



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ASSESSMENT OF URBAN MANAGEMENT POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF CACUACO, LUANDA PROVINCE, 2020–2024

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 14th January, 2026
Received in revised form
24th February, 2026
Accepted 25th March, 2026
Published online 30th April, 2026

Keywords:

Public policies; Urban management;
Sustainable development; Cacauco.

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Citation: Lic. Nzuzi Jonete Abílio João Da Rocha and Prof. António Afonso Bindanda (Ph.D.). 2026. "Assessment of urban management policies for sustainable development: a case study of the municipality of cacuaco, luanda province, 2020–2024". *International Journal of Current Research*, 18, (04), 36785-36788.

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the contribution of urban management policies to sustainable development in the Municipality of Cacauco between 2020 and 2024. A mixed- methods approach is adopted, combining qualitative and quantitative methods (questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and documentary analysis). The results indicate that land-use planning policies, urban renewal, improvements to infrastructure, and social inclusion promote greater equity in access to basic services, stimulate economic activities, and strengthen local social capital. On the other hand, rapid urbanisation, the expansion of informal settlements, and institutional limitations present challenges that require enhanced strategic planning, citizen participation, and the integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and spatial monitoring.

INTRODUCTION

The content of this article was extracted from a Master's dissertation in Economics Spatial Planning and Regional Development, submitted at the Methodist University of Angola. The work was supervised by Professor António Afonso Bindanda, PhD. Bibliographic references in both English and Portuguese were consulted. The dissertation was written in Portuguese; however, the article was translated from Portuguese. Luanda and its peripheral municipalities face challenges of rapid urbanisation, with impacts on quality of life, equity in access to services, and urban governance. How have the urban management policies implemented between 2020 and 2024 contributed to sustainable development in the Municipality of Cacauco?. The overall objective of this study is to identify which policies influence greater equity, assess impacts on basic services, and analyse gaps in implementation. It should be noted that this study is justified because of its contribution to Angolan urban science and to the development of more inclusive local policies.

DEVELOPMENT

In recent decades, the phenomenon of urbanisation has become central to academic, political, and institutional debate. Cities have become privileged spaces for economic production, social innovation, and cultural dynamism, but they are also territories

marked by inequality, environmental vulnerabilities, and structural governance challenges. In Africa, and particularly in Angola, urban growth has been simultaneously rapid and uneven, revealing tensions between territorial expansion, institutional capacity, and ensuring quality of life for populations (UN-Habitat, 2020). Assessing urban management policies in line with the principles of sustainable development requires a consistent theoretical foundation capable of addressing the socio-spatial dynamics of contemporary cities, planning instruments, and the challenges related to urban justice. To this end, this study is based on three central axes: urban management in the African and Angolan context; the concept and application of sustainable urban development; and public policies linked to the right to the city.

Urban Management: Foundations and Challenges: Urban management refers to the set of actions, decisions, and policies developed by local and central governments to organise, plan, and administer urban space, with the aim of meeting people's needs and ensuring the city functions efficiently (Souza, 2006). In the Angolan context, urbanisation has occurred rapidly, characterised by marked social and spatial inequalities. Lopes (2018) highlights that much of the urban growth in cities such as Luanda takes place informally, with limited access to essential infrastructure and services. The Municipality of Cacauco reflects this tendency, with formal and informal areas

coexisting, illustrating the complexity of territorial management. Lefebvre (2001) introduced the concept of the “social production of space”, emphasising that urban space is shaped by social relations and political-economic dynamics. In this sense, urban management must go beyond technical measures by incorporating the inequalities, interests, and conflicts that structure the territory. Villaça (2011) argues that effective urban management requires articulation between housing policies, sanitation, mobility, land use, and citizen participation. When these dimensions are not integrated, urban exclusions and segregation can arise, undermining equity in the city. In Angola, although there have been legal advances—such as the approval of master plans and the Law on Land-Use Planning and Urbanism—the challenge of implementing and monitoring these policies remains, particularly in peripheral municipalities where institutional capacity and budgetary resources are more limited (CEIC, 2022).

