Collaborative knowledge development through action research:
A case study of research into appropriate land management mechanisms for
peri-urban areas in Mozambique and Angola

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Abstract
This paper is based on recent and on-going action research in Mozambique and Angola, both of which are developing new land and planning legislation largely reflecting their situation in opening to market forces, but also post-war democracy. A crucial issue for both countries has been to what extent emerging land markets are formally recognized, and under what forms of tenure, as land formally remains nationalized and/or under state control. The research has been focused on the impact on the urban poor of the new legislation and market tendencies. It deals mainly, but not exclusively with the two capital cities, and the peri-urban areas of these. It has sought to identify appropriate urban land management mechanisms that are politically acceptable, socially legitimate, economically sound and institutionally practicable. Rather than starting from a best practice approach, these research projects have concentrated initially on a political economic analysis of the context, as well as in-depth analysis of the socio-economic situations and cultural perceptions of the urban poor, including actual urban land management/market mechanisms, which are mostly informal. This has been seen as necessary to both permit political and social awareness of the need for appropriate mechanisms, and ground these in local institutions (mental models and organizational structures). The research then draws from international experience and assesses how to apply this locally, and the on-going nature of the legislative changes lead to this being termed action research.

The paper provides a short introduction to the general context of urbanization and the importance of urban development, as well as land management and related research approaches. It then briefly provides background to the two countries, including the urban land management situation, with specific focus on Maputo and Luanda, followed by a description of the two research projects. The empirical section of the paper summaries results of the research available to date (institutional attitudes studies) in both places, comparing these briefly. Overall the research, while accepting that market activity is a fact and can be an appropriate exchange mechanism for urban land, focuses on how socially modified market mechanisms to be established to both protect the poor majority and create a solid basis for improved urban efficiency. In this it is critical of more simplistic state-nationalised or “free-market” approaches to urban land management in such situations, where both the state and the formal market are weak. It thus aligns itself with the critique of the neo-liberal paradigm for urban development, but also warns of the trends in the pos-neo-liberal paradigms. In particular it focuses on the role of knowledge production and management in this evolving paradigm, and the role of collaborative knowledge development through action-research.
Introduction

Urban development context

Urban development is slowly becoming a focus for international development agencies, rather reluctantly it would appear as many still predominantly focus on rural development. Whether rural development can in itself be a major basis for development beyond providing basic food security is questionable, at least in some parts of the world, as agriculturally based export-oriented development increasingly encounters “glass ceilings” in terms of international trade. However the scale of urbanisation, and the latent attitude to seeing urban areas as “problems” rather than “solutions”, are beginning to affect some agencies’ policies — reactively rather than proactively. A few agencies of course have for some time stressed the importance of urban-based development, yet at the same time these have implemented policies to reduce what has been termed a pro-urban bias — the World Bank being the prime example.

The resulting trend for urbanisation in future may in fact lead to a qualitative change in what we consider urbanisation. Instead of the increasing concentration in major urban areas of new waves of the previously rural poor and their subsequent natural growth, we may see the growth of linear forms of urbanisation. These may well be along main transport routes, as the larger urban areas and the rural hinterlands do not provide either adequate food security or monetary income, and households balancing subsistence survival across both areas tend to move to locations where this is more possible (see Jenkins 2003). This will require new attitudes to both urban and rural development which should see these sectors less separated.

Whether this is the case or not we face the continuing results of major urban population growth in existing urban areas in most parts of the “South” over the past 25-50 years without the concurrent growth of urban employment. What makes this more acute than previous forms of rapid urbanisation — which also ran ahead of adequate forms of provision of infrastructure associated with urban densities in relation to public health and/or efficiency - is the scale of the urbanisation and related urban poverty, and reduced opportunity for inter-continental migration. It is thus accepted wisdom that urban areas will continue to grow and yet their economic potential (in basic and redistributed forms) will remain severely stretched for some time.

Whereas early attitudes to urban growth in the “developing world” included various rural-urban migration controls, segregated living and forced removal, later attitudes were dominated by reluctant acceptance of urban growth and the application of forms of state-redistribution and then market allocation for urban resources – within the Basic Needs and Structural Adjustment development paradigms respectively. Neither has been particularly successful in terms of either equity or efficiency as the fundamental solution is rooted in wider issues related to the vast disparities between “North” and “South”. The more recent development visions imbued with “Third Way” ideology stress the need for much more sensitive state-managed market activity, and have set themselves targets for global action against poverty, although these are as yet to be assessed in practice.
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This approach also influences urban development strategies, which are the theme of this conference. In general state-managed market-driven growth is at the core of new approach(es), with forms of redistribution to kick-start this, as well as protect marginalized groups. We are thus arguably already moving beyond the neo-liberal consensus in terms of development into a new neo-Keynesianism paradigm, but there is much to be clarified within the new development policies which replace this – for instance the continuing rather ambivalent attitude to urban development.

