Landscapes of Care. Public housing across multiple geographies: crossing theories and practices

SOPHIA

SCOPIO EDITIONS

volume 9, issue 1 | publication year: 2024
issn: 2183-8976 [print] 2183-9468 [online]
isbn: 978-989-53640-8-4

...

homepage: https://www.up.pt/index.php/sophia

Differentiated inhabitation of 'auteur architecture': photographing Álvaro Siza's Bouça housing estate

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Abstract

This paper explores the different ways residents of famous buildings experience the architecture they live in. We aim at an architectural photography that seeks to portray architecture not as a visual phenomenon but rather a lived one. We have photographed residents of the Bouça housing estate in Porto, Portugal, designed in the 1970s by Pritzker Prize winning Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza to house the urban poor after the 1974 revolution. The estate has since become an architectural icon and is currently undergoing gentrification by architects, designers and artists who are drawn to the appeal of 'auteur architecture'. The differences in inhabitation between the original residents and the recent ones pertain to a complex yet dualistic stance between two distinct social classes on what architecture is and what it means, one that also raises the issue of housing for the urban poor becoming fashionable. We read such tensions while tracing back to Siza's early belief in a classless society, which later evolved into the belief in an 'interclassist city'.

Keywords: inhabitation; auteur architecture; residents' experience; Álvaro Siza; Bouça housing estate; architectural photography.

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Acknowledgements

We want to thank the Bouça residents who opened the door to their houses and made this research possible in the first place. We are indebted to Ana Estevens, Filipa Serpa, Ricardo Agarez, André Carmo and Juliana Pereira for the discussions we had in the research project 'Inhabiting Siza: residents' experience of Álvaro Siza's architecture and micro-technologies', which also inform what we write here. The project was funded by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (SIZA/UES/0020/2019; https://doi.org/10.54499/SIZA/UES/0020/2019).

Reinserting people into Architectural Photography

Portraying buildings which for any reason have become architectural icons is a complex process, yet one which still tends to focus on what the building was designed and intended to be rather than on what it actually is or how it is lived. A common trick is photographing residential buildings immediately after completion – before the resident moves in – or eliminating any piece of clothing or furniture that are out of place or do not fit an intended aesthetics, often to make 'the architecture stand out'. While visually appealing, the trick risks losing sight of the building's main purpose – to be lived in. Mainstream forms of architectural photography can thus be devoid of people, or even of an allusion to them through mundane objects in the image. In this paper we counter such state of affairs by trying to show how residents live in and experience 'auteur architecture',[1] how their flats reflect that idea and what may be their own sense of inhabiting a famous building.

These concerns are not new in photography debates. During the post-WWII period, a humanistic claim on architectural portrayal emerged and a 'documentary aesthetics' came to inform the debates over the reconstruction of many European cities. Nigel Henderson's portraits of children playing in the streets, for instance, were presented by Allison and Peter Smithson at CIAM X, in 1953, as an illustration of this new way of looking at and portraying architecture. Later, John Donat presented a lecture at the Royal Institute of British Architects titled "The camera always lies", in which he argued for the need of a less formal way of depicting architecture, proposing instead that architectural photography should include the lived and vivid experience of buildings or spaces, instead of reverting to the sterile photography of post-construction but pre-occupancy unlived spaces usually presented in architectural magazines.[2]

Recurrent calls for a more humanistic architectural photography had philosophical and theoretical backings. Martin Heidegger's concept of 'being-in-the-world' was often used given it underlines that our existence is inherently connected to the world, and that we experience these connections through our interactions with the surrounding environment and the things in it.[3] Architectural photography would in this vein at least attempt to catch, if only fleetingly, such connections of 'being-in-the-world'. A second theoretical stand revolved around Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which argues that the built environment can be regarded as a spatial expression of class and ideology, thus that buildings can also be conceived as representations of their owners and users through class markers such as

