An Urban Middle Class and the Vacillation of 'Informal' Boundaries - Insights from Maputo, Mozambique

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Over the last decades, interest in major cities in sub-Saharan Africa has heightened, mainly due to their rapid economic growth, as well as the emergence of a so-called new urban 'middle class'. This paper aims to contribute to the debate from a policy planning perspective by analysing possible outcomes of the newly middle class housing, land demand and settling-down trends. These are currently dealt with under an out-of-date concept of formal-informal boundary. In some of Maputo's hot-spot zones it is particularly evident that this class seek alternative ways to obtain a decent dwelling, redesigning the physical boundaries of the city and leading to the vacillation of the concept still labelled as urban 'informality'. Using the city of Maputo (and its most recent urbanisation trends) as a fruitful case study, the aim is to shed light on how the interconnections between a rising middle class and a culturally embedded 'informal' urban production of space could be pivotal for the emergence of many new forms of urban 'behaviours' in similar Sub-Saharan African cities. Specific cases of 'inverse planning' procedures to obtain land rights reputedly support two main concepts: the first being that it is really a new emergent class who seem to be increasingly proactive towards new hybrid planning actions; the second being the consequences these actions are already leading to in terms of urban governance.

Keywords: *urban middle class; Maputo; housing; formal-informal boundary; inverse planning; urban governance.*

During the last five to ten years, there has been a renewed academic and political interest in understanding how socio-economic changes are interconnected with both political and territorial changes taking place in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly focusing on new complex processes of urbanisation strongly linked to the emergence of a 'burgeoning' urban middle class (Birdsall, 2015; Cohen, 2006; African Development Bank, 2011; Watson, 2015; White et.al., 2008).

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We have been witnessing a recent (market-led) tendency to promote sub-Saharan African cities as new metropolitan models, defining them as the 'ordinary' and 'global', while many capitals of the sub-continent are also being promoted as ideal sites for planning 'futuristic' cities. This is due to the intricacies related to such a specific social transition, and a strong trend towards an ever greater number of newly-opening markets, as well as discoveries of resources (which has brought a massive increase in the presence of new international actors in the territory). In particular, the new urban middle class in Sub-Saharan Africa has been linked to the rapid alteration of some urban paradigms such as: inclusion, accessibility, and *suburbanism* (Mabin et.al., 2011). The urban middle class, in particular, is identified as the main driver for the current economic growth, creating new consumeristic niches (Balbo, 2014).

Although local and international private investors and developers are attracted by this new market enclave, trying to meet an urgent need for affordable housing and more infrastructures, local governments seem particularly attracted by residential solutions which, in reality, do not serve the real bulk of the actors undergoing the current socio-economic shift. In this sense, the debate divides into two main lines: the first one claiming attention on the housing shortage for the new class (CAHF, 2013; Kingombe, 2014; Arvanitis, 2013), the other one warning against some emerging exclusionary form of urban development related to it, which fosters urban fragmentation and unsustainable city sprawl (Morange et.al., 2012; Watson and Agbola, 2013; Lemansky, 2006; Adedeji et.al., 2016). This last point of concern particularly that regarding the futuristic visions of the major capitals' outskirts, dominates the international debate (Watson, 2014; Cain, 2014; Parnell and Pieterse, 2014).

The new urban middle class debate, as well, seems to be based on these embedded concepts of urban fragmentation and exclusion. Moreover, the factors defined as responsible for the lack of proper housing and planning solutions to accommodate the new urban actor lies at the 'policy-crisis'-related concept (Pieterse, 2014; Collier, 2012) and on the fact that the new wave of market-led expansion is leading to a non-state, non-central urban development.

Within this framework, little mention is made of the relationship between such an important socio-economic shift -as the rise of a wealthier class- and the 'informality' debate, nor of the consequences of this relationship in terms of policy scenarios.

This article aims to suggest a more empirical reading of the local fast-changing urban dynamics in a specific Sub-Saharan African city, considering that the new urban middle class, with its 'right to the city' perception, is one of the key actors that will determine which kind of urban expansion patterns will prevail in the future.