Land management and approaches to knowledge

Land management is core to urban development and this paper draws on recent research into emerging land markets in peri-urban areas in Mozambique and Angola as a way to focus on the relevance of emerging “post-neo-liberal”, or neo-Keynesian, approaches to urban development. In previous more ideologically charged times, much land policy was developed based on either the state or the market as dominant actor. Neo-liberal approaches in their heyday stressed the importance of minimally regulated markets, and land markets were a key element of this (e.g. Doebele, 1994; Durand-Lasserve, 1996; Jones & Ward, 1994). At their most simplistic, these entailed freehold land supply as a basis for security and investment, a trend which continues to be strongly advocated in some parts. However research has begun to show that such simplistic policy responses may not be appropriate as either being considered too risky in relation to livelihood mechanisms (Calderon 2001; Gilbert 2001), or not possible to implement due to the lack of appropriate market and other regulatory functions (Stein, 1995). This has led to a more recent literature and research into regularising informal land markets (e.g. Durand-Lasserve, 1997, 1999; Fourie, 1997; Kombe, 2000; Kombe & Kreibach, 2000).

In today’s world of the “Third Way” the approach to urban land has become more oriented to partnerships and process. We support this general orientation but consider the nature of the proposed partnerships and processes sometimes limited. We argue that a model which accepts the state, the market and civil society as actors is important – especially where the state and/or market are weak, as in fact the mechanisms that actually operate are then often embedded primarily within social structures and values as opposed to state regulation or market forces. We would argue that whatever the ideological orientation in terms of macro-level social and/or economic development, it is the institutional aspects of land management that are key to this in practice – both the mental models which affect the way actors operate (whether individual households, private sector actors, or actors within the various relevant tiers of government), as well as the organisational structures which can permit or constrain operation of different mechanisms.

This leads to how appropriate approaches can be developed. Based on our own experience, we argue that a contextually embedded investigative approach is essential, which permits a realistic analysis of the political, economic, institutional, social and cultural values within which appropriate solutions can be developed. As such we argue against the simplistic assumptions that underpin much of the research and professional pedagogy in relation to land – perhaps most obviously in the so-called “best practice” approach. This approach to knowledge production and transfer is closely associated with the new development paradigms, with its focus on knowledge management. Our position is that to often the adoption of new laws,
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policies and implementation mechanisms has been distorted by ideology, the interests of a powerful minority (such as governing elite and/or bureaucrats) - or more recently, exogenous “expert” experience – somehow uprooted from its context and implanted fairly arbitrarily as having been a “success” (although how this is measured is rarely explained).

Appropriate solutions, and the processes to investigate these, require interaction with and between a wide range of stakeholders and engagement in some form of negotiation, in order to develop land management mechanisms that can work and are acceptable. As such the approach we advocate is based on a political economy analysis, with a strong element of what can be termed “new institutionalism”, and is predicated on a joint development process with local actors. This form of research is often also seen as “action research”, in that it has a specific normative orientation and usually responds to on-going – and often rapidly changing – needs. At its core is essentially a collaborative and flexible approach to knowledge development, which we want to focus on in this case study.

Analytical basis

Trends in land research have broadly followed the main development trends, and doubtless contributed to the development of these. Thus, for example, the focus in the 1970s and early 1980s was on land access for the poor (related to the re-distributive Basic Needs approach, but also the neo-Marxist political economy critique), whereas in the later 1980s and 1990s it was on land markets (related to Neo-Liberalism and Structural Adjustment). These themes continue in the new dispensation of the Third Way, but land is increasingly seen as an element of a wider livelihoods approach with a focus on poverty alleviation and/or wealth creation – i.e. simultaneously dealing with both equity and efficiency issues. That said, the main approaches to urban land research remain typically focussed on a) the political economy, focussing on how land is “produced” or “packaged” and who benefits (e.g. Rakodi 1994); or b) market trend analysis, such as land market assessments such as promoted in the Urban Management Programme (Dowall, 1994). A more recent alternative is investigation of the socio-cultural aspects of land, with investigation of the “meaning” land can have in different cultures and forms of knowledge – and their use (Assies, 1994).

While this latter perhaps indicates some post-modernism in approach it is related to recognition of indigenous forms of knowledge and the relationship between these and the social organisational structures with which they are embedded, and has been an important component of rural land research (Delville, 1999). In general the simplistic approaches of the past – land nationalisation or promotion of full freehold land markets – have been critiqued sufficiently for there to have emerged a substantial literature on different more synthetic approaches. These, however, seem to fall into two categories – an emphasis on public-private (or state-market) partnerships in urban land management (Payne, 1999) and the emphasis on “socially modified” land management in rural areas with a focus on peasant agriculture and embedded social systems (e.g. Toulmin & Quan 2000). The overall approach to land management in the current development paradigm is therefore that of a “nuanced” state managed, socially responsible, market sensitive approach, as exemplified by the international agency consultation document DFID 2002.
In general we agree with the nuanced aspect of this approach, although remain concerned that the lack of clarity in ideology can lead this to be seen as “all things to all men”. As such our interest is not so much to critique the neo-liberal agendas of the past 15 years in this field (although we definitely support this critique), but to discuss how this approach is applied in practice. We believe that this is the acid test of the ideological content in each specific situation.

