

## ***Narratives on women architects in former Africa colonised by Portuguese rule: professional profiles based on training practices***

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### ***Abstract***

*In “The Canon and the Void”, Meltem Gürel and Kathryn Anthony pointed to the lack of references to the work and lives of women architects as a persistent gap in the historiography followed by North American schools of Architecture (2016). This gap had been identified since 1980s by Karen Kingsley’s well-known account of the teaching of architectural history (1988). Women’s non-representation in careers continues today as a condition of inequality beyond the school benches and is arguably a direct result of architecture history’s lack of investment in understanding the female professional role. Accordingly, the architectural historiography produced by the Portuguese-speaking academy has only very recently begun to provide answers to questions about who were the women architects working in the former Portuguese colonial territories in Africa and what was their social background and professional training. Based on archival work, interviews and fieldtrips, this presentation aims to fill a gap in the architectural history of the African countries formerly colonised by the Portuguese by tracing different professional positions played by women. I propose to study five female architects – Carlota Quintanilha, Antonieta Jacinto, Maria Emília Caria, Ana Torres and Assunção Paixão – to describe different professional profiles, distinguishing between forerunners, experts and locals. I will start with the portrait of the first female architects to emigrate to Africa, still supported by the family structure, during the 1950s. These women, here considered as the forerunners, stood out above all from the attention given to the work of their male partners. Then the analysis will move to the beginning of the colonial/liberation wars, in the 1960s, where the need for planners with the ability to read the territory from a regional perspective, together with the technical requests of very demanding geographical, economic and social conditions, paved the way for experts, who tried to find design and policy solutions from offices based in Lisbon. The paper will close during the 1970s, a decade which prepared the ground for a set of women born in Africa or from families already settled on the continent, attentive to the needs of local communities concentrated in self-produced neighbourhoods such as musseques or caniços. These “African locals” chose to remain in their countries and not return to the former “metropolis”, since the latter was not really their home. They were responsible for keeping the*

*Public Works apparatus running during the troubled times of transition to independence. However, they were often discarded as political systems normalised and transfers of power came to an end. The aim is to understand how the presence of these women affected different actors and agendas in historical times of transition, linking training and professional practice in a ground-breaking study.*

**Keywords:** *Women architects, Colonial architecture, Carlota Quintanilha, Antonieta Jacinto, Maria Emília Caria, Ana Torres, Assunção Paixão, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique*

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## **Summary**

*Among the women architects who worked in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, I will focus on a group of five architects – Carlota Quintanilha, Antonieta Jacinto, Maria Emília Caria, Ana Torres and Assunção Paixão – to describe different professional profiles, which will be distinguished between forerunners, experts and locals. The study will start from the portray of the first female architects to emigrate to Africa, still supported by their family structure, during the 1950s, considered here as forerunners. The analysis will then move to the beginning of the colonial/liberation wars, in the 1960s, when the need for planners opened the way for experts, who tried to find design solutions and policies from Lisbon-based offices. Finally, the article closes with the 1970s, a decade which prepared the ground for women architects born in Africa or from families already settled on the continent. These women were attentive to the needs of local communities settled in self-produced neighbourhoods such as the musseques or the caniços. These African locals chose to remain in their countries and not return to the former "metropolis", and were responsible for keeping the Public Works apparatus running during the transition to their countries' independence.*

**Keywords:** *Women architects, Colonial architecture, Carlota Quintanilha, Antonieta Jacinto, Maria Emília Caria, Ana Torres, Assunção Paixão, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique.*

## 1. Introduction

Earlier in 2006, Meltem Gürel and Kathryn Anthony identified the lack of references to the work and lives of women architects as a persistent gap in the historiography followed by North American schools of Architecture.<sup>1</sup> This gap had been identified at least since the 1980s by Karen Kingsley's well-known account on the teaching of architectural history.<sup>2</sup> Recently, in 2021, Kathleen James-Chakraborty's research project "The Expansion Agency: Women, Race and the Global Dissemination of Modern Architecture" was awarded a grant by the European Research Council. The proposal accurately acknowledged that "decade after decade, women (...) studying architecture report that they never learnt about the work of people like them when they were in architecture school"<sup>3</sup>, thus echoing the same gap. Women's non-representation in careers continues today as a condition of inequality beyond the school benches and is arguably a direct result of architecture history's lack of investment in understanding the professional role of females. In line with some of the current challenges faced by the (scarce) narratives about female protagonists, the architectural historiography produced by the Portuguese-speaking academy has only very recently begun to provide answers to (simple) questions such as: who were the women architects working in the former Portuguese colonial territories in Africa? What was their social background and professional training? What were their struggles for professional recognition? Based on archival work, interviews and fieldtrips, this paper aims to fill a gap in the architectural history of the African countries formerly colonised by the Portuguese by tracing different professional roles played by women. The recognition of the value of academic training, in particular, is key: one of the first questions to emerge from the research on "women architects in former Portuguese colonial Africa" has been precisely the late arrival of these women trained in Portuguese schools.<sup>4</sup> So far, the ongoing mapping of women architects who worked in former Portuguese Africa has brought together only nine names; yet, it is already possible to start tracing their trajectories from training to their destinations and different roles assumed. In this paper, I propose to narrow the group down to five female architects – Carlota Quintanilha, Antonieta Jacinto, Maria Emília Caria, Ana Torres and Assunção Paixão – to establish a categorisation based on three professional profiles:

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<sup>1</sup> Meltem Gürel and Kathryn Anthony, "The Canon and the Void," *Journal of Architectural Education* 59, no. 3 (2016): 66-76.

<sup>2</sup> Karen Kingsley, "Gender Issues in Teaching Architectural History," *Journal of Architectural Education* 41, no. 2 (1988): 21-25.

