

The emerging role of Mozambican small urban centres in local development: the case of Caia District.

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Abstract

The paper takes into consideration the District of Caia, situated in central Mozambique where relevant processes, such as rapid urbanization and empowerment of local administrations, are involving small urban centres situated along the Zambezi River. The most important factors that influence the growth of such small urban centres are individuated and analysed. Moreover, attention is paid to actions and policies undertaken by district authorities to intercept new development opportunities and to manage the population flow from rural areas. Finally, transformations affecting small towns are analysed, together with the instruments implemented by the administrations to avoid the negative effects of a rapid and unplanned urban growth.

Foreword

The extremely rapid urbanization process that can be observed for a long time in the developing countries is showing now, in comparison with the past, some significant

changes that can give a turning to the process, that characterized the last decades, of concentration of population in the major urban centres.

According to United Nations projections, more than one billion people will move from rural areas to the urban centres of the developing countries by 2030 and more than 40% of this urban growth will occur in small and intermediate towns, or rather those that have a population of less than 500,000 people. Moreover, statistics based on national censuses data generally show that the highest urban growth rates within national urban systems are already noticed in secondary towns.

This framework deserves attention not only because makes obsolete some common ideas on the characteristics of the urbanization process in developing countries, which refer the last one to the “urban gigantism” or the “primate cities”, but also because the growth of small sized towns – and in general changes occurring in regional systems – can have an impact on development policies and actions.

The 2007 Mozambique’s National Census data confirm this demographic trend, which occurs together with the emerging role of local authorities, to be considered crucial in both promoting local development and managing urban growth. The ongoing public administration reform, in fact, leads to the devolution of administrative power to the local level, as a first step to promote sustainable economic growth. Districts, in particular, are assuming an important role in promoting equitable regional development and poverty reduction.

Within this frame, the paper takes into consideration the District of Caia, situated in central Mozambique, where relevant processes are involving Caia, Sena and Murraça, three small urban centres situated along the Zambezi River.

On one hand these towns are assuming a strategic role at national level thanks to important infrastructures that are under construction along the Zambesi Valley. We are talking of the rehabilitation of the railway line connecting Beira to the coal fields of Moatize and to Malawi, the rehabilitation of the Dona Ana Bridge - an impressive iron structure -, the construction of a new bridge across the Zambezi River connecting the North and the South of the country, and finally the advancing electrification.

On the other hand, District’s small urban centres are the destination of the rural population driven to abandon the flood plane of the Zambezi by resettlement policies implemented after the floods of the river in the last ten years.

As a result of such processes, these three small towns are experiencing both a rapid population growth and significant transformations, which charge the local administration with new tasks.

With reference to this framework, the most important factors influencing the growth of small urban centres are individuated and analysed, to establish whether this growth is due to new functions assumed by these towns or to persisting crises in rural areas. Moreover, actions undertaken by District's authorities are considered, paying attention to decision-making processes and to policies implemented to intercept new development opportunities and address the change, as well as to manage the immigration from rural areas.

Finally, transformations - also physical - affecting small towns are analysed, together with the instruments implemented by the administrations to avoid that the high level of concentration of urban poorness and the negative effects of a rapid and unplanned urban growth, already experienced by the largest cities, can be repeated.

1. Emerging features of the Mozambican urban system

Mozambique's urban system is assuming, after a long phase marked by both the civil war and the resettlements phase that followed, features clearly visible outlined by the data, however provisional, relative to the National Census carried out in 2007. These features consist on one hand in the demographic slowdown of the major towns that, with one exception, show signs of consolidation, and on the other hand to the most sustained growth of the medium-sized towns.

It is not yet possible to analyse the behaviour of other towns, as the data available today are not comparable with the data from the previous census. But, observing some specific situations, it results that even small towns are showing a significant increase in population.

Such features being assumed by the urbanization process in Mozambique have complex causes and heterogeneous characteristics, which probably vary in relation to regional contexts. The following notes intend to emphasize this phenomenon and to suggest some initial interpretations suggested by the reading of the transformations occurring in a territory situated in the central part of the country, the district of Caia,

The population growth of the major towns

From the preliminary data of the last Census, provided by the National Institute of Statistics, it appears that the major towns, or rather those that have a population of more than 250.000 people, show a low increase in population, with the sole exception of Nampula. This phenomenon appears to be more evident in the case of Beira, but also considering the Maputo-Matola conurbation - that although consisting in two separate administrative centres in reality is a single large city – the increase in population during the decade is almost 27%. Now, if the rate of natural growth is hypothesized, in towns, which is around 1,5%, it appears that more than half of this growth is due to differences between births and deaths, which brings the number of people migrating to the capital to about 150.000 during the examined time period.

The different performance of the two centres – more notable in the case of Matola – may also lead to hypothesize a displacement of population, even of small dimensions, from Maputo to Matola.

The case of Nampula, as mentioned earlier, is an exception, as this town, between 1997 and 2007, shows an increase in population of 59%. It should be noted however that Nampula today represents not only a large town in the North of the country – not by chance it is called the *Capital do Norte* – but also an important economic pole in the centre of a vast agricultural region. The town is characterized in other terms as the third great urban pole of the country, second in size only to the Maputo-Matola conurbation having surpassed Beira in population in the examined decade. This last town appears, as mentioned previously, rather motionless as its population growth does not reach 10%. It is therefore assumable, considering the rate of natural growth, an outward flow of population, albeit small. This condition of immobility is also confirmed by Dondo, a satellite centre of Beira where mostly industrial activities have established themselves, which – at least according to earlier data that await confirmation – does not present any increase in population.

The population growth of the medium towns

The medium-sized towns, or rather where population ranges from 100.000 to 250.000 people, show an overall growth in population over the decade of around 33%. This is a significant growth – in effect, it doubles the rate of natural growth – which indicates a capacity of attraction that does not appear still redundant.

