

The informal city: Candonga, governmentality and
corruption in post-conflict Luanda

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Glossary

Água para todos	Angola's water programme (literally Water for All)
Alface	Lettuce
Ambundo	Ethnic group from Angola's northwest area such as Malanje, Bengo and Luanda
Antes	Before
Assimilado	Indigenous inhabitant considered to be assimilated into Portuguese culture and social norms during Portuguese Colonialism
Bairro	Neighbourhood
Bairro dos Pescadores	The fishermens' neighbourhood in Cacuaco
Baixa	Refers to Central Luanda, the areas close to, and facing the, Luanda Bay
Bakongo	Ethnic group originally from northern Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo
Balde	Pail
Bandido	Criminal or street thug
Banheira	Tub
Batuquero	Slang for street thug

Benguela	A province of Angola but may also refer to the city of Benguela, the capital of Benguela Province
Bié	A province of Angola
Boa Vista	Informal neighbourhood in Luanda's Sambizanga municipality
Boleia Quinhentos	The informal taxi system of the early 1980s when lifts between places cost 500 kwanza
Cabrité	Grilled goatmeat
Cacuaco	A municipality of Luanda
Calão	Slang
Candonga	The act of getting things done through informal means
Candongeiro	In Luanda it commonly refers to informal taxi drivers. More generally it refers to an individual who gets things done through informal means or partakes in informal economic activities
Capitalismo selvagem	Law of the jungle capitalism or savage capitalism (referring to Angolan capitalism)
Casa própria	Refers to house ownership
Cazenga	A municipality of Luanda
Chafariz	Water tap (or water fountain)

Chapa	Corrugated iron
Chefe	Boss
Chicala	Informal neighbourhood in central Luanda
Chindungu	The local hot spice
Cidade	City
Compra e venda	Refers to the act of buying and selling merchandise on the informal market
Comissão de moradores	Residents' committees
Cooperante	Development worker or volunteer (usually foreign)
Comuna	City district (the municipal unit above neighbourhoods)
Contratados	Forced labour during colonialism
Cuca	An Angolan brand of beer
Cunhada	Sister in law
Cuove	Cabbage
Curandeiro	Traditional healer
Deslocados	Internally displaced people (IDPs)
Direcção Nacional das Águas	Angolan State Department of Water
Engarrafamento	Traffic Congestion. Literal translation: Bottleneck

Esquemas	Informal social (and economic) network
Fiscalização de pesca	The Anolan State's maritime fisheries surveillance patrol
Galo Negro	Black rooster, referring to UNITA and the black rooster on its flag
Gasosa	Bribe in Luandan slang (literally it means a soda drink)
Girafas	Water filling stations for cistern trucks (named after their giraffe like shape)
Giria	Slang
Huambo	A province of Angola but may also refer to the city of Huambo, the capital of Huambo Province
Imbondeiro	Baobab tree
Indígenas	Indigenous inhabitants not considered to be integrated into Portuguese culture and social norms
Ilha de Luanda	The Island of Luanda
Ka ndengue	Younger one, in Angolan slang
Kicolo	A comuna of Cacuaco Municipality in Luanda
Kifangondo	The area on the Bengo River in which the source of Luanda's water is located

Kikongo	The language of the Bakongo ethnic group originating in the north of the country (and in the Congos)
Kikuxi	In Kikuxi, south-east of the city, there are waterfilling <i>girafas</i> for cistern trucks to fill up on
Kilamba Kiaxi	A municipality of Luanda (since 2011 Kilamba Kiaxi has ceased to exist as a municipality of Luanda)
Kimbundu	The language of the Ambundo ethnic group which is historically predominant in Luanda
Kinguila	Those involved in the illegal and informal exchange of currency on the street
Kitanda	Informal marketplace
Kota	Older one, in Angolan slang
Kuito	The provincial capital of Bié
Kwanza	The Angolan currency
Kwanza Norte	A province of Angola
Kwanza Sul	A province of Angola
La politique du ventre	The politics of the belly
Ladrão	Thief
Lingala	A Bantu language originating along the Congo River

Loja	Shop or store
Lojas do Povo	People's stores
Lojas Francas	Well stocked shops where expats and the elite could shop for foreign currency in the 1980s and 1990s
Lusotropicalism	The representation of Portuguese colonialism as characterized as unique, promoting hybrid, creolized and harmonious societies
Malanje	A province of Angola but may also refer to the city of Malanje, the capital of Malanje Province
Mangeira	Hose
Marginal	Luanda's monumental boulevard along the Bay of Luanda
Mata	Bush
Mestiço	A person of mixed race
Motoqueiro	Motorcyclist
Mulenvos	A peri-urban area bordering the municipalities of Cacuaco and Viana
Musseques	Informal or peri-urban areas
Ndalatando	The provincial capital of Kwanza Norte
Nocal	An Angolan brand of beer

Nova Lisboa	The Colonial Portuguese name for the city of Huambo which was to become Angola's new capital city
Ovimbundo	Ethnic group originating in the central plateau area and Angola's central coastal area
Panguila	A peri-urban area that belonged to Cacuaco in Luanda but later became part of the province of Bengo when the official border between Bengo and Luanda were moved. The area was originally built to house relocated families who lost their houses and land to urban renewal plans, evictions and demolitions.
Paraíso	Peri-urban neighbourhood in Kicolo
Poder popular	People's power
Polícia Fiscal	Fiscal Police (sometimes referred to as the economic police)
Polícia Nacional de Angola	The Angolan national police
Processo quinhentos	Reference to the informal taxi system of the early 1980s when lifts between places cost 500 kwanza
Quintal	Fenced off yard surrounding a house. Quintais in plural
Rangel	A municipality of Luanda (since 2011 Rangel has ceased to exist as a municipality of Luanda)

Relocados	People relocated due to evictions
Requalificação urbana	Urban renewal
Retornados	Portuguese citizens who left the Angola when it gained independence in 1975, or can also refer to a returned refugees
Rio Bengo	The Bengo River
Rio Kwanza	The Kwanza River
Roque Santeiro	A large informal marketplace in Sambizanga named after a Brazilian telenovela which aired in Angola in the mid-1980s. It was closed by authorities in 2010.
Rusga	Forced conscription of soldiers during the war
Samba	A municipality of Luanda (since 2011 Samba has ceased to exist as a municipality of Luanda)
Sambizanga	A municipality of Luanda (since 2011 Sambizanga has ceased to exist as a municipality of Luanda)
Soba	Traditional authority
Talatona	A recently urbanized more “luxurious” and “developed” area in the southern parts of Luanda
Taxi Mota	Motorcycle taxi

Taxista	Taxi driver
Telenovela	Soap opera
Uíge	A province of Angola but may also refer to the city of Uíge, the capital of Uíge Province
Umbundu	The language of the Ovimbundu ethnic group originating in the central plateau area of the country
Urbanização Nova Vida	An area in southern Luanda often considered more “luxurious” and “developed” than other parts of Luanda
Viana	A municipality of Luanda
Vigilância Popular	Public vigilance teams
Zango	A peri-urban area in the municipality of Viana in Luanda. The area was originally built to house relocated families who lost their houses and land to urban renewal plans, evictions and demolitions
Zungeira	Mobile street vendor

Accronyms and Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung's Tranformation Index
CBO	Community Based Organization
CFS	Centre for the Future State
CIVICUS	Global Civil Society Alliance
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DW	Development Workshop
EDEL	<i>Empresa de Distribuição de Electricidade</i> (Angola's state electric company)
EPAL	<i>Empresa Publica de Águas</i> (Luanda's public water company)
EU	European Union
FAA	<i>Forças Armadas Angolanas</i> (Angolan Armed Forces)
FAPLA	<i>Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola</i> (Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola)
FNLA	<i>Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola</i> (National Front for the Liberation of Angola)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Global Financial Integrity

IDP	Internally displaced person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INADEC	Angola's National Institute of Consumer Protection
INE	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estatística</i> (National Institute for Statistics)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LUPP	Luanda Urban Poverty Programme
MPLA	<i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i> (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
MSF	<i>Médecins sans Frontières</i> (Doctors Without Borders)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	<i>Organização de Desenvolvimento de Área</i> (Organization for Area Development)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMA	<i>Organização da Mulher Angolana</i> (Organization of Angolan women)
PIDE	<i>Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado</i> (International and State Defense Police)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TPA	<i>Televisão Pública de Angola</i> (Angola's Public Television Network)
UCAN	<i>Universidade Católica de Angola</i> (Catholic University of Angola)
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNITA	<i>União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola</i> (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

This work is an ethnography of post-conflict Luanda. It focuses on the informal aspects of the city, more specifically life in the peri-urban neighbourhoods, or what in Angola is referred to as the *musseques*, the informal neighbourhoods where the majority of the city's residents reside. After decades of armed conflict in the country, the capital city Luanda with its original infrastructure for less than 500 000 people built by the former colonial power, Portugal, inhabits 1/3 of the country's population, over six million people. This massive urbanization has led the majority of the urbanites to lead informal lives on the periphery of the city.

This thesis describes a city where dealing with obstacles in residents' daily lives through informal means has become the norm rather than the exception. It describes a culture of urban informality, or what has been defined in this work as the *candonga* culture. This culture of informality and the city's informal economy are instrumental when it comes to securing vital household services, such as electricity and water, when dealing with civil servants and the official bureaucracy, and when securing land rights and land tenure in the city.

The thesis is a window into times when the city was going through rapid social and topographical changes due to post-conflict reconstruction, development, and urban renewal plans. Like the title suggests, it describes informality, governmentality and corruption in times of exponential economic growth when the gap between the rich and poor is rapidly increasing. It describes daily life on the periphery in a country that has been termed "the most centralist state in Africa" (Soares de Oliveira 2013:66), where, since colonialism and

socialism, power is still controlled and exercised from the center and dispersed outward into the peripheries.

Thus, the thesis is fundamentally about the resiliency of a population, and civil society organizations, in the face of hegemonic state governmentality, in an atmosphere where the parameters between what is considered formal and informal, official and unofficial or, legal and illegal, are blurred, and where, as is described herein, the state is simultaneously elusive, yet seemingly ever-present. While it is an ethnography of post-conflict Luanda, the dissertation's theoretical framework has a certain generality to it as it describes dimensions of informality that are found all over urban Africa (and rural), and aspects of social life that can be found, to certain extents, all over the world.

Sommaire

Ce travail est une ethnographie de Luanda après la guerre civile. Il se concentre sur les aspects informels de la ville, plus spécifiquement sur la vie en périphérie de la ville, ou sur ce qu'en Angola on appelle les musseques, ces banlieues informelles où la majorité des habitants de la ville résident. Après des décennies de conflit armé dans le pays, la capitale Luanda, avec ses infrastructures d'origine construites pour moins de 500 000 habitants par l'ex-pouvoir colonial, le Portugal, abrite un tiers de la population du pays, soit plus de six millions de personnes. Cette urbanisation massive a conduit la majorité des habitants de la ville à mener une vie informelle en périphérie de la ville.

Cette thèse décrit une ville où régler les problèmes de la vie quotidienne de façon informelle est devenu la norme plutôt que l'exception. Elle décrit une culture d'informalité urbaine, ou ce qui est défini dans ce travail comme étant la culture *candonga*. Cette culture d'informalité et l'économie informelle de la ville contribuent grandement au mode d'approvisionnement des services domestiques essentiels, tel que l'électricité et l'eau, au mode d'interaction avec les fonctionnaires et la bureaucratie officielle, et au mode de gestion de la propriété et des droits fonciers dans la ville.

Cette thèse se penche sur un temps où la ville connaissait des changements sociaux et topographiques rapides du fait de la reconstruction, du développement et de la réhabilitation urbaine d'après guerre. Comme son titre le laisse supposer, elle décrit l'informalité, la gouvernementalité et la corruption en temps de croissance économique exponentielle, quand l'écart entre les riches et

les pauvres s'accroît rapidement. Elle brosse le portrait de la vie au quotidien en périphérie, dans un pays que l'on a décrit comme étant "l'état le plus centraliste d'Afrique" (Soares de Oliveira 2013:66), et où depuis les temps du colonialisme et du socialisme, le pouvoir a toujours été contrôlé et exercé depuis le centre puis dispersé en direction de la périphérie.

Ainsi, cette thèse traite avant tout de la résilience de la population et des organisations de la société civile face à la gouvernamentalité hégémonique de l'état, dans une atmosphère où les paramètres différenciant ce qui est formel et informel, officiel et non officiel, légal et illégal, sont brouillés, et où, comme cela est décrit ici, l'état est simultanément distant tout en étant omniprésent. Bien qu'il s'agisse d'une ethnographie du Luanda de l'après-guerre, le cadre théorique de la thèse est assez large puisqu'il aborde des aspects de l'informalité que l'on trouve partout en Afrique urbaine (et rurale), ainsi que des aspects de la vie sociale que l'on observe dans une certaine mesure partout dans le monde.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Luanda, a City of Contrasts

“The enclave of downtown Luanda, with its political intrigue, its sexual gossip, its irrelevant cocktail parties, its billion-dollar loan sharks, is not Angola. To visit the real Angola, removed from the suffocating obsession with power and wealth, you need to travel five or ten miles from the center, beyond the end of the old colonial tarmac” (David Birmingham 2006:165).

1.1 Luanda and its *Musseques*

The Angolan civil war left millions of *deslocados*, internally displaced people (IDPs), uprooted by the violence. This massive population displacement has led to one of the highest rates of urbanization in Africa, transforming the country from predominantly rural, to largely urban (Hodges 2004, 6 and 20), with 58.5% of the population living in urban settings today (BTI 2012:2). Angola’s capital, Luanda, is a city originally built by the Portuguese colonial power with an infrastructure for about 500 000 people (Croese 2012a:126), but inhabits today more than six million people, approximately 1/3rd of the Angolan population (Cain 2013:12). This rapid urbanization occurred during and after the 27 year long civil war that ended in 2002. In fact, rural to urban migration occurred throughout Angola’s almost 40 year period of war (Cain 2012:11) if one includes the war of independence from 1961-1974. Furthermore, forced migration of slaves and later

contratados (forced labour) has been widespread in the country for centuries. A population boom ensued, due to Luanda's status during the war as a safe haven from the fighting, as the city was the MPLA's [*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* or the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola] stronghold, protected at various time periods by the Cuban, Soviet, and the oil-backed MPLA government's war apparatus, turning the city into a relatively safe refuge for internally displaced people.

Many were driven to the city by fear and insecurity, trying to escape the crossfire, while others were forced by the MPLA government's armed forces (FAA), to migrate to and resettle in government held towns and cities, as part of a "scorched earth" military strategy designed to weaken the opposing UNITA [*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* or the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] forces in the countryside (Pearce 2005:26 and 35; Hodges 2004:74). Both MPLA and UNITA armies would use the local population to supply themselves with food and supplies through pillaging and extortions during the war (Hodges 2004:74; Pearce 2005:54; Birmingham 2002:159). One way of manipulating the rural population was by denying them access to farmlands and water sources by laying minefields around them, resulting in the maiming, rather than killing, of Angola's rural population (Birmingham 2002:159). However, the logic behind the systematic evacuations of

the countryside under UNITA control was to starve the enemy out (Pearce 2005:54; Hodges 2004:74). As people were forcibly resettled into towns and cities that could hardly cope with the numbers, the problems of inadequate services such as water, sanitation and shelter, and the ensuing predicaments due to the sudden halt in provincial food production, were laid in the hands of international donors and humanitarian agencies (Irin News 2002; Pearce 2005:54).

After the war ended, many of the IDPs in Luanda continued to live in the country's economic hub (see DW and CEHS 2005:68) which is today, on its own, responsible for 75% of Angola's GDP production [Gross Domestic Product] (BTI 2014:18). The city's employment and business opportunities in the informal economy are unequalled elsewhere in the country, including its vast expanse of social and economic networks; in other words, its *candonga* culture of urban informality (which is explained further below) is unrivaled. Thus, the city became desirable despite its many problems, difficulties and paradoxes, derived from, for example, sorely lacking infrastructure and service provision in the city, land tenure insecurities and stark social inequalities. This desirability of the city is further evidenced in the fact that in the post-conflict era the influx of people to the city continues (see map in appendix 1). Most of the IDPs settled on the outskirts of the city in the *musseques*, or the so-called informal, or peri-urban areas, where

an estimated 75%-80%² of the city's population lives today (DW 2010a; Urban Landmark 2013:4). These musseques were the fieldsite of this ethnographic research, the once rural hinterlands of the city turned into urban peripheries, housing the poorer sections of the capital city, mostly out of reach of public services such as water and electricity or where such services were consistently unavailable or non-functioning.

Thus, the peri-urbanization of the city is a process that began during colonialism but sped up dramatically during the civil war. Through colonial laws and policies of racial segregation, the city was divided between the *Baixa* (Central Luanda) and the musseques. While the white colonizers lived in the *Baixa*, which as Robson and Roque have pointed out “became synonymous with the urbanized area where whites lived” (2001:21), Angolans lived in the musseques. Some have referred to the Musseques as peri-urban slums, others informal shanty towns and yet others squatter settlements, however, I will refrain from calling them names that can be interpreted as derogatory here, because for millions it was, and still is, the only viable way to inhabit the city and the option to live “formally” or “legally,” outside the musseque, with some form of basic public

² In 2004 a Development Workshop (DW) study on peri-urban Luanda indicated that 80% of land was informally occupied or peri-urban (DW 2010b) and in 2013 Urban Landmark estimated that three quarters of the city's population live in peri-urban or informal areas (Urban Landmark 2013).

infrastructure services, is not available to the majority of the Angolan population (see chapter 5 in this work). The musseque label, for the poorer, informal and peri-urban areas, geologically refers to the red sandy soil that characterizes the areas surrounding the capital city (Robson and Roque 2001:21). The name comes from the Kimbundo language, meaning *mu* = place + *seke* = sand (Van der Winden 1996:21; Chavagne 2005:104) and thus meaning the place of, or on, the sand (Van der Winden 1996:157). It has come to signify the areas surrounding the central, asphalt city, where the poorer inhabitants of the city reside. As has been pointed out by Carvalho, the term has come to refer “to a kind of urban morphology that is improvised, precarious and constantly expanding” (Carvalho 1989; cited in Robson and Roque 2001:21); or, as Justin Pearce (2005:5) has explained, it refers specifically to the jumble of self-made houses on the sand.

However, in contemporary Luanda, as the city has grown exponentially in recent decades, the asphalt city and musseque dichotomy is not necessarily bound by the geographical division between the central city and the city’s geographically peripheral areas. During my fieldwork there were still musseques that were centrally located (although they might be gone by the time this is read), such as Chicala, “situated quite close to the city’s epicenter” (Cardoso 2012:33), below the *Fortaleza de São Miguel*, the fortress of Luanda that stands watch over

the colonial city, and in “the armpit” between the *Ilha de Luanda* (Island of Luanda) and the *Marginal*, the monumental boulevard that borders the Bay of Luanda. Another example would be Boa Vista, reaching from the roots of the hill housing the diplomatic section of the Miramar neighbourhood (today this part of Boa Vista has been bulldozed in the name of property development (see e.g. Pearce 2005:10; Hodges 2004:31)) to the roots of the Roque Santeiro informal marketplace (which also has been removed and relocated to Panguila, north of the city). As the city has expanded, these musseques have become centrally located within the city’s borders. Thus, the difference between the *cidade*, or the asphalt city, and the musseque, is not merely geographical for, as pointed out by fellow anthropologist and researcher of post-conflict Luanda, Claudia Gastrow, it is a boundary that “maps on not merely to a geographical divide, but to perceived differences in lifestyles, social status, and everyday practices” as well (2012:70). Furthermore, as she explains, it is “a continuing presence in residents’ apprehension of the city” (Gastrow 2012:70) that can be dated back to the colonial period.

Soares de Oliveira (2013) has written about Angola’s center-periphery relations in historical perspective explaining how both colonial and post-colonial Angola was, and still is, controlled from the center (or from the cities by the Atlantic shore) which rules over the Angolan rural hinterlands, “the periphery.” He

describes how the center-periphery model, as political metaphor, continues to be used after the war's end in achieving political control and state hegemony across Angola. Thus, the rural peripheral hinterlands that were out of the MPLA state's reach during the war are being annexed through a state-making agenda generated by centrally located state elites. As Soares de Oliveira has put it:

[T]he regime's 'peace dividend' materialized as hegemony over a physically and mentally drained society. Angola is now 'the most centralist state in Africa', with every official nominated from Luanda. Underpinned by a budget in excess of total OECD aid to Africa, Angola's state-making project is generated by President dos Santos and MPLA elites and enacted via a plethora of public and private actors and institutions linked to the regime that has directed the Angolan state since independence (Soares de Oliveira 2013:166).

Thus, as is so well described by Soares de Oliveira, center periphery relations are still entrenched in the Angolan political mentality and the history of centralized control of Angolan society makes plans of decentralization (in action and not merely on paper) seem improbable. Power relations at the local level in Luanda's peri-urban neighbourhoods are the theme of chapter 6 where local level power dynamics are explored further.

1.2 Historic Roots of Urban Segregation

In Luanda, the onset of the center-periphery approach to the city during colonialism, and the resulting spatial segregation that has developed since, is an example of an urban development of social exclusion, social inequality, segregation and citizens' differentiation. As will be further explained in chapter 5 this has today brought about a status of illegal occupancy in the city for the majority of Luanda's population. Thus, the rights to the city (Lefebvre 1996[1968], comprised of the individual right to access the city's resources and the right to affect and change the city (and ourselves in the process) by collectively shaping the processes of urbanization (Harvey 2008:23), are in Luanda unevenly distributed and a form of distributed inequality and unequal citizenships persists (see Holston 2008). There is a thin line between this argumentation and that of apartheid and neo-colonialism. However, it serves to demonstrate that inequality and injustice found in Angolan society has historical roots. This is consistent with other sources of inequality such as the colonial power's unequal distribution of education and rights to its subjects and the division of society into the racial categories of indigenous Angolans (*indígenas*), assimilated non-whites (*assimilados*) and Europeans (Tvedten 1997:27). During colonialism an *assimilado* was a mestiço or black African who could speak and write Portuguese (the colonial language which still serves as the language of power and authority)

and who had been acculturated in Portuguese cultural values (Birmingham 1995). However, in 1920 it became a specific legal categorization to separate *assimilados* from the indigenous African population, legally securing them increased civic rights over their indigenous kin, including privileged access to education and certain jobs (Hodges 2004:43; Birmingham 1995:92). *Bilhetes*, or identity cards issued by the colonial state, firmly positioned the Angolan citizen into the “appropriate” category. As explained by Pearce (2005:ix), “the goal of assimilation was to cease to be African in all but colour.” However, the possibility of cultural assimilation was not open to all, only to a selected few, mainly from the coastal urban areas and the Methodist mission fields of the city hinterland (Birmingham 1995:92), and this created social divisions based on inequality. Hence, representations of *lusotropicalism*³, where Portuguese colonialism is characterized as unique, promoting hybrid, creolized and harmonious societies, is a myth which obscures the history and realities of Portuguese colonialism (Pearce 2005: ix; Bender 2004; Venâncio 1996). The idea behind *lusotropicalism*, as found in the work of Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1998[1933]; 1961), was that a harmonious unity was generated in the colonies

³ This short discussion on *Lusotropicalism* is heavily influenced by my research collaboration with Lisa Åkesson and the research proposal written for our research on the reversal of migration patterns between Portugal and its former colonies, Cabo Verde and Angola. The research officially began in July 2014.

because the Portuguese colonial masters, unlike for example the British ones, adapted to the culture and rejected any ideas of ethnic purity (Åkesson with Waldorff 2013). This argumentation has however been dismissed as an attempt to omit the issue of racial oppression in the Portuguese colonies (Helgesson 2001).

The Angolan writer, José Luandino Vieira, who took up the name Luandino to identify with his city, looks for inspiration in the musseques and his childhood and youth growing up in Luanda, as he writes about daily life in the musseques surrounding Luanda's central neighbourhoods in the "baixa." The city's divide between the baixa (the center) and the musseques (the periphery) during colonialism is clearly featured in his writing. Luandino Vieira was the son of a Portuguese shoemaker who traveled with him, then still an infant, and his mother, to Luanda in 1938, where he grew up in an environment characterized by a mixture of poor whites, *mestiços* and black Angolans, an experience that made him a stark opponent of racialism and Portuguese colonialism (Wolfers 1982:35). The world he transmits to his readers in his books comes from this experience.

He has been described as "a master of modern prose fiction in the Portuguese speaking world" (Wolfers 1982:35). His novel *Nosso Musseque* (2003) describes daily life in the musseques, the resident's struggles for survival

and the camaraderie between them, while issues of racism and colonial oppression and social injustices come through in a language that is a mixture of Portuguese and Kimbundu slang, the language of the Luandan musseque (Luandino Vieira 2003; Literarische Agentur Mertin n.d.; Encyclopedia Britannica n.d.). The characters of his story all have their own voice and describe both young and old residents of the musseque, friends and foes, tales of resisting the ever-present secret police, of tradesmen, craftsmen, thieves and prostitutes (Literarische Agentur Mertin n.d.).

Luandino Vieira wrote many of his stories while imprisoned by the Portuguese Colonial Power for being involved in Angola's struggle for independence by bringing international attention to the failures of the colonial regime (Wolfers 1982:35). He spent eight years in the notorious *Tarrafal* concentration camp on the Cape Verde Islands, nicknamed the camp of the slow death [*campo da morte lenta*] (Luandino Vieira 2003). When he was finally released he was placed under house arrest in Lisbon (Luandino Vieira 2003). It was only after his release and the fall of the Salazar regime that he was able to publish his work, although, while barred from publication, his work had been distributed clandestinely to his readers (Wolfers 1982:35; Luandino Vieira 2003). His novel *Nosso Musseque* was, for example, first published 40 years after he wrote it in prison in Luanda, between December 1961 and April 1962, and 60

years after the “fictional” events took place in the musseque (Luandino Vieira 2003:6)⁴.

It can easily be argued that “instrumentalization of disorder” (Chabal and Daloz 1999:xviii) or the “politics of disorder,” in which a political elite’s inactions towards their populations’ suffering leads to civil strife and disorder (Chabal 2005:9), is an ongoing process in contemporary post-conflict Angola. As mentioned above, the continuation of the history of urban segregation, gives, to a certain extent, power to the criticism of a neo-colonial or a neo-apartheid urban morphology and post-conflict government policy as there is a history of segregation woven into the urban fabric that continues to this day; four decades after independence and one decade after the conclusion of the civil war. Realization of this and the symbolism it represents could become particularly pertinent to Angolan policy makers (and urban planners) when considering that segregation and inequality between the Indigenous population and the European population during colonialism bred anticolonial resentment and ultimately led to

⁴ His book *Luuanda* [the Kimbundo name for the city of Luanda], released in 1964, celebrating life in the musseques, was awarded the Portuguese Society of Writers’ fiction prize while he was still in prison for alleged terrorism. The fascist regime had been on the verge of banning the book and then responded to the award by arresting and questioning the panel of 5 leading Portuguese authors and critics who had awarded the prize. Despite such tactics of intimidation they refused to withdraw the prize and the government banned the Society for awarding the prize, as well as banning the book, while the Society’s premises were wrecked by followers of the regime (Wolfers 1982:35).

the onset of the war for independence in the 1960s. Critiques of neo-colonialism have emerged in the short post-conflict era and, as will be further elucidated in chapter 6, attempts at public protest have been emerging in the last few years, which was virtually unheard of in Angola's post-independent history. However, these protests have always been harshly beaten down by police and the military, causing outrage among international humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and locally based ones such as SOS Habitat. Thus public protests, free speech, free press and democracy, all "weapon(s) of the weak" (referring to Scott's 1985 vocabulary), were severely weakened and circumscribed by the MPLA, whose state apparatus imposed hegemonic power over all layers of Angolan society.

1.3 Theoretic Argumentation: Candonga as Culture and the Ubiquity of Informality

Many of the younger musseques found in Luanda today emerged during the civil war as the areas surrounding the capital were used to provide refuge to internally displaced people who eventually settled in these areas and built their own houses. The segregation between the urban "asphalt" city and peri-urban musseque plays a significant role when it comes to one of the main themes of this work, informality. The division of the market into formal and informal entities, or legal and illegal markets, does not stop there as urban areas are also divided

into formal and informal neighbourhoods and thus the city's inhabitants could be divided into informal or formal citizens depending on where they live (the asphalt city or the musseque) and how they provide for themselves (through informal work or formal employment). Not only are the musseques considered informal and even illegal by authorities but peoples' lifestyles are also considered informal. For example, the manner in which a majority of Luandans provide revenue for their households, and the manner in which services are acquired, is accomplished informally, or through the informal economy. This brings us to the main theoretic argument and to what I believe to be the major theoretical contribution of this work: In Luanda informality has become culture, the *candonga* culture, and Luandans are immersed in this culture and the resulting ways of life and mindset.

I argue in this work that informality is ubiquitous in Luandan society. It does not only concern the poor or the inhabitants of the informal peri-urban musseques. Informality is found in every layer of Angolan society. It is an indestructible part of Luandan society and culture and therefore any attempts by authorities to close or eradicate informal activities or informal economic spaces are bound to fail.

By defining Luandan culture as a culture of informality or a *candonga* culture I am referring to this ubiquity of informality in Luanda. For instance,

informality does more than merely transcend the borders of the ideal of a formal economic sector and official state bureaucracy and has become a mode and logic of being, living and surviving in the city. That is, it affects how people think and act in the city; it has become permanently engrained in the habitus (Bourdieu 1980) of ordinary Luandans.

The omnipresence of informality in Luandan society is revealed in the various chapters of this work: from how the majority of the population survives off the informal economy which has become the lifeline of ordinary Luandans, to how vital household infrastructure services are secured through informal means and informal, quasi-formal, and traditional land tenure and housing documents have become the norm among the city's population although they are not considered legitimate by authorities which use informal occupancy and land tenure as an excuse to reject the majority of the city's population access to public infrastructure services such as water and electricity and to evict people from, and demolish, their houses and neighbourhoods. Furthermore I explain how power and authority is both ambiguous and informal at the local level in the peri-urban Luandan musseques and how corruption is both systemic and endemic in Angolan contemporary society.

The ubiquity of informality in Luandan society turns the informal-formal divide on its head, to a certain extent, since it is hard to find purely formal or

official sectors in contemporary Luanda that are unaffected by the informal domain, even if they exist in the local vernacular and are frequently evoked by the city's inhabitants. In Luanda, the formal appears as an enclave, an island in a sea of informality, closed off to the majority, and open to but a few. However, to argue that this formal enclave is purely formal without any informal influences and incentives would be an exaggeration.

Thus, the informal-formal dichotomy, as well as official-unofficial, and even legal-illegal dichotomies are used in this work, for informality has been, and continues to be, defined as an anomaly to (the norm of) formality or a formal sector although it could be argued that it is more of an illusion than a reality in Luanda. Even though informality has infiltrated every layer of the formal and official sector in Luanda, the formal and official terminologies continue to be used and referred to on the ground, by the common citizen, by authorities, and by academics, although in reality the formal official "sector" is more of an ideal than an actuality on the ground, an ideal immersed by informality which renders these categories hybrid and blurs the boundaries between what is considered informal and formal. Thus, such a dichotomy is used in this work for the sake of clarification rather than to assert that there really exist categories of purely formal or purely informal activities and norms. As pointed out above, this dichotomy exists as an ideal, and is used throughout Angolan and Luandan society and

throughout the world, and thus, it is a vernacular tradition that is hard to shy away from when ethnographically describing contemporary Luandan society.

It should be clear that by referring to a candonga culture I am not emphasizing the illegality, but rather the informality, of candonga. The fact that the informal economy is categorized as illicit by authorities is beside the point here. What I find interesting and important is how essential the informal market has become to everyday life in the city, to the extent that, without the informal economy, few people would be capable of feeding and clothing themselves in contemporary Luanda. As pointed out by AlSayyad and Roy (2004) and Ley (2012) and the empirical evidence provided in this work demonstrates, informality is an organizing urban logic, or, as Ley elucidates, it goes “beyond land and shelter, it is transport, supply of basic services and employment which are organized and provided informally” (Ley 2012:15). As this work will reveal, the implicit idea that formality is the norm and informality the deviation from that norm (see MacFarlane and Waibel 2012:2) does not apply in contemporary Luanda where, in fact, this implicit idea is reversed for the majority of the city’s population.

Therefore, the informal city cannot and should not be dismissed as simply chaotic, as official government discourse dictates; it is a response to the country’s and the city’s history which has over time conceived a culture of

informality, the candonga culture. Within such cultures of informality, there are productive spaces where creative initiatives, contestation and new social configurations take place. Post-conflict urban renewal and attempts at formalizing the city are unlikely to erase the effects of this history, and the culture it has shaped, overnight. Furthermore, while the Angolan state's income mainly comes from oil revenues, haphazard attempts at formalizing and taxing the informal economy, upon which the majority of Angolan's base their survival (dwarfed, however, in comparison to state revenues from the oil sector) often seem to be more for show than a sincere effort, with political will often seemingly not matching the political agenda, and institutions lacking for transitioning the (so-called) "informal" society into a "formal" one. Such attempts are also unethical and bound to automatically fail unless the government can provide alternatives upon which Angolans can base their survival. Chapter 3 further explores candonga and the informal economy and its evolution in the post-colonial era.

As pointed out above, presenting Angolan social practices and norms as binary oppositions such as formal/informal, official/unofficial, public/private and legal/illegal, is also a simplification and hence to a certain extent false, as it is difficult to imagine an absolute divide between such conditions in the Angolan context. As Roitman (2005) has argued in her book, *"Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa"*, the informalization of the

economy does not necessarily imply the breakdown of order (see also Anders and Nuijten 2008:12). Furthermore, she points out how legal and illegal economies are connected in multifarious ways and constitute each other, as “the parallel economy is neither residual nor unregulated” (Anders and Nuijten 2008:12). Thus, in Angola, like the situation described in Roitman’s research field for the Chad Basin, the existence of informal economic activity does not necessarily equal a weakness in state authority, despite public condemnations by the state apparatus, as members of the state apparatus themselves partake regularly in unregulated economic activities and acts of corruption (see Roitman 2005; see also Rich 2007). Hence, the ensuing blurred lines between the formal and the informal, private and the public, licit and the illicit, and the state and society, described in more depth in chapter 3 on the informal economy and chapter 6 on local level power dynamics.

1.4 The Reliability of Angolan Statistical Data and the Paradox they represent

Reliable statistics are hard to find in Angola as no official census data has been published since before independence⁵. This can be problematic when conducting research in the country and as pointed out by Tvedten (1997:2) it presents major

⁵ This, however, should soon change for the better when the official results of the government’s first national census in over 40 years (conducted in May of 2014) will be published.

challenges for those writing about Angola, since basic measures on economic performance, population and socio-economic conditions are missing. As a team of Dutch researchers declared when exploring women's work and employment in Angola, Angolan statistics are in a deplorable state, especially when it comes to social indicators: "Such statistics are mostly outdated or simply not existing. Gathering data by the National Institute for Statistics (INE) remains in its infancy. Trade, industrial, demographic and employment data are nearly fully missing" (Klaveren et al. 2009:8). The lack of statistics or unreliability of statistics is however not uniquely an Angolan problem as other war torn or post-conflict societies that have gone through considerable social changes are frequently in this situation. At a conference at Emory University's Institute of African Studies in 2012, Thomas Crick, Associate Director of the Carter Center, gave a presentation on their work in Liberia. He described the difficulty of finding reliable statistics in the country and recounted a joke on the situation; stating that one is more likely to find gold and diamonds when looking for reliable statistics in Liberia. This is a metaphor easily transferred onto the Angolan context. Similar witticisms could be told about the state of Angolan statistics although one could perhaps add firearms alongside the gold and the diamonds as Angolans have been reluctant to disarm after the war's conclusion.

During my fieldwork I found several indications of how unreliable statistics are in Angola. In one instance a government report was released with statistics on public water usage in Luanda. However, the statistics looked suspiciously positive, in favour of the government and their post-conflict development efforts, indicating that a large majority of households in the city now had access to public water. It portrayed a picture of water access that was at odds with the everyday reality in the musseques. Thus, due to suspicions about the report's reliability, a high ranked official involved in publishing the report was confronted in private during a conference in the capital. The government official admitted that the statistics had been tampered with in order to make it look like the government had been successful in providing the population with clean water. Hence, the empirical ethnographic research method, where data is collected through interviews and participant observation, and access, trust and authority is earned in the field, often gives a clearer picture of what is taking place on the ground than (unreliable) statistics. A Kimbundu proverb: *Kumona njamba kwenda*, which translates to: To see the elephant you have to walk (move around) [*Para ver o elefante, tens que andar*], expresses this necessity when conducting research in Luanda and Angola quite well. The fundamental implication being that a traveled person is more knowledgeable than the one sitting at home all his life.

Furthermore, if you haven't seen it how do you know it is true, as another Kimbundu maxim relates: *Don't say it doesn't exist, say you haven't seen it.*

Existing Angolan statistics are however striking because of the paradox they represent. Angola has one of the fastest growing economies in the world, reaping the benefits of a GDP growth averaging 11.5 per cent per year since 2002 (BTI 2014:17). Between the year 2000 and 2011 the country's GDP increased from US\$ 11.4 billion to US\$ 100.9 billion (Adolfo 2012:1, citing the World Bank n.d.). However, despite these promising economic statistics the country ranks only 148th of 187 countries on UNDP's 2011 and 2012 Human Development Indexes (BTI 2014:18; UNDP 2013; UNDP 2011a). Poverty rates are high with statistics from the BTI 2012 Angola Country report showing that 70.2 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, living on less than 2\$ per day. Croese has published statistics that show that 60% of Luandans live on less than \$2 per day (Croese 2012a:137; see also DW and CEHS 2005; UCAN 2010). The accuracy of some of these statistics has been disputed by institutions involved with social work in the country. The Angolan investigative journalist, human rights activist, anti-corruption campaigner, and probably the Angolan Government's starkest and most widely circulated critic, Rafael Marques de

Morais⁶, claimed that in reality the poverty rates are much higher (BTI 2012:3; Adolfo 2012:3). According to statistics provided by Eldridge Vigil Adolfo (2012:3), researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute, 13.7 million out of Angola's estimated 19 million inhabitants have no access to electricity. Furthermore, UNICEF statistics from 2010 indicate that countrywide access to improved drinking water is just over 50 per cent. According to UNICEF 60 per cent of the urban population has access to improved drinking water sources while in the rural areas only 38 per cent of the rural population has access to improved drinking water (UNICEF n.d.). More recent statistics, from the BTI 2014, reveal that only 23% of the rural population has access to clean drinking water (BTI 2014:24). However, as will be explained in chapter 4, a significant portion of the water accessed in the musseques (where an estimated 75-80% of the city's population lived during my

⁶ In 2013 Marques de Moraes won Transparency International's Integrity Award. The award recognized his courage and determination in confronting corruption at great personal risk (Transparency International 2013). Marques de Moraes was also awarded the Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship from the National Endowment for Democracy in 2011 (Regan-Sachs 2012) and in 2006 the Civil Courage Prize, for steadfast resistance to evil at great personal risk, by the Train Foundation (Train Foundation 2006). In 2000 he was awarded the Percy Qoboza Award for Outstanding Courage, by the National Association of Black Journalists of the United States and the same year the European Parliament awarded him with the Freedom Passport (Train Foundation 2006). In an intriguing piece for Think Africa Press, Rebecca Regan-Sachs goes through Marques de Moraes' story of "subversion," his imprisonment for speaking out against the war and corruption in his country and his battles with the Angolan government and the not-so-free, open or friendly system for managing the press and social critics (Regan-Sachs 2012).

research), through the informal market, is not sanitary as it is pumped up straight from the river and often sold to peri-urban households untreated.

The aforementioned statistical paradoxes have earned the country the dubious nickname “the world’s richest poor country” (Kampfner 2008; O País 2011). Hillary Clinton, then US secretary of State, picked up on these paradoxes during an official visit to Angola, carried out during my field research in August of 2009. Although her intention with the visit was to strengthen US-Angolan diplomatic relations, and the oil trade between the two countries, she posed a question to the Angolan minister of external affairs, Assunção Afonso de Sousa dos Anjos, that sounded much like a premeditated and compulsory critique: How do you explain that Angola is now one of the largest producer of oil in Africa but ranks among the lowest on the UNDP’s human development index? A question, and critique, that points to the staggering paradox of poverty in times of exponential economic growth.

1.5 From “Afro-optimism” to “Afro-Pessimism”: A Call for “Angola-Realism”

Angola’s post-conflict stint of exponential economic growth, as well as rising economic growth on the Sub-Saharan African continent in general, has called for increased optimism towards development and poverty reduction in Africa.

Optimists have, for example, claimed that economic growth “is reducing poverty

and that Africa will catch up with richer countries” (see Hårsmar 2013). This optimism is duly called for when one looks at the history of economic growth on the African continent over the last few decades, for as Sachs et al. of the UN Millennium Project have called attention to, Africa was “the only major developing region with negative growth in income per capita during 1980–2000” (Sachs et al. 2004:117). Thus, in line with these economic developments, *The Economist* has, for example, in little over a decade taken a U-turn in its reporting on the continent from proclaiming Africa as “The Hopeless Continent” in 2000 (The Economist 2000) to “A Hopeful Continent” in 2011 (The Economist 2011b; see also Havnevik 2013a; Havnevik 2013b), where it is argued that “Africa has a real chance to follow in the footsteps of Asia” (The Economist 2011b) and conceptions of a “new Africa” and “the Africa miracle” have emerged (see Havnevik 2013b). This argument has been used for Angola as some see in Angola the possibility of developing into a developmental state comparable to the Asian tigers (as pointed out by Sogge 2011a:90). Collier has for example claimed that “Angola, with its oil and its Atlantic coastline could well prove to be another Malaysia” (Collier 2008:206, as cited in Sogge 2011a:90). However, the current state of Angolan politics, in which the country’s governing elite lacks the political will, discipline and vision found within such “developmental states,” is not conducive to such an imagined path of development (see Sogge 2011a:90).

Others, as Sogge (2011a:90) has called attention to, eulogize the country and its economic growth with breathless enthusiasm without invoking specific scenarios.

There are also, however, those who are more pessimistic, calling the prevailing Africa optimism as false and unwarranted (see Havnevik 2013a and 2013b); those who observe the economic growth on the African continent and simultaneously curse its poor social development record, pointing out rising inequalities, persisting poverty, commodity export dependency and poverty traps (Hårsmar 2013; see also Sindzingre 2013; Akyüz 2012). The argument is that the current growth in Africa is largely based on resource exploitation for export, such as oil, gas and minerals which spurs great economic growth in the short term but in the long run is neither socially nor environmentally sustainable (Havnevik 2013b). Furthermore, according to Kjell Havnevik of the Nordic Africa Institute, foreign investment in Africa is largely directed to agricultural land for energy crops and food exports, which is highly mechanized and requires little labour. Thus, the argument of the “Afro-pessimism” camp is, as Havnevik has asserted, that: “African economic development will in the future be characterized by social exclusion and conflict rather than being inclusive and poverty-reducing” (Havnevik 2013b).

Obviously, Africa is a vast continent with diverse countries and societies and thus it is questionable to apply dichotomist argumentation such as presented

in the Afro-pessimism and Afro-optimism debate to the continent as a whole. It also runs against the tenets of anthropological research, which attempts to enter specific fieldsites, and produce holistic, ethnographic “thick descriptions” (Geertz 1973) of societies (or specific communities within the larger scope of society) based on empirical research. However, Angola has become a prime arena for the Africa optimist versus pessimist debate, as it reaps the benefits of tremendous economic growth, with oil production expected to peak in 2015 (Sogge 2011a:90), in tandem with staggering poverty and social injustices.

1.6 Some Notes on Angola’s Post-Conflict Development

After the civil war’s end the state’s finances were increasingly implemented in large scale infrastructure rebuilding with annual infrastructure investments estimated at \$4.3 billion, or 14% of GDP, spent on roads, railways, ports and power generation (Soares de Oliveira 2013:173-174; see also Pushak and Foster 2011). However, it turned out that \$1.3 billion US or 5% of the GDP were lost to inefficiencies every year according to Pushak and Foster of the World Bank (2011:2). This post-conflict infrastructure reconstruction has yielded 8,000 km of asphalted roads, with \$2.8 billion US spent annually on road rehabilitation as well as new roads, between 2005 and 2009 (Soares de Oliveira 2013:174). Through this investment the major provincial roads between Luanda and the provinces of

Benguela, Malanje and Huambo have been restored to relatively high standards. However, as Soares de Oliveira (2013:174) points out, the “economic consequences” of linking these provincial capitals with Luanda (linking the periphery to the center), although positive, have been fewer than expected. The reasons for this, he claims to be the government’s poor investment in agricultural development. As Soares de Oliveira argues, the government’s goal of facilitating “broadcasting power across space – the logistical prerequisite for effective control of the hinterland” has, through such logistical connections between the rural peripheries and the urban center, been considerably advanced and consequentially has partly transcended the “traditional limits of political geography” in Angola (2013:174). Thus the post-conflict infrastructure reconstruction has been remarkably successful in achieving political control of Luanda (centrally) based economic and political elites over the rural peripheries, a projection of MPLA’s state hegemony through the conventional Angolan political pattern of center-periphery relations.

Angola’s path towards post-conflict development has been influenced by China and by new powers in the global South, such as India and Brazil, aiming for state-led (rather than market-led) rapid economic growth and poverty reduction through a *mélange* of neo-liberal economic policies, social-development programs, and the privatization of service delivery (Croese 2013).

The inefficacy of the predominant model of economic development for reaching the poorest layers of Luandan society is evident. Billions of dollars have been spent on large infrastructure developments, such as highways, skyscrapers in Luanda's downtown area, and new luxurious suburbs to the south, while the peri-urban areas where most of the population lives are left out of the development schemes. They are supposed to benefit from trickle-down economics. This, however, seems not to have transpired as the peace dividends and oil wealth are not shared with the country's population. Thus, the post-conflict, destruct to reconstruct, policy undertaken by Angolan authorities has had, and continues to have, grave consequences for the urban poor and the majority of urbanites living in the informal musseques of Luanda. As Angolan rap artist and social critic MC K⁷ pointed out in a media interview: "Instead of fighting poverty they are fighting the poor" [*"Em vez de se combater a pobreza, combate-se o pobre"*], a view that echoes the paradoxes found in Angola's post-conflict environment (Praia 2013; see also Silva 2014)⁸.

This destruct to reconstruct policy, the consequences of which will be further explored in chapter 5, focuses more on a utopian vision of a "modern" city

⁷ MC K was one of several Angolan civil society activists who met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her official Angola visit in 2011 (Praia 2013).

⁸ As explained further in chapter 7, Angolan social critique can often be found in popular Angolan songs (see for example Moorman's 2008 work on the role of music as a medium for resistance and nationbuilding in Angola).

with globalized citizens (perhaps modelled after the *utopia* presented in the ever popular Brazilian *telenovelas* [soap operas] aired on TV) than on the needs of the majority of the population who has been left behind to fend for itself; this is an art that Angolans perfected during the 27 year long civil war, and the decade of peace, during which the former socialist regime (MPLA) dominated the state apparatus and remained, and still remains, in control of all social, political and economic levers (Vidal 2008:232).

As described in the work of critics like Marques de Morais, the major figures involved in the reconstruction of the country after the war have been public officials (including generals from the Angolan army and members of the president's family) who use public money and policy for self-enrichment, as will be described further in chapter 7. This is, ironically, illegal, even according to the new constitution put in place by the same people in February of 2010, and affects the outcome of the reconstruction and the "trickle down" supposed to reach the poor at the bottom of society. One possible reason for why the so-called "trickle down" is not reaching the poor as it could is the fact that Angola's ambitious reconstruction program, which is to a large extent carried out and financed by China, does not rely on Angolan workers and thus is not using the opportunity of creating skills and jobs for ordinary Angolans and spurring the local economy. Instead of using Angolan labour, the post-conflict reconstruction is largely

conducted by over 250,000 Chinese labourers admitted into the country through work visas (Marques de Moraes 2012), evoking critiques of neo-colonialism and rumours about the Chinese workers, a persistent one being that they are prisoners sent from China to work off their sentences abroad through hard labour and construction work⁹. An “Angolanization” policy does exist emphasizing the employment of Angolan citizens. This policy has been followed most thoroughly by the Angolan oil sector. However, there are sectors that have been successful in bypassing the policy, for example, sectors like the banking and construction sectors. This is in essence, an example of a disconnect between adopting policies and laws in Angola and their implementation on the ground, a subject further discussed in chapter 5.

1.7 Colonial (R)evolution: From “Post-Colonialism”, to “Neo-Colonialism”, and Subsequently a Reversal of Roles

The economic crisis that has hit Portugal, calling for drastic austerity measures, with significantly diminished salaries and soaring unemployment rates, in tandem with the oil fuelled economic growth in Angola, has led to a reversal of roles between the former colonizer (Portugal) and colony (Angola) as the stream of

⁹ These were rumours related to me by Angolan friends, who, for example, worked themselves in construction but were appalled by the conditions of Chinese labourers in the country.

migration has now been from Portugal to Angola, rather than vice versa, as has been the norm in the past. Statistics on the number of Portuguese in Angola vary, but *Sectretaria de Estado das Comunidades Portuguesas* has estimated that around 100,000 Portuguese citizens were living in Angola in 2013 and a majority of them in Luanda (Sectretaria de Estado das Comunidades Portuguesas 2013). However, in October 2013, Angola's Minister for External Relations, Georges Rebelo Chicoti, claimed on BBC's Focus on Africa program that 250,000 Portuguese were living in Angola (BBC 2013). Other estimates have been around and over the 200,000 mark (see e.g. Åkesson 2013). Portuguese construction companies such as Teixeira Duarte, Soares da Costa and Mota Engil have established themselves in Angola as have Portuguese banks which have become dominant players in Luanda's financial sector (see e.g. The Economist 2011a).

Angola has been presented as an El Dorado in Portuguese media, promising excitement, exotic pleasures and a life of means (Åkesson 2013; Smith 2012b; Zuber 2012). Portuguese migrants to Angola are a heterogeneous group and the goal for most of the new migrants is to rapidly gain a foothold on the local labour market through hard work and to secure enough income to be able to raise a family, or sustain family members left behind in Portugal (Åkesson with Waldorff 2013).

Some are children of the Portuguese “*retornados*” who left the colony when it gained independence in 1975, which means that a number of the new migrants lived as young children in Angola (Zuber 2012; see also Åkesson with Waldorff 2013; Åkesson 2013). Their pre-independence history in the country often secures them connections to Angolans and sometimes to the political and economic elite (Åkesson 2013). I met several such “historically” connected Portuguese Angolans during my fieldwork. Some have even secured an Angolan citizenship, a great asset in a country where the bureaucratic process to acquire visas is complicated and frequently involves paying bribes (Åkesson 2013).

Many of the Portuguese leaving for Angola are relatively young and well educated (Åkesson with Waldorff 2013); some come with a university education to secure a salary in Angola, as jobs are scarce at home, working in for example telecom or banking while others come to work for the Portuguese construction companies in Angola (Åkesson 2013). Then there are the Angolans who fled the war to Portugal, who are returning to the land of their ancestors in hope for better opportunities there. Education and skill training vary within this group of migrants, and, as Åkesson (2013) has pointed out, some members of this group are the ones who have had the most difficulty reintegrating into Angolan society, sometimes accused of having left during times of hardship only to return to reap the benefit of the economic boom.

As an old friend, who had returned from Portugal in search of opportunities in the now peaceful and rich Angola, kept reminding me in our many conversations: “Even though some people have it better, this is still Africa, this is not Europe, things are still difficult.” This applied to both Angolans who had never left the country, as well as those in his situation of a returnee.

Older Angolans, with lower levels of education, are more open minded towards, even admiring, the old colonial masters, while younger Angolans are more critical of them (Åkesson 2013). During my fieldwork, educated and skilled Angolan’s working for private enterprises as well as public ones, expressed resentment when seeing their Portuguese colleagues promoted ahead of them and earning higher salaries, some condemning racist attitudes they had to endure at work. As Lupita explained with resentment: “These Portuguese guys, arrive, with lower education and without experience, and they become a *chefe* [boss] on the spot. While we Angolans with the most experience never get promoted and only receive a portion of the Portuguese employees’ salaries.” Furthermore, the Portuguese staff often receives other perks as well that are not available for the local Angolan workers, such as free housing, a car and social security fees (see e.g. Åkesson 2013).

The role reversal is not only represented in the reversed migration pattern from the former colonial power back to the colonies, but also in the fact that with

increased Angolan investment in banks and businesses in Portugal, often through the state Oil and Gas company Sonangol, Angolans who in the past worked for the Portuguese are now employing their former colonial masters to work for them (see e.g. The Economist 2011a; Conchiglia 2012). In 2012 Angolans had become one of the biggest investors in Portugal, owning around 4% of companies listed in Portugal's stock exchange worth approximately 2 billion US\$ (Conchiglia 2012). Capital flight from the Angolan economy, as well as Angolan investment in Portugal, is further broached in chapter 7.

The Angolan president's 2011 promise to help the former colonial power to cope with its financial crisis "in a spirit of solidarity and mutual help" through a "strategic partnership" and Angolan investment in the Portuguese economy could be interpreted (adding it to the growing voices of criticism of the country's post-conflict development) as clear evidence of where Angola's economic and political elite's economic and development priorities lie (Mark 2011; BBC 2011). As summed up by Sogge, "today's political economy resembles the colonial order of yesterday in a number of ways. A narrow state-based elite manages the economy in collaboration with foreign corporations to promote a development model that redistributes wealth upward and outward" (Sogge 2011a:90), neglecting one of the country's most important resources of all, its own population.

However, in an unexpected turn of events, the “strategic partnership” between Angola and Portugal, as a solution to Portugal’s financial crisis, weakened considerably when President José Eduardo dos Santos announced in his 2013 annual state of the nation address to parliament that unfortunately anti-corruption organizations in the west are “creating the general expression that a rich African is invariably a corrupt one” (Beck 2013). Claiming that relations with Portugal are not going well and that the “current political climate does not advise the implementation of the strategic partnership” (Beck 2013), the president’s remarks followed the earlier launch of an investigation by Portugal’s chief public prosecutor Joana Vidal into the activities of several high-ranking members of Angola’s economic and political elite (Beck 2013), among them Vice President Manuel Vicente (Åkesson 2013), former chief executive officer of Sonangol, Angola’s national oil company and “fiscal lifeline” (as pointed out by Soares de Oliveira 2013:172). Thus, it seems that friendships and partnerships between former colonizers and colonized are not limitless and to a certain extent fragile. Furthermore, Angola has shown quite clearly who is at the reins of such a partnership as it attempts to influence Portuguese judicial affairs by means of its economic power; to the extent that Portugal’s foreign minister, Rui Machete apologized for the investigation into corruption of Angolans in high places on Angolan radio, causing a wave of criticism at home and calls for his resignation

for violating Portugal's judicial independence (Beck 2013). Furthermore, in the immediate aftermath of Dos Santo's speech, Portugal's president Cavaco Silva called a press conference, stating that it was all a "misunderstanding", for the Angolan leaders "merit all our respect" (Åkesson 2013). As pointed out by Åkesson, "this is the World downside up" (2013), in which the classic colonial power-relations and roles are going through a metamorphosis.

