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## Wartime residential rural landscapes *the Guinea-Bissau case during the colonial/liberation war with the Portuguese (1963–1974)*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to study the military housing campaigns carried out in the last 14 years of Portuguese colonialism (1961–1975), through archival and documentary treatment, cartography, historical and architectural description. Critical assessment and architectural analysis of the settlements and villages promoted in a warfare context allows an assessment of how large-scale housing programs are still present in the built and social landscapes of formerly colonized countries. Some of the data recollected suggests that, in Guinea, about 100 military resettlements were built; in Angola, only in the Lunda region, 730 villages were intervened; and in Mozambique the new settlements caused the displacement of one million peasants. The article will focus on the Guinea case by introducing what is described here as ‘the architects’ feebleness’, debating the pragmatism of the military in opposition to the idealism of the architects.

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## Prologue

*What was the role of Architecture in supporting colonialism in war scenarios?* Starting from the scarce bibliography that questions Architecture, Colonialism and War, the paper aims to present a first look at the production of housing during the colonial/liberation war in the former Portuguese Continental Africa territories (1961–1974), Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique, by the military forces and their liaison with the Colonial Public Works (CPW) departments, crossing archive data, architectural achievements and colonial policies. It is part of a broader research that, at a first level, intends to establish a direct relationship between housing and colonial dominance, through architecture and territorial planning, as a counterinsurgency measure; and on a second one, aims to distinguish the military approach supported by an idea of pragmatism from the more idealistic values identified with architects and engineers. The paper itself reinforces the Housing process, reached during armed conflicts, as a control mechanism based on Architecture and Urbanism, giving also expression to the interaction between Violence and Colonialism.

In the international realm, the literature that crosses ‘architecture and domesticity’, ‘architecture and war’, or ‘architecture, war and colonialism’ is still scarce. The first line of research was opened by Beatriz Colomina (2006), with *Domesticity at War*. The author showed that modern architecture was spread as a *way of life* after World War II, through the migration of an important group of artists and architects who would cross the Atlantic, evading the European conflict. More specifically, Colomina exposed how the war industry had then been reconverted to serve the *building boom* in North America that followed during the 1950s.

The first study to shed light on the existence of a ‘war’s architecture’, however, dealt with an earlier chronological timeframe, covering the interval between 1939 and 1945. This is the book-catalogue

*Architecture en Uniform. Projeter et construire pour la Seconde Guerre mondiale* published by Jean-Louis Cohen (2011) as part of the exhibition displayed at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), Montreal.<sup>1</sup> Cohen had the merit of breaking with the State-of-the-Art, until then mainly focused on the reconstruction efforts of the European countries involved in the war, by attending specific architectural programs and functions related to the war effort such as housing, building technologies, camouflage procedures, bunkers, among others (Cohen, 2011).

Later on, Samia Henni (2017) was the first architecture historian to cross the three topics: Architecture, Colonialism and War, by addressing the Algerian war of Independence (1954–1962). Among the different strategies used in warfare, Henni highlights the processes of regrouping populations which mainly sought mobility control. The construction of these strategic villages—already tested by the French military in Indochina in *Agrovilles* or ‘protected villages’—was also considered as a way to ‘pacify’ local communities. In the chapter ‘From permanent Camps to Villages’, Henni starts from the description of the violent reaction in France to the existence of *camps de regroupement* to explain the process of their transformation into consolidated ‘villages’ and suburban neighbourhoods, as a propaganda response. The process would obey a structured organization, with objectives and hierarchy in the decision chain, aiming at the ‘post-war’ normalization, understood by the authorities as a ‘period of pacification’. Significantly, the terminology used would be the object of debate in order to remove its negative charge, equating four possibilities: *nouveaux villages*; *nouveaux hameaux*, *nouveaux quartiers*, *groupes d’abris provisoires* (Henni, 2017, pp. 179–204). The *Mille Village* concept, in particular, was developed within the framework of building new villages through ‘evolutionary’ dynamics that would guarantee their permanence and resilience in the future. The objective was to instill in the Algerian populations the idea that the colonial government was acting on the level of territorial planning and not on a strictly military vision (Henni, 2017, p. 118). Design guidelines were produced to assist its application in the field.

The Algerian case is an essential key to understanding the Portuguese context, especially since it was systematically studied by the Portuguese military on the eve of the liberation war outburst in Angola. In 1959, a mission of six Portuguese military included internships in France and visits to Algerian cities and villages, such as Algiers, Oran, Colomb-Béchar, Laghaout, Gardaia, Bone, Constantine, Biskra or Tougourt (Figure 1). Anticipating the war in Africa, the mission brought the Portuguese military forces into contact with the insurgency and guerrilla tactics deployed by the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) and the counterinsurgency methods used by the French army to prevent its progression. The army already proposed the ‘intimate contact with the populations’ (Carreira & Frazão, 1959)<sup>2</sup> as a way to reinforce the psychological action, that would inform the activities and ideological stances of the main military commanders in the three scenarios of the Portuguese colonial war in Africa: António Spínola (1910–1996) in former Portuguese Guinea (Spínola, 1970), Francisco da Costa Gomes (1914–2001) in Angola and Kaulza de Arriaga (1915–2004) in Mozambique (Arriaga, 1988).

## **Fundamentals**

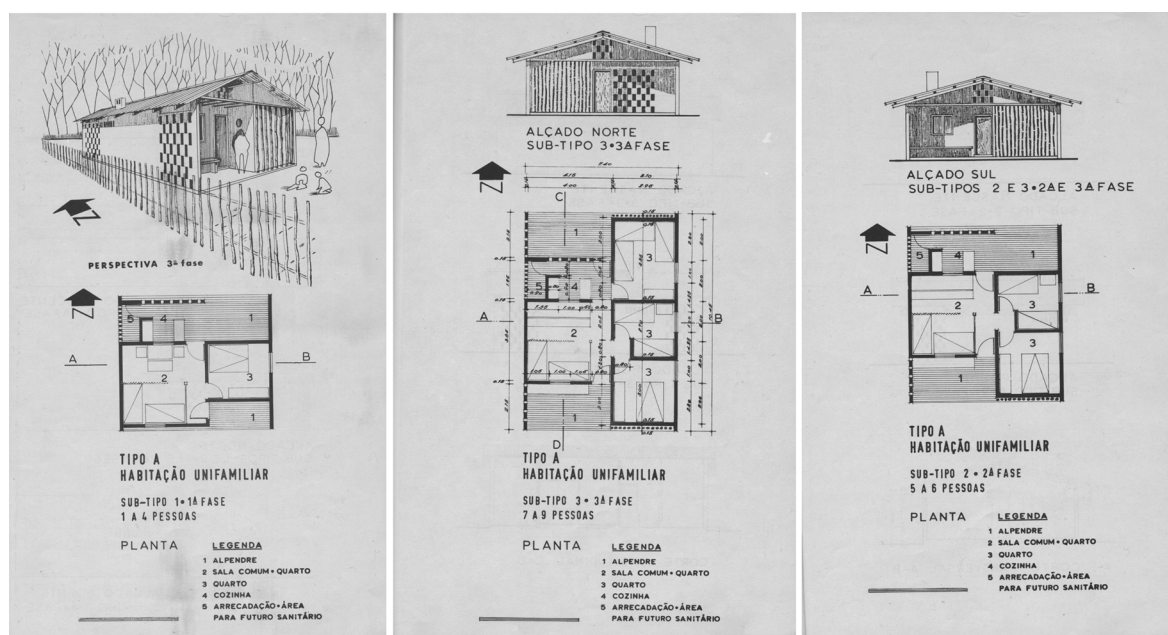
In the Portuguese milieu, the Social Sciences, mainly in the field of Social History, are now leading the way in resettlement-related studies that have followed the logic of massive population displacement, particularly since 2015. Interviewed about the book *Colonial politics in time of revolt...* (Curto et al., 2016), released the following year, the Portuguese historian Diogo Ramada would agree in highlighting the role of the ‘military part’ confirming that it would be ‘above all as the driving force of the supposed reformist ideas that needed a dose of violence to be put into practice’ (Curto, 2016). Still in 2017, jointly with Pinto da Cruz, they portrayed the formation of *regedorias* through the fieldwork of the architect Mário Santos Costa, in 1963, in Angola at the service of the Junta Provincial de Povoamento (Provincial Colonization Board of Angola), outlining a significant approach to the process (Cruz & Curto, 2017).<sup>3</sup> Using the case study of the rural reordering of the Viana *regedoria* (now part of the Luanda metropolitan area), the article established important concepts for following research, such as the distinction between *reordering* and *regrouping* (Cruz & Curto, 2017, p. 207). The *regedorias* regime,



