

The 'Office des Cités Africaines' in Lubumbashi (DRC). An Analysis of the Mid 1950s Colonial Built African Quarter Ruashi: From Conception to Appropriation.

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As in other colonies, the urban centers of Belgian Congo have known a strong population growth after the Second World War, inciting the government to launch a more structured planning to respond to the tensions on the urban space. As such, the OCA (*Office des Cités Africaines* or *Office of African Neighborhoods*) was founded in 1952 in order to resist the emergence of shantytowns in the main cities of Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. Developing an action based on the importation of occidental urban models such as the 'neighborhood unit', the OCA planned several satellite cities meant for about 30.000 habitants in the periphery of urban centers as Kinshasa, Lubumbashi or Kisangani. These quarters, provided with public functions and well-studied dwelling types, constituted well equipped zones, which nevertheless stayed inscribed in the characteristic spatial logic of racial segregation of the urban policy in the Belgian colony.

By discussing the case of the OCA quarter at Lubumbashi, called upon today Ruashi, this contribution aims to reveal the logic of such a satellite city's initial plan drawn up in the mid 1950's in Central Africa, and to show how this zone has developed during the postcolonial era. By documenting and analyzing in detail Ruashi's actual urban build environment on different scales, from quarter to individual parcel and residence, this paper will highlight the continuities and ruptures in his functioning. In particular, we aim to illustrate the appropriation and transformation of spaces and constructions, whose occidental model mostly didn't correspond to the inhabitants' modes and practices. By presenting typologies of these phenomena, we try to nuance the lecture of this sort of processes, often interpreted as an 'informal urbanism'.