URBANIZATION IN LUANDA: GEOPOLITICAL FRAMEWORK. A SOCIO-TERRITORIAL ANALYSIS

SÍLVIAS LEIRIA VIEGAS
Address: Rua Bartolomeu Dias 122 rc dfº 1400.031 Lisboa, Portugal.
e-mail: silvialv.metapolis@gmail.com; info.metapolis@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this reflection is to make a socio-territorial analysis of the city of Luanda in three historical periods – colonial [1948-1975], postcolonial amidst a civil war [1975-2001] and postcolonial amidst peace [2002-2012] – so as to formulate some theoretical considerations (after standard authors like Castells, Foucault, Lefebvre or Harvey, among others) and on practices (considering the (in)effectiveness of the obtained results, and following new unexplored “bottom-up” methodological trails), with the goal of promoting the “right to the city”.

Figure 1- Map of Angola, Hodges (2002:16).

COLONIAL ANGOLA [1948-1975]
From 1948 (year of the 1st National Congress of Architecture in Portugal) to 1975 (when Angola became independent) the management of urban processes in Luanda was essentially characterized by the domination of a colonial and fascist Portuguese Mother Country. Architects/urban-planners intervened from an ideological and formal insubordination against that conservative State (an authoritarian and corporatist regime ruled mainly by Prime Minister Oliveira Salazar [1889-1970]), applying the late modernist principles of post-industrial Europe1 with a Brazilian influence and tropical expression. Against this backdrop, away from the

1 The International Style that shaped the reconstruction of European cities in the wake of the Second World War [1939-1945];
cities, nations and regions in planning history

repression and the official architectonic models (guided by historicism and revivalism) conveyed by the ‘New State’ in Portugal (1933-1974) – returning to their home countries or propelled by anti-regime ideological reasons – we single out the names of Vasco Vieira da Costa (1911-1982) and Fernão Simões de Carvalho (1929-) within the establishment of an overseas creative freedom and reinterpretation of a modern colonial utopia in Angola (Tostões, 2009).

When Vasco Vieira da Costa returns to Luanda in 1949, the central power of a vast Colonial Empire was already setting the major guidelines for planning (and for public works), in an attempt to thwart the alienation of African possessions recommended by the international community and the United Nations (Salvador e Rodrigues, 2006; Milheiro, 2009). A disciple of Le Corbusier’s architecture firm, where he worked from 1945 to 1948 (after a spell at Luanda’s City Council), Vieira da Costa was forced to work as an independent contractor and although receiving few urban-planning commissions (Fernandes, 1983) these were to represent the onset of his career: the study submitted in Oporto to the Competition for Obtaining the Degree of Architect (CODA, Satellite City no. 3. Draft for a Satellite City in Luanda, 1948) was based on the Urbanization Plan for the City of Luanda, developed by urban-planners Etienne de Groër and D. Moreira da Silva in 1942. Rapidly outdated by the capital’s fast growth, the plan suggested the creation of 5 satellite dormitory cities (separating Europeans from natives), each of them for about 50,000 inhabitants, spread on a semicircle around the existing urban area and connected by a ring road (Costa, 1948).

Figures 2 and 3 - Urbanization plan for Luanda and satellite cities, Costa (1984:89, 91).

In this project, Vieira da Costa analyses the urban space in Luanda in terms of general organization, routes, zoning, street network, public and commercial buildings, housing for Europeans and natives, transport, water supply and sewerage. He draws up a preliminary study for Satellite City no. 3 (located between Luanda and Malange), defining it as an independent and complex urban sprawl (Magalhães e Gonçalves, 2009) which also contradicted the rationalistic principles

2 The Colonial Urbanization Office (created in 1944) was responsible for developing several urban plans for the colonies, namely the urbanization plan for Luanda of 1949, by João Aguiar; 3 UN, founded in 1945 to operate as a platform between different countries, in order to achieve, among other goals, world peace;
of the so-called functional city that suggested an effective separation between residential, leisure and work areas, advocated by Le Corbusier, since 1923, in Vers une Architecture.

However, the work of Vieira da Costa in Luanda would thrive away from the fields of urban planning, best examples of which are the Kinaxixe Market, built in 1950-1952 (and demolished in 2008), the Anangola building from 1965, the Angola's Engineering Laboratory and the English House in Morro de Samba, both from 1965, or the Mutamba Block (now the Ministry of Urban Planning and Construction) also from the 1960s, among so many others (ibid; Fernandes, 2000).

