

Experiences of Inverse Planning – Re-thinking Land Access and Urban Governance in Maputo, Mozambique

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Erfahrungen mit “Planung umgekehrt” – neue Konzepte für Landzugang und lokale Regierungsführung in Maputo, Mosambik

*Maputo ist, wie viele Hauptstädte in Subsahara-Afrika, von schnellem Wachstum und sozio-ökonomischen Veränderungen geprägt. Jüngst beobachtete Dynamiken verdeutlichen die damit verbundenen Herausforderungen. Bei Planung und städtischem Management sehen sich die Kommunalverwaltungen insbesondere von der wachsenden Mittelschicht gefordert, die bessere Wohnmöglichkeiten und Infrastrukturanbindung verlangt. Während sich die Behörden überwiegend um Strategien zur Regulierung des Zugangs zu Bauland bemühen, um die rasche Urbanisierung zu bewältigen, finden Bewohnergruppen neue Wege, um ihre Landnutzungsrechte zu sichern. Vieles deutet darauf hin, dass diese Pioniere der städtischen Entwicklung das Potenzial haben, die zukünftigen städtebaulichen Strukturen am Stadtrand nachhaltig zu beeinflussen. Abgesehen von den räumlichen Folgen der Expansion, bietet sich hier auch die Möglichkeit, den Gesellschaftsvertrag zwischen Bürger*innen und Kommunalverwaltung (insbesondere den Stadtplaner*innen) neu zu gestalten sowie den Zusammenhalt zwischen den verschiedenen städtischen Akteuren zu stärken. Dieser Artikel liefert zunächst eine kritische Analyse der empirischen Erkenntnisse einer Feldforschung aus den Jahren 2015-2016. Besonderes Augenmerk wird dabei auf die Wahrnehmungen, Befürchtungen und Sichtweisen der Bewohner*innen gelegt, deren Quartiere im Kontext dynamischen Stadtwachstums einem hohen Druck des Immobilienmarkts ausgesetzt sind. Der Artikel erläutert die Prozesse, die aus städtebaulichen Entwicklungsstrategien “von unten” entstehen, mit dem Ziel, bestehende Landregulierungsmechanismen zu hinterfragen, die auch in anderen Kontexten in Afrika existieren. Die Erkenntnisse aus dieser realen Stadtentwicklung könnten dazu beitragen, die Vorgehensweisen entsprechend anzupassen.*

The processes of horizontal expansion and densification of cities in Mozambique are the result of mixed semi-formal and semi-legitimate proceedings of land subdivision and allocation. Several authors (Barros et al. 2013, Andersen et al. 2015, Melo and Viegas 2014) point out that “informal” settlements in Mozambique are shaped and reproduced through various factors not solely related with spatial access, extreme poverty, or educational level. The peripheral space is also produced through a widespread culture of imitating the formal urban grid (Nielsen 2009) in order to facilitate the land-regularisation processes.

Traditionally, as the registration process for both land-use registrations and construction permits is neither consistent nor systematic, the vast majority of housing is predominantly recognised as informal, despite the high level of residential security. This perception derives not only from the fact that the legal status of a building has always had limited impact on the social or economic situation of the owner within the city. It also derives from the intricacy of relationships and relational ties built up throughout the process of securing a plot or constructing a house, often lasting several years; a process imbued with socio-political and cultural meanings, inferring a certain level of confidence about their “home spaces” (Jenkins 2012, 2013; Kamete and Lindell 2010).

Recently, the city expansion has functioned as a private-led stimulus, which is raising concerns about urban equity (Lage 2013). Some authors analyse changes to informal perceptions of security in this new, liberal context (Melo and Viegas 2014). Recent land-development policy is increasingly influenced by a new wave of regularisation programmes through a willingness to formally register residents’ land-use rights (DUAT¹) as the main solution to cope with urban expansion. An example is the ProMaputo programme still lying at the heart of De Soto’s approach. In the context of increasing land pressures, local planning entities feel the urgency to encourage all householders or land users to quickly obtain their DUAT.

This article debates on the current processes of “informal” and hybrid land management emerging from heterogeneous social groups, having the presence of a wealthier class influencing the perception of what is formal or informal within the city. The consequences in terms of urban governance that the changes within the culturally influenced continuum of land access (transactions, actions) could have will also be discussed. Given the high penetration of culturally influenced “informal” settling-down dynamics through self-production/subdivision of space in peripheral areas, Maputo is particularly suitable as a case study.