1 Ana Catarina Costa et al., "Inhabiting Auteur Architecture: Tracing the Residents' Experience of Álvaro Siza's Bouça Housing Estate," *Social and Cultural Geography*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2025.2464016.
2 John Donat, "The Camera Always Lies," *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal* 75 (1968): 62–71. See also Robert Elwall, *Building with Light: An International History of Architectural Photography* (London: Merrell, 2004).
3 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking* (1964), trans. and ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).

furniture, decoration and other elements.[4] Later, Homi Bhabha's 'un-homely' (following Freud's concept of *unheimlich*) came to destabilise such schematic meanings, and in the process blur the theoretical boundaries between private and public experiences of home.[5] Adding to such cumulative complications of experiencing home, some architectural offices now try to leave room for the inhabitants' future imprint on the buildings they design, as can be seen in atelier Elemental's half-built houses for low income populations or in the photographic series of the *Cité manifeste* complex in Mulhouse by Lacaton and Vassal.[6]

Recent research from human geography's sub-field known as the geographies of architecture has emphasized that buildings inhabit our lives as much as we inhabit them, and that they do so in multidimensional ways: from the interior to the exterior, from visual impression or iconography to the functional elements of housing and importantly to our physical and mental inhabitation inside the house.[7] The focus of these studies is thus to 'practising architectures', which include not only *material matter* (the physical architectural artefact) but also *human mattering* (meaning, judgment, affect and atmosphere).[8] Among them is for instance Mark Llewellyn's study on the reception and appropriation of early modernist apartment complex Kensal House in London. Llewellyn tells of in-movers in the 1930s making sure to bring or buy ornate, traditional furniture to 'help them feel at home' amongst the geometric, minimalist design of their homes.[9]

Contemporary architectural photography has in a way accompanied such understandings of 'what architecture is' and some of its strands try to re-insert people and inhabitation practices back into architectural depiction. This is not to be mistaken with folk aesthetics nor with things like 'home staging', the all-pervasive home visualities we can see in furniture catalogues, real estate websites and developer's prospectus, where an ersatz type of inhabitation, almost always consisting of a middle-class aesthetics, is performed to enhance the commodity being sold – furniture, a house or a whole neighbourhood. Regarding this, Beatriz Colomina has shown a possible archaeology of images of domestic bliss in the case of the technologies, initially developed for war that became central elements of post-war, American domesticity, such as microwaves and television (today added by the personal computer and the mouse,

4 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
5 Homi Bhabha, "The World and the Home," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 445–455.
6 Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, "Cité Manifeste, Mulhouse," 2005, https://www.lacatonvassal.com/index.php?idp=19.
7 Kraftl, Geographies of Architecture; Kraftl and Adey, Architecture/Affect/Inhabitation; Lees, "Towards a Critical Geography of Architecture."
8 Jane M. Jacobs and Peter Merriman, "Practising Architectures," *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 3 (2011): 212.
9 Mark Llewellyn, "'Urban Village' or 'White House': Envisioned Spaces, Experienced Places, and Everyday Life at Kensal House, London in the 1930s," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 22, no. 2 (2004): 229–249.

not to mention the internet, which came later).[10] She had previously showed how modern architecture had been 'produced' not only by buildings themselves but by their representations in mass media, including those 'un-lived' staged domesticities.[11]

An example of architectural photography with a human presence yet clearly portraying an 'un-lived' and staged domesticity are Julius Shulman's photographs of mid-century modern architecture, in particular his images of Richard Neutra's and other architects' LA hills homes.[12] The human presence in such photographs is more closely aligned with the aim of projecting a specific lifestyle to be associated with the house – an elegant, bourgeois and modern lifestyle – as well as enhancing the architectural and property values of the houses depicted, than with the intricacies of actual inhabitation. As Joseph Rosa and Esther McCoy note, Shulman's 'method of "constructing" photographic views often transcend[ed] reality to capture the spirit, time and place of a work of architecture'[13]; but doing so, we add, with a great deal of poetic (and imagetic) license that was not interested in actual inhabitation but rather in iconic image producing.

