



Interview to Isabel Raposo, architect, urban planner, researcher and professor at FAUL

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Paulo Moreira Good afternoon, Isabel, good afternoon, Gonçalo. As editor of the journal *Estudo Prévio*, I wanted to interview Isabel Raposo - architect, urban planner, and lecturer. Therefore, I challenged Gonçalo Folgado, lecturer at Da/UAL and Isabel's former student at FAUL, to lead this interview with me. Isabel Raposo is associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Lisbon, she has participated and conducted research and local action initiatives in several peri-urban and self-built neighbourhoods in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, in Maputo, Mozambique, and in Luanda, Angola, for several years. She currently coordinates the project Africa Habitat and coordinates GESTUAL (Grupo de Estudos Socio-Territoriais, Urbanos e de Ação Local) at research centre CIAUD, Faculty of Architecture. In the last few years of her career as a lecturer, she has promoted the discussion in academia on the Right to the City. First, we would like to ask Isabel to talk about the people (colleagues, teachers, authors) who she considers have influenced her and were crucial for her in the beginning of her career.

Thank you, Paulo, and Gonçalo, for inviting me and having the patience to listen to me. Regarding your question, Paulo, I want to start by saying something that explains my position and my attitude. When I was little, I was very shy, I stayed at home, and I would spend my time drawing or reading, hidden from the adults. I had a passion for dance, which was only made possible when I was twenty-five and did a jazz dance retreat for a few months in Paris; as a small girl I was not able to choose that path, which I considered my whole world. To compensate that, I collected images of great male and female dancers at the time. The name of the group Gestual derives also from that passion for the gesture in space. This artistic and sensitive dimension is key to my whole life. Though in the last years I have focused more on my rational side, that is my core dimension, to which I want to return as soon as possible.

As childhood references that influenced my professional life, I recall having found, in my father's library, besides many art-history books and books on the work of several painters, which I voraciously read, a book by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, German Ideology, which I placed to my personal bookshelf. I struggled to understand the richness and complexity of the book's message, because my world was much more one of sensations, emotions, and shapes than structured thought. That text made me very curious and left clues that just drifted in my mind until I got older and understood historical materialism, its theory and methodology. Art, drawing, and painting were the most important for me at that time. I painted a bit, but I drew a lot, realistic drawings of faces and bodies or drawings of feelings and perceptions in colourful symbolic splashes. As a child, when I was about ten or eleven years old, I imagined and drew plans of furnished houses and I remember having designed a dance school. I think I made more architecture plans at that time than in my professional life... [laughter]

But I wanted to pursue painting. At a certain point in time, I also considered studying mathematics. And I ended up doing architecture. This hesitation has a lot to do with the fact that my sensitive and my rational sides are both very strong. When I entered architecture at the then ESBAL (Escola Superior de Belas Artes de Lisboa), I discovered a new world of possibilities. I entered university in 1969 and that year was known for student demonstrations, which led to the symbolic burial of the old school with a performance by our colleague José Fanha, now a well-known poet. This took place within a number of movement for self-management and democratization of education in the 1960s in several cities in Europe, such as in Torin and Rome, in 1964, or in Paris, where it led to rising upheaval in May 1968, a time known for the large student movements that gave origin to similar protests in other French cities and arrived in Portugal to the Porto and Lisbon schools a few years before the end of the dictatorship, exactly at the time I entered university. From a young woman sheltered in her own inner world, I was now in a midst of great uproar, at a place where my colleagues from different years, with the complicity of some professors, fostered a new way of learning architecture through organizing spontaneous critical discussion groups on the teaching model and the social function of an architect for a more just world. It was a wonderful opportunity to broaden my horizons in terms of society and of architecture.

In the following years, with the academic situation "back to normal", I recall two professors who fostered my taste for reading: the geographer José Gaspar, who, among others, led me to discover Orlando Ribeiro and his perspective on the types of rural population and habitat, leading to my passion for vernacular architecture, and architect

Tomás Taveira, who, in his classes on Architecture Theory, challenged us to read those authors who, in the 1960s and 1970s, questioned the rationalism of the modern movement, from Kevin Lynch to Gordon Cullen to Leonardo Benevolo. In my discovery of other perspectives, I would refer the work by Amos Rapoport, on house anthropology (*Pour une Anthropologie de la Maison*, 1972), and that by Christopher Alexander, who, with Serge Chermayeff discussed the concept of community and privacy (*Community and Privacy: Toward a new architecture of Humanism*, 1965). These references, among others, influenced my questioning and my research interests, which have lasted until today on the change of popular rural and (sub)urban habitat, the role of the architect and of communities in producing their space.