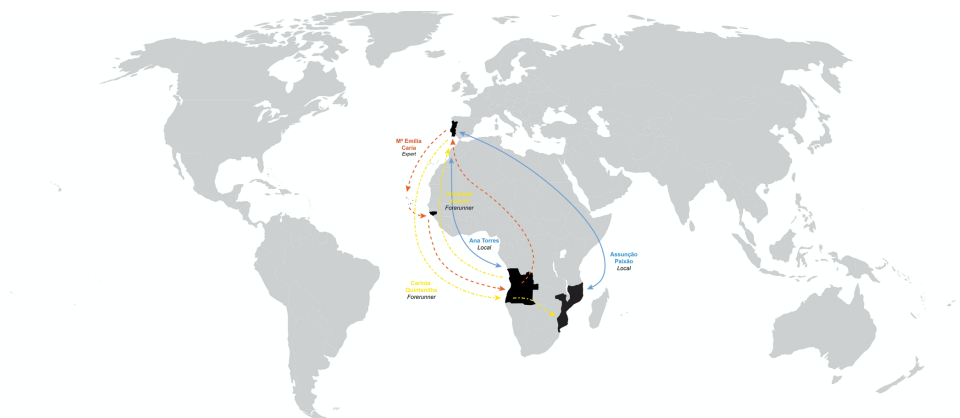
<sup>3</sup> "Professor Kathleen James-Chakraborty awarded ERC Grant," (April 22, 2021) News and Events, UCD College of Arts and Humanities (online, accessed 2 March 2023).

<sup>4</sup> See Ana Vaz Milheiro and Filipa Fiúza, "Women Architects in Portugal: Working in Colonial Africa before the Carnation Revolution (1950–1974)" Special number: Becoming a Gender Equity Democracy: Women and Architecture Practice in Spain and Portugal (1960s–1980s). *Arts*, vol. 9, no. 3 (2020)

*forerunners*, *experts* and *locals*. However, these women were certainly accompanied by other female architects whose roles are still to be contextualized. In future research, the goal is to temper their protagonism and trace a historiography less dependent on isolated figures.

## 2. Objectives

This article will start by portraying the first female architects who emigrated to Africa during the 1950s, still supported by their family structure. These women, here characterized and inquired as *forerunners*, stood out despite the attention given to the work of their male partners. The analysis will then move to the beginning of the colonial/liberation wars, in the 1960s, when the need for planners who could read the territory from a regional perspective, together with the technical demands of very challenging geographical, economic and social conditions, paved the way for *experts*. These women mainly tried to find design solutions and policies from offices based in Lisbon. Finally, the paper will close during the 1970s, a decade which prepared the ground for a set of women born in Africa or from families already settled on the continent, who were attentive to the needs of local communities living in self-produced neighbourhoods such as “*musseques*” or “*caniços*” (slums). These African *locals* chose to remain in their countries and not return to the former “metropolis”, since the latter was not really their home. They were responsible for keeping the former Colonial Public Works (CPW) apparatus running during the troubled times of transition to independence. However, they were often discarded from their roles and positions as political systems normalised and transfers of power came to an end. The aim of this presentation is not to trace biographical perspectives of the mentioned women, but to understand how their presence affected different actors and agendas in historical times of transition, by linking training and professional practice through a ground-breaking study.



**Map 1. Migratory movements of the five women architects mentioned in the article according to the categories: forerunners, experts and locals (1953-1975).** © Ana Vaz Milheiro (2023)

Name	Birthplace	Date of Birth/Death	School	Graduation	CODA or Final exam [Architect Diploma]	Work in Africa	Practice & Partnerships	Other activities
Maria Carlota de Carvalho e Quintanilha	Coimbra, Portugal	1923-2015	EBAL (1944-1948) EBAP (1948-1953)	1953	Nursery (classroom; sewing; nursery) in Vila de Rei, Portugal	Angola (1953-1968), Mozambique (1956-1972)	Independent practice; João José Tinoco (husband) and other architects (after divorce)	High school and technical teacher
Maria Emília Marques Caria	Santarém, Portugal	1926-2000	ESBAL	1957	?	Cape Verde; Guinea-Bissau; Angola (1961-1974)	Serviço de Urbanismo da DSH/NDGDP, Ministério do Ultramar [Urbanism Service of DSH/NDGDP of the Ministry of Overseas]	Not applicable
Antonieta Jacinto	Kahala, Huambo, Angola	1930-2021	ESBAL	1957	School group (nursery; primary school; sports equipment; accommodation for staff and teachers), Luanda, Angola	Angola (1956-1960)	Independent practice; Francisco Silva Dias (husband) while working in CPW (probably the first woman to hold this position)	?
Maria de Assunção Paixão	Lisbon, Portugal	1943	ESBAL	1973	Plano Parcial das Lagoas, Lourenço Marques (now Maputo), Mozambique	Mozambique (after 1970). Family lived in Mozambique	Gabinete de Urbanização e Habitação da Região de Lourenço Marques-GUARLM (1970-1975) after independence was transferred to the new PNW Services	Not applicable
Ana Hermínia Vilela Simões Torres	Dondo, Kwanza Norte, Angola	1945-2006	ESBAL	1974	Study of the museums, spatial organisation and housing, Luanda, Angola	Angola (after 1972). Family lived in Angola	Trainee at the Urban Planning Department of Luanda (1972) after independence became head of the Department of Architecture of the Buildings Directorate of the Ministry of Construction and Housing	?

**Table 1. Biographical data of Quintanilha, Caria, Jacinto, Paixão and Torres cross-referenced with their academic career, stay and professional partnerships in Africa.** © Ana Vaz Milheiro (2023). Table from research carried out in the project *WomArchStruggle-Women architects in former Portuguese colonial Africa: gender and struggle for professional recognition (1953-1985)* (2022.01720.PTDC) with the support of L.M. Silva.