In the Angolan context, the city of Luanda and its peripheral municipalities have experienced significant demographic growth driven by internal migration flows, the search for economic opportunities, and post-conflict reconstruction dynamics. Among these municipalities, Cacuo stands out; its recent trajectory reflects the paradoxes of contemporary urban development: on the one hand, visible economic and territorial expansion; on the other, persistent challenges in housing, sanitation, mobility, land-use planning, and social inclusion. As a field of public intervention, urban management plays a decisive role in this scenario. It is not merely about administering infrastructure or ensuring basic services, but about building a strategic vision of the city that promotes social cohesion, economic efficiency, and environmental sustainability. As Healey (2010) notes, contemporary urban planning should be understood as a relational and strategic process that integrates multiple actors and interests to construct territorially contextualised solutions. Therefore, effective urban management depends not only on technical instruments, but also on institutional capacity, citizen participation, and appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Urban Management and Territorial Planning: Urban management encompasses strategies, policies, and actions aimed at organising urban space, providing infrastructure, and promoting collective well-being (Villaça, 2011). Territorial planning must consider, in an integrated manner, land use, the distribution of facilities, mobility, and the provision of urban services. Lefebvre (2001) argues that urban space is socially and politically produced, reflecting power relations, economic interests, and institutional logics. Thus, cities are structured by political and economic decisions that shape opportunities and potential exclusions in the territory. In Angola, rapid and disorderly urban growth, combined with informality and social inequalities, has generated significant challenges for territorial planning. In the Municipality of Cacuo, these conditions are reflected in the coexistence of precarious settlements with more structured urban areas, as well as in the uneven distribution of basic services (Lopes, 2018).

Sustainable Development in Urban Areas: The concept of sustainable development was consolidated from the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) and refers to development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the urban context, the concept includes dimensions such as territorial equity, social justice, and environmental preservation.

Sachs (2004) highlights that sustainable development is multidimensional, involving economic, social, ecological, cultural, and political aspects. In cities, this implies ensuring decent housing, adequate urban services, public transport, economic opportunities, and environmental quality. The United Nations’ 2030 Agenda consolidates SDG 11, guiding countries to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The SDG 11 sub-indicators include access to housing, sanitation, mobility, participatory planning, and mitigation of urban environmental impacts (UN-Habitat, 2020). Urban sustainability requires an integrated approach, with community participation, effective governance, and a long-term vision. Harvey (2012) warns that urban models focused only on profit and real-estate speculation can undermine collective well-being and the social function of urban land. In Cacuo, the challenge lies in consolidating integrated urban policies capable of promoting the upgrading of informal areas, socio-spatial justice, and environmental preservation within a context of population growth, mobility pressures, and institutional limitations.

Public Policy, Spatial Justice and the Right to the City:

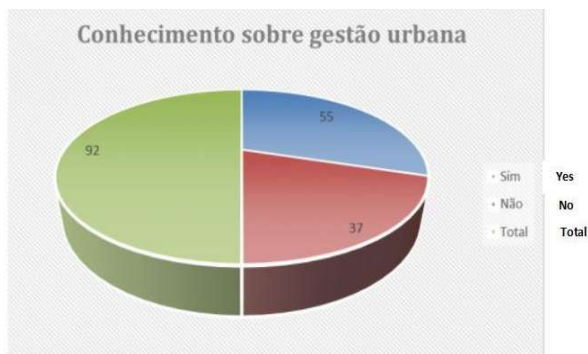
Public policies are essential instruments for State intervention, through which resources are organised, priorities are defined and actions are carried out to address social demands. In an urban context, these policies cover areas such as housing, mobility, the environment and sanitation. According to Souza (2006), the effectiveness of public policies depends on institutional capacity, the existence of appropriate legal frameworks and, above all, the population’s participation in planning, implementation and evaluation. Including the community strengthens the relevance and suitability of policies to local contexts.

The concept of the right to the city, formulated by Lefebvre (2001) and extended by Harvey (2012), argues that all citizens have the right not only to live in the city, but also to actively participate in its organisation and transformation. This right involves fair access to services, inclusion in urban planning and recognition of the socio-cultural diversity of territories. Rolnik (2013) highlights that the growing financialisation of land and housing may intensify socio-spatial exclusions, making it necessary to implement participatory public policies guided by principles of spatial justice. In the Angolan context, this debate is particularly relevant, given the historical heterogeneity and the complexity of urban peripheries, such as Cacuo, where building an urban pact based on equity, sustainability and human dignity is essential.

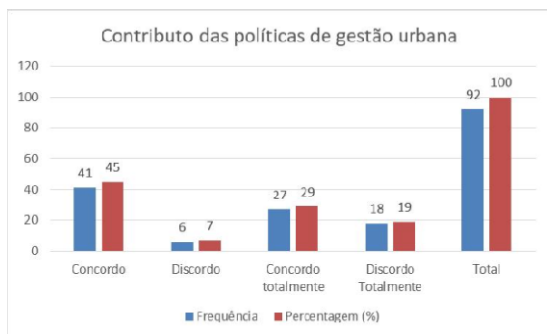
RESULTS

Demographic description of the sample (gender, age group, level of education, etc.). Public perceptions of urban management policies.