Against this background, we aim our photographs to point to a more complicated, less staged process of inhabitation. In the rest of this paper, despite our images sometimes showing less human presence than Shulman's, we wish to provide glimpses of an everyday, un-staged domesticity and inhabitation. We aim to show the way the dwelling represents the dweller and vice-versa (how the dweller transforms its dwelling) as well as explore the contested process of living in a building charged with architectural meaning.[14]

Show us your home at Bouça

The images and interview excerpts presented below result from a series of interviews carried out at the Bouça housing estate. They were produced within the scope of a broader research project on resident's experience of Siza's architecture. Ethnographic fieldwork at Bouça lasted five months and included 15 interviews with residents of different age, gender, class and occupation, as well as different tenure status and date of arrival. During the interviews, inspired by Jane M. Jacobs's SUYH Show Us Your Home ethnomethodology, we asked residents to show us their flat and tell us how they perceived and interacted with architectural elements, photographing them as they spoke.[15]

10 Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
11 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
12 Pierluigi Serraino, *Julius Shulman: Modernism Rediscovered* (Cologne: Taschen, 2018).
13 Joseph Rosa and Esther McCoy, *A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994).
14 Peter Kraftl, "Living in an Artwork: The Extraordinary Geographies of the Hundertwasser-Haus, Vienna," *Cultural Geographies* 16, no. 1 (2009): 111–134.
15 Jacobs, Cairns, and Strebel 2006; 2012.

Asking residents to participate in the photographic process aimed at engaging directly with their personal perceptions of their homes, hopefully shedding light on the way they had already adapted the space and how they might wanted to change it further. This interaction introduces an additional layer to common photographic practice, one where residents' self-perception and interpretation about their living environment is heightened, and gets at the idea that architecture is not static but continuously shaped by its users. By involving residents in the decision-making of what to show and how to present their homes, we not only documented their lived experiences but also captured their evolving relationship with the space. Such photo elicitation[16] during interviews was complemented by a supplementary session to photograph two specific apartments, which are among those featured in this paper. Instead of looking only at the conventional subjects of architecture such as walls, angles, perspective, volumes and light, we propose to look at the flats in Bouça in their multiplicity: as a representation of people's worldviews and experiences; as homes that are sometimes performed, sometimes dismissed; and as places of everyday inhabitation, taste and belonging. We turn to Bouça's history next.

The Bouça housing estate: revolutionary architecture, inhabitation and gentrification

The Bouça housing estate was commissioned in the early 1970s by the Housing Investment Fund (*FFH Fundo de Fomento da Habitação*) to develop land that belonged to Porto's Juvenile Court (*Tribunal Central de Menores do Porto*) for middle income residents.[17] However, it was redirected after 1974, during the post-revolutionary political atmosphere that lasted around two years, to be built through the assisted self-building and participatory architecture program *Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local* (Mobile Service for Local Support, from now on SAAL),[18] for the low-income population that lived in areas near the site. Having endured 48 years of a fascist dictatorship that had led to serious underdevelopment and poverty, the urban poor lived in precarious housing conditions such as Lisbon's shanty towns or Porto's tenement buildings known as *Ilhas* (Islands). The latter consisted of the small flats of about 9 to 25 square meters built for proletarian workers on the back of the bourgeois buildings that faced the street. Typically these dwellings had only one façade and were accessed by a corridor that occupied the entire lot, with a shared toilet at the beginning or at the end.[19] Although of very poor living conditions,

16 Harper, Douglas. "Talking about Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation." *Visual Studies* 17 (1) (2002): 13–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860220137345.

17 Wang, Wilfried. "Bouça and Public Housing at the Beginning of the 21st Century." In *Bouça Residents' Association Housing: Porto 1972–77, 2005–06*, edited by Á. Siza, B. Fleck, and W. Wang, 65–70. Austin: University of Texas, 2008.

18 Eduardo Ascensão, "Interfaces of Informality: When Experts Meet Informal Settlers," City 20, no. 4 (2016): 563–580; Ana Catarina Costa, *O campo da arquitectura na construção da cidade democrática: o Processo SAAL/*Porto (PhD diss., Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, 2022).

19 Manuel C. Teixeira, *Habitação Popular na Cidade Oitocentista: As Ilhas do Porto* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1996).

