

INFORMALITY. An important feature of Luanda's urban process

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ABSTRACT

Observing African cities, one usually easily distinguishes its formal and urbanized areas from its informal settlements. In Luanda, the latter are called *musseques* and one aim of Angola's urban planning politics is to end them. They represent poor living conditions and poverty. They are the side of the coin that must be hidden. But is this distinction between formal and informal so simple?

Since the foundation of Luanda, there never existed a previous formal city plan and Luanda developed spontaneously in adaptation to the topography, resulting in an organic radiocentric city structure, with axes coming from the bay and connecting to the interior of the country. Throughout the centuries, Luanda grew along these axes, mostly due to micro-scale social and economic dynamics, despite some attempts to "formalize" some areas, usually expropriating poor people living near the center and pushing "informality" towards the periphery. This segregation movement has been occurring for a long time, shaping the city's urban growth and the mentality of its citizens.

This paper aims to see beyond this dichotomy. As the standards defining "formal" were set according to the western societies of the North and not the African reality, everything that does not comply with the standards is "informal": economy, social interaction, space appropriation, construction. The current paper wants to redefine this conception and question whether "informality", "urban informality" in particular (and distinct from "slum conditions"), should be fought or, on the contrary, whether it is an integrating part of Luanda's character and, as such, should be taken into account in its relationship with the world.

INTRODUCTION

The present paper aims to address informality as a characteristic of Luanda's urban reality, so it can be taken into account when relating to the global, instead of being ignored or hidden. It questions the simplistic dichotomy between formal and informal, as it is reductive and does not express reality.

It focuses on Bairro Prenda, particularly on the area of the apartment buildings by Simões de Carvalho, as a closer approach to the city's urban process. Its development demonstrates how the city has evolved in a constant interaction between formal and informal levels, responding to new needs and aims. It was the object of a unique experience of miscegenation in Luanda that never had the time to flourish as projected. Still, new needs led to what is called informality, which made the purpose of the architect become reality, though not as idealized.

From farmland to *musseque*, from *musseque* to modern new neighborhood and then to now: the houses, streets and infrastructures that survived forty years of war, a melting pot of formal and informal urban and architectural processes. They tell the story of how the space was built and organized, how people lived (or survived) and how their own ideas, means and achievements shaped the absolutely unique identity of Bairro Prenda.

The present investigation is part of my master dissertation in Architecture, which I have been working on since September 2012. The empirical study was carried out during a one-week stay in Luanda last May. I tried to gather a general impression of the whole neighborhood and to focus on some particular aspects, such as the different house typologies and their evolution through time, the existing facilities, infrastructures and public spaces. The present paper, however, concerns solely housing.

A considerable amount of information was provided by Anabela Francisca do Nascimento Cunha, a historian who lived there for some time in Building 10. The more detailed information concerns a townhouse and a self-constructed house, both belonging to her relatives, who allowed me to collect photographs and interviews. In addition, two short interviews with local dwellers, one inhabiting an unfinished apartment building and another living in a house with precarious conditions near it, enabled me to widen my perspective of the needs and wishes of the inhabitants.

URBAN INFORMALITY

The term *informal* as applied to urbanism has come into vogue in the last decades to describe a phenomenon that has been occurring worldwide. The cities are increasingly poles of attraction, continuously growing mostly due to urban migration. When the *formal* city does not have the capacity to absorb its new citizens, they find their own *informal* ways to establish themselves. The result is the spreading informal settlements in the periphery of the cities. This is more notorious in some areas of the Globe where the population growth rate is higher, the capacity of the State to answer new needs is weaker, the labor market is incapable of absorbing all the working population and the poverty rate is higher.

The phenomenon name varies from country to country, so as do its characteristics. One cannot say that a *Favela* in Brazil is the same as a *Jhugi* in India or a *Caniço* in Mozambique. They may have some similar characteristics, as the non-permanent materials, the self-constructed houses or the lack of land tenure, but even these cannot be generalized, as they are not suitable in all cases.

In the English language, the word slum fell into disuse for some time since it was regarded as pejorative. It had a come back related to living conditions with the Millennium Development Goals in 2001, which stated that a dwelling would be defined as a slum household if it lacked one of the following: improved access to water and sanitation, sufficient living area, durability of housing and security of tenure.

