Rural–Urban Dynamics in Francophone Africa
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Edited by
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Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala 1997
Indexing terms:
Rural–urban relations
Towns
Urban sociology
West Africa

Cover: A Dogon granary door, Mali
Language checking: Elaine Almén
ISBN 91-7106-401-X
© the authors and Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1997
Printed in Sweden by Gotab, 1997
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Preface

The preparation and publication of this volume involved the contributions of many people. Unlike other books published under the auspices of the *Urban Development in Rural Context in Africa* research programme, all the chapters in this present work have been translated from French, and this made the task of preparation more time consuming than usual. I would like to thank all the contributors for their efforts and especially to Jean-Bernard Ouedraogo for his assistance in making local arrangements for the conference in Ouagadougou in July 1993 upon which this book is based. I would also like to thank Frédéric Giraut for his willingness to write a background chapter specifically for this book on small towns in West Africa.

Mention should be made of all the people who helped bring this book to fruition. Pierre Kouraogo, Department of Modern Languages, University of Ouagadougou, and Paul-Marie Ilboudo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ouagadougou, had the main responsibility for translating the chapters from French. Katrine Kristiansen and Elaine Almén made a number of suggestions for linguistic improvements, while the latter also read all the chapters and made a number of suggestions for stylistic improvements. Karl Eric Ericson and Sonja Johansson of the Publishing Department gave invaluable advice on editorial matters, while Åsa Berglund formatted the final version of the typescript. Thanks are due to Louise Simann, Anne-Marie Kempe, Kent Eriksson, Inga-Lill Belin, and Markel Thylefors, for their help in a number of different ways. Ingrid Andersson deserves a special acknowledgement both for her help in the preparation of this volume and also for her support over a period of several years as my Assistant on the research programme. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the following people for their support and friendship: Pedro, Helena, Håkan, Vidar and Greta. This book is dedicated to my children: Benjamin, Susanna and Michael.

Uppsala, January, 1997

*Jonathan Baker*
Introduction

Jonathan Baker

Between 1989 and 1996 the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies operated a research programme entitled *Urban Development in Rural Context in Africa*. The programme attempted to address the issue as to how small towns can, and do, play a significant and positive role in promoting rural development. The concept of integrated and mutual development of urban and rural societies was a central concern of the programme. The programme developed contacts and cooperation primarily, but not exclusively, with Nordic, African and Anglo-Saxon scholars, research institutions and universities. During the lifetime of the programme many facets of the rural–urban relationship were explored. The edited works by Baker, 1990, Baker and Pedersen, 1992, and Baker and Aina, 1995 present some of the diversity and major findings of this international research cooperation.

This present volume, which focuses on a number of francophone countries in West Africa, originates from a conference held in July 1993 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and arranged in collaboration with the University of Ouagadougou. The purpose of the conference was to provide a number of scholars from francophone West Africa with the opportunity to share their research experiences and findings on the theme of rural–urban interaction in francophone Africa. Moreover, participants were requested to contextualise their papers, as far as possible, within a framework which had the small town as an important focus. For a good many anglophone scholars, much of the interesting research which is being conducted by francophone scholars in Africa is not readily accessible, primarily because of the language barrier. This present collection represents a modest attempt to redress this situation.

THE FRANCOPHONE INTEREST IN SMALL TOWNS AND THE RURAL–URBAN INTERFACE

This interest in small urban centres by francophone scholars parallels a similar interest in the topic by Anglo-Saxon scholars (see the discussion by Baker and Claeson, 1990:7–34, which provides a review of the debate concerning the developmental role and functions of small towns in Africa from an anglophone perspective).
There is a clearer rejection of the perceived antagonism between the town and the countryside in contemporary francophone writings than is the case, for example, with some American studies (see, for example, the last work on small towns by Southall, 1988, which concluded that small towns contributed to rural underdevelopment and impoverishment). By contrast, Raison states that “the African town is no longer seen as the negation of the ‘traditional’ countryside, the devourer of men; at the limit it is almost becoming a creator of landscapes, a driving force in the development of the countryside” (1991:22). Furthermore, Jean-Marie Cour stresses the interdependency of the rural and urban spheres: “… towns are now closer to the rural world as rural population and rural activities tend to become concentrated in peri-urban areas, closer to markets and urban services” (1996:6). This phenomenon can be illustrated as follows.

The very high rates of urban growth characteristic of many francophone (and anglophone) countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have led to increasing land commercialisation particularly around the larger urban agglomerations. Vennetier, drawing on the examples of Brazzaville (Congo) and Cotonou (Benin), shows how urban dwellers are ‘colonising’ villages and agricultural land around these cities—thereby introducing the phenomenon of ‘urbanisation’, which not only describes the physical landscape but which also describes the economy as well (1989:113–157). This process of urbanisation is, according to Vennetier, mutually beneficial to rural and urban dwellers alike. The evergrowing urban market offers villagers the opportunity to increase sales of rural resources, such as food, fuel and sand, which increases rural incomes, and which in turn enables them to become buyers of urban goods such as building materials, food and consumer goods. In addition, new urban financed enterprises, such as poultry farms, have been introduced into the peri-urban economy, creating some local employment and stimulating modern production techniques. Ultimately, all these processes will mean “a complete urbanisation” (Vennetier, 1989:114–115).

However, more research is needed to investigate newer aspects surrounding processes of rural–urban interaction. Michel Arnaud is refreshingly clear about the way forward: “Updating the debate on the relationship between countryside and towns is a vital though difficult task. Research and experiments must continue…” (1996:2). However, Arnaud does caution that because small and intermediate-sized towns are so essential to development generally, they must not be excluded from rural development projects which previously have focussed narrowly on agriculture (1996:2). Similar concern has also been voiced in English language studies over the exclusive nature of many so-called integrated rural development programmes (Baker and Pedersen, 1992:12). McNulty, for example, lambasts such programmes for their “myopic focus on rural development” (1987:36).

SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAY INFLUENCE URBAN RESEARCH IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In identifying contemporary urban research themes in francophone and anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa and choosing the most appropriate ap-
proaches to problem solving, a number of essential considerations should be borne in mind.

The first of these considerations is that Sub-Saharan Africa is the fastest urbanising region in the world. In 1960 only one city (Johannesburg in South Africa) had more than one million inhabitants. By 1990, there were 18 ‘millionaire’ cities in the region (World Bank, 1996:2). Rapid urban growth is common to both francophone and anglophone countries. While terms such as exploding cities in non-dynamic economies may appear appropriate to describe the process of urban growth in Sub-Saharan Africa, towns and cities do provide a range of opportunities even in a context of national stagnation.

While the region is still nevertheless overwhelmingly dependent upon agriculture and approximately two-thirds of the population lives in rural areas, the prospects for future rural sustainability appear uncertain. Some of the myths regarding the agricultural potential of Sub-Saharan Africa are now being dispelled. For example, the region does not have large amounts of surplus cultivable land; the amount of cultivated land per capita is lower in Africa (estimated at about one third of a hectare in 1987) than, for instance, in the People’s Republic of China (Cleaver and Schreiber, 1994, cited in World Bank, 1996). Much of the region has a water deficit and rainfed agriculture is the norm. The irrigation potential is less than ten per cent of the currently cropped area (Crosson and Anderson, 1995, cited in World Bank, 1996). In addition, a good deal of Africa’s soils are of poor quality, and 90 per cent lack phosphorus which is a key nutrient in biomass production. This important deficiency is compounded by the “low content of organic matter, weak water retention capacity, and surface crusting” (World Bank, 1996:12).

It is against this backdrop that the rapid growth of population must be viewed. Between 1980 and 1992, the annual average population growth rate in the Sub-Saharan region was 3.0 per cent, which meant that population doubled during this time period, and reached 559 million in 1993 (World Bank, 1996:21). Even though population growth rates are expected to slowly decrease in the coming years, the United Nations projects that the region’s total population will be 1,361 million by the year 2025 (Venard, 1995:33). Sub-Saharan Africa will also become a much more urbanized region. In 1960, only 32 million people or 14.5 per cent of the region’s population was urbanized, while the corresponding figures for 1990 were 149 million and 28.3 per cent. Projections for 2010 and 2025 are 386 million or 41.3 per cent, and 705 million or 51.8 per cent respectively (Venard, 1995:34 and 36). Consequently within the next 30 years Sub-Saharan Africa will have become more urban than rural and the absolute number of urban dwellers will be nearly five times greater than it was at the beginning of this time span! There is little doubt that this greatly increased urban population will present some formidable challenges for governments as well as the urban poor. However, rapid urbanization should not only be seen as a problem, but also as a solution in that the concentration of increasing numbers of people will provide demands for the many goods (including food from urban and peri-urban farms) and myriad services which large and small cities can provide to their inhabitants as well as to rural populations. Moreover, relieving some of the population pressure in areas of extremely fragile rural resources (such as the Sudano-
Sahelian zones, discussed below) can but only be beneficial if it can contribute to the restoration of the stock of natural capital.

The second point to be borne in mind is the perennial problem of defining what is urban. Throughout the Sub-Saharan region (and indeed for most regions of the world) there is a lack of unanimity regarding what kind of criteria should be used. At present, a mixture of criteria are used which leads to confusion as well as creating problems in terms of international comparability. It is not unusual for three main criteria to be used to define an urban centre: statistical (i.e. minimum population threshold); the number of administrative functions; and the range of economic activity. Some examples drawn from both francophone and anglophone Africa will illustrate the confusion. In Burkina Faso, a centre is considered urban when it has a minimum population of 10,000 and where, at least, 50 per cent of heads of households are involved in non-agricultural activities. In Botswana, by contrast, a settlement is defined as urban if it has a minimum population of 5,000 and if, at least, 75 per cent of the labour force is employed in non-agricultural activities. The use of administrative criteria also creates confusion. In Côte d'Ivoire, all the capitals of communes, sous-préfectures and préfectures qualify automatically as urban, regardless of population size, while in Togo all district capitals (some with barely 1,000 inhabitants) are considered as urban. In Ethiopia, the definition of urban can have three meanings according to three main criteria: population size (minimum of 2,000 inhabitants); an administrative definition which must fulfil four sub-criteria; and an economic definition which considers five sub-criteria. Consequently this can create confusion; according to the 1984 Population Census of Ethiopia, the smallest population centre considered as urban had only 57 people!

The third point we need to consider is that, with some rare exceptions, the Sub-Saharan region has suffered economic crisis and stagnation. Terms such as the “lost decade” have been used to describe the magnitude of the crisis in the 1980s. In an attempt to stimulate economies, structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) have been introduced in (some would say forced on) many countries. The effects of SAPs have been dramatic and government austerity measures have been felt by most classes; the living standards of urban populations have plummeted necessitating households to adopt a variety of complex survival strategies. Central questions in this regard are what kinds of survival mechanisms are employed and are households becoming increasingly multi-active in order to survive?

An important part of the research agenda in this connection is the impact of the economic crisis on the level of remittances to rural areas by urban migrants. Thylefors' recent study of the repercussions of the devaluation* of the CFA Franc in January 1994 on poor households in Ouagadougou shows that the number of migrants moving to the city has decreased following the devaluation, because of the difficulties of finding a job, even in the informal sector. Furthermore, urban dwellers were leaving Ouagadougou and moving

* The CFA Franc (Franco de la Communauté Financière d’Afrique) which is the common currency for twelve francophone countries (and Equatorial Guinea) in West and Central Africa was devalued on the 12th January 1994 by 50 per cent, from 50 CFA Franc: 1 French Franc, to 100 CFA Franc: 1 French Franc.
Introduction

permanently to the countryside to take up farming (1995:48). In Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, a similar pattern has been observed with people moving back to their home villages to take up farming, or returning to their countries of origin. Côte d'Ivoire is the foremost destination for migrant labour from other parts of West Africa, and in the early 1990s was host to an estimated three million foreign workers, the overwhelming majority drawn from Mali, Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Burkina Faso. Côte d'Ivoire is, by far, the preferred destination for workers from Burkina Faso and somewhere between one quarter and one half of all foreign workers in the country were Burkinabè (Robin, 1992:13).

A fall in the demand for Burkinabè labour in Côte d'Ivoire could have serious repercussions in terms of declining remittances which, in turn, could have disastrous implications for rural and urban households in Burkina Faso, which are dependent upon such financial flows. For example, while the value of merchandise exports from Burkina Faso was worth $145 million in 1993, the value of workers' net remittances was worth $71 million—a figure equivalent to half the value of total exports! (World Bank, 1995:186 and 194). While no more recent data are available to indicate whether the devaluation of the CFA Franc in January 1994 has had a negative influence on the level of remittances, there is a strong probability that this is the case. For instance, immediately following the devaluation, CFA Franc countries experienced high rates of inflation. In Burkina Faso, the inflation rate increased to between 30 and 40 per cent (Thylefors, 1995:7). This writer also demonstrates how the devaluation has increased the vulnerability of poor urban households in Ouagadougou. He shows the various strategies which are adopted by households in response to higher prices for basic commodities. Examples include switching from the consumption of preferred foods such as rice and meat to cheaper grains and protein such as millet and dried fish; reduction in the amount of firewood used by cooking food less often; and switching from the use of higher-priced imported medicines to cheaper traditional medical remedies (Thylefors, 1995:47).

While the above discussion has focussed on Burkina Faso, there is every reason to believe that these experiences and responses would be mirrored in other African francophone countries. Indeed, similar processes operate in anglophone Africa and Jamal and Weeks have shown how the economically-constrained urban population in Uganda adopted comparable consumption reduction and switching strategies in order to survive (Jamal and Weeks, 1988:287).

However, a fourth factor which places a unique focus on much francophone urban development in the sub-region in contrast to the anglophone experience is the nature of the geographical contexts for urban development which give rise to different kinds of urban systems. Nowhere is this better exemplified and contrasted than by the forested zones of West Africa with those of the drier inland zones. One can compare urban development in the forested Guinea zones of West Africa, which have dynamic agricultural sectors based on cash crops (such as cocoa, coffee and palm oil) and which stimulate urban growth, with the development of towns in the extensive Sudan-Sahelian zones, where the motors of urban growth have been the twin forces
of long-distance trade, on the one hand, and administrative functions, on the other.

The Sudano-Sahelian ecological zone "includes some of the poorest countries in the world" and "is the most fragile and the least favorable for development all over Africa" (World Bank, 1996:24 and 22). The majority of these countries are francophone and include the large landlocked states of Mali, Niger, Chad and, on a smaller scale, Burkina Faso. The three remaining francophone countries included in the zone are the coastal states of Senegal, Mauritania and Djibouti. The non francophone members comprise Cape Verde, The Gambia, Sudan, and Somalia. While there are variations between these states in terms of their development prospects, they do nonetheless share a number of common disadvantages including poor soils, extremely variable rainfall, a high risk of drought and poverty. However, it is suggested that the coastal countries in this zone have better development potential because of their easier access to international trade, greater irrigation potential and opportunities in fishing (World Bank, 1996:22).

But the development possibilities of the landlocked countries of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad appear extremely limited, and even the high-potential farming areas of these countries (i.e. the valleys and aquifers of the River Niger and Lake Chad) have become, in the terminology of the World Bank, 'hot spots', and are, in other words, areas subject to 'severe environmental stress' (World Bank, 1996:22-23 and 35). One indication of the magnitude of this stress can be given by the following data: the combined populations of these four countries are projected to increase from 31.5 million in 1990 to 55.8 million in 2010, and to 81.4 million by 2025 (Venard, 1995:32).

Without major upward shifts in technological levels in agriculture (for example, by optimizing the efficient use of water for irrigation and the development of drought-resistant crops), any kind of meaningful development for this greatly increased population appears problematic. The traditional pattern of labour out-migration to the coastal states, particularly to Côte d'Ivoire, will probably continue to provide an employment option, but one which may become increasingly insecure given the current economic difficulties being experienced by the receiving states.

A complementary and fruitful strategy, which would bring long-term rewards in terms of employment and income generation, is to create more off-farm and non-farm economic opportunities at all levels of the urban hierarchy by reinforcing the traditional functions of towns as market and administrative centres while, at the same time, providing support to the development of new productive and service activities. Such proposals are not new. For example, in Kenya, the Rural Trade and Production Centre programme was established in 1986 to promote the development of about 200 small towns by the year 2000, with a view to, inter alia, creating non-farm employment for the rural landless and near landless (Gaile and Aspaas, 1991:381-386). Urban-based strategies such as these require a good deal of investment and innovative approaches, but should certainly be tried as a complementary strategy to that of greatly improving agricultural technology, as referred to above.
THE URBAN RESEARCH AGENDA—TOWARDS THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

The convening of the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in June 1996 was a reflection of the commitment of governments and donors to addressing the urban issue and to defining and detailing the urban agenda for the first decades of the next millenium. According to Attahi, five main urban themes have been identified by francophone scholars as research priorities. However, it must be said that there is generally agreement or, at least, a congruence as to what is considered important and relevant as major urban research foci by both the francophone and anglophone African research communities. But as was mentioned earlier, researchers from each linguistic community rarely cite or refer to each other’s work.

The following are summaries of the five main urban themes (Attahi, 1994:222–225).

Urban poverty

There is little doubt that urban poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa represents enormous challenges to the poor, governments and donors. For example, the World Bank expresses the view that “even if poverty is still largely rural in most countries... urban poverty will become the most significant and politically explosive problem in the next century” (World Bank, 1991:4).

As indicated earlier, urban real incomes have declined dramatically, as have formal sector employment opportunities, as a consequence of structural adjustment programmes. Moreover, the numbers of the absolute urban poor have increased. More research is required on the range of survival strategies adopted by vulnerable urban groups and households, including, inter alia, informalisation, expansion of urban agriculture, the evolution of new urban food supply systems to cater for the needs of the poor, and the increasing multiactivity and spatial diffusion of urban households.

Decentralization and urban management

With increasing pressure from the international financial institutions and the donor community for political democratisation, African governments are also under pressure to permit greater decentralization to urban authorities. More research needs to be done as to how African cities are managed. Municipal governments are often weak because they either generate insufficient revenues (through property taxes and so on), or because central governments have reduced urban public investments as a result of structural adjustment programmes. This has led to a severe “crisis of maintenance” and to the deterioration in the quality of urban services. Research is also required on the impact of privatization on urban services as well as “other urban neo-liberal management strategies, the financing of urban services, and taxation as it relates to service cost recovery” (Attahi, 1994:223).
The urban environment

As urban centres in Africa have grown rapidly in terms of their populations and poverty, so too have the problems associated with urban environmental health and hygiene (the so-called *Brown Agenda*) and the delivery of public health services. Studies of urban health and related issues in Sub-Saharan Africa are relatively few. Consequently, “studies should deal with issues of solid waste, water supply, sanitation and drainage, hygiene in the context of housing, atmospheric pollution, the preservation and maintenance of the natural and built environment, and urban ecosystems” (Attahi, 1994:224).

Demography and urban society

An important theme is a consideration of migrant integration into urban life. “Studies of social integration should analyze migratory channels, networks of solidarity and the integration strategies of migrants” (Attahi, 1994:225). While the topic of migrant integration is not new, fresh perspectives can be introduced. For example, one central consideration in analyzing contemporary migration in Sub-Saharan Africa has been the impact of the current economic crisis. For instance, how have the African crisis and structural adjustment programmes impacted on the propensity to migrate?

Urban networks

The city should be viewed in a wider context and “evaluated as a product of economic and social development” (Attahi, 1994:223). Specifically, more research needs to be conducted on the economic functions of urban areas and the factors influencing local economic activity.

Furthermore, attention should be focussed on the economic factors influencing the dynamics of what Attahi terms “medium-sized cities”, which he does not define, although presumably this refers to centres with less than 20,000 inhabitants. As was demonstrated earlier in this chapter, simply defining what is ‘urban’ is notoriously difficult, whether in a francophone or anglophone setting. Consequently, defining different settlement categories in the urban hierarchy is a similarly complicated affair. However, the important suggestion is made that more research is needed on the implications for regional decentralization efforts of strengthening the ‘catalytic’ role of secondary or smaller urban centres. And the very encouraging view regarding the importance of investigating more closely the rural–urban relationship is reflected in a number of contemporary studies by francophone writers, as was indicated above.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS

From the papers presented at the conference in July 1993 a total of nine were selected for publication, while Frédéric Giraut was specifically invited to write a background chapter on small towns in West Africa for the whole volume. Three chapters are concerned with the Burkina Faso experience, two
with that of the Côte d'Ivoire, and one each from Congo, Benin, Senegal and Togo.

Frédéric Giraut has produced a very detailed and insightful review concerning the dynamics of small towns, with examples drawn predominantly from francophone West Africa. Since 1960 small towns in the region have followed a wide variety of different trajectories. Some have grown rapidly, others have declined, and in some cases individual centres have experienced alternating phases of growth and decline. However, overall the number of small towns (i.e. those with populations of between 5,000 and 20,000) increased quite dramatically from 182 to 343 over the period 1960 to 1980, while an additional 54 small towns evolved into a larger town category. But what Giraut does reveal is the generally stable nature of small towns and he shows that there is a marked tendency for the majority to remain as small centres for a period of more than twenty years.

Giraut identifies a number of influences which determine the pace and texture of the urban dynamic. During the colonial and early post-colonial periods, administrative functions were "at the heart of urban development" through the dual forces of the development of national capitals, as well as the growth of employment in national administrations. The impact of civil service employment on town growth could be considerable as the example from Mali clearly demonstrates; every civil service position in the 1960s and the 1970s meant 20 to 30 additional townspeople as dependents! However, he cautions that administrative status is of decreasing importance "for basic urban dynamism".

In the post-colonial period, a new set of forces have spurred the growth of small towns including the emergence of customs and trading centres as a result of the delimitation of international boundaries, the growth of large metropolitan centres with their space arranging abilities, and the construction of roads and generation of road traffic. Giraut makes the important point (discussed earlier in this chapter) concerning the distinctions between urban growth in the forested zones where a dynamic cash crop sector has been the major stimulus for such growth, and the Savanna and Sudan zones where the dynamism of trade and rural density (as well as administration) explain the evolution and permanence of urban centres.

Finally, Giraut discusses the changing nature of small towns, particularly in view of the political and economic transformations which have occurred since the end of the 1980s. With increasing decentralisation and the attendant reduction of the close control of local authorities by the central state, local government now has greater power to mobilize local resources. In tandem with this development, the "relative" democratisation of many one-party regimes means that the legitimacy of politicians is no longer merely dependent upon the prestige inherent in their functions and access to state power for electoral support at the local level, but increasingly upon their abilities to acquire non-state resources from NGOs and international charitable agencies.

The aim of the chapter by Gabriel Kwami Nyassogbo is to discuss and analyse the different types of interactions which exist between the secondary town of Palimé in the south-west of Togo and its rural hinterland. As with many other towns in Sub-Saharan Africa, the development of the town of
Palimé was deliberately promoted by the colonial power. In 1897 the German colonial administration established authority over what was then a small village, undistinguishable from neighbouring settlements, but which subsequently evolved into an important administrative and economic centre.

As Nyassogbo describes, Palimé has developed as a result of many factors. It is, for example, a border town and is located only 10 km from the border with Ghana; consequently, it has developed as a “contact town” for smuggling and currency flows. However, suitable natural conditions for the evolution of a plantation sector based on coffee and cocoa provided major stimuli to the growth of the town and to the prosperity of its hinterland. Moreover, the plantation economy also assisted in the opening up the south-western region, and modern forms of communication and transportation were introduced. Lamentably the collapse of world prices for these cash crops, as well as the depredations of crop disease, have brought something of a crisis to the region.

Despite this, Palimé continues to perform important administrative, economic and socio-cultural functions both for its own population, as well as for that of an extensive hinterland. Palimé provides a range of educational and hospital facilities; it is the administrative link between Lomé, the national capital, 120 km away, and its hinterland; it is an important market centre for rural produce, as well as an important supplier of spare parts for bicycles, motorcycles, coffee-hulling machines, and modern house construction materials. Nyassogbo also gives an interesting illustration of how urban resources are exploited by rural people when he describes how well-off rural dwellers, who had been able to invest in urban property during the boom days of coffee and cocoa, come to town once a month to collect rents.

Yet Palimé is in a paradoxical situation: on the one hand it is characterized by an apparently healthy interaction with its hinterland, and yet simultaneously is caught up by unfavourable trends in international commodity prices and by an increasing modernization of the rural road system linking directly with Lomé which is having the effect of bypassing Palimé.

In a detailed and closely argued analysis, Robert Edmond Ziavoula discusses the contradictions between the theory and practice of decentralisation in the Congo. He argues that in the context of the Congo the “local”, if it is to mean real decentralisation, must imply autonomous economic entities which enjoy broad political, administrative and financial independence from the confines of the centre. Without this, local development is only an illusion. Ziavoula also poses a central question in this regard: what is the appropriate administrative level for successful decentralisation to occur?

He traces the history of administrative structures in the Congo since independence in 1960 and concludes that these structures have not changed fundamentally. The village remains as the primary administrative unit. However, important higher-levels of the administrative hierarchy, such as communes which are legally obliged to have populations of about ten thousand in order to enjoy such status, are supposed to have “real financial autonomy”, but do not.

Ziavoula discusses the various ways in which the central state displays democratic pretensions, but in reality is interested in maintaining tight control through the one-party apparatus. For example, the constitution of 1992
clearly states, *inter alia*, that local authorities “enjoy administrative, patrimonial, financial, economic, cultural and social autonomy”. Although local authorities do collect numerous local taxes, these are clearly insufficient, and the transfer of subsidies from the centre to local authorities “reinforces the interference of the state in the management of local affairs”.

By way of conclusion, Ziavoula makes suggestions for realizing some of the democratic ideals enshrined in the 1992 constitution, including increasing the power of local communities through reinforcing the power of elected local officials; to endow *communes* with greater powers; and to facilitate and make systematic use of negotiating mechanisms between the state and local authorities.

Albert Tingbé-Azalou discusses urban–rural relations in Benin with a special focus on the pre-colonial town of Abomey in the south-western part of the country. His chapter discusses the foundation and evolution of towns in Benin and thus provides a valuable historical backdrop to urban developments. Further, Tingbé-Azalou presents some of the complexities in analyzing the phenomenon of “urban” in Benin, and reveals a number of the ambiguities involved. He shows how towns in the pre-colonial period evolved as a consequence of the centralization of royal power and the development of interregional trade. During the colonial period two new important urban centres were created: Cotonou on the coast and Parakou located more than 400 km inland, but connected to the sea by a rail link. Not surprisingly, the colonial period brought about new alignments in urban economic space. Cotonou, because of its maritime location necessary for the promotion of colonial trade, and Parakou, because of its role as a major inland route and transshipment centre for the north of Benin as well as countries to the north, became the “two pivots” of the whole country. In the contemporary urban context of Benin, Cotonou and Parakou have become “the two major regional economic capitals”, while other urban centres lack the same kind of dynamism, and are more dependent upon administration and agriculture.

Tingbé-Azalou’s specific focus on Abomey provides some fascinating insights into the evolution of a West African pre-colonial urban centre, particularly since he uses a historical approach intertwined with sociological and anthropological perspectives. Even when dealing with developments in contemporary Abomey, he reminds us of the centrality of the past and of the weight of traditions in explaining the present: the town, for example, is the leader of the spiritual space of southern Benin and, as such, obviously conditions modern urban life. In the conclusion, Professor Tingbé-Azalou elegantly reiterates the vital interdependency and mutuality of the rural and the urban in Africa: “the town and the countryside undoubtedly constitute two living environments where social and cultural practices of giving and receiving take place. Each area of the countryside and each town bring to each other the values necessary for their existence and cultural development. Abomey and its immediate and distant suburbs live in this symbiosis indispensable to group life”.

Alphonsine Bouya describes the “current reality and problems” of the small town of Sokone located on the coast in south-eastern Senegal, and places particular emphasis on the role of women in rural–urban interaction. Throughout her narrative, she compares and contrasts rural life with that of
the town. She expresses the view that although the village in Africa has traditionally been a place of community and solidarity, it has now become a "repulsive space", a place to escape from. The town, by contrast, offers greater freedoms, and the economic rewards offered by urban employment, although relatively meagre, are superior to those obtaining in the village.

Paradoxically, the town of Sokone, which Bouya describes as "rural", exhibits features common to rural existence and consequently "everyone knows everyone else and no one is anonymous". Further, rural traits and traditions have been brought to the town as evidenced by the practise of polygyny, use of traditional healers despite the presence of modern health facilities, and the transference to town of rural aid associations for women.

Bouya describes how rural women use Sokone as a resource and migrate there to find work and/or to care for their children if they attend school in the town. She shows how rural women pursue regular annual migrations to the town for work, often as traders, and return to the village for about six months to work in the fields. Bouya concludes with a statement which reflects a pattern of behaviour which is now becoming much more commonplace throughout Africa than hitherto: "The town... provides women with some opportunities for escaping from the constraints and values prevailing in the countryside and it allows them to develop some solidarity strategies which enable them to bring some support to the family members back in the village". Women throughout Sub-Saharan Africa are becoming increasingly economically multiactive and are moving to town to exploit the greater opportunities which prevail there. This is certainly an important phenomenon which requires further investigation.

Gabin Kponhassia's study of the secondary town of Agboville in Côte d'Ivoire is an attempt to understand how organic intellectuals (to use Gramsci's terminology) adapt to urban life. Clearly, he is interested in understanding urbanisation as a social and cultural process.

By employing "life history" interview techniques with 25 secondary school teachers he attempts to explain the nature of their social networks or their sociability. Do social networks in town remain grounded in traditional cultural values or do they undergo a transformation? Kponhassia attempts to test this hypothesis by assessing the value that his informants place on four kinds of associations in town: associations of people from the same village; professional associations; urban neighbourhood associations; and service clubs such as the Rotary Club. The results of the survey are ambiguous. Membership in associations of people from the same village and urban neighbourhood associations was rated highly, particularly when such associations had savings arrangements. The view was expressed that, although members had bank accounts in town, the more informal nature of these savings societies meant that members could draw on these resources in times of emergencies, unlike banks with their much greater rigidity. Another perceived advantage of these same village/neighbourhood associations was that members could maintain and exhibit traditional cultural values and group solidarity. However, professional associations, such as trade unions, were not highly regarded but were occasionally used for strategic purposes. Service clubs were elitist in nature but allowed members, if they had the financial wherewithal,
to “acquire a distinguished social life”. Few teachers were members of such clubs.

More generally, informants stated that membership of urban associations brought changes in their social behaviour. Revealingly, and in contrast to the often espoused disadvantages and anomie of town life, most informants had adjusted well to living in town because of membership in associations. Kponhassia even quoted informants as saying that membership in associations had made them “less selfish” and “more joyful in groups”.

Sylvie Bredeloup presents a fascinating study of the Ivorian town of Dimbokro and describes how the once dynamic relationship which existed between this town and its rural hinterland had dramatically declined. She discusses how the town evolved from being a small colonial post at the beginning of the twentieth century to become the capital of the cocoa belt. Cocoa and coffee plantations were established just before the Second World War. She further describes how Dimbokro’s prosperity was reflected in its importance as a trade and railway centre and how it was “busily involved in import–export activities”.

However, while the plantation economy brought prosperity to Dimbokro and its hinterland, it was later to bring about major decline. This occurred through the shift of coffee and cocoa production from the Dimbokro district to the western part of the country. Moreover, even the production of the staple food crop, plantains, followed this shift to the west as they are a sub-product of cocoa farming. Consequently, the major raison d’être for Dimbokro’s development has disappeared. Bredeloup sums up the position as follows: “the town of Dimbokro no longer produces; it consumes and gets its supplies from a non-peripheral space”.

Although the spatial shift of cocoa and coffee production must be attributed to unfortunate circumstances, government policies have done little to mitigate the problem: indeed investment decisions have apparently been misplaced or misguided. Few resources—financial or technical—have been used to increase food crop production in the regional economy to stimulate rural incomes and employment. This has, in turn, led to the out-migration of rural populations to the west and south west, the disappearance of a number of rural markets and to a decline in bush lorry services.

Sylvie Bredeloup has produced a valuable study concerning the deterioration and breakdown in rural–urban relations in Côte d’Ivoire. Moreover, she places the Dimbokro experience within the overall context of Ivorian national planning policies and this adds to its usefulness for policy makers.

The history and contemporary situation of the small Sahelian town of Dori in north-eastern Burkina Faso is the subject of Jean-Bernard Ouedraogo’s chapter. He uses a blend of historical and sociological perspectives to achieve an intriguing account of the changing fortunes of this once important Saharan entrepôt. He traces the history of the settlement from the pre-colonial period and shows how it became the most important centre of Fulani and Islamic power in the Emirate of Liptako. This “miniature Timbuctu” became an important “crossroads” for long-distance trade which was based on salt, cereals, slaves and locally-bred cattle. The arrival of the French in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the subsequent colonization of the area resulted in another form of political power and Ouedraogo describes
how this influenced urban form and structure. He discusses the importance of
the fact that because the town is located on a major water source, this permits
the intensive production of rice, cotton, potatoes, tobacco, as well as pasture
for cattle. He shows how the town and the countryside have historically been
indelibly interlinked. As the capital of the Emirate of Liptaako the town of
Dori controlled more than 50 surrounding villages which provided it with
food and taxes as well as serving as a strategic barrier or buffer against incursions
by hostile forces, such as the Tuaregs.

The decline of trans-Saharan trade naturally had serious implications for
the fortunes of the town. Contemporary Dori, although still a regional mar-
ket centre and an important administrative settlement, has seen better times.
But as Ouedraogo explains, Dori is still an attractive place for its population
and the overwhelming majority would not want to live elsewhere. The coun-
tryside is not perceived by the townspeople as an alternative to urban life;
even though it “remains a symbol of tranquility” and “a place where human
relations are still intact”, the countryside is nevertheless characterised by isola-
tion and boredom.

Basilisa Sanou describes how the two major cities in Burkina Faso (Ouaga-
doucou and Bobo-Dioulasso) have been growing rapidly as a result of in-
migration of people from the countryside. In an attempt to control rural exo-
dus and so reduce the growth of Ouagadougou, ten village-centres which sur-
round the city have been selected for development interventions (with fund-
ing from The Netherlands) in order to make them more attractive to their
populations. This involves improving village infrastructures, such as schools,
clinics, paths and roads, and stimulating small-scale income-generating
schemes. Income improvement projects include market gardening (the pro-
duce from which finds a ready market in Ouagadougou), village agro-for-
ery, and trade.

Sanou states that this village-centre development programme has had some
success and has resulted in re-afforestation, the re-turfishing of schools,
maternity hospitals and dispensaries, the drilling of bore-holes, and the grant-
ing of credit to individuals and groups. It has without doubt improved living
conditions for the inhabitants of the targetted villages surrounding Ouaga-
doucou. She concludes by saying that a similar development programme
should be devised for the city of Bobo-Dioulasso.

The concluding chapter in this volume is by Yveline Dévéron-Kouanda and
is concerned with the symbolism of housing. She shows how the design and
layout of the rural house and farm in the Mossi country of Burkina Faso have
immense symbolic relevance and meaning. She then proceeds to take us
through the difficulties involved in conveying and redeploying these symbolic
complexities in rural housing to housing in Ouagadougou. Space limitations
in the capital city are such that it is impossible to replicate the rural house
exactly in an urban context. She describes how certain areas of the Mossi
house (for example, the inner compound) are extremely private and conse-
quently privacy in densely crowded cities can be difficult to maintain. How-
ever, while the construction of non-traditional urban housing has been pub-
licly criticized as not being capable of supporting and reflecting traditional
values such as the extended family, privately it is suggested that limited house
space in town does mean that it is difficult to physically accommodate visiting
rural relatives. It follows from this that in times of increasing economic constraint this may certainly be perceived as a blessing in disguise.

References

Contemporary Dynamics of Small Towns in West Africa

Frédéric Giraut

In Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in West Africa, the number of small towns is multiplying. This phenomenon deserves to be measured and its modalities assessed. To achieve this, the existence of a functional and morphological transition of the urban networks affecting small towns can be examined and the modifications of urban–rural relationships recorded. But are existing scientific instruments adequate for assessing these contemporary relationships?

THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF SMALL TOWNS

The rapid emergence of small towns

Throughout West Africa one fact is clearly noticeable: small towns of between 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants proliferate. Between 1960 and 1980, in ten countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Togo, Guinea Bissau, The Gambia), illustrating a variety of environments and regional histories, the number of small towns increased from 182 to 471, while 54 grew into larger urban centres. Therefore, 343 new small towns emerged during this period. They continue to attract an ever-increasing proportion of the population: the number of small town dwellers has risen over a period of twenty years from about 1.5 to about 4.5 million, and their percentage of the total population from 5.8 per cent to 8.6 per cent.

Despite the fact that some small towns regularly become larger towns, their share as a percentage of the total urban population decreased relatively slowly from 45 per cent in 1960 to 36 per cent in 1970, then to 34 per cent in 1980. In addition, small towns ensure urban renewal from below by absorbing new centres.

However, one phenomenon is remarkable: the acceleration of the growth of small towns in a context of a slight decline in the overall urban growth rate (from an annual mean of 6.9 per cent to 6.4 per cent), while that of intermediate, large and primate centres tends to decrease.

Indeed, during the 1960s, the population of small towns grew at a rate of 4.3 per cent, while the category of intermediate and large towns was inflated
by the emergence of numerous centres which brought a very high annual growth rate of 9.5 per cent. The eight per cent annual growth rate of primate cities is also just as remarkable, given that this was only due to the rapid growth of the ten national capitals of the newly-independent states.

During the 1970s, these capital cities witnessed a slight decline of a little over one per cent annually in their overall growth rate. During the same period, the growth of intermediate and large towns sharply declined, as the latter category already included a good number of agglomerations (40) and could no longer accommodate new settlements (to reach 68 towns in 1980, their number increased at the rate of 5.4 per cent a year, against 11 per cent for the previous decade, when their number grew from 14 to 40).

On the other hand, the dynamism of small towns increased, and almost doubled in number from 269 in 1970 to 471 in 1980, compared with 182 in 1960. This represented a mean annual increase of 5.8 per cent—an annual increase which exceeded that of intermediate and large towns. This also resulted in an increase of the share of small towns in the total number of urban centres (from 84 to 86 per cent), while this share had decreased during the previous decade (from 88 to 84 per cent).

However, these trends blur contrasting national realities. The decline of urban growth during the 1970s seems to only affect some coastal countries whose rates are at very different levels: Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire and Togo. Most Sudano-Sahelian countries experienced an increase in their urban growth rates. However, the contrasts between the countries do not always follow ecological and economic lines. Indeed, the phenomenon which reflects the situation in the previous decade, but goes against the general trend of the acceleration of the growth of intermediate towns, affects Mali and Mauritania as well as Togo and Liberia. On the other hand, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana present a category of “small towns” more dynamic than the others, in the context of an overall reduction of urban growth for the latter two countries or, conversely, overall urban expansion for Burkina Faso.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the actual importance of city dwellers living in small towns as a proportion of the population as a whole varies from one country to another; it depends both on the scope and the age of the urban situation, but also on the size of the country.

The following data refer to the percentage of population which lives in small towns as a percentage of total population for the years 1960, 1970 and 1980, respectively.

- It will be weak, but increasing rapidly if urbanization is still marginal (Niger: 3, 2 and 4 per cent; Burkina Faso: 1, 2 and 9 per cent; Mali: 3, 3 and 6 per cent).

- It will be strong if the urbanization is old, generalized and distributed over a hierarchical framework (Ghana: 12, 10 and 12 per cent), or on the contrary if the urbanization is recent in a small country where all the secondary centres are still small (Togo: 8, 19 and 17 per cent; Liberia: 5, 9 and 9 per cent).

- Finally, it will be moderate if a framework of secondary towns is being established in a context of strong urban growth (Côte d’Ivoire: 6, 6 and 7 per cent).
Trends confirmed by contemporary developments

The gaps and disparities in the recent available data concerning a large number of West African countries do not permit a clear picture beyond 1980. The only possible evaluation of the trends after that date must be based on censuses, the latest of which was carried out at the end of the 1980s. In West Africa, besides Nigeria, this is the case in four countries, Mali (1966, 1976 and 1987 censuses), Côte d’Ivoire (1965, 1975 and 1988), Niger (1962, 1977 and 1988) and Senegal (1964, 1976 and 1988).

In all countries, the urban growth rate decreased (from 6 to 5.1 per cent from one census to the next in Senegal; from 8.6 to 7.4 per cent in Niger; from 10.1 to 6.1 per cent in Côte d’Ivoire; from 10.8 to 5.6 per cent in Mali). Everywhere, the growth rates of capital cities has also decreased (from 6 to 4.2 per cent in Senegal; from 11.5 to 5.2 per cent in Niger; from 10.8 to 5.6 per cent in Côte d’Ivoire; from 10.5 to 4.2 per cent in Mali) to reach a level lower than that of the overall urban growth rate, which for the most part is concentrated on intermediate towns.

The general trends of the 1970s are therefore confirmed. However, although the number of small towns has unquestionably increased (from 40 to 84 in Senegal; from 25 to 52 in Niger; from 56 to 111 in Côte d’Ivoire; and from 44 to 69 in Mali), it is influenced by the rise of intermediate towns drawing on the small town base. This is particularly the case for those countries considered here, thus Niger, Côte d’Ivoire and Mali experienced annual growth rates for their “small town” category, during their last inter-census period, of respectively 7 per cent, 4.5 per cent and 1.9 per cent—rates that are lower than those of the previous period and, except for Niger, to that of the general urban growth rate. We can assume that this phenomenon will disappear in the 1990s, with the continued expansion of the small town group and a more restricted access to the already replete category of intermediate towns. This has already been happening since the end of the 1970s for more urbanized countries such as Ghana and probably Senegal (Mainet, 1988 and 1991).

Other parts of the continent actually show this type of evolution. As early as 1988, a study on the development of towns in Uganda from 1970 to 1980 had the following subtitle: Political change, the decline of a nation’s capital and the spread of small towns (Mugabi, 1988). In Tanzania, over a 10-year period, from the 1978 census to that of 1988, the average growth of the capital, Dar es Salaam, was 4.7 per cent, while that of the “intermediate towns” was 6.4 per cent for the smallest (between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants), 7 per cent for the largest (10,000 to 35,000 inhabitants), while the five main regional towns (35,000 to 175,000 inhabitants) grew at an annual rate of 5.6 per cent (Holm, 1992:240).

An increasingly clear predetermination

Peculiar trajectories

For about thirty years, small town growth has shown great variety: from decline to a swift passage through the category, experiencing stagnation or
slow growth, either regularly or gradually; and even in some cases alternating phases of decline and growth can be observed.

For the cases of decline, besides the spectacular disappearance of camps on the Liberian plantations and a few cases of “ghost” mining towns such as Bibiani in Ghana, Mali and Burkina Faso also provide some examples: we can mention Tenenkan on the Middle Niger in Mali or Villy Sandogo in the Boulkiemdé province in Burkina Faso. These two countries also provide the largest number of stagnating towns, for example Sabou, Bogandé, Imasgo, Kokologho, Tenkodogo and Koupéla in Burkina Faso, and Macina and Niafunké in Mali. But the coastal countries also provide some examples of urban decline (for example, Rubino in Côte d’Ivoire) and numerous cases of stagnation, particularly in Ghana. Among the category of stagnating small towns, we find old cities which occupied important positions within the urban colonial or precolonial hierarchies. These are Sahelian or maritime “ports” or trading and colonial administrative centres. But almost all the colonial towns are today important centres, even though their positions have declined within the urban hierarchy.

