Changes to Urban Society in Angola: From Limited to Multi-Criteria Stratification

Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues

Abstract: This article examines the transformations to urban social stratification in Angola during the last decades. The analysis is centered on the indicators of social difference throughout these years: the racial criteria of the colonial times; the political precedence in the first years after independence; and the multi-criteria of the postwar period. Based on research conducted before and after the end of the civil war in 2002, the article explores the construction and reconfiguration of urban society today, providing evidence of increased social mobility—despite the poverty and deeper inequalities—and of the importance of economic and residential criteria.

Résumé: Cet article examine les transformations de la stratification sociale urbaine en Angola au cours des dernières décennies. L'analyse se concentre sur les indicateurs de la différence sociale durant ces années: les critères raciaux de l'époque coloniale; la prépondérance politique des premières années après l'indépendance; et les multicritères de l'après-guerre. Basé sur des recherches menées avant et après la fin de la guerre civile en 2002, cet article explore la construction et la reconfiguration de la société urbaine d'aujourd'hui, témoignant d'un accroissement de la mobilité sociale—malgré la prévalence de la pauvreté et des inégalités profondes—et de l'importance des critères économiques et résidentiels.

Keywords: Angola; social stratification; urban; social mobility; inequality

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African Studies Review, Volume 60, Number 2 (September 2017), pp. 161–181

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doi:10.1017/asr.2017.48

Introduction

Angola's rapid and abrupt political, social, and economic transformations during the last half-century have led to rapid changes to the criteria of social differentiation and social mobility, particularly in the cities. Since the ending of colonial restrictions on social mobility, new criteria for social stratification and mobility have emerged in Angolan society, triggered by changes in the economy and the political setting. The features and trends of these transformations are still little understood or discussed in the social sciences, particularly among Africanists, despite their relevance to the present-day context of globalization and major urban transformation in Angola. Strongly influenced by both global and local change, social stratification has acquired new configurations, especially in the cities, contributing to the emergence and consolidation of gradually more defined groups and social strata.

The recent changes are the result not only of different economic capacities and access to economic resources, but also of new subjective and less tangible characteristics and criteria. Differentiated situations in the formal job market or in the informal economy, residential aspects, differences in terms of consumption and lifestyles, and social and cultural references are components of the objective and subjective appreciations of the social level of individuals and define the way urban dwellers are "located" in the city. The effects of these distinctions are reflected in the growth of new forms of access and accumulation of economic and social capital and new mechanisms for their reproduction.

In this article, social transformations under way in Angolan cities are examined within the broader scope of the aspects referred to above. This discussion is supported by empirical data collected in several Angolan cities during recent years, both before and after the end of the war in 2002. In the course of conducting multidisciplinary research projects focusing on a variety of subjects—including urbanization, poverty, and migration, among others—I found that my respondents repeatedly emphasized matters involving social stratification, and this subject, therefore, constitutes an important part of the data I have accumulated over the years. For this reason, the time span of the interviews referred to here is quite large, although a selection of such references was necessarily made. Throughout the analysis, indications of the multiplicity of grounds for the understanding of social stratification will be suggested, directly or indirectly, as well as the background of urban social transformations in the colonial times and following independence in 1975.

The focus is on the important transformations to urban society today, especially those that are associated with globalization and "access to modernity," and how these reconfigure perspectives on social differentiation and place categories that are related to economic activities, ownership of assets, and lifestyles at the center of social stratification. Cosmopolitan perceptions of urban life (Ferguson 1999) combine with more subtle changes

https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2017.48 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(Mbembe & Nuttall 2004) related to lifestyles, consumption, and access to assets, and for urban dwellers these help to define social and cultural references that guide the way people steer their lives, the strategies they adopt, and their social aspirations, which do not correspond solely with their economic capacity. Other relevant and more visible indicators are also present in the Angolan urban recompositions today, such as clothing or fashion, leisure, sports, and music, as well as gender relationships, sexuality, and marriage patterns (Mbembe & Nuttall 2004). Together with the areas analyzed here, these constitute a vast field for further social urban analysis.

The construction of the Angolan urban "way of life"—of urbanity—has gone through very different historical periods and socioeconomic circumstances and has also produced highly diverse realities over the years. Consistently linked to the country's social, political, and economic organization and transformations, it regularly adapted and changed, sometimes abruptly, leading to today's urban way(s) of living. Urban life and society are markedly the result of colonial and postcolonial pathways and of the rapid, unavoidable influence of references and practices of the globalized world, combining the tangible and intangible indicators of urban social stratification. As will be further detailed, the Angolan social urban reality today is quite distinctive in some aspects: for example, in the ruralization of cities after independence, the predominance of the Portuguese language within the processes of rapid urbanization and massive rural exodus, and the overwhelming postwar explosion of urban modernization projects.

