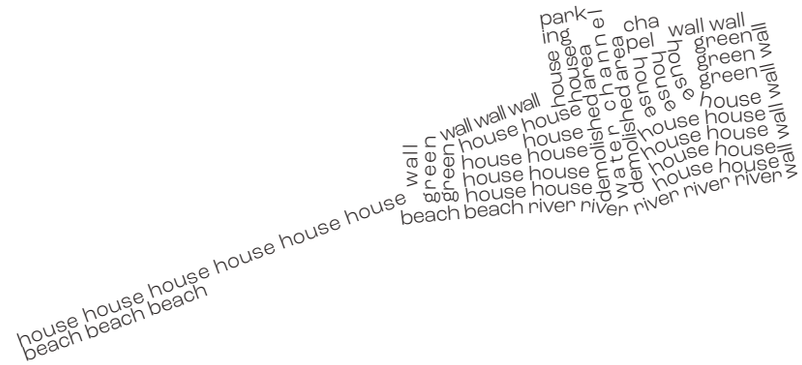


Living the fragment

Care, enclosure, and otherwise futures in Segundo Torrão

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
Department of Architecture and Design
Masters of Architecture for Heritage
A.A. 2025 / 2026


house house house

[...]
privatize-se tudo, privatize-se o mar e o céu,
privatize-se a água e o ar, privatize-se a justiça e a lei,
privatize-se a nuvem que passa,
privatize-se o sonho, sobretudo se for diurno
e de olhos abertos.

E, finalmente, para florão e remate de tanto privatizar,
privatizem-se os Estados, entregue-se por uma vez
a exploração deles a empresas privadas,
mediante concurso internacional.
Aí se encontra a salvação do mundo...
[...]

– José Saramago, in "Cadernos de Lanzarote – Diário III". Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1996.

Atlantic Ocean

Portugal

Portugal

Spain

38°66’73”N 9°24’55”W



Abstract

eng

Living the fragment. Care, enclosure, and otherwise futures in Segundo Torrão

This thesis investigates Segundo Torrão, a self-produced settlement on the waterfront across the Tagus estuary from Lisbon, in order to unpack the entangled dynamics of financial speculation, coastal gentrification, militarisation, and the right to housing that increasingly define contemporary urban scenarios. Rather than treating informal settlement as a deficiency to be corrected, the research adopts a situated, fieldwork-based methodology, engaging directly with residents' testimonies, the material history of the settlement's demolitions, and the everyday practices through which the community has built and maintained its own environment, reading it on its own terms rather than as a failed version of formality.

Two lines of analysis structure the thesis's core argument. The first situates the settlement within Lisbon wider territory, showing how it occupies a residual space squeezed between infrastructures of defence, industry, and ecological protection, pressured further by coastal requalification: a landscape of mutually isolated enclosures. The second builds an atlas of fragments, human, material, natural, and collective. Rather than weaving them into a single narrative, one that would risk flattening the settlement into a fully legible, totalising object, the atlas holds them apart as fragments.

The design proposal reflects on the spaces of care and enclosure through two speculative futures, each testing what becomes of the settlement depending on whether its fences are dismantled or allowed to multiply. Water, the settlement's oldest condition and its most persistent threat, is taken up as the project's guiding agent of transformation, its capacity to render boundaries labile turned into a means of imagining how enclosure might be undone. Framed as an act of futuring rather than problem-solving, neither future is offered as inevitable; unfolding at the scale of the house as much as that of the territory, together they ask which forces we allow to prevail and which we choose to resist, arguing for an architecture that neither promises resolution nor abandons the imagination of alternatives.

ita

Vivere il frammento. Cura, recinzione e futuri altri a Segundo Torrão

Questa tesi analizza Segundo Torrão, un insediamento autoprodotto affacciato sull'estuario del Tago, di fronte a Lisbona, come chiave di lettura per le dinamiche intrecciate di speculazione finanziaria, gentrificazione costiera, militarizzazione e diritto alla casa che definiscono sempre più gli scenari urbani contemporanei. Piuttosto che considerare l'insediamento informale come una carenza da correggere, la ricerca adotta una metodologia situata, fondata sul lavoro sul campo: si confronta direttamente con le testimonianze dei residenti, con la storia materiale delle demolizioni e con le pratiche quotidiane attraverso cui la comunità ha costruito e mantenuto il proprio ambiente. Ne risulta una lettura dell'insediamento nei suoi propri termini, non come una versione fallita della formalità.

Due linee di analisi costituiscono il nucleo della tesi. La prima inquadra l'insediamento nel suo territorio più ampio, mostrando come occupi uno spazio residuale, schiacciato tra infrastrutture di difesa, industria e protezione ecologica, e ulteriormente sottoposto alla pressione della riqualificazione costiera: un paesaggio di recinzioni reciprocamente isolate. La seconda costruisce un atlante di frammenti, umani, materiali, naturali e collettivi. Anziché tesserli in un'unica narrazione, che rischierebbe di appiattire l'insediamento in un oggetto pienamente leggibile e totalizzante, l'atlante li tiene distinti, come frammenti.

La proposta progettuale riflette sugli spazi della cura e della recinzione attraverso due futuri speculativi, ciascuno dei quali esplora cosa accade all'insediamento a seconda che le sue recinzioni vengano smantellate o lasciate moltiplicarsi. L'acqua, condizione originaria dell'insediamento e insieme sua minaccia più costante, diventa il principio guida della trasformazione progettuale: la sua capacità di rendere instabili i confini è qui assunta come strumento per immaginare come le recinzioni possano essere rimosse. Concepito come esercizio di immaginazione del futuro piuttosto che come risposta a un problema, nessuno dei due futuri è presentato come inevitabile: tanto alla scala della casa quanto a quella del territorio, entrambi interrogano quali forze siamo disposti a lasciar prevalere e quali scegliamo di contrastare.

Acknowledgement

To Camillo Boano, for giving me the opportunity to explore this subject and for allowing me the freedom to find my own direction within it. At least this time, I have managed to be brief.

À Rosa, ao Daniel, à Francesca, ao João, ao Sebastião, ao Mario, ao Pedro, à Dio e à Claudia, pelo vosso tempo, pela vossa amizade e pelas histórias que escolheram partilhar comigo. Obrigada por tudo o que fazem.

To my Lisbon friends, now scattered across the world, for making my time in Portugal magical and more meaningful than I could ever have imagined. You made Lisbon the city that always fills me with longing whenever I think of it. Though we are far apart, I still feel your hearts close, and I hope that one day we may live in the same city again.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

1.2 An otherwise city is an urgent utopia

1.3 Structure

Chapter 2.0

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1. Introduction

In October 2022, machines entered Segundo Torrão. The municipality of Almada had declared an emergency: a drainage channel running beneath the densest part of the settlement had been deemed at risk of collapse. Dozens of houses were demolished. Families were relocated, some to hostels in central Lisbon, far from their children's schools, their workplaces and most importantly from their community across the river. Others resisted, and were denied rehousing for months. When the machines left, what remained was not emptiness. On the walls of the houses still standing, at the edges of the newly cleared ground, exposed brick began to appear: raw courses laid above the existing rooflines, new floors rising without plaster or paint, open to the sky. On land they do not legally own, in a place the city has consistently tried to render invisible, people were building upward.

This thesis begins from that image. Not as a symbol of resilience, a word that too easily aestheticizes what is, above all, a material condition of exclusion, but as a question. What kind of logic produces that act? What does it mean to invest in a structure without legal status, on ground designated as ecologically protected, in a neighbourhood that has already seen demolition? And what kind of architectural thinking would be capable of recognising, and responding to, that logic?

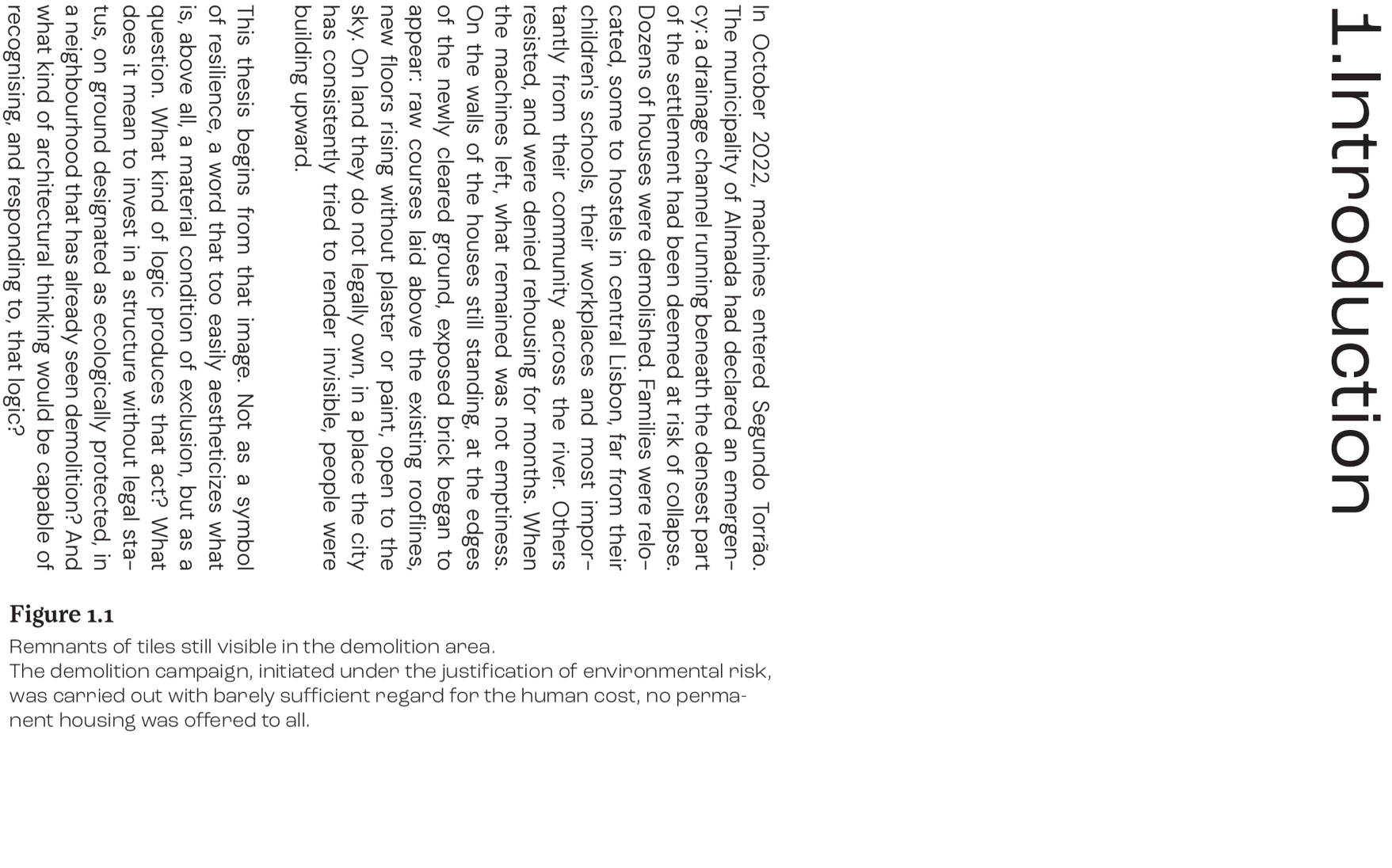


Figure 1.1

Remnants of tiles still visible in the demolition area.
The demolition campaign, initiated under the justification of environmental risk, was carried out with barely sufficient regard for the human cost, no permanent housing was offered to all.



1.1 – Context

FROM PRODUCTIVE TO ATTRACTIVE

The idea that we are living in the most intensely urban era in human history has long shaped both scholarly debate and public discourse. Urban populations are growing, and even territories traditionally defined as non-urban are undergoing rapid processes of urbanisation.

At the same time, cities and regions find themselves in constant competition to attract capital flows and people. Although moments of crisis, whether critical or catastrophic, occasionally challenge the narrative that frames this trajectory as inevitable, those responsible for governing cities continue to pursue strategies centred on attractiveness and growth, as if no alternative course of action were conceivable.[1]

Looking at Lisbon, this vision appears difficult to reconcile with the principles of fair redistribution and democratic governance. It is also, this thesis argues, neither as stable nor as inevitable as it presents itself: faced with organised resistance, it can be challenged and, at least in part, reversed.

In a world increasingly shaped by urban tourism, unregulated urban tuorism and economic liberalism in the global economy, including in the real estate market, Lisbon continues to regenerate itself. *Touristification* and *gentrification* policies have placed residents and tourists in growing competition for the same spaces, driving up costs and accelerating displacement. Housing has been progressively detached from its social function and absorbed into global financial circuits, so that displacement can be read less as an accident than as a structural outcome. Urban development strategies, increasingly detached from material reality, tie urban transformation to a model of infinite growth that risks producing structural inequalities rather than resolving them. This process of regeneration and sanitisation, however, carries a cost (Lucia Tozzi, 2023).

As Tozzi argues, Lisbon appears to have shifted away from a city that organises public services for its residents, where goods and services are produced, toward one where every square metre is monetised: from productive to attractive. The original inhabitants of cities are progressively replaced by a more fluid population, including *digital nomads*, *expats*, and *students*, groups that tend to lack strong emotional ties to the urban environment and its ongoing transformations, and that may therefore be less inclined to raise demands. Meanwhile, those with fewer economic resources are pushed out of central areas, despite being essential to the everyday functioning of the city, and are left to bear the burden of lengthy commutes. This dynamic is often portrayed as an inclusive and sustainable form of urban development, which points to a broader tension at the heart of urban policies: measures presented as instuments of renewal can end up eroding the very social fabric they claim to protect (Lucia Tozzi, 2023).

Scholars such as Saskia Sassen and David Harvey[2] have extensively documented how Western states, following decades of post-war policies, responded to successive crises by concentrating resources on a limited number of cities considered capable of competing at an international scale. Urban competition itself is not a new phenomenon, but this thesis follows Tozzi in arguing that issues of equality and social justice can no longer be treated as secondary concerns (Lucia Tozzi, 2023).

Drawing on Mark Fisher's notion of *capitalist realism*, one necessary step is to question the assumption that no alternative exists to the current state of affairs. The reversibility of present conditions can be understood not as a utopian aspiration, but as a concrete political possibility.[3] Achieving change requires building infrastructures, both urban and non-urban, that do not extract wealth for the benefit of the few, but instead distribute services and wellbeing across territories (Lucia Tozzi, 2023).

Within this framework, the most vulnerable are not simply those who have failed to adapt, but people marginalised by a system that does not reduce inequality. When economic power determines how and where people can live, resistance becomes one of the few available responses. People claim what remains available: residual or abandoned spaces, occupying them as a complement to, or substitute for, conventional housing.

SITUATING THE GAZE

This is the context from which my own experience emerges. I lived in Lisbon for ten months as part of the Erasmus programme, and that experience became the starting point for this thesis. It grew out of a need to better understand some fundamental questions around housing and cities, at a moment when social, civic, and environmental rights feel increasingly under pressure. My interest in these issues developed gradually during that period, through repeated encounters with questions of the right to housing, the right to the city, and the right to live where one chooses, through protests, and through organisations working in defence of urban and territorial rights.

→ [1] Lucia Tozzi, *L'invenzione di Milano: Culto della comunicazione e politiche urbane (Napoli: Cronopio, 2023).*

→ [2] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012).

[3] Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2009).

The issue I address does not concern me personally, at least not directly. Today, it hits hardest those who are most marginalised. Yet the fact that I too had to pay high rents during my time in Lisbon is not entirely unrelated to the phenomenon I am studying: it can be read as one of its consequences. During those ten months, I lived in apartments far from the neighbourhoods I analyse,

The issue I address does not concern me personally, at least not directly. Today, it hits hardest those who are most marginalised. Yet the fact that I too had to pay high rents during my time in Lisbon is not entirely unrelated to the phenomenon I am studying: it can be read as one of its consequences. During those ten months, I lived in apartments far from the neighbourhoods I analyse,

Figure 1.2

This poster announces a demonstration organised by the platform "Casa para Viver" (A Home to Live In), which has become one of the most visible actors in Portugal's housing movement.



expensive ones, a direct result of an unregulated and exclusionary housing market. In doing so, I likely contributed to, or at least did little to counter, a saturated market driven by speculative development and rising rents. I am aware of the privileged position from which I conduct this research, and of the distance between my own experience and the injustices I am attempting to study. Even so, I hope to contribute to a broader conversation about the urgency of developing new frameworks for understanding urban inequality, frameworks that move beyond the categories of the *informal* and the *illegal*.

Several questions remain open. Can architectural production still represent a form of social and democratic agency, or has it been reduced to a mere outcome of economic forces? Can access to housing be conceived as a right rather than a consumer good? And what would a city look like in which no one owns property, but everyone has access to rental housing? More broadly, how do policies oriented toward urban attractiveness work against the possibility of building a city that is genuinely welcoming? And how can alternative narratives of creativity and imagination reframe the negative representations historically attached to peripheral neighbourhoods?

FINDING SEGUNDO TORRÃO

The choice of Segundo Torrão as case study was not immediately self-evident. Why this specific settlement, and not others? The answer emerged gradually, through a combination of academic guidance and direct access to ongoing research. Professor Daniel Santos de Jesus, who conducts a design studio focused on these areas at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon (FAUL), where I did my Erasmus exchange, was a fundamental point of reference in orienting this choice. Equally decisive was the possibility of entering into contact with researchers already working on those territories, thanks to the direct help and support of Rosa Arma, which opened access to knowledge and networks that would otherwise have been difficult to reach.

This work ended up awakening in me a renewed sense of what architecture can be when practised outside the university, reminding me of my love for the discipline. It showed me the possibility of doing, and the desire of sharing and resisting.

The ideology underpinning this model of the city can, in this thesis's reading, be traced to a neoliberal, neocolonial, and patriarchal vision that perpetuates hierarchies between

1 Km

Atlantic Ocean

Cova do Vapor

Trafaria

Segundo Torrão

Almada

Porto Brandão - Trafaria

Rio Tejo

Terreiro do Paço - Barreiro

Cais do Sodré - Seixal

Cais do Sodré - Almada

Ponte 25 de Abril

Belém - Porto Brandão

Algés - Porto Brandão

Rio Tejo

Cais do Sodré - Montijo

Belém

Lisbon

Segundo Torrão
Beach
Productive area
Water
Railway
Forest
Green area
Agricutural area
Industrial waterfront
Ferry

N

Scale 1:35000

what is accepted and what is considered inferior. It tends to maintain a rigid division between centre and margin, and to sharpen social injustices, feeding an urban planning that recognises value primarily in profit-making, and that risks dismissing as worthless the relations that fall outside that logic.

MARGIN AND THE RIGHT TO AUTOGESTION

> "Appropriation is thus a "right" in the sense that users have a normative right to the space of the city. It is rightfully theirs. In this light, owners' claims to property rights are wrong, a claim to something that is not properly theirs. Appropriation is thus a way to rethink the concept of rightful ownership, to radically transform our notions about who rightfully owns the city. Not only does it refuse a property rights conception of ownership, it affirms a radical alternative: the city belongs to those who inhabit it" (Mark Purcell, 2014).[4]

This map situates Segundo Torrão within a territorial duality that has structured the Lisbon Metropolitan Area since at least the mid-twentieth century: the historic, touristic city on the north bank of the Tagus, and the productive, industrial *margem sul*[5] to the south. The map is deliberately presented rotated 180 degrees from conventional cartographic orientation: the *margem sul* appears at the top of the image, with Lisbon and the north bank below it, a reversal that unsettles the habitual, centre-facing view of the estuary and positions the south bank, and Segundo Torrão within it, as the vantage point from which the territory is read. This asymmetry, this thesis argues, is not incidental.

Between 1946 and 1950, while developing the urban plan for Almada, the urbanist Étienne de Gröer conceived the south bank primarily as a release valve for Lisbon's uncontrolled expansion, an organised, accessible extension meant to absorb the capital's overflow of population and industry rather than to develop as a place with its own right to the city.[6] Green, non-urbanised spaces were treated in the same plan as voids that could contain and shape the limits of Lisbon's growth, not as places of value in themselves. The *margem sul*, in this reading, was designed from the outset as an auxiliary territory, defined by, and subordinated to, the expansion of the city across the river.

This asymmetry finds a fitting name in Daniel Santos de Jesus's notion of the "Vice-City":[7] the south bank read not as a marginal or residual appendix to Lisbon, but as its structural counterpart, the shadow

→ [4] Mark Purcell, "Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2014): 149.

[5] Portuguese words and phrases appear here and there throughout this thesis, left untranslated. Some have no real equivalent in English; others would lose something of what they carry, an authenticity that belongs to the language in which they were first spoken. This choice is discussed further in Section 2.4.

[6] Étienne de Gröer, *Plano de Urbanização do Concelho de Almada* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 1950). Gröer began work on the Plano de Urbanização do Concelho de Almada in 1946 and completed it in 1950.

[7] Daniel Santos de Jesus, "Vice City – or Architecture for the People, in Trafaria" (Faculdade de Arquitetura, Universidade de Lisboa, 2018).

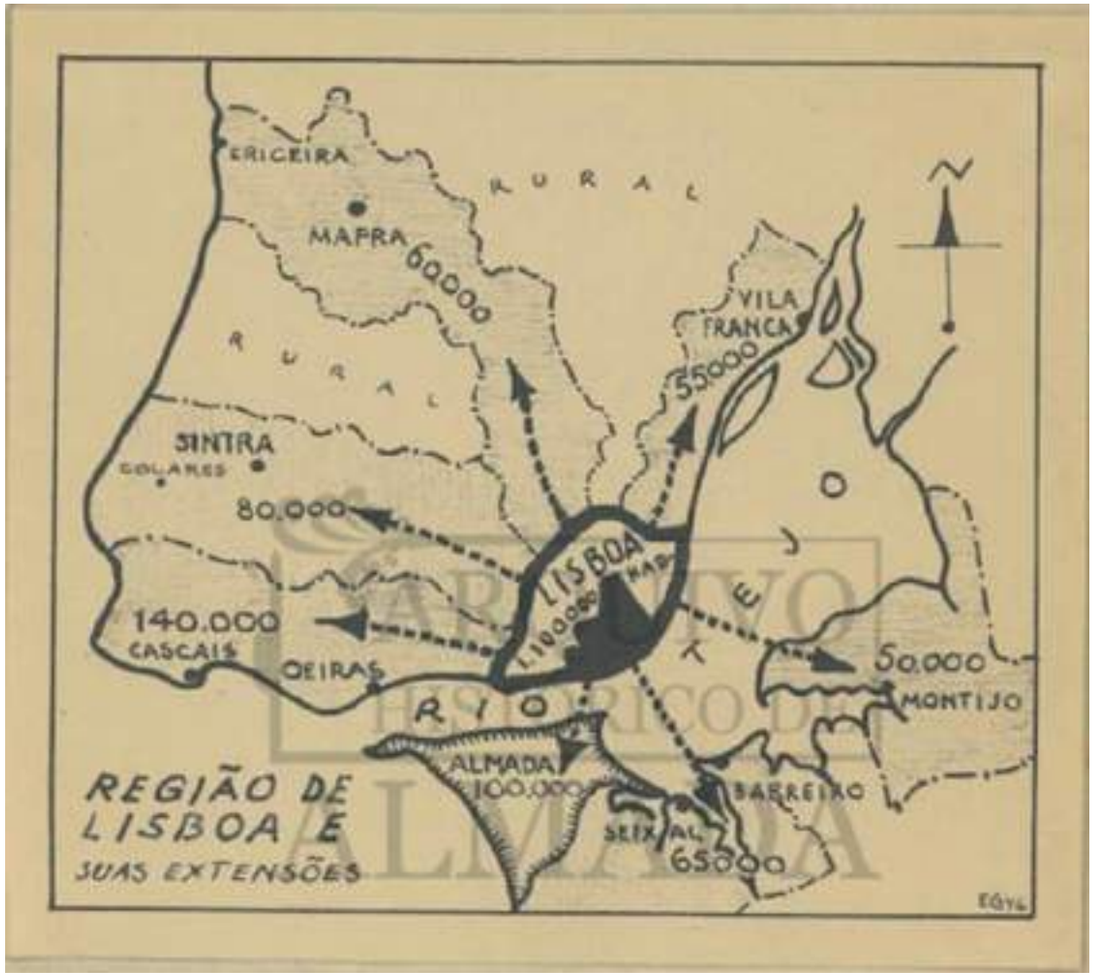


Figure 1.3
Étienne de Gröer, Plano de Urbanização do Concelho de Almada, 1950. The plan conceives Almada as a controlled, accessible extension designed to absorb Lisbon's overflow of population and industry, an early expression of the logic through which the margem sul would be defined for decades to come.



Figure 1.4

Inverted-colour view across the Tejo estuary: the Padrão dos Descobrimentos rises on Belem's northern bank, while the silos and industrial waterfront of the Margem Sul occupy the opposite shore. Behind this infrastructural landscape lies Segundo Torrão. The chromatic inversion brings into tension the monumentalised narrative of Portuguese expansion and the peripheral, postcolonial geographies it obscure.

cast by a city that externalises, onto this other shore, what its own regeneration and sanitisation cannot accommodate. Segundo Torrão, and the wider stretch of coastline examined in this thesis, sit precisely within this vice-city: a margin that appears, this thesis suggests, marginal by design rather than by accident.

Lisbon is showing signs of failure within a growing climate of crisis and socio-political inequality. The solutions being proposed often fall back into the same patterns that generated the problem in the first place, risking a reproduction of the very conditions they claim to resolve.

This thesis sets out to free architecture from its association with beauty, increasingly understood as a synonym for cleanliness and order, and to explore instead whether, and on what terms, it is possible to recognise the value of settlements such as the one examined here, 2º Torrão, located in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

This settlement, born outside the law, carries a long and consolidated history of resistance and adaptation. Over time, the need for coexistence and mutual adjustment among residents has given rise to a neighbourhood with a singular and irregular urban fabric, where streets and improvised planning reflect a continuous dialogue between people and place, shaped by the imagination of those who live there, producing an urban texture that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere.

NATURE AS DISPOSITIF

One of the most consequential expressions of this logic is the mobilisation of nature as a political instrument. In Segundo Torrão, the very ground on which the community has lived for decades is classified as Reserva Ecologica Nacional:[8] a designation that simultaneously blocks any path to legalisation and provides the legal cover for demolition. The environmental protection of the coastline, a legitimate concern in itself, has been selectively applied to a community of predominantly African-origin residents, while adjacent infrastructure, military installations, and tourist facilities occupy the same coastal system without equivalent scrutiny. The 2022 demolitions in Segundo Torrão were justified on grounds of hydraulic risk. When the technical report was eventually made public through a court case, it was found to dedicate more than a third of its pages to sea level rise projections until 2100, with no supporting study on the structural resistance of the channel itself.[9] Nature, in this case, functioned less as a reason for protection than as a pretext for displacement.

→ [8] Portugal, Decreto-Lei n.º 93/90, de 19 de março, "Estabelece a Reserva Ecológica Nacional" (*Diário da República* n.º 65/1990, série I, 19 March 1990: 1314–1321). Accessed 22 July 2026, https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/dereo-lei/93-1990-333172.

[9] João A. R. Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins: Case Study of 2.º Torrão, Almada" (PhD diss., Universidade de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências, 2024).

→ [10] Purcell, "Possible Worlds," 142.

[11] As elaborated by Purcell, "Possible Worlds," 141–54.

FROM MARGIN TO AUTOGESTION

Several perspectives have been explored to interpret these urban settlements. Categories such as margin are reread here within a broader feminist interpretive framework. This approach aims to recognise the relations that take place within them, and to acknowledge *otherwise* ways of living that stand in contrast to a purely extractivist analysis of places and human relationships.

This recognition, however, needs to be carefully distinguished from romanticisation. The residents of Segundo Torrão have not, for the most part, chosen precarity as a lifestyle. They are people who, in the absence of structural alternatives, have organised themselves to make their lives more liveable, building community and collective practices out of necessity. Dignity, this thesis argues, can be granted without obscuring the material conditions that produce it, and without replacing the demand for structural change with an aestheticisation of resilience.

The decolonial lens proves especially relevant in a territory like the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, where the colonial past remains present through the recent dismantling of the colonial empire, which resurfaces in updated and renewed forms in the contemporary city.

These expressions of living can be read as forms of resistance against a city increasingly homogenised and subjected to the dynamics of profit. They offer the possibility of challenging current trends, and can be read as an invitation to act before they disappear, are demolished, or their land is sold.

At the same time, it would be reductive to frame them solely as sites of resistance. They are, above all, places where people live, struggle, and aspire to more stable conditions, free from the constant threat of demolition and displacement, and any analysis needs to try to hold both dimensions simultaneously.

Lefebvre's "right to the city" should not be understood as a right added to others within a liberal democratic framework, where rights are seen as legal concessions granted by the state. It is rather, taking from Mark Purcell's reading of Lefebvre, "a cry that initiates a struggle to move beyond both the State and Capitalism."[10] Drawing further on Lefebvre, alongside the right to the city, and given that this right is not tied to bureaucratic state control, emerges the "right to ***autogestion***", presented as the other face of the right to the city.[11] To appropriate the city, and therefore urban space, means to manage it collectively. For Lefebvre, the capitalist city is dominated by exchange value and private property, which fragment and



Figure 1.5
Aerial view of the demolition site in 2.º Torrão, showing demolitions carried out in October 2022.



Figure 1.6
A demolished section of the stormwater drainage ditch, recorded on October 19 2022.



Figure 1.7
Rubble and demolition remains in the restricted area of 2.º Torrão.

→ [12] Laura A. Meek and Julia Alejandra Morales Fontanilla, "Otherwise," *Feminist Anthropology* 3, no. 2 (2022): 279.

[13] McTighe and Raschig (2019), as cited in Meek and Morales Fontanilla, "Otherwise," 275.

[14] Katherine McKittrick (2021), as cited in Meek and Morales Fontanilla, "Otherwise," 280.

alienate space by separating its inhabitants. City dwellers reclaim the right to take back the space that is theirs, taking it back from the logic of the commodity.

OTHERWISE AS CRITICAL LENS

This thesis sets out to critique the effects of economic liberalism, colonialism, and patriarchy on the city: forces that present themselves as neutral and self-evident in territorial planning, while in practice pursuing specific visions of the city and particular economic interests. The analysis is conducted through situated lenses that make the point of view explicit and visible. Through the frameworks of decoloniality and feminism, the term ***otherwise*** is placed at the centre as a key concept.

Otherwise should not be understood as an abstract idea, but as a transformative practice aimed at capturing the latent possibilities of any given situation, that series of possibilities "prefigured, but not formed",[12] which can open pathways toward liberatory transformation: a series of fugitive and creative actions, *fugitivity*, that escape dominant categories and construct alternative worlds.

These frameworks are adopted with an awareness of their limitations: postcolonial and feminist critiques risk remaining theoretical abstractions if they are not grounded in the concrete, material conditions of the people they claim to speak about or alongside. For this reason, an ***"epistemic unruliness"***[13] is adopted, one that refuses to reduce the real exclusively to data, and instead opens itself to complexity, aiming to unsettle colonial epistemic hierarchies and to promote an *otherwise* architecture, plural and rooted in local struggles. "I do not, and cannot, fully know their worlds".[14]

The feminist perspective is adopted because history has largely been narrated from a male point of view, and because the sex-gender system plays a determining role in the organisation of the economic and social system, and therefore also in its understanding.

"The city must never be confused," states Marco Polo in Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities, "with the words that describe it" (1972).[15]

As mentioned, this thesis aims to study the urban tensions and inequalities present in a self-produced settlement in Portugal, focusing on one located around the capital. Lisbon's unique historical and socioeconomic context, shaped over time by critical events such as the 1755 earthquake, the authoritarian Estado Novo regime, and the 2008 financial crisis, provides the reference framework for this research.

Self-produced settlements are a central feature of the urbanised world. Like other European countries, Portugal has experienced the growth of this type of settlement over the past fifty years, coinciding with a period of economic growth between the 1960s and 1970s, further accelerated following the Carnation Revolution of 1974. This brought the return of migrants living in central Europe and war refugees from former African colonies.[16]The phenomenon concentrated primarily around Lisbon and has persisted from the 1970s to the present day. In recent years, migratory flows have intensified significantly. In 2024 alone, the foreign resident population in Portugal reached 1.54 million people,[17] a number that almost quadruples the total of 421,802 foreign nationals recorded at the end of 2017. According to Statistics Portugal (INE), permanent immigrants entering the country in 2024 numbered 177,557, marking a 6.2% decrease compared to 2023,[18] while net migration remained positive for the eighth consecutive year, standing at 143,641.[19] This acceleration puts additional pressure on an already strained housing market, disproportionately affecting those with fewer economic resources, including long-established residents of self-produced settlements who find themselves increasingly exposed to displacement and the threat of demolition. This points to the insufficiency of existing planning responses and housing policies, and underlines the need for different analytical and interventional strategies, ones that are neither consolatory nor positivist, in pursuit of inclusive and context-sensitive urban development that genuinely empowers residents.

In a context of economic crisis and growing urban inequality, the demand for urban planning policies capable of effectively undermining or eliminating structural injustice is increasing. Recent housing and socio-urban changes have led to limited production of public housing, triggering further processes of exclusion through peripheralisation and fragmentation, driven by urban renewal and sanitisation.[20] "In this sense, the Right to the City is less a juridical right than an oppositional demand, which challenges the claims of the rich and powerful. It is a right: to redistribute, not for all people, but for those deprived of it and in need of it".[21]



Figure 1.8
Comparative cartographic propaganda of the Portuguese colonial empire (c. 1940).

Figure 1.9
Reworked map of the celebratory map of Portuguese maritime exploration (c. 1940), realised by Roberto Araújo. The original map claims that Portugal "discovered and explored nearly two-thirds of the inhabited globe" over the course of a century.

→ [15] Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972).

[16] As elaborated by Paulo Silva and Helena Farrall, "From Informal to Formal: What Can Be Learned from Reviewing 50 Years of Portuguese Models, Policies and Politics," in *Dynamics and Resilience of Informal Areas*, ed. S. Attia et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 25–42.

[17] Agência para a Integração, Migrações e Asilo (AIMA), *Relatório de Migrações e Asilo 2024* (Lisboa: AIMA, 2025). "A 31 de dezembro de 2024, Portugal registava 1.543.697 cidadãos estrangeiros a residir em território nacional." This figure refers to the total number of foreign citizens holding a valid residence permit or covered by pending regularisation proceedings in Portugal. This administrative count provides a snapshot of the legally resident non-national population. It must be distinguished from migratory flow measures, as it cumulatively aggregates all previous years' arrivals and subsequent adjustments in legal status, rather than measuring entries occurring within a single reference year. Accessed 16 July 2026, https://aima.gov.pt/pt/noticias/relatorio-de-migracoes-e-asilo.

[18] Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE), "Demographic Statistics – 2024," press release, 18 June 2025. "Em 2024, estimou-se um total de 177 557 imigrantes permanentes e de 33 916 emigrantes permanentes, resultando num saldo migratório de 143 641 e observando-se um saldo positivo pelo oitavo ano consecutivo." The 6.2% year-on-year decrease in permanent immigrant must be interpreted against the exceptionally high data established in 2023. According to Statistics Portugal (INE), the year 2023 recorded 189,367 permanent immigrants entering the country, representing a 13.3% increase compared to 2022 (167,098). This unprecedented volume was accompanied by a positive net migration of 155,701 persons. Accessed 16 July 2026, https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?DESTAQUESdest_.

[19] The net migration figure of 143,641 represents the algebraic balance between permanent immigration and permanent emigration in 2024. Its sustained positive value underscores a persistent structural dependence of Portuguese demography on migratory movements. As a synthetic indicator, net migration remains sensitive to population estimation and to changes in the definition of permanent residence adopted by the national statistical institute.

[20] Sonia Arbaci and Jorge Malheiros, "De-Segregation, Peripheralisation and the Social Exclusion of Immigrants: Southern European Cities in the 1990s," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 2 (2010): 227–55.

[21] Margit Mayer (2010), as cited in Joana Pestana Lages, "Questioning (in)

✳PORTUGAL–THE COUNTRY THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED MOST TO GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLOBE IN THE COURSE OF ONE CENTUYRY



SHE DISCOVERED AND ~~EXPLORED~~ exploited NEARLY TWO-THIRD OF THE GLOBE ✳

✳ **Portugal**

× **Colony**
Full and direct control.

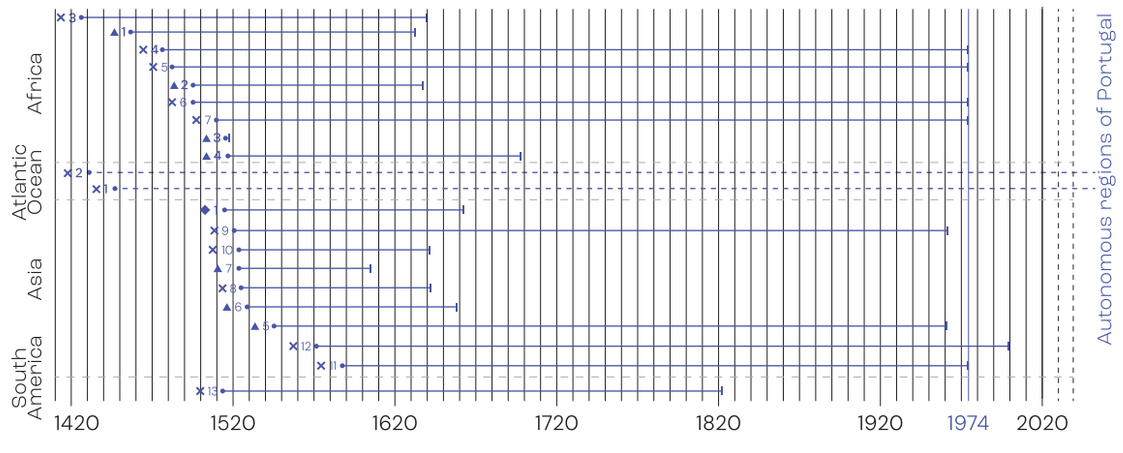
◆ **Protectorate**
A formal agreement with a local kingdom that preserved its own ruler and internal administrative structure, but ceded to Portugal the control of foreign policy, defence, and external trade.

▲ **Feitoria**
A commercial-military structure, built on the territory of a local ruler who retained power.

×1 Azores
×2 Madeira
×3 Ceuta (Marocco)
×4 Cape Verde
×5 São Tomé and Príncipe
×6 Angola
×7 Mozambique
×8 Hormuz
×9 Goa (India)
×10 Malacca (Malaysia)
×11 Moluccas (Indonesia)
×12 Macau
×13 Brazil

▲1 Arguin (Mauritania)
▲2 Elmina (Ghana)
▲3 Kilwa (Mozambique)
▲4 Mombasa (Kenya)
▲5 Diu (India)
▲6 Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
▲7 East Timor

◆1 Cochin (India)



LIVING THE FRAGMENT

CARE, ENCLOSURE, AND OTHERWISE FUTURES IN SEGUNDO TORRÃO

The tourist postcard of Lisbon that welcomes its visitors often shows the post-imperial face of the city. Yet the remnants of the empire are easy to find: monuments dedicated to its navigators and to the Portuguese Empire. Several parts of the city centre are undergoing rapid regeneration and gentrification, and the appeal to the ancient splendour of the Empire arguably serves to legitimise this bourgeoisification of the city, in the name of a beauty that in practice tends to conceal what is not meant to be seen.[22] Over the past decade, the question of displacement and the right to the city has received increasing attention, and the social and spatial consequences of gentrification have been taken more seriously.[23] Lisbon presents itself as a postcolonial and cosmopolitan centre, while promoting, in Ascensão's reading, a domesticated idea of ***postcolonial multiculturalism***, functional to a gentrification programme designed to attract the wealthy (Ascensão, 2015).

The other face of Lisbon, developed over the past four decades, is its relationship with "*postcolonial immigrants*",[24] as well as with Portuguese migrants from the interior, who settled in self-produced settlements, *bairros de lata*, on the outskirts of the city following the fall of Salazar's fascist dictatorship in 1974 and the independence of former colonies including Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe. The absence of social housing and effective policies left these communities with few alternatives. A succession of social housing programmes, most notably the 1993 Programa Especial de Realojamento (PER), aimed at the elimination of shantytowns, contributed to these informal neighbourhoods becoming associated with perceptions of poverty, marginality, and illegal activity, obscuring more complex and truthful possibilities of representation. Part of this programme involved the demolition of these settlements in favour of grouping marginalised communities into large residential complexes, disregarding the cultural specificities and practices of the immigrants (Rodrigues, 2010; Malheiros et al., 2012; Mendes, 2012). The ongoing intensification of migratory flows to Portugal, with foreign residents now exceeding ten percent of the total population,[25] makes the question of adequate housing policy increasingly urgent, and suggests that the persistence of self-produced settlement is less an anomaly than a structural symptom of a system that continues to fail its most vulnerable residents.

→ Equality: Insights from a Community Kitchen in a Migrant Squatter Settlement in Greater Lisbon," in *Architecture and the Social Sciences: Inter- and Multidisciplinary Approaches between Society and Space*, ed. Maria Manuela Mendes, Teresa Sá, and João Cabral (Cham: Springer, 2017), 177.

[22] As elaborated by Eduardo Ascensão, "Slum Gentrification in Lisbon, Portugal: Displacement and the Imagined Futures of an Informal Settlement," in *Global Gentrifications: Uneven Development and Displacement*, ed. Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), 37–58.

[23] Walter Rodrigues (2010), Jorge Malheiros et al. (2012), and Luís Mendes (2012), as cited in Ascensão, "Slum Gentrification in Lisbon, Portugal," 38.

[24] Joana Pestana Lages and Pedro Braga, "There Is Africa in Lisbon: Spatial Practices to Support the Struggle for Spatial Justice in a Migrant Squatter Settlement in Greater Lisbon" (ETH Zürich, 2016).

[25] INE, "Demographic Statistics – 2024," press release, 18 June 2025.



Figure 1.10
Street sign calling for "Casas de renda acessíveis para a população" ("Affordable rental housing for the population"). The message invokes the public demand for housing affordability amid intensifying rent pressures and displacement. Photograph by the author, [Feb 2026].

This section appears on a grey background, marking a shift into historical context set slightly apart from the surrounding argument.

Returning to the image with which this section opened, a postcard flattens what it depicts. It selects a single, legible image, ready to be consumed at a glance, and discards much of what resists that framing: contradiction, struggle, the slow accumulation of everyday effort. Segundo Torrão risks being read in exactly this way, either romanticised as a picturesque expression of resilience and creativity, or reduced to an exotic other, a curiosity of informality to be documented and then left behind.

The visual material throughout this thesis, and especially the atlas presented in Chapter 5, works through photographs, drawings, and collage rather than through any single, authoritative image of the territory. Photography follows the same logic of the fragment that shapes the thesis's writing: each chapter opens with an image spread across two pages, offering a glimpse of Segundo Torrão, one partial view among the many the thesis tries to hold together.

This analysis therefore adopts the term margin, but from a different perspective. It seeks to study these spaces beyond *ethnographic fascination*, and beyond diversity seen merely as an *exotic other*, giving value instead to other forms of knowledge and to ways of building that are rich in creativity and imagination. At the same time, this approach demands a conscious resistance to romanticisation.

The residents of 2º Torrão have not, for the most part, chosen this condition. Informality here is not a lifestyle but a consequence, the result of decades of absent or inadequate housing policy that has left entire communities without practicable alternatives. To study this neighbourhood without acknowledging that most of its residents aspire to more stable, secure, and dignified living conditions would risk reducing them to symbols of resistance, stripping them of their complexity and their humanity.

This thesis therefore seeks a position that is neither one of uncritical celebration nor one of condemnation that reduces an entire neighbourhood and thousands of lives solely to poverty and precarity. It aims instead to hold both dimensions simultaneously: to recognise the extraordinary social fabric, collective practices, and spatial imagination that have emerged in Segundo Torrão, while keeping sight of the structural forces that have made such conditions necessary in the first place. In search of "a concept of the Right to the City that supports the transformation of the city while transforming ourselves (Harvey, 2008)".[26]

→ [26] David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53 (2008): 23–40.



Figure 1.11
Parque Metro Station, Lisbon, Portugal.
The station combines transport infrastructure with visual nefernces to the Portuguese Empire.

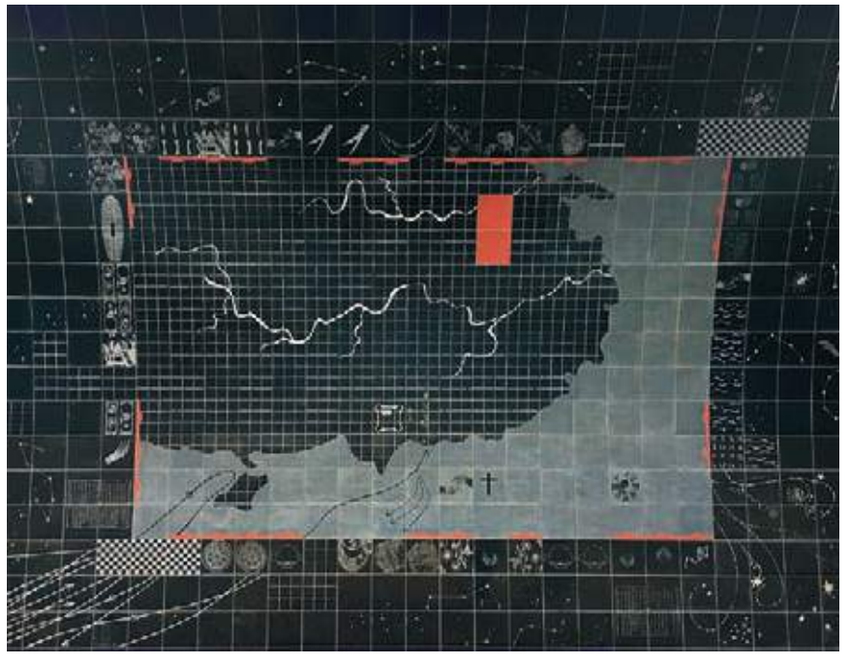


Figure 1.12
Parque Metro Station, Lisbon, Portugal.

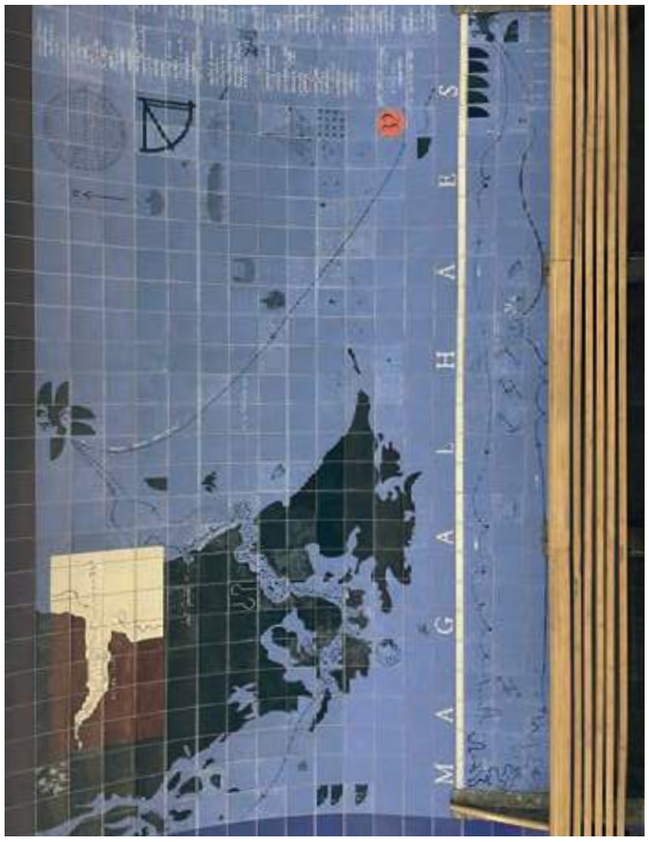


Figure 1.13
Parque Metro Station, Lisbon, Portugal.

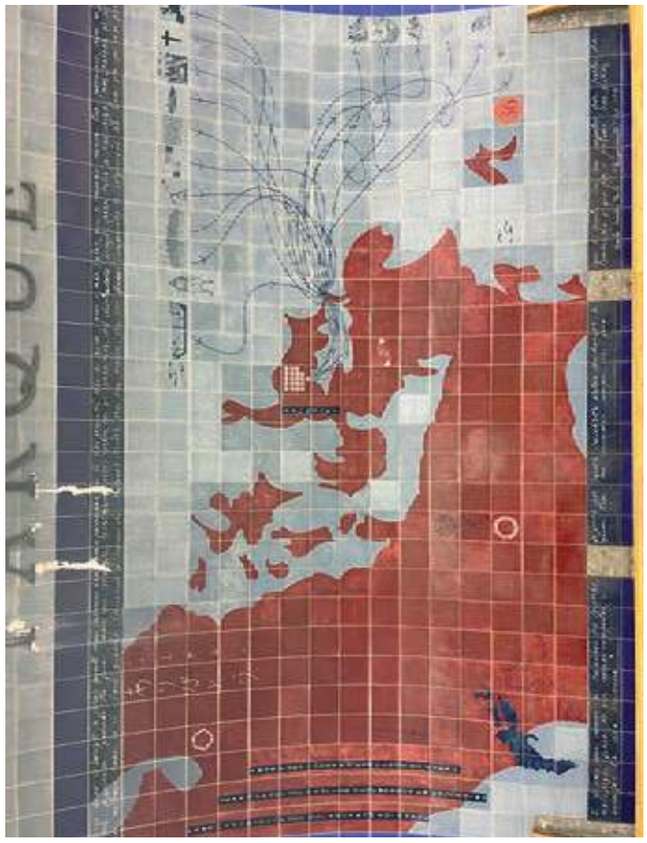


Figure 1.14
Parque Metro Station, Lisbon, Portugal.



Figure 1.15
Parque Metro Station, Lisbon, Portugal.

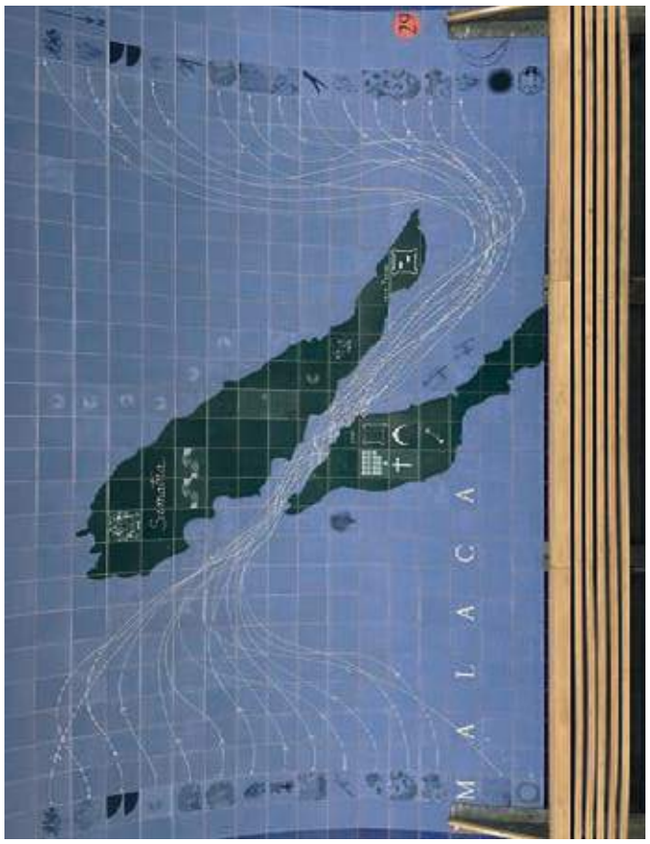


Figure 1.16
Parque Metro Station, Lisbon, Portugal.

1.2 – An otherwise city is an urgent utopia

OTHERWISE AS A WORLD-MAKING PRACTICE

In a city like Lisbon, dominated by unregulated urban tourism and a global economic liberalism that offers little protection for the housing market, it is increasingly difficult to think of housing as a right rather than a *consumer good*. This thesis sets out to free architecture from beauty, understood as a synonym for cleanliness, and to explore the value of the settlement under examination through other categories, ones that capture the latent possibilities of each situation and allow the future to be actively shaped. This is a "conflict" that concerns buildings and built space, in which the role of the architect and of architecture is central, and where the space is complex, shaped by power relations and individual histories.

The intention of this thesis is to analyse how social interactions, power relations, and cultural practices have contributed to the formation and reappropriation of urban environments and the city, through *otherwise* modes of engagement.
As in Nanni Moretti's film *Il sol dell'avvenire*, the intention here is to write a history with "ifs", made of utopian possibilities that resist the *pull of the probable* and the reproduction of the *status quo* of power and the dominant system, opposing instead the insistence of *the possible*, *the otherwise*, imagining other and more just worlds.[27]

The term ***otherwise*** proves useful here. A key word in feminist thought, it insists on the possible against the tradition of the probable (Meek & Fontanilla, 2022). As analysed by Laura Meek and Julia Fontanilla, *otherwise* is at once a concept, an analytic, a method, and an ethical-onto-political commitment. It resists singular definition, appearing instead as a constellation of operative modes, reflecting an intention to escape rigid categorisation and to embrace a fluid epistemology. Otherwise, in this sense, functions less as an abstract idea than as a transformative practice, aimed at capturing the latent potentialities of any given situation. That series of possibilities, "prefigured, but not formed",[28] which can open pathways toward liberatory transformations and allow an alternative to be imagined.

Today, in an increasingly alarming and precarious global scenario, architecture arguably needs to redefine itself. Not by aspiring to *positivist utopian scenarios* in which architecture resolves structural problems too complex for it to fix, but without surrendering to that fate either. This thesis proposes looking for *otherwise* solutions that do not preach a perfect future. As Frédéric Neyrat reminds us, "future in the Anthropocene has become conditional, it is no longer guaranteed".[29] These solutions, instead, are asked to inhabit the contradictory and difficult present. This thesis does not begin by asking what is the right thing to do in order to have a beautiful and clean city, but rather by asking what individuals actually do.
"I smell the evasive whiff of *the otherwise*. A promise of reconciliation" (Akomolafe, 2017).[30]

Alongside *otherwise*, Meek and Fontanilla introduce, within the field of Black feminist studies, the term ***fugitivity***, developed by Tina Campt. This does not refer to simple flight or resistance, but to a strategic and creative practice that inhabits the tension between escape and resistance, evading dominant categories while constructing alternative worlds. *Fugitivity* as a commitment to strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant, of what is considered right and proper.

In their text *Otherwise*, Meek and Fontanilla adopt this term to describe how *otherwise* often manifests in fugitive forms. Forms that do not consist of passive refusal or mere frontal opposition to the logics imposed by the colonialist order, but of a subtle presence that makes its way through the cracks, as Bayo Akomolafe calls them, of power, manifesting the presence of alternative worlds that creep beneath the apparent order.

In this thesis, the concept of *otherwise* is adopted as a practice of world-making. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben, *otherwise* manifests in the everyday and the political through "tiny displacements"[31] and practices of collective care that resist the ***pull of the probable*** (Meek & Fontanilla, 2022). *The probable* is what is given: the dominant system that makes it difficult to see futures beyond the one realistic and predictable future, based on a logic grounded in the reproduction of existing power structures. *The probable* is a force that pulls the present toward a predetermined future. What chips away at this conservative force is the ***insistence of the possible***, of *the otherwise*, capable of imagining ***other*** worlds, a lens through which a different future can be glimpsed.

THE UNWANTED AND UNWELCOME

During the fieldwork conducted in 2º Torrão, this tension became more concrete: not to frame the residents of 2º Torrão as passive agents, victims of circumstance, nor to romanticise the conditions in which they live, but to recognise them as active agents who, through the continuous

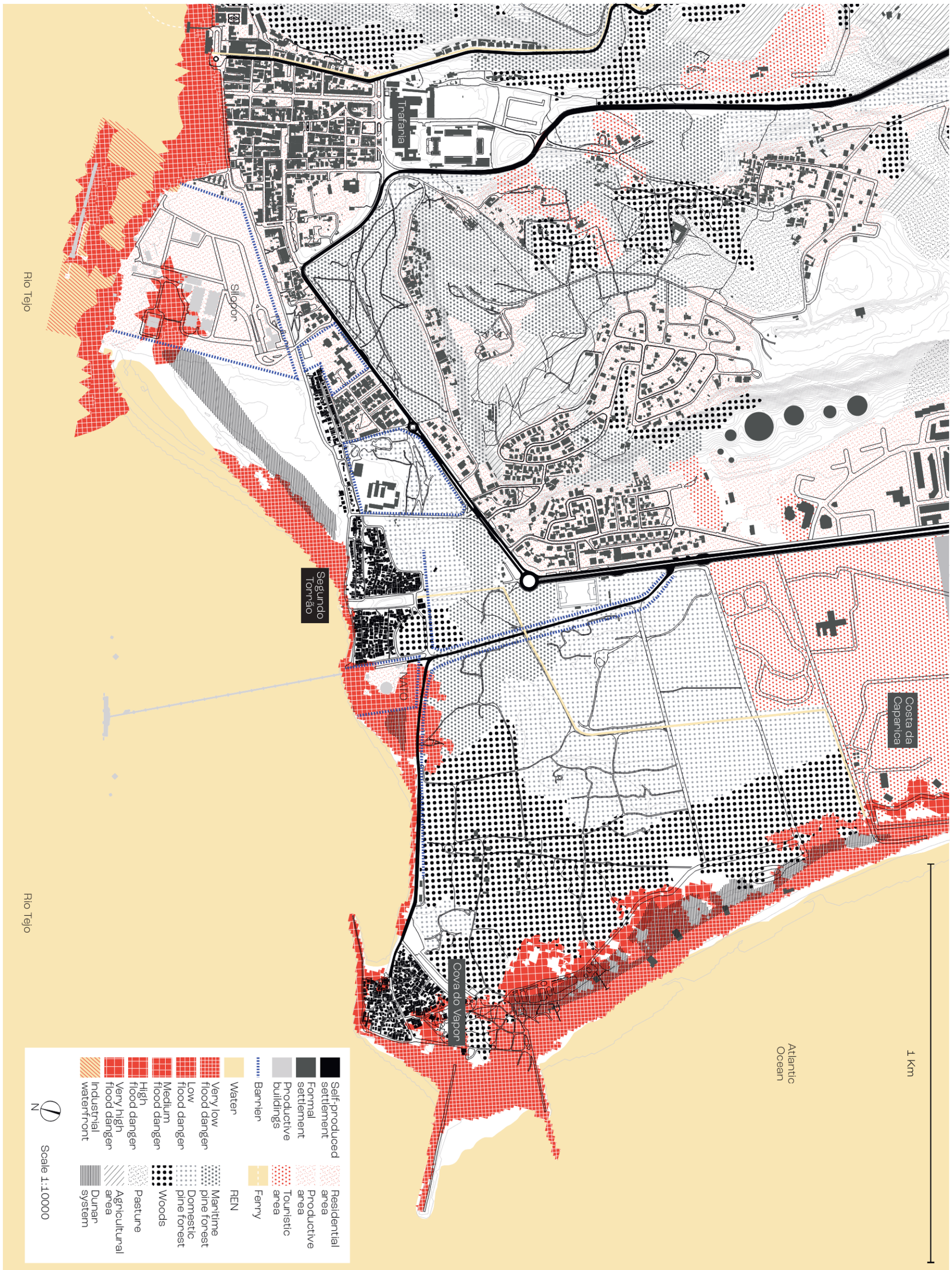
→ [27] Meek and Morales Fontanilla, "Otherwise," 274–83.

[28] McTighe and Raschig (2019), as cited in Meek and Morales Fontanilla, "Otherwise," 275.

→ [29] Frédéric Neyrat, *The Unconstructable Earth: An Ecology of Separation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), as cited in Camillo Boano, *Inhabiting Future Frictions* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2025), 20.

[30] Bayo Akomolafe, *These Wilds Beyond Our Fences: Letters to My Daughter on Humanity's Search for Home* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2017).

[31] Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).


Rio Tejo
Sligpor
Trafaria
Segundo Torrão
Costa da Caparica
Cova do Vapor
Atlantic Ocean
1 Km
Rio Tejo
Self-produced settlement
Formal settlement
Productive buildings
Barrier
Water
Very low flood danger
Low flood danger
Medium flood danger
High flood danger
Very high flood danger
Industrial waterfront
Residential area
Productive area
Touristic area
Ferry
REN
Maritime pine forest
Domestic pine forest
Woods
Pasture
Agricultural area
Dunar system
N
Scale 1:10000

practice of living in that place, challenge a system that systematically excludes some in order to make space, and a great deal of it, for others. People who, even without seeking to be politicised, enact through their daily lives a quiet but persistent form of dissent.

This exclusion is not only social or discursive: it is also spatial and material, mapped quite literally onto the ground the settlement occupies. The Cartography of Exclusion [pp. 42–43] situates Segundo Torrão within a landscape of constraints and threats: an area classified at risk of flooding, surrounded by walls and fences on every side, the NATO base closing one side, the Silopor grain terminal the other, the Reserva Ecológica Nacional the remaining edge facing the river Tejo. The major infrastructures that run directly alongside the settlement, road, rail, port, never connect it to the networks they serve elsewhere: Segundo Torrão is adjacent to circulation without being part of it. Squeezed between the imposing silhouettes of the grain terminal and the military base, both characteristic of the margem sul's productive, non-residential character, the settlement occupies what remains once every other function has already claimed its share of the territory. Cartography of Exclusion, in this sense, gives spatial form to the same dynamic that Cohen, hooks, and Halberstam describe below in social and psychological terms: a system that appears to produce margins not by accident, but by design. The specific legal, administrative, and infrastructural mechanisms through which this exclusion has been produced over time are examined in detail in Chapter 3; here, the map serves to make that exclusion visible before its underlying logic is unpacked further.

Drawing on Cathy Cohen's *Deviance as Resistance* (2004), this thesis proposes a rethinking of these so-called marginal places. Deviance from standard forms, from what is socially accepted, offers the possibility of reflecting on what we consider right and what we consider wrong, opening up new urban scenarios shaped by imagination, creativity, and resistance. Cohen argues that acts of non-conformity, especially by marginalised members of society, can be reconceptualised not as failures, as they are typically understood within a dualist logic that sees no possibilities beyond the one accepted norm, but as acts of political resistance. It is important to note, however, that this reconceptualisation is an analytical operation, not a description of intent.

The residents of 2º Torrão do not necessarily understand themselves as political actors, nor should they be required to. The political dimension of their everyday practices is read from the outside, through a theoretical lens, and must not be confused with a romanticisation of their condition. "One of the most significant forms of power held by the weak is the refusal to accept the definition of oneself that is put forward by the powerful [it is the] ordered use of the power to disbelieve." (bell hooks, 1984).[32]

bell hooks suggests transforming the "power to disbelief", that is, the capacity of subordinate groups to reject the definitions imposed by those in power, from an internalised act into a collective political project. *Deviance*, in this sense, can be understood not as pathology or moral deficiency, but as an intentional and agentive choice that occurs under conditions of scarce resources or limited power.[33]

Adding to this, Jack Halberstam, he appreciates the willingness of marginalised people to inhabit negativity and rage as a political position, but while grounding this negativity in the specific, material experiences of marginalised people: the lived realities of *"dyke anger, anticolonial despair, racial rage"*.[34]

Halberstam populates his bleak and angry territories not with abstract theoretical figures, but with real people and those who have been raced, classed, and gendered into failure. He suggests that rage and negativity, born of failure and marginalisation, can be turned outward to dismantle the oppressive structures of the dominant social order. The failure of the outcasts, in this reading, is not only a private experience: it becomes a public, political act with the potential to disrupt and challenge the very world that deemed them failures in the first place.

This theoretical framework makes it possible to read the territories analysed in this thesis not merely as sites of despair, but as potential starting points for a form of critique that aims to *dismantle the system that produces winners and losers*.

This methodology tries to resist positivistic or heroic storytelling, insisting instead on looking at the parts that are unwanted and unwelcome.

Urban design, with its emphasis on efficiency, symmetry, and order, can itself be read as an instrument of governance, one that finds its clearest expression in the construction of monumental spaces that can suppress organic social life and marginalise those social groups that do not fit the dominant vision. This is a process that urbanists such as Jane Jacobs exposed,[35] revealing how architectural order is deeply tied to dynamics of class and ethnicity.

Who has access to certain spaces? Who controls them? Which culture is represented and imposed through the monumen-

→ [32] bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (New York: Routledge, 1984).

[33] Cathy J. Cohen, "Deviance as Resistance: A New Research Agenda for the Study of Black Politics," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 1, no. 1 (2004): 27–45.

[34] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 110.

[35] Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

tality of the state?

AN OFF-SCREEN INVENTORY OF LIVING THINGS

This thesis, in its writing and in the fragments that structure it, does not attempt to explain Segundo Torrão, nor to claim to know it in its entirety, nor to translate it into a language that would make it legible to those who have never walked its unpaved roads, sat in its open areas, or entered one of its cafés. What follows is not a portrait, not a diagnosis, not a map that pretends to cover the whole territory. It is closer to an inventory kept off-screen: an attempt to hold what was encountered without putting it on display.

THE BORDER IS NOT ONLY AT THE MARGIN: IT IS EVERYWHERE AND IN OUR MIND

The residents of self-produced settlements are, in this sense, not there simply by choice. Structural conditions push people to the margins of the housing system, and these conditions are not accidental: they tend to be the predictable outcomes of political-economic arrangements that consistently privilege private property over the right to shelter.

As housing scholar Richard Ronald argues,[36] Western societies have become *"home-owner societies"*, in which owner-occupation is not merely a practical arrangement but a moral one. Homeownership signals autonomy, respectability, and full social membership. Its absence signals the opposite. Those without stable housing tend to be seen less as victims of a system than as authors of their own misfortune.

This ideological inversion is not innocent but rather functional. If dispossession is reframed as personal failure, the system that produces it remains unquestioned. The stigma attached to self-produced settlements and informal living does not merely describe a reality: it helps construct one, in which inequality appears natural, deserved, and inevitable.

The settlement examined in this thesis is read here not as evidence of individual faults, but as the outcome of a housing system that was never designed to include everyone. Recognising this shift, from personal fate to structural condition, is as much a political move as it is an analytical one.

RETHINKING THE MARGIN: FROM DEPRIVATION TO RADICAL OPENNESS

Another category adopted in this thesis is that of the ***margin***.

At the foundation of Western urbanism lie two fundamental spatial categories: identity and separation. The first operates through the recognition of the self in relation to the other, the human in relation to the natural, the city in relation to the countryside. The second functions as a device to guarantee sanitary order and urban efficiency, through zoning.[37] The dualistic model of Western thought, which enables the separation between what is same and what is other, can be read as underpinning the neocolonial, capitalist, and patriarchal system that has shaped the reality in which we live, artificially separating the (Western) people from all other historically marginalised people, framed as *others*.

It is on the basis of this dualistic thinking that the categories of *centre* and *margin* appear to have been constructed: what is inside and what is outside, outside a defined perimeter that encloses what is organised, clean, and orderly, from what is dirty and disorganised.

bell hooks dismantles these prejudices by defining the margin as "a space of radical openness. It's about a space of resistance, it's not just about endurance or a sign of deprivation."[38] This exposes the limitations of defining marginal space only in negative terms, in opposition to what is considered right and beautiful. Marginality is seen instead in a different light, as a site of resistance for the production of *counter-hegemonic discourse*.

The terms *margin*, *centre*, and *resistance* are therefore understood here not in an abstract sense, but as political concepts with transformative potential.

Drawing on the thinking of Gios and Tavolieri, 2º Torrão is not viewed, in this thesis, as the geographical and economic margin of a wealthy and "neutral" country.[39] The *margin* is not identified with a physical place, but with an experience, a relational condition that can emerge anywhere power relations exclude, dominate, and make certain groups invisible. Aware that no point of view can be fully objective, since all are situated within reality, ***relational experience*** is adopted here as a key analytical lens. This means that nothing is marginal in absolute terms, but everything can be become so in relation to something else that positions itself as the centre.

Margins, furthermore, are not only geographical, such as the neighbourhoods where migrants live, but can also be ***juridical***, concerning those who cannot access legal documents, and *social*, affecting racialised communities.

The *centre*, then, is not simply a geographical or institutional place, but an *operating system*, a normalised position of power that defines the rules of the game. The centre produces the margin through exclusion, but it also needs the

→ [36] Richard Ronald, *The Ideology of Home Ownership* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2008).

→ [37] Camillo Boano and Michele Cerruti But, "Un progetto relazionale," in *Inhabiting Future Frictions*, ed. Michele Cerruti But, Camillo Boano, Daniela Ciaffi, J. Igor Fardin, and Richard Lee Peragine (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2025), 32.

[38] bell hooks, "Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness," Framework, The Journal of Cinema and Media 36 (1989), 15-23.

[39] Elsa Gios and Nabila Tavolieri, "From Metaphors to Figurations: Experiencing 'Margin', 'Centre' and 'Resistance' in the Ethnographic Field and Beyond," Annali di Ca' Foscari, Serie Orientale 3 (2025): 121-64.

margin in order to define itself.

This thesis therefore proposes, as will be developed further in Chapter 2, to pay close attention to the language used in the research. In a study that aims to bring to light capitalist, patriarchal, and neocolonial relations, and to unmask the dynamics that lead to the creation of this settlement, language plays a central role as an expression of power structures.