On the other hand, examples of towns moving rapidly up the urban hierarchy are increasingly rare. It is no longer the case that the new capitals such as Yamoussoukro in Côte d’Ivoire or Nouakchott in Mauritania, nor the mushrooming mining towns such as Arlit in Niger and Camp IV in Liberia, or Nouadhibou the Mauritanian mineral port are still exhibiting strong growth (Tireka, 1986). However, strong growth conditions still project small towns quickly into the category of intermediate towns. Just as several centres in the 1970s can be mentioned, the township of Anié in Togo illustrates this type of evolution for the 1980s and 1990s.

Examples of slow or average but stable growth are many and can be illustrated by Rosso and Atar (d’Hont, 1986; Kamara et al., 1988) in Mauritania, Koulikoro and Bougouni (Bertrand, 1990) in Mali, Odienne (Cotten, 1969), Ferkessedougou, Dabou or Bouna (Boutilier, 1993) in Côte d’Ivoire (Dureau, 1987:242–243), and Fada N’Gourma (Ganne, 1988, 1989 and 1991) in Burkina Faso.

As for illustrations of uneven evolution, Dire and Goudam in Mali “wake up” around 1965, after remaining at an elementary stage of urbanization. Bingerville in Côte d’Ivoire started growing around 1975 after having experienced stagnation as a small town. A similar development has characterised the Ghanaian town of Nsawam, a centre for collecting cocoa, which vegetated in the 1930s and 1940s before being caught up by the neighbouring metropolitan centre during the following decade, after which it again experienced population stagnation as an intermediate town. As for Bandiagara in the Dogon country in Mali, its population has fallen since 1975, following a slow rise through the small town category. Finally, the Mauritania town of Tidjikja has had a rather bumpy evolution at an elementary urban level (d’Hont, 1986). The second town of Mauritania in 1955 with a population of 6,000 inhabitants, it first declined before experiencing a very slight growth after the 1960s, at the same time it fell to tenth position in the growing national urban hierarchy.
Cohorts of increasingly stable small towns

Beyond these empirical observations, the relative weight of the different types of evolution now needs to be examined. To this end, let us observe the evolution of small towns as a whole at five-year intervals, by means of transition matrices (Table 1).

Table 1. Transition matrices of the cohorts of West African small towns
(Number and percentage of towns by size class, in thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>&lt;5</th>
<th>5–20</th>
<th>20–40</th>
<th>40–80</th>
<th>80–160</th>
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<td>86%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Geopolis

These are presented in the form of tables in which the first row corresponds to the number of small towns at a given date and the following rows correspond to the subsequent distribution of the towns of the initial group. It
is therefore possible to follow every five years the development of whole
groups of towns which belong to the same category at a given date.

As an example, of the 94 small towns that existed in eight West African
countries in 1955, 50 remained small thirty years later, and 44 became inter-
mediate-size towns, 5 of which exceeded 80,000 inhabitants.

We can thus trace to 1985 five successive generations of small towns (those

One fact worth noting about the dynamics of all small urban centres is the
marked tendency for two thirds of them to remain as small towns for more
than twenty years.

We can therefore talk of the generally stable nature of small towns, most of
them having only quite a restricted dynamism. Indeed, towns of over 40,000
inhabitants which grew from small towns during less than twenty years are
rather rare: 9 cases, that is 10 per cent from the 1955 class, 10 cases (5 per
cent) for 1960, and 10 cases (4 per cent) for 1965.

It should be noted that successive generations of small towns are increas-
ingly numerous but also increasingly more stable, that is to say, producing
fewer and fewer intermediate-size or large towns. However, this constant evo-
lution is rather slow and is not confirmed in absolute values given that it is
still small towns which evolve into intermediate-size towns. Furthermore, sta-
bility characterized the majority of small towns in 1955, almost half of which
remained small thirty years later.

We can therefore state that since the end of the 1950s, small towns, as a
category, have functioned as a trap and a filter for very small towns, attract-
ing more and more centres but allowing only very few to escape into the
higher levels of the urban hierarchy.

NEW EMERGENCE FACTORS

The decline in the importance of administration as a factor in town growth

For a long time, civil administrations appeared as the determining factor in
the birth of West African towns and their subsequent dynamism. Trade func-
tions, as well as education and health functions, were an integral part of territ-
orial partitioning of the colonial administration. This was particularly true
for the French colonial empire, while the British colonies were organized
according to a more diffuse pattern, although admittedly on a more devel-
oped urban sub-stratum, such as in Ghana and in Nigeria.

The administrative apparatus is at the heart of urban development and is a
reality which has remained constant beyond the first post-colonial decade;
this is articulated in two ways: the extraordinary promotion of the national
capitals and the growth of national administrations. Along side the growth of
these administrative structures, selected towns were provided with infraestruc-
ture (which produced urban features), accompanied by an influx of civil serv-
ants which economic theory translates into basic jobs.

During this phase, administrative upgrading was not only given to a few
townships and canton main towns, it sometimes coincided with an obvious
demographic and/or economic dynamism. It is then much more difficult to
identify the real weight and influence of the administration in the genesis of
towns. Even centres without any particular status may grow significantly and attract a number of educational, health and police services so their growth is sustained by an intake of civil servants.

On noticing the growth of numerous centres of the Niger Delta during the 1960s and 1970s, J. Gaillais relates this phenomenon to the “considerable, excessive development of the civil service for the previous twenty years in West Africa and for which it is difficult to find comparable examples” (1993:220). According to him, in Mali, every civil servant means 20 to 30 additional people, relatives and financial dependents. Having the function of canton main town (for example, Konna and Sofara studied by Ba, 1981) with its 30 to 50 civil servants corresponds therefore to a growth by 500 to 1,000 inhabitants; that of a modest district main town (Ténenkou and Djenné) involves a growth of 2,000 to 3,000 inhabitants. “Everything happens as if each administrative level confers upon the chosen township or small town a relatively stable population influx” (p. 220).

This approach, however interesting it may be, is hazardous, given that civil servants do not all have the same capacity to generate domestic employment as opposed to the basic jobs they themselves hold. Civil servants at lower levels of the administration and public services obviously have less important incomes and therefore have less purchasing, investing, hiring and saving power than their colleagues in better positions in the hierarchy. Furthermore, if a centre offers easier access to public services, greater opportunities for family multiactivity and a low cost of living, a civil servant will bring in a larger number of relatives than in less well-endowed centres. Finally, civil servants may, in the absence of a local bourgeoisie, become entrepreneurs and create jobs that would already exist in other socio-economic contexts. Therefore, the multiplier to be used for each civil servant to obtain the number of additional inhabitants is certainly smaller for spontaneously developed towns with lower and recently granted administrative status. But threshold effects exist and even a limited influx of civil servants can constitute a substantial market for trading activities, handicrafts and services that can thus become more viable.

However important it may be, administrative status accounts less and less for basic urban dynamism. This is pointed out by Dureau (1987:267), and Chaleard and Dubresson (1989) for Côte d’Ivoire: “The analysis of administrative biographies shows that, if the administrative function has indeed played a fundamental role in the emergence of the Ivoirian urban framework ("the sub-prefecture creates the town"), its weight varies with time and space. The administration remains a crucial but not the only factor of urbanization in the North, but its effects have decreased in the South where elevation to sub-prefecture no longer constitutes a distinct feature explaining the population settlement of small towns” (p. 281). Galaup (1991) reaches a similar conclusion and observes that in Senegal, the administrative function does not support the growth of “village-centres”, often more dynamic than their sub-prefectures (p. 201).

Other explanatory factors must therefore be found or combined with the administrative one, to explain the rise to the category of small towns of centres not yet recognized by the administration and in which, as a result, the urban reference features are absent. To understand contemporary urban
determining factors we need to correlate the dynamics of the spread of small towns with a whole series of geographical facts and insights, which can constitute principles of location which generate urban functions.

FAVOURABLE LOCATION FACTORS

The post-colonial context has also seen the emergence of international borders, the making of large metropoles and the development of roads and the generation of road traffic, all of which are eminently geographic elements which offer opportunities for some human settlements according to their new relative location (Map 1).

Map 1. *The towns of eight West African countries in 1980*
Route centres

It appears that during the 1960s and the 1970s, a road axis location became a major factor in the emergence of a new generation of centres. The Abidjan-Yamoussoukro road and the Abidjan-Man road via Gagnoa have thus been re-aligned by the spread of the small towns of 1980, in the same way as the main road of Togo.

Although a good number of new small towns emerged as the result of the existence of the road, not all of them are stopovers or crossroads. For example, along the new Unity Road in southern Mauritania, there is a chain of small commercial centres which function as shelters for victims of disasters (d'Hont, 1986). Moreover, main roads are often grafted on to one or several other space structuring elements, such as a border, which can also generate contemporary urban functions or which constitute a not inconsiderable legacy, such as a railway, a coastline, or a river.

A systematic study carried out by Young (1989) on the coastal countries of West Africa (Benin, Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea Bissau) confirms what we consider as cartographic and geographic evidence. This study, based on a survey of data included on the Michelin map of West and North Africa, shows that the density of the road network and the extent to which it is tarred, are variables which positively influence and explain the density and the spread of small and intermediate towns. These variables are in fact closely correlated to the population density and the extent to which roads are tarred is used by the author as a development indicator for the sub-national regions that served as a framework to the study.

Border centres

Again, in the post-colonial period, and particularly since 1970, the proximity to a state border, has accounted for the location of a whole range of small towns, customs and trading centres. In this respect, not all borders have the same value. The monetary borders, which correspond to former imperial boundaries, generate more small towns. This phenomenon is in fact not new, compare the emergence at the end of the last century of a double trading centre on both sides of the Volta: Kete the German and Krachi the English, two border towns, both twins and rivals.

J.O. Igué who is interested in “national peripheries” in West Africa (1989) defines a certain number of “border enclaves” made up of secondary towns, often small. These are almost all located at monetary borders, that is to say at the outer edge of the “Franc Zone” of which Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Guinea, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone are not members. According to the author it is these “national peripheries” which “carry out what interstate negotiations and projects have not been able to achieve” (p. 605), that is to say, the political and economic integration of the sub-region. Such an approach focuses essentially on the existence of parallel and underground trading networks organized from central micro-places on borders. However, it should not make us forget the fact that the border phenomenon contributes to the emergence of small towns which are isolated in comparison with the “border
enclaves" identified. This is the case, for example, of the Malian border with Burkina Faso, and of Côte d’Ivoire with Mauritania.

**Satellites**

The relative location of urban centres within the rest of the urban hierarchy is influenced differently according to the periods, the regions and the size of the towns. At the beginning of the 1960s, some large towns functioned as “repel-

lers” for small centres, which is the case of Ouagadougou and Bamako, and to a lesser extent Accra, Abidjan and Monrovia. This is also the case for intermediate towns such as Bouaké and Bobo-Dioulasso. At the same time, some large towns are already accompanied by satellites and progressively constitute real conglomerations: Kumasi and Lomé. These were joined during the 1970s and 1980s by a number of large towns (Accra, Abidjan and, to a lesser extent, Bamako), and by intermediate towns, such as Koudougou in Burkina Faso, the heart of an urban nebular since 1980, while the capital, Ouagadougou in the east has only attracted peripheral towns since the late 1980s. Only the Mauritania capital Nouakchott, continues to dominate a peripheral “urban desert”. The study by Young (1989) shows generally that for the coastal countries of West Africa as a whole, the proximity of a metropolis is a stimulating element for the spread of small towns, but inhibiting to that of intermediate towns; on the other hand, the proximity of “a pro-
vincial centre” is one cause of stagnation for small towns.

**Towards spontaneous generation of rural centres?**

However, apart from these location factors which are favourable to the emer-
gence of small towns, it seems that the dynamics of surrounding rural areas constitute potentially important determinants for their take-off.

**How to isolate the phenomenon?**

In Burkina Faso, a number of small centres had over 5,000 inhabitants at the last census in 1985. Apart from the 13 official towns, 120 centres have in fact acquired a minimal urban size, compared with 63 in 1975. West of Tenko-
dogo, in Bissa country, at the limit of the Mossi country, two neighbouring localities belong to the new small towns: a small rural centre, Niaogho, and a trading place located on the old cola nut road, Beghèdo (Faure, 1993). The trading elite of the latter has now gone over to trading in onions, a local pro-
duce in great demand. But the traders of Beghèdo tend to integrate the whole chain of production of this valuable crop, by becoming producers and com-
ing into conflict with the neighbouring town of Niaogho and its landowning elites, who are dependent economically on the traders cum money-lenders when given the opportunity. The conflict spread into the political arena with both towns fighting to obtain the status of main borough town, and which both finally obtained. We can see from this example that different develop-
ment trajectories do not prevent two localities from emerging simultaneously and competing as local centres within a dynamic agricultural context.
How then can we isolate the phenomenon of the development of small towns within the context of changing rural demand? In this context, what indicators should be used to identify the local incentives to urbanization from below? Peasant wealth? Yes, but the case of a structural or cyclical peasant misfortune can also create a "demand" for a local town. That was the case in the drought-stricken Sahel in the 1970s and 1980s, where a number of small places served as "retreats" (d'Hont, 1986; Gallais, 1988). Furthermore, peasant wealth can result in a sociological and architectural urbanization of the countryside, without a physical urbanization and an agglomeration. This is a phenomenon already described in the 1950s by J.-L. Boutillier (1972) in the Ivorian plantation region of Bongouanou, then confirmed thirty years later by Chaleard and Dubresson (1989), but which since that period has been common to many plantation areas such as the Litimé and the Buem country around Badou, Jasikan and Kadjebi (Giraut, 1994).

Besides the reservations we can have about such an indicator, we have no harmonized quantitative data that allow us to draw a map of rural wealth. In the absence of such data, rural densities appear an interesting indicator to be correlated with the spread of towns.

*The increasing correlation between the spread of small towns and rural densities*

Concerning the Ivorian case, J.-L. Chaleard and A. Dubresson also use rural density as an indicator, in the absence of studies on the spatial distribution of incomes, and they conclude that "one of the springs of Ivoirian urbanization is the osmosis between the rural and urban dynamisms", after observing that "the demographic and economic dynamism of forest rural environments benefits more the small and intermediate-size towns (whether we consider their number or their growth) than large urban centres, with however high internal disparities in forest areas" (1989:280).

Beyond the cases of recent densification, high rural densities often correspond to former political entities or former areas of dense commercial activities, which are quick to revive or maintain an old urban network (Mossi country in Burkina Faso, Yoruba in Nigeria, Ashanti in Ghana, Hausa in Niger and Nigeria, Marka in Mali, Fon in Benin), or a tendency to generate one without a tradition (Ibo country in Nigeria, Bamiléké in Cameroon, Mina and Ouatchi in Togo). It can then be a hierarchical system (Yoruba, Ahanti, Ibo, Hausa, Fon), or a spread of small towns from which one or several intermediate or large towns emerge (Mossi, Marka, Bamiléké), or a conglomeration of elementary centres (Ouatchi and Mina in Togo).

It should be stressed that for most of the urbanized cultivated areas of the forest zone, contemporary urban development has, as its basis, an agricultural development resting on the adoption of cash crops: cocoa for the Ashanti and the Yoruba, palm oil for the Ibo, Arabica coffee for the Bamiléké. Since then, the modalities of urban development have depended on traditions (Ashanti political and urban centralization, Yoruba conurbations) and on behaviour (trading skills of the Ibo, entrepreneurship and links with areas of origin of the Bamiléké (Dongmo, 1978; Bruneau and Courade, 1983)). This denominator is however not common to all dense and urbanized
A clear confirmation of the correlations

The relationship between the spread of small towns and rural densities is clearly reinforced between 1960 and 1975.

In 1960 they were high only for the southern parts of Ghana and Togo, as well as the arid regions of the northern part of the Sahel and the Sahara, or the forest area of the Ivorian south-western regions and south-east Liberia (Map 2).

In 1975, the correlations were generalized; the high densities of the Mossi plateau translated into a dense spread; the upstream part of the Malian Niger became an axis of small towns; the Ivorian plantation areas, whose rural densities had greatly increased, saw a reinforcement of their structures as small towns (Map 3).

Map 2. Small towns and rural densities in 1960
social formations; indeed, a few cases in the forest zone (Fon, Mina, Ouatchi) and above all the Savanna and Sudan cases do not arise from this contemporary adoption of cash crops. For these regions, it is only rural density and the trading dynamism of some groups which explain the permanence and development of urban centres.

Let us look at the case of the Marka towns in the inner delta of the Niger (Gallais, 1984:143). This heterogeneous trading group dominates a whole set of small urban centres which today constitute a real regional network around the centres of Mopti and San. The Marka urban tradition dates back to the Ghana Empire with Dia at its centre. A clustering process of this bourgeoisie allows both the development of small cosmopolitan centres, kinds of urban embryos, and the emergence of new central places which take over from pre-
rious ones. Thus from the Ghana Empire to the French colonial empire, via that of Mali, the towns of Dia, Djenné and Mopti have succeeded one another as regional capitals without being totally eclipsed. Besides this historic chain of centres, it is interesting to note the emergence of numerous small towns in this cultivated zone such as: Konna, Sofara, Diafarabé, Ténenkou, Macina... These are large cosmopolitan trading villages observed at the beginning of the century by the colonizers, some of which acquired an urban size by the 1950s or 1960s, but have since stagnated to remain at the lower limit of the small town category. They thus correspond to the traditional urban model of Marka towns, one characteristic of which, according to J. Gallais (1984:148) is that they “continue to thrive with between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants.”

At the heart of this “urbanizing civilization”, there is the Marka trader whose activities are integrated within international networks, but who does not neglect the setting up of a stratified and hierarchical network of local markets. “The market economy at the two levels—continental and regional—strongly integrated, and a certain urban capitalism have been working for several centuries in this Mid-Niger part of Africa.” (p. 158). Furthermore, this society, open because of its professional nature, has been able, with the adoption of Islam, to create attractive and cosmopolitan towns which generate new urban centres. Indeed, “the concern for facilitating the setting up and activity of all the foreign colonies, as the enrichment of the town depends on it, is found in the most modest market-centres” (p. 149).

The commercial dimension of the Marka group has even developed during the twentieth century despite the European and the Lebanese interlude. With the disappearance of Saharan trade, and consequently the transit trade towards Timbuctu, Moorish merchants no longer control Mid-Niger trade. The Marka have since then totally dominated a trade activity in which the export of fish, regional supply and the control of internal exchanges have almost completely replaced the transit of forest products in one direction and salt in the other.

Potential urban offshoots in the regular spread of markets

After starting with questions on rural dynamics and urbanization, we now turn to examine local and regional trade dynamics. The interplay between these two terms—rural dynamics and trade dynamics—seems permanent, despite various state attempts to control agricultural exchanges. This is a feature specific to the “primary economy regions” discussed by M. Rochefort (1990), whereby “each possess a particular town network, whose characteristics derive from those of the economic base” (p. 226).

Concerning the form of these regional urban networks in the “primary economy”, various writers share the view that, in a predominantly rural world, a tight pattern of central places is necessary for everyone to have access to them, but that their organization into a hierarchy is not necessary. In the Third World context, M. Santos (1975:183–184) finds that it is in small towns that the poor find the urban services they can afford. However, there is not a great range of services for the poor, and it is only the bourgeoisie, limited in number, which has access to a hierarchy of services. This analy-
sis focuses on the notions of services and polarization, neglecting momentarily the productive dynamics internal to the urban sphere. It makes it possible to isolate the question of functions, and for small towns, that of the relations with the hinterland.

A recent study of “the village-centres” of the peanut producing Senegalese Basin (Galaup, 1991), reveals the contemporary emergence of many small towns. An administrative reorganization (introduced in 1972) and a commercial one promoted many villages into “village-centres” of “rural communities” (317 for the whole of Senegal). This was carried out by the dissemination of infrastructure and public services to stimulate development. A network of micro central places has therefore been set up which benefits from the systematization of weekly markets which permanently replace the old merchant system. It should be noted that a few places had already inherited a certain centrality, at the margin of the colonial system. These are the small urban centres of Sine Saloum which attracted several thousand inhabitants at the beginning of the century, and which served as elementary collection centres for peanuts. Located upstream of the merchant companies based along the railway line, these small centres were run by Lebanese traders.

Among the village-centres, and therefore within the network of rural markets, numerous small towns emerged and caught up with older neighbouring communes (“stop-overs” and colonial administrative centres). This corresponds in fact to the fulfillment of the initial village-centre project which aimed to link centrality, basic urban development and local development, and which planned the emergence of a few tens of village-centres into an elementary urban category until then occupied by a few communes.

The factors which explain this emergence are numerous, but they do not all operate at the same level. It seems that the very nature of these village-centres makes them particularly adapted to the needs of the rural world in the Peanut Basin, because of the supply of services and trade infrastructure they provide and which are in part appropriated by the rural world. The agricultural economy of the Peanut Basin is indeed undergoing a deep crisis which translates into a change and a diversification of crops: peanuts do not disappear, but their cultivation is systematically complemented by millet farming, market gardening and livestock breeding. It is these activities which have made it possible to re-establish in the countryside the succession of exchanges which the suppression of the old merchant system had dried up. It is through the village-centre network that the technical, commercial and organizational supervision of this changing economy is carried out. However, a selection process is operating within the network of village-centres and markets; only some of them grow enough to become small towns. This happens when a second series of factors intervene, which no longer depend only on local economic evolutions. This is for example, according to Galaup (1991), the position in relation to road axes. The fact of being located near a road, and more particularly at a cross-roads, is a dynamic factor. Such a position facilitates the entry of the place into the exchange network, and it often corresponds to a better provision of infrastructure and urban services, which are attractive elements for rural populations. Galaup also points out as a stimulating factor, the proximity of The Gambian border, the economic-ecological border between the sylvano-pastoral zone and the Peanut Basin, and finally the
dynamism of local traders which can be added as a secondary factor. The various factors mentioned all affect the importance of the market, by offering it important possibilities for increasing its catchment area(s); and it is indeed on the market, the main pillar of the economic life of these places, that the hierarchical organization of “village-centres” rests.

The case of the Marka country, mentioned above, allows us to retrace a form of urbanization from below, a form also linked to the rural–commercial dynamics of markets. The Mid-Niger, an area rich in small towns, is characterized, first and foremost, by a dense network of rural markets which are the “antenna used by urban trade to capture, for its profit and that of the continental economy which it represents, the local economy” (Gallais, 1984:160). A number of these markets, developed at the beginning of the century, were hampered or even suppressed by the colonial power until the 1930s, before being encouraged, and sometimes replaced by administrative functions. Parallel to this, the contemporary revolution in transport, by facilitating the movement of goods and vendors, has contributed to commercialisation in the form of large weekly markets, whose structure has been consolidated. This evolution was accompanied by the emergence of small towns within this structure: small towns with rather limited growth capacities whose function as a rural market is their economic basis, possibly reinforced by an administrative role.

Finally, the rural markets in south-west Togo, studied by E. Le Bris (1984), show us how the trading function can be the basis for a dense network of small towns with little hierarchical organization. These places, like the networks which sustain them, are in fact dominated by the neighbouring metropolis and its economic actors. Le Bris examines how the reorganization of trade in this region has modified the hierarchy of the numerous market places whose location is guided by principles relating more to road axes than during the old merchant period when waterways dominated. However, he notes that the hierarchy of the periodic markets does not exactly mirror the demographic hierarchy of these places. One must therefore conclude that there are secondary factors which differentiate basic urban dynamisms from the network of periodic rural markets.

A specific role in “urban transition”

The emergence of new generations of small towns and their multiplication must be placed within the framework of the “urban transition” which affects all West African urban networks. This transition occurs when the national metropolis, conspicuously enlarged, dominates a few secondary towns, some of which are already intermediate towns. This results in a slowing down of metropolitan growth, the expansion and diversification of the category of intermediate towns, and finally the explosion in the spread of towns (Moriconi-Ebrard, 1993). But this morphologic transition of the urban hierarchies reaching maturity corresponds to a functional transition which marks the passage from an embryonic and external network to a network linked to an endogenous trade economy in the context of a crisis of the cash crop economy.
The study of three country experiences (Giraut, 1994) helps to identify stages in the transition of urban hierarchies and networks. An elementary stage for Niger and Togo, an advanced stage for Ghana where the stagnation of small towns is spectacular compared with neighbouring Côte d’Ivoire. The three countries also offer a whole range of traditions and contemporary regional dynamics which can illustrate the notion of “urbanizing civilization” (agricultural regions generating small and large towns, where the crucial economic sectors are managed by autochthons) and that of the “urbanizing environments” (food producing or plantation regions whose intensive commercial activities generate a dense spread of small towns).

On the other hand, each country reveals particular processes. The Togolese case makes it possible to grasp a true situation of macrocephaly which does not however impede the dynamics of secondary towns. The case of Niger shows that the interference of climatic crisis with phenomena of rural exodus and sedentarization accelerates but does not upset the modalities of the beginnings of “urban transition”. In Ghana, besides the relative age of urbanization, we note almost an absence of the “main town effect”; the resulting dispersal of infrastructures and services is a British colonial legacy.

Various modalities of regional entry

Contemporary urban networks are often composite and can be broken down into a local town network (a centre of services and agricultural and handicraft production), a network of trading towns and a network of administrative control centres. The same town can belong to several functional categories through successive or simultaneous superimpositions. Small towns include most of the local towns and constitute, in varying degrees, the base of the other networks. Their specific role in the chain of trade and supplying of urban markets should, moreover, be analysed in greater depth because it is one of the keys to the way contemporary regional urban networks operate.

The notion of urban function appears then as a complex and evolutionary combination. In addition, the same form, the small town, can include bodies organized in a functional hierarchy in a specific domain, while the hierarchy can be inverted in another domain. Size alone is not a pertinent functional indicator. This is the main lesson from the functional study of seven small towns in their regional environments (Giraut, 1994). Anié, the Togolese “metropolis of food trade”, or Tamaské, one of the large historic markets of the Sahel region in Niger, are elementary service centres. Torodi (Niger), a large regional cattle market is, at the same time, a small peri-urban agricultural market. On the other hand, despite the oldness of their administrative functions as main towns, Keïta, Jasikan and Badou hold secondary commercial positions; a rising one for Keïta which benefits from the effects of a model integrated rural development project, and a falling one for Badou and Jasikan which, on both sides of the Togo–Ghana border, suffer from the cocoa crisis and competition from other places.

It is therefore not possible to draw a functional profile of the small town beyond types, even though there are convergent movements at play everywhere. The rural–commercial dynamisms attract the administration and con-
versely the "main town effect" partially governs the organization of communications and exchange.

New functions in a new context

The end of the 1980s was marked by a series of changes and transformations which have affected the social, political, economic and spatial organizations in West Africa. In this context, the role assigned to small towns has changed significantly.

As part of decentralization and disengagement movements, they meet the demands of new regional authorities, often more autonomous, but less well provided with facilities and civil servants than older ones. Thus, an administrative promotion no longer generates urbanity, but will confirm endogenous dynamics or a prominent position. It is no longer a question of tight administrative supervision of local authorities, it is now time for local government (under surveillance!) to know how to mobilize local resources. The rewards of obtaining a specific status of regional authority are therefore considerable for the political dimension of urban–rural relationships.

Parallel to this evolution the relative democratization of a number of one-party regimes should transform the nature of the relationship of politicians with their territorial bases. On the one hand, the interest of a place is no longer systematically linked to that of the local capital town. On the other hand, the legitimacy of the politician vis-à-vis his electoral basis is evolving. This legitimacy is no longer dependent on the mere prestige of his function and the investments obtained for the local capital town, it is dependent rather on the acquisition of facilities, services, and productive activities that can directly benefit his socio-spatial basis, his community of origin. These acquisitions require his mediation with the state, but more and more with decentralized cooperation, with NGOs and international charitable agencies. He can then use the legitimacy thus acquired as a regional or national stepping stone. These are hypotheses based on a few observations and numerous indicators.

Furthermore, for a decade, rural development projects have been "integrated" and "autocentred". They rest on the basic structure of service centres, places still rooted in rurality, but in contact with the urban network and the influences which sustain it. Small towns are therefore potential host centres for development operations targeting their hinterlands.

On an economic and commercial level, a number of small towns are driven by the informal channeling of foodstuffs and consumer goods from the countryside towards the urban markets of the sub-continent. They can be located at quite different levels of the hierarchy.

Lastly, the traditional social and economic retreat functions filled by the small town tends to be further asserted in the context of the crisis of national and urban economies.

Given the functions assigned to contemporary towns, their dynamisms are strongly determined, but their endogenous actors enjoy a certain margin for manoeuvre and can bring weight to bear on major evolutions.
THE DIFFICULT EVALUATION OF URBAN–RURAL RELATIONS

In conclusion, I would like to insist on the need for evaluating urban–rural relations at the level of small towns and their hinterlands. The observation and interpretation of the contemporary dynamics of the spread of towns must, as a matter of fact, be accompanied by an analysis of the role of small towns in rural development.

While the evaluation of rural–urban relations at this level is quantifiable or appraisable in a number of contexts, it is on the other hand much more difficult for others.

With regard to quantifiable or appraisable relations we notice:

- *The urban market and the supply flows it generates.* A series of works by economists (Coussy *et al.* 1991; Bricas *et al.* 1985; Hugon, 1988; Requier-Desjardin, 1985), and particularly the thesis of F. Lançon (1990), show the renewed interest for this type of study, which now aims to understand the networks channelling and trading food produce to satisfy urban demand.

- *The productive reinvestment* achieved by the economic and intellectual elite of small centres: notables, traders or craftsmen, civil servants serving in the centre or local people living elsewhere, a list to which we should add the “returnees”, victims of the crisis affecting the metropolitan economy. We should note that these populations, apart from the major traders and the local higher level civil servants, constitute the favourite target of the new rural development projects whose aim is to stimulate the development of dynamic agricultural ventures. These projects which are light on logistics want to promote potential agricultural entrepreneurs through appropriate technical aid and formulas of alternative loans. Such projects have been described and studied in the Senegal River Valley (Nuttal, 1989; Kane, 1989).

- *The demographic pressure* exerted on the countryside after the passage and formation in the small town. But this function of the small town as a stage on the way from the countryside to the metropolis must be increasingly relativized by measuring other demographic movements, such as the movements to and from large towns and local centres (Dupont and Dureau, 1988), or the circulation movements within the sphere of secondary towns. Finally, let us note the movement of populations who are victims of disasters and whose settlement in a new region requires passage through the small town which sustains the host rural area.

- *The demographic solidarity* or, on the contrary, the decoupling between the small town and its hinterland. J. Gallais (1988), who tried this approach in Mali, has thus managed to design a typology of places based on a comparison of their dynamisms with those of the neighbouring environment.

However some *equally significant indicators and themes* in urban–rural relationships are more difficult to grasp:

- *The function of mediation and translation* between local economic and political logic and the logic of the international urban economy and the politico–administrative machine. The anthropological studies carried
out on a few small towns (Hopkins, 1972 and 1979; Southall, 1979 and 1988) must be extended by other works on political entrepreneurship at the local scale (Jaglin and Dubresson, 1993).

- **The exploitation or the promotion** through the bias of the regional administration which is exerted from the main town, syphoning-off fiscal resources and dissemination of services and equipment.

- **The dissemination of innovation** which can pass through multiple channels and for which the small town is not a systematic stage.

- **The facilitation of the movements of goods**, a difficult assessment which also belongs to the economic studies mentioned above on the commercial networks channelling food produce.

- **The function of temporary or seasonal “retreat”** for populations who are victims of disasters resulting from ecological, economic or political crises.

The relations between the small town and the countryside appear then to be complex in a period of functional and morphologic transition of urban networks. The role of the various cyclical events that can occur at various levels must be determined. In another connection, in order to understand the inter-relations between the town and the countryside, a careful analysis must be made to locate the economic and demographic flows and the social and political relations within a framework of networks that mobilize individuals, families and communities and to relate the small town to rural environments, as well as to the urban sphere as a whole.

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Urban–Rural Interactions in Sub-Saharan Africa
The Case of Palimé and its Hinterland in South-West Togo

Gabriel Kwami Nyassogbo

According to L. Mumford, towns are “the receptacles harbouring both individuals and functions called “urban” from which relations are initiated with peripheral spaces called “rural” (Mumford, 1961). It is, in fact, through the social and collective facilities and functions of the town that we will study the interactions between Palimé, a secondary town in Togo, and its hinterland.

The town of Palimé is the main administrative centre (chef-lieu) of the prefecture of Kloto. With a surface area of 2,775 km², a population of 186,778 inhabitants (1981) and a density of 67 inhabitants/km², compared with a national mean of 48, Kloto and its main town are part and parcel of the Plateaux Region (Région des Plateaux)¹, which currently includes seven prefectures. Palimé is located in the south-west of Togo, in the heart of the cocoa and coffee plantation zone near the border with Ghana.

The interactions between Palimé and its hinterland are intense and are of three main kinds: administrative, economic, and socio-cultural and family based. The present chapter is comprised of three parts and these will be discussed as follows:

– Geographic and historical background of Palimé;
– Urban functions;
– Interactions between the town and its hinterland.

GEOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PALIMÉ

Palimé, a border and contact town

The secondary town of Palimé has been the main town of the district of Kloto since the German colonial era, with the administrative subdivisions of Ho and Kpando in today’s Ghana. With the new administrative divisions introduced in 1981, it remained the prefecture town of Kloto, within the Plateaux Region which has as its main administrative town, Atakpamé 100 km away in the north-west (see Map 1). This prefecture was recently split into three new territorial administrative units and a sub-prefecture (the new Danyi and
Agou prefectures and the sub-prefecture of Kpélé-Akata). In the following analysis, we will not take these very recent divisions into account. Palimé remains the only real urban centre in this space, despite the birth of new administrative centres which are actually semi-urban agglomerations.

Located some 10 km from the border with Ghana, the town of Palimé, which was founded by the Germans, fully deserves to be called a “border-town” (Nemo, 1958). It is tucked away 205 metres up in the first buttresses of Mount Kloto (500m), which overhangs it with a sharp drop of 300 metres. Mount Kloto (Mount of the Tortoises), which has given its name to the territorial unit headed by Palimé, is part of the mountainous chain of the Kourouma Plateau. The latter plateau is itself part of the more important group of mountains of the long Atakora chain, basically made up of schists and micaschists, topped with quartzite. This chain which divides Togo in a ssw-nne direction, serves as a natural border with Ghana and forms the watershed between the hydrographic basins of the Volta River in the west and the Mono River in the east.

Entirely located in Ewe area divided by the border, the town of Palimé is also a “contact town” in three respects (Nemo, 1958):

- A “contact town” between two different natural environments: a granite-gneissic peneplain with woody and shrubby savanna in the south and east, and a mountainous relief made of schist, micaschist and quartzite, covered with semi-deciduous forest in the west;
- A “contact town” between two zones which depend for their agricultural development on particular characteristics of their natural environments: coffee and cocoa in the west, the region with heavy rainfall (over 1,600 mm annually), and food crops in the less humid eastern part (1,300–1,400 mm a year).
- A “contact town” because it is a border-town, with all the economic consequences this implies for smuggling and currency movements (Nemo, 1958).

Suitable natural conditions have permitted the development of plantation agriculture based on coffee and cocoa. These two export crops, the “mother’s milk of Togo” until independence and before the exploitation of phosphates, were once the source of the precarious and short-lived prosperity of this part of the country. Today they suffer from the consequences of a double crisis, the decline of production caused by diseases and capsidæ, on the one hand, and the collapse of the prices on the world market, on the other hand (Nyassogbo et al., 1990).

The plantation economy has also helped to open up the region and modernize the roads and means of transport leading to Palimé. These have facilitated the integration of the area into the market economy. Thus, since before the First World War, a road which runs parallel with a railway (called “the cocoa line”), has linked Lomé, the capital, to the rich lands of Kloto (Cornevin, 1969). The Lomé–Palimé road skirts and winds across Mount Kloto through the Von François Pass (named after a German governor) leading to the vast Volta plain in present-day Ghana. The town is also linked to Accra, via Ho, and to Atakpamé, the main urban centre of the Plateaux Region, 100 km to the north-west. Today there are a number of roads, most of which are
Map 1. Location of the Prefecture of Kolo
tarred, conveniently linking Palimé to all the other parts of the prefecture, to the other regions of the country, and to neighbouring Ghana (Map 2).

In their choice of a site with an essentially granite subsoil, no idea of protection or defence seems to have guided the original founders. The site of Palimé is generally, punctuated by slight undulations despite a slight general nW-SE inclination (Nyassogbo, 1975). With no major obstacles, it permits the spatial extension of the town and, moreover, allows for an easy flow of run-off water in this abundantly watered region. The climate is predominantly sub-equatorial and is characterized by four seasons (two dry and two rainy). This climate makes Palimé and the neighbouring area a rich agricultural zone. The cool weather which prevails there, along with attractive scenery, attracts many tourists.

A crossroad town promoted by colonization

The old village of Agomé-Kpalimé, in the district of Agomé, was founded by a branch of the Ewe who came to the area following the exodus from Notsé towards the end of the seventeenth century (Cornevin, 1969).

After a brief stay at Agomé-Fédé on the slopes of Mount Kloto, the various clans began to move down to found successively Yo (from the name of the shea tree), today at 6 km to the north-west of the town, Koussountou, which has now become part of the urban commune, Tomégbé on the north-western slope of the plateau, and then Kpodji, now also part of the town council of Palimé, to the north. Finally after a few years of wavering, the last inhabitants also decided to leave the original village, to settle down at the meeting point of all the villages of Agomé and those which had already been founded at the foot of the mountain, on the peneplain and on the slopes of Mount Agou. This geographical situation, linked with the history of the foundation of the town, explains the etymological origin of the name "Kpalimé" ("crossroads") given to this small village which nothing could distinguish it yet from neighbouring settlements (Nemo, 1958; and Nyassogbo, 1975).

The entry of Togo into the German colonial empire in 1884 brought important changes in the development of this small village. Following a series of visits to Palimé by missionaries, Grade, the secretary of Falkenthal, Imperial Commissioner of the Bismarck government, established German authority over the settlement in August 1887 (Cornevin, 1969). Three years later, in May 1890, the Misahōhe post, on top of Mount Kloto, was established to control the commercial rubber traffic through the Von François Pass, the only passage between the plain to the south and the Volta valley to the north-west.

During the colonial period, Palimé was the economic centre while Misahōhe, which overlooks the town nine km away, was the headquarters of the District Officer and his deputies (Cornevin, 1969). For strategic reasons (for control and monitoring purposes) and for convenience (pleasant weather with cool nights), this situation remained unchanged with independence, and the Prefect and his main aides still reside at Misahōhe (Nyassogbo, 1984).

As the main town of the district of Kloto with Misahōhe, Palimé used to have Ho and Kpando in present-day Ghana as administrative subdivisions. This was the consequence of the successive boundary demarcations between
Map 2. Tarred roads in the Prefecture of Kloto
the French and the British. Nothing prevented the evolution of this small township which progressively acquired the features of a small urban centre with the elementary functions and infrastructure necessary for towns of this size at that time. Palimé thus had the privilege of belonging to the first seven urban communes of colonial Togo defined in the 1950s by the French administration.3

With a population of 12,000 inhabitants at the first national census in 1960, 20,000 at the second census in 1970, and 28,000 in 1981, Palimé was for a long time the third largest Togolese town after Lomé, the capital, and Sokodé in the centre of the country, before being overtaken in 1981 by Kara in the north of the country (Nyassogbo, 1991).4

With its functions and infrastructure designed to provide for the needs of the population it controls and governs, the secondary town of Palimé is an important administrative, economic and socio-cultural centre, serving a largely rural hinterland. Although its administrative and socio-cultural influence is bound to decrease in the future, on account of the division of the former district of Kloto into three new prefectures and the establishment of new secondary schools and hospitals outside the town, its economic and commercial influence on the hinterland will remain very strong for a long time. Indeed, the only competing centres are far away at Lomé and Atakpamé, located respectively at distances of 120 and 100 km.

THE MAIN URBAN FUNCTIONS OF PALIMÉ

Founded by the colonial administration, Palimé was thus provided at an early stage with the facilities needed to fulfil its administrative functions. Export agriculture, boosted by the suitable soil conditions, turned the town into an agricultural market and a very active trading centre. Attracted by the economic and social activities of the new town, scores of craftsmen flocked in to offer their services to the new town dwellers. Handicrafts are therefore also important in the town. The town is a market, and a centre for the supervision, control and development of its hinterland.

Palimé, an important politico-administrative centre

As an important link between the capital and the rural zones, the main town of a prefecture or of a territorial division, has an important role to play in the government and the control of the space under its influence.

To play this role more efficiently, and probably also for reasons of convenience, the French administration moved from Misahöhe in 1936 to settle in Palimé (Nemo, 1958). Progressively, the town was equipped to be up to its tasks: offices were erected to house the District Officer and all the related functions, the commune, as well as a municipal council and services called here “Town Hall”, in memory of the brief presence of the British, the departments and agencies for public works, agriculture and livestock, water and forestry, and posts and telecommunications.

Order and security were initially ensured by a small detachment of district guards, although this was replaced after independence by the police and the gendarmerie, who also settle small conflicts between individuals and commu-
nities. The Justice of the Peace is particularly important and settles all disputes beyond the competence of the heads of town wards, villages and cantons. Other services such as social affairs, the supply of water and electricity add to an ever-increasing list of urban facilities.

At the political level, Palimé serves as a link between Lomé and its hinterland. The directives and orders to be carried out have to pass through it first. To obtain a good dissemination of their political message in the rural areas, political meetings usually take place on Saturday, the main market day which attracts crowds from a wide area: Agou, Tové, Danyi, Kpélé-Akata. In view of this, it is hardly surprising that the Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT), formerly the sole political party, was launched at Palimé on Saturday, 30 August 1969.

All these administrative and political functions relating to the public sector as well as to education and health, which will be discussed separately below, employ between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of the population of the town. Palimé is therefore an important administrative centre (Marguerat, 1985).

Schooling and health

Palimé has long been an important educational and health centre for all the zone under its administrative authority, despite the building of two hospitals and two senior secondary schools (grammar schools) in the rural or semi-rural zones. These two functions also have a pre-eminent role in rural–urban interactions, as is shown below.

Education

As primary schools and junior high schools are widespread throughout the rural zones and particularly in this region, which has the highest school enrolment rate in the country, we shall only discuss senior secondary schools preparing pupils for their Baccalauréat, and technical and vocational schools. They constitute the “higher level of the school structure”, the only university being in Lomé.

Secondary schools were introduced rather late both at Palimé and in the region, despite the early and strong presence of primary education. The first junior high school dates back to the 1957–58 school year, as in the other regions, except Lomé and Sokodé. That school used to train pupils only for the BEPC examination and was transformed into a grammar school in the 1960s.

Today Palimé has two grammar schools (one state-run and one run by the Protestant Church); two technical schools (one run by the state and the other by a Catholic Mission); and finally an agricultural institute for training technicians.

Pupils of rural origin who want to pursue their studies beyond the BEPC must enroll in a grammar school at Palimé or elsewhere, after passing the senior high school entrance test, like the other pupils living in town. About one third of the grammar school population at Palimé comes from the rural zones of the Prefecture. In the early 1970s the only grammar school in the town used to recruit up to half of its pupils in the rest of the Prefecture (Nyassogbo, 1975).
Two new grammar schools have appeared to reinforce the secondary school system: the grammar school of Dayes, 45 km to the north-west of Palimé, and that of Adéta 30 km to the north, established only at the beginning of the 1992–1993 school year.

