

# Homeownership, Design, and Postcolonial Citizenship: Comparing Two Emergency Housing Programs in Portugal, 1974–82

RUI ARISTIDES LEBRE

This article examines two housing programs in the mid-1970s in Portugal as architectural and political experiments in democratic citizenship. It begins by describing how the promotion of a certain tradition of house design served as a governing tactic of the Portuguese dictatorship, which lasted from 1926 to 1974. It then analyzes the Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local (SAAL — Mobile Local Support Service) of 1974, which was intended to respond to the insurgency of the urban periphery. And it analyzes the Comissão para Alojamento de Refugiados (CAR — Refugee Housing Commission) of 1976, which was directed at accommodating returned colonial citizens. Comparing these programs' socio-political circumstances, strategies and architectures, the article concludes by reflecting on architecture as a social product, and on its role in the constitution of democracy. It argues that a social history of architecture — and especially, of housing production — can provide a richly critical view into the tactics of democratic and postcolonial national-identity construction.

On April 25, 1974, after 48 years of dictatorship, democracy was swept into Portugal by revolutionary force — not through a process of adaptation to liberal European norms, but as an exploding, overpouring, deluge-like phenomenon. Two years later, in 1976, there followed a new movement to conform to European market-driven social democracy. But between the fall of the dictatorship and the arrival of a more stable regime, the country's urban landscapes experienced an effort of democratic construction through "insurgent citizenship."<sup>1</sup>

Following James Holston, the notion of citizenship is here interpreted to designate legal, political and social forms of national belonging predicated on the attainment of rights and social capital that, besides being played out in unequal and complex manners,

*Rui Aristides Lebre is a post-doctoral researcher at the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, Portugal.*

are defined by struggles over access to the city, not simply the law itself.<sup>2</sup> Along these lines, the article deals with the two main insurgent populations of revolutionary Portugal: residents of the marginalized urban periphery, who until then were largely excluded from the public stage by the silencing power of official government discourse;<sup>3</sup> and returned colonial citizens, who were at the time escaping the violent defeat of Portugal in the African liberation wars. In particular, the article discusses how the revolutionary government tried to integrate these emerging populations through new housing programs and, in the process, make public architecture an inclusive, democratic project.

In the present context (as well as others), the architecture of the house, needs to be approached as a composite political, cultural, and power-laden social product.<sup>4</sup> The house must thus be understood as a key tactic for “shaping social identities,” both for individuals and communities.<sup>5</sup> Being a place for negotiating culture, gender, class, and social productivity, the house should also be understood as a powerful signifier of nationhood.<sup>6</sup> By implication, it has historically been a tradition of modern government to target domestic architecture as a key site of power and empowerment.<sup>7</sup>

Following these views, this article will seek to understand how the Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local (SAAL — Mobile Local Support Service) of 1974 and the Comissão para Alojamento de Refugiados (CAR — Refugee Housing Commission) of 1976 constituted two proposals to produce and govern democracy. In order to achieve this, it will seek to explain how the creation of a housing tradition became a Portuguese form of government.

#### A PROPER HOUSE FOR EVERY PORTUGUESE

Lasting from 1926 to 1974, the Portuguese dictatorship (for the majority of this time under António Oliveira Salazar but,

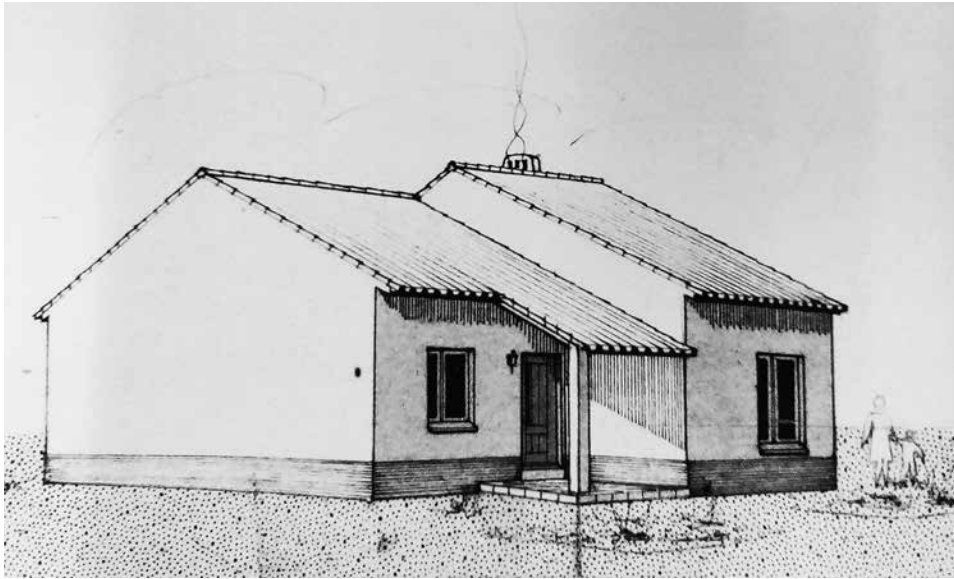
in its later period, under his close friend Marcello Caetano) gave the house a very particular cultural biography and role.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the constitution which wrote the regime into power in 1933 proclaimed, “In order to defend the family it belongs to the State and local government: favoring the constitution of independent and salubrious homes and the institution of the family aggregate.”<sup>9</sup> And it made the provision of the “new political and social unit” of the family with a “proper” house a national mission.

In terms of construction, this political strategy departed from a cultural tradition developed by “unofficial” agents (to use Eric Hobsbawm’s categories).<sup>10</sup> Beginning in the early twentieth century, architects, ethnographers and historians, national at heart, had set out to “discover” a Portuguese house type that could address modern living habits and forms with “the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law.”<sup>11</sup> And, by 1933, the architects of this cultural movement had popularized a series of house models and images. As in many other contexts, the “proper” house was fabricated as a nexus of morally edifying relations to self, state and country.<sup>12</sup> But it fell to the dictatorship to pick up this cultural production and give it the gravity of official discourse, making it an “official” invented tradition. The “Portuguese house,” as it was subsequently called, thus transformed a particularly styled and organized form — of vernacular inspiration, detached and modern, inhabited by a particular social organization, the patriarchal family — into a powerful sign of social empowerment and national resolution.<sup>13</sup> And the provision of such houses became a government tactic — a way of distributing social capital and position. For a dictatorial regime, with its various systems of repression and state violence, this ideal also enabled it to project a liberal form of power, helping it rule through aspiration and empowerment (FIG. 1).<sup>14</sup>

In reality, however, the dictatorship never fulfilled its duty under the 1933 constitution when it came to housing the population. And compared to other European nations at the time,