In 1974, as I was completing the fifth and penultimate year in my degree in architecture, the military movement that rose against the military action in the then colonies, later leading to the military coup on the 25th of April, the end of the dictatorship, the dismantling of Estado Novo and the independence of the African colonies. For two years, the revolutionary process in Portugal is taken by the population, who can finally claim their right to housing and to better living conditions. In that period, ESBAL is closed. A group of colleagues, active and activist, gathers regularly at a flat above the café “Leitaria Garrett”, a meeting place for students (opposite Rua Ivens, a five-minute walk from the School, the today Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon). We would discuss the political and social situation and the struggle of those living in the poor neighbourhoods. I participated in some meetings and, together with these colleagues, we became more aware of that other reality and the extreme social and spatial inequality.

At that same time, on 31 July 1974, SAAL, Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local, was founded, designed by architect Nuno Portas, a major reference for many of us and who was then the Secretary of State for Housing and Urban Planning. SAAL was implemented by Fundo de Fomento da Habitação. As a final year student, I went there and asked if they needed any help from a student who knew very little or nothing but who was eager to learn by doing. SAAL was, for me, a means of diving into other social and spatial realities of poor outskirts and clearly showed me the important role of architects in finding dignified solutions in close interaction with those inhabiting the space. I am called to participate in the neighbourhood of Falagueira, a then *freguesia* in Amadora where a fire had destroyed fifty very fragile houses called “barracas” (shacks). With other students and those living in Falagueira, we helped in the urgent construction of provisional houses by carrying bricks to immediately rehouse those families. I am then asked to be part of SAAL team, coordinated by architect Cruz Henriques, responsible for designing the plan to permanently rehouse those very same families, now Bairro 11 de março, in Alforneiros. In view of the urgency, we opted for prefabricated houses but, more than the project’s technical solution, I was interested in the process’s social, spatial, and participatory dimensions. Because of tensions in the team, I did not follow that project up until the moment it was implemented. I was lucky to start working with another SAAL team right away, this time, with the one in Loures, coordinated by architect Pitum Keil do Amaral, a great humanist and creative humourist, very sensitive to the project’s social aspect and always in search of feasible solutions discussed with the inhabitants. Pitum was a reference in my professional career and in my search for a closer relation with neighbourhoods, associations, and communities. We mostly worked in Catujal, where Pitum designed and supervised the construction of a small social centre, to which I

contributed a bit in terms of labour. When that centre was finished, a few nights a week I would teach how to read and write to young and adult workers, some from Cape Verde, following Paulo Freire's method of using their own life experience as the basis for teaching. Freire's pedagogical and political thought, which he expressed in his major work *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (1975), teaching the alphabet based on students' life experience, is a social emancipation tool, one that also changes the educator, promoting that he or she become closer with the daily life of workers and foster dialog and respect for one another. This deep immersion in different social and spatial realities and different life stories further reinforced my idea that I was looking for a different dimension for my work as an architect.

In 1978, at a transitional moment, I moved to France to explore what had been my biggest passion: jazz dance and drawing. But after a few months I am asked to go to Mozambique by Pitum. He had settled there upon being invited by architect José Forjaz, who was then the head of Direção Nacional de Habitação, in Maputo. I packed my bags, and, in August 1979, I flew to meet this challenging team and, once again, embrace social and spatial causes.

Gonçalo Folgado: This is your more sensitive side, you like working on urban fringes and are very curious about the other, that is what leads to go to Mozambique. Tell- us about that. What was the best thing you took from that trip, what was the most important thing you took from it in terms of your profession and even in terms of you as a person?

In Mozambique, besides Pitum, who was already integrated in Maputo, together with his big family, two other people will be very influential in my development and change as a person. António Quadros was a major influence, a master draughtsman, painter and poet, with his heteronyms, João Pedro Grabato Dias, Frey Ioannes Garabatus, Multimati Barnabé João, as well as a published author, a beekeeper, a builder-architect, a teacher who combined scholarly and popular knowledge and who had been living in Mozambique since 1964, and a critic of the dictatorship He was considerate to all those who were around him, he was a true Master, who held my hand (as well as that of many others) and helped me leap across the ocean, overcome my paralyzing fears, and dare be what I wanted to be and do what I believed in. He was a very important friend, a reference, constant inspiration, also because of his humanity and creativity, as well as his mastery in designing alternative construction solutions, his skills in popular knowledge, his manuals on alternative techniques within what he called the basic techniques for rational use of nature (TBARN)