**Figure 1.** [Carreira & Frazão, 1959], Missão à Argélia [Report], CEM [Lisbon: 20/03/1959], [cover]. Source: Arquivo Histórico Militar (courtesy: Francesca Vita).

launched in 1961, through the *Decree No. 43896*, as part of the administrative division of the so-called Portuguese ‘overseas provinces’, recognized the differences between the ‘municipalist formula’ used in Portugal’s metropolitan territory and traditional African organizations. Article 1 and its sole paragraph determined that the areas of the *concelhos* (districts) that did not constitute parishes (*freguesias*) would be divided into *regedorias*, which could adopt toponyms of regional use and be grouped by administrative posts. These areas could also ‘be divided into groups of villages and into hamlets’ (Decree 43896, 1961). The political and strategic implications of the implementation of the *regedorias* have also occupied the social scientists in the realm of ‘community development’ which was used during colonial rule as a founding argument. For the discipline of architecture, it is now of great interest to understand how its layout contributed to transforming the ancestral matrix of the pre-colonial landscape, generated by a ‘tribal’ social structure, in the post-independence territory through a colonial design that was meant to control the ‘decentralisation’ process. Back in time, the *regedorias* were justified as administrative frames that integrated rural villages and/or suburban neighbourhoods mimicking aspects of African traditional societies, aiming at economic and productive self-sufficiency, and introducing ‘new’ functional programs related to the *Estado Novo* regime,<sup>4</sup> as the *Casas do Povo*.<sup>5</sup> The implementation of *regedorias* had different outcomes, and some survived until today and continue to shape the urban frame of metropolises like Luanda. This is the case of Viana, where single-family housing projects designed by architects would be produced and disseminated under the Provincial Colonization Board of Angola in 1964 (Junta Provincial de Povoamento de Angola, 1964). Different types and variations were tested in design: detached or semi-detached houses for 1–4 inhabitants; 5–6; and 7–9 (Figure 2(A–C)). Significantly, the site layout of the houses allowed the presence of polygamous families (Junta Provincial de Povoamento de Angola, 1964).





**Figure 2.** (A–C). [Mário Santos Costa, 1963], Single-Family House for 1–4 inhabitants; 5–6 inhabitants; 7–9 inhabitants (Regedoria de Viana, Type A) Junta Provincial de Povoamento de Angola (1964). *A habitação em núcleos de povoamento.* (Housing in settlement centres). Luanda: JPPA Edition, Design n. 11.

In the realm of architectural studies, also, the organization of the house and the urban layout can illuminate an important part of the occupation processes, through the analysis of the plan, the materials used, and the functionalities introduced that were exogenous to African traditions. It can also highlight the degree of interference that the architectural culture of the Colonial Public Works (CPW) technicians had in the alteration of local habits. A major (and difficult) question for the architectural field is to understand whether these actions are on the level of ‘colonial violence’, as described by social scientists and historians (Gerlach, 2009, pp. 360–393).

One aspect of studies already carried out, mostly by social scientists, as previously mentioned, is their overlooking of the architectural culture and landscape ‘legacies’ of these processes; an absence that remains true in some core readings. Bandeira Jerónimo launched an analysis of the resettlements in Angola, linking them with processes of social control (Jerónimo, 2017). Once more, the article was crucial for an understanding of how the Social Sciences have read the implementation of the ‘psychological action’ evoked by the military during the war to justify these large-scale housing operations. The perversity of the assembly between ‘social promotion’, security and population control is one of the central features of the article’s argumentation. The author also explained how the norms for the development of the United Nations (UN) were used as propaganda to demonstrate the Portuguese ‘modernization’ in Africa. More recently, Jerónimo has taken up the topic again regarding ‘Operation Robusta’ (1969–1974), which forced the displacement of the Angolan populations inhabiting Cuanza Norte to the district of Zaire to free up land for coffee production exploited by European settlers (hence the name ‘Robusta’ which refers to a specific variety of coffee) (Jerónimo, 2020). Although accomplished during the colonial war, the motivation for ‘Operation Robusta’ was essentially economic and not based on military principles. Yet, as the author explains, the building of new villages in the Zaire district happened within the framework of war operations, grounded on the principles of ‘social promotion’, control and surveillance. These villages, outlined as ‘model villages’ (Jerónimo, 2020, p. 4), offered functional programs such as sanitary areas, school, health, religious and sports facilities, having been. After the April 1974 revolution, which put an end to the Portuguese dictatorial regime, measures would be taken to support the populations that wished to return to their native villages; and on the Angolan independence verge, the process was publicly exposed and criticized as a time when ‘the most elementary rights of the moral and human person were violated’ (Jerónimo, 2020, p. 18).

## Topic

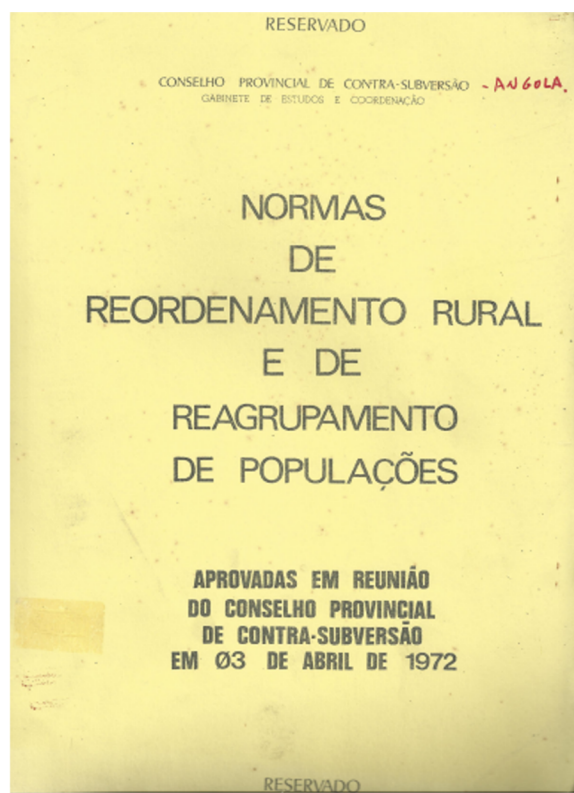
This article aims to set a first approach to housing production during the colonial war period, in the context of rural reordering and population regrouping promoted by the Portuguese military forces. The numbers of displaced populations still rely on estimates proposed by Christian Gerlach in 2009: 1,000,000 people in Angola (1962–1974); 1,300,000 in Mozambique (1968–1974), and 150,000 in present-day Guinea-Bissau (1968–1973) (Gerlach, 2009, pp. 362–363). In comparative terms, the US military, under British advice, displaced 8,700,000 South Vietnamese to model villages between 1959 and 1965 until about 1975, according to data from the same author. In Angola, during the process, 52,000 people died. Gerlach did not provide records on the Mozambican and Guinean cases.

