



## **PLANNING EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES IN ANGOLA: A PRELIMINARY APPROACH**

### **PLANEAMENTO DE ZONAS DE PROCESSAMENTO DE EXPORTAÇÕES EM ANGOLA: UMA ABORDAGEM PRELIMINAR**

### **PLANIFICACIÓN DE ZONAS DE PROCESAMIENTO DE EXPORTACIÓN EN ANGOLA: UN ENFOQUE PRELIMINAR**



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#### **ABSTRACT**

The study aims to highlight not only how, where, and when an EPZ could be implemented in Angola, its externalities, but also its viability in creating competitive advantages for the Angolan economy. The proposed implementation of an Export Processing Zone in Angola constitutes a strategy for productive restructuring and economic diversification, aligned with national policy instruments in the medium and long term. Based on classical growth pole theories (Weber, Lösch, Isard, Perroux, Hirschman, North, and Christaller), the EPZ aims to promote exchange rate equilibrium, reduce inflation, and increase the international competitiveness of the Angolan economy. The timeline for its implementation foresees three phases (2027-2034), with a direct impact on the agro-industrial and textile sectors, especially in the municipality of Lobito. The expected externalities include local gains (increased value of primary production), regional gains (logistical integration with SADC and ECCAS countries), and international gains (attracting capital, technology, and skilled labor). In economic and financial terms, the potential for foreign exchange revenue collection, public debt reduction, and stimulation of productive investment stand out. However, structural challenges remain to be overcome in the Angolan economy, such as institutional weakness, the lack of an inclusive capital market, and the need to modernize the financial system. The EPZ's strategic location and its ability to foster industrialization and corporate internationalization reinforce its viability as a driver of sustainable socioeconomic transformation for Angola.

**Keywords:** Angola. Export Processing Zone. Economic Diversification. Regional Integration.

#### **RESUMO**

O estudo visa colocar em evidência não só o modo como, onde e quando se poderá implementar uma ZPE, em Angola, as suas externalidades, mas também a sua viabilidade no âmbito da criação de vantagens competitivas para a economia angolana. A proposta de implementação de uma Zona de Processamento de Exportações em Angola constitui uma estratégia de reestruturação produtiva e diversificação económica, alinhada aos instrumentos de política nacional, médio e longo prazos. Fundamentada em teorias clássicas

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de pólos de crescimento (Weber, Lösch, Isard, Perroux, Hirschman, North e Christaller), a ZPE visa promover equilíbrio cambial, redução da inflação e incremento da competitividade internacional da economia angolana. O cronograma para a sua implementação prevê três fases entre (2027-2034), com impacto directo sobre o sector agro-industrial e têxtil, especialmente no município do Lobito. As externalidades esperadas abrangem ganhos locais (valorização da produção primária), regionais (integração logística com países da SADC e CEEAC) e internacionais (atração de capital, tecnologia e mão-de-obra especializada). Em termos económico-financeiros, destaca-se o potencial de arrecadação de divisas, redução da dívida pública e estímulo ao investimento produtivo. Contudo, persistem desafios estruturais a serem ultrapassados na economia angolana, como a debilidade institucional, ausência de um mercado de capitais inclusivo e necessidade de modernização do sistema financeiro. A localização estratégica da ZPE e sua capacidade de induzir a industrialização e a internacionalização empresarial, reforçam sua viabilidade como vector de transformação socioeconómica sustentável para Angola.

**Palavras-chave:** Angola. Zona de Processamento de Exportações. Diversificação Económica. Integração Regional.

## RESUMEN

El estudio busca destacar no solo cómo, dónde y cuándo se podría implementar una ZPE en Angola, sus externalidades, sino también su viabilidad para generar ventajas competitivas para la economía angoleña. La implementación propuesta de una ZPE en Angola constituye una estrategia de reestructuración productiva y diversificación económica, alineada con los instrumentos de política nacional a mediano y largo plazo. Basada en las teorías clásicas de polos de crecimiento (Weber, Lösch, Isard, Perroux, Hirschman, North y Christaller), la ZPE busca promover el equilibrio cambiario, reducir la inflación y aumentar la competitividad internacional de la economía angoleña. El cronograma para su implementación prevé tres fases (2027-2034), con un impacto directo en los sectores agroindustrial y textil, especialmente en el municipio de Lobito. Las externalidades esperadas incluyen ganancias locales (incremento del valor de la producción primaria), ganancias regionales (integración logística con los países de la SADC y la CEEAC) y ganancias internacionales (atracción de capital, tecnología y mano de obra calificada). En términos económicos y financieros, destaca el potencial de captación de divisas, la reducción de la deuda pública y el estímulo de la inversión productiva. Sin embargo, aún quedan desafíos estructurales por superar en la economía angoleña, como la debilidad institucional, la falta de un mercado de capitales inclusivo y la necesidad de modernizar el sistema financiero. La ubicación estratégica de la ZFE y su capacidad para impulsar la industrialización y la internacionalización empresarial refuerzan su viabilidad como motor de la transformación socioeconómica sostenible de Angola.