If in 1940 the capital of Angola sheltered a population of 66,932, in 1950 its inhabitants had more than doubled, now totaling 158,882 (INE, according to the census). Luanda was a (un)predictable colonial city, characterized by an increasing social exclusion – fueled by a growing rural exodus and the search for a better life – and the proliferation of its musseques: spontaneous and self-built local neighborhoods, with an utter lack of infrastructure and/or services, located in or around the asphalt town (the old center and its expansion); informal peri-urban settlements that appeared among an accelerated urbanization and lack or inadequacy of planning. And though there is no numerical or percentage survey of the Angolan (native) population that then inhabited the musseques of Luanda, we may estimate it as being significant, given the weight of the ‘indigenato’ system created by several discriminatory laws perpetuated by the Portuguese state which would only be abolished in the early 1960s, examples of which are (Neto, 2000):

(a) the administrative needs for differentiation, of 1951, aiming at a slow cultural assimilation of natives and their transformation into civilized Portuguese;

(b) the statute of Portuguese natives from Guinea, Angola and Mozambique, of 1954 (to be granted to all black individuals and their offspring), which downgraded natives to the rank of second-class citizens, i.e., deprived of any legal rights, or any rights of citizenship, property, opportunity, and so on.

This ‘indigenato’ system, combined with a highly uneducated Angolan population and a violence exerted without reservations, crushed the human dignity of natives, creating a huge grudge against the Portuguese rule. It fueled the rise of a political
opposition4 that – alongside the growing international pressure towards what would prove to be the inevitable catharsis of decolonization – triggered the anticolonial war against the “mother country” in 1961 (Hodges, 2002; Neto, 2005; Teixeira, 2006).

Such was the (inter)national context that Fernão Simões de Carvalho encountered when he intervened in Luanda in the 1960s. After a spell at Le Corbusier’s architecture firm in Paris [1957-1959], this urban-planner took on the organization of the Angolan urban and regional territory (specifically in the capital) through the application of regional (national or worldwide) means:

‘It is time to define occupation of land, to set population densities, to define a plan to equip it on a «human scale» (...) to define the principles that should guide the use of land, not only in the city but also in the Region it depends upon (Carvalho, 1963:29), in order to prevent «the apoplexy of the center and the paralysis of the edges» (Le Corbusier, cit. Ibid)’. (Freely translated)

And although the master plan he developed [1961-64] was never concluded, its driving ideas – such as the opposition against the idea of satellite cities, structural generators of pendular movements and racial and social segregation (Carvalho, 2012b); the reorganization of the traditional center; the construction of shared collective equipment, or the creation of neighborhood areas (for 5,000 up to 10,000 inhabitants) according to social and ethnic characteristics – paved the way for the international expression of an integrative overseas Portuguese policy. And they lasted as a benchmark for the global development of cities or the implementation of new detailed plans, of which we highlight Neighborhood Unit no. 1, Bairro Prenda [1963-65], by the same author (Magalhães e Gonçalves, 2009; Milheiro, 2010; Carvalho, 2012b): though not meant for residents of the musseques, it deemed the allocation of plots for self-build as an occasion to integrate the native populations.

But, in the 1960s, Luanda was already sheltering a population of about 225,000. Prompted by its opening to global markets – and more investments flowing in and out of the country (Amaral, 2005) – and by Mother Country’s new population policies

4 Consisting of rival nationalist movements with different ethno-linguistic backgrounds like the Mbundos, the Bacongos and the Ovibundos;
5 According to Mendes and Dias et alia. (2005), official emergency plans (PZOI) developed in Angola, from 1950 to 1970, were also inclusive: they considered urban expansion through the implementation of a grid structure upon pre-existences and the construction of basic equipment or outdoor spaces for collective use; the authors cite as an example the Plan of Immediate Occupation Zone of Portugália, by Adérito de Barros;
(which aimed at settling new populations in the colonies), the city saw the arrival of white population and witnessed a downgrade in living conditions in the *musseques*, where 80% of the population resided (i.e., about 180,000 people) *(Ibid, 1968)*:

*The substantial increase of Europeans living in Luanda stressed racial divisions in the life of the city, further curtailing the ground for multiracial sociability (with clear effects on schools, churches, venues, sports clubs...) and dislocating many black and mixed-race families (not only the poorest) to the suburbs, through administrative decisions or due to a financial speculation on land and subsequent rise in rents* *(Neto, 2005:19)*. *(Freely translated)*

![Figure 8- Luanda in the early 70s: the city and the musseques, Amaral (2005:49).](image)

In the beginning of the 1970s only 100,000 of the 480,000 inhabitants were officially ranked as *civilized* *(INE, according to the census)*. Many were the natives from different backgrounds that – in a context of huge urban poverty – inhabited the *musseques* of Luanda, surviving on informal parallel economy.

**POSTCOLONIAL ANGOLA AMIDST A CIVIL WAR [1975-2001]**

After the fall of the dictatorial regime in Portugal (on April 25, 1974), Luanda came face to face (between 1975 and 1991) with the chance to build a 'Collective Angolan Identity' rooted on the Marxist ideological predominance of the 'equality principle' introduced in the country by the MPLA, with the assistance of Cuba and encouraged by the Soviet Union. Yet the (cultural) construction of what it meant to be an Angolan – the *Identity*, in line with the thought of Castells cit. Castells and Ince *(2003:77)* – could not depend solely on the Mbundo ethnic group (predominant in Luanda) nor on the dictates of the MPLA. Besides the new thrust generated by the (multi-ethnic) rural-urban migration, the construction of that identity had to deal with the growing relevance of Angola within the strategic conflict of the cold war, which called for the armed opposition of UNITA, used by South Africa and manipulated by the USA.
Ruled by a strong single-party presidential system (with no popular participation), Angola adopted (after its independence, on November 11, 1975) an economy with centralized planning – based on the Marxist-Leninist thinking, and relying on a policy of price regulation and administrative resource allocation – that reinforced the autocratic and bureaucratic system inherited from the Portuguese colonialism (Hodges, 2002). Let us not forget that the Angolan domestic context was characterized by a high deindustrialization; the abandonment of agriculture (essentially promoted by the forced departure of Portuguese settlers and the lack of state investment in those productive sectors); and the insufficiency of skilled personnel (considering the low schooling standards of the majority of the Angolan population, alongside the departure of the Portuguese who dominated most sectors of the economy, particularly the public administration). Only the tertiary sector – unable to absorb the working population – was flourishing given the high growth of informal economy (Lopes and Oppenheimer et alia., 2007; Lopes 2007).

In relation to the urban issue, the insufficient formal mechanisms to provide access to property and the increasing flow of rural population to the city also encouraged a rapid expansion of the informal market, and Luanda7 was facing a proliferation of its musseques. The Omnium Technique d'Aménagement (1973)8, the Urbanization and Housing Office of Luanda (later on the Ministry of Construction and Housing) (1974/1977)9, and the Department of Physic Planning at the Ministry of Construction and Housing (later on the Department of Spatial Planning at the Ministry of

6 Before its independence, the industrialization of Angola was already feeble for it could not compete with the "mother country", and it was fundamentally reduced to mining, sugar, wood harvesting or fishing;
7 That in 1983 gathered about 920,000 inhabitants, according to an incomplete census;
8 OTAM, a French consulting firm hired in 1973 by the colonial regime to develop three alternative growing centers around the capital (Viana, Cacuaco and Camama) on a total area of 17 thousand hectares: though still racially, socially and spatially segregating, the plan acknowledged for the first time the need to improve the musseques (Development Workshop, 2005; Raposo, 2007; Bettencourt, 2011);
9 The Portuguese architect Troufa Real (born in Angola) coordinated all technical activities regarding the study on the Master Plan for the Luanda Region and developed specific (integrated and participated) cataloging studies for the musseques (Raposo, 2007);
Planning) (1979) did not manage (despite their studies and plans) to predict the growth of the city. They also failed to minimize the increasing problems with peri-urban (in)formal settlements that, amidst an immense urban poverty, deepened in the capital (Raposo, 2007). Recently, the Development Workshop (2005) classified these settlements as township settlements, organized musseques, or old musseques:

(a) township settlements (such as the Kilamba Kiaxi township settlement) were (and have been, since the 1960s) large-scale residential areas located near the urban center, with a low level of infrastructures and services, consisting of regular streets and houses mainly made of bricks with tin and fibrocement roofing;

Figure 10- Township settlements of Kilamba Kiaxi, Development Workshop (2005: 88).

