Policing the Periphery:

Party-anchored hybrid policing in Luanda, Angola

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Antonio Frank

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Promotor(es):
Prof.dr. A. J. Dietz

Co-promotor(es):
Dr. A. Akinyoade
Dr. G.J.C. Van der Borgh (Universiteit Utrecht)
Dr. H.C.T. Theisens (Haagse Hogeschool)

Promotiecommissie:
Prof.dr. M. Dekker (Wetenschappelijk Directeur Instituut Afrika-Studiecentrum/voorzitter)
Prof.dr. M.J. Spierenburg
Prof.dr. G.J. Abbink
Prof.dr. M.E. de Bruijn
Prof.dr. C.G. Koonings (Universiteit Utrecht)

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Contents

Summary

This PhD thesis investigates how hybrid policing networks function in the peri-urban neighbourhoods of 11 de Novembro and Cariango, in Cazenga municipality, Luanda, Angola, by analysing the interactions between the police and non-state forms of local authority. Using social network analysis, it contributes to debates on nodal governance and hybrid security governance in post-colonial African contexts.

The findings show that hybrid policing networks in the peri-urban areas of Luanda are MPLA-anchored. Although their composition varies across sites, the underlying pattern is similar: shared party-state alignment and administrative embeddedness bind the police and party-state-affiliated non-state forms of local authority into tightly connected clusters. In functional terms, these policing networks operate less as systems of direct policing and more as mechanisms of surveillance, monitoring, and oversight, rather than as structures primarily engaged in activities such as patrolling or criminal investigation.

Overall, this thesis offers a nuanced understanding of how hybrid policing networks function in Luanda's peri-urban neighbourhoods. It highlights the importance of historical and socio-political factors in shaping local security governance. By conceptualising policing networks in peri-urban Luanda as MPLA-anchored hybrid networks, this study provides a contextually grounded account of how authority is organised and exercised at the neighbourhood level.

Samenvatting

Deze PhD dissertatie onderzoekt hoe hybride politienetwerken functioneren in de peri-urbane wijken 11 de Novembro en Cariango, in de gemeente Cazenga, Luanda, Angola, door de interacties tussen de politie en niet-statelijke vormen van lokaal gezag te analyseren. Met behulp van sociale netwerkanalyse levert het een bijdrage aan debatten over nodale governance en hybride veiligheidsbestuur in postkoloniale Afrikaanse contexten.

De bevindingen laten zien dat hybride politienetwerken in de peri-urbane gebieden van Luanda verankerd zijn in de MPLA. Hoewel hun samenstelling per locatie verschilt, is het onderliggende patroon vergelijkbaar: een gedeelde partij-statelijke oriëntatie en bestuurlijke inbedding verbinden de politie en aan partij en staat gelieerde niet-statelijke vormen van lokaal gezag tot hecht verbonden clusters. Functioneel gezien werken deze politienetwerken minder als systemen van directe politiezorg en meer als mechanismen van surveillance, monitoring en toezicht, in plaats van als structuren die zich primair bezighouden met activiteiten zoals patrouilleren of strafrechtelijk onderzoek.

Al met al biedt deze dissertatie een genuanceerd inzicht in hoe politienetwerken functioneren in de peri-urbane wijken van Luanda. Het benadrukt het belang van historische en sociaal-politieke factoren bij de vormgeving van lokaal veiligheidsbestuur. Door politienetwerken in peri-urbaan Luanda te conceptualiseren als in de MPLA verankerde hybride netwerken, biedt deze studie een contextueel ond beschrijving van hoe gezag op buurtniveau wordt georganiseerd en uitgeoefend.

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Resumo

Esta tese de doutoramento investiga como as redes híbridas de policiamento funcionam nos bairros periurbanos 11 de Novembro e Cariango, no município do Cazenga, Luanda, Angola, analisando as interações entre a polícia e formas não estatais de autoridade local. Utilizando a análise de redes sociais, contribui para os debates sobre governação nodal e governação híbrida da segurança em contextos africanos pós-coloniais.

Os resultados mostram que as redes híbridas de policiamento nas áreas periurbanas de Luanda estão ancoradas no MPLA. Embora a sua composição varie entre os diferentes locais, o padrão subjacente é semelhante: um alinhamento comum entre partido e Estado, bem como a inserção administrativa, ligam a polícia e as formas não estatais de autoridade local afiliadas ao partido-Estado em clusters fortemente conectados. Em termos funcionais, estas redes de policiamento operam menos como sistemas de policiamento direto e mais como mecanismos de vigilância, monitorização e supervisão, em vez de estruturas primordialmente envolvidas em atividades como patrulhamento ou investigação criminal.

No geral, esta tese oferece uma compreensão nuançada de como as redes de policiamento funcionam nos bairros periurbanos de Luanda. Destaca a importância dos fatores históricos e sociopolíticos na configuração da governação da segurança a nível local. Ao conceptualizar as redes de policiamento no espaço periurbano de Luanda como redes híbridas ancoradas no MPLA, este estudo apresenta uma explicação contextualizada de como a autoridade é organizada e exercida ao nível do bairro.

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List of abbreviations

AATA	Associação Angolana de Autoridades Tradicionais
CAPs	Comités de Acção do Partido
CASA-CE	Convergência Ampla de Salvação de Angola — Coligação Eleitoral
CNE	Comissão Nacional Eleitoral (National Electoral Committee)
CPPA	Corpo de Polícia Popular de Angola
CSP	Companhia de Segurança Pública
DW	Development Workshop
FLPA	Frente de Libertação Popular de Angola
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola
GURN	Government of National Unity and Reconciliation
JMPLA	Juventude do Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMA	Organização da Mulher Angolana
PDA	Partido Democrático de Angola
PIDE	Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado
PRS	Partido de Renovação Social
PSPA	Polícia de Segurança Pública de Angola
RC	Resident's Committee
SINFO	Serviço de Informação

SNA	Social Network Analysis
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
UPNA	União das Populações do Norte de Angola

Introduction

This dissertation explores the dynamics of hybrid policing in Angola. It was inspired by visits to Angola from 2017 to 2024. During these visits, I noticed the stark contrast between the city centre and the informal urban settlements in Angola's capital province. In addition to the differences in architecture, ethnic diversity, and economic activity, one striking observation was the limited visible signs of governance and law enforcement in areas outside the city centre.

For instance, during visits to Cazenga, a municipality just a fifteen-minute drive from Largo Primeiro de Maio in downtown Luanda, as well as to other municipalities in the province of Luanda, such as Viana and Cacuaco, there were few signs of formal state authority, including police officers, patrol cars, public warnings, or any other indications of law enforcement in public spaces. This, coupled with the poor condition of the houses, the numerous youth gangs on the streets, the unpaved roads, and the absence of visible government symbols, makes many of these areas, at first glance, resemble what many would classify as 'ungoverned' spaces. This is described as a "physical territory and non-physical policy space in which effective state sovereignty and control are absent" (Raleigh & Dowd, 2013, p. 1). These spaces are frequently associated with disorder and insecurity, as they may serve as a refuge for criminals, terrorists, and others with malicious intent.

The setting described above is not unique to Angola; instead, it reflects broader patterns observed in major urban areas across the Global South. However, a closer examination of Cazenga reveals a more nuanced reality that challenges the initial perception of it as an ungoverned space. As Miguel[1], a local gatekeeper who assisted me during fieldwork in Cazenga, remarked while we were walking through the streets of Cazenga, '*Não penses que ninguém nos está a ver, os donos do bairro já nos viram'*, which translates to: 'do not think that no one is watching us, the owners of the neighbourhood have already seen us'. By owners, Miguel was not

[1] Miguel is a pseudonym. In this dissertation, a gatekeeper is understood as a trusted local intermediary who facilitates access to neighbourhoods, introduces the researcher to relevant actors, and helps navigate settings in which an outsider would otherwise face restricted access. Miguel's role was practical rather than analytical: he enabled entry, introductions, and safer movement in the field, but he did not participate in interviews or speak on behalf of respondents.

referring to local officials or the police, but to various non-state forms of local authority involved in everyday neighbourhood governance, including policing, as well as residents who keep an eye on the streets. These non-state authorities are often invisible to outsiders, as they do not wear identifiable symbols of authority or power, such as uniforms or weapons.

These local forms of authority, situated 25-35 minutes drive from the Presidential Palace, are particularly noteworthy given Angola's political context, a centralised authoritarian regime that exhibits little tolerance for entities operating beyond state control in both public and private spheres. This raises questions about how governance and security are structured and maintained in these peri-urban areas. Who are these non-state actors? What roles do they fulfil? What connections, if any, do they have to state institutions and political parties? These and many other questions, arising from experiences in Cazenga, Viana, and Cacuaco, served as the impetus for this research, which was motivated by a genuine sense of curiosity.

While talking with my Angolan-Dutch friend, who works in the maritime sector, I was prompted to reconsider my assumptions. I realised that my initial views stemmed from a bias towards state-centric governance models. As Loader (2000, p. 324) describes, "it rests on the idea derived most from the sociology of Max Weber that a defining feature of the modern sovereign state is its monopoly of the legitimate use of force within given spatial boundaries, a monopoly that is principally vested, concerning internal threats to security, in the uniformed body we have come to know as the police." Yet, as Meagher (2012, p. 2) argues, understanding political order in Africa requires "moving beyond the pathological approach to analyse political order in Africa, in which organisational systems are not judged by what they are, but by what they are not, and to engage with alternative systems of order that have often been more successful than formal governance arrangements in contemporary Africa."

Drawing inspiration from the works of Meagher (*ibid.*) and Baker (2008; 2011), this study examines how the so-called 'alternative systems' of order in Angola operate. The term 'alternative systems' highlights the patronising perspective often applied to African governance.

Angola: a 'anique' case

The question of how order and law enforcement are upheld in the absence of a strong state, particularly in post-colonial Africa, has garnered considerable scholarly attention. Over the past two decades, extensive research has focused on the roles played by both state and non-state

actors in shaping the policing landscape of post-colonial African countries. This topic has been examined in depth by various scholars, including Baker (2008), Kyed (2009), Wiuff (2011), Göpfert (2012), Alemika (2015), Bagayoko (2016), Beek (2017), Schuberth (2018), Aning & Axelrod (2023), and Bjarnesen (2023). These researchers have contributed to our understanding of the intricate dynamics of security governance and policing in these regions by introducing concepts such as multi-choice policing (Baker, 2008), multi-layered approach (Baker, 2011), and twilight policing (Diphoorn, 2016), among others.

Despite the wealth of literature, Angola remains largely unexplored. This is surprising given the country's distinct post-war development. In a brief span, Angola shifted from a fragile state to one of sub-Saharan Africa's fastest-growing economies, achieving a GDP of $121 billion in 2013 (De Oliveira, 2015, p. 2). Angola became China's main trading partner in the region and the USA's second. Luanda, a lively city populated by many expatriates, was often recognised as the world's most expensive city (De Oliveira, 2015, p. 2). It also possesses one of the largest and most capable armies in the region (De Oliveira, 2011, p. 292) and is noted for being one of Africa's most centralised systems, with most officials appointed by the central government in Luanda (Bye, Inglês, Orre, Pearce, & de Oliveira, 2025, p. 204). As Akesson remarked (2016, p. 267), "Angola was frequently highlighted as one of Africa's success stories, with average oil-driven growth of about 4.8% annually from 2010 to 2014."

This economic boom prompted an unprecedented shift in post-colonial migration trends. After gaining independence, Angolans traditionally moved to Portugal in search of financial and personal security. However, during Angola's oil-driven economic expansion, this trend reversed. For the first time in African post-colonial history, a significant number of citizens from a former European colonial power began migrating back to their former colony in Africa. Between 2010 and 2014, Portugal experienced negative economic growth, averaging - 1.2% annually (World Bank, 2015). During the same period, between 100,000 and 150,000 Portuguese migrated to Angola in search of better economic prospects (Åkesson, 2016, p. 267).

Politically, Angola operates as an authoritarian, illiberal democracy, with political and economic power tightly controlled by the elites of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) (Roque, 2023). Led by a strong president, the MPLA garners support from an urban, culturally uniform elite (Roque, 2021). It has maintained a firm grip on the country's political,

economic, and social structures for nearly five decades, permitting little room for dissent or opposition. For those unfamiliar with Angola's post-colonial political landscape, the MPLA is more than just a political party; it functions like a motherboard in a computer, coordinating the entire system and ensuring that every component operates within its defined parameters.

Filling the gaps

In academic discussions, hybrid policing in Angola has received limited scrutiny, particularly concerning the interplay between state and non-state authorities at the neighbourhood level. Although there is substantial literature on Angola's politics and governance, including at the local level, recent research, such as works by Feijo (2012), Meneses et al. (2012), Croese (2017), and Teixeira & Santin (2020),), highlights the existence of various local forms of authority within Angolan society. However, these studies tend to focus on individual non-state actors rather than on the functioning of hybrid governance arrangements, thereby offering a limited, though valuable, perspective on local governance in Angola.

A notable gap in Angola-specific research, mirroring a broader trend in the literature on plural and hybrid policing, is the limited engagement with the politics of plural policing. Scarpello (2016, p. 2) emphasises that "scholarly analysis often fails to explain why certain actors assume roles in specific contexts but not in others, or how plural and hybrid policing networks shape and are shaped by the broader political economy".

This study addresses these gaps using Social Network Analysis (SNA) to examine the relationships between state and non-state forms of local authority. It uncovers the functions and dynamics of hybrid policing networks in two peri-urban regions of Luanda. By situating the findings within Angola's political and governance context, this research demonstrates that these hybrid policing networks are not merely a random collection of actors, but a structured system shaped by historical and political factors that define their structure and dynamics.

Research objectives and questions

This study seeks to deepen our understanding of hybrid policing networks in a post-colonial African context. It examines the interplay between state and non-state forms of local authority, with a particular attention to the interactions, structures, and power dynamics that shape these networks. By investigating how different actors engage within hybrid policing arrangements, the

research contributes to wider debates on hybrid security governance in transitional and post-colonial settings. The study is framed around the following central and sub-questions:

Central question:

How do hybrid policing networks function in the peri-urban areas of Luanda, Angola, and how do historical and socio-political factors shape their structure and dynamics?

Sub-questions:

1. How are the legacies of precolonial, colonial and post-colonial governance structures reflected in contemporary governance arrangements in Angola?
2. What is the composition and functioning of hybrid policing networks in peri-urban areas of Luanda?
3. What historical and socio-political factors shape the structure and interactions between actors in hybrid policing networks in Luanda's peri-urban areas?

Book structure

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Chapter one outlines the core conceptual foundations of the study. It introduces and discusses the main theoretical perspectives guiding the research, including plural policing, nodal governance, hybrid security, and social network theory. This chapter situates these concepts within the broader academic literature and explains how they contribute to understanding security governance dynamics in the Angolan context. Additionally, it lays the conceptual groundwork for the study's empirical analysis.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Methods

Chapter two outlines the study's methodological framework. It begins by describing the study environment, focusing on Luanda, and explains why Cariango and 11 de Novembro neighbourhoods were chosen as case studies. The chapter then provides an overview of the research approach, followed by a detailed discussion of the data collection methods and analysis techniques employed. It concludes with reflections on the researcher's positionality and considerations of the limitations inherent in researching sensitive issues in an authoritarian country.

Chapter 3: Precolonial, Colonial, and Post-Colonial eras in Angola

Chapter three provides a comprehensive overview of Angola's history. It explores the country's ethnic and historical origins, shedding light on its various ethno-linguistic groups and pre-colonial kingdoms. The chapter also covers the colonial period and the post-independence era, tracing Angola's transition from colonial rule to its current socio-political landscape.

Chapter 4: Post-Civil War Angola: The Triumph of the MPLA

Chapter four centres on Angola's ruling party, the MPLA. Understanding the MPLA's dominance is crucial for comprehending the political environment influencing local governance. The chapter outlines the party's historical development, internal relationships, organisational structure, and governance methods. It also examines the strategies the MPLA uses to strengthen and sustain its control and dominance.

Chapter 5: Local Policing Networks in Practice: The Case of the Neighbourhood of 11 de Novembro

Chapter five examines the policing network in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood in Cazenga. The chapter begins with an overview of the municipality of Cazenga, describing its socio-economic and demographic profile to provide context. It then focuses on the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, where empirical evidence from interviews, surveys, observations, informal conversations, and social network analysis is used to identify the most significant non-state actors involved in security provision and to analyse their relationships with the police.

Chapter 6: Local Policing Networks in Practice: The Case of the Neighbourhood Cariango

Chapter six investigates the policing network of Cariango neighbourhood in Cazenga. Since the broader contextual background of the Cazenga municipality was already covered in the previous chapter, it is not repeated here. Similar in structure to the case study of 11 de Novembro, this chapter looks at the main features of Cariango, residents' views on safety and security, the composition of the local policing network, and the interactions between police and non-state forms of local authority.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: MPLA-Anchored Hybrid Policing in Angola

Chapter seven synthesises the research findings. It begins by addressing each sub-question, which collectively form the puzzle pieces necessary to answer the main question. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis of security governance in Angola, with a particular focus on the interactions between state and non-state forms of local authority in the peri-urban areas of Luanda. Plural policing introduces the concept of non-monopolistic security governance, emphasising the involvement of multiple actors, including state and non-state entities, in policing. Nodal governance and anchored pluralism build on this by focusing on the state's role within these plural arrangements, whether as one node among many or as an anchoring force. Hybrid security governance extends the discussion to contexts of limited or weak statehood, where formal and informal actors coexist and co-govern security. Ultimately, Social Network Theory provides a distinctive analytical framework for examining the relationships and interactions among various actors within social networks.

Together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive lens for understanding and analysing the functioning of hybrid security governance in the peri-urban areas of Luanda, in Angola.

1.1 Plural policing

To understand the complexities of security governance in Angola, we must shift away from the conventional, state-focused view of policing. This involves unpacking the concept of 'plural policing,' acknowledging that various state and non-state actors increasingly assume policing roles.

In everyday language, "policing" and "police" are often used interchangeably, leading to confusion. This overlap occurs mainly because policing has usually been regarded, until recently, as equivalent to the actions performed by contemporary professional police forces. This state-oriented view of policing poses challenges, as it hinders our ability to develop an understanding of the world that reflects ongoing realities, thereby constraining normative thought. "It also limits our ability to comprehend and address the divisions created in the world by limiting our awareness of the sources of these divisions and the options and opportunities available to challenge and, hopefully, reverse them" (C. Shearing, 2006, p. 3).

There is a distinction between 'policing' as a procedure and 'the police' as an organisation. Alemika (2019, p. 97) notes that "police" encompasses two distinct definitions. Firstly, it refers to government-established agencies that enforce laws, prevent crime and disorder, and

apprehend, prosecute, and punish or reform offenders. Secondly, it pertains to officials employed by these agencies who have the authority to enforce laws, maintain public order, and sanction those who transgress. Moreover, Newburn (2008, p. 18) identifies three main characteristics that define the police: legitimacy, structure, and function. These three elements are briefly outlined below.

Structure indicates that police are an organised body with varying levels of specialisation and a set code of conduct that outlines when force may be used legitimately. This organisation and the types of permissible force may differ.

Function refers to the police's primary role in maintaining law and order and preventing and detecting offences. There will also be significant variations here regarding the differing definitions of crime, the balance between enforcement and order maintenance, or prevention and detection, as well as how much other duties (such as welfare, political, and restorative functions) are assigned to the police. Importantly, each police force is unique, shaped by its historical path influenced by particular political circumstances (Beek, Göpfert, Owen, & Steinberg, 2017, p. 20).

Legitimacy, the third characteristic, is more nuanced and closely connected to structure and function. While structure provides the organisational framework and function defines the tasks performed, legitimacy concerns the public's acceptance and recognition of this authority. The police's authority depends not only on formal powers but also on public trust in their legitimate exercise. The literature features extensive debates on the topic of legitimacy. This thesis does not aim to explore these broader debates in full, as that would exceed its scope. Nonetheless, it is important to outline the general definitions that form the basis of this study. Max Weber established legitimacy "as one of the central concepts in understanding the survival of political regimes" (Arnesen, Broderstad, Johannesson, & Linde, 2019, p. 179). He defines legitimacy as a conviction on the part of persons subject to authority that it is right and proper and that they have some obligation to obey, regardless of the basis on which this belief rests (ibid). Building on this, Levi, Sacks, and Tyler (2009, p. 354) differentiate between value-based legitimacy, an individual's sense of obligation or willingness to obey, and behavioural legitimacy, which is demonstrated through actual compliance with laws and regulations.

Tyler (2006, p. 375) presents a psychological perspective, defining legitimacy as a quality of an authority or institution that prompts people to perceive it as proper and fair, leading to voluntary compliance driven by a sense of duty rather than fear, self-interest, or anticipated reward. Rodney Barker (as cited in Holsti, 1996, p. 87) describes legitimacy as the belief in the rightfulness of a state, where commands are obeyed not only out of fear or interest but because they are seen to carry moral authority.

Two additional key distinctions are important: the first is between normative and empirical perspectives, and the second is between vertical and horizontal legitimacy. Normative legitimacy concerns assessments made by external analysts at the system level, focusing on formal characteristics of political systems and policy outputs. This includes criteria such as accountability, efficiency, and procedural fairness, with legislation judged against abstract normative standards of democratic legitimacy. By contrast, the empirical perspective examines legitimacy at the individual level, highlighting how citizens themselves evaluate political authority. This approach is therefore more subjective, as it captures public perceptions, experiences, and expectations (Arnesen et al., 2019, p. 179).

Vertical legitimacy concerns the relationship between the state and its citizens, focusing on how much political institutions are recognised as the rightful authorities to govern and how much loyalty they garner. As Holsti (1996, p. 87) explains, vertical legitimacy involves acceptance of authority and loyalty to the state's ideas and institutions. Horizontal legitimacy, on the other hand, pertains to the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups within the state toward one another and toward the state itself. When different groups and communities accept and tolerate each other, horizontal legitimacy is strong. In many countries, the question of who should rule is often assumed or not debated at all. However, if communities seek to exclude, marginalise, oppress, or exploit others within the same state, horizontal legitimacy is low (Holsti, 1996, p. 87).

The term policing, at its simplest, refers to the maintenance of organised order, peacekeeping, rule of law enforcement, crime investigation and prevention, and other forms of investigation and associated information brokering, which may involve the conscious exercise of coercive power (Scarpello, 2016, p. 1). Newburn (2008, p. 149) delineates four key elements of policing: "1) it entails intentional action or a purposeful condition; 2) it involves the conscious exercise of

power or authority by an individual or organisation 3) it is directed towards rule or norm enforcement, the promotion of order or assurances of safety 4) it seeks to govern in the present and/or the future". In short, 'police' refers to a particular kind of social institution, while 'policing' implies a set of processes with specific social functions (Reiner, 2010, p. 4). "Police are not found in every society, and police organisations and personnel can have various shifting forms. Policing, however, is arguably necessary in any social order, which can be carried out through various processes and institutional arrangements. A state-organised specialist 'police' organisation of the modern kind is only one example of policing" (Reiner, 2010, p. 4). With the distinctions between policing and police established, we can further explore the idea of plural policing.

Today, both scholars and practitioners widely acknowledge that, beyond public state agents like the police, a variety of non-state actors engage in policing activities. The traditional view of the police as the exclusive guardians of public order has evolved into a complex, fragmented landscape of policing (Newburn, 2008, p. 147). Newburn (2012, p. 151) contends that "the idea that sovereign states alone could guarantee crime control to their subjects in a monopolistic fashion often was a myth, rather than a reality, albeit a powerful one". In academic debates, this critique of the idea of a state monopoly on crime control is associated with the concept of plural policing.

Plural policing refers to the delivery of policing services by various actors and a range of institutional arrangements rather than being the monopoly of a single provider, typically known as the police (Watson, Howes, Dinnen, Bull, & Amin, 2023, p. 84). As Scholte (2005, p. 3) noted, "nothing in history is ever completely novel," which is also true for plural policing. Since the emergence of political consciousness recognising the distinction between public and private realms, policing has always had both public and private dimensions (C. D. Shearing, 1992, p. 402). This is so because the entities with the will and capacity to offer credible *safety* and *security* guarantees have been located within both realms. This study defines safety as the state of being away from hazards caused by natural forces or random human errors. Natural forces and human errors form the source of the hazard and have no malicious intent. In contrast, security is defined as the state of being away from hazards caused by humans' deliberate intention to cause harm. Humans here deliberately pose the source of the hazard. Nevertheless, safety and security encompass more than just the absence of physical damage. Both safety and security can be

approached both objectively (there is a real threat) and subjectively (there is a perceived threat) (Buzan, Wæver, & De Wilde, 1998, p. 30).

Although plural policing is therefore not a new empirical phenomenon, it has attracted renewed academic attention because scholarship has increasingly shifted from viewing the police as a single entity to understanding policing as a broader social process involving multiple actors, agents, and institutional arrangements. (Watson et al., 2023, p. 84). The plural policing perspective unsettles long-standing assumptions about the centrality of governments (and states) in authorising and exercising power (ibid). As Loader has put it, "what we might call a shift from police to policing has seen the sovereign state, hitherto considered focal to both provision and accountability in this field, reconfigured as but one node of a broader, more diverse network of power" (Loader, 2000, pp. 323-324). Plural policing exists in every society, but the range and diversity of policing vary in terms of structure, means, scope, and actors (E. Alemika, 2019).

1.2 From global trends to local realities: understanding the drivers of policing in Africa

Once plural policing has been defined, it is important to examine the factors that contribute to the diverse and fragmented nature of policing landscapes. This section examines the global and local factors that have influenced the development of plural policing across various contexts, with a particular focus on its manifestation in Africa. Recognising these factors is essential, as they highlight how transformations in governance, state capacity, economic policies, and global interconnections have impacted the delivery of security. This approach enables us to view policing frameworks not as fixed entities but as evolving results of structural and historical processes.

Plural policing is not recent; however, over the last two to three decades, several factors have contributed to a more intricate and diverse policing landscape across various regions worldwide. These factors are diverse, interconnected, and context-dependent, influenced by social, economic, political, and technological aspects (E. Alemika, 2019, p. 105).

One of the key global influences on plural policing is globalisation, which is marked by the growing interconnection and movement of goods, capital, people, information, and cultures across borders (Scholte, 2005, p. 5). This trend has fundamentally transformed state power and authority (Scholte, 2005, p. 3). Scholte (2005, p. 16) notes that contemporary globalisation has rendered old structures of sovereign statehood much more contested. In particular,

supraterritorial spaces, social connections, and areas that are delinked from traditional territorial spaces, which are defined by fixed points on the Earth's surface plotted along longitude, latitude, and altitude axes. Examples of supratenterritorial spaces include global economic spaces, global financial markets, multinational corporations, and organisations. Such spaces cannot be effectively governed under the traditional Westphalian principle of supreme, absolute, unilateral, and comprehensive state control over a bounded territory and its inhabitants. Even the best-resourced states cannot fully regulate phenomena such as electronic finance, the Internet, transborder companies and climate change. Addressing irregularities, such as money laundering and fraud, in supratentorial spaces necessitates collaboration between public and private entities, especially since public actors often lack the expertise to navigate these complex environments (E. Alemika, 2019, p. 105).

Similarly to plural policing, globalisation is not a new phenomenon. However, it would be mistaken to argue, as some observers have done, that there is nothing new in contemporary globalisation. Quantitatively, most manifestations of global connectivity have reached unprecedented levels during the past half-century. Earlier periods did not include jet travel, intercontinental missiles, transnational migrants with transborder remittances, satellite communications, facsimiles, the Internet, transnational production chains, intercontinental retailers, global credit cards, or anthropogenic ecological problems that encompass the planet as a whole (Scholte, 2005, pp. 3-4). Furthermore, it is essential to recognise that globalisation has not impacted the various social features and institutions of society equally or simultaneously throughout history (Wikan, 2015, pp. 2-3). For instance, in terms of geographical location, global networks have typically engaged more with populations in North America, Western Europe, and East Asia than those in other regions. Additionally, cities and metropolitan areas have generally experienced more globalisation than rural areas. Anyone who has visited multiple continents understands it is misleading to assert that globality is solely a Northern, urban, elite, Western, or white preserve; however, prevailing cultural patterns, resource distribution, and power dynamics have cultivated a distinctly uneven spread of transnational connections (Scholte, 2005, p. 6)

A political factor closely linked to globalisation that is often associated with the expansion of plural policing worldwide is the rise of economic policies rooted in neoliberal philosophy (Scarpello, 2016, p. 1). As both an economic theory and an ideological perspective, neoliberalism emphasises maximising individual economic freedom while minimising state

intervention (Wikan, 2015, p. 1). In this view, the state is expected to assume a more limited and primarily regulatory role, reducing its direct involvement in economic and social affairs (Wikan, 2015, p. 6). Privatisation, liberalisation, and deregulation are commonly identified as key pillars of this policy orientation (Boels & Verhage, 2016, p. 1). In a number of contexts, these developments were accompanied by the introduction of market-like approaches to public services, including the outsourcing of certain traditional state tasks, among them aspects of policing and security provision, to private companies (Scarpello, 2016, p. 3). As a result, new opportunities emerged for private firms to enter the policing sector and offer safety and security services to the public. A common account of the rise of neoliberal policies links them to the economic crises of the 1960s and 1970s, which contributed to growing criticism of more interventionist approaches such as Keynesianism or embedded liberalism. This shift is often associated with the Thatcher and Reagan administrations in the United Kingdom and the United States and with the international promotion of market-oriented reforms through structural adjustment programmes and policy frameworks such as the Washington Consensus (Wikan, 2015, p. 3). However, the relationship between neoliberalism and plural policing should not be understood as automatic or uniform, since the development of plural policing is also shaped by broader historical, political, and local conditions.

In the realm of technology, both state and non-state actors are increasingly leveraging advanced tools to monitor individuals, surveil communities, and predict behaviours. Worldwide, police forces utilise systems such as CCTV, emergency incident control systems, and gunshot detection technology for law enforcement. Likewise, private companies use CCTV to identify thieves or unauthorised individuals on their premises. Furthermore, individuals are also turning to technology for their own personal security and policing efforts. In my neighbourhood, for instance, nearly every household has a smart doorbell, a device with a camera that enables homeowners to view and communicate with visitors without opening the door. Thanks to internet connectivity, this device allows homeowners to manage interactions even when they are away. According to Berg and Lamb (2022), technology in this context functions as an additional player within plural policing frameworks, facilitating collaboration among various policing entities. In numerous countries, commercial security firms and individual businesses install surveillance systems operated by their employees, which are connected to police operations centres, thereby

distributing the responsibility for security (E. Alemika, 2019, p. 105). In my neighbourhood, footage captured by smart doorbells can be shared with the police upon request.

While global trends are influential, they do not unfold in a vacuum. In Africa, particularly in Angola, plural policing must be understood within its historical and socio-political context. The legacies of colonialism, rapid urbanisation, and uneven state reach give plural policing a distinct character in these settings. As Watson et al. (2023) incisively observe, colonial powers imposed their laws and police systems upon regions that already had established local social order and regulation forms.

Initially, due to necessity, colonising powers frequently relied on indigenous leaders and institutions for indirect rule, as they lacked sufficient resources to maintain order throughout the colonies, especially in rural and peri-urban regions. As colonial rule expanded, state legal systems began selectively integrating customary or religious laws, albeit subject to repugnancy clauses. They acknowledged and established customary and village tribunals to address local issues, including family law, customary and religious norms, and minor disputes (Tamanaha, 2011, p. 6). It resulted in a bifurcated legal system: one for the colonised and one for the colonisers. The prevailing attitude was that 'natives' needed different treatment under the law (Agbiboa, 2019, pp. 9-10). Consequently, colonisation fostered legal pluralism, merging various legal systems: transplanted state legal frameworks focused on governance and commerce alongside adapted indigenous laws and institutions, creating a complex interplay and hybrid combinations of both. The repercussions of these historical structures persist today, long after colonisation has ended (Tamanaha, 2011, p. 6).

State incapacity to deliver adequate services, including security, is often cited as contributing to plural policing in African countries. This incapacity is predominantly notable in peri-urban and rural areas. According to Agbidoa (2019, p. 10), this is a legacy from the colonial era, during which policing primarily focused on urban areas, with the principal aim of protection of property and the propertied classes. Even in some metropolitan regions, especially those with a high concentration of Africans, colonial policing was sometimes selective and often only superficial. By contrast, rural areas and townships were notoriously under-policed and crime-prone. As Baker notes (2008 p. 32), "the inability of the police to single-handedly produce security within the nation has created a vacuum in security". This vacuum is commonly filled by non-state

policing. Africans, wary or dismissive of the state police, look elsewhere for security". However, the incapacity to provide services is not solely attributable to the colonial legacy; poor governance, corruption, and nepotism in post-colonial Africa also significantly contribute to this trend.

