

Chapter Five

THE STATE OF CENTRAL AFRICAN CITIES

05





5.1

The Social Geography of Urbanisation

Geographic Concentration and Clustering

For the purposes of this report, the Central African subregion comprises Angola, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tomé e Príncipe. The total land area of the subregion is 5,366 million km², or 17.7 per cent of the land area of Africa as a whole.

In 2010, the Central African subregion had a total (estimated) population of 128,909,000, with 55,592,000 (or 43.1 per cent) living in areas classified as urban. The region remains the continent's least urbanised region after Eastern Africa (23.6 per cent). However, Central Africa is rapidly catching up with the continent's more urbanised subregions. Since the 1980/90 decade, when urban populations grew by a 3.65 per cent annual average, steady decade-interval urbanisation rate increases have been observed: 4.6 per cent in 1990-2000; 5.91 per cent over the 2000/10 decade; 6.48 per

cent projected for 2010/20; and 6.63 per cent for 2020/30. From 2030 onwards, these decade-interval urbanisation rate increases will begin to decline: to 6.23 per cent in 2030/40 and 5.98 per cent in 2040/50. This downward trend is to set in sometime around 2022 and after the subregion's population has become predominantly urban.

With these high urbanisation rates, Central Africa's urban population has more than doubled from 23,741,000 in 1990 to 55,593,000 in 2010. It is projected that the urban population will reach the 100 million mark sometime around 2022, reaching 112.7 million by 2030 and 185.9 million by 2050. Urban demographic growth rates are set to continue, although at a slower pace, until 2030 or (most likely) even beyond (see Table 5.1). After a 19.1 million increase in the 2000/2010 decade, these slower growth rates in a still-expanding urban population are to add 25.9 million urban dwellers during 2010/20 and 31.2 million during 2020/30.

In 2010, Gabon, with 86 per cent of its population living in cities, was the region's most urbanised nation by far, followed by São Tomé e Príncipe (62.2 per cent) and Congo (62.1 per cent). Least urbanised were Chad (27.63 per cent), the DRC (35.22 per cent) and Equatorial Guinea (39.7 per cent) who all remained below the Africa-wide urbanisation average of 39.9 per cent. During the 2000/2010 decade, Angola and Cameroon were the most rapidly urbanising Central African countries with respective rate increases of 9.5 and 8.5 per cent, with both having become predominantly urban just before 2005; by 2010, their respective urbanisation rates had risen to 58.5 and 58.4 per cent respectively (estimates). These are expected to reach just under two-thirds by 2020 and more than 75 per cent by 2040.

At the lower end of urbanisation trends, Equatorial Guinea, the DRC and CAR are not projected to become predominantly urban until after 2030 and Chad only around 2042. Only by then will all Central African populations be more urban than rural. During 2010/20, though, the decade-interval growth rate of Central Africa's urban populations is likely to be highest in Chad (22.8 per cent), compared with 12.8 per cent in Angola, 12.1 per cent in Cameroon and as low as 3.1 per cent in Gabon, which suggests a converging trend among urbanisation rates over time.

MAP 5.1: CENTRAL AFRICA COUNTRIES





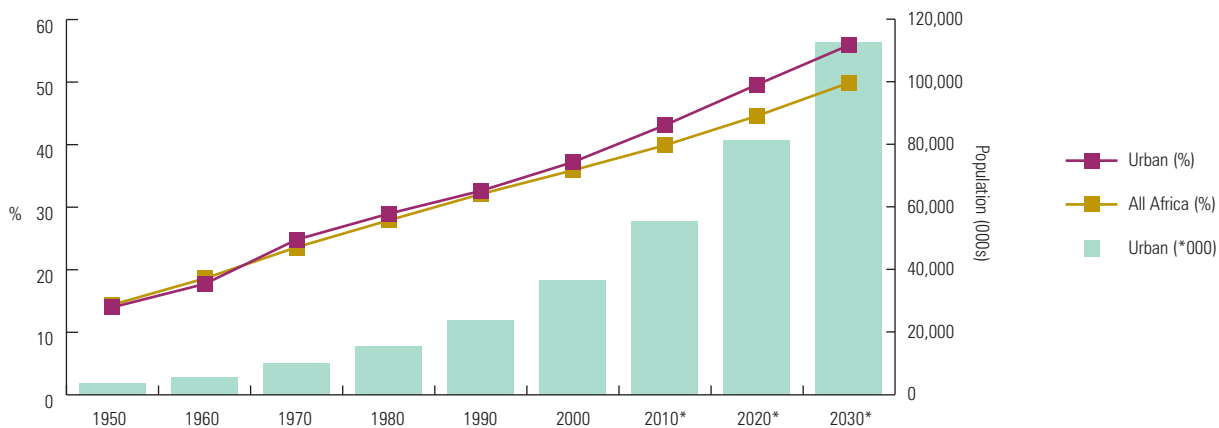
▲ Libreville, Gabon. Photograph courtesy of IISD/Earth Negotiations Bulletin

TABLE 5.1: CENTRAL AFRICA: TREND IN URBAN POPULATION, 1950-2030

Population	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*	2020*	2030*
Urban (000s)	3,657	5,687	10,161	15,578	23,741	36,486	55,592	81,493	112,727
Urban (%)	14.00	17.72	24.82	28.96	32.61	37.21	43.12	49.60	55.92
All Africa (%)	14.40	18.64	23.59	27.91	32.13	35.95	39.98	44.59	49.95

* Projections
Source: WUP 2009

GRAPH 5.1: CENTRAL AFRICA: TREND IN URBAN POPULATION, 1950-2030



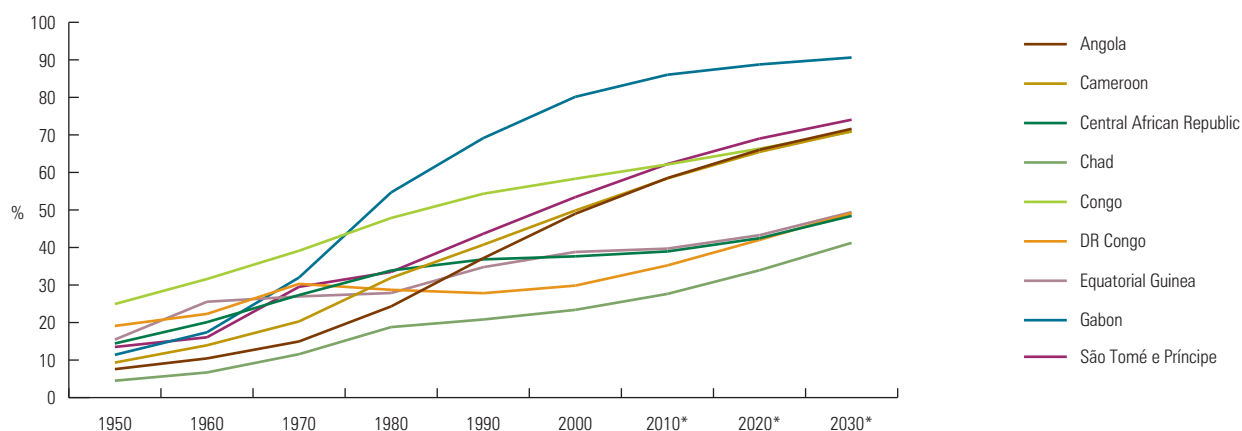
* Projections
Source: WUP 2009

TABLE 5.2: CENTRAL AFRICA: NATIONAL URBANISATION TRENDS, 1950-2030

Population	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*	2020*	2030*
Angola	7.58	10.44	14.96	24.30	37.14	48.99	58.50	66.04	71.62
Cameroon	9.33	13.94	20.30	31.92	40.72	49.86	58.40	65.47	70.99
Central African Republic	14.42	20.10	27.33	33.87	36.83	37.64	38.94	42.47	48.43
Chad	4.50	6.70	11.57	18.79	20.81	23.38	27.63	33.93	41.24
Congo	24.93	31.60	39.13	47.86	54.32	58.32	62.12	66.34	70.87
DR Congo	19.10	22.30	30.30	28.72	27.82	29.84	35.22	42.03	49.16
Equatorial Guinea	15.46	25.54	26.95	27.87	34.75	38.81	39.70	43.28	49.43
Gabon	11.40	17.40	32.00	54.68	69.14	80.15	86.03	88.77	90.62
São Tomé e Príncipe	13.49	16.07	29.52	33.48	43.65	53.42	62.23	69.02	74.05

* Projections
Source: WUP 2009

GRAPH 5.2: CENTRAL AFRICA: NATIONAL URBANISATION TRENDS, 1950-2030



* Projections
Source: WUP 2009

Geographic Concentration and Clustering

Urban populations in Central African countries are overwhelmingly concentrated in a few major cities, mostly the national capitals. As shown in Table 5.3, all Central African capitals are primate cities, except *Yaoundé* in Cameroon. *Luanda*, the capital of Angola, for instance, is more than four times larger than the second-largest city *Huambo*, while *Kinshasa* is 5.6 times the size of the DRC's second largest city, *Lubumbashi* and 5.8 times the size of the third-largest, *Mbuji-Mayi*. The highest degree of urban primacy is found in Congo, where the capital *Brazzaville* is 16.3 times larger than the second largest city *Pointe-Noire*.

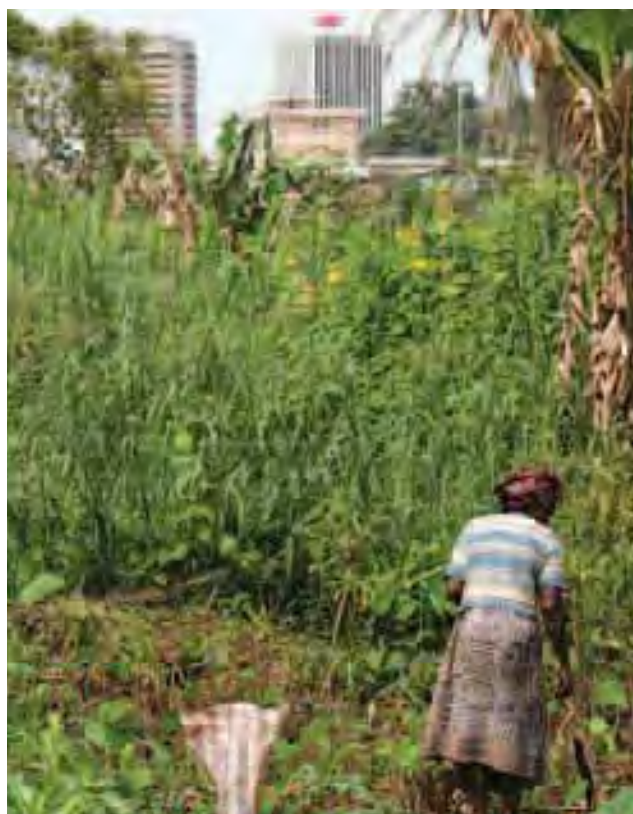
Political power, manufacturing, employment, basic infrastructure and social services are all concentrated in and around Central Africa's major urban centres, in complete disregard of geographical balance. Rural areas are mostly neglected and little, where any, public spending, makes living conditions particularly difficult for the rural poor.

In Congo, the primacy of *Brazzaville* can be explained by the fact that its population increased sharply between 1997 and 2000, when civil war devastated the country and people fled the countryside and the smaller cities to seek refuge in the capital. *Brazzaville*'s population continues to grow rapidly compared with the second-largest city in the country, *Pointe-Noire*, due to continued rural-urban migration away from ravaged rural economies, rising unemployment, lack of basic goods in the countryside, as well as emigration from *Kinshasa*, which sits opposite *Brazzaville* right across the Congo River.

Douala, rather than the capital city *Yaoundé*, is Cameroon's largest conurbation. The country's main business centre accommodates almost 11 per cent of the national population and 18.8 per cent of Cameroon's urban dwellers. *Luanda* and *Brazzaville* account for about a quarter of their respective countries' total populations, while *Kinshasa*, one of the fastest growing conurbations in sub-Saharan Africa, accommodates more than 13 per cent of the DRC's total 2010 population of 66 million.

With large cities concentrating economic opportunity, it should not come as a surprise that urban areas have attracted large-scale rural (and in times of conflict also cross-border) migrant flows. Comparatively high birth rates and better health services in cities have also contributed to the rapid growth of urban populations (see Tables 5.4 and 5.5).

However, the subregion's constant and rapidly changing demographic fluidity makes urban statistics somewhat unreliable in the absence of recent census data. Obtaining accurate population data is a challenge in many Central African cities, because in some countries, census surveys have not occurred for decades and many municipalities do not collect demographic data on their own. Moreover, such data is often contradictory and significantly different across sources, with figures provided by public administrations often particularly inaccurate and incomplete. In the DRC, for instance, no census has taken place for more than 25 years and data for large urban centres like *Kinshasa*, *Mbuji-Mayi* and *Kananga* are often little more than educated guesses. For *Kinshasa*, the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) arrives at a figure of 8.754 million, while the African Development Bank's estimate is more than 10 million. Apart from different numbers, the definition of what constitutes an urban area also varies from country to country, making it difficult to compare urban populations in the subregion. In this report, UNDESA data have consistently been used, if and where available.