The social segment examined is one that is internationally defined as the 'floating' middle class', characterized by patterns of economic reversibility. This specific focus is not only dictated by a statistically-based logic (considering that the real bulk of the socio-economic shift lies in that economic segment), but most of all because of the conviction that those 'floating' middle class individuals play a particularly

new and subverting role in the urban scenario, able to modify culturally influenced dynamics of urban governance. The two main arguments used are the housing and the land use rights achievement.

This article is organized in order to firstly provide the reader with both a general framework of the 'rising urban middle class' debate and of the urban governance one, before entering into the specifics of the case study. The second section provides a brief portrait of the new middle class urban actor as characterised in the international debate about Sub-Saharan Africa so far, and of the main characteristic related to it, highlighting the existence of poor research on the urban behaviour of the very bulk of this class (in particular, in terms of relationship with the urban 'informal' sector). The third section takes a specific position within the overall debate of the urban governance issue and urban middle class, providing insights into how this social actor is totally reshaping and blending some social, physical, and formal-informal boundaries. The case of Maputo is introduced here, through a general overview of recent urban policies observed through the lens of the new middle class expansion within the urban fabric. The fourth section approaches the concept of a continuum of the urban behaviour of the emerging class in Maputo in relation to the 'informal' modalities of land achievement and space production, and tries to foresee which kind of urban governmental responses it could lead to.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

In 2009 the economist Martin Ravallion (World Bank) analysed a specific socio-economic shift that took place between the years 1990 and 2002, determining how 1.2 billion people in the developing world became middle class. Just a year later, a report from the African Development Bank estimated that more than 300 million individuals have entered a middle class label in Africa. From that moment on, many other reports and studies have tried to be specific about (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012; Birdsall, 2010; Dadush and Ali, 2012; Kharas, 2010; Balbo, 2014) the real statistics, and a general income-related debate about this kind of label was sparked off. However, no significant agreement has yet been reached among various experts.

Nowadays, it is evident that, in economic terms, the vaunted social segment with a disposable income power oscillating between 2 and 20 USD/day, is nothing but a slightly wealthier segment, out of poverty, but still markedly different to a Western middle class. During the last 30 years, the only segment comparable with a Western middle class has improved to such a small extent that, sadly, it is almost imperceptible (Stupart, 2012). Nevertheless, one must admit that a totally new class of the non-poor does exist, and is notably and rapidly on the rise, exerting a considerable influence on the world of politics, as well as territory management.

Such a rising middle class, as a complex urban actor, is largely responsible for the revival of interest in sub-Saharan African urbanities, both in spatial terms (for

example, the renaissance of interest towards the 'African suburbanism' issue) and in terms of urban policies (the interest in a growing housing demand and the proposed solutions related to it).

The new urban middle class is often associated, within the current international debate, with a consumeristic, winner's scenario. It is capable of improving its living conditions by entering the internal market and obtaining some specific consumer products (often used as indicators) or establishing efficient socio-economic networks. Many authors (Handley, 2015; Cheesma, 2014; Wietzke and Sumner, 2014; Ncube and Shimeles, 2015; Birdsall et.al,, 2000; Kawanaka, 2010) analyse this new stakeholder through its relationships with local authorities and participation in the public arena with some of them arguing that the new middle class will be economically and politically transformative depending on a collective identity and the attitude and commitment of the state itself. A state level awareness must be the main provider in terms of services and infrastructures. Another minor part of the debate stands in stark contrast with such approaches, thus highlighting the exclusionary dynamics and warning that this class suffers due to poor urban access, inadequate services and distorted affordability options. How to dismantle, then, some preconceptions about who wins and who loses as far as urban access is concerned, whilst also taking into account a current socio-economic shift?

This article proposes to respond to such a question by analysing the so-called 'proto-formal' dynamics of the class in question. Push and pull factors, driving the new middle class during their attempts to obtain a fair share of decent urban space, could be key to identifying which kind of future urban policy scenario is likely to be created in the forthcoming years. These factors are equally dependent on both the urban-related policy choices made by the formal sector, as well as on the growing opportunities the 'informal' sector provides as a substitution for the failures on the part of the authorities. That is to say, this social class is strictly dependent on a wide range of alternative trade channels, networks, importations, and administrative transactions, often carried out through a mix of formal planning and alternative proceedings.