Another contributing factor to the state's struggle to provide adequate services, including security, thereby fueling plural policing, is the rapid population growth and urbanisation in the Global South. Urban population growth in the Global South today is unprecedented in history. "Between 1875 and 1900, the period of swiftest urbanisation in the Global North, its urban population grew by about 100%; in the equivalent period in the South, between 1950 and 1975, its urban population grew by 188%" (Randolph & Storper, 2023, p. 6). A comparative analysis of major cities during their respective periods of rapid growth reveals stark differences in absolute growth rates. For instance, Chicago and Mexico City saw comparable growth rates during their rapid expansion periods of 1875–1900 and 1950–1975, respectively; however, Chicago added 1.3 million residents, while Mexico City experienced an increase of 8.1 million (Randolph & Storper, 2023, p. 7).

Today, Africa has the fastest-growing urban population in the world. Angola is among the most urbanised countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and its urban population continues to grow. "Approximately 67 per cent of Angolans, over 21 million people, live in urban areas" (Bye et al., 2025, p. 127). More than half of the projected 2.0 billion additional people between 2020 and 2050 are expected to come from sub-Saharan African countries, regardless of the various scenarios. This proportion is projected to be approximately 90% by 2050–2100. Approximately 23–38 million more people from sub-Saharan countries are projected to be added to the world's total population each year. As a result, the current total population of sub-Saharan African countries, which was 1.1 billion in 2020 (or similar to Europe and Northern America combined), is projected to climb to 3.8 billion by 2100 with a 95% projection interval between 3.0 and 4.8 billion (Gu, Andreev, & Dupre, 2021, p. 605). Population growth in Africa is primarily concentrated in urban areas. In 1950, just 14% of Africans resided in cities, while Latin America and Europe had urbanisation rates of 41% and 52%, respectively. By 2020, the percentage of Africa's urban population had reached 43%, although North America, Latin America, and Europe had figures that were nearly double that. As of 2020, Africa's overall population had surpassed 1.3 billion, with approximately 588 million residing in urban areas. Projections

suggest that Africa's urban population will triple over the next thirty years, potentially hitting 1.5 billion by 2050, meaning nearly 60% of Africans will live in urban centres (zu Selhausen, 2017, p. 6).

Population growth, particularly in urban areas, does not inherently pose problems. It can offer advantages that support a nation's progress. However, this is not the case for Africa. On the contrary, the substantial demographic pressure in cities has raised legitimate concerns for both African governments and the international aid community. This is primarily because rapid urbanisation in Africa has not been accompanied by sufficient economic growth and structural transformations. Consequently, urban areas have expanded alongside townships and informal economic activities (zu Selhausen, 2017, p. 14). The poor management of urban population growth and changing demographic structures in many African countries has diminished the ability of local governments to provide essential services, including employment, housing, electricity, water, sanitation, and law enforcement. As a result, numerous urban residents have turned to the private sector to obtain these vital services, including policing.

1.3 The role of the state in plural policing: nodal governance and anchored pluralism

The shift towards plural policing has raised important questions about the role of the state in increasingly complex and fragmented security landscapes. Among the various concepts explaining these developments, nodal governance and anchored pluralism stand out as particularly influential. Both, rooted in Anglo-Saxon academic traditions, have shaped discussions on how security is structured in decentralised and networked arrangements. While nodal governance highlights the plurality of actors involved in security provision, anchored pluralism emerged as both a critique and an alternative approach. Together, they offer complementary insights into the core dynamics of policing governance within pluralised contexts.

Before exploring these approaches, it is important to recognise that nodal governance, anchored pluralism, and hybrid security governance (in section 1.4) are all used in the literature in two ways: descriptively, as analytical tools to examine how authority is exercised among state and non-state actors, and normatively, to prescribe how governance ought to be organised to secure accountability, effectiveness, or democratic legitimacy. This dual use has played a key role in shaping the ongoing debate about plural policing. In this thesis, these frameworks are mainly

used as analytical tools to gain a better understanding on the workings of security governance processes in the peri-urban areas of Luanda, while also recognising the normative elements from broader literature.

The nodal governance model emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s, garnering substantial attention from academics and professionals, particularly following the publication of the influential article "*Nodal Governance, Democracy, and the New Denizen*" by Shearing and Wood in 2003. Since then, it has been widely applied in policing studies. Notable examples of this approach's application can be found in the works of Burris et al. (2005), Terpstra (2009), Boutellier and Van Steden (2011), Shearing and Johnston (2013), Holley and Shearing (2016), among others.

The nodal governance approach offers an alternative to the dominant state-centred paradigm of security governance, which emphasises the strategies and practices of the state or the three Cs (cops, courts, and corrections), as noted by Shearing and Wood (2003, p. 402). The traditional state-centred perspective is grounded in a defining characteristic of the modern sovereign state: its monopoly on the legitimate use of force within its territorial boundaries. Despite state security governance, the collective practices of state agencies aimed at providing or claiming stability and security, having more prominent and capable agencies than ever before, there are now significantly more non-state policing actors than police officers (ibid). Policing has increasingly become an activity involving agencies and agents outside the state (ibid). Governments progressively acknowledge their role as one agency within a wider governmental network, where service planning, provision, and control are dispersed across numerous state and non-state actors (Hermer, Kempa, Shearing, Stenning, & Wood, 2002, p. 38).

"The nodal security governance approach is grounded in the non-monopolistic production of security by a network of interrelated entities known as nodes, which interact within formal or informal organisations" (Quéro & Dupont, 2019, p. 283). Within this framework, safety and security are perceived as not only produced, or even predominantly so, through the traditional top-down governmental system but through a far more horizontal governance mechanism that regulates nodes within a network (ibid). In a nodal conception of governance, no specific set of nodes is afforded conceptual priority. Rather, the nature of governance and the contributions of the various nodes to it are viewed as empirically open questions that vary across time and space

(C. Shearing & Wood, 2003, p. 403). Nor can it be assumed that the state is the essential repository of the collective good under nodal arrangements. This approach (nodal governance) draws on Latour's Actor-Network Theory, which conceives power not as a resource to be possessed, but as something that emerges relationally through the enrolment of others into joint courses of action (Latour, 1984). This dispersed understanding of power underpins nodal governance's emphasis on decentralisation and resonates with broader shifts towards polycentric governance arrangements (McGinnis, 1999, cited in Bekkers et al., 2006).

Shearing's nodal governance framework has received praise, but it has also been heavily criticised by scholars, notably Loader and Walker in their article with the ambiguous title *State of Denial?* Some of the criticism is descriptive, concentrating on how governance functions in practice. Loader and Walker (Loader & Walker, 2004, p. 224) contend that portraying the state as "one node among many" underestimates its continuous authority over coercion and its capacity to authorise or oversee other actors. Even where non-state provision is significant, they observe that the state generally retains the ability to define and regulate the terms of security provision (ibid).

A further line of critique is more analytical, questioning the conceptual clarity of nodal governance itself. Johnston and Shearing sometimes employ the concept descriptively to capture the plural and networked nature of contemporary security arrangements, and at other times, normatively, to advocate for a particular way of organising governance. Loader and Walker (2004, pp. 223-224) point out that this dual use generates ambiguity and complicates the framework's application as an analytical tool.

Other criticisms are explicitly normative, raising concerns about the conditions needed to sustain security as a collective good. Loader and Walker (2004, p. 224) contend that without politically established institutions capable of exercising some form of meta-authority, it is unclear how security can be maintained as a shared good. Likewise, Boutellier and Van Steden (2011, p. 6) warn that while networked governance may enhance deliberation, flexibility, and effectiveness, it also poses risks to accountability, transparency, and the protection of rights. Loader and Walker (2004, p. 227) also caution that, in the absence of public institutions to ensure coordination and solidarity, nodal governance might strengthen particularistic communities rather than promote broader, inclusive collective security.

In response to these debates, Loader and Walker (2007), in their provocatively titled book *Civilizing Security* introduced the concept of anchored pluralism. This explicitly normative framework recognises the empirical reality of pluralised security provision but argues that the state should remain the cornerstone of collective security. Anchored pluralism calls for maximising pluralism internally through democratic safeguards such as inclusiveness, representativeness, and minority protection, and externally by acknowledging the role of non-state actors alongside the state (Loader & Walker, 2007, p. 194). While granting the state a prominent position in the security landscape, Loader and Walker do not ignore its shortcomings. As they state: "the state can be and often has been a physical and psychological bully. It is prone to meddling, to interfering where it is not wanted. It does take sides and, in so doing, packs the hardest punch. It undoubtedly seeks to set the cultural climate and, in some measure, is successful, as it makes life difficult or impossible for those who do not conform to the norms it encourages and defends. Finally, it tends towards stupidity. It lacks the means to answer all the key questions about individual and collective security, and it often seems unable or unwilling to recognise this deficiency" (Loader & Walker, 2007, p. 143). However, they argue that sidelining the state entirely is both analytically misleading and normatively problematic, as it risks undermining equitable and effective security provision.

1.4 Hybrid security governance

While nodal governance and anchored pluralism offer good insights into plural policing in environments where state institutions are strong, they are less applicable in contexts with fragmented authority and a weak state presence. The peri-urban areas of Luanda exemplify such an environment, where state institutions coexist, overlap, and sometimes compete with non-state actors. To better understand the dynamics of plural policing in such environments, this thesis employs the concept of hybrid security governance.

Nodal governance and anchored pluralism are often associated with debates within Anglo-Saxon academic circles. However, nodal governance also arises from practical experiences in the Global South. For instance, Clifford Shearing applied this framework in South Africa, particularly with the Zwelethemba peace committees. Despite this, its most common application remains within Western academic discussions on plural policing and governance. Both concepts describe the reality of stable states where central authorities have the power to make and enforce

decisions. As Krasner (as cited in Risse & Stollenwerk, 2018, p. 405). notes, consolidated states "possess the ability to authoritatively make, implement, and enforce central decisions for a collectivity. In other words, consolidated states command domestic sovereignty, that is, the formal organisation of political authority within the state and the ability of public authorities to exercise effective control within the borders of their own polity"

The form of statehood described above is seldom observed outside OECD countries. In many parts of the world, limited statehood is common, where authorities are weak, disputed, or absent. As Risse & Stollenwerk explain, in areas of limited statehood, a country's central authority (government) lacks the capacity to implement and enforce rules and decisions and/or lacks a legitimate monopoly over the means of violence. Limited statehood can relate to (a) specific regions within a country and (b) particular policy areas (Risse & Stollenwerk, 2018). In other words, areas of limited statehood do not necessarily encompass a country's entire territory or all policy sectors (ibid). Most such areas are located in the Global South, where historical legacies from the pre-colonial period, colonialism, fragmented political authority, and informal security arrangements render governance frameworks based on experiences from the Global North less applicable to describe the realities of governance and security in these regions. Such contexts require frameworks that extend beyond Western notions of consolidated sovereignty.

Scholars have responded by proposing alternative perspectives that highlight the coexistence of different forms of authority within plural policing landscapes. Over the past twenty years, they have introduced various concepts and theories reflecting the ground realities of policing in the Global South. This includes contributions from scholars such as Baker (2008), Kyed (2009), Wiuff (2011), Göpfert (2012), Alemika (2015), Bagayoko (2016), Beek (2017), Schuberth (2018), Aning & Axelrod (2023), and Bjarnesen (2023). The hybrid security governance approach has become a key framework for understanding these complex realities, emphasising "the existence of multiple sites of political authority and governance where security is enacted and negotiated, including the multiple ways traditional, personal, kin-based or clientelistic logics interact with modern, imported, or rational actor logics in the shifting historical conditions of particular national and local contexts" (Bagayoko et al., 2016, p. 6). Aning and Axelrod note that non-state forms of governance, operating outside and beneath the state, may serve as sites of

fundamental ethical values and assets to counter violence amid collective insecurity (Aning & Axelrod, 2023, p. 143).

The hybrid character of African policing has deep historical roots. Alemika (2015) notes that policing in Africa has always been the responsibility of various actors, institutions and occupations, such as age-based groups, the elders, priests, cultural and religious groups and many others. Colonial and post-colonial authorities did not replace these mechanisms but often co-opted or layered them under state control. In rural areas, many persisted in relatively autonomous form. Aning and Axelrod (2023, p. 142) note that "for many post-colonial states, social order is the result of polycentric governance embedded within multiple sources and sites of political legitimacy, authority and agency". The state, therefore, is only one actor among many, conveying only one of a plethora of political orders. Bøås and Strazzari (2020) note that African states exhibit a hybrid character, as they may control capital cities, yet in non-urban areas, the state tends to be one of several actors that collaborate and compete for the role of effective, legitimate, and sovereign authority that communities abide by (ibid.). Similar to nodal governance, the functioning of hybrid institutions and the precise nature of the relationship between state and non-state forms of local authority should be investigated empirically rather than assumed in advance. (Bagayoko et al., 2016, p. 7).

Hybrid security governance is founded on the concept of hybrid political orders, as coined by Boege et al. (2009). This concept was developed in response to the widespread disillusionment with the 'failed state' perspectives on African governance (Meagher, De Herdt, & Titeca, 2014, p. 1). According to Boege et al. (2009, p. 13), the concept of state fragility, which has gained prominence within the development and security agendas, primarily focuses on the deficiencies and shortcomings of governance in so-called fragile states (Boege et al., 2009, p. 13). They argue that labelling these states as 'fragile' is misleading and thus hinders the sustainable development of these nations. This is because the lens of fragility is unsuitable for understanding the social and political processes of so-called fragile states. In these contexts, state institutions are not the sole providers of functions conventionally associated with the state in Western models of governance. In these settings, authority is dispersed across various state and non-state actors, producing fragmented governance (Joshi, 2023, p. 2). Boege et al. note further that in these contexts the security domain in particular deviates from the ideal type of Western models as it is

structured in a non-centric way" (2009, p. 17). As a growing share of the world's population lives in such contexts (Joshi, 2023, p. 1), Boege et al. (2009, p. 14) emphasise the necessity of developing alternative, non-state-centric approaches to governance, the control of violence, peacebuilding, and development. Such approaches broaden perspectives and reframe the focus, leading to a deeper understanding of the social and political order processes in so-called fragile states (ibid).

Like nodal governance and anchored pluralism, hybrid security governance has seen both adoption and criticism. A common analytical criticism highlighted by scholars is the limited ability to differentiate between arrangements that supplement the state and those that undermine public authority (Bagayoko et al., 2016, pp. 7-8). Drawing from existing empirical research (Bagayoko et al., 2016, pp. 14-15), note that many traditional authorities and customary dispute-resolution systems are often run by local elites, which can perpetuate inequalities, including gender and minority discrimination. They also argue that when state elites delegate security responsibilities or build local alliances with non-state groups, citizen security and justice may not be prioritised. In countries like the DRC, Sudan, and South Sudan, central governments have sometimes mobilised local paramilitaries, tribal militias, and irregular forces to serve political goals (ibid).

Aning and Axelrod (Aning & Axelrod, 2023, p. 144) further highlight that hybrid arrangements often reflect existing power imbalances and structures of dominance, which, through non-state actors, could marginalise certain social and ethnic groups without being held accountable. They further point out that hybrid arrangements "could prove counterproductive if the arming of non-state actors, which is commonly difficult to supervise, aggravates local tensions and divisions, and gives rise to further insecurity and violence" (ibid). For example, they refer to the case of Ansarul Islam in Northern Burkina Faso. "Tied to jihadists elsewhere in the Sahel, the group has leveraged grievances and perceptions of insecurity among local communities in the Soum province. Yet, it has simultaneously challenged the prevailing social order and promoted armed attacks in the region" (Arman 2020 as cited in Aning & Axelrod, 2023, p. 144). Last, they point out that the focus of hybridity on the 'local' sphere runs the risk of uncritically romanticising traditional and customary bodies and thus neglecting those rivalries that escalate intercommunal

violence and perpetrate human rights violations (Hunt as cited in Aning & Axelrod, 2023, p. 144).

Overall, the literature suggests that whether hybrid arrangements are desirable depends on the context: in some cases, non-state actors support limited state services; in others, they undermine state authority and reduce the state's ability to control violence and administer justice (Bagayoko et al., 2016). This has led to the emergence of normative positions, including the urging of African leaders to define clear goals and mandates when involving non-state actors in security arrangements (Aning & Axelrod, 2023, p. 145).

1.5 Social network theory

This study employs Social Network Theory as a central component of its theoretical framework, emphasising the importance of structure and relational dynamics for understanding how networks function. While the preceding sections have focused on frameworks that depict security governance as a non-monopolistic and multi-actor system, Social Network Theory adds a specifically relational perspective that helps clarify the structure, functioning, and interconnections of actors within policing networks. This section outlines the theoretical foundations of Social Network Theory and explains its applicability to the analysis of interactions between the police and non-state forms of local authority within Angola's peri-urban policing networks.

Social Network Theory offers a useful analytical lens for examining relationships and interactions among actors within networks. In Angola's peri-urban areas, governance and security are characterised by shared authority between state and non-state actors who form networks to maintain local order. Understanding how these networks function, specifically who is connected to whom, how strong these connections are, and what flows through them, is important for analysing how power dynamics, conflict resolution, and the distribution of information and resources operate. This requires a relational perspective. Unlike approaches that focus primarily on individual actors or formal institutions, Social Network Theory emphasises the relational structures and interactions that shape social behaviour and outcomes (Gamper, 2022). As such, it provides a suitable framework for analysing the structure and dynamics of hybrid policing networks.

Rather than formulating formal hypotheses in a strict deductive sense, this dissertation uses Social Network Theory to guide the analysis of relational dynamics such as tie strength, brokerage, resource exchange, and network centrality. In the empirical chapters, these concepts guide the analysis of interactions between the police and non-state forms of local authority within local policing networks.

Based on the literature reviewed for this dissertation, little research has applied Social Network Theory to neighbourhood-level policing arrangements in Angola, particularly in peri-urban areas. This study therefore uses Social Network Theory to explore the relational dynamics of peri-urban policing networks in this under-studied empirical setting.

The origins of Social Network Theory are difficult to pinpoint precisely (Scott, 2011b, p. 21). While structural thinking has long been part of sociology, the concept of networks as a distinct analytical framework emerged more clearly in the 1930s. Since then, there has been extensive theoretical debate on social relations and their structures (Gamper, 2022, p. 35). Scott (2011b, pp. 21–22) and Gamper (2022, p. 35) note that several research traditions shaped the early development of Social Network Theory. According to Gamper (ibid.), three key strands were particularly important: the sociometric tradition, rooted in mathematical graph theory; the interpersonal relations tradition, which examines the formation of cliques within groups; and the anthropological tradition, which investigates the structure of community relationships in less developed societies.

Network-theoretical perspectives assume that social life is shaped primarily by relations and by the patterns formed through those relations (Marin & Wellman, 2011, p. 1). Rather than focusing on individual actors in isolation, they treat social ties and interactions as a major "engine of action" underlying behaviour (Perry, Pescosolido, & Borgatti, 2018, p. 4). The central theoretical interest therefore lies not in the attributes of individuals alone, such as gender, race, or age, but in relationships, their structure, and the embedding of actors within networks. In this respect, Social Network Theory differs from more attribute-based approaches in the social sciences (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010, p. 18).

In Social Network Theory, a network is a set of relationships (Kadushin, 2004, p. 3). More formally, a network consists of a set of objects, often referred to as nodes or actors, and the relationships between them, known as links, edges, arcs, or ties. Marks and Stys (2019, p. 382) note that ties are often reduced, albeit imperfectly, to variables for comparative analysis. They may be coded as positive or negative, directed or undirected, weighted by distance, frequency, or duration, or categorised according to the type of relationship, such as family, neighbour, or co-worker. In classic sociograms, actors are represented by points and their relations by lines (Scott, 2011a, p. 22). The simplest network contains at least two actors connected by a single tie. (Kadushin, 2004, p. 3). Social networks can be studied at the level of individuals, groups, and wider communities (Gamper, 2022, p. 23).

Social scientists commonly distinguish between two primary types of networks: ego-centric and socio-centric networks (Chung, Hossain, & Davis, 2005). Socio-centric networks, also named whole networks, study entire networks. It focuses on a pattern of relations within a socially defined group. It begins with a set of actors and examines the ties among all pairs of actors (Perry et al., 2018, p. 20). The result is a single, complete, or whole network (ibid). Whole networks take a bird's eye view of social structure, focusing on all actors rather than privileging the network surrounding any particular actor (Marin & Wellman, 2011). Researchers using this approach focus on measuring the structural patterns of interactions and how these patterns explain outcomes, such as the concentration of power or other resources, within the network (Chung et al., 2005, p. 2). The main advantage of the socio-centric approach is that the entire network structure (and each individual's location) can be enumerated, described, and analysed (Perry et al., 2018, p. 23); however, there are also limitations. Collecting data for socio-centric network analysis can be challenging, time-consuming, and costly (Provan & Kenis, 2008, p. 230). This is because of the high burden on respondents, which increases the chance of refusal to participate, survey noncompletion, or reducing response rates (Perry et al., 2018, p. 24), and there may be deliberately dishonest or incomplete answers, or simply lapses in memory and mistakes. Consequently, researchers conducting socio-centric network research must spend much time convincing all respondents to participate (ibid) and checking their answers where possible. A more significant challenge for socio-centric network researchers is the boundary specification problem. When conducting sociocentric network research, it is essential to determine who should or should not be included in the study. However, boundaries are often unclear and frequently

contested. For example, in policing, there are wannabees, newbies, retirees, apprentices, part-timers, contractors, hangers-on, etc.; this makes it difficult to draw a distinct line (ibid).

Ego-centric network analysis, by contrast, focuses on the relations of one focal actor, or ego, to others, known as alters (Berrou & Combarnous, 2012, p. 6). Data are collected on the ego's direct contacts and, where possible, on the relations among those contacts (Marin & Wellman, 2011). A key premise of this approach is that each individual lives in a personal community, partially of their creation and nearly unique to them, whose composition and structure have consequences. One of the primary objectives of ego-centric analysis research is to predict ego outcomes from variables that describe how ego is connected to alters, the characteristics of alters, and the patterns in which alters are connected. Underlying this goal is the theoretical proposition that individuals exist in a social context, and this context affects them (Perry et al., 2018, pp. 25-26). Another goal of ego-centric research is to understand why egos have the ego networks they do (Perry et al., 2018, p. 26). For example, why do some people have personal networks in which many of the alters know each other, while others have very open networks in which the alters do not know each other? Underlying this goal is the theoretical proposition that historical time, geographical space, and social place shape the opportunities for and constraints on the nature of social interactions (Pescosolido & Rubin, 2000, cited in ibid).

Compared to the socio-centric approach, an advantage of the ego-centric approach is its ability to take probability samples from a population and generalise the results. For example, when focusing on young adults in any country. Using the socio-centric approach is not feasible for this purpose, as it requires surveying the entire population of interest (Perry et al., 2018). However, there are also limitations. Ego-centric network research heavily burdens the ego when collecting information about the alters and ties in the ego's network. This burden increases significantly with the size and complexity of the ego network (Perry et al., 2018, p. 29). The most significant limitation of an ego-centric approach is its inability to map the broader network in which personal networks are embedded. That is, while ego network data can tell us about local networks (and ego's position in those local networks), they cannot provide information about the larger structural context in which these local networks operate. Put differently, ego network methods are constrained to analyses of present direct ties. However, sometimes, the most powerful indicators of an ego's social position may be indirect ties (e.g., friends of friends) or

ties that do not exist (i.e., structural holes), which cannot be measured with an ego network research design.

Because this dissertation focuses on the relationships between the police and non-state forms of local authority, it adopts an egocentric approach in which the police serve as the focal actor. This is more appropriate than a fully sociocentric reconstruction of all policing relations, as the study is primarily concerned with the network of ties surrounding the police. This approach makes it possible to identify key actors, tie strength, intermediary roles, and patterns of resource exchange within that network. The justification for selecting the police as the focal actor is elaborated further in Section 2.3

Gamper (2022, p. 35) asserts that "there is no single network theory; instead, there are many different theoretical concepts". These concepts can be broadly categorised into two primary types: grand theories and middle-range theories. Grand theories offer comprehensive, overarching explanations, supported by extensive evidence, often focusing on abstract, universal principles rather than practical, everyday applications (Gamper, 2022, p. 36). An example of a grand theory is the work of Georg Simmel. He introduced the concept of social circles, which refers to relational integration into social networks (1950). Simmel argues that the individuality of every single person is created through affiliation with different circles (Gamper, 2022, p. 36). His work also identified basic structural features that later became central to network analysis (Gamper, 2022, p. 37).

Harrison White examines the dynamic relationship between social networks and identity in a more contemporary discussion. "With the help of relational thinking, he tries to explain how actors develop their identity. According to White, social identities are not given as irrevocable facts but are constructed in social networks and formed through control. They are not given; rather, they are negotiated in relation to other actors in a certain network" (as cited in Gamper, 2022, pp. 37-38). While grand theories like these offer universal perspectives on networks, they share a common foundation: the idea that relations are the origin of action or are influenced by action, and networks have a universal claim to explanation (Gamper, 2022, p. 38).

In contrast, middle-range theories are more specific, bridging the gap between grand theory and research-oriented working theories. They are particularly useful for formulating and interpreting empirical findings (ibid). Among the middle-range concepts relevant to this dissertation are

homophily, tie strength, resource exchange, reciprocity, brokerage, and network centrality. Together, these concepts help analyse how relations are formed, maintained, and structured within local policing networks.

1.6 Synthesis of the theoretical framework

The frameworks of plural policing, nodal governance, anchored pluralism, hybrid security governance, and Social Network Theory provide a layered conceptual basis for understanding how policing networks in Angola's peri-urban areas are composed and how they function. Plural policing highlights that security provision involves a variety of both state and non-state actors. Nodal governance conceptualises these actors as interconnected nodes within wider security assemblages, without granting primacy to any single actor, including state actors. Anchored pluralism likewise recognises the diversity of actors involved in policing, while maintaining that the state continues to play an important role in coordination, accountability, and the provision of collective justice.

These frameworks can also be located within broader debates on statehood and authority. At one end of the continuum, consolidated states, in Krasner's terms, possess the capacity to authoritatively make, implement, and enforce central decisions for a collectivity. At the other end, areas of limited statehood, as Risse and Stollenwerk explain, are settings in which central authorities lack the capacity to implement and enforce rules and/or do not hold a legitimate monopoly over the means of violence. This distinction is useful for situating different ways of thinking about governance and security, but it does not in itself determine the analytical framework of this dissertation. Rather than deciding in advance where peri-urban Luanda should be placed on this continuum, the empirical chapters examine how authority is organised, negotiated, and shared in practice. Within such settings, hybrid security governance offers a particularly useful lens, as it is grounded more directly in empirical research on the Global South and is well suited to contexts in which authority and security provision are shared among multiple actors. This differs from nodal governance and anchored pluralism, which emerged primarily from Anglo-American academic debates.

While the frameworks discussed above provide the broader conceptual foundation for understanding plural and hybrid forms of security, Social Network Theory offers a more specific lens for examining the relationships between actors within such arrangements. Instead of

focusing on individual entities in isolation, it emphasises the significance of connections, interactions, and structural positions. Building on this theoretical base, Social Network Analysis allows for an empirical investigation of how policing networks are organised and how power, influence, and resource exchange are distributed within them.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives enable this study to examine how hybrid policing networks in Angola operate, with particular attention to their composition, interaction patterns, resource exchanges, and the ways in which authority is formed, power circulates, and security is negotiated in practice.

Chapter 2 Methodology & Methods

This chapter provides a comprehensive account of the research approach, the selected cases, and the methods and techniques employed to gather, interpret, and analyse data for this study.

It begins with an overview of the selected study areas and their context: the neighbourhoods of 11 de Novembro and Cariango. This is followed by a presentation of the research approach used in this study. The next section outlines the analytical framework employed to interpret and examine the interactions between the police and non-state actors on the ground. It then provides a detailed account of the methods used to collect and analyse the data throughout the research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations faced during the investigation and a reflection on my insider-outsider positionality.

2.1 Area of study

This study takes place in the municipality of Cazenga in the province of Luanda, in Angola. Luanda is one of the eighteen provinces of Angola, located in the country's north-central region. "The city had historically been perceived as racially and materially segregated into two zones, the *musseques* and the *cidade*. The term 'cidade' generally referred to the formally planned colonial urban core largely inhabited by white settlers, while 'musseque' was a reference to areas of informally built constructions often lacking basic services and largely inhabited by black Angolans" (Gastrow, 2021). The word *musseque* derives from kimbundo, a dialect spoken in the regions closest to Luanda; it means "sand" or "red earth", describing the geological condition that characterises the type of areas where the first *musseques* were built (Bettencourt, 2011, p. 52). Another popular word used in Angola to refer to these types of urban settlements is *bairro*. This study uses the word *bairro* throughout the book.

Luanda is the most populous province in the country, with an estimated population of 9.079.811, and covers a territory of 2.417 km2 (*Indicadores da Província, dados oficiais de Luanda*). The province of Luanda is divided into nine municipalities: Belas, Cazenga, Cacuaco, Icolo e Bengo, Kilamba Kiaxi, Quiçama, Viana, and Luanda, the country's capital. Luanda is the most populous municipality in Angola, with an estimated population of 2,194,747 (Kilamba, Sonhi, & Quiluta,

2022).[2] Very often, the number of people residing in the province of Luanda and the municipality of Luanda are confused. This happens because writers frequently do not indicate to which political administrative layer the numbers refer. The lower figure, 2.194.747, is for the city of Luanda (the municipality), and the higher one, 9.079.811, is for the metropolitan area (the province). Luanda metropolitan area is the epicentre around which the rest of Angola revolves. It is the political, financial, commercial, and economic centre of the country and home to the country's major companies, such as the Angolan National Bank, Endiama, Sonangol, and Unitel.

Paradoxically, most (an estimated 90%) of the Luanda metropolitan area's population live in bairros (De Oliveira, 2015, p. 114). The bairros of Luanda are heterogeneous in their ethnic composition and the social status of their inhabitants (ibid). Data from desk research and interviews with residents, scholars and journalists suggest that during the colonial and post-independence period, mainly during the civil war, many people who migrated to the province of Luanda settled in bairros. People from the regions where Kimbundu is spoken, the areas closest to Luanda, were most predominant; then those from the regions where the dialect is Umbundo, from the centre of the country, and finally, the Kikongo-speaking populations who came from Northern Angola (Bettencourt, 2011, p. 54).

Most streets in the bairros of Luanda are unpaved and follow an unaligned pattern. The unemployment rate among residents is particularly high, especially among young people (World Bank, 2023, p. 8). Many spend a significant amount of their time on the streets searching for odd jobs. "Of the more than 50 per cent of urban residents in Angola living in informal settlements over two-thirds are employed in the informal sector. Widespread job informality also means that most urban residents are employed in low-paying, low-quality jobs with low productivity levels. Angola's urban cost of living, including food, housing, and transport, is 32 per cent higher than cities in developing countries at similar income levels and one of the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa" (Bye et al., 2025, p. 129).

Moreover, most of these types of settlements are characterised by a lack of basic urban infrastructure, including access to drinking water, sanitation, functioning drainage systems, and electricity. The Gini coefficient in Angola is 0.51, one of the highest in Africa. Decomposition of

[2] The total population of Angola in 2025 was ca. 39 mln people, with more than half living in cities.

the Gini coefficient by area of residence shows that inequality within urban and rural areas accounts for more than half of the total value (0.27 of the total 0.51 Gini-coefficient), and most of the within-group inequality comes from inequality within urban areas (0.23 out of a total 0.27) (Bye et al., 2025, p. 129). State institutions, such as the police, are either absent or present in a minimal capacity. Governance is often a hybrid affair wherein non-state forms of local authority play a crucial role in the everyday governance of the neighbourhood.

Specifically, this research took place in the bairros 11 de Novembro and Cariango, in the municipality of Cazenga. The municipality of Cazenga, located in the first surrounding ring of Luanda, covers an area of about 37 km² and has an estimated 911,694 inhabitants. Cazenga is one of the areas with the highest prevalence of bairros (Manuel, 2017, p. 2). The choice for the bairros 11 de Novembro and Cariango is based on two reasons. 1) To acquire a sample that is representative of the entire municipality of Cazenga and similar bairros in Luanda by combining the two major types of informal urban settlements in the study; 2) to be able to make comparisons between two types of bairros and see to what extent the workings of local policing in bairros differs across population subgroups and neighbourhoods.

2.2 Research approach: Abduction and data reduction

Many methodological sources recommend that researchers define their research design in advance, select an appropriate framework, and consistently adhere to the chosen approach. However, in contexts where prior research is limited or absent, and where unexpected findings, deviations from established theory, and high levels of complexity are likely, such a rigid positivist methodology may prove difficult to sustain.

In such cases, iterative research methods and efforts to simplify the field may provide a more effective strategy. This enables researchers to understand and capture field-based insights in a way that reflects contextual reality, rather than forcing observations into the framework of a predetermined research design.