Therefore, slum and informal settlement are not the same. Although they can sometimes coincide, one can find slum conditions in many *formal* inner cities, as well as improved living conditions in informal areas. Thus, it is important to clarify what *informal* really means.

According to the meaning of the words, the concept of informal only exists in opposition to what is formal. It is not just about the form, clarity and evidence, but also about the "*usual requirements, customs*"¹. Therefore, informal describes what is "*not according to the prescribed, official or customary way or manner; irregular, unofficial*"².

Hence, the distinction between formal and *informal* is set by certain requirements or rules. When applied to the urban development field, they relate to three factors:

- "*land use (as assessed by planning activity – covering aspects of appropriate uses and /or densities, as well as tenure),*
- *construction standards (as assessed by construction regulations) and*
- *infrastructure (as assessed in terms of public health risks and generally embedded in the former two sets of regulation)*³

¹ Dictionary.com, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/formal?s=t>, consulted on 10/6/2013

² Dictionary.com, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/informal?s=t>, consulted on 10/6/2013

Therefore, we can say that standards draw the line that divides the two realities. But who draws the standards?

When focusing on African countries, one finds much of their legislation remains from the colonial period: rules were imposed by another country, based on its society and mostly for its own benefit. The principles used to define planning legislation originated from the Northern societies and do not always take the environmental, cultural and sociological particularities of each country into account. In addition, the UN try to define worldwide standards, aimed at global development, but the resulting standards are not contextualized. For example, if the defined standards for slum were applied to the Europe of two centuries ago, a great part of the European households would be considered slum dwellings, for they did not have the present day conditions of hygiene. There is obviously a temporal context – and there must be a spatial one too.

The particularities shaping the so-called *informal city* in African countries are precisely the environmental, cultural and sociological values which are ignored when defining the *standards line*. Despite economical and social difficulties, people are striving to make their lives and construct their houses. Instead of classifying them as informal, which often leads to their demolition, a more sensitive analysis should be made. When planning interventions in the city, this *informality* should be considered as the context and guiding principle of the proposals rather than imported values, legislation and models.

In conclusion, the concept of urban process itself concerns more than mere technical practices of architectural expertise, it equally involves the "*social practices of urban informality, economical practices of real estate speculation or political practices of the different local and territorial jurisdictions of the State*"⁴. There is a constant tension between institutions, legal norms and cultural control and validation, i.e. the formal level, and the multiple social micro-dynamics, which results in a «disordered» amount of small non-regulated events, i.e. the informal level.⁵

³ Paul Jenkins; Jørgen Eskemose Andersen: *Developing Cities in between the Formal and Informal*. 4th European Conference on African Studies (ECAS 2011), Panel 85: Governing Informal Settlements, on Whose Terms?. Uppsala, Sweden, 2011, p. 2, in <http://www.nai.uu.se/ecas:4/panels/81-100/panel-85/Jenkins-and-Eskemose-Full-paper.pdf>, consulted on 22 December 2012

⁴ "las prácticas sociales de la informalidad urbana, las prácticas económicas de la especulación inmobiliaria o las prácticas políticas de las acciones de las diferentes jurisdicciones locales y territoriales des Estado", Roberto Fernandez: *Modos de hacer ciudad: Proyecto y Plan*, p. 111 in Revista Ciudades, nº 3: *Pensar la ciudad, vitalidad y límites del plan urbanístico*, 1996, Instituto Universitario de Urbanística de la Universidad de Valladolid in http://www3.uva.es/iuu/CIUDADES/Ciudades%2003/C03_111-127%20FERNANDEZ.pdf, consulted on 13/12/2012

⁵ "instâncias institucionais, normativas legais e administrativas e aparatos de controlo e convalidação cultural"; "multiplicidade de «miniprocessos» sociais que determinam um fazer cidade (...) «magmático», «desordenado» e cheio de pequenos acontecimentos não regulados", *Ibidem*, p. 114

LUANDA AND ITS MUSSEQUES

The city of Luanda has always developed in a spontaneous way. Since its foundation, there never was a previous urban plan, resulting in an organic structure, adapted to the topography. Historically, two different zones can be identified: *Cidade Alta* (Uptown), on the top of S. Miguel hill, where political, military and religious administration was located, and *Cidade Baixa* (Downtown), where maritime trade took place, mostly slave trade. The growth rhythm was slow, as Portugal never made great investments in the colony. It was not until Brazil became independent, slavery was abolished and following the Berlin Conference that the mother country started paying more attention to Angola. New economic activities appeared, more Portuguese settlers arrived and segregation became more apparent, with informal settlements spreading towards the periphery.

