

Following engineers and architects through slums: history, policies, urban poor populations and the technoscience of slum intervention in the Portuguese-speaking landscape

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This paper draws on an enlarged view of the history of state intervention in informal settlements and poor built environments throughout the 20th century, in cities such as Lisbon, Porto, Luanda, Maputo or Macao; as well as on ethnographic research with experts from the National Laboratory of Civil Engineering (LNEC) during the scientific assessment of informal dwellings in the neighbourhood of Cova da Moura, Lisbon; to discuss some political and socio-technical complexities of slum intervention.

First, I argue that metropolitan policies of housing provision for poor populations were part of a common but multi-sited emergence of a technoscience of housing developed by colonial and postcolonial political regimes, and that specific architectural or planning solutions can be analysed as an indicator of the value the populations concerned had, or have, to the different political regimes. This can be seen in the IBC regeneration program in Cova da Moura, which aims at the urban inclusion of postcolonial migrants in multicultural Lisbon and threads a fine balance between the paradigm of slum upgrade (it is inspired by Favela Bairro) and that of 'European' urban regeneration (it uses EEA funds) and a 'negotiated city' (Kesteloot 2005, Bourdin 2010).

Then, I use insights from Science and Technology Studies as applied to the built environment (Gieryn 2002, Jacobs 2006, Hommels 2009) to show how the current 'unbuilding' and 'reconfiguration' of the dwellings in Cova da Moura not only is based on the adaptation of scientific knowledge from formal housing, (namely through a 'laboratorisation' of the dwelling); but that it is dependent on the intense, subjective-objective and embodied experience of the experts that evaluate the dwellings; i.e. it is dependent on people as scientific instruments (Derksen 2010).

Keywords: colonial and postcolonial urbanism; slum rehabilitation; housing assessment; Lisbon, Portugal

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