To the reflections on the concept of margin, it is necessary to add the distinction that hooks draws between the ***marginality imposed*** by oppressive power structures and a ***marginality chosen as radical openness*** (hooks, 1989). This distinction requires careful handling in the context of this thesis. The residents of 2º Torrão did not choose the margin. Their presence there is the result of structural exclusion, of absent housing policies, and of a system that has consistently failed to provide alternatives. What hooks offers, however, is not a romanticisation of imposed marginality, but a recognition that within it, despite it, and sometimes because of it, forms of knowledge, creativity, and resistance can emerge that are not as readily available from the centre. It is in this qualified sense that the concept is adopted here: not as a celebration of precarity, but as an acknowledgement that the margin, even when imposed, can become a site from which to see and to speak differently.

STUDY AREA

This framework of oppressive and discriminatory architectural order finds a telling illustration in the case studies at the heart of this thesis. Lisbon hosts numerous self-produced settlements along its outer belt, physically removed from the centre of urban life and hidden from view. 2º Torrão, the settlement examined here, is located on the southern bank of the Tagus river, the *margem sul*, on the opposite side of Lisbon.

The spatial irony is difficult to ignore. Directly across the river, in full view, lies Belém, home to some of Lisbon's most celebrated monuments: the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, the Torre de Belém, and the Padrão dos Descobrimentos. These are symbols of Portugal's colonial past, prominently displayed at the heart of the city, carefully preserved and promoted as prime tourist destinations. On one bank, the monuments of the empire. On the other, communities whose presence in this city is inseparable from the long history of that same empire.

The river does not simply divide a city. It marks a hierarchy.

This settlement, marginalised and abandoned by the state, has become a site where new forms of social life have emerged, not entirely by choice, but largely by necessity. In doing so, it unsettles, without necessarily intending to, the norms of the "ordered" city and the logic that sustains them.

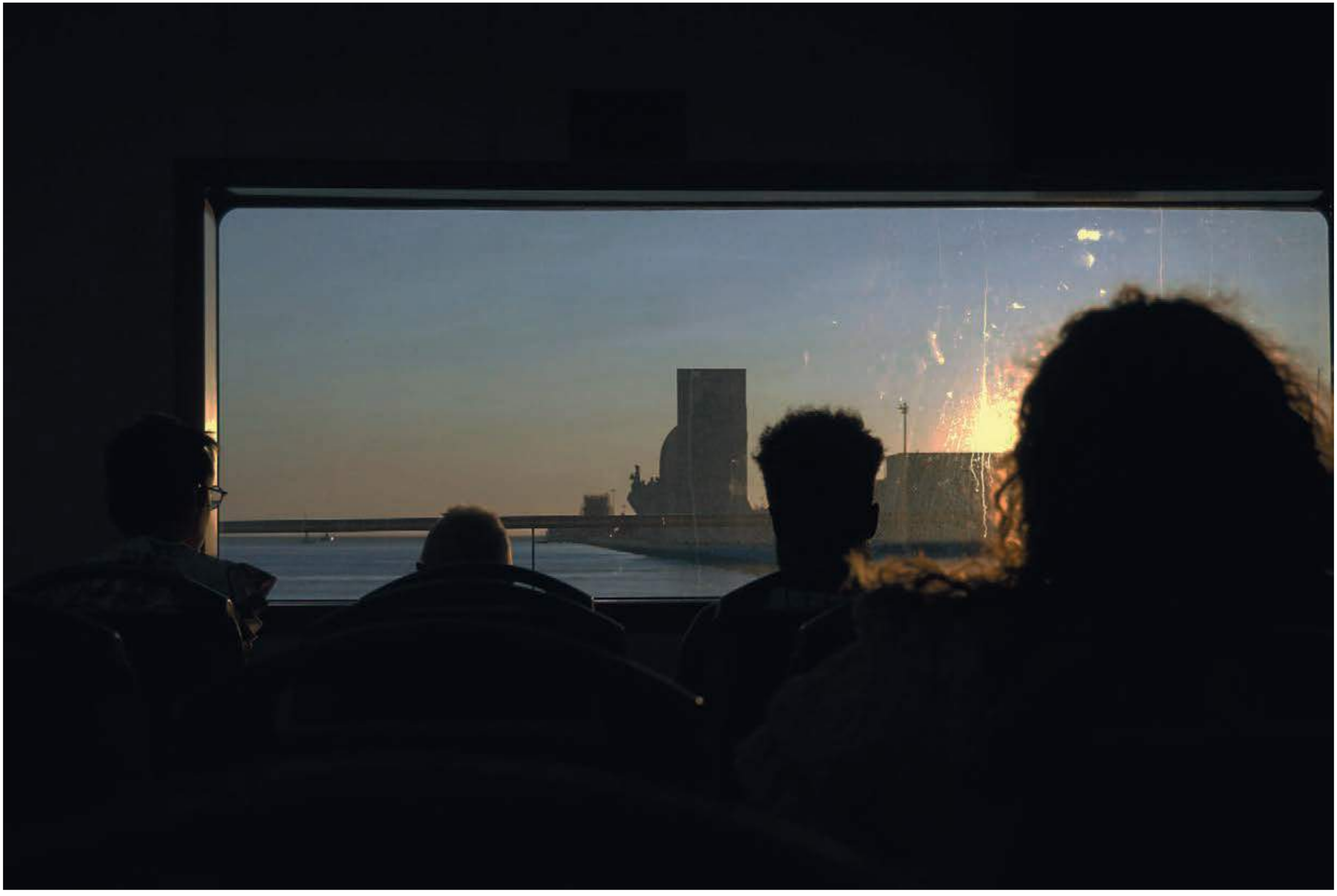
These self-produced settlements can be read as agents of change in physical space, though that change is not, in itself, the end goal: it can function as a means of triggering social transformation, operating through modes of resistance that fall outside recognised channels.

Figure 1.17
A house near the silos.



Figure 1.18

Photograph taken from the ferry connecting Belém and Segundo Torrão, with a view of the Padrão dos Descobrimentos.



1.3 – Structure

Chapter 2.0 It outlines the methodology of the thesis. It defines the epistemological principles that orient the research, including situated knowledge, accountable positioning, and the ethics of knowing-*with* rather than knowing-*about*, and introduces the methods through which this research was conducted: fieldwork in Segundo Torrão, conversations with residents and researchers, photography, creative writing. It also develops the thesis's linguistic practice, examining how the choice of terms through which self-produced settlements are named is itself a political act, and constructing a micro-glossary that draws on both academic sources and the community's own modes of self-description.

Chapter 3.0 The third chapter examines the phenomenon of self-produced settlement as a specific taxonomy within the contemporary urban landscape. Drawing on key literature, it argues that informality is not the antithesis of formality but rather a distinct spatial configuration born from conditions of crisis and exclusionary politics, and shaped by postcolonial trajectories specific to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

Chapter 4.0 It introduces the reader to the territory under analysis as a complex space, shaped by power relations and by individual and place-based histories, focusing primarily on Segundo Torrão. It traces the historical formation of the territory, its geographical and biophysical vulnerabilities, and the legal and planning frameworks, military, ecological, and infrastructural, that have progressively enclosed it, with only a brief mention of Cova do Vapor, a second self-built settlement nearby, included to signal that Segundo Torrão is not the only such settlement in the area. This analysis reveals the mechanisms of exclusion and inequality perpetrated by territorial planning and urbanism that are far from neutral, and constitutes the basis for imagining otherwise worlds in this specific area.

Chapter 5.0 It presents the atlas of Segundo Torrão: a collection of fragments, natural and constructed, ephemeral and permanent, individual and shared, that together begin to give an idea of what Segundo Torrão is, without ever pretending to say what it is entirely. Each fragment is an entry point, not a conclusion, an off-screen inventory of living things. Among these fragments, two are dedicated specifically to two residents of the *bairro*, whom I interviewed and came to know closely. Their presence within the atlas manifests a concern that runs through the whole thesis: the conviction that these are not merely sources of information to be extracted, but voices that carry, in equal measure, pain and resistance, and that must be allowed to speak in their own right rather than be flattened into evidence.

Chapter 6.0 It develops two speculative future *fragments* for Segundo Torrão and its surrounding territory, conceived as an act of futuring rather than problem-solving. Building on the conclusions of the preceding chapters, it identifies two structural conditions to work from: a grammar of care embedded in the settlement's compact, incrementally grown fabric, and a territory of nested enclosures, in which the settlement is squeezed between a NATO military base, a grain-terminal port, and protected ecological land. Rather than pursuing a project that stitches this fragmentation back together, the chapter proposes a project of rupture, dismantling the fences that isolate these adjacent zones. Two scenarios extrapolated from forces already active in the territory are then developed: one, over a thirty-year horizon, in which a demilitarised NATO base becomes an infrastructure of collective care organised around water; the other, over a ninety-year horizon, in which unchecked extraction, saturation, and rising seas erase the infrastructures of care the settlement embodies today.

Conclusion

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METHODOLOGY

2.1 Looking from where I stand: principles guiding the research

2.2 Creative writing

2.3 Approaching Segundo Torrão

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2.Methodology

To write about a place is never a neutral act. It is a choice about what to include and what to leave out, about which voices to foreground and which to leave in the background, about the language in which a life becomes legible to someone who has never lived it. This is especially true when the place in question has already been named, studied, and represented by others, often through categories, informal, precarious, illegal, that say more about the gaze doing the naming than about the place itself.

This chapter does not resolve that tension. It sets out, instead, the principles, practices, and formal choices through which this research has tried to hold it open: what it means to produce knowledge with a community rather than about it, what obligations that entails, and what kind of writing, drawing, and photography can carry those obligations without pretending to dissolve them.



Figure 2.1
Fieldwork sketches of Segundo Torrão [February-April 2026].







2.1 Looking from where I stand: principles guiding the research

SITUATED KNOWLEDGES AND PARTIAL PERSPECTIVES

The work developed in this thesis is inspired by the concept of situated knowledge, developed by Donna Haraway in her 1988 essay of the same name.[1] The text participates in the feminist debate of the 1980s on objectivity. Haraway critiques two positions that, in her view, trap feminist thought. The first is radical constructivism, which reduces every knowledge claim to social construction and the rhetoric of power, dissolving any possibility of a real referent. The second is feminist empiricism, which seeks to correct the biases of traditional science in order to build a more equitable successor science, but risks, according to Haraway, falling back into the very idea of neutral objectivity it set out to challenge (Haraway, 1988).

From these premises, Haraway develops the notion of situated knowledge, critiquing the traditional scientific ideal that presents itself as universal, *a view from nowhere*. It is within this framework that this thesis situates itself. It does not aim for omniscient knowledge of the area under analysis, but for as broad and detailed understanding as possible, while remaining aware that knowledge is always partial, always produced from a specific standpoint.

Haraway proposes to reincarnate vision: in place of objectivity as detachment and neutral positioning, she offers accountable positioning. It is precisely from this partiality of knowledge, and not despite it, that a more faithful and less innocent vision of the world can emerge (Haraway, 1988): only partial perspective, in her account, promises an objective vision.

The situated position occupied in this research is, in this sense, not a unique one. 2º Torrão has drawn the attention of researchers before, each arriving with their own standpoint, their own questions, their own partial perspective. This thesis joins that succession. It does not claim to see what others have missed, but tries to look from where it stands, adding one more located voice, shaped by a particular place, formation, and set of privileges, to an ongoing conversation about these territories and with the people who inhabit them.

AN UNINVITED VOICE

This situated voice is not one the community needs. 2º Torrão exists, resists, and produces knowledge independently of this research; if anything, it is this thesis that needed them. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith has argued, research conducted on marginalised communities has historically been one of the ways in which colonial relationships have been enacted and reproduced.[2] The context of this thesis is not strictly colonial, but her warning still holds real force: the risk of extractivism is present. Academic research has a long history of entering communities, gathering stories, images, and knowledge, and leaving without returning anything of value to the people who made that knowledge possible. Naming this risk does not exempt this thesis from it.

This became concrete in the first weeks in the *bairro*,[3] in a way that theory had not fully prepared me for, and that is described more fully in section 2.3. The discipline I was representing, and that was representing me, carried a history I could not easily separate myself from: a history of arriving with plans, of knowing better, of measuring what is lacking against a formal standard.

A further danger lies in representation itself. To write about a community is always, to some degree, to fix it, to translate its complexity into a language and a format that belongs to someone else's institution. The temptation to produce an account that is coherent, readable, and meaningful to an academic audience can distort rather than clarify, romanticising what is difficult, smoothing what is contradictory, and, at its worst, mystifying the very lives it claims to document.

RESEARCHING FROM WITHIN PRIVILEDGE

"If you 'study' colonialism or the subaltern but you maintain the rules of the social sciences and humanities game, you maintain the coloniality of power that reproduces the epistemic colonial difference" (Mignolo, 1999).[4]

This thesis does not claim to discover something new. 2º Torrão has already been studied, written about, and documented. I arrive after others, carrying my own questions and my own blind spots. I arrive as an architecture student, white and European, shaped by a specific disciplinary formation and a specific social position. Acknowledging this is not a gesture of modesty, but a methodological necessity.

Architecture has its own epistemological baggage. In the past, the discipline often viewed self-produced settlements from a deficiency perspective, focusing on what they lack, what needs to be fixed, and what should be replaced or formalised. According to Ananya Roy, informality is a mode of urbanisation created and controlled by planning systems that selectively criminalise some

[1] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99.

[2] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

[3] Throughout the text of the thesis, the term "*bairro*" refers specifically to Segundo Torrão. In Portuguese, "*bairro*" means "neighbourhood."

[4] Walter D. Mignolo, "I Am Where I Think: Epistemology and the Colonial Difference," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 8, no. 2 (1999): 241–61.

forms of space-making while legitimising others, rather than simply a condition of the urban poor (Roy, 2005).[5]

I try to resist that deficiency gaze, while knowing I cannot fully step outside it. The danger of romanticisation is just as real: self-production and informality are not intrinsically good, and are frequently the result of exclusion and a state that has failed to uphold the right to the city, which Henri Lefebvre defined as *t*he ability to change both the city and oneself through that change rather than just having access to urban resources (Lefebvre, 1968).[6]

I came to this research having read about situated knowledge, about the importance of taking and giving, of building horizontal relationships, of not extracting. I believed in all of it and I still do. But belief and practice are not quite the same thing, and the distance between them became clear very quickly once I was actually in the *bairro*: good intentions, on their own, do not dissolve power asymmetries. It became evident, for instance, in the uncertainty of not knowing whom to approach or how, which is described in the following sections.

Reflecting on one's own position is not a preliminary step to be completed before the real work begins. As Kimberlé Crenshaw's work on intersectionality makes clear, the categories that define our social position, race, gender, class, professional formation, are not incidental to knowledge production but *constitutive of it* (Crenshaw, 1991).[7]

Returning to Haraway, the partiality of this perspective is not only epistemic but also ethical: accountable positioning requires acknowledging that no situated account is innocent, and that the responsibility toward the people encountered in the field does not end when the writing begins. Researching from a position of privilege is not, in itself, disqualifying, but that privilege has to be made visible rather than concealed. Accountability, in this sense, is less about eliminating one's standpoint than about taking responsibility for it (Haraway, 1988).

KNOWING *WITH*, NOT *ABOUT*

Haraway's critique of the *view from nowhere* does not only redefine what counts as objective knowledge: it also redefines the relationship between the knower and the known. Knowledge, in her framework, does not arise from an abstract, disembodied subject positioned above the world, but from embodied subjects situated in specific historical and power contexts (Haraway, 1988).

This has methodological consequences. If knowledge is relational, in this sense, it has to be produced with, rather than about. In this thesis, that principle translates into a concrete practice: leaving space for what emerged from conversations with the *moradores* of 2º Torrão, from shared time in the *bairro*. The knowledge produced in those exchanges is treated here not as supplementary to the thesis, but as a substantial part of it.

The work carried out tries to take up Haraway's warning to not transform, as typical of Western academic tradition, the world into a passive resource to be dominated, attempting instead to perceive the object as an active agent (Haraway, 1988). The world is an active space, and faithful knowledge can only aim to arise from *conversation rather than from an act of discovery*, from a horizontal relationship that resists extraction, recognizing that research is always, to some degree, a political act.

CARE AND DJUNTA MON AS METHOD

Care, in this research, is understood as a disposition of attention that a relationship demands, before, during, and after the encounter itself: not an ethical supplement added on top of the research, but a mode of attention that orients it throughout.

Djunta mon can be read as one concrete expression of that disposition of care, translated into an actual practice of reciprocal labour. In Cape Verdean Creole, the term literally means "joining hands" and refers to a practice of reciprocal mutual aid, in which labour is shared over time through relations of deferred obligation and mutual support. Originating in the Cape Verde archipelago, it travelled with diasporic communities and has been documented in Lisbon's peripheral settlements, notably Cova da Moura in Amadora. The concept of *djunta mon*, is also a methodological principle. *Djunta mon*, in its Cape Verdean Creole sense, describes a system of reciprocal labour in which each member of a community contributes to the others' work in turn, with no immediate return required. The obligation is deferred, diffuse, and governed by a shared understanding of mutual vulnerability rather than by explicit contract. No one keeps accounts. The system works because everyone understands that precarity is shared, and that cooperation is a rational response to it.[8]

This thesis does not claim that *djunta mon* exists in Segundo Torrão as a formalised or culturally homogeneous practice. Unlike Cova da Moura, the settlement is not predominantly Cape Verdean, but a multicultural community shaped by Portuguese, Cape Verdean, Angolan, Guinean-Bissauan, and Roma histories. What emerged during fieldwork was instead

→ [5] Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no. 2 (2005): 147–58.

[6] Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968).

[7] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

→ [8] Francisco J. Cuberos Gallardo, "Migrant Urbanism: Cape Verdean Djunta mon and Its Impact on the Built Environment of Cova da Moura (Lisbon)," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 47, no. 3 (2023): 329–48.

Francisco J. Cuberos Gallardo, "El 'djunta-mon' en la periferia de Lisboa: migración caboverdiana y comportamiento moral en un contexto de conflicto urbano," *Revista de Antropología Social* 28, no. 1 (2019): 51–69.

Djunta mon is a Cape Verdean Creole expression that literally means "joining hands." It traditionally describes a system of reciprocal labour, particularly in agricultural work, in which neighbours and family members contribute labour to one another's work in turn. Cuberos-Gallardo documents its transformation within Cova da Moura from a practical form of inter-household aid, used in house-building and in securing basic services, into a broader moral and political framework of collective identity and resistance. The practice was explicitly mobilised when the Câmara Municipal de Amadora announced plans in 2001 to demolish 80 per cent of the settlement.

a more diffuse moral disposition: an awareness of shared vulnerability in relation to the city, the state, and the land, and a corresponding refusal to treat that precarity as a reason for competition. In this sense, *djunta mon* is not employed as a fixed ethnographic label, but as a methodological orientation toward reciprocity, obligation, and care.

The thesis attempts to practice research as a form of *djunta mon*. Not in the sense of a formalised reciprocity, a gift economy of data and returns, but in the sense of entering a system of relationships already in motion and contributing to it.

The knowledge produced in Segundo Torrão by its residents, and by researchers like João Duarte who spent years there before this thesis began, by community members who have mapped their own territory and named their own streets, pre-exists this research and exceeds it. To arrive in that context with a thesis project is not to bring knowledge in, but to participate, however partially and temporarily, in a knowledge system that does not need the thesis in order to function.

The methodological consequence of this principle is concrete. The conversations, photographs, and shared time that constitute the primary material of this research are understood here not as data collected but as contributions received, contributions that create an obligation. That obligation cannot be fully discharged within the thesis itself, but it can be acknowledged, and it can orient the choices made in how the material is used, how people are named or not named, which voices are foregrounded, and how much space is left for what could not be fully understood.

This chapter introduces care and *djunta mon* as the methodological ground of the research; the concept of care returns, and is developed further, in Chapter 5.

THESIS IN PROGRESS, AND TO NOT KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT

These epistemological premises shaped the very structure of this thesis. Rather than departing from a fixed research question or a predetermined output, the work was kept deliberately open, so as to to remain sensitive to the context, to the people encountered, and to their stories. The thesis, in this sense, is *a thesis in progress,* built more through listening rather than through a prior design intent.

This approach felt especially necessary given the complexity of the neighborhood under analysis. Imposing a project-driven framework from the outset would have contradicted the relational and non-extractive ***ethos*** described above; the intention, instead, was to let the research be shaped by what emerged from the field.

Any final output should therefore be understood as a form of return, however partial and insufficient, an attempt to give back something to the people and communities that made this work possible.

SENSING THE WORLD OTHERWISE

Interviews and relational encounters with invisibilized groups open up a different form of knowledge, one that is fundamentally relational. This kind of knowledge does not only allow us to look at the world, but to feel it through the body and through senses that exceed the visual. This is what Mignolo calls *world sensing*,[9] as distinct from mere world view, a concept that points toward an embodied and situated way of engaging with reality.

A further theoretical grounding comes from Édouard Glissant's concept of *opacity*.[10] Conventional research tends to operate on a principle of transparency, assuming that the object of study can be fully understood, translated into the researcher's own terms, and reduced to familiar schemas. Glissant argues against this. He defends *the right to opacity, the right to remain incomprehensible, not as a refusal of dialogue, but as an honest acknowledgment of limits*. It resists the impulse to dissolve difference into a single, totaliz-

→ [9] Walter D. Mignolo, "Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: On (De)coloniality, Border Thinking and Epistemic Disobedience," *Postcolonial Studies* 14, no. 3 (2011): 273–83.

[10] Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

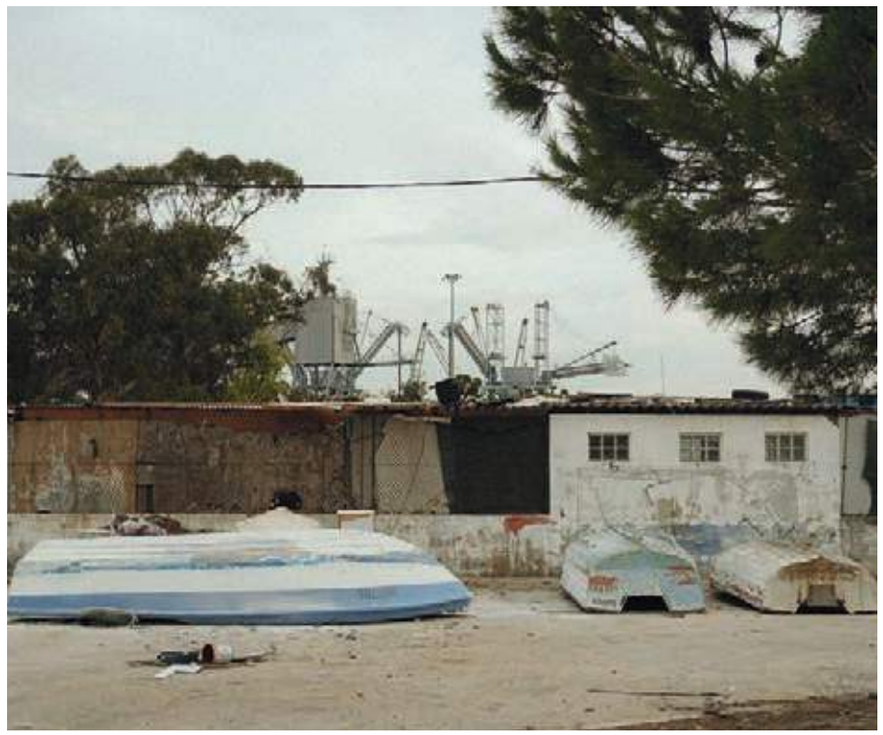


Figure 2.2
View from behind the silos, showing fishermen's shacks and several boats awaiting repair.

ing logic.

Building on these premises, this research also draws on the notion of *sentipensante* inquiry, developed by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda.[11] The concept challenges the Cartesian separation between reason and emotion, and calls for research that thinks and feels at the same time. Knowledge, here, is not produced on the object of study, but *with it and for it*.

This has methodological consequences that go beyond epistemology. Research on the urban beyond the city calls for approaches that move past established frameworks. This thesis draws on planetary urbanisation theory and on post-colonial and feminist critique as a way of stepping outside the mainstream, extractivist gaze through which such settlements are usually read. Rather than applying these frameworks from above, it attempts to build a grounded, situated way of looking, rooted in direct, first-person engagement with these realities, and attentive to the limits of what can be known from the outside.

2.2 Creative writing

ENTANGLED STORIES

Storytelling has long been used as a communication tool in architecture. In order to persuade clients, architects tell stories. However, when storytelling is reduced to technical illustration or design marketing, it hides rather than reveals the problems, inconsistencies, and weaknesses that come with any spatial intervention. This thesis asks whether architectural storytelling can become something more.

The idea of entangled stories suggests using storytelling as a method of worldmaking, starting from the periphery of the built environment and paying attention to its less audible and visible voices, both human and non-human. Telling an entangled story allows for *plural, situated, and relational accounts* of place while working against the totalising gaze of traditional architectural representation.

The methodological framework of the thesis is directly influenced by this approach. 2º Torrão, the settlement being examined, is not viewed as an object to be surveyed or an issue to be resolved. It is viewed as a territory with its own histories, personalities, and ecologies. The Silopor grain silo, the NATO military base, a fenced-in horse, the fishing boats along the shore, the rainwater drainage channel that carries the traces of the violent demolitions that occurred in the *bairro*, a maritime pine, the trash and the many dogs running free, the narrow *becos* (alleys) that, after branching suddenly into a series of other *becos*, open unexpectedly into wider spaces, the many cafés, the few water collection cisterns on the rooftops, the increasingly numerous additional storeys built on top in exposed bricks that make the alleys darker, the fish being prepared in the wood, the sand dunes and the *praia*, are all recognised as narrative anchors. Each of these characters offers its own window into the complexity of the place.

STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

The narrative techniques used in this thesis are interpreted broadly. The main source of situated knowledge is resident and volunteers' interviews and conversations, which enable perspectives that are rarely heard in architectural discourse to guide the study. Photography operates not as neutral documentation but as a *selective, embodied act of looking*, a form of partial perspective in Haraway's sense. What cannot be properly communicated through words is translated with drawing and graphic representation. Finally, creative writing emerges in situations where opacity, in Glissant's sense, is *the more faithful form* and transparency would distort rather than clarify.

Together, these tools do not produce a complete or definitive account of 2º Torrão. They produce an incomplete and situated one. That is, precisely, the point.

BETWEEN LINES: FRAGMENT AS METHOD

The methodological framework of this thesis finds expression not only in its theoretical premises but also in its formal choices. If margin names a relational position and otherwise a horizon of possibility, as discussed in Chapter 1, the fragment names the unit through which this thesis chooses to look, and to write.

Rather than approaching Segundo Torrão as a totality to be described, this research treats the settlement, and its telling, as an accumulation of fragments, material, narrative, human, non-human, each carrying its own partial claim on the territory. A fragment, in this sense, can function like a crack, in Akomolafe's terms, a point through which what the dominant order excludes becomes momentarily visible. It is also, following James Scott's notion of "weapons of the weak", small, partial, and resistant to being catalogued and rendered fully legible by power.

This refusal of full legibility can

→ [11] Orlando Fals Borda, *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina*, ed. Víctor Manuel Moncayo (Ciudad de México and Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores and CLACSO, 2015).

again be understood through Édouard Glissant's notion of opacity. Writing against the demand, embedded in Western epistemology, that the other be made transparent, translatable, and fully knowable, Glissant argues for "the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but that is subsistence within an irreducible singularity." To grant opacity is to refuse the assumption that understanding requires dissolving difference into what is already familiar. A fragment, read in this light, is not a piece of a puzzle waiting to be completed into a coherent whole; it is a form that insists on remaining partially unreadable, and whose value lies precisely in that refusal.

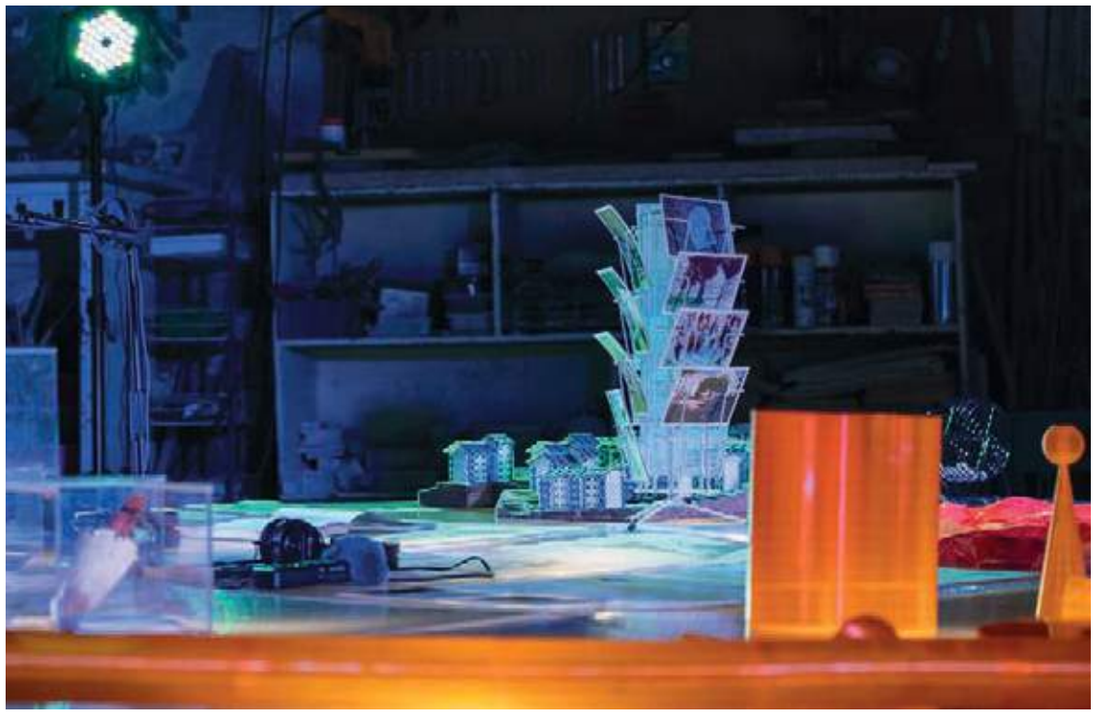
Drawing on the practice of ConversA(c)tion developed by Gios and Tavolieri,[12] the thesis incorporates creative and narrative inserts alongside the analytical text. These fragments, which interrupt the linear flow of the argument, constitute *a parallel layer of reading*. They do not illustrate or explain; they gesture toward something without making it fully transparent.

This formal choice is understood here as a practice of care, in the sense introduced earlier in this chapter alongside *djunta mon*: care not as an ethical supplement but as a mode of attention that the text must practice toward its own material. The creative inserts allow what was encountered in the field to surface on the page in a form that "resists the demand for total legibility",[13] an exercise of opacity in Glissant's sense.

→ [12] Elsa Gios and Nabila Tavolieri, "From Metaphors to Figurations: Experiencing 'Margin', 'Centre' and 'Resistance' in the Ethnographic Field and Beyond," *Annali di Ca' Foscari, Serie Orientale* 3 (2025): 121–64.

Figure 2.3

"Instructions for Drawing Dialogues" – performative lecture by Space Transcribers. Presented in Feb, 2025,Lisboa.



→ [13] Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation.*

Figure 2.4

"Transcribe: Participatory Actions in Braga's Social Housing Estates" – a year-long project by Space Transcribers that reshaped the narratives of Enguardas, Santa Tecla, and Picoto (Portugal).



They hold embarrassment, fatigue, and shared joy not as data to be processed but as textures of presence that resist reduction. Some of these fragments echo the voices of the people met in the field, without claiming to represent them. Writing, in this sense, is not merely descriptive: it is, as Gios and Tavolieri argue, a material practice of resistance. It works against the conventions of transparency that govern much academic production and insists on the irreducibility of what was lived. The formal structure of this thesis is therefore itself a methodological stance: an attempt to produce knowledge that is *relational and incomplete by design.*

2.3 Approaching Segundo Torrão

STANDING AT THE THRESHOLD / PARAR NO LIMIAR

The first weeks in the *bairro*. I would arrive, walk, sit, look. I had read about situated knowledge, accountable positioning, subjugated standpoints. None of it translated into knowing what to do once I was actually there: I was not sure where to look or whether to look at all. The *moradores* were not hostile, mostly indifferent, , and that indifference reflected something accumulated over years of researchers arriving, studying, and leaving.

The collective Space Transcribers, in their practice-based research in Braga's social housing estates, describe the process of entering as "slow, long and occasionally demotivating".[14] Something similar happened to me.

The first visits took place between May and June 2025, alone, during the final weeks of my Erasmus exchange, when I visited the area on a handful of occasions without yet any precise research aim. In September 2025, I returned to Lisbon for two weeks, during which I partially attended the course Laboratório de Práticas para o Habitar Popular, led by Rosa Armas and Andrea Figueiredo Arruda, on self-produced settlements, alongside professor Daniel's design studio, which included a site visit to the area of Segundo Torrão and, more extensively, to Cova do Vapor. This visit was followed by further, more targeted returns to the site. Then alone again, I returned to Lisbon a third time between late February and mid-April 2026, this time within the framework of the Erasmus for Thesis programme, which supported the core period of fieldwork: a continuous stretch of nearly two months structured around repeated visits, almost daily, before the encounters that changed the shape of the research.

What shifted things was, above all, people. Rosa,[15] PhD candidate in architecture at FAUL researching participatory processes in self-produced neighbourhoods, whose generosity and care made much of what followed possible, provided the contacts of both João[16] and Francesca[17].
João, a researcher, facilitator and former *morador do bairro*, had spent years building relationships within 2º Torrão. Through him I met Sebastião, an inhabitant who was generous in sharing his story, and Pedro, photographer and anthropologist, who became a companion during many visits and whose photographs appear in this thesis.
Francesca had been working with the *bairro* and its inhabitants for years, through art and ethnographic research, always with the direct involvement of residents. Her willingness to include me in that work opened

→ [14] Space Transcribers, *Transcribe Book: Participatory Actions in Braga's Social Housing Estates* (Braga: Braga City Council, 2018), 67.
Space Transcribers is an interdisciplinary international network of architects, urbanists, and artists that critically examines the contemporary built environment through its representations and collective imaginaries. Their approach treats places as open to multiple meanings, shaped by different layers of time, history, space, and social actors. The group works through immersive fieldwork and socio-spatial practices, aiming to observe, interpret, and make visible the specific characteristics of the places and communities with which it engages.

[15] Rosa Arma is a PhD candidate in Architecture at FA.ULisboa, where her current research focuses on the socio-spatial impacts of interactive interventions in self-produced neighbourhoods within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Since 2016, she has been a member of GESTUAL (Grupo de Estudos Socio-Territoriais, Urbanos e de Ação Local), an interdisciplinary research group within CIAUD (Centro de Investigação em Arquitetura, Urbanismo e Design), where she contributes to studies on socio-territorial and urban processes, with particular attention to local action and urban practices.

[16] João Duarte is a researcher in science communication and inclusive research practices,



Figure 2.5
A child holding a drawing she made during a neighbourhood party in Segundo Torrão.

something that the first weeks alone had not. Through her participation in an Erasmus Plus project, organised jointly with the *moradores*, I met Mario, Dio, Lucrezia, Claudia, and other inhabitants of the *bairro*. This involvement extended to concrete moments of collective life: I took part in the organisation of a neighbourhood party held in the square next to the Associação de Moradores, preceded by some days of communal clean-up that brought me into contact with many more residents than those named here.

DRAWING DIALOGUES

Across ten years of practice, the Braga-based architecture collective, Space Transcribers, has developed what they describe, in their 2025 performance lecture "Instructions for Drawing Dialogues", as an understanding of architecture as a fundamentally dialogic and collaborative practice, anchored in empathy and ethics, and important for imagining more inclusive and sustainable futures. Taken together, their projects suggest that the practice of drawing dialogues is not a fixed protocol but an evolving set of dispositions: a willingness to not know, an ethics of presence, a commitment to building trust before building anything else.

In Transcrever, the project most extensively documented conducted between 2017 and 2018, these dispositions are articulated with particular clarity. Facing communities historically tired of being treated as objects of study, Space Transcribers made a deliberate choice to abandon surveys and structured interviews in favour of a relational process of dialogue-design. The most emblematic tool in this process was the Polaroid camera: each encounter was marked by the gift of an instant photograph, a gesture that simultaneously produced a first documentary trace and established a moment of reciprocity between researcher and resident.

This methodological lineage informed the initial intentions of this research. The plan was to invite a few *moradores* to photograph their neighbourhood using instant cameras, following the photovoice methodology developed by Wang and Burris,[18] and to use the resulting images as the basis for conversations and shared reflection. In practice, this did not happen: time was limited, and the relationships built during fieldwork already asked something of the people involved. Adding a photographic task felt like one more demand on inhabitants who had already been generous with their time and stories.

Photography is nonetheless present in this thesis. The images included are my own, if not specified otherwise, made during visits to the *bairro*, and focused primarily on its spaces rather than its people. They do not claim to represent the community's perspective; they are a partial and situated act of looking, nothing more.

→ with a background in Biochemistry and History and Philosophy of Science. His current work focuses on action-research in scientific culture and on facilitating participatory approaches to science research, particularly in contexts involving social margins and inclusion. He has also developed an ongoing practice in socio-cultural mediation and science-and-technology outreach through museums and other organizations. He is associated with Canto do Curió, an association working with the neighbourhoods of Trafaria, Almada, in support of social participation in science, the arts, and politics.

[17] Francesca De Luca's work focuses on ethnographic, collaborative artistic projects and experimental methodologies, with particular attention to the relationship between ethnography and art practice. They have coordinated and curated participatory projects involving youth, community-based artistic intervention, and decolonial education, and their research interests include diasporic identities, coloniality and decoloniality. She's a a member of EBANO Collective, an artistic and curatorial collective focused on site-specific projects and urban interventions. She coordinated the Erasmus+ project AYE, Action-research with youth in Europe, and curated the project eMConstrução, a community-based artistic collaborative intervention in 2º Torrão.

[18] Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, → "Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment," *Health Education and Behavior* 24, no. 3 (1997): 369–87.

[19] Gueto Family (GTO Fam) is a rap group formed by three childhood friends from the Segundo Torrão neighborhood, Mário King, Sessa and GK. They use music as a tool for social intervention, giving voice to their community, challenging stigma, and demanding better living conditions in an area marked by housing precarity. Their songs portray the everyday reality of a multicultural neighborhood with strong African and immigrant presence, highlighting both structural difficulties and the solidarity among residents. As the project has grown, the trio has become a cultural reference point for Segundo Torrão, turning rap into a vehicle for denunciation but also for hope and community transformation.

[20] Rosi Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject," *Comparative Critical Studies* 11, no. 2–3 (2014): 163–84.

[21] Ibid., 165.

[22] Alan Gilbert, "The Return of the Slum: Does Language Matter?" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31, no. 4 (2007): 697–713.

[23] Kim Dovey, Tanzil Shafique, Matthijs van Oostrum, and Ishita Chatterjee, "Informal Settlement Is Not a Euphemism for 'Slum': What's at Stake Beyond the Language?" *International Development Planning Review*

SPEAKING *WITH*, NOT *ABOUT*

The primary source of situated knowledge in this research is conversation. Not interviews in the conventional sense, though two more structured exchanges did take place, but a broader, more varied field of dialogue: informal talks during activities and shared time in the *bairro*.

Following the principle already outlined in the work of Space Transcribers, dialogue here is understood as method rather than instrument, and knowledge is produced *with* rather than *about* the community.

The two structured conversations were with Sebastião and Mário, both *moradores* of 2º Torrão. These structured conversations, along with several of the informal exchanges, were recorded, and photographs showing residents' faces were taken, only after the people involved had given their informed consent regarding the nature of the work being carried out.

With Sebastião, the conversation followed the arc of a life: where he came from before the *bairro*, how he arrived, what it means to live there now. With Mário, the focus shifted toward the present and the collective: his role in organising activities within the *bairro*, the house currently under construction that he envisions as a shared space for everyone, and his music, rap songs that *speak of the community's struggles and refuse to let others tell its story*. Mário is part of the Gueto Family,[19] a group born from friendship and grown into something the *bairro* recognises as its own.

Beyond these two conversations, dialogue took other forms. With Francesca and João, exchanges were less structured but no less informative, shaped by their years of presence in the *bairro* and their willingness to share what that presence had taught them. With Dio, Lucrécia, Cláudia, and other *moradores* encountered through the Erasmus Plus project, conversations were often practical, about things to organise, to make, to clean, but practical talk is also a form of knowledge.

All conversations were conducted in Portuguese, with the exception of those with Rosa and Francesca, which took place in Italian. The language barrier is real and is worth naming: *it shaped what could be asked, what could be understood, and what inevitably escaped*.

Figure 2.6
Sebastião recounting his life story during a conversation at Café Americana, Trafaria. The encounter formed part of the fieldwork through which personal memory, everyday places, and the history of Segundo Torrão were approached.



2.4 Three fragments of meaning

THE LANGUAGE OF THE MARGINS

Language is not a neutral tool. It carries histories of power, exclusion, and epistemic violence. As Braidotti argues,[20] language is not merely an instrument of communication but an ontological site of the constitution of shared humanity: it structures what can be thought, said, and known. To write, in this sense, is a political act, one that exposes the power at work in its own structures and practices.

This thesis takes this premise seriously. Following hooks (1989), silence is understood here not as the absence of speech but as a condition imposed upon those who have been historically denied the right to speak. Making space for the voices of the residents of 2º Torrão, rather than speaking in their place, is therefore treated as a methodological and ethical choice.

The question of language also concerns the terms through which these settlements are named and described. Dominant urban discourse has historically labelled these settlements with terms that carry stigma: *illegal, clandestine, precarious*. These are not neutral descriptors. The language of the majority tends to discipline and marginalise minor voices, reducing their complexity to a set of deficiencies measured against a normative standard. The attempt here is to shift attention from what these settlements lack to what they actively produce.

These naming choices are themselves a form of writing practice. The formal choices of this thesis are therefore understood as a linguistic practice in a broader sense. The use of creative writing alongside analytical text enacts what Braidotti describes as a *nomadic writing practice*: "one that resists the gravitational pull of the master signifier" and that resists flattening the complexity of lived experience into the conventions of academic transparency.[21] Writing, in this framework, is a self-reflexive enactment of the power at work in its own structures.

This thesis extends that positioning into the question of language itself. Writing always with an accent, across languages and their histories, is itself a form of situated knowledge. This thesis is written primarily in English, but with Portuguese and Italian surfaces.

→ 42, no. 5 (2020): 1–12.

[24] John F. C. Turner, "Housing as a Verb," in *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 148–75.

[25] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991). Originally published as *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1974).

[26] Tanzil Shafique, "Re-thinking Housing Through Assemblages: Lessons from a Deleuzean Visit to an Informal Settlement in Dhaka," *Housing Studies* 37, no. 6 (2022): 1015–34. [25] Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no. 2 (2005): 148.

[27] Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," 148.

[28] Ibid., 150.

[29] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998; orig. ed. 1995), 18.

[30] Shafique, "Re-thinking Housing Through Assemblages," 1016.

[31] Ibid., 1022.

[32] Ibid., 1019-20.

[33] Redento B. Recio and Tanzil Shafique, "Reimagining (Informal) Housing Futures in Uncertain Times," *International Journal of Housing Policy* 22, no. 1 (2022): 107.

[34] Adriana L. Mas-

→ sidda, "Slums, Villas Miseria, and Barriadas: Why Terms Matter," *Journal of Urban History* 49, no. 3 (2023): 566–82.

[35] Ruth Glass, "Introduction: Aspects of Change," in *London: Aspects of Change*, Centre for Urban Studies (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1964).

[36] Neil Smith, "Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45, no. 4 (1979): 538–48.

[37] David Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).

[38] Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Neil Brenner, *Critique of Urbanization: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 2016).

[39] *Expresso*, "Há 27 *bairros* de barracas na Grande Lisboa…," 4 June 2025, accessed 18 June 2026.

[40] Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," 150.

[41] Sandra Annunziata and Loretta Lees, *Staying Put! Um manual anti-gentrificação para as cidades da Europa do Sul* (2020).

A MICRO-GLOSSARY OF RESISTANCE

The streets of Segundo Torrão do not commemorate. They orient. *Rua dos Pinheiros* names what is there: pine trees. *Rua do Convivio* names what happens there: gathering, sociality. *Rua da NATO* names what borders it: the military installation that closes the settlement to the west. These are not the names of heroes or dates. They are acts of collective spatial knowledge, a cartography produced by those who live within it, in the language of everyday use rather than official memory.

The glossary that follows is constructed in the same spirit. It is not a neutral definitional apparatus, but a practice of naming that tries to be as honest as the streets of Segundo Torrão are: describing rather than commemorating, orienting rather than fixing. Each term chosen carries a history of use that this thesis tries to make visible, and a deliberate departure from the terms that dominant urban discourse has imposed on the communities studied here.

The thesis is written primarily in English. Portuguese surfaces in it as the language of the place, of the *moradores*, of the *bairro*. Italian surfaces as the native language of the researcher. Cape Verdean Creole surfaces in the concept of *djunta mon*. These are not incidental linguistic presences: they are, as Braidotti argues, traces of the *multiple locations from which this research speaks*. Writing always with an accent, across languages and their histories, is itself a form of situated knowledge.

Bairro auto-produzido / Self-produced settlement

The choice of terminology in any study of housing produced outside formal regulatory frameworks is never neutral: it encodes assumptions about the people who build, the spaces they inhabit, and the legitimacy of the act of building itself. This thesis uses the term *self-built settlement* in English and *bairro auto-produzido* in Portuguese, rather than *slum*, *informal settlement*, or their Portuguese equivalents such as *bairro barraca* o *bairro de lata*. The reason is explained in the following paragraph.

The word *slum* carries an origin that is, as Gilbert argues,[22] intrinsically negative. Its first written appearance was apparently in 1812 where a slum was inauspiciously labelled as being synonymous with "racket" or "criminal trade". Despite decades in which the term had largely been abandoned in social science, the UN's *Cities Without Slums* initiative resuscitated this old and dangerous term from the habitat vocabulary, launched by the Cities Alliance in 1999 and subsequently incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals. Gilbert's foundational critique of that revival remains the clearest statement of what is at stake linguistically: *the word is dangerous because it confuses the physical problem of poor-quality housing with the characteristics of the people living there*. In doing so, it transforms a structural condition, the absence of affordable formal housing, into a moral attribute of the residents. The word *slum* conflates a raft of meanings about construction, services, design quality, crowding, tenure, informality, illegality and social class into a digestible stereotype, a label for a stigmatised neighbourhood that can become a slur on its inhabitants.

The term *informal settlement* was long assumed to be a neutral corrective to *slum*, and has been widely adopted in international policy discourse precisely as a less pejorative alternative. However, Dovey and colleagues have shown that this substitution is analytically insufficient.[23] The phrase *informal settlement* is widely used as a euphemism for *slum*, avoiding a word that can be seen to cast a stigma on neighbourhoods of the urban poor. However, the term *informal settlement* also refers to self-organised production methods used by the urban poor to create affordable housing and infrastructure. This dual meaning indicates an unresolved tension within the concept itself. In addition to the negative register of the *slum*, illegality, insecurity, and material scarcity, informality is also linked to the gradual self-organization of urban space by its residents, a positive register that the term "informal" neglects to highlight. In the specific Portuguese context, the terms *bairro informal* and *bairro clandestino* are analytically imprecise, since many residents of these neighbourhoods paid municipal property taxes (IMI), meaning that the state had in practice recognised a degree of formal existence of these places even while denying their legal status.

The term adopted in this thesis, *self-produced settlement* or *bairro auto-produzido*, is grounded in two distinct but convergent intellectual traditions. The first is the tradition inaugurated by John F.C. Turner, whose essay "Housing as a Verb" introduced a decisive conceptual shift in how housing should be understood.[24] Turner argued that what matters in *housing is not what it is but what it does in people's lives*, and that the worth of a physical dwelling cannot be assumed to lie in its material qualities alone, but rather in the relationship between the object and its user. When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contributions in the design, construction, or management of their housing, both this process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well-being. When people have no control over nor responsibility for key decisions in the housing process, dwelling environments may instead become a barrier to personal fulfillment and a burden on the economy. Turner's framework places the act of building as a process at the centre of analysis, foregrounding the agency of the inhabitant rather than the material deficit of the result measured against a formal standard.

The second tradition is Lefebvre's theory of the production of space. The theory of the production of space, conceived by Lefebvre in the 1970s, is an influential theoretical construct in urban studies and human geography. For Lefebvre, space is not a pre-existing container in which social life unfolds, but it is itself actively produced through social practices, representations and lived experience. The city is the result of the interaction of the dynamics that run through it, of which its spatial morphology is a consequence: the possibility of a right to build the city is approached from the angle of power relations, from the power to act collectively to economic and political power.[25] The term *produzido* in *bairro auto-produzido* directly invokes this framework: it names the settlement as the spatial outcome of a social act of production, incremental, collective, materially grounded, carried out by the inhabitants themselves. Crucially, it foregrounds the agent (the community) and the process (building), rather than the deficit of the result with respect to a formal norm.

Where *slum* names a pathology and *informal settlement* names an absence of regulation, *bairro auto-produzido* names a practice: the active, material production of urban space by its users.

This terminological choice has direct consequences for how the legislative history examined in this thesis is read. The shift documented across Portuguese housing law, from *bairros de barracas* and *erradicação* in the Decreto-Lei n.º 163/93, through *núcleos precários* and *situações indignas* in the Decreto-Lei n.º 37/2018, to the participatory obligations of the Lei n.º 83/2019, can be understood as a partial and incomplete movement towards a recognition of the inhabitants as subjects of urban production rather than objects of state intervention.

Urban informality

"A spectre haunts" the study of settlements produced outside formal regulatory frameworks, Tanzil Shafique writes at the opening of his 2022 analysis of Karail in Dhaka: the spectre of describing the world in binaries, in oppositions, in essentialised identities.[26] Formal and informal. Top-down and bottom-up. Self-organised and state-planned. These categories, he argues, appear as common sense without demanding any attention, while on the ground they explain very little about how settlements actually work, who produces them, or what holds them together.

This thesis adopts *urban informality* as an analytical term with full awareness of its instability. The word carries a double register that has never been fully resolved. As Dovey, Shafique and other scholars argue, *informal settlement* functions widely as a euphemism for *slum*, importing through the back door the very stigma it claims to replace; but it also names something else, a set of self-organised production processes through which residents construct affordable housing and infrastructure in the absence of state provision (Dovey et al., 2020). The tension between these two registers is not a defect of the term that better language could repair. It is the tension that makes the term useful: it holds in view both the structural condition that produces settlements like Segundo Torrão, and the practices through which residents respond to and reshape that condition.

Ananya Roy's foundational redefinition remains the clearest articulation of what is at stake in this shift. Against frameworks that treat informality as a separate sector, bounded and spatially contained, Roy proposes understanding it as a *mode of urbanization*: not a parallel city existing alongside the formal one, but a series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another.[27] Crucially, informality in this reading is not the absence of state regulation but its product. The planning apparatus of the state, Roy argues, holds the power to determine what is informal and what is not, and to determine which forms of informality will thrive and which will disappear.[28]

Informality is the expression of that sovereign power: "not the chaos that precedes order, but the situation that results from its suspension" (Agamben, 1998).[29]

Yet Roy's framework, powerful as it is, still risks reproducing a top-down reading in which informality is primarily something the state produces and manages, rather than something residents navigate, negotiate, and transform through everyday practice. Shafique's assemblage approach offers a corrective. Working from six months of ethnographic fieldwork in Karail, he argues that what we call an informal settlement cannot be described as bottom-up or self-organised, since these terms flatten the multiple scales of decision, the heterogeneous actors, and the intersecting desires that actually produce the settlement.[30] The settlement is instead a field of tendencies: synergies, antagonisms, opportunisms, and empathies between bodies human and non-human, between residents, state agencies, NGOs, political parties, and material infrastructure.[31] What holds these tendencies together is not a shared plan or a unified community will, but a *landscape of desire*: a field of possibilities conditioned by narratives, affects, and material capacities that guide the becoming of a settlement without determining it in advance.[32]
This is close to what Recio and Shafique describe elsewhere as a shift from a *framework of problematics* to one of *potentialities*: an inversion of the analytical relationship to informal housing that asks not what is wrong with these settlements, but what they are capable of, what they already do, and what forms of knowledge and political engagement they make possible.[33] It resonates equally with the observation made elsewhere in this thesis, following Massidda, that the vocabulary of urban informality is not neutral and that any term chosen tells us as much about the analytical agenda of those who use it as about the spaces and communities it purports to describe.[34]

In the specific context of Segundo Torrão, the term *urban informality* appears in this thesis primarily when engaging with academic and policy literature that uses it. In the body of the thesis, the settlement is named a *bairro auto-produzido*, and its residents are named *moradores*. This terminological discipline is not pedantry. It is the refusal to allow the dominant language of urban poverty management to frame, in advance, what the fieldwork found.

Gentrification

A concept coined by Ruth Glass in 1964 to describe the displacement of low-income residents from inner London as higher-income groups moved in and renovated the existing housing stock.[35] Glass observed not merely a shift in property values, but a transformation of the social fabric of a place: its rhythms, its uses, its networks of trust and mutual recognition.

In subsequent theoretical developments, Neil Smith framed gentrification as a structured outcome of cycles of capital disinvestment and reinvestment, explainable through the concept of the rent gap, the difference between the rent currently generated by an area and the rent potentially achievable under more intensive land use.[36] David Harvey extended this reading to the scale of the city as a whole, interpreting gentrification as one expression of the uneven geographical development that capital requires.[37] Sassen and Brenner later connected these local processes to global financialization, whereby investment capital treats urban real estate as an asset class, operating at scales that exceed any local planning decision.[38]

In the Portuguese context, and particularly in the Lisbon metropolitan area, gentrification takes specific forms linked to state policies aimed at attracting foreign capital. The Golden Visa programme, which granted a residence permit (and, after five years, citizenship) in exchange for real estate investments between 300,000 and 500,000 euros, contributed to the creation of a luxury housing market that is often left uninhabited, replacing the historic building stock without producing any real increase in housing supply. The NHR (Non-Habitual Resident) tax regime, which offered a favourable flat tax to those relocating from abroad, attracted a significant influx of digital nomads and new foreign residents (particularly North Americans and Europeans) with spending power far exceeding that of local residents, accelerating the rise in rents and property prices. Both programmes were suspended between 2023 and 2024, but their effects on the housing market persist. Compounding these factors has been the proliferation of short-term tourist rentals, which has further reduced the stock of housing available for stable residence.

The combined effect of these dynamics has produced not only gentrification in central neighbourhoods, but a falling displacement effect toward the metropolitan periphery, where, over the past two years, informal settlements (*bairros de barracas*) have once again grown, inhabited by precarious workers, migrants, and descendants of immigrants from the former colonies, many of whom previously lived in regular housing that had become financially unsustainable. Associations such as Vida Justa estimate up to 23-27 such settlements in the Lisbon metropolitan area alone.[39] The institutional response, often limited to demolitions without relocation, illustrates what Roy observed: the state holds the power to determine which forms of informality may persist and which must be eliminated.[40]

For the case of Trafaria and Segundo Torrão, this theoretical framework allows us to read gentrification not as an already concluded process, but as a structural and ongoing risk, produced by the combination of tourist-residential pressure, regulatory vulnerability, and public narratives that frame the settlement as a problem to be solved rather than as a community with legitimate claims on the territory it occupies and has produced. Symbolic displacement, in this context, operates through discourses that moralise poverty, stigmatise ethnic and racial diversity, and criminalise forms of spatial reappropriation for housing and social purposes.[41]

This section appears on a red background, marking it as a reflection on the thesis's own language.

Chapter 1.0

Chapter 2.0

Chapter 3.0 p. 092

INFRASTRUCTURES OF EXCLUSION

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Urban informality as a specific trait of contemporaneity

3.3 The landscape of informality in Lisbon: a genealogy of spatial violence

3.4 Infrastructures of exclusion: the state, the body and the territory

3.5 Policy as violence: a genealogy of housing law from revolution to financialisation

Chapter 4.0

Chapter 5.0

Chapter 6.0

3.Infrastructures of exclusion



Figure 3.1

Aerial photograph of the depot, port terminal, petroleum quay, and Bico da Calha beach. Arquivo Histórico de Almada.

In 2025, an investigative report counted twenty-seven self-produced settlements still standing in the metropolitan area of Lisbon, a European Union capital celebrated abroad for its light, its architecture, its post-imperial cosmopolitanism. Some of these settlements have existed for over forty-five years, longer than most of the housing policies designed, at various points, to eliminate them.

This chapter asks what it means to take these places seriously: not as an anomaly to be explained away, nor as evidence of a Global South out of place in Europe, but as a specific and enduring mode of urbanization, one that the state itself has produced, sustained, and periodically destroyed. What logic allows a wealthy European capital to house, for half a century, forms of settlement it simultaneously refuses to recognise? And what happens to a community's claim to a place when the state that excludes it also holds the power to decide, and redecide, what counts as legal, informal, or precarious?



3.1 Introduction

COSPIRAC(IT)Y

The contemporary urban condition can't, this chapter argues, be fully grasped through a simple, normative opposition between a "formal" city and its "informal" other. To persist in such a dualistic epistemology is to remain trapped within what Ananya Roy identifies as a persistent framework that frames the cities of the global South as sites of crisis, their "megacities" defined by a "planet of slums" teeming with "surplus humanity" (Roy, 2011).[1] This apocalyptic narrative, which Roy powerfully critiques, constructs informality as a pathology to be cured, eradicated. The exhausted and violent response of architectural and urban design to the contemporary housing crisis, still aimed at relaunching economic growth at all costs (Tozzi, 2023),[2] can be read as a direct symptom of this failure of imagination. The real task, as this chapter will argue, is not to search for a new formal model to impose upon the "unplanned," but to see the "informal" itself as a specific mode of urbanization, one that bears within it the material traces of state power, neglect, and systemic violence.

This thesis, and specifically this chapter, focuses on a precise instance of this global phenomenon: the "postcolonial slums" of Lisbon, a term coined by Eduardo Ascensão (2010)[3] to describe the unique constellation of self-built settlements that ring the periphery of a European capital. In this context, the housing rights collective Vida Justa works to halt demolitions and to ensure that families living in shantytowns are relocated to adequate housing rather than simply displaced. According to the movement Vida Justa, there are currently 23 informal shantytown settlements in the Lisbon metropolitan area,[4] while a 2025 investigative report by the newspaper Expresso identified 27 such neighborhoods, suggesting both the scale of the phenomenon and the difficulty of fully capturing it in official statistics.[5]

These settlements, which have persisted for over 45 years, are not the sprawling slums of Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo. As Ascensão documents, "they tend to be pockets of 1000 or 2000 or so inhabitants scattered around the general urban fabric. Usually they are located on the outskirts, in indistinct areas close to administrative boundaries (Salgueiro, 1977).[6]

Their specific history is crucial: they initially formed through internal migration of white Portuguese from the countryside, then grew exponentially after the fall of the Portuguese colonial empire with the arrival of *retornados* and migrants from Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe. "The post-colonial population of Lisbon's shantytowns makes them somewhat unique", Ascensão argues, a direct spatial legacy of Portugal's imperial past.[7]

The area, once developed along a disused military road, became favorable to these settlements because it was a zone of administrative invisibility, where land was "neither profitable for agriculture nor likely, at the time, to be legally developed into urban space".[8] This was a limbo of deregulation, where unauthorized occupations were tacitly accepted by the State, which simply "turned its eyes away" (Rodrigues, 1989).[9]

The presence of such settlements in a "first world" European city is not an anomaly. It runs against a body of literature that reads such settlements as necessary stages toward future urbanization, a tendency examined more fully in section 3.2. On the contrary, these places must be analyzed as key elements for deciphering the political and economic dynamics that govern the housing question, revealing the mechanisms through which a fundamental human need is reduced to a financial asset.

This investigation, therefore, moves beyond the architectural level to *embrace the overall ecology of these spaces*: the set of social, environmental, historical and material relations that enabled their birth and sustain their existence. Drawing on Lefebvre's (1991) writings on the production of space, economic and capitalist interests emerge as the main drivers of such production. Added to this is the work of Bruno Latour, who views architecture, planning, and thinking about the city as a socio-technological continuum (Latour & Hermant, 1998).[10] Ascensão's methodological objective places the "fleeting" nature of the self-produced settlement form at the center of his analysis. "The objective is to examine the notion of an architectural form that travels through the landscapes of different and uneven modernities. Except, in contrast to the bungalow or the residential high-rise, the urban slum is a more fleeting form. Fleeting in that it seems to escape and fleeting in that its "official existences" are always minimal, thus rendering it difficult for social scientists to "grasp"; fleeting in that it is a global urban form with known addresses (African, South American and Asian conurbations) that also appears in other locations (like Lisbon) if conditions arise".[11]

The object of study is therefore a built artifact, in this case, a self-produced settlement like b*airro* Segundo Torrão, and the entire ecology that comes to life inside and around them. Through the analysis of the built form, one can explore the relations created by the immigrant and postcolonial population with the country of arrival, their access to resources, and

→ [1] Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, no. 2 (2011): 223–38.

[2] Lucia Tozzi, *L'invenzione di Milano: Culto della comunicazione e politiche urbane* (Napoli: Cronopio, 2023).

[3] Eduardo Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum': Informal Settlement as a 'Building Event' in Lisbon, Portugal" (London: The Urban Salon, 2010), 1-36.

[4] Vida Justa reports that there are currently "23 *bairros* de barracas na Grande Lisboa" and stresses that "há cada vez mais famílias trabalhadoras que não conseguem alugar uma casa e nem sequer um quarto." Vida Justa, quoted in "Moradores da periferia de Lisboa exigem 'vida justa'," Observador, 29 July 2025, accessed 18 July 2026, https://observador.pt/2025/07/30/moradores-de-*bairros*-da-periferia-de-lisboa-exigem-vida-justa-em-frente-a-sede-do-governo/.

[5] In a 2025 investigative report, Expresso identifies *"27 bairros de barracas na Grande Lisboa"* and notes that *"estão a nascer bairros inteiros, de tijolo ou de lata, onde vivem três mil famílias nos concelhos da Área Metropolitana de Lisboa,"* with informal self-built settlements recorded in "50% dos concelhos da AML."
"Há 27 *bairros* de barracas na Grande Lisboa: 'Trabalho, sou segurança, mas tive de construir uma casa ilegal para dar um teto à família'," *Expresso*, 4 June 2025, accessed 18 June 2026, https://expresso.pt/sociedade/2025-06-05-ha-27-*bairros*-de-barracas-na-grande-lisboa-trabalho-sou-seguranca-mas-tive-de-construir-uma-casa-ilegal-para-dar-um-teto-a-familia-99c5453d.

[6] Teresa Barata Salgueiro (1977), as cited in Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum'," 6.

[7] Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum'," 6.

[8] Eduardo Ascensão, "Slum Gentrification in Lisbon, Portugal: Displacement and the Imagined Futures of an Informal Settlement," in *Global Gentrifications: Uneven Development and Displacement*, ed. Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), 39.

[9] Carlos Rodrigues (1989), as cited in Eduardo Ascensão, "The Slum Multiple: A Cyborg Micro-history of an Informal Settlement in Lisbon," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 40, no. 5 (2016): 948.

[10] Bruno Latour and Émilie Hermant, P*aris ville invisible* (Paris: La Découverte–Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1998).

[11] Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum'," 8-9.

the modes of production of space. Ascensão defines the entire settlement process as a "building event," which allows him to look at "the 'technogram of housing and housing architecture (which) would allow to bring 'things' (humans and non-humans) together and to show how each 'thing' takes part respectively in 'stabilising' or 'destabilising' housing as a socio-technical hybrid".[12]
This methodological approach is fundamental to this chapter's argument: it allows us to see the history of state violence not as an abstract political narrative, but as a force concretely inscribed into the walls, roofs, and sanitation systems of these neighborhoods.

Studying this settlement from this perspective means giving dignity to a complex phenomenon that, from the absence of planning, rights and services, generates an assemblage of social and technical knowledge. A view from within the object of study is therefore proposed, one that considers people, their histories and their knowledge not as separate entities, but as part of a system of sociotechnical relations that sustain the material existence of the settlement. This is preferred over dwelling on what can be objectively measured by the state's expert knowledges, which, as Ascensão critiques, "do not approach the object in of itself but rather they look for what can be measured in it (eg. persons, etc); or take the opposite direction and look at it through a bird's eye view".[13]

The self-produced settlement becomes a valuable laboratory for investigating *otherwise* ways of living that place the collective, relational and caring aspects at the center.

The collective intelligence of these neighborhoods is what Ascensão names "technologies of inhabiting," meaning "all artefacts or interactions involved in the management of practical daily life in this invisible (to the state) neighbourhood, that is, the different associations between material artefacts and their use in daily life that made the neighbourhood work, and over time, emerge from invisibility".[14]
This chapter will trace how state power, through its housing policies and infrastructures of exclusion, has systematically worked to destroy these technologies and the social worlds they sustain.
From the SAAL program to the PER, from the AUGI law to the *1.º Direito*, the history of Portuguese housing policy is not a neutral administrative chronicle but a genealogy of how the state has calibrated its mechanisms of violence, shifting from direct demolition to financialized exclusion, but always maintaining the sovereign power to decide who can dwell in the city and who must be banished from it. I tried to "follow the network", as prescribed by Latour (1987).[15] Yet what I have produced can't be other than a partial, situated, and deeply political tracing of the architecture produced by exclusion and precarity.

→ [12] Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum'," 8.

[13] Ibid., 10.

[14] Ibid., 32.

[15] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

→ [16] Roy, "Slumdog Cities," 223.

3.2 Urban informality as a specific trait of contemporaneity

To study an informal settlement in Lisbon, a "first-world" European capital, is therefore not to study an anomaly, an exotic survival of underdevelopment in Europe. It is, rather, to deploy a valuable analytical lens that reveals the very mechanisms and logics of contemporary urbanization at all scales.

The first necessary step in this analysis is to critically dismantle the ontological and topological readings of "the slum" as a bounded territory of poverty and a fixed identity of its inhabitants. Roy's concept of *"subaltern urbanism"* is a vital, but also deeply limited, intervention in this field (Roy, 2011). This paradigm, which she traces through the work of influential figures like Hernando de Soto and the architectural gaze of Rem Koolhaas, seeks to counter apocalyptic and dystopian narratives. It does so by rendering the slum as a terrain of "habitation, livelihood, self-organization and politics" (Roy, 2011, p. 223),[16] celebrating its enterprising nature. This is an important gesture of recognition, a granting of agency to the urban subaltern, a necessary correction to the view of these territories as mere zones of abjection and criminality.
However, this very itinerary of recognition, which recodes the

Reserva Ecológica
Nacional (REN)

Segundo Torrão

NATO base

Silopor

Rio Tejo

Rio Tejo

self-produced settlement as a site of "heroic entrepreneurship" or a spontaneous "people's economy" (Hernando de Soto, 2000),[17] remains trapped within the same logic it tries to escape. As Roy powerfully argues, these people's economies are also, in our contemporary moment, the "active frontiers of contemporary capitalism, the greenfield sites where new forms of accumulation are forged and expanded, in the interstices of the slum, in the circuits of microfinance".[18]

As anticipated in section 3.1, the Koolhaas' contested gaze upon Lagos, which interprets its urbanism as a "culture of make-do" that generates "ingenious, critical alternative systems" and creates "intense emancipatory zones," from which the West "may be catching up," is the most spectacular and problematic example of this. It is a neo-organicist analysis that turns on the premise of an ontological difference, situating the African megacity outside the currents of world history, thereby transforming a brutal socio-political condition into an aestheticized model for a new kind of urbanism, completely detached from the vectors of power, history, and political economy that produce it.[19] De Soto's libertarian optimism, which presents the Third World self-produced settlement as a grassroots uprising of "heroic entrepreneurs" against state bureaucracy, is its closest policy complement. It is an equally depoliticizing move that frames the solution not in terms of wealth redistribution but in the technical fix of "wealth legalization," converting the complex ecology of the self-produced settlement into "dead capital" waiting to be brought to life by the formal market.[20]

The metonymic self-produced settlement, celebrated by the tourist's gaze on a "Reality Tour" or the architect's search for a new generative grammar, becomes a way of "worlding" the Third World city, making it recognizable, consumable, and ultimately governable within the existing parameters of global capitalism.

To move beyond this impasse, this chapter follows Roy in her radical epistemological shift.

> "Urban informality," for Roy, is not a sector of the economy nor a specific type of housing to be celebrated or condemned. It is an "idiom of urbanization," a logic or a mode of the production of space that is fundamentally not separate from formality but is constitutively produced by the state apparatus itself (Roy, 2011).

The key to understanding this is the concept of the "state of exception," which Roy borrows from the political philosophy of Giorgio Agamben. Yet, as Roy emphasizes in Slumdog Cities, states of exception do not stand outside metropolitan habitation; rather, they reveal a logic of rule that operates within the ordinary spaces of the city. Informality is not the chaos that precedes order, the primitive state from which a rational, planned city will eventually emerge. It is "rather the situation that results from its suspension" (Roy, 2005).[21] The sovereign power lies with the planning and legal apparatus of the state, which has the capacity to determine when to enact this suspension. This is the profound and destabilizing point: "The planning and legal apparatus of the state has the power to determine what is informal and what is not, and to determine which forms of informality will thrive and which will disappear".[22]

Informality is thus an effect of the state, a strategic tool for managing populations and space, not its pre-modern outside. The state operates through practices of exception, deregulation, and ambiguity, creating a territorialised flexibility where the line between legality and illegality is constantly redrawn in an "arbitrary and fickle" manner.[23]

The valorization and regularization of certain forms of informality, those threatened by the powerful, the middle class, the politically connected, is the hidden counterpart to the criminalization and erasure of subaltern informalities. The state creates both the legal violation and its selective absolution, demonstrating its political potency in the process.[24]

This is the foundational theoretical logic for understanding the starkly dual system that Silva and Farrall describe in Lisbon's periphery, and that was later formalized and institutionalized in the 1990s: the valorization, negotiation, and eventual legalization of the land-owning "informal settlers" of the *clandestinos* (the ISL model) versus the criminalization, stigmatization, and eventual violent erasure of the landless "slum dwellers" of the *barracas* (the ISS model).[25] This logic of differential value connects directly to the specific temporality and agency of these spaces, moving our analysis from an abstract political plane to the material reality of the built environment and human bodies.