In Luanda, this phenomenon of urban informality was given the name *musseques*, meaning "red sand" in *kimbundo*, the local language, referring to not urbanized streets. Yet they did not start to emerge in the 19th or 20th century: they were born with the city, developing from downtown backyards, where slaves awaited shipping, to nuclei of huts of the African population and then to dense peri-urban settlements.

Although the *musseques* were traditionally inhabited by Africans, in the 20th century the increasingly European population also started to build their houses there. This fact distinguishes Luanda from other African capital cities, inasmuch as segregation was not clearly racial, but mostly economic and social. Moreover, even if at times an "asphalt boundary" could be identified, as in the cases of Av. Brito Godins (now Av. Lenine) or Rua de D. João II, the distinction between urbanized city and *musseques* has never been clear.

The *musseques* distinguish themselves from the so-called *formal* city by their "absence of urban organization, precariousness, overcrowding of miserable population."⁶ They were traditionally constructed with local materials like wood, adobe and straw and/or grass (*capim*). The most common typology in the 1970's had *pav-a-pique*⁷ walls, cement or rammed dirt floor and zinc roof⁸.

Nowadays, however, the walls are usually built of cement blocks and have zinc or fiber cement roofings. The population, too, changed considerably. It is estimated that the majority of Luanda's inhabitants, around 80%, now live in these informal areas. Forty years of war increased Luanda's population exponentially, enhanced the housing problem and damaged all infrastructures. Urbanized and non-urbanized areas were both and equally affected and the problems concerned the city as a whole, which nevertheless managed to survive and grow through informal processes.

⁶ "ausência de organização urbanística, a precariedade e a insalubridade do povoamento, o amontoamento das populações miseráveis", Ilídio do Amaral: *Luanda (Estudo de Geografia Urbana)*, Coleção Memórias da Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, nº53. Lisboa: 1968, p. 67

⁷ Vertical wooden posts, interlaced straw in the horizontal and then fulfilled with mud; *wattle and daub*.

⁸ Ramiro Ladeiro Monteiro: *A Família nos Musseques de Luanda: Subsídios para o seu estudo*. Dissertação de Licenciatura. Luanda: Fundo de Acção Social no Trabalho em Angola. 1973, p. 257

A CLOSER LOOK AT BAIRRO PRENDA

Bairro⁹ Prenda tells the story of Luanda's urban process in its particular way. This paper focuses on three different time periods of the area: the emergence of the *musseque*, the formal plan and project of Neighborhood number 1 and the multiple informal micro-processes that changed it to the present time. Perspectives for the future remain uncertain.

Musseque Prenda

It is not easy to define when the area of Prenda was first occupied. It is, however, certain that there was an *arimo*¹⁰ belonging to a European named Prenda, around which the first nucleus of *cubatas*¹¹ formed. Similar adoptions of names occurred in most *musseques*. Probably it was a rural area in the 19th century, given that in the city plan of 1862, by F. Dutra, it is possible to see the "*Maianga*¹² *do Rei*" and the "*Casa da Guarda*" in that area. On the opposite side of "*Caminho da Maianga*", there is already a *musseque* called Magalhães Silva.

The plans of 1900 and 1926 do not include this area, so that it is not possible to conclude whether it was still a rural area or already a *musseque*. Either way, at that time it was not yet considered as pertaining to the city. In a later plan by Etienne de Gröer and David Moreira da Silva (1942), considered Luanda's first urban plan, the present day area of Prenda is depicted as being urbanized, presenting newly planned streets. However, these were never constructed and in 1948 Castro Lopo refers to Prenda as a *musseque*. Later on, in 1973, Ramiro Ladeiro Monteiro divides the existing *musseques* into three phases of emergence, situating Prenda in the second phase, together with Rangel, Calemba, Catambor, Lixeira and Caputo.

