



## BUILT ON EXPECTATIONS: ANGOLAN AND MOZAMBIKAN EMERGENT AND STAGNANT RURAL TOWNS

Cristina Udelsmann Rodrigues\*

*Nordic Africa Institute, Sweden*

\*E-mail: [cristina.udelsmann.rodrigues@nai.uu.se](mailto:cristina.udelsmann.rodrigues@nai.uu.se)

**ABSTRACT** Both private and public investors in Angola and Mozambique have been responsible for the growth and consolidation of major cities. In the countryside, recent private economic investments and new opportunities attracting population and settlement have contributed to the emergence and growth of smaller towns in rural areas. Emergent towns foster expectations of access to better urban living for migrants, who anticipate the transformation of new settlement areas with infrastructure and services being introduced over time; migrants tend to invest more in their permanence there. In both Angola and Mozambique, however, the expectations around emergent cities have been recently challenged by the economic crises, which began in 2014. The implications for residents include not only a reduction or cessation of access to revenues, but also the frustration of their expectations. Based on qualitative research conducted in Angola and Mozambique between 2015 and 2018, in a post-war, post-economic-boom context, this analysis describes the shifting trends of urban formation and consolidation in four towns and the changing perceptions of urbanism. The conclusion proposes that the state and its investments into the urbanisation of places constitute a key element for the consolidation and permanence of these settlements.

**KEYWORDS:** Angola; Boomtowns; Emergent cities; Mozambique; Rural urbanism; State and urban growth.

### INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanisation has characterised both Angola and Mozambique since the mid-20th century. From 1960 to 2015, the Angolan urban population increased from 10% to 44% of the total population, according to World Bank projections (<https://databank.worldbank.org/data>). The Angolan Census of 2014 indicates an even higher percentage of urban dwellers (63%), based on actual counts. Luanda is the most important urban centre, accounting for roughly 27% (near seven million) of the country's total population (INE 2014). Mozambique, which evolved from having a 6.8% urban population in 1960 to 33.8% in 2014, also has a significant percentage of the population living in cities—34% (around nine million) in 2014 according to the World Bank (reference above) and some nine million in 2017 too, as indicated by the census (INE 2017).

Since their creation, the capital cities, Luanda and Maputo, have been the largest cities; there, new fast-growing areas have also begun to be built, particularly on the peripheries. However, despite these historical urban tendencies, urbanisation today in Angola and Mozambique also involves urban living outside the existing main cities. Cities and urbanism, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are characterised by “unruly, unpredictable,



surprising, confounding” dynamics (Pieterse & Simone 2013: 12) and therefore urban emergence and urban transformation take place not only in already established urban areas but also outside of them. While urbanisation has been historically associated with ‘high-density living’ in the cities, changes have been happening worldwide and “urban culture, society and production systems are increasingly found in rural locations” (Tacoli et al. 2015: 5). The ability to dynamically activate social change has been attributed not only to the ‘big city’ but also to medium and small urban agglomerations (Bertrand & Alain 1997; Rakodi 1997; Bryceson & Potts 2005; Malaquais 2005; Potts 2009). Small municipalities are just as relevant within the urbanisation panoramas and they are equally potential places for improved living and for urban concerns. Worldwide, cities with fewer than one million inhabitants account for 61% of the urban population (UN-Habitat 2010: 4). UN-Habitat’s report ‘The State of African Cities 2010’ pointed out that larger cities—defined there as more than five million inhabitants—absorbed on average only 9% of African urban growth. UN-Habitat further indicated recently that the fastest growing urban centres are the small and medium cities with less than one million inhabitants, which account for 59% of the world’s urban population and 63% of the urban population in Africa (UN-Habitat 2016: 9).

Emergence and growth of new towns and cities in sub-Saharan Africa happens for multiple reasons. Research has shown that most new cities are private-led projects (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer 2017) and, in some cases, initiative and entrepreneurship, external support, and the presence of talented leaders can be a successful combination (Nel 2005). Research also has pointed to the economic drivers of the growth of small towns as being a combination of population, infrastructure, location, municipal leadership, local entrepreneurs, existent industries, and local economic development (Reynolds & Antrobus 2012: 42). In other places, the development of a core activity—for instance, tourism—is perceived as the main impetus for local population growth and improvements in terms of public services, job opportunities, and infrastructure (Nhantumbo & Salomão 2010). Especially in sub-Saharan Africa, new dynamics involving both the private sector and government undertakings in new regions gradually attract both voluntary and involuntary population movements and activities to new forms of settlement (Agergaard et al. 2009; Dobler 2009; Bryceson 2011; Bryceson & MacKinnon 2012). Research on ‘frontier settlements’, ‘village towns’, small towns and ‘emerging urban centres’ has brought to the fore new dynamics in rural and proto-urban areas that turn into new attractive locations, ‘centres for urbanisation’, and ‘urban frontiers’, despite the continued growth of capitals and bigger cities (Agergaard et al. 2009; Agergaard et al. 2013).