The two presented cases² of inverse planning are analysed through the lens of urban governance, aiming to specific-

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Direito do Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra.

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The cases analysed demonstrate the diverse methods employed by an emergent class in trying to spatially represent an achieved status. These “inverse-planning” actions illustrate the ways in which residents act following spatial and aesthetic norms “as if the state was able to construct for them”, thus in a continuous intricacy between the imitation of the state and the “materialisation” of the residents’ social position (Lefebvre 2003 [1970]), as realised through spaces of representation.

Figure 1: House under construction in Costa do Sol, Maputo. Photo: A. Mazzolini 2015



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The DUAT missive is strictly related to the inclusion of the plots in a formal urbanisation plan (e.g., “*plano de parcelamento*”, “*plano de reordenamento*” or “*plano de pormenor*”).

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The first three inverse-planning actions identified were detailed by Nielsen (2011), who defined them as “inverse governmentality” processes.

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This case is not the first one in the neighbourhood. An “inverse governmentality” process was documented in detail for the first time by Nielsen in 2008, regarding 4 *quaterões* (neighbourhood’s sub-units) in Costa do Sol. Anna Mazzolini, the main author of this article, is currently conducting a comparative research between the two cases.

ly envisage: (i) new processes of production of peri-urban space as a consequence of the proactive efforts of an emerging middle class, (ii) inverse planning as the reshaping of the “social contract” between citizens and the authority, and also among the residents themselves, (iii) how authorities and residents are changing attitudes and the resultant consequences in terms of urban land management and access, and (iv) the new roles in the game, given the presence of new actors such as local private firms.

1. “INVERSE PLANNING”, THE RESIDENTS, AND THE STATE

“Inverse-planning” practices are defined here as embryonic planning forms that are proposed, undertaken, and financed by the residents. These actions are the result of a collective of householders who need to obtain their land-use rights.³ The lower-middle class in particular, trapped between the necessity to obtain positive formal responses and the traditional ways of gaining land rights, is proactive in promoting such processes.⁴ This practice is carried out through the establishment of a direct agreement between the communities and architectural/planning firms for the topographical identification of the plots and urban design (roads, public spaces, etc.).

The processes have their basis in the cultural importance that, especially since 2000, has been given to the spatial “form” of a plot as an implicit declaration of self-regularisation. Householders imitating the formal grid, formally or informally, feel safer depending on which kind of “spatial output” they are able to achieve. As a consequence, efforts in terms of urban inclusion have gradually shifted from a policy perspective to a *physical/spatial* one.

The two cases detailed in this article could be considered the “middle class” continuation and adaptation of the very first inverse-planning action carried out by the Maguanine association in Costa do Sol in 2004, an association rooted in a poor community (Nielsen 2011). The association, in order to obtain DUATs and secure the plots, “informally” contracted a local architect to prepare a regularisation plan.

Even though it was an “illegal” action”, and although the plan was only shared with the local authority at the end of the process, it was approved.

The “innovative” factor was that an urbanisation scheme came directly from the residents themselves, convinced that they would be properly included in the city’s plan through the imitation of a formal grid and respecting the plot-size standards. The assertion that such a process works has also been influencing the new middle-class residents’ aspiration to urban land. Since the first cases, there has been a significant upsurge in social actors implementing such actions: nowadays, “inverse-planning” processes particularly seem to suit the new middle class’s urban needs as a safe, sometimes quick, way to obtain land-use rights. Despite being relatively recent, these actions are already differentiating themselves into several sub-niches of actions, depending on the internal composition of the residents’ groups implementing them.

0.1. The Costa do Sol case⁵

The development of a community-led parcelling plan was the idea of Mr. Ibraimo, a middle-class householder and, now, residents’ committee coordinator. In 2013, Ibraimo was not a resident of Costa do Sol. He lived in a little apartment in Central neighbourhood, but had acquired a plot in Costa do Sol to construct a house.