▲ Yaoundé, Cameroon. ©David Hecht /IRIN

TABLE 5.3: CENTRAL AFRICAN CITIES > 750,000 INHABITANTS, 2010 (PROJECTIONS)

Country	City	Population	Primacy
Angola	Luanda	4,772,000	4.62
Angola	Huambo	1,034,000	---
Cameroon	Douala	2,125,000	1.17
Cameroon	Yaoundé	1,801,000	---
Chad	N'Djamena	829,000	---
Democratic Republic of Congo	Kinshasa	8,754,000	5.6
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mbuji-Mayi	1,488,000	---
Democratic Republic of Congo	Lubumbashi	1,543,000	---
Democratic Republic of Congo	Kananga	878,000	---
Democratic Republic of Congo	Kisangani	812,000	---
Republic of Congo	Brazzaville	1,292,000	16.37

Source: WUP 2009

TABLE 5.4: COMPARATIVE TRENDS IN FERTILITY RATES, CENTRAL AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Period	Total fertility rate (children per woman)	
	Central Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa
2000-2005	6.22	5.41
2005-2010*	5.67	5.08
2010-2015*	5.18	4.66
2015-2020*	4.66	4.20
2020-2025*	4.15	3.77
2025-2030*	3.68	3.40

*Projections
Source: WUP 2009

Over the past five years, demographic growth has been significantly faster in urban areas than in whole individual countries. In those countries where populations were estimated to be more urban than rural in 2010, the excess factor was 1.6 or more, while in predominantly rural countries that factor was smaller: 1.1 in Equatorial Guinea, 1.2 in CAR and 1.3 in Congo.

Inter-decade urban demographic growth rates between 2010 and 2050 are projected to remain high, though on a decelerating trend, reflecting the ongoing urban transition in Central Africa. In those countries where the population is already predominantly urban, demographic growth is decelerating (either because rural or other migration has slowed down or stopped, or because birth and death rates are lower, or both – see below), whereas in the other countries growth is found to be fluctuating, though still overall declining as well. However, urban populations continue to grow in absolute terms, although at a decelerating pace, particularly in cities in the more populated Central African

TABLE 5.5: SELECTED POPULATION DATA, 2010 (PROJECTIONS)

Countries	2010* Total Population (000s)	2005-2010* (%)		Crude Birth Rate/1,000	Crude Death Rate/1,000
		Population Growth Rate	Urban Growth Rate		
Angola	18,498	2.67	4.49	40.4	15.2
Cameroon	19,552	2.26	3.73	34.2	13.2
Central African Republic	4,422	1.88	2.33	33.2	15.7
Chad	11,206	2.77	4.56	43.7	15.5
Congo	3,683	1.91	2.54	31.9	12.3
DR Congo	66,020	2.76	4.61	42.5	15.8
Equatorial Guinea	676	2.60	2.99	37.4	13.8
Gabon	1,475	1.84	2.41	25.7	8.9
São Tomé e Príncipe	163	1.61	2.99	29.4	6.8

*Projections

Source: UNDESA, WUP 2009 and World Population Prospects 2008

TABLE 5.6: INTER-DECADE ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE INCREASES IN URBAN POPULATIONS, 2005-2050

Country	2000-10*		2010-20*		2020-30*		2030-40*		2040-50*	
	000s	%	Abs.	%	000s	%	000s	%	000s	%
Angola	4,117	58.9	5,072	45.6	5,600	34.6	6,000	27.5	6,258	22.5
Cameroon	3,745	47.3	4,829	36.8	4,363	27.4	4,555	22.4	4,484	18.0
Central African Republic	345	24.5	513	29.2	710	31.3	830	27.9	875	23.0
Chad	1,215	61.9	1,875	59.0	2,789	55.2	3,601	45.9	4,317	37.7
Congo	565	31.9	783	33.5	765	24.5	786	20.2	753	16.1
DR Congo	8,719	57.5	12,947	54.2	16,548	44.9	19,220	36.0	20,669	28.5
Equatorial Guinea	70	34.1	104	37.8	148	39.1	177	33.6	197	28.0
Gabon	303	30.6	287	22.2	274	17.4	245	13.2	213	10.2
São Tomé e Príncipe	28	37.3	33	32.0	37	27.2	37	21.4	33	15.7
Total	19,107	52.4	26,443	47.6	31,234	38.3	35,451	31.4	37,799	25.5

*Projections

Source: WUP 2009

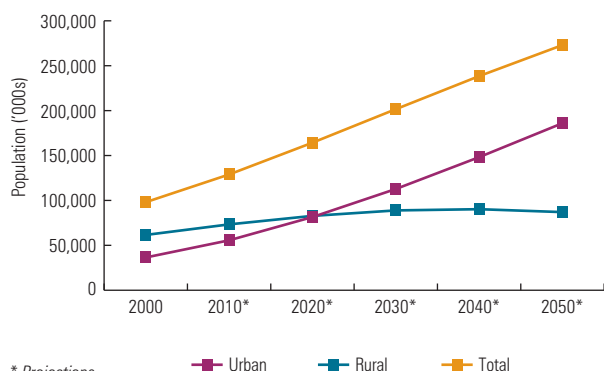
countries, as shown in Table 5.6. This would suggest that the demographic clustering in Central African cities will further increase as urbanisation makes progress - a worrisome prospect, as explained below.

In parallel with rapid urban demographic growth, living conditions in Central African cities have undergone dramatic changes. Significant shortfalls in access to urban livelihoods, adequate shelter, and urban land have remained unresolved. Large numbers of low-income and poor households have been forced to move between and within cities - especially to the urban peripheries - as they could no longer bear the costs of living in formally planned urban areas. Whether they come from outside the city or have been evicted from inner-city areas, the peri-urban areas where they now live effectively confine them to the margins of urban life both literally and figuratively. On top of the geographical isolation from the

city's economic resources, livelihood opportunities and social infrastructures, these poor populations are also increasingly becoming excluded from participation in mostly urban-based political life. This creates and reinforces highly undesirable patterns of geographical, social and economic exclusion - the root causes of the 'urban divide' - and dysfunctionality that can threaten the social, economic and political viability of these urban systems, if left unaddressed.

Current rapid demographic growth in Central African cities is the combined result of five factors, as follows: (a) high national fertility rates; (b) rural-urban migration; (c) declining urban mortality rates; (d) displacement through conflict; and (e) economic growth in some of the region's countries, which attracts cross-border migrations. These factors contribute to peri-urban sprawl, spatial segregation and concentration of the urban poor in non-serviced areas on or beyond the urban

GRAPH 5.3: URBAN, RURAL AND TOTAL POPULATIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA, 2000-2050



* Projections
Source: WUP 2009

fringes, as those populations simply cannot afford shelter in formally planned urban areas.

In the subregion's capitals and other large cities, until fairly recently, the poor were typically concentrated in the 'indigenous' urban neighbourhoods left over from the colonial era. Today, they are increasingly found in unplanned suburbs on or beyond the urban periphery. In *Kinsbasa*, for example, most of the poor are now concentrated in peripheral districts such as Kimbanseke, Masina, Kingasani, Kindele, Malueka, Mpsa and Mikonga. Likewise, in *Brazzaville*, the majority of poor people live in Mikalu, Mflou and Talangayi. In *Luanda*, most poor people live in Petrangol, Palanca and Mabore. In recent years, the built-up areas of these cities have expanded dramatically; mostly without any formal spatial planning or infrastructures due to lack of urban management

BOX 5.1: ENERGISING URBAN GOVERNANCE IN AN OIL-DOMINATED ECONOMY: THE CASE OF ANGOLA

African governments' revenues from oil and gas are set to rise from US \$80 billion in 2006 to approximately US \$250 billion in 2030, giving the continent's hydrocarbon-exporting countries the means to speed up economic and social development and alleviate poverty. However, history has shown that oil- or, more generally, commodity-based riches will only lead to economic and social development if governments manage the revenues that accrue in a wise and honest way.

Oil became Angola's top revenue-earner in 1973 and Sonangol, the state-owned company managing the hydrocarbon reserves, has controlled all oil revenues since 1976. Angola is currently experiencing a construction boom and its gross domestic product (GDP) grew an average 16 per cent per year between 2006 and 2008. Nevertheless, a wide gap remains between national revenue and the living conditions of the majority of Angolans. GDP per head is approximately US \$4,400, but some 70 per cent of the population lives on less than one dollar a day. This is not surprising since, between 1985 and 2004, capital flight out of the country amounted to an estimated total of 216 per cent of official GDP.

Poverty is rampant in the vast informal settlements and slums of the capital Luanda. Although the government is building one million houses over four years, it is estimated that, just in the Greater Luanda Region, some three million people lack decent housing. Housing projects like *Copacabana Residencial*, a 720-apartment complex valued at US \$100 million, contrast sharply with urban slums and forced evictions of those living there, with 15,000 people displaced

in July 2009 alone.

Currently, less than 30 per cent of Angola's population has access to electricity or clean fuels for cooking like liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), kerosene or biogas. About 150,000 people, mainly women and children, die prematurely every year because of indoor air pollution from wood and charcoal burning. An estimated 70 per cent of Angolan businesses rely on backup diesel generators to compensate for chronic power outages.

An abundant, clean and affordable energy source is crucial to public health, social welfare and economic productivity. Improving access to energy will entail fundamental political and legislative reform, as well as strengthened institutional and financial capabilities to implement such programmes. Universal access to electric or LPG cooking throughout the Western and Central Africa regions would cost an estimated US \$18 billion - a mere 0.4 per cent of the regions' projected 2007-2030 cumulative oil revenues. Establishing universal access to electricity in Angola would require a mere 0.1 per cent of the country's projected revenues.

Civil society struggles to hold the Angolan government to account on the use of its oil revenues, because public information on actual revenue flows remains very scarce. The transition to, and consolidation of, a democratic Angolan State is still ongoing, as the country is trying to recover from a devastating civil war that lasted nearly 30 years. Likewise, civil society is yet fully to develop its capacities for engaging the government in dialogue to pave the way for democratic, equitable and sustainable development. However, when civic relationships

are individualized rather than institutionalised, civil society often has difficulties engaging the government. It might nevertheless be possible for Angolan civil society to create political space if the unspoken, yet implicit lines that may not be crossed are used to pave the way for dialogue and negotiation in areas that are open to debate. The short-term objective is, therefore, to promote a culture of engagement and collaboration that can yield results in the longer term.

The problem is that Angola may not have much time to negotiate a new social contract with civil society, because its proven oil and gas reserves are modest, and very much so if compared with those, for instance, of Equatorial Guinea or Nigeria. Angolan oil output was projected to peak by 2010 and its petrodollar-based national budget could go into deficit between 2015 and 2018, if no alternative sources of government revenue are found.

If Angola persists in its current patterns of elite-centred consumption and near-exclusive reliance on oil and gas revenues, it will probably face an economic downturn around 2020. The revenue shock of 2008 triggered by declines in oil and diamond prices came as a foretaste of what may lie ahead. Unless current oil-based wealth is wisely invested in economic diversification, urban productivity, universal access to clean and cheap energy and urban social and basic infrastructures, the next decade could see an abrupt end to rising expectations among the millions of urban Angolans who legitimately aspire to stable, middle-class lifestyles.

Sources: World Energy Outlook 2008; Angola: Failed yet Successful, AfricaFocus Bulletin, 10 August 2009; Oil and Governance Report, March 2008, www.ethicsworld.org/publicsectorgovernance/; Electricity Distribution Modernization in Luanda, Angola, United States Trade and Development Agency, www.devex.com.



▲ A new formal housing development in Luanda, Angola. ©Pedro Alphonso Kingungu

capacities and development control. As they find themselves overwhelmed by demographic momentum, cities have tacitly allowed poor and low-income people to build structures in the least-desirable areas. Consequently, urban poverty has gradually become geographically determined and spatially segregated from the planned city. Although there is officially no ethnic segregation, *de facto* market-driven segregation between rich and poor now determines who resides where in the city. The wealthier urban population, including foreigners, live in the well-serviced, formally planned sections of the city, i.e. high-income neighbourhoods mainly built during the colonial period or immediately after independence. Rapidly rising costs of centrally located land increasingly drives out the poor to unplanned and under- or non-serviced areas.

The Links between Poverty, Inequality and Slums

The affordability criteria that enforce urban spatial segregation by distinct income groups are not necessarily an undesirable phenomenon. For thousands of years, cities around the world have voluntarily segregated population groups on the basis of shared affinities, such as ethnicity, religion or cultural identity. Urban segregation is undesirable, however, the moment it becomes an involuntary process, because under such conditions spatial distance results in often insurmountable social, political and economic distance. Involuntary geographical segregation creates inequity, poorer and fewer life chances, or hampered social mobility. This, in turn, leads to undesirable degrees of urban fragmentation and dysfunctionality that affect all, rich and poor.

