



Markers of Capitality in Portuguese-Speaking Cities

Madalena CUNHA MATOS, Associate Professor

Technical University of Lisbon, Faculty of Architecture, Portugal
m��unhamatos@fa.utl.pt

Tânia Beisl RAMOS, Researcher

Technical University of Lisbon, Faculty of Architecture, Portugal
taniaramos@fa.utl.pt

Lisbon, Luanda, Maputo and Brasília are the capital cities of the largest and most important countries where Portuguese constitutes the official language and is generally spoken. They are either of Portuguese foundation or were founded in what had been in time a Portuguese colony. At least in part they share a cultural ethos and a linguistic legacy - and they would be incomprehensible without taking into account a significant common political, religious, ethnic and anthropological backdrop.

This paper sets out to investigate the nature of their capital status, at present and in history, in relation to their urban form and urban form evolution. This is done relying on the reading of cartographic, iconographic and bibliographic sources, and is subject to a tentative comparative analysis. Defining an identity - be it at a national, at an infra-national or at a super-national scale - is central to the issue of capitality. As each city asserts or tries to reassert its role as symbol of national sovereignty, new modules of planned sectors are designed and put in action, altering the configuration of the pre-existing urban fabric. The imposition of a rule on the land and subsequently on the built production is of paramount importance, but public buildings have played a crucial role in the formation of the capitality substance. Fortresses, sees, seats of government or municipality and cultural structures amount to the major harbingers of power statement. Public spaces, particularly public squares, built axis and public gardens are also part of the inner definition of capitality, as it has evolved in the 19th and 20th century. The paper itemizes and analyses the main features of capitality found in the political centers of Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique and attempts to relate them in architectural and urban terms.

KEY WORDS: Capital cities, lusophone countries, identity.