

– GLOBAL URBAN POLICYMAKING IN AFRICA: A View from Angola Through the Redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda

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Abstract

A burgeoning literature looks into the processes and actors involved in the adoption and emulation of best practices and models of urban policy and development across the globe, often with the aim of attracting investment and making cities more competitive. With its focus on leisure, tourism and global capital, the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda, in the capital of Angola, echoes the rhetoric, policies and projects underpinning such practices. Yet, a deeper interrogation reveals that the redevelopment forms part of a predominantly inward-looking project driven by the highest echelons of the national government and its ruling party. While these actors mimic and appropriate the language and tools of entrepreneurial cities, their aim is not necessarily to make the city more internationally competitive but to achieve domestic political legitimacy and stability. The argument presented in this article builds on McCann's (2013) call for scholars to also consider the 'introspective' politics of urban policy boosterism from the perspective of a context in which power is highly centralized. The article thus contributes to a growing literature that advances more adequate and provincialized theorizations of urban policy and city governance in the global South, with a particular focus on the African context.

Introduction

A burgeoning literature is looking into the processes and actors involved in the adoption and emulation of best practices and models of urban policy and development in aspiring world-class cities across the globe. It shows how over the past decades cities have become increasingly entrepreneurial, outward-looking and plugged into transnational networks of urban policymaking. This has resulted in the fast-paced circulation of policies, often with the aim of attracting investment and making cities more competitive (McCann and Ward, 2011; Peck and Theodore, 2015).

In this article we consider the case of the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda, in the capital of Angola, to shed light on the local dynamics of global urban policymaking in Africa.¹ The first phase of this redevelopment was inaugurated in 2012, ten years after the end of nearly three decades of civil war. Since its inauguration, the redeveloped waterfront has become the postcard image of the government's efforts to transform Luanda from a war-torn and slum-ridden town into a 'livable', 'beautiful' and 'international' 'world-class capital city' (GoA, 2015). The second phase of the project, launched in 2013, includes office and residential developments and presents the Bay of

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1 In line with common practice, this article refers to Luanda as a 'city', even though in administrative terms Luanda is a province. A new administrative division adopted in 2011 did create a municipality of Luanda out of a total of seven municipalities that make up the province of Luanda. However, unless specific reference is made to this entity, the reader should assume that when mention is made of the city of Luanda, what is meant is the administrative entity of the province of Luanda.

Luanda as ‘the mirror of the modern economy’ and an attractive investment destination (Baía de Luanda, 2013).²

With its focus on leisure, tourism and global capital, the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda echoes the rhetoric, policies and projects underpinning the adoption and promotion of global urban policies by local authorities across the world. It is also in line with an emerging drive across the African continent towards ‘world-class cityness’ through the planning and implementation of mega urban development projects, ranging from large-scale urban renewal to the construction of new towns in the image of cities such as Dubai, Shanghai and Singapore (Watson, 2014). Yet a deeper interrogation of the case of Luanda reveals that the redevelopment forms part of a predominantly inward-looking project driven by the highest echelons of the national government and ruling party. While these actors mimic and appropriate the language and tools of entrepreneurial cities, their aim is not necessarily to make the city more internationally competitive but to achieve domestic political legitimacy and stability.

The argument presented in this article builds on the work of McCann (2013), who has called for scholars to also consider the ‘introspective’ politics of urban policy boosterism, a subset of branding and marketing activities that involves the active promotion of local policies, programmes or practices, alongside its extrospective dimension. According to McCann, for growth agendas to be politically viable, practices of city branding not only target ‘potential business investors, certain groups of coveted workers, granting agencies, and tourists’, but also the local population (*ibid.*: 8). He therefore argues that further research on global urban policy mobilities should pay attention to the intersections of extrospective and introspective urban politics (*ibid.*: 22–23). Yet, where McCann uses the case of the Canadian city of Vancouver to point to the political agendas of local policy boosters and growth machines, the case of Luanda shows that in contexts where there is no effective decentralization, urban policymaking is driven by national instead of local actors with narrow growth agendas who make little distinction between the state and the private sector.