Some could argue that it goes without saying that the multifaceted ways in which the urban poor have been achieving their living space and homes have always manifested in this kind of 'proto-formal' manner. Nevertheless, what is changing nowadays is the socio-economic label of the actor responsible for such actions, and this will lead to far-reaching consequences for future planning policies.

On the one hand, the adoption of semi-formal dynamics by a wealthier class should make authorities realise that what they have called 'informal' so far, is in actual fact a growing, simple and sustainable way to construct an urban environment (with an eventual beneficial impact made by some poorer groups). On the other hand, the shift of the middle-class demand on the 'informal' economy (as the provision of public services, possibility for imports and obtaining goods from the

formal sector have been reduced), has resulted in the creation of a new, distinctive, lucrative/speculative niche, with a negative impact on the urban poor.

This sensitive positive-negative oscillation holds the potential for reshaping the whole 'informality' debate, especially regarding a context such as Mozambique, where housing production and space layouts are, to a great extent, the responsibilities of the inhabitants themselves, carried out within a context of tolerance through local micro-actions of land parcelling and regularization (Nielsen, 2011; Anderseon et.al., 2015).

The next section will summarize some of those expansion patterns in Maputo, related to a growing wealthier class, and some urban governance and planning policy insights related to them which can help better portray winner-loser urban scenario.

The evidence presented and the specific case studies are the result of the first phase of ongoing fieldwork carried out by the author since 2015. The fieldwork, supported by the Faculty of Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Maputo (FAPF) is articulated in two parallel engagements: (i) on the one hand, it especially accompanies the local authority's efforts in some hot-spot expansion zones, trying to envisage which possible land management scenario could prevail in the near future; (ii) on the other, extensive surveys are carried out through 135 households with focus groups and open-ended interviews focusing on the perception of belonging (or not) to an urban middle class. In parallel, two specific cases of "inverse planning" carried out by lower and middle class householders are monitored: in such areas, a set of actions lying between the formal-'informal' border as a way to achieve land rights are ongoing. Although in terms of urban behaviour this could seem to be nothing new within the urban scenario, the author strongly believes that it is worth observing how such actions lead to different formal (policy) responses, depending on the social segment adopting them. Furthermore, in terms of urban inclusion, very different 'winner or loser' perspectives for the rising class can be glimpsed, depending on the specific social entity that decides to adopt some particular approaches to local authorities to obtain their urban rights.

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES IN THE NEW CITY'S EXPANSION- INSIGHTS AND POLICIES FROM MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE

Maputo is a core site attracting the greatest international attention for the study of its urban expansion patterns and directions. This attention in part focusses on the recent private-led residential boom in central and peripheral sites, and the adoption of recent urban trends heavily criticized by a part of the international debate. Local planning entities, among them the Centro de Desenvolvimento do Habitat (CEDH) of the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, are both interested and worried about such market-led expansion. They strongly hold the belief that the rapid

urban inclusion of an urban middle class is pivotal for proper internal growth with positive rebound impacts on the whole population. However, they feel the urgency to sensitize the need for a more centralized (state) management of such expansions, often defining as "uncontrolled" (such as, through a formal, embedded concept) the expansion zones where the middle class is progressively settling down (Professor L. Lage, personal communication, October 2015).

For the purposes of such research, Maputo is a particularly suitable case study for two main reasons: (i) it represents many other postcolonial cities in Sub-Saharan Africa owing to its structure (the out-of-date concept of 'dual city'), which is rapidly disappearing (Bertelsenet.al., 2014); (ii) it is a particularly favourable point of observation of the urban expansion because of its general and historically embedded permissive practice of space self-production in the peripheral areas. In the areas analysed, in particular, with limited authority participation, it is 'easier' to observe which urban and spatial preferences the new rising class is adopting.

Many householders within the 'poverty belt', with an improved economic status, are actually constantly searching for the space to construct their "luxury" dwellings, not only because they lack diverse affordability options, but also because of their own specific vision of what a 'middle class house' should look like.