**FIGURE 1.** House type responding to the floods of 1967. Based on: FFH/IHRU Archive, Lisbon.



**FIGURE 2.** House type for southern Portugal, 1977. Based on: FFH/IHRU Archive, Lisbon.

fascist or otherwise, the regime managed to develop only a meager housing-provision policy. In all respects, this followed the philanthropic logic of liberalism's private housing programs, as adapted to serve those social sectors that supported the dictatorship politically. State housing practices were thus essentially limited, directed toward individuals the regime identified as deserving. Meanwhile, the regime permitted, and actually promoted, other dwelling situations formally considered illegal, such as shantytowns.<sup>15</sup> This left a considerable portion of the population situated ambiguously in the nation's social and political life. On the one hand, these were typically its working citizens, a condition which would ordinarily have made modern development possible; on the other, this population could claim very little in the way of social gains or rights, not unlike the Brazilian *favelado*. It was thus that the independent, salubrious image of the "Portuguese house" was used to manage expectations and norms within the landscape, rather than produce an actual landscape of houses.

Only in 1969, with the stepping down of Salazar and the rise of Caetano, did the regime revisit its housing strategy. With several colonial wars in progress, and faced with an escalation of metropolitan populations and political pressures from within, it created the Fundo de Fomento da Habitação (FFH — Housing Development Fund). This step represented a late strategic acknowledgement that housing could provide a concrete and sophisticated way to transform the masses — a key way to govern social reproduction and establish citizenship. And through the mass production of housing, the Fundo thereafter set out to reform the country.

Yet, even as its emphasis shifted to large-scale plans for new housing construction, the state did not actually put aside the powerful symbol of the "traditional" Portuguese house (FIG. 2). Instead, it retained its validity as a tactic of liberal empowerment and as a meaningful form of cultural

discourse. It was at this crossroads, when the independent and salubrious house was being conceived as the means of large-scale social improvement, that the Fundo welcomed both SAAL and CAR to deal with those citizenships the state had failed to address before 1974.

#### HOUSING FOR A BOTTOM-UP REVOLUTION

Executed by the lower ranks of the army organized in the MFA (Movimento das Forças Armadas — Armed Forces Movement), the bloodless Carnation Revolution of April 1974 resulted in a mass mobilization of the country. The popular uprising rallied behind an antifascist and socialist program: an end to colonial wars, the purging of fascists from national society, and the design of programs for general material and social improvement.<sup>16</sup> As part of this movement, peripheral neighborhoods and shantytown communities were quick to mobilize behind the right for better housing. It had, after all, been a constitutional duty of the state to provide salubrious and independent homes. In the immediate wake of the revolution, popular action took the form of mass squatting in state-promoted housing and, to a lesser degree, in vacant private dwellings. This had a powerful urban impact.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in 1974, the state faced two key problems: how to reorganize its spatial practices for a general improvement from below; and how to control the explosion of popular insurgency. In other words, the revolution needed to be harnessed, gathered in by the new state. With virtually all its programs suspended, and facing a crisis in the construction sector, the Fundo responded by creating SAAL.<sup>18</sup>

Conceived by the architect Nuno Portas, then serving as secretary of state of urbanism and housing, with key consultant input from the architect Nuno Teotónio Pereira, the pro-

gram at its most fundamental level aimed to organize populations to address their own claim to housing.<sup>19</sup> To do so, SAAL sought to harness the lessons of a variety of grassroots urban renewal efforts — from Brazilian *favelas* to Peruvian *barriadas* and, on the other hand, eminent advocates of participatory planning processes such as Chombart de Lawe, Henri Lefebvre, and John Turner.<sup>20</sup> Yet, their take on what Peter Hall later called the “city of sweat equity” was at its heart paradoxical.<sup>21</sup> On the one hand, they believed the best strategy for a general improvement of the housing situation, and the organization of the forces of the revolution, was to empower individuals and collectives to construct their own houses. On the other, these individuals were not recognized as having a “culture of the city,” with proper resilient structures and fields of agency.<sup>22</sup> The program was thus specifically directed at the population of those peripheral and informal neighborhoods that the dictatorship had previously enabled through its liberal housing policies. Following Teresa Caldeira’s analysis, those places embodied long-term property, housing, labor, and market arrangements that unsettled official logics while establishing new modes of citizenship.<sup>23</sup> And yet, for the SAAL program’s architects, this population was essentially “homeless,” without any claim to urbanity deeper than a need for shelter.<sup>24</sup> For them, Portugal had an estimated 600,000 homeless.

Nevertheless, SAAL was premised in the political organization of this “homeless” population and its appropriation of the means of production through self-building practices.<sup>25</sup> For its part, the populations dealt with the program through the figure of the SAAL “brigade,” a technical group, coordinated by an architect and composed of architects, engineers and social workers who were, in effect, the agents of the program. From the other side, the brigades dealt first with the population and then with local government, answering only to a regional directorate. As an alternative to the highly centralized protocols of the Fundo and the centralizing power of the old regime, this scheme allowed for great local autonomy. In practice, it followed a case-by-case logic, in which solutions were locally derived from interactions between regional directions, brigades, communities, and local governments.

The program produced a great variety of architectural and urban outcomes, as its architects were afforded a rich, nationwide laboratory for house design and political organization. And despite tight budgets, legal problems, and building constraints, SAAL incorporated as great a variety of construction techniques, professional attitudes, and intellectual elaborations as could be derived from the country’s contemporary architecture institutions. There were neighborhoods designed as postmodern interpretations of Weimar modernism, such as Siza’s application of Brechtian “estrangement” in the São Victor and Bouça neighborhoods in Porto (FIG. 3).<sup>26</sup> There were a large number of others developed following a neorationalist logic, either embracing more austere languages or appropriating vernacular elements, such as, respectively, Manuel Dias’s Ferreiras neighborhood in Faro or Manuel Taíinha’s in



FIGURE 3. SAAL operation of São Vitor in Porto, 1977. Based on: José António Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal e a Arquitectura no 25 de Abril de 1974* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2011).

Grândola. There were neighborhoods reminiscent of English Brutalism, such as João Moitinho’s in Vila Real de Santo António or Joaquim Bousan’s in Matosinhos. And there were openly postmodernist experiments — either of the Russian kind, such as José Santa-Rita’s Casal Ventoso in Lisbon, or of North-American inspiration, such as Raul Hestnes Ferreira’s Quinta da Calçada in Lisbon (FIG. 4). Especially in the latter city, where the number and mass of peripheral communities required a large response, there were also various neighborhoods developed according to the Fundo’s generic state-rationalism, often involving prefabrication.<sup>27</sup> Lastly, there were a great number and variety of reproductions of the neovernacular style that the state had been applying since the late 1950s, and which the Fundo had started rationalizing since the late 1960s, such as Sérgio Fernandez’s Leal neighborhood in Porto or Ana Salta’s Esperança neighborhood in Beja (FIG. 5).

