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Social security, poverty dynamics and economic growth in Angola's small-holder agriculture

A case study of two communities in Huambo province

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Social security, poverty dynamics and economic growth in Angola's smallholder agriculture

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Contents

1. Introduction

This paper is a condensed presentation of findings in the project "Land and Legal Plurality in Angola" as a part of the research collaboration programme between CEIC, Universidade Catholica de Angola and CMI, Norway. Fieldwork was done in August and September 2009 and 2010 in the municipalities of Kachiungu and Caála, in Huambo province.

Like most African countries Angola has a huge sector of small-holder agriculture and the great majority of the population in the rural areas completely depends on this activity for their livelihood and their survival. For Angola, the end of the civil wars in 2002 has again opened the countryside for support to farmers and for improvement of agricultural practices. Even though personnel resources and competence are limited within the Angolan state apparatus the government accepts that the state has an important role to fill in supporting and improving agricultural practices. The recognition of such a role for the state found an important expression by Parliament's provision of the 2004 Land Law (*Lei de Terras, Lei 09/04*) which was signed into law in 2004 and its Regulations, which were issued in 2007 as the General Decree for Land Concessions (*Regulamento Geral de Concessão de Terrenos*). One of the main reasons for the new law is to increase the agricultural producers' security to land through the establishment of clearer titling procedures. Similar to what is the case in many African countries the rural areas has - in matters of land - mainly been left to govern themselves according to informal rules and regulations, often called 'traditional' or 'customary' law.[1]

Comparatively speaking, the overall knowledge about the organisation and functioning of small-holders' agriculture in Angola is fairly scarce. In particular, this applies to the local rules and regulations governing distribution and transference of land.[2] The attitude among many government agencies is often very technocratic mainly focusing on technological potentials and disregarding institutional constraints associated with the rules and norms of the local communities. The underlying objectives of this project has therefore been to contribute to more knowledge about these issues and – as far as possible – to investigate to what extent government policies seem adequate measures compared to what emerges as the reality for the farmers and their dependants.

The project selected Huambo Province as its study area. The main reasons for this is that the highland plateau in Huambo (Planalto Central) has had a well-developed agricultural sector over a relatively long period of time where the colonial authorities were very active with a substantial presence of settlers. The colonial legacy should therefore be taken into consideration in the evaluation and this also means that farming methods and traditional systems of land tenure has been under external influence over long time. Furthermore, the population density is relatively high in Angolan terms. One must therefore expect that Huambo Province represents the most 'modern' parts of Angolan small-holder agriculture and that it cannot, therefore, contrarily be cast as somehow out-dated and irrelevant for the country as a whole. However, as will soon be

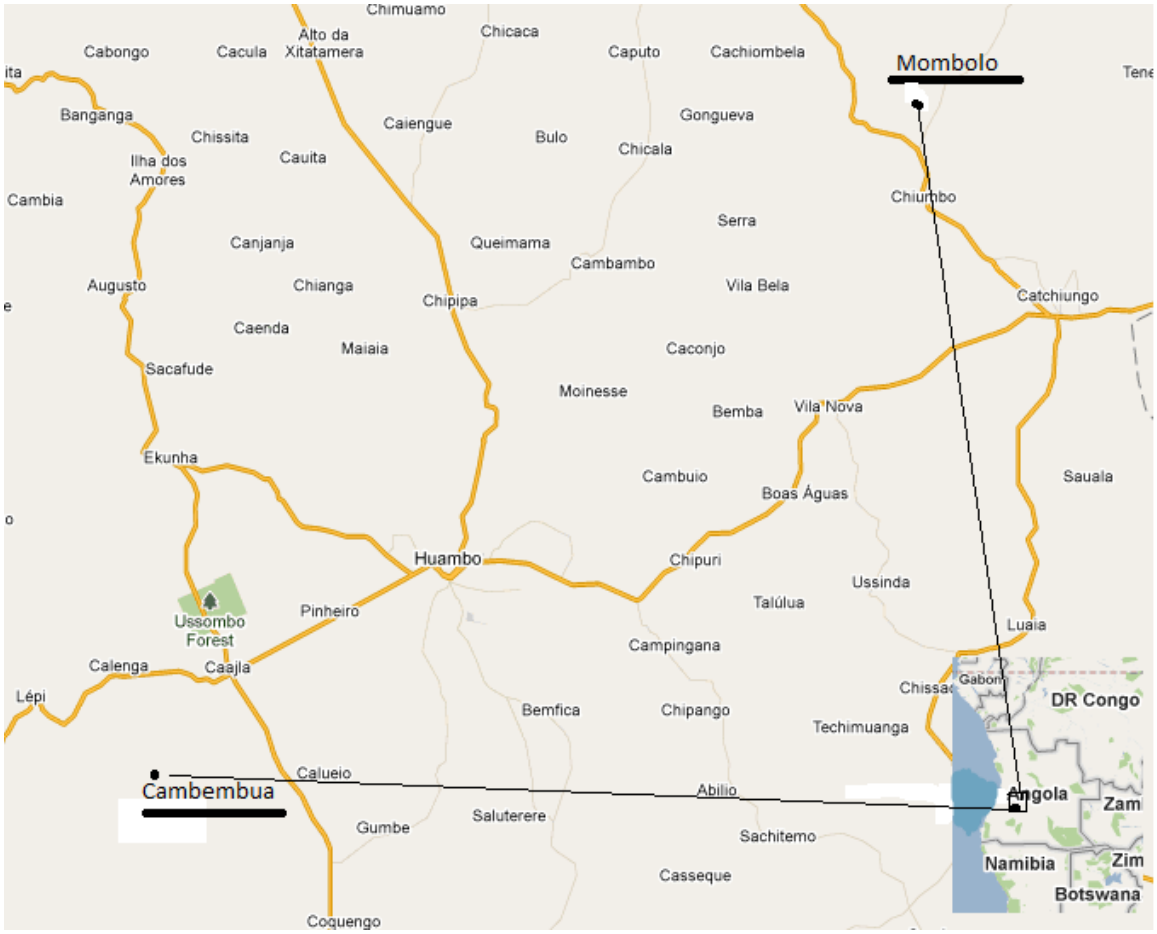
[1] Some recent contributions to the studies of African practices, governance and conflicts related to landinclude Anseeuw and Alden 2010, Cotula 2011, Matondi et al. 2011 and Moyo 2008.

[2] For literature on land tenure in Angola, see, e.g., Clover 2005, Clover 2010, Foley 2007, Pacheco 2001, 2002 and 2005. Besides Wheeler and Pélissier's introduction to the history of Angola (2009), two early studies on rural poverty in the region of southern Angolan history are also useful (Clarence-Smith and Moorsom 1977, Soremekun 1977).

shown below, the variations in agricultural practices as well as in land tenure are considerable within the province

The collection of data took place in two rural villages, Mombolo in the municipality of Katciungu and Cambembua in Caála municipality (See map 1). The villages are similar in terms of size and household composition and located in typically rural settings at some distance from the main roads. The populations belong to the same ethnic group and speak the same language. Distances to towns and cities are also fairly identical although slightly shorter from Cambembua than from Mombolo. Despite these similarities we find remarkable difference in agricultural performance. A main difference is this: While agriculture in Mombolo remains simple with only moderate external influences over time, and heavily concentrated on subsistence, Cambembua emerges as much more dynamic with close and frequent commercial relations to food markets in many of the major cities in Angola, such as Luanda, Benguela, Lobito and of course Huambo town.

In the following the case studies are presented with, firstly, an overall focus on the current land tenure system followed by a description of the lines of authority that govern land tenure in the two communities. Towards the end of the report we present a comparative analysis of how the local judicial and political practices influence important social parameters such as access to land security and poverty dynamics and on the potential for economic improvements.



Map 1. Location of field sites (source: Google Map).

2. Mombolo village and Communa de Chiumbo[3]

2.1 General description of land, household and history

Mombolo village is located in the chieftaincy (*ombala*) of Bongo within the Commune of Chiumbo in the north of Kachiungo Municipality, Huambo Province. It is situated about 7 kilometres east of the main road between Kachiungo and Bailundo and 10 kilometres from the administrative town of Chiumbo. The municipal capital of Kachiungo lies approximately 25 kilometres away and it is 95 km to the provincial capital of Huambo.

Table 1. Baseline data for the municipality of Kachiungo

Communes	**Kachiungo**	**Chiumbo**	**Chinhama**	**Total**
Area (km²)	645	857	1,445	2,947
Chieftaincies	3	4	2	9
Villages	72	86	50	208
Population	76,000	44,000	36,000	156,000
Pop. density (ind/km²)	118	51	25	53
Households	15,200	8,700	7,200	31,100

Source: EDA office in Kachiungo, personal communication

Baseline data for the whole municipality and the communes are found in Table 1. In Mombolo the population counts approximately 1,000 people divided into some 200 households.[4] Approximately half of all villagers participate in the production, mainly agriculture. The households are all integral to the settlements of Mombolo which is divided into two sections: What is termed 'the old village' (the original site of the village) and Gozene which was established at the turn of the new century in connection with a religious conflict between Catholics and Pentecostals – a physical expression of a conflict that had been brewing for several years. The household's average is size 4.7 members and three out of four households are headed by males. The remaining women-headed households are all headed by widows. The only public services in Mombolo consist of a primary school with two teachers and an improved waterhole equipped with a manual pump. There are no private services in the form of markets or shops. As for what is usually categorized as civil society organisations there is a Catholic church in the old village and a Pentecostal one in Gozene. The administration and running of the two churches are the responsibility of villagers with very modest external support. No cooperatives or villagers' associations exist to potentially provide assistance in terms of agricultural inputs or other purposes.