This study therefore adopts an abductive and reductive research approach to understand the dynamics of the hybrid policing network in the peri-urban areas of Luanda, Angola. Rather than following a linear or strictly inductive or deductive route, the research unfolds as an iterative and dialogical process in which empirical fieldwork and theoretical ideas remain in continuous

conversation. A key feature of this approach is that research questions may evolve in response to the collected material, and that research strategies, data collection methods, and analytical techniques may adapt to the changing phases and questions of the research process. As van Hulst and Visser (2025, p. 2) write, “In abductive analysis, qualitative researchers work iteratively from surprises and tensions toward theoretical insight. With abduction, researchers engage theory and other prior knowledge early in the research process and creatively throughout.”

Abductive analysis enables researchers to enter the field with the openness necessary to investigate everyday practices and experiences from within. Approaching the field with an open mind does not imply being empty-headed. Rather, abductive analysis encourages qualitative researchers to develop a broad theoretical foundation and draw upon diverse forms of knowledge (van Hulst & Visser, 2025). By combining intellectual resources, whether “a head full of theories” or “a feel for the game,” researchers are better able to recognise family resemblances, consider what the phenomena under study may exemplify, and generate new theoretical insights. This also strengthens the dialogical engagement between pre-existing knowledge and the practices encountered during fieldwork (van Hulst & Visser, 2025, p. 2). In this dissertation, abduction is understood, in broad terms, as inference to the best explanation (Harman, 1965): a process in which the researcher moves iteratively between empirical observations, emerging puzzles, and theoretical interpretation in order to arrive at the most convincing explanation of the phenomenon under study. In this sense, working abductively is also closely related to the idea of “casing,” in which the researcher asks what the observed phenomenon may best be understood as, while remaining open to revising that interpretation in light of the empirical material.

Whereas a linear qualitative research process is often presented as a sequence of successive steps, typically: 1) pose a question, 2) design, 3) fieldwork, 4) analysis, and 5) write-up, abductive research follows a more non-linear and iterative pattern. In this process, the researcher moves back and forth through different stages. Instead of a linear 1–2–3–4–5 progression, the process may follow a more dynamic pattern such as 1–2–3–2–3–4–3–4–5: posing a question, designing, conducting fieldwork, redesigning, returning to the field, analysing, conducting further analysis, and finally writing up (van Hulst & Visser, 2025, p. 5).

Figure 1 outlines the abductive qualitative research process followed in this study. It illustrates how practices such as reading literature, developing research questions, designing fieldwork,

collecting data, analysing, casing, and initial writing, alongside events such as surprise, doubt, intuition, and hunches, may be patterned in recognisable yet always context-specific ways across different domains, including theory and literature, design and analysis, and fieldwork. These research practices unfold over time (from left to right), often overlap temporally, and feed into one another (as indicated by the arrows), ultimately spiralling towards an initial write-up.

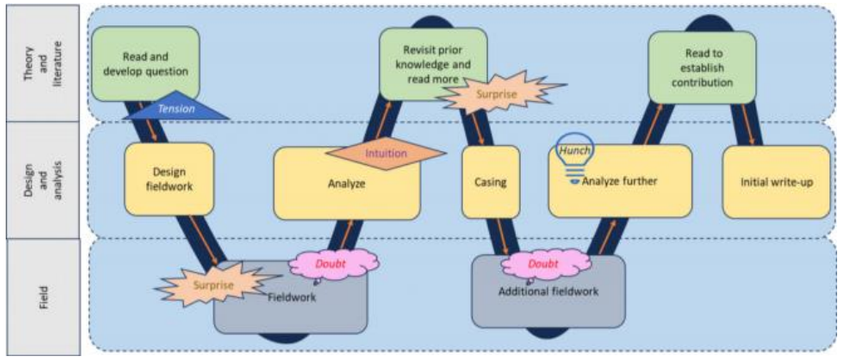


Figure 1: Abductive qualitative research process.
Source: van Hulst & Visser, 2025

In addition to an abductive approach, this study also employed a reductive approach. Every qualitative analyst working in a data-rich environment encounters the problem of data overload. As Huberman and Miles observe (1983, p. 285)., “The fact that field-study data are not usually translated immediately into numerical or alphanumerical form means that a vast number of words accumulate during data collection, further increased by the analyst’s tendency to follow serendipitous leads, confirm hunches, and resolve puzzles, all of which may or may not be fruitful, but will undoubtedly add bulk to the corpus of field notes.” This accumulated material must be carefully selected for analytical purposes; otherwise, arriving at a focused and targeted analysis becomes difficult.

In qualitative research, reductive approaches simplify or distil complex phenomena into more fundamental elements. This process involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the raw data in edited field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 23). The reductive

approach in qualitative research entails simplifying, structuring, or selecting data to produce units that can be analysed. The aim is to condense large volumes of raw data into meaningful patterns or themes while retaining the context and complexity from which the data originated. Miles and Huberman (ibid) emphasise that data reduction is not separate from analysis. Rather, it is an integral part of the analytical process that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organises data to facilitate drawing and verifying final conclusions.

In qualitative research, data can be reduced and transformed through various strategies, such as selective focus, summarisation, paraphrasing, or integrating individual observations into broader patterns or metaphors. Numerical transformation is not excluded, provided that the resulting figures remain embedded within their original linguistic and contextual frameworks. Maintaining the connection between data and context ensures that the richness and meaning of qualitative material are preserved during the analytical process (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 24).

Data reduction can occur at various stages of the qualitative research process, including before, during, and after data collection. It therefore extends beyond post-fieldwork analysis to include important anticipatory and interim phases that influence the study's direction and focus (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 25).

Anticipatory data reduction occurs before data collection and includes strategies that help narrow and focus the fieldwork. This may involve developing conceptual frameworks that guide the researcher's perspective, formulating research questions that direct the inquiry, and making intentional choices regarding sampling strategies, which are often purposive in qualitative research. Additionally, decisions about instrumentation, such as interview design, field notes, or recording methods, also play a role in early-stage reduction by determining the type of data collected and how it will be captured.

Interim data reduction occurs alongside data collection, which is important for maintaining flexibility and preventing the analysis from becoming unmanageable. This phase may involve the use of contact summary sheets, which identify emerging themes after each site visit; coding schemes, whether derived inductively or informed by the research questions, to categorise and organise material; and memos, which allow the researcher to reflect conceptually on evolving patterns or anomalies. In research involving multiple researchers or locations, site analysis meetings and interim summaries can also provide opportunities to synthesise findings, refine

codes, and adjust the research focus. Post-collection data reduction, finally, focuses on synthesising and streamlining the material for final analysis. This phase is directly connected to data display, conclusion-drawing, and verification, and assists researchers in distilling extensive material into clear findings.

This study implemented data reduction at various stages of the research process, including before, during, and after fieldwork. In the initial phase, conceptual frameworks, research questions, and purposive sampling strategies helped define and narrow the scope of the inquiry. During fieldwork, interim data reduction was facilitated through the use of memos, coding, and reflective summaries, which enabled ongoing engagement with the material and informed modifications to the research focus. In the post-collection stage, thematic matrices and interpretive synthesis further assisted in identifying patterns and relationships among key participants.

2.3 Making sense of the interaction – social network analysis

This study uses the Social Network Analysis (SNA) approach to analyse the interactions between state and non-state forms of local authority. SNA is a methodological approach used to study relationships and interactions within social structures. It has often been used to study complex networks and interactions between actors, as seen in the works of Wasserman and Faust (1994) and Brewer (2015). SNA has also been applied to study the socio-political environment in African countries, for instance, by Berrou & Combarnous (2012), Matoušet et al. (2013), and Osei and Malang (2018).

SNA focuses on the systematic, quantitative, and qualitative analysis of the relationships between actors, the patterns of these relationships, and the implications of these relationships for particular outcomes (Whelan, 2016, p. 12). Although most SNAs have developed a predominantly quantitative-oriented approach (Schepis, 2011, p. 1), this study applies a qualitative SNA approach. The extensive use of quantitative research methods in SNA studies should not be perceived as an indication of the irrelevance of the qualitative SNA approach. As brought forward by Heath et al. (2009, p. 646), "it is widely known that SNA has at least some of its roots in the qualitative tradition", emerging from anthropology, e.g., (Barnes, 1954) and sociology, e.g., (Young & Willmott, 1957). Curran et al. (1993, p. 14) add that, as networks are considered a cultural phenomenon, qualitative approaches are most appropriate to study

networks. Qualitative SNA studies produce richer data, which can give insight into complex problems.

According to Schepsis (2011, p. 3), three specific occasions in which qualitative SNA is a suitable approach to study networks: 1) when the network is composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds. In a network composed of members with different cultural, educational, or occupational backgrounds, although linked, "they may interpret the questions in vastly different ways, making it difficult to achieve any sense of understanding through a quantitative medium" (ibid); 2) when the context of the study makes it difficult to collect reliable and accurate quantitative data. These include sensitive or complex topics, where surveys may not be the most appropriate method to answer questions, and the researcher may be required to tease the answers; and 3) when the phenomenon being studied is understudied and requires exploratory research. As a result, the prerequisite prior literature is not available to design a compelling quantitative study. These three occasions are applicable in the context of Angola. Policing in Angola is a sensitive, under-researched topic involving actors with various cultural, occupational, and ethnic backgrounds.

This study employs an ego-centric SNA approach to study the interactions between state and non-state forms of local authority, focusing on the relationship between the police and non-state actors within the neighbourhoods. The rationale for selecting the police as the point of departure is that they represent the most prominent state authority at the neighbourhood level, actively engaged in policing-related matters. Their presence and direct involvement in security governance make them an important focal point for understanding the dynamics between state and non-state authorities.

To analyse the interactions between the police and the non-state forms of local authority with which they interact the most, three key dimensions of network analysis were selected: network size, network composition, and the content of ties and brokerage roles.

Network size

Network size refers to the number of actors to whom the ego, represented by the police, is connected (Perry et al., 2018, p. 159). This is measured simply by counting the number of actors in the network. The size of an ego-network is often considered an indicator of social integration

and social capital, the notion that one's connections are an essential determinant of success, whether status attainment, positive health outcomes, income, or power (ibid).

Network composition

This dimension examines the attributes of the ego (the police) and alters (non-state actors) and how their characteristics influence interactions. The principle of homophily, the tendency for actors to form ties with others who share similar attributes, was applied to explore patterns of cohesion and fragmentation in the network (McPherson et al., 2001).

The fundamental principle of homophily is that 'similarity breeds connection' (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001, p. 415). This concept encompasses all types of network ties, including marriage, friendship, work, advice, support, information transfer, resource exchange, comembership, and other forms of relationships (ibid). The term "homophily," as it is known today, was introduced by Lazarsfeld and Merton in 1954 (Gamper, 2022, p. 41). It is the tendency for individuals to interact more frequently with others who share similar characteristics (McPherson et al., 2001).

Consequently, personal networks tend to be composed of individuals who exhibit similar sociodemographic, behavioural, and intrapersonal characteristics. Among these, race and ethnicity create the strongest divisions within personal networks, followed by age, religion, education, occupation, and gender, in that order (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 415). Prolonged interaction with similar individuals reinforces shared experiences and norms, reinforcing group social cohesion. However, homophilous relationships can also lead to adverse outcomes such as social exclusion, reinforcement of biases, and restricted access to diverse resources (Gamper, 2022).

Understanding homophily allows researchers to examine how social networks form and which attributes or characteristics of actors are most influential in fostering connections (Kadushin, 2004, p. 6). The general assumption is that the greater the homophily within a network, the more likely nodes are to connect. Moreover, homophily provides insights into the spread of attitudes and behaviours within a network, as individuals in homophilous relationships tend to influence each other's perceptions (ibid). Analysing homophily can also reveal social inequalities, helping

to identify groups that may experience isolation or limited access to resources due to differences from those in positions of power (Gamper, 2022, p. 209).

This study assessed the following attributes: ethnicity, place of birth, social status, legitimacy, political orientation, and roles and functions.

Ethnicity and place of birth: These attributes help to sketch a profile of the actors within the network. In Angola, ethnicity plays a significant role, as the ethnic group to which an individual belongs can substantially influence their social network. These traits were assessed during semi-structured interviews, where respondents were asked about their ethnicity and place of birth.

Actor type: This attribute categorises the actor as community, commercial, state, or traditional. Understanding this classification facilitates the analysis of the types of non-state actors that engage most often with state authorities, particularly the police. Data was collected through a blend of semi-structured interviews and desk research to obtain insights into the non-state actor's history, role, and status.

Legitimacy: This study will assess the perceived legitimacy of members within the policing network, focusing on both vertical and horizontal legitimacy. Vertical legitimacy will be assessed based on residents' perceptions of the police and the non-state actors with whom the police interact most frequently. Horizontal legitimacy will be examined in terms of how different community groups perceive and accept each other, as well as how they recognise or challenge the roles of actors involved in local governance, including the policing network. Evaluating legitimacy offers valuable insights into residents' willingness to cooperate with and adhere to the authority of network members (vertical legitimacy), as well as the recognition and acceptance of authority among various community groups (horizontal legitimacy). During semi-structured interviews, residents from Cariango and 11 de Novembro neighbourhoods were asked about their satisfaction, support for police actions, and trust in both the police and the identified non-state actors involved in policing. To assess the horizontal legitimacy of the policing network, both network members and other community groups were asked how they perceive and accept one another's roles and authority.

Political orientation: Political affiliation plays a significant role in the context of Angola. While Angola is formally a multi-party system, it operates as an autocracy. Success in both the public

and private sectors often hinges on membership in, or at least a non-critical view of, the ruling party, the MPLA. By examining the political orientation of non-state actors within the police ego-network, one can gain valuable insights into how political affiliations impact local security governance. This was assessed by inquiring with interviewees about their support for and membership in their political party.

Roles and Functions: This attribute refers to the general policing activities undertaken by non-state actors who closely interact with the police. It provides insights into whether non-state actors complement, substitute, accommodate, or compete with the police. This was measured by inquiring the identified non-state actors about their policing-related activities, supplemented by insights from interviews with the police and residents in Cariango and 11 de Novembro.

Content of ties

The second dimension, the content of ties, examines the nature of interactions between the police and the non-state actors with whom they interact most frequently. This study focuses on two key variables to understand these interactions: tie strength and the exchange of resources.

Tie strength

Tie strength is an important concept in social network analysis, as it influences the flow of information and resources through a network. According to Haythornthwaite (1996, p. 327) "the concept of tie strength refers to the intensity of a relationship", which can be determined by factors such as the frequency of interaction, emotional closeness, and mutual exchange of resources. Granovetter (1973, p. 1361) defines tie strength as "a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterise the tie".

Tie strength is not just about the presence or absence of a connection but also its intensity and quality (ibid). Empirical research suggests that both strong and weak ties play distinct yet complementary roles in social networks. Strong ties, such as those found within families and close friendships, provide emotional support, stability, and trust (Lois, 2022, p. 113). Traditionally, strong ties have been viewed as key facilitators of information sharing, as individuals with close relationships tend to have deeper connections and greater motivation to share information. However, Granovetter (1973) famously challenged this perspective by

highlighting the ‘strength of weak ties’. In his study on job opportunity information, over 80% of participants reported receiving critical job-related information from contacts they interacted with infrequently. In comparison, fewer than 17% gained such information from close contacts. Granovetter argued that weak ties often connect us to different social circles, providing access to unique information unavailable within our immediate networks (Granovetter, 1973). This groundbreaking insight demonstrated the significant role of weak ties in spreading new and innovative ideas. While subsequent studies have reaffirmed the value of strong ties in information exchange, it is now widely recognised that strong and weak ties are essential for effective information flow (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p. 328). In her case studies of Guinea, Lourenco-Lindell (2002) stresses that while weak ties are more flexible and easily manipulated, they are also more vulnerable in times of crisis (unlike strong and affective ties) (Berrou & Combarnous, 2012, p. 7)

Measuring tie strength is important for understanding how information flows through a network. It can help identify individuals who act as brokers, bridging different network parts via weak ties and providing access to non-redundant information and resources (Gamper, 2022, p. 40). The presence of strong ties is often seen as an indicator of social integration and regulation. Networks with many strong ties may be cohesive, but they often lack diversity in their connections. Conversely, networks with a predominance of weak ties might have greater reach but less internal cohesion (Borgatti & Ofem, 2010, p. 4).

This study measured tie strength using four indicators frequently cited in the literature as distinctive features of strong ties.

Frequency of contact: According to Granovetter (1973) and Marden & Campell (1984), strong ties are characterised by frequent interactions. To measure this, the police and the non-state actors with whom they interact most frequently were asked to indicate how often they interact with each other on a weekly basis.

Duration of the contact: This another important dimension of tie strength (Granovetter, 1973; Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Petróczi, Nepusz, & Bazsó, 2007). Strong ties are typically associated with longer periods of engagement. During interviews, the police, the non-state actors with whom they interact the most, were asked to specify the average length of their interactions with each other.

Closeness: This variable reflects the emotional or social intimacy between actors, with strong ties often characterised by higher levels of mutual trust and personal connection (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). According to Marsden & Campell (1984, p. 483), close friends have been said to have ‘strong’ ties, while acquaintances or friends of friends have been called ‘weak’ ties. In this study, closeness refers to the intimacy of the relations between the police, Soba, and the members of the Residents’ Committee in both neighbourhoods. In this study, closeness was assessed by asking the police to comment on the intimacy of their relationships and whether their interactions extend beyond policing matters to include personal or social discussions. To measure this indicator, during semi-interviews, police officers and the non-state actors with whom they interact the most were asked to comment on the intimacy of their relationships and whether their interactions extend beyond policing matters to include personal or social discussions.

Exchanged resources

In social network theory, resource exchange refers to the availability and transfer of resources among actors within a network (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p. 323). The actors who exchange these resources may be individuals, organisations or institutions, such as libraries linked in an interlibrary loan. Resources can be of many types, including tangible assets such as goods, services, or money, or intangible assets such as information, social support, social capital, or influence (ibid). They can be directly transferred or provided from one actor to another. Social networks, much like transportation networks, serve as conduits for resources. The position of an actor within the network determines their access to and control over resources (Haythornthwaite, 1996, pp. 323-324). It can help researchers see which actors are central, influential or serve as bridges (ibid). Analysing resource exchange patterns allows researchers to identify influential actors, structural bottlenecks, and opportunities for collaboration (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p. 339).

Semi-structured interviews took place with police and the non-state actors they frequently interact with, focusing on the types of resources exchanged and the perceived value of these exchanges.

2.3 Data collection methods

Miguel, the gatekeeper

Before elaborating on the methods used for data collection, it is important to highlight an aspect that enabled me to conduct fieldwork safely: my gatekeeper. I will refer to him as Miguel, a pseudonym used to protect his identity. A gatekeeper, someone who guides you during visits to the informal neighbourhoods of Luanda, is not a luxury but a necessity for outsiders. This is not only due to safety considerations but also to navigating and gaining access to these areas. Miguel is the nephew of the cleaner at the guest house where I was staying. He lives in Cazenga and knows the area like the back of his hand. He is a local musician and artist who creates artwork from street waste, including plastic, glass, and other materials. Miguel explained that glass found on the street is often used as a weapon during conflicts that escalate into violence. By transforming this glass into artwork, he hopes to inspire other young people and show that waste glass can have a new purpose, something more creative, constructive, and even profitable, rather than being used to cause harm.

Miguel's role extended beyond merely ensuring my safety. He facilitated access, helped gain the trust of research participants, and legitimised my research in the eyes of the local population. Through Miguel, I was able to engage with young people, including gang members. He also knew how to use local expressions (codes) to introduce me to community leaders. To make this possible, he introduced me as his cousin from Europe, presenting me as less of a complete outsider.

Although Miguel is not politically active, he has strong negative opinions about Angolan politicians and government institutions, including the police, an attitude that, as it later became clear, is not uncommon among young people in Cazenga. To minimise the influence of his personal views on my research, I ensured that he did not take part in any interviews or act on my behalf in my absence.

Desk research

The documents used in this research can be categorised as follows: (a) news material from traditional and social media, (b) academic papers and books, (c) non-academic papers, conference papers, and policy reports, and (d) "hard" data in the form of statistics and laws.

Before my departure to Luanda, I gathered a substantial amount of traditional and social media news material. Once in Angola, I asked friends and colleagues to recommend the best media news sources for finding information about policing in Angola. Club-K, Jornal de Angola, TPA, Maka Angola, Folha 8, Radio Luanda, Angola 24 Horas, Angonoticias, and Nova Folha were the most recommended news sources. I regularly consulted these sources. To stay updated on current events, I watch the news and listen to local radio, Radio Luanda, every morning. It is challenging to assess the objectivity of news provided by the Angolan news media, as the government heavily regulates this sector. As a couple of journalists stated during interviews, '*The news in Angola is first cooked by Angop (Agência Angola Press), the official news agency of the Angolan State and then made available to the public"*. Academic studies on issues related to policing, security governance, crime, and violence written by Angolan scholars affiliated with Angolan universities or knowledge institutions are scarce. Most of the studies found are from scholars based outside Angola. According to a professor at Agostinho Neto University, such studies are not produced in Angola due to its political sensitivity. Due to the minimal availability of rigorous academic studies on crime, law enforcement, and safety at the local level in Angola, findings from desk research were relatively scant. An exception is a work written by Rafael Marques, an internationally recognised Angolan human rights activist. On his digital platform, *Maka Angola,* one can find various articles about local crime, safety, policing, and other topics.

Observations

Once I arrived in Luanda, I prioritised seeing, smelling, and feeling Cazenga. I visited Cazenga almost every day. I did this in the company of my gatekeeper, Miguel. We planned to visit different Comunas (sub-district of Cazenga) every day. Regrettably, we were unable to visit all the neighbourhoods in the various comunas due to security concerns. The visits took place during daytime hours, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. I was advised not to be in Cazenga after 18.00 for security reasons.

We went to Cazenga by taxi and spent a few hours exploring the area on foot. I took pictures of the streets and events. Whenever possible, I spoke with residents, street vendors, and workers from various shops. The conversations were usually conducted in Portuguese. When respondents did not understand me due to my accent, choice of words, or sentence structure, my gatekeeper reformulated the question so the resident would understand. If someone spoke poor Portuguese,

my gatekeeper assisted in the conversation. He then used a mix of Portuguese and Kikongo (a local language spoken by people from the Northern provinces, many of whom reside in Luanda's informal urban settlements) to communicate with the residents.

During my observation, I paid attention predominantly to the structure of the neighbourhoods, the types of houses and buildings, the presence of basic infrastructure (water, electricity and drainage systems), local business activities, the presence of the police, the presence of state local authorities, and the presence of non-state forms of local authority. My observations were written in Word and saved in my cloud at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. The Word document was later uploaded to ATLAS-TI for analytical purposes. The observation findings were supplemented with data from the desk research, interviews, and informal conversations.

Survey

In addition to interviews, observations, and desk research, a survey was conducted among residents in Cazenga to complement the qualitative findings with broader resident-level data on perceptions of crime, violence, and policing. The survey was intended to identify broader patterns across the municipality, rather than to claim perfect statistical representation of all residents. In collaboration with the Development Workshop (DW), a locally established development organisation with long-standing experience in urban community work and field-based research in Luanda, a questionnaire was designed to gain a deeper understanding of residents' perceptions of crime, violence, and policing in the municipality of Cazenga over the previous five years. DW's contribution was practical and methodological rather than analytical: it supported questionnaire development, piloting, and field implementation through its familiarity with local conditions, language use, and survey logistics.

Before distributing the survey, it was tested among 12 volunteers (friends of my gatekeeper living in Cazenga). The objective of the test was to identify questions that respondents had difficulty understanding, interpreted differently than intended by the researcher, or refused to answer due to sensitivity. The experiences of the 12 volunteers were gathered during a debriefing session at the DW office and used to adapt the questions. Based on the test findings, it was decided that the surveys would be in-person interviews in the respondent's residential area. Interviewees (survey takers) would be free to clarify the meanings of questions and response

choices if necessary. This is for three reasons. Firstly, the testers emphasised the low level of education and mastery of Portuguese by many residents in Cazenga. Secondly, the complexity of the concepts under study, e.g., policing, can be easily interpreted differently from the researchers' intention. Thirdly, most residents were not accustomed to filling out questionnaires and might not fully understand how to answer the questions in the survey, for example, writing lengthy answers on the back of the questionnaire. Additionally, based on their experiences, the testers and officers of DW pointed out that the survey should not require more than 15 minutes of the respondent's time.

The survey takers, students from Agostinho Neto University, received a two-hour training at the DW office on conducting survey interviews. The training involved practising interviews to familiarise the interviewees with the situations they are likely to encounter, as well as reviewing the survey questions, definitions, and procedures to avoid misunderstandings. During the training, students learned to make initial contacts and avoid influencing or biasing responses. A total of six students participated in the training. They worked in pairs; in every district of Cazenga, two students were placed to take the survey interviews. Random sampling was applied in the selection of respondents. Survey takers were instructed to approach every 10^{th} person they came across from their point of departure in one of the three districts of Cazenga. The survey consists of 16 closed-ended questions. It focuses on residents' opinions regarding crime, violence, and policing, as well as their characteristics, such as age, gender, and place of birth. Three hundred respondents, N = 300, participated in the survey.

Interviews

Most of the primary data in this study has been acquired through semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, which sometimes yield more insightful findings than formal interviews. Three sorts of interviews were conducted: 1) semi-structured interviews with residents and professionals, 2) focus group interviews with civil society and local youth, and 3) semi-structured interviews with police officers, Soba, and members of the Residents' Committee of Cariango and 11 de Novembro.

The first interview series, conducted with residents and professionals, aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the development of crime, violence, and policing over the last five years in the municipality of Cazenga, particularly in the neighbourhoods of 11 de Novembro and Cariango. It

was necessary to learn about the context in which policing occurs in both neighbourhoods. Official numbers from state or non-state actors were not available. The interviews were semi-structured and guided by the following topics: perception of the evolution of crime and violence in the last five years, the types of crime and violence that residents have experienced in the previous five years, the frequency and severity of crimes experienced by residents in the last five years, the hotspots in the municipality of Cazenga, main characteristics of victims, main features of offenders, and where residents go for assistance after being a victim of crime and violence. The last question aimed to determine which existing forms of local authority in Cazenga were considered most relevant by the residents.

A total of 36 interviews were conducted. Most interviewees were male residents (young adults and adults) of the municipality of Cazenga, followed by local street vendors, many of whom are in Cazenga. To find professionals for the interviews, I used the snowball sampling method. I asked interviewees if they knew professionals familiar with topics related to crime and violence in the municipality of Cazenga who would like to participate in the research project. In total, I interviewed 15 professionals: a journalist from the private paper Folha 8, a professor at the University Agostinho Neto, local police officers of Cazenga, an owner of a local private security company, local community leaders, and high-ran king local administrators. I also spoke with politicians from the ruling and opposition parties, as well as two generals. Access to politicians and the generals was gained through contacts from the owner's guest house, where I stayed. She is from a prominent family of high-ranking Angolan politicians, judges, and famous musicians. The length of interviews varied between 40 and 60 minutes. Unfortunately, due to the sensitivity of the topic, most of the interviewees did not agree to be recorded. Notes were taken during the interviews, and I wrote reports about them immediately afterwards.

The second interview series, focus group interviews, was held to supplement the findings from the interviews with residents and professionals. The primary purpose was to stimulate discussions between participants about the development of crime and violence in Cazenga and policing. The first focus group interview occurred at the local youth centre in Cazenga. Miguel, my gatekeeper, took me to Cazenga on a Saturday to observe the neighbourhood. In a local youth centre, eight adolescents were in a classroom talking to each other. During the interviews and observations, I discussed my research and preliminary findings with them.

The second focus group interview took place in Hoij ya Henda, a sub-district in the municipality of Cazenga, at the office of a local NGO on Rua da Mãe Preta. I scheduled an appointment to meet six local NGO leaders familiar with socio-economic issues in Cazenga, including crime, violence and policing.

The third interview series, conducted with the police, aimed to map and understand the interactions between the police and non-state forms of local authority in the Cariango and 11 de Novembro neighbourhoods of the municipality of Cazenga. In-depth interviews with local police officers of both neighbourhoods were conducted and used as a name-generator tool. A name generator is a tool often used in social network analysis to compile the identity of actors in a network and discuss their significance (Edwards, 2010, p. 8).

During the interviews, local police officers from both neighbourhoods were asked to identify the local non-state actors with whom they had maintained close ties for policing purposes over the last five years. Subsequently, they were asked to comment on their characteristics, interactions, and experiences with the identified non-state actors with whom they interact regularly. Later, interviews were conducted with the non-state actors identified by the police officers to gain a deeper understanding of their activities, roles, interactions, and experiences with the police.

Analyses of the collected data

To analyse the qualitative data, this study employed a hybrid approach of qualitative methods, including thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). It incorporates a data-driven inductive approach and a deductive a priori template of codes approach (a code book) (ibid). This study developed the codebook based on the theoretical and analytical framework. Before analysing the data, the codes from the codebook were entered into the ATLAS.ti data management program. This approach enabled important theoretical insights to be integral to the analysis process, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data through inductive coding (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 83). Data were collected from interview notes, transcripts, observational notes, and documents, and entered into ATLAS.ti. A process of data coding and identifying themes was then undertaken. After coding the data, a search for patterns within and across the two cases was launched. Patterns predicted by theoretical insights in the codebook were then matched against those observed in the cases (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1999, p. 386). The collected quantitative data from the survey were entered into SPSS, a software program used to

analyse statistical data. Before the start of the analysis, a preliminary data analysis (PDA) was conducted. In practice, this meant cleaning and cleansing the missing values. Surveys with missing values were not excluded from the study, but they were assigned a code of 999 so that they could be identified by SPSS and excluded from the analyses. Descriptive statistics, frequency, measures of central tendency, and crosstabs have been applied to make sense of the data. Findings from the interviews and informal conversations with residents and professionals corroborated the survey's conclusions.

2.4 Positionality

No matter how hard one tries, no one enters the field without preconceptions, and no one is treated neutrally. One always deals with one's perception of reality and how research participants perceive it. Within the literature, this is referred to as positionality. Positionality refers to an individual's worldview regarding a research task and its social and political context (Holmes, 2020, p. 1).

Positionality implies that the social-historical-political location of a researcher influences their orientations, i.e., that they are not separate from the social processes they study (Holmes, 2020, p. 3). "Recognising that the research relationship is inherently hierarchical, understanding and making explicit one's positionality as a researcher illuminates what one potentially sees or does not see concerning whether and how one is at the margin or centre at various points in time in the research process" (Foote & Gau Bartell, 2011, p. 47).

Positionality is often shaped by factors such as political allegiance, religious faith, gender, sexuality, geographical location, race, culture, ethnicity, social class, age, linguistic tradition, and others (Manohar, Liamputtong, Bhole, & Arora, 2017, p. 2). Some aspects of positionality are fixed, such as gender and race, while others are subjective, such as personal experiences. The way researcher participants 'place' the researcher, and vice versa, is vital for the success of any research (Manohar et al., 2017, p. 3). The positionality researchers bring to their work, as well as the personal experiences that shape that positionality, may influence what researchers bring to research encounters, their choice of processes, and their interpretation of outcomes (Foote & Gau Bartell, 2011, p. 45). The positionality that a researcher adopts can differ from the positionality that research participants attribute to the researcher. Additionally, a researcher's perception may change over time as their contact with sources increases.

Self-reflection and reflexive approaches are necessary prerequisites and ongoing processes for the researcher to identify, construct, critique, and articulate their positionality (Holmes, 2020, p. 2). "A good strong positionality statement will typically include a description of the researcher's lenses (such as their philosophical, personal, theoretical beliefs and perspective through which they view the research process), potential influences on the research (such as age, political beliefs, social class, race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, previous career), the researcher's chosen or pre-determined position about the participants in the project (e.g., as an insider or an outsider), the research-project context and an explanation as to how, where, when and in what way this might, may, or have, influenced the research process" (Holmes, 2020, p. 4)."Exploring the insider/outsider status of the researcher has been an important avenue of addressing researcher positionality and subjectivity " (Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman, 2017, p. 378).

According to Holmes (2020, pp. 5-6), insiders are members of specified groups and collectives or occupants of specified social status. Outsiders are non-members. Others identify the insider as someone whose personal biography, such as gender, race, skin colour, class, sexual orientation, and so on, gives them a 'lived familiarity' with and a priori knowledge of the group being researched (ibid). On the other hand, an outsider is a person or researcher who lacks prior intimate knowledge or experience of the group being researched (ibid). Ontologically, the insider perspective is often referred to as an emic account, while the outsider perspective is an etic one. The terms refer to different ontological positions. An emic description or the insider's view of reality (Fetterman, 2008) is situated within a cultural relativist perspective, recognising behaviour and actions as relative to the person's culture and the context in which that behaviour or action is rational and meaningful. An etic account is situated within a realist perspective, attempting to describe differences across cultures in terms of a general external standard and from an ontological position that assumes a pre-defined reality regarding the researcher-subject relationship (Nagar & Geiger, 2007).

Etic accounts aim to be culturally neutral (i.e., independent of culturally specific terminology or references), using and testing pre-existing theory, and written in terminology appropriate to a community of external scientific observers or scholars rather than those within the culture. While emic and etic refer to ontological positions, the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' also refer to whether a person is an actual insider or outsider to the culture under investigation, rather than

necessarily operating from an emic or etic position. By that, I mean that one can aim to adopt an etic ontological position but be an insider to the culture being studied, and vice versa (Holmes, 2020, p. 5).