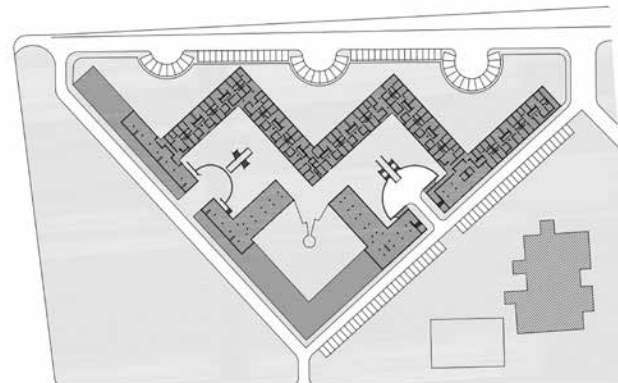


FIGURE 4. Raul Hestnes Ferreira’s Quinta da Calçada SAAL operation, ground plan. Based on: José António Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal e a Arquitectura no 25 de Abril de 1974* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2011).



**FIGURE 5.** Ana Salta's Esperança neighborhood SAAL operation. Based on: José António Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal e a Arquitectura no 25 de Abril de 1974* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2011).

The variety of architectures showed both the richness of the discipline's international connections and the radical openness created by the revolution. A bottom-up architecture was thus produced in too many forms to easily categorize. Yet certain patterns quickly emerged that put into question the actual bottom-up nature of the endeavor. Besides some notable exceptions, mostly in the southern region of Algarve, most SAAL operations involved the brigades' architects designing the houses and their residents building them. Participatory design practices were very unequally applied and, quite often, not brought up at all. On the one hand, this situation reflected the reality of limited budgets and the pressure to build quickly; but it was also essentially given by the relation built into the program between the brigades and the population. The result, of course, was that insurgent claims for urban form and place were siphoned through the expertise of the specific architects involved.

Soon enough, however, another pattern emerged that brought the program's very political philosophy into question. In most cases self-building was not automatically understood as empowerment, and not easily regarded as a positive practice. In fact, the activity of self-building was so widely rejected that SAAL's national secretariat recognized in 1975 (as others had previously recognized in similar instances) that it overwhelmingly represented "nothing more than a form of double exploitation."<sup>28</sup> And this rejection reflected a deeper and more controversial reading of the whole program: that it articulated a form of postcolonial control over the poor, whereby the poor, while not granted responsibility in more central political decisions, were made responsible for their reproduction through the house.

Such ambiguities and contradictions were soon recognized by many of the program's own agents. Thus, by 1976, in an independent report, the architects Ana Salta and Josefina Mena, who had been active in the SAAL brigades in Setúbal and Beja, questioned the program's self-construction

strategy. As they wrote: "Was it presupposed that dwellers claim the right to self-construction? As a social project, self-construction resulted in the annulling of the collective, creating an individualist mind-frame that directly leads to private property. In this point this policy's justification is ambiguous. . . ."<sup>29</sup> Their point was that SAAL was not just a house-providing apparatus, but a social-planning one, guided by a collectivist project of socialist reform. But in reality what many residents wanted was just a house to live in that was better than their old one, without having to go through the work of building it, never mind the work of political organization SAAL supposedly implied. Such people also did not want just any house, but a house of their own, something they could make their property and hearth:

*What we then took as opportunism by some, for instance, claiming that it was never agreed that the property of the houses should be of the Association, was in fact the result of an incorrect communication process: apparently there was verbal consensus, but, in fact, it was not possible to rationally assume something that was never tried; the consensus did not mean yes to collective property, but simply yes to houses.<sup>30</sup>*

Another pattern also emerged. Some populations started to appropriate new houses in an individual and often opportunistic fashion, despite attempts by the brigades and by intercommissions to organize collective processes of allocation. This occurred nationwide, generating an informally arrived at architectural model: the house as a unit, within the neighborhood, capable of being individually appropriated and distributed. Typologically, this in turn implied that most SAAL operations resulted in variations of detached, row, and back-to-back houses. And, with the exception of large prefabricated blocks and some more elaborately designed blocks in Lisbon and Porto, what SAAL actually ended up producing

was a new universe of small-scale urban villages, mostly on the urban periphery.

This, in turn, put into question the program's social planning, for as part of its inception, and in keeping with the revolution's socialist ambitions, SAAL implied the organization of grassroots associations based on the neighborhood unit and collective appropriation.<sup>31</sup> As originally envisioned, SAAL assumed the need for such social infrastructure as a given; indeed, only through such a public entity could a population request the program's services. Following this model, SAAL was supposed to produce a new social subject together with new houses: the politically active neighborhood association.<sup>32</sup> And underlying this was the assumption that every neighborhood possessed core structures or organizational capabilities that would guarantee their viability.<sup>33</sup> Salta and Mena, however, emphasized that this was not the case. Instead, neighborhood associations were often assembled with weak popular bases, solely as way to request state-sponsored houses, and thus were largely not concerned with any larger socialist objective. Furthermore, they were easily appropriated by existing cultures of power and "patriarchy," resistant to and even repressive of progressive experiments, directly at odds with the revolution's objectives. And at times these were even used to delegitimize other, more structured, popular organizations.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, a whole range of legal issues further complicated the institutionalization of insurgent populations into this citizen-body of the association.<sup>35</sup> For many brigades, this resulted both in a sapping of energy and a displacement of mission, as too much attention was given to the institutionalization of the process, instead of the process itself.<sup>36</sup> The brigades thus either focused too much on the design, the legal process, or political mobilization — negotiating these three levels of action in conflicting and complex dialogues with communities, local governments, and national priorities. All the quality and variety of architectural effort did not directly address these complex levels of negotiation. And some, such as Salta and Mena, viewed such efforts as a hindrance to the progressive impulses of the insurgent citizenships enabled by the revolution. Thus SAAL ran the risk of serving to "dampen" the popular uprising through a "cushion policy," intent on demobilization, by becoming "... the 'Santa Claus' that would answer the housing problem."<sup>37</sup> This critique was not undeserved, because the program's paradoxical foundation emphasized a form of liberal, social-democratic normalization, in which self-built houses were more a tactic for grounding social impetus than for conducting the population into a collective socialist future.