**Palabras clave:** Angola. Zona Franca de Exportación. Diversificación Económica. Integración Regional.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Although the Angolan economy is among the most dynamic on the African continent, the country's state is still marked by poverty and social exclusion, with unemployment, food shortages and lack of housing being its most visible face. In this way, the creation of an Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in the country, with the resulting possibility of the inflow of foreign currency and the consequent balance of the country's international reserves, could make it feasible to achieve important macroeconomic goals such as: exchange rate balance and the control and reduction of inflation rates, It also demonstrates the public effort aimed at reversing the current situation in the country.

According to Sanches-António (2024) there is, in developing countries, a great need not only to diversify their sources of income, but also to increase the levels of competitiveness of their economies, both by increasing productivity and attracting foreign direct investment, as well as by permanent innovation in all their production chains, and an EPZ can constitute a laboratory of economic policy and management, supported by research and development processes, which would allow the emergence of a local value chain, with national and regional reach.

The present study aims to highlight not only how, where and when an SPA can be implemented in Angola, its externalities, but also its feasibility in the context of the creation of compatible and aligned competitive advantages, national economic policy instruments, such as: the long-term development strategy Angola 2025 (MINPLAN, 2007), and the Memorandum of Understanding on Labour Agreements, relating to the development of the Lobito corridor and the Zambia-Lobito railway line.(CE, 2023)

Angola is a country located on the west coast of Africa south of the equator, between the parallels 4° 22' South, in the province of Cabinda, and 18° 2' South in the town of Mucusso, in the province of Kuando Kubango, and the meridians 11° 41' east in the Tigres peninsula, in the province of Namibe, and 24° 2' east in the Upper Zambezi, in the province of Moxico.

With an equatorial and tropical climate, it has the city of Luanda as the capital of the country and a total surface area of 1,246,700 km<sup>2</sup>. Administratively, it is divided into 18 provinces, 163 municipalities and 376 communes. The average population density is 12 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, but, due to the disparity in the spatial distribution of the population, this indicator reaches the estimated value of 1,094.2 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in Luanda, where about the country's population is concentrated, and 0.6 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, in the Province of Kuando Kubango.<sup>1</sup><sub>3</sub>(INE, Inquérito Integrado sobre o Bem-Estar da População | IBEP, 2008-2009, 2011)



Angola, a potentially rich country, has resources of high value and diversified nature, such as numerous forest resources in Maiombe in the province of Cabinda, and in the Dembos in the province of Kwanza Norte, namely noble woods, such as ebony, sandalwood, rosewood and blackwood.

Angola has 1600 km of coastline rich in oil and fishing resources, in addition to several mineral resources that the country has. In terms of energy, Angola, in addition to having a huge source of oil and natural gas reserves, also has a remarkable hydroelectric potential throughout the territory.

The railway system consists of four main lines that run through the country in the direction of Sea/East, with the Benguela railway with 1305 km<sup>2</sup>, its backbone, and one of the most important railway lines in Southern Africa, connecting Angola, to inland countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia, with the possibility of interconnection to other countries in the Southern and Central region, and the Indian Ocean.

In the regional context, Angola borders Central African countries to the north, one of the richest and most unstable regions in the world, marked by continuous wars and movements of millions of people, refugees and emigrants. To the east, the Republic of Zambia and to the south, the Republic of Namibia, areas where the borders are less turbulent.

The need for state intervention to foster economic growth has justified the emergence of Free Trade Zones, of different types, based on the concept of growth poles and the dynamics of attracting investments. In this order of ideas, projects similar to SPAs find their theoretical foundation in the classical theories on the poles of localized economic growth, and at the basis of their formulation are contributions from authors such as: , , , , , and . (Sanches-António L. D., 2024) (Weber, 1929)(Lösch, 1940)(Isard, 1956)(Perroux, 1967)(Hirschman, 1977)(North, 1977)(Christaller, 1980)