Marracuene's district is a clear example of this kind of urban expansion. At the beginning of 2000, the Fundo de Fomento de Habitaçao[1] (FFH), launched a contest to create an urbanisation plan for that area. Although it was produced (through a FAPF's consulting group) the plan was never implemented, nor legally adopted. Nowadays this area is characterised by low-density, one-storey houses, incrementally built, which have made a large part of the district look like a unique, huge and peculiar construction site.

In general, and despite the increasing local authorities' awareness of the manifold challenges a rising class is posing to the city expansion, there seems to be a general failure to take into account a totally new social actor, the one creating its own modus operandi to 'make an urban life' and the planning instruments are part of an outdated approach.

The overall approach and main idea is to try to derive substantial benefits from urban areas through the increase in their market value ("*urbanização mercantizavel*") both with regard to 'officially' planned areas, and 'spontaneous' settlements. The ProMaputo programme (World Bank) aims to improve the limited impact formal planning has on the territory, by undertaking several parallel actions, the principal of which is a massive land regularization programme, including the infrastructural component as well as the formulation of pilot partial urban plans (Planos pilotos parciais de urbanização). The main purpose of this process seems to be to allow the city Council to approve a series of urban land-use plans as the basis for land regularisation and titling, thus establishing municipal control over land use through a state-dominated planning process, the result of which will be gaining a greater access to the source of income via land registry taxation.

Moreover, some actions of 'bland verticalization' were proposed in the contest for the partial urbanisation plans (as in the case of Polana Caniço A or 'Marginal' areas); namely, in order to make several lots available to the public, it was decided to put them on the market, at the same time freeing space for infrastructure or public spaces.

In general terms, the political will seems to lie at the heart of the De Soto's approach, both with regard to the higher class housing (through the recent idea of the creation of '*novas centralidades*') and low-cost actions, through the added land value achieved once infrastructure and services are provided to a specific area.

In parallel, The FFH is increasingly making efforts to integrate this approach with other established dynamics of 'informal' income sources, as is the case with a recently promoted flexibility in allocating credit lines to families with 'mixed' income sources, or by making more flexible timetables for the credit repayment. R. Costa (FFH's President), announced that the new housing policy (2013) has made it a priority to increase the number of the beneficiaries by modifying timings and interest rates in order to make them commensurate with their clients' circumstances (personal communication with R. Costa, November 2015).

The overall approach of both local and international relevant communities regarding the existing planning practice has led local authorities to believe that the key to the problem is to legitimise (through market-led policies) that which has already been consolidated and socio-culturally regulated. Such a regulation is supposed to work through the involvement of the private sector with the result that, at the end of the process, lots or houses are no longer affordable by a lower or middle class. In Mozambique, some so-called 'social housing' projects show official final prices comparable, or even higher than private sector's ones, often because of the inclusion of additional infrastructural costs. Middle class families, then, tend to construct much bigger, better dwellings through the 'traditional' way of private proto-formal agreements, mostly alongside primary communication routes, typologically differentiating, then, those spaces defined as of 'not manageable expansion'.

Within this overall framework, positive signs of a renewed awareness are emerging, in terms of: (i) the recognition that the real bulk of the emerging class is missing in relation to housing and land policies; (ii) that new settling down dynamics carried out by this class (or by mixed socio-economic groups including the new middle class) are significant input to improve urban inclusion policies. UN-Habitat's office in Maputo is very proactive in this sense, seeing the recent (lower) middle class expansion, and especially new community-managed forms of planning, as an opportunity rather than an obstacle to an equal urban development (personal communication with UN-Habitat officers, October 2015). Following such a concept, the author agrees about the fact that it is mostly the kind of lower-middle class's urban behaviour that holds the potential to redesign the urban space.