### 3. Being a woman architect in the Portuguese African colonies between Second World War and the rise of the new nations

#### 3.1. The first wave of women architects in Africa: profiling the *forerunners*

Maria Carlota Quintanilha (Coimbra, 1923 – Lisbon, 2015), one of the Portuguese women architects most biographed by Portuguese historiography,<sup>5</sup> was a *forerunner*. It would be possible to include other female architects in this group, such as Antonieta Candida Pires Jacinto (Kahala, 1930 – Lisbon, 2021), but the article will not ponder her in much detail since Jacinto's life has not yet been fully studied. Together, Quintanilha and Jacinto opened a fresh chapter in the architectural culture in Angola by settling in this territory in the 1950s. This was the beginning of the final period of Portuguese colonisation, marked by strong economic investment in Africa. The *forerunners'* era was a time of equal treatment within the profession. In fact, the scarcity of technicians in the colonial territories gave women architects an advantage over their metropolitan colleagues. Quintanilha and Jacinto's stays in Angola, brief in both cases, illustrated the so-called “progressive” policies of the colonial state, involving the creation of large territorial infrastructures and urban “modernization”. Plans entailed the colonization of inland regions, such as Cunene, where Quintanilha settled with her husband and architect João José Tinoco, while participating in large-scale hydroelectric projects, such as the Biópio Dam.

<sup>5</sup> Ana Vaz Milheiro, “Maria Carlota Quintanilha, uma arquitecta em África,” *JA – Jornal Arquitectos*, Ser Mulher, no. 241 (2011): 20-25; Elisiário Miranda, “Modernidade, progresso e permanência: infraestruturas de arquitetura moderna na antiga província ultramarina de Moçambique,” *Actas do 2º Congresso Internacional de História da Construção Luso-Brasileira* (2016): 1121-1133; Ana Magalhães, “Migrações do moderno: arquitetura na diáspora – Angola e Moçambique (1948-1975)” (PhD thesis, Universidade Lusíada de Lisboa, 2015).

Jacinto, on the other hand, joined the Luanda Public Works Division, where she was the first woman (as far as research can tell). Outside the public service, she maintained a partnership with her husband and architect Francisco Silva Dias, allowing her to work as a liberal and to co-author important public commissions, namely at the Liceu de Saurimo (1958-1959, in the former village of Henrique de Carvalho, Lunda Sul) in the northern border area of Angola, now considered a “modern landmark”. Her work as a female urban planner would be visible in the territory, through the plans for Porto Alexandre or Baía dos Tigres in 1958. Jacinto also worked with the indigenous population of Luanda, settled in peripheral neighbourhoods of the Angolan capital, for which she designed local facilities. For both Quintanilha and Jacinto, Africa represented the opportunity to stand out as professionals. However, when Jacinto left Angola, in 1960, she disappeared from the professional circuit, unlike her husband, who would later stand out for a successful career. This course of events confirms that, nonetheless, Africa was a doubtful professional venture back in the so-called “metropolis”.

Quintanilha, on the contrary, migrated in 1956 to Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, in Mozambique, where her paternal family had recently been settled. It was in the Mozambican capital that she truly began her life as an architect designer, while also taught at the high school and technical school. Until 1966, the date of her divorce, Quintanilha was the co-author with her husband and other architects of a unique set of modern works for the northern region of the country: Nampula, Liguinha and Pemba. These were mainly public facilities, airports and buildings linked to the colonial administration. Quintanilha returned to Lisbon only in 1972. Her career continued in the service of the Portuguese Ministry of Education, where her technical and plastic skills would be eclipsed for reasons that historiography has not yet been able to explain.

Both Jacinto and Quintanilha were linked to a tropical architecture of modern affiliation and have emerged in research as central figures for the modern colonial culture that arose in former Portuguese Africa. In previous articles,<sup>6</sup> I have hypothesised that this attention was linked to the importance of their architect partners and husbands in later works and especially in studies conducted on the Modern Movement in Colonial Africa.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the presence of their husbands in their professional career is the first distinctive factor of the *forerunners*’ group, as explained later in this paper.

It is essential to notice that the reception of these two women’s work in Africa took different paths. Jacinto’s value has been practically reduced to a single work – the school facilities in Saurimo –, while Quintanilha saw her Mozambican career featured in the most relevant

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<sup>6</sup> Ana Vaz Milheiro, “Architecture between Colonialism and Independence: Being a Woman Architect in Former Portuguese Africa (1953-1979),” E. Dainese (ed.) (2023, forthcoming, under review).

<sup>7</sup> Miranda, “Modernidade...”; Magalhães, “Migrações...”.

historiography on architecture produced in the country during the colonial period. Once again, this outcome is arguably linked to the partnership she had with her husband for the first ten years of her stay in the present-day city of Maputo. One of the challenges for historiography dealing with *forerunners* remains to separate the careers of these women from their husbands, overcoming the wife-husband entanglement that could be described as the Denise Scott-Brown/Robert Venturi syndrome.<sup>8</sup>



**Fig. 1. Antonieta Jacinto & Francisco Silva Dias, current Saurimo High School, Angola, 1957-1958.**

© Margarida Quintã (2014)

A second key issue in understanding the *forerunners*' careers concerns their academic training. Quintanilha's apprenticeship at the two schools that trained architects in Portugal at the time – the Architecture sections of the Lisbon (EBAL) and Oporto (EBAP) Fine Arts Schools – is now greatly known. Quintanilha joined EBAL in 1944 and finished her studies at EBAP, where she was transferred to in 1948. Five years later she completed her final work in a compulsory exam for those wishing to practise the profession, entitled Competition for the Diploma of Architect (commonly known as CODA). Expressively, not all women who studied architecture had the ambition to become architectural designers, so they avoided taking this “exam”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, among others, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: the forgotten symbolism of architectural form* (Cambridge; Londres: MIT Press, 1977); Kester Rattenbury and Samantha Hardingham (eds). *Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown: Learning from Las Vegas* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> See Leonor Matos Silva, “Marriage and the school of architecture in the 1940s: the case of Bixa (Lisbon, 1926-),” ICAG presentation (2023, forthcoming).