Amid the war effort, the construction of ‘new and *hygienic* villages and affordable neighborhoods’ was praised in the 2nd legislative session of the *X Legislature*, by the Portuguese deputy of the National Assembly, Lopo Cancela de Abreu (1913–1990), following the visit to Guinea and Cape Verde by some members of the Portuguese National Assembly in 1970. The achievements in the field of housing and infrastructures were described as a ‘counter-revolutionary’ gesture, challenging the actions of the PAIGC (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde—African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), then led by Amílcar Cabral (1924–1973). In an ‘overseas province’ with 36,125 km<sup>2</sup> in area, these operations were thus on a par with the building of ‘bridges (...) and (...) paved roads; schools and (...) school stations (...); health posts’, or even with the improvement of ‘general hospitals (...), ports (...) and new wharves (...)’; or by ‘establishing new airfields (...)’; reorganizing the post-office services and increasing sanitation and water supply’ (Abreu, 1970). If the Assembly debates accurately illustrated the political spirit related to settlements’ programs, local meetings provided the motto for the strategy. That same year, during the ‘Congress of Settlement and Social Promotion’ (*Congresso de Povoamento e Promoção Social*) held in Luanda and sponsored by the *Associações Económicas de Angola* (Economic Associations of Angola), Filipe Themudo Barata clarified that ‘the strategic settlement would imply strategic development’ (Barata, 1970, p. 201). Barata also warned that a feebly structured settlement could lead to greater exposure to the advances of the subversive struggle. Despite the risks, the author reinforced that strategic settlement remained ‘not only an imperative of political and military order, but also the solution by the realistic appreciation of the means available in the short-term’ (Barata, 1970, p. 210). It was found that by the end of 1969, the ‘regrouped population (...) had grown to about one and a half million, living in 3100 new settlements, of which 2900 had self-defence elements’ (Barata, 1970, p. 211). In Mozambique, the districts of Cabo Delgado and Niassa already housed half a million inhabitants spread around 300 new villages. The context of the meeting seemed ideal for the military to come out and publicise that the ‘settlement [was] one of the fundamental weapons to be employed in the fight that [the Portuguese supported] in Africa’ (Oliveira, 1970, p. 314). More recently, a few historians have used sensitive (and in some angles controversial) numbers to exemplify the extent of the infrastructural processes during late colonialism. For instance, in 2010, the historian Rui Ramos noted that in Guinea ‘the army drilled 140 wells and built 196 schools, 630 dikes, and 8313 housing units’, between 1969 and 1974, guaranteeing ‘health care at the minimum World Health Organization level’ (Ramos et al., 2010, p. 683) (Figure 3).

The resettling, to which Ramos was referring in part, made use of numerous laws, with emphasis on international ones, namely through the concept of ‘community development’ (mentioned before) strongly put forward by the UN, which Portugal belatedly joined in 1956. The integration compelled the Portuguese government to a set of obligations to the colonized populations, including health, education and housing. The statistics quoted by Ramos were already a consequence of this obligation. The Portuguese army had different approaches depending on the region affected by the liberation struggles. One key strategy of the Portuguese army was to develop local primers that framed protocols for action in the field, as in the case of the *Normas de Reordenamento Rural e de Reagrupamento de Populações* (Norms for Rural Reordering and the Regrouping of Populations), approved in April 1972 by the Provincial Council of Angola for Counter-subversion (Conselho Provincial de Contra-Subversão, 1972) (Figure 4) or the *Reordenamento das populações em Aldeamentos* (Village Population Reordering), proposed by an administrative civil servant from the Inhambane municipality, Mozambique.



**Figure 3.** Associações Económicas de Angola (1970), *Congresso de Povoamento e Promoção Social* (Congress of Settlement and Social Promotion), Luanda: Associações Económicas de Angola [cover] (courtesy: Beatriz Serrazina).



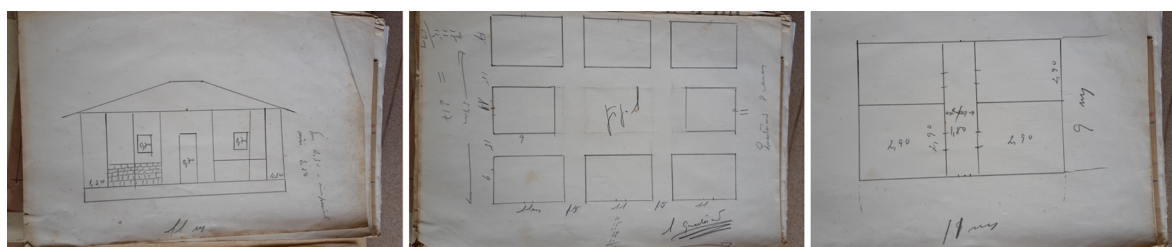
**Figure 4.** Conselho Provincial de Contra-Subversão, *Normas de Reordenamento Rural e de Reagrupamento de Populações*. Gabinete de Estudos e Coordenação. [Luanda], 3 April 1972, [cover]. Source: Arquivo Histórico Militar (courtesy: Major Cunha Roberto).

Resettlements were thus an essential element of the counterinsurgency programs that the Portuguese military began to systematically implement from 1964 onwards, following legislation launched by the Ministry of Overseas specifically linked to the planning of rural regions. Most legal and practical measures resulted from the effort to fix rural populations, preventing their migration to the cities during the armed conflict, where the lack of housing was considered a problem without a feasible solution, according to the colonial governments themselves. Different colonial agents, from leaders of the CPW services to government officials, denoted rural planning and the promotion of the well-being of non-urban populations as priorities in fighting the residential precariousness that existed in the main African cities under Portuguese rule. In Luanda, there were around 180,000 people without decent housing during the war outburst (Directorate-General for Urbanization Services, 1961, p. 235), while the number of houses needed in Lourenço Marques (current Maputo) was estimated at 30,000. In Bissau, for example, the urban population had already reached 47,000 inhabitants in 1971 (Veloso, 1971, p. 3).

Different types of departments and offices were then created locally to address the chronic lack of urban housing. The rural territories were particular areas for the Provincial Colonization Boards of Angola and Mozambique to promote, among other strategies, technical support through the dissemination of architectural designs and training on construction methods. There was no single residential pattern, except for the promotion of single-family housing. In this regard, rural housing was increasingly seen as a critical effort to westernize African populations, namely by advocating private ownership of agricultural land—contrary to the communal sense of ancestral cultures—associated with home ownership. Moreover, the design of the plans was westernized through functional modernization, and the introduction of European furniture changed the ways of use and domesticity. For the most part, the Portuguese authorities, supported by administrative officials, believed that the ‘indigenous’ condition was temporary and could be changed by the house design. It was in this context that the Portuguese military, amid the ‘counter-subversive’ action, would promote their own residential models for the local populations by planning and building ‘new’ communities.

### **Models and strategies: the Guinean case**

In 1969, in former Portuguese Guinea, the military forces had already streamlined a resettlement model to facilitate operations on the ground. The schematics of the Bissorã Administration confirmed exactly how the protocol was in place (Figure 5(A–C)). Proofs can also be found in academic works, such as the ‘Report on the Internship with the Engineering Battalion’ presented by João António Leitão Simões Santos at the School of Agricultural Regents in Santarém (*Escola de Regentes Agrícolas de Santarém*) (Santos, 1966–1969). The Portuguese former lieutenant had served in Guinea, in the 447<sup>th</sup> Engineering Battalion,<sup>6</sup> which cooperated directly with the Population Reordering Services (*Serviços de Reordenamentos Populacionais*), based in Bissau (Vita, 2022, p. 6). He was a delegate of the Commander-in-Chief and was given the role of drawing up ‘some instructions that would serve as a guide for future resettlement constructions’ (Santos, 1966–1969, p. 1). The document presented in Portugal reinforced the ‘social promotion’ overall strategies that these resettlements should obey, while enumerating the difficulties inherent to the mobilization of populations. The attachment to the land, the existence of ancestrally used cultivation areas, burial places, and the ethnic structures themselves emerged as obstacles to overcome. ‘*Mentalização*’ (mentalization) emerged as a keyword and one of



**Figure 5.** (A–C) House Type 2—Bissorã Administration, Former Portuguese Guinea (30 October 1969). Source: INEP – Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa, Guiné-Bissau.

