

Voice(s) without a place, place(s) of the voice

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Abstract

Enquanto equipa técnica que desenvolve a ação experimental da iniciativa Outros Bairros (IOB) procuramos construir, desde sempre, questionamentos sobre práticas arquitetónicas coletivas e participativas que possam gerar ações político – arquitetónicas capazes de se intercalar ideologicamente com os lugares onde atuamos. Recentemente, pela possibilidade de se conceber e implementar, em São Vicente – Cabo Verde, esta ação pública responsável pela reabilitação urbana de três zonas autoconstruídas no Mindelo, pudemos participar de um conjunto de ações, entre as quais *Amdjer na Obra* e *Kubaka*, que, neste documento, são analisadas através de um conjunto de (im)possibilidades que questionam o atual modelo de cidade e recusam a herança colonial do contexto em que a Iniciativa se insere.

As transformações, cumplicidades e tensões integradas com o sujeito coletivo que surge permitiram, pelas ações levadas a cabo, construir este artigo a partir das questões: como pode o arquiteto questionar o modelo urbano atual através de ações político colaborativas no terreno da arquitetura e do urbanismo?; podem as ações coletivas em zonas autoconstruídas contribuir para o aparecimento de um sujeito coletivo que garanta o reconhecimento do modo de vida local?

Keywords: Urbanismo, arquitetura, coletivo, participação, investigação / ação.

Abstract

Voice(s) without place, place(s) of the voice

As the technical team behind the experimental iniciativa Outros Bairros (IOB), we aim to explore questions surrounding collective, participatory architectural practices generating political architectural actions that are capable of intersecting ideologically with the places where we operate. Recently, as part of an initiative to design and implement a public urban regeneration project in three self-built areas in Mindelo, São Vicente (Cape Verde), we were able to participate in several actions, including Amdjer na Obra and Kubaka, which are analysed in this article through a series of (im)possibilities that challenge the contemporary model of the city and reject the colonial heritage of the intervention site.

The changes, interactions and tensions interwoven with the collective subject that emerges through the actions undertaken allow us to address the following questions in this paper: how can architects challenge the contemporary urban model through collaborative political action in architecture and urban planning? Can collective action in self-built areas contribute to the emergence of a collective subject that ensures that the local way of life is acknowledged?

Keywords: Urbanism, architecture, collective, participation, action / research

Context

“Mas a imigração rápida para São Vicente, de gente pobre, evidentemente tornou impossível o controlo da edificação bem como o standard habitacional. Em 1852 fala-se da construção desordenada que existe em São Vicente e o cirurgião da ilha propõe algumas medidas higiénicas como por exemplo cobrir com palha as habitações que precisassem e não consentir que se faça fogo “dentro das cobatas.”

(General description of the urban development of the city of Mindelo, 1984: 26).

We begin this text with a description of the city of Mindelo, in São Vicente Island, Cape Verde, in 1852, partially revising it, considering the current self-built areas and the refusal to continue the colonial path, which, since its foundation, established a hierarchy in the city that is still visible today. According to Moassab (2014) the current separation of the city into two parts – formal and informal – dates from about five hundred years ago when literature and urban planning fostered the construction of an imaginary ideal city.

This refusal as a starting point makes us aware of the fact that there is a public territory management device that evidences the impossibility of developing a city based on the way of life of its local inhabitants.



We will analyse the restraints and the challenges that architecture and urban planning face in the current city model, the challenge to decolonize the territory and socially acknowledge the appearance of a community.

From a methodological perspective, we present the action Iniciativa Outros Bairros¹ (IOB) and the location where the action has taken place. This action and the daily practices are analysed from a theoretical point of view and, since this is action research, our analysis will lead to questions that we will include in our conclusion. Ours is a reflective and collective action research, thus requiring an understanding of specific practices and situations.

Regarding the first part of our title, on voice(s) without a place, we question “how can an architect question the current city model through political and collaborative action² in the field of architecture and urban planning?”; additionally, we discuss different authors whose position is also critical of current practices in thinking architecture and urban planning, which we also consider is failing. We will discuss architecture and urban planning from our incomplete perspective and our condition as activist/researcher/architect, aiming to reflect on those three conditions and using an objective and engaged approach, question the collective actions developed with an educational and communal objective. This is why we will analyse the issues of power and authorship related with our action both at IOB and in the specific actions mentioned in this paper, which will be included because of the need to mobilize the community and their aim to think architecture as a means of raising political awareness on the right to the city.