[3] Some of the data presented in this section has initially been collected in a survey conducted by the NGO Development Workshops Angola in 2007/2008 and is available in an unpublished report, Anon. 2008. To the extent possible, data was double-checked during our 2009 fieldwork.

[4] This figure mirrors that provided in study by Nielsen (Nielsen 2008) where it was claimed that in 2008 Mombolo had 215 households and a total population of about 1075 people. The brief study on women's rights in relation to land also includes a very brief treatment of Mombolo as one of several pilot study areas.

The village covers an area of almost 1,500 hectares or 15 square kilometres. As late as the 1940s most of the landscape of rolling hills was covered by open woodlands, but vast tracts have since been cleared for crop cultivation. Each home is located within a small property called *ochumbo*. This home-near plot of land is used for the cultivation of vegetables (primarily beans, potatoes and sweet potatoes) as well as holding fruit trees and is a site for the rearing of poultry and, for some, a few goats or pigs. The *ochumbo* are generally more fertile than other land due to organic waste from the households and from animals. Larger, more distant rain-fed fields called *ongongo* are used predominantly for maize and manioc cultivation, while the small irrigated *onaka* fields along rivers and drainage systems are used for vegetables, maize and banana cultivation.

Extensive subsistence hoe farming without fertiliser provides by far the main economic occupation in all households in the village. Some of the agricultural produces may be marketed at the main road or in town. Other sources of monetary income include labour migration to the major Angolan cities, casual labour in the nearby towns or providing services such as the cutting and carrying of timber in connection with a nearby state-owned forest reserve. However, such alternative income-generating activities are often erratic or are seasonal in the sense that people choose to migrate in the "quiet" season from May to August.

The "collective" memory situates the establishment of the village approximately 90-100 years back in time and the founder's name was Lundovi, which was also the name of the village until 1989 when it changed to Mombolo. The establishment took place after the initiation of widespread evangelisation of Huambo province by Evangelist and Catholic missionaries. Through the establishment of new villages, the missionary activities proved to have important demographic implications for the area. The time of establishment also coincided more or less with the first arrival of Portuguese settlers who**,** according to oral sources, established their agricultural estates or *fazendas* in Bongo during the second decade of the 20th century. By 1920 a total of four *fazendas* are reported to have existed in the commune near to the Kachiungo-Bailundo road. It was not possible to verify whether the establishment of the village was directly related to the appearance of the colonial settlers.

According to several village elders the village soon became organised around three main lineages. The first was Lundovi's which always have remained the biggest and from which the village headman (*soba*) is recruited. The present headman is the direct grandson of Lundovi. People of the two other lineages descend from persons invited by Lundovi to establish themselves in the village. They remain numerically more insignificant and there are also some disagreements related to who are to be included in one of them. The three lineages are for many purposes sub-divided into smaller descent groups such as extended families consisting of married brothers – sometimes also married sisters – descending from the same father.

During the first civil war after independence the village was more or less completely evacuated between 1978 and into the second half of the 1980s and the population living as displaced in Bie, in the city of Huambo or elsewhere. Some also joined the Unita guerrilla in the bush. Most inhabitants had returned by 1990. During the second civil war in the late 1990s the commune of Chiumbo was severely affected and military control shifted between the fighting parties. During this time, however, there was no systematic evacuation of the village.

The previously mentioned religious conflict in the village between the old Catholic and the new Pentecostal Churches came as a direct result of the evacuations. During their time away from the village, younger members of the community met the Pentecostal church and converted. During the 1990s social tensions grew since the whole population continued to live in the old village. In 2000 the Pentecostals were offered to buy a plot of land and a new settlement called Gozene (after the Goshen in the Old Testament's Genesis) started to emerge. The new settlement is situated about 1 kilometre away from the old Mombolo, and must be considered

the first step in the process of village fission. However, until now, no headman has been appointed. This means that formally, the Gozene settlement still responds to the *soba*. Nonetheless, in everyday life and most matters, the *de facto* authority is actually in the hands of the Pentecostal church leaders based on their charismatic characters and traditional functions. In 2009 Gozene' population counted between 200 and 250.

2.2 Land tenure practices

Even though land tenure practices in rural Huambo may vary from one location to another, they show many of the typical characteristics also found in small-holder agriculture in other parts of Africa - often referred to as customary land tenure. Contrary to what the notion of 'popular knowledge' may lead one to think, customary tenure never proves to be founded in well-defined rules and regulations from old times. Rather access to land is achieved and conflicts sought solved with reference to a multitude of local rules and regulations which co-exist and find their legitimacy in widely differing epistemological and socio-political systems originating in different historical periods. For instance, it may be argued that the customary land tenure we see today largely is a result of the colonial legacy.[5] As a result customary tenure often lacks internal convergence and it is not unusual also to find internal contradictions in the principles it claims to follow. In such situations the negotiating context becomes very important for the outcome.[6]

First of all rights to land remains integral to the old agrarian conception where people and land are considered parts of the same universe since both descend directly from the ancestors.[7] Land, family and the individual constitutes in some respects at some level in social orders an inseparable entity where the land is crucial in the social construction of family position and accords the particular identity of the family members. According to this view the transference of land out of the descent group is highly problematic and affects all members of the family. Decisions about land transactions can therefore in no way be the privilege of individuals or single households alone.

Confirming to some degree such a basic understanding of the interconnectedness of land, family and the individual, the study in Mombolo shows that the great majority – probably as much as 80 per cent -- of the fields is being transferred through inheritance.[8] Further, the fields have remained in the same families since the establishment of the village a hundred years ago. Such internal continuity within the village as well as time-depth is significant, particularly when one takes into account that the village was more or less deserted for 20 years due to the civil war. The study also shows that, despite the commonly held and frequently expressed view in the village that specific plots of land "belong" to specific households, the rights to the plots are mainly limited to usufruct rights and does in no way include rights to transfer land to others. Such decisions can only be taken at the level of the extended family, generally a group of adult brothers and their children. It is also not uncommon that sisters will also be consulted in such matters. However, even usufruct rights may be limited since it is common that larger pieces of land often prove to be cultivated by several households belonging to the same extended family. This is so even if the piece in everyday discussions may be associated with a particular person

[5] See Chanock 1985.

[6] See e.g. Berry, 1993 and 2002 and Juul and Lund, 2002.

[7] For a classic and historically informed study of the *longue durée* of such relations, see Ranger 1999.

[8] Unpublished survey data collected by USAID in Mombolo, August 2007, put at our disposal by Development Workshop in Huambo.

or household. This practice has further important implications on decisions regarding the rotation of the fields (both *ongongo* and *onaka*), which areas that are to be left fallow and, ultimately, which crops to cultivate where. It is therefore a finding from this study that the extended family is more important than each household when it comes to decisions concerning the tenure of agricultural land.

The logic of descent and inheritance is not always well suited in situations characterised by great political change and instability and considerable mobility of people. This has been the case in the Planalto Central and important modifications to the above general dynamics therefore exist. First of all, it must be recalled that descent does not necessarily imply blood relations. Genealogies are continuously being constructed by the villagers on basis of alliances that individuals establish with families. In Mombolo today the Salombonde lineage is dominated by a branch that descends from one of Salombonde's captives who later was married to one of Salombonde's daughters. In every extended family in Mombolo one will find individuals that are considered members of this lineage although it is generally accepted that their biological descent is different. This is particularly noticeable with respect to the creation of Gozene and the Pentecostal church where one finds many newcomers without direct family relations to people in the village. Thereby, the newcomers also acquire rights to land even though their rights over a long period of time remain weaker than those of the ordinary members of the family. A variation of the same system**,** which is quite much in use in the area**,** is to give land rights to people who trace descent through the women. One of the families in control of most land in Mombolo descends from a widow who, due to her brother's death, has inherited much land belonging to her father's lineage. These practices of family association of newcomers and extensive use of tracing descent bilaterally is perfectly adaptable to the existing patrilineal inheritance system and do therefore seldom create conflicts.

Another way newcomers may acquire land rights is by working it. Since no land in Mombolo at present has the status as idle it means that working a piece of land can only occur by tilling the soil under the control of one of the families. In that case the principle of family association is commonly invoked and, contrarily, it is therefore quite uncommon to observe that right to land is achieved through work.

Finally, the principles of land as a commodity object to exclusive and individualised rights of property are also well known. Despite the tensions between these institutions, the practice of land sales is quite common. In fact, land sales in Mombolo are more common than what is often the case in other African contexts where one often observes that transactions are neither real nor exclusive. In Mombolo, on the other hand, prices of land are relatively high and exclusive rights are transferred. There are many reasons for this and also why land sales remains modest compared to acquisition through inheritance or family association. One is provided by the strong normative sanctions associated with selling plots of land.

Generally, however, there is a lot of scepticism attached to land sales and in all the cases investigated during fieldwork the sale proved to have taken place because there were no direct heirs to it remaining in the village. Land which has been bought clearly has a different status than the rest of the land in the village since it is considered to belong to the person or the household who have bought it irrespective of the interests from other parts of the extended family. Crucially, this particular status seems to end when the land is inherited after the death of the buyer. When it is inherited by his/her children it becomes inherited land again where the assembly of the heirs tend to control the land together and where other individuals from the lineage may claim certain rights which it is difficult to refuse.

In a project run by Development Workshops, Angola, aiming at individual demarcation of land in Mombolo the demarcations of the different fields are shown in fig. 1.