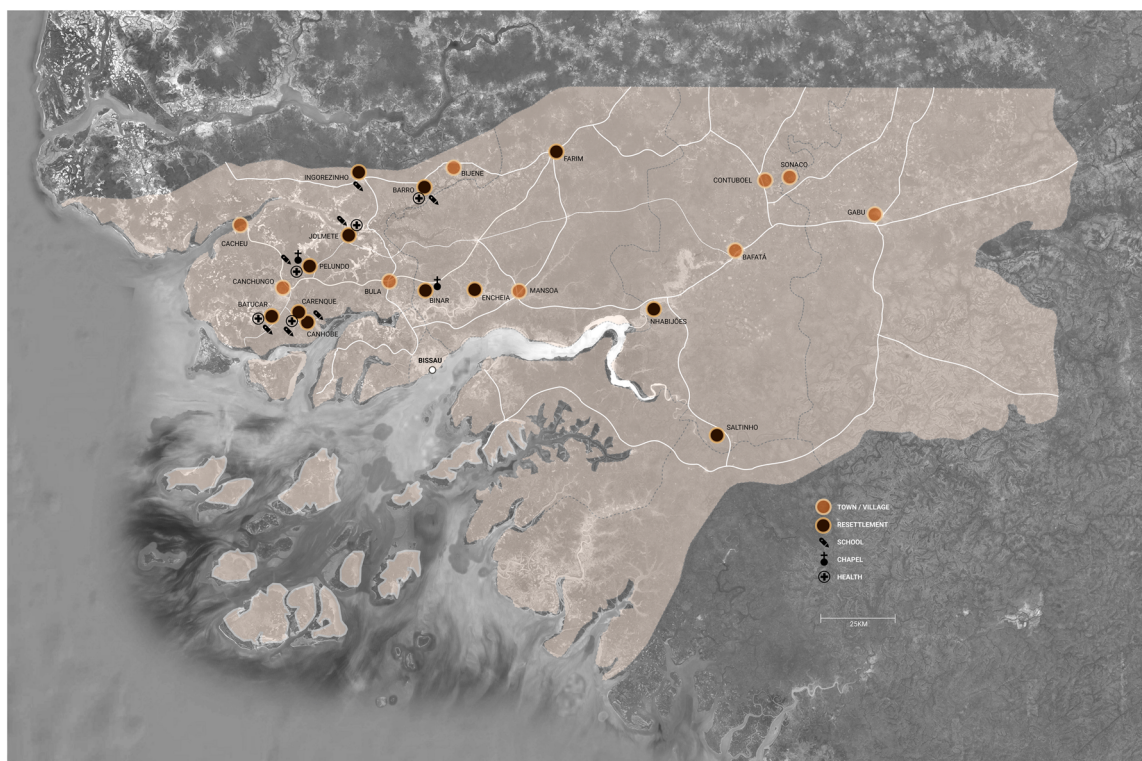


the measures of ‘psychological action’—, meaning to make the population aware of the advantages to be gained from the resettlement process. Simões Santos also listed the conditions necessary for its implementation: (1) population obedience; (2) to overcome subsistence agriculture; (3) nearby communication networks; (4) pasture areas and access to drinking water; (5) the number of families that optimized the creation of assistance facilities (education, health, others); (6) and finally, as a last point, ‘the repudiation of all coercion or ‘taking of force’ over the population’. The awareness that resettlement should not be synonymous with violence was imbued in a military corps then led by General Spínola. The military often advocated that the ‘development work’ in Africa could only be accomplished with the adhesion of Africans. Three months before the April 1974 revolution, Spínola wrote: ‘If we intend to integrate what does not want to be integrated or constitute societies of different frames than those societies want, we will never cease to be vulnerable’ (Spínola, 1974, pp. 127–128). Since at that time the former governor of Guinea did not believe in a military solution to the colonial war, this sentence was more than a symbol of the spirit to be instilled in these operations; it probably manifested a consciousness of failure. Indeed, reality would eventually become harsher, and violence would obviously be applied as shown by recent testimonies by Portuguese military involved in the process<sup>7</sup> and pictures of former *tabancas* that were destroyed.

The regulation for the urbanization of settlements, and particularly to the construction of resettlements, was set in Directive no. 57/69 of 14 July 1969. This document exposed the housing problem as central to the ‘social promotion’ policies underway in Guinea. The uprooting of local populations was assumed to be a double consequence of the subversion encouraged by the guerrilla and the ‘ongoing social improvement’. The need to ‘modernize the housing of the indigenous people’ was emphasized, regardless of the rural or urban landscapes. It was also imposed that urbanization plans should be carried out for all the nuclei of population in Guinea, with the superior’s approval. This immense task was finalized in 1973 with the publication of ‘Rural and Urban Planning in Portuguese Guinea’ (*Ordenamento Rural e Urbano na Guiné Portuguesa*) (Spínola, 1973). The plans were coordinated by the Province’s Public Works Services, while their defense aspects were under the competence of the military services, encouraging cooperation between military and civilians. Among the technical aspects of how to plan and build a house was the recommendation of the gradual replacement of thatched roofing with zinc. Once the urban plan was approved, no building could take place outside its limits and rules (Cunha, 1969). The process of ‘westernisation’ of the Guinean home, however, was already a historical process, pointed out since the 18th century through a few descriptions, such as Jean-Baptiste Labat’s *Nouvelle relation de l’Afrique occidentale*, which colonial surveys of the 1950s referred to persistently (Labat, 1728). The goal was to prove that the rectangular house was a ‘European’ arrival on the continent, through a long route of displacing the circular-plan house, considered by many the ‘real’ African vernacular house across all ethnic groups (Mota, 1952).

In general terms, the new Guinean villages with military roots were structured by an orthogonal grid that exposed the underlying military matrix (Map 1; Table 1). This grid organized the layout of the dwellings that obeyed simple square shapes, 11,00x9,00 meters. The plan was subdivided into four compartments separated by a corridor and had a *veranda* around the building. The houses were built in adobes manufactured in the region with a standard size of 0.20x0.20x0.40 m. The adobes had to dry in the sun for a minimum of 2 days. For the military resettlement of Nhabijões, for instance, about 633,983 adobes were used, according to the calculation of former Lieutenant Simões Santos (2019). Ten work groups consisting of 10 men were set up. Each day, 10 residential units were built, also according to the testimony of the former Portuguese soldier. There was a hierarchy in the typology of the houses resulting from the social order of each ethnic group. Different building materials and more sophisticated surfaces ensured social distinctions. Thus, while Type 1 intended for the wide-ranging population was thatched, Type 2—to house the *tabanca* chiefs—was fully zinc-covered. Type 3—for the *régulos* and religious chiefs—had a paved floor as an extra. Only the last two types were whitewashed (*caiadadas*). Sets of 4–8 houses made up the block type (Figure 6(A–D)). Nhabijões was designed for 1820 inhabitants (485 men, 621 women and 714 children) in a total of 287 houses.

Not all villages were fortified and some maintained curvilinear organizations, resulting from pre-existences. School, health post, storehouse, fountain and cattle water ditch, and wells, completed the facilities’ program of the smaller units. In already ‘developed villages’, the new urbanization plans paid



**Map 1.** Former military resettlements. Survey carried out following the field trips with record of residential structures and facilities. Drawing: author; Beatriz Serrazina, <http://doi.org/10.54499/PTDC/ART-DAQ/0592/2020>, 2022 (Guinea-Bissau, 2011–2021).

attention to the water supply, sewage, the existence of different types of dwellings, health post with a nurse's house, storehouse, social centre, sports field, among other collective programs.

The news would reach Lisbon through the *media*. In 1973, the journalist Augusto de Carvalho (1933–2012) described the resettlement process in the magazine supplement of the weekly newspaper 'Expresso': 'the villages (...) obey a 'zoning' plan (urbanization), where we can find the social centre, the school, and the health post, etc. It is a pity that these houses do not have a bathroom. The villages will later be defended by Portuguese troops, by African militias, or by themselves, since many thousands of weapons were distributed to the population' (Carvalho, 1973, p. 13). Administratively, the process seemed to be quite simple. The Namedão resettlement's implementation, for instance, was decided in 1969, and construction was expected to begin the following year. A two-page letter, addressed to the governor of the territory, accompanied by a layout drawing illustrated the entire procedure to be followed (Figure 7(A–C)). The new village would occupy an area of 43 hectares, and the Portuguese armed forces were told to build their facilities, and prepare their defense, before the transfer of the populations (Figure 7(D)). The document made explicit the dual responsibility in planning by both the administrative and military authorities. According to the same notes, a team of 200 men should be hired. The workers would be paid in food, the same practice followed in Nhabijões, where the deforestation work took six days and was executed by 800 men.