We will discuss authors such as Raquel Rolnik (2016), Bruno Latour (1988; 2012), James Scott (2000) and Ananya Roy (2005), who will contribute to contextualizing the topics under analysis based on urban criticism and will allow us to critically assess our own practice.

In terms of the second half of our title, place(s) of the voice, our questions are: “Can collective action in self-built areas contribute to a collective subject who ensures that the local way of life is acknowledged?”, analysing practices that allow us to consider how collective actions designed based on the location may allow acknowledging places from a collective subject. We consider collective subject a group of citizens or movements able to create one voice that ensures the possibility of collective participation.

It is important to theorize the dynamics in each group or eventually among groups, knowing that there is a specific sense of belonging to a place and that the collective may be a means of reinforcing or changing that. Moreover, we will analyse the changes that occurred in the architect him or herself and how groups are able to create change in the way they act in architecture and urban planning.

Finally, this allows for considering local powers found and built as IOB was being implemented, despite knowing the restraints and (im)possibilities of the context and the ideological starting point that assumes action based on refusing the paths left by the colonial heritage.

Voice(s) without a place

Though currently humans concentrate more and more in the city, the word city seems to have multiple meanings and to require an analysis.

Therefore, we start by not intending to change the current paradigm of the city or its meaning, but rather by reflecting on the discourse of a resident of Alto da Bomba³, who, at a local discussion, told us that in his conversations with IOB, the team had made him understand that politics is not only political parties but a daily fight for your rights.



Figure 1 – Meeting with the inhabitants (during the implementation of Iniciativa Outros Bairros, besides unscheduled meetings, there were weekly meetings in the square to discuss issues regarding the relationship between the technical team and the inhabitants or any other relevant issue). Photo by Grace Ribeiro.

Throughout its centuries of history, the city has gained three main principles when being described: *civitas*, the social group that makes the city; *polis*, the place where politics emerges, i.e., a type of government; and *urbis*, the place where construction and infrastructure exists that ensures the daily life of places. This leads to a dichotomy between city and urbanization, and urbanization may be seen as a process that is continuously gaining shape and is established, regardless of the place.



Studies by authors like Castells, in the 1980s, and De Soto, until the 2000s, focused mostly on economy-based analysis, which led to a view of the city based on determinism, productivity, profitability and usefulness of places, legitimizing territory segregation of those marginalized by the economy.

Neither in cities nor in the economy is there formal and legal space for these populations, forcing them to occupy expanding unstructured territories to ensure their right to housing and to survival.

This is Ananya Roy's (2005) more recent perspective when she focuses on philosophical patterns and proposes that informal urbanization itself should be seen as an urbanization process.

Our analysis is that of a specific reality, the city of Mindelo, and the restraints and (im)possibilities that we, as architects, face due to cultural heritage and our training, marked by elitist ideas of the *civitas*, which structures the *urbis* in an excluding manner, that act outside it using a paternalistic structure based on urban principles of a hegemonic and individualistic way of life.

The urban history of the city of Mindelo may be divided into three: the first era, marked by the first attempts to occupy the territory, in the 15th century, up to the king's order to build a city; the second, when the city expanded from the sea harbour Porto Grande; and the third, from the decline of Porto Grande to the country's independence and up to now. In all of these eras, Mindelo was always defined and established by force. A consequence of the imposition of urban plans and different attempts to boost its development based on a commercial harbour is that self-built areas have appeared where the poorer citizens have been living up to now.

After initial attempts to establish settlers to defend Sao Vicente Island from the English, French and Dutch in the 19th century, the king orders the building of a city whose name would be Mindelo. Because of its adverse natural conditions, São Vicente is the last island to have settlers. The development of city of Mindelo, founded after slavery was banned, is linked to its harbour, Porto Grande, and to hard coal exploitation. Later, it becomes a strategic stopping point for the underwater cable of the international telegraph that made São Vicente one of the most important points of the world telegraph system in the 19thc.

In the beginning of the 20thc, harbour activities started to decrease due to the competitions of the harbours in Dakar and in the Canary Islands and the fact that hard coal was replaced by petroleum as fuel for the ships, since petroleum can be extracted in new locations even when there is drought and hunger.

