

Urbanization in Luanda, *musseques* expansion and the relocation of their inhabitants in the new millennium

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Abstract

O texto acompanha o crescimento populacional de Luanda desde o aparecimento dos primeiros *musseques* agrícolas, de que há notícia em planta de 1862, acelerando no terceiro quartel do século XX, com o desenvolvimento industrial ainda sob a administração colonial e o início da expansão dos *musseques*. O crescimento continua nos primeiros vinte e cinco anos de independência, declarada em 1975, os quais são marcados por prolongada guerra civil. Com o Acordo de Paz de 2002 e os anos de crescimento económico, a cidade continua a ser forte polo de atração, mas marcada por forte dualidade socioespacial com a maioria da população sem recursos a viver nos *musseques*, assentamentos autoproduzidos suburbanizados. Este período é marcado pelo lançamento de um pacote de instrumentos de ordenamento do território, de planos, programas e projetos com grande impacto na renovação e expansão da cidade urbanizada que contribui para a deterioração e tabula rasa de áreas estratégicas dos *musseques* e para o realojamento periféricos dos habitantes desalojados. O texto aborda o impacto de um realojamento periférico conduzido de cima para baixo e a procura de soluções mais inclusivas.

Palavras-Chave: Urbanização de Luanda, expansão de *musseques*, realojamento periférico, Angola.

Abstract

Urbanization in Luanda, *musseques* expansion and the relocation of their inhabitants in the new millennium

This paper analyses the population growth in Luanda since the appearance of the first agricultural *musseques*, attested by an 1862 map. Their growth increased in the third quarter of the 20th century, due to the industrial development, still under colonial administration, and continued in the first twenty-five years of Angola independence, declared in 1975, which were marked by a long civil war. With the 2002 Peace Agreement, and the following years of economic growth, the city continues to be very attractive, but it is marked by a strong socio-spatial duality, with the majority of the underprivileged population living in *musseques*, self-built suburbanized settlements. This period is also marked by the creation of spatial planning instruments - plans, programs, and projects - which caused a large impact on the renovation and expansion of the urbanized city, contributing to the deterioration and *tabula rasa* of strategic areas of the *musseques* and to the peripheral relocation of the displaced inhabitants. The text addresses the impact of the top-down peripheral resettlement and the search for more inclusive solutions.

Keywords: Luanda urbanization, *musseques* expansion, peripheral resettlement, Angola.

Introduction

The city of Luanda is a location attracting many people due to the opportunities it offers, as well as its social and economic dynamics and urban landscape. Since there is lack of housing in the urbanized city, the majority of the less well-off population lives in *musseques* - self-built, semi-developed or undeveloped neighbourhoods. These started to grow in the first half of the 20th century to house those working in the construction of urban infrastructures in the colonial city. In the third quarter of the 20th century, industrial development and economic growth, the expansion of the urbanized city, the attraction of workers and native population led to the expansion of the *musseques*.

During the first twenty-five years of independent Angola (the country became independent in 1975), the civil war led to even more intense affluence of the rural population to Luanda, which, in turn, contributed to the continuous growth of the *musseques*. In the new millennium, since the Peace Treaty in 2002, with the country's economic boost due to petrol exploitation and public Administration policies to modernize the city, new legal and urban tools were created. These tools contributed to the expansion of the central urbanized areas of Luanda, the creation of new housing for the middle and high class and the demolition of large areas of the central, more strategic, *musseques*. The demolished houses of the *musseques* were replaced by high contemporary buildings that did not fit the habits and culture of the old inhabitants nor were accessible to them in economic terms.

The families who inhabited the demolished *musseques* were partly rehoused in areas far from their former houses, far from their workplaces and far from the education and health social services they formerly used. This disrupted their social networks and the family economy that was their livelihood. There is a gap between the process and the models of the new rehousing neighbourhoods, of the houses allocated to the displaced families, and the families' aspirations.