This argument is in line with the work of scholars such as Parnell and Robinson (2012) who have long defended that theories of neoliberal urbanism are ‘ill-equipped for the task of illuminating the conditions of poorer cities, especially those that have weak (local) states or those where the link between urban political elites and capitalist elites are (*sic*) not formalized in the conventional (democratic) electoral and quasi-corporatist politics of the local state’ (Parnell and Robinson, 2012: 600). In examining how national actors are involved in shaping urban policymaking and the particular political economy and logics that drive the mobilization and promotion of urban policies in Luanda, this article then also contributes to a growing literature that advances more adequate and provincialized theorizations of the modes, actors and processes involved in urban policy and city governance in the South (Roy, 2009; Sheppard *et al.*, 2013; Leitner and Sheppard, 2015), with a particular focus on the—still under-researched—African context.³

Research for this article was conducted as part of a comparative research project on urban governance in African cities and involved reviewing relevant historical and academic literature, as well as grey literature such as government, policy and research reports, legislation, online media records and local newspaper archives. In addition, interviews and informal conversations were conducted with government representatives (at the central, provincial, municipal/district government level), representatives of the private sector and civil society, as well as ordinary residents of Luanda.

The article starts by briefly outlining the main tenets of the policy mobilities literature before turning to the case of Luanda and the redevelopment of the Bay of

2 For more videos, see the project’s YouTube channel, available at <https://www.youtube.com/user/baiadeluanda>, and its website, available at <http://www.baiadeluanda.ao> (accessed 3 November 2017).

3 Although this type of research in and on Africa is growing, it tends to be dominated by (excellent) work on South African cities (see, for example, Didier *et al.*, 2012; Wenz, 2014, and Wood, 2015).

Luanda. It presents a detailed and historically informed description of the redevelopment to discuss the dynamics of the introspective politics of urban policymaking in Luanda and draw comparisons with other African cities in order to make the case for a better understanding of the local and political dynamics shaping urban policymaking in the global South.

Urban policy mobilities

The urban policy mobilities literature represents a response to the policy transfer literature, regarded as inadequate for theorizing policy travels between cities in a context of globalization and increasing inter-urban competition (McCann, 2011; McCann and Ward, 2013). According to urban geographers such as Peck and Tickell (2002: 47) this context has increasingly turned cities into ‘extrospective’ entities as local elites and states have been forced to ‘scan the horizon for investment and promotion opportunities, monitoring “competitors” and emulating “best practice”, lest they be left behind in the intensifying competitive struggle for the kinds of resources (public and private) that neoliberalism has helped make (more) mobile’.

This logic has contributed to the spread of increasingly generic ‘world-class’ large-scale urban development and the promotion of projects such as museums, waterfronts, exhibition halls and parks, business centres and international landmark events (Swyngedouw *et al.*, 2002). The rise of such projects, in turn, is combined with a range of practices of city branding, policy boosterism and policy tourism, aided by a wide range of transnational urban policy actors such as consultants, think-tanks and professional organizations (Ward, 2011; McCann, 2013; Peck and Theodore, 2015).

In contrast to the policy transfer tradition developed by political scientists, which invokes notions of rational diffusion and best-practice replication between nation states (Stone, 1999; Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000), scholars of the policy mobilities literature acknowledge the variegated, relational, context-dependent ways in which urban policies are mobilized, assembled and manifested on the ground (Peck and Theodore, 2010; Peck, 2011). According to McCann and Ward (2011: xiv), urban policies and processes of policymaking are ‘intensely and fundamentally local, grounded and territorial’.