The implications of urban emergence outside the established grids are varied but, above all, not easily predictable. The challenges faced by large cities are also likely to affect small ones: “ubiquitous urban poverty and urban slum proliferation, so characteristic of Africa’s large cities, is likely to become an even more widespread phenomenon” (UN-Habitat 2014: 7), as secondary and smaller cities, lacking urban governance capacities, may replicate their larger counterparts. Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the ‘urbanisation’ of new places, formerly rural or towns of small dimension, is often a result of unplanned urban growth and of accelerated in-migration, high mobility, and the ‘provisionality’ of settlement often quickly changing the built environment of cities and towns (Simone 2011: 386); urban planning and management rarely accompany these changes. Moreover, discussions about the viability of the private-sector-driven governance that characterises most new cities have highlighted the social consequences of such types of new urbanism (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer 2017). However, while unplanned new settlements are normally ‘ignored’ until years after their emergence, they do not go unnoticed for residents and migrants, and for private investors.

Both private and public investors in Angola and Mozambique have been responsible for the growth and consolidation of major cities. In the countryside, recent private economic investments and new opportunities have contributed to the emergence and growth of smaller towns. Organised large-scale ventures, such as those related to the exploration of natural resources but also extemporaneous migration of population seeking economic opportunities, such as in the case of boomtowns, have led to the creation of new urban centres in both countries.

Emergent towns foster expectations of access to better living for migrants. While both firms and migrants seek improved economic earnings, migrant residents also anticipate the transformation of new settlement areas with urban types of infrastructure and services being introduced over time (Ferguson 1999). Expected changes make places in the countryside “become culturally more similar to large urban agglomerations”, leading to a visible “rural transformation” (Berdegué et al. 2014: 1), and becoming truly urban in the eyes of their inhabitants. The concretisation of the urban project is, however, dependent on evolution in terms of continued investments both by the state and by private actors. There are various cases in urban history of the boom and bust of cities and towns. There are equally several reasons for the interruption of what were previously considered prospects of urban consolidation. In both Angola and Mozambique, the expectations around some emergent cities were recently challenged by the economic crises which began in 2014. In both countries, liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects suffered profound consequences when oil and natural gas prices dropped, investors withdrew, and state investment encountered setbacks relating to infrastructure and services. Changing opportunities for businesses impacted by the crises have also substantially conditioned the growth of once vibrant border towns. The implications for residents in emergent towns include not only a reduction or

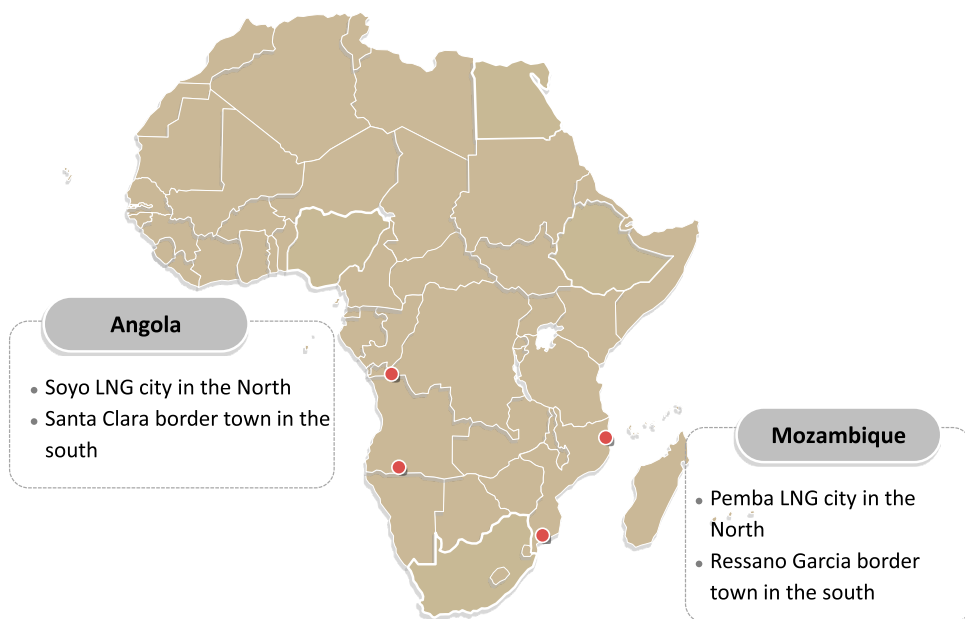


Figure 1 Location of the towns and cities

cessation of access to revenues, but also the frustration of their expectations. These cases are not new on the African continent. Economic decline and decay in Zambia's copperbelt, for instance, reduced miners to a state of abandonment and abjection (Ferguson 1999).

In the Angolan and Mozambican case studies analysed here—border towns Ressano Garcia and Santa Clara and LNG towns Soyo and Pemba (see Figure 1)—the disillusionment of expectations of urban transformation has not demolished all hopes of urban residents and there are signs of a certain 'waithood' regarding a regained impetus for improvements and for urbanisation. African survival strategies simultaneously mobilise creativity and endurance (Ferguson 1999). This state of 'suspension' depends on the restart of local state investments and reinforces expectations of urban futures. The central argument developed here is that state backing of urban emergence is key for development and consolidation of new towns, not only through the investments made but also in the eyes of urban dwellers.

Based on qualitative research conducted in Angola and Mozambique between 2015 and 2018 and follow-ups of the transformations, in a post-war, post-economic-boom context, the analysis describes the shifting trends of urban formation and consolidation in four towns. These were selected based on their recorded growth in the last years and on accounts of their growth in the literature, previous research work or conversations with scholars and policy stakeholders. While data about the internal demographic trends in the two countries and, specifically, in smaller towns is particularly hard to find—and censuses take place only every ten years—the slowdown of urban prospects is captured in the analysis of residents' stated perceptions of the urban transformation, supported by the available quantitative information on urbanisation. The focus of the interviews were residents in the studied towns, although informal accounts were also collected from non-residents that have a connection to the local life. The nearly 50 semi-structured interviews conducted in total in the four locations with residents of different age, sex, or profession and key informants (government and local administration representatives, and specialists, among others) are the basis of this empirical research study which also involved direct observation.