The work of Teresa Caldeira provides this crucial materialist grounding with her concept of "peripheral urbanization". This is not simply a spatial designation, a mere location on the city's physical edge, but a specific "mode of the production of space" with its own complex logic.[26] Caldeira identifies four deeply interrelated dimensions that constitute this mode. The first is a distinctive form of agency and long-term, step-by-step temporality she calls *autoconstruction*. Residents are the primary "agents of urbanization, not simply consumers of spaces developed and regulated by others. They build their houses and cities step-by-step according to the resources they

→ [17] Hernando de Soto (2000), as cited in Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism," 227.

[18] Roy, "Slumdog Cities," 229.

[19] As elaborated by Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism."

[20] Roy, "Slumdog Cities," 227.

→ [21] Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no. 2 (2005): 149.

[22] Ibid.

[23] As elaborated by Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism."

[24] As elaborated by Eduardo Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum': Informal Settlement as a 'Building Event' in Lisbon."

[25] Paulo Silva and Helena Farrall, "From Informal to Formal: What Can Be Learned from Reviewing 50 Years of Portuguese Models, Policies and Politics," in *Dynamics and Resilience of Informal Areas*, ed. S. Attia et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 37–38.
In Silva and Farrall's typology, ISL refers to *informal settlements with landownership*, namely illegally subdivided land occupied by settlers who own the plots, while ISS refers to *informal settlements without secure land tenure*, such as "slums" built on land owned by others, often public land. The distinction is crucial because landownership shaped the way institutions respond to each form of informality.

[26] Teresa P. R. Caldeira, "Peripheral Urbanization: Autoconstruction, Transversal Logics, and Politics in Cities of the Global South," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35, no. 1 (2017): 3–20.

are able to put together at each moment." Their spaces are "always in the making," resulting in landscapes that are "never quite done, always being altered, expanded, and elaborated upon".[27] The second dimension is a *transversal* engagement with the official logics of legal property, formal labor, and state regulation. Peripheries "do not contest these logics directly as much as they operate with them in transversal ways."[28] The constant negotiation, the expectation of future legalization, and the state's own acting after the fact create highly unstable and contingent urban formations where "categories such as 'formal' and 'regulated' are always shifting and unstable".[29] The third dimension is the generation of new modes of politics through practices that *produce new kinds of citizens, claims, and contestations*. The fourth is the creation of highly unequal and heterogeneous cities, a *patchwork*.

The idea that the self-built settlement is something "fundamentally ad hoc," a pure act of provisional survival, is precisely the state's "tacit knowledge" that allows it to devalue, stigmatize, and ultimately justify demolition without compensation.[30]

Against this, Ascensão's meticulous method of the "house biography" reveals a profound and complex entanglement between life history, labor, and spatial form over decades. Armindo Mendes's self-built compound in Quinta da Serra, which grew over 30 years from a single wooden shack to an intricate assemblage of rooms for four nuclear families, is not a chaotic act of informality. It is a deeply calculated expression of a "family logic," a "type of adjustable architecture" where the house mirrors a personal and collective trajectory with clarity.[31] The house followed "family reunion and growth, adjusting itself and being adjusted to their needs as these evolved".[32] This is the human, architectural dimension of what Caldeira would call autoconstruction: an act of "micro-planning, so to speak," a careful, long-term sequence of enclosing land, building foundations, extending a corridor, adding rooms, and upgrading a roof from corrugated fibre-cement to concrete slab, each phase responding to increased savings, family reunion, and the changing needs of a multi-generational household.

Therefore, to understand the "postcolonial slum" in Lisbon is to understand it not as a discrete object of poverty, a pathology to be eradicated by a benevolent or violent state. It is to see it as a specific and intensely creative, yet structurally constrained, urbanization process. The built environment of an self-produced settlement is an exceptionally potent and dense historical archive, a "cyborg micro-history" as Ascensão puts it.[33] It is a physical repository of in-

→ [27] Ibid., 5.

[28] Ibid., 7.

[29] Ibid.

[30] As elaborated by Eduardo Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum': Informal Settlement as a 'Building Event' in Lisbon."

[31] Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum'," 2-3.

[32] Eduardo Ascensão, "The Slum Multiple: A Cyborg Micro-history of an Informal Settlement in Lisbon," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 5 (2015): 956.

[33] As elaborated by Eduardo Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum': Informal Settlement as a 'Building Event' in Lisbon."

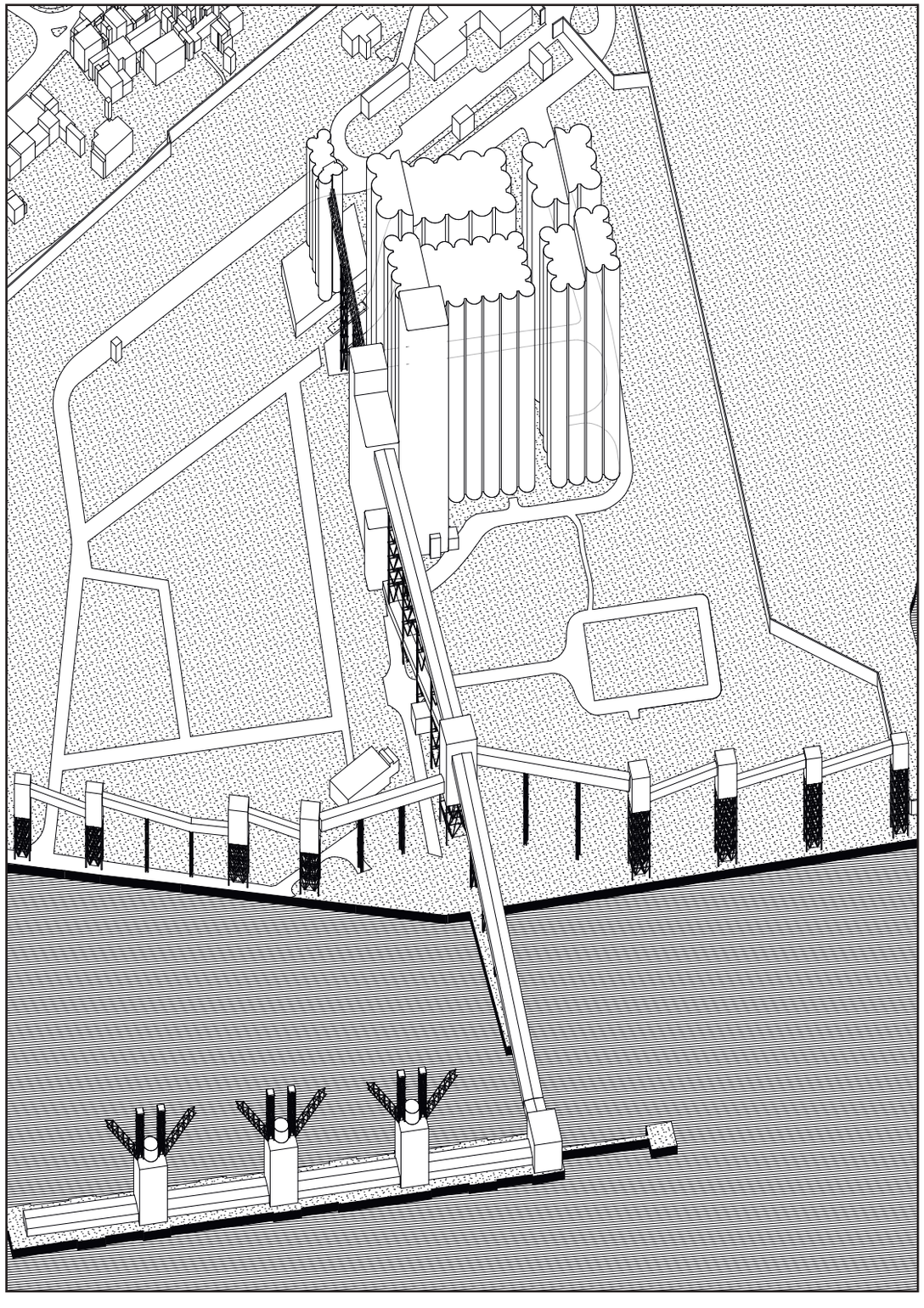


Figure 3.2
The Silopor grain terminal, seen here in axonometric view, occupies the eastern edge of Segundo Torrão's territory, characteristic of the margem sul's industrial identity.

tertwined social, political, and economic histories: a state's calculated neglect, a global postcolonial diaspora's resilient arrival, and a community's architectural and social response. To analyze it honestly means understanding that urban informality is the undeniable and challenging truth of the twenty-first-century metropolis, and that learning from its transversal logics is the most urgent task for any architectural and urban practice that seeks to move beyond the reproduction of systemic violence.

3.3 Landscape of informality in Lisbon: a genealogy of spatial violence

Understanding self-produced settlements in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area begins with mapping their historical genesis and morphological specificities. The self-produced settlements that today ring the Portuguese capital are not a homogeneous mass of poverty but a complex palimpsest where two distinct, yet interacting, informal morphologies emerged from different social and economic pressures. Scholars Paulo Silva and Helena Farrall provide a crucial framework for distinguishing between these, categorizing them as Informal Settlements as Slums (ISS) and Informal Settlements with Landownership (ISL).[34] This distinction forms the very basis upon which the Portuguese state calibrated its subsequent responses, leading to wildly different outcomes for the communities involved.

The first category, the ISS type, began to emerge prominently from the 1960s, driven initially by the internal rural-to-urban migration of white Portuguese seeking work in the burgeoning industries of the capital. This process was then radically intensified in the mid-1970s by the influx of *retornados* (white settlers returning from former colonies) and, most significantly, by a massive wave of post-colonial immigration from the newly independent African countries, particularly Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Angola.[35] These populations, facing widespread racial discrimination in the private rental market and systematically "priced out of the housing market and ineligible for the scarce pool of public housing stock," had no choice but to occupy land illicitly.[36] The fundamental characteristic of these settlements was the lack of secure land tenure; settlers built on public land, owned by a weakened post-revolutionary state, or private land where legal owners were unable to prevent squatting. The architecture here was one of pure survival, a point powerfully illustrated by João Duarte's ethnographic work on the community of Segundo Torrão in Almada.[37] He describes how the first inhabitants, facing persecution by the landowner's right-hand men, developed a creole technology of building homes that could be "light enough for them to carry on their back," using pieces of cloth, cardboard, and milk packages.[38] This "adjustable architecture" was also a defensive one. As Dina Oliveira, a resident, recounts, they had to build from the inside out, creating a stronger infrastructure hidden from the outside, so the house "appeared not to be more than fabric and cardboard" to the surveilling eye of the landowner's guard, the technique of bricklaying from the inside, using the wooden shack as a hidden scaffold.[39] This was the genesis of what Ascensão calls a "building event," a long-term process of incremental upgrading that often began with a shanty and, over decades, transformed into a brick and cement house, though always under the threat of demolition.

In stark contrast, the *bairros* classified as ISL, emerged from a fundamentally different socio-economic logic. As Teresa Barata Salgueiro meticulously documented in her 1977 study, this process was driven by speculation. A promoter would buy peripheral agricultural land at a low price, open a rudimentary orthogonal street layout with no regard for topography, and sell individual plots at a considerable profit margin to working-class families, including returning emigrants with small savings.[40] According to Silva and Farrall, these settlers "owe the land and therefore construction conditions tend to be better."[41] The resulting architecture was more enduring from the start, evolving into one or two-story houses that echoed rural typologies fused with urban aspirations. The social profile of ISL residents was comparatively more stable; they were employed and had a greater capacity for investment.

The scale was enormous. A 1978 government report revealed 83,000 dwellings built under this regime national-

→ [34] Silva and Farrall, "From Informal to Formal."

→ [35] As elaborated by Eduardo Ascensão, "The Slum Multiple: A Cyborg Micro-history of an Informal Settlement in Lisbon."

[36] Ascensão, "The Slum Multiple," 948.

[37] João A. Ribeiro Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins: Case Study of 2.º Torrão, Almada" (PhD diss., University of Lisbon, 2025).

[38] Ibid., 58.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Teresa Barata Salgueiro, "Bairros clandestinos na periferia de Lisboa," *Finisterra: Revista Portuguesa de Geografia* 12, no. 23 (1977): 28-55.

[41] Silva and Farrall, "From Informal to Formal," 27.

ly, with 63,000 in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area alone. By the early 1980s, an estimated 300,000 people lived in these areas, occupying a surface larger than the municipality of Lisbon itself.[42] Unlike the ISS, which formed a patchwork of bare survival within the city's interstices, the ISL formed a dense ring-fence around the formal city, constituting, in Salgueiro's words, "uma cintura que envolve a área mais urbanizada, constituindo a sua periferia".[43]

This basic difference in land tenure, between those who were mere squatters and those who were illegal owners, shaped the political trajectory of these spaces. The state did not respond to these two forms of informality in the same way. Instead, its actions created a perfectly calibrated system of spatial violence. The state's power was exercised not through its incapacity to plan, but through its active flexibility to un-plan, to create deliberately ambiguous zones where the line between legality and illegality is constantly redrawn. The tacit acceptance of the *barracas* was a form of management that kept a reserve of cheap labor in a state of perpetual precarity. For the

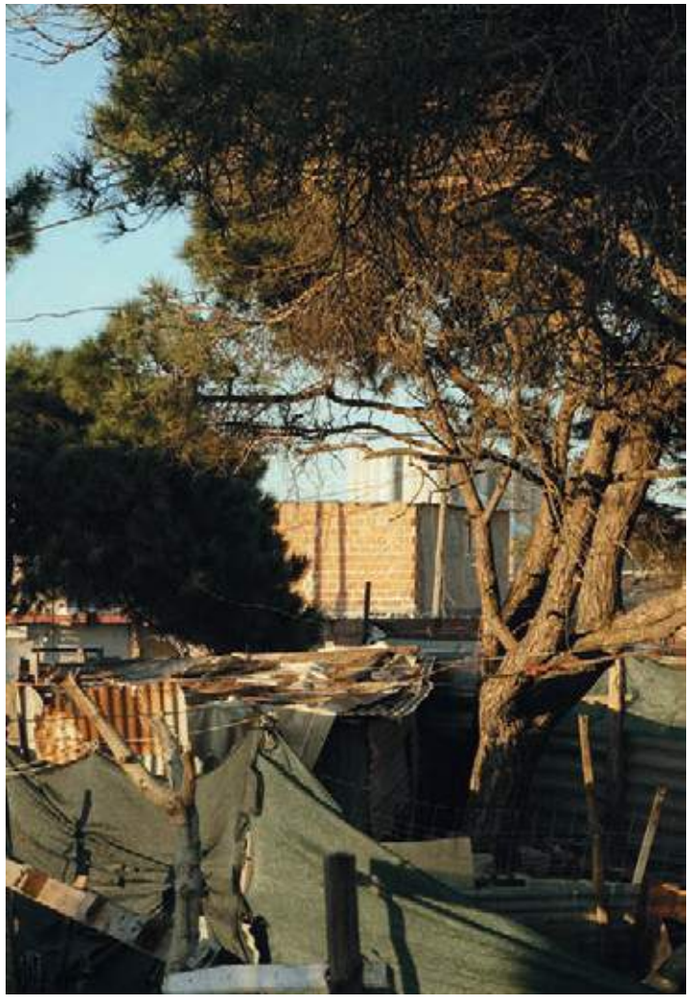


Figure 3.3
View of Segundo Torrão, its houses, the vegetable gardens, and the silos in the background.

→ [42] Ibid., p. 29.

[43] Salgueiro, "Bairros clandestinos na periferia de Lisboa," 30. English translation by the author: "a belt that surrounds the most urbanized area, constituting its periphery".

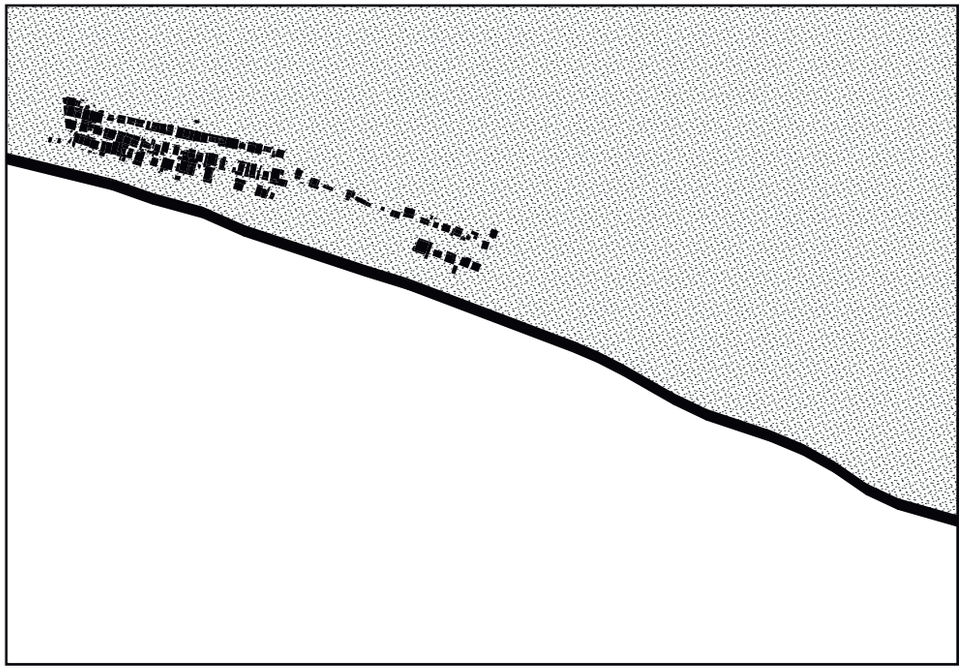
→ [44] Elena Tarsi, "A Critical Perspective on Policies for Informal Settlements in Portugal," *Cities* 106 (2020): 102949. See also Rita Cachado, "Ana Rita Alves, Quando ninguém podia ficar. Racismo, Habitação e Território," *Cidades* 47 (2023), review of Ana Rita Alves, *Quando ninguém podia ficar: Racismo, Habitação e Território* (Lisboa: Tigre de papel, 2021), accessed 30 November 2025, http://journals.openedition.org/cidades/7745. The reviewer highlights how Alves's research on Santa Filomena demonstrates the "structural racism" of the PER.

clandestinos, the legal ambiguity of their land titles was a space of negotiation and political trade-off, where the eventual legalization of their situation became the horizon of a long-term struggle.

This dual system was not a technical failure but a political design that would be institutionalized in the 1990s through the PER and AUGI programs, discussed at lenght in section 3.5.

The specificity of these settlements in Lisbon is further defined by their postcolonial character. Ascensão's term, the "postcolonial slum," is crucial here. These are not simply spaces of poverty; they are a direct spatial legacy of Portugal's imperial past. The concentration of black African migrants in the most precarious ISS, while white, often better-off, families could access the slightly more stable, albeit still illegal, ISL, reveals a deep racialization of urban space. As Elena Tarsi argues, drawing on the work of Ana Rita Alves, the history of these neighborhoods is inseparable from "the persistence of colonial forms of organizing spatial and social relations" in Portugal.[44] The *barraca* dweller was not just poor; they were black, postcolonial subjects, rendered "infra-citizens" in a city that has been, and continues to be, simultaneously marketing its post-imperial cosmopolitanism to the world.

Waves of expansion in the bairro



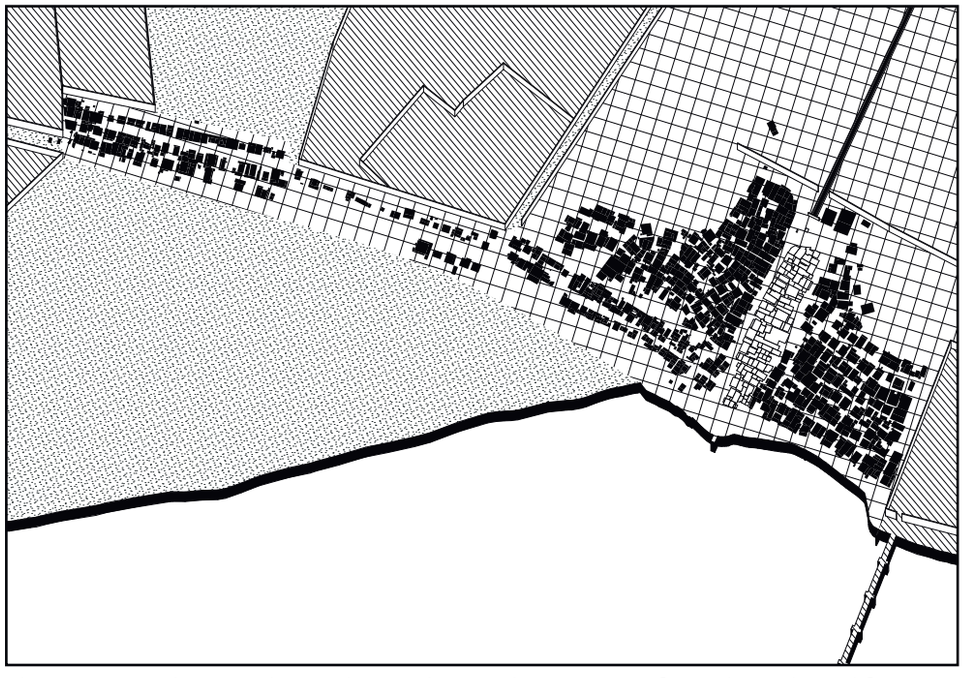
By the 1940s, the first structures had appeared on this stretch of coastline, built by local fishermen to store their tools and equipment, licensed informally by the Autoridade Portuária de Lisboa (APL). This earlier settlement is properly known as Primeiro Torrão; although distinct from Segundo Torrão, it shares a similar history of occupation and a close relationship with the river.



By the 1970s, the settlement expand. The informal licences originally granted by the APL for fishing support structures were increasingly appropriated for residential use. It is in this period that the NATO facility appears on the settlement's western edge.



By the 1990s, Segundo Torrão approximately reached its current extent. Several walls were built during this period to prevent further expansion. The grain terminal, completed in 1984 on the settlement's eastern edge, added a further constraint.



The present-day condition shows the settlement significantly reduced from its 1990s extent, but enclosed by the same infrastructures. A substantial portion of the buildings visible in the previous phase were demolished following the 2022 demolitions.



Figure 3.4

Dona Carla and her dog sitting in front of her family home, one of the earliest houses built in the bairro in the 1970s. A plaque on the façade reads: "Aqui se reúnem caçadores, pescadores e outros mentirosos".

Figure 3.6
1958

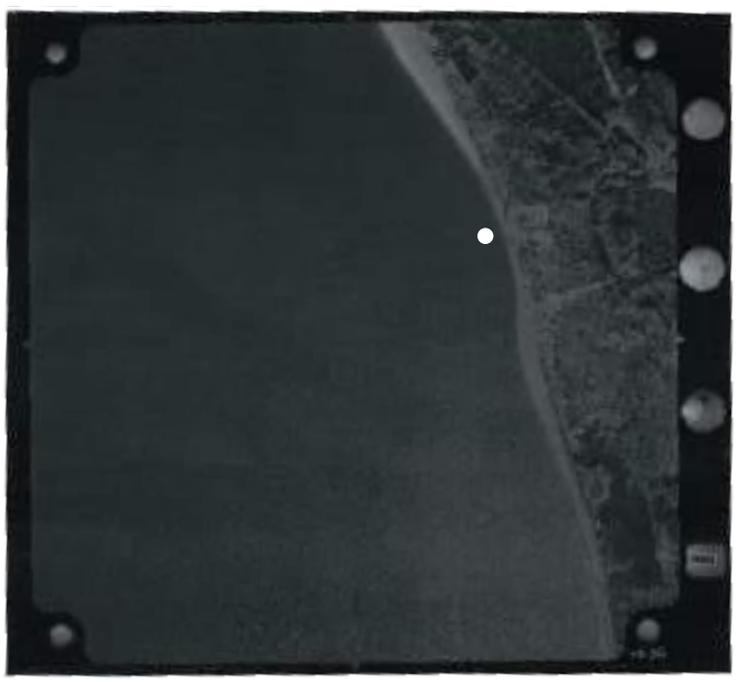


Figure 3.5
1955



Until the early 1980s, the coastline here was relatively uniform and rectilinear, shaped by the littoral drift that governs sediment transport along this stretch of the Tagus estuary. This equilibrium was abruptly disrupted by the construction of the Silopor grain terminal.

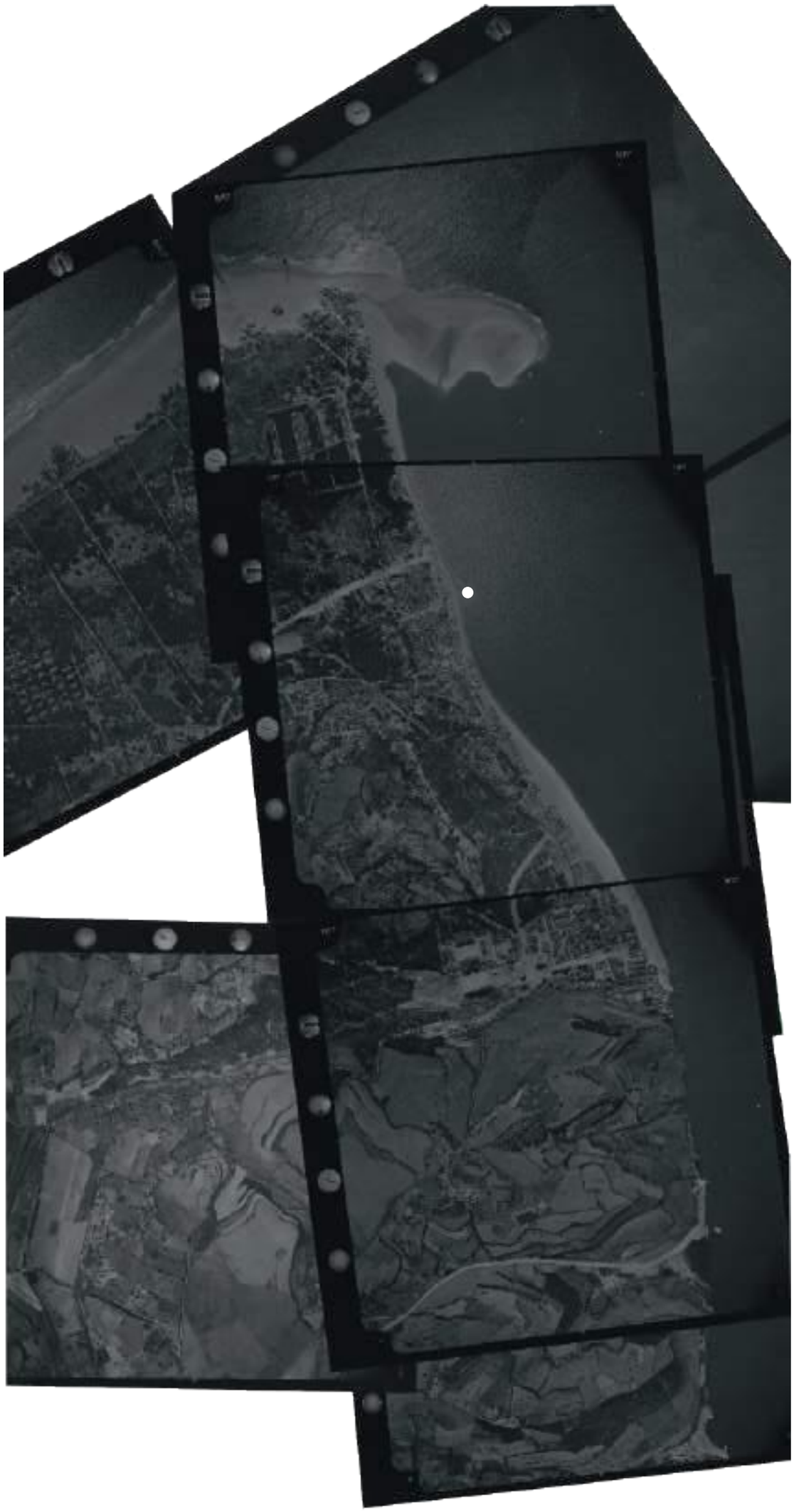
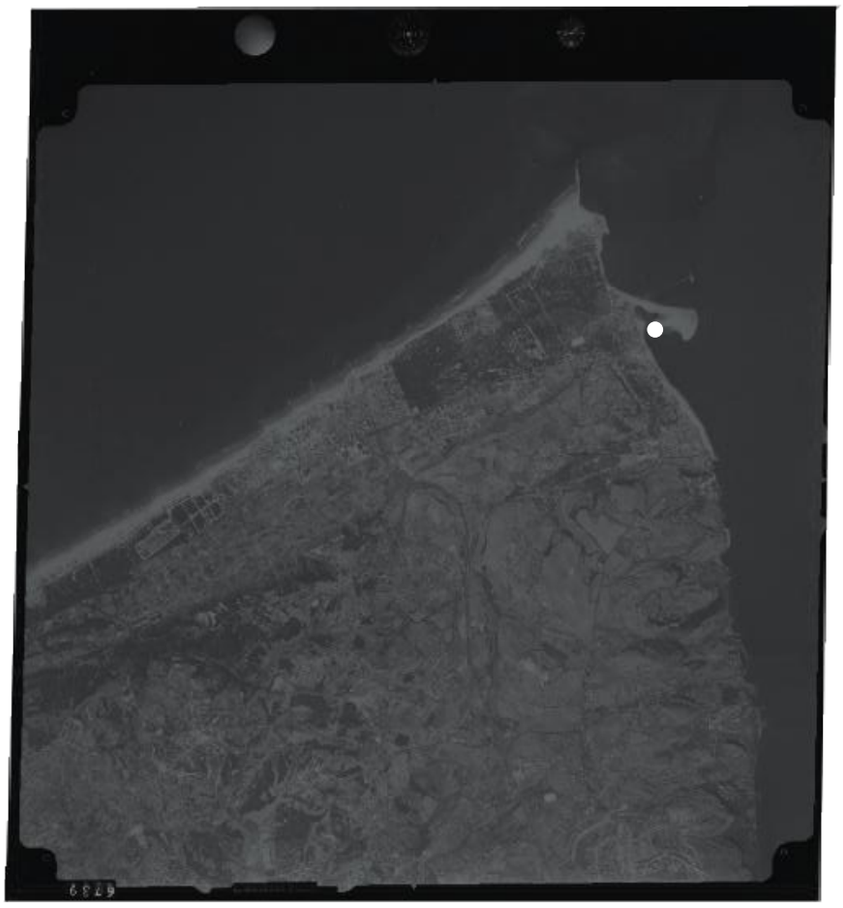


Figure 3.7
1960



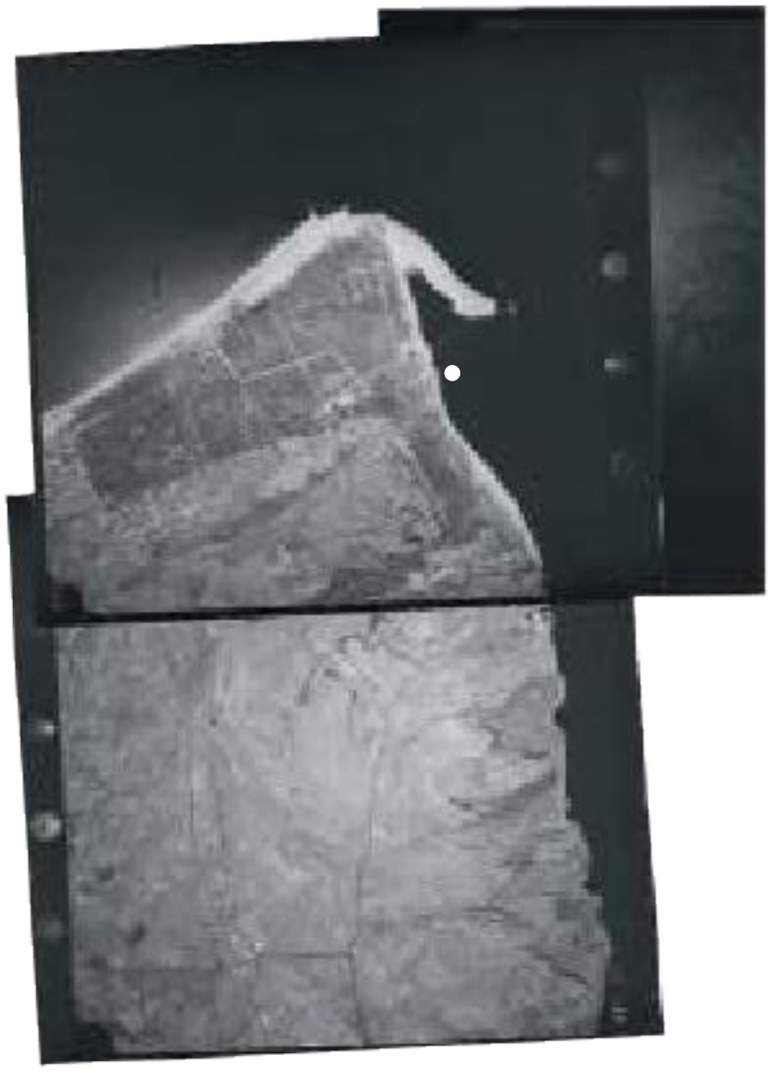


Figure 3.9

1977

Figure 3.8

1965

The Silopor grain terminal extended well beyond the original shoreline and interrupted the natural movement of sand along the coast. Sediment that would otherwise have continued drifting along the shore began instead to accumulate against the western side of the silo complex, gradually forming what is known today as the "praia de Segundo Torrão."

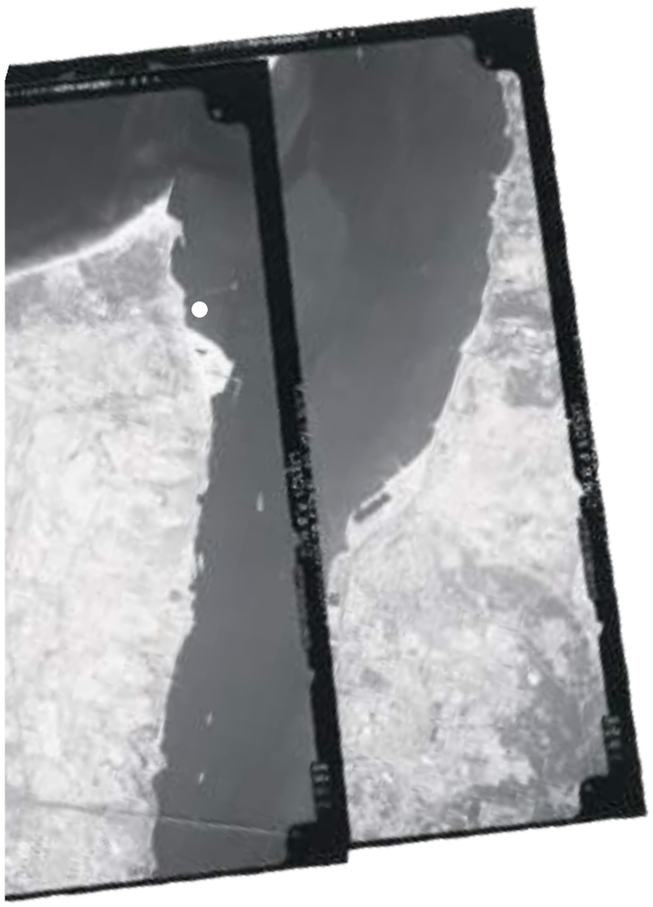


Figure 3.11
1985



Figure 3.10
1984



Figure 3.12
1990

3.4 Infrastructures of exclusion: the state, the body, and the territory

The distinction between ISS and ISL is not just an academic classification; it is the scheme for a perfectly calibrated political response. State violence here is systemic because it is built into the everyday systems of infrastructure provision. The same institutions, local municipalities, adopted entirely different logics depending on which type of informality they were facing. For the *barraca*[45] dwellers (ISS), who possessed no land and thus no tangible asset to anchor their claim to the city, the state's role has been one of a unwilling and incomplete "provider," a model that ultimately generates dependency and enables control. The neighborhood of Segundo Torrão, in Almada, is a living archive of this infrastructure of exclusion.

João Duarte's thesis provides a detailed account of how the systematic denial of basic services operates as a technology of state power. The neighborhood, which has existed since the 1940s, remained without running water until 2014. As Duarte documents, until that date, residents had to get water from a public fountain about one kilometer away, a risky journey during rainy periods when the dirt paths became muddy.[46]
This was not a technical problem but a political choice: the surrounding farms all had irrigation systems, a fact that highlights the deliberate exclusion of the human settlement from the basic infrastructure grid.[47]

The same logic applied to electricity. The *bairro* remains exposed to potential service interruptions and disconnections by the energy company EDP, which retains the power to cut off electricity supply, cutting off the *puxadas*,[48] often with the support of law enforcement. The neighborhood remains vulnerable to electricity disruptions, and although a state-purchased electricity distribution infrastructure was installed in 2017, it remains inactive amid bureaucratic deadlock between the state company, the city, and the residents' association.[49]
"The harsh winter blackouts happen year after year. What legitimacy does the agreement with the state have when the electricity keeps going down?" is the question Duarte's community asks, a question that powerfully unveils the state's sovereign power to maintain a permanent zone of exception.

This temporal paradox, a state of permanent waiting for a promised resettlement that is always about to happen but never does, is a central mechanism for producing precarity. It prevents any long-term investment, any sense of security, any genuine rootedness, thereby systematically undermining the inhabitants' moral and political claim to their own homes.
The 1993 PER survey, conceived as a one-time administrative act of what Ascensão terms "numeric governmentality," became a deadly temporal weapon.[50] This "fixed date" created a violent dividing line between the "PER" and "non-PER" populations, a line that would fossilize for decades. The non-PER include children who had turned eighteen after the survey date, new arrivals, and those who were merely absent on the day the state came to count them. This bureaucratic artifact transformed

→ [45] In this thesis, a deliberate choice has been made to avoid the use of terms with derogatory connotations, such as "slum," "barraca," or "*bairro* de lata," favoring instead the expression "self-produced settlement," which is considered more responsible and descriptive. However, when such terms appear in references or in citations from other authors, they are reported verbatim in order to preserve the accuracy of the original sources.

[46] João A. Ribeiro Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins: Case Study of 2.º Torrão, Almada," 60. See also Joana Braga, "Recognizing Difference and Claiming Political Agency over the Urban Space: Social Spatial Practices at Terras da Costa, South of Lisbon" (paper presented at the International Conference "From Contested Cities to Global Urban Justice," 2016), 4–5, for similar conditions in the neighboring settlement of Terras da Costa.

[47] Joana Braga, "Recognizing Difference and Claiming Political Agency over the Urban Space: Social Spatial Practices at Terras da Costa, South of Lisbon" (paper presented at the International Conference "From Contested Cities to Global Urban Justice," 2016), 5.

[48] The term "puxadas" (from Portuguese) refers to informal and often unauthorized connections to existing electricity infrastructure, typically created by extending cables from nearby power sources to supply individual dwellings. Literally, *puxadas* derives from the verb *puxar* ("to pull") and can be understood as "pulled lines" or "pulled connections," evoking the idea of cables being physically drawn from one point to another.

[49] In 2017, a protocol was signed between the Municipality of Almada, EDP Distribuição, and the residents' association of the Bairro do 2.º Torrão to regularize electricity access in the neighborhood through a provisional and exceptional connection to the public grid, pending the implementation of broader infrastructure upgrades. *Protocolo de Fornecimento de Energia Elétrica entre o Município de Almada, EDP Distribuição – Energia, S.A. e a Associação de Moradores do Bairro do 2.º Torrão*, 20 September 2017.

[50] Ascensão, "Slum Gentrification in Lisbon, Portugal," 41.



Figure 3.13
Scheme of urban exclusion logics in the Portuguese context. Adapted from Elena Tarsi, "As lógicas da exclusão urbana no contexto português: uma perspectiva Sul–Norte", Forum Sociológico II, 29 (2016), p. 49. The three diagrams synthesize the interdependence between the logics of inequality, urban regulation and territorial stigma around three exclusion rationales: peripheralisation, touristification/expulsion, and invisibility. By situating self-produced settlements within these rotating fields, the diagrams make legible how everyday infrastructures and planning instruments contribute to the progressive relegation of certain communities to peripheral, expulsive, or invisible positions in the metropolitan landscape.

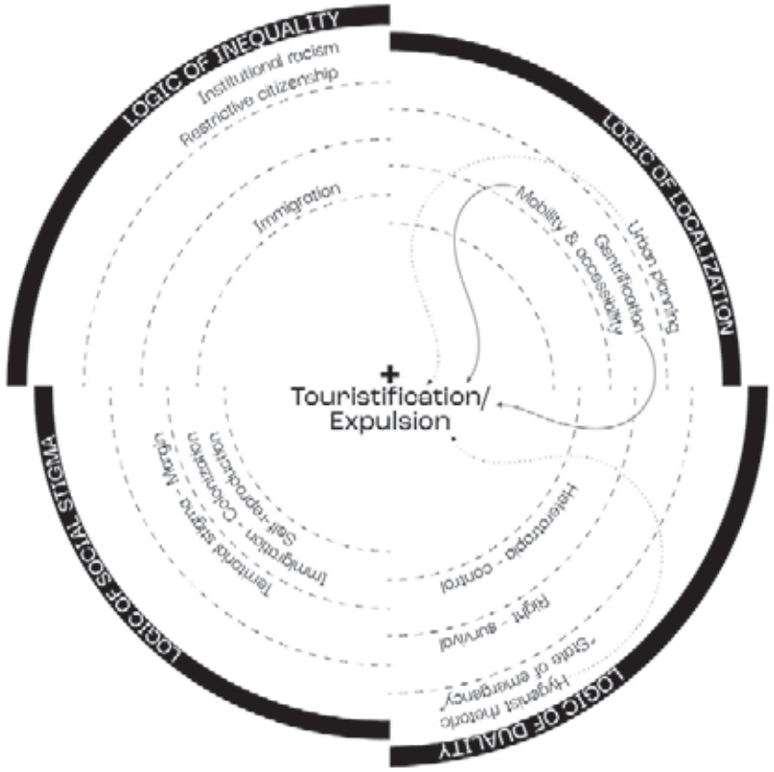


Figure 3.14



Figure 3.15

→ [51] Elena Tarsi, "As lógicas da exclusão urbana no contexto português: uma perspectiva Sul–Norte," *Forum Sociológico*, Série II, 29 (2016): 41–52.

[52] Silva and Farrall, "From Informal to Formal," 38.

[53] Roy, "Urban Informality," 149.

them, in the eyes of the law, into non-persons with no right to their shelter of decades, a stark illustration of what Tarsi calls the "state of exception" that characterizes housing policies in Portugal.

Building on this notion of state of exception, Elena Tarsi's analysis of urban exclusion in the Portuguese context identifies a set of exclusion logics that operate through the urban itself, rather than simply through social policy.[51] Drawing on a South–North comparison between Brazilian and Portuguese metropolitan realities, she distinguishes processes of peripheralisation, touristification and expulsion, and invisibility as mutually reinforcing rationales that structure who is allowed to dwell, where, and under what conditions. In Trafaria and Almada, the ISS/ISL divide, the PER survey, and the selective provisioning of basic services can be read as concrete manifestations of these logics: ISS settlements are pushed to peripheral land, exposed to touristification-driven clearance, and kept institutionally invisible even as their inhabitants are counted, taxed, and policed.

In stark contrast, the state's behavior towards the ISL has been that of an "enabler," a partner in negotiation. Because landowners, however illegal their subdivision might have been, held a valuable asset, they had a powerful trading instrument that the landless *barraca* dweller lacked. As Silva and Farrall explain, "settlers had something to contribute to the process: the land for future urbanization [...] institutions, municipalities, start from this point [...] to create solutions in which the construction of a shelter, the location and the typology chosen by each family were integrated."[52] This ability to bargain highlights Ananya Roy's assertion that the state determines "which forms of informality will thrive and which will disappear."[53]
The AUGI law, as will be discussed below, is the ultimate product of this political capacity to negotiate from a position of property ownership, a capacity which was systematically denied to the postcolonial populations of the ISS.

The embodied experience of this infrastructural violence is captured by Ascensão's concept of the "cyborg" *slum*, where the shanty dwelling emerges as the gap between the wooden wall and the fibre-cement roof, causing recurrent leakages and excessive damp; this is not simply an architectural defect. It is, rather, a material inscription of a social condition of exclusion that becomes integrated into the very being of the dweller, a specific form of psychological suffering. This is the infrastructure of exclusion operating at the scale of the body itself.

3.5 Policy as violence: a genealogy of housing law from revolution to financialisation

The post-1974[54] housing policy landscape is not a neutral chronicle of administrative measures but a genealogy of how the Portuguese state has continuously shifted its mechanisms for managing its marginalized populations, with each shift reconfiguring but never dismantling the fundamental architecture of systemic violence. This section moves beyond a technocratic reading of this legal framework to interrogate the specific implications of each law on the lived reality of these territories, , building on the infrastructural analysis developed in section 3.4.

The Carnation Revolution of 1974 was a moment of radical potential, a brief window where a different city seemed possible. The SAAL program (Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local), launched the same year, was a service of brigades composed of architects and engineers who provided technical assistance to organized communities. It was a bottom-up experiment where "municipalities were part of an experimental process by providing land to build new housing settlements in cooperation with ISS residents [...] to involve future residents into finding architectural solutions [...]."[55] For a brief moment, the state was an enabler not of capital but of community-led development, a fleeting architectural and political project that the historian Bandeirinha would later call "the architecture of the 25th of April."[56] However, this experimental phase was violently cut short. As Gonçalo Antunes notes, as representative democracy consolidated in Portugal, the political climate looked upon SAAL with increasing distrust, and the program was effectively paralyzed by 1976.[57] The radical moment of citizen participation was closed down, replaced by a "top-to-bottom" model of large-scale integrated plans that reproduced the segregationist logics of the earlier European model.

The entry into the European Union and the consequent inflow of EU cohesion funds, combined with the political pressure of mega-events like Lisbon 1994 Capital of Culture and Expo 1998, forced the state's hand. The scattered *barracas* had become a stain on the country's modern, European image. The state's dual solution was formalized in the mid-1990s with two distinct legal instruments that represent the institutionalization of the ISS/ISL division.

The Programa Especial de Realojamento (PER), launched in 1993 by Decree-Law 163/93, was the direct state-led assault on the ISS. Its objective was the "eradication" of the "*bairros* de barracas" in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto, which it described as "an open wound in our social fabric,"[58] through demolition and the construction of large-scale peripheral social housing estates.

The law's choice of words is not innocent: the expression "*bairros* de barracas" and the metaphor of an "open wound" construct these settlements as a pathological anomaly to be surgically removed, revealing the negative moral and aesthetic connotation attached to self-built environments and to their racialized, postcolonial residents (DL 163/93).

The program, while providing many with access to basic sanitation for the first time, has been widely and powerfully criticized. As Tarsi argues, the PER "had concentrated a vulnerable population into huge residential blocks [...] it had destroyed the social, familial and economic ties of ethnic communities and hastening the spiral of vulnerability and exclusion."[59] It replicated the "great ensemble" model of the 1960s and 70s at the very moment when such projects were being demolished all over Europe for their segregating effects.[60] Crucially, the technocratic, top-down implementation, epitomized by the use of the frozen 1993 census, allowed local municipalities to weaponize the program against the most vulnerable.

→ [54] By "post-1974" I refer to the period following the Carnation Revolution of April 25, 1974, when the Portuguese dictatorship was overthrown and the long colonial wars in Africa reached a breaking point. Rather than a unilateral decision by the metropole to dismantle its empire, this was a conjuncture shaped by anti-colonial liberation struggles, military fatigue, and domestic opposition to the war, which together precipitated rapid decolonization, the independence of Portugal's African colonies, and a profound reconfiguration of the country's political, social, and urban order.

[55] Silva and Farrall, "From Informal to Formal," 31.

[56] José António Bandeirinha (2007), as cited in Gonçalo Antunes, "Política de habitação social em Portugal: de 1974 à actualidade," Forum Sociológico, Série II, 34 (2019): 9.

[57] Gonçalo Antunes, "Política de habitação social em Portugal: de 1974 à actualidade," Forum Sociológico, Série II, 34 (2019): 7–17.

→ [58] Decreto-Lei n.º 163/93, de 7 de maio, "Estabelece o regime de apoio à erradicação das barracas nas áreas metropolitanas de Lisboa e do Porto" [Decree-Law no. 163/93, of 7 May, establishing the support scheme for the eradication of shack neighbourhoods in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto].

[59] Tarsi, "A critical perspective on policies for informal settlements in Portugal."

[60] Ibid.



Figure 3.16
Portuguese civilians living in Angola stream across the South West African (Namibia) border, 1974.



Figure 3.17
Portuguese returnees from Angola, 1975.

Ascensão's detailed study of Quinta da Serra in Loures demonstrates that 35 to 40 percent of the neighborhood's inhabitants were simply evicted, their homes demolished with no alternative provided, because they were not registered in the 1993 survey.[61] This legally sanctioned dispossession is what Ascensão theorizes as "area gentrification," a state-led process of "clearing and earmarking for residential development for white Portuguese middle-class populations."[62] In Amadora, a municipality that relaunched the PER in 2012, the application of the program became a terrible bureaucratic theatre. This case shows how the "non-PER" category was used to expel black and Roma families, an obvious manifestation of institutional racism. The Amadora municipality's use of a twenty-year-old census to deny over forty percent of *Bairro* 6 de Maio's residents any right to exist was a necropolitical act, a weaponization of administrative failure against the most vulnerable.

Contemporaneously, the AUGI Law (Law 91/95) dealt with the ISL. Based on two decades of experimentation and negotiation between landowners' commissions and municipalities, the law provided a framework for the *in-situ* legalization and upgrading of these illegally subdivided areas. It did not treat the phenomenon as a social plague to be wiped clean but as a planning problem to be regularized through the cooperation of landowners. The AUGI law is a perfect example of what Silva and Farrall call a "short chain" of communication: marginalized landowners found political representation, linked their local struggles directly to the national parliament, and forced the creation of a flexible and adaptable legal tool, an impossible path to the landless and racialized dwellers of the PER.[63] By contrast, the PER was a top-down decree-law dependent on the wills of changing governments.

The economic and social crisis exacerbated by the Troika's austerity measures exposed the deep failures of the previous models.[64] The PER was effectively stalled, and new forms of housing precarity, such as the loss of homes by indebted families, emerged.[65]

In 2018, the government approved the Nova Geração de Políticas de Habitação (NGPH), with its flagship program, Primeiro Direito (Programa de Apoio ao Direito à Habitação). This policy, prompted by a national survey that found over 25,762 families living in "clearly unsatisfactory situations," represents a new paradigm shift.[66] A central instrument of Primeiro Direito is the requirement that every municipality elaborate an Estratégia Local de Habitação (Local Housing Strategy), identifying all situations of "clearly unsatisfactory housing conditions" within its territory and defining concrete pathways to resolve them. Through this mechanism, informal or self-built neighborhoods are mapped and classified as precarious areas to be addressed, at least on paper, by public policy rather than ignored.[67]

In Almada, the municipality's Local Housing Strategy incorporates Segundo Torrão as a degraded and precarious neighborhood, inscribing it into a portfolio of interventions to be financed through Primeiro Direito and complementary programmes such as Porta de Entrada. Yet, the events of 2022 reveal the gap between this strategic framing and actual practice: instead of an in-situ upgrading process grounded in recognition of the residents' self-built environment, the area is once again treated as an exception to be evacuated under the pretext of an "unforeseeable" environmental risk, activating emergency rehousing tools and reproducing the logics of dispossession.

This shift is also visible at the level of legal language. While PER's decree framed informal settlements as "*bairro*s de barracas," to be eradicated as a "social wound," the decree that created Primeiro Direito situated its intervention over "households living in clearly unsatisfactory housing situations," including "precarious housing situations" and "buildings or housing units constructed without a license" often referred to as "*bair-*

→ [61] Ascensão, "Slum Gentrification in Lisbon, Portugal," 42.

[62] Ibid., 41.

→ [63] Silva and Farrall, "From Informal to Formal," 41.

[64] "Troika" refers to the joint mission of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund that negotiated Portugal's 2011–2014 Economic Adjustment Programme, a €78-billion bailout. The programme's conditionality included fiscal consolidation (tax increases and deep cuts to public spending), structural reforms in labour, housing and services, and privatisations, measures widely described as austerity policies in the Portuguese context.

[65] Tarsi, "As lógicas da exclusão urbana no contexto português," 42.

[66] Antunes, "Política de habitação social em Portugal: de 1974 à actualidade," 14.

[67] Decreto-Lei n.º 37/2018, de 4 de junho, "Cria o 1.º Direito – Programa de Apoio ao Acesso à Habitação" [Decree-Law no. 37/2018, of 4 June, creating the 1.º Direito – Programme to Support Access to Housing].

ros" or "núcleos" built through self-construction (DL 37/2018). In municipal strategies elaborated under the umbrella of Primeiro Direito and the broader NGPH, these territories are frequently described as "*bairro*s auto-construídos" or "self-built neighborhoods," a terminology that, even while keeping them within a framework of irregularity to be regularized, acknowledges the agency and labour of their inhabitants rather than reducing them to "shacks" (DL 37/2018).

On the surface, it seems to correct the technocratic failures of the PER by promoting flexible solutions (including the rehabilitation of existing buildings and the purchase of new units) and by claiming that residents can be involved as individuals, associations, or cooperatives in proposing solutions to the municipality. However, a critical reading reveals a dangerous shift from a provider-state to a facilitator-state for a financialized housing market. The PER, for all its segregating power, was a direct act of public construction.

The risk is that Primeiro Direito becomes a mechanism for channeling public funds to private landlords and developers, subsidizing rent in a deregulated market rather than creating a permanent stock of public housing.

Within this framework, the Porta de Entrada, Programa de Apoio ao Alojamento Urgente, created as part of the Nova Geração de Políticas de Habitação (NGPH), becomes a crucial instrument. The programme was established by Decree-Law No. 29/2018 and applies to cases in which people are temporarily or permanently deprived of their dwelling, or are at imminent risk of being so, as a result of an unforeseeable or exceptional event. It provides support for immediate and temporary accommodation as well as for permanent housing solutions, including reconstruction, rehabilitation, or rental on the private market.[68]

In Almada, the limited capacity of the municipal housing stock made it necessary to sublet housing units on the private market to rehouse some of the families removed from informal settlements. In these cases, households sign a contract with the Instituto da Habitação e Reabilitação Urbana (IHRU), while the municipality acts as an intermediary between the households and the property owners and is responsible for paying the rent, with the expectation, only "ideally" and often indefinitely postponed, that these families will subsequently be rehoused in municipal housing.[69]

Porta de Entrada and Primeiro Direito thus operate as two interlocking mechanisms within the NGPH: the former manages the "emergency" of displacement under the language of calamity and exception, while the latter provides the long-term policy frame. In both cases, however, access to housing is

→ [68] Governo de Portugal, "Porta de Entrada – Programa de Apoio ao Alojamento Urgente," public consultation text, approved by the Council of Ministers on 4 October 2017 and published on 16 October 2017, accessed 21 July 2026, https://portugal.gov.pt/gc21/consultas-publicas/consultas-publicas-legislativas/216.

[69] Portal da Habitação, "Porta de Entrada – Programa de Apoio ao Alojamento Urgente," accessed 21 July 2026, https://www.portaldahabitacao.pt/leg_portaentrada.



Figure 3.18
Malagueira housing neighbourhood built as part of the SAAL Program in Évora by Álvaro Siza, 1977–97.

mediated through contracts in a financialized housing market and through administrative protocols, rather than through an unconditional right to a permanent public housing stock.

The tragic and brutal application of the program in Segundo Torrão is a warning. Duarte documents how the City of Almada announced the demolition of part of the neighborhood in 2022 due to the risk of collapse of an underground rainwater drainage channel. The internal technical report that motivated this "emergency" was hidden from the public; when it was eventually accessed through a court case, it was discovered that it "devotes more than a third of its pages to sea level rise due to climate change with data of vulnerability until 2100," despite the risk having no supporting study on the structure's material resistance.[70] The real *modus operandi* of Primeiro Direito on the ground, in Almada, was the forcible displacement of families, first to packed hostels in central Lisbon, far from their jobs and schools, while the mayor announced a plan to resettle them. Then the city denied resettlement to those who resisted, claiming they were "illiterate people or people who do not understand Portuguese," a false assertion about a group of organized and articulate citizens.[71] This is the state weaponizing its own administrative power, the colonial commandment operating under the appearance of a progressive housing program.

The Programa Bairros Saudaveis (Healthy Neighbourhoods Programme), launched in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 crisis, represents a different, though not contradictory, vector of state intervention. Coordinated by the architect Helena Roseta, the program funded small-scale projects designed and implemented by local community associations and movements, bypassing municipal bureaucracies.[72]

In Almada, thirteen vulnerable territories were identified in a public consultation, and projects such as "*2T/2825*" in Trafaria, operating in and around the Segundo Torrão

→ [70] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 191.

[71] Ibid., 196.

[72] The Programa Bairros Saudáveis (Healthy Neighbourhoods Programme) is a public, inter-ministerial, participatory programme created by Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 52-A/2020 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It supports small-scale projects proposed by associations, NGOs, civic movements and residents' organisations, in collaboration with municipalities and health authorities, to improve health, wellbeing and quality of life in vulnerable territories. The national coordinator is architect

neighbourhood, and "*Há Margem*" received funding.[73] The project 2T/2825 focuses on human, social and community development in 2.º Torrão, acting "between the beach and the forest" and building on a long history of collective resilience; it seeks to address risks to life and health through community-driven initiatives, strengthening local networks of mutual support and social participation. "Há Margem", promoted by the Egas Moniz Higher Education Cooperative together with local partners, is a psychosocial intervention project that offers free health, social and environmental services to residents in Trafaria and Monte da Caparica, aiming to promote healthy behaviours and to prevent risk situations across three axes: social, health, and environmental/urban. The program's direct transfer of public funds to community-based groups, as Roseta stated, was aimed at putting "public money into the hands of those who need it most." While the program's impact in specific communities like Segundo Torrão is yet to be fully assessed, and its transition to a permanent character is a recent development from 2023, this model represents a potential, albeit fragile and localised, counter-narrative to the top-down violence of PER and Primeiro Direito.

It suggests a State that can, in very specific and contained circumstances, learn to enable rather than destroy community agency.

The Primeiro Direito program of 2018 marks the transition to a neoliberal phase, where this violence is not enacted through direct demolition alone but through the mechanisms of a financialized and coercive market, in which access to housing is mediated by subsidies, loans, and time-limited contracts within an increasingly speculative urban economy. In parallel, Portugal has developed a regime of residence for investment, commonly known as the Golden Visa (Autorização de Residência para Investimento), which grants residence permits and a fast-track route to citizenship to foreign investors who purchase real estate worth at least 500,000 euros, or invest similar amounts in funds or rehabilitation projects.[74]

While families displaced from informal settlements are channelled into temporary hostels, sublet apartments, or peripheral social housing under programmes such as PER, Primeiro Direito, and Porta de Entrada, wealthy investors can effectively buy a right to reside – and eventually to belong – by injecting capital into the real estate sector. This dual regime contributes to the inflation of land and housing prices, intensifies pressures of gentrification and touristification in Lisbon and other cities, and exacerbates the structural asymmetry between those whose presence in the city is constantly precarized and those whose presence is welcomed as a source of capital accumulation.

→ and politician Helena Roseta, a long-standing advocate for the right to housing, who was also the author and political driving force behind Lisbon's Programa BIP/ZIP – Bairros e Zonas de Intervenção Prioritária. Launched by Lisbon City Council in 2011, BIP-ZIP is a municipal participatory programme that identifies 67 neighbourhoods and priority intervention zones in the city and implements projects that strengthen socio-territorial cohesion and improve living conditions in these areas. Accessed 18 July 2026, https://www.*bairro*ssaudaveis.gov.pt/.

[73] Information retrieved from the following pages of the Programa Bairros Saudáveis online journal: https://jornal.*bairro*ssaudaveis.gov.pt/noticias/00000186 and https://jornal.*bairro*ssaudaveis.gov.pt/projetos/00000921/index.htm, accessed 21 July 2026.

[74] Decreto-Lei n.º 14/2012, de 20 de janeiro, "Estabelece o regime da autorização de residência para atividade de investimento (ARI/'Golden Visa')," as subsequently amended [Decree-Law no. 14/2012, of 20 January, establishing the residence permit for investment activity (ARI/'Golden Visa'), as subsequently amended].

Recent reporting on Lisbon shows the convergence of these dynamics: on the one hand, the demolition and clearance of "informal neighborhoods" and self-built settlements are justified in the name of safety, environmental risk, or urban modernization; on the other hand, the same urban territory is opened to investors who acquire renovated apartments, hotels, and luxury developments via Golden Visa schemes.

The result is a profoundly selective citizenship regime, in which racialized and landless residents are subjected to necropolitical management and forced mobility, while mobile owners of capital are invited to anchor their assets and their legal status in the city's built fabric.

In this sense, the neoliberal phase of Portuguese housing policy does not signify a retreat of the State, but rather its reconfiguration as a broker between financial capital and urban land: a sovereign power that continues to decide which lives and which built environments are made secure through legalization and investment, and which can be sacrificed, displaced, or erased in the name of market-driven urban futures (DL 14/2012; DL 37/2018). The *Bairro*s Saudaveis program showed a different possible State, one that is responsive to community-led processes. Yet, the brutal events in Segundo Torrão in 2022, where the State used a manufactured environmental emergency and a distorted image of the inhabitants to forcefully displace a community, demonstrates that the colonial commandment, the sovereign's right to declare the exception, remains the foundational logic of the State's relationship with the self-produced settlements of Lisbon's periphery.

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THE SOUTH BANK OF THE TAGUS

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Chapter 5.0

Chapter 6.0

4.The South Bank of the Tagus A territorial, historical and socio-economis analysis

In an era of marked economic and social differentiation, where the city itself functions as an engine of diversification, a strategy that cuts across everything in an identical way is no longer conceivable. It cannot ignore the existing social, cultural and economic differences, nor sustain a process of sanitization extended to the entire sphere of social interactions. The web of problems has become extremely complex: the question can no longer be isolated and addressed in one corner, because that corner carries everything else with it.

The exhaustion of the contemporary city is evident, yet the response of architectural and urban design remains unchanged: aimed at relaunching economic growth at all costs. On the contrary, accepting exhaustion as a starting point means looking to other experiences as sources of knowledge and alternative technology, with the aim of building a more just social vision and an inclusive city for all. We are living through one of the greatest crises of housing, urban exclusion and social inequality in democratic societies. Cities have been transformed into global financial assets, becoming progressively more inaccessible and limiting citizen participation. The housing question can be rethought not as a domain of isolated policies but as a decentralised infrastructure that goes beyond the single housing unit and the single family.[1]

→ [1] The concept of housing as a social infrastructure aligns with the theoretical framework developed by Lucia Tozzi (see in particular *L'invenzione di Milano: culto della comunicazione e politiche urbane* [Napoli: Cronopio, 2023]). The author argues for the necessity of removing housing from market logics and financial speculation in order to elevate it to a cornerstone of universal welfare. According to Tozzi, viewing housing as a mere individual commodity atomizes society and generates exclusion; conversely, shaping it as a public and decentralized infrastructure allows for the guaranteeing of the fundamental right to housing, integrating it with urban services and community networks that operate outside of profit-driven dynamics.



Figure 4.1
Postcard showing the general view of Trafaria and the Tejo River, early twentieth century.



If the current urban model is difficult to reverse, what role can self-produced settlements play in guaranteeing rights and promoting spaces for participation and diversity? Could the struggle and resistance of these communities take on a new protagonism, redefining the very idea of city and urban citizenship? These questions structure the analysis that follows, which explores how grassroots initiatives, community practices and public policies can transform cities into more just, participatory and inclusive territories.

Self-produced settlements are today home to over one billion people in the world,[2] yet they often remain at the margins of urban development practices, or are not considered at all. Many planners, municipal officials and architects continue to operate using the same approaches in use at the beginning of the twentieth century, viewing these settlements as a pathology, something to be eradicated. This reductive vision, which hardly adheres to what are in reality very complex situations, employs obsolete strategies that leave millions of people displaced and homeless. It ignores what those settlements actually are: assemblages of social and technical knowledge born precisely from the absence of planning, rights and services.[3]

The territory situated on the southern bank of the Tagus estuary occupies a peculiar position in metropolitan Portugal. Administratively part of the Municipality of Almada, in the civil parish of Caparica e Trafaria, this area has historically functioned both as a threshold and as a margin: a threshold to the Atlantic and to the oceanic routes of empire; a margin in relation to the formal city and its planning apparatus.

At this convergence of river and sea, three self-produced settlements have taken root across decades: Cova do Vapor, Primeiro Torrão, and Segundo Torrão. Each was born of necessity, shaped by self-construction, and sustained by social networks that formal urban planning never provided. Together they constitute a postcolonial urban ecology specific to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area: a layering of working-class Portuguese internal migrants, *retornados* from the collapsed empire, and African immigrants from Cape Verde, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau who arrived in successive waves from the mid-1970s onwards.[4]

→ [2] According to UN-Habitat's World Cities Report 2026, approximately 1.16 billion people live in self-produced settlements, representing 24.8% of the global urban population based on estimates updated to 2024. The report, published in 2026, highlights an increase of about 279 million residents in these settlements compared to the year 2000. UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2026: Changing Cities, Changing World* (Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2026). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://unhabitat.org/world-cities-report-2026.

[3] Eduardo Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum': Informal Settlement as a 'Building Event' in Lisbon, Portugal" (London: The Urban Salon, 2010).

[4] Ibid.

→ [5] Raul Pereira de Sousa, *Almada: Toponímia e História* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 1999).

[6] Câmara Municipal de Almada, Departamento de Planeamento Urbanístico, *Estudo Estratégico de Almada Poente (EEEAP): Fase 1, Diagnóstico* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2007), 5.

[7] Pereira de Sousa, *Almada: Toponímia e História*.

[8] Câmara Municipal de Almada, *Estudo de Enquadramento Estratégico da Costa da Trafaria* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2005). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://www.cm-almada.pt.

[9] Câmara Municipal de Almada, *Estudos de Caracterização do Território Municipal: Caderno 2 – Sistema Ambiental* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2011). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://www.cm-almada.pt.

4.1 Geographical and biophysical framework

POSITION AND TOPOGRAPHY

The Municipality of Almada occupies the extreme northwestern portion of the Arrábida Peninsula, covering approximately 70 square kilometres, bounded to the north by the Tagus, to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, and to the east and south by the municipalities of Seixal and Sesimbra (Sousa, 1999).[5] The terrain is characterised by a low-altitude plateau cut by depressions oriented west-east and south-north. The northern and western edges are defined by high sea cliffs that drop sharply to the riverfront and coast. The interior undulates and descends gradually toward the east.

The specific area of Trafaria occupies the coastal plain at the mouth of the Tagus, a zone of active geomorphological process where the coastal plain on which Segundo Torrão stands, and the estuarine shoreline along which Porto Brandão developed, all reflect the dynamics of a coastline subject to tidal fluctuation and coastal flow. The 2007 strategic diagnostic produced by the Câmara Municipal de Almada characterises this western portion of the municipality as a territory defined by a paradoxical positioning between metropolitan centrality and a peripherisation tendency, with strong ferry accessibility to Lisbon but marked by socio-economic fragility and a high concentration of self-produced settlements.[6]

GEOLOGY, SOILS AND SLOPE CONDITIONS

The underlying geology of the Almada municipality is entirely Tertiary in formation, with the exception of recent Tagus alluvium and Atlantic coastal dunes. The topsoil is predominantly sandy, with low agricultural capacity and marked permeability; natural surface runoff is limited, while groundwater can be accessed in the Tagus riparian zone through natural springs or drainage galleries.[7]

The slope analysis provided by the CMA shows that Segundo Torrão is located on terrain classified as flat or almost flat, with a slope below 5%.[8] While this reduces the risk of slope instability, it simultaneously creates vulnerability to coastal flooding, since flat low-lying terrain offers no natural protection against marine incursion. The ecological soil value of the area, as mapped by the CMA, is classified as low or very low, and its agricultural capacity is correspondingly low.[9] The dune system inland from the beach is the primary natural defence against marine erosion on this stretch of coast.

This combination of flat terrain, low altitude, sandy permeable soils, and north-facing exposure constitutes the biophysical framework within which the settlement's vulnerability can be understood: not as an incidental or exceptional condition, but as the defining characteristic of the land that was left available for those excluded from the formal city.

HYDROGRAPHY, THE REN DESIGNATION, AND FLOOD RISK

Segundo Torrão lies within the large hydrographic basin of the Tagus, on the coastal plain of Trafaria. Because it occupies a coastal aplanation zone, it presents no natural watercourses: the area lacks the topographic gradient that would generate streams. This absence of natural drainage channels is not a minor technical detail but a fundamental condition that shaped the settlement's infrastructure. In the absence of engineered public drainage, a *vala de drenagem* (drainage ditch), came to serve as the settlement's primary stormwater channel, controlling surface water runoff to prevent coastal flooding. Over time, part of the constructions was located directly over this *vala* and made direct discharges into it, so that it came to function simultaneously as a stormwater channel and a septic system, and this happened to be the densest built area of the settlement.