It appears to us that the move from an ideologically determined research agenda (whether right- or left-oriented) to a more open agenda has led to a focus on “learning from experience” and “knowledge transfer” in narrow ways which can themselves carry implicit ideological directions. Whether this has come about because of the relatively limited number of researchers in urban land issues, or whether it has come about because of a further set of simplistic assumptions about knowledge and practice is not clear. However, as noted above, much of the emphasis in knowledge transfer in this field has focussed on “best practices” as a means of packaging and disseminating experience. While learning from other situations can be stimulating, the application of this form of knowledge can be shallow and rather limited in effect. An alternative “embedded” learning process, which is context specific and entails endogenous development and analysis, we recognise entails investment in investigative and analytical skills that may not be present in the relevant sectors in many parts of the world, however we believe it is the only way that a more grounded analysis, which can produce a more relevant set of actions, can emerge.

We thus focus in this paper on the process of development of appropriate land management mechanisms and the obstacles to these as well as on the “post-neo-liberal” approaches themselves. We hope to relate how two processes of embedding new approaches to urban land management systems have been started and their current status – one in Mozambique and one in Angola. The former is stalled for now, although is seen as part of a long term process with starts and stops. The latter – due largely to the fortuitous context – seems to be moving forward very rapidly in a short space of time. Both are on-going processes and as such incomplete. Although we will describe something of the context and the wider investigation processes, we will focus on a comparison of the institutional attitudes to urban land management as a means to stress the importance of nuanced context-embedded investigation as opposed to simplistic assumptions of land management responsibilities, and also highlight the essential limitations of the “context-lite” best practice approach.

In addition we will argue that the nature of the situations does not permit the luxury of in-depth “objective” empirical research which might produce results in time, which might be of use or might be applied. The interest here has been to engage with the key actors from the beginning and use the research process itself as a tool to this end, with a view to affecting policy as it is formed. The essential difference between the two approaches has been the investigators as actors in the processes as opposed to external neutral entities, and this has probably affected their application. The action-research approach may not always be appropriate, but does demonstrate the essential embedded nature of this form of knowledge development and transfer. In addition there is a need to be flexible in approach and remain focussed on the main objective, adjusting to changes in circumstances, which also include the information produced and its reception. This is a challenge for external development organisations and thus the level of engagement of national actors in the process is critical.
Case study background

Both Mozambique and Angola were colonised by Portugal, and although the processes differed somewhat in detail, the overall effect was rather more different from typical English or French colonisation. Both countries became independent in 1975 from Portugal mainly as the indirect result of wars for liberation, but also changes in macro-economics and political blocs – as membership of Europe became more important for Portugal and as it went through a reaction to the social and economic costs of the liberation wars. However while competing groups colluded in a new post-Independent government in Mozambique, there was faction fighting in Angola which continued until relatively recently despite periods of military stasis – locally termed “no war, no peace”. This is not to suggest that Mozambique was governed by a homogenous polity, rather it was dominated fairly successfully by an elite, which - similarly to that which maintained control of the state in Angola - promoted an ostensibly socialist development path. The Cold War intervened in both countries through proxy states – mainly Cuba and South Africa in Angola's continuing set piece war, South Africa and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe with more direct Russian interests in Mozambique's insurgency. These forms of civil war rumbled on in both countries until the end of the Cold War led to peace processes, successful in the case of Mozambique which had limited capacity for the warring parties to continue on their known, but resurging in Angola, fuelled by its strong exports in oil and diamonds. Mozambique opted for a new Constitution with specifically market-friendly development policies as an integral part of its peace settlement in 1992, whereas Angola fought on, with a less general anti-market stance in economic terms, until the main rebel leader (Jonas Savimbi of Unita) was finally killed in February 2002, permitting a rapid peace process to be started – still underway at the time of writing this paper (April 2003).

As a result there are now significant differences between the countries other than their economic development potential. These include their degree of integration into the global economy – with Mozambique reverting to a high degree of integration within the South African dominated regional economy, but Angola retaining its more international points of reference due to its strong exports, surrounded by a set of weak neighbouring states. Other differential aspects are the decade of peace which appears to be producing some economic dividends for Mozambique in terms of inward investment – albeit regionally subordinate and with arguably limited re-distributive and broader development potential. This has a certain degree of diversification, although focussed on agriculture & fishing, tourism and energy/mineral extraction. Angola’s economy on the contrary has become totally dependent on oil and diamonds. A further factor related to the last decade is the commencement of reconstruction in Mozambique, which Angola only now is beginning to face, including major demilitarisation and de-mining efforts.