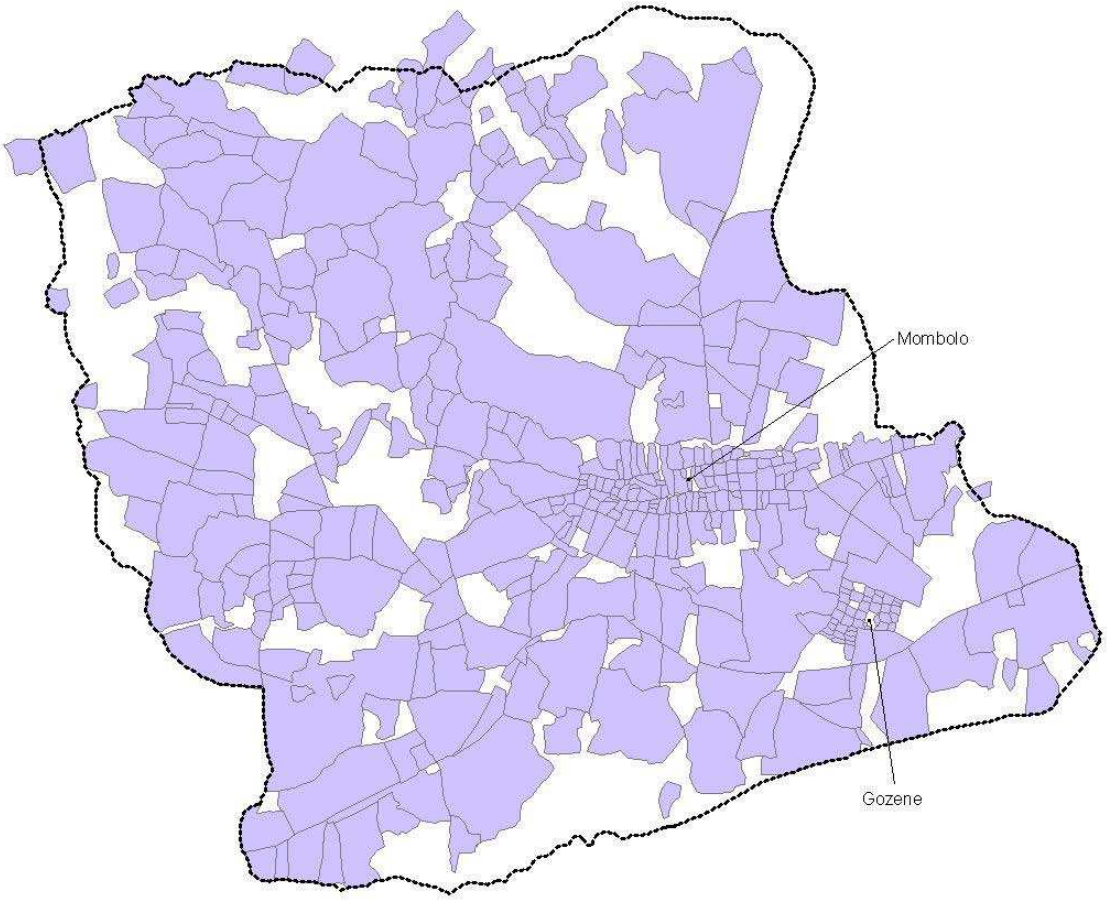


Figure. 1. Demarcation of fields in Mombolo (Anon 2008).

Our study in the same village shows that this map is fairly accurate and reflects the villagers' own conceptions of how the land is distributed. However, the problem arises when exclusive ownership is attributed to individual households. As already mentioned, inherited land is not exclusively controlled by the households and Fig. 2 shows a more representative picture of the situation. The fields marked with different colours are all under the control of an extended family consisting of eight separate households comprising an old father, four married sons and their wives, one unmarried son and two married daughters. In the registry land has been divided between them according to the colours in fig. 2. This division was a direct result of the demarcation project since it was decided by the family "upon request of the project". However, the division is purely formal since the land remains under the extended family and the paternal family head who happens not to be registered with any land at all. Two of the fields that have been bought are under control of separate households. In addition to the eight households our investigations also revealed that there may be as many as 10-15 other households that were granted more limited rights to land in these fields.

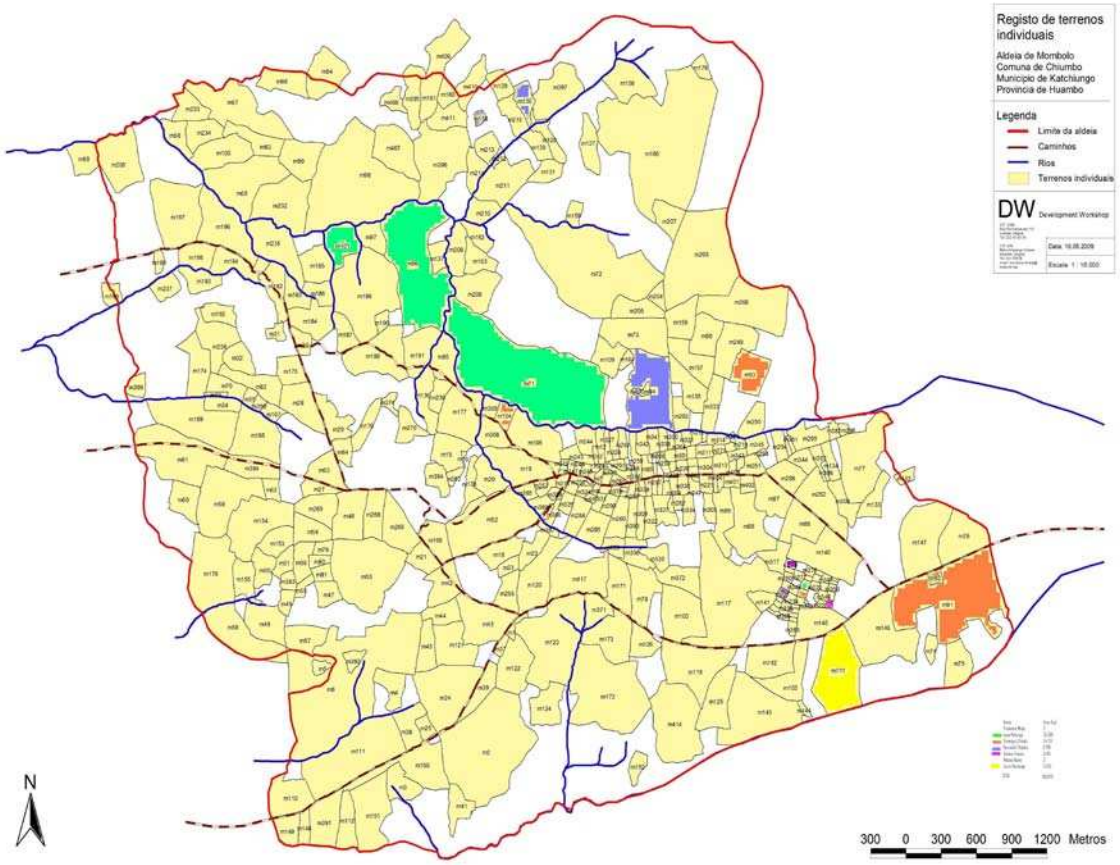


Figure 2. Land under the control of one extended family.

As this very brief example shows, one of the great dangers with this type of demarcation exercise is that they might lead to erroneous interpretations. According to Fig 2 the green household is a great landowner in Mombolo while his father and some of his brothers have very little or no land at all. Reality shows that it is the father who still remains with very much of the control.

2.3 Authority structures

According to the village head and many interviewed villagers there are few conflicts over land in Mombolo. The reason is that there is little competition since what have just been shown demonstrates that the rules are far from clear and the lack of clarity is further emphasised by a very complicated system of political authority and the role of the village headman or *soba*[9]. It is important to notice that, unlike what is the case in many other countries, the *soba*s in the municipality of Kachiungo do not control any resources (e.g. land) on their own. They therefore draw their authority solely on the legitimacy they receive from others. Many in Angola seem to consider the *soba* mainly as the direct representative of the national and municipal

[9] The vernacular term is *soma*, but this has become *soba* in Portuguese and used nationally as the term of a village headman.

administrations in the country, but this study shows a much more nuanced picture.[10] While it is certainly true that the *soba* draws part of his authority from the local political administration, this source is but one from several potential sources. Further, the *soba* is formally approved by the state's authorities, he goes to meet with them regularly and he gets compensation for the work he performs. But as have been shown, the Angolan state is almost non-existent at the village level**:** Except for a primary school there is no trace of state institutions in Mombolo. Health services, police or judiciary functions are simply physically absent from Mombolo. The *soba* has therefore very limited support in terms of local political, administrative and institutional infrastructure in fulfilling his duties. In addition the state authorities may make use of other sources in the village: In a situation where state authorities from different levels (municipal, provincial, national) do not always discern clearly between bureaucracy and political parties, they may also work through the nominated representatives of the party in power (MPLA). The study showed how this was the case regarding the establishment of the Gozene settlement and how this complicated the role of the *soba*.

In principle the *soba* also receives legitimacy through the system of traditional authority. The *soba* in Mombolo is subordinated to the chief (*soba inene*) in the chiefdom (*ombala*) of Bongo. However, the study did not find a single case where the *soba inene* had been consulted or in other ways had intervened to influence the outcome of particular events in the village. Even in the conflict leading up to the division of the village in two settlements**,** the Bongo chief was not involved. Overall, the *soba inene* in Bongo seems not to intervene very much in the affairs of the villages even though he has some control of the *soba*s since he approves them. During fieldwork several informants also reported from other places that many *soma inene* exercise considerable power in their chieftaincy – including cases wherein the *soba*s always must consult the *soba inene* in most matters regarding the village.