This paper has been written within the scope of the research conducted for a PhD by Osvaldo Bráz, in which the expansion of the *musseques* in Luanda is analysed and mapped, from a diachronic perspective, considering the city's urbanization process and the underlying intervention paradigms and the urgent need for new approaches. This research is included in the Research Project África Habitat (footnote 2), coordinated by Isabel Raposo, the co-author of this text and Osvaldo Bráz's PhD thesis supervisor. Firstly, this paper describes the expansion of the *musseques* considering the city's increase in population and its urbanization based on studies by other authors, as well as on statistical data. Secondly, based on prior research and recent fieldwork, the text focuses on some aspects of the impact caused by rehousing in the social and spatial (un)structuring.

Population growth in Luanda, city urbanization and expansion of the *musseques*

Luanda was founded by the Portuguese in the 16th century, in a territory occupied by the Ndongo kingdom, a subject of the Congo kingdom. Until 1605, when it was declared a city, the settlement was limited to the fort Forte de S. Miguel. From this moment onwards, and under Portuguese administration, the city and its population slowly increased until the middle of the 19th century, conditioned by the harsh climate, the land that was not good for agriculture and by the frequent military conflicts (AMARAL, 1968) and, since the 17th century, by its economy based on slave trade to South America. In 1845, Luanda had only 5600 inhabitants (*id.*, q.V).

In the city plan of 'Loanda' in 1862 (redesigned in 1954, in AMARAL, 1968), when the slave trade had already been abolished, the word *musseque* started being used to name the agricultural villages scattered in the outskirts of the colonial cities which were led by influential local families, such as the Vandunen *musseque* or the Massi *musseque*. Cassava was produced here which later became *musseque* flour (as referred by the "older" residents in the municipality of Cazenga interviewed by the author).

In 1881, according to Amaral (*id.*, p. 59), Luanda had about 11,000 residents and a very low percentage of Portuguese residents (13%). Most of the local population lived in *sanzalas* (66,6%), typical villages in the outskirts of the colonial city, and a lower percentage (20,4%) lived in the rural *musseques*. At the turn of the 20th century, the colonial administration started to invest in the modernization of the city as a means to foster the economy; they built new urban infrastructures (the railway, roads, large equipment). In 1898, Luanda was still a small city with about 20,000 inhabitants, but the percentage of Portuguese inhabitants (24%) was higher than in 1881 (*id.*: 63).

In the first half of the 20th century, there was a gradual increase in the population and an expansion of the urbanized city, which was built by local workers living in the new peri-urban *musseques*, in the outskirts of the rural *musseques* which had been demolished and absorbed by the expansion of the colonial city. Between 1930 and 1950, there was an increase in the building of infrastructures and in the influx of rural labour; the percentage of Portuguese population decreased again from 12% to 15%, with the increase of local population settling in the *musseques* which were increasingly further in the outskirts. In 1940, Luanda already had about 60,000 inhabitants, three times more than in 1898.

Population growth has been even greater since then, with the growing investment in infrastructures, and, since the mid 20thc, with industrial development. The last colonial census of 1970 registered about 475,000 inhabitants in Luanda (AMARAL, 1968: 63 and q. VII), almost eight times more than in 1940. Industrialization and urbanization of the colonial city in the third quarter of the 20th century fostered its expansion and attraction of Portuguese settlers. The percentage of Portuguese population rose again in the 1960s and the 1970s, to 25% and to 26% (*id.*, q. VII).

The urbanization and expansion of the colonial city was carried out at the expense of the demolition of more central villages inhabited by the local population, *sanzalas*, and their inhabitants were pushed further and further to the outskirts, beyond the first rural *musseques*, which were eradicated in this process. Some of these peri-urban undeveloped *musseques* became a centre for anti-colonial resistance, a place of memory where a strong cultural identity was created³.

In 1970, about 352,000 (74% of the population of Luanda) (*ibid.*) lived in the peri-urban *musseques* - they were the cheap local labour force who worked in the urbanization of the colonial city, in the industry and in services. Population growth in Luanda under colonial administration was partly due to the increase in the birth rate, but mostly due to the attraction that the city had on the rural population because of its economic development, as well as due to the rural depopulation because of the war against the colonial regime.