Even in this case however there are different speeds. Lichinga and Pemba, the two capitals of the Provinces of Niassa and Cabo Delgado show increases of around 65% while Tete, Chimoio and Gurue show increases that range from 40% to 50%. With reference to the first two towns, we are dealing with provincial capitals – respectively of the Province of Tete and Manica – while Gurue is an important centre located in the North of the Zambezia Province.

Mocuba, Nacala-Porto and Quelimane, this last one is the capital of the Zambezia Province, show increases of around 30% while Xai Xai, capital of the Gaza Province, and Maxixe are positioned at lower levels with increases respectively of 17% and 12%. The administrative functions certainly contribute to the growth of the medium-sized towns: more than half of the 10 towns that appear in this class are in fact provincial capitals. However these two, – Pemba and Tete – besides playing an administrative role are also important economic centres.

Tete, besides dominating the central western part of the country, is also the largest town located along the Zambezi River and the terminal of the railway axis, that starts from Beira, which is currently in rehabilitation with the prospect of the reactivation of the coal mines of Moatize. Pemba is perhaps the most important tourist centre of Mozambique being, as well as the destination of an international flow attracted by seaside, a base for excursions throughout the Northern part of the country.

The other towns, like Gurue and Macuba, both located in the Zambezia Province, are centres of agricultural regions specialized in export crops while Nacala, the marine terminal of the Nacala Development Corridor which reaches Malawi, is a node of commercial traffic with high economic potentialities, since it overlooks a bay regarded as the deepest natural port of East Africa. Xai Xai and Maxixe – two cities located on the coast just north of Maputo - deserve consideration because, as mentioned earlier, both show a modest increase in population.

Population of major and intermediate towns of Mozambique

Municípios	Population 1997	Population 2007	Variation 1997-2007 (%)
Cidade de Maputo	966.837	1099102	13,68
Cidade de Matola	424.662	675422	59,05
Cidade de Nampula	303.346	477900	57,54
Cidade da Beira	397.368	436240	9,78
Total	2.092.213	2688664	28,5
Cidade de Chimoio	171.056	238976	39,71
Cidade de Nacala-Porto	158.248	207894	31,37
Cidade de Quelimane	150.116	192876	28,48
Cidade de Mocuba	124.650	162719	30,54
Cidade de Tete	101.984	152909	49,93
Cidade de Gurue	99.335	142682	43,64
Cidade de Lichinga	85.758	142253	65,88
Cidade de Pemba	84.897	141316	66,46
Cidade de Xai Xai	99.442	116343	17
Cidade da Maxixe	93.985	105895	12,67
Total	1.169.471	1603863	37,1

1997 National Census Data; 2007 National Census Data (preliminary).

Xai Xai has probably suffered the impact of the frequent flooding of the Limpopo River, which has devastated vast zones of the Gaza Province; Maxixe, which overlooks a bay facing Inhambane, capital of the homonymous Province, serves as a background for this city which also serves as a terminal for tourist flows from the capital, and to a lesser extent, from South Africa. The low economic weight of the two centres, associated with the proximity of the capital and therefore to the force of attraction exerted by it, is probably the basis of their low growth rates.

Looking at educational data

The structure that the Mozambican urban system is assuming, due to the emergence of a system of medium-sized towns that balances the presence of the three major urban centres, is also confirmed by the data provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture, regarding the enrolment of students in the first scholastic classes over the same period of the two censuses, in 1997 and in 2007.

Number of students attending primary school in major and intermediate towns of Mozambique

Municípios	Students 1997	Students 2007	Variation 1997-2007 (%)
Cidade de Maputo	151.419	167241	10
Cidade da Matola	76.014	115484	51
Cidade de Nampula	40.571	79204	95
Cidade da Beira	46.887	61968	32
Total	314.891	423897	34,6
Cidade de Chimoio	21.113	43411	105
Cidade de Nacala Porto	13.651	24977	82
Cidade de Quelimane	23.943	34972	46
Cidade de Mocuba	34.478	77213	123
Cidade de Tete	15.779	27209	72
Cidade de Gurue	27.287	69867	156
Cidade de Lichinga	11.973	25883	161
Cidade de Pemba	11.015	23963	117
Cidade de Xai-Xai	22.931	22256	=
Cidade da Maxixe	18.565	20245	9
Total	200.735	369996	84,3

Ministry of Education, Mozambique.

The data of the scholastic enrolment certainly do not only reflect the increase in population but as well as the presence of educational facilities and the tendency of parents to send their children to school, but precisely for this reason it can be considered as an indicator of urbanity. In general, regardless of specific discussion points that are solicited by the comparison of these data, it appears that the growth rates of school enrolments occurring in the medium-sized towns are much higher than those occurring in larger towns. But while in major towns it is possible to establish a correlation between increase in population and increase in enrolment to the first classes, in medium-sized towns, yet with the exception of Xai Xai and Maxixe, the increase in enrolment significantly exceeds the increase in population. A case that can be explained by both the large migratory flow – and births associated with it – and an increase in educational facilities. Moreover, if the percentage of the students enrolled to the first classes in the total population is considered, it appears that – in both 1997 and 2007 – it is higher in medium-sized towns than in larger ones, a case that can be attributed to a

more efficient recruitment or to a better functioning of the administrative mechanisms in the medium-sized towns.

In any case, it seems that these last ones are characterized by an increase not only quantitative – that is, in population – but also qualitative, related to the attainment of stronger urban features.

The urban growth in the Sofala Province

The analysis of the Mozambican urban system is limited to larger and medium-sized towns because, as previously stated, the data of the last census regarding the other towns – those with a population of less than 100.000 people – are currently difficult to compare with the data of the previous census.

It should be said that the more you get closer to small centres, the more problems with the delimitation of their areas arise and – with reference to the census – therefore with the quantification of the number of inhabitants. The coincidence between an administrative centre that often includes extended rural areas and its urban centre is in fact not uncommon. This problem arises particularly with reference to the formation of new municipalities.

The 2007 preliminary Census data, already made available for Sofala Province by the Beira local office of the Statistic National Institute, allow deepening the considerations carried out up to this point. These data, in fact, confirm the above-mentioned trend.