Other outside sources of power (in the conventional and institutional sense) also prove to be very few. Maybe most important are the churches that definitely play a major role in the daily life of the villagers. However, both the two churches present in Mombolo are to a large extent self-contained by being controlled and managed from the village itself with their own catechists and councils of elders. Underlining such a general tendency, the study revealed very few instances where outside representatives from the Catholic and Pentecostal churches in Angola intervened in the affairs of their church in Mombolo.

In this situation with few and weak outside relations the most important source from where the *soba* can base his authority is from the already existing authority structures inside the lineages or extended families and the elders who serve as their representatives. Only by acting in accordance with their will can the *soba* expect to exercise power. If he for some reason should choose to deviate from this strategy, there is very little he can do to prevent the families from taking matters in their own hands and follow their own convictions. For instance, when the majority of the Salombonde lineage decided to establish their own settlement 2 km outside the old village settlement there was little the *soba* could do about that as the land in the Gozene settlement was bought by the church and their members. This emergent village fission and how it came about demonstrates how the sale of land in Mombolo in many ways reduces the influence of the village authorities.

[10] See also Guedes and Lopes 2006, Orre 2010 and Flôrencio 2010a for other general approaches to the relations between authority structures, rural realities and the state. For an interesting constrastive study of political authority and its relation to the state in the nearby municipality of Bailundo, see also Flôrencio 2010b**.**

Summing up, it is probably correct to say that the institution of the *soba* in the study area is one which mainly bases its authority upon the families residing in the village even though the institution in some cases can seek support from the local authorities of the government. In such a situation the influence of the *soba* (in matters like, e.g., land tenure) is fairly limited unless he follows the will of the families who are in control of the land. Generally speaking the *soba*s in the study area have limited powers.

2.4 Consequences for people's livelihoods and economy

When looking at the effects of this situation in a poverty alleviation perspective it is possible to maintain that the present system of land tenure in the small-holders' agriculture represents certain advantages. The argument could be made that it is the dominant role of inheritance, combined with the dynamic practices and principles of family association**,** which to a large extent explain why all households in the village have at least some access to land. As a consequence no-one can be classified as landless even among the absolute poorest villagers. Generally the poorest people in Molombo belong to two categories of people. Either they are widows or divorced women with young children who head their own households. For the latter category there exists few possibilities for social mobility or for change in marital status (contrarily men can – and do – remarry much more frequently). Although the most severe economic limitation for this group is access to labour (the women themselves often constitute the only labourers in the household) it is also crucial that they have access to at least some plots of land. In a mainly patrilineal system of inheritance it is the practice of a flexible and largely bi-lateral heritage pattern where the women in need are given pieces of land from their own fathers. This form of inheritance explains how they are able to initiate and sustain their own households. The other group of poor people is the newcomers who, most often, do not possess hereditary rights to land in the village. It is the principle of achieving rights through family association to one of the existing families which renders the survival of this group possible even though the situation often is precarious particularly during the first years after arrival. This is predominantly visible among many of the newcomers who have settled in connection to the establishment of the Pentecostal church in Gozene.

A word of caution is necessary here: If we in this report designate someone as 'poor' in Molombo, this does by no means imply that the others are wealthy, or even less rich. The situation is better characterised by talking about various degrees of poverty where those who are the less poor belong to households that are able to generate a monetary income on top of the basis of subsistence agriculture. It follows from this that with the small households one finds in Mombolo, seldom with more than two persons providing labour input, it is difficult to establish viable strategies for generation of monetary income, particularly if it also requires leaving the village for longer or shorter periods. One would therefore expect that options which do not require moving would be preferred and the most utilised among the villagers. This proves not to be the case: On the contrary it seems as if the options requiring the longest travelling are the most preferred ones and almost all there is of monetary income in the village is generated on the basis of extensive travelling, either in work migration to the major cities during the "dead" agricultural season from May through August, or in more casual labour in nearby towns. The latter alternative can to some extent be combined with subsistence agriculture at home outside the peak seasons of clearing**,** sowing and harvesting. Work on the *fazendas* in the province used to be a common practice, but has not yet been re-established after the end of the civil war. Among the less important income generating strategies in Mombolo we seem to find cash crop cultivation and the rearing of animals like pigs or poultry at home.

Another observation relating to people's investment patterns is worth pointing out: We observe that agriculture is not among the preferred objects of financial investment. Overall, very little of the monetary income which is generated in (or brought back to) Mombolo is invested in means

of production. Instead, the majority of the money is used for construction or improvement of residences by the procurement of cement and/or sheets of corrugated iron for the roofs. When in rare cases money is spent for productive purposes it seems to be on activities outside the agricultural domain. We found cases in the village where money had been spent on motorbikes in order to establish transport facilities from the village to the main road and on buying and restoration of a flour mill near the village. This situation is not unique, but rather a quite common feature in many African villages and the reasons are certainly many and complex.[11]

In terms of existing agricultural facilitation and state intervention, in Mombolo we observe that extension assistance on the part of the agricultural authorities is non-existent. Agricultural subsidies are also virtually lacking. During the 2008 campaign for provision of fertilisers we were informed that the whole village received one bag. The market price of fertiliser (if it can be provided) is far from what the villagers in Mombolo possibly can be expected to pay.

On the basis of these very general traits – as well as the practical and technical contexts described – one might assume that Mombolo villagers would be careful about investing their meagre resources in a type of agriculture where land tenure does not favour individualised control of all means of production. Further, one might argue that they would rather prefer to invest part of their own labour and monetary resources in ventures characterized by individual control. Many studies of customary tenure from other African countries try to show how ambiguous institutional arrangements in the customary tenure tend to discourage people from investing in small-holders agriculture and that they therefore prefer other activities in order to generate monetary income. The case of Mombolo could lead us to think that this was also the case in rural Huambo, but the study of Cambembua village presented below will demonstrate how such monocausal explanations tend to be considerably oversimplified.

[11] See e.g. Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2009.

3. Cambembua village and the Vale de Kalai [12]

3.1 General description of land, household and history

Cambembua is situated in Comuna da Calenga, Município da Caála, 15 km south of Calenga, 25 km from Caála and around 50 km from Huambo. The village is part of the chiefdom (*umbala*) of Kasupi. Its population is approximately 640 persons divided into 128 households. This ratio gives it roughly the same household size as in Mombolo (5 pers./housh.). 25 households or one out of five are woman-headed and almost all are comprised of widows – another similarity with Mombolo. The total village area is 851,145 ha according to a communal deed (*croquis comunitária*) where the homes are located to the southern part of the village (see map 2).

Set in a rich agricultural valley – the Vale de Kalai – the village of Cambembua is part of a string of villages and minor towns that grace the line of the valley. Table 2 shows a density of population in the commune of Calenga (in which Cambembua is set) which is substantially higher than in the case of Mombolo (84.5 vs 51 inhabitants/km²), but in all other respects the baseline data of the two sites are fairly similar. It is therefore somehow surprising that Cambembua emerges as a much wealthier rural community than Mombolo. It is also characterised by very different agricultural practices: Here we find a much more intensive land exploitation (See map 2) including considerable areas under irrigation for production of a long range of products such maize, potato (*batata reina*), wheat, onion, cabbage (*repolho*), carrot, cassava and other agricultural products of which a great share is being commercialised to urban centres in and outside of the province. The contexts of and the reasons for the disparities in wealth are, as we shall see, both complex and historically contingent.

Table 2. Baseline data for Communa de Calenga

Area (km²)	386
Chieftaincies	2
Villages	51
Population	32,600
Pop. density (inh/km²)	84.5
Households	10,000
Households/village	196

Source: Calenga communal administration, personal communication.

The agricultural richness of the Kalai valley is also served by transport and communication that facilitate the movement of personnel and goods to markets, urban centres and job opportunities. For instance, the village is served by a so-called *chapacem* – a privately run bus service – that, during day time, goes through Cambembua every 30 minutes. Also, a network of roads of fair to good quality (with the exception of the last 14 kilometres between Calenga and Cambembua, which is dirt road) makes accessible markets and urban centres in the wider area.

[12] Contrasting case 1, the presentation and analysis of Cambembua relies more directly on our own baseline data collected during fieldwork in 2010.

Cambembua has also a more diversified set of institutions and activities compared to Mombolo. It has no less than four privately owned shops mainly selling groceries and some production equipment. Given its good yields and high production, the village regularly receives outside traders who come to buy agricultural goods. There are also 2-3 agricultural cooperatives, of which most villagers are members, which cater for modest provisions of seed and fertilizer. Most fertilizers, however, are bought in the urban centres at commercial rates.

As Mombolo, Cambembua is also dominated by two churches. The oldest is the Catholic Church but since 1979 the Adventist Church has become very active and remains today the largest. Beyond these institutions, there is a public health station in the nearby village of Karoi, an agricultural infrastructure support project (funded by the African Development Bank) which operates in the area and there is a publically run primary school up to 5th grade in the village. Thus, as in Mombolo public services remain at a very low level.

According to informants and official statistics, the village was created 12 August 1942 by a Herculano Kakumba. He came from the village of Mâma located 4-5 kilometres Northeast of Cambembua. Kakumba arrived together with his sister's son and, according to informants, meeting no people he 'closed the bush' (forest) and he became the first *soba*. Herculano was catechist in the Catholic Church and brought the church with him, so to speak. Upon Kakumba's death in 1953, his brother Igini Kimbão took office and ruled until his death in 1987 when Kakumba's sister's son Fermino Foma took over. In 2002, Foma decided to step down and gave the office to his youngest son, João de Deus, who remains the *soba* today. Fermino was still alive and active during the fieldwork in 2010.