## THE RURAL URBANISATION OF ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE

Several combinations and successive transformations of settlement dynamics have been seen over time since the colonial period (until 1975), throughout the civil conflicts (1975 to 1996 in Mozambique, 1975 to 2002 in Angola) and in the post-war reconstruction periods. The colonial settlement policies configured the rural urbanisation of both countries, through the creation of national urban networks and some specific rural projects involving settlement, such as the agricultural *colonatos*, mining towns, or indigenous villages.

### I. Colonial towns in colonial Mozambique and Angola

Colonial rural undertakings such as the *colonatos* or other agriculturally based model villages began to be built in the late 1940s and early 1950s initially to house indigenous families and, later on, for European families. The most prominent of these, which was considered to be the 'model', were Cela and Matala in Angola and Limpopo in Mozambique (Castelo 2016; Costa 2006). *Colonatos* have not reached the level of urban structuring as, for example, mining towns that were also built from scratch, because the economic agricultural project that motivated them was generally not successful (Bender 1972; Jundanian 1974; Ball 2012; Castelo 2016; Coghe 2016). They were controlled forms

of rural small village building, but shaped by the Portuguese rural model.

Another form of colonial urbanisation were mining towns. Mozambique's colonial coal industry in the Tete province, initiated in the 1920s and later on boosted in the 1940s, was the first to foster increasing settlement in mining areas. The Belgian *Société Minière et Géologique du Zambeze* and, from 1948, the *Companhia Carbonífera de Moçambique*, however, operated intermittently until independence, relying on mobile migrant work and not seeking or continuing stable settlement. The Angolan case was different. The diamond mining company Diamang built mining towns in the Lunda provinces that succeeded in stabilising workers and families in the mines' concession perimeters in a more complex and comprehensive urban model than that of the traditional mining compound (Cleveland 2008; Udelsmann Rodrigues & Tavares 2012). For several years, Diamang was not only in charge of the mining areas but also of local settlement and construction, and ruled there as a quasi-state (Cleveland 2008), organising settlements in detail.

Another relevant mechanism of urbanisation of the countryside was the fusion and unification of native *bairros* and villages. This policy was more active in the last two decades of Portuguese colonisation and had the stated objective of providing better infrastructure—health services, churches, schools, or water supply—but clearly aimed at better control of the population. Unification of localities became particularly active in the eastern regions of Angola where liberation forces were concentrated (Bender 1972; Niddrie 1974) and in northern and north-eastern Mozambique, where the liberation movement Frelimo was operating, the state built *aldeamentos* (villages) and other soldier and military settlements (Jundanian 1974). These systems, however, were not fully implemented until independence in 1975—an estimated 7% of the populated areas and 56% of the rural areas according to a survey conducted in 1972 in Angola (Marques da Silva 2003)—and in Mozambique few of the foreseen improvements took place (Jundanian 1974).

Given the characteristics of the colonial urbanisation of Mozambique and Angola—state-and/or private-led—migration in the interior was particularly dependent on both recruitment to mines, plantations, and other agricultural endeavours and forced resettlements, initiated and run according to state and private planning. The migrants involved relied on infrastructure and services provided by these planners and managers.

## II. Villagisation after independence and warfare in Mozambique and Angola

After independence, other settlement initiatives were experimented in Mozambique, such as the *aldeias comunais*, but in Angola massive displacement caused by the long-lasting civil conflict made settlement in the countryside practically impossible, contributing to the growth of already existing major cities and discouraging the creation of new ones.

In Angola, 'new' towns that emerged during the war were often related to settlement in border regions where escaping the war was easier (Silva 2011; Bakewell 2012) but, in particular, to mining areas where artisanal mining *garimpo* sites run by the opposition guerrillas increasingly agglomerated a number of people directly or indirectly related to the business (Udelsmann Rodrigues & Tavares 2012). Settlement of refugees in border regions forced by war was most significant in the south, in Namibia (Brinkman 1999, 2000; Dobler 2009), in Zambia (Silva 2011; Bakewell 2012; Neto 2019) and migration to the Democratic Republic of Congo was more significant to Kinshasa. In addition to creating new settlements, war in Angola forced the majority of the population to stay put in the government secured cities (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2014), making urbanisation impossible elsewhere.

Mozambican post-independence projects of rural villagisation through *aldeias comunais*,

implemented until 1982 when the civil war no longer permitted their continuity, led to forced displacements and emplacements (Lubkemann 2016). This attempted to ‘modernise’ rural settlements but, in fact, merely copied the previously failed colonial model (Coelho 1998). War also had a broad impact on displacement and settlement in Mozambique, but for a shorter period and with less impact on settlement, although some towns became particularly attractive for the displaced populations seeking refuge (Vivet 2012, 2015; Dava et al. 2013). Throughout the country, “people moved both into and out of the areas controlled by the government and the Renamo at different times” (Wilson 1994: 4) and there were intense border-crossings and relations with neighbouring countries, especially because of refugees (Brennan 1986; Lischer 2005).