José Forjaz was my director in the first five years I was in Mozambique, his influence was the result of his passion for architecture, his artistic sensitivity and strong ability to place things in motion, as well as due to his thinking on urban issues and social and spatial development, which focused on building a territory that was less unequal within a country that was still being developed "um país por fazer". In the first ten years after Mozambique became independent, he placed his skills at the service of rebuilding the new country - that became his main mission, thus emphasizing the political aspect of the role of the architect. To José Forjaz, after the political revolution there was the need to

design a new city model that would fit the new society without classes that he aimed for. His main battles were for access to dignified housing conditions for all and linking economic planning and physical planning (*Plano, projeto e planeamento físico*, 1984). In 1983, he founded Instituto Nacional de Planificação Física (now Direção Nacional do Ordenamento do Território e Reassentamento) and, in 1986, with Italian cooperation, the Faculty of Architecture and Physical Planning (currently Physical Planning), where he lectured and who he headed between 1990 and 2009.

At Direção Nacional da Habitação and then at Instituto Nacional de Planificação Física, he managed to have a number of professionals from various parts of the world: from Latin America, from Northern Europe and North America, not only from Eastern Europe, as in most public institutions. Many young professionals who were there also believed that you could change society by changing its territory. I actively participated in that rich experimental lab on what and how to do things. When, later on, in my research on houses built by immigrants in the North of Portugal, a project conducted with Roselyne Villanova and Carolina Leite (*Maisons de rêve au Portugal*, 1994, or *Casas de sonhos*, 1995), I heard immigrants state that: "I became who I am today because of France", I thought "I became who I am today because of Mozambique". My strong connection with Mozambique and with the African continent dates from that time. I still feel emotional when I relive those moments which were full of enchantment and learning in all aspects. It was an exceptional time for all of us who believed we were participating in building a new possible world. There was safety in the city. We would mingle in different places and times with foreigners who were as committed as we were, and with Mozambicans in search of new paths. We worked hard and discussed everything, politics, development, new ways of thinking and doing urban planning, teaching and life. Of course, this microcosm also had tensions and contradictions, and these would later lead me to my master's and to my PhD.

From my stay in Mozambique, I would emphasize my link with staff training. Pítum called me for that in 1979, because he knew my interest and commitment to adult literacy in Catujal. Between 1979 and 1984 and later between 1988 and 1989, I was responsible for staff training in housing and human settlement, first at elementary level at Direção Nacional de Habitação, later at basic and middle levels, at Instituto Nacional de Planificação Física. We worked on basic concepts in urban and rural planning to improve the living conditions in neighbourhoods and villages. My experience in adult literacy, according to Paulo Freire's methodology, was strengthened here, now at professional level, absorbing António Quadros's creativity and José Forjaz's vision and focus on youth training and change as they accepted the challenge to become professionals, some of them heading the physical planning provincial services.

In 1981, I also had the opportunity to participate in the first field research in independent Mozambique, on changing rural habitat after the implementation of communal villages throughout the country. The research was coordinated by Adolfo Casal and José Fialho, anthropologists (*Contribuição para o estudo do habitat moçambicano, Distrito de Vilanculos, Inhambane*), with the collaboration of a historian, a geographer, as well as of Eric Bouchet and mine in collecting and designing village organization and their constructions. It was a wonderful experience that made me feel and understand the richness of rural populations' way of life, one which the urbanization ideal in the

communal village policies would disorganize. This deep immersion in the rural world, through listening to the words and collecting space shapes and reflections that this and other research arose, led me to develop my PhD research on what I would call village and house urbanization, a violent process to speed country urbanization, in this case as a result of a political decision.

Another significant contribution for my thinking and my approach to field research was the research that was being conducted at that time by Christian Geffray for his PhD. He was a French philosopher and anthropologist who had been doing fieldwork for almost one year among the *macuas* in the district of Erati, in Nampula, in the North of Mozambique, aiming to understand their social relations (1990, *Ni père, ni mère. Critique de la parenté: le cas makhuwa*). This was 1984, there was civil war in the whole rural country and Geffray was the first to understand that the armed conflict, which a group of mercenaries paid by South Africa started in 1978, had spread through the whole rural country as a result of the dissatisfaction with rural development policy, specifically, the communal villages policy (1990, *La cause des armes au Mozambique: Anthropologie d'une guerre civile*). This policy, launched to improve production and living conditions in the countryside, was based on disorganizing the way of living, producing, and inhabiting, leading to dissatisfied populations that joined the anti-government guerrilla, RENAMO, against FRELIMO. The anthropological perspective by Christian Geffray was a key influence in my research on the impact of the communal villages policy in the way of living of rural workers in Manica. This represented a major change in my approach.