The expansion of the colonial state and Portuguese re-settlement schemes were to have a great impact on this region. From the 1950s onwards the Portuguese colonial administration initiated many large-scale agricultural development schemes (in Angola and beyond) which particularly gained momentum in this region from the 1950s onwards. As in other provinces of Angola (and also in Mozambique and other Lusophone colonies), the majority re-settlement of Portuguese people were of poor peasant background.[13] When the so-called 'second wave' of poor Portuguese settlers came into the area in the 1960s, it is reported that land in the Cáala area was no longer available. The new settlers therefore had to rent land from the indigenous population. The rent, however, is crucial here as payment for rented land often consisted of what may seem like symbolic items such as cloths and bottles of wine. However, while payment was little in monetary terms, it speaks to the robustness of the organization of agriculture and land in the village that it incorporates change and new arrivals.

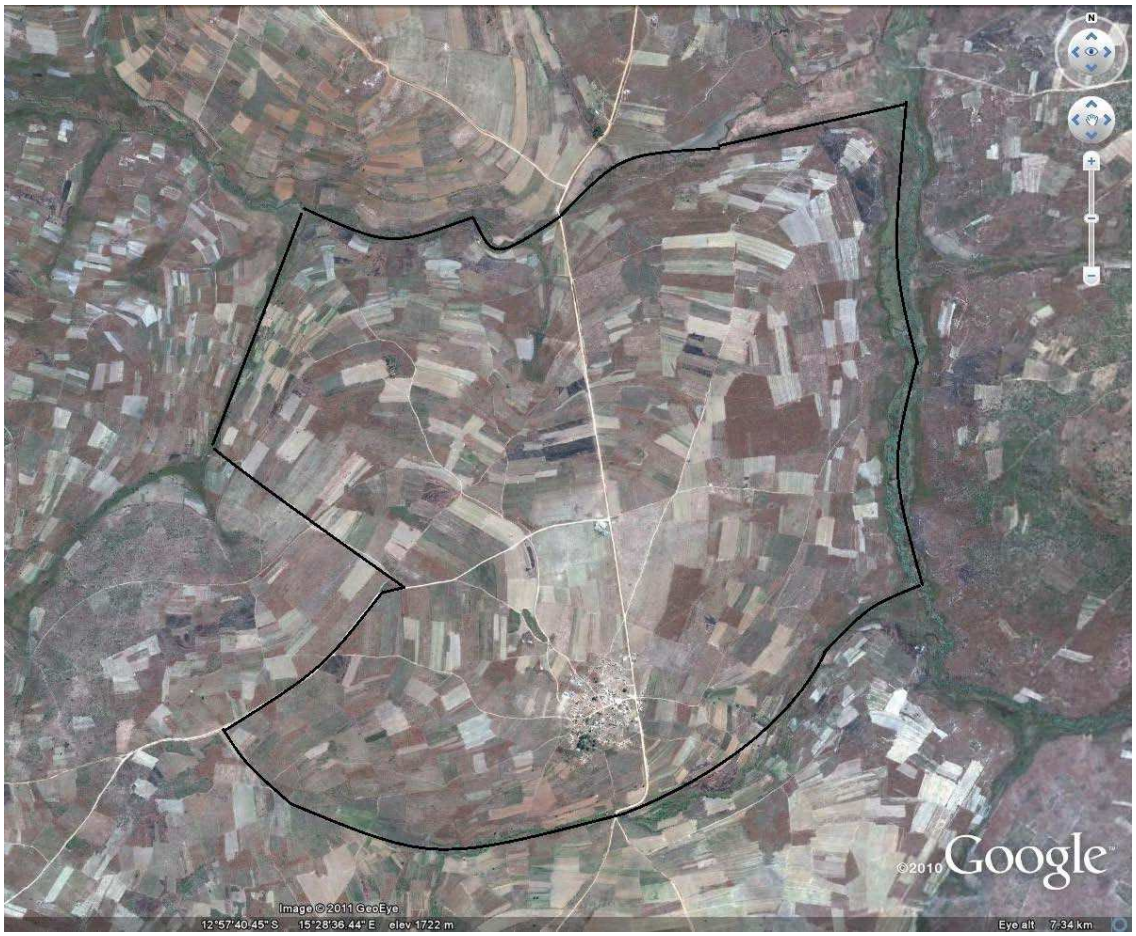
This argument is supported by the historical trajectory of also more recent influxes of people external to the valley. During the post-independence era, and related to the violence of the civil war, large populations of the Angolan rural and urban people were forcibly moved by the fighting forces. As noticed in the section about Mombolo, the MPLA government relocated large groups of people in the province to areas that they defined as more safe. One such area was Cáala where many were located in town. However, some of those re-settled in Cáala on individual bases established contacts with people in the rich agricultural areas further down in the Kalai valley. Gradually, many of these eventually settled in sites such as Cambembua – a process that was ongoing until as recently as 1998. In Cambembua the newcomers attained the

[13] The number of Europeans in Angola (the majority of which were Portuguese) increased greatly in the mid-20th century: From having 44 083 in 1940, the number increased to 78 000 in 1950, 110 000 in 1955 and 172 000 in 1960 – an increase of more than 400% in 20 years. See Wheeler and Pélissier 2009:205ff for further details on these population developments.

status of *visitas* – "visitors". This status assumes importance in the dynamics of land management, as we will see below.

If we compare the Vale do Kalai area with Mombolo and the municipality of Kachiungo, in general the era of the civil war left the area largely unharmed. The exception was during the period from 2000 to 2002 when the whole valley was emptied of people and located in and near Cáala town. In 2002, however, these people returned to their plots of lands and took up again agricultural production. Crucially, our study shows that there were few (if any) conflicts that arose from the two-year absence of people from their plots in terms of rights to land, the authority structure, boundaries between plots or the communal organization of land.

As a direct result of the Angolan Land Law of 2004 and the *Regulamento Geral de Concessão de Terrenos* of 2007, Cambembua was attributed a so-called *croquis comunitária* – a kind of communal lease for the area cadastrally designated as belonging to the community of Cambembua.[14] Crucially, the law opened for such communally held tracts of land and this is central to socio-political organization of life in the village.



Map 2. The village, fields and boundaries of Cambembua village.

[14] According to the communal administration in Calenga, the legal status of the *croquis communitaria* was not yet finalised.

3.2 Land tenure practices

Agriculture in Cambembua is less work intensive and more dependent on modern equipment and techniques than in Mombolo. The lands of Cambembua are also characterized by such long-term usage as they predominantly comprise open grasslands virtually devoid of trees. Another key difference is that there is hardly any substantial agricultural task in relation to the fields that is involve work with the hoe, as contrarily is the case in Mombolo: An impressive 41 households (out of a total of 128) have one or several ox at the time of the fieldwork and, thus, use these for traction when ploughing and for transportation of fuel and other goods. Through renting the cows and oxen to other households, the vast majority has their fields tilled by ox. There is also quite a widespread use of rented tractors for this purpose – a use that seems to be increasing. A further contrast from Mombolo is the frequent use of fertilizer – a use that attests to the financial strength and a dependency on production for the market of the Cambembua community. Fertiliser is used for many products, but is particularly important for the production of cash-crops, mainly potatoes, but also carrots, onions, cabbage etc.

The local land tenure practices and typology of lands resemble Mombolo but with some crucial differences. To recall, in Mombolo there were three main categories of land: Each home is located within a small property called *ochumbo* used for the cultivation of vegetables as well as holding fruit trees, *ongongo* – much larger, more distant rain-fed fields used predominantly for maize cultivation, and, thirdly, *onaka*, small wetland fields along rivers and drainage systems used for vegetables, maize and banana cultivation. Contrasting slightly Mombolo, in Cambembua villagers live in a very concentrated settlement and the *ochumbo* encircling the houses are small and poorly developed. The *ongongo*, on the other hand, is fairly well-developed and these fields are used predominantly for maize but often also in combination with other crops such as beans (*feijão)*. It is also the site of production of many other cash crops. There is, however, a fourth category which constitutes a major difference between Cambembua and Mombolo: *Ombanda*. According to our survey, in Cambembua this category comprises some 160 agricultural fields – close to one fifth or 20 per cent of the total area of the village. The *ombanda* are fed by a well-developed system of dams and water canals and are used almost exclusively for production of cash-crops bought in quantities by wholesale traders that pass through or regularly visit the village or brought to markets in the major cities to be sold there. The growing season on these lands are, for some, close to 12 months a year. Lack of time for the land to lay fallow constitutes may be the main cause for dependence of fertilizers in Cambembua.

It should be evident from the above that the infrastructure of irrigation is essential in this typology of land tenure and typology. Indispensable in this regard is, therefore, the three barrages that serve the irrigation canals in the village area. Two of these barrages were erected during the Portuguese colonial era and in relation to the influx of poor Portuguese peasants from the 1950s onwards. The third was, according to the *soba*, constructed more recently by a man from the town of Lupili. In constructing the barrage, he used the labour of the local population. This latter barrage, as the two former, were all constructed by manual labour and with a minimum of technical equipment. All three presently serve to feed a complex network of irrigation canals. The allocation of amounts and timing of water to the different canals is organized communally and the study found that, perhaps surprisingly, very few conflicts surround the distribution and infrastructure of this scarce resource. It follows from this that also regular maintenance and work on the dams and canals is done according to communal decisions. In total, the main effect on the soil that the use of such technologies (tractors, cows/oxen, fertilizers and irrigation canals) has is that it greatly increases the land's productivity in terms of annual yields.