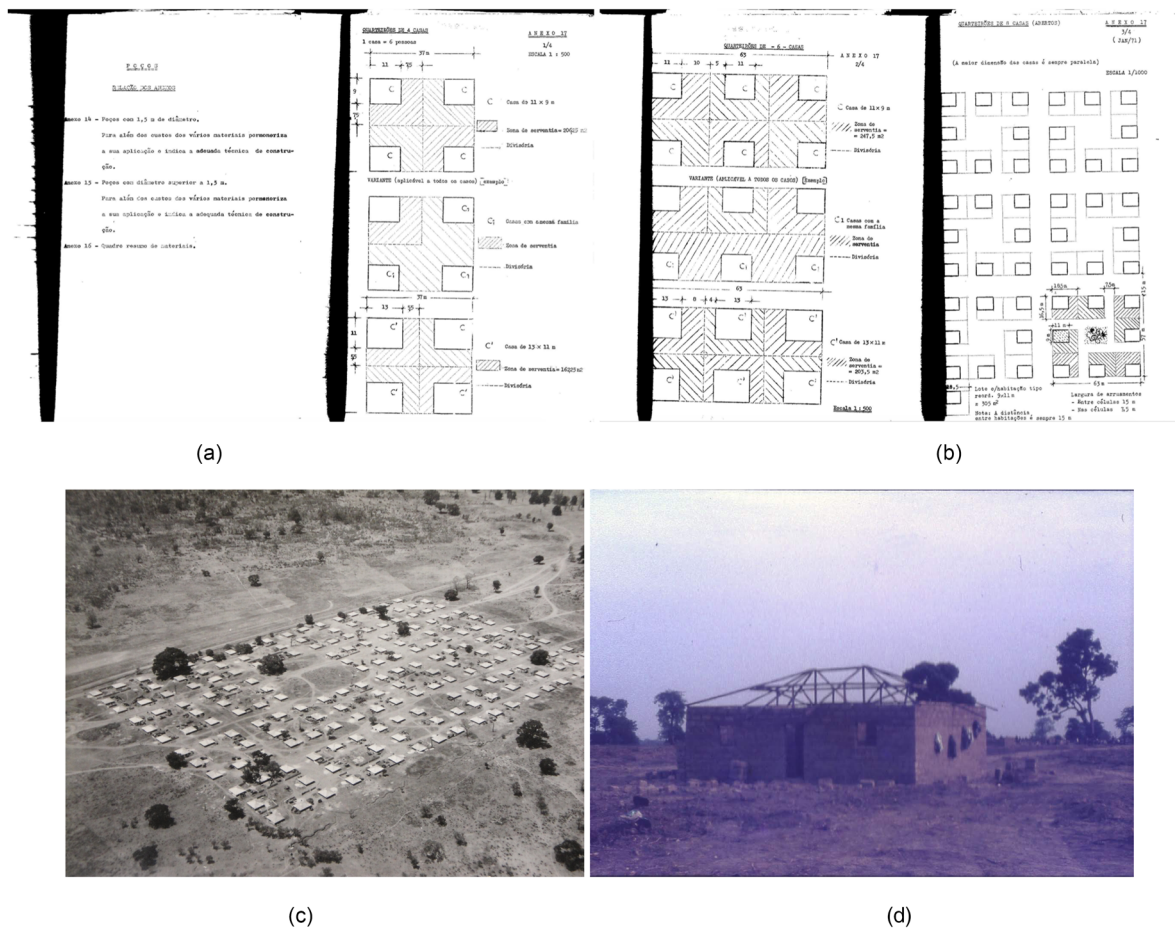
Such an occupation process can be further understood through some data. Between 1969 and 1972, 83 new villages had been built and 47 settlements received improvements. As for the production of single-family housing, the figures pointed to the construction of 9865 traditional houses (Type 1), 3576 zinc-covered (Type 2) and 441 destined for high authorities (Type 3) (Summary Table, 1969–1972). In early 1973, still during Spínola's government, José Henrique de Azeredo Perdigão (1896–1993), President of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, visited Guinea. Throughout the journey, while passing by the military resettlement in Batúcar, supported by the Foundation itself, Perdigão acknowledged that 'the type of houses was not detached from tradition and that their location was not far from the population's cultivation areas' (Perdigão, 1973, p. 10) (Figure 8(A,B)). This remark reinforced the application of some of



**Table 1.** Former military resettlements.

MILITARY RESETTLEMENT	Visiting date	Aerial View 1968/1973	Zoning Plans	School	Medical Facility	Chapel	Military Facilities	Existing housing structure	Houses in use	Water Well	Colonial Administration buildings	Other military buildings
NHABIJÕES	7 October 2011			Not visible	Not visible	Not visible	Not visible		Not visible	Not located	Not visible	
BINAR	1 March 2019			Not visible	Not visible	Not visible			Not visible	Not located		
ENCHEIA	1 March 2019			Not located	Not located	Not located		Not located	Inexistent	Not located		
PELUNDO	1 March 2019 +30 November 2021								Not located	Not located		
JOLMETE	03 November 2021					Not located			Demolished	Not located		
BATUCAR	03 November 2021					Not located			Not located	Not located		
CARENQUE / CANHOBE	03 November 2021					Not located	Not located		Not located	Not located		
INGOREZINHO	04 November 2021					Not located	Not located		Not located	Not located		
BARRO	04 November 2021					Not located			Not located			

Record of existing infrastructure. Survey: author; F. Fiúza; F. Vita, <http://doi.org/10.54499/PTDC/ART-DAQ/0592/2020>. (Guinea-Bissau, 2011–2021).



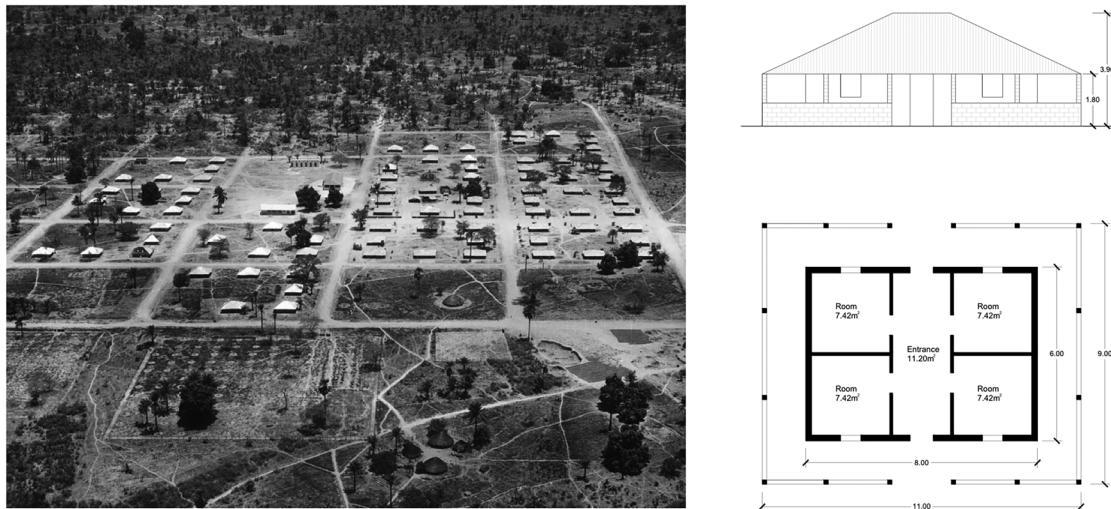
**Figure 6.** (A,B) 4 Houses blocks; 6 Houses blocks; 8 Houses blocks. (Appendix 17, 1/4; 2/4; 3/4, Jan. 1971), (Santos, 1966–1969). Source: J. A. L. S. Santos personal archive (courtesy: Francesca Vita). (C) Nhabijões military resettlement, Guinea. [3 May 1971]. Reorganization of the Nhabijões region settlements, planned and led by the Portuguese military and with the approval of the colonial Public Works departments, Guinea-Bissau. Source: Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [IPAD 1971-00770]. (D) House. Nhabijões military resettlement, Guinea, ca. 1970. Source: J. A. L. S. Santos personal archive.