THE RISING CLASS'S URBAN ATTITUDES AND THE 'INVERSE PLANNING' ACTIONS

There is a general 'openness' to considering the 'informal' as significant (African Development Bank, 2013; Simone, 2004; Gilbert, 2007; Roy, 2011; Pieterse, 2014), both in physical terms complementary to other elements of the urban fabric and its economic implications, and considering the awareness of how the urban 'informality', by no means an option limited to the poor (Obeng-Odoom, 2013; Mittlin and Satteirthwaite, 2013; Chivangue, et.al (2014)), is developing into an array of complex new forms. Despite this, the overall focus, as far as urban governance and spatial challenges are concerned, remains on finding solutions as to how to increase formality; in other words, on how to re-establish a sort of 'broken' relationship between local administration and 'informal' inhabitants (Agarwala, 2008; Meagher, 2014; Tonkiss, 2011) through formal proceedings. Nevertheless, what is especially difficult nowadays is to establish where the border is between a broken relationship (a broken 'social contract') and an orchestrated way of using and expanding urban space. This is particularly true if we observe and consider the way in which the new urban middle class settles down in peripheral spaces in Maputo: there, due to the traditional realpolitik in land access and land management, the limit between the 'broken relationship' with the local authority (in charge of the parcelling plans and land rights emission) and the continuum of 'informal' proceedings to achieve space for house construction is barely undefinable.

A focus group of the residents' committee in the Costa do Sol neighbourhood (October, 2015) clearly showed how slight this limit can be, in three parallel ways, both 'perceived' and documented through personal interviews: (i) the fact that the perception of being an 'influential' part of society makes the inhabitants feel more permitted to 'supersede' the local authority regarding planning processes, also considering the fact that most of the city has been developed through no 'formal' regulations; (ii) the fact that, depending on an intricate set of conditions (housing-related needs, social relationships, economic projections), middle class inhabitants decide whether to be supportive of community-led planning actions to achieve formal regulation plans, or, to rely on culturally embedded illegal proceedings, silently positioning themselves both in contrast and in a hiding towards local authorities (iii) the fact that such two aforementioned ways of thinking and acting, despite being transversal to all social classes, are increasingly translated into practical (spatial) actions by the specific new (floating) middle class segment.

For this reason, 35 open ended interviews and a focus group discussion in Beira (Sofala Province, Mozambique) conducted in 2014 by the author, also focused on the subject of the perception of belonging (or not) to an urban middle class and on the relationship with the local authority. The results have shown clear signs about how this kind of 'broken relationship' has much to do with the housing issue. 80% of the respondents[2], despite a considerable economic gap between them, claim to

be building a house through the incremental building modality, contracting local builders, with the construction taking place in a time period lasting from two to eight years. 30% of them have declared being subjected to heavy constraints due to the complex bureaucratic procedures for obtaining the land use right (DUAT[3]) or a new lot in the desired areas. In general, incremental building remains the main way to get a dwelling for those classes; irrespective of the actual economic status of a household, the house is, in most cases, completed, refurbished, extended and improved over the longitudinal period studied. In many cases building materials are stored on the site itself, as an indication of a desire to continuously invest in the house.

It is becoming obvious that a wealthier class is searching for more 'peripheral' spaces characterized by traffic decongestion, greater safety, and in short, cleaner zones, cheaper lots with more peace and quiet (personal communication with Costa do Sol inhabitants, November 2015).

More and more members of the middle or lower-middle class looking for a living space closer to the centre, are beginning to turn to some kind of 'hybrid' dynamics, until recently associated with a political or economic elite. Bustling activities, such as informal subdividing, buying and selling of lots on the fringes of the Bairro Central are becoming characteristic of a growing 'middle' class, with a consequential expansion of the 'old' grid and the gentrification of some zones.

On the whole, contemporary hybrid socio-cultural attitudes to urban space are strictly related to the economic stratification of the society. Current urban development is nothing but a continuum of implementing what is economically viable, socially legitimate and culturally influenced (Andersen et.al., 2015), so it appears logical that social segments also labelled as 'out of poverty' are going to behave using social and cultural means suited to their set of values in order to obtain the desired location, a larger plot or some housing-related facilities.

Therefore, do housing and land access constraints for the new middle class act as push factors, inclining more towards 'informal' approaches or collective actions at a public level? Are these very constraints actually leading to an ulterior attitude towards the state administration, that is, 'hiding', or, quite the opposite, are they promoting a better coordination between the population claiming living space and housing and local authorities? As for Mozambique, the responses could be difficult to predict, as several levels of 'informal' actions are actually, in practice, accepted (and even supervised) by formal or legal authorities, and also as 'land use planning based on state control has limited impact' (Andersen, Jenkins, & Nielsen, 2015).