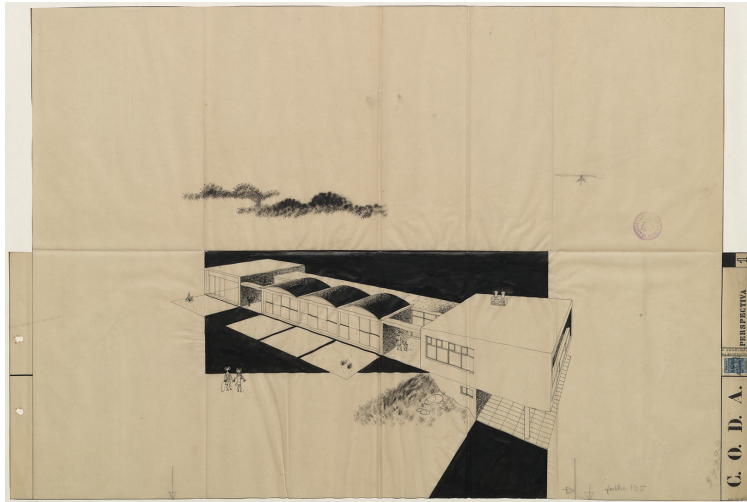


Fig. 2 Maria Carlota Quintanilha, Kindergarten in Vila de Rei, 1953. Project submitted for the Competition for the Diploma of Architect. © Portugal, Archive of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Oporto

In her CODA, Quintanilha presented a Corbusian-style kindergarten for Vila de Rei, a small town in the Beira Interior region of Portugal, far from the large urban centres of Lisbon and Oporto. Her commitment to modern culture, which Quintanilha herself would later attribute to the influence of her then-future husband, was already evident in this project, which was an important point in her biography. The kindergarten drawings would have repercussions in her later work, not only in terms of graphic representation, but also regarding technical, functional and aesthetic choices. Working with sun exposure, creating hygienic and bright spaces,<sup>10</sup> and respecting children's ergonomics were requirements described in the CODA that not only reinforced the mentioned Quintanilha's affiliation with modern culture, but also showed her up-to-date knowledge of the fundamentals embedded in the design of this type of equipment. No connection has yet been made between Quintanilha's proposal and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the International Union of Architects in Lisbon<sup>11</sup> that same year, which included an exhibition on schools in the Nordic countries that was very well received in Portugal.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Maria Carlota Quintanilha. *Descriptive and Justifying Memory*, 1953, Faculty of Architecture of the University of Oporto: FAUP/CDUA/E(S)BAP/CA/CODA/131.

<sup>11</sup> UIA Congress: "The Architect at the Crossroads", Lisbon, 20-27 September, 1953.

<sup>12</sup> See Ana Tostões, *Os verdes anos na arquitectura portuguesa dos anos 50* (Porto: Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, 1997).



It should be noted that the programmes favoured by young women architecture students in their CODAs have been interpreted as choices determined by gender. School facilities for early childhood were often the chosen programme of the first female graduates<sup>13</sup> – who can be described as “pioneers” in the non-colonial context – and would be the topic selected by Antonieta Jacinto in 1957. Jacinto presented her CODA at EBAL for a school complex in Luanda (including teaching equipment and accommodation for staff and teachers).<sup>14</sup> This was probably one of the first EBAL’s final projects for a colonial capital city and Jacinto’s African birthplace was probability decisive in her choice.

*Forerunners* shared a third aspect: they exercised activities in parallel with their professional practice, e.g. being technical and high school teachers. These roles were socially accepted for women with higher education diplomas in a wide variety of areas. Quintanilha’s mother, for instance, was a Biology teacher in girl’s schools.<sup>15</sup> While still a student in Oporto, Quintanilha requested permission to teach. She would continue this task in Lourenço Marques and later considered teaching to be her greatest professional contribution – in contradiction with recent analyses that place her as an exemplary female architect. Following Quintanilha’s career, it is possible to summarize the three characteristics of a *forerunner*: 1) a woman of white ethnicity and European origin; 2) married and sharing the authorship of architectural projects with her husband; 3) and reconciling the exercise of a liberal profession with other civil service roles, often as a secondary school teacher. While this description fits Quintanilha’s profile directly, it doesn’t exactly match the portrait of Antonieta Jacinto, leaving room for further questions. Jacinto was born in Africa (a subject to be later addressed) and returned to the continent already married to an architect. She would work in the Public Service as a technician, keeping within what was then considered the “proper acts of the profession”.

### 3.2. “Circulating experts”: the “Empire” in closed circuit

The demand for technicians to promote territorial infrastructures across the Portuguese “third empire”<sup>16</sup> reached its highest during the colonial war (1961-1974). In the architectural field, this need was accompanied by the growing attention given to discipline in Portugal, in particular

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<sup>13</sup> See Joana Filipa Roxo, *The Lady Architect: Maria José Estanco* (Master’s thesis, ISCTE-IUL, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> Antonieta Jacinto, *Project Programme for CODA, Lisbon, 29/10/1956* (4 pages). File of Academic Process. Archive of the Academic Services of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon. ESBAL/FAUL/n.20/Box7

<sup>15</sup> Milheiro, “Maria Carlota...”.