After the independence, in 1975, and mostly after the political openness in 1990, Mindelo is influenced by a neoliberal agenda marked by the decentralization of a significant part of urban services which, together with the migrating outflow, lead to a huge impoverishment of the population that will reside the new self-built areas.

We have opted for the term self-built areas (*zonas autoconstruídas*) because we consider the official term used "informal areas" lacking. We use a term that is used locally. In Sampajud creole, São Vicente creole for the inhabitants of São Vicente



Island, these areas are commonly identified as “zóna”, representing the forgotten area of Mindelo which exists in several places. These are mostly areas where the need for survival have led to resistance that was typical of the area, and self-built because the houses were built by the citizens themselves after occupying the land, which ensures their right to the place. The most common materials for construction are any type of waste available, such as wood or steel plates.

Their features include invisibility, marked by the insecurity of the land and of the house⁴, their relationship with public entities is almost non-existent and they are not socially acknowledged, which, according to Rolnik (2016), places them in a situation of ambiguity or permanent transience. The author defines these areas as places “de indeterminação entre legal/ilegal, planeado / não planeado, formal/informal, dentro/fora do mercado, presença / ausência do Estado” (ROLNIK, 2016: 174) and such uncertainties are mechanisms that are at the basis of the referred permanent transience. Simultaneously, as shown earlier, those residing in these areas, left open to real estate speculation, do not exist as citizens with full rights and they are commonly taken advantage of by political representatives of governmental institutions whose functioning is key to maintain inequality and foster political power, “fundamental para manter desigualdade na cidade controlada pelas elites, ao mesmo tempo que reproduz mandatos políticos, constituindo vastas bases eleitorais para os partidos” (ROLNIK, 2016: 181).

We believe, therefore, that the invisibility of these areas is directly related with the way public policies have been designed, as they are almost always defined based on the need for new companies that become private companies providing services - water, electricity and improvement and consolidation of public space - rather than based on the population’s actual needs for housing or infrastructures.

In general, these public policies face huge difficulties in designing a horizontal process that will meet the existing needs and is created based on the population’s actual needs through flexible planning. These policies may arise from a perspective on the place and opposing a colonial utopia that these places would be eradicated by constructing housing schemes, commonly built by private companies that promote substitution and demolition of these types of areas all over the world. Not only are these projects questionable in terms of design, as they are designed from the point of view of power and adjusted to actors who have outside interests, they are also questionable in terms of the physical locations, because they use space that is really needed by the populations and are not adjusted to the dominant way of living in those locations. An example of this are the construction of big housing schemes aiming to totally meet the need for housing, a process that was widely accepted in 2008 in Cape Verde, when the government at the time promoted the implementation of the program Casa Para Todos (a house for everyone) throughout the country. In this case, not only was this program very different from the urban and social model of the *zonas*, but the fact also that the design and construction was dependent on a competition open to Cape Verdean and Portuguese companies, has led to 6000 houses being still on paper, apparently due to financial difficulties of the consortiums in view of the world economic crisis.

The fact that this program was not financially viable has also led to a change in how people have access to renting. Presently, most people sign lease contracts; since, currently, poorer people struggle financially, most buildings do not have any tenants.

The current government has launched a program - Plano Nacional de Habitação de Cabo Verde for Horizon 2030 (PLANAH), acknowledging serious indicators of the populations' poor living conditions. Yet, the government uses old strategies and again suggests the construction of new social housing schemes and almost completely ignores the huge weight of self-built neighbourhoods, which are not only admittedly expanding but also require improvements so that they comply with their citizens' basic rights.

The colonial history of Mindelo, in particular its social and economic growth based on Porto Grande, may have led to a more individualistic understanding of the general population and the way the territory has been occupied; that reserving the areas closest to the sea for more prestigious activities has led to its labour force having to settle temporarily in the many areas being built in the outskirts of the city Territories where areas subject to housing public policies and urban management are increasingly common, areas designed considering real estate interests and, in some cases, in the best locations for enjoying the view of Porto Grande Bay.

This raises several questions on the role of the architect in designing a work plan that raises awareness to actions leading to the appearance of collective subjects representing the *zonas* and their struggles.