1.8 Of Traps and Curses

The statistical discrepancies between Angola's natural resource endowment and the state of the country's human development indexes have been mentioned by both academics and politicians (e.g. Chabal 2005; Hodges 2004; Sogge 2011a; BTI 2014; Secretary Clinton in her official visit to Angola in 2009). These arguments have become even more relevant after the end of the civil war. With its vast oil resources, fast growing economy and effective armed forces, which have been taking on an increasingly important role of intervention in the region, it has been argued that Angola is "a prime example of a 'failed state' that is, in effect, remarkably successful" (Ellis 2011:106; see also Soares de Oliveira 2007 and Sogge 2009). Thus, Angolan society is often portrayed as a society of extremities, contrasts and contradictions. While it has become a persistent

rumour that the young members of the Angolan economic and political elite hold lavish private parties at the Ilha de Luanda for its elite friends when their bank account reaches its first million dollars, the poor majority has limited access to basic services such as water, electricity, education and healthcare.

Urban Geographer, Margot Rubin has written about such intense paradoxes found in the urban landscape of Johannesburg: “where lives are lived in glittering luxury and/or dire poverty. The state is both absent and present¹⁰; residents are visible and invisible, profoundly connected to each other and in states of intense disconnection, leading parallel lives” (Rubin 2013¹¹). This description of paradoxes, inequality and an urban way of life captures quite well what I saw and experienced in Luanda during my fieldwork (despite the differences between the two cities). In truth, Rubin’s description summarizes quite concisely my sentiments during fieldwork in Luanda in 2009-2010, the view of the city that developed over time during my fieldwork, and the ensuing jottings and field-notes in my notebooks.

The extreme paradoxes of wealth and poverty found in Luanda in the 1990s (before the civil war’s end) are captured quite intriguingly and vividly by

¹⁰ Although alluded to throughout the dissertation the simultaneous absence and presence of the state, where it is “highly present and consistently absent” (Rubin 2013) in Luanda will be further explored and analyzed in chapter 6 on local level power dynamics.

¹¹ Rubin’s description of paradoxical Johannesburg caught my attention in Gastrow’s and Croese’s short articles on Luanda in Urban Africa in 2012 and 2013.

journalist and associate fellow of the Royal Institute of International Affairs

(Chatham House) Nicholas Shaxson in his book *Poisoned Wells: The Dirty*

Politics of African Oil.

The city offered contrasts of wealth and misery unlike anything I had seen in Africa. Many expatriates spent their lives inside Luanda's central "concrete city," the bubble inside the bubble, which was the area built by colonial planners and was plugged into water mains, sewers, and (intermittent) electricity. The concrete city was surrounded by more extensive slums, which was possible for many of Luanda's richer residents to ignore. The Angolan elites and foreign aid and oil workers dodged potholes in air-conditioned Land Cruisers, and carried mobile phones that were then so chunky that they wore them with straps across their shoulders. The elites sat in restaurants on the Ilha and watched their sons, exempted from military service, race jet skis off the beach, while their daughters, perhaps exhausted from the previous night's cocaine-fueled dancing at the Pandemonium disco, sunbathed and sipped Brazilian caipirinha cocktails (Shaxson 2007:50).

The paradoxes presented in resource rich countries such as Angola, where economic statistics are in great contrast to the social indicators within the country, show that, although important, economic growth alone does not necessarily lead to development, or diminishing poverty and inequality (see Peet and Hartwick 2009:2). One could therefore claim that the development produced by economic growth does not reach all, not even through the sometimes often mythical, trickle-down effect, the vertical economic model which dictates that

economic growth benefits everyone in society as incomes from the rich trickle down to the poor below (Peet and Hartwick 2009:2). However, much of the so-called “trickle” that reaches the ordinary Luandan citizen is unfortunately eaten up by price inflation, in one of the world’s most expensive cities (Mercer 2014; Mercer 2013; Mercer 2012; Mercer 2011). Thus, as emphasized by Collier (2007:8), to describe what the average person experiences one should not work solely with the figures based on a country’s income but rather based on its population. Angolan agronomist and development specialist Fernando Pacheco has for example stated that the elite’s confusing of economic growth with development has been both penalizing and painful for Angolans (see Sogge 2011a:90).

Within disciplines focusing on development the concept of “traps” has been employed to explain the continuation, and even the cause, of poverty and “underdevelopment” in certain parts of the world. These traps are thus depicted as barriers to development and prosperity for various countries. Economist Paul Collier (2007:5) has for example used the trap concept to rationalize why some societies are “stuck” when others are “lifting” out of poverty. Among the traps that have entered the development vernacular are poverty traps, development traps, conflict traps, natural resource traps, commodity export traps, the trap of being

landlocked, and the trap of bad governance within small countries (see e.g. Collier 2007; Collier et al. 2003; Easterly 2006; Sachs et al. 2004; Hårsmar 2013). Similarly the notion of “curses” and “diseases” has been used when explaining poverty and conflict in the world. Both the “natural resource curse” and its relative, the “Dutch disease,” are relevant in the Angolan post-conflict context, just as “the conflict trap” where natural resource wealth is used to finance and even motivate conflict (Collier 2007:21) is relevant when analyzing the country’s history of war. Angola can be used as an example of how the natural resource curse (or trap) can contribute to conflict and the so-called conflict trap. However, in countries where natural resource wealth does not lead to conflict, resource wealth can paradoxically have negative effects rather than the opposite (Collier 2007:38), when resource exports lead to economic stagnation and increased economic and social inequalities; hence, the curse/trap. To explain how this happens economists have traced this curse to events that took place over 30 years ago due to the effects of North Sea gas on the Dutch Economy, leading to the so-called “Dutch disease” (Collier 2007:39). The term refers to the effects of resource exports on local currencies, which rise in value against other currencies, leaving the county’s other export activities uncompetitive. When valuable natural resource exports become the main source of foreign exchange other exports lose their value domestically (Collier 2007:39).

Thus, for countries such as Angola, where symptoms of the Dutch disease can be detected, less valuable sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and fisheries (to give an example), become secondary to the more valuable oil and gas sector, resulting in a monotone path of development with economic diversification diminishing, as one sector monopolizes technological progress and job creation. For example, according to Havnevik (2013b) less than one per cent of Africa's workforce is employed in resource extraction or related activities, the main source of Africa's current economic growth. Furthermore, the resource extraction sector is mainly dominated by foreign companies and interests and tax revenues from these corporations have been very low to non-existent in order to offer favourable conditions for investors (Havnevik 2013b). Thus, ultimately, it can have adverse effects on important sectors of countries' economies; it affects political priorities, and consequently important domestic development or welfare tasks come secondary to those of the export resource extraction sector (which unfortunately does not provide "inclusive economic growth" and improved welfare) due to the exchange rate and relative price effects (see Hårsmar 2013). Other explanations for why resource wealth can have detrimental effects on countries' development have been explained by economic labels such as "enclave economy, debt overhang, high volatility of resource prices, and political

economy factors related to the presence of rents” (Holden 2010; see also Hårsmar 2013).

The use of illness as a metaphor for political discourse has been critiqued as encouraging fatalism (Sontag 1977:84). The fatalism found in the Dutch disease reveals itself when poverty, as well as social injustices and economic inequality, automatically become the fate of the population of many resource rich countries as a consequence of external market effects. Essentially, according to this so-called “disease”, citizens of resource rich countries are at the mercy of international markets and fluctuating resource prices.

With regard to Angolan (post-conflict) development, the concept of the “power trap” (Holden 2010) is more appropriate than the aforementioned traps and curses. Stein Holden offers a different point of view when he asks why even resource rich countries fail to protect people’s livelihoods and ecosystems, and argues that poverty traps and resource curses are only symptoms and not the primary causes of such development predicaments. He argues that poverty traps and resource curses are “misnomers with respect to the causal problems that they aim to analyze” and tend to misdirect the attention from possible solutions to these problems (Holden 2010). Thus, instead, he suggests that power traps are the main cause of poverty traps and resource curses and in order to find solutions to them which consequently lead to the possibility of institutional reform,

market development, economic development and livelihood rehabilitation, one has first to find solutions to the power trap (Holden 2010).

Holden defines the power trap as “a situation where there are sufficient resources to create broad economic development and welfare improvements in a society but such development fails to take place” (Holden 2010). He points out different situations where such power traps hinder development, of which one could be seen as a quite concise (and critical) description of contemporary Angola:

A situation where those in power use it to hinder broad economic development and where those negatively affected lack the power to break the trap on their own. This implies that those in power primarily act out of self-interest to maximize their private returns at the expense of others and to keep their powers. This requires that those in power lack motivation/interest in improving human welfare but have the resources to do so. This is a dictatorial power trap that is supported by a strong government. Institutions are developed to conserve this power structure, e.g. by investment in military and secret service protection, information control (no free press etc.), control of enemies/threats, and possibly investing in strong allies that benefit from the alliance (Holden 2010).

Weak and/or discriminatory institutional structures facilitate the existence of power traps, providing a legal basis for discrimination against the poor by the powerful whereas weaknesses in institutional structures result in their lack of power to protect the poor from illegal actions by the powerful (Holden 2010).

Chapters 5 and 6, on land laws and forced evictions, and on the power dynamics in peri-urban Luanda, respectively, provide empirical examples of how this was taking place in Luanda during my fieldwork. Although easy to diagnose, it is hard to find solutions to such power traps, as the strong position of those in power with control over valuable resources is used to sustain their power, thus the concept of “trap” enters the development language quite appropriately here (Holden 2010).

Focusing on power traps as the causes of resource curses and poverty traps provides a fundamental change of focus from the previous curse and trap arguments, and what can perhaps be described as fatalistic discourses to development dilemmas, as it diverts attention towards responsibility for, instead of presenting merely the burden of, flawed and/or impractical (development) policy. Furthermore, it includes social, political and historical environments on a case by case basis rather than focusing exclusively on economic factors. This also supports the argument presented in chapter 7 that corruption matters and should not be dismissed when researching Angola’s path towards post-conflict development. However, as argued in chapter 7, corruption in Angola is a complex phenomenon which is unlikely to simply disappear with the introduction of top-down anti-corruption, good governance, and zero tolerance policies.

1.9 Some Notes on Research Methodology

On the outset of this ethnographic research the question of what drives the post-conflict development agenda and how this affects development and local populations according to the local communities was critical. Influenced by my MA field research (Waldorff 2008), the focus was on development and the intention was to understand and interpret the effects of Angola's recent peace and how development strategies and projects initiated after the civil war influence the people of Luanda and how they conceptualize development and poverty in the new post-conflict context. The thesis, however, developed quite organically into a much broader ethnographic gaze into post-conflict Luandan society.

In order to pursue such an ethnography of post-conflict Luanda I undertook 12 months of fieldwork in Luanda where, as mentioned above, the primary fieldsites were the peri-urban areas of the city, the informal neighbourhoods, or what in Angola are called the *musseques*. The main fieldsites were found in Cacuaco, located north of central Luanda, specifically in Kicolo, although Luanda in general can be considered the fieldsite for this research (see map of Luanda in appendix 2). To help me navigate through Luanda's logistical challenges and the city's seemingly ever clogged traffic I invested in a car to get around within the city and to travel between the various informal areas of Cacuaco and Luanda.

The ethnographic field research methods consisted of qualitative research methodologies based on participant-observation and structured and semi-structured interviews. As has been widely argued, a combination of participant-observation and interview methods is believed to provide the researcher with more in-depth information than were interview questions to be used exclusively (e.g. Esterberg 2002). This methodology had also proved fruitful in my earlier ethnographic fieldwork in Malawi (Waldorff 2008). During fieldwork I carried out in-depth structured and semi-structured interviews with residents of Luanda, development workers, government employees, members of local level governing bodies, and members of local and community-based civil society organizations. Furthermore, I conducted participant-observation by actively engaging in the daily activities of ordinary Luandans, among members of local civil society, and development organizations. Such participant observation proved to be a venue for informal interviews and conversations which provided key information. In addition to qualitative fieldwork, archival research was conducted at Development Workshop's (DW) headquarters in central Luanda and observations were made and notebooks filled with jottings wherever my stay in Angola led me.

Interviewees and the people I stayed with (as per the participant observation component of the research) included both men and women and were

from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. That is, from members of the “common” population, what could be considered as the lower and poorer classes of Luandan society, to the small but relatively well-off middle class, to the higher tiers of Angola’s social, economic and political hierarchy. All participants interviewed formally were given full details of the research and the interview process, including what kind of questions were to be asked and how the information gathered was to be used in the research and thus informed consent was provided prior to interviews being recorded.

In this work I have committed to anonymity to guarantee that the data collected and published here cannot harm my informants due to, for example, the nature of the information conveyed, which sometimes could be interpreted as politically charged in Angola. Thus, pseudonyms are used and in some instances names of institutions and organizations have also been altered to conceal people’s identities and assure anonymity.

I benefitted from the assistance of a research assistant who helped me come in contact with various important informants in Kicolo (in Cacuaco) and helped with the interviewing. I also profited from the assistance of Development Workshop (DW), their research in the country, their hospitality, their friendship, and their invaluable assistance with bureaucratic hurdles and visas. Lastly, I benefitted from having my wife with me on this research journey as her presence

was an immense support and encouragement to my research endeavours. Her work in Angola, during this time, as a consultant for one of the Luanda based NGOs turned her into an important advisor, and as the thesis was in the process of being written, an insightful proof reader.

This work is based on my own perceptions of the circumstances I encountered and my interpretation of the information conveyed to me during interviews and derived from my observations during the yearlong fieldwork in 2009-2010, as well as to a certain extent derived from my childhood in Cacuaco in the 1980s to early 1990s. The position taken in this work is derived mostly from the bottom-up, that is, from the inhabitants of Luanda, rather than from the top-down, such as from authorities or, for example, the urban planners working on the post-conflict reconstruction and renewal of the city, although meetings in which municipal administrators, staff of municipal authorities, and resident committees were present, did take place during field research.

It is true, as Gunnar Myrdal (1969) points out, that “[t]here is an inescapable *a priori* element in all scientific work. Questions must be asked before answers can be given. The questions are all expressions of our interests in the world; they are at bottom valuations” (Myrdal 1969:9). With this in mind it is also appropriate to mention James Clifford’s thoughts on ethnographic texts which he claims to be systems or economies of truth and that all truths are

constructed (Clifford 1986:6-7; see also Waldorff 2008:15). Thus, he argues, ethnographic texts are true fictions and ethnographic truths are “inherently partial, committed and incomplete” (Clifford 1986:6-7; see also Waldorff 2008:15). It is my hope that the division between my observations and interpretations and those of my informants’ are clear rather than indistinguishable in this ethnographic text.

This is an ethnographic text derived from the research methodology described above, a research methodology that has been criticized (especially by advocates of positivist research (Neuman 2011:100)) for not producing completely objective “truths”. However, as is widely accepted, truths are always subjective to some extent. It is unfair to compare the research methodologies of the social sciences and the so-called hard sciences such as, for example, physics (sometimes referred to as the most advanced science which eventually all science, including the social sciences, will come to resemble (Neuman 2011:95)) and proclaim that only research results derived from methodological positivism are essentially scientific and valid. Further, such proclamations are based on misconceptions as the subject matters are often very different and, hence, require different research methods. It is important to keep in mind that although qualitative research methodologies of the social sciences have been criticized for not being completely objective and value free, there are still

important things to be studied in the social world that are hard to grasp with other, “more objective”, research methodologies. Thus, refusing to research the social world qualitatively on the grounds that it does not produce complete objectivity or completely value free research (such as, for example, discovering causal laws etc.) would leave immense gaps in our understanding of the social world. As Flyvbjerg (2001) who has argued vehemently for the importance of qualitative research methods has called attention to, concluding that empirical and value laden social research (that is, influenced by what Aristotle referred to as *phronesis* (society’s value rationality) instead of instrumental rationality) is less important, is essentially wrong.

Myrdal, who wrote about “the myth” of objectivity in social research, argued in 1969 that “[i]n our profession there is a lack of awareness even today that, in searching for truth, the student, like all human beings whatever they try to accomplish, is influenced by tradition, by his environment, and by his personality. Further, there is an irrational taboo against discussing this lack of awareness” (Myrdal 1969:4). Fortunately, this taboo of discussing the “flaw” in what Myrdal called “[t]he ethos of social science”, that is, “the search for ‘objective’ truth” (Myrdal 1969:3), was lifted when the so-called “myth” of objectivity in social research was put to the fore with postmodernism’s arrival into the discipline and the ensuing “crisis of representation”.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons the postmodernist wake imprinted in anthropology students (like me), when it comes to research methodology, is that although complete objectivity might never be entirely reached, the fact remains that qualitative and empirical social research methodologies are still unsurpassed when it comes to grasping certain complex social phenomena, culture, and social relations (which are often ambiguous and subjective in nature). This can hardly be encompassed through “more objective”, for example positivist and quantitative, research methodologies (which as Myrdal (1969) has pointed out are not completely free of valuations themselves). Thus, the research methodologies used here were chosen for this research as per the long established standards of the anthropological discipline, yet with an awareness of the debates influenced by post-modernist critique, as well as their methodological practicalities in grasping complex social phenomena which are, like in most social-anthropological research, the research subject of this work.

1.10 Organization of the Dissertation: The Chapters and their Contents

As stated above, this work is an ethnography of Luanda’s peri-urban musseques, and to a certain extent of Luandan, and perhaps even Angolan, society in general. Thus, it is not solely about corruption or the negligence, malpractices

and biopolitics¹² of the Angolan state, although these are topics that are difficult to shy away from in the Angolan context. Furthermore, it is not an attempt to portray the Angolan population as the passive victim of a kleptocratic state. Rather, it is an attempt to offer a glimpse into a time when during Angola's short post-conflict history its society is going through rapid social changes. This work is first and foremost about the people of Luanda and the strategies they apply to provide themselves with basic services in the city, such as water, electricity and other necessities, like employment, by means of the informal market, informal social networks, friendships and strategies for surviving and getting by, or what I have called here a culture of *candonga*. Thus, the dissertation provides an ethnographic view of a post-conflict Angolan society that might change considerably over the next few years or decade. It is a *mélange* of anecdotes, theoretic and analytical ponderings, empirical and ethnographic data and even some personal history. Each chapter has different proportions of these ingredients depending on the issues they address and the focus they adopt.

The chapters in this work are thematically defined, although they are also tied together in various ways, to various extents, around the main themes of the

¹² What Foucault has referred to as a governing technology used to control whole populations (see Foucault 2008). A form of governmentality that can be achieved through for example state policy such as public health policy, housing policy or urban planning and, as Foucault points out, "must be understood in terms of a theme developed as early as the seventeenth century: the management of state forces" (Foucault 1994:71).

research. That is, each chapter gives an in-depth view into the Luandan “reality” I encountered during my fieldwork within a certain theme or predicament that Luanda’s inhabitants were facing. It is my hope that the outcome of this assemblage of chapters and its sometimes diverse threads will provide a “synthetic weave” (to borrow from Roitman’s (2005:200) terminology). The aim has been to tackle one (large) subject in each chapter in detail while collectively the entirety should provide a more holistic view of the Luanda, and post-conflict Angola, encountered during the 2009-2010 fieldwork.

Chapter 2, following this introduction, introduces the fieldsite and the researcher. It describes my return to Angola after 18 years of absence, a (re)entrance into a field that had gone through much transformation in its transition from war to peace. The theme of chapter 3 is informality and *candonga* in Angolan society. It elucidates the historic roots of the informal economy and the emergence of what I define here as a culture of *candonga*. The chapter speaks of how informality, or the process of “doing things informally” rather than through formal or official means, has become much more of a norm than a deviation from the norm (of formality or official procedures) in Angola. It points out how the process of deviating from formal and official procedures is ubiquitous within all layers of Angolan society, rendering the boundaries between what constitutes informal (or unofficial or even illegal) and formal (or official or legal)

blurred. In Chapter 4, the mechanisms of the informal water economy in Luanda are explained. It provides examples of how vital services are delivered to the Luandan population, through the informal economy, in an urban environment where public services are non-functioning or non-existent. Chapter 5 describes the informal land market and how new laws designed to formalize the largely informal land market have not increased tenure security, but, rather, decreased it for a majority of the city's inhabitants. Through an ethnographic case study, it explains how small scale farmers on the outskirts of the city were faced with land grabbing and forced evictions from their land. In chapter 6, the discussion turns to local level power dynamics in the city's peri-urban areas. It speaks of how community based organizations that are struggling to improve their urban environment and services are faced with obstacles derived from an autocratic governmentality that tries to grind their efforts to a halt. Before concluding this work with a conclusion, chapter 7 addresses the topic of corruption in Angola and how it has become both endemic and systemic, and a vital issue to include and understand in discussions on Angola, as it is a phenomenon that is embedded in power relations at all levels of society (see Anders and Nuijten 2008:2).

Chapter 2. Informal Beginnings: Luanda “Before” and Luanda during Fieldwork

Given that the theme of informality is an important component of this work it is perhaps fitting to commence it with a chapter of a more informal and personal nature. As has long been established within the anthropological discipline, this chapter introduces the fieldsite as well as the researcher. This chapter describes my connection to and history in the field and my return to the field after almost two decades of absence, and thus not only introduces the field but also situates the researcher within that field. One of the underlying themes here is the social and urban changes that have occurred during the war to peace transition in Luanda.

2.1 From Longing to Belonging: Cacuaco a Place and Community from the Past

Despite 18 years of absence from the country, having lived in Cacuaco, an area on the northern periphery of the capital city Luanda for over 6 years in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, it was always my first choice as a fieldsite for my research. My family had moved to Angola in 1984 when my father worked for SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) at a fisheries school in Cacuaco. The Cefopescas School was a bilateral development project between

the Swedish and the Angolan government the aim of which was to provide professional training to and educate Angolans in the fisheries industry. It offered academic and practical training in a wide range of fields, from mechanics to navigation and ship control. During fieldwork in 2009-2010, I noticed how Cefopescas had left a mark on Cacuo as it had provided many young Angolans in the area with practical training that often led to work (although not always in fisheries), while some former students had opened their own successful businesses.

I can only describe my childhood in Cacuo as wonderful. Days were spent swimming in the sea, fishing from the pier, racing homemade cars made out of empty cooking oil and insect poison cans, catching butterflies, hunting birds with a sling-shot and playing countless games with the neighbourhood kids in the late afternoons when the evening breeze crept in and the sun, in the form of a huge fiery orange globe, was preparing to disappear into the sea, a sunset view, as I realized later in life, which was unrivaled. Such vivid memories had a magnetic effect on me, drawing me back to Cacuo. Memories of a vibrant society by the Cacuo bay where friends and neighbours looked out for one another and enjoyed conversations in the fresh ocean breeze at dusk while children shared the gossip of the various magical powers of witchdoctors and the dangerous supernatural powers of UNITA enemy warlords. This area of Cacuo

had a sense of place (Feld and Basso 1997) and a sense of community (McMillan and Chavis 1986).

The concept of a sense of place within anthropology is described in Feld and Basso's edited book *Senses of Place* (1997), dedicated to the ethnography of place, which focuses on "how people actually live in, perceive, and invest with meaning the places they call home" (Feld and Basso 1997). On the other hand, a sense of community has been defined in psychology by McMillan and Chavis as: "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (1986:9). This definition focuses on the experience of community rather than its form and structure. Similarly, the phrase "a sense of community" in urban planning, which generally emphasizes the urban form, is used for neighbourhoods where neighbours interact on a regular basis and look out for each other; something I heard people in Luanda complain that was disappearing, after a decade or two of an unprecedented influx of people to the city and increasing individualism among the city's inhabitants.

Having left the country before the internet revolutionized global communications and, in Angola's case, before everyday telecommunications and an efficient postal service (which is still inefficient to this day), I lost all contact with my childhood friends in Cacuaco. Thus, the first months of my 2009-2010

fieldwork in Angola was not spent in Cacuaco but between a new peri-urban area in the municipality of Viana (east of Luanda) and the city's central Maculuso district where I conducted archival research at the headquarters of Development Workshop, the first NGO to set foot in Angola in 1981.

The room I lived in with my wife Dora during my first months in Viana was in an area that formerly belonged to Luanda's Green belt. A traditional agricultural area encircling the nation's capital that in the past, before the city's expansion and the country's dependence on import goods, served as a food basket for the city's inhabitants. In 2009-2010 there were however few signs of agriculture in this new peri-urban area though only two years before my arrival it had been almost empty of houses. In this sense it is a perfect example of a new Luandan peri-urban musseque.

This is an area that is famous for having housed a SWAPO [South West Africa People's Organization] base three decades earlier, when SWAPO was fighting for Namibian independence from the Apartheid South West Africa government, a base that symbolized the camaraderie between the MPLA and SWAPO which eventually, in 1990, succeeded in its struggle for independence and to this day still rules Namibia. Susa, a Swedish medical doctor whom I met coincidentally at a conference at Emory University in Atlanta, had worked in the early 1980s at a SWAPO refugee camp in Kwanza Sul province. She told me

how they had used the base in Viana as a stopover when transporting SWAPO refugees and personnel to Luanda in cases requiring more complicated medical procedures that could not be offered at the camp in Kwanza Sul. As she recalled, in Viana, “back then there was nothing there, just mud.”

The reasons for living in Viana the first months of my stay in Angola are two-fold. First, prices for accommodation in Luanda have become ridiculous and the city was (and still is as this is written) ranked among the most expensive in the world to live in. According to Mercer’s 2011 annual global cost of living survey of the most expensive cities in the world Luanda ranked first, followed by Tokyo, N’Djamena (Chad), Moscow and Geneva. It is said that some of the oil companies are paying up to \$2500 U.S. per day for an apartment in the city (Åkesson 2013). Paying thousands of dollars for a tiny apartment in central Luanda is, however, simply not an option for a PhD student. Thus, like millions of Luandans today, I had no other option than to move to the city’s periphery, and like those formally employed in the city center I braved the traffic jams for a few hours every morning and afternoon to get to the city center to conduct archival research at Development Workshop’s headquarters where I profited from their library and research experience in the country. Because of such logistical complexities, Luanda is a difficult place to conduct field research in, as it is both financially and psychologically draining. However, in hindsight, I learned that in

such situations, friends and family are the best remedy and help keep one sane, and having my wife Dora by my side during this time proved to be invaluable.

Friendship was the principal reason why Viana became my home for the first few months in Luanda rather than other peri-urban areas of the city. Out of generosity Iliana invited my wife and me to stay with her and her family. She was a friend I knew not from my childhood in Angola, but through her education abroad, someone who once had benefitted from my own family's hospitality. My stay with Iliana and her family in Viana left a valuable impression on my research. It opened my eyes to the struggles and challenges many of the educated "middle-class," living in peri-urban areas where accommodation is cheaper, go through on a daily basis. To get to work people have to get up before daybreak and spend up to half the day in traffic jams, driving the approximately 20 km to the city center in over two hours. In the nearly two decades of my absence, traffic jams or *engarrafamento* [literally bottlenecks] had become an omnipresent problem in the city. Traffic and logistical problems were often quoted as being one of Luanda's main characteristics and popular songs, and jokes were written about being stuck in traffic gridlocks.



Figure 2: Cartoon from *Jornal de Angola*:

Man (on the left): “You’re Back?” Driver (on the right): “No I haven’t even left yet!”

It is also not easy to keep up with a lifestyle that has become increasingly expensive even for those who earn a proper salary. While this small middle class has more means than many Angolans to pay for electricity and water, securing such basic services, where there is no public infrastructure in place to provide it, is still a struggle. These were struggles that bred deep frustrations with their own situation and the workplace politics and networks of nepotism they found themselves in (or excluded from) in the “new” and peaceful Angola. However, Viana was not the ideal place to conduct my field research, I was isolated with little access to this peri-urban society, and my own security as a researcher in the area was not guaranteed; furthermore, childhood memories from Cacuaco kept pulling at me.

Without transportation, it was not until after having spent over a month in Angola that I finally managed to convince Iliana to take me to Cacuaco. From Viana we drove through the dusty roads of the *Mulenvos* area bordering the municipalities of Viana and Cacuaco, to reach *Ecocampo*, the neighbourhood which later would become my new home, until we finally ended up, following my directions (after 18 years of absence and immense changes to the landscape), in front of the house I had lived in from 1984 to 1987. The small housing complex located close to Cacuaco's town center *Vila de Cacuaco* had not changed much.

Iliana decided to stay in the car while my wife Dora and I stepped out. As I stood in front of the green doors of the semi-detached houses, memories and flashbacks washing over me, evoking strange sensations, I noticed a young man standing by one of the cars parked in front of one of the houses. When the young Angolan man who later introduced himself as Lucio noticed us, he came over and I explained to him that I used to live there. A few months earlier a childhood friend from Sweden who lived in Cacuaco in the 1980s and 90s had contacted me on Facebook, saying that if I went back to Angola I should visit his in-laws living in the housing complex. I mentioned this to the young man and it turned out that Frederik, my old friend in Sweden, was his brother in law. He invited us into what was his parents' house where his father, mother and sister, who were obviously relaxing and enjoying the Sunday afternoon as is customary in Angola,

warmly welcomed us. Sitting in the living room where I had spent so much time playing with my neighbour decades earlier, the whole family curiously probing us, I explained that I had lived in the house furthest to the left and was back to see the neighbourhood of my childhood and see if any of my childhood friends were still living in the area.

When I explained that I knew Fredrik and that he sends his regards, the whole family became content and more at ease. They asked me if I knew him from Sweden, but I explained that I am not from Sweden, I am from Iceland. "From Iceland?" the father asked, "I have a very good friend from Iceland, his name is Skúli." "Skúli is my father" I replied almost in disbelief. His face lit up with a big smile. "I used to work a lot with your father at Cefopescas. Not a week passes at Cefopescas where your father is not mentioned at some point. How is your old man?" From then on it was as if a veil of formality had been lifted as the atmosphere became more colloquial and relaxed.

After our visit, Lucio accompanied me at his father's request to see some of the neighbours who still lived there since my time in the neighbourhood. It turned out that while some had passed away, and others had moved or disappeared, many still lived in the area. At the first house we stopped by we interrupted a meeting being held in the yard. A man in his 60s stepped out, apologized for being busy with the meeting and looked at me: "Pedro?" he said

surprised. After 18 years, Pacheco, a local businessman remembered me. I had been a blond young boy last time he saw me and had returned, 30 years old with dark (graying) hair and he still recognized me. I remember playing with his children while our parents ate, drank and talked into the wee hours. His daughters had been especially fond of combing and styling my hair bleached almost white by the African sun. Before going back to the meeting in which he seemed to be the organizer, we exchanged mobile phone numbers and he told me to come by sometime and spend a Sunday with him and the family.

We walked down a couple of houses and stopped by another house, the woman who lived there was away but a young boy was sent after her brother, Helder, who was back in Angola after 11 years in Portugal. A strongly built man appeared with his cousin not far behind. Not believing his eyes, he started shouting Pjetir! Pjetir! running up to me, hugging me, even attempting to lift me off the ground, repeating over and over again that it had been such a long time since he last saw me. We sat down in his sister's house, a boy was sent out after coca cola, and as we drank the sugary black liquid which never seems to lose its popularity in sub-Saharan Africa, we sat back and talked of old times. Sitting in front of this old friend, all grown up, he informed me of what had been happening in the neighbourhood since I left. He talked about all our friends and neighbours from when we were younger; where they lived today and who had passed away.

Through him I got back in touch with many of the old friends who still lived in this area of Cacuaco.

It turned out that most of them still lived there. From then on, I was back in my old neighbourhood, and had reclaimed what had once been, and what was becoming anew, my Angolan “family.” As was repeated countless times by old friends in Cacuaco: “you are family, you can stay here as long as you want,” when they offered me to stay with them. The isolation I had experienced in Viana was circumvented when we finally moved to Cacuaco, into a tiny room in an annex belonging to a friendly woman in the *Ecocampo* neighbourhood.

This first and long awaited trip to Cacuaco thus became a turning point in my fieldwork. I had found a new the community of my childhood and a place where I enjoyed both trust and friendships; something that became vital when conducting my fieldwork. Although I had earned that trust and friendship decades earlier through shared experiences with the people of this old Cacuaco neighbourhood it is something that can be quite hard to acquire when conducting field work in a foreign environment, especially in a post-conflict environment, where wartime politics and suspicions continue to linger. Thus, personal history in Cacuaco gave me access to informants, information and social networks which otherwise would have been difficult to acquire.

Conversations in the afternoon breeze once again became a regular event; sitting in white plastic lawn chairs sipping on ice cold domestic or Portuguese beer, with the smell of barbequed pork and chicken in the air from a childhood acquaintance's makeshift (informal) restaurant; dust clouds rising from the street every time a car passed by. I had found once again the place and the community I had missed since leaving in 1991. However, as the following sections and chapters will explain in more detail, Cacuo, and Luanda and Angola in general, had changed considerably during my absence.

2.2 "The Great Transformation": From War to Peace in Luanda and Angola

Angola is still dealing with the consequences of the war's destruction, infrastructure had collapsed during the prolonged war, forced migration to the cities during the war has made cities like Luanda densely populated, with a badly maintained infrastructure for only a fraction of the city's inhabitants, and with great social and psychological effects due to direct suffering from or the indirect consequences of the war.

Thus, the fieldsite(s) of this research, the city of Luanda, and Angola in general, has in its relatively short history of independence gone through, borrowing from Polanyi's (2001[1944]) terminology, a "great transformation." From colonialism to independence, from a war of independence to a civil war,

from state directed socialism to state directed capitalism, and finally from war to peace. As this is written the country is attempting to strive towards another “great transformation” from a one party state to multiparty democracy (at a staggeringly slow pace however which has left people unconvinced of the governments true intentions) and transformations brought about by post-conflict development and reconstruction, with its effects on society and changes to rural and urban topographies.

I remember dusty trucks rolling into the city in the beginning of the 90's, with somber and dusty families sitting in the back, on top of some of their belongings. These were refugees being shipped into the safety of the city, refugees that often had experienced the war first hand, had to flee their rural homes and start a new life in a new place. Two decades later stories of flight from the rural areas to the capital city were recounted to me in interviews and conversations. These were often harrowing tales of flight where families had had to survive (and often perish) in the “bush” [*mata*] for months, even years, fleeing from both rebels and government forces, never knowing who were friends and who were foes. Other tales included flight from the post-election violence in 1992 that occurred in provincial towns and cities, as well as in Luanda. Others yet reminisced about their flight to the capital at the outbreak of the post-independence civil war. Lupita described how she and her siblings had to hide

under nuns' skirt hems and in suitcases on the train ride to Luanda to hide from UNITA soldiers looking for MPLA officials, their followers and families as they fled from the city of Huambo at the onset of the civil war. Before reaching the capital the family had benefitted from the help of a truck driver who hid them in sacks of potatoes, stacked in-between the crop of potatoes on the back of his truck, being shipped to markets in the capital.

These were traumatic experiences that for some were difficult to recount, as expressed by Beto, who explained to me how he and his family had had to flee to the bush from their home in Kwanza-Sul province; how they were reduced to live for months off roots and natural herbs. During this time his sister perished, "she couldn't handle life in the bush" he told me. She was a city girl, a student in Luanda who got trapped by the war on one of her visits home. He described how he saw his friends being shot dead in the bush, dropping down beside him, as they were running for cover from soldiers firing at them. It did not matter whether the soldiers were from government forces or rebel forces they were just as likely to shoot you. This harrowing war experience did finally end when his family was, through his father's connections, flown to safety in Luanda in a helicopter from the government forces. Beto confided in me that he was not able to talk of these experiences for years, and had tried to block out these memories; it was only years later he was able to think and talk of his experiences of flight from the war.

Today, a significant problem for those who have had to flee their homes and seek refuge in peri-urban Luanda is the lack of formal documentation confirming who they are, such as IDs and birth certificates. As explained in conversations and interviews with individuals who had had to flee their homes and ended up in the relative safety of the capital, many people had left their documentation with their other belongings when they fled, and many had discarded them on their flight for fear of being caught with them and the repercussions it could have. Paulinho a war veteran who, after fierce battles with enemy forces in Benguela, had to retreat and flee with his comrades and others from the area, crossing roaring rivers during the rainy season, many of them drowning and perishing on the long walk to Luanda. They were forced to walk in the bush, through minefields, without food, until they reached the safety of Luanda. For fear of being caught by enemy forces they burned their documents as documentation declaring that they were government forces or had links to the MPLA would mean certain death if caught by the enemy.

The lack of formal documentation of the peri-urban population, and poor institutional capacities for proper registration, not only skews national statistics but also pushes those without formal registration to live “informally” as the formal or official system and its services becomes harder to reach. To give an example of this, war veterans such as Paulinho, having discarded their documentation

while fleeing the war, have no claims to their pension, despite having fought for the MPLA government forces for decades. Furthermore, if one is not registered it is difficult to register one's children, which affects their eligibility for school and other services. This predicament is not new in Angola; Butemuena, a childhood neighbour and family friend from Bailundo in the central highlands region, an area where UNITA had its roots and strong following, had fled the war and gotten "trapped" in Cacuaco, as he had no identification papers confirming who he was and that he was not an enemy of the MPLA. Being of *ovimbundo* ethnicity without documentation in Luanda during the war in the 1980s, with its roadblocks surrounding the city of Luanda, checking every traveler and vehicle for identification, seriously restricted his mobility. Thus, as he described it, he was trapped, as he could not even leave Cacuaco to reach the central parts of Luanda. Butemuena died in the early 1990s after he had caught an infection in his foot, and because he lacked all documentation his mobility was limited and he had no access to the health clinics that might have been able to save his life.

This is, however, not a problem unique to Angola, for as UNICEF statistics elucidate, "one in three children under-five does not officially exist" in the world, since they have never been registered at birth (UNICEF 2013). According to UNICEF birth registration and a birth certificate is "vital for unlocking a child's full potential" and unregistered children are "a symptom of the inequities and

disparities in a society” (UNICEF 2013). However, as explained above, this is a prevalent problem in post-conflict Angola, especially in the informal or peri-urban areas of Luanda where the population is not only living on the periphery of the city but also of Angolan citizenship. It therefore becomes increasingly justifiable to portray Angolan society as two tiered, as represented in the dichotomy of informal versus formal, or unofficial versus official, when a large percentage of the population is not officially registered, and when those who were officially registered have often lost the official documents during their flight from war and thus has limited access to the so-called formal or official system and its services.

After pressure through development forums organized by civil society, the *Comuna* [city district] of Kicolo in Cacuaco, with its estimated 421 000 inhabitants (during my fieldwork in 2009-2010), was equipped with a mobile registration post, travelling from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, on three day intervals, to register inhabitants that seek it out. However, residents claim that it is a lengthy and expensive process, and with only 12 people registered per day, it is clear that the output is very low when one considers the large size of Kicolo’s population (421 000 inhabitants). Such mobile registration posts had been installed in other peri-urban municipalities of Luanda during my fieldwork, such as in Kilamba Kiaxi, but with the same problems found in Kicolo. Although it is a

step in the right direction it is far from enough to eradicate the problem it sets out to amend.

2.3 Cacuaco Past and Present

Cacuaco became one of the main fieldsites of my research, although fieldwork was also conducted in other peri-urban areas of Luanda as well as in central Luanda. Cacuaco is the northernmost municipality of Luanda, Angola's capital area. Once a traditional fishing village, it has been fast expanding in the last decade or two becoming a prominent northern "suburb" of the ever-growing city of Luanda. Its name, Cacuaco, comes from the time of King Ngola Kiluanje in the 16th century who ruled the Mbundo kingdom of NDongo (now Angola). During a war with the Portuguese colonizers, on a caravan trip north of Luanda, the King and his followers stopped at a creek, which today is famous for its salt pans (facing the former fisheries school of Cefopescas) in Cacuaco. One of his men approached him with an injured arm. The king told him: "I don't have medicine for your arm, if you can come, come, if not, stay." From the Kimbundu expressions "*to-ndo-kwaka*" (to stop) and "*lukwako-diaximbi*" (injured arm) the name Bwakawako was conceived and came to signify this area. Through Portuguese influence the name Bwakwako developed into the Cacuaco name the area goes by today (Perfil Municipal de Cacuaco - forthcoming).

According to a recent municipal profile a secret prison was housed where the Vila de Cacuo is located today where slaves were kept before being shipped off across the Atlantic to the Americas (Perfil Municipal de Cacuo - forthcoming). In the 1960s the Portuguese colonizers lay claim to what today is the Cacuo beach below the Vila and forcibly relocated the indigenous families of fishermen away from the area, turning it into a colonial residential and commercial area housing the administrative offices (Perfil Municipal de Cacuo - forthcoming). As will be further discussed in chapter 5, such forced relocations of the Angolan population continue to this day, but today are conducted by Angolan authorities in the name of modernization and development.

Cacuo has become a big municipality on Luanda's northern periphery with a variety of rapidly growing urban and peri-urban clusters. However, when I was growing up there in the 1980s, Cacuo was still a little village by the bay where most people knew each other. Elements of this "old" small-town Cacuo still exists today, but like elsewhere in Luanda there has been a population boom in the last two decades. The core of this "village" is still situated around the old Cacuo center that goes by the name Vila de Cacuo and the *Bairro dos Pescadores* (or the fishermen's neighbourhood), by the beach. The cultural and social mosaic I left 18 years earlier was still there. This mosaic had however

grown exponentially as Cacuo has gone through a metamorphosis in the last two decades.

Cacuaco during my fieldwork and Cacuo in the 1980s and early 1990s are different in many ways. As a municipal entity its inhabitants have multiplied and new peri-urban musseques have appeared, some of which initially housed internally displaced people who had been relocated because of the war, but eventually became permanent neighbourhoods. In the recent peri-urban areas such as, for example the *Kicolo* area, the sense of community one feels on the street where I had grown up is harder to find. Although Kicolo's first inhabitants claim that it is still there to some extent they also claim that it cannot be likened to the early days when the *bairro* [neighbourhood] was in the process of being settled and built.

2.4 Luanda "Before" [*antes*]

Older "metropolitans", Luandans born and raised in the city, or that had lived in the city for decades, reminisced about old times and sometimes talked about a loss of community. The old times, or "before" [*antes*], that people referred to, when things had been better in the city, was not the era before the war, as the time of Portuguese colonialism is associated with oppression, segregation, forced labour and racial inequalities. Rather, the before, for some of the

Caluandas (using Angolan writer Pepetela's vocabulary; meaning the people of Luanda) refers to before the urban explosion occurred due to the mass insurgence of internally displaced people from the countryside and systematic forced migration as part of the government's "Scorched Earth" strategy that took place in the last decade of the war. Thus, referring to Luanda "before," was for longtime residents of Luanda nostalgia for times when the city was still relatively small, when traffic was relatively functional, when the city was cleaner, and, ironically, "delinquents" were picked up from the streets and sent to the front lines.

There were of course many undesirable events taking place "before" that people are aware of, and many things have changed to the better, with the establishment of peace being most important. However, "before" frequently came up as an issue in conversation when talking of people's daily lives, living in the city and working in the city. A symbolic example of sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit criticism of the status quo pertains to people's view that somewhere along the road things had taken a turn in the wrong direction.

2.5 Loss of Community

The sense of community loss was mentioned by some of my friends and informants in conversation. As Vieira a resident of the greater Kicolo area in

Cacuaco explained: “When we first came here, you could even sleep in the street and you would be safe.” Or, as Iliana reminisced about: “Before [in Luanda in general] people did not need 2-3 meter high walls around their houses. When I was younger people would have one meter high fences and were able to see their neighbours.” She explained how there used to be a sense of community that she feels is disappearing, with people distrusting each other and fearing the *bandidos* [criminals] that roam the streets in the dark. Beto, a resident of Kicolo, even claimed that before 2002 there were no *bandidos* at all. However, as many others would point out, the reason for this is not that positive, because the so-called delinquents and *bandidos* were systematically picked off the street and sent to the frontlines to fight the enemy during the war and thus were not as visible in the city. The forced conscription [*rusga*] of young men in Luanda into the army is further explained below in a section dedicated to the subject. The topic of delinquency and crime is discussed in more detail in chapter 6 on the local level power dynamics in peri-urban Luanda.

This loss of a sense of community in Luanda, which ironically has become more obvious since the war ended, has been blamed on a combination of delinquency, crime, insecurity, and, above all, increased individualism or individualistic behaviour. Caroline, an expatriate, having lived decades in the city, believed this loss of community (her own words) was reflected in the city's

chaotic traffic: “Before, during the civil war and before the influx of refugees, people showed more respect in the traffic, made eye contact and drivers would stop to let pedestrians cross the street. Today the traffic has become more ruthless, everyone minding their own business and trying to get on their way as fast as possible without regard to other passers-by.”¹³

The links between individualism and car culture have been made elsewhere. Kristin Ross, in her book *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and Reordering of French Culture* (1995), points toward such a link in the context of post war France during its years of decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s. With an argument similar to that of Caroline’s in the Luandan context above, Ross refers to a “movement inward,” or what Castoriadis, Morin and Lefebvre termed “privatization,” when the French middle classes started to withdraw to the comforts of their modern comfortable domestic interiors, the enclosures of their private automobiles, “and an ideology of happiness built around the new unit of middle-class consumption” (Ross 1995:11). She describes in her work a process of post-war “modernization,” “Americanization,” a “reordering of French culture,” in which modern social relations are mediated by objects which in France were cars, washing machines, refrigerators and television for a population that had

¹³ Indeed, the traffic is brutal; I witnessed more traffic accidents and deaths during that one year of fieldwork than all the other years of my life combined.

rapidly been “transformed from a rural, empire-oriented, Catholic country, into a fully industrialized, decolonized, and urban one” (Ross 1995:4).

Although Ross’ post-colonial and post-war context in France is far from the same as Angola’s, there are however some aspects that translate well between the two. Her description is of a society going through rapid social changes, yielding increasingly materialistic and individualistic behaviour and thus changes in social relations. This inevitably brings to the fore the issue of alienation. For it is the sentiment of alienation residents of Luanda conveyed to me in interviews and conversations when they talked of a “loss of community.”

2.6 Changes to Luanda’s Landscape and Society

The last decade of the war and the war to peace transition has led to incredible physical transformations of the capital city. As described in the introduction and above, after the war ended, a large portion of the IDPs in Luanda, some of whom had lived decades in the city, having raised children and grandchildren there, had set roots that proved hard to sever. Their children and grandchildren had in many cases lost their mother tongues (national languages) and spoke only Portuguese, the language most commonly spoken in Luanda. Furthermore, these young city slickers did not like the idea of returning to village or small town life. As emphasized by Rodrigo whose relatives had left for the provinces only to return

to Luanda: "There is a lot of tradition there." Pointing out that younger generations, raised and bred in and around Luanda during the war, often have a hard time adapting to the rural conditions after having lived all their lives in Luanda's urban and peri-urban environment. Furthermore, people have established friends, families, employment and social and professional networks that do not exist in their ancestral lands. Some of them owned assets in the city and earned their living as part of the city's vast network of informal market merchants and thus going back to village life from the bustling and hustling in Luanda was unappealing, especially among the younger generations. As Birmingham (2006:168) has written: "wheeling and dealing of black marketeers may have enabled the swollen coastal slums to survive, but no such options were available in the provinces." However, some moved back only to realise that someone else had taken over or appropriated their ancestral land in their absence, sometimes new settlers, and sometimes the land had been "redesignated for commercial exploitation by urban and military elites" (Cain 2006:22). Yet others who had left as long as 30 years earlier returned only to realize that they had been bypassed or excluded from the primary ways to access land, that is, through traditions of land inheritance (Unruh 2012:661). Describing his relatives' experience of returning to the province of Huambo one informant said of the encounter between his relatives and those who had settled

on their lands: “When these poor people were asked to leave, they would ask: ‘where were you during all these years of fighting and suffering? You wear clean clothes and your skin shines’”; insinuating that they had a right to stay because of their suffering in this place. Other returnees would meet more severe hostilities at the hand of those who had settled on their ancestral land.

As has been discussed in more detail in the introduction, since reliable statistics for Angola were almost non-existent during the war and continue to be in its aftermath, it is hard to gauge where the city’s increase in population is coming from today. Expatriates are increasingly moving to the city in the wake of an unprecedented economic boom; and research indicates that natural urban growth and inner-city population movements have overtaken rural to urban migration as the major growth factor of peri-urban areas after the war’s end (DW and CEHS 2005:162).

2.7 Physical Changes to Cacuaco’s Geography

In Cacuaco the most obvious change to the landscape and society was the emergence and physical expansion of the municipality’s peri-urban neighbourhoods and the multiplication of Cacuacos’s residents. While these expanding peri-urban musseques became a major research focus, I, at first,

directed much of my attention towards the physical and social environment I had grown up in.

Cefopescas, the fisheries school my father had worked for, was a ghost of its former self. A natural disaster had swept people, cars, boats, houses and containers into the ocean, including the house I had lived in from 1989-1991.

After heavy rains in January 2007, the creek King Ngola Kiluanje had stopped by in the 16th century, an event that had given the area its name, grew into a roaring river, bursting a dam that had formed out of branches and tree trunks that were wedged under a bridge on the Cacuaco road, causing a disaster which damaged infrastructure and displaced thousands¹⁴ (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2007). People, including friends and neighbours from Cefopescas, lost everything in the floods and had been forced, as they explained it, to “start over from scratch.” When I visited the school and the place that once was my home I met with some of the teachers. They told me that the establishment was to be moved somewhere else and that a high-ranking politician had appropriated this prime real estate as his own. Rumours were circling that he was going to build a hotel and luxury marina on the land. This

¹⁴ Three years after the flood I saw that people displaced by the floods were still living in a tent camp in Kilamba Kiayi.

particular case of appropriation of public assets for private enrichment is explained in more detail in chapter 7 on corruption.

Due to this flood, the areas of the sea around Cefopescas I had swam in on a daily basis in my childhood had become too dangerous to swim in, as the water was full of scrap metal swept in during the flood. When the tide was low, rusted containers could be seen lying on the ocean floor. Another physical and social change to the landscape during my fieldwork was found on the beach between Cefopescas and the municipal market area and *Rua dos Pescadores*. Municipal authorities had relocated all the fishermen, their boats and equipment, further north and designated the beach to tourism. This tourism included openair bars and restaurants serving the growing Luandan population cold drinks with barbequed fish and meat on the weekends. On Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays during the warm season, the beach became crowded with thousands of people, drinking, eating, and swimming in the ocean, while some played beach soccer and the kids did somersaults on the sand.

After the war ended in 2002, areas that were out of bounds in the 1980s and 1990s had become neighbourhoods with houses and crooked streets. Thus, areas along the water pipeline between the Kifangondo on the Bengo River and the city, which were strictly restricted during the war, have become populated. During my childhood, anyone caught going too close to the water pipeline would

be shot by soldiers guarding the pipeline, for fear of enemy terrorists. Today, the old watch towers along the pipeline, where soldiers stood watch a decade earlier, stand empty, rusting in the sun, towering over new neighbourhoods and kids playing soccer while residents of these new neighbourhoods along the pipeline go about their daily business.

2.8 The Kicolo Area

The Kicolo area of Cacuaco, which became one of my key fieldsites, was occupied more recently than some of the other peri-urban areas or *comunas*, such as *Ngola Kiluanje* and *Hoji Ya Henda* where settlement started as early as the end of the 1960s (Robson and Roque 2001:48-49). In the end of the 1980s Kicolo still housed large farms (Robson and Roque 2001:48). It had been used by the Portuguese colonizers to house *contratados*, or forced farm labour, in the mid-20th century. Some of the oldest inhabitants of the area shared their stories with me of the times before the influx of war-displaced people, when it was inhabited by farmers and *contratados* sent from the south to work on the Portuguese owned farms. They confirmed that it had been a rural area that had changed considerably in recent years; as Jacinto clarified: “It was mostly bush back then, there were no neighbourhoods back then.”

Kicolo, like most of Luanda today, is a melting pot of Angolan cultures

made up primarily of internally displaced people uprooted by the war in the last few decades. People who settled in the area were from the central plateau of Ovimbundo origin (mostly from Huambo and Bié) and north of the country of Bakongo origin, particularly from Uíge Province (Robson and Roque 2001:48). After the war ended, Kicolo has also increasingly become inhabited by people moving in from other areas of Luanda, often more expensive parts of the city.

In the almost two decades that I was away, this area had probably undergone the most significant transformation of all the city's peri-urban neighbourhoods. It houses today one of the capital city's largest informal markets, the Kicolo market, where people from all over the city come to trade. Informal traders sell from either market stalls or warehouses while containers roll in from the port of Luanda with merchandize from all over the world, jamming the traffic to and from the area. Just like the areas around Vila de Cacuaco, houses have risen here where, during my childhood, they had been blown up for so-called security reasons, being too close to important infrastructure or military and police bases. During my fieldwork, neighbourhoods [*bairros*] such as Paraíso in the Kicolo area were still in the process of being occupied at a rapid rate (see appendix 3) and many of the older Kicolo *bairros* had become overcrowded, with residents complaining about the lack of open space as almost every square inch had been built on.

2.9 Symbols of Peace and Evidence of War

The signs of more peaceful times are quite obvious in Angola: there are fewer soldiers on the streets, the sounds of shots being fired, which in the 1980s and 90s were part of daily life, have been silenced, and the warring factions fighting the MPLA government have been turned into political opposition parties. Driving in Luanda one can therefore see UNITA offices painted in Green and Red and I once came across an FNLA [*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* or the National Front for the Liberation of Angola] office in Luanda's Petrangol area. This was truly something unimaginable only a few years earlier when Luanda was MPLA's stronghold, and the factions were bitter enemies, even though MPLA still dominates most of the city's political space today.

On a trip to Huambo province in Angola's central highland I came across the most visual sign that the war was indeed over. As I traveled with some Angolan colleagues in a Toyota Land Cruiser through the Huambo countryside we passed a village which seemed in all respects ordinary for a central highland village. However, there was one distinct detail that caught all the passengers' eyes. Above the village skyline, on two different spots in the village, were two flags flying high, attached to long, slim curly tree stems. One of the flags was the green and red UNITA flag with its *galo negro* [black rooster] and red rising sun, a

flag typical for the region which traditionally has been UNITA territory; the other flag was the red and black MPLA flag with its yellow star in the center. As we saw this from the newly rebuilt highway, a part of the country's post-war reconstruction development, an Angolan colleague and friend burst out: "Wow! We are really living in peace now." It was a sight symbolic for Angola's new post-conflict era.

In the city of Huambo, which still in 2010 was riddled with bullet holes, Jonas Savimbi's collapsed White House¹⁵ stands in ruins as a symbol of his defeat. The UNITA flag flickered in the wind above it when I went to visit the house, exploring every room, even the wine cellar. It has been both bombarded and shot at. Joaquim an Angolan colleague traveling with me on this trip, bragged that after his childhood in the province of Malanje he recognizes all the sounds and effects of the various weapons used during the war and said jokingly: "that is a MiG¹⁶" pointing at the large hole that had collapsed the ceiling of the once elegant and extravagant house on this street of single family, *vivenda* style houses. In 2010 there were people squatting in the house, people that settled in the ruins after the war ended. Further down the street two demolished tanks stood by the roadside. They stood there as part of the urban landscape, just as

¹⁵ A suitable name for a house owned by a warlord invited to the White House across the Atlantic in Washington D.C. in 1986.

¹⁶ MiG is a Soviet/Russian made military fighter jet aircraft.

houses and walls riddled with bullet holes were still part of the everyday scenery in Huambo.



Figure 3: A house riddled with bullet holes in Huambo in 2009.

A relic from the colonial era that has seen better days, one of the many vivid indications of the war's destruction still found in contemporary Angola.

