DECENTRALISED SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA

Situation and challenges
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1. INTRODUCTION

The last forty years have been characterized by the establishment of sub-national governments in most countries, which are accountable to the citizens for their actions. Thus, the irresistible spread of sub-national governments of all types and levels has become the main characteristic of the institutional landscape of countries.

This groundswell, which imposes itself, including in the other regions of the world, is illustrated by the principle of self-governance, which results from the socio-economic and political transformations of the last four decades. In practically all regions of Africa, this principle of self-governance translates into a transfer of powers formerly exercised by the central Government, towards decentralized authorities at the regional, provincial, and local levels. These authorities, within the framework of the exercise of these competences, benefit from the legal persona and the financial autonomy necessary for the good fulfillment of their public missions.

The principle of self-governance is itself based on another principle: the principle of subsidiarity. It is a political and social maxim according to which the responsibility for a public action must be allocated to the smallest entity capable of solving the problem on its own. Subsidiarity also goes hand in hand with the substitution principle, which means that when the problems exceed the capacities of a small entity, the higher level then has the duty to support it, within the limits of the principle of subsidiarity. It is therefore a wish to ensure that we do not do, at a higher level, things that can be done with as much efficiency on a lower scale, that is to say, the search for the relevant level of public action.

The principle of subsidiarity within the context of decentralization emphasizes the comparative advantage that the sub-national governments, has by virtue of its proximity and its better knowledge of the demand for local services, to better exercise a competence formerly exercised by the central Government. By being close to the populations, and therefore better knowing the demand, sub-national governments ensure a better adequacy of the supply of services and the demand of the populations.

Subsidiarity translates concretely into the allocation to sub-national governments of a certain number of competencies, which cover the daily life of populations, namely health, education, sanitation, transport, and drinking water supply, to name only the basic competencies. Even if great differences often exist between African countries in terms of the competencies of sub-national governments, their definition has been an important aspect of decentralization policies. In some countries, the general competence clause for sub-national governments has been introduced. It designates the possibility for sub-national governments to settle the “matters falling within their jurisdiction” without a precise and limiting definition existing. sub-national governments can therefore intervene, under the control of a judge, in any field, based on the local public interest, and since the jurisdiction is not devolved by legislation to another public person.
While getting involved in the provision of local public services to populations, particularly the poorest, sub-national governments are also involved in international cooperation. The international action of sub-national governments has thus considerably expanded, especially since the 1980s. Decentralized cooperation is thus taking on an important dimension by increasingly involving local authorities around the world in countless cooperation projects. By highlighting their Know-how, sub-national governments have contributed, through decentralized cooperation, to ensuring the efficient and effective provision of local services, thus contributing to strengthening their credibility on the national, pan-African, and global stages.

But how many local authorities are there in Africa? How are they distributed per region and per level of decentralization? What is their governance (elected or unelected councils and/or executives)? What room for maneuver is offered to them by their national Governments (quality of their institutional environment)? These are all questions to which this paper strives to provide precise answers for the year 2021.

2. DECENTRALIZED SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA

Sub-national governments that are active in Africa are fourteen thousand nine hundred and seventy-three (14,973), including fourteen thousand two hundred and eighty-two (14,282) grassroots governments, one hundred and seventy-one (171) intermediate level authorities, and five hundred twenty (520) higher level governments (Regions, Federated States, Provinces, etc.).

The core governments constitute the smallest scale of sub-national governments. They have various names in English-speaking countries (district councils, urban councils, municipal councils, town councils, municipalities, towns, etc.) and in francophone countries (urban or rural municipalities, city, urban community, municipalities, etc.) (communes urbaines ou rurales, ville, communauté urbaine, municipalités).

Higher-level governments are the highest level of governments. They are, according to the countries, Provinces, Federated States, Regions, Islands, and other geographical groupings.

Intermediate-level governments exist in countries at three levels of governments; they are those located between the basis scale and the upper scale. However, the case of Kenya is particular because the “Counties” are in fact an intermediate scale which contrasts with the previous local division.