<sup>16</sup> William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *The Third Portuguese Empire (1825-1975): A Study in Uneconomic Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

from the ministry Duarte Pacheco, a key figure for the public acceptance of the profession.<sup>17</sup> This last period of Portuguese colonialism, which began with Brazilian independence in 1822, would come to an end with the liberation movements that led to the constitution of new African nations in 1973/1974 and 1975.<sup>18</sup> This section of the article will focus on the last two decades of the mentioned period, corresponding to settlement of women architects in the former Portuguese Africa. These women – here enquired as *experts* – were employed in public administration positions. By this time, there were already structures to support architects in different jobs, from designing buildings to regional and urban planning. The main head of these offices was the Colonial Urbanisation Office (GUC), based in Lisbon and created at the end of the Second World War. GUC addressed different programmes, from health, and housing to urban planning.<sup>19</sup> It had different names and organisational charts over time, extending its work to other typologies and covering all the former Portuguese colonial territories, from Timor to Macao, including Africa. The architect Maria Emilia Caria (Santarém, 1926 – Lisbon, 2000) entered one of GUC’s successors in 1962, when she appeared for the first time in an official record (as far as research can prove).<sup>20</sup> Caria is a “faceless” architect since there are no photo records of her. The only records available are her training archives at ESBAL (then known as the *Escola Superior de Belas Artes*, Lisbon School of Fine Arts, as previously mentioned), and some accounts of colonial history and Portuguese cooperation in post-independence Africa,<sup>21</sup> beyond the oral testimonies of former colleagues. Previous surveys of Caria’s career as an architect and urban planner in Africa revealed her professional awareness of architecture culture, especially concerning the objectives of international institutions for countries then described as “third world”. When Caria joined the Ministry of Overseas Affairs (Ministério do Ultramar – MU), Portugal was committed to achieving international support, following many of the directives advocated by organisations such as the United Nations. Caria carried out a series of actions that would make her a key figure in the management of regional and urban planning in geographically smaller colonies, such as Cape Verde and present-day Guinea-Bissau. Caria designed plans for most of the islands in the archipelago and was responsible for an equally significant number of urban interventions in the Guinean capital. The colonial war became an

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<sup>17</sup> See José-Augusto França, *A Arte em Portugal no Século XX, 1911-1961* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2009, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 1974).

<sup>18</sup> See, among others, Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and António Costa Pinto (eds.), *Portugal e o fim do colonialismo: dimensões internacionais* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 2014); Fernando Rosas, Mário Machaqueiro and Pedro Aires Oliveira, *O Adeus ao Império: 40 anos de descolonização portuguesa* (Lisbon: Nova Vega, 2017)

<sup>19</sup> Ana Vaz Milheiro, *Nos Trópicos sem Le Corbusier* (Lisboa: Relógio d’Água Editores, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Eurico Gonçalves Machado, “Serviço de Urbanização,” November 6, 1962: 3, *Cape Verde Information* (various). AHU: IPAD7908.

<sup>21</sup> 13.02/30 - Co-operation with the People's Republic of Angola. UTA facilities in Luanda for liaising with the EEC. Report. Mission by architect Maria Emília Caria, 1987. Camões Institute’s Archives (formerly IPAD).

obstacle to most of her proposals, since the Portuguese state's priorities were then directed towards the warfare stages on the mainland, leaving the islands to their own devices, as often appears in administrative reports. In any case, these events don't erase the fact that Caria was at ease among the male members of the colonial administration. She was the only woman among other three male urban planning colleagues in the MU's General Directorate of Public Works and Communications (DGOPC-MU).<sup>22</sup> She often worked with men, also MU technicians, and usually exercised a decision-making role of greater responsibility, given the strategic dimension of her area of activity – urban and regional planning – within the colonial apparatus.<sup>23</sup> These circumstances made her a feared character, as noticed by the testimony of Leão do Sacramento Monteiro, governor of Cape Verde in 1969, in a letter to the Minister of Overseas Territories. Monteiro described Caria's tasks and highlighted her prominence in colonial circles.<sup>24</sup>

Caria's longest missions in Africa could last almost a year. During these large periods, she worked with numerous players, from governors, bureaucrats and officials from the colonial administration to officials from the different CPW departments, designers and fellow architects. Caria essentially dealt with collected data, then adding an analysis collated by on-site observation, as shown by her valuable photographic surveys. She was often accompanied by auxiliary staff who travelled from Portugal as draftsmen, specially recruited to accompany her. She returned to Lisbon whenever it was necessary to "draw", taking breaks from fieldwork. She travelled by all means of communication and made her own photographic records, which is one of the reasons why we don't know of any portraits of her despite the numerous iconographic surveys she signed. When Caria was away, members of the CPW local services continued her work by collecting topographical data or producing cartography for new proposals.

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<sup>22</sup> Caria was 35 when he joined the DGOPC's urban planning department, working with architects Mário de Oliveira, who was 12 years older and had extensive experience in colonial policies and settlements, and Leopoldo de Almeida, who specialised in urban planning in Milan and had just returned from Timor. Three years later, this group was joined by architect António Moreira Veloso, a former member of the team working in Beira (Mozambique). The trajectories of these architects reinforce the scale and dimension of their work as "circulating experts".