[Fig. 1] *Ilhas* and similar poor housing in 1970s Porto: entrance to *ilha* at Avenida Fernão Magalhães, c. 1976 (Left) and the Travessa do Leal alley (Centre), November 1974. Photographs: Alexandre Alves Costa and Sérgio Fernandez (Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril). Newly-arrived residents at Bouça cook a meal, 1979 (Right). Photograph: Brigitte Fleck.

the *ilhas* typology in a way helped institute an idea of community and sharing in adversity. The SAAL housing program was initiated to address the housing needs of such populations, and Bouça – although initiated before – became one of its most prominent exemplars.

Today, the housing estate consists of four buildings anchored by a high wall that both connects them and blocks the noise coming from a railway line located immediately to the North. Between the buildings are courtyards with different characteristics: a tree-shaded area, a lawn and the central courtyard in which individual access stairs to the dwellings form a kind of bench for social gatherings or a scenario for ordinary life. In a way, Siza took *ilha's* corridors as social spaces and enlarged them to a much larger scale, with the intention of privileging social life in the estate. All the main buildings have four floors and include two overlapping maisonettes, where the lower floors are accessed directly from the street and the upper floors are accessed through exterior galleries (or 'streets-in-the-sky').

[Fig. 2] Bouça's central courtyard. Video Still: Author 2, 2024.

Bouça was not entirely built in the late 1970s. Due to different problems, including the winding down of the SAAL by central government (which deemed the program too revolutionary when the country 'normalised' into a parliamentary liberal democracy), the estate was built in two phases: 56 dwellings in the late 1970s, for the poor and poorly-housed residents of the area. They had to form a Residents Association, which according to SAAL rules and the revolutionary zeitgeist was the only type of entity that could be the recipient of funding through low-interest loans; and the remaining 72 dwellings in 2006, through a cooperative formed mostly by architects and designers — we detail this process in a different article.[20]

What happened was that the estate became famous in the intervening time, as an illustration of Siza's architectural talent and the qualities of participatory architecture as well as, to an extent, a nostalgic memento of architecture designed amidst progressive direct democracy. Currently, it is visited by many architectural tourists, ranging from individuals wandering around the estate to more organised international architecture students' visits (Fig. 3).

Coupled with its central location and the extremely competitive prices the cooperative managed to put the flats up for sale, it became a desirable place for the creative classes to move into when the second phase was finished. Some ended up buying more than one flat and

20 Costa et al., "Inhabiting Auteur Architecture."

[Fig. 3] An architectural tourist visits and photographs Bouça (Left). Photograph: Author 4, 2023. Residents on being subjected to the tourist gaze: "*I feel [like I'm living in an artwork] even more when I'm out there smoking: I'm on these stairs that everyone looks at, and near this stair-monument that everyone laughs at and says the craziest things about...*" (Interview, 2023). The stair-monument (Right). Photograph: Author 3, 2023.

either rented them at market values or sold them at a higher value – e.g. flats bought from the cooperative for 80.000€ in 2006 were valued at 230.000€ in 2020. Some original residents, or their descendants, have also sold their flats. Overall, the process has similarities with the gentrification of landmark modernist estates by modernism aficionados like the Trellick Tower and Keeling House in London, among others worldwide.[21]

As a consequence, at Bouça there is a marked divide between residents belonging to each phase, and even if new residents make steps towards bridging the divide and fostering a sense of community, older residents feel the estate's original spirit is fading. The class divide and, in a way, distinct worldviews can be seen inside the flats, where furniture and reconfigurations are different and an overall attitude towards Siza's architecture is different too. Figures 4 to 6 reveal the way home interiors vary according to the different generations of residents. Taken at a very similar angle, they show that whereas recent, more educated and higher income in-movers make intense efforts to align the aesthetics of their flat with Siza's original design, sometimes regardless of everyday practicality, older residents reconfigure their flats to suit practical needs and their individual notions of inhabitation, including more ornate furniture and arriving at a more baroque outcome.