In later work McCann further elaborates that ‘local policy domains are [not] passive in the face of global flows or logics’ but actively made by engaging both global and local actors and interests (McCann, 2013: 19–20). He draws on the work of Logan and Molotch (1987) on urban growth machines to argue that local rentiers and politicians rely not only on outside investors to boost their city but also on local support. Branding as a strategic approach to the commodification of cities and marketing as a particular element within a brand strategy are therefore part of ‘ideological, political projects that seek to create a general sense of local common purpose in order to naturalize the notion that certain types of development and growth are good for everyone, in one way or another, and to marginalize any group or individual that questions this myth’ (McCann, 2013: 8). From this perspective, practices of policy boosterism not only involve the active promotion of certain urban policies in the global sphere, but also among the local population by continually informing them of the city’s purported global influence and the praise it is garnering and through methods of direct persuasion and indirect incentivization (*ibid.*: 22–23).

While McCann makes an important contribution to the literature by calling attention to the role of introspective politics in urban policymaking, his work is situated in a Western urban context that assumes the existence of coalitions at the city level of businesses people, politicians and other local actors and interests who work together to maximize economic growth. However, despite a growing Southern turn in the study of the circulation and ‘worlding’ of urban policies and practices (see, for example, Roy and Ong, 2011; McCann *et al.*, 2013), scholars have pointed to a persisting need for analyses

of policy mobilities that acknowledge the different local political, institutional and historical actors and dynamics that shape urban policymaking across the global South (Bunnell, 2015).

This article draws on the case of Luanda to show the ways in which introspective politics may play out in a context where local authorities have virtually no power in determining the development agenda and trajectory of their city. Luanda differs from other cities where local decision making and administration is also tightly controlled by the central state, as is the case in East Asian cities such as Tokyo, Seoul and Singapore, where despite local government subservience, at least until the 1990s, subnational governments, politicians and businesses have been an integral part of state-led efforts to achieve industrialization, economic growth and global cityness (Bae, 2011). Instead, the case of Luanda shows how despite the use of the language and tools of entrepreneurial cities, national political motivations and narrow economic interests trump a desire for local economic growth and investment.

A view from Luanda

In the years prior to and following Angola's independence in 1975, the city of Luanda did not have an operationally effective local government. Years of centralized colonial Portuguese rule were followed by decades of civil war during which Luanda largely functioned as the base of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). From here, it fought the forces of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). During this time, the local administration largely ceased to deliver any public services and mainly served to accommodate political appointees in the socialist party state. Legal provisions for organizing local elections at the municipal level have been in existence since the country's transition to (formal) multi-partyism in the early 1990s, but in practice they have been continuously postponed. To date, the boundaries between the local administration and local ruling party structures remain blurred and local administrators continue to be appointed by the president or his appointees. The president also controls the state budget and legal apparatus. Aided by a closely knit group of hand-picked family members, advisors, army and party officials, this allowed President José Eduardo dos Santos, in power from 1979 to 2017, to effectively rule the city.⁴

In the decade following the end of the war in 2002, Angola became known as the poster child of the 'Africa rising' narrative. From a war-torn and failed state, it rose up to being Africa's second largest oil producer, after Nigeria, and one of Africa's fastest-growing economies (Soares de Oliveira, 2015). The use of oil revenues and oil-backed loans from countries such as China to finance large-scale infrastructural development, especially in the capital of Luanda (Corkin, 2013), has been central to Angola's global emergence. This has put Luanda at the centre of the postwar economic boom, the city accounting for an average of 74% of national GDP, which grew at double-digit rates between 2002 and 2007. At the height of the boom, in 2007, 55% of all companies were established in the capital, generating 77% of jobs in the private sector and 27% of jobs in the public sector (Alves da Rocha, 2010). With almost 7 million inhabitants Luanda is now home to over a third of the country's population (INE, 2016).

Reconstruction efforts, besides focusing on rebuilding the city's infrastructures and services, have been aimed at transforming Luanda into a modern 'world-class city' through the implementation of mega urban development projects. These include mass-scale housing projects such as the new satellite city of Kilamba, as well as the construction of a new port, 'Africa's largest' international airport, major real-estate, office and commercial developments, as well as special economic zones (Croese, 2016).

