

Decentralisation, Urbanisation and Environmental Drifts in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Challenges of Urban Governance, Resilience Mechanisms

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Abstract:- Known as the world's second largest carbon and biodiversity reserve after Brazil, the DR Congo has initiated since 2006 a process of decentralisation which promotes positive values in terms of the distribution of powers between the central government and the provinces and between the provinces and the decentralised territorial entities (ETD) but whose collateral effects in terms of environmental drifts risk calling into question the expected advantages of this process. The unbridled creation of Cities and Communes (rural in particular) driven by decentralization has made it possible to go from 31 to 67 cities, i.e. 46.2% increase, and 117 to 503 Communes, i.e. 232.6% increase between 2011 and 2013.

The common denominator of all these ETDs remains the weak governance capacity of all public domains and especially their dependence on nature to cover energy and housing needs. The environmental drifts caused by the challenges of urban governance will be accentuated in the new cities created during the process of implementing decentralisation in the DRC in the sense that they are for the most part located in rural areas and deprived of resources and infrastructure (energy, water resources, comfortable housing, roads and drainage, etc.) to meet the needs of the inhabitants. The latter must resort to nature to meet their needs. The invasion of the countryside by cities of spontaneous generation by decentralisation damages the environment through: deforestation, floods, erosion, and more, thus becoming the daily lot of the inhabitants. The destruction of the environment then becomes an obstacle to sustainable development. The decentralisation reform supposed to promote sustainable local development would have become desolate in its creative implementation. Resilience mechanisms are possible if we stick to the respect of standards at the national, regional and international levels, in particular

national and sub-regional legislation, the various mechanisms put in place by the World Bank within the framework environmental and social safeguards, as well as environmental protection mechanisms such as reforestation, the social responsibility of mining companies as well as the proper implementation of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD)+ process mechanisms crowned by citizen engagement and design of durable cities.

Keywords:- *Decentralisation; Urban Governance; Environment; Environmental Risk; Durable Cities*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2014, the urban population represents 54% of the total world population and could increase by around 3 billion people between 2000 and 2050. 90% of this growth is expected to be located in Africa and Asia where the rates of urbanization would be around 56% and 64% respectively (Sikuzani, 2018: 99-108). The resulting rapid spatial expansion of urban areas is likely to induce a series of adverse socio-economic and environmental impacts, such as loss of arable land, persistent land insecurity, lack of amenities as well as the degradation of ecosystem services.

The situation is exacerbated in the creation of cities induced by the implementation of the decentralisation.

This not D R Congo's first experience of decentralisation, as the process had been initiated before the accession of independence of the country and since then, the succession of legal texts that enshrines it is always far to making it a reality.

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Regarded as a mode of administrative and political management of the territory during the First Republic (1960-1964), according to Fundamental Law "the provinces enjoy substantial autonomy" (Bouvier, 2010: 41), it will be considered as a cause of disorder (attempts at secession of Katanga and South Kasai) during the Second Republic (1966-1982) which in turn adopted it without making any corrections.

Between 1982 and 2007, the recognition of autonomy to local entities (collectivities) was adapted according to each case and the regimes, at the various basic levels either in the direction of the increase or the reduction of the said autonomy after the size of the community (regional, territory, sector or chiefdom). From the point of view of status, during these different periods, the urban question did not arise with acuity, especially since the colonial city remained legally the same (the capital and the chief towns of the provinces as well as some agglomerations erected in the city during the Second Republic). It must however be recognised that urban governance remained a headache for all the regimes that succeeded one another in power in the DR Congo, in particular because of the rural exodus and an absence of policies in the matter.

Article 2 and 3 of the Constitution current constitution, relating to the number and status of the provinces; and the determination of the quality of the provinces and decentralised territorial entities (territorial collectivities of the country) respectively as well as the promulgation of organic law n° 08/016, 2008 October, 7th, on the composition, organisation and functioning of the Decentralised Territorial Entities simply defines as: Either, the Chief town of a province or an agglomeration of at least 100,000 inhabitants¹.