The urban plan of 1949 by the Colonial Urbanization Office reveals two groups of three parallel streets planned for the area near Av. João III. The easternmost streets coincide with the actual ones and were integrated in later plans.

In 1964, the Musseque Prenda had an estimated population of 13.000 inhabitants. In a comparative study of *musseques*, which included Coreia do Norte, Samba Pequena, Prenda, Catambor, Bananeira Sambizanga, Mota and Lixeira, Prenda was the one with the highest percentage of European population, about 6%. There was no

⁹ The decision to not translate "Bairro" for "neighborhood" relates to its specific concept in Luanda. It can mean a large area of the city as well as a more specific community. Nowadays, the Municipality of Luanda is divided into six Urban Districts, which are then divided into *Bairros*. Prenda belongs to Maianga's Urban District, but is also, non-officially, divided into smaller areas (*Baixo Prenda, Margos, Chabá...*)

¹⁰ Name given to farmland close to houses or settlements in Angola.

¹¹ Musseque's house units, huts.

¹² Maianga comes from kimbundo *mazanga*, meaning a site once submerged by rainwater.

official commercial establishment in the area, though there were 99 informal (not legalized) establishments, 84 mixed trade shops (*comércio misto*), 3 bars (*botequins*), 12 groceries (*quitandas*).¹³

Neighborhood Unit number 1

In 1961, Simões de Carvalho took the lead in Luanda's urban development as chief-architect of the newly created Municipal Urbanization Office. A multidisciplinary team of architects, engineers, architectural drafters, a surveyor and a painter was put in charge of the new Master Plan of Luanda. It was the first time a city plan would be drawn on a scientific basis. Surveys were made on housing, industry, trade and business, automobile traffic and population density. Investigations were carried out in *Mussequê* Prenda and other transgressional settlements (*bairros em transgressão*). Furthermore, the whole plan was drawn in accordance with what Simões de Carvalho had learnt from Le Corbusier and Auzelle during his stay in Paris in addition to his own experience of being born and raised in Luanda.

In his 1963 article "*Luanda do Futuro*", he exposes the concept and the main actions of the Plan. First and foremost, he wants to heal Luanda of its diseases, which he identifies with the radial city model. Within the logic of linear city, he divides the total urban area into Neighborhood Units, combining dwelling, working and leisure in the same area, allowing the city to grow naturally albeit in a controlled manner. Each Unit should have its own facilities, such as schools, groceries, gardens, cinemas and churches within a walkable distance. Three or four Units combined form one Bairro. The 7 Vs hierarchy system of Le Corbusier is applied to the city's road system. Two main axes, crossed by four rings, connect the city with the hinterland. Together with the boundaries of the Neighborhood Units, they form the fast traffic system. Inside the Units, on the contrary, no cars would be allowed.

The Master Plan was never approved or even finished, as the beginning of the Colonial War required more pragmatic measures. The ideas behind the plan were applied through Partial Plans for Neighborhood Units as occurred in the case of Prenda, Neighborhood Unit number 1¹⁴. Its plan was designed between 1961 and 1963 by Simões de Carvalho and Luiz Taquelim.

¹³ Ilídio do Amaral: *Luanda (Estudo de Geografia Urbana)*, Coleção Memórias da Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, nº53. Lisboa: 1968, p. 70-71, 119.

¹⁴ The Neighborhood Unities number 2 and 3 were also planned; the latter was constructed, though the architectural project was not elaborated by Simões de Carvalho.