The total number of decentralized sub-national governments can change significantly for two main reasons.

On the one hand, not all the sub-national governments prescribed by the texts have been set up. For example, in Togo, the 5 Regions prescribed by the legislation are still not put
in place; in Guinea, the eight (8) Regions are waiting to be operationalized; in Chad and the Central African Republic, respectively 23 and 7 regions are waiting to be set up as decentralized governments.

On the other hand, some countries have not decentralized their entire national territory, such as Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, Swaziland, and Mozambique (with regard to the cities). In Gabon, rural communes are still waiting to be set up.

The region that contains the largest number of sub-national governments is North Africa, which alone accounts for nearly 30% of this number, i.e. four thousand four hundred and eighty-one (4481) sub-national governments. West Africa is the second region where sub-national governments are the most numerous with four thousand seventy-four (4074) sub-national governments, all levels combined. East Africa with 25.51% has three thousand eight hundred and nineteen (3819) sub-national governments. Central Africa and Southern Africa with respectively One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-One (1781) and Eight Hundred and Ten Eight (818) sub-national governments are characterized as having the lowest numbers.

The figure below shows the share of the different types of local and regional governments (basic governments, intermediary governments, and higher-level governments) in total. One should note the absence of intermediary-level governments in North Africa, Southern Africa, and Central Africa. However, in East Africa, the 47 counties of Kenya, and in West Africa the 49 circles of Mali, reinforce the representation of intermediary governments in the two regions. Central Africa is characterized by the highest weight of higher-level governments, nearly 7%, i.e. double the average. This is explained by the situation of two countries; Gabon which has almost the same number of higher-level governments (47) as basic governments (50), and Congo where the number of higher-level governments (12) is twice that of basic governments (6).
The intersection between level of urbanization and number of sub-national governments is not very significant. If West Africa and North Africa, which have respectively 47.70% and 52.50% of urbanization rates, have the highest numbers of sub-national governments, the fact remains that Southern Africa which has the highest rate of urbanization (64.60%) has only Eight Hundred and Eighteen (818) sub-national governments. The same is true for Central Africa which displays a level of urbanization (50.60%) almost identical to that of North Africa (52.50%) while displaying almost 3 times fewer sub-national governments.
3. THE GOVERNANCE OF SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA

The Fourteen Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-Three (14,973) sub-national governments are overwhelmingly democratically governed. Indeed, elected councils and executives are at the head of 85% of these decentralized governments in Africa. A very small minority (3%) of these sub-national governments is governed by elected councils and appointed executives, with or without the agreement of the councils. Twelve percent (12%) have appointed councils and executives.

This governance of sub-national governments is analyzed (figure below) in the light of the decentralized level. It is the decentralized basic governments that determine the percentages of all the sub-national governments; these decentralized basic governments are governed for 85% of them by elected councils and executives, 3% by elected councils and appointed executives, and 12% by appointed councils and executives. On the other hand, the intermediary level of sub-national governments is governed 100% by councils and elected executives. On the other hand, 23% of higher-level governments are governed by appointed councils and executives, i.e. twice the average.

A particular effort must be made so that this scale of governments experiences more democratic governance. These higher-level governments are 81% governed by elected councils and executives.
In East Africa, the share of decentralized sub-national governments governed by elected councils and executives is the same as the African average; they represent 83% of the local and regional governments in the region. The share of communities run by appointed councils and executives is 14%, i.e. 2 points more than the African average. Elected councils and appointed executives are represented as the national average, namely 3%.

The analysis per level of decentralized sub-national governments in East Africa makes it possible to draw other lessons. First, decentralized basic governments, whose share is overwhelming, determine the regional average. Governance entirely ensured by elected councils and executives, on the other hand, characterizes the intermediary level. At the higher level of decentralized sub-national governments, the share of governments run by councils and elected executives accounts for only half of the total. Those run by appointed executives and councils account for one quarter of all upper-level governments.
In Central Africa, there are no half measures, which means that either the councils and the executives are elected, or they are both appointed. There are therefore no decentralized sub-national governments run by elected councils and appointed executives. This is the particularity of this region which therefore does not have any association between elected and appointed bodies. Elected councils and executives run 80% of sub-national governments, while appointed councils and executives run 20% of sub-national governments.

