

**THE ROLE OF THE URBAN GRID IN LUANDA AND MAPUTO'S CURRENT TRANSFORMATION:
BETWEEN THE IDEALISED CITY AND THE PRE-EXISTING SELF-PRODUCED SPACES**

SÍLVIA LEIRIA VIEGAS AND SÍLVIA BRANCO JORGE

Abstract

The article focuses on the current urban and housing transformation of the Angolan and Mozambican capitals with regards to the misleading role of the urban grid, as pursued by both administrations in the dominant neoliberal context. Following the theoretical conception of 'Production of Space', as discussed by Lefebvre ([1974] 2000), our purpose is twofold: to reflect on the urban and housing strategies, policies and practices adopted by these governments in order to counteract the progressively more increasing self-production of space; and to present the resulting imageries of the cities, including its paradoxes and tensions. By relating the political-economic and socio-spatial contexts of Luanda and Maputo, in view of the recent massive production of legal instruments and plans and their corresponding urban paradigms, practices and consequences, we conclude that current transformations, exclusively based on gridiron street layouts and supportive of international architectural typologies, tend to promote spatial fragmentation and social exclusion.

Introduction

The expansion of the dominant neoliberal financial system in the West, especially from the 1990's onwards, has led to significant and challenging urban changes in the so called developing countries, such as Angola and Mozambique. The purpose of this brief article is, on the one hand, to present paradigmatic imageries of recent transformations in Luanda and Maputo; and, on the other hand, to frame the current urban and housing strategies, policies and public practices adopted by the corresponding governments, responsible for the archetypal images of the city. Taking into account the theme of this issue, the urban grid, we will critically comment on the urban metamorphosis of both capitals, having as guiding concept the *Production of Space* as understood by Lefebvre ([1974] 2000).

The urban grid: a misleading path for an inclusive urban and housing transformation?

According to the recent official national survey (INE, 2016, 15), Angola has approximately 25.8 million inhabitants. Roughly 6.9 million of its urban population lives in the capital, Luanda, with 80 per cent residing in the *musseques* (Governo de Angola, 2011, 1561), that is, self-produced housing spaces that shelter most of their population in need [Fig 1]. On a smaller scale, Maputo has around 1.3 million inhabitants, out of 26.4 million living in Mozambique (INE, 2016), 70 per cent of which residing in self-produced neighbourhoods (UN-Habitat, 2010, 11) [Fig 2]. Both cities face a growth rate of 1.9 and 0.8 percent, respectively (United Nations, 2014:

Figures 1-2

Self-produced housing spaces in Luanda and Maputo (photos by Viegas, 2012 and Jorge, 2013)



20). Considering the geopolitical background, we may add that, in both countries, political regimes are autocratic and overpowering, mostly subjugated to the economic interests.

In Angola and Mozambique, over the recent decades, the market logic has reigned whilst the pressure applied over strategic spaces, namely urban centres and/or pericentral areas, has increased. Accordingly, profound legal urban and housing reforms reinforced new conflicting models of access, planning and management of land, specifically targeting self-produced pre-existing neighbourhoods (Viegas, 2015; Jorge, 2017). Given this, land tenure insecurity increased, even in Maputo, a different context from Luanda, where customary rights, including the right to the place, are legally recognised (Melo, 2015). At the same time, massive production of urban plans, even those not completely implemented, reproduces an idealised Western world vision of the city, profoundly disconnected from most of the necessities of its impoverished inhabitants.