As moderates pushed the state forward toward a more pluralist, market-driven, democracy, SAAL gradually did become just this "Santa Claus." By 1976, the program's collectivist tenets were transformed into an apparatus to secure expropriations, building permits, and budgets for the house designs, mostly developed by professional architects.<sup>38</sup> It was at this time that the larger revolutionary process was also

coming to a halt. By then, 169 operations were under way, involving 41,665 families; and 2,259 houses were under construction, while a total of 5,741 were planned. But this was also happening just as the Portuguese empire was dissolving, former colonies were claiming their independence, and colonial Portuguese were clamoring for a place in the new democratic nation.

#### PREFABRICATED HOUSES AND POSTCOLONIAL INTEGRATION

The return of Portugal's overseas colonial citizens had started before the Revolution of 1974. But by early 1975, with the formalization of Angolan independence, the situation changed drastically.<sup>39</sup> There followed a mass exodus of Portugal's imperial citizens, the majority of whom were white, to the metropolis. Indeed, by later that year, half a million colonial citizens had returned.<sup>40</sup> All of a sudden, the country, and especially Lisbon, was overwhelmed with a whole new population.<sup>41</sup> In response, in March, the revolutionary government created IARN (Instituto de Apoio ao Retorno de Nacionais — Institute for the Support of the Repatriation of Nationals) to deal with the situation.<sup>42</sup>

The question of where to house such mass of people was a main issue from the start. The influx had overwhelmed the country's housing stock, forcing people to seek housing in hotels, lodges, "military barracks, monasteries, state and private holiday colonies, boarding-schools, . . . campers and even docked boats."<sup>43</sup> But by early 1976 this situation was becoming untenable, and pressures were mounting within various social sectors — but specifically among returnees, who were becoming more politically organized and were demanding a solution to the housing situation.<sup>44</sup> Thus on March 3, as the SAAL brigades were publicly complaining of delays and blockages in their operations, a new public agency, CAR (the Refugee Housing Commission), was created as an interministerial agency to regulate the housing situation of returnees. Besides more effectively managing temporary housing in campers and "decadent hotels" (three- to five-star hotels were removed from the program), CAR aimed to build a large number of new houses. And, given the urgency of the problem, prefabrication emerged as a logical solution.

Since at least 1972, the Fundo had already been considering prefabrication as a key model of a liberal political economy — with the dual purpose of boosting the construction industry and supporting access to homeownership. In a report of 1972 by its bureau of studies, prefabrication was evaluated as "a valid route to achieve urgent objectives," one which allowed "easier control of execution," "better quality of products," diminished costs, and most importantly, "economies of scale."<sup>45</sup> While the urgency of the returnees' housing situation thus provided the key public argument for such a program, its main driver was a reorganization of the govern-



**FIGURE 6.** Prefabricated house from Austrian company Prinz N-V Dokkum's, 1976. Based on: FFH/IHRU Archive, Lisbon.

ment housing construction effort to better align with liberal and internationally scaled markets. This not only derived from the Fundo's original strategic goals, but was part of an international reorganization of postcolonial building industries, and of democratic Portugal itself.

Especially since mid-1975, when the returnee crisis had started to gain international recognition, the government had also been flooded by "help" from European companies and states. These outside agents proposed prefabricated solutions, most of which had already been tested in postcolonial Middle Eastern and African countries, and which were supported by internationally managed credits originating from European and North American banks (FIG. 6).<sup>46</sup> Confronted with the pressure of this international "help," the Fundo's reading of the benefits of prefabrication, and the urgency of the situation, the government decided to make CAR the manager of a large-scale prefabricated housing program. With CAR's creation on March 3, 5,000 houses were initially planned. But at the time, SAAL, in its original form, was going extinct, and so CAR was later expanded to encompass a total planned production of 11,938 houses, not just for returnees, but for other "homeless" Portuguese as well.

By late 1976, CAR produced a list of 42 national construction companies that were willing to meet the program's needs using a variety of solutions. The companies were supposed to supply numbers of houses in accordance with local and regional scales of activity.<sup>47</sup> The actual housing need was identified by locally provided censuses, the largest numbers being concentrated in coastal cities such as Lisbon, Aveiro and Porto. The production of houses was then begun at the same time that municipal land was procured, and that returnees, among other Portuguese, were subject to meticulous, *vacue*-driven screening. The competitive process of selection for the program emphasized a patriarchal model and involved inquiries on personal health, morality, past

physical records, and general social behavior.<sup>48</sup> Understandably, it generated all sorts of ambiguities, marginalities, and instances of corruption — from the simple bribing of Fundo employees to the irregular appropriation of houses, from the unequal distribution of families to exclusions by gender and ethnic heritage. The program was clearly intended to replace SAAL's collectivist framework with a form of modular social identification, one that articulated the modular nature of its architectural production.<sup>49</sup> And this modulation seemed to proclaim a new universalism in housing provision at the same time that it implied a return to the Fundo's prerevolutionary regime of individual empowerment and discipline.

Interestingly, the homogeneity of this social modulation was accompanied by a rich spatial production — maybe in part because Portuguese companies were largely inexperienced in prefabrication. Instead of the cement-based models used by Austrian, Swiss, and other international companies active in Africa, they experimented with various combinations of materials.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the underlying architectural designs not only reflected but increased this variety.

Yet, besides a few applications in apartment typologies already practiced by the Fundo, most CAR houses were variations of the single-family house and its traditional imagery. Some seemed almost caricatures of how a house might be universally understood. But there were also rationalist models, such as that by the company Intermobel, tectonic ones by the company Novobra, or more abstract interpretations by the company Jorge Ribeiro, to name a few (FIGS. 7–9).

The various models not only reinvented in creative fashion the image of the house, but they also worked through the typology of the detached house to produce various possibilities of aggregation and neighborhood. More importantly, while many CAR neighborhoods were subsequently demolished (as so many bad memories), those that survived were appropriated intensely by their residents, such as the neighborhood in Camarate, Lisbon (FIG. 10). This was something at which SAAL neighborhoods were not as successful.

By 1978 the program was in disarray, however. Indeed, later that year it went extinct and was absorbed by the Fundo, which continued the work under the name Ex-CAR. In 1981, an internal report unapologetically affirmed the "failure" of the program. The numbers allowed no other conclusion. Of the 11,938 houses projected (for returnees and native Portuguese alike), only 5,349 (45 percent) could then be considered finished, while 2,613 were under way — although at a rhythm with little to distinguish it from "paralysis." A total of 2,227 were still to be started, and the remaining were being held up by various sorts of legal, administrative and economic disputes.<sup>51</sup>

Prefabrication — what the Fundo imagined in 1972 to be the route to "easier control of execution, . . . [and] costs" and "economies of scale" — ultimately provoked the bankruptcy of many construction companies and the explosion of state debt. And in 1982, for the second time since the revolution, the IMF stepped in with its familiar austerity measures.<sup>52</sup>

FIGURE 7. Prefabricated steel house from the company Intermobel. Based on: FFH/IHRU Archive, Lisbon.