PM: On your return to Lisbon, how did this relevant experience contribute to your action as a researcher and as a lecturer?

Between my return from Mozambique, in 1989, and my entering the Faculty of Architecture, in 2002, thirteen years passed. This was the time when I conducted my PhD research. I conduct initial fieldwork in the villages of Manica in 1989 and then conducted a second fieldwork, a deeper one, in 1990. There was still civil war and suffering in the depositions I collected, the physical and psychological violence that people had endured and the economic precariousness they lived in did not allow me to dive into those testimonies for some time. Meanwhile, on returning to Portugal, I am invited by Associação de Desenvolvimento Local In Loco, in Faro, to design and supervise a summer course for university students on the heritage of the village of Alte, in the Algarve. It was another enriching experience, in which I followed the same principles I had been using of listening and including the inhabitants in the discussions on their way of life and of inhabiting the village. This work continued with the support of the Municipality, of a village artist, Daniel Viera, passionate for old heritage, and of two of the students. One of them, Júlia Carolino, anthropologist, is a researcher at FAUL and active member of Gestual. The result of this work was a travelling exhibition on the research, with public debates in Loulé, in Alte and in different places within the *freguesia*. I continued my research for another year, which led to writing a monograph (1995, *Alte na roda do tempo*), which was also locally distributed and discussed and ended up becoming part of my PhD thesis.

Along this period, before entering FAUL, I designed several architecture projects, conducted other small research and popular training. At the end of the 1990s, when I was completing my PhD (I completed it in 1999, at Université de Paris XII, thanks to a

scholarship awarded by FCT), I was invited by CEA (Centro de Estudos sobre África) at ISEG, through economist Carlos Sangreman Proença, to participate in two deep research projects on the outskirts of Luanda and Maputo (1998 and 1999), led by Professor Jochen Oppenheimer. And that was how I came to the African urban fringes, when my focus, up to that point was the change in rural habitat. The teams in both projects were multidisciplinary, which enriched our perspectives on the living conditions and on the housing in the outskirts, which were in a process of shifting from rural to urban, a process that had been made faster in both cities because of the civil war in both countries (2002, *A pobreza em Maputo*; 2007, *Subúrbios de Luanda e Maputo*). At that time, I was a member of two research centres on African Studies, CEsa, and CEA at ISCTE, but I was not affiliated to any of them, as I had received a scholarship for my PhD and for my post-doctoral studies. It is at the end of this research outside the university, in 2002, that I am invited to teach at the Faculty of Architecture.

In theoretical terms, in my initial research I started by doing empirical work based on observation of how the space changed. Afterwards, my knowledge of the changes was added through reading several authors, experts on the city and on inhabiting, as well as on socio-anthropology, as is the case of Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, or Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, the latter being an anthropologist whose focus was Africa (*Socio-anthropologie du développement em Afrique*, 1995). This provided me with key concepts for fieldwork (*La politique du terrain*, 1995) on the communal villages in Mozambique, for understanding the data collected, for the actions needed for restitution and public debate and also for local action. But the most important writer who structured my thought and my reading of space change was Henri Lefebvre and his many books - among which I select *La production de l'espace* (1974) - which I avidly read with the support of my supervisor, Jean-Pierre Frey, a follower of Lefebvre, of the sociology of housing, and who conducted much research on the concept of significant types of housing, a concept I used and furthered in my research in different contexts.

The fact that my supervisor advocated fundamental research and my interest for applied research and for action-research, specifically, for interaction with subjects and territories under study, led to differences and made me justify theoretically restitution and public debate, while in a logic of (inter)action and in a logic of research, as heuristic contribution. This approach was developed in the PhD in both territories: in Alte, with distribution and discussion of the above-mentioned monograph, and in Manica, in Mozambique. Here, the results of the empirical research led to a journal with all the answers of the rural workers. The journal was reviewed by my local "guide" Jorge Lampião, my former student in the training for middle management positions at Instituto Nacional de Planificação Física and, at the time, chief of Serviço Provincial de Planificação Física in Manica. With his indispensable support, the journal was distributed among the villagers who, for the first time, had access to a publication that spoke about their way of living in their own words. Distributing the journal made it easier to organize public debate, first in small groups and later in big party-like assemblies organized by the local leaders. It was a grand moment that gave the rural workers their voice back, they had been forbidden from expressing their opinion on communal villages that had disorganized their production and their living. It was a changing moment for everybody, for the researcher, for her "guide", but also for the local leaders and for the rural workers, men and women, who made their public voice free in a rather cathartic moment. These events took place