He managed to join about 200 families from four blocks (*quaterões*) interested in obtaining a DUAT. A special commission was organised and a formal DUAT request sent to the Municipality, which rejected it and suggested that the residents contract a private architect to establish a work and financial plan. In this first phase, the Municipality was extensively involved and appointed two technicians to monitor the process. The two technicians suggested a list of architecture firms suitable, in their opinion, to develop the plan. The residents’ committee decided upon the preferred firm and contacted the architect. From that moment on, the Municipality maintained only an observatory role.

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◀ **Figure 2:** Street in Costa do Sol, Maputo, area recently inhabited by middle-classes. Photo: A. Mazzolini 2015

The residents developed and signed a private agreement establishing the value of the parcelling process, stating that the individual costs would be proportional to the plot size. It was also decided that the overall value had to be paid to the architect in several tranches to facilitate the poorest families. A joint bank account was opened. At the time of the first field monitoring, two years after the establishment of the contract (November 2015), only 35 householders had put their agreed contributions in the account. About 165 payments were lacking, and the account balance was only 20% of the required amount.

In Ibraimo's opinion, the main reasons for this were the considerable time spent in organisational terms, the lack of trust of some householders, and sudden unforeseen economic constraints. Currently, the architect has approval from the Municipality to proceed with a small part of the parcelling plan, excluding the conflicting zones. However, the economic issues are not completely resolved and the architect is trying another strategy. Working on the empty

plots, the wealthier population could easily pay to speed up the process for the whole group.⁶ Meanwhile, some subjects belonging to a tiny elite are recurring to traditional, semi-legal (or also bribery) modalities in order to speed up their DUAT emission process.

0.2. The Polana Caniço case

A similar process started in 2013 in Polana Caniço due to a land conflict with the neighbourhood of Costa do Sol. The residents of 4 *quaterões* felt threatened by the planned construction of a *condomínio*,⁷ and around 200 householders collected signatures and made a claim to the Municipal Council. Although they received a positive response, the Municipality passed the responsibility to the Ministry of Central Administration (MAE). The MAE tried several negotiations between the residents and the private company, but the developer did not participate in the meetings. The MAE passed over the process to the Municipality, choosing two technicians to be in charge of the process and field



6 Those subjects hold the plots of land farther away from the main infrastructures, and for this reason they feel less confident/safe about their right to stay or to construct there: Thus the interest in rapidly soliciting their land title. They seem proactive in paying a higher amount than required, and to subsidise poorer neighbours (that is to say, to also provide their DUATs) with the aim of definitively closing the process.

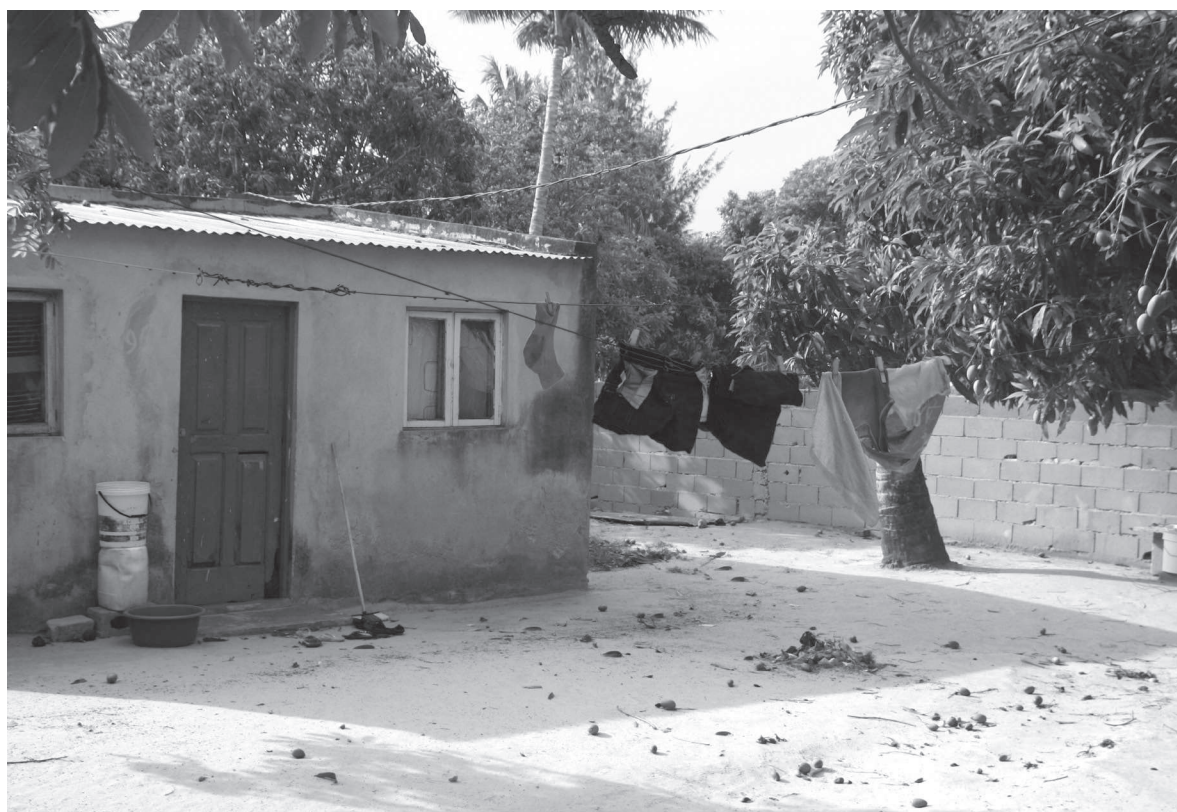
7 A horizontal, fenced residential community.