The perspective used here is of urbanization as a process, simultaneously physical while demographically noteworthy, but particularly social as it produces corresponding transformations in behaviors and practices (Little 2013; Van de Walle 2009). The discussion here begins with a description of how the rapidly, and sometimes profoundly changing, urban society in Angola has gone through particular historical contexts in the last decades that have changed the criteria of social stratification. The Angolan social stratification system in the urban areas has basically been through three major periods in the last decades, corresponding to three major central criteria for social stratification: the racial criteria of colonialism, the political criteria of postindependence, and finally, today, the economic criteria. Despite these different schematic features, today's social panorama is inevitably the result of accumulations, juxtapositions, and several combinations. Beyond the objective determination of social strata as identified by the access that individuals have to resources—and particularly to money—lifestyles and specific social and cultural references have come to play an important role as differentiating criteria and allow for a more flexible social mobility, despite the increasing inequalities. The importance that new conditions and features, brought essentially by globalization, mass consumption, and urban modernity, acquire in the present is increasingly clear. These combine to produce a social organization that is based on new premises—new syntheses that structure ways of life and generate new social dynamics. The discussion will focus on the implications of these objective

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and subjective features on social stratification and on the reconfigurations of inequality that characterize urban life today.

Social Stratification in a Multi-Criteria Perspective

The analysis of social stratification in Angola, as anywhere else, is not an easy task. For example, although some particular aspects of social differentiation have been selected for this analysis—residential patterns, consumption and lifestyles, economic activity and professions, education, and the use of the Portuguese language—these should not be considered the only relevant features. It is worth mentioning, however, that these aspects, linked to urbanity, are not only significant in the Angolan urban context today but are increasingly at the forefront of social analyses of Africa. Social inequalities refer, in general, to the unequal access to resources, whether goods, services, or opportunities, that are causally rooted in the mechanisms of society. The criteria for defining the boundaries and features of social stratification encompass a vast set of objective and subjective characteristics and life opportunities, including living standards and level of wealth; position on the scale of prestige and the level of power; education; access to the labor market; values and patterns of behavior; personal tastes; and others variably accounted for in different contexts. Life opportunities are particularly related to collective mechanisms—that is, those shared and reproduced by societies—and consequently to the structure of the society itself. The systems of social stratification translate these inequalities and involve the identification of differentiated layers, predominantly subjective and often dependent on the "identifier" and the "subject of identification."

Modern sociological theory has long rejected economic differentiation as the sole definition of class. In defining social classes, sociological theory approaches social stratification through class and status notions (Max Weber), types of capital (Pierre Bourdieu), or a combination of multiple criteria (Anthony Giddens). Max Weber provided an innovative distinction between class (position in the economic order) and status (groups that share a common way of life), underlining the fact that class and status may interact in complex ways. The approach of Pierre Bourdieu was more elaborate and focused on the existence of different types of capital and the possibilities of their conversion, while Anthony Giddens's approach is based on the diversity of the criteria at stake.[1]

These partially or mostly up-to-date perspectives contribute to a better understanding of present-day African urban contexts and allow us to move beyond Georges Balandier's analysis—one of the few made by sociologists about social classes in Africa—on the unfinished nature of the African social classes. While his analysis focused on the postindependence period, it provided some signs for understanding the continent's increasingly complex realities, especially in the cities and under the influence of globalization. The "unfinished" character of African social classes that he identified has often been justified by the continent's diversity and by its "triple history" (1965:132),

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which includes past legacies, colonial rule, and independence. In the majority of cases these combined factors allowed only for the constitution of a distinct social class, the ruling elites, in the years following independences. The importance of looking at social stratification today remains precisely in the reassessment of the (many) evolutions that have occurred since then.

This reflection has timidly reentered Africanist social analysis, though its definition and relevance still need to be addressed (Melber 2013). Moreover, the interest in the poorest and the richest ends of the scale is not completely served by the analysis of the emergence and (re)configuration of the middle classes in these new studies. Between 1990 and 2010 the South's share of the global middle-class population expanded from 26 percent to 58 percent, and by 2030 more than 80 percent of the world's middle classes are projected to be residing in the South and to account for 70 percent of the total consumption expenditure (UNDP 2013:14). But even the World Bank's rediscovered interest in the massive expansion and global reconfiguration of the middle class in the South still raises many questions regarding its simultaneous occurrence with chronic high unemployment and the high hopes that the middle classes will solve the problems of development or democracy.

Today, in Angola, the "unfinished" character of social class must urgently be questioned despite the continued insistence, and still widespread assumption, of political science and social science scholars since independence in 1975, on the elite's being "the only well-defined social class," in the sense of Balandier. The "reconversion" and multiple recompositions of the elites in the country show that socioeconomic changes have, over the years, produced clear effects in terms of social stratification. Greater social mobility during recent years, and the lessening importance given to political affinities in terms of access to resources and wider opportunities (although this is still high), are some of the critical changes that should be signaled and taken into account in the analysis of Angolan urban society today. Several studies of the dynamics of social stratification in Africa have shown the importance of political power for gaining economic advantages (Van de Walle 2009), and particularly the way that political parties have been able to structure a layered form of social stratification and available forms of social mobility (Sumich 2010). New dimensions, however, ask for new approaches, entwining aspects of politics with other social and cultural factors that effect stratification and mobility, such as lifestyles, residential (re)locations (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2009), or education (Buchmann & Hannum 2001).