Huambo, which the colonial power intended to become Angola's new colonial capital under its former name *Nova Lisboa* [New Lisbon],¹⁷ still bears the physical

¹⁷ Huambo was planned by the Portuguese colonizers and designated the capital of Angola, Nova Lisboa [New Lisbon], long before a single house was built in the area. This was done because of

evidence of devastating battles that not only destroyed the city's infrastructure and displaced or killed thousands of its inhabitants but also starved its survivors. It is perhaps because of the city's evident battle scars and destructive past, that physical signs of change are more apparent here than in the capital city. In Luanda the signs of the war are not as direct or materially visible, although huge areas of the city are musseques built by internally displaced people that fled the war from all over the country. However, psychological, social and cultural scars are more obscure to the common observer than bullet riddled and shell shocked urban infrastructure.

its strategic location in regards to the Benguela railway which ran from the 1920s until its destruction during the 1970s, serving as one of Africa's main arteries carrying Congolese minerals, such as copper, to a deep sea port in Lobito (Birmingham 2006:68). Huambo was also the hub of a planter economy (Birmingham 2006:169), with many Angolans claiming that the cooler, more European like temperature made the colonizers more at ease in areas further south such as Huambo.



Figure 4: A house in Huambo's "embassy" district.

Half of it has been renovated by a Portuguese company while the other half is still riddled with bullet holes after deadly battles from years past.

2.10 *Rusga*, providing a steady flow of soldiers for the war

In Cacuaco, the greater Luanda area and elsewhere in Angola the end of the war also meant the end of the systematic and forced conscription of soldiers into the FAPLA [*Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola*], and later the FAA [*Forças Armadas Angolanas*] armies, that is, the end of the *rusga*. The *rusga* was a menace to young men who could expect to be picked up by the army and sent

to the battlefield at anytime. As Rui a young man in his thirties recalled: “During that time there was a curfew and all that were caught after the curfew or were in a somewhat delinquent state were sent to the frontlines to fight.”

In the 1980s and 90s some of the older boys in my neighbourhood would disappear regularly to avoid the rusga. They would return with stories about having had to go to work on a grandfather’s or aunt’s farmland. Their disappearance would coincide with rumours that the army was on its way to “recruit” young men from the neighbourhood. In fact, these rumours were often tip offs derived from the local administration and therefore one representation of how informal social networks were used to protect its members. To avoid recruitment some of the older boys had documents claiming they were only 12 years old when in reality they were much older. Thus, one could encounter a 12 year old sporting a mustache in Luanda in those days.

Tomas told me how parents would even lock their children in the freezer to keep them from being conscripted when the rusga raids happened in certain neighbourhoods of Luanda. There were also those who through the right connections could escape the rusga just before being shipped off to the various bases and frontlines in the countryside. This was something Tomas had himself once benefitted from when caught one night after curfew. Others had escaped the rusga more miraculously and still others did not survive to tell their story.

Nelson, a family friend from my past was stopped randomly; the soldiers had gathered him with a group of men and made them stand in a line while they checked their documents and decided what to do with them. Knowing what was about to happen, Nelson made a rash and foolhardy decision, which could have had horrible consequences for him, to step outside the lineup and walk calmly away. With his heart in his throat, expecting to be noticed by the soldiers at any moment and shot in the back, which is what was done to deserters at the time, he miraculously escaped unnoticed. He lived to tell the story but he also ended up having to flee the country.

During the war the rusga was a real and present threat felt by most Luandans, that ended up conscripting people as cannon fodder in the many battles fought during the war. With the end of the war, this concern is gone along with the curfew that kept the population indoors after a certain hour, varying depending on curfew regulations that changed over time; forcing visitors in one's household to sleep over out of fear of being caught returning home during the curfew.

2.11 Shots in the Dark or Shots from the Past

Many of the everyday signs of war were gone in 2009-2010. Although, Angolans, especially former soldiers, have been reluctant to let go of their arms despite the

government's post-war disarmament and gun collection programs, the sound of shots being fired are not part of everyday life anymore.¹⁸ As Chiqinho recalled: "Back then [during the war] no one would flinch at the sound of shots being fired close by, people would continue with their conversation as usual. Guns and shots fired were part of the everyday. Today, however, everyone would panic and start running for their lives if shots were being fired nearby." The collection of empty Kalashnikov/AK-47 rounds has therefore ceased to be a young kid's game in the post-conflict era. However, as many would confirm during my fieldwork, because of the arms still in circulation, the police and other authorities felt uneasy when conducting raids and forced evictions in Luanda; especially in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of war veterans, which in the city could be any of the peri-urban neighbourhoods. Furthermore, authorities know quite well of the abundance of firearms in the city as they were the ones who armed civilians supporting the MPLA party in the aftermath of the 1992 elections, when the war

¹⁸ Shots are however still heard from time to time and I remember vividly waking up in the night in Viana with shots being fired very close by and people screaming in what seemed to be a police raid, although I never got an official explanation for what really took place. In fact the shots were so close by that Dora and I had to stumble out of bed and take shelter beside the bed. Furthermore, shots were fired on other occasions as well; however, they were not the same casual and everyday occurrences as they were two decades earlier. They had become occurrences "out of place".

broke out again with devastating effects in Luanda's neighbourhoods and other provincial towns and cities in the country (see Pearce 2005:17; Maier 2007:95).

However, by scrutinizing Angola's recent history of war and peace one can see that the MPLA has been quite successful in establishing and upholding peace since 2002. This has been achieved through certain politically strategic approaches. Instead of humiliating its defeated opponents the MPLA government, the victor of the war, has chosen a rhetoric that has focused on its peacebuilding capacity for the Angolan people (Åkesson 2013). Furthermore, the "winner takes all" end result of the civil war has resulted in a role reversal of the country's vast natural resources, from fuelling wars to fuelling peace¹⁹. This has, in the short run at least, pushed the country out of some of the so-called resource and conflict traps (see Collier 2007) that extensive resource endowments can bestow upon countries. As pointed out by Åkesson 2013, the government's uninhibited access to the country's rich natural resources after the war has contributed to the peace, as the MPLA government has used these resources to buy allegiance from former rebel soldiers and officers. While low ranking UNITA officers have been offered jobs and income opportunities better than those found during their life as rebels (such as, for example, guards in private security firms),

¹⁹ However, resources continue to fuel corruption, low productivity in other sectors of the economy, as well as post-conflict infrastructure reconstruction, among other things.

high-ranking generals have been incorporated into the national army and offered a slice of the country's resource wealth, in the form of, for example, diamond mine concessions (Åkesson 2013).

Thus, although the effects and scars of war are still found in Angola, the decade of peace has been the longest stretch of peace within the country's border for decades. Now we turn from a somewhat "informal" chapter on the changes in Luanda's social and urban landscapes to the informal economy, an essential part of everyday life in Luanda, and Angola in general.



Figure 5: Another building in Central Huambo, riddled with bullet holes and bombshells, after fierce fighting between MPLA and UNITA.

Chapter 3. Candonga and “Informality” in Angolan Society

“Suddenly you are immersed in a vibrant world of free-market dynamism that is probably as energetic and inventive as any economic system in the world. It has had to be if people and politicians alike were to survive the bizarre distortions that a soi-distant Marxist system of command economics imposed on the country in the 1980s. The survival strategies that women merchants and male artisans developed in those years now serve the country exceedingly well... The hundred-acre open-air work-shops are hives of industry where there is virtually nothing that cannot be made or bartered by Angolans of incredible ingenuity. When local supplies of recycled scrap fail, raw materials come in on the oil budget, plywood from the plundered forests of Indonesia, calico from the cotton mills of Congo, roofing nails from the iron furnaces of Europe... There the market women reach far beyond the neighboring countries of Central Africa and wholesalers have tentacles that stretch from Brazil to Dubai. There is nothing that cannot be bartered, be it a window motor for your air-conditioned Mercedes or half a gross of plastic sandals to be hawked through the township alleyways” (Birmingham 2006:165-166).

This concise passage from David Birmingham’s description of the vibrant informal economy in peri-urban Luanda captures quite well its dynamism, its partaker’s inventiveness, and its historical roots in the non-inclusive socialist economic model of the post-independence era. Furthermore, it captures the informal economy’s importance (still today), its large scope and how it transcends international borders. Cultures of informality as represented in the culture of

candonga and the informal economy, with its essential role in everyday life in the city, if not the whole country, is the subject of this chapter.

Sitting in a *quintal* (a fenced off yard surrounding someone's house, a domestic social space and important cultural characteristic of Luanda's typical and classic architecture) in *Bairro dos Pescadores* on a Sunday afternoon, eating barbequed pork and drinking cold beer, we are engulfed in a stimulating conversation about what seems to be an explosion in the widening assortment of religious groups in the city in recent years. An assortment that includes Jehovah's witnesses, Baha'i and Brazilian super churches, alongside the Catholic and the various Protestant and Pentecostal churches. As we sit and indulge in the leisurely luxuries that Sundays can offer in Luanda, people come and go. They come with crates of empty bottles and leave with crates of *Cuca* or *Nocal*, depending on the customer's domestic beer preferences. This is how the sister of the household matriarch partially makes a living, by quenching the neighbourhood's thirst for beer. A truck comes to this up-and-coming musseque and fills her stock when needed. When she is not around, other members of the household take on her role, receive the empty bottles, the money, and then provide the customer with a new crate. Such self-employed *compra e venda* [buy and sell] is a typical

representation of informal economic activities, or *candonga*, operated from people's houses in contemporary peri-urban Luanda.

As will be argued in this chapter and this work as a whole, *candonga*, the informal economy and paying a *gasosa* (Angolan Portuguese slang for the offering or reception of bribes in a variety of social situations) has become permanently engrained in Luandan (and Angolan) culture. That is to say, it has become part of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1980) of the Luandan population, as it is more than a mere economic space, it is part of everyday life, taken for granted, a phenomenon created and reproduced unconsciously, that affects people's values and quotidian expectations. Indeed it is a phenomenon that is difficult, if not impossible, to separate from contemporary Angolan society and culture.

3.1 Everyday Representations of Candonga in Contemporary Luanda

Candonga, or the informal way of doing things, was intertwined with literally all sectors and phases of life in Angola during my fieldwork. This section portrays some instances of how *candonga* plays out in the daily lives of peri-urban Luandans. At the time of Angola's independence in 1975, Kapuściński (2001[1976]) wrote of large ships waiting on the horizon outside the *Ilha de Luanda* for a chance to enter the port and fill up with the belongings of the Portuguese population who were ready to flee *en masse* as soon as the call

came. Today, ships are again taxiing on the horizon beyond the Ilha. However, this time they are filled with containers full of imported goods, waiting to unload them into Angola's formal and informal markets. A portion of the items flowing into the country will end up in formal grocery stores in the cities where the urban rich shop, others on the various informal marketplaces of the city, and yet others in the hands of street vendors hawking in the traffic-jammed streets leading in and out of central Luanda.

The large scale shift from socialist formality to capitalist informality, described in more detail below, led to the development of increasingly large, open air marketplaces on what was then the outskirts of the city. As the city's boundaries expanded with time, the open air marketplaces became an increasingly central feature of the city, both geographically and economically as well as culturally. *Roque Santeiro*,²⁰ in the municipality of Sambizanga, was the largest one, named after a popular Brazilian *telenovela* that aired on Angola's state television network [TPA] and became the subject of endless small talk, and animated conversations and debates, among the Luandan population in the mid-1980s. *Roque* (as it is commonly called) developed into one of the largest

²⁰ Shortly after I returned from my field research, Roque Santeiro was relocated by authorities to Panguila (18 km north of Luanda) in Cacuaco, in the name of urban renovation and property development. This relocation severely affected the informal retail sector in the city (Jover, Lopes Pinto and Marchand 2012:80). See chapter 5 on the discourse surrounding the "Sambizanga project" of urban renovation.

informal marketplaces in Africa and with the exponential growth of Roque Santeiro its notorious reputation grew. Residents of Luanda often claim that: “If you cannot find it at Roque then it does not exist.” Thus, it is rumoured that you can buy or barter anything at Roque, including illegal drugs, diamonds, weapons, human organs and even children; you just have to know where to look for these things.

In conversation with fellow researcher and colleague, Lisa Åkesson, who, like me, had lived in the country in the 1980s, she described to me how she had been approached by a man in one of her visits to Roque at the time who claimed to have something she would definitely be interested in. She followed the man, and to her surprise, he showed her a helicopter he had for sale. It was brand new and straight from the Luanda port, stolen, undoubtedly, from the army or perhaps the oil sector. Lisa smiled and laughed as she shared her story with me. As her anecdote suggests it was common for goods stolen from the port to end up at Roque Santeiro and other informal marketplaces at the time and the port is still notorious for the recurrent theft of merchandise coming into the country. Karl Maier has for example written about how donations from international aid agencies, such as medical supplies, do not end up at their intended destinations but at Roque and other markets: “Any medicine imaginable can be bought at Roque Santeiro... Many of the medicines are clearly marked ‘not for resale.’ The

same words are to be found on sacks of maize and tin cans at Roque Santeiro and at smaller markets in cities throughout the country” (Maier 2007:143).

The traditional form of *candonga* is based on *compra e venda* [buying and selling] of consumer goods, and is traditionally run by women (Van der Vinden 1996:46), who constitute 70% of Angola’s informal workforce (BTI 2014:24). The *compra e venda* economic model is based on buying goods in small or large quantities and re-selling them in smaller quantities for a profit. Women buy vegetables from peasants on the outskirts of the city and fish from fishermen at the beach early in the morning to resell them at informal marketplaces during the day. In the same way, imported goods are bought from warehouses, sometimes directly from containers, and resold for a profit. When not sold at a stall in one of the many informal marketplaces in the city, these goods are sold by *zungeiras* [mobile vendors] who travel the neighbourhoods with their merchandise in a basin on their head, shouting out their selection of goods as they walk past prospective customers. As Santos (2011) has pointed out, women’s street trading and selling has been a way of life in Luanda since its early colonial époque, an important part of everyday social relations in the city and “one of the most striking faces of daily life in Luanda” today (Santos 2011; see also Silva 2014). However, despite their vital socio-economic functions in the city they are characterized as constituting an “informal” (and illegal) sector, which serves to

homogenize their diverse and often very specific socio-economic functions (Santos 2011).

Traffic jams in Luanda, a result of neglected infrastructure after years of warring, as well as rapid population growth after massive urbanization during the war, and a substantial increase in motorized vehicles, has made street hawking a viable business. Street vendors, usually young men, often school age boys, and some women as well, stand in the traffic-jammed streets and sell everything from newspapers, food items (such as canned fruit, Danish butter cookies or fresh fruits imported from South Africa), cell phones, clothing and doormats, to showerheads and axes. Beside the jammed streets women have laid out their blankets presenting passers-by (or drive-b(u)yers) with their merchandise. The women at these roadside markets are however quick to gather up their sales items and flee when a police vehicle drives by. One never knows when the fiscal or economic police will target one's area of *candonga* business.

Informal restaurants are run by women, who serve lunch such as barbequed chicken or fish with cooked rice and *funge do bombom* with *kalulu*,²¹ catering to the city's hungry formal and informal workforce. At home, in the neighbourhoods, one commonly sees inscriptions on houses and cardboard

²¹ A traditional Angolan seafood dish served with *funge* (Angola's traditional staple food) made from manioc flour.

signs, such as *Há ovo* [we have eggs] or *Há sopa* [we have soup], revealing to hungry passers-by and neighbours that they have food for sale in their household. Certain neighbours sell gas cylinders to replace the ones that go empty while cooking a meal on the gas stove; others sell gasoline or diesel to the neighbour who needs to refill the household generator (adding to the city's ever-present noise pollution), or to refuel someone's motorcycle or car. Yet others sell beer from home, and sometimes even barbequed pork, chicken, or *cabrité* [grilled goatmeat] to accompany the cold local or imported Portuguese beer, which people from the neighbourhood consume at dusk over conversation. Luísa, explained to me how she would buy crates of beer and soda from a local business in her neighbourhood, and then re-sell it bottle by bottle to thirsty neighbours for a small profit of 330 *Kwanzas* per crate.²² Others sell water to their neighbours, by the bucket or basin, from cemented water tanks filled with water transported by cistern trucks from *Rio Bengo* [the Bengo river]. The mechanisms of the informal water market will be elaborated upon in chapter 4.

²² She would buy a crate of beer for 1100 Kwanza and sell each bottle for 60 Kwanza. Having sold all the drinks she would get 1440 Kwanza earning a 330 Kwanza profit per crate. The exchange rate at the time was around 90 kwanza for \$1 U.S. dollar, thus, her profit per crate would have been around \$3.7. U.S.



Figure 6: Women running an informal restaurant at Cacuo's Vidrul Informal Marketplace.

Rodrigo, a man in his mid- to late thirties who grew up by the sea but got involved in agriculture in the course of his life, told me of his dream of selling some of his fast-urbanizing agricultural land to buy an outboard motor and start a fishing business. The motor costs around \$4000 US dollars in the city center. With a motor and a *chata*, a conventional open fishing boat built out of wooden planks, he would be able to go out and fish, and then sell his catch at the beach, either at the Cacuo beach or the Ilha de Luanda. The fish would be sold to women involved in the *compra e venda* of fish. By buying a kilogram of fish for 1,500 Kwanza, the women can resell it for 2000 Kwanza, either by selling it at a

market stall or as a *zungeira* [i.e. mobile street vendor], crying out the catch of the day in a shrill voice, in the areas further away from the fish market²³.

The same man, suffering from a chronic illness, sought treatment at clinics, private and public, where his illness was diagnosed (chronic osteomyelitis) and a treatment suggested. However, the rare antibiotics he needed were nowhere to be found on the Angolan official market, neither in pharmacies nor hospital clinics. Without the right antibiotic treatment doctors advised him that an amputation would be the next course of action to take. Fearing amputation, and a firm believer in the magical capacities of traditional healers, Rodrigo travelled to the territory of his ancestors and experimented with traditional medicine administered by a traditional healer which improved his condition slightly, but only for a short period of time. In a final attempt to save his leg from amputation, tired of his health situation and the disability it caused, he threaded the informal market-places in both the capital and provincial towns and cities in search of the medical drugs that were nowhere to be found on the official market. It turned out that the informal *candonga* sector could provide him with the drug treatment he needed and a clinic was willing to administer the treatment.

²³ The fish usually stare eerily over the brim of the basin on the *zungeira*'s head, with lifeless eyes peeking at the lively streets she passes through, as a shrill high pitched voice calls out the species she is selling ("*Karapão, Karapão!*"), the strength of her voice, fading or increasing, depending on whether she is moving closer or further from one's location.

This combination of informal and formal services, of rare high tech drugs bought on the informal market and medical treatment at a private clinic, saved his leg from amputation and possibly his life; as was confirmed to me by both himself and the doctor who treated him.

The informal taxi drivers or the *candongeiros*, as they are commonly referred to (Lopes 2006:165), are an essential part of everyday life in Luanda. Today, the informal taxi business is much more “formalized” than when it was pioneered as an illegal trade. Restrictions exist about the number of passengers allowed, and the traffic police stop the taxis frequently to diligently check for any possible infractions/infringements the *candongeiros* might have committed, which in turn would yield a fine or a bribe [*gasosa*] increasing the police officers’ meager salary informally. Thus, the *candongeiros* today are never packed with so many passengers that some of them have to lie on top of the roof, holding on for their lives, as was a common sight in the 1980s. A blue and white coloured Toyota Hiace minivan, although other minivan models are also used, is the standard minivan taxi that travels fixed routes. If you want to go far, you need to take multiple short route minivan taxis to reach your destination. As an example, to get from Vila de Cacuaco to Kinaxixi in central Luanda takes 4 minivan taxis, 8 back and forth, with common taxi fares within the city ranging from 100-200 Kwanzas per taxi, during my fieldwork, depending on the distance of the route.

Thus, those without a car, living on the outskirts of the city but working or studying in the city's central hub, have to spend considerable amounts of money (and time) each day on taxi fares. Smaller Toyota Corollas or Starlets are the standard smaller taxis which one can take for shorter routes often within a particular *bairro* [neighbourhood] and do not always adhere to a fixed route. There are also the *motoqueiros* or *taxi mota* [motorcycle taxis] who will take passengers short distances within a certain area, these are sometimes the only ones found in *musseques* farther from the city center.

The Angolan music industry is also largely informal. For example, *Kuduro* music, the “raw,” “underground” music of Angola’s *musseques* which has reached international acclaim, is produced in *musseque* studios and sold on the streets of Luanda. This music became so popular that it kept whole neighbourhoods awake on the weekends during my fieldwork. When asked why these clearly popular musicians from the *musseques* do not produce their music through a larger and formal music label, the reply was that the music turnover was so fast in Angola that when a “legal” CD finally came to the stores, the songs on that CD were already old, and the people already listening to the newest and freshest beats. Thus, the “raw” sound of the *musseques* travels far and fast through the informal economy (or at least faster than the formal Angolan music industry allows for) and does not tend to linger.

Since the end of the civil war in 2002, the boundaries of the *candonga* trade have been extended beyond the Angolan borders. Angolan *Compra e venda* has become globalized. More and more people, mostly women, are travelling abroad to buy merchandise with the intention of re-selling it in Angola. I met several women who did this. Joana ran a small clothing shop in central Luanda which she stocked up by travelling to Portugal, Namibia, South Africa and even the US. Maria-Luisa travelled to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa, and Margarida had been all over the world, buying merchandise in China, Thailand, Portugal, Brazil and Dubai, which she then re-sold to her social network of colleagues, friends, acquaintances, neighbours and friends of friends. This global *Candonga* can yield considerable returns in Angola's post-war economic context. Angola's State airline company TAAG catered to such "*candonga*" travel during my fieldwork by advertising and allowing 60 kilos of checked-in baggage. However, many also travelled across borders to neighbouring (cheaper) markets by car or bus.²⁴

Men I met who partook in such global *candonga* were often involved in importation of used cars and trucks for re-sale on the informal market. This

²⁴ An Icelandic development worker in Namibia explained to his colleagues in Iceland how some days when he wanted to shop for certain things in Namibia he would find the shops empty because of Angolans shopping for merchandise to sell in Angola had bought up the stock. A shoe store owner for example excused himself by telling him: The Angolans were here, they bought everything.

involved travelling as far as to Dubai, Belgium or Sweden to buy cars and trucks for re-sale in Angola. Over the course of my fieldwork, I was often asked by men about my relation to Sweden and how much a Volvo truck would cost there. However, there is considerable risk involved in this business as cars and trucks bought during such trips had to be shipped to Angola by freight ships where there is a high risk of theft. The stealing of car parts on the shipping route between the Persian Gulf or Europe and Angola is notorious and a major problematic and risk factor for those who partake in this trade. Sadly I saw incidents where trucks and cars were not operational when they reached their destination. Such theft could be avoided by the use of sealed containers when transporting cars, which is more expensive, but not an option for trucks, which are too big.

The bureaucratic process of getting the vehicles out of Luanda's port is also tedious, but when successful these men could make considerable amounts of money in an informal economy where demand is high and people tend to pay in cash for their properties, including cars and trucks. This is due to mainly two things: A. The contemporary Angolan informal economy is mostly a cash economy; and: B. a tradition of general distrust in the country's banking system, although this has changed somewhat after the war ended, with new private banks entering the official economy and offering easier access to one's account through debit cards and ATMs. The skyrocketing prices on the Luandan market

after the war, which has rendered it one of the most expensive cities in the world today, in tandem with a growing economic elite and its spending power, has made such international *candonga* trips increasingly lucrative.

Before turning to the origins of the informal economy in Angola it is perhaps fitting to end this section with an anecdote on the effects of the aforementioned distrust in the country's banking system which resulted in the habit of storing or "hiding" money earned under mattresses in people's homes. This brought with it certain risks, although such risks were clearly deemed lower than keeping one's money in the bank. One late night in the 1980s, the members of my family woke up to loud crying and sobbing; the morning after we found out that all the money stored in a neighbour's house had been stolen. No one knew who the perpetrator was but Gracinda, the matriarch of the house, had been a successful entrepreneur on the local informal market, selling dried fish and homebrewed beer. As had become common knowledge in the neighbourhood she had been saving up money for a refrigerator so she could sell her beer cold. When we got up the next day to see what had happened, Gracinda was already on her way to her ancestral village to consult a traditional leader and healer (*Curandeiro* in Kimbundu/Angolan Portuguese) regarding this tragic incident.

In tandem with the role of investigator and judge, the traditional authority played a role not dissimilar from what could be called a social counselor, calming

her as well as asking her to explain how things were in our neighbourhood, and to describe her neighbours. Despite being far away from the neighbourhood her meeting with the traditional authority caused a lot of anxiety in the neighbourhood in the days that followed and everyone was afraid that he would point fingers in their direction. His verdict was that one of our neighbours, a teacher who walked with a limp (and not of Ambundo origins like Gracinda and most of our neighbours), was the perpetrator; a teacher who was rumoured to have shot himself in the leg to escape conscription into the army and, hence, walked with a limp.

The result of this trip to her ancestral village was almost immediate, as only two days after the theft, the teacher disappeared; he had fled the neighbourhood, as the verdict of the Curandeiro made it impossible for him to remain. The judgment of this traditional legal apparatus was, in effect, a sentence of exile for him as he became a persona non-grata in the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the same day he disappeared, part of the money re-emerged on Gracinda's doorstep. Someone had tried to push it through the door, but as the notes were mostly of small value and thus numerous, it had been difficult to get all the money through, and hence it piled up inside and outside her door. To this day neither I nor other members of my family are certain if the verdict was correct, but the power of the traditional method of dealing with such problems

became quite clear. Furthermore, it elucidated the importance and power of rumour in Cacuaco, and in Angolan society in general, as well as the plurality of legal systems and power in effect at the time.

Such was the “banking” system of the 1980s in Angola, and continued to be until quite recently with the development of new opportunities in banking as new private banking institutions came in to compete with the already stagnated national banking system in place. Thus, until quite recently, the money made on the informal market often never returned to its origin, the official banking system, but continued to circulate in the informal sector with intermittent stops under people’s mattresses. However, during my fieldwork this had changed and when one entered banks in Luanda, waiting in line for one’s turn to reach the teller, one frequently could see people with large bundles of cash, both Kwanzas and US dollars, being deposited into bank accounts, in quantities so large that other people in the bank stared, quantities so large that one would feel uncomfortable carrying them around, anywhere in the world. The following section sheds some light on the origins of the informal economy concept.

3.2 The Origins of the Informal Economy Concept

The term ‘informal economy’ became current in the 1970s as a label for economic activities which take place outside the framework of corporate public

and private sector establishments. It arose at first in response to the proliferation of self-employment and casual labour in Third World cities; but later the expression came to be used with reference to societies like Britain, where it competed with other adjectives describing deindustrialization – the ‘hidden’, ‘underground’, ‘black’ economy, and so on (Keith Hart 1987).

Anthropologists Chris Hann and Keith Hart (2011:114) point out that the formal and informal aspects of an economy are connected “since the idea of ‘informality’ is entailed by the institutional effort to organize society along formal lines”. A widely cited definition of the informal economy provided by Castells and Porte (1989) defines the informal economy as “income generating activities outside the regulatory framework of the state” (Castells and Porte 1989:12; cited in Meagher and Lindell 2013:61). Thus, economic activities that fall outside the rules and regulations of the formal or official national or state bureaucracy are considered informal and even illegal when, for example, tariffs and taxes are not paid or official licenses for one’s “business” are not procured, and hence they are not recorded in national accounting (a definition of the informal economy offered by Craggs 2005). Although informal economic activities existed long before there ever was a formal economy, following rules and regulations determined by higher authorities and state bureaucracies, the origin of the common use of the informal economy/sector concept in contemporary discourses can be traced to Hart’s work on informal urban employment in Ghana (1973). Based on ethnographic

research in Nima, a slum in Accra, he claimed that the urban poor were not unemployed but active within the informal economy and informal opportunities that ranged from “market gardening and brewing through every kind of trade to gambling, theft and political corruption” (Hart 2006). For Accra, as for contemporary Luanda, he came to the conclusion that everyone, especially in the slums, tried to combine the two sources of formal and informal income (Hart 2006). However, in the 1970s there was widespread preoccupation with “Third World urban unemployment” within development policy circles (Hann and Hart 2011:115). Based on his ethnographic evidence of a vibrant informal economy in Accra, he urged development economists to abandon their “unemployment model” and tried to persuade them that there was much more going on in the grassroots economy “than their bureaucratic imagination allowed for” (Hann and Hart 2011:115; Hart 2009:4). He has since emphasized the importance of these informal income opportunities and their significance for models of economic development and potential for economic transformation (Hart 1973; 1987).

It was the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) application of the term in a 1972 study in Kenya that first publicized and introduced the concept to the vocabulary of development economics. ILO’s Kenya mission was its first comprehensive employment mission in Kenya and in its report entitled:

Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive

Employment in Kenya (1972), it coined the term, devoting a whole chapter of the report entirely to the informal sector (Bangasser 2000:8). In this influential report, informal activities are not confined to employment on the periphery of towns, particular occupations or even economic activities. Rather, informal activities are defined in terms of “the way of doing things” (ILO 1972:6) and the importance of the link between formal and informal activities is emphasized. In the ILO report the informal economy is characterized by: “ease of entry; reliance on indigenous resources; family ownership of enterprises; small scale of operation; labour-intensive and adapted technology; skills acquired outside the formal school system; and unregulated and competitive markets” (ILO 1972:6; see also Nordstrom 2004:229). On the other side of the informal/formal spectrum the formal economy contradicts the informal economy and is characterized by: “Difficult entry; frequent reliance on overseas resources; corporate ownership; large scale of operation; capital-intensive and often imported technology; formally acquired skills, often expatriate; and protected markets (through tariffs, quotas and trade licenses)” (ILO 1972:6).

The ILO report introduced the idea of the informal sector’s potential to be a source of national development by employing peasants and the urban poor (Hart 1987). Incomes generated in the informal sector were seen as leading to increased equality in income distribution between those with formal employment

and those without (Hart 2006). Thus, it was seen as a potential for diminishing the gap between those formally employed and formally unemployed by contributing to an increase in equitable income distribution (Hart 2009:16). Unfortunately these ideas vanished from the discourses and policies surrounding the informal economy, which soon became portrayed as a menace to economic development and existing structures of governance, as a phenomenon in need of “formalization.” It certainly seems to be non-existent in the contemporary official discourse on the informal sector in Angola, where it is increasingly defined as illegal and undesirable and as a threat to the state’s bureaucratic (and hegemonic) powers. However, there is (perhaps) a glimmer of hope, for, as pointed out by Meagher and Lindell (2013:58-59), the idea of the informal economy as being a part of the solution to market failure rather than part of the problem has lately resurfaced within international policy circles (see for example CFS 2010; Joshi and Moore 2004; Guha-Khasnobis, Kanbur and Ostrom 2006) and among certain corporate investors (see for example London and Hart 2011; UNDP 2008). This has, in the current age of globalization, rapid informalization, weakened state capacity and in the aftermath of the recent global financial crisis, given rise to new approaches to both governance and economic development. Meagher and Lindell’s (2013) publication demonstrates some of the effects of contemporary development models, discourses and policies of informal

economic inclusion (rather than exclusion) on Africa's informal workers, although much still remains to be seen in that respect.

However, despite the early introduction of the informal economy/sector concept in the 1970s, non-formal and extra-state activities still do not seem to translate well into the ideas underlying formal organizational structures and knowledge. Carolyn Nordstrom (2004) has drawn attention to the absence of the informal economy concept from official economic reports. International and country reports from agencies such as the UN, IMF or the World Bank do not provide solid empirical data on the informal sector, and, where mentioned, it is typically only referred to in passing. This is startling, especially when considering how, as Nordstrom points out, "central to economic viability in the day to day development work on the ground" the non-formal or extra-state sector can be (Nordstrom 2004:227).

Nordstrom recounts a 1998 visit she made to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank headquarters in Luanda, where she had hoped she could find data on the 90% of the Angolan economy that was informal. Unfortunately, neither institution had any data on the informal sector, claiming that their institutions either did not have the capacity or the interest in acquiring such data (Nordstrom 2004:228). Thus, (to play with Adam Smith's (2011[1776]) infamous metaphor), the hands of the informal market are

indeed invisible in official economic reports, yet they are, in the case of Angolan society, also the most active.

As Nordstrom rightly calls attention to, a problem occurs when development policies meant to help the entire country are based on data that represent only 10% of the economy (Nordstrom 2004:226). Peet and Hartwick have, in the same vein, argued and criticized the fact that the “‘official’ economy, whose measurements serve as the main indicators of economic growth, may be only a minor part of the *real* economy, whose measurements are unknown” (2009:10, emphasis in original). As they point out, this renders arguments about growth, development, and poverty based on existing statistics often unreliable, and even unusable.

Researching what she has termed non-formal, extra-state, shadow economies, Nordstrom (2004:228) asks why economic work tends to ignore such a vast economic reality; an informal economic reality which reportedly represents 70-90% of African national economies (Hann and Hart 2011:116; Meagher and Lindell 2013:58; ILO 2002). The most common answer Nordstrom received to her questions, from economists and academics in the field, was that, while the informal economy is fascinating, classical economics does not deal with it, as it runs against the culture and tradition of the profession, and with no existing methodologies to do so the empirical complexities of these economies have

never been mapped. Furthermore, to gather data on the informal economy, one would have to conduct fieldwork, a task that seemed to be a “formidable barrier,” to the economists she spoke to (Nordstrom 2004:230-231). In other words, economists tend to work with official numbers from the formal sector, and thus the informal sector becomes hard to account for in their reports.²⁵

Even though the methodologies of classical economics still seem to be dominant within international organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank, these institutions are well aware of the existence and expanding scope of the informal economy relative to countries’ GDP²⁶, frequently referring to it as the “underground economy,” “shadow economy,” or the economy “hiding in the shadows” (see for example Schneider and Enste 2002). The expansion of informal economies, and an increase in the informalization of the world economy, can (to a certain extent at least) be traced to the neo-liberal economic policies of recent decades, which served to reduce the state’s grip on the “free market,” and which were advocated by these same international banking institutions (Hann and Hart 2011:115). Meagher and Lindell (2013) have, for example, pointed out that decades of market reforms “have turned the informal economy into a central

²⁵ This is of course a general argument about classical economics and does not apply to all economists researching the various shades of grey found within formal and informal economies. Carlos M. Lopes who has written extensively about the Angolan informal economy in the Portuguese language is for example a trained economist.

²⁶ GDP = Gross Domestic Product.

feature of popular livelihoods, urban service provision, and associational life” rather than eliminating incentives of informality as predicted by neo-liberal policy makers (see also Meagher 2003, 2010; Lindell 2010; Hansen and Vaa 2004; Thorstensen, Tvedten and Vaa 2001). Furthermore, as Béatrice Hibou (1999:80) has pointed out in the context of Africa, economic “liberalization” policies have not achieved its intended effects of improving the competitiveness of African economies, “squeezing” informal parallel markets, and reducing the obstacles to international trade, but rather, instead of liberalizing and formalizing the market, it generated the opposite, reinforcing informal politico-economic networks.

Hart’s research findings came out of ethnographic fieldwork. He not only lived in a slum in Accra himself, interacting with people on the ground on a daily basis over a relatively long period of time, but also took part in informal and illegal activities, some of which even got him arrested. This ethnographic involvement allowed him to experience first-hand what is not necessarily found in official documents or statistics. As Polly Hill stated in her 1957 work on spending habits in Ghana: “[T]he gulf between social anthropologists and economists is so terrifying that even the simplest anthropological ideas are liable to disappear into thin air when one is pursuing economic survey work in the field” (Hill 1957:8; cited in Guyer 2004:131). Thus it comes perhaps as no surprise when Hart claims that the informal economy concept is an ethnographic concept (Hart

2009); a concept coming from and representing people (on the ground) and not the bureaucracy (from above). The difference in research methodologies between ethnographic fieldwork and that of classically trained economists is hence, perhaps, one of the main reasons for the recurrent absence of the informal sector in country and development reports from international organizations such as the UN, IMF and the World Bank.

Consequently, it is perhaps not surprising that African economies have been portrayed by Western observers as being beyond the threshold of comprehension (Geschiere, Goheen and Piot 2007:38). This is, in part, due to a process Jane I. Guyer (2004:7), like Nordstrom above, has called attention to: When methods begin to get in the way of understanding. Guyer in her book *Marginal Gains: Monetary Transaction in Atlantic Africa* (2004), argues that the hegemony of current models of economic thinking risk making research on economic topics blind to alternative forms of value and rationale that develop in sites such as Africa which are “in a context of constant crisis” (Geschiere, Goheen and Piot 2007:38). She emphasizes that economic transactions (in Atlantic Africa) are hybrid institutions that have taken shape at the intersections and are thus neither best understood “in terms of the Western logic of capitalism nor as expressions of ‘local cultural principles’ operating in isolation” (Carter 2004:x ; Guyer 2004). Similarly, and as will be further elucidated below, Luanda’s

informal economy and candonga culture has developed at the intersections and margins of the formal or official economy, the margins of “formal” society, the margins of the asphalt city, and the margins of citizenship.

3.3 Candonga and the Informal Economy/Sector in Angola²⁷

In Angola, the informal economy that has developed and flourished parallel to the official economy goes by the name of candonga. The term has entered the Angolan Portuguese language as *calão* [slang], a denominator for the informal market, informal trade and illicit commerce. It originates from Kimbundu, one of the most commonly spoken native languages in Angola, and is believed to be derived from the term *ka ndenge*,²⁸ which means small, minor (Schneider

²⁷ I am indebted to several Luso-African scholars: Kathleen Sheldon, Daniel dos Santos, Dores Cruz, Rita Abranches, Betty Rodrigues-Feo, Margarida Paredes, Jon Schubert and Inocência Mata, who enlightened me through a discussion on the H-Luso-Africa listserve in October of 2011 about the roots of the candonga concept in Angola, and its diverse uses within and outside of Angola’s borders.

²⁸ *Ka ndenge* is itself another *calão* [slang] found in Angolan Portuguese. During my fieldwork it was common to hear it used in interactions between older and younger individuals where the older one would say something in the vein of: “*Como estas ka ndengue*” [How are you younger one] and the reply would usually be something like: *Estou bem kota* [I am fine older one]. *Kota* is another *calão* term used in Angolan Portuguese which can be traced to both the Kimbundu and Umbundu languages. The meaning, older one or older brother, has positive connotations, as in more experienced, and plays into the cultural norms which dictate that one should respect one’s elders. Thus an older, well-respected man would often have *kota* prefixed to his name (e.g. Kota Sanches or Kota Domingos).

1991:93) or younger (see Chatelain 1889:33). Those who participate in *candonga* go by the name *candongeiros*, although in contemporary Angolan society, almost everyone is directly or indirectly involved in the informal economy or *candonga*, and therefore the term *candongeiro* has become more specifically associated with drivers of informal taxis. Although not a universal rule, the *candongeiro* title can take on a pejorative meaning, and today *candongeiros* prefer to be called *taxistas* [taxi drivers]. The naming of taxi drivers as *candongeiros* can be traced back to the early 1980s, when car ownership was a rarity in Angola. Then drivers of cars would offer people rides for 500 kwanzas [which at the time was called *boleia quinhentos kwanzas* or *processo quinhentos*], an amount that was considered quite steep at the time, but acceptable in light of the few alternatives in transportation. Rodrigo elucidated how *candonga* could also signify exploitation since the price of 500 kwanzas for a lift was deemed so expensive at the time and thus these informal transportation operators became known as *candongeiros* due to their exploitative activities.

Informal taxi drivers or *candongeiros* partook in a highly illegal activity when they started out their trade in the early 1980s against the backdrop of the State's socialist economic policies. Today, however, they are highly visible in

In one particular group of friends, all of similar age, *ka ndengue* was frequently used mockingly between friends, usually with a grin, as to put someone in his place, by pointing out that he or she was younger or even less important.

their blue and white minivans, staffed with one driver and another person who collects the fare, calls their destination to pedestrians, and decides when it is full of passengers and ready to go. The blue and white informal minivan taxis have become the most reliable form of transportation for the majority of Luandans; serving as the city's public transit system, although they are private, informal businesses. This applies to the informal candonga market in general as well; what was once considered illegal has today become the prevailing *modus operandi* of the Angolan economic society.

The candonga word has through time undergone an impressive process of globalization within the Lusophone world. It has travelled widely from its roots in Angola and secured a place in Portuguese dictionaries on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In Brazil and Portugal, the word has come to mean contraband food or contraband goods in general (Schneider 1991:93), in Mozambique, it refers to the black market and non-official, illegal financial transactions,²⁹ and in Guinea-Bissau, it has come to signify the informal transportation networks.³⁰

²⁹ Information obtained through personal communication with Kathleen Sheldon.

³⁰ Information obtained through personal communication with Daniel Dos Santos.

3.4 Candonga and the Informal Parallel Market in Historical, Political and Economic Context

In the last 500 years of historical development one finds the roots of the political tradition of Angola's leaders, "their relation to the population and their relation to wealth accumulation" (Newitt 2008:19). Thus, as Malyn Newitt (2008) has emphasized, modern day Angola is a child of its own history; or, as Marx claimed, "people make their own history, albeit not under conditions of their own choosing" (Guyer 2004:4). This is particularly true when one looks at Angola's contemporary economy. Historically, Angola is a land of traders, a land that only became effectively ruled by a single government entity after the First World War. Up until then, the various culturally distinct areas that make up Angola today had been connected through long distance trading. Angolans were also actively involved in the Atlantic economy after the discovery of the New World and developed strong commercial, political and social relations with the Americas and Europe (Newitt 2008:19). The slave trade was thus a result of international interests and alliances between European merchants and African leaders who saw in slavery great possibilities for enrichment (Gonçalves 2011). Angolan Economist Jonuel Gonçalves (2011) points out that Angola's economic history is a history of extractive economics, with the extraction of human beings during the

slavery époque, which later was taken over by the lucrative mineral, oil and gas extraction economy, and continues to this day in the post-conflict era.

Contraband operations of petty merchants and a black market for foreign currency existed pre-independence in the context of colonial capitalism (Dos Santos 1990:162). However, it was not until after independence that *candonga* became omnipresent in Angolan society. The contemporary version of the parallel informal market economy in Angola was introduced (or at least perfected) by the returning Angolans who had taken refuge in Kinshasa, Zaire during the war (see Birmingham 2002:157-158), where they had learned the trade of what in English has been referred to as cut-throat capitalism (Hodges 2004:43) and Angolan social critics have labelled *capitalismo selvagem* [law of the jungle capitalism or savage capitalism], a term with origins in the immense economic and social injustices of the industrial revolution but is frequently extended beyond the local Angolan economy to the international dealings of the political and economic elite (see e.g. Hodges 2004:46; Marques de Moraes 2013; Sogge 2011a). Among the *retornados* [returned refugees] returning from Zaire after independence were Bakongo businessmen and women who overtook the parallel market which previously had been dominated by petty Portuguese traders (Hodges 2004:43; Birmingham 1995:92-93).

The returning exiles from Zaire were, however, not only the children of those who fled over the border from the 1961 vigilante massacres that took place in the north of the country but also the grandchildren of Angolan entrepreneurs and artisans that had served the Belgians for over three generations (Birmingham 2002:157). When they arrived in the capital city, speaking French (the language of Zairean business) instead of Portuguese, they were treated as foreigners by the already established Luandan population and as they were disconnected from the city's old social networks and from access to land and salaried employment, they made the best of the blue collar commercial skills they brought with them from the north and which the white collar, *assimilado*, political elite did not possess; making a living by taking risks in the crafts and trade industry and by establishing private commercial enterprises (Birmingham 2002:157; Birmingham 1995:93). Their business skills and "political ideology of entrepreneurial capitalism" (Birmingham 1995:93) contrasting that of the state led service ideology in newly decolonized Angola, filled the vacuum created by the post-independence socialist economic system's failure to encompass, adjust to, and provide for, the newly independent Angolan population. Arbitrary price fixing of consumer goods, as well as widespread shortages in the official socialist economy in the mid-1980s, in part due to a decline in international creditworthiness and import capacity caused by the 1985-1986 drop in oil prices

(Hodges 2004:44), allowed this parallel informal market to grow and blossom even further until it began to overshadow the formal market. Today, it has become so influential that it serves as the main source of employment for an expanding urban population, and provides a large percentage of Luanda's inhabitants with basic services such as household water, food, transportation and other services; this is especially true in the peri-urban areas or musseques of Luanda.

3.5 The Post-Independence Socialist Economic System

“We shall have socialism when everyone can say: I have my house; I have my small belongings; I have my cooperative; I have the possibility, in the area where I live, of getting what I need in the way of food, medical treatment, for getting from one place to another, that is, having transport facilities; having organised trade; being able to sell produce; and, lastly, being able to exchange goods within the country or even with other countries, so that our work really represents an advantage for everyone.

We shall be able to say we have socialism when there are no classes exploiting each other; when we no longer have a group or various groups of people in the country who want to have greater advantages than the rest.”

This means that we must create conditions.”

President Agostinho Neto (from a speech delivered at Calandula, in Malanje province on 18 August 1979; cited in Baghavan 1986:4).

Angola's *candonga* economy cannot be disconnected from the official economy.

As explained in this section the official economy and the State's post-independence economic policies fuelled the expansion of an informal parallel economy. The post-colonial Angolan state nationalized the economy and attempted to reorganize the national market with a new independent and self-sufficient socialist economy. This new socialist economic system offered consumption goods to officially employed citizens, paid in the official national currency, the Kwanza, through people's stores [*lojas do povo*]. The consumption goods sold in these stores were ideally to be produced by Angolan agriculture and industry and supplied through a national distribution network. However, shortages of locally produced goods, due to the state's failure to revitalize the agricultural sector after independence, difficulties in distributing these goods while fighting a civil war, as well as small-scale agriculturalists' refusal to sell their surplus crops for a valueless national currency (Baghavan 1986:22), pushed the state towards importation of consumer goods for petrodollars rather than their production. After independence, production levels in all sectors of the economy other than the oil industry fell far below their pre-independence standards (Hodges 2004: 44; see also Dos Santos 1990:164). Thus the importation of

consumer goods was financed by oil revenues, while other sectors of national production were left to decline. In fact, ever since oil rents had made it possible to import food from abroad, the rural agricultural sector had declined in importance (Messiant 2008:96). Higher oil prices yielded more import goods, while lower oil prices led to shortages. As pointed out by Birmingham, export prices of oil affected both the formal and informal parallel economy as prices on the informal market, whether in real currency or pseudo-currency, “shadowed the international price of oil accurately and speedily” (Birmingham 2002:158).

The socialist economic system provided Angolan’s with four types of *lojas* [stores]: the people’s store [*loja do povo*] for the working class, the lower-end of the petty bourgeoisie, and the urban poor; the store for “*responsaveis*”, the middle-level salaried employees; the store for employees of higher-level state and bureaucratic positions; and, finally, the store for those who belonged to the highest levels of the state and party (Baghavan 1986:21). A system of ID-cards [*cartas*] and coupons (Birmingham 2002:158) defined which stores one would have access to, a categorization of Angolan citizenship that in principle is based on unjust exclusion rather than equality. Although the prices were the same in all the stores despite its different categories, purchasing power in the higher level stores were two to three times higher than in the lowest level people’s stores (Baghavan 1986:21). Alongside these four types of people’s stores were also the

loja de cooperantes for foreign workers paid in the local currency, suffering like the other lojas from shortages in stock (Baghavan 1986:21) and the *lojas francas*, where expats could shop for foreign currency; well stocked shops compared to its Angolan counterparts and inaccessible for the common Angolan.

When available, commonly found merchandise on the shelves of the people's stores included rice, beans, sugar, soap (blue and pink in colour with an overpowering odour), cooking oil, canned sardines from Portugal, cigarettes, alcohol, Coca Cola cans, and canned beans. However, as mentioned above, the lojas frequently suffered from shortages in goods and selection of merchandise. Oftentimes, the shops were almost empty of people as well as goods, at other times, people had to queue up outside and wait for a chance to get in and shop.³¹ Merchandise in the stores was rationed with a limit on how much one could buy of each available product each time. Before Christmas the stores usually stocked up and the selection increased, including, for example, chicken meat (Margrét Einarsdóttir, personal communication).

My mother worked for the Angolan State in the mid-1980s and through her work got access to the state run *lojas dos cooperantes* with her *carta de cooperantes* (an ID confirming that she was a *cooperante*, i.e. a foreign state

³¹ This could be an arduous task especially in the burning sun. The pregnant wife of a close family friend, suffering from high blood pressure, dropped down dead in the late 1980s, while waiting in such a line during the shopping frenzy that occurred before Christmas.

employee) and salary paid in Kwanzas. When the subject comes up in conversation she reminisces about how her monthly state salary could, at the time, secure her various products in the official people's store (which in her memory was more often empty of stock than not) but only one bucket of tomatoes on the informal market (Margrét Einarsdóttir, personal communication). This serves to demonstrate the huge price discrepancy between the formal and informal markets. A paradox, as one would normally assume that the informal sector, without official overheads and costs, would be able to provide lower prices than the formal sector. However, the heavy state subsidies of merchandize sold in the government run shops in combination with a severe lack of merchandize "outside" the exclusive and limited formal economy led to the paradoxical market dynamics at the time.

Official state wages were low, and the national currency did not have much purchasing power on the informal parallel market. However, the State's policy of price fixing with little reflection of the goods' real value, a form of state subsidization, ensured access to goods for low income state employees in the *lojas do povo*. This State subsidization of goods on the formal market had a secondary effect, as the huge gap in prices between the formal market (*lojas do povo*) and the unregulated informal parallel market further fuelled the expansion of the latter. The high non-fixed prices of the unregulated informal market

reflected the capitalist play of supply and demand, since demand was high and supply low during the first decades of Angolan independence. Those formally employed with access to the people's stores could resell or exchange the merchandise on the informal market, making a profit because of the steep difference in prices, which as Baghavan (1986:22) noted in 1986, could range from 30 to 100 times higher on the parallel market compared to the government controlled people's stores. Dos Santos provides us with an example of this process in 1987:

[A] worker earning Kz 10 000 per month (minimum official wage is Kz 6000 per month) could buy, at the official price, four cartons of cigarettes per week for which he or she would pay Kz 800 (4x200). A worker could sell the same cigarettes in the second market [informal market] for Kz 40 000 (4 x 10 000) (Dos Santos 1990:165).

Thus, the factory worker earns almost four times his official State salary by re-selling the four cartons of cigarettes on the informal market. The most obvious equivalent of such a price gap between products on the formal market in comparison to the informal market is today found at the country's gasoline pumps (and as will be explained in the following chapter in the city's informal water economy vs. the limited public water system). The low state-fixed prices of gasoline and diesel at the pump versus the price on the candonga market has led people to queue for long times to buy large quantities of gasoline and diesel,

only to resell it in peri-urban neighbourhoods for a profit. The informal market prices that are based on “supply and demand” are much higher, and in turn make the *compra e venda* [buying and selling] of gasoline and diesel a profitable candonga business. This is especially true in the musseques, further away from the city center where State supply of petrol is low and demand is high because of the non-existence of, or irregularity of, official electric supply that results in reliance on generators for electricity. This creates the rather ironic situation in which one of the continent’s largest producers of oil runs dry at the pump, a situation that occurred more often than not during my fieldwork. Furthermore, when petrol is available at the gas stations, huge line-ups occur, which further leads to petrol hoarding. Another reason for this is that although 95% of Angola’s export revenues and 75% of government revenue come from oil extraction, Angola exports crude oil and does not produce enough refined oil to meet internal demand and is therefore dependent on fuel importation (Adolfo 2012:2).

3.6 The Failure and Demise of the Socialist Economic System

Although people could sometimes get access to the *lojas do povo* through officially employed family members, the general exclusion of the majority of the population who were not officially employed, as well as the non-sustainability of the socialist economic model and its lack of capacity for providing the population

with opportunities and solutions to satisfying basic needs for survival, made the development of an informal parallel market unavoidable. Furthermore, in the 1980s, official State employers were notorious for not paying salaries on time, or even paying salaries at all. This further encouraged *candonga* activities. Laura, a ministry employee in the 1980s, recalled that she would frequently not get paid by her employer (the State). To make ends meet, she would sell water in plastic bags on the streets of Luanda to thirsty passers-by. Her education and official employment for the State therefore became secondary to the informal *candonga* activities, which provided a livelihood for her and her family members.

Laura's experience is one example of what can be described as the "hollowing out" of the state (Clapham 1996) which according to Ferguson (2006:39) has inevitably led to an explosion in corruption and parallel businesses, leaving the formal institutions of the government little more than empty shells (see also Reno 1999). In Angola this is well reflected in absenteeism of official state employees (see e.g. Dos Santos 1990:162; Hodges 2004:79), who spend more time on their private informal business opportunities and networks than their formal work, and in the tradition of paying a "gasosa" for access to (or to escape from) the official bureaucracy of the state, which in principle is supposed to be free of charge or at least inexpensive. As is shown below and in chapter 5 on the informal land market in Luanda, the official

bureaucracy turns out to be not so official when it is put to the test by the State apparatus itself. This is in essence one representation of the infiltration of the informal economy into the state bureaucracy (Hann and Hart 2011:116) and what Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou (1999) have termed the “criminalization of the State”³², when corruption and criminal practices become routinized within political and governmental institutions and circuits (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999:16; see also Ferguson 2006:39).

Dos Santos (1990) describes how Angolans in the 1980s would use *esquemas* [informal social networks] as a survival strategy to gain access to essential products and services and solve economic problems. Esquemas helped people get around the everyday difficulties of providing basic needs such as food, clothes, housing and transportation. Membership in these social networks or esquemas not only provided people with access to products and services, but also offered avenues to share and barter. These social networks, which helped the population to solve economic problems and obtain what it needed to survive, fitted well with a vision of socialism that in Angola was called *socialismo esquematico* (Dos Santos 1990:161). However, combined with the

³² As Ferguson (2006:39) has pointed out, such a new political order has meant “less order, less peace, and less security.”

informal parallel market, the yields of belonging to such social networks could lead to lucrative informal business partnerships and relative private enrichment.

Angolan author Pepetela, refers to such esquemas (or social networking for economic gain) in the early 1980s in his book *O Cão e os Calunandas* (2006[1985]:75-76). In his story, one such esquema has to be kept clandestine so that the family father's friend, an official who will arrange a truck to transport the protagonists' agricultural produce to the market, will not go to jail (for cronyism and corruption in office for private gain, one is led to believe). Later in Pepetela's story, the family matriarch has left the *kitanda* [informal marketplace] and opened a shop [*loja*] in Luanda, selling fruits and vegetables from their family farm. When warned that she should be careful, as she was selling her produce at a price higher than legal prices, she replied: "Don't worry, the market regulators [*os fiscais*] (officials and police regulating the market) are in the esquema" (Pepetela 2006[1985]:137). Such social networking is still today a vital part of operating a successful business (informally or formally), in all layers of society, and thus an integral part of the Angolan economic system and the candonga culture.

An example that demonstrates one function of such social networks during my fieldwork in 2009-2010 could be seen in how providing someone with work through one's connections (a form of cronyism) had, in certain circles, become

somewhat of an informal business model, as the receiver of an official post would have to repay the favour by giving a few months of his or her salary to his or her benefactor. This is but one example (others can be found throughout this chapter) of the importance and functions of social networks, and their potential for informal (and formal) income generation. Furthermore, it is an example of the embodiment of power in Angolan society today, demonstrating how power is entrenched in one's social, economic, and political connections, especially one's connection to the ruling MPLA party.

