Chapter Three

03

THE STATE OF WESTERN AFRICAN CITIES

Saint-Louis, Senegal.
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DIEYE
CH·A·BECK

3.1
The Social Geography of Urbanisation

For the purposes of this report, the Western African subregion includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Each of these countries is challenged by the need to manage the opportunities and constraints arising from an accelerating, inevitable transition to urban demographic predominance. As in many other developing regions, cities act as the engines of economic growth because they create wealth, enhance social development and provide employment. However, when not properly governed or planned, as is largely the case in Western Africa, cities can become repositories for poverty, social ills, exclusion, environmental degradation and potential hotbeds of social unrest.

MAP 3.1: **WESTERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

The ongoing urban transition comes under many different forms and rapidly changing conditions in Western Africa, including rapid and massive coastal urbanisation, the emergence of urban regions and domestic and cross-border development corridors. This raises many new challenges, including the rapid geographic concentration of poverty in urban areas, latitudinal and longitudinal mobility, climate change and its effects, etc. These features make urban expansion in its various guises an important common challenge for governments in the subregion, who should more than ever before see it as a priority for national policies, as well as a collective priority for the subregion as a whole, since Western Africa is an integration space where cities act as the driving force of development and modernization.

In 1950, a mere 6.6 million people lived in Western African cities. The number and the rate of urbanisation increased only slowly until 1990. Around that time, the urbanisation rate of Western Africa overtook the continental average and began to accelerate. The urban population rose to 92.1 million in the year 2000 and 137.2 million (a near 50 per cent increase) in 2010. This accelerating trend of urbanisation rates is expected to peak at an annual average rate of 6.24 per cent between 2020 and 2030, after which the trend should decelerate. Western Africa will become predominantly urban around 2020 with an estimated 195.3 million city dwellers. By 2050, that number will reach 427.7 million, or 68.36 per cent of the total population.

During the current decade up to 2020, Western Africa will become host to an additional 58 million urban dwellers, another 69 million during the 2020-30 decade and a further 79 million between 2030 and 2040. Even then, urban demographic growth will not subside in absolute terms, despite the expected onset of a declining inter-decade urbanisation trend around 2030. The 2040-50 decade is projected to add a further 84 million people to Western African cities. The message embedded in these statistics should be clear: Western African nations must give urgent attention to their rapidly growing urban populations. They must build governance and management capacities in cities of all sizes and plan for significant spending on services provision.

TABLE 3.1: **WESTERN AFRICA: URBAN POPULATION TRENDS, 1950-2050**

Population	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*	2020*	2030*	2040*	2050*
Urban (000s)	6,629	12,660	22,572	37,774	60,559	92,162	137,271	195,344	264,182	343,213	427,675
Urban (%)	9.79	15.12	21.31	27.18	33.05	38.76	44.85	50.98	57.40	62.86	68.36
All Africa (%)	14.40	18.64	23.59	27.91	32.13	35.95	39.98	44.59	49.95	55.73	61.59

** Projections*
Source: WUP 2009

GRAPH 3.1: **WESTERN AFRICA: URBAN POPULATION TRENDS, 1950-2050**

** Projections*
Source: WUP 2009

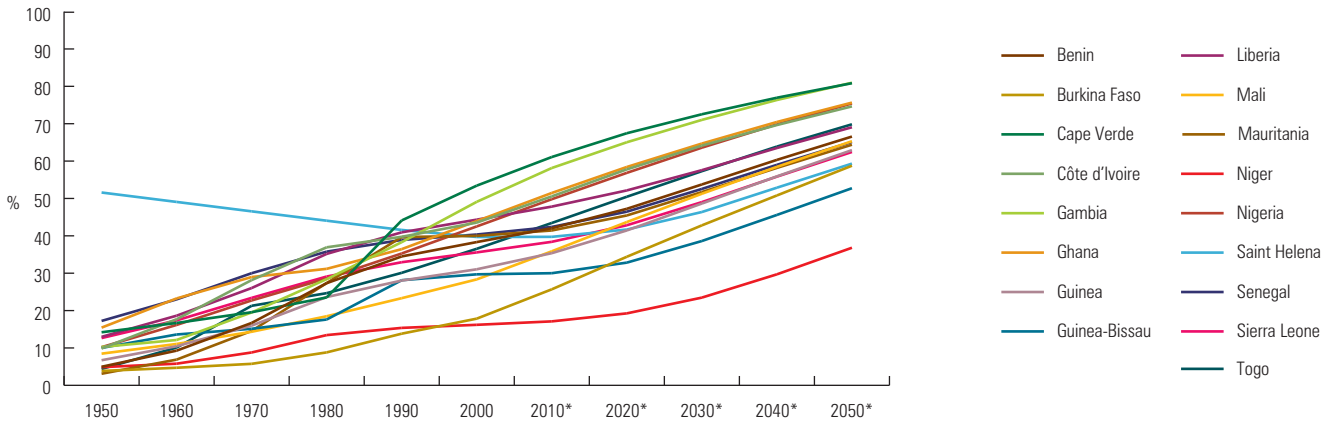
▲
Lomé, Togo. **©Peeter Viisimaa/iStockphoto**

TABLE 3.2: **WESTERN AFRICA: NATIONAL URBANISATION TRENDS, 1950-2050 (%)**

% Urban	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010*	2020*	2030*	2040*	2050*
Benin	4.96	9.28	16.69	27.34	34.49	38.33	42.04	47.23	53.74	60.32	66.56
Burkina Faso	3.84	4.70	5.75	8.81	13.82	17.84	25.69	34.40	42.80	50.80	58.76
Cape Verde	14.20	16.68	19.56	23.52	44.12	53.43	61.09	67.45	72.53	76.95	80.84
Côte d'Ivoire	9.86	17.68	28.16	36.93	39.74	43.54	50.56	57.78	64.13	69.65	74.64
Gambia	10.27	12.13	19.50	28.41	38.31	49.10	58.15	65.04	71.02	76.35	80.96
Ghana	15.44	23.25	28.97	31.17	36.44	43.95	51.47	58.42	64.69	70.46	75.64
Guinea	6.71	10.47	15.98	23.62	28.03	31.05	35.36	41.44	48.64	55.91	62.93
Guinea-Bissau	10.01	13.60	15.13	17.61	28.13	29.70	30.00	32.83	38.61	45.59	52.74
Liberia	12.97	18.63	26.03	35.17	40.94	44.33	47.82	52.15	57.57	63.50	69.05
Mali	8.47	11.07	14.33	18.48	23.32	28.34	35.86	43.69	51.26	58.46	65.31
Mauritania	3.10	6.88	14.56	27.37	39.67	39.99	41.43	45.45	51.71	58.18	64.38
Niger	4.86	5.79	8.79	13.44	15.37	16.19	17.11	19.25	23.47	29.70	36.81
Nigeria	10.21	16.16	22.71	28.58	35.28	42.52	49.80	56.85	63.59	69.83	75.42
Saint Helena	51.59	49.07	46.55	44.05	41.57	39.69	39.73	41.68	46.37	52.88	59.32
Senegal	17.23	23.00	30.00	35.77	38.90	40.35	42.38	46.46	52.55	58.99	65.11
Sierra Leone	12.65	17.38	23.40	29.11	32.94	35.57	38.40	42.83	49.02	55.84	62.44
Togo	4.38	10.10	21.28	24.66	30.10	36.53	43.44	50.46	57.30	63.88	69.84

** Projections*
Source: WUP 2009

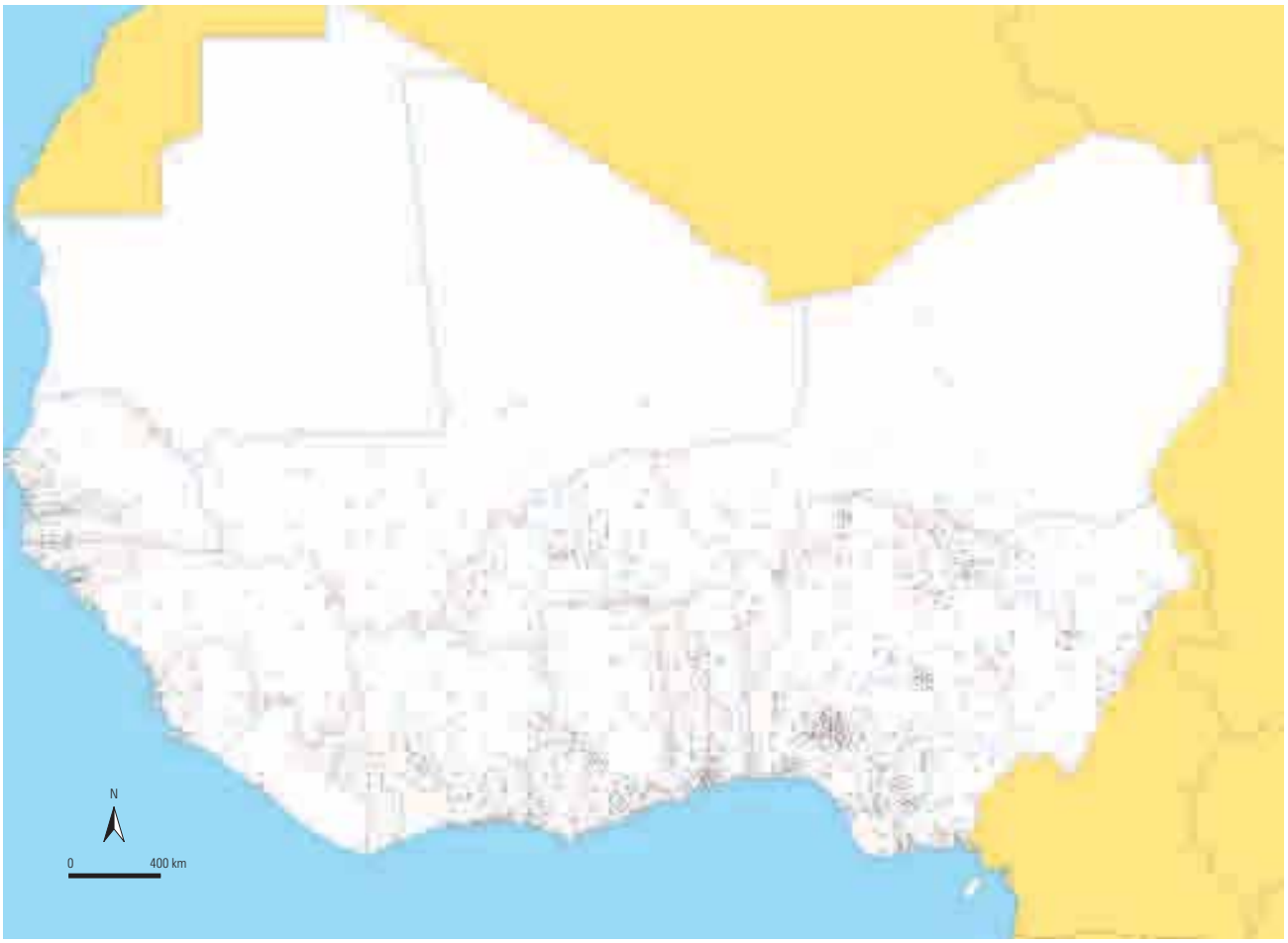
GRAPH 3.2: **WESTERN AFRICA: NATIONAL URBANISATION TRENDS, 1950-2050 (%)**



** Projections*
Source: WUP 2009

The urban geography of Western Africa varies widely across the subregion's countries. For example, in 2010, the percentage of people living in areas classified as urban was highest in Cape Verde with 61.0 per cent and lowest in Niger with 17.1 per cent and a regional urbanisation average of 42.0 per cent. Five of the subregion's 17 nations were already estimated to be predominantly urban in 2010: Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana and Liberia. The mid-range to relatively low concentrations of urban populations in some Western African countries notwithstanding, cities such as ***Porto Novo***, Benin, ***Ouagadougou***, Burkina Faso, ***Accra***, Ghana, ***Niamey***, Niger, ***Lagos***, Nigeria and ***Lomé*** in Togo, are all confronted with 'over-urbanisation'. This means that in these cities the populations are growing much faster than local economies, leading to major social and economic challenges like high unemployment rates, slum proliferation, social polarization and crime. Other commonplace urban challenges in the region include rapid changes in land use and

MAP 3.2: **DISTRIBUTION OF URBAN AREAS >10,000 INHABITANTS**



Source: Africapolis database SEDET/AFD, July 2008 ©Guèye & Thiam, Dakar, Senegal, August 2010

land cover, and deteriorating environments, not to mention the effects of climate change.

The current rapid demographic growth in cities is bound, over the next decades, to pose particularly daunting challenges in terms of poverty alleviation and environmental degradation. However, urban demographic growth cannot, on its own, account for human exposure to socio-economic and environmental risks. Rather, it is the pace of urban change that is adding to human vulnerability. This change involves rapidly proliferating, deep urban poverty that disproportionately affects women and children, which, together with ethnic and racial conflict, urban crime, homelessness and degraded urban environments all have far-reaching political and socio-economic implications. Economic prospects look bright for some Western African nations, which gives their cities the potential to improve the living conditions of countries' poorest residents. However, cities with the highest rates of population growth and urban change tend to be found in the nations with the most listless economies. For the cities, the risks of further deterioration are both obvious and there to stay.

The concentration of populations in urban areas is in principle positive, since this can generate efficiencies and economic gains through agglomeration of all kinds of resources, first and foremost human. In cities and regions with sluggish economies, however, stark spatial disparities and socio-economic polarization are becoming increasingly visible. With the demographic and spatial expansion of cities, the capacity of several Western African nations to manage and address the implications is lagging way behind. The more harmful of those implications, whether of a social, economic or environmental nature, fall especially heavily upon the poor, most of whom become excluded from the benefits of prosperity.

The problems of the urban poor cannot but affect national efforts to achieve sustainable development. In an increasingly interdependent world, high prevalence and persistence of domestic urban poverty can have implications for other nations, apart from emigration flows. Deep deprivation weakens national capacities to combat organized crime, human trafficking, armed conflict, terrorism, social unrest and the spread of diseases. These, in turn, can have severe domestic economic, environmental and security consequences, and also affect neighbouring states and the global community. In a global

age, the outcomes associated with high poverty incidence can often no longer be contained within national boundaries, and can therefore also affect regional and global stability.

However, it is not just deprivation of income or consumption opportunities that forces huge numbers of urban dwellers to live in the unacceptable conditions associated with socio-economic exclusion. A broader view encompasses the non-income dimensions of poverty such as access to education and health services, gender equity and access to basic services like clean water and adequate sanitation facilities. *Inequality* is closely related to poverty and a factor in domestic wealth distribution, income and consumption. It is different from *inequity*, which refers to an ill-balanced distribution of economic, political, social and cultural opportunities.

Throughout history, one of the functions of cities has been to protect residents from the onslaughts of invaders and civil strife. Over time, the concentration of wealth, knowledge and power in cities has allowed for specialization which, in turn, has contributed to technical, cultural and social innovation and generally rising levels of economic and social prosperity. However, in Western Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, cities have been largely unable to accommodate rapid demographic expansion and to provide new residents with jobs, land, housing as well as basic and other services (the 'urban advantage', compared with rural areas). This inability keeps millions excluded from the socio-economic benefits of urban life, and this exclusion finds its tangible expression in extensive urban slums that are hosts to millions of extremely poor households who are effectively deprived of their fair shares in national prosperity. They have little option but informal settlements and slums which, by definition, have limited if any access to urban and social infrastructures, and find themselves spatially and socially segregated from those who have the wealth or power to benefit from the urban advantage. The practical mechanisms of exclusion are complex and the segregation that began during the colonial period, and was maintained after independence by small political and economic elites, has now given way to new patterns of inequality and inequity that go beyond the distribution of urban spaces. Nevertheless, the continuing proliferation of urban slums and informal settlements remains the main manifestation of exclusion and inequality in the majority of Western African cities.

Exclusion, poverty and proliferating slums go hand in hand with poor urban governance. Breakdowns in central and local government ability to manage and steer urban growth are the inevitable consequence of geographicaly selective fiscal retrenchment by the urban public sector. In most cases, the poorer sections of the city have been all but abandoned and are essentially forced to manage by themselves. Poorly maintained drainage systems, inadequate waste collection and solid waste dumps inhabited by the underprivileged are rife in Western Africa. This spatially selective degradation of the urban environment is the result of *laisser-faire* attitudes and the consequential, uncontrolled self-help urbanisation that promotes indiscriminate urban sprawl on peri-urban space and agricultural lands; this interferes with natural drainage patterns, or adds to denuding of hillsides in pursuit of urban land.

Geographic Concentration and Clustering

With its urban population projected to double over the next 20 years, as noted earlier, a majority of Western Africans will be living in urban areas by 2020. The subregion will soon host Africa's two largest urban agglomerations, with the continued rapid growth of the already colossal demographic concentrations of ***Lagos*** and ***Kinshasa***.

