

The ill city – several recipes to cure the scourge of Caniço and the handbook of the city councilor without a master

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Various recipes to cure the scourge of Caniço (Maputo, Mozambique) and the handbook of the city councilor without a master¹

"Senmut, the Egyptian, did what he was told to do; a granite house for a queen alone and dead. Are Senmut's children today incapable of doing what they are asked to do: habitable spaces for the millions who live, but who are no longer able to make their own houses out of clay and with their hands, no longer forced to drag granite."

Aldo van Eyok, architect sometimes in the very old city of Amsterdam

The Caniço belt

Just like a huge belt around the city, there is another city where many more people live than all the people in the city – it is the city of the poor and the servants – huge dependence on the city. No one knows for sure how many people are in this other city of sandy roads – some say 150.000, others 300.000. In a few years there will be 600.000, maybe 1.000,000. All these people live without sewers, without water, without light. Their houses are precarious shacks of old zinc, tin, crates, and reeds; at night, it is dangerous to pass through the corridors and access mazes.

Short and loosely commented memory of great municipal works

The Cronistas neighborhood was made at the Sommerchild (Maputo, Mozambique) area. There now live 1.092 bosses and 410 servants in 273 dwellings of various styles.

The streets are narrow, the lots are long, the houses are small, except for the Buccellato wall, which is too big, poor, and ugly. Every house has a garbage can at the door, every yard has a buried cesspool, every block has a mix of voice and chain wires. The Cronistas are the glory colors of urbanization coming and going. How much does it cost us all to make garden cities like that?

Is it only \$100,000 per dwelling?

Garden cities are the playthings of rich people in rich states. You make the slope of the beach for those passing by and those who stay there, to see the sea from above and the camp of tourists is hidden in the bush, with waving canteens at the entrance.

Ponta Vermelha was filled with symmetrical sidewalks and gasoline pumps at the ends.

It was also built the track to Costa do Sol – they say it only cost \$9,000,000.

That was so that we could get to the shrimp by day and chain each other up at night. The runway is for the future – for when the airport moves that way.

The streets that were missing at Carreira de Tiro were asphalted and Craveiro Lopes Avenue was made, fast enough for the president to enter.

They made the sewage discharge onto the beach.

We are now at the end of the disarrangement of Pinheiro Chagas Avenue (the account of this first phase is something up to 7.000,000\$00 – the composition of the disarray will cost at least another so much) and in the Caniço belt were made 5 monumental fountains.

The devil is in the (soaking) details

When the know-it-alls arrived by plane, saw, from above, many people in tin shacks around the city. Worried about it (among other concerns), they quickly hired architects to dream their dream, which was that with many houses, everything was going to be good. The architects did not think or talk – they designed and had some houses made – far away, expensive, and bad (some of them, when it rains, are real lake houses).

Thanks to the provincial economic weakness, only a few were made.

Astronomical accounting unprecedented short scene

To house 300.000 people, it takes about 75.000 dwellings. For 75.000, it takes about 3 750.000,000\$00, plus land, plus water, plus lights, plus phones, plus streets, plus roads, plus avenues – besides the rest...

Assuming that this part of what is missing only costs an extra 25,000\$00 per dwelling (the napkin-sized plots around the airport cost 21,000\$00 each), the expense, not considering transportation and public services, is around 6,000,000,000\$00 – more than the entire budgets and fomentations of one year in Mozambique.

But it is not a question of whether the money is gone – it is that solving the problem with little houses is making the city a huge and terrible monster. The city will reach Marracuene and pass Matola in an endless number of little houses and the current problems will be added to other more serious.

Only those who don't want to have a home, don't have one

(*Slogan in recent and indecent commercial*).

The areas of of Caniço were once granted to people who never had done anything in them, and were content to wait, selling for annual rents the annual right to others to build temporary shacks on their land, but who recently became impatient with the temptation of fabulous businesses. The blind simplicity of housemakers has awakened the land agents who, maneuvering in the confusing forest of cozy offices, sell future nightmares masked as dreams – they shred the land around the city to astronomical profits for themselves – to the detriment of everyone else.

Only those who cannot afford it, don't have a home.

The scourge of Caniço is a long and expensive disease to treat. The kind that cannot be treated in South Africa.

The city is seriously ill.

The city in the resuscitation room

The city has two central areas, that thanks to their rugged topographies, could be digested in the various terrain adventures. They are the slope of Malanga and the barrier of Ponta Vermelha, under the Hotel Cardoso. Unfortunately, in the extension of the Malanga hillside, construction has recently begun as urbanized speculation.

The consolidation of the two areas and the opening of accesses will allow the construction of two housing centers of great density that will include a small part of the inhabitants of Caniço that work in the center, the port, in Polana and in the industrial area of May 1st. Such a solution will bring to the workplace, many people who today spend a large part of the day and night in endless wanderings – it will provide all these people and their families the use of the central city, the use of its cultural, recreational, and social

functions; it will allow them easy access to high schools and night schools and at the same time revitalize the lower city.