Even though the pupils of the Prefecture of Dayes and those of the new sub-prefecture of Kpélé-Akata have their grammar school close by, Palimé remains the most important educational centre in what is called greater Kloto (old Kloto). The school population in the town, all levels combined, is between 35 and 40 per cent of the population of the town.

Health facilities

The health facilities of Palimé have evolved like those for education. The town hospital was built by the Germans at the beginning of the century and is among the oldest in the country. It was therefore the only hospital in the Kloto area until the late 1960s, when the German Evangelical Mission built a hospital at Agou, the Bethesda Hospital, 15 km south of Palimé. A second hospital was opened a few years ago at Kpélé-Tsiko, 30 km north of the town below the Dayes Plateau. It was built by the American Baptist Church. These two new hospitals provide services not available at Palimé and compete with the older hospital which is struggling to modernize itself. These two hospital centres and the services offered by their counterparts in neighbouring Ghana, have considerably reduced the influence of the Palimé hospital.

As for the supply of pharmaceutical products, the National Pharmacy Board (Togopharma) which has the monopoly on imports, has established a good network of distribution points that makes it unnecessary for the rural population to rely on towns.

In the area of school and health facilities, the Kloto region is among the best equipped in the country.

A very active trading centre

As a centre where exports are collected and imports redistributed, Palimé and its region experienced a strong early monetarization of their economy. The town is a very active market.

The beginning of modern urbanization and the plantation economy soon attracted numerous traders and dealers who came to try their luck. In the early 1920s, despite the departure of the Germans, there were still, among the most important business firms, la Société Commerciale Ouest-Africaine (SCOA, French), G.B. Ollivant (British), Swanzey (British), John Walkden (British) (Rapport Administratif, 1925). Thus, as early as 1926, "there were at Palimé 23 warehouses for wholesale and small quantities trading, dependant on the European foreign trading post. These were as fully supplied as those in Lomé. Four of those warehouses were managed by Europeans", and the rest by a Syrian and "indigenous" traders (Rapport Administratif, 1930).

A German trading firm, the Deutsche Togogesellschaft (DTG), set up in 1928, came to reinforce the exchange activities in this already busy urban centre. Despite the world economic crisis which was already lurking on the horizon, trade was booming, for "the district of Klouto is only important because of the trading town of Palimé... which is likely to become the largest
market in the territory” (Rapport Administratif, 1931). The artificial border that “separated this market from its rich hinterland which the Germans had particularly developed”, leaving to the English “the pipe” and to the French the “tube”, in no way affected the commercial development of the town (Rapport Administratif, 1931).

It was the coffee-cocoa binomial that promoted the prosperity of southwest Togo as a whole, “for long the most monetarized rural area” in the country (Marguerat, 1985).

Trade ranks first among urban activities, given the importance of the population actively engaged in this sector. In 1970, 23.2 per cent of heads of households were engaged in trade, a ratio slightly lower than those for Atak-pamé (25.7 per cent) and Badou (25.1 per cent), two other trading centres in the south-west, but it is higher than the share of Lomé (22.2 per cent) where the activities are more diversified (Marguerat, 1985).

Transactions are considerably more important on Tuesdays and above all on Saturdays, the two market days at Palimé, as described in the study by Nemo (1958), even though the situation is no longer quite the same: “Saturday, market day, eleven a.m.: the train has just arrived from Lomé, pouring out a variegated crowd mostly made up of women carrying all sorts of objects they have come to sell. Outside the station the lorry drivers from the British zone are shouting themselves hoarse, in search of passengers. A bit farther on, the market, seething with excitement seems to be the rallying point of long files of women who have been walking for hours on the six or seven roads leading to the town. The men, leaving their wives to their petty trading, proceed with their loads of coffee or cocoa, towards the scales of the various trading houses; they discuss, bargain, threaten to sell to the rival buyer, come back. The cars are as busy as the men and struggle to find a way through the crowd which congests the ten or twelve main streets of the town” (Nemo, 1958). These good old days are now over, swept away by the joint effects of a series of factors: the crisis in the plantation economy and the short-circuiting of the town with the advent of modern means of transport.

The main trading firms have now concentrated their business in the capital. Only a few firms managed by Togolese and Syrians are still in existence today. On the other hand, small-scale trade is dominated by women and foreigners such as Yoruba from Nigeria and Djerma and Hausa from Niger, as well as a few Malian and Senegalese nationals.

A number of banking agencies have been set up as a consequence of the commercial activity. These are:

- The Togolese Development Bank (La Banque Togolaise de Développement, owned by the State).
- The Togolese Banking Union (L’Union Togolaise de Banque, a local name for the Crédit Lyonnais and of a few associated European banks).
- The Togolese Bank for Trade and Industry (La Banque Togolaise pour le Commerce et L’Industrie, another local name for the National Bank of Paris).
- The National Fund for Agricultural Loans (La Caisse Nationale de Crédit Agricole, a bank with the same name as in most of the former French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in France). However,
this bank could not survive the disastrous consequences of whimsical management and has therefore disappeared from the Togolese banking scene.

A few Yoruba and Hausa exchange the CFA Franc, the Ghanaian Cedi, the Nigerian Naira, the American Dollar, but the exchange rates applied are those of the “black market”.

Finally, six filling stations including TEXACO, SHELL, TOTAL, MOBIL supply the town and the region with fuel.

A town of craftsmen

Palimé, despite its numerous assets, does not possess a single manufacturing unit, not even for the transformation of agricultural produce. Crafts occupy an important place in the absence of industrial and manufacturing activities.

Among the craftsmen, the tailors and dressmakers are the most numerous, as in the rest of the country. At Palimé they represent one fifth of all the craftsmen. They can be found throughout the town; along the main streets there is an average of one tailoring establishment every 100 metres.

There are also many repair shops for cars and cycles which are located on the outskirts and on the main streets of the town. On the other hand photographers, jewellers and clockmakers are rather rare and work downtown for relatively well-off customers.

Because the Togolese are attached to their individual houses, to their “homes”, Palimé has attracted bricklayers, joiners, painters, electricians, coppersmiths. Only tile-layers are rare.

While weavers, whose activities have slowed down because of the competition from imported printed cloths, form the oldest guild and are recruited from among the old Anlo families in Ghana, art workers have recently arrived mostly from Benin. They are sculptors carving wood or ivory, some of them make art objects such as statues, pottery and ceramics, and painted cloth. They work together in an artisan centre created and run by the state.

All these functions assigned to and the facilities developed in Palimé are meant to develop the rural zones and have promoted frequent movements of people and goods between the two geographic zones which are complementary and interdependent. Proximity to Ghana, with its older and more prosperous cocoa economy, has played a crucial role in the economic and commercial development of Palimé.

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PALIMÉ AND ITS HINTERLAND

The interactions between a town and its hinterland are of several kinds. Their intensity depends not only on the density of the communications network, but also on the degree of development of the two zones. Around Palimé, we can identify politico-administrative, economic, socio-cultural and family-based interactions, but these are rarely exclusive. A peasant who goes to town to sell his crops and buy essential commodities, may at the same time pay a visit to a sick relative who has been living in town for a long time.
Politico-administrative interactions

Politico-administrative interactions do not have the same scope as those generated by economic needs. When a political leader holds a political meeting or when the President of the Republic pays a visit to Palimé, the rural populations are obliged to turn out en masse to “welcome” or “cheer the renowned guest”. They may at the same time attend to other business after the ceremonies. Apart from these occasional, collective, planned and massive movements, there are other more permanent individual trips during the year required by the needs of modern life. To obtain various administrative papers (birth, wedding or death certificates, or an identity card) one is obliged to travel to the main town of the prefecture. However, over the last few years, birth or wedding certificates and other documents have been issued in the major villages.

In this plantation economy region, land has acquired a commercial value it had never had before the colonial penetration. Land disputes frequently create conflicts between various neighbouring rural communities, clans and families, or sometimes even brothers. The most common cases settled by the Justice of the Peace relate to land, for any conflict which goes beyond the competence of the head of the ward, the village or the canton, is dealt with by the modern legal system. Some cases are transferred to Lomé. As for movements in the opposite direction, they are of little importance, consisting of tours by some local administrative officials (prefect, medical doctor, agricultural agent).

Economic interactions

These interactions are intensive in both directions. The population of Palimé is mostly supplied with foodstuffs from the rural zones. On market days, Tuesdays and above all Saturdays, as we have already mentioned earlier, and to a lesser extent on ordinary days, hundreds of women arrive on foot or by bush lorries, carrying agricultural produce, firewood, charcoal. They go back home in the evening, carrying this time essential commodities: kerosene, smoked or dried fish, salt brought from Ghana, sugar, tinned food from Lomé. Printed cloth, shoes and other items of clothing, enamel plates are usually purchased just before the end of the year, and at major Christian festivals which are celebrated with pomp in this region which was converted very early to Christianity. The markets are even busier at Christmas and the New Year as these correspond with the period of the harvest and sale of coffee and cocoa which have punctuated the rhythm of local economic life, at least until the last few years. Weddings, births, and deaths are occasions for expenditure by rural dwellers in the town.

Men, in particular, travel to Palimé to buy spare parts for bicycles, motorcycles, corn mills or coffee-hulling machines. They can also buy materials for building permanent houses, such as cement, corrugated iron, or reinforcing iron for concrete. It should be mentioned that owning a house roofed with corrugated iron, which is widespread in the area, confers a good deal of social prestige (Lucien-Brun and Pillet-Schwarz, 1988; Nyassogbo et al., 1990).
As for the very few relatively well-off rural dwellers who had been able to invest in real estate during the cocoa and coffee boom, they come to collect rents from tenants in town at the end of the month. The African banking systems having practically excluded farmers from loans, few farmers visit banks.

The town dwellers who go most regularly to rural areas are above all female retailers. They attend rural markets which take place every week at fixed intervals. They can be divided into two categories: those who ensure the distribution of imported products in the rural zones, and those who supply the urban market with agricultural products. For these women, the only rest day of the week is Sunday. The main rural markets are Agou-Gare (Friday), Kpadafé (Wednesday), Larnié (Friday), Adéta (Monday), Élé (Saturday). Some of these have a regional character and their influence goes far beyond the confines of the prefecture. A kind of modern barter takes place during which the products of the land are exchanged for those of the town. This is why Pâlimé had been identified on the eve of independence as a “true regional capital, maintaining close links with the various parts of the district: a centre of redistribution for imported products, and of concentration for export products (coffee, cocoa)” (Nemo, 1958).

We can also mention the number of town dwellers with business ventures in the rural zones: agricultural development activities, shops, corn mills, coffee-hulling machines, supervision of building works. In this category, we can classify civil servants of rural origin, traders, craftsmen and all those who exploit plots for food farming to make ends meet in a town where conditions are becoming more and more difficult.

Socio-cultural and family-based interactions

Having a son or a daughter at a grammar school in town, or as an apprentice, or a relative or friend hospitalised, entails constant movements to and from the town and the hinterland. A father or mother may stay over for a few days or weeks with their son who is a teacher or a medical doctor, or with their daughter who is a midwife or a trader.

It is pupils who help maintain the most permanent relations throughout the school year. These consist of weekly returns to the village to obtain something to support themselves with (foodstuffs and money) for those pupils living alone. Some are accommodated and fed by relatives or “employers” for doing small domestic services. School holidays constitute a period of intense meetings between pupils living in the rural zones and those returning to the village. In some cases, sporting contests are held between the two groups of pupils, which breaks the usual lethargy and monotony prevailing in these villages.

Finally, the new town dweller who has not yet entirely cut off his rural ties, something which is rare in these new towns created only by colonization, returns from time to time to the village to re-immperse himself in ancestral traditions at funerals or other ceremonies. To this end, he usually builds a house worthy of his social rank, almost as in town.

In both directions, gifts are offered to relatives and friends during these encounters marked by complementarity, brotherhood and solidarity.
Rural–urban interactions in Sub-Saharan Africa meet administrative, economic, socio-cultural and family needs. They strengthen the links of solidarity between town and rural dwellers, given that mutual self-help projects are financed by town dwellers, while rural dwellers provide the labour.

These interactions also help rural dwellers to improve their living conditions: health, hygiene, problems of drinking water, housing. New ideas, fashions, especially in dressing are quickly disseminated in the rural zones thanks to these permanent contacts, but also via the radio which is now found everywhere. These assist or should assist the economic and social development of rural zones.

CONCLUSIONS

In this discussion we have shown that the interactions between Palimé, the main town of the prefecture of Kloto since the German period, and its hinterland are intensive and multiform. However, the town is increasingly facing a series of difficulties which prevent it from efficiently playing its role of leading the rural zones into a general and enduring development.

The first difficulty is the absence of any new economic activities to complement coffee and cocoa, which would assist in the transformation of the agricultural sector. Part of the economically-active population, especially the young, is plagued with the problems of unemployment and under-employment and must leave and seek opportunities elsewhere.

The second difficulty relates to the crisis in the plantation economy. Palimé and its hinterland, as well as the whole of south-west Togo are experiencing unprecedented economic and social stagnation. This explains the low annual growth rate for the town and its rural zone, of respectively 1.3 per cent and 1.5 per cent, compared with the national urban growth rate of 4.5 per cent, and 2.9 per cent for the country as a whole between 1970 and 1981 (Dupont, 1986).

Thirdly, we can mention the short-circuiting of the town of Palimé resulting from the modernization of the road system, designed to facilitate the transport of coffee and cocoa towards the port of Lomé. All major rural agglomerations in the prefecture now have daily access to Lomé, the capital, without having to pass through Palimé.

This precarious economic and social situation reinforces the dependency of secondary towns, such as Palimé, on Lomé, which alone has the power to sparingly redistribute the resources it attracts, in the absence of any administrative or financial autonomy.

Lastly, the recent partitioning of the Prefecture of Kloto into smaller administrative units provided with services and facilities that used to exist only in Palimé, with the aim of “bringing the administration closer to the administered”, can worsen all those difficulties in the years to come for Palimé.

As a consequence of all these problems, the interactions between the Prefecture of Kloto and its still rural hinterland will be negatively affected as long as no real plans exist for the organization of space, as well as territorial development.
Notes

1 Togo is divided administratively into 5 regions and 30 prefectures. From south to north, the regions are as follows: la Région Maritime, la Région des Plateaux, la Région Centrale, la Région de la Kara, and la Région des Savanes.

2 Lomé is the point of departure for three railway lines towards the main agricultural regions in the country: “the cocoa line” towards the north-west (120 km); “the cotton line” towards the centre (272 km); and “the coconut and copra line” towards the east (44 km).

3 It should be mentioned that the town and the district have undergone three colonial influences successively, as a result of the First World War: German, from 1897 to 1914; British, from 1914 to 1919, and French from 1919 to independence in 1960.

4 Political decisions have made Kara, “the hometown of the President”, the second centre of Togo after Lomé and the town was favoured by rapid development during the 1970s.

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A New Look at Linking Towns in the Congo
What are the Alternatives for a Better Structuring of Space?

Robert Edmond Ziavoula

The local “is what is considered when one has emphasized the economic and cultural determinants at the international level and the intervention of the state, and the state administrative apparatus as well as the social and political forces which support it at the national level. The local is thus a balance, a leftover, but it is also an area neglected by ‘serious’ studies because the local does not bring together the conditions of the experience” (Le Bris and Le Roy, 1986:347).

The local or the secondary in the administrative organization of the state is conceived of as an autonomous economic entity, disconnected from the centre and which enjoys a broad political, administrative and financial autonomy. Around the so-called local affairs there appear some structures likely to promote development. It is an unprecedented experience included in a paradigm named “new development” which is called “decentralization” in almost all the countries south of the Sahara. The generalization of this concept leads to an investigation into the objective conditions that will help to turn it effectively into “realities, and realities yielding positive results” (Clauzel, 1992:2). However, although this concept is now in fashion, it has not determined the creation of local entities born ex nihilo during the last few decades. Is it therefore an illusion or a gamble of the post-colonial African state, used to exorcise the spectre of poor development and non-integration of the rural world into the national economy? To better appreciate the margin for manoeuvre of the territorial institutions evolving in the wake of the state, it is necessary to go beyond political declarations. What is the level of local community to which decentralization must be applied? What type of decisions can local authorities take? To what extent can they exert an influence on the administrative and economic organization at the local level? What is the weight of the decisions taken outside the local in the life of the community at the grassroots level.
INSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION OF THE LOCAL IN TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

Local administrative structures

Thirty-five years after the independence of the Congo (15 August 1960), the administrative structures have not fundamentally changed. The village remains, as under the colonial administration, the basis of territorial organization. The hierarchy of the administrative and economic functions is the theoretical model of reference in the organization, administration and management of the country.

The village, made up of an agglomeration of at least thirty inhabitants and several hamlets and with agricultural land attached to them, is the primary administrative unit. It plays a variety of roles: as a place of concentration and supervision of the rural populations, it is an economic and commercial structure. The administrative hierarchy has allowed efficient control by creating administrative and customary chieftaincies. These chieftaincies instituted within the villages were the materialization of an administrative model designed to meet the need for developing the village space. The land, subordinated to the head of a canton, is at the interface between the latter and the village chief. The grouping policy initiated in 1934 and reactivated in 1962 through l’action de rénovation rurale (Action for Rural Renovation), culminated in 1984 in the institution of the village centre as a fundamental element for integrating rural schemes throughout the country. The village centre operation has become the supporting basis for space organization and a “new type of development”. The commune, the second level of the administrative edifice, is defined in statistical terms. A local territory can be made into a commune only when its population is more or less equal to “ten thousand inhabitants”, and when it has reached a stage of “sufficient development likely to provide it with its own resources necessary for its budgetary balance”, the 1973 law stated. This provision constrains the multiplication of local basic communities (Congo only has six communes of various sizes and financial capacities). Even the large communes do not enjoy real financial autonomy. This constitutes therefore a clear political will to stifle the evolution of the local.

Decree 57/41 of 4 April 1958 set up “rural communities endowed with a legal status” (Art. 2). The law of 1960 used the same term (Law 29/60 of 22 June 1960), but that law is locked away in the universe of administrative red tape. Until 1973, only fully functioning communes were local communities endowed with a legal status and enjoying financial autonomy.

Furthermore, the administrative reform introduced by Decree No. 67.247 of 25 August 1967, reduced the 15 prefectures to 9 administrative divisions or administrative regions and turned the 44 sub-prefectures into 47 districts and 33 administrative control posts, which resulted de facto in an administrative hierarchy with four levels: region–district–commune–village. The administrative control post has so far been an outgrowth of the district, that is to say a post bringing the users closer to public services. It should be noted that not all the districts are subdivided into communes and administrative control posts. The administrative division has changed names several times while keeping the same powers: region (1958),¹ prefecture and sub-prefecture
(1964), region–district (1967)\(^2\) and finally region/prefecture and district/sub-prefecture (1991).\(^3\)

The dominant role of Marxist ideology and the revolutionary enthusiasm during the first decade of the August 1963 movement\(^*\) inspired the coinage in 1973 of the concept of “entire people” associated with the notion of management of “local affairs”. This concept also prompted the establishment of popular councils in the regions, districts and \textit{communes} following application of Article 60 of the 30 December 1960 constitution. Article 77 of the constitution of the 24 June 1973 confirmed this institution. The regions, the districts and the \textit{communes} became, \textit{de facto}, “decentralized authorities, endowed with a legal status and financial autonomy” (Article 1 of Ordinance No. 16/73 of the 4th May 1973).\(^4\) The local is transformed into a popular power by a kind of democratization of decision making in the regions, districts and \textit{communes}, while remaining a representative body of state power. State power and popular power enter simultaneously the arena of the “democratic” game of hybrid management where central power and local autonomy agree upon a marriage of convenience with diverging interests. The final expression of this hybrid form of “popular participation” in the management of local affairs was embodied by the 1981 reform which reinforced the authority of the popular powers and introduced explicitly the notion of decentralization, presented as a new technique of organization and management of the territorial communities. The term appears for the first time in the legal and administrative language of the Congo in Article 136 of Law 45/81 of 6 November 1981 which stipulates: “Decentralization aims to permit a better participation to the power of conception, orientation, implementation and management of the popular masses in solving local problems, for a better adaptation and integration to national life.”\(^5\)

The region is said to be a “basic economic unit” which expresses the will to articulate the various levels of the local economy that have been neglected in the process of national space management and organization. Legislation in 1990 maintained 10 regions as territorial administrative units and decentralized local authorities including districts, administrative control posts, villages and, in some cases, \textit{communes} and boroughs. The urban \textit{commune} of Brazzaville has become a region and a \textit{commune}, while keeping the same territorial area. Two bodies were charged with the management of the regions, districts and \textit{communes}: a local assembly elected by direct universal ballot and an executive made up of members appointed by the central state.

Decree 91/878 of 15 November 1991 which determines the running of administrative divisions during the transitional period,\(^6\) makes the region the pivot for central power. Prefects, sub-prefects and mayors are appointed by the state. Financial autonomy is maintained in principle, but the region does

\(^*\) In August 1963, Congo’s first post-independence President, Abbé Fulbert Youlou, attempted to restrict trade union activity, among other things, which resulted in a general strike and a state of emergency. Subsequently Youlou resigned and this initiated a process leading to the formation of Marxist-Leninist governments — Editor’s note.
not really enjoy this; moreover, it loses its character as a decentralized local authority.

The constitution adopted on 15 March 1992 reinstated the local with full rights. The first article stipulates: "The Republic of Congo is a sovereign and independent state, decentralized, indivisible, secular, democratic and social". This sets the scene and any ambiguity is now cleared up. The same constitution specifies that: "Local authorities have a legal status. They enjoy administrative, patrimonial, financial, economic, cultural and social autonomy. The deliberating bodies of the local authorities are the councils elected by direct universal ballot who elect among themselves one or several executive committees" (Art. 170). The spirit is reasserted and the procedures specified. Decentralization and the management of the local by the elected bodies now constitute principles that cannot be circumvented.

THE COMPETENCE OF THE LOCAL POWER

From the prefecture councils (1963) to the popular councils (1973), the make-up of the local assemblies depended on the size of the population of the division. The management of local affairs was entrusted to elected officials who had long been included on a single list supported by the one-party state. The voter did not therefore have any real choice and had to approve the proposals of the Party.

At the regional level, the sharing of areas of competence between the state and local authorities was translated into a real redistribution of decision-making powers only when these exclusively concerned problems of local interest. The popular regional council had the task of dealing with matters considered as regional and distinct from state or communal affairs. Over the years, the powers of this council have increased in order to promote the development of a "regional consciousness". The prerogatives of the popular council of a region, district or commune cover all the domains of regional or communal interest. The task of the council is to deal with matters considered as regional and distinct from state or communal matters. The area of competence of the popular council is very wide. However, the regional popular council is not a permanent assembly and does not have full control over its meetings. Indeed, the single party probably feared that popular councils might digress from their areas of competence to interfere with national political and economic matters.

The regional popular council has powers in several areas:

- Economic and financial; it votes on the budget and defines the policies of economic and social development of the region. The development plans of the districts and communes have to be submitted to the regional popular council for discussion.

- Administrative, with three poles: administrative organization of the region, modification of the territorial limits of districts, towns and villages; creation and delimitation of urban and rural communities.

- Political, in particular to maintain order.

Decentralization as a mode of management and an organization technique is reduced here only to the running of the popular council. The state has there-
fore not bothered to specify the means or the modalities of the transfer of powers, and the single party maintains tight control. The few powers transferred have not allowed the elected local representatives to define true development policies. The election of the deliberating body, although a requirement of decentralization, has not helped to consolidate a true local power. The National Conferences follow in fact the same logic, a “democratic” logic with an obscure contour. The state wanted to limit local powers and thus avoid an atomized and non-integrated development likely to bring about “serious contradictions between the communes, the districts, the regions and the State”.

THE POWERS VESTED IN THE DECONCENTRATED AND DECENTRALIZED ACTORS

The prefect (in 1963), the government commissioner (in 1968), the political commissioner (in 1973), had two functions: as agent of the State-Party and as a regional or communal authority, elected on a single list, in a direct universal ballot. The laws and regulations organizing territorial administration assigned to the deconcentrated and decentralized authorities important powers especially in the management of the daily affairs of the Party and the State. In the regions, the political commissioner has three main areas of competence. First, he is vested with the authority of the state and as a result is in charge of preserving the interests of the central power and applying laws and regulations. This power entitles him to exert a “control, a posteriori, over the acts of local authorities” (Art. 47, Law No. 45/81 of November 1981). Second, he heads the external service of the state civil administrations within the region or the district. The government gives him a permanent delegation of power. Finally, the political commissioner has competence over the economic and social domain: he implements the measures taken by the government as part of the national plan and in the area of territorial development.

The political role of the political commissioner or the prefect is often intermingled with his administrative tasks. He is engaged in three possible dialogues. He is dependent on the state which wants him to apply government policy; as an executive and advisor to the intermediate local authorities (districts, communes and villages) he is accountable before the regional popular council for the results he has achieved in the area of economic development and for the use of state aid. He coordinates state services and fulfills other responsibilities assigned by the government. This is the case in economic matters: he has instruments for controlling prices, but he has no means to influence private salaries and control the collection of some taxes. The power of the local authority is therefore not absolute: in short, it is the central authorities who decide what a local authority can do in respect of the means allocated.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL IN TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT

The legal framework for the participation of the local

The laws enacted in 1981 conceived of participation as a redistribution and, at the same time, a transfer of the political, economic and financial powers in favour of the regions. Three components of this participation can be distinguished:

First, the choice of development objectives specific to the decentralized local authority. The selection of the intervention allows the state to have more responsibility in the initiation, preparation and implementation of the projects.

Second, the choice of the means of development and decision making (in the form of discussions within the popular council), by setting up an internal regulation mechanism (election of the councillors by the local population) which gives all the local authorities equal opportunities for development.

Third, project implementation at the local level makes it easier to reach the chosen development objectives.

From the point of view of the principles, the Congolese legislators had more or less encapsulated all the preoccupations for leading local authorities toward a true local “democracy”, by granting them more room for manoeuvre, especially with regard to socio-economic development projects. These principles have been abandoned due to the accumulation of the difficulties of daily management. The distinction between “local affairs” and national affairs was difficult to establish, these two management categories having the same administrators: the State-Party. Ideology gave power over everything to the party and justified the latter’s action through the use of quasi “sacred” concepts. The power of the centre constituted both a brake and the unique driving and coordination force for economic, administrative and political actions. However, at the political level, the state wanted to transform the local into a “vast economic working site” and the political commissioner into a skillful and devoted manager. Figure 1 summarizes the stages of this participation.

The limits of the local in administrative decision making

The local budget is provided by resources internal to the local authority and by external resources. The internal resources include: real estate income, the proceeds from the running of administrative services, the recovery of outstanding debts, the sale of local stamps and various local taxes. The external resources derive from allocations for equipment, subsidies and loans.

Among all these resources, local tax revenues ought to be the basis of the local budget and, as a result, should fall under the responsibility of the elected officials. There are numerous taxes, but they are determined by law and collected only using lists of taxpayers. This legal constraint is a factor limiting local power and is the main source of the financial imbalance in local budgets. In addition, loans cannot be contracted without the endorsement of the state. The important volume of subsidies needed to balance the budgets of the local authorities reinforces the interference of the state in the management of local affairs. These subsidies constitute the main external source of the run-
ning budget. They contribute over 50 per cent to the regional budget which can be broken down as follows: budget balance subsidy, 50.9 per cent; other subsidies, 14 per cent; regional action fund, 10.8 per cent; and funds to encourage the creative action of the masses, 0.3 per cent. These subsidies represent 76 per cent of the total and their increase amplifies the financial problems of the local authorities due to collection difficulties. Despite the importance of state resources, local authorities are obliged to seize every opportunity offered by the law to generate income within their spheres of activity.

The initiative of development projects

Most development projects are coordinated by the regional headquarters which depend directly on the central state. However, the objectives and means of implementation are determined outside the regional authority. These projects have brought about the centering of economic activities in the regions where they are located and this reinforces at the same time the technological, financial and politico-administrative dependency of the local community.

Incentives to encourage investment in the economically less-developed zones

Several advantages are provided to foreign and national investors in underprivileged zones. Fiscal and tariff reductions (settlement incentives) are granted to firms that meet certain conditions among which are the implementation of the economic and social development plans, the creation of jobs, the use of local products and the localization of jobs. All these advantages are directly assessed by the national investment commission. The local authorities are absent from this commission and merely record the decisions taken by the state. To correct this imbalance, the new investment code has divided the Congo into five economic zones, conceived so as to favour investment in the
least-developed areas. The field of action is no longer limited to local authorities; it covers a whole range of territories distinct from the administrative entities. The reform is ambitious at the level of territorial organization but one may question the efficiency of the measures proposed at the local level.

Relations between the state and local communities

The law of 1981 conceived of participation as a “redistribution” and a transfer of economic and political power in favour of the regions. However, the text itself reinforces the ambiguity in the organization and the decentralized management of the local administrative structures: the presence of the state is, in fact, permanent. It exerts a power of control and must approve all the decisions of the popular councils. Decisions adopted by the local assembly can be put in force only 30 days after the day they have been signed by the chairman of the executive committee if “they have not been rejected or approved by the relevant hierarchical authority or repealed by the supreme court”. This control is justified by the fact that the local assembly is only a body representing the state. The state also exerts over local authorities a power of temporary suspension and final revocation. The activities of local authorities are systematically submitted to both hierarchical and legal control (especially judicial activities). The area over which this control is applied is quite diversified and the General State Inspectorate is the arm ensuring this control. The power of investigation of the Inspectorate is unrestricted. Although it reinforces the regularity and the relevance of financial operations, this control also constitutes an impediment to the free exercise of local power.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LOCAL SECONDARY TOWNS AND RURAL ZONES

An urban transition

For the last twenty years the population of the secondary towns in the Congo has grown faster than that of the rural areas. These urban centres seriously drain the population of these rural zones and thus maintain them as “simple reservoirs of migrants”. In 1960 for example the “12 secondary centres were inhabited by only 5 per cent of the population. This figure rose to 12 per cent twenty years later” (BCEOM/CRETH, 1985:55). Moreover, the rural population has declined accordingly, and many rural people have migrated to secondary urban centres. Table 1 summarizes the trends in the growth of secondary towns.

Thus, Brazzaville, Pointe Noire, and the other main urban centres now contain 73.6 per cent of the total population. The rural population, i.e. centres with less than 2,000 inhabitants, has fallen from 79 per cent in 1960 to 40 per cent in 1985 and this will decline to 27 per cent in the year 2010. The decrease in this population has prompted the Congolese authorities, as well as the bilateral and multilateral agencies, to devise a geography of projects more likely to promote a new development articulating the links between the
Table 1. Evolution of the population of the 18 secondary centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1965&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1970&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1974&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1980&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1985&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>% of urban population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dolisie</td>
<td>11,500</td>
<td>15,900</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>28,577</td>
<td>38,600</td>
<td>49,498</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mossendjo</td>
<td>3,714</td>
<td>5,300</td>
<td>7,523</td>
<td>11,129</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>14,188</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makabana</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>6,984</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>11,765</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkayi</td>
<td>7,450</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>19,300</td>
<td>28,328</td>
<td>32,400</td>
<td>37,442</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madingou</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td>8,716</td>
<td>10,700</td>
<td>10,505</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loutété</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>4,898</td>
<td>7,100</td>
<td>9,196</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudima</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>8,547</td>
<td>9,800</td>
<td>8,885</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouyondzi</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>6,178</td>
<td>6,300</td>
<td>6,103</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibiti</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>1,914</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>14,556</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinkala</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>4,369</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>8,059</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindouli</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>7,397</td>
<td>8,600</td>
<td>7,119</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djambara</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>4,612</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>7,178</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamboma</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>8,606</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>11,207</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owando</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>6,800</td>
<td>9,061</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>15,900</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makoua</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>5,900</td>
<td>7,024</td>
<td>8,900</td>
<td>10,994</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mossaka</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>6,324</td>
<td>7,600</td>
<td>8,955</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouesso</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>5,300</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>7,243</td>
<td>8,900</td>
<td>12,031</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implondo</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>4,300</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>4,678</td>
<td>5,600</td>
<td>11,229</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>42,614</td>
<td>90,837</td>
<td>130,123</td>
<td>164,585</td>
<td>213,900</td>
<td>254,810</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<sup>a</sup> Study hypotheses, Ministry of Planning 1984  
<sup>b</sup> Census data 1974 and 1984

rural and the urban zones. The creation of village centres constitutes the focal point of all these policies.

The adaptation of an urban frame in rural context

*The village centres*

The village centre is the supporting base of the organization of rural space. It makes it possible to define a new type of "development and it is considered as the ideal place for social and technological innovation". In other words, the village centre is the focal point for alternative technologies. Its role is at the same time multifunctional and integrated, facilitating in the long run, communications, economic exchanges, and social and cultural relations between rural and urban dwellers.

The creation of village centres addresses two complementary and non-exclusive types of concerns:

1. Four general principles govern the organization of the rural territory:
   - To set up integrated rural programmes to bring the complementarities into play and develop exchanges among the various villages.
   - The programmes must be conceived for their target rural population in order to achieve "economies of scale" (BCEOM/CRETH, 1985:72).
   - The village centre must be made a strategic environment for modernization by providing it with the means for starting such modernization.
The implementation of this policy must conform to the territorial development plan.

2. The planned activities are specified in terms of operational objectives:

- To increase and organize productive capacities;
- To meet the development needs expressed by the rural populations with three priority actions: the provision of infrastructure and other equipment, improving productive capacities, and improving the quality of life (such as health care, and the supply and improvement in leisure activities).

As part of this policy therefore, 159 village centres were to be established between 1980 and 1986. However, the budgetary constraints imposed by the structural adjustment programme forced the government to severely reduce this number and only six pilot villages were selected: Bolomo (Likouala region), Okouessé (Cuvette), Kébara (Plateaux), Louengo (Pool), Soukou-Bouadi (Bouenza) and Loubétsi (Niari).

**Rural countries and/or rural centres**

The "rural country" (pays rural) paradigm is akin to the policy of "country" contracts undertaken in France as early as 1976, particularly in the valleys of the Atlantic Pyrénées (Aventur, 1976:56). The rural centre after the village centre is the second point of attachment for rural policies and regional space structuring. No matter what scale was used to assess the rural country, the selection criteria have been the same: degree of cohesion, ease of access, demography and economy of the zone considered. Based on all these criteria, the following subdivisions were retained: 18 urban centres (excluding the large cities: Brazzaville and Pointe Noire), 65 rural countries (association of districts and administrative control posts), and 155 village centres (association of large villages and administrative control posts).

Each rural country includes at least five village centres with populations ranging from 100 to 2,000 inhabitants. The rural centre attempts to curb rural exodus, principally that of the youth, by developing a significant level of production and trade activities. The concept of rural country has raised several difficulties in its implementation. The content of the concept associates three independent elements: a minimum population threshold of 2,000 inhabitants and a maximum of 20,000 inhabitants; an influence zone, that is to say a set of several intermediate centres, and several villages sharing geographic, economic, and social complementarities. The general objective of the rural country is to promote and master the "transformations generated by the mobility of the populations" toward the important urban zones, so as to create the optimal conditions for the development of the rural world via the concentration poles: the village centres and their influence.
The economic functions of the rural space

Agriculture

The Congolese population is generally considered to be 90 per cent agricultural. However, there are no accurate statistics to determine correctly the numbers actively involved in agricultural activities. The assumed negative impact of rural exodus on productivity remains a working hypothesis. The significance of agriculture, as a real economic factor in the transformation of space and the behaviour of producers, can be assessed in two distinct periods.

1. The economic functions of rural planning during the colonial administration:

The combination of renovation and modernization of rural communities was the starting point of the agricultural policy during the colonial administration. The implementation of this policy at the level of each geographic zone considered several criteria of unequal value: geographic unit, ethnic unity, capacity of integrating modern techniques, i.e. the ability to introduce innovations likely to “modify customs and traditions” (Chauvet, 1956:124), so as to disrupt the stability of the existing, traditional society. The objectives chosen related to three fundamental points:

- Settling the populations permanently on good quality lands in order to put an end to destructive land practices which was an impediment to permanent development, and to improve housing and social amenities;
- Generating a permanent link between man and the land by instigating a system of annual farming with a carefully devised fallow system, ensuring conservation and the improvement of collective and individual property.
- The operations concerned the planning of rural zones and above all the transformation of living conditions. Agricultural popularization was the “prerequisite to the creation of rural communities” (Chauvet, 1956:126). It helped to specify the use to which the lands were to be assigned and to measure the “abilities of the peasants to create or develop a production capable of sustaining a regular commercialization of products”.

The renovation action provided for the creation of peasant incomes from fish breeding, fishing and forestry. The creation of provident societies, the management of villages, the environment and property, have constituted the mainspring of agricultural progress at a period when technical provision was very reduced and private activity could not normally integrate bush producers into the commercial circuits.

2. The current economic functions of rural planning:

Rural planning supposes or pre-supposes in the Congolese context a definition of the functions of the rural space likely to be integrated into the present day “modern” society. The settling of rural populations and the improvement of their living conditions, remain today as yesterday, a major concern of decision makers and planners.

The spatial planning scheme proposed focuses on three intervention axes:
- Operations for the development of the regional economies. The role of planning here is to improve the rural space so as to promote "the emergence of regional employment poles providing an acceptable alternative to immigration for unemployed town dwellers" (Ministère du Plan, 1988:15). Priority zones of integrated planning and development (zones d'aménagement et de développement intégré prioritaires, ZADIP) have been created to widen the field of action of several activities of primary production, transformation, commercialization and improvement of living conditions.

The occupation of space within the perspective of this policy concerns several geographic zones and is based on a hierarchy of economic and administrative functions: rural country, district and region. The mission assigned to the ZADIP is to put into a relationship of interdependence the primary and secondary urban centres, the rural centres, the village centres and the operations of "economic dynamism".

- Operation of economic dynamism (ODE) meant to make the planned investment produce profits.

- Operations related to development research and experimentation cover two types of activities: irrigated rice farming and semi-nomadic pastoralism.

These economic functions are not new. In each case, they aim to improve the living conditions in the rural zones. The characteristic of all these actions is to be found in the special features of the means used and which are not integrated into a national policy. They are specific answers to specific situations which reinforce the unwieldiness of territorial planning policies. The encouragement of various forms of peasant groupings and the return of urban youth to the countryside are not efficient measures to "promote a social, economic and commercial agricultural policy" (Charrier and Debard, 1970:22).

Finally, the often decried difficulties of planning and integrating the rural world are due to the weaknesses of the infrastructure and access (communications, energy, public services etc.). However, whatever the difficulty of the problem, planning a region implies the implementation of "an overall plan and coordination of all the investments" (Charrier, 1970:34). The Directorate of Territory Development and Regional Action (La Direction de l'aménagement du territoire et de l'action régionale, DATAR) and the national council of investments have an important role in influencing, guiding and coordinating investment. The economic functions identified in this new occupation of rural space belong to the long-term perspective and require diversified solutions capable of fitting into a coherent whole by integrating a variety of situations, existing aptitudes and structures.

CONCLUSION

In the Congo, the exercise of local economic power has remained within the realm of illusion. The ideological enthusiasm, as a dominant mode of expression, introduces the paradigm of local power using decentralization by entrusting the councils of regions, districts, communes and boroughs with the role of "collaborating with the authority governing the public power"
Decentralization is therefore perceived as a kind of promotion of local power but with hazy and fleeting contours. The constitution of 15 March 1992 makes decentralization an unavoidable principle. It is therefore up to the state to specify its spirit. The reinforcement of this principle could take shape along three axes:

- To increase the power of local communities (regions, districts and communes) by reinforcing the power of elected local officials. This should help to change the relationship between the state and local authorities and to introduce clear modifications concerning the relations between urban centres and rural zones.
- To transform the main administrative towns into true urban and rural communes, as the case may be.
- To make a systematic use, in the transfer of the financial and human means, of negotiations between the state and the local communities, with due regard for the level of development of each local authority. These are simple actions dictated by common sense.

Notes

1 Decree No. 59 of 31 August 1959 relative to the designation of administrative divisions.
2 Decree of 15 December 1967 relative to the power of the prefects and the organization of state administrative services in the prefectures.
3 Decree No. 91/877 of 15 November 1991 determining the functioning and organization of the administrative divisions and defining the prerogatives of the prefects, sub-prefects, heads of PCA and heads of villages.
4 Ordinance No. 1673 of 4 May 1973 instituting popular councils of districts and regions in the Popular Republic of Congo.
5 Law 45/81 of 6 November 1981 providing for the institution of the popular councils of regions, districts and the decentralization in the P.R. of Congo, modified by Law 002/87 of 23 January 1987.
6 Decree No. 91/878 of 15 November 1991 determining the functioning of the communes, boroughs and wards, defining the prerogatives of the mayor administrators of the communes, boroughs and heads of wards.
7 The regional popular council is composed of:
- 24 members for regions with 30,000 inhabitants;
- 32 members for regions with a population between 30,000 and 80,000 inhabitants.
- 36 members between 80,000 and 150,000 inhabitants and 41 members for regions with a population over 150,000 inhabitants. On the other hand, Law 001/92 of 21 January 1992 providing electoral law, assigns the same number of seats to the regional councils (25 seats), the district and borough councils (17 seats); it also introduces a distinction among the communes of:
  - Brazzaville: 31 seats
  - Pointe Noire: 19 seats
  - Dolisie: 19 seats
  while Nkayi, Mossendjo and Oussou have the same number of seats (13 seats).
8 Law 26/82 of 7 July 1982 providing an investment code and modified by the 1992 law.

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Cultural Dimensions of Urban–Rural Relations in Benin
The Case of Abomey and its Hinterland

Albert Tingbé-Aزالou

In Benin, the town appears as a totality, a microcosm of the global society within which it was born and developed. More than a projection of this society in a defined space, the town is unquestionably the concrete result of a time-space dialectic through the multiform practice of a given human group.

As for the countryside, it also refers back to historical, economic and cultural specificities but is characterized by its traditionality and a quasi-mechanical solidarity among the actors. Between the town and the countryside are found intermediate social spaces called secondary towns, which are the real centres of the manifestation of the interactions of these two poles. It is these secondary towns that will be the focus of this chapter as we explore the cultural foundations of urban–rural interaction in Benin, and particularly the town of Abomey and its hinterland.

The present discussion revolves around three main axes. The first relates to the historical, social and geographical situation of towns in the Republic of Benin. The second will describe a typical Beninese secondary town, Abomey. The third axis is devoted to the socio-cultural foundation of the interactions between the historical town of Abomey and the surrounding countryside.

SECONDARY TOWNS IN THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN

The creation and evolution of towns in Beninese society vary according to the periods and the regions which justify their existence. A retrospective view of the history of urban life in Benin reveals pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial towns.

Pre-colonial period

Before European colonialism, the rise of kingdoms with centralized power, Danxome, Xogbonu, Nikki, and the development of interregional trade relations, gave birth to towns. These pre-colonial towns—some of which date back to the fifteenth century such as the city of Togodo (Allada), others to the
seventeenth century: Abomey, Xogbonu, Glexwe, Nikka—were all palace towns or trading centres. They are all located in the interior of present-day Benin. Even the maritime ports such as Glexwe and Xogbonu are set back from the Atlantic Ocean. The structuring elements of the urban space were the monarchic power and/or the market, a place of commercial exchange. As concerns particularly Abomey, Maurice Glele Ahanhanzo, relates that “Abomey was organized by wards, and professional bodies: in the periphery of the palace and the Hundjio market, ... lived the Yemadje, the king’s weavers, then came the Hountondji, blacksmiths and goldsmiths of the throne, the “Adaro” or the king’s dyers, etc.” (1971:149). Thus the urban tissue was organized to serve the royal palace, the seat of central power. We should add to the presence of the political power and the market the large ditch surrounding the whole city and designed to protect it and its population, too aware of their city dweller status from warring invaders. Such were the essential characteristics of these pre-colonial towns which bear witness to the great age of urbanism in Dahomey.1

Colonial period

With colonization two new cities arose: Cotonou on the Atlantic coast and Parakou in the north. The former located on the Gulf of Guinea, was "grafted" toward the end of the nineteenth century to the village of Okutonou,2 a maritime province of the Abomey Kingdom.