What emerges is the – previously mentioned – low increase in population of the two major urban centres, i.e. Beira and Dondo. The variation of the population is up to six times higher for the rural and urban-rural *postos administrativos* (administrative units) in comparison to that of the major town, Beira. As urban *postos administrativos*, are meant those who gained the status of *autarquia*, that is an administrative centre provided with political and financial autonomy. As urban-rural *postos administrativos* are meant those who gained the status of *autarquia* and, at the same time, present also a large peri-urban area with rural characters within the administrative boundaries. The rural *postos administrativos* also have within their boundaries urban (*vilas*) and rural areas, but the population does not elect the local administration.



Population of *Postos Administrativos* of Sofala Province.

	Population 2007	Population 1997	Variation 1997-2007 (%)	Area
Posto Administrativo				
Cidade da Beira	436.240	397.368	9,78	Urban
Cidade do Dondo	71.473	61.405	16,40	Urban
Vila de Marromeu	76.734	49.098	56,29	Urban-Rural
Vila de Gorongosa	52.897	40.177	31,66	Urban-Rural
Vila de Nhamatanda	141.341	83.641	68,99	Rural
Vila de Caia	55.010	39.153	40,50	Rural
Vila de Buzi	30.130	21.960	37,20	Rural
Vila de Inhaminga	27.296	20.795	31,26	Rural

1997 National Census Data; 2007 National Census Data (preliminary).

Therefore such *postos administrativos* – both urban-rural and rural – are interesting with reference to our discussion because they all contain an urban centre. Apart the comparison with Beira that, as already seen before, is the less performing town, these *postos administrativos* show all an increase in population that is similar to that registered in the last ten years for the intermediate towns of the country. This specific aspect will be deepened in the following paragraphs, trying to separate the behaviour of the *vilas* from that of rural settlements.

2. Administrative decentralization process

During the period elapsed between the two censuses of 1997 and 2007, a process of administrative decentralization has also taken place in Mozambique. On the basis of this process, the highly centralized State established after the war of independence, which had created only few decentralized administrations, that is 11 provincial governments including that of Maputo, has progressively articulated its administrative system devolving powers to both Municipalities and Districts.

It would be arbitrary to establish a correlation between the two processes. Nevertheless, the coincidence between the high increase in population of the small and medium-sized towns and the emerging role of local authorities, to be considered crucial in both

promoting local development and managing urban growth, qualifies the population growth giving the last one significant urban features as previously observed with reference to the increasing interest of people in education.

The Municipalities

The process of administrative decentralization started in the mid-1990s by the approval of several laws giving *autarquias* (municipalities) extensive administrative and financial autonomy. In fact, the Municipalities became territorial units with their own representative body elected by universal suffrage, and an executive organ responsible for local economic and social development, environment, quality of life, and spatial planning. Specific responsibilities include roads and public transport, electric distribution, sewerage and rubbish disposal, markets, preschool and primary school education and low-cost housing.

In 1998 municipal elections were held in 33 urban centres: 10 *cidades capitais* (provincial capitals), 13 *cidades* (towns), and 10 *vilas* (small towns). Anyhow, 118 *vilas* were excluded from these elections, even being district capitals, since only 23 *cidades* and 10 district capitals were given the right of establishing their own local government, and therefore the status of *autarquias*.

Recently, the status of *autarquia* has been granted to 10 other *vilas*, that is, a district capital for each province (excluding that one of Maputo that coincides with the city).

As a result of this profound transformation of the public administration system, today we are in presence of a reclassification of the national territory, which is defined as “urban” – the 43 *autarquias* – and “rural”. This classification overlaps the other administrative division of the national territory into 128 *distritos* that include the *autarquias*, which can be also district capitals. Districts are divided in 394 *postos administrativos*, 1071 *localidades* (small centres) and 10025 *aldeias* (villages) formed by *comunidades*, *regulados*, and *povoações*.

The distinction between urban and rural, as previously mentioned, is not always precise. Considering, in fact, the “promotion” of the last 10 *autarquias*, it seems that the criterion, beginning from the choice of selecting a new *autarquia* for each province, was mainly political and therefore detached from consideration related to urban characters of the new administrative centres. Moreover, a careful look addressed to these last ones would not allow highlighting substantial differences between them and other centres nearby. The creation of new *autarquias* is however an important choice that

foreshadows a gradual acknowledgement of equal rights to other small towns in the country. In fact, the long-term project to reform public administration – to which the international community has renewed its financial support – is to gradually extend the statute of *autarquías* to all the administrative centres.

The Districts

In 2003 the devolution of power to the local level made a further and significant step through a framework law that defines the structure and organization of the local government. The framework law - Law 8/2003 (Law of Local Organs of the State), the regulation of which was approved in 2005 - increases the autonomy of the Provinces and promotes Districts as effective administrative units, granting them programming and planning competences and budgetary autonomy. In fact, Districts assume an important role as planning units – essential for both programming economic and social activities as well as coordinating interventions of national and international institutions - given that they are involved in promoting regional development and reducing poverty. From a practical point of view, Districts are now in a position to merge sectoral competences – i.e. directorates before responding separately to provincial authority - into multi-sectoral teams.

A limitation of this transition is represented by the fact that the District Administrator, who takes part to District Direction together with the district directors, is placed as the head of the district activities not by the district population but by the central government. This means that the administrative efficiency of a District is often linked to the administrator and therefore to his capacities and nature.

Anyway a complex system of public participation that avails itself, at the highest level, of the *Conselho Consultivo do Distrito* (District Advisory Council), contributes to mitigating the separation between the district management and the local society. This should allow the different social groups to cooperate with the local administration authorities “seeking for the solutions of major problems affecting population, its well-being and the sustainable development of the territory”. A norm introduced in the beginning of 2000 not only allows to extend the participation of traditional authorities and leaders, acknowledging them as interlocutors between civil society and local organs of the State, but as well as to appoint these figures a number of decisions on important aspects of daily life.