While these two very large conurbations are soon to rise to the apex of Africa's urban hierarchy, they nevertheless absorb only relatively small shares of urban demographic growth: cities below one million and secondary ones (up to 500,000) are where (about three-quarters) that growth is anticipated.

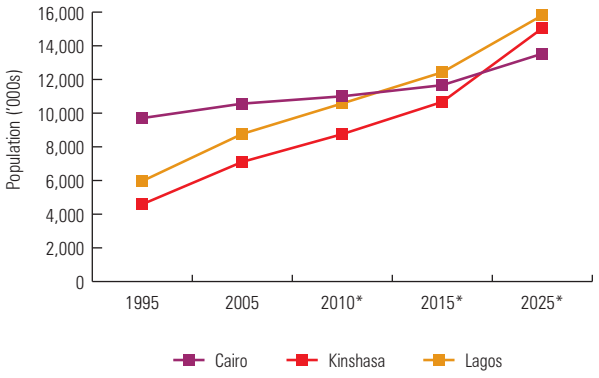
Depending on respective historical, political and cultural backgrounds and development opportunities, Western African countries are urbanising in very different ways. With the exception of the desert zone comprising Mali, Mauritania and Niger, urbanisation in Western Africa over the past 30 years has been relatively dense and very rapid. From South to North and from West to East, four relatively homogeneous urbanisation strata are apparent (see Map 3.3). The area from the South Atlantic coast to 10 degrees north and from the western coast to the eastern region of Nigeria is host to the largest urban centres in the subregion. Nigeria features a particularly tight and increasingly dense network of cities

TABLE 3.3: **AFRICA'S LARGEST CONURBATIONS: CAIRO, KINSHASA AND LAGOS, 1995-2025**

	1995	2005	2010*	2015*	2025*
Cairo	9,707	10,565	11,001	11,663	13,531
Kinshasa	4,590	7,106	8,754	10,668	15,041
Lagos	5,966	8,767	10,578	12,427	15,810

** Projections*
Source: WUP 2009

GRAPH 3.3: **AFRICA'S LARGEST CONURBATIONS: CAIRO, KINSHASA AND LAGOS, 1995-2025**



** Projections*
Source: WUP 2009

TABLE 3.4: **NUMBER OF CITIES WITH POPULATIONS OVER 10,000, 1960-2020**

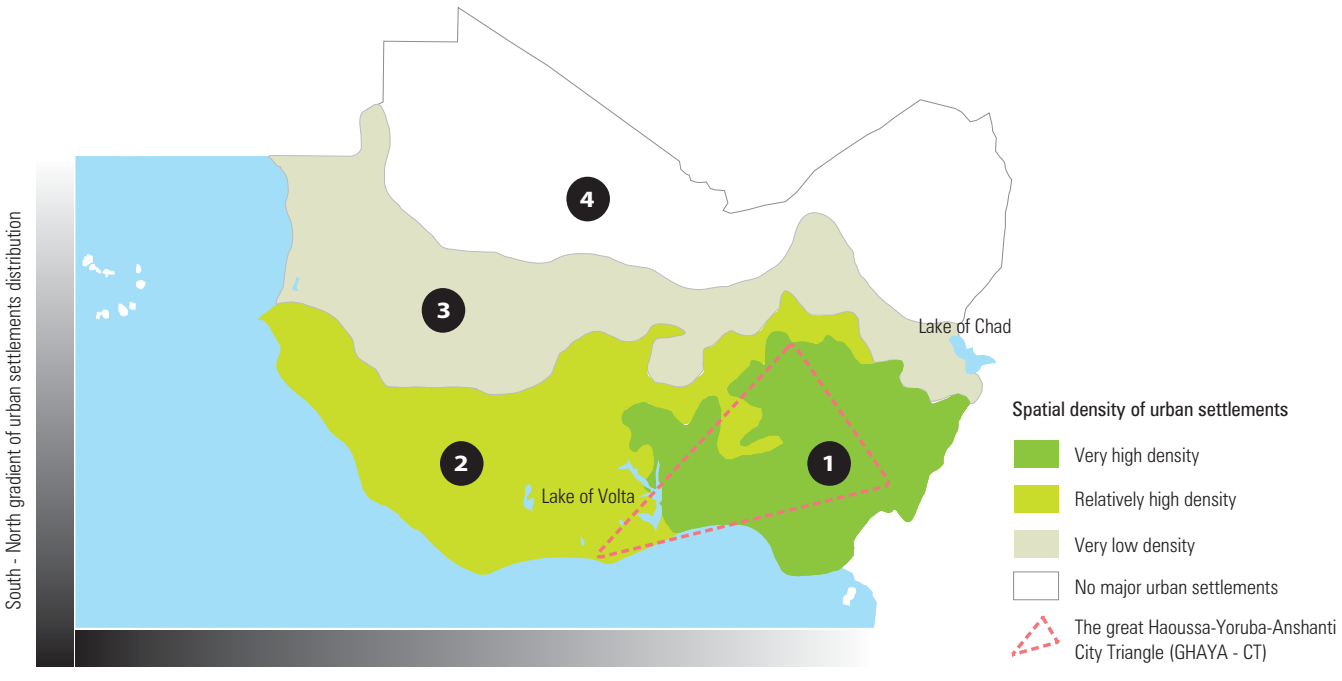
	1960	1980	2000	2020*
Benin	3	37	67	85
Burkina Faso	2	16	56	93
Cape Verde	2	2	3	8
Côte d'Ivoire	8	52	106	195
Gambia	0	1	5	8
Ghana	30	57	117	199
Guinea	4	18	26	25
Guinea-Bissau	0	1	2	9
Liberia	0	11	13	16
Mali	5	18	29	60
Mauritania	0	5	9	10
Niger	3	9	34	49
Nigeria	133	253	438	574
Senegal	8	23	42	59
Sierra Leone	2	7	11	17
Togo	4	19	38	70

** Projections*
Source: Etude Africapolis – AFD/SEDET

(zone 1). Next come the countries along the Gulf of Guinea (zone 2), where urban networks are much less dense than in Nigeria but which, nevertheless, feature dense urban pockets. The third zone is characterized by a relatively loose pattern of stagnant urban settlements and an absence of large towns. Niger is typical of this pattern, with most of its northern territories featuring a low urbanisation rate (estimated at 17 per cent in 2010) and one of the least dense urban settlement networks in Western Africa. Mauritania stands out as the exception, owing its urban vitality to the capital Nouakchott where more than 21 per cent of the nation's total population and about 75 per cent of the total urban population of the country are currently concentrated.

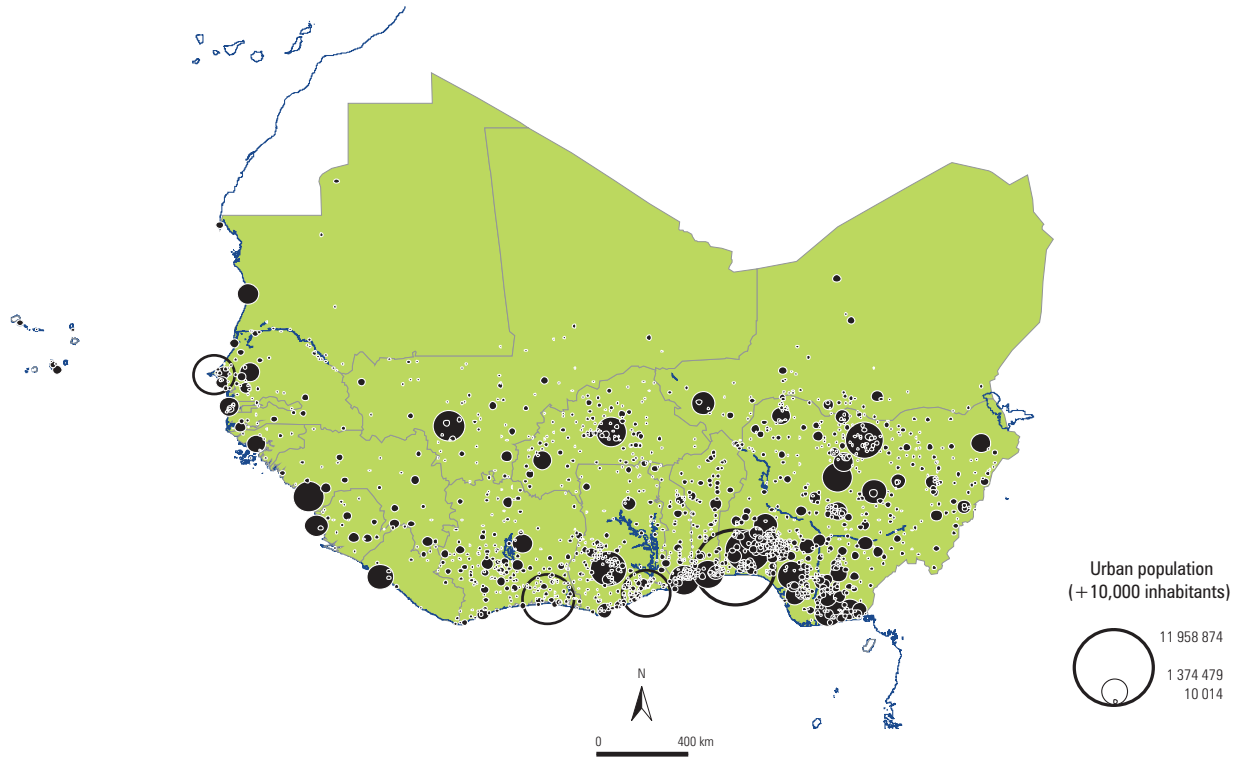
The fourth zone is none other than the western extension of an elongated desert strip that runs from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and separates sub-Saharan from Northern Africa. This is a particularly inhospitable area where cities are scarce. Existing settlements like ***Zouerate***, ***Chinguetti*** and ***Taoudeni*** (north-western Sahara) experience few new developments due to climatic conditions, lack of functional connections and absence of a rural demographic reservoir to feed cities. All these factors combine to restrict urban formation and growth. Insecurity and political conflict do not favour urban growth, either. However, if and when regional integration and cooperation becomes a reality and long-distance roads materialize, existing urban areas could become important new population nodes between sub-Saharan and Northern Africa. The recent opening of the trans-Saharan

MAP 3.3: **THE TYPOLOGY OF URBANISATION IN WESTERN AFRICA**



Source: Zones are digitized according to the Africapolis study conclusions. ©Guèye & Thiam, April 2010

MAP 3.4: **PROSPECTIVE URBAN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN WESTERN AFRICA, 2020**



Source: Databases of Africapolis study - SEDET/AFD, July 2008. ©Guèye & Thiam, Dakar, Senegal, Sept. 09

Morocco-Mauritania highway, for instance, has shown that, with infrastructure development, settlements that have been in a state of lethargy for centuries can quickly become economically vibrant urban growth poles.

Overall, Western Africa's urban network has maintained the same configuration for decades and is not expected to change much in the near future. However, a few urban growth poles have emerged in recent years. Some of these appear as incipient regional clusters, as they connect with the dense networks in the more urbanised parts of Western Africa, particularly those in the Ashanti (Ghana), Hausa (Kano) and Yoruba (Lagos) triangle. Map 3.4 shows the population distribution projections for 2020 and the emergence of regional urban clusters in Western Africa.

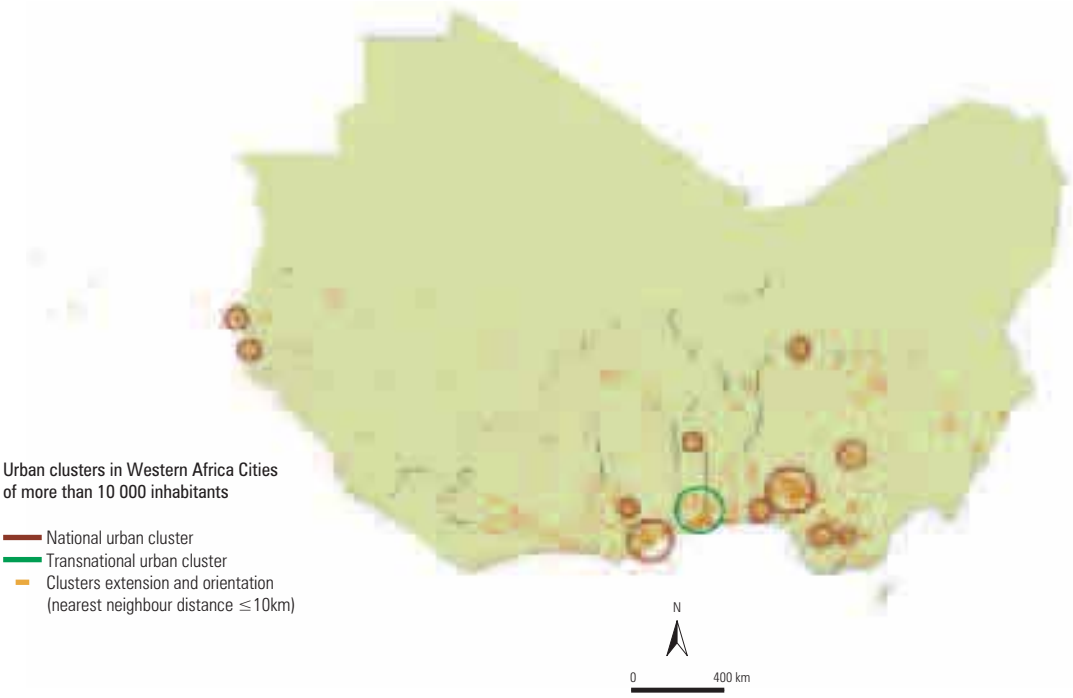
The largest of these clusters is located in southern Nigeria. It extends over 160 km from ***Ondo*** to ***Illorin*** and along an east-west axis from ***Omuo*** to ***Oyo*** over a 200 km distance. This is the region with the highest urban settlements density in Western Africa, where distances between one city and the next rarely exceed 10 km. The region extends towards ***Lagos*** through a smaller cluster currently emerging north-east of the business capital and which, in time, will embrace smaller towns like ***Owode***, ***Ode Lemo*** and ***Ibefun***. In the northern Nigerian cities of ***Sokoto*** and ***Kware***, a relatively large cluster is also emerging. It is expected to absorb smaller towns like ***Guidan Madi***, ***Bunkari Silame*** and connect to border towns in Niger such as ***Birni N'Koni***, ***Malbaza Usine*** and ***Galmi***.

In southern Ghana and west of ***Accra*** in particular, a very large settlement cluster is now emerging as an extension of the Accra Extended Metropolitan Region. The cluster stretches over 200 km along an east-west axis and nearly 150 km south to north. Over the next few years, it is likely to connect to the ***Kumasi*** agglomeration, which already includes more than a dozen towns, and then turn into Ghana's first major urban corridor.

Transnational urban clusters are also beginning to emerge throughout the subregion. A large one is located between Togo and Benin and extends west to east from ***Mission-Tové*** in Togo to ***Sé*** in Benin. This cluster is part of the enormous Greater Ibadan-Lagos-Accra (GILA) corridor, and one of its more dynamic segments. The Togolese part is soon expected to connect with ***Dzodze*** and ***Penyi*** in Ghana. Other transnational clusters are to emerge over the next few years between northern Benin and southern Niger, as well as between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

In view of the important role that cities play in regional development, regional urban clustering deserves special attention, especially where resulting from spontaneous spatial and geographic processes. Urban clusters are major economic activity centres. The geographic concentration of cities, and therefore of people and human activities, can be beneficial and

MAP 3.5: **PROSPECTIVE URBAN NETWORKS AND REGIONAL CLUSTERING, 2020**



Source: Databases of Africapolis Study SEDET/AFD, July 2008. ©Guèye & Thiam, Dakar – Senegal, March 2010

should be promoted. It creates a self-reinforcing accumulation of agents of production in agglomeration economies, which will make up for logistical shortcomings and distance by linking markets and major transport infrastructure nodes such as ports, railway stations and airports. In Senegal, for example, the development of an economic and logistical hub in Diamniadio and the construction of an international airport nearby are part of a laudable effort to bring supply and demand closer together. As shown in Map 3.5, the urban cluster around ***Dakar*** is about to become one of the larger economic zones in Western Africa. This process owes as much to manufacturing and tourism as it does to the establishment of structuring facilities such as the airport and highways.

Two main factors determine the emergence of urban regions: (a) the existence of two or more metropolitan cities in relative proximity and connected by infrastructures (road, rail and/or waterways); and (b) the gradual functional integration of the metropolitan spaces with the semi-urban and rural spaces between them. In Western Africa - as is mostly the case south of the Sahara - regional urban configurations and city regions are comparatively new phenomena; the outcomes of the demographic momentum generated by large cities. The emerging urban patterns are highly conducive to domestic economic development and regional integration when and where they cross national borders and functionally link up with similar configurations in neighbouring countries. However, regional agreements on the free movement of people, goods, finance and communications are a significant pre-condition if the outcomes of regional development, integration and trade are to be maximised.