4 President dos Santos left the presidency after the elections of August 2017, but remains chairman of the ruling MPLA party.

As in other aspiring world-class cities, urban development has been accompanied by a fair share of city boosterism and branding. This includes extensive media campaigns involving the production of documentaries and promotional videos to advertise the government's investments and efforts, broadcast within the country on public television and radio, as well as published in newspapers and on billboards, and aired outside the country on international channels such as CNN, all with a particular focus on the capital city. A video produced by the Angolan National Private Investment Agency (ANIP), for instance, describes Luanda as 'one of the biggest and most important cities in all of Africa', 'a city that works full-time, filled with magic and great experiences ... a historical and modern city that can now once again hold the title of the pearl of the Atlantic' (ANIP, 2015). Over the course of the past decade, Luanda has also hosted various high-profile sport events, such as the African Cup of Nations in 2010, as well as numerous international and regional political events and summits, such as the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region. Despite having no elected mayors of its own, in 2015 it even hosted Africa's first ever African Mayor Awards ceremony (UCLG, 2015).

These campaigns and events have been undertaken against a backdrop of the adoption of a flurry of urban development plans put together by well-paid consultants from countries such as Portugal and Brazil. Like city development plans adopted elsewhere and on the African continent (Myers, 2015), they position Luanda as a future regional and global hub that is 'open for business'. The first one, dating from 2007, is the country's long-term development plan, 'Angola 2025: Angola, a Country with a Future: Sustainability, Equity and Modernity', which outlines the aim of turning Luanda into a 'modern, efficient, creative and unified metropolis' that connects the country to the outside world (GoA, 2007—part III: x–46). The national development plan adopted in 2012 for the years 2013 to 2017, in turn, refers to the metropolitan region of Luanda as a 'platform of internationalization' (GoA, 2012: 86). This idea of internationalization similarly forms the basis for the provincial development plan for Luanda for the years 2013 to 2017, which refers to Luanda as 'already one of the most dynamic and diversified cities of the African continent and a leader of great initiatives in its community' (GPL, 2014: 22).

The new master plan for Luanda, launched in December 2015, to be implemented over the next 15 years, in turn, identifies three pillars of change, which are to transform Luanda into a 'livable', 'beautiful' and 'international' city (GoA, 2015: 6–10). This last pillar foresees the establishment of Luanda as 'a future economic, touristic and service pole in Southern Africa' by 'keeping its international profile' and 'creating world standard infrastructure' (*ibid.*: 10). More specifically, Luanda's new port and airport hubs are set to 'bolster Luanda's regional and global profile, as a centre for services and logistics, manufacturing and as a market for agricultural produce to diversify Angola's economic base in a world-class capital city environment'.

Among these ostensible efforts to turn Luanda into a 'world-class' city, the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda represents not only one of the most visible projects, but it also exposes the role that national actors and political motivations play in reshaping the city.

Redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda

Until independence, the Bay of Luanda was known as Avenida de Paulo Dias de Novais, after the Portuguese explorer who founded the city of Luanda in 1576. Similar to waterfronts elsewhere in the world, the Bay of Luanda has traditionally been a place of 'flow', connecting the city and state at large to the world (Dovey *et al.*, 2005). For centuries, the bay represented the heart of the city, where goods such as rum, food, clothes, sugar, tobacco and hardware came into the country from across the Atlantic in exchange for slaves, ivory, wax and seeds (Amaral, 1968: 43).

Until the first half of the twentieth century, boats would dock at the entry of the bay, along a strip of sand referred to as the Island of Luanda. The shore was then reached

by means of small boats. The construction of a new port, with its own wharf, under the urbanization plan for the waterfront of Luanda of 1943, and subsequent construction works under the Colonial Urbanization Department, created in 1944 for the design and execution of architecture and urbanization projects in the Portuguese colonies (Milheiro and Dias, 2009), shifted the main focus of the city's movements from the centre of the bay to a site two kilometres north of the city (Amaral, 1968: 27).