In exploring my insider/outsider status, I reflect on my subjectivity and the shifting nature of my positionality throughout the research. In analysing how I negotiated my insider/outsider status, I draw from and build on the analytic framework of credibility and approachability as operationalised by Mayorga-Gallo and Hordge-Freeman (2017). Mayorga-Gallo Hordge-Freeman conceptualises credibility and approachability as both performed behaviours and perceived characteristics. “In a sense, credibility and approachability are characterisations of how a researcher intentionally behaves in the fieldwork encounter as well as how the researched perceives the behaviour of the researcher. Credibility and approachability thus open up a space to interrogate researcher positionality” (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p. 9).

Approachability is defined here as being perceived as non-threatening and safe. Safety here encompasses not only physical but also emotional aspects. It refers to respondents feeling that researchers can adequately care for their stories and withhold judgment. For the research, researchers need to establish themselves as worthy of the time to be invested in the research; this is referred to as credibility (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p. 10; Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman, 2017, p. 381). Reflecting on ‘why and how people talk to me’ can help me theorise my positionality more effectively than a discrete list of personal descriptors (Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman, 2017, p. 378).

Credibility

In this research, I had to establish credibility with two main groups: urban informal settlement communities and professionals. The perception of credibility for the two groups differed; therefore, I had to use different approaches to introduce myself and the research project (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p. 11). During my fieldwork, my first point of contact was with professionals at the DW, where I presented my research to DW staff and other professionals to validate the project and gain access to their contacts in the field. Trust and credibility at DW and with other professionals were based on cultural and professional academic credibility. The performative aspects of cultural credibility were rooted in being Angolan by birth, having family living in Angola, possessing basic knowledge of the various informal urban settlements in

Luanda, and being fluent in Portuguese, the official language. By projecting my insider status, I aimed not to be seen as a disconnected ‘privileged’ Angolan who lived his entire life in Europe without any interest in his country of birth. This insider status offered advantages in terms of trust and willingness of the research participants to talk to me.

Various professionals, with whom I am still in touch today, appreciated seeing a young man (33 years old) raised abroad come to Angola not for tourism and a jet-set life, but to research areas where the most vulnerable people reside. Some professionals also had their children studying abroad, predominantly in Portugal; my presence reminded them of their children. I sometimes downplayed my insider status by emphasising my ‘foreignness’. I mentioned during presentations and interviews with professionals that I was raised abroad, which means I have limited knowledge of Angola and a weak network. By projecting my outsider status, I hoped to get as much detailed information, as many contacts, and as much logistical support as possible. Appearing too much like an insider could lead research participants to assume that I need little support, given my familiarity with Angola.

Besides cultural credibility, I also demonstrated academic and professional credibility by emphasising my institutional affiliation with Leiden University, my PhD student status, and my profession as a lecturer at the Hague University of Applied Sciences for the Safety and Security Management Studies programme. This was added using professional markers, such as a business card featuring the Leiden University logo and a polo shirt from the Safety and Security Management Studies program at the Hague University of Applied Sciences. By introducing myself in this manner, I aimed to present myself as a credible researcher worthy of the research participants’ investment of time and effort (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p. 10). The markers contributed to establishing a professional and, thus, credible status (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020, p. 11). This approach worked well, mainly because being a lecturer made a positive impression on several professionals. Professionals not only wanted to talk to me but also wanted to tell their stories and experiences. Several police officers were interested in the Bachelor of Programme in Safety and Security Management Studies; they wanted to know what the curriculum looked like and what students learned. Some asked if there were any scholarships available in the Netherlands for which they could be eligible.

In the informal urban settlements, the approach to increasing my credibility differed from that with professionals. To avoid appearing as a disconnected academic from abroad in my ivory tower who has come down to their country of birth to study those who stayed, I downplayed my academic and professional credibility by presenting myself as a student and not as a researcher and lecturer. I put more emphasis on cultural credibility by presenting myself as an Angolan young man studying abroad. I also adapted my clothing style by wearing simple T-shirts and sneakers instead of the linen suits and polo shirts I had worn when dealing with professionals.

The efforts to manipulate my status as an insider in the informal urban settlement were less effective than with the professionals. Due to my accent, choice of words and appearance, the informal urban communities initially did not perceive me as an insider. This is not because I lived abroad, but predominantly because I was not from Cazenga or other informal urban settlements of Luanda. I did not speak like them, I did not behave like them, and I did not look like them. In their perception, I was indeed an Angolan, but one from the city centre with a 'privileged' life and perhaps rich or influential relatives. The social distance between the communities and me in the informal urban settlements created a barrier at the outset of the research.

My gatekeeper, Miguel, also from Cazenga, played a decisive role in establishing my credibility. He introduced me as his cousin, who is studying abroad and would like to interview residents to learn about crime and violence in the neighbourhood. By doing so, residents in the informal urban settlements saw me as someone worth talking to because I was Miguel's cousin and not a random outsider. This approach worked well. My gatekeeper knew that residents would be reluctant to spend their time being interviewed and surveyed by outsiders without any links to the neighbourhood.

Performed approachability

Approachability, the ability to be perceived as non-threatening and safe, is a crucial quality for gaining access and establishing rapport in the field (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020). Research participants must also feel they can trust the researcher with their experiences, i.e., that the researcher will not cause them harm (approachability). Participating in research is a vulnerable experience, and approachability captures the emotional safety individuals must feel to engage in the process (Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman, 2017, p. 385).

The topic of research in this study posed a challenge to my approachability. Policing, crime and violence, safety and security are, by many people in Angola, perceived as sensitive topics. For example, I asked a professor of sociology at the University, Agostinho Neto, why it is so difficult to find studies about crime, violence, policing, and the workings of the police in Angola. He responded that many scholars do not write about such topics because of the difficulty in accessing data, as the police do not share information with the public. He also mentioned that many scholars do not want to embarrass the regime, fearing repercussions, e.g. losing their jobs. On another occasion, during an interview with a local NGO in Cazenga, I was warned by the NGO officers to be cautious about whom I spoke to, as I could get in trouble by asking questions related to police crime, violence, and policing in Cazenga. Keep in mind that you came from outside, he said. On the one hand, professionals such as police officers could perceive you as a foreign agent, a member of the opposition living abroad, an officer of an international NGO, or any other agency intending to expose the malpractices of the Angolan police. On the other hand, research participants in informal urban settlements may perceive you as an officer of the secret services gathering data for operations, he added.

To be perceived as approachable by professionals, I employed three approaches: the socially accepted incompetent, critical accommodation, and a non-aligned approach. The socially accepted incompetent researcher assumes the role of one who is to be taught. The researcher must be told and will not take offence at being instructed about the obvious things or being lectured to. This approach enables the researcher to appear as a non-threatening learner (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2022, pp. 69-70). To do this, I emphasised my outsider status by saying that I had lived abroad my entire life, was willing to learn more about my country of origin.

The second approach of performed approachability was that of critical accommodation. Critical accommodation is a strategy of silence or going along to get along (Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman, 2017, p. 386). Silence should not be taken literally. I still conversed with research participants to understand their perspectives, but did so without being judgmental and critical. This approach was employed so research participants could speak freely without feeling judged, criticised, or looked down upon. Given the subject's sensitivity, it was important that participants felt secure in sharing their information.

The third approach, which I refer to as performed approachability, is one that I call the non-aligned approach. With this method, the researcher demonstrates that they are a neutral party not affiliated with any institution that could harm the interests or image of the research participants. I did this by explicitly stating that I was a student from abroad and that the knowledge gathered would be used solely for research purposes, and that their identity would under no circumstances ever be disclosed.

Perceived approachability

There are two main ways in which I observed the research participants perceived my approachability. The first is an approachable young man, considered to have a non-threatening demeanour and someone who cares about Angola. Being approachable was also connected to ethnic similarities between the research participants and me (skin colour, place of birth, and language), as well as my social status as a PhD student at Leiden University and a lecturer at THUAS, and my foreignness, which provided an element of intrigue. The second way I was perceived was as a foreign, outsider, and potentially unsafe. Interestingly, some characteristics that made me approachable had the opposite effect on others. This was particularly true for high-ranking police and public officers, who were distant during our conversations and more cautious in their statements, perhaps because they had much more at stake than other professionals. This perhaps explains why they were more challenging to recruit for interviews, and when they agreed to be interviewed, they refused to be recorded. Initially, communities in the informal urban settlements also perceived me as not too approachable. During my first visits, the residents of the informal urban settlements were not so eager to participate in the research. This changed after multiple visits, thanks to my connection with the gatekeeper, who introduced me as his cousin, giving residents the feeling that I could be trusted.

2.5 Limitations

In their latest reports, various renowned international non-governmental organisations, including Human Rights Watch (2023, pp. 29-33), Amnesty International (2023, pp. 72-74), and Freedom House (2023), reported that Angola remains a country where the Angolan government structurally violates human rights. The latest report rated Angola as 'Not Free' in the Freedom in

the World Index[3]. According to the latest report of the United States Department of State on Human Rights, "human rights issues in Angola included credible reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by government security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention; political prisoners or detainees; serious restrictions on free expression and the press, including violence, threats of violence or unjustified arrests against journalists, censorship, and enforcement or threat to enforce criminal libel laws; interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly; serious government corruption; lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence; and crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons" (United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, 2023).

Angolan government institutions, including the police, are very secretive and suspicious of those who want to look behind the door. Foreign researchers interested in investigating politics, governance, human rights, and related subjects are not welcomed with open arms and cannot operate in total openness. Therefore, caution is necessary to ensure the safety and security of both the researcher and research participants. The attitude of Angolan authorities also had consequences for my research. Many high-ranking provincial and national-level officials declined to participate in the research, often employing what I refer to as the *technique de fatigue*, a method of wearing down or discouraging the researcher through persistent delays, evasiveness, or nonresponsiveness. I was invited to their offices and had to wait for three to four hours only to be told that the person could no longer see me, day after day, until I eventually decided not to return. Those officials who agreed to be interviewed often preferred not to be recorded or named in the research. The secretive attitude of authorities also results in limited publicly available data on issues related to local security and policing, which are often produced by local authorities.

Another limitation was my restricted access to Cazenga. For safety reasons, I was advised not to be in Cazenga after sunset due to the high risk of robbery. Additionally, less assistance is available in emergencies because fewer people are present. I also could not access certain regions

[3] Freedom in the World is a yearly survey and report by the U.S.-based non-governmental organisation Freedom House that measures the degree of civil liberties and political rights in every nation and significant related and disputed territories around the world.

of Cazenga during the day, as these were areas where my gatekeeper had no connections and was aware that youth gangs were very active.

Chapter 3 Precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras in Angola

The waves of modernity that have swept through the city of Luanda may lead many to believe that in Angola, "the past is a foreign country" (Varanda, 2015, p. 126). However, a closer examination of Angolan history reveals that contemporary Angola is the product of a series of historical processes that have shaped the actions of local, regional, and international actors, who constantly renegotiate their positions in Angola (ibid). Without considering its past, it is nearly impossible to comprehend the complexities of present-day Angolan society. The precolonial and colonial histories still heavily inform the relationships between the state and society, as well as between various ethnolinguistic groups. This chapter has a dual purpose. First, it offers a concise overview of Angola's historical development from the pre-colonial era to the end of Portuguese rule. Second, it provides the context needed to understand contemporary Angola and to locate and interpret the fieldwork findings within the country's historical trajectory.

The precolonial era in Angola is a difficult period to study due to the scarcity of data (Silva, 2019, p. 128). Its history from 1500 onwards is well documented (Vansina & Obenga, 1992, p. 546) thanks to the local oral tradition, which, through memory, has preserved important memories, and to foreign authors, mainly Portuguese and Italian, e.g. António de Oliveira de Cadornega, responsible for three volumes entitled General History of the Angolan Wars, and Duarte Lopes & Filippo Pigafetta (an Italian humanist), who together published Relação do Reino do Congo e das Regiões Circunvizinhas (Costa & Pereira, 2018, p. 42). However, it is essential to carefully analyse written and oral documentary sources, as some may reflect external views often laden with stereotypes and misinterpretations of local values and norms. To overcome these limitations, this study draws on various documentary sources, including books, dissertations, and articles from renowned Angolan historians such as Alberto Oliveira Pinto, as well as international scholars and researchers.

3.1 Peoples and languages of Angola

Angola is a country situated on the west coast of Southern Africa. It is the seventh-largest country in Africa and, after Brazil, the second-largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world

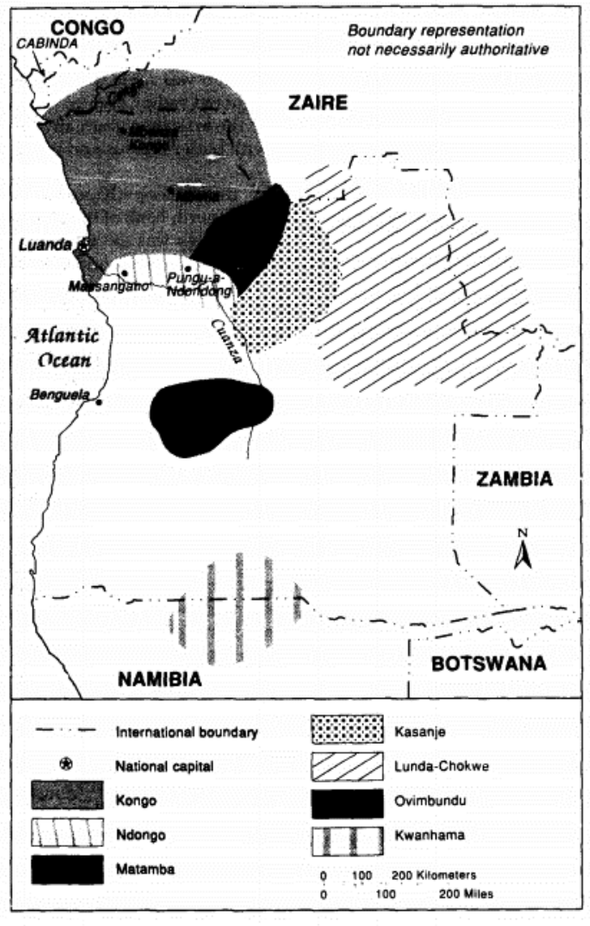
by both area and population. The diplomatic definition of Angola's current borders was delimited by agreements between Portugal, France, Belgium, England, and Germany/South Africa between 1886 and 1926 (Silva, 2019, p. 132). "These agreements have arbitrarily separated ethnolinguistic groups and destroyed the precolonial kingdoms constituted over several centuries of Bantu migratory movements" (Luansi, 2003, p. 1). To illustrate, i) the Bakongo were divided between the two Congos and Angola; (ii) the Lunda were divided between the Belgian Congo, Zambia and Angola; (iii) the Ovambos and Herero were divided between the colonial territories of Angola and South-West Africa (current Namibia) (ibid).

Angola has a size of approximately 1,246,700 square kilometres, including the exclave of Cabinda (Collelo, 1989, p. 16). To give an idea of the country's size, it is comparable to the combined areas of France, Spain, and England (Wheeler, Pélissier, Pereira, & Almeida, 2009, p. 26). It borders Namibia to the south, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the north, Zambia to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The exclave province of Cabinda borders the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Angola currently has an estimated population of 33.097.671 (Cristóvão, 2022). Its capital province, Luanda, contains the largest number of inhabitants, 9,079,811 (ibid.); i.e., over 25% of Angola's population.

Historical records indicate that the San were among the earliest known inhabitants of present-day Angola and are identified in the literature by names such as Kung, Mukuankala, Ovasekele, and Khoisan (Pinto, 2016, p. 46). Europeans referred to the San as *Bushmen*, a term attributed to the Dutch, who used the terms *Bosjesman* and *Hottentot* at the Cape of Good Hope in the seventeenth century (Pinto, 2016, p. 46). This study uses the term *San*, which was endorsed by San political representatives at regional meetings in 1998 and 2003, attended by San from Angola, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, as the preferred general term for referring to the many distinct San groups (Begbie-Clench & Bassimba, 2018).

Fig. 2: Major Angolan Kingdoms in Angola

Source: Collelo, T. (1989). Area Handbook Series: Angola: A Country Study.



The San people have historically been associated with mobile hunter-gatherer livelihoods based on hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants. As a result of the southward expansion of the Bantu-speaking peoples in the Northern part of today's Angola during the first millennium A.D., the San people lost their predominance in the region (Collelo, 1989, p. 5). Today, the San people form a minority ethnic group in Angola, numbering between 10,000 and 20,000 people. They live in the southern provinces of Angola in Namibe, Huila, Cuando Cubanco, and Moxico.

The Bantu people progressively expanded into the area corresponding to the present-day Angolan territory in small groups and waves, with varying time intervals (Pinto, 2016, p. 46). The term "Bantu" results from the combination of "ntu" plus the prefix "ba," which means "human beings" or "people" (Lima, 2006, p. 86). The Bantu, that is, the Bantu language

groups, share an origin in terms of the languages they speak and cultural aspects. According to various sources, the Bantu people began migrating from the rainforest near the Nigeria-Cameroon border (Pinto, 2016, p. 47). They brought iron-melting skills and agricultural and pastoralist practices, which they used to develop lineage-based villages (Ball, 2017). The Bantu people settled in Angola between 1300 and 1600; some may have arrived earlier. The Bantu formed several historically significant kingdoms from which Kongo and Ndongo kingdoms played a substantial role in the development of Angola's history. The territorial limits of the kingdoms, as shown in figure 2, should not be understood as fixed boundaries. According to Herbst (cited in Silva, 2019, p. 128), the conception of fixed borders was not a characteristic of Bantu Kingdoms. "The nature of authority was based on social regulation of humans, regardless of spatial limits, and not on the control of permanent territorial space" (ibid). Other kingdoms in the region were Matamba, Kasanje, and Lunda-Chokwe, located east of Ndongo; Bie, Bailundu, and Ciyaka, situated on the plateau east of Benguela; and Kwanhama (also spelt Kwanyama), located near what is now the border between Angola and Namibia.

Most of the current Angolan population is believed to be of Bantu origin. The so-called *'Cartas etnicas de Angola'* ethnic map of Angola initiated by Ferreira Diniz in 1918 and improved later, first by Jose Redinha, then by Lopes Cardoso and Mesquitela Lima, divided the Angolan Bantu peoples according to the languages spoken throughout the territory, from north to south: Bakongo (Kikongo-speaking), the Mbundu (Kimbundu-speaking), the Lunda-Kiokos (predominantly Kioko or Tuchokwe-speaking), the Ovimbundu (Umbundu-speaking), the Nganguela (Tchingangela-speaking), the Ovambo (Ambo-speaking), Herero (the Linguatchiherero) and the Vaxindonga (Xindongo-speaking).

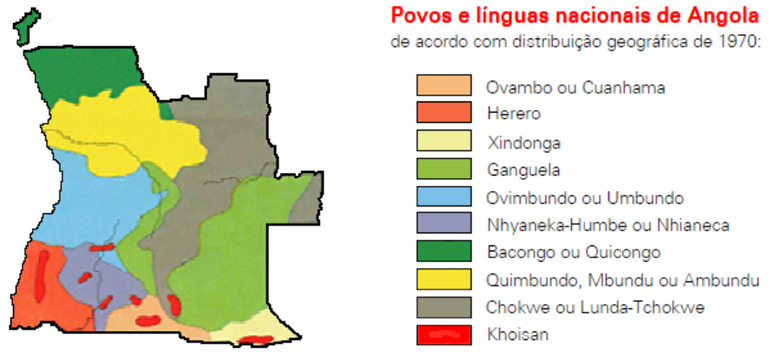


Fig. 3 Map of the distribution of the ethnic groups of Angola. The Khoisan group, scattered throughout the south, is the only non-Bantu group and represents the previous occupants of the territory before the arrival of the Bantu.

3.2 The Kongo and Ndongo kingdoms

The Kongo Kingdom, formed by Kikongo speakers, arose between the mid-1300s and the mid-1400s in an area overlapping the present-day border between Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was the region's most prominent, influential, and politically well-organised Kingdom (Collelo, 1989, p. 6) and, according to various scholars, the first African Kingdom on the west coast of Central Africa to come into contact with Europeans. The earliest contact occurred in 1483 when Diogo Cão reached the mouth of the Congo Rivier (Birmingham, 2015). In terms of territorial division, the Kongo kingdom is usually divided into six provinces: Soyo, Mbamba, Nsundi, Mpango, Mbata and Mpemba. Each province of the Kingdom had a capital named after it, Mbanza Nsundi for the province of Nsundi (De Maret, 2002, p. 2). In addition to these provinces, there were independent states and chiefdoms, such as the Mbundu in the northeast, named Ndongo (Santos, 1964). The provinces comprised many mbanzas and lubatas, which were similar to cities and villages. The Kingdom was organised in a centralised, hierarchical structure with the supreme chief king, known as the Manikongo, at the head of the kingdom (Broadhead, 1979). The centre of power was in the capital city, Mbanza Kongo. Currently, the capital of the province of Zaire is located northwest of Angola. The Manikongo administered the territory with a group of nobles who formed the royal council, which had functions such as tax collection, military affairs, judicial duties, and personal service.

The Manikongo appointed the territorial governors, except for the governor of Mbata, and had the right to dismiss governors and other officials as he saw fit. The nobility had no hereditary functions; at every generation, its hierarchy was redefined with the new kings. Another factor favouring centralisation was the existence of a currency issued under the king's control. It consisted of shells of Olivancilaria nana, called nzimbu, which came from the fishing grounds of the Island of Luanda, part of the kingdom. There was also military centralisation. In the late sixteenth century, the royal guard, composed of enslaved people, was 16000 to 20000 strong and was the sole standing armed force of the Kingdom. During war abroad, the peasants were called up in territorial units (Vansina & Obenga, 1992, p. 551). The king of Kongo was baptised in 1491 by the Portuguese, who gave him the name of their King, *João* (De Maret, 2002, p. 1). His successor, Afonso I, the longest-reigning king in Kongo's history, from 1506 to 1543, played a crucial role in the history of the making of Angola. It is said that he opened the Kingdom to Portugal, setting in train a vast economic and political reorganisation and a deliberate assimilation of Christian features that was to prove permanent. Ironically, centuries later, the Bakongo people carried out the first severe attacks on Portuguese civilians and administration, leading to the War of Liberation in Angola.

The territories of the then-called Kingdom of Ndongo comprised strips of land between two important rivers in the region: the Kwanza and the Bengo. It was surrounded by important kingdoms in Central West Africa, with the Kongo Kingdom to the north, the Ovimbundu Kingdom to the south, the Chokwe-Lwena peoples to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The Ndongo Kingdom was inhabited by the Mbundu, a people of Bantu origin, who spoke Kimbundu. According to Jan Vansina (as cited in de Carvalho, 2011, p. 8), they migrated to the region in search of areas with better agricultural potential.

The leading authority in the kingdom of Ndongo, who was tributary to the king of Kongo, was entitled Ngola - A - Killwanji, or Ngola Kasanje, who also appears named in texts as Kasanze, Caçanze, Casanze, Quasanze, Cazzanzi, Casangi (Caregnato, 2011, p. 12), a title that gave rise to the Portuguese designation Angola for their conquests (da Silva). In the 16th century, Ngola gained political independence with the battle of Ndande (1556) when they defeated the ManiKongo. After independence, the power of the Ngola became more far-reaching (Costa &

Pereira, 2018, p. 48). The Ngola was considered sacred, possessing special powers that guaranteed fertility, rainfall and the community's well-being (Fonseca, 2014, p. 116).
The political and governance structures in the Ndongo region differed from the Kongo Kingdom; they were less centralised, but the ideology was almost identical (Vansina & Obenga, 1992, p. 555). As put by Birmingham (as cited in de Carvalho, 2011, p. 9), "Contrary to the Kongo where, for example, a Mani Mbata was governor of the province of Mbata, a Mani Mbamba governor of the province of Mbamba and so on, in Ndongo, there were no governors of provinces. Each of these regions was divided into numerous chiefdoms (Sobados), mostly autonomous. The Sobados were "political units" with a leading head, known as a Soba. Soba enjoyed relatively political autonomy since they were in regions of difficult access, which made the direct influence of the Ngola impossible. In these areas, the power of Ngola was more symbolic than concrete (Costa & Pereira, 2018, p. 48). The sobas' responsibilities included the right to issue death sentences, the obligation to provide military support in case of threats to the Ngola's power and the payment of taxes (ibid). According to Costa and Pereira (2018, p. 9), this organisational difference between Kongo and Ndongo was decisive in defining the Portuguese goal in the region. Concentrating efforts to challenge the sovereignty of Ndongo's Ngola with its Sobas would be more advantageous than the Manikongo with the provincial Manis. The Ngola had an administrative entourage comprising various royal officials. The Makotas acted as "ministers" and were generally older men who assisted him in decision-making and had the right to vote in his succession. They also served as advisors in military campaigns (Costa & Pereira, 2018, p. 46). For an overview of the principal offices and their functions, see Table 1.

Table 1: Key offices in Ndongo administration (16th–17th centuries)

Source: Costa & Pereira, 2018, p. 47

Office (local term)	Role (short)	Key functions/responsibilities	Notes
Soba (plural: Sobas)	Local chief heading a *sobado* (chiefdom)	Levy taxes; provide troops to the Ngola; exercise capital jurisdiction within the domain	Sobados were largely autonomous due to terrain/distance; Ngola's authority often symbolic in outlying areas
Tandala / Tendala	Highest authority after the Ngola; regency during interregna	Administer the kingdom between reigns; safeguard succession	Reported by Cadornega as often filled by enslaved persons to avoid challenges to the Ngola's power
Ngolambole	Head of the army	Report military campaigns to the Ngola; command forces	Importance grew with intensifying warfare
acunzes	Envoys / ambassadors	Represent the Ngola and Sobas in local and foreign affairs; conduct negotiations	Known for gift-exchange practices (e.g., cachaça) in diplomacy
Mani-Ndongo	High priests	Receive foreign missionaries; accompany military campaigns	Older men serving as the Ngola's council
Makotas	Senior royal councillors ("ministers")	Advise on decisions and campaigns; vote on succession matters	Older men serving as the Ngola's council

The presence of Europeans and the intensification of the slave trade on the west coast of Africa from 1514 onwards contributed immensely to the fall of both kingdoms, as slave hunting had become the most profitable activity, eroding morale and clan solidarity. It generated dynastic conflicts and aggravated existing rivalries. These rivalries led to the famous Battle of Ambuila in 1665, in which the Portuguese and the Imbangala (also known as the Jagas) took part, ending in the political-military defeat and death of the King of Kongo (Luansi, 2003, p. 4).

After this battle, Portugal intensified its military conquests to occupy the kingdom of Ndongo. In 1671, Portuguese forces and their Imbangala allies defeated the Ndongo Kingdom and

established a presídio (interior military-administrative outpost) in the capital city of Ndongo (Ball, 2017, p. 5). Nearly two hundred years after the arrival of the Portuguese, the two strongest kingdoms in West Central Africa were militarily defeated, giving the Portuguese more space to organise the slave trade.

3.3 Angola during the colonial period, independence and civil war

The Portuguese colonial presence in Angola lasted four centuries. However, Portugal did not control the territory now known as Angola for such a long period. There was even a period when Portugal lost control of the top posts in Luanda and Benguela. Whoever owned these posts had control over the supply of slaves to Brazil. Between 1641 and 1648, these posts were under Dutch control (Pinto, 2016, p. 342). The exact start date of the colonisation of Angola by the Portuguese is challenging to establish. It was a lengthy and complex process without a clear and coherent plan. A critical event that can be considered one of the beginnings of the colonisation process is the foundation of Luanda in 1576 by Paulo Dias Novais.

In retrospect, the colonisation period of Angola by the Portuguese can be divided into five periods. Diogo Cão's arrival at the Zaire River's mouth in 1483 marks the start of the first contacts and trading activities between the Portuguese and the Kingdom of Kongo. The Kongo people welcomed the Portuguese. Nzinga-a-Nkuvo, the King of Kongo, showed interest in learning the customs of the foreigners and adopting their religion. Relations were at first reasonably peaceful. The Portuguese sought to establish a Christian and commercial community in West Central Africa without resorting to force or conquest (Wheeler et al., 2009, p. 60). They traded beads, wines, spirits, fabrics and other products for large quantities of gold and ivory.

The slave trade marked the second period of colonisation between 1500 and 1885. At the start of the 19th century, the Portuguese transformed Luanda into a slave trading city, with exiled convicts from Portugal and wholesale slave merchants. Slave trading became the primary business activity in Angola and expanded significantly. According to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, roughly five million enslaved people left the ports of West Central Africa during the three centuries between the 1650s and 1860s. The trade in enslaved people impacted all aspects of life in West Central Africa. The demand for captives fuelled wars of conquest, and the importation of firearms to execute those wars led to the collapse of states such as Kongo and Ndongo. The expansions of slavery undermined communities and thus negatively impacted

agricultural production and natural production. The wealth to be accrued from the trade in enslaved people warped the administration of justice because elites could increase their wealth and political authority by selling those convicted of crimes. In 1878, Lisbon abolished slavery in Angola. However, by the 1890s, coffee and cocoa plantations on the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea revived trade in serviçais (servants) who had been acquired as enslaved people. This "modern slavery" continued until 1909, when international pressure forced the Portuguese government to suspend the trade in *serviçais.*

Around 1885, the third colonial stage commenced, lasting until 1910. Wars of military occupation marked this period. It was only in the first half of the 20th century that Portugal consolidated its rule over Angola. It suppressed the last pockets of resistance in the 1920s (Ball, 2017, p. 10) and extended its civil administration across the colony. To maintain colonial rule in the interior of Angola, the Portuguese colonial government adopted a policy of subjugating local chiefs, the Sobas (Fonseca, 2014, p. 117). The Sobas, who agreed to cooperate with the Portuguese colonial power, underwent a vassalage ritual similar to those often employed by Portugal in its overseas conquests (idem). The essential elements of the vassalage contract were, on the part of the vanquished, the declaration of consent, military support, payment of taxes, fidelity and obedience to Portugal, and on the part of the victor, the promise of protection and acceptance of their position. The vassal continued to be free but now owed allegiance and obedience to the Portuguese Crown and was also obliged to cooperate with the colonising projects: to shelter and feed soldiers, merchants and smugglers in their lands; to ally with allies and be enemies of the Portuguese enemies; to give passage to the troops; to keep the trade fairs open in their territory.

Sobas were also obliged to participate in the slave trading business. They had to pay tribute to provide men for the colonial wars in the interior. In the first quarter of the 19th century, after four centuries of interracial contact, intensified trade, and political activity, a new socio-economic class emerged in Luanda and other coastal areas: the *assimilados* (Wheeler et al., 2009, p. 147). *Assimilados* were African or mixed-race people who dressed like Europeans and spoke fluent Portuguese. The cultural pattern of the Angolan *assimilados* was almost exclusively and consciously Portuguese. Most of the *assimilados* were from Luanda, Ambaca, Massagano, Icolo and, Bengo, Malange. They were mainly of Kimbundu origin. *Assimilados* had a privileged

status in the colonial system compared to non-assimilado Africans; they held administrative positions, such as mayor or director of a department, and provided services to the colonial rulers. Matoso da Camara, Sales Almeida, Van Dunem, Africano Ferreiro, José Fontes Pereira, Arantes Braga, Carlos da Silva, and Arseio Carpo are names of assimilado families that, to this day, play a prominent role in Angolan society.

The new political wind in Portugal led to the fourth stage of colonialism in Angola (1910 – 1961). In October 1910, the centuries-old Portuguese monarchy was overthrown and replaced by the First Portuguese Republic. This period was characterised by the capitalist exploitation of Angola, marked by the introduction of new relations of production, forced labour (the so-called Contrato), and the exploitation of plantations, mines, and some factories. Norton de Matos, the governor of Angola from 1912 – 1915, introduced plans to make Angola economically self-reliant, if not profitable for Portugal (Birmingham, 2015, p. 59). He wanted to achieve this by taking the following measures: continuing with railway infrastructure works, initiating a road-building programme, making Angola a colony of white settlers, promoting the end of exchange trade, encouraging the monetary circulation of money, and eliminating the African petty bourgeoisie through administrative and economic measures (L. M. Pacheco, Costa, & Tavares, 2018, p. 93). The growth of the Angolan economy, particularly the export of coffee from 1945, attracted many Portuguese migrants to Angola, seeking better living conditions than those in Portugal. The Portuguese resident population in Angola increased significantly between 1940 and 1960, as shown in Table 2 (Wheeler et al., 2009, p. 205).