Baghavan (1986:22) has pointed out that by the mid-1980s the national currency, the Kwanza, had lost all its value and become, as he puts it, "mythical." That is, it had no nominal value outside the state-run *lojas* with its low availability, and restricted amounts of goods for purchase per customer, while on the parallel informal market people preferred bartering rather than using the "mythical" kwanza. As pointed out by Birmingham (2002:158), at a certain point in time coupons became the medium of exchange in the state-run people's stores and instead of the kwanza, a six pack of lager became a pseudo currency and a physical measure of exchange and value. These economic developments led to the parallelization of the official economy as is evidenced in the growth of the informal or candonga economy at the time, as well as the "dollarization" of the

economy in the late 1980s when U.S. dollars became the preferred currency instead of the value ridden national currency. This dollarization of the economy has continued to this day, which can be interpreted as mistrust in the local currency, economy and the Angolan State.

As can be seen from the above, multiple reasons rendered the official economy secondary to the parallel informal economy as a revenue provider in the mid-1980s. However, although riddled with absenteeism because of these developments, the official economy remained (to a certain extent) important to its employees. It not only provided access to the *lojas do povo*, but also provided access to social connections with people who could assist with the chronic struggle to sustain basic needs. Thus, the combination of formal and informal income and the multiplication of official wages through 'round-tripping' (or *arbitrage*) between markets and indulging in one of the essences of *candonga* business, the *compra e venda*, became the norm rather than a rarity and the informal market, or *candonga*, became for the common Angolan an equally, if not more, important source of income than the formal market. In 1990, Dos Santos wrote that "unofficial activities are so important that the population devotes at least one third of its productive time to them on an everyday basis" (1990:162; the same argument has been put forth by Tvedten 1997:78). During the 1990s the informal economy mushroomed, becoming the primary source of employment

for the urban inhabitant (Hodges 2004:31), almost a decade later, in 1998, it was estimated that 90% of the Angolan economy had become informal (Nordstrom 2004:226), and today, although no reliable data is available (BTI 2014:20), it has been estimated that the informal sector accounts for two thirds of Angola's urban and peri-urban economic activity (Redvers 2014).

3.7 The Informal Parallel Market as an Avenue for Corruption, Kleptocracy and Cronyism

The late Christine Messiant (2008:97) has described how the social and political changes of the mid-1980s and the new "liberalism" that generated the rise of the informal parallel market enabled the political elite [*nomenklatura*] to take massive advantage of their position and invest in the illegal informal market, producing colossal returns. She has called this a system of "one-party clientelism" and "savage socialism" which led to the dollarization of the economy and the sanctioning of illegal practices, yet another appellation for the above mentioned "criminalization of the state" (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999).

Sogge (2011a) has asserted that, while the poor buy and re-sell imported merchandise on the informal market, it is members of the politically connected elite that possess control over the lucrative import monopolies. Thus, members of the politically well-connected elite control the supply of goods in the informal

market, where the common population does the groundwork, which involves buying and re-selling imported goods, as well as dealing with the fiscal or economic police and other “shakedown artists” through bribes or “gasosa”. Hodges (2004:46) has similarly written about the politically connected elite’s control over the profitable import businesses providing merchandize for a starved Angolan market. He describes a business environment of informal economics where those with the right connections can acquire business privileges such as de facto import monopolies of certain goods by denying import licenses and business permits to rivals. Furthermore, the employment of the economic police against rival businesses to thwart their efforts to enter the market occurs, using the complicated and slow bureaucracy inherited from the socialist economic model to do so (Hodges 2004:46). Thus, to be successful in business in Angola, one needs more than mere business skills, but connections to well-placed members of the political and economic elite in order to protect one’s business. Foreign companies and businesses have caught up on this and thus their strategy of success often includes adding well-placed individuals as shareholders, “advisers” or business partners (Hodges 2004:46). This was confirmed to me during my research by staff members of INADEC (Angola’s National Institute of Consumer Protection) and other fiscalization institutions that were

powerless in their work against businesses in blatant violations against regulations and laws, due to such political protection (see chapter 7).

The arbitrary price controls of goods on the official market, explained above, were not the only cause of arbitrage between formal and informal markets. The official foreign exchange rates set by the administration became one of the principal mechanisms for private enrichment by the political elite (Hodges 2004:131). Artificial exchange rates, well below market values, favoured the *nomenklatura* and its clients (Messiant 2008:96-97) and exposed a fairly easy way to “multiply” money due to the wide gap between the official and parallel market exchange rates (Hodges 2004:131). Those with privileged access would exchange Angolan Kwanzas at the central bank for undervalued US dollars, which were then re-exchanged for an even greater amount of Kwanzas in the informal market. Those Kwanzas could then be further re-exchanged for dollars at the administratively fixed, artificial rate at the bank, and so the loop would go on and on with a snowballing effect on the initial amount.

Nicholas Shaxson (2007:52) has described quite lucidly how this transpired, emphasizing that the key to accomplish this was to have the connections to be allowed to use the official, and subsidized, exchange rates:

By early 1994 the *kinguilas*³³ [A Kimbundu term and local vernacular for those involved in the illegal/informal exchange of currency in Luanda (Lopes 2006)] were offering 120,000 Kwanzas per dollar, 20 times the official rate of 6,000. A powerful official could then change \$1,000 on the street, and get 120 million Kwanzas in a shoulder bag from the *kinguilas*. With the right connections, he or she could then go to the central bank and ask for the official rate, at 6,000 to the dollar, yielding \$20,000 of what was, in effect, free oil money from the bank. This was normally not taken in cash; instead the central bank would pay it to a foreign supplier, who would deliver \$20,000 worth of goods. The happy official would collect these from the port and sell the goods in the market, with another mark-up, and repeat the cycle (Shaxson 2007:52).

As Barry Munslow, who also describes this process of criminal arbitrage and self-enrichment of the politically connected elite, put it: “and so the license to make money was complete, but only for the few” (1999:563). This particular privilege practically secured exponential growth of the political elite’s money. According to Hodges (2004:131), the scope of such arbitrage was enormous until 1999, and was one way of transferring State resources, mainly in oil, to individual beneficiaries (see also Messiant 2008:96-97). The average exchange ratio

³³ In the Kimbundo language Kinguila refers to “the one who waits.” An expression that entered the Luandan jargon in the late 80s when groups of women involved in exchanging US dollars for Kwanzas and vice versa began appearing on street corners, in the shades of city buildings, or by informal marketplaces. To this day they still indicate their trade to passersby with their characteristic “psssst” sound to draw attention while simultaneously rubbing their thumb and forefinger together, as if they were holding cash in their hand (Lopes 2006:169).

between the parallel and official exchange rate in 1991-1998 was 2.9 to one (Hodges 2004:131). One can only imagine the amounts of petrodollars that were extracted from the official economy through this practice.

These economic distortions, presented in the subsidies and official exchange rates, looked like schemes of legalized theft but were officially justified as a way to provide the population with cheap food (Shaxson 2007:53). However, in reality those who benefitted from the subsidies were not the poor masses, in the form of cheaper food, but rather, the small number of politically connected individuals and the big importers “who wielded petty regulations against potential competitors, and so kept the prices high” (Shaxson 2007:53). With the Luandan war economy largely dependent on import goods, these import monopolies became immensely lucrative. As explained in the words of Christine Messiant, after 1985 the country turned to “‘savage socialism’, combining the dictatorship of the single party, the ‘dollarization’ of the economy -in effect, the sanctioning of illegal practices- and the transition to a political economy of clientelism” (2008:97). This involved the State sanctioning the takeover by its agents of the informal market, and “giving cover to the elite’s appropriation of the proceeds of the fraud made possible by the liberalization of the economy” (Messiant 2008:97). Thus, the nomenklatura took advantage of their position by investing in the parallel market, generating colossal returns for themselves while the

population suffered greater poverty (Messiant 2008:97). In effect these developments were to the benefit of the parallel informal market as elite interests in the parallel economy grew and, simultaneously, the suppression of the illegal activities of the candongeiros or black marketeers were slackened (Messiant 2008:98), and thus the informal economy continued to grow exponentially. Although issues of corruption are touched upon in this chapter, the subject of everyday corruption in contemporary Angola is further scrutinized in chapter 7 which is dedicated to the subject.

3.8 The Blurring of Boundaries: The Elasticity of the Formal/Informal Boundaries in Contemporary Angolan Society

In contemporary Angola the informal candonga sector has become ubiquitous, permeating all layers of society. The informal sector is composed of a variety of people from all walks of Angolan society: the lady who sells freshly baked bread buns on the streets to passers-by; the roadside restaurant serving lunch and drinks to the nation's informal and formal workforce; the well-connected businessman/woman importing consumer goods from abroad into the informal economy; the public servant using his/her formal official position as an avenue for informal business ventures, or collecting "gasosa" bribes for public services rendered (or not rendered) to supplement his/her formal salary; as well as the

bandido [criminal or street thug] who sells illegal drugs or stolen merchandise.

The informal sector is in itself a vast grey area which includes honest hard-working merchants and their customers, as well as corrupt officials and criminals.

The formal sector can also accommodate informal and illegal activities, as is fairly evident in Angola, where corrupt officials have a history of prioritizing projects which will bring personal profit for them, and businessmen and women keep their formal businesses legal through bribes or strategic social relations to those “who can in any way be of assistance” with loopholes in the frustrating bureaucratic system. As has already been thoroughly emphasized, the informal or the *candonga* way of getting things done has a wide reach in Angolan society, and the fine line between formal and informal ways of doing things is difficult, and in many cases impossible, to pinpoint.

In her work on Post-Socialist Romania, Katheryine Verdery (1996) uses the conceptualization of elasticity, arguing that “socialism engendered a landscape with elastic qualities” (Verdery 1996:134). Similarly I came to the realization that the boundaries between what constitutes informal and formal categories in contemporary Angola are non-fixed and elastic. However, unlike Verdery, who uses the concept in a quite different context, I do not use the concept physically (as pertaining to, for example, the elastic qualities of land and its boundaries) but figuratively to refer to the often-imperceptible divide between

what constitutes formal or informal activities or categories in contemporary Angola. Thus, the boundaries between the formal and informal are not fixed but elastic (for example when it comes to state-bureaucracy); they are flexible and can be stretched into either side of the formal/informal spectrum depending on the social, political or economic situation one finds oneself in.³⁴ Sometimes it is a premeditated manipulation to achieve the impact of making something “look” formal, real, or official or have a formal effect yet through informal means; sometimes the borders are unconsciously stretched by both formal and informal stakeholders or interests; and frequently the elasticity of the borders are unquestioned, that is, it is part of the everyday reality of the Luandan citizen who takes consciously or unconsciously part, and thus it is neither questioned nor condemned by official or informal parties.

The elastic qualities of the boundaries between formal and informal activities, economies, sectors and cultures in contemporary Angola renders the concept quite descriptive of the blurred boundaries, or hybridity of formal/informal and state/society categories in Angola. Thus, informal and formal categorizations are used and useful to a certain extent (as is best evidenced in public political or

³⁴ If we imagine a bar that reaches from left to right, half of it symbolizes the informal (the left side) and the other half the formal (the right side). The division between the two halves is fixed, but if we replace the original fixed divide with an elastic rubber band, the boundary between the two categories can easily be manipulated by pulling on it and stretching it to either the right or the left.

economic discourses), yet often they are insufficient³⁵ due to the elastic nature of the boundaries between them and their blurredness, rendering it difficult to distinguish one category from the other. This raises questions such as Gupta's (1995:375), in his work on the blurred boundaries between the state and civil society (a subject we will return to in chapter 6), on whether the ubiquity of a phenomenon (in Gupta's article the state, in this chapter informality) can make it invisible? Or is this an analytical problem, a question of faulty research methodology, when it becomes difficult to coherently explain something as ethnographers, that is present and "in our faces" on a daily basis, yet continues to be elusive?

These elastic and blurred interfaces between the formal and informal, the official and unofficial, and even legal and illegal is something I had to deal with during my fieldwork. To be able to conduct my fieldwork efficiently and navigate through Luanda's logistical difficulties, I bought a car. I went through the tedious process of registering my vehicle, and a police officer handed me all the required documents. It is important to have one's car documents valid at all times in Angola, because one runs the risk of being stopped by the traffic police on a daily basis, to check them. As Riles (2006) has reminded us, "the document" has

³⁵ This becomes obvious when trying to deconstruct these categories and the way they are perceived and used in Luandan everyday life and transactions, whether monetary, social or otherwise.

become one of the fetishes of the modern economic era (cited in Guyer 2004:159). Not possessing valid documents may result in hefty fines, even the confiscation of one's vehicle, but in most cases police officers provide an opportunity for paying "a gasosa" [bribe] which, rather than being the unconventional way of dealing with the traffic police, has become more conventional than any other option. The documents I received looked impeccable and were, in fact, the same documents anyone who registers a vehicle officially receives, and they seemed valid when I was stopped by the traffic police. However, when I later sold the car as I was leaving the field, it turned out that the documents were false, which became a problem for the new owner when she wanted to register the car in her name. Thus, I had in my hand my registration papers, which everyone considered valid, but in the car registration system, there was apparently no entry or no file for the car, even though this registration card had gotten me all the necessary documents needed for the car, including a car insurance which became mandatory in Angola during my fieldwork. Thus, the documents I received through formal channels, the police, looking exactly like they should, issued and stamped by the right official bureaus, turned out to be false and thus, non-official.

This anecdote describes quite well the blurred boundaries between the formal and informal in contemporary Angola and how informality has come to

permeate state institutions and bureaucracy. As will be seen in chapter 5, on the Luandan informal land market and tenure system this is the same situation victims of demolished houses and forced evictions find themselves in. That is, their seemingly valid tenure documents are deemed false, even when issued by official authorities. Whether this apparent fraud was committed by the police, the registration office, or somewhere else in the process is hard to say and perhaps not important. However, this experience elucidates the vague boundaries between the formal and informal sector in Angola as well as the seemingly inconsistent interpretation of these boundaries. This also leads to a false sense of security or, as is explained in chapter 5 on land tenure insecurities, distrust in the rights one usually allocates to an “official” record or title and a sense of powerlessness when dealing with the State. It is connected to what I refer to as “virtual realities” (see chapter 5), in which perception, that is, what things “look” and “feel” like rather than what they “really” are, becomes all that matters in an environment where it is difficult to gauge what really is formal or informal, official or non-official, what is the bureaucratic “truth” and what is false, due to the sharp disconnect between evidence (perception) and “reality.”

I had the fortune of being affiliated with a research institution that helped me with all my bureaucratic necessities, such as receiving necessary visas. However, a large portion of immigrants, foreign workers, and returning Angolans

from abroad after the end of the war, and the Angolan population in general, did not enjoy such privileges. With the complexities of the bureaucracy and the long lineups in front of all official offices, securing an official document or stamp indeed becomes a tedious task. Even getting the information about how to proceed is difficult. This has led to a *candonga* system of getting official documents in which informal practices are performed routinely by formal/official entities.

The formal bureaucratic system has become so blatantly informal that outside its offices groups of young men with connection to the officials inside offer giant leaps over the system's bureaucratic hurdles for a "moderate" price. Strategic social connections between the men outside who provide the customers, and the state employees inside, who provide official documents or stamps, offer mutually beneficial avenues towards personal enrichment. Thus, those officially employed inside boost their official salary through informal means, on the side, via their official posts and the informally employed men outside earn a living. This was so widespread that any kind of official documents, from licences, visas, to criminal records could be acquired, or rather, purchased, in this way. In a sense the informal economy has infiltrated and taken over the state-made bureaucracy (see Hann and Hart 2011:116 for their argument on how neoliberal globalization has invigorated the informal economy). When I asked the

young men providing such services: “How are you able to do this? How is this possible?” The looks and the answers that followed were frequently: “No, you don’t understand, the lady who provides the document is my relative”, or, as was common, sister in-law [*cunhada*]. Such bypassing of state institutions and, on a larger political scale, the siphoning off of their resources for personal gain and neo-patrimonial networking, weakens these official institutions. This is yet another example of the aforementioned “hollowing out of the state” (Clapham 1996) where the state becomes a deception or as Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou have put it: “no more than a décor of *trompe-l’oeil*” (1999:19; see also Reno 2003:90).

What I have attempted to describe here is Angola’s contemporary version of what Bayart refers to as *la politique de ventre* [the politics of the belly] (Bayart 2009). The Cameroonian expression referring to a proverb in which “the goat grazes wherever it is tied”; a metaphor for the accumulation of wealth through political power, and, as Bayart points out, through the symbolic reference to family lineage and witchcraft, and a physical corpulence believed to be appropriate for big men and women (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999:8). It may seem like a dysfunctional state, if one were to compare it to the ideal of the Weberian state, but nevertheless quite “functional” in the Angolan context despite its “inefficiencies.” Thus, to use Chabal’s and Daloz’ (1999) terminology: Africa [more specifically Angola] Works; although its economic and political structures

might seem “irrational” to western analysts as the state fails to conform to the Weberian template, yet its effects are derived by other means and through other dynamics (Chabal and Daloz 1999:9).

As pointed out by Meagher and Lindell, such processes of *bricolage* and hybridity between formal and informal sectors has been part of Africa’s development for a long time, especially in the context of the continent’s “history of concession economies, indirect rule, post-colonial engagements in state-building, and intense experiences of neo-colonialism” (Meagher and Lindell 2013:72) and, for example, structural adjustment programmes’ destructive effects on what was once a social contract between African states and society (see Meagher and Lindell 2013:59). One of the consequences of this is the ensuing blurredness of the parameters between informal and formal practices and documentation, as well as corruption, which contributes to the country’s reputation of being one of the most difficult places to do (formal) business in the world. Transparency international’s 2011 Corruption Perception Index ranks Angola 168th out of 183 countries, with corruption as the main obstacle to doing business (Adolfo 2012:3; see also Transparency International 2011).

3.9 Formalizing the Informal or Moving “the Problem” Around

When I complained about cases of petty corruption, such as the police checks, which can only be described as harassment and sometimes even extortion, people, in general, shared my frustration. However, many also added, in the police’s defense, that this was a necessary part of their work: “Pétur, if you only knew how much their salaries pay. They also have families; they also have to put food on the table.” Thus, petty corruption was dismissed as a necessary evil, as a natural way of getting by in a world of difficult circumstances.³⁶ This opinion was generally extended to other grey/informal areas of the official state system.

There is a special police force in charge of regulating the informal market, called the *polícia fiscal* [the fiscal or economic police], whose methods include fines, intimidation and even violence when dealing with small-scale informal entrepreneurs. It is a division of the Angolan National Police [*Polícia Nacional de Angola*], charged officially with the task of “controlling people and merchandize, the prevention, investigation and obstruction of customs infractions, as well as

³⁶ The frequent police stops have psychological effects. At least in my own personal experience it could cause both anxiety and anger. The sight of a traffic police officer would often send a chill down my spine. This kind of “harassment” was so intrusive that when my wife and I returned from fieldwork, on a stopover in London, England, she physically cringed and slid down in her taxi seat when she saw a police officer as we passed him by in a taxi. We both noticed her doing this much to our amusement. We laughed about it and felt a little silly, “of course,” the London police would leave us alone.

guaranteeing public order in the areas of tariffs and taxation” (Angop 2011). Its mandate is thus to attempt to achieve what Guyer describes as the substitution of “the systemic order of the market for the systemic order of the state” (2004:157). The Fiscal Police is, as Birmingham has described, an intrusive agency: “making urban survival more difficult, more dangerous, more needful of ingenuity” (2006:166).

When the fiscal police try to stop informal merchants through intimidation, fines, beatings and even robbery, they are not really fixing anything; they are just moving their perceived problem around. A conceptualization for “problem solving” under the influence of Harvey (2011; 2006) and Engels (1995[1872]) who claimed that the bourgeoisie solve problems by moving people around; that is, the problems are not solved but merely shifted elsewhere. The bureaucracy to formalize one’s small business is complex, time consuming and, in most cases where it exists, too slow and expensive to be an option, especially for small scale informal entrepreneurs. In some cases, informal merchants do not know of or understand the process. Furthermore, as is widespread knowledge in Angola, the women and men of the parallel informal market do not have another “formal” employment opportunity waiting for them around the corner. They will be back to selling what they need to survive in Luanda’s capitalist *candonga* economy. As has often been pointed out to me by Angolan friends and research informants,

the acts of the fiscal police are incredibly ironic, shortsighted and unsustainable, when one considers that most of the policemen and women who do this work, often by means of violence, have themselves family members, wives, daughters, sisters, working at an informal marketplace somewhere else in town. These same police officers also often rely on the informal market themselves for their groceries and other necessities.

Furthermore, the small formal sector mainly hires educated people or people with the right connections. The formal sector is also so small compared to the informal sector that it would hardly be able to hire more than a tiny percentage of the Angolan working population. Formal employment for the non-trained in large scale infrastructure developments, such as the building of roads, bridges, housing projects and skyscrapers in central Luanda, are typically offered to foreign contractors, Chinese, Brazilian or Portuguese companies who bring with them construction workers from abroad. Thus, the formal employment opportunities opened up by the termination of the civil war and the post-conflict reconstruction that followed are increasingly offered to an immigrating foreign workforce. This has (as explained in the introduction) led to an influx of immigrants taking the so-called “formal” jobs from local Angolan’s, causing frustration and criticism among the Angolan population and leading to the

continuing strength and importance of the informal economy in contemporary Angolan society.

Attempts on the behalf of the police to intervene with informal economic practices are not new. In 1996 Bob van der Vinden et al. described in *A Family of the Musseque: Survival and Development in Post War Angola* how the biggest threat to the merchants of Roque Santeiro was the police: “the regular police, the traffic police, market inspectors and economic police - all of them are known to confiscate goods arbitrarily from vendors and customers” (1996:16). Tvedten has described how in the early 1980s goods were frequently confiscated and informal market vendors were jailed and it even occurred that the army stormed openair market places which resulted in the deaths of civilians (1997:78). During my childhood in the 1980s, there were police operations meant to combat corruption and theft where the police would go from house to house seizing all objects that could not be accounted for with receipts. Obviously, few had receipts for their possessions, which led to the confiscation of people’s belongings, which in our relatively poor neighbourhood were mainly battery-powered radios. Once taken, it turned out that it was very difficult to get one’s belongings back. Thus, official operations to combat corruption and theft involved corruption and theft. Being a PhD student with research grants, in need of receipts to account for my expenditure everywhere I went, I learned the hard way that even more than two

decades after the aforementioned police operations, receipts are still hard to come by in Angola. This is especially true when buying things on the informal market, but applies even when dealing with official state-run enterprises such as petrol stations.

As Gupta (1995:394) has shown, the discourse of corruption helps construct the state, similarly discourses on informal and formal sector activities and economies help construct the Angolan state, as it is the formal sector which supposedly follows state regulation and is state sanctioned while the informal is not. Roitman (2005) has argued that economic concepts and institutions are not simply instrumental regulatory interventions for obtaining or assuring power, but, rather, they are a very material form of power itself. That is, as she explains, they are “political technologies that serve to constitute ‘that which is to be governed’... a field of regulatory intervention based on a set of presuppositions about the nature of economic life and economic objects” (Roitman 2005:3). Similarly, Roy (2005:149) has pointed out that it is the state, with its legal and planning apparatus, which decides what is formal and what is informal, and thus, what is legal and illegal. Furthermore, it is the state that decides what forms of informalities are acceptable and allowed to survive (Roy 2005:149).

With Roitman’s (2005) and Roy’s (2005) arguments in mind it becomes particularly ironic when one realizes that the same people who are supposed to

uphold law and order dabble in the same kind of informalities and illegalities themselves, that is, the misuse of power and corruption. Furthermore, through the power of their positions they become exempt from laws and regulations, using them to their personal advantage on the formal and informal markets, for example through exclusive links to the state bureaucracy and/or by employing the fiscal police against rivals and competitors on the “de”-regulated informal market (see Hodges 2004:46). This is in effect a process of informalization of the formal and formalization of the informal; distorting the boundaries between the two even further, rendering them flexible and elastic, and leading to the hybridization of the formal and informal categories, as well as the state and society.

3.10 Conclusion

Although it is difficult to deny the ingenuity, entrepreneurial skills and resistance to the status quo of the Angolan population under extremely difficult circumstances during the war and the centralized socialist economy, the recent history of Angola’s candonga economy is not a history of an “invisible revolution” (De Soto 1989), or of unregulated “free market” heroism (De Soto 2000) performed at a level playing field. As this chapter has indicated, it is first and foremost a history of survival strategies: a response to poverty, inequality and

exploitation, a system of social reproduction in which the majority can survive and a minority becomes wealthier (Morice 1985:110; as cited in Dos Santos 1990:163). Furthermore, “informal” business ventures, and the custom of doing “things”, or acquiring “things”, through informal means, have become a Luandan cultural institution of vital socio-economic importance to the city’s inhabitants, with roots that can be traced back to the colonial city’s foundational period (see for example Santos 2011).

Guyer (2004) has suggested that the two economies, the one regulated through formal rules and the second regulated through popular conventions, should not be seen as a dichotomy but as a single configuration. In Angola the formal/informal dichotomy is, as Santos (2011) has pointed out, both subtle and inconsistent, with established formal businesses even using informal mobile vendors (street vendors/hawkers) as a business strategy. Furthermore, the established formal businesses share the space, the clients and the suppliers in Luanda (Santos 2011), rendering the categorical chasm between formality and informality inconsistent.

Roy, in her writing on urban informality, goes beyond viewing urban informality through the dichotomy of informal and formal sectors by viewing it rather as a “*mode* of urbanization” (emphasis in original) and “a series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another” (Roy

2005:148). Through such a conceptualization informality stops being a “sector” and becomes a “mode” of urbanization (Roy 2005:148). Examples from this chapter suggest how this is applicable to contemporary Luanda where the boundaries between what is formal and what is informal have become increasingly blurred, for as has been thoroughly reiterated in this chapter, informal, illegal and corrupt activities have become an almost expected element of the formal/official sector in Angola and boosting formal wages with *candonga*, or petty corruption such as *gasosa* bribes, on the side, is a strategic way of increasing one’s livelihood. The case study in chapter 5 gives an empirical example of how this plays out in Luanda, when the amalgamation of the two sectors can literally be found in the documents of land ownership and occupation which are considered informal by authorities yet are in many cases stamped and notarized by formal authorities, and considered formal and valid by their owners.

Candonga has a far wider reach than conventional market economics, it includes social relations, it is a cultural phenomenon that runs deep within Angolan cultural norms and it is not something that can be done away with or “formalized” overnight. When a phenomenon like *candonga* becomes culture, it affects not only economics but also the political and socio-cultural processes that permeate all levels of society. That is, it affects not only the majority who rely on the informal sector for survival, but also the top tier politically connected elite, as

well as the state bureaucracy the role of which is, among others, to regulate the informal *candonga* sector. The lack of an alternative to the services provided by the informal “sector” is another, and perhaps the most obvious, reason for its scope, importance and success. As pointed out above, and by Santos (2011), the informal sector is a vivid reminder of the State’s incapability to offer equality in education, and equal access to the official/formal job market, to its citizens. “What are the ‘unemployed’ supposed to do when they leave their informal employment? They still have to eat,” a comment I frequently heard during field research. Even if there were an economic alternative for the masses, a grand “formalizing” solution, *candonga* and doing things informally, on the side, is so intertwined with Angolan culture and society that it is almost impossible to imagine.

Unleashing the fiscal police on the informal economy and thus simultaneously on the common Angolan who provides for him-/herself through it, the State is indulging in its own fantasy of a modernizing State, by using the “stick” instead of the “carrot” to force “formalization” or rather, disperse or set informal merchants back, while the process of formalization is out of reach. The formalization of the informal in Angola can therefore not be anything other than a show, a theater portraying a modernizing and formalizing post-conflict State through means of violence. The mistreatment, extortion, arrests and

incarcerations of informal street traders (who often carry their young children on their backs) without impunity in Angola, by police officers and government inspectors, often in civilian clothes, has been reported and criticized by human rights groups and Angolan anti-corruption watchdogs and critics (Human Rights Watch 2013; Maka Angola 2014a; Maka Angola 2014b).

Most Angolans know that the millions of people involved in the *candonga*, the economic activities that keep the population alive, and serves as a major attraction to the capital city, can not simply stop since the formal economy has few vacancies for those informally employed. This is one example of how, in Angola, political rhetoric and reality are often at odds; indeed perception (of doing something towards fulfilling the utopian modernist vision the Angolan state, and the world in general, subscribes to) comes first while reality (what really is taking place, on the ground, in Angolan society) comes second. Furthermore, this reality seems to be conveniently misunderstood or ignored by political policy makers while the elite reap the benefits of their political connections and their monopolies of not only the formal economy and the importation of goods in an economy severely dependent on import goods, but also of political and economic power. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that social critics have started saying: “Instead of fighting poverty, they are fighting the poor” (Rapper and social critic MC K, interviewed by Praia 2013; Silva 2014).

With the influence and importance of the informal market taken into consideration, it is fairly obvious that an overnight abolition of informal market practices would grind Angolan society to a halt. Attempts at such forced social and cultural changes not only depict a disconnect between political authorities and the everyday reality of the Angolan population, but also renders arguments of an Angolan State dabbling in neo-colonial policy and governance tactics increasingly justifiable. In Angola, as elsewhere, there is dignity in work and without work, whether informal or formal, poverty and delinquency awaits. Thus, removing people's informal employment and income is also an attack on people's dignity (a shocking and disgraceful act of injustice). From a development point of view, it has been argued elsewhere that attempts to assimilate or eliminate the informal economy in Africa could be counter-productive, even devastating to the development process (Craggs 2005). Thus, as pointed out by Hann and Hart: If the aspiration is to raise living standards through 'development', "some attempts must be made to harness the co-ordinating power of bureaucracy to the self-organized energies of the people" (Hann and Hart 2011:116; see also Guha-Khasnabis, Kanbur and Ostrom 2006). Therefore, economic development policies have to include the informal space of *candonga*, not only because it is so expansive and important for a population which has few other avenues for survival in the city, but because it has become engrained in the Angolan social

spirit and cultural psyche and hence become indispensable as well as unavoidable. We now turn to the mechanisms of the informal water economy in Luanda, which serves as one example of how vital the informal sector has become in the absence of formal public service provision in Luanda's neighbourhoods.

Chapter 4. A “Pipedream”: Access to Water in Luanda’s Informal Water Economy



Figure 7: Water trucks filling up on water at a *girafa* to sell on the informal market.

<i>Kifangondo a corrente parou,</i>	In Kifangondo the current stopped,
<i>Chaffariz do cano enferrujou,</i>	The watertap has rusted,
<i>No cubico do musseque,</i>	In the house of the Musseque,
<i>Eu sei,</i>	I know,
<i>Que a torneira secou</i>	That the faucet has run dry

Água Rara, Água Rara, Água Rara, Água Rara [refrain]

Rare water, rare water, rare water, rare water

<i>Domingo fui ao Kifangondo,</i>	On Sunday I went to Kifangondo,
<i>Kifangondo não havia menha,³⁷</i>	Kifangondo didn't have any water,
<i>Eu fiz a sopa,</i>	I made a soup,
<i>Com água da mukuenha</i>	From the water of the Mukuenha ³⁸

Água Rara, Água Rara, Água Rara, Água Rara [refrain]

Rare water, rare water, rare water, rare water

<i>Sopro cano,</i>	I blow into the pipe,
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³⁷ Menha is Kimbundo for water.

³⁸ Água da mukuenha is water that is dirty as it refers to water that has been used to wash women's "private parts". However, the common usage of the term in the local vernacular, folklore, myths and witchcraft refers to a powerful magic potion, in which, for example, women can give this water to their husbands to control them through witchcraft. This would allow the women to take on a lover, control her husband's finances, and order him to cook or wash the floors of the house (household chores that are typically not men's chores in Angolan culture). Thus, água da mukuenha is dirty water which has been used to wash women's genitals but with strong magical properties. As Beto, a friend, told me when I asked him about Bonga's lyrics: "Bonga is referring to such water, because during the times that he sang this music it was difficult to get water from Kifangondo, due to the war, as UNITA controlled parts of the Kifangondo river. Thus, the men couldn't see or control what kind of water the women used to cook for their households, as the water was too cloudy, almost dirty, at the time".

<i>Água foi,</i>	The water leaves,
<i>Limpo o cano,</i>	I clean the pipe,
<i>Água vem,</i>	The water comes,
<i>Água turva tem também,</i>	There is also the cloudy ³⁹ water,
<i>Para quem não tem água para beber</i>	For those without any water to drink

Água Rara, Água Rara, Água Rara, Água Rara [refrain]

Rare water, rare water, rare water, rare water

Excerpts from Bonga's song *Água Rara* [Rare Water]

Those who drink from the Bengo River never leave.

Angolan saying.⁴⁰

4.1 Water in Luanda

On a hot and dry day, arriving at a friend's house in *Bairro dos Pescadores* with the noon sun at its highest, scorching everything in its way, I deliver a knock on a sturdy metal door and the silence that follows my "hello, is anybody home" confirms that no one is there. I wait outside the *quintal*, the small fenced off yard surrounding the house, to see if someone is around. As I am standing there I see my friend, a woman in her early thirties and her daughter of about eight years old

³⁹ Or murky or dirty water.

⁴⁰ Another version of the saying is: Those who drink from the Bengo River always return; something that became true in my case.

walk slowly towards me on the reddish sand, each with a water container on her head. Their skin glistens in the sun from the cool and refreshing water dripping from the overflowing containers as they approach me, smiling when they realize that they have a visitor. As I wait for them to arrive, a warm breeze rattles the leaves of the few remaining palm trees in the area.

After finishing with this almost daily chore shared by most households in the *musseques* the matriarch of the house sits down to catch her breath and sends a young neighbour to buy cold beer for her guest. She explains that usually her family along with two other friends' families living nearby put money together for a cistern truck to come by to fill up one of the friends' water tanks and then the three households share the water between themselves. However, she added, "we plan to build a private water tank for ourselves on the lot, it is simpler that way."

Although this area is close to Luanda's main source of water in *Kifangondo* and the water pipelines to the city, both the old and the new one, pass literally through this neighbourhood, the water situation in most of *Bairro dos Pescadores* [the fishermen's neighbourhood] in Cacuaco is difficult. Walking back and forth the 100 meters to a neighbour's tank carrying a pail full of water on one's head is hard and tiresome. It costs 30 kwanza to fill the larger container,

a tub, and 15 kwanza for the smaller pail.⁴¹ For this particular household, consisting of two adults and three young children, the labour intensive chore of providing water for the family is problematic as both adults are formally employed and the children go to a nearby primary school during the day. Thus, it is difficult to find time for this arduous but essential task.

The informal provision of water for the household as experienced by my friend on that hot dry day is an important part of daily peri-urban life in Luanda. This little anecdote reflects the reality as well as the dreams of millions of Luandans living in the *musseques*. The dream of having easy access to water and the realistic, most obvious solution to this particular problem is to have a private water tank that can be filled by either pipes connected to the city's water source or cistern trucks that sell water on the informal water market. Sadly, in the *musseques*, piped water provided by the authorities is still rarely considered an option.

Access to water is almost without exception described as one of the main problems encountered in Luanda. Thus, internationally renowned Angolan singer Bonga's lyrics (in the epigraph), in his song *Água Rara* [Rare Water], are still applicable, as they describe a struggle for water encountered in most of Luanda's

⁴¹ The exchange rate was at the time around 90 kwanza for \$1 U.S. dollar, and thus 30 Kwanza would have been around 33 cents and 15 kwanza around 16.5 cents.

neighbourhoods, especially in the peri-urban areas. The city's public water infrastructure built for a colonial city of less than half a million has not been able to keep up with Luanda's major population boom where an estimated 6 million people, 1/3 of the Angolan population, lived during my fieldwork in 2009-2010. In order to meet the needs of those without public water services, a thriving and indispensable informal water market has emerged in the city, which provides the majority of the residents with water. This chapter explores the dynamics of this informal water market. It shows how it has become the accepted source of water in Luanda's peri-urban areas where a majority of the population lives, to the extent that development projects in Luanda have adopted the structures and methodologies of the informal water market and authorities see it as a viable alternative to a public water system.

Water brought in by privately owned water trucks from the Kifangondo water pumping station in Rio Bengo⁴² has become a commodity which is sold on a competitive market to neighbours even though the Luanda water pipeline,

⁴² Rio Bengo, or the Bengo River, is and has historically been essential for the city of Luanda through its provision of water. Furthermore, the fertile lush area surrounding the river has, throughout the city's history, been vital in providing the city's inhabitants and surrounding areas with locally grown food (Lopes 2013). The Bengo area also produced food, by Luso-African owned agricultural properties, for ships departing across the Atlantic during the slave trade (see e.g. Lopes 2013; Miller 1988:251). As Lopes (2013) mentions, the Bengo area and its lushness made impressions on travelers and explorers in the past, and is mentioned in travelogues by David Livingstone, Carlos José Caldeira, Gustav Tams, and Francisco Travassos Valdez.

which serves the city's central areas, passes through some of these neighbourhoods. The price of water fluctuates based on availability in the area as well as accessibility to the areas in question. Thus, water adheres to the capitalistic free market principles of supply and demand. Consequently, a minority of the population with domestic connections to the public water network, usually the more well off living in central and more developed areas of the city, pay low fees fixed by the state for treated piped water while the rest, living in the musseques, pay a high price for untreated water pumped directly from the Bengo river. The high price of water bought on the informal market in the musseques has led the inhabitants to ration how much water they use, which is often not enough for their basic needs (Robson and Roque 2001:77).

The fact that the water is often untreated also adds to the health hazards of waterborne diseases in Luanda's urban and peri-urban areas. Water tanks filled by cistern trucks are considered an unsustainable source of water by UN Habitat, since they are neither stable nor dependable. Furthermore, the prices are high and time and effort spent on accessing water is considerable. However, the importance of the informal water market in post-conflict Luanda is undisputable as it provides the majority of Luanda's population with water and seems to be the only currently available alternative to a dysfunctional or non-existent public water system.

This chapter can be seen as portraying one representation of a shift that has occurred within the conceptual terrain surrounding the informal economy, that Meagher and Lindell (2013:61) have called attention to, where the focus has shifted from a dualist view (informal/formal) to a more institutional understanding of informal economies. That is, “where informal economies are not defined by exclusion from formal institutions, but represent alternative organizational systems” (Meagher and Lindell 2013:62) where informal institutions fill in the gaps in the social and economic provisions found in weak or downsizing states.

4.2 How the Informal Water Market Works

Angola is blessed with plentiful water resources. However, as Joaquim, an Angolan lawyer and development worker, stated shortly after I arrived in the country in 2009 to conduct my field work: “There is plenty of water in Angola, this is not the problem; the problem is access to that water.” This certainly applies to Luanda and its *musseques*; the main problem is not a lack of rivers and water sources, but rather a logistical one due to an inadequate water distribution system. Two large rivers border the province of Luanda; the Kwanza River to the south and the Bengo River to the north.

Despite this abundance of water resources only 33% of the Angolan population had access to piped water according to a 2001 study (INE 2001a; see

also Croese 2011). Statistics for Luanda from 1998 showed that 56% of the city's population had access to piped water, which included domestic connections and/or public standpipes (Hodges 2004: 29; INE 1998). However, more than a decade later, a report on the peri-urban informal water market showed that 55% of Luanda's peri-urban population procures water from a neighbour's water tank while 20% buy water directly from cistern trucks. Only 13% used standpipes as a source of household water and 12% used domestic connections that include purchases from other people's taps (Table 1; DW 2009).

Table 1: The main sources of water in peri-urban Luanda

Neighbour's tank	55%
Directly from cistern trucks	20%
Total informal water market	75%
Public standpipes	13%
Domestic connections to public water pipes	12%
Total public water sources	25%
Total	100%

Source: DW Angola (2009)

The access to the public water network is often so unreliable that investments in private water tanks are still considered worthwhile as a backup water plan for

those moments when the service of the public water system falls through. Similarly, those with the means to do so invest in generators as a backup electrical plan, even when they are connected to the public electrical grid. This is apparent in Luanda's urban landscape where, for example, each apartment in a typical high-rise building in central Luanda would have a private and separate water tank and electric generator. Furthermore, the irregular water provision to those connected to the main pipe in Luanda has made indoor flooding a common problem for the inhabitants of central Luanda's apartment buildings, due to the unsupervised gushing of water from faucets that have been left open during a break in the water service when the water pressure comes back on.



Figure 8: Generator storages and water tanks in front of apartment buildings in Luanda's Sambizanga area. Each apartment has their own generator and tank.

Thus, households that had piped water in the 1980s and early 1990s have invested in water tanks for times when water services are down. The difference between water outages during my fieldwork and in the 1980s and early 1990s is that in the past they were usually explained as derived from strategic attacks on the water pipe infrastructure by UNITA rebels, but today they are explained as a result of poor service and maintenance of the city's public water infrastructure. In tandem with these justifications rumours are persistent of how authorities are trying to "dry out" certain areas of the city, in order to have an excuse to evict people from their houses and demolish them to make room for "development" and "post-conflict reconstruction" in the form of urban renewal [*requalificação urbana*].

The informal water market operates on three levels; it starts at pumping stations such as in Kifangondo on the Bengo River (or, for example, at the Kikuxi water pumping station south-east of the city) where cistern trucks are filled up with water from the river. Then these trucks transport and distribute the water in bulk to buyers who store the water in concrete water tanks on their lots and either use it for themselves or re-sell it to neighbours for profit. Usually, both selling and household usage occurs. In the musseques, selling water has become a domestic informal business where people, who own water tanks and have the means to fill them, sell water to neighbours. Millions of people in Luanda get their

household water through the informal water market which, with its essential commodity has flourished in an urban landscape where public water infrastructure is severely lacking. A 2009 report on the informal water sector in Luanda estimated that the informal peri-urban water market in Luanda turns over more than \$250 million US dollars per year and that it provides almost 20 liters of water per person per day to almost 4 million people for an average price of 0.01 US Dollars per liter (Cain and DW, with Mulenga, 2009:21; DW 2009).

4.3 Patterns of Water Use and Access in “Paradise”

Like many other peri-urban musseques in Luanda, Paraíso [Paradise], a *musseque* located in the *Comuna* of Kicolo, Municipality of Cacuaco, has no domestic water pipes.⁴³ It is dependent on the informal water economy.

The Paraíso *bairro* was initially settled by *deslocados*, internally displaced people, refugees that left their homes for the relatively safe haven of the capital city during the civil war. In the 80's and 90's this area had few residents and was mostly uninhabited bush. Today it has an estimated population of 71,000 inhabitants. The inhabitants originate from various parts of the country and many of the older people are still more proficient in their indigenous languages than

⁴³ The vast majority at least, some have illegal connections to the public pipeline that runs through their community.

Portuguese.⁴⁴ The first *deslocado* inhabitants arrived in the area in 1998.

According to a local governing body (the *comissão de moradores*) in the bairro,⁴⁵ people were allowed to move into the area around the year 2000 and then at the end of the war in 2002 there was a major influx of people into the area. The first inhabitants claim that since construction was prohibited in the area it went under the derogatory name *Pára com isto* [Stop this!], referring to the position of the municipal government towards building houses in the area. Later, when people started to move in, the name developed into *Paraíso* [Paradise]. The current name is a *jeu de mots*, where the middle word *com* has been removed and the two remaining words are spliced into one, *Paraíso*, changing the meaning of the name to its opposite, from Stop This! to Paradise.

In a community profile, the Angolan weekly news journal O País described Paraíso as a stark contrast to the paradise described in the Bible. The journal published on September 22nd, 2009 an article on the neighborhood under the name: *Um Paraíso longe de Deus: Aqui falta tudo. Parece que o Criador se esqueceu deles* [A Paradise far from God: Here, everything is missing. It seems like the Creator forgot about them].

⁴⁴ The most common indigenous languages are Kikongo, Umbundu and Kimbundu.

⁴⁵ Chapter 6 will further explain the power dynamics and governing bodies in the peri-urban musseques.

However, in this relatively young and expanding musseque, a controversial Paradise, one can learn much about the informal water economy and access to and availability of this vital substance in the musseques. In Paraíso, like elsewhere in Luanda, it is quite obvious that the informal water economy follows competitive capitalistic free market principles where prices are controlled by supply and demand.

4.4 Water as a Commodity

As one walks the sandy paths of the musseques there are a few easily noticed indicators of who is selling water from their private water tank. When passing *quintais* [yards] where a funnel and a pail (usually wet) with a cord attached to it is sitting on top of a cement water tank neighbours and by-passers know that water is available to be sold by the bucket. It is clear from interviews with water sellers in these neighbourhoods that they also buy water from other such sellers when they run out of water themselves.

Monika, who sells water from her private tank, insisted that social relations with neighbours were important in Luanda for, as she explained, your neighbours become your family when your family is far away. A response that echoes the fact that many of the inhabitants of the musseques were uprooted during the war and ended up in the relative safety of Luanda, weaving social, economic and

safety networks between neighbours and colleagues. When one needs help with one's children, one is sick and needs medical help, doesn't have any salt or sugar, neighbours help one another out. However, Monika also insisted that when selling water from her private water tank it is "hard" (non-negotiable) business and that she doesn't give anyone any breaks when it comes to water, people have to pay upfront in cash and the price is not negotiable. If she became "soft," she wouldn't be able to afford the next cistern truck to fill her tank and she would herself be out of water. Water was therefore not as prone to be considered part of the web of reciprocity among neighbours that applies to other needs.

Prices from water tank owners to neighbours vary. As mentioned above, water prices on Luanda's peri-urban informal water market follow a supply and demand principle. In Paraíso the water varied between 25 and 50 kwanza per *banheira* [tub] but when there was little water in the bairro it could go over 100 kwanza per banheira. That is, the prices of water from private water tanks dramatically increase when availability of water is low in the neighbourhood and decrease when water is plentiful. One of the main effects on water availability in peri-urban areas is accessibility for cistern trucks to the area in question. For example, during the rainy season, the accessibility to areas like Paraíso is reduced because of the poor road conditions when rain and floods turn the roads into mud, with potholes and small puddles growing into small ponds, and tiny

brooks to rivers; this leads to shortages of potable water and higher water prices in the communities. Birmingham (2006) has for example written about one such incident when water prices increased several-fold when a bridge to enter one of the musseques collapsed due to floods and the cistern trucks had to follow a muddy path to enter the musseque instead. Thus, prices tend to fluctuate, as Birmingham points out: “Even at the best of times water from the entrepreneur who owns the truck may cost a family half of its combined income” (2006:168).

Water tank owners in these neighbourhoods generally claim that even though water is “hard” business, they are not selling water for profit, but instead, more for their own household’s water usage. The profit from selling the water is then used to refill the tank when it empties. Another reason for selling water and not consuming it all by the owner’s household is that it is also frequently believed that the water goes bad when it is left standing for a long time in the tank, therefore water tank owners opt to sell the water alongside their domestic consumption so that it is consumed faster and their household water is fresher. However, those with private water tanks with illegal connections to the public water system were also selling water from their tanks at the price of 25-30 kwanza for the *banheira*. The owners of such tanks are thus able to make considerable profit, as they do not pay for the water themselves.

During my field research there were instances of water vendors in some streets of Paraíso (not all) coming together to collectively negotiate among themselves the prices they would be selling their water for. In one such case water sellers decided to sell their water for 30 kwanza per *banheira* but one of the sellers could not cope with this price and kept on selling it for 50 kwanza, claiming this was necessary to cover the high price she was paying to fill her own tank. Such price fixing, although not a general rule, is one example of how informal water merchants try to manipulate the market forces to their advantage.

As pointed out above, distance and road conditions from the primary source of water influence the prices of cistern truck water in *bairros* such as Paraíso. A study of the informal water market in Luanda shows that prices are highest in parts of the Samba *Comuna* which are distant from both piped water and any of the *girafas* [filling stations for cistern trucks] and that water prices can increase over short distances (DW 2009). Thus, operators of privately owned cistern trucks are more eager to go to neighborhoods that are closer to the source of water and where the roads are good. The farther they drive from the water source and the worse the roads, the higher they charge for the water.

The sentiment in the musseques that buying and selling water is a “hard” business with a commodity that has non-negotiable prices that must be paid in hard cash, no matter how well one knows the customer or whatever social

relations one has with him or her, was shared by most of my informants during interviews in Paraíso, and in the greater Kicolo area. However, it is interesting to note that this sentiment generally is not shared by residents in other parts of the country (or even in other parts of Luanda that traditionally have been connected to piped water from the water main). A study made for the World Bank and the *Direcção Nacional das Águas* [Angolan State Department of Water] portrays how the status of water varies between provinces in Angola. The study report for Huambo, located in the central plateau of Angola, shows that privately owned cistern trucks and water tanks are not to be found in the city (DW 2008). The report comes to the conclusion that in Huambo, where households mainly use water from private wells which rarely run out of water because of the high water table level in the city, there is no market for water. Furthermore, when a household well runs out of water in Huambo one usually gets access to a neighbour's well (DW 2008). This is in stark contrast to Luanda's water market where longstanding neighbours sell water to each other and water has a special status as an all-important commodity with little room for bargaining, for which one has to pay up front in hard cash.

The aforementioned study covered five cities from different parts of the country: Huambo, Kuito, Ndalatando, Malanje and Uíge (Luanda was *not* included in the study). It reveals that in all the cities where the study was

conducted private water trucks were rarely mentioned as a source of water. Furthermore, focus group discussions in Huambo, Kuito and Malanje revealed that it was inappropriate to charge other households for water and that helping other households to obtain water was considered as part of a web of reciprocity among neighbours (DW 2008). This serves to show how different water access and delivery in other parts of the country can be from that of Luanda where private water trucks are the main water providers. It also highlights the diverse perceptions of water as commodity depending on the geographical area in question, within Angola, and more generally the globe. It is one example of how scarcity of, or lack of access to, vital services such as water can affect such perceptions.

However, scarcity of, or lack of access to water are not always left to market dynamics such as supply and demand, and economics of scarcity, such as in contemporary Luanda. During my MA fieldwork in rural southern Malawi, the prevailing sentiment about water, which was severely lacking, as the whole country was facing a devastating drought, was that it was something to be shared and not monopolized or sold. When I asked men who were digging a well in one of the villages whether the well was private or all the villagers would have access to it, the response was: “Yes [all would have access to it], because water is life, we can’t stop people from using it” (Waldorff 2008:38). An example of how

diverse natural and social conditions, values, ideologies and politics may affect the way water is regarded rather than merely economics of scarcity and supply and demand.

4.5 Water Sanitation

At the Rio Bengo water pumping station each cistern truck is supposedly required to stop and pay 10 Kwanza for each 1m³ of water to be treated. However, there is no system to verify that the water has been treated successfully. A study has found that most of the time no one watches or records whether drivers have put the chlorine into their cistern tank or not (DW 2009). Interviews with people involved in the informal water economy clearly indicate that untreated water is abundant on this market.

As one water seller explained: instead of buying 10,000 liters of treated water for 10,000 kwanza, she bought 10,000 liters of untreated water for 8000 kwanza. She prefers to treat the water herself, as it is more cost effective and she does not trust the cistern truck sellers with the task, claiming that one never knows if they really treated the water or if they blended the water with the right amount of sanitizer. Water vendors, and buyers, from private tanks also complained that sometimes too much chlorine would be added to their water, causing questions of water safety due to “too much sanitation.”

When the water in a tank filled with water from the river is low one can see that the water at the bottom is filthy and not fit for consumption. Thus, a private water tank that is nearly empty with water from Kifangondo has to be washed by its owner before it can be filled up again because the bottom of the tank fills up with mud, small branches and other rubbish from the previous filling.

The fact that the informally sold river water is often untreated contributes to water safety problems and consequently the spreading of waterborne diseases, such as, hepatitis A and E, typhoid fever and bacterial and protozoal diarrhea. According to USAID, Angola has the highest rate of diarrheal disease in the world, mostly due to contaminated water usage, inadequate storm drainage and a lack of basic sanitation facilities (USAID 2008). These are conditions that cause high rates of morbidity and mortality in peri-urban neighbourhoods, especially among young children (Hodges 2004:30). This health hazard, unacceptable in many parts of the world, affects millions of Angolans who get sick or even lose their lives, or those of loved ones, due to these conditions. Personally, I lost one of my own good friends to typhoid fever when she was in her early teens; another friend, who later passed away due to other health problems, nearly died of cholera.

In 2006 a cholera outbreak occurred in Luanda and quickly spread to 16 of the country's 18 provinces. Between February 2006 and May 2007, 82,204

cholera cases were reported in the country with 3,092 cholera related deaths (WHO 2009). Around 50% of the 82,204 cases were reported in Luanda alone, pointing towards the health hazards the current water supply system can produce and the importance of not only safe drinking water but also the importance of drainage systems, systematic garbage collection and basic sanitation facilities. Due to these “disastrous” water and sanitation conditions in the city the Médecins sans Frontières called the 2006 cholera outbreak a disaster waiting to happen (MSF 2006).

4.6 The Informal Water Economy as a Development Model

Rhetoric within the development community has in the past pushed for scenarios where the state is the provider of basic services such as water. However, in recent years a neoliberal rhetoric has been emerging at the global level where water has been increasingly perceived as a commodity to be sold through either private-public partnerships or even the complete privatization of water sources and water distribution systems that have conventionally been public property or a common pool resource. Such privatizations have in some cases had severe consequences ending in civil unrest and protests as was witnessed in Cochabamba’s (Bolivia’s third largest city) “Water War” in 2000 when a subsidiary of the U.S. corporation Bechtel had in 1999 anonymously bought

rights to the control of water distribution and began raising water prices to levels equaling an average tariff increase of 43 percent (McKenzie and Ray 2005:17; Wutich et al. 2013). The new owners of Cochabamba's water distribution rights even went to lengths to block domestic collection and storage of rainwater (Thirumavalavan 2003:2). However, the Water War, a month long popular uprising protesting the privatization of their scarce water resources and distribution infrastructure under the leadership of the *Coordinadora* (The Coalition in Defense of Water and Life), eventually resulted in the cancellation of the privatization deal (Oliveira with Lewis 2004; Wutich et al. 2013:223), a victory for the local population against neoliberal attempts to privatize their water supply and a testimony that the (democratic) "weapons of the weak" (a conceptualization borrowed from Scott 1985) can indeed have an effect.

In Luanda there exists a public water distribution system that services only a privileged minority of the city's population and thus, in tandem with this public system, water is effectively privatized by business owners who deliver water to the city's inhabitants through cistern trucks. However, in Angolan politics, with its socialist roots and tradition of clientelism between the ruling MPLA party and its population, basic services such as water are regarded as the responsibility of the State. This is clearly reflected in the name of the government's water program: *Água para todos* or Water for All. The program is a collaboration between the

Angolan State Department for Water and the Ministry of Environment with the UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and the IOM [International Organization for Migration], and has received funding from the Spanish Government through the Millennium Development Goals Fund (UNDP 2010). Água para todos has had on its ambitious agenda the provision of water to 80% of the urban population and 50% of the rural population by the year 2012. These figures are to be raised to 100% and 80% respectively by the year 2020 (UN News Centre 2009). However, BTI's 2014 statistics for Angola state that only 50% of the country's population had access to clean drinking water, with the figure dropping to 23% in rural areas (BTI 2014:24). These figures illustrate that Angola's Water for All program has been far from reaching its 2012 goals and, considering the state of water delivery services, as described in this chapter, face a steep uphill battle to reach its increasingly unrealistic goals for 2020.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind, as pointed out by fellow researcher Henrik Lindblom (2013) who has conducted field research in Luanda, including in Paraíso, that statistics on water access are often both skewed and unreliable, as the criteria for water access used by, for example the UN and the World Bank, where households within 200 meters of water points are considered to have access to water, do not always encompass what they are supposed to measure. Lindblom exposes how quantitative criteria for assessing water access

by measuring household distance from water points (water faucets, water pumps, or tanks) are quite often inadequate and false. Water access in Luanda, where public water points are frequently lacking or inefficient and water is privately owned and sold on the informal market between households, is a prime example of this as households in Luanda are regularly within 200 meters of privately owned (or public) water points, yet without adequate water access (despite being considered to have access according to the UN and World Bank definitions) (Lindblom 2013).