The problem becomes interesting in that all the chief towns of 25 provinces resulting from the territorial division, as well as those of 145 territories which were already overpopulated, became cities. Talking about a city, supposes an autonomous administration to ensure its governance, a minimum of infrastructure and appropriate energy sources, so that the environment already bruised by catastrophic land

management cannot suffer exaggerated environmental drifts. Because, despite the financial autonomy granted to them by the aforementioned Constitution and the organic laws in the matter, the low extractive capacity or mobilisation in terms of public finances is weak as demonstrated by Emmanuel Kasongo Mungongo (2019). Kasongo Mungongo accurately demonstrates the financial difficulties of local Decentralised Territorial entities as well as the African Review of Finance (UCLG, 2014) stating that "the observation is striking because on average only 17% of cities have total control of their local tax base". This highlights the limits and dangers of brutal administrative reforms. It is clear that poor cities will not be able to take charge of drifts or environmental disasters.

The present study aims to shed light on the misalignments of a process that is supposed to ensure the transformation of local entities with a view to sustainable development but which, for lack of public policies on urbanisation and urban governance pave the way for peri-urbanisation with incalculable consequences in terms of environmental destruction.

The main objective is to draw attention of socio-political and scientific actors to the danger of ill-prepared reforms in this case, the decentralisation of the DR Congo and African countries in general, the global risks of urbanisation of the second largest ecological "lung of the world".

The research methodology combined readings of official documents on cities, environmental threats in the peri-urban environments of the few new cities in DR Congo as well as socio-demographic data from specialised services of the Public Administration in charge of the issues of urban planning and management of the territory. Data collection has been done in the national urban data structures at the Ministries of Urban Planning and Housing; Decentralisation and Institutional Reforms; Interior and Security, Environment and Nature Conservation as well as within Non-Governmental Organisations focused on environmental issues in DR Congo.

This study will make four points: (1) the process of decentralisation in the DR Congo and growth of cities; (2) the effects of urbanisation and environmental drift in the DR Congo; (3) mining sector decentralisation and environmental drifts; and (4) the different resilience mechanisms.

From a conceptual point of view, it is important to specify that environmental drifts are accentuated by the phenomenon of peri-urbanisation – e.g. the process of extension of urban agglomerations, in their periphery, resulting in a transformation of rural spaces². It is linked to the arrival of new inhabitants, some of whom leave the centres of

¹ Article 6 Under the terms of this law, the following shall be understood to be a city: 1. any provincial capital; 2. any agglomeration of at least 100,000 inhabitants with public facilities and economic and social infrastructures to which a decree of the Prime Minister has conferred the status of city in Loi Organique n°8/.016 du 07 octobre 2008 portant composition, organisation et fonctionnement des Entités Territoriales Décentralisées et leurs rapports avec l'Etat et les Provinces (Organic Law n°8/.016 of 7 October 2008 on the composition, organisation and functioning of the Decentralised Territorial Entities and their relationship with the State and the Provinces), Journal Officiel de la RDC (Official Gazette of the DRC), 2008

²Available at <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%A9riurbanisation>, Accessed 2022 August, 10

agglomerations to settle on the outskirts, and of space-consuming activities (supermarkets, transportation infrastructure). Suburbanisation can be based on pre-existing inhabited centres (villages, towns) and on the major transportation infrastructures that connect these spaces to the initial urban spaces.

The globalisation of environmental problems (erosion of biodiversity, climate change, access to drinking water) and their governance developed considerably from the 1970s. It was first based on the work of environmental sciences and environmentalism before and after the Second World War, institutionalisation – through conventions, conferences of parties, intergovernmental platforms, forum of IOs (International Organisations) and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) (Cormier-Salem, 2018).

II. THE PROCESS OF DECENTRALISATION IN THE DR CONGO AND GROWTH OF CITIES

One of the purposes of decentralisation is to promote the development of the country from the lowest levels. The major objective of decentralisation is to make the entities viable in terms of infrastructures likely to take care of the social needs of the citizens.

In the DR Congo, there are currently 1,455 Decentralised Territorial Entities, including 98 Cities, 620 Communes, 474 Sectors and 263 Chiefdoms.

The 98 cities are capitals of the Provinces (25 + Kinshasa which is both the capital of the country with provincial status). The 620 Communes are either subdivisions of cities (urban communes) or rural commune areas often capital of territories or chiefdoms located in rural areas where there is a shortage of hydroelectric energy and precarious housing, the latter being the main reasons for peri-urbanisation.