The other particularity of the region is the absence of decentralized intermediary-level governments; there are only basic sub-national governments or higher-level governments. Basic subnational governments are 80% run by elected councils and executives, while higher level subnational governments are 84%.
In North Africa, elected councils and executives run 84% of decentralized sub-national governments, which is practically the same percentage as the African average (85%). There is an absence of sub-national governments run by elected councils and appointed executives. As for local authorities run by councils and appointed executives, they weigh only 15.58%, i.e. 3 points more than the national average.
As is the case for Central Africa, North Africa has no intermediary-level governments. Elected councils and executives run 85% of sub-national governments, while appointed executives and councils run 15% of decentralized sub-national governments. Elected councils and executives run 67% of upper-level governments.

Figure 11: Mode of governance per level of sub-national governments in North Africa

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa

In Southern Africa, elected councils and executives at both the grassroots and higher level run all sub-national governments. This unanimity of the mode of designation by election at the decentralized level is one of the particular features of Southern Africa where decentralization seems to have an undeniable democratic breeding ground.

In West Africa, elected councils and executives run 87% of decentralized sub-national governments, i.e. 2 percentage points more than the African average. The same is true for sub-national governments run by appointed councils and executives, which weigh more than the African average, i.e. 5%. Elected councils and appointed executives run only 8% of sub-national governments in West Africa.

Figure 12: Mode of governance in West Africa

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa
Governance per level of sub-national government in West Africa shows that elected councils and executives govern all middle and upper-level governments. In this region, only 5% and 9% of sub-national governments are governed respectively by appointed councils and executives and by elected councils and appointed executives.

Figure 13: Mode of governance per level of sub-national governments in West Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Elected Councils</th>
<th>Appointed Councils</th>
<th>Elected Executives</th>
<th>Appointed Executives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic level</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher level</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa

4. THE GOVERNANCE OF SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE QUALITY OF THEIR INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The typology and governance of sub-national authorities are analyzed here in terms of the room of maneuver offered to them by their countries. Twelve criteria were scored (from 1 to 4), which gives a synthetic score out of 48, leading to the ranking of countries in 4 colors according to the quality of their institutional environment 1:

1. Green (score greater than or equal to 36): countries which present the most enabling environment for the action of cities and local governments according to the standards adopted;

2. Yellow (score less than 36 and greater than or equal to 30): countries whose environment is rather favorable to the action of cities and local authorities, but whose certain elements must be improved;

3. Orange (score less than 30 and greater than or equal to 24): countries whose progress towards an environment favorable to cities and local authorities requires significant reform efforts;

4. Red (score of less than 24): countries whose environment is generally unfavorable to the action of cities and local authorities.

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Situation and challenges

The graph below shows the share of decentralized sub-national governments located in the 4 categories of countries above. Thus, only 14% of decentralized sub-national governments are located in countries that present the most enabling environment for the action of cities and sub-national governments. 10% of sub-national governments are in countries where the environment is rather favorable to the action of towns and sub-national governments, but where certain elements need to be improved.

The Most disturbing fact, is that the decentralized sub-national governments belonging to countries where deep structural reforms are necessary to improve the institutional environment account for 40% of all African governments, while the decentralized sub-national governments which are in countries whose unfavorable environment weighs 37% of African sub-national governments.

In total, 77% of decentralized sub-national governments operate in an unfavorable environment.