The size and organization of the lands also differ from that of Mombolo: in the Kalai valley there are two denominations of farmers pertaining to the agricultural sector: Firstly, like in Mombolo, there is the category of *campesinos*. These are the vast majority of inhabitants and controls smaller plots of land and usually live on – or near – their *ochumbo* – that are located in the village itself. Almost all of them are part of the main lineages in the village: The descendants after Herculano (arrival in 1942 and recognized as founder), Matheus (married to a woman from the village in 1954 and who returned as a widow and re-settled here) and Vasco Pagador (an Adventist man coming as a refugee in 1979 and settling in Cambembua).[15]

The second category that is made relevant in the valley is *agricultores.* This term denotes a land owner that controls at least 10-15 hectares of land. The study found that the largest of such *agricultores* could control as much as 120 hectares of village land.[16] While the *campensinos* totally depend on the local authorities (lineage elders and *soba*) regarding their access to land, the *agricultores* rely on a combination of government and local authorities. Most of them have some sort of formal title to their land and are recognised by the administrator in the Calenga commune. The *agricultores* are all Africans, but it was not possible to identify the exact origins of the category.[17] They generally live in town as absentee landlords, even though most of them originate from the valley. However, as we shall see, some have no or very weak linkages to the area. Despite their control of relatively large land areas, they complain to have great difficulties in putting their land under cultivation. One *agricultor* in control of 120 ha reported that less than 20 ha were under cultivation in 2010.

At the time of the fieldwork only two *agricultores* (Evaristo Ouanjanganga and colonel Tourbo) operated in Cambembua. Ouanjanganga, originally from the area and part of a central lineage in Cambembua, works in Huambo at the Ministry of finance and uses mainly external labour for work on fields. Tourbo, who is from Luanda and without any linkage to the area, recently acquired some 10 ha of fields in Cambembua from a family in the nearby village of Mâma. In late 2010 there was some political turbulence in the village as Tourbo apparently wanted to individually title his claim – a development opposed by the current *soba* and the majority of the informants. As is evident from the above, the category of *agricultores* is comprised of households from a few families and numerically unimportant in the village.

Another key category among the *campensinos* which we do not find in Mombolo is the *visitas* or 'visitors'. They are people who have settled more or less permanently in the village as a result of the civil wars movements. While it would seem natural to assume that *visitas* would be marginalized within such a communally organized agricultural domain (replete with an implicit hierarchy in the categories of *agricultores* and *campesinos*), their role is far more dynamic, ambivalent and, in one important case, crucial for understanding the relative wealth of Cambembua. Unsurprisingly those that are economically marginalised – widows and non-married women – often belong to the category of *visitas.* However, many *visitas* are also assimilated into the socio-cultural world of the village and while retaining the category, many *visita* households fare well economically and socially in Cambembua. Also, while the female-headed households of *visitas* may be marginalised, *all* households nonetheless still have access

[15] The term `lineage` is used here to denote what are socially recognized as lineages – thus based on what the anthropologists call classificatory kinship – rather than entities where one, theoretically speaking, could use genetical testing to ascertain kinship. In this way the lineages and how they are related to also support one of the main conclusions of this report that highlight the high level of adaptation and the plasticity of the socio-political organization that characterize Cambembua.

[16] This refers to another village in the Kalai valley close to Cambembua.

[17] One possibility is that they prefered to call themselves *agricultores* instead of the more incriminating term *fazendeiros* which generally refers to a white estate owner.

to land. The mechanism securing universal access to land assumes considerable importance for the question of reproduction of poverty since it reduces the growth of a category of landless rural farmers.

Finally, the last category in the agriculture of Cambembua is constituted by hired labourers. Among the villagers one finds that most households have both hired people to work for them as well as they have worked for other households in the village, even though the frequency of working for others is most prevalent among the poorer households. In this context the system of hired labour is much more than an economic institution since it may be as much a response to various types of social obligations. Slightly different is a considerable amount of labourers who arrives and works in the area during shorter periods in the peak seasons. Most of them come from more hilly and less productive areas west of the Kalai valley where they have their own farms.[18]

The success of *visitas* also concerns the most notable exception to the rule: The economically strongest lineage in Cambembua is one made up of *visitas*. Arriving, according to informants, around the year 1978, this group introduced the Adventist faith in the village and rapidly proceeded to recruit adherents – crucially also the *soba* and the local MPLA secretary. A microcosm more based on individualised responsibilities and opportunities then emerged with new ideals for agricultural development: Abstention from alcohol, recognition of the individual aspects of property, an emphasis on the value of hard work and an equal emphasis on cooperation.

There is no doubt that the level of household independence with regard to land tenure is considerably higher than in Mombolo. One of the obvious reasons for this is found in the very high frequency of land sales: While only 20 per cent of the households in Mombolo controlled land they had bought, our survey in Cambembua of 30 households and some 160 fields indicates that more than 80 percent of the *campensino* households controlled land bought by the same household. 52 percent of all fields in the village were reported to have been bought in Cambembua while only 48 per cent were reported to be inherited. Prices on land is fairly high and has turned around the equivalent of 2 (heads of) cows/oxen per ha of land during the period from 1990 until 2010. Nevertheless, it still makes little sense to talk about a free market of land in Cambembua or to see the households as market agents. Like in Mombolo, the general rule is that one is still required to have the approval of the extended family before land is sold. In such discussions, only reasons connected to dire material needs are considered socio-morally acceptable causes. The need to buy fertilisers was sometimes used as a reason and illustrates well the level of technological dependency that the *campensinos* in Cambembua have acquired. The selling of land remains subject to moral disparagement and people tend to avoid talking about it.

More autonomy to the households compared to the extended families is relative. Land that has been bought and later inherited returns back to become part of the patrimonial heritage where the extended family has much more influence and rights. Parents and elder brothers may in some cases legitimately intervene in agricultural activities and family members outside the household can only with difficulty be refused access to limited plots of land if other options do not exist. Compared to Mombolo, inheritance practices seem fairly similar only with slightly more inheritance to the households.

[18] Unfortunately it was not possible to treat the external hired labour in Cambembua in a satisfactory manner. Field work was undertaken in the lean season of August-September when external labourers remained in their home areas.

3.3 Authority structures

As should be clear from the sketch of Cambembua's history above, the Vale do Calai has been an area that in comparative terms have been exposed to relatively little long-term violence, periods of destructive warfare or other disordering political and social processes during Angola's periods of civil war. This has had as a consequence that it constitutes one of the few areas in the province where the post-independent Angolan state has enjoyed virtually full political and territorial control. Such control and relative peace has produced a strong state presence and MPLA also influences greatly the traditional institutions such as that of the *soba*. An instance of this was seen recently when the youngest brother in the dominant lineage was chosen as the current *soba*. He was preferred over his older brother – who would under normal circumstances have been the natural choice – as the latter had been arrested for UNITA sympathies and contacts.

In terms of the long periods of political calm, this also means that the socio-political organization has had the opportunity to attain some level of institutional stability regarding the administration of land.[19] This has created an institutional flexibility with wide-spread support that undergirds decision-making practices – as well as challenges to the understandings of land tenure. This was seen recently in the so-called Bambi case from 2003 that will be recounted here to illustrate this.

The Bambi case has significance on several levels. Firstly, there is a perceptible *normative ethos* relating to land and land tenure involved in the whole development of the case. By being perceived as transgressing the ethos relating to land and customary land tenure – dimensions Bambi at the time seemed oblivious about – tensions rose against him in the local community. Secondly, the case evidences a strong *communitarian or collective* orientation. This might seem paradoxical given the large-scale and cash-crop driven form of agriculture dominating Cambembua. But it might be explained also by a wide-spread experience of being interdependent – a tangible example of the ways in which precious water is collectively guarded and its canals and barrages maintained. When threatening to kill Lessalessa, then, Bambi threatened the stability and sense of this acutely experienced interdependence. One might also speculate that this was at least part of the reason why one of the villagers exclaimed to Bambi's nocturnal troops that "If you want to kill our brother Lessalesssa, you need to kill us too".

The role and the position of the *soba* tend to be more pronounced in Cambembua compared to Mombolo where his authority seems to rely heavily on the lineage elders and the church leaders (often the same persons). The dependence on market production as well as the presence of the *agricultores* opens for much more direct and continuous government involvement. One example is the question of property rights to land and the legal status of various cadastres. Like in so many other situations regarding legal matters, in depth investigations prove that neither the individual rights of the *agricultores*, nor the communal rights of the *campesinos* have been formalised completely. This clearly opens up for political negotiation and manipulation. Finally, the weak historical presence of UNITA forces in this area has made it easier and more natural for MPLA to create its own role even though it often is difficult to discover where party activities ends and those of the state commence.

[19] For a useful overview of some of the relations between *sobas* and the state (including some cases relating to Huambo and its hinterland), see Guedes 2006.