**Figure 7.** (A,B). Namedão resettlement, Former Portuguese Guinea (Administrator António Isidro de Campos Gramazo, 31 October 1969), Fundo de Administração de Bissora. Source: INEP – Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa, Guiné-Bissau. (C,D). Namedão resettlement Plan, Former Portuguese Guinea (design: Furiel C. Sousa, 28/10/1969), Fundo de Administração de Bissora. Source: INEP: Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa, Guiné-Bissau.

the general principles stated in Lieutenant Santos’s report based on his experience in Nhabijões. Traditional ballasted roof insulation techniques, for instance, would be adopted to ensure higher thermal quality inside the house. The procedure included a tight grid of sticks (*varas*), a layer of grass (*capim*), a second layer of rice straw, and a final coating with mud.

Although women were often in charge of helping to build the house in some Guinean traditions, the Portuguese military hired only men. Women were assigned more conventional jobs from a western



**Figure 8.** (A) Militar resettlement of Batúcar, Guinea-Bissau. Source: Biblioteca de Arte e Arquivos da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian I03-015-005 [I03-015 (COOP 04640)]. (B) House typology. Portuguese Army Source: INEP – Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa, Guiné-Bissau (courtesy: Francesca Vita).



**Figure 9.** (A,B). Men on the construction site and women doing laundry and taking care of the children. Everyday life during the construction of Nhabijões military resettlement, Guinea, ca. 1970. Source: J. A. L. S. Santos personal archive. (C) Medical assistance. Nhabijões military resettlement, Guinea. Source: J. A. L. S. Santos personal archive.

perspective (Figure 9(A,B)). Once the resettlement was completed, the families' distribution, most of which were polygamous, was left to the *tabanca* chiefs' criteria. Once the populations were installed, mobility was restricted. Leaving the regional perimeters was monitored and, according to Lieutenant Simões Santos, it had to be authorized by the Chief of Post (*Chefe de Posto*). In the case of Nhabijões, it was located in Bambadinca. Education and health services were also provided by military personnel (Figure 9(C)), who thus fulfilled their goal of living close to the people and trying to gain their trust. Before the end of the war, colonial authorities generally admitted that 'the Armed Forces [ensured] health coverage, education, communications, rural reorganization, briefly, all the activities that [contributed] to the social, economic, cultural, health and psychological development of the populations' (Miranda, 1973). Following Mao Tsé-Tung's well-known teachings, spread through all counter-insurgency manuals, and following the advised proximity (Afonso & Gomes, 2020, p. 315), the Portuguese military lived in houses that were outwardly similar to the village ones, although built as a reinforced concrete shelter. Spínola's supporters who witnessed his experience accumulated through the study of the 'errors committed in the various subversive wars' would confirm in 1973 the general's slogan: 'What legitimizes the most a government is its acceptance by its people' (Carvalho, 1973, p. 14). In their vision, the resettlements were a step in the direction of social promotion and were efficient in captivating the local population.

Throughout a field trip mission to Guinea-Bissau in 2021, it was possible to visit some of these resettlements and houses built during the colonial/liberation war (Map 1/Table 1). In the village of Ingorezinho,





**Figure 10.** (A–C) Ingorezinho, Photo: autor, 2021.

for instance, a set still in use was located. The testimonies given by the local population reinforced the idea that some of these ‘new villages’ were used to house the families of the Guineans fighting for the Portuguese army and that changes were made to accommodate local cultural needs through specific appropriations. There was a distribution of the residential units by family members with separation by gender to lodge polygamous families. Architectural elements, such as corridors, lost their usefulness as distribution constituents, mainly in the cells assigned to not married male young adults, as new entrances were opened directly from the sleeping compartments to the exterior. Many of these houses would be enlarged up to the limit of the plot, being today almost imperceptible from the outside (Figure 10(A–C)).<sup>8</sup>

Portuguese colonialism was no different from other colonial processes promoted by European nations throughout the twentieth century. But its longer span, lasting until the mid-1970s, gave it particular features that must be addressed. On the one hand, there was a colonial war felt on the ground through three battle fronts, and therefore three modes of guerrilla warfare. On the other hand, the ‘developmental principles’ demanded by international organizations had to be taken into account to justify its colonial, territorial and political domination. In this connection, residential strategies and models introduced in independent nations (Bekaert, 2021) were thus followed by the Portuguese administration in its colonies. The configuration of houses in Guinea intended for rural areas was example of how the Portuguese colonial authorities - military and civilian - understood these principles, as Francesca Vita has recently revealed in Guinean urban areas (Vita, 2022). Architects aimed to solve the same problem through their professional culture, albeit with dissimilar fallouts, as explained below.

### **Final considerations: the architects’ feebleness**

The time of war was not favourable for the architects who worked in rural resettlement contexts. Although they were more than ever engaged with missions and visits by several technicians from the Urbanism and Housing Services Board of the General-Directorate of Public Works and Communications (*Direcção de Serviços de Urbanismo e Habitação da Direcção-Geral de Obras Publicas em Comunicações*), of the Ministry of Overseas Territories, based in Lisbon, their studies remained without direct application. This was not true only in Guinea-Bissau, but also in other former Portuguese colonies, namely Angola and Mozambique. The architects António Moreira Veloso,<sup>9</sup> Fernando Schiappa de Campos (1926–2018) and Maria Emília Caria (1926–2000) composed an extremely skilled technical workforce who, however, were not able to impose the architectural culture of the time to the immediate and effective pragmatism of the design teams under the tutelage of the military. Even if all of them were involved with territorial planning in Guinea during the colonial war, it was Moreira Veloso who would be deeply engaged in the resettlement operations, albeit for very concentrated periods. Being an employee at de Ministry of Overseas Territories, Moreira Veloso carried out four work missions that allow today for a clearer

understanding of the cleavages between the pragmatism of these operations carried out by the military and the attempt to introduce design methodologies closer to the architectural culture of the time. Veloso's first commission, between March and May 1970, laid the foundations for what would be his major contribution to the resettling program. It was during this period that he founded the new Provincial Urbanization Office in Bissau, with two local collaborators: the architect captain Fernando Morgado and the intern-architect Alda Tavares. For three months, Moreira Veloso and his team travelled around Guinea, taking charge of the resettlement plans for Geba (700 inhabitants), Binar (750 inhabitants), Empada (2700 inhabitants), and Contuboeil (1500 inhabitants); and the urban plans to Sare Bacar (850 inhabitants), Pirada (700 inhabitants) (Veloso, 1970), Bissum and Cacheu (Grupo de Trabalho, 1972). The team was also tasked with studying a 'standard-house' that could compete with the houses built by the Portuguese army throughout Guinea.