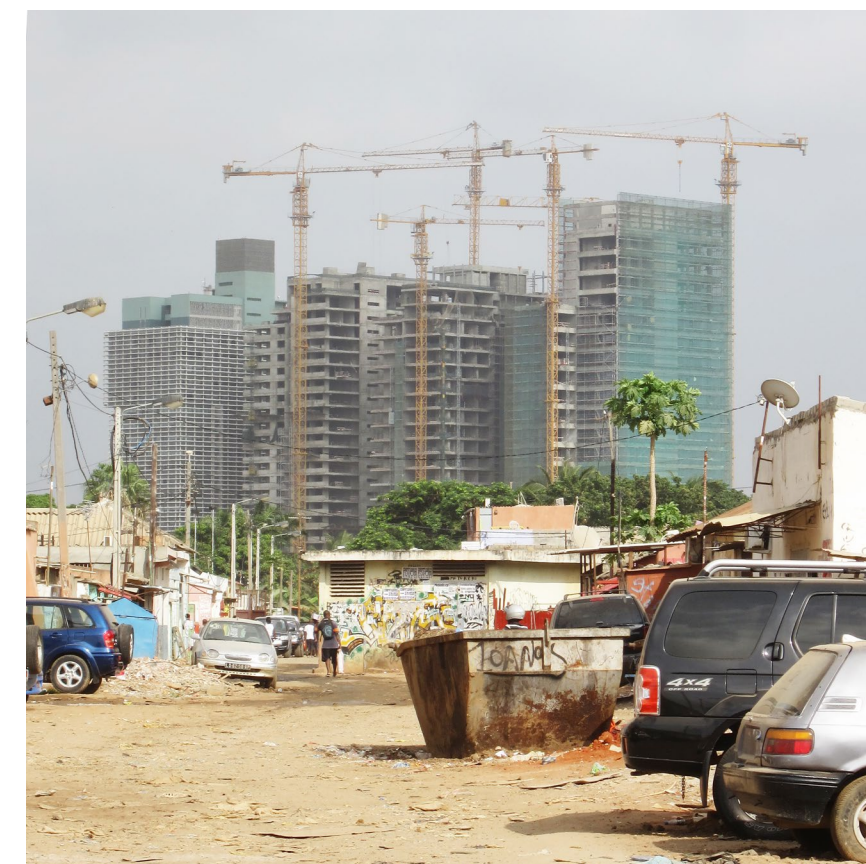
Despite the strong commitment of both administrations to implementing these legal instruments and plans, their full execution is compromised by the complexity of the socio-spatial reality. Nevertheless, in Luanda and Maputo, private entrepreneurs and/or international countries or alliances have become important urban players as they have been putting into practice many housing and infrastructure megaprojects, allegedly acting on behalf of public interest. But then again, these interventions tend to strengthen the real estate market while promoting urban renewal, urban expansion and gentrification in spaces that are preferential

targets of mercantilist valorisation processes. As such, these cities tend to be perceived as economic assets operating in and for the global market. In this context, urban and housing public instruments became important strategic allies called upon or dispensed with according to the interests and the dynamics of finances. As Harvey (1989) would argue, Luanda and Maputo reflect the 'managerialism' characterised by an uncritical submission to private interests and by an obsession with attracting new investments [Fig 3].

Regarding the image of the city, current urban transformations are based on gridiron street plans and layouts. These plans are either comprehensive or partial, frequently following post-modern idealised and globalised architectural typologies, often inspiring new self-production

Figure 3

Urban renewal of the urban centre of Luanda (photo by Viegas, 2012)



of space (Raposo, 2011). In Luanda, these plans project the 'metropolis-to-be' according to different urban growth scenarios based on the construction of new centralities. Yet, these housing projects tend to be disconnected from the centre's urban grid whilst sometimes overlapping with the urban fabric that has been self-produced by the inhabitants in need. Following an analogous strategy, the municipal urban plan of Maputo favours instead the improvement of the structuring road accesses delineated to sustain a new urban grid.

In both contexts, low income social groups tend to be excluded from the city centre whilst being deprived of its benefits (i.e., better infrastructure, urban services and job opportunities). This is pursued through manoeuvres of urban renewal, mercantilist urban expansion, and rehousing and/or resettlement. The implementation of these urban paradigms, which is often violent, is generally framed by plans that lack an inclusive popular consultation and/or participation. In addition, the analysis of these new urban morphologies points to a strong sense of arbitrariness in the production of the official space, in a way that is often different from or rather an adaptation of the original gridiron plan. Furthermore, most citizens do not have the financial capacity to access these projects, frequently defined as 'controlled-cost housing', as occurred in Kilamba (Luanda, **Fig 4**) and the Vila Olímpica (Maputo, **Fig 5**) (Melo and Viegas, 2014).