In a context of rapid economic growth, fuelled by a coffee boom, and increasing investments in and growth of the city, during the 1950s and 1960s the Bay of Luanda became a place of leisure—the symbol of the city's transformation to modernity and the postcard image of the jewel of the Portuguese colonial empire (da Fonte, 2007: 184).

When Angola attained independence in 1975, the name of the waterfront was changed to Avenida 4 de Fevereiro, which refers to the date of the start of the armed struggle against Portuguese colonial rule in 1961. During the years of war that followed independence, the waters of the bay became increasingly polluted as public investment in urban infrastructures ceased and sewerage and drainage systems stopped working. In the early 1990s, as negotiations for a peace agreement between the MPLA government and rebel UNITA forces were taking place, followed by multi-party elections, plans for a range of large construction and infrastructure projects in the city started circulating, including plans for a project involving the construction of luxury housing and offices on the waterfront (*Jornal de Angola*, 1990; Gastrow, 2014: 85). However, as the war resumed after the 1992 elections, these projects stalled. By the end of the war, raw sewage continued to flow into the bay, roads and buildings on the waterfront were frequently flooded, and traffic had become increasingly congested (Booyens, 2013).

In 2003 plans were commissioned by the Ministry of Public Works for the redevelopment of the bay. A Portuguese businessman, José Carlos Moreira Récio, who had been working in Angola since the late 1980s, in collaboration with his Angolan partner, António Mosquito, a business man with close ties to the ruling party, presented a proposal for the redevelopment of the bay to the government in October 2003 in a ceremony attended by President dos Santos (Nexus, 2003). The proposal included, among other things, plans for dredging and cleaning the bay, the extension of the waterfront road and the construction of parking lots and green spaces, to be financed using private funding to the value of about US \$76 million. In return, the developers requested the government to compensate this investment through land that would be reclaimed using dredged sand from the ocean to create two artificial islands with an area of 900 square metres in the Bay of Luanda parallel to the Island of Luanda. The islands were projected to require an investment of US \$462 million, and were earmarked for private real-estate development.⁵ The proposal was subsequently scheduled to be discussed at the next session of the Council of Ministers.

In response to concerns raised against the plan by a group of well-connected citizens, who sent a series of petitions to President dos Santos about the potential environmental, ecological, cultural, geophysical and sociocultural impact of the project (Mukuna, 2003), the Minister of Public Works instructed the developers of the project to organize 'as many debates as necessary' until the concerns of these citizens were accommodated (*Semanário Angolense*, 2003). In line with these instructions, the Luanda Waterfront Corporation, set up by the main developers of the project, launched an 'awareness raising campaign' (Guerreiro, 2004), which involved organizing special meetings aimed at journalists and opinion makers as well as the publication of a number of advertisements in the daily state-owned newspaper *Jornal de Angola* on the benefits of the project. According to these advertisements, the redevelopment would restore the bay's 'natural splendour' and turn the waterfront into the 'unequivocal symbol of

5 Images of the proposed plan are available at <http://www.slideshare.net/Jals/projectos-para-a-baia-de-luanda-1178921> (accessed 29 March 2009).

the city of Luanda' (*Jornal de Angola*, n.d.). The redevelopment would also contribute to resolving the problems of silting and pollution in the bay and traffic congestion on the waterfront, while reclaiming land for urban development. In addition, the developers promised that the project would not result in the displacement of the existent community of residents. Instead, it would constitute an important source of employment through the generation of more than 2,500 direct and indirect jobs, in addition to providing fiscal revenue for the city (*ibid.*).