As the demographic transition accelerates larger Western African cities tend to lag behind intermediate and smaller cities. Beyond demographics, though, larger cities retain their essential roles in spatial dynamics. Their economic and political power fuels the emergence of urban regions whose catalyser and gravitational effects spur the expansion of urban peripheries, and connect with each other to form extended metropolitan urban regions, as explained below.

The emergence of urban regions in Western Africa is essentially the result of major shifts in metropolitan spatial organisation that are, in turn, one of the main outcomes of functional specialization. While central business districts and their immediate surroundings increasingly host top-level political, economic and commercial functions, the peri-urban and adjacent rural areas are mostly left to cope with rising land demands for housing and other urban functions as required by demographic growth, or as rising land prices or other factors displace residents from central to peri-urban locations. Recent high peri-urban demographic growth rates and the resulting rapid urban sprawl are mainly caused by

Dakar, Senegal. **©Brian McMorrow**

the reconfiguration of urban residential areas. This has less to do with rural migration than with the shifts of existing city dwellers to urban peripheries.

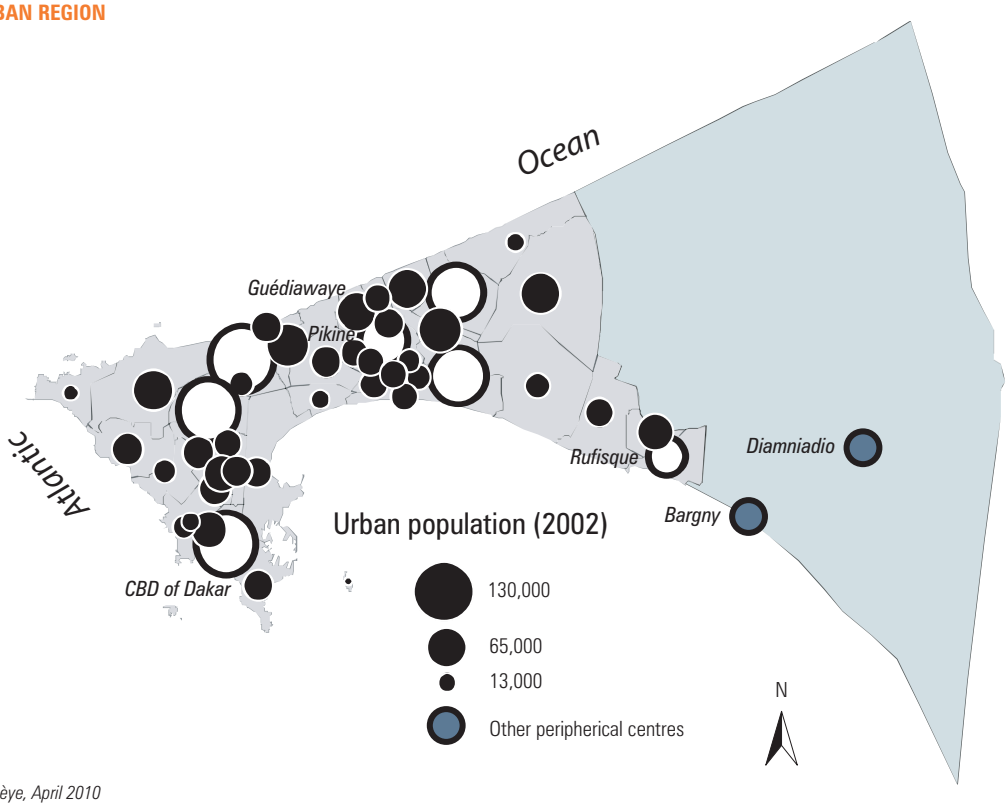
For instance, the major changes the Senegalese capital ***Dakar*** experienced during recent years have involved a revival of the city centre's administrative and commercial functions to the detriment of residential uses. The demographic ballooning of suburbs like Pikine and Guédiawaye and the large increases in urban peripheral neighbourhoods such as Rufisque, Bargny or Diamniadio, for instance, are mainly caused by land market-driven functional rearrangement. Increasing demand for central urban locations and the associated sharp rises in land values render residential functions commercially less viable and pushes them out to the urban periphery. However, the emergence of a dynamic urban region around ***Dakar*** is hampered by an obsolete and inefficient transportation network that provides poor connections between peripheral residential neighbourhoods and the city's commercial centre. Regional city configurations always demand major improvements in urban mobility, especially efficient mass transit options, to ensure that the very urban dynamism and productivity that drive city-region formation do not get stranded in congestion and associated negative environmental externalities.

The crucial role of efficient urban mobility is well understood in ***Lagos***, Nigeria's business capital and main conurbation. Huge investments are currently under way to improve urban mobility through interesting public-private partnership initiatives, as elaborated upon in Box 3.1.

Around the ***Accra*** agglomeration in Ghana, the metropolitan transportation system is relatively well developed. The urban region now extends over more than 900 km^2, more than 70 km west-east and 30 km north-south. It includes four Metropolitan Districts: ***Accra***, ***Ga West, Ga East*** and ***Tema*** and is gradually encroaching on the Metropolitan District of ***Dangme West***. The spatial extension of ***Accra*** is facilitated by the good performance of its transportation system which plays a very important role in the mobility of people and production factors from the central areas toward the peripheries.

Accra clearly shows that good urban mobility through an efficient public transportation network is a major factor behind urban performance (see map 3.7). Among the Western

MAP 3.6: **THE DAKAR URBAN REGION**



Source: DPS/DAT. ©Thiam & Guèye, April 2010

BOX 3.1: HOW GREATER LAGOS INVOLVES THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN INTEGRATED URBAN MOBILITY

▲ Traffic in downtown Lagos, Nigeria. **©George Osodi/Panos Pictures**

Whereas in 2010 the population of the City of Lagos was about 10.5 million, the Lagos City Region is host to an estimated 18 million and bound for rapid expansion in years to come. Greater Lagos now includes 16 of the 20 local authority areas in Lagos State and some 90 per cent of its population. Lagos State – the smallest for surface area – is the nation's most industrialised and employs 45 per cent of Nigeria's skilled domestic human resources. Acknowledging the urgent need to improve urban mobility, water supply and waste management, the authorities are now spending heavily on infrastructures across the metropolitan area.

Every day, some seven million Lagosians commute to work by public transport or private vehicles. It has become evident that productivity in Metro Lagos is increasingly hampered by the inadequacy of its fragmented public transportation system and heavy traffic congestion. In responce, the Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA) has engaged in a public-private partnership to improve urban mobility through the integration of urban bus, rail and water transportation networks. An initially sceptical population is now beginning to notice the improvements. Early investments by the state have established the first Bus Rapid Transit in sub-Saharan Africa with 100 new buses and passenger capacity increased from 60,000 to 220,000. Urban mobility is further expected to improve with seven new urban rail lines totalling 246 km. Road network improvements include the upgrading of the Lekki-Epe expressway and the construction of 20 km of coastal road, funded through partnerships between private, state and federal bodies. The greatest impact, however, should be the precedent Lagos has set for improving urban mobility through public-private partnerships. For details refer to www.lamata-ng.com/.

African urban agglomerations exceeding 200 km², ***Accra*** is the only one where the configuration of the transport network facilitates rapid and direct access to central areas. It takes, on the average, less than 25 minutes to commute to work, compared with 45 minutes in smaller conurbations like ***Abidjan*** or ***Conakry,*** or 60 minutes in ***Monrovia***. The ease of mobility in ***Accra*** has proven essential to good connections between the central business district and the urban region, facilitating a host of beneficial spin-offs, including ease of demographic growth absorption in peripheral towns since 1970.

Between 1970 and 2000, ***Ashiaman*** and ***Madina***, for example, have seen their populations increase from 22,000 and 7,000 to 150,000 and 76,000 respectively. These numbers are expected to reach 200,000 and 140,000 respectively by 2020, while other peripheral towns seem bound to experience even higher demographic growth rates over the next ten years. By 2020, the ***Oduponkpehe-Bududuram-Nyanyano-Bortianor*** urban agglomeration is likely to grow into a compact urban region with the potential to counterbalance Central ***Accra*** and its large north-east suburbs. This is expected to diminish the current extreme primacy of Central ***Accra*** without compromising accessibility. Further, the incipient urban zone

around the peripheral town of ***Tema*** is to become more influential in the years to come and fill in any gaps in the urban fabric. Clearly, ***Accra*** and its extended metropolitan region shows how Africa's large urban agglomerations can address the debilitating urban mobility challenges they have to face.

The Links between Poverty, Inequality and Slums

Just like the cities that produce and maintain them, urban form and functions are not neutral creations. Whether classified as legal or illegal, they reflect actual organisational modes and operational systems. Over time, urban form and functions become the spatial reflexions of social change, politics and development options. In Western Africa, recent developments in urban form, particularly in the larger cities, have often occurred through crisis-like socio-economic processes. Very high urban growth rates during the past 25 years, and their consequences such as escalating urban unemployment, declining household incomes, increasingly difficult access to urban land, shelter and services, all reflect the quality of the organisation and management of cities. All-too often, though, the very social structures of urban populations have led to undesirable geographies of socio-spatial fragmentation.

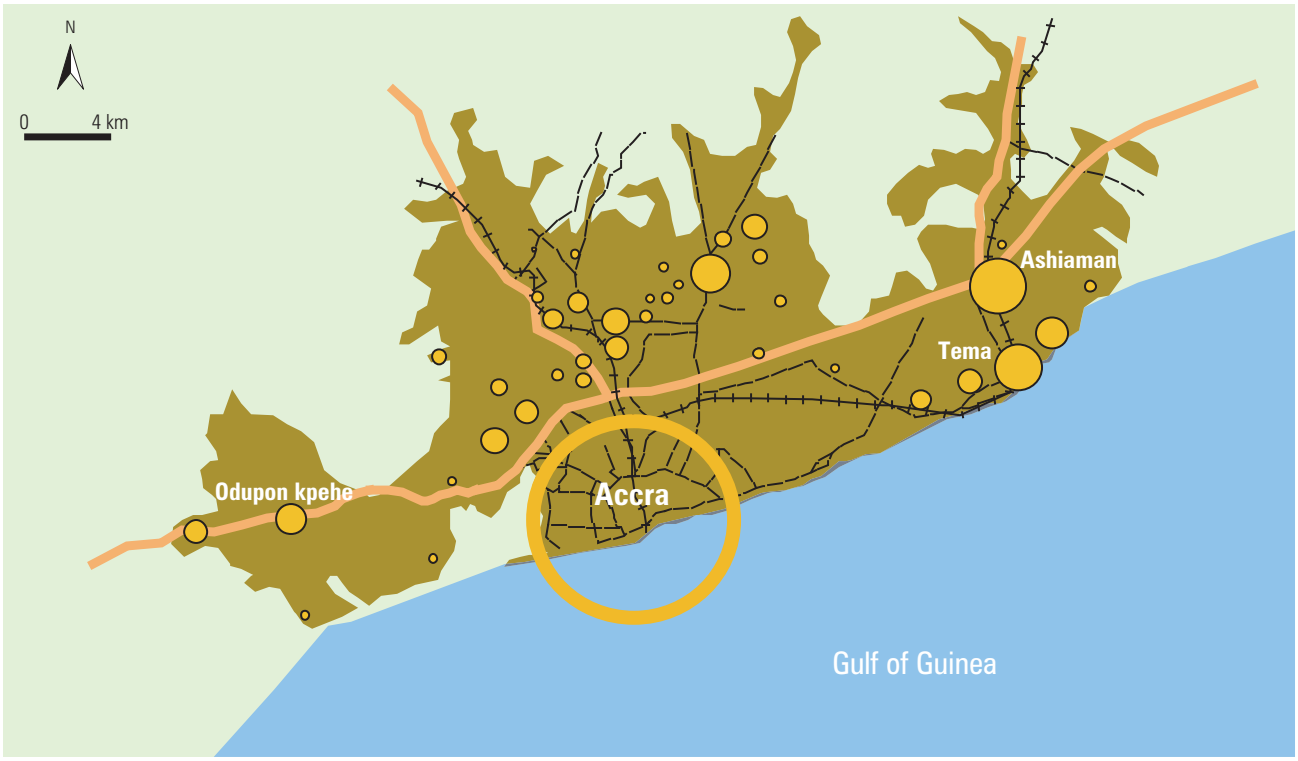
The perception of the processes that underpin the spatial structuring of urban populations has changed profoundly. Contrary to earlier analyses, and partly under the influence of the urban sociology developed by the Chicago School in the 1950s, recent studies attach less importance to ethno-cultural or linguistic affinities when seeking to understand spatial and socio-economic formation and reconstitution of urban population groups, their residential choices, or the daily movements of individuals within urban spaces. For instance in ***Abidjan,*** neighbourhoods such as Petit Bouaké and Petit-Ouaga, or ***Conakry's*** Mosquée Sénégalaise indicate spatial groupings based on domestic or cross-border migratory origins, and therefore stand as remnants of an urban pattern when ethnic identity still played an essential role in residential choices. Today, ethnic identity or geographic origin no longer serve as the main factors behind the geographic structuring of groups in Western African cities. Instead, socio-economic criteria and derivative factors like poverty, social polarization and exclusion have become the main spatial determinants.

Urban poverty, social polarization and slum development have become established through a variety of social, economic and political factors that define individual or group status and, by extension, individual or collective options for political power leveraging. This has often major geographical implications for services delivery, tenure security and the soundness of government decisions. The rapid proliferation of slums is underscored by the reluctance of the urban poor to invest in permanent and safe housing due to poor security of tenure. Many urban slum communities *can* afford improvements to their living environments, but lack of political leveraging and the risk of eviction often make the expenditure too risky.

Urban poverty, social polarization and slum proliferation have distinct spatial dimensions, as people with comparable socio-economic characteristics tend to converge on the same locations. Spatial segregation is not necessarily a bad thing, though, as people have self-segregated for millennia based on language, ethnicity, profession or other social criteria.

▲ Accra, Ghana. Communal toilet blocks in an informal settlement. **©Gordon Dixon/iStockphoto**

MAP 3.7: **THE SPATIAL EXTENSION OF THE ACCRA URBAN REGION**



Source: Database of Africapolis report AFD/SEDET, July 2008. Digitization by Guèye and Thiam. ©Guèye & Thiam, Dakar, Senegal, Sept. 2009

However, the spatial confinement of urban social categories - particularly the poorest - and the continuous spatial fragmentation of Western African cities are no longer entirely voluntary nowadays, which makes particular urban areas highly susceptible to political, social, economic and life-chance inequalities. These transformation processes are driven mainly by rapid and steady growth in urban populations, as well as by mismatches between supply and demand for liveable urban spaces and housing. A second factor is a direct consequence of the first and follows market-driven mechanisms. Irrespective of the resource (commodity, privilege, etc.), when demand exceeds supply, competition becomes inevitable and the poor become more vulnerable to inequalities.

Therefore, the persistence of illegal housing and the proliferation of urban slums, informal settlements and land squatting are mostly the outcome of competition for space. Formal urban land markets systematically serve the wealthy who can afford the best land and housing options, while driving out the poor. The latter are then forced into informality in the least desirable, if not uninhabitable urban areas, such as low-lying and flood-prone lands, factory fringes, garbage dumps, road reserves, etc.

Having been initially confined to larger cities, economic and residential informality is now spreading to cities of all sizes and with similar effects everywhere. In ***Lagos***, the rich and well-serviced neighbourhoods of Ikoyi, Victoria or Apapa contrast sharply with overpopulated, under-equipped and unsafe areas like Mushin, Shomolu or Iju. In ***Dakar***, one finds similar contrasts between Fann Résidence, Almadies, Corniche Ouest and central neighbourhoods like Grand-Dakar, Usines Ben Tally and Niarry Tally, or poor, dense and under-serviced peripheral areas like Pikine, Guédiawaye and Ngor. Likewise in ***Abidjan***: the rich Plateau neighbourhood has extended deeply into the popular neighbourhood of Adjamé, driving out the original, economically less affluent residents, while the middle-class neighbourhoods of Cocody and Riviera are built right up against the infamous low-income neighbourhood of Abobo. In Abidjan, spatial fragmentation is heightened by the presence of the Ebrié lagoon which, in some places, sharply demarcates urban neighbourhoods. Western Africa offers many more similar examples. In some cases, however, the emergence of urban middle classes has encouraged the materialization of distinct lower-middle income residential areas like Sacré Cœur, Libertés and Mermoz in ***Dakar***, or Ajegunleand Ilupeju in ***Lagos***.

The social geography of today's Western African cities features very clearly delineated boundaries that are determined by market forces. The gap between rich and poor is bound to deepen, not only in terms of well-being, but increasingly also as expressed in the spatial differentiation that determines access to public resources, facilities and life chances. In the current absence of effective interventions, inequalities between urban communities will inevitably increase the disparities between rich and poor urban groups, with the risk of destabilizing urban communities and the national political equilibrium alike.