Parakou, located 438 kilometres from the coast, at the terminus of the colonial railway, which was meant to link Cotonou to Dosso in Niger, in fact, did not go beyond Parakou. A place of transhipment for goods and passengers coming from or going to Niger, just like Cotonou it has constantly reinforced its position in the hierarchy of the Dahome-Beninese urban network taking advantage of the increasing development of its urban functions.

Cotonou was born towards the end of the nineteenth century and overtook in less than half a century the surrounding pre-colonial towns which dated back several centuries: Ouidah (located 40 km to the West), Porto Novo (30 km to the East), Allada and Abomey (respectively 57 and 140 km to the North). Ranked fourth by population size after Porto Novo, Abomey, and Ouidah in 1910, Cotonou moved into first position in 1956 and has ever since continued to reinforce its lead. Porto Novo, the capital of Benin since the colonial period, is now only the second town in the Beninese urban network and remains the capital of the country simply by reason of history.

The contemporary urban situation

The territorial administration reform which occurred in Benin in 1979 divided the national territory into 84 districts now called sub-prefectures (sous-préfectures) with the status of their headtowns (chefs-lieux) raised to urban communes (communes urbaines). However, as Igue and Adams have emphasised, the urban status of some district headtowns is a purely administrative decision which does not correspond to local realities (1981:120). One can often find in these sub-prefectures, rural communes that exhibit a more obvious urban character than the headtown of the sub-prefecture. This is
what justifies the use of demographic and economic criteria to supplement the administrative definition for the identification of towns in Benin.

Indeed, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (INSÆE) considers as a town any headtown of a district for which the census has enumerated a population of 10,000 inhabitants or more, and that has at least four of the following infrastructures: Post and Telecommunications (PTT), Tax Office, Public Treasury, a bank, running water supplies, electricity, health centre, secondary school with the full secondary cycle. It can be noted that the intensity of population concentration and the proportion of tertiary activities are not considered. The application of these criteria led to the identification of 23 population agglomerations classified as towns: Parakou, Bémberèkè, Djougou, Kandi, Koandé, Natitingou, Nikki in the North; Abomey, Bohican, Covè, Dassa-Zoumè, Savalou and Savé in the Centre; Allada, Aplahoué, Comé, Dogbo-Tota, Lokossa, Ouidah, Porto-Nov, Pobè, Sakété and Cotonou in the South (Map 1).

This approach to an urban definition was the topic of in-depth discussions in January 1993 at the Ministry of Interior, Security and Territorial Administration. The conclusions of these discussions distinguished smaller urban agglomerations from large towns or cities.

To determine those localities with a status of smaller urban agglomeration, five criteria were proposed:

- An agglomerated population of 5,000 inhabitants;
- Easy access;
- Water and electricity;
- Basic socio-communal infrastructure;
- Economic potential.

Five other criteria are used to define a larger town or city:

- An agglomerated population size of at least 100,000 inhabitants;
- Substantial level of economic development;
- Capacity to secure financial autonomy;
- Technical reasons;
- Political strategy.

On the basis of these criteria, only the agglomerations of Cotonou, Porto Novo and Parakou can be considered as large urban centres or cities.

A careful analysis of these criteria highlights the need for supplementary precisions concerning the operationality of the above listed definitions because some of the factors are tinted with subjectivity, for example, economic potential, ease of access, substantial level of economic development, technical reasons and political strategy. While the definitions mentioned above which emanated from discussions at the Ministry of Interior, Security and Territorial Administration lack clarity and have not been adopted as yet by the Government of Benin, the definition used by the INSÆE seems more objective for the identification of urban centres and agglomerations.

In terms of numbers, the urban population represented 26 per cent of the total population in 1979 and was unevenly distributed among the towns.\(^3\) The three main towns contained, in 1979, 58 per cent of the urban population distributed as follows: Cotonou 36 per cent, Porto-Nov 15 per cent and
Map 1. Location of urban centres in Benin
Parakou 7 per cent. The other towns have rather modest population sizes compared with the three main towns. The share of the population of the latter in the total population keeps growing—from 15 per cent in 1979 to 17 per cent in 1992.

In Benin, as in most West African countries, the most dynamic towns are now those that serve as “bridgeheads” of the dominant economies. They are the headquarters for import and export activities. Cotonou and Parakou are in this situation while other towns such as Abomey have a more marked administrative function and activities essentially related to the agricultural and subsistence sectors.

The growth rate of the main towns between 1961 and 1979 should have slowed down during the period 1979–1983, if we refer to the estimates of the Urban Plan Project in Table 1. Between 1961 and 1979, the mean annual growth rates of Cotonou, Parakou and Porto Novo were estimated respectively at 8 per cent, 8.3 per cent and 4.2 per cent.

Table 1. Population and annual growth rates for selected towns in Benin, 1979–1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotonou</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>419,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porto Novo</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>146,633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abomey</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>42,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bohicon</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>25,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parakou</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>75,933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djougou</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>34,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natitingou</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>15,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lokossa</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>15,525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Urban Plan Project, Cotonou, Benin.

The last population census carried out in 1992 gives a relatively more modest growth rate of the three main towns in Benin: between 1979 and 1992, Cotonou grew at a mean annual rate of 4.0 per cent, Porto Novo 2.2 per cent, and Parakou 4.4 per cent (INSAE, 1992). The fairly remarkable and sustained growth of Cotonou and Parakou, a consequence of strong immigration, is due to the fact that both have assumed roles as economic poles and they can justifiably be considered as the two major regional economic capitals: Cotonou for the central and southern parts of Benin, Parakou for northern Benin. They are the two pivots of the Beninese economy: the level of paid jobs and investment in these two centres is higher than those of other towns in the country. They assume almost all the transit functions toward the other regions of Benin or toward the neighbouring countries. Parakou constitutes an important crossroads between the south and the north of the country; it is also a stopover for the transport of goods towards Niger and Burkina Faso.

However, these two towns differ from each other in many regards. In contrast to Cotonou, Parakou has a site that offers very good housing conditions and spatial expansion is easier to manage. People's needs for “urbanized” land to build houses have so far been largely satisfied.
Most of the other towns in Benin except Natitingou and Lokossa have fairly marked features of traditional towns. We can cite, for instance, the town of Djougou and the historical towns of Porto Novo and Abomey. They have minor problems of housing and environmental quality because of the quality of their sites. These towns have relatively small growth rates. The apparently rapid growth of Lokossa, a town of modest demographic importance, is due to the administrative functions it assumes as headtown of a département and to the small size of its population in 1979. Besides its historical character, Abomey exhibits cultural features that places it in a mutual conditioning type of relationship with its hinterland.

ABOMEY—A SEMI-RURAL AND A SEMI-URBAN TOWN

Abomey is a town that has been strongly marked by a royal tradition, the evidence of which can still be seen in the urban landscape, the spatial organization and the population settlement of the town. It houses one of the most prestigious historical museums in West Africa. It is the headtown of the Département of Zou (formerly Département of the Centre). It therefore attracts most of the administrative facilities designated to this territorial division. Its structure and the pace of its evolution explain not only its traditional character but above all its socio-anthropological unwieldiness.

Social structure

Abomey is an old pre-colonial town created around the middle of the seventeenth century by King Hwegbaja, founder of the Aladaxonu dynasty. The majority of its population is of the Fon ethnic group. History tells us that people from Western Nigeria migrated and settled there. But at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Guedevi were annexed by the Adja conquerors. This invasion gave birth to the Danxome kingdom and cemented the ethno-linguistic community.

With the various royal successions, because of wars, slavery or trade, various ethnic groups have been added to the Fon population of Abomey; for example, the Maxi, the Hausa, and the Gun. Even today, migrations somehow favour this ethnic convergence. However, the Fon largely dominate the other groups numerically and represent 98 per cent of the population.

Three social groups can be distinguished according to the historical and socio-economic status of their members.

- The Axoui, princes born of the royal dynasty. They constitute the best organized group, the dominant class.
- The Anato, autochthons of the Abomey plateau, are the political chiefs. They were the only ones invited to head the territorial administration and to assume ministerial functions in the former kingdom.
- The Kanmon also called commoners. They are not a class in the Marxist sense of the term but a variegated group of former slaves and/or their descendants.

Nowadays, under the influence of modern administration, this social hierarchy no longer has any political validity. However, it is still strongly felt in the
celebration and consecration rites related to the human person: birth, disease, death.

Evolution

Built by Hwegbaja in the seventeenth century, the large royal palace of Abomey which currently houses the museum was the seat of a strong state power that had up to 8,000 inhabitants before the colonial conquest. The establishment of the palaces of the various kings created wards that became organized around them. The first royal palaces, Akaba and Agaja, built in the seventeenth century were located to the north of Abomey; the others, Tégbésu and Kpengla in the west were built in the eighteenth century, then in the south, Agonglo and Gézo, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Each palace has thus given birth to a ward which, despite history, is characterized by great social and religious cohesion. This spatial organization, which has resulted in a town made up of several densely populated wards separated by areas of farming fields was to see the process of its internal evolution affected by a number of setbacks with the fall of the kingdom at the end of the nineteenth century. However, attempts in the colonial period to establish some order included: withdrawal of the population from within the palace, a decrease in the urban population by 50 per cent caused by wars and epidemics, development of the economic space of the Hunjro market, creation at Axito of an administrative command zone, in other words a prefecture, setting up of essential central facilities such as primary and secondary schools, a hospital, ambulance services, tax offices, post and telecommunication services, and in the parcelling out of Goxo in the eastern part of the town.

These set-backs which turned out in fact to be more positive than negative have given the town its identity made up of a certain urbanity conditioned or even disturbed by endogenous values derived from a very rigorous and overwhelming traditionality. In short, the town has been developing following its own organizational logic.

According to the works deriving from the implementation of the Urban Plan in the Republic of Benin Project (PUB), the population of Abomey about whose evolution little was known before the First World War and above all during the dynastic reigns, grew from 11,000 to 15,000 inhabitants between 1926 and 1932. From 1933 however, its population declined to the 1926 level. The causes of this decrease have not yet been well explained. However, Roger Ahoyo, a geographer, in his thesis defended in 1976 at Paris VI University justifies it by the 1929 economic crisis.

However, the population increased to 12,000 inhabitants in 1944 and then increased again to 17,000 inhabitants in 1947 (PUB, 1988:123). Since the latter date, the population has not declined, and in 1979 it reached 50,170 inhabitants for the whole of the former urban district of Abomey. The three urban communes of Adandokpoji, Jègbe and Hunli, representing the more or less agglomerated population of the town of Abomey, totalled 38,825 inhabitants at the 1979 census with an annual growth rate of 2.7 per cent, slightly above the national growth rate.
Abomey has thus been very little marked by "modern times" and has experienced so far a rather slow demographic growth which reflects that of its urban evolution. The thrust of human development is in fact hindered by the weight of tradition which has its own operating mechanisms. It is in this geographical, historical and socio-anthropological context that the interactions take place.

ABOMEY—A SOCIO-ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE AND A SOURCE OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL INFLUENCE

The accumulation of administrative services makes the town the largest decision-making centre at the regional level. This politico-administrative function is a heritage of royalty, preserved under colonization and maintained after the independence of Dahomey. As a headtown of the Département of Zou, Abomey extends its administrative influence over the whole of central Dahomey.

But its influence spreads far beyond the boundaries of the département to cover a good deal of southern Benin as far as the cultural domain is concerned. We know the role played by the kings in the unification of the Dahomean pantheon by means of wars of conquest which always resulted in the transfer of the deities of the subdued populations. This process led to a centralization of the traditional religious universe around Abomey. The town has retained from this past a pre-eminent position as leader of the spiritual space of southern Benin.

The Fon living on Abomean soil constitute one of the most important social groups in Benin. The territorial expansion resulting from wars of conquest has generated a continuous mixing of populations and civilizing values. Fon bas-reliefs can be found with the Yoruba of Benin and of Nigeria. Masks, bronze bracelets, ivory, silver, gold, golden pots, the conception and arrangement of drum orchestras, tapestries recalling historical events, have enriched the artistic background of the region. For instance, the naming system of the Fon using the same birth anthroponymy related to the days of the week, is the same, with a few linguistic differences, as that of the Agni of Côte d'Ivoire, the Ewe of Ghana and the Gen of Togo. This cultural convergence is also strong at the religious level. The Fon beliefs exhibit the same features as those of the Yoruba, Aja, Ewe and Gen. The spiritual entities are similar to one another. The "gu", iron god has its Yoruba counterpart "Ogu" and the oracle "Fa" exists in Yoruba country, as "Ifa" and in Ewe or Gen as "Afa" etc. (Tingbé-Azalou, 1985:9–11).

The cultural role of Abomey is not, however, limited to aspects of cult and tradition. The headquarters of the Primary Inspectorate for the Département of Zou, the town of Abomey, houses the largest number of secondary and technical schools in the region. This makes it the major centre for training and the dissemination of modern knowledge in central Benin.

Abomey does not only have a leading political and cultural role in the Central Dahomean space. It also actively intervenes in the economic area. With the main Hundjro market and its branches it assumes an important function as a major centre of traditional trade. In this respect, its influence has been solidly established over the whole Abomey plateau by the network of dis-
tributive markets surrounding the Hundjro market and also by the area of residence of the traders, as well as the origin of the goods sold and the people who come to buy. Modern trade is not absent from Abomey as we know. However in this area, the old city yields to its younger rival, Bohicon.

All these politico-administrative, economic, social and cultural features drive the rural population toward the town of Abomey where various needs for daily life and survival are met. Here we have the explanation of the rural exodus phenomenon which translates the attraction of the complex and the unknown.

However, the rural exodus in African countries has never actually meant the definitive abandoning of the countryside for the definitive adoption of the “refuge” of the town. The modern migration which it expresses implies a constant ebb and flow. The culture of the city is not sufficient to maintain the mental, psychosomatic and social balance of the individual. The culture of the countryside appears, in this respect, better equipped to ensure, by compensation, this beneficial stability.

ABOMEY— A CENTRE FOR MASSIVE TRANSFERS AND MOVEMENTS TOWARDS THE COUNTRYSIDE

One of the questions raised by this study is whether the demarcation often made between the cultural development of the towns and that of the countryside does not reveal an act or a state of cultural alienation on the part of the propagators and authors of such a distinction who superimpose a borrowed culture over the productive forces of development. Indeed observation shows that the so-called culture of the countryside in the final analysis, also manages to impose itself in an apparently difficult economic structure.

As it is, despite the importance of towns, the gap and imbalance between them and the countryside do not exist in Benin. Even at the historical level, despite the predilection of the state of Danxome to centralize the vital activities of the kingdom, it always respected the domain of the villages where the lineal production system dominated in general social formation. Although Abomey, the historical capital of Benin, was the outcome of centralization, it was not as an economic monopoly, but rather as an administrative centre, as was shown earlier, and also as a religious one: a place where the officials of the central power lived, a place where, according to Honarat Aguessy the rites which were indispensable to the perpetuation of society were performed, where “the assumption of higher functions impregnated with the dignity of the sacred” was achieved (1980:4).

Abomey was not the privileged centre on the cultural level either. The countryside and the administratively dependent villages enlivened the capital and even other towns such as Abomey-Calavi, Ouidah, Allada with their permanent cultural creation. Thus the artistic creation initiated in the countryside permeated the whole population. The throne festivals were ideal occasions for creators of all kinds, who came from all provinces of the kingdom to show their talents. The craftsmen-artists (weavers, sculptors, modellers of bas-reliefs, goldsmiths, engravers of calabashes, composers of songs, shoemakers, jewellers, makers of royal sandals, makers of copper-bells, building specialists, etc.) made their mark through their innovations and by so doing,
defended the prestige of the countryside or towns with no apparent discrimination.

Even today, the mechanisms of production of these influences the rural world has over the town of Abomey have not yet disappeared. They remain as obvious as in the past in the sense that Abomey does not experience rapid urban development like Cotonou which has become, in addition to its economic standing, a political centre housing almost all the state institutions.

Apart from this tradition with its rather slowly increasing dynamism, the bureaucratic structures were unable, despite their extroverted character, to counter the exodus toward the villages and suburbs of Abomey.

Experience has shown that the life of Abomeans is not confined exclusively within the unnatural environments of administration. The individual finds himself facing his global life and reflects over it. This life calls for behaviours related to the actual living conditions deriving from merchant relations. That is why, the practices affecting family members, rites de passage, ceremonies in connection with birth, marriage and death no longer have anything in common with civil “service” behaviour and attitudes. These “elites” become themselves. The Euro-centrism of their culture yields to the tropism⁴ and the unwieldiness of the local context. It is as if the elites carried out their business and had their thoughts in a certain world, but lived their normal human lives in another one. It is for this normal human life that the culture of the town shows itself to be insufficient, forcing city dwellers to resort to the countryside for reassurance about themselves.

To sum up, the town and the countryside undoubtedly constitute two living environments where social and cultural practices of giving and receiving take place. Each area of the countryside and each town bring to each other the values necessary for their existence and cultural development. Abomey and its immediate and distant suburbs live in this symbiosis indispensable to group life.

Notes
1 A name given to the country on Independence Day on 1 August 1960. With the advent of the Marxist-Leninist regime under President Mathieu Kerekou (1972–1989), Dahomey became in 1975 the Popular Republic of Benin and then Republic of Benin following the conclusions of the work of the 1989 National Conference.
2 Okutonu has been distorted to Cotonou.
3 The results of the 1992 census have not yet been published.
4 Tropism: the direction of growth in a plant or other organism that is due to an external stimulus.

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The Roles of Women in Urban–Rural Interaction
The Case of Sokone in Senegal

Alphonsine Bouya

INTRODUCTION

During the colonial period and for a few years after independence, African studies focused basically on so-called traditional societies, although for the past few years, and particularly since the early 1970s, sociologists, anthropologists, demographers, town-planners and others have turned their attention towards the study of urban phenomena. Consequently, a good number of studies have since been conducted on the development of towns in Africa. This interest continues to grow with what the specialists call “the urban explosion”, a trend which suggests that within the next few years more than half of Africa’s population will have become urbanised.

Thus, the growth of African cities raises many serious and complex issues for specialists of the social sciences.

The town is not a new phenomenon in Africa. The African continent knew, during the pre-colonial period, prestigious cities such as Djenné, Timbuctu and Segou in Mali, Kumasi in the Ashanti country, Mbanza Kongo in the old Kongo kingdom, Agades in Niger, Kano in Hausa land in northern Nigeria, etc.

With colonization, new urban centres were developed which later became the capitals of the new independent states. This is the case of towns such as Bamako, Libreville, Brazzaville, Fort-Lamy, and Dakar.

In the colonial context, the growth of towns was related to their geo-commercial situation. They were thus built along the coast, inland rivers, at the intersection of major road networks, or in mining areas.

I have deliberately left aside all those aspects relating to the historical background of the town of Sokone, to focus mostly on the current reality and problems of this town, with a particular emphasis on the roles of women in urban–rural interaction.

Sokone is a small secondary town (a departmental town according to Senegalese administrative terms) located some 230 km from Dakar (Map 1). It belongs to the Fatick region, the district of Foundiougne and the sub-district of Toubacouta. The administrative region of Fatick is one of the smallest
regions in Senegal with an area of 7,935 km² and a population estimated at 805,447 in 1988 (Bouya, 1992).

Map 1. Location of Sokone in Senegal

At first sight, Sokone, a small departmental town, is almost a boring case of no particular interest. However, Sokone aroused my curiosity as an anthropologist because of a rather banal fact: as a project coordinator of the Association of International Cooperation through African Volunteers,¹ I had found myself in a village located nine km from Sokone, a village called Sadioconda.

During numerous discussions, the youth of Sadioconda and Badoudou (a neighbouring village) expressed only one wish: to own a motorized canoe. It should be mentioned that Sokone, as well as Badoudou and Sadioconda, are surrounded by the Sea of Saloum.

This marked interest of the youth in motorized canoes was not motivated by the desire to practise fishing, but by the idea of engaging in smuggling between The Gambia and Senegal. This was revealed to me by a young man when I asked what job he could do or would like to do. His answer was: “I don’t want to do anything else, I am already a smuggler.” This made me wonder how this young man who called himself a smuggler could live by his
“job” in a village like Badoudou with barely 150 inhabitants. The smuggled goods could only be sold in centres more important than Badoudou and Sadiocounda. I thus started to develop an interest in the towns in the area and particularly in Sokone.

So much for this anecdote. I should stress, however, that Sokone is not a town made up of smugglers. The story I have just recounted is important only because it prompted me to discover, on the one hand Sokone and, on the other hand, to understand the factors that contribute to the development of a secondary town in Africa.

FROM THE VILLAGE TO THE TOWN

The village in Africa has always represented the identifying space, the reference to the generation chain that binds and defines the person as a member of a community. The village also used to be the place where social security was pre-eminent, a place where solidarity was the key principle.

Today, the village has become a repulsive space both for the younger generations and for those with many years of existence behind them. In short, the village no longer retains anyone, it is dying.

The passage from the village to the town is achieved through a rupture which is sometimes brutal, sometimes gradual or by stages. Among the factors which have brought about the death of the village and the emergence of the urban phenomenon we can note the attraction that the colonial and then the post-colonial town has had for the rural populations, the deterioration of the living conditions in villages and the ensuing poverty.

Two theories have attempted to explain urbanization. According to the first theory, the urbanization process is the corollary of economic growth, while the second theory suggests that urbanization is the driving force behind economic and social development. In both cases, urbanization is defined as “the spatial concentration of a population based on certain limits of dimension and density, and as a space of dissemination of the value system, the attitudes and behaviours named urban culture” (Castels, 1973).

The town has indeed always fascinated rural populations. To many Africans the town has been and remains a space for freedom, entertainment, leisure, but above all a place where one can find a solution to the problems of poverty and the satisfaction of basic needs. In other words, the equation made by Rostow, according to which urbanization equals modernization, persists in the minds of many Africans, despite the fact that it has been invalidated by a number of African experiences.

In the case of Sokone, inter-regional migration has played an important role in the development of this secondary town. Indeed, the devastating effects of the monoculture practised for too many years in the Sine region have forced many farmers to migrate towards what was called in Senegal the “new lands”, which include part of the Saloum. These new arrivals settled first in villages where they could acquire fields and cultivate them. In time, with the ever-increasing number of immigrants, land became scarce. Moreover, the long drought which struck the Sahel in the 1970s, and whose consequences are still felt today, created a phenomenon of soil salinization, also called the “advance of the salted tongue of land”.

Driven away by the degradation of the environment, some villagers have settled at Sokone, progressively turning this large village into a departmental town.

While the hypothesis which states that the development of towns is always related to the importance of migration is confirmed in the case of Sokone, that by which urbanization is associated with modernization is not confirmed, as Sokone remains a town I would call rural.

Indeed, Sokone stretches along part of the Kaolack–Karang–Banjul road. The town is divided into two parts by a paved road. One side is the “administrative” zone while the other is more of a “residential” area, predominantly made up of dwellings. In the administrative zone are concentrated: the police station, the post office, two schools (including one day school run by the state and one boarding school run by the Catholic Church), the church itself, the hospital, the market, the chemist shop, some old buildings—remnants of the colonial period (two-storied buildings and trading houses), as well as a few current administrative premises.

What we call the residential area is in fact a popular area, a real mirror of the villages of origin of the inhabitants of Sokone. However, thatched huts neighbour mud brick houses. West of the town the Senegalese–German cashew-tree project (the PASA) has set up its headquarters. This project will later play an important role in what can be called the “development of the town of Sokone” because it has created some jobs for the inhabitants of the town and surrounding areas.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN OF SOKONE AND IMPACT ON THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN AND ITS SURROUNDING AREA

Christianity and particularly the Catholic Church have played a considerable role in the development of Sokone. Catholicism appears to have played an important role or rather held an important place in the Serer zone. Thus at Sokone, as in neighbouring villages, we find churches and agro-pastoral training institutions built by the Catholic Church. This is the case for instance of the CARITAS agricultural training centre located about 5 km from Sokone, in the Niombato (a nature reserve where a scheduled forest has survived).

CARITAS and the Catholic Church initiated a number of agricultural, poultry farming and small animal husbandry projects which now supply the town of Sokone.

However, the main activity, which makes Sokone live, remains trade. Trade is facilitated in this town by what Robert Chambers (1983) calls the “tarmac bias”. Indeed, as Chambers puts it: “tarmac and roadside biases also direct attention towards those who are less poor and away from those who are poorer. Visible development follows main roads. Factories, offices, shops and official markets all tend to be at the sides of main roads” (Chambers, 1983:13).

Chamber’s statement is applicable in the case of Sokone. Although those who settle in this town are poor, the fact remains that, given the realities of the rural context, they are still materially better off than those who stay in the village with no opportunity for leaving it. It is therefore the relatively wealthy
who can afford to settle in a town, even a rural town like Sokone, where everything has to be purchased.

On the other hand, can one speak of “development” because a town has office buildings, shops and markets? Doesn’t “development” go beyond these few buildings? The question of “development” for a town like Sokone remains unresolved. As J. Marc Ela writes: “the African towns located at the intersections of major land routes belong to a category whose importance also derives from the trade economy” (1983:11–12). This author adds that there is often: “an urbanization without industrialization... This is no doubt the situation which prevailed in Africa on the eve of independence” (Ela, 1983:14). I would add that this situation has continued to exist even after independence. It is at any rate the case for several secondary towns like Owando in Congo and Sokone in Senegal.

The administrative centralization in the capitals of francophone Africa has also favoured the emergence of these rural towns which serve as bridges linking the large urban centres, the capitals, and the countryside. Two main activities prevail in these towns: agriculture, which is practised in the surrounding villages, and retail trade. Agriculture serves not only to supply the town itself, but its produce is also often sold in more important town centres and in the capitals. As for trade, it supplies manufactured goods or other agricultural products such as kola nuts to the villages and the towns.

Much has been written about rural–urban migrations and the attraction and illusion of towns for peasants. While it is true that this attraction exists and has always existed, it should be pointed out that in the case of rural towns like Sokone, migration is rural–rural, and it is justified not by the attraction of the town as such nor by the “lights of the city”, but rather by the desire and the determination to earn one’s living through trade, however insignificant, with the hope of building up a small “capital” which will be used not only to survive but above all to prepare for a more important migration to large urban centres like Kaolack and even Dakar.

The departure from the village is therefore to be taken as the result of the degradation of the village environment and the ever growing crisis which is spreading in African villages.

In the case of Senegal, and Sokone in particular, where the dry season lasts eight months, the inhabitants of the villages find themselves during this period in paralysing idleness. In the villages, only a few peasants who have access to wells and boreholes can practise irrigated farming. But most of the population, often unorganized and particularly the young, move to Sokone in the hope of finding an occupation that will help them make it through the long dry season.

Thus, the misery of the African peasant in the village is a factor in the decision to leave for town, even a rural town like Sokone.

Other factors contribute to the repulsion of the village and its abandonment: conflicts among “land owners” despite the law on the national lands passed in 1974, inter-generational conflicts, practises and customs which drive the young towards urban centres, fear of being cursed by the elders, boredom of young people during the long periods of the dry season, or the search for money required to pay for the dowry and take a wife in the village
context. All these are factors to be taken into account in the study of the development of rural towns and other urban centres.

While in the large towns of Senegal (the capital and regional metropolises) such as Dakar, Kaolack, Thiès or Ziguinchor, (and this actually applies to all large towns in Africa), life is characterized by the differentiation of the urban population into distinct groups defined by socio-economic variables such as nationality, socio-professional category, income, type of housing, dressing and eating habits, or means of transportation. Rural towns like Sokone and Passy, on the other hand, are marked by the relative homogeneity of these variables.

According to the national land development plan (the SNAT), the population of Sokone grew from 5,800 inhabitants in 1976 to 8,554 inhabitants in 1988. These figures must however be raised, as a large number of the inhabitants of the town do not possess ID cards and did not take part in the census. Based on these figures and taking into account the housing variable, we can say that less than 10 per cent of the inhabitants have comfortable housing meeting urban norms (such as walls built with cement bricks, running water, and electricity). Apart from the administrative services such as the police which have one or two service vehicles, church officials, a few Muslim religious leaders, and a few merchants, the rest of the population uses only carts drawn by horses or donkeys as a means of transportation.

The relative homogeneity of the population just mentioned above results, on the one hand, from the fact that it was essentially internal and rural migration which turned Sokone into a rural town. There are hardly any foreigners from other countries (except of course for the promoters of the PASA project and the priests and nuns of the Catholic Church). On the other hand, this homogeneity is also due to the basically rural way of life of the population (type of housing, daily behaviour: prevailing solidarity with family members and neighbours, cooking and eating habits, and so on). However, dressing tends more and more to be adapted to the urban environment. Women, for example, are seen wearing high-heeled shoes and large embroidered gowns.

Young people, for their part, gather more and more to form youth associations which, during the weekends, hold special festivals with dances (cotoro) to the music of modern sound equipment brought from large towns. Coladeros (the word comes from Cape Verde) were until very recently held only in the capital and the “regional metropolises”. The mobility of the youth between the towns and the villages has favoured the introduction and development of these parties that flourish in secondary, departmental and rural towns, causing the decline of traditional dances (such as sabach or tom-tom, which however remain the prerogative of adults) as well as the adoption of urban entertainment behaviour. To attend the coladeros, some young people travel to Sokone from their village of residence, often several kilometres away, and the dance often lasts till early in the morning.

Besides the coladeros, other activities such as church fairs, football matches and other sporting events (running and cycle races) allow for town-village exchanges and contribute to turning Sokone progressively into a real urban centre.
CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXPANSION OF THE TOWN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE INHABITANTS

The arrival of peasants in an urban centre and the ensuing expansion should not be viewed only within the simple framework of internal migrations and population movements. They obey a certain number of rationales and relationships which villagers and town dwellers entertain with one another both in their original environment and in their new setting. While it is recognized that in the villages the conditions for social reproduction are constantly deteriorating, it should also be admitted that the place of settlement, here the urban environment, offers opportunities for reorganizing social reproduction and implementing new strategies of land occupation and socio-economic reorganization.

What possibilities are available to Sokone for its own expansion?

There was first, as mentioned earlier, the settlement of the missionaries and the building of the church. It should be noted that the Serer, who live in the Saloum zone, together with the inhabitants of the Casamance region, are among the Christianized population in Senegal.

Thus, in several villages of the Saloum and Niomboto the missionaries have built churches which, however, have either remained or become non-functional due to a lack of priests. The inhabitants, in an effort to assert their Christian faith, travel to Sokone to attend the Sunday services and major Christian festivals. Some of them manage to get a small job related to church activities and end up settling down in Sokone.

The presence of two schools—a public one and one with boarding facilities run by the Catholic mission—has also boosted the expansion of the town and its population. In the neighbouring villages, a number of schools were built either by the Senegalese government or the Christian missionaries. However these schools often only have three classes, which means that the pupils spend only three years there if they do not repeat classes. They attend standard one through three (Cl to CE1), then they are transferred for the remaining primary school classes and the rest of their schooling to Sokone where they are often, if not always, taken in by a member of the extended or the immediate family. Moreover, the settlement or rather the arrival of the pupils in the rural town can lead to the movement of parents, especially of mothers, who will often travel to the town during the dry season, which also corresponds to the academic year, to assist and take care of a child or children attending school there. The mothers who arrive from the village then settle down and engage in small trading activities such as selling wild fruit, cashew nuts, peanuts, and so on.

The arrival of the new “town dwellers” is not without problems. First of all the initial space quickly becomes too small. This results in a more or less anarchic occupation of space: houses built with millet straw, development of a market gardening belt which in turn reduces the arable spaces, and the expansion of sheep and goat breeding with animals roaming freely on the outskirts of the town.
This uncontrolled urbanization causes the decay of the environment and the occupation of zones which are ever larger and less suitable for habitation. Added to this is the indiscriminate dumping of refuse in the town and its outskirts (there are no garbage collection services, neither is there any provision for individual or collective sanitation). All of these elements together have broken the already fragile environmental balance. This environmental degradation manifests itself, in the case of Sokone and its outskirts, in an increase in the salinization of the soils and the pollution of the underground water table.

Rural activities have an important place in the daily life of the inhabitants of Sokone. This is evidenced by the presence of small gardens within the compounds, as well as that of family goats, sheep and poultry. The village way of life which prevails at Sokone is not unique to the towns that I call rural. Even in the large African capitals these modes of life persist, which prompted Jean Marc Ela to ask: “Aren’t some African town districts real villages integrated or juxtaposed to the town?” (Ela, 1983:49) and the same author answers: “The capital itself is thus made of multiple elements which are either real villages or more urbanized districts” (Ela, 1983:49).

While in some central African towns (Brazzaville, Douala, Kinshasa, Yaoundé etc.) people settle in the urban districts according to their ethnic origins, in Senegal in general and at Sokone in particular, these aspects are not so marked. In other Senegalese towns, just like in Sokone, ethnic disparities do not seem to be a significant factor in the occupation of urban space or the development of the town. The development of towns in Senegal has allowed a blending of the various populations of the country. Thus, in the case of Sokone, one cannot speak of “partitioning” or “isolation”. Life in this rural town is such that everyone knows everyone else and no one is anonymous.

The inter-ethnic relations or even the ethnic mixing which takes place in the town creates new relations, new relational networks with the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages. These relations are characterized by friendship, solidarity and mutual help during happy and unhappy events: marriage, death, or baptism.

Far from promoting isolation, partitioning and even anonymity, rural towns constitute spaces for developing new solidarity strategies.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN OF SOKONE

Gudrun Ludwar-Ene (1991) wonders whether women are more urban than men in Sub-Saharan Africa.

She specifies that the terms “urban” or “town-dweller” should not be understood only as “living or working in town”, but they also imply that the main means of existence are located in town. It is within this perspective that I should like to define the roles of women in the development of the town of Sokone.

Before going further, it should be recalled that Sokone is located in the area inhabited by the Serer about whom Jean-Marc Gastellu wrote: “The Serer never break totally from the economic organization of their areas of origin when they live outside these areas, whether in urban areas or in colonization
zones" (Gastellu, 1981:552). He adds: "a number of biographical interviews with agents living in the main towns of Senegal, as well as a relevant analysis of the Serer migration towards the new lands, show that the Serer migrants, perpetuating the economic organization of their areas of origin, distribute their income between the two units of affiliation" (Gastellu, 1981:552).

Serer society is based on the principle of economic egalitarianism, which however does not at all exclude social inequalities within that society. What must be remembered is that among the Serer, women have relative economic and financial independence, which means that the money they get from the sale of the produce of their work is theirs and they are free to use it for their personal needs and to care for their children (Bouya, 1992).

Despite the multi-ethnicity I mentioned earlier regarding the population of Sokone, Serer women are predominant. In the development of Sokone "the rules of collective auto-consumption prevailing in the villages have been transposed to the urban context without any profound modification" (Gastellu, 1981:567).

The women of Sokone, like other women elsewhere in Africa, are hard-working. In the town their role is not limited to one single specific activity. They engage in several activities simultaneously in order to pay for "their clothing, their medical care and the ceremonies involving their children" (Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1985:13).

The few rare women who work in the public services often come from other areas of Senegal. The natives of Sokone and its outskirts have their activities in the informal sector. These activities include market gardening (small family gardens), sale of food, drinks, and textiles; they also engage more and more in hairdressing, sewing, and with the PASA project, in the harvesting and processing of cashew nuts.

The town represents for rural women a "resource", a way out of the crisis, a means of survival and improvement of their living conditions. By working in the informal sector they can, on the one hand, move to larger towns like Kaolack, Thiès, Dakar or Banjul to supply themselves with manufactured goods which they then sell in Sokone and in neighbouring villages; on the other hand they can leave Sokone with agricultural products such as cashew nuts to sell in larger towns. As the activities related to the harvest of cashew nuts are seasonal, the annual cycle for women in Sokone follows the rhythm of these activities. The year is thus divided:

- from May to October: Most women return to the village to engage in agriculture and work in the fields.
- from October to December: They settle or resettle at Sokone for various reasons: children's schooling, commercial activities involving a constant toing and froing between the town and the village. It is during this period that millet and peanuts are harvested, which the women then resell in Sokone to the oilseed industry.
- from December to April: Women stay in town and intensify their commercial activities, they travel to and from more important towns than Sokone, they harvest and sell cashew nuts and take temporary jobs with the PASA.
As this calendar of the women’s yearly activities shows, the movement between the town and villages is continuous and implies an important urban-rural interaction in the sense that the life of and within each is interconnected to the life of and within the other.

Despite the degradation of village life, life in town could not be conceived without the village, i.e. the countryside, because 70 to 80 per cent of the food consumed in towns still comes from the countryside. Therefore, the assertion by J. Marc Ela that: “the passage to town marks the end of a world: it is the collapse of the certainties of existence and the breaking off of all community links with traditional life” (Ela, 1983:106) cannot be accepted as true in absolute terms. There still persist in town some typically rural practises and behaviour. Such is for instance the practise of polygyny, a rural practise which has spread to town despite the economic difficulties and the inherently urban problems (the shortage of housing space). While each co-wife in the village has her own hut, in town one finds two, three and sometimes four co-wives sharing together with their offspring the same restricted vital space.

Another example is the use of traditional healers despite the existence in town of modern health facilities. The urban population and particularly women more often consult the practitioners of traditional pharmacopeia than modern medical doctors. They still turn to marabouts and healers even when they attend hospitals and health centres for treatment, deliveries and vaccinations.

This permanent reference to rural life has encouraged the emergence and the development in town of women’s mutual aid associations. In the villages, on the occasions of childbirth, marriage or other happy or unhappy events, a woman is always surrounded by other women who assist her. The women who settle in town have transferred these practises of mutual solidarity by setting up various types of associations for women from the same village, the same urban neighbourhood or the same area of income generation. These associations often, if not always, answer a need for economic and social emancipation. They provide the women with the means to start up a business, and in large towns to buy a plot and to build and equip a house.

However, these new strategies for survival and solidarity in town entail some new risks for the women, one of which is what J. Marc Ela calls “the dependency trap” (Ela, 1983:149).

Life in town creates new needs to be satisfied. As these needs are satisfied, other needs arise and demand attention. With regard to children’s schooling for instance, the more successful the children are at school, the more expensive their requisites become. As they progress in the school system they become less and less likely to return to the village because they have to move from Sokone to larger towns to pursue their studies. Even when they fail in their studies, only in rare cases do children accept a return to the village.

Although success in business helps women to meet the needs of the family members staying in the village, it leads them into the trap of urban dependency as the new needs generated by urban life become indispensable for life at all.

Failure in the urban experience leads a lot of women to engage in practises such as prostitution, first secretly then openly. This is when in some cases the
definitive rupture between the town and the village, i.e. the abandonment of the countryside for permanent settlement in town, occurs.

The opening of a tourist site at the gates of Sokone has had as one consequence, among others, the development of covert prostitution. Young women in financial difficulties engage in this kind of prostitution to solve the financial problems of daily life.

Women settle in town for various reasons: to look for employment, to get married, to assist and care for their children attending school there, etc. However, even when this stay is temporary or intermittent it does not necessarily bring about the emancipation of these women because they end up in one way or another by falling into “the dependency trap” in all its aspects. The coming and going between the village and the town does however help the women to escape to some extent from the traditional authority system and rural traditional values which are often too constraining and unfavourable to women. The illusion of being free pushes them to indulge in activities such as prostitution, the practise of which is simply unthinkable and impossible in the village.

Among the new needs created by the town–countryside relationship we can note the “radio-revolution”. Around Sokone there is not a single village without a radio set. The radio phenomenon has developed to such a point that its consequences are felt through advertising even in cooking habits. For example, the advertisements for “Maggi cube” or “Jumbo-Jumbo” cooking ingredients have reached the villages and scores of women travel to Sokone several times a week to purchase Maggi and Jumbo-Jumbo cubes. A meal cooked in the village without these “cubes” seems, according to the women, tasteless.

Finally, in the urban–rural interaction which affects the behaviour of women, we must mention the advent of the artificial locks of hair which have become one of the canons of modern beauty in town as well as in the countryside.

All these new products are disseminated to the countryside through secondary towns, and in the case under discussion, through rural towns like Sokone.

THE ROLE OF SOKONE IN THE FATICK REGION AND IN THE TRADE BETWEEN SENEGAL AND THE GAMBIA

As has already mentioned, the development of Sokone as a town is mainly due to its geographical position as the hub of the relations between The Gambia and Senegal. This geographic position has encouraged the blossoming of trade involving manufactured goods from all over the world, which are sold and channelled through Banjul in The Gambia and then through Sokone to other towns and villages.

Trade in this region is intense and constitutes the main activity after agriculture. The goods come mostly from The Gambia, either through the activities of smugglers or through legal trade. Some manufactured goods come from Dakar. Goods from The Gambia are transported by canoe through Sokone and are then sent further, still by canoe, along the various arms of the sea, to other towns such as Foundiougne, Kaolack, M’Bour and Dakar.
While the illegal trade of goods from The Gambia is a male activity, women engage in the informal trade sector. The women of Sokone have found in this sector not only the means of survival but also and above all the means for improving their income and living conditions. How is this trade carried out?

Usually when they have a small amount of money, the women, in groups of three or four, travel to Banjul, the capital of The Gambia, by “bush lorries”. They entrust one of the group with their money to avoid problems at border check points. Senegalese currency regulations only allow 20,000 to 40,000 CFA Franc per person going to The Gambia, which has its own currency. The women traders therefore use all sorts of devices to smuggle out the money necessary to purchase their merchandise. Once in Banjul they buy all kinds of goods, from simple items like Chinese green tea (highly valued in the region and all over Senegal) to luxury textiles like bazin. Once back in Sokone, after many adventures and tricks to dodge the customs officers, they settle either along the Kaolack–Passy–Sokone–Toubacouta–Karang main road to sell their wares, or they occupy fixed stalls or small shops in the market. In contrast to the countries of the Gulf of Guinea (Togo, Benin, Ghana), in Sokone and in Senegal in general, there are no female itinerant traders or peddlars.

While trade allows rural and urban women to contribute to the development of the town and provides them with a certain amount of economic, social and emotional security, it is nevertheless considered as a “gorgorlor” activity (a Wolof term which means “to muddle through, to try to find a way out”). There is therefore an underestimation on the part of the women themselves of their activities in the informal sector. The same activities are considered “real jobs” when they are practised by men. This devaluation of trade carried out by women is also found in Nairobi where they talk of the “female way of life”, as well as in Brazzaville and in Kinshasa where they call it “system D” (for “debrouillardise”, resourcefulness).

As a starting point in the development of a town, the place occupied by the market, is noteworthy. In Senegal markets grow and spread at an amazing speed. They start as weekly traditional markets called “loum”, then the number of market days increases gradually until they become daily markets.