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◀ **Figure 3:** Satellite image of Polana Caniço settlement in Maputo. Source: Google Earth image 2016

Figure 4: Low-income house in Polana Caniço, Maputo, involved in the “inverse planning” process. Photo: A. Mazzolini 2015



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A “plano de pormenor”.

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One of the private technicians in charge of the plan was in fact working for the Municipality, and provided a subdivision plan that in some parts was rejected by the local authority because some plot sizes did not fit the current normative.

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work. The technicians, having verified the neighbourhood’s boundaries, expressed in favour of the community. The community decided then to hire an architect to prepare a detailed plan.⁸

A small private enterprise did the fieldwork in 2014, and the community opened a joint bank account. A price per square metre was established. Some lower-middle-class householders also paid for poorest. The process of collecting the entire amount took one year. The detailed plan was thus elaborated and delivered to the Municipality. The DUAT missives were quickly approved in August of 2014. Since then, individual communications from the Municipality to the residents have commenced, including the value for the DUAT emission.

In November of 2015, nearly 90% of the families were in possession of the DUAT. This does not mean that the process was free of constraints. Some families with severe monetary problems had to go to the Municipality to negotiate the value. Ten percent of the families experienced problems, such as no response from the Municipality. The main reason was the lack of clarity by the private enterprise in charge of the plan, as well as the conflicting roles.⁹ The Municipality later reassured the owners of these plots that they would receive their DUATs. The plot regularisation, the reallocation of some houses or courtyards, would happen after the middle-class newcomer residents had settled in. This agreement had not been respected in the first phase, leading to an increasing feeling of insecurity and of being “left alone” among the poorest residents.

Eventually, some municipal technicians advanced with the proposal of a “collective DUAT” for the remaining ten percent. The population rejected the proposal, considering that collective DUATs would put them in an unfavourable situation in the event that the residents wanted to

build on or sell their own plots. The situation is now resolved, and the Municipality dispatched all the DUAT missives by the beginning of 2016.

2. SPATIAL PRACTICES IN TRANSITION – A NEW URBAN SOCIAL CONTRACT?

The two cases studied are a perfect example of the ongoing reshaping of the urban social contract in two parallel ways: a “vertical” relationship between the planning authority and residents, and a “horizontal” one among various different socio-economic groups. The role of the local authority is caught between being regulatory and “culturally influenced”, the latter being characterised by a complex network of relations and intentions. Although this position is not new within the Maputo urban-planning system, it is gradually changing and evolving due to these more frequent inverse-planning actions.

Moreover, it is worth reasoning whether there is a difference in the way the local authority chooses to deal with the processes of “inverse planning”, depending on which social segment initiates it. From a local perspective, in fact, if such an action were implemented by the urban poor it could be interpreted as a sort of “licit” continuum of space self-management. If carried out by the urban middle class, it could be misinterpreted as a gentrification process (interview with DPMUA, October 2015).