<sup>23</sup> One of the regular partners was architect António Saragga Seabra, from the architectural service. Both were members of the Urbanisation Working Group in Cape Verde. In 2013, Seabra gave an oral testimony about Caria that is still one of the main sources about her. António Saragga Seabra, Interview by A.V. Milheiro for the exhibition "Africa - Visões do Gabinete de Urbanização Colonial, 1944-1974". Lisbon, Garagem Sul - Centro Cultural de Belém, 7 December 2013 - 28 February 2014 (event organised as part of the research project *The Colonial Urbanisation Offices: Architectural Culture and Practice*, PTDC/AURAI/104964/2008), Lisbon, 17 November (video recording, about 1h30). Seabra died in 2015, and his disappearance made it even more difficult to obtain direct testimonies from people who had worked with Caria professionally.

<sup>24</sup> Leão do Sacramento Monteiro, "To the Minister of Overseas Affairs from the Office of the Governor of Cape Verde", December 16, 1969. *Cape Verde - Service Commission of the Architect Maria Emília Caria*. AHU: 7631.



**Fig. 3. Maria Emília Caria, Bissau, Guinea-Bissau. Photographic Documentation collected during architect Caria's Mission to Guinea-Bissau (February to April, 1966) vol. V, Town Planning and Housing of the General Council for Public Works and Communications, Lisbon: Ministry of Overseas Affairs, AHU: 11344 © Portugal, Overseas Historical Archive -PT-AHU**

One of the questions Caria's production raises is the extent of her contact with local populations. Her view of colonial peri-urban areas, essentially recorded through images and a few comments in official reports, would anticipate the weight later given to local communities in transforming the African habitat with urban characteristics.<sup>25</sup> She was also a pioneer in moving from a more stylistic modern approach to the impact of applying spatial anthropology studies to African territorial infrastructure. This approach was perhaps a reflection of her training at ESBAL, where reforms in architectural teaching were happening by following international trends closer to the Social Sciences and Humanities' approaches. Caria fostered frameworks that were sensitive to local traditions, as made clear by her descriptions and records of suburban neighbourhoods. As a result, she understood "informal" architecture as local vernacular architecture and was eager not to demolish the self-produced buildings that were an integral part of these communities. This step towards understanding the new realities experienced across booming African cities was in line with the metropolitan Portuguese architectural culture, which was also questioning modern orthodoxy by surrendering to international critical voices.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, Caria's position was biased against the dominant trends of her male colleagues working in Africa, who were still focused on an architectural culture based on "tropical modern" trends (meaningful, the linguistic expression that helped to disseminate the work of the *forerunners*).

Caria enjoyed great freedom of movement, probably due to her status as a married woman without children. Marriage was a social factor greatly valued in the Estado Novo's appraisal of

<sup>25</sup> See Milheiro and Fiúza, "Women Architects in Portugal..."

<sup>26</sup> See Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* (Lisboa: SNA, 1961, 2 vol.)

the family structure. Caria's career was key to drawing our second profile: the *expert*. She was part of a group of professionals who travelled around the former Portuguese "Empire", from Praia to Bissau, via Luanda, always within a closed "imperial" circuit. As Johan Lagae & Kim De Raedt pointed out, this group was "off the radar" and out of the historiographical narratives,<sup>27</sup> often obscured by their departments and institutional structures. These specialised technicians included women who can be classified as "circulating experts" or "nomadic specialists", sharing common traits: 1) European origin and roots in the "metropolis"; 2) family autonomy and professional independence in the CPW teams; 3) working preferably in urban and regional planning.

### 3.3. Moving to independent nations: the role of the so-called "African Locals" (*naturais de África*)

A third and final group of professionals will be here identified as the African *locals* or "*naturais de África*", as the "white" people born in the colonised territories were then called. In this regard, *locals* were women architects with roots in Africa who remained in their jobs and in their new countries after independence. Ana Hermínia Vilarigues Simões Torres (Dondo, 1945 – Lisbon, 2006) and Maria da Assunção Perestello Marques Paixão (Lisbon, 1943), both belonging to this group, were born during the Second World War, had family backgrounds in Angola and Mozambique and were the second generation of Portuguese settlers. Ana Torres' parents were from the Portuguese region of Viseu, and their daughter was born in Angola.<sup>28</sup> Assunção Paixão, on the other hand, was born accidentally in Portugal in 1943, during her family's short stay, and left for Africa when she was just two months old.<sup>29</sup>

Given the dates of Torres and Paixão graduation, they were certainly colleagues at ESBAL. Both ended their training shortly before 1974 and briefly practised their profession when their countries became independent. Their CODA themes were also very similar, centred on the so-called "native" communities and their interaction with demographic pressure in the two main Portuguese colonial cities: Luanda, Angola, and Lourenço Marques, Mozambique. Although these works were still developed in a colonial context and in public institutions, they had a major impact on the future careers of both architects in the soon-to-be independent countries. The easy

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<sup>27</sup> Johan Lagae and Kim De Raedt, "Editorial - Global experts 'Off radar'," *ABE Journal* 4 (2013) (online, accessed June 20, 2022).

<sup>28</sup> *Full Narrative Birth Certificate* of Ana Hermínia Vilarigues Simões Torres, Province of Angola 8 September 1963. Archive ESBAL/FAUL/000138.

<sup>29</sup> Assunção Paixão's family was based in Lourenço Marques at the time, but had already lived in Guinea and Angola. Her Mozambican mother and Portuguese father first travelled through Bissau (where her eldest sister was born), Lisbon (where she was born) and Moçâmedes, now Namibe, in Angola (where her three younger brothers were born). Interview by Maria da Assunção Paixão with Milheiro e Fiúza in Lisbon, 27 July 2022 (audio recording).

access to communities reported by Torres and Paixão was probably a consequence of their female status, since they were able to interact with the traditional African family where women have always played a fundamental role. This was undoubtedly an advantage over their male colleagues when working in self-produced neighbourhoods.