After the independence in 1975, many refugees that had been living in the neighbouring countries returned to Luanda, as well as many people living in the rural areas in search of better living conditions. The population that moved to Luanda occupied the areas that the settlers had abandoned, as well as central locations of the city that were not occupied, areas the city had expanded to and rural areas and new self-built neighbourhoods were constructed that continued to be called *musseques*, as is the case of Mabor, Kikolo, Palanca and others.

In the first year of the country's independence, there were disagreements between the nationalist movements - the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) and UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) which led to a violent civil war that lasted over two decades and spread through the whole country. As a consequence, the influx of rural population fleeing from the conflict and moving to the city increased. The population of Luanda continued to increase very fast and, in 1983, the city had 923,000 inhabitants (according to the census in the Province of Luanda by INE), almost the double of what it was thirteen years earlier (since 1970)⁴.

In the despair to flee conflict areas, people would build in any free space within the urbanized city, and within the *musseques*, on water tables or drainage ditches, under power lines, along the railway or near dumps. The existing *musseques* had more and more population and new ones appeared in between already existing ones or in their outskirts, as was the case in Chicala, in Futungo de Belas, or in Rocha Pinto, among others.

Between 1983 and 1993, the population of Luanda doubled, reaching around 1822 million inhabitants (LOPES; AMADO; MUANAMOH, 2007: 44). After the failure of multi-party elections in 1992, the civil war worsened and the influx increased of rural populations into the city in search of security, as well as of immigrants from other countries. In this context, the population of the province of Luanda continued to increase and almost doubled until 2000, to about 3276 million inhabitants (*ibid.*).

In the first fifteen years of the millennium and after the Peace Treaty in 2002, the city's economic growth consolidated, which led to the continuous influx of rural population. Despite the inequality and social and spatial differentiation, the population of the hinterland continued to see Luanda as a place that offered better opportunities and where it was easier to become rich, an idea which attracted the rural population more and more. With no resources to access urbanized areas, these new city dwellers moved to the old and the new *musseques* where access to basic urban services was insufficient and where the majority of the population of the country's capital still lives. The population doubled again in the first fifteen years of the 21st century, reaching, in the 2014 census, about 6945 million (in the province of Luanda).

Since then, and despite the country's economic crisis in the past years, the population has continued to increase at a fast pace and the population of Luanda is estimated at more than 11 million. Most of the population continues to live in the vast self-built "urban fringes" (África Habitat 2018) that are called *musseque* in Luanda: they are "informal settlements" or, in Lefebvre's perspective of space production (1974), studied by Gestual (in which this research is included), they are "self-produced neighbourhoods" (RAPOSO, 2012; RAPOSO *et al.* 2012) which are lacking in infrastructures. The name *musseque*, used both for the settlements that appeared in the colonial period and for those that appeared and expanded with the country's independence, is currently under discussion in Luanda and is one of the research topics of the PhD thesis and the research project in which this paper is included.

In the forty-six years of independence, these self-built settlements have become more populated and have expanded beyond the old borders, now being the home of about 8 million people⁵, i.e., the population living in the *musseques* is now 20 times higher than the 352,000 inhabitants in 1970.

In the first twenty-five years after the independence (until 2002), marked by the violent civil war, the *musseques* infrastructures deteriorated because of the overpopulation and the lack of public investment. In the first two decades of the new millennium, public and private investment was mostly directed at urban planning and refurbishing of new central areas of the city and to building new housing schemes and new peripheral centres, mostly for the middle and high classes. This refurbishing was based on a *tabula rasa* policy of the more central *musseques* and in the (insufficient) housing of its

inhabitants in the outer outskirts. The investment in the infrastructures of the *musseques* was almost none, which worsened their conditions.