21 Maren Harnack, "London's Trellick Tower and the Pastoral Eye," in *Urban Constellations*, ed. Matthew Gandy (Berlin: Jovis, 2011), 127–131; James Boughton, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (London: Verso, 2018), 122.

[Fig. 4] Recent in-movers, many of them architects, bought flats that had been extensively altered by their original residents and re-did them back to Siza's original project: "*We knew that we would want to refurbish* (or. reabilitar) *in depth. During this research I realized that we didn't have to change everything, we just had to understand if we were in a balanced game. We are architects, we can put it in good condition.*" (Interview, 2023). Photo: Author 2, 2023.

[Fig. 5] First-phase residents' home interiors and renovations reflect the need for a visual transformation for a population for whom Siza's design is not determinant: "*It's not a flat with great aesthetics, it's a normal flat, like in any council neighbourhood, (...) it's nothing to be surprised about.*" (Interview, 2023). Photo: Author 2, 2023.

[Fig. 6] In the kitchen: "*I've made some changes in the flat. (...) I wanted to make a completely new kitchen, and the builder said to me: 'I'm going to make you an Algarvian kitchen.' An Algarvian kitchen, what's that? 'It's a big island, then there's a snack-bar type spotlight on top, the wife cooks on one side, then there are stools as if you were in a bar, what do you think?'*" (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

A similar difference occurs in the way workspaces are arranged: while creative or professional occupations are strongly reflected in people's homes (as suggested by desks with desktop or laptop computers, design chairs and framed posters); in older residents that contamination is much less visible. (Fig. 7).

Living room decoration is one more case where recent in-movers try to make light and space distribution stand out, whereas older residents seek 'cosiness' or a homely feeling differently.

[Fig. 7] Workspaces: "*The modern people have another standard of living that we don't have, they have another position that we don't have, right? But our next-door neighbours were people who, from the first day, were always very friendly with us.*" (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

[Fig. 8] *I think it's important to be from Siza, but not because of the name. Living here, you can see the house is very well designed. It's very small, but it's very well designed. We are three people here and we are super comfortable. We are able to have dinners, do everything on this tiny table."* (Interview, 2023); *"We really like the light in the flat, it's not that intense, and the temperature is also very good."* (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

A final example of different modes of inhabitation regards the everyday use of what we term Siza's micro-technologies. These are the design pieces that contribute to everyday inhabitation such as door knobs and window pushers, towel hangers, bathroom faucets and so on. Siza has always devoted time to design such instruments, which he considers part of the architectural experience – he has famously mentioned how 'living a house' is a continuous struggle with things breaking up and needing repair.[22] At Bouça, the recent residents give much importance to these artefacts, either by maintaining original technologies (e.g. the window opening system) or by substituting the materials previous owners had bought to replace the original hardware, either with 'signed' pieces which are on sale in dedicated design stores or with similarly-looking 'un-signed' pieces (Fig. 9).

22 Álvaro Siza, "Viver uma Casa" (1994), in *Álvaro Siza: Obras e Projectos*, ed. P. Llano and C. Castanheira (Madrid: Electra, 1995), 94–95.

[Fig. 9] New residents maintain Siza's 'micro-technologies' in the flat, such as door levers and the window system (Left). In the bathroom, parts and external pipes are not original but were chosen by new owner-architects to match the original concept (Right). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

Such everyday modes of engagement with Siza's architecture suggests a form of sociotechnical entanglement between people and technologies in the built environment, much like Jane M. Jacobs' research on the science and technology of highrise housing estates, only regarding the smaller scale of auteur architecture.[23]

This is, in a summarised way, the reception of Siza's architecture at Bouça along class lines. For Siza himself, ideas concerning class and architecture have long been an integral part of his thought. During the revolutionary period, in a commentary paper on the role of SAAL's brigades, he expressed a strong belief in a classless society.[24] Bouça could be read as an architectural manifestation of this belief. However, in the nearly five decades since its inception, while the living conditions of the working class have significantly improved in Portugal, inequality levels have risen and gentrification has occurred in several areas of cities, including, acutely, at Bouça. In 2014, confronted with the increasing gentrification and *embourgeosiement* of the estate, Siza (in dialogue with architect-curator Nuno Grande) reframed his early belief and emphasised how the existence of new, wealthier residents at Bouça must be taken as part and parcel of living in an 'interclassist city'.[25]