During the wartime, migration in the interior was then particularly dependent on the military conflicts. After the end of the war in 2002 in Angola and in 1996 in Mozambique, the colonial urban networks remained practically unchanged. Recent important new economic developments such as the extractive industries and increased circulation, however, started to change the type of urbanisation happening in the countryside, and new migration and movement started to take place.

## EMERGENT TOWNS IN ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE: FOUR CASE STUDIES

The case studies are of towns with the following broad characteristics summarised in Table 1. Worth noting the infrastructural developments of the last years, in their majority promoted by the state or by private-state investment.

### I. Emergent border towns in Angola and Mozambique

After the end of the civil wars, border towns regained their vibrancy in Angola and in Mozambique. They represent new opportunities, continue to attract population seeking them and contribute to the urbanisation of rural areas, which is where most border passages are located. Given their location, border towns are often outside the state urban planning radar. However, as they grow in population and movement of people and trade, they call for state investments in infrastructure. Most of this infrastructure is related to the control of

**Table 1** Study sites and their main characteristics

	Angola	Mozambique
Border town	Santa Clara 21,735 population (2015) Traffic intensive Trade corridor Customs park ( <i>Parque Aduaneiro de Santa Clara</i> ) Truck park Border services	Ressano Garcia 9,000 population (2017) Traffic intensive Trade corridor International terminal ( <i>Terminal Internacional de Mercadorais de Ressano Garcia, Km4</i> ) Truck park Border services
Mining/gas town	Soyo Angola LNG Port infrastructure Airport infrastructure 1,000 jobs expected State services	Pemba Mozambique LNG Port infrastructure Airport infrastructure 5,000 jobs expected State services

the circulation—border posts, commercial and customs hubs—but also roads, transportation and state services.

### 1. Case 1: Ressano Garcia in Mozambique

In Mozambique, the traffic-intensive Ressano Garcia at the border post of the same name, between the capital Maputo and commercially vibrant interconnected South African towns Nelspruit and Johannesburg, is an example of how intensified circulation leads to rising settlement. This area, considered a ‘cross-border micro-region’ within the Maputo Corridor and the state-led programme of the Maputo Development Corridor (MDC), is the result of not only the expansion of existing demographic, social, and economic conditions, but also the ‘millions of migrants’ who moved into it over the years (Söderbaum & Taylor 2008: 35). This urban growth is particularly evident in twin towns Komatipoort (South Africa) and Ressano Garcia which straddle the South African border where, because of the “considerable increase in the volumes of people and traffic crossing the border, new investment opportunities have emerged for retailing and tourism developments” (Rogerson 2001: 340). The town has increased its area by 31% since the 1950s (UEM 2016) and, according to the last census (2017), has a population of about 9,000. The railway and the national road EN4 are responsible for the intense traffic and the area is a migratory hub (Neto 2016; Raimundo & Chikanda 2016). The micro-region was in existence even during the conflicts with South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, and over the years, the corridor has been simultaneously a migration corridor, an informal trade (*mukhero*) corridor, and even a criminal corridor (Söderbaum & Taylor 2008: 37). Given the importance of this traffic, in 2017, the Mozambican government built a trading and transport area in Ressano Garcia to oversee formal and informal cross-border trade, concentrating on migration, customs, and health services. The international terminal (*Terminal Internacional de Mercadorais de Ressano Garcia*), commonly known as Km 4, was built within the project One Single Border Post and has warehouses, offices for support services, banks, toilet facilities, canteens, and a 180 vehicle truck park (Jocitala et al. 2016). Some years before, in 2014, with the aid of government participation, a gas-to-power plant started to operate in Ressano Garcia (*Central Térmica de Ressano Garcia*) and hired around 100 workers for its construction.

### 2. Case 2: Santa Clara in Angola

In Angola, new investments being made at the local level also contribute to the growth and dynamism of border towns. In the south Cunene region, the border town Santa Clara benefited in 2012 from the construction of a customs park—to facilitate the traffic and border procedures—and the reactivation of the Namibe and Lobito ports, and the railways linked to them, is expected to further improve the border town’s connectivity. Originally, before gaining urban prominence at a regional level, Santa Clara emerged as informal agglomerations of a varied range of traders, businesspeople, and their employees. The Cunene traders crossing these borders are mostly from the neighbouring province Huíla, from Cunene, and from Cuando Cubango. During the war, the population from these areas took refuge across the border in Namibia. The end of the war allowed for more people coming from more distant provinces also to participate in cross-border trade (Udelsmann Rodrigues 2010). Like Santa Clara, neighbouring Namibia’s Oshikango, although small with only around 20,000 inhabitants, is a town created “from below, through economic opportunity” (Dobler 2009: 129). It has become a trade boomtown since the mid-1990s (1995–6) due to its safety during the war for the Angolans and its accessibility to the northern region (Dobler 2010). It attracted outside investments and settlement that had more

impact than local initiatives or natural growth (Dobler 2009: 116). In Angola's (south) Cunene region, the border town of Santa Clara grew significantly—21,735 inhabitants in 2015, according to the municipal government—after the construction of the customs park (*Parque Aduaneiro de Santa Clara*) and the truck park, both built in 2012. These infrastructures aimed to organise the local circulation and economy as part of a significant state investment in this remote region.