The entire area of Segundo Torrão is included in the Reserva Ecológica Nacional (REN), established by Decree-Law 93/90.[10] The REN is a basic biophysical structure designed to protect areas of erosion risk and flood risk. Its significance here is double. On the one hand, it constitutes the formal legal basis on which construction is prohibited: the PDM (Municipal Master Plan) of Almada includes the settlement within the REN on account of its coastal erosion risk and vulnerability to marine flooding, meaning that, legally, construction is not permitted in this zone.[11] On the other hand, the REN has inadvertently protected the settlement from large-scale formal real estate development, since the same designation that prevents legalisation also makes the land economically unattractive to formal developers. The Estudo Estratégico de Almada Poente identifies the coastal system of Trafaria as part of the primary ecological structure of Almada Poente, a zone of strong ecological fragility subject to marine erosion and tidal flooding, and specifies that the REN designation in this zone is non-negotiable within the regulatory framework in force (EEEAP, 2007).

The settlement is classified as an area of significant flood risk under the Plano de Gestão dos Riscos de Inundações (PGRI). A flood simulation map, produced using hydrological and hydraulic modelling developed for the delimitation of flood-prone areas under the PGRI, shows that a significant portion of the built area falls within inundation zones.[12] Coastal flooding events in the settlement are documented photographically: images show the sea overtopping the coastal line and flooding the interiors of houses. Infragravitational waves, referred to by community members as *ondas de lamber* (licking waves) in terms borrowed from local fishermen's knowledge, constitute the primary physical threat.[13]

CLIMATE

The climate of the Trafaria area is maritime transitional, influenced by the proximity of both the Atlantic Ocean and the Tagus estuary. The oceanic proximity moderates thermal variation and generates frequent fog and mist. The estuary raises average annual temperatures, particularly in winter months, while in summer the proximity of the sea acts as a temperature reducer along the coast. Winds are predominantly northerly. Precipitation concentrates between October and April, with November and December as the most rainy months. The highest temperatures occur in June and August; the lowest between December and March.[14]

The north-facing slope exposure of Segundo Torrão compounds these climatic conditions into a particularly unfavourable bioclimatic situation. The consequence is housing that is cold and damp in winter, poorly ventilated in summer, and exposed to wind and sea spray year-round. These are not the consequences of residents's indifference to their living conditions but of a combination of biophysical disadvantage and the absence of any public actor willing to invest in the thermal and structural quality of housing built without permits on land the state refused to recognise.

→ [10] Portugal, Decreto-Lei n.º 93/90, de 19 de março, "Estabelece a Reserva Ecológica Nacional" (*Diário da República* n.º 65/1990, série I, 19 March 1990: 1314–1321). Accessed 22 July 2026, https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/dereo-lei/93-1990-333172.

[11] Câmara Municipal de Almada, *Estudo de Enquadramento Estratégico da Costa da Trafaria* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2005). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://www.cm-almada.pt.

→ [12] Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente, *Plano de Gestão dos Riscos de Inundações (PGRI): Cartografia das Áreas Inundáveis e de Riscos de Inundações* (Amadora: APA, 2020). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://apambiente.pt/agua/planos-de-gestao-dos-riscos-de-inundacoes.

[13] Loukia Batsi, "Segundo Torrão: Marginality Seen in Urban Policy and the Historical Precedents of Territorial Fixation and Stigmatization," *Urban Transcripts Journal* 3, no. 3 (2020). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://journal.urban-transcripts.org.

[14] Câmara Municipal de Almada, *Estudos de Caracterização do Território Municipal: Caderno 2 – Sistema Ambiental* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2011), based on *Ficha Climatológica 1981–2010, estação de Lisboa*. Accessed 24 July 2026, https://www.cm-almada.pt/sites/default/files/2021-11/Caderno%202%20_Sistema%20Ambiental%20_1.pdf.

4.2 Historical formation of the territory

ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL FOUNDATIONS

The southern bank of the Tagus has been inhabited since prehistoric times. The Roman occupation (1st-5th centuries CE) left material traces in the form of fish-salting installations at Porto Brandão, similar to those found at Cacilhas, Setúbal, and Cascais, testifying to the economic integration of this riverbank with the supply networks of Roman Lisbon across the water.[15] Following the Christian reconquest of Lisbon in 1147, the territory of Almada was progressively incorporated into the kingdom of Portugal. The first formal administrative delimitation of Almada's term dates to 1297, under D. Dinis. The Parish of Caparica was formally founded in 1472. Its territory, which in the 18th century encompassed Trafaria among its settlements, was defined by the fertile agricultural lands of the former Reguengo de Caparica, predominantly planted with vines and cereals (Sousa, 1999).

THE TORRE VELHA, THE LAZARETTO, AND THE MILITARISATION OF THE MARGIN

The most significant medieval and early modern built legacy of the Trafaria area is the Torre Velha, also known as the Forte de São Sebastião da Caparica. Its origins lie in a battery erected under D. João I (1385-1433) at the narrowest crossing point of the Tagus estuary. Under D. João II (1481-1495), a comprehensive three-tower defence plan for the river mouth was conceived, linking the Torre Velha on the south bank with towers at Cascais and at Belém. The Torre Velha was thus the prototype and precursor of the Torre de Belém: Garcia de Resende, the chronicler of D. João II, recorded the king's detailed plans for a strong fortress in Caparica, facing Belém, noting that D. João II had assigned the captaincy of the fortress to a trusted noble. The original structure was rebuilt under D. Sebastião in 1570, becoming the Fortaleza de São Sebastião da Caparica, and was further extended during the Filipine dynasty, when it became known as the Torre dos Castelhanos.[16]

From the late 18th century the military function of the Torre Velha declined, and the fortress was progressively repurposed. Its most consequential transformation was into a lazaretto: a quarantine facility for maritime travellers. The first lazaretto was installed in the Torre Velha in 1814, and by the 1850s this installation had become inadequate. A new purpose-built facility was planned in Porto Brandão, and the new Lazareto de Lisboa was inaugurated in 1869, designed to accommodate up to 980 quarantine patients in seven isolation quarters. Its support infrastructure included a hospital, laundry, military barracks, and residential quarters for doctors, priests, and administrative staff, constituting the largest built complex on this section of the southern bank.[17] In 1919, when the Lazaretto ceased to function as a quarantine station, it became a prison. In 1928, it became the Asilo 28 de Maio, housing up to 465 pupils by 1942. The building was abandoned in 1958 after a roof collapse killed two pupils. Following the Carnation Revolution of April 1974, it was occupied by over 600 people repatriated from Africa, and a further structural accident in 1996 led to its definitive closure.[18]

The spatial legacy of the Lazaretto is crucial for understanding the logic of the territory: since the 16th century, this stretch of coastline had been systematically used for the quarantine and containment of those perceived as dangerous or marginal to the city across the river. This history of territorial stigmatisation was inherited and reproduced by successive uses of the land, and ultimately by the conditions under which self-produced settlers occupied it.

PORTO BRANDÃO: A RIVERINE COMMUNITY

Porto Brandão is the settlement immediately north of the Torre Velha, occupying a small bay at the base of the Almada cliff. Its toponym first appears in the 1513 royal charter (*foral*) of Almada under D. Manuel I, where it is cited as one of the limits of the Reguengo de Caparica. The name derives from the Brandão family, owners of the Quinta da Azenha adjacent to the site.[19]

Between the 16th and 18th centuries Porto Brandão functioned primarily as a goods terminal for the agricultural hinterland: cereals, wine, vegetables, stone and wood were transported to Lisbon by small river vessels (*catraios*). By the 19th century it had grown into a small but active fishing and boatbuilding community. In 1865 the first inclined plane for shipbuilding in Portugal was installed there. A fish canning industry, a cooperage, and a *catraieiros'* cooperative (1923) providing ferry and crew-change services made Porto Brandão a lively industrial and transport node until the Tagus bridge (1966) and the end of vehicle ferry services (1977) sharply reduced its role.[20]

TRAFARIA: FROM FISHING VILLAGE TO MILITARY ENCLOSURE

Trafaria developed as a fishing village along the riverfront north of Porto Brandão, enclosed by the Tagus to the north and a wooded ridge to the east. In the 16th century, when Lisbon was one of the most important ports of Europe, the land across the river

→ [15] Centro de Arqueologia de Almada, *Porto Brandão: A Terra e o Tejo* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2007).

[16] IGESPAR, *Fortaleza da Torre Velha, também designada por Torre de São Sebastião da Caparica* (Lisboa: IGESPAR IP, 2012). Accessed 24 July 2026, http://www.igespar.pt.

→ [17] Vítor Aparício, *Esparso histórico do Lazareto* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 1990).

Raul Pereira de Sousa, *Fortalezas de Almada e o seu Termo* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 1981).

[18] Centro de Arqueologia de Almada, "Porto Brandão: A Terra e o Tejo."

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

served as the city's lazaretto: the establishment of the quarantine facility on this stretch of the southern bank effectively designated the Trafaria coastline as an extension of Lisbon's public health infrastructure, a space for the management of bodies perceived as potentially dangerous to the metropolis. The Fort of Trafaria (Forte de Nossa Senhora da Saúde da Trafaria), built in 1683 during the reign of D. Pedro II, reinforced this militarised character. Despite its defensive logic, it was never used in battle. Its primary function became custodial: it served as a quarantine hospital, then as a prison, and was used by the Navy and Army as a military jail, notably for political opponents during the Salazar dictatorship. It was acquired by the Municipality of Almada in 2000, and in 2020 a rehabilitation project was announced to convert it into the Institute of Art and Technology of NOVA University Lisbon.[21]

This sequence of militarised, custodial, and exclusionary uses of Trafaria's built environment contributed to shaping the land tenure patterns, infrastructure deficits, and spatial isolation of the area in ways that conditioned the self-produced settlement processes of the 20th century.
Military exclusion zones, port authority jurisdiction, and national ecological reserve designations all converged on this stretch of coastline, creating conditions of deregulatory ambiguity that enabled settlement to take root and persist.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF ALMADA

The administrative history of Almada is characterised by successive expansions and contractions of its term. The first formal delimitation dates to 1297. The 1836 liberal administrative reform detached a significant portion of Almada's territory to create the Municipality of Seixal. The current administrative structure encompasses five civil parishes following the 2013 reorganisation. The parish of Caparica e Trafaria was formed by the merger of the former parishes of Caparica and Trafaria. The municipality had a population of 177,238 at the 2021 census, with approximately 11.4% foreign-born residents, a proportion that rises significantly in Caparica e Trafaria given its concentration of African-origin communities.[22] The EEEAP (2007) situates the Almada Poente area within a context of marked socioeconomic fragility, characterised by a high concentration of young adults of African descent, low educational achievement, high rates of single-parent households, and limited access to employment and services, noting the presence of several self-produced settlements as a defining feature of the territory's social geography.

→ [21] Toolbox in Action, "About Trafaria." Accessed 24 July 2026, https://hub.t-factor.eu/toolbox-in-action/about-trafaria/.

[22] Câmara Municipal de Almada, *Levantamento socioeconómico do bairro do 2.º Torrão* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2021). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://www.am-almada.pt/comissao-eventual-sobre-desmantelamento-e-realojamento-do-*bairro*-do-2o-torrao/.

→ [23] Teresa Barata Salgueiro, "Bairros clandestinos na periferia de Lisboa," *Finisterra* 12, no. 23 (1977).

Jorge M. Gonçalves, Fernando Nunes da Silva, and Carla Mota, "Do ilegal ao formal: percursos para a reconversão urbana das Áreas Urbanas de Génese Ilegal em Lisboa," *Cidades, Comunidades e Territórios* 20 (January 2010): 161–92.

[24] Christoph Kalter, "The Strange Case of Portugal's Returnees," *Africa Is a Country,* December 2020. Accessed 24 July 2026, https://africasacountry.com/2020/12/the-strange-case-of-portugals-returnees.

[25] PALOP is an acronym for *Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa* (African Countries of Official Portuguese Language). It designates a group of five African nations, Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe, that share Portuguese as their official language following their independence from Portugal in 1975.

[26] Câmara Municipal de Almada, *Estudo de Enquadramento Estratégico da Costa da Trafaria* (Almada: Câmara Municipal de Almada, 2005). Accessed 24 July 2026, https://www.cm-almada.pt.

THE 1974 REVOLUTION AND THE POSTCOLONIAL DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATION

The transformation of the Trafaria area in the late 20th century cannot be understood without reference to the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974 and the subsequent decolonisation of Portugal's African territories. The revolution triggered one of the largest forced migrations of the 20th century: over one million people, the vast majority of them white settlers from Angola and Mozambique (*retornados*), returned to Portugal, arriving mainly in 1975 (Peralta, 2022). By the late 1970s, Portugal's population had grown by approximately half a million, concentrated overwhelmingly in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. The self-produced settlements of Almada grew rapidly to absorb populations for whom the formal housing market was inaccessible. The phenomenon of self-produced settlement had been present in Portugal since the late 1920s in Lisbon and Porto, accelerated through the 1960s, peaked around the time of the revolution, and reached maximum intensity in the years immediately following 1974, driven by the internal migration of workers and the arrival of *retornados* and post-colonial populations.[23]
At the same time, people from the former colonies also arrived in Portugal seeking alternatives to the high cost of urban life. Unlike the white *retornados*, these African migrants were neither accepted as citizens nor entitled to comprehensive welfare, despite having grown up as ostensibly Portuguese subjects.[24] In the 2000s, new waves of migration from Cape Verde and Angola brought additional families to the Trafaria area, as noted in the CMA's 2005 strategic study of the Costa da Trafaria, which records that the settlement's population grew significantly through successive waves of PALOP arrivals,[25] primarily Angolans and Cape Verdeans, with the second generation increasingly using the houses as primary residences.[26]

4.3 Land ownership, legal status, and planning instruments

LAND TENURE IN TRAFARIA AREA

Understanding the legal status of Segundo Torrão requires situating it within the broader history of Portugal's "clandestine" settlement phenomenon, which the planning literature defines as construction carried out without a municipal licence.[27] In the specific case of Almada's western settlements, Salgueiro notes that a key factor in the location of self-produced settlements near Trafaria and Porto Brandão was their proximity to river crossing points providing access to Lisbon, combined with the availability of land with a relatively hidden character that reduced exposure to municipal inspection brigades.

The land on which Segundo Torrão stands falls under the jurisdiction of the Autoridade Portuária de Lisboa (APL), which in earlier decades issued informal licences for the construction of fishing support structures (*casas de apres-tos*) on the waterfront. These structures were subsequently converted to residential use. Over decades, residents built and consolidated dwellings without legal title, in a condition of tacit tolerance that was never definitively resolved. The progressive appropriation of APL-licenced structures for residential use, combined with the autoconstruction policies of the 1970s and the arrival of post-colonial populations, significantly expanded the settlement (CMA, 2005).

The EEEAP (2007) diagnoses the cadastral and patrimonial structure of the Almada Poente PIA area as one of profound ambiguity, noting that old rustic parcels never formally converted remain prevalent throughout the western zone, and that these have been informally converted to residential use without any viable path to legalisation.

For the inhabitants of self-produced settlements, this ambiguity has a concrete everyday meaning: residents occupy land to which they have no legal title, cannot obtain building permits, and can in principle be evicted at any time, yet many have paid municipal taxes and utility charges for decades, creating a *de facto* expectation of permanence that the state has never formally recognised (CMA, 2005).

THE REN DESIGNATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

As noted in section 4.1, the inclusion of Segundo Torrão in the Reserva Ecológica Nacional has a double function in the governance of the settlement: it simultaneously blocks any path to legalisation and inadvertently protects the settlement from large-scale formal real estate development.

→ [27] Salgueiro, "Bairros clandestinos na periferia de Lisboa."

Under Portuguese law, Segundo Torrão might in theory qualify as an Área Urbana de Génese Ilegal, subject to the AUGI Law, Law 91/95, which establishes a framework for the reconversion and legalisation of illegal-genesis urban areas.

However, several factors prevent this: the land is not in private ownership of the residents; it is subject to the REN, which prohibits construction under any circumstances; and the environmental risk conditions make formal urban reconversion technically impossible. As Gonçalves, Nunes da Silva and Mota (2010) explain, while AUGI areas currently identified in PDMs are in principle eligible for urbanisation according to the LAUGI, some areas do not meet the requirements for delimitation under the law and in these cases continue to be identified as areas requiring urban recovery without being able to benefit from the technical-administrative mechanisms the law provides.

The administrative paradox that results is that the state cannot recognise the settlement, but cannot adequately rehouse its residents either, leaving the community in permanent legal limbo.

THE RAN AND AGRICULTURAL LAND

The Reserva Agrícola Nacional (RAN) is a complementary instrument protecting soils of agricultural value from urban conversion. In the Trafaria area, the RAN designation covers portions of the coastal plain that retain some agricultural potential, particularly in the transition zone towards the hills. The CMA's ecological soil value maps show that the soils of moderate to high agricultural capacity in this zone are protected against conversion to urban uses (CMA, 2011).

For the self-produced settlements, the RAN's significance is indirect: it contributes to the general designation of the coastal plain as unsuitable for formal urban development, reinforcing the REN restrictions. Together, the two reserve instruments categorise the entire area occupied by Segundo Torrão as land that should not be built upon, creating a fundamental tension between the formal planning framework and the reality of decades of established community life.

4.4 The self-produced settlements of Trafaria

A COMMON ECOLOGY, DISTINCT TRAJECTORIES

The three self-produced settlements of the Trafaria area, Segundo Torrão, Primeiro Torrão and Cova do Vapor, share a common ecology: all are self-built, legally unrecognised, spatially peripheral, and inhabited by populations excluded from the formal housing market. But each has a distinct history, spatial form, and present condition. Together they constitute what Eduardo Ascensão calls a **postcolonial slum**: a global urban form shaped by the intersection of capitalist land markets and colonial legacies, with specific local and historical characteristics.[28]

To present these communities as pathological risks misreading them: they are assemblages of social and technical knowledge born from the absence of planning and services, expressions of what people are capable of building when institutional support is denied. The informal electricity connections, the running water network, the self-organised street names and the residents' associations that assumed municipal functions are evidence not of absence but of presence: they are the signature of communities these are evidence of communities that built themselves with the materials available, material and social alike. The EEEAP (2007) classifies these settlements as *espaços informais*, a specific category of urban space characterised by informality of construction and use, absence of formal planning recognition, and a casual, incidental form.

COVA DO VAPOR: THE LAST FISHING VILLAGE

Cova do Vapor is the westernmost of the three settlements, located at the precise point where the Tagus river meets the Atlantic Ocean. Bounded to the north by the river, to the west by the ocean, and to the south-east by a stretch of protected coastal forest, the settlement occupies a plot of approximately 40,000 square metres within which around 350 houses have been built: densely clustered, organic in form, constructed and repeatedly reconstructed over more than seventy years.[29] The permanent population numbers approximately 200 residents, though this figure quintuples in summer when the settlement's beaches draw seasonal visitors. Fishing remains the primary livelihood of the permanent community. The settlement was repeatedly affected by coastal advance throughout the 1940s-1960s, with houses moved or rebuilt as the shoreline fluctuated. After the 1974 revolution, military engineers built concrete breakwaters that stabilised the settlement's boundaries in the form they retain today.

→ [28] Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum'."

[29] Ibid.

Cova do Vapor is not legally recognised. The land is privately owned by Urprasol, a real estate company that in the early 2000s proposed to "re-naturalize Cova do Vapor, put an end to the illegal constructions, give the area back to tourism".[30]
This project, which ignored the actual social fabric of the community, was blocked in the late 2000s when public entities declared the area at high risk of tidal flooding.
The jurisdictional framework governing Cova do Vapor is particularly complex, and this complexity is itself a significant fact: although the land is privately owned, the settlement is under public protection; integrated into the REN and subject to the jurisdiction of the Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente, its northern section also falls under the Instituto dos Portos e Transportes Marítimos and the Autoridade Portuária de Lisboa.
This diversity of responsible entities has made the local community's situation more complicated, preventing formal municipal conversion of the settlement. As a result, new construction is prohibited and residents may face eviction at any time, yet many hold building permits and pay municipal and public service taxes: a paradox that is by now familiar across all three Trafaria settlements.

→ [30] Margarida Queiroz, "Cova do Vapor," in A Criatividade Urbana na Região de Lisboa (Lisboa: IGOT-UL/CCDR-LVT, 2012), 238.

The REN designation, while constituting the formal legal basis for the settlement's non-recognition, simultaneously protects it from large-scale tourist development, functioning, as in the case of Segundo Torrão, as an inadvertent defence against real estate speculation.

With the independence of Portugal's African colonies in 1974 and 1975, a large number of Portuguese settlers returned home together with people from those former overseas provinces, producing enormous demographic increases in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and giving rise simultaneously to a large number of self-produced settlements throughout the District of Almada as well. In the 2000s, new waves of migration from Cape Verde and Angola brought a further population to Cova do Vapor. The composition of the settlement's population is therefore specific and historically layered: initially formed by internal migration of working-class Portuguese from rural areas, it grew exponentially after the fall of the colonial empire, producing what Ascensão (2010) calls a postcolonial population that makes it somewhat unique among comparable settlements. Limited access to Portuguese citizenship, and the resulting restrictions on access to the formal labour market, constitute, in Ascensão's words, the invisible expressions of postcolonial structural violence against low-in-

come immigrants, a condition shared, as discussed further in section 4.5, by the community of Segundo Torrão.

The community is largely invisible to middle-class residents of adjacent Costa da Caparica, and when visible, it is viewed with suspicion rooted in racial prejudice and the perception of danger associated with proximity to a precarious neighbourhood. This cultural violence, rooted in the persistence of colonial forms of social organisation and the representation of racial and ethnic difference, structures the spatial and social experience of the settlement's inhabitants.

The Associação de Moradores da Cova do Vapor compensates for the absence of municipal services by taking responsibility for infrastructure maintenance and community organisation, a structure that explains why residents rejected relocation to social housing blocks: the settlement's social fabric, accumulated over three generations, was not transferable to a municipal apartment building.

The TISA (The Informal School of Architecture) project led by architect Filipe Balestra undertook participatory architectural work in Cova do Vapor from 2011, including the design and construction of a communal kitchen through community engagement.[31] Balestra's observation captures the epistemological inversion at stake:[32] when people build their houses to measure for their family, you cannot criticise it, because it makes complete sense.

A subsequent project by un-.se assembled a team of 75 specialists who spent three months on site working with residents to document the settlement and support the legalisation process.[33]
The Constructlab initiative followed with the Casa do Vapor, a multipurpose support structure that housed at various times an open-air classroom, a public library, a community kitchen, a bicycle workshop, a skate ramp, a playground, and a pizza oven.[34]

PRIMEIRO TORRÃO

Primeiro Torrão occupies the intermediate position between Trafaria and Segundo Torrão, within the coastal forest and dune system of Trafaria. It shares the general characteristics of the area's self-produced settlements: self-built, legally unrecognised, inhabited mainly by working-class Portuguese. Documentation on Primeiro Torrão remains considerably more limited than on the other two settlements, a gap that reflects the settlement's smaller size and lower visibility in existing municipal and academic sources. Much of what this chapter documents for Segundo Torrão, its precarious land tenure, its infrastructural exclusion, extends at least in part to Primeiro Torrão as well. The boundary between the two settlements is, in any case, far from clearly defined and the two areas are best understood as a continuous rather than as two fully distinct territories.

→ [31] Information retrieved from "Participatory Aesthetics and Makeshift Urbanism," *Part-urbs Anthology*, accessed 24 July 2026, https://www.part-urbs.com/anthology/participatory_aesthetics_and_makeshift_urbanism.html.

[32] Filipe Balestra, the architect in charge of the TISA project, who oversaw the creation of a communal kitchen in Cova do Vapor through participatory architectural practices.

[33] Urban Nouveau, "Cova do Vapor," 2024. Accessed 24 July 2026, https://un.se/en/work/cova-do-vapor/.

[34] Constructlab, "Casa do Vapor," 2013. Accessed 24 July 2026, https://constructlab.net/projects/casa-do-vapor/.

→ [35] Batsi, "Segundo Torrão: Marginality Seen in Urban Policy and the Historical Precedents of Territorial Fixation and Stigmatization."

SEGUNDO TORRÃO: FORMATION AND GROWTH

Segundo Torrão is the largest of the three Trafaria self-produced settlements. Located on the coastal plain west of the historic centre of Trafaria, bounded to the north by the Tagus riverfront, to the south by coastal forest, to the east by the Trafaria primary school, and to the west by a NATO facility, it is one of the largest self-built residential concentrations in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. At its peak, before the demolitions of 2022, it housed approximately 3,500 residents.[35]

Its situation was publicly declared urgent, and the authorities proceeded to implement special measures that had the effect of further destabilising and marginalising residents. In 2019, eviction was announced, though no clear plan existed for the relocation and rehabilitation of the displaced families (Batsi, 2021).

The settlement's formation responds to a logic that is neither accidental nor irrational. People do not occupy hostile land voluntarily; their choices, over time, reflect specific, material constraints that this section sets out to trace. The majority of Segundo Torrão's population chose to inhabit the area informally before there was any plan or infrastructure, because life in the city was not economically accessible. Alongside this, the very specific and controlled identity of the city contributed to the exclusion of those from different cultural backgrounds or unfamiliar with living in a less urban landscape (Batsi, 2021).

According to the CMA's 2005 strategic study of the Costa da Trafaria, the initial residents were essentially Lisbon residents who had secondary residences there, and population from other parts of the country who settled in Lisbon and came to spend leisure time on the other bank. A group of fishermen had been authorised to build support structures, and Lisbon residents who came for leisure gradually settled on the coastal strip. Over time, financial constraints prevented return to Lisbon and the structures became primary residences (CMA, 2005).

The settlement's population structure and housing dynamic changed significantly as it attracted and settled PALOP populations, primarily Angolans and Cape Verdeans, whose children increasingly used the houses as primary residences. The autoconstruction policies of the 1970s and the arrival of post-colonial populations significantly ex-

panded the settlement, which grew largely unnoticed, hidden by coastal forest from the road network and accessible primarily on foot from the Trafaria ferry terminal, on land whose ownership was ambiguous and whose jurisdiction was dispersed across multiple public and private entities (CMA, 2005).

By the time of the 2021 CMA socioeconomic survey, Segundo Torrão had consolidated into a dense self-produced neighbourhood, its urban form is discussed in detail in section 4.6.

The precarious land tenure of Segundo Torrão's inhabitants has a second, historical root, beyond the environmental-conditions of the terrain: the area's prior use as a lazaretto and city dump of Lisbon, a legacy examined at length in section 4.8.

Technical support structures could in principle alleviate coastal erosion and mitigate the immediate threat of rising waters. Participatory decision-making systems, focused on the self-determination of residents, could aim to modify the specific connotations attributed to the area, which long-established conventional practices have labelled as marginalised.

These practices point toward what Batsi calls *assemblic thinking practices*: heterogeneous and multiple processes that introduce the perspective of broad social and territorial equality.[36] The broaderimplications of this argument for how cities as a whole should be understood are developed in section 4.8.

The EEEAP describes across the western Almada self-produced settlements a pattern of great diversity of building types including precarious constructions organised in an illegal or casual way, associated with situations of insecurity, vandalism and social degradation.

This description, while framing the settlements primarily as problems, contains an implicit acknowledgement of the scale and diversity of construction activity they represent:

not settlements produced by passivity, but environments actively built, however constrained the conditions under which building took place.

→ [36] Batsi, "Segundo Torrão: Marginality Seen in Urban Policy and the Historical Precedents of Territorial Fixation and Stigmatization."

→ [37] Ascensão, "The 'Postcolonial Slum'."

[38] Elsa Peralta, "The Return from Africa: Illegitimacy, Concealment, and the Non-Memory of Portugal's Imperial Collapse," Memory Studies 15, no. 1 (2019).

4.5 Population: composition, structure, and socioeconomic conditions

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The demographic analysis of Segundo Torrão is based on data provided directly by the Câmara Municipal de Almada in the context of the rehousing operation for the drainage channel zone, specifically a socioeconomic survey conducted in June 2021. The survey covered 1,224 individuals, though 231 lacked identity documents, meaning their ages could not be confirmed. A sub-sample of 395 individuals provided more detailed socioeconomic data. This data has inherent limitations given the circumstances of its collection, including the fact that it coincided with the beginning of the rehousing process, which affected the willingness of residents and local associations to engage (CMA, 2021).

The age structure shows a majority in the working-age bracket between 20 and 60 years old. From the sub-sample of 395 people, the majority is of African nationality, more specifically Angolan and Cape Verdean. The majority of the population is female and single. The most common household size is four persons, and the intervention zone contains many single-parent families (predominantly mother and children), as well as nuclear and extended families (CMA, 2021).

THE POSTCOLONIAL CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY

The demographic profile of Segundo Torrão cannot be read as a set of statistics: it is better understood as the outcome of a specific political history. As with Cova do Vapor, limited access to Portuguese citizenship, and the resulting restrictions on access to the formal labour market, constitute what Ascensão calls *invisible expressions of postcolonial structural violence* against low-income immigrants: violence that prevents them from developing their own potential within the current Portuguese political, institutional and economic framework.[37] The legal precarity of many residents, living without land title, without building permits, often without full citizenship documentation, is not incidental but structural, the product of a Portuguese immigration and nationality policy that, in the decades following decolonisation, systematically denied full citizenship to the African populations of the former empire while integrating the white *retornados*.[38]

As in Cova do Vapor, this community too is largely invisible to the middle-class residents of adjacent Costa da Caparica, and subject, when noticed, to the same cultural violence

rooted in colonial forms of social organisation described above.

The PhD research of João Duarte (2025), conducted through participatory immersion in the Segundo Torrão community between 2017 and 2022, documents this social fabric from within. His thesis traces the community's scientific and political knowledge, built through the Novo Decisores de Ciência project, through community meetings, and through the shared experience of floods, eviction threats, and collective resistance. Duarte argues for the recognition of this knowledge as a legitimate form of scientific participation from the margins, one that cannot be dismissed by formal institutions as irrelevant or pre-scientific.

4.6 Urban form, housing, and infrastructure

MORPHOLOGY AND SPATIAL STRUCTURE

The CMA's own documentation of the settlement describes it as characterised by very dense informal construction, without a logic of edification, whose principal voids were created as a negative of the unbuilt areas, in an attempt to maximise available space, with public space resulting from existing voids and never being built or designed as such (CMA, 2005).

This description captures both the spatial reality and the social logic: in the absence of a public actor willing to plan and invest, maximising residential space was the rational response of a community that had no other option. Although the *bairro* was built without a formal plan, a clear internal logic is still visible, structured by a matrix of streets running parallel to the river.
The circulation network consists of three traversal streets, one running through the middle of the settlement, and the other two at the external margin of the settlement, off which branch narrow alleyways (*becos*). Some perpendicular streets run through the settlement in the other direction, from the river to the side of the wood. Vehicle access is difficult: streets are narrow, of compacted earth or sand, and their condition deteriorates dramatically in rain. Most access to dwellings is pedestrian-only, a constraint with significant implications for service delivery, emergency access, and daily mobility.

HOUSING TYPOLOGY AND CONDITIONS

The housing stock is predominantly *alvenaria* (masonry) construction, typically one or two storeys, built progressively with available materials. Constructions are for the most part overcrowded, and present weak capacity to protect against inclement weather (CMA, 2005). The data provided by the CMA for the full settlement shows that on average there are more than 1.5 persons per bedroom, meaning that room-sharing is the norm for the vast majority of families.
These conditions are not the consequence of residents' preferences but of the combined effect of economic exclusion, the impossibility of obtaining building permits, and the absence of any public investment in housing quality for a population the state has refused to recognise.

ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

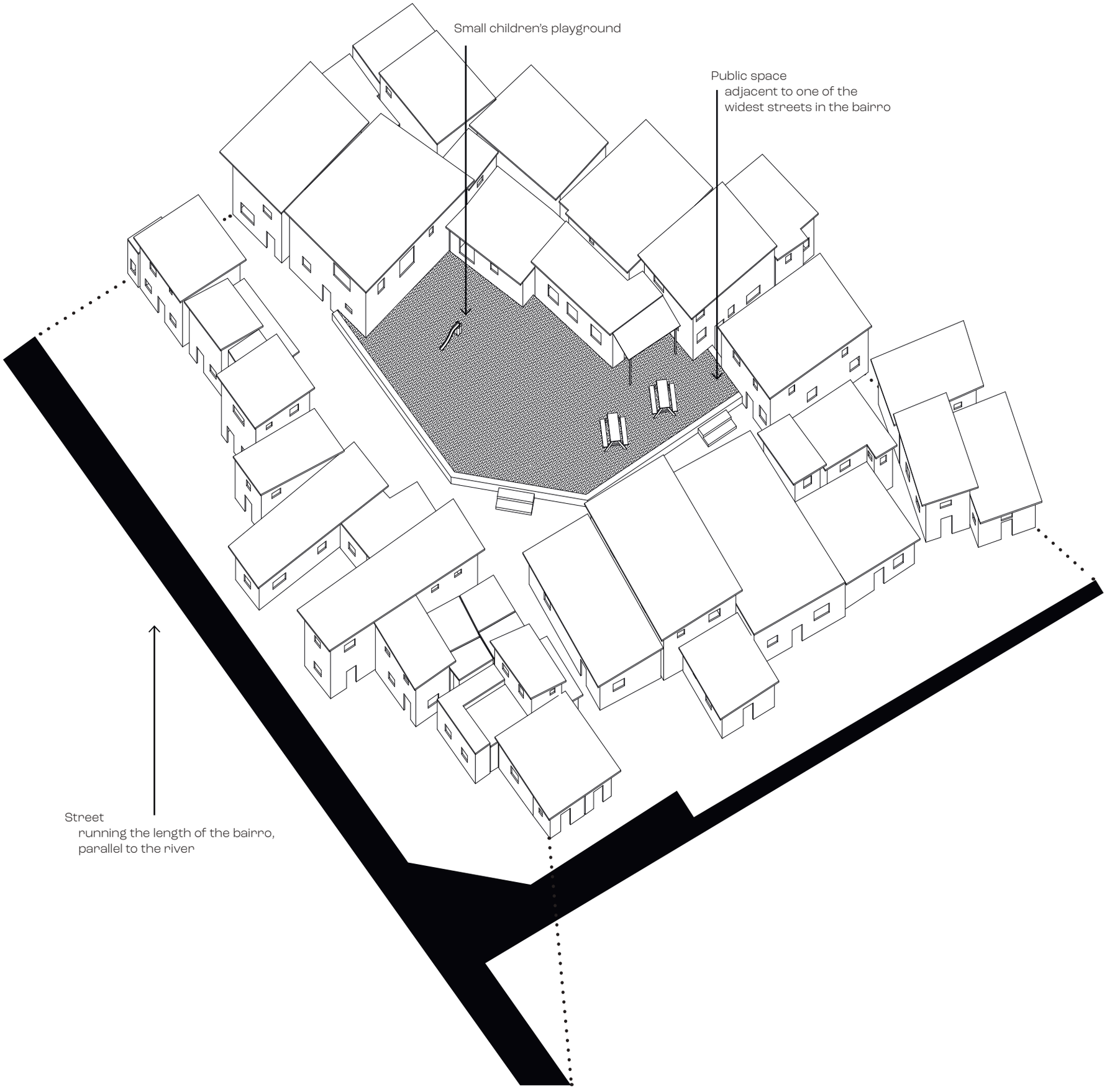
The settlement has public street lighting. The Associação de Moradores do 2.º Torrão signed a protocol between EDP, the energy supply company, and the CMA so that residents would have electricity meters in their homes and pay their respective bills. E-Redes installed the electricity meters. However, according to CMA sources, the majority of residents still resort to illegal connections (*puxadas*).

WATER AND SANITATION

Water supply reached the settlement through connections to the public grid.
Sanitation presented significant deficiencies: domestic waste water was discharged into the municipal effluent network or directly in the open air, in some cases discharged directly into the drainage channel. As noted in section 4.1, this channel controlled surface water runoff to prevent coastal flooding and was simultaneously used as a septic system, with part of the constructions located directly over it and making direct discharges into it.

Solid waste collection presented difficulties: some rubbish containers existed, but waste accumulated at corners throughout the settlement, particularly in internal alleys where collection vehicles can't penetrate. The picture that emerges across all these infrastructure dimensions is not one of a community indifferent to its living conditions, but one that the state has systemati-

A praça



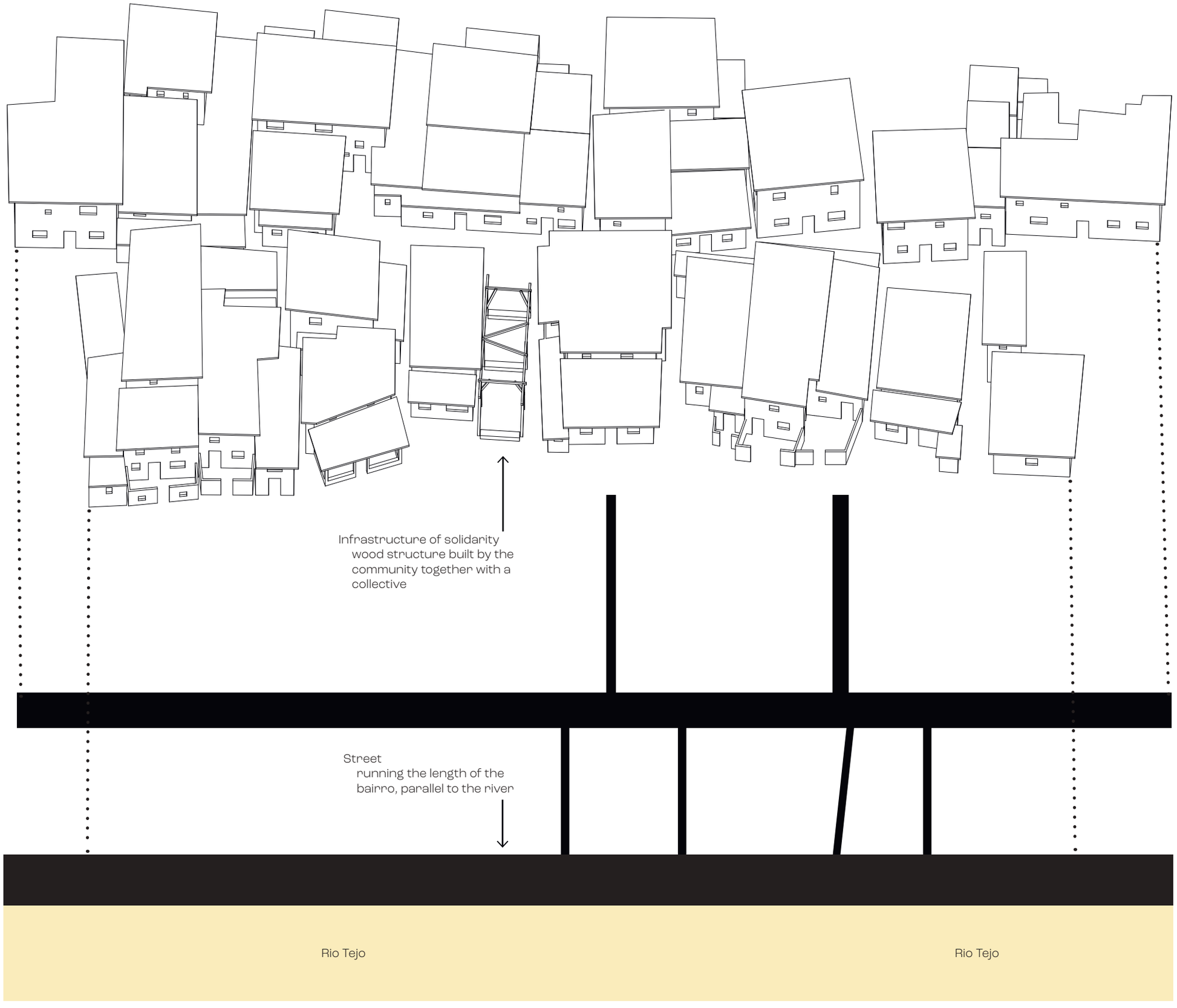
The image shows one of the few squares of the bairro, formed at the intersection of two perpendicular streets. The square is partially enclosed by a low containing wall on two sides, with the remaining two sides delimited by the surrounding buildings; its interior surface is unpaved, composed of sand and bare earth.

Given its considerable size, this space is unlikely to have originated as a residual gap left by subtraction within the built fabric, and appears instead to be the result of a deliberate collective choice to preserve an open communal area.

A slide and a set of tables, the latter built by the community during a workshop held some years earlier, occupy the space.

During fieldwork this area was frequently observed being used as a laundry-drying zone, with clothes hung across the open ground. Together with the swing located behind the church, this praça constitutes one of only two spaces in the settlement equipped with play facilities for children, underscoring both the scarcity of dedicated public and recreational space within the bairro's dense urban fabric and the community's own capacity to produce such spaces.

Settlement's spatial organization



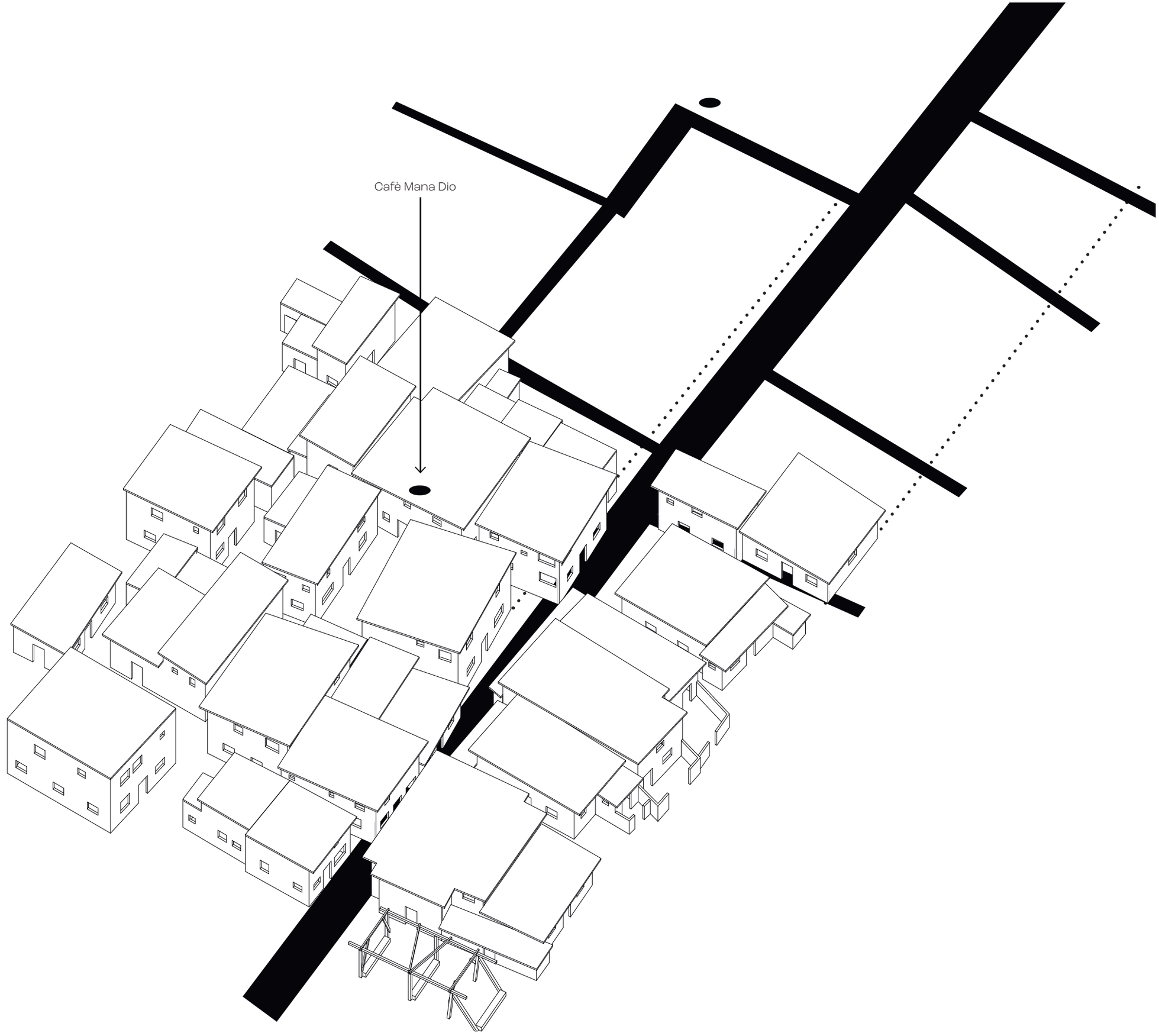
The axonometric shows the spatial organisation of the bairro in the front rows of the settlement, developed along lines running parallel to the Tagus river.

This sector is structured by the same street matrix described in section 4.6, with the main thoroughfares following the riverfront and narrower perpendicular streets, becos, branching off them, connecting the riverside rows to the interior of the settlement.

Here too, the drawing documents a wooden structure built by the community as part of a participatory workshop, evidence of the same collective, self-organised production of space visible in the praça shown previously.

The perpendicular streets, though narrower than the main parallel routes, appear notably wider than the internal becos described elsewhere in the settlement, suggesting a more generous and considered spatial layout in this riverfront portion of the bairro.

O café



This axonometric documents the current position of one of the bairro's cafés.

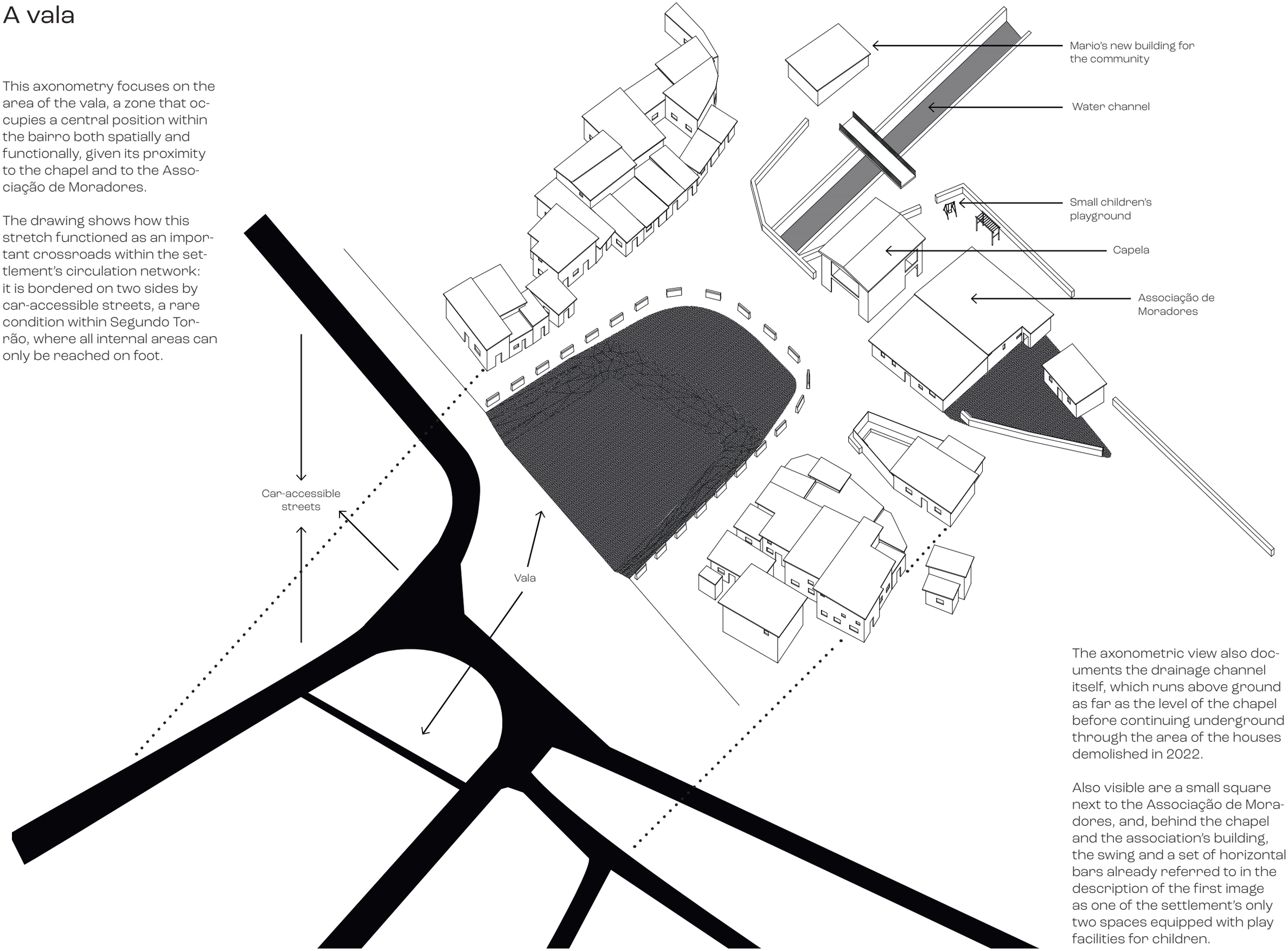
The café originally occupied a far more visible location, situated along the vala, the drainage channel that ran through the settlement's densest built area, in the stretch closest to the chapel. This was precisely the zone affected by the 2022 demolitions, carried out due to the risk of collapse of the constructions built directly over the channel.

Following the demolitions, the café was relocated to its present position within the bairro, a displacement that reflects at a small, everyday scale the broader transformation the settlement underwent as the drainage-channel area was cleared. While some activities and residents were absorbed elsewhere within the remaining urban fabric, others were not reabsorbed into the bairro at all and had to relocate outside it entirely.

A vala

This axonometry focuses on the area of the vala, a zone that occupies a central position within the bairro both spatially and functionally, given its proximity to the chapel and to the Associação de Moradores.

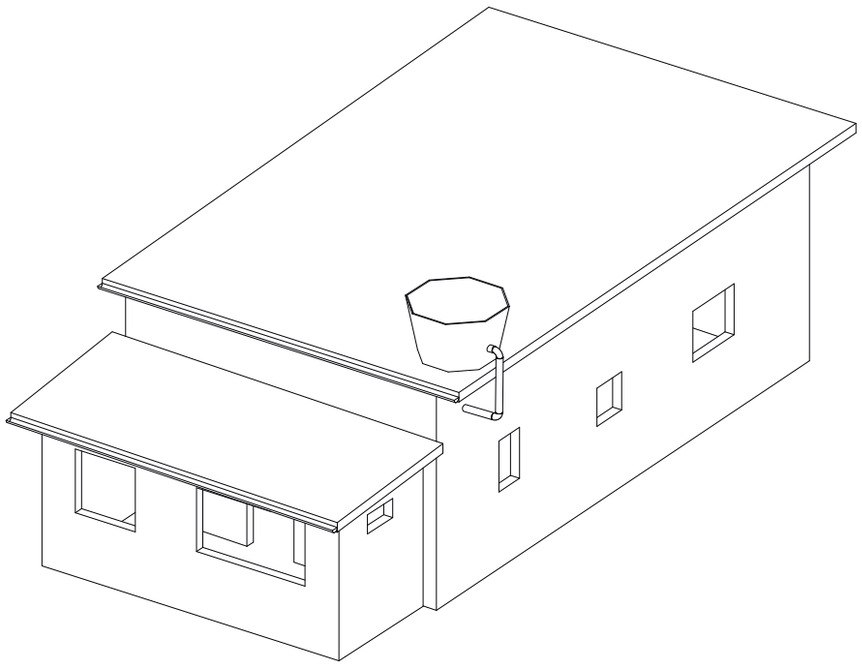
The drawing shows how this stretch functioned as an important crossroads within the settlement's circulation network: it is bordered on two sides by car-accessible streets, a rare condition within Segundo Torrão, where all internal areas can only be reached on foot.



The axonometric view also documents the drainage channel itself, which runs above ground as far as the level of the chapel before continuing underground through the area of the houses demolished in 2022.

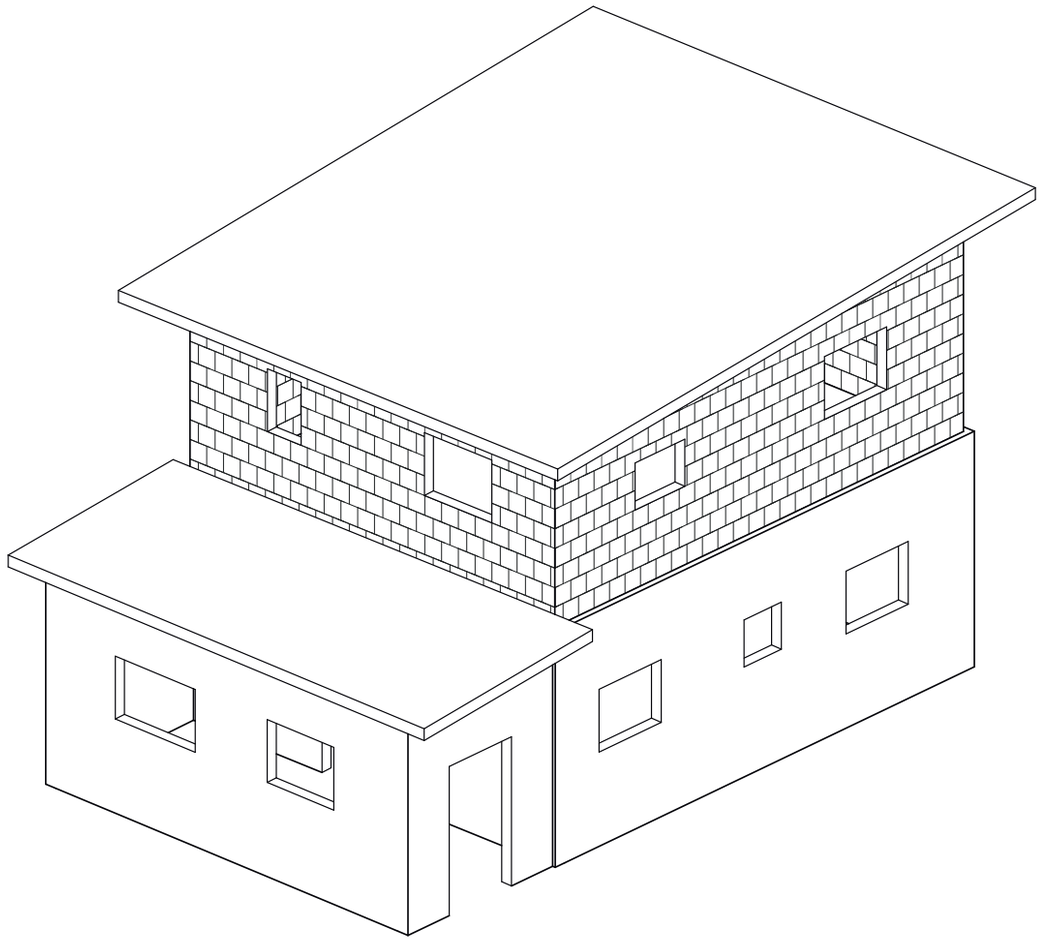
Also visible are a small square next to the Associação de Moradores, and, behind the chapel and the association's building, the swing and a set of horizontal bars already referred to in the description of the first image as one of the settlement's only two spaces equipped with play facilities for children.

One story house



The axonometric shows a single, one-storey building. While a number of houses in the bairro have grown to two storeys, often through quite recent and still-unfinished additions built in exposed brick, single-storey construction of this kind remains common throughout the settlement. This particular building also features a water-collection basin on its roof, a solution visible in a number of cases throughout the bairro, likely compensating for the deficiencies of the formal water supply network.

Two stories house



This axonometric shows a two-storey building. As in most of the two-storey houses within the bairro, the upper floor is left in exposed brick, without external finishing, a condition that testifies to a recent addition to the original structure, one that appears not yet definitive or complete. This incremental, unfinished quality of vertical growth is consistent with the settlement's broader pattern of self-construction, where dwellings are expanded progressively as resources and needs allow.

cally refused to serve with the basic infrastructure it provides as a matter of course in formally recognised neighbourhoods.

MOBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Segundo Torrão's connectivity to the rest of the metropolitan area is limited. The settlement is hidden by the forest and passes unnoticed by those who circulate nearby. Access via ferry from Belém to Trafaria allows connections with Segundo Torrão.

Otherwise, another way to reach Segundo Torrão, starting from the north bank, is by taking several buses that cross the bridge 25 de Abril and that bring passenger closer to the settlement by stopping along the Avenida 25 de Abril.

As alreadynoted, the road network reaches only the settlement's perimeter, and internal circulationremains pedestrian-only.

4.7 Governance, rehousing, and the right to the city

THE AMBIGUITY OF LAND TENURE AND LEGAL STATUS

The land status of Segundo Torrão is characterised by a fundamental paradox: formally controlled but practically ungoverned in terms of planning and service provision.

The specific legal and administrative mechanisms behind this paradox, the APL licences, the EEEAP's diagnosis of cadastral ambiguity, and the impossibility of AUGI reconversion, are set out in section 4.3 and are not repeated here.

The result is a community that has existed for decades on the threshold of legality, paying taxes and utility charges to a state that refuses to recognise its existence.

THE REHOUSING PROCESS

The municipality initiated the demolition process in October 2022, due to the risk of collapse of the drainage channel in the settlement and, consequently, of the constructions located over it. The CMA rehoused the households in the municipal housing stock with the Porta de Entrada programme, part of the Nova Geração de Políticas de Habitação (NGPH) framework (IHRU, 2018). As discussed in Section 3.5, the limited capacity of the municipal housing stock made it necessary to sublet some units on the private market, with households contracted through the IHRU and the CMA acting as intermediary. These families should, ideally, be rehoused in municipal housing.

→ [39] Isabel Guerra, "As pessoas não são coisas que se ponham em gavetas," Sociedade e Território 20 (1994): 11–26.

Duarte's research documents this process from the community's perspective, describing a hurried emergency plan and a group of residents who resisted, demanding recognition as legal inhabitants and a right to adequate housing. After eight months, they were finally recognised and granted new housing.

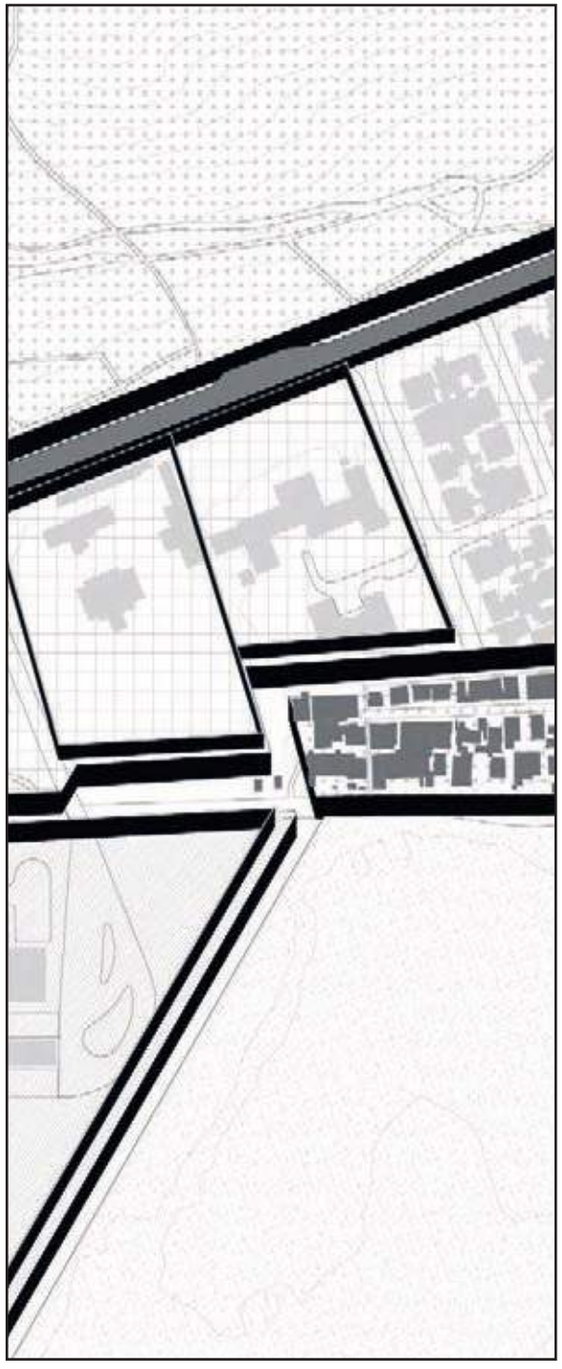
The governance of this process illustrates the structural tension between the management of environmental risk and the recognition of social rights. The fact that these imperatives were treated as sequential rather than simultaneous, with demolition preceding adequate rehousing for some families, is consistent with what Guerra[39] identified as a recurring pattern in Portuguese rehousing processes: treating the problem as financial and urbanistic rather than social, forgetting that it is not the population being rehoused that must adapt to the rehousing, but the rehousing that must consider the sociocultural identities, habitat models, pre-existing social networks, and life projects of the people involved.

THE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION AND COMMUNITY SELF-GOVERNANCE

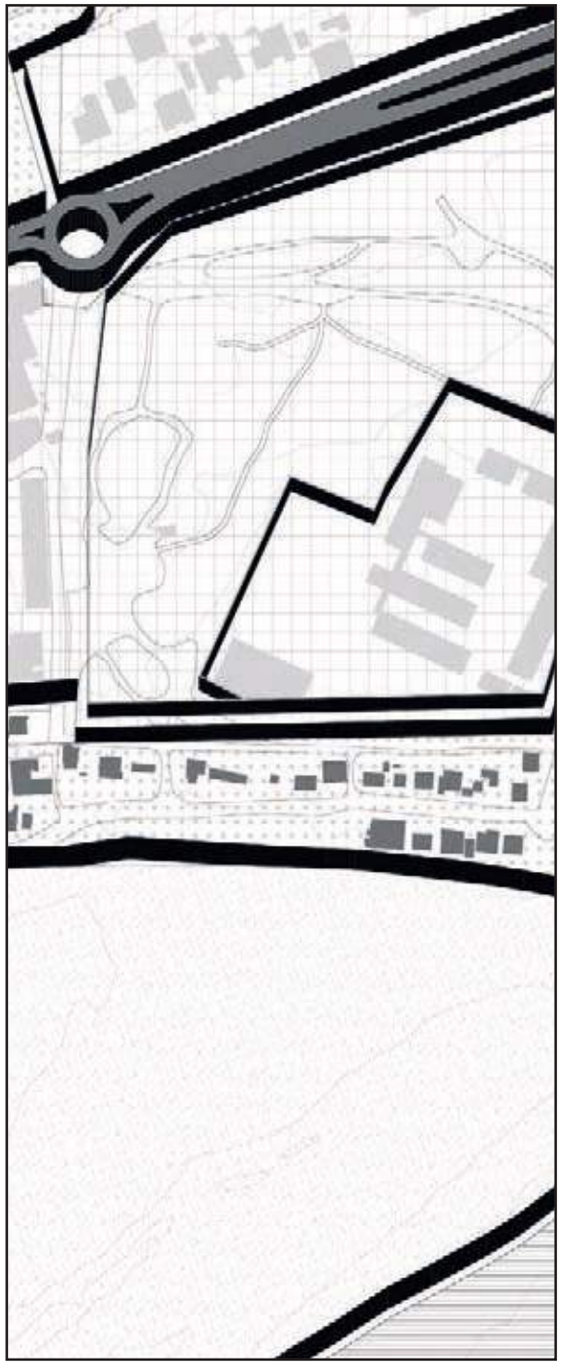
In the absence of municipal services and formal legal recognition, Segundo Torrão's residents organised through the *Associação de Moradores* to provide collective infrastructure and defend collective interests. This pattern mirrors that of Cova do Vapor, where the *Associação de Moradores* da Cova do Vapor assumed responsibility for public infrastructure in the absence of municipal presence.

Both associations testify to what Ascensão calls the *technologies of inhabiting*: the self-organised solutions that communities develop precisely because the state has not provided them.

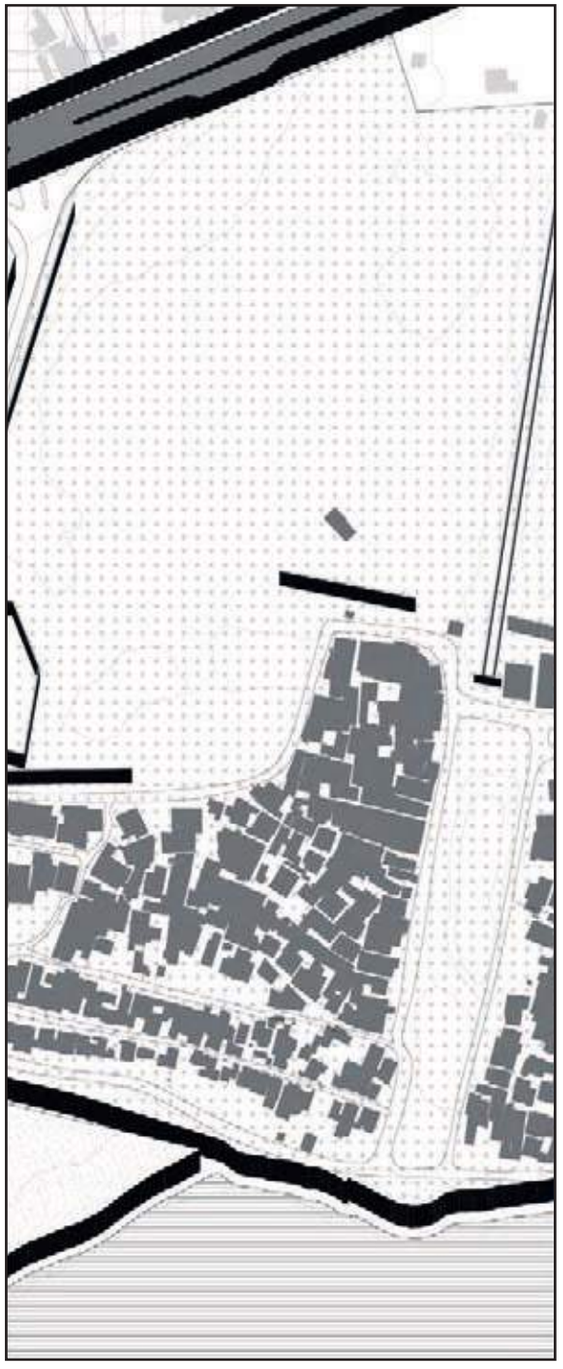
The signing of the electricity protocol with EDP and the CMA, the organisation of community meetings during the rehousing process, the advocacy for residents' rights during the demolitions: these are all evidence that Segundo Torrão was not a disorganised settlement but a community with significant social capital and governance capacity, a fact that the eviction process failed to adequately acknowledge.



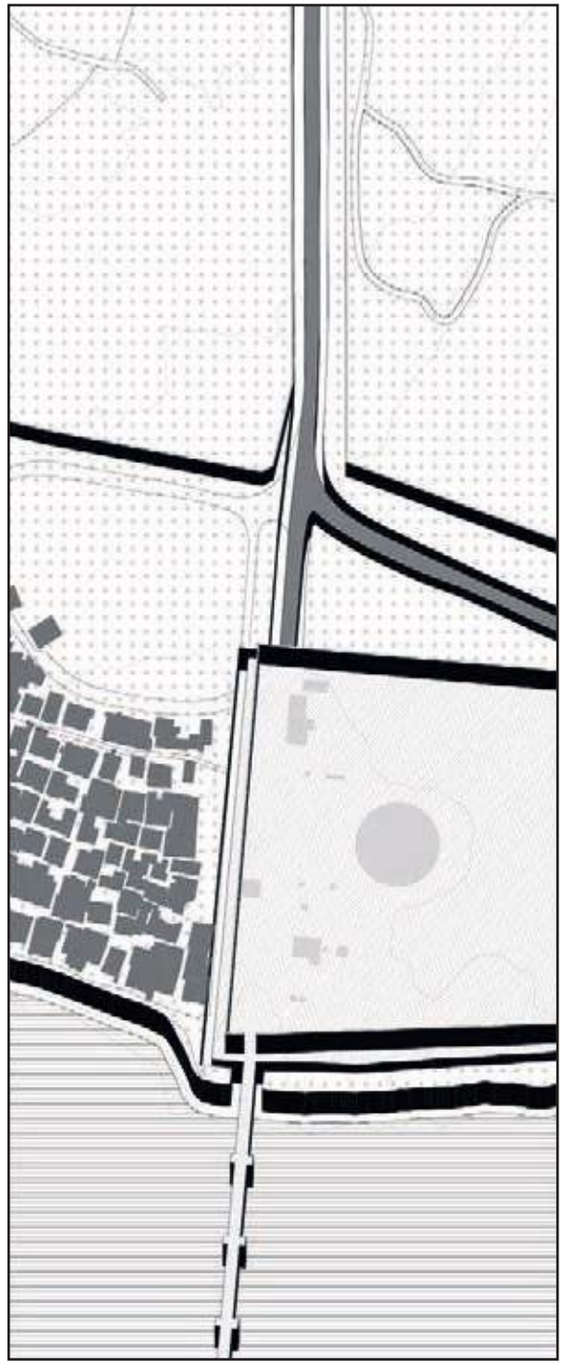
These maps represent the fragmented territory of Segundo Torrão by depicting its various land parcels as “islands” rendered with volumetric thickness, a device that visually isolates each fragment from its surroundings.



