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Wood for the kitchen
Towards a history of the supply and use of fuelwood in urban households of West Africa: the case of Lomé, from 1884 to the present

The demographic growth of West African cities, in particular, over the past and forthcoming decades is not only a serious challenge for the economy of the concerned countries, but a challenge also for the energy needed in urban households. In the vast majority of West African cities the energy issue in the context of rapid urbanization requires a tremendous significance as population growth naturally lead to an increase in energy demand, in this case the demand for wood and charcoal, especially for cooking. Wood and charcoal cover more than three quarters of the total energy demand for cooking in West African households. Looking at the current situation in Togo and in Lomé in particular, the above issue of household dependence upon fuelwood in West Africa do seem to apply. More than 80% of the country's domestic energy demand is currently met using fuelwood. Based on the above-mentioned importance of wood as a source of energy in many households in West Africa, the paper raises the issue of supply and consumption of firewood and charcoal in the Togolese capital Lomé, from a historical and at the same time future-focused perspective. The paper will specifically emphasize on three issues. First, a short introduction into the thematic of fuelwood energy in West Africa as well as the relevance of Lomé, as main research area, will be presented. This will be followed by the research objectives and questions. Lastly, the different methodological approaches to be used in order to tackle the research questions will be discussed.