3.2
The Economic Geography of Cities

Cities are humankind's most complex creations, never finished, never definitive. They are the physical manifestation of history and culture, the incubators of innovation, industry, technology, entrepreneurship and creativity. Cities around the world have moved to the forefront of global socio-economic change, with half of humankind now living in areas defined as urban and the other half increasingly dependent upon cities for their economic, social and political advancement.

As privileged spaces of accelerated social transformation, cities serve as nodes for the coordination and servicing of national economies that are increasingly becoming internationalized. This transition comes with substantial social costs, most notably a growing polarization between small, successful trans-national urban elites and increasingly impoverished majorities of city dwellers. Informal settlements keep mushrooming away from the central areas where jobs, cultural and economic opportunities are concentrated, and this phenomenon increasingly results in highly undesirable patterns of urban duality (the 'urban divide') that are not only highly discriminatory, but that also have the potential to undermine the systemic stability and dynamism of cities.

One of the most conspicuous changes over the past decades has been the growth of 'privatized' urban space, especially gated residential communities. These have emerged in part as the response to the apparent inability of public authorities to address the rise in crime and other security concerns; however, they are increasingly contributing to the fragmentation and polarization of urban space and the segregation of the poor from other segments of society. Gated communities comes in various shapes and guises, but they share the following

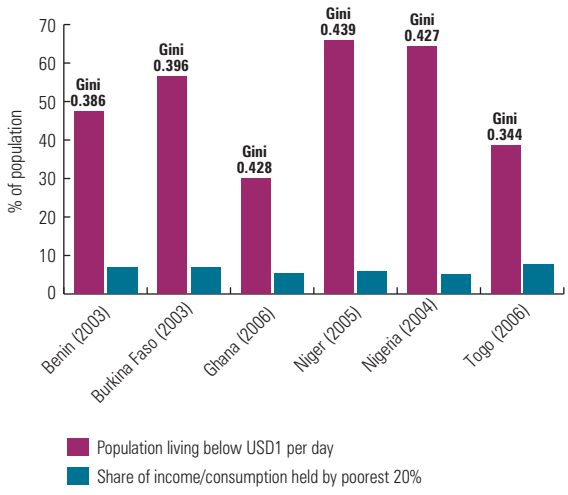
▲ Nouakchott, Mauritania. **©Attila Jándi/Shutterstock**

TABLE 3.5: **PEOPLE LIVING ON LESS THAN ONE DOLLAR A DAY (%), SELECTED WESTERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

	Population living below US $1.00 a day (%)	Share of income/consumption held by the poorest 20%	Gini coefficient
Benin (2003)	47.33	6.91	0.386
Burkina Faso (2003)	56.54	6.96	0.396
Ghana (2006)	29.99	5.20	0.428
Niger (2005)	65.88	5.85	0.439
Nigeria (2004)	64.41	5.13	0.427
Togo (2006)	38.68	7.62	0.344

Source:
1. Global Urban Observatory, UN-HABITAT
2. UN Development Report 2010 The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development, UNDP, NY p. 154-159

GRAPH 3.4: **PEOPLE LIVING ON LESS THAN ONE DOLLAR A DAY (%), SELECTED WESTERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES**



Source:
1. Global Urban Observatory, UN-HABITAT
2. UN Development Report 2010 The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development, UNDP, NY p. 154-159

broad functional features: (a) separation from neighbouring land by fences, walls or other constructed or natural obstructions, including symbolic barriers; (b) filtered entry through human, mechanical or electronic access control; and (c) privatized internal public areas and circulation systems. For all the generally negative nature of the opinions and practical assessments they generate, the proliferation of privately guarded urban enclaves is a fact, providing solid evidence that the ability of public authorities to maintain public security is fragile at best. However, the provision of security and protection is part and parcel of the municipal mandate. Since urban areas are mostly governed through elected and appointed local government representatives with the political and administrative mandates to provide safety and security, it can be credibly argued that the emergence of gated communities is not just an outcome of economic factors, but also political ones.

If the political system defers its own specific responsibilities to the markets, the economy becomes the political system under another name. When politics shows no empathy for the poor and the vulnerable, self-help solutions will be the inevitable outcome, as predicted by market theory. In practice, this means that anti-social and criminal solutions are at work at both ends of the income spectrum because there are no public institutions to counter or control the market. Good governance provides not just security, but also empowerment as part of a system that balances and controls the acquisition and application of individual power or opportunity. Security only for the already empowered is defeating the very notion that assisting and empowering the poor and vulnerable would result in less need for security for the wealthy.

Many Western African nations have recently experienced economic and political crises. Consequently, poverty has spread as wages have fallen while the prices of goods and services have risen. As wages slip, people buy less and falling demand puts even more people out of work. In several Western African countries, economic crises have had especially harmful effects on urban economies, because the prices of food, utilities and essential imported consumer goods have increased while currency values have fallen.

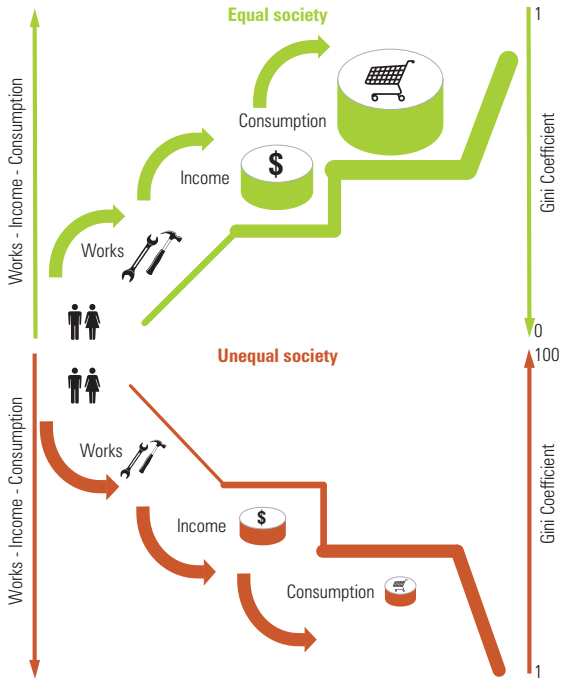
Analysts were initially optimistic that the impact of the 2008/09 global financial crisis on sub-Saharan Africa would be negligible, because African economies were among the least-exposed to the global financial system. African banks held few 'toxic assets', as they hardly ever used the high-risk financial instruments that sparked the global crisis in the first place. However, as the crisis deepened into a global recession, it became clear that many African nations would be strongly affected by the secondary effects, such as reduced demand for primary commodities and declining revenues from tourism. On current estimates, economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa slowed, from an annual average in excess of six per cent over

the past five years, to a paltry 1.5 per cent in 2009. This is happening at a time when Western African countries require high rates of economic growth to outpace their population growth; to make progress in alleviating poverty; and to meet the targets of the Millennium Development Goals.

The proportion of people living in Africa on less than US $1.25 a day (the current international poverty line) has hovered around 50 per cent since 1981, but the number of poor people, in absolute terms, nearly doubled from 200 million in 1981 to 380 million in 2005, and is still increasing due to present economic constraints. Table 3.5 shows recent UN-HABITAT data for selected Western African nations on the percentage of populations living below one dollar a day (the previous international poverty line); the share of income or consumption held by the poorest 20 per cent; and the Gini coefficient measuring economic (income or consumption) equality.

The conditions reflected in Graph 3.4, give no grounds for optimism against an unfavourable global economic background. At the time of writing, the world was barely emerging from a largely unprecedented two-year economic and financial crisis. However, it is all too apparent that besides declining economic growth, the short-term effects will be further job losses and unemployment rates well above five per cent in most of the advanced economies, while in many developing countries the figure is above 20 per cent. With manufacturing, industrial output and retail sales declining, disposable incomes for households have also been reduced.

FIGURE 3.1: **THE INTERDEPENDENCE BETWEEN ACTIVITIES, INCOME AND CONSUMPTION**



Income and Consumption

The magnitude of the socio-economic and spatial inequalities in urban societies is basically determined by two factors: (a) the permeability of the urban market (access to employment, land, housing, services and staple foods) particularly for the most underprivileged; and (b) cities' exclusionary power. The more accessible the markets, the larger the number of people who can earn an income and the higher the consumption rate will be. Conversely, the lower the number of people who have access to the labour market, the more difficult it is to earn an income and the lower the consumption rate. In the first case, the outcome is a low degree of economic inequality as reflected in a low Gini coefficient (i.e., tending towards 0) both for income and consumption (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2 for an explanation of the Gini coefficient). The situation is reversed in the second case where the bulk of income and consumption are in the hands of a minority, resulting in high Gini coefficients (i.e., tending towards 1). It is important to realize that the more a city becomes integrated in the international economy, the higher its Gini coefficient may be, because the local elites have less need to invest in local business or projects that would provide incomes to the population (similarly, local elites draw maximum benefits from the legal security generally associated with transactions with developed countries, while maintaining legal insecurity at home for their own profit and, again, to the detriment of vast population majorities). This, in a sense, is the origin of ever-growing inequality for the poor in Western African cities.

Income- and consumption-based Gini coefficients are compiled by UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory (GUO) in cities in 33 African countries. A review suggests three main conclusions:

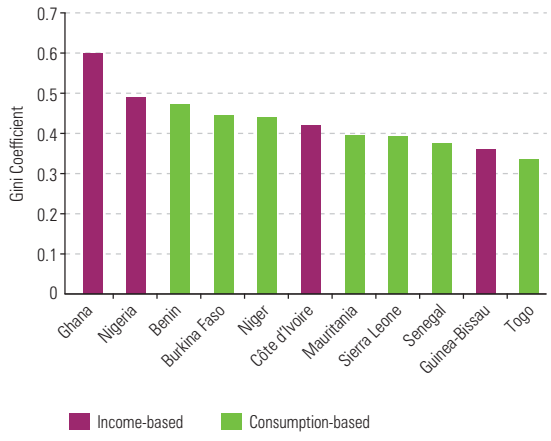
(a) significant Gini coefficient disparities can be found among African countries;
(b) the gaps between income- and consumption-based Gini coefficients can be relatively large; and
(c) large differences can be found across African cities, on the one hand, and Western African cities, on the other.

Gini coefficients denote the following degrees of inequality: below 0.299: *low inequality*; 0.3 to 0.399: *relatively low*; 0.4 to 0.449: *relatively high*; 0.45 to 0.499: *high*; 0.5 to 0.599: *very high*; and 0.6 and upwards: *extremely high*.

In Africa as a whole, urban areas in the Republic of South Africa feature the most unequal income distributions with Gini coefficients around 0.75. In Nigeria, *low* Gini coefficients are found in cities such as ***Sokoto*** (0.33) and ***Zamfara*** (0.34). In ***Kinshasa***, DRC, and in ***Pointe-Noire***, Congo, the coefficients stand at a *relatively low* 0.39. Analyses of consumption-based Gini coefficients show that in the Namibian cities of ***Hardap***, ***Omaheke*** and ***Karas*** consumption is least equal, with a Gini coefficient of almost 0.70, 0.64, and 0.61 respectively. The lowest coefficients are to be found in Tanzania and Burundi: 0.25 in ***Muleba***, Tanzania, and 0.26 in ***Kirundo***, Burundi.

Agadez, Niger. **©Tugela Ridley/IRIN**

GRAPH 3.5: **NATIONAL GINI COEFFICIENTS (INCOME OR CONSUMPTION)**



Source:
1. Global Urban Observatory, UN-HABITAT
2. UN Development Report 2010 The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development, UNDP, NY p. 148-151

The second conclusion is that, generally speaking, the Gini coefficient is higher for income than for consumption for two reasons: The first is the nature of wealth sharing and distribution systems in African societies. Income is generally earned individually but spent collectively. Redistribution of individual incomes by a family solidarity system makes resources available to those who have no work, increasing the numbers of those who are able to consume. One of the paradoxes of the African city is that few people have access to jobs and regular incomes, especially when compared with the vast masses of consumers. Today, this paradox appears to be all the more blatant as large amounts of undeclared incomes, including remittances from international migration, informal micro-credit, drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption etc, stimulate consumption but are not captured in statistics. Moreover, consumer markets are becoming increasingly flexible due to the dynamism of the informal sector which offers a range of goods and products at often unbeatable prices.

As far as Western Africa more specifically, UN-HABITAT research into Gini coefficients included Burkina Faso, Côte

▲
Accra, Ghana. **©Brian McMorrow**

TABLE 3.6: **MULTIPLE MODES OF LIVELIHOOD (MML) RATES: COMPARING TWO MEDIUM-SIZED TOWNS WITH THE GHANA LIVING STANDARD SURVEY (GLSS)**[a]

Category	Case study		GLSS	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total sample	237		4,997	
Salaried employees in total sample [b]	96	40.5	749	15.0
Salaried employees in MML	61	63.5	133	17.8
Employer [c]				
Government		67.1		21.8
Private		54.5		7.7
Other		50.0		22.2
Type of Public Institution [d]				
Ghana Education Service		88.0		
Ministry of Health		40.0		
Civil service		70.6		
Others		53.8		

a. The case study is based on a survey in Wenchi &Techiman in the Brong Ahafo region, Ghana, between 1995 and 1996. The GLSS is a national survey of 4,565 households, undertaken between 1991 and 1992 by the Ghana Statistical Service.
b. Percentages are based on total respondents.
c. Percentages are based on salaried employees in each case.
d. Data on income or type of public institution unavailable in the GLSS.
Source: Owusu (2005)

d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo and found that the subregion is rich in contrasts. Ghana is where income distribution is least equal (0.60), and Guinea-Bissau where it is most equally shared, with a coefficient of 0.36 (see Graph 3.5). As for consumption, Benin is the least equal country (0.47), followed by Burkina Faso and Niger who both recorded a Gini coefficient of 0.44. For the other countries, the situation is homogeneous with Gini coefficients varying between 0.34 and 0.39.

Analysis of urban Gini coefficients based on income show that Nigeria's income distribution is least equal (0.54). In Côte d'Ivoire, the urban coefficient has improved from 0.51 in 2002 to 0.44 in 2008. In rual areas, the reduction has been dramatic (from 0.41 in 2002 to 0.22 in 2008), after increasing from 0.42 to 0.48 between 1993 and 1998. However, in ***Abidjan***, the crisis that rocked Côte d'Ivoire for more than a decade has contributed to a rising income gap with the Gini coefficient increasing from 0.41 in 2002 to 0.50 in 2008.

City-specific analysis shows that in ***Lagos*** income distribution is the least equal (0.64), while other Nigerian cities show coefficients higher than 0.40. The lowest regional income coefficient is recorded in ***Bissau*** (0.37), probably because poverty is widespread and people are equally poor. Consumption-based data for ***Freetown*** (0.32) and ***Dakar*** (between 0.37 and 0.41) suggest more equal and open consumer markets. The situation in ***Dakar*** is probably explained by the dynamism of the informal sector, which, with the advent of Chinese products, has experienced a considerable boom in the past few years.

In the final analysis, we must conclude that inequalities in income distribution and consumption in Western Africa are considerable and increasing. Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are making efforts to better redistribute wealth, although they find it difficult to maintain their performance. Ghana's national income-based Gini coefficient changed quite erratically over time, going from 0.43 in 1988 to 0.38 in 1992 and 0.60 in 1998. This may, in part, be due to an invasion of foreign products, causing a rise in unemployment as several economic sectors stagnated or severely declined. Livestock breeding and poultry farming, for example, two of the pillars of the informal market in Ghana, were severely affected by chicken imports from South America and Europe. Benin, too, has made exceptional efforts towards increased consumption and the national Gini coefficient improved from 0.50 in 1999 to 0.47 in 2007.