(b) old musseques (such as Val Saroca, in Sambizanga) were (because for centuries they grew alongside the colonial city) residential areas (mega-scale, nowadays) – sometimes miscegenated with the formal city (and limited thereby) or expanded into areas of geological or sanitary risk – without infrastructures or services, consisting of streets with no draining system and unable to allow access from transports (public or others) to the precarious houses built with sticks, or wood;

Figure 11- Old musque of Sambizanga, Development Workshop (2005: 90).

10 DNPF, with Cuban support: prepared a preliminary outline for the Master Plan (with five planning options) that showed a vast ignorance of the (in)ability of government operation and of the complexity of the Angolan problematic regarding urbanization and control on accelerated urban growth in Luanda (Development Workshop, 2005; Raposo, 2007; Bettencourt, 2011);
Cities, nations and regions in planning history

(c) organized musseques (such as Santo Antônio, in Cazenga) were (and have been, since the end of the colonial age) residential areas usually built as an extension of township settlements or the formal city, without infrastructures or services, consisting of reticular streets and houses built with bricks or cement blocks, also with tin and fibrocement roofing.

![Image of Cazenga Popular Area](image)

Figure 12- Organized musseque of Cazenga, Development Workshop (2005: 93).

During the 1980s, the poor results of the policies of the new independent government were plain to see at a local level and weakened the image of a Party/State that ruled amidst a civil war. The poor macroeconomic performance – which led to an increased public debt – forced MPLA to make a strategic turn and establish privileged relations with the neoliberal West (and to enter the Bretton Woods11 system). Angola began to encourage more and more private investments and to promote the reopening of the country to new markets (Hodges, 2002, Guedes, 2011), while keeping the implementation of an economic reform through multiple and contradictory stabilization plans12 (Ibid). Since 1991 – after the end of the cold war (the dissolution of the USSR and the economic consolidation of the USA) and the consequent loss of relevance on the global geostrategic scene – the Country accepted the consequences of supplying oil to international centers with a dominant capitalist structure, basing the bulk of its economy on this strategy up until today.

Let us not forget that Angola, during the 1990s, dithered locally between a civil war perpetuated by UNITA and relative peace [1991-1992; 1994-1998]. The year of 1994 witnessed a mass movement of approximately 1.25 million inhabitants and 300,000 refugees to the cities; the year of 1998 saw an abnormal figure of about 1.05 million displaced people; and at the dawn of the 21st century – after the failure of the peace process – a new wave of migrations was taking place for undetermined figures (according to the UN cit. Hodges, 2002). And if in 1991 Luanda reckoned it sheltered almost 2 million residents, for 2000 the predictions reached 3 million people (according to INE13 cit. Ibid).

11 Consisting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF, an organization created in July, 1944, with the purpose of looking after the stability in the international monetary system) and the World Bank (WB, an international financial institution created in 1945, whose current mission is the struggle against poverty by funding developing countries);
12 Many of them without a strict control, totaling nine in fourteen years [1987-2011]; monitored by the IMF from 1995 on;
13 National Statistics Institute;
It was specifically in Luanda that the de-structuring effects of the war (and of the neoliberal policies enforced by the State) were most visible. In the Angolan capital, housing was undermined (established with no infrastructures, equipment, public areas or road network); many of the old musseques (which Development Workshop (2005) now called transitional musseques) were becoming denser; new multiform built-up pockets – the peripheral musseques – were taking shape (apparently in a chaotic way); and informal property was thriving (Raposo e Salvador, 2007):

(a) transitional musseques (such as Catambor in Maianga) were (still are) neighborhoods that, smothered by the configuration of the enveloping city, grew vertically to two or three stories high, spreading the replacement of the original shacks for cement buildings;

(b) peripheral musseques (such as Augusto NGangula in Cacuaco) were (still are) temporary houses set on peripheral lands, randomly and low in density, far away from job opportunities or access to services.

