred in a short time, contributing to change its present "urban condition" (construction of experiences and territories). The linear urban text, sequential, structured, that expressed many of the urban narratives of colonial origin, became a hypertext (structure open to multiple meanings). It is not devoid of rules, structure or intelligibility. Simply, it increases the acquaintances, sequences and possible links. Many African inhabitants are located in emerging urban areas, seeking answers that the geometric city and corresponding centres, do not provide in terms of price and functionality or of availability of land. The hypertext results from the diversity: of living, of producing, of distributing and consuming, and from the contradictory reasons that inform the behaviour of social actors.

They represent an intricate territorial situation in which individual and complex microstructures of soil occupation are embedded. It experienced a profound transformation in its economic base, physical structure and social composition that widespread the phenomena of undergrowth of urban qualities. Even so, this should be converted into a development factor by redefining relationships between individual, place, society and territory/urban landscape. Nevertheless, the dichotomy between political and technical limitations of the strategies of urban management (macro-scale) and the real and accelerated regional dynamics that there occur (of micro origin) is one of the major constraints in the planning of the African City.

The reticule configuration of African City centres enables linear and sequential reads of its morphological structural elements, staggered by thematic areas: are currently proliferating diverse forms of soil occupation, overlapping without any precise limits – African City express unpredictability, difference,

uncertainty, ideological and financial problems, despotism, liberalization of markets, alignment of interests, the crisis of values in the community, etc. It became so extensive and diverse that no longer is more likely to address as a linear unit. It overcomes the paradigm of duality: it is more than a diptych – it is now an urban mosaic with multiple parts of complex geometries. It reflects the dichotomy between formal versus informal city, between cities versus countryside, between the urban versus the rural. These realities tend to fade, crossing themselves, overlaying themselves, juxtaposing many others that in it have been winning form and expression. The African City won a plural sense that must be strengthened.

African City – sometimes apparently chaotic and incomprehensible – is neither explained by the old urban order, nor by unique principles of rationality and functionality. Its complexity can not be solved only through interventions in the city centres of colonial origin, or with rules that emerge from this, or even through urban projects considered exceptional, but punctual. It will be even truer the more it covered the scale of the urbanization of its vast territory, which accumulates disorders, but in which are also answers to the new ways of inhabiting the city, linking the centres and peripheries (interacting their urban qualities). It expresses the joint action of different social sectors, political and economic, that in it live, some acting through formal channels of power, others expressing themselves informally, responding to constraints.

It embodies itself in urban spaces open to the involvement of its different parts, in which it is necessary to reinterpret and restructure the texture of its standards and fragments: exposing the micro-sections and their strategies of self-organization that can be diagnose in the African City sub-morphologies – considering their mechanisms of action in order to be integrated and supported in a comprehensive process of rehabilitation that does not exclude anyone. The built (the texture and its patterns and typologies) rarely corresponds to only arbitrary settings: each built form brings and induces meanings to the African City – difficultly is neutral or absolutely independent related to it. Their contents and significance are in constant creative [re]construction through the action of everyday life. Recognizing its uniqueness, considering it as dynamic and flexible, it is time to consolidate urban proposals that allow its transformation to turn African City more liveable and caring, transposing cultural, racial, socioeconomic, political and ideological discriminations.

The often referred disease of the African City degenerated in the atrophy of the structural relationship between project (first instance) and form (as a consequence), exacerbating the weakness of links between established types, programs and social ways reflected in the fragmentation and in the not calculated hazard, a basis of new microforms to use and create space with a high creative potential, induced by the imagination and productive need (survive) – and the own spontaneity of subjectivity which are shaped parts of its urban spaces. From house to house renovated patterns and types of urban tissues of the African City are weaving. The ability to overcome adversity and uncertainty, turning "non places" (Salvador, 2004) in areas of great vitality, create new types of construction by adopting various technologies are different answers to how we can design the transformation of the African urban space (that using only the planning, methods and programs uncritically imported seem insurmountable). African City requires constant [re]framing of the shares in its urban mosaic: a permanent [micro]restoration is not compatible with the dual logic maintenance – reducing the complexity and diversity of its current urban condition.