As has become quite evident, political rhetoric and reality are often far from the same in Angola.⁴⁶ Ambitious programs such as Água para “todos” are for example contradicted by authorities’ reluctance to connect Luanda’s peri-urban households to the public water infrastructure as they consider them to be informal settlements. Thus, these informal neighbourhoods, with an estimated 75-80% of the city’s population, some of whom have lived there for generations, will not be provided with access to a safe and public water system until they have gone through urban renewal. However, as will be revealed in further detail in chapter 5 on Luanda’s informal land market, unfortunately for the millions of inhabitants of these informal neighbourhoods the formalization or urban renewal process often involves forced evictions of the population and demolition of their

⁴⁶ See the references to “virtual realities” in Chapter 3 and 5.

houses with little or no compensation. Such evictions usually push the population even further to the periphery of the city, further away from employment opportunities, schools and healthcare institutions and other basic services such as water and electricity. Ironically this has been done in the name of urban renewal, modernization and development.

In order to circumvent the aforementioned problems of authorities not wanting to invest in public water infrastructure for informal households and the short lifespan and relatively slow access and service of the public water taps that have been installed, the government and some development agencies have attempted to mimic the successful model of the informal water market by building large concrete water tanks to be filled with water transported by cistern trucks from the Bengo river.

In 2003, the Angolan central government, in collaboration with the Japanese government, built five public water tanks in Paraíso. This development project was paid for by the Japanese government and the local population helped with some of the construction. The water tanks were supposed to be filled by cistern trucks and the Japanese government donated first ten and then five more Mitsubishi trucks to refill the tanks as soon as they ran out of water. However, José, an informant within the local governing structure, informed me that shortly after their arrival, the trucks had started to break down and when all the 15 trucks

stopped working the public water tanks were left empty. The comissão de moradores [residents' committees, a branch of the local level-traditional-governing authorities] described how at that point, with empty water tanks and no trucks, they tried to drill down in hope of reaching water to fill up the tanks, but the water they discovered was of poor quality and therefore that "solution" proved to be fruitless as well. The local government representative described the water tank project implemented by the Angolan and Japanese governments as a complete failure and compared the project to burning money since all the work, money and time that had gone into building these tanks, in the end, served no one. He added that any water project that depends on cistern trucks would become a failure since the trucks are bound to break down.

In Angola, truck maintenance is both difficult and expensive, it can be hard to find spare parts and the roads are in bad condition so the trucks keep breaking down and wear out quickly. In research on the informal water sector in Luanda it was discovered that on average 63% of cistern trucks were off the roads one day per week due to mechanical problems and 26% were off the road two days per week (DW 2009). Furthermore, according to the research report cistern truck drivers are stopped 2.7 times per day on average by the police, paying an average of 750 Kwanzas in fines/bribes each time. Ten percent of drivers also

claim that their trucks are off the road on average one day per week because of a lack of proper vehicle registration documentation.

It is perplexing that the Angolan and Japanese governments opted for this unsustainable “solution” to the water problems in Paraíso since the government had already installed five underground water tanks in an earlier water project (to be filled by public cistern trucks) that had been empty almost from the start since the cistern trucks had stopped coming or were non-operational. Thus, this earlier public water project in Paraíso depending on water from cistern trucks had proved to be unsustainable and a complete failure and therefore it comes as no surprise that the second project which followed the same principle would also fail.

In a discussion with Alfonsão, an NGO expert on water issues in Angola, I was told that, in fact, the water trucks that were donated for this task never really appeared in Paraíso. Upon their arrival, they were appropriated by someone higher in the “development” hierarchy for his or her personal benefit. Thus, a case of misappropriation of public property contributed to the project’s failure. Considering that the informal water market in Luanda is a booming industry and with Angola’s tradition of combining formal and informal incomes, and history of corruption, it is perhaps not surprising that the cistern trucks would end up on the more lucrative informal private market, instead of the public service domain

which follows the methodology of the informal water economy, but only pays a public salary and not the profit from the goods being sold.

Only one public *chafariz* [water tap] was working when I first came to Paraíso. One of the Japanese tanks had been connected to the main Luanda water pipeline that runs past the bairro. This was the only public source of water despite the Japanese/Angolan development project which had installed five public chafarizes and an earlier Angolan project which had installed five other chafarizes (see appendix 4) and then two additional chafarizes installed by the MPLA government before the 2008 elections⁴⁷ which had already run dry. The only public chafariz working in the bairro of 70,000 plus inhabitants had just received water the same day and women waited with containers in a long line for their turn. The price of water at the public chafariz is much lower than from neighbours' private tanks. It was only five kwanza (instead of 25-50 kwanza) but the downside is that the queues are long and time consuming. It takes several hours to obtain the water. Those living close to the only public chafariz that actually had water used it rather than those living further away. One woman explained how she would save time by waking up at 4am to get a good spot in the queue and thus wait less for her water. Households that live further away

⁴⁷ The 2008 parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for 1997, were the first elections held in the country since 1992.

prefer to pay the much higher price for water from a neighbour's tank than waiting hours in line to secure water for the household. It is not only considered time consuming, but carrying the water the distance from the public chafariz to their house is also seen as a problem when they live farther away. It is a waste of time and money, in their eyes, to wait all day for water, especially if they have other chores or need the time to sell merchandize on the informal marketplaces or from home. It is clear that the principles of supply and demand are not the only capitalist principles when it comes to the informal water economy, because for water consumers in Luanda's informal economy, "time is money"⁴⁸, and time spent in line can be costly.

⁴⁸ This already infamous saying coined by Benjamin Franklin in 1748 in his essay: *Advice to a Young Tradesman*, was quoted by Weber in his work: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capital* (2001[1905]) (see in Guyer 2004:156; Swedberg 1999:43 and 53) as "the defining slogan of the capitalist work ethic" (Shigehisa 2002:220). Sombart's: *The Quintessence of Capitalism* (1998[1913]) also identifies Franklin as the source of the maxim (see Shigehisa 2002:219).



Figure 9: Girls and women waiting in line and receiving water from the only functioning public water tap in Paraíso.

4.7 Successful Bottom-up Approaches

One can contemplate whether the water development “failure” in Paraíso would have repeated itself if local users were consulted in the planning process and the final project were managed by residents of the bairro. If there had been a strong community based organization in place to oversee and control the project, would it have been more likely to “succeed”? Or would corruption have entered the equation just as easily and the trucks never showed up, at least not for the public’s benefit?

CASA and Allianca, community based organizations in the municipality of Kilamba Kiayi in Luanda, are examples of how resources and basic services such as water and electricity can be successfully controlled and distributed by community associations. However, the establishment of these community based organizations was not easy as they led to serious clashes with the comissão de moradores in their areas, which tried to sabotage and appropriate their projects and successes. Their experience shows that community based organizations and local level governing bodies are competing against each other, instead of working together, in the area of basic service provision. Furthermore, basic services such as electricity and water are generally seen by the comissão de moradores as an opportunity to earn money instead of necessarily an opportunity to ameliorate conditions in their communities.

In CASA's case this competition became so fierce that it threatened the organization's very existence and the participation of the local population in the development of their communities. Allianca's problems with the comissão de moradores went so far that participants received death threats. However, they persisted and their success has earned them respect in the local community and sparked interest among high-ranking government officials and, consequently, with the public spotlight on their efforts, the comissão de moradores toned down their aggressiveness towards Allianca and their projects. It is however evident

that local level, authoritarian, governing bodies, such as the comissão de moradores, can threaten the existence and availability of bottom up development in the peri-urban areas of Luanda, which unfortunately are areas where top-down state development of the most basic services is also lacking. Chapter 6 will further elucidate the power relations between community based organization and local level governing bodies in peri-urban Luanda.

When it comes to development project design and planning in Luanda's musseques, it is useful to keep in mind David Harvey's suggestion that, to fully understand any kind of social constructs, one also has to understand the forces that swirl around them and creates them (Harvey 2000:16). This is meant in a strictly practical sense here. If a project is to succeed one has to understand the social, political, economic, historical and power contexts into which that project is being projected. Not only can this prove hard to achieve as in the Kilamba Kiaxi cases, but it seems that public water projects in Paraíso, and, as will be seen below, in the greater Kicolo area and Sambizanga, are good examples of where it has not been achieved at all. Thus, it seems that the politics of water in Luanda are based on exclusion from, rather than inclusion to, the water mains (and the quality of life they provide) running from Angola's rich water resources, such as found in the Bengo River north of the city.

4.8 Contemplating Water as a Biopolitical Tool

Nikhil Anand describes how residents of informal settlements in Mumbai, India have to continuously re-negotiate relations with different authorities to receive pressure in their water pipes. In his article about marginal populations in urban settings and how they, through cultural politics, secure access to a public water infrastructure, he invokes the concept of hydraulic citizenship and its relationship with a biopolitical state (Anand 2011). Anand's notions of a hydraulic citizenship, a form of belonging to the city through political and technical connection to its infrastructure, and a state that dictates people's status as hydraulic citizens through biopolitics, are intriguing. It certainly fits well in the Luandan contemporary context where a peri-urban population circumvents the biopolitical state and secures a hydraulic citizenship through the city's informal water economy.

In Angola, plans for urban renewal [*requalificação urbana*] often clash directly with the wellbeing of the urban population and, as pointed out above and in chapter 5, have already caused forced evictions and relocations of people. This is clearly reflected in meetings with municipal officials in Luanda and in Luandan municipal development policies. In Sambizanga, municipal authorities were reluctant to answer researchers' questions about basic services and infrastructures. There, like in Paraíso, a water project with public water taps filled

with cistern truck water from the Bengo River was to provide the municipality's inhabitants with water. The Sambizanga water project, part of the government's program *Água para todos* [Water for all], turned out like its identical twin in Paraíso: the cistern trucks broke down or disappeared and the public water taps ran dry.

When asked for an explanation for this, the municipal officials shrugged their shoulders indifferently and blamed the local population for sabotaging the project. It is clear that the municipal administration is not taking responsibility for the project and that failure and unsustainability is not blamed on project planning and organization or its supervision but on the people who, ironically, are the ones who are supposed to benefit from it. Similar blaming and attitudes of "it is not our problem" were expressed when municipal administration representatives were asked about the problem of the accumulating heaps of garbage in the streets. The finger was pointed at the Provincial Government as if there were nothing the municipal administration could do about the garbage problem and as if it were not really their concern. It was then clearly stated that no basic infrastructure upgrading, including public water infrastructure, would be taking place in Sambizanga as the area has been earmarked for urban renewal. Thus, the fate of this area and its 650 thousand inhabitants, which as the city expands has

become centrally located within the city's boundaries, is laid out in its urban renewal plans.⁴⁹

Other reasons for poor infrastructure and basic services in peri-urban Luanda have also been pointed out. Anthropologist Tony Hodges has claimed that:

“[C]ertain elite interests clash directly with those of the urban poor. This is the case, for example, of Angolan businessmen who make large profits from the sale of water from cistern trucks in the *musseques* of Luanda and stand to lose from the extension of piped water systems to these areas” (Hodges 2004:58).

According to this the success of the informal water market as a business model ironically hinders the implementation of a public water system for Luanda's peri-urban population. Examples of how this is taking place were encountered in Kicolo during my fieldwork: “I do not understand. Why build all these chafarizes [water taps] only to cut them off from their water supply?” Matteo asked me on a January afternoon, referring to a newly implemented EU sponsored water project for the greater Kicolo area, with its 15 *bairros* [neighbourhoods] and over 400.000 inhabitants. Matteo, a young university student involved in a community association working towards developing his neighbourhood, was both

⁴⁹ Sambizanga's urban renewal plans are further discussed in chapter 5.

disappointed and angry. A week after the project had mounted the chafarizes in Kicolo, EPAL, the state water company that oversaw the technical side of the project, came back and cut off all the supposedly illegal *mangeira* [hose] connections between private water tanks in the area and the Luanda water pipeline. These illegal connections provided privately owned water tanks with water from the main pipe from the Bengo River, which passed by Kicolo and other areas to supply other more central and affluent neighbourhoods further south with water. Before the new chafarizes were mounted some of the inhabitants had bought their water from these tanks at a relatively low price. The fact that there were private tanks with connections directly to free water from the main water pipeline also lowered the price of other water vendors in the area as competition with the low priced *mangeira* water forced cistern truck operators to sell their water to private tanks at lower competitive prices.

Shortly thereafter, the newly installed chafarizes also stopped working, which resulted in water shortages for the inhabitants of Kicolo. I never got an official explanation of why this happened. Some inhabitants of the area told me that it was because there was no pressure in the pipe system. However, when I asked a man working for an NGO involved in the planning of the project he claimed that there should be plenty of pressure from the main pipeline and therefore dismissed this excuse. Many critiques of the project surfaced, one was

that the location of the chafarizes in the streets, and not in sheltered *quintais* [fenced off yards], was ill planned as the chafarizes were damaged when trucks and other vehicles bumped into them in the narrow and sandy, or muddy (depending on the season) streets.



Figure 10: Children playing at one of the dried up public water taps in Kicolo.

After the chafarizes dried up the only source of water for the area was cistern truck water brought in from Kifangondo. The cistern truck drivers, aware of the situation and the loss of competition from the mangeira tanks and chafarizes, used the opportunity to skyrocket the water prices. My informants claim that in some cases the water prices from the cistern trucks doubled, tripled and even

quadrupled. This price hike, due to the eradication of competition on the informal water market and the monopolization of cistern truck water on the market, made some privately owned water tanks run dry because the owners could not cope with the high prices. Consequently, those who paid the high prices to fill their water tanks sold the water at a much higher price than before. This price hike had an impact on the inhabitants of Kicolo who before this were already paying a high price for water⁵⁰ or as one informant describing the situation put it: “It eats our money.”

These events in Kicolo coincided with EPAL’s arrival, accompanied by armed police, to a nearby farming community and a small housing project, initially built for forcibly relocated families from another Cacuaco area.⁵¹ EPAL turned off the area’s water which, as the inhabitants explained, came “naturally” from the water conduct’s respiratory valves. The farmers were certain that this

⁵⁰ As has been pointed out in this chapter the poor in the musseques pay higher prices for lower quality water than the better off in centrally located and developed parts of the city with connections to the public water pipes. While a 1998 survey showed that the poorest 25% of Angolan households devoted an average of 15% of their expenses on water (INE 2001b; see also Tony Hodges 2004:30) David Birmingham (2006:168) has mentioned how water from cistern trucks can easily cost a family half of its combined weekly income in Luanda. This, however, does not include the time spent on the arduous task of providing water for one’s household, time which is taken from other important tasks.

⁵¹ The intended inhabitants however never accepted the houses and never settled there as it was far from necessities such as schools, markets, and employment. Thus, squatters took the houses over.

was done to dispossess them since they rely on the water for their crops and livelihoods. Thus, according to them, water, or rather, the lack of water to the area was meant to have a biopolitical effect, forcing the inhabitants to move out and accelerate the urbanization of their farmland which was gradually being engulfed by the sprawling city. Chapter 5 will further explain such evictions.

A few months after the inauguration of the public chafarizes in Kicolo, at a meeting with the municipal authorities in Cacuaco, a representative of the municipal administration started listing all the public water chafarizes that had recently been constructed in Kicolo. He was however interrupted by an inhabitant of Kicolo present at the meeting because of his involvement in a local governing body in the area: “But none of them work, sir.” To which the municipal representative answered with a fleeting and rather vague remark (and a doubtful look on his face), implying that this was only a temporary situation and far from being as bad as it sounded. However, it was clearly not taken as lightly by the population which was supposed to rely on the faulty infrastructure and faced hefty price hikes due to its failure.

4.9 Conclusion

One can ask the question, is a non-operating water tap [chafariz] really a water tap? If, as part of a census or development project for an NGO or the

government, for example, one were to collect quantitative data on *chafarizes* and private water tanks in Paraíso, one would see that there are many private water tanks and 12 public *chafarizes* in the *bairro*, five built by Angolan authorities, five provided by the Japanese government and two from the ruling MPLA party, built before the 2008 parliamentary elections as part of the political party's election campaign. However, this information is useless if one does not include information on the functionality of these chafarizes and private tanks. During my fieldwork I found out that only one of the 12 public chafarizes in Paraíso had water, and that only intermittently. One other chafariz built before the 2008 elections sometimes had water, but very infrequently. Furthermore, the majority of the private tanks were empty, although many households had one on their lot, since owning a private water tank did not necessarily mean that one had the means to fill it with water. Thus, in Paraíso, a situation had arisen where the approximately 71,000 people living in the area had little to no access to public sources of water, despite (failed) attempts to overcome this problem, and therefore had to rely on the volatile informal water market and its frequent price fluctuations.

The informal water market as a development model in contemporary Luanda is unsustainable as has been proven in Cacuaco and other municipalities of the city. However, as a private endeavor, although far from ideal, the informal

water market seems to work (to a certain extent) as it has proven itself to be the only currently available alternative to a dysfunctional or non-existent public water system and provides the majority of Luanda's population with access to water. Nevertheless, the fact remains that water is lacking (in both quantity and quality), not because of a shortage of water but because of insufficient or nonexistent official or public water distribution and thus people pay large amounts of money to secure access to water that is frequently untreated. This in itself has dire consequences for the population, which are represented in human development statistics such as child mortality rates.⁵² The fact that Angola is one of the best resource-endowed countries on the continent with one of the world's fastest growing economies now that the civil war is over renders the current situation even more ironic.

An Angolan acquaintance once told me at a dinner party in one of the more affluent southern suburbs of Luanda that he had been reading an article claiming that if archeologists were to find Angola as it is today after hundreds or thousands of years they would probably conclude that Angola had been very developed. Every house had a private water tank and a generator. However, as

⁵² Angola is 148th of 187 countries when it comes to the under-five mortality rate, with Norway on top of the list and the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the bottom (UNDP 2011b).

the acquaintance pointed out, this is not because Angolan society is so developed, but quite the contrary, because of a lack of public infrastructure development. Everyone wants a water tank because the public water system is either non-existent or not working in their area and everyone wants a generator because the public electric grid is either non-existent or not working properly. Thus, the “development” the archeologists would find are in fact signs of desperate measures where residents need to take basic services such as water and electricity into their own hands.

If one were to use this hypothetical archeology scenario for Paraíso, it is plausible that the future archeologists would think, at first glance at least, that this society had plenty of water. But in reality this couldn't be further from the truth. Statistically the area has water tanks and chafarizes, these are statistics municipal authorities cite with pride in meetings, but in reality, these water tanks and chafarizes are nothing but concrete sculptures in the peri-urban landscape since they almost never fulfill their purpose. This raises the question whether the idea of a public water infrastructure is even considered a possibility in this urban society? Are these piped slabs of concrete a sign of failure of state institutions or a lack of political will and resources to tackle the problem? Or is water used as a biopolitical tool by the state to control and push around its (hydraulic) citizens (Anand 2011); a tool for developing a modern city where sadly not all its

residents are accepted? Or, can it all be blamed on history (as Angolan authorities often do): 41 years of war and a city which was originally built by the colonial power for less than 500,000 inhabitants, but is today inhabited by an estimated 6 million people? The status quo could be seen as derived, to varying degrees, from all of the above mentioned scenarios. There are many hypothetical questions and rationalizations that arise when one asks why this is the situation in most of Luanda today. It is, however, certain that our hypothetical archeologists would find a society where basic services and ultimately survival is secured through individualistic and private endeavours in an informal economy parallel to the formal or official one.

As mentioned in chapter 3, it can be easy to romanticize such an “informal” response to the lack of official, “formal”, or public urban services as heroic (De Soto 2000). However, when put into context, one sees that it is also, fundamentally, an answer to poverty and circumstances where a majority of the population has been left to fend for themselves, coming up with solutions that may help, but are neither safe, sustainable nor sanitary. This chapter has elucidated how the informal economy, or *candonga*, provides the peri-urban population with necessary services to survive, by shedding light on how water is delivered and distributed in the peri-urban *musseques*. In the following chapter we turn to the informal Luandan land market and the insecurities new laws, urban

development and plans of formalizing the largely informal land market have brought about for Luanda's peri-urban society.

Chapter 5. “The Law is not for the Poor”: Land, Law and Evictions in Peri-Urban Luanda

It [land law] is thus an instrument of calculated disorder by means of which illegal practices produce law and extralegal solutions are smuggled into the judicial process. In this paradoxical situation, law itself is a means of manipulation, complication, and violence by which all parties - public and private, dominant and dominated – further their interests (John Holston 2008: 203, on the Brazilian land law and the consequences of its misrule in the peripheral areas of São Paulo).

During the newfound era of peace, the Angolan state has decided to “formalize” a largely “informal” land tenure system. This has been done through a 2004 land law (law 9/04), which required landholders to formally register their land before a 2010 registration deadline after which all unregistered land in Angola would become the property of the state. The post-conflict land strategy has had grave consequences for many Angolans who face forced evictions and the demolition of their houses, crops and personal possessions often with little or no compensation. Most urban and peri-urban occupants in Angola have however purchased or been allocated land from local authorities with very few occupants squatting on land which has led to a majority of the residents possessing various kinds of informal documents demonstrating purchase or recognition of

occupation (Unruh 2012:663; Urban Landmark 2013:6). The new land law has however nullified older rights to land and housing found in the Civil Code (Cain 2012:51), calling for the elimination of all occupancy rights where use and occupation has been solidified over time (Unruh 2012:663).

This chapter focuses on the land tenure insecurities faced by a peri-urban Luandan population. It speaks of the demolition of houses, forced relocations of families and how a new land law and a false sense of tenure security affect the peri-urban society. In particular, it describes how smallscale farmers, in Luanda's northern municipality of Cacuaco, producing for the city's informal marketplaces were facing the loss of their lands to urban development during my ethnographic fieldwork. The chapter explains what was taking place in this peri-urban agricultural area around the time the new land law took effect. It describes a process by which a peri-urban population is moved around and faced with increased uncertainty and anxiety in the name of modernization, development and post-conflict reconstruction of the city. Furthermore, it calls into question whose interests such urban development strategies, using forced evictions and the demolition of property, really serve when people are relocated further into the city's periphery, further away from schools, health clinics, markets, and employment opportunities.

While the chapter describes a particular case of small scale farmers in the process of losing their land to the sprawling city, it also argues that the Luandan land tenure system is two tiered, as the vast majority of the population has only access to the informal land market, and informal or quasi-formal tenure documents, which after the adoption of the new land law are in effect illegal. The other tier, a small political and economic elite and small group of people with mid-level to high incomes, has access to the formal and legal land market and thus tenure security. Consequently, despite being considered illegal by the law, land titles issued informally continue to be the norm and are widely accepted by the population in contemporary Luanda, and in Angola in general. Thus, as pointed out in the introduction and chapter 3, the implicit idea, that formality is the norm and informality the deviation from that norm (an idea also challenged by McFarlane and Waibel 2012:2), does not apply to contemporary Luanda where informal land tenure has become much more of a norm than a deviation.

Moreover, following the overall theme of this work, the chapter argues that a formal land tenure system, which at present is based on politics of urban exclusion in Luanda, will need to acknowledge the reality on the ground and the mechanisms of informal land titling and tenure systems in order to promote politics of urban inclusion (an argument in line with that of Cain 2013 and Croese 2013). The issuing of informal or quasi-formal land titles and the flourishing

informal land market that runs parallel to the economically and socially exclusive formal land market is in essence a response to an inefficient and exclusive formal land titling system and land market. Exclusion from official or formal land tenure has conceived a productive space in which human agency and ingenuity is applied to acquire formal, semi-formal or informal land titles. Individuals, families, and land speculators often engage the state, local authorities and other informal, yet socially accepted, authorities in the process. This has resulted in the aforementioned two tiered land tenure system, which is for the most part illegal in the eyes of the state, although widely accepted by the local population, and based on financial transactions (see Cain 2013), to the effect that most land owners in Luanda live with a false sense of tenure security.

Finally, it also portrays a picture of Luanda which is at odds with the popular idea that policies (seemingly) aiming to formalize property rights, a goal which generally ranks high on urban policy agendas, necessarily lead to progress and modernization (Koster and Nuijten, forthcoming). This includes ideas and theories drawing inspiration from influential work such as Hernando de Soto's *Mystery of Capital* (2000) where it is claimed that capitalism can work for the poor through the formalization of property rights. This chapter points out the unfortunate fact that such ideas have not been realized in Luanda (due to, for example, bureaucratic incapacities) and not benefitted the urban poor by allowing

the formal registration of their land, houses and small businesses, but, rather, has given the state (and other powerful interests) an excuse to evict and demolish the assets of the poor in the name of legalization, modernization and development. In fact, Luanda deviates significantly from that of de Soto's prescriptions, in which "real" formalization takes place and the poor (like everybody else in society) can formalize their informal properties, reviving their so-called "dead capital" (De Soto 2000), as opposed to only formalizing the informal properties of a segment of the population, as has occurred in Luanda.

Thus, in Angola's post-conflict context one finds situations in which an accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003, 2005, 2008) is literally taking place. Accumulation by dispossession which, to paraphrase David Harvey, can be seen as a developmental drive to colonize space for the affluent at the expense of the least well off (Harvey 2008:39; see also Koster and Nuijten, forthcoming). However, before going more deeply into such theoretical contemplations the chapter commences with an ethnographic account of how small scale farmers on the capital city's northern periphery are coping and reacting to the urbanizing pressure of the city.

5.1 Small Scale Agriculture Vs. Large Scale Urban Development

On a green patch of land surrounded by yellowish soil, in a small agricultural area between Vila de Cacuaco and Kicolo, Rodrigo and some of his relatives run a farming business. They grow and sell vegetables to women who make a living re-selling them on the city's informal marketplaces such as the Kicolo market.

Rodrigo works on the farm every day while his wife Linda sells merchandise at a small marketplace close to Vila de Cacuaco. Linda is active in the so-called *compra e venda* [buying and selling] business, an integral part of the informal economy. She buys imported merchandise such as cooking oil, coffee and spaghetti from warehouses and containers and re-sells them at her local market for a profit. The income generated from her business in the market is both higher and steadier than from Rodrigo's farming work.

Only a year before my arrival this patch of land was a fertile green area relatively far from urban settlements. During my fieldwork, however, this once rural agricultural setting increasingly became an urban agriculture zone as the suburban neighbourhoods of Cacuaco municipality fast encroached. The rural aspect of the area was still clearly noticeable once it rained during the wet season, when it became almost inaccessible by car, as the hard clay roads turned into rivers of mud and puddles grew into small lakes.

The family's agricultural fields were irrigated by runoff water from the pipeline that provides Luanda's Viana and Benfica areas with water from the *Kifangondo* water-plant on the Bengo River. When Rodrigo's father arrived here in 1993 and started farming, it was a rural area separated from the urban settlement in Cacuaco's town center (*Vila de Cacuaco*). My informants claimed that the land had belonged to no one and was not used by anyone. Rodrigo's father is claimed to have been one of the first inhabitants of the area. In 2009, however, the city had started to sprawl onto the farmland. Every night new *chapa* shacks made of corrugated sheet metal rose on the surrounding lands. Shacks had risen, and kept rising, from the direction of the city's closest peri-urban neighbourhoods, on the rocky hills to the west and on the lowland to the north. When I was there in 2009 and 2010 shacks had started rising in areas to the south of the farmland as well. The surrounding land was being divided into plots, separated by aligned rocks serving as borders between the plots. It was clearly in the process of being commoditized as it was being divided, to be either lived on or sold.

This area, like so many others on Luanda's periphery, was noticeably changing during my fieldwork. As my informants confirmed: "Before the area was

empty but now we even have *zungeiras*⁵³ [mobile street vendors] coming through here daily.” I myself sometimes snacked on boiled eggs with *chindungu* [the local hot sauce made from hot peppers drenched in cooking oils] sold by a zungeira in the area. Another zungeira selling sardines to the farmers and the area’s new inhabitants had started coming through shouting with her shrill voice the merchandize she was selling from the basket on her head. One day I came across a young man with a basin full of medical supplies and drugs while another man travelled through with his camera offering to take individual or family portraits for cash that would then be developed with a European city setting or romantic sunset as a background. The area was indeed becoming more populous by the day and informal economic activities and services were emerging.

This little patch of agricultural land in the process of being engulfed by Luanda’s peri-urban sprawl was a place I visited regularly during my fieldwork. Rodrigo with his articulate and humorous, sometimes bordering on sarcastic demeanour, became one of my key informants. The story of the area is a good example of the urban expansion taking place along Luanda’s physical borders. It tells a story that represents a serious predicament for tens (even hundreds) of

⁵³ As explained in chapter 3 *Zungeiras* are mobile vendors, usually women, who pack their merchandize into basins which they carry on their heads and sell on the go. To advertise their commerce they shout out the name of the merchandize they are selling as they walk.

thousands of Angolans living in and around Luanda and elsewhere in the country. The case gives a glimpse into the harsh reality of land tenure security in Angola. As will be seen, Rodrigo and his family are resilient and realistic in what appears to be an inevitable battle against the Goliath of an obscure Angolan land tenure system, municipal authorities, and others acting as beholders of authority, such as neighbourhood coordinators, residents' committees [*comissões de moradores*] and traditional authorities.

Sitting under the shade of a mighty *imbondeiro* [Baobab tree] Rodrigo and his family members shared their story over a few *Nocal* [an Angolan brand of beer] and coca colas. The day was hot and the sun seemed inescapable. The shade from the imbondeiro did little to protect us from its burning rays.

From the modest shade of the imbondeiro we had a view of the farmland and surrounding area, a rocky yellow hill to the west, the Cacuaco bay to the north, a “failed”⁵⁴ housing project to the east and Cacuaco’s developing industrial

⁵⁴ The project’s name *Quinhentos casas* [500 houses] is misleading as only a few dozen houses have risen. This housing project was originally built by the former state-run and now partly privatized Nova Cimangola cement company, for people who were to be relocated from other areas in Cacuaco two years prior to my fieldwork. However, not all the intended *relocados* accepted these houses, as they were smaller and of inferior quality than those that people had previously lived in and were above all far from the city’s services such as water, electricity, schools and clinics as well as informal employment possibilities. Those relocated had been promised certain infrastructure such as electricity but when I arrived the houses were in poor

park to the south where various types of factories were being built ranging from cement factories to sausage factories. Further to the east was a brand new highway, built by the Brazilian contractor Oderbrecht, connecting Cacuaco to the north of Luanda with Viana to the east and Benfica to the south of Luanda.

A few meters from where we were enjoying each other's company under the imbondeiro were the ruins of Rodrigo's brother Mario's house. The foundation of a small house and the rubble of broken cement blocks was all that was left. A bulldozer came one night and tore down the house, which was still under construction. When Rodrigo told me the story of how the house had been torn down I expressed my sympathies and said that this was indeed a very sad situation. "Sad" he repeated agitated, "imagine, a poor family is trying to build a small home, it takes about 800 blocks to build a small house, one room and one living room. Each bag of cement costs up to 1600 kwanza and you only get 40 blocks per bag. Then when the house is almost ready they come in and destroy your hard work with their machines." Rodrigo pointed towards a spot close by, another bigger rubble of cement and a nearly finished concrete water tank. "The house on the other side of this small road was already finished and they came

condition, some with roofing and windows missing. Thus, some of the intended "beneficiaries" did not claim their property and the houses were occupied by others who shortly after I left for Canada were being threatened with eviction by Nova Cimangola which was rumoured to want to demolish the houses and build something else on the land.

and tore it all down.” Now those who had plans to build did not dare to and the blocks they had invested in sat in tidy stacks waiting to be used.

The Fiscal Police [*Polícia Fiscal*] demolished Mario’s house a few months prior to my first visit to the area. They came with a bulldozer during the night, claiming to act on behalf of the municipal authorities. The fact that they came during the night to demolish the houses could be interpreted as an indication of their performing an operation that is generally not accepted or, at least, contested and, hence, were expecting protests were they to arrive during the day. Most families and individuals who lost their houses that night fled the area and did not return. Mario and his family, a wife and two children, were the only ones who returned after their house had been destroyed. They built a shelter using rope and sheets of fabric and by the time I arrived they had built a corrugated metal shack close to their field, just in front of the ruins of the cement block house they had hoped to be living in.

Corrugated metal shacks are not considered to be permanent structures by the municipal administration and its “fiscalization” team and therefore not regarded as a threat to any plans of future “urbanization” and are thus less likely to be torn down. That is why people who have land in new and upcoming peri-urban areas raise corrugated metal shacks on their land. It is one way of showing

that the land is occupied or taken⁵⁵ without it being too much of a loss, compared to a more permanently structured house made of cement blocks, if the authorities or the Fiscal Police decide to tear it down. This is in essence one representation of how urban development gives rise to productive spaces and of how residents on the city's margins and those with insecure land tenure affect architecture and the urban typology as a response to land legislation and the heavy handedness of authorities in their implementation of the law and the post-conflict land strategy. It is a logic derived from the peri-urban reality.

Mario told me that they preferred to stay in the area. They had rented out their house in a nearby neighbourhood to stay there. He likes the fresh breeze that the hills offer and said that the area is calmer than more densely populated areas.

5.2 Urbanization of the land

Walking back after inspecting the ruins of two houses within a 50 meter radius from the imbondeiro Rodrigo turned to me and said: "This area is already all urbanized." He showed me a small blue steel marker in the ground beside one of

⁵⁵ Sometimes families are paid to live in the shacks for wealthier "owners" to show that the land is really occupied. Questions whether the land is really their property are valid, however I will not go into that here. I will talk more in-depth about the manipulation of the obscurities in the land tenure system and touch on the emergence of informal land speculators later in this chapter.

his fields. "This small steel pin marks where the municipal administration has planned a road." He grinned as he watched my face to see if I understood the fate of his agricultural land. The road signified the inevitable arrival of urban development and the land they made their living off had already been planned for exactly such urban development. Asking him what this meant for him and his family business, he predicted that the municipal administration would probably show up one day and claim the land. That is when he and his family will most likely have to negotiate with the representatives of the municipal authorities and let them take 50% of the land while keeping 50% for themselves. This, he and other members of his family said, would be inevitable.

Six months after my initial visit the administration came and further "urbanized" the area Rodrigo's family has been cultivating since the early 1990s. A person claiming to be an architect working for the municipal administration appeared on the scene to urbanize their land. A machine was brought in to build roads, some of which go through farming plots. The land was being divided into 20x20 meter plots. There seemed to be a general consensus that the municipal administration would receive part of the land and the family would keep the other part. Their status as the first inhabitants of the area was supposed to give them bargaining power which new settlers in the area would not necessarily have.

5.3 A Fight for Water = A Fight for the Future of the Area

The agricultural area is strategically situated beside a respiratory valve [*Respiratorio da conduta*] in the main water pipe from Kifangondo to the Municipalities of Viana and Benfica. The farmers use the run-off water from the respiratory valve to irrigate their fields with a system they designed and built themselves. The water runs through plastic pipes and is collected in rectangular ponds, where it is then pumped into the fields by a motor run water pump.

On one of my drives to Rodrigo's farmland I saw workers from EPAL (*Empresa Pública de Aguas de Luanda*), Luanda's public water company, working around the respiratory valve that provides the farmers in the area with irrigation water for their fields. "They are closing our water supply as well!," Rodrigo told me upon my arrival. The area had not had water for six days and the crops were suffering in the dry heat. He and his family members had a plan to invest in more pipes to extend his irrigation system to another respiratory valve further away. This would be costly since the plastic pipes are expensive. However, they were all really hoping that it would start to rain soon.

Sitting in an informal *chapa* [corrugated metal] restaurant, taking care of the restaurant owner's infant while she cooked and served us drinks, Rodrigo and his brother pondered the question why their water source was being closed after years of their using its water. They believed the closure of the water to be a

strategic play on behalf of the municipal administration to get rid of the farmers. They speculated that after a few days or weeks without water when the crops would start to wither and die, officials from the municipal administration would show up and claim that the land is not good for cultivation anymore and that it needs to be urbanized. It was clear that they felt that their land was being targeted for development by the municipal government and that there was nothing they could do other than wait and hope for the best. In his own cynical way Rodrigo gave us an analysis of the situation and a historic reason for why it was unlikely that the cultivators of the area would join hands in finding a solution to their problems. Referring to Angola's colonial past he said: "We are from the south (referring to himself and his family), and as everyone knows, the people from the south were the ones most easily colonized, they never fought back, they only followed orders. That's why the Portuguese liked to stay in the south." That is also why he and his brother believed that it was unlikely that they would fight for their rights and stand up to the people who were trying to take over the land they considered to be theirs. "Nothing has changed today," said Rodrigo, "the land will be taken from us and nothing can or will be done to prevent it." Moments later it started to rain, precisely what the farmers had been hoping for. As the raindrops started beating rhythmically on the corrugated metal roof a man kindly

came by and reminded me that I should probably leave before the roads became un-navigable.

The following week Rodrigo and his family had connected their irrigation pipes to a respiratory valve farther away from their fields. A month later, when I unexpectedly visited the farmland and we ate boiled eggs with salt and *chindungu* and drank beer and sodas together under the mighty imbondeiro tree, I found out that because of the serious water insecurities the farmers of the area were facing, they had come together to try to find a solution to their water problems collectively.

Two months after the farmers got together to set up their plan to collectively provide water for their fields, I was told that EPAL had showed up with a police escort and cut off the water supply to the whole area. All water sources were closed; even the *500 casas* housing project lost its water supply. EPAL had filled the respiratory valves with rocks and sand. When I asked my informant whether the area was without water I was told: “Thanks to god (*“Graças a Deus”*), the farmers got together and removed all the rocks and the sand.” This act of collective decisionmaking and resistance secured water to the area once again and the farmers could continue to cultivate their crops. My farming informants insisted that the water closures were intended to rid the area of its farmers and other inhabitants so that the area could be “urbanized” and

sold off to the highest bidder. As one informant clearly expressed when I asked about the reasons for the water closures: “No one knows, they are even closing water sources where water comes naturally anyway.” He added later: “They must be trying to get rid of us since they are closing the water for the whole area.”

As has been explained in more detail in the previous chapter, water and access to it is an omnipresent issue in Luanda and has been used as a biopolitical tool by authorities to control the city’s residents by cutting off water supply to people in an attempt to force them to leave. The question however arises, where are these people supposed to go? Land with access to public water provisions is difficult to find and expensive and hence impossible for most. Thus, cutting off access to water serves as an authoritarian tool to disperse an unwanted population from areas that are increasing in monetary value as the city grows and the peri-urban areas are re-urbanized and “formalized”. However, this also further increases the dependence on the informal water market and has led to an ironic situation where a majority of the city’s population has to pay more for poorer access to lower quality water than those with the privilege of living in planned urban areas. As explained in chapter 4 the time and money spent on securing one’s household with water, for drinking, cooking, and cleaning is one factor that contributes to the growing gap between the poor and better off in Angola, i.e. social injustice, in-equity, health problems and poverty.

5.4 Fighting for the Land

This is not the first time Rodrigo's family has had to fight for their land. They described how during the last decade of the war when internally displaced people [IDPs] started increasingly flowing into Luanda, settling in the surrounding areas of Kicolo and Cacuaco, in areas which formerly had been restricted by the army and municipal administrations, their land was invaded by settlers claiming the land was theirs. It is interesting how they use the same vocabulary and discourse as municipal authorities and the government when referring to settlers and other smallholders in peri-urban areas of Luanda as invaders: A discourse which serves to "criminalize" the "other."

Rodrigo's father, Luisão, facing the loss of the land he had started using in the early 1990s, decided to call upon his family to help fend the newcomers off. His extended family in Cacuaco all came to defend the land. They divided the land into plots for each family member and together they fought off the people who were after the land. From that moment on Luisão stopped using the natural rain cycle to harvest maize twice a year and together with his family members started farming vegetables all year round with water from the pipeline, cash crops such as cabbage [*cuove*] and lettuce [*alface*] to be sold on the informal market.

According to Luisão, the people who had claimed that the land was theirs were *Bakongo*⁵⁶ and with links to a certain residents' committee [comissão de moradores⁵⁷] in a neighbouring peri-urban musseque. They did not speak Portuguese, which is more often than not the preferred language of those who have traditionally lived in and around Luanda, only *Lingala*, a Bantu language originating further north, along the Congo River. Therefore, he claimed, "we knew that they were not Angolan [at least not from Luanda] and the land couldn't possibly be theirs." Explaining how these people never had any intention to cultivate the land ethnic stereotyping entered the discussion as he described how: "The Bakongo only want to sell and sell land and then spend all the money. That is what they do."

Thus municipal authorities are not the only ones who have tried to lay claim to the land Luisão, Rodrigo and other members of their family cultivate. Other, more informal, political entities and individuals have tried to claim the land as theirs through tactics of intimidation and threats of violence. The supposed link between the people who were after their land and the residents' committee of a nearby peri-urban neighbourhood is also one example of how informal de facto

⁵⁶ An ethnic group originally from northern Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo.

⁵⁷ Resident's committees [comissões de moradores] are explained further in chapter 6. It suffices here to state that they are notorious for land speculation and illegal selling of land.

political entities other than the state (which according to the post-conflict land law is the legitimate owner of all unregistered land) have been taking on a role of authority and ownership of land even though people do not always accept their so-called authority. As explained in more detail in the following chapter, this stems from the fact that the state is not necessarily regarded as the sole locus of authority in Angola. Authority takes on both traditional forms, as in authority invested in traditional leaders and authorities such as traditional headmen or chiefs [*soba*] and witch doctors and traditional healers [e.g. *Curandeiros* (see e.g. chapter 3)], etc. and de facto authorities where authority is invested in groups or social entities such as residents' committees. However, the Angolan state has been quite adamant in subordinating such powers under its governmentality as it considers itself as the "real" beholder of authority, above the more traditional and cultural depictions of authority in Angola. The existence of such informal entities that claim to have authority and ownership over land, even though the source of their powers is obscure, has intensified land tenure insecurity in peri-urban Luanda. Especially with the prices of land rising, since the land people are living on is in danger of being expropriated by such de facto authoritarian entities turned land speculators.

The obscurity of who is who, that is, who for example really represents the state and who really has authority, or is the rightful owner of land (whether

defined by state law or traditional occupancy rights), produces a situation where the state or other beholders of authority (whether legitimate or not) have the power to do whatever they want without effective protest. However, these circumstances also open up possibilities for the common population to benefit from such obscurities, grey areas and uncertainties. This has allowed informal land speculators to enter the scene, where laws, rights, realities and truths are uncertain or obscure. This situation of uncertainty renders it complicated to pinpoint the state, other authorities, and owners of land in Angola's peri-urban society. It is not uncommon to encounter cases where the same piece of land has been sold multiple times to different buyers. Often these buyers don't realise that they have been deceived until they start developing their lots, sometimes only realizing that there is already someone else working on that same lot after having brought in building material to the newly purchased land. With the same paperwork in hand and the ensuing quarrel between the new landowners, municipal authorities claimed that the solution to this problem was simple, the beholder of the paperwork (if legal) with the earliest date of issue was the true owner and no one else. This, however, becomes a huge predicament for buyers of land that have to try to be compensated for the loss of the land they had invested in. Further, it represents an enormous change of future plans for the individuals and families that are victims of such fraud.

With the state and beholders of authority in mind, questions arise of who has authority and where it is located. That is, who represents the state or official authorities and who does not. This can certainly become confusing for outside researchers, but many Angolans have become specialists in navigating this system of uncertainty, where the boundaries between the formal and informal and official and unofficial are blurred, and use it to their advantage. In fact this uncertainty and the blurring of boundaries is a major contributor to what I have referred to here as the *candonga* culture, or way of life.

Almost a year after the so-called urbanization took place where the municipal authorities/architect had come in and put down steel markers indicating where the roads were going to be built, I called Rodrigo and his brother from Montreal. They explained to me how in the end the administration had taken 70% of the family's best land without offering any compensation in return. The family kept 30% and they claim that the fact that they were farmers and had farmed there for a long time secured them certain rights to the land. According to Rodrigo they did receive new formal land titles for the remaining 30% of their land. However, these actions by the municipal government are at odds with the new land law, which clearly states that eviction from, and land grabbing of, informally occupied land without declaration and just compensation is illegal.

Within Angola's post-conflict context Rodrigo and his family can perhaps consider themselves fortunate to be able to keep a portion of the land they believe is theirs, as in many other cases people are completely removed from their land. However, the World Bank has redefined the term "displaced person" as not only referring to people who have been forcibly relocated from their land, but also to those who are not necessarily physically relocated from their land but lose access to parts of their land (Cernea 2006). What Cernea (2006) has called a form of "economic dislocation." Thus, even though they kept 30% of the land, in this case the land that was least valuable, situated on a slope and more likely to be affected by seasonal flooding, they are still considered displaced according to the World Bank's definition of displaced persons.

Rodrigo continues to cultivate and sell his crops but his father has started to sell off his own land, that he now has formal title to according to Rodrigo, in 20x20 meters plots. In 2011 he informed me that the going price for these plots was 2500-3500 US dollars (a little lower than the 3000-4000 US dollar price tag they were hoping for a year earlier). I asked if people were buying his father's plots and Rodrigo's reply was: "Yes, people need places to live."⁵⁸ Rodrigo's

⁵⁸ \$2500-3500 might seem like a steep amount for a plot some might consider as being "in the middle of nowhere" in Angola but to give a price comparison, in the municipality of Samba, located further south, lots were being sold illegally for a minimum of \$8000 US. In 2008, 20x30

brother Mario has sold almost all of his land, and is renting out parts of the remainder. For the money he received he has been able to build a house large enough for his family in a nearby neighbourhood, furnish it, and buy a used car.

5.5 Legal Documents

With Rodrigo's family's land concerns in mind, I suggested that they should go and legalize their documents to get an official land title, as per the new Angolan land law (Law 9/04) which gave Angolans until July 2010 to legalize their land tenure. Rodrigo looked at me and laughed at the suggestion, claiming that the municipal authorities themselves were after their land. Rodrigo and his family members have documents stating that the land is theirs. However, according to Rodrigo, no such document seems to exist at the municipal administration office and the documents they have in hand are not accepted by the municipal administration. My informants' theory is that municipal officers have been selling off the land and pocketing the money, handing out documents to new owners who now believe that the land is theirs. However, to be able to covertly enrich themselves from such dealings, the officials do not follow the right filing and

meter plots were being sold for \$25000 US, this had however decreased dramatically to \$6000 US in 2010 (DW 2011; Seminário Angolense, 28 August 2010).

registration protocol at the municipal administration office and the title deeds are thus considered invalid and are neither registered nor can they be found.

Seeing as they had the documents I wondered whether they could go to court to fight off those who were after their land. Their answer was short and simple: “The law is not for the poor, it is for the rich against the poor.” In other words, they don’t believe they have any power or judiciary rights against those in power and those who are wealthier. During my stay in Angola I often heard the saying: “In Angola nothing is allowed and in Angola everything is allowed.” Insinuating that depending on your social status, position and means you can either do whatever you want or nothing at all. Thus, even if their documents have all the necessary stamps or signatures or there exists a document somewhere in the municipal administration building asserting that the land belongs to Rodrigo’s family, that document might never be found if it is inconvenient for those in power.

Rodrigo’s reactions, claiming that “the law is not for the poor” bring to mind John Holston’s experience of the law in Brazil where it is considered to be for your enemies as portrayed in the Brazilian maxim: “For your friends everything, for your enemies, the law” (Holston 2008: 5). This is, as Holston has pointed out, not the conventional interpretation of the law where it is viewed as protecting the rights of citizens as emphasized in the rhetoric of liberal democracies. Rather

Rodrigo's family interpretation is similar to Holston's experience of the law in Brazil, where laws are not used to protect rights but quite the contrary used against adversaries to put them at a disadvantage. Therefore, "it is not for the poor" as Rodrigo has claimed and one could quite easily transfer the Brazilian saying to contemporary Angolan society. Especially in the cases of forced evictions where officially stamped and notarized papers and land titles are rendered null in the face of the law and authorities backed by the Angolan legal apparatus, of which the most visible members are the heavily armed police and bulldozers.



Figure 11: A victim of forced evictions sits on the rubble that used to be her house in the area of Camamba I in Kilamba Kiaxi municipality in Luanda (Picture: SOS Habitat).

Rodrigo's family's approach to legalizing their land tenure was shared by many of my informants throughout my fieldwork. People in positions ranging from farmers to NGO workers to ministry employees shared similar stories. While some informants who had waited for years for their application for legal land tenure documents to be validated were angry, others would give me a cynical smile and a shrug of the shoulders, saying something in the vein of: This is Angola, what did you expect? [as in "*Epa, isto é Angola*"].

One informant told me how he had had to fight off a person claiming to be a general in the Angolan Army, who tried to claim the land his wife had bought more than a decade earlier from a farmer in the area, was his. This former farming land was undergoing rapid urbanization during my fieldwork, and, therefore, like Rodrigo's land, considered valuable. Only with their education and privileged position and connections within Angolan society (and the ruling MPLA party), were they able to fend him off and keep the land.

Such experiences resonate with Shaxson's (2007) anecdote describing how established elites took advantage of their positions to appropriate private property in the early 1990s. Shaxson describes how his friend had come home one day to find two soldiers sitting in his nice Luandan sea view apartment. The soldiers claimed that now the apartment was theirs. However, knowing more

powerful individual's than those the soldiers relied on, Shaxon's friend was able to get his apartment back (see Shaxson 2007:54). These are examples of how power and authority in Angola work in mysterious ways, in many circumstances, rendering rights (both legal and human rights) and security trivial.

However, for many Luandans, the land titling application process was neither on their minds nor an issue. This stems from the two tieredness of the land titling system, which is further explained below, as many urban Angolans have a false sense of security when it comes to land tenure, believing that the papers they already have in hand for either their occupation or ownership of land is proof enough that the land is theirs.

5.6 The Angolan (Informal) Land Market

To gain a better understanding of the circumstances Rodrigo's family and millions of other people in Luanda's *musseques* are living in, one needs to look at the Luanda land market and what land and housing means to people in Angola's contemporary post-conflict context.

Property such as land and housing is of great importance in contemporary Angola. During my fieldwork a plot of land and a house were objects of desire everywhere I went in urban and peri-urban Luanda. To own land and have a house for one's family seems to be what most people strive for in contemporary

Luanda. It is a symbol of status and independence, to be able to invite friends and relatives to eat and drink in one's own abode. It is also considered a good investment in post-conflict Angola where housing prices have skyrocketed with the centrally located new and renovated buildings going for higher prices per square meter than anywhere else in the world.⁵⁹ This inflation of land and housing prices is mainly fuelled by the high demand for housing in the capital and by petro dollars which before the war's end went to the war apparatus but after its conclusion are increasingly spent on the reconstruction of infrastructure and new constructions in the capital.

Everyone needs a house to sleep in at night. The rental market is overpriced and there are no official renting regulations that protect tenants from the whims of landlords. Thus, rent hikes are irregular, frequent and often drastic; the rent may double between months. If one does not comply with the demands of the landlord one is kicked out. The situation of a tenant with little or no power to protest is not desirable. Therefore, despite the insecurities in land tenure and the volatility of the housing market, procuring one's own house, either by building or buying, and improving one's living conditions, seems to be on many people's

⁵⁹ According to Mercer's 2011, 2013 and 2014 annual global cost of living survey of the most expensive cities in the world Luanda was ranked first. In 2012 it was ranked the second most expensive city in the world. This indicates how Luanda has in its post-conflict era earned a place alongside expensive global cities such as Tokyo, Moscow, Geneva or Singapore.

agenda. It is an omnipresent conversational topic in contemporary Angola. This sentiment is echoed by the largescale construction projects after the war. Skyscrapers have risen and continue to rise in central Luanda, changing the capital city's skyline; modern housing projects are spreading noticeably in Luanda's suburbs and the infrastructural reconstructions by the government and its sub-contractors seem ever present.

A general sentiment for a majority of Luandans was therefore an emphasis on the importance of housing, with the preference being ownership [*casa própria*] since the rental market was volatile and price hikes frequent and often considered unfair. However, one of the most important factors in Luanda when it came to housing was location, that is, the value of being close to one's informal (or formal) sector workplace and social network. This is one reason why many of the forcibly relocated families from central areas returned from the peripheral areas they had been moved to. In cases where people have been provided with new property or a piece of land it is not uncommon to hear of people who sell or rent out their property or land to move back to their informal livelihoods in the city which provides vibrant business and social relationships which equals job opportunities, income and essentially survival, in Luanda's informal economy. Thus, there are people who prefer these conditions over the new and distant peripheries despite the threat of eviction and hardships some of

these areas have to offer its inhabitants. Such return, or migration from the place of relocation, is not surprising. For example, in cases of fishermen and their families who were moved from the centrally located *Ilha de Luanda* [Island of Luanda] kilometers inland to *Zango* (in Viana municipality), rendering their professional skills and means of survival (fishing and selling the catch) null.

This was the case with Antonio and his wife Dona Ana who was losing parts of his house to infrastructure upgrades in Cacuo. They had been promised a house in Zango as payment for the loss of land and demolition of parts of their house due to a new road in the area. When I asked whether the family would consider moving to Zango their daughter Xica was quick to answer: “Never!” [“*Nunca na vida!*”]. “The house in Zango will be rented out; no one here is willing to leave Cacuo and move out there.” The move to Zango represented a downgrade in the family’s wellbeing and their attachment to the place, as the ties to the community they had forged through the years were considered more important than a house in Zango in the relatively distant municipality of Viana. In Cacuo they had status through their social connections and through their work while a move to Zango would mean starting from scratch in a new social environment. In other words, Zango was too far from the family members’ workplaces as well as their social networks and their micro-world of informal

business ties and solutions to the various everyday problems found in contemporary post-conflict Luanda.

Although these were the sentiments of my informants in Cacuaco it is worth mentioning that recent ethnographic research on Zango (by Claudia Gastrow and Sylvia Croese) has shown that for many it is a desirable residential option, one that represents a calm and urbanized (planned) place with minimum basic services, and a contrast to the more “chaotic” informal settlements of the city, a place where one could acquire a house without having to pay rent. Furthermore, even though beneficiaries that have been relocated to Zango have not received formal title deeds for their houses, and are officially prohibited from selling or renting out the houses, there exists a lively real estate market in Zango (Croese 2013). However, this also serves to point out that the state’s strategy to “formalize the informal” and combat illegal occupancy, by removing citizens living in informal settlements in the city and moving them to peripheral settlements without granting formal title deeds, preserves the status quo (which incidentally has to change according to the same authorities) and maintains the informality of occupancy and what the state has defined as the illegal selling of land and housing.