Questioning and analyzing the evolutions of social stratification and social class in Angola constitute an important part of the indispensable updating of knowledge in this area, not only in regard to Angola but also to African social recompositions in general. Notoriously increased social mobility characterizes the major change since the colonial period despite profound and striking inequalities, but since then the tendency in social

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analysis has been one of partially or insistently holding to the dual perspective of elite versus poor. This has not helped to tackle poverty and increasing social exclusion—and new kinds of social exclusions—or the blatant income inequality in the country and of the urban areas, as indicated by its 43 Gini coefficient (World Bank 2008). In fact, as conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu's approach, a better understanding of the diverse types of capital involved in social stratification—economic, social, symbolic, and cultural capital—over the years in Angola, and of the strategies used to capture, convert, and reproduce them, contributes to a finer and more useful understanding of society today. While the root causes of the transformation of social relations are to be found in a combination of multiple conditions and factors, major political and economic changes have led to visibly distinct recent phases in Angola regarding the social setting. In shifting from the colonial type of economic organization and dictatorial regime to a post-independence socialist-oriented economy and, eventually, entering into a neoliberal economy and democracy, Angolan society has (re)constructed new elites and new social relations.

The Changing Principles of Social Mobility

Colonial Mono-Criteria: Race

Generally, the main social distinction built over the colonial years was profoundly based on race, with the Portuguese and other whites accessing economic, political, and social resources in a privileged way, in contrast to the black Africans. The few exceptions, of particularly wealthy powerful African slave traders at a certain point, are referenced in historical research (Hodges 2001; Jorge 1998; Messiant 1989). Based on race, rather than on the ethnic complexity of cultural and social backgrounds that came to compose the colonial population, Angolan society built new categories confining the privileged and the unprivileged in positions more suited to the dominant powers. Associated with this criterion, the colonial regime in Angola imposed a clear social organization, and the difference between "civilized" Europeans, *assimilados*, and natives was defined and cemented over the years (Messiant 1989).[2] Belonging to one of these social classes dictated the rules for social reproduction—the replication of social inequalities over generations (Bourdieu 1984)—and strictly conditioned social mobility. This structure was based almost exclusively on origin—place of birth and ethnic heritage—while there were more subtle differences within the strata, such as level of education or monetary capacity. Among "civilized" Europeans there was, for instance, a marked distinction between those born in the metropolis, in Portugal, who enjoyed a higher social status, and those born in the colonies.

In spite of these internal stratifications and nuances, until independence, economic aspects and the capacity to participate in politics were secondary to the stratification of society based on race. This was what rigidly dictated

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the rules of upward mobility, essentially as a result of the social and economic control that colonization required and imposed. This social organization established and reinforced the social status of a specific number of elites from the group of assimilados who, in Angola, were concentrated mainly in the capital, Luanda. In socio-spatial terms, it resulted in an "asphalt"/*musseque* polarization—that is, a clear physical and social separation between the urbanized tarred road areas and the red-sanded poor districts of the periphery, the *musseques*—particularly in Luanda, but also in other Angolan cities (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2009, 2012).[3]

During the colonial urbanization process, the cities' inhabitants gradually adopted modern, urban references, habits, and lifestyles. These also became a common basis for upward mobility, especially for the assimilados, as these were used by the colonial power as a criterion for (limited) social mobility. These ideas of modernity and urbanity became increasingly widespread and known to all social groups and strata and were part of a process that was, at times, termed "Westernization" (Monteiro 1973). Until independence, these were the conditions and context for the social differentiation that accentuated the corresponding racial differentiation: "In Angola, social stratification followed the contours of racial stratification" (Monteiro 1973:276).

Postcolonial Sociopolitical Change and the Political Precedence

Following independence in 1975, social precedence based on race was enthusiastically abolished from the political discourse. The markedly political nature of the country's transformation toward socialism led to the establishment and consolidation of a social organization based on political and ideological orientation and on the extent of participation in political and power structures. The adoption of a single-party political system that centralized economic organization and management generated social differentiation between a core that was connected to the administrative and political structures and a peripheral circle divided by different degrees of access to power and resources.

The proximity of the state and its structures resulted in social recomposition based on political criteria, the formation of a *nomenklatura* with more or less extensive ramifications (Ferreira 1995), and the rule of politics and ideology over the old racial and economic premises. This social distinction took the form, for example, of unequal access to shopping cards, travel and state assets such as cars or houses, and benefits to which the group closest to the state and government had privileged access.[4] In this context, social mobility was strictly dependent on inclusion and exclusion of access to resources depending on membership of the political and power structures. The consolidation and reproduction of this model entailed converting the social capital of the old colonial (African and mixed) elites and forming new elites who regarded privileged access to resources, through their political belonging and performance, as a form of accumulation and consequent

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upward social mobility. The interactions between the old elites and the newly (re)created elites were naturally varied, with some of the old ones losing their privileges while others emerged, particularly those linked to the liberation movement that came to dominate the political structures.

Most analyses of recent social stratification in Angola have addressed the important political processes that took place immediately after independence. According to Nelson Pestana, "the current social differentiation process . . . occurred during the major changes in political trajectory in the first 30 years of Angolan independence" (2005:58). This trajectory can also be divided into two periods, the revolutionary period (1975–1990) and the clientelist period (1990–2004) (Hodges 2001). Pestana argues that during these periods it was possible to see the formation of different classes (or "proto-classes," as he calls them): the Angolan ruling elite, the business-owning bourgeoisie, a middle class, and "a huge popular class representing more than 70 percent of the population" (2005:65–67). These divisions, which contradict the notion of "dual" inequalities used by most analyses of postindependence society, are stronger today and can be noted via the deeper analysis of certain signs, including "external signs of wealth" (Pestana 2005:68).