The coexistence of mutants scenarios, in which complexity and difference are two of the major characteristics, need to be understood as a dynamic resource for the enrichment of the future life of the African City Centre – allowing diversity of urban life and contradictory and multifaceted actions, highlighting the promotion of participatory democracy and consolidating the African City into various, hybrids and fluids territories. It will be important to focus on absent [micro]memories, not explicit, invisible, but which are felt in the ways of ownership and use of the African City urban spaces, marking it with dissident and informal words. Open processes are required in new approaches to the understanding and interpretation of the multiple dynamics that interact in it: "(...) *cities are not constructible or planable machines in the sense of the industrial age (...)*" [op. cit. Gleiniger e Vrachliotis (ed.), 2008:91]. The macro-practises strictly rationalist/functionalist, targeting at the monitoring of compliances, are poorly adapted to the uncertainty of the urban spaces of the African City, in that it is difficult to establish a supra-dialogue for its hypertext.

African City: Plural and Polymorphic Urban Mosaic– Perspectives for a New Paradigm

The planning and land management have often been overtaken by the urban non-infrastructured production, not planned and spontaneous. For example: the environmental reserves for planting trees or for economic

and social facilities, green spaces, infrastructures, non-building areas, marshes, floodplains or slopes, were occupied by the growing population that was accessing the African City, seeking for a shelter, security, employment, better living conditions, etc. The distribution of city growth is not uniform – the percentage of people living in designated "peripheral" areas in relation to those living in such "centres" of the African City is rising. It grew the number of degraded areas. The referenced "periurban space" has become more fragile due to the lack of tools for planning the land use, implementation and monitoring.

The bulk of the city came to reside in areas without the adequate access to basic infrastructures and social equipments, living in precarious housing units, without security of land tenure. It is needed a plural and inter-sectarian vision in the long term, identifying trends and opportunities, formulating prior objectives and concentrating limited resources on critical issues, to encourage dialogue and debate, manages the Community commitment to the actions to be taken, also strengthening the social fabric. The proclaimed "good city form" was diluted into a hybrid and solvent composition, in which the contours of the urban fabric of the African City as readable artefact, identity, clear in its tracks – marking the identification on its configuration, limits and centre – were replaced by the vagueness of its urban spaces.

Being predictable that the African City becomes a continuous extension of occupied landscape, I refer to Gausa that says that

“(…) la forma cristalina de la ciudad primitiva tiende progresivamente a disolverse, así en un abanico heterogéneo de salpicaduras y vacíos. La música armónica de una ciudad completa, refigurada, equilibrada, cede pues ante la evidencia de una compleja partitura arrítmica con – quizás – eventuales fragmentos melódicos, pero generalmente con un ‘no-ritmo’ sincopado y atonal de puntos y contrapuntos que harían del espacio urbano contemporáneo un cuerpo definitivamente inacabado y mutable en el tiempo (...)” (2007)

between dichotomy pairs (colonial/post-colonial; centre/periphery; formal/informal; regular/irregular; order/disorder; predictable/unpredictable; ordered/spontaneous; macro/micro; global/local; linear geometries/complex geometries). It will be the root of the condition of uncertainty and transition that marks the African City and that consubstantiate it as a plural and polymorphic urban mosaic.

The concern for trying to understand internal processes that occur in gradually heterogeneous realities leads to the overcome of traditional planning limitations, unable to articulate in the most appropriate manner

“organismos en constante evolución entrópica. En efecto, del mismo modo que resulta inviable seguir aceptando el ‘caos fascinante’ de la ciudad como alibi del abandono a un proceso definitivamente aleatorio e incontrolable destinado a ocupar el territorio de modo ilimitado, también lo es pretender circunscribir los procesos a planificaciones cerradas – endógenas – limitadas a situaciones de coyuntura, apenas justificables desde el punto de vista de la lógica administrativa. Del mismo modo que el propio sistema territorial – el organismo global – acaba remitiendo a operaciones complejas de interacción en su seno, su proceso de renovación debería remitir a procesos interrelacionales, si no del todo coherentes sí intencionados”(ibid., 2007),

capable of boosting the progressive development of African urban spaces, impregnating them with urban qualities usually strictly subject to the designated "centres" (minimum levels of basic housing, provision of urban services and equipments, diverse infrastructures, work, culture, etc.).

The mosaic city is rooted in the multiplicity of land that, overlapping, colliding, hybridized, sets synthetic landscapes that respond to the transitional nature of their urban communities. Not to recognize the unstable balance between rationality and sensibility, between conscious desire and unconscious expression, between desired inter-subjectivity and irreducible subjectivity, between collective action and individual development (Baptista, 2007) is to contribute to the further disruption of the aspects of African urban spaces. There is the necessity for broad platforms of intersectional dialogue and of different scales, fostering conditions for the civic participation and development in the different moments along the urban process. To reconfigure its fractures involve multidimensional perspective structured on new programs and in a connected substance (nature/landscape and space and collective/public structures) that addresses the multiple facets that are revealed in its morphology. For this we need the strengthening of solutions more than linear, catalyst and shaped of the existing pieces, exploring contemporary ways of life found in its urban landscape.