In this millennium, there has been an effort to differentiate and classify different types of *musseques*. Considering the UN-Habitat indicators for adequate housing (occupation density, security in owning the land, construction durability, access to drinkable water and improved sanitation), using new mapping technologies and aiming to a sustainable urban management of Luanda, the NGO Development Workshop (DW) Angola has, since 2005, been working on identifying the types of settlements in the capita, dividing the *musseques* into: old, planned, peripheral and transitional between urban and rural (Cain, 2011). After DW, several masterplans use this classification with some variation.

That is the case of the masterplan for Luanda - Plano Diretor Geral Metropolitano de Luanda (AMADO, coord., 2015: 216, 226) - that presents a classification based on the possibility for renewal of the *musseques*, which are divided into three types – structured (with about 1.5 million inhabitants, 21% of the total population of Luanda), unstructured (with about 3.2 million or 46% of the total) and scattered (about 5%). The PDGML defines a complex refurbishing, but which mostly is based on the demolition of the existing buildings and the rehousing of a large percentage of the population of Luanda (5.9 million inhabitants or 86% of the total). The assumptions of the PDGML comply with the objectives of the national program on housing - Programa Nacional de Urbanismo e Habitação -, launched in 2008, and other legal and urban planning tools of the new millennium, which include demolishing the self-built peri-urban settlements, considered illegal, and their replacement with new public housing (Viegas, 2015, p. 152). This project was suspended because of the serious economic crisis and the influence of the new urban agenda - Nova Agenda Urbana -launched in 2016, within the scope of Habitat III by UN-Habitat, which is under discussion in the country.

As evidenced in research on cities in South Africa and on Maputo (GROENEWALD *et al.*, 2013), the name of territories viewed as informal has a pejorative connotation that emphasizes what these territories do not have and that justifies a *tabula rasa* intervention. The western perspective underlying the classification of the *musseques* and the refurbishing strategy of PDGML, despite the effort to understand the complexity of the situation and the diversity of the presented solutions, reinforce the strategy to demolish the *musseques* and rehouse their inhabitants in the outskirts.

In the next part of this text, we will discuss the demolition processes of the *musseques*, a consequence of the urban renewal implemented in the first years of the millennium and the social and spatial impact of rehousing their inhabitants in the outer outskirts.

Urban renewal, *musseques* demolition and rehousing their inhabitants

With the Peace Agreement in 2002, the capitalist neoliberal economic model became consolidated and promoted economic growth based on controlling petrol exploitation in a presidential regime by José Eduardo dos Santos, as well as on opening the country to major international companies that invest on infrastructures and real estate. In the first fifteen years of the new millennium, new urban influences and models were

disseminated, new legal tools were laid down on territory planning, mainly influenced by Portuguese legislation, and several urban plans and projects for Luanda were designed by international companies and foreign consultants aiming at its modernization and globalization. Several public programs and private initiatives supported by the State were implemented aiming towards urban renewal and expansion of the urbanized city, an example of which being the new 'central position' of Kilamba (VIEGAS, 2015).

Services and real estate were privatized, and major infrastructure projects were implemented, as well as central areas were renewed, as real estate projects were being built for middle and upper classes, leading to land valuation, real estate speculation, financial profitability, and strong gentrification. The latter was based on the demolition of parts of the *musseques* which were located more in the centre, an especially attractive area for new estate investments, new infrastructures (roads, sewage, drainage ditches for rainwater) or located in 'risk areas'. The modern high-rise buildings built in the areas where the *musseques* were demolished did not always adjust to the climate and tended not to adjust to the cultural model of the inhabitants of Luanda; they were built for those with more resources and with a western background.

Rather than focusing on improving the housing conditions of the poorer population and protecting the risk areas, the administration committed to freeing and privatizing the lands with strategic locations for real estate interests. The administration resumed colonial values, which became unimportant in the first years after the independence when socialist ideals ruled, and, in the new millennium, the model for the city was neoliberal, competitive and unequal (RAPOSO *et al.* 2012) there being strong social and spatial division. Demolishing and renewing the *musseques* may be seen as both a product and a producer of land valuation and estate speculation in central areas of the city, i.e., they are a tool to produce the neoliberal city.