As already noted, these changes were accompanied by the sometimes rapid conversion of capital that individuals and groups required to perform and maintain their conditions and positions. Da Rocha (2005) refers to the inevitable adaptations that the different classes in Angola had to perform, on pain of jeopardizing or even collapsing social cohesion. In the current situation of significant change, driven more and more by globalization, the analysis of Angolan society needs to closely monitor signs of these transformations that can provide clues to society's future directions.

Angola in a Context of Peace: The Rich, the Others, and the Multiplying Facets of Social Stratification

The socioeconomic transformations of the last few decades, such as the political transition and the opening-up of the market economy, did not mean rapid, sudden change in structures or social organization, as they did when the country gained its independence. Transition to democracy and a market economy evolved slowly from the beginning of the 1990s, before the first (failed) elections which, together with the resumption of the civil war, allowed for only partial or incomplete changes until the end of the conflict in 2002. They did, however, require new conversions of capital acquired in the meantime. Both legacies—colonial and postindependence—contributed to the current social differentiation and deeply influenced the way in which social strata were formed. Generically speaking, we can say that the definition of the current elite dates back to the merger of the "old creoles" and "new creoles." According to David Birmingham (2006), the old creoles were the old bourgeois black families that came to the fore in the nineteenth century, while the new creoles were black and mixed-race assimilados who had been educated at missionary schools and competed

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in economic and occupational terms with the colonists (see also Hodges 2001). The above-mentioned racial criteria, nuanced both among the blacks and the whites, did not stop some of the African families from attaining noteworthy social status before independence. These elites, who dominated the state and government in the years following independence by rapidly and effectively converting social and economic capital, were joined by new dominant social strata connected to politics and power. These strata retained the political capital they had accumulated over the years, as well as their significant social and economic capital, the latter highly related to the control of the income from oil and diamond production, international aid circuits, and the biggest businesses, thereby gaining influence over the management of a vast amount of resources.

Although social stratification is still largely based on greater or lesser proximity to the state and the resources that it manages, the weight of economic differentiation among individuals and groups is increasingly visible in the dynamics of social recomposition, even though wealth is accessed by means of a series of strategies for attracting, mobilizing, and converting different types of resources—social, political, and ethnic. The old colonial elites and those that appeared after independence—not necessarily the same—tended to convert this old capital into economic capital. At the same time, new groups appeared with considerable wealth generated in the informal economy or from alternative sources less connected to the state and power. The informal economy allowed a number of individuals and groups to accumulate and recreate solidarity and reciprocity networks that broke down some of the restrictions on social mobility and that pressured for the reformulation of precedence and social ascension criteria.

The negotiations and reconversions of the social strata, particularly the relations between the old and the new elites, are, as mentioned, naturally complex and varied. The multiplicity of individual cases shows that the schematic transformations described throughout this article call for a detailed analysis whenever pertinent. For the purposes of the argument developed here, it is important to stress that the foundations of social stratification today tend more and more to be economic capital and a capacity for mobilizing solidarity and reciprocity networks aimed at increasing this capital. In addition, lifestyles and types of consumption that are derived from the wealth constitute signs of social stratification. These changes underscore the secondary role played today by race and origin and the lesser importance attributed to proximity to, and participation in, politics and government in favor of the imperatives of economic capital and ways of spending and using it.

Globalization, Cosmopolitism, and Modernity as New Premises of Urban Social Mobility

Cities have always been more exposed to globalization than rural areas (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1993), and so are their inhabitants, who absorb and

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actively reconfigure their economies, society, and culture. An analysis of new lifestyles and forms of consumption produced and molded in the cities takes us to the recent changes in Angola and to a series of transformations associated with modernity. According to Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009), perspectives on the effects of globalization on culture include focuses on lasting differences, growing sameness, and on-going mixing, while three aspects contribute to modernization: modernity, globalization, and culture. James Ferguson's (1999) distinction between localist and cosmopolitan styles is also very useful in understanding the redefinition of social positions associated with lifestyles in modern African cities today (see also Mbembe 2004). While localist lifestyles refer to loyalty to a traditional rural lifestyle, cosmopolitan styles, dominant in urban areas, reveal a widespread desire to get away from rural references and embrace global ones—a fundamental aspect of the urban transformation in Africa (Nyamnjoh et al. 2002; Pisani 2004). Although this distinction may not be enough to explain current urban practices and the creative mix of localist and cosmopolitan styles, it does identify references that orient the way of life of urban citizens and that do not necessarily correspond strictly to their economic capacities, although they are connected to them.[5]

As suggested above, the signs of change in urban Africa—and elsewhere—are clear when we analyze economic activities, family structures and organization, religion, education, or housing. However, this type of analysis has been neglected in Angola, even in light of growing evidence of the effects of "modernity" and globalization on urban ways of life today and, to a certain extent, rural life. An analysis of globalization in Angola also needs to take into account specific local appropriations and a tendency toward more evident cosmopolitism in the highest social echelons (Friedman 2000). Considering the country's rapid urbanization—more than half of the population (62%) lives in cities according to the 2014 census, and more than six million live in Luanda alone—these aspects are definitely relevant to an understanding of Angolan urban society today, and particularly to the way that social stratification is (re)defined. The cities' continuous attraction for the population, both during and after the war—for different reasons, but all related to the search for better conditions—has in recent years combined with major state and private urban investments, leading to social and economic transformation.[6]