23 Jane M. Jacobs, Stephen Cairns, and Ignaz Strebel, "Doing Building Work: Methods at the Interface of Geography and Architecture," *Geographical Research* 50, no. 2 (2012): 126–140; Jacobs, Cairns, and Strebel, "Windows: Re-viewing Red Road," *Scottish Geographical Journal* 124, no. 2–3 (2008): 165–184.
24 Siza 1976.
25 Mariana Duarte, "As Discussões eram de uma Sinceridade Absoluta," *Público*, November 9, 2014.

It is a compelling idea, suggesting a permanent dialogue and interaction between people belonging to different socioeconomic classes and merits further development. Siza and Grande, unfortunately, did not detail it. Still, the phrase hints at a city where the urban poor and better-off households can live in physical and social proximity, i.e. not in physical proximity that does not translate to social proximity, what Tim Butler and Garry Robson have termed 'social tectonics'.[26] In a way, middle- and upper middle-class individuals being in awe with flats that have relatively small areas is already a type of interconnection, a downward adjustment to live in a smaller flat than they are used to (Fig. 10).

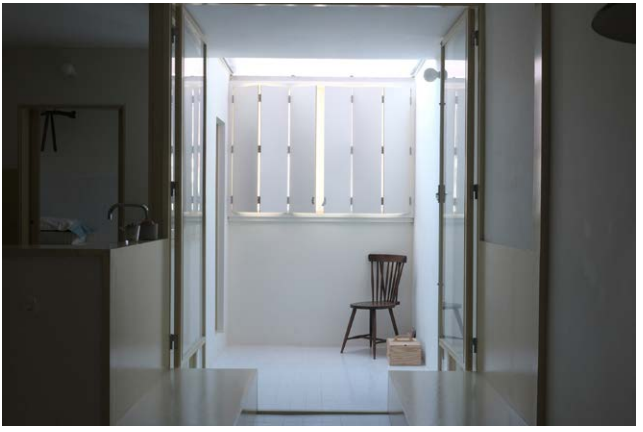
[Fig. 10] Flats are small and residents need to make good use of the limited space, such as by drying clothes in the laundry next to the kitchen: "*Our fridge is small. We've reduced the fridge area. (...) And the washing machine is a washer-dryer, we had to optimise the space. Not having a tumble dryer in this flat is challenging at certain times of the year.* (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

However, such adaptation has more to do with the Siza appeal than the wish for interaction with low income neighbours. Interaction, residents say, happens only sporadically, in particular during the Midsummer festivities of São João (Saint John, Porto's patron saint) (Fig. 11).

26 Butler and Robson 2001. See also Jackson and Butler 2015.

Fig. 11] 'Social tectonics' at Bouça: "I like the atmosphere here, in theory, because in practice there is no interaction, there is no feeling of companionship among the residents. Only in S. João..." (Interview, 2023). Video Still: Author 3, 2024.

Other, more contradictory moments of interaction relate to the feelings of middle-class individuals of seeing older residents moved out by their children to be able to cash in on their recently appreciated flats (Fig. 12).



[Fig. 12] *"There was a man who I really liked, he lived there (...). Now his wife passed away his son sold the flat. He took him to a care home, and he is there, he lives there. I think the son did wrong, but there you go, it's money moving on. (...) He could have let the man live here, everyone got along well with him, the man was living in his environment. I don't even know if he's still alive... When these people are taken from their environment, they sometimes pass away quickly..."* (Interview, 2023). Photo: Author 2, 2023.

The only problem of an 'interclassist city' is thus if it is merely a transitory phase of a revolutionary city based on equality becoming increasingly commodified and displacing the poor until it is fully gentrified. Such conceptual concerns can be seen very concretely at Bouça, with its seemingly unstoppable gentrification being exactly what the original residents are the most afraid of (Fig. 13).