Figure 14: Weight of decentralized sub-national governments according to the color of the countries in Africa

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa

The figure below shows the leeway offered to the different levels of sub-national governments. While grassroots governments behave like the African average, only 29% of intermediary level governments operate in an environment requiring structural reforms, 27% in a rather enabling environment, and 44% in an enabling environment. As for the higher-level authorities, they operate at 43% in an adverse environment, at 46% in an unfavorable environment, at 7% in a rather favorable environment, and at 4% in an enabling environment.

Figure 15: Weight of sub-national governments according to color and level

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa.
Decentralised sub-national governments in countries where the environment is rather favorable to the action of cities and local governments (yellow) amount to 1,441 sub-national governments, including 47 intermediary, 35 higher level and 1,359 basic sub-national governments. 74% of the decentralized sub-national governments in those countries have elected councils and executives. Twenty-six percent (26%) of territorial governments in these countries have elected councils and appointed executives. These are Ghana and Burundi where the local councils appoint the local executives after prior or subsequent agreement. These appointed executives mainly involve the basic territorial governments, because those of the intermediary level and of the higher level have councils and elected executives.

In these two categories of countries where the institutional environment is favorable to decentralized authorities (green and yellow), there are no councils and no appointed executives.

Countries whose progress towards an environment favorable to cities and sub-national governments require major reform efforts (orange) include 5,950 decentralized authorities including 49 intermediary, 239 high-level, and 5,662 basic sub-national governments. In these countries, elected councils and executives run 99% of sub-national governments and only 1% of sub-national governments are run by elected councils and appointed executives. These are the municipalities of Benin where, as per law 2020-13 of June 2020, the municipal councilors, the mayor and his or her deputies, as well as the district heads, are no longer elected by their peers. The political party that has obtained the absolute majority of elected councilors now directly appoints them. Thus, this party...
appoints the mayor, the deputy mayors, and the district heads, and sends the list to the
prefect who is responsible for convening the first session, which will be devoted to their
official inauguration.

There are no governments with appointed councils and executives in this category of
countries (orange).

Figure 17: Decentralized sub-national governments in countries whose progress towards an
environment favorable to cities and local governments requires major reform efforts

The figure below shows the intersection between scales of decentralized sub-national
governments in countries whose environment is unfavorable to cities and local
governments (red). It is thus noted that elected councils and executives run 68% of sub-
national governments, while elected councils run 49% of higher-level governments and
executives. At first sight, one would have expected that the decentralized sub-national
governments of this category of country (red) would be more led by councils and/or
appointed executives, but this is not the case. However, in this category of countries,
about thirty-two (32%) of sub-national governments are run by appointed councils and
executives, which is 3 times more than the African average.

Figure 18: Scale of governments and Governance of countries whose environment is unfavorable to
sub-national governments

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa
Countries whose environment is unfavorable to the action of sub-national governments are characterized by a high percentage of decentralized sub-national governments run by elected councils and appointed executives or appointed councils and executives; they represent 35% of all sub-national governments; elected councils and appointed executives run 21% of sub-national governments while appointed councils and executives run 14% of sub-national governments.

In this category of countries, there are no intermediary-level authorities and there are no sub-national governments run by elected councils and appointed executives.

5. THE ROOM FOR MANEUVER OF SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS ACCORDING TO THE REGIONS OF AFRICA

The distribution of decentralized sub-national governments from the four categories of countries (Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red) according to the 5 regions of Africa is interesting in more ways than one. It makes it possible on the one hand to see the regional quality of the institutional environment offered to the sub-national and regional governments, on the other hand, to characterize the various regions according to the typology of the decentralized sub-national governments they host.

The figure below takes stock of the quality of the institutional environment of sub-national governments in East Africa. Sub-national authorities from countries whose progress towards an environment favorable to cities and local governments requires major reform efforts (orange) account for almost half of the total, 45%. Decentralized sub-national governments from countries with an unfavorable institutional environment (red) weigh 40%. In addition, 11% of sub-national governments benefit from a rather favorable environment (yellow) and 5% of sub-national governments come from countries whose environment is an enabling one (green).