Nevertheless, an emergent phenomenon could help answer such questions: namely a particular form of self-organised planning process carried out by groups of inhabitants in hotspot zones near the city centre. The topic of 'inverse planning' here proposed is the prosecution of the "inverse governmentality" cases monitored by Nielsen (2011), as a very important phenomenon to help foresee which kind of new urban developments will prevail in the near future. The author strongly believes

that such actions are progressively increasing because of the rapid expansion of a wealthier class, with improved spending power used to establish new kind of agreements/proceedings.

The 'inverse planning' phenomenon is 'new' within the city (and subject to increasing local interest), since the first case registered was in 2008. In that year, a group of inhabitants of the Costa do Sol neighbourhood were negotiating with Municipal Council regarding their DUATs (which was sparked by the land value increase in the area). Having received the response from the Municipality informing them of the necessity to include all lots into the cadastral plan before entering the procedure for obtaining DUATS, they decided to organize themselves and subsequently contracted an architectural team. They agreed on a price per square with the architect for the revision of the cadastral plan, the creation of the 'reordering' plan and the lots' delimitation. The final detailed plan was delivered to the Municipal council for approval, and it worked with them. Such a shrewd action helped spare the local administration parcelling and planning costs, and it worked very quickly compared to the standard local administration processes. The group of inhabitants consisted of about 200 households, living in various socio-economic circumstances, but mostly middle income.

In 2013 another group of inhabitants in the same area united and started a similar action. It is still in progress due to, among other reasons, a different socio-economic composition of the group itself (some middle class components, among lower class ones), as well as the reluctance on the part of some poor households to join in and particularly high tension generated in the area as a result of an increased land demand and conflicts arising from it. As a general rule, the individual price established for participation in the joint action depends on the lot size, but it also happens that, given the high value of the land in that area, and the wealthier families' rush for the DUAT, the individual cost is counted as proportional to the economic circumstances of each household. Although a Municipal officer routinely accompanies the whole process, it has to be noted that, although the Municipality itself could actively participate on several levels, it often assumes a passive role.

This way of obtaining land right is hard to define in terms of the consequences it might have, because it holds the potential to subvert many sorts of urban dynamics, both in terms of the inclusion of the urban poor and the relationship between the citizens and local administration. If, on the one hand, it does promote a collective action and accelerates cumbersome bureaucracy and lengthy administrative proceedings through bottom-up private-public planning, on the other hand, it weakens a still frail political will (which is especially manifest when it comes to financial and technical aspects) preventing it from engaging in some hotspot zones and finding suitable solutions. Moreover, once they achieve a DUAT, the poorest families often tend to sell the lot and move to further unsafe urban zones.

In fact, what has to be taken into account is that this kind of 'inverse planning' process has its roots in a recently increasing trend which barely fits the cultural and

social realpolitik of Mozambique. In short, the obligation to issue a DUAT only on condition that the area in question is cadastred/'officially planned' does not seem to have much effect on the lower class. Local members of this class anyway feel safe and protected living in their existing homes (since evictions are not envisaged by the overall planning approach), while, at the same time, it appears to have a huge economic consequence for the wealthier class, as it uses this same mechanism to put their living space and housing on the market, thus rapidly selling them and buying new ones.

These processes seem to become something commonplace for achieving DUATs, mostly among middle class inhabitants who want to speed up the whole bureaucratic DUAT's emission process (personal communication with local architect, October 2015). De facto, in Catembe, a zone recently labelled as 'Maputo's future', some middle class inhabitants are already considering uniting and beginning the same kind of private bottom-up process (personal communication with Catembe's prospective inhabitant, February 2016).

It could be argued that it is not anything more than the perpetuating of a traditionally embedded attitude but, in reality, such a peculiar way of obtaining land right escapes strict definitions, and the consequences it might have are impossible to be envisaged, because it holds the potential to subvert many aspects of urban governance dynamics. De facto, what is relevant is that it is more and more the Municipality itself that, lacking other relevant strategies, forces the residents to resort to community-private contracts to produce their own parcelling or upgrading plan.

It is worth mentioning that such processes shift some urbanisation costs from the local government to the citizens themselves, thus subverting some primary concepts of the urban social contract between them and the Municipality.