Box 1. *Agricultores vs Campensinos*; The Bambi case

In 2003 a lieutenant coronel, Vanancio Bambi, known simply as Coronel Bambi or, simply, Bambi, came to Kassupi village near Cambembua having procured 3.5 ha of land from the administrator of Calenga commune, Isaac Mbeu as well as under the auspices of the *soma inene* (chief) of Kassupi. His father originated from this village, but he had never himself lived in this type of rural setting. Rapidly, Bambi procured other pieces of land from local peasants through different types of transactions. This translated into trouble, however, when Bambi sought a formalisation of his ownings – a so-called *croquis de localização*. With this process, villagers of Cambembua and elsewhere suspected that the area Bambi had acquired encompassed villages of Lupili, Cassupi and the local *sobas* supported villagers in their accusation against the *soma inene* – Lourenço Bernardo Costa – that the latter had sold land illegally to Bambi. Already an old man past 70, Costa denied the allegations but quickly chose to remain silent. The silence did not, however, resolve the tensions created by the land acquisitions and matters came to a head when a villager, Mr. Lessalessa, told Bambi: "If you come to my land, I will kill you". This threat lead the furious Bambi to summon soldiers under his command and these started to do nocturnal rounds in the village, beating doors in search of Sr. Lessalessa. Bambi's response created great tension and fear but also, seemingly, amalgamated villagers in their resistance against Bambi. One villager in an interview expressed: "We told the troops, 'If you want to kill our brother Lessalesssa, you need to kill us too'". Eventually, Bambi called the case in for the provincial court in Huambo in 2007 where he alleged that Lessalessa interrupted his agricultural work, destroyed his crops and even sabotaged his tractor as well as some agricultural equipment. In court Lessalessa appeared with four *sobas*. He alleged that the lands were acquired through a sordid dealing between the administrator of Calenga and Bambi and that the problems arose when the coronel appeared arrogant and also transgressed the boundaries of other plots. The four *sobas* all concurred with this version of events. Upon direct question from one of the court members if and how he wanted to kill the coronel, Lessalessa responded positively and said that he would use *feitiço* (sorcerous magic) that he gone to the Democratic Republic of Congo to find. The court eventually passed a preliminary ruling that Bambi should refrain from invading other lands beyond the 3.5 hectares that he had already acquired. The conflict with Bambi also involved a second phase – in which the villagers collectively contributed to a payment of USD 3000 for the expenses of a lawyer. At the time of the field work the preliminary ruling was still upheld and the *soba*s see to it that the ruling is respected.

In this situation the Calenga communal administration needs a more intimate collaboration with the *soba* and a follow up on the decisions made by at the *soba* level. This means that opposing the *soba* in the village easily are taken to mean opposition against the state, the government and MPLA. However, this must not be understood as if government can do like they wish or that the *soba* are in the pockets of the government. The influence of the lineage elders and also very much the church leaders are considerable and without their support his authority will very soon be challenged. When 4 *soba*s choose openly to oppose the practices of the communal administration they do so because the local power of the lineages more or less force them to do it even when they perfectly know that the details of the Bambi case is far more ambiguous and tacit than what emerge from the court documents.

3.4 Consequences for people's livelihoods and economy

The irrigated fields yield richly and while maize is produced in relative large amounts (and mainly consumed locally) most other products are exported wholesale to local markets as well as to markets in most of the major cities in Angola. Wholesalers from all over the country arrive regularly to purchase large quantities of potatoes, carrots, onions beans, cabbage and other agricultural products directly from the producers. Such direct sale of agricultural products generates a relatively vast surplus of money for many Cambembua households. Contrasting the situation in Mombolo – where cash mainly was found to be generated outside the agricultural sphere and re-invested in transport or in less productive commodities such as improved housing facilities – farmers in Cambembua mainly generate their surplus in agriculture and they also reinvest a large portion of this surplus back into productive agricultural inputs such as fertiliser, improved seed, ploughs and animal traction or hired tractor hours. A few farmers even possess small motorised water pumps which may increase the land area that can be put under irrigation. The amounts of such reinvestments are considerable; it was not uncommon that households reported to invest between 15-20 bags of fertilisers per year which in 2010 had a market price around 50 USD. In a few cases the use of more than 60 bags were reported. One among the most prosperous farmers had also invested in a car in 2008 which he used for buying and transporting agricultural products and groceries.

Reinvestments in agriculture only constitute one part of the surplus that is generated. One of the first observations made when visiting Cambembua are the high standard of certain large houses built in cement and with iron grids in front of the windows. A number of roof antennas are clear indications of television sets and DVD players (generally referred to as 'Sony') in many houses and electrical refrigerators are also heard of. The energy supply is secured through small private diesel generators belonging to one household or several households together. No systematic inventory was produced, but we estimate the number of households with television to be somewhere between 10 and 20 per cent of the households. 7 cemented waterholes built by privates but used communally are reported to exist in the village. Finally, some households also own motorbikes to fill the internal transport needs of the household.

To the extent the developments just described should be considered a success, it must immediately be emphasised that they do not include all households in the village to the same degree. The reality is that the internal economic differences in Cambembua are relatively high, in particular if one compare with the situation in Mombolo. If we include the conditions of the *agricultores* who mainly live in Caála or Huambo, the differentiation increases even further. However, in the comparative perspective it is probably correct to say that the increase in differences mainly is caused by improved living conditions among the richer segment rather than an aggravated life among the poorest.[20] The main economic difference is found because (a limited number of) households in Cambembua have managed to create a neat surplus in their agricultural activities while this is not the case in Mombolo.

In order to understand this feature, particular attention must be given to the role of agricultural land. Land is undoubtedly the most important object of reinvestment. However, contrary to the other objects of investment mentioned above, we have demonstrated that land remains much more than a market commodity and land's social and symbolic significance therefore make the

[20] As already mentioned in section 3.2 it was not possible to include a study of the conditions of external hired labourers, a group upon whom the richer households in Cambembua become increasingly dependent upon. A full picture of the economic differentiation processes can only be achieved when this group has been included in the analysis.

economic development process extremely fascinating and very different from a simple 'market logic'. This is e.g. the case when we look at the dynamics in land transactions between the *campensinos* and the *agricultores.* With the high land prices one might expect that the latter, due to their economic strength, easily could outmanoeuvre the former and increase their properties through purchases. However, the Bambi case in Box 1 shows how difficult it is for "foreigners" to manage and succeed in what is often called a moral economy. One of Bambi's problems was that he considered the land as a simple commodity controlled by a household where he could easily make non-transparent agreements with the farmer without the consent of the rest of the family or the village. When problems arose between him and the alleged seller, it is Bambi who encounters the resistance of the community irrespective of what the initial agreement between the two may have contained. Through this sort of mechanisms the local community effectively resists aspects of what is often called modernisation processes.

The same applies in explaining why the conditions among the most marginalised households – such as widows and some *visitas* – do not seem to deteriorate. Despite the pronounced increase in land sales in Cambembua, the moral and symbolic significance of the land connected to people's identities complicates a process towards a class of landless farmers which is so common in many other parts of the world. According to people's understanding a person becomes a social being only through the place it has in a family as well as rights it has to land (even children have rights). A person who is accepted to live in the village must therefore – per definition – have some rights to land in order to be incorporated into the socio-cultural order of that village. One effect of such a pressure to conform to the dimension of land, is that some of the principles in the customary tenure works to reduce the strain in relation to processes of economic differentiation.

But customary tenure is by no means static. We find an interesting contrast between Mombolo and Cambembua in tenure when it comes to labour power. For the sake of simplicity one might say that in Mombolo the communalist and collective orientation of land tenure in terms of labour power means that one works for one another. In practical terms this means a constant rotation of different members of households that in reciprocal fashions work on each other's plots of lands, help in constructing houses and granaries or partake in other collective ventures. This reciprocal logic to labour enshrined in a collective ethos one also finds in Cambembua – as we saw above in the Bambi case, as is demonstrated by the collective organisation of work on barrages and irrigation and one would also find similar collective work on houses and plots of land, as in Mombolo. However, in addition there is in Cambembua the large-scale use of *hired labour* constituted by people from outside, but also from fellow villagers. These are farm hands that are recruited seasonally and they are given salaries in addition to food which is a necessity also in labour rotation. Put differently, while similar in many ways to the Mombolo socio-cultural communalist peasant orientation, the Cambembua agricultural system is *dependent* on a household-external pool of labour. Since the labour resources in the village and the valley are limited they also include people from outside the area. In other words, the communal orientation of Cambembua is both plastic in the sense of adaptable and open (as also seen during the colonial era and during the civil war era) – it is not a communalism that is self-contained in any way.

Together these characteristics of communal land organization, its tenure and the considerable investments that are constantly carried out means that the village of Cambembua represents a case of an economically successful and politically stable unit of agricultural production.[21] For

[21] One may strongly question the sustainability of the intense use of land and fertiliser in the Kalai valley, but given the social science focus of this analysis it is not deemed appropriate to include that aspect in this analysis.

the topic of this paper, this means that with this case in mind, it is impossible to argue that the viable agricultural development may not take place within a communalist and traditional framework. It, thus, poses a crucial counterpoint to the example of Mombolo which more easily would lend itself to such an argument.

4. Comparisons and some concluding comments with policy relevance

Quite naturally, the literature on development of smallholder agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa has tended to focus upon so called customary tenure; it's meaning, it's dynamics and it's implications. This vast literature can in no way be said to be in general agreement with regard to how it affects factors such as e.g. labour intensity, technological and institutional changes or market production. A case in point is the long-term (and sometimes heated) debates on agricultural politics, commercialisation, rural labour and technology that have characterized Mozambique for some time.[22] This is is unsurprising when one takes into account the great actual variations that exist, both in the agricultural practices as well as in tenure. Nevertheless, it is probably not unfair to claim that concrete studies focusing agricultural innovations towards more commercialised modes of production are somewhat scarce. Even though it shows a very dynamic tenure regime it sometimes unintentionally gives an impression of rather static production practices with small differences from one place to another in the same area. One reason for this state of affairs may simply be that long lasting processes towards more commercial smallholder agriculture on the continent are not that many. A significant exception is a large literature on the development of cocoa agriculture during the first half of the 20th century in countries like Nigeria (Berry, 1974), Ghana (Hill, 1963) and Côte d'Ivoire (Chauveau, 1997). However, the story of the development of the West African cocoa agriculture is also the story of large migrations of foreigners into virgin land which makes the story very special and not easily comparable.