This may be in opposition to the current trend of individualization and contribute to a stronger architectural thought in terms of decentralized models based on collective and public construction process and, especially, models that allow the architect to contribute to an architecture that assists in social construction. This may also counter the present unavailability of public resources, which allow creating processes that foster most of the population's organization and housing modes, thus contributing to making these processes the norm rather than the exception, as it occurs nowadays.

These collective subjects, either created by the populations that inhabit those places or by those who aim to overcome the (im)possibilities the current situation raises will contribute to *zonas* being socially acknowledged and crucial to an understanding of the social situation. According to Latour (2012), this process occurs through interaction among human and non-humans, Algirdas Greimas's (2008) concept of actant being the one who "articula o enunciado elementar em funções (tais como sujeito, objeto e predicado)."

In Latour (2012) and in Teoria do Ator Rede (TAR), actant refers to an understanding of the modern epistemological classes (subject / object, society / nature), and proposes a new perspective of the concept of social, since it opposes the classical concept of social actor, including not only the action of the human being, but also the action carried out in association, including people, houses, postcodes, etc.

The dialog with this author allows us to view self-built areas as a living organism that is made of humans and non-humans, trying to counter the invisibility they are historically subject to because of their way of life.

Noteworthy is also to recognize that the architect that works in self-built areas must understand why these areas are invisible and rather abandoned in order to question his or her action from the start. Working in partnership and in cooperation with the

residents leads to considering the sense of belonging to a community, one which is probably different from that of the architect, and for not repeating the models brought from other places with a different organizational structure. The principle that urban intervention arises from the locations' way of life makes the population become aware of those modes and recognizes them, thus allowing for the same recognition by those outside the community, namely, by the team of architects.



Figure 2 – Constructing a road access (construction is always carried out with the residents, thus contributing to the sense of community). Photo by Grace Ribeiro.

The fact that there isn't a collective subject that does not necessarily work in known organizational models must be a key factor to suspend our condition as architect / activist / researcher and external elements to the location in order to provide space for that collective and that process.

This process enforces the need to deconstruct ourselves, mainly for our position to be more than just technical, and so that we are able to find the discourses, the differences and the languages that allow for the other.

Unlike what usually happens, the refusal of the role of architect as an element who can only act based on his or her technical knowledge allows for raising society's awareness to the right to the place and foster other means of visibility that resist the established institutional impositions.

Fostering culture as a means of countering the silence also allows for the appearance of a voice that may be heard regardless of the constraints imposed by the political and the organizational model, as well as new types of associations and locations of power in terms of the ability to demonstrate and to rally



Iniciativa Outros Bairros, a partnership between MIOTH and São Vicente Municipality, is founded in 2019, and is an action by the State of Cape Verde aiming to renew self-built areas in Cape Verde based on the local population's way of life.

In its pilot stage, which started in May 2019 and will end in December 2021, the aim has been to work in the city of Mindelo, Alto de Bomba, Covada de Bruxa e Frenando Pó; the work will be carried out by a team that includes three architects and five consultants - in civil engineering, in sociology, in art education - who, based on the acquired experience, will define the guidelines for a future public policy on these zona.

Therefore, we are aware that, as technical team, this experience has shown us the need and (im)possibility of countering an institutional model that leads to public policies based on deterministic principles, unable to understand the zona urban model. More than holding technical knowledge that we would make available; we are constantly faced with obstacles that mostly focus on the understanding of a collective process built through the closeness that we have established with the inhabitants. Our action should not create obstacles to raising awareness to a collective subject able to find a voice; this voice allows the architect to collectively build political and collaborative actions which, by contributing to the political visibility of the locations, may place the current model of the city in question.

Place(s) of the voice

Returning to Mindelo, the city that provides us with experiences and allows us this discussion, we find it important to institutionally contextualize the actions we will analyse, *Amdjer na Obra* and *Kubaka*, as well as describe the specific location in which they occur, the zona Alto de Bomba.

We should emphasize that a prior research paper has been published – *No te ne kemín* – conducted at M_EIA, Instituto Universitário de Arte, Tecnologia e Cultura, which focused on understanding the urban model of Alto de Bomba, and which was conducted by the same team (which has been renewed because of the technical requirements that arose).