Markets in Africa and in rural towns like Sokone must not be considered as a closed space; rather, they must be viewed under various social aspects, and above all as an open space. The market is a place of contacts, exchange of information, news and products from the villages. It is the pre-eminent site where the town and the countryside meet. There is therefore a sort of current, a flow of energy in both directions. To view the market in town and in the villages strictly as a place for buying and selling would be to divest the African market of all its significance, of all its meaning.

It is this role of crossroads along with the important place occupied by the market, which has helped Sokone to become an intersection between the countryside and the towns. Its position as a central crossroads also contributes to its expansion, despite its limited geographical space.
CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the above discussions.

First of all, the key point that we can draw from this chapter is that urban–rural interaction is part of a dual system in the sense that settlement in town often takes place progressively and that town dwellers often have one foot in town and one foot in the countryside. This assertion is confirmed particularly in the case of rural towns like Sokone and more specifically with regards to women.

Second, rural towns, despite their accelerated “development”, do not undergo any noticeable transformations. They grow within the context of urban underdevelopment and in a context of poverty, making them underdeveloped towns where rural poverty is present.

In this context of urban underdevelopment, it is difficult in rural towns to develop what one would call an urban culture, despite the presence of some urban attitudes and behaviour. Rural towns do not necessarily generate an urban culture. Rural town dwellers cling to a rural culture and are split between two worlds which reject and attract them at the same time. In this regard, we can say that J. Marc Ela is correct when he writes: “the African town is not that modern type of space where only civil servants (very few in the case of Sokone), traders and business employees live. We can also find people carrying out traditional types of activities” (1983:47).

The town in Africa provides women with some opportunities for escaping from the constraints and values prevailing in the countryside and it allows them to develop some solidarity strategies which enable them to bring some support to the family members back in the village. However, even secondary towns located in rural areas appear to be dangerous places for women, marked with family insecurity, threatening personal identity and increasing family expenses because of the numerous demands expressed by those who have remained in the village.

Women in Sokone play a key role, through various activities, in the development of this rural town and in the development of the region as a whole. This role should therefore be taken into consideration, if we really want to understand the dynamics of rural–urban interaction.

Notes

1 A Pan-African NGO created in 1986 by a number of African academics to promote the idea of voluntary service in Africa.
2 PASA (Projet d’Anacardiers Sénégal–Allemand) is an agricultural development project located in Sokone, which covers the hinterland of the town. The aim of the project was to promote the production of cashew nuts for export as well as for local consumption. The project was launched with German assistance but this has been discontinued, and consequently the PASA now has difficulty in maintaining operations.

References

Urban Life and Traditional Models
A Study of the Social Networks in a Secondary Town in Côte d’Ivoire—the Example of Agboville

Gabin Kponhassia

ABSTRACT
As a result of the development policy adopted, the Ivorian society, as a whole is experiencing an accelerated urbanization. On analysing the urban policy of Côte d’Ivoire one is tempted to think that the so-called traditional world is living its last hours. Urbanization, a cause of ruptures, transformations, reinterpretations of sociability, globally transforms traditional ways of life, mentalities, behaviours, activities and habits.

The present study has tried to determine, from an analysis of the social network at play, the nature of the problem raised by the transformation of traditional cultural models in a relatively developed secondary town. Can we talk of a split between the rural and urban aspects in the case of this town? Are there influences and strategies developed by town dwellers? Finally how can we understand, within the rural–urban logic, the social relationships and the social frameworks developing in this town? These are the issues on which our discussion will focus.

The problem of urban life and traditional models belongs to the wider issue of social change. The history of our societies is indeed characterized by the passage to a modern industrial society, a passage from a rural to an urban society, the progressive predominance of the social organization modes generated by the town and the progressive transformation of the urbanizing individual or the permanence-resistance of the features of the folk society (Wirth and Redfield). In this process of change, the town (whether small, intermediate or large) can generally be defined by its specific and critical cultural contents and plays both a catalyst and integrating role.

Such an approach to urban–rural interaction which focuses specifically on the intermediate town–countryside dialectic, places at the heart of the debate the men and women who inhabit the intermediate town and the way they organize into groups, creating links and distances from one another. Within this perspective we are interested in all the relationships which city dwellers establish and terminate, and in the more or less intensive interactions they maintain, the flow of relationships, feelings, ideas and goods; in a word their
sociability. Is this sociability grounded in traditional cultural values or has it broken away from it? Are we now witnessing the emergence of an individualization process in the intermediate town or can we still find in it references maintained by the community-based lineal society? All these questions can be included in the dynamics and innovations which currently govern the relationships between the intermediate town and the countryside.

To study these new dynamics and innovations, we have taken the example of Agboville, a intermediate town in Côte d'Ivoire, to examine the sociability of its intellectual dwellers so as to measure the interactions between town and countryside. As it was not possible to consider all the intellectuals, we have chosen to deal with the secondary school teachers of this town.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE INTELLECTUALS

The literature on intellectuals is dense and diversified in sociology. We shall not go into the details of this literature because the context of this chapter does not require it. We shall limit ourselves to key issues related to the analysis of the phenomenon under study.

We can thus say, from the works of Gramsci, that intellectuals have an organic relationship with social groups and therefore with their position in the social relations of production. Their role is among other things to widen the horizons of the social groups to which they belong through a system of ideas: ideology.

Talking about organic intellectuals, the subjects of the present study, Gramsci characterizes them as civil servants in the superstructures. As such, they fill for the dominant class functions of political government and consensus.

When we add to these general characteristics of organic intellectuals, in the case of teachers, their fundamental role in the transmission of the dominant ideology, in the promotion and deciphering of cultural references, it becomes crucial to know the nature of the sociability in an intermediate town of this category or caste, to use Gramsci's terms.

We find this investigation to be pertinent in the sense that usually urbanization in a society like Côte d'Ivoire logically aims to replace the system of symbols based on territory by an axiomatic system of income and trade flows without a territory. We know that to make such a policy effective the state uses organic intellectuals, including teachers. One of the questions we shall address in this study is how the ideologists of the regime for their part experience these choices.

All this raises a double issue: on the one hand the issue of the homogeneity and the heterogeneity of the cultural contents of the intermediate town resulting from its relations with the countryside (problems of cultural conflicts, reinterpretation of values) and, on the other hand, the issue of determining the true structure of the sociability of organic intellectuals such as teachers in town (their social position and their habits determine their sociability or the absence of it). This is what justifies the choice of this category which we shall use as a reference in the study of intermediate town–rural interactions.
METHODOLOGY

We did not feel it was feasible to carry out a comprehensive study of the sociability of the intellectuals of Agboville by using the questionnaire technique. As a matter of fact, the quantitative approach, because it isolates elements of social practice as variables, destructs the system of practice and makes it more difficult or even impossible to grasp the logic behind the sociability of the intellectuals of this intermediate Ivorian town. This was what motivated the choice of the “life history” technique which belongs to qualitative methods.

In the field we first identified the various associations of which the teachers are members. Then we have carried out a series of interviews with intellectuals chosen without reference to any particular sampling technique. What was essential to us was to know through their responses the representation and motivation of their sociability. We recognize that this technique is too intimate by nature, it tends to belong to psychology and is close to emphasizing value judgements. It also poses the problem of the representativeness of the phenomenon studied and the results attained. It should also be recognized however, that it is operative for the collection of non-quantifiable data; which is why we have opted to use it in this study.

Without relying on previous criteria of identification and differentiation, we interviewed twenty-five secondary school teachers. We limited ourselves to this category of intellectuals to preserve a certain level of homogeneity in the responses.

THE TOWN OF AGBOVILLE

Agboville is the capital town of a department located in the south-east of Côte d’Ivoire. It is surrounded by the departments of Abidjan in the south, Dimbokro in the north and Adzopé in the west.

The Department of Agboville is made up of three prefectures: Agboville, Azaguié and Rubino. The population of the department, essentially composed of the Abbey ethnic group, is estimated at 180,000 inhabitants. The town has few agricultural resources: coffee, cocoa, bananas, kola nuts, and palm oil. At the industrial level, we can mention sawmills, brick-making, distilleries, quarries for gravel, sand and granite, a glue works and a textile factory.

At the administrative level, Agboville has several public and private primary and secondary schools, and relatively important medical and social services. Entertainment is essentially provided by popular festivals and activities which take place in different neighbourhoods, get-togethers in popular restaurants or in “maquis”. There are also sporting events in a stadium which is in an advance state of decay.

In addition to these popular dynamics, there are a few service clubs such as a Young Chamber of Commerce, a Rotary Club, a Lion’s Club which also contribute to the dynamics of town life. In such a context how is the sociability of teachers structured?
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASSOCIATIONS OF WHICH TEACHERS ARE MEMBERS

The twenty-five male and female secondary teachers interviewed say that they belong to at least four associations which they classify in order of priority as follows:

- associations of people from the same village,
- professional associations,
- urban neighbourhood associations,
- service clubs.

What are the characteristics of these associations selected as the main ones with regard to the sociability of the intellectuals? All these associations can be classified into three categories:

1. associations of people from the same village or urban neighbourhood
2. professional associations
3. service clubs

Associations of people from the same village or urban neighbourhood

These associations generally attract members by ethnic affinity or origin. Their essential goal is mutual help. They all have an elected committee, but the daily running is placed in the hands of an individual, very often the oldest member or a person with a particularly good reputation. In these associations there are no exclusive sexual criteria because these structures have become essentially groupings with economic orientations. Two main activities appear in the programmes of these associations: leisure activities and savings.

Leisure activities

Baptisms, weddings, deaths or other occasions may serve as a pretext for holding recreational activities. These activities have a modern, a traditional or a mixed content, but fundamentally the members of the associations tend to let traditional cultural values predominate. The preference for these cultural features is obvious in the ways conflicts are settled and the various rituals celebrated (baptisms, weddings, deaths). Another observation that can be made about these activities, based on interviews with informants, is that a good proportion of all these activities take place at the chairman's house. In cases where it is absolutely necessary they are held at the town hall.

We can notice that urban values are not claimed with regard to the content or the spatial location of the leisure activity. Intellectuals do not strongly influence the orientation or the content of the activity. We have gathered views which we find crucial concerning this particular point:

It's true that the function of teacher gives me the status of an intellectual; you are asking me why I do not influence the cultural content and the whole process of the activity as an intellectual. (Hesitation). I think that the answer is simple... It's because, in my interaction with the other members of the associations I belong to, I do not see myself first as an intellectual. I could even say that I forget that I am an intellectual. In my teaching job I claim and enhance my status as an intellectual but not elsewhere.

What you are asking me would mean that we must promote the westernization of the pop-
ulation. Quite frankly, I would ask you in return: What interest would I have to do that? What do you do with the universal civilization which is fed by the contribution of the various cultures?

We notice that the organic character we give them because of their function and their social position in relation to power is not perceived and claimed within the framework of social networks. They are only aware of their position as organic intellectuals in the carrying out of their functions. We can therefore say that it is difficult for them to act as vehicles of westernization as we thought they would.

**Savings activities**

In addition to leisure and consumption activities, the associations encourage among their members the principle of rotating loans which allows each member in turn to receive the amount contributed by the other members. This principle is based on a verbal agreement among several people linked by friendly or professional ties, the objective being to accumulate savings from the membership dues paid regularly. The final aim is social mutual aid.

One may ask why intellectuals, who are aware of the existence of financial institutions presenting reliable security guarantees, join in such activities. What rationality can be seen in a behaviour which relies much more on trust without security than on codified and well tested rules? Here are the answers given by our informants:

The bank or any other financial institution is impersonal, while here I contribute to help a friend, a brother, a sister... I can feel the use to which my money is put. Solidarity is embodied in this type of association because I know the one who receives the money contributed; which is not the case at the bank.

As far as I am concerned, I have a banking account and I also participate in these contributions. Quite obviously one cannot exploit banks and associations in the same way. Banks are harsh in their management, whereas here, everything can be negotiated even when it is not your turn. These facilities are more useful in case of hard times or emergencies, than banks who use western reasoning.

These associations are the true African banks. I think that political authorities ought to draw some inspiration from them to adapt banks to the African context. Salaries do not have the same meaning in Africa as in Europe. Our financial institutions seem not to have understood that; we therefore place ourselves on two registers and try to draw from both what is good for us.

We can conclude that these associations of people from the same village or town neighbourhoods are important for the intellectuals we interviewed on account of their impact on urban life and on urban–rural relations. They are also important with regard to their size and their activities. Their main function is to maintain within the town the traditional cultural values.

This type of association is particularly well organized with an elected committee. It has a heavy and very formal structure with numerous statutes. However, the real day-to-day running does not always correspond to this picture which shows an overlap of the modern and traditional styles of the members.

Within these structures there is a very wide social and ethnic heterogeneity. It is possible to find in the same association a member working as an orderly in the administration and a minister, a teacher and a housewife. Furthermore,
within the same association other structures such as mutual help groups may be created to solve particular problems.

In practice, all these structures operate to a certain extent on the margin of the modern urban system of associations.

Professional associations

These are less valued by our informants who occasionally make strategic use of them. These associations are generally trade union organizations and sometimes recreational associations.

Whatever their nature, they attract teachers only when they can see a specific interest related to their professional rights. They find it uncomfortable and limiting to have their social interaction restricted to their profession.

This attitude tends to support the hypothesis that there is no class consciousness among the intellectuals.

Service clubs

Service clubs are high-class associations and are therefore not normally open to everyone. Not all our informants belong to service clubs. Some of them have become members, we can say, in order to acquire a distinguished social life.

Service clubs are not associations like others... (pause) to become a member one must have a high intellectual level, belong to the administrative elite and above all have a stable financial status because members must spend a lot. You see, in service clubs, you have reliable friends of a certain social standing.

The small number of the surveyed teachers who are members of these service clubs does not allow us to analyse patterns of behaviour within these structures in any significant way in this research. We can only note that these associations, which can be termed intellectual, are infrequently attended by our educators. The associations that can be called "popular" are those which are clearly valued because of the popular and spontaneous nature of their activities and their members.

URBAN LIFE AND TRADITIONAL MODELS IN AN INTERMEDIATE TOWN

The town is often accused of destroying social organization, leaving individuals isolated and helpless. In fact in this study, there are many signs that the references to lineage remain convincing even in the urban environment. It is the mechanism and strategies underlying this reference which are often hidden because they are transformed. It is a case of reformulation of kinship and solidarity links which presents some ambivalence and sometimes ambiguities. The associational life of the intellectuals interviewed here shows the presence of lineage and its reformulation in town. But this reformulation is not very advanced given the weak development of the intermediate town. However, the process is still under way.

As a result of the interviews with our informants it can be stated that urban associations are characterized by some form of paradox beyond which we can perceive a certain coherence. These structures are indeed expected to
help their members to distance themselves from close relatives and at the same time to allow a restructuring of the lineage and the attributes of the town. The same paradox is apparent in the behaviour of our intellectuals who at times consider themselves as intellectuals and at times as traditionalists, depending on their interests. These intellectuals do not claim and affirm their membership of the town as a living environment different from the village, with its own specific requirements. The break with traditional cultural values is erratic in the behaviour of our informants.

Our informants assert that they belong to savings associations in order to “benefit from material aid”. However, a closer look reveals that this financial support is not used for daily needs, which would be rational for the intellectuals. This aid is used rather to finance non-daily events such as traditional ceremonies, funerals, weddings, baptisms etc.

How logical is this behaviour of the intellectuals? How can we understand that the intellectuals value ostentatious and wasteful spending? To say the least, we have here further proof of the ambivalence of our intellectuals. As a matter of fact, the monetarization of exchanges during traditional ceremonies in town shows an increasingly stronger adherence to the merchant capitalist sphere. Because many of them do not have the means for this adhesion, this associative system therefore finds its place in the two spheres.

We notice that the distancing in relation to one's group is not always experienced in a totally satisfactory way, which causes feelings of guilt, ambivalence and isolation. The search for a new type of social and affective relationship becomes of prime importance; for our informants the structures of general associations of which they are members and particularly those said to be popular, play an important role by providing the members with new references which are neither exclusively western/modern nor purely traditional. There is an ongoing process of re-interpretation/adaptation of the two civilizations in contact. This need for new reference points is present in all the interviews and reflects a particularly strong need for membership and affiliation. This need can explain all the rituals observed such as wearing uniforms on some occasions, or having a particular hair plaiting style common to all the women. As a matter of fact, a distinctive feature is displayed at each associational event.

Beyond the characteristics of all these associations attended by our informants, the interviews reveal that membership entails changes in the social behaviour of city dwellers. They thus find themselves “more sociable”, “more sensitive to the misfortune of others”, even with people who do not belong to their own association. Most of them think they have adjusted more to life in town thanks to their membership in these associations; “we find ourselves less selfish”, “more joyful in groups”.

We can therefore say that to belong to an association becomes, for our informants, a way of learning to live with other people outside the kinship group or sometimes even outside the ethnic group. The thrust given by the Ivorian policy maker to the urbanization process has brought about the creation of makeshift institutions because of and in response to the disarray described by Balandier:

The urban society determines directly important transformations in the shade of kinship ties; it causes a reduction of the kinship field and it tends to promote the existence of a separate and autonomous restricted family. The most noticeable impact is that this phenomenon affects individuals ill prepared for the emergence of the conjugal family: as a result, basic social supervision (within primary groups) is seriously deficient. For a fairly long period, a state of detachment exists which leads the new city dweller into some form of confusion.

The town appears as a place where the communal forms of society tend to disappear and gives way to more associational forms. Indeed, urbanization causes the family unit to be segmented. Aspirations tend to be transformed, but they can only be fulfilled as a result of new structures which bring together all the elements. At this stage, objectives are still linked to behaviours, to family components. The passage to a type of society which would combine a community, non-family based ideology, with more collective aspirations, could eventually be achieved, based on associational structures which have proved capable of adapting themselves to a new contingency.

Our informants say they value membership of associations of people from the same village; however a deeper analysis shows that although they claim to prefer this kind of association, they more readily use exclusively urban structures, which are more homogeneous and provide greater social mobility. This aspect could be a further sign of this ambivalent attitude which officially values pre-urban links in order to feel less guilty for exhibiting urban behaviour. This presence of lineage in town requires a reinterpretation, using urban criteria, of the kinship relations within an intermediate space said sometimes to be transitional. The associations find their place between these two systems (modern/traditional) and allow the population to carry out family ceremonies using the gains from paid employment.

In conclusion, our informants do not claim to be organic intellectuals in order to impose themselves on their social networks. Regarding the urban–rural relationship, our hypothesis made on the basis of intellectuals as power keepers, is wrong or should be relativized. It would need to be tested with a more important and more dynamic town. The significance of traditional values in the socio-cultural environment of the intermediate town is an importantly enough variable to be taken into account.

Finally within the intermediate town, in its relations with the countryside there occurs a dense and dynamic process of reinterpretation, assimilation, adaptation and rejection of various cultural values. This process is so dense, so dynamic and so dialectic that its paternity could not be assigned to one single vector, whether intellectual or not. It is a problem of modernity, the specific production of deliberate strategies for building social networks; in that area, the leaders, the initiatives constantly move from one camp to another.
Dimbokro, the Typical Ivorian Town, or the Absence of Urban–Rural Interaction?

Sylvie Bredeloup

How can staple food trading enable Dimbokro, a town in decline, to come into contact with a new space and so end its isolation? To what extent can this trade contribute to keeping the city of Dimbokro within the Ivorian urban framework? In what way does migration constitute an instrument for economic dynamics and become a reproductive agent for declining societies? Is the town of Dimbokro a place of transit for traders during their travels, or is it a strategic centre which allows some communities to improve their living standards? Finally, does the movement of population through the town have an impact on neighbouring rural areas? These were the questions which led me to study between 1984 and 1986 the determining factors in the development of Dimbokro, ex-capital city of the “cocoa belt”, and to look beyond the city for social spaces likely to reactivate it.

It should first be stated that if the effects of the economic “crisis” and the policy of decentralization on local dynamics have been studied in the present research, they would have been much less important in the mid-1980s and consequently more difficult to understand. This is the reason why the reduction in the growth rate of the Ivorian capital city and of foreign immigration were not established facts in 1986, nor were the return movements of city dwellers towards the countryside obvious. To be more specific, it was then too early to say whether these scarcely observable tendencies were temporary or permanent, or if they were the sign of a new demographic situation. At present the “relations” between those who live in Abidjan and their region of origin have become an essential resource: today, the capacity to build a relationship with one’s region of origin serves as a basis for exchange between the “urban and the rural area and this represents an instrument in the status of the city dweller” (Vidal, 1992; Vidal and Contamin, 1993).

In 1986 it was more a question of economic conjunctures than a crisis. However, the editors of the issue of Politique Africaine devoted to Côte d’Ivoire already mentioned the major upheavals which hit the country, but as they were cautious, they preferred to describe “the daily social situation” than “to try hazardous prophecies and daring anticipations”. In their preambles A. Dubresson and Y.A. Faure recalled the objectives of the research pre-
sented: “beyond the apparent macro-social quietness and the routine flows between individuals and groups, can one find, at infra-statal and infra-national levels constructive indicators of social factions? What methods occur for regulating the tension thus created, given that the multitude of frictions did not end up in a final explosion even at the peak of the economic ‘crisis’?” (Dubresson and Faure, 1986). The country was not yet in complete recession, structural adjustment programmes had not yet produced all their effects and the signs of social division although already noticeable, were not completely clear. In 1993, economic difficulties were obvious: public budget deficits, disequilibrium in the balance of payments, falls in raw material prices, galloping inflation, reduction of salaries, and the laying-off of workers. The economic crisis was followed by a crisis within the political regime and mechanisms which secured the integration of the individuals within networks of clientelism or solidarity: “The Ivorian society is engaged in a general process of individualization” (GERI-CI, 1992). School programmes are more and more uncertain, family and professional situations (marital instability, rise of bachelorhood, evasion of parental and professional responsibilities, unemployment, early retirement) are more and more chaotic.

As a result of the above, the research carried out at Dimbokro is now outdated, and should be placed within the political and economic context of that period. At the beginning of the 1980s rural drift was still a topical issue; rural immigration resulted more from the decrease in productivity than from the attraction of towns. To avoid a greater concentration in Abidjan, the emphasis was laid on the importance of polarization factors and on the hierarchical organization of the communities even though the modified theory of the poles had already shown its limits. At the same time food self-sufficiency advocated by the OAU (Lagos Plan of Action) was supported by the World Bank (domestic food self-sufficiency) while sub-Saharan Africa was holding back its imports. Priority was granted to food crops.

The staple food trade policy at Dimbokro, a secondary inland town, should be viewed within the context of urban and food crop policies created at the national level during the first decades after independence.

THE ROLE OF SECONDARY TOWNS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The structure of the Côte d’Ivoire is based on a strong contrast between the macrocephalic economic capital (Abidjan) which contains about 25 per cent of the Ivorian population and half of the urban population, and a young political capital city (Yamoussoukro), fruit of a presidential dream, and a set of small towns (44 towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants). Taking this into account, one wonders which principles have guided the Ivorian land development policy. During the first two decades after independence, the options taken by the government proved to be less favourable to the dynamism of secondary towns: the regional question not being considered as a concern. Priority was given to the active development of plantations in the forest zone. While the development of the country favoured the sharpening of the contrast between forest and savanna areas, Abidjan was growing at a rate of 10 per cent per year. An omnipotent capital, Abidjan was at the same time the seaport, the railway terminal, the junction for road and air traffic, the
political headquarters of the country, and the centre for consumption and jobs par excellence. The annual urban growth of inland towns reached an average rate of 7 per cent (1965–1975), except for some coastal zones where this growth was stagnant (Map 1).

Map 1. *The towns of the Côte d'Ivoire in 1975*

At the beginning of the 1970s, the urbanization process was accelerating and the primacy rate (percentage of urban population in the largest city) increasing. Faced with growing difficulties relating to the management of food supplies to the city of Abidjan, and because of the increase in the rural exodus and food import problems, the Ministry of Planning considered reducing the
importance of the capital city by providing other towns with the potential
capacity to retain their populations. The real question was not really whether
to promote regional development, or to review the question of growth at the
national level, but rather to reduce migration to and to stop the growth of
Abidjan. It was in this situation that specific measures, which were not part of
a homogenous scheme or a unified strategy, were conceived as part of the
international economic context aimed at securing the revitalization of the
structure of the economy and of secondary centres through the setting up of
textile "mammoths" in towns served by the railway (Dubresson and
Lootvoet, 1985). The regionalization of the Ivorian industrial system was
included in this new voluntarist approach which aimed at an equitable social
and spatial distribution. Facilitating private investment, in order to provide
jobs in inland towns, should help to retain local populations. On the other
hand, the awareness of secondary town realities only started to be clearly per-
ceptible through the objectives stated in the 1976–1980 Plan. The fight
against regional differences was then placed on the agenda. The political
authorities advocated a "structuring and polarization of the national terri-
tory" at four levels based on the hierarchical organization of the urban sys-
tem together with the main trade routes. These "poles" were to stimulate
growth and, in the long run, create a spread effect on the region. The space
was then divided into a national pole (Abidjan), balance poles (Bouaké, Fer-
kessédougou, Korhogo, Man, San Pédro), a supporting zones and secondary
balance poles (Daloa, Gagnoa, Odienné, Bondoukou) and intermediate
towns (Yamoussoukro, Dimbokro, Abengourou, Divo) (Map 1).

These broad orientations were repeated in the 1978 Territorial Develop-
ment Scheme which confirmed the will to balance the urban framework. But
the difference between urban policies and spatial practices was telling. While
the objective of regional development was scarcely confirmed in the 1971–
1975 Plan, the proportion of public investments devoted to inland towns
compared to the rest of urban investments was, however, 50 per cent and cor-
responded to their demographic weight in the country. On the contrary, for
the 1976–1980 period when the need for regional readjustment was being
asserted, public investment in urban centres, apart from Abidjan, represented
only a quarter of urban investment. In short, given population growth, per
capita investment decreased by 50 per cent between 1971 and 1992 in the
inland towns when, paradoxically, decentralization was more clearly aimed
for. It should be added that for the same period, 49 per cent of urban invest-
ment was devoted to infrastructure. Economic investment (for example,
enhancement of agriculture-related services, or improvements in commercial
channels) represented however only 6.6 per cent of the total investment
(ACA, 1982).

Due to the ineffectiveness of this development policy which was drafted in
an increasingly difficult economic situation, the 1981–1985 Five-Year Plan
aimed for more concrete and less ambitious objectives. Although the previous
broad orientations were maintained and extended, actions that were found to
be too constraining were reconsidered. A better participation of the popula-
tion and the local and regional authorities was expected, and was tested by
preliminary studies. The point was to limit and modulate "infrastructure"
(roads, bridges, telecommunications, telex, industrial zones and areas, energy, and services to companies) to a few selected towns for their potential dynamism in the short term. Moreover the setting up or improvement of “non-structuring” infrastructure (health, education, courts of justice, living environment) was planned. These new guidelines were summarized as follows: “the diversity of situations, the need to take into account the real constraints and specific priorities of each district or set of districts requires a more flexible and pragmatic approach, a less prospectivist conception than in the previous plans with regard to the structuring of space. The a priori setting up of a rigid hierarchical framework of towns and corresponding networks is more likely to satisfy the abstract and summary rationalism of a town planner than to meet the real needs of the country.” At the same time a policy of decentralization of decision making was applied: in addition to the establishment of municipalities (1978–1981), the creation of new districts (1983) was meant to enable a better coordination of development policies.

THE IVORIAN STAPLE FOOD QUESTION

There is a paradox concerning the staple food question: Côte d'Ivoire enjoys ecological and climatic conditions favourable to agricultural development, a land tenure system flexible in its principles and a solid agricultural tradition. The potential for staple food production is therefore enormous. Food crops still represent an essential part of the Ivorian food habits. However, 80 per cent of the economically active population is not able to fully satisfy the food needs of eight million people.

Many factors explain this paradoxical situation. The population explosion together with the improvement of net incomes and the emergence of new urban life-styles stimulated an increased demand for foodstuffs. Within two decades the urban–rural population ratio was modified. In 1960 there was one urban dweller for ten rural dwellers; in 1980, there was one urban dweller for every two rural dwellers. What kind of future can be envisaged when the main production factor is labour, and when an already weak productivity is declining? What kind of future can be envisaged when food crops are mainly dominated by starchy foodstuffs and when new urban eating habits have given rise to the increased consumption of cereals? Food imports have increased and the population has grown faster than food production.

Apart from urbanization and its consequences, development policies in Côte d'Ivoire were also responsible for a food crop imbalance. Colonial economic policies as well as national economic policies encouraged the development of export crops while excluding food crops from their different programmes. As a result, food crop production was limited to household consumption. Guaranteed and profitable prices were not offered to the peasants who quickly became convinced of the weak earning capacity of their production activities. No innovative techniques were undertaken to improve productivity. No efficient restructuring of the market has ever been achieved; and yet it is crystal clear that production shortages often mask other problems related to commercialization, transport, storage and preservation. The vast agricultural diversification scheme launched in 1960 was not concerned with food crops. Some specific actions such as cereal programmes proved
very efficient in the short term. In 1974 Côte d'Ivoire was self-sufficient in rice; the following year there were rice surpluses. However, following the demise of the rice self-sufficiency policy, rice imports have increased to cover domestic needs since 1976. The question of food crops has never been clearly integrated in development plans and the capital injected by the state for this purpose amounted only to 4 per cent of the investment of the 1976–1980 Plan. Then the question of the need for readjusting the budget was raised. In the following plan the food crop question was avoided: it was not even part of minimum programmes introduced to cope with the crisis.

Considering these policies, and the development and transport options, how was the town of Dimbokro built up? What agricultural orientations did the rural hinterland adopt?

DIMBOKRO—FROM PROSPERITY TO “DISCREET DECLINE”?3

Founded less than a century ago, Dimbokro was equally the fruit of sheer luck and political will. The town benefitted largely from the occupation and territorial structuring policies initiated by the colonial authorities. Thus, during the exploration of the region the village of Djimbo was chosen by the army as a stopover point on the way to the north. Despite the unhealthiness of the location, Dimbokro was chosen as a railway town just like Abidjan and Agboville, while some other busy centres of the colony such as Grand Bassam and Tiassalé were not included in the rail network. The colony became organized progressively; decisions which were once taken in passing by the authorities evolved towards a more rational conception of resource exploitation. Just before the Second World War, coffee and cocoa were grown in the forest zones for export. Very soon the small administrative district became an important crossroads for commercialization, busily involved in import–export activities; it became the capital of the cocoa belt.

If the plantation economy caused the prosperity of Dimbokro it was later to hasten its downfall. Dependent on inflows of money from trading, the commercial activity could only become disrupted within a context of land tenure saturation and reorganization of the transport network. The plantation zones had moved towards the western forest area. Planters had followed the movement. Moreover the trading firms had moved back to Abidjan; the new trunk roads having made possible the direct transfer of cash crops, still available in the region, to the capital port. Dimbokro was no longer a collection centre, nor was it an interesting outlet. The local population had not attempted to develop marketable products in either peri-urban or rural zones for sale at the regional or national level. The lack of inter-regional trade could only worsen the isolation in the long run. No serious attempt was made to recover or to regenerate young trees: the preoccupation was to drain resources from the region rather than to enhance their value. It was time for consuming space, not for structuring it.

As with Mbal Mayo in Cameroun, Louga in Senegal or Koforidua in Ghana, which were trading towns created or developed through the railway under colonization, Dimbokro in Côte d'Ivoire became marginalized after independence. Priorities in transport change with time. The road became the
new vector for development or at least for traffic; railway links were not prioritised so as to provide a better coverage of the territory.

The end of the 1960s marked, at the national level, the end of a period of sustained and rapid growth based on the development of plantation agriculture. The development policy initiated at the beginning of the 1970s in Dimbokro came under the national programme for reducing regional differences. At Dimbokro the measures were limited to a series of boosts without the establishment of any real solid economic foundation. These attempts to decentralize industry were followed by development operations sustained by prestigious public investments, then came the first political decentralization measures without any homogeneous plan for urban structuring efficiently based on the economy. Enhancing the regional economic space required a spatial division of labour which was not anticipated. The creation of a textile complex which employs more than 1,300 people, most of whom were recruited from outside the district and the rural world, did not help the city recover from its anaemia neither did it contribute to the emergence of a local industrial texture. There were industries without industrialization. Despite the fact that it did not have any effect on other economic sectors or on the settlement of the local population, the spinning/weaving mill reduced migration by attracting new populations. It also allowed for a fairer distribution of salaries and resources in the town. As for the massive investments made during the rotating independence celebrations they were not really part of a strategy for promoting the development of secondary towns. They concerned mainly the development of infrastructure and public services, but they revealed nothing about the problems overwhelming the city. They contributed instead to disguising economic realities and to maintaining the illusion by presenting the most obvious urban forms, the usual most explicit signs of prosperity and power. Tarred roads, street lights, prestigious public buildings—such was the recipe to quickly embellish the image of the city. These celebrations were specific and beyond local capacities for assimilation and management, and resulted only from the implementation of the Ivorian ideology which prevailed after independence. This ideology granted the administration a decisive urbanizing power, a role of catalyst of energies. Unfortunately, these investments did not have any lasting effect on the capacity of the town to attract or retain population. The 1971 plan went against any attempt to develop towns, and merely confined them to their administrative, social, educational and health functions.

Twelve years later a new master plan was designed. In accordance with the national food self-sufficiency policy and within the particular context of a sharp decline in cash crop production in the former cocoa region, the future of the region was viewed in relation to its rural environment. Dimbokro was to become the food reservoir, the granary of Yamoussoukro, the new administrative capital of the country. Some of the objectives were related to improvements in agricultural production, as well as the upstream multiplication of services and the downstream increase of agricultural activities. But the determination to develop the area was more obvious in rhetoric than in budgets. For example in the five-year plan, works related to roads and other infrastructure represented 83 per cent of budget allocations, while the creation of
a peri-urban agricultural area was allocated only 3 per cent of total investment.

In the early 1980s, the city of Dimbokro lost its status as an economic link and regional pole, despite the massive inflows of public money. In terms of investments, neither employment nor trade with the neighbouring rural areas really seemed to represent priorities in Dimbokro in 1986. The implementation of decentralization policies should have increased the attractiveness of secondary towns, stimulated their dynamism and that of the peripheral rural zones. However, because they were too fragmented, these policies seem to have led mainly to the temporary reduction in the growth of Abidjan.

A DECLINING TOWN AT THE DEMOGRAPHIC LEVEL

The demographic background of the city of Dimbokro can be summed up in three phases: explosion, blossoming, decline. In 1908 Dimbokro was only a colonial post containing a few Baoulé villages scattered throughout the palmýra savanna. Thirteen years later an administrative census recorded 1,340 inhabitants in the small centre. Just after the Second World War its development accelerated at the same pace as the growth of the trading economy. Trading agencies, warehouses, workshops but also “indigenous” areas blossomed gradually in the new metropolis of the cocoa belt. In 1956, the town had a population of 9,336. In the 1960s the town exploded outside its limits and spread in all directions. In 1968 it had 22,833 inhabitants distributed over an area of 420 hectares. Between 1968 and 1975 the annual growth rate fell to 4.3 per cent, having previously reached 8 per cent. From 1975, the rate at which the infrastructure was built exceeded the population growth rate. Spread over six kilometres from east to west, Dimbokro developed new neighbourhoods, while the population density per square kilometre fell by more than 20 per cent. Despite the setting up of the UTÉXI factory and marked student immigration, the population remained unchanged judging from the censuses: 31,073 in 1975, 30,313 in 1981, and 32,305 in 1984. In the ten year period from 1975 to 1985, the growth rate of the town was only 4 per cent, compared with a 4 per cent annual growth rate for Côte d'Ivoire as a whole during the same period. In the urban hierarchy Dimbokro was degraded. It ranked fourth in the 1950s, tenth in 1975, and finally fifteenth ten years later. But this demographic situation is not specific to the town of Dimbokro it affects the whole district.

ECONOMIC UPTURNS

In 1986 urban functions at Dimbokro showed clear signs of fragility. Economic productive activities were divided into more numerous and smaller units than in the past. This fragmentation of production signalled recession. Thus, a comparison with the General Census of activities in urban areas (Ministère du Plan, 1976) and a count we made in 1985, on a similar but very restrictive basis, indicate: a slight decrease in the number of activities following a sharp fall in attendance at the central market, as well as a decline in the rate of activities carried on outside the market despite an increase in the number of employees.
Compared with other intermediate inland towns, the secondary sector appears to be well developed at Dimbokro since the opening of the UTEXI textile plant. It employs about one out of every ten of the urban population. Nevertheless, it is neither industry nor the craft sector which will enable the city to recover its dynamism and influence in the future. The textile plant has only resulted in a diffusion of salaries which are spent on goods and services, but which are rarely reinvested in production activities. The number of jobs created remains limited and the factory is not well integrated with the local economy. The construction industry and the handicraft sector are poorly represented (one worker for every 37 inhabitants). The incomes of many artisans fell by half between 1980 and 1985.

The civil service is also unlikely to get the town out of its economic asthenia. However, the civil service provided most of the permanent paid jobs in 1984, and employed almost one third of the active population of Dimbokro (excluding farmers). Civil servants consume both in quantity and in quality, and they save and sometimes invest. Furthermore, the redistribution of civil service salaries helps a good part of the population to survive. But in 1986 it seemed inconceivable to base urban development on these extravagant functions which benefit only an increasingly restricted population. The 1981–1985 Five-Year Plan provided for a decrease in the number of civil service jobs. A reform of the parastatal sector, as well as a policy of budgetary restrictions were introduced (cancelling of administrative leases, a freeze on staff recruitment, early retirement). In this context the purchasing power of civil servants, the main urban consumers, could only decline.

The town distributes revenues which it does not produce, and draws resources not only from the allocation of administration funds but also from commercial activities.

A CLEAR LACK OF URBAN–RURAL INTERACTION

Disappearance of village markets

At Dimbokro, local trade is dying out. Instead of blossoming progressively the number of markets in the cocoa belt is declining. No new urban market has been created. The village populations have vacated their isolated land to migrate towards the west and the south-west. At present the district does not have enough village markets. A progressive isolation of rural areas is taking place. Some markets such as Diéri-Kouassikro in the west, Aoussoukro in the north-east and Soungassou in the east have even disappeared (Map 2). In 1986, Diéri-Kouassikro was no longer included on the route of the bush lorries departing from the coach station in Dimbokro. Consequently, the inhabitants of the village are obliged to obtain their supplies from Toumodi. After 1977 the Soungassou market disappeared, even though it had been selected by the Directorate of Statistics to report on the movement of retail prices of various types of products. Today, village women have to travel to Dimbokro to sell their produce. The market of Nofou, which replaced the one at Soungassou in the ministry sample, is poorly attended due to difficulties of access by road. One can surmise that it has been maintained because it is close to the railway. Because of the absence of small distribution markets serving as links
between villages and the urban centre, the main market of Dimbokro could not really expand. In 1986 there were fewer selling points and fewer traders than in 1976. Its catchment area remains limited. The trips of the bush lorries have become rare.

Map 2. Supply and catchment areas of the Dimbokro market

A transport service which no longer serves the hinterland
The effervescence which characterizes the coach stations at Toumodi, Yamoussoukro and Oumé is absent from the former regional stopover. The number of city taxis was drastically reduced from 200 to 70 between 1979 and 1985, while the population growth rate stagnated during the same
period. The economic growth of the town should also be seen within the context of the regional space. Given the decrease in the purchasing power of wage-earners living in Abidjan and originally from Dimbokro, and the massive and generalized flight of villagers from the land-locked north west, the number of lorries plying the various transport routes declined by 28 per cent between 1968 and 1985. During the same period the number of passenger seats increased by 28 per cent. Since 1979 the situation has significantly deteriorated: transport services experienced a decline of 20 per cent both in the number of bush lorries and in the number of seats.

In 1986 a 22-seater bus used to depart daily from Dimbokro for Abidjan. These buses frequently returned empty, a situation which worsened when inter-urban public transport stepped in with comfortable and air-conditioned buses with greater capacities, specialising in long-distance transport. These buses offered very competitive prices and operated according to a fixed schedule. Sixteen to twenty bush lorries and buses departed daily from Dimbokro for Tiémélékro, Toumodi, Yamoussoukro, N’Douci, Gagnoa, Soubré and Man, while 25 vehicles travelled to Bocanda, Bogouanou, M’Batto and Bouaké. Links with Bocanda and Bogouanou, two towns which were experiencing a population decline, have decreased. The reduction in the number of vehicles departing from Dimbokro between 1979 and 1985 reached 60 per cent for Bocanda and 30 per cent for Bogouanou (Map 3). On the other hand, judging from the increase in the number of vehicles on the road, the links with Toumodi seem to have diversified. In 1979, 17 vehicles linked this village to Dimbokro; in 1985, there were 26 bush lorries. Consequently, there must have been a redistribution of vehicles between the two coach stations to adapt to the demand in the growth of traffic. It should be noted however that the number of vehicles is not an adequate indicator of the intensity of the traffic. There can be an imbalance or mismatch between the transport capacity and the actual use of vehicles.

Though the number of regular routes has not changed since 1968 (15 in 1968, and 17 in 1975) the itineraries have changed to adapt to the geographic redistribution of the plantation areas. The routes were extended by about a hundred kilometres and the traffic has moved towards the South-West. The hauliers have provided a regular service towards the urban centres of Man and Soubré since the planters from Dimbokro moved there to pursue their cash crop activities. The whole Western Region is served by these channels. The number of customers is important: most of them are bulk sellers of plantains who charter a lorry at the production site and travel to Dimbokro, the consumption centre. The north, on the other hand, is not directly serviced by lorries from Dimbokro; the railway offers a regular competitive service. As for the surrounding rural areas they are being progressively deserted by their inhabitants and served less frequently by village taxis.

These results throw some light on the situation in the hinterland. Rural markets are becoming scarce, there is no longer any intermediate link between the plantation and the urban commercial outlet. The town of Dimbokro is no longer well integrated into the regional space; on the other hand, it now maintains more intensive relations with distant regions. It is increasingly dependent vis à vis the outside world; it is becoming more and more dependent for its imports on a long-distance transport infrastructure.
Inadequate agricultural extension services

According to the ideology developed by the promoters of secondary towns, the growth of such towns should be assured as a result of their rural hinterlands; the town could also be a distribution centre for seeds and fertilizers, a collection centre, a route centre, a place for breakdown services and maintenance, and a zone where agricultural products are redistributed and pro-
cessed. But what really does happen in Dimbokro? What roles do the agencies for the development and trading of agricultural products play in the rural economy and in the structuring of towns?

SODEPRA (The State Company for the Development of Animal Production) receives no financial subsidies and has limited logistical support. As a result, its activities in the region are limited. By encouraging livestock breeders to acquire their supplies outside the district, the company discourages any investment in animal food within the town. The role of SATMACI (Agency of Technical Assistance for Agricultural Modernization in Côte d'Ivoire) is also limited to the organization of cooperative structures, production and commercialization. Although it was promoted as a regional development agency it does not receive any subsidies for promoting food crop production. Neither does it provide any technical assistance to encourage dynamism in isolated entrepreneurs. Its rigid structure prevents it from playing its role as the driving force of the regional economy. The head of the zonal branch of SATMACI, who used to be stationed at Dimbokro, was transferred to Daoukro, a more prosperous region. This restructuring was more motivated by the need to establish the company in important agricultural zones and to draw more heavily on export crops than to develop a regional urban network. The Alliance or Union of GVC (Grouping of Vocational Cooperatives) has essentially been in charge of collecting the coffee and cocoa crops gathered in villages or cooperatives located in the sub-districts of Dimbokro and Bocanda since 1978. The end of the administrative restructuring of the Ivorian space economy and the ageing of young plants has reduced the importance of the Alliance. In 1986 the company only had a limited number of vehicles (two lorries); before 1978 it operated nine vehicles throughout the neighbouring sub-districts. Some storekeepers were laid off. In 1970 the cooperative union collected for the year the equivalent of four billion CFA Francs. Its turnover for the 1984–1985 campaign was only 120 million CFA Francs. It should finally be added that although the number of cooperatives decreased in the Département of Dimbokro it doubled at the national level as a result of three agricultural campaigns.