in 1991, while the country was still at war and you could not openly criticize governmental policy, but a year before the Peace Treaty, at a time when things were becoming more open. I did not have the opportunity to study the short and mid-term impact of this restitution and public debate on local change, but the hundreds of participants in the several events was very enthusiastic and the debate was rather direct and relevant.

This methodology of restitution and public debate is useful for researchers because it allows assessing the results and collecting more data, but it also useful to the interviewees because they have access to knowledge produced based on their discourse and on observing the places they live in. Research is not limited to academia and benefits only scientists and their CVs; it rather makes peoples' thinking and daily lives richer. We applied the same methodology in two research projects conducted in the suburbs of Luanda and Maputo (*Restituição e debate público em Luanda e Maputo*, 2007). Besides restitution, my collaboration in both these projects focused on the space signals of poverty, in the change of popular housing (with the collaboration and sensitivity of Cristina Salvador who focused on Luanda), the role of NGOs (with Mário Ribeiro) and the impact of planning and management tools in suburb changes. Without realizing, I was getting closer to the topics I would teach at university. At the start of my career at the university, in 2002, I was rather confused, I felt that I was entering a world I did not belong to, in which I felt a complete stranger, and I wondered: "What am I doing here?" I ended up staying for twenty years...

GF: Your career path starts in practice and then you move towards research. You found GESTUAL, a research group that focuses on urban fringes, intervenes in territories, impacts communities, and ends up influencing academia. Will you please talk about how GESTUAL was founded, the principles of the research group and its impact, both in academia and in the communities you have in been in dialog with?

When I started teaching at university, I was lucky to be asked to supervise the course unit Project IV to students attending the fifth year in Urban Planning and Territory Architecture. Margarida Moreira, who was very empathetic and welcoming and was then the Head of the Urban Planning Department, suggested that I worked PUZRO - Plano de Urbanização da Zona Ribeirinha Oriental - with the students. The first step was to take the students to the area, so that they could explore it - from that area up to the Expo area, there is a lot of contrast: palaces and farms, factories, and low-income houses, as well as many undeveloped or little developed areas. I found the topic rather interesting. I was then completing my research on the suburbs of Luanda and Maputo, rather more precarious urban fringes. I decided that I would continue to work on the same topic with the students, though in a different place. Teresa Craveiro, urban planner and then Head of Strategic Planning in Lisbon Municipality suggested that I would take the students to the northern part of the city, between Calçada de Carriche and Carnide, where there are several neighbourhoods, whose construction was illegal. A group of students collected information to describe the referred areas (Áreas Urbanas de Génese Ilegal - AUGI). They did a very good job and the Municipality, thanks to Teresa Craveiro's interest and dynamism, used their work to decide on the plans for those AUGI. In the following year, I chose the area of Alto do Lumiar in the Urban Plan and I took the students (by bus) to visit the outskirts of the Municipality of Amadora. On our way there, we went past the



neighbourhood of Cova da Moura, which I did not know. A student pointed at the neighbourhood and said: "That is where we should be working". I wondered "Why there?"

I did some research on the neighbourhood and understood its associative dynamics and, in the meantime, I participated in the conference Congresso Luso-Afro-Brasileiro de Ciências Sociais, organized by Centro de Estudos Sociais (CES), held in Coimbra, where I presented my research on Maputo. Francisco Lima Costa, a sociologist, participated in the same conference session and presented his research on the ethnic tourism project Sabura, which was being developed in Cova da Moura by Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude (*Turismo étnico, cidades e identidades: o projecto "Sabura - África, aqui tão perto!". Uma viragem cognitiva na apreciação da diferença*, 2006). I immediately arranged a visit to the neighbourhood with them to meet the association. And I did. Suddenly, it was as if I had returned to Africa and was at home. I established contacts with Associação Moinho da Juventude and other associations in the neighbourhood and, the following year, my fifth-year students studied the municipality of Amadora and chose Cova da Moura as one of the neighbourhoods for further research, in close interaction with the local associations. This which was well received by the students despite being criticised in the university. A few years later, in 2010, the Trienal de Arquitectura took students from different faculties to study qualification of Cova da Moura... I was just too early! Meanwhile, in June 2005, Associação Cultural Moinho da Juventude organizes a seminar on neighbourhood qualification "A qualificação do bairro é possível se a gente quiser" in which my students with projects for Cova da Moura could present their work. The then President of the Republic, Jorge Sampaio, and the Secretary of State for Territory and City Organization, João Ferrão, attended the seminar. In September of that year, João Ferrão launched a program for urban qualification - Iniciativa Qualificação e Reinserção Urbana de Áreas Críticas - and chose Cova da Moura as one of the pilot neighbourhoods. The relationships we established with the associations that year led us to support the neighbourhood commission for this action throughout several years, thus providing traineeships for students, who participated in improvement actions. In the following year, I stopped teaching to the fifth year because my focus was deemed a fringe topic and not adequate for fifth-year students.

