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To read the city of Dakar through its planned housing program is not an easy thing to do. The recent nature of these projects prevents us from being able to pass judgment as of now. Later, it will be possible to make some real assessments in accordance with the various 'readings' of which Bugnicourt spoke.

The SICAP (Real Estate Company of Cape Verde) was created in 1951, during the colonial period. Since its creation, 10,000 housing units have been built in Cape Verde. The whole set of these real estate subdivisions covers an area of 250 hectares in one complete bloc. Certain infrastructures date back to the period of construction while others were installed later. The SICAP made a special effort in creating the green spaces (3,000 trees, without counting the gardens). The population is estimated at 70,000. The homes range from 2 rooms to 7 rooms, and from very modest housing units to prestige homes. Some of the houses are grouped, while others are isolated, and there are also apartment buildings. It is essentially the middle ranges of the bourgeoisie who live there, since the OHLM houses the petty bourgeoisie.

The OHLM is an agency that was established in 1959, just after independence, with a specific calling: housing Senegalese workers with modest incomes. But between this intention and the results attained, we observe discrepancies attributable to such factors as the increase in the costs of living of materials, and external elements that have an influence on our activity.

Some inquiries carried out in the course of development of the *Parcelles assainies* (Improved Parcels of land) project made it possible to determine that, for the Dakar agglomeration, the people having low incomes constitute 80 percent of the population. The potential purchasers of SICAP or HLM housing units represent only 20 percent of the working population. This Improved Parcels of land project supplements the activities of the HLM

office and of the SICAP. It is planned to extend it to the regional capitals.

The purpose of the Improved Parcels operation was to meet the demand of people who could not acquire housing of the OHLM or SICAP type and who had no salary. This operation, strongly supported by the World Bank, introduced a new rationality into our way of approaching housing problems in Cape Verde.

- 1) It was linked to a political decision: a halt to eviction of people from "irregular" (illegal) neighborhood.
- 2) The beneficiaries of the Improved Parcels of land, within the framework of the World Bank program, were going to be able to obtain land titles, which was new.
- 3) The infrastructure standards were higher than those generally found in the plots financed by the City Planning Delegation. The applicants were very sensitive to this aspect of the program.
- 4) This project was not a simple city planning operation. It was a matter of overseeing the population — before and after the distribution of the lands — to help it occupy this enormous area and develop it thanks to a variety of procedures: self-help construction, use of local materials; the "Castor" system, cooperatives, etc.

Our activity, unlike what happens with the SICAP, covers the whole national territory, and we act at the level of the regions and the regional capitals. People can become owners of private property with all of the legal and institutional guarantees linked to our programs. In Cape Verde, our efforts extend, like the SICAP, to a long strip of land: ten built lots, located more or less at the border of the working-class districts, which are called shantytowns, which have an infrastructure potential that is lower than at the OHLM. The inhabitants of those districts use our community facilities and try to survive by having us carry them along.

It was very quickly perceived that houses imply a certain realm of reference. Those long-time city-dwellers who had unsuccessfully tried for a long time to obtain an

OHLM-type home adopted this model in building their houses. People also referred to another model, the one found in such suburbs as Pikine, and which is often built by the "rich people" of the poor districts: numerous rooms in which the whole family can live, and part of which can be rented out to increase the family income.

So certain models were built, but each one tried to distinguish itself from the others in its way of constructing an original realm for itself. Since a land title existed, one could invest both materially and imaginatively.

Was this Improved Parcels of land operation, which concentrated a population belonging to the same socio-economic category in an area of 400 hectares, acceptable on the political and sociological level? The investor's argument was based on the idea that the OHLM and the SICAP could absorb only 60 percent of the applicants. Hence it was necessary to take charge of the remaining 40 percent and offer them a specific program.

One might object that proposing a single program for 40 percent of the housing units is unsatisfactory.

It is obvious that, in this type of operation, the architect's position is secondary, and the population does not spontaneously have recourse to him. Moreover, one of the principles of the project was that the beneficiary was to build his house himself. After four years, it was decided to offer a variety of housing plans, virtually free, that proposed houses with an upper floor and 3 to 5 rooms. But people had the possibility of submitting a plan designed by themselves to us.

OHLM, SICAP, Improved Parcels of land: how can we contribute to a reading of these three types of intervention that have marked the development of this city, whether we like it or not? What is architecture's place in all this? How do our operations affect the orientations of this city? What is the over-all effect of the Improved Parcels operation?

If we admit that all of these programs are

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products in the sense that they have emerged from activities by architects, city planners and sociologists, they are the product of a certain rationality that is distinct from everything that is done in the villages, in the neighborhoods characterized by spontaneous development. Let us admit that this rationality is based on a concern with having this city come under the influence of one form of modernity. But what is the meaning of this modernity in the view of the planners, and in the view of the beneficiaries and users? From this viewpoint, a shanty-town is simply whatever escapes our rationality. It is defined by what it is not. It has a negative image in our eyes

When one offers SICAP, OHLM or Improved Parcels housing units, one selects the people to whom they are supplied. One must ask what the habitat winds up as in those areas. Have we created living, dynamic universes, or static ones? Have we promoted the existence of communities, have we enabled them to survive? Can those programs that we have endowed with standards live autonomously? Are we not in the process of cutting them off from the neighboring districts? Have we not turned these HLM, SICAP and Improved Parcels into residential micro-systems living on themselves?

After a few years of use, our product becomes the object of voluntary, spontaneous treatment, in which we do not intervene. The user of the house transforms it; either he changes the facade, or he increases the space, opens up an access-way toward the street or creates rooms in the courtyard. Every day, we receive some requests for remodeling. Hence this is a sign that the product does not give full satisfaction. Our goal completely moves to one side, and the product disappears sometimes because of the effect of the treatment that the user subjects it to. A re-writing is done of the original text and is printed over it, and I think that here, we may speak of fecundity. The user expresses, and translates into acts, his

desires, which sometimes require the architect's intervention, but not always.

The reading of a city like Dakar can only be an attempt at interpretation which has only limited value, since everything depends on the culture and the time in which this interpretation is made. The planner's work is something of a reflection of the society that he would like to have, just as much as the image that the user makes of it. The conjunction of the two things constitutes a message that gives the work all its value