An other body that supports public participation is the *Conselho Consultivo do Posto Administrativo* (Administration Unit Advisory Council). Here problems and instances coming from different *localidades* are discussed and organized according to priorities, before being faced at district level and in local forums. Therefore, in the same way as the *Conselho Consultivo do Distrito*, the Local Forum is focal point of the planning process at district level.

In this framework, small district capitals are placed in an entirely new situation, in which important decisions not only for the economy but also for the living conditions of the population are assumed *in loco*, as well as through participatory mechanisms.

These decisions often are implemented through plans, programs and allocation of financial resources. From this perspective, District duties range from economic development and policies against poverty – according to the *Plano Distrital de Desenvolvimento* – up to the choices of land use that intervene, at district level, through the *Plano de uso da terra* (Land use Plan) and, at urban level, through the *Plano de Ordenamento territorial* (Master Plan) which gives, for example, land tenure rights.

Considering the relevance of the decisions taken *in loco*, it has to be taken into consideration the hypothesis that the consolidation of communities in *vilas* and *aldeias* could depend also on feeling taking part, by people, of a local society that decides autonomously on matters that affect perspectives on life.

3. Caia District: Factors of urban growth

Due to the relevance of the population growth noticed in the small towns, it seems then important to analyse the phenomenon. In particular, it is relevant to establish whether this growth is due to new functions assumed by small towns or to persisting crises in rural areas.

Caia District, situated in the Northern part of Sofala Province, is almost 475 Km far from the town of Beira considering the national road EN1, which is the only one practicable during the all year. The district is situated in a strategic point at national level, because crossed by the national road EN1, which connects the Southern, Central and Northern regions of the country. Besides, the district provides the connection to Malawi through the Dona Ana Bridge.

In the year 2006 began also the construction of a new bridge across the Zambezi River along the road EN1, so that a further connection to the Province of Zambezia will be

possible through Chimuara. In this *localidade* is to be found an electric station, whose energy comes directly from the Cahora Bassa Dam: both Caia and *Sena* already benefit from it.

Caia District, being situated in the lower part of the Zambezi River, has a potential of humid areas which offer favourable conditions for the development of the territory and, more in general, of the whole country. The Sena Railway that is at the moment being rehabilitated and will connect the port of Beira with the Province of Tete and Malawi, also crosses the district.

With reference to the new classification of Mozambican national urban system, the only localities of Sofala Province considered as urban, and therefore provided with the status of *autarquias*, are the towns of Beira, Dondo, Marromeu and Gorongosa.

None of the small urban centres of Caia District has gained the rank of *autarquia*. On the contrary, they belong to another rank within the new hierarchical classification: that one of *vilas rurales*. They belong, then, to the part of the national territory considered as “rural”.

This choice, as said, is not related to statistical or geographical criteria. In other terms, the attribution of the status of *autarquia* does not depend on the dimension, the urban equipment or on the functions of that particular urban centre. It defines political rights of the citizens, first of all the one of voting their municipal government. As a consequence, the choice of promoting an urban centre to the rank of *autarquia* depends often from political evaluations and equilibriums.

On the basis of these considerations, *Caia*, the district seat, *Sena* and *Murraça*, the *posto administrativo* seats, are considered in the following notes in the same way as small urban centres (*vilas*), because they perform functions that are characteristic of a small town.

The settlement pattern

Caia District experienced in the last 10 years a radical spatial redistribution of population. The settlement pattern, characterized by the dispersion of the peasant families, marked along centuries the territory settled by *Sena*, a people migrated from North. These people were composed by large polygamous households that were traditionally organized in housing units situated at a large distance one from another. This settlement pattern is functional to subsistence agriculture on household basis, which has been during centuries the principal economic activity of the population

settled along the Zambezi River. The large soil consumption, determined by this settlement pattern, is allowed by the low population density, which is also accompanied in the region by the wide endowment of arable land.

Nowadays, this traditionally dispersed population has been run over a very rapid urbanization process, which is concentrating people in the small towns of the district. In 1997, the population of Caia District was estimated around 86.001 inhabitants, with a population density of 24 hab/Km². The population was unequally distributed, with a higher concentration along the flood plane of the Zambezi, to the detriment of the hinterland, where the population was more dispersed and isolated.

The principal settlements of Caia District are situated along the Zambezi River and the regional road 213, which facilitate the mobility of persons and goods. Along this road are to be found Caia, Murraça and Sena, the three seats *of posto administrativo*, where basic services for the population and the principal markets for agricultural produce are located. *Vila de Caia* is a landmark in the whole district, being its administrative seat and the place where most of the public services are concentrated. *Sena*, a small town that is rapidly expanding, is provided long since with permanent electric energy, and is mainly an important commercial centre at regional level. The presence of *Dona Ana* Bridge, in fact, the only one that allows at the moment to cross the Zambezi River, facilitates connections to *Mutarara* and the near country of Malawi. Finally, *Murraça* is situated in a central and equidistant position with respect to the other two *vilas* and is a landmark in the District because it offers important attractions such as the old cotton factory and the mission *Nossa Senhora de Fátima*, one of the major educational centres of the whole Mozambique. Most of the inhabitants of the hinterland, then, use the *posto administrativo* of Murraça to attend to administrative practices and to buy and sell goods, because do not exist in that area other public administration seats.

Furthermore, an axis can be found in the hinterland that presents a medium population density: it is that one corresponding to the road in direction of *Chatala* and *N'topa*, which passes through the centres of *Randinho* and *N'sona*.

In the hinterland, the *aldeias* have small dimensions and follow a dispersed settlement pattern in which the households, situated at a certain distance between them, tend to locate along the waterways. As *aldeias* are meant those villages that are provided of some basic services for the population (such as primary schools, sanitary centres, water pumps).