Figure 19: Operating environment of decentralized governments in East Africa

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa
The figure below shows the environment in which decentralized governments in East Africa operate. An overwhelming majority of sub-national governments (86%) operate in an institutional environment that is not favorable (red) or deserves major reforms (orange); only 14% of them benefit from an environment that is at least rather favorable. Intermediate-level authorities all benefit from a rather favorable environment, while 69% of higher-level authorities operate in an unfavorable environment (red and orange).

Figure 20: Operating environment of decentralized sub-national governments in East Africa

In East Africa, two colors dominate, red and orange. This means that 57% of the decentralized governments in this region operate in an unfavorable environment (red) and 45% in an environment requiring major structural reforms (orange). There is therefore no decentralized local government benefiting from an environment favorable to subnational governments.

Figure 21: Operating environment of decentralized sub-national governments in Central Africa
The distribution of the levels of decentralized sub-national governments according to the quality of their institutional environment gives similar results: for the basic sub-national governments, more than two-thirds of the subnational governments (58%) operate in an unfavorable environment whereas this share is 50% for higher-level governments.

Figure 22: Operating environment of the levels of decentralized sub-national governments in Central Africa

In Central Africa, one third of decentralized sub-national governments, at all levels, operate in an enabling environment, 35% (green). The remaining two-thirds (65%) operate in a rather unfavorable environment (red + orange). It should be noted that no sub-national government operates in a rather favorable environment (yellow).

Figure 23: Operating environment of decentralized governments in North Africa

The figure below shows the quality of the environment in which grassroots and higher-level subnational governments operate in North Africa. 51% of grassroots sub-national governments operate in an institutional environment that is adverse (red) to sub-national governments. 35% of these sub-national governments operate in a favorable environment (green) and 13% in an environment that requires structural reforms (orange).
For higher-level authorities, the majority (92%) of decentralized authorities operate in an unfavorable environment (red + orange). Only 8% of higher-level governments operate in an enabling environment.

Figure 24: Operating environment of the levels of decentralized sub-national governments in North Africa

In Southern Africa, the institutional environment seems generally more favorable. Only 17% of decentralized sub-national governments operate in an unfavorable environment (red) and 22% in an environment requiring major reforms (orange). More than two-thirds of decentralized sub-national governments (60%) operate in an environment that is at least rather favorable (green + yellow). One third of decentralized governments operate in an enabling environment (green).

Figure 25: Operating environment of decentralized governments in Southern Africa

Source: Decentralization Observatory, UCLG Africa
In Southern Africa, grassroots sub-national governments are those operating in the most favorable environment, 61% (green and yellow). Only 39% of them operate in an unfavorable environment (red+orange). For higher-level decentralized authorities, 72% operate in an unfavorable environment (red+orange).

Figure 26: Operating environment of the levels of decentralized sub-national governments in Southern Africa

80% of the decentralized governments in West Africa are operate in an institutional environment that is unfavorable (red + orange) to cities and local governments. A minority of governments operate in a rather favorable environment (20%).

Figure 27: Operating environment of decentralized governments in West Africa
The analysis per level of decentralized governments shows that for the higher level, the institutional environment is unfavorable (red), requiring major structural reforms. For sub-national governments, 79% operate in an unfavorable environment (orange+red) while 21% of authorities operate in a rather enabling environment. As for higher-level sub-national governments, 96% of them operate in an environment requiring major structural reforms; only 4% of them operate in a rather enabling environment. There is no decentralized community operating in an enabling environment in West Africa.

Figure 28: Operating environment of the levels of decentralized sub-national governments in West Africa

6. WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING DECENTRALIZED SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY INTERMEDIARY CITIES AND WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS?

Intermediary cities, which are at the heart of the Africities 9 Summit, do structure and will further structure the African institutional and socio-economic landscape for several reasons.