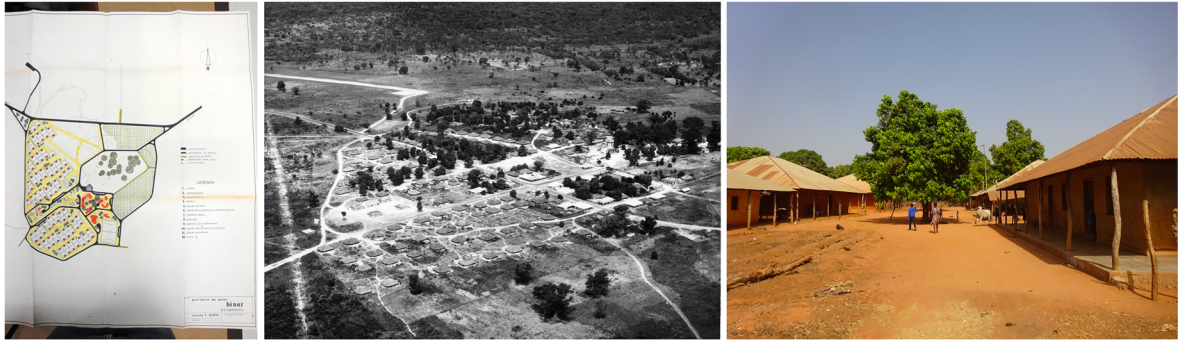
Given the information gathered in the fieldwork, Moreira Veloso became quite critical of the way the resettlements were being conducted, particularly in terms of urban layout and house design. His first criticism pointed to the absence of regional planning that would articulate the different operations, allowing, for instance, greater management of transport networks (one of the obstacles to the development of rural Guinea). He also criticized the dispersion of tasks and activities, which prevented better management of human resources, in the scope of Public Works, which he considered scarce concerning the requests. Also, Veloso pointed out the lack of architects in the military corps that could fill some of the technical gaps noticed.

Documents and reports suggest that there was a conflict of methodologies between the architect's approach, which aimed at a long-time occupation, and the military actions, extremely focused on solving present problems. At a certain point, Moreira Veloso explained that 'we tried to solve [the problems of a military nature] without affecting too much the urbanistic conceptions' (Veloso, 1970, p. 4). It seemed that the architects consented to the actions of the military, but the truth was the opposite, since they had already lost room for maneuver to act according to their disciplinary principles. Due to the war climate, the military had full control over infrastructural and territorial planning, mostly resettling, considered key in the war of counterinsurgency. The debate about the design of the house, in particular, made this an obvious fact. Required to introduce the model developed by the military into his plans, Veloso admitted that 'the expedient solutions of standard houses, adopted by the army in all resettlement operations, [present] as an advantage their easy deployment (...), their low cost and the fact that the army achieved a standardization of construction, which [facilitate] and [accelerate] achievements of this type'(Veloso, 1970, p. 5). This would happen as early as in the Binar resettlement plan, designed about 14 days after starting his mission in Guinea.

The proposal for Binar (Figure 11(A,B)) can be seen as an example of the architect's failure, since its accomplishment was never at risk thanks to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation's financial support. The group led by Veloso was asked to develop a plan for 95 dwellings to group pre-existing populations living in dispersed areas. Specifically for these plans, Moreira and team had developed a 'grouping-type' (close to the concept of 'cluster' that originated in the architecture of the 1950s and became an integral part of the *praxis* of the time), seeking to give greater flexibility to the implantation of the houses, achieving 'free living space' and deploying urban elements—as fountains—beyond its restricted functionality. This 'basic cluster' would result from the aggregation of 'type-cells', sets of 16 residential units that would be combined. Yet, the complexity of the implantation was an obstacle to its adoption, as Veloso himself admitted in the report written in Lisbon and delivered to his superiors at the Ministry of Overseas Territories (Veloso, 1970, p. 6). Perhaps for this reason, the composition proposed for Binar was extremely flexible, taking the military house as an element of repetition. The written documents of the resettlement plans conveyed the importance of sociability to be fostered architectural composition, thinking of the African family structure: 'The solution allows the organization of more defined and pleasant family spaces' (Veloso, 1970, p. 3). The residential complex was further completed with planned facilities, whose location gave urban significance to the new village. The final result, however, would be much 'barer', with the military ground still very visible, as shown by the picture registered after its completion.

In the plan for Empada (Figure 12(A-C)), the authors reinforced that they had opted for the same solution as Binar, using the 16-house 'type-cell', in a village with 450 residential units. By using the same layout in all the proposals, the architects were trying to match the military's grid with an equally resilient





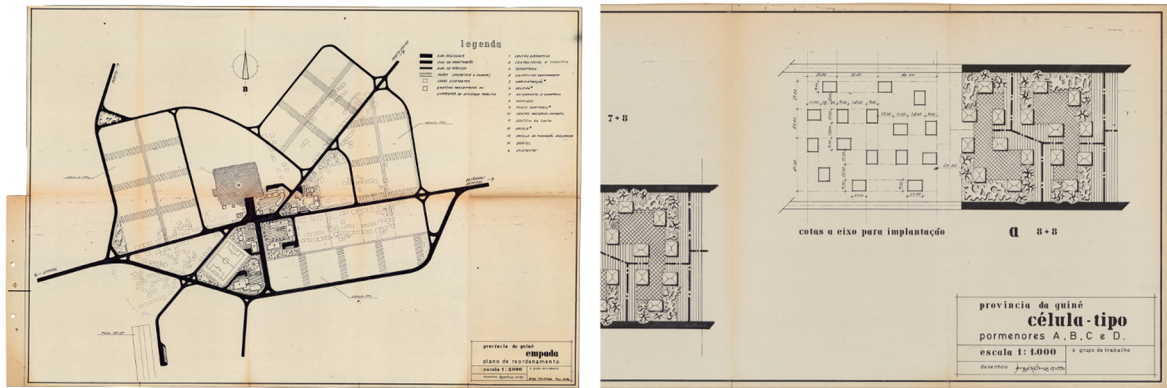
**Figure 11.** (A,B) Binar military resettlement, Guinea, *Plano de Reordenamento de Binar* António Moreira Veloso, Urbanism and Housing Services Board of the General-Directorate of Public Works and Communications, Overseas Ministry, 1970. Source: Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [IPAD 858]; Source: Biblioteca de Arte e Arquivos da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian [03-015-015]. (C) Photo: autor, 2019.

ENCADRAMENTO	ESTRUTURA DE ORGANIZAÇÃO	PLANTA (MILITAR)	REordenamento (civilitário)	ESQUISAS (ÁGUA)	ELEMENTOS, NECESSIDADES (SANEAMENTO, ÁGUA, LUZ, SOMBRA)	PRIORIDADES	OBSCURIDADES
	■						
	■						
	■						
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**LEGENDA**

ESQUEMA - Plano geral da Zona Militar.  
 ESTRUTURA - Plano geral de ordenação do território.  
 ORGANIZAÇÃO - Plano geral de ordenação do território, com o plano de ordenação de cada unidade, em base operacional de ordenamento da unidade.  
 ANEXOS PLANO - Plano geral, organizado em base de ordem.  
 PLANO - Plano de ordenação, organizado em base de ordem.  
 PLANTA (MILITAR) - Plano de ordenamento da unidade militar.

(a)



(b)

(c)

**Figure 12.** (A-C) Empada resettlement, Guinea, *Plano de Reordenamento de Empada*, António Moreira Veloso, Urbanism and Housing Services Board of the General-Directorate of Public Works and Communications, Overseas Ministry, 1970, Source: Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [IPAD 858].

layout that was in tune with the architectural culture. They were interested in functional issues, and also in social values, at a time when the social sciences were emerging strongly. Nevertheless, architects ended up adapting to the military needs and practices, always claiming to be offering solutions 'likely to be easily implanted (...) allowing various groupings (...) depending on the needs of each family' (Veloso, 1970, p. 4)—even if they noted not considering this to be an ideal solution. In fact, architects kept requesting studies to further work on more adequate solutions to be found for the different Guinean ethnic groups. The proposed urban layouts were equally strict but offered variations that were closer to the organic values also perceived in vernacular cultures. But as Veloso pointed out, there seemed to be 'no doubt that, as long as [a state of] war was maintained in the territory, urbanization studies [would]

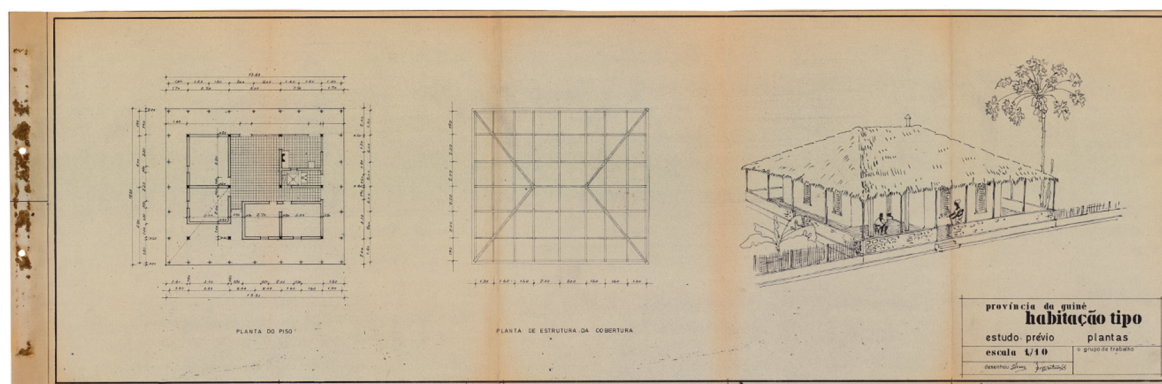


have to attend to the (...) military objective' (Veloso, 1970, p. 7), and architecture would have to wait its turn. Embedded in the architectural culture of the time, at least one residential set was tested in Farim, describing the attempt as 'an experiment in natural habitat-based plots' (Morgado & Tavares, 1970, p. 3; Vita, 2023, p. 199).