## II. Emergent mining towns in Mozambique and Angola

With practically no similarities with the colonial systems, mining towns today in Angola and in Mozambique continue to foster human settlement in the rural areas. With a few exceptions, companies and the state alike have significant control of local planning and management, and are the main agents of urbanisation. New opportunities attracting the population to certain regions and, hence, conducive to urbanisation are today varied in both Angola and in Mozambique in the areas related to the exploration of natural resources, where urbanism has increased after the end of civil wars. In Mozambique in particular, the recent exploration of minerals has caused new urban geographies to emerge (Kirshner & Power 2015), particularly the mining activities in the northern province of Cabo Delgado in the Rovuma Basin (LNG projects) where towns like Mocímboa da Praia or Palma and, most notably, Pemba have grown significantly after the initiation of the projects. In the interior of the country, the coal project in Tete has been catalysing for decades the urban growth and economic dynamism of the region. In Angola, offshore oil production, being the most important industry of Angola since independence, has not fostered urban settlement. However, new mineral-related ventures in the north are also linked to on-shore gas exploration, like the Soyo LNG project. Diamond mining in the north eastern Lunda provinces (Lunda Sul and Lunda Norte) is still the most active in-land mineral industry.

Although some of these projects allegedly do not take into consideration issues related to urbanisation or the development of social infrastructure (Nhantumbo & Salomão 2010: 39), they are associated with urban emergence. Urbanisation and consolidations of towns related to natural gas exploration rely not only on the financial and infrastructural investments normally made by private large corporations but also of state support. This is made by state participations and authorisations but also by an important mobilisation of state services to these regions and investments in public infrastructure.

### 1. Case 3: Soyo in Angola

As for mining towns, the border town of Soyo in the north of Angola was organised based on the large-scale oil and gas related activities of the Angola LNG, with state participation. Due to its location on the fluvial/sea border with the DRC, it is also a hub of migratory and trading routes. Before this, it was a small fishing village, with a small number of not so well-known families. According to the 2014 Census, the town now has 227,000 inhabitants. The border post, which is physically located inside the Angola LNG compound, controls mostly the trading and transportation activities, and was placed here, according to local consultations, because the plant became the most prominent and central infrastructure of the town. The Angolan border police survey the circulation of the population across the Congo River, but payment of duties and border documentation is dealt with at the Kwanda Base where the firm is located. The company has been gearing the growth and development of Soyo through a number of construction activities, such as city roads, upgrades to Soyo airport, a power plant to serve the local community, upgrades to Soyo Municipal Hospital, and support to small clinics, schools, and others around the Soyo municipality. Given this



accumulation of conditions, the town has not only been attracting workers to the large-scale venture—employing around 1,000—but also a number of others seeking opportunities related to the town’s growth. As a consequence, the capital of the Zaire province, Mbanza Congo, has lost, over the last few years, economic and even administrative prominence to Soyo. The province administration staff most of the time is based in Soyo where there is a stronger infrastructure. Population in-flows catalysed urban growth only after the establishment of the natural gas plant and associated urban infrastructure, such as the airport, built in 2008. Although the town has not witnessed significant improvements in regional road connectivity in the last few years—natural gas is transported by sea through the Kwanda Base port of the Angola LNG—there has been a constant influx of populations seeking opportunities related to the expanding local economies.

## 2. Case 4: Pemba in Mozambique

In Mozambique, in Pemba, urban rapid growth was also boosted by the prospects of LNG exploration nearby, in Palma. In fact, urban growth has been recorded in Pemba—the main city in the region and capital of Cabo Delgado province, served by port and airport—but also in Mocímboa da Praia, between Pemba and Palma, and Palma itself, where the LNG base is located, though at a smaller scale. Estimates are in 2030 that Pemba will have amassed more than 30% of the population of the province (currently around 230,000 for a province of 2 million, which represents 12%) (Cruz e Silva et al. 2015). Unlike Soyo, Pemba was already an important city in Mozambique before the gas. The *Companhia do Niassa* started its urban occupation between 1987–89 by creating Porto Amélia and, in 1958, the port became a city. It had three urban plans (1936, 1956, and 1963) and, after independence, changed its name to Pemba. Although it remained not very infrastructured until the new millennium (when its touristic potential started to be explored, fostered by state development plans and by private investments of tourist operators), it rapidly received many migrants related to the construction of the LNG and associated services since the early 2010s. Expectations were that an average of 5,000 jobs would be created in the first three years, according to Anadarko Petroleum Corporation, leader of the gas project. The influx of population to the city caused its physical growth, which included not only hotels, condominiums, and luxury houses, but also informal settlements.

## III. Emergent towns and private and states involvement

The key actors for the accelerated growth of ‘natural gas’ towns are most prominently private large-scale endeavours, although public–private partnerships have also often been established and the state has become the main interested stakeholder in the construction of infrastructure or support of its construction in Soyo and in Pemba. In Angola, Angola LNG has been partnering not only with the government, but also with private companies linked to major services for the gas industry which, besides generating employment, are also in some cases investing in urban construction. In Pemba, major international firms directly and indirectly involved in the gas business have also participated in the transformation of the city for the same reasons. Despite state investments in major infrastructures like ports and airports, the private sector steers a significant part of the urban planning and management in both cities. Palma and Pemba in Mozambique or Soyo in Angola are examples of cases where ‘projects bring the cities with them already and services follow them’ (A.R.L., male, 56, Pemba, April 2017). In both cases, private actors of the formal or informal sectors play a central role in the edification of cities and urban living. To sum, border and mining towns’ emergence and growth in Angola and Mozambique has been the result, accumulated

and/or sequential, of the conditions set by the civil wars, the changing interconnectivities, and the initiation of activities attracting population. The dynamics behind the emergence of mining/extractive-based towns and border towns are intertwined with other factors and conditions as well, most notably with the quantity and quality of the state's public support for urban growth.