Eventually, the initial plan was reformulated: the creation of the two artificial islands scrapped and substituted by reclaimed land along the waterfront and the Island of Luanda. The plan was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2005, and after further studies, the design was finalized and the licensing process completed. Construction work on the first phase of the project started mid-2008 (Portalangop, 2005). The initial developers set up a new company, Sociedade Baía de Luanda (SBL) to finance the project, which came to include shareholders such as the Angolan state oil company Sonangol and an associated network of Angolan companies and banks such as the Banco Privado Atlântico, Banco Millennium Angola and Finicapital. While the contractors for the project involved an international consortium of companies, the main contractors were the Portuguese construction companies Soares da Costa and Mota-Engil, in which the promoter of the project, businessman Mosquito, owned a majority share.

Construction work on the first phase was largely completed by August 2012 and the newly developed waterfront was inaugurated on the seventieth birthday of President dos Santos on 28 August, three days before the country's second postwar elections. Representing a reported total investment of US \$376 million (almost triple the amount initially projected), the new Bay of Luanda now had a three-kilometre-long upgraded promenade lined by over 2,000 newly planted palm trees, 147,000 square metres of pedestrian spaces, about three kilometres of cycle lanes, ten new open spaces along the beachfront, three playgrounds, three sportsfields, five basketball courts and five spaces for cultural events, in addition to a new waste water system, a six-lane road (three lanes in each direction), a fuel station and a flyover connecting the waterfront to the Island of Luanda (Expresso, 2012; SBL, 2015).

In return for its investments SBL received a 30-year concession for all outdoor publicity along the waterfront, as well as for all retail spaces along the waterfront and all 3,100 newly built parking spaces along the waterfront, in addition to land development rights for three plots of land of 38 hectares that had been reclaimed during the process, for a period of 60 years (GoA, 2005). Construction on the three plots of reclaimed land along the waterfront and Island of Luanda started in 2013 as part of the second phase of the project. It includes office and residential developments, as well as the installation of kiosks at strategic points along the promenade, which function as restaurants, snack bars and shops, to turn the waterfront into a 'reference point within the capital for internal and foreign tourism' (*Angola Today*, 2016).

Introspective city making

Widely promoted as the 'new face' of Luanda (Lopes, 2011), the redeveloped bay has been awarded international prizes for best environmental redevelopment and public space project (*PR Newswire*, 2013). Such international praise has played an important role in generating local support for the project, building what Logan and Molotch (1987: 60) call 'place patriotism of the masses'.

In a city that has very few quality public open spaces and amenities, the redeveloped waterfront has become a key site of leisure. Since the completion of the first phase of the project, an estimated average of 2,500 people a day, or 15,000 people a week, visit the waterfront, according to the SBL website. People can be found jogging on the promenade, roller-skating or playing basketball, while children play in the playgrounds, ice cream vendors sell popsicles and photographers take pictures of newlyweds, while

many others take their own pictures, or cell phone ‘selfies’ or photos of their friends during lengthy posing sessions. Dance classes and music events take place in the evening and on weekends. Those who are unable to visit the waterfront regard images of such activities and events as powerful representations of development and modernity, even if this is not reflected in their daily lives.⁶

Yet, while growth coalitions in liberal democratic contexts are often led by local business communities who work together with the city government to generate and sustain support and pride to realize (the rents associated with) economic growth, in Luanda urban policymaking and boosterism is the prerogative of the national government.

As mentioned, plans for the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda were not commissioned by the local administration but by the Ministry of Public Works, which appointed the private developers of the project under the auspices of the country’s president.⁷ Throughout the implementation of the project, the Provincial Government of Luanda only dealt with technical aspects arising from the construction works, and the Provincial Institute for Urban Planning of Luanda, created in 2007 only, was merely able to make small recommendations for adjustments to the plan as it was implemented over time.⁸ Moreover, while in terms of the law this institute is the key government agency responsible for guiding the city’s development, it was only allowed limited input into Luanda’s master plan, which was commissioned and managed in later years through the president’s office for civil affairs and a company owned by the eldest daughter of President dos Santos.⁹

The national government’s control over the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda is indicative of its desire to hold on to the reins of power in the capital and to project its power onto and through the city’s landscape in a context of postwar state building. Hence, images of the redeveloped bay are featured widely and frequently on public television and in the electoral campaign material of the ruling party. The area has also served as the primary location for the realization of key political events, such as President dos Santos’ inauguration after his first official election as president in 2012, and military marches on the day marking the anniversary of the start of the country’s armed struggle for independence.