Ana Torres' internship in the Urban Planning Section of the Luanda City Council (Câmara Municipal de Luanda – CML), in 1972, lasted nine months and was coordinated by the architect José Troufa Real. She worked with the technical team from OTAM (Omnium Technique D'Aménagement, Paris),<sup>30</sup> a French company hired by the municipality to carry out various studies for the new *Luanda Regulatory Plan*. This latest colonial effort to find solutions to Luanda's rapid growth, due to ongoing rural exodus, had been commissioned in the early 1970s and would be concluded three years later. The plan included the *Etude de Typologie des Zones résidentielles futures a Luanda* (OTAM, December 1972), to which Torres was assigned. The study focused on the so-called *musseques*, self-produced neighbourhoods inhabited mostly by Africans.

ESBAL		000138 FICHA DE ALUNO	
NOME <i>Ana Henriqueta Silveira de Azevedo Torres</i>	LIVRO <i>3</i>		
FILIAÇÃO <i>Henrique Simões Torres</i>	FOLIO <i>119</i>		
NATURALIDADE <i>Portugal</i>	PROCESSO <i>14</i>	PRIMEIRA MATRICULA <i>30/9/1984</i>	
PREGUESIA <i>Campanha</i>			
CONCELHO <i>Campanha</i>			
DISTRITO <i>Campanha</i>			
OBS <i>Aprov. no exame de aptidão com 12 val. de dia 14 de Janeiro de 1984 Conclusão favorável de aquisição com a superação final de 18 valores Bom nome</i>		PROVA FINAL OU EXAME DE SAÍDA <i>14/1/1984 Arquitetura 18 VALORES</i>	
		REGISTO N.º <i>330</i> EM <i>13/1/1986</i>	

**Fig. 4** Ana Torres, 1964-1976, student file at the School of Fine Arts © Portugal, Archive of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon

The study promoted the identification of five residential typologies aggregated into “parcels”: *reception, economic, residential, collective and restructuring*. *Reception* corresponded to an upgrade of the *musseques*, targeting a population that was “*noire et proviendra de la strata socio-économique inférieure ... Ce seront des immigrants avec une moyenne de 6 à 7 membres*

<sup>30</sup> Statement by Ana Torres: *Luanda City Council*, 28 September 1973. Archive ESBAL/FAUL/000138.

*par famille*".<sup>31</sup> According to the plan, each plot was to be occupied by two families, giving a maximum of 370 inhabitants per hectare. The houses were to be built by the future inhabitants with "light<sup>32</sup> and traditional" materials. The use of communal toilets or the sharing of smaller units by some residential clusters was permitted. The plan further envisioned these areas to be transformed into economic neighbourhoods, thus representing a social and urban "ascension". Later, in Lisbon, Torres told the ESBAL services that she was taking part in a "study of the musseques – spatial organisation and housing – which [would] serve as support" for their "restructuring,"<sup>33</sup> thus suggesting involvement in the OTAM survey or another very similar one. Ana Torres died in 2006 in Lisbon, following an oncological illness for which she sought treatment in Portugal. During her career in Luanda she developed various programmes, from urban planning to the conversion of modern colonial buildings for residential or administrative use, including projects for expandable living units based on vernacular traditions,<sup>34</sup> probably a remnant of her apprenticeship. After Angola's independence in 1975, she joined the civil service of Luanda City Council, becoming director of the Architecture Department of the Building Services Directorate of the Ministry of Construction and Housing.<sup>35</sup> From this position, Torres worked with Cuban architects involved in cooperation programmes with the Angolan government between 1976 and 1979. She stood out as a professional open to multiculturalism, sharing ideals of cultural independence for the Global South.<sup>36</sup>

Despite being on the opposite coast of southern Africa, Assunção Paixão followed a similar path. She returned to Mozambique's capital as an intern at the newly created Urbanisation and Housing Office of the Lourenço Marques Region (Gabinete de Urbanização e Habitação da Região de Lourenço Marques – GUHARLM), created in 1969,<sup>37</sup> on the eve of the independence of her future country. Paixão was part of the team working on the *Plan for the Valorisation of the Suburban Area of Lourenço Marques* (BASLM). The plan operated in the *Caniço*, an area lacking in urban infrastructure, facilities and sanitation, inhabited mainly by African communities. BASLM included an Urbanisation Plan along Avenida Craveiro Lopes (now

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<sup>31</sup> OTAM, *Etude de Typologie des Zones résidentielles futures a Luanda - formulation préliminaire* (December 1972): 3 [photocopied].

<sup>32</sup> In the sense of "weightless".

<sup>33</sup> Ana Torres, "Dear Mr Director...", 22 November 1973. ESBAL archive: FAUL/000138.

<sup>34</sup> *Application Dossier - Installation Committee of DOCOMOMO Angola*, Luanda (June), 2014.

<sup>35</sup> During Ana Torres' mandate, this Directorate was headed by engineer Valério Guerra Marques, according to engineer Filomeno Saraiva (email correspondence with Maria Filomena do Espírito Santo, Luanda, 12 December 2019).

<sup>36</sup> Jose Antonio Choy López, "Ana Torres, recuerdos de admiración y amistad desde Cuba" [statement on Ana Torres sent by email to Maria Alice Correia], La Habana, 1 November 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Decree-Law 48.860, 08/02/1969. Nuno Simão Gonçalves is studying GUHARLM in his doctoral thesis entitled *Do caniço ao cimento: A evolução suburbana da capital de Moçambique (1892-1992)* (Coimbra: Centre for Social Studies).