Intermediary cities occupy a strategic place in urbanization in Africa. All the projections made by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision) indicate that the majority of new urbanites will settle in cities with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. They should absorb nearly 2 out of 3 new urban dwellers and even 3 out of 4 in certain years of acceleration of the urbanization process. Thus, intermediary cities will further structure the urban framework, making urban Africa less and less that of the national capital cities, but more and more that of the intermediary cities which double every decade in terms of
population and area, and which paradoxically receive very little attention in public policies. For all these reasons, Intermediary cities must be at the heart of global agendas and of the sustainability strategies for the planet. The achievement or not of the goals pursued depends on the application of the global agendas in intermediary cities. It is therefore more crucial than ever to strengthen the role of these intermediary cities.

Intermediary cities in Africa represent 30% of the urban population in 2015 according to the Africapolis study; Intermediary cities bring together 173 million Africans in one of the 1,348 intermediary cities identified. Intermediary cities of 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants weigh one third of all towns, but are home to 58% of the population, almost double their weight in terms of number of cities. These cities, within the urban framework of African countries, are home to more and more people; all the projections show that these 783 cities will welcome at least half of the new urbanites in the next 30 years. The upper segment of intermediary cities, between 400,000 and 500,000 inhabitants, weighs only 8% of the population of intermediary cities; there are 26 of them. The range of intermediary cities between 100,000 and 200,000 inhabitants represent respectively 29% of the population and 26% of the number of cities. The various projections available show that intermediary cities will contribute up to 40% of the African GDP.

Intermediary cities do accompany the structuring of space. They are also the place of a convergence between space, ecology, economy, and society. As studies on local economies led by UCLG Africa have shown, people produce and consume where they live, and the way they produce largely determines the mode of social organization as well as the mode of occupation and organization of space. Any modification of one of the components (population, social organization, or occupation of space) leads to transformations and the need for rebalancing. This is why we can say that the local dynamics of settlement, economic development, socio-political and spatial organization complement each other, interact with each other, and explain the change that influences local life.

Intermediary cities are at the heart of the ecological transition. Local economies are currently opening up new prospects in the field of the circular economy, where the territorial and integrated approach makes it possible to consider a de-compartmentalization of sectoral approaches, in order to improve horizontal relations promoting synergies between sectors with a view to reducing the carbon cost of economic activities and extractions from the natural environment of the territories. Africitics 8 had emphasized the ecological, social, and democratic transition and the need to take this articulation into account in Agenda 2063. Taking ecology into account introduces a total shift in the conceptions of economic and social development, and this shift is reinforced by the democratic imperative.

To meet all these challenges, while dealing with global agendas (on climate, Sustainable Development Goals, New Urban Agenda, etc.), intermediary cities must benefit from a specific program articulated around the following priorities:

• Raising the level of development of African intermediary cities. Africa must invest in intermediary cities in order to unleash their growth potential, by consolidating their level of exercise of their economic model, which should increasingly be part
of short circuits. Intermediary cities and their hinterland must fit into a division of labor between the urban and the rural worlds, which allows the intensification of exchanges within the local economy that they steer. Intermediary cities must also be part of the complementarity of economic branches, which means that if cities are the driving force behind the development of their area of influence, then the fuel would come from rural areas. The elaboration of any strategy for the development of intermediary cities must take these factors into account in order to develop relevant and sustainable models.

• Renewing the conceptions of land use and planning. At the level of sub-national governments, one finds the link with local territories and institutions. It is a question of rethinking the planning of the territories. The lockdown demonstrated the importance of the local anchoring and of the neighborhood. The lockdown led to activities refocused on essential needs and on useful work. Ultimately, it is necessary to concentrate the design and decentralize public actions. It is a matter of combining two imperatives: think globally and act locally, and also, think locally and act globally. The legitimation of public action brings again public planning and services to the fore. It is a question of mobilizing all the possibilities and all the actors. Companies, associations, administrations, and their combinations all have their place. Nevertheless, it is up to public action, which is not limited to central government forms, to give full place to citizens’ actions; and it is up to public citizen action to decide.