In view of the complexity of analyzing the entire effect of globalization and modernization in Angola—and, particularly, how it is shaped in the urban context (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2012)—this article focuses specifically on relevant criteria for the definition of social difference, such as the economic integration in the labor market—that is, access to work and forms of employment. It also addresses indicators of "urbanity" and education, associated, for instance, with the use of the Portuguese language. The issue of national languages is closely connected, as shown, to social change via national policies in Africa (Fardon & Furniss 1994) and to the context of the urban imaginaries and urban integration. It is also associated with the

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criterion of socio-spatial differentiation, especially as a result of rapid urbanization, which translates into residential differentiation (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2009). The most general, visible signs of the current social transformation in cities in Angola are space related—the neighborhoods where people live or the type of homes they have. Finally, the article addresses some of the rationales resulting from these processes, with particular emphasis on the actual definition of being "urban" and the signs and consumption styles associated with this condition. Consumption is linked to the production of lifestyles and is therefore the material basis for identity-building processes (Fardon et al. 1999), including those linked to social stratification. Cultural reorientation processes in Africa are closely associated with consumption, including the subjective frustration of those who do not have the resources to participate in consumption (Fardon et al. 1999).

Where You Work and Where You Live Matters

Some studies conducted in Angola in recent years have pointed to the construction of comprehensive social differences between urban and nonurban lifestyles. The difference between people from "the city" and from "the bush" can be assessed on the basis of, for example, language, gestures, greetings, clothing, and hairstyles (Brinkman 2003). Furthermore, this distinction between city and country dwellers, crystallized in terms of *matumbos* (ignorant, rural people) and *calcinhas* (inhabitants of Luanda, referring to Western dress), has its roots in the colonial period and has been in use ever since. Often, expressions of this separation from rural life cut across the discourses of the urban dweller: As one resident of Luanda said, "The children have never been to the place we came from and they don't want to go there because it's bush out there. What they like is the open road" (interview, 42-year-old female, 2000). The distinction persists today, when the majority of the population live in cities and references to the continuous search for the urban life are widespread: "The youth is no longer interested in agriculture; the minute they can sell a chicken to pay for transportation, they move into the city," said a resident of Benguela (interview, 46-year-old male, 2008). As mentioned, the urban references and access to urban life are not only synonyms of objectively better conditions of living, but also central elements of increased social status and indications of upward social mobility. The prestige of the cosmopolitan life and the actual and potential well-being it provides are today more central than before.

Though affected by war and profound political and economic transformation, economic integration in the city through work is also an important area for the analysis of urbanization and social difference, especially in a context of a precarious (and growing) informal economy. One of the signs inherited from the "civilizing" efforts of colonization was the inclusion and control of the population through employment. Formal work in the private sector or in public administration has, since that time, become a goal not only for rural migrants seeking better opportunities, but also for the longer

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urbanized population that regards informal activities as survival strategies for the less integrated, less educated population: "He doesn't have a job yet; he's just doing business, said a thirty-five-year old woman in Luanda" (interview, 2002).

Even though formal work is very rare in Luanda, and in smaller cities for different reasons, and the informal sector absorbs most of the working population, formal paid work has always been one of the signs of integration in the city. This apparent contradiction between the ideal and the reality is not only true of the current market economy but also was a feature of the colonial period and the years of the postindependence centralized economy. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), in 2001—right before the end of the war—only 39 percent of Luanda's population had a job in the formal sector, while self-employed workers and unpaid family workers accounted for 61 percent of those with an occupation or trade. The formal sector was divided into 10 percent civil servants, 4.7 percent state corporation workers, and 18.7 percent private-sector employees. In 2011, ten years later, the INE estimated that 45 percent of households in Angola had their major incomes provided (but not exclusively) by formal employment, while in the urban areas this percentage was higher, 54 percent (INE 2011). Still, the majority of the population depends partially or completely on the informal economy for income.

Paid work is therefore a central goal and standard in the construction of modern, urban social status, and field interviews, conducted over the last decades, point to this idea (and ideal). The notion that "[formal] work ennobles man" (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2006) is widespread. Urban models of economic achievement are focused essentially on an increase in levels of school attainment and, therefore, the access to a paid job that education provides. These constitute criteria in the aspirations of both new city dwellers and people who have lived there for a long time. Indicators of higher school attainment and access to employment in the formal sector are systematically present in the discourses and hopes expressed by people living in city environments, as in the comment of the Luanda resident above that distinguishes between "having a job" and "just doing business."

Spatial location in the city constitutes another important indicator of urbanization and urbanity that has been present since colonial times. The type and location of homes in the city are some of the most important indicators of people's socioeconomic standing: "To be able to build a house like this [made of bricks] you have to have a lot of money. If you don't have enough, you build a wooden or a wattle and daub house," said a twenty-five-year-old man in Benguela (interview, 2008). Today, residential differentiation is increasingly evident, and housing constitutes one of the central markers of socioeconomic condition.