The unbridled creation of towns and rural communes driven by decentralisation has made it possible to go from 31 to 67 towns i.e. 46.2% and 117 to 503 towns i.e. 232.6% between 2011 and 2013 (J.O.: 2013) this legal and political approach which does not take into account the socio-demographic realities and the prerequisites of urbanisation conceals many constraints of urban governance and constitutes at the same time, a danger for the ecosystem of a country considered as the lungs of the world. As for some (Maxime Lambert, 2013), *the Congo Basin forest is neither more nor less than the second green lung of the planet behind that of the Amazon. Needless to recall then the challenge it represents in biodiversity as well as in the safeguarding of a world heritage. The forest constitutes 60% of the territory of the DRC, that is to say 10% of the forest surface of the world and represents 90% of the energy needs of the country (10% of the GNP, 20% of the GDP).*

Maxime Lambert (2013) recalls that *The forest of the Congo Basin in the DR Congo (Victim of deforestation) tends to disappear and thus comes to swell the ranks of natural sites in danger on the planet, it fires red ball on the companies of logging, but the latter are not the only ones responsible for this deforestation. Suburbanisation, an unintended consequence of decentralisation, is another cause that we highlight as responsible for deforestation through this study.*

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP: 2013), in 2011 DR Congo had 72.8 million inhabitants (with an average population growth rate of around 3.5%/year), including 25.5 million city dwellers (in relative and absolute growth) and 47.3 million rural people (in relative decline and absolute growth). The urban population is growing much faster (due to urbanisation and rural exodus) than the rural population. In 2030, D R Congo will have approximately 143 million inhabitants, more than half of whom will live in urban areas. This demographic growth and especially the change in the distribution of the population between rural and urban will have a very strong impact on the volume of energy needs and on the structure of energy consumption in 2030.

For the European Union and the DRC (RDC-UE, 2006) *the DRC is a country with strong demographic growth and relatively urbanised in the sense that it is probable that nearly 40% of the total population of the country lives in urban centres, and surely nearly 60% in the regions close to them; In urban areas, the past shortcomings of the public services in charge of drinking water supply and sanitation have left a rather dramatic situation. In Kinshasa, for example, barely 25% of households in the most populated peripheral neighborhoods would be served. The phenomena of soil degradation and erosion, although very localised in overpopulated and overexploited areas.*

With 1/3 of the hydraulic potential of all of Africa and 6% of the world, its potential is estimated at between 100,000 MW7 and an estimated annual production of 774 TWh. Nowadays, only 3% of this potential exploited. And, 13.5% is the portion of the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo which is electrified while 50% against 5% are the rates of electricity coverage in cities and in rural areas respectively (Tribune Afrique, 2019).

It is in this context that the urban-rural cities in accordance with article 3 of the Constitution of the 3rd Republic, enjoying free administration and autonomy in the management of their economic, human, financial and technical resources, face the challenges of urban governance.

III. CITIES AND ENVIRONMENT IN THE DR CONGO

The urban environment in the D R Congo is potentially destructive to the ecosystem. And decentralisation is not a stabilising process.

According to the organic law n°08-16 of 2008, October 7, on the composition, organisation and functioning of the decentralised territorial entities and their relations with the State and the provinces, in its article 6, it is necessary to understand by city: “Any head - place of province; any agglomeration of at least 100,000 inhabitants having collective facilities and economic and social infrastructures to which a decree of the Prime Minister will have conferred the status of city”.

As indicated above, the old cities as well as the new ones and those to come are by nature urban-rural, and therefore bastion of suburbanisation and largely dependent on the environment whose ecosystem is already experiencing damage related to human action. The poverty of these cities (that of their inhabitants) will weigh heavily on the environment: energy and food needs to be covered by recourse to nature (afforestation, deforestation, hunting, etc.), in addition to a precarious habitat invading peripheral areas with as much collateral damage: erosion, flooding, unsanitary conditions. And as we know, more often than not, cities are born at the expense of their rural regions. The city can involve the region which depends on it in its rise as in its decline.