As has been revealed here, the land market and its mechanisms as well as issues of land titling and tenure security are complex. A 2004 Development Workshop study on urban land access in Luanda states that only 20% of land was accessed through formal means that left occupants with a clear title (DW 2010a; DW 2010b). According to this, 80% of Luanda's lands were informally occupied in 2004, which means without true land tenure security. In the eyes of the government, informal occupation equals illegal occupation and thus, in Luanda, illegality has become the custom and the norm of residency. This illegality of residency for 80% of the city's estimated 6 million inhabitants was then legally confirmed by the new land law (Law 9/04), which placed all unregistered land under the ownership of the Angolan state. The question for a majority of Luanda's population is therefore how to go from informal to formal occupation and obtain a legally binding land title.

As Unruh (2012) has pointed out the land law was particularly problematic in its requirement for all landholders to formalize their land tenure and obtain a legal title within three years of the law's passing. This became impossible for the vast majority of the population considering that the regulations on how to apply for title still had not been published three years after the time period for registering land had passed (Unruh 2012:662). The fact that formal titles were only to be granted by the provincial government in the few areas where an urban

development plan already existed (DW 2010a), combined with the government's lack of institutional and administrative capacities, made the task of formalizing one's tenure even more problematic. Furthermore, many believed that they already possessed the documents that prove that their land, houses or businesses were formally and legally theirs.

Roy (2005:152) points out (and the Luandan case is a great example of this) that the process of formalizing one's property rights is seldom as straightforward as exchanging one's informal title for a formal one. That is, the process is not as straightforward as sometimes tacitly implied in policy documents. Title documents are of various types and of varying legitimacy and multiple and diverse claims to a single plot of land occur. Thus, it becomes a complicated process, with diverse legal ambiguities and competing interests for land based on diverse claims.

The limited and complex system of formal land registration has left the huge urban land market largely informal since formal and legal land tenure is largely inaccessible. However, despite this informality, documents are granted and stamped by formal official bureaucratic agents and local leaders, which further leads to a false sense of tenure security as, although seemingly official, few such documents are considered proof of legal occupation by the state. In reality only those with the capacity to go through the slow, arduous, expensive

and corrupt process of obtaining formal title from the provincial government have any legal status (Unruh 2012:662; see also DW 2010a). This is a small minority of the peri-urban population with only 6.8% of peri-urban households possessing documents that the state considers formally legal (Cain 2013:30; Urban Landmark 2013:6).

The inability of most peri-urban households to obtain legal land tenure was made clear to me during the first Forum for Municipal Development⁶⁰ held in Cacuaco in October 2009. After presentations by CBOs, NGOs and the municipal administrator himself, a man from one of the neighbourhoods in Kicolo stood up and asked about the mechanisms provided by the government to legalize property that had been constructed before the (new) processes of urbanization. Before answering the question the administrator set the context by saying: “As we all know most of the areas of the city of Luanda were invaded [by people looking for places to stay, away from the war, internally displaced people etc...]. *Bairro dos Mulenvos*, *Bairro Paraíso*.... and other parts of Kicolo, all these neighbourhoods are disorganised.” “...Just like *Sambizanga*, *Rangel* and even

⁶⁰ The Forum is a venue where representatives of civil society, including NGOs and local CBOs, the municipal administration and the local population can have a dialogue on the various issues existing in the municipality. It is an attempt to bridge the gap between local government and the population and increase local democracy. This was the first Forum of hopefully many to come.

Cazenga are disorganized.”⁶¹“...This, the government wants to stop.” They want to organize the areas. He goes on to answer the original question by saying that where such disorganization exists in the non-urbanised areas the municipal administration cannot and will not give fixed, long term legal land titles because “tomorrow the government might urbanize or renovate that area.” He justified this explanation by pointing out that it becomes a problem for the state if a (legal) building is standing where a street is supposed to pass through. His answer can only be understood as saying that it is easier not to issue land titles so that the state can evict and demolish the houses of the population living in the so-called musseques when and if they decide to urbanize or renovate these areas.

The informality of the land market has been highlighted here as well as its illegality according to the new land law. Government discourse on the informal land market proclaims it to be a manifestation of an anarchic situation in need of disciplining by the state through measures of “fiscalization,” urban upgrading, restructuring, renewal [*requalificação urbana e ordenamento*] and relocation (DW and CEHS 2005; DW 2011). However, in tandem with this “official” discourse, informal and illegal selling of land is, in the private press,⁶² often reported to be

⁶¹ All of which are old and long established neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the old city center of Luanda where a large proportion of the city’s inhabitants live.

⁶² As has been pointed out by DW (2011), there is perhaps little use in talking of independent media in Angola as the private sector is highly politicized.

carried out by public servants linked to municipal administrators and army officials (DW 2011:17). Simultaneously, municipal administrators have complained that their municipalities' biggest problem is the illegal sale of land, asserting that this illegality is carried out by people claiming to act on behalf of the municipal administration when selling the land (DW 2011:17-18; see, for example, the interview with the municipal administrator of Samba in Seminário Angolense 2010). A similar story was expressed by the municipal administrator of Cacuaco in 2009, when he explained how the residents' committees [comissões de moradores] have turned into speculators and sales agents of land. This is however not their role according to the administrator and therefore illegal and something the municipal authorities were trying to prevent.

However, land in Luanda (and elsewhere in Angola) is valuable and demand is high and therefore such practices continue. Such developments are one reason why Rodrigo and others in his situation are doubtful of the intentions of those claiming to be urbanizing or re-urbanizing their land or neighbourhoods. Thus, in addition to having a false sense of tenure security it becomes difficult for the Luandan population to know who is really behind the urbanization of their land and therefore they bear little trust towards those claiming to be "architects" and others alleging to be working for municipal authorities in land related matters. Hence, who is who, and who legitimately represents what (or who), becomes

indeterminate and therefore a predicament and a question that oftentimes is difficult to answer, resulting in further insecurities and the blurring of boundaries for the peri-urban population.

5.7 Forced Evictions and Relocation

Destruíram o meu cúbico,
Quando a vida já ia pra frente
E agora onde é que eu fico
Me digam só minha gente

They destroyed my house,
When life was on the right track,
And where do I go now
Please tell me my people

Me atiraram para as tendas
Onde o frio queima como o sol
Sem luz, sem pitéu,
E é tão longe o rio
O que é que eu faço minha gente
O que é que eu faço

They threw me to the tents
Where the cold burns like the sun
Without electricity, without food
And so far from the river
What do I do my people
What do I do

From the song: Eu quero ser político [I want to be a politician] by Teta Lágrimas

The lack of clear legal land tenure rights in contemporary Angola means that one's land or house is at risk of being expropriated by the state, someone claiming to represent the state like the residents' committees [comissões de moradores], or someone who has legally bought it from the rightful owner, which is the state when it comes to unregistered land. In Luanda and elsewhere, forced

evictions, forced relocations of people and demolition of their houses has become an increasingly common practice. It has been estimated that in 2009 (during my fieldwork) 3000 homes were demolished in the capital city, affecting 15,000 people (Croese 2010). The official justifications for this vary but in almost all cases illegal occupancy is brought up as an excuse.

On a fieldtrip to Cazenga with Angolan development workers, we passed by the neighbourhood of Talahadi. Heavily armed police officers with machine guns and bulletproof vests had closed some of the streets, causing jams in an already clogged and slow transit. The police stood guard while the residents of the houses adjacent to the street were loading all their worldly belongings on the back of trucks. The police looked menacing and nobody in our car dared to bother them with questions. I asked the Angolan NGO workers who were sitting in the car with me what was going on: "It has been decided that this area will be demolished. I had already heard of it but I guess it is really happening," said Nando who was quite up to date on the issues of forced eviction and relocation in Angola. We continued past the area designated for destruction to arrive at our meeting. What struck me, as I witnessed forced evictions for the first time, was the imminent destruction of houses, and the use of the police as an enforcer of this. Compared to many Luandan neighbourhoods, this part of Talahadi seemed

to be well organized, a residential area where the houses and streets were well planned. Incidentally, the reason for this particular eviction was the widening of the street and upgrading of infrastructure in the neighbourhood. However, my Angolan colleagues doubted that the residents of these houses would get proper compensation or any different treatment than people relocated for other reasons in other areas of the city, who often end up living in tents or small cheap cement block houses provided by the government on the periphery of the city. This experience made the forced relocations more real to me. Despite the grave implications for the people being evicted it felt like a very casual, everyday occurrence. This was one of many areas from which people were “relocated” or “evicted” during my fieldwork in 2009-2010.

The government has frequently been accused of using reasons such as environmental hazards and infrastructure upgrading as an excuse to evacuate prime building land in and around the city center, but then failing to implement the promised upgrading and instead selling the land to private developers. Forced relocations and evictions are depicted differently in local media depending on the political stance of the medium: as part of the country’s effort to reconstruct after decades of war or as a violation of human rights. International organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and national ones like SOS-habitat have condemned the use of intimidation tactics, violence,

excessive use of force, insufficient notice and inadequate compensation during demolitions and mass evictions in Angola (see also Foley 2007:2). They have also critiqued the lack of information and available consultation for victims of mass evictions, which should be ensured by both national and international law (Croese 2012a:129; DW 2011; Amnesty International 2003 and 2007; Human Rights Watch 2007). Ironically, at the same time forced evictions and demolition of houses were taking place in Angola, the government approved an official Housing Policy in 2006 (Resolution 60/06) with the objective of guaranteeing the universal right to housing, a right which later was further protected in the new 2010 constitution (art. 85) (DW 2011; Croese 2010).

The large scale state and privately-held infrastructure developments have led to rumours that Luanda is striving to become the Dubai of Africa. Developers are buying property, sometimes sites of cultural heritage,⁶³ in the centrally located old colonial capital for substantial costs, only to bulldoze them to provide room for skyscrapers, luxury apartment buildings and garages. However, striving to be the Dubai of Africa (whether actually true or not) has involved urban renewal and

⁶³ The French newspaper *Le Monde* made this into a story when the Elinga Theater was to be torn down. A site in central Luanda that had been classified as cultural heritage by the ministry of culture but later lost that classification to allow for its demolition and the building of office buildings and a parking garage (Châtelot 2012).

forced evictions of citizens. While the state media talk of development, the more critical weekly newspapers talk of the victims of development, that is, the forced eviction or relocation of people in the name of progress and development. A vivid example of the state's discourse was found in the state run *Jornal de Angola*, Angola's only daily newspaper, on August 11, 2009, when it announced that the Egyptian millionaire, Ahmed Bahgat Abdel Fattah, was going to build in the municipality of Sambizanga a "new" city in only four years to help in the post-war reconstruction of the nation. This city is supposed to be similar to another "city" he built in Cairo, called "Dream Land Cairo", with houses, high-rises, hospitals, hotels, fun parks, shops, golf courses, laundry services, swimming pools and other sport and social facilities. The project also includes a telecommunications component that will allegedly turn Sambizanga into Luanda's greatest "city."

It became however clear that the approximately 650 000 inhabitants of Sambizanga were not part of the plans for this "new" city. In an interview, the millionaire himself said without embarrassment: "We have created the Sambizanga Project, now we are going to work on the general plan of the municipality, but before we initiate our work we will have to transfer the people that live in the community to other areas" (Suami 2009). Thus, in this normalized discourse of development the focus on the physical topography of the city and

the extravagance of construction projects far outweigh the well-being and human rights of the citizens who happen to live in Luanda and elsewhere in the country.

Forced relocations are not new in Angola. They were carried out during Portuguese colonization and by the warring sides during the civil war. During the slave trade, slaves were forcibly relocated in masses and shipped overseas from Angola. Angolans were not only slaves but also slave traders. When slavery was abandoned in the early 1910s (Ball 2005:7) the Portuguese colonizers forcibly moved *contratados* who were compulsory recruits of able bodied men and women “contracted” to work for 12 months at a time⁶⁴ (Birmingham 2006:77).

The *contratados* were part of a government-run system of forced labour that lasted until the nationalist war for independence began in the early 1960s (Ball 2005:7). In the 1960s the Portuguese relocated the fishermen and women from Cacuaco’s beaches to remoter areas, taking up the best zones for themselves and their businesses. The Portuguese provided the fishermen and women with houses not far from the ocean but far from the residential and commercial zones of the colonizers (Perfil Municipal de Cacuaco - forthcoming). Ironically, this was done again in Cacuaco in the new millennium, now by the Angolan local

⁶⁴ The *contratados* worked for minimum wages that did not allow them to adequately support their dependents (Birmingham 2006:77).

authorities. However, this time no houses were offered as the Cacuaco beach was turned into a touristy beach with makeshift restaurants and bars.

During the war of independence the colonial power built prison style villages into which peasants were then herded by the colonial power at night. This was a measure taken against insurgency so that the peasants “could not provide food supplies and intelligence to any guerilla nationalists who might try to travel through the countryside by night” (Birmingham 2002:141; see also Pearce 2005:21; Bender 2004). Similarly, people were displaced by the civil war and many were systematically relocated from rural areas to government controlled provincial towns and cities by the FAA [*Forças Armadas Angolanas*], as part of the FAA’s ‘scorched earth’ strategy aimed at starving out the UNITA rebels who, like the government’s soldiers, depended on farmers and their crops for survival in the bush (Hodges 2004:74; Pearce 2005:54; Birmingham 2002:159). This resulted in rapid urbanization and millions of internally displaced people who are in many cases being forcibly relocated again today in the name of post-war reconstruction and development in Angola’s urban and peri-urban areas. Thus, one can see that forced relocation of the Angolan population is not new, for it has existed in various forms for centuries.

5.8 Virtual Realities

Angolan authorities have gone to lengths to hide the Luandan peripheries from the outside world, emphasizing instead its new and modern construction projects that are out of reach for the common Angolan. In 2008 the global celebration of World Habitat Day was held in Luanda. An important member of LUPP (Luanda Urban Poverty Programme) explained to me how LUPP was not invited to attend the UN Habitat convention: “The government did not want to show UN Habitat the musseques and since LUPP works with the urban poor and the poor live in the musseques we were not invited.” Instead, he claimed, UN Habitat were shown new “modern” developments, such as the new luxurious *Talatona* neighbourhood south of Luanda where the conference was held and areas such as *Urbanização Nova Vida* where, he claimed with a grin of comical disbelief: “nothing is lacking!” Thus, UN Habitat were shown a very onesided view of the city and not one representing the living conditions of approximately 80% of the city’s population.

The UN-Habitat’s decision to choose Luanda to lead the global observance of the 2008 World Habitat Day provoked controversy among international housing and human rights organizations. In light of human rights violations surrounding the forced mass evictions and demolitions of houses taking place in the city they deemed the city not suitable for the United Nations’

aim to raise awareness of the human right to adequate housing for all, with the theme being harmonious cities “where everyone and every culture is at home” (Amnesty International 2008).

This is one representation of what I have referred to as “virtual realities” in Angola, in this case propagated by the government and thus representing one form of propaganda, where perception (of an imagined and ideal reality or imagined city) becomes all that matters in an environment where it is difficult to distinguish reality from fiction and truths from falsehoods. Such virtual realities in Angola are sustained through the state run media and news outlet and through the use of international public relations firms. According to Marques de Moraes (2012) the president earmarked in 2012 \$40 million US to promote Angola’s image abroad through a private company managed by two of his children. The same children of the president have also received two state-run TV channels to manage which helps in constructing such virtual realities (or in reconstructing realities). The president’s and the MPLA’s use of international public relations companies is not new. Hodges (2004:57) has for example pointed out how President dos Santos paid a Brazilian public relations company to propagate the image of the MPLA as the champion of peace, reconciliation and democracy before the 1992 election, which they won (see also Birmingham 2002:171-172).

Birmingham has pointed out another tactic by which such virtual realities are upheld by authorities, when he describes how expatriates who hardly ever travel outside of the city center are exempt from the poor conditions and much of the misery one can encounter in the city. He mentions how unwanted populations have been pushed to the periphery, for example, how beggars and their dependents have been moved to camps to prettify the Luanda downtown area (2006:168). Thus, when foreign leaders come to visit they are shown a (false) “image” of the city that does not represent reality for the majority of the city’s inhabitants. Friends with families living in Luanda’s Hoji Ya Henda neighbourhood explained to me how shortly before my arrival in 2009, during the Pope’s official visit to Angola, the route between the Pope’s various stops on the itinerary was cleaned up and houses painted by public workers that otherwise seldom came to these neighbourhoods to service the population. Incidentally my friends’ family house was located in the vicinity of a church, which was one of the pope’s scheduled destinations. Everything was supposed to look impeccable for his holiness’ visit. However, during my fieldwork heaps of rubbish had started accumulating once again in the streets that had been cleaned and painted for the pope’s visit only a few months before my first visit to the area. My friend, clearly angry, told me that “this is how things work in Angola”, pointing out that the perception of foreigners of the state of affairs in Angola and Luanda is more

important to authorities than the reality on the ground, that is, the lack of services for the Angolan population and their well-being.

Hence, throughout my fieldwork I kept coming to the conclusion that in Angola, appearance is everything and that reality is repeatedly altered to be perceived differently than it really is. This is of course not a new or necessarily uniquely Angolan political strategy as the “Potemkin village” has been used as a political and economic trick by rulers all over the world for centuries.⁶⁵ However, it is not only the state which uses such strategies but citizens also engage in propagating virtual realities, either of themselves, their social, economic or political powers, and of their connections to the state apparatus or those in positions of power in Angola.

5.9 The Land Registration Process and Angolan Law

Luandans, who have the right to register their land and properties, say that it is a very slow and unproductive process, one that seems in many cases to be endless. I heard various reasons for this. The government’s institutional capacity to legalize land titles was weak or lacking. An NGO worker working on matters of

⁶⁵ The Potemkin village can be traced to Russian military leader and favorite of Catherine the Great, Grigory Potemkin’s trickery in which he had fake villages erected along the Dnieper River to impress his empress during her visit to Crimea. Thus, the expression refers in essence to a fake village built with the intention to deceive and impress.

land titling and forced relocation claimed that this institutional capacity was lacking on purpose in order to stall the legalizing process as long as possible until it was too late: “You have to wait for years, sometimes you never get your legal documents”. In one case the owner had to wait seven years and still had no legal documents for his property. After seven years of frequent follow-ups on the case by the owner himself he was told that the application was invalid and that he would have to re-submit his application for the land titling documents.

As is evident by Rodrigo’s reaction, people were sceptical of their ability to register their land before the land registration deadline in 2010. Informants from diverse social strata shared the widespread belief that the land registration process was purposefully unproductive and slow so that the legal registration of land, especially urban, would miss the deadline. An NGO worker, working on land related issues, who had great difficulties in legalizing his land and house, claimed that those in charge of registering land in Luanda were afraid to do so, because in some cases land titles had been granted which had roused anger among officials higher up in the chain of command. In some cases land rights were given in areas planned for demolition, supposedly to make way for new infrastructure. In other cases land titles were given in areas that had been earmarked for someone high up in the political hierarchy. That is, it had interfered with what Messiant (1992) has called “clientelist redistribution”, a form of

patronage and cronyism (see Hodges 2004:57). These developments have rendered the process inefficient and seemingly it became more “for show” than for the benefit of the local population, an ideal and utopic version of what was happening on the ground, another case of what I have referred to in this work as “virtual realities”.

Such scepticism might perhaps be considered by an outsider as a cynical attitude towards change, but one has to keep in mind that the new land law and the registration process took effect in the midst of cases of forced evictions, relocations and land grabbing on behalf of the state. There are similarities between the peripheral areas of urban São Paulo, Holston writes about, and contemporary post-conflict Angola. In the Brazilian context Holston refers to a misrule of law which is easily applicable to the Angolan context. Holston talks of “a system of stratagem and bureaucratic complication deployed by both state and subject to obfuscate problems, neutralize opponents, and, above all, legalize the illegal” (Holston 2008:19). The most notable difference between the two urban peripheries are discrepancies in citizen’s rights, seeing as Angola’s peri-urban population has almost no voice or legal capacity to stop the demolition of their property and the evictions from their homes.

Rodrigo’s case, and many others’ in the central and peri-urban neighbourhoods of Luanda, underline that the poor have little power to claim their

rights. As a friend once told me: “Our laws are beautiful on paper, perhaps the most beautiful laws in the world, but when it comes to following them it is like they do not exist”. The moral of her story: we should not confuse laws and political regulations with political will or capacity. Her words ring true when one reads over the new Land Law (Law 9/04) and the Territorial Planning Law (Law 3/04) of 2004. Not only do they set a timeline to regularize informally occupied land as mentioned earlier, but they also state that mass evictions from, and land grabbing of, informally occupied land without declaration and just compensation is illegal. Furthermore, rights to information and public participation in urban planning are also provided by the law (art. 21 Law 3/04). These laws confirm that the act of adopting laws is not always followed by adequate strategies of how the government, local or national, should implement them (DW 2011). The lack of strategies to deliver on adopted laws is one contributing factor to an informal land tenure system and to informality in general, or what I have defined here as *candonga* culture. Tomás (2012:14-15), in his writing about what he has described as the “formalization of hyper-presidentialism”, referring to the concentration of executive power that has become the hallmark of Angola after the adoption of the 2010 constitution, has also called attention to how the law in Angola is used in ad hoc ways when it benefits those who have the power and

authority to take advantage of them. He points out the gap between the written law and the reality of how it is used and what the law is supposed to normalize.

As various informants pointed out throughout my fieldwork, opinions varied on whether such a lack of strategy was indeed a strategy in its own right, allowing for land seizures and land speculation by those in positions to manipulate it; was the culprit simply incompetence, corruption or perhaps all of the above? Through his work in Brazil, Holston (2008:24) has demonstrated how the gap between legislation and social practice is often wide enough to accommodate the passage of history itself. Furthermore, his experience of the law in Brazil where “people craft legislation and exploit its complications as strategies, or stratagems, of social action” (Holston 2008:25) is in many ways remarkably similar to the experience in Angola and raises the question of whether the complications and inconveniences of the legal system and its bureaucracy are not functions of its own design. Thus, one could conclude, even though laws exist, it is as if they exist for reasons outside the purview of the law. A soon-to-be lawyer confirmed this sentiment when she conveyed to me that she doubted that the laws she has been studying for years would apply entirely when she graduated and stepped into the real world of Angolan law. She was not sure that the lessons she learned in class could fully prepare her for the reality that waited outside the university walls, which finally brings to mind another Angolan

saying: 'Angolan law is written in pencil'. Meaning that it can easily be manipulated, erased or altered, when needed, which would be more difficult if it were written in ink.

It is evident, as pointed out above, that forced evictions in Angola are at odds with the Angolan land law. From Luanda's post-conflict environment one can conclude that laws and constitutional rights do not seem to reach very far from the central pillars of power in Luanda and into the periphery. This is best seen in how the same law (Law 09/04) that states that land may only be expropriated for specific public use and that forced evictions without just compensation are illegal (art. 12 Law 9/04 and art. 20 Law 3/04) (see DW 2011) is used to justify evictions of the peri-urban population in the name of informal land titles and illegal occupation.

The institutional capacity to serve and protect the inhabitants of the peripheries is clearly lacking. Those in power (to decide what shall happen in the city and thus who has "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1996 [1968])) and in charge of the rule of law have the law on their side and can use it to evict people from their houses and lands. Ironically, the same laws that are used to evict people from their homes and off their lands are also supposed to protect people's rights, for example, to housing (e.g. the official housing policy (Resolution 60/06) and art. 85 of the 2010 constitution) and just compensation in the case of evictions (as

e.g. per art. 12 in law 9/04 and art. 20 in law 3/04). Thus, the laws seem inconsistent depending on who is involved. Furthermore, one finds a situation in Angola that could be defined, using Agamben's (2005) terminology, as a state of exception, in which exceptional measures are taken by the sovereign to suspend the legal order. In Angola, this can be seen when authorities, private companies and other de facto authoritarian entities act in suspension of the law⁶⁶ (and human rights), and ironically use the law to do so.

5.10 From the Formalization of Land Tenure to Accumulation by Dispossession

The situation in Luanda described here, where a new law has removed citizens' rights to land (Cain 2012) and people are evicted from their homes, relocated and their houses destroyed, brings to mind the concept of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003; 2005; 2008). In Angola's post-conflict context there is an abundance of occurrences in which accumulation by dispossession takes place, where the state and other powerful interests use the law as an excuse to evict and demolish the assets of the poor in the name of formalization and legalization of property rights, urban renewal, and modernization and post-conflict development.

⁶⁶ Martin Murray (2011:160) has come to a similar conclusion for the spaces of immigrant workers in inner-city Johannesburg.

The concept of “accumulation by dispossession” is Harvey’s rephrasing of Marx’s notion of primitive accumulation. Primitive accumulation was Marx’s answer to the question posed by him and others of how the capital used in capitalist production accumulated originally (Hall 2012:1189). Marx’s example of the process of primitive accumulation in 19th century Britain describes how commodification of land and soil involved the expulsion of the land’s users and residents which thus not only made land a medium for capital circulation but also produced a proletarian labour force necessary for industries in the cities. This was achieved through the use of the state as an apparatus of simultaneous eviction and commodification (Marx 1992[1867], cited in Harvey n.d.).

Similarly, accumulation by dispossession is a process of displacement which Harvey claims to “lie at the core of urbanization under capitalism”, where valuable land is captured from low income populations, a form of capital absorption through urban redevelopment (Harvey 2008:34). Harvey’s argument is similar to that of Wood (1989:42), who states that capitalism facing stagnating production and profits has turned to redistributing wealth by taking away resources from the poor in favour of the already wealthy (see also Spangler 2000:126). That is, capital accumulation of the upper classes in the neoliberal era has not come from economic growth but through accumulation (of the assets of

the lower classes) by dispossession through laws, regulation and credit schemes (Harvey n.d.).

Marx's notion of primitive accumulation has thus resurfaced and, as pointed out by Hall (2012:1188-1189), gained increased importance in the discourses of both academics and activists.⁶⁷ The notion provides a politico-economic framework that has become analytically useful when looking at issues of social justice within urban landscapes (Doshi 2012:3), and which fits well within contemporary Angola's post-conflict reconstruction context. However, unlike Marx's idea of primitive accumulation leading to an introduction to capitalist market relations, the outcome of such accumulation by dispossession in Luanda is an expansion of the informal land market, as those evicted cannot afford the new houses rising on their land, which inevitably produces new informal settlements. However, capitalist property relations are not new in Angola. Hence, the accumulation by dispossession that is taking place in Angola should not be seen as an entry point into capitalist market relations, as per Marx's writing, but rather should be seen as an attempt at reshaping Angola's capitalist property relations that still are very informal and have variously been

⁶⁷ Hall points to the works of de Angelis 2001 and 2004, Hart 2002 and 2006, Harvey 2003, Perelman 2000, and Wood 2002 and 2006, in support of his claim.

dubbed questionable nicknames such as cutthroat capitalism, jungle capitalism or *capitalismo selvagem* (Hodges 2004:43; Sogge 2011a:86).

Thus, it is not a question of an emerging capitalist market system. A vast capitalist market emerged informally from the ruins of the post-colonial socialist planned market system that failed horribly as such, but succeeded remarkably in propagating a flourishing parallel informal capitalist economy that still today is essential for the majority of the Angolan population (see chapter 3). Depicting Luanda's post-conflict land and housing developments through a dualism between private property and the commons, or customary tenure, does not represent fully what is taking place in many of Luanda's neighbourhoods where people have purchased and sold their properties in good faith and even gone through the process of regularizing their tenure documents with authorities. Rather, it is a question of dividing the market into formal and informal categories. All citizens have access to the informal market that saturates Angolan economic space while the official or formal economy is out of reach for those who do not possess the socio-political connections and the economic and bureaucratic capacity to formalize or legalize their land tenure or businesses.

5.11 A Two Tiered System of Land Titling

These circumstances have resulted in a two-tiered land titling system⁶⁸. There exists land ownership and documentation of land tenure that is widely accepted by the Angolan population. However these are not necessarily accepted by the government or municipal authorities, even though the documents are often signed, stamped or notarized by the same authorities. Thus, land ownership is accepted between people, but not always between the population and the government. The grimmest reminder of this two tiered land titling system I have seen were in pictures depicting desperate people holding their documents in hand while their houses were being bulldozed in the background.

The two tiered tenure system is partly a result of the slow, complicated and cumbersome formal land transaction procedures and weak land administration, which has allowed for parallel systems of land titling to exist in tandem with the formal land tenure system (on ineffective land administration see Cain 2013; Unruh 2012). It is this informal parallel system that has fulfilled the needs of the Luandan population in the absence of an efficient formal registration system. It is also a result of locally established customs of tenure and land titling, where traditional authorities and other local leaders have in the past overseen

⁶⁸ Or even a multi-tiered land titling system, as there are different versions of informal land titles in circulation with overlapping registration procedures being used.

and legitimized transfer and tenure documents (Urban Landmark 2013:5), which according to the new law have become illegal.

The two tiered system is therefore divided into formal and informal land markets and transactions and, in some cases, arguably semi-formal because the parallel system often incorporates local administrators in the process and thus engages the state, which further blurs the lines between the formal and the informal, legal and illegal land titles and secure and insecure tenure. A study of informal land tenure arrangements in Luanda has shown that 85% of buyers on the informal parallel land market believe that they have secure tenure and legitimate documents for occupation (Cain 2013:30; Urban Landmark 2013:5).

The mechanisms that render the system two tiered are derived from the social disparity as represented in the fact that only a minority has access, and the means, to participate in the formal land market and receive legal land titles, while 75-80% of the city's population rely on the informal parallel system which has become predominant. Thus, in effect, the majority is excluded from the small formal market, which deals in land that is legally titled or belongs to officially-planned housing reserves, while the informal market deals with the remaining mass of untitled land which automatically has formally become the property of the state as stipulated in the land law (Law 9/04).

Consequently, Luandans continue to rely on informal tenure documents, and an organized yet informal land market with widely recognized rules, to access land (Urban Landmark 2013:8; Cain 2013:20). Much can be learned from this informality and policy makers could well use the informal tenure systems as a basis for new politics of inclusion rather than exclusion, where existing uses of urban and peri-urban space are respected and the wellbeing, needs and aspirations of citizens do not come second to the political and economic imaginations within the Angolan state of a modern and developed metropolitan city and the economic self-interest of well-connected land speculators. The argument here thus agrees with Croese's call for an approach to the urban centers of Africa that recognizes "the emergence of new, multiple, sometimes contradictory, and ever changing urbanisms that arise in the space between state intervention and its limitations, between intentions and outcomes, between discourses and practices, and between the state and its subjects" (Croese 2013).

There is a connection between property rights and citizens' rights (Sikor and Lund 2009:8). This chapter comes to a conclusion similar to Doshi's from her research on slum clearances for redevelopment in Mumbai where she states: "Redevelopment produces difference and reworks class relations" (2012:19). In Angola today there is an enormous discrepancy between the formal legal

situation and the actual reality on the ground when it comes to land and property as is best represented in the two tiered land titling system. As the case study shows, the new land law and the post-conflict land strategy have, for many, caused disorder and increased social inequalities and legal insecurities rather than the opposite. In the name of urbanization, urban renewal and post-conflict reconstruction, citizens are moved from more valuable land in the city, and their homes demolished, to land on the fringes of the city with minimal land value, far from services, markets and established social networks.

The perceived problems of uneven urban development and informal land tenure have been turned into technical-legal problems and consequently the ongoing accumulation by dispossession has been legalized. This could perhaps be explained as a case of what the Comaroffs have called the ‘fetishization’ of the law. That is, when the law is “objectified, ascribed a life force of its own, and attributed the mythic capacity to configure a world of relations in its own image” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:33) resulting in an overemphasis on its ability to generate what it strives to accomplish. However, the outcome of attempts at formalizing the informal land market through legislation, accumulation by dispossession, urbanization and urban renewal, is a widening gap between privileged ‘formal’ citizens and underprivileged ‘informal’ citizens, and the inequality and social injustices that inevitably follow such a widening gap. From a

more critical standpoint one could say that the neoliberal segregation between newly enriched political and economic elites and the rest of the Angolan population is a process classifying who has 'the right to the city' (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]) and who has 'the right to co-produce the city' (Koster and Nuijten, forthcoming). This segregation is not only social and economic but is increasingly taking on a geographical dimension as well.

5.12 Conclusion

De Soto (2000) has claimed that the poor are living on land and housing assets worth trillions of dollars of "dead capital" in the form of informal land, houses, buildings and small businesses (see also Kingwill et al. 2006:4). This is true in the case of Luanda as it has become one of the most expensive cities in the world. However, as has been explained here, Luanda's informal land and housing economy has revived or, at least, helped liquefy some of this so-called "dead capital." Thus, the classification of "dead capital" does perhaps not apply entirely in Luanda. Nevertheless, the rental and real estate market in Luanda has skyrocketed after the war with increased demand, in particular from expatriates and international corporations, pushing many of the original inhabitants to the outskirts of the city (DW 2011). Rents and prices for housing in central Luanda are among the highest in the world and prices for peri-urban land are rising.

Thus, one can conclude that the land the poor are living on, especially land close to the city center is of considerable monetary value, whether on the informal housing market in which official and legal land titles are absent (or titles merely considered quasi-legal), or on the smaller formal housing market. Unfortunately the price inflation of land and housing in Angola often further hinders justice for the poor when more powerful players in an informal and insecure market and political system are eyeing their assets.

Urban development in Angola has been in the form of accumulation by dispossession in which Angolan authorities wield the power to bulldoze a neighbourhood in its entirety, pushing people out, not only from their homes but from the personal ties and connections, social networks and informal employment opportunities that have developed over years and decades and have served as a social security network in Luanda's "informal" *candonga* culture.

As pointed out by Sikor and Lund (2009:14), force, violence, physical presence, eviction and land grabbing are at the origin of most property regimes. One can see how force plays out in Rodrigo's case: firstly in the farmers' own defence of their land when outsiders, *de facto* authorities and squatters have attempted to settle on their agricultural land; secondly, in the authorities' use of

armed police and bulldozers during evictions and the demolition of peri-urban neighbourhoods. The law combined with state violence has thus been used to eliminate earlier rights and to legalize new sets of property rights. This can be seen as a continuation of a trend towards further consolidating the state's political sovereignty despite the miniscule steps towards multiparty democracy and talk of decentralization.

The lack of institutional capacity to oversee the registration and thus formalization of citizens' land and property rights results in a gap between the legal code and actual practice on the ground. This situation has led to the blurring of boundaries between what constitutes the formal and the informal and the legal and illegal. Hence, the flourishing informal land market, the two tiered land titling system and the advent of countless land speculators in the emerging urban spaces that represent opportunity for some and insecurity for others.

Informality tends to be viewed as "the other" of the city, something that can be changed or banned through urban development (Koster and Nuijten forthcoming). Using Agamben's terminology to explain urban informality, Roy (2005) has claimed that informality is a state of exception to the formal. Much like in Agamben's (2005) definition of state sovereignty as the power to determine the state of exception, it is the state, and its planning and legal apparatus, that determines what is informal and what is not. Thus, she reminds us of how

informality (and the state of exception that it embodies) is defined and produced by the state (Roy 2005:155). Furthermore, it is the state that decides which forms of informality survive and which do not (Roy 2005:149).

As has been illustrated in this work, informality in Luanda is what Roy and Al Sayyad (2004) have referred to as an “organizing urban logic” (see also Ley 2012:15) so it becomes difficult to portray the informal and the formal as strictly separate domains (as is often presumed in policy documents). Rather, these domains are profoundly hybrid, with processes of ‘bricolage’ between formal and informal sectors (Meagher and Lindell 2013:72) being much more of a norm than a rarity in Luanda. However, the outcome of this bricolage between formal and informal domains is structured and systematic and accepted by the city’s inhabitants. That is, it is not as ad hoc, random or chaotic as is often presumed.

The reality on the ground in contemporary Luanda, as has been touched on through ethnographic accounts in this work, is that people adapt to and learn how to manoeuvre in the often-obscure areas of such an informal politico-economic system. Both the people on the ground and authorities at the top (if such a dichotomy can be used) try to manipulate the vast grey areas and blurred parameters of “the system” to their advantage. In fact it fuels what I have called here the *candonga* culture, which in itself is the informal result of decades of failed economic policies, weak institutions and war. Old categories and

paradigms of political and social order and domination, as well as the culture they produce, are difficult to transform and impossible to erase entirely. This can be seen in this chapter in the attempts at social engineering through the introduction of new laws or renewal of the urban landscape.

Von Benda-Beckmann et al. (2009:2) remind us that state authorities are rarely the sole locus of governance, which is applicable in Luanda as elsewhere.

However, when armed police and bulldozers show up on people's doorsteps, there is little to be done to stop them. One can see from Rodrigo's case, when dealing with those they believe to be official representatives of the authorities (state or municipal), that is, not informal (non-state) de facto actors, people have little agency and describe their cases in fatalistic terms as having few avenues with which to defend themselves.

Urban development and evictions of families from informal neighbourhoods in Luanda evidently affect more than the objective layout of the city's topography. It upsets the residents' deeper subjective roots such as their senses of place, community and survival. Pushing people out of their homes and neighbourhoods does not solve the perceived problem of informal occupancy. Rather, it is a way of moving the problem (and people) around (Harvey 2011; Engels 1995[1872]), pushing it further to the periphery which inevitably produces

new informal settlements and squatters since the evictees can hardly afford the new houses that are being built on the land they were evicted from. An Angolan friend framed this predicament in very basic terms: “People need to live somewhere, people need houses” and, accordingly, people continue to find solutions to their land and housing problems, and where formal avenues are closed informal ones are taken.

Chapter 6. Local Level Power Dynamics in the Musseques: Civil Society, the Elusive State and Governmentality

In some of Luanda's peri-urban neighbourhoods, community based organizations (CBOs) are working towards improving basic infrastructure and services such as water and electricity distribution. However, during my 2009-2010 ethnographic fieldwork, I witnessed how these organizations were locked in local power struggles with other institutions claiming to have the sole right to develop these peri-urban neighbourhoods.

This chapter looks at local level power struggles that CBOs and other civil society organizations are finding themselves in and the power dynamics at play in Luanda's peri-urban musseques. It describes how institutions such as residents' committees, which are not always considered part of the state apparatus in Angola, take on the role and authority of "the state" in peri-urban Luanda. This makes the classic Hegelian boundaries between the state, civil society and the family increasingly blurred. Furthermore, the imagined vertical relationship between the state at the top and society (or families) at the bottom, with civil society organizations acting as intermediaries between the two becomes increasingly horizontal when "state" institutions, whether legitimate or not, take on a competitive role against CBOs in Luanda's peri-urban areas.

The chapter focuses on grassroots civil society organizations and local authority in Luanda's peri-urban context. It twines together the reality of civil society organizations in peri-urban Luanda with the philosophical history and contemporary understandings of the concept of civil society. A clarification of the concept's philosophical roots as well as uses and critiques found in contemporary discourses sets a theoretical context through which a more comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs) in Luanda's musseques (as well as in Luanda and Angola more generally) can take place.

The chapter provides ethnographic cases of local level power struggles in a peri-urban neighbourhood in Luanda and the implications of such struggles. It describes a clash between community-based organizations and other older informal as well as formal institutions of urban governance. In essence it describes a contest for power at the neighbourhood level as well as a struggle for control over the services and resources in the peri-urban neighbourhoods of Luanda and the economic and political power they yield. Rather than focusing too much on the "mechanical" ideals of a system, for example, the power structures presented at the offices of municipal authorities, I describe in this chapter the power dynamics as they are experienced by, and affect, the peri-urban populace and local, small scale, community based organizations. Through

such a bottom up approach one can focus on what *really* takes place at the local or community level instead of what *should* be taking place.

6.1 Civil Society in Angola: The Legal and Political Environment

Civil Society in contemporary Angola is growing and becoming increasingly interconnected. However, as Nuno Vidal (2008:232-233) has pointed out, Angolan civil society organizations (CSOs) operate in an environment where the state apparatus, dominated by the governing MPLA party, controls society with a firm hand and imposes continuous constraints. In 2002 the state introduced an NGO bill (Art. 21 b) that impedes NGOs and church-based organizations from involvement in politically sensitive issues, and prohibits NGOs from partaking in any political or partisan activities (Nuno Vidal 2008:233-234). As Vidal calls attention to: “it is up to the government and to the judicial system controlled by the government to assess the political nature of NGOs activities” (2008:234). When I asked the director of an Angola-based NGO with international ties what would happen if they were to become overly critical of Angolan power structures in their research reports, the reply was: “I don’t know, we would probably be kicked out of the country.” Thus, NGOs and other civil society organizations have to find a balance between being constructive in their reports and advice without being overly critical while conducting their work. This brings to mind Gramsci’s

claim that “the guarantor of the autonomy of civil society can be none other than the state” (Mamdani 1996:15), suggesting that only the practices that have been ratified by the intellectual and political leadership are considered valid for civil society, while actions that have not been ratified are considered invalid (or illegal) (Chandhoke 2003:226). Needless to say, this political environment has led to fewer NGOs in Angola, with less political and economic influences than one can find in many other sub-Saharan African countries.

The Enabling Environment Index (EEI), a study on the favourable conditions for civil society activism per country, that is, on how open and safe a country is for civil society activities, ranked Angola 101 of 109 countries in 2013, classifying the environment for civil society activism in Angola as non-favourable (CIVICUS 2013). The index takes into account “legal, regulatory and policy measures” that restrict civil society’s ability to exist and operate freely in each country, as well as, “physical attacks, harassment, imprisonment, and assassinations of civil society activists,” and “crackdowns on protests and demonstrations” are taken into consideration (CIVICUS 2013:4). CIVICUS’ own definition of an enabling environment is “the condition within which civil society works” (CIVICUS 2013:5). Angola’s low score on the Enabling Environment Index is consistent with Transparency International’s claim that civil society activism in Angola can be dangerous (Transparency International 2013).

Despite a complex political environment, civil society is nevertheless present in Angola, although arguably weak. Through my fieldwork I communicated and became acquainted with local CBOs as well as national and international NGOs. My research focused mostly on local level community based organizations and their work in peri-urban Luanda. These organizations were involved in diverse community projects, varying from operating small neighbourhood based schools to daycare centers, often involving and aiming at the women who work in the informal market, earning the bread and butter for their households. There are also organizations that provide courses in adult literacy, organize garbage removals from their neighbourhoods and work towards providing basic sanitation services in their areas, as well as the provision of water and electricity. Other organizations take part in public education on subjects as broad as delinquency prevention, general health, malaria prevention, HIV/AIDS awareness and human rights. Furthermore, CSOs are involved with civil society forums at the community and municipal levels where local authorities, civil society representatives from NGOs and CBOs and the local population get together and take part in dialogues on the various issues they face in their neighbourhoods and municipalities. These forums are an attempt to bridge the gap between local government and the population through the influence and guidance of an organized civil society.

There are of course varying degrees of success and failure at the local level in the endeavours of such CBOs and NGOs. It is, however, interesting to note that the problems such activities aim to address and mitigate are often considered the responsibilities of the state⁶⁹, as part of a social contract between the state and its citizens. That is, the State is theoretically identified as the major service provider although its role as service provider is in reality not fulfilled in Luanda, especially not in the informal parts of the city or in the so-called Musseques. Thus, CBOs in Luanda's peri-urban areas try to take on an important role by filling a vacuum where other solutions are absent or have failed. Before going further in depth into the local conditions of civil society organizations in peri-urban Luanda and the oftentimes-complex power struggles they are dealing with, it is appropriate to bring to light the philosophical and politico-economic roots of civil society as a concept in contemporary discourses. Juxtaposing civil society in peri-urban Luanda against the backdrop of historic and contemporary discourses on civil society as a philosophical and political concept will help put the situation that locally based civil society finds itself in in present-day Angola into context.

⁶⁹ This is dependent on the society one comes from and the social contract in place between state and society; it is definitely seen as the state's responsibility in social democratic systems, but also in the residue of socialist ideology that still prevails in Angola.

6.2 Philosophical Roots of the Civil Society Concept

Contemporary definitions of civil society first emerged as a “systematic formulation” during the Scottish Enlightenment in the 18th century (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:4). Scottish Enlightenment thinkers saw the realm of civil society as a public arena of exchange and interaction. Adam Ferguson considered it to be almost interchangeable with commercial society⁷⁰ (Chandhoke 2005:2) and thus with capitalism. According to him civil society arose when production left the household and individuals became dependent on one another, which spurred the development of active citizenship within the modern state system (Chandhoke 2005:3; Oz-Salzberger 1995). This was in itself not merely a neutral space of exchange but also a moral space, a realm held together by solidarity, moral sentiments and natural affections (Seligman 2002:18-19). As Ferguson noted in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*: “It is in conducting the affairs of civil society, that mankind find the exercise of their best talents, as well as their best affections” (Adam Ferguson 1995[1767]:149). Thus, for Adam Ferguson and other philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment (e.g. Adam Smith, David Hume and Francis Hutcheson), civil society was an ethical realm “in which the individual

⁷⁰ Scottish Enlightenment thinkers were influenced by theories of natural law as seen in the works of Hugo Grotius and Samuel von Pufendorf, particularly in Pufendorf’s theories on the emergence of property as a key social institution and his theory on economic progress from primitive societies to more sophisticated commercial societies (Oz-Salzberger 1995:xiii).

is constituted in his individuality through the very act of exchange with others”

(Seligman 2002:18).⁷¹

Hegel has also become an important influence on contemporary civil society thought. Like Scottish Enlightenment thinkers he linked civil society to the emergence of the market economy (Wood 1991:xviii) and saw it as part of, and functioning within, a modern liberal state system. He conceptually distinguished the state from the realm of civil society, which he considered as the realm where ideas and activities, independent of the state were expressed (Brannan 2003:2). This distinction between the state and civil society has become one of the main defining characteristics of civil society in contemporary discourse. While distinguishing civil society from the state, Hegel also claimed that it presupposes the state. Thus, in order for civil society to exist the state must exist before it as a self-subsistent entity (Hegel 1991[1821]:220). Civil society was for him a creation of the modern world, the realm of a civic community existing between the family and the state and thus serving as an intermediary (in the vertical relationship) between the family (below) and the state (ruling from above) (Hegel 1991[1821]:220). It was “a genuine form of society, a ‘universal family’ which makes collective demands on its members and has collective responsibilities

⁷¹ Other philosophers accredited for their work towards coining the term civil society are John Locke, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Immanuel Kant, Alexis de Tocqueville and Karl Marx.

toward them” (Wood 1991:xix; Hegel 1991[1821]:263-264). As Hegel noted in *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (Elements of the Philosophy of Right)*: “In civil society, each individual is his own end... But he cannot accomplish the full extent of his ends without reference to others; these others are therefore means to the end of the particular [person]” (1991[1821]:220). As Hegel (1991[1821]) maintained, it is clear that this realm of civil society is made up of diverse interests with extremely heterogeneous aspirations.

Hegel’s definition of civil society as an intermediary between the state and the family has become a classic definition of civil society. Family is however quite a specific term, and relative, since the definition of family can differ between societies and social contexts (see for example Karlström 1999 on civil society and African kinship systems). It is also not uncommon to situate civil society in between the state and society, or the state and the individual. Given that family, individual and society are all terms with different meanings, I use the broader concept of society in which, ideally, the family, the individual and other societal units are included. By doing this, I do not mean to interpret civil society as necessarily representing society as a whole in the face of state power, but rather as representing units that fit within the concept of society.

The concept has taken many turns in its journey towards contemporary understandings. In the 19th and early 20th centuries the concept was taken up by

various political thinkers and philosophers, including Tocqueville, Marx, and Gramsci, before its reawakening in the 1970s and 1980s owing to a dissident Central and Eastern European intelligentsia struggling against totalitarianism (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999:4-5; Gellner 1994). The body of literature dedicated to the definition of civil society is still growing and most (if not all) definitions of the concept hinge on its particular relations to the state as an embodiment of power (Helander 2005:199). As will be seen in this chapter the classic distinction between civil society, the state and the society (the family, the individual) becomes simultaneously confusing and interesting in Luanda's peri-urban context.

Thus, civil society, as an idea among philosophical and political thinkers in the mid to late 1700s in Scotland and early 1800s in Germany, was a space for active citizenship. Today, however, civil society is often portrayed in terms of associations, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs), which work towards solutions to socio-economic problems in the world. However, the original definition of the concept of civil society can be interpreted much more broadly than this. It represented that elusive space where the individual, citizen or group can interact with other like-minded individuals, citizens or groups and where a dialogue between the state and its citizens could be achieved. Hence, NGOs and CBOs are just one

formalized version of the sometimes-ambiguous phenomenon that has been called civil society. However, it is this space and the shape of civil society as represented by NGOs and CBOs in peri-urban Luanda and the challenges they have to deal with that is the focus in this chapter, which provides a window into how power dynamics take place at the peri-urban level and an opportunity to deconstruct what can only be described as an elusive yet ever-present Angolan state.

6.3 Civil Society as “Association” and the (Global) Politics of an NGO

“Revolution”

When contemplating NGOs as representatives of civil society it is interesting to note that the emergence of NGOs and their unprecedented increase in international development circles in the 1990s was in part a response to a decline of the state as an institution. Many bilateral and multilateral organizations became less willing to transfer funds directly to Third World governments, as they often saw them as inefficient and oppressive and also because of the rise of the neoliberal vision that the state’s involvement in social programs should be trimmed down as much as possible (Thomas and Allen 2000:213; Edelman and Haugerud 2005:27). The neo-liberal reforms that emerged at the time through development policy and programs such as the IMF’s and World Bank’s Structural

Adjustment Programs involved conditioned loans to governments in developing countries. The neoliberal conditions for these development loans involved diminished welfare services such as public health and public education services where private enterprise was to replace the state. The failure of the Structural Adjustment Programs has been thoroughly documented in development literature. It has been blamed for eroding the welfare systems that were already in existence in developing countries while simultaneously burdening nation-states with increased debt. However, in Angola's case the state had, due to its resource riches, been able to avoid such conditioned loans by instead striking non-transparent deals with China; this was the case until 2009 when the Angolan state took a 1.4\$ billion loan from the IMF in response to the consequences of the global financial crisis in 2008. As will be further elucidated in chapter 7 on corruption, this allowed the IMF to scrutinize economic policy and in the process uncover a scandal in which 32\$ billion had been spent or transferred between 2007-2010 without being properly accounted for in the state budget (Power and Alves 2012:1).

The NGO "revolution" was seen by the international development community as a "third way" of delivering development, attractive for its potential to simultaneously diminish the size of the state and circumvent corruption in the state system. Intertwined with these developments were sharp critiques of

previous top-down development interventions and widespread evidence that development strategies of the past have failed. The rising support for sustainable development efforts, which included the participation of the beneficiaries of development, also motivated existing development agencies to search for alternative ways to “integrate individuals into markets, to deliver welfare services, and to involve local populations in development projects,” which they found in the NGOs (Fisher 1997:442-443; see also Tvedt 1998:4).

This so-called revolution has, however, not always been portrayed in such a positive light. James Ferguson has for example claimed that NGOs (and other transnational organizations) have become part of a new “transnational apparatus of governmentality” that coexists with the older nation-state system (2006:102-103). Through the reduction of both the size and scope of the state, civil society has been seen as promoting the tenets of liberal market capitalism (Brannan 2003:5 and 32) and can thus easily be portrayed as a political project in its own right. Ferguson argues that these developments have transformed the image of “the African state” from a modernizing national state, governing its “pre-modern” subjects, into a despotic, overbearing, flabby, bureaucratic and corrupt obstacle to democracy and development. Thus, it has become the role of “governance” reforms and civil society to bring it into balance and reduce its (now damaging) role (James Ferguson 2006:95). This, of course, renders arguments about a non-

profit and apolitical nature of civil society associations obsolete.⁷² However, civil society organizations are diverse, operating in different ways in diverse cultural, economic, and social contexts, and clearly do not all hold the same political significance (Fisher 1997:449).

CBOs in Luanda are varied and have diverse financial backers. While some struggle financially and are led by enthusiastic and often charismatic people who do not give up despite opposition, others have a steadier support, both in terms of finance and capacity, provided by international NGOs and foreign governments. In a country like Angola where the state monopolizes the social, economic and political levers of society, the transnational links CSOs have provide leverage rather than its opposite, as well as an opportunity for increased “neutrality” and assertiveness. This is indeed the opinion of a majority of Angolan civil society activists who believe that “internal leverage pushing for more openness can only be effective with the strong co-operation of external partners” (Vidal 2008:234), an opinion shared repeatedly in interviews with CBO staff in Luanda’s peripheral areas in 2009 and 2010.

⁷² Political neutrality within civil society and apolitical civil society groups seem hard to find. With civil society associations such as NGOs and their funding structures in mind, the non-profit clause also becomes more of an ideal than a rule. For an interesting argument about how the development industry (with its various NGOs and state run agencies) mistakenly perceives its projects as apolitical see James Ferguson’s *The Anti-Politics Machine* (1994).

6.4 CBOs, Residents' Committees and Power Dynamics in Luanda's Peri-urban Context

The notion of civil society as a *peaceful* democratic space of active citizenship where ideas and solutions about socio-economic problems are exchanged is, as has been hinted at above, perhaps *utopic* in Luanda's peri-urban context.

Unfortunately, the work of CBOs within this so-called realm of civil society is not always as smooth or easy as is often tacitly presumed in the literature on civil society. As case studies will reveal later in the chapter, the presence and working conditions of CBOs are far more challenging and complex in Luanda's peri-urban neighbourhoods.

Many of these community based organizations in peri-urban Luanda are faced with complex problems and impediments to their development efforts. One significant problem I witnessed throughout my research involved local level power struggles between CBOs, on the one hand, and other actors that claim to possess the sole right to neighbourhood resources and their development or to act as intermediaries (for the state, they claim) in the provision of solutions to socio-economic problems, on the other hand. The main protagonists, other than the CBOs, in such power struggles at the local level are the residents' committees [*comissões de moradores*].

The role of these so-called residents' committees is somewhat obscure and seems to vary significantly between committees. While some show signs of willingness to co-operate, others seem to perceive CBOs as a threat to their own and the ruling MPLA party's *sovereignty*. Despite a clear link with the ruling MPLA party, especially in and around Luanda, the municipal authorities do not always acknowledge their authority. Unfortunately, these committees are often not democratically elected as their name suggests; that is, they are not elected by the residents they claim to represent but rather are appointed by their own cliques or political networks, which in many cases in Luanda have ties, of varying degrees of obscurity, to the ruling MPLA party. Instead of working together with CBOs towards the betterment of their neighbourhoods and municipalities there are many instances where these residents' committees work against the endeavours of civil society organizations and take on a competing role against the CBOs in seeking the good-will of local inhabitants and ownership of community based and external development projects.

Although not democratic or representative of the residents' aspirations today, the residents' committee's grew out of the war of liberation in Angola and were part of the people's power structures with support of the MPLA party and its leader, although their origins were not necessarily from the MPLA party itself but the "diverse aspiration of the time" (Mabeko-Tali 2001:49-50, as cited in Croese

2012b). These were aspirations of a time where a social contract was forged between the MPLA party's political and military power and the society's and the people's power, with social units like residents' committees, student associations, trade unions etc. playing an important role. However, with time, and specifically after the coup attempt in 1977, units like the residents' committees were used by the MPLA to effectively control the population (Croese 2012b). Thus, its history is both long and politically and ideologically influenced. While this governance structure still exists in Luandan society its contemporary role is somewhat obscure and can vary depending on areas and neighbourhoods. While many act as an instrument of urban governance, controlling for example land allocation in their neighbourhoods, others are not as visible or, as Robson (2001:13) has pointed out, have become redundant, or dysfunctional (Van der Winden 1996:113; Robson 2001:13; see also Croese 2012b), an opinion shared by many of my informants during fieldwork.