Despite these major differences, there are a number of similarities of relevance to urban development issues. Land was nationalised in Mozambique and large areas of land confiscated by the state in Angola. The lack of any clear pre-Independence policy in urban development had led to laissez faire attitudes to urban settlement with large informal sectors in both countries. These grew rapidly as the war intensified inward rural-urban migration, however the longer and more intensive war in Angola...
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led to a much more concentrated form of war-related urban growth with large rural areas almost abandoned and the concentration over time in Luanda, the capital. In addition the large numbers of urban dwellers are generally very poor - Mozambique being one of the world’s poorest countries, and Angola having an extremely high tendency to wealth concentration in its elite and resulting high general poverty levels, urban and rural. The result in urban terms is large to very large, generally informally occupied peri-urban areas, with extremely basic services, high poverty and expanding populations – leading to both rising densities and outward sprawl. The urban environmental problems are immense – and the capacity to deal with these is weak due to the tendency of highly centralised government structures was well as the poverty/wealth structure, but also the legacy of the colonial period in skills development.

More specific information on the two capital cities is available in City Profiles (Jenkins 2000b & Jenkins et al 2002) including typical urban problems. Key amongst these is the lack of virtually any formal land management, and the structural weaknesses of the forms of informal land management that have filled the gap. The situation in both countries – especially in the capital cities – has been aggravated by a de facto land market despite this not being legal. This appears to have operated in both countries throughout the socialist/war periods, but more openly in Angola where it was not outlawed per se. The informal market tendencies are perhaps more incipient in Mozambique, due to its economic deregulation in the past decade, but also seem quite established in some of the peri-urban areas of Angola. To some extent this situation is more prevalent in the capitals, but even in secondary and tertiary urban areas land commodification is beginning. The issue is thus not mainly an ideological one of whether a land market is “good” or “bad”, but what can this achieve and what is the role of the state, as well as civil society actors, in these markets in terms of more equitable and efficient urban development.

The research in Mozambique was undertaken in 2000 by Paul Jenkins of the Centre for Environment and Human Settlements (CEHS) with local research partner Centre for the Development of Habitat (Faculty of Architecture, Eduardo Mondlane University, Maputo). This was funded as a small grant by DFID-ESCOR, and focussed on the impact of the emerging land market on the urban poor. This research project was of limited size due to funding, but built on a number of prior research activities in urban land management in Mozambique and more specifically Maputo, which the principal researcher had been involved in since the early 1980s (see for example Jenkins 1990, 1993, 1999, 2001c). As such it was possible in the research report to report on a wide range of issues, including the trends in formal and informal demand as well as the legislative and institutional situation concerning urban land in the country. The specific research project focussed on two methodologies aimed mainly at the (changing) political economic context, investigated through an institutional analysis focussing on attitudes of stakeholders, undertaken through loosely structured interviews with key informants and through semi-structured surveys of peri-urban inhabitants in key urban areas. The initial findings were presented at the previous N-AERUS conference in Leuven in 2001, and are available from CEHS (Jenkins 2001a) as well as in an ID21 Highlight. ¹

The research in Angola started with a seminar hosted by the Angolan-based NGO Development Workshop (DW), looking at urban land issues in Angola (Luanda,

¹ Some of the background research is also published (see Jenkins 1999, 2000a).
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November 2001). This latter workshop led to DW undertaking a scoping exercise on urban land problems during January – September 2002, funded mainly by UNCHS (Habitat) through the Angolan Ad-hoc Commission on Human Settlements, with advice from CEHS. At the same time Development Workshop, Centre for Environment and Human Settlements and UK-based NGO One World Action prepared a more comprehensive research programme, based on the scoping exercise, which was accepted for funding by DFID (Angola Desk) in October 2002. This latter programme has a series of linked research projects in Luanda and Huambo, and is still underway.

The Angolan research is different from that in Mozambique in that the background research undertaken over many years in Mozambique is not available, as there has been very little research or activity in peri-urban land in Angola since before Independence, nearly 30 years ago. As such the various components of a wider analysis still need to be undertaken. These are included in the research programme as follows:

a) A review of the legal situation and proposals for the current debate on a new land law vis-à-vis urban land (completed with proposals developed by the research team that have already been included in the national land law debate);

b) An institutional attitudes analysis, similar as in the Mozambican case above – i.e. through loosely structured interviews with key informants (implemented in November/December by a joint DW-CEHS team, and drawn on for this paper – see below);

c) Parallel qualitative surveys with peri-urban inhabitants in key urban areas to investigate the following (nearing completion with data-inputting underway):
   i. Attitudes to land and land tenure
   ii. The incidence and nature of conflicts over land
   iii. Mechanisms to access and exchange land actually used
   iv. The role of land as an asset in poverty avoidance and/or wealth creation
   v. The possible post-war trends in migration

d) Assessment of informal land demand and supply over time (to be initiated soon)

e) Assessment of formal land demand and supply over time (to be initiated soon)

f) An analysis if institutional capacity vis-à-vis land management – mainly in state institutions (to be initiated soon)

It is hoped that by September/October 2003 all of these components will be completed and a synthesis report presented to government.