## EXPECTATIONS AND DELUSIONS: WAITING FOR THE STATE

### I. Roles of states building emergent towns in Africa

The cases illustrating emergent urbanism in Angola and Mozambique and the qualitative research conducted there reveal that a combination of factors—economic boom and investments taking place in both countries as well as post-war freedom of circulation and mobility—created expectations of improved life in new fast-urbanising rural loci. While expectations on the part of investors were of profitable businesses, the state saw opportunities for taxation and control of the local economies and settlement. Urban dwellers in turn forecasted improved urban types of living in emergent towns.

The state, through public investments, on several occasions in partnership with private interests, has played a key role in the emergent localities by establishing infrastructure related to the intensified circulation on the one hand—roads, railway, electricity, and water—and services like education and health, and organising settlements and deliberate urban planning, on the other. As shown in Table 2, the state and public-private infrastructural investments in the four localities are concentrated on border-related facilities and on the mining activities, as well as on health and education services.

While some of these projects have been completed after the start of the crises in both

**Table 2** Key infrastructural projects

	Transportation infrastructure	Roads	Schools	Health facilities
Santa Clara	Customs and truck park 2012 Renovation of Ondjiva airport 2005	Rehabilitation of the Ondjiva-Lubango road 2008	School 1&2 levels 2017	Health post 2008
Ressano Garcia	Truck park 2017	Rehabilitation of the Moamba-Ressano road 2017	New labs in the Secondary school 4 de Outubro offered by the electricity central 2016	Rehabilitation of the Ressano Garcia health post 2019
Soyo	Renovation of airport 2012 Kwanda base customs post 2007 Renovation of port 2012	Rehabilitation of the Luanda-Soyo road 2012	Polytechnic Institute of Soyo 2012 Faculty of Engineering of Kintambi 2012	Rehabilitation of the municipal hospital 2012
Pemba	Renovation of airport 2013	Rehabilitation of the Pemba-Palma road 2014	School Hotel of the Pemba Institute 2019 Vocational Training Centre 2010	Surgery block in Palma 2014 Rehabilitation and improvements of the Province Hospital in Pemba 2016

countries, it is notorious the decrease of the number of announcements of new major infrastructural investments. With the exception of the contributions from the large-scale international firms to public works, the levels of the best growth periods in the four towns have not been re-matched.

Related to this, discussions about the private-sector-driven governance of new cities evolve and evidences of social fragmentation and exclusion call into question these models for the emergent urbanisms (van Noorloos & Kloosterboer 2017). This further stresses the key role of the state in urbanism and local development. By taking responsibility for urban development and urbanisation, residents in emergent towns have built expectations about the likeliness of improved infrastructure and services provided by the state to follow affluence and economic dynamism, gradually translating into an urban type of living. Individuals interviewed in these types of places have stressed the importance and significance of seeing state interventions happen.

Sub-Saharan Africa, however, provides many examples of regional growth independent of state-led strategies (Bach 2008). It is interesting to note this state-dependent feature of rural growth and transformation in Angola and in Mozambique as compared to other African contexts. There are also many other examples of state-led urban development and growth in the two countries. The state has an important stake in some of the major private real estate investments being made in the peripheries of both Angolan and Mozambican cities and in rural areas. It is the leader in building new cities linked to the capital cities or to provincial capitals, and in the construction of new neighbourhoods; therefore, it is a key actor creating urbanism in the rural areas. In Angola, new urban (re)configurations are emerging in the capital Luanda, in the provincial capital cities, and also through the construction of new neighbourhoods in rural areas within more or less complex public–private partnership programmes (Pitcher & Moorman 2015; Cain 2016; Croese 2017). In Mozambique, state-led urbanism is quite significant too, although at a smaller scale but, there, private mineral related investments stand out more prominently, involving important rural resettlements and concomitant challenges (Mosca & Selemane 2012; Langa & Mandlate 2013; Kirshner & Power 2015).

## II. Expectations from states in emergent towns in Angola and Mozambique

While new towns are rarely solely creations of the state or of the private sector, there are normally great expectations regarding the changes the government can bring to new towns and how such interventions will manifest. The projects for urban development of the LNG towns in both countries have not advanced as expected by the residents—and in Mozambique the project has even been halted—while the border towns' residents refer to more individual and private level investments than state endeavours. Dwellers of new towns have specific expectations of the state regarding continued support to local development, and provision of infrastructure and services, and state intervention is often seen as the natural consequence to both spontaneous emergence of towns such as border towns and the implantation of new urban sites such as mining towns. Accounts of residents collected in different types of new urban configurations are informative in this regard. A summary of the main messages collected through interviews shows that the urbanisation of emergent towns is evident and the role of the state in this regard is rather emphasised (see Table 3).

Both those that moved to the fast-growing towns and cities for work and due to business opportunities also highlight the fact that this transformation leading to more urban types of living had a bearing in decisions to move more permanently to the new towns.