The African urban spaces require a more interventionist approach, in which the program is not institutionalized, that is, it is not presented as a given fact in the beginning, implying the conventionality of the use and language. The programmatic exploration has not to answer simply to the needs of the present, but to enhance radically the expectations of the future. In its tense and nebulous morphology, in its plural and complex urban forms, it is difficult to identify and establish points of contact in its multiple realities in order to reconfigure the unity in the urban diversity. Similarly to the ecological strategy of the three R's to sustainability and urban regeneration – Reduce, Reuse and Recycle – it will also make sense the reformulation of the assumptions (recycled) to the African City:

- Re-infrastructure – physical and basic, acting (in a transversal way) at the processes of regeneration and redevelopment of the urban fabric level;
- Regeneration – to propose to the parts that remain as urban units, in a cellular manner adjusted, socially and culturally structured and supported, with own dynamics, but that are vulnerable in their physical, environmental and sustainability dimensions;
- Conversion – to propose to the parts which are generally inadequate and alienated in their distinct and complementary parts (urban, social, cultural, environmental, and economic).

It will then be necessary to look progressively to an increasing network articulation of additional centralities/nucleus between central urban areas and designated "suburbs" to develop. It can be achieved by interconnecting the complexity of the urban tissue, delimiting minimum units in order and meaning, identifying indivisible sections of urban areas (form), and those that are not divisible (meaning). The aim is to express regular and/or irregular properties from the parts of the urban polymorphic mosaic and its combinations and variants (endogenous or exogenous) which are established between them. The diagnosis should be build on the decomposition of the forms of the African City, identifying symptoms of emptying of its significance and recognition, territorial inadaptability, the inadequate to available resources, operational redundancies, among others.

The characteristics of the African City may also be encoded in subunits properties, subjected to morphological relational principles, in order to admit affinities with different processes of urban transformation through the adoption of approaches that describe and comment both the constituents of the properties of urban spaces, and the types of morphological processes (simple or complex) that change, or have changed, the meanings and categories of the urban forms (at the process, plant and disposal levels). Cognitive links are set up on urban measures of addition, display, composition, modification, permutation, repetition, overlapping, substitution and subtraction. The African urban spaces may consolidate its adjustment to diverse forms and meanings as its proper principles, in which the combined disposition of its constituents allows different structural relationships between them. It will be important to propose flexible and regenerative morphologies to the African City, sensitive and adapted to the diversity of their contexts (understood in the broad sense of the term: social, environmental, economic, territorial, etc.). The new paradigm will look to carry out modifications on the urban spaces through multiple and crossed readings of their internal micro-units, suggesting forms derived from them. This transformational methodology addresses the morphologically arbitrary and indiscriminate, with high degrees of variability, looking for possible forms in the urban idiosyncrasies but still inexistent.

It involves a descriptive and relational capability that makes possible the distinction between the existing forms and the possible ones. The re-qualification of the African City should observe the urban [ir]regularities in its different aspects, distinguishing the structural of the complement, in order to [re]define morphological components that allow to [re]create the urban area linked to the existing forms and meanings in its subunits. This type of urban morphology – derivative, which acts on the process of urban derivational way – allows the organization of the city in sequences of contrasts, crossing specificities and making them properties of the urban structures. The non-ordering characteristic of parts of the African urban spaces, despite their shortcomings and weak physical infrastructure usually diagnosed in them, makes it receptive and willing to adapt to [sub]morphologies with larger environmental concerns and that explore the condition of complexity, in which continuously occur overlapping and juxtapositions of patterns and typologies. They must intersect in or move to more unexpected morphological change, but adaptive, sustained in the flexibility and flowing in more organic and hybrid urban settings – the result is a city less formal than the colonial one, more malleable, in transition, a reflection of a society that should seek (itself) alternative ways to the urban practical in the African City.

African City: “Chameleon” Urban Type – Open Systems for Hybrid Urban Spaces

Part of the challenge for the African City is to find another process in its urban structure that accommodates in its process the dynamic patterns of texture, where

“roles and functions can vary within short spaces of times (...). Public spaces and buildings become multi-functional, used differently at different times. Streets become ‘theatres of activity’ (...). The emphasis will be on the importance of connectivity, choice, and a framework that encourages movement, activity and pulse (...). The flexible framework will therefore be key to this urban design future. It will enable development to respond to uncertainty (...). Such adaptability will also see the emergence of new typologies and spatial components to inhabit the framework” (op. cit. Malcolm and Rowland, 2006:186).