In 2006, I create two optional courses - "Subúrbios Habitacionais" (suburban housing) "Urbanismo nos Países em Desenvolvimento" (Urban Planning in Developing Countries) - for students interested in fringe topics at research and action-project levels, using different university extension dynamics. These courses attracted many students eager for a new perspective on thinking and doing architecture and urban planning. The second course attracted, among others, Gonçalo Folgado and João Martins, with whom, a few years later, we would start research on the neighbourhood Bairro 2 de Maio, which would lead them to the BIP-ZIP projects. The two courses were later blended into one "Qualificação de Áreas Urbanas Críticas" (Qualification of Critical Urban Areas), lectured in a master's program before the implementation of the Bologna process, and later became "Qualificação de Subúrbios Habitacionais" (Qualification of Suburban Housing), a course in the new master's program after Bologna. This course has always attracted many students.

In 2007, again with the support of Teresa Craveiro and colleagues at FAUL, we managed to have funding by FCT for a research project on "illegal urban clusters" in the Lisbon



Metropolitan Area (AML), and contrasting them with similar situations in São Paulo, Istanbul, and Maputo. Besides a thorough collection of all situations in AML, we worked with municipal officers responsible for AUGI and with Comissões de Administração Conjunta (joint-management commissions) fostering meetings that would allow for discussing the situation. It was an excellent opportunity to learn by doing with those that were actually doing it. This research was later updated and led to specific cooperation with the project to restructure the southern part (Vertente Sul) of the municipality of Odivelas, a complex and dynamic lab that used different tools and allowed us, within the scope of our participation, to coordinate action-research, training, and university extension.

Though I was no longer teaching Project to the fifth year, which did not allow me to develop deeper project on qualifying the fringes with students, these optional courses and research projects allowed for a reinforcement of this threefold approach: training, research and university extension. The principles underlying my career at the Faculty are the same as those of our research group GESTUAL. Firstly, our focus on fringe territories, which have been considered secondary in architecture schools, as they favour spectacle architecture and urban spectacle. Luckily, today, there is a new generation of architects and urban planners who work on these topics and territories and there are more and more texts on relevant experiences in Portugal and in other parts of the world, as well as theoretical texts to support that practice or on that practice. As I mentioned earlier, my reference in terms of author was, from a very early stage, Henri Lefebvre and his concept (1974), of space as a social product - the inhabited space as evidence of the society that produces it and space as a producer of society. Another earlier book by the same author *The Right to the City* (1968), has been key to thinking about the fringes, about how to intervene in the fringes and specially to recognizing the major role of inhabitants in their change. It became key to understand these social and territorial realities, reflect on intervention paradigms, understand participation and interaction with all those in the field, be able to listen local wishes and link space change to social change of the communities we work with and our own change. Within the scope of GESTUAL, producing knowledge is, therefore, a social production of knowledge, not just academic or scientific knowledge, it includes and mixes the knowledge of other actors, of local leaders and of the communities. We emphasize yet another dimension, that of proximity urban planning; instead of a technocrat and office approach, we focus on searching tools that bring us closer to the social and spatial reality. Moreover, we focus on the dimension of restitution and public debate developed in previous research and that are used for teaching, for research and action developed in the context of the university. These are some of the main principles of GESTUAL, which have led to the writing of several dissertations and master projects and PhD theses that have developed this approach and provided new practical and theoretical clues on what to do and how to do it.

PM: You have had a key role in training a generation of “revolutionary” architects and urban planners, among whom Gonçalo, who is an excellent example of this. How do you see yourself in the role of educator, of one who paves the way for so many young people to focus their practice and their research on these fringe territories?