Table 2: Number of the Portuguese population resident in Angola between 1900 and 1973
sources: Wheeler et al., 2009, p. 205 and Ball, 2017, p. 14

1900	9177
1920	20 000
1940	44083
1950	78 000
1955	110 000
1960	172, 826
1973	335, 000

During this period, the colony's land administration became more demarcated. Administratively, the territory was divided into districts, councils, administrative posts, City Councils, Municipal Committees and Parish Councils. In the last years of Portuguese colonial presence in Angola, the political-administrative division consisted of 16 districts, 120 counties, 37 Administrative Circumscriptions, 423 Administrative Posts, 72 Municipalities, 47 Municipal Committees, and 34 Parish Councils. The districts had the competence to approve and execute their urban plans and register the population. They reported to the Governor-General, the highest entity in Angola, a sort of President. Councils and Municipal Chambers were reserved for distributing and commercialising water and electricity, as well as for constructing social housing and infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, roads, and gardens (Miguel, 2014, p. 35).

This period was also marked by a break from the liberal governing trends of the 19th century and the emergence of segregationist colonial policies that dominated the early decades of the 20th century (Neto, 2015, p. 121). In 1926, the Portuguese colonial government introduced the Indigenous Statute. 'The old class, gradations of colonial society, were legalistically replaced by the simple two-way barrier between 'citizens and natives'(Birmingham, 2015, p. 64). This Statute made it explicit that Africans and African descendants were not part of the Portuguese nation. They had no political rights regarding institutions of European character and were subject to a poll tax, which replaced the old hut tax. The transition from indigenous to citizen status was left to the discretion of the colony's administrative authorities. To be recognised as civilised under the new ideology, the Africans had, among others, to be over the age of 18, to speak Portuguese correctly, to exercise a profession, art, or trade that guaranteed an income sufficient for their maintenance and that of people in their care, to have good conduct and demonstrate enlightenment and the new habits, prerequisites for the complete application of the public and private rights of Portuguese citizens, and not to have been noted as refractory or a deserter from military services (art.56), these requirements did not however, guarantee the absolute effectiveness of their new status. According to the 1950 population census, 4,145,266 people lived in Angola, of which 4,036,687 were Black Africans, 78,826 were white, and 29,648 were mixed race (Angola, Histórica, & História, 2008, p. 38). During the 1950s, statistics revealed that only a fringe of the Black African population, around 30,089, in the colonial system were granted the status of civilised, which kept them away from compulsory labour, allowed them to work in the organs of the metropolitan administration, have the autonomy to move around within the

colony, request a driver's license, and have the right to vote. Thus, enabling some economic and social ascension (Nascimento, 2016, p. 265). However, most of the African population remained in the condition of the indigenous, which placed them at the bottom rung of the social ladder with all the consequences that would arise from it (Angola et al., 2008, p. 36). The Indigenous Statute created profound societal differences that persisted for decades and remain relevant today (Martins, 2017, p. 102).

On February 4, 1961, the fifth and final period of colonisation in Angola began, marking the start of the Angolan revolution. Wheeler et al. (2009, p. 282) refer to 1961 as the year that Africans in Angola decided to settle accounts with the Portuguese. It is essential to mention that the Angolans have always fought against domination and against the colonial presence in isolated groups in revolts that had no sequence because the repression that followed always ended in the victory of the oppressor. The harsh model of society created by colonial power formed the basis of these revolts and nationalist claims by the African population**.** On the 4th of February of 1961, a group of 80 to 180 men launched an attack on a police station, the São Paulo prison, the military house of reclusion, and a radio station in Luanda. Six days later, on February 10, 1961, a second attempt was made to gain control of the São Paulo prison. The leadership of the attacks was the responsibility of men from the townships of Luanda, who had been gaining political awareness for some time (Fernando, 2012, p. 37). The goals of the attacks are unknown. Did they want to instigate a revolt against the Portuguese? Or did they want to take over the city of Luanda? Fernando (2012, p. 37) claims that the goal was to liberate political prisoners. They were mostly public servants, trade employees, nurses, and students supporting small liberation movements (Bittencourt, 1997, p. 6). The colonial forces pushed the attackers back, resulting in many deaths and injuries on the part of the attackers. Many believe that the attacks failed because only a tiny minority of the Luanda African elite and population in the city dared to publicly show anti-Portuguese feelings, so there was no widespread support for the attackers. The result of the attacks was devastating for the African population in the city of Luanda. There were brutal retaliatory actions by the colonial authorities and the Portuguese population (Pepetela, 1992).

In two statements issued from London and Paris, written in English and French, the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) claimed an active role in the attacks. It accused the

Portuguese colonial government in Angola of being repressive. One of the texts was signed by João Cabral, and the other was signed by Mario Pinto de Andrade and is entitled 'The Luanda Incidents' (Fernando, 2012, p. 38).

The MPLA is one of Angola's three most important liberation movements. According to official documents of the MPLA, the movement was established on December 10, 1956, in Luanda, following the unification of Partido da Luta Unida dos Africanos de Angola (PLUA) with other nationalist groups (Bittencourt, 1997, p. 1). However, doubts about this date persist to this day. Pepetela, a pseudonym of Artur Carlos Mauricio Pestana dos Santos, one of Angola's most respected writers in Portuguese-speaking countries, reveals in his book *A Geração da Utopia* that many Angolan students living in Portugal in 1961 were surprised upon discovering the emergence of the MPLA and the fact that this movement claimed the responsibility of the events of the 4th of February in Luanda. Until that date, according to the story told in the book, there was only awareness of the União das Populações de *Angola* (UPA), a liberation movement from northern Angola, which was created in 1954 (Pepetela, 1992). The former Health Minister and Member of Parliament for the MPLA**,** Mário Afonso "Cassessa", now aged 91, believes that it is possible that the MPLA was only formed after 1961, following the amalgamation of the small parties that existed up to that point (Bittencourt, 1997, p. 17). "In 1982, Mário Pinto de Andrade, one of the founding fathers of the MPLA and an Angolan social scientist, when asked by an interviewer to confirm that the MPLA was founded at a congress in Luanda on 10 December 1956, he replied that neither the date nor the place was correct. He stated that the party was founded in Conakry in 1960, where MPLA leaders were exiled (Inglês, 2017, p. 45).

Claiming 1956 as the MPLA's year of foundation and Luanda as the site of that foundation was part of a political battle: it sought to show that MPLA was founded before 1958, the alleged year of the foundation of another strong liberation movement, the Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) at that time known as UPA, and in Luanda, the central city of Angola, instead Conakry, a distant country unknown to Angolans (Inglês, 2017, p. 46). The MPLA, originally a Marxist-Leninist-oriented group (though now formally social democratic), was composed of urban intellectual elites, mainly from the capital city of Luanda, who had studied in the former capital of the Portuguese Empire, Lisbon, or other European capitals. They were children of *assimilados* or had Creole origins, as evidenced by the surnames of their leaders: Neto, Lara,

Nascimento, Alves, Andrade, and Santos. It included whites, blacks and mixed-race Angolan individuals (Fernando, 2012, p. 159). Its ethnic base was the Mbumbu (about 23 per cent of the population) (Roque, 2009, p. 138).

MPLA interpreted colonialism as an instrument of imperialism by which people were subjected to political, economic and cultural oppression and exploitation (Inglês, 2017, p. 46). Political independence was the essential first stage in constructing an alternative society. According to MPLA, the war was anti-colonial but also anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. MPLA would accept the allegedly modern condition of Angola built during colonisation (including Portuguese as the official language), but intended to correct the systemic barriers that allowed for the reproduction of social inequalities (Inglês, 2017, p. 47). Socialism was the state model pursued to achieve a utopian postcolonial society (Inglês, 2017, p. 46).

Although unsuccessful, the February 1961 attacks gave the anti-colonial struggle a national stamp. It opened the first significant breach in the wall of silence surrounding the Portuguese colonies. However, it was the violence and breadth of the March uprising northwest of Angola that brought Portugal to war with the Angolan independence liberation movements (Neto, 2018). On March 15, 1961, in northern Angola, trained men and mobilised peasants blocked roads. They launched an assault on everything in the region that represented Portuguese rule, including farms, administrative posts, villages, and plantations (Neto, 2018). The attack aimed to provoke a general uprising against Portuguese rule and destroy everything representing the settlers (Fraga, 2014, p. 17). Hundreds of settlers and an undetermined number of mixed-race and black *assimilados* were killed in the attacks in the first few days, without distinction of sex or age. Many settlers took refuge in Luanda (Ngonda, 2020, p. 50). The Portuguese colonists retaliated with blind violence against the African population. Tens of thousands of men, women and children were killed. Families were wiped out, and entire villages disappeared. At the end of 1961, the UN counted 200 thousand Angolans as refugees in Congo-Léopoldville, and many more were hiding in the forests (Neto, 2018).

The attacks on the 15th of March 1961 were claimed by the U*nião das Populações de Angola (*UPA), originally known as the Union of Peoples of Northern Angola (*União das Populações do Norte de Angola* – UPNA), was established by Holden Roberto in opposition to the Portuguese government in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), Congo on July 14, 1958 (Collelo & DIV, 1989, p. 27). In

March 1962, the UPA joined with another small Kongo nationalist group, the Democratic Party of Angola (Partido Democrático de Angola—PDA), to form the FNLA, National Front for the Liberation of Angola (*Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola),* Holden Roberto remained the leader of the movement (Collelo & DIV, 1989, p. 29). The FNLA is primarily composed of people of Bakongo origin. Its influence was almost entirely Zairian in habits, customs, and language, with a better command of French than Portuguese (Fernando, 2012, p. 159). Of the three movements, FNLA was seen as most strongly tied to its ethnic roots (Brinkman, 2003, p. 197). FNLA had the same diagnosis of colonialism as the MPLA, even though it saw colonialists as invaders. According to the FLNA, colonialism had attempted to destroy the ancient Kongo Kingdom, which, according to the movement, was not destroyed but persisted in the traditions of the people. The dichotomy was perceived not as one between oppressor and oppressed, the MPLA's perspective, but rather as one between invaders and natives. Anti-colonialism was seen as a precondition for restoring native power (Inglês, 2017, p. 47). A perspective that automatically places *assimilados* and mixed-race people as part of the problem.

After the March revolt, the Portuguese colonial administration realised that something fundamental had to change in colonial politics to prevent further African rebellions. The Portuguese government introduced reforms in the colonial system to integrate Africans into the Portuguese *space* in Angola. The first measure taken was the abolition of the Statute of Indigenous Peoples on May 31, 1962, and all complementary legislation relating to forced labour. All the indigenous people automatically had the status of citizens (Ngonda, 2020, p. 50). Road infrastructure was improved, extending the network of roads to reach the most remote areas of Angola. Ports and airports were also expanded. The colonial government adopted a generalised national education system, which Africans classified as indigenous before 1962 had no access to. Teacher training programmes and primary schools for general education were opened in all districts.

However, these changes did not result in the desired effects. After 15 March 1961, a large part of the Angolan population wanted only one thing: to be liberated from the Portuguese occupiers. The attacks in the north of Angola started the *annus horribilis* for the colonial regime in Angola. Losing Angola was not an option for Salazar, as Angola was seen as the crown jewel of the Portuguese empire. "In 1967, a total of 58 political movements and 26 socio-economic

associations were founded by Angolans. Many were active in Léopoldville/Kinshasa, and many were initiated by Angolans from the North (Brinkman, 2003, p. 205). MPLA and FNLA, and later the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), were the most prominent organisations that garnered much international support.

The UNITA was founded in March 1966 in the province of Moxico in Angola, with 18 initial founders, by Jonas Malheiro Savimbi. UNITA found its base among the Ovimbundu people (37 per cent of the population) of the central high plateau in the provinces of Huambo, Bié, Benguela, Moxico, and Cuando Cubango (Roque, 2009, p. 138). Savimbi, Chitunda, Jamba, Dembo, Wanga, and Chiwale are names associated with traditional families from Bailundo, Huambo, and various eastern regions in Angola. Ideologically, as defined by the congresses and following the guidelines of Jonas Savimbi, UNITA declared itself Marxist-Leninist, but was influenced by Maoism (Fernando, 2012, p. 159). Like the MPLA, UNITA believed in a modern Angola; however, like the FNLA, it saw the impact of such modernisation as the impoverishment of Angolans, especially the peasants. UNITA highlighted the dichotomy between cities and villages: cities were modern and wealthy but corrupt and somehow racist, while villages, although poor and exploited, were where traditions were kept alive. The revolution was intended to balance this dichotomy (Inglês, 2017, p. 47).

Despite several attempts to collaborate, the three movements operated exceptionally independently of one another. Additionally, during the struggle against the Portuguese, tensions between the three freedom movements also increased. There was much mistrust, with accusations being thrown back and forth and what would nowadays be called fake news being spread. For example, according to FNLA, the MPLA members who came to Conakry in the 1960s (in exile) were subjects of great suspicion. It was said that they were part of an international communist movement and not genuine Africans, but a foreign movement consisting of privileged urban mixed-race and *assimilados* individuals. lucio Lara, Eduardo dos Santos, and Viriato da Cruz were of mixed race. Mario Pinto de Andrade would be called a *fula* today, and Matias Migueis was the only genuine African (Fernando, 2012, p. 70). This discourse was also utilised later in the 1990s during the civil war by UNITA to contrast UNITA's Africanness with the MPLA's near-white oppression (Brinkman, 2003, pp. 199-200). UPA/FNLA claimed to be the voice of the poor black Africans in contrast to the elitist MPLA. On the other hand, the MPLA

accused the UPA/FNLA of having ordered the indiscriminate killing of non-blacks during the revolt in March 1961, where *mestiços* belonging to the MPLA were also killed during the attacks. MPLA stated that the FLNA was a tribal, backwards and evil organisation (Brinkman, 2003, p. 198). MPLA also emphasised that the FNLA was a foreign party, its leadership had no ties with Angola, and the movement could only survive because of Mobutu's support. UNITA, for its part, described the FNLA as clannish and corrupt and the MPLA as bourgeois, corrupt and former slave traders (Inglês, 2017, p. 48).

The Liberation War continued until 1974; that year, the Portuguese government of Marcelo Caetano, which had replaced Salazar in 1968, was overthrown by a military coup. The young army captains who assumed power decided not to continue the war in Angola and cease the country's occupation. Fernando (2012, p. 148) claims that the coup surprised the Angolan liberation movements, which were on the losing side at the time. However, although the coup d'état in Portugal played a significant role in Angola's independence, it would be erroneous to conclude that independence was granted to Angola by Portugal following the coup d'état. Angolan independence is the result of years of bloody struggle against the Portuguese colonists, during which thousands died, both colonists and Africans. As Ngonda (2020, p. 7) put it, Angola Independent is a story of blood and tears. On January 15, 1975, under heavy international pressure, the colonial power and the three movements, FLNA. The MPLA and UNITA signed the Alvor Agreement in Portugal, which provided for a transitional government, a constitution, elections, and independence (Meijer & Birmingham, 2004, p. 13). The three movements settled in Luanda, accompanied by their militaries, where they awaited Independence Day, scheduled for November 11. The animosity between the three liberation movements increased in the run-up to independence. It was as if the common enemy was no longer there; the movements had more time and resources to fight each other. The first clashes occurred shortly after the Alvor meetings in February 1975, with FLNA attacking areas controlled by MPLA in Luanda and the north. In July, the MPLA expelled UNITA and FNLA from the Angolan capital. In August, UNITA allied with FNLA against the MPLA. Apart from Luanda, incidents and clashes were also recorded in other major cities, including Benguela, Lubango (Sa da Bandeira), Lobito, Moçâmedes, and Huambo (formerly *Nova Lisboa)* (Fernando, 2012, p. 159).

At 00:00 on November 11, 1975, in a candlelight ceremony, and without consulting the other liberation movements, Agostinho Neto, President of the MPLA, proclaimed Angola's independence (Camba, 2018, p. 8). It was far from an uncontested event. The MPLA hardly controlled Luanda as it was battling the Zaire-backed soldiers of the FNLA to the north. South of Luanda, MPLA's forces, with essential backing from Cuban troops, defended Luanda against a South African invasion, with UNITA's troops occupying the areas behind the South African advance (Orre, 2010, p. 4). "Article 2 of the 1975 constitution announced that the MPLA party was vested with the status of the only lawful political party in Angola, with the constitutional mandate to exercise complete control over the state and all its organs" (Thomashausen, 2016, p. 183). On the contrary, UNITA and FNLA jointly proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Angola in the city of Huambo (formerly known as Nova Lisboa). International recognition favoured the MPLA; 41 of the 46 African states grouped in the Organisation of African Unity, as well as Western countries such as France, the United Kingdom, and Portugal, recognised the MPLA as the legitimate power of the new African nation (Fernando, 2012, p. 182).

The FNLA, UNITA, and many Angolans viewed Portugal's recognition as a betrayal. This was because Portugal intended to hand over power to the MPLA from the outset of the Alvor Agreements; the negotiations were merely a ruse. Rosa Coutinho, president of the Portuguese transitional government in Angola in 1974, admitted that Portugal always supported the MPLA due to the leaders' closeness to Portuguese culture. "*The MPLA was the only movement that had behind it a culture; there was no writer, no singer, no painter, in short, no cultural elite in Angola who was not a member of the MPLA. The MPLA continues to be the only movement that likes red wine and potatoes with cod,"* thus Coutinho (Etu Mwêlê Sul - EMS TV, n.d.).

The period after 1975 is a story of a war between the MPLA government and the UNITA guerrilla movement. Not long after Angola's independence, the FNLA lost its military power. According to Meijer Birmingham (2004, p. 15), the independent Angolan state emerged from turmoil and violence amid intense national, regional, and global rivalries. It was a war between the two movements, dividing Angola into ethnic and ideological camps that corresponded to the conflicting parties. A division that still exists today within the Angolan society. Angola's conflict assumed international significance, with the Soviet Union and Cuba backing the MPLA, and the United States and South Africa backing UNITA. This foreign interference helped to keep the

hostilities alive for over a decade (Roque, 2009, p. 138). In her book, Orphan of the Cold War, Marget Joan Anstee describes how Angola was dragged into a geopolitical conflict during the Cold War. The civil war in Angola lasted for 27 years (1975-2002), ending with the death of the UNITA leader Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, killed in an ambush by the MPLA troops, the Forças Armadas Angolanas (FAA), ironically in the birthplace of UNITA, in the province of Moxico.

3.4 From colonial policing to the PNA: institutional legacies

The origins of most African police forces are rooted in measures aimed at securing colonial regimes through coercive means (Beek et al., 2017, p. 17). Angola is no exception. The history of the Angolan police can be divided into three key periods: the colonial period, the transition period, and the post-independence period (Ventura, 2010). This section traces the evolution of policing from the colonial period through the transition and early post-independence reforms. overview. Although Angola's police formally originated during the colonial era, pre-colonial kingdoms had their own order-maintenance systems based on customary authorities and dispute resolution practices.

In Angola, the police were established in 1837 when Governor-General Manuel Bernardes Vidal founded the Companhia de Segurança Pública (CSP) in Luanda, marking the beginning of organised state policing in the country. It was primarily responsible for defending Luanda and enforcing city policing (Sá, 2013, p. 11). By 1877, Decree No. 8 of February 27 led to the formation of the Corpo de Polícia de Luanda, based on the existing CSP structure. Its mandate included maintaining public order and security, as well as enforcing municipal regulations, particularly those concerning public health and sanitation. On March 15, 1877, the Corpo de Polícia de Luanda was upgraded to a police company, functioning as an auxiliary force under administrative authority while remaining subject to military discipline (Sá, 2013, p. 12).

By 1894, a reform proposal sought to integrate various security forces, including mounted police and artillery units, into a structured policing system for major urban centres such as Luanda and Benguela. In the early 20th century, further transformations took place. In 1911, the Corpo de Cipaios (Native Police Corps) was established. This force, composed of indigenous personnel, operated under Portuguese supervision and was primarily tasked with enforcing colonial laws among African communities (Eugénio, 2010, p. 8). Today, the term "Cipaio" is frequently used pejoratively to describe Angolans who, in the perception of others, act against the public interest

by favouring the regime or external actors, essentially viewing this as a form of betrayal. In 1923, the Portuguese administration formalised the Corpo de Polícia da Província de Angola, replacing earlier structures to professionalise the police service. Despite this reform, the police remained militarised and directly subordinate to the colonial governor, reinforcing their role as enforcers of state authority rather than protectors of public safety (Sá, 2013, p. 13).

Further reorganisations took place in 1929 and 1935, consolidating the Polícia de Segurança Pública da Colônia de Angola. Legislative changes aligned Angola's policing structures with those of mainland Portugal, prioritising efficiency in law enforcement over addressing the needs of the local population. By the 1940s and 1950s, the colonial police expanded significantly to suppress the rising anti-colonial resistance. Special investigative and paramilitary units focused on criminal investigations and intelligence gathering, including the Polícia de Segurança Pública de Angola (PSPA). In 1961, at the height of the Angolan War of Independence (1961–1975), the International and State Defence Police (PIDE) was bolstered. This was a highly repressive force under Portugal's Estado Novo regime, established by Decree-Law No. 35 046 of 22 October 1945. In addition to its role in political repression, the PIDE was also responsible for managing foreigners and border control services, among other duties (Sá, 2013, p. 14). The PIDE remains indelibly etched in the memory of many Angolans. Often, when I conversed with individuals over the age of 60 and inquired about the decolonisation period, they frequently referred to the PIDE as a feared organisation among Angolans.

Following Angola's independence in 1975, the police force underwent a radical transformation. Under the transitional government, the PSPA was renamed the Corpo de Polícia de Angola (CPA) and placed under the joint administration of the Ministry of the Interior and the National Defence Commission (Sá, 2013, p. 21). The CPA incorporated members from the former colonial police, along with recruits from the liberation movements MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA (Ventura, 2010). As part of the integration process, 300 combatants joined the police force, 100 from MPLA, 100 from UNITA, and 100 from FNLA (António, 2023, p. 42). The CPA operated as a paramilitary organisation responsible for maintaining public order and tranquillity, preventing and suppressing crime and illicit activities, and protecting public and private property (António, 2023, p. 43).

In 1976, the government restructured law enforcement into the Corpo de Polícia Popular de Angola (CPPA), reflecting the socialist orientation of the People's Republic of Angola. The state directly controlled the CPPA, reinforcing a highly centralised policing model prioritising political loyalty over professional law enforcement (Ventura, 2010). By 1993, amid political and economic reforms, Angola's police force was renamed the Polícia Nacional de Angola (PNA). This marked a shift towards a professional and modernised policing system, aiming to adapt to the realities of a post-conflict society. Legislative changes, such as Decree-Law No. 20/93, established specialised units like the Emergency Police, which was later renamed the Rapid Intervention Police (PIR) (Ventura, 2010). Despite these reforms, the PNA still functions as a centralised and militarised organisation, with hierarchical structures inherited from colonial and socialist periods. Sá (2013) points out that Angola's governance model remains dominated by former military officers in police leadership, emphasising a command-and-control style over public service. This institutional legacy partly explains persistent problems like police brutality, accountability gaps, and low public trust.

Over the long term, three patterns recur: local authorities are often integrated into broader governance projects; there is a consistent preference for centralised administration; and the security apparatus operates under hierarchical, militarised logics. These patterns are evident historically, in the vassalage of sobas and sobados, in colonial indirect rule, and later in one-party rule under the MPLA (1975–1991/92), which channelled local structures through CAPs, Residents'/People's Committees, and mass organisations. Colonial administration normalised rule from the centre and limited local autonomy. After independence, the police organisation continued this pattern, being consolidated into the Polícia Nacional de Angola (PNA). These legacies influenced politics after 2002: the end of the war brought peace, but it left the deeper structures of rule intact, as shown in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Post-civil war Angola: the power of the MPLA

"*Embarking on a road to democracy is one thing, and sustaining a democratic moment is quite another. Put somewhat differently, it is easy to put together a democracy roadmap and begin a journey on a democratic path, but rather difficult to ensure that the democratic moment is both sustainable and irreversible" (Khabela Matlosa 2008, p 5 as cited in Blaauw, 2014, p. 123).*

Since the end of the civil war in 2002, Angola has entered a new period of political consolidation, in which historical practices of centralisation, party–state fusion, and the integration of local authorities have been reorganised rather than discarded. Recent research increasingly portrays Angola as less a transitioning democracy and more an authoritarian regime that employs democratic elements to maintain its grip on power. (Blaauw, 2014; Bye et al., 2025; Roque, 2009).

This chapter explores how the MPLA has reinforced authoritarian rule across both national and local levels. It details how constitutional reforms, the merging of party and state functions, and strategic patronage have enhanced the MPLA's control since 2002. Additionally, it emphasises how governance frequently favours regime and elite interests. By doing so, the chapter enhances understanding of authoritarian resilience in Angola and reveals the specific mechanisms that organise and sustain governance in practice.

4.1 Angola's political solar system: the MPLA as the sun, the Presidency as gravity

The MPLA in Angola is more than just a political party; it functions as the central axis around which Angolan society revolves, much like planets orbiting the sun. At the core of this system stands the president, whose influence, like gravity, shapes the movements and dynamics of the political order. Following the 2002 ceasefire, the MPLA consolidated its dominance in Angola, effectively establishing itself as a hegemon. The remaining UNITA guerrilla structures were disbanded, and elements of their leadership were incorporated into the MPLA. While UNITA was officially included in the Government of National Unity and Reconciliation (GURN), it was clear who held the power: The MPLA, led by President José Eduardo dos Santos (1979-2017) before handing the power to João Lourenço in 2017(Orre, 2010, p. 1).

In the first post-war election, held in 2008, the MPLA won 191 of the 220 directly elected seats in the National Assembly. Although the legal framework for free and fair elections was in place in the 2008 post-war elections, the opposition party never stood a chance against the gigantic MPLA campaign. The opposition received funds for the election at a very late stage of the campaign. It was not until late July, however, that the Council of Ministers (not the National Assembly) approved US$17 million to fund the campaigns of all the parties and coalitions for the September 5 balloting (Roque, 2009, p. 142). MPLA controlled all the state resources, including the media and the treasury. As an Angolan independent consultant, Fernando Pacheco said, "*The confusion between party structures and State administration remains. It has been shocking to observe how public media were manipulated by the MPLA during the August 2008 electoral campaign, adopting a clear posture of propaganda. Many civil servants in Angola did nothing in August 2008 but work for the MPLA's campaign. The Public Treasury should demand payment from the MPLA for at least part of the expenses incurred due to the presidential campaign trips made during August that served the party's strategy for a smashing victory at the polls"(2009, p. 11).*

It is estimated that the MPLA's 2008 campaign cost $300 million, likely funded by donations from Sonangol and Endiama, as well as from private companies and investors. This violated regulations prohibiting political parties from accepting contributions from state-owned enterprises and foreign entities (Roque, 2009, p. 142). The National Electoral Committee (CNE) was and still is a bulwark of the MPLA. Eight of the eleven members were from the MPLA or government institutions (Roque, 2009, p. 143). To secure votes and maximise its presence in the rural areas, where the presence of formal authorities and the MPLA is scarce, similarly to the Portuguese, the MPLA co-opted the Sobas to gain votes in their respective villages. "The ruling party successfully brought in these traditional authorities as well as local administrators and influential citizens, bribing them with money, cars, computers, motorbikes, bicycles, and promises of future benefits" (Roque, 2009, p. 144). As of May 2012, 41,554 recognised traditional authorities out of an estimated 50.000 were on the government payroll, costing some 8 billion kwanzas per month (De Oliveira, 2015, p. 121). Sobas who are given state support are assumed to be members of the MPLA party. In the bairros of Luanda and other central provinces, the MPLA infiltrated the informal structures of local urban governance. For this purpose, it has also used the OMA, the party's women's organisation, and the JMPLA, its youth wing (De

Oliveira, 2015, p. 114). These practices are still used today by the MPLA to maximise its presence outside the urban and coastal core areas. As pointed out by Blaauw (2014, p. 126), "in the case of Angola, elections have been an instrument of authoritarian control as well as a means of democratic governance. This is because elections in Angola are contested in a lopsided political arena. In this context, elections help rulers manage their opponents by co-opting them"

Oliveira claims that two unspoken assumptions drive the MPLA's peripheral state-building project. The first is the notion, hiding behind claims of state universality, of the superiority of the Portuguese-speaking, urban and coastal core of the state vis-à-vis the backwards periphery. The second is that modernisation and development are virtually coterminous with control of the rural population and expansion of the party-state.

The overwhelming victory of the MPLA in the post-war elections of 2008 gave the MPLA sufficient power to govern, amend the Constitution, and expand the party's powers without engaging in political debate with the opposition, civil society, or any other stakeholders. Vital Moreira, one of the foremost authorities on constitutions and constitutionalism in Lusophone countries and a member of the European Union Parliament, labelled the 2010 Angolan Constitution as 'hyper-presidentialist'. Another renowned Portuguese constitutional law expert, Jorge Miranda, compared the presidential powers granted by the 2010 constitution to those established by the 1933 Portuguese constitution of the authoritarian Salazar regime. The most controversial aspect of the 2010 constitution is its choice of a presidential system; it abolishes the post of prime minister and also the direct election of the president; instead, the leader of the party with the most parliamentary seats automatically becomes head of state, and no further vote in the Assembly is required for the office, see article 109 of the Angolan Constitution. Furthermore, in the 2010 Constitution, according to article 119(d), the president freely appoints and dismisses the ministers of state in his own office, as well as the ministers and deputy ministers making up his Cabinet (Conselho de Ministros), which he chairs, and all provincial governors and deputy governors. The president further appoints all judges based on different nomination procedures. In the case of the Constitutional Court, the president appoints and selects the Judge President, as well as three out of the eleven judges. In the case of the Supreme Court, the president appoints and selects the Judge President and the Deputy Judge President from a list of three candidates proposed to the president by the Council of the Judiciary (Conselho da Magistratura). The judges

of the Auditor-General Court, the Supreme Military Court, the Attorney-General, his deputies, the Military Chief Prosecutor, and his deputies are all appointed by the president (Thomashausen, 2016, p. 190). Thomashausen (2016) note that the concentration of presidential powers in Angola is not balanced by the checks and balances typically afforded by a direct election of the president, and that the resulting parliament is consequently weak.

UNITA faced a significant defeat in the 2008 elections, with its representation in parliament plummeting from 70 to 16 seats; however, it successfully increased its vote share in all subsequent elections. This was evidence of growing support, which increased its membership to over 2 million supporters. In 2019, Adalberto da Costa Junior was elected President of the UNITA. The government attempted to vigorously interfere with the process, fearing that his election would give the party a new impetus. He combined eloquence, youthfulness, and urban sophistication, all of which the MPLA had previously denied as traits of UNITA's leadership (Roque, 2021, p. 38). The FNLA, as an opposition party, would remain weak, weaker than UNITA, and ineffective, divided by internal factionalism exacerbated by the death of its leader and founder, Holden Roberto (2007, ibid).

To guarantee its absolute and unchallenged power at every level of society, in addition to its formal powers, the MPLA leader, President dos Santos, developed a scheme to maintain his political leadership by distributing benefits to his supporters. It is a system of informal politics based on (neo)-patrimonialism in which access to public office and state resources is used to sustain clientelistic networks on which political support depends (Chabal, 2000, p. 826). It is a type of exchange involving, for example, a ministry, a senior position in public administration, or a leading position in a public company, in exchange for loyalty. The network extends to high-ranking army, police, and government officials. With an average annual GDP growth rate of 14.9% between 2002 and 2008 (Da Rocha, 2012, p. 2), primarily driven by the rise in oil prices and production in Angola, the President has had sufficient resources to nurture his clientelistic network. Dos Santos also sustained a functioning dual structure of government, ensuring that no collective action could threaten his rule (Roque, 2011, p. 2). This structure consisted of a formal, weak government ruled by the MPLA and a more resilient 'shadow' government controlled and manipulated by the presidency, with Sonangol (the national oil company) as its chief economic motor and, to a lesser extent, Endiama (the national diamond company) (Roque, 2011, p. 1).

The MPLA has governed Angola for 47 years, and is since 2017, has been led by João Lourenço. Officially, Angola is a multi-party democracy; in practice, however, it functions as an authoritarian regime that uses democratic institutions to shield itself from threats both from within the government and society (Brancati, 2014, p. 314), reflecting Rousseau's idea that even the strongest must turn strength into right, since no one can be sufficiently powerful to always be the master (Gerschewski, 2013, p. 18). Altough the MPLA's dominance showed visible cracks in the 2022 general elections, when it won 51.17% of the vote and 124 of the 220 seats in the National Assembly, while UNITA secured 43.95% and 90 seats, the party remains a powerful force (Lusa, 2022). Its leaders are involved in numerous lucrative businesses that control the economy, politics, and media in Angola.

Thus these developments position Angola clearly as an authoritarian regime, where the ruling party maintains control via centralised presidential authority, the blending of party and state, and tools of legitimation, co-option, and coercion (Gerschewski, 2013). The coming sections demonstrate how these mechanisms are integrated into Angola's local governance and manifested in daily community life through the roles of state officials and non-state forms of local authorities.