The institutions in charge of agricultural supervision, which constitute the major state instruments for promoting agricultural production, appear to be too constraining to stimulate private initiatives. They recommend that the operators work in groups thus favouring the creation of heavy and rigid production or commercialization structures. The allocation of loans, the choice of farming techniques, the location of land are arbitrarily decided with no concern for the needs and motivations of the peasants. Projects remain sectoral and poorly adapted to the environment. There is not always agreement between the actions of the agricultural agencies and the concerns of the peasants. These actions are, furthermore, closer to agricultural supervision in all its limitative aspects than to the organization or promotion of agricultural production. “Extension” agents, initiated in the use of imported know-how, often limit their interventions to instructions. Moreover, they are not able to offer economic incentives. If these institutions, without restriction, impose heavy taxes on producers, mainly through export crops, what can we conclude is their real impact on towns? Although agencies are decentralized in the inland towns, they work in isolation. By providing their members or cli-
ents with equipment and inputs such as their own collection infrastructure, funds, transport, and repair services, they deprive the town of essential functions and important resources.

We can conclude that the urban economy cannot rely on agricultural production activities or related activities. Local food self-sufficiency has not yet been attained. Neighbouring rural areas, deserted to a great extent by their populations, experience food deficits and do not have enough resources to offer their services to the towns. Town dwellers have to develop long distance transport and distribution channels to satisfy urban demands. And yet the region has agricultural potential. The problem is how to mobilize and enhance the status of farming as a profession by directly involving the peasants in agricultural projects and providing them with regular outlets and good prices. The lack of urban–rural interaction deprives urban centres of many vital productive functions such as tool making, the supply of goods, commercialization, and savings facilities for rural dwellers. On the other hand, the town rarely satisfies anything but the trivial needs of the rural population. Successive urban policies have not concretely considered the integration of the town within the regional rural space. They have so far given priority to the internal development of the city. The migration of peasants in search of extra income in industry or trade has not led to any economic success. Access to the labour market remains difficult; the linking infrastructures are poorly maintained.

A TOWN INTEGRATED WITHIN TRANS-REGIONAL NETWORKS, A TOWN “UNDERGOING TRANSFUSION”?

The plantation economy and the plantain trade

The town of Dimbokro no longer produces; it consumes and gets its supplies from a non-peripheral space. Over the past few decades, the plantation economy has shaped and restructured the Ivorian space. The shift to the west of the coffee and cocoa production zones has drastically changed the food crop trading channels (Map 4). Regions which produced and consumed plantains, a sub-product of cocoa farming, are no longer near each other. Today, supplying Dimbokro with plantains requires the establishment of a transport system and technical operations more sophisticated than in the past. Commercial practices have adapted in various ways to these new market conditions without any support from the state. Progressively trading channels have been extended through time and space thus integrating newcomers. A new hierarchical organization of society has taken shape based on income, place of work and time spent on trading. The profits that peasants used to make through their trading activities are now diverted and fall into the hands of traders. Despite the noticeable increase in consumer prices caused by the rise in transport costs, traders obtain important profit margins. Obviously, city dwellers need food crops, and plantains were the second most purchased food item in 1986, both in terms of quantity and value.

At the source of this commercial restructuring were women determined to break away from the rural environment and integrate into the city. Migration and commerce represented the means for their emancipation. These unmar-
ried women rose to the rank of heads of families and were surrounded by many customers, thus generating a new social and cultural dynamic. Once they permanently settle in Dimbokro these women pursue their wholesale activities and initiate their daughters into the mysteries of their profession.

More recently and unintentionally bulk sales of plantains started attracting young women, daughters of planters from the Dimbokro region who had migrated to a pioneering plantation zone. These planters took control of activities in a bi-polar space via the control of food crop sales. As leaders of the orchestra, they delegate to their daughters the linkage and distributional functions, thus maintaining this trading system within the sphere of domestic production. During these trade expeditions, the women traders convey in both directions information as well as money and goods. These commercial transactions contribute to the shaping of a new socialisation process and to
strengthening family cohesion despite a geographical dispersal of family members.

The role of migrants in the yam trade

Similarly, the yam trading system has also been restructured. Although the traditional starchy root has increasingly contributed to the food intake and the budget of city dwellers, the consumption of luxury varieties (early matur ing yams) has intensified at Dimbokro in the wealthy Baoulé neighbourhood and in restaurants. Regional production shortages, coupled with buoyant demand: the conditions coincided for some Malinké migrants to show interest in the yam trade in addition to their kola nut trade thus establishing an oligopoly. Without receiving any state support, without investing much capital, but with the help of family networks they were able to regularly supply the city. On their initiative inter-regional flows have developed. The agglomeration of Dimbokro was absorbed within a space extending well beyond the regional borders and stretching towards the Malinké ethnic area (Map 5).

Map 5. *Areas supplying yams to the Dimbokro market*
Thus under the cover of ethnic solidarity, the first Dioula migrants welcomed their younger unemployed brothers and kept them under their domination. Beyond the Malinké village in an enlarged space, community links are reactivated. The plasticity of the institutions prevent the emergence of new social relations. But the importance of the community is not always the determining factor in the careers of traders. Solitary migrants from the Akan ethnic group, for their part, consider commercial activities as a temporary means for enrichment, and the town of Dimbokro as a brief occasional stopover. For them economic power seems to count as much as social status.

CONCLUSION

In other words, traders having integrated the town of Dimbokro within their trading circuits, maintain it through a form of transfusion. Although inter-regional trade supplies the town, it constitutes a rather fragile basis for real economic development. Can Dimbokro’s future be based on the transfer of productive activities, while the presence of traders in the town is only to be seen as a short pause for those who will continue on their way when demand changes. Trade rarely encourages its actors to invest locally in productive activities. Some traders have built bungalows or shops, others pay for the schooling or the training of their children in town. But none of them invest in and develop agriculture in the hinterland.

But why do we expect interactions to emerge only according to the model of geographic proximity? Functional analysis has shown itself unable to account for demographic and economic mechanisms. Why should we posit at the outset that the intermixing of populations is dependent on location and urban functions? Rural–urban relations can certainly result in less mechanical and less bivalent configurations than those usually aimed for by town planners. If certain ethnic groups enlarge their relationship space by including the town of Dimbokro via the medium of trade, why cannot other communities, originating from the rural areas, also develop dynamics and trade beyond their local space. The only remaining productive enclaves are those which are in direct contact with international trade. Instead of systematically trying to develop trade with the neighbouring town thus releasing surpluses for city dwellers and providing food security at the local level, would it not also be relevant if rural areas considered exporting these surpluses to other African regions experiencing deficits? Lessons can be learned from the organization of precolonial trade which was successful for centuries and which is being reconstructed in some trade sectors.

Finally, what can be said about urban–rural interaction in the mid-1990s, now that problems of integration in the job market and payment of school fees force city dwellers to develop new strategies and to initiate new ties with villagers? The tutorial system (accommodating a young villager for his or her studies in town) is on the decline. On the other hand, young city dwellers are now being sent to village schools. To what extent do these new orientations contribute to a reshaping of urban–rural relationships in an intermediate town where in 1986 the student population reached one third of the urban population?
Notes

1 See the work initiated within GIDIS-CI (Groupement Interdisciplinaire en Sciences Sociales—Côte d’Ivoire) [Interdisciplinary Social Science Group] and the papers presented during the roundtable 30 November to 2 December 1992 in Bingerville, Côte d’Ivoire, on the theme “Crisis and structural adjustments: the social and cultural dimensions”.

2 “It would however be irresponsible to always count on the surprising capacity of adaptation and innovation of rural societies which are dwindling here and there under the blows of a disastrous environment”, remarks G. Courde (1990).

3 A term borrowed from Y. Marquet in “Reflexions provisoires sur la décadence des villes secondaires au Cameroun”, colloque CNRS No. 539, La croissance urbaine en Afrique Noire et à Madagascar, 1972, p 841–845.

4 These censuses had a comparative basis: they all exclusively concerned urban areas; the villages of the commune were not included in the census.

5 In 1986, these buses linked Abidjan to Bouaké with a stopover at Toumodi; today they serve the whole country including Dimbokro. They have replaced bush lorries.

6 “The idea behind the study carried out on the role and functions of towns in the national or regional development of Sub-Saharan countries are the following: could a functional urban growth more evenly distributed over the territory, stimulating a hierarchically organized network of secondary towns, not have the double effect of placing the same number of efficient filters between the rural areas and primate cities and stimulating agricultural production by generating a stronger demand closer to the production zones?” M. Wertheimer, ACA, “Les villes secondaires en Afrique, leur rôle et leurs fonctions dans le développement national et régional”, Symposium “Nourrir les villes”; ALTERSIAL–ORTOM–CERED–CERNEA, Paris, 1984.

References


Dori—a Town in the Sahel
Social Identities and Urbanity

Jean-Bernard Ouedraogo

To the first European travellers and military men who described and/or conquered it, Dori appeared to be a town that differed from the other urban centres of the future Upper Volta colony. As a strategic door governing the access to the Sahel, a centre of the Fulani power in the Liptako region, a cosmopolitan crossroads of an intense long-distance trade in the Niger bend, it enjoys a positive image in the western representations which have adorned it with the prestige of a “civilized” town, sister to the “Great Lady” Timbuctu. “It is something of a miniature Timbuctu, its square-shaped houses made of dried bricks with their low and flat roofs, its numerous small streets, its mosques made of mud bricks and sticks add to the illusion” (Coutouly, 1923). This image testifies to its commercial radiance and the yesteryear political power of the Emirs of Dori. However, following conquest and colonization, the political power fell under the control of the colonial administration established within the town itself, a power rival to that of the Emir. This resulted in another decision-making centre, other functions, the colonial town, “a place of colonization” equipped with specific services giving rise to new urban functions. How did Dori under this tutelage remain the centre of an economic power? How did its relations with the countryside and the rest of the Liptaako evolve? Finally, has the social hierarchy established in the nineteenth century been preserved or was it altered? What is the influence of the urban population on the definition of the town and subsequently on its relationships with the countryside?

To describe urban–rural relations amounts to both studying the social conditions of the definition of these spaces and determining the historical modes of relationships entertained by men with these places. The current study cannot dispense with the general framework of the social changes which affect social space as a whole and consequently the relationships established between city dwellers and inhabitants of the surrounding countryside. Our objective is therefore to analyze urban–rural relations through the evolution of urbanity and urban life in Dori.

To reach such an objective we have decided to combine two types of research approaches often wrongly viewed as mutually exclusive: a historical perspective combined with a sociological investigation considered to be too
bound to current events. We have had to consult colonial records, and inter-
view old people about the more or less recent past of Dori and its inhabitants. 
This historical overview was supplemented by a statistical survey carried out 
in the neighbourhoods of the town. We have preferred the use of neighbour-
hoods to that of sectors, the latter units having been imposed since the 
Sankara revolution, but having no real sociological roots. The sample is made 
up of: 10 households from Yera, 8 from Bangré-Dori, 8 from Debéré 
Lettougal, 7 from Debéré Gorgal, 6 from Homboriré, 6 from Haoussangoré 
and 5 from Hamdalaye. In each of the 50 households visited we interviewed 
3 individuals. These statistical measures only aimed to show the major trends in 
current behaviour and in the best cases to highlight the historical foundations 
of current social practices.

A TOWN OF MARGINS—DORI IN HISTORY

The originality of Dori is, first of all, that it embodies the making of a new 
political power in the bend of the Niger. The local history of this southern 
part of the bend partakes of the vast movement of political reforms which, by 
means of the holy war, the *jihad*, established Muslim theocracies throughout 
West Africa in the nineteenth century. Originally, Dori used to be a Gour-
manchte town. Its name is Gourmanchte and means “at the side of the 
pond”. The Gourmanchte had occupied Dori for about a century before they 
were expelled by the Fulani whose ancestor, Birmany, settled first at Wedou. 
The current dominant group in Dori are believed to have originated from 
Koumarib in Mali. After a long cohabitation with the Gourmanchte who had 
chased out the first settlers, the Dogons, they went to war against their hosts 
and drove them out of Dori to a village to the west of the town of Kôlâ.

DORI AS A COMMERCIAL CENTRE AND A PLACE OF POLITICS

Some Fulani of the Feroobe clan—which means “immigrants” in the Fulani 
language—who had come from Massina, took power with the help of the 
reformist Cheik, Ousman Dan Fodio, and supplanted the Gourmanchte in 
the region. This upsurge of the Fulani coincided with a local conflict between 
the native Fulani and the Gourmanchte who had been settled in the capital, 
Koala, since the beginning of the eighteenth century. The thus far good rela-
tions between the two groups deteriorated around 1809–1810. Then, the 
Fulani fought under Ousman Dan Fodio’s banner and defeated the Gour-
manchte who fled southward. The region which was afterward named 
Liptaako—meaning “which will not be destroyed” in the Fulani language— 
surrendered and owed allegiance to the Sokoto rule. The southern boundary 
of the Liptaako was set at Bani but it was to remain poorly defended.

Birahima Seydou from the clan of the Feroobe conquered Dori and established 
his authority there. The establishment of the politico-religious 
authority coincided with a general movement of recomposition and centrali-
ization of West African states in the nineteenth century. The new authority 
seemed to prefer “heart *Jihad*”, i.e. voluntary conversion, to violent forced 
conversion. As a matter of fact, the states that were then established in this 
region were characterized by a gentle integration of old social structures
included in these new social groups. Thus, the first Emir of Liptaako, Birahima Seydou, did not attack the privileges of the local nobles in the name of some Islamic reform during his seven-year reign (1810–1817).

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Emirs had to protect the Liptaako Emirate from the frequent incursions of the Gourmantche and the Tuaregs, that destabilized political power: thus, in 1887/1888, the Fulani refused to follow their Emir, Amadou Issa, in a battle against the Gourmantche. So Amadou Issa refused to go back to Dori, the new capital, and settled at M'Bamga until his death and the market moved there from Dori. Trade was, therefore, highly dependent on the protection the traders received from the political authority.

Issa’s death sparked off the longest succession struggle in the Emirate’s history. Such was the situation found in 1895 by Captain Destenave who had come from Bandiagara in order to curb the potential advances of the British and the Germans. He was warmly welcomed in Dori: presents were exchanged and a treaty that placed the Liptaako under French protection was signed. To understand the decision of the Emir, Bohari Soré, the following reasons are given: as the Liptaako was (permanently) threatened by the raiding Tuaregs (from the Jullmmiden region to the north) and weakened economically by a bovine plague epidemic which decimated the cattle in 1890 and affected trade, the Emir was inclined to submit to the French (Irwin, 1981). Moreover, the sad fate of the Toucouleurs who supported El Adj Omar and his descendants was well known in the region. While fleeing from the French, Amadou Sekou had stayed twice in Dori, in 1891 and 1893 (see Irwin, 1981). Bohari Sori was subsequently deposed by the French and replaced by Aboubakar’s descendant from the elder lineage of the Dicko, Abdourahamane Ahamadou. All the Emirs originated from the Feroobe clan. The Toroobe, though the first Fulani to settle in Dori, and the Wakambe, both constituted the dominated and less important groups politically and socially. The Feroobe formed a warlike aristocracy who kept the Rimaibé as serfs. According to some European visitors at the beginning of the century, about 40 per cent of the population of the Emirate were former slaves.

Most of the traders who contributed to the growth of Dori as a big trading centre were foreigners: Hausa, Moors, Yarsé and Songhai. The Homboribbee who came from Hombori, the Songhai town in Mali, arrived at Dori around 1829–1831 during the reign of Sori Hamma (1816/17–1832/33). They were well received by the Fulani and settled in the present neighbourhood of Homboriré. Subsequently, they undertook long-distance trade and were the only ones to practise such trade on a large scale in the Liptaako. These exchanges were part of the big north-south/east-west caravan trade that covered West Africa (see Map 1). Dori was the centre of the salt trade from Taoudéni via Timbuctu and Gao, cereals and slaves from Mossi country, and locally bred cattle. The Moors came from the north with salt to barter for loincloths, robes, turbans, and so on, brought there by Hausa traders. As some visitors pointed out, the market was not only the centre of the town but its brain as well.
THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE TOWN OF PONDS

Dori enjoys a very privileged geo-strategic position in this Sahelian zone: located at the edge of the savannah zones and at the boundary of woody vegetation and permanent rivers, the town is located 270 km from Ouagadougou, 200 km from Gao and 180 km from Hombori. Moreover, the site benefits from the presence of a very large pond which occupies the thalweg of the former tributary of the Niger. This portion of fertile land in the middle of the Sahelian zone has undoubtedly attracted, more than any other place, the Fulani who were herdsmen. This geographic position has never been emphasized enough in the study of Dori. The pond, the Weedu, surrounds the town from south to north, covering its western part. It is made up of two creeks, one of which is located in the northern part of the town, and the other in the south. These water points are also places where the town dwellers grow rice, cotton, potatoes, tobacco and so on. Vast and dense pastures grow there too. The territory of Liptaako benefits from the presence of a number of permanent ponds, of winter ponds and pasture lands which attract nomadic cattle breeders in the region of the Niger bend. There are also a lot of salty lands.
very much appreciated by the cattle whose breeders often bring them there for salt cures which are said to keep the cattle healthy. These geographic characteristics largely determine the political and social destiny of this Sahelian town. This accounts for Dori being, in the period preceding colonial rule, a trading centre controlling the vast pasture lands frequently visited by the nomads and where local herdsmen led their cattle. Owing to this geographic position (Map 1), Dori remained an immense oasis in the middle of the Sahel, and the natural and coveted stop-over for traders heading south. The expansion of the town remained bound to these regional dynamics.

UNDER THE YOKE OF COLONIALISM—THE FACETS OF A TOWN

A colonial post was founded in 1897. Until 1910 the district was ruled by military men before being placed under civilian rule. In 1919 it was part of Upper Volta. How was this new authority able to modify activities in Dori? It is clear that we can only understand present-day Dori by looking back into its history.

AN ENTREPÔT TOWN

In the twentieth century the town was organized around 3 poles: the market, the new colonial town (the post office and the military camp), and the neighbourhoods of the “indigenous village”. Then Dori still enjoyed a very good image; before moving to his new post there, Amadou Hampâtè Bâ sums up the common impression in these terms: “Dori! Who in Sudan, in Upper Volta, or in Niger had not heard of Dori! For the Fulani, it was a paradise, for the Moors and the Hausa, it was an inter-territorial fair, and for the Muslim marabouts, it was a true holy town. Everybody wished to go to Dori.”4

As the economic heart of Dori, the market remained the commercial centre of the town and of the Liptaako district. It was the place where cereals, salt and cattle were sold. It was located in the north of the town, at the crossing of the road to Kaya and Monteil Avenue, and where Residence Avenue, the roads to Tera and Djibo converged. In the 1920s it consisted of two large covered markets and a shelter-shed for the butchers. Marketing mainly comprised cattle, cereals and local cotton materials (the famous Dori blankets). The cattle were led to the Gold Coast and Nigeria. The cereal was produced, as we have said, by irrigated farming thanks to the water of the pond. The colonial administration also tried, as elsewhere in Upper Volta in the heyday of the “land development” policy, intensive irrigated farming of cotton, tobacco and onions, but Dori still remained characterised by cattle breeding and handicraft production which involved it in trans-Saharan trade. The production of cotton which was already an old activity in the region, made the district become, in 1943, the greatest producer in the whole of the Niger colony to which it had been attached since 1932.

At that time, Dori still served as the entrepôt for products brought in from all corners including Timbuctu, Hombori, Gao, Ansongo, Tillabery, Gotheye, Niamey, Bandiagara, Mopti, Ouahigouya, Ouagadougou, Kaya, Fada, Say; as well as Nigeria and the Gold Coast. But since the 1920s, the cotton fabrics sold were of British origin, just like the matches, the fragrances and toilet
items. Sugar, glass jewellery, hardware, fancy goods, and second-hand clothing mostly came from France. As for oil, it came from America. These new exchanges resulted from the effects of long-distance trade which used to be more important in the north-south direction. The town had about 4,000 inhabitants in the 1920s (Coutouly, 1923). However the figures from the 1943 census are globally less important and seem to denote a demographic crisis brought about by the economic crisis subsequent to the disruption of the ancient order by the colonial power. The world economic crisis also had tangible local effects such as the abolition of the colony of Upper Volta in September 1932, and the cancelling of some “land development” projects. At the time there was already a well established urban society in Dori which reflected the history of its cosmopolitan population.

THE “INDIGENOUS VILLAGE”

At that time the “old village”—the colonial term used to refer to the pre-colonial town—was made up of six neighbourhoods: an urban geography reflecting clearly the history of the encounter of the populations who have lived in Dori for at least a century (Map 2).

The neighbourhood of Debéré Gorgal borders the market, straddling the road to Ouagadougou. It is “the western neighbourhood of the captives”, the most densely populated. It is also the neighbourhood of the Emir. The Rimaibé farmers who were former slaves constituted nearly half of its population. There were also the people and relatives of the Emir, the Feroobe and the Fulani. The Songhai and Diawambe were also represented there.

The neighbourhood of Debéré Lettougal is located in the eastern part of the town. It was the “eastern slums” also populated by Rimaibé farmers, Fulani Gaobé as well as Diawambé. Retired military men and policemen from various regions had started settling there since colonization. The two Debéré—“residence of slaves”—which were formerly united, have split into two distinct neighbourhoods.

The oldest neighbourhood, Bangué Dori or Banyé-Dori meaning “on the other side of Dori” lies in the south of the town on top of the road to Ouagadougou, between the pond of Koussouniébé Mariki and that of Kollenguel Diddoma. It is the neighbourhood inhabited by the Fulani notables.5

The neighbourhood of Homboriré is characterized by its houses with flat clay roofs forming terraces. In colonial times Homboriré was the trading centre of Dori. It was the neighbourhood of the Songhai6 whose chief was a relative of the chief of Hombori, a village located in present-day Mali. This population, who had come there under the protection of Sokoto, were griots or merchants. They enjoyed relative autonomy, had their own banner and a chief for the “Touban”, the royal gong. The Songhai, the Rimaibé, the Djambé and the Fulani are also represented in the neighbourhood. They had probably followed the first Hombori there. The Emir of Dori is said to have contracted an alliance with the chief of that warlike tribe to avoid confrontation with them. Their chief was invited to settle in Dori around 1833 on the site called Debéré Sylloube occupied by a population transferred to Dangadé. It is a rich neighbourhood, with more cattle than the others. Few cultivators live there.
The fifth neighbourhood Gorel-Nâkou is located at the side of the pond of Koussounièbé Maoude. In the 1940s, this part of the town was newly built and the notable whose name it was given was still living there. It was a cosmopolitan area with the Rimaibé as the dominant group followed by the Fulani, the Songhai, the Hausa, the Yoruba who were traders, and a few Mossi who were most often craftsmen.

Finally, the sixth neighbourhood, Haoussangoré ("the place of the Hausa"), located in the most western part of the town at the end of the gardens bordering the bank of the big pond, was the smallest in population and territory. At the time the Hausa constituted no less than half of the population, followed by the Rimaibé and the Fulani. Most of the population were traders. The settlement of the Hausa in the town of Dori is recent. They came from Sokoto in Nigeria and were allowed to settle in this neighbourhood by
the Emir of the region. Gradually, the Berber families, the Djandaronge and the Yoruba from Nigeria came to settle there accompanied by the Adraronge who had come from neighbouring Niger. On their arrival, the Emir of Dori lent them lands at Dany. They went there during the rainy season to farm. It must be pointed out that, between 1932 and 1947, the northern part of the colony of Upper Volta was attached to Niger by a decision of the colonial administration, and which promoted new migrations from the east.

A COLONIAL PLACE

Between the market and the indigenous town an embryonic colonial town centred on the "Residence" grew up around the post office. Naturally, it was around this area that the modern town developed. This new power centre—the Residence, headquarters of the Commander of Dori—emerged as a rival to the old authority. Dori was also a garrison town housing the camp of the native infantry of the 4th Company of the 6th Battalion with its round huts for the tirailleurs (riflemen) and its rectangular houses for the European officers. The urban zoning quite obvious at all levels (the indigenous town/colonial town and within the latter houses for the Europeans/houses for natives) expresses a clear-cut differentiation of functions but also of social status, as well as racial and ethnic groups. The camp of the native infantry was a reminder that Dori was a town of margins and borders surrounded by a nomadic population and threatened by frequent rebellions of the Tuareg, which had necessitated since 1920 a permanent presence and control by the army. "The one who controls Dori necessarily controls the Tuareg and the whole country up to Say, and can also control the Hausa bank of the Niger river as far as the post of Sokoto" said Destenave in 1895. It was from Dori that missions for the pacification of Tuareg rebellions, as well as against religious unrest were launched. A rather peculiar colonial policy towards the nomadic population of this Sahelian area led in fact to an odd colonial management; "the attitude of the colonial administration towards the nomadic population" wrote a former colonial administrator, "was determined by a double frame of mind with partially contradictory orientations: some determination to carefully supervise, some attraction and some sympathy. These two attitudes have co-existed in us since soon after the conquest. With the passing decades the first became blurred but never disappeared; its weakening allowed the second to be freely expressed". This retrospective view particularly contrasts with the attitudes recorded in the colonial reports of that time, where adjectives such as "primitive" and "intriguing" were used without hesitation to describe the local nomadic population.

The colonial policy did not favour the economic growth of Dori, seen for a long time as a military centre and a source of tax revenues from the cattle trade. In addition, the colonial town remained distinct from the native neighbourhoods which were geographically and socially differentiated. This ethnic and social organization of the urban space is still weakly perceptible in present-day Dori.
A LIMITED LOCAL COSMOPOLITANISM

As a crossroads in the Sahel, Dori attracts, as we have shown, the population of the immediate neighbouring regions and the Niger bend. Statistics from 1943, although incomplete, showed that out of 560 families, 431 came from the Liptaako, 31 from Hombori, 16 from the Emirate of Kano, 16 from the district of Kaya, 10 from the Ader, 9 from Sokoto, 8 from the district of Ouagadougou, 7 from Bandiagara, 6 from Segou and Tillabery... Togo, Chad, Mauritania, Saint-Louis... One notices that only four families came from the neighbouring Yagha canton which seemed to have only weak economic ties with this Sahelian town. This social structure of the population shows the traditional functions of Dori, whose vocation stems from its geographical location. It is the market town for the Sahelian world. Its relations with the neighbouring rural areas can be described as “limited”. People from the sub-region come to Dori only to trade.

Dori is a cosmopolitan town but interactions among communities are still governed by collective structures marked in the geography of the town. Social intermixing is relatively rare as is shown by marriage relationships which remain, with a few exceptions, endogamous. A Hausa notable admits that his community practises endogamy in modern times. Social hierarchy is still rigid and the intermixing of cultures, even within the framework provided by the dominant Islamic religion, does not occur to any significant extent. This lack of intermixing drastically separates and specializes the various social groups in such a way that a town-dweller’s relations with the countryside are determined by his/her social position. We shall return later to this selective use of the town.

PONDS OF POVERTY

“Concerning the socio-economic organization” H. Diallo states, “a stratified society came into being right after the conquest, made up of the Fulani aristocracy, the non-aristocratic Fulani families and the free men, the stratum of craftsmen, griots and traders (all free men) and the slaves. This stratification was not the result of an evolutionary process among the Fulanis, but resulted rather from the integration of elements from different ethnic origins in the Fulani society.” This social structure which regulated the occupation of urban space was also the basis of professional specialization. It also defines the relationships of the different communities with the more or less distant countryside. Large-scale trade has turned Dori into a transit town linking the people in the north with those of the Atlantic coast. The fact that the Fulani aristocracy became sedentary town dwellers implied the creation of new relationships with the countryside and with agricultural livestock activities. The non-aristocratic Fulani families lived a semi-sedentary life and practised transhumant herding over an often limited area because they remained attached to their encampments and their farms. The Fulani elite, on the other hand, possessed numerous slaves who took care of agricultural production and herding. A section of the poor urban population was socially linked with the countryside but remained by status subservient to the urbanized Fulani aristocracy.
Urban activities therefore transformed Dori into a basically commercial town where handicrafts were also made: up to the 1940s out of a total population of 4,340 inhabitants only 1,654 were farmers and 2,234 non-farmers who practised small and medium-scale trading. Among the latter group were the Fulani notables who lived either on animal products or by renting parts of their houses to “indigenous” travellers. Other Fulani were herdsmen who were either sedentary or nomadic over short distances. One must add to these the Songhai from Hombori and the Hausa from Nigeria. The Moors and the Yoruba were also traders. Shoemakers, blacksmiths and griots could also be found in the town.

The farmers living in the town were essentially Rimaïbé of slave origin, but culturally integrated in the Fulani world. Some Hausa, Gourmantche, Songhai and Mossi who had the status of free men were also farmers. The Fulani people believed that it was only the “haabees”, “blacks” who should till the land, the more noble occupation being animal rearing. During the rainy season, the farmers who lived in the town left for the bush farms (gurüvé) and stayed there until the harvest. At the end of the planting season they returned to Dori. The movement allowed the town to maintain profitable contacts with the rural world as a result of the constant presence of farmers among the population of herdsmen and traders. These agricultural activities fed the “non-productive” social categories. Pastoral activities were practised by the Fulani and the Tuareg following an old tradition. The other ethnic groups placed their livestock, when they owned some, in the care of the Fulani. Rearing stock had long been the main source of accumulation and the basis of the local population’s participation in the large-scale trans-Saharan trade. The compulsory links of the town-dwelling Fulani with the countryside also resulted from the Fulani system of representation; any responsible person found it his duty to preserve a part of the forefathers’ pastoral tradition.

Politically the Dori Emirate controlled close to 56 neighbouring villages or wuro which were closely associated with the religious, administrative and military supervision of the territory. Within the town itself political power was exercised through the Emirate council, an institution placed under the Emir. In the countryside, each village was headed by a chief, Jooro, followed by a village overseer called the Dogre-Naba in charge of foreigners and, finally, a committee of warriors.

The villages and their inhabitants served as a strategic barrier for Dori, and also supplied the town with food. The old Emirate authority also used to levy taxes there. The establishment of political authority and the social stratification upon which it imposed its legitimacy showed a structural relationship with the countryside. Only the poorest town dwellers frequented the countryside. The nobles and the rich, even though they exercised their authority over the territory, were sedentary town dwellers.

THE SLOW DECLINE

The commercial activity which had developed since the 1830s, as a result of the expansion of the large-scale trans-Saharan trade, started to slow down under the destructive effects of the 1933–1935 crisis and World War II. Inappropriate colonial administrative policies that increased taxes on livestock
and attempted to redirect commercial movements at the expense of the British colonies considerably weakened the strong position of Dori. Moreover, this position was somewhat over-estimated by the new French conquerors. To these political reasons one must probably also add natural disasters such as epizootic disease, droughts and famines which made the economic condition of the population precarious. The consequences of these two events were an impoverishment of the petty tradesmen and a massive exodus of Fulani herdersmen toward the British colonies to escape the heavy taxes on livestock. The decline which affected the population of the town was noticed by the French administrators who underscored the situation of the Fulani, “totally impoverished since the French conquest, they have lost their habits and love of pastoral life, having sold the livestock which was their ‘raison d’être’, they appeared to give themselves up to their fate without reacting and, even in the most fortunate families, they lived on a mere pittance”.11 “In the centre of the town, according to foreign visitors in the 1940s, one could see vacant plots and houses in ruins. The beginning of the decrease in trade with the outside world was a clear sign of a decline.”12 Towards the end of the 1940s the structure of external trade underwent a change. The goods of the old trade declined considerably; slaves, salt and rugs faced strong competition from export products. The trans-Saharan trade system was disrupted and trade routes were altered to serve the new territorial and national economies. The transit of livestock declined by 100 per cent at the beginning of the 1940s in Dori where the sale of small animals had to face competition from the freer market of Markoye. Given the importance since that period of goats and sheep, livestock occupied a very important economic position. In the 1960s, the market of Dori was no longer reserved exclusively for the trade of animals. Observers noticed alongside this decline the existence of an established urban population. The decline of trans-Saharan trade forced the town to limit itself to traditional activities such as herding and handicrafts and the newly-established administrative services. Dori became less and less of a market town without ceasing to export animal products.

Cash crops, which did not develop as a result of pressure from the colonial administration, appeared in the 1970s. Cotton and peanuts were grown in the areas where herding was not practised. The major droughts which struck the Sahelian region so hard in the 1970s reduced and dispersed the herds depriving the capital city of the Liptaako region of the commercial activities which were the basis of its prosperity. As G. Brasseur put it: “The scarcity of millet corresponds to a decrease in animal products and their massive exodus resulting in impoverishment.”13 Has the town maintained the same social structure? Has development brought with it a new agenda of urban–rural relationships? The countryside, as a support for the economic development of the town, and which has been severely effected by a harsh climate, seems to have very limited potential.

DORI TODAY—PERMANENCE OR CHANGE?

Present-day Dori, still located on its original site, had a population of 3,940 inhabitants according to the 1985 census. A new neighbourhood was created in the 1970s called Hamdalaye or “Sandou ville” after the name of the
former MP who distributed plots of land to his supporters. Although it belongs to local people this new sector was inhabited by Bellah and neo-town dwellers recently arrived from the neighbouring countryside. The first parceling out operations started in 1959 and were completed in 1961; 1,000 plots were made available to the inhabitants. A second estate of 458 plots was developed in 1984. Some spontaneous settlements have appeared in the southeast, and in Sector 2 (beyond the slaughter-house, at the Bellah encampment), and in Sector 4. The commune of Dori also includes 11 villages.

The town is the capital of Seno Province and therefore contains various administrative services. The collective amenities in the town consist of a big central market and two small neighbourhood markets. The town is also served by a landing strip and has a lorry terminal. In addition to the big central mosque and five smaller neighbourhood ones, the town of Dori, which is inhabited mostly by Muslims, also has a Catholic Church and two Protestant Churches. As a modern town, Dori has running water, electricity and telephone services.

But the modern Dori lives on the memories of its former power and glory. The town is in a state of decline.14 Even though it is not the aim of this study to analyze the conditions for this deterioration, we cannot ignore the fact that it is intrinsic to the formulation of new relationships with the countryside. The era, today long gone, of the city’s greatness and the social domination of the Fulani is still fresh in people’s minds. According to one member of the Fulani aristocracy “at that time, the various ethnic groups lived in perfect harmony with one another because each had its place and therefore its tradition. Now that this tradition has been ransacked by politics, you can see the result...”. How and in what direction has the weight of this historical development affected the present behaviour of the inhabitants of the town? The reader will have noticed that our historical review stops with the era of decline. The post-war period has just accelerated this trend. Since Independence, Dori has certainly acquired some infrastructure and maintained its status as the capital town of the province but there has not been an economic revival to give it back its past glory. On the social level, urban life is still regulated by the same sluggishness.

History and culture are still very much present in the contemporary life of the people, especially in the persistence of spatial occupation of urban space. The ethnic distribution of the neighbourhoods is maintained, but increasingly, following the local urban tradition, other groups try to upset the old Fulani domination. The Fulani complain about it. “To relinquish our hold over Dori...? For the time being, we dominate the other ethnic groups”, claims a notable close to the Emirate. One thing is certain. The end of large-scale trading activities and the collapse of the internal hierarchy, which excludes more and more social specialization, compel the town to change. Concerning Dori’s relationships with the countryside, the traditions and the demands of the new economy reduce the urban hold. The inhabitants, like those of the other secondary centres, aspire to a life in a bigger town. Formerly defined by the social structure, urban–rural relationships are reformulated, without ever disappearing, through new daily urban activities. An informant confirms: “almost all the inhabitants of Dori have their fields here. There are some who still have fields in their villages, but they are no longer so
many. And very often when they have fields in the villages there is someone who takes care of everything. As for the owners, they only have to send the necessary money which their representative uses to hire hands. It is only at harvest time that they go personally to the villages to see what the fields have actually produced." This type of relationship with neighbouring rural areas is also reflected in herding activities. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to see urban households which keep some animals in their homes. "People keep those animals because they tell themselves: "I would like to have something close by... Otherwise they are obliged to place them in other people's charge in the villages." A government official describes the situation: "Everyone has his animals in his house and in the morning there are animals streaming out of everywhere all over the town. They are gathered at a common point from where they are driven to the bush by a herdsman. All this because traditionally that's how it is." Today the town is said to house more than 6,000 head of cattle. Villagers, on the other hand, use the town more and more frequently. According to another informant: "The villagers are always here, especially because of the central market in Dori; and even the fact that other villages have small markets does not solve the problem. They still have to come here to run their various errands, and above all to buy foodstuffs during the difficult pre-harvest periods." We have noticed that, during that period of crisis, the families remain united but household activities are re-assigned. Thus the ba-bâdi, the heads of extended families, assign the feeding of the livestock and farming to the ba-soudi who are heads of nuclear families but who have too little means to claim any form of independence. The ancestral social hierarchy itself is being challenged. The social strata which were formerly powerless and dominated, acquired some rare resources such as livestock and foodstuffs thanks to the drought in the 1970s. The Fulani who were excluded from farming by their culture had to barter animals for cereals in order to survive. These transactions have allowed a relative shift of wealth from one social stratum to another. This helps to interpret the remarks made by a Fulani notable: ".... The future is in fact uncertain because, there are many ethnic groups here who have material power. With this power, they can change everything." It should be mentioned that the urban crisis pushes a few town dwellers into returning to the countryside: "Those who cannot live in the town are bound to return to the village."

Dori has nevertheless retained its Sahelian charm and the former magnificence of its architecture remains impressive. Our study will now look at the way in which today's inhabitants live and perceive urban realities and the nature of their relationship with the countryside. The past cannot explain everything. The current way of life is rooted in a logic deriving from the contradictions of ongoing social changes.

THE TOWN AND ITS INHABITANTS TODAY

One of the difficulties encountered when undertaking the study of a secondary "town" is how to characterize it. The criteria generally used are often inappropriate and constantly leave room for misunderstanding both analytically and methodologically. Unless this problem is resolved, it will complicate the analyst's task and affect the result of his or her work. We have chosen
here to take into account as far as possible the definitions that the inhabitants of Dori give to their agglomeration. Is Dori, the former capital of the Liptako, a town? This straightforward question receives various answers with different shades of meaning. Only a small percentage consider that Dori does not deserve to be called a town, given the level of its infrastructure, its modest population and the small size of its market. One notices that this view is held by those who have been to large towns such as Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, or other towns abroad.

Although Dori is a “town” for the majority of the people interviewed, the criteria used are never the same. For a great number of them there is sufficient infrastructure to make it a town. For others, it is the area and the size of the urban centre which makes it a town. A final group emphasizes the fact that it is an old settlement which is the seat of the administrative authority, with a relatively important market. However, Dori is characterized as a town above all by those natives of neighbouring secondary towns like Ouahigouya, Djibo, Pouytenga, Kaya or Zorgo.

People seem to base the identity of the town and the related life style on the development of urban infrastructure. The interest attached to the town depends, in fact, on the way in which the town can measure up to the expectations of various categories of town dwellers. Government officials measure urbanity using two major criteria: the infrastructure and the population. These criteria are also shared by traders, drivers and housewives. Military men take into account only the size of the resident population while craftsmen and farmers only look at the infrastructure.

We should add that it is not only people’s experience of urban geography as mentioned earlier, but also the nature of their activities that shapes their perception of the town. For instance, it is easy to understand the importance of the local rural market for craftsmen still engaged in traditional market exchange, although this kind of transaction has very little influence on traders involved in day-to-day urban life, and free from the uncertainties of periodic markets. Administration and health facilities are found to be key characteristics by that part of the urban population which principally has a “utilitarian” relationship with the town, and this instrumental view concerns the modern activities which the town can already offer.

Another distinguishing characteristic of this urbanity is geographical origin. Depending on their region of origin, the new town dwellers perceive the urban reality differently. Marginally, the inhabitants of relatively important urban centres use architecture as a criterion of urbanity. The two main criteria are the existing infrastructure and the size of the resident population. Besides the professionally-based opinions which, as already noted, just emphasize the importance of the market or the administration, the two criteria mentioned above clearly dominate. These differences find further bases on social identities such as ethnicity, age, education and sex. The major trends are confirmed for ethnic group but not for gender. A good proportion of women prefer the criterion of population and minimize the importance of infrastructure on urbanity. We must also note here a slight trend among those aged 20–39 also to favour population. On the basis of these general criteria, can Dori be considered a town? People massively say “yes” on the basis of the infrastructure and the population size which clearly distinguishes it from
a village. On the question of whether Dori is an urban settlement, only a tiny minority do not give it this status. However, education does not affect the trends in the answers as much as one would expect. When we use this variable, we notice that those who answered “no” were people with an education who undoubtedly have the means for a comparison.

While it is easy to understand the significance of the demographic criterion, it is on the other hand more difficult to agree straightaway on the rather imprecise notion of “infrastructure”. Running water, electricity and health amenities are the main elements mentioned under infrastructure. Both men and women agree on this definition, slightly modified by a strong masculine preference for “leisure” amenities such as cinemas, bars, night clubs and inns. Professional positions have little influence on these definitions. However, it is hardly surprising if “entertainment” facilities, as urban features, are not given a high rating by labourers and farmers. The definition of urbanity involves at the same time, a certain vision of the countryside as the opposite of the town. Urban criteria are meant to represent what the countryside cannot be.

The identity of urban space is built around the realities of the daily relationships of its inhabitants. This urban sociability should be central to an analysis of intermediate towns, such as Dori, because it is on these that the most ordinary constraints on urban life and its relationships with neighbouring regions rest. From our study it appears that the inhabitants of Dori build their urban relationships according to ethnically- or professionally-based preferences and also according to age.

It is understandable that sex, in this Muslim community, is a discriminatory factor in social relations. Beyond this old integrated circle there is an opening up through education and modern professions. When we asked people about professions with good prospects, the answers were as follows: the indigenous population of Dori mentioned in first place trade and commerce, then agriculture, followed by administration and handicrafts, and lastly, herding. These results show a tendency for a shift in preferences from traditional activities, such as herding, toward those which give more immediate financial gains. The same observation is confirmed by the non-local population of Dori who think that, in order of importance, trade and commerce, agriculture, administration and handicrafts are the major occupations of the future. Education, age and sex do not considerably change these trends.