In the subregion's oil-producing nations, market forces now increasingly keep the poor away from the city proper, as rapidly rising costs of urban housing and land push the planned city beyond affordability. However, oil-producing nations are not the only ones facing this problem. In other Central African cities, too, the costs of land and housing have also risen sharply. High-income residential units in the downtown area of Gombe, *Kinshasa*, for instance, can cost in excess of one million US dollars. Housing in less-privileged areas, such as Masina and Kingasani, although less than US\$ 30,000, are still way beyond what the bulk of the local populations can afford¹. Due to rapidly rising urban property prices, accommodating limited- and low-income households is often no longer considered as financially viable in up-and-coming residential areas. These categories fall victim to neighbourhood gentrification and are evicted by 'market forces' to make room for high-income residential and commercial developments in privileged areas of the planned city. Not only does their relocation to outer city fringes imply significantly increased transportation costs to city-based livelihoods and economic opportunities, but in many cases it also reduces interactions with different social groupings, because socio-economic contacts at the periphery mostly remain restricted to other poor urban dwellers. In this way, relocation of the urban poor further reinforces inequality.

The extent of the deterioration in living standards in Central African cities has become an acute problem, as have the large numbers of people affected. Economic growth in many of the subregion's economies has gone hand in hand with a proliferation of extreme urban poverty, including sharp declines in real incomes and the concomitant inequality

among the populations. In *Bangui*, CAR, *Brazzaville*, Congo, *Kinshasa*, DRC, *Luanda*, Angola, and *N'Djamena*, Chad, as well as in many smaller cities in the subregion, social infrastructures (health and education) have deteriorated to appalling levels. With the major economic sectors facing difficulties, the informal economy has become the main livelihood provider in many cities, pushing millions into daily battles for survival.

Table 5.7 shows that large shares of the population in Central Africa have no access to clean water. Since access to health care is mostly limited to rich people, it is not surprising that, in six of the 10 Central African countries, more than a third of the population is not expected to live beyond the age of 40, while the reduction in infant mortality remains slower than expected. It is deplorable that Africa still has by far the lowest life expectancy and highest infant mortality rates of any major region of the world. Clearly, Central African countries have failed to invest sufficiently in the well-being of their people and, as is always the case, the poor are the most affected.

The urbanisation of poverty is a dramatic development on the African continent, generating sharp contrasts between the affluence of business districts or high-income residential areas on the one hand, and massive human suffering in sprawling informal settlements and slums, on the other.² These trends are the entirely unnecessary and unacceptable result of lack of inequitable shared resources and opportunities in an environment where corruption and wealth hoarding are endemic. The politico-commercial bourgeoisie in the region leverages its control or influence over government and state-owned companies to plunder their countries, squandering national resources in flagrant and unscrupulous pursuit of personal riches³, at the expense of desperately needed spending on basic infrastructure and social services such as public transport, clean water, electricity, education and health.

In *Brazzaville*, *Kinshasa*, *Libreville*, *Luanda*, *Malabo* and *Yaoundé*, for instance, political and economic elites are becoming richer at the expense of the vast majorities or urban

poor. In some of these cities, 10 per cent of the population reaps more than 60 per cent of the total income, all too often causing life-threatening situations. In Cameroon, for example, a child born into the poorest 20 per cent of households is more than twice as likely to die before the age of five as one born in the richest 20 per cent. Likewise in oil-rich Angola, despite an annual economic growth of 16.6 per cent (2006/07), slum households constitute more than 80 per cent of the urban population. Poor living environments, inadequate sanitation and water supply all add to the health challenges of slum dwellers, leading not only to more illnesses and deaths, but also to higher health care costs, lower school enrolment and retention rates, and lower labour productivity.

The failure of Central African nations to address urban poverty and inequality has led to the emergence and rapid proliferation of slums in all cities in the subregion, depriving large shares of the urban populations of opportunities to meet their basic needs. Besides severe inequality and socio-economic exclusion, urban slum dwellers frequently also experience malnutrition. Today's widespread incidence of hunger is deplorable and entirely unnecessary, but many poor families in Central Africa and a large share of its urban population are chronically malnourished.

In many of the subregion's urban slums, women play an essential role in household survival, but female slum dwellers carry most of the burden of social inequality and exclusion. Nearly 95 per cent of female slum dwellers acknowledge that they need support systems, including short- and medium-term credit, to allow them to improve the quality of their work and the running of their households. To face the continuous financial and employment crises, slum dwellers have been promoting gender equality, advocating for women to take more control over household management and decision-making. As a result, gender relations within urban and slum households have somewhat improved⁴ in recent years, but much still needs to be done to improve female slum dwellers' living conditions.

TABLE 5.7: HUMAN POVERTY INDICATORS IN CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES (2007)

	Population without access to clean water (%)	Population not expected to reach age 40 (%)	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Children <5 underweight (%)	Literacy 15 years and older (%)
Angola	49	38.5	46.5	31	67.4
Cameroon	30	34.2	50.9	15	67.9
Central African Republic	34	39.6	46.7	29	48.6
Chad	52	35.7	48.6	34	31.8
DR Congo	54	37.3	47.6	31	67.2
Congo	29	29.7	53.5	14	81.1
Equatorial Guinea	57	34.5	49.9	19	87.0
Gabon	13	22.6	60.1	12	86.2
São Tomé e Príncipe	14	13.9	65.4	9	87.9

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report, 2009

5.2

The Economic Geography of Cities

Income and Consumption: Gini coefficients

Balanced income distribution is important for sustainable development, because it turns less wealthy households into effective consumers and influences social cohesion; it has the potential to reduce the extent of poverty and affects people's health⁵. Although information on incomes in Central African cities is scarce, available data suggests that income distribution is uneven both across the subregion and across countries. Urban income inequality is increasing and the gap between rich and poor widening. Whereas research on income and consumption inequality is mostly carried out and measured on a national basis, this section analyses urban income and consumption inequalities in selected (mainly capital) cities of Central Africa based on the data compiled by UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory (GUO). Data for cities such as *Luanda*, *Malabo*, *N'Djamena* and *São Tomé* are not available. In the case of *Luanda* and *N'Djamena*, national data has been used instead.

Some Central African nations feature high income-based Gini coefficients (see Table 5.8), implying that national income and wealth is poorly shared, with large sections of the population living on low incomes and consumption. Cities cannot develop and perform optimally if a small group

dominates most of the resources and opportunities, while the majority remains impoverished and marginalized.

Angola is where the nationwide income-based Gini coefficient is the highest, and indeed the country is the most unequal in the region in almost every sphere of life. These disparities are reflected in distribution of income and access to education, clean water, sanitation, healthcare, electricity, adequate housing and urban land. Given Angola's vast oil wealth, its fair distribution appears to be a major problem. Income-based coefficients are also high in *Brazzaville*, *Libreville* and *Yaoundé*.

Equitable distribution of wealth and achievement of social goals are essential components of development and good governance, over and above economic growth *per se*¹⁰. Urban inequality in Cameroon, Congo, the DRC and Gabon is steep, while the economic and financial problems Chad, CAR, the DRC, Congo and São Tomé e Príncipe are facing, coupled with various civil wars during the last two decades, have all had huge though unequal effects on the consumption patterns of various segments of the population. In the subregion, the income gap between rich and poor has widened since the mid-1980s because of: (a) public sector retrenchment, (b) layoffs in the private sector due to declining foreign investment, (c) the collapse of agricultural and industrial sectors, and (d) reduced export incomes.¹¹



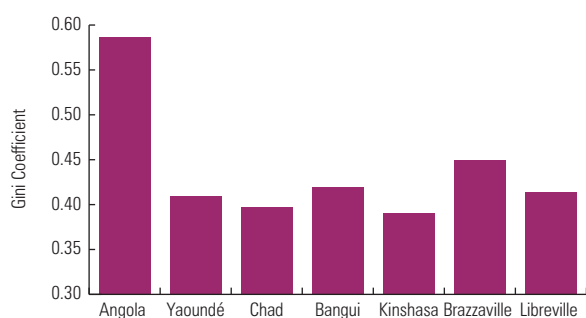
▲ Luanda, Angola. ©Nathan Holland/Shutterstock

TABLE 5.8: GINI COEFFICIENTS FOR SELECTED CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND CITIES

Country	Gini Coefficient
Angola	0.586
Chad	0.397
Bangui	0.420 ⁷
Brazzaville	0.450 ⁹
Kinshasa	0.390 ⁶
Libreville	0.414
Yaoundé	0.410 ⁶

Source: African Statistical Yearbook 2009

GRAPH 5.4: GINI COEFFICIENTS FOR SELECTED CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND CITIES



Source: African Statistical Yearbook 2009

Income inequality has forced many households to make drastic cuts in consumption, foregoing non-essential expenditures such as clothing, shoes, and home furnishings, and incidentally causing dramatic price declines in many Central African cities. In *Kinshasa*, for example, the average amount spent on food represented 74 per cent of the total household expenditure in 2008¹², up from an already high 70 per cent in 2002¹³. The concomitant fall in the consumption of non-essential items had repercussions on the incomes of those producing or selling those goods. However, there is more to steep income and consumption inequalities than just the urban economic aspects. Data has shown that political tensions and social disturbances are rife in cities where income and consumption inequalities are high, as in *Bangui*, *Brazzaville*, *Kinshasa*, *Luanda* and *Yaoundé* (whose coefficients range between 0.43 and 0.58). Highly unequal income distribution is clearly among the lead causes of underdevelopment and conflict in Central Africa.

With oil-based economic booms, the capitals of Angola, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon have seen increases in the numbers of well-paid highly-skilled workers. But oil wealth tends to fuel price inflation, while poor wealth distribution reinforces existing income and consumption inequalities and widens the gap in basic needs satisfaction. Social scientists researching the effects of different income patterns have shown that wealth distribution inequalities are not only detrimental to development, but that high urban income inequality affects urban social stability and cohesion.

How Slum Dwellers Survive

Despite economic progress realised in many Central African countries, endemic corruption, looting of state funds and lack of business ethics and ethos impede income distribution and national wealth sharing. This created havoc in the urban labour markets, in particular between 1980 and 2000, and impoverished urban populations are often experiencing multiple deprivations¹⁴. Drastic reductions in real urban wages, significant urban income disparities and high levels of urban unemployment and the resultant urban poverty have all forced slum dwellers in the subregion to supplement their incomes, using combinations of appropriate and/or inappropriate measures.¹⁵

To make ends meet, numerous low or unpaid civil servants in the subregion's cities (many of whom are slum dwellers) have little option but to combine their formal job with informal activities. In many Central African cities, economic and political crises have led to the decline, absence and sometimes hijacking of municipal services by unpaid civil servants or traditional chiefs. In *Kinshasa*, residents are now reinventing public order, through new forms of social organisation, to compensate for the overwhelming failures of the nation state.¹⁶ Civil servants in *Kinshasa* often remain unpaid for months on end and, by necessity, have developed parallel offices to allow them to derive income outside official structures. Fake receipts, fraudulent use of official stationery and forged signatures enable them to top up wages, instead of putting the collected revenue in the public treasury.¹⁷ This has created a vicious circle of 'privatised' municipal income, depriving municipalities of much-needed revenues.

In order to survive in an expensive city where cash is king and to relieve their often severe state of poverty, civil servants make it impossible to get public services without additional 'facilitation' charges. After months without pay, civil servants demand fees from the public or companies in need of their services. In almost all government offices, civil servants can either issue official or look-alike private receipts, with any monies charged ending up in the public coffers or private pockets, depending on the type of receipt. Another common feature is the looting of office stationery, computers, furniture, air conditioning equipment, fax machines, photocopiers, cars, etc. by civil servants at all levels after every cabinet reshuffle.¹⁸

The supply of urban jobs and regular wages has decreased dramatically in Central Africa while the labour force has grown rapidly. In response, urban slum dwellers have developed their own local survival initiatives through self-employment within the informal sector. Evidence shows that, in all Central African cities, the informal economy keeps growing, even as (or because) the formal sector remains stagnant.

The range of activities subsumed under the informal sector umbrella in Central Africa is extremely diverse, including production, distribution and service enterprises, as well as outright illegal operations. These change from one city to another, but mostly involve low-skilled or manual production and services provision, or small-scale retail trade. Informal

TABLE 5.9: ANNUAL URBAN AND GDP GROWTH RATES IN CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Country	Average annual urban growth rate 2000-2010* (%)	2010* Urban Population (%)	GDP growth 2007 (%)	GDP/head Growth 2007 (%)
Angola	4.40	58.50	23.4	20.1
Cameroon	3.73	58.40	3.8	1.3
Chad	4.92	27.60	0.6	-2.1
Central African Republic	2.07	38.90	4.2	2.3
DR Congo	5.07	35.20	6.5	3.5
Congo	2.88	62.10	-1.6	-3.6
Equatorial Guinea	2.59	39.70	-	-
Gabon	2.32	86.00	5.6	4.0
São Tomé e Príncipe	3.19	62.20	3.8	-
Average	3.46	52.06	5.1	3.6

* Projections

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators 2009; UN DESA, 2008



▲ Informality in Kinshasa. ©Benjamin Makutu

businesses in *Bangui* employ more than 70 per cent of the population, while in *Brazzaville*, *Kinshasa*, *Luanda*, *Malabo*, *N'Djamena* and *Yaoundé* it accounts for more than 50 per cent of all jobs created. *Kinshasa* provides examples of the important role played by the urban informal sector. It provides almost 95 per cent of all public transport services, nearly 98 per cent of household waste collection, 95 per cent of construction workers, plumbing or mechanical repairs, and it has a nearly 90 per cent share in local trade¹⁹. In their daily quest for survival and well-being, the *kinois* (inhabitants of Kinshasa) have invented a set of codes, discourses, systems and practices that enable the community as a whole to ward off the long-predicted apocalypse.