That is a very nice question, but I don't know if I really have that role, I wish I had! I should mention a family tradition: my grandfather Simões Raposo was a teacher at Casa Pia

and he always rejected any honours in order to focus on his mission as an educator. He was a born teacher. His legacy has always been in my mind and has inspired me. That is why I started teaching adults how to read and write in Catujal, Loures, and why I went to Mozambique to train young people at elementary, basic, and middle levels, future planning officers. More important than building a CV (and the university is currently stuck to extending curricula) is to contribute to the change in others while we ourselves change. I learn a lot from all the young people that were my students. Sometimes you will hear me sigh when I am correcting poorly written texts by students who have good critical skills but poor writing skills. I also struggled with writing because my world was also that of gesture and shape. I had to read a lot, write a lot of reading sheets, take a lot of notes, understand the structure of the language. That effort may be very painful for those studying arts and architecture. It requires a lot of commitment. I took on this mission to help young people to write better so that they can think better.

Many come to me, at PhD level, and they tell me they have witnessed painful situations in their professional practice. Like me, they understand that technical intentions when you do not listen to local wishes may lead to very dramatic situations and to violent conflict or even more precariousness. In order to contribute to better solutions to a more balanced life for all, you must know reality better. Just because we are professionals does not mean we hold the truth. We need to know how to listen to others, to include in our practice everyone's right to participate, the right to *l'oeuvre* that Lefebvre referred to as more important than the Right to the City. To do "with" rather than to do "for". The now fashionable concepts of co-design, co-produce, derive from this idea that only when you do things with people is it possible to cooperate in creating a better world.

In terms of youth training, I really like to contribute to their growth and to enhancing their potential. More than being a good professional, it is important to be the best that you can be. There is a reference to teaching in the book that Francisco Louçã wrote with Michael Ash (*Sombras. A Desordem Financeira na Era da Globalização*, 2017) which I would like to mention: since the nineteen seventies, American economics schools, through the way they designed and implemented new programs and methodologies, have created a new generation of economists that advocate neoliberalism and the financialization of the economy. The role of the school is key in the path of future professionals and leaders and the message that teachers convey is decisive. The university has been under the neoliberal and competitive perspective of economics, which translates, in terms of architecture and urban planning, in big architectural and urban projects built for a magazine, they promote inequality rather than generate better living conditions for everyone. If we get young people excited to be the best that they can be we will make tomorrow a better world too. In line with Henri Lefebvre, that another space is only possible if there is another society, University may train young people who are able to contribute to the co-creation of another space, a less unequal and a more just space, a more cohesive and less competitive space. Today, at university, research is heavily linked to competitiveness and individual prestige. While it remains that way, the University reproduces a world as it is, instead of cooperating in the creation of a better world, in building another society and another space. Change is happening, nevertheless, but what is the role of the University in this change?

PM: Currently, you coordinate the project África Habitat. Can you tell us about this project and about other ongoing and future projects?



My future project will be on different areas, but I want to finish this scope of research on the link between social space and training and university extension on the fringes. As I referred earlier, doing things with the communities has been something present since the start of my career, since SAAL, the reading and writing classes, the classes in Mozambique, my work at Alte. The book on Alte was published with the support of the Municipality and the association In loco, and we aim to have a new edition published, which has been postponed due to me having too much work on my hands. I also want to review and publish my thesis. I want to publish these old research projects. There are two other ongoing publications. They are the result of the strong interaction with the communities and of academic extension work, one about Bairro da Torre and another about Cova da Moura, the latter with Júlia Carolino, the anthropologist in our team, who is now creating a platform on the perspectives on the neighbourhood. The publication on “inhabiting the outskirts of Luanda and Maputo”, included in Projeto África Habitat is also being updated. Within the scope of this project, we will also publish the material designed for the optional course Qualificação de Subúrbios Habitacionais (Qualification of Suburban Housing) and its predecessors, with the discussions I had with the students and what I have learned from them and all my guests throughout fifteen years. Among these, I should mention two Brazilian professors who were doing their postdoctoral studies at FAUL within the scope of Projeto África Habitat, Andrea Arruda and Débora Cavalcanti, who have been part of the classes in the last two years, and Sílvia Jorge, who, as a scholarship holder for Africa Habitat and Gestual, also participated in the classes.