The inexistence of an intermediate form of right to the land14 (capable of providing a cut in urban poverty15 and social exclusion), combined with the inadequacy (complexity and incoherence) of the Angolan legislation on land management and urban planning – as well as the ineffectiveness (and paralysis) of land registry procedures – gave rise to a high uncertainty in ownership and vulnerability amongst

14 A crucial mechanism to change from an informal to a formal system (according to the Development Workshop (2005);
15 Estimated in 59.5% for 1995 (according to Raposo and Salvador, 2007);
populations (Development Workshop, 2005; Human Rights Watch e SOS Habitat, 2007).

However, the difficult management (and upgrading) of informal peri-urban settlements in Luanda also undermined the administration of the urbanized city: public networks were saturated and the water and power supply systems along with sewerage were being sabotaged, public funds were being embezzled, environmental issues were getting worse, green areas (namely the green belt that encompassed the city) and existing infrastructure were being occupied (Raposo e Salvador, 2007).

POSTCOLONIAL ANGOLA AMIDST PEACE [2002-2012]

In 2001, Angola had approximately 14 million inhabitants and 83.1% of the urban population lived in musseques (according to UN-Habitat).

At the beginning of the new millennium, most socio-territorial constraints aggravated, irreversibly conditioning the future of Angola, and the country was still having a quite irregular performance on the hard matters of urbanization. However, the end of the civil war [2002] brought hope on a long-awaited future and with it the chance to consistently create a stable social and urban tissue and to distribute the peace benefits in a fair manner. But the fact is that very little was invested in a sustainable relation between the society and the territory, and all innovative and creative programs with a direct social impact have been clearly insufficient. The lack of statistic data and a thorough survey on population and land has also prevented a conscientious intervention; the diagnosis on the city has been carried out fundamentally in an empirical way, and all proposals and interventions have been made in an untimely and seemingly random fashion.

Nowadays, the current trends in the reshaping of the Luanda territory show the irrational drive of the capitalist production of space, relying on interventions liable to generate more capital in the short term (in line with the ideas of Harvey (2001)). The political authority favors private participation (or public-private partnerships) in the construction of territory, looking for the benefits from concessions on land use and commercialization of new buildings. The circulation and overaccumulation of

---

16 In 1995 only 43% of houses were supplied by the public water network, and in 1998 only 56% of the population of Luanda had access to piped water (according to the INE);
17 The UN has been revealing the urban situation in many developing countries through this program; according to UN-Habitat (2010), Angola had in 2005 approximately 16.6 million inhabitants, and 86.5% of its urban population lived in musseques;
18 The last census in Angola dates from 1970 and the next is expected to occur in 2013; currently, it is estimated that Luanda shelters between 5 and 7 million inhabitants;
19 An example is the approval by the Cabinet Council in 2000 of the pilot plan for urban and musseque growth management drawn up by Dar al-Handasah from 1976 to 1978 (interviews by the author, 2012); the plan was obviously outdated;
20 Croese (2011) mentions the preponderance of Brazil and China in the country’s reconstruction during the period in question, through the participation in infrastructure projects; recently, China has took the lead in housing projects (interviews by the author, 2012);
capital (based on oil export and generating an uneven economic growth) creates, destroys and recreates the space in its own image (ibid).

Figure 15- Land reconfiguration – the musseque/neighborhood and the great built-up area, Author (2012).

In the formal city, the urban center has been struggling to preserve its historical heritage (with no commercial value) from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Quintalões (houses with big yards where slaves were kept before departing to the Americas) or sobrados (two-storey houses erected with structures in Brazilian wood and naval construction techniques) are now rare and many are rundown – (Mingas, 2012). Most buildings with a modern tropical (signed or anonymous) architecture show high levels of deterioration (due to lack of public or private maintenance), and some of the buildings still unfinished (since the independence) were occupied or mussequized. Buildings that grow higher and replace others (such as the aforementioned Kinaxixe Market) or public areas (such as the square in front of the Elinga Theater) multiply. Luxury gated communities are also growing within high walls (mainly along the Bay or in the South stretch, an example of which is Talatona). This urban transformation is taking place without any master plan and only recently new integrated plans for the urban and infrastructural expansion of Luanda-Bengo (Angolan official gazette, 2011) have defined rules on land use, with the purpose of directing investments from the various sectors.