Many slums in Central Africa are home to hardworking communities, whose human aspirations are modest - improved living conditions in the absence of government assistance. However, incomes for many urban dwellers in the subregion have, over the past years, deteriorated to almost meaningless levels and, consequently, many household survival strategies are now based on non-income sources.

Addressing Urban Inequality and Fragmentation

The rapid and sustained demographic growth of Central African cities has outpaced municipal authorities' capacities to provide jobs, services and infrastructures, as well as proper management and financing. Many municipal structures are ill-prepared to play the role that should be theirs in the face of rapid demographic expansion, growing informality and economic inequality, with the attendant urban fragmentation and dysfunctionality.

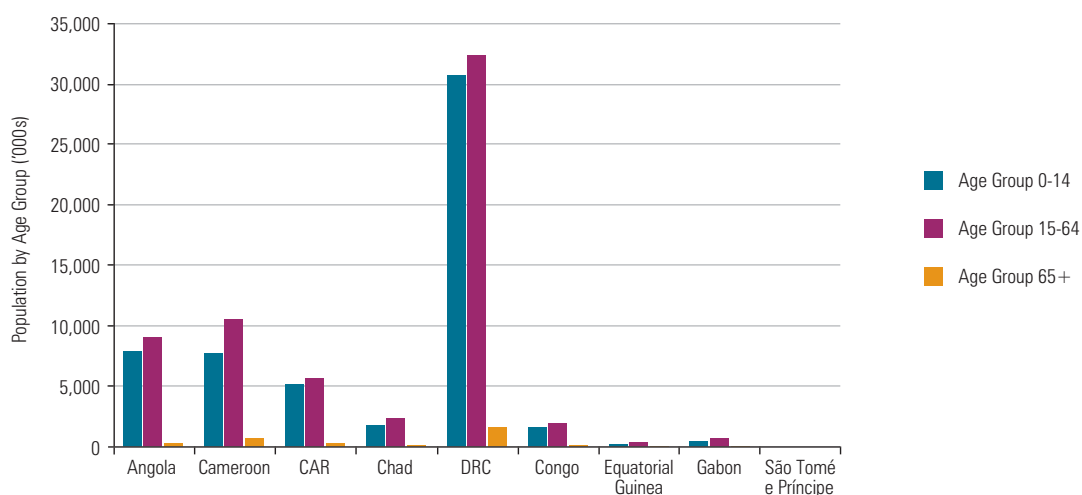
One of the most important Central African demographic characteristics, as shown in Table 5.10 and Graph 5.4, is the massive 'youth bulge', i.e. a median 42.1 per cent of the population below 15 years (or slightly less than the all-Africa 44 per cent median). The percentage of those aged 65 or more is low in all Central African countries, reflecting the very poor life expectancies associated with poverty, exclusion and inequality.

TABLE 5.10: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP IN 2008

	0-14		15-64		65+	
	000s	%	000s	%	000s	%
Angola	4,049.2	43.5	5,007.0	53.8	253.2	2.7
Cameroon	7,718.6	40.8	10,531.9	55.7	669.8	3.5
Central African Republic	1,857.4	42.0	2,397.4	54.2	169.5	3.8
Chad	5,114.3	46.1	5,653.0	51.0	320.4	2.9
DR Congo	30,692.1	47.5	32,342.6	50.1	1,566.8	2.4
Congo	1,605.3	41.7	2,118.1	55.1	123.8	3.2
Equatorial Guinea	219.1	42.2	279.5	53.8	21.1	4.1
Gabon	464.0	34.4	823.8	61.0	62.4	4.6
São Tomé e Príncipe	65.6	40.9	88.0	54.9	6.6	4.1

Source: African Statistical Yearbook 2009

GRAPH 5.5: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP IN CENTRAL AFRICA, 2008



Source: African Statistical Yearbook 2009

Research shows that governments and municipalities have started to put in place a number of strategies to tackle inequality and fragmentation of society. Municipalities are working with local groups to launch integrated urban development initiatives, with the aim of enhancing the quality of life of the more underprivileged urbanites. They look to improve public infrastructure and facilities, health services and housing in some low-income areas through support to local self-help development projects, providing employment to local people and sponsoring local cultural events. In some cities, assistance is also extended to the periphery and suburbs through improvement of agricultural production and the protection of natural resources.

Gender relations within Central African cities are another area where central governments and municipalities are working to reduce inequality and exclusion. Faced with low female literacy rates, governments and municipalities have secured

UNICEF to promote schooling and improve enrolment rates for girls. Urban authorities are also promoting increased employment of women in the urban public sector and their better inclusion in public and political life. As Pacione has argued:

In an inclusive city, urban residents feel they are important contributors to decision-making, from political aspects to more simple daily life questions. This level of participation guarantees them to have a stake in the benefits of development of the city. The concepts of human relationships, citizenship and citizen rights are all integral parts of an inclusive city²⁰.

Some progress has been achieved in the fight against urban inequality and fragmentation in Central African cities, but many urban dwellers remain frustrated with the persistent injustice they face in the housing market, schooling, multiple discrimination in workplaces, gender exclusion in the labour market, and glaring inequality between the rich and the poor within the same city.

5.3

The Geography of Urban Land Markets

Reliable data on Central African land markets is scarce, except, perhaps, for Cameroon, where recent research provides some insights. If anything, this ‘knowledge gap’ across the subregion underlines the limited attention paid, until recently, to urban land governance.

Central African urban land markets operate in legal frameworks similar to those observed in Western Africa. However, tensions, confrontation and negotiation between public institutions and emerging social forces appear to be more acute in Central than in Western Africa. In addition, Angola, the DRC, Congo and Guinea-Bissau have experienced protracted periods of instability, conflict and subsequent reconstruction that have all had negative effects on urban governance, institutional reform efforts and land governance. Against this unsettled background and with the effects of rapid urbanisation, Central Africa is now going through radical breaks with its rural roots and identities, and these require pragmatic governance reforms, especially with regard to urban land.

The Forms of Urban Land Tenure

Urban land tenure problems in Central Africa are similar to those already described in Section 3.3 of this report on the urban geography of land markets in Western Africa. The main difference between Western and Central Africa, though, has to do with urbanisation, since the two subregions do not share the same urban traditions. The colonial and post-independence backgrounds are different, although both subregions share the French and Portuguese heritage of land legislation, management and administration based on a colonial civil code tradition (RocheGude & Plançon, 2010). Another difference is the wider gap between institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks of land governance in Central than in Western African cities.

Colonial rule introduced formal urban land administration in Central Africa, as codified in statutory law, with ownership details documented in central land registries and associated land rights enforceable in court. However, customary land



▲ Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ©Dieter Telemans/Panos Pictures

management in Central Africa's rural and peri-urban areas remains largely unaffected by these institutional and legal frameworks. Not surprisingly, confrontations between customary practices and public land management are a rapidly growing source of political, economic and social friction that remains unresolved to this day and which is exacerbated by rapid urbanisation, economic change and market pressures on urban and peri-urban lands.

The three defining features of the formal land governance system prevailing in Central Africa are as follows: (a) registration is the criterion for the creation of rights, rather than any contractual documentation; (b) at the core of land administration is the properties registry, where transactions and rights are recorded; and (c) the registrar, which is always a government body, guarantees the validity of entries in the registry, providing a high degree of tenure security.

In practice, however, despite the legal obligation to register property rights, only a fraction has gone through the procedure. The reasons include central government monopoly on land allocation, lack of allocation transparency, cumbersome registration procedures and requirements, lack of broad access to land and housing finance and, consequently, the continuing predominance of customary forms of tenure. Therefore, and contrary to Western Africa, formal private ownership of urban land remains limited in Central Africa.

Land allocation by central or local government remains the most important land delivery channel across Central Africa. Residential land is accessed mainly through a 'Permit to Occupy' (PTO) for a specific duration during which the recipient *must* develop the plot and build a dwelling unit. Only then can this temporary permit be converted into a permanent one and, in principle, into a title granting either long-term leasehold or freehold rights. Although these permits are not transferable, public allocation of urban plots with PTOs has created an active informal urban land market in the development(s) on the land, rather than the land itself. Although this process includes a degree of informality, tenure is quite secure.

Throughout the subregion, public allocation of land is determined by social factors (and preventing land speculation is one) and planning objectives (orderly occupation and development of urban and peri-urban areas). For all these commendable conditions, though, public land allocation is a source of governmental power that is open to abuse. In practice, complex allocation procedures and lack of transparency encourage land allocation in dubious, corrupt conditions by land administration services who argue that their processing capacities are inadequate.

In the DRC, the State Domain is the most important land category, as Law 73-020 of 1973 established the State, in principle, as the owner of all land. The Domain is, therefore the source of all land rights, whether user rights or long-term and permanent leaseholds (*concession perpétuelle*). The State can delegate its land management prerogatives to statutory entities, especially for development purposes.

In Angola, land and tenure legislation is rooted in the Civil

Code which provides the sole relevant framework. Under the post-independence (1975) constitution, the State is sole owner of all land. Only land usufruct (beneficial rights) can be transferred to legal entities or individuals for a (renewable) minimum 25 and a maximum 60 years. This form of usufruct can be transferred. In 1992, Decree 46A gave provincial governments the right to grant land concessions, including in urban areas where the land is also under state control. However, the law is ambiguous, unclear and leaves many areas undefined, and enforcement is a challenge in peri-urban areas (Cain, 2003).

In Gabon, the law identifies four categories of urban land, depending on the nationality of the occupant, the type of construction and the location of the land (urban or peri-urban), each of which comes with different degrees of security of tenure (leasehold for the first three categories, occupation permits for the fourth one).

Customary Tenure

Across Central Africa, customary tenure prevails under various forms, with sharp intra-regional legal contrasts. Some nations formally recognize customary tenure. In Cameroon, for instance, customary rights have been formally recognized since 1974. They can, in principle, be converted into formal titles, although, in practice this is a rare occurrence due to the rather ambiguous relationship between government land administration services and customary communities (Rochegeude & Plançon, 2010).

Others countries, such as the DRC and Gabon, do not formally recognize customary land rights. In the DRC, only user rights (*droits de jouissance*) are recognized, not property rights, and only on condition that the property has been developed (*mise en valeur*). User rights are secure and can be mortgaged to access credit. Nevertheless, the customary system remains the main provider of land in rural and peri-urban areas. One of the questions currently under debate is whether customary communities can be allocated permanent leaseholds. In principle, that would be possible but, again, this is a rare occurrence as it requires intensive negotiations between government institutions and customary authorities. This awkward legal situation continues to generate land-related conflicts.

In Gabon, under Decree N° 77 (1977), Art. 2, land ownership through adverse possession by Gabonese citizens is recognized by law after five years' public, continued and peaceful occupation of urban plots not exceeding 2,000 m² (or a maximum of 10 ha in rural areas). This could, theoretically, also apply to customary land tenure, but the decree is, in practice, not enforced on customary land. However, whether recognized or not, customary tenure generally comes with some rights to allocate and transfer land, and usually also provides a fairly high degree of security. Recognition or otherwise of customary rights does not appear to have any effect on formal land markets, the simple reason being that formal land delivery caters to only a fraction of the demand for land.

To some extent, the various tenure arrangements described

above seemed to be supportive of land governance in Central Africa, until rapid urbanisation began to set in. Against a background of relentless demand for urban land, pressures on formal and customary markets and associated price rises, squatter settlements and social instability began to mushroom in many Central African cities. This fairly recent phenomenon can, among many others, be observed particularly in *Kinshasa*, DRC, and in *Luanda*, Angola: in these two cities, slums and informal settlements are proliferating in areas that are not claimed by customary or other owners and are, mostly, unsuitable for urbanisation. Although these illegal settlements come, at least in part, as the outcome of rapid, conflict-driven rural-urban migration, the shares of urban populations living in informal settlements are also increasing in the Central African Republic and Cameroon; two countries that have not experienced any periods of protracted conflict (Bopda, 2005).