4.2 A co-opted network: state and non-state actors in Angola's local governance structure and the legacies of pre-colonial and colonial rule

The culture, official language, educational landscape, population demographics, and socio-economic issues in Angola are intricately linked to its pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. For example, the current tensions between the three major political parties (MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA), the tensions between the main ethnolinguistic groups, the significant socio-economic disparities between urban centres and rural regions, and the ongoing battle for cultural dominance between Western-leaning city dwellers and more indigenous communities all stem from this complex historical context. These historical influences also play a role in shaping Angola's local governance system, characterised by the state's incorporation of non-state actors, a practice deeply rooted in Angola's history. The next section explores local governance in Angola, emphasising traces of the precolonial and colonial times.

The skeleton of Angola's current territorial division was inherited mainly from the Portuguese administration during the late colonial period. It consists of three major hierarchical layers:

provinces (previously referred to as districts during the late colonial period), of which there are 18; municipalities, numbering more than 160; and communes, exceeding 530; exact numbers are unknown. These communes are further divided into neighbourhoods. Like during the colonial period, Angola's administrative apparatus remains highly centralised, arguably more so than many other African countries (Guedes, 2006). According to Roque, centralisation was not only a way of maintaining control and power but also a consequence of a collapsed bureaucracy and administration. Roque explains, "the mass exodus of state officials and servants in 1975 contributed to a dysfunctional state bureaucracy. Faced with a system that could not deliver, power became concentrated in the Presidency and key party elites, who micro-managed the everyday affairs of state and government administration" (2021, p. 27).

Provinces, the first layer of sub-national governance, are overseen by governors who are accountable to the national government and the President. Municipalities (municípios), the second layer of sub-national governance, are led by municipal administrators, who are appointed by and report to the provincial governor. The term municípios cannot be simply translated to "municipalities," the nearest English equivalent. The municípios in Angola are nothing like municipalities in their classic anglophone meaning of a political unit with self-government and local elections. Quite the opposite, they are led by an "administrator" who is an appointed representative of the central government, and the municipal administration is the local branch of the central government" (Bye et al., 2025, p. 205).

Municipalities are the closest state administrative body to the population within their jurisdiction (ibid). According to Guedes (2006), the primary functions of municipal administrators include ensuring public security, promoting local public services, overseeing the physical organisation and maintenance of essential public services, and providing regular inputs to provincial governments for the preparation of the municipality's annual plans (Orre, 2007, p. 188). However, municipalities face significant capacity and financial challenges. They are highly dependent on the national Treasury and the provincial delegations of the Ministry of Finance. Municipalities do not yet possess de facto autonomy over their spending, and their role is often reduced to implementing programmes that fail to address local problems and realities. This situation is further exacerbated by the unpredictability of the financial shares that municipal administrations receive each month. Furthermore, municipalities often lack employees with strong governance competencies. Additionally, municipalities often struggle with governance

deficiencies, including a shortage of skilled personnel. Corruption, a pervasive issue nationwide, has severely impacted municipalities. In some instances, it has resulted in substantial debts to suppliers of goods and services, such as rubbish collectors. This, in turn, has further eroded their capacity to deliver essential public goods and services effectively (UNICEF n.d.).

Communes, which represent the third level of subnational administration, are managed by administrators chosen by the provincial governor. These administrators report to the municipal administrator. Like provincial governors and municipal administrators, commune administrators are not accountable to voters, reflecting practices carried over from the colonial era. Typically, their roles involve organising and sustaining public services, such as waste management, parks, cemeteries, and marketplaces.

4.3 Traditional authorities and residents' ommittees

At the level below the *comuna* (commune), no formal state institutions are tasked with local governance. However, as in the precolonial and colonial periods, traditional and non-state forms of local authority continue to play an active role in everyday governance at the local level. Angola's 2010 Constitution recognises three types of local power: (1) local state authorities, (2) institutions of traditional power, and (3) other forms of citizen participation. Traditional authorities are organised into a three-tier hierarchy: the *Regedor* (or *Grande Soba*), the *Soba*, and the *Sekulu*. The third form of local authority is primarily represented through Residents' Committees. According to José Melo Alexandrino[4], one of the greatest innovations of Angola's 2010 Constitution was the incorporation of the principle of legal pluralism. This principle acknowledges Angola's cultural diversity by recognising the coexistence of multiple normative systems rooted in the country's long history (as cited in Santin & Teixeira, 2020, p. 146). Soares de Oliveira argues that the introduction of legal pluralism is not a neo-traditional turn infused with sudden respect for the 'authentic' structures. Instead, it is part and parcel of the broader party-state strategy for reinforcing its presence in the periphery (2015, p. 121). Like the Portuguese colonial regime, Angola's post-independence government, led by the MPLA, faced challenges stemming from its lack of legitimacy, authority, and effective presence in rural and peri-urban areas. Consequently, it called upon traditional authorities (Sobas) and communal

[4] Associate Professor nearing retirement at the Faculty of Law of the University of Lisbon, where he earned his doctorate. His research interests lie primarily in the areas of Constitutional Law, Fundamental Rights, and Public Law in Portuguese-speaking countries.

leaders (Residents' Committees, *Comissões de Moradores*) to carry out functions delegated by the state administration in these areas. This phenomenon is not unique to Angola but can be observed in various post-colonial African countries. Traditional authorities and Residents' Committees are effectively the closest forms of governance to citizens in contemporary Angola, due to their proximity, cultural alignment, and use of the local language.

The appointment of traditional authorities often requires government approval, typically from the municipal administrator, reflecting practices established by the Portuguese colonial government. These 'modern' traditional authorities derive their authority and legitimacy from two sources. From below, through the trust of the population and local traditions, and from above, through state-recognised legal frameworks. The functions and responsibilities of traditional authorities vary depending on the region, area (whether urban or rural), and ethnic group. However, various sources indicate that they include: establishing ties with state institutions (often the MPLA in practice); transmitting state information to the populace; representing communities before local state institutions; overseeing magical-religious practices (often linked to witchcraft); managing and regulating access to land; controlling the population from both a statistical and security perspective; and establishing social and legal frameworks norms (F. Pacheco, 2002). These roles closely resemble those of traditional authorities during the precolonial and colonial periods.

The recognition of traditional authorities as forms of local power is not without criticism. Many Angolan scholars, journalists, opposition leaders, and citizens argue that traditional leaders in Angola are essentially auxiliaries of the political regime, serving as agents of state-led projects. Paula Roque highlights (2021, pp. 42-43) that President José Eduardo dos Santos strategically leveraged traditional authorities to enhance the MPLA's image and maintain influence over these important social actors. He established mechanisms to exert a softer form of societal control by expanding clientelistic and patronage networks beyond the political and military elite. He created the NGO O Nosso Soba (Our Soba) and the Associação Angolana de Autoridades Tradicionais (AATA). These organisations allowed the MPLA to extend its patronage to traditional authorities. This focus on Sobas was part of a broader strategy to embed the MPLA within rural communities and ensure its dominance in peripheral regions.

Following the war, widespread displacement and the ensuing administrative chaos left traditional authorities as the primary recognised leaders in rural areas. The MPLA capitalised on this by

using Sobas to organise and influence local populations in the post-war context. This approach proved particularly impactful during the 2008 elections, where Sobas were publicly shown receiving material benefits such as motorcycles, computers, and cash. Allegations also surfaced of Sobas safeguarding ballot boxes and ballots in their homes during the 2008 and 2017 elections. This shift in their role diminished perceptions of Sobas as impartial intermediaries, instead positioning them as proponents of the MPLA's political agenda.

By 2012, over 41,500 traditional authorities (i.e., persons), out of an estimated 50,000, were receiving salaries from the government, costing approximately 8 billion kwanza (equivalent to $13 million) monthly (ibid). This view on the traditional authorities was also echoed by Angolan civil society during the 107th session of the Human Rights Committee in Geneva, where it was stated that traditional authorities are used to advance the political interests of the ruling party. They are often coerced into mobilising communities to support individuals aligned with the party in power (Angolan Civil Society Organisations, 2013). Croese further notes that the status of traditional authorities in Angola remains unclear, and local councils, where traditional authorities hold a seat, remain unregulated, with little accountability to the population and are open to instrumentalisation by the state (2015, p. 408).

The Residents' Committees are legal entities under public law, resulting from the voluntary union and organisation of people residing in a particular street, block, neighbourhood, village, or town. The law on the Organisation and Operation of Residents' Committees – Law No. 7/16, of 1 June - states that residents' committees are considered a citizen participation mechanism, as described in the 2010 Constitution.

The emergence and evolution of Residents' Committees (*Comissões de Moradores*) in Angola reflect the country's shifting governance dynamics from the liberation struggle to the post-conflict era. According to Sylvia Croese (2015), these committees can trace their origins to the *poder popular* (people's power) structures of the anti-colonial struggle against Portuguese rule. Initially, these grassroots organisations, including action committees, trade unions, and student associations, played a key role in mobilising popular and military support for the MPLA. Following independence in 1975, the MPLA institutionalised these networks through the Law on People's Power, which established people's committees at provincial, municipal, and communal levels to consolidate the revolution's gains and facilitate governance.

However, after the attempted coup by Nito Alves in 1977, the MPLA began to view these grassroots structures as potential threats to its authority (Roque, 2023). Many were purged or disbanded, and their functions were brought under the party's centralised control. By 1979, these entities had been reorganised into People's Committees, explicitly tied to the MPLA's administrative and mobilisation apparatus. They acted as extensions of the state, responsible for political mobilisation, maintaining urban order, and serving as intermediaries between citizens and the state. This marked a significant departure from their earlier grassroots autonomy, transforming them into instruments of party dominance.

The transition to multiparty democracy in 1992 introduced further ambiguity. The new Constitution did not mention People's Committees or Residents' Committees, leaving their official legal status undefined. While some literature suggests they had fallen into disuse or were dissolved, evidence indicates that Residents' Committees continued to function informally, reporting neighbourhood information to communal administrative structures, assisting in dispute resolution, and managing routine administrative tasks such as registering land and providing proofs of residence. However, during the 1990s, many committees became inactive or distanced from their communities, functioning sporadically when provincial authorities needed them to monitor neighbourhoods or implement MPLA policies on the ground (Croese 2015; Robson 2001; Robson and Roque 2001).

With the end of Angola's civil war in 2002, Residents' Committees experienced a resurgence, particularly in urban areas. This revival was driven partly by urban residents themselves, who sought to use these committees to advocate for compensation or rehousing following post-conflict housing demolitions and evictions. At the same time, provincial administrative structures and the national government actively encouraged their reformation. The MPLA seized this opportunity to re-establish Residents' Committees as tools for governance, leveraging their roles in monitoring communities and facilitating the implementation of state policies.

In recent years, the MPLA has sought to formalise Residents' Committees through proposed legislation, further integrating them into the state apparatus. According to Bornito de Sousa, then Minister of Territorial Administration, this formalisation aimed to enhance community participation and solidify the committees' roles as extensions of state authority at the grassroots

level (Croese, 2015). This dual function, as informal governance structures and tools of MPLA control, has cemented their place in Angola's local governance framework.

Like the traditional authorities, elevating the Residents Committees to quasi-formal governance structures through the Law on the Organisation and Functioning of Residents' Committees (Lei das Comissões de Moradores) has sparked significant controversy. While the government, led by the MPLA, presents these committees as mechanisms to promote citizen participation, opposition parties, civil society, and political commentators argue that the law is a thinly veiled strategy to reinforce MPLA dominance and control over the population, undermining democratic principles and local autonomy (Tchalyongo, 2016). A central critique revolves around the partisan nature of the initiative. Opposition parties such as UNITA, PRS (Partido de Renovação Social), and CASA-CE (Convergência Ampla de Salvação de Angola - Coligação Eleitoral) view Residents' Committees as extensions of the MPLA's apparatus, akin to the CAPs (*Comités de Acção do Partido*) used during Angola's one-party regime. UNITA politician Joaquim Nafoya dismissed the initiative as a strategy to dominate and deceive citizens, alleging that the committees serve as mechanisms for surveillance and exploitation (ibid). Similarly, CASA-CE characterised the proposed law as a revival of authoritarian systems, likening the committees to Brigadas Populares de Vigilância (Popular Vigilance Brigades) from Angola's past. CASA-CE leader Gaspar André Mendes de Carvalho described the law as a 'Big Brother' mechanism, designed to monitor citizens and suppress freedoms and constitutional guarantees (ibid).

The lack of transparency in the legislative process and the law's perceived ethical shortcomings have further fuelled opposition. UNITA has criticised the MPLA-led government for implementing the law without sufficient public consultation or inclusion in Angola's broader legislative framework for local governance (ibid). Opposition politicians have accused the MPLA of using the Residents' Committees as tools to manipulate the political landscape, particularly in preparation for the upcoming elections. Journalist and political analyst Reginaldo Silva questioned the utility of Residents' Committees, arguing that they fail to address structural governance challenges and should be replaced by investments in strengthening local governments and promoting municipal autonomy. CASA-CE MP Lindo Tito (at that time) described the committees as ambiguous institutions that lack accountability and risk becoming tools for citizen policing (ibid).

Despite these criticisms, the MPLA government has defended the initiative. Minister of Territorial Administration (in 2016) Bornito de Sousa argued that the law reflects inclusivity and participatory governance principles, insisting that the committees are not intended to replicate CAPs or function as secret surveillance mechanisms. Instead, he framed the committees as platforms for all residents, regardless of political affiliation, to collaborate on improving their communities (ibid).

This section has shown how non-state forms of local authority, such as traditional leaders and Residents' Committees, are systematically incorporated into the state apparatus under the MPLA regime. This co-option serves a dual purpose: it expands state control into areas where formal institutions often struggle to establish authority and integrates local governance structures into a broader political and social surveillance system. This allows the MPLA to oversee territories and populations by embedding its influence within everyday governance. By aligning the roles of non-state actors with the regime's aims, these authorities become tools for consolidating power rather than independent entities serving their communities.

Angola's post-war political system is authoritarian, combining a constitutionally protected concentration of power in the presidency with a patronage scheme and the strategic co-optation of community actors. Elections mainly serve to provide procedural legitimacy both domestically and internationally. At the neighbourhood level, traditional leaders and Residents' Committees function as hybrid nodes that extend the reach of the party–state into neighbourhoods, streets, and houses. The upcoming chapters explore these dynamics, illustrating how security is managed in Luanda's outskirts by the police, alongside hybrid local authorities within the MPLA-dominated political arena.

Chapter 5 The policing network of the neighbourhood of 11 de Novembro

"Sometimes, the police witness you being robbed, yet they do not intervene because they fear for their own lives; what kind of police are those?"(interview with a resident).

Building on the theoretical, historical, and socio-political context set out in the preceding chapters, this chapter marks the beginning of the empirical phase of the research. It investigates how hybrid policing networks function in the peri-urban neighbourhood 11 de Novembro in Luanda.

The chapter starts with an overview of the municipality of Cazenga, outlining its socio-economic and demographic profile to set the context. It then focuses on the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, using empirical evidence from interviews, surveys, observations, informal conversations, and social network analysis to identify the most relevant non-state forms of local authority involved in the provision of security and analyse their relationships with the police. The findings reveal how the local hybrid policing network in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood operates and how historical legacies, political, and social factors shape its structure and dynamics. Chapter 6 examines the second case study, which focuses on the Cariango neighbourhood.

5.1 Cazenga municipality

The rapid urbanisation of Luanda has led to the emergence of numerous new neighbourhoods, particularly since the early 1960s. Cazenga began to gain significance as various facilities were constructed and new residents, including settlers and assimilados, moved in. This prompted the colonial authorities to develop additional areas. Consequently, a vast expanse of farmland and isolated homes, known as the Cazenga musseque, was incorporated into Luanda (Meneses & Lopes, 2012, p. 42). Spanning a total land area of 42 km² and with a population estimated at between 1.5 million and 2 million inhabitants, though official figures are unavailable, Cazenga ranks among the most densely populated municipalities in the Luanda metropolitan area and is home to numerous informal settlements. Situated near the city centre, the municipality of

Cazenga comprises six districts, or comunas in Portuguese: Cazenga, Hoji Ya Henda, Kima Kieza, Tala Hady, Kalawenda, and 11 de Novembro.

For someone used to living in a country where local authorities designate specific uses for every square meter of land, Cazenga might seem chaotic, lacking a formal system to manage public space. The dusty atmosphere gives the area an intriguing and adventurous vibe. However, upon closer look and conversations with locals, it becomes evident that there are indeed rules, leaders, and followers within the seemingly disordered environment. The Cazenga district is vibrant and bustling with significant economic activity during the day. Street vendors, markets, small corner shops, warehouses, taxis, grocery carriers, and various other businesses thrive in the daytime. Most commercial enterprises, banks, and newspaper vendors are centrally located, where neighbourhoods primarily comprise family homes constructed in the 1960s and early 1970s. This central area also houses the Municipal Administration and various public institutions (Meneses & Lopes, 2012, p. 42). A striking feature of Cazenga and similar informal neighbourhoods in Luanda is the considerable presence of young children and adolescents on the streets. Younger children frequently play while their mothers sell goods, while teenagers and young adults partake in work, socialising, or job hunting.

Traffic in Cazenga is busy, with many people travelling to and from the district daily. This causes regular traffic jams on the main roads connecting Cazenga to the city centre. The high volume of vehicles produces dust, especially during the dry season, which settles on cars, homes, and people. The main impacts of the heavy traffic include noise, and air pollution. Most streets in Cazenga are unpaved except for the main roads. During the rainy season, some streets, markets, and roads become difficult to access, worsening traffic congestion.

Cazenga's housing exhibits significant variations in size, style, and building materials. Many homes are made from cement blocks or wood, with fibre cement or metal sheets as coverings, yet some neighbourhoods appear more orderly than others. For example, Tala Hady underwent the Projecto de Requalificação (Requalification Project) between 2009 and 2014, resulting in a more urban setting. In contrast, Hoji Ya Henda, constructed during the colonial era, has largely preserved its original design, although some property owners have made minor structural changes. As one moves deeper into the district, narrow alleys, randomly placed houses,

abandoned vehicles, and remnants of old artefacts become apparent. Green spaces and trees are scarce, and visible signs of state presence and public service provision are limited.

5.2 The neighbourhood 11 de Novembro: a Bakongo neighbourhood

This subsection draws on fieldwork conducted for this study, including interviews, observations, informal conversations, and field notes, as well as discussions with residents and local authorities.

11 de Novembro is a large neighbourhood in Cazenga characterised mainly by informal settlements. The local police estimate that approximately 81,000 residents live there. Housing is primarily self-constructed and often precarious. Access to basic services, including water, sanitation, drainage, and electricity, remains limited, causing many households to rely on informal markets. Streets are unpaved and have an irregular layout. Residents and local authority officials report high unemployment, especially among young people who frequently seek temporary work on the streets; there are no official unemployment statistics specific to the neighbourhood. Those employed in the formal sector typically hold low-paid jobs, such as security guards, construction workers, cleaners, or petrol station attendants. At the time of fieldwork, the minimum wage in Angola ranged between 16,503 and 32,181 kwanzas per month, depending on the sector (about US$27–US$53). However, residents report that actual wages are generally lower and are often paid irregularly, with some individuals going unpaid for three or more consecutive months.

Many residents of the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood identify as Bakongo, and migration histories are an important part of their life story. Interviewees recounted an initial wave of Bakongo returning from then-Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) around the time of Angola's independence in 1974, followed by a second influx in the 1980s and 1990s. The second group of Bakongo arriving in Luanda became more noticeable due to their larger numbers and efforts to set up informal street markets across the city. These groups formed what are known locally as "Bakongo neighbourhoods" (bairros dos Langas), including areas such as Petroangol, Hoji Ya Henda, Rocha Pinto, Mabor, and 11 de Novembro. Recently, another influx of people from the Bakongo ethnic group has arrived from northern Angola in pursuit of better economic opportunities in the capital, adding to the ongoing flow of newcomers.

Boundary-making between “Luandans” and “Bakongo” is often expressed through language, dress, and perceived cultural markers. Some Luandan interviewees suggested that the Bakongo are culturally closer to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) than to Angola, citing the use of Kikongo (language) and differences in dress, diet, housing, religious practices, and other everyday customs. The derogatory term “Langa” is sometimes used to refer to the Bakongo or those perceived as Congolese. Conversely, Bakongo interviewees voiced critical opinions of Luandans, characterising them as arrogant or overly “Europeanised”. They saw their way of life as ‘more African’, whereas Luandans were viewed as more oriented towards Portugal and Brazil (Pereira, 2002, p. 50). Initially triggered by the link made between Bakongo returnees and the FNLA (the MPLA’s rival in a city where the MPLA held sway), the hostility later shifted to rejecting cultural elements and customs perceived as foreign to local residents (ibid).

The divide between Luandans and Bakongos became more apparent after Sexta-Feira Sangrenta, or ‘Bloody Friday’. On 22 January 1993, Angolan National Radio reported that Bakongos in Luanda planned to assassinate former President José Eduardo dos Santos. Over the next two days, Luandans armed with firearms attacked Bakongo residents in the capital, leading to hundreds being wounded or killed (Pereira, 2002, pp. 51-52). Although the civil war concluded in 2002 and tensions eased, people from northern Angola still face discrimination in Luanda today. Interview and fieldnote evidence suggest that northerners are still sometimes not regarded as ‘really’ Angolans in Luanda by what Pereira (2002, p. 48) calls the *Sociedade crioula,* a small black and mixed-race Angolan bourgeoisie which, through amalgamation with the colonial white society, produced an original society in social and cultural terms.

5.3 Safety and security in the neighbourhood 11 de Novembro

This section investigates residents’ perceptions of (in)security in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood through various sources, including a survey, semi-structured interviews and conversations with residents, traditional authorities, local authorities, and journalists.

The Cazenga municipality, including the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, is widely regarded as an insecure area by both residents and outsiders. In the survey, 53 per cent of respondents reported being victims in their neighbourhood over the past five years; 51 per cent rated the area as “unsafe” and 20 per cent as “very unsafe”. Evenings and nights (around 18:00–07:00) were identified as the most hazardous times, especially in areas with poor street lighting. Among

survey respondents who had been victims of crime in the last five years, 27 per cent said they reported these incidents to the police. Interviewees often cited corruption, bribery, capacity limitations, and unprofessional conduct by the police as reasons for low reporting rates. As one resident said, *“reporting it to the police is a waste of time,”* while another claimed that *“sometimes the police witness you being robbed, yet they do not intervene because they fear for their own lives.”* A member of the Residents’ Committee alleged that “*they (the police) come at night and shoot people… it’s good that they kill criminals, but I am terrified because if you are outside, you could also be killed.”*These accounts highlight a situation where formal policing offers neither reliable protection nor clear safeguards. In such contexts, residents often turn to whatever form of order provides minimal predictability about the rules to follow to avoid harm (such as whom to inform, when to stay indoors, how to resolve disputes). Pearce (2022, p. 153) describes this as empirical acceptance: people obeying a criminalised or hybrid order because it offers some stability and reduces the risk of punishment, and even death. Crucially, empirical acceptance is not the same as endorsing the order’s legitimacy; it is behavioural compliance driven by constraints.

Women interviewed through OMA (Organização da Mulher Angolana), the women’s wing of the MPLA, established on 2 March 1962 to mobilise women around the nationalist liberation struggle (Mouzinho & Cutaia, 2017, p. 35), highlighted domestic violence and abuse of minors as major concerns. Interviewees said such violence is not always recognised as a crime and is frequently underreported, especially where the perpetrator is a family member or neighbour. A local OMA leader explained that they are teaching women to denounce such practices, but added that many fear exposure and retaliation, citing weak trust in the police: *“The police will expose you to the accused, and then you become a victim of revenge,”* she noted. Poor lighting after dark was perceived as heightening the risk, and some young women during interviews mentioned that they avoided taking evening classes for safety reasons. A few described entering relationships with gang members for protection, while noting that attempts to leave such relationships can be dangerous. The study did not systematically document domestic violence, as its primary focus was on (in)security in public spaces. Even so, residents’ perceptions are included here because the issue emerged in interviews with women.

During interviews, residents and police officers often pointed out that street robbery, particularly phone snatching, is one of the most common crimes. Residential burglaries also happen quite frequently. According to police officers, market traders and small local shops, known as cantinas, are regular targets because they often keep large amounts of cash on hand. Gas cylinders are another common item stolen because they are easily resold. The police emphasised that child abuse is a serious concern in Cazenga.

Residents, members of the Residents' Committee, and local NGOs cite several reasons for crime and violence in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, including the ongoing economic crisis, limited job opportunities, widespread alcohol and drug use, declining family norms, and fewer social activities for youth. Officers also mentioned that the neighbourhood's layout, characterised by narrow alleys and poor street lighting, worsens the problem. The Soba highlighted issues of under-reporting and familial protection of offenders, saying: "*We need to start reporting crimes. Often, criminals are protected by their relatives. They know a son, nephew, uncle, or father has committed a crime, but choose not to report it."* He added: *"Sometimes, the family even sends the offender elsewhere to avoid consequences."*

Low confidence in the police extends beyond residents of Cazenga or the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood. Overall, the Angolan police force is perceived as ineffective, with low public trust and concerns about professionalism and human rights abuses. On Luanda's streets, few people speak positively about the police. Common comments include *"they do nothing,"* "*they only serve the MPLA," "they are the real criminals,"* and "*they just want money from people"* when residents are asked their opinion. Afrobarometer data (Pacatolo, Bola, & Roque, 2023) indicates that 45 per cent of respondents think 'most' or 'all' police officers are corrupt. Moreover, 38 per cent believe police are involved in criminal activities (ibid). Only 18 per cent of Angolans think the police regularly act professionally and respect citizens' rights, while 60 per cent say they rarely or never do (ibid).

During interviews, police officers disputed broad claims that they were about a reluctance to act while acknowledging the limitation they faced. As one senior officer explained, "*The issue is that the country faces an economic crisis; there is no money, unemployment is high, and many children are out of school, these are problems the police cannot fix."* The station chief mentioned that his police station, the 14th police post in Cazenga, serves around 341,000 residents but has

only 54 officers and two vehicles, resulting in a ratio of roughly one officer for every 6,315 residents. Officers also reported providing police coverage for 33 private schools, two public schools, six banks, and one medical centre, which further strains capacity. They also highlighted language and cultural barriers, noting that many residents prefer speaking Kikongo rather than Portuguese, which complicates case intake and follow-up. As a younger officer said, *"Communicating with residents here can be difficult… when they file a complaint, we give them a ticket to take to the central command post, but many do not follow through."*

In short, 11 de Novembro is an ethnic neighbourhood where many residents report feeling unsafe. In security terms, it is a high-demand, low-capacity environment, characterised by residents' distrust of the police and by police accounts of resource scarcity and task overload. These perceptions matter not only as expressions of distrust, but also because they help explain why residents often seek help from neighbours, non-state actors, or community-based responses before turning to the police. As the following sections demonstrate, these dynamics are among the factors that influence the interaction between the police and non-state forms of local authority.

5.4 The policing network of the police in 11 de Novembro, an MPLA clique

This subsection identifies the non-state actors with whom the police in 11 de Novembro most frequently interact for policing purposes. The findings draw on in-depth interviews with local police officers, which were used as a name generator to identify the key non-state actors with whom they had maintained close policing ties over the past five years. These interviews also shed light on the characteristics of these actors, as well as on their interactions and working relationships with the police. Follow-up interviews were then conducted with the identified non-state actors to develop a deeper understanding of their activities and their interactions with the police.

Interview data show that the police are connected to a broad range of neighbourhood actors involved in daily governance and policing. These include the Soba; RC members, especially the chair; OMA members; residents; security guards on specific streets; street children (miúdos de rua); church leaders; the MPLA district committee and JMPLA, the MPLA's youth wing; as well as district and municipal administrations.

In social network analysis terms, the police have a large ego-network at the neighbourhood level, comprising at least ten actor categories. Since some categories include many individuals, such as churches and commercial guards, their actual contact potential is significantly greater than the simple count of categories. The network includes (a) hybrid local authorities (Soba, RC), (b) party-linked nodes (MPLA/JMPLA and OMA), (c) community actors (residents, church leaders, street youth), and (d) state bodies (district and municipal administrations). Both residents and officers view the wide range of police connections as essential, not optional, stating, "*The police alone cannot protect us because they do not have the capacity to do so."* The overall structure is core–periphery: at the centre are the police, Soba, and RC, characterised by frequent contact, information exchange, and routine referrals; this core is surrounded by a looser periphery, including church leaders, commercial guards, JMPLA, residents, and OMA, that interacts occasionally or for specific tasks like mobilising residents, passing on information, or coordinating with the administration. The closely interconnected group at the centre resembles what is known in social network analysis as a clique. a set of actors maintaining relatively close, direct and reciprocal relationships (Gamper, 2022, p. 44). Other non-state actors certainly interact with the police, but less frequently and less systematically than the Soba and the RC.

A notable aspect of the policing network in 11 de Novembro is its explicit MPLA affiliation. The police reported collaborating with various actors, including hybrid local authorities such as the Soba and the RC, as well as the JMPLA, OMA, and the district and municipal administration, all of which are institutionally or politically connected to the ruling party. Since the police are also closely linked to the MPLA, this creates an MPLA-aligned network. This highlights the MPLA's presence and influence at the neighbourhood level and raises questions about the purposes served by the network: to what extent is it aimed at improving residents' safety, and to what extent does it also function as a mechanism of monitoring and control?

The following sections examine the characteristics of the two non-state actors with whom the police in 11 de Novembro interact most frequently: the Soba and the RC.

5.5 Attributes of the soba

This subsection describes the Soba through the lens of the study's attribute framework, which includes identity and actor type, roles and functions, legitimacy (both vertical and horizontal),

and political orientation. The evidence is drawn from semi-structured interviews with the Soba, residents and local officials, as well as interviews with police officers and desk research.

The Soba position predates Portuguese colonisation and has long served as a traditional authority figure in the Kongo Kingdom. In its modern form, it is recognised by the state, closely linked with the ruling political party, and active in local governance in both urban and rural areas of Angola. In the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, the Soba, who identifies as Bakongo, was born in Uíge in 1932 and moved to Luanda in 1974 due to unrest in his region. He speaks Portuguese as well as Kikongo. The Soba explained during an interview that he already held a traditional leadership position prior to relocating to Luanda and continued this role in Cazenga with the approval of the local authority, describing it as *"pursuing my destiny".* When introducing himself, he stated: *"I am Soba Manuel João, responsible for the neighbourhoods of 11 de Novembro, Marbor, Bandeira, Candeira, and Mulemba,"* adding that *"these neighbourhoods have a notably high population of individuals of Bakongo origin."*

Interviews with the Soba, residents, police, and local administration officers indicate that the Soba's role can be summarised as a combination of information brokerage and oversight (monitoring the neighbourhood and reporting to relevant institutions), convening and mobilisation (for example, organising youth football tournaments), advice and prevention (such as counselling at-risk youths), mediation (through traditional dispute resolution), and norm stewardship (upholding and transmitting local norms and values). Residents often refer to him as *o mais velho*, meaning 'the elder,' a term in Angola that extends beyond its literal translation of "the oldest one." This title signifies respect and authority awarded to those in a position of authority within a community; it denotes respect for their wisdom and authority. To perform many of the activities mentioned above, the Soba collaborates with local actors within the community, including residents, local authorities, the Residents' Committee, and other relevant stakeholders.

Regarding political orientation, the Soba openly supports the MPLA and presents this affiliation as common among traditional authorities. Some residents and outside observers, however, expressed concern that this association undermines neutrality of the Sobas. In this context, legal expert Chipilika Eduardo stated in an interview: *"Unfortunately, this has become common practice, which is not surprising. Those familiar with Angolan politics see sobas used as cipaios*

(a pejorative term for colonial-era auxiliaries) and cabos eleitorais ('electoral captains'), which distorts their traditional roles."

Using the thesis distinction, vertical legitimacy refers to residents' acceptance of an actor's right to lead or govern, while horizontal legitimacy involves recognition by peer institutions. The Soba's position is mixed vertically: many older residents recognise his authority and social standing, seeking his help when needed. However, younger residents, aged between 15 and 25, appear less familiar with him; during interviews, many could not identify who he was or his role in the neighbourhood. Although specific age-distribution data for 11 de Novembro is unavailable, this cohort constitutes a substantial share of residents. Nonetheless, lack of familiarity does not necessarily imply rejection; given the cultural importance of customary authority in the neighbourhood, recognition and knowledge about the Soba may be acquired through socialisation and experience at a later moment. His MPLA affiliation also negatively influences residents' views of his neutrality. Horizontally, recognition from local institutions such as the police, the Residents' Committee, and district or municipal offices is very high. However, opposition party members question his impartiality, stating, "*He is MPLA, so he cannot be neutral,"* one resident commented.

Overall, the Soba functions as a hybrid central figure: vertically acknowledged by a large part of the community and horizontally recognised by government and party-aligned institutions, yet his neutrality remains contested by members of the opposition party, such as UNITA.

5.6 The residents' committee: 'a district office'

Figure 3: Office of the Residents' Committee of the Neighbourhood 11 de Novembro

This part discusses the Residents' Committee (RC), using the study's attribute framework, covering identity and actor type, roles and functions, legitimacy, both vertical and horizontal, and political orientation. The findings are based on field data collected through semi-structured interviews with the RC, residents, local officials, police officers, the Soba, and scholars, as well as desk research.

