

## **Portuguese colonial heritage in contemporary urban space of African cities**

**The main objective** of the presented project is to determine the scope and dynamics of changes that have taken place in the colonial space of two selected cities founded by the Portuguese on the Atlantic coast of Africa, from the date of their independence to modern times.

**Two cities** located in two different countries were selected for the analysis. The first one is **Bissau** – the capital of Guinea-Bissau (until 1974 Guinea-Portuguese). The second city is **São Tomé** – today the capital of São Tomé and Príncipe (until 1975 the colony of the same name). Both cities selected for the project performed important administrative functions in the past, as they were both the capitals of the colonies.

At the time of Portuguese domination, their urban space was subjected to many activities aimed at controlling public sentiments, so as to maintain control and power over the colonies and their inhabitants. The Carnation Revolution in 1974 brought independence of the Portuguese colonies in Africa, preceded by a long civil war in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea.

New authorities chose the old capitals of the colonies for the capitals of the newly-formed states. However, the cities left by the Portuguese were dominated by elements that now constitute the heritage of colonial times. These elements include buildings, public spaces, monuments, cemeteries, streets and their names or administrative division.

The emerging new African nations and their leaders had to find the answer to the question of whether to leave this negative heritage, to protect it or to destroy it. (Post-socialist societies have faced similar questions after the fall of the Iron Curtain concerning the socialist legacy commonly found in the space of many cities in Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland the debate over urban de-communization rises from time to time, resulting in street names change or monument removal.)

This project aims at **answering some key questions** regarding the present state of preservation of the Portuguese colonial heritage in two selected cities on the Atlantic coast of Africa. What part of the historical space has been transformed? How much remained from what the Portuguese had left? Was the process of changes taking place in the urban space evenly distributed over time? Were there any stages of increased decolonization of the urban space during after-independence period? What role did the post-colonial relations between Portugal and its former colonies play in the decolonization of the urban space of the cities indicated? In Guinea-Bissau do the new elements that replace that of colonial period refer to the latest history of African states or rather to the time before the arrival of the Portuguese? How do relations between colonial and new elements develop in space? Which of them dominate? What is the technical condition of historical objects?

In order to achieve the abovementioned objectives and obtain answers to the questions posed, the study will be divided into three stages. **The first** of them will comprise collecting, processing and analyzing literature and documents (city plans and contemporary and historical maps, archival photographs or planning studies). **The second** stage is fieldwork, which will be carried out in both cities. A visit in each of them is necessary to verify the information contained in the maps and plans. The fieldwork will be based on charting, sketching and photographing of the cities carried out accordingly to previously planned routes as well as a detailed inventory of the elements located in the colonial districts (buildings, streets, monuments, squares, etc.). These tasks are essential to estimate the state of preservation of the colonial elements in urban space and to indicate, whether the colonial or maybe the new elements dominate in the colonial districts of the cities selected. The second aim of the field work is to visit local archives, libraries and museums, where the documents regarding the history of selected cities, unavailable in Poland, can be found.

**The third stage** of the project is the analysis of the information gathered during previous stages. It will constitute of juxtaposition of the data from available literature and those collected in the course of field work. What is more, the applicant plans to elaborate detailed maps of contemporary preservation of colonial heritage in the historical districts of the selected cities and the maps of the scope of changes that occurred since the colonial period. The last stage also involves the verification of the hypothesis and the answers to the research questions posed by the applicant.