This basic condition does not reject the urban principles of more standard bias. It implies that it is articulated in a more integrated and systemic process, involving issues such as un-multiplied interconnectivity, individual action, supply of adaptable spaces to receive temporary uses, volatile and transient.

It will be needed to enhance the performance on the continuous rise of illegal and informal interstices, linking them with the centres of the African City, and impregnating them with social meanings, sustained in a network of references and collective services – making it not only more liveable, but also ecological and urbanely more sustainable. It will imply the proposed and consolidation of complementary centralities in their urban spaces, formed in organic [re]infrastructured networks, regenerated (or converted) through alternative urban processes in order to establish more flexible structures for communities that are wanted strong and productive, sharing healthy urban environments. They are specific interventions, limited (chirurgical) and balanced, in a small-scale, if necessary with few resources, of commitment, using upgrade operations, not only in the fitting of urban area, but also in the management and use of financial and energetic resources available. This is an approach of complement, of support, seeking a higher quality of urban life and enhancement of basic infrastructures and equipments that make possible small urban spaces environmentally more appropriate, seeking at the sustainability of the processes of progressive urbanization of the African City – furnishing the weaknesses found, as well as the perpetuation of urban strategies gradually disqualified, between the segregating elitism and the unsupported clandestine.

Looking for morphologies to adapt to the African urban spaces means to reject totalizing and airtight forms. Guidelines will have to be consolidated for urban settings supported on the standards-based open to interaction: combining them together in order to promote its recognition, its assimilation and actual application *in situ*. For fringe with urban properties more feeble (resulting from the physical and cultural separation of the city's infrastructure and provisioned with urban services), it must substantiate, as already mentioned, the integrated guidelines, participative, systemic and included that perspective the rehabilitation of areas taken as “suburbanized”.

Strategies that can even be simple but enriched by the public participation, addressing the community and its groups, the African City and its ways and places, the environment, their centres and their resources, and all the interaction that is down in their midst. Increasingly it requires an open and inclusive political and administrative position in relation to the management of urban areas by creating the capacity for cooperation and negotiation with the residents and their representatives, formal and informal. The re-qualification should be established with the residents and not *a priori*. It is commonly marked the sense of order and peaceful coexistence that most people maintain in the face to the paucity of institutional instruments of social control and information. This can only be understood considering the existence of traditional microstructures where family ties and the hierarchical relationships retain their social relevance, and the authority so-called “informal”, which embodies these traditions, is accepted as a form of social integration of the family and the individual.

“Chameleonic”¹ principles are urgent, i.e. changeable and flexible to adapt – with flexibility – its urban operation and behaviour to the specific features of the African City (with identity, or meaning, fixed or in changing). They are principles that promote an urban spin, that do not want to “jump” in the radical

¹ The chameleon is, mostly, from the island of Madagascar and the generality of the African continent. It is a reptile known to change its colour to adapt to an environment or a situation.

emptiness, opting instead for a “below track”, connected with the reality, their problems/weaknesses and emergent urban potentialities.

The "path" to the socio-physical consolidation, economical-productive and energy-environment (and sustainable) of the African City will be in the encouraging of the development linked to the development of its human dimension. Given the condition of transience of the African City, the re-qualification may be organized into relational methodologies of the relational paradigm (open systems, free forms, absorption of which is “outside”, exterior): absorbing the irregular, the unpredictable, the apparent disorder, the spontaneous innovation through creative imitators actions – add to the “digestion” of the new (created by others) a vision of itself (Lemaire, 1997). A process whose body/torso is as common as a collective manageable with little hierarchy and stratification, organized in a very flexible and adaptable way – like a chameleon. The internal organization of this type of proposal should be constantly evolving in order to be able to adjust the transition strain felt in the African City: chameleon principles that metamorphosis themselves in order to better fit their urban spaces, to better diagnose the weaknesses, and in them to learn to their therapy – regenerative urbanism.

They will be necessary operational [sub]structures able to acquire knowledge *in situ*, not only of the physical characteristics of degraded areas, but also of the social composition and their internal dynamics of the group and real organic of local authorities. The disturbing elements of stability that may affect the residents and the history of transformation of the African City, and the system of values with special meaning for different social groups, are other dimensions to be considered. It is required to understand the relevance of relations between neighbourhoods (informal and formal), its correct insertion into the network of urban infrastructures and their needs for services and social facilities.