## 2 LIKELY LOCATION

The municipality of Lobito, as the preferred location for the installation of the intended project, is made up of three communes: Canata, Canjala, Egypt-Beach. It has a territorial area of approximately 2,687.92 km<sup>2</sup>, representing about 7% of the total territory of the province of Benguela. It is bordered to the north by the municipality of Sumbe, province of Kwanza-Sul, to the east by the municipality of Bocoio, to the south by the municipality of Catumbela, and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, the municipality of Lobito was identified and chosen for the implementation of a future SPA, an area that encompasses the communes of Canata and Egypt-Praia, for the following reasons: the area is part of the State's land reserve, which allows to guarantee the efficiency of the project from a perspective of



minimizing costs with the acquisition of land, in the vicinity of national road No. 124 and other secondary roads, which serve as a connection to the North and South of the country. However, one of its biggest competitive differentials is its location 7 km from the port of Lobito, and that of the railway that goes from the port of Lobito, in the west, to the town of Tenke, in the province of Katanga, in the DRC, in the east, being organized, along its itinerary, different communities with different productive and socio-cultural matrices, which can represent potential at various levels of productive activity. Its relevance of the Lobito multimodal corridor for the location of an SPA is also justified by 5 KmDuarte, Santos and Tjønneland (2014), according to which, the Lobito corridor covers not only the Benguela railway, but also a port, roads, airports and logistics platforms, and it is estimated that about 26% of the population of Angola lives within its area of influence.

### 3 AVAILABLE FEATURES

Financial resources are foreseen for this project essentially from revenues from the extraction and refining of crude oil and natural gas, as well as those resulting from the extraction of diamonds and other metallic and non-metallic minerals, which together represent about 26% of Angola's GDP (INE, (2024) and initiating a process that allows the evolution of the exchange rate to be decoupled from the evolution of revenues from oil exports, which between 2019-2023, showed convergent trajectories, with counter-cyclic effects and with a constant future trend, on the national non-oil industry and outside the transformation sector Sanches-António (2024).

Constituted human resources Essentially by the local population, with about 18% of the total population of the province of Benguela (509,542 inhabitants) belonging to the municipality of Lobito. However, considering the effect of attracting labor, exerted on the neighboring provinces of Kwanza Sul, Huambo and Namibe, which according to INE data, together have a population projected to be about 13% of the total population of Angola by 2050, it is expected that from the outset the necessary intensive labor will be guaranteed, for a large-scale project.(2025)

Physical resources, of a material nature, are a stimulating factor and key to the materialization of any project, and in the present case the following are considered: Angola's strategic geographical position at a regional level, serving as access to the sea for inland countries of the continent, in the connection between the *South African Development Countries* (SADC) and the *Communauté Économique des États de l'Afrique Centrale* (ECCAS), multilateral organizations of which Angola is a member, as well as in the international connection within the scope of transatlantic trade); the port of Lobito; the CFB;





national roads in the North/South direction; the prospect of the construction of the TAH9 trans-African highway, which will connect the port of Lobito to Beira in Mozambique on the East coast of Africa; The viability of products of diversified origin may find in the SPA the possibility of being processed, transformed, repaired or assembled, whether of mineral origin or of non-mineral origin such as: agriculture, livestock, water, forestry or fishing, both national or international and those from neighboring countries or from any part of the world.

#### **4 METHODOLOGY AND SCHEDULE**

The creation of an SPA is a project, whose time goals are aligned with the economic goals of strategic scope of the Ministry of Planning of Angola (MINPLAN), namely the Angolan long-term development strategy, and the strategic diagnosis Angola 2050, meeting the national design of increasing wealth, from the construction of an industrial sector with an export profile. This leads to the implementation of this project being structured in three phases, starting in 2027 and ending in 2034, and an expected size of 8 hectares built area, as presented below, chronologically. (MINPLAN, Estratégia de desenvolvimento de longo prazo Angola 2025, 2007) (MINPLAN, Estratégia de longo prazo - Angola 2050, 2023)

- Infrastructure phase (2027-2031): implementation of 4,000 hectares

Nuclear phase in which all the legal and legal regulations are carried out, which creates and regulates the activities in the SPA, as well as its governing and management bodies, its organic structure, above which its tasks, objectives, competences and responsibilities are defined.

It is also at this stage that the State creates the entire set of infrastructures to support the operation of the project: sanitation, water piping, electricity supply, fencing and allotment of space, streets and paving, as well as the installation of solid waste treatment plants.

From the last quarter of this phase, purely logistical activities related to the transit and storage of goods will begin, allowing the start of the revenue collection process by companies, already based in the SPA.

- Effective start-up phase (2031-2032): implementation of 2,000 hectares

The finishing and effective start-up phase where, in addition to the implementation of 2,000 hectares, the recruitment of personnel for support services such as: administration and management of the SPA, maintenance of the space and facilities, security personnel, reception support services and business administration, the installation of notary services, and customs expedients, which allow the reduction of administrative costs and minimize bureaucratic constraints. The installation of the



manufacturing units is also planned for this phase, as well as the beginning of their production cycles.