Moreover, they have been showing/fostering many 'urban inequality' trends by the local governance apparatus. As an example, in the above-mentioned Polana Caniço case, this inverted planning process provoked misleading and contradictory responses from the Municipal Planning Department (from now on, DPMUA) towards the inhabitants: in that area, a remaining 5% of inhabitants is still waiting for its DUAT. The private architect in charge of the regularization plan was in reality an architect working for the DPMUA (so, with a clearly conflictual position), and he provided a subdivision plan that in some parts was rejected by the DPMUA itself, at the moment of approval, because of some plot sizes not fitting with the current normative. In these cases, the DPMUA reassured the inhabitants of these plots, through a sort of oral agreement: the inhabitants would receive the DUAT anyway, and the plot regularization (the reallocation of some houses or courtyards) would happen after the middle class newcomer inhabitants had settled in. This agreement has never been respected and those inhabitants now feel insecure and 'left alone', no longer having any support from the municipality nor by the private architect who,

once the work was completed and the monetary transaction closed, no longer felt the need to resolve the situation.

In terms of internal social consequences, the fact that these processes are started and carried out by a socially mixed group of inhabitants (belonging both to lower and middle classes) also means that the whole set of relationships and undeclared social relationships between the urban poor and the urban emerging middle class is subject to a massive process of reshaping. On the one hand, such a process could promote collective actions capable of claiming the lack of clear and qualitative land regulations and of somehow conquering cumbersome bureaucracy and lengthy administrative proceedings through bottom-up private-public planning. On the other hand, it could weaken the local urban governance apparatus, which is now actually less motivated to engage in finding suitable solutions to some hotspot zone burning issues. De facto, the general opinion of the DMPUA that such a process is inevitable and that 'it works', could be hazardous for the urban local governance.

What is interesting to study is the kind of urban scenario that will enter the picture, depending on the possible political responses to such kinds of planning trends, be it a sort of 'licit' continuum of space self-management, or a stricter option of regularization.

The degree of local authorities' engagement in this process is a key factor, as well as the way in which all these detailed plans will be included in the general city plan *a posteriori*. What all this implies is new tools within the existing plans and planning processes.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Spatial accessibility as a 'political parameter' (Narvaez et.al. 2012) assumes a very peculiar value if associated with an emergent wealthier Sub-Saharan class trying to obtain urban space and housing, through improved means and more socio-political 'weight'. In many sub-Saharan African countries, housing affordability seems to be the major constraint for the rising class, as well as its access to a fair rental market. In this light, this article has tried to highlight some new, experimental processes, the purpose of which has been to integrate various social actors, 'formally' or not, in an attempt to compensate for what is definitely missing in the social dialogue on the subject of urbanity. In particular, it has been stressed how the personal perception which the members of the new middle class have regarding their 'right to the city' is neither a direct and linear consequence of their escape from poverty, nor a mere copying of the values characterizing the higher class's lifestyle. Rather, it is a multifaceted perception that is reflected in many new aspects spatially produced or re-produced.

Maputo stands as a particularly suitable case study to shed light on these concepts. What transpires to be of primary importance is to analyse which kind of

'culturally legitimate' mode or formal or proto-formal mechanism this class is willing to adopt in order to achieve its access to a house that would satisfy its material requirements and would also represent their desired social status in the public eye. What is fundamental is to shed light on how they really perceive their social status and accordingly develop their proper 'value systems' in relation to housing development, with or without the state.

The new middle class is inevitably introducing nuances in urban land appropriation dynamics on the outskirts of Maputo, and, as such, keeps sending all those peri-urban clues as to the arrival of a new entity: '*a cidade està a chegar*' ('city is arriving') through displaying big fenced houses with satellite antennas, kitchenware stores, building materials shops and storages, minor construction companies' offices, hardware stores, all of which are mostly located in the periphery, along the main expansion routes (Marracuene, Laulane, Zimpeto, Magoanine). It is exactly there that the 'formal layouts for middle class' are not only emerging, but already consolidating, alongside modest low-income dwellings.