My colleague Cristina Henriques told me about the contest by FCT and Aga Khan Network for Development to fund research focused on Africa. I thought I would never participate in another contest again, but, suddenly, Africa was again at my door, knocking. So, we designed Projeto África Habitat²¹ and were lucky to get funding. For me, it was the best way to finish my academic career: to go back to the land that made me who I am - Mozambique. In this project, once again, work is developed with local partners, academia, society, professionals, and community leaders. Some research is being concluded, with local partner institutions, some more operational, other more academic, postdoctoral, PhD and master projects. They are, namely, in Luanda, the experimental action-research that Paulo Moreira, the project member that is a scholarship holder and is developing the project with NGO DW and the support of its director Allan Cain; Osvaldo Bráz's PhD research with the *musseque* communities in Cazenga; debates with architects, students and public administration which are being promoted by Ilídio Daio and colleagues from UAN and from Lisbon. In Maputo, Jéssica Lage's PhD research, which involves the communities of three neighbourhoods and their habitat; with the support of Projeto Kaya Clínica and the Faculty of Architecture at UEM, three very committed young architects, Moisés Francisco, Martin Mganyasi and Milousa António are completing extensive research on the 44 suburbs of the capital, on the challenges and interventions they have undergone. This collective research in different areas, involving junior and senior researchers from Angola, Mozambique, Portugal and also Brazil, includes a wide group of partners, in interaction with actors and local communities, aiming to understand diversity in terms of situations and interventions in the “urban fringes”, focusing on Luanda and Maputo and how to do better. In Portugal, at AML, the average percentage of inhabitants of the city living in the “fringes” either self or co-built, will be lower than 10%; in Luanda and Maputo, the percentage is between

80% and 70%, corresponding to millions of people living without infrastructures and in poor housing conditions. Can you talk about the fringes when they are the majority of the inhabitants of those cities? What can you do? What is our role as architects and urban planners and other professionals and researchers in view of such a wide dimension? All these Southern countries are dealing with this reality, inherent to *capitalist production of space* (Harvey, 2005) and the continuous urban concentration and attraction. Many of those who arrive at the city do not have the resources to settle in the urban areas and search for alternative solutions for their housing situation and access to basic infrastructures. Our challenge was to reflect on the situation in both case studies, Luanda and Maputo, contrasting it with that in Brazilian cities and in AML (where the Faculty of Architecture, University of Lisbon, the coordinating institution of Projeto África Habitat, is located). Besides the two collective publications related with the research, which is being completed, we aim to organize a seminar in Lisbon, in February, after the seminars in Luanda and in Maputo. This will be my last mission in my academic career.

GF: You present this more rational dimension of the world, but you cannot separate that rationality from a more sensitive, humanistic dimension that even leads to a spiritual side. How do you move between those two dimensions?

Great questions, one that relates with the fact that, two years ago, I had an accident while I was doing fieldwork in Luanda, which caused a chronic subdural hematoma and almost led me to another dimension. When I had that accident, I immediately realized it was something serious. I rested for two days, took some medication, and managed to stay the remaining ten days in Luanda conducting the fieldwork from its “fringes”. When I arrived in Lisbon, I went to the hospital and soon after that I had to undergo emergency surgery and stayed at home recovering for five months. Surviving this was an opportunity to complete pending research and prepare for new paths, from art to a greater connection with the universe. As Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey say, we change ourselves when we change the world, but this change is not only one of knowledge, we are more than our body and our mind, we have other dimensions that are important and that are key to creating another world.

GF: Earlier you said that you did not know if people saw you as an educator. I cannot speak for the others, but I must thank you publicly for being an inspiration, for helping us revisit the compass that guided you in professional terms, as well as for sharing your vision of the world, which is almost a forbidden topic in a society that is more and more focused on the rational.

Thank you. You are the inspiration for future generations. I just wanted to share some final words on the role of the university. I was unable to bring university extension on the fringes to the centre of university, I was unable to make that activity recognized and part of the academic curriculum, as it happens in Brazil. The university must reinforce cohesion, empathy, human development. Study plans should include more optional courses, in which lecturers develop topics according to their research interests, and assessment should become a learning opportunity for both students and lecturers, the grading system should be changed (it is obsolete) and the competitiveness that is now at the core of teaching should also be reconsidered. There is so much that should be changed at University! You, who are younger, full of energy and imagination, you are the



ones who can make a difference and contribute to the urgent change of the University, of the city, of society and of the environment on planet Earth.

¹ For more information, see <http://gestual.fa.ulisboa.pt/>

² For more information, see <http://africahabitat.gestual.fa.ulisboa.pt/>