The *musseques*, or self-built non-urbanized neighbourhoods, continue to occupy most of the urban area of the city, but are looked down on by the predominant models and imported criteria, they are illegal areas that must be demolished in the legal and urban planning documents and from the prevailing perspective of Angolan administration and foreign companies.

The inhabitants of the *musseques* displaced by the state are evicted, rehoused in new social schemes in the outer outskirts, more than 40km away from the city centre. Examples of this are the Panguila and Zango schemes, built to rehouse populations displaced from risk areas or areas with a strategic peri-central location, such as Boavista, Cazenga, Chicala, Sambizanga.

The complex *musseques* demolition, eviction and rehousing process has been studied by different research teams (see Viegas 2015 and Moreira 2018) including ⁶ the PhD thesis in which this text is included. The fieldwork was based on visits, talks and interviews (to three inhabitants, to a person responsible for Panguila, twelve inhabitants and a person responsible for Zango). Some of the issues under discussion are listed below.

The processes were led by the administration in a top-down policy, without public consultation or hearing the population regarding the demolition, the place for rehousing

or the rehousing project and process. In the perspective of Lefebvre (1974), this type of intervention (in terms of process and of project) may be seen as an instrument of the power of the administration, as well as evidence of a dual view of the city.

The interviewees emphasized the speed of the demolition process, in which many families lost their belongings, equipment, furniture, clothes and food. They were rehoused very far away from their prior residence, daily life, job, school, health centre and hospital, far from the services they used, the transportation, their business relations with the city centre, and, as a consequence, their fragile family economy was disorganized, and their means of survival weakened. Communities fell apart, neighbourhood and social networks were broken, as well as emotional relationships and a sense of belonging that had been established for many years. Their sense of identity with their prior place of residence, a place of family and community memories, was also lost. Their constraints were countless: adults lost their jobs, children lost their school year, young people turned to delinquency, mutual help relations among neighbours were lost, people became more and more isolated, and there were accidents, deaths and many stories of injustice that made the populations angry. Physical and symbolic violence marks this authoritarian, speedy and unequal urbanization process.

The poverty of the displaced families who were rehoused in areas far away from their places of residence or of origin was increased by a rehousing process and project. The population did not participate in the project design. The projects did not consider the populations' way of life, their desires or economic situation.

The new Panguila and Zango housing schemes are one-storey, which fits the populations' way of life, but the area of the houses is considered insufficient⁷, the house plan does not fit their way of life, the construction is poor, showing many cracks, they are not finished and there is no basic sanitation. The dissatisfaction about the houses, stated in the interviews, had already been mentioned by Viegas (2015) and Moreira (2018). In and near the housing schemes there are no jobs, no equipment or social services, as well as insufficient transportation. The Zango social scheme is part of a larger five-stage scheme that included a "new centre" and an area for middle and high-income families. Because of its size, structure, mixed uses and different social strata, this scheme has gained a new social and economic dynamic. In these recently built areas, a new identity is lacking. Nevertheless, local organizations have been created that may contribute to solving some pending issues.

Two especially serious situations have been identified in Panguila and in Zango: (i) not all the families listed were given a new house, sometimes two and three families have been allocated the same house (against art. n.º 17, of the regulation Regulamento de Operações de Realojamento which defines the criteria for allocating the houses); (ii) some families were not allocated a house, but were assigned a tent close to the housing scheme. In both cases, the families were promised this would be a temporary situation. However, more than ten years later, the situations have not been solved, leading to: (i) in the case of several families living in the same house, serious conflicts regarding the use of space, differences in habits and cultures and promiscuity; (ii) in the case of families that were allocated a tent rather than a house, the tents have been replaced by poorly self-built houses made with zinc slates and concrete blocks, and no infrastructures (water, electricity or sanitation).

In some cases, given the violence of the process, the lack of conditions of houses and neighbourhoods, families were unable to adapt and left the allocated houses, they sold or rented them and returned to their old neighbourhood or to neighbourhoods closer to the city centre and to their old jobs. An example of this are the families of fishermen who lived in Kilombo, in Chicala island, who were rehoused in Zango (Moreira, 2018), and who, having lost their livelihood, left Zango and went back to Chicala 1, though they lost most of their possessions in the process and their living conditions in Chicala 1 were much poorer than in Zango.