Urban Land Institutions

Institutional frameworks are very similar in Central and Francophone Western African countries. In all Central African countries, land administration and management fall under the responsibility of multiple administrative entities with weak inter-institutional coordination. In Gabon, for example, land administration is shared between the Department of Domains, the Land Registry (which falls under the direct responsibility of the country's president) and the Department of Cadastre and Topography (which is under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning). This creates major obstacles to development, approval, implementation and enforcement of land governance reforms. Nevertheless, during the past two decades, all Central African countries have attempted to decentralise land administration and management. However, with institutional hindrances, and the subregion's strong centralist traditions, decentralisation has achieved limited results.

A top-down national process imported from more advanced countries, decentralisation has been embraced by many African governments. In practice, decentralisation frequently amounts to little more than de-concentration of functions to *local* branches of *central* government institutions, because governments remain reluctant to transfer land management decisions and processes to local authorities. Moreover, in most Central African countries, the links between the legal frameworks of land administration (the status of the land) and land management (who can use the land for what) are not sufficiently developed or clear to enable local operators to benefit from decentralised land governance. Such limitations can, for instance, be observed in Gabon, where land is allocated at the *Département* and *District* levels, but nevertheless remains under the authority of central government representatives (*Préfets*). Likewise in Cameroon, where the land registry was decentralised in 2005 to the level of "*Départements*", but the decentralisation of land administration responsibilities to *Communes* and *Communautés urbaines* remains restricted as central government still plays a key role in decision-making at the local level.

In institutional terms, Central African countries are all responding differently to customary practices. While Cameroon recognises customary institutions, public authorities frequently deny them the right to allocate land, especially in urban and peri-urban areas.

Traditional chiefdoms today stand as the legacies of ancestral structures and norms and continue to play a fundamental role in land management. Being linguistic, cultural and political entities, they are recognised by government authorities as yet another component of spatial administration. Their role was formalised by decree in 1977 (decree N° 77/245 restructuring traditional chiefdoms) and in 1982 (decree N° 241/82). Traditional chiefs and auxiliary notabilities sit, by right, on consultative committees and advise on land registration and concessionary allocation, although any final decision remains with government officials. Chiefs also play a role in land dispute settlement.

In the DRC, where customary approaches to land management are *not* formally recognised, traditional leaders nevertheless play a significant role, as few decisions affecting customary land are made without prior consultation and negotiation with the communities involved, in part because these communities help ensure local peace and social stability.

How Land Markets Operate

In Central Africa, urban land initially gets onto the markets in one of four different ways:

1. *Land allocation through public agencies* (municipal, federal or state) is the formal urban land supply channel. The procedure comprises registration of tenure arrangements, title deeds, lease agreements, etc. Security of tenure is high, with rights to the land enforceable in court, while the title can serve as collateral for formal housing loans. However, in Central Africa, formal urban land markets remain embryonic, except in city centres, and over the past decades all efforts to provide land to the urban majorities through formal allocations have failed;
2. *Allocation of public land through illegal transfer* by government employees is usually supported by a registered land title, lease agreement or other formal documentation; these rights are bankable;
3. *Allocation of customary urban land* can take different forms, but under severe urban land demand, customarily allocated plots have become subject to commoditisation. Private rights on customary land can increasingly be bought as in formal land markets. Tenure rights are not registered, albeit they are often recorded in local registers. Consequently, security of tenure is fragile; and
4. *Land squatting* is rapidly on the rise across Central African cities, as a response to rising land price trends and migration of very poor rural populations who simply cannot afford any of the previous land access options. Security of tenure for this category is basically non-existent.

Structural weaknesses in formal land allocation and the attendant inability to cater for low-income urban populations

BOX 5.2: CAMEROON: ANTAGONISMS IN CUSTOMARY LAND MARKETS

Traditional community chiefs are the main providers of land for housing in Douala and Yaoundé. They do this in cooperation with informal intermediaries and brokers, as well as formal and informal land and housing developers. Government and municipal employees in land administration services act as facilitators, while lawyers and magistrates ensure continuity between formal and informal land delivery processes.

Source: Bopda, 2005

Customary practice is now gradually adapting to higher demand for urban land. After negotiation with other community members, customary land right holders sign away their customary rights (*Attestation d'abandon de droits coutumiers*) and transfer them to the buyer. This document is countersigned by witnesses and local authorities. This procedure is becoming ever more commonplace in cities, stimulating customary urban land markets. Still,

government services are not officially involved in these customary land markets and look to enforce laws. For example, these services do not recognise customary deeds of sale even where authenticated by witnesses or civil servants. They will also routinely deny applications for registration or land title on customary land, but with many exceptions depending on applicants' social status and networks.

BOX 5.3: TRANSACTION DOCUMENTATION IN INFORMAL REAL ESTATE MARKETS, LUANDA



▲
Luanda, Angola. ©Jaspreet Kindra/IRIN

Most of the land surrounding Luanda has been allocated through customary or informal delivery. These lively, albeit unregulated and 'illegal' urban real estate markets present opportunities for the government to fund infrastructure upgrading from rates, fees and eventually taxation through land titling and regularisation.

Although formal registration of property transactions is typically sidestepped, 80 per cent of the residents interviewed across peri-urban Luanda claimed to possess some form of documentation proving their land purchase,

land occupation rights or land rental. Only 16 per cent had no supporting document. 'Purchase and Sale' contracts made up 20 to 30 per cent of these documents, with 10 to 25 per cent of these signed by a local administration. Some documents are just receipts of fines paid to the local administration for unauthorised occupation.

However, the majority of the reported documents do not confer any legal occupancy rights whatsoever, although most residents mistakenly believe they do. Fewer than 20 per cent of those interviewed had some form of legal ownership

title or formal rental contract with an owner holding legal title to the land. About 43 per cent of the respondents had no knowledge of the legal concept of land rights, and only 13 per cent had a reasonable awareness of land rights.

Since a new land law proposes stripping informal occupants of any tenure rights, the majority of those living in Luanda's peri-urban areas and *musseques* (urban slum settlements) are at risk of becoming illegal and can portend subsequent eviction.

Source: Cain, 2003

have boosted the emergence of alternative urban land markets. Given the scale of the demand, it should perhaps not be surprising that informal and (neo-)customary markets are now meeting up to 90 per cent of Central Africa's urban residential land demand - the highest rate in all of sub-Saharan Africa.

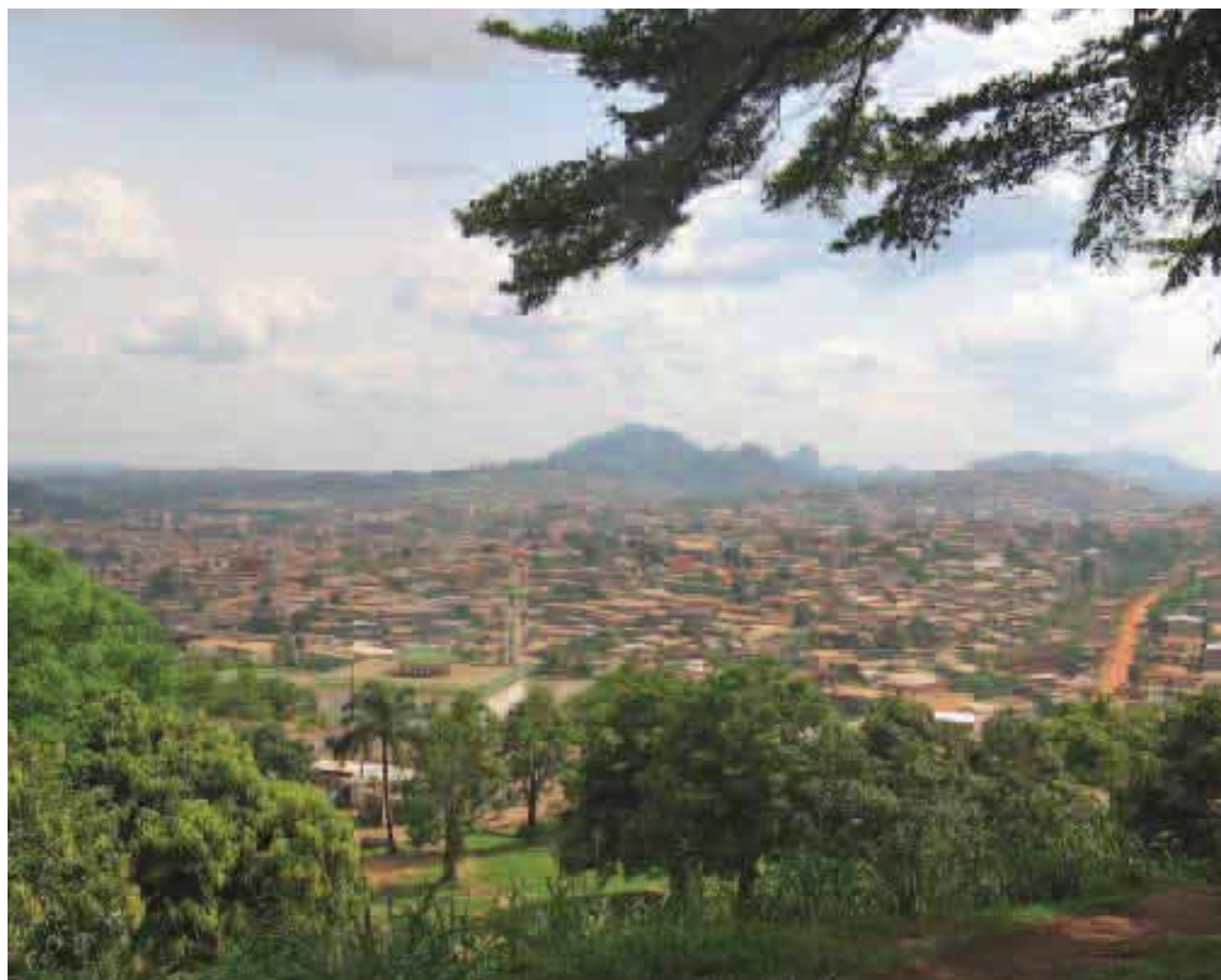
Most transactions on these markets are not formally recognized and therefore risky. But since these alternative markets offer the sole option for poor urban households, the risks simply have to be borne, although - and this is a crucial point - they discourage spending on decent housing. Worldwide experience has shown that, if given security of tenure, slum dwellers, despite their poverty, are willing and capable to build fairly adequate housing through self-help. The risk of eviction, rather than poverty *per se*, accounts for the appalling housing standards prevailing in urban slums.

During the past decades, most of the cities in the subregion displayed a surprising capacity to adapt to economic change and rapid urban expansion. In all Central African cities, customary and informal land delivery systems are adapting and now treat land rights as freely exchangeable market commodities.

In *Kinshasa* and *Brazzaville*, for instance, customary and informal operators are now the main providers of urban land. However, public authorities do not formally recognize customary or informal land transactions, as in Cameroon. Rather, they try to enforce repressive laws, regardless of the fact that public servants in land administration (Cadastral and Land Affairs Departments), public representatives at neighbourhood level (*chefs de quartier*) and mayors are all actively involved in customary and informal land transactions (Flouriot, 2010, personal communication) (see also Box 5.2).

Land Markets, Urban Form and Configurations

Over time, formal urban land markets substitute income- or social class-based segregation for the colonial legacy of ethnic urban segregation, often with largely similar outcomes, namely clear, systematic segregation between rich and poor urban neighbourhoods. The real problem came when cities began to 'over-urbanise' that is, when demographic growth significantly outpaced the capacity of urban economies to cater to their various economic needs and requirements.



▲ Yaoundé, Cameroon. ©Pozzo di Borgo Thomas/Shutterstock

BOX 5.4: CAMEROON: UNCONTROLLED EXPANSION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AT THE PERIPHERY OF CITIES

In Cameroon, 'urban' refers to any land located within the boundaries of those agglomerations categorised as 'urban centres' which poses the problem of the delineation of rural peripheries and, more particularly, peri-urban areas. Anarchic extensions take the form of illicit occupation of state property; this can sometimes involve a degree of formalisation (for lack of full legalisation) which consists of 'selling' parcels that have been more or less subdivided by customary holders. For lack of control or proper information, this process can even end up with transfers of plots from the state public or private domain. This more or less *bona fide* land anarchy effectively adds to the already severe problem of large city management, and to this day government services seem to be totally powerless, regardless of their powers under law.

Source: Rochegude & Plançon, 2010

With rapid increases in urban populations, the land values in former indigenous neighbourhoods tend to rise sharply, especially near city centres, which adds to demand pressures and the associated risks of market-driven displacement to insecure tenures. In areas where demand is high, economically weaker households are exposed to the market pressures and are forced out of the area, because tenure status as provided under dual formal and informal/customary rules can become 'reinterpreted'. Such market-driven eviction can also happen where multiple forms of overlapping tenure status sit side by side. Formal markets, as rigidly backed by the law and market forces, cannot provide land at scale to house the poor. Informality is pushed to marginal lands within the city and the more affordable peri-urban areas and urban fringes. The political, social and spatial outcomes of these processes are quite predictable and almost uniform across urban Africa.