In the last year, an improvement of services has started in the hinterland of the district, in order to provide the population with basic services and, through this, to limit the population flow towards the Zambezi corridor. Even if the nearest centre equipped with services is hung out, the population maintains its houses in an isolated position, in order to have direct access to their own *machamba* (family farm) and to graze animals. Even if seasonal commuting of families on the region is still a very common phenomenon, especially for those families who base their subsistence on agriculture, the permanent displacement toward the *vilas* is a recent and still ongoing phenomenon.

The following table allows a comparison between 1997 Census data for Caia District and 2007 preliminary Census data. Tacking as an example the demographic dynamic of the *posto administrativo* of Caia, the only one to which disaggregated data of the *localidades* in both census are referred, it is possible to notice that the variation of the population in percent in the last ten years has been very high for the urban centre (Vila de Caia), that has almost doubled its total population. The rural area, on the contrary, loses inhabitants and presents a negative variation of the population.

Population of *Postos Administrativos* and *Localidades*. Caia District

Posto Administrativo	Localidad	Population 2007	Population 1997	Variation 1997-2007 (%)	Area
CAIA	Vila de Caia	18256	10473	74	vila rural
CAIA	Caia- sede	28197	28680	-2	rural
CAIA	Ndoro	8557	/	/	rural
MURRAÇA	Murraça- sede	24221	18135	34	vila rural
SENA	Sena- sede	33549	28713	17	vila rural
SENA	Licoma	2949	/	/	rural
District Total		115729	86001	35	

1997 National Census Data; 2007 National Census Data (preliminary).

In general, it is possible to observe a massive process of displacement of population from rural areas to the small urban centres of the District. The causes that are determining such movement of the dispersed population towards the *vilas rurales* of the District can be related on one hand to exogenous factors - environmental, political and socio-economic - that are pushing the population away from rural areas. On the other, to some advantages the small towns of the District are in a position to offer to the urbanized population. Advantages that repays somehow discomforts caused by the resettlement, as well as the distance and the lower quality of agricultural land.

Push factors

Historically, the civil war is the exogenous factor that determined in the region the transfer of the population from rural areas to urban centres. Dispersed rural settlements were variously insecure, because of robberies and attacks of the opposed troops, so that the population concentrated in urban centres that were considered more controlled and safe. Most of the inhabitants of the Caia District, anyway, were transferred in refugee's camps in the near Malawi. They returned in 1994, mostly in *Vila de Sena*, that was nearer to Malawi's border. Here temporary resettlement camps, which were prepared to receive the refugees back to their country, have been transformed into permanent settlements.

In the last ten years, anyway, the major factor of increase in population of small urban centres of Caia District is represented by the resettlement of the rural population, traditionally settled along the Zambezi Valley, because of frequent floods. The flood plane, even if very fertile, is also vulnerable and therefore people that lead their life cultivating the land near the river, live permanently in conditions of risk.

The proximity to the river, the fourth longest of Africa, has always been advantageous for the local population, guaranteeing besides the fertility of soil, also the possibility of hunting and fishing and all the advantages related to the easy access to water provision and river commerce. Since some decades, however, the proximity to the river became a serious risk factor for the population settled in the area. One of the reasons of risk can be found in the way in which is managed the Cahora Bassa Dam situated in the Province of Tete, in the North of the Sofala province. The dam has been constructed at the beginning of the 1970's from the government of Mozambique, a Portuguese colony at the time, in cooperation with European and South African enterprises. Besides the production of hydroelectric power, the dam has an important role in flood control and influences strongly the environmental conditions of the Zambezi Valley. Opening unexpectedly the dam, even if to regulate the water level, can cause evident damages like the loss of houses and agricultural land situated in the flood plane, besides a risk for people who there live and cultivate land.

In the last three decades there was a series of floods, whose frequency cannot be related only to natural events. In particular, from the 2nd December 2007, intensive rain determined a huge increase of the flood level of Zambezi main tributaries. Furthermore, Cahora Bassa Dam poured almost a quantity of water equal to 3.500 m³/s, following a decision which principally contributed to the rise of the flood level of the lower part of

the Zambezi River. From January 2008, the Province of Sofala was affected by violent floods in the planes of the rivers Zambezi, Púngue, Búzi and Save. Such floods involved the districts of Chemba, Caia, Marromeu, Nhamatanda, Dondo, Búzi and Machanga.

In 2008, the *Direcção Provincial das Obras Públicas e Habitação* (Provincial Direction of Public Works and Housing) of the Sofala Province prepared a programme for people affected by the floods, in order to resettle them in safe areas (*Programa de Reassentamento da população afectada pelas cheias 2007*).

In Caia District, only 372 families (2.313 people in total) have been moved from the risk areas. Anyway, it must be underlined that the whole number of families to be resettled in Sofala Province is almost 6.384. According to 2007 data, only 16,1% of the families were displaced. The goal, then, is far to be achieved and the problem is still extremely topical. At the moment, the resettlement process has entered the second phase, which consists in transforming the temporary settlement camps into permanent urban areas, equipped with infrastructures, services and “conventional houses”.

Another factor determining the abandon of the rural areas, which has been noticed in other Districts of Mozambique by some authors, is the loss of competitiveness of the local agricultural products, due to the import from other countries. This exogenous factor has not been detected in the case of Caia District, which on the contrary shows, together with a food-producing that guarantee subsistence levels in particular in the area situated in the west bank of the Zambezi River, a certain export of agricultural products toward major towns.

Population of Sofala Province in resettlement centres

District	Nº of resettlement centres	Number of resettled families	
		2007	2008
Búzi	3	419	17
Caia	17	3000	657
Chemba	2	1300	
Dondo	-	-	
Machanga	1	-	221
Marromeu	3	1.328	
Nhamatanda	-	-	

Instituto Nacional de Gestão de Calamidades, Centro Operativo de Emergência (COE) of Beira, Mozambique.

Pull factors

The most relevant pull factor of the small urban centres of the Caia District, is represented by the previously mentioned infrastructural works, which are employing a not negligible number of local workers.

If the rural population is now being attracted by job opportunities in the construction sector, the major pull factor in perspective will be the important role that will be played by the *vilas rurales* of the District at national level. The construction of such infrastructures, in fact, will put them in the middle of national and international urban networks and trade flows.