**Table 3** Background of the selected interviewees and references to urbanism, the role of the state and the impacts of crisis

	Reason for moving	Reference to improved urban living and role of state	Reference to impact of crisis
DN, male 41, businessman, Soyo	Business opportunity	State role in cities and businesses	
EC, male 35, teacher, Santa Clara	Work opportunity	More urban type of living	Crisis impact on in-migration
JB, male, manager, Ressano Garcia	Work opportunity	State role in cities and businesses	
D, female 58, businesswoman, Ressano Garcia	Business opportunity	State role in cities and businesses	Profits are lower
J, male 29, technical staff, Soyo	Work opportunity	More urban type of living	
IM, female 38, trader, Santa Clara	Business opportunity	More urban type of living	
AG, female 73, resident, Pemba	Long-term resident	More urban type of living	Crisis impact on in-migration
MZ, male 72, landlord/businessman, Ressano Garcia	Long-term resident	More urban type of living	
PJ, government official, Santa Clara	Work opportunity	State role in cities and businesses	Crisis impact on in-migration
DM, male 59, businessman, Ressano Garcia	Business opportunity	State role in cities and businesses	
EZ, male, technical staff, Soyo	Work opportunity	More urban type of living	
DMK, male 40, teacher, Santa Clara	Work opportunity	Improved conditions led to permanent residency	
X, male 45, businessman, Pemba	Business opportunity	Improved conditions led to permanent residency	Profits are lower
MA, male 68, resident, Maputo		State role in cities and businesses	Return seen as failure
D, female 58, Ressano Garcia	Business opportunity		Profits are lower

### 1. Expectations and complaints from businesses

Among those involved in businesses, some people point to the fact that “The state is responsible for the growth of cities” (DN, male, 41, businessman, Soyo, April 2016) and this constitutes a central reason for migration and settlement: “The population goes to where the basic conditions are created” (EC, male, 35, teacher, Santa Clara, April 2016). In Mozambique, too, these investments are seen as catalysing and attracting others; as a local manager of the Ressano Garcia transit park put it: “With the [border truck] park, came infrastructures; there are already five hotels in town since three years ago and the migrant population has increased a lot” (JB, male, manager, Ressano Garcia, April 2017). In these emergent towns, most residents interviewed anticipate that urban growth there will be planned and managed by the state: “in the parking area, businesses are more interesting. There is more space for trucks but opening a business there will have to go through the municipality” (D, female, 58, businesswoman, Ressano Garcia, April 2017). Expected investments locally are then central to business related activities and when they do not happen, references to its absence emerge.

## 2. Expectations and complaints of residents in general

As residents see towns emerging and consolidating, perspectives of urbanisation dominate the perceived futures. As posed by a resident, “Young people of Soyo have progressed; the mentality is new” (J, male, 29, technical staff, Soyo, April 2016). For others, it is the urban aspect places acquire that nurtures the expectations, as referred to by a resident: “Initially, Santa Clara was a market and settlement; but now it is more organised and the houses are better” (IM, female, 38, trader, Santa Clara, May 2016). In Mozambique, the perceived transformation is also materialised in the physical transformation, as mentioned by another resident: “Pemba changed immensely since five years ago: so many new hotels and even a big commercial area now” (AG, female, 73, resident, Pemba, March 2017). Unlike neighbouring district/province capitals, such as Mbanza Congo in Angola and Moamba in Mozambique, some emergent towns stand out in terms of the urban dynamics, as perceived by residents: “Moamba is “off” until today. There is only agriculture there” (MZ, male, 72, landlord/businessman, Ressano Garcia, March 2017). These notions of a prospective urban future, gradually materialised in infrastructure and urban living, have sustained the enthusiasm for urban transformation of what not long ago were rural areas during the boom phases.

## 3. Expectations and complaints of migrant residents

When migrants, who make up the significant majority of the population in these emergent towns, perceive that there are improvements being made or that may potentially be introduced by the state, decisions to remain in the new towns are more likely to be taken. For instance, issuance of land and property titles is a key element for continued permanency in new towns and is dependent on state concession. However, visible new construction more directly feeds the expectations of urban residents, as a local government official of Cunene (Santa Clara border) mentioned: “the government programme “200 houses per municipality” is going well. There are many new constructions and plots for self-construction have also been delivered. Soon, this will be a better organised province.” (PJ, Ondjiva, March 2017). Urban permanence and stabilisation gravitate towards the expectations of increased investments made by the state and the private sector, which in turn foster individual and family investments made and accumulated over time. A resident mentioned an example of clear urban growth: “Before there was just one school and only up to the seventh grade, but today there are five and for higher grades” (MZ, male, 72, landlord/businessman, Ressano Garcia, March 2017). These individual and family investments normally materialise in house-building and improvements, but can also take the form of economic activities, such as jobs and businesses. While residents witness the growth and ‘evolution’ of towns, they often state that they still miss “water, electricity, roads” (DM, male, 59, businessman, Ressano Garcia), which are expected urban assets. As the same informant mentioned, “There are promises of improvement. For instance, the power plant promised to engage in social responsibility, but since 2013, when they came, they did nothing.” Quite often, residents in emergent towns intended a temporary stay when they moved. In particular, housing signifies the actual or prospective permanency in the new towns: “I finished building my house in 2012. This neighbourhood was a bush before; now, it is all nice houses” (EZ, male, 29, technical staff, Soyo, April 2016). Businesses and work also have an important weight for decisions to stay in a certain location. As years pass and investments grow and become more solid and stable, the tendency for permanence increases and becomes stronger: “I am already used to being here” (DMK, male, 40, teacher, Santa Clara, May 2016). In Mozambique, residents in cities like Pemba, where the anticipated natural gas project started to mobilise public and large-scale private endeavours, also report

various individual investments. As a resident 45-year-old businessman mentioned, “I was frequently travelling back and forth to Maputo, but Pemba started to be more promising, and so I moved my family here and our family business too” (Pemba, April 2017). Longer-term settlement is then an indicator that the urban life expected from those who migrated to new towns is somehow materialised.