Given the generally limited capacities of local government institutions to enforce urban development control, the markets fill the governance void, either formally or informally, and settlement on any 'vacant' urban land by poorer people becomes widespread. Eviction will push settlers to some other vacant tract. When no more vacant urban lands are available, the poor move to affordable rural land on the urban fringes where eviction is less likely, especially if the land lies beyond municipal boundaries.

That is how the urban poor become increasingly concentrated on under-serviced, marginal and hazardous lands within the city or on sprawling peri-urban fringe areas, which, again, leaves them spatially segregated from economic opportunity and much more exposed to unhealthy living environments and worsening spirals of extreme poverty.

Even more clearly than in Western African cities, the patterns of physical urban expansion in Central Africa are

characterised by lack of planning and uncontrolled urban sprawl. This is the consequence of a combination of four factors: (i) rapid urban demographic growth, (ii) the share of customary and informal land delivery processes in the supply of land, (iii) rigid and unenforceable legal frameworks with regard to planning and land administration, and (iv) widespread corruption and illicit practices.

In 2005, the urbanised area of *Kinshasa* extended over more than 500 km², expanding by 8 km² every year and almost exclusively by dint of illicit, informal, 'self-help' urbanisation. Far from being 'anarchic', as often claimed, occupation follows an orthogonal urban pattern inherited from the colonial period. Plots are relatively large, at 300 to 500 m², while the built-up area - often with fairly good quality construction - does not exceed 100 m². This results in urban sprawling, with low densities (between one and five individuals per 100 m²) (Flouriot, 2005).²¹ In 2005, no affordable plots (i.e., between US \$300 and 500) were available within a radius of 40 to 50 km from central Kinshasa. Subserviced plots of 750 m² located 20 km away from the city centre would still cost about US \$1,000 (Flouriot, 2010).

In all Central African capital cities, stringent construction standards combine with insecure land tenure to fuel the proliferation and spatial expansion of slums. Administrative boundaries turn planning regulation enforcement into a challenge: dual urban land management and administration systems can operate and even co-exist fairly smoothly, but only when the territories under their respective control are clearly demarcated and separated. The problem in the post-independence period, however, has been that these dualistic urban land markets and their respective regulatory frameworks have triggered more and more urban land conflicts when they began to intrude on each other's physical territory.

Bopda (2005) once watched a rush of 'landless' people in *Yaoundé* and *Douala* (in fact, households without any land or shelter) to customary lands in the far-out periphery. The rush came in response to persistent lack of government policies in favour of access to land or housing for low-income categories. The pressure on land is exacerbated by private-sector developers. Since available land prevents them from operating at scale, they must go into business with (neo-) customary land market participants. For the sake of efficiency, informal developers will typically turn to customary property owners (when they are not one of them) in order to purchase parcels, which adds to land scarcity and urban sprawl.

The Limitations of Conventional Land Administration

A series of obstacles undermine the efficiency of formal urban land and housing markets in Central Africa; they include the following: (a) time-consuming and cumbersome land allocation procedures, (b) costly transactions, (c) slow tenure regularisation, (d) inappropriate land policies given the scarce financial resources of the urban poor; (e) fragmented, outdated or partially enforceable legislation; (f) inefficient dispute settlement institutions and procedures; and (g)



▲ Roof construction, Central African Republic. ©Anthony Morland/IRIN

general failure of land administration to register land rights.

Security of tenure for the poor is a major urban problem in the subregion. Even when informal land is titled, non-compliance with municipal regulatory requirements, such as minimum plot size, space standards and infrastructural criteria, can render illegal any developments on the land. Attempts have been made in most countries of the subregion to streamline public land allocation and tenure regularization procedures, but with limited results because the main obstacles to reform are to be found within land governance institutions.

In all Central and Western African nations, access to land allocated by the State requires an extensive series of steps: 137 in Gabon, for instance, involving seven administrative bodies. Procedures are not transparent either, since documents in the Department of Domains, the Department of the Cadastre and in the Land Register (*Livre foncier*) are not freely accessible to the public, a major factor behind the general reluctance to register land. In 1995, *Libreville* consisted of an estimated 150,000 built-up plots, of which only a paltry 6,000 were titled, and another 6,000 temporary titles

(*titres provisoires*) had been issued (Comby, 1995).²² Recent observations confirm that the situation has not significantly improved since then. As the result of this debilitating lack of administrative expediency, 90 per cent of residents in Libreville have little alternative but to rely on informal land delivery and occupancy. In all countries of the subregion, the predominance of unregistered ownership further makes the tracing of title chains over time almost impossible, and fraud all the easier. This overwhelming degree of informality has tangible effects on formal land and housing markets: the potential for collateralized lending (backed by the relevant, securely held plot) is drastically reduced, which in turn makes the achievement of the construction requirements attached to PTOs a self-defeating condition, since compliance with those requirements is a prerequisite for permanent property rights.

In Angola, a 1992 law placed the responsibility for land access on the state. The problem is that the public institutions regulating land access lacked the capacity for transparent, accountable implementation. State management of land was disorganized, with fragmented institutional responsibilities

BOX 5.5: CAMEROON'S CUSTOMARY LAND HOLDERS CANNOT AFFORD DEVELOPMENT COSTS

In Cameroon, customary stakeholders are not in a position to make proper land subdivisions. Since they have no formal land titles, they are not authorised to subdivide parcels or sell land plots.

The alternative for them is to subdivide plots regardless of planning standards, since these are not enforceable on customary land. They hardly ever call in surveyors from the Land Registry to help with subdivision and demarcation, for fear of being deprived of part of the plot and becoming aware of it only once the process is completed. In case they wished to comply with planning standards when making subdivisions, they could not afford the costs and would not have the necessary political connections, even where they hold a title. Therefore, customary operators act in a piecemeal sort of way, subdividing parcels and selling individual plots as required by demand or their own financial needs.

There can be no doubting that if customary channels for land delivery were to be recognised by public authorities, this would remove the attractions they hold for low-income people as land values would rise. Therefore, operating on the margins of formal legality serves the poor well.

Source: Bopda, 2005



▲ Goma, DRC. ©Laudes Martial Mbon/IRIN

and a lack of clear records that made land administration open to gross abuse. The system gave advantage to those who understood the system and knew the people in charge. In 2004, under pressure from civil society organizations, changes were introduced that allow informal occupiers to legalize their tenure status within a three-year period, but since the state administration still lacks the capacity to process the resultant tens of thousands of requests, the backlogs are enormous.

Across Central Africa, allocation of public land by local and municipal authorities is undermined by corruption, especially where institutions are heavily under-resourced, as in Chad, the Central African Republic and the DRC. This situation has nothing to do with land market shortcomings, but rather a deeply rooted pattern of behaviour. In these nations' post-independence administrative tradition, land allocation prerogatives shifted to the newly independent states but without the procedures, institutions or independent bodies to monitor operations. *Brazzaville, Kinshasa, Libreville, Luanda* and *Malabo*, to mention a few, lack the procedures for legal and administrative scrutiny which could stop illegal sales of public land. Corruption is difficult to address where urban land administration and registration is poor, land records are incomplete, access to land ownership information is lacking and whatever available information is held by a variety of government bodies. Deep grassroots mistrust of court decisions on land disputes is not helpful either.

Informal Settlements as a Response to Land Market Imperfections

In Central African countries, and without any exception, formal urban land markets force out the urban poor, strengthening new alternative land delivery systems in peri-urban areas because they can deliver at scale, they are cheap, and they provide a 'fast-track' access to plots. However, informal land delivery fails to provide secure tenure, even though residents of informal and customary settlements do enjoy *de facto* security. The numbers of land-related conflicts are rapidly spiralling out of hand, representing 80 per cent of all court cases in *Kinshasa*, for example, (Flouriot, 2005) and a majority of the cases in *Brazzaville, Douala, Luanda* and *Yaoundé*.

Whereas in Western African cities the dynamics between government land institutions, on the one hand, and customary and informal/customary developers, on the other, are converging when it comes to land delivery, the situation in Central Africa is a problematic one. For Central African government institutions (Departments of State Domain and the Cadastre), the integration of customary land developments is made difficult by inappropriate land management and planning models, poor model implementation and centralised administrative traditions; at the same time, widespread corruption hinders streamlining and integration of informal land delivery methods. Community-level organization is usually weak; it can also be beset by political problems, with customary leaders and democratically elected representatives vying for legitimacy, as in Cameroon, Congo or the DRC.

Simultaneously, customary systems are eroded by market pressures as customary land reserves dry up along city fringes. Access to customary land is now possible only in those areas far from city centres. Customary land delivery is further marginalized by the proliferation of intermediaries and brokers, including land surveyors as increasingly important mediators between buyers, customary land holders and government services. Lack of resources, technical culture, skills and know-how on the part of customary developers creates further planning and environmental problems.

The Political Economy of Urban Land Markets

Land tenure is a social relation of appropriation and exclusion. Land represents power in political, social and economic terms. In all countries of the subregion, land legislation is based upon the principle of *domanialité*, which grants the state an exclusive monopoly on any land that has not been appropriated and titled. This principle was inherited from the French and Portuguese colonial tradition and today is upheld in the name of national unity and economic development. It provides a framework for the allocation of public land and access to ownership. In practice, implementation of the principle of *domanialité* varies across countries. For example, it may or may not recognize customary rights - but the basic principle remains the same: it places all land not held under a title in the state domain.

This gives public administrations discretionary powers to allocate land, recognise customary rights or formalize informal land occupations under the terms and conditions defined by law. The state prerogative with regard to *domanialité* puts government officials in a powerful position, as they can arbitrarily allocate (for a fee) land rights that can subsequently be transferred at market prices. In many Central African nations where democratic practices and transparent land management procedures do not prevail, this practice is deeply rooted in land administration services, to the benefit of government clienteles. This is not only fuelling corruption, it also generates rivalries between government institutions in charge of land management and administration. This situation stands as a major obstacle to decentralized land governance, as transfer of land prerogatives to local authorities deprives central government land administration of resources and power (UNCHS, 1999).

'Legality *vs.* customary legitimacy' is another conflict area between statutory and non-statutory institutions. That is why, in Central Africa, governments are so reluctant formally to recognize customary land rights. When these rights are recognized, as in Cameroon, customary land transfers are not permitted or strictly limited. In Angola, only customary user rights are recognized; this is the one and only exception in the subregion, as though the emergence of customary land markets would deprive government land institutions of their *de facto* monopoly on land. Still, paradoxically, the legitimacy of customary institutions is not questioned. Their role with regard to social control is acknowledged, as well as

their critical contribution to the provision of affordable land for housing. They are simply not considered as legal entities, implying that they cannot yield the full benefits of the land transactions they control, since land delivery remains a government prerogative.

No country in the Central Africa has launched any tenure formalization or regularization programme, even where the necessary legal instruments are available, as in Cameroon and Angola. Lack of tenure regularization is usually justified by technical reasons, such as lack of administrative capacity or the illegal status of settlements, a situation that is also symptomatic of attempts by interest groups within the state apparatus to maintain scarcity on land markets, as long as illegal but tolerated informal and customary land delivery acts as a 'safety valve' to relieve the shortage of affordable urban housing.

Land as a Municipal Revenue Source

In *Libreville*, *Luanda* and *Malabo*, public authorities have in the past resorted to a variety of instruments (including leases and outright sales) to capture rapidly rising land values and use the proceeds to spend on infrastructure. Capturing land values indeed is a one of the main avenues for recouping many urban infrastructure costs. But at a time that Central African cities are facing a rapidly escalating scramble for urban land, sales of public land by local and municipal authorities are increasingly tainted with lack of transparency, secretive decision-making and corruption. Where governance is weak and highly corrupt, public urban land is often captured by politicians or high-ranking officers in the armed forces and sold to local businesses, or illegally transferred to foreign buyers.

Across the subregion, local protests against public land purchases by businesses from the Far East, the Gulf States or Western multinationals are on the rise. Unless illegal sales on this non-renewable municipal resource are curbed, the outcome can only be increased evictions of poor and lower-middle income urban dwellers, along with significant foregone municipal own-source funding. The reality, however, is that many countries or cities in Central Africa have no adequate legal or administrative mechanisms to protect public land. Revenue collection services are often understaffed and inefficient, while large amounts of collected revenues never reach local authority accounts.

This is the background against which urban land has ceased to serve as a major source of municipal revenue in many Central African cities. In *Bangui*, *Brazzaville*, *Kinshasa* and *Yaoundé*, land sales have all but ceased to fund urban infrastructure or even to increase government revenues. Corruption has become so commonplace that it now interferes with urban development processes. A rigorous debate on the use of land revenues, land administration and land management is urgently needed to explore workable alternatives, and to enable urban land to once more play its crucial role in the funding of municipalities.

5.4

The Geography of Climate Change

Much of Central Africa has a humid tropical climate with dense rain forest cover. The subregion also features extensive savannas north and south of the Congo Basin. The Atlantic coast is humid and warm, while a dry desert climate prevails in the north of the subregion, especially in north Cameroon and Chad. Many countries experience a dry and a rainy season, and monthly temperatures average between 21° and 34°C.