Therefore, IOB counters the common location for public investment in established areas of the city and allows its residents to participate in the decisions regarding the project and in creating a voice aware of its location. It starts with a discussion on the nature, the experiencing and the belonging to the place, which is followed by enhancement work that create new public spaces and provide support to the appearance of a collective subject that gains a voice. The governmental nature of the action sometimes makes it difficult for such a collective subject to be established. If, on the one hand, the resources made available allow us to do and be seen as someone who makes processes possible, on the other hand, it is clear that it also hinders the collective position before those who represent power.

“M bem mora pa Olt de Bomba na 1958. Li ka tinha árvores e tinha txeu sol. Ess árvor mi é k plantal. Fka li até aoje. Tud dia um ta cuida del”⁵

It may reinforce the struggle against invisibility, being listened to acknowledges the importance of any topic and a means of affirmation, of resistance and of local recognition. When confronting power, in the case of Alto de Bomba, resistance and criticism are also built by including non-human objects in the process which, according to Latour (2012), consolidate the action which uses public space to express actions, promoting local voice. For Bibia, now a new leader in the work of one of the community gardens in Alto Bomba, a tree strengthens the fight for the place, a rare element in an island where water is a rare good and where shade is essential for the use of public space.

“Kel muro de pedra um ta fazel mi só, moda um aprende faze lá na Santo Antão.”⁶

Just like the tree, the stone wall marks, in Evandro’s voice, the presence of a rural imaginary and that a considerable part of the population residing in *zonas* who have come from more rural islands know how to do things. In a community that has settled on a land with 38% of inclination, this element ensures also the possibility of building bases for the houses and the walls that limit the paths or that provide small steps for small plantations.

“Únic cosa kum krix foi saí de renda e um consegui. E já aoje um gastá kes oito contos da renda na compra k jam ta metid na nha casinha... na nha caaaasa de tambor.”⁷

Though IOB’s action is restricted to requalifying the neighbourhood’s public space, including the basic infrastructures, we also aim to understand housing. Therefore, acknowledging *casa de tambor*⁸ as a first step in the housing project of self-built areas, on the one hand, aims to show the fact that public authorities are unable to fulfil the constitutional right to land, and, on the other hand, acknowledges that this type of house, regardless of its physical features, represents the only possibility of accommodation for a considerable part of the population usually described as illegal or clandestine and exposed to strong social and political violence. According to Moassab (2013), economic and social forces are responsible for redesigning the territory and influence habits and ways of living as well.

Acknowledging *casa de tambor* consolidates the bond between the residents and the technical team because the reinforces the possibility of the right to inhabit. However, this acknowledgment becomes a major difficulty in our relationship with the political authorities because it counters an imaginary of illegal / informal which has been long established.

“Condé k casa de tambor ta da pa estod la dentro ta pingar el é um cosa... mané kum pode ta bem dzé? El é um cosa k só kel pessoa k ta estod dentro, ta passa kel sofrimento é k ta sabe explicar”⁹

We will now focus on the strategies used to activate public spaces, new or old, fostering culture, which heavily contributes to the rising of a voice, both in terms of local and external acknowledgement.

From talking with a resident that mentioned *Kubaka* as something that gave him strength to find his own path, we came across this artistic residency on hip-hop which emerged from a home music studio in the *zona* called Kubaka, whose principles are:

“atividades terão um carácter colaborativo, procurando criar uma arena de negociação, debate e diálogo com os jovens hip-hoppers e ativistas mindelenses, buscando explorar áreas semânticas e questões relevantes identificadas no decurso da residência, que irão constituir a base do processo criativo. De modo similar a outros tipos de intervenções do género, as oficinas baseiam-se em discussões sobre a história e a cultura hip-hop e o papel do ativista comunitário em contextos caracterizados pela cultura de necessidades, cujo objetivo geral é a promoção do desenvolvimento de trabalhos colaborativos assentes nos princípios do hip-hop e na atuação enquanto mediador entre o poder público ou privado e a comunidade.”¹⁰



Figure 3 – Members of Kubaka home studio (participants in the artistic residency kubaka, whose aim was to raise awareness to the right to the city based on being from Alto de Bomba). Photo by Ângelo Lopes.