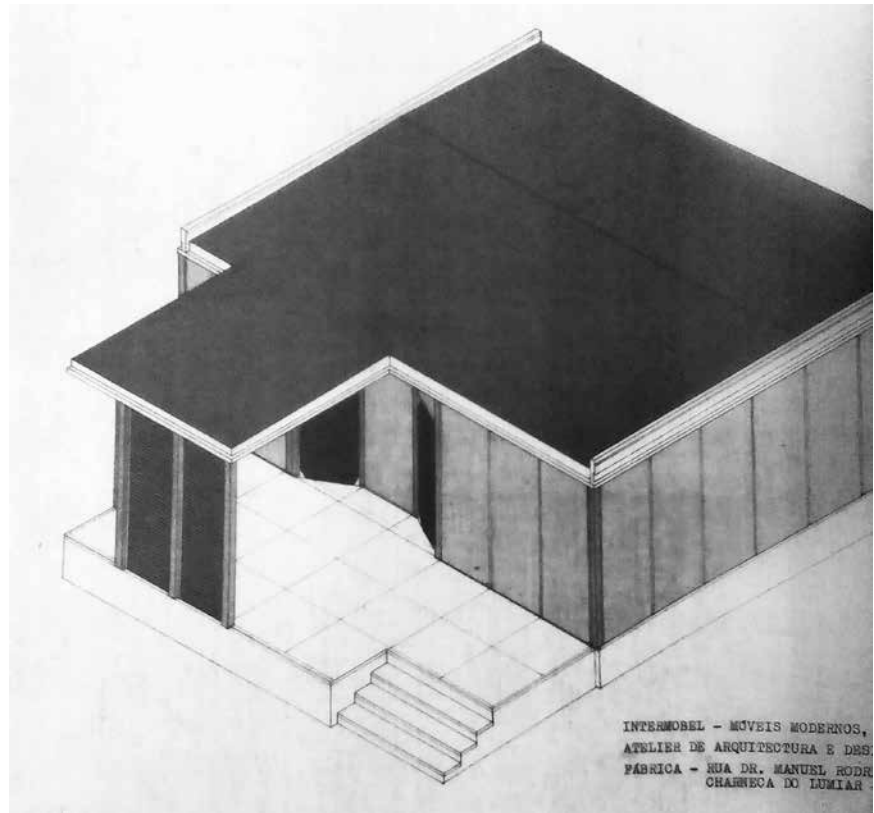


FIGURE 8. Prefabricated cement house from the company Novobra. Based on: FFH/IHRU Archive, Lisbon.

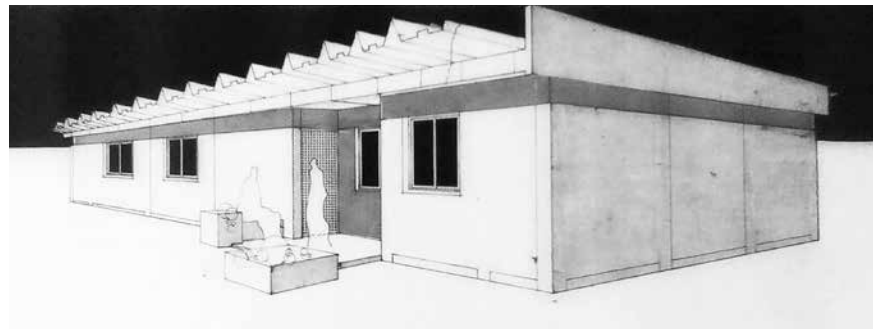
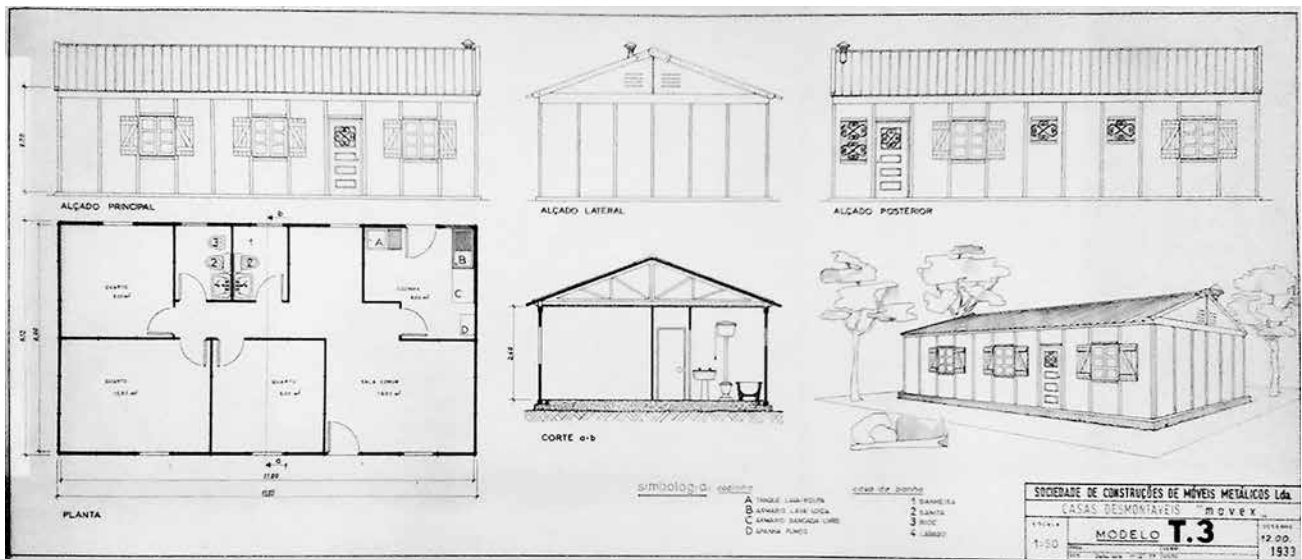


FIGURE 9 (BELOW). Prefabricated wood house from the company Movex. Based on: FFH/IHRU Archive, Lisbon.







**FIGURE 10.** Prefabricated CAR house, cement model, as it appears today in Camarate, Lisbon. Based on: Joana Gouveia Alves, July 2017.