The representation makes clear that the bairro is not connected to the main road network: streets distribute only around the surrounding area, without continuity into the interior, and automobile access is confined to the settlement’s perimeter.



This physical disconnection is reinforced by a series of perimeter walls and boundaries that enclose the bairro on every side, echoing its broader confinement between the Tagus riverfront, the coastal forest, the Trafaria primary school, and a NATO facility.



The fragmentation shown here is not merely spatial but mirrors the jurisdictional fragmentation. A visual counterpart to the administrative condition of a community formally controlled but practically ungoverned.

4.8 Territorial injustice and the production of the margin

THE HISTORICAL PRODUCTION OF THE MARGIN

The analysis of Segundo Torrão and its surrounding territory reveals a consistent historical pattern: the Trafaria coastal plain has been designated, across centuries, as a space for the management of whatever Lisbon needed to contain or exclude.

The 16th-century lazaretto placed those perceived as physically dangerous on this shore. The 19th-century Lazareto de Lisboa institutionalised this function at monumental scale. The 20th-century self-produced settlements concentrated here those excluded by the formal housing market: low-income Portuguese workers, *retornados*, and African immigrants. This is not a coincidence but a continuation of the spatial logic of marginality that the lazaretto had established, mediated through the instruments of planning law, land ownership, and public health policy.

As anticipated in section 4.4, the precarious land tenure of Segundo Torrão's inhabitants does not derive exclusively from the environmental conditions of the terrain. It derives also from the prior use of the area as a lazaretto and city dump of Lisbon: the policies that generated those prior uses were based on the idea of isolating everything associated with disease, from toxic waste to people, as a means of reinforcing the city's economy. Comparable practices remain widespread today, sustaining an unequal distribution of resources across different territories and causing exclusions and dysfunctions. This raises the question of whether it is useful to understand cities as spatial territories that can be treated as separate or independent, without being considered in their constitutive relations as systems within larger systems. The principle of **territorial fixation**, which assigns certain populations to certain marginal territories, can and should be contested.

The EEEAP is itself implicated in this logic. Its strategic vision for Almada Poente, oriented toward economic growth, tourism, and residential quality for existing residents, does not engage substantively with the long-term future of the self-produced settlements or the rights of their inhabitants. Its identification of the settlements as a problem of urban form, rather than as communities with legitimate rights and social capital, reflects the same planning paradigm that has historically excluded these populations from recognition and resources.

→ [40] Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[41] Giorgio Agamben, *When the House Burns Down (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022).*

[42] Tsing, "Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection."

[43] Ibid.

HOUSING AS INFRASTRUCTURE, NOT ASSET

The housing issue continues to be addressed in isolated compartments, but the causes of the unequal distribution of access to housing go beyond the specific domain of housing policy. Housing can be rethought as a decentralised infrastructure, as this chapter's openingpages have already argued. The trajectory proposed here sees the self-produced settlements of Trafaria as key elements for deciphering the political and economic dynamics that govern the housing question, now reduced from an essential human need to a mere financial asset. Cities, as noted at the start of this chapter, have been transformed into global financial assets, becoming progressively more inaccessible and limiting citizen participation. Building on Lefebvre and, as in Chapter 3, on Latour, who considers *architecture, planning and urban thought as a sociotechnical continuum*. The self-produced settlements of Trafaria, produced at the margins of this continuum, testify to other ways of producing space: collective, relational, adaptive, and oriented toward inhabitation rather than investment.

As Anna Tsing writes,[40] precariousness is a life without the promise of stability. Inhabiting the burning house, using Agamben's metaphor,[41] in the burning world, in its relative impossibility of breathing and redemption, implies not only analysing the processes of privatisation, oppression, and extractivism but at the same time refusing their immunitarian logic. Inhabiting, understood not as having, disposing, or infrastructuring, but as a way of being in the world, consists in weaving relationships, incorporating, knotting, and taking distance. One inhabits in a continuous failure, in a ruin of plans, of ideologies, of possibilities, in a perpetual dysfunctionality.[42]

FRICTION AS HOPE

The area of the Trafaria settlements can be understood, following Anna Tsing's ethnographic concept, as a friction: the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference.[43] Frictions are the symptom of a situated perspective that escapes the universalising force of capital and therefore a sign of hope for non-capitalist relations. The self-produced settlements of Trafaria are laboratories for investigating alternative ways of living that place the collective, relational, and caring aspects at the centre.

The communal kitchen at Cova do Vapor, the Novo Decisores de Ciência project at Segundo Torrão, the residents' associations at both: these are not compensations for what is lacking but positive forms of collective life that formal

city planning, with its focus on individual units and market transactions, typically fails to produce.

The challenge is not to romanticise the conditions of self-produced settlement. The flooding risk, the construction precarity, the legal insecurity, and the socioeconomic marginalisation are real and cause real suffering. The challenge is to hold simultaneously the critique of the conditions and the recognition of the community; *to refuse the false choice between the eviction that destroys social fabric in the name of safety, and the preservation that ignores material vulnerability in the name of community*.

The alternative, participatory, incremental, rights-based rehousing or upgrading that begins from the community's own knowledge and social organisation, is what the literature cited here proposes, and what the case of Segundo Torrão demonstrates has not yet been adequately provided. The dehumanisation visible in the conditions of these settlements is a concrete historical fact but not a given destiny.

The territory of Trafaria and its self-produced settlements is a palimpsest: each layer of use and occupation deposited over the previous one, with the traces of each still legible in the landscape. The Torre Velha and the Lazareto de Lisboa mark the long history of the margin as a space of containment; Porto Brandão marks the riverine economy that made this territory productive; the fishing villages of Cova do Vapor and Primeiro Torrão mark the working-class appropriation of coastal leisure space; and Segundo Torrão marks the concentration of postcolonial displacement and urban exclusion on the one stretch of land that formal planning had left ungoverned. These are not separate histories but a single history read at different scales.

The biophysical vulnerability of Segundo Torrão is real, documented by the Novo Decisores de Ciência project and the CMA's flood risk modelling, and intensifies with climate change. But it is not separable from the political vulnerability that placed this community on this land. Any intervention that addresses the biophysical risk without addressing the political conditions that produced it will simply reproduce, in a new location, the same dynamics of exclusion.

What the case demands is not merely technical: it demands a reorientation of urban governance toward the recognition of rights and the mobilisation of the social capital that these communities have already demonstrated they possess.

The demolitions of 2022-2023 have physically transformed the settlement. What remains, the community relationships, the accumulated social knowledge, the associative capacity that enabled the Novo Decisores de Ciência project and the resident association's advocacy, represents a resource that future planning should engage rather than override. These communities have already redefined, through practice, what it means to build a neighbourhood, to govern a territory, and to inhabit the world.

Chapter 1.0

Chapter 2.0

Chapter 3.0

Chapter 4.0

Chapter 5.0 p. 178

ATLAS OF SEGUNDO TORRÃO

5.1 Landscape of Desires

Photographic archive

Chapter 6.0

5.Atlas of Segundo Torrão An off-screen inventory of living things

Segundo Torrão is located in the margem sul of Lisbon, on the other side of the River Tejo, built entirely by the hands of those who live and have lived there. There are no master plans here. There are unpaved roads and becos, a church, few hairdressers, open areas with benches where people gather, and soon, a house intended to be um *refúgio* for the community, as an act of collective care made physical.

What differentiates Segundo Torrão from the Lisbon that most people know is precisely this: that it has been entirely self-produced. And yet, or perhaps because of this, it is a place full of life, of relations, of repair. This is a territory that has been shaken by many traumas, some brought by nature, others by deliberate human decisions. The people of Segundo Torrão respond to these traumas not with resignation but with a wide range of solutions, personal and collective, pragmatic and tender. They find hope in places that others have written off as hopeless. They bring repair to what has been declared irreparable.

SEGUNDO TORRÃO IS THE IMAGE OF POSSIBILITY

How would architectural thinking change if we learned to think from the shared ground of the living? Is it possible to inhabit without possessing? To know without extracting? What is the meaning of home, and what is its feeling?



Figure 5.1
Material remains recovered from the demolition site of Segundo Torrão, Trafaria, including fragments of building materials, glass, domestic objects and a child's toothbrush. Collected by former resident children through a simulated archaeological excavation undertaken with the Centro de Arqueologia de Almada, these objects were presented in the exhibition Archaeologies of Destruction as evidence of the homes, possessions and social worlds erased by the 2022–23 demolitions.



5.1 - Landscape of Desires[1]

What the historical account offered in Chapter 4 can't exhaust is the living dimension of Segundo Torrão: the texture of daily life, the attachments people hold to specific corners and thresholds, and the desires, often unarticulated, sometimes contradictory, that orient how inhabitants imagine their own future in this place. To move closer to this dimension, this research organises its attention around three entangled elements: *places, people, and desires*. Not as separate categories, but as three dimensions of a single, irreducible reality.

Of the three, desire is the most elusive, and perhaps the most generative. It is worth pausing on it before proceeding further. In the context of self-produced settlements, desire is not simply what people want or need in the abstract. Drawing on assemblage thinking as developed by Deleuze,[2] and applied to the study of informal urban production by Tanzil Shafique, desire operates within a narrative frame: it is socially constructed, mediated through imaginaries of what is possible and memories of what has been.[3] A desire for security may manifest as a brick wall where there was once sheet metal. A desire for permanence may express itself in the decoration of an exterior wall with tiles, in a pattern chosen with care, or in the planting of something green at one's own threshold, a small act of rooting in uncertain ground. These are not simply pragmatic acts. They are acts charged with meaning, embedded in the collective narratives that hold a community together and orient it toward a shared, if never fully determined, future.

What assemblage thinking makes visible, and what this research takes seriously, is that these desires are never singular. They intersect, contradict, reinforce one another across different bodies, both human and non-human, individual and collective. As Shafique writes, the forces of change in self-produced settlements are *differential fields of desires*, a landscape of desire based on different narratives that thread together capacities and imaginaries, what he describes as the "role of desire as underlying mechanisms of the assemblage".[4]

The state may push one imaginary, that of formalization, regularization, erasure. Community narratives, in turn, hold other imaginaries, grounded in daily life, in what has been built with one's own hands, in what one hopes to pass on. These counternarratives of solidarity contest dominant imaginaries and give life to the everyday desires that continue to hold a place like Segundo Torrão together.

Places are not neutral containers: they are produced by desires and in turn shape them. People are not a homogeneous community: they are differentiated subjects, each inhabiting the same territory from a different position, with a different history, a different capacity, a different imaginary. And desires are not fixed endpoints: they are processes of becoming, always in motion, always responding to the forces that surround them.
It is within this landscape of desire that the atlas that follows is organised. Each element, each tavola, belongs to one or more of these dimensions, and the boundaries between them are deliberately left porous.

→ [1] The chapter title "Landscape of Desire" deliberately echoes Tanzil Shafique's *City of Desire: An Urban Biography of the Largest Slum in Bangladesh* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024). In that book, Shafique reads Korail, Dhaka's largest informal settlement, through the desires of its inhabitants, showing how everyday aspirations and survival strategies drive urban change beyond formal planning and capitalist narratives. By shifting from "city" to "landscape", this thesis adopts his lens of desire to examine how informal and self-produced territories in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area are shaped by intersecting longings for security, recognition and the right to stay.

[2] Based on the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[3] Tanzil Shafique, "Re-thinking Housing Through Assemblages: Lessons from a Deleuzean Visit to an Informal Settlement in Dhaka," *Housing Studies* 37, no. 6 (2022): 1015–34.

[4] Ibid., 1017.

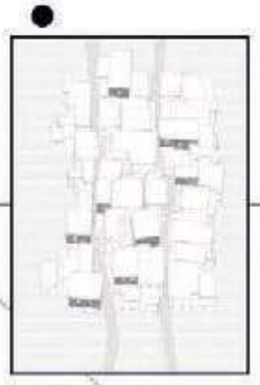
An index of entanglements

REGISTER
OF LIVED
EXPERIENCE

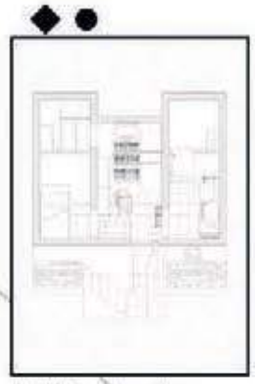
PEOPLE

PLACES

DESIRES



/11/ Growing upwards



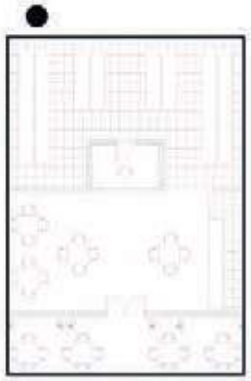
/14/ A casa do Sebastião



/2/ A vala



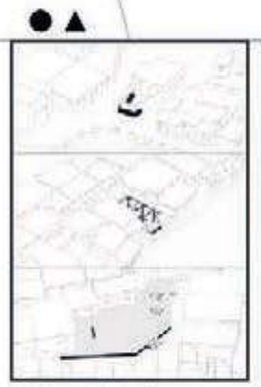
/10/ A madrugada



/7/ Os cafés



/3/ A capela



/1/ Inundação



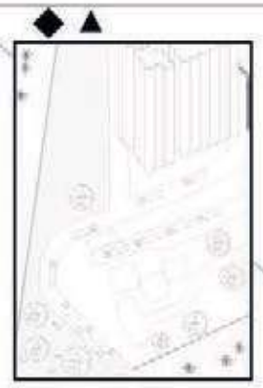
/15/ O refúgio para a comunidade



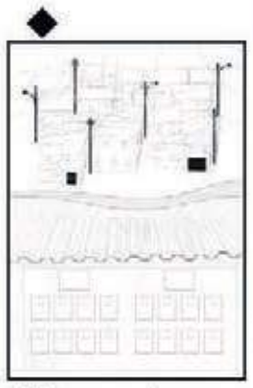
/9/ O rio, as dunas, as pedras



/6/ The NATO base



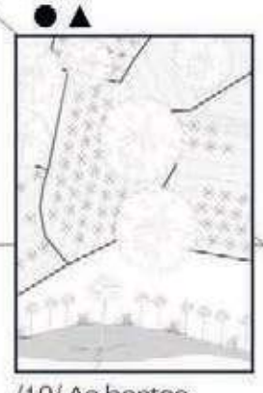
/5/ O guardião



/4/ As puxadas e os muretes



/13/ Pelo bosque



/12/ As hortas



/8/ A mata

[Attends to embodied lives—the labour, movement, fatigue, and vulnerability of human and non-human bodies—as well as to the infrastructures and territories through which everyday life is materially enabled, constrained, and exposed].

REGISTER
OF SPATIAL
CONDITION

- BODIES
- INFRASTRUCTURE
- TERRITORIES

/1/
Inundação and the relation with nature:

Flooding is the accumulation of water over land that is normally dry, caused by the overflow of rivers, streams, or coastal waters, or by the unusual build-up of water from heavy or prolonged rainfall, storm surges, or sudden snowmelt.[5]
It is one of the most widespread and destructive natural phenomena on earth, capable of destroying infrastructure, contaminating water sources, eroding ground stability, and displacing entire communities (IFRC). Yet flood is never a purely natural event. The ways in which we manage our waterways and the alterations we make to land also play a significant role. Flood, then, is both a natural process and a political one. It reveals, with brutal clarity, who is protected and who is left exposed.

Water has long been the condition of existence at Segundo Torrão. The territory itself carries the memory of water in its geological foundations: the area where the settlement stands used to belong to a swamp-like reedbed, a site prone to flooding, whose stagnant waters were associated in the nineteenth century with epidemics of tuberculosis and cholera, contributing to mortality rates in Trafaria higher than those registered in Lisbon.[6] In 1882, by the order of the Portuguese Kingdom, the swamp was drained and the area arborized, and the pine forest that resulted from that intervention remains in the territory to this day.[7] The idea of this land as inherently insalubrious and unfit for habitation is, therefore, not a neutral observation but an historical construction, one that has been used across different periods to justify the exclusion of those who settled there. The settlement sits on the southern margin of the Tejo estuary, where the river meets the sea at the mouth of the Atlantic Ocean, a position that makes it particularly vulnerable to rising waters and to the intensifying force of storms. This is not a territory built despite the water. It is a territory built with the water, in full awareness of its presence and its violence. As local residents say, "*as ondas do Tejo emolduradas pela janela da sala são parte da paisagem diária*", the waves of the Tagus framed by the living-room window are part of everyday landscape.[8] Any account of this settlement cannot be separated from the question of climate change, which places it at compounding risk: located along the Tejo coast near the estuary's opening into the Atlantic, Segundo Torrão sits precisely at the intersection of riverine, estuarine, and coastal flooding dynamics.

Portugal has historically been considered peripheral to the most severe Atlantic storm systems, but this is changing. Hurricane

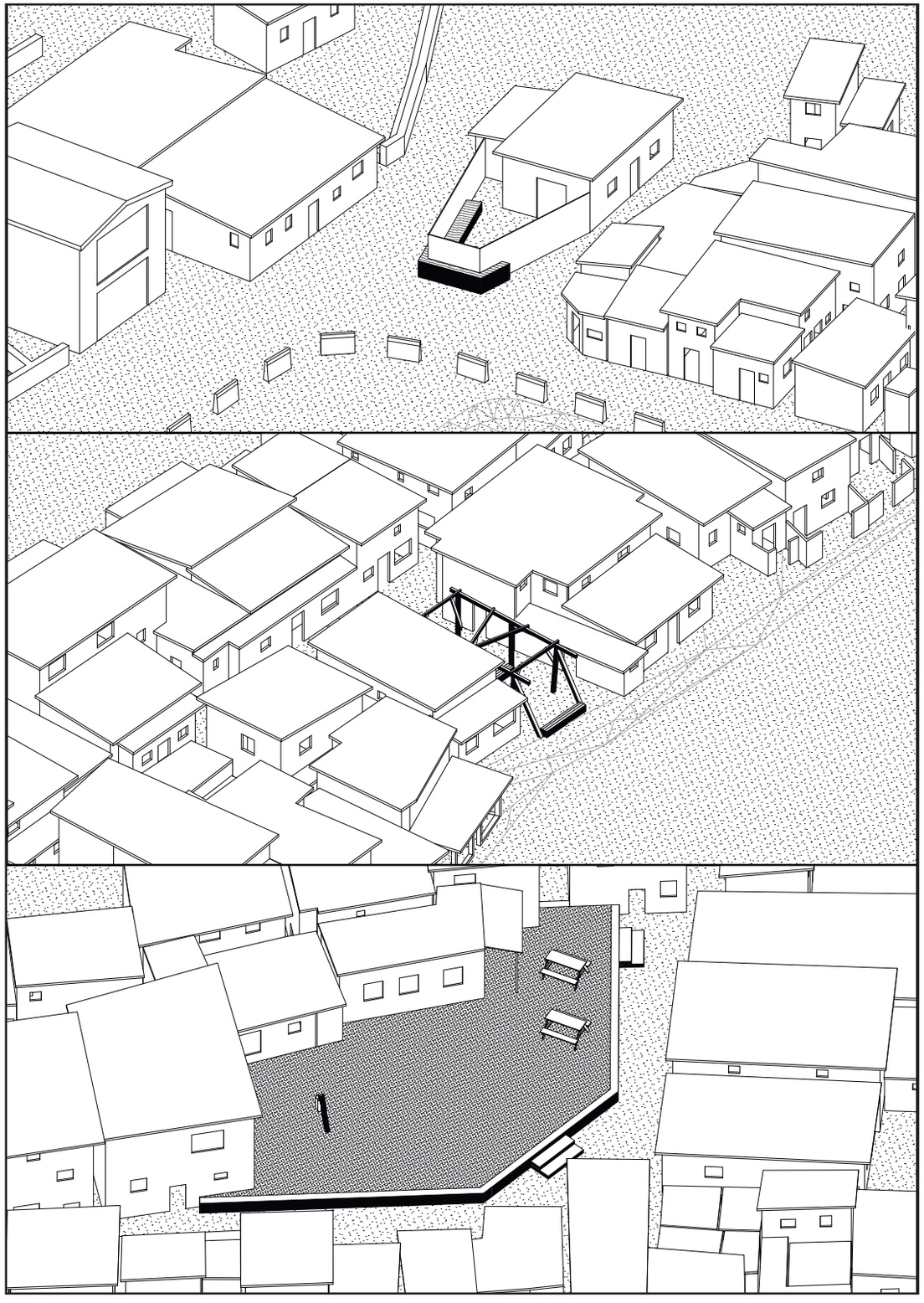
→ [5] "Flooding and Climate Change: Everything You Need to Know," Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), 2024, accessed 21 July 2026, https://www.nrdc.org/stories/flooding-and-climate-change-everything-you-need-know.

"Floods," International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), 2025, accessed 21 July 2026, https://www.ifrc.org/our-work/disasters-climate-and-crises/what-disaster/floods.

[6] Carlos Barradas Leal, *Outrafaria* (Almada: Centro de Arqueologia de Almada and Junta de União de Freguesias de Caparica e Trafaria, 2014), 12–16.

[7] Ibid.

[8] All Portuguese quotations in this section are drawn from Maíra Streit, "O mar vai comer o *bairro*? Segundo Torrão unido a cientistas para prevenir tragédia em Almada," *A Mensagem*, 21 May 2024, accessed 22 July 2026, https://amensagem.pt/2024/05/21/sera-que-mar-vai-comer-*bairro*-moradores-segundo-torrao-cientistas-almada/.



The drawing shows three meeting spaces built through participatory workshops during Novos Decisores Ciências, in collaboration with Frame Colectivo in 2017.

Leslie in 2018 and Subtropical Storm Alpha in 2020 are two recent examples of tropical-like cyclones that impacted the Iberian Peninsula, with Leslie considered the biggest storm to hit Portugal since 1842. An increase in the intensity of hurricanes and remnants of hurricanes in the Eastern Atlantic Ocean due to climate change is expected, placing coastal territories like the southern margin of the Tejo estuary in a position of compounding vulnerability. Continued rising sea levels associated with high erosion rates may result in unprecedented coastal flooding along the Portuguese coastlines, with estuarine and river-mouth areas identified as facing particularly high levels of exposure.

The threat of flooding here is not a recent discovery. It is a constitutive element of the landscape, woven into the memory of every generation that has lived along this stretch of coast. In 1977, a severe *galgamento* (wave overtopping) destroyed several houses, which at the time were still built from wood and provisional materials. The photographs recovered by the community during the preliminary research of the Novos Decisores Ciências project documented times of struggle and distress: a portion of 2.º Torrão had been flooded by the sea, and several houses were taken by the waves.[9] Neighbors had lost everything they owned. Lau, who has lived his life between the popular Lisbon neighbourhood of Mouraria and 2.º Torrão, was there with his camera to document the event, and the images now hanging on Carminda's wall are described as "*memórias de outros tempos penduradas nas paredes da casa*". The years that followed, 1978 and 1979, brought further galgamentos, further anxiety. "Este episódio foi bem marcado na memória coletiva... nos anos seguintes, de 1978 e 1979, seguiram-se mais galgamentos que trouxeram ansiedade", recalls João Cão Duarte.[10]

The sea does not forget its boundaries, and neither do the people who live beside it.

Carminda Calado, a resident since the 1970s, remembers one particular day in 2002 when she was swept by the waves that reached her garden, and survived only by holding onto a tree. The physical and emotional consequences have not left her since. *"Ficou o susto. Hoje tenho medo do mar, coisa que eu não tinha"*, she says. And yet she remains. Without anywhere else to go, without another way to sustain herself beyond the small café she built next to her house, remaining is itself a practice, a daily act of claiming the right to be where one has always been.

"*O que é do mar ao mar regressará. Isto é dele.*"[11] What belongs to the sea will return to the sea. This is his.

She knows it. She says it with the clarity of someone who has made peace with an irreducible truth.

Research conducted on the community's relationship to climate change has found that the media's portrayal of the risk of coastal flooding and extreme events in this territory is seen as inevitable and is integrated by locals as part of a narrative of relocation. The inhabitants of 2.º Torrão perceive climate change as the greatest threat to the community. This perception is not abstract. As the eldest Roma inhabitant of the neighbourhood confided: "We live here with our heart cut into pieces. We see so much misery in other places, that we think that something similar will happen to us that live by the sea!".[12] The risk of flooding has thus been absorbed into a politics of fear, framing the settlement as a place that must be evacuated, rather than protected.



Figure 5.2

The photographs displayed on Carminda's walls turn the domestic interior into an archive of the bairro's environmental history. They preserve events that might otherwise remain absent from official records.

→ [9] Novos Decisores Ciências is a citizen-science project developed in Segundo Torrão between 2014 and 2022 by the cultural association Canto do Curió (Trafaria). Starting from the community question "Será que o mar vai comer o *bairro*?" ("Will the sea eat the neighbourhood?"), the project brought residents, local children and coastal scientists into a co-created research process on sea-level rise and wave overtopping, combining interviews, participatory mapping, photographic and video documentation, and the installation of sensors in the estuary to build an early-warning system for marine flooding

[10] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 107.

[11] Carminda Calado's words articulate a form of situated environmental knowledge developed through decades of life at Segundo Torrão. They acknowledge the sea's force while also revealing the material and affective impossibility of leaving a place to which home, memory, and community are bound.

→ [12] Retrived from: https://www.timeout.pt/lisboa/pt/noticias/nao-sao-destroscos-mas-memorias-exposicao-chama-atencao-para-demolicoes-no-segundo-torrao-053124 [20/06/2026].

It was precisely this kind of knowledge, held in the bodies and memories of the residents, that gave rise to a significant experience within Segundo Torrão: the project Novos Decisores Ciências, initiated in 2014 by the cultural association Canto do Curió, based in Trafaria. The question that set everything in motion was simple: "*Será que o mar vai comer o bairro?"* Will the sea eat the neighbourhood? The question did not come from a laboratory or a government office. It emerged from a community game in which residents were invited to name their most pressing concerns about the place where they lived. The sea was one of them.

In 2014, at the onset of the participatory research, storm Hercules hit the Portuguese coastline. There was no substantial damage to the households in 2.º Torrão, but the protective barriers on the seafront were damaged, and inhabitants registered the event. It was from that concrete sense of danger that the community's scientific engagement developed.[13] What followed was an experiment in another way of producing knowledge. Residents, mediators, and scientists were brought into the same process, not in a hierarchy of expertise, but in a relationship of mutual dependence. Coastal geologists and oceanographers from the Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade de Lisboa, the Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil, and the Laboratório LIENSs of the Université de La Rochelle were invited to investigate a problem that had been identified and formulated by the community itself, supported by the Fondation de France and Ciência Viva. Between 2014 and 2022, the project mapped changes in the coastline, collected data on wave behaviour, installed pressure sensors in the estuary, and built a system of early warning that translated scientific findings into something the community could act upon.

Despite the considerable public investment applied in artificial sand filling on the beaches of Costa da Caparica, little had been known about the morphodynamics of the estuarine coastline where 2.º Torrão is located. The community's question opened a scientific inquiry into a territory that had been, until then, largely invisible to research.

The translation was not only technical. It was also linguistic. The "infragravity waves" that scientists identified as a particular risk for the settlement, long, low-frequency waves that do not break but slide inland with enormous energy, destroying what they encounter, were renamed by João Cão Duarte, one of the project's mediators, using a term he learned from Carminda herself, who had learned it from the fishermen of her childhood: "*ondas que lambem"*. Waves that lick. The expression captures something that the scientific term does not: the movement, the intimacy of the invasion, the way the water enters not with a crash but with

→ [13] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 107.

a slow, insistent persistence. António dos Santos, known as Toni, a fisherman who has worked these waters since the age of six, as his father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers did before him, was the one who helped the scientific team install the sensors in the seabed. Without him, the data would not exist. For many residents of Segundo Torrão, freedom is not simply an abstraction. It is also the daily practice of knowing, naming, and navigating a world that institutions have never fully seen.

This is not a story of science saving a community. It is a story of a community that posed a question, found the scientists willing to follow, and built together a form of knowledge that neither could have produced alone. The project encouraged the direct participation of residents in addressing the territory's problems through cultural activities, the sharing of experiences and audiovisual production. Children mapped the risk of marine invasion in the neighbourhood. Fossils were found on the ground and became the starting point for conversations about the geological memory of the place. Satellite images were compared with photographs and with the living memories of those who had watched the coastline change over decades. The boundary between knowledge and life was deliberately made porous.
The associated drawing documents three self-built interventions realised in the neighbourhood as part of Novos Decisores Ciências: three small meeting spaces constructed through participatory workshops. Developed by Frame Colectivo with residents in 2017, the structures, built from wood, cement, and metal in three different sites, translated the project's scientific and social exchange into a durable spatial presence within the *bairro*.

The project formally ended in 2022, the same year the Câmara Municipal de Almada forcibly demolished part of the settlement, a decision that João Cão Duarte describes as having been carried out without adequate notification, with several families deemed ineligible for rehousing and at risk of becoming homeless. As Duarte documents, the political elite of Almada designed a brutal security mechanism, imposing strict discipline over the bodies of the residents and targeting the forced displacement of more than sixty families, with immediate destruction of their homes. The science that motivated this intervention was hidden from the community until its imposition, communicated only verbally and based on the alleged risk of collapse of an underground drainage channel that crosses the *bairro*. The work of eight years, the data, the relationships, the alerts, was not enough to protect the community from a different kind of violence: the institutional one.

In March 2024, the sea entered again. The house of Diogo Botas

was partially destroyed by a *galgamento*. The alert had been issued two days before by scientist Xavier Bertin, from La Rochelle, who had been monitoring the wave conditions. The Civil Protection was informed. The family was reached in time. But Diogo remained without emergency housing, waiting.

It is in this context that the concept of *climate gentrification* becomes indispensable. Climate change is altering weather patterns, leading to rising sea levels and more frequent and severe weather events, which in turn result in the displacement of vulnerable residents and changes in community characteristics, a set of processes that researchers refer to as climate gentrification. The mechanism operates in two directions. On one hand, extreme weather events such as floods can destroy subsidized and affordable housing, displacing hundreds of residents, while predatory investors and developers are incentivized to buy up the damaged, devalued properties and invest in high-end redevelopment projects that attract a wealthier demographic. On the other hand, as wealthier households move away from flood-prone coastal areas in search of safer ground, they displace residents in lower-income communities at higher elevations, communities that have been rooted there and have endured disinvestment, racism, and inequality and are now under the threat of gentrification.

In cities of the global South, the state or city is often a key actor in attracting capital and aiding private development in areas of informal settlements, such that adaptation and resilience measures implemented by governments may play a significant role in the process of gentrification, presenting distinct challenges for those seeking to reduce inequality and displacement. The case of Segundo Torrão reflects precisely this dynamic. The Câmara Municipal de Almada's rehousing process, framed as a response to the fragility of the settlement and the risk of flooding, has proceeded in ways that residents describe as coercive, opaque, and deeply damaging to the social fabric of the community. Several families have been deemed ineligible for rehousing and left without housing alternatives. The threat of the sea, real and scientifically documented, has become the ground on which another, slower form of displacement is being enacted. Resilience planning may achieve resilience through the displacement of residents, where displacement is not a side-effect of resilience planning but a direct aspect of it.

The relationship between Segundo Torrão and the water is not simply one of risk and vulnerability. It is also one of intimacy and identity. Ana Almeida, whose family arrived in the 1950s and who grew up in Cova do Vapor, the neighbouring settlement, speaks

of the sea as the landscape of her earliest memories: climbing rocks, catching crabs, going fishing, walking along the beach. *"Ainda hoje há esta ligação. Acho que não conseguiria viver longe do mar."* This connection still exists today. She does not think she could live far from the sea. For her, as for many others, the demand is not simply to be rehoused, but to remain within reach of the water, within reach of each other. To be removed from the sea would mean being removed from the self. *"Desmembrar as comunidades já é mau. Desmembrá-las e desenraizá-las ainda é pior."* Dismembering communities is already bad. Dismembering them and uprooting them is worse.

What the flood reveals at Segundo Torrão, then, is not only the violence of water. It reveals the violence of a system that has always placed the most vulnerable communities in the most exposed positions, and that uses the language of protection to accelerate their removal. The people of Segundo Torrão have known this for decades. They have read the water, named its waves, warned each other, and stayed. Their staying is not passive. It is a concrete and daily practice of freedom, of inhabiting a place on one's own terms, of refusing to be made illegible by the categories that others impose. The sea may come. It has come before. But the community has learned to read its coming, to name it in its own words, to warn each other, and to remain.



Figure 5.3
One of three timber meeting structures built in Segundo Torrão through participatory construction workshops organised by Frame Colectivo as part of the Novos Decisones Ciências project. Conceived with residents and located across the bairro, the structures created small, collectively accessible spaces for gathering.

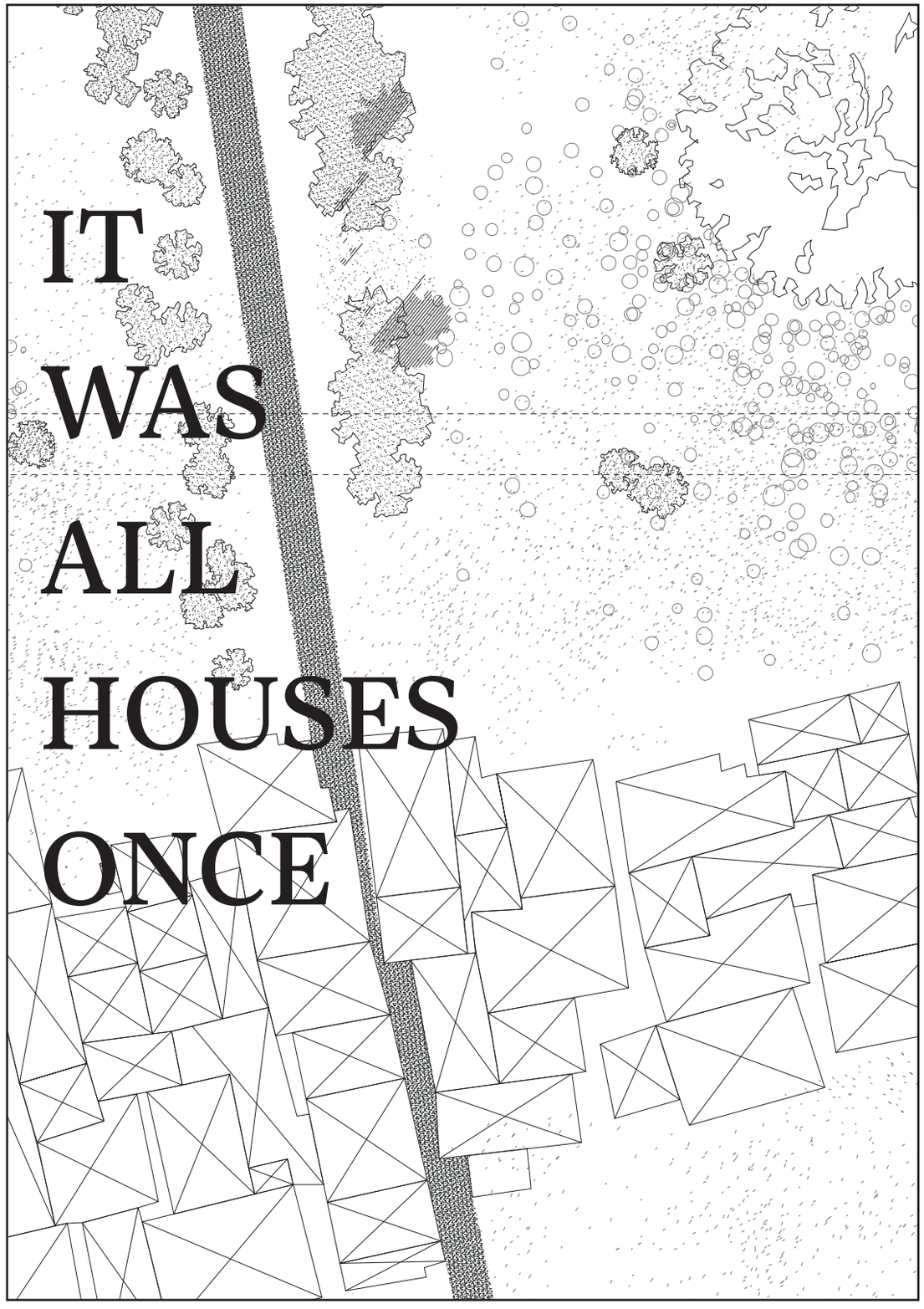
/2/
A vala - the scar:

Disasters carry a particular form of fracture in time, dividing it into what was before and what is after.

There is something that this section cannot fully contain. During fieldwork in Segundo Torrão, the demolitions of 2022 were present everywhere and almost nowhere: in the silences between sentences, in the way some conversations would arrive at a certain point and then turn, quietly, in another direction. Several of the people I came to know had been directly affected, their houses demolished, and had since returned to live in the *bairro* in other people's homes. The demolitions were not a past event in the way that past events can be spoken of. They were still happening, in the sense that the fracture they produced had not closed.
I was not able to speak about the demolitions directly with the people of Segundo Torrão. I did not ask. The topic carried a weight that I could feel without needing to name it, and I was aware, and remain aware, that the way one tells a story about loss can itself cause harm. I hope that what is written in this section does not do that.

What I can say is what Sebastião showed me, one afternoon. He wanted to take me to the place where the houses had once stood, among them his own and those of his two daughters. What remains there now is sandy ground and vegetation that has reclaimed almost everything. Almost, because in certain places the floor tiles are still visible, the ones that once formed the floors of someone's home, and the paved *becos* that used to branch between the houses are still there underfoot, leading nowhere. Sebastião moved through this space slowly, using his hands and dragging his walking stick through the sand, tracing lines that were no longer visible on the surface but that he carried inside. He was reconstructing the *bairro* as it had been: this was where his door was, here was his neighbour's house, this was the *beco* that led to his daughters' homes. He was doing this so that the memory would not be lost, he said. His own, and the *bairro*'s.
I followed his movements and tried to see what he was drawing in the sand.

On June 7th, 2022, residents of a portion of Segundo Torrão received notifications, delivered by hand by unidentified technicians, instructing them to attend a meeting with the mayor of Almada, Inês de Medeiros. The meeting took place in the gymnasium of a local school, where chairs were arranged facing the



city representatives. There, the mayor announced that an underground drainage channel crossing the neighbourhood was at risk of collapse, and that the families living above it would need to vacate their homes by the end of the summer, so that the structures could be demolished. Residents were advised to begin looking for accommodation in the housing market themselves. No written documentation of the risk assessment was shared. Requests for clarification regarding individual cases were deferred to private consultations to be scheduled later.[14]

The technical reports that had led to this decision were not disclosed to the public. As Duarte documents, the science that motivated the intervention was kept hidden, and the technicians who designed the measures remained entirely removed from the daily life of the community until the moment of imposition. What emerged later was that internal reports from the SMAS (Serviços Municipalizados de Água e Saneamento) had already alerted to the danger of the drainage channel as early as 2019, noting that its repair was urgent and that lives were at risk. A further report in 2020 described the situation as requiring immediate intervention. These documents, despite being requested by multiple oversight bodies, were withheld or provided only partially and with significant delay throughout the process (Assembleia Municipal de Almada, Ata n.º 04/XII-2.º/2021-2025, 9 May 2023; Observador, "2.º Torrão. 44 famílias terão de sair…", 21 Aug 2022).[15]

The underground channel in question is a concrete structure measuring approximately four square metres in section, built to drain rainwater from the territory to the estuarine waters. According to Duarte, the channel had not been subjected to any material or structural resistance analysis before the emergency was declared. Additionally, and significantly, the city's internal plan for climate adaptation, which accounted for projected sea level rise for the period 2050-2100, also contributed to the decision to intervene, revealing a disproportion between the stated reason for emergency and the actual security mechanism imposed. The demolition, in other words, was not only about a collapsing drain. It was also about a longer-term plan to remove informal settlement from a waterfront area identified as increasingly at risk from flooding, a plan that the community had no access to and no part in designing.

On September 23rd, 2022, the Municipal Emergency Plan of Civil Protection was activated by unanimous vote of the Almada city council. On September 26th, the Municipal Alert Situation was formally declared. On September 29th, the demolition machines entered Segundo Torrão. The same day, a map showing the planned demolition of approximately ninety houses, divided

→ [14] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 137–138.

[15] Comissão eventual sobre o desmantelamento e realojamento do Bairro do 2.º Torrão, Ata n.º 04/XII-2.º/2021-2025, Assembleia Municipal de Almada, 9 May 2023. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.am-almada.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ATA-N.o-04_XII-2o_2021-2025_2o-Torrão.pdf. This commission records that SMAS reports from 2019, 2020 and 2022 had already identified the covered drainage channel as structurally degraded, urgent to repair, and posing a risk to life, and that these documents were requested by oversight bodies but only partially disclosed and with delay.

"2.º Torrão. 44 famílias terão de sair do *bairro* na Trafaria até fim de setembro," *Observador*, 22 August 2022, accessed 22 July 2026, https://observador.pt/2022/08/22/cerca-de-44-familias-terao-de-sair-do-*bairro*-2-o-torrao-na-trafaria-ate-fim-de-setembro/. This article reports how those same SMAS and Municipal Civil Protection reports were used by Almada's municipality to justify emergency evacuation, demolition of houses built over the culvert, and the temporary rehousing of at least 44 families through the Porta de Entrada programme.

into six sections to be destroyed one per day over six days, was shared by the mayor with selected journalists in a closed meeting. The community learned of the plan the following day, through the press, with less than forty-eight hours before the first demolitions were scheduled to begin.[16]

The Câmara Municipal de Almada identified sixty aggregates living above the drainage channel. Of these, nine were considered ineligible for relocation support on the grounds that they held a second residence in the Lisbon metropolitan area. Of the remaining fifty-one, those deemed eligible were directed to the programme Porta de Entrada, a national emergency rehousing mechanism co-financed by the Instituto da Habitação e Reabilitação Urbana (IHRU). However, the eligibility criteria of the programme proved difficult for many families to meet, particularly those with incomplete documentation, those who had family members working or studying abroad, or those whose household composition did not match administrative records. These families were not informed in explicit terms that they had been excluded from the programme.[17]

What followed the first week of demolitions, which concluded on October 6th, 2022, was described by multiple parties, including elected officials from across the political spectrum, as chaotic and disorganised. Families that had not found housing were placed in hotels, tourist accommodation, and camping sites in Almada and Lisbon, in some cases far from their workplaces, schools, and support networks. Some were placed in a hostel in central Lisbon where ten families per floor shared a single toilet and a single kitchen hob, and where guests were not permitted. The Amnistia Internacional Portugal, which monitored the process, concluded that the Câmara Municipal de Almada had not complied with the good practices it recommends for the prevention of forced displacement.[18]

Among those excluded from the rehousing programme were twelve families who refused to leave their homes, claiming they had not been recognised as inhabitants despite having lived in the settlement for years or decades. All of them were of African origin or Afro-descendants. Duarte notes that such systematic exclusion of African and Afro-descendant residents echoes the pattern of previous Portuguese rehousing programmes, in which this population has been disproportionately denied access. One of those who addressed the Almada town hall assembly during the months of resistance was Caramó Cassamá, fifty years old, a construction worker who had lived in Segundo Torrão for over twenty-five years and raised his children there. He had been excluded from the programme by verbal decision of technicians,

→ [16] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 138.

[17] "Bairro do 2.º Torrão. Almada conclui demolições, 51 famílias foram realojadas," Rádio Renascença, 6 October 2022, accessed 22 July 2026, https://rr.pt/noticia/pais/2022/10/07/*bairro*-do-2-torrao-almada-conclui-demolicoes-51-familias-foram-realojadas/302740/.

[18] Amnistia Internacional Portugal, "Segundo Torrão: moradores em desespero por situação de desalojamento iminente," 11 October 2022, accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.amnistia.pt/segundo-torrao-moradores-em-desespero-por-situacao-de-desalojamento-imminente/.

→ [19] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 142.

[20] "Bairro do Segundo Torrão. Famílias em risco de ficarem desalojadas, alerta a Amnistia Internacional," RTP, 2 September 2022, accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/*bairro*-do-segundo-torrao-familias-em-risco-de-ficarem-desalojadas-alerta-a-amnistia-internacional_n1436623.

[21] Comissão eventual sobre o desmantelamento e realojamento do Bairro do 2.º Torrão, Ata n.º 04/XII-2.º/2021-2025, Assembleia Municipal de Almada, 9 May 2023. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.am-almada.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ATA-N.o-04_XII-2o_2021-2025_2o-Torrão.pdf.

[22] Amnistia Internacional Portugal, "Novas demolições no Bairro do Segundo Torrão," 26 May 2023, accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.amnistia.pt/novas-demolicoes-no-*bairro*-do-segundo-torrao/.

[23] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 144.

without written justification. As he said to the assembly: "Simply by hearsay, technicians decided who was entitled to be recognised as an inhabitant".[19]

The resistance movement that formed around the families who refused to leave became a prolonged political struggle. Legal proceedings, including emergency injunctions filed by pro bono lawyers on behalf of six families, temporarily suspended some demolitions.[20] The families that remained in the settlement did so literally surrounded by rubble: the debris from the demolished houses was not removed for months. As of May 2023, eight months after the first demolitions, the rubble remained on site, and residents reported infestations of rats in neighbouring houses as a direct consequence. The Comissão Eventual da Assembleia Municipal de Almada, which had been created specifically to oversee the process, noted at a meeting on May 9th, 2023 that the debris had not been cleared, that a safety barrier had not been installed around the open drainage channel, and that the documents requested from the Câmara had not been provided.[21]

In May 2023, a second wave of demolitions took place, relocating the five families that had remained through the winter following the resolution of their legal cases.[22] The Câmara announced that ninety-five new social housing units were under development and would be made available as permanent resettlement for those displaced. Whether this commitment would be fulfilled, and under what conditions, remained uncertain at the time of writing.

What the demolitions of 2022 made visible was not only the physical fragility of a drainage channel, but the political fragility of the community's existence in this place. A security mechanism, designed in the absence of the community and imposed upon it without prior consultation, produced in a single week the forced displacement of dozens of families, many of whom had lived in Segundo Torrão for three or four decades. The word that surfaced in the Almada town hall, spoken by community worker Renata Camargo and silenced by the mayor, was *colonialism*.[23] In fact Camargo said, before being interrupted: "to say that people are in much better conditions now is a thought that can again be considered the matter of a 'colonial Almada', by which people sitting at a desk can order which are the conditions…".


Aqui era a casa da minha filha.


A porta estava aqui.


O beco ainda é visível e usado.


Eu morava aqui, aqui.


Esta é a vizinha da minha filha.


C: Qual era a área, mais ou menos?


Aqui era a casa que onde eu morava.


...onde está árvore era outra entrada...a minha entrada era aqui eu quando saía daqui ia no beco...


A entrada é aqui, na casa da minha filha.


Esto é o beco.


Essa é a vala que era toda a casa.


A igreja já estava lá. É isto tudo demoliram.

00:02:33 Sebastião
Aqui era a casa da minha filha.
00:02:46 Carlotta
E era qual era a área, mais ou menos?
00:03:32 Sebastião
A porta estava aqui.
00:03:34 Sebastião
Esta é a vizinha da minha filha.
00:03:37 Sebastião
Esto é o beco.
00:03:44 Carlotta
Ok, a entrada foi aqui?
00:03:46 Sebastião
A entrada é aqui, na casa da minha filha.
00:03:49 Sebastião
O beco ainda é visível e usado.
[....]
00:05:57 Sebastião
Eu morava aqui, aqui.
00:05:59 Sebastião
Aqui era a casa que onde eu morava.
00:06:25 Sebastião
Não o beco era aquele é esse nós vamos lá o beco da então a casa da Dio é lá em cima que demoliram. Nessa rua nessa rua lá em cima logo tipo quem curva a igreja sim então é a casa da Dio.
00:06:50 Sebastião
Até tem uma pedra dessa aqui. Nós vamos, vamos lá passar. Essa é a vala que era toda a casa.
00:07:04 Carlotta
E a igreja já estava lá?
00:07:06 Sebastião
Sim, a igreja já estava lá A igreja já estava lá. É isto tudo demoliram, a igreja já estava. Agora eu morava aqui.
00:07:21 Sebastião
Sim essa parte aqui era a casa, até aqui, onde está árvore era outra entrada e eu tinha a minha entrada por aqui. A outra entrada dos outros era ali e a minha entrada era aqui eu quando saía daqui ia no beco só andava um bocado entrava na casa da minha filha.
00:07:51 Carlotta
Isto aqui era uma é que isto era um caminho para as pessoas andar, ou seja, isto fazia a ligação com esta com esta aqui, não era?
00:07:58 Sebastião
Sim, é aqui a ligação, era assim um caminho que irá por aqui.
[...]
00:12:17 Sebastião
Tava cheio de casas.
00:12:19 Sebastião
Ali do outro lado também, cheio de casas.
00:12:23 Sebastião
Vala aqui no meio.

00:12:27 Sebastião
Aqui é a vala.
00:12:45 Sebastião
Era tudo casas.
00:12:45 Sebastião
Aqui, casas também.
00:12:47 Sebastião
Isso tudo é só casa.
[...]
00:13:52 Carlotta
Onde ficava a casa da Dio?
00:13:54 Sebastião
A casa da Dio é essa aí.
00:14:39 Sebastião
por isso é que eu disse do Jeep, é essa.
[...]
00:15:30 Sebastião
Então aqui era a casa da Dio.
00:15:34 Sebastião
A Dio cozinhava, vendia, fazia, fazia fritos de asas, de galinha, fazia muita coisa para o pessoal.

This section appears on a grey background, marking a shift into a different register.

/3/
A Capela:

At one end of what residents call the *Rua Principal* stands the river. At the other end stands a chapel. Between them, the street runs alongside the area where the demolished houses once stood.

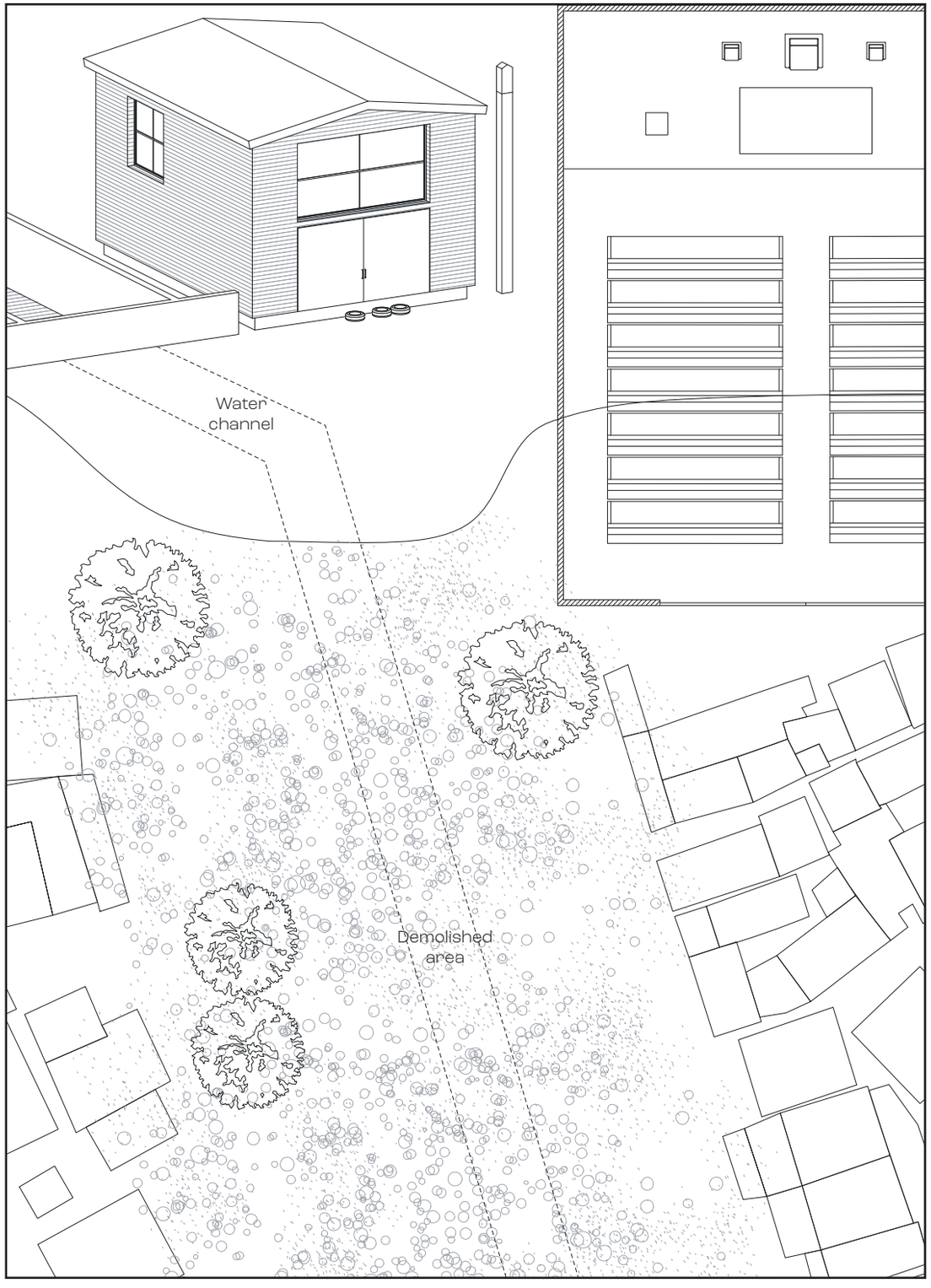
The chapel's official patron is São José Operário. Some of the residents of Segundo Torrão call it the *Capela da Nossa Senhora da Vala*, after the name given to the part of the *bairro* where the demolished houses once stood, and where the drainage channel runs. It was built between 2018 and 2022, by the hands of the community and with the collaboration of an architect, Tomás Azevedo Neves, an engineer, Pedro Carvalho, and several artists. A post by the residents' association on the 9th of June 2022 indicated that the work was nearing completion.[24] It was completed, therefore, a few months before the demolitions of October 2022 began. It stands now at the threshold between what was destroyed and what remains. It was built by the community as an act of collective faith and labour, in a place that would shortly after become the site of forced displacement. The chapel survived, but the houses did not.

Its interior carries an iconographic programme that speaks directly to the composition of the community. The altar features waves, in reference to the sea. On the walls, two paintings described by the presiding priest as "an updating of Pentecost": on one side, saints from Brazil, the PALOP countries, and the islands; on the other, saints of the twentieth century.[25] The community of Segundo Torrão is largely composed of people of African origin and Afro-descendants from Portuguese-speaking countries. The chapel's imagery reflects this without need for explanation.

The street that leads to the chapel is named on the maps as *Rua da Associação*, named after the residents' association that once anchored community life in the *bairro*. The association, however, lost much of its power and cohesion in the aftermath of the 2022 demolitions, and has not been formally reconstituted since. During fieldwork, two residents referred to the street not as *Rua da Associação* but as *Rua Principal*, the main street. This may be a coincidence, or it may be something else. It is possible, though not verified, that the informal renaming reflects a shift in how the community relates to the street after the association that gave it its name ceased to exist as a functioning body. A street named after an institution that no longer functions may quietly become, in everyday speech, simply the main street. This is an interpretation, not a documented fact.

→ [24] Associação de Moradores do Bairro do 2.º Torrão, Facebook post, 9 June 2022.

[25] Diocese de Setúbal, "Benção da Capela do 2.º Torrão," 5 July 2025, accessed 22 July 2026, https://diocese-setubal.pt/bencao-da-capela-do-2o-torrao/.



/4/
As puxadas e os muretes - the question of recognition:

A *puxada* is an illegal electrical connection. It is a wire that runs from a public distribution point to a house, bypassing the meter, bypassing the contract, bypassing the system that was never designed to include a place like Segundo Torrão.

In the *bairro*, *puxadas* have been for decades not an exception but the norm: the only available solution to a structural absence. Of the approximately 600 electricity consumption points estimated to exist in the settlement, only around 50 had regularised energy contracts.[26] The remaining households depended on informal connections, improvised and precarious, built with the means available and the knowledge passed between neighbours.

As Duarte documents, most of the families of 2.º Torrão have had to improvise their electricity access by directly hooking to the electricity line, and this has been one of the most contentious issues of the community.[27] The consequences were predictable and recurrent. The illegal connections overload the network, particularly in winter, when cold forced residents to use more electrical heating. The harsh winters and spikes in electricity consumption compromise the electric grid, delivering blackouts that extend 2.º Torrão into more severe days and weeks of cold and darkness.[28] Blackouts could last for days. In January 2022, part of the settlement went without electricity for more than three days during a cold wave. The *Associação Cova do Mar*, which carries out social work with the children of the *bairro*, appealed publicly for emergency aid: lanterns, warm meals, blankets, a generator. The official response was slow. The association turned to private donations to provide what it called the bare minimum.

This was not an unforeseen situation. As early as 2017, the Portuguese parliament had passed Resolução da Assembleia da República n.º 151/2017,[29] recommending that the government adopt measures to ensure access to essential services for inhabitants of precarious housing settlements. In response, the government approved Decreto-Lei n.º 36/2018 of 22 May,[30] establishing an extraordinary regime to create conditions for the connection to the public electricity distribution network and for the signing of electricity supply contracts for dwellings integrated in precarious housing settlements. The decree, championed by the then MP Helena Roseta,[31] defined a clear procedure: municipalities would identify precarious housing settlements and their residents, inform the distribution network operator, and together develop a plan for provisional connection, after which residents would be notified to sign individual supply contracts within 60 days. The

→ [26] *Protocolo de colaboração para a regularização das ligações elétricas no Bairro do 2.º Torrão*, celebrado entre EDP Distribuição, Câmara Municipal de Almada e Associação de Moradores do Bairro do 2.º Torrão, 2017.

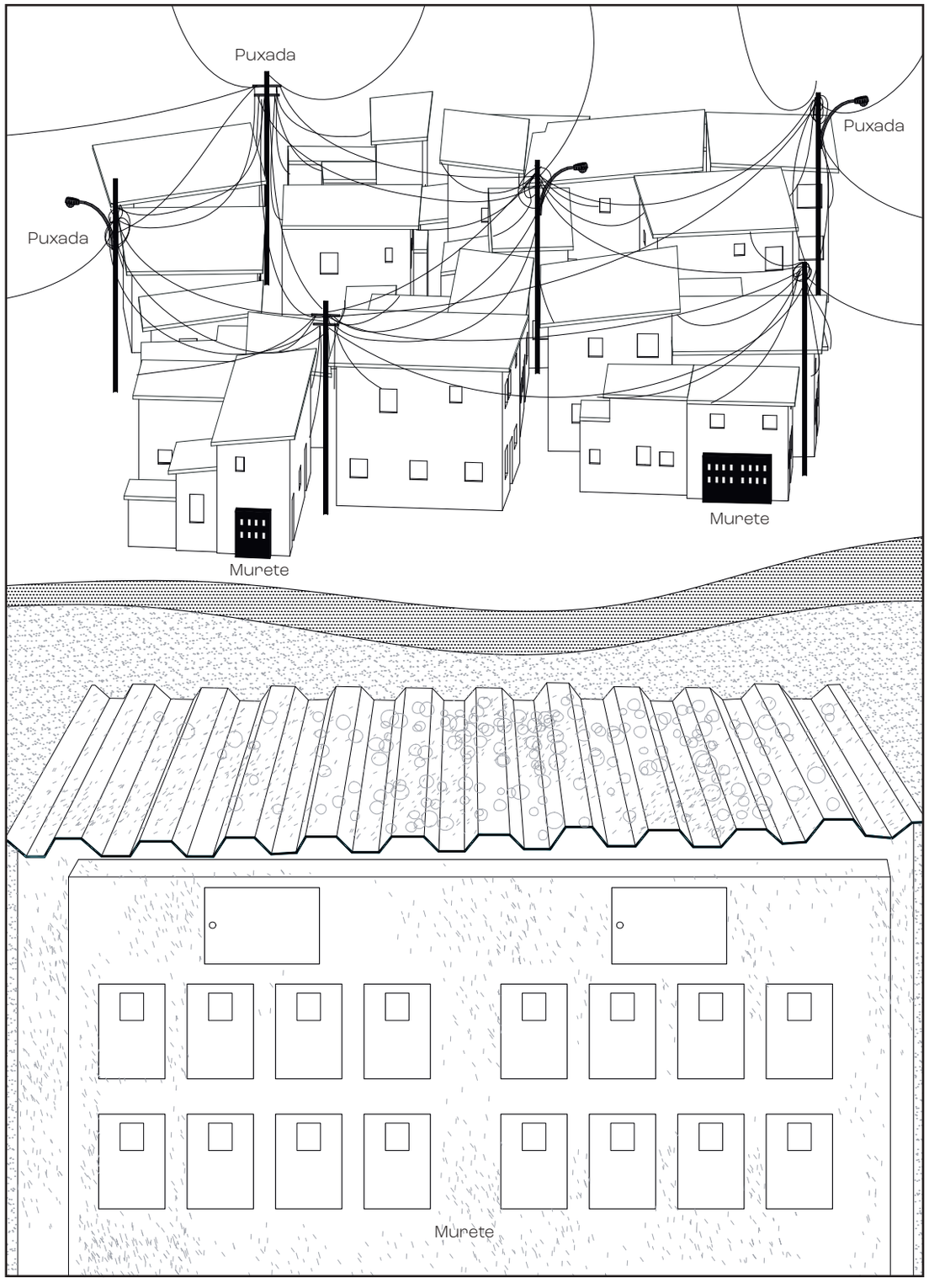
[27] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 60.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Resolução da Assembleia da República n.º 151/2017, "Recomenda ao Governo que adopte medidas que garantam o acesso a serviços essenciais por parte dos moradores de *bairros* e núcleos de habitação precária," *Diário da República*, 1.ª série, n.º 136, 17 June 2017. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://files.diariodarepublica.pt/gratuitos/1s/2017/07/13600.pdf.

[30] Decreto-Lei n.º 36/2018, de 22 de maio, "Aprova um regime extraordinário relativo ao abastecimento provisório de energia eléctrica a fogos integrados em núcleos de habitações precárias," *Diário da República*, 1.ª série, n.º 99, 22 May 2018. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.homepagejuridica.pt/info-jus/leis-simples/2623-decreto-lei-n-36-2018-de-22-de-maio.

[31] MP stands for *Member of Parliament*, that is, a deputy in the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic; here it refers to Helena Roseta, then an MP and the main political sponsor of the extraordinary regime for access to electricity in precarious housing settle-



decree did not apply to constructions classified as Áreas Urbanas de Génese Ilegal (AUGI) for which a subdivision plan or detailed plan had already been approved.[32] Segundo Torrão, as the protocol itself acknowledged, did not fall under the AUGI classification and was not susceptible to urban reconversion, which meant, in principle, that it fell precisely within the scope of the new decree. And yet the decree was never applied there.

One year before the decree, in September 2017, a protocol had already been signed between the Associação de Moradores do *Bairro* do 2.º Torrão, the Câmara Municipal de Almada, and EDP Distribuição.[33] The document established a cooperation strategy with the explicit goal of regularising electricity consumption in the settlement. It acknowledged that approximately 3,000 people lived there, that the vast majority had no formal electricity contract, and that illegal connections had become widespread, overloading the infrastructure and creating safety hazards. The protocol set out clear obligations for each party: the residents' association would inform and mobilise residents; the municipality would issue the necessary declarations; EDP would analyse connection requests and proceed with the installation of meters. The process was designed to be completed within three months, extendable to a maximum of six.

In 2018, the municipality proceeded with the installation of the *muretes*, the small concrete structures along the streets of the *bairro* intended to house the new electricity meters. Although the neighbourhood has, since 2017, been equipped with a new electricity distribution infrastructure, this equipment remains inactive.[34] Five years after the protocol was signed, the process had never been concluded. In January 2022, following the multi-day blackout, E-Redes stated that it expected to complete the meter installation during the first quarter of that year, which would finally allow residents to sign contracts with a supplier. Paulo Faísca, then president of the residents' association, said it plainly: the residents wanted to have contracts and pay for the electricity they consumed. The desire to be legal, to be counted, to exist within the system, was there. It was the system that had not arrived.

The agreement between the state-owned company responsible for electricity distribution, the city, and the local inhabitants' association has been repeatedly questioned by the inhabitants. The harsh winter blackouts happen year after year. As Duarte frames it: what legitimacy does the agreement with the state have when the electricity keeps going down?

The deputy Joana Mortágua, of the Bloco de Esquerda, described the situation clearly: the contracts had never been put into effect. The meters had been installed but, for reasons she was trying to understand, the process had not advanced. She also warned against reducing the solution to a simple relocation: there is another social dynamic in the *bairro*, and it must be respected.

The *muretes* remain. Concrete structures with white plastic doors, lined along the unpaved streets of Segundo Torrão, empty inside. They are monuments to an unfulfilled promise, to the distance between legislation and life, between the signature on a protocol and the light that comes on when someone presses a switch. The question of electricity at Segundo Torrão is not only a technical or administrative failure. It is a question of recognition. To be connected to the grid is to be counted, to be part of the city, to exist in the eyes of the state. The *puxada* is both the symptom of exclusion and the community's pragmatic refusal to wait for a recognition that does not come. For many residents of Segundo Torrão, freedom is not simply an abstraction. It is also the daily practice of keeping the lights on by whatever means are available, in a place where the law arrived only in the form of a small concrete box, and then stopped.

→ ments, as also reported in media coverage of Decree-Law no. 36/2018.

[32] Lei n.º 91/95, *Estabelece o regime excepcional para a reconversão urbanística das áreas urbanas de génese ilegal (AUGI)*, Diário da República, 1.ª série, n.º 205, 02 September 1995. Retrived from: https://www.pgdlisboa.pt/leis/lei_mostra_articulado.php?nid=1240&tabela=leis [22/07/2026]. The electricity supply protocol for the *Bairro* do 2.º Torrão explicitly states that the neighbourhood "*não é susceptível de ser considerado uma Área Urbana de Génese Ilegal (AUGI)*" ("is not susceptible of being considered an Illegal Urban Area of Informal Genesis"), thereby placing it outside the reconversion regime established by this law.

[33] EDP Distribuição – Energia, S.A. (now renamed E-REDES – Distribuição de Eletricidade, S.A.) is the main electricity distribution system operator in mainland Portugal, supplying around 99.5% of delivery points (about six million customers) through the public grid.
Regarding the *protocol*, see note 170.

[34] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 60.

/5/
O guardião - the silos and the industrial making of Trafaria:

THE BACKYARD OF LISBON

Trafaria has long been, from the point of view of Lisbon, a place to put what is not wanted. Located on the left bank of the Tejo, directly facing the most celebrated postcard of the Portuguese capital, the Torre de Belém, it has occupied throughout its history the position of what Leal calls the *pátio das traseiras* of Lisbon, Lisbon's backyard: far enough not to disturb, close enough to be useful, treated with contempt.[35] It is a characterisation that runs across centuries and takes many forms.

In 1700, the area counted no more than forty inhabitants, surrounded by estates belonging to the aristocracy and religious orders. The population dedicated itself to subsistence farming. Already then, the Câmara de Lisboa had decided that Trafaria was the appropriate place to discharge the city's waste and refuse when the weather did not permit doing so in the deeper waters of the sea: *"todas as vezes que o tempo permitir, e, quando não puder, há de descarregar na enseada da Trafaria"*.[36]
From the 16th century, Trafaria functioned as a *lazareto*, a quarantine station where ships, goods, and people from suspicious origins were isolated before entering Lisbon. By the mid-18th century, this same complex also acquired a penal role, becoming a *presídio* that received convicts awaiting deportation to the colonies, like India, Africa, or Brazil.[37] It was, as Malty documents, the beginning of a stigma: *"uma localidade destinada ao depósito de tudo quanto era indesejável para a margem direita do Tejo, onde reinava Lisboa, a capital do país"*.[38] In the nineteenth century, industrialisation arrived in the form of fish canning factories, which brought employment and an influx of people from outside.[39] In 1874, a gunpowder factory was installed in Trafaria.
The logic was consistent: the site became the remit for everything unwanted, refuse and sanitation works, quarantine facilities, detention and deportation, military installations, and later industrial uses.