Comparison of institutional attitudes

The core part of this paper is based on a comparison of the institutional attitudes surveys in both countries. Although the issues discussed were not exactly the same – as for instance the issue of post-war reconstruction were important in Angola,

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2 This came about mainly through dissemination of the Maputo project.
3 This will be reinforced by participation in a national land seminar in late May in Luanda.
4 Initial discussions on appropriate land management mechanisms for government are expected to be started in late May, with a view to the subsequent phase of the project being developing partnerships between the state (national, provincial and local levels), private sector and NGO/CBO actors in implementing appropriate mechanisms.
whereas the action of 10 years of market forces post-war were more of a focus in Mozambique - however sufficient overlap was achieved to permit such a comparison. The objective of this research was basically twofold:

- Ascertaining what were the attitudes of different institutions and actors in relation to urban land; and
- Developing awareness of key issues in urban land vis-à-vis equity and efficiency and general development

A similar set of institutions and of interviewees were targeted in both countries. Semi-structured interviews with these actors allowed the researchers to identify perceived and expected institutional responsibilities and roles, and the attitudes these actors had towards aspects such as urban development trends, efficiency and equity in urban development, and the resource base for urban development and management. What follows in this section is first a summary of the findings concerning the actors and their responsibilities and roles, secondly a comparison of their attitudes towards the defined urban issues, and finally a summary of overall findings across the two places where the research was undertaken.

**Institutional responsibilities in Maputo**

In Maputo, central government is characterised by the existence of a variety of agencies involved in aspects of urban land and urban development, some of these of recent creation, and among which collaboration is still in some cases incipient. The attitudes towards land issues of the ministries involved range from the Ministry of Public Works & Housing’s (MOPH) concern that the new urban land use regulations should allow the property market to develop more freely to stimulate private investment – whilst avoiding high compensation claims in upgrading and rehabilitating existing occupied urban areas – to the Ministry of State Administration’s (MAE) view that land markets need to be regulated by the state as land cannot be sold as such, and that this is a key issue for local government.

Local government activity in urban development in Maputo had been almost totally absorbed by emergency activities after the floods in 2000, encountering many problems with prior informal occupation. However, the city municipality was preparing plans for urban expansion areas as well as the upgrading of some inner city areas. It was preparing to ‘formalise’ all the ‘informal’ partial urban land layout plans which were developed since Independence, as it considered these have no legal status. In general, local government understood it had limited capacity and economic base for full land planning and development, and called on central government to support it more legally, technically and financially.

Since the housing market was liberalised in 1990 a number of real estate companies have been formed. Initially involved mostly in the rental market, they are increasingly becoming involved in new housing developments, but have encountered many problems in getting access to urban land for housing development because of earlier land allocations by non-transparent mechanisms and speculation. The problems of land supply have led to joint ventures between housing developers and landholders, but the lack of housing finance and high costs of development restrict their activity and they continue to work predominantly for a small national and international elite. The private sector expressed considerable interest in a land market assessment which would help to regulate the sector and be advantageous to all: the investors
who could better assess costs; the state which could better set taxation levels; and current land occupiers or concessionaires, who could better set land prices or be compensated more adequately.

NGOs are working generally in emergency activities in Maputo peri-urban areas, for which there has been a high level of funding. Normally NGOs focus on community development projects and are oriented to the urban poor and most vulnerable within this group. Those NGOs solely involved in emergency flood assistance are aware of the complexity of some of the urban problems involved but have no overview, whereas some of the NGOs active in urban development are more aware of the problems associated with emerging urban land markets and the informal sector. Most NGOs see government favouring the private sector over communities, including tendencies in urban land access. In general NGOs want to work with the government but see very limited interest from the government in partnerships. As a result some of their activities remain very small scale.

Another institutional actor in Mozambique was the World Bank, with two major urban development projects undertaken\(^5\), and at the time preparing a new urban investment loan with various municipalities. However it had specifically excluded urban land issues from this programme as it considered these too complex for the nature of the project.

**Institutional responsibilities in Luanda**

In Luanda, at central government the discussion on the proposed land law has been led mainly by the Ministry of Agriculture, though there is an understanding of the imperative to act on urban land issues. Part of the (acknowledged) problem is that there is no clear institution at central government level which should take responsibility for urban land issues – a legacy of incomplete coverage by ‘forals’ (urban areas with defined land management responsibility) in pre-Independence days, and the curtailment of the state’s technical capacity due to the colonial exodus post-Independence. At the time of the research, a new government structure was announced. Although there was still no clarity over responsibilities for land management, the position was that one institution should be created with the overall responsibility. The view across central government was in favour of strong state leadership in developing a national urban development strategy that would reduce pressure on Luanda in particular, through the creation of rural and peri-urban growth poles. However, low state capacity for implementation of this was also recognised, thus requiring partnerships with the private sector and others.