The questions on “being from Alto de Bomba”, the possibility of recovering the hip-hop culture that once existed in the city and of openly discussing IOB’s action, led to the appearance of a new group of young people in Alto de Bomba called Brigada de Intervenção Política (BIP). BIP glues posters in prime locations in Mindelo, where they question topics discussed during kubaka and claim, among other things, the right to the city.

In the case of Kubaka, the appearance of BIP was surprising, and working as a group proved to be rather difficult. On the one hand, not all the participating musicians knew one another, which made dialog difficult. On the other hand, even after the artistic residency on hip-hop and being from Alto de Bomba, it was not possible for all the musicians to understand that personal and artistic differences would make the produced material richer, which led to the work being homogenised.

The consequences of Kubaka are that resistance was reinforced and that a collective subject emerged who, based on cultural spaces, is organized in different formats and contents. However, they are still trying to achieve affirmation regarding resistance or even occasional rebellion, which, according to SCOTT (1990), cannot be understood unless we consider the cultural elements that feed them and provide them with meaning.

“Calcetá bo bairro é moda ta na bo casa, bo ta segur. Nós zona é moda nós casa. Se bo ta na bo casa abo ta sabe k bo ta da bo medjor. Conde no ta na ot lugar no ta fica k um gzim de medo de faze errod.”¹¹

While trying to understand the decolonization of our being¹², we conducted *Amdjer na Obra*, an experience in construction that allowed ten women from Alto de Bomba to learn how to lay pavement with five women from São Nicolau Island and deconstruct the idea that construction work is culturally a man’s job.



Figure 4 – *Amdjer na Obra* (group of women - trainers and trainees - that participated in the first training in work context, and which led to the appearance of the group of paviours *Amdjer na Obra*). Photo by Grace Ribeiro.



Figure 5 – Amdjer na Obra (member of the group Amdjer na Obra in the first pavement work conducted by Amdjer na Obra). Photo by Grace Ribeiro.

We can understand how groups struggle to find a sense of union that allows them to overcome the challenges they set for themselves, regardless of their time of existence or their organization. If, on the one hand, the group of women who participated in the action really got together to learn how to lay pavement, even though they were not a united group before, they were able to integrate a team laying pavement in a different neighbourhood. This experience, besides showing the conflicts in the group regarding the lack of collective interests, mostly related with the payment per hour negotiated with the contractor, allowed these ten women to enter the construction world, one which is mostly masculine.

After a work experience¹³ the result of *Amdjer na obra*, despite the group's frailties, Maísa has become the group leader. We were able to understand that there is, in fact, a link to the place and expectations to improve the physical conditions of the location, the possibility to have a different life based on the current changes and the will to build a collective, even though they are aware of the difficulties they encountered after learning the craft.

“M senti dret. No tive más próximo, más junt, no convive tud hora e não só, nos conxe más gente, no aprende ma es, nos trocá experiências. Nos senti dret em grupo”¹⁴

The feeling also shows that the exchange of experience that resulted in the possibility of working as paviours in another construction, allowed for sharing among the group, as well as exchange of experiences with other people in the same precarious employment status (in this case, men). In the country, construction offers rather



precarious employment conditions, a worker may work on a daily basis, without any work contract and only while there is work to be done.¹⁵

Conclusion

The model set at IOB is based on the participation and the search for a collective that may promote public discussion on the informal world. It is a contact area, which, according to PRATT (2008), not only brings citizens and public authorities closer but may also create post-colonial meetings that will allow for dialog between citizens from different areas of the city. It allows for rupture in our political context, forcing us to question the need for a position that is aware of our colonial origin, our place for speaking, our controversial position as civil servants and our need to not lose sight of working with rather than working for the community. However, despite the initial idea to promote discussion on the right to the city, institutional powers appear rather impenetrable. The fact that you do not have access to strategic decisions increases union and complicity in the field and allows for resistance to be consolidated and strengthened in the collective subject that emerges.

Since the municipality had a limited knowledge about the infrastructure led to the relocation, in the beginning of 2020, of the office of Iniciativa Outros Bairros from the municipality's facilities to a rented space in the house of a resident of Alto de Bomba. This also strengthened, from a physical perspective, the reason behind the contact area.