THE INDUSTRIAL POLICY OF THE ESTADO NOVO AND THE ARRIVAL OF THE SILOS

It was during the Estado Novo, which lasted without interruption from the approval of the Constitution of 1933 until the Revolution of April 25, 1974, that the decision was formalised to relocate

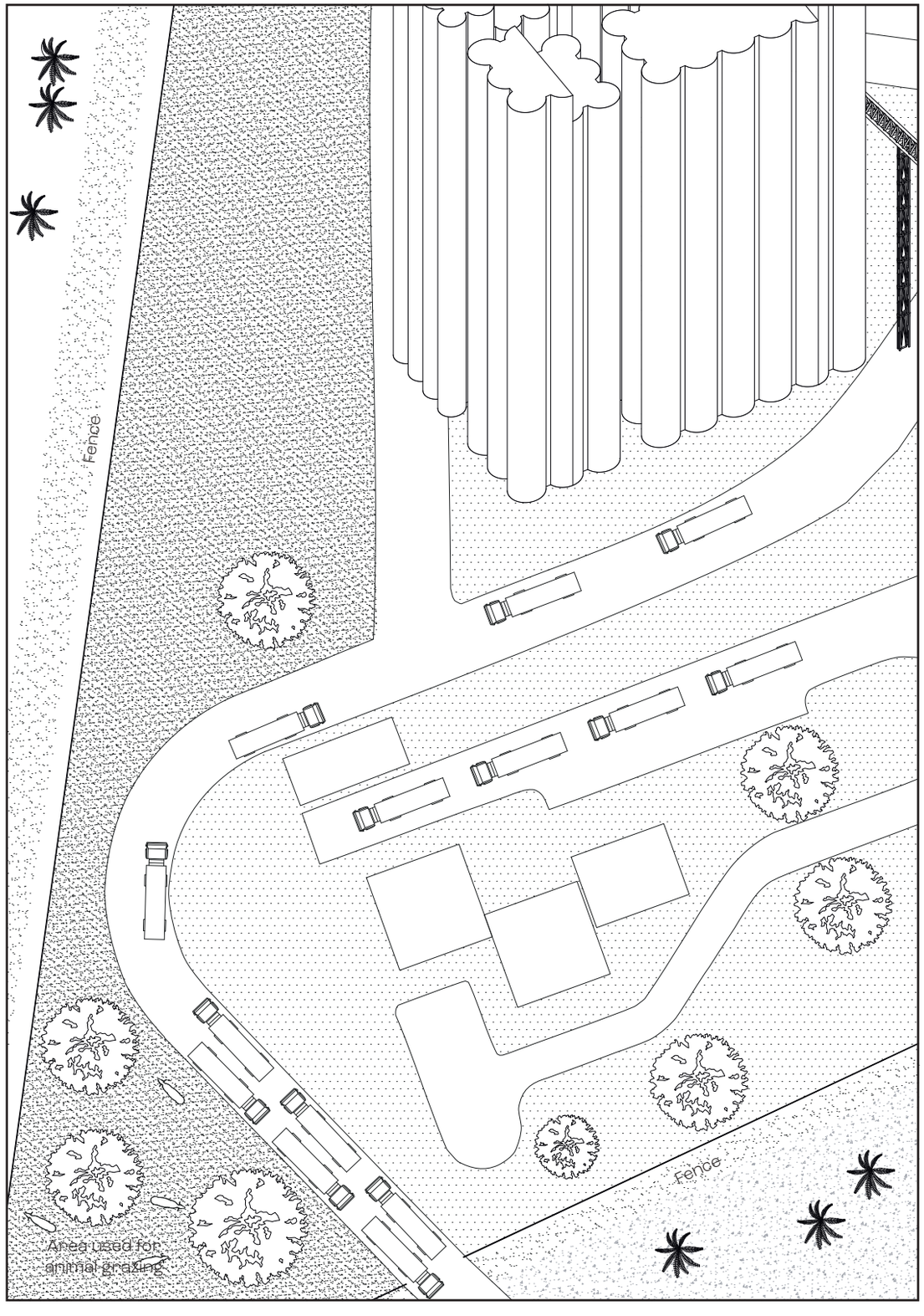
→ [35] Interview with Carlos Barradas Leal as cited in Larissa dos Santos Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities: The Trafaria Case, Tejo River Estuary of Portugal" (PhD diss., Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2017): 29.

[36] Eduardo Freire Oliveira (1901), as cited in Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities 111.

[37] Carlos Barradas Leal as cited in Larissa Malty, 24.

[38] Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities," 111.

[39] Ibid., 113.



from Lisbon to the southern bank of the Tejo the activities of heavy industry.[40] As Domingos Rasteiro and Fernanda Marques of the Câmara Municipal de Almada's Department of Strategic Planning explained in interview: *"No chamado Estado Novo desenvolveu-se uma ideia, e no fundo o terminal de contentores da Trafaria e mesmo a própria vinda da Lisnave aqui para o território, de que tudo o que fossem indústrias pesadas e portanto actividades decorrentes dessa natureza deviam sair da capital e deviam migrar para a margem sul"*.[41]
After the Revolution of 1974, this model began to be contested by the local population, which started to demand a different form of development grounded in the natural and landscape potential of the Tejo estuary and the Atlantic coast, including tourism, fishing, and access to the river. These two visions, industrial on one side and landscape-oriented on the other, have defined the contested territory of Trafaria ever since.

It was within this political logic that the grain terminal now known as SiloTagus, previously Silopor, was implanted. Inaugurated in 1984, the Terminal Cerealífero da Trafaria was constructed over three years, on a land area of approximately 140,000 m² which received over 900,000 m³ of sand dredged from the river bottom. The silo complex, with its storage capacity of 200,000 MT and towers reaching between 72 and 82 metres in height, became at the time of its opening the largest grain storage facility in Europe. Today, as SiloTagus, it operates as the main Portuguese port company for the reception, storage, and dispatch of solid food bulk, with an overall capacity of 340,000 tons, capable of handling during the course of a year the entirety of Portuguese grain and flour imports.[42]

LAND, PLANNING, AND THE ABSENCE OF PROTECTION

The territory where the silos stand is governed by a complex set of instruments of land-use planning that regulate its coastal and estuarine character. The *Plano de Ordenamento da Orla Costeira Sintra-Sado* (POOC), approved by the Council of Ministers Resolution n.º 86/2003, establishes a terrestrial protection zone of maximum 500 metres measured from the limit of seawaters towards land, and a maritime protection zone down to a depth of 30 metres, with the exception of areas under port jurisdiction.[43]
It is precisely this exception, relating to port jurisdiction, that has historically allowed industrial implantations in the coastal fringe of Trafaria to bypass the environmental protections that would otherwise apply.
Additionally, the *Plano Regional de Ordenamento do Território da Área Metropolitana de Lisboa* (PROT AML) identifies the Trafaria area as part of the Rede Ecológica Metropolitana, designating it as an *Área de Reserva Estratégica*, a classification that formally acknowledges its ecological significance and yet has not prevented successive industrial occupations of the waterfront.[44]
The development of the territory has been further complicated by the fact that the Programme POLIS, which promoted urban coastal requalification across Portugal in the late 1990s, explicitly excluded the parish of Trafaria, leaving it without the public investment mechanisms that supported other coastal municipalities.[45]
As a result, planning has proceeded largely through partnerships with private landowners who hold extensive stretches of land in the area, creating a structural dependence on private interests that has shaped the territory's development in favour of industrial and infrastructural projects over community-led alternatives.

The land on which Segundo Torrão stands is itself a product of this same private structure. The *bairro* occupies two distinct portions of privately owned territory: a smaller parcel under the jurisdiction of the Porto de Lisboa, and a larger one belonging to the Couto family, owners of the companies Ensul and Meci and of the Urbanizadora da Praia do Sol, a real estate development company with registered activity in urban and tourist construction.[46] The Couto family at one point constructed a wall around part of the settlement specifically to prevent further informal construction on their land.[47]
The real estate value of the site has not gone unnoticed. As Catarina Prata, researcher at Amnistia Internacional Portugal, observed during a visit to the *bairro*: "*Percebe-se o valor imobiliário do sítio do bairro, tanto para questões portuárias, como imobiliárias*".[48]

The five detailed urban plans that were being developed by the Câmara Municipal de Almada and that would have provided a planning framework for the settlement, including solutions for its residents, were blocked for years precisely because of the competing strategies surrounding the proposed container terminal for the area.[49] In other words, the very uncertainty that kept the community in legal limbo also protected it, paradoxically, from the rapid transformation that a resolved planning framework might have accelerated.

WHAT THE SILOS TOOK AND WHAT THEY DID NOT BRING

The construction of the silos was not accepted without contest. Residents of Trafaria have consistently described the arrival of the Terminal Cerealífero as a "divisor de águas"[50] in the model of

→ [40] Ibid., 24.

[41] Domingos Rasteiro and Fernanda Marques (2016), as cited in Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities," 93.

Translation by the author: "During the so-called Estado Novo, an idea took shape, namely, that the Trafaria container terminal, and even Lisnave's move to this territory, reflected the belief that all heavy industries, and more generally activities of that kind, should leave the capital and move to the South Bank of the river."

[42] Information retrieved from https://www.silotagus.pt/en/, accessed 22 July 2026.

[43] *Plano de Ordenamento da Orla Costeira Sintra-Sado*, approved by Resolution of the Council of Ministers n.º 86/2003, 25 June 2003. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://apambiente.pt/agua/pooc-sintra-sado.

[44] *Plano Regional de Ordenamento do Território da Área Metropolitana de Lisboa (PROT-AML)*, September 2001. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://lisboaparapessoas.pt/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/protaml_vol2.pdf.

[45] *Programa Polis – Programa de Requalificação Urbana e Valorização Ambiental das Cidades*, national urban and environmental regeneration programme for Portuguese cities. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://ext.incm.pt/siluc/detalhe/26424.

[46] "Os miúdos do 2.º Torrão só vêem o lixo e os silos da Trafaria," *Público*, 3 September 2017, accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.publico.pt/2017/09/03/local/noticia/os-miudos-do-2-torrao-so-veem-o-lixo-e-os-silos-da-trafaria-1784096.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.
Translation by the author: "The real estate value of the neighborhood site is evident, both for port-related matters and for real estate purposes."

[49] Ibid.

[50] "Divisor de águas," literally "watershed," meaning a turning point in something.

local development: a rupture that shifted the area from a territory oriented around fishing, tourism, and the river, to one defined by industrial production.[51]

The silos physically severed the connection between the historic village and the Tejo. As architect Duarte Brasil Paiva observed, the structure enters into the concept of the *non-lieux*[52]: it is not relational, not identity-bearing, not historical. The silos block the evening light from reaching the village adequately. Sixty percent of the population surveyed by Malty considered that fishing activity had been negatively impacted, with access to the river and beach made more difficult due to the implantation of the megaproject and the spatial competition between industrial and fishing activities. The type of fishing itself changed: the traditional *"chatas"*, flat-bottomed rowing boats used in the 1960s and 1970s, gave way to motor boats fishing far from the left bank, partly due to legal restrictions imposed by the presence of the silos.[53]

The promise of local employment, often made by proponents of large-scale industrial projects, did not materialise. Malty's field research found that only 3% of the population of Trafaria had ever worked for the Terminal Cerealífero, and in most cases these were unskilled labour jobs related to the construction phase. A further 5% had a family member who had worked or was working for the company. In total, 97% of local residents had never received any remuneration from Silopor.

As compensation for the loss of access to the river, the company built what residents refer to as a *piscina*: a pool of standing water near the installation, offered to the Trafaria community as restitution for the environmental and social impacts of the work. From the earliest fieldwork visits, I observed the presence of this stagnant pool, described by residents as a *"tanque de água suja"*, a tank of dirty water. One resident summarised it precisely: *"Antes de construírem foi prometido emprego e uma piscina, nós temos um tanque de água suja e infecções respiratórias."* Another resident, a fisherman, noted with bitter irony that fish were now always gathered around the silos, attracted by the grain, while the village itself had become deserted: *"A Trafaria está deserta, qualquer coisa que vier está bom."*[54]

THE SECOND PROJECT AND THE CLOSING OF THE ESTUARY

When in 2013 a second large-scale industrial project was proposed for the same area, a container terminal that would have overshadowed even the grain silos in scale and impact, the community responded differently. The proposed location, studied since the 1990s, was known as the *fecho da Golada*, the closing of the mouth of the Tejo estuary. The technical logic behind this location was that the only zone of sufficient depth for a deep-water port in the western part of the estuary required extending into the area immediately west of the grain terminal, towards the Cova do Vapor, in a position that would have effectively closed the natural mouth of the Tejo.[55] According to engineer Fernando de Carvalho Santos e Silva, the construction of a deep-water port in this location would have implied the permanent closure of the *Golada*, with consequences for the entire estuarine system, including sand dynamics, coastal erosion, and the ecological functioning of what is one of the most important wetlands in Western Europe. The sandbank immediately to the northeast of the Bugio lighthouse, already advancing northward as the Caparica coastline loses sand, would have been definitively altered. The Câmara Municipal de Almada formally rejected this localisation.[56]

Between 2012 and 2013, the *Associação Contentores na Trafaria Não!* was created,[57] which mobilised thousands of people and gathered the support of the Câmara Municipal, the local parish unions, and civil society organisations across the region. In July 2013, hundreds of people formed a human chain through the main streets of Trafaria in an action called *Abraçar a Trafaria*. Surfers and bathers joined hands on the beach at São João da Caparica, or formed circles in the sea on their boards, in a protest called *Dar as Mãos à Caparica*, drawing attention to the local economic vocation of tourism, fishing, and water sports. A public petition collected 6,420 signatures and was submitted to the Assembleia da República and to the Parliamentary Commission on Economy and Public Works. As researcher Carlos Leal observed, the only entity that had shown genuine interest in the Trafaria location for the container terminal was the construction industry lobby, whose pressure had led the Port of Lisbon Authority to declare itself in favour.[58] The project was ultimately abandoned.

WHAT REMAINS: THE SILOS, THE ANIMALS, AND THE THRESHOLD

The silos remain. On the eastern edge of Segundo Torrão, following the waterline, the megaindustry of cereals defines the horizon of the settlement. Access to the site is formally restricted. The perimeter of the grain terminal is fenced and controlled, an industrial zone operating under port jurisdiction, closed to those who do not work there.
And yet. During fieldwork walks along the outer edge of the terminal, something unexpected appeared within the fenced perime-

→ [51] Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities," 175.

[52] "Non lieux," literally "non-places," a term associated with Marc Augé's theory.

[53] Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities," 299.

[54] As quoted in Malty, 331. Translations by the author: "Before they built it, they promised jobs and a swimming pool; what we have is a tank of dirty water and respiratory infections." And "Trafaria is empty; anything that comes is good."

→ [55] Fernando de Carvalho Santos e Silva, "Ponto de vista sobre o terminal de contentores do Barreiro," blog *FCS Serra de S. Eratosthenes*, 2 March 2015, accessed 22 July 2026, https://fcsseratostenes.blogspot.com/2015/03/ponto-de-vista-sobre-o-terminal-de.html.

[56] Ibid.

[57] An association and civic initiative created in 2013 in Almada, Portugal, to oppose the construction of a mega container terminal and deep-water port in Trafaria.

[58] Carlos Barradas Leal (2014), as cited in Malty, 216.

ter: a horse, tied to a tree, spending its days in the grassy margins of the industrial zone, in the strips of land that lie between the fence and the active operational areas of the silos. Each evening, at the hour of sunset, its owner would come to collect her. On subsequent visits, the scene had grown: a small group of goats with their young, sheep, and the same horse, grazing inside the enclosure. These animals belong to residents of Primeiro Torrão. The fields within the terminal's outer perimeter, not used for any operational purpose, perfectly enclosed and sheltered, have been quietly reclaimed as pasture. Whether by tacit agreement or by a permission quietly asked and quietly granted, the arrangement persists. It is the daily practice of inhabiting a threshold, of finding within the fences of what excludes you the conditions for something to live.

This presence says something that cannot be said *otherwise*. The land enclosed by the silos is not dead land. It is land that was taken, built over, fenced, and declared off-limits, and within which, at the margins of the operational zone, grass grows and animals graze, tended by the hands of people from the settlement next door. It is a small and quiet form of reappropriation, of the kind that does not appear in any plan, that is not recorded in any protocol, and that cannot be easily removed without someone noticing. It belongs to the atlas of ordinary resistance.
It is the physical materialisation of a logic that has governed the relationship between Lisbon and its southern margin for centuries: what the capital does not want, it places across the water. The grain terminal did not emerge from the desires or the decisions of the people who live beside it. It was built despite the-mand largely without them. But the grass grew anyway. And the animals came.

/6/
The NATO base:

Next to Segundo Torrão stands a fenced installation that interrupts the community's direct relationship with the sea. It is the Depósito POL NATO de Lisboa, known by its acronym DPNL, a fuel storage and naval refuelling depot that occupies a substantial portion of the waterfront immediately adjacent to the *bairro*. The street that runs along its perimeter is called Rua da NATO.

POL stands for Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants. The installation was built as part of NATO's common infrastructure programme in the context of the Cold War, on a site chosen for its strategic position at the mouth of the Tejo estuary, providing direct maritime access for the refuelling of allied naval vessels. The military servitude regime governing the area was established by Decree 47875 of August 31st, 1967, which placed the surrounding land under strict military jurisdiction, prohibiting any construction, excavation, or modification of the terrain within defined perimeter zones without authorisation from the Portuguese Navy.[59] The installation was managed jointly by the Portuguese Navy and the Direcção-Geral de Recursos da Defesa Nacional until September 2016, when it was transferred, under a twenty-five year agreement, to the Entidade Nacional para o Mercado de Combustíveis (ENMC), for use as a strategic fuel reserve and to supply, via pipeline, the Naval Base of Lisbon in Almada and the Air Base nº 6 at Montijo.[60] The installation includes a port terminal, fuel storage tanks, and a pipeline network. An aerial photograph of the depot is preserved in the Arquivo Histórico de Almada, showing the port terminal, the petroleum quay, and the adjacent beach of Bico da Calha.

As Duarte documents, the DPNL is described in the context of Segundo Torrão as a "former NATO ship gas station, deactivated for the past decades".[61] The installation is formally no longer active as a naval refuelling point, but its physical presence on the territory remains total. The fences, the tanks, the restricted perimeter, the port terminal: all of it is still there, occupying the coastline to the west of the *bairro*.

The effect of this presence is spatial and daily. The residents of Segundo Torrão live next to the sea but cannot reach it on this side. The DPNL occupies the western waterfront in the same way that the SiloTagus occupies the eastern riverfront: as a wall, a forced detour, a denial of direct relationship with water. To reach the beach from the *bairro*, one must navigate around the installation. The *bairro* is thus bounded on two sides by industrial and

→ [59] Decreto n.º 47875, de 31 de agosto de 1967, *Diário da República*, 1.ª série. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/dere/47875-1967-390600.

[60] ENSE – Entidade Nacional para o Sector Energético, "Comemoração do 1.º Aniversário da ENMC no Depósito POL NATO de Lisboa," 2017. "Infra-estruturas da NATO vão levar combustível aos aeroportos do Montijo e de Lisboa," *Jornal de Negócios*, 5 April 2016, accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.jornaldenegocios.pt/empresas/energia/detalhe/infra_estruturas_da_nato_vao_levar_combustivel_aos_aeroportos_do_montijo_e_de_lisboa.

[61] Duarte, "Social Participation in Scientific Research from the Margins," 59.

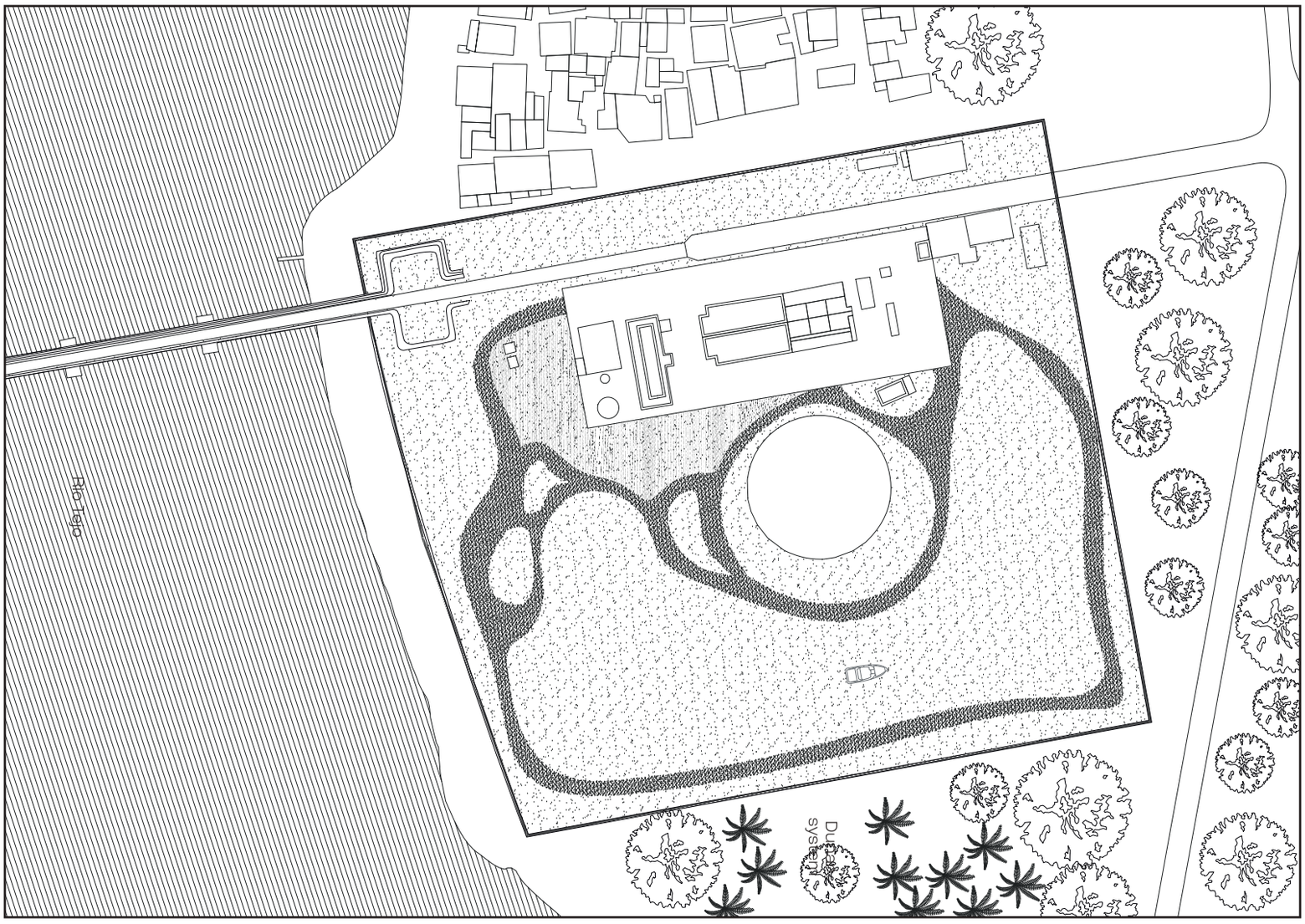


Figure 5.4

View from the surrounding hills of the NATO petroleum-supply installation in Trafaria, on the Tejo waterfront. It is also possile to see the dunar system.



military infrastructure that physically interrupts the community's relationship with the territory it inhabits.

This is not a coincidence of geography. It is a product of the same logic that placed the gunpowder factory in Trafaria in 1874, the grain silos in 1986, and the military zones throughout the twentieth century: the logic of the *pátio das traseiras*, of a territory used as a site for what Lisbon and the state did not want near the capital. The NATO installation was chosen for its strategic position at the estuary mouth. The people who already lived near that position were not part of the calculation.

/7/
Os cafés and the food desert:

There is a paradox at the eastern edge of Segundo Torrão that is difficult to ignore. The grain terminal that flanks the settlement to the east, now operating as SiloTagus, handles in the course of a single year the entirety of Portugal's grain and flour imports, approximately 3.4 million tonnes.[62] The infrastructure that makes this possible, towers of up to 82 metres, quays capable of receiving ships of up to 120,000 tonnes deadweight, a computerised system for tracking every movement of product across multiple terminals, sits at the boundary of a community that has no supermarket. Not one.

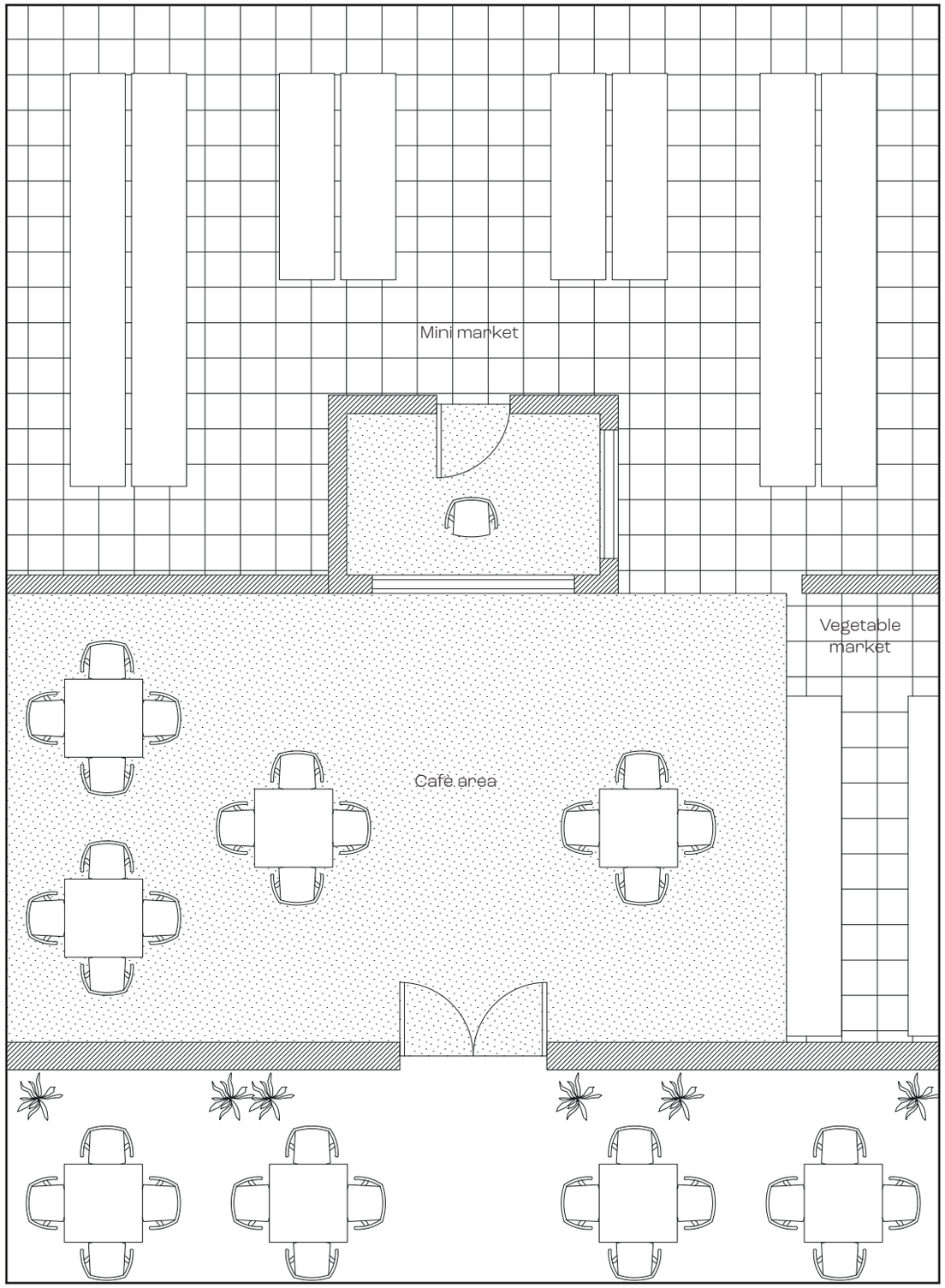
Based on fieldwork conducted for this research, the entire territory of Trafaria, including the historic village centre, the *bairro* of Segundo Torrão, and the adjacent settlement of Cova do Vapor, is without a supermarket. The nearest large-format food retail is located in Costa da Caparica, several kilometres away. The formal food infrastructure that exists in the area is limited and fragmented. The Mercado Municipal da Trafaria, located in the historic village centre, offers fruit, vegetables, fish, and fresh goods, but operates only in the morning and cannot be compared to a supermarket in terms of either range or opening hours. There are also a butcher, a greengrocer, and some small shops scattered across the area. But for the majority of everyday needs, and for most of the day, these options remain partial and insufficient.

The food supply chain that passes through SiloTagus connects Portugal to global grain markets and supplies the national food system, but it does not supply the community next door.

This is not an accident. It is the ordinary condition of what researchers have come to call a *food desert*: a term used to describe areas where residents experience both physical and economic barriers to accessing healthy, varied, and affordable food.[63] The concept, developed primarily in North American and British urban contexts, describes a pattern in which low-income and historically marginalised communities are systematically underserved by the food retail sector. The absence of supermarkets in spaces of poverty means that low-income families without a car tend to shop in small local shops that often sell a smaller variety of foods, and at higher prices. Food deserts are the result of gradually changing infrastructural interdependencies that alter market conventions and generate repercussions for many urban consumers, constituting a distinct form of infrastructural exclusion. Some food justice scholars and advocates have proposed replacing the term *food desert* with *food apartheid*, arguing that the metaphor of a desert implies a natural absence rath-

→ [62] Information retrived from: https://www.silotagus.pt/en/, accessed 22 July 2026.

[63] "Food desert" is a term first used in a 1995 report by the Scottish Nutrition Task Force; it refers to areas where residents have limited physical and economic access to nutritious, affordable food. The concept of "food desert" has been widely criticised in the literature for reducing food inequality to spatial proximity alone, while obscuring the roles of income, pricing, transport, retail concentration, and structural inequality. Several scholars also argue that the metaphor itself is misleading, since these areas are not devoid of food but rather marked by constrained, unequal, and often racialised access.



er than the product of deliberate structural choices. The food desert concept, in this critique, overlooks the deeper structural inequities, including poverty, systemic racism, and discriminatory urban planning policies, that contribute to creating and perpetuating limited food access.

In the case of Segundo Torrão, and the whole area of Trafaria, the structural dimension is especially legible. The settlement is classified as illegal, situated on privately owned land and under port jurisdiction, excluded from urban planning frameworks that could have attracted investment, and without legal status that would make it attractive to large retailers whose site selection criteria require, among other things, formal land tenure and adequate infrastructure. Low-income residents without transportation rely more on smaller neighbourhood stores that may offer the same goods only at higher prices. The condition of food insecurity at Segundo Torrão is not separate from the other exclusions the community faces.

What fills the gap, in part, is the *cafè*. There are several in the *bairro*, and they are not quite what the word suggests. They are gathering places, yes, and places to drink coffee or share a meal, but they are also, in most cases, something more. Behind the counter, or through a door at the back of the room, there is a market: shelves with basic foodstuffs, household goods, sometimes fresh produce, sometimes bread. These cafès function as the primary food retail infrastructure of the settlement. They are the supermarket that does not exist, compressed into the back of a room, stocked with what can be transported and sold, priced at rates that reflect the costs of a supply chain built for small volumes without the buying power of large-format retail. Based on observations and conversations conducted during fieldwork, products sold in these spaces are consistently more expensive than equivalent products in supermarkets, a condition documented across food desert contexts globally. For residents who cannot travel easily to Costa da Caparica, and for those whose time, income, or mobility makes that journey difficult or impossible, these prices are not a choice.

The cafè in Segundo Torrão is thus a hybrid space. It is a place of sociality and rest, of conversation and community, and simultaneously a site of economic necessity, of food access in the absence of better alternatives. It exists because the people of the settlement needed it to exist, and built it into their daily life accordingly. The food it sells costs more than it should. The grain moves in enormous quantities through the terminal on the eastern edge of the *bairro* but it does not stop here.

/8/
A mata - the southern boundary:

To the south of Segundo Torrão, the road that connects Trafaria to Cova do Vapor and Costa da Caparica runs along the edge of a forest. It is this woodland, sitting between the *bairro* and the road, that marks the southern limit of the settlement. To those who travel along the road without knowing what lies to the north of it, the *bairro* is invisible. The trees screen it from view. The forest hides it, or the forest protects it, depending on where one stands.

This forest is not wild. It is planted. The vegetation that delimits Segundo Torrão to the south is part of the Perímetro Florestal das Dunas da Trafaria e Costa da Caparica, a state-owned forestry perimeter managed by the Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas (ICNF), which includes a woodland patch of approximately ten hectares in the Trafaria area, composed of coastal pine forests and acacias on dunes (CM Almada). This area is part of the plan Paisagem Protegida da Arriba Fóssil da Costa da Caparica (PPAFCC), established by Decree-Law No. 168/84 of May 22, 1984.[64]
The three *matas* adjacent to Trafaria,[65] those of Ribeira da Enxurrada, Abas da Raposeira, and Santo António, are described by Malty as areas of significant biodiversity value, classified as *domínio privado do Estado*, private domain of the State, and subject to specific forestry regulations.[66]

The land on which this forest stands, and on which the *bairro* itself stands, is classified as Reserva Ecológica Nacional, a designation that includes the *cordão dunar* system that functions as a natural barrier against coastal erosion and sea level rise.[67] It was this very classification that prevented the Couto family, owners of the majority of the land where the *bairro* sits, from carrying out a luxury urbanisation project they had planned for the territory, with its privileged view over the Tejo and Lisbon.[68] The ecological designation that makes this land legally unbuildable for luxury development is the same one that, in practice, left space for the informal settlement that grew there over decades. The forest protected the *bairro*, without ever intending to.

This forest was not always here. The vegetation that now marks the southern edge of the settlement is the product of a deliberate intervention that began in the second half of the nineteenth century. The dunes of the Trafaria and Costa da Caparica coastline had been identified since at least the 1880s as a territory requiring afforestation, in response to mobile dunes that threat-

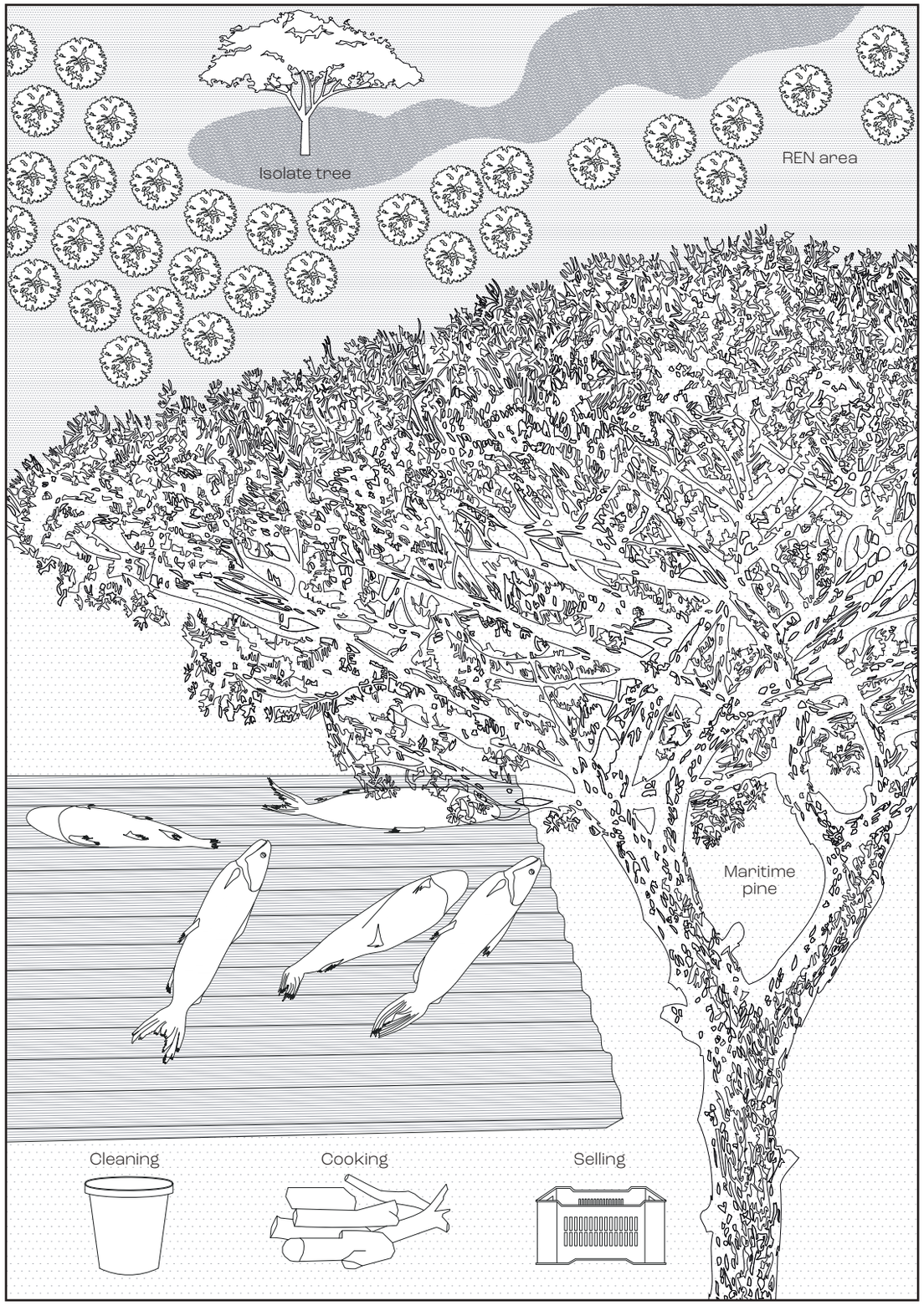
→ [64] Paisagem Protegida da Arriba Fóssil da Costa da Caparica (PPAFCC), Decreto-Lei n.º 168/84, de 22 de maio, accessed 22 July 2026, https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/decreto-lei/168-1984-383996.

[65] "Mata" means forest.

[66] As elaborated by Maty, 2017, p. 99.

[67] "Como nasceu o maior *bairro* de lata de Almada?," Rádio Renascença, 21 March 2019, accessed 22 July 2026, https://rr.pt/video/segundo-torrao/2019/03/21/como-nasceu-o-maior-*bairro*-de-lata-de-almada/200706/.

[68] "Os miúdos do 2.º Torrão só vêem o lixo e os silos da Trafaria," *Público*, 3 September 2017, accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.publico.pt/2017/09/03/local/noticia/os-miudos-do-2-torrao-so-veem-o-lixo-e-os-silos-da-trafaria-1784096.



ened agricultural land further inland. A formal plan for drainage and afforestation of the area was drawn up in 1888 by engineers Adolpho de Oliveira and Álvaro de Carvalho under the direction of forest inspector Pedro Roberto de C. e Silva (Palma, Dias, Freitas 2021, p. 234).[69] In 1906, a major planting campaign established approximately 70,000 trees in the area, including maritime and stone pines, eucalyptus for drainage of the low-lying wetlands, acacias, casuarinas, and other species.[70] Malty confirms that the vegetation surrounding Trafaria today, including the areas of Santo António, São João, and Cova do Vapor, is the direct result of these drainage and afforestation works.[71]

The forest was planted to stop the sand from moving. It was planted to protect agricultural land from the advancing dunes. It was planted as infrastructure, as a technical solution to a territorial problem.

Further east along the road, closer to the historic centre of Trafaria and south of the road itself, lies a second section of this same forestry perimeter. It is here that in 2024 the Associação Ensaios e Diálogos (EDA) launched the *Projeto Mata Viva*, a community initiative for the ecological restoration and improvement of access to the *Mata das Dunas* da Trafaria e Costa da Caparica, developed with the community of Trafaria through its schools, local associations, and residents.[72] Among its activities were the planting of 1,250 native species, three cleaning sessions, a course in scientific drawing, an exhibition at the Trafaria Library, and the creation of a botanical trail documenting seventeen species present in the forest.[73] The project identified among its conservation priorities species such as the *sabina-das-praias* (*Juniperus phoenicea*) and *herniaria* (*Herniaria maritima*), endemic plants of the coastal dune pinewood communities. This initiative offers a point of departure for a more attentive reading of the vegetation that surrounds Segundo Torrão as well: the same species, the same ecosystem, the same planted landscape, on the other side of the road.

UNDER THE MARITIME PINE

There is a path that starts from behind the building of the residents' association of Segundo Torrão and leads into the forest. I followed it one afternoon, accompanied by a friend. A man I had seen carrying boxes emerged from between the trees. He told me there were *cobras* along the path. I followed him anyway.
What I found, a short distance into the forest, was a workspace under the wide canopy of a very tall maritime pine. The canopy was large enough to shade a considerable area beneath it, and the space had been arranged for work: a metal sheet laid flat on

→ [69] Monique Palma, João Alveirinho Dias, and Joana Gaspar Freitas, "It's Not Only the Sea: A History of Human Intervention in the Beach-Dune Ecosystem of Costa da Caparica (Portugal)," *Journal of Integrated Coastal Zone Management* 21, no. 4 (2021): 227–47, 234.

[70] Magalhães Mesquita (1912), as cited in Palma, Dias, and Freitas, "It's not only the Sea: A History of Human Intervention in the Beach-Dune Ecosystem of Costa da Caparica (Portugal)."

[71] Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities."

[72] EDA – Ensaios e Diálogos Associação, "Projeto Mata Viva," 2024, accessed 22 July 2026, https://e-da.pt/post/mata-viva.

[73] EDA – Ensaios e Diálogos Associação, "Percurso Botânico Mata Viva," 2024, accessed 22 July 2026, https://e-da.pt/percursomataviva

the ground, a worktable, tools, chairs. Several large silver fish lay on the metal sheet. Others were already open on the table.
The man was preparing fish. He worked methodically: first opening each fish with a knife along the belly, then, where the bones were too resistant, using an electric saw. He removed the internal organs, discarding them into a container on the ground, then opened the fish flat with his hands and rinsed it in a basin of water. The fish, he told me, came from Africa. What he said with certainty was that the fish, once prepared, cooked and smoked, would be sold to the inhabitants of the *bairro*, where it was much appreciated.

We exchanged a few words. I did not want to interrupt his work. The pine above us was very tall and its canopy was very wide, and in the shade beneath it the temperature was different from the surrounding forest. There were other tools and surfaces arranged around the space, suggesting that this place was used regularly, for this and perhaps for other kinds of work. I stayed there for about half an hour.

/9/
O rio, as dunas, as pedras - the northern boundary:

Segundo Torrão faces the Tejo. To the north, at the edge of the settlement, the ground drops towards the river. At the top of this riverbank lie the stones: a line of rocks placed along the edge as coastal protection, an unspectacular intervention that marks the boundary between the land and the water. Parallel to them, a road runs and right next to the road, the houses begin.

This is the northern limit of the *bairro*. It is also, in many ways, its origin. The settlement grew on this riverbank precisely because the river was there: a source of fish, of work, of connection to Lisbon across the water. The ferry that still crosses between Trafaria and Belém is one of the oldest crossings of the estuary. The people who built their homes on this bank did so with their backs to the land and their faces to the water.

The stones that now line the riverbank are part of a longer and wider history of intervention along this coastline. What happens here cannot be understood at the scale of a single settlement. The sedimentary dynamics of the Tejo estuary operate across the entire arc of coast between Trafaria and Cabo Espichel, and the decisions made at one point along this arc have consequences on the others.

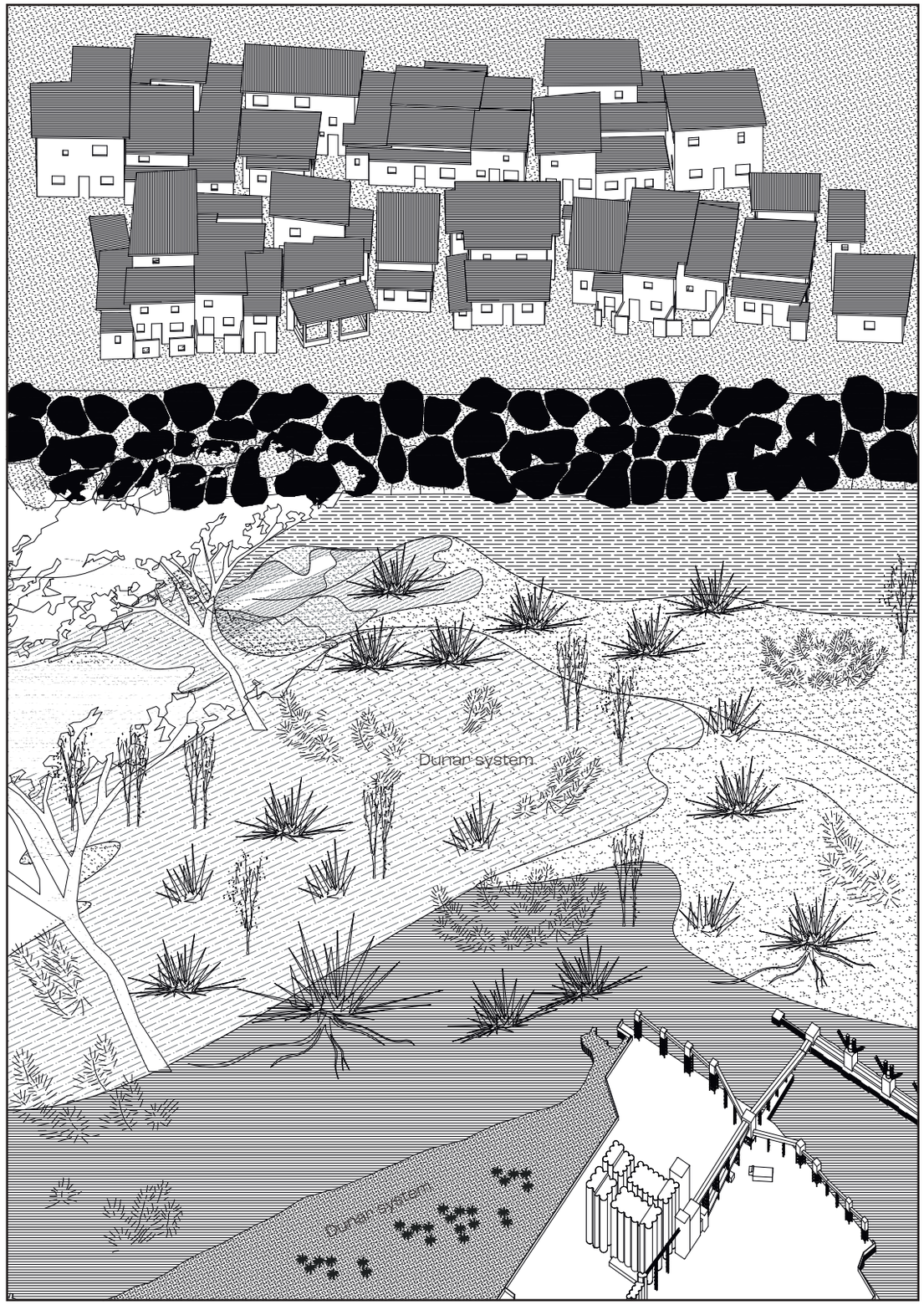
The *Banco do Bugio,* formed by two submerged sandbanks at the river mouth known as *Cachopo Norte* and *Cachopo Sul*, functions as a natural barrier conditioning wave propagation and sediment movement along the entire coastal system.[74] Between 1939 and 1985, the Banco do Bugio advanced approximately 700 metres northward, altering the sedimentary balance of the coastline.[75]
From the 1940s onwards, intensive dredging operations in the area of Cova do Vapor removed approximately 14.5 million m³ of sand from the zone. The destination of this material was the construction of landfill on the right bank of the Tejo, at Belém-Algés, for the *doca de pesca de Pedrouços*, whose project dated from 1942. A further extraction was approved in 1948 for the regularisation of the left bank between Cacilhas and Alfeite, of unknown quantity. These removals triggered a process of accelerated coastal erosion. The first documented reports of erosion at Cova do Vapor date from 1947.[76] In 1959, as a direct consequence of this erosion, the first coastal defence structure was built at Cova do Vapor, followed by two further breakwaters and a longitudinal masonry. Between 1957 and 1963, the beach retreated by 150 metres (Almada Virtual Museum 2016).[77] Between 1968 and 1971,

→ [74] Marta Oliveira, "Evolução Natural e Antrópica: Trafaria, Cova do Vapor, Costa da Caparica" (Master's thesis, Universidade de Lisboa, 2015).

[75] Pinto et al., 2007, as cited in Oliveira, "Evolução Natural e Antrópica."

[76] Almirante F. V. Abreu, *O Porto de Lisboa e a Golada do Tejo* (Síntese do Ciclo de Conferência, Academia de Marinha, 2010).

[77] "Pequeno canal ou golada do Tejo," Almada Virtual Museum, 2016, accessed 22 July 2026, https://almada-virtual-museum.blogspot.com/search?q=Pequeno+canal+ou+golada+do+Tejo.



→ [78] Ibid.

[79] Palma, Dias, and Freitas, "It's not only the Sea," 227-47.

[80] Trienal de Lisboa, "Cova do Vapor," 2020, accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.trienaldelisboa.com/ohl/en/espaco/cova-do-vapor/.

seven additional breakwaters were constructed along the Costa da Caparica.

The construction of the Terminal Cerealífero da Trafaria, inaugurated in 1984, introduced a further anthropic disruption to this already altered system. Built between Trafaria and Cova do Vapor on the southern bank of the Tejo, the terminal functioned as a physical barrier interrupting the natural circulation of sediments along the estuarine margin. Sediments that would previously have moved freely were retained to the west of the terminal structure, giving rise to the extensive sandbank now visible in the area known as *Torrões da Trafaria*, and forming the beach immediately adjacent to Segundo Torrão, known as the *Praia do Segundo Torrão*, a beach that did not exist before the construction of the silos and that owes its existence to the interruption of natural sediment dynamics caused by the terminal.[78] The same structure that denied the community its relationship with the river created, as an unintended consequence, a beach in front of its houses.

The dune system and the forest that covers it are not separate from this story of erosion and protection. They are part of the same system. The *cordão dunar*, the dune system that runs along the coastal and estuarine fringe of this territory and that forms the basis of its classification as Reserva Ecológica Nacional, functions as the primary natural defence against the advance of water towards land. Dunes accumulate and retain sand, absorbing wave energy and preventing the inland penetration of tidal and coastal flooding. The vegetation planted on them since the end of the nineteenth century, the maritime pines, acacias, as well as low-growing shrubs and ground cover plants including Calamagrostis arenaria and other coastal dune species documented during fieldwork, plays a fundamental role in stabilising this system: the roots of these trees and shrubs bind the sand, preventing the dunes from migrating and maintaining the physical integrity of the bank that protects the land behind it. Without the vegetation, the dunes would move.[79] Without the dunes, the water would advance.

On the Atlantic side of the territory, the fragility of this system is more visible. The settlement of Cova do Vapor, to the west of Segundo Torrão, has receded approximately 500 metres over the course of the twentieth century, with its earliest structures progressively relocated as the coastline retreated.[80] Emergency interventions followed in the winters of 2002-2003 and 2006-2007, after intense erosion breached the longitudinal coastal structure and exposed the urban front to direct wave action. The level of the sea along the Portuguese coast rose approximately 15 centimetres during the twentieth century, and projections es-

timate a further rise of between 75 centimetres and 1.9 metres by the end of the twenty-first century.[81] These numbers describe the ground on which Segundo Torrão stands.

The stones at the northern edge of the *bairro* hold this history quietly. They are a modest intervention in a system that has been altered for over a century by decisions made elsewhere: in the offices of the port authority, in the planning chambers of Lisbon, in the engineering firms that designed the grain terminal. The people of Segundo Torrão did not make those decisions, but they live with their consequences.



Figure 5.5
Dune system and coastal vegetation on the beaches around Segundo Torrão.

→ [81] Oliveira, "Evolução Natural e Antrópica: Trafaria, Cova do Vapor, Costa da Caparica."

/10/
A madrugada - the invisible labour:

The first ferry from Trafaria to Belém departs at 6:42 in the morning on weekdays.[82] It is not the first thing that moves in Segundo Torrão. Before the ferry, there are people already awake, already dressed, already moving through the unpaved streets of the *bairro* towards the *estação fluvial*.
The *madrugada*, the hours between deep night and the first light of morning, belongs to them before it belongs to anyone else.

The crossing takes approximately twenty-five minutes. At the Belém terminal, on the Lisbon side of the river, the people who descend from the ferry are many. They arrive before the city has fully woken up, before the cafès along the waterfront have opened their doors, before the tourists who will later walk the same ground have left from their hotels. They come from the southern margin of the Tejo carrying the tools of work that the city requires: hands for cleaning offices and buildings, hands for laying concrete and erecting scaffolding, hands for the labour that makes the city function and that the city, for the most part, does not see.

The data on occupation available for this territory are incomplete by definition. The census 2021 and the Diagnóstico Contínuo da Rede Social de Almada (CMA 2021) cover the União de Freguesias Caparica/Trafaria as a whole, and their figures almost certainly underrepresent or exclude altogether the residents of Segundo Torrão.[83] Self-produced settlements like this one are structurally absent from official statistics: many residents do not have their fiscal residence registered in the *bairro*, many dwellings are not classified as formal housing units in cadastral records, and some people actively avoid the census out of fear of consequences linked to their irregular housing status. The people who cross the river at sunrise do not appear in the data that describe the place they come from. This invisibility is not incidental, but part of the same condition that makes the streets unpaved and the electricity illegal and the houses unregistered.

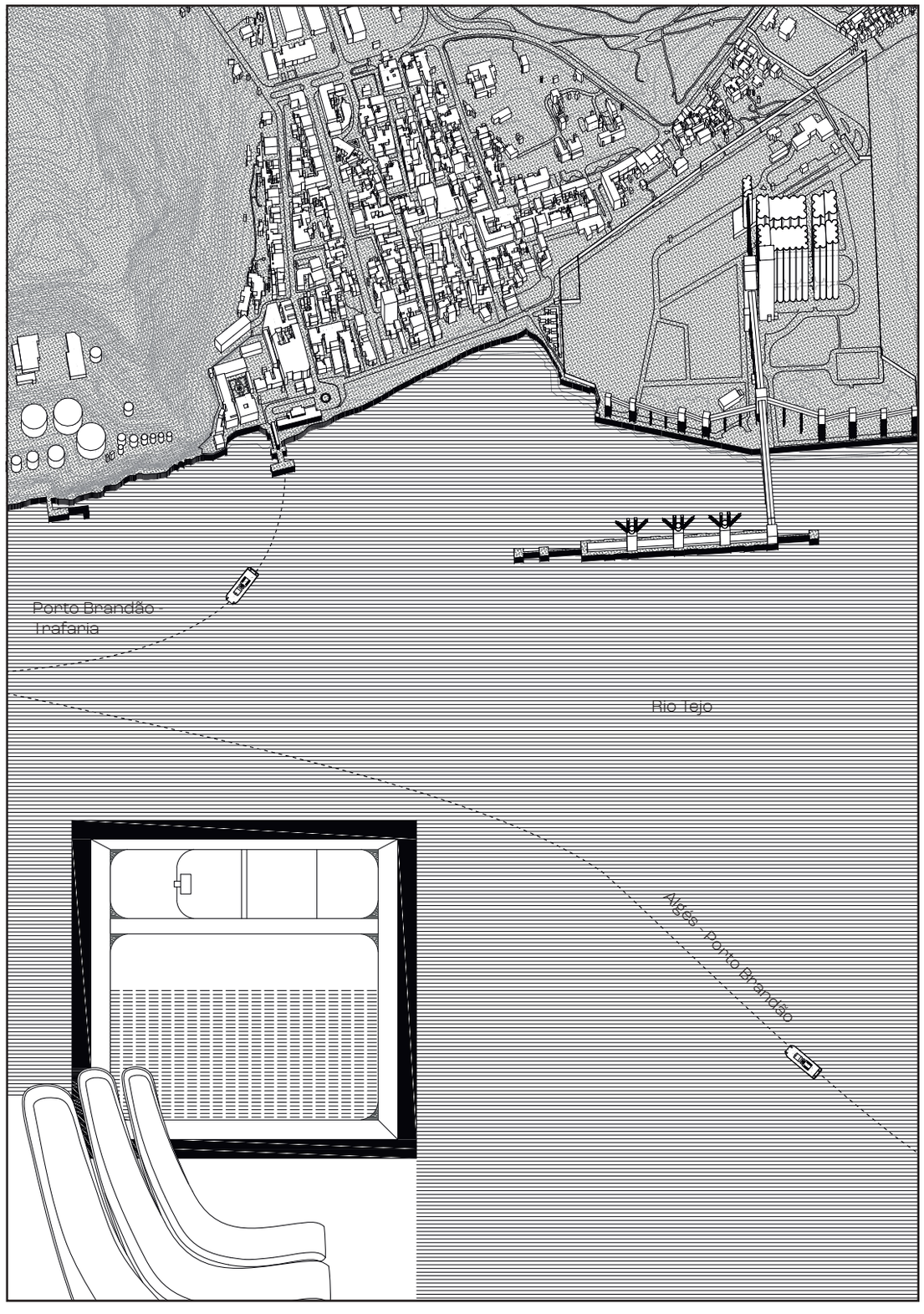
According to Malty's field research conducted in 2015, 55% of the population of Trafaria was active in the labour market, with 14% unemployed and 31% retired. Of those who worked, 29% did so within the parish and 19% outside it, commuting to other parts of the metropolitan area for employment.[84] The unemployment rate in Trafaria exceeded 20%, the highest in the entire municipality of Almada, and the predominant household income was between 500 and 1,000 euros per month.[85] The 2011 census data for Trafaria, reproduced in the CMA diagnostic, confirmed that 58% of

→ [82] Transtejo/TTSL, "Horários Trafaria – Porto Brandão – Belém," accessed 22 July 2026, https://ttsl.pt/passageiros/horarios-de-ligacoes-fluviais/partidas-trafaria/.

[83] Câmara Municipal de Almada and Rede Social de Almada, *Diagnóstico Contínuo da Rede Social de Almada: Retrato das Freguesias – União de Freguesias Caparica/Trafaria* (Almada: CMA, 2021), accessed 22 July 2026, https://www.jf-charneca-caparica-sobreda.pt/phocadownload/balcaovirtual/2022/CHARNECA_SOBREDA_Jan_2022.pdf.

[84] Malty, "Social Participation Promoted from the Implantation of Mega Projects in Small Communities," 162-163.

[85] Ibid.



the working population commuted to a different parish from the one where they resided, a figure that suggests the southern margin as a place of residence for people whose working lives are elsewhere (CMA 2021).

For those who must reach Lisbon without taking the ferry, the alternative is the Ponte 25 de Abril. But this requires at minimum two bus changes, and the journey time grows considerably depending on the destination within the city. It is not, for many, a viable daily option. The ferry is the connection. When the ferry does not run the connection breaks.

And the ferry does not always run. On days of adverse sea conditions, when the river and the ocean are agitated and tides are high, the service from Trafaria is suspended. The ferry stops at Porto Brandão, the previous station, and passengers are redirected to a bus. The territory between Trafaria and Porto Brandão is hilly, and there is no road connection along the river at that point. The replacement bus travels along the top of the hills, far from the water. On those mornings, the people of Segundo Torrão who need to reach Lisbon for work must find their way up the hill.

During fieldwork, on several mornings of particularly severe weather, the ferry from Trafaria did not complete its crossing to Belém. On the mornings when conditions allowed it, I watched the boat arrive from the Belém side. The number of people who descended was striking: a crowd of people moving from the gangway into the city, dispersing in different directions towards their workplaces.

/11/
Growing upwards:

The exposed brick speaks a specific language in Segundo Torrão. Where it appears, on a small number of houses that rise above the single storey common to the rest of the *bairro*, it marks the edge between what is finished and what is still becoming. The ground floor is plastered and painted. Above it, the brick is raw. No plaster and no paint. Just the material of construction, laid course by course. These are the floors that have been recently added. Other houses present a second floor with complete external finishes, suggesting an older addition, a previous moment in the same incremental process. But it is the exposed brick that is most visible, most present, most legible as an act still in motion.

In a settlement where building has long happened incrementally, where people have constructed their homes over years and decades, adding a room when money allowed and materials were available, this is not a sign of incompletion. It is a sign of continuation. The *bairro* has long been built this way: not all at once, not according to a plan drawn elsewhere, but progressively, in response to need, with what was available, when it was possible. The upper floor is part of the same logic. The house is still growing because the need it must answer is still growing.

The growth happens upward because it cannot easily happen outward. The land on which Segundo Torrão stands is privately owned, in its larger portion by the Couto family, who at some point constructed a wall around part of the settlement specifically to prevent the constructions from increasing in footprint.[86] The perimeter of the *bairro* is, in this sense, fixed not by planning instruments but by a private boundary. Where the wall stands, the settlement stops. Where the settlement stops, the only direction left is up. This constraint is structural, inscribed in the land tenure conditions that have governed the *bairro* since its formation. The upper floor, in this reading, is not simply a personal decision but a response to a collective condition.

What this requires is knowledge. Building a structural floor above an existing dwelling, calculating the load, laying the courses of brick, connecting the new electrical circuit to the existing one, running new pipes through the walls: these are not tasks that can be done without skill. The people of Segundo Torrão have this skill. Among those who live in the *bairro* are *eletricistas, canalizadores, pintores, lenhadores, construtores* of various kinds, people whose professional knowledge is precisely the knowledge of how buildings are made and maintained.[87] The city of Lisbon is

→ [86] "Os miúdos do 2.º Torrão só vêem o lixo e os silos da Trafaria," *Público*, 3 September 2017.

[87] Informations based on fieldwork observations and conversations, February–April 2026.



built and cleaned and maintained by people who come, in significant part, from self-produced settlements and peripheral areas on both margins of the Tejo and around the city. Some of them, when they return home across the river, continue building. They build their own homes with those same hands.

It is also worth noting that the *bairro* has its own internal forms of regulation that govern how space is used and how it grows. Self-produced settlements are sometimes described as though anyone can build anything anywhere, as though the absence of formal planning implies the absence of any order. Segundo Torrão has developed, over decades, its own spatial logic, its own conventions about boundaries between houses, about shared paths, about what belongs to whom. These forms of self-regulation are not documented in any official instrument, and this research was not conducted over a long enough period to trace them with precision. But their existence is legible in the *bairro* itself, in the coherence of its layout, in the way houses relate to one another, in the negotiated geography of shared walls and adjacent plots. The *bairro* is structured by houses set in parallel lines to the river, forming a linear matrix that quietly orders the settlement.

The process of building upward has a context. The demolitions of 2022 removed dozens of houses from the *bairro* and displaced the families who lived in them. Some of those families returned, living now in other people's homes, in houses that must absorb more people than they were built for. The pressure on existing space increased. Beyond the addition of floors, another form of spatial adaptation has been documented: some houses left vacant by owners who emigrated or are absent for part of the year have been passed on to or occupied by new residents, absorbing additional households into the existing built fabric of the *bairro*.[88]

Whether the upper floors now visible across the *bairro* are a direct response to this pressure is not something this text can confirm. The construction of additional floors may have begun before 2022, and may reflect longer-term processes of family growth and the need for additional space. The exposed brick does not explain itself.

What can be said is this: in a settlement that has been told, repeatedly and in various forms, that it should not exist, people are building upward. They are investing time and money and skill in structures that have no legal status, on land they do not own, in a place that has already seen machines arrive and houses fall. The upper floor, unplastered and open to the sky, is a statement about the intention to remain.

→ [88] "Bairros sociais. Reportagem no Segundo Torrão da Trafaria, onde a pandemia fez duplicar a população," *Observador*, 24 June 2020, accessed 22 July 2026, https://observador.pt/especiais/*bairros*-sociais-reportagem-no-segundo-torrao-da-trafaria-onde-a-pandemia-fez-duplicar-a-populacao/.

/12/
As hortas - the quiet sustainability:

There are vegetable gardens in Segundo Torrão. They do not have any sign. They exist in the peripheral zones of the *bairro*, outside the built perimeter of the houses. On the south-western edge of the settlement, a larger area has been subdivided into smaller individual plots, each cultivated separately. A second, smaller area of cultivation, has been observed to the east of the *bairro*, in front of the Escola Básica da Trafaria. The plots are tended and active. During fieldwork, I never saw anyone working in them. And yet the soil was turned, the plants were growing, the gardens were alive.

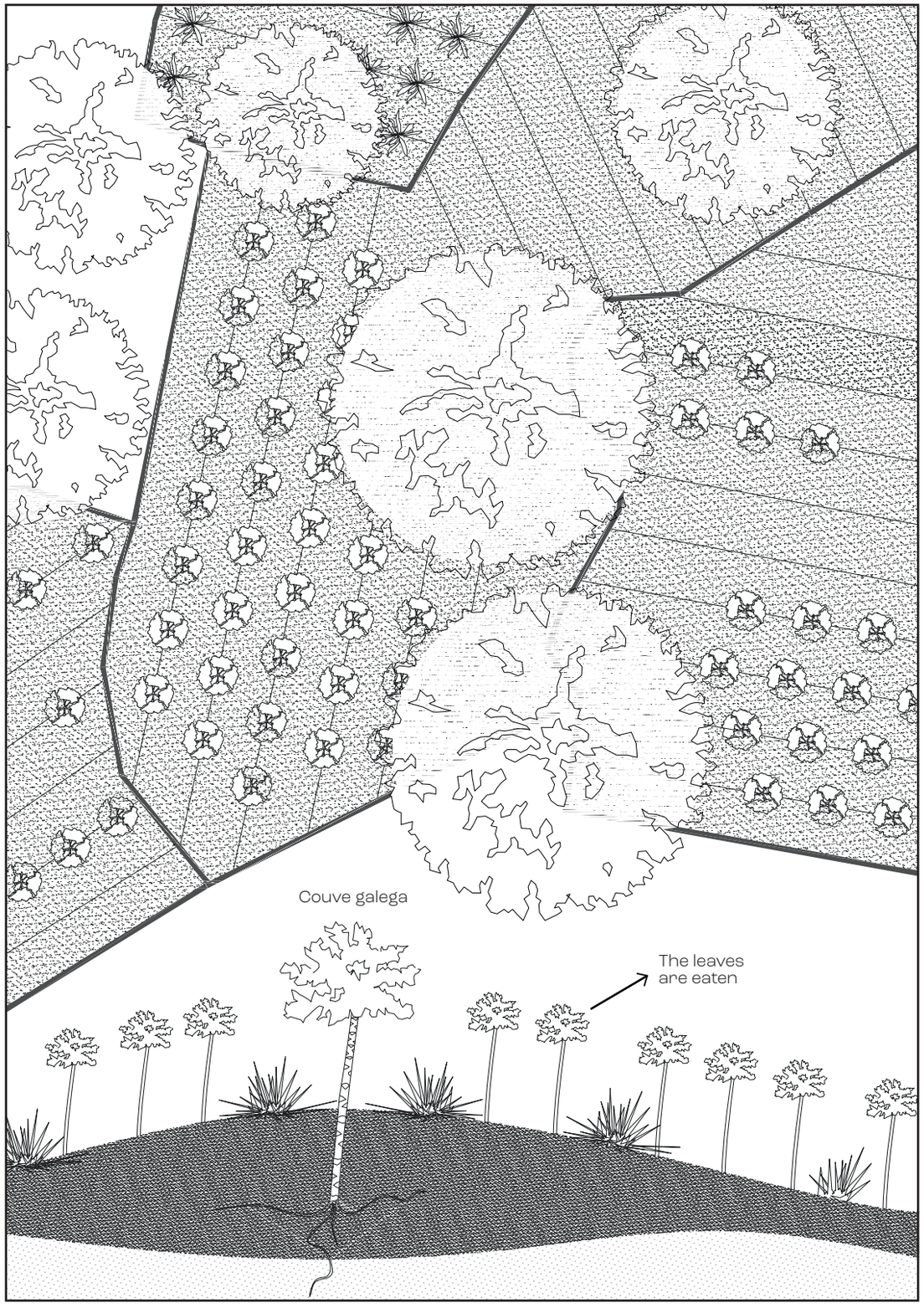
This kind of practice has a name in academic literature. Smith and Jehlička describe it as *quiet sustainability*: the informal, unannounced practices of food self-production, exchange, and care that exist in communities without being labelled as sustainable, without political manifesto, without public visibility.[89] These are not alternative food projects. They are not urban farming initiatives. They are practices that simply exist, transmitted through habit and necessity, invisible to the radar of urban policy. In Segundo Torrão, the vegetable gardens are quiet in exactly this sense.

The connection to the food landscape of the settlement is direct. As discussed elsewhere in this atlas, the entire territory of Trafaria, including Segundo Torrão, is without a supermarket. The nearest large-format food retail is in Costa da Caparica, several kilometres away. The cafès of the *bairro* partially fill this gap, but at prices that reflect the costs of a supply chain built for small volumes. In this context, the cultivation of vegetables within the *bairro* is not incidental. It is a partial, informal, unquantified response to a structural condition of food insecurity.[90]

The question of where the gardens are located, and why, is one this research cannot fully answer. The peripheral areas where the *hortas* are situated are not built upon. Why they remain open, while other areas of the *bairro* have been progressively occupied by construction, is not clear from observation alone. As noted in the preceding plate, the *bairro* has developed its own internal forms of spatial regulation over decades, its own conventions about what is built and what is left open, about shared spaces and individual plots. The vegetable gardens may occupy ground that was always understood, within the community's own spatial logic, as cultivation land rather than building land. They may reflect agreements between neighbours, or longstanding uses that

→ [89] Joe Smith and Petr Jehlička, "Quiet Sustainability: Fertile Lessons from Europe's Productive Gardeners," *Journal of Rural Studies* 32 (2013): 148–57.

[90] Alberto Zezza and Luca Tasciotti, "Urban Agriculture, Poverty, and Food Security: Empirical Evidence from a Sample of Developing Countries," Food Policy 35, no. 4 (2010): 265–73.



predate the current built fabric of the settlement. This research was not conducted over a long enough period to trace these logics with precision. What can be said is that the open spaces of self-produced settlements, including these vegetable gardens, are not simply residual spaces. These open spaces seem to be publicly accessible but communal in terms of use and attachment, they correspond neither to private property nor to formal public ownership, but are spaces that the community has appropriated and subdivided according to its own logics.

Beyond the *hortas*, there is another form of cultivation in Segundo Torrão that operates at a smaller and more intimate scale. In front of a small number of houses, in the narrow strips of ground between the facade and the street, single plants of what appears to be *couve galega*, or a similar variety of Portuguese cabbage, grow in spaces that might otherwise be read as purely decorative. But the *couve galega* is not an ornamental plant; it is a food plant. A single plant in front of a house is a small productive garden. It is also, perhaps, a form of presence indicating that the house is inhabited, the threshold is cared for and that something grows there.

These practices, the communal *hortas* at the edge of the settlement and the single plant in the strip of ground before the door, belong to the same register of *quiet sustainability*. They are not projects. They are not resistance. They are the ordinary acts of people who grow food where they can, with what they have, in the place where they live.