After having completed the phase of post-war reconstruction, Mozambique deals today with the challenge of a rapid socio-economic development. Modernizing infrastructures, and in particular the transport network, is considered essential for poverty reduction, for supporting private sector and regional economic integration, as well as for a broad-based and sustained economic growth (*Plano Quinquenal do Governo 2005-2009; PARPA II*). This national strategy will be particularly relevant in the case of the small towns of Caia District, situated at the cross point of strategic transport axes. The national road EN1, which connects the whole country from North to South, passes as said through *Vila de Caia*. Furthermore, the *vilas rurales* of the District are situated along the *Zambesi Corridor*, one of the three corridors planned to give hinterland countries access to the sea and to promote the Southern Africa economic integration. The economic interest towards this plan is being confirmed by international investments.

Apart from the role that small urban centres of Caia District will assume in the next future, another important factor of attraction is represented at the moment by the initiatives that such centres are assuming in promoting market economy and more in general local development. The *vilas rurales* of the District, in fact, function as markets for regional agricultural products, produce goods and services for their rural areas and offer the opportunity of combining subsistence agricultural activities with non-agricultural ones. Creating the conditions to differentiate income sources and to improve the quality of life, through the provision of urban services, is the most important factor detaining rural population from migrating to major towns. At the same

time, small urban centres connect the surrounding rural areas to national and international urban networks and trade flows.

Another factor of attraction is represented by the high concentration of international cooperation programs, which not only involve a certain number of inhabitants but have also the effect of increasing urban structure. International cooperation contributed in fact to the construction and functioning of the main educational structures of the District, i.e. the Secondary School in Caia, built by the Chinese cooperation, and the Agrarian School in Murraça, built thanks to the direct aid of the Italian Autonomous Province of Trento. A part from the personnel directly involved in teaching and managing, the creation of these structures favoured the growth of both services and trade activities, linked to the demand of the numerous students.

At the same time, interventions as the enhancement of the aqueducts of Caia and Sena, the construction of a network of primary schools and the creation of a community radio reinforced attractiveness of the small centres.

Again, international aid programs implemented after the Zambezi floods, almost concentrated in Caia and Sena, attract population from the rural hinterland through several activities as construction works and goods and services supply. Moreover, after floods not only resettled population but also a huge number of poor farmers of the surrounding areas were attracted by the distribution of food and medicines made by the international donors.

Finally, national policies centred on administrative decentralization and diffusion of urbanization are requiring a great number of employees in public administration and services. This is leading to the transferring of high skilled population from major urban centres.

It has to be observed, anyway, that in spite of all the above mentioned factors of endogenous development, the population growth of the *vilas rurales* of Caia District seems to be determined mainly from factors that are pushing the population away from rural areas, in particular referable to the Zambezi floods, than from an ongoing local development. In other terms, we are observing a phenomenon of “urbanization of poverty”, where urbanization is caused by political crisis - the war - and then by environmental emergencies in rural areas.

Anyway, it has to be also underlined that small urban centres of Caia District are demonstrating to be able to “retain” population. In other terms, such *vilas rurales* are not a temporary destination and they do not represent a diving board for a new