How Slum Dwellers Survive

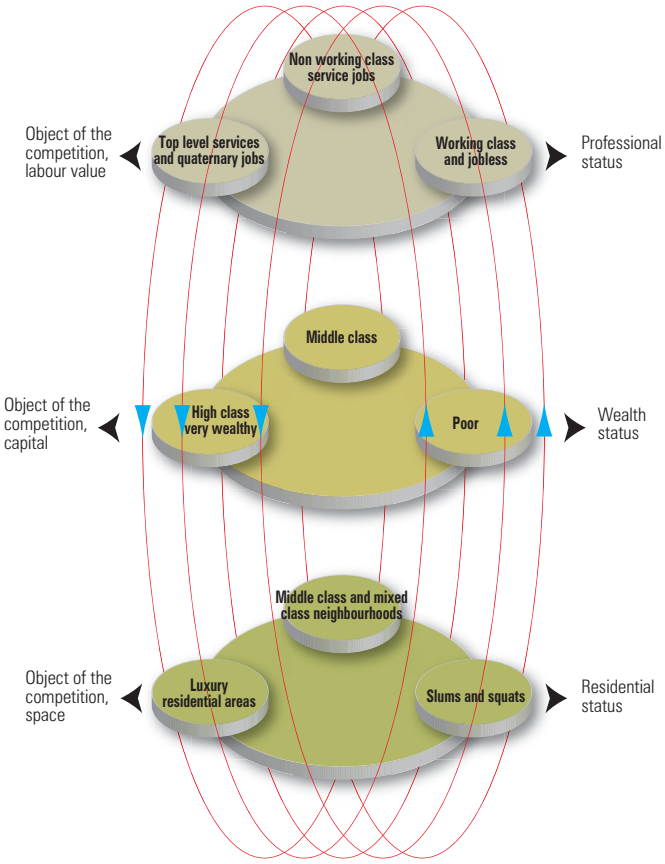
When economic conditions deteriorate, a growing percentage of urban dwellers shift from the formal to informal labour markets. Research on African urban livelihood strategies has generally followed two approaches. The first is more popular and focuses on the informal sector. The other uses the 'survival strategy' framework and analyses people's strategic responses to economic crisis, with a focus on the urban poor and other marginalized groups. Informal sector studies have played a crucial role in drawing attention to urban poverty, the potential for employment in the informal sector, and the creativity and entrepreneurial skills of informal sector participants who succeed despite non-supportive state regulation.

However, since analysis frequently tends to focus on a given economic activity rather than the people involved, many informal sector studies fail to capture the increasing numbers of urban dwellers who are deriving income from both formal and informal activities. This omission is particularly significant given the scale of this dual income pattern. Lower down the formal income ladder, any topping up of income through parallel informal activities can very well be a necessity for survival. However, sheer opportunity and frequently high returns have led many formal sector employees to join the informal sector, even though they do not necessarily need the additional income. Informal sector activities may even be monopolized locally by those who can use formal sector business as a cover, especially when it comes with inappropriate use of public office. In such cases, the formal sector has little incentive to regularize the informal one because profits can be significant and go totally unreported.

An alternative framework for the understanding of the economic strategies of the urban poor is the Multiple Modes of Livelihood (MML) approach, which focuses on the relationships between macro-level processes and domestic units. The basic argument of the MML approach to urban poverty alleviation is that macro-economic changes across Africa have

▲ Freetown, Sierra Leone. **©Tugela Ridley/IRIN**

FIGURE 3.2: **HOW SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL GROUPS PROJECT ON URBAN SPACE AND FRAGMENTATION**



©Guéye & Thiam, Dakar 2010

created supportive environments for individuals and households from all social and economic backgrounds to diversify their sources of income. The MML approach captures the acquisition of additional jobs not only by the unemployed, but also by those primarily dependent on fixed salaries.

Mustapha (1992) has documented the livelihood strategies of the middle and the skilled classes in Nigeria to show that people of diverse socio-economic backgrounds participate in multiple economic activities. These have a long history in Nigeria, but recent economic conditions have intensified the phenomenon. Mustapha distinguishes between survival and livelihood strategies. For most (unskilled) members of the working class, engagement in multiple-mode activities is critical to individual and household survival, while, for skilled workers, multiple-mode activities are a way of containing or reversing a slide in living standards. He further argues that Nigerian working classes often confine their activities to labour-intensive, capital-scarce and low-return operations, while skilled workers draw on their superior access to financial and political resources to become involved in more effective income-generating activities. Moreover, skills often result in better business ideas or activities on better terms. For instance, skilled workers can repackage refuse collection as 'environmental sanitation' and sewing as 'fashion design' and adjust pricing accordingly. The activities of the skilled working class range from small-scale manufacturing and commercial farming to moonlighting of all types. The activities of the Nigerian unskilled working classes include commercializing private assets and skills, such as converting motorcycles into taxis, farming for those with land, petty trading for those without land, and petty abuse of office for others.

Drawing on case studies of two medium-sized towns in Ghana and a nationally representative sample (see Table 3.6), multiple livelihood strategies are clearly becoming 'the way of doing things'. The survey showed, first, that 18 to 64 per cent of salaried employees in urban Ghana were involved in multiple economic activities. Agriculture-related activities, trading and production-related activities (in that order) were the more important 'other' activities. Multiple activities frequently involve entire households. Another finding was that opportunities for multiple livelihood strategies are not equally distributed across the country. Smaller urban centres with less-diversified economies provide more opportunities for non-formal income generation than large urban centres. Finally, involvement in multiple livelihood strategies depends on gender, marital status, household size, and place of residence. Married people and those with large households are more likely to be involved in multiple activities and, in large urban centres, women are more likely involved than men.

Addressing Urban Inequality and Fragmentation

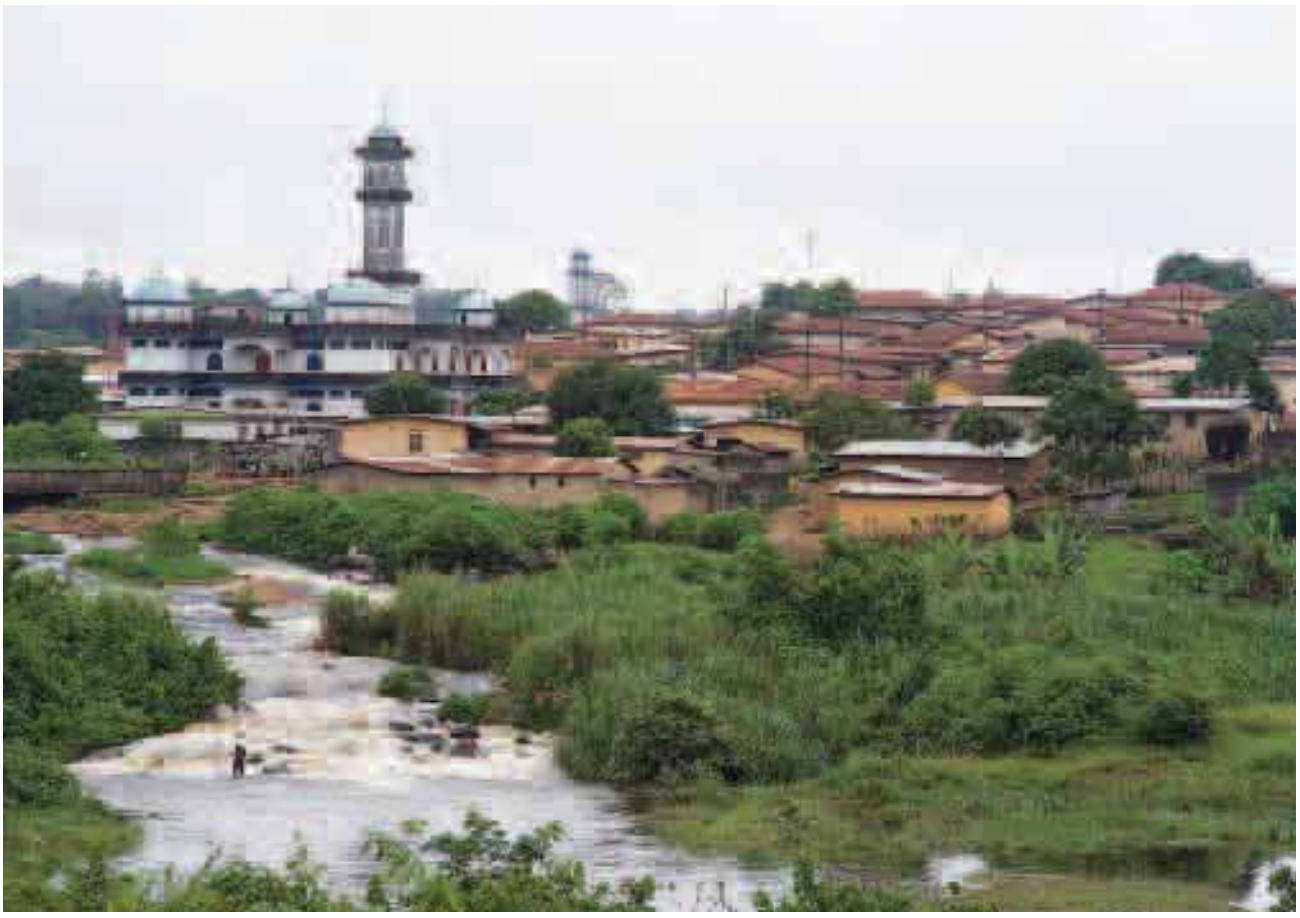
Good governance, in all its dimensions, can amplify the benefits of poverty reduction policies to a significant degree. Although various types of groupings or partnerships are emerging in response to the need for participatory governance, the status of urban citizens largely remains a solitary one. Not only have formal public institutions mostly abandoned the majority of urban residents, but any tangible collective actions that might provide some alternative sense of belonging or identity are hindered. As a result, the majority of urban citizens are trapped in vicious cycles of poverty, leaving them vulnerable to external shocks such as economic volatility and environmental disasters.

In Western African cities, as elsewhere on the African continent, urban fragmentation reflects the interdependence of income and access to land and housing. Groups occupy urban space according to income level and especially their position on the labour value scale. The correlation between income level and where people live is all the more significant, because there are hardly any mechanisms for the promotion of equality and social mixing. For the poor, in particular, any interaction is caught in a daunting vicious circle, which systematically maintains them in income and residential conditions that are often appalling. Their precarious living environments severely restrain their chances of a rewarding working life, a well-paid job or regular income, which, in turn, are two essential conditions for access to urban land and decent housing, as explained in the following section.

3.3
The Geography of Urban Land Markets

The significant diversity between Western African countries is to some extent a legacy of their colonial and post-independence backgrounds. Still, land and tenure systems and administration are where the colonial period has introduced some kind of unity within this diversity. The land governance procedures introduced by the French, the British and, to a lesser extent, the Portuguese have mostly been taken over by the newly independent States who wanted to keep tight control on land allocation and management processes.

The two prevailing legislations in the region are the French civil code and British common law. In Francophone countries, land legislation is still based on the colonial civil code which recognizes the public domain of the State that cannot be alienated; the private domain of the State that can be alienated under certain conditions; private land for which a title has been issued; customary land; and *terres vacantes et sans maître* (land with no clear status, unclaimed or vacant). Ambiguities between the concepts of 'public domain' and 'State domain' blur the boundaries between alienable and unalienable land, frequently to the benefit of those working in government bodies involved in land allocation.



▲
Danané, Ivory Coast. **©Guido Potters**

Some Francophone countries have created another land category. Senegal, for instance, in 1964 introduced 'National Domain'[1], which includes all lands that are not part of the public or private domain of the State or local authorities, or which have not been privately appropriated and registered before the law was adopted. These lands are not State-owned but became part of the State patrimony. Likewise, in Mali[2], the National Land Domain includes all categories of land, giving the State discretionary power to add these lands to its private domain and put them on the market. In Anglophone Western African countries, land categories are more or less the same, but the concept of alienable and unalienable public land is less ambiguous.

Formal and Customary Forms of Tenure

As in other regions south of the Sahara, Western Africa is characterised by a dual system of statutory or formal tenure (as codified by law) and customary (traditional) tenure. Despite international pressure to liberalise Africa's urban land markets, government institutions retain full control over land allocation and restrict delivery of freehold titles. Vested interests and inappropriate land administration practices have colluded to produce low levels of formal title issuance. Despite enormous land reserves - as the land mainly belongs to the State - most governments are reluctant to release land on any large scale, as scarcity benefits vested interests while increasing opportunities for predatory practices. The exception is Burkina Faso, where large areas of public land have been provided for housing development, alleviating huge demand pressure and reducing land prices.

Formal Tenure

In the wake of rapidly emerging urbanisation, changes in the demand for secure urban land and freehold titles by investors and incipient urban middle classes in Western African cities have contributed to the development of formal private land markets. Private appropriation of land and access to freehold tenure result in land privatisation, fresh investments, market pressure on land and, to a lesser extent, tenure regularisation policies. These processes have over the past two decades been supported by new land laws and codes to either facilitate private land appropriation or to restrict its proliferation. In Nigeria, for instance, the Land Use Act of 1978 transferred ownership of all land to the government and anyone with a freehold title became a leasehold tenant with a 99-year maximum under a Statutory Certificate of Occupancy. Land tenure comes under statutory law and security of tenure is guaranteed by a Certificate of Ownership (Asiama, 2005).

In Senegal, a law allowing holders of 'Permits To Occupy' ('*Permis d'Habiter*') to convert these into freehold was to be passed in 2010. In most of Western Africa, PTOs (see Box 3.2) or equivalent titles can be converted into freehold only *after* the land has been developed. In the meantime, the government holds the prerogative to repeal ownership rights if PTO holders do not comply with the development obligations. In Western Africa, PTOs and/or housing permits (names vary depending on countries) remain the most common type of formal tenure in urban areas. As allocated to applicants by central or local administrations, PTOs are: (a) valid for a limited period of time; (b) conditional (conversion into a permanent permit or freehold requires plot development according to minimum standards or expenditure, with typical deadlines between three to six years); and (c) revocable (if not developed within the prescribed period). PTOs are recorded, though not formally registered, in the Land Book (*Livre foncier*). If the permit holder can fulfil the obligations, then the temporary permit can, in principle, be converted into a permanent permit and, in a further step, into a full, registered ownership title.

A PTO is not transferable as long as the land has not been developed. Although the security of tenure attached to PTOs is rather high, it takes the rare holder to be able to comply with the construction or investment norms and the time frame. Therefore, actual security depends heavily on government decisions. Most permits holders in government-initiated land subdivisions have not, or not yet completed the formalisation process.

BOX 3.2: TENURE UPGRADING IN MALI: FROM ADMINISTRATIVE ALLOCATION TO FREEHOLD

In Mali, three main types of documented residential rights are available:

1. Plot Allocation Certificates (*Décisions d'attribution*) are the most basic form of title, reflecting the right of every citizen to possess a parcel of land. These temporary user-rights are allocated by city authorities based on eligibility and priority criteria in the case of direct allocation to individuals. Upon payment of a usage tax, applicants are granted allocation certificates, which can be withdrawn if beneficiaries do not, within five years, build a housing unit that meets minimal standards.
2. Urban Occupation Permit (*Permis Urbain d'Habiter* - PUH) is a permanent user-right, although the land itself remains under state ownership. It is delivered by Land Administration services once the parcel has been developed and built (*Mise en valeur*) in compliance with government norms and building standards (floor/area ratios and building materials, in particular). These titles provide security of tenure, are transferable and can be mortgaged if registered in the Land Registry, a procedure that makes the title fully secure. Since registration is not compulsory and given the cumbersome process and costs involved, registrations are rare.
3. The freehold regime was abolished by the 1983 revolution but has been reinstated a few years ago. Ownership rights are evidenced by *Titres Fonciers* that are necessarily registered. To secure this type of title, applicants must: (a) already hold a PUH, (b) have spent at least 30 times the original usage tax on residential development, and (c) pay the government a 'price' equal to twice the original usage tax.

Customary Tenure

Customary tenure remains, by far, the most common tenure type in the Western and Central African cities. In the strict sense of the term, customary land ownership refers to the communal possession of rights to use and allocate agricultural and grazing land by a group sharing the same cultural identity. Commoditisation of customary land delivery channels and the accelerated development of land markets have changed the nature of customary relationships, and the original form of customary tenure can no longer be found in urban and peri-urban areas, as well as in many rural areas. For this reason, it would be more appropriate to refer to 'neo-customary' land tenure and land markets (Durand-Lasserve & Mattingly, 2005).

Customary tenure covers a wide range of situations, with the degree of government recognition the main differentiation factor, as this determines both security and the potential to be integrated into formal land markets. Although customary land rights are mostly recognised by governments (by law and/or in the Constitution), this recognition is usually restricted to certain types of land or areas. This is, for instance, the case in Ghana (see Box 3.3), especially in the ***Kumasi*** region, or in ***Conakry***[3], Guinea, and more recently, with some restrictive conditions, also in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, where since 2000/02 the law recognises individual collective land ownership under customary rights. Still, ownership rights can be repealed if customary right holders do not comply with their obligation to develop the land within a certain period of time.

In some Western African countries - where recognition of customary systems is restricted to rural areas - customary land management is, nevertheless, often tolerated in suburban

BOX 3.3: **CUSTOMARY TENURE IN GHANA**

▲
Cape Coast township, Ghana. **©Trevor Kittelty/Shutterstock**

In Ghana, customary land rights are recognized and protected under the 1992 Constitution. Indigenous owners exercise all the powers attached to ownership: the right to own, manage, sell, receive payment, determine beneficiaries, terms and conditions of the grant, price, etc. For all these formal rights, though, customary land ownership often is considered to be informal because of the nature of the transactions in the market. About 90-95 per cent of peri-urban land in Ghana is held and managed under customary practice. Customary and statutory regulations operate side by side, making it difficult to identify who has the authority to alienate a parcel of land. (Augustinus, 2002).