In June 1970, the team put forward a 'Guinean standard-house' (Figure 13(A,B)) that was considered to sum up the entire culture of the time and simultaneously provide a service to the local population. Set in a 13.80×12.20 rectangle, its materialization was equally fated to failure. Although more flexible in the plan, its construction would require more sophisticated manpower and building materials, and consequently more time-consuming processes. One of the merits described by Veloso was precisely the non-European character of the proposed house yet meeting 'the minimum conditions of hygiene and comfort' (Veloso, 1970, p. 10). Through such a remark, he directly criticized the elementary nature of military housing, calculated based on rows of bricks, number of workers, and easy layout.

The problem, nonetheless, laid in effectiveness. Military resettlements succeeded in what was intended: rapidly built, large numbers of units; strategically grouped and controlled populations. The military was thus able to create a landscape in its own image: geometrized, zoned, and resilient. Despite the surveys and missions that the technicians, including the architects from the Public Works departments, carried out in the local communities, the proximity of the military was overwhelming. This aspect would also contribute to their confidence in the ongoing operations. In this context, architecture remained on the fringes of the regime's own demands, as it did not respond with the same celerity, using tools that were not agile. Nor was it certain that, despite the *good intentions* of the (more culturally appropriate) design, it was immune to the violence that the construction of a resettlement meant.

Many of these resettlements almost disappeared, such as Nhabijões, Encheia or Jolmete. In the latter, only a stone tablet and indistinguishable ruins show the previous military village. Others evolved and



(a)



(b)

**Figure 13.** (A,B). Standard-house for the Province of Guinea-Bissau, António Moreira Veloso, Urbanism and Housing Services Board of the General-Directorate of Public Works and Communications, Overseas Ministry, 1970 [AHU] [students' model]. *Report of the Eventual commission of service of architect António Moreira Veloso in Guinea, from March to May 1970*, Lisbon: 30/06/1970. Source: Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino [PT/IPAD/MU/DGOPC/DSUH/1972 00857].

changed, namely Binar and Ingorezinho. For the most part, the overall resettlement process revealed the infrastructural acceleration boosted by the colonial war and the transformations inflicted on the rural African landscapes. Since the actions of the architects had a very little echo, only the military-run settlements ended up marking the future rural landscape of current Guinea-Bissau. Even in regions where these constructions have almost disappeared, an intangible memory persists, still transmitted between families, showing how the military resettlements implanted themselves in the lives of these communities during the colonial epoch. And yet, there is no single standard. There are places where Christian religious monuments have been erected and remain closed (with no use for Islamic communities)—despite being clean and cared for as in Pelundo –, while in others these have disappeared or only fragments remain, as in Binar. The same goes for military facilities, guard posts and barracks, which alternate between relics treated and venerated as ‘ambiguous’ monuments (either as a reminiscence of colonialism or as a mark of liberation) or nothing more than outdated ruins. Beyond the built legacies, the layout imposed by the military is still perceptible in the current villages. Some have been fitted to the organisation inherited from the war strategies. Notwithstanding the colonial rhetoric of permanence and improvement—which was in line with the Algerian policies quoted at the beginning of this article through Henni narratives and which inspired the Portuguese—the immediate purpose was military and therefore transitory. This transitoriness may explain the ephemeral nature of some former resettlements, in the same way that identical military effectiveness and rationality may explain the persistence of others.

## Notes

1. The exhibition was open to the public at the CCA headquarters between April 12 and September 5 and at the Nederlands Architectuurinstituut between 10 December 2011 and 25 March 2012.
2. The military involved in the writing of this report were: Joaquim Franco Pinheiro (major), Carlos Costa Matos (captain), José Basto Carreira, Emiliano Quinhones de Magalhães, Nuno Almeida Frazão and José Almiro Canelhas (the last four were infantry captains). The editors were essentially concerned with the training of Portuguese troops for guerrilla warfare in Africa.
3. Following a previous article from 2015 (Curto & Cruz, 2015). The authors described *regedorias* as ‘artificial villages designed to concentrate scattered peasants – made by the civil branch of the colonial state’ (p. 205). The indication of this trainee architect appears in the report of the Junta Provincial de Povoamento de Angola, *Studies on the rural reorganization of the Viana Regedoria (Estudos sobre o reordenamento rural na regedoria de Viana, PT/IPAD/MU/RPAD/1415/01931)*, which includes not only the *regedoria’s* project, which would have a dose of *idealism* in its design, but which was not implemented (as much as the exploratory visits to the site let to perceive). Its inclusion in later publications without identifying the authorship reinforces the idea of the accumulation of technical knowledge that involved the gathering of ‘urbanistic schemes for a village - the seat of a typical *regedoria* - that [could] serve as a guide for the work of the Commissions of *Reordenamento*’. What prevailed, however, would be the residential programs and models.
4. The *Estado Novo* has generally been described as one of the last colonial dictatorships in post-1945 Europe. It began after the military dictatorship in 1928 (constitution published in *Diário do Governo* on 22 February 1933) and ended with the revolution of 25 April 1974, which established a democratic regime, ended the war, and began the process of decolonization of African countries.
5. *Casas do Povo* were local bodies created during the *Estado Novo* with the aim of organizing the work of the agricultural sector (*Decree-Law No. 23 051 of 23 September 1933*). These and their counterpart *Casas de Pescadores* were also founded in Portuguese colonial territories, and their respective headquarters built.
6. The Guinea Engineering Battalion was created in July 1964 and operated for 10 years, almost until the country’s declaration of independence. Resettlements were part of its duties, which included responsibilities in the layout and construction of transport infrastructure, hospital and health units, schools, well drilling, electrification, among others. In the ‘history’ of this military unit, one can read: ‘Population’s reordering is understood as the deliberate alteration of the pre-existing population pattern in a specific territory’. *História da Unidade— Batalhão de Engenharia da Guiné n. 447, 1964–1979* [unpublished]. Arquivo Histórico Militar, 2/4/124/15.
7. The people ‘were used to living in a *tabanca*, and they had a decent house; not in all places, because from ethnic group to ethnic group it was very different, (...) in some [*tabancas*] the houses had to be burned down for the people to move to the new ones. Audio interview with Simões Santos by author and Francesca Vita, Cartaxo, 02/05/2019 [unpublished].
8. Field trip to Guinea-Bissau between the 2nd and the 5th of November 2021. The team was composed by Ana Vaz Milheiro (PI) Filipa Fiúza (Co-PI) and Francesca Vita (Researcher). Project ArchWar—*Control and violence through housing and architecture during the colonial wars. The Portuguese case (Guinea-Bissau, Angola and*

Mozambique)... (<http://doi.org/10.54499/PTDC/ART-DAQ/0592/2020>). The author had previously taken field trips in 2011, 2015, and 2019.

9. The architect was working for the Urbanism Service of the Directorate-General of Public Works in Communications since 1965.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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