Not unlike the population of Dori during its period of glory, today’s urban dwellers do not seem to have significantly changed their attitudes toward urbanity, and despite everything, only 21 per cent of people interviewed want to leave the town, whereas 79 per cent want to stay. Family links, jobs and acquired habits keep a good number of the inhabitants in Dori. Regarding the destination of potential departees, we found that they would head toward urban centres, primarily towards Ouagadougou, the capital of the country, or to Abidjan, the neighbouring Ivorian capital and, in trickles, towards nearby intermediate towns like Djibo, Gorom-Gorom, Kaya, and Pouytenga. A significant drift is also noticed beyond Ouagadougou toward other rural areas in order to join relatives, to cope with the cost of living, or to make one’s fortune. The countryside, on the other hand, becomes an alternative for a good many urban dwellers. Faced with the crisis that has struck the town, its inhabitants see the countryside as a refuge which can offer remedies to the
most crucial urban problems. The advantages associated with country life are above all material ones. It offers cheaper foodstuffs and helps to save money. Moreover, the countryside remains a symbol of tranquility, security, solidarity and respect for others. It is a place where human relations are still intact. But this attraction goes hand in hand with some drawbacks which counterbalance it. In the countryside, there are no health centres. It remains a place of isolation with little leisure activities and entertainment, and where boredom reigns. The drought and famine that it experiences makes the place more fearsome than town and definitely difficult to live in.

THE COUNTRYSIDE—A REDISCOVERY IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

Current urban relations show a reinforcement or at least a maintenance of local and social links based on traditional parameters; ethnic group, sex and age influence the choice of relationships, but new criteria such as level of education and profession are also perceived to affect intra- and extra-urban relationships. While the surrounding villages no longer serve as security zones for Dori, town dwellers have, nevertheless, maintained production links with them.

Eighty per cent of visits by townspeople to the countryside are for purposes of crop production and livestock herding. In fact, some inhabitants of Dori have always maintained relationships with the countryside. These relations were often indirect, through the former use of slave labour. The local notables had farms on which slaves worked for them. “There were many places where people went to farm. And we still have slaves staying at these places”, a Songhai notable confirmed. This occupation of the countryside is supervised according to a hierarchy handed down by history. The Fulani are the lords of the land and no other community could have access to it without their agreement—at least until recently. The Bellah farmers do not have lands: “We do not have farms besides the ones lent us ... this is how it is. Wherever the Bellah settles, he asks his host for land”. A Hausa resident declared “if you see anyone of us owning a farm, it means that we have bought it.” The price of a plot of land is increasing considerably and the crisis compels the owners to sell. During our stay in Dori, an average-size farm could cost up to 50,000 CFA Franc.

The town dwellers of Dori have always needed the countryside, immediate or distant. Being a Sahelian town, it receives its food from the rural world. The inhabitants of the town continue to grow crops and practise herding; the proportions of the studied population engaged in these activities are respectively 84 per cent and 13 per cent. In this agricultural interaction the indigenous urban population represents the highest percentage with about 73 per cent of town dwellers paying visits to rural areas. Some of them go there to “supervise the workers”, perhaps former slaves. A significant proportion of the town dwellers have “families” living in the countryside. This traditional town-village interaction explains the age and regularity shown in these relationships. Their regularity is shown by the frequency of the visits to harvest or collect agricultural products to supply the town or to compensate for food shortages there. The sphere of these activities rarely exceeds 20 km around the town; the countryside of the city is a countryside of proximity.
The relationship can be contextualised within the traditional practices of transhumance among the Toroobe Fulani herdsman. The results of our survey show that over 66 per cent of contacts with neighbouring rural regions had been established "since time immemorial". These relationships with the countryside become less marked as people work their way up the modern educational ladder. Education, which often induces an exodus towards the large metropoles of the country or abroad, can serve as an index of social alienation with regard to the traditional way of life and norms. It is mostly men who are the main actors of this rural practice. Our survey also reveals that these relationships with the countryside concern primarily the Fulani and, to a lesser extent, some traditional Bellah farmers. Following the crisis which is pushing the town towards a decline, the countryside is not however an ideal recourse; for many town dwellers it has lost its attractiveness, if it ever had any at all. Thus, whenever one decides to leave the town, one often heads to another town. It can be noted that some civil servants use the countryside for recreational activities and this is regardless of their professional origin.

The above discussion shows that Dori is no longer at the heart of a vast exchange movement and that contacts with the external world are maintained thanks to family links and the flight of its native population which, however, remains strongly attached to its roots.

HOW CAN WE CONCLUDE?

How can one study the realities of the relationships between what people call a town and the countryside in the case of Dori, a town in the Sahel? This question is not simple because there are two major obstacles facing anyone attempting to address it. The history of Dori has revealed social modes of spatial inscription that determine the type of urban–rural linkage. The town of Dori, as any other town, is first and foremost a congruence of social practices, historically built up, which gives it a form and an identity. When considering the town/countryside dichotomy one has to perhaps also think of social practices modified within less rigidly limited spaces. Basically, identifying the sociological conditions of urban practices amounts to analyzing the impetus of modernisation and assessing social change at the interface of the ongoing social recomposition. Today the town of Dori still keeps its Sahelian features although it is frozen in its economic and social inertia. Projects for the development of intermediate towns in Burkina Faso are geared towards creating a certain number of activities by means of large investments. However, the prosperity of yesteryear is more difficult to regain. The social networks which bear the economic dynamism of Dori are not easily dissolved. Culturally attached to pastoralism which served in the past as the foundation of trading networks, the majority of the inhabitants of Dori are probably expecting to find a place within the new economic order which simultaneously marginalizes their town. In this context of expectation, Dori is inward-looking and maintains its cultural and economic ties within the space of ponds and the pasture lands which feeds it.
Notes

1 Legend has it that, being forced to leave Koumari as a result of a dispute about succession, the ancestor of the Feroobe clan and his followers, on the advice of a marabout, followed a black bull who, according to the predictions of the marabout would lie down and die on the banks of the pond at Dori where the travellers were to settle.

2 According to certain sources it was more a case of a métis Songhai aristocracy from Houndougou.

3 Oral sources recount that after victory over the Gourmantche a problem over the choice of ruling clan arose between the “Toro dos”, the “Ferodjos” and the “Badjos”. A drawing of lots skillfully carried out by the godfather Dan Fodjo pointed to the “Ferodjos” who, it seems, had the weakest claim to command. Before becoming an emirate during the reign of Birma-ly-salapadé the ruler of Dori was only the head of the district of the Sokoto to whom he paid tribute. This theory is rejected by A.H. Bâ who states that the cheikh of the Sokoto “has never exercised any temporal power there whatsoever” and that this was only a case of a straightforward religious influence. “It was the king of this country” he wrote, “who, because of his piety, placed his kingdom under the religious authority of the Cheikh.”


5 Remarks made by colonial administrators on the subject of the instability of Fulani families must be related to the situation of economic crisis which affected the former masters of the Liptako. Totally impoverished by the French conquest, forced into a sedentary life style, gradually selling off the cattle which were their wealth, they seemed to be supplanted by other groups such as the Songhai or others who in turn were favoured by the new masters.

6 It seems that the installation of these new arrivals was connected with a desire for political control. “The Hombori arrived with their drum (the royal gong). They were placed in the middle of the village... as you know, it is not possible to have two powers in the same village. If the Hombori had been placed elsewhere they would have taken up arms. That is why they were confined to the middle of the town. They had, in fact, arrived with a lot of people headed by a chief with the title of Hombori-koi”, according to Hamidou Ousman, head of the Debéré-Lettougal ward.


10 It must be emphasised here that colonial statistics are not always reliable on this question of the population’s activities. Families where one or more members practised agriculture were compelled under colonial tutelage to store millet in reserve granaries, in case of scarcity. This arrangement of the colonial administration leads us today to suspend those demographic divisions based on the data mutilated by the anti-colonial strategies of the population.

11 Report on the census of the urban area of Dori, Niger colony, No. 587, 8 November 1943.


14 Dori is one of the ten intermediate towns of the “intermediate towns” programme whose aims are to develop urban facilities and accelerate the economic dynamics of urban centres. Through this programme Dori should receive 1,992 million CFA Franc. See Traoré Nouou “Le programme ‘villes moyennes’ du Burkina Faso”; and Bonou Yérébé Victorien “Le programme d’investissement dans le cadre du programme de développement de dix villes moyennes au Burkina Faso”, in E. Lebris and H. Giamirrapani (eds.), “Maitriser le développement urbain en Afrique sous-saharienne”, Actes du colloque de Ouagadougou, October 1990, Paris: ORSTOM.

15 From the very beginning of their colonisation, the French were determined to treat equally the “indigenous population”. Bâ tells of the drama in the village of N’Djomba, inhabited by Rimaïbé and where Fulani had been obliged to do forced labour. This insult resulted in numerous casualties (Bâ, 1994:173).
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What Solutions to the “Antagonistic” Urban−Rural Relationship?
The Ouagadougou Suburb Project

Basilisa Sanou

The population growth rate in Burkina Faso has been very high over the past two decades. According to the last population census conducted in 1985, the population growth rate for the entire country was 2.68 per cent; 9.4 per cent for Ouagadougou and 7 per cent for Bobo-Dioulasso. Thus population growth rates in these two towns far exceeded the average national growth rate. One of the repercussions of this situation is the pressure exerted by town dwellers on arable land in the suburbs whose populations are already faced with serious problems.

Even though the majority of the Burkinabè population live in rural areas, towns play an important administrative, political and economic role in the life of the country. For economic reasons, the population migrates towards neighbouring countries. The same reason explains internal migratory flows towards the major towns, particularly Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso—respectively the political capital and economic capital of the country. Added to this, are the specific internal dynamics of each town.

The expansion of Ouagadougou is due not only to a high natural growth rate but also, and particularly, to an ever-increasing rate of immigration resulting from rural exodus. Towns in Burkina Faso, like in many other African countries, are provided with physical and welfare infrastructure, whereas in the countryside such facilities as health care, education, good communication, safe drinking water, electricity, and so on, are poor. The outcome of such a situation is the congregation of jobless or underemployed people on the outskirts of town creating spontaneous habitats, the control of which eludes public authorities. Eventually, the town invades the countryside by expansion and absorbs surrounding villages.

Confronted with this situation, the state, with financial assistance from partners in the Netherlands, set up, between 1979 and 1990, a system to restructure spontaneous habitat through gradual development with a view to securing land, providing urban infrastructure and other necessary facilities for the benefit of these populations. Despite this initiative the town only kept on increasing in area with the result that spontaneous habitat on its outskirts
increased at an alarming rate. Setting up a green belt was another attempt to curb the expansion of the town. This was also to no avail since the green belt was to be found within the city!

Developing the suburbs of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso then became a way to settle the populations of these two large towns and to control rural exodus — the cause of numerous social problems in towns.

There is a nation-wide development programme drawn up for 10 intermediate towns. One of the primary objectives of this programme is to bridge the gap between the principal metropolises (Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso) and the intermediate towns by providing the latter with infrastructure and services likely to sustain and strengthen their development.

We observe that urban—rural relationships are rather ambiguous. Ambiguous in the sense that the traditional antagonistic perspective presents the town as a consumer of the active labour force of the countryside, and encroacher of rural lands and as a stamping ground for maladjusted rural folk. It will therefore be convenient to look at it beyond this perspective.

In actual fact, urban—rural relations can be described as symbiotic: the surrounding villages supply market gardening products, fruit, farm produce (vegetables, groundnuts, maize) and fuelwood.

Surveys conducted at Bassiyam, Sabtenga and Zagtouli in 1985 within the purview of the Development Scheme for the Suburbs of Ouagadougou (SABO), gave the following reasons (in decreasing order) for the movement of people:

- sale or purchase of market gardening products
- sale of fuelwood
- sale or purchase of small livestock
- others reasons

Nonetheless, there are other reasons which should not be overlooked. As the town attracts the village, the village also attracts the town. The importance of the village to urban dwellers can be illustrated by the following examples:

- The attraction of city dwellers to roast pork restaurants found in surrounding villages, at weekends. To illustrate this phenomenon, during a survey conducted by Achille Ouedraogo (1994), restaurant owners revealed to him that on Saturdays and Sundays each of them can make more than 150,000 CFA Franc through the sale of roast pork.
- Visits to marabouts and other seers in surrounding villages by mainly city dwellers. They take advantage of weekends to go for consultations.
- Some city dwellers go to suburban villages for various reasons. For example, recreational purposes, visiting local markets for their supplies, fishing, picking wild fruit or simply enjoying fresh country air.

In the opposite direction, i.e. movement from countryside to town, the following examples can be cited.

Apart from for the sale of products, rural people go to town for many reasons:

- Visits to places of worship in town: Muslims on Fridays and Christians on Sundays. They also take the opportunity to attend to other matters like visiting relatives.
– Some village inhabitants come to town to solve health and administrative problems.
– Young people living in surrounding villages go to town for entertainment, for example, the cinema.

Control over development of the capital necessitated the implementation of development programmes in surrounding villages. These programmes take into account urban–rural relationships, often presented as antagonistic, with a view to creating a complementarity and especially mitigating these antagonistic relations. This is made possible by the creation of economic, social and educational infrastructures characteristic of towns with a view to:

– attaining food self-sufficiency,
– introducing recreation activities,
– establishing a pleasant environment for rural inhabitants and also city dwellers who want to retire to the countryside to enjoy these benefits.

BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUBURBS OF OUAGADOUGOU

The improvement in the relationship between Ouagadougou and surrounding suburban villages is of concern to the authorities. This explains why the development of the suburbs was perceived as a logical continuation of the Urban Development Scheme. Designed to permit and facilitate complementarity between Ouagadougou and its suburbs, this development scheme has gone through several stages which we will present in this chapter.

Development scheme for the suburbs of Ouagadougou (SABO)

One of the strategies in the search for a balance between the town and its suburbs was the implementation of a number of development programmes, especially in the suburbs under the day-to-day jurisdiction of the principal centres.

The first phase of SABO consisted in a study of the socio-economic environment of the suburbs. SABO was a logical complement to the Urbanization and Development Master Plan (SDAU)² which had the following objectives:

– To better understand the development of the capital city through the control of spontaneous habitat construction (disorderly expansion of the town);
– To supply the city with farm produce, particularly market-gardening produce.

This would encourage the rural populations to stay in their villages or in the village-centres by strengthening their means of existence through access to education, construction of schools, construction of and equipment for health centres, access to public transport, etc.

To achieve these objectives, there was a need to define the use and management of land in the project area, delimiting areas to be reserved for:

– village-centres (public infrastructure, roads, housing, trading facilities,
cottage industries);
- production of food;
- cultivation of market garden produce;
- grazing zones;
- reforestation zones.

The SABO project zone stretches over an area of about 2.5 km around the city and includes 101 villages of varying sizes grouped into village-centres. It is an area which suffers from a high rate of migration to Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, the rate of rural exodus to Ouagadougou is equally alarming.

Production of millet and sorghum is the main agricultural activity in this area. Trade links between the project villages are not developed: very little of their produce is exchanged among themselves and their excess production is sold in Ouagadougou.

The SABO aims at:
- contributing to the restoration of economic balance;
- improving the quality of life by building essential facilities;
- promoting local economic activities (trade, market gardening, village agro-forestry);
- developing 10 villages (to be selected on the merits of their socio-economic roles).

This last objective has culminated in the setting up and implementation of a project entitled: “Village-centres/Suburbs of Ouagadougou Project” (PVCBO)\(^3\) which started in 1990.

**The Village-Centres/Suburbs of Ouagadougou Project (PVCBO)**

The PVCBO is the result of studies and the concrete expression of the objectives of the Development Scheme for the Suburbs of Ouagadougou (SABO) which consists of selecting 10 villages as “centres of attraction”, each of which, in turn, will cover some ten other villages thus helping to achieve total coverage of the 101 villages in the suburbs of Ouagadougou. They are to serve as the driving force of development for other small villages. The selection of these village-centres was made on the basis of their socio-economic importance. The 10 village-centres are shown in Map 1.

Some main characteristics of these 10 villages can be itemized as follows:

**Bassiyyam-Kienfangué**

Bassiyyam-Kienfangué, 13 km from Ouagadougou, is comprised of two adjacent villages. According to the 1985 population census Bassiyyam had 864 inhabitants and Kienfangué 1,640, which gives a total of 2,504 inhabitants in the two villages. In 1992 the population was estimated at 3,020.

Livestock breeding and market gardening are the main economic activities. This village is provided with 17 boreholes and 17 wells fitted with pipes.
Map 1. *Zone of operations of PVCBO*

![Map of Ouagadougou region](image)

*Source: Village-Centres/Suburbs of Ouagadougou. Mid-way evaluation report.*

**Doundoulma**

Doundoulma is located about 20 km from Ouagadougou. According to the 1985 population census, it had 1,772 inhabitants. The population was estimated in 1992 at 2,135.

**Kamboincé**

Kamboincé is very near Ouagadougou, a mere 4 km away. In 1985, the population stood at 4,881 and 5,880 according to 1992 estimates. In terms of
water infrastructure, Kamboincé is blessed with 10 boreholes, and 4 traditional wells. The population lives mainly on revenue from market garden produce.

**Komsilga**

Lying some 25 km from Ouagadougou, Komsilga totalled 1,190 and 1,435 inhabitants in 1985 and 1992 respectively. Together with its 4 surrounding villages, the population of Komsilga, according to 1992 estimates, was 4,850. There are 25 boreholes and 10 wells equipped with pipes. Market gardening remains, without doubt, the main economic activity in this village.

**Koubri-Nagbangré**

The location of this village 19 km from Ouagadougou and along a major road, is the cause of the current high level of development of Koubri-Nagbangré. Its population was 6,145 in 1985 and about 7,400 in 1992. The main source of village income is the sale of produce from market gardening — the dominant economic activity.

**Loumbila**

Loumbila village is located 17 km from Ouagadougou. The village is divided into two by a large permanent dam which is the main economic attraction of the village. The National Training College for Primary School Teachers and a secondary school for girls have facilitated the economic and demographic development of the village which had a population of 1,727 in 1985 and about 3,000 in 1992.

**Saaba**

Saaba is one of the village-centres nearest (4 km) to Ouagadougou. Its population was 2,029 in 1985 and 3,000 in 1992. This village-centre has 2 small dams. The dominant economic activities are market gardening and farming.

**Tanghin-Dassouri**

This is the largest of the 10 village-centres. In 1985, it had 6,408 inhabitants and 7,720 in 1992. Its economic development is well advanced and it has 3 dams, 59 boreholes and 82 traditional wells. The main income source is from the sale of market garden produce.

**Tanlargin**

With a population of 1,965 in 1985 and 2,370 in 1992, Tanlargin has 2 dams, 9 boreholes and 4 wells. The main economic activity in the area is market gardening.
Zagtouli

Located about 5 km from Ouagadougou, this village had 2,855 inhabitants in 1985 and 3,440 in 1992. Its geographical location is the cause of its rapid economic growth. Zagtouli has one dam (in a deplorable state), 6 boreholes, 2 wells fitted with pipes and 7 modern wells. The main source of income is market gardening.

As can be realized almost all the 10 village-centres live basically on incomes from market gardening, which is, by far, the dominant economic activity. This state of affairs articulates in concrete terms the interdependent relationship existing between Ouagadougou and its suburbs because the market-garden produce is sold in the town.

The PVCBO has many components of which the major ones are the following:

- Development of the rural areas in order to raise the quality of life of the rural population to that of city dwellers, who may want to retire to the countryside to escape the stress of city life;
- Improvement of the populations' means of existence by encouraging them to undertake small-scale economic activities which improves household economies. This can be achieved by promoting and facilitating the sale of their produce;
- Rehabilitation of paths or roads linking the villages to facilitate communication among them;
- Safeguarding of the environment including reafforestation.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PVCBO PROJECT

Studies

Preliminary work on the different activities of the project consisted of several studies, of which the main ones are:

- The study of the development plans of the Kamboincé, Koubri, Tanghin-Dassouri and Saaba markets;
- The study of the possibilities of loan refunding and market management;
- The design of plans for the development of 9 to 10 groups of village-centres;
- The feasibility study of profitable exploitation of potable water from boreholes;
- The study of inter-village roads linking the village-centres;
- Finally, there is a study of the evaluation of PVCBO which was completed in September 1992.

These studies were followed by a plan for Doundoulma, the study on the rehabilitation of the path linking Komsilga and Saponé, the mapping out a plan for the parcelling out of Kamboincé, Saaba and Zagtouli.
Infrastructure

Many villages have benefited from infrastructure built through the implementation of this project. In 1992, the PVCBO constructed a path and other works to link Tanghin-Dassouri and Koubri as part of a road rehabilitation programme. Roads were also constructed at Zagtouli, Tanlargin and Saaba.

In the borehole construction/rehabilitation component, the project has sunk a borehole at Loumbila and rehabilitated an existing one at Tanghin-Dassouri.

Regarding the development component, the project has designed plans for development in groups thus indicating in the first phase, the main orientation of the development scheme, taking into account the natural and man-made constraints on the site (water courses, sacred sites, thickets). The second phase of the project consists in implementing the parceling plan. Villages nearest to Ouagadougou (Zagtouli, Saaba, Kamboincé) will be parcelled out during the first phase.

The project rehabilitated the Koubri, Tanlargin and Tanghin-Dassouri markets. The rehabilitation work consisted in dividing up the market areas into plots of different sizes to be used as sales points, depending on the use to which they are assigned (shops, stalls, etc.).

Trees have been planted along the completed path (Tanghin-Dassouri) and in the markets at Koubri, Tanlargin, Bassyam/Kienfangué and Komsilga.

Public and other facilities

The distribution of public facilities was done on the basis of needs expressed by the populations. The following was achieved:

- Table-benches for the benefit of the primary schools of Goundry (Loumbila) and Tanlargin;
- Beds for the Tanlargin maternity unit;
- Construction of domestic science and literacy centres at Doundoulma, Tanghin-Dassouri and Saaba;
- Construction of a school library at Zagtouli;
- Construction of school buildings to reinforce existing ones at Tanlargin, a dispensary at Komsilga and a maternity unit at Zagtouli;
- Construction of a livestock immunization centre at Bassyam/Kienfangué;
- Construction of public latrines in the markets of Tanlargin, Koubri, Tanghin-Dassouri, Kamboincé and Zagtouli.

Micro-projects

This programme is well under way in the 10 village-centres. It involves funding and monitoring of micro-projects by village groups who define the objective of the loan, its amount, its maturity period and repayment period. To be eligible the village groups applying for loans must meet the following criteria:

1. The group must be dynamic;
2. It must be well versed in the type of activity it plans to carry out;
3. Each group applying for a loan must open a savings account at the National Agricultural Savings Bank (CNCA). Upon satisfaction of the above conditions, the groups undergo two selection tests: the first one conducted by the PVCBO and the second by CNCA.

The PVCBO selection criteria are the following:

- applications for funding must have been approved by the local administrative authorities;
- the micro-project must, directly or indirectly, be beneficial to as many people as possible;
- the productivity of the micro-project;
- the micro-project must be the work of persons residing or planning to reside in the village-centres;
- preference to be given to micro-projects undertaken by women;
- the contribution of the PVCBO must be included as pre-financing.

For its part, the CNCA is willing to finance a micro-project on the grounds of:

- the strong determination and experience of beneficiaries;
- the economic viability of the activities to be financed;
- the official recognition of the group by the administration.

4. The group must be composed of a minimum of 15 members to avoid fictitious groupings;

5. The groups must choose their own repayment modalities. Generally, loans are either spread over 12 months for small-scale businesses or over 24 months (grain mills, etc.) repayable quarterly or half-yearly;

6. Except in the case of grinding mills, loans are granted to individuals in a group depending on their capacity and how much each applies for.

CNCA requires a personal contribution equal to 20 per cent of the amount applied for.

It should be mentioned that in conformity with the legislation of the Central Bank for West African States (BCEAO), interest rates applicable to customers at the CNCA—the bank in charge of funds for micro-projects—as from September 1, 1992 are as follows:

Requirements for legal bodies:

- 13 per cent: loans for animal traction
- 14 per cent: other medium-term loans
- 15 per cent: short-term loans

Requirements for private individuals:

- 15 per cent for medium-term loans
- 16 per cent for short-term loans.

The groups pay only 5 per cent of the interest while the remainder is subsidised by the project.
A number of micro-projects have been set up in some village-centres, for example:

- installation of grain mills at Saaba and Kuirtyoghin-Loumbila;
- establishment of experimental farms at:
  - Zagtouli (pig rearing)
  - Goundry, Loumbila (poultry rearing)
- launching of several groups in the various village-centres:
  - local beer (dolo) brewing groups,
  - women’s groups to manage grinding mills,
  - market gardening groups, etc.

It should also be noted that the recovery of loans had already started at the beginning of 1993. As an example, money borrowed for the development of the Tanghin-Dassouri market (2,262,937 CFA Franc) and Koubri market (500,000 CFA Franc) was repaid by May 1993.

The rate of recovery of loans granted to the villages within the micro-projects scheme is estimated at 70 per cent. Insofar as PVCBO is not the only body working with the populations involved, it is imperative that it collaborate with the other organizations already in the field, such as:

- The CNCA for the financial management of micro-projects;
- The “Association Long Live the Peasants” (AVLP): a Saponé-based development association working in villages in the Saponé, Kayao and Komsilga districts.

In a draft agreement signed by PVCBO and AVLP in November 1992, the latter commits itself to implementing a reforestation programme by running the sensitization campaign, serving as a supportive body to the organization and execution of activities and accepting to coordinate and monitor the evaluation of works carried out at Komsilga and Bassiyan/Kienfangué.

For its part, the PVCBO undertakes to place at the disposal of AVLP the requisite funds for carrying out activities and to ensure field monitoring and final evaluation of the activities.

- The National Wells and Boreholes Corporation (ONPF) for the implementation of the village water supply/borehole and safe-drinking water supply component with a view to sinking a borehole technically equipped to produce safe drinking water for sale.
- The Village Poultry Farming Development Project which is in charge of training village groupings in experimental poultry farming (hencoops at Goundry/Loumbila).

It can be seen that the PVCBO has jointly helped in the implementation of micro-projects with governmental and non-governmental bodies. For the project designers it is a matter of incorporating it into a broader rural development policy. The skill of its partners and interest shown by the targeted populations make one believe that the project is going to satisfy true needs—the needs of establishing a way of life which will encourage the populations to stay in the rural areas.
ANALYSIS OF PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The project has helped to build infrastructure in quite a number of areas with the sole aim of improving village living conditions. But then, the question one may ask is, has the project been able to cover all areas of life as it claims? What we have to do is to analyze achievements by asking whether the project has actually contributed to settling and maintaining the rural populations in their original homes by reducing their desire to leave the village for the town.

We shall take up, first and foremost, the positive contribution of the Project achievements and secondly we shall ask ourselves if these achievements could not be extended to other areas.

Positive achievements

This section will focus on the analysis of the positive impact of the Project achievements through its different components:

Infrastructure: The construction and improvement of roads has undoubtedly facilitated inter-village relationships through trade exchanges between villages. Among other things through:

- Buying and selling of farm produce, both between villages and from the village to Ouagadougou.
- Improving accessibility to such community services as dispensaries, maternity units, schools etc.

Public and other facilities: Building schools, maternity units, dispensaries, etc. and furnishing them with tables, benches and health equipment make a considerable contribution to solving the health and education problems facing the populations.

As for boreholes, they help solve the acute water problem in the villages, which in turn facilitates the development of livestock breeding and market gardening—important sources of income for those involved.

We should also stress the considerable contribution made by these water holes to the improvement of the living conditions of the populations in general (access to safe drinking water) and women, in particular. They reduce the fatigue of women who generally walk tens of kilometres for water whose quality and availability leaves a lot to be desired.

Micro-projects: This component of the PVCBO is important for it has many advantages:

- With loans granted, each group or individual beneficiary is able to carry out income-generating activities (like market gardening, animal rearing, sale of dolo—local beer—soumbala, rice, etc.) which earn them some income to enable them to attend to their needs and those of their families (food, children’s clothing, school fees, etc.).
- Most of the groups that request funding are women’s groups, (for example, in Koubri, Saaba). This PVCBO contribution is greatly appreciated since it contributes to their emancipation, because the income from their trading activities makes them financially independent of their husbands.
Reafforestation: Burkina Faso is a Sahelian country. The central plateau which covers the PVCBO project area is one of the regions most affected by desertification due to demographic pressure. Consequently, we see the importance and necessity of a desertification control policy through reafforestation. The sensitization campaign carried out by the project on this scourge is in line with the objectives and actions taken by public authorities: to make the local populations understand their role in the desertification process and, more importantly, the part they should play in reafforestation exercises.

If we are to appreciate the true worth of PVCBO achievements which tend to improve the living conditions of rural populations, it would be utopian to think that everything is roses: it would be tantamount to irresponsibility to refuse to analyze the noticeable deficiencies which could be an impediment to the attainment of the Project’s objectives.

Shortcomings of the Project

In some villages, after the marking out of the land, open confrontations resulted from the method used in parceling out the land and the system of plot allotment. The fact is that the parceling out of land is the application of an urban system in a rural milieu where people’s relationship to land is different from that in town. This breeds frustration among local people who are expropriated of their land to the benefit of foreigners such as missionaries; what happened at Zagtouli is a good example. It could be mentioned, in passing, that once the land is parcelled out, the management of the plots rests with the Public Lands Department which subsequently sees to the settlement of disputes.

It should be further pointed out that in the medium and long term, this demarcation exercise could have as a consequence a change of the villagers’ mentality in their relationships to each other and with the land. Formerly collectivists, they might now think in terms of private ownership of land ("my plot of land"). The extended family system will give way to the nuclear family system, thus breaking down the spirit of mutual help and solidarity and developing an individualistic spirit.

Inasmuch as parceling out village lands could result in the transfer of land speculation from towns to villages, major land speculators in Ouagadougou could find their way to the villages to amass plots of land to be sold later. This assumption needs to be tested through empirical studies.

Regarding micro-projects, credits granted to women give rise to conflicts between couples in some families because the husband does not feel involved in the loan granted. This is linked to the thorny problem of man’s domination over woman, especially among the Mossi. The fact is that, whatever the woman’s achievements and output, she remains subject to the man’s authority. It is said that the woman and all her possessions belong to her husband. This mentality, at times, transforms the man into a parasite living on the woman’s business and this adversely affects the good management and smooth running of the woman’s economic activity.

The World Decade of Cultural Development calls on all decision-makers to take into account the cultural dimension of all development projects. But what do we see in the PVCBO? It only focuses on equipping schools. This is a
good thing if we consider there is a need for education in the development of humankind given that the right to education is a fundamental human right. Nonetheless, culture is not only education but it also finds expression in leisure and entertainment which enable people to express their relationship to their environment. Although the objective of the PVCBO is the creation of a satisfying quality of life for the rural population, a recreation component should have its rightful place here because it could go a long way to contributing to the improvement of living conditions and dissuading the target population from leaving the village for town in search of leisure activities which are, at times, unwholesome. This explains why the project should envisage the building of infrastructure such as youth and cultural centres furnished with indoor games (traditional and modern) and where stimulating events (debates, drama) and recreational activities (dancing) could be organized. They could also serve as meeting halls where the youth could meet to discuss their problems—in short, a recreation centre.

It is obvious that it could be difficult to recoup the costs involved in carrying out such activities as in the case of the socio-economic micro-projects, therefore this could be at least one of the areas where the local population could be exempted from refunding the cost of investment. This can be seen as even more necessary, given that the achievements of micro-projects will generate income that will create in rural populations new tastes which can attract them to town (especially when it is nearby) in search of satisfaction. In that case, do we not run the risk of witnessing the opposite effects of PVCBO’s objectives?

CONCLUSION

With a principal objective of bridging the gap between town and countryside particularly by providing collective social infrastructure and improving living conditions in general, the pilot experiment of PVCBO should put particular emphasis on the identification of the true needs of the inhabitants and the needs of the project area. As a matter of fact, the criteria for granting and repaying loans to CNCA seem unfavourable to the beneficiaries; yet it appears that the CNCA is well conversant with the reality in the field by virtue of its experience. This error should be rectified by carrying out more in-depth sociological studies.

Existing studies have revealed the existence of infrastructure such as schools and dispensaries where the standard of service rendered was below that expected by the population. They have been rehabilitated and reinforced by the project in order to provide better service.

Despite its few noticeable shortcomings, the project endeavours to effectively improve the living conditions of inhabitants in their daily lives. With the installation of grinding mills, for example, women no longer need to walk tens of kilometres to grind their grain. This is also true of the sinking of boreholes and the rehabilitation of existing wells. At this level the inhabitants will no longer be confronted with the crucial problem of scarcity of potable water from which even Ouagadougou is not exempted.

It is imperative to extend the activities of the project to other towns such as Bobo-Dioulasso which is confronted with the same kinds of problems as
Ouagadougou. The main objective is to reduce the demographic pressure on the main urban centres by improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of peri-urban zones and, who can tell, this could also stimulate those living constantly under poor conditions in town to take refuge in the countryside.

The project should also lay emphasis on research in order to find an alternative source of energy to the one currently used, fuelwood. Of course, re-afforestation is necessary but it is also even more vital to introduce, especially in the countryside, another source of energy which will relieve women of the daily need to search for fuelwood which results in the villages being totally stripped bare of their bushes. Thus, the project could embark upon studies on the use of biogas and its profitability in the project area. (The project has, already to its credit, experimental farms which can serve as a test-bed in pilot operations).

In-depth studies have been carried out, since 1990, on the suburbs of Bobo-Dioulasso. Why wait till the data collected become out-of-date before trying to provide it with the few solutions that are available or could be available to this component (funding from the Netherlands)?

Notes

1 Schéma d’Aménagement de la Banlieue de Ouagadougou
2 Schéma Directeur d’Aménagement et d’Urbanisme
3 Project Villages Centres Banlieue de Ouagadougou
4 Caisse Nationale de Crédit Agricole
5 Banque Centrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest
6 Association Vive Le Paysan
7 Office National des Puits et Forages

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From the Rural Compound to the Urban Plot
Changes in the Architecture and the Functions of Dwellings
in Mossi Country in Burkina Faso

Yveline Dévérin-Kouanda

In rural areas of Burkina Faso, the various elements of the domestic dwelling compound are organized in a strict way, each having a particular, well-coded function, whether they relate to domestic activities or to social exchanges. In town, these functions are redeployed within a more restricted space and an architecture which is often different.

This chapter shows how the transformation takes place, and how, despite appearances, we find in town fundamentally the same forms and rules of the traditional culture which blossoms more obviously in rural contexts.

The major change concerns the relationship man maintains with his dwelling, which in town corresponds more and more to the image he wants to give of himself rather than simply being a shelter.

The inner compound is the most private place. A place where one can hide from the looks of strangers. It is where everyone is truly his own master. It is impossible to carry out genuine "surveys" on the inner compound, and above all on the structure and representation of the house. The contrast between Ouagadougou and Dakar in this respect is quite surprising. In Dakar, there is such overcrowding that you are very often received in the bedroom which serves as a living-room. Here, on the contrary, each place has its function and the place where one is received is significant: samande, terrace, living-room, translate in a subtle way the transition between the values of distrust or respect towards you and the intimacy in which you are accepted. Our study is therefore based on the observations gathered in various places during informal conversations.

The observations made in this chapter relate to observations made in the Mossi country and in Ouagadougou. The village of Ziga, about 100 km north-east of Ouagadougou (in the Province of Oubritenga), served as a reference for comparisons with other villages of the Mogbo. However, any generalizations about the Mossi country as a whole or the whole of Burkina Faso would be incorrect.
SOME CONCEPTS OF SPACE

The space referred to by city dwellers when they say in French “to the village” (an expression which can be heard at least once a day in various forms: I am going to the village; he is at the village; at the village,...), is yiri.

The city dweller who goes to the village will say om kuiisa yiri (“I am going home”). (Kuiisa: expresses the idea of returning to where one came from). He will say om kuiisa ba-yiri (“I am going to my father’s home”) if he wants to insist on the fact that he is going to the village (and not to his own home in town).

When he is leaving the village to go to the town, he will say om leebda teng-pughin (leebda: expresses a simple, circumstantial return, teng-pughin: to the place where the “womb of the earth” is, the centre of the country, that is to say Ouagadougou). The same expression will be used by the villager leaving another village or the bush (which is in fact the same thing, given spatial representations here) to go home. Teng-pughin is the centre, the womb of the village or the country, where the ego lives.

When he is in another part of the capital and is going home, he will say om leebda zakhin (zakhin: where the zaka is, that is to say the “the compound”) or om kuiisa yiri.

Leebda: to return, to go straight home without stopping; associates the idea of movement with that of penetrating and is always associated with zaka.

Kuli: to go back to where one came from, to one’s origins, in the deep sense of the term is associated with yiri. One would never say nkuila zakhin.

Kul-sida (sida = husband) means to get married (only for a woman), pagh-kuli is translated by unmarried). Kuli insists on the idea of departure for the place of origin, therefore to the buudu. For a woman, the buudu is that of her husband, to get married means to enter the buudu of her husband.

One penetrates the compound (a space physically delimited), but the place of origin, yiri is a place where one goes, not a place one enters.

The term yiri denotes in fact the dwelling, “where one lives”, but also all the inhabitants; it is roughly the equivalent of the term “foyer” in French. It covers the idea of place, that of a grouping of people around a family head, and, inseparably linked to that, the idea of the “three stones” of each married woman. It also has in a significant way an affective meaning, it is where my roots are, “my home”.

Yiri is thus one of the points where the village-town interactions can be felt most. They are not only architectural and spatial, but also social through the type of new relationships that the architecture imposes.

In the village, zaka is part of yiri. The meaning is different, it refers to the inner compound, in a concrete sense. The compound is mine, I attend to its upkeep, but I am the master of the yiri and I am responsible for the harmonious life of the community it houses.
A CROWDED SPACE

The compound (yiri)

Yiri refers not only to the compound as it is seen in the landscape and the inhabitants, but also the fields surrounding the house (kamanse). 3

Yiri therefore includes three types of elements:

- affective (where I live)
- spiritual (where my buudu is)
- material and landscape related.

The first two elements are so strong that the plural of yiri, yiya is only used exceptionally in the areas covered by our survey. When you ask for the plural, the term that will be spontaneously given is zakse. What is counted is not yiri, but zaka, the latter term referring only to the material aspect of the building. It is our western minds that superimpose geographic entities on what the Mossi see above all as something affective and spiritual. Yiya can only be used when one wants to refer to an entirety. It is not used for counting but rather for global perception.

Yiri is geographically made up of three elements:

- the inner compound (zaka), surrounded by a wall made of mud bricks or seko (thatch) mats, linking the various elements of the building.
- the samande, the outside yard, with no material limits during the dry season, and limited by the absence of farming in the rainy season. There is often an open shed or a tree providing shade.
- the kamanga (singular of kamanse).

The granaries are located in the east, either on the kamanse or on the samande. 4 They are not linked to any specific space.

The various yiri 5 are joined together by the kamanse which therefore have not only a feeding function but also serve as borders.

The Mossi of the Mogho contrast geographically 6 kamanse (house farms) from puese—singular puogo—(bush farms). The puese belong to the bush, the kamanse are part of the yiri. When we say “house farms” we mean “farms around the house” and the reference is geographic and landscape related. In the Mossi language, Mooré, the meaning is much stronger, these farms are part and parcel of the dwelling. When you ask the names of the elements of the house, they are cited, and to conceive of a yiri without kamanse would amount to conceiving a house in Europe without a door. The kamanga is inseparable from the tampuure which it always includes.

The tampuure (the bowels of the mountain, that is to say the rubbish heap), is made of the domestic waste used to fertilize the house farms. It is kept in heaps and is only spread on the farm at the end of the dry season. The heaps have no specific location in relation to the zaka, its gate or the samande. The place can change from one year to the next. In Ouagadougou, tradition used to force people to throw their rubbish on the chief’s tampuure, which ensured him of good crops.

This shows the independence existing among the various yiri. The Mossi say Zakhin baagha han-karik konbre nienga baagha karikde konbre which
means “If the dog of the compound does not carry the bone outside, the dog outside cannot have it”, in other words: a problem is not aired outside the compound, unless someone has brought it outside. This idea is very important in the representation that the Mossi have of the space where they live. When you visit someone, you first cross the kamanga. Then this person knows that you are heading towards his house and not his neighbour’s. Once in the kamanga, you are already within the premises of the yir-soba, the master of the house.

The visitor is generally received on the samande, the outer compound, a space with informal limits. It is the place where one finds the huts of the sons who are still bachelors but too old to be considered as children living inside the zakas. Sometimes a shed (zande) has been erected and visitors are received there in wooden armchairs made of yilga (Mitragyna inermis). On the roof of the shed, millet stalks and ears are put to dry, other items such as animal teeth and children’s toys are also kept there.

It is on the samande that a tree (mango tree, nim, nere) may have been planted, if only for the shade. It is also where we find the poultry house and the goat shed.

The samande is also the place where they dig the graves of those who die at a very advanced age and who are entitled to a grave shown by a closed circle on the ground made of “wild stones”. Only dead “centenarians” can be buried in this way on the samande, the others are buried in a cemetery.

At Ziga, the chiefs, on the other hand, receive different treatment: the compound is customary and dependent on the chieftaincy and not the family, even though it is rare that the son of the chief does not become chief. The dynasty of the chiefs is therefore gathered in a separate cemetery, around the grave of the founding chief. Every year, during a traditional feast called yado (= graves) held at the beginning of the rainy season, the village women go there to brew some dolo (millet beer) on the graves and pour some on the ground. This custom may be particular to Ziga which was founded by a son of Naaba Oubri and which is a stable village. The graves of the Mogho Naaba are scattered, and only the most recent ones have theirs gathered around and even inside the Na-yiri (royal palace) in Ouagadougou.

The buudu is thus united: yabramba (plural of yaaba) means both “ancestors” (regardless of the number of generations elapsed since the death of the ancestor), and “grandparents” (even when they are still alive). In the singular, yaaba only has the latter meaning. The main idea is that of lineage. The dead person who accedes to the status of yabramba through his extreme longevity is at the centre of the activities of the living. This place of the dead among the living is important. Whether they are resting in the bush cemetery or on the samande, they are in the space apportioned by the buudu. “A woman has no house”, the Mossi say, she lives with her husband. Given the representation of the cosmos by the moaga, it is indeed fundamental for her to live in her husband’s village: the conception held by the Mossi of birth, life and death imposes a virilocality, indispensable to insure the heredity of the buudu which comes through the kinkirse, the heirs of the yabramba. The role of the woman is purely that of a feeder of the buudu (she feeds men by cooking their food, she feeds their offspring by bearing them in her womb). This essentially nutritive function of the woman is found in the spaces assigned to her: the
Photograph 1. The grave of an “elder” on the samande

The grandfather of the head of the family living in this compound died when he was very old and was buried near his people. The grave is shown by a circle of “wild stones” and is well maintained. Further back, the huts of the bachelors can be seen among the pilugu type granaries. In the background, we can make out the thatched wall (talga) of the compound. The yir-soba has also died, but was too young to be buried on the samande.

zaka (with the stones of the fire-place) and the kamanse. Pag la yiri: the woman is the household.

For some time now, the “new religions” have introduced an unusual element to the samande: the “mosque”. It is a circle of “wild stones”, that could be mistaken for a grave, the only difference being that the mosque always has an “opening” for “entering it” while the grave is a closed circle. In town, these circles of parpens are found along the walls.

In the Zorgho region,\(^\text{13}\) the samande is the male space, while the zaka is the female space. At Ziga, while the zaka remains the place for women, the samande is “mixed”, at least during the day. In the evening, the women are necessarily busy in the kitchen.\(^\text{14}\) However, we think that the sex-bound function of the samande must have existed in the past and that the current spatial distribution of the activities of the inhabitants is somewhat altered. On the other hand, this assignment of female and male spaces described by A. Bruyer still exists in the naaba’s compound.\(^\text{15}\)

This “male” aspect of the samande helped to bring closer the world of the living and that of the ancestors. The absence of orientation of ordinary compounds in the region studied does not allow us to carry the interpretation further.