About 80 per cent of the land in Ghana is held and managed under customary ownership. The remainder is held by government under various statutes and practices, which range from outright State ownership to the management of customary-owned State lands.

areas. This means that customary bodies *can* operate in urban areas, but at their own risk, given the discretionary power of central government on land.

In the former French colonies, this situation is clearly linked with the concept of freehold: (a) as defined in the Civil Code, and (b) as part of a French-inherited, centralised its political model characterised by State monopoly on land, control over land markets and its centralised land management systems. Customary tradition in suburban land subdivisions gives informal practices a degree of legitimacy and protection against eviction. Its customary land subdivisions are usually recognised in Benin, Cameroon and Namibia, although they are not legal in the strict sense of the term.

Research into the changes and dynamics observed over the last two decades in 10 Western and six Central African countries[4] shows that in Western Africa, except in the ***Kumasi*** area of Ghana[5], customary land rights have not, for long, been formally recognised by the State in urban and peri-urban areas. However, customary land rights have been tolerated, including in Senegal where these were supposed to have been eradicated. Under pressure from civil society and due to more realistic land policies, customary rights are now increasingly formally recognised (albeit conditionally) in rural and peri-urban areas in Benin 2007 and in Burkina Faso 2008. Still, government powers of eminent domain can override any legal decisions about land management, as in Mali, where collective land rights are recognised as long as the State does not need to incorporate the land in its domain. In Ghana, the State Lands Act 125, 1962, entitles the government to use eminent domain powers only with due compensation.

Although many non-formal land rights are referred to as 'customary' - including where customary practices are not effective anymore - the authorities consider many of these illegal. This is particularly the case with urban squatter settlements located on land that is unsuitable for development and does not provide occupants with any security of tenure. With the combined pressures on urban land and widespread urban poverty, squatting is, understandably rapidly increasing in Western African cities.

Urban Land Institutions

Formal Urban Land Institutions

In Western Africa, central government institutions are responsible for the initial registration of land under its own name and for allocation of land from the government's private domain through administrative permits with leasehold or freehold rights attached. In Francophone countries, registration is made in the Land Book (*Livre foncier*), under the joint responsibility of the *Direction des Domaines* (state property department) and the *Direction du Cadastre* (central land registry). In Anglophone Western Africa, the authority for registration of land rights falls under the Registrar of Titles.

Over the past two decades, land management has been gradually decentralised in Western Africa. Land allocation and some management functions regarding state property have been transferred to local entities. However, decentralisation is not uniform across countries. In Mali, for example, after having transferred land administration to municipal authorities, central government institutions are still involved in local land allocation and also retain all title registration functions. In practice, this 'decentralisation' frequently consists of little more than deconcentration to the local level branches of central government institutions, as central governments clearly remain reluctant to fully decentralize land management. Cities are supposed to benefit from land decentralisation, but this does not work as long as spatial jurisdictions are not clearly identified. Moreover, the links between land administration and land management are often not clear enough for the benefits decentralised land governance to be effective at the local level.

Customary Land Institutions

Governments in all Western African countries increasingly recognise the role of customary institutions in the allocation of land for housing. In most countries, customary land sales are now authenticated and recorded by local authorities, in what can be seen as a first step towards further tenure formalisation. In the meantime, new participants are becoming involved in customary land delivery process in a bid to keep better control over customary practices. In Ghana, for instance, chiefs and elders are still at the centre of customary land management, but Town Development Committees, made up of community members, oversee developments in the settlements. They help ensure that revenues from land transactions become available for development projects in the town. Traditional authorities continue to make land grants, but procedures are validated by Land Commissions to ensure that these grants comply with legal requirements (Asiama, 2005).

How Land Markets Operate

In Western and Central African cities, urban land can be obtained from the government, the formal private sector and customary/informal channels.

Government Allocation of Public Land

Urban land is predominantly allocated through the State, local authorities and their agencies. Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and other countries have added to supply through allocations of residential and commercial serviced plots to individuals or private developers for subdivision.

- The buyer receives full ownership of the land. The land is titled and the transfer is registered. Land is sold at or below market value. By far the most widespread government land allocation method for housing in Western and Central Africa is through administrative permits (plot allocation certificate, permit to occupy, urban occupation permit, etc.). Costs are much lower than for titled land sold outright by government. Government allocations are aimed at low-middle and middle income groups, but in practice the beneficiaries are the higher income groups.

Private Formal Land Markets

Urban and peri-urban parcels sold through formal private land markets were originally supplied through government allocation procedures. Research in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Rwanda and Senegal shows that only 10 to 30 per cent of any given urban population can access land through the formal markets, through purchases of:

- Titled freehold or long-term leasehold lands put on the market by private landowners. Development rights and rural-urban conversion depend on planning, land-use and construction standards; and
- Land sold by private developers can be developed or built-up, or not. In all cases, the land rights have been or will be registered, either as freehold or long-term leasehold. Property title has been or will be issued on completion of development (i.e., provision of services, or construction in the case of private housing development). Land is sold at market prices.

Customary and Informal Land Markets

- Access to land through (neo-)customary channels provides between 60 and 80 per cent of the land for urban housing in the subregion. This format combines customary with informal and formal practice; it operates through individuals who have been granted land rights under a customary system, but who treat these rights as market goods. The format provides some form of customary legitimacy (PRUD, 2005; Durand-Lasserve, ITDG).
- Access through squatting is not predominant in Western African cities, but the numbers of squatter settlements have been on the increase for a decade or so. This form of access to land has become commoditised, as all other informal channels, and now involves payment. In many cities where customary tenure is not formally recognized, governments make no distinction between customary subdivision and squatter settlements, with both referred to as 'informal settlements'. Owners of dwelling units in customary or informal subdivisions can, in principle, apply for tenure regularisation and a more secure form of tenure, such as permits to occupy.

These predominant land delivery systems feature their own specific mechanisms for allocation and pricing, but these do no prevent strong interactions between formal and informal, public and private land markets. Taken together, land markets form a single system. Consequently, any change in one segment has repercussions on the others. For example, decreases in one type of land allocation induce increases in the others. For instance, high demand for land from private real estate developers in ***Dakar*** over the last five years has increased the pressure on informal land markets in peri-urban areas. The reverse situation can also prevail: in Burkina Faso, massive allocation of public land over the past 10 years has relieved demand pressures on informal/customary land markets.

When access to formal land markets is not possible or too expensive, urban stakeholders move to markets where security of tenure is not guaranteed, and sell the parcels back on the formal market for titled land (see Box 3.4). Some participants are in a position to buy or be allocated land in a segment of the market where it is cheap but still insecure (customary or informal land markets, or public allocation of administrative permits to occupy; they do so in a bid to secure tenure upgrading or regularisation in some form or another prior to on-selling the parcel, the rationale being to capture a significant share of the incremental value of the land. For this type of speculative transaction, access to political and administrative power is a key condition of success.

BOX 3.4: **THE MARKET PRICE OF LAND DEPENDS ON THE TYPE OF TENURE**

At Dialakorodji, a suburban village 15 km from the centre of Bamako, Mali, the market price of a plot of land of 400 to 900 m^2 sold by a customary owner is 150,000 to 300,000 CFA francs (XOF) (or US $320 to 640). The deed of sale is authenticated by the village head and two members of the municipal council. With the land sale thus legalised, and after payment of a development fee of XOF 50,000 (or US $160), the market value of the plot increases to reach between XOF500,000 and 1million (US $1,060 to 2,120). Where the owner can secure a freehold title, the price of the plot will be in the range of XOF2.5 to three million (US $5,300 to 6,400).

At times, the price differential is shared between the seller of the land, municipal authorities, government employees and the officials involved in the regularisation process, as well as the State Property Dept and the land registry. Part of the money goes to administrative and standard fees and taxes. The remainder is shared under informal arrangements between the land owner and those involved in the tenure regularisation process.

BOX 3.5: **SENEGAL'S ATTEMPT TO REGULARIZE TENURE**

Senegal, in 1991[6], decided to institutionalise the tenure regularisation process launched in 1989 and to design a national slum upgrading programme (*Programme de Restructuration de l'Habitat Spontané*). In July 1991, a decree provided the regulatory framework for settlement upgrading and tenure regularisation. In a first step, the objective was to regularise the status of some 410,000 individuals, representing 30 per cent of the total estimated population living in urban informal settlements. The programme focussed on the capital region of Dakar and Pikine, involving 41,000 plots spread over 1,400 ha (or an average 341m^2 per plot). Between 1995 and 2002, however, due to lack of human and financial resources, coming on top of obstruction from the institutions in charge of land registration and administration, the initial objective of 41,000 plots to be regularised was reduced by 90 per cent, or 4,800 plots only. The number of titles effectively delivered was even smaller: between 1991 and September 2007, fewer than 1,600 land rights titles had been delivered in the Dakar region (Dakar, Pikine and Rufisque).

The Dynamics of Western African Urban Land Markets

Over the past decade, changes in the legal and regulatory frameworks governing land management and administration have accelerated liberalisation of land markets. Reforms, new laws and codes have introduced the right to private land ownership in most Western African countries, even where land has long been considered as a matter for the government only. Still, private land ownership does not provide full protection, as governments frequently use their rights of eminent domain to appropriate land for development, including private land. However, across Western Africa, private appropriation of land and private land markets are increasingly endorsed or acknowledged by legislation or national policies, as, for instance, in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and, more recently, in Senegal (Constitutional law N° 2001-03) or in Nigeria (through the 2002 National Housing Policy).

Another recent feature in Western Africa is that policies have come to emphasise tenure upgrading and regularisation schemes (Durand-Lasserve & Selod, 2009), despite resistance of many government institutions and agencies in charge of land administration. The current challenge is how to secure and safeguard tenure for informal settlers without losing the public sector's ability to provide improved infrastructures and services as well as redevelopment options in prime urban locations. However, regularisation of tenure has so far achieved limited results in Western African cities (see Box 3.5).

Land Markets, Urban Forms and Configurations

Land markets and land prices are the main drivers of urban spatial expansion and geographic social patterns. Demand pressures and the attendant rise in prices have gradually excluded the poor from access to urban land. At work here are four converging mechanisms that are tightly related to land markets dynamics, as follows:

- Market prices of urban land increase faster than household incomes;
- Affordable land for housing in city centres and inner fringes becomes scarce;
- Evictions of communities living in inner city slums in the name of public interest, security and public health; and
- Market-driven displacement and evictions (Durand-Lasserve in Huchzermeyer & Karam, 2007)

Uncontrolled urban sprawl is another spatial consequence of increasing land prices and expressed through informal and customary land developments. Together with steady increases in the prices of plots close to city centres, a lack of constraining regulations in areas beyond municipal administrative boundaries encourages the spatial expansion of cities in peri-urban areas, especially where statutory or customary regulation are in no position to rein in land speculation. In the longer term, the cost of urban sprawl to be borne by public authorities (provision of infrastructure and services) and by the population (higher costs for basic services and for transport) will be considerable.

The main consequence of this combination of factors is spatial social segregation, with the geography of poverty overlapping the patterns of insecure tenure and poor access to urban services and infrastructures. One of the greatest shortcomings of informal and customary land delivery systems is their inability to provide adequate services (water, sanitation, power, waste collection, roads, etc). Demand for land is such that informal and customary land developers do not see any advantage in providing basic infrastructure or even complying with minimum standards regarding layout plans. Even in areas where recognition of customary land allocation would enable control over land development, such as in the ***Kumasi*** area in Ghana, many people do not acquire planning permission before developing their land (Asiama, 2005) due to unrealistic standards, rigid and unaffordable planning norms, inefficient city planning and institutional inability to grant permits in a timely sort of way.

▲
Bamako, Mali. **©Joseph Guiebo**

The Limitations of Conventional Urban Land Administration

Access to urban land, property registration or tenure regularization invariably involves very cumbersome administrative procedures that may take up years and involve a large number of administrations. In Nigeria, for example, anyone seeking to buy dispute-free, officially recorded property must complete 21 steps in a process that takes on average 274 days with fees amounting to 27 per cent of the property value (World Bank, 2004). In ***Dakar***, before the procedure was streamlined in 1993, delivery of property rights required 44 steps and involved 12 different central and local administrative processes. In 2005, only 25 per cent of households entitled to tenure regularisation in the informal settlement of Dalifort had been granted property rights. The city of Pikine in the Dakar Metropolitan Area has a population of 870,000, but its Land Registry can process only 3,600 registrations, transfers or land subdivision applications per year (ILD, 2009).

In Burkina Faso, conversion of a temporary administrative permit into a permanent one or into leasehold also runs against multiple bottlenecks. A distant vestige of an outdated state control approach, the conversion process can take up to one and a half year and requires many steps. It can also be seen, more bluntly, as deliberate obstruction on tenure regularisation by land administration bodies in order to facilitate corruption and other 'encouragements' from applicants. Allocation of freehold rights usually requires a case-by-case evaluation. The length and 'costs' of these procedures act as disincentives to the formalization of property rights, which in turn has repercussions on property markets. Other major obstacles hindering formal land market development include government's quasi-monopoly on land, weak and corrupt land administration, inappropriate market rules and lack of transparency.

In Nigeria, the 1978 Land Use Act vested the control and management of urban lands with state governors through a Certificate of Occupancy, while local authorities can grant customary rights of occupancy for agricultural or other purposes. In spite of these laws (or perhaps *because* of them), companies and individuals keen on acquiring urban land keep facing major hurdles, especially as 'booms' in the oil industry and urban populations have occurred in short succession. The new legislation encouraged land speculation, especially as it combined with the conventional approach to land use planning under which most Nigeria's major cities, have been developed.

In all Western African Francophone cities, planning regulations and construction norms and standards effectively hinder the development of formal land and housing markets. This is compounded by three major factors that restrict the development of formal housing finance:

- The formal land and housing development sector is almost embryonic, with limited delivery capacity;
- Private developments are priced way above what most households can afford; and
- Security of tenure is inadequate on so many plots that these cannot qualify as valid collateral to back up bank loans.

In Burkina Faso, for instance, housing loans amounted to only 0.5 per cent of GDP in 2004. Similar ratios are found in Ghana and Nigeria. Senegal and Mali do slightly better with about 20 per cent.[7] Poorly developed financial services reflect the general condition of national economies, which feature high poverty and illiteracy rates.

Until recently, most Western African governments tolerated informal land markets, as it was assumed that they would eventually give way to modern, formal land markets. It was further assumed that only secure private property could provide adequate incentives for investments in land, and that tenure security could only be achieved through land titling and registration (Durand-Lasserve *et al,* 2009). However, realities on the ground provide quite a different picture and, across Western Africa, land registration and titling have achieved very limited results and coverage.

Informal Settlements as a Response to Imperfect Land Markets

In the vast majority of Western and Central African cities, the urban poor and large shares of low- and middle-income groups cannot access public or formal private land markets. Except for Burkina Faso, public provision of urban land and housing is steadily declining throughout the subregion due to lack of resources, lack of political will, widespread corrupt practices, and administrative and technical bottlenecks. The formal private sector does not provide for low-income households, unless heavily subsidised. This situation makes informal land markets more attractive because customary and informal land delivery is more flexible, delivery time is short, transaction costs are low, and tenure is perceived as secure enough to encourage limited investment in land and housing. However, their effectiveness when it comes to reaching out to the poorest segments of the urban population, as well as their long-term sustainability and accessibility, must be questioned, especially in the absence of supportive public policies. The viability of (neo-)customary land delivery is questionable for two main reasons:

- Customary land supplies at reasonable commuting distance from cities are drying up and customary land reserves are located increasingly further from city boundaries, places of employment and public transport facilities, severely restricting the sector's ability to respond efficiently to demand for well-located urban land and housing; and
- Informality does not necessarily mean insecurity of tenure. Even when not formally recognized by government, endorsement by the community and the neighbourhood usually ensures secure tenure. However, this arrangement

▲
West Point slum, Monrovia, Liberia. An example of an informal settlement vulnerable to surge flooding. **©Tugela Ridley/IRIN**

may deteriorate when conflicts arise among customary owners, especially between those who allocate the land and others within the group, or between customary owners and public authorities about customary claims' legitimacy.

Recent observations made in Western African cities confirm that (neo-)customary land delivery is responding increasingly to demand from middle- and lower-middle income groups' demand. Housing development projects are less and less effective in reaching people in urban areas, either in circumstances where customary practices are recognised (Ghana), or where they are tolerated and streamlined by inclusive administrative practices (Benin), or are not formally recognised (Senegal).

Drying up of customary land reserves combines with increased competition from low-middle and middle-income groups and *de facto* recognition by most states to induce accelerated commoditisation of customary land. On the other hand, government reluctance to recognise customary land delivery gives rise to urban and land policies whose unintended impacts can further hinder access of households to shelter. Legal pluralism and the diversity of land markets are not taken into account, which can only compound the effective exclusion of a majority of the African urban population.