- Conclusive phase of the project and the transition to full use of resources (2033-2034): implementation of 2,000 hectares

At this stage, companies providing services, ranging from technical assistance and maintenance, distribution, accessories and consulting, to companies providing financial services, such as the existence of a quality and densely represented bank, will be installed in the SPA, in order to respond promptly and effectively to the financing needs of companies established and that will be established in the SPA.

## 5 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Like any project, of any nature, the implementation of an SPA will give rise to certain operational and financial costs, so costs are foreseen with: raw materials used in the manufacture of products, transportation of materials and personnel, direct and subcontracted labor, depreciation of goods and equipment, maintenance of equipment and infrastructures, insurance, tax waiver, negative externalities (social costs) and financing (financial costs). In this sense, the expected benefits of the creation of an SPA can be analysed in three aspects: the first is related to its interaction with the local and national economy, with the economies of the southern and central African regions, as well as with the economies of emerging countries; the second is related to the non-financial and social nature of these same benefits; and the third related to the economic and financial externalities.

### 5.1 EXTERNALITIES RESULTING FROM INTERACTION WITH THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL ECONOMY

The contribution of the industry linked to the agricultural sector in the formation of the national GDP can be increased through the processing and transformation of local production, of products such as sugar cane, sisal, cotton, banana, palm oil, fish, cereals and coffee, whose potential local production is considerable. In this regard, the textile and tanning sector, including cotton, livestock, clothing, footwear, paper pulp, biomass and resins that find a wide demand in the international market, is also very promising at the level of the municipality of Lobito.

The petrochemical industry is an area with enormous potential for specialization in an SPA, with the prospect of increasing the integration of the exploration possibilities offered by the refinery in Lobito, the growing production capacity in Cabinda and Soyo and the recent discoveries of new oil reserves in the region between the province of Bengo and Kwanza Sul,



enabling the supply and repair of equipment for oil companies, of spare materials, making it feasible to increase the production of a set of petroleum derivatives, such as: medicines, rubber, synthetic fabrics, plastics, cosmetics, cleaning products, lubricants, tar, flavorings, dyes and preservatives, artificial fertilizers and pesticides, which at the moment are not produced in the country, thus replacing their imports.

Also in its integration into the hydrocarbons sector, an SPA, will allow the installation along the primary sector of the national value chain, metalworking industries focused on the production and repair of accessories for the oil, construction and automotive industries, which would complement and enhance the gains around the value chain of the companies based on it.

In the mining sector, diamonds, ornamental stones, ferrous and non-ferrous minerals are able to register significant increases in their extraction in the medium term and contribute to the diversification of exports.

## 5.2 EXTERNALITIES RESULTING FROM INTERACTION WITH THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY

The creation of an SPA is a project that aims to apply financial resources from national oil revenues, which combined with technological resources from countries such as Japan, Singapore or Taiwan and human resources from countries such as India, can create the competitive advantages necessary for the country to assert itself as a regional and continental economic power.

Thus, in the relationship with the inland countries of SADC and ECCAS, the implementation of an SPA in Angola may, among other advantages: facilitate access to the sea to neighbouring, landlocked countries, particularly the DRC and Zambia; serve as a more economical export hub for countries such as the DRC; Zambia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, to Europe, America and Asia, as well as the import of goods to this sub-region from SADC and; in the future, to serve as a point of industrialization of the resources of SADC inland countries, benefiting from the construction of the TAH9 trans-African highway.<sup>2</sup>

In relation to emerging economies such as China, India, or Brazil, which have directed a considerable volume of investments to the African continent, an SPA, due to Angola's geographical positioning, can represent a gateway for investment by these countries in Africa, and also an exit not only for Angola's domestic production, but also from countries such as: DRC, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Uganda, which would find in an SPA in Angola, the

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<sup>2</sup> Road that will connect the city of Lobito to Beira in Mozambique, passing through several inland SADC countries.





ideal logistics platform for increasing their exports, giving the country a central role in the region and in Africa.

On the socio-economic side, a project of this nature can represent for the populations of the municipality of Lobito, the neighboring localities, as well as the country in general, the possibility of: industrializing local human and material resources, both those trained and those to be trained; achieving some of the main millennium goals, such as the reduction of extreme poverty and unemployment rates; through the increase in the purchasing power of families embodied in the increase in the volume of employment generated, and the consequent amount of goods and services acquired by them; the creation of jobs and added value, as well as opportunities for professional development, the environmental sustainability being guaranteed through the adoption of large-scale environmental conservation policies and programs, of the entire ecosystem that is in direct and indirect contact with the project, stimulating the adoption by companies of practices that allow the achievement of ecologically cleaner and healthier conditions for their own means of action.