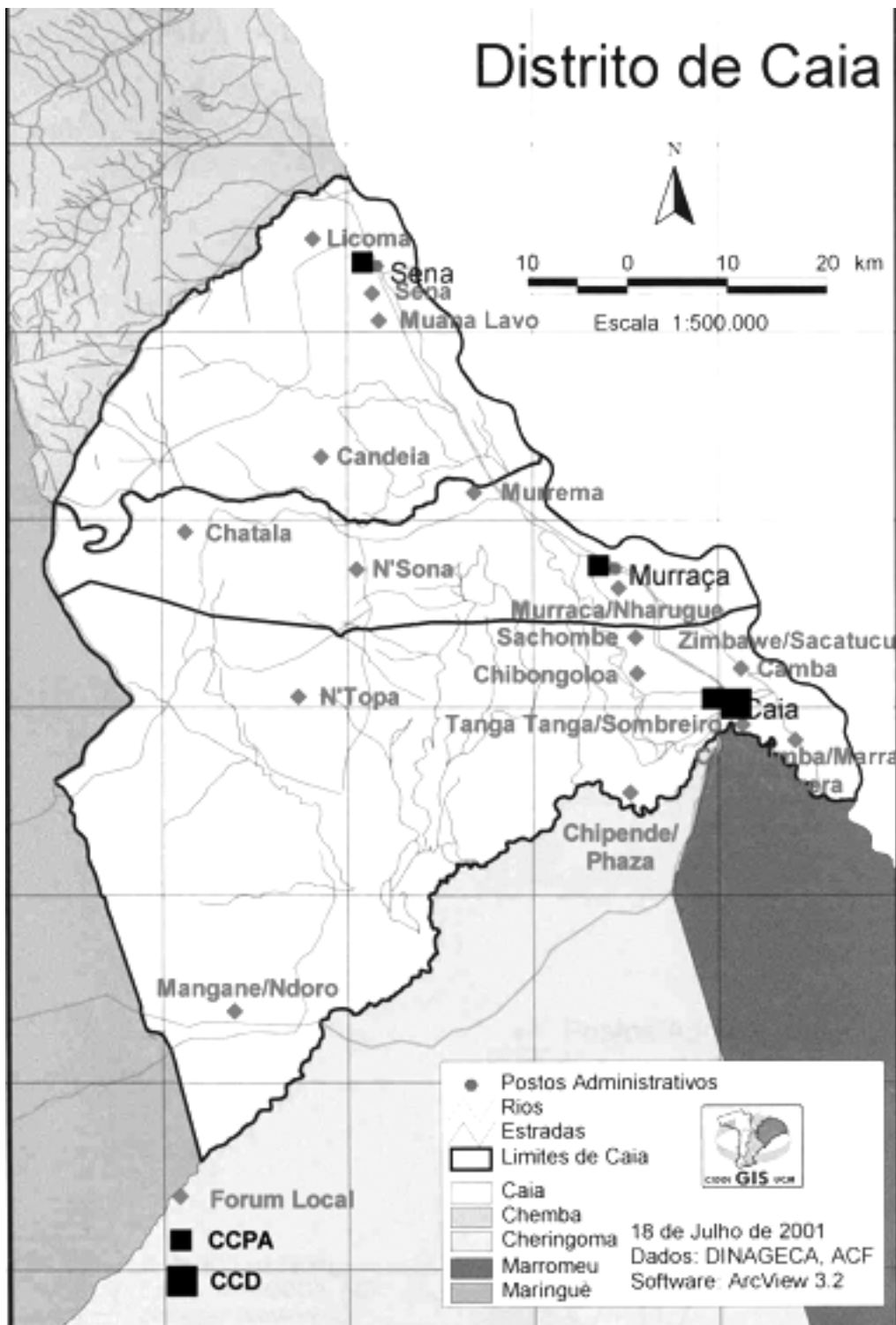


displacement of families towards major cities. On the contrary, such settlements are offering to their inhabitants the opportunity of leading a life that is surely hard, but anyway dignified.

4. Caia District: The challenge of the new administrative tasks

Caia District includes 3 *postos administrativos* and 5 *localidades*, which overlap 22 *regulados*. The last ones are areas under jurisdiction of a *regulo* who is a traditional authority representing customary rights of rural communities – including land tenure - and their role in conservation of natural resources.

The Caia District: Advisory Bodies



Finally, urban *bairros* (neighbourhoods), each formally delimited, and administrated by a secretary nominated by the district administration, are to be added to this administrative system.

Caia is the seat of the District Government that includes, besides the administration

office, several directions. The District Government avails itself, as advisory body, of the *Conselho Consultivo do Distrito* in which take part, besides citizens and representatives of different categories who operate officially with recognized power by the people, even the *regulos*. Until few time ago, also delegates of both NGO and local churches took part in this Council.

Sena and Murraça have also a *Posto Administrativo* – constituted by both the *Chefe de Posto* (Head of the administrative unit) and the local responsible of the others administrative structures – supported by the *Conselho Consultivo do Posto Administrativo*. The participative system includes also 16 local forums that operate in *aldeias* distributed on the entire district.

The Development Strategic Plan

One of the first tasks faced by the District Government after the approval of the Law of Local Organs of the State, was the drawing up of the *Plano estrategico de desenvolvimento*, which took place in 2006 with the contribution of the GTZ, the Provincial administration and some NGO operating in Caia. This plan, besides containing a deep analysis of economic and social situation of the district and a description of weakness and strength points, individuates both a priority field of intervention and 4 areas, at district level, for which different actions are programmed.

The main weakness points individuated by the document are: the limited agriculture production, the lack of sources of drinkable water, the high frequency of the Zambezi floods, the lack of both public structures – principally schools and hospitals - and social infrastructures. The main strength points individuated are: the abundance of water resources, the presence of large forests and rich soils. The priority field of intervention is represented by the scarcity of water, due to excessive salinity, found in Mangane, Ntopa, Chatala and Candela, all *aldeias* located in the interior of the district.

The development areas that have been individuated are the following.

- The corridor along the Zambezi River between Caia and Sena, characterized by high population density, presence of important infrastructures, and fertility of soils. Here the main problem is the scarce productivity of agricultural activity.
- The agricultural region situated in the western part of the Zambezi corridor, characterized by inadequate utilization of agricultural land, lack of infrastructures and middle population density. Here the main problem is the scarce agricultural production.

- The forest region, which occupies the western part of the district, characterized by the presence of large forests and wildlife, and low population density. Here the main problem is the difficult water supply, given the deepness of the ground water.
- The alluvial region situated in the eastern part of the Zambezi that is characterized, besides the presence of the rich and complex habitat of the river, by the frequency of floods which inundate soils cultivated during the whole year. Here the problem is the loss of human lives and goods.

This document goes on presenting a detailed list of actions, which are considered having priorities, which involve several aspects of the local economy and society. It is obvious that the District alone is not in a condition to finance the whole plan, but the last one can be a helpful reference for the State administration, international bodies, and development cooperation carried out by governments and NGO, as well as foreign investors acting in the district.

Further to the *Plano estratégico de desenvolvimento*, in 2007, the *Plano económico-social* (Economic and Social Plan) has been drawn up, with reference to the *Plano de acção para a redução da pobreza absoluta* (Action Plan for reducing absolute poverty), undertaken by the Mozambican Government.

The *Plano económico-social* is addressed to 18000 households of the district – that is 79,7% of the total – that depend entirely on agriculture. The plan is aimed to increase the agricultural production level, diversify the food, promote commercial production, increase the livestock production, reduce the loss of agricultural product, extend the commercial network and involve rural communities in managing natural resources.

With reference to these goals the District administration operates directly organizing forms of cooperation aimed to extend flushed lands, promoting the production of fruits and vegetables, distributing oxen to provide incentives to animal traction. And again, distributing products which safeguard harvest from the attack of insects or creating local committees to protect wilderness and forest resources.

The results of these actions are tangible, since the high increase in the production of sesame – a product much-sought in the last years on the Asian markets – allowed to contain the effects of two years of scarce harvest. This happened in a context, the Caia district, in which the food production normally succeeds in guaranteeing, as mentioned, just subsistence levels.

The Land Use Plan

In the last years the District administration, besides the ordinary tasks defined by the Law of Local Organs of the State, had to cope also with two emergencies: on one hand the resettlement of peasants affected by the Zambezi floods, on the other the rapid transformations produced by the already mentioned infrastructural works. It is better to start from the latter emergency, because the solution proposed for it has determined the conditions also for the solution of the former.

The realization of impressive infrastructural works entailed, mostly in Caia, the arrangement of the bridge construction camp, the creation of accommodation facilities and, above all, a supply of middle-standard houses – that is made of long lasting building materials – and of related services. To this, other works related to the realization of the secondary school had to be added.