Outside of Luanda, central government is represented through provincial delegations, but their institutional weakness leads to the continued centralisation of functions in central government. In Luanda the provincial government is more or less the urban government. This provincial government has a certain installed capacity for urban planning and land management, though not adequate to the challenge it faces in this regard. Recent legislation established the competencies of provincial and local government levels, including in relation to urban land management, but there were

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\(^5\) The Urban Rehabilitation Project (1988-1995), with activities in Maputo and Beira) and the Local Authority Reform Programme (1994-1999), with activities in Maputo, Beira, Nampula, Quelimane and Pemba).
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collaborative knowledge development through action research: There was therefore a need for clearer definition of responsibilities in this area between central, provincial and local government, with particular emphasis on the latter as urban land management is closely linked to local urban administration and also to the fiscal base for local government.

Currently local government is subordinated to provincial government, with the provincial governor appointing the municipal administrators, and these in turn appointing commune administrators. Below the commune administrators there are a variety of local entities operating. In larger urban areas such as Luanda, coordinators – or bairro leaders – operate through residents’ committees (“comissões de moradores”). While this ‘informal’ role is subordinate to the commune administrator, it has significant importance in local administration, including land management. Although local government has formally allocated responsibilities in urban land management, the ambiguity in the delimitation of competencies (see above), and its serious lack of technical capacity, greatly constrain its involvement in land management. Thus, the expressed intention in future to devolve more responsibility to this level needs to be articulated with the actual role of subordinate levels, such as the commune and below.

After Independence the formal private sector more or less disappeared, as much land and property was confiscated by the state. The move to divestiture of such confiscated property since the beginning of economic restructuring has led to the re-appearance of formal sector operators. Informal sector operators seem to have operated throughout the interim period however, and much of the resurgence of private sector activity has been stimulated by state entities operating on the fringes of the market such as through direct property development. Further development of the private sector has been constrained by: land still formally belonging to the state; lack of clear state responsibilities; lack of a clear legal and regulatory basis for the property sector in general; the absence of a housing finance system; the problems of legal identification of individuals and the weakness of the legal system to underpin repossession; and the actual financial capacity to lend in the long term. The relatively strong private sector demand in Luanda is driven by the oil sector, and is predominantly for middle and upper income housing, and a relatively successful experience of public-private partnership to provide land for this sector has operated for some years.

Focusing predominantly on humanitarian assistance, increasingly NGOs operate in development activities. A few key NGOs have been involved in land issues for some time, mostly concerning rural land, but a limited and increasing number have experience in urban land issues. There are two main activities: (1) defence of legal rights, and (2) urban management capacity building/assistance. There is generally a stronger support from the state for activities by NGOs which directly support capacity building for local administration and related services, including land management. Here the activity of NGOs has been important in suggesting alternatives to direct state and/or private sector activity, and as such has importance in situations where the capacity of the state and private sector has specific limitations in relation to need and demand.

The other main actors in urban land who were interviewed were land specialists linked to either government study groups or international agencies. Both types of actor were mainly involved in rural land issues. Key aspects note by these actors
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were that there are a number of study groups working on development policy issues within government – some of which seem to overlap in that some are based in ministries – and others are cross-sectoral. In addition, the international agencies reinforced the perception of the complexity of the issues compared with experience elsewhere, counselling an approach to drafting the new land law which was relatively cautious.

Comparison of institutional perceptions in Mozambique and Angola

In terms of land occupation trends, though both cities have grown in a context of civil war, Maputo’s growth has been more contained than that in Luanda. Both cities, however, have experienced similar processes in access to land for housing, though in Maputo the formal private sector is more developed mainly due to the longer period of peace and opening to market forces. In Maputo there was broad agreement among interviewees with the analysis of the three main types of mechanisms through which urban land for housing is accessed: formal state allocation, private sector market activity, and informal sector market activity. In Luanda there was a prevailing view that at independence the state had assumed the responsibility for all urban land management without dealing with it adequately, mainly due to the war. In the absence of state control, land access in Luanda since independence was described as ‘anarchic’, a form of development that was seen as the cause of irregular layouts and poor levels of infrastructure and services in the vast areas of unregulated urbanisation. In both cities, the informal sector was broadly recognised as the dominant form of access to land for housing. A major difference between actors perceptions in Maputo and Luanda was that in the former there was an expectation of current trends continuing, whilst in the latter there was (still 6) an expectation that the recent end of the war would foster out-migration from the city.

Although in both cities there was recognition that the state had limited capacity, there was also a perception among state actors that they should have a dominant role. What differed was their approach to tackling the issues of urban development. In Maputo the state was hoping to improve its lack of capacity vis-à-vis the informal land market through better relations between the municipalities and local bairro-level administrative structures, and to continue allocations of the remaining available sites within the central city. In Luanda the position among state actors was that current weakness could be redressed through better legal and administrative provisions. This stronger state would then develop and implement a regional planning approach based on growth poles outwith the city, and major redevelopment within. This policy, geared towards ‘decongesting’ and ‘regularising’ peri-urban Luanda was not being publicly debated, but was very much a high priority on the agenda of ‘technical groups’ within the state.7

Conflict over land was considered to be an important issue in both cities. In Maputo a considerable amount of state effort now goes into resolving land conflicts created by previous uncontrolled state activity and this is a significant preoccupation for the city assembly and municipal council. In Luanda, though currently little formal state effort

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6 This had been a feature of the government’s attitude in Mozambique at the end of war there a decade previous but had now been dropped as unrealistic.