Hence, while in global cities such as Dubai the ‘technology of symbolic power’ or the development of world-class infrastructures and the construction of iconic buildings primarily serve to attract international capital and visitors and ‘seduce a global audience’ (Acuto, 2010: 276), in Luanda flagship projects such as the redevelopment of the bay are aimed at conveying a political message about the nation state, not only to an international but also, perhaps more importantly, to a domestic audience.

According to Bekker and Therborn (2011: 1), ‘capital cities [in Africa] have always played a central role in nation and state building. These processes are both a symbolic movement and a quest to establish and maintain power. The nation state projects its power through the urban landscape and spatial layout of the capital city’. Moreover, ‘as the centres of formal political power and administrative authority, they also often become the main conduit to economic wealth and privilege in the country as a whole’ (*ibid.*) As such, the city represents not only an instrument for the national government to convey messages about itself, a function often associated and combined with mega sport events (Black, 2007; Cornelissen, 2008), but also a vehicle to achieve legitimation and accumulation.

Indeed, projects such as the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda offer not only a way for the government to assert its presence and ability to deliver development but also

6 Site visits and interviews, Waterfront of Luanda, August 2015.

7 Interview, Darwin Investment Management, Luanda, 30 November 2015.

8 Interview, Provincial Institute for Urban Planning of Luanda, 30 November 2015.

9 Interview, Provincial Institute for Urban Planning of Luanda, 27 November 2015.

important opportunities for capital accumulation by domestic elites. This is presented as part of a narrative of home-grown growth and success, with SBL administrators proudly stating that the main investors in both the first and second phase of the project have been Angolan¹⁰ and therefore ‘there is no capital flight ... value is generated as well as reinvested in Angola’ (Vemba, 2013). However, such words conceal the fact that most investors have links to the state and that behind the government’s branding strategy there has been no effective effort to make the city more accessible to international investors. Fifteen years after the end of the war Luanda continues to be one of the most difficult places to do business in the world (World Bank, 2016). Testament to this is a decree issued by the Angolan president in February 2017 by which all concession rights held by SBL were signed over to the Angolan state owing to ‘the current economic crisis which turned the continuation of the project in its initial format no longer economically and financially viable’ (GoA, 2017). In exchange for a once-off payment of US \$379 million the Angolan state now holds all rights to the exploitation of publicity, retail spaces and parking spaces, as well as the development rights over 10,000 square metres of the reclaimed land area, essentially reimbursing the project’s investors while nationalizing something that was never entirely private.

Part of the particular national dimension of introspective policy and city making in Luanda is a product of the country’s history of conflict. This has weakened local government and strengthened the central government’s desire to consolidate its control, which, in turn, has been facilitated by its access to growing oil revenues in the postwar years. But there are similarities with a range of other African cities that do not necessarily share the same history of conflict or resource endowment. Evidence from other African countries confirms that while many states have pursued decentralization reforms over the past 20 years, in practice implementation has been at best uneven and marked by a tendency towards administrative deconcentration instead of effective political and fiscal decentralization (Smoke, 2003; Chome, 2015). There is also evidence that decentralization is increasingly used as a political strategy to entrench the power of central government or as a cover for the recentralization of power (Wunsch, 2001; Boone, 2003; Otayek, 2007; Chinigò, 2014). This is particularly true for capital or otherwise ‘strategic’ cities where ruling parties seek to maintain or regain political control (Bénit-Gbaffou *et al.*, 2013; Gore and Muwanga, 2014) or in post-conflict states where there has been no change of executive power (Aalen and Muriaas, 2017).