When you look at the geography of Cape Verde, ten islands where there are 24 cities and 22 *concelhos*, São Vicente is rather special in the sense that the island has only one city and one *concelho*. On the one hand, this situation hindered the project because the interest of the municipality were mainly real estate speculation and the hotel business. On the other hand, the lack of coordination between the two partners, MIOTH and CMSV, made the technical team's work difficult.

The lack of funding was a constraint to the action by the technical team's work. Up to now, we were unable to do any work in the Fernando Po and Covada de Bruxa zonas. Work has also been delayed at Alto de Bomba, as we are still waiting for funding to complete the infrastructure work.

From the perspective of belonging, the recent suspension allowed us to reflect on the time we live in, which is based on a European educational and social structure. Alto de Bomba is not only subject to enormous pressure due to its ambiguous condition but has also been built in direct relation with a demobilized and, consequently, discouraged perspective of the future.

More than the specific result of *Kubaka* and *Amdjers na Obra*, we were able to understand that promoting culture spaces opens the possibility of suspending our technical presence and increasing our political presence in order to collectively, as one voice, participate in the collective subject who ensures that the local way of life is acknowledged.

We should then reflect whether possible changes are already visible in the current places of power. Only through insisting and persisting in a coordinated set of actions will these changes solidify; they apparently, do not arise from political action alone.

Finally, we must conclude that informal urbanization, more common in the south of the globe, can be found anywhere and should be viewed as any other urbanization process. Therefore, those who work in this field have the added responsibility to understand their action as a means to politically make a stand in society by participating in building a collective awareness that mitigates urban inequalities.

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¹ Iniciativa Outros Bairros is public action by the State of Cape Verde aiming towards urban renewal of self-built areas in Cape Verde based on the way of life of its local population.

² We consider political-collaborative actions all interventions conducted and discussed with those residing in the area. These discussions will lead to political decisions by the existing groups and by IOB.

³ Alto de Bomba is the first location of the pilot stage of IOB.

⁴ The insecurity in terms of land and house commonly refers to the fact that you cannot access municipal legalization of the land after occupying public (either owned by central or local authorities) or private land.

⁵ Bibia's voice, in a conversation about what changes would be made to the front of her house. Bibia resides in Alto de Bomba. "I moved to Alto de Bomba in 1958. There were no trees and lots of sun. I planted this tree. It has been growing ever since. I take care of it every day."

⁶ Evandro's voice, in a conversation about what changes would be made to the front of her house. Evandro resides in Alto de Bomba. "I have built that wall myself, just like I learned to do in Santo Antão."

⁷ Virgínia's voice, in an interview on the first three months working in IOB. Virginia resides in Alto da Bomba. "The only thing I wanted was to no longer rent and I have spent those eight *contos* in shopping, I am in my house ... In my own tin house."

⁸ "Casa de tambor" is the equivalent to a tin house or "bidonville". You cut the top and the bottom of an oil barrel, you straighten the tin and reuse it to make the walls of the house.

⁹ Euclides's voice (an inhabitant of Alto da Bomba), on the music produced by the artist residency Kubaka: "When it's raining inside a "casa de tambor" it is... How can I explain it? Only a person who is inside one of these houses can really explain it.

¹⁰ Kubaka was promoted by IOB with the objective of promoting culture in Alto de Bomba, as well as curated by the Cape-Verdean sociologist Redy Wilson Lima who was permanently in dialog with IOB's technical team and the residents.

¹¹ Maísa's voice (an inhabitant of Alto de Bomba), on the experience "Amdjer na obra": "Calceta bo zona is like being in your own home. Our area is our home. If you are at home, you know you give it your all. When you are somewhere else, you know you are afraid of making a mistake".

¹² We refer to "our being" because understanding the decolonization of my being will lead, in this specific



case, to the joint action by a group of five architects that make the IOB team. From collective action willing to participate to the collective subject that emerges.

¹³ After Amdjer na Obra, the group of craftswomen was hired to work in a construction by the State, the urban regeneration of Baía das Gatas, Mindelo.

¹⁴ Maísa's voice (a resident of Alto de Bomba), on the experience "Amdjer na obra": I felt great. We were closer, more united, we hung out all the time and we learned with them, we exchanged experiences. We felt great as a group.

¹⁵ In the case of São Vicente, the quarries ensure the supply of stone to the municipality before supplying any other builder. Therefore, all city paviments are self-employed professionals who just work for the local authorities.