The colonial socio-spatial configurations in Angolan cities were associated with urbanized, paved and asphalted areas where the more economically advantaged population lived, while the peripheries, the musseques, were the places of residence and socialization of the poorer, more excluded

https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2017.48 Published online by Cambridge University Press

strata; "in Luanda, from 1920 onward, the city began to show segregation of spaces, mainly in terms of housing and services" (Carneiro 1987:45). Today, even in towns that were colonized later, there is clear spatial separation and segregation inherited from the colonial model and reproduced by the social dynamics of housing (Croese 2011; Gastrow 2014; Roque 2011; Udelsmann Rodrigues 2009). Basically, the socio-spatial organization imposed by colonialism had similar effects in various Angolan cities, although to different extents. This process, which was more visible in the period when cities grew the most (1930s–1960s), produced a "topographic 'racialization'" (Messiant 1989:131) in which the distinction between the downtown, upper city and the musseques was the distinction between classes, and also constituted a "segregation of spaces, especially of housing and services" (Carneiro 1987:44). The urbanized centers, where services and administrations were located, were mainly inhabited by people of European origin. The native population and rural migrants lived in the peripheral areas of the cities which were unpaved and dominated by shanty-type housing. However, circulation between areas has always been characterized by close relations between the dominant population and the more disadvantaged population working in the companies, services, and trades in the central area.

The erosion of this dual structure after independence, which was felt more acutely in cities where the war had caused the most destruction (Mendes 1988; Roque 2011; Udelsmann Rodrigues 2012), created a socio-spatial mix, the effects of which have survived until today. After Angola's independence and the Europeans' departure from the cities, the buildings abandoned by the Portuguese were occupied en masse by the inhabitants of the peripheral neighborhoods and the new migrants who thronged to the cities, mostly due to the civil war between the ruling party, MPLA, and the UNITA. The phenomenon resulting from this peculiar recomposition of the urban social structure was described as a "rurbanization of cities," as Felipe Amado (1992) called it in the case of Luanda, which was characterized by the integration in the cities of habits and ways of living typical of the countryside. "Rurbanization" and ruralization took place in coastal cities such as Luanda, Benguela, and Lobito, and even in inner ones like Lubango, although the war did not reach into most of the inner cities for long periods (Robson & Roque 2002).[7] These changes to the residential features, the economy, and the urban way of life led to new social recompositions, in this period diffusely translated into spatial separations.

Although the rapid growth of the cities during the war generally caused an exponential increase in precarious musseque areas, there was also precarious new housing self-construction and the resulting penetration of the displaced, disadvantaged population into the central areas previously occupied by a wealthier population, colonials, and African elites.[8] The former spatial separation of the cities did not result in rigidly identifiable frontiers: "The musseques do not only surround the cement city [in Luanda] but also penetrate into it" (Messiant 1989:130). The causes of the residential

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transformation that followed independence lay mainly in the war and its impact but also in the egalitarian ideologies that dominated society at the time. The rapid exodus from rural war-torn areas resulted in an increase in jerry-built buildings within the colonial city and growth in peripheral neighborhoods. Agglomerations of uncontrolled construction appeared in the central business area, on vacant land, along the main watercourses, and along a number of roads. In Luanda this phenomenon was further reinforced by the quick degradation of most of the dwellings in the old city, which lent the city musseque-like characteristics, even in the most central areas.

The current spatial reconfiguration that emerged from this overlapping was simultaneously social and economic. In recent years there has been a tenuous recovery of the old socio-spatial divisions in most of the cities of Angola, although this is punctuated by a series of new "poor" and "rich" neighborhoods that are recognized as such. The "nicest" colonial areas, inhabited by the more affluent socioeconomic strata—which were occupied by poorer families after independence—gradually returned to the dominance of wealthy families or wealthy foreign investors, particularly in the old parts of the cities. Some cities, but especially Luanda, are also witnessing the appearance of residential enclaves where wealthier social groups have built exclusive protected environments. Gated communities and the "closure" of certain neighborhoods or areas have arisen, as in other cities in developing countries where social inequalities are increasing (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2009). These usually materialize as condominiums, but also appear as whole new neighborhoods and satellite cities, of which Kilamba New City (nova cidade/centralidade do Kilamba) in the province of Luanda is the most widely known. These are strongly encouraged by Chinese financial support and technical cooperation and they reflect the recent direction of urbanization—the appearance of pockets and areas that have characteristics distinct from the surrounding zones. Luanda is the Angolan city that represents the best example of this trend, but gated communities have appeared in new districts such as Luanda Sul, Camama, Cacuaco, and Catete, where an estimated 75 percent of the residents belong to a high-income bracket and 22 percent to a medium-income one (Jenkins et al. 2002). In other cases some zones or neighborhoods in the center are being renovated with either an increasing number of walled houses or with high-rise buildings. Self-exclusions of those living in the new modern areas as well as hetero-exclusions provoked by resettlement policies are currently accelerating socio-spatial stratification.

Multi-Criteria Urban Stratification: Always Changing Ways of Exclusion and Exclusivity?

Urban social stratification, as evident in residence patterns and aspects of socioeconomic integration in the city, is accompanied by sociocultural transformations which are important for social scientists of diverse fields.

