ANGOLAN CITIES: URBAN (RE)SEGREGATION?

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Colonial Angolan cities were built according to the racial, economic and social stratification of the time. After independence, ideologies of social egalitarianism, together with massive migration towards urban centres, profoundly changed this spatial organisation, creating socially and economically mixed areas in the cities. This spatial blending lasted until very recently, when new, closed districts began to be built and when the old ‘rich’ bairros began to be bought up and renovated by upper-class families. The new urban segregation, which is a tendency documented, for example, in the former apartheid cities or in the cities of other developing countries, is essentially the result of new social and economic differentiations.

The forms that this segregation takes are not necessarily colonial centre/periphery distinctions (although this configuration has been partially readopted) but, as in other developing countries, there is a certain tendency to create new social ‘enclaves’, closed and guarded residential spaces. As in other African cities, the discourse of violence and the ‘fear of crime’ are used to legitimate these social, economic, and spatial divisions. To different degrees and taking on different forms, the new socio-spatial organisation of Angolan cities tends to recover old spatial differentiations and to create new ones. This phenomenon is most evident in Luanda, the capital, but even in very small cities like Ondjiva or in medium-sized urban centres like Benguela, Lobito or Lubango, it is possible to affirm that socio-economic stratification is gradually being translated into spatial and residential differentiation. These appropriations of the urban space create and recreate new competing claims while, at the same time, shape new urban sociability.

The most significant debate on the question of the spatial configuration of social relations is, undoubtedly, that which opposes the human ecology interpretation of the Chicago school to a socio-spatial

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perspective (Spinks 2001: 6). If for the former\textsuperscript{2} the composition and social organisation of space in distinct zones—which are contiguous, but do not interpenetrate—determine the characteristics of the social groups that occupy them, for the latter, social space and social mechanisms establish reciprocal relations, i.e. space is at the same time a consequence and a cause of social relations (ibid.). According to the ecological school, the inhabitants of cities are various and independent from/to each other in their struggle for a social position and a suitable localisation in the city, which results in an ecological ‘segregation’, whether voluntary or involuntary (Villaca 2001). The social determination produced by inhabited space, however, has been the object of various criticisms.

Other lines of argumentation, also determinist, support the analysis of urban space in a historical and evolutionary determination of socio-spatial configurations. For evolutionary theories, industrialisation represents the determining factor for the stages of evolution of which urban centres are a part. But these theories have never been able to explain the phenomena in developing countries where weak industrial development has not blocked urban growth. Another type of determinism can also be identified in the analysis of the socio-political structures that inform the rules for socio-spatial segregation. Structuralists believe that the dualistic nature of cities in developing countries is directly related to colonial capitalism (Savage and Warde 1993).

The difficulties of these types of approaches in developing countries are numerous: not only do the rapid and sometimes abrupt transformations of urban configurations question ecological determinism in its strictest sense, but they also prevent the clear delimitation of the stages of development of urban centres. Moreover, socio-political transformations have rapidly and profoundly altered the dual nature imposed by colonialism in countries like Angola; in various urban contexts in the developing countries, we can see the increase in conflicts between social classes and strata, producing new forms of auto-segregation of space, for example by creating enclaves.

In analysing the segregation of space in today’s Angolan cities, the argumentation used here takes into account the analysis of other urban contexts in southern countries. Thus it is stated that the intentionally dual structure of colonial urban space in Angola—the wealthy city centre

\textsuperscript{2} For example, Park et al. (1925).