RCs, as detailed in chapter 4, originated in grassroots mobilisation structures and were gradually integrated into the MPLA's administrative and political framework. Subsequent legislation redefined them as citizen-participation bodies while further embedding them within the state's local infrastructure. This embeddedness is observable in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood.

Mr Vitorino, chair of the RC in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, was born in Uíge province in northern Angola and moved to Luanda in the late 1970s. He speaks Portuguese and Kikongo and identifies as Bakongo, the neighbourhood's main ethnolinguistic group. Although Mr Vitorino presented the RC as a community organisation during interviews, several indications suggested that it is more than that: a hybrid body that operates between the state and the community. The signage above its entrance (see Figure 3) reads, "República de Angola, Administração Municipal do Cazenga, Distrito Urbano do 11 de Novembro, Comissão de Moradores do Bairro 11 de Novembro," giving the impression that the RC operates as part of the municipal administration. Its activities point in the same direction. During my first interview at the RC office, a staff member explained that they were registering residents because many do not have birth certificates, an activity that in many countries falls within the remit of state institutions. Inside the office, portraits of José Eduardo dos Santos and João Lourenço hang on the wall, similar to those commonly displayed in other state institutions such as police stations, municipal offices, and ministries.

The RC operates through a layered structure of block representatives who serve as the community's eyes and ears. As the chair stated, "*the various representatives and I meet regularly to discuss neighbourhood issues; I handle unresolved problems, and if necessary, I escalate them to district authorities*." The RC's activities include collecting and sharing information, supporting the police and local officials, mediating community disputes, and managing routine administrative tasks such as issuing birth certificates or informing residents about vaccination campaigns and identity document procedures. During fieldwork, the RC organised a neighbourhood registration drive and a dog vaccination programme. Overall, the RC acts as a community liaison with an important administrative role, assisting local authorities and helping residents navigate bureaucracy by translating complex procedures into practical steps that are understandable to the local population.

Politically, ties to the ruling party were expressed both symbolically and verbally. When asked about the portraits of José Eduardo dos Santos and João Lourenço, the chair said, *"we serve the public, so we are also part of the larger government family,"* and confirmed that he is a member of the MPLA, while insisting that the RC operates impartially. In interviews at the RC office, several block representatives also stated that they were MPLA members or sympathisers. However, in informal conversations outside the office, some of these same individuals explained that their membership was pragmatic rather than ideological; in fact, several identified more closely with the FNLA. As one block representative put it, "*everyone must be with the MPLA; you will lose your position if you publicly declare your affiliation with FNLA or UNITA… be careful with this work."* These statements indicate the strong influence of the MPLA at the local level: although the party may not intervene openly in the RC's daily work, its power and omnipresence within Angolan society shape the committee's political environment.

Regarding legitimacy, both vertical and horizontal, the RC closely resembles the Soba. Vertically, the RC appears to hold significant yet conditional authority: its office, centrally located and visibly present in the neighbourhood, its visible services, and its assistance with administrative matters attract residents who view it as their primary point of contact for various issues. Several interviewees mentioned that *"people recognise the authority of the RC"*. However, some also claimed inaction or financial misconduct. As one resident remarked, *"they do not do anything; they sit there, collect money, and that's it."* Horizontally, the RC enjoys strong recognition among state entities: it collaborates regularly with police and district/municipal offices; referrals are generally accepted; and even its official signage suggests a degree of shared jurisdiction. The strongest criticism comes from opposition-aligned actors, who perceive the RC as an extension of the MPLA because of its close proximity to both the party and the government.

The attributes of the Soba and the RC reveal patterns of homophily that help explain the structure and cohesion of the policing network in 11 de Novembro. Clear ethnolinguistic homophily exists between the Soba, the RC chair, (and members of the RC): they are Bakongo from Uíge, migrated to Luanda in the 1970s, and speak both Kikongo and Portuguese. This shared background not only reinforces affinity among these actors, but also aligns them more closely with the neighbourhood's dominant ethnolinguistic group, thereby strengthening their local

legitimacy among many residents. By contrast, the police force is more ethnically diverse and operates primarily in Portuguese, creating greater social distance from the community it serves.

While the police, the Soba, and the RC differ in actor type, state, traditional, and community-based, respectively, they are aligned within the same MPLA-centred political and administrative order. All three are linked to the MPLA and embedded in the same municipal governance architecture. This shared party-state alignment and administrative embeddedness contributes to collaboration and helps explain why these actors occupy central positions in the hybrid policing network in 11 de Novembro. As outlined in Chapter 4.3, the roles of Sobas and RCs in Angola have deep historical roots. Since independence, and especially after the civil war, traditional authorities and RCs have been drawn into the MPLA's governance project in order to extend regime influence where formal state capacity remains limited. As hybrid entities embedded locally, culturally, institutionally, and politically, Sobas and RCs are therefore important partners not only for the police but also for district and municipal administrations. In short, shared party-state alignment and governance embeddedness help bind the police, the Soba, and the RC together and facilitate their collaboration.

The next section shifts from attributes to practice by examining how these three actors interact and what their cooperation entails in everyday policing.

5.7 Analysis of the interactions between the police, the soba, and the residents' committee in 11 de Novembro neighbouhood

Building on the attribute profiles, this section examines the interactions between the Soba, the RC, and the police in 11 de Novembro, using the study's tie-strength and resource-exchange perspectives drawn from social network analysis. It investigates ties in terms of frequency, duration, and closeness, and maps what flows across them, such as information, cultural knowledge, and both tangible and intangible resources. Rather than considering actors individually, the analysis examines their collective interactions to reflect the interdependent nature of local governance and to minimise redundancy, thereby revealing the mechanisms of cooperation, coordination, and control that shape everyday security governance.

Field data reveal a strong tie between the Soba and the police, characterised by frequent, routine interaction and a degree of personal familiarity. During an interview, the Soba stated: *"I speak*

with the chief on the phone daily. Look, I even have his number. I call him after 20:00 to keep him informed about neighbourhood events. Our conversations usually last between 20 and 40 minutes." A police officer likewise confirmed this access: "*The Soba has the police station chief's phone number, so he can call in emergencies."* In addition to telephone contact, the station's deputy chief described regular in-person meetings with the Soba, RC chair Vitorino, and OMA representatives to discuss ongoing problems, report on police actions, and consider possible responses. *"Every two weeks, I meet with the Soba, Vitorino, and other stakeholders, such as the OMA,*" he stated. The relationship also appears to have a personal dimension. As the Soba explained, *"after many years, I have built a personal relationship with the police chief; whenever possible, we help each other*." One police officer added, "*the Soba is part of our family. We make small talk whenever we meet."*

In contrast, according to Mr Vitorino, the RC–police tie is less frequent and more formal, yet still robust. As Mr Vitorino explained, "*The RC has more resources available than the Soba and bears greater administrative responsibilities. Because of this, we have more regular contact with the municipal and district authorities, and less with the police compared to the Soba.*" He added, "*my relationship with the police is mainly professional, not personal … I do not see myself as having personal ties with anyone in the police*," but emphasised cooperation: "*The police are an important partner for us; we often collaborate and support each other regularly*." Within the RC, contact with the police follows an internal procedure, with the chair serving as the primary point of contact. As Mr Vitorino explained, "*I contact the chief when necessary … other RC members in each block also have the chief's number, but I usually make the calls*." Police officers, during interviews, confirmed their cooperation with the RC and the importance of the RC in the neighbourhood, with one officer stating, "*Without the Residents' Committee, the neighbourhood would not function."*

Overall, considering this study's indicators of tie strength, the Soba–police tie is a strong tie, while the RC–police link is moderately strong and more formal. As the next sections will show, and as established in the literature (Granovetter, 1973; Marsden & Campbell, 1984) strong ties increase bandwidth, trust, and resource sharing but can also lead to redundancy and obscure role boundaries.

In terms of resource exchange, the main resources flowing from the Soba and the RC to the police are intangible, particularly cultural capital and local intelligence. Here, cultural capital refers to knowledge of local geography, residents, institutions, and social mechanisms. As a senior police officer noted, *"we cannot communicate effectively with everyone in the neighbourhood; the RC and the Soba help us.*" Most residents in 11 de Novembro speak Kikongo and little Portuguese, whereas police officers mainly speak Portuguese. In this context, the Soba and the RC often act as translators and interpreters. The same police officer added, *"they (the Soba and the RC) also share information about their customs and habits, which some of us (the police force) are not familiar with. Plus, they know who lives here and what people do daily."* He further emphasised the importance of this informational reliance: "*One of the key collaborations with the community, especially with the Sobas and the Residents' Committee, involves the information they provide us. We depend heavily on them for vital insights. They inform us about illegal immigrants, crime, disturbances, and other issues. Without their support, our access to information and intelligence would be limited.*"

When asked for examples, he referred to *agitadores*. In the Angolan context, this term is often used by police and ruling-party actors to describe individuals, usually young people, who are seen as inciting unrest or disobedience. This framing became particularly visible during the protests that began in Luanda on 28 July 2025, following a taxi strike triggered by a diesel price increase and wider frustration over living costs. The protests escalated into barricades, burning tyres, looting, clashes with police, arrests, injuries, and deaths in Luanda and beyond. As the police officer explained, "*the Residents' Committee and the Soba often provide us with information about these individuals. Sometimes we ask them to observe specific people more closely.*" These practices place the network in a grey area between crime prevention, public order management, and political surveillance.

The exchange of information between the Soba/RC and the police flows in both directions. Mr Vitorino explained, "*we also receive information from the police about upcoming operations and details about criminals.*" He also emphasised his intermediary role*: "I serve as a link between the police and the community. When the police need to communicate with residents, I relay the message, and vice versa, when I pass information from the community to the police*." Similarly, the Soba stated: "*I function as a bridge between the police and the community. When the police*

need to communicate something to the population, I pass on the message." Taken together, these statements indicate that both the RC and the Soba act as intermediaries, conveying police messages to residents while also passing information from residents to the police.

These exchanges go beyond the sharing of information; they also facilitate referrals and handovers by directing issues to the node (actor) considered competent or authorised to handle them. A stark example is provided by the Soba's vignette: "*A young man was causing considerable disruption in the neighbourhood. A group of young men came to me, indicating that they needed a solution. I told them they needed the courage to catch him and bring him to me. They managed to capture him, although some force was involved, which resulted in his injury. After they handed him over to me, I took the 'troublemaker' to the police*." He added: "*When residents seek my help with mediation or conflict resolution that goes beyond my capacity or authorisation, I direct them to the police. Any matters related to crime are always referred to the police*."

This vignette is an example of what Schultze-Kraft calls crimilegality/crimilegitimacy: a state-recognised, customary authority (the Soba) deputises civilians to use force (extra- or illicit coercion), then channels the outcome back into the legal apparatus (handover to the police). The police's acceptance of the handover shows how illicit means and legal institutions interlock: the boundary between legality and illegality is blurred in practice, and participation in "unlawful interactions" can be socially acceptable to both state and non-state actors when it produces order. According to Pearce (2022, p. 154) the notion of 'empirical acceptance' of criminal orders gives a better indication of what appears to be the case in many urban and rural contexts outside of war, that is, many citizens accept a criminalised order when it provides some minimum stability/certainty about the de facto rules you need to abide by to survive and to avoid punishment and even death. In other words, they 'legitimise' those orders through their acceptance (ibid).

Mr Vitorino described a similar pattern: "*When residents experience a crime, they often try to resolve the matter on their own. It is not unusual for the community to capture criminals, dispensing immediate justice that can sometimes result in the offender's death. Common practices involve beating, stoning, or even setting the accused on fire … many choose not to approach the police due to previous negative experiences … Depending on the situation, we refer*

cases to the relevant authorities. Crimes are sent to the police, domestic violence cases go to OMA, and witchcraft-related issues are directed to the Soba." The sub-chief of the police station confirmed the collaboration between the Soba, the RC and the police, stating: "*At times, youth gangs may cause significant disturbances … In such cases, the Soba or a member of the Residents' Committee informs us, enabling us to take appropriate action."*

Another example from 11 de Novembro further illustrates the pattern identified by Mr Vitorino: residents often seek to address crime themselves, or through local intermediaries, and distrust in the police discourages them from approaching the police directly. In an interview conducted in October 2024, a young woman living alone with her daughter described how, during the night, she heard male voices outside her house and feared that intruders were attempting to dismantle the bars on her bedroom window in order to gain entry. Frightened, she called her neighbour, whose front door was directly opposite hers. The neighbour and his adult son came out, entered the house, and attempted to assess the situation with her, but decided it was too risky to go outside. They remained inside for a while, talking loudly so that the men outside would hear multiple male voices and leave. The following morning, she discovered that the external unit of her air conditioner had been stolen. Rather than going directly to the police, she went to the Residents' Committee and asked for help in identifying the thieves. The person present told her that the matter would be passed on to the police at their next meeting and that other residents would be alerted to this method of theft. She did not report the theft directly to the police because, as she explained, she had little confidence that they would take any action. The air conditioner was never recovered.

Case referrals also move in both directions, with the police directing cases to the Soba, the Residents' RC, and OMA. Culturally sensitive conflicts are referred to the Soba. As one officer explained: *"If someone reports being bewitched by a neighbour or another person in the neighbourhood, we direct them to the Soba. These are traditional issues, and we cannot deal with them.* During an interview, a resident explained how this mediation process typically unfolds:

"*My maternal grandparents were believed to be involved in witchcraft by my mother, uncles, and aunts. My mother asserted that my grandfather had the ability to change into a tiger and was responsible for the death of her younger sister in her early years. He was often held liable for the*

sicknesses that plagued our family and the troubled marriages of all the children. My mother mentioned that my grandfather hailed from Catete, a region known for such occurrences. One day, my mother and her siblings took my grandfather to the Soba to find out if he was a bruxo (a witch). The Soba explained that he could determine this by heating a machete in the fire and pressing it against each person's leg; if it caused a burn, it would reveal whether someone was a bruxo or not. My grandfather was the first to be tested. When the Soba tried to put the heated machete on his leg, he refused and ran away. For those who stayed behind, this was considered undeniable proof that he was indeed a bruxo. The accusation lingered for years, leading to significant negative impacts on our family relationships."

Beyond illustrating crimilegality and empirical acceptance, this example also points to hybrid ordering: multiple logics of order maintenance coexist, with one logic anchored in the formal structures of the modern state (a legacy of colonial rule) and another rooted in customary authority exercised by traditional leaders operating alongside, and at times outside, the official apparatus. The Soba also addresses issues such as infidelity and 'unusual' diseases. For its part, the RC is often drawn into mediating disputes between residents. As the sub-chief of the police station explained, *"We often ask for assistance from the Residents' Committee when there are problems between residents … (they) generally have a stronger relationship with the community and deeper knowledge than the police and are better positioned to mediate disputes.*" Police also stated that domestic violence cases are referred to OMA. An OMA member explained that, where possible, they speak with those involved in such cases. Several women reported during conversations that they sometimes warn their husbands that they will contact OMA if they are beaten. This referral of cases among different actors aligns with Alemika's (2009, p. 491) findings elsewhere in Africa: in policing networks, actors do not simply do everything. Instead, norms specify which institution should be approached for particular types of disputes.

Like policing networks elsewhere, this network is not without its problems. In fact, several frictions are evident. As Mr Vitorino observed, *"when a case is transferred from the Residents' Committee to the police, it often remains unresolved or is managed in a way that fails to meet the alleged victim's expectations. This also diminishes the credibility of the Residents' Committee."* The sub-chief of the police station acknowledged that resolving cases is often difficult due to limited resources and capabilities. However, he also criticised the Soba and the RC for not

properly informing residents about the formal complaint process, stating that "*people arrive here without ID cards and with unrealistic expectations. That is not how it works.*" In addition, he expressed concern about assaults on suspects by community members before they are handed over to the police, stressing that the police strongly condemn such practices.

Boundary issues also emerge within the policing network. The sub-chief of the police station mentioned that the Soba sometimes interferes with police jurisdiction, referring to a recent attempt by the Soba to establish a night patrol under his own oversight. According to the sub-chief, the initiative was halted by the police and municipal authorities because the Soba did not have the authority to undertake such action. The Soba, however, contested this account, explaining that he had not intended to usurp police responsibilities, but rather sought to improve neighbourhood safety. In his view, the crime rate in the area was very high, and the police could make use of additional support.

A fieldwork observation further illustrates the practical limitations of police response in urgent situations. On one occasion in 11 de Novembro, the researcher encountered a young man lying in the street and convulsing. When nearby residents were asked to call an ambulance, they replied that it would not come and advised going to the police instead. The researcher then went to the police station and informed the officers about the situation. The officers asked where the incident was taking place but stated that, due to limited personnel, there was little they could do immediately and that they would deal with it once more officers were available. When the researcher returned to the scene, more bystanders had gathered and were speculating that the young man had probably consumed too much alcohol or drugs. As neither the police nor medical services arrived, one bystander eventually decided to take him to hospital himself. This incident reinforces the broader finding that, in urgent situations, direct intervention by actors within the policing network, including the police, the Soba, and the Residents' Committee, may be limited or entirely absent, leaving residents and other bystanders to respond themselves.

Concluding remarks

The 11 de Novembro neighbourhood illustrates a setting in which state institutions are not the sole providers of functions conventionally associated with policing. Authority is distributed across state, non-state, and hybrid actors, but at the centre of this arrangement is a smaller core composed of the police, the Soba, and the RC. In SNA terms, this core may be understood as a

clique: a tightly connected set of actors characterised by regular interaction, recurrent information exchange, and strong ties. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the cohesion of this core rests not only on repeated cooperation, but also on party-state alignment and embeddedness in local governance structures.

Within this configuration, the Soba and the RC do not generally challenge or compete with the police. Rather, they complement, and at times substitute for, formal policing by facilitating communication, mediating disputes, transferring cases, and channelling access to state authority. This echoes Kyed's (2009) findings in Mozambique, where local authorities function as cultural translators and logistical brokers, extending the state's reach into everyday life.

The findings further show that this arrangement relies less on conventional policing activities such as routine patrol, independent investigation, proactive crime prevention measures, or broad-based resident protection than on neighbourhood monitoring, information-sharing, mediation, and selective police intervention. Yet this does not mean that the network is inactive or that it performs no policing-related functions. On the contrary, it contributes actively to everyday order-making, albeit in forms that differ from conventional active policing. Residents often respond first, whether by apprehending suspects, managing disturbances, or seeking help through local intermediaries, after which cases are channelled through the Soba or the RC and only subsequently reach the police when this is deemed appropriate. Residents also approach the police directly in some cases. However, the evidence suggests that police involvement is often mediated or preceded by the actions of residents or non-state forms of local authority. For residents, this means that the core policing actors examined in this chapter—the police, the Soba, and the RC—often become involved only after an initial response has already taken place through self-help or other community-based action.

Residents do not necessarily perceive these core policing actors as a coherent arrangement. Rather, they engage with them pragmatically as distinct local actors: the RC and, for many, also the Soba are seen as locally accessible points of contact, yet both are also subject to criticism regarding effectiveness, neutrality, and political proximity to the MPLA. While the network contributes to everyday order-making, this does not necessarily translate into a general sense of safety. Instead, residents' accounts point to widespread feelings of insecurity, a reliance on self-

help or other community-based action, and limited trust in direct police protection and in formal state response more generally.

Overall, the 11 de Novembro case points to an MPLA-aligned hybrid arrangement embedded within a party-state framework. In this respect, it resonates with Aning and Axelrod's argument that hybrid arrangements often reproduce existing power imbalances and structures of dominance (2023, p. 144). Although the data do not show direct MPLA co-decision within the interactions among members of the policing network, the political alignment and institutional embeddedness of the core actors suggest that the network also helps sustain party-state influence at neighbourhood level.

The next chapter examines how the policing network functions in Cariango, a wealthier and more formal area. It applies the same analytical approach used in this chapter to explore interactions between the police and non-state actors.

Chapter 6 Local security networks in practice: the case of the neighbourhood Cariango

The previous case study focused on a neighbourhood primarily inhabited by a Bakongo community of relatively low socio-economic status; this chapter turns to Cariango. Cariango is ethnically more diverse, and its residents are more integrated into the formal economy and generally enjoy a higher socio-economic status than those in 11 de Novembro. As the findings below show, several of the patterns identified in 11 de Novembro also emerge in Cariango. At the same time, the results suggest that the neighbourhood's ethnic composition influences both the configuration of the policing network and the interactions between the police and non-state forms of local authority.

6.1 Cariango neighbourhood 'Tala Alice'

Cariango is a working-class neighbourhood located in the Tala Hady district. It has an estimated population of 10.800 residents, of whom 40% are male and 60% female (Croese et al., 2021, p. 10). The average household comprises 6.4 persons (ibid). Cariango was built during the colonial period, between 1959 and 1960 (Administração Municipal de Cazenga & DW – Development Workshop Angola, 2011), and it had an organised layout. According to local accounts, the name Cariango derives from the word 'Cadiango', which in Kimbundu means 'eats grass'. Since there was plenty of grass available for grazing animals in the area, it came to be known as such. Gonçalo Neto, a long-standing resident and coordinator of the RC of Cariango, explained, "*the place where the grass is eaten*." He also noted, "*there may be other versions, but this is the one we know."*

The first settlers in Cariango were of Umbundu origin from the province of Kwanza Sul (ibid). André (2019, p. 8) claims that Cariango was a neighbourhood where white and black residents lived peacefully. Over time, as shown by the results of interviews and surveys, Cariango has developed into a diverse community. Nowadays, it is home to people from Bengo, Luanda, Malanje, Kwanza Norte, and Kwanza Sul. According to Mr Manuel Gonçalo Neto, there has been a recent influx of people from the Congo and the northern provinces (Uige and Zaire).

The neighbourhood was redeveloped in the 2010s, which significantly impacted the well-being and socio-economic standards of the community. In a Presidential Decree (266/10) 2010, a

special ‘Office of Urban Reconversion of the Cazenga Municipality and both Sambizanga and Rangel Districts’ (GTRUCS) was established to pilot the requalification of informal settlements. The objectives were to consolidate and urbanise the informal settlements, incorporating peri-urban areas into the process by legalising already occupied land, conducting an economic valuation of residents’ homes, and installing missing public infrastructure and social services (Cain, 2020, p. 196).

Under this decree, the Cariango neighbourhood received a ‘Favela-Bairro’ style upgrade. This in-situ development approach enhances urban infrastructure and housing without requiring the demolition of structures or the displacement of residents. Improvements included upgrading the drainage system, paving roads, providing free Wi-Fi, establishing waste collection, and expanding water and electricity services, along with installing road signs and speed bumps. Utility fees were introduced, with residents paying monthly for water and electricity. They also actively contributed to financing and upgrading their homes, with many expanding vertically within their property boundaries (Cain, 2020, p. 198). Unlike most informal settlements in Cazenga, many Cariango houses are now two stories. As a result of these upgrades, Cariango evolved from an informal settlement into an area resembling lower-middle-income neighbourhoods, distinguished by well-structured, numbered streets, which set it apart from other parts of Cazenga.

Residents of Cariango have diverse occupational backgrounds. Results from interviews and informal conversations indicated that many residents work in the public sector, especially in the safety and security domain, for example as police officers or members of the armed forces, while others are self-employed or students. The neighbourhood’s workforce includes, among other occupations, barbers, truck drivers, traders, teachers, cleaners, bakers, and nurses. Cain (2020) reports that households in Tala Hady earn between $300 and $400 monthly. Cariango is also widely known as “Tala-Alice”, a name derived from its formal structures, which resemble those of Vila Alice, a very wealthy neighbourhood in downtown Luanda.

6.2 Safety and security in Cariango neighbourhood

While residents and outsiders often regard Cazenga as unsafe, Cariango stands in marked contrast. Interviews with residents, police, and local organisations consistently describe Cariango as a safe neighbourhood. Residents reported feeling safe both during the day and at night, a

perception many attributed to recent redevelopment efforts. Improved roads, street lighting, and free municipal Wi-Fi points in the neighbourhood were all seen as contributing to this sense of safety. As RC chair Mr Gonçalo Neto explained, residents use WhatsApp groups to circulate alerts. *“If someone sees a young man with a weapon … they post it in the WhatsApp group … the messages I send reach everyone in that group,”* he said.

He also linked safety to what he described as residents’ “civilised” behaviour, contrasting this with “migrants” who, he said, *“have no manners.”* In this context, he was referring not to foreigners, but to people from the northern provinces or those of Bakongo background, who also live in the neighbourhoods of Cazenga. This echoes long-standing and often negative stereotypes of Bakongo communities in Luanda.

Although many interviewed residents reported feeling safe, redevelopment has also brought certain drawbacks. Residents noted that the renovated public square now serves as a venue for many events, including concerts and festivals, which attract large numbers of visitors and generate various forms of nuisance and crime, such as noise and parking disturbances, fights, drug dealing, sexual assault, and theft. A late-night visit (around 3:00 a.m.) during one such festival, organised by a young Angolan man raised in Vlissingen, the Netherlands, revealed cars blocking the streets, loud groups of people talking outside the festival grounds, and deafening music. In an interview, the then administrator, Tany Narciso, acknowledged these issues and stated that the administration was working to address them.

Residents also noted that the availability of free Wi-Fi has contributed to phone theft: young people gather in the nearby park to connect to the free Wi-Fi, but are sometimes assaulted by youths from other neighbourhoods. The police further reported an increase in drug trafficking and prostitution, allegedly involving “migrants from Congo” living in rented houses, and noted that the sex trade attracts Bakongo men from the nearby neighbourhoods of Marbor and Palanca, who engage in various illegal activities in Cariango. This again reflects the long-standing stereotyping of Bakongo people among some Luandans.

Mr Dos Santos, a member of the RC in Cariango and responsible for the community vigilante group, mentioned that serious crimes were more common in the past. Currently, he believes the neighbourhood mainly experiences petty crime. He attributed this shift, among other things, to the execution of prominent criminals by unknown groups, which he did not identify as the police

or other authorities. He said, *"there used to be much delinquency ... some people from here ... ended up being executed.*" As in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, the concept of empirical acceptance appears relevant in Cariango: residents may accept a criminalised or hybrid order if it offers sufficient stability.

Residents and police reported similar crimes to those observed in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, including street assaults, car theft, physical violence, burglaries, and minor sexual offences. In interviews, residents noted that boys roughly between the ages of 8 and 18, often from outside the neighbourhood, were frequently responsible for such crimes, sometimes under the guidance of adults or criminal networks. Mr Neto and police officers explained that offenders under the age of 16 are below Angola's age of criminal responsibility (Penal Code, art. 17), which limits the legal measures that can be taken against them; as a result, older criminals often use them to carry out criminal activities on their behalf.

During interviews, residents and police identified several factors contributing to crime, violence, and insecurity in Cariango, many of which mirror those reported in the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, including unemployment, economic hardship, drug and alcohol abuse, limited opportunities for youth, and infrequent police patrols. Mr Dos Santos also argued for the need to improve infrastructure and living conditions in surrounding areas, noting that some lower-income residents from these neighbourhoods reportedly come to Cariango to steal.

The Cariango police station appears better equipped than the one in 11 de Novembro and is also more visible and prominent within the neighbourhood. It is larger than the police station in 11 de Novembro and, during fieldwork, appeared more modern and better maintained. During a visit, nine police vehicles were parked outside and 23 officers were counted on the premises. In interviews with different police officers, estimates of the total number of officers attached to the station varied considerably, ranging from 80 to 150. One officer added that an important distinction must be made between the number of officers on the payroll and the number actually deployed in practice.

Residents' opinions about the police were mixed. Many residents considered the police ineffective, citing the lack of patrols and unreliable emergency responses. However, unlike in 11 de Novembro, most did not view officers as criminals, accomplices of criminals, or individuals concerned only with their own benefit. Overall, various residents stated during interviews and

informal conversations that they had a workable relationship with the police and contacted them when they became victims of crime. During an interview, a police officer noted that communication with residents had improved through WhatsApp groups and community meetings. "*We established WhatsApp groups to make reporting easier, hold meetings, and share station and commander contact numbers, as well as promote the SOS 113 emergency number,"* he explained.

6.3 The local policing network of the police in Cariango, an MPLA clique

This subsection identifies the non-state actors with whom the police in Cariango most frequently interact for policing purposes. As in 11 de Novembro, the analysis draws on in-depth interviews with local police officers, which were used as a name generator to identify the non-state actors with whom they had maintained close policing ties over the previous five years. These interviews also explored the characteristics of these actors, as well as their interactions and working relationships with the police. Follow-up interviews were then conducted with the identified actors.

Interview data reveal that the police are connected to a wide range of neighbourhood actors involved in everyday governance and policing. These include the Soba (António Gaspar Fernandes), the RC of Cariango (chair: Gonçalo Neto), church leaders, MPLA-affiliated organisations (OMA, MPLA committees in Cazenga, and JMPLA Tala Hady), and local state institutions (the District Administration of Tala Hady and the Municipal Administration of Cazenga). In social network terms, the police in Cariango have a large ego-network, and because some categories encompass multiple individuals, such as church leaders, the effective contact potential exceeds the simple count.

Results from interviews with police officers in Cariango indicate that the police interact most frequently with the Residents' Committee (RC), especially its chair, Mr Gonçalo Neto, who serves as their primary neighbourhood partner. This also explains why Neto's voice is relatively prominent in this chapter. Engagement with OMA tends to be more sporadic and task-specific, for example during large political events organised by OMA in the neighbourhood. Contact with church leaders does occur, but less frequently. Many police officers and residents expressed scepticism about churches, noting the presence of numerous "fake churches" across Cazenga, which they believed were primarily concerned with generating money.

When asked about the Soba's role in Cariango, one police officer explained that the Soba mainly deals with indigenous matters and that, in a neighbourhood where many residents are less involved in such practices, his role is more limited. In Cariango, where the resident profile is more diverse and interviewees described the area as more "civilised" than other neighbourhoods in Cazenga, referring to the adoption of urban "modern" norms and to the neighbourhood's layout, the Soba, as a traditional leader, plays a smaller role in everyday community affairs. This contrasts with 11 de Novembro, where the Soba's role is more prominent, something interviewees attributed to the neighbourhood's Bakongo profile and the stronger presence of indigenous practices. The contrast also reflects colonial-era patterns, under which the Portuguese administration relied on Sobas to govern indigenous populations through indirect rule, while urban areas were governed more directly through colonial bureaucratic structures.

As in 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, the police ego-network in Cariango appears closely aligned with the MPLA. Police interviewees reported collaborating with a range of actors, including the Soba, RC JMPLA, OMA, district, and municipal administrations, all of which are institutionally or politically connected to the ruling party. Given the police's own proximity to the MPLA, these ties point to an MPLA-aligned policing arrangement at neighbourhood level. As in 11 de Novembro, this underscores the MPLA's presence at neighbourhood level in Luanda's peri-urban areas.

The next section examines the characteristics of the Residents' Committee, the non-state actor with whom the police in Cariango interact most frequently.

6.4 Attributes of the residents' committee of Cariango

This section describes the RC in Cariango through the study's attribute framework, focusing on identity and actor type, roles and functions, legitimacy (both vertical and horizontal), and political orientation. The findings draw on interviews with RC leaders, police officers, OMA representatives, residents, and local officials, as well as informal conversations and field notes.

The initial interview with Mr Gonçalo Neto, the RC chair, took place at his home rather than at the committee's office. Also present were two Canadian master's students in architecture and Sylvia Croese, an urban sociologist of Angolan-Dutch background who was also conducting fieldwork in Cariango. In total, three interviews were conducted with Mr Neto during fieldwork. At our first meeting, he had internal documents, maps, and extracts from Law 7/16 laid out on

the table and agreed to the interview being audio-recorded, a degree of openness rarely encountered among interviewees in my research.

Mr Neto is a retired FAPLA colonel (FAPLA being the former military wing of the MPLA), in his late sixties, and was born in Luanda. As he stated, *"I am a retired member of the armed forces. I studied law (third year) and economics (also third year) but never finished either*." He speaks impeccable Portuguese, which he attributed to Portuguese-era schooling at an institution near Cariango. Although the ethnic backgrounds of other RC members were not explicitly discussed in the interviews, the surnames listed in the RC organisational chart, including João Gomes, António Terra, Ferreira Gomes, Baptista Neto, Dos Santos, Silvestre Monteiro, and António Fernandes, suggest a stronger presence of families associated with Luanda's assimilado and Creole milieu.

From the outset, Neto emphasised that the RC was both a legally recognised and a community-embedded organisation. Referring to Law 7/16, he noted that "today the Residents' Committees have an assembly, an administration, and a fiscal council, each functioning as an independent entity," and described the committee as the neighbourhood's primary point of contact for residents in Cariango. As he put it, "When someone is a victim of crime, they often come to us before reporting to the police. We are the ones who understand what really happens in the neighbourhood." Beyond Cariango, Neto maintains relationships with NGOs, frequently participates in public discussions on community governance and urban development, and has appeared on DW to discuss the role of RCs in Angola, reflecting a public profile that extends beyond the neighbourhood. Police officers likewise affirmed the importance of the RC for the neighbourhood, describing the partnership as *"boa"* (good). They referred to WhatsApp groups, regular meetings, and shared contact lists as part of this cooperation.