Alain Piveteau (2005:71-93) is almost prophetic on this subject when he writes: “Decentralisation and local development in Senegal. Chronicle of a hypothetical couple” and in the same vein Yves-André Fauré (2005: 95-118) insists on Decentralised public policies, obstacles to local development. Brazilian experiences. These illustrations reinforce the hypothesis of the destruction of the environment by devouring cities following the implementation of the decentralisation process in the DR Congo.

Urbanisation is first of all a special process “by which people agglomerate in relatively large numbers in a limited space” but it is also a social process, generating contradictions: ethnic, linguistic, professional (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1993). To this list of Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, it is necessary to add, with regard to the question of sustainable development, the Contradictions relating to the coexistence of urban and rural lifestyles in the same space (urban-rural environments). This duality leads to behaviors of significant dependence on nature for the frank of the poor population. The secondary cities which for the peasants are an interface between the village and the big city, and for the decision-makers are an alternative to the development of the local economy (Ziavoula, 1996). The Decentralisation of the DR Congo will generate secondary cities which, failing to promote the development of the local economy, will be the

crucibles of development of the multifaceted crises for which sustainable development will pay the costs.

These cities will quickly develop what Jean Pelletier and Charles Delfante (2000) qualify as considerable urban problems: technical problems due to overcrowding, practically insoluble social problems, partial policies to solve the problems.

Not only as Jean-Pierre Chrétien (2004) points out “The Great Lakes region illustrates the difficulty of defining the urban phenomenon, given the diversity of geo-cultural situations and the need not to use the label “city” on any space with a high human density”, but also when this label is attached to the agglomeration (as is the case of cities resulting from decentralisation) the autonomy of management and even the control of works do not follow. This is all the more true since under the aegis of the Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Tourism (Isabelle Milbert and Geneviève Bianchi, 1994) had already noted it: “the explosive urban development of sub-Saharan Africa creates, from the point of view of rainfall runoff, and all things considered, the same problems as those experienced by European cities after the First World War: increase in the onset of rainwater and increase in the impact of floods.

The material and human damage recorded in the cities of the DR Congo following the degradation of the urban environment will *mutatis mutandis* worsen in post-decentralisation cities and expose the inhabitants of peri-urban agglomerations and their environment to collateral damage.

According to Jonas Yamba Tshisungu Kantu (2022) alluding to the climate change vulnerability index published by the Maplecroft Institute, the D R Congo is cited among the ten countries most exposed to climate risk. At the local level, observations highlight the fact that over the past three decades, the city of Kananga, capital of the province of Kasai Central, has been confronted, like other Congolese cities, with severe elements whose harmful effects on the population are already being felt.

IV. DECENTRALISATION, MINING SECTOR AND DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE D R CONGO

Beyond human activities linked to the quest for well-being consisting either in the destruction of the ecosystem for food reasons or in the anarchic occupation of land spaces in squatting areas in the absence of a real public policy of territory arrangement; there is also the thorny issue of mining, the rent from which is considered a guaranteed way to increase public revenue.

It is important to note the fact that the new political order impelled by the Global and Inclusive Agreement signed in Sun City on December 16, 2002 between the politico-military

movements and the government of Kinshasa precedes the Constitution of February 18, 2006 which enshrines decentralisation in the Republic Democratic Congo. The close relationship between mining and the process of implementing decentralisation is part of the concern to revive the country's economy and to grant substantial financial resources to both the central government and the provinces. The latter can benefit from the withholding of national revenues provided for in article 175 al 2 of the Constitution “ share of national revenues allocated to the provinces is established at 40%. It is deducted at source”

Reformers had certainly foreseen the dangers that the outrageous or even disorderly exploitation of the mining squares would represent on the environment, but in the face of the obsession with revenue, environmental abuses, even in cases where responsibilities are established, are not followed by exemplary sanctions.

The link between the decentralisation of the administrative management and the reform of the mining sector no longer needs to be demonstrated, because the two sectors were considered as pillars of the way out of the crisis of the years 1999-2000, the first (decentralisation) for the legitimacy of power and local development and the other (mining) for the revival of the economy. Thus, thanks to the assistance of the most important technical and financial partners of the DR Congo, namely the World Bank and the UNDP, as stated by Marie Mazlto "the 'assistance strategy', a program drawn up by the World Bank, is set up to respond adequately to the specific needs of the country. In DRC, this plan is deployed through the Transitional Aid Strategy which involves a macroeconomic and structural reform program aimed at stabilizing the economy, guaranteeing peace and fighting poverty”.