According to the Environmental Impact Study undertaken in relation to the construction of the new bridge, the presence of heavy means of transport would have facilitated wood commerce, which together with demographic pressure, would have accelerated the already ongoing deforestation. Furthermore, a huge increase in the production of industrial waste had to be expected, as well as the increase of illnesses.

The District administration looked immediately at an urban plan, for the drawing up of which asked for the involvement of the *Consorzio Associazioni per il Mozambico*, an Italian NGO that receives technical support from the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Trento.

Therefore the drawing up of the plan was made jointly by the *consorzio* and the district authority. It is to be underlined the operative participation of the *Conselho Consultivo do Distrito*, for the more general operations, and of the *Conselho Consultivo do Posto Administrativo* of Caia, with reference to the choices related to land use control. The district authority lacked of qualified technicians, so that it was necessary to train a group of young people, some of them graduated at the secondary school, who constituted first the *Gabinete do Plano* (Planning Office) and then the *Servicio Obras Publicas* (Public Works Office).

Through the plan, the district authority intended not only to respond to the dynamics started from the infrastructural works, but also to provide Caia with modern structures to be realized together with the regularization of urban land occupation, the improvement of the water supply system and the forthcoming connection to the electric

system. The Plan, at the same time, had to avoid the dichotomy of urban economy and society.

The double goal became, then, to ensure the ordered transformation of the town, and guarantee the integration of its different economic and social components. This was obtained paying attention principally to the persistence of traditional economic forms, first of all agricultural activities, but also handicraft production and petty trade within a frame of urban-rural interactions.

Effectively, the plan acted in this way by favouring the integration of different parts of the town. This happened by working conveniently on urban centralities, in order to use them as hinges between the modern town and the traditional one. Similarly, the adequate distribution of functions was thought to stimulate contacts and avoid separation. Furthermore, the circulation of people was favoured by avoiding the formation of places inaccessible to the majority.

Another central theme of the plan was the still ongoing registration of the land occupied for housing in informal settlements, as well as of the expansion areas of the town, classified as land suitable for development. Finally, the plan started upgrading programmes in the informal settlements, which consisted mainly in the construction of roads, drainage and, in perspective, of the water supply system. On the 18th of October 2006 the Provincial Governor signed the approval of the plan, the first concerning a *vila rural* in Mozambique, authorizing the District administration to sign the titles of land use. The plan is now being implemented.

As already mentioned, the drawing up of the plan created the conditions to face promptly the problem of the resettlement of population forced to abandon the flood plane of the Zambezi River after the floods. Having established areas suitable for urban development, in fact, allowed the district authority to indicate immediately to the provincial administration, which was working together with international donors, the new expansion areas to be occupied by immigrants. The first settlement, in fact, was realized exactly where the plan considered urgent to join an informal *bairro* with the future railway station. All this was made considering the resettlement of the families affected by the floods not temporary – and consequently to be handled by the provision of refugee's camps – but permanent and, therefore, to be faced by urban growth interventions.

In both these circumstances, that is the Development Strategic Plan and the Land Use Plan, the District authority demonstrated to be able to address complex processes and

to involve technical - also high-level - skills in supporting specific political and administrative objectives.

Conclusions

Small towns of many developing countries are playing an essential role in retaining population migrating from rural areas, which in the past headed towards major towns. This role was hypothesized in 1970s without being confirmed in the following decades. On the contrary, the urbanization processes took place confirming the attractiveness of major towns, which absorbed almost the whole increase in urban population.

Now this role is outlined by both statistical data and, above all, case studies carried out at country and regional level that contribute to give also some explanations for this reversal. In this framework the study presented on Caia District, in Mozambique, suggests a double image of population growth of small towns.

On one hand it confirms that urbanization, even the one involving mainly small towns, depends in many developing countries more on persisting crisis in agricultural areas than on the development of urban economy. In this specific case study, in fact, the different reasons that push rural population to leave rural areas – first of all the Zambezi floods and the displacement in urban centres - occurs without relevant transformations in urban economy. Therefore what happens is the coming up again, in towns, of subsistence forms based mainly on rural labour. This last phenomenon could be an explanatory key for the population growth of small towns. Their urban dimension, in fact, guarantees the availability of agricultural land, whose production can be integrated by other jobs suggested by the urban context. An analysis carried out in Sena by the same authors of this paper in the summer 2008 confirms this hypothesis.

On the other hand, small sized towns do not appear passive at all in facing this change. Caia District is directly involved in the realization of major works that introduce, besides direct effects on urban economy, elements of strong modernization to which local authorities contribute actively.

Moreover the small towns are actually in the position to perform urban functions that before were only performed by major towns, being equipped with electric power and drinkable water – even if not all families have access to these services – and also with secondary schools, training colleges and finally with modern communication infrastructures.

In any case, the problem represented by the scarce incidence of urban jobs in these towns still persists, even if something gets a move on. Local actors, in fact, are emerging, taking the opportunity given by the circulation of money to start new activities, above all in trade sector.

Another aspect of the ongoing change of the *vilas rurales* is represented by the increasing in more and more complex administrative functions. In the case of Caia District, the results in planning activities, which represent something new in the administrative practice of the district, revealed good management and technical capacities of the local administration system. It is true that at the moment senior technical and administrative personnel come from major towns. Anyway, it is to be underlined on one hand an effective involvement of these senior technicians and administrators in day to day work – even because it is on its quality that depends their career – and on the other the level of capacities reached by local personnel, whose training occurred in the middle of the recent administrative and technical experiences, even of short duration.

Finally it has to be underlined the relevance that the participative process is assuming, even taking into account limits often pointed out by case studies. In the case of Caia District, besides institutional participation forms that involve only stakeholders, there are decisions made by a large number of people, as it happens when informal *bairros* are involved in upgrading interventions. In this context, it is frequent to see people getting not only into the matter of discussion, but also into technical aspects of the intervention.

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