### 5.3 ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL EXTERNALITIES

They represent the possibility of economic terms: the construction of an industrial, commercial and service sector, capable of diversifying the economic base and allowing for more effective GDP growth; the development of intensive technologies and the development of a set of basic infrastructures, which do not exist at present; promoting the full use of national resources; as well as the integration of existing production chains; provide a greater emphasis on investment expenditure, and consequent reduction of consumption expenditure, as a condition for an efficient transformation of dividends applied by the State, into gains with national value; to promote business activity, stimulating the production of goods and services, with a high degree of demand in export destination markets; to allow greater inflationary control through the construction of a commercial sector, with policies to encourage and promote its export capacity; to enable the achievement of a balanced trade balance, through the increase in the entry of foreign exchange into the national economy, originating in the non-oil productive sector, enabling an increase in the overall coverage rate of imports.

In financial terms, the implementation of an SPA can represent an important instrument for the management of public finances that can allow: the reduction of public debt, the collection of foreign exchange and the fight against inflation; the collection of revenues from rent, resulting from the operation of both manufacturing and commercial facilities in the SPA, as well as the use of return freight, along the Lobito (Angola) - Tenke (Zambia) logistics circuit.



## 6 CHALLENGES

The internal, sectoral and spatial economic destructuring, the technological, management and organizational weakness of the productive fabric, the weak institutional productivity of the public administration, the need for strong business, financial and fiscal sectors, are challenges to be overcome in the Angolan economy, so that when there are failures in the enclave sectors, overall economic growth does not register significant slowdowns in its rates.

In the national economy, macroeconomic imbalances will also have to be corrected, which, due to their relevance, provide information to potential investors, regarding the weight of the State in the economy, and monetary stability, namely the business environment.

In the national economy, a set of constraints will still have to be overcome in areas relevant to private initiative, such as the modernisation of the financial system, the geographical expansion of the banking system, the lack of specialised financial institutions and differentiated financial services, as well as the lack of a more comprehensive and inclusive capital market.

The diversification of the non-oil economy, giving a greater role to the real estate, agricultural, manufacturing industry, distribution networks, mercantile circulation, service provision and business competition, as a way of reducing consumer prices, the promotion and development of infrastructures that constitute an additional stimulus for economic growth and, particularly, for investment and the development of trade, they are also purposes to be achieved, so that an EPZ can be important.

The integration of Angola into regional economic sectors is also a challenge to be considered and fostered, given that the country is a member of SADC and ECCAS, a geographical space where it may play a role of economic and political relevance, compatible with its natural potential, since the discrepancy between its economic potential and social reality, is one of the main challenges that the country has to overcome, which presupposes a more rational use of available resources, which is also possible in an SPA.

In this context, it will be important for Angola to establish adequate relations between the economic activities most suitable for internal economic integration and maximum economic integration, job creation, balance in the optimization of productive resources so that the different strategic objectives can be enhanced, since the relationship between the available resources, the rational way in which they are used and the rate of achievement of the goals that the State proposes to achieve, will enhance or condition the good performance of the national economy in the coming years.



## 7 CONCLUSION

An SPA represents an investment in the national territory, which makes socio-economic sustainability viable, which structurally allows the search for solutions adapted to the real conditions and potential of the national economy, ensuring the sustainability of a development that takes into account the social well-being of the populations.

Its privileged geographical location, allowing easy and quick access to sources of raw materials, labour and intermediate products, both the final product market and other places that provide support services to the companies based on them, represents a competitive advantage, also in the justification for its implementation.

Still on its location, it will allow the reduction of transport costs as a key factor in decisions on the location of industrial activities at local and regional level; the ease of water and electricity supply from the Biopio dam.

An SPA implemented in the municipality of Lobito may also promote the development of socio-economic potential in the provinces served by the Lobito corridor, thus completing and interconnecting sectoral support activities along the national value chain.

An SPA can represent for local companies the opportunity for the internationalization of their business, the increase of their sales volume and, consequently, their market shares, making agro-industrial development feasible at a local level, with potential for the emergence of export logistics platforms.

Finally, the implementation of an SPA in Angola may represent the possibility of an industrialization of material and human resources, positively changing the productive structure in the economic and social dimensions, mainly enabling the expansion of both the market in which companies operate, and the self-realization of the populations.

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