Of the four strategies recommended and cited by the abovementioned author, namely: The updated minimum three-year program – 1999-2001, The reinforced interim program (PIR) – 2001-2002, The poverty reduction strategy taking shape with the Interim Poverty Reduction Program – 2002 which promotes the elimination of the monopoly on the diamond trade, as well as the promulgation of a new Investment Code and a new Mining Code as well as the Multi-sectoral Programme for Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Emergency (PMURR) serving as a reference framework for concerted operations to resume cooperation between the DRC and World Bank in accordance with the Transitional Aid Strategy for the period 2002-2005. It is within the framework of the PMURR that the reform of the Mining Code was undertaken, in close collaboration with experts from the World Bank.

As can be clearly seen, the Mining Code as well as others such as the Investment Code (2002) and the Forest Code (2002) is subsequent to the constitution, which enshrines decentralisation in the With particular regard to the Mining

Code, it is full of attractive provisions regarding the sharing of mining royalties. In its articles 240, 241 and 242 related respectively to the base of the mining royalty, the rates of the mining royalty and the distribution of the mining royalty. Article 242 is particularly flattering insofar as it establishes the repatriation of the mining royalty as follows:

- 50% acquired for the benefit of the central power (central government);
- 25% paid into an account designated by the administration of the province where the project is located;
- 15% on an account designated by the decentralized territorial entity in whose jurisdiction the operation takes place;
- 10% Mining Fund for future generations³.

Since these percentages are often converted into millions of dollars and make up the bulk of the central government's own revenues, the provinces as well as those of the decentralized territorial entities, their leaders tend to lay hands on the serious violations of environmental standards by the mining resources much decried by civil society.

In view of the deficiency of the control mechanisms of the Public Administration in the DR Congo, there is no doubt that the conditions provided for by the Mining Code in terms of environmental protection are strictly observed and offenders sanctioned in accordance said Code. For, as Mazlto (2005) reminds us, "The code now imposes on the holder of the mining right obligations relating to the protection of the environment. Thus, "any exploitation operation must be subject to Environmental Impact Study of the Project and an Environmental Management Plan previously established and approved". Being binding on these new standards, permit holders thus become liable for damage to the environment that is not previously recorded in their approved environmental plan⁴".

Article 71 of the Mining Code relating to the conditions for granting the Mining Exploitation Permit, in its point C requires the applicant to obtain prior approval of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) of the project.

On the ground, the contrast between the protection of the environment and the satisfaction of the needs of the population is indisputable. Justin Malundama Mbongo returning to this contrast declares that: “Indeed, it happens that the implementation of environmental standards undermines development. On this, a paradox emerges between protection of the environment and satisfaction of socio-economic needs,

³ Article 242 of the Mining Code of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Journal Officiel de la RDC, n° Spécial 2018, March 03

⁴ Idem

*the protection of the environment is a necessity for the very existence of the individual while the satisfaction of socio-economic needs occupies a non-negligible place for the survival of any person*⁵.

At the central level, there is also this desire to show off the country's commitments on the issue of compliance with environmental standards. As proof of this, the calls for tenders for the exploration and exploitation of 27 oil blocks and 3 gas blocks officially launched by the Head of State, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi during a ceremony which took place on Thursday July 28, 2022 in Kinshasa. He took responsibility in these terms: "we should no longer be content to boast of the potential of our resources, but to exploit them while taking into account their implication on the environment"⁶. In the same vein, answering the question of a Congolese journalist at the press conference held by the American Secretary of State Mr ANTONY BLINKEN and the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DR Congo, Mr Lutundula Apala on August 10, 2022, the latter did not mince these words when he replied that the DRC must strike a balance between the protection of the environment and the satisfaction of the needs of the Congolese people.

At the level of the Provinces and Decentralised Territorial Entities, claims relating to environmental and social abuses are legion. We will not be able to count it on this occasion except that this illustration of the "students of the Lubusha high school in Luisha, more than 80 kilometers from Lubumbashi, traveled from the capital of copper to express their dissatisfaction because of mining that is done near their school. The demonstrators believe that their lives are in danger following in particular the detonations of explosives used by mining companies, which shatter their peace and damage school buildings"⁷.

