

INTRODUCTION

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This book gathers five papers presented to the ECAS' 2013 proceedings. Following the theme of the Congress "African dynamics in a multipolar world", the challenge was to select among the 118 papers presented those which focused in the subjects of informality and space reconfiguration. The papers were selected from 4 panels: "Writing the world from another African metropolis: Luanda and the urban question"¹, "Urbanisation and poverty in mining Africa"², "Urban imaginaries in Africa"³ and "Managing other people's money: financial services in sub-Saharan Africa after structural adjustment"⁴.

In the editing process, we assumed that the intention of the authors when submitting papers to the ECAS' proceedings was to share and collect contributions from the academic community to improve their researches. This means that all the papers in this book are considered a work in progress. The editor's work, guided by the reviewers' comments was limited: the main goal was to present the preliminary insights. The authors are therefore expecting to receive contributions from the readers and, thinking ahead, why not opening new communication channels?

The theme of the space and city is, broadly speaking, a constant in these articles. This book analyses fixed, fluid, informal, working and social spaces and even new spaces created or formalised following governmental interests. The assumption that "(social) space is a (social) product"⁵ formally presented in Geuder's text is also a direction followed by the authors. Informal dynamics and exclusion (*latto sensu*) are another leitmotif, worked from different angles in this book. Pedro, Pólvora and Venâncio focus on social and economic exclusion and Servet approaches financial exclusion. Pedro's article also analyses exclusion from the natural resources. The exclusion caused by the transformation/change of the original space is mainly analysed by Pólvora, Servet and Venâncio. Four of the present articles are based in field researches in different areas: Bamako (Mali, adopting the "Pont de l'Amitié Sino-Malienne" as an intended starting point), Tete Province (Cateme and 25 de Setembro resettlements – Mozambique), Plateau (commercial area in Praia, Cape Verde) and Prenda (especially the *musseques*, a neighbourhood in Luanda, Angola).

We may find a common thread in all the papers, and still all of them introduce a unique view on the subject chosen by each author. Jacqueline Pólvora,

¹ Coordinated by Ricardo Cardoso (UC Berkeley) and Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues (ISCTE-IUL).

² Coordinated by Deborah Bryceson (University of Glasgow) and Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues (ISCTE-IUL).

³ Coordinated by Ilda Lindell (Stockholm University) and Onyanta Adama (Nordic Africa Institute).

⁴ Coordinated by Jose-Maria Munoz (University of Edinburgh) and Philip Burnham (University College London).

⁵ Present in this book by Geuder, according to Lefebvre's work.

following the transformations in Plateau area, “gentrifies” the analysis, looking deeply into the relationship between women and the urban space. She analyses the impacts in the daily working lives of the female street vendors in the Plateau – the commercial centre of Praia, where the majority of commerce and services are concentrated, besides Sucupira market), namely the plans to construct a new market⁶. The focus is also on the tensions and disputes over space, given the significant changes that have been promoted by the City Hall.

Jacob Geuder’s text analyses the dominant logic of the “production of space” in Bamako. The concept of *Entraeumlichung* is proposed to describe a significant transformation in the way space is produced and being produced. The text is based in the concepts of “space as relational space and on the assumption that space is not only socially produced but also produces the social”. Geuder’s fieldwork was abruptly interrupted by the Mali Coup D’état, which prevented the author of fulfilling his intended goal for this research trip, also interrupting a film production. This interruption led him to redefine the scope of his analysis. Even with this constraint, the text illustrates, in a very visual way (for once I felt to be in Bamako) the transformations in the “fixed” and “fluid” spaces in the city. Looking for “Fixed Spaces” the author analyses Bamako’s urban space “from a more material-structural dimension, the structures of ownership and tenureship in housing, new forms and elements in (residential) architecture and the effects of (newly) built environments”. The movement, the mobility and the (everyday) constructions of the city were the standpoint of the analysis.

Pedro’s text analyses the transformations in the quality of life of the population relocated to formal resettlements made by the mining company Vale in Tete Province, between the years of 2006 and 2011. Due to the discovery of coal reserves, the government, in partnership with Vale Company but under the company’s full responsibility, decided for a resettlement process that has affected, and will affect, several people in Tete Province. The paper focuses on two resettlements: Cateme, which received the families considered rural and 25 de Setembro, which received the ones considered urban. The author selected a set of variables to be analysed, such as: housing, education and health services’ in frastructures’ and water and energy supply, as well as the conditions offered for the maintenance of social and traditional cultural links. The author also tries to

⁶ According to Imam (1997, p. 23): “Fundamentally, gender analysis highlights the necessity of considering ideology, subjectivity and consciousness, and the role of this ‘non-material’ process in politics, productions relations, democratic process and the state. For instance, the investigate of various forms of gender relations indicates that’s despite women’s involvement in central aspects of productive labour, even in the contexts were their economic contributions are sustaining households and communities, patriarchal ideologies ensure women’s subordinations. They do so by rendering women’s and men’s labour incommensurate, devaluing women’s labour and rendering it invisible an ‘non-economic’”.

analyse the conditions of the survival practices in the new resettlement (such as the proximity to Moatize town and roads).

Joana Venâncio analysed the informal resettlements, the *musseques*, namely in Prenda area. The Angolan civil war was not only long but also extremely violent. It caused a migration of population from rural to urban areas in search of safety and employment, although in these areas the job opportunities were already scarce and off limits to non-skilled labour. The adaptation to life in the cities was a challenge for the migrants. Some families found available land to build shelter in the periphery of the urban centre, distant from roads and without available transportation services, while others have settled in the shantytowns inside the cities⁷. Venâncio analyses the process of urbanisation in Prenda area “as a closer approach to the city’s urban process”. Her analysis is based on Luanda’s architectural development. The author intends to contribute to the debate on informality, “whether this urban informality should be fought or, on the contrary, is an integrating part of Luanda’s character and, as such, should be taken into account in its relationship with the world”. Another plus of the paper is the confluence between architecture, history and sociology.

Finally, Servet’s article, written in French, aims at analysing the contributions and conditions of microcredit systems to alleviate poverty. Microcredit programs, as Servet highlights, are a well-known topic in the academic world. The author analyses the relations between the concession of the credit and several variables such as: the beneficiaries (or “the customers”, in the authors’ words), the use and cost of the loans (in relation with the business profitability) and the grantor’s technical capacity. Through the analysis of the data presented, the article aims to contribute to the (re)design/revision of microcredit programs.

ECAS received texts from lecturers, masters and PhD students as well as junior and senior researchers. This book intends to be as inclusive as ECAS was. The set of papers here presented aims to represent the growing interest in the themes of informality and space, which permeates different disciplines, here represented by the authors’ different backgrounds: architecture, sociology, anthropology, political science and environmental engineering. Likewise, this book intends to indicate (new) possibilities for research in the broader thematic of space and informality.

⁷ Afonso, 2001, p. 60.

References

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