Avenida dos Acordos de Lusaka), as well as Plans 1, 2 and 3 for Lagoas, Munhuana and Mafalala. It covered a previously flooded area to the north of today's Mafalala neighbourhood, where there was a dump or *bucaria* until 1970.<sup>38</sup>

Paixão used the *Lagoas Plan* later in her CODA, fulfilling the objective of working with local communities living in precarious peripheries. Along these lines, she refused to join the Lourenço Marques City Council (Câmara Municipal de Lourenço Marques – CMLM), where the main focus remained the so-called “formal” city, occupied mainly by European settlers.<sup>39</sup> Proposals like BASLM were part of the colonial apparatus' psychosocial strategies to “conquer” and control African populations through the instruments of urbanism, amid the liberation struggle. The spatial interventions included the design of thirty-two Units, described by Paixão as a set of community services, such as a health centre, a wash-house,<sup>40</sup> markets, roads and rubbish collection.<sup>41</sup> Among the most visible facilities were the primary schools: the smallest had four classrooms, a teacher's room, sanitary facilities and an outdoor gymnasium. At least two of them remain in Mafalala today.<sup>42</sup>



**Fig. 5 Maria da Assunção Paixão, Unidade 23 primary school, Mafalala, Maputo, Mozambique © Walter Rossa (2013)**

<sup>38</sup> Margarida Calafate Ribeiro, Walter Rossa (ed.), *Mafalala: memórias e espaços de um lugar* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2016).

<sup>39</sup> Before moving to Maputo, Paixão worked in the office of Portuguese architect Miguel Pestana. Interview with Paixão..., 2022.

<sup>40</sup> “These would not work due to the lack of maintenance by the municipality”. Interview with Paixão..., 2022.

<sup>41</sup> “BASLM was the units, the accesses, the rubbish collection, the fountains...”. Interview with Paixão..., 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Schools 22 and 23.

At the time, cartographic records of the *Canico* were still scarce. This shortcoming led to the use of aerial photography as a working methodology to trace the construction of routes to the schools. Paixão declared using the knowledge she had acquired in Lisbon, particularly in the Urbanology classes taught in the final years of her degree, which inspired her to calculate the size of each school according to the population. The plan called for an inventory of self-produced housing and the right to an address, i.e. “the identification of the houses so that the mail could get there”, turning the preexisting *canico* into a legitimately urbanised place.

By the time of Mozambique’s independence, in 1975, Paixão was challenged to fulfil plenty of professional duties since all her teammates returned to Portugal. She remained in charge of the Urbanisation department, but only until a male architect was hired. The role was then given to the Portuguese Roxo Leão, who had no previous experience in Mozambique. This episode shows that unequal professional treatment did not change. In February 1976, the former GUHARLM was transformed into the National Housing Directorate, headed by architect José Forjaz. Even with the recent acknowledgement by research of the impact of this former colonial institution in the immediate post-independence period,<sup>43</sup> Paixão remained an anonymous figure to the point where her authorship of the Mafalala primary schools was almost forgotten by the professional community (both Portuguese and Mozambican).

From the professional paths of Torres and Paixão, the profile of the “African *locals*” – women architects who remained in Africa after independence, playing a key role in the transition of CPW services to technical structures adjusted to the new countries’ needs – can be described as follows: 1) born into families of rooted “European settlers”, whose stays in the “metropolis” corresponded only to periods of training; 2) professional internships in CPW services and specialisation in “informal” geographies; 3) maintaining the same technical positions in PW services after independence.

#### 4. Conclusions

This presentation profiled women who developed their professional careers as architects in former Portuguese colonial Africa. They were a small group of former students in the architecture departments of the Lisbon and Oporto Schools of Fine Arts, the only two schools that graduated architects until 1974, when Estado Novo’s dictatorship came to an end. This political event paved the way for the end of the liberation/colonial wars in Africa and the start of the independence processes. *Forerunners*, the first women architects arriving in the 1950s, worked on an equal footing with their male colleagues, always accompanied by their husbands,

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<sup>43</sup> Nuno Simão Gonçalves, “Policies of (sub)urban management in Lourenço Marques (1875-1975),” *Cabo dos Trabalhos* 12 (2016).

also architects. Despite this background, they benefited from professional recognition that their former colleagues did not have back in Portugal. Their training began in the late 1940s, in the aftermath of the Second World War, and their learning was based on design, which is why they adhered so precisely to modern language as an exemplary plastic and technical expression. Architectural programmes linked to education were among their priorities as part of the exams (CODA) they took in the process of gaining their professional qualifications. This was a topic considered suitable for female students.

The following group of *experts* were “office” women, employed within the Public Works departments and the bureaucracy of the colonial apparatus. These specialists worked within the Portuguese “empire” and circulated through different geographies, thus defying a culture of occupation. By then, in 1960s, the colonial war started. Having attended the school during the 1950s, these women architects witnessed the rise of the social sciences in architecture syllabus. Consequently, greater attention to local communities – more precisely their building and aesthetic traditions – would eventually emerge in projects sensitive to local vernacular cultures.

Finally, the African *locals* appeared in the following decade as a generation of women already born into colonial settler families and therefore with a closer understanding of colonial society and focused on the so-called “communities”. The scale of social and urban problems arising from the concentration of *slums* (“bairros da lata”), for example, would lead to more technocratically rooted approaches discussed in Portuguese academia. These slums surrounding Lisbon and Oporto had their counterparts in Angola and Mozambique, known as *musseques* and *caniços*. These former female students who studied architecture in the transition from the 1960s to the 1970s faced this reality academically and professionally. Also as architects, African *locals* paved the way for and participated in the transition between colonial institutions and the national apparatus. Despite continuing to suffer from gender inequality after the “normalisation” of the new states, these women had an important opportunity to make their professional skills count when national institutions were at their weakest. Their contribution was invaluable in transferring knowledge both to new generations and to new co-operators who changed the direction of architectural culture. This work is a first step towards a stronger narrative to understand the role of women architects in Africa in the recent past.

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