The analysis of urban morphologies also observes a struggle between the official and the pre-existing self-produced space, a struggle that is particularly ferocious in Luanda where forced evictions are more frequent. In such cases, the administration sometimes hands over

Figures 4-5

The 'controlled-cost housing' of Kilamba (Luanda) and of the Vila Olímpica (Maputo) (photos by Viegas, 2012 and Melo, 2012)



Figures 6-7

The rehousing project of Panguila (Luanda) and the resettlement project of Chiango (Maputo) (photos by Viegas, 2012 and Jorge, 2013)

a house (e.g. Panguila, **Fig 6**); whereas the Mozambican local government assigns a plot and offers a pay-check for self-construction (e.g. Chiango, **Fig 7**), both cases in peripheral areas. Despite the use of gridiron layouts, the transformation of housing space reflects the very same processes of self-production that are rejected in the city centres by official policies, instruments and practices. In these rehousing and resettlement projects, pendular movements are encouraged as the impoverished inhabitants lose more and more of their urban rights. Having meagre resources to fight back, they frequently call upon non-governmental organisations in order to be heard. This occurs especially in Luanda where demolitions also take place without an alternative allocation of housing, but only with the distribution of plots, or without any compensations.

Conclusions

We have witnessed the consequences of the expansion and consolidation of the global neoliberal model of production of space, as an urban neo-colonisation process where land and housing become restricted to their exchange value and capital gains. Consequently, the 'right to the place' is being blocked and, adopting a more ambitious perspective, the 'right to the city' as well. Despite the specificities of the urban contexts in question, both governments play an important role in these complex processes that often punish the most impoverished. These processes are more severe in Luanda, where land tenure insecurity is frequently related to forced evictions and the violation of human rights. The Angolan and Mozambican administrations use legal instruments together with urban gridiron plans and layouts, supportive of a global and imported, uncharacterised image, of the city. This image tends to encourage current urban paradigms and practices. As such, socio-spatial fragmentation is extremely visible in Luanda and Maputo, through the confrontation between the 'desirable' city and the existing self-produced spaces. This confrontation is enhanced by the performance of either architectural typologies or urban morphologies.

Bibliography:

Harvey, D. 1989, From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*. 71 (1), 3–17.

Governo de Angola. 2011, *Planos Integrados de Expansão Urbana e Infraestruturas de Luanda-Bengo: Decreto Presidencial nº 59/11, 1 de Abril*, Luanda, Diário da República, 2424.

INE. 2016, *Resultados Definitivos do Recenseamento Geral da População e da Habitação de Angola 2014*, Luanda, INE, 212, available at <http://www.info-angola.ao/attachments/article/4654/Publica%C3%A7%C3%A3o-Resultados-Definitivos-Censo-Geral-2014.pdf>, retrieved 30 January 2017.

INE. 2016, *Instituto Nacional de Estatística*, available at <http://www.ine.gov.mz/>, retrieved 31 January 2017.

Jorge, S. 2017 (forthcoming), *Lugares Interditos: Os Bairros Pericentrais Autoproduzidos de Maputo*, Ph.D. Thesis, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa, 359.

Lefebvre, H. 2000 [1974], *La Production de L'espace*, Paris, Anthropos, 485.

Melo, V. and Viegas, S. 2014, Habitação de Iniciativa Pública em Luanda e Maputo: Modelos de Intervenção e Impactes Sócio-Territoriais no Novo Milénio, *PÓS*. 36, 124–140, available at <http://www.revistas.usp.br/posfau/article/viewFile/90254/92944>, retrieved 27 January 2017.

Melo, V. 2015, *A Produção Recente de Periferias Urbanas Africanas. Discursos, Práticas e Configuração Espacial: Maputo versus Luanda e Joanesburgo*, Ph.D. Thesis, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa, 531.

Raposo, I. 2011, Sinais de Modernidade na Arquitectura Popular em Luanda. In Prado, G. R. and Martinez, P. N. (co-ords), *La Modernidade Ignorada, Arquitectura Moderna de Luanda*, Alcalá de Henares, Universidad de Alcalá, 172–189.

UN-Habitat. 2010, *Mozambique Cities Profile: Maputo, Nacala and Manica*, Nairobi, UN-Habitat, 32.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2014, *World Urbanization Prospects, the 2014 Revision*, New York, United Nations, 27.

Viegas, S. 2015, *Luanda, Cidade (im)Previsível? Governação e Transformação Urbana e Habitacional: Paradigmas de Intervenção e Resistências no Novo Milénio*, Ph.D. Thesis, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa, 522, available at <http://www.repository.utl.pt/handle/10400.5/10063>, retrieved 5 October 2015.