In terms of costs, the procedure relieved the Municipality of some technical actions as well as parcelling costs. Specific urbanisation costs, such as the collocation of the *marcos*, were transferred from the local government to the citizens themselves. The expenses charged to the residents for the *marcos* collocation and for the plan elaboration do not change the fact that, following the plan approval, they are also supposed to pay the normal fee of the issuance of the DUAT document.



◀ **Figure 5:** A lower middle-class house in Polana Caniço, Maputo. Photo: A. Mazzolini 2016

In terms of spatial equity/urban inclusion, the impasse of the final stage of the Polana Caniço case illustrates how these processes could lead to land transactions that are unequal, particularly regarding the poorest residents. Those still waiting for their DUAT may feel the urgency to sell their plot to the incoming wealthier class, even at a lower price, because of the “illegality” of any transaction without a DUAT.

The local architect interviewed for the case of Costa do Sol gave a contrasting perspective, repeatedly pointing out how inverse planning could be a valuable instrument to guarantee quick solutions in hotspot areas, avoiding illegal transactions and fostering urban inclusion. This would be due not only to the presence of an “external” actor mediating the planning process, but also because the whole process would be accelerated, which could help to avoid the overlapping of various actors/interests on the same plots, which often arises when an extremely slow bureaucratic process occurs.

Analysing the social implications, certain core components of the inverse-planning actions infer a possible reshaping of the set of relationships and/or undeclared social obligations between the urban poor and the emerging middle class. Such actions could be viewed as the beginning of a new kind of integration between particular spatial interests and traditional land-achievement modalities, promoting collective actions capable of overcoming the lack of clear and qualitative land regulations and the cumbersome bureaucracy. However, it is obvious that this could weaken the local urban governance apparatus. The retreat of the planning authority from the process threatens some important fundamentals of urban inclusion, thus giving added importance to the land-title document. This aspect, in Maputo, challenges the urban “*realpolitik*” of widespread acceptance of “informal” settling-down actions as alternative but still valid ways of production of space.

4. ACTORS AND RESPONSIBILITIES – A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

The degree of the local authorities’ engagement with the inverse-planning process is a key factor to analyse forthcoming planning scenarios. That is to say: the way in which all these detailed plans will be included in the general city plan, a posteriori, could imply the introduction of completely new tools within the existing urban plans and planning processes. More than this, the roles and responsibilities among the triangle of actors is bound to be completely redefined.

In order to discuss these points, it is worth following a local perspective, in particular that of the third actor entering the process, the local firm. It is interesting that the definition that the architect in charge of the Costa do Sol parcelling plan uses to define the “inverse-planning” process is that of “social planning”.¹⁰ With this term, he emphasises not only the fact that land allocation is carried out through a community-based action and a set of transversal agreements involving different actors, but also the fact that these actions hold the potential to provide a certain level of urban and social “protection”. The architect believes that a real social-planning action could be carried out uniquely with the superseding of the Municipality field actions, limiting its role to a regulation/normative/bureaucratic/fiscal one.¹¹

Regarding the sustainability of the inverse-planning actions, there seems to be a wide consensus about the fact that “*it works*” (interview with Prof. Tique, CEDH, interview with Polana Caniço committee president, and interview with private topographer and architect, 2015). The consensus seems to be that once a plan appears, it will be approved if basic regulations have been respected.

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He pointed out how, before the year 2000, this private sector expertise was not present in the country. Nowadays, however, as the architect said in a personal communication in March 2016, “There are many qualified persons now in the city, they are persons who want to help.” As for community involvement, the architect reassures that during his mandate there was complete collaboration because of the participatory planning meetings. These meetings were fundamental for becoming aware of the residents’ needs and preferences, in particular regarding public spaces (green zones, leisure areas, spaces for vendors).

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“I consider the Municipality as an administrative subject solely. People think that the Municipality has to go on the field, to ‘see’, to ‘know’, but this does not work. They solely have to control, to check if the plan is adaptable to the structural city plan, to approve, to make money from the taxes, and do invest that money. And so on. The Municipality must hold a holistic vision, preparing terms of reference for the plans, but they are losing their time with all these little parcelling actions.” (Interview with a local architect, done by Anna Mazzolini in March 2016.)