The samande has basically a social function. It is a space for getting together, it is where the women crack nobramidou nuts,\(^\text{16}\) shell peanuts, and tell stories. The adolescents sit there to joke and the men meet.
The compound (zaka)

The *zaka*, on the other hand, is limited in a very precise way. The main idea behind it is that of a building. So, in town, a plot in an undeveloped part will be called "zi viugo" (for *ziga* *viugo* = empty space) if it contains no investment, but it will be called *zaka* if a small house has been built on it ("there is something showing that it is a compound").

It is the "inner compound", circular and delimited by a ring of round huts and, more and more today, the *tole roogo* (a squared house with a corrugated roof) linked by the *banco* or mud wall (or formerly the thatched wall) called *lalga*.

*Photograph 2. The neere—the traditional millstone*

Every evening, the millet is ground on the traditional millstone, made of a flat stone embedded in a table of *banco* and another flat stone which the woman scrapes against the first one to grind the grains. In many villages, the modern mill has replaced the daily use of the *neere*. At Ziga, there is no modern mill and this *neere* is also used by the women of the neighbouring compound (which is that of the *yir-soba*’s younger brother).

Photograph taken from inside the *zaka*. Beyond the small wall: the *samande*. Here the *lalga* only has a symbolic function: it does not prevent people outside from peeping into the inner compound.

At Zorgho, Annie Bruyer notes that “the wall separating the inner compound from the outer yard must always be in good repair [...]. Indeed, passers-by must not see anything of the activities taking place in the inner compound, where they cannot penetrate without being invited". 17

At Ziga, the wall is too low to serve as an obstacle to intruding eyes. Its function seems to be mostly symbolic. Similarly, contrary to what was observed at Zorgho, the door of the compound does not close, there is no *lugri*. On the other hand, the chief’s compound has a door made of corrugated iron which is pushed sideways, like thatched doors.
At Kombissiri, the observations made at Zorgho are confirmed (door, height of the wall); on the other hand, the orientation of the ordinary compounds is not important.

The *zaka*, limited by the *lalga*, is the place for the life of the community. Its global structure is the same everywhere we went: at the left when you enter, there is the *neere*, the large round table made of banco in which large flat stones are embedded and which is used for grinding the grain (Photograph 2). Even when there is a modern mill, the *neere* is still used, not only in case of mechanical failure of the mill, but also when the small quantity of the grain does not justify resorting to the mill. Roughly in the centre, is located the fireplace which includes as many sets of “three stones” as there are married women in the compound (but the “three stones” are also found in the hut of each married woman). We have seen, from studying winds, that this location is explained by the fear of seeing a spark set fire to the thatched roofs.

All around, caught in the *lalga*, are the huts and the *tole roogo* (square houses with corrugated roofs). The buildings alternate with stretches of wall. In the old days the huts were built first then they were joined by *seko* (thatch). This was meant to isolate the living place, where one goes out of one’s hut, from the rest of the *yiri*, which is more public. Beyond the female attributes of this place, good manners require that one avoid coming across someone when going out of a hut: the man who has just “eaten with his wife”, anyone who has just woken up is obliged to wash his face with water before greeting other people. The wall may be “symbolic” because of its low height, it is however enough to avoid an unwanted encounter.

The basic building, whether it is a round hut or a square house, always has as its function, sleep. It is in fact a bedroom. The men’s rooms are almost empty (a few clothes hanging from a wire which crosses the room), the women’s rooms always contain two essential elements, the very symbol of their function within the compound: the “three stones” of the stove (which are generally six, because there is a fire-place for the *sagbo* and another one for the sauce) and a collection of pots which grows in importance as the woman gets older. The number of pots is therefore indicative of the respect due to the person. These buildings are never places where people live, people usually spend their lives in the inner compound and on the *samande*. This is one of the most important changes we shall see in an urban context.

The customary position for sleep translates a constant fear of external danger (attack, wild beasts). When a man and a woman share the same hut (which is always temporary, each having his/her own hut), the man must always sleep near the door to protect the woman, the woman sleeps near the door to protect the children. One always sleeps with one’s head towards the door lying on one’s side, which is the position in which one can more easily detect danger and face it as quickly as possible.

Once all these precautions (which are now part of the collective subconsciousness of the Mossi) are taken, the minimum is to enclose one’s compound, even when the wall is today sometimes only symbolic.

The huts are part of the enclosure. The most obvious reason for that is to save materials, since the wall of the hut in places serves as the enclosure. In the plan for building a *zaka*, the huts are arranged in a circle. The hut of the family head always faces the entrance of the compound. It always has a shed
made of seko (zande) near its door. The first hut on the left is that of the first wife (observed at Ziga). It is therefore always next to the neere.

The compound belonging to the Kabre family at Ziga, illustrates the evolution of a zaka over a period of time: the hut of the third wife happens to be in the middle of the compound, which is a rather exceptional situation. It used to be part of the enclosure which corresponded to a circle with a smaller diameter. The seko wall that was immediately at the right, when you enter, caught fire and this spread to the present storage room which used to be the yir-soba’s hut. The eldest son of the family, a civil servant in Ouagadougou, financed the reconstruction of buildings with corrugated iron roofs: the burnt hut was replaced by a house with a roof of 8 corrugated iron sheets. The father’s hut has become a storage room and has been replaced by a 16 iron sheet two-room house a few yards away, and the pughkiema’s (first wife’s) hut has been replaced with a 10 iron sheet house. The old hut of the first wife (now deceased), is now used as a poultry house. The present pughkiema therefore still has the first house on the left when you enter the compound.

We can notice a similarity between the organization of this compound and that of the chief of Ziga: the external wall is separated between the “common” compound and the “women’s” compound, a space reserved for the kitchen. The only woman living in the “common” compound is the mother of the yir-soba’s younger brother who lives in the next hut to the west. When her husband died, she was “married” to her husband’s son who was not her son. She therefore lives, as in the na-yiri, in the compound of the “poghbeogho”, “the bad women”, those who “do not cook the meal” for the yir-soba. However, the hut of the family head is not in this inner compound, which differs from the arrangement in the na-yiri.

This compound happens to be that of the nabiga (= who can compete to become chief). The other compound we visited did not present this type of organization. This may doubtless be seen as an imitation of the naaba.

At Kombissiri, this principle of small inner compounds for each inhabitant is systematic: they are called beongo, and the small wall separating them from the larger compound is called lulli25 (small hulga).

Finally, the last part of the zaka: the tenkugri, commonly called in Burkinè French the fetish. The literal translation would be the stone (kugri) of the earth (tenga).

In families it is located inside the compound, never hidden, always visible as soon as you enter, if you can recognize it. It generally consists of two polished humps smoothed regularly (see Photograph 3). It is the children of the family who are in charge of building and maintaining it.

In the particular case of the Na-yiri, the tenkugri is located in the western samande, at the right of the zoongo26 when it is outside. Around the tenkugri, the space is tamped and smoothed. It is where a sheep skin is laid on which they put the nag-puerue (cow bowl, a large circular leather cushion, a sign of the chieftaincy) where the chief sits during the various customary ceremonies.

Variable statutes

It was on the samande that we were received the first time (with distrust), then, a little later, in the small compound (within the zaka) of the eldest son
Photograph 3. The family tenkugri

The family tenkugri is always placed within the compound. It is maintained and polished with "cement" made of bundu—Ceratotheca sesamoides—by the children of the family. According to what we were told, the form can be different, but there is always the idea of a "double" element, a masculine one and a feminine one.

For an adaptation found in town, see Photograph 9.

of the family. Then, after all distrust disappeared, we were received once under the shed of the yir-soba (a mark of trust, but also respect, and of the official nature of the interview). Finally, as our visits became more frequent, we were no longer quite "strangers" and we were therefore received again, but with obvious pleasure on the samande.

As we see, the same place of reception takes on a different meaning depending on the stages in the relationship. The samande is both the place of "reserve" when a stranger is received and the place for friendly meetings (where the same ex-stranger is received when he has become more familiar). The shade of difference lies in the way people behave towards those with whom they are talking.

In fact, to enter the compound is a sign of trust and intimacy. Women retire there to cook (a private affair), but to chat they will go to the samande. They will follow, when circulating within the premises, an itinerary that is strictly defined in space. Public life, relationships with neighbours, the stories and the tales of story-tellers take place on the samande. This is also where family meetings are held to settle disputes, such as the refusal of a girl to marry the man the family wants her to. This kind of dispute concerns the whole bundu.

On the other hand, if a visitor comes to raise a private problem which does not concern the community, he comes first onto the samande, takes part in the informal exchanges, then addresses the yir-soba telling him that he wants
The royal *tenkugri* is built outside the customary house. Sacrifices are made there before greeting ceremonies (*bagga, kingul*). Before every ritual feast, it is smoothed along with the earth platform in front of it. Then the sacrifice is made (some feathers are left there) and the *nagpuure* is laid just in front of it for the rest of the ceremony, the first part of which takes place inside the compound. On the left of the *tenkugri*, the hut with a double entrance, the *zoongo*.

to “see him” (*n’da ti nieenfo*). Then they retire under the shed, inside the *zaka* and the important discussion can begin, away from indiscreet ears.

The inner part of the *zaka* is undoubtedly the place for women, even though they occupy the *samande* more and more. On comparing the findings of Annie Bruyer and the observations we have gathered, we notice that there is no male/female interference, but rather a female “expansion” towards a space that was on the whole male. Perhaps we can relate this “expansionism” to migrations, women occupying more easily then an empty or deserted space. On the other hand, a man will never move closer to the fire-place! We frequently find this attitude towards a space left empty in town, just like in the countryside; as soon as a house becomes empty, it is abandoned to animals that find shelter there. The only exception is when the owner is dead and his belongings have not yet been redistributed among the members of his family. These are then kept in the room he used to occupy.

A MOBILE PLACE

**Founding or moving a *yiri***

The process of founding a *yiri* in the bush varies. The most frequent case is that of the elder son who gets married and leaves the bachelor’s hut he used to occupy on the *samande*. He then settles down a short distance from his father’s compound, on lands belonging to the *buahdu*. 
With the development of herding (small ruminants and cows), cohabitation problems may arise with the other members of the neighbouring yiya. One then settles in the bush, where the cattle will not cause any conflicts.

If a disease sweeps away a family, or when a place is declared “cursed”, the compound is abandoned and the inhabitants build another one a bit farther away.

Finally, with the recent multiplication of boreholes in the bush, some inhabitants move closer to the water points. This explains why the compound shown in Photograph 5 was abandoned in May 1992 to be rebuilt (with banco bricks, as no one knows today how to build a wall with tangiligu), near a borehole recently installed in another part of Ziga. In January 1993, only the foundations of the houses were still visible, the walls having been washed away by floods.

*Photograph 5.* An abandoned compound in Ziga

The *yiri* can also change in physiognomy and grow wider as the needs and means grow; for example, a fire, or a new wife will require building or rebuilding.

The compound of the Kabre family at Ziga, mentioned earlier, shows an “evolutive” *zaka* where the third wife’s hut is now in the middle of the compound, following far-reaching modifications caused by a fire at a time when the eldest son had some money available.

One can see the evolution of the representations of space and the house with the proximity of the town: at the south-west, the elder son has built for himself (while he was having the other houses with corrugated iron roofs built) an adjacent compound. Normally, the eldest son leaves the *yiri* and founds his own *yiri* a bit farther away.
Photograph 6. A raboogo at Koala

A deserted compound at Koala (new lands in the White Volta forest). Some members of the family died in conditions judged suspicious and the whole site was abandoned for another location deemed more favourable.

At Ziga, this principle is very strong, they cannot conceive of an elder son who remains within the compound; even if he remains economically tied to the family, he must found his own yiri. With the proximity of the town, the system is degenerating: one cannot build an isolated yiri where one will not live permanently and which would have no one to till house farms around it. And yet people do not want to abandon the village structure. Everyone wants to have a place there. When you are married you cannot stay “outside” like bachelors. A geographic compromise has therefore been found; this civil servant has his own compound, his own 16 iron sheet house, but his compound opens into his father’s compound. His house is used to accommodate him when he spends a few days in the village, but when we visited the premises, it served mostly as a shelter for hens. A house is indeed defined by the person living in it. An uninhabited building is no longer a house and is left to animals.

The principle annex of the compound for the son living in town, the third wife’s hut in the middle of the compound constitute elements showing the variety of the adaptations to a common initial model required by changing circumstances.

In town, the adaptation follows the same logic. It is therefore not rare to find a deserted building within a compound, especially after the death of the occupant. The small empty building then becomes a shelter for small animals and hens.
Surprised city dwellers—centre and peripheries

One of the questions which struck town planners is the specific character of Ouagadougou where the parcelled out wards are overpopulated while the spontaneous settlements are very loose.

The Baskuy commune which includes the central sectors (1 to 12) had 67 inhabitants/hectare in 1985, Bogodogo (sectors 14, 15, 28, 29 and 30) had 23, Boulimiougou (sectors 16 to 19) had 19, Nongr’Maasom (sectors 13, 23 to 27) had 11, and Signoghin (sectors 20 to 22) had 10 inhabitants/hectare.\(^{30}\)

This situation can be seen in the surroundings, even if the periphery has been attracting more people since the census. Town wards such as Tiedpalogo, Bilbalogo, Kamsaoghin, Zangouettin and what remains of Koulouba (like former Bibambili) are densely built and populated.

The conception that the Mossi have of their dwelling and family explains that. “The sons of Bilbalogo or Tiedpalogo do not want to leave their fathers’ compounds, they are all packed there.”

They were taken by surprise by the growth of the town over the past fifteen years. Traditionally one stays “in the family” as long as one is a bachelor. Then, one asks the chief for a piece of land to build one’s own compound, but within a short distance. The “sons”\(^{31}\) of these parts of the town have left themselves surrounded by the very rapid growth of the formerly peripheral wards of Gounghin and Zogona. The parcelling out of the town soon froze the expansion possibilities of the family. The elder sons, did not want to become isolated, so they stayed within the family. They occupy places, the younger brothers see their turn coming and new buildings are added to those already on the plot. This explains the intense occupation of the plot at Bilbalogo.

They are city dwellers, they do not want to go to “the bush”, in the peripheral wards of the town. They remain thus tied to the family and cannot conceive of going away from it. A son of Bilbalogo who was allotted an apartment at Cité An III (close by) had a hard time trying to make his family let him move there: “Why leave for this unknown and strange place when there is still room in the family compound?” We will not even mention those who are obliged today to “muddle through” to obtain a plot at Patte d’Oie! The general trend is therefore to stay “in the family” as long as possible and because the town is growing in the meantime, the inhabitable periphery is becoming more and more remote and therefore uninviting. The encircling is more and more intense.

An urban adaptation—the celibatorium

Speculation in real estate and the multiplication of the number of bachelors (pupils, students, young workers) have led to a quite particular adaptation of housing: the celibatorium.

In traditional areas, the bachelor lives in an isolated hut, on the samande. In an urban context, with the disappearance of the samande, he must live within the family compound, if there is one. Ouagadougou being a town of migrants, a lot of landlords have found an opportunity to build cheaply for
an important and regular rent in return. The celibatorium is a Ouagalese institution.

As its name suggests, this was built initially to accommodate students and pupils (bachelors + “latin”) who have no host in town. Today, they accommodate sometimes entire families.

The principle is always the same: a bedroom and a living-room, attached to six or seven identical structures. The celibatorium is arranged either around a common yard, or as a central block.32

The owner is sure to collect the equivalent of the rent of a posh villa, with far fewer risks, because people will be fighting to occupy the buildings (while it is not easy to find a tenant who can afford to rent a villa), it is cheaper to build and has the advantage of sharing out the risks of unpaid rent.

The celibatorium is, in its conception, directly inspired by the traditional zaka, but here, the inhabitants are all “strangers”. It is therefore a “non-zaka”.

The families have variously adapted the constraints imposed by the town in the organization of their life space. The buildings as well as the space, are flexible in their functions.

THE REDEFINITION OF THE FUNCTIONS OF PLACES

Transferring the yiri on the modern plot

In town, everything is changing, one must manage to fit within the rectangular “plot” measuring between 600 and 245–300 m² (the size of the plots allocated recently) the activities which used to be carried out over the entire yiri.

The disappearance of the kamanga

The spaces are therefore reshaped and their functions redefined. The kamanga, house farm, was a buffer space between solidarity with neighbours and family intimacy. It disappears in town. Its function is filled both by the street which is also a marginal space, and the “wall” of the plot, (whether it is located in a parcelled out or a undeveloped part of the town). Sometimes, cultivation takes place within the space delimited by the boundary stones of the plot.

In the undeveloped parts of the town, space is occupied in a fairly loose way. One begins by building a house (generally a square one with a corrugated iron roof, often with second-hand materials because one does not want to invest too much in a building bound to be “pulled down” in the near future). The kamanga then finds its place in front of the house, then everything is enclosed if only symbolically by a small wall only a few bricks high, just enough to delimit the territory. The function of the lalga is no longer protective, it only serves to mark a space. It is significant that the compounds are now square-shaped, signalling that people are waiting for the areas to be parcelled out.

In parcelled out areas, people rarely cultivate anything inside the plot which is nowadays perceived as a zaka rather than a yiri. While one can frequently find some cultivating activities within the plots, it is rare that the whole plot should be devoted to these. We can perhaps explain this particular
case by the fact that the *yir-soba* is an “autochton” who lived there before the town came with its modern plots. He is a farmer of Wemtenga who was "caught" within the urban space. He did not therefore have to conceive of a new organization, but to reduce his activity in space. This implies some redefinition of the places, but one is hardly surprised that it is incomplete.

Cultivation in urban contexts often takes place outside the plots.33

*Photograph 7.* Plot in undeveloped area at Tapenga

The inhabitants themselves have delimited rectangular plots. The *lalga* is symbolic and serves only as a mark in the absence of boundary stones. There used to be a park of shea trees here, now swallowed by an ever spreading urbanization. We can notice that some houses are roughly rendered only on one side: the eastern side. In this way, the owners seek to limit their investments as much as possible and protect only the most vulnerable part facing the wind.

The usual practice of the *tampuure* in rural areas implies an ambiguous attitude towards domestic waste which is more associated with fertility and power,34 than with dirt and lack of hygiene. It is therefore easy to understand the difficulties mentioned earlier for the “public powers” to “mobilize the populations” for a cleaner environment, the latter saying openly that they have other priorities. The *tampuure* is so inseparable from the *kamanga* that it actually shocks only a few city dwellers. Its presence in the village is indispensable, one must be quite rooted in city life to be aware that the balance is fragile and that the dispersion of houses goes along with the heaps of rubbish. It is the concentration of plots that leads to the problem of domestic waste.35

*The mutations of the samande*

The plot must function both as a *zaka* and a *samande*. In some cases, the *samande* is actually located on the public way. The authorities themselves encourage these spontaneous reactions by recommending that everyone plant
trees in front of his house, on the public way. How then can one define a “collective space” that one must not own but must contribute to “embellishing”? There exist three types of situations as far as the *samande* is concerned:

- *samande* installed and proper, with a shed built and sometimes trees planted.

*Photograph 8. The proper *samande**

Charles de Gaulle Avenue, below the level of the paved road, a parallel tramped street allows access to the houses bordering the avenue. Here the narrowness of the “square” (there are only five plots, two on each side) made it possible to build a shed covered with corrugated iron sheets, without hindering the little service traffic. The inhabitants meet there to “chat”, to drink tea. It is a masculine space, the women of the compound also staying on the *samande*, but as a separate group. In this case the advantage of the *samande* is threefold: it helps to limit the number of those who stay inside the compound, which is after all densely built with little empty space, it is a place where one can take “fresh air” while the air does not circulate easily inside the compound, finally and above all, it gives a full view of what happens on Charles de Gaulle which can facilitate encounters and provide topics for conversations.

- “wild” and intermittent *samande*: the street is too narrow for there to be a proper *samande*. People sit there under the shade of a building or a tree (generally a shea tree) spared in the street. Armchairs are brought out during the day but at night, as the inhabitants go to bed, the *samande* disappears to reappear in the morning. In this case there is a space (or generally spaces) within the compound which can fulfil the functions of the *samande*. These *samande* never have exactly the same functions as the proper *samande*.

- non-existent *samande*, due either to the mode of life of the inhabitants, which is the case for instance in housing estates (“cités”), or due to the
organization of the street which makes regular or frequent installation impossible.

This gives the measure of the multiplicity of the situations.

- When the *samande* is proper, the organization of the space inside the compound (*zaka*) and the management of the places can follow the same principles as discussed earlier in connection with traditional compounds, only the buffer zone of the *kamanse* disappears, thus entailing a nearer contact with others.

- When the *samande* is "wild", its function changes. It is temporary everyday. It is the street more than the *samande* which is occupied. Young people will meet there to chat, but the functions usually assigned to the *samande* are performed inside the *zaka*. The shed (*zande*) or the terrace (a sign of luxury, and probably an urban reflection of the tramped space in front of the western yard of the chief) then takes on the functions of the *samande*, while the function of the *zande* located in front of the *yir-soba*’s house is filled by the living room which is an architectural innovation compared with the traditional compound. The living room is in fact defined as the "place through which one enters" rather than a place where one stays.

- When the *samande* does not exist, the whole *yiri* is concentrated inside the *zaka*. The *kamanga* no longer exists, the terrace becomes *samande*, the living-room becomes the equivalent of the family chief’s shed.

*A zaka with little modification*

The internal organization of the *zaka* is rarely disrupted. The principle of peripheral buildings and a central empty living space is kept.

However, the regulations prescribe a one-metre space between the limits of the plot and any building (three metres for the limit facing the street). The buildings are no longer included in the wall but are truly located within the *zaka*. Regardless of the technical reasons given, this measure further reduces the living space.

Most of the time, the only change concerns the transition to two-roomed units: the "living-room" that is to say "where one enters" and a bedroom. This transition to two rooms is seen also at the village, as for example in the case of the plot of the Kabre family at Ziga.

On the other hand, the *samande* occupying a part of the central space, the women’s stoves (external stoves in the villages) are generally set closer to the buildings which are less likely to catch fire because they have corrugated iron roofs.

In all the cases encountered, in town, the bedrooms keep their function related to sleeping, but this becomes their exclusive function, cooking is only done in a kitchen, generally an external one, built separately (equivalent to the fire-place in the house of the rural *zaka*), or on external fire-places. This is a dislocation of the functions of the place, while all the other elements of the dwelling are concentrated.

As it is, life in town increasingly imposes another distribution of the occupation of the rooms; each spouse does not have his or her own room. Except
in the case of polygamous couples, there is usually a room for the couple which is a new entity. The woman cooks in her room, she cannot do it in the couple's room.

One can therefore understand why it is difficult to get the population to accept the principle of collective housing. It was difficult to find tenants for the flats of Cité An III; some were occupied by the administration which turned them into offices, and others were "abandoned" by their tenants: a number of them are empty today.

There is a rational explanation for this: given the rapid decay of hastily built houses after 20 years, there may not be anything left for the owners. Some sections of the walls get filled with water every rainy season, parts of the roofs have been torn away by the wind and the Management Committee does not do any maintenance, despite the fact that the height of the building requires the need for scaffolding which one tenant can neither finance nor organize. One building in particular is in such bad repair that the committee gave one of the families the rooms of the ground floor shops as bedrooms, because the flat they had been given became flooded when it rained.

Beyond these problems which arise with wear, cultural factors have intervened to explain the reluctance of the population: people want to dig their zamboko inside the compound. Moreover, the zaka refers in the first place to a building, the term insists on the idea of a space delimited by the lalga. One owns one's compound and not just one's house. This is logical, because the compound is the living space.

The ritual aspects

The yiri not only denotes the idea of a life unit of the geographical type, but also a spiritual and affective unit related to the ancestors. In the old days when "the village" was still in the bush, the customs were performed there and it was quite rare for an old man to die in Ouagadougou, because it was a town of strangers. In case of death, the corpse is still brought back to the village (yiri).

But there were true Ouagalese, or people who had settled down in Ouagadougou long enough to have their yiri (affective sense) there. There has always been a tradition of burying very old people on the samande. In town, the samande no longer exists and its function has been merged with that of the plot; old people ask to be buried in their compounds. "I want to be buried in my compound", the yaaba living in the northern plot at Bimalogo keeps repeating.

This practice is old. In fact when the inhabitants of Bilibambili were cleared out, this posed a problem: the bulldozers are said to have unearthed human bones.

All the very old people we know have this wish. For them it is self-evident. The procedure is severely regulated, but no one respects them: not from irreverence, but because of lack of means and conviction. In June 1992, two articles were published on the topic in the newspaper l'Observateur Paalga, showing how the authorities were concerned by the issue. And yet, for the moment, graves are dug within the plots and this practice cannot possibly continue indefinitely without causing serious health problems.
Less visible because it cannot be seen is the *zamboko* which has sometimes changed places. The *zamboko* is the place where the placentas of newly-born babies are buried. It is usually placed in secluded parts of the compound where people are least likely to walk. In town the regulations prescribe a metre wide space between the compound wall and the buildings. It is often in this place, normally not a place where people walk, that the *zamboko* is dug. Finally, a cultural innovation: if a child is born to tenants renting the house, the *zamboko* is still dug in the compound where they are living (which is not possible for the grave of an old tenant).

Finally, there is no *tenkugri* in town. First of all because one claims to be a city dweller and then because by definition the “customs” are performed at the village. Besides this, it is extremely rare to find someone who declares himself animist, because of the fear of being despised (“these things are just for villagers!”).

The Catholic Church which has often built its churches on customary sacred places, has apparently managed to “recover” the practice of the *tenkugri*.

There is, in fact, a peculiar feature of Ouagadougou which is not found anywhere else: the “Christ child’s crib”. These cribs are built by children for Christmas. They are generally located outside the plots, near the door, but they can also be found inside.

The foreigner who arrives in Ouagadougou is always surprised by these well-decorated edifices which embellish all the streets of the capital. We have always been surprised by the fact that they were called “cribs”, because they bear in fact little resemblance to the stable-grotto, with the cow and the donkey. They are always sophisticated edifices, representing places of worship (churches). We had always wondered what made people confuse the place of worship (church) with the object of the worship (crib = Jesus). Far from the cowshed, these buildings are inspired by the most striking places of worship: for instance, since the construction of the Assemblies of God’s temple at the 1200 Lodgings Estate, its particular modern and gracefully shaped architecture has inspired many a child in Ouagadougou.

These cribs are not found (or only exceptionally) in Bobo-Dioulasso. In Ouagadougou, they have now become part of the scheme for “embellishing the capital”, and building contests have been held for children. While it is generally a delicate matter to take photographs, we had the opposite problem of not disappointing the budding architects by photographing their cribs.

It was when we went to Ziga in the bush that we suddenly became aware of the obvious kinship between the *tenkugri* in the village and the crib in town.

The transfer from the *tenkugri* to the crib is clear. The departure point is said to have been the initiative of a priest. No such “graft” would have succeeded so well without the tradition, in the villages, of children building and maintaining the *tenkugri*. The actors remain the same, the “landscape” is similar and what it evokes is identical.
Photograph 9. An original feature of the urban landscape in Ouagadougou—the crib

The kinship with the tenkugri on photograph 3 is quite obvious. It is not only landscape related: in both cases, a place of worship is represented and identified as the object of the worship. In the ditch limiting the building, the children have sown some corn so as to obtain a miniature lawn on Christmas Day. On the right, we can make out the entrance of the compound, here the crib is on the street where people can admire it.

“One family, one roof”

This slogan, coined during the revolution, shows the determination of the government to propagate a western type of model, despite the “anti-imperialist” phraseology. “One family, one roof” is the very image of the blockhouse, the house as it is conceived by Europeans who often find it difficult to understand that the “house” in moaga country, is the yiri or, in town, the zaka.

“One family, one roof” propagates the model of the “villa”, the blockhouse in which the rooms are not distributed around a space with a variety of functions, but grouped at the centre of the plot in one building. It is exactly the opposite of the zaka, the inverted dwelling.

This model is however sought by a good part of the population: it is the symbol of success. To build it, one must have sufficient means to afford to collect all the necessary materials (whereas building isolated huts can be done through a progressive occupation of the places). It costs however less in terms of bricks because the same wall serves for two rooms.

It is also a mirror of its owner: tell me how you are accommodated and I’ll tell you who you are. Life in a block-house requires a change in life style. The space representations we have discussed fall apart. What used to be the zaka is now located behind the house where the kitchen is generally installed (this
is the case in the housing estates, particularly at “1200”, but also at An III where a kitchen is included in the main building but opens on a tiny yard)\(^{39}\) which serves as an external kitchen and where we can find the “three stones”. The yard in front of the house then becomes a new element: the embellished garden, the terrace, always located at the front continues to play the role of the samande.

At the “An IV A” estate near the town ward of Zangouettin in Ouagadougou, we visited a house that was conceived “back to front”: the terrace located behind the building, meant that visitors were received in the living-room before being led to the terrace. For those accustomed to the structure of houses in Ouagadougou and the rules of reception, this house seemed totally uninhabitable, despite its high level of comfort.\(^{40}\)

The block-house is today the dream of those who have a certain standard of living. The kitchen, the bathroom and the toilets inside the house presuppose that it is fitted with water pipes and a minimum of plumbing\(^{41}\) which significantly increases building costs. One of the complaints voiced against the “1200” Estate is that the kitchen and the toilets are outside. The civil servant tenants have a life style and a representation of a home which require that these amenities be inside the house.

We can however find in the way these spaces are managed, some reflexes due to the traditional representation of the house. For instance, the bedrooms (where a stranger will only exceptionally be allowed, just like the sug-roogo in the village), are never decorated or embellished. On the other hand, everything that can give value to the yir-soba is assembled in the living-room: diplomas, family photographs, calendars, posters, carpets from Mecca, etc. Any gift will be added to the previous decorations, in the living-room. In many cases, the presence of a refrigerator in the living-room is a sign of ostentatious luxury.\(^{42}\)

It is pointless to decorate or to paint the bedrooms because they are not living places, neither are they places where one receives guests. “Why decorate a bedroom? One only sleeps there, no one ever enters it.”

The living framework is then a framework to be shown. Life remains essentially social. There is no “living framework” “in itself” or “for oneself”. It is always for others.

Finally, the breeze-block house implies a reduced number of inhabitants (it is not as easy to extend as the individual buildings). It therefore presupposes a different mode of life. It is not possible to live together in the same block as people lived in the same compound. There is however an adaptation in the block-house which is reminiscent of the zaka: as a general rule, the living-room is separated from the bedrooms, all located in the same part of the house, that can be isolated from the living-room by a door.

**Decent housing for all—a priority?**

One can wonder, without meaning to be provocative, whether the choice of the estate system is not, in fact, a choice aiming to force people to adopt a new life style more likely to promote economic development.

Even before 1970, a new phenomenon which did not exist in the village emerged in town: O. Dao\(^{43}\) notes that “we should not forget either the
number of parasites who, on account of vague degrees of kinship, live at the expense of others”.

One of the recurrent themes, in all circles, is the problem of “relatives” who come visiting from the village. The Ouagalese are caught then between the need for a comfortable house and for showing off, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the fear of “parasites”.44

It is a real leitmotif everywhere: a relative just drops by one day from the village with his luggage and settles down and no one knows how long he intends to stay. He typically never has his return ticket which his host will have to buy for him.

It is always very difficult to save money, and therefore to invest because there are always unforeseen problems to solve, the most frequent of which is the “relative”. A debate on this topic could last a whole night during which everyone would present the formula he has developed to reduce the scope of the phenomenon: in one case the unannounced visitor is asked “where are you staying?” or “my son will accompany back to your host’s house, thank you for calling on us”, which transfers the difficulty over to another “relative”; in other cases, good care is taken to limit the quality of the hospitality (“I have rolled mattresses in my room, but if I give them to my guests, they will stay for several months, I just give them a mat which they can use to sleep on the floor of my living-room, they won’t stay more than a week”); only exceptionally will someone refuse to welcome a guest (because of “African solidarity”). The guest is not only cumbersome to accommodate, but you must also feed him, which is a source of difficulties for some households, especially when the “guest” is “several”. Furthermore, he often comes with a “list” of things which the host must supply. The host can neither refuse to put up the guest nor to provide part of the material asked, even if this is going to lead him into debts. (“If I don’t give anything they are going to spoil my reputation in the village”.)

Some city dwellers have made tactical preparations to face this situation they can anticipate: “I have put a jar near the tap, with a bench. If a “relative” arrives with a bag, he is given the stranger’s water,45 then I ask him where he is staying, as he is surprised, he has to find an answer and I have him accompanied to the house of the person he has named.” In the best case, he manages to make the “relative” return to the village by coming back to him with a transport ticket: “Take this, I have bought your ticket, when I have something for you, I’ll call you”.

So, everyone has developed a strategy to avoid tempting the “relative”. We were still puzzled by the relative46 interest that the Ouagalese put into arranging his house.

The most obvious explanation relates to the high building cost compared with the standard of living of the inhabitants. One must however acknowledge that a number of expenses are incurred “as a priority”: it is difficult to build when one has already contracted a loan payable over several months to finance a wedding, a baptism (when it is possible to opt for a cheaper ceremony), or funerals. In the latter case, however, it is culturally impossible to avoid the expenses. The moaga exists in relation to his buudu which gives him his identity. We have seen how fundamental the role of the ancestors is.47 Funerals are therefore an elementary duty no one can consider escaping: we
have known families who had to repay, over a period of several years, loans they used for the funerals of an uncle or a parent. The same person must, by custom, contribute to the funerals of several members of his own family and the family of his wife or wives. If the deaths become too frequent one is then obliged to borrow enormous sums in relation to one's income to face these social obligations. One must then postpone the building or improvement of one's house. These "imponderables" always come along to disrupt real estate projects. 48

In fact these projects are often more of a "dream" that one does not really hope to realize. Everyone wants to have "his" house, but its level of comfort (arrangement and inhabitable space) is often relative, even regardless of the obvious economic constraints related to the investments.

After hearing people talk so much about "relatives" we have tried to find out if this phenomenon could hinder the development of housing. We carried out a survey in which we asked each subject how he would react if he was offered a larger house with at least one more room, and the same comfort (running water if he already had such facilities, etc.) and in the same neighbourhood. The first reaction was enthusiastic. Each time, we asked the interviewees to think carefully and to give us their answers the next day. It was unanimous: "No, thanks. I am fine as I am!"

When you asked them why, they would answer: "If I have an extra room, my 'relatives' will come and I will no longer have the pretext that my house is too small, they will stay. It is going to cost me too much, I prefer not to change."

We were told that General Garango used to advise his high civil servants never to build more than three rooms and a living room: one room for the couple, one room for the girls and the third one for the boys. A large house or the existence of annexes automatically brings about a procession of "relatives" and economic insolvency for the family.

All the strategies relating to housing result then from everyone's need for comfort and space, 49 from the pressure of relatives and one's capacity to resist that pressure. This aspect which we find fundamental is ignored by the housing authorities who have made theirs the western views on housing. The dream of owning a roomy and comfortable house does exist, but one does not necessarily want to realize it: a large house will always be filled to the maximum of its capacity, the elements of comfort (taps, shower and flushing toilets, refrigerator) are bound to be quickly damaged by the relatives who are used to fetching water with pails from the pond and to using pieces of wood or stones when they go to the bush to defecate.

One of the strategies then, when it is clear that one cannot avoid this problem, consists in setting up annexes near the block-house. The latter is then reserved for the master of the house and his nuclear family, the annexes are for the "strangers".

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of the "parasite-relative" is in fact unknown in the traditional society. It is unthinkable to go to the village and sit idly under the nim tree while others are working on the farm. In town, the "solidarity" is one-way
and takes a rather curious turn: the host puts up with it grumbling, while the “relative” does not care the least about the nuisance he is causing to the person who accommodates him.

Economically, the consequences are far-reaching: it is difficult to save money for whatever purpose at all, it is impossible to manage a budget which includes items of expenditure that can easily double without any possibility of even short-term planning.

In such a context, building non-indigenous houses like those at the “1200” Estate could well have very positive effects: after many a complaint (“these houses have been conceived by white people, they are not suitable for the extended African family, how am I going to accommodate my ‘strangers’”), recriminations fade and some people acknowledge the fact that moving to a more limited house has significantly contributed to decreasing their expenses. One may wonder if there has not been a deliberate intention to impose a new attitude on those who do not dare to send back visitors. Economists could attempt to find out if it is possible to determine what sums were saved in this way and what use they were put to.

It is then no longer housing that reflects man’s image but the opposite. Housing imposes a new life style, a change in people’s relations with others and it gives the possibility for managing more efficiently family resources. Perhaps an endogenous development policy depends on a rigorously and strategically implemented housing policy.

Notes

1 The infinitive of kuiisa.
2 A fire-place made of stones on which the woman places the pot in which food is prepared.
3 Literal translation: where maize is cultivated. The term is used in a general way to denote the fields belonging to the house (whatever is being cultivated) in Ziga, but in Kombissiri, it is only used for maize fields. If the field bears gombo or other plants, the term “samand’ puogo” would be used: fields of the samande. For convenience we will keep the term kamanse to denote the fields belonging to the house, without prejudging what is cultivated in practice.
4 In the region of Zorgbo, A. Bruyer (1987) notes a strictly orientated organisation. The “temporary” granaries are on the samande which is always to the west. This exact placing is not found in the region of Ouagadougou where the granaries are to the east in all the compounds to prevent fire. They can, therefore, be “behind” in relation to the samande. Only the boare is on the samande. This is an anti-theft precaution which is made of banco and required because it contains millet in sacks or as grain (and not ears) which therefore makes it easier to steal.
5 Apart from in the villages of the new territories, in the forests of the White Volta, where the living area is spread out.
6 There are also other lexical categories referring to the types of cultivation, to their organisation (planted together or not), to the types of fields (individual or collective).
7 For once there is an equivalent French proverb: “Dirty linen should be washed at home”.
8 In fact, it is generally a question of huts. It is rare that a bachelor invests in a “tole roogo”, a square house with a corrugated iron roof, as he knows that his status is that of a temporary inhabitant of the outer compound.
9 This planting of a tree on the samande is recent (less than 70 years old), formerly in Moaga country trees were not planted. The traditional samande did, however, contain a shed, except if the construction was erected near to a tree which had grown naturally. The presence of a tree, whatever its situation was in relation to the compound, automatically influenced the placing of the samande. This could, therefore, very well be situated “behind” the compound with regard to the entrance.
10 Stones of hardened laterite.
11 For the appearance of these bush cemeteries see the opening of Idrissa Ouédraogo’s very fine film “Yaaba” (1989).
14 Food is generally cooked only once a day, in the evening.
15 Nevertheless, the reception samande is situated in the east of the compound, only the samande used for customary festivals is in the west, opposite the zoongo (small house with double entrance). This western samande is never used for receiving visitors.
16 Fruit of the noabga (Sclerocarya birrea).
18 In a general way it has seemed to us that in the Kombissiri regions, the attachment to customs has remained stronger than in Ziga which we had chosen as our reference village. We would relate this to the history of the Mogbo. The Mossi of Ouagadougou consider that the most “Mossi” of the Mossi are those of Manga (where Naaba Wogbho took refugee after Voulet’s attack in 1896), then come those of Saponé (which was, until Naaba Koom 1, the place of investiture of the Mogbo Naaba).
19 Let us, nevertheless, note the great variety of traditions of the Moaga country, which illustrates the importance of always indicating the locality of the observations made.
20 To fulfil one’s marital duty.
21 To in Burkinabé French. This is a compact “porridge” of millet or maize which is eaten with a sauce. This traditional dish, the staple food, is something like the Italian polenta.
22 They all have their own rooms, each wife sleeping with her children until they are at least seven years old.
23 It is corpses which are placed with their feet towards the door (inverted world).
24 The area of houses is measured by the number of corrugated iron sheets needed to cover them (1 sheet = 1.3 m² approximately).
25 In Zorgbo (A. Bruyer, 1987), it is the small compound itself which is called lulii.
26 Ritual vestibule with double entrance.
27 The term designates all those who are strangers to the yiri and has no connection with nationality or skin colour.
28 We only give here those observations which we have been able to make personally. See also the comments of F. Imbs (1987) pp. 52–54, concerning Kumtaabo in the region of Koudougou, as well as the studies by J.M. Kholer (1971). The latter states that “only one enclosure out of ten remained where it was originally installed in Dakola.” He estimates between ten and fifty years at most as the life of a dwelling from its foundation to its abandonment.
29 Balls of banco, traditional method of production.
30 Source: INSD demographic review, quoted by R. Koumbemba.
31 They are between 30 and 40 years old.
32 This tendency is actually the most frequent as owners are obliged to leave vacant a space of 1 m between the building and the party wall and at least 3 m between the building and the street. The “central yard” means that a lot of space is lost. It corresponds in general to former instructions.
33 However, the evidence is in agreement when reporting that thirty years ago kamanses did exist, even in the areas which had been parcelled out. In the example of Bilalogolo, the most densely built plot used to have a kamanga forming an L-shape on the site of the villa (until 1975–80).
35 More especially as in the town the type of waste changes (plastic, tins) and the production (volume) increases with the standard of living.
36 In 1991 we asked the children of Saaaba, a village near to Ouagadougou, to draw “the house where they would like to live later”. 64.4% of the houses have external staircases (which presupposes an elevated building) and 26.5% have a terrace.
37 To respect them requires a considerable fortune, as the regulations demand a galvanised coffin and that the grave is very deep (at least 3 metres).
38 This town is, indeed, more Muslim but it is especially very different from a cultural point of view.
39 A result of the regulation concerning “a distance of 1 metre”.
40 Taking into account the frequency of visits within Ouagadougou, it is indispensable to have a place which fulfils the function of samande and which allows access without letting the whole town pass through the interior of the house. This house was, moreover, not inhabited and the Mossi who visited it refused to rent it because of this inverted structure.
This also presupposes that there is a regular water supply. The villas of Wemtega, situated in an area which is particularly badly served, could thus remain more than a year without finding any takers.

In addition to the purchase price, the use of a refrigerator already places someone on the higher income level: the monthly cost for electricity (considering the lack of insulation of the material and the temperature outside) is estimated at 8,000 to 10,000 CFA Franc (average monthly income of households in Ouagadougou: 50,000 CFA Franc).

O. Dao (1973) p. 63.

One of the Burkinabè we questioned used the provocative term "social parasites" regarding this phenomenon.

Term indicating the water which is given to every visitor to drink.

In relation to our own way of thinking and priorities.

Let us remember that if the *buudu* situates a man in the world and in the time cycle, in other words, gives him his cultural identity and his roots, on the other hand the house only serves as a shelter. Traditionally, the building does not last; the compound changes its site and even in the case of modern constructions of concrete and cement, the life-time envisaged is limited: "You have seen my house, all in concrete. There at least my mind is at ease, it will last for a long time. I will have it for at least 30 years!" (heard in 1986 on a plot of the "commando allocation"). The life-time of the house is considered purely from a financial point of view, there is no extension into personal identity.

One of the advantages recognised in the cities is the obligation to pay rent. The tenant is thus assured of the possibility of "saving" to pay for his house. Hire purchase is therefore seen as a form of forced saving. The sum which he considers to be at his disposal to regulate the different "problems" of the family thus corresponds to what is left of his income. In this way, no one can want him to pass over his house rather than his family. This principle explains why credit is always preferred to saving: a debt must be repaid but, on the other hand, it is difficult to refuse to help a relative in a critical situation on the pretext of saving. The Ouagalais is not the master of his own priorities.

Among real city dwellers. A good many "urban dwellers" hardly have this concern.

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