The Fundo was soon extinct, and its experience in social engineering through housing was subsequently replaced by a policy of private procurement of housing via subsidized credit. Country and house returned to its route to a “world of homeowners,” now less obviously an ideological technique and more of an actual mass of independent and salubrious houses creating Portuguese urban landscapes.<sup>53</sup>

#### ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY AND POSTCOLONIAL MEMORY

It is difficult to evaluate if SAAL and CAR actually helped the integration of the urban periphery and colonial returnees in democratic Portugal, or if the impact of their processes was that central to the emerging democratic state and society. As this article has tried to show, both programs fell short of their stated objectives — in terms of house numbers, but also regarding the organizational footprints they presupposed. On the other hand, both were ambitious plans for citizen integration and emancipation through housing, cut short by economic, legal and political changes of circumstance.

From the perspective of housing as social planning, both tried to instill forms of democratic citizenship. SAAL attempted to build the social agency of the neighborhood association and its collectivist process, to the detriment of the bourgeois individual and the primacy of private property. CAR attempted to build upon a universal logic of provision, one that was not openly political or identity based, but which was instead premised on adaptability and individual autonomy. These plans both articulated and fell victim to the political infighting for power during the revolutionary period. Yet they also opened planning and architectural creation in Portugal to new fields of experimentation. And, in this

sense, each reflected important forces by which Portuguese democracy was rebuilt, just as each tested different tactics for the urban inclusion of insurgent populations.

SAAL, which pushed for a grassroots socialism (even if underlined by a social-democratic strategy of popular pacification) tried to produce an urban landscape of sweat equity, as Hall might call its distillation of the participatory planning experiences of the 1960s.<sup>54</sup> CAR promoted a liberal social horizon premised in individual property and merit, with a view toward a refurbished Portuguese market economy. Their histories today allow an evaluation of the limitations of these housing tactics and their political visions. But they also provide a glimpse into the emergent planning and design possibilities of a democratic explosion, as was Portugal between 1974 and 1976.

Born of the collapse of a dictatorial empire, these two programs represented the avant-garde of Portugal’s spatial production at the time, shaping a new democratic polity by giving an architecture to insurgent citizens. In this respect, their perceived relative legacy and the way they are publicly remembered reveals much about the construction of contemporary Portuguese identity. SAAL is typically celebrated as a reflection of the progressiveness of Portuguese democracy and, more often, as a way to articulate a Portuguese architecture culture seeking to tie design quality to citizenship and democracy.<sup>55</sup> The integration of colonial returnees in 1976 is likewise celebrated as a success story — especially recently by politicians to laud Portugal’s credentials in accommodating refugees.<sup>56</sup> Yet CAR is never mentioned; it is literally buried in national memory, while SAAL is hailed for its architectural and political ideals.<sup>57</sup> This situation is deeply entwined with the decolonization process and how it has come to be lived in democratic Portugal. This continues to be a conflict-ridden and tense terrain, in which memory is mainly used as a

weapon to rewrite forms of ambiguous national belonging. There is thus an “enigmatic deficit of memory regarding the colonial experience and the rupture decolonization brought to it.”<sup>75</sup> In this contest, SAAL is a powerful token of the leftist, progressive credentials of Portuguese democracy, while CAR is perhaps a bad reminder that Portugal was until very recently one of Europe’s oldest empires.

SAAL also resonates better with a certain idea of architectural tradition, in the same way as it does with an official idea of national democratic tradition. After all, its cause was noble — to defend the designs of a utopian vision of radical democracy and participation, using the architect’s pen. This purpose seems heroic when compared against the supposedly bland technocratic-industrial horizon of a CAR. It is not difficult to pick a side in this battle, yet this choice hides an

irony: that a CAR neighborhood in Camarate, Lisbon, better served the flexibility and transformation of life in democratic Portugal than, for instance, Álvaro Siza’s Bouça neighborhood in Porto, widely celebrated as a success for SAAL. Maybe because of its large-scale industrial scope, broad and loose strategy, CAR was more friendly to democracy than SAAL, allowing a wider field for the practice of insurgent citizens. Yet, to get to know the country’s main prefabrication program, as well as the unstable history of its recent postcolonial populations, requires pushing through considerable amounts of architectural pride, political consensus, and postcolonial re-writes of history. An attentive cultural biography of the house, and care for its process as a social tactic, reveals a much larger and more troubled field of aspirations and political horizons than those afforded by the architecturally beautiful.

## REFERENCE NOTES

The paper draws on source material gathered through a research project (2017–2018) on the architectural and urban planning activities of the Portuguese state throughout the twentieth century funded by the Portuguese State Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation. The information shared here is specifically derived from the work of the research group coordinated by Professor José António Bandeirinha and Tiago Castela, Ph.D., and composed of Joana Gouveia Alves, Ph.D., and myself.

1. J. Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, U.K.: Princeton University Press, 2008).
2. *Ibid.*, pp.3–33. Particularly important with regard to the Portuguese case is Holston’s juxtaposition of formal citizenship, or the legal “principles of incorporation into the nation-state,” with the actual distribution of rights, privileges, and social meanings. The historical discrepancy between the two, according to Holston (*Ibid.* p.7), “generated a national citizenship that was from the beginning universally inclusive in membership and massively egalitarian in distribution.” Holston derived this pertinent idea from a study of Brazil’s modern citizenship, but it serves aptly to shed light on the history of Portuguese modern citizenship, as shown by Tiago Castela in “A Liberal Space: A History of the Illegalized Working-Class Extensions of Lisbon,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, 2011.
3. I refer here to the popular insurgency of the urban poor and disenfranchised, as well as to the illegally housed but not necessarily poor. To group all the various names that may be applied to the socially peripheral in Portuguese urban society at the time I use the concept of urban periphery as

- espoused by Teresa Caldeira in “Peripheral Urbanization: Autoconstruction, Transversal Logics, and Politics of the Global South,” *Environment and Planning D Society and Space*, Vol.35 No.1 (July 2016).
4. Social product in the sense espoused by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, D. Nicholson-Smith, trans. (Malden, MA, and Oxford and Carlton, U.K.: Blackwell, 1991).
5. A. Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p.5.
6. G. Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873–1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and P. Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design since 1880* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).
7. For a detailed analysis of the Portuguese case, see Castela, “A Liberal Space.”
8. I am applying cultural biography in the sense espoused by Igor Kopytoff. As he has written, “In doing the biography of a thing, one would ask questions similar to those one asks about people: . . . Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized ‘ages’ or periods in the thing’s ‘life,’ and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing’s use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?” See I. Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process,” in A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.67.