In addition, it is observed that damages caused by chaotic urbanisation in Africa and in the DR Congo in particular, on the urban ecosystem, the management of household waste, floods with a very high rate of loss of human life, are increasing year by year.

⁵ Available at: <<https://www.pugoma.com/index.php/RFD/article/view/88>> Accessed

⁶ Available at: <<https://www.radiookapi.net/2022/07/30/actualite/revue-de-presse/la-tempete-des-tropiques-blocs-petroliers-et-gaziers-en-rdc-f>> Accessed

⁷ Available at: <<https://www.radiookapi.net/2022/07/08/actualite/education/1ubumbashi-marche-des-eleves-luisha-contre-l'exploitation-miniere-cote>> Accessed

V. ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE MECHANISMS (POST-DECENTRALISATION)

As above described, the catastrophic urbanisation generated by the implementation of decentralisation is not inevitable. The DR Congo can remedy all environmental abuses and their future threats through compliance with the REDD+ process; urban governance and building sustainable cities.

➤ The REDD+ Process

The Congolese forests and considerable threats to which they are exposed continue to attract the attention of the world because of the crucial role they play in regulating the global climate. Estimates indicate that the forests of the Congo Basin taken together capture and store around 10 to 30 billion tons of carbon 1, an ecosystem service that is becoming increasingly important as concerns about climate change caused by human activities. In recent years, projects aimed at Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) have been developed to provide performance-based financial incentives to owners of large tracts of forest to reduce forest loss and promote the enhancement of carbon stocks through the conservation and planting of trees (Kipalu and Mukungu, 2019).

The various financings to be capitalized within the framework of this process will not lead to the expected results without having designed and executed integrating projects which take into account not only the protection of dance forests but also of gallery forests as well as the energy needs of the populations in both large agglomerations and medium and small towns that are the capitals of the provinces and decentralised territorial entities.

The emphasis placed on the forest is not meaningless, it is part of the fact that the forest, which is a double reservoir of carbon, constitutes the sanctuary of animal and plant species as well as the last refuge of rural residents and city dwellers in the quest well-being in order to compensate for the shortcomings of modernity: building materials, hay wood, food are gathered there without concern for renewal.

The REDD+ process in the DRC, which is implemented in the context of decentralization, by evoking the establishment of provincial structures, is important that the grassroots populations, the most affected by multi-sectoral precariousness, be actively associated.

➤ Urban Governance

Nowadays, governance has become the password of urban management because it is exalted in all academic, socio-professional forums, both national and international, for several reasons, including in particular the ability to mobilise actors for an inclusive management of urban agglomerations.

According to the World Bank (2022) “ 55% of the world's population, or 4.2 billion inhabitants, live in cities. This trend is expected to continue: by 2050, the current number of city dwellers is expected to double, and almost 7 out of 10 people in the world will live in urban areas. With cities generating more than 80% of global GDP, urbanization can, if harnessed, drive sustainable growth by boosting productivity, catalyzing innovation and unleashing new ideas”.

This Breton Wood institution points out that *However, with rampant urbanisation comes many challenges. This includes addressing the growing demand for affordable housing, well-connected transport networks and other infrastructure, essential services and jobs, especially for the billion urban poor who often live in informal settlements. . Building “functional” cities, i.e. inclusive, healthy, resilient and sustainable, requires intense policy coordination efforts and smart investment choices. National and local authorities must take action now to prepare for the future development of cities and to create opportunities for all...rapid urbanization brings with it many challenges.* These include increasing demand for affordable housing, transportation and other vital infrastructure, basic services, and jobs, especially for the one billion urban poor who often live in informal settlements.

The urban management approach in terms of governance will have the advantage of mobilising actors from various sectors for the benefit of initiatives aimed at strengthening their capacities in order to achieve multiple goals, including those of urbanization and environmental protection.