The analysis of data on respondents’ knowledge of the concept of urban management shows that most participants have some level of familiarity with the topic. Of the 92 respondents, 55 stated that they have knowledge of urban management (60% of the sample), while 37 (40%) reported that they do not. These findings suggest that, although there is a substantial level of awareness, a significant proportion of the population still has limited access to information about the processes of planning and administering urban space.



Graph 5. Urban Management knowledge



Graph 06. Contribution of urban management policies

In the Angolan case, especially in peripheral municipalities such as Cacuo, this situation may be linked to inequalities in access to public information, insufficient dissemination of urban policies, and the weak institutionalisation of mechanisms for citizen participation. The graph above shows respondents' perceptions of how urban management policies contribute to sustainable development in the Municipality of Cacuo, highlighting relevant trends in how the population assesses the effectiveness of public interventions in urban space. Of the 92 participants, 41 (45%) agreed that urban management policies have contributed to the municipality's sustainable development, and 27 (29%) expressed full agreement. By contrast, 18 respondents (19%) stated that they completely disagreed and 6 (7%) indicated disagreement. These results therefore reveal differing assessments of the real impact of policies in the local context. The predominance of positive responses—which together make up 74% of the sample—suggests that a significant part of the population recognises the institutional efforts of the public administration, particularly in land-use planning, the improvement of urban infrastructures and the implementation of sustainability-oriented initiatives. In the case of Cacuo, shaped by rapid urban growth, demographic pressure and structural challenges related to access to basic services, such policies play a strategic role in organising urban space and promoting better living conditions. Even so, the 26% of negative responses indicate that difficulties in the effective implementation of these policies persist. Among the most sensitive aspects are the coverage of urban services, the management of basic sanitation, mobility and unplanned land occupation. In many peripheral areas, the expansion of informal settlements and the insufficiency of infrastructure continue to undermine the outcomes of public actions, which may help explain the critical perceptions expressed by a portion of respondents. According to UN-Habitat (2016), the success of urban management policies in cities of developing countries depends not only on the formulation of appropriate strategies, but also on the institutional capacity to ensure their effective implementation.

Impact of policies in: Land-use planning: changes in land use, density, protected zones. Urban renewal: renovation of public spaces, accessibility. Infrastructure: water, sanitation, energy, transport. Social inclusion: access to basic services, community participation. Local development indicators: improvement in well-being indicators, economic opportunities, social capital. Identified challenges: rapid urbanisation, informal expansion, institutional constraints, financing.

DISCUSSION

The survey results show a generally positive perception of urban management in the Municipality of Cacuo, although limitations and critical evaluations also coexist. First, it is found that 60% of respondents say they have knowledge of the concept of urban management, while 40% report not having it, suggesting inequalities in access to information and, in particular, insufficient dissemination of urban-space planning and administration processes. Second, the assessment of the impact of policies on sustainable development is largely favourable: 74% agree that the policies contribute, with emphasis on the role of land-use planning, improved infrastructure and sustainability-oriented initiatives. However, 26% hold negative positions, linking critical perceptions mainly to difficulties in the coverage of urban services, the management of basic sanitation, mobility and unplanned land occupation. Thus, the data indicate that, although institutional efforts exist, structural challenges persist—such as rapid urbanisation, informal expansion, and institutional and funding limitations—which affect effective implementation and the consolidation of results at the local level.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the article shows that the assessment of urban management policies should be grounded in a theoretical base that links sustainable development, socio-spatial justice and the right to the city, taking into account the dynamics of space production and the inequalities that shape the peripheries. By contextualising Angola and the Municipality of Cacuo, the text highlights that, although there are legal frameworks and planning instruments, effective implementation and institutional capacity remain challenges, especially in the face of rapid urbanisation and informal expansion. The empirical results reinforce this picture: most respondents recognise some level of knowledge about urban management and tend to evaluate positively the contribution of policies to sustainable development (74% agreement). However, a relevant portion disagrees (26%), associating limitations mainly with the coverage of urban services, basic sanitation, mobility and unplanned land occupation. Accordingly, the study concludes that progress in urban sustainability in Cacuo depends not only on strategies and regulations, but primarily on effective implementation, cross-sector integration and robust mechanisms for citizen participation.

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