

## OUTROS BAIROS

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Outros Bairros Project

### Context

The demographic growth seen during the 20th century will lead the world population to approach seven billion in the year 2030, formalizing an inversion in the location of the people, leading to occupy, in greater numbers, the urban centers and to the detriment of the rural areas. In South American, African and Asian countries, this phenomenon has caused the emergence of megacities such as São Paulo, Mexico City, Cairo, Kinshasa, Mumbai or Seoul, since the beginning of the 20th century. The topic of urban peripheries has become central to discussing their future.

In Brazil, the country in Latin America where the phenomenon has gained a large proportion, urbanist John Turner, described in the book *The Planet of Slum* by Mike Davis (2005) as one of “the friends of the poor”, it is told to say back in 1968: «They present to me housing estates as a solution, and they seem like a problem. They present to me favelas as a problem, and they seem like a solution».

In the case of Cape Verde, cities began to develop, since the 1940s, with problems related to housing and urbanism that, increasingly, raised an imperative need to discuss their future urban development. Between this time and the 1980s, the period in which began the first plans for territorial organization of cities in the Country, some attempts at regulatory actions for spatial planning were made, which, having not been applied, allowed only the punctual appearance of planned growth zones.

The peri-urban areas today concentrate a significant part of the housing production of the main cities – Praia and Mindelo – and were covered by detailed urbanization plans, whose predicted areas of occupation run out and where the informal occupation begins to gain scale.

The existing diversity raises, in parallel to what happened in other places in the world, such as Portugal, Brazil, Argentina or Colombia, interpreting these areas in a way that better connects them, looking for greater urban equity, as well as thinking about new ways of interpreting the territory.

According to Scott (2000) the conflicts of interest between the different inhabitants of a place are not surprising; more disturbing are the contradictions that arise between themselves on certain occasions. However, these contradictions are not exclusive to the most invisible places. Dependency relationships and the silencing of one's own voice, revealing dependency, do not prevent the possibility of verifying the existence of consistent and independent opinions. At a formal level, it can be said that subordinate groups, such as those living in territories of resistance, need to achieve political and civil rights to counter the constraints imposed on their previously defined social position.

Using the city of Mindelo as a practical case of action, we created this pilot initiative within the areas of Alto de Bomba, Covada de Bruxa and Fernando Pó, in order to put into practice a collaborative and participatory action strategy, aiming to implement knowledge on urban practice in the center of political, technical and ethical discussions.

### **Strategy**

The urban rehabilitation of a place with the precarious characteristics found in Alto de Bomba, requires the design team's daily immersion in the neighborhood, seeing and feeling the everyday life of the residents. That's why, since the launch of the project, two groups of 10 interns have joined the team, one from M\_EIA University, University Institute of Art, Technology and Culture and one from Jean Piaget University, in order to ensure the apprehension for future generations of architects and engineers.

The materialization of the strategy takes place through the initial characterization of each area, the analysis of the collected data allows the construction of a strategic plan – we call it the intervention plan – which sets the scenarios and provides possible solutions for physical and social issues. It contemplates the infrastructure, the design of surfaces, the collective equipment and, above all, creating moments of conversation that allow discussing each phase of the plan, listening to the voice of the citizens and the silences of the place, as well as including at least 50% of local residents in the estimated workforce of a starting project.

After installing our office in a local house, you could notice the enhancement/impact it had in the ongoing process of the transformation. The daily participation of residents, workers and our team in discussions about the project and the work is accompanied by meetings and actions on different topics – like rap and hip hop, agroecology, social participation, education, architecture, urbanism, among others – which reinforce the understanding and use of new public spaces, as well as increasing the proximity and allowing us to listen to and understand the constraints and courage that make Alto de Bomba this energetic place.

«We stop listening to voices that are different,  
silences that are different»  
(Couto, Mia, 2005: 123).

Since the conclusion of the first work, two places of encounter have been rescued and adapted, preserving and enhancing the micro sociability of the neighborhood: the table games-square, usually used for the elderly to find themselves in *bisca* and *uril*, and the basketball court, where the youngsters grow up and learn how to dribble and play. In the near future, more precisely during the third trimester, three more projects will be launched in Alto de Bomba, in order to complete the task and move on to two other areas, Fernando de Pó and Covada de Bruxa, to supply the urban deficit found there.

Just as the voices of Alto de Bomba slowly infiltrate this collective action, so do the local workers and available workshops: bricklayers, locksmiths and carpenters – are included in the design, production and execution of pavements, urban furniture, guards, among others.

The web of relationships and actions that was built and is lived daily aims to strengthen, even more, the way of life of a place that arose from the resistance and resilience of its residents.















**Promoter:** MIOTh - Ministry of Infrastructure, Spatial Planning and Housing

**Partner:** CMSV - São Vicente City Council

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