## II. Impact of the economic crisis since 2014

However, with the recent economic crises in both countries, the state has substantially halted investments in most of these towns and cities, with impacts on not only the volume and pace of construction but specifically regarding the expectations of the dwellers. Table 2 provides examples of the major infrastructural urban changes in the four towns and the slowing-down of investments while on Table 3 the references to the impacts of the crises in both countries focus on reduced in-migration and of profits from businesses. The ongoing economic crises are now causing disillusionment regarding the projected urban futures. This context often generates apprehensions of different types as “return to the countryside is seen as failure” (MA, male, 68, resident, Maputo).

### 1. Overview of the economic crises

Briefly, the economic crises in Angola and Mozambique resulted from a combination of adverse national and international contexts, starting in the beginning of the 2000s and becoming more visible in 2014/2015. In Angola, the dramatic drop of oil prices from a peak value of over US \$110 a barrel in February 2014 to US \$60 in 2015, and continued fall to approximately US \$35 at the beginning of 2016, was the main factor which steered the crisis. Subsequently, between 2014 and 2016, the Angolan state budget was significantly reduced from US \$74 billion to US \$41 billion, with the construction sector’s share declining from 8% to 3.1% (Cain 2016). In Mozambique, the ‘mega-crisis’ was generated around the combination of the international crisis and disinvestments in the mega-projects—particularly the LNG projects—with wrong economic policies, hidden debts, and corruption (Castel-Branco 2017). This context was further combined with a series of terrorist attacks in the north, in the area of gas exploration, and a significant decline of donor support since 2015, which has been for many years an important source of state revenue. The economic growth consequently declined from 7.4% in 2014 to 3.8% in 2016 (World Bank 2017).

### 2. Effects on emergent towns

The crises started to have significant direct impact on the economies all over the two countries and the emergent towns were no exception. Previously seen as places of opportunity, the economic downturns notoriously restrained the levels of enthusiasm of residents; as one businesswoman put it: “with the crisis, now it is different; profits are much lower” (D, female, 58, Ressano Garcia, April 2017). As a consequence of the shift from high local state investment to deferral and even disinvestment in some areas—particularly in infrastructure—apprehension is growing among urban residents of once thriving urban centres. In Soyo, the gas project saw international investors and the state withdraw from further investments due to falling commodity prices. In Pemba, this same situation and the added concerns about the country’s debt scandal also brought private firms to a standstill. Border towns which received a major infrastructural boost were also impacted by the crisis. Santa Clara’s once constantly fully booked warehouses and truck parking have become practically empty for long periods, and accounts of less traffic at the Ressano Garcia border

are also frequent. The interruption of the prospering economic and urban growth can be clearly perceived; as a businessman that used to enjoy good profits from house renting said: ‘Ressano Garcia was developing, evolving, but it has fallen a bit because of the crisis’ (MZ, male, 72, Ressano Garcia, March 2017).

While there are no accurate figures on the demographic trends, the stated perceptions and some scattered figures about border traffic or new construction, for example, show that the pace of urbanisation is slowing down. The urban life expected to come has been postponed, suspended, and, in a significant number of cases—specifically among those interviewed—disillusionment populates the imaginaries. Indications of new investments, on the part of corporations and of the state may reactivate local expectations. Actual projects on the ground, increased job and economic opportunities or new infrastructure in place will be the indicators of renewed urban vibrancy for the urban residents.

## CONCLUSION

While much urban creation is dependent on combinations of local, social, migratory, and economic dynamics, the state’s investments into urbanisation of places constitutes a key element for the consolidation and permanence of emergent cities in rural areas. The state plays a key role in urbanisation by providing and creating infrastructure and services, and supporting private large- and small-scale investments. As such investments on urbanisation are made, they generate expectations of improvement and better urban futures among residents. These expectations lead to increased individual and family investments in settling in new towns and building their futures there. In cases such as those of mining and border towns in Mozambique and in Angola, the counteracting of these trends provoked by the economic crises that started in the mid-2000s has engendered widespread feelings of disillusionment and of ‘urban postponement’. While they have not completely lost hope for future urban lives, urban dwellers stress the key role of the state in guaranteeing that small towns evolve to desired ‘proper’ cities. While this may not be a surprise, particularly in developing countries, it is crucial to understand and relativise the role of large-scale private investment in the production and management of urbanism, which is frequently over-estimated. Large-scale private-led rural (and urban) development is frequently fed by dispossessions and extraction (Arrighi et al. 2010) concentrated in resource-extraction enclaves (Ferguson 2006) rather than motivated by constructive plans for sustainable local development. Moreover, as shown, state initiative and actual improvement of urban infrastructure and services, aware of the dangers and bust effects of unstable and shifting urbanisation, has a direct effect on the perceptions and perspectives of urban residents, catalysing individual and family investments, which can be mobilised for local development.

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