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Accumulated capitals, converted and reconverted across the years as strategies of social mobility and precedence, are again creatively combined today where the types of jobs that are available, the places where people live, and their lifestyles acquire renewed importance in the cities and extensively in the whole country. Aspects of inherited privileges of individuals and groups that constituted the colonial or the postindependence elites or more favored strata have been transformed and readapted to the new—and/or renewed—criteria of the modern society. These include not only the principal and more tangible criteria described above, but also more subtle factors of social differentiation.

One of the most important aspects of urban lifestyles that has often been mentioned in analyses of Angolan society is the generalized use of the Portuguese language. In Angola, Portuguese, which dominates in the cities, has been perceived since colonial times as the language of the urban—of modernity, of upward social mobility, and also a certain "Westernization" (Mingas 2000; Monteiro 1973). Even outside the cities Angolan languages were increasingly replaced by Portuguese, and, with rare exceptions, children born in Angolan cities learn and speak Portuguese exclusively. In all Angolan towns today, Portuguese dominates at the administrative level and in the more urban classes and is used to communicate with central and national institutions. The idea that is repeatedly disseminated in many circles, and among city dwellers, is that migration and integration into an urban setting mean assimilating new urban practices and values that are different from those of a person's rural origin. This premise is demonstrated in the willingness to adopt Portuguese by people of different origins in Angola. "Children born here in the city can't speak our traditional language. They understand, but answer in Portuguese," said one thirty-eight-year-old woman in Luanda (interview, 2000). Indeed, this is one of the characteristics of a more "cosmopolitan" population that people with nonurban, "localist" lifestyles often criticize; according to Inge Brinkman, "they think that Luanda people are arrogant, inconsiderate and non-African and speak a European language and wear European clothes" (2003:209). Data from the INE indicate that in 2001 Portuguese was the mother tongue of around 59.8 percent of the population (INE 2010) and in 2010 of almost 83 percent (INE 2011). The language question is, in fact, always present in analyses of Angola and social differentiation, and Portuguese is considered to be a factor that has brought cultural unity to the cities: "Portuguese has been the only vehicle for teaching in schools and the language of the armed forces shared by successive generations of recruits" (Hodges 2001:47). It simultaneously constitutes an objective and a subjective feature of urbanized society.

In Angolan cities there has also been a clear shift in consumption habits. Although these are impossible to list exhaustively, they are all directly related to the economic capacities of individuals and families. Changes in food consumption and habits, in clothing or music taste, and all other sorts of urban signs point to a modern cosmopolitan construction of urbanity

that has accelerated the physical transformation of the cities. This modernity can be seen everywhere and is reflected in discourses and perceptions of social and cultural change: Children "don't want to eat *kisaca*," said a forty-eight-year-old woman in Luanda. They prefer rice" (interview, 2000). Preferences for urban industrial and imported products, although not an exclusive feature of the urbanized strata in Angola, are often pointed to as indicators of changes in people's lifestyles. The importance of paying closer attention to these signs and lifestyles and how they combine with the objective material conditions of individuals and families resides in the significance they have for the construction and delimitation of social strata. Access to industrial products, such as food or clothing, has boosted the urban economy and the trading networks over recent years, responding to an increased demand for imported "modern" goods. The ability to buy modern, *de marca* (branded) fashion and accessories reflects not only economic capacity, but also tastes that are linked to certain social strata, to a cosmopolitan urban lifestyle. This sentiment and perception are found all over the country, even among rural populations; "they now do anything to have Hugo Boss," said a fifty-one-year old man in Luanda (interview, 2012). In cities a growing importance is attributed to places of consumption, including restaurants or bars, but particularly to the type of shopping places that people have access to, whether in Angola or abroad—the latter being even more prestigious and a marker of high social positioning. "Shopping in London or Dubai is not the same as going to the Belas mall or buying your stuff in the Kikolo [informal market]," said a twenty-seven-year-old woman in Luanda in 2010.

Accessing certain levels of consumption necessarily requires higher economic resources, and these different economic capacities translate into social differentiation. However, certain entanglements between signs and actual social position require closer examination. As mentioned, the multiplicity and combination of criteria lead to multiple and complex particularities. For instance, the capacity to "buy" education and actually having an educated family background adds to the, at times, ambiguous and complex features that result from the recent social transformations in Angola. "Today, you can buy your diploma easily, given the huge amount of universities that there are now; but that does not mean you become an educated person," said a thirty-eight-year old woman in Luanda in 2012. The different cases and situations, highly dependent on material financial capacities, are therefore colored by subjective criteria linked to lifestyles and consumption patterns. These multiple possibilities and combinations, however, do not by themselves signify a decrease in the deep differences between the wealthy and the poor.

Conclusion

These recent processes of change in Angolan urban societies have boosted the re-creation of practices and logic that make themselves felt in the

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appearance of new social inequalities and associated new social strata. Both the scholarly literature on postindependence Angola and the extensive fieldwork I conducted there suggest trends of social stratification that are clearly evident in a variety of contexts, particularly through discourses. The new social stratifications are a product of different legacies and are now molded by new types of capital as well as new premises. Whereas previously it was race or political networks that held major importance, today economic factors that allow access to better places of residence and consumption capacity stand out. Belonging to the formal labor system, having a formal job, or occupying a formal position with a company or with the state has been associated with a privileged social position since colonial times. Today, one's employment status, the use of the Portuguese language, and participation in the formal education system have been added to the set of core social criteria. Lifestyles and external signs of urbanity, such as clothing, hairstyle, and sociability venues, add to this set and provide the more subtle signals of social stratification.