/13/
Pelo bosque - free will paths:

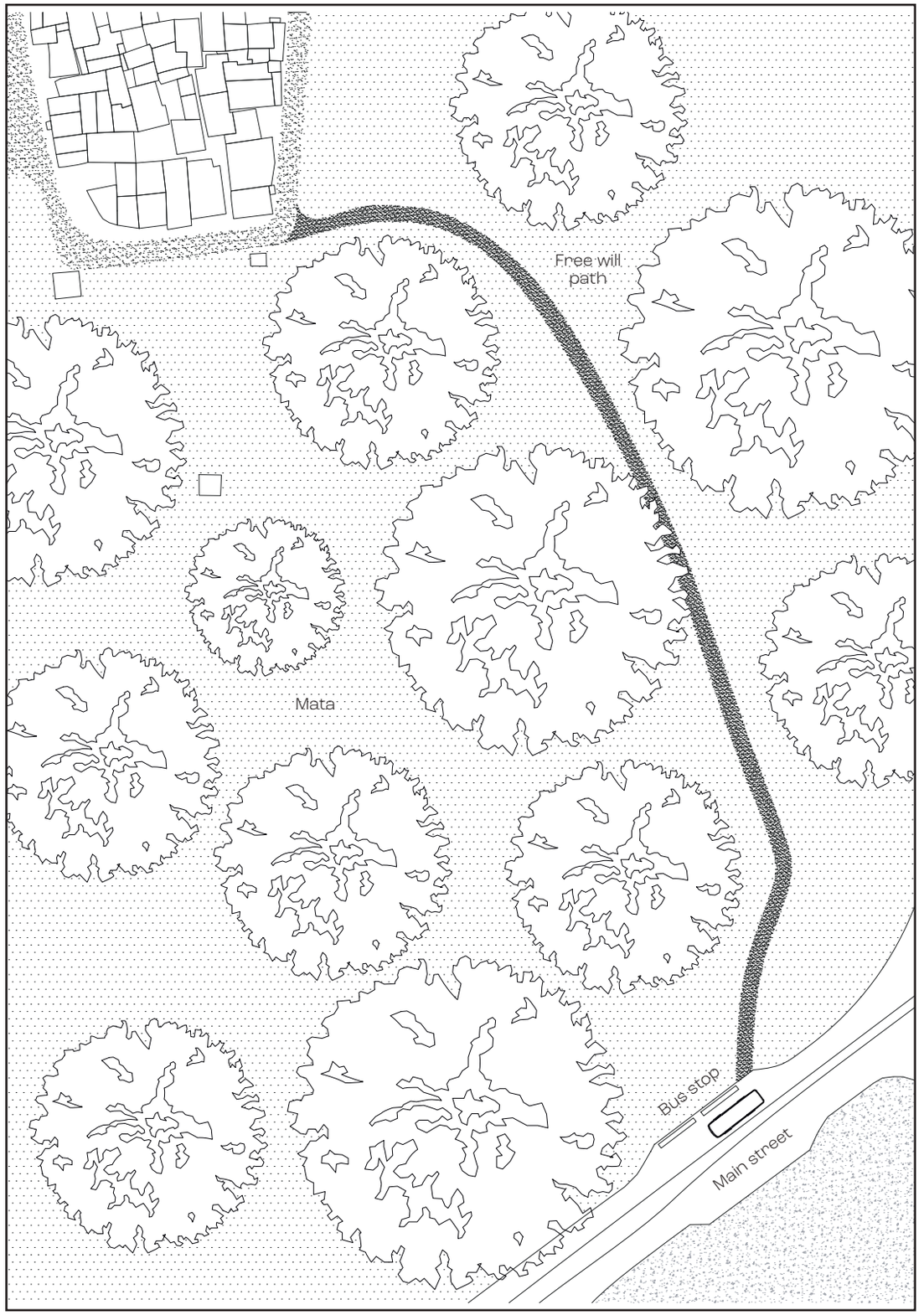
There are two “formal” roads that bound Segundo Torrão on its southern and eastern sides. The Avenida 25 de Abril runs along the southern edge of the settlement, separated from it by the forest of maritime and domestic pines described in the preceding plate; the Avenida Almirante Gago Coutinho runs along the eastern margin of the *bairro*. Several bus lines stop along the Avenida 25 de Abril: the 3021, 3030, 3039, and 3708, serving Caparica, Cova do Vapor, Trafaria, Raposeira, and the Nova School of Science and Technology, among other destinations. The stop is located next to the forest. For someone who does not know that Segundo Torrão exists, there is nothing at this stop to suggest that a community of some thousands people lives a few hundred metres to the north.

For someone who does know, and who lives there, the stop presents a problem. The *bairro* extends northward from the formal road, and many of its houses are far from the bus stop. To follow the road on foot would mean walking a bit backwards, then turning left on the Avenida Almirante Gago Coutinho and then turning into the settlement through one of its eastern paths, a significant detour that adds time and distance to a journey already long. So a different path exists.

From the bus stop, a path enters the forest. It is clearly visible on the ground: the soil compressed by repeated footfall and the pine needles displaced to either side. It runs for approximately two hundred metres through the forest, arriving at a clearing. From there it divides. One branch continues westward for approximately eighty metres, reaching a car park at the edge of the settlement, close to the *casa-refúgio* of the Ghetto Fam and, across the drainage channel, to the chapel. The other branch leads straight for another seventy metres in another direction. The whole path is also a matter of choice: the choice to move through the forest rather than around it, to arrive where one needs to arrive by the most direct route available, regardless of whether that route was designed or paved or intended for this purpose.

This kind of path has a name. It is called a *desire path*. Robert Macfarlane described them as “paths and tracks made over time by the wishes and feet of walkers, especially those paths that run contrary to design or planning. Free-will ways”.[91] They form when the built environment does not align with pedestrian needs: when the official route is longer, slower, less direct, or sim-

→ [91] Robert Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin Books, 2012).



ply wrong for the people who must use it. Desire paths are the informal pathways created from the erosional effect of repeated foot traffic, and can occur in spaces where there are no formal pathways for pedestrians, as well as within landscapes that have been intentionally designed. They are, in this sense, *archives of habit and collective decision*: first one person walks through the forest, then another follows the same line, then another, until the ground itself records the preference.

Rebecca Solnit argues that walking is never only a means of transport.[92] It is a mode of engagement with the world, a form of thinking made physical, a practice that connects the body to its surroundings in ways that faster movement does not allow. In this sense, *desire paths are not only shortcuts*. They are the visible record of how people actually inhabit a space, as opposed to how they are supposed to inhabit it. The tension between these two things, between the planned path and the walked path, is a tension between design and life.

For some theorists, this tension is explicitly political. As Hall argues, the social construction of official space has invariably been a figuration of the grid, and desire lines violate the order of the grid: they are invariably forms of resistance.[93] The academic journal literature on desire paths notes that they "record collective disobedience": unlike the paths made by animals, desire paths made by humans carry an attitude that says, implicitly, I will not use this space as intended.[94] They are minor acts of civil disobedience written into the ground.

But the path through the forest at Segundo Torrão is not exactly a path of resistance against an oppressive spatial order. It does not cut through a manicured park or a campus or a carefully designed public space. It cuts through a forest, between a bus stop and a home. This is not a path made in defiance of comfort or in protest against surveillance. It is a path made in defiance of inconvenience, by people who need to get home efficiently after a long day of work, or who need to reach the bus before it leaves in the early morning. *It is practical before it is political.* And yet, as Macfarlane suggests, all desire paths carry within them something of the same impulse: the refusal to accept that the only legitimate way to move through space is the way that has been designed for you.

The path connects the "formal" city, its buses, its roads, its timetables, to Segundo Torrão, a place the formal city has never fully acknowledged. It crosses the forest that hides the *bairro* from the road. It arrives at the chapel and at the houses of people who have lived here for decades. It is a few hundred metres long. It is also, in a very precise sense, the stitch between two worlds that official maps and planning documents have never managed to stitch together.

→ [92] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

[93] Noëleen Murray, Nick Shepherd, and Martin Hall, *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post-Apartheid City* (London: Routledge, 2007), 289.

[94] "Desire Paths: The Unofficial Footpaths That Frustrate, Captivate Campus Planners," University of Wisconsin–Madison News, 24 April 2019, accessed 22 July 2026, https://news.wisc.edu/desire-paths-the-unofficial-footpaths-that-frustrate-captivate-campus-planners. At the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the team observed how pedestrians naturally cut across lawns and open areas, creating informal "desire paths" wherever the built route did not match the shortest or most convenient line of movement. Rather than treating these paths as inconvenient, they used them as evidence of actual pedestrian behavior and as a prompt to rethink campus circulation and pathway design.

→ [95] Frame Colectivo is a Lisbon-based architecture, research, and art studio founded in 2013 by Agapi Dimitriadou and Gabriela Salhe. Working through interdisciplinary methods that combine architecture, research, sociology, and artistic practice, the collective focuses on social and ecological issues from decolonial and counter-colonial perspectives. Architecture is understood as a cultural, political, and relational practice developed in close collaboration with local communities and artists. In Segundo Torrão, Frame Colectivo has been active since 2017, carrying out participatory and community-based interventions that seek to reactivate shared spaces in the *bairro*. The collective developed three interventions there as part of a broader effort to support communal use, local care, and spatial revitalisation through collaborative construction. Accessed 22 July 2026, https://framecolectivo.com/EN/projectos/2a-torrao-espacos-em-pesquisa/.

THE NAMES OF THE STREETS

The streets of Segundo Torrão have names. Not all of them, and not always official ones, but the main arteries of the settlement carry names that say something about the community that gave them. They are not the names of politicians or historical figures. They are the names of things: of what is next to the street, of what the street leads to, of what happens there.

The *Rua da NATO* runs along the perimeter of the NATO fuel depot, the Depósito POL NATO de Lisboa, that occupies the western waterfront of the settlement. The name is a simple description of adjacency: the street of the NATO. It is also, in a very precise sense, a naming of the boundary. The street does not lead to the depot. It runs alongside it, marking the edge where the settlement meets the restricted zone.

The *Rua da Associação* runs from the river to the building of the residents' association, the *associação de moradores* that for decades anchored community life in the *bairro*. Among residents, it is also called the *Rua Principal*, the main street, and its widening near the association building is known as the *Largo da Associação*, a place where people stop, where paths converge, where things happen. As noted elsewhere in this atlas, the association lost much of its cohesion in the aftermath of the 2022 demolitions and has not been formally reconstituted since. Whether the quiet shift from *Rua da Associação* to *Rua Principal* in everyday speech reflects this loss is not something that can be confirmed. It is, however, something worth noting.

The *Rua dos Pinheiros*, the street of the pines, runs along the eastern edge of the *bairro*, marking the boundary between the settlement and the forest. It begins near the casa that Mário is building as the base of the Ghetto Fam and as a gathering point for the wider community, and runs eastward along the outer margin of the *bairro* until it connects to the *Rua da Escola Preparatória*, which in turn opens onto the Avenida Almirante Gago Coutinho. The name is descriptive in the most direct sense: the pines are there, at the edge of the road, and the road is named after them. It is a form of naming that stays close to the ground, that describes what the eye sees rather than what an authority decided. The street of the pines runs alongside the pines.

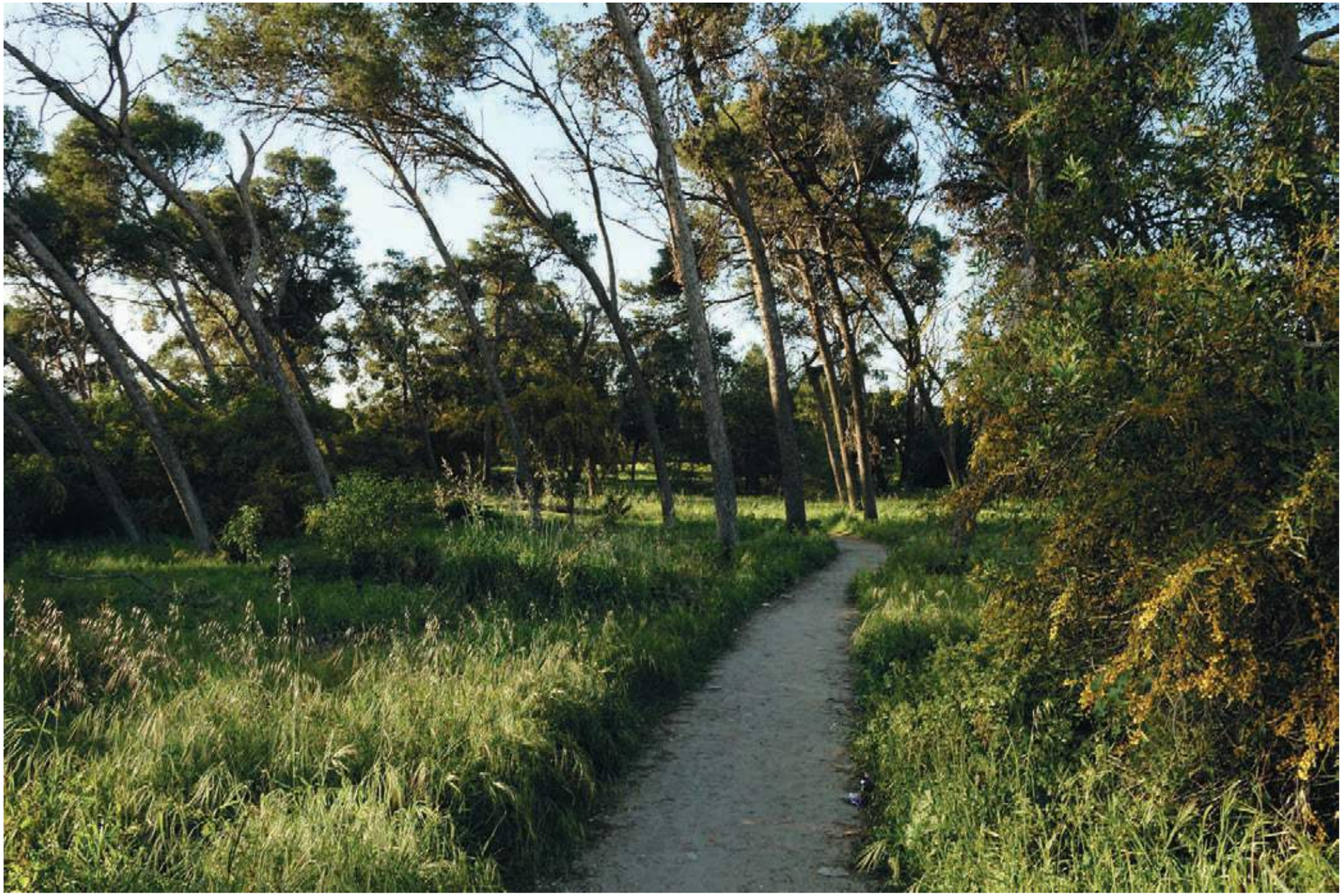
The *Rua do Convívio*, the street of conviviality, runs parallel to the river and divides the eastern part of the *bairro*. At a

certain point along its length, the street opens into a sandy clearing where a small collection of playground equipment has been installed: a slide; a series of partially buried tyres in the sand, and their exposed portions that offer a surface to bounce between, moving from one tyre to the next; and a few wooden tables, the result of a participatory construction project carried out by the collective Frame, which also realised two further interventions in the *bairro*.[95] This clearing is one of two dedicated spaces for children's play in the settlement; behind the Associação de Moradores building, where a swing and parallel bars are located. The name of the street, conviviality, seems to anticipate or describe this use.

The *Rua do Alerta*, the street of alert, runs parallel to the *Rua do Convívio*. Its name is the one that resists explanation. Alert to what, and from when, and decided by whom: these are questions this research cannot answer. It is possible that the name carries a memory of something specific, an event, a warning, a moment in the history of the settlement that those who named it would recognise immediately. It is equally possible that it has become, over time, a name whose origin has been forgotten by most of those who use it. The street of alert remains, for now, opaque.

Figure 5.6

Informal footpath through the wood, created by residents as a shortcut to the nearest bus stop. The path illustrates how everyday mobility infrastructure is collectively produced in response to the bairro's limited formal connections.



What these names share is a logic of proximity and use. They describe what is next to the street, what the street leads to, what the street is for. They do not commemorate. They orient. In a settlement that has never appeared on official maps with any consistency, that has been excluded from planning frameworks and administrative records for most of its existence, the names that the community gives to its own streets are *a form of cartography*: an act of naming that makes the space legible, that says this place has parts, and the parts have names, and the names mean something to the people who live here.

SEBASTIÃO

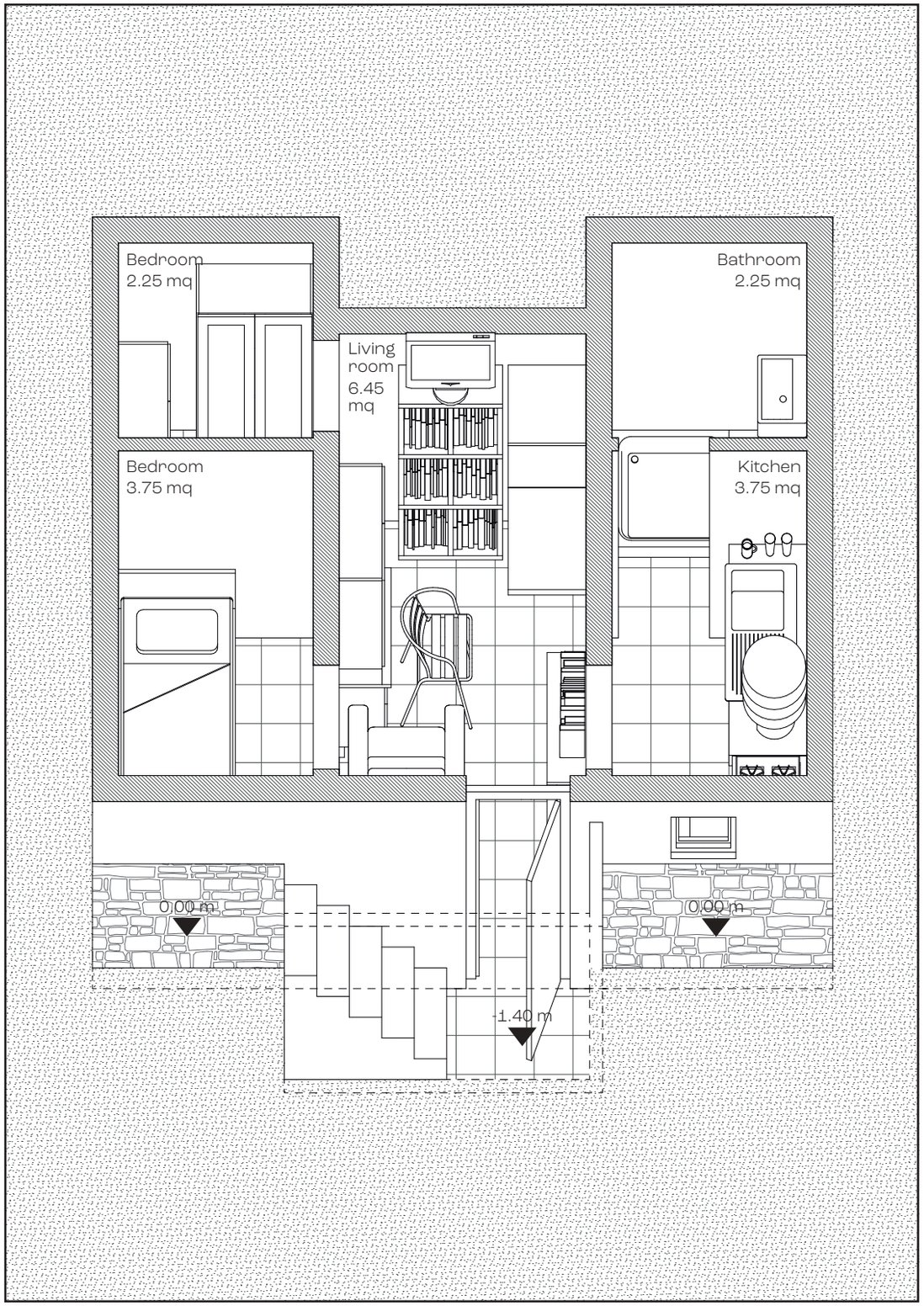
/14/
A casa do Sebastião:

There is a moment, on one of the last afternoons I spend with Sebastião, when he opens the door of the room he lives in now. The air inside is still, carrying the scent of dampness. He gestures inside and says, "*Pode mirar, filha, está desarrumado, mas mira*." You can look, daughter, it's a mess, but look. He calls me *filha* throughout our conversations. "*Se quiser ir à casa de banho, não tenho vergonha*." If you need the bathroom, I'm not ashamed. It is a small word, yet it collapses the distance between us; he gives it easily, the way he gives almost everything easily, once he has looked at you and decided you are someone he can trust.

What to do with what someone gives you like that has been one of the hardest questions of this research. The ethical weight of autoethnographic work often settles in the silence after the recorder is turned off: Sebastião did not have to let me in, nor did he owe me the vulnerability of his past. When I finally ask him directly, on record, my voice betraying a slight hesitation over whether I can use his story for my thesis: "*Eu queria perguntar se posso usar a tua história para a minha tese da arquitetura*", his answer comes immediately, cutting through my academic anxiety: "*Não faz mal, está tudo bem*." No problem, it's all fine.

He goes further than mere consent, though. He explains, plainly, into the recorder, why he keeps talking even when I can see the toll it takes on him to remember. He shifts his weight, looks at me, and says: "*Vocês estão a fazer um trabalho muito importante para o mundo... E eu, quando eu puder ajudar, eu ajudo*." You are doing work that matters to the world, and when I can help, I help. I swallow a self-deprecating smile, acutely aware that my architecture thesis is far more likely to gather dust in a university archive than to actually save the world. But his generosity easily overrides the modest reality of my project. And later, more directly still, leaving no room for my doubts: "*Se não deixarmos a história, ninguém saberá de nada*." If we don't leave the story behind, nobody will know anything. These pages cannot possibly return what he gave me, nor will they fix global housing policies. What they can do, perhaps, is serve as a vessel to let one more person know it.

This tavola follows Sebastião through his houses, the ones he was



born into, the ones he built for other people, the one that was demolished, and the one where he lives now.

CASAS QUE FICARAM PARA TRÁS - THE HOUSES LEFT BEHIND

He was born in 1964, in the municipality of Kimbele, in the north of Angola: "*Eu nasci no município de Kimbele, no Norte de Angola*", he was the son of a *soba*, a traditional chief, of the neighbourhood of Mutuangulo. There were thirty-six of them, his father's children: "*Nós éramos 36 filhos do meu pai*." He left in 1990, alone, on the last day of October: "*1990, dia 30 de Outubro... Veio sozinho, sozinho, sem ninguém, sem ninguém.*" He came to Portugal alone, alone, with no one, no one.

The first house Portugal gave him was not a house. Sebastião did not come from poverty; he was the son of a *soba*. His father owned a coffee farm, *"eram ricos, o meu pai"*, and he grew up in an environment where care and healing came from the land itself, an indigenous childhood defined by botany rather than modern medicine. *"Crescia através da botânica, as plantas... não sabia o que era injeção."* He had served in the army in Angola. He speaks of the commandos, of military communications, and of being sent across different parts of the country. By 1982, he says, he was in the commandos: *"Em 82 estava nos comandos"*. When he finally made the decision to migrate to the metrópole on October 30, 1990, holding onto a letter sent by a Portuguese priest containing his aunt's address in the Algarve, he could not have anticipated what awaited him.

Arriving with three other young men in Almancil, in the middle of winter, with every pension full, they eventually stumbled upon an unfinished building site and a small shed on it. I try to imagine the biting, unfamiliar cold of that first European night as he recounts it: "*Encontramos uma casota ali numa obra... entramos naquela casota por causa do frio... aquilo estava cheio de saco de cimento.*" They found a little shed on a building site, went in because of the cold, and it was full of bags of cement.

What happened next strips away any romanticized narrative of the immigrant arrival. In the dark, seeking warmth and shelter, they lay down on the only things available to them. But the bags split under their weight in the night. They woke up the next morning covered entirely in pale, choking dust. The cement of Portugal's booming construction industry, the very material Sebastião would spend the rest of his life mixing, pouring, and breaking his body over, had claimed him on his very first night.

I listen as he recites a long inventory of rented rooms and borrowed addresses, a transient geography mapped by the exhaustive work his hands did, the tunnels he drove under Lisbon, the motorway between Sacavém and Vila Franca, the cranes he operated across the Tagus valley: Loures, Odivelas, Serra da Luz, Beja. He tells me he worked on the Lisbon metro in 1995, on the section from Marquês de Pombal to Largo do Rato, operating the tunnelling machine and drilling underground; elsewhere he remembers working at Baixa-Chiado, drilling a forty-five-metre tunnel below the city. His are the kind of hands that build a city from below and out of sight: hands that open its tunnels, extend its roads, raise its machinery, and make its daily life possible, even as the city itself forgets the bodies that built it.

In Odivelas, for a while, there was something closer to a home: "Eu tinha uma casa, uma casa em condições igual em Odivelas, vivia com a mulher." A proper house, he says, where he lived with his wife. In Barreiro, after a second accident at work, he rented an apartment: "*Tinha 2 quartos... uma sala, uma cozinha toda equipada. Era uma boa casa.*" Two bedrooms, a living room, a fully equipped kitchen. It was a good house, he tells me.

A CASA JUNTO AO RIO - THE HOUSE BY THE RIVER

He came to Segundo Torrão because his daughter was already living there. "*A minha filha foi-me buscar, que a minha filha morava aqui no Segundo Torrão.*" His own house, once he had one, was close to the water: "*Eu vivia lá à frente, quem vai para a Dio. Mesmo perto da praia.*" Right there, near where you go to Dio's, Dona Dio, a neighbour's cafè whose own house would later be demolished too. A single *beco*, an alley, connected the two: "*Tem um beco que vai até a Dio.*"

As an architecture student, I am trained to look for blueprints, foundations, and physical traces. But here, four years after the demolition, walking the cleared ground with a stick, Sebastião draws the plan of what is no longer there directly into the dirt: "*Eu morava aqui, aqui. Aqui era a casa que onde eu morava.*" I lived here, here. This was the house where I lived. He takes a few steps forward, pointing to the empty air: "*A entrada é aqui, na casa da minha filha.*" The entrance is here, at my daughter's house. In this moment, I realize that his moving body and his memory are the only surviving architectural plan of the settlement that once stood there.

O DIA DA DEMOLIÇÃO - THE DAY OF THE DEMOLITION

When the municipality first came to move him, he refused. *"Eu só saio daqui morto."* I'll only leave here dead. I sit with the quiet violence of the image he paints next: men removing his belongings from inside his home while he physically resisted. *"Eles estavam a tirar minhas coisas dentro da casa, tirando as coisas."* His daughter's house, where he had also been seeking refuge, was erased in the same 2022 clearance: "*Demoliram tambem a casa da minha filha*." They demolished my daughter's house too.

AS NOITES SEM CASA - THE HOMELESS NIGHTS

For a period after the demolition, he had nowhere to go. He speaks of sleeping in the church that stands at the edge of the *bairro*. "*Praticamente eu cheguei de dormir naquela igreja*", curling up on its small chairs before the building even had a gate. He tells me of a night spent on a bench outside the *junta de freguesia*, the parish council, soaked through to the bone: "*Dormi num banco... Tinha apanhado chuva, molhado, a andar até Trafaria*." It is deeply unsettling to reconcile the warmth of the man sitting in front of me with the stark coldness of a city that left him in the rain. It was a stranger, in the end, a man he had only just met, who told him: "*Ele não pode estar a dormir assim, a passar essa dificuldade... pode vir comigo, dorme lá na minha casa*." He can't sleep like this, going through this. He can come with me, he can sleep at my place.

UMA ARRECADAÇÃO, NÃO UMA CASA - A SHED, NOT A HOUSE

He eventually returned to Segundo Torrão, to the slightly lit room where we are sitting now: a converted fisherman's shed on the river, built for something other than a human being. *"Essa era a casa da pesca."* This was the fishing house. "*Aqui é uma cave, aqui é só sítio mesmo para guardar coisas, não é para uma pessoa viver*." This is a cave, a cellar, a place just to keep things, not for a person to live. Built to hold nets and equipment for the hours between one catch and the next, it was never meant for rest: "*Estar aqui por pouco tempo... comer e ir à pesca, guardar as coisas, agora, viver."* Meant for a short while, eat, go fishing, store the gear, and now, to live.

I can feel the chill seeping through my own clothes as he speaks. The dampness in this room is structural, not incidental. "*Essa parte aí está cheia de lama. A lama está encostada aqui na parede... a humidade aqui é demais*." That part there is full of mud, pressed right up against the wall, too much humidity. He scrapes it and repaints, but the mud always bleeds back through. At night, even under layers, he shakes: "*A noite começo a tremer, mesmo com cobertor e lençóis que eu tenho*." The heater, a gift, no longer works: "*Já não trabalha... está muito frio, muito frio, aqui é uma arrecadação, é difícil*." He is unambiguous about the toll this takes on a body already worn down by two work accidents from height: "*Porque é muito frio, porque quem mata um homem é o frio*." Because it is very cold, because what kills a man is the cold. And then, quietly, he delivers the clearest verdict of all: "*Eu não gostaria de viver aqui nem sequer um dia*." I would not want to live here, not even for a day.

O MUNDO QUE ELE QUERIA - THE WORLD HE WANTED

He says, almost in passing, what he would have done instead, if the war and everything after it had gone differently: *"Eu gostaria de estudar, informar e ajudar o mundo todo, dar um abraço ao mundo*." I would have liked to study, to inform, to help the whole world, to give the world a hug. It is an unfinished sentence, and he lets it stay beautifully unfinished.

Later that same afternoon, in the room that is not a house, he puts on a song he says he loves, "Ghetto," by the Dutch-Moroccan artist Ali B. For the length of the track, he is somewhere else entirely. I watch him move to the rhythm, momentarily unbound by the damp walls pressing in on us, asking to play the song again. *"Eu quero repetir mil vezes."* I want to repeat it a thousand times. The state still has not given him the house it owed him. Yet, in the meantime, in a cold cellar built to hold nets, he somehow finds four minutes to be exactly himself.

> [...] These streets remind me of quicksand (quicksand)
> When your on it, you'll keep goin' down (goin' down)
> And there's no one to hold on to
> And there's no one to pull you out
> You keep on fallin' (fallin')
> And no one can here you callin'
> So you end up self destructing
> On the corner with the tuli on the waistline
> Just got outta the bing doin' state time
> Teeth marks on my back from the K9
> Dark Memories of when there was no sunshine
> Cause they said that I wouldn't make it
> (I remember like yesterday)
> Holdin on to what God gave me [...]

MÁRIO

/15/
O refúgio para a comunidade:

"Eu sou Mário Carvalho, mais conhecido por Mário King. Estou cá nesse bairro, exatamente em Portugal, desde 2009. E desde então, pá … eu cheguei cá com 12 anos, estou com 31 anos de idade. A minha adolescência foi aqui, cresci aqui basicamente."

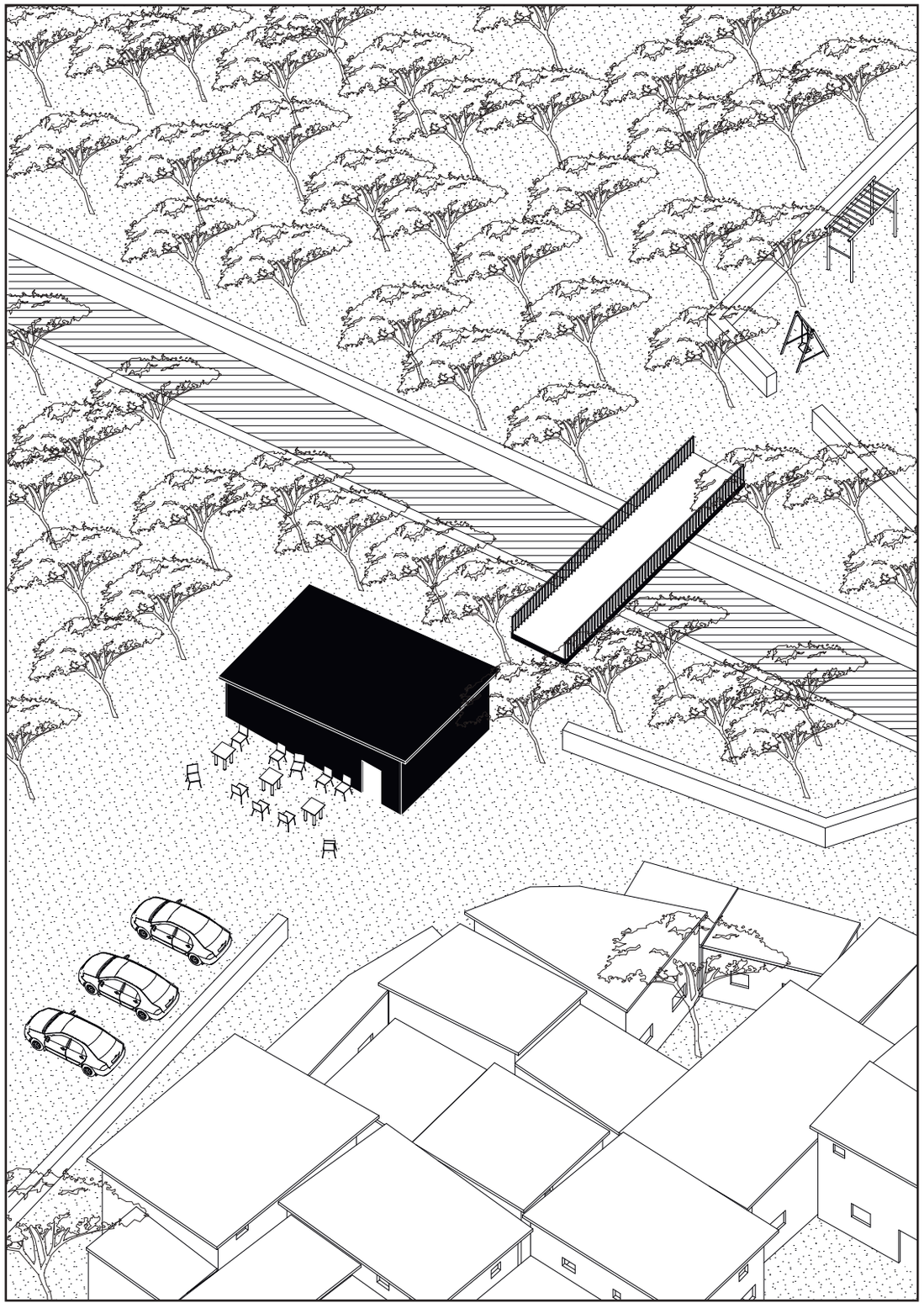
There is a practical clarity in the way Mário introduces himself: he is not speaking about Segundo Torrão from outside it, but from a life grown inside it. Moreover, he does not speak on account of the whole *bairro* but simply on his behalf. He arrived as a child, became an adult here, and learned to measure the neighbourhood not only by what it contains, but also by what it has long been denied. What he is building now is not simply a shack, a café, or a room. It is a refuge in the broadest sense: a place to gather, to feed people, to remember, to organize, to make music, and to insist that this *bairro* can still produce its own forms of care.

O REFÚGIO - THE REFUGE

When he explains how the project began, he begins with a need that is almost modest in its wording: *"o projeto era só fazer algum sítio onde possamos estar tranquilos."* Just some place where people could be at ease. But that need widened very quickly, because, in his telling, the lack was never only his own. It was the lack of space for children, for older people, for activities, for food, for music, for ordinary forms of staying together that other places take for granted.

One of the examples he returns to is Christmas. He remembers growing up without ever seeing anyone in the neighbourhood organize that kind of celebration for the children, and he says that absence stayed with him. He watched children go outside the *bairro*, to Trafaria or elsewhere, see Christmas lights there, and return with that brightness extinguished. "*Chegam aqui no bairro, as luzes nos olhos apagam,"* he says. The sentence is simple, but it contains an entire diagnosis of what deprivation looks like when measured through a child's face.

So the refuge began in fragments: first a temporary structure



elsewhere, then a tent for a birthday, then a series of visualizations about what might come next, and finally the decision to build here piece by piece, on the other side of the water channel from the Residents' Association and the Chapel. He describes the process materially: beam by beam, roof first, ground levelled, sand removed, cement bought, pipes and electricity installed, always with money that had first to be earned elsewhere. "*Esse espaço foi construído por mim*," he says, before adding the names of two friends that helped him, João and Nuno. The refuge is therefore not an abstract social project but accumulated physical effort: fatigue converted into shelter.

He thinks of the space now as *"um espaço de todos, como museu cultural, como o refúgio, como um café*." The list matters because each word adds another layer of use: *memory, rest, gathering, exchange, survival*. It is also a place that must partially sustain itself. He sells small things here because materials, food, drink, electricity, and events all cost money, and because community work, in the absence of structural support, has to invent its own economy.

MÚSICA COMO DENÚNCIA - MUSIC AS PROTEST

If the refuge is one way of making the neighbourhood visible, music is another. Mário says of his collective, GTO FAM: *"somos a voz daqueles que não conseguem tirar voz para fora."* Later he puts it even more directly: "*da parte da música, nós é que sempre levamos o bairro ao ouvido das pessoas."* Music, here, is not ornament to political life. It is one of the main technologies through which the *bairro* enters public hearing at all.

That understanding is consistent with how Mário King and Ghetto Fam have also been described publicly: as artists who turn lived experience in Segundo Torrão into performance and use rap to show and transform the community. In his own words, though, the matter is less polished and more urgent. He speaks as someone for whom music and neighbourhood work were never separate tracks, but overlapping forms of responsibility. Food and music, children and sound, activities and denunciation all belong to the same practice of keeping collective life from collapsing into silence.

There is also an important continuity in the way he narrates this trajectory. Before GTO FAM, there was Kuduro, and before the current name there was another collective energy among the young people who grew up together here. He describes that earlier formation as something natural rather than strategic, a force

that changed names but never really died. In that sense, the music is another kind of refuge: a form that carries the neighbourhood forward even when other structures fall apart.

MUSEU COMUNITÁRIO - THE COMMUNITY MUSEUM

The refuge is not only for the present. Mário also imagines it as a place where the neighbourhood can keep and narrate its own past. When he speaks about the idea of a museum, he does not mean an institutional museum separated from everyday life. He means a community museum built so that what happened here cannot be hidden.

He explains that after the demolitions, there were materials and images that circulated elsewhere, but were never truly seen by the people who most needed to confront them. That is why he wants photographs and traces of that history here, in the refuge, where anyone entering will have to encounter them. *"Poderão mostrar coisas que os outros não quiseram ver,"* he says. And then, even more forcefully: *"vão ter que ver, vão ter que olhar porque ninguém é cego."* They'll have to see, they'll have to look, because no one is blind. The museum he imagines is therefore not contemplative. It is accusatory, pedagogical, and communal all at once.

What matters to him is that the *bairro* should have a place where its own history can be seen and heard from within. *"Temos pessoas, mas não temos um sítio onde podemos entrar e com os olhos ver história do bairro, ouvir as histórias do bairro,"* he says. He marks a generational shift with a sentence I keep returning to: "antigamente nos contavam a história do *bairro*. Hoje nós contamos a história do *bairro*." In the past, they used to tell us the story of the neighborhood. Today, we tell the story of the neighborhood.
The refuge, then, is not just a built structure. It is an answer to the political problem of who gets to narrate what happened here.

RESISTÊNCIAS DO *BAIRRO* - RESISTANCE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Again and again, Mário returns to a hard lesson: if the neighbourhood does not act for itself, very little arrives that is not filtered through someone else's agenda. He says it plainly: *"se nós não fizermos, não tem junta, não tem Câmara, não tem nada."* "If we don't do it, there's no parish council, there's no Câmara, there's nothing. The sentence comes from a long experience of seeing

projects come from outside, take information, funding, legitimacy, or images, and leave without producing the concrete transformations residents were led to expect.

He is especially sharp when speaking about associations and initiatives that approach the *bairro* without really knowing its pain. *"Nós não podemos depender de outras associações que vêm de fora, que não conhecem a nossa dor, não conhecem a nossa luta,"* he says. We cannot depend on other associations that come from outside, that do not know our pain, do not know our struggle. This is not a refusal of all collaboration. On the contrary, he repeatedly acknowledges help from outside and says many activities only happened because such help appeared. But he insists that support must become something tangible: work for local people, material improvement, children's spaces, football grounds, a park, a fair-price grocery, a room that actually remains in the neighbourhood.

That insistence is one of the clearest forms of resistance in his narrative. He wants a politics of the visible and the usable, not of vague goodwill. When projects enter the *bairro*, he wants labour to stay inside it too: "*garantir que as mão de obra sejam dentro do bairro.*" To make sure the labour stays within the neighbourhood. He wants resources to become structures children can play in and elders can use. *"Já devíamos ter um campo de futebol,"* we should already have a football pitch, he says, and later speaks of a park with the same certainty. These are not secondary wishes. They are his measure of whether solidarity has taken built form.

His critique is sharpened further by stigma. Segundo Torrão, he says, has been repeatedly painted from outside as a place of criminals and danger simply because it is a *bairro*. Against that image, he offers a counter-description: many young people here are trained, working, capable, and far more complex than the stereotype allows. He even says he doubts that one would find as many educated young people elsewhere as inside this "*quadrado.*" Resistance, then, also means refusing the names imposed on the neighbourhood and producing other representations through speech, music, images, and space itself.

"VIZINHO É FAMÍLIA" – THE NEIGHBOUR IS FAMILY

For all his criticism, Mário does not describe the *bairro* only through lack. He also describes a social fabric that many formal parts of the city have already lost. He says very clearly that places like this contain forms of culture and mutual reliance that do not exist in ordinary apartment blocks. *"Vizinho é família,"* he says, correcting even the weaker version of the phrase, because for him the neighbour is not a second family but family itself.

That is perhaps the deepest reason the refuge matters. It is being built inside a neighbourhood where care still circulates, through neighbours, children, elders, borrowed time, and trust. He speaks of leaving a daughter with a neighbour, of borrowing help directly, of people who know one another not only by proximity but by obligation. The refuge gives this culture a physical room. It does not invent community from nothing. It tries to protect an existing one from exhaustion, invisibility, and erasure.

When he speaks about his favourite place in the neighbourhood, he names the beach, the place where he once went to retreat into thoughts of Angola. That earlier refuge was open, exposed, and solitary. What he is building now is different. It is a refuge turned outward: less a place to withdraw from the *bairro* than a place from which the *bairro* can gather itself, remember itself, and speak back.

More than a final interview question, this one seems to run through everything Mário does: the refuge he is building, the music he makes, the way he speaks about children, neighbours, memory, and dignity. His artistic practice, his everyday life in the *bairro*, and even this space itself all return, in different ways, to the same underlying question: "O que é a casa para ti? E o que é que permite que uma pessoa e uma comunidade sejam? (What is home to you? And what does it allow a person and a community to be?)"

Mario: "Para mim, a casa é um porto seguro. A casa é o nosso confessionário, é aquele sítio que, depois de tu enfrentares todos os problemas que existem no mundo, tu podes chegar e despir-te daquilo que carregas da rua, e podes realmente encontrar-te e ouvir o teu eu. A casa não devia ser um simples sítio para descansar, como nos fizeram acreditar. A casa é o sítio onde a gente se encontra. A casa é o sítio que dedicamos às nossas crianças. A casa é um sítio sagrado. A casa é o nosso templo, esse é o mais correto. A casa é o nosso templo, porque é lá, na nossa casa, que nós realmente somos nós. Há coisas que fazemos na nossa casa que não fazemos em mais parte nenhuma. Há comportamentos nossos que só as nossas paredes conhecem, defeitos nossos que só em casa se veem, hábitos que só em casa existem. É o teu santuário, onde ninguém te julga."[96]

→ [96] Translation by the author: "For me, the house is a safe haven. The house is our confessional, it's that place where, after you face all the problems that exist in the world, you can come and undress yourself of what you carry from the street, and you can really find yourself and listen to your self. The house should not be just a place to rest, as we were led to believe. The house is where we meet. The house is the place we dedicate to our children. The house is a sacred place. The house is our temple, that's the most correct. The house is our temple, because it is there, in our house, that we really are us. There are things we do in our house that we don't do anywhere else. There are our behaviors that only our walls know, our defects that only appear at home, habits that only exist at home. It is your sanctuary, where no one judges you."

02 April 2026
Interview transcript with Mário
[audio intervista Mário.mp4]

pt
Rosa
Eu durante um tempinho, acho que em 2018, fui voluntária na associação do João Cão, a Canto do Curió, e colaborei em algumas pequenas ações do projeto dos Novos Decisores e, entretanto, inscrevi-me no doutoramento em arquitetura e eu estou a fazer a minha tese. Faço parte de um grupo da faculdade que se chama gestual e acompanhei o Bairro da Torre, em Camarate, um bairro já extinto, conheces o bairro?

Mário
Pois, não

Rosa
A minha tese é sobre as transformações que projetos que vêm de fora ... as transformações que estes projetos operam nas pessoas que participam. Então, tenho um caso de estudo e alguns casos em que eu tive a oportunidade de participar em projetos, como aqui no Segundo Torrão, no projeto do João, mas a entrevista é a Carlotta que vai fazer e eu, se puder, só vou me inserindo com umas questões que gostaria de perceber. A ideia é gravar, se concordar, para a gente se lembrar do que falamos, mas pelo menos na minha pesquisa, se o Mário quiser, é tudo anonimizado, ou seja, não é preciso aparecer o seu nome e podemos transcrever a entrevista e entregar ao Mário para o Mário ver se concorda com tudo o que está lá.

Mário
Não tem problema, porque também aquilo que eu vou falar não vai ser nada que vai ser obrigado, não.

Carlotta
Olá, muito, muito obrigada. Eu estou a fazer a minha tese de mestrado final, como te disse, em arquitetura sobre o tema do espaço no general ... então, queríamos perguntar se queres falar um pouco da tua história, há quanto tempo moras aqui, como ficaste aqui ...

Mário
Se calhar fica mais fácil você perguntar o que é que você quer saber, porque eu não sei a que fim é a entrevista, se calhar fica mais fácil você conduzir a entrevista para ter o resultado que você quer, não é? Se não, eu posso lhe entregar um resultado totalmente diferente daquilo que você quer.

Carlotta
OK, porque o resultado é o estúdio do espaço do Segundo Torrão
Só eu quero saber a história do espaço.

Qual são as forças que jogam no espaço, que é que pode entregar decisões, como as decisões são feitas no bairro, e o espaço público, como é organizado, quem usa o espaço, o espaço público.

Mário
Neste caso, estamos a falar deste espaço ou da Associação?

Carlotta
Podemos falar deste espaço ... sim, a tua história e a história deste espaço, como nasceu, porque fica aqui, se está muito gestão e como sou do projeto da gueto fam, se queres.

Mário
Sim, para perceberem melhor. Eu sou Mário Carvalho, mais conhecido por Mário King. Estou cá nesse bairro exatamente em Portugal desde 2009. E desde então, pá ... eu cheguei cá com 12 anos, estou com 31 anos de idade. A minha adolescência foi aqui, cresci aqui basicamente. E, pelo facto de ter crescido aqui, há muitas coisas que, quando eu era mais novo, havia aqui que hoje em dia não há, e também há muitas coisas que não havia, que até hoje não há e quando fui crescendo, fui sentindo a necessidade de ter que existir algumas dessas coisas. Vou-lhe dizer uma delas. Não me lembro algum dia de eu sendo mais novo, algum mais velho preparar aqui alguma festa de Natal para nós. Eu não me lembro de um acontecimento parecido e isso foi uma das coisas que sempre me errou a cabeça, porque eu sempre desde depois de crescer, sempre via as crianças, quando chegava dezembro, só falavam de luzes de Natal ou do Natal quando iam para a Costa, para Trafaria ou para um sítio qualquer fora do bairro, porque encontravam representação de Natal e aqui dentro não havia e isso incomodava-me muito, até mesmo por causa da minha filha, incomodava-me muito. Eu sempre fiz as minhas atividades ... além da gente fazer música, nós, pá, o nosso grupo antigo de kuduro foi o pioneiro cá dentro a fazer o estilo do kuduro que a gente fazia e hoje em dia viramos para o rap e continua, quando continua, continua a ser o mesmo, somos a voz daqueles que não conseguem tirar voz para fora, pá, e nós sempre é que movimentamos o bairro trazendo pessoas de fora, fazendo atividades ... passou por também a vida nos levou todos por caminhos diferentes, aconteceram coisas nas nossas vidas que já não nos permitiam fazer o que a gente gostava e amava. Tivemos que optar por outros caminhos e hoje em dia me reencontrei novamente e sinto necessidade de fazer tudo isso novamente. Ver as crianças ... vão à Trafaria, voltam todas contentes, chegam aqui no bairro, as luzes nos olhos apagam. Isso faz muita confusão ... então, eu comecei a levantar ... nem comecei por isso, o projeto nem era esse. O projeto era só fazer algum sítio onde possamos estar tranquilos, porque eu sempre ... olha, eu sou cozinheiro de profissão, eu sou cozinheiro e eu sempre gostei de fazer as minhas atividades e algo que envolvesse comida e música, comida e música, mesmo sem ter um espaço,

eu falei com toda a gente aqui no bairro que tinha um espaço para ver se me davam um empurrão ou se me cedessem às vezes o espaço para fazer as atividades, pá, e não condeno ninguém, porque também estão a fazer o seu ganha-pão, não tem que parar de fazer o seu trabalho para ... fui à praia, aproveitei o espaço que tinha na praia, fazia as minhas atividades. Mesmo assim, não era o suficiente porque chegava a uma altura que o vento não deixava para nada e quando vinha cá para frente era muito sol, não dava e tinha que ter um espaço. Quando comecei, primeiramente criei um espaço aqui, no outro lado fiz uma barraquinha, cheguei a fazer uma atividade lá com a Francesca e daí foi quando surgiu uma ideia de ter que fazer uma outra barraca aqui desse lado, porque aí também ainda tive um bate-boca com o dono daqui desse café por estar em frente ao café dele. Foi quando no meu aniversário montei aqui uma tenda e já comecei a visualizar porque eu tenho uma mania em tudo que eu estou a fazer, estou a visualizar o que vem a seguir e comecei a visualizar. Passado umas semanas, comecei a meter barrotes, comecei a montar barrote por barrote, fiz aqui essa casinha, meti aqui um toldozinho, tinha uma sombra que as pessoas podiam estar, podia ter minhas coisas lá dentro, as pessoas cá fora, estava top e daí continuei a sonhar, continuei a projetar as coisas. Isso foi em setembro, para aí setembro, outubro que eu já começava a pensar na festa de Natal, já começava a ver aquilo de fazer a festa de Natal. Foi quando recebi uma proposta de um rapaz, o Léo Santana, um rapaz de Lisboa que faz eventos e tudo mais alguma coisa, ele é brasileiro, ele desde o Brasil já fazia também atividades comunitárias e tudo mais. Entrou em contacto comigo e eu lhe expliquei também o meu projeto, tudo o que eu queria fazer e casou e assim foi. Realizamos a festa de Natal que meu Deus foi uma coisa espetacular. Eu nunca vi tanta felicidade nos olhos no rosto das crianças. Esse ano fizemos a segunda edição, foi o ano antepassado, basicamente foi a primeira festa no meu isso até lá eu resisto de tudo. Foi algo espetacular, foi fantástico mesmo, mesmo fantástico, fantástico, fantástico, fantástico. Depois desde ali pá decidi não parar mais e fizemos a segunda edição e agora estamos a ver se tentamos fazer outras festas, como a Páscoa e tudo mais. Tivemos ajuda também da Canto do Curió, da Ebano Coletivo, tivemos ajuda do Museu da Amada, tivemos bastante ajuda, tivemos bastante ajuda. Esse espaço depois comecei também a pensar nele como um espaço de todos, como museu cultural, como o refúgio, como um café, como vocês já viram, já viram as pessoas virem comprar aqui as coisas porque há muitas coisas que tem que se comprar e muitas das pessoas quando vão ajudar não ajudam com valores, estás a ver e há coisas que tem que ser com valores para poderem ser comprados e eu tenho que ter esses valores. Muitas das vezes tenho que ir trabalhar, tenho que ir para o mar, às vezes vem da minha música, às vezes vem do dinheiro que eu faço aqui e tem que se comprar. Tudo o que está aqui de eletricidade, pá, foi basicamente um balanço de eletricidade, O que gastei aqui de cimento, cimento para cimentar ... Tudo isso foi um valor, pá, gastei aqui, gastei aqui dinheiro, canalização, tudo e mais alguma coisa. A festa de Natal há coisas, o lanche das crianças, tudo e mais alguma coisa. Todo o pessoal que vem de fora, que vem muita gente de fora, que colabora comigo na festa de Natal e eles não vão chegar aqui e vão estar a consumir as coisas enquanto eles estão a vir fazer uma festa para nós. Eu não me sinto bem com isso. Eu tenho que ter coisas para eles consumirem desde comida, bebida, tudo mais alguma coisa e tudo isso encarrega-me, encarrega a mim, por isso sinto a necessidade de ter que vender coisas para não ter que simplesmente só sair do meu bolso, porque isso não é uma associação, não é nada. É simplesmente um dos pensamentos, um dos corações do bairro a tentar fazer alguma coisa pelo bairro. E aí é que nasceu o refúgio. Essa necessidade é mais pelas crianças e pelos mais velhos. Foi aí que surgiu essa necessidade de ter que fazer o refúgio, porque aqui basicamente não havia mesmo nada. Eu na primeira edição fiz uma árvore de Natal, meu Deus, eu nunca vi um bairro assim, nunca vi, nunca vi, nunca vi que as pessoas, especificamente as crianças, vinham com os pais, pediam aos pais para lhes trazerem só para virem ver a árvore de Natal, nunca tivemos aqui uma árvore de Natal. Foi algo lindo, foi mágico mesmo, e é por isso que e por outro também, porque se nós não fizermos, não tem junta, não tem Câmara, não tem nada. E até as associações, mesmo as associações que vêm principalmente no Verão, trazem a ajudas e tudo mais alguma coisa, nunca nenhuma delas falou de festa de Natal, nunca nenhuma delas falou de saúde mental das crianças, pá, por isso é que eu tenho muito cuidado quando vou-me ligar a alguma associação, quando vou colaborar com alguma associação, porque se não for a trazer uma verdadeira ajuda, prefiro, prefiro continuar a me esfolar, a fazer o que eu faço e trazer a ajuda que eu trago do que estar aí a me fantasiar com ajudas que não são ajudas, ajudas mascaradas. Isso não?

Carlotta
Eu só queria perguntar mais sobre o museu, a ideia do museu.

Mário
A ideia do museu também surgiu porque, na altura, quando houve a demolição, foram feitos muitos esquisitos que depois foram para a Câmara da Almada, que serviram como exposição, que basicamente foi uma exposição que não foi exposição, porque só os verdadeiros ... só quem realmente tinha vontade de ajudar, quem pertencia ao museu e só quem passou por aquela situação é que souberam daquela, senão quem realmente devia ver e o restante das pessoas não souberam de nada. São, foram, foram, foram, foi uma obra basicamente esquecida e que ninguém viu. E quando eu soube que aquilo ainda estava lá no museu e que tinha a possibilidade de virem por aqui, bateu-me logo a ideia que se virem para aqui, este será o museu comunitário. Porque aqui poderão mostrar coisas que os outros não quiseram ver, porque quando chega a altura de eleições, quando chega tudo, todo esse tipo de

coisas, quando chega o Verão, todos querem vir por aqui, não é? Já querem vir ... vão ter que ver, vão ter que olhar porque ninguém é cego, mesmo que não quiserem, vão ter que olhar porque as fotografias vão estar todas aqui espalhadas, vão estar todas aqui espalhadas. Não vai ser preciso mostrar, não vai ser preciso não. Quem entra aqui vai ver as fotografias, é mais por aí, pa, porque nós também aqui não temos um ... temos pessoas, mas não temos um sítio onde podemos entrar e com os olhos ver história do bairro, ouvir as histórias do bairro, não temos Hoje em dia. Nós éramos todos novos, hoje em dia já somos adultos, antigamente NOS contavam a história do bairro. Hoje nós contamos a história do bairro. Por isso, também tem que existir um sítio onde se conta a história do bairro, que é aqui o nosso museu. As fotos que lhe mostrei no outro dia foram parte desta exposição, as fotos das demolições. Ainda houve uns cartazes bem maiores, mas só que como aquilo era claramente plástico, aquilo partiu-se. Já não deu para reaproveitar, senão seria posto na Parede.
Aquilo é o tamanho de uma Parede mesmo, senão estaria aqui dentro, na Parede.

Já não deu para aproveitar dele, mas a ideia do museu foi isso, portanto, não é? Contar as histórias do que aconteceu aqui, do que foi a do que foi essa barbaridade que aconteceu na demolição. São coisas que nem a Câmara nem a junta gosta de falar, mas quem passou, não esquece, eu vivia lá, eu fui um dos ... e foram partir a casa, a minha filha até agora falar daquela casa, ela tinha dois anos, a minha filha a chorar, sair daquela casa, até agora por isso é que eu não gosto de falar disso.

Carlotta
E este espaço, tu dizes que foi construído com a ajuda da Ebano.

Mário
Não, mas não foi o espaço que foi construído com ajuda, as atividades que eu faço é que tiveram ajuda, porque este espaço foi construído por mim. Eu e basicamente, mais 2 amigos meus, que é o João, que é o foi o principal que teve aqui comigo, o João deu aqui a alma dele comigo, conforme dei a minha alma, pá, por mais que ele depois afastou-se um bocado, porque também tem os seus afazeres, mas ele deu aqui a alma dele comigo, pá, e foi eu, o João e o Nuno e o restante fui eu, porque havia alturas em que estava aqui sozinho, mas tive ajuda sim, tive. Não posso dizer que não tive ajuda em nada. Não há coisas que a gente faz sem ajuda. Tèmos a ajuda, sim senhora. E foi de raiz, esse espaço aqui era uma rua como esse lá, o outro lado aqui onde estão os carros parados. Era só esse muro e o chão, um monte de mato, carros parados. Era uma rua. Comecei a montar barrotes, fazer o telhado. Esse chão todo o nível do chão era daqui ao nível da rua. Era aquele nível dali da rua, teve de ser todo tabuado aqui, bolas, a areia que saiu daqui parecia que um caminhão que veio, que veio recolher muita, muita, muita, muita areia, muita areia que saiu daqui, muita areia, muita areia que saiu daqui, isto aqui, se isso tivesse boca, ela própria ia vos contar a história, não seria o que tem aqui para se contar. Aqui tem muito sacrifício, tem muito trabalho. Eu acordava de manhã bem cedo, acordava de manhã bem cedo, 7- 8 da manhã, às vezes 6 e tal e saia daqui uma e tal, 2 da madrugada. Só a trabalhar o dia inteiro, o dia inteiro, o dia inteiro, o dia inteiro. Por isso é que ainda a mente pode estar minimamente, mas o corpo ainda está cansado. O corpo ainda está, porque foram mesmo dias e dia, dias e dia. Havia vezes que eu tinha que ir trabalhar para poder ter verba para comprar o material. Vinha do meu trabalho, ia comprar o material, voltava para aqui e trancava-me aqui a trabalhar. Foi assim o processo disso. E agora é muito, é completo.

Carlotta
Está acabado?

Mário
Ainda não está terminado, ainda não está. Ainda faltam alguns pormenores, mas que agora são detalhes só. Agora são detalhes. As paredes ainda vão ser, ainda vão ser vestidas com uma massa ou com uma massa ou com um pladur, mas não é já já. A ideia é meter elas todas lisas para serem pintada para a tinta agarrar bem ou se não levar a massa ou pladur vai ser pintada e depois grafitada as paredes todas. Ainda falta levar o pladur na parte do telhado. Ainda falta meter as prateleiras que eu quero fazer uma mini biblioteca aqui desse lado. Ainda falta fazer a mercearia cá atrás que eu quero fazer uma mercearia a preço justo. Porque aqui no bairro tem merecerias, fazem o trabalho deles. Não condeno ninguém, mas é muitíssimo caríssimo.
É muito caro e são pessoas que não vivem aqui no bairro. Só têm os negócios no bairro, não sentem a dor, aquela pessoa que vai lá comprar a coisa ou o pacote de meia dúzia do ovo, quase 3 EUR, meia dúzia de ovo, quase 3 EUR. A pessoa que vai lá comprar não é vizinho dele, não é uma pessoa que ele viu crescer, ele não tem empatia para perceber, por isso é que não ele não importa fazer o negócio dele. Eu senti a necessidade de fazer aqui a mercearia. Não é porque eu preciso ganhar dinheiro. Eu sei ganhar dinheiro. Graças a Deus eu tenho uma mente para isso. Tenho energia para isso que eu sei se você ganhar dinheiro, eu me mexo em qualquer lado.
Se tiver que trabalhar na força, se tiver que desentupir, eu vou desde que me desde que me paguem, eu vou. Não tenho problema com isso. Já trabalhei na obra, trabalhei na pesca, faço música, trabalhei em frustração, sou chefe de cozinha. Eu trabalho onde tiver trabalho, não tenho medo de trabalho. A gente aqui faz tudo.

Rosa
É na organização das atividades, estás sozinho ou tem um coletivo?

Mário
Pá, eu estou a tentar criar um coletivo, mas estou sozinho, estou. Para tentar criar um coletivo, pá, aqui é pá, é difícil, mas a única pá, eu também não sei de onde é que vem essa força, mas eu sempre tive um pensamento e uma força que não me permite desistir. Eu quando começo a fazer algo de Coração, não há pensamento, palavra, energia que possa me fazer parar nem doença. Quando eu resolvo fazer com Coração, com a mente e com a alma, esquece pá, hoje em dia eu Não cobro, não cobro, não cobro nada a ninguém, porque aquilo que eu busquei e que eu busco, eu vejo que os outros não buscam, então por isso não tenho que estar à espera que eles façam aquilo que eu faço, porque eles não escolheram o mesmo caminho, então não cobro nada a ninguém. Na hora certa, no momento certo, as pessoas certas vão-se chegar. As coisas vão continuar a fluir porque têm continuado a fluir as coisas que eu tenho feito. A maior parte das coisas, as atividades é com a ajuda de pessoas de fora. Se eu desistisse, nem a ajuda das pessoas de fora teria. O importante é continuar a fazer que a ajuda vai aparecer no meio do processo, vai aparecer tudo.

Carlotta
É uma boa mentalidade, um bom espírito.

Mário
Mas nem sempre foi assim. Tive que mudar para isso. Fui mudando

Carlotta
Mas é muito bom porque não é fácil mudar. E o graffiti?

Mário
Foi um rapaz, o Piazzo. Ele gira o mundo todo a fazer esse tipo de trabalho. Se entrarem na página dele, ele gira o mundo todo, o mundo, todo mundo, todo mundo, todo mesmo, até Madagáscar, já foi tudo. Ele gira o mundo todo mesmo a fazer isso e ele escolhe uma parte do mundo, vai lá, ouve as histórias ou ele pesquisa daquele local as histórias e vai lá e faz algo memorável lá e ele veio cá. Ele ia vir para Portugal, escolheu Portugal, o destino dele seria Portugal e ele começou a pesquisar as histórias de Portugal. Ouviu falar do Torrão, aprofundou mais a história do Torrão, veio cá no Torrão, começou a conhecer as histórias, ouviu falar de mim. Já na altura eu já costumava fazer os trabalhos, as atividades ... e sempre fiz música. Por isso, da parte da música, nós é que sempre levamos o bairro ao ouvido das pessoas. Por isso ele também, como gosta de música, ouviu falar de mim, aprofundou mais e ele chegou à conclusão de que eu era a pessoa certa que devia estar, que devia estar aí o meu graffiti. E foi assim que ele chegou a fazer o graffiti. Foi uma coisa muito magnífica mesmo.

Carlotta
E o lugar?

Mário
Foi escolhido mesmo por acaso.

Carlotta
Eu que fosse a tua casa.

Mário
Não, olha, por acaso ela estava a perguntar se não havia problema nenhum. Quando tu és uma boa pessoa, tens uma mente limpa e um coração limpo, é tudo natural porque eu respeito todo mundo desde criança a mais velho respeito todo mundo e obviamente quando tu respeitas és respeitado quando tu gostas és gostado assim sucessivamente, pá, e graças a Deus aqui nesse bairro eu tenho um carinho pelas pessoas enorme que até quando as senhoras viram a fotografia, começaram a chorar, pensaram que me aconteceu alguma coisa, que era um memorial. Pensaram que aconteceu alguma coisa, mas não e a dona da casa é uma senhora que lida muito bem comigo, eu gosto dela, ela gosta de mim, que ela até gostou e disse que a parede ficou mais bonita. Por acaso tem aqui no bairro tem uma boa ligação com toda a gente, desde português a cabo-verdianos, angolanos, guineenses, santomenses, ciganos, todos sem distinção.

Rosa
O coletivo 2GTO/2825?

Mário
Sou o fundador da GTO FAM. A GTO FAM é a voz de quem não tem voz aqui dentro.
A GTO FAM é ... falar da GTO FAM é um pouco complicado porque a GTO FAM é um sonho que não quer morrer, só o nome é que mudou, a energia e o sonho não mudaram porque antes da GTO FAM nós fazíamos kuduro, como eu disse há pouco tempo, e o nosso grupo de kuduro era os PS Squad que PS Squad é abreviação de Para Sempre e o nosso coletivo éramos todos os miúdos daqui do bairro, sempre crescemos juntos e fazíamos a mesma coisa e queríamos o nosso coletivo, que é hoje e para sempre, pá, aquilo era uma coisa sem explicação, porque não era nada combinado, não era nada traçado, era tudo natural, era magnífico. Eu também fui um dos fundadores da PS quad que depois, quando a gente se separou, aquela energia sempre viveu dentro de mim e aquele sonho sempre viveu dentro de mim. Hoje em 3 elementos, éramos 5, agora somos 3, foi como nos PS Squad, eramos 5 elementos, ficamos 3, depois ficamos 2. Agora somos basicamente 3, mas o outro está muito afastado, estamos basicamente 2 na correria, mas como eu disse lá atrás, nos PS Squad de antigamente, hoje em dia na GTO FAM, eu tinha um vá uma dicazinha quando falavam que PS Squad morreu, eu gostava de dizer, dizem que PS4 sou eu e sou mais vivo do

que nunca, por isso nunca morreu, está aqui dentro, é como a GTO FAM enquanto eu existo a GTO FAM não vai morrer. Cada um pode fazer os seus afazeres, não condeno ninguém, somos cabeças diferentes, somos mentes diferentes, de filhos, de pais diferentes, de mães diferentes. Viemos de ventres diferentes, é normal querermos coisas diferentes, somos seres humanos diferentes. Eu Não condeno ninguém. Eu aprendi, aprendi a aceitar isso assim, aceitando isso, torno-me mais leve para ir atrás daquilo que eu realmente quero. Não tenho que obrigar ninguém a ir atrás daquilo que eu quero. Cada um é livre de ir atrás daquilo que quer e os meus sonhos não morrem, não. Os meus Sonhos só morrem quando eu morrer. Eu não gosto de matar meus sonhos.
Avô, está tudo bem? É o nosso avô, é o avô daqui da Comunidade, é o nosso avô, mas é meu puto, tem 14 anos, só vai fazer 15 próxima semana.
(...)
Ok, então, tem mais alguma coisa?

Rosa
E queria perguntar qual é que é no bairro o teu lugar preferido?

Mário
Pá, acho que se for para relaxar, vou dizer esse sítio porque é o sítio que eu mais me sinto à vontade. Quando cheguei cá no bairro, o sítio onde eu me refugiava para voltar para Angola com os meus pensamentos era à beira praia ... é a praia, é a praia, porque lá tem o todo tipo de recordações, todo tipo de recordações, é a praia.

Rosa
Um dos momentos mais bonitos que já viveste no bairro?

Mário
Mais bonito, mais bonito ... pá, tem vários momentos para ser sincero, mas o momento que eu achei mesmo mais bonito e que mexeu com a minha estrutura toda foi a primeira festa de Natal que fiz cá,, ya foi uma coisa mesmo ... tive, tive que me conter mesmo, conter, conter, conter, conter para as lágrimas não cair mesmo. Tive que me conter, porque depois, no meio disso tudo eu, enquanto a festa estava a decorrer, eu não estava presente, que eu ainda estava a fazer outras coisas, buscar outras pessoas, supermercado, comprar águas e comer a mais para as pessoas que acabavam de chegar e tudo mais alguma coisa e depois houve uma altura em que eu cheguei e estavam basicamente todas as pessoas que estavam a colaborar comigo. Estavam todos cá no bairro e estava o bairro todo cheio, cheio, cheio, cheio. Eram carrinhas e carrinhas de brinquedos, roupas que viam por todo o lado, bandas montadas, máquinas de algodão doce, máquinas de pipoca ... estava mesmo lindo, lindo, lindo, lindo, lindo, lindo e as crianças todas, o bairro todo estava, estava aqui neste lado. As crianças todas felizes, todos, todos, todos.
Lembras-te da festa de Natal, filha? Eu comi pipoca, estavam todos e todas, e algodão doce, foi, foi, foi, foi ... não acho, tenho a certeza que foi a festa de Natal.

Rosa
Vocês vieram de Angola e a tua família quando chegou aqui autoconstruiu a sua casa?

Mário
Pá, nós basicamente quando ... isso já existia tudo. Essa parte daqui desse muro para cá é que era tudo mato, senão lá para dentro já existia tudo, esse bairro já existe há mais de 60 anos e isso foi um bairro feito por pescadores. Quando chegamos aqui já existia tudo.