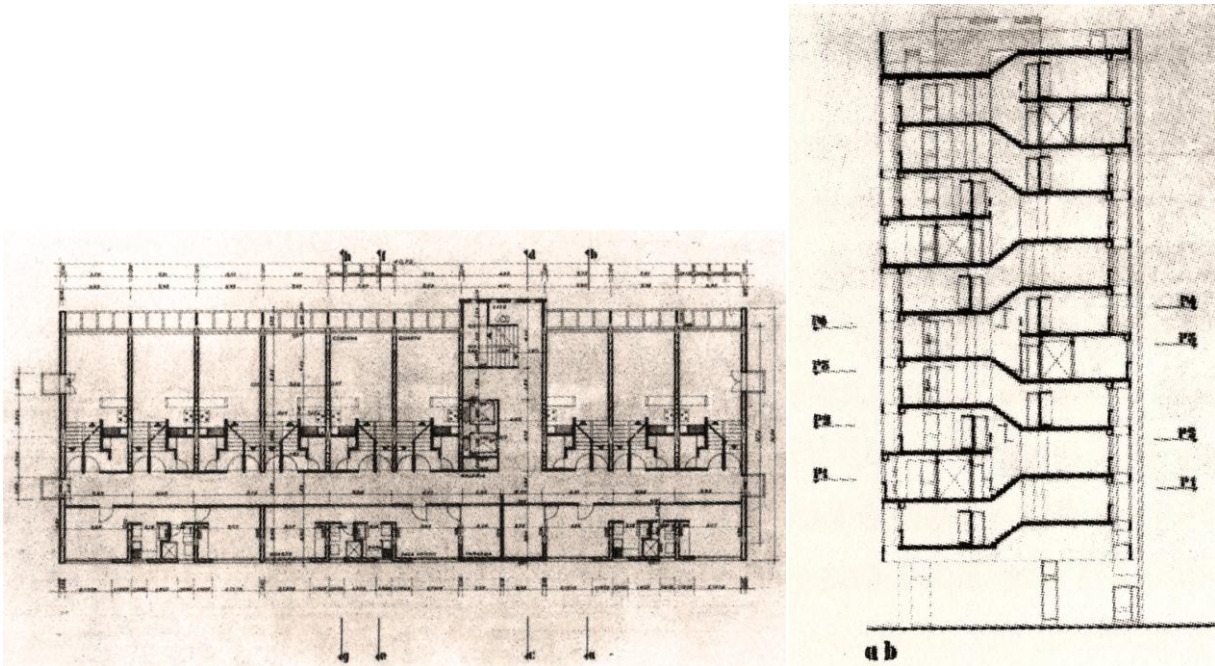
Figures 1 and 2 - Neighborhood Unit number 1: project model and construction

The Unit had 25 to 30 hectares and was designed for 5.000 to 10.000 inhabitants. It consisted of a combination of four different typologies of housing, depending on the economic capacity. There were detached houses for the richer, townhouses (*casas em banda*) for the less rich, apartment buildings for the middle class and "houses with a courtyard", which were to be self-constructed, for the indigenous, who were connected with the traditional origins of the *musseque*¹⁵. The idea behind the design was to promote miscegenation, given that the proposal was for it to be inhabited by 2/3 of indigenous population and 1/3 European. Although this proportion was not allowed by the authorities, they still succeeded in allotting 1/3 indigenous population and 2/3 of Europeans. The idea, however, was not for the indigenous to move directly to the Neighborhood Unit, but to first adapt to an urbanized lifestyle by passing through a "schooling-neighborhood" (*bairro-escola*).

The location of the buildings is in accordance with the Athens Urban Charter, with distances that allow a controlled population density. The commercial street, type V4, with large sidewalks, crosses and organizes the whole unit: along this street were the highest buildings, type A, and on both ends sequences of lower buildings, types B and D. A cinema, a church, a shopping gallery, schools and a health care center were also projected in association with the commercial street, but they were never built.

As the architectural project was awarded to the construction company PRECOL, they requested Simões de Carvalho to also design the buildings, which he did together with Fernando Alfredo Pereira and José Augusto Pinto da Cunha. That way, Prenda became one of few examples where plan and project coincide in the same person, making the project a detail of the plan.

¹⁵ Ana Vaz Milheiro: *Luanda no Futuro: o Bairro Prenda*. Texto publicado no âmbito da exposição *África/Brasil: A Cidade Popular* na Trienal de Arquitectura de Lisboa 2010, p. 313 in <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B3MllcndlsdCME5Sbm52QUFLMkk/edit?pli=1>, consulted on 29/5/2013



Figures 3 and 4 – First floor plan and Cross-section of Apartment Buildings type A

The apartment buildings, the only ones that were built, were designed with modernist concepts and elements, which were adapted to the tropical climate. Different typologies were combined in each building, from T1 to T4, for a single person or for a big family. Most of them were semi-duplexes¹⁶, accessible by an “interior street”, which allowed the air to circulate through the apartment, taking advantage of Luanda’s breeze to ventilate it. All were designed with the help of Modulor and the inner organization has similarities to Le Corbusier’s Unités d’Habitation.