Formalisation of land transactions under neo-customary systems is happening, if only gradually, in all urban areas, as use of witnesses in land transactions is becoming institutionalised, and transactions are frequently authenticated by local and sometimes central government administrations. Although informal land purchasers are rarely given any formal title deed, they can usually provide a paper of some sort (often a deed of sale countersigned by local government officials, or a certificate delivered by the administrative bodies in charge) that protects them against eviction attempts. Furthermore, keeping records of informal land transfers and transactions at the local level helps solve one of the main problems experienced by neo-customary land delivery, namely, the multiple allocation of the same plot of land to different buyers, a commonplace practice made possible by collusions of customary and local authorities. Keeping records also improves security of tenure; to defend their rights, people will refer to both the 'paper' and customary evidence.

The Political Economy of Urban Land

In Western African cities, the current debate on liberalisation of land markets, tenure formalisation and integration of customary land delivery into the formal land market provides an illustration of the relationship between land and political power. Under the principle of *domanialité*, government has the exclusive right to allocate and register land that has not been already privately appropriated and titled, which effectively restricts formal regularisation of informal and customary rights (Comby & Gerber, 2008). There is today in Western

Freetown, Sierra Leone. **©Leonardo Viti/Shutterstock**

Africa broad consensus about the need to clarify, regulate and sometimes regularise customary tenure. Depending on those involved, the rationale for this new approach reflects various complementary and sometimes contradictory objectives:

- Protect customary ownership against market pressures, or facilitate the integration of customary within formal land markets;
- Improve security of tenure for occupants of informal and customary land developments;
- Make customary land available for agricultural and urban development;
- Increase land supply through tenure formalisation and land privatisation programmes;
- Secure investment in land and housing;
- Develop housing mortgage finance;
- Reduce the number of land conflicts; and
- Ensure social peace and stability.

The main purpose of customary tenure formalisation is to increase the supply of urban formal land markets. This is one of the conclusions of a study carried out in Mali in 2009 (ADL-GTZ, 2009). In the majority of rural areas which have attractions for investors, formalisation of customary tenure is not envisaged. However, in rural and peri-urban areas with an anticipated high economic potential and demand pressure on land, formalisation of customary tenure is considered a priority. Local and central government institutions as well as local elected bodies are usually supportive, as are society organisations who rightly see formalisation as a crucial component of security of tenure. Customary owners are usually willing to cooperate where they realise that the ongoing erosion of their customary prerogatives is irreversible under the joint pressure of the state, market forces and local authorities.

Corruption in land administration is tightly related to the principle of *domanialité*, which gives government the exclusive power to allocate land and regularise land tenure, as well as with the coexistence of formal and informal land markets that operate on different price scales. Land administrators have discretionary power whether to decide for effective tenure regularisation. As they are aware of the profits beneficiaries of land tenure regularisation are expected to yield, they will inevitably ask for a share of the anticipated profit. This situation can be observed at various degrees and , with only the odd exception, in all Western and Central African cities, fuelling corruption at all levels of land administrations and impacting on allocation of public land and tenure regularisation.

Since the market price of land depends on the degree of security of tenure attached, the typical strategy for urban land market participants will be as follows: (i) secure a non-transferable administrative 'permit to occupy' from a government institution or on the informal market; (ii) apply for tenure upgrading or regularisation and, in a later stage, for a property title, and (iii) to sell the property back on the formal market agaist the market price.

3.4
The Geography of Climate Change

Western Africa, particularly in the Sahelian confines of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and northern Nigeria, has shown recurrent weather variability since the early 1970s. The subregion experienced marked declines in rainfall and its hydrometric series around 1968-1972. With 1970 as the transitional year, average declines in rainfall before and after 1970 range from 15 to more than 30 per cent. This pattern resulted in a 200 km southward expansion of the arid Sahel region. The causes of this anomaly have yet to be clarified, but the assumption so far is that they have to do with climate change. Recorded average discharges in the largest water courses varied by 40 to 60 per cent when compared with pre-1970 levels, causing a significant shrinking of wetlands. The average surface area of the Hadejia Nguru floodplain in northern Nigeria, for instance, decreased from 2,350 km^2 in 1969 to less than 1,000 km^2 in 1995. Likewise, the inland delta of the Niger River decreased from 37,000 km^2 in the early 1950s to about 15,000 km^2 in 1990, while the surface area of Lake Chad, 20,000 km^2 during the wet years before 1970, has shrunk to less than 7,000 km^2, resulting in the splitting of the lake into two parts. Today, only the southern part contains water permanently.

The Role of Local Authorities in Adaptation to Climate Change

Both coastal and inland Western African cities suffer under the impacts of climate change. Ongoing urbanisation has densified coastal cities and, consequently, many more urban dwellers are now threatened by changing sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events. Droughts in the hinterlands stimulate eco-migration and further swell urban populations. Gone are the days when the effects of climate change were little more than vague concepts for international experts only.

▲
Flooding in Dakar, Senegal. **©Nancy Palus/IRIN**

BOX 3.6: LAGOS: ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN WATER SUPPLY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Whereas metropolitan Lagos generates 9,000 tonnes of waste daily, only 15 per cent of an estimated potential of 80 per cent of waste was recycled. The Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA), with over 25,000 staff, aims at increasing waste recycling four-fold through improved collection. Households are encouraged to separate waste at source through discounted collection fees. A consortium including LAWMA has invested US $100 million in an integrated landfill project in Epe, while 20 waste transfer loading stations are now under construction to reduce logistical problems. Wastes are being sorted into recyclable metals, plastics, paper and organics, while the remainder is burnt to provide electricity. Composting occurs under a public-private partnership (PPP) and the output is used in the Lagos 'greening programme'. LAWMA acts both as the facilitator and PPP pioneer to attract local and international investors, and has now extended it operations to other states and even to Sierra-Leone and Ghana.

Deficient urban water supplies are one of the most urgent threats to African cities. Despite its abundance of local water resources, Lagos State faces severe challenges in water supply for industry and a rapidly growing urban population. In 2004, the Lagos State Water Corporation (LSWC) was established, a holding company under the State Government and the largest of its kind in Africa. The LSWC uses its high degree of autonomy to reduce administrative bottlenecks and increase external funding for large urban water projects. LSWC has already significantly raised the capacity of the Adiyan water works that now provides 90 per cent of all metropolitan water, while capacity expansion is in progress in Epe to serve the Lekki-Victoria Island-Ikoyi axis. The aim is to increase the current 50 per cent water coverage to between 70 and 80 per cent over the next 10 years. LSWC has also started to improve metering and is addressing systemic losses with sonic equipment to locate leakages. On top of this, efforts to raise public awareness of the need to reduce water wastage are under way (see www.lagoswater.org and www.lawma.gov.ng).

Local authorities are now directly faced with these effects on their populations, including homes and livelihoods.

More than 25 per cent of Africa's population lives within 100 km from the coast and estimates suggest that the number of people at risk from coastal flooding will increase from one million in 1990 to 70 million in 2080 (UNFCCC,2007). In Nigeria and Benin, coastal infrastructures are threatened with erosion and subsequent flooding. Mayors are expected to develop adaptation policies, but most lack the technical, human and financial resources for effective action. With their typically very narrow revenue bases, municipal authorities can rarely afford more than day-to-day operations in a hand-to-mouth manner. Already struggling as they are with essential spending on housing, services, infrastructure and development control, few local authorities can invest in disaster preparedness or adaptation interventions.

For all these shortcomings, cities in Western Africa are well aware of the potentially dramatic effects of climate change - and flooding in particular. In ***Lagos***, for instance, it is now acknowledged that flooding incidence is exacerbated by poorly engineered and waste-clogged drainage systems. As a result, Greater Lagos authorities have taken to improve services and infrastructures, in an effort that involves indigenous knowledge, livelihood support systems as well as partnerships with the private sector to fund these interventions (see Box 3.6).

Despite a number of commendable initiatives, climate change adaptation in ***Lagos*** still suffers from an exclusionary urban governance because of a reluctance to provide basic public services in informal settlements, since they are regarded as falling outside accepted urban regulation and planning systems. Lagos should develop an action plan that also addresses the plight of its citizens in informal urban areas.

Climate change is also becoming a matter of concern in other Western African coastal cities. For instance, with 50,000 individuals per square km, the ***Dakar*** coastline is one of the most densely populated in Western Africa, and a storm surge disaster could easily affect 75,000 residents whose (illegal) occupation of these coastal areas makes them particularly vulnerable. The risk of storm surge disasters is compounded by recession of the marine sands that act as an important natural barrier to sea intrusion, also adding to the risk is the lack of effective management systems to cope with any hazards once they occur. All Western African coastal cities should become more aware of the actual risks and take commensurate disaster-prevention/adaptation action, including arresting the further sprawl of settlement in vulnerable locations, and establishing post-disaster management capacities.

Climate Change: How much do we know?

The recharging of the subregion's aquifers has noticeably decreased due to declines in rainfall and surface runoff. Across the upper reaches of the Niger River in Mali, water tables have now reached the lowest-ever recorded levels, reducing the input of groundwater into major watercourses. Coastal areas too are not spared from the impacts of climate change. Beaches and dune ridges along the Western African coast show evidence of retreat, varying from between 1-2 m annually in Senegal and 20 to 30 m along the Gulf of Guinea.

Recurrent droughts create a self-reinforcing spiral of accelerated desertification and deforestation contributing to the persistence, incidence and duration of the phenomenon. Poor rainfall leads to overgrazing that strips the soil bare and increases heat reflection, exacerbating Saharan subsidence and

accelerating the disappearance of vegetation and increased desert encroachment. The increase in discharge observed in the Nakambe watersheds in Burkina Faso, for instance, can be explained by run-off surfeits due to degradation of the vegetative cover and soil. Along its middle course, the Niger River has seen significantly increased solids and silting up.

Climate change has started to affect Western African national economies and those of the Sahel countries in particular for three main reasons: (a) the economic role of rain-fed agriculture; (b) inadequate water resources management; and (c) meagre replenishment of reservoirs on which some countries depend heavily for the generation of hydropower. In 1998, Ghana experienced a major energy crisis when Lake Volta dropped below the threshold required to feed the turbines of the Akosombo dam. ***Ouagadougou,*** which is supplied by natural underground reservoirs, experienced severe shortfalls in 2002 and 2003. Rainfall and river flow decreases have begun to affect urban water and energy security and, by extension, urban productivity. Drops in water availability or quality also cause heightened competition for water between agriculture, manufacturing and thirsty cities. Tensions and conflicts among countries over increasingly precious water resources are on the rise, especially along the lower half of the Niger River and in the Volta Basin.

Extreme weather events now seem to occur with rising frequency and higher environmental and socio-economic costs. In 1999, torrential rains led to the opening of the floodgates of the Kainji, Jebba and Shiroro dams in Nigeria, resulting in a heavy death toll and property losses. In the same year, an overflowing White Volta River claimed many lives and destroyed hundreds of houses in Ghana. After a devastating flood and the displacement of several hundred thousand people in 1998, the Komadugu Yobe Valley in Nigeria flooded once more in 2001. The death toll exceeded 200, with over 35,000 displaced people. Likewise in 2009, floods in Burkina Faso that followed the heaviest rainfall in 90 years, leaving seven dead and 150,000 homeless. Clearly, the need for public interventions that reduce the vulnerability of urban and rural dwellers in Western Africa is becoming more and more pressing.

▲
Drought in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. **©Nancy Palus/IRIN**

3.5 Emerging Issues

Migration in Western Africa

After independence, Ghana became a major regional immigration pole because the cocoa, coffee and gold producing sectors offered numerous employment opportunities. The huge immigration wave ended with the Alliance Compliance Order (1969) and the subsequent expulsion of hundreds of thousands of immigrants. Over the longer term, though, these and similar interventions do not seem to have interfered with a structural trend of regional mobility. Western Africa is a natural integration space with its cities increasingly the driving force behind development and modernization.

From the 1970s onwards, three major economic opportunity-driven systems of regional migration patterns emerged in Western Africa:

(a) the Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire axis (based on work in cocoa and coffee production);
(b) Nigeria (oil and gas); and
(c) Senegal (groundnuts production and trade).

Although these three migration patterns are still at work in Western Africa, their roles have changed. Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria have become transit countries, a stepping stone for wealth accumulation before proceeding to other regional or foreign destinations. Economic and labour constraints guide migrations to or away from Senegal.

In Western Africa, migration occurs mainly for economic reasons and is often facilitated by identity-based networks (ethnic, family, etc). Some of the flows came in response to political or economic tensions, such as mass expulsions of foreign nationals from Côte d'Ivoire (1964), Ghana (1969), Nigeria (1983 and 1985), Mauritania and Senegal (1989), Benin (1998), or people fleeing conflict such as in Côte d'Ivoire since late 1999.

Part and parcel of the Western African mobility equation is that colonial borders cut across socio-cultural areas where mobility is so natural that it is difficult to imagine how border crossing could be prevented. For example, the Hausa cultural area has 30 million people in Southern Niger and Northern Nigeria bisected by an international border, while 15 million people belong to the Mande cultural area that extends over parts of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. The same happens across the border between the Gambia and Senegal. Given these realities, it is important to acknowledge that intra-regional migration can have beneficial aspects. For instance, the central plateau in Burkina Faso would have found it difficult to sustain rapid population growth on its steadily deteriorating lands and emigration has reduced the country's rural population to six million, instead of the estimated (and unsustainable) 15 million that would otherwise have been there. High mobility has substantially altered the demographic geography of the subregion over the past few decades. Migration and urbanisation have spawn networks of towns in previously vacant areas and these are now able to absorb excess populations from other parts of the subregion.

However, regional migration flows must be provided for in regional agreements if political and economic tensions are to be avoided. In 1979, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agreed on a forward-looking protocol on the free movement of people and the rights of residence and establishment. Consequently, and regardless of minor discords, the ECOWAS area is becoming a sphere of free movement that is highly conducive to regional development. This is also likely to be supportive of Millennium Development Goals through dynamic regional territorial development, including development of new economic centres and increasing infrastructure financing. A truly integrated Western African subregion would outweigh most of the short-term difficulties of this dynamic process, as the political, economic and cultural realities on the ground are already solidifying the region's natural tendencies to integration, as the following section explains.

Urban Development Corridors: The New Urban Spatial Reality

In sub-Saharan Africa, as in all regions where trade between cities and their hinterlands has accelerated, urban development corridors are now emerging in the wake of rapid demographic expansion and urbanisation. An urban development corridor can emerge where two or more large urban cores are located along a single connection trunk line (road, rail, sea or river) that is organised in such a way as to attract flows of people, goods and services while large and regular trade flows pass through urban or rural transit points

▲
Dakar, Senegal. **©DigitalGlobe**

between the larger urban cores. The part played by each of the urban nodes in the corridor is, all other things being equal, determined by respective population, physical and electronic accessibility, functional specialization and location-specific advantages, especially in economic terms. Continuous urban fabric or spatial occupation and morphological proximity are sometimes also seen as distinctive features of urban corridors, but this is not always a necessary condition. These features are more the outcomes of corridor dynamics than essential conditions for their emergence. It is the corridor's networking mechanisms that fill the spatial gaps, taking advantage of good connections among emerging conurbations.

While the concept of urban development corridors is relatively recent in Western Africa, the underlying geographical realities are not. As early as the 14th century, trade routes emerged between Northern and Western Africa that led to the rise of particularly dynamic urban centres. Examples include the ***Gao-Kano*** pre-colonial trade corridor between Mali and Nigeria, which ran through ***Sokoto*** and ***Katsina***; or the ***Timbuktu-Gao*** route starting in the Moroccan Sahara near ***Marrakech*** and extending to ***Kano*** in Nigeria[8]. British colonial rule did not attempt to change these trade and urban settlement configurations, but rather reinforced them by establishing road and rail infrastructures between these urban centres. The geographical realities underlying today's urban development corridors are, therefore, clearly not new but rather the re-establishment of age-old trade and movement patterns. What *is* new, however, is the growth of urban nodes that have so far remained unaffected by post-independence urban dynamics, as well as the nature of the forces at play and the surfacing, in some cases, of west-east corridors. A case in point is the ***Dakar-Touba*** corridor in Senegal.