9. Constitution of 1933, article 13, 1ffl.
10. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
11. E. Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, p.2.
12. Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*.
13. On the production of the house as a national cause, see Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*. On invented tradition as a form of government, see Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*; and Nezar AlSayyad, *Forms of Dominance: On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Avebury, U.K.: Aldershot, 1992). Also see G. Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
14. I am using here Michel Foucault’s notion that power is the more effective when not felt as power, but on the contrary, as a set of truth propositions about a social and political landscape. M. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, G. Burchell and M. Senellart, trans. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
15. Castela, “A Liberal Space.”
16. C. Downs, *Revolution at the Grassroots: Community Organizations in the Portuguese Revolution* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989). As Downs shows, until late 1975, the MFA and popular mobilizations shared many common causes. Thus, military revolutionaries and poor working populations were more often allies than enemies in local and national fights for better rights and political change.
17. For a comprehensive description of the urban and political impact of squatting, see J.A. Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal E a Arquitectura No 25 de Abril de 1974* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2011).

18. Generated from various factors, the main one being the 1973 oil embargo, which hit Portugal specially hard given its close alliance with North America.

19. Both architects invested a great deal of their careers to the housing question in Portugal. Portas had been a leading voice in housing issues since the late 1950s through professional magazines and state apparatuses — namely, the Fundo, of which he was a key promoter. Pereira, on the other hand, had dealt with public housing since the postwar era, working first under the dictatorship and then against it — namely, by using housing, or the lack thereof, as an example of the regime's hypocrisy. Along with many others, he constituted the regime's progressive architects, who were brought together in the Fundo during the Caetano regime's late compromise with welfare. The revolution, as with the urban squatters, opened the field for the appropriation of the state by these progressive professionals. For a biography on Portas's urban studies career, see C.M. Freire Campos, "Nuno Portas Diálogos Entre Teoria E Prática (1957–1974)," Department of Architecture of the University of Coimbra, 2011; A. Tostões and C. Távora Vilar, eds., *Arquitetura E Cidadania: Atelier Nuno Teotónio Pereira* (Lisbon: Quimera, 2004); and Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal E a Arquitetura No 25 de Abril de 1974*.

20. Manuel Castells and Martin Echenique were also consulted by Portas. For a detailed description of Portas's discussion with international cases and authors, see Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal E a Arquitetura No 25 de Abril de 1974*.

21. Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.

22. See Peter Hall's discussion of Oscar Lewis's "culture of poverty," together with John Turner's lessons from Peru, in Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, pp.302–8. For a discussion of the reproduction of a myth of homelessness by Portuguese modern architects, see Castela, "A Liberal Space."

23. Caldeira, "Peripheral Urbanization." For a detailed analysis of Portuguese peripheral urban history, see Castela, "A Liberal Space."

24. Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*.

25. Nuno Portas and the other architects of SAAL, despite not recognizing a culture of urban informality, were heavily influenced by Giancarlo de Carlo's anarchist take on self-building. See Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal E a Arquitetura No 25 de Abril de 1974*.

26. As a term, "estrangement" or "distancing" was coined by Bertolt Brecht to refer to the theatrical technique of trying to remove the emotional identification between the public and the characters in a drama, as a way of making the public reflect actively about their possible solidarity with the characters. Siza's use of this concept regards more directly its experimentation by German modernist architects, such as

Hannes Meyer's *co-op zimmer* from 1926. On Siza's use of "estrangement" in SAAL, see A. Zaera, "Salvando Las Turbulencias: Entrevista Con Álvaro Siza," *El Croquis* (1994).

27. Especially in Lisbon, where the number and mass of communities required large responses.

28. "A autoconstrução, que significa ser os próprios moradores a construírem as novas casas, não passa de uma forma de dupla exploração." Conselho Nacional do SAAL, *Livro Branco Do SAAL 1974–1976* (Vila Nova de Gaia: FAUP publicações, 1976). On similar critiques developed regarding earlier examples of participatory housing programs in South America, see Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, pp.307–8.

29. "Pressupõe-se que os moradores reivindicavam o direito à auto-construção? — Como projecto social auto-construção resultou no anular do colectivo, criando um enfoque individualista que conduz directamente à propriedade privada. Neste ponto a justificação desta política d) é ambígua na medida em que apropriação de locais valiosos pelas camadas populares nele radicadas não vincula a uma forma de apropriação colectiva." A. Salta and J. Mena, *Metodologia Do Projecto Social E Territorial* (Lisboa: Fundo de Fomento da Habitação, 1976) p.22.

30. "O que na altura considerámos um oportunismo da parte de alguns, por exemplo afirmar que nunca tinham percebido nem concordado que a propriedade das casas fosse da Associação, era de facto resultado de um processo de comunicação incorrecto: Aparentemente ao nível da expressão verbal existia um consenso mas de facto não era possível o assumir racional de algo nunca experimentado; o consenso não queria dizer sim à propriedade colectiva das casas, mas tão somente sim às casas." Salta and Mena, *Metodologia Do Projecto Social E Territorial*, p.23.

31. Downs, *Revolution at the Grassroots*.

32. It is regarding this social planning that most critiques were directed, both from within and outside the program, right and left. From within, the rejection of self-construction and the simplification of participatory design was seen to hide a confrontation between the program's projection of the neighborhood association and the actual communities. See Downs, *Revolution at the Grassroots*; and Bandeirinha, *O Processo Saal E a Arquitetura No 25 de Abril de 1974*.

33. The program's political and organizational success depended on the preexistence of organized and productive emancipatory grassroots movements, among peripheral urban populations. In other words, it needed there to already exist popular infrastructures for the socialist revolution that would not only assure powerful processes of design and construction but would also allow for the

creation of building and construction cooperatives, a reorganization of local urban policy through forms of direct democracy and a proposal for national reorganization of housing policy. All of these objectives were at the core of the program and its entanglement with the socialist revolution, but they were also fatally tied to the organizational capabilities of local populations, brigades, and regional directorates.

34. Salta and Mena gave the following example: "When the initiative arises, promoted by parties on the left, of forming a city-wide intercommission, that then moves to occupy houses, with the support of 'our' two associations, there is by the other parties the contestation of the legality of the elected commissions and only the recognition of these two" ["Quando surge a iniciativa, estimulada por partidos de esquerda, de formação de uma intercomissões da cidade, que se lançam na ocupação de fogos e sua atribuição com o apoio das 'nossas' duas associações, por parte de outros partidos surge a contestação da legalidade das comissões eleitas e apenas o reconhecimento destas duas (de facto consideradas como enquadradas)"]. Salta and Mena, *Metodologia Do Projecto Social E Territorial*, p.24.