The façade design protects the interior from sun exposure with protruded stories and screens (*grelhagens*). The *pilotis* in the ground floor also allowed air to circulate and created shaded public space. Twenty of the twenty-eight projected buildings were fully constructed and three were not concluded.

Simões de Carvalho also projected his own house in the neighborhood, a clearly modernist project, which was built in 1966.



Figures 5 and 6 – Simões de Carvalho’s house in Prenda. In the 60’s and at the present.

¹⁶ Also called triplex. They take advantage of a difference of height between floors in opposite façades.

Informality takes over and continues the formal project

Owing to the beginning of the Civil War, the construction of the projected neighborhood was never completed. The housing problem in Luanda increased, and Prenda had the right location and enough free space. The area of the *musseque* continued to grow and penetrated the open spaces of the formal plan, in the same way as in the unfinished buildings. The distinction between formal and informal plan and project became increasingly diffuse.

HOUSING



Figures 7 and 8 – Visited townhouse, main façade and new kitchen.

Most of the detached houses or townhouses are well preserved and seem to maintain the integrity of the original project. Perceptible modifications lie in the search for safety, with bars in the windows and higher walls and fences. In addition, the open space of the courtyard was once important for the extended family to gather during the day, as the scale of the house allows many family relatives to find a temporary home there. The small kitchen, however, did not meet the needs and the great importance of cooking and eating as gathering activities, so, in the visited house, the backyard was transformed into a wider kitchen.



Figures 9 and 10 – Apartment Buildings.

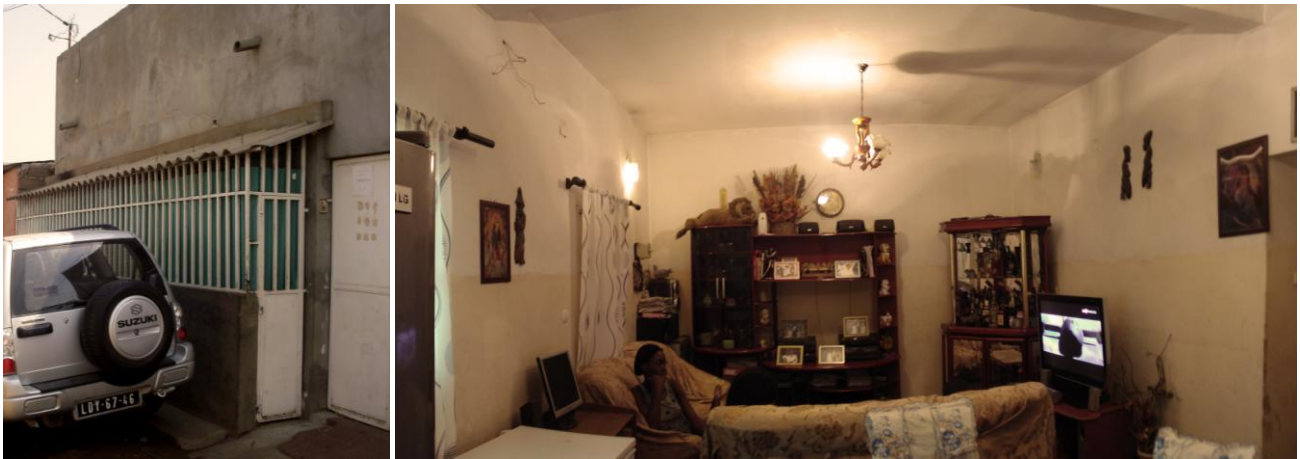
Concerning the apartment buildings, one must distinguish between fully constructed and unfinished buildings, which remained as skeletons of concrete slabs, columns and stairs. The former exhibit different states of conservation. For example, the lift never worked in most buildings, but it did for some time in Building 11¹⁷. All over the *façade*, one can see many satellite dishes, as well as air-conditioning equipments and closed balconies, which disrupt the projected effect of natural ventilation. There is wiring coming out of windows, connecting to small cages with generators inside next to the buildings, or connecting to houses in the vicinity. In the need of space, the *pilotis* of the ground floors have been occupied, mostly by commercial premises, with the exception of Building 1, where it remains free, yet without the desired quality for a public space. Whereas the T1 typology does not suit the common large Angolan family needs, the semi-duplex T4, by contrast, offers adequate and proportionate accommodation – and is located near the center, nowadays a most unusual housing offer in Luanda.