[Fig. 13] Low income population worry about short-term rentals adding to the almost complete gentrification of the neighborhood:
"This thing now about having short term lets, this was not meant for that. The ideology was this was meant for poor people. Nowadays it is the complete opposite. And if they can, they'll take away the few that are still here. I can't get my head around it, and it pains me." (Interview, 2023);
"I'm not against short term rentals. If you buy a house and put it under the short term rental regime, look: the money is yours, the investment was yours, you had no state contribution, therefore it is perfectly logical that you make the most out of your money. Now, what is not logical is that you monetise what you have, which is yours, but which was in a way offered to you by the state. I'm against that. Therefore, there should be a law to forbid cooperatives, or anyone living in cooperatives, from transforming their flats into short term rentals." (Interview, 2023).
"She told me: 'I came because the price is attractive, and I like this place', and then she also said: 'this will be worth a lot of money in a dozen years, because it is under the architecture of Siza'. What do I care about Siza?" (Interview, 2023). Video Still: Author 2, 2024. Airbnb listing, 2024.

Conclusion

The tension existing at Bouça arises from a complex situation that we can summarise as a dualistic one, with the original residents, on the one hand, and the new inhabitants, attracted by the estate's architectural prestige, on the other. Despite risking oversimplification, our photographic evidence points to such a differentiated inhabitation, and images and residents' voices point to two typical interiors and inhabitation modes – with a third, a conceptual one, running in parallel.

The first is the typical interior of the original residents. This interior represents the organic development of spaces as used and modified by the initial inhabitants. It showcases their personal touch, adapting Siza's architecture to their needs, traditions, and lifestyles without the fear of betraying the architect's vision. This type of interior often reveals a blend of the architect's vision and the residents' everyday practices, leading to a unique and evolving space that reflects the lived experience – even if at a quick glance, or from an architectural purist's viewpoint, it may look uglier than other house interiors. Regarding inhabitation, there is a strong concern in this set of residents with practical aspects of living, such as stairs, as well as more political views of housing, such as being very proud of living in Bouça for what it meant politico-historically, i.e. as an example of a revolutionary push to house the urban poor in quality flats.

The second is the typical interior of the Siza followers. These interiors are strongly influenced by the practices of those who admire and follow Siza's architectural philosophy in their homes. Siza followers have tended to preserve the integrity of his design while incorporating contemporary elements that align with his visual language. This results in spaces that maintain the aesthetic and functional intentions of Siza, demonstrating a respect for his original vision while also reflecting the evolving nature of design practices among his followers. Regarding inhabitation, there is an emphasis by Siza followers to pinpoint where in their home Siza's brilliant design can be seen (the layout making for spacious flats, the window and door systems making for good ventilation and light) and subsequently how intangible qualities such as atmosphere can be preserved with their own adaptations to the original design.

The third inhabitation mode would be Siza's own imagined interiors, which would perhaps be more conceptual but also more elusive. In a way, they can be inferred from his drawings, writings and the principles evident in his completed projects. The interiors by Siza followers could hypothetically correspond to such an imagined interior and inhabitation practices. However, in Siza's own words, the architect's work finishes 'the moment buildings are delivered to clients', which for flats means the moment they start to be inhabited.[27] Siza may thus have an abstract,

27 Brigitte Fleck, *Álvaro Siza* (Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 1999), 87.

conceptual and imagined version of what each space he designs can and should be for, how can and should it be inhabited; but he also knows architectural ideas are transformed by people, external influences and practical constraints. The photographs and the accompanying voices in this paper make such differentiated experiences explicit and point exactly to a truly heterodox appropriation of Siza's architecture.

One final note. Photography in this research, in a way, transcended mere documentation and became a tool for revealing the complex, evolving relationship between aesthetic ideals and social reality. It allowed us to portray not just parts of Siza's interior design and architecture but also how they are lived and modified, thus highlighting the ongoing dialogue between the built environment and its inhabitants. In this way, we attempted to reconcile the tension between photography as an aesthetic medium and as a social practice, using it to convey the full experience of architecture by inhabitants.

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