The Dakar-Touba Corridor: Senegal's Urban Backbone

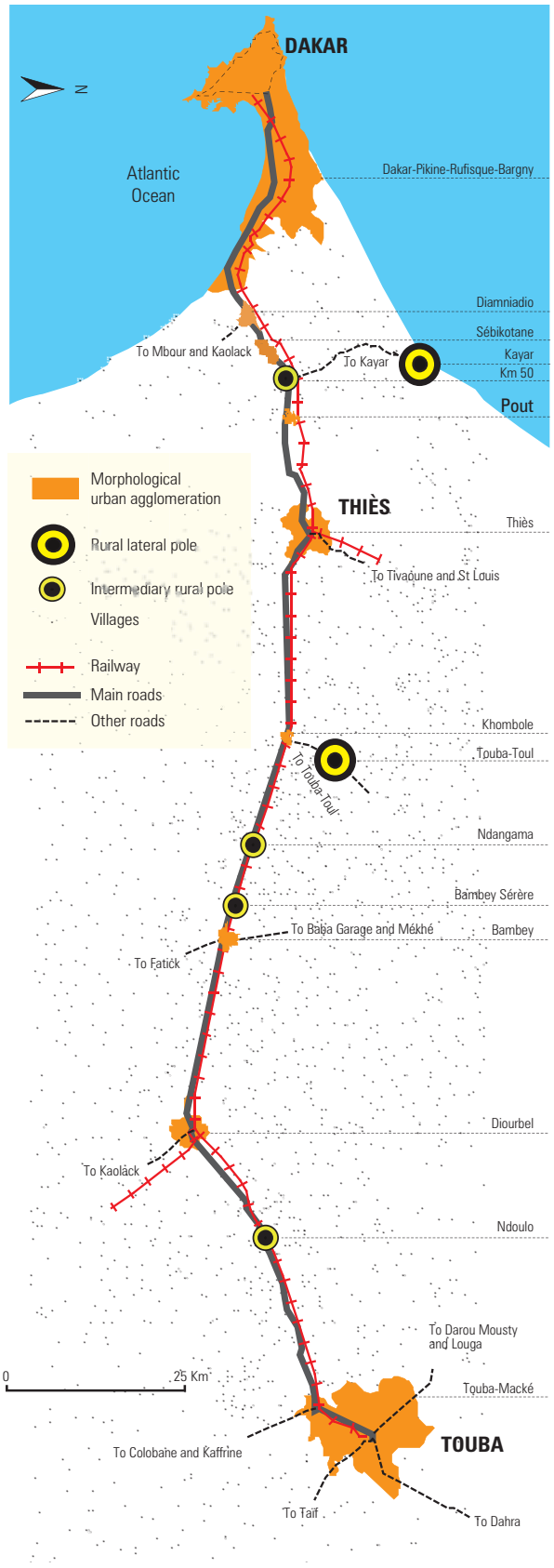
Near large urban areas, attention is more and more drawn to spatial transformations through which new links between towns and their surroundings are appearing. In west Senegal, these new urban dynamics are most visible along the West-East ***Dakar-Touba*** urban corridor. They have started to influence Senegal's long-term urban pattern and will especially affect the primacy of ***Dakar***. If the dynamic nature of the corridor is to be adequately apprehended, two significant aspects must come under special focus: (a) the recent, very substantial demographic expansion of Touba and (b) the presence of particularly dynamic intermediate-size urban cores along the Dakar-Touba corridor (see Map 3.8 and 3.9).

Over the past two decades, ***Touba's*** population grew at an estimated 15 per cent average annual rate. Since 1980, its population increased seven-fold to more than one million today. The resulting rapid urban sprawl has seen the surface area expand from 5.75 km^2 in 1976 to 135 km^2 today. The economy grew commensurately, despite the absence of manufacturing. Rather, Touba's boom is based on high consumption with retail outlets and service providers responding to demand with goods hauled over ever-longer distances. Touba is the end-point of large financial and commodity flows coming via Dakar, mainly from Europe and North America.

The 200 km ***Dakar-Touba*** corridor owes its dynamism to the string of towns and cities structured along the highway linking these two main urban centres. The largest, ***Thiès***, is host to more than 200,000 and stands as a major transition point along the route. A number of rural settlements that host weekly markets are found between the main corridor cities, helping maintain the commodity flows within the corridor and creating very active lateral links. Corridor dynamics are spurred on by lateral collecting points, such as the ***Touba-Toul*** market village, located about 7 km from the highway and accessible via a corridor town between ***Thiès*** and ***Diourbel***. This is also the case with ***Kayar***, a fishing town located about 15 km from the Dakar-Touba highway, accessed mainly through ***Km50***, a particularly dynamic commercial transit node. Much of the fish produced in Kayar goes to ***Touba*** and its hinterland.

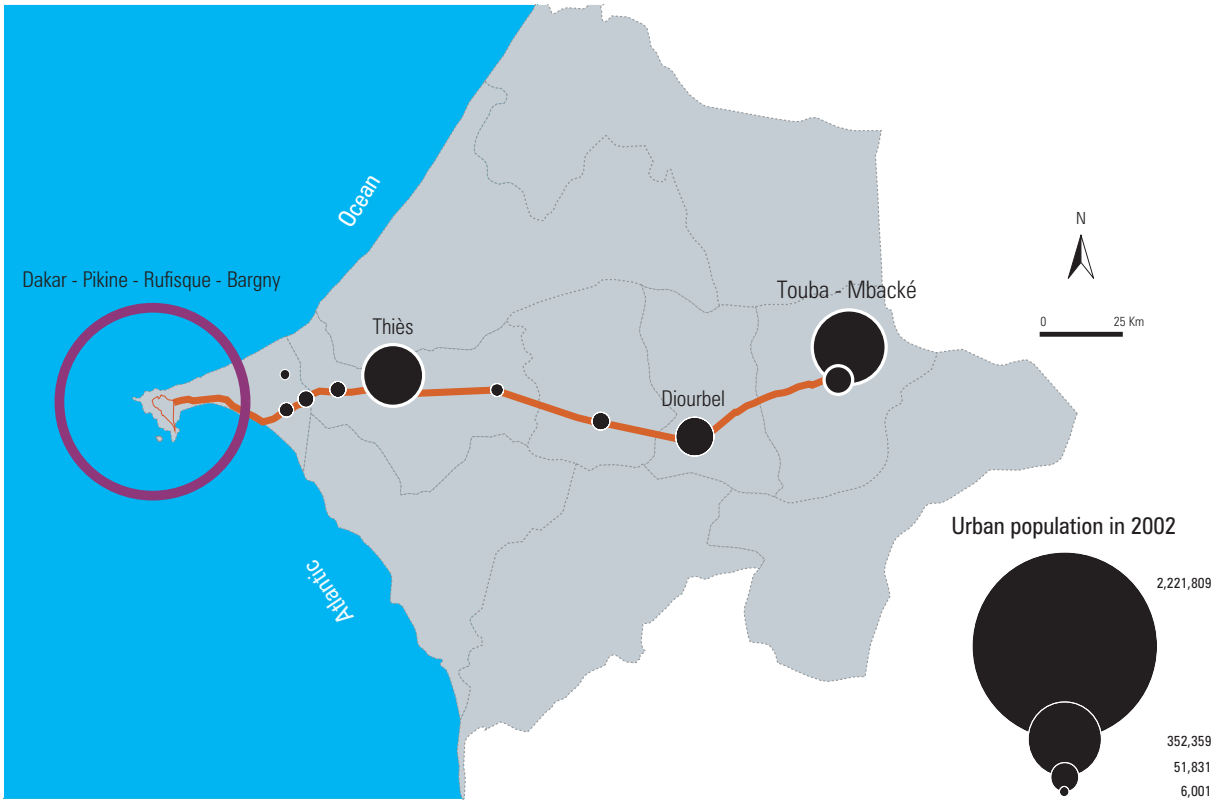
▲
Thiès, Senegal. **©Ji-Elle**

MAP 3.8: **THE DAKAR-TOUBA CORRIDOR: URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS AND RURAL TRANSIT POINTS**



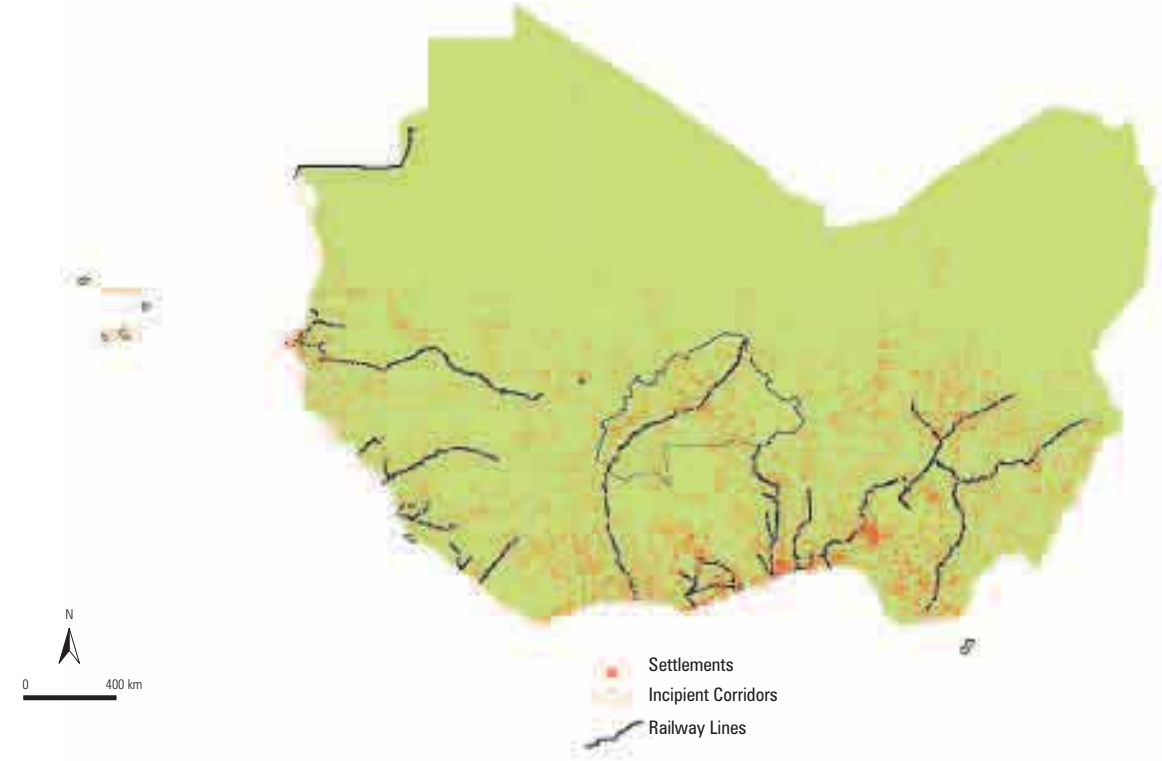
Source: Digitisation Google Earth images. ©Guèye & Thiam, Dakar, Senegal, March 2010

MAP 3.9: **URBAN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE DAKAR-TOUBA DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR**



Source: ANSD – Dakar, 2002. ©Guèye & Thiam, Dakar, Senegal, March 2010

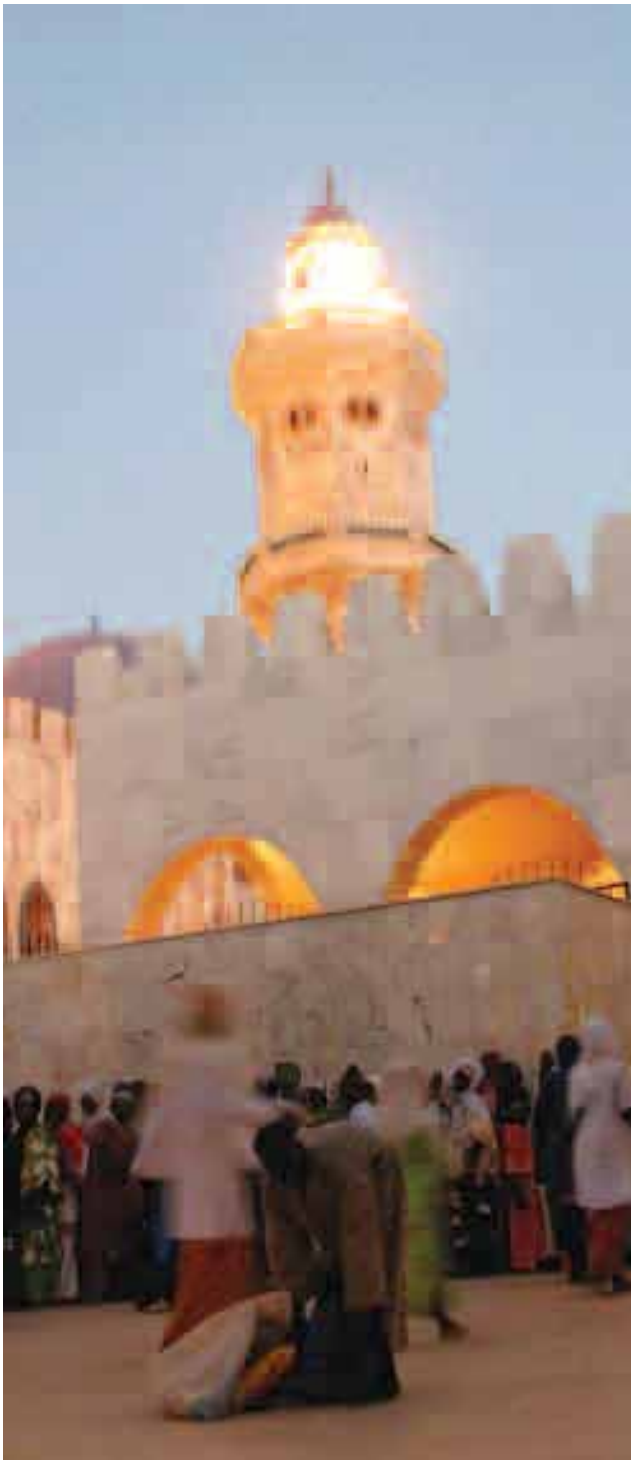
MAP 3.10: **INTERACTIONS AND POTENTIAL NETWORKS IN WESTERN AFRICA**



Source: Databases of Africapolis study AFD/SEDET – July 2008. ©Guèye & Thiam, Dakar, Senegal, Sept. 2009

Other Western African Development Axes and Corridors

Urban ribbon configurations are also emerging in Côte d'Ivoire, such as ***Bouaké-Abidjan***, via ***Dimbokro*** and ***Agboville***, or ***Yamoussoukro*** which emerged a few decades ago along a network of roads and railways. Another example is the ***Ouagadougou-Bobo-Dioulasso*** corridor, running along Burkina Faso's main highway that links the port of ***Abidjan*** with the Burkinabe capital.



▲
Touba, Senegal. **©IRIN**

Some national corridors are now becoming trans-national, building linkages with cities in neighbouring countries. An example is the ***Maradi-Katsina-Kano*** corridor, connecting cities in Niger and Nigeria. ***Katsina*** plays a particularly significant transit role in movements between southern Niger and northern Nigeria. Part of this corridor follows the pre-colonial ***Gao-Kano*** trade route, showing that urbanisation is re-establishing yesterday's major trade routes. There is also the example of the emerging ***Bobo-Dioulasso-Korogho*** trans-national corridor between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire with ***Banfora*** and ***Ferkéssedougou*** as important intermediate nodes.

The urban development corridor phenomenon is expected to become more widespread on the back of expanding road networks. Map 3.10 shows a simulation of the linkages and potential development corridors in Western Africa based on the distance to the nearest neighbour. This choice of method is deliberate. In Western Africa, distance remains a key determinant factor for spatial relations, even though the policies and technologies designed to cut distances short are becoming more and more effective. In view of persistent lags in regional interconnectivity, planning the geography of future interactions and urban configurations would lose much of its significance if distance is not taken into account.

This map is interesting for at least two reasons. First, it gives notion of the potential for proactive links between cities in Western Africa; and, second, on deeper analysis, most of the arcs coincide with the patterns of logistical connections, particularly roads. For the sake of clarity, only rail networks are shown on Map 3.10.

However, while research frequently showcases urban development corridors as positive for regions, territories and socio-economic systems, the fact remains that they may come with some drawbacks. Indeed, when corridors are not well-managed, they may cause major spatial imbalances in areas outside them. This is bound to result in spatial and functional gaps, particularly in the absence of transit towns capable of diverting for their own benefit some of the opportunities attracted by the cities located along the corridor.

ENDNOTES

1. Loi N° 64-46 du 17 juin 1964, relative au Domaine national.
2. Loi N° 86-91/AN-RM du 1er août 1986, portant Code domanial et foncier, telle que modifiée par l'Ordonnance N° 92-042/P-CTSP du 3 juin 1992
3. With the new Land Code *(Code Domanial et Foncier)* adopted in 1992.
4. Rochegude, A. & Plançon, C. (2010). Décentralisation, acteurs locaux et foncier en Afrique. Mise en perspective juridique des textes sur la décentralisation et le foncier. This study covers 21 sub-Saharan countries, mostly in West and Central Africa. It provides a valuable follow-up of changes affecting the legal and regulatory frameworks governing land management and administration against a background of decentralisation over the past two decades.
5. Asiama, S. 2005.
6. Decree n° 91-748, July 29, 1991.
7. In Burkina Faso, housing prices in the formal sector and income levels are such that the newly created *Banque de l'Habitat* found in 2005 that there were about 25,000 bankable households in its potential customer base, but only about 15,000 if only salaried groups and formal entrepreneurs were included.
8. See Blin, (1990) p 27 or Toupet, (1992) p 58.