Social stratification in Angola involves a mix of the above-mentioned types of capital and signs of prestige and there are, therefore, different combinations that, in turn, depend on the urban context. In Luanda, for example, the range of opportunities for spending is much more varied than elsewhere, and variations in the quality of one's home are even more complex. These economic and social indicators may result from greater affluence in a city like Luanda, a factor that in itself allows easier access to resources or, more subtly, may depend on how important they are considered to be and the ability to manage and use them. Significant statements like "if I go to a job interview wearing a tie, it is different" (interview, 35-year-old male, Luanda, 2002) show the importance given to modernity and urbanity, the associated economic capacity and simultaneously the underlying importance attributed to formal urban jobs. The multinational business executive style that the suit and tie symbolize has acquired a worldwide significance and, in this sense, Angolan perceptions are no different. The appropriation of modern, cosmopolitan, urban lifestyles is thus dependent on acquired economic capacities and also determines and reinforces people's social status. The implications of these changes, which have stripped colonial racial stratification and postcolonial political stratification of their importance in terms of the rigid delimitation of social strata, have opened the door to new opportunities and combinations and, therefore, to greater complexity and a conceivable reduction in social differentiation as it presents the opportunity for social mobility. However, the social mobility that is now possible leaves open questions that need to be further explored in order to understand the still serious problems of poverty and social exclusion. Globalization and its influences make the penetration of values and practices that now dictate people's social positioning inevitable, but it has done nothing to solve the deep contradictions in the unequal distribution of wealth. These are the issues that must remain at the top

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of the agendas of both policymakers and social researchers, despite the socially and culturally interesting transformations they engender and the fact that the rigid delimitation of access to resources and social mobility seem to have improved since colonial times and the postindependence organization.

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Notes

1. "Status," according to Weber (1968), is the basis of "traditional" social organization, while "class" applies to modern societies. "Status" implies a sense of individual distinction acquired through precedence and based on honor, the exercise of power, and the access to consumption. According to Bourdieu (1984), the possession of different types of capital allows for the identification of class, which is structured at several levels (economic, social, cultural/symbolic). According to Giddens (2013), social stratification and the structures of capitalism are based on a combination of diverse criteria. These include a mediate level of structuring (which includes property, the means of production, technical and educational qualifications), an immediate structuring (related to labor division in organizations and authority relations, where status groups are defined through consumption), and structuring resulting from noneconomic attributes (ethnic or cultural inferences).
2. According to a more critical definition at the time, "an assimilado was an African who had severed his cultural ties to his African society of origin in order to acquire and follow European habits and customs" (Jorge 1998:55). "Civilized" referred to the population of European origin (with some subdivisions based on place of birth—metropolis or colony), and "native" was an Angolan who had not achieved the status of assimilado.
3. Although it was coined in Luanda and has been used there for a long time, the Kimbundo word *musseque* is used to describe unpaved areas of cities and is used today practically nationwide. The term "is made up of mu (place) and seke (sand) and indicates areas of reddish sand on the Luanda plateau, as opposed to the fishing villages . . . , beaches and the Portuguese 'cement city. . . .'" (Kasack 1996:66). The term takes on "sociological significance when it is used to refer to groups of cubatas [jerry-rigged houses] built in these areas by people who have been pushed out of the city centre due to urban expansion" (Mendes 1988:233). Therefore, "by semantic extension it was also used to describe suburban areas inhabited by the capital's more disadvantaged population" (Carvalho 1989:68).
4. Shopping cards were prepaid debit cards issued by the state to employees that enabled them to make purchases from government-run shops. The quantity and quality of these cards depended on the level, qualifications, and position of the employee.
5. See Ferguson (1999) as well as critiques of Ferguson, especially Nyamnjoh (2001).

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6. Urban population growth in Angola since independence is impressive. Luanda, for instance, increased from 475,000 in 1970 to an estimated 1.5 million in the 1990s, three million in the 2000s, and over six million in 2014, according to the census. Major urban and housing projects in Angola since the end of the war include the National Program on Housing and Urban Development (PNUH, of 2008), which foresees the construction of "One Million Houses," projects for "new centralities" or urban expansion, urban renewal projects, and infrastructure in some areas. The most important international support to these projects comes from the China International Fund (CIF) launched in 2006 and aimed at the construction and reconstruction of the country, which anticipates the construction of 215,500 houses across the country, with the highest percentage in Luanda.
7. In other inner cities, however, postindependence dynamics are radically different. Ondjiva, Huambo, or Cuíto, for instance, were literally deserted due to intense militarization and the war that followed, which practically left them in ruins.
8. Although it was not possible, from the first years of growth of the city of Luanda, to establish a clear separation between "the cement city and the musseques . . . , the white and the black city . . . such was the confusion of permanent and semi-permanent houses and cubatas" (Monteiro 1973:80), the subsequent postindependence period has been much more profound in this respect. This confusion and interpenetration continue today, and there has even been a certain "musseque-ization of the whole city" (Carvalho 1997:133) and its green belt. In peripheral areas it is also possible to detect characteristics of the urbanized areas. In all Angolan cities, the growth dynamics have resulted in mixed, intertwined spaces.

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