35. Salta and Mena highlight "the existence of legal bases for expropriation law, association law and financing law," in *Metodologia Do Projecto Social E Territorial*, p.2.

36. Conselho Nacional do SAAL, *Livro Branco Do SAAL 1974–1976*; and Salta and Mena, *Metodologia Do Projecto Social E Territorial*. Writing thirty years later, Bandeirinha produces a rich analysis of the broader political and economic movements structuring this situation in *O Processo Saal E a Arquitetura No 25 de Abril de 1974*.

37. "O SAAL surge assim como canalização de movimentos reivindicativos amortecendo-os em política de almofada. Face aos moradores ele surge como o "pai natal" que deve dar resposta ao problema habitacional; a solução não é o resultado duma luta, uma conquista, mas duma interacção com a Equipa SAAL/aparelho de Estado, sendo sempre este segundo elemento que estabelece os limites da experiência (por exemplo desmobilizando os movimentos de protesto — ocupação de casas)." Salta and Mena, *Metodologia Do Projecto Social E Territorial*, p.3.

38. The SAAL program was formally terminated, in terms of its 1974 administrative formulation, on October 27, 1976, after which its various processes were commuted to local government. Thus, although most SAAL operations were only completed after 1976, municipalities would thereafter dictate its design qualities. Furthermore, although it received upwards of 40,000 requests for units from Portuguese families, SAAL was in the end responsible for building only 10,696 units

39. The signing of the Alvor Agreement on January 15, 1975, formalized Angola's independence from Portugal in November 11 of that year.
40. Numbers that reflect the actual mass of population in circulation are difficult if not impossible to come by given that the government poorly documented those who returned. See M.B. Rocha-Trindade, "The Repatriation of Portuguese from Africa," in R. Cohen, ed., *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.337–441.
41. Initially there was an expectation, by the government, that many would not remain in the country — continuing instead to Brazil, Venezuela, the United States and, to a lesser degree, continental Europe, as these were all key destinations for Portuguese migration during the twentieth century. For data on Portuguese migration, see D. Higgs, *Portuguese Migration in Global Perspective* (Toronto: The Multicultural History of Society of Ontario, 1990).
42. IARN was supposed to be a more dynamic and effective apparatus for dealing with returned citizens than those created following the previous loss of Goa to India in 1961. Literature on the Portuguese state's dealing with decolonization, specifically regarding IARN and CAR, is scarce. One key, although brief, exception is Rocha-Trindade, "The Repatriation of Portuguese from Africa."
43. "A comissão propõe o aproveitamento dos recursos imediatamente disponíveis, tais como a aquisição de fogos no mercado da habitação, a utilização temporária de edifícios existentes (tais como instalações militares, conventos, seminários e casa de recolhimento, instalações hoteleiras decadentes, colónias de férias estatais e privadas, internatos de colégios (em Agosto e Setembro, etc.). Prevê-se, ainda, se necessário, a aquisição de "roulotes" tipo caravana e até a ocupação temporária de navios imobilizados." "Construção de Cinco Mil Fogos Para Instalação de Retornados," *Diário de Notícias*, March 22, 1976, sec. Política Nacional.
44. The hotel sector had an important influence on the situation. The state-subsidized mass occupation of hotels by returnees imperiled the possibility of a strong tourist economy. By January 18, as a hotel crisis was publicly announced, hotel owners formed a national secretariat to solve the "problem of the returnees." See "Hoteleiros Formam Secretariado Nacional a Fim de Procurar Solução Para a Crise: Debatido O Problema Dos Retornados," *Diário de Notícias*, January 18, 1976. The emergent presence of the economic priority and the political voice of the returnees was the cause and reflection of a political reorganization with right-leaning, market-driven visions in November 25, 1975.
45. M.I. Ramalho de Almeida, *Aspectos Da Indústria Da Construção Em Portugal* (Lisboa: Fundo de Fomento da Habitação, 1972) p.21.
46. On the importance of prefabrication for the postcolonial reorganization of European building industries and architectural modernism, see, for instance, L. Stanek, "Introduction: The 'Second World's' Architecture and Planning in the 'Third World,'" *The Journal of Architecture*, Vol.17 No.3 (2012), pp.299–307; and J.-H. Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Colonial Networks, Nature and Technoscience* (London: Routledge, 2016).
47. Most companies signed contracts with CAR during 1976. Internal financial report by the Fundo from 1978.
48. For instance, forms were all directed at male subjects, there was no line of questioning directed at female ones, which caused the peculiar situation of having single mothers answer for the "man of the family."
49. On the production of a "modular society" put in motion by prefabrication, see C. Wall, *An Architecture of Parts: Architects, Building Workers and Industrialization in Britain, 1940–1970* (London: Routledge, 2013).
50. While there were many cement models, given cement's leading role in the national construction industry, there were an equally large number of wood models and, to a lesser degree, of metal ones. "Ex-programa CAR: tipificação das situações dos empreendimentos." Internal dispatch No.52/81 from the Ministry of Housing, Public Works and Transports from 1981.
51. *Ibid.*
52. The IMF first intervened in 1977.
53. There is a complex continuity between the dictatorship's emphasis on independent and salubrious houses and its central use in the democratic rewrite of the country. For a detailed analysis of the importance of the detached single-family house for postwar political landscapes, see N. Kwak, *A World of Homeowners: American Power and the Politics of Housing Aid* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
54. Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*.
55. For architects who had until then worked under an imperial dictatorship, SAAL was a redeeming moment: architecture was finally in the service of a free people. As a consequence, SAAL's representation by architects and architecture historians has tended to focus on the importance of architectural design in producing political intention, while reproducing an old argument of housing shortage and the need for a new architecture.
56. See, for instance, the former prime minister of the Socialist party Mário Soares, "Descolonização: Processo 'foi Exemplar' face A 'condições,'" *Diário de Notícias*, April 16, 2010. However, for many returnees the reading has been the opposite, portraying decolonization and metropolitan reception as "abandonment," "incompetence," and a "betrayal." For a historical analysis of the political, economic and social reception of returnees, see F. Rosas, M. Machaqueiro, and P.A. Oliveira, eds., *O Adeus Ao Império: 40 Anos de Descolonização Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Nova Vega, 2015).
57. In the great majority of documentary films on returnees and the decolonization process there is no mention of the program. As the one exception in which returnees' housing situation is, albeit very briefly, reported on, see L. Ferreira, *Retornados ou Os Restos do Império* (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal, 2002).
58. M. Machaqueiro, "Memórias Em Conflito Ou O Mal-Estar Da Descolonização," in Rosas, Machaqueiro, and Oliveira, eds., *O Adeus Ao Império*, pp.227–46. Translation by the author.