---

22. After the independence, the old urban center (of public or private colonial descent) witnessed a process of mussequization, i.e., the occupation of abandoned buildings (habitable or still unfinished) by low and average income Angolan families, and their cohabitation with the high-income classes (Bettencourt, 2011); these buildings were recently vacated following an order by the central administration (interviews by the author, 2012);

23. The terms of reference for the new master plan (now metropolitan master plan) of Luanda were developed in July, 2009, by the company A1V2 – engenharia civil e arquitectura lda., and gave birth to a limited request for tender won by Broadway Malyan (interviews by the author, 2012);

24. Including those already in place, such as the Special Economic Zone of Viana (industrial and developed by the National Reconstruction Office, created in 2004 and extinguished in 2010); or providing a framework for the several partial projects in place or proposed for the city, such as the recent North Luanda Plan (GTRUCS, 2012);
Projects for low and average incomes are coming to life – namely under the ‘My Dream, My Home’25 program for the construction of a million homes – so as to fulfill the housing needs of the country (Viegas, 2011; interviews by the author, 2012). However, many plotting and urbanization projects for the new demarcated areas (initially named micro-locations) are, today, unfinished (there is a great lack of infrastructures) or uninhabited due to the financial incapability of most of the population and/or because it is impossible to find access to bank credit (as it happens today in the new New Centrality of Kilamba, where the developed part – 20% of the expected total – hopes to house approximately 100,000 people).

Public housing intervention to reduce urban poverty is confined to mass and peripheral rehousing (as in Zango, Sapú or Panguila) of the deprived population that lives in the more central musseques (such as recently in Chicala), in decrepit buildings or buildings with no conditions of habitability (such as that of ‘Cuca’), in critical or geologically unstable areas (such as the Luanda Island), due to the need to widen or open thoroughfares capable of shaping a new city grid (such as Via Expresso, the new beltway that crosses all the city periphery) or draining ditches; or from the implementation of new urban projects. We can also watch the extinction of informal markets that are very significant to support many Angolan families (such as Roque Santeiro or Beato Salú, both closed because of lack of organization and hygiene and high crime rates).

25 This program was launched in 2008 with the goal of delimiting and infrastructuring land reserves – within the scope of master and urban plans that call for a rational use of land in all 18 provinces of Angola – in order to build 115 thousand homes through the State, 120 thousand homes through the private sector, 80 thousand homes through cooperatives, and 685 thousand homes through supervised self-building.
Figure 18- Housing for deprived population in Sapú, Panguila and Zango, Author (2012).

Figure 19- Neighborhood of Chicala, Author (2012).

Figure 20- Widening of the north road from N’Gola Kiluanje to Cacuaco, Author (2012).

Figure 21- Critical area in Comandante KimaKienda road, Author (2012).
This kind of land intervention has set off, since 2002, demolitions and forced evictions (not always linked with resettlement operations) and triggered the alarm given by the people (the organized civil society and several international organizations like Human Rights Watch and SOS Habitat, 2007; International Alliance of Inhabitants, 2010) who have shown their disagreement with these methods.

**THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The socio-territorial historical analysis of Angola, more specifically that of Luanda, on three different periods of time (colonial, socialist and neoliberal post-colonial, amidst war or peace) shows us, following the ideas of Castells (1972), that the urban and social infrastructure has been continually conditioned and/or determined by the political or economic superstructure (an intention admitted by the Marxist ideological system). It also proves that – far beyond projects, their causes or motivations – most urban strategies that were adopted always fell short of or were even totally inadequate regarding the socio-territorial needs of the Angolan capital.

On the one hand, the political authority (through different models of State) never managed to articulate the urban processes in order to ensure a balanced management between production and collective (such as housing, equipment or transport, and so on) consumption and equal opportunities (given the racial or class differences) among the population. On the other hand, its numberless attempts of large-scale urban planning and control (characteristic in all three periods of a markedly 'Top-Down' political approach) not only did not manage to predict and plan the accelerated city growth but also failed to meet the basic needs of the majority of the population and of a land in need of housing and basic infrastructuring that is currently longing for a metropolitan status on a global/worldwide scene.