• Guaranteeing the population’s access to public services. Intermediary cities must meet two challenges, firstly that of the urban population and secondly that of the population of their area of influence. The challenges that arise are those of the quantity of services, but also of their good spatial distribution. It is necessary to anticipate in order to avoid the problems of spatial and social exclusion which can lead to the development of pockets of extreme poverty. These slums must be a constant concern of urban officials by emphasizing justice and equity, but also the participation of populations in the options in terms of urban planning and local public expenditures. Intermediary cities are also suppliers of public services to the populations of their hinterland in terms of education, health, and administration. Intermediary cities must constitute the objective framework for providing services to populations, including those in their hinterlands.

• Anchoring cities within the development strategies. These strategies must not ignore the cities, not to say turn their backs on them. Since the independence of African countries, and for ideological reasons, cities in general and intermediary cities in particular have always been perceived as a drag on national development. Considered as the place of residence of the “rich”, cities have received very little attention from development strategies; even better said, they were ostracized from economic reforms. The urban economic branches were deemed to be extroverted and import-oriented in contrast to the economic branches deemed endogenous.

• Localizing the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and accessing the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Intermediary cities may not be approached as a closed system. They live from their relations with an area of influence (their hinterland). This will involve finding ways to urgently involve sub-national governments in the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) pursuant to the
Paris Agreement on climate change, and even considering Locally Determined Contributions (LDCs) if, as is desirable, sub-national governments should participate in increasing the ambitions of the Paris Agreement aimed at limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century compared to the pre-industrial period.

• Building a new model of relations between the rural and the urban worlds. While large metropolises ensure Africa’s connection to globalization, intermediary cities structure their space of influence, equip their territories, strengthen economic opportunities, and offer basic local public services to populations. Intermediary cities accompany the structural changes that are taking shape in their territories due to the rise in the level of urbanization. This level is a leverage effect for rural economic activity which increases with the population of intermediary cities. The intensification of exchanges with the new opportunities diversifies the activity of rural households and makes them more resilient. The sizing of urban infrastructure must, beyond the urban population alone, take into account rural populations, but also the economic particularities of rural areas, particularly in terms of services to their production. In short, intermediary cities must therefore be developed to support agricultural production in their hinterland.

• Developing industrialization policies. Intermediary cities are at the heart of the process of structural transformation that the continent is experiencing. Indeed, structural transformation occurs with the gradual transition of the population from a less productive sector (rural economy) to a more productive sector (urban economy) and from subsistence and self-consumption agriculture to an agriculture generating surpluses and which is competitive. These more productive sectors of the urban economy can be explained by the emergence of processing units for agricultural products and, gradually, of real industrial units whose inputs come mainly from the rural hinterland. The use of capital-intensive production allows high levels of productivity that irrigate the entire local economy, both urban and rural. This structural transformation is much more likely to occur in cities oriented towards the rural agrosystems that surround them, i.e. towards intermediary cities. An urban strategy based on the calling of intermediary cities makes it possible to better tap the huge potential of their hinterland; this strategy makes it possible to make these cities a real lever for the industrial production of African countries.

• Consolidating the democratization process. Unlike large cities and national metropolises, intermediary cities are the ideal level of democratic participation. Democratic elections for once are more likely to reflect the expectations of local populations in terms of services and improved living conditions. Intermediary cities are also the place where citizenship is exercised, where it is possible to establish a link between the taxes paid to the local public institution and the public services received. Within intermediary cities, there is indeed a greater chance that local issues prevail over national policy issues. In this context, experiences show that urban populations are more inclined to pay their taxes if they have participated in choosing priorities in terms of local public services. On the other hand, the accountability exercises undertaken in many cities are a crucial instrument for anchoring grassroots democracy. These exercises are all formal spaces for the questioning process that are used by the populations; accountability is no longer a choice: it is an imperative for good governance.
• Expanding the overall reform of public actions. With at least one third of the urban population, the governance of intermediary cities will pose enormous challenges, particularly for the provision of local public services. Decentralization offers this framework for the exercise of governance and must take into account the innovations necessary for greater access of populations to social services. This is why the scope offered to intermediary cities for the management of urbanization and the provision of local public services must be significant to enable local officials to innovate. For this, it is crucial that decentralization be perceived as a global reform of public action. Decentralization must be translated into practice by the anchoring of a good subsidiarity, which consists in leaving to the level of governance closest to the populations the competences that concern their daily life.