Despite the dissatisfaction of many families and the fact that some left, other families were found who tended to have less resources and eventually adapted to their new situation. Despite being far away from the city centre and the lack of services, these families adapted the houses to their new way of life.

Brief conclusion

Considering three of the main dimensions in the concept of the Right to the City from Lefebvre's (1968) perspective – access to housing and services, renewed centre, right to the 'work' – we may state that, like Viegas (2015) in the case of Panguila, these housing schemes imposed by the State contribute to a loss of the right to the city. They are a product and a producer of increased inequality between the urbanized areas and the new and the old outskirts. Allocating a new house occurs following the demolition of the old house, which, in many cases, was better than the new one and this causes serious material and immaterial losses; on the other hand, the model of the new house was imposed rather than designed and discussed with its inhabitants. Given the peripheral location of these new schemes, the right to access services and the right to jobs is substantially decreased when compared to their old place of residence. In the process of demolishing the *musseque* and rehousing its inhabitants in the outskirts, all collective space, represented by the street and the squares, is lost; the 'centre' of community life in the *musseque* is lost, a space that also included closeness to services and to the urbanized city centre. People lose their right to their daily life in the city and, most of all, they lose the right to 'l'oeuvre', which is typical of settlements built by their inhabitants. The use value of the space in the *musseques* is replaced by exchange value, the housing space is now valued as a market product.

The legal and urban planning tools implemented in the first fifteen years of the millennium are marked by a neoliberal perspective that does not contemplate the dialectics of how space is produced in the *musseque*, which, though designed under colonial administration, became the place where anti-colonial resistance was born. The public agenda in Luanda includes the discussion on the tools produced in this millennium, based on a model of the city that is excluding and neoliberal, as well as on the impact of living in the wide, diverse, and complex territory of the *musseques*, and on the new types of housing schemes. Specifically, discussion is being promoted by UN-Habitat and by the NGO DW, on the new strategy - Estratégia de Melhoramento Participativo dos Assentamentos Informais⁸, which focuses on a participatory process rather than the *tabula rasa* policy and the authoritative processes used before.

The concept of the right to the city and a means to understanding the impact the recently implemented tools is a basis for enhancing emerging more emancipating paradigms that allow designing a city that is less dual and more inclusive for the inhabitants of self-built settlements.

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³ This topic is further discussed in the previously referred PhD thesis, based on bibliographical research and in the collection of testimonies of the oldest inhabitants of the municipality of Cazenga, our case study.

⁴ In this text, we only mention data on population growth, we do not refer to the size of the territory expansion of the urbanized city or of the *musseques*, which is being assessed within the scope of the PhD thesis and of Project África Habitat. We do not also explain the territory authorities and divisions of Luanda (municipality, province), types of areas (urban and rural) and their boundaries, which are also under revision.

⁵ Considering that, in 2014 (according to the census) the province of Luanda had 6945 million inhabitants and that the population has continued to increase in the past seven years and at the same pace (about 695 thousand inhabitants per year), it is estimated that the population in over 11 million in 2021 and that the population in the *musseques* (a low estimate of about 70% of the total population) may be about 8 million. Several studies indicate, however, that the population living in the *musseques* is much higher.

⁶ The case study we discuss in the PhD thesis is in the municipality of Cazenga and the urban district of Kalawenda. Within the scope of implementing the masterplan for Cazenga - Plano Diretor para a Reconversão Urbana do Cazenga -, several families whose houses were demolished were rehoused in the social schemes of Zango and Panguila, which is why these cases present a contrast between living in the *musseques* and in those schemes.

⁷ The area of the allocated houses is often insufficient when compared to the demolished houses.

⁸ The strategy is being disseminated by UN Habitat, in English, *Participatory slum upgrading*, PSUP. See <https://elearning.mypsup.org/home>