7 One of the results of the ‘collaborative development of knowledge’ approach used in this research was to bring out this de facto policy-making activity to the light, and make it known to other actors.
goes into resolving land conflicts, most respondents were very aware of these and saw them as primarily due to problems of access and definition of rights, as well as to weak capacity of government and other land title holders, and to the ill-defined nature of rights of occupation.

Awareness of issues of efficiency was higher in Maputo than in Luanda. In the former there was an overall perception of high levels of inefficiency in urban residential land use mainly related to: limited access to infrastructure and social amenities, linked to ‘socially inefficient’ densification of land use (overcrowding, health hazards); and private sector market land speculation, based on unrealistic demands which the market buyers are not prepared to meet. The lower level of comment on urban efficiency in Luanda linked this – or rather its absence – to the ‘anarchic’ form of land access and development. In both cities, again, the proposed response was stronger state intervention, through effective urban planning and taxation in Maputo, and through the creation of growth poles and redevelopment in Luanda.

There was more variation between the two cities in relation to the issue of equity. In Maputo, the dominant perception was that the private sector and informal sector both tend to promote inequity, and that it is the state’s role to promote equity, but the latter’s limited capacity to act could also lead to promoting inequity. Little was said by Luanda respondents about what sectors promoted equity. However, in both places there were strong views about land rights. In Maputo there were a significant number of respondents who considered it necessary to recognise customary (occupation) land rights as they stand – including in informal areas – as an essential basis for greater equity, though predicated adequate planning and infrastructure development. In Luanda the rights to de facto occupation of land are generally currently recognized, but there is a position within government at central and provincial level – as well as to some extent within the private sector – that these increase urban development costs and should thus be limited in future. NGOs, on the other hand, are alert to the need to recognize and ‘valorize’ actual occupation rights.

There appears to be a higher understanding in Maputo of the resource base for urban land development and management. The main resource base for urban development was overwhelmingly identified as coming from taxation – mainly land taxes, but also fines for improper land use etc. Other suggested sources included raising capital for urban development from private sector investors, through bonds, etc. No Maputo respondent had considered taxation of land value increases (“betterment”), although all were aware of the potential. In Luanda, on the other hand, the potential role of wealth creation through urban land was only recognised in a limited way, although there was a general position that the state has the main role in controlling this. The mechanisms for this – whether through taxation of land use or change of land use (e.g. agricultural to other urban) – were generally not well understood, with a few notable exceptions. In addition, the importance of urban land in domestic wealth creation, and for the poor in survival strategies, was not clearly understood, and as such the existing investment was generally discounted, leading to the prevalent attitude favourable to ‘re-ordering’ informal urban areas.

**Overall findings**

In Maputo the main actors involved in land management have an expectation of continuity in current trends, whilst in Luanda a prevailing expectation is of a reversal
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(or at least an end) of city growth. Despite these contrasting scenarios, in both places there was a broad perception that the state should have a strong role in managing urban development, though the way this role was fulfilled differed due to the diverging perception of future trends – reduction of the perceived negative effects of the informal market through better land management in Maputo, and radical intervention through creation of growth poles (by the state) and redevelopment of informal areas (by the private sector) in Luanda. In both places there was acknowledgment of the role of the private sector, more widely in Maputo, where it has had the opportunity to develop since the early 1990s, and more restricted to public-private partnerships in Luanda, where the state has not undergone structural adjustment and the formal private sector has not yet been given the conditions to develop. In both places there was recognition of the role that the informal sector plays, but also the perception, especially at higher government levels, that this sector tends to what was perceived as negative urban development outcomes (densification, commodification, irregular layouts).

The comparison of institutional attitudes can reveal major differences across actors in attitudes to land access, tenure and security, procedures and responsibilities and the role of land in urban development, as well as urban areas in development in general. In general the research has pointed to the very limited capacity in either the state or private sector to regulate or develop land for the majority – despite the declared intentions. As such the research has been used to counterpoint the prevailing institutional attitudes with the dominant social, economic, physical and – indeed – cultural reality of the evolving informal land market mechanisms, including the overwhelming scope of this (i.e. results of field research)\(^8\). This has been undertaken in Maputo and is underway in Luanda.

More than this, the process of the above component of the two research projects has been used to disseminate the different attitudes across the key informants, who often are not aware or misguided as to others’ attitudes. The research process itself is used to initiate a process of dialogue through this form of awareness raising as well as raising issues concerning urban land that have not been considered previously, or that were conceived of in different ways, as well as suggesting alternatives. This is seen as key to start a negotiation process on urban land. The outcomes of this form of action research (to date) are reviewed below.