Figures 11 and 12 – Unfinished Apartment Buildings and, in contrast, Building 22.

As to the unfinished apartment buildings, newcomers progressively occupied them. In 1998, at the time the representative of the residents of one of the buildings arrived in Luanda, only the lower floors were occupied. Now, almost all of the building looks inhabited. A great variety of materials and openings make up the design of the *façade*, since walls, windows and all other elements were built in by every single resident. Many wires and pipes connect the different floors with the electricity source or with the ground. Even though the unfinished buildings represented an opportunity to obtain a dwelling near the center in a time of need, at present they do not offer desirable living conditions, considering they lack all infrastructures and are unsafe for young children, for instance.

¹⁷ This one was known as “prédio dos cooperantes”



Figures 13 and 14 – Visited self-constructed house, main façade and living room

The self-constructed houses form a heterogeneous urban tissue, with a great variety of materials, population and house qualities. The courtyard lost its significance owing to the need for housing and densification took place. Side by side, one can find a reconstructed two-storey house with permanent and quality materials and a precarious construction with walls of zinc and almost no divisions. The first one invested in infrastructures, like water tanks, generators and pit latrines, the same way dwellers of detached houses or apartment buildings had to do on account of the lack of quality of public supply.



Figures 15, 16 and 17 – Materials and construction quality of self-construction houses. Various aspects.

In the second case, people strive to live without any infrastructures, except for “stolen” water and electricity¹⁸. Although the temporality of the construction is similar to that of the old *musseque*, living conditions cannot be compared, given, for instance, there is no courtyard to assure privacy in open space and so fulfill family needs. If the Government gave them a house, they would not hesitate to leave - Mrs. Isabel da Conceição Joaquim, resident in one of this houses, assured me.

¹⁸ “Puxadas”

Doubts for the future

Several specific press reports referring to Bairro Prenda have been published over the last years in the context of Angola's, in particular, Luanda's reconstruction.

In 2008, the project was to demolish the apartment buildings and re-urbanize the area¹⁹, according to the director of IPGUL, architect Hélder José. A public-private partnership was in charge of the project, and the residents were to be relocated to the Camama/Viana road, about 15km from the center, or find other solutions if they wanted to move somewhere else. This action should have started in 2009, but was never accomplished.

In 2009 the news changed, as the second phase of an urban requalification plan for Prenda was to be the rehabilitation of the apartment buildings²⁰. The structure was to be preserved, the façades improved, as well as the quality of the architecture. The degraded ground floor was not to be forgotten. However, since the value of the houses was expected to increase, the residents without economic means to remain in the buildings should leave, as should those occupying the former public spaces between buildings. The population was to be relocated to Viana Municipality. The same press report claims that the resettlement houses were already under construction. This action would imply the gentrification of the area.

Still, in 2010, it was reported that the project had stopped because of problems with the relocations.²¹ The construction company in charge, *Pidi Urbana e Tanix*, on a public-private partnership basis, was only planning the simple transfer from Prenda to the resettlement area. It was necessary to create other mechanisms in order to fulfill the residents' wishes for options.

In 2011 and 2012, the public space was improved. Scrap and abandoned vehicles were taken away²² and some streets of Prenda were paved, namely those that provide access to the detached and townhouses and the apartment buildings. The main streets of the self-constructed areas remained unpaved, although they are wide enough for cars to pass through.