The Angolan case of Cambembua and the Kalai valley presented here represent in many ways a a counter-point to the image of African smallholder agriculture as somewhat resistant to commercialisation and more capital intensive production methods. The contrast between the two cases equally represents an exception to a picture of small differences in land tenure within one and the same region. The contrastive developments and socio-political contexts of Cambembua and Mombolo are striking and its differences should be re-emphasised: In Cambembua, agriculture is capital-intense (i.e. through the widespread use of hired labour and the almost indispensable use of animal traction and of fertilizer) it caters to a large degree for the market. In Mombolo, agriculture is mainly oriented around household consumption and there is not much need for and use of capital. Contrastingly also, in Cambembua capital gained from agricultural production is re-invested in seeds, fertilizer, production equipment, hired labour etc. In Mombolo, on the other hand, the comparatively meagre gains generated outside agriculture and outside of the village are not to any tangible degree invested in agriculture. Further, while in Cambembua the agricultural production system relied on the seasonal use of external labour, production in Mombolo relied fully on its villagers' household and reciprocal systems for collaborative work. Another key finding from the cases and, perhaps, more evident in Cambembua than in Mombolo is the dynamic capacity of the socio-political context: Not only open to new cultural impulses (e.g. the Adventists), the community also shows a remarkable capacity to absorb and integrate the fallout from Angola's political conflict. In particular, this concerns how women have been integrated – first as having established relations from the surrounding cities and towns and then being gradually invited to the village and integrated into a family there.

[22] See, for instance, Coughlin (2011), Castel-Branco *et al.* (2010), Pellizzoli *et al.* (2010), Lukanu (2009) and Dinerman (2001). For a particularly heated debate on the nature of and policies relating to rural labour and farming, see exchanges between Cramer and Pontara (1998, 1999) and Pitcher (1999).

However, there are also some key similarities between the two case studies of which the following perhaps are the most important. Firstly, in both sites and independent of practice, all smallholder agriculture remains heavily embedded in the norms and rules often referred to as customary tenure. This is obvious in Mombolo and is also noticeable in many instances in Cambembua. It is seen vividly in the Bambi case which effectively shows the mobilisation of collective efforts to defend communal rights to land that were seen to be infringed by an external and powerful (as well as threatening) buyer.

Secondly, the two cases also show some similarities at the level of societal developments that are neither reducible to agricultural developments and their socio-political contexts nor to the agencies of the state and the local *sobas*. In both Mombolo and Cambembua, religious forces propelled dramatic social and political changes in the period towards the end of (or immediately following) the civil war. In Mombolo the predominant development – led by a Pentecostal movement – included the fission of the village into two geographic locations. It created a schism that to some extent has deepened practices of non-cooperation between lineages. By contrast, in Cambembua, the entry of a group of Adventists affected local circumstances in a different manner by increasing generalised trust among the villagers (banning of alcohol and increased economic discipline). If seen from the narrow perspective contributing to economic growth it has amalgamated converted (and rapidly converting) villagers around communally organised agricultural production in a politically well-controlled setting. The reason we have chosen to emphasise this religious dimension both in the description of the cases above and here in the conclusion is that they underscore the limits to predictability in terms of local social and political developments – especially so in a context of rapid expansion of a range of different Christian faiths in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.[23]

Thirdly, in both sites the presence and influence of government remains relatively weak. In Cambembua the links between *soba* and communal and municipal administration is more pronounced than in Mombolo and the present *soba* was chosen over a culturally perceived more natural choice, his elder brother (who was disqualified due to UNITA sympathies). This indicates that there are shades of differences regarding government (and MPLA) presence, but overall the traditional authority structure (*soba, soma inene* and lineage elders) in both localities comprise the overarching institutional framework within which most conflicts are handled. Further, there are few if any regular state institutions in both localities (health centres, schools, police, administrations etc.) which further underline the relative weak influence of the central government.

The diversity in trajectories of the two cases underlines that there are no direct causal relations or one-factor explanations that may explain such difference. Factors such as population pressure or proximity to urban centres can be ruled out as generalized explanations. The two cases are too similar in that respect. This does not mean that such factors may not play a role, but they do so in a much more complex reality that also embraces a multitude of historical and social events completely impossible to plan or to monitor. A general lesson from this comparative exercise is therefore to exercise caution when attempting to exorcize causal trajectories. This insight was also underscored by the not inconsiderable force that religious dynamics have played in the two contexts, as detailed to some extent above. There are, thus, no simple elements that can explain the variation in practices.

This heterogeneity of the trajectories, context, agricultural practices, authority structures etc. impede the development of universal policies that may be put into work. In general, all policies

[23] See also Ranger 2008 for a comparative overview of the force that especially evangelical Christian faiths have for political and social trajectories in contemporary Africa.

must take into account the considerable capacity that the socio-cultural and socio-political context of both cases exhibit. We will list a few conclusions based on the features of the two cases and their comparison which, we argue, have policy relevance.

The fact that land tenure among the small-holders remains heavily based upon the customary principles of descent and inheritance makes it problematic to introduce a system of individual land titles. This is reinforced by the fact – as already noted - that government influence and statutory law are weak in the villages. Conversely, the power of the traditional authority (the *soba*) is relatively fragile and largely dependent on the will and the interests of the main descent groups in the village. Besides, both cases including the Bambi affair also highlight that the main threat regarding land security for smallholders is not connected to internal competition for land, that is handled effectively by themselves. However, much more difficult is the competition originating from the interests of *agricultores* and estate holders that often are disrespectful of local customs, aggressive and unlawfully expanding.

On the other hand the study does not see any inconveniences regarding the introduction of communal titles at village level. Even though the local tenure system is oriented on the basis of extended families this system can easily continue to operate even with a title which is established in the name of the whole village. The relatively frictionless ways in which communal titling is working in Cambembua and Mombolo undergirds this recommendation. Also, it should be noted that communal titling in itself is no impediment to the transfer and sale of land rights in the same way as is taking place today. This also implies that communal titling and the communities' capacities to act as a social buffer (see below) should not be seen as in itself antithetical to agricultural production which is geared towards the market – a point also underscored by the relative prosperity of farmers in Cambembua based on marketed goods and investments in agricultural production. In other words, the case of Cambembua demonstrates that increased capital intensity and commercialisation in agriculture may emerge and remain within the organizational realm of a customary tenure system. However, the increase in commercialisation we observe does not necessarily mean that agriculture in the Kalai valley is on the way of being integrated in a free market economy.

Finally, it seems that local land tenure has an alleviating effect on the reproduction of rural poverty. The system often seems effectively to protect the weakest categories of the village population from falling into an even more difficult livelihood situation. This is in line with findings in Malawi (Jul-Larsen and Mvula, 2009) and can, be exemplified by the status of the *visitas* in Cambembua and new church members in Mombolo who are integrated and awarded land allowing for also generational mobility out of poverty. In this context it must also be underlined that extreme poverty in both cases is often related to the status of widow. Widow households often consist of only one agriculturally productive woman and a number of unproductive children. However – and as our life history data show us – when the widow's children will move out of the extreme poverty situation as they become productive and through different means are given access to land. It proves that access to labour often seem to be more critical for the poorest households than access to land A key feature of the system is therefore that extreme poverty is dynamic and thereby *not* necessarily reproduced across generations.

The customary system also has important effects on the dynamics relating to increased economic differentiation as it may be observed in Cambembua. It is mainly the wealthiest who become richer rather than the poor becoming poorer. Although signalling larger economic differences between villagers that may in turn and in the long run lead to increased social tensions between them, it seems also to present us with a case in which accumulation, agricultural practice and re-investment is integral to a dynamic but robust communal organization. These aspects lead us to two general conclusions:

1. As the multilevel contrasts between the cases demonstrate, the differences in developments that are observable in Mombolo and Cambembua are irreducible to single-factor explanations. In political terms, this means that challenges related to these and other similar Angolan agricultural contexts cannot be met by simple policy measures. This is not to say that there are no measures one can take. For instance, the establishment and safeguarding of stable market outlets would undoubtedly have a favourable effect on cash-crop cultivation and re-investment in agricultural production.

2. As we have attempted to demonstrate above, when the accumulation process that is observable in especially Cambembua occurs, this produces both positive and negative effects. However, the Cambembua case shows the potential of such growth within existing and strong sociocultural frameworks that emphasise communal values and norms, this contributes to reduce the potential negative effects of such accumulation. Therefore, when these processes are occurring, the government should facilitate and support the further growth within such sociocultural contexts where it is embedded rather than challenge these. This is so as, as we have shown, the robustness and plasticity of such sociocultural circumstances arguably have a favourable effect on reducing social tension and has the potential to incorporate non-locals.

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A new Land Act introduced in Angola in 2004 demonstrates a genuine interest in the protection of the customary land rights of rural communities and underlines rural communities' rights to their land. However, the documentation of customary rights in Angolan agriculture is limited. This report describes and analyses customary land rights in two villages in Huambo province, both situated some 60 to 90 km from the provincial capital. The report demonstrates that despite of many similarities there exist huge differences in agricultural practices and in how customary land rights are conceived. In Cambembua land utilization is more intensive and production mainly aims the urban markets, while agriculture in Mombolo is more extensive and subsistence oriented. In Cambembua most of the land is acquired through special forms of sales while bilateral inheritance remains the common practice in Mombolo.

The analysis focuses variations in historical legacy, local relations of power and economic opportunities and shows that no simple variable can explain the observed differences. Rather, causes must be sought in a complex patchwork of historical coincidences, power relations and religious influences. The analysis further demonstrates that poverty dynamics remain fairly similar in the two villages. Of utmost importance is that the noticeable increase in land sales has not led to emergence of landless farmers. Mechanisms exist which secure marginalised groups such as widows or internally displaced people a minimum of access to land.

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