➤ *Participation of citizens in favour of sustainable development*

Sustainable development is a global imperative that requires the participation of all people without distinction. However, we note that the majority of the population considers that it is the intellectuals and industrialists who have the great responsibility. The rural and urban masses have no hesitation in taking actions that pollute the environment: non-compliance with standards for the management of household waste, anarchic construction, deforestation of forests, and destruction of animal and plant species likely to protect the environment. environment such as mangroves, Carbone peat bogs, etc. are the daily lives of the working masses of developing countries, Africa in general and the DR Congo in particular. This assertion is verifiable through the comparative observation of the neighborhoods inhabited by the middle classes and the popular cities of Africa as well as in the countryside where the drought pushes the citizens towards internal immigration in search of the appropriate living spaces that they anytime soon.

Mouloud Guerchouh and Djamel Si-Mohammed (2020) wondering about the place of citizen participation in local environmental governance and by extension, in sustainable development in Algeria “*environmental governance*

presupposes the mobilisation, participation and 'active involvement of social actors in the decision-making process affecting the territory, the region, etc., because it is possible to consider the environment as a collective asset whose preservation is everyone's responsibility”.

Of all development projects, those that focus on citizen participation easily achieve the expected results. Ultimately, citizen participation must come after global citizenship education, as I already noted in my last publication on this topic (Kasongo Mungongo, 2021) “*the local dimension taking into account citizen participation in the implementation of public policies, the concern for the formation of the citizen was necessary in order to better understand and take on one's responsibilities in the face of the challenges of humanity”.*

➤ *Creation of sustainable cities*

As part of the environmental and social protection of urban areas in Africa including DR Congo, the use of science and new technologies can allow the implementation of urban renovation programs through the use of renewable energies such as photovoltaics, wind turbines and others so as to provide a number of basic social services to the entire population. *Cities that ensure equal access to essential services, to sober and efficient means of transport, to jobs, and that reduce insecurity, as defined by the French Development Agency*⁸.

VI. CONCLUSION

The research theme of «African Cities: Climate Change and the Search for Resilience”, gives us the opportunity to analyze in a systemic and global way the links between the rapid development of urban agglomerations following the implementation of decentralization and environmental degradation. This is what justified the title of this article as follows “*Decentralisation, urbanisation and environmental drifts of Urban Governance and Resilience Mechanisms”* to express the concerns arising from a process of decentralisation which leads to the creation of urban agglomerations with unfortunate consequences on the urban environment.

We have developed strong ideas in four essential points, namely: (i) the process of decentralisation in the DR Congo and the growth of cities; (ii) Cities and environment in DR Congo; (iii) Decentralisation, the mining sector and the destruction of the environment of the D R Congo; (iv) Environmental Resilience Mechanisms (post-decentralisation).

The materials used for the elaboration of this study essentially consist of documents written both by doctrine and

⁸ Available at <<https://www.afd.fr/fr/page-thematique-axe/villes-durables>> Accessed 25 August 2022

in official documents as well as the fruit of our own observation as an actor and historical subject of the reality of climate change in the urban environment.

This study is not a questioning of the city but on the contrary a call for conscious urbanisation through the adoption of strategies that encourage the creation of small ecological and sustainable cities. It is motivated by the contrast that emerges between the process of institutional reforms (decentralisation in the DRC) and the reality of environmental abuses resulting from the anarchic creation of cities by the said process.

While the hopes of local communities are often based on decentralisation as a process of empowering local communities, it is observed that African municipalities in general and those of the DR Congo in particular are expanding rapidly, swallowing up the rural territory which constitutes the reserve of oxygen. The masses thus grouped together in large, medium and small cities, living in multidimensional poverty, have only nature as a last resort for their food and energy needs. The poverty of the said urban agglomerations not allowing them to develop the infrastructures which would lead to the protection of the environment, urban governance presents itself as a challenge which requires the commitment of everyone.

Decentralisation can then become an instrument for promoting local development through project management and the process of sustainable urbanisation; the grouping of villages within small sustainable towns where respect for the environment and social control would be dominant words. This process will allow the reconstitution of ecosystems degraded by man.

We would also like to see squirrels and foxes circulating in the streets of African cities as are the case in the streets of Los Angeles in California. Nothing is impossible where there is the political will to apply good urban governance.

We call for capacity building in urban governance of African cities to combat climate change due to the damage caused by urban and urban-rural populations.

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