



Nairobi - Reshaping the Slums

Alda RIBERIO COELHO, Student

Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, Portugal
za_alda@yahoo.com

This work has the urban space of the so-called underdevelopment countries as its main scenery. The concepts of underdevelopment, sustainability and emergency will be reviewed in the realm of architecture.

A case study in the context of Mukuru Kwa Njenga - Nairobi, presented as a building project for a library and media lab, in the scope of an international architecture competition was the starting point for a theoretical and practical investigation that tries to reveal how can the architect conciliate the demands and pressures of globalization, with a growth that is sustainable and respectful of cultural values, traditions and local conditions, when intervening in informal settlements in an underdevelopment country.

Starting by an interpretation of this premise in the contemporary architecture field of study, the theoretical investigation is centered in the modern movement and the ways of thinking and doing architecture that arose from it, analyzing the social and human responsibility of the architect as an intervenient in the modeling and organization of space. Analysis advances into the dimension and origin of the world's tragedy, drawing a portrait of the present geopolitical situation and analyzing in which way the colonial disaggregation occurred, turning clear the differences between the two worlds, and showing how the gap is deeply rooted both in the urban organization and in the architectural design of cities.

The progress of the theoretical framework about the informal settlements, their formation and organization, that primarily started through a design for Mukuru Kwa Njenga, and the search for answers both of architecture to the human emergencies as of the role of the architect in these contexts, was recovered in a second phase of practical investigation, with the opportunity to travel to Kenya.

The confrontation with the reality of the informal settlements by visiting the slums of Kibera and Kitui Ndogo, in Nairobi, and the cooperation of a group of people from local NGO's and from the Un-HABITAT department in Nairobi, that intervene ad live in this reality presented a new perspective to the work which resulted in the development of a new proposal of intervention in the slums of Nairobi. The results of this expedition, once again are presented as a building prototype, no further than a most simplified system of housing assemblage for self-construction, whose design was directly inspired by the observation of existing structures.

KEY WORDS: Architecture, sustainability, emergency, underdevelopment, slums, empowerment, Africa.