The existence of the three bodies within the RC—the assembly, the administration, and the fiscal council—was confirmed through interviews with RC members in Cariango, although some questioned the extent of their independence. One assembly member, speaking anonymously by phone, stated that Mr Neto exercised considerable influence and hinted at possible corruption: "I am extremely unhappy with his leadership. I know many things about him," he said. Yet residents of Cariango expressed respect for the RC and recognised Neto as a strong local leader, someone who "gets things done." Some referred to him as *o cota Neto* (a colloquial expression

meaning “elder” or “older man”). One resident recounted that, when her mother died and she had no money to take the body to the mortuary, she called Neto at 5:00 in the morning and, thanks to his intervention, it became possible. All interviewees from the neighbourhood knew where Neto lived and where the RC headquarters was located. In practice, the RC functions as an epicentre in the neighbourhood, serving as the go-to point when residents need help or encounter problems they cannot solve on their own.

Turning to roles and functions, the Residents’ Committee (RC) combines administrative liaison, community problem-solving, and a bridging role between residents and state agencies. As Neto explained, the RC’s main responsibilities are to “*help the administrative authority solve the neighbourhood’s biggest problems, to issue declarations confirming residency, to assist people in obtaining an identification document (a major problem in the neighbourhood), to file petitions, to resolve minor community disputes, and to promote cultural, sporting, and recreational events*.” He cited Law 7/16 as the legal basis for these duties. When asked whether the committee carried out all of these functions, Neto responded: “*Yes, because we follow the law*.”

To manage this wide range of tasks, the RC relies on a block-based structure. Cariango is divided into *quarteirões* (blocks), each overseen by specific *zeladores*, lower-level neighbourhood functionaries who monitor a smaller territorial segment and act as intermediaries between residents and higher-level committee representatives. Neto stated that more than 40 members work under his leadership, each assigned responsibility for areas such as education, public safety, sanitation, health, or housing. They collect information, respond to residents’ concerns, and monitor illegal activities. As Neto explained, *“I cannot walk around the entire neighbourhood asking questions, so I have 40 members, each assigned to a specific zone. Everyone has their own role, education, youth, and housing.*”

The committee also conducts community-level data collection, which Neto described as essential for effective governance. The information gathered includes data on children not enrolled in school, undocumented residents, local unemployment, vehicle ownership, domestic violence, and crime incidents. When asked whether documents relating to these data could be made available for verification, Mr Neto declined to provide access, stating that they were confidential. In addition, the RC addresses issues relating to public safety and petty crime. Neto discussed youth

gangs and minor offences, attributing them in part to a lack of documentation, education, and employment: “*Some children do not go to school because they do not have documents. They grow up without education and opportunities and end up in crime. The problems are not limited to Cariango alone: these kids come from everywhere. They form groups with others from different neighbourhoods. We know who they are and where they go*.”

Despite its importance in neighbourhood affairs, the RC faces significant logistical challenges. As Mr Neto and other RC members stated during a group meeting at the RC office, “*We lack equipment: no car, no computer, not even basic office supplies. We do everything manually*.” Although the committee receives funding from the municipality, the exact amount was not disclosed. RC members stated that it is insufficient and explained that both they and residents contribute financially, although not everyone in the neighbourhood pays.

During fieldwork, it was not possible to directly observe or independently verify whether all tasks described by Neto and other RC members in Cariango were carried out exactly as claimed. This was partly because many of these activities had taken place prior to my visit or occurred on an intermittent basis, making direct observation difficult. It is also important to note that Mr Neto and other RC members have an interest in presenting the RC in a positive light; accordingly, these accounts should be read with due caution.

However, interviews with police, local officials, OMA representatives, and residents corroborated that the RC engages in a range of neighbourhood activities that residents consider important. Regarding data collection, police officers stated that this is sometimes carried out jointly with the RC, with Neto alerting them to key neighbourhood issues. According to the police, they do not usually receive unsolicited data from the RC. Residents also reported turning to the RC for assistance with matters such as obtaining ID cards. Nonetheless, some expressed dissatisfaction, stating that the help they received was ineffective, for example when they were given phone numbers that led nowhere. Residents further noted that longstanding issues, such as weekend festivals and the associated nuisance or crime, remain unresolved. They also mentioned ongoing shortages of materials at the neighbourhood primary school, stating that the RC is aware of the problem but has not addressed it. Because the RC is involved in many activities, it is often perceived as a neighbourhood “one-stop desk.” Residents’ expectations of the RC are high and

are often unmet, either because the committee lacks the capacity to act or because some issues lie beyond its mandate.

Local administrators in Tala Hady also recognised the importance of working with the RC to address neighbourhood issues, describing it as essential. As one district administrator stated during an interview, "*without the RC we could not do our work*." When presented with the list of activities that Neto claimed the RC performed, one district administration officer smiled and remarked that " *it looks like a lot for the RC*." He added that, although these tasks are listed officially, it is practically impossible for the RC to carry them all out given its limited capacity. He also observed that, with regard to statistics such as youth unemployment or school dropout rates in Cazenga, neither the municipal nor the provincial government possessed such data. This suggests that Neto may overstate the extent of the RC's activities.

Regarding legitimacy, residents' views were varied but generally respectful. Vertically, the RC, especially its chair, appears to hold significant authority among residents. Several respondents mentioned turning to the RC before approaching the police or other local authorities in cases such as theft, indicating a degree of trust and confidence in the committee. In addition, the RC board in Cariango is selected through neighbourhood elections, which further strengthens its vertical legitimacy. However, some criticism exists. As in 11 de Novembro, certain residents described the RC as *cipaios* (colonial-era auxiliaries). Citizens sympathetic to UNITA were also notably sceptical of the RC, particularly of Mr Neto, because of his close ties to the MPLA. On balance, vertical legitimacy is clearly present, but it remains contested rather than uniformly accepted. In terms of horizontal legitimacy, the RC enjoys strong recognition from other actors. As a recognised local authority within the MPLA-linked governance network, it is accepted by the police, municipal and district authorities, OMA, churches, and NGOs such as DW, all of which recognise the RC as an authority in Cariango.

In terms of political orientation, the RC chair is clearly aligned with the MPLA, referring to longstanding ties to the party and to his military background. This pattern extends beyond the chair. Interviews with members of the RC's assembly, administration, and fiscal body indicate that all identified themselves as MPLA supporters or sympathisers. None of the ten interviewed *zeladores* (individuals who assist the RC in the various blocks of the neighbourhood) mentioned

membership in UNITA or other opposition party; they likewise expressed support for the MPLA. A journalist from *Folha 8*, a private newspaper, remarked during an interview at his office that many people in Luanda who work for, or depend on, the government conceal their actual political preferences and publicly present themselves as MPLA supporters out of fear of repercussions, such as losing their jobs or having their career prospects blocked.

As in 11 de Novembro, party-state alignment and administrative embeddedness help explain why the RC and the police occupy the centre of Cariango's hybrid policing network. Their proximity to the MPLA and their incorporation into local governance structures act as the glue that sustains coordination, collaboration, and trust. The contrast lies in the position of the Soba: in Cariango, his role is more marginal, not because he is unimportant, but because the neighbourhood's social profile is less rooted in the indigenous cultural base that underpins his authority. The Soba remains an important authority in other neighbourhoods of Cazenga, where his ethnolinguistic ties to residents are stronger and where state actors, including the police, benefit from an intermediary who can help bridge cultural distance.

6.5 Content of ties: the nature of interactions between the police and the residents' committee of Cariango neighbourhood

Building on the attributes profile, this section examines how the Residents' Committee (RC) interacts with the police in Cariango, using the study's tie-strength and resource-exchange indicators from social network analysis. It analyses ties in terms of frequency, duration, and closeness, and maps the flow of information, cultural knowledge, and both tangible and intangible resources. In doing so, it highlights the mechanisms of cooperation, coordination, and control that shape everyday security governance in Cariango.

The ties between the Residents' Committee (RC) of Cariango and the police are close, marked by frequent and direct contact. During interviews, police officers described holding regular meetings with the RC, although the frequency varied depending on circumstances. As one officer explained, *"sometimes it is every 15 days, and when things are calm, once a month."* When asked whether these meetings were formally organised, one officer stated that "*the contact with the Residents' Committee is not formalised,*" while another described the collaboration as both formal and informal, explaining that "*the Residents' Committee has to work with us, but we have*

not put it down on paper how this collaboration should be." The chief of the police station in Cariango added that ties with the RC are strong and consistent with Angola's Proximity Policing model, which encourages cooperation with trusted community actors such as the RC. RC chair Mr Gonçalo Neto likewise emphasised the importance of immediate communication between both parties: "The police cannot act without informing us what their plans are." To illustrate this, he added: *"They (the police) might say, on this particular day we are going to carry out an operation in your neighbourhood, but we need your help to identify suspicious houses."* He also noted, "*we call each other regularly because we often work together, and this can happen at any time of day."*

As in 11 de Novembro, interaction between the RC and the police in Cariango is frequent. However, ties between the RC and the municipal and district administration are even more regular and extensive. As Mr Dos Santos (Community Vigilance Services, RC) explained, *"the Residents' Committee handles various issues, mainly non-security related; therefore, the Committee interacts more often with district and municipal authorities than with the police*." The proximity of the Cazenga municipal administration office, located just across the main road from Cariango, further facilitates close and ongoing ties. Explaining how the RC raises concerns and proposes improvements to the municipality, Mr Neto stated: "*We cannot simply go to the administrator and say, 'You must do this or that.' It does not work like that. For example, we drafted a report for the administrator. We can make such proposals. Just last week, we presented a summary report with our ideas for improving conditions in the neighbourhood. It covers facilities that should be functioning, immigration issues, and the lack of leisure spaces. We also highlight the shortage of green areas, which relates to one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. All of this is set out in the report. That is roughly how we intervene."*

Research findings also point to a close working relationship between Mr Neto and the police leadership in Cariango. On one occasion, when the researcher indicated an interest in interviewing a police officer, Neto immediately phoned the station commander, explained that research on policing in Cariango was being conducted, and exchanged jokes and laughter with him. He then secured an appointment for the following week. When asked about his relationship with the chief of the police station, Mr Neto explained, *"we have known each other for a long time, since we were children, so our relationship is very good*." The chief of the police station

likewise described his relationship with Mr Neto and other RC members as strong. Asked about the police–RC relationship, another senior officer stated, "*We are a family in the neighbourhood; we need each other,"* suggesting a close working bond between the police and the RC. Taken together, statements by both police and RC representatives during interviews and informal conversations indicate that their ties are strong and close.

As in 11 de Novembro, resource exchange between the police and the RC in Cariango involves both tangible and intangible resources. A recurring theme in the interviews was the reciprocal sharing of intelligence. RC chair Mr Neto explained*: "My role is to report, but it also works the other way. When the police are unsure about an incident in the neighbourhood, they reach out to us for assistance*." He gave a recent example: "*We recently identified about fifty individuals who had entered the neighbourhood. I had strong suspicions. I contacted the police and immigration services and informed the commander (chief of the police station) that the situation was serious."* Police officers also frequently emphasised the importance of the RC as a source of information. As one officer stated, *"information from the Residents' Committee has been particularly important for police operations."*

Police officers also referred to the RC's insider knowledge, a form of social mapping that is difficult for outsiders to access. One officer illustrated this with a personal analogy: *"When I moved to Portugal, I initially did not plan to stay, but I ended up staying and becoming the reception committee for my family and friends. The same applies here; when newcomers arrive, residents know who acts as the reception committee. This helps us identify illegal migrants and those who facilitate their settlement,"* the officer explained. Reflecting the RC's own understanding of its role, Mr Neto stated, *"we are the ones who discuss everything because we know the truth,"* implying that the committee considers itself better informed about neighbourhood issues than the police or other official bodies. In addition to providing information, the RC also offers operational assistance when requested. Mr Neto explained: *"When police plan an operation in the neighbourhood, they notify the RC in advance and, if needed, ask for our help, such as identifying suspicious houses."* He referred to a case in which the police arrested several young men involved in armed robbery and sexual violence, stressing that without the RC's intelligence, the police would not have known where to find them.

Another form of interaction between the police and the RC involves case referrals. Similar to in 11 de Novembro, residents often contact the RC first when dealing with crime-related issues before approaching the police. Mr Dos Santos from the RC's Community Vigilance Services explained: *"Residents do not always go to the police first. They come to us. If it is something serious, we forward them to the police."* He recounted a gunshot incident in which the family initially chose not to inform the police; only after the RC became involved was the case officially reported. Referrals also move in the other direction, from the police to the RC. A senior officer explained that a known repeat offender named "Piquinito" was referred to the committee after his release: *"Once he was freed from prison, we asked Mr Neto to supervise him, ensuring he learns a skill and avoids criminal behaviour."* Another police officer noted that when residents have disputes, particularly over housing, the RC is contacted because its members are more familiar with the local history of residents' circumstances. He also added that victims seeking assistance, for example with food or financial support, are often helped through contact with the RC, which mobilises support on their behalf.

These strong ties between the police and the RC are not without tensions. Police interviewees recounted cases in which collaboration broke down because of conflicts of interest. As one officer stated, *"When the investigation reveals the involvement of someone related to an RC member, they stop cooperating."* This highlights the vulnerability of close, trust-based ties in tightly woven environments, where personal relationships may conflict with professional responsibilities. Members of the RC likewise voiced dissatisfaction with the police. As in 11 de Novembro, RC members in Cariango noted that the police often fail to follow up on cases referred to them, leaving residents feeling abandoned. According to RC members, this weakens trust in both the RC and the police. Mr Dos Santos stated that a major frustration for residents is that, when reporting incidents, police frequently say that the system (software) is not working and ask them to return later. In many cases, however, residents do not come back.

Concluding remarks

As in 11 de Novembro, Cariango illustrates a setting in which state institutions are not the sole providers of functions conventionally associated with policing. Authority is distributed across state, non-state, and hybrid actors. Unlike in 11 de Novembro, however, where the Soba form part of the central core, in Cariango his role is more marginal in community affairs. Interview

material suggests that this reflects the neighbourhood's more diverse resident profile and higher socio-economic status. At the centre of the arrangement are the police and the RC. Here too, the police and the RC form a tightly connected core characterised by regular interaction, recurrent information exchange, strong ties, and close bonds between the chair of the RC and the police leadership.

Similar to the 11 de Novembro neighbourhood, the evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the cohesion of Cariango's core rests not only on repeated cooperation, but also on party-state alignment and embeddedness in local governance structures. The RC in Cariango, and especially its chair, appears to maintain strong ties to the MPLA, as do the police. In this case too, the police appear to occupy the most central position within the configuration. The RC functions both as a complement to and, at times, a substitute for formal policing by receiving complaints, mediating disputes, brokering access to services, and acting as a neighbourhood liaison.

The findings further show that this arrangement also relies less on conventional policing activities such as routine patrol, independent investigation, proactive crime prevention measures, or broad-based resident protection than on neighbourhood monitoring, information-sharing, mediation, and selective police intervention. However, unlike in 11 de Novembro, the material from Cariango suggests that residents are better able to rely on the RC when problems arise in the neighbourhood, although self-help and other forms of community-based action remain part of how problems are addressed. The RC may then intervene directly or involve the police or another relevant actor. The police in Cariango also appear to be more responsive to residents than in 11 de Novembro, even if residents' assessments remain mixed. In practice, this means that residents have a more accessible channel through which neighbourhood problems can be raised, mediated, and, where necessary, referred to the police or other authorities.

While contributing to everyday order-making, this arrangement in Cariango also appears to translate more into a relative sense of safety than in 11 de Novembro. Residents' accounts suggest that this is linked not only to the functioning of the policing network, the well-organised RC, and the more workable relationship residents have with the police, but also to Cariango's broader social and spatial profile.

Overall, the Cariango case indicates that the hybrid policing network in this neighbourhood, like that in 11 de Novembro, is embedded in a party-state framework. This arrangement also appears to reflect and reproduce party-state presence at neighbourhood level.

Chapter 7 now returns to the sub-questions and synthesises the findings from both case studies into a broader answer to the main research question.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This chapter concludes the dissertation by first answering the three sub-questions, based on the case studies of the 11 de Novembro and Cariango neighbourhoods. It then synthesises these findings to address the main question. Next, it clarifies the conceptual contribution of the dissertation by specifying the type of hybrid policing arrangement identified in the two case studies. The chapter ends by outlining directions for future research.

7.1 Historical layering rather than rupture

The first sub-question examined how the legacies of precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial governance structures are reflected in contemporary governance arrangements in Angola.

Contemporary governance in Angola reflects a historical trajectory in which precolonial authority, colonial rule, and post-colonial party-state consolidation intersect in present-day local governance arrangements. This continuity is visible in at least three areas: the territorial-administrative organisation of the state, the continuing role of traditional authorities, and the incorporation of grassroots organisations, particularly Residents' Committees, into the orbit of the party-state.

First, the current administrative system remains highly centralised and reproduces key features of colonial territorial organisation. Luanda's position as the political-administrative centre of the country is itself a colonial legacy that has persisted after independence. Second, the role of Sobas in contemporary Angola is best understood not as a rupture, but as a historical continuity shaped by precolonial authority, colonial-era co-optation, and post-independence incorporation into state and party-state structures. Their authority is therefore neither purely customary nor purely administrative; rather, it reflects the cumulative effects of successive political orders. Third, the contemporary role of Residents' Committees also reflects continuity rather than rupture. Initially associated with neighbourhood mobilisation and local organisation, they were progressively incorporated into the structures of party authority and local administration. Over time, they developed into recognised forms of neighbourhood-level authority that combine administrative, political, and oversight functions.

Taken together, these continuities show that present-day governance in peri-urban Luanda is not built on a clean break with the past. Rather, contemporary local authority arrangements are historically shaped formations in which older logics of mediation, incorporation, and territorial control have been reworked within the post-war MPLA party-state.

7.2 Policing, monitoring and local order

The second sub-question examined the composition and functioning of hybrid policing networks in peri-urban Luanda.

The findings show that hybrid policing networks in Luanda's peri-urban neighbourhoods are composed of multiple actor types: (a) hybrid local authorities, notably the Soba and the Residents' Committee (RC); (b) party-linked actors, including MPLA/JMPLA and OMA; (c) community actors, such as residents, church leaders, and street youth; and (d) state actors, the police and district and municipal administrations. In both 11 de Novembro and Cariango neighbourhoods, the police remain the principal formal authority, while the other actors mainly complement or, at times, substitute for the police.

The composition of the operative core varies by site. In 11 de Novembro, the core takes the form of a police–Soba–RC triad characterised by strong ties, regular interactions and the exchange of both tangible and intangible resources, such as case referrals, local knowledge, and intelligence. In Cariango, the effective core is narrower and centres primarily on a police–RC dyad, while the Soba occupies a more peripheral position in day-to-day community affairs. Around these cores sits a looser periphery, including party organisations such as OMA and JMPLA, church leaders, commercial guards, and residents, who are drawn in episodically or for specific tasks. Local norms and routinised expectations help determine which actor addresses which kinds of issues. In general, disputes and matters related to traditional or indigenous practices are more often handled by the Soba, the RC tends to manage administrative issues and mediate conflicts between residents, and the police deal primarily with crime-related cases.

The findings also show that conventional active policing is limited. These networks do perform policing-related functions, but those functions lie less in routine patrol, autonomous criminal investigation, and proactive crime prevention than in neighbourhood monitoring, local reporting, information-sharing, mediation, referral, and selective intervention. In both neighbourhoods, the police often enter the process only after information has already been generated, filtered, and

channelled by local actors. In 11 de Novembro, this pattern is especially visible in the way residents often respond first through self-help or other community-based action, before cases are channelled through one of the core non-state forms of local authority, namely the Soba or the RC, and only subsequently reach the police. While the policing network contributes to everyday order-making, this does not necessarily translate into a general sense of safety among residents. In 11 de Novembro, residents' accounts point instead to widespread feelings of insecurity. In Cariango, by contrast, residents appear to feel relatively safe. These more positive feelings of safety in Cariango are linked not only to the functioning of the policing arrangement, but also to the neighbourhood's broader social and spatial profile, including the relatively higher socio-economic position of residents and better public infrastructure than in 11 de Novembro.

Several recurrent problems affect the functioning of these hybrid policing networks. Cases referred by the RC to the police frequently stall or are handled in ways that fall short of complainants' expectations, thereby eroding trust in both the RC and the police. Police capacity constraints, including low police-to-resident ratios and limited equipment, further reduce the ability of the police to respond effectively.

The blurring of boundaries between actors also contributes to practical problems within these networks. In 11 de Novembro, for example, the police criticised the Soba and the RC for not adequately informing residents about the formal complaint process. As a result, according to the police, residents often arrive at the police station unprepared, for example without the required documentation. This suggests that responsibility for informing residents about police procedures is not clearly allocated among the actors involved. Another example of boundary issues in 11 de Novembro concerns the Soba's efforts to address perceived security gaps, such as proposing night patrols, which generated tensions with the police and municipal authorities over who had the authority to organise such initiatives.

In both neighbourhoods, conflicts of interest can also obstruct cooperation when cases involve acquaintances or relatives of members of the network. In addition, violence by residents against suspects before they are handed over to the authorities remains a recurrent concern, one explicitly condemned by police leadership.

In sum, the policing networks in 11 de Novembro and Cariango are organised around relatively small, party-state-linked cores: triadic in 11 de Novembro and dyadic in Cariango. Around these

cores sits a looser set of additional actors, many of whom are likewise connected to the MPLA. Although the precise internal configuration differs across the two sites, both cases show that policing in peri-urban Luanda is carried out through hybrid arrangements embedded in party-state structures.

7.3 Historical and socio-political drivers

The third sub-question examined which historical and socio-political factors shape the structure and dynamics of hybrid policing networks in Luanda's peri-urban areas.

The findings suggest that the structure of these networks can be understood through three interrelated factors. The first of these factors concerns political alignment, more specifically party-state alignment. In both 11 de Novembro and Cariango, actors with strong links to the MPLA and with embedded positions in local governance structures tend occupy central positions in the network. The police, as the formal authority for internal security and a key institution within the party-state, act as the principal anchor of coordination. Around them, Residents' Committees and, where relevant, Sobas operate as local intermediaries whose importance derives not only from their neighbourhood roles, but also from their proximity to party-state structures. Shared party affiliation, administrative embeddedness, and routine interaction help explain why certain actors cluster together and why cooperation is strongest among those positioned closest to the local governance architecture.

A second factor is historical incorporation. The authority of Sobas and Residents' Committees cannot be understood outside the longer historical trajectory through which local authority was progressively incorporated into systems of state control. The role of Sobas in contemporary Angolan society is best understood not as a rupture, but as a historical continuity shaped by precolonial authority, colonial-era co-optation, and post-independence incorporation into state and party-state structures. Residents' Committees, though historically different in origin, have undergone a comparable process of incorporation into neighbourhood-level governance. Over time, both actors have become useful intermediaries through which aspects of community life and local governance are organised.

A third factor is the socio-economic and institutional environment in which these networks operate. Low police-to-resident ratios, limited transport and equipment, and practical barriers to

rapid police response increase reliance on non-state forms of local authority. In some cases, linguistic and cultural distance between police officers and residents further strengthens the role of actors such as Sobas and Residents' Committees, who can mediate communication and facilitate access. The importance of these actors is therefore not only political, but also practical: they provide neighbourhood knowledge, social access, and familiarity with local dynamics.

These factors do not operate in isolation; rather, they reinforce one another. Historical legacies help explain why non-state forms of local authority continue to exist and are seen as legitimate intermediaries; party-state alignment helps explain why certain actors occupy central positions within the network; and institutional and material constraints help explain why the police continue to rely on them. The result is a form of hybrid policing in which local order is maintained through actors who are simultaneously socially embedded, politically connected, and practically useful.

7.4 The MPLA-anchored hybrid network

Having answered the three sub-questions, the chapter now turns to the main question: how do hybrid policing networks function in the peri-urban areas of Luanda, Angola, and how do the political and socio-historical factors shaping their structure and dynamics relate to Angola's broader governance framework? The following synthesis brings together the empirical findings in order to answer this question.

Overall, the findings from the two case studies suggest that hybrid policing in peri-urban Luanda operates through MPLA-anchored networks composed of state, non-state, and hybrid actors. While these networks include a wider set of peripheral actors, their effective core is more limited. In both cases, the police occupy the principal formal role, while the Residents' Committee and, where relevant, the Soba complement and at times substitute for formal policing functions. Although the composition of the core varies, with a triad in 11 de Novembro and a dyad in Cariango, both arrangements follow a similar logic of party-state alignment and administrative embeddedness.

Findings further indicate that the practical role of these networks lies less in conventional, citizen-centred policing than in the combined work of monitoring residents, gathering and passing on neighbourhood information, mediating access to authority, and responding to

incidents through referral, handover, and selective intervention. In both 11 de Novembro and Cariango, the police, Residents' Committees, and, where relevant, Sobas operate through a division of labour in which cases are often first identified, mediated, or channelled locally before the police intervene more selectively. In this respect, the networks function less through autonomous criminal investigation and proactive patrol than through monitoring, mediation, information-sharing, and case-based intervention.

The factors shaping the structure and dynamics of these policing networks are rooted in Angola's centralised party-state model of governance and, in turn, help reproduce it. Angola's post-war political order combines a concentration of power in the presidency with patronage and the incorporation of community actors into broader systems of governance and control. In areas where direct state presence is limited, authority is projected through actors such as Residents' Committees and, where relevant, Sobas. The result is not simply a spontaneous or self-generated form of hybrid order, but a politically embedded arrangement.

For this reason, the term MPLA-anchored hybrid network is proposed to capture the configuration identified in this study. The term reflects both the coexistence of state and non-state actors within neighbourhood-level policing arrangements and the fact that these arrangements are anchored in, and shaped by, party-state structures.

This conclusion should not be read as implying that every interaction is consciously directed at regime maintenance or that the actors involved explicitly articulate such an aim. Rather, it means that these networks contribute to the reproduction of MPLA authority in peri-urban neighbourhoods. Hybrid policing in Luanda's peri-urban areas is therefore best understood not as a politically neutral response to insecurity, but as a historically shaped and politically embedded form of local order-making that operates through neighbourhood-level actors and institutions aligned with the MPLA.

7.5 Conceptual clarification

Whereas the previous section synthesised the empirical patterns observed across the two cases, this section clarifies the conceptual framework that best captures them.

The empirical findings presented in this dissertation suggest that existing concepts such as plural policing, nodal governance, anchored pluralism, and hybrid security governance, each illuminate

important aspects of the policing arrangements studied here, but none of them fully captures their specific political configuration. The cases of 11 de Novembro and Cariango confirm that policing in peri-urban Luanda is neither monopolised by the state nor simply fragmented among competing actors. Instead, it takes place through hybrid arrangements in which state, non-state, and hybrid actors are connected through relations of cooperation, dependence, and political alignment.

At one level, the findings support the broader insight of plural policing and nodal governance that multiple actors participate in the production of order and security. The police are clearly not the only actors involved. Residents' Committees, Sobas, OMA, residents, and other neighbourhood-level actors all play roles in reporting, mediation, referral, monitoring, and the circulation of information. Social Network Theory helps clarify how these arrangements operate relationally by drawing attention to strong ties, brokerage roles, recurring exchanges, and the centrality of particular actors within the network.

At the same time, the empirical material shows that these arrangements are not politically neutral and cannot be understood simply as open, horizontal, or pluralistic networks. The central actors in both case studies are tied together by party-state alignment and administrative embeddedness. The networks are therefore structured not only by practical cooperation, but also by political incorporation into an MPLA-centred governance order. This distinguishes the cases studied here from more fragmented hybrid arrangements described elsewhere in the literature, where non-state actors may operate independently of, or in open competition with, state institutions.

For this reason, the dissertation proposes the term MPLA-anchored hybrid network. This concept captures both the hybrid character of the arrangements and their political anchoring in the ruling party-state. It reflects the coexistence of state and non-state actors within neighbourhood-level policing arrangements, while also emphasising that these arrangements are shaped by strong links to local governance structures, party-political alignment, and the continuing influence of the MPLA in everyday neighbourhood life. The term therefore helps specify a form of hybridity in which plural actors are present, but their interactions are channelled within a party-state framework.

By conceptualising the policing arrangements in peri-urban Luanda as MPLA-anchored hybrid networks, the study provides a more precise way of understanding how hybrid authority operates

in a context where state and non-state actors are closely intertwined within a centralised party-state order.

7.6 Directions for future research

A paradox of scientific inquiry is that increased understanding often generates new questions rather than resolving all existing ones. This study is no exception: although its findings are significant, they also open up new directions for future research.

A first direction concerns comparative analysis. The concept of the MPLA-anchored hybrid network has been developed on the basis of two case studies in peri-urban Luanda. Further research is needed to determine whether similar configurations are present in other parts of Angola. Comparative studies in other urban and peri-urban settings, such as Huambo, Benguela, or Lubango, could help establish whether the combination of party-state alignment, administrative embeddedness, and local non-state authority identified here is specific to Luanda or more broadly characteristic of Angolan neighbourhood governance. Such work could also examine whether different local histories, demographic compositions, or levels of state presence produce alternative forms of hybrid policing.

A second direction concerns broader regional comparison. The findings of this dissertation raise questions that extend beyond Angola. Comparative research in other authoritarian or post-authoritarian African contexts, could help clarify the extent to which party dominance, administrative incorporation, and historical trajectories shape hybrid policing arrangements elsewhere. This would make it possible to assess whether the MPLA-anchored hybrid network identified here is best understood as a specifically Angolan configuration or as part of a wider pattern of politically embedded hybrid governance on the continent.

A third area for future research is the internal functioning of the MPLA itself. Because this dissertation shows that neighbourhood-level authority is closely tied to broader party-state structures, a more systematic understanding of the MPLA's organisation would significantly deepen the analysis. Further research could examine how the party manages cadres, allocates resources, maintains loyalty, and projects influence into local institutions. Such work would help explain more precisely how party-state authority is reproduced through neighbourhood-level governance arrangements.

A fourth area concerns Angola's police force. Recent comprehensive research on the police remains limited, despite the central role the institution plays in both case studies. Future research could explore recruitment patterns, training, organisational culture, and incentive structures, as well as the everyday work of the police across urban, peri-urban, and rural areas in Angola, and the formal and informal relations between police institutions and the MPLA. Such work would help clarify how internal police dynamics shape the practical functioning of hybrid policing arrangements in everyday life.

A fifth direction concerns methodology. This dissertation adopted an ego-centric approach, taking the police as the focal actor in order to analyse their relations with non-state forms of local authority. This approach was appropriate to the research question, but it also leaves room for more expansive network mapping. Future research could adopt a broader whole-network perspective in order to trace additional ties among state actors, party structures, civil society organisations, commercial actors, and informal power holders. Such an approach could reveal patterns of centrality, brokerage, exclusion, and structural holes that remain less visible in ego-centric designs.

Finally, future research would benefit from greater attention to the perspectives of ordinary residents. While this dissertation shows that residents often act first, report incidents, and interact with local intermediaries before the police become directly involved, their perceptions of these arrangements remain only partly visible in the present study. More detailed research on how residents experience trust, authority, coercion, access, and protection within hybrid policing networks would deepen understanding of how such arrangements are lived from below.

Taken together, these directions point towards a multi-layered research agenda that can deepen understanding of hybrid policing, party-state authority, and neighbourhood-level governance in Angola and in comparable contexts elsewhere on the African continent.

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Curriculum vitae

Antonio Frank (1985) completed his secondary education at Scheldemond Secondary School in Vlissingen, the Netherlands, between 1997 and 2002. He then went on to study European Studies, specialising in Public Administration, at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in 2007. In 2008, he completed an MSc in International Conflicts at Kingston University London. He later strengthened his methodological and professional background through a Research Methods course in the Social Sciences at Leiden University (2010–2011) and a master's-level course in Practices of Conflict Management and Peacebuilding at the University for Peace (2012).

After completing his studies, Antonio worked, among other roles, for the NGO Maatwerk bij Terugkeer, where he and his colleagues supported the safe return of rejected asylum seekers. This experience further deepened his interest in questions of migration, governance, and social justice. His growing passion for education and research eventually led him into higher education. Since 2011, he has been a lecturer at The Hague University of Applied Sciences in the Safety and Security Management Studies programme. In 2017, he secured an NWO PhD grant for teachers following a successful application and proposal defence, which marked the formal beginning of his doctoral trajectory. As part of his PhD training, he completed the CERES training programme in 2017. Alongside his teaching and doctoral research, Antonio also worked as a consultant for various organisations on issues relating to migration, urban safety and security, and development in the Global South.

Antonio currently continues to work as a lecturer at The Hague University of Applied Sciences, where he is also involved in coordinating research projects on urban safety and security.