As Croese (2012b) has pointed out, although residents' committees are not formally recognized or regulated by the state like the traditional authorities, de facto committees are operational in most parts of Luanda and publicly acknowledged by provincial government, governors and municipal administrators (see also Orre 2010). Traditional authorities in Angola have increasingly been defined as state actors, rather than as independent of the state's influence and

authority. As the municipal administrator of Cacuaco strongly indicated at a meeting I attended: “A *soba*⁷³ [traditional authority] who doesn’t wear the uniform he got from the state is showing that he does not want to be a *soba*.” A civil society worker told me how the Ministry of Territorial Administration, even though they would never admit it, are providing TAs (Traditional Authorities) with remuneration and benefits in the form of, for example, vehicles. Although hard to prove in a country where access to information is difficult and transparency is not the custom, allowing rumour to often be more compelling than fact or truth, the administrator’s comment on how *Sobas* need to wear the state uniform to be considered *Sobas* reflects the relationship that has been evolving between customarily distinct institutions such as the traditional authority and the state.

This is, however, far from a new governing strategy in state – traditional authority relationships, for, as Paul Robson (2001:12) has noted, the colonial administrative system incorporated traditional leaders in its top-down governance structure, between the colonial administration and the local population. The

⁷³ Paul Robson (2001:12) has written about the word Soba, which originally comes from the word for local leaders in some of the languages in Northern Angola. The Portuguese colonial power took up the word and used it when referring to traditional leaders throughout Angola, even in areas where the local word was different. Thus it became part of the colonial Portuguese vernacular and has continued throughout Angola until this day. However, as Robson points out: “In some areas it appears that the local word continues to be used for a local leader, known only to the local people, while ‘Soba’ is used for the person who is considered the leader by the local government Administration” (2001:12).

system was paternalistic, as explained by Pössinger (1973), by trying to “maintain and force upon the local people a hierarchical pattern based on the power of the chiefs and clan leaders, a pattern which had in fact been obsolescent for a long time” (Pössinger 1973; as cited in Robson 2001:12). As pointed out by Robson, this system of colonial administration “weakened the horizontal and participative aspects of traditional governance systems, and strengthened the vertical, authoritarian aspects” (2001:12) which are quite obvious in Angolan society today, in both government affairs at the top of the pyramid as well as at the local level, in Luanda’s neighbourhoods. Thus, similarly to the situation of residents’ committees in contemporary Angola, it is still unclear “whether the Soba is supposed to represent the interest of a community with the government or represent the Government in the community” (Robson 2001:12), although the aforementioned Cacuaco administrator is clearly of the latter opinion.

The residents’ committees, unlike the TAs (Sobas), are not always *formally* recognized as part of the state apparatus although they have ties to the MPLA party, and are organized as a local governing unit, at least in Luanda. A residents’ committee member in one of the neighbourhoods of Kicolo claimed that they were indeed an intermediary between the people and the government and the government and the people (ironically much like the imagined role of civil

society) and emphasized that they worked directly with the central government and not the municipal government. Thus, although it is difficult to locate their official mandate from the government, they are, in peri-urban Luanda at least, seen as part of the MPLA governmentality and therefore they are both feared and powerful. This link, official or not, between them and the state, and their claim to be following the government's agenda, has yielded them authority and an ability to outcompete, overtake or even sabotage any efforts of local, small scale CSOs, such as CBOs or other group or individual efforts. Thus, ironically, the institution that claims to be paving the way for the development of their communities is simultaneously standing in the way of development initiatives, emanating both from external NGOs and from local community based organizations.

6.5 The Civil Society-State Dichotomy: Vertical and Horizontal Power Relations

As can be seen from the above reflections, discourse on civil society tends to regard the state and civil society as opposites where civil society is the instrument of society against the powers of the state. It is worth scrutinizing this power-relationship further before continuing presenting cases of challenges, successes and failures of civil society in Luanda's peri-urban context. James Ferguson criticizes this conventional view of civil society where the state and civil

society are polarized in opposition to each other (other scholars have also argued against such a position, see for example Aretxaga 2003; Brannan 2003; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Karlström 1999). Without negating state-civil society interdependence, Brannan (2003:3) has claimed that an established dichotomy between the state and society often produces an antagonistic relationship where society is idealised as inherently positive and homogenous and conflicts and inequalities within society are neglected. When it comes to African civil society the main problematic concerning this classic dichotomy has been portrayed as the indistinctiveness of the borders between society and the state (and the public and the private) in African societies (e.g. Chabal and Daloz 1999; Karlström 1999).

James Ferguson has dubbed this way of thinking “the vertical topography of power”: an imaginary space where the state is placed high over the “family” sitting below, on the ground, with a variety of other institutions (civil society) in between (James Ferguson 2006:90-92). By calling this vertical topography of power into question, the transnational character and the horizontal formations of both the state and civil society come into view, which allows for new ways of thinking about both the state and civil society (James Ferguson 2006:90). The conventional state-civil society juxtaposition naturalizes the authority of the state over the local (society) (James Ferguson 2006:92; see also James Ferguson and

Akhil Gupta 2002). According to Ferguson (2006:91), this conventional use of the concept of civil society obscures more than it reveals when it is applied to an African context, often serving to help legitimate antidemocratic politics. He asserts that the vertical nature of this topography is fictive and that in Africa both the “top” and the “bottom” operate in a transnationalized global context, rendering it more complex and increasingly horizontal (James Ferguson 2006:93).

Chabal and Daloz have also argued that it is misleading to claim that there is a politically salient cleavage between society and the state in Africa since the African state has neither been institutionalized nor emancipated from society. Furthermore, they assert that although one can find embryonic social movements opposing central power in Africa there is little evidence of a functioning civil society (Chabal and Daloz 1999:30). Their argument is that even without these components in the political structure, African political systems, based on patrimonialism and nepotism, are not dysfunctional but on the contrary quite functional (see also Karlström 1999 for a similar argument).

Civil society in Africa and elsewhere (in a manner akin to African states) continues to be caught in a web of transnational connections and influences. As pointed out by Galaty (2007:7), civil society in Africa interacts with three, instead of two, counterparts. These three counterparts are the state, society and the international community. As noted above, using the Hegelian model,

conventionally civil society should mediate between the state and society/family. However, because of over twenty-five years of involvement with the international community in Africa, where it has provided the framework and funding for “the emergence of a vibrant African civil society,” there exists a relationship between the international community and African civil society (Galaty 2007:7). This relationship is important, according to Luandan CBOs and NGOs. However, this relationship between civil society in Africa and the international community exposes African civil society to the aforementioned criticism, which claims civil society is dominated by western transnational NGOs and loose coalitions pursuing their own agendas, serving as an appendage in a transnational apparatus of governmentality (e.g. James Ferguson 2006; Chandhoke 2005; Hudock 1999).

While international organizations influence the policies of African states, eroding its powers, they also directly sponsor their programs and interventions through NGOs in a wide array of areas (James Ferguson 2006:102). Thus, civil society in Africa is just as likely to originate from international organizations (the above) as local communities (the below) (James Ferguson 2006:101-102). Depicting the state and civil society as oppositional poles is therefore fictive, since both African states and civil society are in many cases run and governed by the same or similar international organizations.

It becomes hard to draw a distinction between civil society and the state when they begin to look increasingly alike. In some cases they are literally the same where NGOs are run from government offices (James Ferguson 2006:99). The World Bank, for instance, uses a specific terminology for bank-organized NGOs (BONGOS) and government-organized NGOs (GONGOS), rendering the non-governmental part of the NGO acronym quite paradoxical (James Ferguson 2006:101). Civil society organizations are therefore, in many cases, all at once, local and global, sub-national, national and supra-national (James Ferguson 2006:103), making the picture of vertical power relations with the state at the top, society (the family, the individual) at the bottom and civil society in between, problematic. Hence, Ferguson comes to the conclusion that organizations of civil society should not be seen as “challengers pressing up against the state but as horizontal contemporaries of the organs of the state – sometimes rivals, sometimes servants, sometimes watchdogs, sometimes parasites, but in every case operating on the same level and in the same global space” (2006:103).

James Ferguson’s point changes the image of both states and organizations of civil society. However, the old image of vertical power relations between the state (or other bodies of governmentality) and its subjects is still relevant. For in the contemporary “nation-state” system, people (individuals, families, citizens, non-citizens) or the local, are often times in bottom-up

struggles with repressive nation-states, fictive states (Aretxaga 2003), states of exception (Agamben 2005) or informal de facto sovereignties (Hansen and Stepputat 2006), on their own or through organizations of civil society.

6.6 The “Elusive” State

Academic reflections on states and sovereignty (e.g. Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Agamben 2005; Aretxaga 2003) suggest that the state-society contrast should be used metaphorically rather than literally. Although the modern nation-state does not seem to be disappearing, other sovereignties exist in tandem with it. As von Benda-Beckmann et al. (2009:1-2) have pointed out, state authorities are rarely the sole locus of governance and, increasingly, a plurality of non-state actors has become involved with what has been, until recently, the sole domain of the state. Hansen and Stepputat have referred to “de facto sovereignties,” which have “the ability to kill, punish, and discipline with impunity” wherever they are found and practiced, and different from sovereignties “grounded in formal ideologies of rule and legality” (2006:296). They claim that “the nation-state is no longer the privileged locus of sovereignty” and sovereignties “are found in multiple and layered forms around the world” (Hansen and Stepputat 2006:309). Thus, governmentality is perhaps the characteristic power of the modern state (Mitchell 2002:9) but is not exclusive to it. For example: “aid organizations,

NGOs, private entrepreneurs, security companies, and warlords are acting as state and producing the same powerful effects” (Aretxaga 2003:398). An example of this is the way in which vital infrastructural services and security operations were outsourced to major corporations in Afghanistan and Iraq (Hansen and Stepputat 2006:309). Thus, as will be shown through examples from peri-urban Luanda, the bottom-up struggles the local or society are in are still vertical, however, their nemesis is not necessarily the modern Weberian⁷⁴ nation-state any more, but other entities that have appropriated the powers of the state.

Aretxaga (2003:398) has pointed out that the contemporary state “appears as an open field with multiple boundaries and no institutional or geographical fixity”; it is produced and reproduced as a phenomenological reality through discourses and practices of power in everyday life. She claims that the state as a unified political structure or subject has become a fiction of reality, a collective illusion, “the reification of an idea that masks real power relations under the guise of public interest” (Aretxaga 2003:399-401). However, the state as an entity does not necessarily need to literally exist since it has the same effect when it

⁷⁴ “Weber defined the state as a rational institution characterized by a system of law, a rational economy and a bureaucratic means of administration. The modern state is distinct from other political entities by: (i) its monopoly of the legitimate use of violence; (ii) its system of domination based on legal authority; (iii) its legitimating relations founded on duly enacted legal rule” (Morrison 1995: 345).

becomes a social subject in everyday life, whether it is imagined or not. Thus, even when the state cannot be easily located, it continues to be a powerful object of encounter (Aretxaga 2003:399).⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that it is not only the subjects of the state that are imagining the state, but the state itself, in its various forms, indulges in enacting its own fantasies (Aretxaga 2003:399). This is particularly relevant to the peri-urban context in Luanda where diverse actors, such as the residents' committees, take on the role of the state. The question of whether this authority is legitimate or merited is beside the point here.

Thus, the family and the individual remain caught in struggles against a "state", whether fictive or not, oftentimes from below. Albeit "states" and civil society organizations transcend vertical power relations, their subjects are still at the bottom in a vertical topography of power subjected to "state" rule. Therefore it makes sense, regardless of the horizontal and transnational nature of state and organizational power relations, that "vertical topographies of power" (James Ferguson 2006:90-92) still apply to the "state" and its subjects. Civil society organizations are still cropping up around local struggles against repressive states (imagined and real) in Africa and elsewhere with varying degrees of

⁷⁵ Aretxaga's argument has much in common with Foucault's (1995) idea of "panopticism" and a self-surveilling society and is directly connected to his ideas of governmentality through "practices and discourses aimed at the ordering of bodies and populations" which would replace the power of an absolute sovereign (Aretxaga 2003: 399).

international support (see for example Galaty 2007). Although in many cases the roots of struggle and resistance against states and other governing establishments still come from below (the local), the networks the local use in their struggles are becoming increasingly transnational (global) which in turn makes them more effective and powerful in their struggles. Hence, organizations of civil society are not naturally local or communal but indeed often global, well connected and opportunistic (James Ferguson 2006:107). However, this transnational nature of civil society is in many cases empowering for local struggles against governing bodies, as they provide an international network of allies, supporting their struggles.

The dangers of conflating civil society with the local or society should be taken seriously, since organizations of civil society sometimes have equally strong ties to international organizations and governing bodies as to their constituents on the ground. In an effort not to overlook the elements of both horizontal and vertical power in these systems, we have to acknowledge the two but be aware of the dangers of amalgamating them even if they coexist, overlap and are in many ways connected. Ferguson's (2006) proposal to view power within the realm of civil society as operating in a more Foucauldian way, that is, as a field of multiple forces, is essential, as vertical topographies of power alone do not reveal all the power relations at play within this realm. The struggles of

CBOs in Luanda are a vivid reminder thereof. With the above arguments in mind it is easy to contemplate how local, small scale, CBOs in Luanda's musseques are in a competing relationship with representatives of local authority, such as the residents' committee. That is, they are competing for power, authority, financial resources, and control of other community resources, and the CBOs are in many respects seen as a threat to the tradition, hegemony and "sovereignty" of an older institution and system of governance. The following section will further examine what CSOs and small scale local CBOs are doing in Luanda's musseques and the challenges they face.

6.7 The Real Conditions of CBOs in Peri-Urban Luanda: The Case of an ODA (Organization of Area Development) in Kilamba Kiaxi

Allianca is a community based organization in the municipality of Kilamba Kiaxi. The organization started out in 2004 as a group of women who decided to organize themselves to have an effect on the development of their neighbourhood community. The group was discontented with the community's lack of basic services, in particular electricity, running water and schools to educate the youth, as well as the problem of unemployment in their neighborhood. It commenced as a women's organization based on the principles of motherly love and with a mandate to resolve the problems existing in the

community and to contribute to community development. As the group's development activities began, men also became interested in their work and joined the organization and in 2009-2010 Allianca had reached 60 active members.

Allianca works with the children's network in the municipality and is also part of the women's network, which were both initiated to defend women's and children's rights in the area. Furthermore, it is one of the municipality's ODAs (Organization for Area Development) and participates in the Forum for Municipal Development in Kilamba Kiaxi where the municipal government, representatives of local communities, civil society organizations, public service providers and the private sector meet to plan for the future of the municipality. Through the Forum for Municipal Development, the organization takes part in a recently commenced innovative and ongoing process towards increased decentralization and local democracy in Angola. With Angola's political history of centralized power and top-down rule in mind, this is a novel and important initiative in Angola's post-conflict context, but, as will be seen, has also caused challenges.

By 2009-2010, Allianca had in its five years initiated various development projects and achieved considerable success in their community. Before the birth of this organization, there was no electricity and no piped water in their area. Since the state electricity company, EDEL, had no plans to provide electricity to

the area, Allianca took it into their own hands to save for and construct the power supply cabinet that would provide the area with electricity. When the cabinet was ready, EDEL came in and connected it and simultaneously the neighbourhood to the city's electricity network. The person they worked with at EDEL on this project later became vice minister of energy and water which has had positive effects on the organization's work. Through this partnership they have been able to provide the area with piped water as well.

Allianca had recently opened a crèche (day-care centre) for children in the area to help mothers that would otherwise have to take their children to work or leave them by themselves while they work. This is important in the Angolan context, as the informal economy, one of the main sources of employment, is largely run by women who are also the main caregivers of children. Thus, the crèche allows women in the neighborhood to conduct their businesses at the local markets and other jobs without having to worry about their children.

Education of the youth and the community in general is also a priority for Allianca. One of the women has provided a house for a school teaching up to grade six. Allianca is also partnering with a local school to help mothers that never have had the chance to finish grades 7-9 to finish their primary education.

The organization is involved in various other activities for their community. One of these is the education of community members on various issues they

consider important as well as issues they feel are not adequately covered in school. They give presentations on the subjects of child care, how to prevent certain diseases such as malaria and advocate for safe sex and HIV/AIDS awareness, a topic that is often difficult to discuss openly. Allianza also runs a theatre group and a football team for youths. The organization schedules spontaneous activities as well. For example, in 2009, 120 members of the community joined hands to clean the rubbish accumulated in the riverbed running past the neighborhood.

Allianza was planning to open a new school and two additional crèches in 2010. The organization was also working on the opening of a library equipped with computers and an internet connection which would sell school books to students at cost. They had a plan to start a micro credit operation for women in the community, and were working towards ameliorating the streets in the neighborhood by advising house owners to dig drains in the sandy streets in front of their houses to divert rainwater during the rainy season and thus contribute to the maintenance of the community's streets and improve mobility within the neighbourhood during the rainy season. News of Allianza successes have spread outside the community and women from other municipalities, such as

Viana and Samba, have come to them for advice and guidance in creating their own women's organizations⁷⁶ for the development of their communities.

As indicated above, this particular organization has achieved considerable successes in its work and it continues to work on plans for future community development projects. However, these successes have in some cases been hard to accomplish, especially in the first phases of the organization's existence.

When they started to collect money for the power supply cabinet, they had clashes with the residents' committee, which has tried to sabotage and then steal their projects. As Sikor and Lund have noted: "[s]truggles over property are as much about the scope and constitution of authority as they are about access to resources. Similarly, contestations over authority deal as much with the nature and distribution of property as with issues of power" (Sikor and Lund 2009:19).

The CBO's plans for development were thus not only seen as producing resources of potential monetary value out of the control of the residents' committee but also as undermining their power and control over the neighbourhood and its inhabitants.

The residents' committee tried to undermine the authority of the president of Allianca by accusing her of stealing the money saved up by the community for

⁷⁶ There has been a tradition of a state-run women's organization in OMA [*Organização da Mulher Angolana* or the organization of Angolan women] which was created in 1962 as the MPLA's women's wing (Ducados 2004).

the power supply cabinet. Later, when the cabinet had been built and electricity was starting to be distributed to houses in the neighbourhood, the residents' committee tried to take over the electricity project by claiming ownership of it in the hope of controlling it as their own project. This would have involved their total control of this immensely valuable neighbourhood resource brought in by the CBO as well as any revenue this resource would generate. This "shock", as Allianca members call it, escalated into serious intimidation tactics and threats, even death threats, against members of Allianca, causing insecurity among group members, as well as weakening the community's support of, and consequently the success of, the CBO's development endeavours.

As Fernanda, the president of the organization, was in charge of safekeeping the considerable amount of money they collected, most of the threats were pointed towards her. Both the president and vice president of Allianca say that the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) training they received from Care International (as part of the LUPP⁷⁷

⁷⁷ LUPP (Luanda Urban Poverty Programme or *Luta Contra Pobreza Urbana* in Portuguese) is a development partnership between CARE International, Development Workshop-Angola, One World Action and Save the Children UK, which as the name indicates, works towards solutions to poverty related problems in urban communities. This they aim to achieve by building the capacities of local communities, authorities and civil society by "promoting mechanisms of dialogue and engagement between local communities and state institutions" (LUPP n.d.). They support various civil society initiatives and are perhaps the single most influential backers of grassroots CSOs and local community based development endeavours in Luanda's musseques.

development partnership) helped them to prepare for and overcome these problems and they continued despite the opposition from the residents' committee.

With the representatives of the "local government" (the residents' committee) standing in the way of their projects the CBO applied a methodology in which they contacted the state electricity company directly and bypassed the local government. They caught EDEL's attention, which saw that the CBO was well prepared and had an understanding of the work that had to be done. Hence, EDEL continued to work directly with them and not through local government institutions. Today they have links to institutions above the local government, such as ministries and national companies, and these partnerships have proved to be fruitful. Now ministries, national institutions and companies speak directly to them and not through the local government. It is this direct link, bypassing the residents' committee and the local authorities, which Allianca believes to be a key factor in their success. Without this direct link they believe that their projects could not have been realized and would have been sabotaged or overtaken by the corrupt residents' committee, which unfortunately does not co-operate with them towards the development of their communities but rather, ironically, are competing against them for the community's resources.

6.8 Power and the State in Angola

It is interesting to note that such a direct link to the government, that is, to actors at the top tier who have the power to execute plans and affect change at the local level, was something other community based organizations were striving for as well. There was a general sentiment among CBOs in Luanda's peri-urban areas that local grassroots initiatives typically got stuck at the municipal level. This also serves as an illustration of the power generated by the ever-present yet elusive state in Angola. Despite its ambiguity it is a power in Angolan society that is difficult to object or deny. One wants to have that power on one's side, preferably by affinity to those in positions of power as it makes life easier in an informal system. It gets one through the bureaucratic hurdles of the system. It can for example help procure compensation for the loss of one's land, licenses for one's businesses, or important business relations that would not otherwise have been available, etc. As António Andrade Tomás has pointed out: one can perhaps talk of the state in Angola as "the logic that governs this system" (Tomás 2012:338) rather than necessarily an entity in itself. It is the state that often gives formal or official legitimacy to very ad hoc, "informal" decisions, and interpretations of the law. Therefore, in securing access to the multilayered phenomenon that is the Angolan state apparatus, one has accomplished something significant. The higher one reaches in the hierarchy the more power and success one can

achieve. Thus, reaching or catching someone's attention above the lower ranking officials of the state apparatus (such as the residents' committee) is recognized as an avenue to success. CBOs, residents' committees, and other actors are therefore involved in politics of representation, in which representation of the state yields power. It is this power of representation, when invested in oneself or one's organization, that can lead to success in Angola.

Thus, people use the state to make claims and to wield power and authority and the residents' committees are an excellent example of this. The main tactic to achieve such power and the prosperity that can come with it is through family connections and social and political networks. As Monique Nuijten (2003) has pointed out, the idea of the state as an imagined centre of control can be nurtured by intermediaries who pretend to have privileged relations with state officials and knowledge of state procedures. That is, the belief in the idea of the state leads to a search for its real-world personification and those personifying the state, whether legitimately or illegitimately, contribute to the "process of the construction of the state" (Nuijten 2003:118; see also Sikor and Lund 2009:12). This is clearly found in contemporary Angolan society, to the extent that, as Tomás has pointed out, the state is no longer simply an entity but becomes "the logic that governs" the system (Tomás 2012:338). This has created the condition referred to throughout this work where the boundaries between the informal and

the formal, and the official and the unofficial, are blurred, and the state/society dichotomy becomes too simplistic to represent reality. Thus, moving beyond the state/society dichotomy, by referring to the state as a form of logic, or even a culture, perhaps best captures the elusiveness yet ever-presence of the state in Luandan society. This is a cause and consequence of the informal system that is a key feature of Angolan society, economy and politics, and it is a major contributor to what I have referred to here as the candonga culture.

After the success of the electricity project and other development practices became apparent, the local community now believes in and respects Allianca. This also applies to high-ranking government officials, and thus, aware of these high-level connections and the backing of the local community, the residents' committee is not as aggressive towards them and their projects as before. The widespread popularity of their projects by the neighbourhood community was proven one dark night, when, after a period of receiving death threats and coordinated intimidation from the hands of members of the residents' committee, the president of Allianca woke up to an unknown man standing in her yard. She thought to herself that now someone was finally here to kill her. However, observant neighbours also noticed the man in her yard and at that moment something happened; it was as if everyone in the neighbourhood knew something was wrong and they all flocked to Fernanda's defense and beat up the

mysterious man and drove him away. Afterwards, Fernanda told me, “we didn’t know whether he was really there to kill me or just someone snooping around.” However, this occurrence served to show everyone in the neighbourhood, including the residents’ committee, that the CBO, its president and other members were not to be “messed” with. The people were behind her and the CBO. Today, the president of the CBO explained to me, due to their success in bringing vital services such as running water and electricity to the neighbourhood, nobody dares touch them or threaten them because everybody knows that the people in the community support them as well as important national institutions and international organizations.

6.9 Expressions of Governmentality and Social Control: “Party” Interrogation of CBO Members

The experience of Allianca is just one of many local level power struggles in the peripheries of Luanda and the violence and intimidation tactics local governing institutions such as the residents’ committees practice. During a group interview with the administrative staff of another CBO in Kilamba Kiayi, it was explained to me how they had to deal with the intimidation tactics of the neighbourhood’s residents’ committee and threats of violence that had escalated into fistfights where knives had even been drawn. It was clear that this was an enormous

predicament for this relatively successful CBO that brought forth fear among its active members and beneficiaries. These are examples of how local level power dynamics can have repressive and shackling effects on the residents' dreams of an urban environment in which one finds social justice, equality and a space for decentralized democratic practices that can bring about an increase in neighbourhood services and the well-being of residents through communal action. This is also why CBOs claim that support from external NGOs matter since involvement with external agencies hold residents' committees and other powerful forces at the local level to a certain extent at bay.

Residents' committees are not the only ones to partake in such social control at the neighbourhood level; municipal and national authorities also use such tactics. Vieira, an active member of a CBO in the Municipality of Cacuaco had during my fieldwork in 2009-2010 been picked up, taken away and then interrogated three times by "the party" (MPLA) and municipal authorities for his participation in civil society activities. The reason for this, they claimed, was his involvement in inciting distrust towards and working against the government. He was accused of spreading propaganda and rumours against the ruling MPLA party and being part of the opposing UNITA party, while he insisted every single time that by trying to address the problems found in their neighbourhood, he and

other members of CSOs were not criticizing or disrespecting the government, but rather trying to help it on the road to a better and more developed Angola.

This is testimony of how the ruling party and municipal authorities (just like the residents' committees) are trying to control and manipulate resources and power at the local level and a vivid expression of the political challenges and power struggles faced by CSOs and their members in contemporary Angola. The most obvious outcome of such governmentality is the deterring of citizens from participating in activities that could benefit their wellbeing considerably. While such incidences were occurring during my fieldwork in 2009 and 2010, scholars critical of the state of affairs in Angola, such as David Sogge, called attention to the increase of secret police deployment and the growing use of informants, "penetrating even local NGO networks" (Sogge 2009:13). These are tactics that were mastered by the colonial administration with their vast network of secret police, the PIDE [*Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado*], using informants to rat out their "subversive" neighbours. Such tactics of hegemonic governmentality continued during the civil war, in the Luanda I grew up in, when members of public vigilance teams [*vigilância popular*] roamed free and one never knew who belonged to the team of "vigilantes" and who not, and thus when it was safe to talk of certain political topics and when not. This intimidation on part of the ruling party and the local government did however not deter Vieira in

his involvement in the CBO that he was a member of and the important work it is achieving in his neighbourhood and the municipality of Cacuaco.

This is a CBO I came to know well. It is involved in planning and executing programs for both the neighbourhood Forum for Community Development and the Forum for Development at the municipal level. Furthermore, it is active in other community based activities, running a small school for children in their area, and holding presentations on important issues faced by the community, including human rights and individual rights and how they are protected by the constitution. Such presentations have, for example, addressed people's rights when picked up by police and interrogated, for often seemingly obscure reasons. The CBO is also involved in organizing soccer matches between the young men of the various neighbourhoods of the municipality. This is a way of easing tensions between neighbourhoods in the Kicolo area, which often end up in turf scrimmages between groups of so-called delinquents or gangs. These are serious conflicts where people get injured and in some cases even die. They pose security problems for the inhabitants of the musseques, especially in how it halts the free movement between neighbourhoods.

6.10 Other Forms of Spatial and Social Control: Delinquency and the Police

There is an ongoing discourse on delinquency⁷⁸ in contemporary Angola, a discourse that has to a certain extent led to the criminalization of the poor and the inhabitants of the musseques, and allowed for increased police violence. However, as pointed out above, delinquency and crime is indeed a problem in peri-urban Luanda and should therefore not be dismissed entirely. A problem many of my interviewees pointed out referred to the fear and insecurity it provokes as well as its effect of halting mobilization in the peri-urban neighbourhoods after dark. Robberies were a threat to those returning from work after dark as well as home invasions for those who stay at home after dark.

Rafa, a young woman, described to me how she had had to give up on her secondary education because the distance to school from her home, and the slow congested afternoon traffic [*engarrafamento*] made it so that she would arrive late with the minibus taxi and have to walk to her neighbourhood in Kicolo after dark. It is in the dark that the so-called delinquents or *bandidos* are most active and it was in the dark on her way home from school that she had been raped, twice, on separate occasions. This harrowing experience and the constant threat of violence after dark had forced her to give up her education. Rafa is a

⁷⁸ *Delinquentes* is a general term in Angola used for young men that turn to a career of crime, drugs and alcohol rather than education or employment.

proud and intelligent young woman who despite her horrific personal experience told me, a researcher she barely knew, her story. It is a story that captures well the predicaments of living in insecurity. While the problem of delinquency and banditry is often highlighted in contemporary Angola the personal effects and the effects on communities and society as a whole of living in insecurity is far too often dismissed. In the discourse on delinquency in Angola, the question of what leads young men to a life of delinquency, the most obvious being a lack of opportunity in both education and employment, is seldom addressed. Rather, the discourse is more focused on solutions that involve violent police operations. These are solutions that do not deal with the roots of the problem, which are fundamentally complex, but are found in the aforementioned lack of opportunities and increased social, economic and political injustices. Furthermore, decades of armed conflict in the country have not only shaped the urban morphology, but also had psychological effects, and guns and assault rifles are still widespread, although they have been more or less hidden from sight since the war ended.

People in Kicolo shared with me their experiences of insecurity, street violence from youth gangs (delinquents), robberies of people returning from work in the city, and of home invasions. However, ironically, the police also provoked fear and insecurity among the peri-urban population. The police were in some cases as feared as the criminals and interviewees explained how the police

would harass them and even rob them of their cellphones. Beto, a long time resident of Kicolo, maintained that there was an ongoing process of criminalization within the police. “How are we supposed to trust the police when we see that they hire the same thugs who have been delinquent in this area for a long time?” He was appalled that the police force did not check the background of the young men, who grew up with him in his neighbourhood and had turned to a life of crime and delinquency, when they were being recruited into the police. “People can’t say anything against the police; people just do as they tell you. When they say that you are a delinquent [even if you are not] and that you stole your cellphone you just have to give them what they want even though the cellphone is legitimately yours.” This is one example of how the police can use the discourse of delinquency against the peri-urban population for their personal benefit, even in instances where no crime has been committed. Thus, distrust and fear of the police, the institution in charge of the rule of law in peri-urban Luanda, was widespread. Furthermore, it is both sad and ironic when those with the mandate of protecting the citizen and providing the rule of law have turned into predators.

The ill repute of Angola’s police is not new; in June of 1999, the US consular office warned “foolhardy” visitors to the country that even in the capital “police officers, often while still in uniform, frequently participate in shakedowns,

muggings, carjackings and murders” (Gledhill 2000:98). Furthermore, in my youth one of my older friends joined the police force but quit soon after, claiming later that his work had involved robbing people all day long.

Thus, a situation has emerged where crime is “legalized,”⁷⁹ when delinquents or criminals are recruited into the police, or when the police become extortion artists, which is perhaps best seen in the work of the traffic police and the fiscal police. Furthermore, a discourse on delinquency has led to the criminalization of the peri-urban poor. This is a discourse that is systematically used against the peri-urban population by police in an environment where the police and other de facto authorities can rule mercilessly from the top without there being any real repercussions. Sogge has for example stressed that in Angola “overt police coercion has been directed chiefly toward those lacking all political protection” (2008:13). Using Agamben’s terminology (again), this could be seen as a state of exception (Agamben 2005), where people are reduced to *homo sacer* (Agamben 1998), or bare life, without the protection of legal or civil rights.

⁷⁹ A similar argument regarding legalized crime has been used when critiquing corruption at the highest levels of Angola’s political and economic hierarchy. See for example Rafael Marques de Morais’ critique of Angolan authorities.

6.11 Public Participation, the Stifling of Free Speech and Self-Censorship

Expressions of the aforementioned autocratic governmentality which involve the manipulation and control of civil society members and Angolan citizens in their local environment are widely found in the short histories of CBOs in contemporary post-conflict Angola. In one of the Kicolo Communal Forums for Development meetings, a man from the municipal administration stood up and accused the participants in the workshop of “badmouthing” the municipal administrator, which in Angola is considered a serious accusation. Thus, when a report on the Forum’s results was to be produced, it was contemplated including a sentence warning participants to be aware that what goes on in the Forum (and any such residents’ or civil society meetings) is often interpreted by the “party” (the ruling MPLA party) as bad. However, after some thought the sentence in the report was replaced with another one saying: When participants of the Forums are talking of problems, they are not criticizing the municipal administration and the government, but are fighting for the same goal as them, which is the well-being of the communities. This was partly done to not scare off potential Forum participants and to post a subtle reminder to those concerned (party members and municipal administration staff) that they share the same goals.

At another workshop on public participation and engagement in one of Kicolo’s neighbourhood’s, 25 community members gathered in an effort to help

the local community organize itself in order to participate in the Municipal Forum for Development, which was then in its embryonic stages in Cacuaco. It was, however, clear that people were concerned that the government would take it as a critique if community members organized themselves for the development of the community. The organizers of the workshop, members of civil society organizations in Luanda and local CBOs in Kicolo, reassured the participants that wanting to develop their community does not mean that they are against the government. In fact, they emphasized that the government possesses resources to develop the municipality, but needs to know the problems that exist in each community before it can act and prioritize projects. Experience has shown that communities with the strongest voice usually get the most support. Thus, it was emphasized at the meeting that while it is important to discuss the problems that exist in their community, it is equally important to come up with solutions and propose new projects to governing bodies. In fact, that is supposed to be one of the functions of the Municipal Forum where the municipal government, civil society and community members can meet and discuss their problems and possible solutions to them.

The suspicion among participants, that their involvement in such development workshops for the betterment of their community might be interpreted as a critique of authorities, is a sign of how top-down authority and

power structures dominate these peri-urban communities. The residents' committee had been invited to the workshop but refused to take part and instead delegated one of the participants to take notes and report back to them what took place at the workshop. Workshop participants complained that the residents' committee does not represent the will of the people and that most local preoccupations get stuck with them and never reach the municipal administration. Thus the opportunity offered through a Forum for Municipal Development, to communicate directly with municipal authorities instead of going through a defunct residents' committee, was seen as important one for these communities.

Albeit such suspicion is a legacy of decades of civil war and top-down authoritarian governmentality it was nevertheless still very real in peri-urban Luanda a decade after the civil war ended. It was clear that authoritarian political entities at the local as well as national levels were by many perceived as outweighing ideas of citizen's or individual rights, as protected by the law in the urban peripheries. However, a central/peripheral dichotomy seems to exist when it comes to perceptions of citizens' rights. Angolan colleagues working and living in the central city claimed that precisely because people on the periphery do not know their rights they are victims of harassment and intimidation tactics by institutions like the residents' committees. Therefore some of the CBOs were

holding information sessions on citizens' rights in some of the peri-urban neighbourhoods. As Yuri, who lives in central Luanda, confided in me: "Here in the center, people or residents' committees cannot come to my house and boss me around: I know my rights and I can tell them that they have no authority over me. It is only in the musseuques that they can control and intimidate people, because people don't know their rights and can't do anything about it. If you are poor and live in the musseques you could have to face the police on trumped up charges if you don't comply with their demands."

6.12 Further Expressions of Governmentality: Struggles for Electric Light and Safety in the Musseques

After a spell of increased crime in a street in Kicolo, the inhabitants living on that street got together, chipped in and managed to buy lights and power cords to light up the street in an attempt to make it safer and keep away the delinquents and bandidos, who prefer to practice their crimes in the darker parts of the bairros. This communal act on behalf of the residents worked, and criminality in the street almost stopped altogether. However, it also brought trouble. The residents' committee showed up a few days later and took down the lights and electric cords, claiming that they used too much electricity. In the end, this collective act and investment was for nothing. Such responses by the residents'

committee are abusive and have a demoralizing effect on the population, in the sense that people that have mobilized to do something for themselves, in this case for their own security, are forbidden to do so. It is a form of authoritarian control over the peri-urban population. The residents' committees have proven to be a political tool at the local level, but a tool used by whom and to what end is difficult to pin point exactly, although it is my conclusion that they are an instrument of control for various powers found in Angolan society, including themselves as an institution of self-interest as well as "party" interests. However, it still is obscure why this abusive control is necessary and who it benefits. Clearly it is not for the benefit of the peri-urban population. It is such local level abusive control by authoritarian entities that is one of the biggest hurdles to the existence of civil society organizations on the Luandan periphery. The authoritarian control of public space and social practice in the peripheries tends to stop in its tracks the democratization of urban public space and the inhabitants' access to and development of their neighbourhoods and the resources found within them.

Over a few beers with friends and acquaintances at the beach in Cacuaco I was told that in one of the new up and coming areas in Cacuaco they had just installed a power supply cabinet for the neighbourhood. One of the group, an inhabitant of the area, told us that the coordinator of the bairro (the president of

the residents' committee) had asked the inhabitants to each pay \$500 dollars to buy a power supply cabinet which would distribute electricity from the city's electrical network to the area. Many people took part in this project that was to secure electricity to the area although some were sceptical and decided to wait and see whether this project really got them electricity before contributing money for the connection.

This acquaintance had taken part and paid the \$500 but later found out that the electric cabinet was not bought but had been donated by the state. The coordinator had therefore used the opportunity to enrich himself. He saw the gift of the cabinet as a personal gift to him and not the community and therefore anyone needing electricity would have to pay the start-up fee of \$500. At the time the informant told me of this only 10 houses in the neighbourhood had obtained electrical connection to their houses and the rest were waiting. However, as the most "important" people, such as the coordinator himself and his closest neighbours, had gotten their electricity the project stopped and the informant claimed that it looks like the money they spent went into the pockets of the coordinator, who had gotten himself and nine other houses electricity; the rest were still waiting and nothing was happening. This is a typical example of how one can manipulate the power invested in oneself (often by official authorities) for personal enrichment in Angola. This is of course an example of small proportion

but it takes on almost the exact same form as top tier political corruption (see e.g. Marques de Morais 2010).

6.13 A New Dawn for Public Engagement or Just the Same Old Politics?

Panopticism and Hegemony in Contemporary Angola

The residents' committees and other de facto and official authorities practice autocratic forms of political governmentality (Foucault 1994:68)⁸⁰ in their way of governing and controlling groups of people and individuals in contemporary Angola. The outcome of such governmentality has, to a certain extent, generated a self-regulating and self-disciplining population, as described by Foucault (1995:195-228) in his work on panopticism. However, the panopticon, as an architectural design of surveillance and observation in Jeremy Bentham's prison⁸¹ does not exist in peri-urban Luanda; rather the function of such panopticism is produced metaphorically through other means, such as the eyes and ears of the residents' committee as well as other formal and informal entities and individuals that see benefit in aligning with the MPLA state governmentality and ultimately the general population itself. Or, as Aretxaga has reminded us of

⁸⁰ Foucault defines political governmentality as: "the way in which the behavior of a set of individuals became involved, more and more markedly, in the exercise of sovereign power" (1994:68).

⁸¹ The concept of the design of a panopticon prison is to allow watchmen and prison guards to observe the prisoners at all times without them knowing when and if they are being watched.

above, the contemporary state “appears as an open field with multiple boundaries and no institutional or geographical fixity”; it is produced and reproduced as a phenomenological reality through discourses and practices of power in everyday life (Aretxaga 2003:398). Thus, even when the state cannot be easily located, it continues to be a powerful object of encounter (Aretxaga 2003:399).

The political effect of rumour (see e.g. Ellis 1993) in Angolan society as well as the heritage of the *vigilancia popular* [state encouraged vigilantism] undoubtedly play a role in the Angolan version of panopticism, although it is difficult to systematically research and measure their effects. The *vigilancia popular* encouraged the general population during the war to be vigilant and report any behaviour and individuals suspected of working for the enemy or any other foul play that endangered the revolutionary objectives of the MPLA government.⁸² This heritage of “wartime political paranoia” as well as the

⁸² This made picture taking in public in the 1980s almost impossible and during fieldwork in 2009-2010 picture taking was still often frowned upon. I was even reprimanded by an older man who claimed to have the secret assignment by authorities to invigilate photographic captures by foreigners. I was defended by friends who were with me who claimed that I could take as many pictures I wanted since I was a friend. However, through this occurrence I was reminded of an incident during the Luanda Carnival in the 1980s, when a Norwegian photographer and my father were confronted by men claiming to belong to the *vigilancia popular*. They confiscated their films and destroyed them before their eyes. Remnants of such an attitude towards photography had the effect on my fieldwork that I took far fewer pictures than I wanted.

contemporary autocratic political environment in Angola has thus resulted in a situation where subjects of the Angolan political governmentality are not sure when they are being observed or by whom and therefore police themselves in certain situations, such as public meetings. The Angolan population itself has therefore been rendered into an instrument of the same governmentality that dominates its social and political life as well as its behaviour.

Modesty in such situations is perhaps not surprising. In October of 1992, after Savimbi lost the first elections in Angola's history to Dos Santos, people suspected of being supporters of UNITA were systematically hunted down in Luanda and detained or killed by civilians, mainly demobilized soldiers, MPLA activists and street thugs, who had been armed by the government in a post-election outbreak of violence and renewed conflict. The violence that ensued involved systematic killings of people who in some cases had been naïve enough to believe in the democratic election process and ensuing freedom of thought and speech that were to be provided through the Bicesse peace accords signed in May of 1991. Such tactics, dubbed romantically as people's power [*poder popular*], had been used before when MPLA supporters in the musseques were delivered arms on the eve of independence 17 years earlier (Maier 2007:95).

A prime example of self-regulation in contemporary Angola would be how people are shy to come to meetings and gatherings concerning the improvement

of their neighbourhoods and occurrences of self-censorship at such meetings. If not self-censorship then worries about how outcomes of such meetings could be censored were expressed, so that the discussions at such gatherings could not be interpreted as critique of authorities or subversion by those participating. While such self-censorship occurs at public meetings, individuals are often quite critical and politically aware in private conversation. However, apathy and fear of those in power stands in the way of the integration of the Angolan population into an active and productive civil society.



Figure 12: MPLA poster from 1982.

Declaring that national defense, economic re-organization and public vigilance are the main tasks of the political party, the state and public organizations

(Poster from the collections of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University).

This type of self-disciplining and censorship is a strategy that has evolved over time which allows for the continuing hegemony of MPLA state governmentality, hegemony being the condition Antonio Gramsci defined as “the situation in which a ruling elite is so widely accepted as to be uncontested” (Ellis 2011:95). As Faria (2013:295 and 303) points out, in Angola, where protest has been absent, authoritarian rule prevails and a pseudo-public has emerged that absorbs criticism, conceals repressive and corrupt practices, and allows the state to engage and monitor those that survive on the margins of this pseudo-public. Attempts to protest this hegemony and the political oppression, corruption and mismanagement of state resources have been harshly beaten back by Angolan authorities. However, in March 2011 a protest was organized under the influence of the Arab spring movements taking place in the north of the continent. At the helm of this movement were Angolan artists critical of the social injustice found within their own country. Despite having the legally protected right to protest, as long as they informed authorities ahead of time, top members of the MPLA party

saw it as “a grand plan against the Republic of Angola, against the MPLA, and most of all, against [their] comrade, President José Eduardo dos Santos.”⁸³



Figure 13: Poster distributed ahead of the public protest.

⁸³ Bento Bento, MPLA's first secretary in Luanda, in a political rally shown on TPA (Angola's state-run television network).

The Angolan authorities with their ability to dominate public discourse and space reacted by organizing a pro-peace and pro-president manifestation with drinks and gifts offered to participants to counter the Arab spring attempt two days before the protest was to occur. Rumours circulated that civil servants should go to these manifestations or else risk losing their jobs, and the turnout was a success. However, few demonstrators turned up at the protest meeting that took place at the Square of Independence in central Luanda. The 15⁸⁴ individuals that were courageous enough to show up were all arrested on arrival. This event, although seemingly just another practice in the autocratic governmentality of the state, pushed open ever so slightly ajar the door to a social space for protest and manifestation that has always been closed tightly shut in Angola's recent history. More protests were organized across the country and more arrests, jailings, beatings, harassment, and even disappearances of protest members ensued. Faria (2013) has described the protests as resistance in the midst of fear and repression, as the dawning of a citizenship revolution in Angola, and as a quest for inclusionary politics. Furthermore, he stresses the importance of "internationalising the counter-public" (Faria 2013:309), that is, using engagement between international democratic organisations and the protest

⁸⁴ The exact number of demonstrators varies, depending on the media outlet, from between 14 and 20 of which 4-5 were journalists.

movement to encourage it to bear fruit, an argument frequently stressed by civil society organization during my fieldwork, to counter the hegemonic powers of the state.

It is important to mention Angola's demography here. A majority of Angolan's is under 20, having lived half its life in times of peace, and so does not have the same allegiance to the ruling MPLA party as older generations. Furthermore, many of Angola's youth have little or no recollection of the war, violence and massacres that took place in their nearest environment. It is this demographic category of young Angolans that has been most actively involved in the recent anti-government protests. Laura had warned me of this during my fieldwork, more than a year before the protests of March 2011, when she claimed that it would be the young generation, that of her daughter, the generation that never experienced the war like her, that would rise up and fight for their rights, fight against the social injustices they are born into and the stark contrast between the rich and the poor.

Since these attempts to protest began to emerge, human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch have demanded that Angolan authorities drop politically motivated and trumped up charges of demonstrators and stop stifling free speech in the country (Human Rights Watch 2011 and 2012). Furthermore, they object to the use of unlawful force by police at political

demonstrations (Human Rights Watch 2011) and complain that “[j]ournalists, civil society activists, and others seeking to express their opinions or criticize the government of President José Eduardo dos Santos, who has been in power since 1979, have been harassed, threatened, and physically attacked” (Human Rights Watch 2012).

As this is written, protests by war veterans have occurred in which they demand the pensions they were promised for their hard work and sacrifice during the war. Jailing of protesters as well as incidences of their disappearance without a trace have been reported by Angolan private media and civil society organizations such as SOS-Habitat. Thus one finds attempts to protest against this political hegemony in post-conflict Angola, something virtually unheard of in the country before. However, despite a claim by Angolan authorities that it has officially become a democracy, the democratic space for public protest has not been opened. Angola can therefore be considered a classic case of an attempt at democratic form without democratic substance. Hence, regardless of more peaceful times in Angola, the autocratic governmentality and hegemonic domination that evolved over decades of civil war still persist.

As Foucault has pointed out, and the brief history of the civil society concept documented earlier in this chapter bears witness to, the making of the distinction

between state and civil society into a historical universal is a view of the world system derived from liberalism which should be seen as a “form of schematization characteristic of a particular technology of government” rather than a universal (Foucault 1994:75). Foucault’s point is valid; it is a western-liberal view of government, one that is evidently at odds with the history of Angolan autocratic governmentality, despite the Angolan state’s labeling of itself as a multi-party democracy. In fact, discourses of democracy have been used to consolidate the government’s power in Angola, extending its control over civil society organizations, a tactic that has helped the government to achieve overwhelming electoral successes (Schubert 2010:657). It is a condition Faria has called the colonization of public space through, for example, staging fake civil society events and by mimicking the activities of functional democracies. It is, as he argues, “an instrument of control that can be used to manufacture consent” (Faria 2013:302).

Angolan authorities’ view of civil society, and their use of it to control public space (see e.g. Schubert 2013; 2010; Messiant 2001; 1999), is at odds with that imagined in earlier definitions of the civil society concept. John Stuart Mill for example, in his work *On Liberty*, published in 1859, claimed that governmental encroachment on people’s freedom was almost never warranted (Peet and Hartwick 2009:39). For him a civil society would protect and guarantee

the civil, or social, liberty of its citizens from “the tyranny of the political rulers” (Mill 2001[1859]:8; see also Peet and Hartwick 2009:39).

6.14 Conclusion

What one sees occurring in the peripheral neighbourhoods of Luanda, that is particularly exemplified in the clashes between local level civil society organizations and organizations such as the residents’ committees, is one depiction of the transformative aspects and nature of state power in Angola, what one can refer to, as pointed out by Rubin (2013) in the context of Johannesburg, as the state’s presence even when it is not *clearly* present. The public sphere in Angola exists in a climate of fear in which citizens are afraid to speak out in public (Schubert 2010:665). Self-regulation and self-censorship at public (“democratic”) meetings are in essence a clear representation of state hegemony in Angola. It describes situations in which *Pharresia* is generally absent, the Greek word Foucault dedicated his lectures at the Collège de France entitled *The Government of Self and Others* (2010). *Pharresia*, a term used in ancient Greece for the act of “saying everything” (for example in Plato’s 7th Letter and Euripides’ *Ion*; see Foucault 2010), yet largely forgotten since, has been translated to mean “frank-spokenness” (*franc-parler*) or free speech (Foucault 2010:43). However, as pointed out by Foucault, *Pharresia* is more complex, as in ancient Greece it was

simultaneously “a virtue, duty and technique which should be found in the person who spiritually directs others and helps them constitute their relationship to self” (2010:43). Empirical evidence in this chapter shows how techniques of the self are part of domination and governmentality (see Roitman 2005:8), a central theme in Foucault’s work on governmentality that shows how power relations can control and create subjects (see for example Foucault 1995 and 1978). However, as can be seen from the case studies in this chapter, as well as elsewhere in this work it does not prevent the exercise of agency by subordinate actors and organizations, although it seriously circumscribes it (see Soares de Oliveira 2013:166 for a similar argument on the politics of post-war state making in Angola’s peripheries), making “the exercise of power a ceaseless endeavour” (Roitman 2005:2) taking place in a myriad of ways, in a myriad of circumstances. Furthermore, while techniques of the self can become part of domination and governmentality they are also part of agency and in some cases resistance to the status quo.

As has become evident, there is a tradition of top-down rule and authority in Angola that clashes with the ideals and endeavours of bottom-up grassroots organizations that follow more democratic principles and agendas for improving their closest environment. Soares de Oliveira (2013:174) has for example pointed

out that it is as if the MPLA state is trying to create the idea in Angolans' collective memory that it can intervene whenever and wherever to defend its interest, that the state has authority over the Angolan citizen yet simultaneously is not responsible for his or her welfare.

Allianca's success despite the challenges it has faced can largely be attributed to the informal route taken to the top. That is, it used the methodology that best works on the ground via Angola's informal market system or *candonga*, by setting up a direct link to or a social network with the people who actually have the power and will to affect their problems, while simultaneously bypassing the inefficient local authorities and the bureaucratic quagmire that surrounds it. This, combined with the backing and moral support of external NGOs and development partnerships, in this case with Care International, LUPP and Development Workshop, has contributed immensely to Allianca's successes.

There has been a tendency, and Angola is one example of this, for states that previously identified themselves with socialism and communism to openly embrace an ideological shift to capitalism. This switch often involves a halt in the development, or diminishing support for, public infrastructures and social programs, including public institutions such as education and healthcare systems. However, these states have been more reluctant to let go of their monopolization of political power, control of economic resources and social

behaviour. Thus, states have found themselves in situations where political power and control follows the old system of authoritarianism while implementing state-directed capitalism.

This reluctance to let go of political and economic control is vivid at the local community level in Angola. The aforementioned power struggles in Luanda's musseques are an extension of such tendencies at the top political and economic levels. They are also a testimony to multiple forms of power held at the local level by people who are caught up in a struggle in which the contenders are more authoritarian on the one side and more democratic on the other.

Chapter 7. Last But Not Least: Everyday Representations of Corruption in Angolan Society

“I realized that the problem was corruption and human rights abuses. So I dropped everything and decided just to focus on these issues. And I have been finding that the country is basically under pillage. It’s just total plunder. There’s no way to even describe it mildly, it’s just plunder.” (From an interview with Rafael Marques de Morais by Rebecca Regan-Sachs 2012).

I was not convinced at first whether to include a section on corruption in this work. However, when writing about Angola, especially on the culture of informality or the *candonga* culture, it seems impossible to divert from the topic of corruption, whether it is in the form of extortion or petty bribes, called *gasosa*, or large scale corruption and embezzlement taking place high up in the chain of command within the Angolan political elite, or any of the myriad of ways that corruption is displayed in Angolan society today. The subject of corruption started out as a section in the introduction that gradually evolved into a chapter of its own. It is not the main theme of this work, which is the informal ways of getting by in a city of extremes and paradoxes such as Luanda. It is, however, important as it paints a picture of Angola’s politico-economic environment, putting the components of the other chapters into a wider political and economic context.

For, as pointed out by Blundo (2008:27), the study of corruption can improve our understanding of social and political issues. “[A]s a specific mode of accession to the state, the universe of corruption offers to anthropological reflection a fertile perspective of exploration of concrete forms of public space, popular representations of forms of government, and daily intrusions of public power in the life of citizens” (Blundo 2008:48). Furthermore, it has elements of what has been dubbed here the *candonga* culture. *Candonga* culture is both a cause and effect of corruption and petty corruption such as paying a *gasosa* or bribe is a common way of getting things done in an ineffective and cumbersome official bureaucracy, as well as boosting one’s formal salary informally, when on the receiving end.

These paragraphs on corruption are, like the rest of this work, based on observations, conversations and interviews with Angolans, some of them in key positions to provide a clear image of how such corruption takes place: within ministries, within private enterprises and within state offices. Such information is of delicate nature and thus a certain degree of caution is necessary when conducting research as well as writing about such issues. It is important that such information is not traceable to its sources (my informants) and thus pseudonyms are used throughout when referring to informants, and exact positions of informants within businesses and public offices are not provided

here. Furthermore, occasionally the name of companies and ministries are not even provided to keep these informants in the shadows. One could perhaps claim that it reduces the quality of the information for the reader when its traceability is removed, however, given the political atmosphere in Angola, research ethics and the standards of the discipline, it would be ethically wrong to publish such information. Furthermore, the intent here is not to expose specific individuals or institutions for corruption but to illustrate the vastness of corrupt practices in Angolan society, and point out that it affects all layers of society, from the top to the bottom, becoming part of culture. As has been argued elsewhere, corruption and corrupt acts are profoundly social and not merely selfish or private: “they are shaped by larger sociocultural notions of power, privilege and responsibility” (Hasty 2005:271; as cited in Anders and Nuijten 2008:16).

Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, in their inquiry into corruption and the state in West Africa (2001 and 2006), have defined seven forms of petty corruption:

1. “The ‘commission’ paid for illicit favours, such as kickbacks for the award of government tenders”
2. “The ‘gratuity’ as the reward for a civil servant who has executed his or her official duty”
3. “‘Having connections’ with civil servants”

4. “The informal payment for services rendered”
5. “The private use of government property, in French ‘*Perruque*’”
6. Appropriation of government property
7. “The more severe form of everyday corruption, namely extortion, when public officials, usually police or army personnel, demand the payment of a ‘fine’ for fictive violations of regulation and threaten to use force if the ‘fine’ is not paid”

(Cited in Anders and Nuijten 2008:6).