For instance, parallels can be found with Kinshasa, where extensive urban redevelopment was not driven by the local government but by the national government as part of President Kabila’s presidential re-election campaign. Here, the ‘world-class’ nature of flagship urban development projects has had a powerful effect, playing on people’s aspirations for modernity and prosperity even if they do not benefit from these (de Boeck, 2011; for parallels within the Indian context, see Ghertner, 2011). Recent efforts to remodel Kigali in the image of Singapore are also largely driven by the central government and serve an important political agenda of stability and securitization. Moreover, major investments in property by domestic elites provide further incentives to keep the city safe (Goodfellow and Smith, 2013). Choplin and Franck (2010) show that, in the case of Khartoum and Nouakchott, the central state is often a primary actor in the implementation of major urban development projects. The adoption of Nairobi’s master plan, to be implemented by the Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development (which was established by the Kenyan central government) was a response to the national election violence that took place in 2007 (Myers, 2015). In Uganda, the government has implemented a new national authority to oversee the administration of the city, the Kampala Capital City Authority. Observers see this as a way to recentralize power over the capital in the presidency, after years of neglect (Gore and Muwanga, 2014;

see also Goodfellow and Titeca, 2012). Similarly, according to di Nunzio (2014) Addis Ababa began to occupy a more central role in the ruling party's political agenda at a time when dissent, both inside and outside the party, became more vocal, which, in turn, gave rise to mass-scale inner-city redevelopment. These examples are not meant to represent an extensive comparative analysis, but they do signal the importance of a particular introspective politics in urban development and policymaking across the African continent and point to the need to further study the strengthened role of—often authoritarian—national governments when it comes to shaping urban development in (capital) cities.

Conclusion

The case of Luanda illustrates increasing attempts across the African continent towards world-class city making in the image of new global city policies and models represented by cities such as Dubai and Singapore. Scholars of the policy mobilities literature have explained such practices as the result of growing international pressure on local governments to attract foreign investment and burgeoning transnational and inter-urban policy circuits that facilitate the 'fast' transmission of policy models from one city to the other (Peck and Theodore, 2015).

This article aims to show that while African cities have become increasingly plugged into transnational circuits of policy knowledge and expertise, as evidenced by the universal language and tools of neoliberal urbanism that is represented by new master plans and mega urban development projects emerging across the continent, the logics and interests driving the adoption and implementation thereof are often distinctly territorial and political.

The research we present in this article builds on McCann's (2013) call for the acknowledgement of the role and intersections of extrospective and introspective politics of policy boosterism to examine the redevelopment of the Bay of Luanda and draw attention to the ways in which governments may speak the language of outward-facing entrepreneurialism in their city branding activities, but how in practice urban development remains strongly driven by political interests of securing legitimacy and stability. Notably, this points to a need to go beyond the current focus in the urban policy mobilities literature on local governments and instead consider the role of national actors and interests in shaping processes of neoliberal urban policymaking.

This makes the case of Luanda not only different from Western liberal democratic contexts, but also from certain Asian countries and city-states where urban development may be state-led but also strongly extrospective and market-driven. A combination of a history of conflict, resource endowment and a weak local state means that in Angola there has been no concerted effort, opportunity or incentive for local coalitions to produce economic growth. Hence, if for McCann the introspective politics of policy boosterism in Vancouver constitutes the 'ideological constitutive inside of extrospective engagement' (McCann, 2013: 14), which can gain an extra-national dimension when city mayors use their own reputation to assert themselves and shape policy at the national level, in Luanda it is the national that shapes the local and the extent to which the city effectively compares to and competes with others.

Thus, the case of Luanda allows for a more 'provincialized' understanding of the dynamics of urban policymaking that goes beyond Euro-American notions of urban neoliberalism as the driving force behind urban development and policymaking, instead highlighting how global models of urban planning are provincialized through local histories, politics and laws (Larner, 2003; Bunnell, 2015; Datta, 2015). The study of the different urban dynamics as they are currently arising and developing across the African continent may therefore prove useful for the further rethinking of notions and differentiated practices and logics of global urban policymaking across and within the wider global South.

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