• Overhauling public policies. Ensuring a level of development for intermediary cities requires an overhaul of public policies. First, the spatial dimension is conspicuous by its absence in development strategies. In many African countries, development policies are and remain sectoral. The agricultural branches are treated independently of their proximity to the city, and urban branches are treated in total disconnection with the nature and the quality of agricultural production. Creating jobs and generating income involves a new approach that takes into account the total interweaving of the two economic branches. This is why it is important to ruralize urban policies and to urbanize rural policies. Greater infrastructural support must be provided to improve the overall accessibility of production areas to the market, but also to give to cities the capacity to have an equipment base that makes it possible to support the economic activity.

• Make migration a lever for the development of intermediary cities. The African Diaspora is the sixth sub-region of the African Union; it has nearly 350 million members worldwide. Its potential is huge, cultural, political, and economic; remittances now exceed the amount of official development assistance. This is why the establishment of the “African Network of Local Authorities, signatories of the Charter on Migrants, open to welcoming migrants” is crucial. Emphasis will be placed on the complementarity of the three populations of migrants: those who leave the local government, those who settle there temporarily during their migratory journey, and those who settle there. The establishment of the network will be based on the complementarity between the right for all to live and work in their territory and the right to move and settle freely.
7. CONCLUSION

Drawing the attention of national decision-makers to the urgent need to give significant leeway to local authorities in general and to intermediary cities in particular, is imperative for their decisive contribution to achieving the SDGs and the 2063 vision of the African Union.

This necessary deepening of subsidiarity in the development, implementation, and evaluation of public policies must consider African decentralization in all its diversity, with as many types, sizes, and modes of governance of decentralized governments as there are countries.

The analyzes carried out show clear dividing lines, particularly at the regional level. The democratic character of decentralized governance is variously treated in the regions of Africa. This is how Southern Africa is distinguished by its democratic specificity; it is the only region where all councils and executives are elected. On the other hand, 83% of sub-national governments in East Africa are run by elected councils and executives. East Africa is the one with the greatest deficit of democratic legitimacy of decentralized sub-national governments with a higher percentage of councils and/or non-elected executives (14%) than the African average (12%).

For an institution like UCLG Africa, this analysis of governance shows the importance of emphasizing in its advocacy the fact that decentralization is now inseparable from the democratic legitimacy of local and regional governments. In all countries, the establishment of elected councils and executives should be the rule, because beyond the election of local and subnational governments, the quality of the decentralization process is improved. Indeed, from the moment the subnational governments are elected, this implies a form of responsibility of these local elected representatives in relation to their electors. It shifts the sense of accountability that used to be focused on the central Government, to now be focused on the populations of electors. Democratic elections strengthen the quality and quantity of the services offered to the populations, because the local and subnational governments are more inclined not only to reinforce the participation of the populations in the local management, but also to account for the efficacy and efficiency of the actions taken. The modern idea of decentralization is therefore inseparable from the democratic principle.

On the other hand, it is important to conduct differentiated strategies towards the regions to better support the decentralization process. Though on average in Africa, 77% of decentralized sub-national governments operate in an environment that requires at least major structural reforms, the analyzes carried out above show that particular emphasis must be given to certain regions such as Central Africa where all local authorities operate in an unfavorable environment and West Africa where 80% of decentralized sub-national governments operate in an unfavorable environment. This restriction of the margin offered to decentralized governments is likely to jeopardize the decentralization process. These analyzes show once again the importance of the strategic watch to be established to anchor the decentralization process irremediably in the institutional landscape of the countries.
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