Moreover, many new urban alterations are taking shape as the consequence of a renewed interest in the economic empowerment of a specific urban class; unfortunately, in many cases the intention to adapt the urban form to suit the new socio-economic stratification leads to the adoption of unsuitable western-based principles or exogenous moral/sustainable models of land use (Biza and Bernard da Costa, 2012).

It is valuable to acknowledge that the floating middle' class's housing and land access endeavours 'with or without the state' potentially threaten informal access of those with lower-incomes, especially in the territories where land is not 'officially planned'. As we have seen in the case of the processes of inverse planning, if current regulatory emphasis on land-use planning continues or even increases, the costs of land regularisation through planning are likely to become relatively high, and, consequently, mainly privately-led in the future. On the other hand, the poorest areas are likely to remain 'hovering' in the state of legal limbo until something eventually changes.

Increasing concern regarding the 'unofficially planned' areas and inverse planning modalities (Interview with FAPF teachers, 2015) must be converted into concern about the limitations of the instruments pivotal for the planning process and title registration, which are actually leading to these alternative solutions. I truly believe that such mechanisms may have much positive potential, if properly analysed and channelled towards the right stakeholders, and if included in proper (reformulated) planning policies.

The increasing settling-down of a class no longer poor, such as the floating or the middle class in peripheral areas, induces local authorities to define it as an inevitable 'gentrification' process (I. Juvane, Municipal Planning Department Chief, personal communications, October and November 2015), a normal "stage of the urban expansion in a specific moment of socio-economic shift". Yet, insufficient attention

is placed on the fact that state planning is sometimes being superseded by peculiar, space-limited, socially mixed collective actions that in reality benefit just a small (higher) part of the urban middle class. At the same time, the 'disappearance' of the local authorities in several steps of the planning process in the light of this kind of "inevitable gentrification", highlights the lack of updated and appropriate planning tools to integrate the new spatial interests with the traditional and ongoing local management of the urban realpolitik (the definitive acceptance of 'informal' settling down actions).

In this sense, it is worth considering the enormous difference in the way local government is choosing to deal with the processes of 'inverse governmentality' depending on which social segment has initiated them, that is, taken such an action: the urban poor (as a sort of 'licit' continuum of space self-management), as opposed to the middle class (a class with completely different social, political, and awareness/participation potential). The importance the local authorities are attaching to such initiatives and the recognition tools they are using, as well as the land policies adopted, differ immensely.

On the basis of the above-mentioned emerging dynamics, it has to be stressed once again that more importance has to be given not to what kind of production of space is adopted, but to who is the social subject adopting it, as this inextricably implies completely different policy responses from the local authorities.

Within the new urban context, it is not easy to discern the short and long-term consequences of the urban practices coming to light before our very eyes, right here, right now, let alone to foresee who will benefit, and how, from these practices, and who will not. In this regard, what has only been emphasized until now are the negative consequences stemming from the ever-popular gated communities or the appropriation of illegal lots in outlying areas carried out by the upper-middle class, posing a threat to the poor who have to move further and further from the city centre (inevitably shrinking their social networks and reducing employment opportunities).

Nevertheless, there is a new, more differentiated set of other practices that are brutally subverting inter-class relationships, land policies, urban expansion path/speed, and even radically affecting planning instruments, land market appropriation dynamics, rental dynamics, and mobility directions within the city.

The new urban middle class could play a pivotal role in discerning how the continuum of a socially efficient (Roy, 2008) and stable way of managing and producing peripheral space (including inverse and superseding planning actions) is changing within the city. It could be the key actor defining, in the near future, how the perception of which kind of 'scripts for cityness' (Myers, 2011) for this class are emerging. Moreover, the new class represents the potential to reshape the border between an 'informal', inverse, 'governmentality' of the space, and instead an equitable social planning action.

Misleading (both economic and spatial) considerations regarding the new specific social actor with some improved spending power to organise both its urban preferences and influence local authorities' decisions, could have negative consequences and lead to non-useful responses to the above-mentioned key questions.

NOTES

1. The entity responsible for social housing policies and housing provision at national level.
2. Although divided into four income sub-categories, the respondents economically fit within the thresholds set by the African Development Bank as belonging to the middle class in 2011.
3. *Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra:* personal land use right title/document.

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