In Angola, forests sprawl over about 30 per cent of the territory, while the DRC's more than 100 million ha of rain forest covers nearly 50 per cent of the country. Much of Congo and Gabon is covered by forests, too, as are southern Cameroon and the South of the Central African Republic.

These rainforests hold vast biodiversity and timber reserves, and coastal countries are rich in fish resources.

However, recent trends of environmental losses in coastal regions and rain forests are worrisome. Central Africa is expected to become predominantly urban around 2022, but current rapid increases in urban populations already alter the regional environment, in general, and urban areas in particular. Urban areas of all sizes face increased risks from water scarcity and flooding. Coastal areas are threatened by sea level rise at a time when urban demographic pressures keep mounting.



▲ Brazzaville, Congo. ©Laudes Martial Mbon/IRIN

The Role of Local Authorities in Adaptation to Climate Change

Recurrent flooding in cities across Central Africa is the result of multiple factors, but mostly the outcome of human behaviour, including sustained demographic growth and associated settlement in flood-prone areas, lack of storm water drains or poor maintenance of infrastructures in many urban neighbourhoods, inadequate urban management and extreme poverty. As more people move to cities, unplanned and uncontrolled developments cover large tracts of land with houses, roads and other infrastructure, which compound flooding, as soils can no longer absorb runoff water.

As serviced urban land is unaffordable to them, poor city dwellers frequently build their homes in unsuitable or hazardous locations, such as near waterways which make them vulnerable to flooding. Lack of drainage systems and uncollected garbage blocking storm water drains slow down runoff water flows and cause flooding. With extreme weather events associated with climate change becoming more frequent, the urban poor are increasingly at risk.

One of the main contributors to climate change in Central Africa is the use of wood and charcoal for cooking, as this contributes significantly to deforestation and land degradation, besides indoor air pollution. Repeated economic and other crises and general deterioration of urban electricity infrastructures have forced many urban households to use charcoal or fuel wood, on top of those that already do because they cannot afford electricity. Extensive fuel wood use is therefore not just a result of poverty but also a matter of widespread failure to give cities energy security.

Since the beginning of the year 2000, many municipalities have issued rules and regulations to address the effects of climate change. In *Bangui, Brazzaville, Kinshasa, Libreville, Luanda* and *Yaoundé*, policy documents such as Environmental Management Programmes and other instruments have provided the legal frameworks needed to address climate change. Significant improvements have already been felt, including thanks to the involvement of private companies operating under scrutiny or supervision of public agencies and international non-governmental organisations.

Most local authorities in Central Africa have devised emergency policies to deal with climate change, especially in urban areas. The rationale is mostly to stop the continuous destruction of the environment and to save urban dwellers' lives and livelihoods. Many local authorities, especially in cities on the Atlantic coast, are currently working with non-governmental organisations and local communities to reduce vulnerability to the social and economic effects of climate change. However, although many municipalities have some climate-change-related arrangements in place, most are not working well and implementation is hindered by lack of urban planning and local financial resources.

Climate Change: How much do we know?

Although climate change in cities is a major threat to living conditions, poverty reduction initiatives and development in general, the majority of Central African city dwellers are not familiar with the notion or its implications. These are mainly debated in political and scientific arenas by the media and non-governmental organisations. The majority of urban dwellers only speak their local dialects and translation of climate change notions does not always clearly convey their meaning. Public awareness-building gatherings, like town hall or community meetings, could help overcome these knowledge-sharing difficulties. Whereas many urban dwellers are aware of deforestation around their cities and have noticed changes in weather patterns, few realize the relationships between these events and the way each and everyone's behaviour can help mitigate the effects of climate change.

Currently, the debate on climate change is taking place mainly among a small number of intellectuals, politicians, scientists and, to a lesser extent, urban managers. As non-governmental organisations and the media increasingly share their knowledge, resources and ideas, more people are becoming aware of climate change and its effects, but much more needs to be done. Since agricultural production in the region relies mainly on rainfall, rural populations, too, must be informed if they are to contribute to any adaptation or mitigation efforts.

In order to address local knowledge gaps, authorities at municipal, city and national levels should invest in awareness-raising through the media, scientists, schools, religious and community leaders at all levels to build awareness of the problem and understanding of the necessary responses.

Urban Strategies for Adaptation to Climate Change

Urban energy security is critical for economic growth and poverty alleviation in the region. In Africa, where wood, charcoal, and other biomass meet about 80 per cent of the domestic primary energy needs, over 550 million people lack access to modern energy supply.²³ But this can change.

The DRC has one of the largest hydro-electric power plants in Africa with a 150,000 MW capacity, or three times Africa's current power consumption. The Inga Dam on the Congo River, has, on its own, the potential to generate 40,000 to 45,000 MW, which could meet the needs of the entire Southern African subregion. The Congo River, more than 4,500 km long, is second only to the Amazon for discharge and features the most important water falls in Africa, with the potential to supply 'clean' and renewable electricity to vast areas of Africa, generating huge incomes in the process. The DRC currently exports electricity to Angola, Burundi, Congo, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

BOX 5.6: INNOVATIVE BRIQUETTES BIOMASSES ARE POPULAR IN DRC

Poor and low-income households in Bukavu, Goma and other towns in the DRC are experimenting with a new source of energy called *briquettes biomasses*. This alternative to charcoal and firewood is made from leaves, tree bark and agricultural wastes. The briquettes reduce pollution, wastes and deforestation. *Briquettes biomasses* have been developed by scientists at the National Park of Virunga, the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature and a non-governmental organisation known as 'Environment, Natural Resources and Development'. The environment-friendly *briquettes* are available at about half the cost of the charcoal or firewood equivalent and are 70 per cent more energy-efficient.

These economic and environmental benefits make *briquettes biomasses* increasingly popular in the eastern regions of the DRC. The raw material is widely available in cities across the region, making production easy. This in turn can bring environmental and socio-economic benefits to municipalities and local communities as jobs are created, forests, savannas and woods are saved, and the cost of solid urban waste management is reduced. Adequate financial, technical and management support would help promote local manufacturing.

In sharp contrast, only eight per cent of the DRC population has access to electric power because of poor (where any) grid maintenance. Current electricity export income flows should be deployed to supply cheap energy to the DRC, including its cities. The highly competitive costs of this clean and renewable energy source can give manufacturing and living conditions a massive boost, putting an end to the current biomass-related deforestation and air pollution. All that is required is the political will to divert electricity export incomes to the upgrading and extension of domestic electricity infrastructures and facilities. In a country the size of the DRC, this is no small feat, but the DRC has a moral duty to do so, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs as the grid is extended and better maintained.

Environmental degradation in Central African cities and their environmental footprints are closely associated with poverty incidence. The high cost of electricity and lack of livelihood opportunities have accelerated environmental degradation, as has the need for poor urban dwellers to use the land for food and biomass production purposes. Many municipalities in the region are looking to promote alternative, cheap and relatively 'clean' new energy sources such as the *briquettes biomasses* produced in the eastern part of the DRC (see Box 5.6).

Although their financial resources are often limited, African governments are working to cut carbon emissions, protect carbon sinks and put in place strategies to tackle a phenomenon - climate change - for which they hardly have any responsibility in the first place. Adaptation and climate risk management are more and more becoming core development objectives in Africa. In 2007, for example, the DRC moved to

preserve the largest tropical rainforests in the world after the Amazon.²⁴ The strategies now under development by Central African governments take into account the impact of cities on the environment, given their concentrated demand for energy, water, infrastructure and services.

While climate variability is not a new factor in Africa's history, the incidence and severity of extreme weather events, including floods and droughts, has increased sharply in recent years and projections indicate that this trend may intensify, further increasing the region's natural vulnerability.²⁵ Faced with these prospects, local authorities in *Libreville* and *Yaoundé* have substantially increased budget allocations for improved urban environment. Putting a halt to deforestation in and around cities located in vulnerable coastal regions has become a priority. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Libreville* and Gabon's Ministry of Public Health and Hygiene have arranged for the collection of waste in residential areas and the city centre. Nearly 200 young people from Libreville work in 11 selected areas, clearing up waste for 300,000 urban residents and otherwise cleaning up the city. Households pay XAF5,000 (about US \$10) per month for the service and household waste clearing has become a source of employment for otherwise jobless urban youngsters.

Cities like *Kinshasa*, *Luanda*, *Malabo*, *N'Djamena*, *São Tomé* and *Yaoundé* are implementing projects to preserve the local environment and tackle eco-system degradation. Around the hinterlands of *Luanda* and *Kinshasa*, trees have been planted to help re-forestation and in other cities, efforts are underway to stop deforestation, too. Furthermore, many countries in the region are members of the Congo Basin Forest Fund, which supports projects, including safeguard of the rainforest with assistance from the United Kingdom and Norway. Central and local governments in the region have recognized that curbing deforestation around their cities (and in the Congo Basin region in general) would provide a cost-effective way of fighting climate change on a regional scale.



▲ Stagnated water in the outskirts of a Chad town. ©UN-HABITAT

5.5

Emerging Issues

Population Mobility, Urban Economies and Livelihoods

Migration has been a social process for millennia and a human response to patterns of uneven development. Apart from involuntary movements resulting from human-made or natural disasters, most people migrate for economic reasons.²⁶ Typically, they seek employment, a permanent residence or a social safety net as they have fallen into poverty.²⁷

Despite the fact that migration is encouraged by the Economic Community of Central African Countries (ECCAC), countries like Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tomé e Príncipe continue to see migration as undesirable, the cause of law-and-order problems, environmental disasters, economic exploitation, or political tensions and violence. However, other ECCAC member states have realised the importance and benefits of free migration, including an ability to bring positive economic and other changes to their countries.

Cameroon, Chad, Congo and the DRC have come to understand that migrants are agents of economic, technologic and cultural change and that they often represent extensive networks of exchange between countries and people. Urban authorities in these countries are well aware that cities are nodes of economic power, both within their individual countries and within the global economy and that cross-border flows of people, goods and finance can be beneficial. Cities' influence results not only from population concentration but also from their location-specific and economic advantages, including agglomeration economies and the associated economies of scale. Urban population growth generally goes hand in hand with increased production/income per head and declines in overall poverty. Cities can generate and sustain the economic growth of an entire country and are hosts to agents of change and development while acting as vibrant places for the creation and transfer of knowledge and wealth.

Any politician and urban manager in Central Africa who remain hostile to free movement of people, goods and finance must better understand the critical role that cities can play in poverty alleviation. Together with cross-border movements of people, migration combines with domestic and inter-city mobility to bring different benefits that can enhance people's

welfare in urban areas on both sides of national borders. Especially in countries where migration is still seen as the cause of tension and instability, authorities at local, city and national levels should more objectively analyze the effects of cross-border migration. Most migrants are highly motivated people in search of employment or other economic opportunities, and they can also be vectors of economical, technological and cultural change who need to be supported and integrated within the city and the economy. They should be viewed for what they really are: human resources with different types of knowledge and cultures that can complement those prevailing in the host location. Well-administered and well-governed cities that are open to new ideas, cultures and technologies can be a country's best catalysts of economic growth and human development.

Trans-national Urban Systems

The Kinshasa-Brazzaville Mega Urban Region

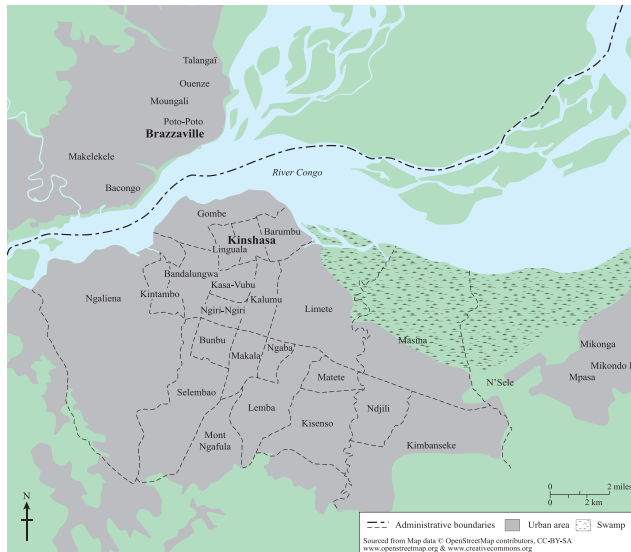
Separated only by the Congo River, *Brazzaville* and *Kinshasa* are the geographically closest capital cities in the world after Vatican City and Rome, Italy. With a combined 2010 population exceeding 10 million people, the Kinshasa-Brazzaville conglomeration is the world's most populous trans-border metropolitan area.

Brazzaville is the capital of the Republic of Congo. The city is currently the largest, most populous and prosperous city in the country. *Brazzaville* was founded in 1880 on one of the northern banks of the Congo River near a Bateke village. It was named after its founder, French explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza.