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▲ **Figure 6:** Socially mixed area in Polana Caniço, Maputo. Photo: A. Mazzolini 2015

CONCLUSIONS

In the Costa do Sol and Polana Caniço neighbourhoods, both lower- and middle-class residents and newcomers are progressively complementing Mozambique's *realpolitik* in terms of land access with new, personal market-driven rationalities, and the "inverse-planning" actions analysed here are perfect proof of those interrelations. These processes are likely to spread very quickly, as is proven by the fact that more and more (but also less qualified) topographers and local architects are now offering such services to the communities, fostering a brand new competitive niche in the market (interview with local architects and Costa do Sol committee representatives, October 2015).

It could be argued that this way of acting perpetrates a traditional attitude adapted to the new regularisation policies. In reality, such a peculiar way of obtaining land rights escapes strict definitions, and the consequences it might have are impossible to fully envision because it holds the potential to subvert so many aspects of conventional urban governance dynamics. What is relevant is that it is more and more the Municipality itself that, lacking other viable strategies, persuades the residents to resort to community-private contracts to produce their own parcelling or upgrading plan.

These processes could be seen as an instrument to manage new expansion zones (or land-conflict zones) and to limit the power of private interests on land. However, the fact that these processes seem to "work" uniquely through the presence of a wealthier class infers that these benefits might not be applicable to the whole community, thus holding the risk to become an "unclear" planning solution.

Inverse planning should be recognised as a continuum: the main reason for accepting the first "illegal" planning action being the lack of financial and technical means.¹² Inverse planning should be seen as a rupture as far as the relationships and the micro-politics are concerned. In this sense, we can define at least three main arguments following which the inverse planning breaks with this continuum:

- i. The local authority, the land-use planning, and the governance: the sense of the planning policies is clearly subverted in the cases documented. Principally, the collective interest makes space for a "generic" interest, which can be claimed (using the DUAT as the main instrument) in different situations by different actors. Profound changes are implied: a shift from the recognition of the land rights to the mere allocation of them through the verification of the adherence to the new planning framework, and an ex-post planning carried out by a local private sector rather than an ex-ante planning through a long-term state strategy. A consequence: a shift from a socially "collective" interest to a commoditised "generic" one.
- ii. The perception of the space, the middle class, and the urban poor: generally, a parcelled zone implicitly means a zone inhabited in the near future by a wealthier elite (Nielsen 2011). Moreover, in the last decade, the plot perimeters have proved to increase the land-tenure-security perception (Jenkins 2004). These two main embedded perceptions are increasingly intersecting with each other in the inverse-planning process. In the same manner, mechanisms culturally related with specific classes are interchanging (Simone et al, 2013). The middle class take inspiration from and reproduce a strategy rooted in poor communities to defend their land use. The poor class, seemingly proactive in engaging in market-led aspirations, do not always (after receiving the DUAT) move farther.
- iii. Inverse planning as a social action. There are many voices defining these actions as "social" actions. From a certain point of view, they could also be interpreted as a sort of local "resistance" towards private-led development. The real news is that such a resistance is cross-class and transversal to different income groups.

We can choose to define inverse planning as a logical strategy emerging from a different socio-economic scenario in a context of administrative and political weakness: in this sense, the effectiveness of the output achieved can be contested, as "where political will was weak and where the nature of the market is embryonic and highly distorted in favour of the economically powerful, the consequence of regularising the informal is likely to be the opposite of what some land reformers lobby for" (Jenkins 2001: 11). In this sense, the novelty of the phenomenon could be contested. Reversely, we could choose to define it as a new way for the lower classes to achieve the desired "urban premium" (Turok 2016), taking advantage of a wealthier class willing to speed up its construction process.

We can be sure of what the inverse planning is not. It is not an innovative form of participation in a general context of weak governance. The disappearing of the state and the increasingly imitative, and increasingly formalising, actions superseding the state planning are not bound to be a new instrument of participation. Nor is it an innovative technical solution. What is really new is the particular set of relationships (not only authority-citizen, but also the triangle private-public-community) deriving from such actions, and the subtle relationships between the visibility or invisibility of these new practices and orientations (Simone 2015) with the urban governance issue.

12

The continuum follows the traditional recognition of the auto-production of space or housing as a real *co-production* mode within the city. This co-production, due to the lack of technical or administrative alternatives, quickly gains a certain level of legality. For this reason, in the two examples described, the "illegality" of the urban occupations is still to be considered as a "floating" category that is continuously changing and reversing.



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