The exclusive option for the system of straight streets in orthogonal grid, with land divided into regular rectangular stands as the only solution to the urban structured has shortcomings in most cases, it led to the socio-spatial alienation of citizens. This type of action, which results in the “delete” from the territory of everything that a particular spatial relationship means to be replaced by another which is forced, does not consider the sub-relations established and despises the micro-design that reflects commitments, negotiations and compromise. They will be useful, however, receptive measures and a flexible and open vision, materializing *in situ* real operations to serve as a reference to alternative methods to current forms of "redevelopment".

This proposition calls for open systems,

“(…) which remain in a state of continuous exchange (...). In such system’s elements at the micro level can collectively generate patterns and structures at the macro level, which can, in turn be traced back to the behaviour of the individual elements. Chaos and order, then, organize themselves through these interactions between the micro and macro levels of a complex system, and are governed by feedback loops (...). In such cases, we refer to the ‘self-organization of chaos and order in open complex dynamic systems’ (...). Self-organization is linked to the phase changes of complex and dynamic systems, leading to the genesis of increasingly complex structures. The genesis of a structure that can be traced back to the self-organization of a complex system is also referred to as ‘emergence’ (...). With a view to cultural history, it seems promising to conceptualize the development of human societies as dynamic and complex systems (...)” [op. cit. Gleiniger e Vrachliotis (ed.), 2008:93].

In this sense, I refer to Gausa to paraphrase him:

“(…) hoy se requieren nuevos dispositivos – sistemas a gran escala – capaces de abordar la propia dimensión casual y, al mismo tiempo, infraestructural de la ciudad y del territorio. El estudio científico de los sistemas dinámicos conduce (...) análisis de procesos complejos – caóticos – caracterizados por el denominado factor ‘in’: alto grado de indeterminación, de inestabilidad, de incoherencia, de infinitud, es decir de informalidad. Son sistemas que, no obstante, permiten adivinar cierta idea de orden interno, un código genético impulsor, asociable a diagramas o trayectorias más o menos complicados, que dibujan – generalmente estructuras rizomáticas, fractales, caracterizadas por la auto-organización matricial, el entrelazamiento, la secuencialidad y discontinuidad, la evolución discontinua, la ausencia de escala, el

desarrollo orgánico más que mecánico y, sobre todo, la importancia de la seriación 'vacío-lleño'. Emerge, entonces, la fuerza del espacio 'en negativo', no tanto como resto – o reserva residual 'entre cosas' sino como engranaje estructural. Y, en el marco de las actuales estructuras urbanas, el paisaje – el vacío – aparece entonces como un 'subsistema', tanto o más importante que el urbano – una infraestructura, a su vez (...).(2007)

The structuring "emptiness" (with the landscape/nature as the linking matter) of multi-element (embodied in both horizontal and vertical spaces), integrates and articulates many urban dimensions of the African City.

Conclusions

The condition of uncertainty (tragedy and hope of the future life of the African City Centre) implies a questioning of beliefs and habits: a systematic correction of perceptions and patterns of action – extending the field of vision and the review of models of urban growth in the context of questions concerning the validity of political, social, economic, cultural and environmental. Demonstrating that, as Virilio (2000:549) says, "(...) *the crises of the grand narrative and the rise of micro-narratives are ultimately the crises of the 'grand' as well as the 'little (...)*", I end up now referring that the African City is supported by numerous connections, with retractions and dilations, with extensions and clippings, of open development, not contrasting landscape/rural and urban spaces, but making them live together in systems in transition, mixed zones, associations between ambiguous situations and linked developments, creating places and between-posts (filled and empty), at different scales (Gausa, 2007). It is possible to suggest points of inflection, decisive moments that reflect and express tension and destabilizing signals which require taking into account the need to change course, because of complexity and difference, towards a new paradigm. One of its lines of development may be the focus of models that, through the experimentation *in situ*, will self-organize the urban space, shaping themselves to predetermined rules and/or the set, generating proposals apparently uncoordinated but where there are "hidden" rules implied. This interaction of rules balancing several factors and behaviours is common in biological systems, generating and adapting to standards and to [ir]regularise – for example, their own principles such as "chameleon" – and to evolve to adaptive morphological changes and flexibly adaptable, forecasting hybrid urban spaces.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank to the co-tutor of my doctoral thesis, Professor Architect Isabel Simões Raposo (Faculty of Architecture – Lisbon Technical University), all the enthusiasm, support and the conversations we have had and the full knowledge that she send on to me.

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