Conclusions

Of fundamental importance for this paper is the focus in these research projects on situations where both the state and market action in urban land management was limited in scope over a long period, and the actual processes developed in peri-urban areas have been largely based on what can be termed “socially modified” traditional mechanisms. The research has focussed on whether it is possible that a strong state-regulated system or a strong market regulated system is appropriate in this context and attempted to assess the most appropriate form of urban land management in political, economic, institutional, social and cultural terms. The research thus starts from the observation that the situation is complex and simplistic solutions are not likely to be appropriate – however from a clear understanding that

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\(^8\) These are not as yet available for Luanda
there are significant limitations in what the various stakeholders in urban land affairs can provide.

One main difference between the two case studies described here has been the nature of the investigating entity in each country. In each the partner with the main research experience was CEHS, an “outsider”, and seen as largely neutral. CEHS however has openly conditioned any sense of “objectivity” through its definition of the objectives of the research in each case. In other words it has declared its interests as being the concerns about land access for the poor majority and equity in regard to this, but allied this to an emphasis on the need for efficiency in urban land management as well as due regard for land values and the role of land in development. The investigating partner in the case of Maputo – another university-based institution - was deliberately chosen also for its perceived objectivity as there was a strongly polarised debate on urban (and rural) land already underway. To have associated with the state (at national or local level), the private sector or the non-governmental sector -- all with rather different positions in this debate -- would have meant less receptivity to the research, therefore affecting the value of the research process and product. However, the very “hot” nature of the debate has led to the university withholding the report from general publication. The results are only available to the main protagonists who participated in the research and this has probably led to a reduced impact of the study. In time it is hoped that this will be overcome and the research published with a wider effect. In general, however, the urban land issue has continued in a stalemate situation in Mozambique during this period, although in practice the trends reported continue and become more obvious and acute. The possible reasons for this can be part of the political economy and institutional analysis as the beneficiaries from the current stasis are mainly the political and economic elite and the bureaucratic class which serves this preferentially.

In Angola the situation has been different. Although non-governmental institutions are taking a strong stance on land affairs, especially rural land issues, and this is becoming politicised, the shorter period since peace was established means that the research is being implemented in the early stages of the land debate. There is as yet less extreme polarisation of views in this – although these do exist – and more opportunity for negotiation. There would also seem to be more openness for this in terms of urban land although this remains to be seen. Here the partner organisation (Development Workshop) has been a open protagonist, but accepted as such due to its long term engagement in partnerships with the government. As the partner is a more active actor this has permitted a more focussed input from the research to political debate, and negotiation on further partnerships are currently being investigated in terms of implementing the possible research findings and recommendations.

This approach to research is very different from that where “so-called” objective entities (typically universities, but also aid agencies and their professional contractors) undertake research which has objectives largely pre-determined by the funder or by the tendencies in international literature and intellectual circles. While this latter research serves as an important resource, as argued in the earlier stages of this paper, it is much more difficult to apply. The tendency has therefore been to publish/disseminate and hope for the best. In these situations the impact is often limited or distorted – if it exists at all – and may take a long time to filter into the local development discourse and practice. We would argue that this is what oftent
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happens with the “best practice” approach – which in effect tends to be dominated by a few specialists and specialist agencies/contractors. The context-based experiential approach necessary for action-research, however, requires a good assessment of the realpolitik of the situation and cannot pretend to be politically “neutral” – something that aid agencies profess to aspire to, when in reality they have quite specific political orientation, albeit defined in Washington, New York, London, Paris or elsewhere.

It is our contention that this form of research and building information in “context-rich” and politically embedded ways will have more appropriate results than the “hands-off” publication of manuals and text books. More pointedly it can have a more immediate impact on the ground. Here however another difficulty arises for the typical international agency. The nature of the action-research has to be flexible and respond to circumstances to continue to have this impact. This makes it more difficult to plan, monitor and assess. Thus as international agencies move to more streamlined managerial and administrative structures and tend to larger and more fixed projects with heavy components of measurable indicators (fed through the inevitable log-frames), it is less likely they will back this type of approach.

So as we enter post-neo-liberal development paradigm(s), these run the risk of continuing to be underpinned by rarified forms of knowledge which have limited embeddedness in the contexts to which they are applied. This quite possibly reflects the over-arching political and economic interests in this phase, where information is a mechanism of power and control, overtaking land, labour and capital in significance. In effect neo-Keynesianism may be saying: “we will help you manage your state-market-society better, because that way we can benefit even more” – either through influence on the global economy or through avoiding the global spill-over of “basket-case disaster”. Essentially what we are dealing with here is forms and mechanisms of intellectual dominance, dangerously allied to economic and political dominance, albeit indirect and at a distance. Our role of researchers has to be to query this level of our activity as much as we can query the more ideological content of research in our area of urbanisation – neo-liberal or other.

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