All these forms of corruption were widespread in Luanda during my fieldwork and I encountered them both during research and in my quotidian life. While members of the powerful elite are embroiled in systemic theft of public resources, capturing the country’s resource wealth, the ordinary Angolan citizen is involved in what Hansen (2013) has defined as “corruption out of need.” This involves bribing poorly paid public servants for: “Moving ahead in waiting lines in hospitals, passport offices, courts etc.”; “signatures on permissions, certificates, licenses, completion reports, etc.”; “not issuing traffic tickets, customs duties, value added taxes or highway tolls”; “making sure judges pass verdicts in your favour in courts”, etc. (Hansen 2013). Some empirical examples of corruption are given in this work, others not. It is, however, important to emphasize that

information on corruption was not merely collected through formal interviews and informal conversations but also through “participant” observation. I observed first-hand accounts of bribe giving and bribe receiving during field research as well as having vivid memories of *gasosa* giving during my childhood in Angola in the 1980s, when *gasosa* [bribe] actually was in the form of a can of soda [*gasosa* literally means soda in Portuguese], beer or cigarettes. Thus, as pointed out by Blundo and Olivier de Sardan (2006:4), researchers conducting field research in places where corruption is widespread are constantly confronted with issues of corruption without consciously seeking it out.

Manifestations of corruption and the situation it puts one in are diverse, and evoke various emotions and reactions that can range from fright, humour, stress, frustration, excitement and even pleasure⁸⁵. At one occasion during the research I was compelled to take on the role of negotiator when I had to negotiate with police officers, turned extortion artists, for the release of a German researcher with minimal Portuguese skills who was accompanying me and had forgotten his ID documents at the hostel room where he was staying during his research sojourn in Luanda. The officer in charge, who claimed he had been to Holland, and thus knew how we “Europeans” handle such matters, had a no-nonsense attitude, sporting dark spectacles and a rigid grimace. The four irritated

⁸⁵ Jennifer Hasty (2005) has written about “the pleasures of corruption” in Ghana.

and menacing policemen, some armed with pistols others with assault rifles, were sitting in the shade of a makeshift shack on the side of the road with the German researcher in handcuffs as I reasoned with them. The German researcher was to be in their custody until his case would be sent to court and a judge would revoke his visa. After some negotiation the handcuffs were finally taken off and we were allowed to continue our journey. As we drove away from the scene and the emotional combination of stress, adrenaline and frustration started to fade, my quite shocked research companion admitted that he had at one point considered running for his life. Trying to convince him that I always had the situation under control, I explained that it would have been a poor and dangerous decision to try and flee from the situation, emphasising that such problems are usually solved by other means, with a certain etiquette or a “play” one has to routinely take part in as a member of Angolan society. As soon as his release from custody had been negotiated the police officers, in a moment of surreal metamorphosis, switched from “extortion mode,” with threats of incarceration and deportation, to “tourist guide mode,” recommending beaches, tourist sites and restaurants in the vicinity, they even provided me with a telephone number to call if we would have any problems with police later on during our expedition.

Examples pertaining to the appropriation of government property were also ample and became obvious when I re-visited one of my childhood homes in Cacuaco in 2009. It turned out that the land where the house I had lived in as a child had stood, and all the property on that land (land that still housed the government's Cefopescas school of fisheries), had been appropriated by a high ranking politician. His plan was supposedly to build himself a luxury, hotel, marina and yacht club on the Cacuaco bay, on this prime real estate where the fisheries school still stood. This was disclosed to me and confirmed by various staff members of the school. On a visit to the school, I met with some of the staff members, who invited me for drinks and some snacks. They reminisced about old times, asking me about my family, how they were and what my father, who had worked at the school, was doing today. The teachers explained how they were in a limbo, not sure what would happen next; classes were not being taught at the school and it was rumoured that a new school of fisheries would be built on a location further north, but they were not sure when that would happen or if they would keep their jobs at the school.

Another memorable example of blatant private appropriation of public goods could be found on one of the streets I frequently visited when seeking literature and development reports in central Luanda. A newly built, centrally located, clinic was in the process of being appropriated by government officials.

The clinic which, had been built by one of the ministries for ministry employees, was located on land that had multiplied in value. However, the clinic had never opened and had stood empty and unused for over a year if not more. The ministry employees, who pointed the clinic out to me, explained that the reason why the clinic had never been opened was because of a quarrel between two ministers over ownership of the clinic, the former minister and the then newly appointed minister. Thus, the clinic, paid for with public money, was in the midst of a quarrel between two ministers trying to appropriate it as their personal and private ownership.

7.1 “Same, Same, but Different”: The State Apparatus as the “Epicenter of Corruption”

During U.S. Secretary of State, Clinton’s visit to Angola in August of 2009, she applauded the Angolan government for steps taken towards increased transparency by publishing the country’s oil revenues. However, on the subject of corruption, she began to say that it is indeed a problem, but then she dismissed it almost immediately by reminding her audience that corruption is found everywhere (and therefore not a problem unique to Angola). Such a dismissal of Angolan corruption can perhaps be seen as logical since corruption in some form can be found in all countries. However, as pointed out here, and many scholars

and critics have already suggested (e.g. Marques de Moraes 2010, Sogge 2011a and 2011b, Shaxson 2007, Hodges 2004, Tvedten 1997, and others), corruption in Angola is ubiquitous and has become an important part of the economic and political system, or, as I argue here, a cultural phenomenon. Critics claim that corruption has become so entwined with the political, economic and cultural fabric that it has been systematically used to “legally steal” from the state’s coffers. The victim of such large scale and systematic corruption has been the Angolan population while members of the political and economic elite have personally enriched themselves and their circles of clienteles, as well as foreign business interests (Marques de Moraes 2010; Sogge 2011a). Moreover, it can easily be argued that the statistical paradox (explained in the introduction) found in Angola is, to a certain extent, derived from the systematic corruption in the country’s politico-economic culture. Thus, based on Angola’s track record in corruption, dismissal of corruption for reasons that corruption can be found everywhere does not easily apply to Angola. However, Clinton’s diplomatic comment is not unique, as scholars have warned against losing track of the real problems that need to be mended in developing countries by focusing too much on corruption. Jeffrey Sachs, for example, made such a comment, and similar dismissal of corruption, when talking of poverty and development at a conference I attended at the University of Iceland in 2003 (see his book *The End of Poverty*

(2005) for his thoughts on development and poverty alleviation). In an interview with Onnesha Roychoudhuri he clarifies his rationale further, explaining that smallpox was, for example, eradicated through a collective effort worldwide. That is, not only in the countries scoring high on governance indexes, but in all parts of the world (Roychoudhuri 2005). Sachs thus comes to a conclusion similar to that of Collier in his book *The Bottom Billion* (2007), that corruption and bad governance (although problematic) are not *on their own* the crucial factor in whether countries' "develop" or break the various poverty traps.

However, although the intention here is not to enter into an argument with renowned and respected individuals such as Secretary of State Clinton, Dr. Sachs and Dr. Collier, this dissertation emphasizes that in Angola corruption has developed over the last decades as a cultural phenomenon, an everyday presence found at all stages of societal hierarchy, and that corruption in Angola does affect economy, politics, and society. This argument draws to some extent from that of Bayart, Ellis and Hibou's, in their book *Criminalization of the State in Africa*, where they state that it may well be that corruption exists in Japan, China, India, Russia, Italy or France. However, in Africa, "the interaction between the practice of power, war, economic accumulation and illicit activities of various types forms a particular political trajectory which can be fully appreciated only if it is addressed in historical depth" (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999:xvi). This

argument also concurs with that of Anders and Nuijten that corruption is not an individual act but “a phenomenon that is institutionalized and embedded in the wider matrix of power relations in society” (2008:2). In a similar vein to Bayart, Ellis and Hibou’s argument, Blundo and Olivier de Sardan have argued that corruption in Africa is qualitatively different from corruption elsewhere in the World “in its pervasiveness, its legitimations and its huge impact on the nature of the state” (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, with Nassirou Bako Arifari and Mahaman Tidjani Alou, 2006: Backmatter). Similarly, Chabal and Daloz (1999:102) have, in their book *Africa Works*, attempted to distinguish African corruption from Western corruption, arguing that while Western corruption occurs at the top, where deals are struck between political and economic elites, African corruption concerns the whole population.

Thus, as Blundo and Olivier de Sardan argue, to understand the state at both central and local levels, better understand “administrations, of municipalities, development projects and even civil society and the associative movement” one has to look at and understand corruption (2006:14). Furthermore, such an understanding of the “everyday functioning of the state, administration, municipalities, development projects and associations” is, as they point out, “an essential prerequisite for their reform to take place” (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006:14). This becomes acutely important if there is any

veracity to Hibou's (1999:95) statement that corruption on the African continent, that is, the maximization of one's political power through private accumulation and vice versa, has gone so far that "the deterioration in the quality of African civil services is nowadays such that it has become materially and humanly impossible to implement reforms" (Hibou 1999:95).

As hinted at here and pointed out throughout this work, the reputation for endemic and systemic corruption and a kleptocratic elite has followed Angola for a long time. It behaves much like an unwanted shadow that grows and grows the more light one shines on the country. There are persistent rumours that Angola's wealth, especially its petrodollars, are being siphoned off to hidden foreign bank accounts and elite business interests abroad. It can, however, be difficult to pinpoint exactly by whom and where to Angola's wealth is being siphoned-off. David Sogge has published numbers hinting at the extent of capital flight from Angola's formal economy. According to his numbers, illicit outflows of capital during the 1990s averaged \$542 million per year (around 6% of GDP) while it averaged \$2.7 billion per year during the period 2000-2008 (around 14% GDP) (Sogge 2011a; see also GFI 2010).

With its abundance of resources Angola has been relatively independent of the influence of foreign bank and loan institutions up until 2009 when, due to

the effects of the 2008 global financial crisis, the Angolan state took a 1.4\$ billion loan from the IMF. Opening its books to a third party institution like the IMF, a financial scandal of large proportions was uncovered in which 32\$ billion of government funds, equivalent to 25% of the country's GDP, had been spent or transferred between 2007-2010 without being properly accounted for in the federal ledger (Power and Alves 2012:1; IMF 2011:9; see also Dolan and Marques de Morais 2013). This discrepancy was only discovered because the IMF imposed a conditionality of fiscal transparency for a loan of 1.4 billion US\$, an amount dwarfed in comparison to the value of the financial distortions uncovered in the state budget.

In 2012 Angola ranked 157th out of 175 countries on Transparency International's, Corruption Perception Index, which is a few ranks higher than in previous years, since in 2011 it ranked 168th out of 182 countries and in 2010 168th out of 178 countries (Transparency International 2012; 2011; 2010). Furthermore, Angola was recently used as an example at the European Parliament of "the plundering that can take place in developing nations with the complicity of European banks and tax havens" (Gotev 2013) when the report *Deception in High Places: The Corrupt Angola-Russia Debt Deal* (Associação Mãos Livres and Corruption Watch UK 2013) was presented in a public event hosted by the Open Society and Portuguese Member of European Parliament,

Ana Maria Gomes (Gotev 2013). The report explains how through a debt repayment deal between Angola and Russia, high-ranking Angolans and middlemen, as well as other “unnecessary” middlemen, including European arms dealers and a Russian Oligarch (Lee 2013), “made hundreds of millions of dollars in profit from the transactions despite offering no discernible services or value, at the expense of the Russian and Angolan treasuries” (Associação Mãos Livres and Corruption Watch UK 2013:1).

The foreign press has intermittently published articles on the paradoxes found in Angolan society with article titles such as: Angola’s Poor People Hit Hard by Urbanization Crackdown in Luanda (Peel 2013, The Guardian); In Angola, Growing Wealth but Shrinking Democracy (Marques de Moraes 2012, The New York Times); Flats, Cars and Oil for China: Angola’s Growth Tempered by Growing Inequality (Smith 2012a, The Guardian); It’s Party Time For Luanda’s Elite as Angola Grows Rich on Oil and Gems (Duval-Smith 2008, The Observer); Welcome to the World’s Richest Poor Country (Kampfner 2008, GQ); As Angola Rebuilds, Most Find Their Poverty Persists (LaFraniere 2007, The New York Times); Angola, Oil Rich but Dirt Poor (Mouawad 2007, The New York Times), and many more can be found. These paradoxes are also highlighted in the fact that Luanda has in recent years consistently topped Mercer’s Cost of Living City Ranking and Isabel dos Santos, the eldest daughter of President José Eduardo

dos Santos, was named in January 2013 “Africa’s first woman billionaire” by Forbes Magazine (see Dolan 2013). The Forbes article provoked harsh criticism of her status as Africa’s first (and only) female billionaire, claiming that her fortune had not been earned through legitimate means but by means of corruption and exploitation of the country’s wealth, through her father’s presidency, and at the expense of ordinary Angolans (see e.g. Smith 2013). This is especially ironic when considering that the majority of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.

In response to this critique Forbes published a follow up article titled: “How an African ‘Princess’ Banked \$3 Billion in a Country Living on \$2 Day” (Dolan and Marques de Morais 2013) which scrutinized the immense wealth accumulated by Mrs. Dos Santos more thoroughly. Tracing her wealth the authors of the article proclaim: “As best as we can trace, every major Angolan investment held by Dos Santos stems either from taking a chunk of a company that wants to do business in the country or from the stroke of the president’s pen that cut her into the action. Her story is a rare window into the same, tragic kleptocratic narrative that grips resource rich countries around the world” (Dolan and Marques de Morais 2013). Former Angolan prime minister, turned critic, Marcolino Moco, joins in the critique by saying that there is no way of justifying her wealth as “there is no

doubt that it was the father who generated such a fortune” (Dolan and Marques de Morais 2013).

Marques de Morais had stated elsewhere that most of her fortune was approved or transferred by her father, claiming that her investments in Portugal, were first made by the state oil and gas firm Sonangol, with Mrs. Dos Santos receiving shares (Smith 2013). A more precise listing of the manner in which she accumulated her wealth, reciting her businesses in both Angola and Europe as well as her business associates in Europe, is explained in Forbes’ follow up article. Marques de Morais has also documented and published the Presidency’s “shady business deals”, which he claims to have had “consequences for citizen’s freedom and development, as well as for the country’s political and economic stability”, in his article “The Angolan Presidency: The Epicenter of Corruption” (Marques de Morais 2010). In the article he argues that the State and the presidency have become hostages to what Achille Mbembe has described as “private indirect government” (see Mbembe 2001:80). It can also be seen as one version of what Chabal has dubbed the “politics of disorder” on the African continent, a thesis on African state politics in which political relations in Africa are seen as directed by a logic of neo-patrimonialism, nepotism, corruption, disorder and violence (Chabal 2005). Marques de Morais describes how some of Angola’s most prominent public companies have been divided between big men and

women within the Angolan ruling party through “processes of privatization.” “In other words, the state apparatus and the civil service are all used for the benefit of private interests by private operators” (Marques de Moraes 2010). This, he claims, is only possible in a society “where the public are fighting for basic survival, thus paying little or no attention to the functionality of the state” and is tied to the control of the state and private media by individuals close to the presidency (Marques de Moraes 2010). Furthermore, as he points out, it is ironically in stark contrast to the president’s zero tolerance policy against corruption, introduced on November 21st, 2009, during my fieldwork, which sparked much debate and comical disbelief among colleagues in Angola at the time.

7.2 Corruption as Everyday Occurrences

At a dinner at a friend’s house, another houseguest said enthusiastically when she learned I was an anthropologist conducting fieldwork in Angola: “You should research corruption.” Attempting to be diplomatic I told her that corruption is a sensitive and tricky topic to study. Her reaction to my reply was unmistakable: “But corruption is everywhere here in Angola”, she said surprised. “Surely you must have noticed.” “Yes of course” I answered. She went on to say: “Here corruption is not tricky, it is in front of our eyes every day.” She spoke truthfully;

representations of corruption were easily found almost everywhere I went in Angola. This suggestion that I should study Angolan corruption as an anthropologist came up a few times during my field research. However, at that point in time I was not familiar with anthropological literature on corruption (e.g. Anders and Nuijten 2008; and Blundo's 2008 chapter on "How Anthropology Can 'Observe' and Describe Corruption") and saw corruption in Angola as a topic best left untouched for various reasons (security concerns, for me and my informants, being one of them). For as Blundo has pointed out, the anthropological study of corruption is riddled with methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas, as the subject is simultaneously "hidden and diffuse, concealed and openly discussed, justified and stigmatized in daily conversations" (Blundo 2008:27). Nevertheless, corruption became unavoidable during fieldwork in Luanda and fieldnotes on corruption soon began to fill my notebooks. Thus, "participant" observation on issues of corruption in Angolan society became an almost "involuntary" observation, which tends to become the case when ethnographic researchers are involved in other inquiries outside or on the margins of corruption (Blundo 2008:37; Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006:4).

Corruption is an omnipresent subject in conversations among Angolans. It has become what Taussig (1999:30) has called a "public secret" where the

population knows “what not to know” (cited in Blundo 2008:30). People share the latest political gossip and freshest scandals, expressing feelings of condemnation or admiration, often both. The admiration of corrupt officials’ daring to steal large amounts of money or to expropriate state resources for private enrichment is not uncommon. As already stressed by other scholars, corruption is not always regarded as bad but also as a manifestation of strength, power and audacity (Anders and Nuijten 2008:18). Thus, perceptions of corrupt practices are culturally embedded (Blundo 2008:28). João, a registered MPLA party member, explained to me: “Here people are not ashamed [*não tem vergonha*] for stealing public resources or being obviously corrupt, in fact, here people are ashamed and resentful for not being a member of the elite circle of corruption, which allows one to steal from the state, and can make one very rich in a very short amount of time.”

Both João and various ministerial employees explained during my research that no one becomes powerful in Angola without being corrupt. If you are not corrupt you will not last; you have to dance the dance [of corruption] and thus corruption becomes almost a necessity if one is to hold public office. Those who are corrupt, which all the people in positions of power are according to my informants, tend to protect each other and push out those who are honest, clean or non-corrupt, to protect their own corrupt interests. According to this logic, a

person in office who benefits from the corrupt activities of someone else and does not repay the “favour,” might be chastised, or, worse, pushed out of office; thus, corruption breeds more corruption. Blundo has referred to the shared properties between witchcraft and corruption as both of these phenomena are reproduced within the same space of uncertainty and suspicion; just like individuals tend to counteract witchcraft by using anticipatory magical practices, corrupt practices are used as preventative measures in societies where corruption is considered endemic, through practices of, for example, political protection, anticipatory gifts, or bribes, etc. (Blundo 2008:31). An informant from one of the ministries trying to rationalize the logic behind the seemingly overwhelming extent of corruption in Angola explained quite intriguingly: “It’s easier to clean up a clean house and to mess up a messy house” [*É mais fácil limpar uma casa limpa e sujar uma casa suja*]. The moral of the maxim is that it is difficult to soil a clean (or transparent) house unnoticed while it is as difficult to keep clean when one is surrounded by dirt, or residing in a “pigsty.” Thus, after some time in public office, the standard of “cleanliness” is bound to lower as the urge to fit in and protect one’s position grips individuals, leading one to partake in corrupt activities.

In line with this argumentation it has become a convention to use public office for personal and private enrichment. As explained by Vidal, in Angola after

independence “[p]ower was exercised by means of a mechanism for distribution of state resources operated through the appointment of key figures in the top positions” (Vidal 2008:200). This was made clear at a dinner in the 1980s, during my childhood, at which the honoured guest was one of the country’s ministers. In a cordial atmosphere with drinks and music flowing, the minister snickered to other guests that it doesn’t matter what happens, it doesn’t matter who is minister or who is in charge of this or that office, the power in Angola will always be in the hands of the same families [the minister’s family included]⁸⁶. Public office has therefore become a perk or personal reward and divorced from the undertaking of implementing policies of national interest (Vidal 2008:200). This has had the effect that the distinction between public and private spheres has vanished as well as notions of common good and collective interest (Vidal 2008:200). Thus, as the rumour goes, becoming a minister in Angola also means becoming a millionaire. Belinda, a specialist working for one of the ministries, confided in me one day that “a minister’s job is to steal, and steal, and steal, and steal, nothing else! Until they have become filthy rich on the expense of Angolans!” Another ministry employee likewise expressed that “ministers, they are all thieves [/*adrões*]!”

⁸⁶ Due to the conversational context, I was asked by my informant not to mention the minister’s name.

7.3 Representations of Systemic Corruption

This state of affairs has rendered fiscal surveillance regulations more for show than real. I was informed by a staff member of INADEC, Angola's National Institute of Consumer Protection, that the institute had severe problems when pursuing big companies in Angola. Despite blatant violations and large fines the investigations into these companies were always cut short by a minister or someone high up in the government chain of command. Jota gave me an example of an international supermarket chain that had repeatedly been caught selling meat that was unfit for consumption. The fines had over time accumulated to close to a million dollars and everyone at INADEC, Jota explained, knew that these fines would never be paid by the company. The reason why INADEC cannot pursue companies such as this one is that every one of them has shareholders or board members who are important people within the Angolan governing elite. This way the companies are protected since one phone call from an angry minister or general stops the INADEC in its tracks, Jota explained. Every big or foreign company in Angola provides important members of the governing elite with shares in their companies in exchange for licences to start a business in the country and for protection against any possible threat, INADEC being one of them. Critical, but also sadly fatalistic about his/her work and the

incompetence of the institution he/she works for, Jota explained how he/she feels that the institute itself sometimes seems to be fake, just a cover, something that looks good on paper but in reality is not supposed to function effectively, because when it comes down to following rules and regulations the institute cannot follow through. This is yet another representation of what I have referred to as the “virtual realities” found in Angola.

Similarly, Pedro, a person working for the state’s fisheries surveillance patrol [*fiscalização de pesca*], explained to me how often when he and his colleagues stop a ship for illegal fishing, or for routine inspection, they get orders from above that the ships should be released immediately, even in situations when the culprits are caught in clear violation of the law. This, my informant explained with an ironic smile, happens because the ships fishing off the shores of Angola, both foreign and local, have ties to members of the government or an important government official on the pay roll, who provides protection from the law as well as their work as fiscal regulators.

Consistent with this, it was common to hear in Angola, during my fieldwork, that if one wants to succeed in business in Angola one has to “jump into bed” with the Angolan ruling party or its generals. In practice (for large scale formal businesses) this means that one has to allow an important member of the political and economic elite to sit on one’s board of directors, pay him or her with

shares in one's company or provide monthly payments to a highly ranked public official. If one neglects to do this, one's business is bound to fail as it is an unwritten rule and tacit knowledge that all formal business connections come through some kind of political connections. During fieldwork in Angola, having listened to ministerial staff members and formal employees of both private and public offices and firms talk of their work, I wrote in my fieldnotes one day: "Nowhere in the world is Polanyi's (2001[1994]) theory that one cannot emancipate politics from the economy as true as in Angola."

As an example of how systematic the corruption is, an employee of a well-established, foreign owned, import business in Luanda explained to me how the business she worked for was ensured protection from well-placed state officials who secured the company's survival in a business environment that is far from being fair, open and free. She elucidated how simple the key to their success was: each month, one of the company's employees puts tens of thousands of dollars in envelopes, and the envelopes are then sent to strategically placed and important individuals within the ministry (ministers and government officials) that oversee the trade the company is involved in. This secured the company protection for when it was needed, for example when someone else wanted a cut or a share in the company. My informant, a veteran at the company, explained that this is such an open process that in cases when envelopes do not reach

certain people in time, envelope receivers send a message or even come by in person to “discuss” the matter. Thus, to survive in such a business environment, one has to understand the informal *candonga* system, which even formal businesses are involved in, and pay *gasosa* (bribes) to the right person, at the right time. Success in such corrupt practices demands socialization in which one learns to read and react to certain signs embedded in the local culture (Blundo 2008:33; see also Werner 2000:16). Considering this, it is perhaps no surprise that Angola scores low on the World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Index where in 2013 it ranked only 173 out of 185 economies (World Bank 2013).

7.4 Corruption as Represented in Angolan literature and Popular Culture

In Angolan writer Pepetela’s book, *O Cão e os Caluandas* (2005[1985]), the reoccurring story of a bougainvillea can be read as a social critique of the state of affairs in Angola when the book was written at the end of the 1970s (although it was first published in 1985). Pepetela uses a bougainvillea as a metaphor for destruction, corruption, exploitation and danger in Angola’s first years of post-independence. This he does despite its magnificent beauty, lushness and colourful blossoms, which, because of their beauty, are more often a signal of hope and happiness rather than its opposite. The beautiful bougainvillea with its thorns that sting, grows fast and wild, attaching itself to and climbing onto its

surroundings, yet flourishing beautifully. Eventually, it starts to suffocate the plants in its vicinity and engulfs the terrace of the house where the dog, a main protagonist of Pepetela's novel, sleeps. In the beginning of the book, the dog tries to uproot the plant that had appeared out of nowhere at a farmhouse outside Luanda. However, blinded by its beauty the father of the household forbids the trimming of the plant as it is a plant of such beauty, and he feels a connection to it, that is, it is like him. However, the dog detests the plant but later gives up, looking at it with hateful eyes, as if it were a ghost, barking, growling and whimpering in its direction, until one day the dog disappears without a trace.

Pepetela's bougainvillea and its metaphorical properties can be interpreted as corruption (and the discourses surrounding it), something that, when allowed can grow out of control, until there is no holding it back, with irreversible effects, both social and personal, for those in its vicinity.

Popular culture, especially music, has been in the past and still is a forum for resistance to the status quo, whether it is resistance to colonialism, politics, corruption or other social hardships in Angola. With a stunted freedom of press, Angolan social critique can often be found in popular Angolan songs, especially within today's rap scene. This is not unique to Angola as, for example, resistance against apartheid in South Africa flourished in songs and music, in a social

environment where almost all kinds of resistance were blocked by authorities.

Historian Marissa Moorman has written about this relationship between culture and politics in Luanda, specifically about colonial resistance and nation building through music in urban Angola in her work: *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, from 1945 to Recent Times* (2008).

Thus, corruption is addressed in Angolan art and popular culture, both metaphorically and directly. Songs and jokes are frequently made on the subject of corruption in Angola. A popular song by Teta Lágrimas: *Eu quero ser político* [I want to be a politician], is about a man who has been forcibly evicted from his residence and his house bulldozed. At a time in his life when he is well and prosperous, his house is demolished and he is forced to live in a tent with no electricity and no food, and far from the river [with no access to water], struggling to make ends meet. In the refrain he sings: “I do not want to be a street thug [*batuquero*], I want to be a politician, because being a politician is what is really paying off these days.” Although the meaning in the text seems obvious, referring to the post-conflict situation of despair and the social injustices many Angolans are experiencing today, and the corruption found within the country, the pun is even deeper and wittier in the local vernacular, for while *batuquero* is the local

slang [*calão* or *gíria*] for street thug or robber⁸⁷ pursued by police, the Portuguese word for politician [*político*] refers in Angolan slang to a criminal but one who is not pursued by police, hence someone entangled in crime that does not lead to arrest (or “legalized crime”).

Typical jokes commonly told on the subject would be: “The problem here in this country is that the corruption is in the DNA of those who rule. Thus, it doesn’t seem to be possible to eradicate this problem. Just look at how their children behave!” Another joke goes: “The story of our rulers is a lot like the adventure of Ali Baba and the 40 thieves, the only difference is that here the thieves are a lot more numerous.” As these jokes and Teta Lágrima’s popular song point out, the issue of corruption in Angola is an ever-present topic, a conversational topic present in all layers of Luandan society, although when and to whom one talks about corruption varies depending on the social circumstances. This also serves to show that politics are considered so riddled with corruption that the term for politician has become synonymous with corrupt individuals, as politics are in contemporary Angola used as a metaphor for corruption and vice versa.

⁸⁷ In the 80s and 90s it referred specifically to car robbers but has come to signify the more general categories of street robbers.

7.5 Corruption Justified

As explained above, corruption in Luanda is blatant and in your face; it would be hard to argue that it is a hidden phenomenon in Luandan society for it has become a common and often exciting conversational topic. Sometimes it is condemned but oftentimes it is even glorified and encouraged; it has indeed become a social norm. When I would ask about corruption in the police force and talk of how irritating it can be to constantly (oftentimes on a daily basis) have to deal with police fishing for bribes, the reply would often be: “They have to receive bribes because their formal salaries are so low. Their families have to eat as well.” Thus, corruption is in many instances socially and morally condoned and justified, sometimes portrayed as a necessary evil and, as mentioned above, sometimes viewed as a manifestation of strength and audacity (see Anders and Nuijten 2008:18). The President himself reportedly declared in a presidential statement to his people that “Angolans do not live solely off their salaries” [*“O Angolano não vive só do salário”*]. A statement that can be interpreted, and has been criticized, in various ways, as referring to the entrepreneurial skills of the population: justifying low official wages; dealings on the parallel *candonga* market to boost one’s low official salaries; rationalizing public officials’ embezzlement of public funds and the reception of *gasosa* [bribes]; or as justifying (and legalizing) the political elite’s tapping into the state’s oil wealth.

Melinda, an old friend, once complained about the corruption in Angola and asked me if corruption was as bad in my home country. The answer to her question was hard to explain at that moment in time because Iceland had recently hit rock bottom in a recession brought on by an overinflated banking system. The newly privatized Icelandic banks owed many times more than the country's annual GDP, which resulted in some of the biggest bankruptcies in world history taking place in Iceland (for information on the Icelandic financial crisis see e.g. Aliber and Zoega 2011; Hreinsson, Benediktsdóttir and Gunnarsson 2010; Wade and Sigurgeirsdóttir 2010; Wade 2009) and some of the filth under the once seemingly smooth surface of the Icelandic banking and political system was emerging. After discussing and criticizing corruption for a while she came to the conclusion that sadly she would also take advantage of her position and partake in corrupt activities if she had the opportunity, claiming: "That is the only way you can go forward [make a better life for yourself] in this country."

However, even though corruption is ubiquitous in Angola, there are those who are getting tired of perpetual conversations on the topic. As pointed out by Anders and Nuijten, corruption has both moral and legal dimensions to it. Thus, it refers to more than "the mere transgression of rules governing the conduct of public officials"; as a concept it can also refer to individuals' feelings of "moral

depravity and perversion or to the moral decay of whole societies” (Anders and Nuijten 2008:1). Thus, despite being widespread, visible and “in your face” in Luanda, a common subject in both conversations and songs, the issue of corruption can also touch a few nerves, people’s sense of pride, or even nationalistic sentiments. Helga, a woman who by Angolan standards is well educated, well off and well-connected once lost her temper in one of our conversations: “Corruption, what do you mean? In the United States and Europe they call it lobbying, here they call it corruption.” Her argument, in line with that of Secretary Clinton and Dr. Sachs above, was that these are the same, but go by different names and provoke different sentiments depending on how and where it happens, condoned in certain parts of the world but condemned in others. In retrospect, she was pointing out how the discourse on corruption in Africa can, and perhaps tends to, take on orientalist overtones which can turn it into mere rhetoric based on ethnocentrism. “Othering” is implicit in such orientalism (one of Edward Said’s (1979) theoretical legacies) in which “the Other” is distinguished from “us” (usually the West or the First World, etc.). A discursive trap and, as Gísli Pálsson has pointed out, “a powerful literary establishment” and “textual institution that domesticates, exaggerates, and misrepresents ‘the Other’ in terms of ethnocentric and nostalgic concerns” (Pálsson 1995:1).

Corruption is indeed a multifaceted phenomenon, one that leaves researchers open to criticism for being orientalist and accused of double standards as corruption is also found “in the belly of the beast.” Furthermore, it is complex because it is a research field that is prone to being grounded in rumours, juicy stories and anecdotes (Anders and Nuijten 2008:6; Blundo 2008: 39-40), which simultaneously leaves the research subject open for critique and even dismissal as a research subject. However, as has been pointed out by scholars such as Ellis on Togo (1993) and Gupta on India (1995), rumour has political significance as it has the potential to function as a subterranean commentary on the state and society⁸⁸ and thus represents a form of resistance, a “weapon of the weak” (Coombe 1997:268; Scott 1985). As this chapter as well as preceding chapters call attention to, corruption in Angola has become so commonplace that it is often the only way to access state services (much like Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, with Nassirou Bako Arifari and Mahaman Tidjani Alou, (2006) observed in their inquiry into the conduct of the local state in West Africa), which presents one with a paradox: it has become “so visible that it stops being considered deviant behavior and is submerged within other morally acceptable social practices and even largely encouraged” (Blundo 2008:34).

⁸⁸ An idea pointed out by Sharon Abramowitz at a conference at Emory University in her conference paper: What Happens when the MSF Leaves? Imagining the State in Post-Conflict Liberia.

However, although difficult to systematically research given the sensitivity of the topic and the nature of such information, it nevertheless is an important issue to grasp in order to build an understanding of contemporary Angolan society.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

As was mentioned in the introduction, this work provides a glimpse into a time of social change and post-conflict development and reconstruction in Angola, and more specifically in Luanda. This is, however, not salvage anthropology in the traditional sense, when it was the trademark of pioneering ethnographic field researchers such as Bronislaw Malinowski, who claimed to be salvaging traditional and cultural worlds of distant populations (as a collector would collect or salvage rare coins or stamps) before they disappeared into the abyss of modernization and globalization. Nevertheless, salvage anthropology came to mind when I realized that the social and urban changes I witnessed during my field research were probably a transitional stage in a developmental path that would continue into the future and leave deep marks in the city's morphology and the nation's social and urban habitus.

As has been explained throughout this work, large parts of Angola's urban areas are being bulldozed and new urban landscapes are being formed, within cities and towns and at their borders. These large-scale transformations are being fuelled by a concoction of oil revenues that formerly were spent on other things, such as the Angolan war apparatus and visions of modernity and economic opportunities that have surfaced in the aftermath of decades of war. Thus, the 1980s Luanda that I knew during the war had gone through a

metamorphosis in the 18 years I had been away from the country, and was going through another post-conflict metamorphosis during field research in 2009-2010. The chapters preceding this conclusion have provided an insight into these developments and the everyday lives of ordinary Luandans. They provide a window into these times of change and increased economic growth in tandem with a variety of problems and the ingenuity of the Luandan population in finding solutions to said problems. However, as conveyed in the preceding pages, certain things are easier to change than others: concrete landscapes and urban topographies are more easily modified and molded than culture, social behaviour, habits and traditions which seemingly change at a much slower pace.

I have argued in this work that informality is a ubiquitous and resilient part of Luandan society and culture, found in every social layer of the city. By referring to the ubiquity of informality in Luanda, how, for example, informality does more than merely transcend the borders of the ideal of a formal economic sector and official state bureaucracy, but has become a mode and logic of being, living and surviving in the city, I have defined Luandan culture as a culture of informality, or what I call here the *candonga* culture. That is, informality affects how people think and act in the city and has become an important part of Luandans' *habitus* (Bourdieu 1980).

The omnipresence of informality in Luandan society and explanations of how the majority of the population survives off the informal economy, which has become the lifeline of ordinary Luandans, have been revealed in this work. I have demonstrated how vital household infrastructure services are secured through informal means and informal, quasi-formal, and traditional land tenure and housing documents have become the norm among the city's population, although they are not considered legitimate by authorities, which use informal occupancy and land tenure as an excuse to reject the majority of the city's population access to public infrastructure services, such as water and electricity and to evict people from, and demolish, their houses and neighbourhoods. Furthermore, explanations of how power and authority appear both ambiguous and informal at the local level in the peri-urban Luandan musseques, which renders the beholders of authority and instruments of governmentality elusive yet ever-present, have been provided. Lastly, this work has elucidated how corruption is an endemic and systemic part of Luandan society.

The dissertation began somewhat informally, which, as mentioned at the start of chapter 2, is perhaps fitting, since informality is a central theme in this work. It commenced by introducing Angola and Luanda (the fieldsite) on a general note in the introduction, describing some of the developments that have been taking place within the country in the last few decades, especially in the

aftermath of the war. Chapter 2 introduced the researcher, me that is, and my historical and personal ties to the fieldsite and research topic, focusing on the changes that have occurred during the 18 years I was absent from the field and the transformations that have occurred along Angola's course from war to peace. Chapter 3 focused on Candonga, Angola's informal economy, and what I have come to call Angola's culture of Candonga, where informality or the processes of "doing things informally", rather than formally or along official routes, are a way to deal with obstacles and almost everything else in contemporary Angola, at all levels of society. As explained above, the candonga has become ubiquitous in Angolan society, to the extent that the parameters between the formal and the informal are seriously distorted and ambiguous. In Chapter 4 the informal water economy was described as an example of how the informal economy provides people with vital services and infrastructures that public or official services neglect or are incapable of providing, despite it being their mandate. It explains how water and access to it is an omnipresent issue in Luanda and how authorities have used water as a bio-political tool in peri-urban Luanda by cutting off water supply to the area in question. Chapter 5 follows the case of Rodrigo and his family's fight for their land. It focuses on the informal land market and describes how laws designed to formalize informal land tenure has in many cases caused more uncertainty and anxiety among informal landowners and land

users (the majority of the Angolan population) rather than solving the perceived problem of informal land tenure. It describes how a two-tiered system of land tenure has evolved, two systems of established and recognized practices, one of them formal and legal and the other based on a combination of legitimate, traditional and informal arrangements. In essence, it describes an encounter with a city where accumulation by dispossession occurs, where, as Harvey (2008) has argued: “The informality of the dispossessed is considered an important reason to deny them the right to the city” (Koster and Nuijten, forthcoming, citing Harvey 2008), a city, in which the developmental mindset and drive of the Angolan authorities seeks to colonize space used by the least well off for the affluent (Harvey 2008:38; Koster and Nuijten, forthcoming). This is a situation where the poorer inhabitants of the city are being pushed further into the (informal) periphery, which has led to arguments on the subject of the post- or re-colonization of the city, and the country, by a post-independence and post-conflict political and economic elite, along with arguments relating to “the politics of the belly” (Bayart 2009) and the “criminalization of the state in Africa” (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999).

Chapter 6 looked at local level power dynamics in Luanda’s informal neighbourhoods and how local level civil society organizations are fighting a battle to operate and survive in the smothering presence of autocratic

governmentality administered by traditional and politically connected entities in these neighbourhoods. It (as well as other chapters) provides examples of how Angola could be seen as a textbook example of a party-centralist state (see e.g. Chazan et al. 1992) with its defining characteristic being a “strong centralization and intervention in the organization of civil society and economic life” (Gledhill 2000:98). As described by anthropologist John Gledhill, party centralist regimes such as found in Angola profoundly subordinate the administrative apparatus to the party and depend on the backing of the military, which is also controlled by the party (2000:98; see also Chazan et al 1992:145). One example of this would be how the Angolan president, Dos Santos, famously asserted that democracy and human rights do not fill up bellies (quite literally, a grand example of what Bayart (2009) has referred to as “the politics of the belly”). The topic of corruption and its everyday representations in Angolan and Luandan society is the focus of chapter 7, the last thematically defined chapter before this conclusion. It explains how corruption has become both endemic and systemic, a phenomenon that is difficult to evade when conducting fieldwork in contemporary Luanda.

As a whole this work has shown through empirical ethnographic data that Olivier de Sardan’s elucidation of African dynamics, in which “[t]he ‘moral economy of corruption’ is a widespread and omnipresent phenomenon, the construction of a

'public space' comes up against numerous obstacles, and the borderlines between 'the private', the collective and the 'public' are permeable and uncertain" (Olivier de Sardan 2005:16), is quite applicable to Angolan contemporary society. Furthermore, the social image developed on these pages (an image that might change considerably over the next decade) is one where the state is everywhere and no-where, where the state seems ever-present but is simultaneously difficult to define: it is fluid, a shape shifter. The state is, however, "merely the logic that governs this system", as Tomás (2012:338) so eloquently put it, or the *modus operandi* of an informal system, or, better yet, a hybrid system where the parameters that define the informal and formal merge and become unclear. It is what gives often very ad hoc "informal" decisions and interpretations of the law formal or official legitimacy (Tomás 2012:14-15). However, despite its ambiguity it (the MPLA ruled state) is a power in Angolan society that is difficult to object to or deny. People want this power on their side, preferably through affinity with those in positions of power, as it makes life easier and gets one through the bureaucratic hurdles of the system. It can provide one with compensation for the loss of one's land, it can get one licenses for one's businesses, and it can arrange important business relations that would not have been there otherwise, etc.

Thus, the image presented here has been of centralized state governmentality where citizens at the periphery lead informal lives to survive and political power and economic opportunity is dispersed from the center. The center-periphery and formal-informal metaphors have therefore been a central tenet in this work. It is not my intention to speculate about the future here, but perhaps some possible developments are worth mentioning. This mirage of positive developments draws us all the way across the Atlantic Ocean to Brazil and James Holston's (2008) work on citizenship in the peripheries of São Paulo. His work evokes a glimmer of hope, a hope one would wish, despite the huge gap in historical and cultural context between the two cities, could reach the Luandan peripheries and Angola as a whole. This glimmer of hope is evoked in descriptions of how "residents generated new kinds of public participation, conceptions of rights, and uses of law to redress the inequalities of their residential conditions, primarily as they struggled to develop and legalize their housing stakes" (Holston 2008:23). That is, one would wish that the citizens of Luanda's peripheries, the same that constructed the peripheries, as well as important contributors to, and consumers of, the city's market economy would be seen as contributor-citizens and granted entitlements to stakeholder rights in the city as Holston (2008) has described in the history of São Paulo's periphery.

Holston describes in his book an “insurgent citizenship” unbalancing the historically established citizenships where the center dominates the periphery. Thus, by giving the peripheries a voice, the birth of a peripheral critical mass could have effect. This would of course have to go hand in hand with political decentralization and an active multiparty democracy. That is, a decentralized democracy in action and not only on paper would be necessary for such a mass to rise and have effect. However, as Messiant has argued, Angola’s strive to multiparty democracy has resulted in a “mutation of hegemonic domination” which she describes as “multiparty politics without democracy” (Messiant 2008). Hence, as pointed out by Soares de Oliveira (2013), centralized control over the peripheries continues to be a trademark of the Angolan state apparatus. Furthermore, as explained in chapter 6, recent attempts at protesting the centralized state hegemony have all been violently brought to a halt. Thus, such developments seem to still be beyond the horizon as Angola continues to be a party-centralist state, or, as Soares de Oliveira puts it, “the most centralist state in Africa” (2013:166). Nonetheless, there are examples in which inclusionary and participatory politics can be found in Angola today, led by civil society organizations. Examples of such endeavours could be found in the municipal and communal forums where the public, civil society organizations and their members, as well as political officials and traditional authorities, meet and

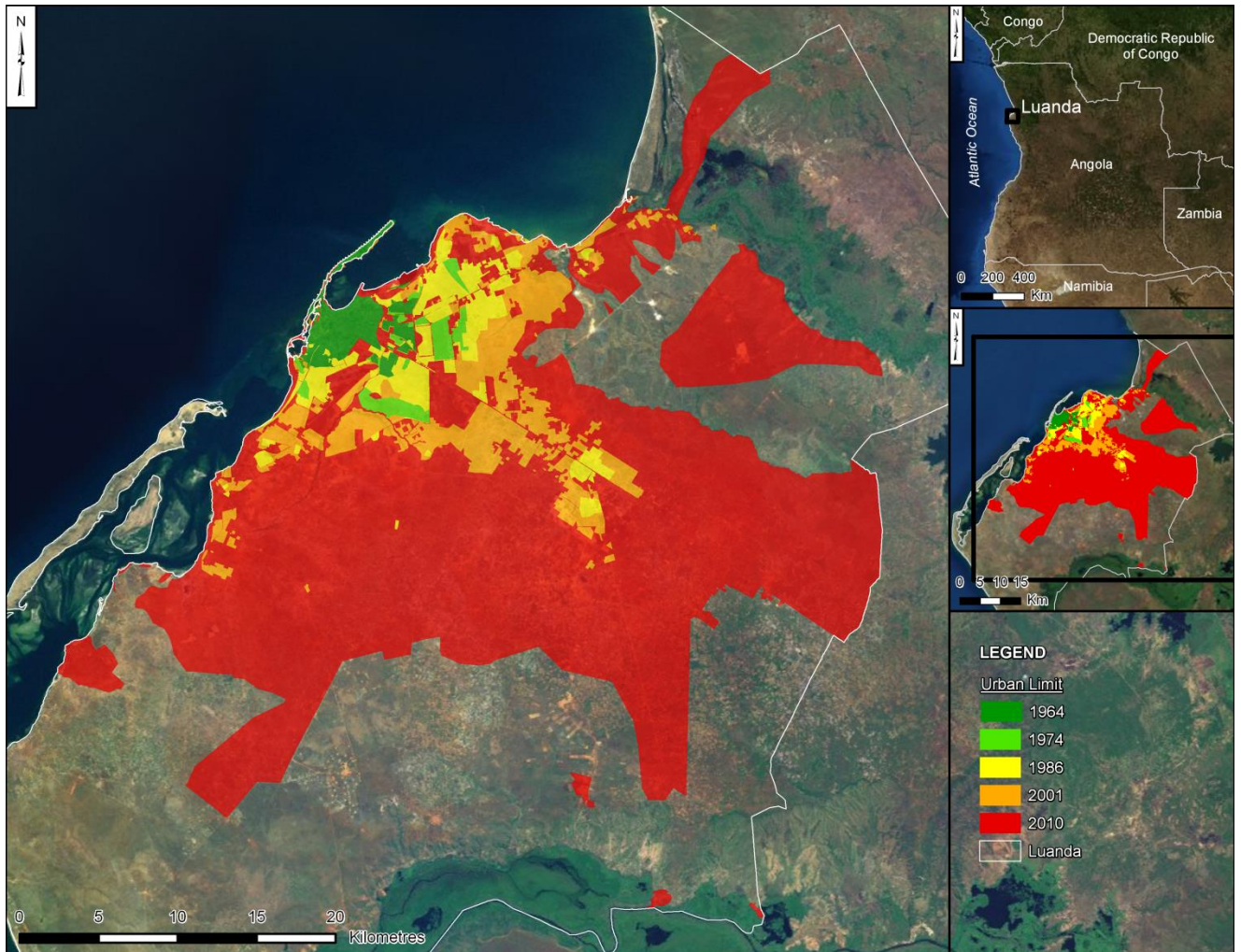
discuss various issues and problems found in Luanda's peri-urban neighbourhoods. However, as explained in chapter 6, vocal civil society members have been targeted, arrested and interrogated about their participation in civil society organizations, which has apparently been interpreted as subversive by governing entities, and leads to distrust in such processes and self-censorship at these meetings.

Although political analysis is important and wishful speculations about future developments are interesting, I want to end this work by reiterating what has become quite clear to me (the researcher) and hopefully the reader who has read through these pages. That is, the core of this work and a central argument and theme: The resiliency, perseverance and ingenuity of the Luandan and Angolan population in times of distress. This research, and my return to Angola after almost two decades away, has left me with the image that whenever one avenue closes, people will find or open other avenues to survive. Whenever a door is closed, another one opens. When formal routes are closed, informal ones are taken, and they often provide what one needs. This has become the rule and the norm, rather than a deviation from it, in Angola. This is "the system"; it is ambiguous, and to many outsiders chaotic and incomprehensible, but it works. It is the offspring of decades of war and strife in the country, yet it is a phenomenon that is found in one way or another all over the continent and in various forms all

over the world. It is one example of what Alsayyad and Roy (2004) have termed an “organizing urban logic.” It is a mode de vie; it is how people have survived in a system where formal or official avenues and services are frequently closed or non-existent. It has shaped Angolan society and Luanda as a city during decades of war and has become a prominent hallmark of Angola’s and Luanda’s urban culture. Thus, Luanda is candonga and candonga is Luanda.

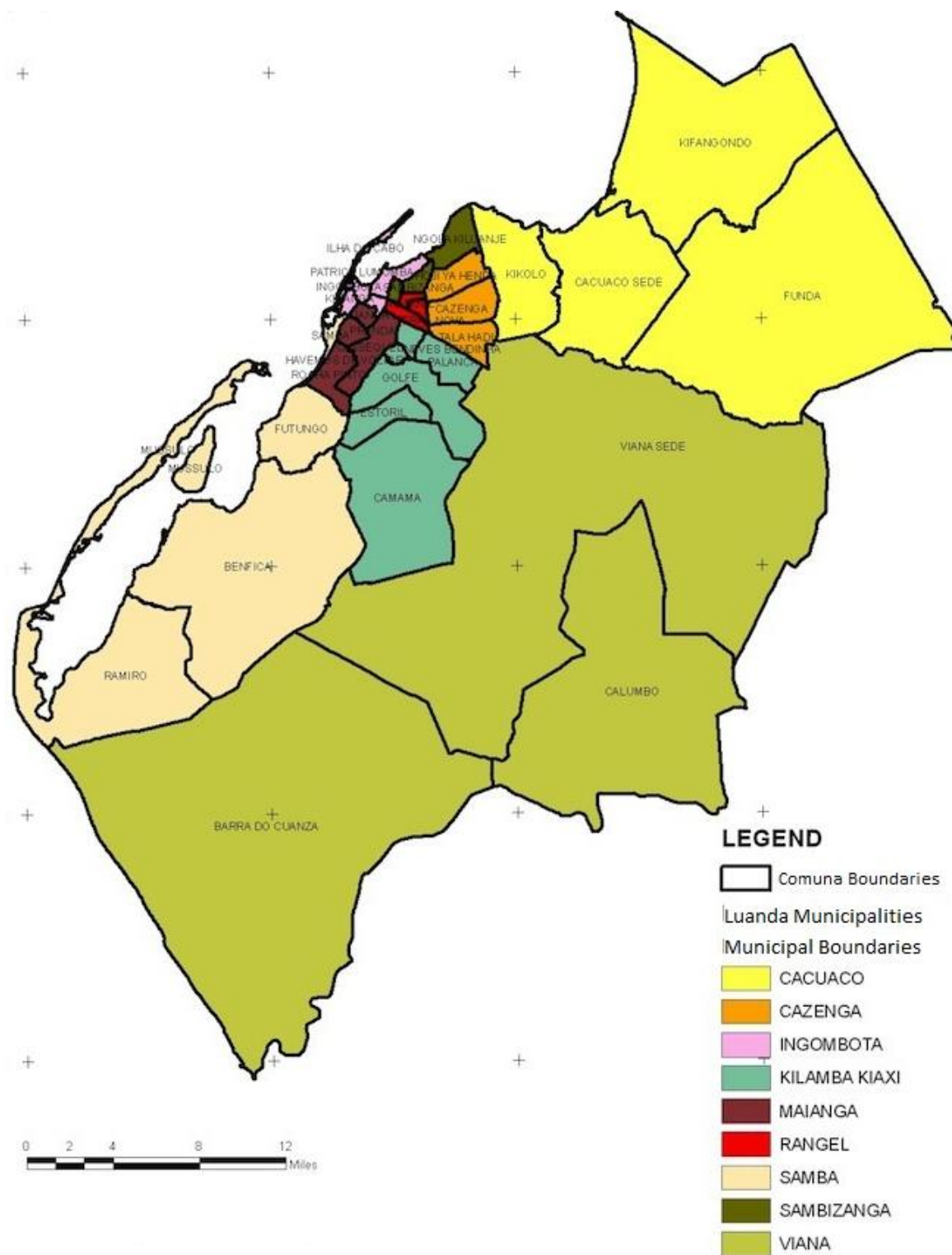
Appendix 1. Map of Luanda's Expansion

A map showing the significant expansion of the city of Luanda from 1964 (before independence) to 2010.



Source DW Angola.

Appendix 2. Map of Luanda's Administrative Divisions in 2009-2010



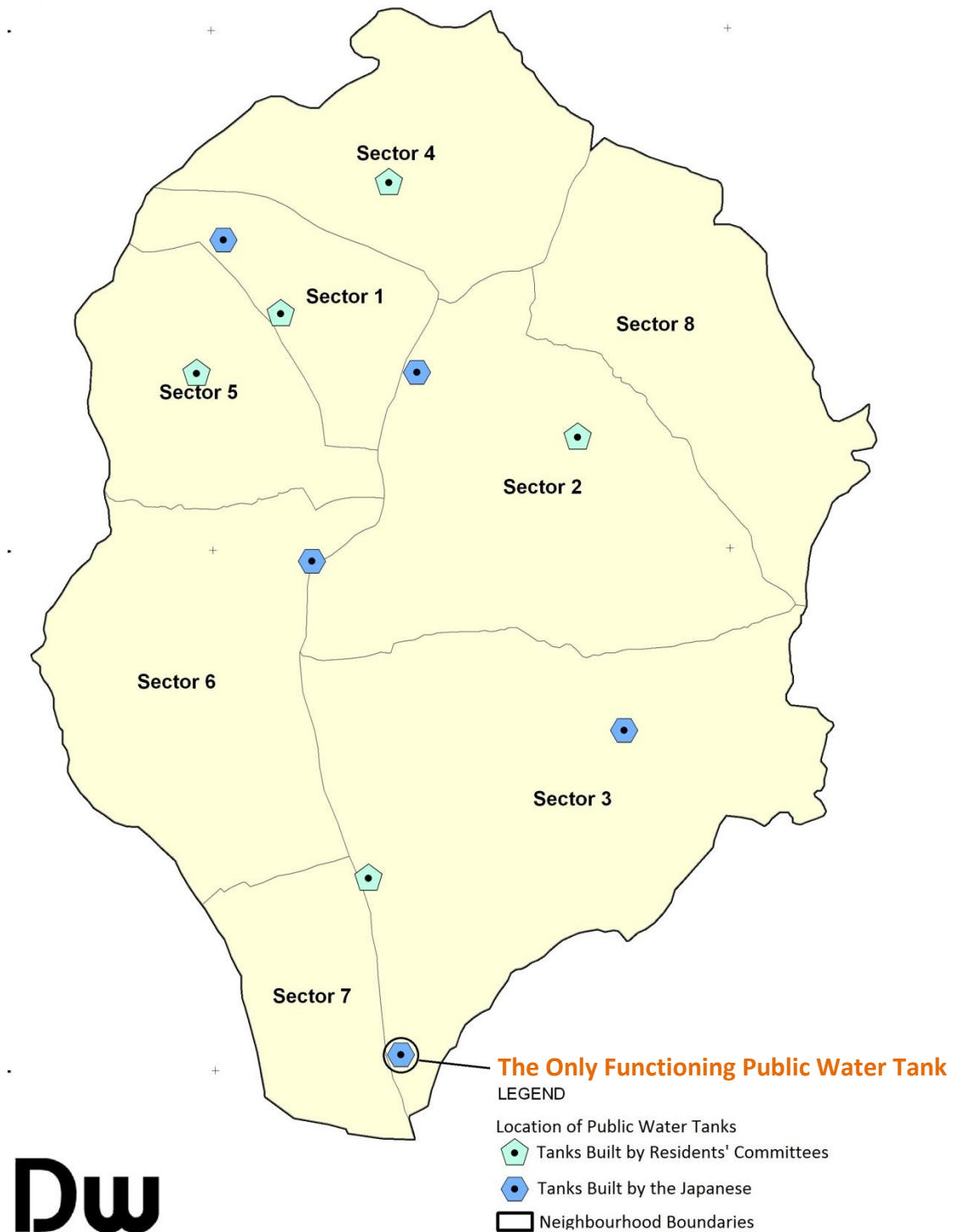
Appendix 3. The Paraíso Neighbourhood in Kicolo in 2005 and 2008





These images illustrate the rapid expansion and occupation rates of Luanda's peri-urban areas taking place in the post-conflict era. Source DW Angola.

Appendix 4. Map of Public Water Tanks in Paraíso



Only one of the public water tanks in Paraíso was actually functional during my research (circled on the map). Map from DW Angola.

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[8863731129af.html](http://www.portalangop.co.ao/motix/pt_pt/noticias/politica/2011/5/23/Policia-Fiscal-assinala-hoje-anos-existencia,ea762364-4aed-4923-8c0b-8863731129af.html) Accessed on September 23, 2011.

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