Such a solution will provoke and accelerate genuine racial integration.

For these two housing centers to happen, it is essential to carry out many units within the current economic capacity of those who will live there – rentable units and even saleable in condominium for rents of 100\$00 to 400\$00 monthly and others still of income less than 100\$00. It is possible to do such things, with some courage and goodwill, with a lot of work, with many mistakes, with a great piece of imagination and such a handbook for all city councilors.

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Literate handbook of the city councilor without a master.

Patient preparation

a. To really study the problem and invent a flexible, practical, and quick way to act (*being an amateur on Wednesdays and Fridays is not enough*).

b. To obtain the cooperation of the Black people's Center and in it, through exhibition, film, and conversation, explain to the inhabitants of Caniço what is intended to be done and obtain their good will and cooperation (*everyone likes to know and give their opinion about what they want to do*).

c. To form real social aid brigades (*get public assistance even to assist*).

d. To form shack recovery brigades (*removal and reconstruction*).

e. To create a foral and registration section to deal with land readjustments and expropriations, capital gains, compensation, to do the surveys and demarcations and pass titles (*there are so many surveyors standing in the cafes*).

e1. To invent quick processes to solve these matters with few stamps and signatures (*to have a monumental stamp made with all the signatures of all the council signers and hire a general stamper*).

First dressings in the peritoneal belt

f. To mark some streets already defined several times in various urbanization plans (*the plans will only be true when the "bulldozers" work – until then, they are expensive and pretty papers that used to fly*).

g. To open some streets. These streets will bring water, electricity, and sewers to the Caniço. There will be hope for 300,000 improved lives.

So that not too many people will despair, so that the poor will not be terribly harmed, every shack that is needed to move will be immediately rebuilt in another area by the

recovery brigades. The constructions are easy and easily movable. Those moved will be given the option of occupying the first units of the new housing centers.

h. To obtain the consent of the Management of the Bullring to temporarily house families whose shacks must be changed. Alternatively, to use Polana's camping equipment.

i. To build small social and commercial centers with ambulance stations, public telephones, post office, police, public toilets and bathhouses, a few stores, and small local markets. To install in these centers, kindergartens, and elementary schools that at night serve as social centers for the youth (*maybe do the social and commercial centers before the streets, so that everyone believes and see with their eyes that now is for real*).

j. To create a job agency type service where it is possible for everyone to seek employment and find it fairly, without wedges, without favor.

l. To create a group of social workers who manage kindergartens, prenatal centers, and ambulance stations.

Time-consuming treatment (in Caniço and on the slopes)

m. To study model projects to perform a high density occupation (*build the studies, study again, criticize again, make better studies, build new studies*).

n. To make sure that most buildings have at least 3 floors.

o. To encourage the activity of the Homebuilding Cooperative and facilitate its works.

p. To order and coordinate the activities of several small industries related to civil construction (*firms with precast and prestressed parts*).

q. To provide those who have some savings and those who offer guarantees, with long-term loans through savings banks for the purchase or realization of self-employed housing (*if local banks do not know how to do this, to form 'Building Societies' that do*).

r. To collaborate with insurance companies to launch life and work insurance systems and re-invest the capitalization of such insurance in Caniço in construction and loans.

The convalescence of the city

s. To study a regional plan for the Lourenço Marques area, forgetting the artificial administrative subdivisions (*Matola is the other part of the city; Benfica and Matola-Rio are dormitories of the city; Machava are factories almost within the city*).

t. To intersperse industrial areas with residential areas, taking advantage of the various existing areas – Estrada de Angola, Malanga, Zoo, etc. (*it does not look so nice in the*



plan, but it works better in reality; people like to live close to work and the 'machimbombo' – train – is very expensive).

u. To install efficient and beneficial methods of waste treatment and lighting.

v. Make it easy to get in and out of the city (*the dredgers remove silt all day long from the passage at the bottom of the bay for ships to get to the piers in the heart of the city. Why is it so hard to get in and out of town with the trucks, with the cars, and people? There must be circulation in the city. Movement in cities is life for those*).

x. To search and find what the city wants to be – that will be one day – a city of towers, a city of platforms to stand and live on, and of canals to pass, walk and stroll along.

z. To be able to make the city a real one, without losing what it has and instill what has never had – will and city life.

Will the city remain divided, ill, schizophrenic?

Will the city continue to be betrayed by the laziness, stupidity, and greed of men, or will it begin tomorrow to be everyone's home?

Raise all city councilors

A. d'Alpoim Guedes, architect sometimes, from Mr Marques' canteen.

¹ By editorial decision, the images of the original text were not included in this publication.