The perpetuation of a war crystallized in three acts (anticolonial or civil) put into effect a resistance to the dictates of a false unity, namely regarding the 'identity' represented by the State and perpetuated through self-vigilance, in line with the ideas of Foucault (1975, 1979). Today – after all military conflicts and given the impoverishment of the urban territory and the population – the consequences of a predominantly capitalist structure question the imposition of a normalization and false unity in Angola.

On an international scene dominated by the sovereignty of central countries – where the emergence of the spaces of flows (Castells, 1989) fed a deregulated worldwide financial dynamics and generated numberless constraints and new international
dependences – Luanda presents itself as an essentially peripheral and fragmented (social, economic and urban) structure, consisting of two poles (local and global) that coexist in one place (the dual city, in line with the ideas of Castells, 1978, 1989, and Borja and Castells, 1997): even if the implications that arise from neoliberal globalization are also intimately connected with the co-accountability of the central government structure.

The struggle for survival and the search for opportunities towards an improvement in living standards and habitability have perpetuated an increasing rural exodus in Angola, and a vast population – the civil society that dreams of a future built on social and economic prosperity – keeps fighting for the occupation of the (peri-urban) territory in Luanda, clashing with the capitalist production of space, perpetuated by a “control society” (Foucault, op. Cit.) that assumes the intentional phenomenon of discrimination and arbitrariness.

Given this state of affairs, whereupon the current and excessive valorization of capital makes a clear physical demonstration of its power – through the mass expansion and verticalization of the asphalt city, or the construction of new centralities amongst the non-official peripheral urbanization – the formal city does not accept nor includes the musseques within its expectations for urban upgrading, thus creating huge socio-territorial imbalances. At the same time, the dissolution of a false unity finds new opportunities in a transforming resistance (Foucault, op. Cit.): following the ideas of Lefebvre (1974) on space as a social product, if neocapitalist society – bureaucratic and of directed consumption – produced an abstract space that comprises the worldwide logics and strategies of the commercial universe (and of State policies), social agents can play a role in change and embody their transforming power.

Within the problematic of housing development in Luanda, we make out another aspect (still unstable) of global neoliberalism: the emerging dissemination of a local counter-hegemonic resistance (Santos, 2011), claiming an equal distribution of benefits obtained by transformation, participation or global cooperation (Harvey, 1973). In short, we are witnessing the tentative rising of an organized criticism that claims a chance to transform social and space relations (ibid, 2008), as well as a fairer urbanization, capable of inspiring new, more inclusive political, social and urban strategies (Dufaux et alia., 2009; Marcuse et alia., 2009; Soja, 2009) for Luanda. We are talking specifically of a 'Bottom-Up' urban approach that takes into account a wider democratization in decision-making and an effective and active participation of the population; the chance to build a new urban life based on the analysis of interactions between society and space; and a formulation of new territorial policies capable of reducing social injustices and imbalances, as well as fostering the right to the city.

We think that the right to the city, more than any individual freedom to access urban resources, should be manifested in the right to participate and fully possess a transformed and renewed urban life (Lefebvre, 1968, 1970), and should also translate itself into a chance for individual and collective change through the very process of city transformation (Harvey, op. Cit.). Therefore, besides all political efforts, a sense of responsibility should be instilled in those who make their everyday life in Luanda and who better understand the city on a daily basis. The active and responsible citizens, who suffer all urban constraints and who long for
Cities, nations and regions in planning history

their potentials, can contribute to explore new methodological trails to upgrade the city that a satellite vision surely cannot feel nor grasp:

“The ordinary practitioners of the city live «down below», below the threshold at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers (...) These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen (De Certeau, 1984:93).”
REFERENCES


Cities, nations and regions in planning history

Development Workshop e Centro para o Meio Ambiente e Assentamentos Humanos Terra - Reforma sobre a terra urbana em Angola no período pós-guerra: Pesquisa, advocacia e políticas de desenvolvimento, Luanda: DW e CMAAH, 2005.


International Alliance of Inhabitants. Não partam a minha casa, enquadramento de conferência contra as demolições e desalojamentos forçados em Angola, 2010, [Ac. 19.04.11]
http://www.habitants.org/news/inhabitants_of_africa/nao_partam_a_minha_casa_angulara_benguela_29_a_31_de_julho_de_2010

Cities, nations and regions in planning history


Santos, B. S. Portugal, Ensaio contra a autoflagelação, Coimbra: Almedina, 2011.