¹⁹ "Área dos Lotes do Prenda será reurbanizada", ANGOP [Agência Angola Press], 5th August 2008 in http://www.portalangop.co.ao/motix/pt_pt/especiais/reconstrucao-nacional/2008/7/32/Area-dos-Lotes-Prenda-sera-reurbanizada,6af4512b-2e86-4862-b72c-f9a36340c981.html

²⁰ Paulo Sérgio: "Prenda pode ser desocupado brevemente", O País [weekly newspaper], Edition 22, 10th April 2009 in <http://www.opais.net/pt/dossier/?id=2023&det=11879>

²¹ Paulo Sérgio: "Moradores do bairro Baixo Prenda sem destino à vista", O País [weekly newspaper], Edition 79, 14th May 2010 in http://issuu.com/o_pais/docs/o_pais_79_completo

²² "Administração da Maianga recolhe sucatas e viaturas da via pública", ANGOP [Agência Angola Press], 24th March 2011 in http://www.portalangop.co.ao/motix/pt_pt/noticias/sociedade/2011/2/12/Administracao-Maianga-recolhe-sucatas-viaturas-via-publica,84b2b43b-3eb3-4e1d-9668-410095b93ca1.html

CONCLUSIONS

The case of Prenda allows us to see that, in order to fulfill new needs, informal processes have been shaping not only self-constructed areas, but also previous formal projects of detached houses or apartment buildings. Over time, the distinction between *formal* and *informal* has become ever less clear. The distinction that can and must be done is between acceptable and insecure living conditions. That is to say, there are people with access to improved water, improved sanitation, with sufficient living area in a durable house, although maybe without security of tenure, in all typologies – as there are many people lacking these conditions, who would like to live in a better house.

Informality is often associated with poverty and for that matter being fought. Actually, it is more of a response to poverty and the result of a big effort by Luanda's inhabitants. If the State wants to reduce poverty and poor living conditions, the approach should be more sensitive. Sometimes it is better politics to improve informal settlements instead of destroying them, which can mean a step back rather than forward. Common resettlements in Luanda push the population towards the periphery, perpetuating the segregation that has always existed. Should we not learn a lesson from the Neighborhood Units?

Luanda is becoming more and more a city of segregation: gated communities for those who choose to "segregate" themselves in order to find safety and poor neighborhoods without infrastructures for those without a choice. Although the project for Prenda never reached completion as originally designed, the result today is an almost self-sufficient *bairro* with a great range of services, from local to municipality level. The different housing typologies coexist and there is a sense of neighborliness. Should a city not provide for the miscegenation of cultures and religions, social and economic strata, who all have the same right to public spaces and to share the same facilities?

The future is unpredictable, but the *ghost* of demolition lies ahead of each self-constructed house without land tenure. Formerly there was a distinction between transgressional neighborhoods (*bairros em transgressão*) and *musseques*. The former overruled the formal plans and forced them to adapt; the *musseques* were meant to be destroyed by the formal city. Did the difference lie solely in the construction materials? The old *musseques*, with their non-permanent materials and big courtyards, evolved into dense neighborhoods of cement blocks. Their construction is now mostly as permanent as that of the transgressional neighborhoods and they even have some of the needed infrastructures. Should they not be included in formal plans and considered for improvements?

Images' references:

- Figure 1 – FONTE, Maria Manuela da. *Urbanismo e Arquitectura em Angola: de Norton de Matos à Revolução*. (Dissertação de Doutoramento). Lisboa: Editora Caleidoscópico & FAUTL , 2012, p. 128
- Figure 2 – <http://cargocollective.com/arquiteturamodernaluanda/filter/Obras/Bloques-residenciales-de-PrecolFernao-Simoese-de-Carvalho-y-Jose-Pinto>
- Figure 3 – FONTE, Maria Manuela da. *Urbanismo e Arquitectura em Angola: de Norton de Matos à Revolução*. (Dissertação de Doutoramento). Lisboa: Editora Caleidoscópico & FAUTL , 2012, p. 308
- Figure 4 – FONTE, Maria Manuela da. *Urbanismo e Arquitectura em Angola: de Norton de Matos à Revolução*. (Dissertação de Doutoramento). Lisboa: Editora Caleidoscópico & FAUTL , 2012, p. 308
- Figure 5 – <http://cargocollective.com/arquiteturamodernaluanda/filter/Obras/Casa-del-arquitecto-en-el-barrio-de-PrendaFernao-Simoese-de-Carvalho>
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