Before Belgian colonisation, *Kinshasa* was a conglomerate of several Bateke and Humbu villages and an important local trade centre. In 1880, *Kinshasa* was a village with 30,000 inhabitants where indigenous people traded bush meat, pottery, raffia, tobacco, boats, crafts and tools, clothes, alcohol, food and ivory.²⁸ In 1842, when the British explorer Henry Morton Stanley arrived there, *Kinshasa* was already an important commercial centre with various economic activities and connections with other parts of the region. Therefore, the urban system was not brought in from outside.²⁹

Despite their common languages, French and Lingala,

MAP 5.2: BRAZZAVILLE- KINSHASA CONGLOMERATION



there has always been a degree of benign competition between *Brazzaville* and *Kinshasa*. The two cities have grown together and influenced each other through commercial and cultural exchange. In recent years, cooperation between *Kinshasa* and *Brazzaville* has increased in several ways and people's lives now are influenced to a large degree by cross-border contacts. An estimated three million people cross the river every year to trade in informal markets on ferries, islands in the river and around the ports. Young people cross from *Brazzaville* to *Kinshasa* for educational purposes and to enjoy the nightlife. National and local radio stations and TV channels serve both sides of the border. However, the international border along the river remains ill-determined, leaving the status of some of the islands in the Malebo Pool of the Congo River somewhat vague. Being free of any jurisdiction, they are an attractive location for illicit trade. Economic and cultural links affect both cities in many ways and some businesses in Kinshasa would be wiped out if the border were to close, and *vice-versa*. *Kinshasa* and *Brazzaville* have become interdependent in the supply of food, clothing, pharmaceuticals and manufactured goods. In the 1980s, the cities were officially twinned and, in 1991, the construction of road and rail bridges between them was first explored, before running into political and financial difficulties.

The *Kinshasa-Brazzaville* urban region is one of the fastest growing cross-border urban conglomerations in sub-Saharan Africa and is currently experiencing various types of change. The mega urban region is host to high concentrations of the economic, industrial, social, health and political activities of both countries and employment opportunities for large numbers of people on both sides of the river. If political, economic and spatial cooperation can be sustained and improved, the Kinshasa-Brazzaville urban conglomeration could very well become one of the most important urban regions in Africa in economic and political terms.

However, as in many other large urban conglomerations

around the world, the Kinshasa-Brazzaville mega urban region is facing numerous problems. Both cities are seriously affected by their rapid demographic growth against a background of substandard urban governance and management. Infrastructures are poorly maintained and in need of serious upgrading. Underdeveloped urban road networks, poorly maintained roads and rapidly increasing numbers of vehicles cause serious traffic congestion and road accidents. Other problems include poor energy supply and management of wastes. Both cities consume enormous amounts of energy and produce very large amounts of waste that is incinerated, buried or simply discharged into the Congo River. Many other urban problems also remain unresolved or unaddressed and both cities urgently need to clean up their acts.

Although some political differences remain over the protection of national interests, the Kinshasa-Brazzaville cross-border flows of people, labour, goods, services and cultures is indicative of the regional potential that could be opened up with an effective regional road network.

The Luanda-N'Djamena Development Corridor

Like any other region of the world, Central Africa, is experiencing ever-more intense migration and other cross-border movements of people, goods, services and finance as the outcome of globalization, rapid demographic growth, increasing mobility and geographically uneven development. Over the past decades, these forces have stimulated the emergence of new urban spatial configurations. These include mega urban regions like the cross-border *Kinshasa-Brazzaville* urban conglomeration discussed above, as well as a host of spontaneously emerging and/or deliberately promoted urban development corridors along major infrastructure lines connecting the economic nodes of the African continent. In Central Africa, an emerging huge regional corridor between *Luanda*, Angola, and *N'Djamena*, Chad, is one of the most important developments in this regard.



▲ Luanda, Angola. ©Hansjoerg Richter/iStockphoto

MAP 5.3: THE EMERGING LUANDA-N'DJAMENA CORRIDOR



Source: Geographic Guide <http://www.geographicguide.com/africa-map.htm>

Central Africa as a whole is still deeply underdeveloped in terms of road, rail and water-borne transportation connections. In fact, most Central African capitals are still better linked to European cities by air and by sea than among themselves. Poorly developed cross-border infrastructures severely hamper the mobility of people, goods and services between the larger Central African cities and stand as significant obstacles to regional economic cooperation and integration.

The member states of the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) met in 2004 in *Brazzaville* and adopted a plan to develop a reliable and competitive regional transportation network with a view to facilitating effective and affordable regional movements and integration. Complementing the initiative were plans to reduce transport costs, boost economic development and create additional jobs to tackle widespread poverty. Since 80 per cent of goods and 90 per cent of people movements in the region occur by road, priority went to their development, supported by a pledge of US\$6.41 billion to develop or improve the trunk roads linking the region's capital cities by 2010. However, implementation is slow and it is clear that that objective will not be met by 2010, since currently only the capital cities *Libreville* and *Yaoundé* have been linked.³⁰

Early construction of the *Luanda-Brazzaville* section of this regional road network should be a matter of high regional priority. A functional, efficient Luanda-Brazzaville road corridor would connect the more than 14 million inhabitants of the larger cities along the way. Early construction of the *Brazzaville-Libreville* section is equally important, as this would create a link all the way to *Yaoundé*. Completion of this road network would connect an estimated 20 million people in the larger cities and conurbations, while also unlocking

many secondary towns, villages and rural areas along its path, serving an estimated additional five million people.

Many of the cities along this proposed Central African road network are located on the Atlantic coast with port facilities, while the *Brazzaville-Kinshasa* mega urban region features ports along the Congo River. Most of these cities are hosts to the largest ports in their respective countries and, consequently, they play significant roles in domestic economic development. Interconnections among these major economic hubs would greatly enhance the potential for regional integration through cost reductions in logistics and enhanced trade and labour flows, including the prospect of elevating some of the domestic ports to regional prominence.

In order to reduce greenhouse gasses from road transportation, while facilitating cross-border trade and the movements of people between the Central African Republic, Congo and the DRC, cities in the subregion should also develop bulk transportation along cross-border waterways, such as the Congo and Ubangi Rivers: this could include links between *Brazzaville-Kinshasa* and *Mbandaka, Lisala* and *Kisangani* in the DRC, making them far more intense than is currently the case. The same applies to *Brazzaville-Kinshasa, Bangui* and *Bangassou* (CAR) on the Ubangi River.

However, if trans-national and regional cooperation between cities along these emerging logistic corridors is to be strengthened, the construction of major roads will not be enough. ECCAC governments must be more proactive and use regional cooperation to stimulate economic and social development in their cities, turning them into engines of national *and* regional growth. Smooth cross-border flows will also require a significant degree of regulation, if only to address current, non-negligible illegal or fraudulent cross-border operations.

Financing from the African Development Bank has enabled the governments of Congo and the DRC to start addressing cross-border issues, like improved trade and other links between *Kinshasa* and *Brazzaville*. Similar initiatives are urgently required along other sections of the proposed regional road network. The example of the Kinshasa-Brazzaville mega urban region highlights the potential of regional cooperation

for mutual benefit and for improved economic, financial, trade and migration relations. Significantly enhanced regional cooperation among ECCAC member states would also be an important step forward in improved economic and social development for the benefit of an estimated 25 million people along this proposed major regional transportation route.

City Regions

City regions are large urbanised territories consisting of one or more metropolitan areas and their surrounding towns, villages and rural areas featuring high and intense degrees of daily interaction. In city regions, economic and other activities extend beyond the confines of the leading metropolitan city and involve multiple surrounding smaller municipalities, to the extent that in economic, infrastructural and other terms the urban region could be considered as one single, if complex, urban structure.

As happens elsewhere in the world when urbanisation runs apace, many cities in Central Africa are now experiencing significant urban sprawl. Most of this expansion happens spontaneously, beyond any form of control by public authorities, as cities overtake their own administrative limits and encroach on rural hinterlands, in the process absorbing villages, towns and inter-mediate cities lying in their growth path. In these spatial urban growth processes, settlements merge physically and economically, creating large conurbations and new spatial configurations.

Most cities in the Central Africa, especially national capitals, were established or significantly developed during the colonial era as administrative and trading centres. At that time, they were significantly smaller, as reflected in original designs. If Central African governments and local authorities continue largely to sit on their hands in the face of sustained expansion of capital and other cities, the spatial, social and mobility outcomes will ultimately become highly undesirable. Funding priorities must be re-assessed. Urgently needed urban interventions and institutional reforms in favour of holistic, region-wide urban governance will only become increasingly unaffordable the longer they are postponed. New urban configurations require novel urban management and

TABLE 5.11: THE PROSPECTIVE FASTEST GROWING CITIES IN CENTRAL AFRICA, 2010-2020

Country	City	2010*	2020*	2010-20*
		Population (conurbation) (000s)		Change (%)
Angola	Luanda	4,772	7,080	48.4
Cameroon	Douala	2,125	2,815	32.5
Cameroon	Yaoundé	1,801	2,392	32.8
DR Congo	Kinshasa	8,754	12,788	46.1
DR Congo	Mbuji-Mayi	1,488	2,232	50.0
DR Congo	Lubumbashi	1,543	2,304	49.3
Congo	Brazzaville	1,292	1,703	31.8

*Projections
Source: WUP 2009

institutions that are adapted to the multi-nuclear nature of city regions. Short of these reforms, large cities will become fragmented, dysfunctional and increasingly difficult to live in, and may turn into significant hotbeds of environmental, social and political risk.

On current trends, all larger Central African cities are to experience significant demographic growth and expand way beyond their administrative municipal limits between 2010 and 2020. *Luanda*, for example, has absorbed in its spatial growth the nearby towns of *Benfica* and *Viana*, while *Kinshasa* has engulfed *Kinkole* to the east, *Kimwenza* to the north and *Matadi-Mayo* to the west. To put the scale of this spatial expansion in proper perspective, the distance between *Kinkole* and *Matadi-Mayo* is more than 100 km, and Greater Kinshasa keeps expanding.

Current urban expansion in the DRC is due to the fact that after independence in 1960, the capital gained prominence

over all other cities in this vast country. *Kinshasa's* population was only one million in 1970, growing to 3.5 million in 1990, 5.6 million in the year 2000 and an estimated 8.7 million in 2010. Projections are that that, by 2020, *Kinshasa* will be host to 12.78 million, becoming the largest and most populous conurbation in Africa after *Lagos*. With a prospective demographic growth rate of 71.8 per cent between 2010 and 2025, *Kinshasa* is expanding significantly faster than any other capital city in Central Africa.

Among the large non-capital cities in Central Africa, the populations of *Mbuji-Mayi* and *Lubumbashi* are expected to grow by 50.0 and 49.3 per cent respectively between 2010 and 2020. The momentum started between 1992 and 1994 when, under instructions from the Mobutu regime, Kasai Congolese were expelled from the Katanga Province. Nearly two million people left Katanga and most moved to Western Kasai and its capital *Mbuji-Mayi*, whose population has since



▲ Kinshasa, DRC. ©Eddy Isango/IRIN

then increased rapidly. In *Lubumbashi*, demographic growth results from an economic boom in the mining industry over the past 10 years, with attendant developments like the establishment of foreign mineral companies in the city and the revival of various types of business linked to the sector. These have spurred immigration of job-seeking people from inside and outside the Kasai province.

Despite rapid urban growth and the emergence of city regions (and in the case of *Kinshasa-Brazzaville* a cross-border mega urban region), many central governments and local authorities appear to have only limited awareness of the potentially harmful consequences of unbridled and unguided urban spatial growth. City regions, like urban development corridors, need careful consideration, focusing not only on the way emerging spatial configurations will affect current and future urban management needs, but also the huge concentrations of people and economic activity which can carry serious risks for urban dynamism and stability. These risks may take many different forms and often appear simultaneously, from debilitating traffic deadlocks that undermine productivity, to severe environmental degradation and societal frictions. Unequal access to services, employment and an often concomitant, emerging urban fragmentation, are the main catalysts for escalating insecurity and crime, grassroots discontent and social unrest. Unless well-managed, very large population concentrations can easily become unstable, threatening urban systemic continuity, and

ultimately become a risk factor to the political, economic and social sustainability of a whole nation.

Cities are national economic powerhouses and the generators of the lion's share of national production of goods and services. *Kinshasa*, for example, hosts 52 percent of all trade in the DRC 19 per cent of manufacturing, 21 per cent of services, 25 per cent of all construction companies, 33 per cent of transport and communications, 21 per cent of banking, 18 per cent of general services, 33 per cent of higher education institutions and the largest medical infrastructure in the country.

It is unlikely that Central African cities can sustain their significant political and economic roles if urban management practice and institutions do not evolve and grow commensurate to rapid physical and demographic expansion. Ignoring massive urban poverty and the needs of under-served urban population majorities is no longer a viable option, nor is the perpetuation of steep inequalities in access to the benefits of urban life. Sustained urban growth is a reality that will not go away for decades to come. The need for holistic interventions and effective reforms is more urgent than it has ever been. Spatial planning and development control, urban employment, transportation, urban mobility and housing all call for radical overhauls. Perhaps the most important task is social policy reform in order to address urban poverty promptly and effectively. Reform may be difficult, unsettling and costly, but the consequences of inaction may be far worse.

ENDNOTES

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