Rosa
E os teus pais estão aqui ainda?

Mário
Não, eu não vim com os meus pais. Eu vim com a minha irmã mais velha e 2 sobrinhos. Vim com a minha irmã mais velha que a minha mãe já esteve em Portugal, já foi para Angola, já esteve para ficar novamente, mas já não, vim só com a minha irmã mais velha e os meus 2 sobrinhos.

Rosa
Já não moras com ela?

Mário
Não moro, já sou homem, já constituí a minha família, sim aqui, nesse momento, no bairro moro eu e os meus sobrinhos, porque a minha irmã não, a minha irmã ... eu sempre considerei a minha irmã uma pessoa, uma pessoa totalmente à frente, totalmente à frente, desde lá de Angola. A minha irmã sempre é ... essa a minha irmã e o meu irmão que morreu há 2 meses atrás. Sempre NOS proporcionaram uma vida que eu, quando paro para pensar na minha infância, eu contando a minha infância, nem parece que era em Angola, não parece, pelo que os meus irmãos me proporcionaram. Meu Deus, que essa minha irmã sempre foi muito à frente e ela quando chegou aqui não se adaptou muito. Daqui fomos logo para fora do bairro, fomos logo para a Costa da Caparica. Ela sempre nos disse que queria dar-nos algo melhor. Nós, quando crescemos, é que voltamos para aqui. A minha irmã não, ela vive em Corroios. Ela não quer ter nada a ver nada com isso.

Rosa
Gostas de morar cá?

Mário
Gosto que está cheio de recordação de lá, de Angola.
Não sei, aqui existe ... em bairros como esse existe uma cultura

dentro. Isso que muitas pessoas não sabem, nem pensam sequer que existe culturas, pá, e culturas assim tu não vais encontrar em residências de prédios. Nos prédios e residências normais não vais encontrar, são vizinhos só de bom dia, boa tarde. Aqui se tiver falta de alguma coisa, algo urgente .... que se tivesse num prédio, tinha que recorrer a uma empresa ou ao Pingo Doce, aqui eu posso bater diretamente na porta do meu vizinho. Eu se tiver que sair de urgência e não tiver com quem deixar minha filha, deixo ao meu vizinho. Existe confiança para isso porque não somos só vizinho, é como se fosse a segunda família. É o que se diz em Angola, em Angola, diz-se que vizinho é a segunda família, vizinho é família, não é a segunda família, vizinho é família. Porque quando nós ... na nossa ausência, é o vizinho que controla a tua filha, o teu filho, é o vizinho que educa o teu filho, por isso é que nós dizemos que o vizinho é a família e nós aqui temos essa cultura, seja preto, seja brancos, o que for. Então, se tiver que sair, deixar a minha filha, sei que ela está bem cuidada, sei que ela vai ser bem tratada. Não tem problema nenhum, como com uma outra pessoa qualquer. Se tiver que sair, fazer algo importante, se tiver que dizer: «olha, vou deixar aqui a minha filha», tranquilo. Ainda mais se tiver aqui a minha filha para brincar em julho. É assim aqui, que a gente ... uma coisa que se poderia mudar, uma coisa no bairro, ou queria uma coisa Asfalto às fininhas? É a mudança mais significativa que eu acho que podia haver aqui no bairro.

Carlotta
Porque quando chove é problemático

Mário
Porque no tempo da chuva quase nada dura, a roupa não dura, ténis não dura nada, tu sais daqui pá, quando sais de branco de casa se andares de autocarro, chegas à paragem, estás todo castanho porque é lama por todo o lado. E tem zonas que a lama é preta, né? Lama castanha. Meu Deus.

Rosa
Então gostaria de ficar cá?

Mário
Pá, vou ser sincero, eu tenho uma mente muito sonhadora. Eu sou muito ambicioso e tenho essa mente. Eu Gosto daqui, mas num sítio onde eu queira ficar para criar a minha filha. Eu fiz questão de ela ter a infância aqui. Fiz questão disso e disse que seria importante, mas agora em diante já não, eu sinto e tenho noção que preciso de dar algo mais à minha filha. Não é só para dar algo mais à minha filha. Temos que sair daqui desse cubo. Este aqui é um cubo fechado mesmo. Temos que sair daqui! Sou sonhador, sonho muito. Eu tenho uma família muito grande, uma família muito grande, se eu se juntar os meus sobrinhos todos, meu Deus ... esse meu irmão que morreu há 2 meses atrás, era basicamente o pilar da nossa família, não é? Agora pá, eu tenho que fazer alguma coisa. Tenho que fazer alguma coisa. Tenho muitos sobrinhos, muitos sobrinhos. Tenho muitos irmãos que não tiveram a mesma oportunidade que eu de vir para Portugal fazer formação. E eu sou o mais novo, sou o mais novo, sou o caçula da minha mãe, sou o mais novo de todos, sou o mais novo de todos. E sinto essa obrigação, ter que fazer alguma coisa assim, não, vou fazer essa coisa.
(...)

Carlotta
Como é a convivência com outros bairros, está boa?

Mário
Sim ... A gente lida bem com todo mundo. Como é como aquilo ...Tem aquele ditado: Não mexer com quem tá quieto. E, entre outros, a gente não representamos perigo até que NOS ameacem, estás a ver? e da maneira que nós temos coração, coração limpo e coração aberto para todo mundo. Só que nós não podemos controlar o que sai da boca dos outros e o que vai no pensamento dos outros, que nós já fomos muito mal pintados e continuamos a ser muito mal pintados, porque simplesmente vivemos dentro daqui, dentro de um bairro. > > estigma
Somos conotados como traficantes, como ladrões, como tudo e mais alguma coisa. Como eu já disse em muita, em muitas entrevistas que dei, que já fiz, esse desafio que eu ... que se forem andar por aí pela Costa da Caparica, pela Trafaria, pelo Monte da Caparica, fazer entrevista ao mundo, eu duvido que vão encontrar tantos jovens formados como dentro desse quadrado. Esse quadrado é conotado como bandidos, como traficantes e tudo mais e tem muitos jovens informados. A maior parte dos jovens trabalha, só que é da maneira que fomos escutados.

Carlotta
Como entendes esta entrevista, estudamos na academia e viemos aqui para fazer uma entrevista ...

Rosa
Como vês as pessoas como nós que vêm de fora fazer perguntas?

Mário
Eu sou sempre sincero, não, pá, vou ser sincero, bem sincero, bem sincero, como sempre pediu. Você terem vindo com a Francesca, já lhe olho de um jeito diferente, já lhe olho de um jeito diferente, porque a Francesca é uma pessoa que eu lido muito bem. É uma pessoa que eu tenho colaborado com ela já há algum tempo e as pessoas que vêm da parte dela para mim é um pouco mais tranquilo, mas em geral, em geral, em geral, a maior parte das pessoas que vêm aqui, eu simplesmente acho que estão a vir simplesmente fazer o trabalho deles, que é algo que é simplesmente do interesse deles e não o condeno, mas

não somos obrigados a colaborar com tudo. (...) é interesse, é interesse, vem para alguma coisa, afinal, lá de algum trabalho de alguma coisa, mas nunca com a finalidade de simplesmente ajudar o bairro. É a minha opinião. Nunca houve uma associação que ouviu falar de alguma luta do bairro ou de alguma causa de algum ... e, olha, vamos lá, simplesmente! Só não.

Rosa
Mas, por exemplo, o projeto dos Novos Decisores, ele tem, teve uma atitude diferente ou não?

Mário
Desculpa?

Rosa
O projeto dos Novos Decisores.

Mário
É muito projeto que eu já nem já nem vi a cabeça dele.

Rosa
É o projeto do João Cão.

Mário
Mas qual deles de que ano?

Rosa
Aquele que começou já há muito tempo, com aquela pergunta sebre se o mar ia comer o bairro e depois teve a construção daqueles 3 pontos e mais recentemente aqueles vídeos

Mário
Pá, como é que eu posso dizer? Trouxe alguma significativa para o bairro? Não ... que conseguimos descobrir o perigo iminente que tínhamos aí da vala, mas também foi a foi ao custo disto que aconteceu a demolição e novamente, resumindo e concluindo, não foi nada que simplesmente vieram para ajudar o bairro. Estavam a fazer um trabalho deles, não foi simplesmente viemos ajudar o Torrão porque vocês podem morrer, aquilo pode desabar, não! Estavam a trabalhar, simplesmente. No final do dia, cada um pega a sua verba, volta para sua casinha, caminha quente, banho bem tomado, sem chatice, sem nada. E nós continuamos aqui, pá, é complicado, é complicado. Não, não participei. Não participei porque também nessa altura as coisas eram outras. Também estava atrás de coisas totalmente diferentes. Nessa altura ainda não estava tão virado para esse tipo de coisas e hoje em dia eu me virei mais para esse tipo de coisa só para garantir que as coisas que vêm para aqui para dentro do bairro é realmente para ajudar o bairro. Não é porque eu gosto do projeto ou porque eu quero virar a minha vida nisso, não. Porque quando eu comecei a me aperceber que os projetos que vinham cá não faziam o que diziam que vinham fazer, aí já senti a necessidade de ter que me envolver dentro disto, desde as associações, desde o Presidente que estava na associação, desde alguns elementos do meu conjunto ... tive que entrar mesmo dentro disso para garantir que todos os projetos que venham, se precisar de mão de obra, garantir que as mão de obra sejam dentro do bairro e tem muita gente aqui que está sem trabalho, mas sabe trabalhar. Isso aqui é que é realmente ajudar o bairro e as pessoas que lá vivem e sempre que eu ver, como já houve, como já houve e nesse projeto esteve envolvido o projeto do João Cão, um projeto da Renata > > projetos deles, teve alguns elementos do meu coletivo ... que houve uma verba que veio para aqui, para o financiamento do bairro e não fizeram ***** nenhuma. Dividiram a verba e desapareceram.

Rosa
Falas dos BS?

Mário
Não sei, nem lembro o nome do projeto, nem nada, nada. Não foi feito nada, nada, nada, nada, nada no bairro, nada no bairro. Por isso é que eu sinto a necessidade de fazer uma associação, porque nós não podemos depender de outras associações que vêm de fora, que não conhecem a nossa dor, não conhecem a nossa luta, nada, porque nós aqui, pá, não é como ... eu não sou um tipo de pessoa ... eu quando vocês me ouvirem a falar de dinheiro, dinheiro, dinheiro é porque eu quero trazer aqui alguma coisa para as crianças, porque quando o dinheiro é de vir de outras pessoas, eu não me foco muito, mas quando é dinheiro que eu buscar, aí me foco sim, porque eu é que estou aí a buscar, estou a trabalhar para mim, mas quando é para fazer outras coisas, para quem, para quem vai, quando me ouvirem falar de dinheiro é porque eu quero fazer algum parque. Eu quero fazer algum campo de futebol e nesses financiamentos que muitos deles meteram o dinheiro no bolso, já devíamos ter um campo de futebol. > > cose tangibili
Já devíamos ter parque para as crianças que as crianças quando pedem aos pais para ir para o parque, tem que ir para Trafaria, tem que ir para a Costa da Caparica. Não tem parque aqui dentro do bairro. Isso até é uma vergonha. Eu sinto-me envergonhado com isso. Sinto-me envergonhado com isso.
É uma vergonha, pá, eu não sei que tipo de associações são esses, pá, eu com eles aprendi a ser interesseiro como eles, com esse tipo de associações eu aprendi a ser interesseiro. Não é no mau sentido, no bom sentido. Como é que eu posso dizer ser interesseiro ... trabalhar por interesse? Com eles aprendi a trabalhar por interesse porque eu percebi que as pessoas não fazem as coisas realmente de Coração. Eu percebi que as pessoas fazem (filha para um bocado, faz favor) as coisas mesmo por interesse, então, se é o interesse que me os move, eu também vou lhes dar o meu interesse. Já não faço as coisas simplesmente de Coração. Faço para as minhas crianças, faço para os mais velhos que já não conseguem fazer, faço de Coração. Agora, jovens que têm energia Como Eu tenho energia, têm

pensamento fresco Como Eu tenho, fresco, é tudo troca de interesse. Já não entrego o meu coração nem a minha mente para jovens como eu, já não, é troca de interesse: tens alguma coisa para me oferecer eu tenho uma coisa para te oferecer.
Tens alguma coisa para deixar tens alguma coisa para levar, hoje em dia tem que ser assim, senão, vai ser como foi aqui para construir isso aqui, tem que estar dentro do meu bolso porque eu quero construir de qualquer maneira, é isso que eu quero dizer eu não me envolver nessa luta, eu de qualquer maneira vou construir um parque, mesmo que não for com financiamento, de qualquer maneira, eu vou construir um parque. Só se não for do meu dinheiro, melhor ainda. Se não for que o dinheiro sai do meu bolso, melhor ainda. Mas eu vou de qualquer. Eu Não sei como começa a barraca. Eu Não sabia como ia construir, mas eu tinha na cabeça que ia construir. No meio do caminho começaram a aparecer as coisas. É como com o parque, não sei como, mas eu vou construir o parque. Não sei como, mas vou construir. Eu gosto de brincar nos barcos.

Rosa
Até uma pergunta que faço as várias pessoas que entrevistar, o que para ti o direito à habitação e direto à cidade de que se fala muito, não é?

Mário
Hoje em dia, pá, para ser sincero, quando eu, pá, é muita coisa que te posso falar na minha cabeça, mas vou dizer o que não foge muito da pergunta, mas não é exatamente o que me perguntou, mas tem tudo a ver quando eu vejo quando eu olho para isso, foi construído como sociedade e vejo, vejo tanta gente vivendo na rua porque não cumprem os requisitos necessários para poderem receber uma casa ou para poderem receber algum tipo de apoio. Isso me faz pensar que nós não vivemos em sociedade nenhuma. Até me faz questionar se realmente nós somos seres humanos, todos nós. Ou quem toma esse tipo de decisões são realmente seres humanos, pá, porque há coisas que não, que não é que não devia ser o direito do cidadão, devia ser direito do ser humano. Ter um prato de comida, ter uma cama para se deitar, um tem um lar. Isso devia ser direito do ser humano. Não devia existir ser humano nenhum tem que estar. Andar, andar em instituições, ter que basicamente mendigar comida para todo mundo no final do dia, quando vai fazer as compras do mínimo que seja, paga IVA, paga, Sei Lá o que tiver que pagar e tu não tens alimentação digna, não tens uma casa digna, ainda mais quando partem a casa, faz-me questionar muito sobre isso de governo. Faz-me pensar mais que em vez de população ou de seres humanos, somos mais um, somos mais gados do que outra coisa. Estamos aqui simplesmente para alimentar alguma coisa ou não sei, não sei, e pá, é algo muito complicado porque o ser ... pá, eu cada vez mais tenho visto que o ser humano não é aquilo que nos fizeram acreditar que é o ser humano é muito mau. O ser humano é muito mau. O diabo que nos fizeram acreditar que está lá no inferno, está aqui na mente e nos corações desses seres humanos. Por isso não consigo. É complicado, não? Como é que dirigentes conseguem ver famílias, crianças em situações ... como conseguem fazer o que fazem aos ciganos por questão de etnia? Não consigo, mas não tem como justificar isso no mundo de seres humanos, não é? No mundo de preto branco cigano, no mundo de seres humanos, vocês vão para a rua. Vocês não vão encontrar um castanho a lutar com o outro por ser preto, vão para o mato, ão vão encontrar um girassol a tentar matar o capim por não ser da espécie dele. Não vão encontrar que o ser humano que mata o outro por ter diferenças, só o ser humano é que faz isso, o papagaio papagaio papagaio papagaio papagaio.
(...)

Carlotta
Muito, muito obrigada. Eu tenho uma pergunta: o que é a casa para ti?

Mário
Vá para mim, a casa é um porto seguro, a casa, a casa é nosso confessionário, é aquele sítio que depois de tu enfrentares todos os problemas que existem no mundo, é aquele sítio que tu podes chegar e podes te despir daquilo que carregas da rua e podes realmente te encontrar e ouvir o teu eu a casa.
A casa não devia ser, assim, um simples sítio para descansar e tudo mais alguma coisa que nos fizeram acreditar, casa é o sítio que a gente se encontra. A casa é o sítio que dedicamos a nossas crianças. A casa é um sítio sagrado. A casa é o nosso templo, é o nosso templo exatamente, esse é o mais correto. A casa é o nosso templo, porque é lá na nossa casa que nós realmente somos nós, porque tem coisas que nós fizemos na nossa casa, que não fizemos em mais parte nenhuma.
Comportamentos nossos que só as nossas paredes é que sabem defeitos nossos que só em casa ... que hábitos, tudo só em casa é da maneira ... e pá deixas as coisas na tua casa, mas tu já sabes que está ali. Sabes que na rua não podes ou na casa do Flávio não podes, mas na tua casa é o teu, o teu santuário que ninguém te julga.

Carlotta
Muito obrigada.

Rosa
Espero que não fomos muito chatas.

Mário
Já tinha reservado também esse tempinho para isso, portanto.

Interviews appear in a distinct typeface throughout, to signal that this material belongs to the people it records.

Photographic archive



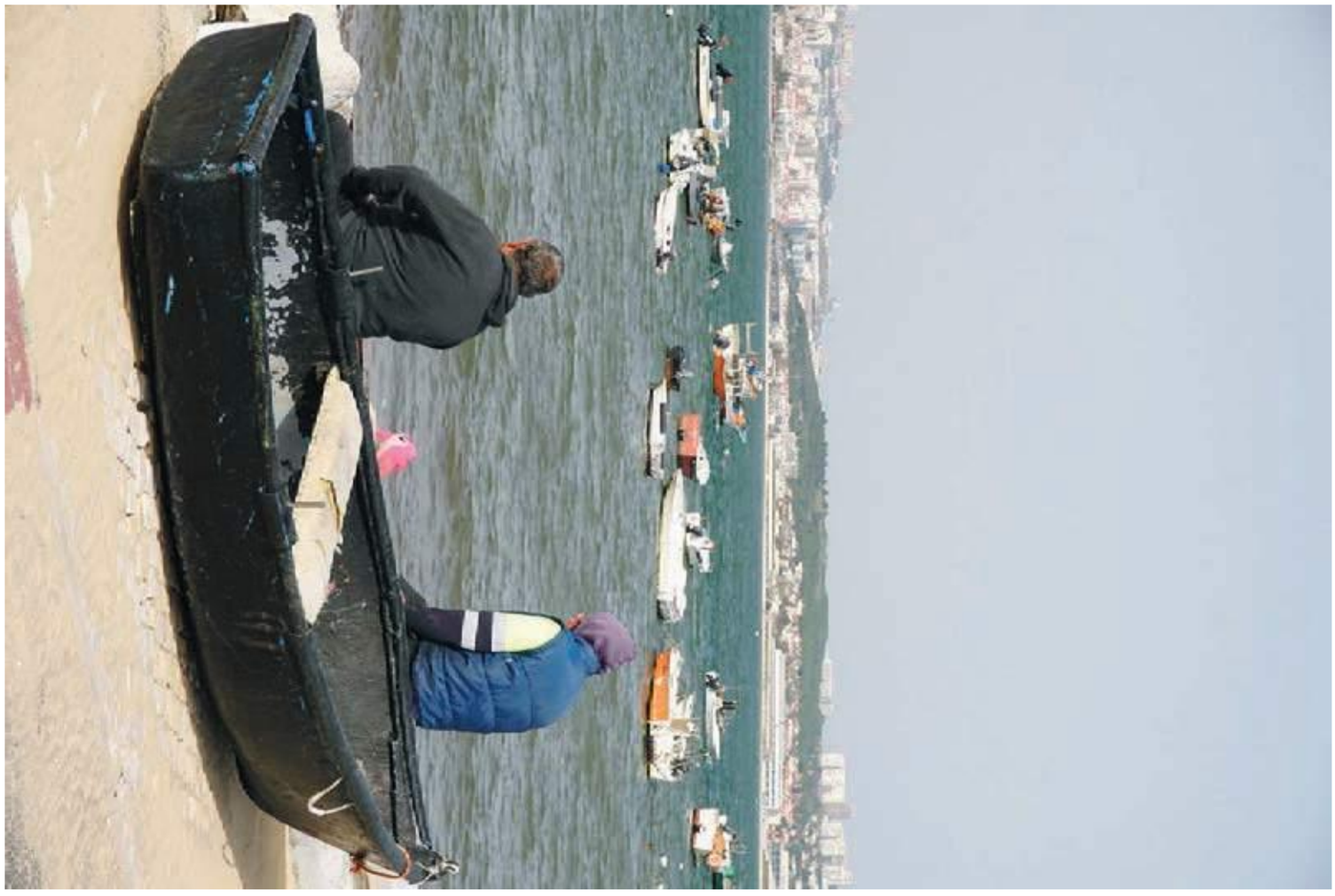


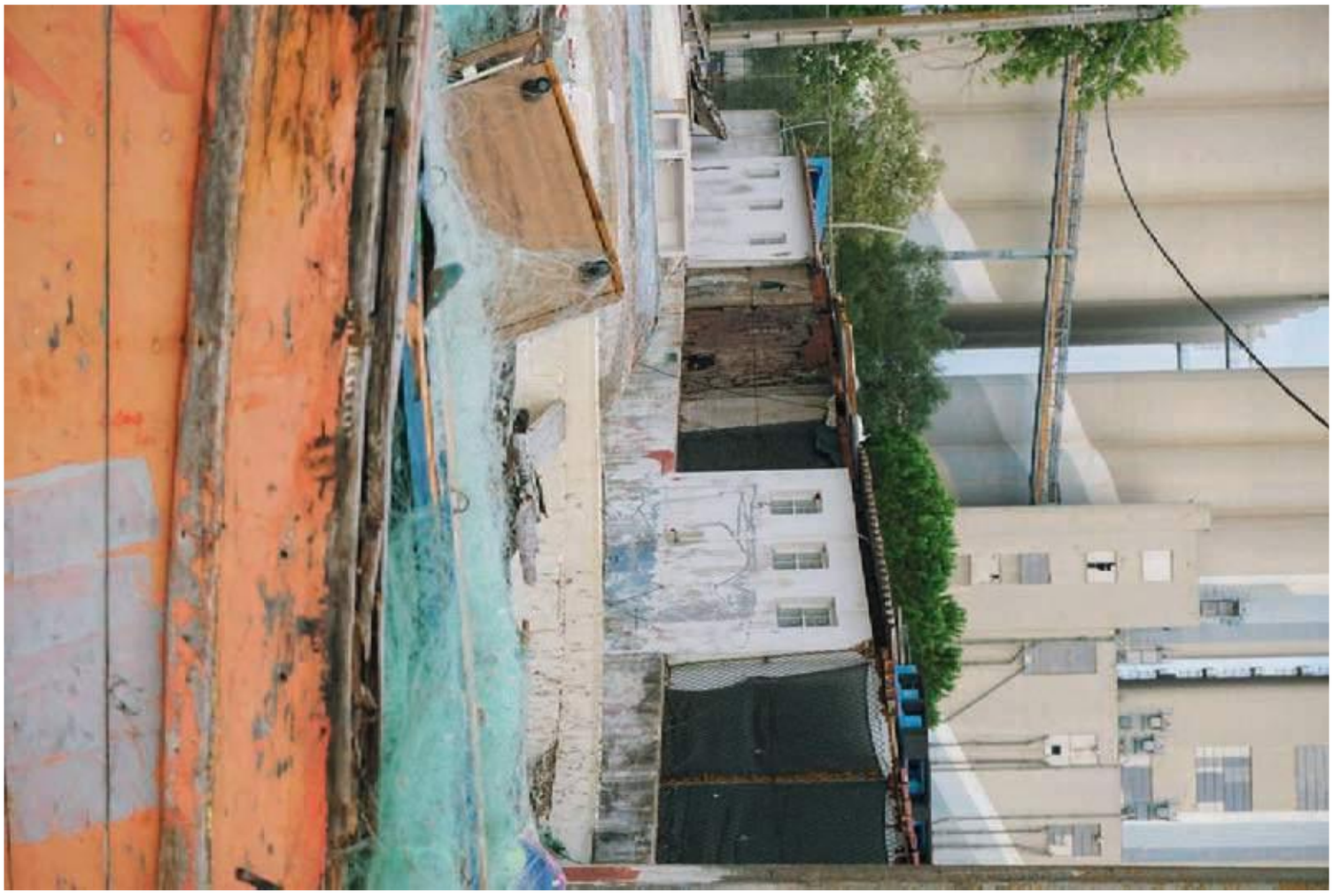

















NATA & CHOCOLATE
Magnifique
Chocolate
KOHLER
Clássico
TWIX
SNICKERS
OREO
Café
GOURMÉS

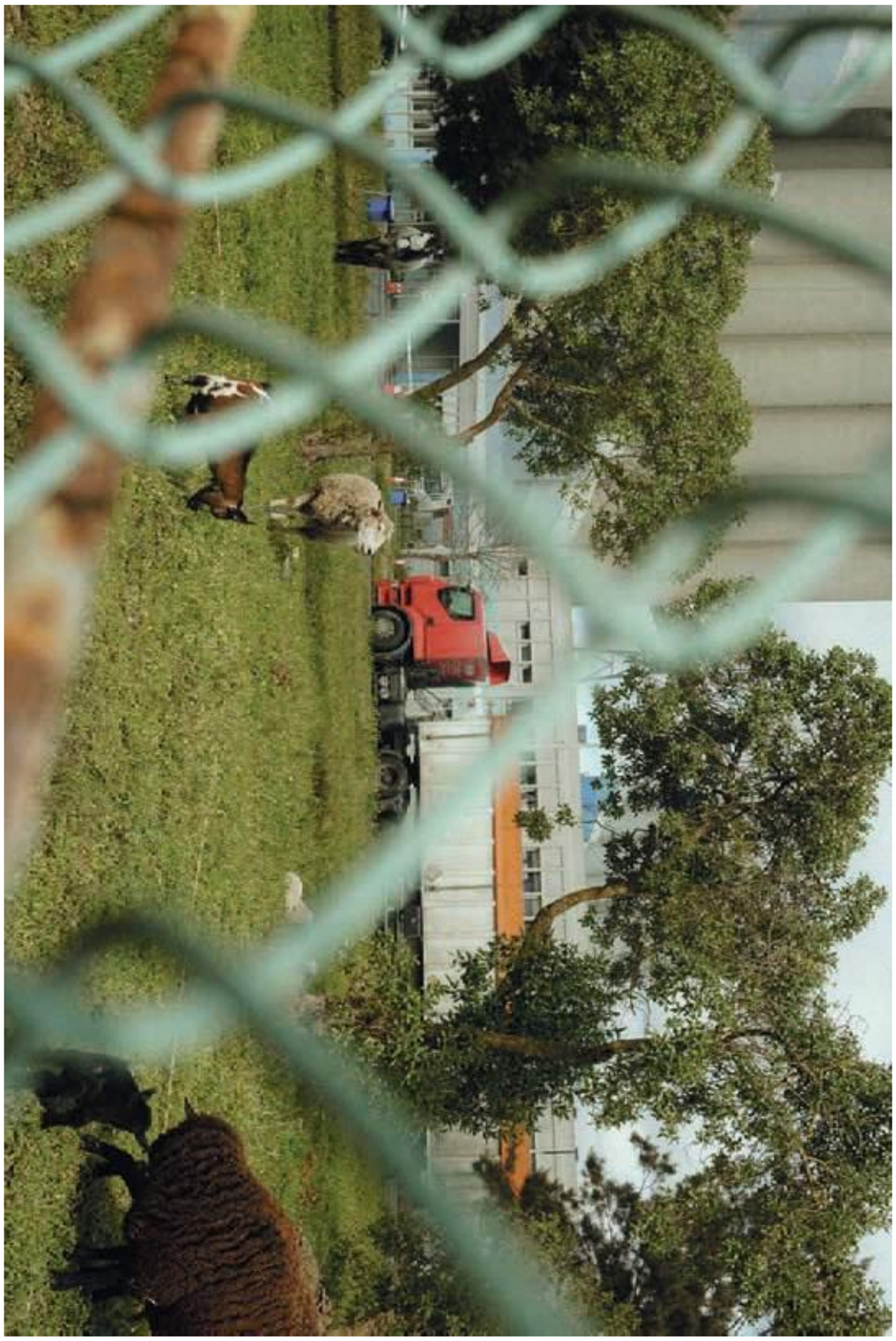














Chapter 1.0

Chapter 2.0

Chapter 3.0

Chapter 4.0

Chapter 5.0

Chapter 6.0 p. 296

DESIGNING OTHERWISE

6.1 Undoing the fence

6.2 Two fragments from one present

6.3 Holding open futures

6. Designing otherwise: Fragments for a conditional future



This final chapter translates the territorial, material, and relational readings developed throughout the thesis into a design proposition for Segundo Torrão and its surrounding territory. It does not approach design as a means of resolving the settlement's conditions through a definitive plan, but as an act of futuring: a way of making visible the divergent trajectories already latent in the present. Building on the grammar of care embedded in the bairro's incrementally built fabric, and on the landscape of nested enclosures that isolates it from the river, the military base, the port, and the ecological reserve, the chapter develops two speculative fragments of future. Together, the two scenarios ask not what Segundo Torrão should become, but which forces and forms of life its future will allow to endure.



6.1 – Undoing the fence: care, rupture, and otherwise futures

WHERE THE PROJECT BEGINS

The territorial and morphological readings developed in the previous chapters are not a neutral background for the project, but the ground it grows from: a dense sedimentation of gestures, materials, relationships, and struggles accumulated over decades. Two things that reading has taught orient everything that follows: a continuity of care, legible in the compactness of the built fabrics, and a rupture of enclosures, demanded by the fragmentation of the surrounding territory.

The project is not offered as a closed plan, but as a series of design fragments extending forces already active in the territory: militarisation, financialisation of land, climate vulnerability, informal care practices. Each fragment aims at a possible future, coherent with the documented present but never deterministic.

THE GRAMMAR OF CARE

Segundo Torrão's growth has proceeded through successive additions: a room built above another, a wall raised where a fence once stood, a roof extended to shelter a newly arrived relative. This is not chaos, but a pattern of accumulation that has quietly persisted beneath decades of uncoordinated construction. It is a rhytm of building that follows the pulse of life itself; each intervention is small, but together they compose a slow, stubborn architecture of survival.

More significant than this pattern is what it makes visible. The exposed brick at the edge of an unfinished floor, the party walls shared between houses, the narrow passages doubling as domestic space: all of it speaks of care, for the house, understood as a living, unfinished project rather than a completed object, and between neighbours, expressed through mutual aid and the informal solidarity that has let the community survive institutional neglect, flooding, and repeated demolitions. This care is not sentimental, but rather material and political. It is the quiet refusal to let the narrative of "informality as disorder" erase the sophisticated logics of coexistence that have been cultivated here, block by block, over forty years of contested presence.

This is the first thing the project inherits: whatever is thought

next must not erase this grammar, but learn from it and extend it. The fragments that follow do not accumulate upon the past, nor do they revise it. Instead, they resonate with it: a spatial narration that listens to the frequencies already vibrating through the bairro and amplifies them into new registers. To imagine spatially, then, is not to draw a future over the present, but to let the present resonate into futures that its own logic already prefigures.

NESTED ENCLOSURES: A TERRITORY OF FENCES

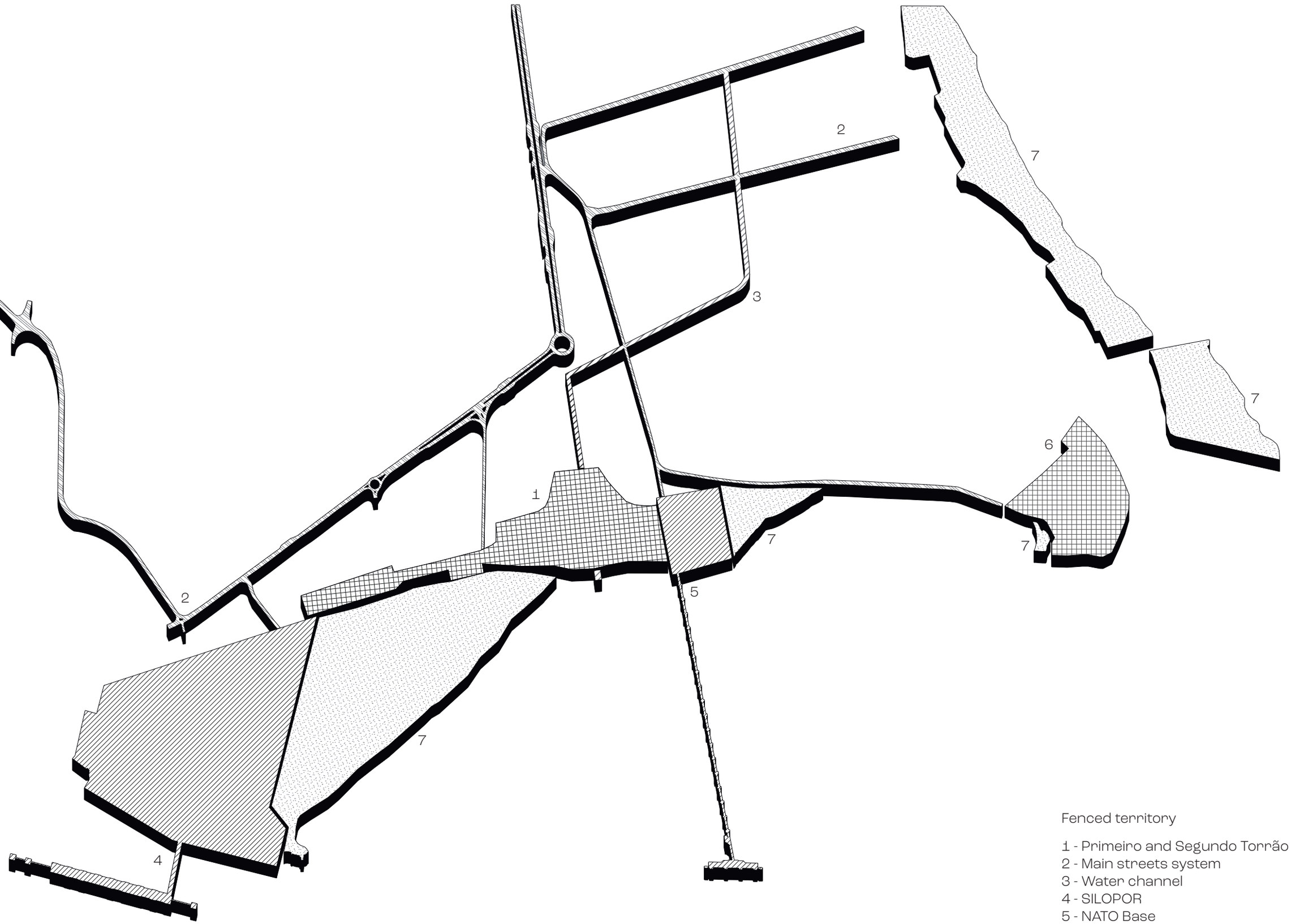
Segundo Torrão sits in a residual pocket squeezed between territories with radically incompatible functions: the NATO base, the grain terminal, the ecological reserve, the pressures of coastal requalification, each governed by its own fence and its own regime of access. The result is a clustered territory, compartments facing one another without communicating. Segundo Torrão is not a centre; it is a seam, produced by the very enclosures that surround it.

Faced with this, the design refuses the language of "stitching" or "healing" a fragmented fabric, a language that quietly frames the settlement itself as the wound. Instead it proposes rupture: not the mending of edges, but the breaking of fences. Only by undoing, physically and symbolically, the enclosures separating base, silos, reserve, and settlement can these zones be put back into relation. Rupture here is not violence for its own sake; it is the condition of possibility for connection.

Water is one of the forces that characterise the *bairro*: alongside militarisation, financialisation, and informal care practices, it shapes what is possible here. The two fragments that follow treat water as a condition that changes depending on what surrounds it. In one fragment, water is collectively managed through channels, dunes, and platforms that transform it from threat into infrastructure of care. In the other, water is left to flood the areas deemed expendable, while embankments protect only the port, the base, and new developments.

SPECULATION AS METHOD

The questions this thesis engages with, housing rights, value extraction from land and coastline, militarisation, climate-driven gentrification, are not architectural problems in any narrow sense. They are structural and global, and they exceed what a single design proposal could resolve. Inserting an architectural scenario into this fragment is, admittedly, an ambitious gesture.



Fenced territory

1 - Primeiro and Segundo Torrão
2 - Main streets system
3 - Water channel
4 - SILOPOR
5 - NATO Base
6 - Cova do Vapor
7 - Beaches

Rather than proposing a single, resolved masterplan that claims to fix the settlement's conditions once and for all, the project constructs fragments of future: coherent projections that extend forces already active in the territory along different trajectories and time horizons. This is speculation not as prediction but as a practice of opening the otherwise, akin to what Bayo Akomolafe describes as slipping 'through the cracks of power' to make alternative worlds visible beneath the apparent order.[1] Each fragment stays accountable to what the fieldwork has shown: the speculative future never floats free of the documented present, but remains checked against it.

This understanding of speculation as a transformative practice, rather than as prediction, follows the framework already set out in Chapter 1: architecture that neither retreats into positivist utopias nor surrenders to fatalism, but searches instead for otherwise solutions, proposals that, as Neyrat reminds us, do not promise a guaranteed future, since "the future in the Anthropocene has become conditional".[2] Otherwise here keeps the sense given earlier in this thesis: not an abstract idea but a transformative practice, a constellation of "possibilities prefigured, but not yet formed."[3]

Following Shafique, informality is treated here not as a problem to be solved but as a field of possible futures: a terrain that, precisely because it sits at the margins of formal planning, makes visible tendencies already at work in the "formal" city, only harder to see there, buried under regulation and capital.[4] Segundo Torrão, read this way, is not an exception but an intensified, legible version of processes unfolding everywhere. The project that follows is conceived as an act of futuring: not a plan to be built, but a device to think with.

A project that discarded what the inhabitants of Segundo Torrão have cared for and built over decades would be an act of arrogance this thesis refuses. Months of fieldwork carry a weight that cannot be set aside at the drawing board, the weight of demolitions, evictions, and institutional neglect, but also of resilience and quiet reclamation. Any project advanced from this position intervenes at the edges, at the fences, leaving the *bairro*'s own logic of care intact, and amplifying it outward where possible.

→ [1] Bayo Akomolafe, These are the Generations Your Eyes Have Not Seen (2017).

[2] Frédéric Neyrat, *The Unconstructable Earth: An Ecology of Separation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), as cited in Camillo Boano, *Inhabiting Future Frictions* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2025), 20.

[3] Laura Meek and Julia Fontanilla, Otherwise: A Constellation of Operative Modes (2022).

[4] Tanzil Shafique, Informal Futures: Housing as a Field of Possibility (2021).

6.2 – Two fragments from one present

Two fragments of future are imagined here, each extrapolated from trends already active in the territory, each projected along different times and different assumptions about what care and power will mean in the decades ahead. This thesis calls them Entangled and Enclosed, a pairing that captures two opposing territorial logics: one in which boundaries become porous and infrastructures hold the community together, the other in which boundaries multiply and infrastructures shut people out.

These are speculative fragments of urban and ecological reimagining: narratives that combine real elements, marginalisation, degradation, inequality, informal care practices, with new, speculative elements, new infrastructures, new relations with water, new configurations of power, to imagine a more inclusive and just city, or, conversely, to show what would happen if that possibility were closed off. They are not predictions, but tools for thinking the city otherwise, starting from Segundo Torrão.

Entangled city

In this future fragment, Segundo Torrão is no longer compressed between rigid boundaries: militarised zone, productive area, natural reserve. Instead, it appropriates new spaces, expanding beyond its historical confines. An area long characterised by social exclusion, inequality, and systemic racism has forced its inhabitants to develop their own strategies against precarity. This vision shows new, regenerative forms of urbanism, allowing the infrastructures of care already present in the *bairro* to expand and become more manifest.

This marginalisation has compelled, and continues to compel, residents to commute to Lisbon or to Costa da Caparica for work and access to essential services. This fragment imagines the settlement as a self-sufficient place: local economies develop through collective gardens and community kitchens; public services are distributed across the *bairro* rather than concentrated elsewhere. To the forms of self-organisation already present, others are added, including a transport system that allows the community to flourish.

The drawing of this speculative scenario represents the settlement as circular, without fixed boundaries: a form that can easily be imagined expanding gradually, circle by circle, progressively occupying areas liberated from constraints. A circular form that makes every movement possible, transforming Segundo Torrão into a space of imagination that enables different modes of futuring.

LIBERATING THE EDGE

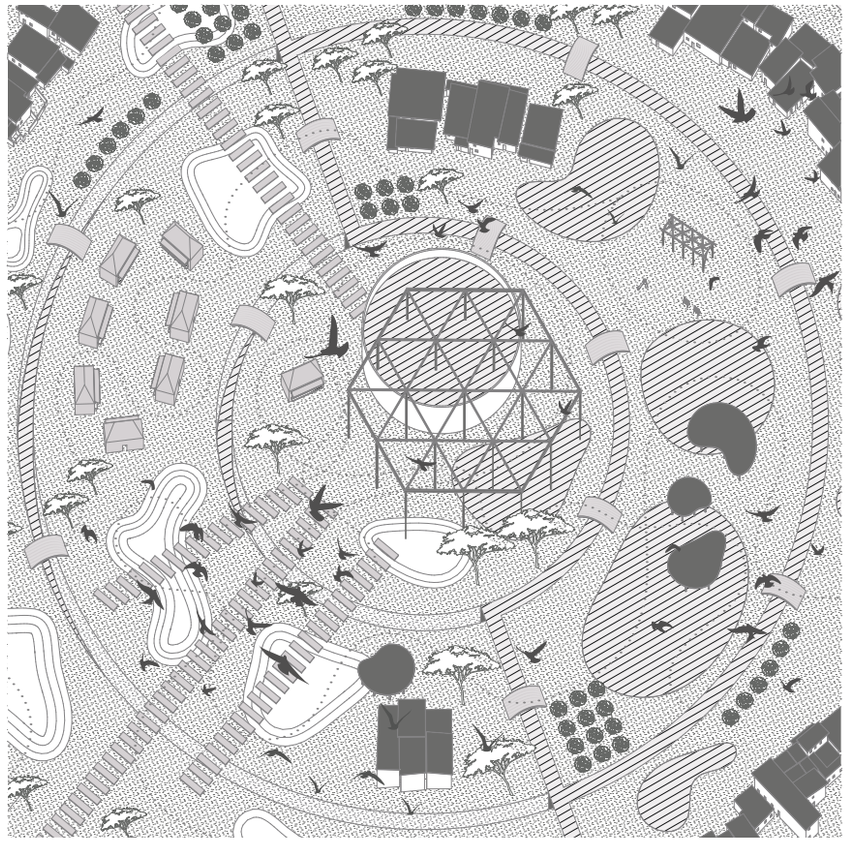
This scenario imagines demilitarisation, followed by the progressive abandonment of the NATO base adjacent to the *bairro* and a corresponding parasitic occupation of that area by residents. What was once a rigid, impassable boundary becomes a new centrality for the community. From infrastructure of control to infrastructure of care.

Water, the oldest characteristic of the *bairro* and one of its most important threads, is collectively managed, guaranteeing the settlement's survival. The NATO base is transformed into a system of water collection and release. Around it develop new urban gardens and zones of sociality, enabling ecological management of the area and the expansion of care infrastructures.

The NATO structure that extends toward the sea is also parasitised with stronger wave defences, and new platforms are placed that allow fishers to build their own bases, reviving the *bairro's* original economic activity. These platforms become nodes of economic and social life. The military infrastructure that once excluded the community is transformed into a platform for the return of fishing as a livelihood.

The drawing depicts the settlement organised around channels that develop in a concentric structure around the liberated NATO base, which becomes a new centrality for the *bairro*. In addition to the underground channel already present, cause of the 2022 demolitions, the community equips itself with a water management system, transforming what was an external instrument of control into a collective infrastructure of care. The channels do not divide; they are the tissue that holds the *bairro* together and allows it to exist. The drawing is split in half to show the dual rhythm of water management in the *bairro*: one side depicts the landscape in water's absence, the other side shows the landscape when water abounds; the same infrastructures that serve as spaces of sociality in dry moments become infrastructures of collective defence when water rises.

The *bairro* also reinforces itself with a dune system: implementing what already exists and an inner ring of large defensive stones against waves, as already present in the *bairro*. These layers work together with channels that manage the water that passes through.



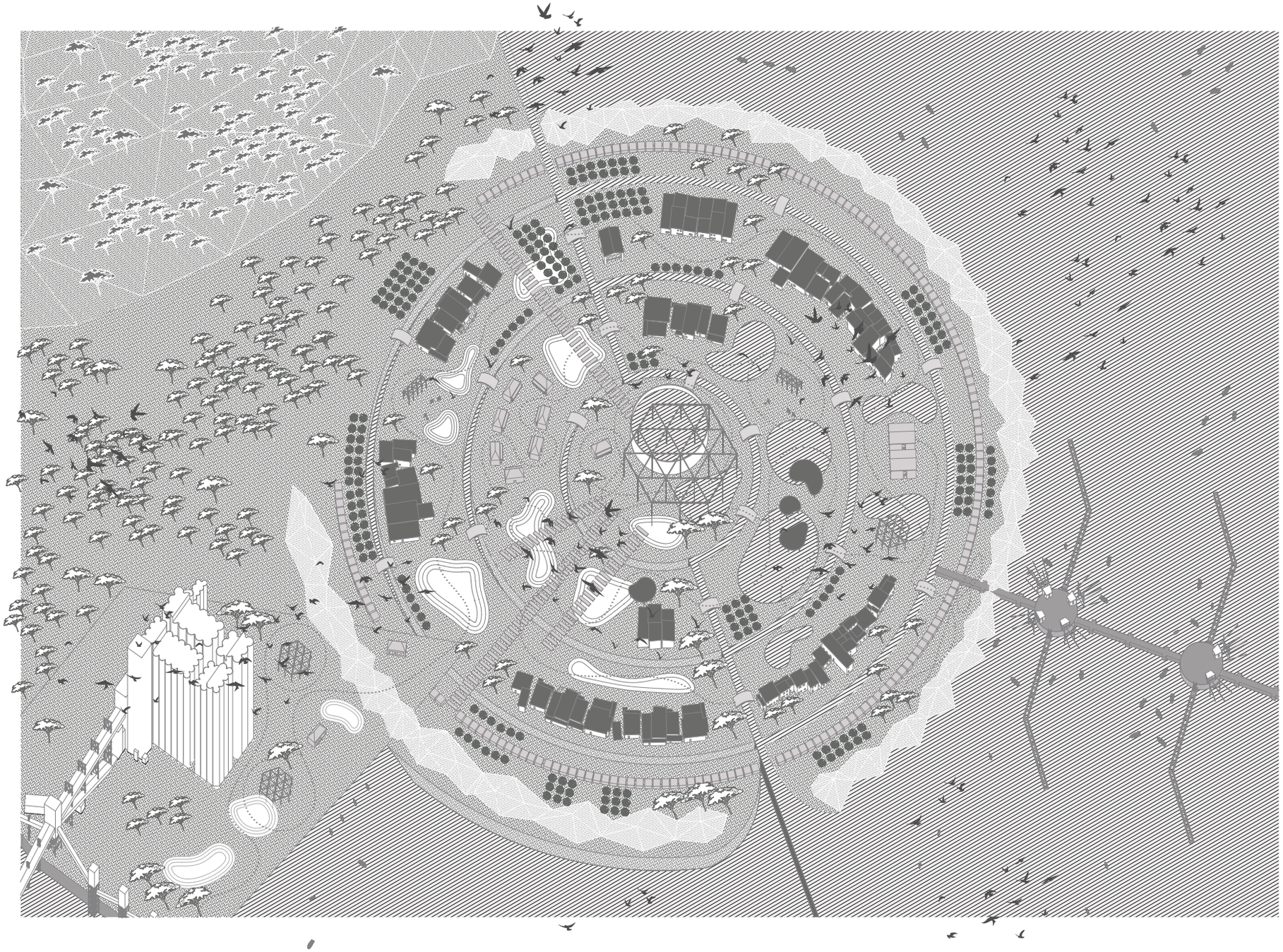
Incremental housing continues to grow by floors and rooms, now supported by shared drainage, water-collection spaces, and safe routes dur ing high tides. Green spaces double as buffers and places of encounter. These green areas also include playgrounds for children, shaded zones for rest during hot seasons, and covered structures that provide shelter from rain in winter months.

The silo structure remains present as a counterforce to economic interests on the land, the guardian of Segundo Torrão. As already happens now, informal practices parasitise the perimeter of this productive zone for animal grazing. In this scenario of entanglement and care, these practices consolidate rather than disappear.

WHAT ENTANGLEMENT REVEALS

Entanglement presents itself as a practice of care, allowing Segundo Torrão's ecosystem to strengthen, socially and ecologically. This fragment uses water and transforms it from a threat into an infrastructure of care, that show a new way of living collectivity, emphasising mutual support.

Entanglement extremises tendencies of care and self-organisation already present. It is not a guaranteed future, but an otherwise one, a future in which the grammar of care already practised in the bairro's row houses finds room to grow beyond its own fences.



Enclosed city

The area of Segundo Torrão makes manifest multiple interests: financialisation of the coast, militarisation, climate vulnerability, social exclusion. The illegality of the settlement is the terrain on which many dynamics of racism and discrimination take hold. Added to this is a post-colonial context that has never reckoned with its past.

This fragment shows a scenario in which economic interests prevail over people's right to housing. It shows the extreme consequences of trends already in motion. Faced with these trends, the care infrastructures of Segundo Torrão find no space.

In an increasingly hot Lisbon, under growing climate pressure, with more immigrants arriving and a system at collapse, spaces for care no longer exist. The NATO base is reactivated; constraints and barriers multiply rather than disappear.

In this representation, the scenario is exaggerated to reveal the trends at work. Water, intrinsic to the bairro, is not managed here but left to become a threat. As sea levels rise and coastal flood intensify, the water that once sustained the community now floods it. The difference is not in the water itself, but in what surrounds it: where infrastructure is built to protect capital rather than people, water becomes the instrument that reveals who is valued and who is disposable.

THE CITY OF SEPARATION

Segundo Torrão has been relegated to the margins of Lisbon not by chance, but in accordance with specific interests that have urbanistically shaped the area over centuries. The persistence of this social exclusion is the result of a deliberate urban project of exclusion.

The drawing aims to trigger questions: What kind of city do we want? What city risk do we face if we continue to pursue economic interests at the expense of people's right to stay put? It shows the area as a territory of deep separations, where the rights of the most vulnerable are left to sink in the water.

Water is not controlled here; it is allowed to flood the areas deemed expendable. Fences multiply, the safest ground is privatised, industrialised and militarised, and the most vulnerable zones are abandoned to inundation or turned into controlled flood areas that protect only the port, the base, and new developments. Care survives only as technical risk management for those who can afford it. Buffer zones are built around economic assets, while Segundo Torrão is left exposed. Community life is progressively eroded by logics of security and surveillance.

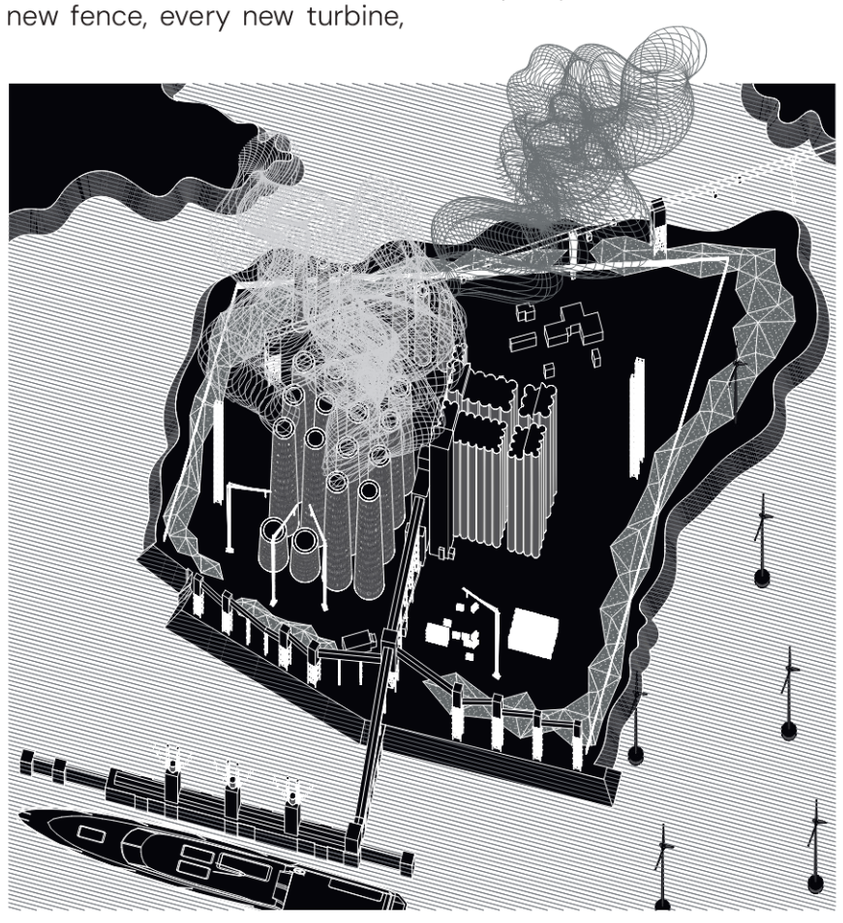
In the drawn scenario, large parts of the territory adjacent to Segundo Torrão, and the settlement itself, are covered with windmills for energy production. The landscape is dominated by rows of turbines stretching across the plains and hills, another infrastructure that serves the port, the base, and new developments while leaving the community exposed. What is presented as sustainability becomes another layer of territorial control, another justification for displacement. The wind turbines rise over the land that once housed the community. Every new fence, every new turbine, every new buffer zone claims ground that was once lived.

NINETY YEARS OF EXTRACTION

The settlement has existed since 1940s, and this thesis shows how this territory has progressively become the object of economic and extractive interests. This scenario shows, by emphasising trends already in motion, what could happen in the next 90 years.

Among these trends is the recent PSZAER plan, which maps at national scale the areas of low environmental and heritage sensitivity suitable for ZAER (renewable energy zones).

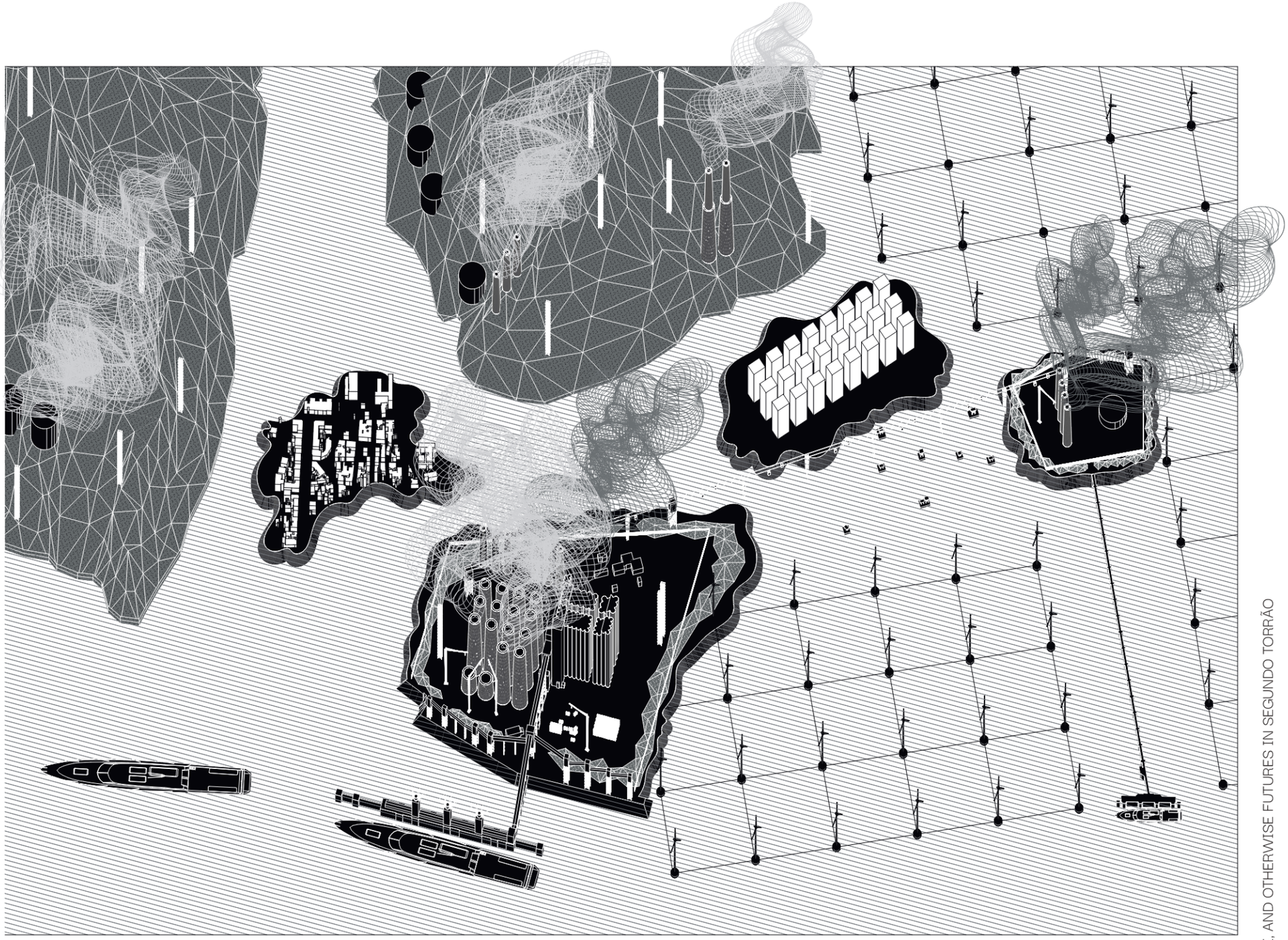
Protection systems are used solely to protect industrial and



military areas. Large housing ensembles are proposed to solve the housing problem for ever more arrivals, attempting to fix the problems in the same way the PER plan failed to resolve. In 1993, PER copied the *grand ensembles* model, clustering together disenfranchised communities in massive housing blocks while ignoring singularities and cultural practices of immigrants.

All of this leads to a loss of Segundo Torrão's care infrastructures. This approach revives a traditional urbanism based on exclusion, functional separation, and isolation, making space for care impossible.

Enclosure extremises tendencies of extraction and abandonment already at work. It is not an inevitable future, but a warning: the future the probable might produce if left unchallenged by otherwise practice. What is called "development" is, for Segundo Torrão, a slow eviction. Infrastructure does not arrive to serve those already here but to replace them.



6.3 – Holding open futures

Drawn from the same territorial material examined throughout this thesis, these two fragments are projected along the same axes: water, enclosure, care, extraction, toward two equally plausible horizons. Their purpose is to make visible, through spatial narrative, tendencies easily overlooked in an everyday reading of the site, and to insist that the direction those tendencies take is not predetermined.

These two fragments are speculative narratives of urban and ecological reimagining. They combine real elements, the marginalisation and degradation already documented in Segundo Torrão, the inequalities produced by militarisation and financialisation, the informal care practices that have allowed the community to survive, with new, speculative elements: new infrastructures of coexistence with water, new relations between settlement and ecological reserve, new configurations of power that either amplify collective care or intensify control and exclusion. In Entangled, these speculative elements extend the grammar of care already present toward a more inclusive city. In Enclosed, they show what happens when that grammar is closed off, when dominant logics consolidate and other possibilities disappear.

Water renders boundaries labile in both fragments, but each scenario responds differently to that lability. In Entangled, water is collectively managed: channels, dunes, and platforms transform it from threat into infrastructure of care, and the same spaces shift between collective defence when water abounds and sociality when it recedes. In Enclosed, water is not managed but left to flood the expendable: embankments protect only the port, the base, and new developments, while Segundo Torrão is abandoned to inundation. Read together, they hold in view the tension between the future dominant logics pull toward (militarisation, financialisation, securitised climate management) and the futures that small displacements and existing collective care already open up.

Whether architecture, faced with problems too vast to resolve through design alone, still retains the capacity to imagine and draw otherwise futures remains an open question. This thesis offers one attempt: not a perfect future, but one in which the grammar of care already practised, quietly and persistently, in the row houses of Segundo Torrão might find room to grow beyond its own fences.

(Not a) conclusion

This thesis began with a question raised by Segundo Torrão: what does it mean to inhabit a place that the city treats as temporary, illegal, and at risk, when generations of residents have nevertheless built their lives there?

Through fieldwork, residents' testimonies, archival material, and an atlas of fragments, the research has approached Segundo Torrão not as a deficient version of the formal city, but as a place shaped by the entanglement of housing insecurity, coastal redevelopment, militarisation, climate risk, and everyday forms of care. The design proposal extends these conditions into two speculative futures, not to predict what will happen, but to make visible what is at stake in the choices made today.

What this work has made clearest is that home escapes any simple definition. In Segundo Torrão, home is neither property nor a finished architectural object. It is a relationship between people and place, made over time through labour, family growth, proximity, memory, and the daily work of remaining. It takes form in a room added for a relative, a wall repaired after a storm, a roof raised when money becomes available, or a threshold shared with a neighbour.

These small acts are architectural, but they are also political. The houses of Segundo Torrão are arguments for the right to remain: evidence that a residual and legally insecure piece of land can become a place of belonging. To recognise this does not mean romanticising informality or accepting unsafe living conditions. It means refusing the false choice between precarity and displacement, and recognising that protection cannot consist in removing people from the relationships through which a place has become home.

The task for architecture, then, is not simply to design new buildings or to repair the visible effects of inequality. It is to ask what existing worlds a project might erase, whose knowledge it accepts as valid, and which boundaries it reinforces or undoes. At Segundo Torrão, this means beginning from what residents have already built and recognising that their presence is not an obstacle to the territory's future, but part of the knowledge required to imagine it.

The question is therefore not whether Segundo Torrão should remain exactly as it is. Its present conditions are neither safe nor just. The question is whether its transformation will be shaped with those who have made a life there, or imposed upon them. Ultimately, this thesis asks what kind of city Lisbon is willing to become: one that protects land, infrastructure, and capital while displacing people, or one that recognises the right to remain as a condition for any meaningful idea of city.

Image credits

[Unless otherwise indicated, all images are by the author]

Figure 1.2
The September 2024 protest, among the many others, drew thousands to the streets of Lisbon, demanding systemic reform in a context where more than half of the working population earns less than €1,000 per month, and where the government has set the maximum limit for so-called *renda moderada* (moderate rents) at €2,300. Introduced by the government in September 2025 and confirmed in subsequent legislation, the *renda moderada* is a fiscal category that grants landlords a reduced IRS tax rate of 10% (down from 25%) for rental contracts with monthly rents up to €2,300. According to the government, this threshold was calculated based on "a market survey carried out in the areas of greatest pressure", and assumes a household with a monthly income of approximately €5,750. The absurdity of defining €2,300 as "moderate" becomes evident when compared with the reality of Portuguese wages: according to a document produced by the Gabinete de Estratégia e Planeamento (GEP) of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security, presented in the Concertação Social in January 2023, 56% of workers in Portugal earned less than €1,000 per month in 2022, a figure that rose to 65% among those under 30. The mobilisations represent a collective response to Portugal's deepening housing crisis, where escalating rents, speculative real estate markets, and inadequate public housing policies have made access to shelter increasingly unattainable. The slogans, "*Ter uma casa para viver já não dá*" (Having a home to live in is no longer possible), capture the urgency of a struggle that has brought together residents, activists, and community organisations across the country. This demonstration is part of a broader wave of protest that includes movements such as Vida Justa, which emerged from grassroots organising in the peri-urban *bairro*s during the 2021 lockdown, and whose manifesto denounced the criminalisation of poorer communities and the prioritisation of debt repayment over social welfare. Together with other movements, they articulate a shared vision: *housing is not a commodity but a fundamental right, and only through organised resistance and sustained public pressure can meaningful change be achieved*.
Retrived from: https://www.casaparaviver.pt/ [16/07/2026]

Figure 1.3
Retrived from Springer Nature Link: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-90445-6_7 [16/07/2026].

Figure 1.4
Retrived from Em Luta Journal: https://emluta.net/2023/06/28/2-o-Torrão-uma-luta-contra-o-poder-pelo-direito-a-habitacao-digna/ [16/07/2026]

Figure 1.5
Retrived from Almada Online Journal: https://almadaonline.pt/trafaria-desabamento-na-vala-do-2o-Torrão/ [16/07/2026]

Figure 1.6
Retrived from Almadense Journal: https://almadense.sapo.pt/cidade/providencias-cautelares-impedem-varias-demolicoes-no-segundo-Torrão/ [16/07/2026]

Figure 1.7
This map visually asserts that Portugal is "not a small country" by juxtaposing the total area of its overseas colonies (2,168,071 km²) against the combined territory of major European nations such as Spain, France, England, Italy, and Germany (2,091,639 km²). While framed as a neutral geographical comparison, the graphic serves a clear ideological function: countering Portugal's diminished European status by redefining national greatness through imperial extent. In the context of Salazar's Estado Novo, it aimed to legitimize colonial possessions and foster a sense of geopolitical grandeur, masking the fragility of the empire with statistical overstatement.
Retrieved from Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal: https://catalogo.bnportugal.gov.pt/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=bn&uri=full=3100024~!525763~!0 [16/07/2026]

Figure 1.8
The map is inspired by a map deployed during the *Exposição do Mundo Português*, it reinforced the regime's propaganda of a "civilizing mission," using past achievements to justify ongoing colonial rule in Africa and Asia, while projecting an image of Portugal as the foremost agent of global geographic knowledge. Reworked from an image found on Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal: https://catalogo.bnportugal.gov.pt/ipac20/ipac.jsp?profile=bn&uri=full=3100024~!525763~!0 [16/07/2026]

Figure 1.10-1.15
Parque Metro Station, Lisbon, Portugal. Originally designed by Francisco Keil do Amaral and remodelled in 1994 by Sanchez Jorge, with plastic interventions by Françoise Schein and Frederica Matta.
These images are placed at the end of the section "Beyond the postcard" because Parque station is more than a functional transit node: it shows how Lisbon's everyday infrastructure can

also function as a curated urban image, combining mobility and historical symbolism. The station's walls are covered with tiled murals that depict themes connected to the Portuguese explorations. The emphasis on the explorations also anticipates and echoes the theme of Expo '98, "Oceans: a Heritage for the Future", which would take place in Lisbon four years later.

Figure 2.1
Retrived from Culturgest: https://www.culturgest.pt/pt/programacao/space-transcribers-fernando-ferreira-daniel-duarte-pereira/ [11/08/2026]

Figure 2.2
Retrived from Space Transcribers: https://www.spacetranscribers.com/EN/projetos/2018-11-24-livro-transcrever/ [11/08/2026]

Figure 3.1
An aerial photograph of the depot showing the port terminal, the petroleum quay, and the adjacent beach of Bico da Calha. Retrived from Arquivo Histórico de Almada: https://arquivo.cm-almada.pt/XarqDigitalizacaoContent/PaginaDocumento.aspx?-DocumentoID=16802&AplicacaoID=1&Pagina=9990&pagelist=1 [20/06/2026]. Reference number: 129934.

Figure 3.5 - 3.12
Retrived from Direção Geral do Território - Webfototeca: https://geo5.dgterritorio.gov.pt/fototeca/ [16/07/2026].

Figure 3.16
Retrived from The Observation Post: https://samilhistory.com/tag/the-carnation-revolution/ [15/08/2026].

Figure 3.17
Retrived from Africa Is a Country: https://africasacountry.com/2020/12/the-strange-case-of-portugals-returnees [15/08/2026].

Figure 3.18
Retrived from Fundação Instituto Marques da Silva: https://fims.up.pt [15/08/2026].

Figure 4.1
Trafaria (Portugal), Vista geral e rio Tejo [General view and Tejo River]. Postcard, no. 28, c. 1900s, Fundação Portimagem. Retrived from Mar da Costa, "Trafaria e Cova do Vapor em 1946": https://mar-da-costa.blogspot.com/2016/06/trafaria-e-cova-do-vapor-em-1946.html [15/08/2026].

Figure 5.1
Retrived from Time Out Lisboa: https://www.timeout.pt/lisboa/pt/noticias/nao-sao-destrocos-mas-memorias-exposicao-chama-atencao-para-demolicoes-no-segundo-torrao-053124 [20/08/2026]. Photo by Susana Santa-Marta.
Figure 5.2
Retrived from Mensagem de Lisboa: https://amensagem.pt/2024/05/21/sera-que-mar-vai-comer-bairro-moradores-segundo-torrao-cientistas-almada/ [25/06/2026]. Photo by Maíra Streit.

Figure 5.3
Retrived from Frame Colectivo: https://framecolectivo.com/en/projectos/2a-torrao-espacos-em-pesquisa/ [25/06/2026].

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Segundo Torrão is a self-produced settlement on the waterfront of the Tagus estuary, across from Lisbon, entangled between a NATO military base, a grain-terminal port, and protected ecological land. This thesis reads it through fieldwork, residents' testimonies and the material memory of demolitions, not as a failed version of the formal city, but as a world built house by house, generation after generation, an atlas of fragments, human, material, natural, and collective, deliberately held apart, that resists being flattened into a single story.

From this reading emerge two speculative futures that do not offer definitive solutions, but imagine what may unfold in Segundo Torrão if its fences are dismantled or allowed to multiply.

In the end, the future of Segundo Torrão is not only a question of what the settlement might become, but a question of what kind of city we want to live in.